

Fabulous offer from British Airways ... see p. 19

Travel Scoop

The Newsmagazine
for Members of
The Travel Society

Vol. 21, No. 4 May 2003

Hiking in Switzerland

by Tiiu Adamek

When we hiked in the Swiss mountains last September, the sound of music was always the cow-bells, no matter how high or how steep the terrain. As it was the beginning of fall, the cows were being brought down from the high pastures and we got to see them ceremoniously crowned with flowers and sporting their giant bells. While our trip was planned around hiking only, any enterprising visitors can be dazzled by the same splendid scenery by getting themselves up to the highland villages via the excellent public transportation. The appeal of Switzerland for hiking is the magnificent scenery, the chocolate-box look to the villages, and no grizzly bears!



In the village of Schuders, near the Austrian border (Adamek)

Switzerland Tourism assures visitors that Switzerland isn't *that* expensive, which is true if one stays at the "Sleep-in-the-Hay" barns for C\$21 which includes breakfast, hot showers and warm blankets, but that is limited to the young or young-at-heart, as are the youth hostels, dormitories and camping grounds. For my husband Frank and myself, in our sixties, more

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TravelScoop

The Newsmagazine for Members of
The Travel Society

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May 2003

Vol. 21, No. 4

From your Editor's desk...



Well ... we seem to have bad news piling on bad news. Yes, thankfully the war is trickling towards its end, but it is, of course, leaving tragedies and problems in its wake. And as we know only too well, SARS has raised its ugly head not only in Asia but here in our own country. Rather hard times to be putting together a travel magazine.

But I remain convinced that most of our world is peaceful and beautiful and that most of its inhabitants share common goals and joys. I believe strongly in the value of travel, whether it be to meet our neighbours in our own country or to the south of us, or on far distant shores. Travel undertaken with a generosity of spirit fosters understanding between nations and cultures and also makes us appreciate our own country and others like ours that cultivate tolerance and fairness.

With the constant barrage of media information it is sometimes hard to keep things in perspective. But on that dreadful morning of 11 September, people from high-flying financiers to hard-working office cleaners were killed in the course of their normal working day. And on some of the days when the toll of SARS in Toronto dominated the news, more people died in traffic accidents in the area. There is no rhyme nor reason to life's random eventualities, so I firmly believe that we must continue to reach for our dreams. And travel remains, and always will, high on life's list of dreams that can be realized. Don't fret that China or Hong Kong are off limits for a while. They'll still be there when all this is over. In the meantime, how about one of the destinations in this edition or, say, one of our trips to Australia, New Zealand or the Galapagos? They are still beautiful and as safe as it is possible to be in this world of random eventualities. Turn your dreams into reality ... and *bon voyage!*

coming in June

- Sri Lanka

- The Day of the Dead in Mexico

- Rating Hotels

Update Items

Here at *TravelScoop* we haven't had a chance to test it, but readers may like to know of the website www.bedandbreakfast.com which promises to offer hot deals at properties in Canada and the U.S. By signing up, information on these special deals will be delivered to your mail box each Wednesday. A week when we checked at random offered special rates in Victoria, BC; Mendocino, California; Chicago, and West Dover, Vermont.

New York City Tourism is also getting in on the 'accommodation via the web system' by offering instant access to more than 160 hotels at www.nycvisit.com. This site offers competitive prices and a variety of packages offered by the listed hotels as well as itineraries, other special offers, maps of the five boroughs and visitor tips.

The lively and lovely island of Barbados continues in its desire to lure Canadians to its shores by extending its *Best of Barbados* offer with 35% off round trip airfare, first night free, full breakfasts, room upgrade, free day car rental and lots of other discounts. Over 50 properties from large and luxurious to small and intimate are participating in this offer. Your agent will have full details, or visit www.barbados.org

Thinking of Egypt? If so, you'll be pleased to know that EgyptAir is now operating a direct flight from Montreal to Cairo every Tuesday and that a second non-stop flight will follow in the month of June.

