

Luxurious hotel deals for seniors around the Pacific ... see p.19

Travel Scoop

The Newsmagazine
for Members of
The Travel Society

Vol. 21, No. 3 April 2003

Enjoy Spring in the Czech Republic

by J. Helen Parkyn

All travellers have no doubt heard what a wonderful city Prague is, but not as many will have realised what a delightful and affordable country the Czech Republic is to tour by car, with its well-preserved old towns and quaint villages, castles, chateaux and quiet roads lined with trees in blossom.

Late in April last year, a friend and I went to the Czech Republic for 12 days of independent travel, spending four nights in Prague followed by eight days



Our beautiful luncheon spot in the grounds of Cervana Lhota overlooking the rose pink Chateau which was reflected in the lake (Parkyn)

of car touring. We arrived by Czech Air from London and immediately had one of our best experiences. The *Lonely Planet* guide had told us that we could take a Cedoz bus (airporter) to the centre of town, then a taxi to our *pension* as a cheaper option to a taxi the whole way. So we headed for the area outside the airport marked 'buses', but saw only a public one waiting, not

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TravelScoop

The Newsmagazine for Members of
The Travel Society

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April 2003

Vol. 21, No. 3

From your Editor's desk...



Unless the day falls on a week-end, TravelScoop goes to print on the 19th of each month. So here I sit on 19th March 2003 with, presumably, war on the agenda within the next few hours. A difficult letter to write? You bet!

At this stage, whatever one's views on this crisis, it seems that the best we can hope for (apart from a coup in Iraq, which would be wonderful but is unlikely) is a quick, decisive resolution. If only this could be achieved without suffering of any kind amongst the young, the innocent and the honourably brave.

If you have decided to stay close to home at this time, I hope you won't forget that the world does contain so many peaceful places and I hope you will continue to plan and dream of exploring this (mainly) beautiful planet of ours in the future.

Unless something out of my control happens, I intend to carry on with my plans. I'm off to Guatemala in April to experience the unique Easter-week festivities in Antigua Guatemala. I also hope to get to the ruins at Tikal. I'll be flying via Havana, Cuba, so I also plan to take advantage of the opportunity the route offers to stop over and discover something of that city. It will be my first visit to both Guatemala and Cuba and I'm very excited and interested. Watch these pages for my news.

In closing I really don't know what to say. Perhaps, "Let us all hope that by the time I next write the world will be a better place" will have to do.

coming in *May*

- *England*
- *Italy*
- *Switzerland*
- *Summer in Canada*

Update Items

Airline Cancellations and Changes

Since 9/11 the airline industry has been in financial trouble. This latest crisis may be the death knoll for those on the brink of bankruptcy. Before purchasing any tickets, find out what your rights are if the airline goes under. As we go to print a number of airline companies have reduced international flights. Who knows whether or not there will be more. If you're holding reservations, be sure to check with the airline to determine if your flight has been cut. Many airlines have relaxed penalties for cancellations and/or changes due to war or acts of terrorism but each seems to be making its own rules. If you're booking tickets for future dates, ask what the airline's policy is.

Air Canada is implementing a 'peace of mind' rebooking policy which allows travellers to make changes to travel dates on discounted tickets in the event of military conflict with Iraq. The carrier's policy allows holders of discounted tickets for travel booked during a 30-day period following the onset of war to postpone travel without penalty to a later date (until 31 December). The policy applies to transborder and international travel on Air Canada, Air Canada Jazz, Tango and Air Canada codeshare flights operated by Star Alliance partners.

Changing the theme of this column completely: 2003 prices for the **Bandera Bed & Barn in Colorado** (see our last edition, p. 10) were unavailable when we went to press. We can now tell you that a night's stay here is US\$75 for the first person, and US\$25 for each additional person, to a maximum of six guests. And even if there's just one or two of you, the whole lower floor is yours. This country home is just a few miles from the Royal Gorge Bridge and Buckskin Joe Frontier Town, just off Hwy. 50, west of Cañon City.

This Month's Winning Scoop

A Unique Ethiopian Experience; the Travel Adventures of a Retired Schoolteacher

by Maureen McGarrity

I first considered a Study Tour – a unique, educational vacation organized by Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR) – to be a good opportunity to see Ethiopia. The trip would also give me the chance to see some of CPAR's development projects that are helping to build healthy communities in rural Ethiopia. And I also wanted to see first hand the things my daughter Sheilagh had been telling me about in her letters, for she has been working as a development worker in Ethiopia for two years.

However, I quickly realized that this was not a tourist trip. The dusty faces and clothes of my fellow Study Tour "tourists" as well as our introduction to cold showers and squat toilets at the end of the day were some of the first clues that this wasn't about to be a Club Med experience.

When we arrived at the first CPAR base camp in Jarso, we had a quick meal and then took a short walk that was lit up with a view of the sunset over the Rift Valley. Later that evening, we visited a woman who was running a restaurant. This was a memorable experience, as was the *tej* (a local alcoholic drink) that she served to us. *Tej* soon became the drink of choice for many of us. The next day, we saw irrigation sites, water points, and a spinning and weaving programme where many of us were impressed by the beautiful

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 on diskettes.

workmanship. At each site we talked to community leaders about their projects, as well as CPAR's involvement with schooling, family planning, health and water issues and HIV/AIDS.

In Debate, we took an early morning walk to the neighbouring Gumez villages. I think this was the highlight of my trip. We must have seemed like space aliens to the Gumez people but they accepted us with uncertain curiosity. Suddenly, a young man dropped something and I said, "Oh, oh." An old woman mimicked me and before long we had a chorus of, "Oh, oh" going around the village. To me, it was almost a magical moment. Their ways seemed so different to us; they are surviving in conditions that we would consider impossible.

On the fifth day of the tour, we were treated to what I would call a mini "vacation" in BahirDar with a relaxing boat ride on Lake Tana to see some of the famous Ethiopian Orthodox Church monasteries. We even had a picnic on an island – complete with a waiter! The visions of men rowing papyrus boats in the early morning mist as well as our walk to the Blue Nile Falls at sunset were unforgettable.

The last camp we stayed at was in Lai Gayint in Mefus Mucha, where the people seemed to be facing some of the most adverse conditions we had seen so far. However, with CPAR's help, miraculous progress is being made. Grains are being cultivated and grown along with fruit and vegetables. Also, now there are schools, HIV/AIDS programmes, family planning initiatives, irrigated fields, forests, rural roads, latrines, health facilities, and drop stairs cut into steep hillsides. We also had a

chance to visit a woman growing and selling produce from her own garden as well as man who is now a successful bee keeper.

Throughout my Ethiopian travel adventure friends were made, discussions were had, questions were asked and answers were given. An amazing experience was had by all. We all have a new respect for the Ethiopians with their ready smiles and friendly waves.

I urge you, if possible, to take a Study Tour. It will be an unforgettable experience!

CPAR'S mandate declares "Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief is devoted to the building and sustaining of healthy communities in rural areas of Ethiopia, Uganda, Malawi and Tanzania." After receiving Maureen McGarrity's report, we contacted CPAR for some more information on these interesting travel opportunities. Information can be found on CPAR's website, or they will send out information packages if you telephone them. The cost of the Ethiopia trip was C\$5,200 which included flight, accommodation and meals and CPAR makes all the arrangements. The maximum number of participants at one time is 12. Accommodation varies throughout the tour: in cities participants stay in hotels, but in rural areas they stay in small, basic guest houses. No actual volunteer work is involved; people are there to share cultures, to stimulate the local economy and to see international development work in action. The next Study Tour, scheduled for Fall 2003, will take place in Malawi. For more information contact CPAR at 416 369 0865, e-mail: info@cpar.ca or visit CPAR's web site at: www.cpar.ca

Your Scoops

If You're Going to Portugal ...

... you may like to know that a 5% commission is charged when you cash Euro travellers cheques, in spite of the fact that the Euro is the local currency. We found that no commission was charged at the banks or *cambios* on US dollar or sterling travellers cheques, but the charge on Euro cheques was consistent everywhere. Remember this and you'll save quite a lot of pennies during your stay in Portugal. (We've just spent a lovely month on the Algarve.)

