

Well-priced getaways to Budapest ... see p. 17

Travel Scoop

The Magazine
for Members of
The Travel Society

Vol. 21, No. 10 December 2003

Discovering Korea

— by Ann Wallace

It cherishes 5,000 years of history and is home to nine UNESCO Heritage Sites. It celebrates a fascinating culture of music, dance and exquisite costumes. It nurtures welcoming people and some of the cutest children on the planet. It creates a delicious, healthy and varied cuisine and is proud of a fine infrastructure that enables visitors and locals alike to travel and explore easily. It's Korea, a small land, rich in wonders.

Yes ... Korea ... a country that offers so much that it will be hard to do it justice is just a few pages. But I would like to start by saying that Korea goes out of its way to make tourists feel welcome and to facilitate their stay. For starters, tourism information is shown on their aircraft screens, signage is invariably in English as well as Korean (but please see note on language below) and tourist help/translation services are just a phone call away wherever you happen to be. Long on the itinerary of adventurous back-packers from Australasia



A traditionally-dressed Korean bride waves to her well-wishers and admirers (Wallace)

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TravelScoop

The Magazine for Members of
The Travel Society

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December 2003

Vol. 21, No. 10

From your Editor's desk...



All the staff at TravelScoop have been saddened by the violence occurring in so many parts of the world these days: Israel, Palestine, Iraq, Turkey ... the list goes on and we commiserate with innocent people of all nationalities and religions who have become victims everywhere. This edition actually went to the printer yesterday, as it usually does on the 19th of the month, but this morning - the 20th - we have just heard of the new attacks in Istanbul. So I sent a message to the printers asking them to replace my original (and rather up-beat) letter with this one so that I could both add my condolences and condemn the perpetrators of yet another horrific incident.

My original letter started thus: "So ... the end of the year has rolled around yet again. My how the years do fly! Is the world a better place than it was this time last year?" Sadly, the answer is becoming more and more obvious.

On a personal note, I hope you have enjoyed *TravelScoop* in 2003 and that your travels have been safe and rewarding. Let us try not to be fearful of the future and let us remember that most of the world is still beautiful and most of the people in it bear only kindness to one another.

Time to sign off ... but not before I wish you all a happy, merry, peaceful, healthy and blessed festive season and *bon voyage* in the coming year.

coming in *January*

- A Selection of Islands:

- Jeju, Korea
- The Big Island, Hawai'i
- Barbados

- Europe's Best Train Journeys

- Insurance News

Update Items

Radisson Hotels & Resorts has announced a special Aeroplan promotion from now until 31 March 2004. One stay at a Radisson property will earn you 500 bonus Aeroplan miles, 2 stays 1,000 miles and so on up to 5 stays which will earn 5,000 miles. For promotion details visit www.bonusmiles.radisson.com and for reservations call 1 800 333 3333 or visit www.radisson.com

Global Volunteers' brochure for 2004 is hot off the press. Learn how you can volunteer around the world in such locations as Mexico, Tanzania and Vietnam by calling 1 800 487 1074, e-mail: globalvolunteers.org, www.globalvolunteers.org

Air Transat has launched its summer 2004 European programme and is offering savings of \$150 to those who book before 31 January 2004. Flights on offer for this discount are for travel in April, May, June, September and October from selected Canadian gateways to a wide variety (but not all) of Air Transat's European destinations, including Athens, Brussels, Frankfurt, Glasgow, London and Manchester. www.airtransat.com

Well-priced ski packages available in the Rockies from **Hostelling International**. 6-day independent ski tours in Banff or Lake Louise start at \$599 pp and include accommodation, breakfast, transportation, skiing, ice climbing, dog sledding, snowshoeing, skating and a wildlife tour. Other packages available for Sunshine Village, Kicking Horse and more. For an *Ultimate Ski & Ride* brochure call 403 283 5551 or e-mail: info.sa@hihostels.ca

This Month's Winning Scoop

Walking In The Kayserberg Valley of Alsace, France

by Linda & Bud Cutler, Sherwood Park, AB

For everyone, including those of us 60+, who enjoy a walking vacation we would like to pass on details of our walk in the beautiful Kayserberg Valley in the Alsace region of France. This is also in appreciation of all the "scoops" we have read and used from *TravelScoop* over the past 10 years. They have enhanced and been the idea behind many of our trips.

Twelve of us met in Colmar, France in late April 2003 to begin a 6 night/5 day "A La Carte" Le Tour d'Horizon Rando-Balade (walking tour) in the Kayserberg Valley. We arranged this tour directly with Horizons d'Alsace in Lapoutroie, France and would not hesitate to recommend them to others.

Horizons d'Alsace arranged for taxis to transport us to and from Colmar to Kayserberg where our tour of the valley was to begin. We were met by Madame Keller, the owner of Les Ramparts Hotel, offered coffee and *kugelhof*, given our room keys and some suggestions as to how to fill our day in Kayserberg. A stop at the weekly outdoor market began our day in Kayserberg, an impressive medieval town, towered by an imperial castle and the birthplace of Dr. Albert Schweitzer (and museum). That evening, dinner was arranged for us at a local restaurant, where a delicious three-course

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: ann@thetravelsociety.com or CD.

regional meal was served.. In the evening we were given our “walking packages”, a topographical map with daily routes marked as well as daily cards with destination details, details of the walk, directions, altitude and distance.

The next morning was the beginning of five glorious days of walking in Alsace, to the villages of Lapoutroie, Le Bonhomme, Orbey, Kientzheim and returning to Kayserberg. We walked in the middle Vosges mountains, through magnificent forests, past beautiful hillside farms, to the northern boundary of the upper-Vosges and back through vineyard trails, an ancient wine-producing town and Riquewirth, the pearl of Alsace, a wonderful medieval and renaissance town. It was five days spent in a world that looked as if it came straight out of a fairy tale.

Our hotels were 2- and 3-star, all family-owned and operated, very charming, clean, comfortable and the hospitality was excellent. Morning breakfasts (except the first one, which was a more typical continental breakfast) were very generous buffets. The first day our lunch was at a wonderful farm auberge, subsequent days our host hotel provided each of us with large picnic lunches and our four or five course evening meals were gastronomical delights of the region. Our biggest decision, and only expense each day, was which Alsatian wine to order with dinner.

Each day our luggage was transported to the next hotel. There was also the option for up to two members of our group to go with the luggage if they did not wish to walk that day.

The walking/hiking routes

were, for the most part, well marked and easy to walk on. We walked 19 km the first day, decreasing the distance each day and walking 12 km the last day. The biggest challenge for us Canadian prairie walkers were the hills - but we all rose to the occasion and were thrilled with our accomplishments at the end of the five days. We would be climbing a good part of the morning, leveling off and then walking down



Riquewirth (Cutler)

again to the next village in the afternoon. On the two most challenging days, four in our group opted to follow a different route to the next village with less climbing.


The tour that we took was the most popular walking tour Horizons d’Alsace offers, but they will custom design (length and degree of difficulty) any walking/hiking tour and do offer a 5 day/4 night Gourmet Walking Tour which includes wine and cheese tasting. They will also provide a guide on any of their walks for an additional charge.

We enjoyed the spring walks, mornings were fresh and it was a pleasant temperature to walk in. The first buds of spring and the lush green fields were picture perfect. If you are a wine lover, we would think wine harvest would be another excellent time of the year to walk this route.

We do have a couple of walking tips for anyone contemplating doing something similar. We were unfamiliar with topographical maps (but learned quickly) and would have spent more time with Madame Keller having her interpret markings on the map before we started out. We did learn that almost everything is on that map: crosses to indicate monuments, each little farm and road as well. We would have also set the stride on our pedometer to correspond to the distance card that would have made following it easier, especially in those areas where trail markings weren’t as frequent as we would have liked them to be. But no one got lost and everyone agrees it was an absolutely wonderful experience, and “let’s do it again!”

We felt this tour was also incredible value. We received a discounted rate because we were a group of 12, but the ‘rack rate’ for the 2003 season was: €461 (approximately C\$747) per person in a double room with shower or bath for October to April and €485 (approximately C\$786) per person double from May to September.

Happy walking (and eating!) if you go!

Horizons d’Alsace can be contacted at 28, rue du Gal Dufieux, 68650 Lapoutroie, France, tel: [011 33] 3 89 78 35 20, fax: 3 89 78 35 21 e-mail: infos@horizons-alsace.com www.horizons-alsace.com 

Your Scoops

“Loonie Sundays”

In response to your request for input on Jetsgo’s “Loonie Sundays”, I’m happy to report the following. I signed up as a “Jetsmiles” member p.m. on Saturday 25 October 2003 with the purpose of acquiring a cheap ticket for my wife to Vancouver. Since that night was the night the clocks went back an hour, I wasn’t sure if I should log on at 1:00, 2:00 or 3:00 a.m! Anyway, I started at 2:00 a.m. and, after much stumbling around on their web site, I eventually booked a ticket for her from Toronto to Vancouver and return for \$149 outbound and \$1 back, plus taxes. The return trip added up to \$266. (The \$1 return is the “red eye”, arriving in Toronto at 6:30 a.m.) Still, at that price one can’t complain!

That first effort took me about a hour. I’m sure that I could cut the time down considerably, the next time (?). I also get the impression that cheap trips can be obtained for hours after the 2:00 a.m. start time.

We have not flown Jetsgo before and look forward to seeing how her trip went in a couple of weeks. That’s my experience with Jetsgo’s “Loonie Sundays”; what I now call the “Insomnia Sweepstakes”! Good luck to everyone else!

