

Great Holidays on a Small Budget in Germany ... see p.18

Travel Scoop

*The Newsmagazine
for Members of
The Travel Society*

Vol. 20, No. 5 June 2002

On Safari in South Africa's Mpumalanga

— by Robert and Patricia Liptrap

The South African stories we published last fall did not contain any game-watching news. Here, now, are two safari stories, from the famous Kruger National Park, which offers accommodation to suit every budget, to a luxurious property in the heart of the Kalahari Desert.



Zebra, Kruger National Park (Liptrap)

We had dreamed of an African safari for many years and had treasured a book on Kruger National Park that we received as a wedding present from South African relatives over forty years ago. So our trip to South Africa in September of 2001 centered around plans to visit the newly-named province of Mpumalanga and some of its game parks, namely Moholoholo Forest Camp, the great Kruger National Park and Mhlabetsi Safari Lodge. Kruger National

Park was founded in 1898 and is South Africa's oldest and largest national park and is one of the world's most important conservation areas.

But first a few words about our arrangements. Our relative had made suggestions on when to visit South Africa (September) and some of the country's highlights, but when we couldn't find a tour company through our agents that filled our needs we went on line and received several responses directly from South

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TravelScoop

The Newsmagazine for Members of
The Travel Society

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June 2002

Vol. 20, No. 5

From your Editor's desk...



A big European train debate has been going on since we published Anne Raymond's letter "Are we on the Right Track? Helpful Hints for Travelling by Rail in Europe." (TS April 2002, p. 5.) A number of readers wrote to defend European rail travel as easy and efficient, pointing out that when crossing borders of EU countries there are no border formalities whatsoever, though this does not apply to Switzerland - Anne Raymond's example - as that country is not a EU member. Helmut Hoeller wrote, "I believe that rail travel in Europe is the most relaxing way to travel, particularly when you use the Eurailpass. When travelling from Vancouver to Duesseldorf I fly to Frankfurt and then, instead of taking a connecting flight, I take the inter-city expresstrain because it is more comfortable than flying, the scenery along the Rhine is gorgeous and the time involved is about the same."

However, a few readers did write to tell us how they had been treated less than courteously by rail personnel in several European countries. One story, in particular, contains a good tip: on no account tamper with your rail pass in any way. You'll find the story, from subscriber Helen Lane of Nanaimo, BC, on page 6 of this issue.

And now for a completely different story, one that's rather like that whispering game! Apparently the Tourism Chairman of one of Malaysia's states, a Mr Wan Hassan, said recently that "a working committee has been set up to study tourism activities in the state including the behaviour of tourists and their attire when they visit religious places like mosques, temples, etc." It transpires that some foreign news broadcasters and press writers took this to mean "... foreign tourists are not allowed to wear bikinis, and men and women are not allowed in the same swimming pool together"! Tourism Malaysia in Vancouver sent out press releases stating that no Malaysia Tourism head, at any level, has made a statement such as the latter. They end by stating, "Tourism has recently become hugely important to Malaysia, and we most certainly would not do anything to jeopardize the positive image travellers now have of Malaysia." So, if Malaysia is in your plans, you can pack your bikinis and look forward to swimming with your partner.

Happy travels!

coming in *JULY*

- *A few more European ideas*
- *Looking to Asia*
- *Autumn in Cape Cod*

Update Items

Hi Ann

You published my article "A Cheaper Way to Stay in the South of France" in the January 2002 edition of *TravelScoop*. Now I am writing to inform you that the Aussie owners of the six cottages in France – Geoff and Kathy Richards – have e-mailed to tell me that they now own seven.

They have added a cottage in Mirepoix - a town of 3400 people in the Pyrenees-Ariege region.

Mirepoix is actually on a plain about 20 km before the serious mountains and it has a warm and sunny climate. It is 40 km south west of Carcassonne, 80 km south east from Toulouse, about 30 km from Foix and about 90 km north from Andorra and Spain via the N20.

It will be available for rental starting in March 2003 – although there is information on their website and they are accepting bookings for it already ... www.cottagesin-france.com.

I am enjoying the calls I am still receiving from readers of *TravelScoop*; even four months after the publication of my cottage story, people are still calling to chat about Southern France - I love it! (Tel/fax: 250 751 8757.)

Thanks Les – Ed.

*Les Dickason
Nanaimo, BC*

Oops ... a gremlin got into our pull-quote on page 8 last month. It should have read "... light years away from the traffic and bustle of the city."

This Month's Winning Scoop

Ann ... I know that you're a book-lover – and I'm sure many TS readers are too – so here's a tip I thought you all might enjoy! IW

Bookworms Delight in New York's Library Hotel

by Isobel Warren

From the mighty New York Public Library to its elegant little imitator, the Library Hotel, there's a piece of midtown Manhattan that's bookworm heaven. Do guests love the Library Hotel's 6,000 eclectic volumes (with more arriving daily), or its hospitable lounges or its friendly family-owned atmosphere? Whatever the reasons, this intimate boutique hotel at Madison and 41st, and its sister, the Casablanca, near Times Square, has caught the fancy of increasing numbers of Canadians, both business and vacation travellers.

For bookworms, the Library Hotel's proximity to the granddaddy of all 'bookeries', the venerable New York Public Library, is another plus. There, with 88 miles of books – 15 million items – you're faced with a lot of reading, even if you bypass the Babylonian clay tablets, the Gutenberg Bible and the 416,000 maps! Guided tours are offered Monday to Saturday between 11:00 and 2:00. The library's website is www.nypl.org

Members are Rewarded for Sharing!

TS rewards members for all submissions published.

The Winning Scoop receives a 1-year membership extension.

Your Scoops receive a 3-issue membership extension.

Favourite Places receive a 3-issue membership extension.

Reader Reports receive extensions depending on length.

Submission Guidelines: TS welcomes reader submissions but cannot guarantee they will be used. We reserve the right to edit submissions should they be used. It is very important to include specific travel details: costs, discounts, addresses, telephone and fax numbers, etc., for the benefit of other readers. Submissions can be sent by mail, e-mail: brit@interlog.com or on diskettes.

Both libraries, hotel and public, are features of Library Way, a two-block section of Manhattan's once-dismal 41st Street that's been dubbed 'the driveway to the New York Public Library'. Punctuated by bronze plaques that commemorate famous writers, the restoration project starts at Pershing Square, passes the now magnificent Grand Central Terminal and the Library Hotel, nods to the Farmers Loan & Trust Company with its exterior menagerie of animals, and ends at the mighty façade of the public library, still guarded by Patience and Fortitude, its twin marble lions.

The Library Hotel, a 1912 office building where Teddy Roosevelt, then a freelance writer, once maintained an office, admires its big brother from just down the block, at the corner of Madison Avenue and 41st Street, minutes from Fifth Avenue's shops, Broadway's glitter and all the lively commercial life that makes New York tick. The hotel takes its inspiration from Melvil Dewey, the guy who, in 1876, invented the Dewey Decimal System, the library classification system now used in 135 countries and some 30 languages.

Each of the ten guestroom floors represents a classification – social sciences, literature, languages, history, math and science, general knowledge, technology, philosophy, the arts and religion. And each of the 60 rooms reflects a different sub-category. Our sixth floor room – 600-006 – celebrates New Media with books offering a mini-education in computers, video and digital do-dads. But we'd have preferred the eighth floor (literature), especially the ultra-popular Erotica room –

number 800-001 if you must know – liberally laced with racy books and prints you probably wouldn't show your kids. Then there are the poetry, classics, fairy tales, biography and politics rooms, but no CanLit, though Marketing Director Adele Gutman, who selects the books, promised to investigate the deficiency.

The Library's library starts in the lobby, and continues in the second floor reading room where classical guitar or jazz play quietly in the background. Here guests enjoy buffet breakfasts and offerings from the \$15,000 coffee machine which generates frothy espresso, cappuccino or café au lait in seconds. Cheese and wine are served each afternoon in the 14th floor garden, an airy solarium with an outdoor terrace that overlooks the city Public Library. On chillier days, you can adjourn to the Writers' Den where a cosy fireplace and deep couches cater to bookworms. If you tire of reading, the video library is stocked with the American Film Institute's top 100 films.

Less literary but equally appealing (and a little cheaper) is the Library's little sister, the Casablanca, on 43rd Street at Times Square, which opened in 1997. Both hotels are owned by Czech émigré Henry Callan and operated by him and his friendly extended family. Not surprisingly, the Casablanca bespeaks Bogey and Bergman. You can expect to hear "As Time Goes By" when you call for messages or sip your afternoon cocktail in the second floor Rick's Café, where a piano guy named (you guessed it!) Sam sometimes tinkles the ivories. Moroccan accents abound: hand-

some tile work, rugs, wall hangings and imposing bronze animals. A secluded atrium garden, a mini-jungle of plants and vines, with tiny candle-lit tables, is an intimate spot for intrigue.

Both hotels offer complimentary breakfast, afternoon wine and cheese to which guests are welcome to bring *their* guests, plus round-the-clock snacks of excellent coffee, teas, fruit and cookies. These treats render the properties a little less hard on the wallet. Guests may also make complimentary use of the nearby New York Sports Club, with pool, sauna, weights and exercise machines. And both hotels have business centres.

The Library Hotel, 299 Madison Ave. at 41st St., New York, NY 10017, tel: 1 877 793 READ or 212 983 4500, fax: 212 499 9099 www.libraryhotel.com Weekday rates are on the high side at US\$265-\$375 double (but there are lots of 'extras' and this is New York), but the three night week-end package (available Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights until 2 September 2002) of US\$540 double makes this New York treat more affordable.

Casablanca Hotel, 147 West 43rd St., New York, NY, 10036, tel: 1 888 922 7225 or 212 869 1212, fax: 212 3917585 or visit www.casablancahotel.com US\$195-\$265 If you drive, both hotels offer deals that soften the high price of parking in New York. Doral Parking (90 Park Avenue & 39th Street, between Park and Madison) charges \$28 per 24 hrs. Meyers Parking, 43rd Street next door to the Casablanca, offers two nights' parking for \$35. For general information on New York City visit www.nycvisit.com.