Earl & Marie Smith
Kamloops, BC

Passport Alert

I thought readers might be interested in some thoughts on the validity of their Canadian Passports. We all know that they have increased to \$85 and are supposedly valid for 5 years. What you may not know is that the Canadian government wants you back in Canada with at least 6 months remaining on your passport. On the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade website, www.voyage.gc.ca, there is a general statement, and I quote, "You should carry a Canadian passport for all visits outside Canada, including the USA. It should be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of your expected return to Canada." To be fair there are some countries where this is a requirement for entry, but not many. In making this blanket statement the Canadian Government has reduced your passport validity to

4½ years rather than the 5 years, along with the price increase. To make matters worse, your passport is usually dated shortly after you make application, not on the later date when you pick it up. Hence my new passport was valid for 4 years and 5 months when I picked it up.

I'd like to make a further admonition. Please check your birth certificates. I was born in New Brunswick. My birth certificate was issued over 60 years ago. I used that birth certificate to join the RCAF, to obtain 7 or 8 passports, to gain CPP and the OAP. Yet on my recent trip to the Passport Office it was declared invalid! It seems it was personally signed in 1937 by the *Deputy Registrar of Vital Statistics* not the Registrar. Hence I had to request a new birth certificate that had the Registrar's signature from a machine copy, i.e. no one signed it personally at all. And I hear from friends who were born in Quebec prior to 1994 that they also have birth certificates that are invalid. They must reapply for new birth certificates prior to applying for a passport.

*James Cooling
Nanaimo, BC*

Rates at Out-of-Canada ATM's

Regarding your January edition page 5 'Scoop', it's worthwhile remembering that CIBC Aerogold Visa belongs to a world wide banking network with FREE withdrawals at Barclays (Great Britain and many overseas locations with Barclays outlets, such as most of the Commonwealth), in

addition to Bank of America, Deutsche Bank, Westpack Australia's First Bank and BNP Paribas. If you use other cards at a Barclays outlet you will incur fees!

In addition, I keep an account at Hongkong Bank of Canada who have the largest world-wide network of their own branding. In Great Britain, they are known as HSBC. In many foreign places all I do is look up and down a main street for their logo and I'm plugged into my own bank with NO SERVICE CHARGES! They are absolutely the best in Asia. Yes ... one must work at keeping down unnecessary service fees.

*David K. Finlay
Port Moody, B.C.*

A Few More Tips on the Outer Banks

A quick follow-up to Editor Ann's article in January on the Outer Banks, North Carolina. A couple of summers ago, we rented one of the large cottages there for a "working holiday" ... a committee of teachers assembled from various points in North America. We noted that many similarly-scattered families use the cottages as an opportunity for a one-week get-together each year. The cottages are often quite unattractive externally, but they are beautifully appointed inside.

Because these cottages normally rent from Saturday to Saturday, traffic on the single main highway down the spine of the Banks, as well as on the highways to the limited bridges across the Sound, was a bit of a nightmare, outgoing on the Saturday morning and incoming during the afternoon. If you are thinking of visiting in the summer

months, try to time your arrival and departure for another day. (Cottage renters could stay at a B&B or hotel/motel at either end of their visit.) And if you are staying over on a Saturday, plan to enjoy a quiet day close to your cottage, rather than trying to drive to attractions in the chaos.

Also, the grocery stores are jammed on the week-ends with newcomers stocking up for their stay. Fortunately we shopped in Virginia Beach for staples before heading down to the cottage, and also stopped at one of the many enticing fruit and vegetable stands along the way before we reached the Banks. The low-lying mainland has many productive farms and equivalent produce is simply not available on the Banks themselves.

Restaurants are also crowded Saturday evening, with many newcomers too exhausted, after unpacking, to cook for themselves. Reservations would be advised if you are dining out, unless your meals are part of a package at your accommodations. We celebrated the end of our week with a Friday dinner at the posh Sanderling Inn Resort, north of Kitty Hawk, between Duck and Corolla. For those who cannot decide whether to stay on the ocean or Sound, the banks are so narrow at Sanderling that you can watch the morning sunrise and listen to the breakers from your hotel balcony, then cross the road to their informal cafe and photograph the sunset over the Sound! Sanderling Inn can be contacted at 1 800 701 4111, www.sanderlinginn.com

*Stan Farrow
Scarborough, ON*

continued from page 1

the Cedoz one. We asked if the bus went to the centre, and yes it did, so we climbed on with our luggage (many others had luggage as well, locals we assumed). The fare was Koruna 18, which is less than C\$1. At the time of our visit the Koruna was about 20/21 to the Canadian dollar. Where dollar prices are indicated in this article they are approximate Canadian dollars. (*As we go to print there are 19.77 Koruna to the Canadian dollar – Ed.*) We asked our neighbours on the bus if any spoke English and, if so, where we should get off. A charming older gentleman not only told us where to get off, he got off the bus with us (not his stop) and flagged a taxi with a meter for us and gave directions in Czech to the driver. In addition he gave us ideas for our itinerary, most of which we were delighted to see matched our planned route.

We stayed at the Pension Unitas booked by Internet after being noted in *Lonely Planet* as “basic, but with a great location in the Old Town within easy walking distance to everything.” The *pension* also had some history in that it was first a convent and then the headquarters of the Czech secret police. Our room, number 9, was three doors from where President Havel was unwillingly located in the old Communist era. Updated smallish rooms were very quiet, overlooking the old convent courtyard. Bathrooms were shared but clean. Breakfast was minimal with bread, butter, and jam, tea or coffee. However a great Tesco supermarket just round the corner provided fruit, yoghurt and cheese to supplement the basics. At Kr.1,400 per night (\$70) for two in a twin room, it was reasonable and the location allowed us to return during the day.

I do not need to tell readers of *TravelScoop* what a wonderful old city Prague is with its wealth of old buildings and not a modern concrete office tower anywhere in sight. A previous issue – January 1997 – has given readers the sightseeing highlights. We found three days was needed to cover the main sights comfortably: the Old Town, the Jewish Quarter and the castle area.

On our first day we went to American Express to change travellers cheques (no commission on their own cheques) and inquire about a reliable local auto rental agency. There was one right in their office called Rentpoint, so we arranged for a small car, a Mazda, to be delivered to our *pension* on our fourth day. There was no charge for the delivery in Prague and a modest \$15 charge to return it to the airport, an option we chose. The rate was about \$41.60 per day without collision damage waiver as this was covered by my credit

card.

We found driving out of Prague to be surprisingly easy. We waited until the morning rush hour was over and left about 10 a.m. Traffic is minimal by North American standards (less cars per capita) and the car rental folks gave good instructions. We needed to have our own map as this was not provided, but I had bought a Michelin in Canada to use in trip planning, along with the *Lonely Planet* guide. I had also looked at a few other books such as the Fodor’s guide in the library.

Our route for eight days was to take us through southern Bohemia and Moravia. We left out the west with its famous spa towns, as this was not an interest of ours. In planning we also had to allow for castles being shut the day after statutory holidays and Mondays. May 2 was the day after the May 1 holiday, so we had to leave out Karlstein castle, but saw plenty of other castles later and it would be impossible to visit them all.

We spent our first night in Tabor, which is famous for being a centre of the Hussites. Jan Hus was burned for heresy in 1415 and Tabor was a military base for his followers who fought the Catholic Church. In Tabor there is a Hussite Museum where underground passages, constructed in the 15th century as a refuge in times of war, still exist. We stayed overnight at the Hotel Kapital (approx. \$57 for a twin room and breakfast). Our plan was to pick hotels or *pensions* on the edge of towns not in the centre, as they were easier to find and offered parking. All the towns we visited and where we stayed had old centres and cars were restricted or inconvenient to park. A walking tour of town then kept us busy the remainder of the day.

Next morning we set off for our first chateau, Hluboka, 10 km north of Ceske Budejovice. As with most sights it is up on top of the hill with the parking below and the day’s exercise is walking up and down. The fine chateau on this site originally dated back to the 13th century but the current building was constructed between 1841 and 1871 in imitation of Windsor Castle. It is fully furnished inside and the tour is well worthwhile. Unfortunately tours were not available in English at the time we were there and this was the only site we visited that did not give out free written English notes covering the text of the tour. Tours in Czech are much cheaper than English (when available) and were usually around \$3-\$5 per person. Of particular note in this chateau was the bizarre coat of arms: a raven plucking out the eye of a Turk. We found this not only

on the front door but also in every keyhole.

After leaving the chateau and having a picnic lunch nearby, we drove cross-country to a small hamlet called Holasovice. This hamlet has the best example of intact rural baroque style farmhouses. The hamlet took some finding, as it was too small for our map, however once we were in the vicinity, west of Ceske Budejovice, we found the signposts. Holasovice consisted of 22 well-preserved houses with ornamentation or painting on the outside and with small farms attached all set round a village green with pond, chapel and hall. The houses were not open to visitors as all are currently lived in, but there was one that was a small café. An information room on the side of another building just outside the centre had a small local museum (and toilets).