*Dale Northrup
Belleville, ON*

In 1995 TravelScoop published a notice from Professor Julia Harrison of Trent University in which she requested participants for a survey on travel.. TravelScoop members Vera and Jack Howard responded and were selected to be two of the 33 interviewees. Vera has now written to us telling us that Professor Harrison’s research is now the subject of a book available to everyone.

Being a Tourist ... Finding Meaning in Pleasure Travel

Author: Julia Harrison Reviewer: Vera Howard

Tourist or traveller? Is there a difference? A bigger question is WHY do we find travel so enticing, and what do we get from those trips that sometimes cost us a small fortune and cause us to reorganize our lives.

Julia Harrison is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Trent University and her new book helps to put some of this into perspective. Her research was based on a series of lengthy interviews she conducted over several years with a group of people who answered an ad she placed in *The Globe and Mail* and *TravelScoop*. She asked for people who had travelled internationally in the past and had at least one trip out of the country planned in the following 12 months. She received 82 replies and selected 33 for her study. No one kind of travel experience dominated in this group. From package tours to total independence, from completely unstructured to minutely-detailed itineraries, from extremely lengthy trips to those of only a week’s duration, from the well-funded to those whose finances were challenging, Prof. Harrison’s group of *travel enthusiasts*, as she calls them, were a diverse lot.

“[They] cannot readily be classified by age, gender or ethnic background, by type, length, or purpose of their trips, or by economic understandings of class. [However] they share similar educational and professional backgrounds and have some parallel aspects in their family histories. *They all have a curiosity about the world. All are passionate about the idea of travel and what the experience encompasses.*”

Do you send postcards, write a travel diary, buy keepsake items? Do you take photographs? Do you try to feel part of the place you are visiting, or are you happier on the outside looking in? Do you get a thrill when you spot a foreign place on TV or in a movie, and can say “I was right there!”? Do you enjoy meeting foreigners and keeping in touch or, once the trip is over, do you put that experience aside, ready for the next? The questions are many and surprises abound. Prof. Harrison has not only the answers, but also much insight into the psyches of her travel enthusiasts, all of which makes fascinating reading.

Although this is a serious academic book, it is written in an engaging and accessible style. It is a delightful addition to the reading list of travellers of every kind. Having been a participants in Prof. Harrison’s study I can say that, once you have read *Being a Tourist*, you will never again feel the same way about any trip, past or future, and you will be a much better-informed visitor wherever your wanderlust takes you. Published by UBC Press (www.UBCPress.ca), hc \$85.00, pb \$27.95.

continued from page 1

and Europe and high-rollers from Japan, Korea is now welcoming visitors from around the world with every tourism service imaginable, from the most luxurious hotels to hiking trips. As they have successfully hosted both an Olympic Games and a World Cup this should come as no surprise. However, you still won't encounter lots of western tourists ... so go while the Korean experience is still genuine.

Before I start my story in earnest I will mention that the Korean National Tourism Organization publishes an immensely helpful, concise and comprehensive *Korea Travel Guide* which answers every question you could possibly have. The guide even isolates each of Seoul's eight far-ranging subway lines, indicates which stop has a worthwhile tourist attraction and gives details such as the correct station exit to use and the distance of the attraction. By using this guide you can find everything from ancient tombs to fashion markets, from 'cherry blossom trails' to the World Cup stadium. I haven't seen this kind of subway guide in any other city ... it's a great idea and makes exploring independently easy and inviting. Also available is a booklet listing Cultural Festivals, an excellent tourist map of the country that shows at a glance the many national parks, places of interest and the locations of the festivals and an equally fine tourist map of Seoul that makes finding your way around this city and visiting its attractions a piece of cake. It also includes four well-designed walking tours that take in many of the city's highlights. Koreans seem genuinely thrilled to see visitors and if you've ever been hesitant about travelling independently in Asia, Korea is a great place to start. But I'm jumping ahead with practical information before I tell my story.

Following a speech I made in Toronto regarding tourism and the environment a year or so ago, I was surprised and honoured with an invitation to become

an "Honorary Tourism Advisor to Jeju Island, Korea". With this tribute came an invitation to visit this charming island lying off the south coast of Korea and my story on the island will appear in the next edition of *TravelScoop*. But as this was to be my first visit to Korea, I was anxious to see something of the mainland too. Arrangements were duly made and early one morning in September I found myself looking down from my Korean Air flight at the twinkling lights of Seoul. I was very excited.

I was soon to discover Seoul lives up to its reputation of being a fast-paced, traffic-clogged city of soaring skyscrapers. Yet on closer acquaintance the visitor soon discovers it is far more than this, for amidst the noise and the bustle stand many ancient parks and traditional gardens with stone bridges and shimmering ponds ... quiet, solemn sites for centuries-old palaces, temples, villas and pagodas, all seemingly far away from the modern world.

Prime among these sites is the 78-acre Changdeokgung Palace complex and this was where I headed on my first morning in Seoul. (Admission Won 2,500, or under C\$3 [at publication time Won 1,000 equals approximately C\$1.15], closed Mondays, English tours of about 80 minutes' duration commence at 11:30 a.m., 1:30

and 3:30 p.m., nearest subway – about four minutes' walk away – is Anguk on Line 3.)

Changdeokgung, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site, is a vast complex of palaces, shrines, halls, pavilions, gates, gardens and parkland lying just steps from modern hotels and subway stations. Some of the trees here are 300 years old. Construction of the buildings commenced in 1405 and, through many fires, revolts, invasions and restorations, the palace managed to remain the home of Korea's royalty and their entourage until well into the last century. Your guide will tell a fascinating story ... wear comfortable



One of Insadong's tiny side streets (Wallace)

shoes, of course, as there's a lot of walking to be done.

When your tour of the palace complex is over you may like to rest your feet awhile, as I did, in one of the trendy little tea houses or restaurants on nearby Insadong, a street famous for such eateries as well as for its many antique shops, gift stores and art galleries. It's very popular with fashionable locals and tourists alike and after a fine cup of tea or a delicious meal here you will be refreshed and ready to explore again. This street and its tempting side alleys is a great area for shopping of all kinds, where the offerings often seem to incorporate Korean's ancient craft traditions with modern sensibilities.

Thus passed my first day in Seoul. The Korean Folk Village on the outskirts of town was my destination on the following day. This is a truly wonderful outing that will both entertain and instruct you and provide you with some wonderful photographs. Those of you familiar with living museums such as Upper Canada Village or Virginia's Williamsburg will find a similar site here. I won't give lots of practical details because you can pick up their brochure at tourist centres or in large hotels; it's a major attraction for tourists and locals. These leaflets give details of the times of the various cultural performances: a traditional wedding ceremony, music and dance, acrobatics on a tightrope and so on and how to reach the site by public transport. As well as holding 260 traditional houses and farms, the village contains costumed guides and 20 workshops displaying cultural crafts such as pottery, basketry, fan-making, musical instruments, embroidery and more. One charming touch among so many was the sight of a female scarecrow lording it over a vegetable patch dressed in a beautiful traditional Korean dress! And then there are the costumed performances ... have your cameras ready and lots of film. The site also contains a selection of restaurants serving authentic Korean food where the menus are translated into honest

English. In the café I chose I noticed "Broth to chase a hangover"; something to look forward to if you party too hard on Insadong Street the night before! You can see a little of what's in store at www.koreanfolk.co.kr

If you do not have time to leave town to visit the Folk Village, a visit to Korea House in Seoul (just three minutes' walk from the Chungmuro station, beneath Namsan Park hill where the Seoul Tower stands) is also a pleasure. The House (a collection of houses, in fact) was once the private residence of a member of the royal family, it became the official office for the chief of political affairs during the Japanese occupation and thereafter a guest hall for Korean Government VIP's and their overseas guests. It's a beautiful, traditional group of houses that comprise a theatre featuring cultural performances, a fine store of beautiful crafts and a delightful restaurant offering traditional 'royal court' food for lunch and dinner (tel: 2266 9101 for details once you arrive in Seoul).