Your Scoops

If Italy is in your plans – perhaps after reading last month's two features and this month's notes on Sicily – chances are you'll need ...

An Address in Rome

We recently returned from a trip to Rome where we stayed in a most delightful hotel – the Hotel delle Muse. Located in the quiet, upscale residential area of Parioli, the hotel has an onsite owner, Giorgio Lazar, a very friendly staff and free internet access. Recently renovated, the rooms are functional with marble bathrooms and satellite TV. There are also free safety deposit boxes.

We were quite comfortably situated on the 2nd floor which we reached by a very tiny two-person elevator. A generous continental breakfast was included in the room price. There was coffee, cereals, juice, yoghurt, bread and croissants, fruit and cold cuts ... certainly more than enough to get our day off to a good start. The bonus is the restaurant located in the hotel. The two evenings we ate there the meal was excellent. There is a very reasonable fixed price menu which is posted outside the dining room during the day. There are bus stops nearby and a stand where weekly tickets can be purchased. Giorgio kindly provided directions, maps and tour brochures for us.

We arranged a day tour, through the hotel, to Naples, Sorrento and the Isle of Capri with hotel pick-up and drop-off. We also ordered a reasonably priced-limousine to pick us up when we arrived at Fiumicino Airport and it

was there waiting for us. It was so nice to return to the hotel in the evening away from the hustle and bustle of traffic noise and delightful to be able to take evening walks in such a pleasant and safe neighbourhood with many nice restaurants within walking distance of the hotel.

Room prices start at around C\$110 double and there is a 5% internet booking discount on rooms. The website www.hoteldellemuse.com contains pictures of the rooms, gardens, restaurant and the room rates are posted. There is also an e-mail link to the hotel where you can request reservations and information. Or you can contact the hotel at Via Tommaso Salvini 18, Parioli District 00197, Rome, tel: 011 39 06 80 88 333, fax: 011 39 06 80 85 749. I would highly recommend this hotel to anyone contemplating a visit to Rome.

*Pat Belanger
Pain Court, ON*

An Iroquois B&B

Last year, before we left Toronto for the drive to Halifax, a friend recommended we try a newly-opened B&B in a great location just off Highway 401 but fronting the St. Lawrence River at a place called Iroquois. Iroquois is about four hours' drive from Toronto, 90 minutes from Montréal and an hour from Ottawa, while the bridge to the U.S.A. (Ogdensburg/Johnstown) is only 10 minutes away.

We soon realized we had discovered a real treasure! Elaine Jamieson and Gerry Leckie greeted us very warmly with wine and cheese and good conversation. Galop House is a two-storey modern home on a 17-acre site surrounded by large lawns and gardens. There's

a spacious living room and dining room for the use of guests. Our very large, en suite bedroom with a queen bed was tastefully decorated (as were all the rooms), and most comfortable, with a great view of the St. Lawrence River.

Elaine offered to do dinner for us, which turned out to be a delicious three-course meal complete with candles and wine. While we were waiting for her to prepare it we made use of a paddle boat on a quiet inlet of the river. Breakfast was also memorable, with smoked salmon, eggs, bacon, fresh fruit and home-made preserves.

We can highly recommend this B&B. Not only is it in a great location to make a break (and a treat) of that drive from Toronto to Montréal, it would also be a wonderful place to stay for a number of days for there are many recreational possibilities in the immediate area worthy of exploring. Local attractions include Upper Canada Village, the Upper Canada Playhouse for summer theatre, the working Iroquois Seaway Lock and many summer and winter sporting activities. The property is open year round and they also offer Stay-and-Play packages for golf, theatre and duplicate bridge. Prices for the three rooms range from \$65 to \$85 per room, depending on whether you choose the shared bath or en suite.

The Galop House is off Exit 738 from MacDonal Cartier (401), south 1.2 km to County Road, turn right 2.2 km west to the marked entrance on the river side. Tel: 613 652 1955 or 1 800 450 1439, fax: 613 652 1956, e-mail: galop_house@ripnet.com, www.bbcanada.com/galophouse

*Isabel Fergusson
Dartmouth, NS*

Train Pass Alert

Last fall, we were returning to Paris after a day trip to Strasbourg when we had a most unpleasant altercation with the train conductor. We were using the last day of our 15-day Euro Saver Pass. When the pass was validated, the stamp had obliterated the "day 15" date area. So in order that the date could clearly be seen, I retraced what I had originally written.

All was fine as we set out from Paris and had the ticket punched by the conductor. But it was a different story on our return trip, seated in a first-class compartment with three other people. Then, the conductor pointed to the date, accused us of forgery, insisted we pay *both* ways, demanded our passports and noted the numbers, refused to return the rail pass and threatened to involve the police. A kind French woman in the compartment tried to intervene, but got nowhere. She spoke excellent English and was mortified that guests in her country were being treated in this way. We refused to pay the conductor but sat worrying that we would be greeted by police on our arrival in Paris, but upon arrival no police were in sight. Neither was the conductor. However, with the help of our new-found friend, we did speak ourselves with the railway police, who were not concerned with the matter at all. (We also later contacted the Canadian Embassy as we were concerned that the conductor had noted our passport numbers. They commiserated with us but assured us that we had nothing to worry about.)

We have travelled many times in Europe with rail passes and have normally found the conduc-

tors pleasant and forgiving. But I do have three pieces of advice: don't forget to have your pass validated, date the pass as soon as you get in the train and do not retrace the date figures.

Our story has a happy ending! The French woman wished to know if anything more transpired on the matter, and gave us her business card, which showed that she was the Director of the National Institute of Education Research. When we arrived home, I wrote to her and thanked her for her kindness and she in turn wrote to us, inviting us to visit her and her family at their vacation home near Bordeaux should we ever return to France. I even think my husband, who vowed *never* to return to France during the altercation, may be prevailed upon to do so!

*Helen Lane
Nanaimo, BC*

Retreat on the Ridge

I highly recommend this B&B. It is located at Ryder Lake, BC, about ten minutes from Chilliwack and 90 minutes from downtown Vancouver. From the solitude, you would not know you were so close to civilization. Retreat on the Ridge is comprised of four luxurious cabins, nestled among the trees. Each cabin has a king size bed, small kitchenette, and bathroom. Additionally, there is a loft with a queen size bed, accessible by a ladder!

Breakfast is a do-it-yourself affair with all the fixings provided; enough to keep one going all day! As well, there was a fruit plate, crackers and cheese, and a small bottle of wine in our room

... a nice gesture.

The resort is very new and the cabins have a beautiful view of Cultus Lake off in the distance. Plush robes are provided for the short walk to the steaming hot-tub.

Have a look at their website yourself to see how beautiful it is. Just writing about it makes me want to go back! Rates \$150 pn. dbl. or \$800 a week. Tel: 604 858 3878, www.retreatontheridge.com/

*Judy Quinn
Chilliwack, BC*

For a Night at Heathrow

Here's a 'scoop' for anyone who finds themselves, due to flight schedules, forced to spend a night near Heathrow, but without enough time to go further afield. The new (2000) Holiday Inn London Heathrow in West Drayton is a short bus ride on Hotel Hoppa #4 from the airport. The shuttle costs £3 pounds each way, and it passes every 15 minutes. The walk-in rate is a steep £155 pounds (*but still cheaper than many Heathrow Airport hotels – Ed*), but our travel agent booked us at a corporate rate of £89, including taxes. Restaurant service available, but for a morning flight you might as well eat at the airport - it will be slightly cheaper. It is your standard Holiday Inn, but quiet, convenient and quite satisfactory for a one-night stop. (1 800 HOLIDAY)

*Ted & Judy van der Veen
Campbellville, ON
(But if you do have time to make it to Windsor, about 10 miles from Heathrow, don't forget my favourite Heathrow stop-over spot – Rainworth Guest House, tel: 011 44 1753 856 794. TravelScoop May 1999 has the details – Ed.)*

Last month's *TravelScoop* contained two stories on different regions of Italy. If they have encouraged you to plan some travels in that lovely country, here's somewhere else to consider adding to your itinerary: Sicily.

Days in Sicily

It was my first retirement trip ... an October journey to Malta – which I greatly enjoyed, but which has been written about in *TravelScoop* before – and then over to Sicily and back by ferry, a destination that I haven't seen mentioned in TS. So here are a few notes to help others who'd like to explore this delightful Italian island independently.

We chose to stay in guest farms where we could choose B&B or half pension (B&B plus dinner). We did research on the Internet and found a few *agriturismos* with descriptions, prices and directions in English. (We used the search engine "Google" and searched for farmstays or *agriturismo* in Sicily.) In Malta we booked a return trip on the ferry and a car from Avis. The Maltese agent quoted us one price for the Fiat car, but before we left he came up with all sorts of charges and we ended paying C\$557 for one week. Had we booked with Avis in Canada we would have got a better deal. Gas was about C\$2 per litre and we spent about C\$50 on gas during the week. The car came with a map and soon we set off, ready for our adventure.

We began near Syracuse where we chose to stay at Agriturismo Limoneto. Usually there is a three-night

minimum booking at these properties, but if there is a vacancy upon arrival guests can stay for one night. Limoneto (the Lemon Grove) was surrounded by citrus trees. The main house contained the owner's apartment and the guests' dining room. Guests stayed in a low building surrounding the house. The dining room was furnished with long tables. We shared dinner (pasta with calamari and mussels with lightly sautéed fish for entrée) with a couple from Switzerland and another from Belgium and our conversations in English and French kept us up quite late. (*Limoneto can be found on the Internet in a report by Karen Brown, author of those great little guides to properties in Europe. www.karen-brown.com/italy/limoneto.html Double rooms B&B Euro 62 or about C\$87 – Ed.*)

Next morning breakfast was served in the courtyard. The owner's daughter, who spoke English, came to join us and we asked her for recommendations for other *agriturismos*. It was following her suggestions that we planned our trip around Sicily. We stayed at other guest farms on the island, but Limoneto ranked the best and we liked the fact that we could have dinner there without the hassle of taxes, tips and driving. But we enjoyed exploring around the island.