We continued on our way to Cesky Krumlov where we planned to spend two nights. It is a beautiful town with a castle and is on the UNESCO World Heritage list. It is known to be crowded later in the season, as it is close to one of the main routes from Prague to Austria. We picked an historic B&B in a 500-year-old round Gothic tower at Kr.1200 or \$57 for a twin room, bathroom shared with one other room and two breakfasts. Pension Ve Vezi was the name and it was a good location once found (it was not shown on the *Lonely Planet* map).

The first day here we set off south and then east visiting first Rozmberk Nad Vltavou, where there is another hilltop castle, dating from the 16th century, that looked beautiful framed by the trees in blossom. The highlight is the banquet hall, which is covered with frescoes. On our way east we stopped at Vyssi Brod which has a fortified Cistercian monastery built between the 13th and 14th centuries. It was closed during the communist era, but a small group of monks have moved in again. We only visited the church as the

Chapter House, a fine gothic one completed in 1285, was not open at the time of our visit. Our day trip carried on to Lake Lipno before returning to Cesky Krumlov.

On our second day in this location we spent the morning exploring the castle and its lovely gardens. The latter were free and reached by a high arched passageway, which from the outside looks almost like a Roman aqueduct.

We left for Trebon after lunch, a short drive of 46 km. On arrival we looked for and found Pension Siesta located beside a canal just outside the town walls. We had a twin room with private bath and two breakfasts for Kr. 900 (\$45). Trebon is an attractive old town, but its best feature are the lakes around the area. They have been fish farming here for over 500 years; some of the old fish hatcheries are still in use and the fish are released into the lakes, many of which were created for this purpose years ago. They are harvested with nets when ready. We walked around the nearest lake, also used for boating and swimming in the summer, and cycling is very popular in this area with marked routes of different lengths around the various



Pension Ve Vezi, Cesky Krumlov (Parkyn)

lakes.

We left Trebon on a Monday, so planned our day knowing that castles and museums would be closed. We headed for a rural chateau called Cervana Lhota, north of Jindrichuv Hradec, where, we'd heard, the grounds are more attractive than the inside. Built in a dark pink colour on an outcrop in a small lake, its reflections were most photogenic. It is possible to walk round the lake, with its resident pair of swans, and then picnic, as we did, at a wrought iron table and chairs with view of the chateau and lake ... an idyllic setting. This chateau was not on the direct route to our next stop at Telc but made for a delightful detour.

Telc in Moravia is another UNESCO Heritage

Site. The town was rebuilt by Italian masons after a fire in 1530 and is in the Renaissance style. Building finished around 1589 and the main square has remained unspoilt to this day. The town is surrounded by artificial fish ponds and small lakes. We set out to search for a place to stay on a street called Steprincka, where *Lonely Planet* had listed a *pension*. However we could not see it, but instead saw a sign advertising an apartment in the garden behind an ordinary-looking house. We checked this out and found delightful private accommodation in the house of a teacher. He and his wife did not speak English but when their daughter came home we discovered she had a little. Before that a few words of tourist German, such as *zimmer frei?* sufficed. We had an apartment with sitting/sleeping area, a large kitchen and bathroom for Kr.720 (about \$35) for two with breakfast. (Without breakfast the price would have been Kr.600 or \$29.) But the breakfast was so worthwhile ... I haven't had such a fresh egg in years! The free-range chickens lived in the garden, which stretched down

to the pond. It was a delightful walk round the pond into town to explore and eat dinner. We particularly liked restaurant Senk pod Uezi near the north gate. They had pork medallions and chicken breasts for less than \$5 and the local beef specialty for \$6.50. These main dishes came with what they called 'a rich garnish', which consisted of cabbage, beetroot, carrots, tomato and cucumber; no vegetable order was needed. However the delicious boiled potatoes at 80 cents were extra, though a 'must'. We also liked the fact that they had a separate non-smoking eating room.

Perhaps now is the time to mention general food matters. Breakfasts, except in Prague, included a boiled egg, and/or cheese and/or yoghurt, as well as bread, tea or coffee. For lunch we usually enjoyed a



The well-preserved old town of Telc (Parkyn)

picnic of supplies bought at the supermarkets. We also bought our bottled water there and wine (\$3 to \$5 a bottle for Czech *vin ordinaire*). Dinner we always ate at a local restaurant. Italian food is popular here and was nearly always an option. Typically a 10-inch pizza for one of us and a pasta dish for the other, together with salad, would cost around \$12. We would often eat a dessert later at a different café ... perhaps an ice cream or tiramisu or a pastry.

From Telc we took a full day to explore two of the main sights of the southern Moravian borderlands. As in Bohemia, we saw gentle rolling farmlands for the most part, but with fewer trees in blossom lining the roads. By the way, the side roads almost everywhere are most enjoyable to drive as they are all paved and

have very little traffic. Our first stop was the village of Slavonice which has many houses covered with 16th century graffiti decorations. Not vandalism-type graffiti, but planned, intricate ornamentation. The village of some 2,600 people were working hard when we were

there on recobbling their main street by hand. After looking at the houses and enjoying a morning coffee at one of the cafés, we drove further east to Vranov castle, perched on the top of a granite crag. We parked below and hiked up on an attractive path cut through the woods and lined with wild flowers. While the castle has a 14th century core it was mostly rebuilt in 1680 in the baroque style. No one else was there when we arrived, so we had a private tour in Czech for about \$2.20 each. In fact, we were given English texts and the guide walked round with us in silence at our speed, which was most enjoyable. There were many ornate rooms to see and the 18th century bathtub impressed us as it looked a bit like a modern hot tub.

After two nights in Telc, we drove northwest

towards Prague but stopped in Kutna Hora to visit the fine cathedral and its famous ossuary. We checked in for an overnight stay at Hotel U Vlasskeno Dvora in a large twin room for Kr.1,290 (\$62) with buffet breakfast before visiting the Cathedral of St. Barbara built between 1380 and 1558 when Kutna Hora was a wealthy silver mining town. The cathedral is the second largest in the country and contains many mining themes.

The next morning we visited the ossuary chapel of All Saints in a suburb that had been the sight of Bohemia's first Cistercian monastery. An early abbot brought back some earth from Jerusalem in the 13th century and sprinkled it in the graveyard. Demand for plots then mushroomed, helped by an epidemic of the plague, and the bones piled up. They were stacked in piles in the basement chapel. We can only suppose the grave plots went on a 'rent a plot for so many years' system, and then the next person got to occupy it, while the old bones went onto the chapel piles. However, another twist to this bizarre story occurred around 1870 when the monastery was abolished and the Scharzenberg family purchased the property. A local woodcarver then started using the bones to create unusual pieces. He made a fine chandelier, a coat of arms complete with the raven plucking out the eye of a Turk (similar to the one which we had seen at the Hluboka chateau) and many other artefacts.

After this rather ghoulish start to the day, we set off for more cheerful sights. First, we went to see a folk museum at Prerov n. Labem. Here many older farm houses have been gathered together and furnished in the appropriate period of the house. We enjoyed the visit, but it would not rank as a 'must see'. However, our last stop, at the village of Pruhonice on the way back to Prague, was delightful. The attractions are the gardens and park attached to the chateau there. The park is now a state horticultural preserve with three lakes and woods full of rhododendrons coming into flower when we were there in early May. I suspect it could be crowded on a weekend, but on the Thursday we visited there were only a few people and it was delightful.

It was now our last night in the Czech Republic and we needed a hotel near the airport for our Friday morning flight. We drove on a ring round the city outskirts to the airport in the northeast, then headed back towards Prague and into the first suburb we reached. We had no specific plans and the *Lonely Planet* had had no tips for us. We checked a couple of *pensions* but

they were both full and we found an expensive hotel, a bit out of our budget except as a last resort. Then we found the Hotel Port, 3-star and convenient to the highway back to the airport 5 km away. We had a functional twin room with private bath and breakfast for Kr.1,600 or \$76 for the two of us. There was also a restaurant that was quite acceptable, so we were set for our departure the next day.

On arrival at the airport we parked outside in the unloading area and met the agent for Rentpoint at the information office as we had been instructed. My only concern was that we arrived early and I was concerned that the security staff would not let me leave the car there for 20 minutes or so, but I had no problem and everything regarding the car was resolved satisfactorily.