Your choice of accommodation in Seoul is wide, with many modern, large international hotels in most price ranges (apart from low budget) to choose from. Unfortunately, as most of the old city has been bulldozed away in the name of progress there are very few charming, older places to stay. It's true, the budget

books list some guest houses (or *yogwan*). I checked out a couple of these and while the welcome was warm and genuine I felt that these properties were more suitable to the room-sharing, back-packing crowd. In a *TravelScoop* article entitled "Korea ... An Asian Gem" (July/August 1999) author Jennifer Hastie reported on staying at the YMCA "... for approximately C\$56 per room per night the staff was helpful, but of course the rooms were not first class. However, the location of the Y is excellent." At the other end of the spectrum, if your pockets are deep, there is a traditional place to stay in Seoul which will



A traditionally-costumed musician in the Korean Folk Village (Wallace)

provide you with some unique memories. It's SamcheongGak, a cultural complex offering learning experiences, performances, tea ceremonies, music, an elegant restaurant and three traditional houses providing accommodation for visitors, all located in a pristine natural setting, yet only minutes from downtown Seoul. SamcheongGak is part of the city's 'cultural corridor' that includes the Gyeongbokgung palace complex, the National Folk Museum, the traditional Korean preservation district of Gahoe-dong and Insadong Street. SamcheongGak's proximity to the home of Korea's president, the Blue House, has insured that the wooded forest that surrounds the complex has remained untouched. In fact, on the lovely restaurant terrace at SamcheongGak you sit above the tree canopy and cannot believe you are close to the city. The recreated buildings here (the name literally means "Three Purity Palace" – Jade Purity, Noble Purity, and Great Purity) are home to arts groups dedicated to sharing the traditions of Korea with not only their country's citizens, but also the world. Here visitors can enjoy the performances of highly respected Korean dancers, musicians, and vocalists (many held out of doors on warm summer evenings) or take time to delve more deeply into the heart of Korean tradition with hands-on learning experiences in such subjects as Korea's unique tea ceremony, pottery making, embroidery or dance. Accommodation, with prices from C\$225 per night, is pricey but the suites offer both traditional Korean rooms with a large mattress on the floor and adjoining room with a large western-style bed so if you are travelling with friends this memorable accommodation becomes quite a bargain, especially when you factor in the large Korean breakfast (fish, eggs, kimchi, rice, fruit and more) delivered to your door. And full Korean feasts in the restaurant here are around C\$65 pp. A stay here will make your visit to Seoul an unforgettable experience. To contact SamcheongGak call 011 82 2 3676 2345, e-mail: terry@sejongpac.or.kr, www.samcheonggak.or.kr

It goes without saying that a city the age and size of Seoul has a great deal more to offer the visitor than the few sites I have mentioned here. As always time is my enemy, but if you can spend several days here you can enjoy other palaces, parks, botanical gardens,

many museums and, of course, a wide range of unique shopping options from vast, glittering malls to street markets. And engineers among you will no doubt be interested in the double level Jamsil Bridge, so constructed because its lower level becomes flooded during the June and July monsoon.

Of course personal taste will dictate where you head when it's time to leave Seoul. As your map will show, Korea is rich in natural, cultural and historical sites. It's also home to a wide variety of festivals, both mainstream and unusual. But one thing you can be sure of, once you leave the high-energy atmosphere of Seoul you can find a quite different world. Although I'm sure most of us imagine Korea as a highly industrialized country that doesn't mean it is crowded. Far from it. Yes, the cities are large and built in high-rise style, but they are usually surrounded by green wooded hills, even around Seoul. In fact approximately 70% of the country's terrain is mountainous or hilly while the coast is dotted with islands, most of which are designated Maritime National Parks. Wherever you

go I am sure you will find an excellent infrastructure, environmental initiatives, little litter and charming people who are keen to help you even though

they may be shy about speaking English.

Koreans themselves are keen travellers in their own country and if you decide not to drive you will find almost anywhere you choose to visit accessible by train or bus with good accommodation choices at your destination. I travelled by train from Seoul Station to Busan on the coast in the south east, a journey that takes one almost the length of the Korean peninsula in 4½ hours for about C\$32. This was in a superior class, fast train with a reserved seat. English is spoken at the station, signage is in English and even the ticket was in both languages. A limited choice of luncheon dishes was available on the train. (I didn't have the opportunity to travel by bus, but aforementioned Jennifer Hastie wrote in 1999 "The bus system is very efficient and the drivers are the most helpful of any country we've been in ... including Canada! The buses stop about every two hours for food and toilet breaks.")

Busan is Korea's second largest city and the world's fifth largest port. Those who are fascinated by views of vast container ports will be duly impressed during a city tour, while those who need a beach fix

... enjoy palaces, parks, botanical gardens, many museums and a wide range of unique shopping options from vast, glittering malls to street markets.

will find all their desires met on popular Haeundae Beach, which offers luxury hotels, lots of crowds in summer, and a little fishing village at its north end for delicious and informal seafood dining. In central Busan there's a lively shopping area, while Korea's largest fish market – Jagalchi – offers an unusual eating experience in its many colourful kiosks together with sights to inspire the photographer. Busan is also home to the U.N. Memorial Cemetery, a pilgrimage site for many as it pays tribute to the soldiers of all 16 allied nations that participated in the Korean War. And no trip to Busan would be complete without a trip to Taejongdae Park on the tip of bridge-connected Yeongdo Island, with its ancient trees, steep cliffs and views over the Korean Strait towards Japan (which, I was told, can be glimpsed on a clear day).

Soon I was leaving Busan to travel north again, stopping on this journey to visit two of Korea's most important historical sites and to experience a couple of its festivals.

Gyeongju, about 75 km north of Busan, is one vast site that is home to the 1,000 year-old history and culture of the Shilla Dynasty. Again, the whole Gyeongju Historical District has been designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO. The first feature noticed by visitors are the immense grassy mounds of the Royal Tombs, mounds covering wooden burial chambers where coffins and priceless artefacts have been unearthed in modern times. One of the tombs is open to the public and contains some of the artefacts displayed museum-style around its perimeter.

Near this park stands the Cheomseongdae Observatory. Built in 632 it is the oldest astronomical observatory in Asia. If you are curious as to why the door is placed half way up the tower, it is because the base of the observatory is filled with soil and pebbles to withstand earthquakes. The astronomer would have entered the tower via a wooden ladder. What may not

be apparent to the eye are the twelve stones forming its base that symbolize the months of the year, the 28 layers of stones symbolizing the 28 major stars and the 361.5 stones used in the entire construction representing the days in the lunar calendar year.

From here it's a short walk to the Gyeongju National Museum: four modern galleries set in gardens containing sculptures, pagodas and the massive bronze Divine Bell of King Songkok (AD 771), as well as a little cafeteria. Please do not miss this wonderful museum complex (closed on Mondays) which contains so many beautiful things revealing thousands of years of history; it is considered the finest museum in Korea.

My favourite items were the exquisite, hand-size gilt/bronze Buddha statues, beautifully illuminated in their dark cases, and the tomb tablets engraved with armoured and armed creatures of the zodiac, all looking rather comical. Other fabulous treasures include a gold crown and girdle, vessels in the shape of dragons and many intriguing figurines. The English translations on the signage are a delight. I especially liked the description of the solemn stone Buddha which told the observer that "the face is somewhat chubby"!

When you've enjoyed all these sites you still haven't seen the highlight of the region: the magnificent Bulguksa Temple complex set amongst misty, wooded

hills nearby. If you've ever seen a photography exhibition or illustrated book featuring this photogenic country you will have seen images of Bulguksa, perhaps in spring when the cherry blossom is blooming, or in fall when its beauty is emphasized by the dazzling colours of the surrounding trees, or magically snow-covered in winter. You, too, will need your camera ready for the traditional buildings and vibrantly-coloured carvings of dragons and fish, for the golden Buddhas and the graceful pagodas, for the calm monks sweeping a quiet corner of a courtyard. Tours are reg-



One of the temples in the Bulguksa complex (Wallace)

ularly conducted in English and the history and legends associated with the site are very interesting. All national treasures in Korea, be they large temple complexes or small artefacts, are numbered. Bulgusksa is "Historic & Scenic Place No. 1."

From Bulgusksa it's a beautiful drive through the mountains to Seokguram Grotto, the stone cave temple containing an immense statue of Buddha and other beautiful carvings; a revered site for Koreans and another UNESCO site. Excellent English guide books are available at the site to explain the history and significance of the temple. Here visitors have the opportunity to "purchase" a roof tile (Won 10,000, about C\$11) that will eventually be used in the restoration of the temple buildings. Paint is provided so that the purchaser may inscribe a wish or a message upon the tile and they are then stacked in rows awaiting use. While most of these are, of course, written in Korean it is fun to glimpse the odd message one can understand. I especially liked "First of all, peace for all ... as well as getting into Oxford University." It would be nice if Eric Wang got both his wishes!

Close to Gyeongju, travellers will find the Bomun Lake Resort with its many tourist hotels (including the luxurious Hyundai) and family attractions so beloved by Koreans with children.

Another UNESCO site was next on my itinerary. It was the Haeinsa (or "Reflection on a Calm Sea") Temple, about 100 km due west of Gyeongju via expressway, apart from the final few winding kilometers into Gayasan Park, followed by a 25-minute walk from the car park to the complex which is nestled in the hills. You have probably heard of Haeinsa, for this temple (National Treasure No. 52) is the storehouse of the Tripitaka Koreana ... 81,340 birch-wood blocks, each weighing 3.5 kg carved with 322 characters per side to form 84,000 Buddhist texts, all without a single mistake in the total of well over 52 million characters. Carved in the 13th century as an entreaty to protect the

then 'Goryeo' nation from Mongolian invasions, it is hard to imagine the work involved. My guidebook tells that first the birch trees were cut and soaked in sea water for three years before being cut into wooden blocks which were boiled in salt water and dried in a shady place. Then the blocks were planed to produce a smooth surface before the laborious, 16-year task of carving upon them began. Then, in 1488, high on a hill behind the Haeinsa Temple, the four-hall depository was built to house the blocks. This building, which has twice escaped fires that destroyed the rest of the temple complex, was meticulously constructed taking into account placement of windows, access to insects, climate control, drainage, ventilation and humidity in order to keep the blocks in perfect condition. It remains unchanged and devoid of any mechanical controls to this day. The pathways up to the temple, which pass through the forest, over bridges across a bubbling stream, under beautifully carved gateways and past sculptures and monuments, is a joy. On a soft day in late summer there were few visitors; I loved wandering calmly around enjoying the special atmosphere and bowing to the passing monks as though I were part of an historical movie.