Limoneto

Leaving Limoneto, we headed along the coast for Taormina, a world-renowned terraced town. From there it was inland, up mountain routes to L'Antica Vigna in Montelaguardia, where we spent two delightful days hiking in the mountains near Mt. Etna. That famous active volcano was our next stop. The road leading to the observation tower is winding but well paved. This is a favourite site/sight for locals and tourists and we had a great time exploring the lava-covered area. Higher grounds can be reached by cable car or jeeps.

The good guest farms are very popular and are booked well in advance during high season and holiday weekends. But in October we enjoyed our 'free plan' which added a sense of adventure and achievement. And we had no complaints about the price ... our total land expenses amounted to approximately C\$1,600 for two people for a week.

Maria Wu
Toronto, ON

In addition to the regular ferry from Malta, Sicily can be reached by regular ferries from Tunisia and its sister island Sardinia, as well as ports on the Italian mainland (Genoa, Naples, etc.) The island also has two airports, at Catania and Palermo.

Fodor's guide upClose Italy devotes 45 pages to Sicily, each densely printed with information on getting around, what to see, what to eat, where to stay plus a glimpse into Sicily's interesting history. (C\$25, 490 pp.) The Italian Tourism website - www.italiantourism.com

continued from page 1

Africa. Eventually we chose to place our plans in the hands of a company called Journeez as we liked the responses from Jimmy Linskey. Over the next six months we sent frequent e-mails back and forth, fine tuning the details and getting to know each other. Jimmy arranged accommodation for us in Johannesburg, a trip to Zimbabwe's Victoria Falls, flights to Cape Town to visit our relative and our safari experiences in Mpumalanga. The game experiences were arranged by Jimmy through Game Encounter who are flexible and will customize tours. While our plans were in place well in advance, the actual bookings were not made until Jimmy felt he had the best prices available. This careful monitoring on his part resulted in substantial savings for us, further helped by the fact the South African rand is weak against the dollar.

There were, however, a few details that presented challenges. We arranged our cancellation insurance through our CIBC Visa (Travel Underwriters) but we did not have protection from any company going under that we might have had had we booked at home. Also, Journeez does not take credit cards, so payments were made in the form of direct deposits to the company's bank account; something of an inconvenience to those of us who are so used to the ease of credit cards.

Now a few general words about South Africa. We had no idea how varied and stunning the countryside is, how sophisticated Cape Town and Johannesburg are and the strength of the country's infrastructure was also a surprise. There is so much more we'd like to see that we are planning another trip in a few years' time and will stay longer than three weeks. We would travel again in their late winter or spring as there are many advantages to this time of year: the weather is much like our own spring with mild days and cool nights. At that time local tourism is down and prices are lower. Animals are easier to spot as they roam searching for water and are not drowsy from the summer heat. It is also a great time of year for enjoying South Africa's abundant wild flowers, trees and flowering bushes. Now here are details of the game-watching section of our trip.

Day 1. Up early for a quick breakfast and departure from the Melville Manor House B&B in the Melville district of Johannesburg. We were picked up by Andrew Hofmeyr of Game Encounter in a VW minibus for our customized four-day wildlife animal tour (no

other tourists) arranged by Journeez. Andrew had been a section game warden in Kruger for a number of years but now lives in Pretoria and is sharing his phenomenal knowledge of flora and fauna, game reserves and Kruger Park with small tour groups. After several hours of driving we stopped at Dulstrum for a snack before travelling on through rugged terrain to Blyde River Canyon and the Burke's Luck Potholes, all very spectacular. A short while later we stopped again at the Three Rondawels, magnificent rock formations in the shape of the indigenous round dwellings of that name.

We arrived at Moholoholo Forest Camp adjacent to Kruger National Park by mid afternoon to be greeted by giraffes, an eland, warthogs and a duiker on our drive in. Our chalet was quite new and attractively decorated with animal prints and local artefacts. We were offered tea in the lodge but were soon whisked off on foot to visit the Animal Rehabilitation Centre where animals, particularly birds, that have been injured or poisoned are treated and released or protected. Then, after our evening meal, we climbed aboard an open vehicle for our night drive. We saw a number of animals including common grey duiker, impala,

kudu, African buffalo, white tail mongoose, bush babies, giraffe, forest bush pig, baboons, bushbuck, water deer, jumping hare, guinea

fowl and warthogs.

Day 2. Were awakened very early (4:45 a.m) by two male baboons fighting for dominance over the watering hole and by others cavorting about on our veranda. This gave us an early start for our first day in Kruger National Park. Once within the park boundaries the animal sightings were many.

We checked into Satara Rest Camp within Kruger Park at noon and had lunch before our afternoon drive. There are a number of these rest camps in the park which have varying amounts of amenities. This one is the second largest and is located in the central section of Kruger Park. It has a good shop with food, liquor, other supplies, crafts and books, pleasant eating facilities and a laundromat. Our cabin was old but comfortable - en suite, air conditioned with a fridge outside with a sitting area. Some included cooking facilities. The knobthorn veld surrounding the camp provides the best grazing in the park.

There's so much more we'd like to see that we are planning another trip.

Just before returning to camp, we were excited to spot (with a number of other tourists) a leopard devouring an impala which delayed our arrival back at the camp, whose gate closes at 5:30. However, there were no consequences to this game park rule infringement. Later we enjoyed a buffet dinner with Andrew in the camp dining room and then retired early so we could be on our way in good time in the morning.

Day 3. Departed shortly after 7:00 a.m. to explore Kruger north of Satara. Here we noticed a big change in the terrain – lots of rocks and many more trees all flanked by the Drakensburg Mountain Range which offers a dramatic backdrop. Again Andrew sought out and found more special birds and animals for us. We left Kruger through the Orpen Gate, the same one we had taken on our arrival.

[Our Kruger sightings had included the following:

Animals: the ‘big five’ are the elephant, lion, buffalo, leopard and rhinoceros. We saw all but the last. Other sightings included: warthogs, impala, kudu, wildebeest (blue), black backed jackals, impala, zebra, waterbuck, slender mongoose, dwarf mongoose, giraffes, hyena, hippopotamus, vervet monkey, baboons, steenbok, crocodiles and enormous termite mounds.

Birds: Guinea fowl, Swainson’s franklin pheasants, red billed ox pecker, long tailed shrike, yellow billed hornbill, lilac breasted roller, black crested forandlers, white backed vulture, fish eagle, black smith plover, buff crested heron, steppe eagle, tarrapins, bateleur eagle, cormorant, howdido ibis, saddle billed stork. and more.]

After leaving Kruger, we drove north west and had a late lunch before arriving at our final destination, Mohlabetsi Safari Lodge by mid-afternoon. We were warmly welcomed by Alma, co-owner with husband Tony of the nature reserve, and their staff. Our comfortable accommodation in an attractive chalet was decorated with African artefacts and fabrics. After settling in we returned to the main building for a snack

before departing for our three-hour evening drive in a comfortable Land Rover. Not many sightings as this reserve is open with several others, so the animals have a lot more space to roam than in Moholoholo and they are not as accustomed to people as the animals in Kruger. We stopped for a sunset drink and ‘nibblies’ before continuing our drive, when the guide, also named Andrew, discovered that neither the headlights nor spotlight were working. But we discovered it’s amazing what you can see with only the southern constellations to light the way.

On our return we freshened up quickly before gathering around the boma (campfire) for a warm welcome by tribal women drummers and a fabulous dinner of butternut squash soup, bread baked on the fire, barbecued chicken, lamb curry, roasted vegetables, nasturtium and banana flambé with ice cream followed by herbal tea or coffee.

Day 4.

Awakened at 5:45 a.m. for a morning walk. We had a quick snack and coffee before heading out at 6:15 with a congenial family from Australia for a two-hour walk. We saw the leadwood tree which is so hard that termites cannot break it down and the marula tree with its variegated bark



Lioness, Moholoholo Forest Camp (Liptrap)

that is used to make beer and a cream liquor. Both humans and animals enjoy the nuts and the African tribes use them for making jewellery. We saw a pair of giraffes with a baby, plus a warthog, wildebeest, waterbuck, impala and a lion ant. We especially enjoyed these morning walks. They offer quite a different perspective than from a vehicle in that they give a chance to leisurely view plants and birds up close.

After a pleasant breakfast we packed up and departed about 10:30 for our return to Johannesburg and our homeward flights. We had a lovely drive and took advantage of a few more picture opportunities along the way as the terrain is so varied and beautiful. We had lunch at the Tea Shop and Rose Garden in Dulstrum, the same eatery we had stopped at on our

Continued on page 20

A PLACE CALLED TSWALU

by Ann Wallace

The ranger who had come to meet me closed the great sliding gate behind us with a clang. It felt like a scene from *Jurassic Park*. The almost-full moon flooded the surrounding desert with an eerie light, but my eyes were eagerly seeking the welcoming lights of the lodge that was still only a figment of my dreams.

I was close to the end of a long journey that had culminated in a four-hour drive from Kimberley in central South Africa, and I was now in the Kalahari Desert in the far northern corner of the Cape Province. A brochure and reservation, tucked in my bag, confirmed the existence of a Relais & Chateaux property at the end of my journey, but as we bumped over the rough track in this seemingly uninhabited wilderness the existence of such a place seemed an impossibility.

“Just a few more kilometres,” the ranger, Riaan, assured me, sensing my weariness. “The fire in your house has been lit, there’s plenty of hot water for a tub or a shower, dinner is being prepared and the red wine is open.” Oh, be still my beating heart!

Minutes later we turned a bend in the road beneath a dark hill and I caught my first glimpse of the lights of the Tswalu Kalahari Reserve. All that Riaan had told me was true. What he hadn’t mentioned was the luxurious air-conditioned accommodation in private *legae* (Tswana for ‘home’) where, beneath soaring thatched ceilings, each guest enjoys enormous personal spaces enclosed by curved stone and desert clay walls: a vast living room with log-burning fireplace, comfortable bedrooms, intriguing bathrooms, fully-

enclosed private courtyards for under-the-stars showering and a verandah bearing chairs and beds for open-air relaxation, game and desert watching. There are no cliché-ed colonial relics and animal prints here. Earth-tone fabrics cover the over-stuffed chairs and sofas; split-level spaces hold clay pots that stand higher than

a man, each filled with desert grasses or bizarrely shaped euphorbia (African cactus-like plants), massive wrought-iron rings descend from the apex of the roof bearing a circle of lights, a fine armoire hides a fridge and a selection of drinks, while picture windows reveal the desert beyond and the nearby, softly-illuminated water hole that awaits visits from thirsty animals.