All in all I can highly recommend not only visiting Prague, one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, but also taking the time as we did to rent a car and explore the beautiful smaller towns and castles/chateaux that abound in this country. The 12 days we spent in the Czech Republic will remain a highlight of our European trip, and late April/early May is an excellent time to visit.

Useful contacts:

Rentpoint Rent-a-car: tel: (country code 011 420) 2 672 86822, fax: 2 672 86819, e-mail: rentpoint@rentpoint.cz, www.rentpoint.cz or see their agent in the American Express Office in Wenceslas Square, Prague

Pension Unitas, Bartolomejska 9, 110 00 Prague, tel: 2 242 21802, fax: 2 242 17555, e-mail: unitas@unitas.cz, www.cloister-inn.cz/unitas

Hotel Kapital, tr. 9, Kvetna 617, Tabor, tel: 2 249 90990, fax: 2 249 90999, e-mail: hotelkapital@volny.cz or log on to www.czechhotels.cz/de tailen_EUR_682_KAPITAL_HOTEL.html

Pension Ve Vezi, Pivovarska 28, 38101 Cesky Krumlov, tel/fax: 380 711742

Pension Siesta, Hradebni 26, 37901 Trebon, tel/fax: 384 724831, e-mail: penzionsiesta@tiscali.cz, www.penzionsiesta.cz

Private apartment on Strepnicka in Telc, Manager Jiri Remes, tel: 066 7243912

Hotel U Vlasskeho Dvora, ul. 28, Rijna 511, 24801 Kutna Hora, tel: 327 514618, fax: 327 514627, e-mail: kh_hotels@iol.cz, www.hotely-kh.cz

Hotel Port, Drnovska 19, 16100 Prague 6-Ruzyně, tel/fax: 2 301 9104, e-mail: mullerjan@mbox.vol.cz, www.flux.cz/tux ☺

Hugh Gaudet of Calgary writes: "The following is an example of how TravelScoop can connect readers and be a great help to travellers. We enjoyed Les Dickason's article "A Cheaper Way to Stay in the South of France" in the January 2002 issue and followed up with a telephone conversation and exchange of e-mail messages with him about the cottages. When we were not able to arrange a stay in the cottages mentioned, Les Dickason came to the rescue and advised us that he had "met a man in the Lot who also had a house for rent". He gave us the details and, to our delight, this turned out to be La Muse!

A French Cottage Called "La Muse"

by Hugh Gaudet

A small house called La Muse, owned by New Yorkers Gary Osius and Ellen Shire, is located in Gagnac sur Cere, an interesting village in the Lot Department of France, about 200 km east of Bordeaux and 180 km north of Toulouse.

The cottage is just the right size for a couple with its kitchen, sitting area, bedroom with queen bed, bathroom with shower as well as a large deck off the sitting area providing ample living space. There is also a basement for laundry and storage. The cottage is modern and equipped with all necessary dishes and cooking utensils, bedding and towels, dishwasher, washing machine, microwave oven and satellite TV.

An advantage of this cottage is that Gary and Ellen have a house close by and spend much of the year in France, so they are able to be of any assistance to their guests if required. Nearly everyone in the area seems to know Gary and Ellen!

While Gagnac itself is small and rural, it is only 4 km to Bretenoux and 12 km to Saint Cere, which offer all necessary shopping and other services. Easy day trips can be made to Rocamadour, a medieval town with a citadel which clings to a cliff side; to Sarlat-la-

Caneda, another wonderful medieval town with a very large weekly market; or Collonges la Rouge with its buildings made of red sandstone. There are many other interesting towns in the region, or you can opt to spend your days in the countryside amongst some beautiful scenery of farmlands, forests, cliff-lined river valleys and hill-top villages. Further afield lies Cahors, home of a magnificent old bridge and renowned since Roman times for its fine Cahors wine;

St. Cirq Lapopie, a town perched on cliffs; Figeac, birth place of the Egyptologist Champollion who deciphered the Rosetta stone, and Bergerac of Bordeaux-wine fame.

As we explored the Lot region from La Muse we found several excellent restaurants. We would especially like to recommend

Hostellerie Belle Rive in Port de Gagnac, just a couple of kilometers from the house. The Belle Rive offers fine dining and accommodation and the property has been in the same family for many generations. The restaurant offers typical regional fare at both lunch and dinner and is an exceptional place in such a small village.

If self-catering is not your idea of a vacation, we



La Muse Cottage, Gagnac sur Cere (P. Gaudet)

As readers may remember, TravelScoop subscribers Ginnie and Norris Rich are spending a year in Ireland. They have already sent us several tips. Here, now, is an account of the highlight of their visit.

Discover the Skellig Islands

by Ginnie Rich

We are in accord ... the highlight of our stay in Ireland thus far has been our visit out to the Skellig Islands (or Skellig Rocks, as they are sometimes called) which rise out of the sea like two majestic sailing ships. They are located in the Atlantic Ocean some eight miles beyond Valencia Island, Co. Kerry, which is the most westerly inhabited point in Ireland and, in fact, in Europe. Valencia Island is joined to the mainland by a bridge and it was chosen as the site for the laying of the first transatlantic cable in 1857.

We depart early from Portmagee Pier, blessed with good weather and a calm sea. But the captain must have a stout heart, a steady hand and nerves of steel as on many days these cliffs are wind- and sea-lashed from every side.

The Skellig Rocks are one of the outposts credited with helping Christian monastic civilization survive through the Dark Ages. The Great Skellig, an enormous mass of rock rising out of the Atlantic to a height of more than 650 feet (200 metres), contains the ruins of a settlement built by early Christian monks.

Yes, from a distance we could well have mistaken the Skellig Islands for two majestic sailing ships with all sails full in the wind. But as we travel closer we

can see two very craggy rocks rising spire-like out of the sea. We soon see that Skellig Michael is beautifully green (in August) as every crevice is covered with flowering sea campion and moss. But the Lesser Skellig Island appears to have a dusting of snow. Sure enough, our eyes did deceive us, but soon our noses don't! Lesser Skellig is an ornithologist's treasure house, providing a home for puffins, kittiwake, razor-

bill, guillimots and at least 20,000 pairs of gannets. Nearing the island we are delighted to see a flock of creamy white gannets flying overhead, but not so delighted when the droppings on the boat proved that we hadn't seen snow! Later we see that the gannets are very tame and crane their inquisitive



Skellig Michael (Tourism Ireland)

little heads out of the nest for a view of anyone approaching.

We are to land on Skellig Michael, a UNESCO Heritage Site. There is no pier for disembarkation so passengers must be fairly well co-ordinated to leap at the right moment from the moving boat onto a 15 inch wide slippery stone step. Failing to do so could land you in the icy sea somewhere between the boat and the rocks. It is quite unimaginable how the ancient monks would have managed the landing and ferrying of sup-

plies with the small hide-covered “currachs” of 1400 years ago.

There are three separate sets of steps laboriously carved out of the rock faces, 2300 steps in all, proof of penitence, zeal and dedication. They lead to the monastery at the 182 metre level and the pinnacle at 217 metres. How between six and twenty dedicated men could have performed all this work with extremely limited tools is a mystery.

The monastery seems to hang on the very edge of the world with the wide expanse of deep blue sea below and immense space all around. As though the monastery wasn't isolated enough for contemplative seclusion, one

hermit monk located his lonely cell by itself on the island's 217 metre southern pinnacle. On what George Bernard Shaw described as “the most fantastic and most impossible rock in the world” the monks built a primitive church, six corbelled beehive-shaped cells, two

boat-shaped oratories, two cisterns and erected many gravestones and crosses, all protected by a rock wall. The dwellings at this archeologically-significant site have received small repairs but have remained fairly well intact over the centuries. The monks chose for their site the most sheltered location on the island and further protecting it with a rock wall. Naturalists and archeologists have recently experimented with growing summer vegetables in this warm enclosure. Presumably the monks survived by eating sea birds, their eggs, fish and seal meat. The sea pinks growing on the island may have provided them with a poor-quality peat for fuel. Even at the best of times it is conceivable that the monks of Skellig Michael were forced to test their limits many times each day and yet there are scholars who believe this was considered a privileged location reserved for only the most devout



It's a steep, but worthwhile climb to the top! (Tourism Ireland)

monks!

The sea is calm as we return ... a perfect time for reflection. We gaze up at the dizzying, awe-inspiring heights one last time, asking “why, what, how?” There are so many unanswered questions here. Certainly climbing to the pinnacle of Skellig Michael encourages spiritual reflection for one feels as though one is surely climbing all the way to heaven!