One section of the Tripitaka Koreana Library (KNTA)

Well here I am on page 10 and I still haven't told you about my experiences at the Ginseng Festival and the Icheon Ceramics Village and World Ceramic Biennale. I think will have to make them the subject of another story for you early in 2004.

I hope I have given you a glimpse of this fascinating country and helped you with some practical information. In all likelihood you will not be visiting for a whirlwind tour as I did. Instead I hope you will take the time to explore Korea fully. As the guidebooks and maps show, it has so much to offer and I have only scratched the surface here. One day I hope to return to mark my map with my highlighter even more, but in the meantime a week's worth of delightful memories and the hopes that you will follow me to Korea will have to suffice.

Some details ...

● Koreans are justly proud of their **cuisine** and while the two Seoul restaurants mentioned above – Korea House and SamcheongGak – are lavish and quite expensive you will find these treats offset by the reasonably-priced food you can find elsewhere. You do not need to be especially adventurous to try the delicious soups, the meats which you barbecue at your table and the rice dishes (especially *bibimbap*), all accompanied, of course, by that Korean favourite *kimchi*. You will find details of Korean food in the KNTA's *Korea Travel Guide*. Japanese food is also popular here, as well as international foods and the ubiquitous fast-foods. If you are driving you can stretch your budget now and again by eating in the bright cafeterias attached to the gas stations. They offer western and Korean food and in the latter a large fragrant soup will cost you only a dollar or two.

● I think I took more **photographs** during my stay in Korea than on any previous trip (please check our website for my full-colour photo essay). Beautiful architecture and the stunning colours of the traditional costumes provide a feast for the eye. And a delightful aspect of touring here is the lack of touts, tacky souvenir stands and crowds (at least on week-days in September) in the historic sites. It seems rare in today's world to have a temple courtyard or famous garden almost to oneself and Korea's tasteful calm remains a happy memory.

● **Korean Air** flies regularly to Seoul from Toronto and Vancouver. I found them efficient and comfortable, with charming flight attendants and a choice of tasty Korean or western food. From their accents, the pilots I heard seemed to be British or Australian.

● **Getting Around.** It would be remiss of me if I didn't mention that Korea has a high traffic accident rate. Only the brave will attempt to drive in Seoul and its busy suburbs. But beyond the big cities the extensive network of highways and scenic secondary roads seems calm and efficient and you may decide on a rental car. If so, you should know that an International Driving Permit (IDP) is required. The IDP is a license (\$13), valid for a year from date of issue, that allows travellers with a valid Canadian licence to drive in over 160 countries without a test. Contact your local CAA office to have an application mailed to you, or download the application from the CAA website: www.caa.ca.

For those who do not wish to drive, Korea offers a massive transportation infrastructure. **Trains** are fast,

reliable and moderately priced with a Korea Rail Pass (the KR Pass, available at any train station) for overseas visitors offering unlimited travel within a set number of days. First and second-class trains are equally comfortable, the latter just makes more stops. On-train announcements are made in English and screens show the train's progress. There's are tourist offices in main stations and major signs – “tickets for today”, “the train is leaving shortly” and so on – are in English. In Seoul station you'll find every fast-food outlet you can think of! Shuttle buses can often be found linking rail stations to hotels and the hotels in tourist areas generally offer tours. These tours are not always available in English, but the Koreans will be all smiles if you join them and the major sites should have English-speaking guides. In every historic and cultural site I visited there was English signage and information booklets.

A **long-distance bus service** links the major centres with an Express Bus and a Superior Express Bus, the latter offering more luxurious seats, foot rests etc.

If taking in **taxi** in Seoul, choose one clearly marked “Kind Call” or “KT Powertel”, both of which come equipped with simultaneous interpretation services. On this theme, visitors who require assistance in English need only insert a Won 50 coin and dial the **Korea Travel Phone** at 1330 to find help anywhere in the country. This number connects the user with the nearest tourist information centre where representatives can help with directions, transportation assistance or translation services. The service is available 24 hours a day.

As mentioned above, it's easy to get around Seoul on the **subway** which is temperature controlled, clean and safe. It is mainly served by escalators but be prepared for stairs at some stations. The city limit fare is Won 700 (about 77¢); buy tickets from the counter or from a machine if you have coins; insert your ticket in the gate which will spit it out for you to retain as it will be checked at your destination. And for tourists there's also a **Yellow Bus** (Won 200) serving favourite stops every few minutes.

The impressive new Incheon international airport offers luxury-bus **transfers** in four different directions for Won 10,000 (C\$11), plus a bus link (C\$6) to the domestic airport at Gimpo. The drive into town takes over an hour, so do not resort to a taxi unless your pockets are deep.

● **Best times to go:** Spring, when the cherry blossom and wild flowers adorn the land, and Fall when the trees change colour, are the best times to visit Korea.

The big road-trip – perhaps winter in the U.S. and summer in Canada – is the dream of many retirees. But the costs of a long trip can sure mount up. Many do it in RV's, but if that's not your style you may be encouraged by the experiences of avid budget-traveller and TravelScoop member Anne Raymond who shares here know-how here.

TIPS FROM A BUDGET TRAVELLER

by Anne Raymond

At last the fashionable world has caught up with me! "It's chic to be cheap," Gene Sloan announced in *USA Today* (7 March 2003). Sloan interviewed Ted Moncrieff, senior editor of the prestigious *Condé Nast Traveler*, who told him that "excess is out." Even *Traveler's* famously affluent readers are looking for a deal ... and boasting when they get one. Moncrieff goes on to say that people don't brag about a \$50,000-a-week villa anymore unless the villa sleeps 20, is all-inclusive and in the end, it's just the most fabulous bargain.

I've always loved a bargain. This winter a nose for the best deals meant that my husband Nelson and I could enjoy an extended ski vacation in the US. Not only did we tour many resorts in New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and California, we also experienced daily life in many communities across the U.S. We spent 92 days on the road, driving 12,000 miles in our Volkswagen, and did it all on a shoestring. How did we pull it off? Let me count the ways.

GOOD CAR CENTS

Before leaving on a long trip, we always treat our car to a complete inspection. I also carry a directory of dealers with us, in case we need service on the road. Sudden weather changes are common in the West, so snow tires are necessary for winter travel. Officials in charge of road safety can refuse access to cars not equipped with snow tires or chains.

This winter we learned the importance of filling the gas tank before crossing deserts, and not only for safety. The price of gas in the deserts will blow your socks off. In mid-March 2003 we paid \$2.89 a gallon in the Mojave desert and \$2.63 a gallon when crossing Death Valley. Chalk it up to the learning process. (All prices quoted in article are USD).

LODGING

The roof over your head is the main expense when away from home, so anything I can do to lower the cost will mean big savings in the long run.

Official discounts: Members of Triple A, CAA, AARP, CARP and other associations get 10-20% off rack rates. Sometimes being a senior will get you a discount - no card needed; they can tell just by looking at you. But although wrinkles may mean bargains, I still get a kick out of someone asking to verify my age, just to make sure I'm over 65!

Coupons: Our best lodging deals were found in *TRAVELER Discount Guide Hotel Coupons*, *Travel Coupon Guide*, *Hotel-Motel Coupons* and other, similar booklets. I've discovered that the prices quoted in these booklets are among the cheapest rates available. Many pages include coupons to clip and present at the advertised motels. These guides can be found at Welcome Centres, Travel Centres, tourist offices, gas stations, McDonald's, local restaurants, and other public places. Coupons can also be printed from the following internet site: www.roomsaver.com.

Motel prices vary widely, but we usually managed to find motels priced about \$29.95, although we occasionally went as high as \$39.95. Our best buy using coupons was a Homestead Suite in the heart of Denver, which we rented for the weekend at \$31.99 a night. It came with a full kitchen and was right next to a beautiful golf course. As Easterners, we just had to take snapshots of people playing golf in January! Homestead Suites are located in 112 cities across the US. Special rates go to those who reserve on the internet. For even more discounts look up Suite Savings, a last-minute weekend-rates programme. If we had taken advantage of this programme, our suite in Denver would have cost a mere \$28.99 per night. Contact Homestead Village Guest Studios at tel. 1 888 STAY

HSD or check out their website at www.homesteadhotels.com.

Early birds: As soon as we drive into a new state, we stop at the first Welcome Centre to pick up our coupon booklets. The coupon pages show which highway exits have the most lodging bargains. We usually settle into a motel around 4 p.m. The trick is to arrive early; as the motel fills up and rooms become scarce, coupons may be refused.

Evaluation: Another advantage to arriving early is the chance to look over the immediate environment in daylight. Once we signed into a motel after dark only to find that our room was next to the railway! The whistle and rumble of cars on the tracks reminded us of the fact every 45 minutes or so, all night long. It's always a good idea to inspect the room before registering. I suspect we sometimes got a better room this way. In any case, if we're not satisfied, there is still time to change our minds. On three occasions we turned down motels after previewing the rooms.

Phone vs. walk-in: In Las Vegas we discovered that we got a better rate over the phone than in the lobby: \$45 over the phone, but \$49.95 for walk-in registration at the Excalibur Hotel. Other people have since told me that they have experienced the same rate split.

Weekdays vs. weekends: It's a known fact that most motels charge a higher rate for weekend stays. On Fridays and Saturdays, we chose motels outside towns or those with no attractions nearby. Las Vegas hotels have especially wide price ranges: weekdays are for tightwads like myself, the weekends are for the rich and famous.

Negotiation: You don't have to be a hag to haggle. Some people (my husband, for instance) find it embarrassing to negotiate. But it's no secret that hotel managers are often willing to give you a better rate if you plan to stay for more than one night.