This Month's Winning Scoop

Another Address in London, England

by Werner Grimm

Yes, hotel prices in London are very high, but if you do not need a 3- or 4-star hotel and feel a quiet, good guest house would do, I have the solution. Temple Lodge guest house advertises itself as "a quiet oasis in the middle of London". It is located in Hammersmith, which is the nearest underground station on the Piccadilly and District Lines with a direct connection from Heathrow Airport. It is also the western terminus of the Hammersmith and City Line. In addition, if you prefer to get around by bus, the bus station is located directly above the tube station with services connecting to all parts of London. There is also a night bus service.

When you arrive at the tube/bus station look for the exit signs that say 'Apollo Theatre' and take this way out. Keep the theatre on your left, pass St. Vincent's House and then turn left through Angel Gate. From the courtyard there is access both to The Gate Restaurant and Temple Lodge.

All rooms have a washbasin; bathrooms and showers are located along the corridor. A hearty continental breakfast is included in the price. Single rooms are £30 per night, £195 per week, twin rooms are £40 per night and £230 per week. I have stayed there; it's simple but clean and quiet (£1 = approx. C\$2.32).

As mentioned, all major tourist attractions can be easily reached by public transport. Nearby, pleasant walks along the

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.

River Thames are easily accessible from either side of Hammersmith Bridge. If you stay on the north side you will pass the rowing clubs and some historical houses, including that of William Morris. On the south bank, going towards Kew, you will see the playing fields of St. Paul's School to the left and the tidal reaches of the river to the right. Kew Gardens may also be reached by walking along the river or by taking the District Line for a few stops in the direction of Richmond, which offers its own park (with deer) and fine shopping. The recently-opened Waterfowl Sanctuary of the Wetlands Centre is also just over the bridge. And there are three theatres within five minutes' walk of the Lodge.

For more information on Temple Lodge contact Michael Beaumont at 51 Queen Caroline Street, Hammersmith, London W6 9QI, tel: 011 44 20 87 48 8388, fax: 011 44 20 87 48 8322, or e-mail: peter.vanbreda@btopen-world.com

*Werner Grimm
North Vancouver, BC*

After receiving this interesting 'scoop', we contacted Michael Beaumont for more details for our files. This was the charming letter we received from him:

"Dear Ann
Thank you for your letter. Enclosed please find our brochure with some important details on our location, rates, nearby places of interest and our history. We have a large house and have recently renovated all our rooms. Although a Christian Trust is responsible for the property and we have constituted ourselves as a club for the sake of the fire authorities, we do not regard ourselves as exclusive in

any way. Yes, we do get many visitors connected with the church, but equally have also welcomed many for whom vegetarian (and possibly vegan) diets are an issue. Consequently, please don't feel you need to mention The Christian Community by name if you would prefer not to; we will not be offended and, of course, are delighted to welcome *everyone*.

Our breakfast is not the standard "cooked English" one, but a healthy, well-proportioned continental one. We have a remarkably large garden for this part of London, we have no phones in the rooms, nor television in the building, all of which is non-smoking. Everyone who stays with us remarks how quiet and peaceful it is here in comparison with the major traffic interchange which is close by.

I hope this letter and brochure give you some idea of Temple Lodge, but please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance. We would really like to welcome as many of your readers as possible." ■

Your Scoops

Timeshares - A Few Words of Caution

My wife Gayle and I have had excellent success with our five Ontario timeshare weeks, saving substantial monies when exchanging through RCI. This month we are experiencing our 23rd exchange. However we were recently hit by a loss of three of our timeshare weeks at North Ridge Inn when it went bankrupt, and other readers may be interested in the following.

When we purchased our Ontario timeshare weeks - at

Horseshoe Valley, Deerhurst and North Ridge Inn - we purchased forty year leases. The problem of what would happen if the resort went bankrupt we thought was covered by having the leases registered first on title ahead of any mortgages and believed that this would result in the new purchaser having to honour the leases

In particular with North Ridge Inn, the weeks were specifically sold with the developer holding out in writing that this was the case. However, when North Ridge Inn went bankrupt we discovered that the developer - Mr. John Kuttis, through his company - arranged for the development's financing by having one of his other companies - Sittuk Investments Ltd - put up the monies; and when the resort went bankrupt Sittuk commenced a legal action asking the courts to have the leases removed from title and treating the timeshare owners as unsecured creditors. Given Sittuk's claim was for approx \$2,000,000, if successful, this would have given the timeshare owners a nominal refund of the monies they had paid for their leases.