The details ...

In the summer, boats depart from Portmagee Pier (on the far west end of the Ring of Kerry). Boat trips to Skellig Michael and back, including circumnavigation of Lesser Skellig, cost €35 (C\$57) each. You can request pick-up at the B&B.

At Portmagee there is the Skellig Heritage Centre This is an audio-visual centre where the background to the monastic occupation of the island is explained, as well as the life of lighthouse-keepers who worked

there between 1820 and 1987. Other topics include the habits of local seabirds and the life of sea creatures in the area. This is a popular visitor attraction, but I wouldn't want readers to think that the Centre is in any way equivalent to a trip out to the islands; I would not like to think of anyone being so close and not going out to Skellig Michael!



Sea Breeze B&B

The tourist office in Killarney is very helpful about making reservations. Boats depart quite early so we had the tourist office book us into a B & B at nearby Cahirciveen, named the Sea Breeze. It was excellent and cost us about €30 (C\$48) each. Contact the B&B at Renard Road,

... continued on page 20

These words are engraved on an historic marker on the Santa Fe Trail:

"Look out over the prairie, and try to imagine how westbound travelers on the Santa Fe Trail might have felt at this point in their journey. The sight of the rocky Mountains appearing on the western horizon must have brought relief - and excitement - at reaching a milestone in their journey to Santa Fe or beyond. The distant mountains symbolized their success at crossing the wild, seemingly endless prairie expanses, and the hardships they had endured to get here. But the mountains also sent a silent warning of the difficult crossing over the Raton Pass, four days ahead. And as you turn your back to the mountains, think about trail travelers heading eastward towards Missouri, for whom the long journey across the prairie was just beginning."

Traversing Colorado's Frontier

by Ann Wallace

To travel from east to west (or *vice versa*) across southern Colorado is tantamount to having a continental geography lesson combined with a fascinating 'opening of the west' history lesson. This is a varied land of broad plains rising through pretty foothill country to the beautiful Sangre de Cristo Mountains and, finally, to the soaring Rockies. It's a land of ancient trails, long-ago battles, Indian reservations, national forests, historical forts, museums, and many tales of early settlers, from gunslingers to missionaries.

If you're planning 'The Big Road Trip Around the U.S.' do include southern Colorado in your travels, or perhaps like me you will decide to fly to Colorado Springs (or nearby Denver) and explore from there. The first account of my travels in this region appeared in our last edition (Feb/March) along with a simple map. But the fine State Map and *Vacation Guide*, available by calling 1 800 COLORADO, or online at www.colorado.com, will prove invaluable in your travels and you can thereby plan to travel as many of the official Scenic and Historic drives as your time permits.

If you decide to take a route through Pueblo you will discover a town busy re-inventing itself by renovating old buildings and establishing a recreational waterfront area known as the Historic Arkansas Riverwalk. An outstanding experience for me during my short stay in Pueblo was a visit to the fine Sangre de

Cristo Arts Center (admission \$4 ... all prices U.S.). This excellent gallery offers startling modern exhibitions, a fine Children's Museum and – my favourite – a fascinating exhibition of western art. What a great introduction to travels in the west to see so many fine depictions of life on the range and the world of cowboys! For your overnight stay in Pueblo do please choose the Abriendo Inn, an elegant, luxurious B&B in a fine residential area close to town. You will not be disappointed. (All details at the end.) And if your travels have made you ready for a glass of cold brew, head to Eilers' Place at 326 E. Mesa Avenue, a multi-generational bar bursting with friendly folks and memorabilia of Pueblo's past.



Sangre de Cristo Arts Center

Roads lead out of Pueblo in all directions. If you love wide open plains plan to take a detour east and you will almost immediately be out on the vast prairies and in the least-populated part of Colorado. If there has been rain you will find yourself in a sea of shimmering grass; if drought has cast its unwelcome spell the region will be golden brown, subtly changing colour as the sun makes its way across the dome of the sky. This is the land of the Comanche Grasslands, of the Santa Fe Trail, of a variety of wildlife and of tales and legends from the past.

Between the towns of La Junta and Las Animas, on Hwy. 50, stands the Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site, looking for all the world like a movie set with its

adobe walls, its wagon and gun carriage standing outside and its cool, dark interior rooms. Originally built in 1833 by brothers William and Charles Bent, the fort was a settlement designed primarily for trade with the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians for buffalo robes. For much of its 16-year history, the fort was the only major permanent white settlement on the Santa Fe Trail between Missouri and the Mexican settlements. The fort provided explorers, adventurers, and the U.S. Army a place to get needed supplies, wagon repairs, livestock, good food, water and company, rest and protection in this vast "Great American Desert". During the war with nearby Mexico in 1846, the fort became a staging post, but thereafter fell into neglect. Archeological excavations and original sketches, paintings and diaries were used in the fort's reconstruction in 1976.

And if you're interested in more stories of "how the west was won" and in particular of that legendary frontiersman Kit Carson and the Santa Fe Trail you'll find plenty to interest you in and around Las Animas and nearby Boggsville, just a 13 miles east of the fort. Las Animas offers Best Western Bent's Fort Inn for your accommodation; good value at about \$57, including breakfast. You may like to relax in their little pool in the evening; a great place to enjoy the star-filled prairie sky.

Travelling south west from the Bent's Fort region you'll be crossing the plains on Hwy. 350 known as the Santa Fe Trail Byway. Here your imagination will continue to be stirred by thoughts of the wagon trains that passed this way and of the emotions felt by the travellers of those days as they caught their first glimpse of the distant mountains standing like a cut-out against the western sky. (Here I'll mention again an engrossing book I bought while in Colorado: *Land of Enchantment: Memoirs of Marian Russell Along the Santa Fe Trail*, published by the University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, and available in book stores and museum gift shops in the region.)



On the Highway of Legends Byway (Wallace)

The town of Trinidad, on the Santa Fe Trail's Mountain Route, and very close to the New Mexico border, is well worth a stop. Once a Trail campsite, Trinidad flourished from the mid-19th century and you'll be surprised by the fine collection of Victorian homes here. Plan to spend several hours in the History Museum complex, comprising the excellent Santa Fe Trail Museum, the impressive 1870 Baca House and the Bloom Mansion and Gardens, once home to banker and cattle baron Frank Bloom. And in town don't miss the fine, modern A.R. Mitchell Museum of Western Art and Hispanic History. How I wished I could have spent longer here! I didn't even get to spend the night in Trinidad, but all the locals I spoke with recommended the Stone Mansion B&B. The museums can certainly fill a most pleasant day and there's a free trolley to take you around town during the summer months. I'd certainly recommend an overnight stay here, not only to

see the above attractions but to provide a nice respite before the beautiful drive on the Highway of Legends Byway.

Yes, heading on west out of Trinidad, with the plains now behind you, you'll discover the Highway of Legends Byway. With its forests, passes and vast

vistas of the rock masses known as the Spanish Peaks you'll understand why it is renowned as one of southern Colorado's most beautiful routes. Then, close to the town of La Venta, you'll connect with Hwy. 160 and will soon be approaching another historic fort. It's the Colorado Historical Society's Fort Garland, a fort that was once commanded by Kit Carson himself. Established in 1858 the fort, with its garrison of over 100 men, protected the early settlers in the San Luis Valley. Today visitors can tour the Fort Museum and its adjoining adobe buildings which feature a recreation of the commandant's quarters during Carson's time, together with many other artefacts from garrison and pioneering life. The Museum also highlights the folk art and culture of the Hispanic community in this area and contains an outstanding book store. Special

events such as historical recreations by costumed members of the Historical Society are held regularly and the folks who take part in these events are so delighted to talk to visitors, especially if you've come all the way from Canada! For information on the timing of these events call 719 379 3512.

If you fancy some good local fare for breakfast or lunch (or just an apple-pie snack) while you're in the little town of Fort Garland, stop at the Ute Café (any local will be able to point the way) and tell owner Darlene Maes that Ann sent you. If Darlene has time she will share with you the heart-warming story of her life and you can purchase some of her take-away goodies.