As we drove to Park City, Utah, last February, a blinding snowstorm forced us to sleep over in Heber City, 17 miles away. We holed up in Mac's Motel: "Clean - Quiet - Warm," its neon sign declared. The official price was \$35 a night plus tax. Our room was indeed clean and comfortably warm; the Main Street traffic made the "quiet" part debatable, but we were glad to be there. I asked the manager for a better rate if we agreed to stay for a week. As it turned out, we stayed at Mac's for three weeks - our longest stay in any one place. Fatigue from daily skiing neutralized the traffic noise and we slept like logs. We paid \$150 *per week*, taxes included, for a room with fridge and

microwave. An hour away from Salt Lake City and only 15 minutes from the Park City ski areas, Mac's at Heber City proved to be our best lodging bargain. Mac's Motel is located at 670 S. Main Street, between McDonald's and Pizza Hut. For reservations, call 435 654 0612.

MEALS

Our food expenses on the road aren't much different from what we pay at home. Eating "in" doesn't have to mean cooking ... many of our best meals were found at the deli section in supermarkets. Most big grocery stores offer a variety of hot meals, including hot soup and a salad bar (though it's true some have only fried chicken and potatoes). If there is a seafood counter, you can obtain steamed shellfish.

Many motel rooms are equipped with fridge and microwave and most offer a 'free' continental breakfast. We often had our evening meal as well as breakfast on site. (We picked up a slick little egg-poacher for emergencies that I now consider essential equipment for travelling.) When we settled down for more than a single night's stay, we invariably chose a motel room with kitchen facilities. A few days of shopping in the same supermarket made us familiar with the employees, the products and the local customs. Social interactions provide excellent opportunities to learn more about the area - people are always pleased when you show interest in their neighbourhood. This is how we learned about a first-rate eatery in Elk City, Oklahoma. For excellent Mexican food, efficient service and a warm "down-home" atmosphere, all at fast-food prices, I highly recommend the El Charron restaurant.

Most US supermarket chains have a savings card programme. Anyone can obtain a card by filling out a form at the service counter. To save on purchases, you simply present the card at the checkout counter. We were repeatedly surprised at how much we managed to lower our grocery bill. I now have 11 different cards!

OTHER SAVINGS

Instead of buying postcards and other souvenirs in tourist shops and boutiques, I discovered that many items are much cheaper in chain stores such as Wal-Mart, K-Mart, supermarkets and department stores. Inexpensive one-hour photo service comes in handy too.

To call ahead for reservations and to keep in touch with those back home, there are also deals on tele-

phone and e-mail services. Wal-Mart carries long-distance telephone cards at 6¢ a minute for calls within the US and 12¢ a minute for calls to Canada. Cybercafés can get quite expensive, so we always stop at the local public library. Even the smallest towns have libraries, where the internet service is usually free.

WELCOME TO THE CLUB

We have found that stretching our vacation dollar means that we can travel for longer, and visit many

more places than if we flew to one resort and settled for a week or two. And the challenge of getting more while paying less is a big motivator. The thrill of each new bargain gets my adrenaline flowing, and I savour my prize. It's a little power trip and I love it.

Cheap chic is catching on. Sloan and Moncrieff agree with Peter Yesawich of YPB&R, a leading marketing/public relations firm specializing in travel. Tightwads of the world, hold your heads up high! Our day has come. 🍷

Perhaps you are planning to chase the sun through the United States on the Great American Road Trip. If so, you may be interested in the following list; the result of a survey among members of the Society of American Travel Writers. I invite readers to help me compile a similar list for Canada. Please mail or e-mail your suggestions to Editor Ann ... contact details on p. 2



Ten Most Beautiful Drives through the USA *(in no particular order)*



Blue Ridge Parkway: Virginia and North Carolina

“A road along the mountain crest ... a marvel with changing vistas and suddenly yawning chasms.”

Peter Norbeck Scenic Byway: South Dakota

“This 70-mile loop, including Iron Mountain Road, Needles Highway and Custer State Park, winds through tall rock formations and tunnels, offering occasional views of Mt. Rushmore. Spectacular ... and with ever-present wildlife.”

Port Townsend to Neah Bay: Washington's Olympic Peninsula

“This sensory drive experience includes a Victorian seaport, 19th century general stores and an island lighthouse.”

Mt. Cheaha: Alabama

“A very straight road with a 30-degree angle drop from the mountain ... for three miles!”

Going-to-the-Sun Road: Glacier National Park, Montana

“A narrow, winding road over the top of the Rockies, offering scenic overviews galore. Hugs the side of the mountains up and over the Continental Divide.”

Great River Road: Baton Rouge – New Orleans, Louisiana

“This path snakes along the Mississippi River through the old plantations, many of which are open for tours ... you'll swoon like Scarlett O'Hara! Road trippers

will catch views of lush sugar cane fields, wildlife, ancient live oak and quaint riverside hamlets.”

Great River Road: Iowa, Wisconsin & Minnesota along the Mississippi River

“Crisscross the river via many bridges, dams and locks to take in the beauty and cultural flavor of three states. Many writers and artists have been inspired by the deep valleys and high ridgelines.”

Kancamus Highway: New Hampshire

“A wilderness drive stretching from the Pemigewassat River to the Saco River, filled with gorges, waterfalls and mountain overlooks. We can't imagine a more scenic 34 miles.”

Overseas Highway: Florida Keys

“Unspectacular is the road itself, which tethers the scattered isles from Key Largo to Key West. But Route 1 serves up the dreamiest views of crystalline waters and tropical life teeming above and among the reefs. Not many byways offer sunrise and sunset views.”

Acadia National Park (27-mile Park Loop Road): Maine

“I grew up near the area and am still in awe of the changing mountain, lake and ocean views.” 🍷

Readers ... don't forget to let me have your suggestions for Canada - Ed.

A Few Words About Tikal, Guatemala

by Ann Wallace

For those of you who became interested in visiting Guatemala after reading October's *TravelScoop* I would like to add a few words about Tikal, which is on the itinerary of The Travel Society's 'Guatemala Grandeur' trip and which can be added to the 'Holy Week in Antigua' itinerary.

Not only is Tikal one of the wonders of the archeological world (a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979), but a trip there puts the visitor into the Parque Nacional Tikal, an immense luxuriant jungle reserve spread over 575 sq. km. and home to an estimated 300 species of birds.

The vast archaeological site itself is quite magical and covers 16 sq. km. It is estimated that at the height of its strength Tikal was one of the largest cities on earth, with the city centre housing around 10,000 elite, while a population estimated to be over six times that number lived in now-perished dwellings in the surrounding jungle. Towards the end of the 9th century this great city was suddenly abandoned. Perhaps the power base eroded or perhaps deforestation and drought led to famine. Perhaps it was a combination of these things. Whatever the reasons, the jungle had the site to itself for hundreds of years until it was officially discovered in 1848. Even today, many of the temples remain cloaked in the tendrils of the jungle. Depending upon your level of interest, there is a vast amount of information avail-

able on the history of Tikal, from several pages in Guatemala guide books to academic tomes, so I will merely concentrate on the practicalities of the trip.

Flights to Flores, the nearest airport to Tikal, leave from Guatemala City early every morning and take about 35 minutes. (You may find a guidebook that shows an air-strip at Tikal itself, but this is no longer operational, having been closed to protect the environment.) Flores is located 65 km from the site and guides/drivers meet their respective groups and transport them into the park. Within the park itself there are

a few low-key lodges with restaurants, a shabby but interesting little museum containing artefacts found at the site and an excellent tomb replica (admission about US\$2) and a Visitors' Centre with a few shops and a gallery containing photographs showing the progress of excavations (free).

I spent my two nights here in the

Jungle Lodge, a friendly and relaxed place offering a thatched main building (reception, a shop, a restaurant and a comfy space to 'hang out' with other visitors). The en suite rooms are in basic little cottages spread out in the pretty, tropical grounds where the presence of flowers and birds make up for any lack of luxury ... you don't want to spend much time in your room when so many pleasures await you outside! Properties within the park turn their generators off during the night so, if this is likely to concern you, you may like to pack a



My cottage at the Jungle Lodge (Wallace)

flashlight. Meals here are nourishing and acceptable: eggs as you like them for breakfast, tropical fruits, plenty of chicken dishes for lunch and dinner and so on. The Lodge has a very nice little pool, offering an ideal spot to cool down and enjoy a drink after a few hours of walking and climbing. As I relaxed there late in the afternoon I was entertained by a group of spider monkeys chasing each other in the nearby trees.

Groups gather in the main lodge after breakfast and lunch each day for the fairly long walk to the archaeological site. You may stay with your guide or wander at will, letting your imagination soar as you view the many temples and pyramids. Some structures may be climbed, others are out of bounds and others are so covered with vegetation that only their pinnacles can be seen floating above the jungle. (If you do plan to climb, try to condition your legs somewhat beforehand. I regularly spend time on a stairmaster but this obviously doesn't prepare the leg muscles for the big steps *down*, and I was ashamed to feel the effects for several days afterwards!) Sunrise is a special time at the ruins and you will probably find a group of hardy souls planning to leave the lodge with a guide before dawn to greet the

sun from atop one of the pyramids. Another good reason for that flashlight!