Several of the timeshare owners defended against the action and some \$70,000 plus dollars later in legal fees and costs the court applied an old common law rule - *interesse termini* - which in simple terms states that if a tenant is not in possession then the tenant does not have the right to repossession but only has a right to damages. However Justice Spence found the facts of the case unconscionable and also ruled that the timeshare owners were to rank ahead of Sittuk Investment's claim from the proceeds of the sale. This meant that although the timeshare leases were no longer valid, the timeshare own-

ers would receive close to full compensation for the remaining unused years of their leases, less legal fees and costs.

For timeshare owners the problem we are now confronted with is that the facts at other resorts may not be so clear as at North Ridge Inn, where the developer held out that the timeshare leases would continue after a bankruptcy or the third party claimant is an arm's length third party (i.e. a bank). In such a case, a timeshare owner could have paid for their leases up front and on bankruptcy end up without a lease and with 10 cents on the dollar. The other problem is the time and legal costs and expenses to go to court to protect your rights

How to overcome the problem? Gayle and I will be purchasing other Ontario resort timeshares to replace our North Ridge Inn weeks, principally to use for exchange, and will be overcoming the problem by firstly looking at resorts where you purchase the title to the timeshare week rather than a lease (you own forever) and secondly, where we have to purchase a lease and even when we have purchased title to the timeshare week, have the purchase agreement specifically contract out of the common law rule (it is permitted to do so) and have the timeshare agreement, with this special clause, registered on title ahead of all mortgages. Some of the newer timeshare developments, Williams Landing, for example, are also structured differently in that they operate on the same principles as a condominium where the timeshare owners, through a corporation, own the units and make the decisions (this avoids the other increasing prob-

lem with timeshare ownership ... the cost of the maintenance is escalating at a rate greater than inflation).

The caveat: do not purchase a timeshare without having a knowledgeable lawyer review the contract. The lawyers who successfully protected the timeshare owners in the North Ridge lawsuit were McLean Kerr of Toronto (416 364 5371) and they are thoroughly up to date on these matters

If any TS readers would like a copy of Justice Spence's decision, please feel free to contact me at DGFThornhill@rogers.com and I will e-mail a copy.

*Dean Feltham
Thornhill On.*

A Cottage Gem in Devon, England

For those readers with a tour of England in their plans, we would like to recommend a delightful B&B – Granary Cottage – in beautiful northeast Devon, just inside the Devon/Dorset border. The B&B is a lovely stone cottage overlooking a 13th century church in a little hamlet called Combyne, in a part of rural Britain where times seems to have stood still. The village is within easy reach of the coastal towns of Lyme Regis and Sidmouth, each differing greatly in character, and the market town of Axminster, home of the renowned Axminster carpets.

The village of Combyne has a pond that is home to a

variety of waterfowl, there's also the above-mentioned tiny church, three farms and a few houses. There are several reasonably-priced restaurants and a host of pubs serving bar food within 10 minutes' drive of the cottage.

As the name implies the cottage has been converted from an old granary and now offers three rooms to guests. The largest has a Victorian brass bed and en suite facilities, the middle-size room has twin beds and there's also a single room. The last two rooms share a bathroom which is very close by. All rooms have tea-coffee making facilities and the two larger rooms have TVs. The largest room costs £20 (approx. C\$46) per person, the twin is £18 pp and the single £16, full English breakfast included. Children of all ages are welcome.

Granary Cottage is run by Lyn and Drewe Henley, a very friendly and hospitable couple. Their little brochure says, "We cannot guarantee you sunshine, but can assure you of a warm welcome." They can be contacted at Granary Cottage, Combyne, Axminster, Devon EX13 8SX, tel: 011 44 1297 442 856, e-mail: lynhenley@amserve.co

*Rita Campden
Vancouver, BC*



Granary Cottage (Campden)

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comfort is required. So, for our three-week holiday we spent a week in a guest house followed by a week each in two timeshare properties.