Your map will show you that Hwy. 150 joins 160 just west of Fort Garland and as you approach the junction you will see the signpost to the Great Sand Dune National Monument. Do not miss this unforgettable natural attraction ... the tallest sand dunes in North America. These dunes reach heights of nearly 750 ft. and cover about 39 square miles. They consist of billions of grains of sand blown across the San Luis Valley and deposited in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. They are constantly-changing sand sculptures and it is quite unsettling to spy them from a distance for they seem so out of place ... there's no shore, no ocean, not even a lake here. Just a wide green valley and mountains that are often snow-capped. If you take children they won't believe their eyes! People are allowed on the dunes to hike, ride a horse, take photos and seek for unusual plants and creatures. Remember, however, walking here is strenuous and the sand can be very hot. On summer days you may be content to take photos from the shade of a nearby tree. There's a good Visitor Center here, but no restaurant. If you're visiting at meal-time take a picnic and use one of the picnic areas under the trees. Admission \$3. Visit www.nps.gov/grsa, plus lots of other sites if you enter the name of the park in your search engine.



Members of the Fort Garland Historical Society recreate fort life of long ago (Wallace)

Continuing west you will be driving across the San Luis Valley with the Rockies now soaring before you. Imagine, once again, travelling through here on a wagon train! This region is not in fact a valley at all, but an intra-mountain basin and, being the size of New Jersey, one of the world's largest such basins. Some sixty million years ago a volcano in the region blew up, creating the San Juan Mountains and the Rio Grande Rift. The area is now full of holy places of importance to the Hopi and Navaho people as well as Athabasca-speaking people who came to this region from Canada.

If you'd like to pause in Del Norte, the interesting Rio Grande County Museum and Cultural Center (open Tuesday to Saturday) is an ideal place to stretch your legs before driving on to South Fork. There's an excellent Tourist Information office where the highways divide at South Fork. You may be planning to stay on 160 and travel on to one of Colorado's most

famous attractions: Mesa Verde National Park. But from South Fork I can recommend a fabulous drive north to the old silver mining town of Creede on Hwy. 149 that runs from South Fork alongside the Rio Grande through Wagon Wheel Gap (where there are several roadside restaurants if your timing is

right). This route is a section of the Silver Thread Scenic Byway and you can continue on deeper into the Rockies on this road.

Creede, which lies in a canyon just beneath the Continental Divide, was a boom/bust town that had the reputation of being the wildest town in all of Colorado during its three-year heyday. It is now booming again thanks to preservationists, artisans, theatre folk and many other enterprising locals. Today the old silver mine is the Underground Mining Museum and the little town at the base of a towering rock formation called "The Pillars of Hercules" is home to trendy stores, quaint B&B's and the nationally-renowned Creede Repertory Theatre that offers seven plays in four days during the summer season. Rafting on the Rio Grande and hiking or riding throughout the area are favourite

pastimes for the active. I didn't stay in Creede, but if you do decide to pause here Blessings Inn and the Old Firehouse were recommended to me and I was told food and lodging have a good reputation in this town. www.creede.com is an excellent website covering all aspects of visiting Creede. Log on and you will be so surprised at all there is to see and do in this little town in the mountains.

There wasn't enough time for us to complete the Silver Threat Byway that carries travellers on into the Rockies through what must be spectacular scenery. But I hope to return one day and cover the rest of the many scenic roads of which I had received a glimpse in my whirlwind tour. Yes, my southern Colorado hosts had been keen to show me a great deal of this area, so we followed a rather circuitous route that I have tried to simplify into these two articles. As mentioned, the excellent State map will make all seem clear and travelling from plains to mountains certainly makes a memorable vacation.

I've covered most of my journey now except for the drive south of Canon City via Florence through the Wet Mountain Valley, where I spied deer, bighorn sheep and a fox, to the little town of Westcliffe. From here you can head south (it's a superb drive) and join highway 160 and proceed on your journey either west or east as detailed above. Westcliffe is a quiet town beautifully located between the Sangre de Cristo Mountains and the Wet Mountain range and close to Mission:Wolf, a wolf rehabilitation refuge. Westcliffe is small, yes, but it offers a vibrant summer theatre, a jazz festival, a couple of B&B's (the historic Main Street Inn looked delightful) and some ranches nearby, wide open views and lots of recreational possibilities in the nearby mountain ranges. Here breakfast or lunch at Karen's Gourmet Coffee Café on Main Street gives you an opportunity to meet some friendly locals while enjoying a meal that will set you up for the rest of the day. It was there that I was privileged to meet local photographer Bob Thomason whose images of the

nearby Sangre de Cristo Wilderness are well known in these parts and whose books are widely available locally. I also enjoyed an outstanding performance by drama students in the charming theatre here. If you visit www.sangre-de-cristo.com/westcliffe you'll discover lots more!

The destinations in Colorado's Frontier country that I've mentioned in my two articles are beautiful and hold a lot of interest. You'll discover so much more than I've described, museums to fascinate and views to stir your imagination. And a warm welcome is guaranteed ... the folks in these parts are delightful and so thrilled to share all their varied region has to offer. Bon voyage!



Main Street, Creede (Wallace)

Some details ...

Abriendo Inn, 300 West Abriendo Avenue, Pueblo CO 81004, tel: 719 544 2703, e-mail: abriendo@rmi.net, www.bedandbreakfastinns.org/abriendo Rates from \$69.

Best Western Bent's Fort Inn, Las Animas, tel: 1 800 508 1234.

Stone Mansion B&B, 212 East 2nd Street, Trinidad, CO 81082, tel: 719 845 1625, www.romanticcountryinns.com/stone-mansion/ \$90-95

Blessings Inn B&B, a four bedroom log-cabin-style house just a few short blocks from shopping and galleries. 466 S. Main, P.O. Box 219, Creede, CO 81130, tel: 719 658 0215, fax: 719 658 0215 e-mail: bls1964@fone.net, www.blessingsinn.com

The Old Firehouse #1 B&B, right opposite the theatre at 123 N. Main, PO Box 603, Creede, CO 81130, tel: 719 658 0212, fax: 719 658 0212 e-mail: info@theoldfirehouse.com, www.theoldfirehouse.com

Main Street Inn, Westcliffe, tel: 719 783 4000, e-mail: mstreetbb@aol.com, www.MainStreetBnB.com, rates from \$95.

The B&Bs of the the **B&B Innkeepers of Colorado Association** have properties that will place you close to many of the attractions I have listed. Call 1 800 265 7696, e-mail: infor@innsofcolorado.com, www.innsofcolorado.org

Mission Wolf: www.missionwolf.com 🐾

Travel Digest

Austria

The **Salzburg Festival** is one of the world's greatest music festivals and tickets are always at a premium. However, this year **Austrian Airlines** is the Festival's official sponsor and they have secured a generous number of performance tickets that they are offering in combination with airfare from Canada together with hotel accommodation in Salzburg's city centre. The basic package is air, two nights in Salzburg and one performance, but travellers can add extra tickets and lengthen their stay to create their own festival experience. The Festival takes place from 26 July – 31 August. These packages are being offered exclusively by Kompas Express and Austrian Airlines. For information see your agent, call 1 800 Europe-1 or visit www.kompas-express.com Prices start at \$1,895 from Toronto or Montreal. Departures from other cities also available.

Britain

Flying to Britain? Travelling on to your destination by train, but wondering about those final few miles? Now you can make use of a free internet service that enables train passengers to get accurate information about **finding taxis** to their final destination. Log on to www.traintaxi.co.uk, key in your destination and you'll learn if your arrival station has a taxi rank or be given numbers for local cab companies. For news of somewhere special to **stay in England** you might

consider investing in the English Tourism Council's 2003 edition of *Somewhere Special*, a book designed for those looking for outstanding and unusual accommodation, be it a hotel, a B&B or a self-catering holiday home. The book costs £8.99 (about C\$21) and can be ordered by calling 011 44 870 606 7204 or e-mailing fulfillment@englishtourismorg.uk The Council publishes other accommodation books specifically on hotels, B&B's, holiday homes or camping parks.

Canada

A getaway to a west coast retreat might be just the thing in these troubled times. **The Malibu Arts Retreat in BC's beautiful Princess Louisa Inlet** offers all inclusive 4-day retreats 8-11 May and 8-11 September for C\$595 per person. There you can try your hand at such pursuits as painting, sculpting, writing, yoga, cooking, film studies and dancing, or you can hike or paddle your own canoe, or you can just relax in spectacular surroundings. Price includes the 3-hour passage aboard the *Malibu Princess* from Egmont, on the Sunshine Coast. For full details call 1 800 690 7887, e-mail artesiataours@dccnet.com or visit www.suncoastarts.com In **Ontario, Something's Afoot** is organizing gentle hiking trips for seniors in areas close to Toronto. These day trips include transportation, elegant lunches, guides and admission fees if necessary (for example to the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton). For details call 416 695 1838, e-mail: somethingsafoot@rogers.com The **National Gallery of Canada** in **Ottawa** belongs to us all, and as Ottawa (and the beautiful surrounding area) makes a great spring/summer

getaway why not plan to be in the capital between 6 June and 7 September, the dates of *The Age of Watteau, Chardin, and Fragonard: Masterpieces of French Genre Painting* exhibition. Here at TS we've seen some of the advance literature on this exhibition: beautiful paintings depicting parties, flirtations and charming domestic scenes showing everyday life in 18th century France. Advance tickets available by calling 1 888 541 8888 or at www.National.gallery.ca Local hotels will no doubt be offering special packages ... we'll bring you the news in the coming months.