Bird lovers should also remember their binoculars for, as mentioned, this is a bird-watcher's paradise. There is a pretty pond area beside the Visitors' Centre



Temple II - just one of Tikal's many splendors (Wallace)

which I was to learn was once a Mayan reservoir. There I was fascinated by a variety of water birds elegantly picking their way over the water-lily leaves and here I looked in vain for the bird attached to a strange clicking sound in the trees above me until a local boy pointed to a large bird seemingly some distance from the noise. I was to learn this was an *oro*

(golden) pendulum Montezuma whose call seems to emanate some distance from him! Another fascinating spectacle was the columns of leaf ants surrounding a tree, not because this was the first time I had seen these creatures but because on this occasion they were carrying blossom fragments, thus creating quivering columns of pretty pink on the tree trunk!

Yes, Tikal and its park truly contain a world of wonders, from mysterious, soaring ancient temples to exquisite birds and industrious tiny insects. Just another reason to make wonderful Guatemala part of your travel plans! 📖

The Travel Society

We have a file listing several single travellers who wish to take a Travel Society tour and wish to share. Destinations include: China, Australia, Turkey and the Galapagos.

If you would like to share with another member please contact us. We will put you in touch with each other so that you can chat on the telephone - or meet if convenient - to see if you would like to share.

**Call 416 926 2500, ex. 24 or
1 877 926 2500, ex. 24**

Travel Digest

Canada

If you're close to the west coast you may like to plan to blow those post-holiday cobwebs away with a Marine Sightseeing Cruise from downtown **Vancouver** to **Gibson's Landing** – an authentic West Coast fishing village. Enjoy the rugged coastal splendor of the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound, enjoy lunch at Molly's Reach Restaurant – former home of the CBC's *Beachcombers* – and then have free time to explore the Landing. Available daily, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., these personally-guided, small-group tours can be customized to include other day trips or overnight packages including outdoor activities, nature hikes, biking, kayaking, garden tours, art workshops, arts & cultural tours and more. For more information call 604 886 1200 or visit www.destination-sunshinecoast.com.

Parksville and **Qualicum Beach** are attracting long-stay winter visitors with their mild climate and lowest annual rainfall levels on Vancouver Island, meaning outdoor activities can be enjoyed year-round. Even the wildlife enjoy winter here, including colonies of sea lions and seals and thousands of water birds. More than 30 area accommodations offer monthly rates and information can be found at www.oceansidetourism.com or by calling 1 888 799 3222.

For 10 days in January (16th–25th) the **Niagara** region will be celebrating the **9th Annual Icewine Festival** with gala evenings, ornate ice bars, late-

night icewine grape picking, sleigh rides, winemakers' dinners and more. Visit www.niagarawinefestival.com or call 905 688 0212 for details and help celebrate this international-award-winning Canadian product.

When *Canada Blooms* can spring be far behind? Garden and flower lovers may like to mark their calendars (and order their tickets now) for the renowned and fabulous **Toronto Flower and Garden Show** which will be blossoming earlier than usual next year: 3 – 7 March at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (beside the CN Tower). Tickets are available online at www.canadablooms.com for \$15, at the door \$18. Call 416 447 8655 or 1 800 730 1020 for more details. *It's a fabulous show! – Ed.*

VIA Rail Canada has teamed up with several partners to offer its customers leaving from Montréal or Québec City a typical **Gaspesian Christmas**. From \$1,175, including transportation, meals and accommodation, this package offers a dream week in the Gaspé region. The Chaleur train will depart from Montréal and Québec City on 23rd December to arrive in New Richmond early the following morning. Among the activities to be enjoyed is a wide array of sporting activities (downhill or cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, tobogganing, skating, and more), the Gaspesian British Heritage Village, the Parc national de la Gaspésie, as well as plenty of nearby excursions. The evening of 24th December will feature a midnight mass (at 10 p.m.), followed by a traditional réveillon feast with the townsfolk of New Richmond. Finally, vacationers will return by train to Québec City or Montréal the night of

30th/31st December. The Chaleur offers two classes and special features for children. Sounds like a great way to escape turkey-cooking and icy roads. For more information on this and other winter packages designed by VIA call 1 877 861 8222, or visit www.viarail.ca.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong's WinterFest – a time of celebration for visitors and locals alike – commenced on 28 November and will delight all in the region until 4 January with city and harbour illuminations and decorations, the Wishing Christmas Tree and lots of street festivities. How about surprising the [grand]kids during the holidays with an exciting trip! And if you are thinking of travelling to Hong Kong with children, look out for the *Hong Kong Family Fun Guide* being distributed at ports of entry by colourfully costumed clowns, jugglers and magicians. Too late to organize a trip for WinterFest? Then how about catching the Chinese New Year Parade due to usher in the Year of the Monkey on 22 January 2004 when, for the first time, the parade will be held during the evening. A memorable event for adults and children alike. For full tourism details of all that's happening in HK call the Tourism Board at 1 800 563 4582 or visit www.DiscoverHongKong.com/canada

Hungary

Good news for those of you keen to visit **Budapest** (perhaps after reading last month's Winning Scoop). ATOURZ, in conjunc-

tion with Malev Hungarian Airlines, have designed a series of well-priced getaways from Toronto to Hungary, one of which is “Budapest: City for all Seasons”, priced from C\$879 pp. db. for air, three nights at a 3-star hotel, breakfasts, a dinner at renowned Gundel Restaurant, a city tour and a concert or opera ticket. Up-grades to other hotels and extensions are possible. Your travel agent will have details, or call 416 485 6387 or 1 877 727 6387 for more details.

Italy

The 2004 brochure from La Bella Toscana villa rental agency in **Tuscany** is hot off the press and looking very tempting. Here at *TravelScoop* we’ve heard nothing but good things about this agency and its English-married-to-an-Italian owner Gaynor Powell. For a copy of the fully-illustrated colour brochure contact Gaynor at Via Solferino 28, 53034 Colle di Val d’Elsa, Siena, Italy, tel: (code: 011 39) 0577 926768, fax: 0577 999023, e-mail: info@labellatoscana.it, www.labellatoscana.net (One point to remember when browsing through the brochure ... Europeans – including the British – call the first floor of a building “the ground floor”, and the floor above that “the first floor”, unlike North Americans for whom the ground floor is the first floor and the next floor the second floor. So you’ll see in the brochure some villa apartments described as being on the first floor ... which, to us in Canada, means the second floor. Hope that’s clear!) *TravelScoop* has a contact who lives in Florence and we asked him if he knew of this

agency. He replied: “It’s a small agency, with professional people and good products at fair prices. Please point out to your readers that as well as their country villas they also have many apartments inside villages, so guests who do not wish to drive can enjoy the villages for shopping, restaurants, etc., and then travel beyond with the public transport system. Everywhere has a bus service (though not always very comfortable) so it’s possible to visit Florence, Siena and many other places, even if the bus schedules are sometimes timed more for students and workers rather than for tourists.”

New Zealand

The award-winning film *Whale Rider* will no doubt kindle much interest in travel to New Zealand. For those who’d like to discover the film’s wonderful locations for themselves, plan to travel to **New Zealand’s East Cape**, the Maori heartland where the movie was filmed. A 3-hour tour leaves from the Gisborne Visitor Center, led by Hone Taumaunu, the tribal elder and cultural consultant for the film. He will lead participants, accompanied by his animated commentary, to Whangara and many of the film’s locations: the Maori war canoe, that dramatic stretch of beach and even to his own property where some of the filming also took place. Tours are NZ\$50 pp (approx. C\$40). Whale Rider Tours does not have a website, but they can be telephoned once you are in NZ at 06 868 6139 or e-mail info@gisbornenz.com for details. (If you missed the film in the theatres, it is now available on DVD.)

Adventurous travellers in New Zealand may also like to investigate a 3 or 4-day exploration of the 65,000-acre high country region known as **Walter Peak**. Log on to www.untouchedworld.com where you can read about these 27-mile treks in the company of a personal guide and a chef, plus a sheepdog. Groups are limited to a maximum of six, each person is supplied with a day pack, while luggage is transported separately to comfortable accommodations such as a restored musterer’s hut, where hot water, fresh linens and prepared meals paired with fine NZ wines await the adventurers, who will have been hiking, horse-back riding, fly fishing and generally enjoying the outdoors in this magnificent alpine terrain. Sounds like a unique adventure, but be warned ... deep pockets required!

Tour Talk

Routes to Learning Canada (formerly Elderhostel Canada) has a new catalogue for 2004 ready and 23 new adventures in its learning/travel line-up. For a copy of the catalogue via mail call 1 866 745 1690 or e-mail information@routestolearning.ca, www.routestolearning.ca Routes to Learning’s mandate is to “strive to form partnerships and alliances with organizations that value and respect the need to develop lifelong learning opportunities that are resource respectful, culturally sensitive, and contribute positively to the host community.”

If you’ve always dreamed of travelling to Antarctica but were put off by the normally high cost of this trip, you may like to know that **G.A.P. Adventures** is now offering

excursions to the Great White Continent with prices from C\$2,425 pp. G.A.P. Adventures 2004/2005 10-day sailings will depart Ushuaia, Argentina, between November 2004 and March 2005 aboard a 100-metre, ice-strengthened passenger ship offering twin, triple and quad cabins as well as superior cabins and suites. For information call 1 800 465 5600 or e-mail adventure@gap.ca

Natural History Travel has its line-up of small-group tours for 2004 organized. These include off-the-beaten path destinations in Ontario, Magdalen Island & PEI, the Rockies, Vancouver Island, California and Rhode Island. Whatever your interest in the natural world – from large mammals to birds to sea creatures to lichens – you’re sure to find it on one of these nature-focused tours. For more information call 416 443 0583 or 1 877 245 2424, e-mail: naturalhistorytravel@sympatico.ca

Hotel Happenings ... News from Fairmont

Time for a treat? Guests staying from two to four consecutive nights at a number of Fairmont hotels or resorts across **Canada** will receive a third, fourth or fifth consecutive night free, from now until 31 March, 2004. The free night offer is based on double occupancy. Participating hotels include Fairmont properties in Victoria, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, Jasper, Banff, Lake Louise and others. The offer varies from property to property (some offering third night free, others fourth

and so on) and the deals must be booked through a travel agent, who will have the full details.