Re-energized by a hot shower under the cool night sky, and full of eagerness to see the rest of this stunning property, I made my way along the stone paths to the *motse*, or main building. My own *legae* had prepared me to expect something exceptional and I was not disappointed. Two large log fires cast flickering light over the luxurious seating sections and adjoining split-level dining room. Thick ochre candles stood in red dunesand in glass cylinders, adding yet more gentle light with their dancing flames. Irregular wooden pillars seemed to grow from the stone floor, supporting the upper gallery, location of the cozy library and games room. Through enormous windows I could see a free-form swimming pool shimmering under soft lights on the edge of the desert.

Members of Tswalu’s friendly staff were awaiting my arrival. They stood back and enjoyed my delight at this remarkable setting before urging me to sit down



Guests can watch the game and the desert safely from Tswalu’s grounds (Wallace)

among the cushions to enjoy a flute of champagne. A delicious dinner, prepared by chefs Josie Stow and Rachel Buchner, was soon before me. As I indulged I chatted with Riaan about the animal conservation work being undertaken at Tswalu and the programmes designed for its guests, which include daily safaris, visits to the areas set aside for the breeding of the endangered roan and sable antelope, guided hikes to see ancient bushmen's rock carvings and escorted desert horse-riding expeditions.

Tswalu is a gigantic 90,000 hectare estate and the largest privately-owned game reserve in Africa. It is home to a multitude of creatures: desert black rhino, white rhino, Cape buffalo, lion, zebra, giraffe and an estimated 12,000 head of game. Until the last decade the area was used for grazing by land-rich but money-poor farmers, who were no doubt happy to sell to the late Stephen Boler, an Englishman whose dream it was to return this land to its roots and see it inhabited by the creatures of the semi-desert. Hence the name "Tswalu", meaning "a new beginning".

Following Boler's untimely death in 1999, Tswalu was purchased by the Oppenheimer family, who pledged to continue Boler's work dedicated to African wildlife conservation and eco-tourism. A lodge was needed. The vision of all involved was clear: building lines must be fluid; the boundaries between interiors and exterior must appear to blur; materials should be natural and found on site; texture, colour and form must reflect the desert. All this was achieved. Once the magnificence of the structures has been assimilated one starts to notice the details: the elegant pottery bowls instead of porcelain sinks in the bathrooms; the waste-paper containers made of logs; the wooden furniture crafted from free-form pieces found across the desert.

Here in the Kalahari, after a delicious dinner com-

plemented with fine South African wine, I finally laid a weary head in my luxurious bed, little realizing that I would wake just before dawn to see a family of gemsbok passing in front of my window on their way to the waterhole. Then, as the sun rose, the boundless horizons of the Kalahari were revealed to me ... a beguiling land teeming with wildlife, a land of whispering grasses where time is measured by the shifting colour of the sun on the blazing red sand dunes.

A fact that sets Tswalu apart from other game reserves is that guests can wander on foot from the lodge at will. That is because the only dangerous predators here – the lions – are located in a separately-fenced area. Thus on a lone dawn or dusk walk you may encounter any number of creatures that call this land home or see, as I did, creatures happily grazing

just feet from your private verandah. And Tswalu is different from most other game reserves for another important reason: it is located in a malaria-free zone, thus providing an ideal safari experience for those who cannot take anti-malaria medication.

Of course prices for this special place are high; not only is it luxurious but it is also iso-

lated and everything you consume must travel a great distance. And then there are the outstanding staff ... experts all, on making you feel welcome, and among whom you'll also find experts on conservation, breeding, desert survival, African food and wine and the sad history of the area's indigenous people – the gentle Bushmen. And tracker Gert Makatong never failed to amaze the group on the safari drives. Tswalu is home to the rare white rhino as well as the desert black rhino, and not only does Gert know where to find them but he can see with his naked eye what none of us could see with our binoculars!

Yes, Tswalu really is a remarkable place.

(see overleaf for details)



The motse, or main building, at the Tswalu Kalahari Reserve (Wallace)

Travel help ...

Tswalu is located near Kuruman in the northern Cape Province of South Africa, an 11-hour drive direct from Cape Town. Driving time from Johannesburg is 7 hours, from Kimberley 4 hours and just over 3 hours from Upington. There are airports in these three locations with car rental services. As warned, the rates for a stay here are high: approximately US\$400 per person per night. This includes luxury (make that adjective 'memorable') accommodation in one of nine guest houses, all meals and all drinks, including those in your room bar (champagne after an eventful day is wonderful!), two long daily game drives in open safari vehicles that can take up most of the day, just returning for lunch and a little relaxation around the pool, as well as walking safaris, all of which are led by experienced rangers and trackers.

Tswalu Kalahari Reserve can be contacted at: P.O. Box 1081, Kuruman 8460, South Africa, tel: 011 27 53 781 9211, fax: 011 27 53 781 9238, e-mail: tswalu.res@cybertrade.co.za www.tswalu.com
Tswalu is part of the Relais & Chateaux portfolio.

Tswalu's tiny, tasteful gift store offers two books

that you may like to look for. At the beginning of your stay it's interesting to purchase *The Kalahari: Survival in a Thirstland Wilderness*, text by Michael Knight and Peter Joyce, photography by Nigel Dennis. This gorgeous book will alert you to the many wonders of the Kalahari awaiting you. The other book is *The African Kitchen* by Jan Baldwin and Tswalu chef Josie Stow, another beautiful volume that contains not only recipes, but stories and photographs that evokes the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of Africa.

The Tourism Authority of the Northern Cape can be reached at 187 Du Toitspan Road, Private Bag X5017, Kimberley 8300, Northern Cape, South Africa, tel: 011 27 53 832 2657, fax: 011 27 53 831 2937, e-mail: tourism@northercape.org.za, www.northerncape.org.za The whole area is completely malaria-free. Readers may like to note that the Northern Cape includes the Namaqualand region, a semi-desert area that early every spring (late August/September), in response to the onset of the rains, presents one of the greatest displays of wild flowers in the world. The Namaqualand Route starts in Cape Town and takes travellers north as far as the Namibian border.

Last word ...

by Ann Wallace

With the publication of these two safari articles, we bring our recent coverage on South Africa to a close for a while (see also *TravelScoop* September & November, 2001). I am confident that with the contacts we have given you – in particular Cyril Payle of Geometric Tours in Cape Town together with Robert and Pat Liptrap's recommendation of Journeez – you will be in a position to organize your own tour of South Africa. Using local contacts you not only have the advantage of customizing your own tour and, in many cases, getting a vehicle and guide to yourself or in a very small group, but you are sure to save many dollars over the pre-arranged tours offered by big operators in North America. The rand is low at present and, apart from the cost of getting to South Africa, you will find it economical to travel there. You'll find the infrastructure sound, tourist information readily available, accommodations and food good and you can even drink the tap water. South Africans are very aware of the value of tourism to their beautiful country and you can be sure of a warm welcome.

And yet another word about Geometric Tours. Cyril has just sent me the full itinerary of his new 9-day *Mammoth Garden Route* tour, an in-depth journey through a remarkable region that many claim to be "the best-kept secret in the world"! Cyril recommends June to November for this tour, as that is the season for whale watching. Cape Town and safari add-ons are also available. The tours are for four people; make your own small group or look forward to meeting another couple. For full details e-mail Cyril at gemtours@mweb.co.za, tel/fax: 011 27 21 951 3378 or write to P.O. Box 371, Kasselsvlei, Bellville, South Africa 7533. To read more about Geometric Tours please refer back to *TravelScoop*, September 2001.

(The Liptraps also sent us details of their trip to Zimbabwe, but as that country is at present considered unsafe for travellers we have not, at this stage published it. Contacts in South Africa will, I am sure, be able to counsel you on the advisability of travelling to Victoria Falls and elsewhere in Zimbabwe.)

Independent in New Zealand

by Yvonne Butorac

You've got to love a country where the taxes are included in the prices and where tipping is the exception. Of course it helps that New Zealand is greener than green, has kilometres of empty beaches, a friendly population and a favourable exchange rate for our sinking loonie. As we go to print NZ\$1 equals 72 Canadian cents. (**Important note: prices in this article are in NZ dollars, unless indicated otherwise.**)

I discovered last year that Air New Zealand, an Air Canada partner, does not black out the Christmas period for reward travel, so in December my husband and I were off seeking Santa in New Zealand. I did find that early booking is essential. Few reward seats are available for the holiday period and even in late spring the choice in December dates was limited. And check

your seat assignment on the Air New Zealand portion from Los Angeles. If you are treating yourself to business class and your seats are in row 7 in the bubble of the 747 and you're taller than 5'5" try to have them changed. In this first row the bulkhead prevents

anyone tall from stretching out fully and totally defeats booking business class for this 12-hour flight.

We planned to spend a few days in Auckland with a friend exploring from there, and the balance of our two weeks on the South Island. No tour fit the bill for us, so I opted for the do-it-yourself approach using the Internet. I booked online our flights from Auckland to Christchurch and return, a rental car, all accommodation on the South Island, and three, one-day tours. When required I paid by credit card via e-mail and although research and booking were time-consuming everything worked perfectly.

North Island

Auckland, the country's largest city, climbs up and down hills and weaves in and around bays. Water is rarely out of sight and to take advantage of the seaside setting we boarded a ferry one day for a cruise to a nearby island in the Hauraki Gulf that is one of the world's most exciting conservation projects.

Tiritiri Matangi is a 220-hectare island of reclaimed farmland that has been turned into an open sanctuary where rare birds can live wild among the reforested native plants. Saddlebacks, whiteheads, and stitchbirds were all new to us but the most thrilling sighting was that of Greg, one of the 20 takahes on the island and one of only 220 on the planet. The takahe is a big fluorescent blue, green and purple flightless bird

with short thick legs and a formidable orange-red beak. It's dumber than a door-knob when it comes to escaping introduced predators like the cat and the rat and was at one time believed to be extinct.