Ireland

A guide outlining outstanding **country manor houses, castles and restaurants** in rural Ireland (many offering surprisingly affordable accommodation) is now available from Tourism

Please note ...

www.thetravelsociety.com

Our website is now up and fully operational. We will constantly endeavour to improve it and welcome your input. To access the site the password will be up-dated monthly and will appear on the back page of your *TravelScoop* within the address box.

Ireland by calling 1 800 223 6470 or log on to the excellent site www.irelandsbluebook.com. Prefer to rent a cottage in Ireland? Then there are two guides available to help you. Call the above number, or e-mail info.ca@tourismireland.com, and request *Ireland Self-Catering 2003* (over 5,000 properties in over 600 locations in the Republic) and/or *Self-Catering Holiday Homes in Northern Ireland* (60 properties in the north).

And how about going to school in Ireland for two weeks?

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland's oldest university, is offering an international programme consisting of seminars (Irish history, literature and politics), field trips and cultural activities from 13-26 July. Fees start at €1,455 (about C\$2,282) and vary with the accommodation option selected. Also included is a 2-week travel pass for Dublin's bus and rail system. Cost of travel to Ireland is *not* included. For more information tel: 011 353 1 602 1741, fax: 011 353 1 677 8843, e-mail: incoming.Ireland@usit.ie, www.usit.ie. Closing date for applications is 6 June.

U.S.A.

A little more information on the First Flight Centennial Celebration to be held at the Wright Brothers National Memorial, **Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina** 13 – 17 December. Advanced ticketing is needed to determine requirements of infrastructure management such as parking, transportation and security. Full advance-ticket details will not be available until mid-April, so if you are keen to

attend these events you may like to keep an eye on www.celebrate100.org and www.firstflight-nc.com or call the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau at 1 877 298 4373, www.outerbanks.org. This Visitors Bureau has a free *2003 Commemorative Outer Banks Travel Guide* available for the asking which contains a calendar of events for this special year and for the 6-day celebration. The cost of the tickets has been set: US\$10 for a one-day ticket, \$5 for seniors and a package price of US\$25 for all five days of the celebration.

Vietnam

Wondering where your travels will take you next? You may like to know that the Hong Kong-based Economic and Political Risk Consultancy has announced that Vietnam was last year ranked as the safest destination in Asia. If you'd like to explore this country independently www.destinationvietnam.com is a good place to start, or you could take advantage of the services offered by **Idyll Limited**, who offer an 'untour' to Vietnam consisting of apartment rentals and staff support throughout your stay. Proceeds from the Vietnam Untour programme are used by the Idyll Development Foundation for job-creating economic development work in Vietnam. Even on vacation you can make a difference! For details call 1 888 868 6871, e-mail: info@untours.com, www.untours.com. Untours offers their services in many other countries around the world ... their brochure tells all.

Tour Talk

Quest Nature Tours' brochure detailing their land and cruise adventures in Canada for 2003 and 2004 is now available. From the High Arctic to Ontario's Point Pelee, and from points west to east, there's sure to be an adventure here that appeals. Call 416 633 5666 or 1 800 387 1483 or visit www.questnaturetours.ca for details.

We've briefly mentioned the east coast company **Maxxim** in the pages of *TravelScoop* before. In a few short years they have become the leading tour operator for **Atlantic Canada**, specializing in all the Atlantic Provinces and also Quirpon Island, Iles de la Madeleine and Saint Pierre et Miquelon. They offer self-guided, drive-yourself tours and can also custom-make a vacation for you, combining air, accommodation (they know all the great B&B's and interesting inns), activity passes and unlimited mileage on your car rental. A new offering this year is an 11-night land and sea expedition on a tall ship along the coast of Newfoundland. Participants will spend six nights on the ship and five on land, exploring icebergs, fjords and remote islands in the company of on-board guest speakers, while enjoying locally-influenced food and well-appointed cabins. For more information on all these vacations ask your agent for Maxxim's brochure, call 1 800 567 6666 or log onto www.maxximvacations.com

Any mycologists out there? You may be one without knowing it, for mycology is the study of and/or love of mushrooms. If these deli-

cious fungi, gourmet cuisine, travel, adventure and convivial good times are your idea of how to spend an enjoyable week, join Gundi Jeffrey (*TravelScoop* subscriber and contributor) on her 4th annual tour in **Tlaxcala, Mexico**. Due to take place 24-31 August, the tour includes foraging for mushrooms in beautiful forests atop extinct volcanoes; gourmet and local specialty dinners designed especially for the tour by top regional chefs and visits to two villages where life revolves around mushrooms. The all-inclusive event begins with a stay in a 17th century ex-hacienda, moves on to a charming rustic mountain lodge and ends with a stay the finest hotel in Tlaxcala city, located on the main plaza. All meals, cuisine events and good Latin American wines are included. Cost of the land trip is US\$1,330 pp.dbl., single supplement US\$215. For more information log on to www.mex-mush.com, phone or fax 011 52 246 461 8829 to e-mail gundi@mexmush.com for a detailed itinerary.

A group of military-history scholars, led by Terry Copp of Wilfrid Laurier University, will lead tours to **Normandy, Belgium** and **Holland** in June and late August this year. Each tour can accommodate up to 34 participants. The Normandy tour costs \$3,700 pp and includes air from Toronto, while the Holland and Belgium tour will cost \$3,900. For more details call Mike Bechthold at 519 885 9518, mbechtho@wlu.ca or visit www.canadianmilitaryhistory.com

In addition to their day trips for

seniors (mentioned on p. 17), **Something's Afoot** offers longer walking tours, with van support, of three to seven days in Ontario. Regions include the Rideau corridor, Quinte and the Haliburton highlands. Accommodation for the small groups is in unique country inns with fine food. If you are a group of at least four the company can also customize a trip for you. Their brochure isn't glossy, but the trips sound very appealing. For your copy call 416 695 1838 or visit www.hikingontario.com

Holland is a great country for an easy cycling tour (no hills!) and/or for a boating vacation (no waves!). And it offers many wonderful cities, towns and villages so close to each other. If a cycling combined with boating vacation there appeals, contact **Cycletours Holland** and request their *Bike & Boat Holidays 2003 in Holland and Belgium* brochure. They offer short, vacation-within-a-vacation trips such as the 3-night Amsterdam-Leiden-Haarlem route or the 4-night Amsterdam-Alkmaar-Purmerend route. Or, of course, you can venture further afield, perhaps to Friesland and the Wadden Islands or south to Zeeland and Flanders (Belgium) or one of the many other choices. Trips last from 3 to 14 nights. You'll cycle during the day (if you wish) and meet your boat in the evening. Make up a group of 8 or more and you can have a boat to yourself! For your copy of the multi-lingual brochure call (011 31) 20 627 40 98, fax 20 627 90 32, e-mail: cyclefun@cycle-tours.com or visit www.cycletours.com

Hotel Happenings

The Marriott hotel group (with over 2,100 hotels) is offering free weekends after five separate stays at any Marriott between 15 March and 15 June. To be eligible for these 2-night getaways you must register by calling 1 888 MARRIOTT or visiting www.marriottrewards.com

If you are a senior (in most cases 55+) and fancy a little luxury at one of the 18 hotels in the Pan Pacific portfolio you can take advantage of the group's Senior Special Packages which offer rooms at around half the usual price, e.g. US\$169 in San Francisco, US\$59 (yes, fifty nine!) in Kuala Lumpur and US\$112.50 in Bangkok. The list of locations includes Singapore, Yokohama, other properties in Malaysia and more. Lots of extras may be included too. For example, the Bangkok package includes extras such as buffet breakfast, a Thai Massage per person and a one-way transfer between the airport and the hotel. For details call 1 800 327 8585 log on to www.panpacific.com

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found an outstanding property – Château de Chauvac – in Beaulieu, a few kilometers from Gagnac. Here Terry and Dean Earnheart, world-travellers originally from Georgia, will pamper you in a delightfully restored, decorated and furnished château, some of which dates from the 13th century. Each of the six rooms is named after one of the former ladies of the château; for example, Antoinette’s room is named after Antoinette de Chauvac, at whose marriage the château was given as a dowry. There is also a tower apartment here, again fully modernized and well furnished. Guests at the château are treated to ‘champagne at sunset’ by the pool, a sumptuous breakfast and, at extra cost, a four-course dinner.