The guest house was in Schuders, a picture-perfect village high in the foothills on the Austrian border near Schiers, north of Klosters, where we discovered that the prices were similar to central Switzerland. We opted for full board (a dinner of delicious chanterelles and melt-in-your-mouth venison, for example) because we preferred to spend the days hiking instead of searching for groceries. Annemarie Lötcher runs the guest house and will arrange free pickup from the train station in Schiers. She can be contacted at 011 41 81 328 2461. B&B is about C\$50 pp, C\$70 full board, including a packed lunch.

Our second week took us to the timeshare Les Crêtes Euroloisirs in Torgon Village on the French border just below Lake Geneva, at the edge of the huge French skiing complex called Les Portes du Soleil. There we could see Mont Blanc from our window. Hiking trails left from the site and we enjoyed the eateries and “drinkeries” called *buvettes* that dot the trails at every altitude. From our village we could see the vineyards of the Rhone Valley far below and all week we enjoyed the Valais wines and fine local cheeses.

If one can only spend a week in Switzerland, then the village of Mürren would be the place *par excellence*. Across the valley are the Eiger, the Monch and the Jungfrau (the ogre, the monk and the virgin), all monster mountains, especially as we first saw them, swirling in and out of the mist. We spent our third week there, in the five-star Anfi Palace, again as part of our timeshare plan. (However, this property is not confined to timeshare owners. Double rooms cost about C\$140 and for an additional C\$11

sports tax per person per day you gain access to a huge swimming pool across a sky walk. This is well worth it; bathrobes and towels are provided. The Anfi Palace, Mürren, CH-3825, Switzerland, tel: 011 41 33 855 2424, fax: 33 855 2417, e-mail: palace@muerren.ch www.muerren.ch/palace. The village offers a wide range of accommodation to the visitor and in September, while not necessarily cheaper than high summer and winter season, there was a lot of space available.

The bonus for the visitor in this, the Jungfrau area, is that transport in the form of cable cars and gondolas reaches all the villages as well as many peaks year round. From Mürren one can go directly up to the Schilthorn Restaurant where James Bond had his champagne breakfast while across the Lauterbrunnen Valley – one of the most beautiful in Europe – thousands take the mountain train to the Jungfrau where the day can be spent in various activities such as husky rides, snowboarding and skiing throughout the summer.

For us, as moderate hikers, the Swiss trails worked out perfectly because there were so many to choose from, all well marked as to direction and time. Since we had planned to hike from only three locations, we had decided to rely on public transportation rather than car rental. Our concerns about reaching the tiny vil-

lages and getting to the trailheads without a vehicle were allayed by the efficient Swiss and travel is so well organized that we were able to cross the whole country in six hours and arrive at our next accommodation exactly as scheduled. Switzerland has many rail pass discounts. To select the best



A mountain beauty (Adamek)

for you, keep in mind the cost of registration as well as the amount you expect to use it. We opted for a half-fare package. There's detailed information on the web

at www.rail.ch. And we found that the hiking trails did indeed start at our door step because these villages are ski resorts, with ski runs door-to-door already. Nor did we need trail books (heavy and costly) because the information available from the hotel desks was always enthusiastic and more than adequate.

While our agenda was to travel on foot in landscapes which were eye-popping, as already mentioned all of these areas are accessible to everyone via a variety of public transport: trains, alpine railways, boats, postbuses etc. And the gondola rides are breathtaking in themselves and they reach many of the peaks which are well serviced with all amenities. We found that once we had adjusted to the costs and learned to share a cake with our coffee we were as happy as clams (though that's a strange description for hikers!). We are certainly looking forward to returning soon to cover more spectacular trails and have more friendly encounters with the local Swiss as well as their many visitors from around the world.

Tiiu Adamek is a TravelScoop subscriber who lives in Campbellcroft, Ontario.

She has written many hiking pieces for us over the past few years.