When we disembarked after the one-hour cruise from Auckland a conser-

vation officer explained the rules of the island. Check your backpacks for rodents (as if you wouldn't notice if you were packing a rat!); smoking is allowed in only two outdoor areas (available water is in short supply and a forest fire on the island would be disastrous); and stay on the trails (that's to give the 250,000 seedlings that have been planted since 1984 a chance to grow undisturbed). The island is open for self-exploration but do sign up for the bargain \$5 tour led by a volunteer guide when you make your ferry booking (\$45 adults) with Fullers www.fullers.co.nz. Bookings are essential; only one ferry departs at 9 a.m. on



Fosters Bay on the way to Coromandel (Butorac)

Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays (no Friday sailings from May 1 to September 30). It docks back in Auckland at 4.45 p.m.

Fullers operates many ferry tours and has plans for cruises during the 2002/2003 America's Cup Regatta. Sign up at their website to be kept up-to-date on the schedule. And if you're visiting from mid to end of December consider the cruise to volcanic Rangitoto Island to see the large stand of pohutukawa trees with their brilliant wine-red flowers. They're called New Zealand's Christmas tree.

We saw the blooming pohutukawas on a day trip up the Coromandel Peninsula. We drove to Thames and headed north. The highway hugs the rugged coast and there's a photo op around every turn. At Tapu we watched for signs to Coroglen and at the 'square kauri' took a right turn. It's 9.5 km on a winding road and 187 steps up through lush vegetation to this 1200-year-old tree with a girth of nine metres. Most large kauri were logged out of this area between 1830 and 1930 but its unusual shape may have saved this one. There is no admission charge at the well-maintained, government-run site, and this seemed to often be the case.

We retraced our steps to the coastal highway and continued north. At Wilsons Bay the highway turns inland across a small peninsula and climbs up to a stunning view over Fosters Bay. In Coromandel we feasted on typical New Zealand fare, green lip mussels and kumara chips. The farmed mussels are huge and tasty, and kumara is a sweet-potato type vegetable brought to New Zealand by the Maoris from Polynesia.

On another day we drove from Auckland to Rotorua and back to check out the area's famed thermal activity. (It's about three hours actual driving time each way.) We stopped for a tea break in tiny Tirau, mid-way between Hamilton and Rotorua, and couldn't decide which was the town's best feature – the imaginative metal sculptures and buildings, the many

antique shops or the savory scones at Poppy's Café (\$2.50).

The Whakarewarewa Thermal Reserve and New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute (\$18 adults) in Rotorua was a bit of a disappointment although we did see two little brown kiwis in the nocturnal display. True there were mud pools and steaming rocks and geysers but not much was happening in the Maori village and the carvers were on a break.

South Island

I booked our flights from Auckland to Christchurch through www.travelocity.ca on Qantas for C\$153 each plus a C\$10 courier delivery fee. Researching car rentals on the Internet presented a challenge. Many firms quoted a base price plus taxes, mandatory insurance, and service charges. I settled on National www.national-car.co.nz because they offered an all-inclusive price of \$79 per day, with unlimited kilometres on a Mitsubishi Lancer or similar car. We did pay \$12 per day to reduce the insurance excess from \$1500 to \$250. As far as I could determine this insurance excess was a bit like a deductible and I couldn't figure out whether it was covered on the gold card. National does not have a kiosk at Christchurch airport (although they do in Auckland and Wellington).



Pohutu Geyser, Rotorua (NZTB)

Instead one of their representatives meets you in the Arrivals area and drives you off-site to a parking lot to complete the paperwork. On our return we opted to drop the car off in downtown Christchurch and one of their staff drove us to the airport. We were well past the 24 hours on the ninth day and into our tenth day but were charged for just nine days.

Since we would be travelling over the Christmas period when the schools are on their long summer break we anticipated the demand for motels would be high so I booked each night's accommodation from Canada. When required I provided a credit card number as confirmation. (If I'm feeling at all paranoid about giving credit card info in an e-mail, I spell out

the numbers or send two e-mails, each with half the number.) Since none of this trip would be covered by cancellation insurance I inquired about the consequences of a last-minute change of plans. Generally the Kiwis were quite casual and their cancellation requirements reasonable. And in hindsight we would probably have had no difficulty finding accommodation each night as we travelled.

After picking the car up at the Christchurch airport we headed west towards the coast, passing roadside blankets of pink and purple lupins and driving through the dizzying heights of Arthur's Pass. Soon we were at the Rosewood B&B rosewoodnz@xtra.co.nz in Greymouth for our first night. Rhonda and Stephan Palten took over the well-established B&B in November after living in Germany for 12 years. For \$105 we had a lovely big front room on the main floor in the beautifully-preserved 1920s house with ensuite bathroom, television and off-street parking. Breakfast, a cooked one if you wish, was served across the hall in the bright dining room. Rates for their five rooms, three of which are ensuite, range from \$75 single to \$120 double. Highly recommended.

Our next stop down the coast after checking out the gold-mining towns of Hokitika and Ross was Franz Josef Glacier and the Rata Grove Motel, a member of the popular Budget Motel Chain www.budgetmotel-chain.com.au This is a co-op of motel owners throughout Australia and New Zealand whose slogan is "Spend a night, not a fortune". Our big room at the Rata Grove Motel (www.ratagrove.co.nz), complete with full kitchen cost \$90.

Proprietors Coleen and Ron West were most helpful, recommending The Beaches on the main street for dinner (great choice), and providing walking directions to the glowworms. Darkness comes late in December so we waited till past 10 o'clock to head out to a nearby, unlighted road. Glowworms are the larvae of the fungus knat. They string sticky threads down the road bank to trap insects that are attracted by the light from their luminescent bodies. The effect is enchanting. If you didn't know better you'd swear someone had decorated the road bank with multiple strings of tiny clear Christmas lights.

We chose Wilderness Lodge on Lake Moeraki for a Christmas splurge. Until 1965 the west coast highway stopped just south of Franz Josef and Fox Glaciers

at the Moeraki River. Construction began early in the decade to push this highway south to link up with the one that crossed the Southern Alps to Haast Village. For four years road construction crews working from a base camp at Lake Moeraki carved out a roadway through the dense rainforest and rock.

In 1989 when Gerry McSweeney and his wife Anne Saunders came across the former work camp, now the Lake Moeraki Motels, they saw the site's potential as a lodge to cater to nature lovers. Simon and Shirley Nikoloff, the current Wilderness Lodge managers, oversee an eco-friendly operation that strives to provide a wilderness experience with all the comforts of home. The lodge is located on the banks of the Moeraki River, just downriver from where the river flows out of Lake Moeraki on its short route to the Tasman Sea. Guests are encouraged to explore the area on guided nature activities (two, one-hour walks each day are complimentary; others, anywhere from three to

five hours in duration cost from \$68 to \$100+), or on the network of forest, river and seacoast self-guided walks.

Kayaking and fishing are

other optional activities. Daily rates per person for double accommodation, including breakfast and four-course dinners are definitely luxury level, from \$160 & \$195, low season (1 May 1 – Sept 30) to \$230 & \$280, high season (1 Oct – 30 Apr). The grounds are landscaped to blend into the site, the well-appointed dining room and lounge are comfortable and the food is excellent, but the rooms are small and fairly basic. And it seemed petty to charge guests for the use of dryers in the handy laundry room where the washing machines are complimentary. Visit www.wildernesslodge.co.nz for more information.

Although steady rain shrouded the scary precipices and majestic peaks we might have seen as we drove from the west coast to the central region over the Haast Pass, we can vouch for a number of impressive roadside waterfalls. We stopped for a car picnic and positioned the car in a layby for a good view of Lake Wanaka. After lunch, when the rain had stopped, we realized a beautiful waterfall had been our picnic backdrop.

Wanaka is sometimes described as Queenstown without the tourists and here we discovered how smart another of my motel choices had been. Bella Vista Motels (www.bellavistamotels.co.nz) operate only on

We headed west ... passing roadside blankets of pink and purple lupins.

the South Island – 11 establishments in total. They are all new properties with average-size rooms that are very efficient with a minimum of tea and toast making facilities and a refrigerator in every room, and full kitchens in some. In-room televisions, hair dryers, iron and ironing board, and communal laundry facilities are standard, as they are in most of the country's motels. I had booked another Bella Vista in Christchurch for two nights and it was equally satisfactory, especially being within walking distance of downtown restaurants. In Wanaka we paid \$85 and in Christchurch \$95.

In Dunedin I chose the Skyline Leisure Lodge (www.mainstay.co.nz/leisurelodge) on the edge of the Botanic Gardens for two nights. The gardens were lovely and the surrounding university area interesting but it was more a drive than a walk to downtown. By this time we were really used to having a motel refrigerator and so, with the manager's approval, we emptied the contents of our mini-bar out on the dresser and filled it with our own supplies. It was just another example of how accommodating Kiwis are. Our rate per night was \$125.

The next time we're in the Dunedin area we plan to live like royalty. In 1871 William Larnach, banker, financier and politician began construction on Larnach Castle (www.larnachcastle.co.nz), high on the crest of Otago Peninsula overlooking the sea in all directions. Two hundred workers labored for five years to build the Scottish baronial-style hall that is New Zealand's only castle. Personal tragedy plagued the Larnach family for decades and by the time the Barkers purchased the property in 1967 the castle was sadly neglected and in need of extensive repairs. Today it is open to the public for self-guided tours (admission \$12) and also as a hotel. Accommodation is available in the original stable in rooms with shared bathrooms

at rates from \$95 or in the newly constructed lodge at rates from \$200 en suite, including breakfast. Lodge guests can arrange for dinner in the castle dining room.