The details ...

La Muse, e-mail: gosius@ureach.com
www.lelot.com, tel: (New York) 212 316 2840.
Weekly rates 1 October – 30 April US\$400, 1 May – 30 September US\$550.

Hostellerie Belle Rive, 3-course dinner for two with wine about C\$90.

Château de Chauvac: Beaulieu-sur-Dordogne, 19430 Bassignac le Bas, France, tel/fax: 011 33 555 91 50 58, e-mail: info@chateauchauvac.com www.chateauchauvac.com, rooms per night from US\$115 – \$175, weekly rates for the apartment US\$840 – US1,050 depending on season. There are lots of extras and “first night free” winter specials. Dinner here is US\$65 per person. 📞

continued from page 12 ...

Cahirciveen, Co. Kerry, tel: 066 947 2609 fax 066 947 3275, e-mail: seabreezebandb@eircom.net, www.homepage.eircom.net/~seabreezebandb

While in the area it’s worth taking a walk and crossing over to Valentia Island. The miles of fuschia and montbretia blooming there are breathtaking.

One can travel the circle route around the Ring of Kerry (stopping at Cahirciveen) on the Bus Eireann for €15 (C\$24).

Footnote:

I have another useful contact I would like to pass on to readers. Janet White Spinner owns and rents out two

suites in a property on the river at Birr in County Offaly, in the centre of Ireland. We have been staying in the one-bedroomed suite, paying €110 (about C\$178) per week, plus electricity. The property is in a perfect location: quiet but within walking distance of shops, library, great restaurants, concerts, etc. Janet also supplies occupants of the suites with an annual pass to the adjacent castle grounds for a variety of wonderful walks. Janet can be contacted at 11A/12A Castlemall, The Maltings, Birr, County Offaly, Ireland, tel/fax: 011 353 505 47035, e-mail: janwspun@iol.ie, www.birrcastlemall.com 📞

We have a file listing several single travellers who wish to take a Travel Society trip next year. Destinations include: China, Australia, Turkey and 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 - or meet - and see if you would be compatible.

Call 416 926 2500, ex. 25 or 1 877 926 2500

How about giving a subscription to *TravelScoop* as a gift when birthdays come around this year? Call Debbie and she will arrange it for you without delay.

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

France a Culinary Extravaganza

*Space limited to
20 people*

Wine & Culinary Tour to the Bordeaux Region of France

14 days departing Date: 21 October 2003

Food and France just go together and, as winter approaches in Canada, what could be better than getting away to enjoy 14 days of superb wines and delicious foods in the Bordeaux region of France, ending with three days in Paris? Bordeaux, Bergerac, St. Emilion and Cognac are more than drinks. They are also delightful towns and villages awaiting your arrival with wine-tastings and outstanding meals.

PRICES INCLUDE AIR AND TAXES departing from:

Vancouver	\$9,864.00	pp/dbl
Victoria	\$9,923.00	pp/dbl
Calgary & Edmonton	\$9,953.00	pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$9,853.00	pp/dbl
Toronto	\$9,393.00	pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$9,717.00	pp/dbl
Halifax	\$9,853.00	pp/dbl

Your tour includes:

- Airfare based on Air France
- 12 nights' first class hotel accommodations
- Breakfast daily
- Hotel taxes and service charges
- Meals as outlined in the itinerary
- All sightseeing and appropriate entry fees as per the itinerary
- All transfers on a private basis.
- TGV train from La Rochelle to Paris
- Local English-speaking guide
- Handling of 1 piece of luggage per person

Galapagos Islands and Ecuador

*Each tour is
limited to
20 people*

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

14 days departing 18 March, 22 April, 14 October & 4 November 2003

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
When departing from	: 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

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)

The Kingdom of Thailand

with optional Angkor Wat (Cambodia)

17 days departing 21 April & 20 October 2003 *pre-tour and Pattaya post-tour extensions*

"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.

PRICES INCLUDE AIR AND TAXES departing from:

Toronto	\$3,045.00	pp/dbl
Winnipeg & Montreal	\$3,045.00	pp/dbl
Vancouver & Calgary	\$3,045.00	pp/dbl
Ottawa	\$3,100.00	pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$3,560.00	pp/dbl
Halifax	\$4,095.00	pp/dbl

GREAT ADD-ONS:

Angkor Wat	\$919.00	pp/dbl - plus air
Pattaya	\$839.00	pp/dbl - plus air

Your tour includes:

- Round-trip transpacific and domestic 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

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.

NEW

Copper Canyon & Guadalajara *9 days departing 14 March & 11 April 2003*

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

NEW

Chile, Patagonia and Easter Island *Departing 3 April & 5 September 2003*

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.)	

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

Great add-ons:

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

Your tour includes:

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

A Traveller's Turkey

Departing: 5 October & 14 September 2003

It is one of the cradles of civilization and one of the most wonderful countries on the planet. Here there 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 luxurious tours exclusively for Travel Society members and we still have room in our September tour.

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? It includes all the highlights of this fascinating land and Ann says "It is the most perfect introduction to Turkey that I can imagine."

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES 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.

Space limited to 20 people

Your tour includes:

- Round trip transatlantic and domestic flights with Air Canada
- 20 nights' accommodation
- Most 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

Costa Rica – "Nature's Museum" *11 days departing 4 & 18 April 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.

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Toronto	\$2,920 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$2,920 pp/dbl
Vancouver	\$2,990 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$2,990 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$3,036 pp/dbl
Single supplement \$464 (Sharing can be arranged.)	Taxes extra.

Please call for prices from other departure cities

Your tour includes:

- Round-trip international airfares
- Canadian domestic air
- 9 nights' accommodation in 4 different properties
- all land transfers
- flights to San Blas
- all breakfasts
- 4 lunches, 4 dinners
- rainforest aerial tram tour

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

from \$3,986 for 19 days

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. Reserve now for departures on 27 May, 9 September, 7 October & 21 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 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!

Our editor, Ann Wallace took the April 2002 China Yangtze trip and her 14-page, illustrated (and honest) account is available. For your copy please send \$5 with your address.

So many members have said:
"We don't know how you do such a first class tour at this 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 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 day and evening in Beijing & Shanghai

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Vancouver	\$3,986 pp/dbl
Victoria/Nanaimo/Kamloops	\$4,099 pp/dbl
Calgary/Edmonton	\$4,224 pp/dbl
Saskatoon/Regina	\$4,428 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$4,392 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$4,320 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,426 pp/dbl
Halifax/Quebec City/London	\$4,540 pp/dbl
Thunder Bay/St. John's	\$4,688 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$1,090 (Sharing can be arranged.)

Taxes and visas extra.

GREAT ADD-ONS:

Hong Kong	4 days/3 nights	\$1,094.00
Tokyo	4 days/3 nights	\$892.00

Prices are subject to confirmation

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.

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

Departure Date: October 22, 2003

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	\$10,357	pp/dbl
Victoria	\$10,499	pp/dbl
Calgary & Edmonton	\$10,610	pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$10,968	pp/dbl
Toronto	\$10,968	pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$10,968	pp/dbl
Halifax	\$11,049	pp/dbl

Single supplement \$1,999 (Sharing can be arranged.) Taxes extra

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.
- The Travel Society neck pillow, flight bag, travel wallet, baggage tags
- 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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Don't let my membership run out ...

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or START A NEW MEMBERSHIP _____
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check your discount choice, we will extend your membership from the expiry date:

- _____ 3 years for \$110.00 - the member rate (a 21% saving off the regular \$140.00)
- _____ 2 years for \$79.50 - the member rate (a 16% saving off the regular \$95.00)
- _____ 1 year for \$44.00 - the member rate (a 10% saving off the regular \$49.00)

All prices include GST.
 _____ my cheque is enclosed, or charge my:
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 signature: _____

I agree to pay TravelScoop the above amount in accordance with the card issuer agreement.

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 Fax: 416 926 0222 e-mail: brit@thetravelsociety.com

your membership expires on: (month - year)

Password: moon