Toronto's Fairmont Royal York has been named the official hotel of the upcoming *Diana, A Celebration* exhibition scheduled for the Design Exchange in Toronto from 19 December to 11 April 2004. The 'Royal Package', priced from \$225 for two and available any day of the week, includes accommodation, priority tickets to the exhibition and afternoon tea at the hotel's Epic restaurant. For reservations call 1 800 441 1414. The exhibition, arriving in Toronto directly from the Althorp Estate in England, will include memorabilia from Diana's childhood, her bridal gown and other clothes, film footage, paintings and jewels from the Spencer family collection and a section devoted to Diana's charity work around the world. Visit www.dianacelebration.com for more information or call 416 872 1212 or 1 800 461 333 or www.ticketking.com for tickets. Admission \$25 adults, \$20 seniors and students, \$15 children; profits to benefit the charities supported by the Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

You'll find a little bit of Canada in **New York** soon, where the Fairmont Plaza Hotel has launched a Canadian-dollars-at-par programme for Canadian guests. From January through March, guests presenting an official Canadian ID will be entitled to use Canadian dollars (at par) to pay for their room. "The Plaza Loves Canada 3" promotion applies to the room rate only and all other charges will be billed in U.S. dollars. For rates and reservations, call 1888 232 5011.

From the Bookshelf ...

THE BEST CANADIAN STOCKING-STUFFER!

I've been meaning to tell you about this great book for some time now, and was reminded of it just before we went to print because it has just won an award ... the 2003 Niagara Book Prize, as well as being short-listed for the Ottawa Tourism Media Award. It's Hans Tammemagi's fascinating *Exploring the Hill: A Guide to Canada's Parliament Past and Present*, a volume that should be on every Canadian's bookshelf. The small volume is really four books in one: a history of confederation and of Parliament Hill itself (from the small advertisement placed in 1859 in Quebec and Ontario newspapers inviting architects to submit designs to the present day); a guide to the buildings, grounds and historic statuary on the Hill; a history of the famous and infamous who have trodden those corridors and grounds and, finally, it is a comprehensive and entertaining explanation of how our federal parliament works. The book contains over 100 colour and black and white photographs, maps and sketches and many fascinating (and amusing) facts. The photo on the cover is of the Hill cloaked in snow and ice, so this makes it especially suitable as a seasonal gift. Pop one in the stocking of every Canadian you know! Published by Fitzhenry & Whiteside, pb C\$20, 174 pp. www.fitzhenry.ca

AW

continued from page 11

Summers are hot and wet and winters cold, although I must say the photographs I've seen of the temples in the snow make winter look special. If I haven't given **admission prices** above it's because most sites in Korea are inexpensive ... usually just a dollar or two.

● Of course there are many excellent **guidebooks** available for Korea, but here's a word about **place names**. The Korean government standardized the form of translated Korean according to the Romanization system in 2000 and tourist signs, guidebooks and maps are gradually being altered. This can cause the tourist a bit of confusion unless you apply these few rules: in the vowel department the old 'o' and 'u' have become 'eo' and 'eu' respectively and four initial consonants have changed: 'p' has become 'b' (i.e. Busan used to be Pusan), 't' is now 'd', 'k' is 'g' and 'ch' is now 'j' (so Jeju Island, the subject of our story next month, used to be Cheju). Things get a bit more complicated when the old 'p', 't', 'k' and 'ch'

which were followed by apostrophes have now dropped the apostrophe but retain the character: so P'unggi drops the apostrophe but does not change the 'p' to 'b' ... it is now just Punggi. If there is both a vowel and a consonant change this can result in quite a different looking word, for example Kyōngju is now Gyeongju. All literature published in English since 2000 reflects this change, but it is likely you will come across old signs or museum literature, for example, that still uses the old system. All part of the fun of travel!

For tempting and comprehensive **tourist information**, the Korean National Tourism Organization can be contacted at 1 800 TOUR KOR or 416 348 9056, e-mail: toronto@knto.ca. The official website at www.tour2korea.com is excellent, and here visitors can find details of locally-offered tours to make trip planning easy. *Bon voyage* in Korea ... it's a wonderful destination. 🇰🇷

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

Go to China now ... before the crowds return!

from \$3,942 for 18 days

New Pricing!

China ... Yangtze Spectacular ~ 18 days

Come with us on our most popular, unique tour and spend 18 days in China still at an amazingly low price.

2004 Departures: 11 April, 9 May, 26 September & 17 October

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 (now in the process of changing 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 18 days you'll stay in Beijing; you'll take a 4-day first-class cruise on the Yangtze with many shore excursions; you'll fly to see those centuries-old terra-cotta warriors in Xi'an; you'll visit bustling Chongquin and see its pandas; stay in Hangzhou and travel into the hills covered with tea plantations; explore the exquisite gardens of Suzhou, and visit Nanjing and Wuzhen. And you'll have time to explore spectacular Shanghai. 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 plane, by luxury bus, cruise ship and river boat. Many of our members have told us it's an experience of a lifetime ... and all at an amazing price!

Editor, Ann Wallace took the China Yangtze trip and her 14-page, illustrated account is available. For your copy please send \$5 with your address.

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Vancouver	\$3,942 pp/dbl
Victoria/Nanaimo/Kamloops	\$4,089 pp/dbl
Calgary/Edmonton	\$4,188 pp/dbl
Saskatoon/Regina	\$4,434 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$4,372 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$4,298 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,372 pp/dbl
Halifax/Quebec City/London	\$4,495 pp/dbl
Thunder Bay/St. John's	\$4,643 pp/dbl
Single supplement \$1,200 (Sharing can be arranged.)	

Taxes and visas extra.

GREAT ADD-ONS:

Hong Kong	4 days/3 nights	\$1,188.00
Tokyo	4 days/3 nights	\$892.00

Prices are subject to confirmation

Your tour costs includes:

- Round-trip transpacific air fares on **Japan Airlines**
- Chinese domestic airfares
- Canadian domestic airfares
- First-class hotel accommodation
- First-class 4 days/3 nights Yangtze River cruise aboard a deluxe cruise ship
- All transfers
- Daily sightseeing
- Three meals daily
- 2 Western style dinners.
- Special banquets in Hangzhou, Xi'an and Beijing
- Evening cultural shows
- Fully escorted by English/Chinese-speaking tour guide
- English-speaking local guides
- Free time in Beijing & Shanghai

Please call **The Travel Society** 1 877 926 2500 x24 or 416 926 2500 x24 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 members and their friends.

21 days, prices include all airfares

Space limited to 20 people

A Traveller's Turkey *Departing: 1 May & 18 September 2004*

It is one of the cradles of civilization and one of the most wonderful countries on the planet. Here are fabled cities, unique landscapes, incomparable historic sites and calm, friendly people who are eager to show that their land is, indeed, both historic and modern.

Ann Wallace, our editor, has travelled extensively in Turkey and always returns claiming it is one of her favourite destinations. So now we have organized a luxurious tour of Turkey exclusively for Travel Society members. It is due to take place in September 2003 for a maximum of 20 people.

We have combined our extensive knowledge with careful research to ensure you see the very best that Turkey has to offer. You'll stay in first-class historic or very specialized hotels, travel in a 40-seat air-conditioned luxury bus, enjoy cruises on private boats, sample fine food and be entertained by cultural performances. And the itinerary? Magical Istanbul (plenty of time there); Ankara, home of one of the world's finest museums; the unique 'geological poem' called Kapadokya (or Cappadocia); mysterious and lovely ruins such as Aphrodisias, Pergamum and, of course, Ephesus; the fabled and beautiful Aegean coast; the peaceful Princes Isles in the Sea of Marmara and so much more.

Ann says, "This is the most perfect tour of Turkey imaginable; you will have an unforgettable time ... and such a small group, too! Sign up now!"

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES (subject to confirmation) departing from:

Toronto	\$4,950.00 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,950.00 pp/dbl
Vancouver	\$5,195.00 pp/dbl
Edmonton & Calgary	\$5,195.00 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$5,125.00 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$5,125.00 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$455 (Sharing can be arranged.) Taxes included, visa extra.

Your tour includes:

- Round trip transatlantic and domestic flights with Air Canada
- 20 nights' accommodation
- All meals as per itinerary
- All domestic transportation
- 40 seat air conditioned luxury bus
- Admission to all sites
- An English-speaking guide/director and a Travel Society host

28 days, prices include all airfares

Space limited to 20 people

NEW Turkey - An Anatolian Adventure

Departing: 28 August 2004

If you can travel with us for 28 days, you might like to consider our longer tour of Turkey. In addition to all the destinations in 'A Traveller's Turkey' detailed above, this tour also includes a trip to legendary Troy, a tour of the historic battlefields of Gallipoli, a visit to the walled city of Iznik, a drive to Gordion (the home of Alexander's famous knot) and to many other historic sites such as Catal Hoyuk, Xanthus and mysterious Termessos, one of Turkey's most beautiful ruins. The extra time here also means more time on the beautiful coast, where you will enjoy boat trips, picnics and beach time or you may decide to take an overnight *gulet* cruise from Antalya to Kas. This truly is a superlative tour that covers all the highlights of this wonderful land.