Encouraged by the motel refrigerators and kitchens and the neat New Zealand custom of providing guests with a small container of fresh milk for tea on check-in, we got into the habit of making our breakfasts. Grocery stores, which also stock cold wine and beer, were easy to find and prices were comparable to home. A number of times we bought fresh fruit from roadside stands – big jumbo cherries in Alexandra, raspberries and apricots near Roxborough, and sweet plums at Little River on the way to Akaroa.

Restaurants cover all areas of taste - lots of seafood including the aforementioned mussels, calamari, prawns and blue cod, and of course the ubiquitous lamb. Prices are often lower than Toronto, in part because the price you see is the price you pay. For example at the Café 124 in Greymouth one of the more expensive "mains" – garlic and chili king prawns pan-fried and served with summer salad, fresh ciabatta and chili

mayo – cost \$28.95 NZ or C\$19.40. Subtract 15% for taxes you don't pay and 15% for tips you don't give, and you're looking at \$15 on a Canadian menu. The only exception to the no-tipping rule appeared to be in Auckland where opinion varied on whether tips were expected.

New Zealand is an easy country for independent travel. Outside of Auckland and Christchurch traffic is not heavy and you quickly adapt to driving on the "wrong" side of the road. Motels make it easy to self cater and keep your laundry up to date. It's an absolute treat to have no taxes or service charges added to any price. And, with the help of the Internet, it's simple to research your areas of interest and pre-arrange as much or as little as you're comfortable with.



Lanarch Castle (Butorac)

Travel Digest

Austria

Does a stay on a farm in Austria appeal to you? If so, you may like to investigate the '**Salzburg Farm Holidays** programme, whereby guests can stay one or more of 30 approved locations in the countryside, yet within easy reach of the many cultural offerings of **Salzburg**. Each farm must meet strict guidelines and must offer private bathrooms and at least one English-speaking family member. If they wish, guests may participate in farm life or may take advantage of lakes and streams for fishing, bicycles and maps for local exploring or horses for riding the fields and hills. Some properties have saunas and/or swimming pools. And to help with all your sightseeing in the area, there's a 'SommerJoker' and a Salzburg Card, cards that offer many deals for visitors, including free admission to over 200 sights and attractions. For information on travelling to and within the Province of Salzburger and the City of Salzburg visit www.salzburgerland.com and www.salzburginfo.at or contact the Austrian Tourist Office at 416 967 4867, e-mail: anto-tor@sym-patico.ca

Canada

King Pacific Lodge, the floating wilderness lodge moored off **Princess Royal Island** in northern BC, is one of the Top Ten Wilderness Lodges on the continent, according to the April issue

of *Outside Magazine*, bible for adventure-seekers in North America. Outside Magazine author, Robert Earle Howells, begins the introduction: "The folks who run the best wilderness lodges are something like the best masseuses: they know exactly what you want and where you want it, and when they're done...oh, my. At this Lodge the guides know exactly where to go, but you'll feel like no one's been there before." The Lodge operates from May to October, with access via floatplane from Prince Rupert. But you'll have to dig deep into your pockets for this adventure: all-inclusive rates for a three-night stay start from C\$2,050 per person. For more information on King Pacific Lodge visit the web site at www.kingpacificlodge.com or www.rosewoodhotels.com or call 1-888-592-5464.

A far less expensive treat awaits you in Vancouver in the shape of the **Pacific Starlight Dinner Train** ... a great way to dine and enjoy part of BC's spectacular coastline. Editor Ann enjoyed this outing a few years ago and *loved* it, reporting it's a "must do" for visitors to Vancouver. Prices from \$89.95 inclusive of tips and taxes. For information call 1 800 663 8238 or visit www.bcrail.com/starlight

Signature Vacations is offering something new in Canada this summer – ranch vacations. Choose between the historic **Rafter Six Ranch Resort** on **Alberta's Kananaskis River** or the **Broadleaf Guest Ranch** near **Fundy National Park** in **New Brunswick**. Both are working ranches which offer horse riding and much more: wagon rides, river rafting, hiking, barbecues, spa serv-

ices, etc. Rates start at \$75 or \$78 pp respectively per night, or choose a package. Your travel agent will have copies of Signature's new Canada brochure, or call 1 800 830 1111 for a copy.

The **Capital Region** in your plans? Don't miss the exhibition **Vikings: The North Atlantic Saga** at the **Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Québec**. On now until 14 October, this major exhibition marks the 1,000th anniversary of the first arrival of Europeans in Canada. Many additional programmes will enhance the exhibition, which consists of 300 priceless artefacts from ten countries on both sides of the Atlantic. For information call 1 800 555 5621. And while you're planning your stay in the **Ottawa** region, don't forget the **Tom Thomson** exhibition at the **National Art Gallery**. We mentioned this event in last month's TS, but omitted to give you contact details for the gallery for further information. Their toll-free number is 1 800 319 ARTS or visit www.national.gallery.ca For city packages call 1 800 465 1867 or 1 800 265 7822.

Europe

Interesting volunteering opportunities are available from **Global Volunteers** in Europe this summer: teaching English in Poland, working with children in Crete, baby care or English teaching in Romania or working for peace in Ireland by helping in a variety of ways at the Glenree Centre for Reconciliation in the Wicklow Mountains. Programmes also available in China, Vietnam,

Tanzania and lots of other places around the world. For details call 1 800 487 1074 or visit www.globalvolunteers.org

Britain

A beautiful little brochure on minibus vacations in Britain can be yours if you contact the numbers or addresses below. The company is **Byway Holidays**, a small family-run business offering high quality tours off the beaten track in Britain with accommodation in small country guesthouses. Garden tours and walking tours are also offered. Call 905 825 8874 (from Toronto area) or 1 888 559 0324, fax: 905 825 5125, e-mail: 1sheila@interlog.com, www.bywayholidays.com

Germany

If you're considering a vacation in Germany you may like to know that the German Tourist Office has just published five useful guides full of information, hundreds of colour photographs and detailed descriptions. **Great Holidays on a Small Budget** lists 300 places to stay across Germany for C\$55 or less pp pn. **Destination Germany, Planning Your Trip** has been produced specifically for Canadians and includes a directory of tour operators offering organized trips to Germany. **The Magic of Germany's Rivers** features tours of river valley to be taken on foot, by bike, boat, car or train, together with information on packages that can be booked individually. **The Germany City Experience** is self-explanatory and **2002 Germany – Holiday Packages** contains more informa-

tion on tour operators and their trips available to Canadians. For free copies of these guides call 1 877 315 6237 or e-mail: gntony@aol.com

Norway

If those coastal voyages in Norway have always appealed to you, but you like to travel alone or your partner doesn't wish to go, you may be interested in the news that **Horizon Holidays** has waived its single supplement charges for hotel and ship accommodations on the September departure of their 12-day **Norwegian Coastal Voyage**. The offer includes the coastal voyage and additional sightseeing in Bergen and Oslo before and after the cruise. Your agent will have Horizon's brochure or visit www.horizon-holidays.com

St. Lucia

As we put the finishing touches to this edition, Toronto is suffering a decidedly wet and chilly spring and we are hearing gloomy weather news from other parts of the country too. Perhaps we should all think of heading off to St. Lucia for a sizzling summer party! For that beautiful island's **Carnival** begins on 30 June and culminates on 16 July with a Parade of the Bands. Visitors are welcome to join the many lively activities and tickets – when necessary – are available from island hotels. For more information on **Carnival** and the whole island contact the St. Lucia Tourist Board at 416 362 4242, e-mail: sltbcanada@aol.com or visit www.stlucia.org (Air Canada flies directly to St. Lucia.)

U.S.A.

Florida is a state that has long been associated with sun 'n sand and theme park vacations. So it may come as a surprise to learn that the state's official tourism marketing corporation has been collaborating with cultural arts organizations for the past two years to launch a campaign called **Culturally Florida**. So if you'd like to learn more about the other side of Florida call 1 888 7FLA USA and request a **Culturally Florida Guide Book**. Therein you'll find ways to explore the state through various themes: **Art & Architecture** (visual arts), **Lift Ev'ry Voice** (Afro-American heritage), **Science & Discovery** (science museums, discovery centres, zoos, etc.), **Florida Performs** (all the performing arts), **Off the Beaten Path** (treasures on the roads less travelled) and so on.

If you're a long-time reader of *TravelScoop* you may remember an article we ran on **Windjammer Cruises in Maine** (April 1999 edition). The new brochures from the Windjammer Association has just arrived in our offices so we thought we'd remind you of these casual getaways that are a wonderful soft adventure. (*If you saw the recent movie In the Bedroom you'll have seen Camden, Maine, where many of the windjammers are berthed. There's even a glimpse of a couple of the ships in one the scenes – Ed.*) For information call 1 800 807 WIND, www.sailmainecoast.com

New York City Visitors Bureau has reminded us of the many free things to do in **New York** throughout the summer: take a tour with a Big Apple Greeter; enjoy open-air classical, jazz, drama, opera and dance perform-

ances in the city parks; visit a wide variety of museums and botanical gardens; ride the Staten Island Ferry and so much more. Then, for US\$10 or less, there's even more to explore. If New York is in your plans browse the NYC website at www.nycvisit.com or call for a free copy of the Office NYC Guide, filled with helpful information and coupons to save you money on hotels, restaurants, sightseeing and shopping at 1 800 NYC VISIT.

If you've always wanted to visit the **Grand Canyon** you can now reserve for a programme that will make your stay even more enjoyable. The Grand Canyon Field Institute (the educational arm of the Grand Canyon Association) has teamed up with Xanterra Parks & Resorts (operator of the lodges in the Park) to offer orientation programmes within the Park. The packages include 2 nights' accommodation, in-park transportation, two breakfasts, one dinner, two box lunches and all instructional materials. Also included are orientation talks and guided hikes along and below the South Rim with naturalists from the field Institute who are experts on the Canyon. Package cost is US\$572 for 2 until 5 November, and US\$482 for 2 from 6 November until 25 May 2003. Group size is limited to 15 and children 10 and older are welcome at a cost of US\$168. For more information call 928 638 2525, fax: 928 638 9810 or visit www.grandcanyonlodges.com

If you think you may feel more adventurous when you're in Arizona you may like to investigate the offerings of **Arizona Outback Adventures (AOA)** who specialize in Grand Canyon

and Havasu Canyon hiking trips. This company operates 50 tours per year deep into the hearts of the canyons, providing experienced guides, spacious tents, sleeping pads and bags and healthy meals. The most popular trek is the "*Ultimate Hike*", a 4-day expedition with price tag of around US\$795. For information call 480 945 2881, e-mail kwilliams@bikestar.net or visit www.azoutbackadventures.com Arizona is a popular destination for Canadians, so they have a tourism office here in Toronto. For general information on the state call 1 888 520 3448 or visit www.arizonaguide.com and statewide discounts can be found at www.arizonavacationvalues.com

Many people are interested in lighthouses. If you're among them, how about taking the **Lake Michigan Circle Tour**? It's a 1,100-mile route through **Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois** and **Indiana** and there's a brochure to guide you. If you're interested, contact the West Michigan Tourist Association and request a copy of the *2002 Lake Michigan Circle Tour & Lighthouse Guide*. Other tourism guides are also available to help you plan your trip. Call 1 800 442 2084, ext. 1 or visit www.wmta.org

The friendly tourism folks from **Chicago** were in Toronto recently, telling us all about the many happenings in their city this summer: a 'music everywhere' programme, architecture cruises, the new Chicago Greeter service and much more. Tourism details are available from their representatives in Toronto: call 905 891 1581 or 1 866 776 0812 or visit www.choosechicago.com and plan a summer city getaway.

Airline News

South African Airways has announced a special *Two for Tuesdays* summer fare offering round-trip travel for US\$1,050 per passenger when two book tickets and travel together from New York to Johannesburg on any Tuesday in July. The special fare allows a maximum stay in South Africa of three months. But hurry ... tickets must be issued before 30 June. SAA can be contacted at 1 800 722 9675.

If South America is often in your dreams, you may like to know that **LanChile** – frequently ranked at the best airline in South America – is now offering custom-designed vacation packages throughout South America. Destinations include Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Easter Island, etc., and some trips have adventure themes: kayaking, horseback riding, trekking, sailing, fishing and so on. Ask your agent for the tempting *Exploring the South of the World* brochure, or call 1 877 219 0345 or visit www.lanchilevacations.com

Continued from page 9

way to Kruger. We arrived at the airport with plenty of time for check in and to say our thanks and farewells to Andrew and Jimmy Linskey of Journeez.

Travel help:

Our four-day Game Encounter package included: en suite accommodation, breakfasts and dinners, all entrance fees and VAT, all touring within Kruger as well as the night drives and bush walks in the private reserves. Cost: approximately C\$700 per person. **Contacts: Journeez**, PO Box 2061, Bromhof 2154, South Africa, tel: 011 27 11 793 2833, fax: 011 27 11 793 2833, e-mail: enquiries@journeez.com, website www.journeez.com **Game Encounter**, PO Box 48737 Roosevelt Park, Fourways 2129, South Africa; tel: 011 27 11 426 7536, e-mail: gamenc@mweb.com.za

Melville Manor House B&B, 2nd Avenue, Melville, Johannesburg, tel: 011 27 11 726 8745

Moholoholo Forest Camp, P.O. Box 1476, Hoedspruit, South Africa, e-mail: moholoholo@wol.co.za.

Satara Rest Camp, National Parks Board, P.O. Box 787, Pretoria 0001, South Africa, tel: 011 27 12 343 1991, fax: 011 27 12 343 0905.

There are many interesting details on the vast Kruger National Park posted on their internet site at www.ecoafrika.com/saparks/krug/kruger.htm#Top This site includes accommodation details (from lodges to camp grounds) distances and more.

Mohlabetsi Safari Lodge, P.O. Box 862 Hoedspruit, South Africa 1380; tel/fax: 011 27 15 793 2166, e-mail: safaris@nix.co.za; website www.mohlabetsi.co.za

The Toronto office of **South African Tourism** has again been closed. Direct enquiries now to 500 Fifth Avenue, 20th Floor, Suite 2040, New York, NY 10110, tel: 212 730 2929, e-mail: satour@aol.com, www.satour.org

These game parks are located in a malaria zone. Consult your doctor regarding medication and take precautions against mosquito bites.

Reference: Our guide had a number of resource books with him and, on his recommendation, we purchased *Smithers' Mammals of Southern Africa, A Field Guide*, edited by Peter Apps, revised 1996, Struik Publishers (Pty) Ltd, Cape Town, which proved to be an excellent reference.

Robert and Patricia Liptrap are TravelScoop members who live in Guelph, ON

Riding the Rails

Two new products have just been announced that will save travellers money and offer increased flexibility when they combine a French or British railpass with a journey on the high-speed Eurostar train through the Channel Tunnel. Available from 28 May from Rail Europe and European Rail Services, the new *Eurostar Plus France 4-day Railpass* and *Eurostar Plus BritRail 3-day Pass* will represent savings of up to 25% over purchasing the railpass and the Eurostar tickets separately.

First and second class tickets are available; the French railpass may be used on non-consecutive days within one month and the BritRail pass within two months. Reservations for the Eurostar must be made no later than 45 minutes prior to departure at London's Waterloo Station or at the Gare du Nord in Paris.

Discuss all the options with your travel agent or visit www.rail@europeanrailservices.com

The Travel Society

Travelling companions wanted!

At The Travel Society we frequently receive requests from single members wishing to share accommodation on our tours. If you would like to travel on any of these dates, want to avoid the single supplement and are willing to share accommodation with fellow members, please call Nigel at 416 926 2500 x24 or 1 877 926 2500 x24 as soon as possible.

- A lady wants to share on Australia Great Trains & Wineries tour departing 31 August 2002.
- A gentleman wants to share on China Yangtze tour 5 October 2002.
- A lady wants to share on China Yangtze tour 12 October 2002.
- A lady wants to share on China Yangtze tour 28 October 2002.
- A gentleman wants to share on China Yangtze tour 28 October 2002.

The Travel Society ~ tours designed for TravelScoop members.

from \$3,716 for 17 days

Reserve now for 2003

China ... Yangtze Spectacular ~ 17 days!

Come with us on our most popular tour and spend 17 days in China for an amazingly low price. Reserve now for departures on

31 August, 7 September, 5 October, 12 October, 28 October 2002
 21 March, 16 April, 5 September, 10 October 2003

It is vast, fascinating and mysterious and it has beckoned travellers from the west for centuries. Mention it to avid travellers and they are sure to say, "Yes, I hope to visit China one day." And what would they choose to experience? A cruise on the mighty Yangtze River (soon to be changed for ever); a look at the work-in-progress on the massive Three Gorges Dam; a walk on the ancient Great Wall; views of charming villages, lush terraced hillsides and magnificent mountain peaks; visits to the great cities of Shanghai and Beijing; a trip to view one of the world's greatest archaeological finds ... the 6,000 terra-cotta warriors at Xi'an; scenes of palaces, pagodas, pavilions and pandas; tastes of Peking duck and Chinese banquets and so much more. So how do you choose? When you decide on The Travel Society's tour there's no need to choose because all these highlights are included. Yes, in these remarkable 17 days you'll stay in Shanghai, you'll fly to the beautiful city of Hangzhou, you'll take a 5-day first-class cruise on the Yangtze, you'll fly to see those centuries-old terra-cotta warriors and you'll have plenty of time to explore Beijing. Throughout the trip you'll see magnificent architecture, you'll be entertained at cultural events, you'll join your hosts at a variety of banquets, you'll have time to shop, and you'll marvel at some of the most wonderful scenery on earth, all in the company of English-speaking guides. You'll travel by train and plane; by bus, cruise ship, boat and river raft. Many of our members have told us it's an experience of a lifetime ... and all at an amazing price!

Your tour costs includes:

- Round-trip transpacific air fares on Japan Airlines
- Chinese domestic airfares
- Canadian domestic airfares
- First-class hotel accommodation
- First-class five days/4 nights Yangtze River cruise aboard a deluxe cruise ship
- All transfers
- Daily sightseeing
- Three meals daily
- Special banquets in Hangzhou, Xi'an and Beijing
- Evening cultural shows
- Fully escorted by English/Chinese-speaking tour guide
- English-speaking local guides
- Free day and evening in Beijing
- Western-style dinner in Hangzhou

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Vancouver	\$3,716 pp/dbl
Victoria	\$3,836 pp/dbl
Calgary/Edmonton	\$3,986 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$4,112 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$4,046 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,112 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$4,216 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$1,040 (Sharing can be arranged.)

Taxes and visas extra.

Prices are subject to change

GREAT ADD-ONS:

Hong Kong	4 days/3 nights	\$965
Tokyo	4 days/3 nights	\$892

Pat Davey, a Travel Society member from BC, has travelled to China with us and written a 14-page account of her trip. For a copy of her unedited story please send us a \$5 cheque and your address.

Don't delay, these tours are very popular and the Yangtze River will be restricted during 2003.

Reserve now for 2003 departures;
 21 March 2003 5 September 2003
 18 April 2003 10 October 2003

Please call now to ensure your reservations for this amazing tour this fall and next year.

Please call The Travel Society 877 926 2500 or 416 926 2500 for the full details. All our tours are specially priced for Travel Society members and are only available at these prices through our office.  reg #01280649

The Travel Society ~ tours designed for TravelScoop members.

The Best of Australia, New Zealand & Fiji ... Ancient Cultures, Modern Cities and Timeless Beauty with 2-days in Fiji 29 days departing 21 September 2002

High on the "wish list" of most travellers are those oh-so-different lands "downunder". How would you like to come with The Travel Society as we visit vast Australia with its Outback, stunning cities, unique animals, aboriginal history, Alice Springs, Ayers Rock and the Great Barrier Reef? Even the island of Tasmania is included! And yes, then we go on to New Zealand, with its scenic beauty, its mountains and farm lands and not-to-be-missed Milford Sound. And while we're going all that way we don't want you to miss the magic of Fiji. If you think all this is impossible in one reasonably-priced trip, now is the time to think again, for The Travel Society has organized such a tour. Call us for a copy of this amazing itinerary. **29 days, most meals and great guides!**

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from: Taxes included.