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES (subject to confirmation) departing from:

Toronto	\$6,750.00 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$6,850.00 pp/dbl
Vancouver	\$7,150.00 pp/dbl
Edmonton & Calgary	\$7,000.00 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$6,950.00 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$6,900.00 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$670 (Sharing can be arranged.) Taxes included, visa extra.

Your tour includes:

- Round trip transatlantic and domestic flights with Air Canada
- Return airfare to Turkey
- 27 nights' hotel accommodation
- All meals as per itinerary
- 40 seat air-conditioned luxury bus
- Admission to all sites
- An English-speaking guide and a Travel Society host

NEW Chile, Patagonia and Easter Island *Departing 6 February & 26 March 2004*

Come with The Travel Society to one of South America's most popular destinations - Chile. During this 9-day trip you'll spend 5 exciting days touring the historic city of Santiago, visiting some beautiful vineyards and taking excursions to some popular beach destinations. Then you'll fly south to Puerto Montt to discover more history, mingle in the local markets, search out special handicrafts and explore the region's beautiful lakes, waterfalls and rivers.

Add-ons which you won't want to miss are a 5-night trip to Patagonia, romantically called 'South of Silence', where you'll stay in the renowned Termas de Puyuhuapi Hotel & Spa, and/or a 3-night trip to unique Easter Island, where our guides will show you all this incredible destination has to offer.

Departing from: Toronto Ottawa & Montreal
Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg \$1,698 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$744 (Sharing can be arranged.)

Great add-ons:

Easter Island	4 days/3 nights	\$894.00 pp/dbl
Patagonia	6 days/5 nights	\$1,794.00 pp/dbl

Canadian domestic & international flights additional
All prices are subject to confirmation
Taxes extra.

Your tour includes:

- First-class accommodation
- All transfers
- Meals as per itinerary
- All tours and boat trips
- Local guides
- Domestic air

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



Guatemala Grandeur

with an optional add-on to Havana, Cuba

Departing 13 February & 12 March 2004

The Travel Society is thrilled to bring you two special tours of Guatemala. **The first tour**, 17 days, covers all the highlights of this colourful land. You'll start your tour in Guatemala City and then travel through the mountains to Chichicastenango, home to one of the world's most intriguing markets. There's another superlative waiting for you at volcano-rimmed Lake Atitlan, often referred to as the world's most beautiful lake. And many people consider Antigua one of the world's most beautiful cities. You'll spend 4 nights there and enjoy unique hotels, restaurants and tours both in the city and beyond. Visits to the Quetzal Biosphere in the highlands, a stay at amazing Tikal and a trip over the border to Honduras to visit the ruins of Copan are also on the itinerary.

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Toronto	\$4,920.00 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,995.00 pp/dbl
Vancouver	\$4,995.00 pp/dbl
Edmonton & Calgary	\$5,095.00 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$5,145.00 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$525 (Sharing can be arranged.) **Plus Taxes.**
Prices are subject to confirmation

Each tour is limited to 18 people

- Your tour includes:**
- Return airfare
 - 16 nights' hotel accommodation
 - All meals as per the itinerary
 - Admissions to all sites
 - Transportation in a comfortable air-conditioned bus
 - The services of a professional bilingual tour director and a Travel Society host



Guatemala - Holy Week and Havana, Cuba

Departing 3 April 2004

The second tour, 12 days, covers the amazing events that take place during **Easter Week in Antigua**, together with excursions into surrounding Guatemala, including a trip to Chichicastenango. A story on this unique event will be featured in the October edition of *TravelScoop* as Editor Ann enjoyed this trip this year. (If you would like to receive a more detailed account of her experience, together with a full-colour photo essay, and her story of the Havana add-on, please send \$5 with your address.) Yes, two days in historic **Havana** end this trip ... a city that every traveller should see. "There's nowhere else quite like it," says Ann.

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Toronto	\$4,696.00 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	
Vancouver	
Edmonton & Calgary	
Halifax	

Single supplement \$370 (Sharing can be arranged.) **Plus Taxes.**
Prices are subject to confirmation

Please call for prices from other departure cities

Each tour is limited to 18 people

- Your tour includes:**
- Return airfare
 - 11 nights' hotel accommodation
 - All meals as per the itinerary
 - Admissions to all sites
 - Transportation in a comfortable air-conditioned bus
 - The services of a professional bilingual tour director and a Travel Society host

Galapagos Islands and Ecuador

with options to Kapawi Lodge in the Amazon and Machu Picchu, Peru

14 days departing 9 March & 20 April 2004

The Travel Society is proud to be able to offer its members an outstanding trip to some of the world's most spectacular destinations. Who hasn't dreamed of cruising to the Galapagos Islands and seeing wildlife as Darwin witnessed it? Think of the unique adventure you will enjoy, of the stories you will have to tell and the photographs you will take! You will spend a week aboard your first-class 20-passenger ship, taking daily shore excursions to a variety of the islands with experienced naturalists in groups of no more than 10 people per guide.

You'll also visit other destinations in Ecuador, and then you can choose to enjoy the exciting optional extensions: to Kapawi - a ecological lodge in the Amazon and/or a visit Machu Picchu in Peru. We'll take care of all the travel details. All you have to do is enjoy!

PRICES INCLUDE AIR AND TAXES departing from:

Toronto	\$7,476.00 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$7,476.00 pp/dbl
Vancouver	\$7,797.00 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$7,797.00 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$7,394.00 pp/dbl

GREAT ADD-ONS, INCLUDING AIR:

Kapawi - from all departure points	\$1,680.00 pp/dbl
Machu Picchu -	
: Toronto	\$1,642.00 pp/dbl
: Ottawa, Montreal	\$1,642.00 pp/dbl
: Vancouver, Calgary	\$1,547.00 pp/dbl
: Halifax	\$1,694.00 pp/dbl

Prices are subject to confirmation

Each tour is limited to 20 people

- Your tour includes:**
- Round-trip air transportation
 - All domestic air transportation
 - All accommodation
 - All meals as per the itinerary
 - Admissions to all sites
 - Expert Galapagos guides
 - Transfers & baggage handling
 - Islands Park Entrance Fee (US\$100)

Please call The Travel Society 1 877 926 2500 x24 or 416 926 2500 x24 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 designed for members and their friends.



Copper Canyon & Guadalajara 26 February & 10 September 2004

We are offering a new 9-day tour to the Copper Canyon, together with a stay in Mexico's wonderful city of Guadalajara. The Copper Canyon is four times larger than the Grand Canyon, and you'll enjoy a journey that is considered by many to be the world's most exciting train trip, with its 87 tunnels, 39 bridges and uncountable spectacular views. You'll meet the people, stay in unique accommodations and explore the present and the past in this astonishing region.

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Toronto	\$3,245 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$3,245 pp/dbl
Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg	\$3,460 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$600 (Sharing can be arranged.) Taxes extra.

Please call for prices from other departure cities

Your tour includes:

- All air transportation on Mexicana
- Canadian domestic air
- 8 nights first class accommodation
- All transfers,
- Meals as per the itinerary
- All train trips and tours as per the itinerary

The 25 Day Grand Tour of New Zealand, Australia and Fiji!

Departure Dates: 18 February and 20 October 2004

Highlights...

Auckland, Waitomo Caves, Rotorua, Agrodome sheep demonstration, Te whakarewarewa Thermal Reserve, Rainbow Springs, Milford Sound cruise, Queenstown, Mount Cook, Christchurch, Sydney, Opera House & Harbour cruise, Tropical Cairns, Michaelmas Cay, Outer Barrier Reef cruise, Kuranda rail & Rainforest, Ayers Rock, Alice Springs, The "Ghan" train across the Outback, Adelaide, Melbourne, 3 nights in Fiji

What could be more wonderful than a 25-day grand tour of New Zealand, Australia and Fiji? No matter where you live in Canada, these destinations are a long way to go ... so come with us and see the highlights in one unforgettable vacation. Our itinerary runs to three pages, so what can we tell you here? Look at the list above and you'll realize this trip covers the highlights of the two safe and welcoming "downunder" countries, ending with three nights in the Pacific island paradise that is Fiji.

PRICES INCLUDE AIR AND TAXES departing from:

Vancouver	\$10,934 pp/dbl
Victoria	\$11,226 pp/dbl
Calgary & Edmonton	\$11,497 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$11,545 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$11,545 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$11,545 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$11,629 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$1,999 (Sharing can be arranged.) Taxes extra
Prices are subject to confirmation

Your tour costs includes:

- Fully comprehensive insurance included
- Exclusive special-interest fun themes
- The services of an experienced escort
- First-class hotels throughout
- Luxury touring coaches
- All tips included
- Full luggage service
- Return trans-Pacific airfare with Qantas Airways
- All sightseeing (with no hidden extras)
- Hotel taxes and Australian and NZ GST.
- 3 nights in Fiji

Please call **The Travel Society** 1 877 926 2500 x24 or 416 926 2500 x24 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



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- ___ 1 year for \$44.00 - the member rate (a 10% saving off the regular \$49.00)

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