Victoria	\$10,590 pp/dbl
Vancouver, Edmonton & Calgary	\$10,530 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$10,710 pp/dbl
Toronto, Ottawa & Montreal	\$10,750 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$11,030 pp/dbl

Your tour includes:

- Round-trip transpacific air on Qantas
- All domestic and Australia to New Zealand flights
- Canadian domestic air fares
- All fully escorted by knowledgeable tour guides
- All transfers
- Daily breakfast
- 17 dinners and 2 lunches
- 4 nights in the Outback
- 7 nights of planned evening activities
- All sightseeing tours, boat trips and fees to parks & sites
- A performance at the Sidney Opera House
- Departure taxes

The Kingdom of Thailand, with optional Angkor Wat (Cambodia) pre-tour and Pattaya post-tour extensions 17 Days departing April and October 2003

"Thailand is magical." So say the increasing number of travellers who journey to this exotic land, a land of majestic palaces, ornate temples, quaint cities, beautiful landscapes and charming, gentle people. Come with The Travel Society and over 14 memorable days we'll show you bustling Bangkok, the floating market and legendary canals of Damnoen Saduak, the Bridge on the River Kwai at Kanchanaburi, Ayutthaya – Thailand's ancient capital, the cool hills and forests of Chiang Mai with their Hill Tribes and working elephants and so much more. You'll shop for unique items, enjoy a Thai cooking class, witness cultural shows, take river trips, visit museums AND still have plenty of time at leisure to follow your own interests.

However, before your arrival in Thailand, you may like to enjoy a unique experience in Cambodia where you'll visit fascinating Angkor Wat. You'll view the Wats and Terraces at sunset and spend a day among the fascinating temple structures that formed the former capital and religious centre of the Khmer Empire.

And an optional post-tour will take you to relax at Pattaya – known as the Riviera of Thailand, where you can enjoy exquisite tropical gardens, a visit to the Mini Siam miniature display of Thai heritage and a catamaran cruise as well as the inviting beach. This trip is scheduled for Spring and Fall, 2003. Give us a call ... we'll add you to the list of those interested and send a full itinerary and applicable prices.

Your tour includes:

- Round-trip transpacific air
- All domestic flights
- Canadian domestic air fares
- Fully escorted by knowledgeable tour guides
- All transfers
- All sightseeing tours, boat trips and fees to parks & sites

PRICES INCLUDE AIR AND TAXES

departing from:

Toronto
Ottawa & Montreal
Vancouver
Victoria
Calgary & Edmonton
Winnipeg
Halifax

Please
call for
prices

Copper Canyon Adventure

10 Days departing 16 May, 26 September and 17 October 2002

We are offering a new 10-day tour to Mexico's spectacular Copper Canyon, four times larger than the Grand Canyon, where you'll enjoy a journey that is considered by many to be the world's most exciting train trip. You'll visit the area's ancient towns and missions and see the habitat of the Tarahumara Indians, considered one of the most fascinating tribes in North America. Folkloric and tribal shows are included on the itinerary, together with time to relax on the shores of the Sea of Cortez where you'll enjoy a sunset cruise.

\$2,899 pp dbl

INCLUDING AIR & TAXES.

ONE PRICE departing from
Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton,
Winnipeg Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal
& Halifax

Single supplement \$600

Costa Rica – "Nature's Museum"

10 Days departing 30 January 2003

Costa Rica is known as Nature's Museum and with good reason. Come for a visit and you'll be impressed by this country that is dedicated to preserving its delicate ecology for all to enjoy and by its warm friendly people who are waiting to show it to you. During your 10-day tour you'll visit historic San Jose, stay in a tropical rain forest at a thermal spa resort; visit a vast jungle preserve; take a river boat trip to watch and photograph the wildlife; soak in the thermal pools of Arenal Paraiso and visit the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve. And after all this you'll relax or play on the beach at Guanacaste Also available is a 3-night jungle odyssey post tour extension, an exciting soft-adventure to Tortuguero, the Amazon of Costa Rica.

PRICES INCLUDE AIR AND TAXES

departing from:

Toronto - \$3,567 pp dbl.
Ottawa & Montreal - \$3,597 pp dbl.
Vancouver & Calgary - \$3,817 pp dbl.
Halifax - \$4,017 pp dbl.
Edmonton - \$3,967 pp dbl.
Winnipeg - \$3,897 pp dbl.
Victoria - \$4,147 pp dbl.

Single supplement \$600

The Travel Society ~ tours designed for TravelScoop members.

from \$4,498 for 17 days Vietnam, China & Hong Kong

Departing 31 October 2002 & 3 April 2003

Marvel at the contrasts of Asia on our unique three-country tour covering some fabled highlights of Vietnam, China and Hong Kong. Come with The Travel Society on a very unusual tour: visit Ho Chi Minh City (still called Saigon by many locals) and visit the Reunification Hall, the former presidential palace; the moving War Crimes Museum; Thien Hau Pagoda, home of the Sea Goddess; bustling Chinatown and a fascinating lacquer ware workshop. The following day you'll take a cruise along the Mekong River, stopping at an orchard island to sample delicious tropical fruits and enjoy traditional music in a typical farmhouse. A stay in the Da Lat region, 280 km from Ho Chi Minh City comes next. It's a cool land of pine woods, green hills and valleys, quiet lakes, beautiful waterfalls and exotic gardens. In Da Lat itself you'll visit pagodas, summer palaces and the city's flower, fruit and vegetable market ... one of the most beautiful in Vietnam. A stay in Nha Trang is next on the itinerary, a superb coastal resort famous for strange rock formations and the Oceanographic Institute. We then revisit Ho Chi Minh City, with time to explore aspects of the city you may have missed earlier.

Then it's on to China ... first stop Guilin, a very special destination with scenery like none other on earth. Here you'll enjoy a full day Li River Cruise, passing through breathtaking scenery to the market town of Yangshu. The pleasures of Shanghai come next with highlight tours, that famous acrobatic show and time to shop in this shopper's paradise.

The pleasures and excitement of Hong Kong are well known. We'll show you the highlights of Hong Kong Island on a morning tour, leaving you time to explore on your own later ... it's very easy to get around! Next day promises an in-depth tour of the New Territories known as the Land Between Tour. Situated between the Kowloon Hills and the border with China you'll enjoy scenic views, markets, monasteries, a Hakka village, a fishing site and much more.

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Vancouver	\$4,548 pp/dbl
Edmonton & Calgary	\$4,798 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$4,798 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$4,798 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,929 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$5,159 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$290 (Sharing can be arranged.) **Taxes and visas extra.**

Your tour includes:

- Round-trip transpacific air on Cathay Pacific
- All domestic and inter connecting flights
- Canadian domestic air fares
- Fully escorted by knowledgeable tour guides
- All transfers
- Three meals daily except in Hong Kong
- One day Li River Cruise
- All sightseeing tours, boat trips and fees to parks & sites

from \$5,269 for 16 days

HIGHLIGHTS OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Departing 4 November 2002 & 10 February 2003 with optional Fiji extension

Perhaps your time is limited and our 29-day tour of Australia and New Zealand is not possible for you. Then how about considering our 16-day adventure that covers the "downunder" highlights? On this tour you'll discover the highlights of Melbourne and take a tour along the Great Ocean Road. You'll spend over three days in spectacular Sydney, where you'll cruise in the harbour and the visit the koalas. And in Sydney you can choose from a variety of side trips ... perhaps a tour of the stunning Blue Mountain wilderness or the Hunter Valley wine region? Christchurch in New Zealand is next on the itinerary and from there it's on to Queenstown, your base for trips to the Milford Sound, Mount Cook National Parks and lots more! This is the ideal trip to give you a taste of some of the highlights of Australia and New Zealand.

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Vancouver, Edmonton & Calgary	\$5,269 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$5,449 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$5,298 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$5,498 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$5,799 pp/dbl
Single supplement \$780 (Sharing can be arranged.)	Taxes included
Fiji add on	\$1,104 pp/dbl
Los Angeles add on	\$ 120 pp/dbl

Your tour includes:

- Round-trip transpacific air on Qantas
- All domestic and Australia to New Zealand flights
- Canadian domestic air fares
- All fully escorted by knowledgeable tour guides
- All transfers
- Daily breakfast
- 6 dinners
- 4 nights in the Outback
- All sightseeing tours, boat trips and fees to parks & sites
- Departure taxes

Please call The Travel Society 877 926 2500 or 416 926 2500 for the full details. All our tours are specially priced for Travel Society members and are only available at these prices through our office. TICO reg #01280649

The Travel Society ~ tours for TravelScoop members and their friends.

New Tours for 2003 ... please call for itineraries and further details

- **China Yangtze Spectacular** – departing March, April, September & October 2003
- **China, Hong Kong & Vietnam** – departing 31 October **2002**, April & October 2003
- **The Highlights of Australia, New Zealand & Fiji** – departing 11 January & 25 October 2003
- **The Best of Australia & New Zealand** – departing 10 February & 20 October 2003
- **Exotic Thailand** – departing April & October 2003
- **Costa Rica, Nature's Wonderland** – departing February & March 2003
- **Galapagos & Peru** – departing February & March 2003
- **The Heart of Eastern Europe** – departing June & July 2003
- **Antarctica, Argentina & Brazil** – departing January & February 2003

... please call 1 877 926 2500 or 416 926 2500 for itineraries and further details

New Long-stays for 2003

- **The Many Faces of Portugal ... Portugal and Madeira tours combined with Long-Stays in the Algarve and Estoril** – departing January & February 2003
- **Mexico Long-stays in Manzanillo** – January & February 2003
- **Spain Long-Stays in Malaga** – departing January & February 2003

Travel services

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TUSCANY ITALY. Weekly rental of apartments, villas and farmhouses in medieval city of San Gimignano and beautiful surrounding countryside.

Halfway between Florence and Siena. For brochure contact Estate Agency La Bella Toscana, Via Solferino 28, 53034 Colle di Val d'Elsa, (Siena), Italy. Tel: 011 39 0577 926768 Fax: 01139 0577 999023 e-mail: info@labellatoscana.it web: www.labellatoscana.it 06

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