Switzerland Tourism can be contacted at 926 The East Mall, Toronto, ON M9B 6K1, tel: 416 695 3496, fax: 416 695 2774, www.MySwitzerland.com

For those of you seriously considering doing some hiking in Switzerland, the Lonely Planet guide *Walking in Switzerland* would be a useful volume to have (345 pp. C\$18.95). This comprehensive guide provides reliable track notes for walks throughout Switzerland's magnificent countryside, from the entire renowned Alpine

Pass Route to easy scenic day rambles. The guide contains information on 60 lowland and alpine trails in all regions of Switzerland for both self-reliant hikers and



We pose with the Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau as a backdrop

less experienced walkers. Also included is advice about minimum-impact walking in the delicate Alpine eco-systems, details of the Swiss Alpine Club branches and local accredited guides, together with 50 route maps. Also included are budget accommodation details, from inns and B&B's to alp

or mountain huts. Readers may be interested to know that Switzerland boasts the most extensive and best-maintained system of mountain huts in the world, most owned by the Swiss Alpine Club. They offer simple dormitories (or sometimes rooms), warm blankets (hikers take their own sleeping sheet), cold water, and simple cooked meals such as stews or cheese fondues. Just dipping into this guide, with its descriptions of the spectacular scenery awaiting you, will make you long to get into your hiking boots!

For those who'd welcome a little more luxury, a copy of Karen Brown's *Switzerland: Charming Inns & Itineraries* (250 pp. C\$25.00) would also be a good investment. I've heard nothing but good reports about this charming series of guides with their easy-to-follow itineraries - Ed. 📖

**How about giving a subscription to *TravelScoop* as a gift when birthdays come around this year?
Call Debbie at 1 877 926 2500 and she will arrange it for you without delay.**

Travellers do not always need a car in order to explore an area in depth. Here are two short pieces on different areas in Italy – one just south of Rome, the other the island of Sicily – which prove that holidays of exploration are possible without driving.

Exploring Italy by Train and Bus

by Jennifer Hastie

It was 38 years ago that my husband and I were traveling by Volkswagen camper through an area south of Rome. “This would be a super place to explore more fully one day,” said I. The years passed, but we didn’t forget and therefore, when we were planning our October trip to Italy, we decided to spend some time on **il Golfo di Gaeta**.

The area lies 1½ hours south of Rome by train. Several medium sized towns lie within a large, sweeping gulf which contains beaches that look magnificent for swimming, should you lose interest in the history the towns have to offer.

Although this is a tourist area, it appears to be visited mainly by Italians and a few Germans. While we were there in October, there were few, if any, tourists in the area. English was not spoken by any of the shop owners; however, in our hotel, *il Albergo del Golfo*, at Piazzale della Stazione 1, Formia, tel: 011 39 0771 790 037 fax: 011 39 0771 771 874 the hotel manager spoke excellent English, as did the very helpful young

woman in the Formia tourist office. In spite of the language barrier, this area could not have been more welcoming or helpful to us. When we asked in our limited Italian where the grocery store was, for example, a clerk in the pharmacy personally escorted us to the nearest shop.

Because we were relying on public transportation

on our holiday, we chose Formia, the town where the train comes in, as our base for exploring this part of Italy. Our hotel was 50 metres from the train station where the local and intercity buses are also stationed. Our hotel was 2 stars and was half the price and four



Il Golfo di Gaeta coastline (Hastie)

times the size of our 2-star hotel in Rome. We paid 36 Euros per night (€1 = \$1.60 Can). Our room was very clean, not sound-proof but quiet.

We discovered three restaurants while in Formia, all good. The seafood risottos and pastas were made from fresh ingredients, beautifully prepared and served. Price-wise, we would pay approximately €24 for two people for an excellent meal of pasta, salad,

... continued on page 20

Sicily seems to have become a very popular destination among our readers. Here are two accommodation recommendations for those of you planning to include this island in your travels.

Two Places in Sicily

Staying in Siracusa

by Barbara Bagnell

Reading about Sicily before our travels led us to conclude that the city we'd like best would be historic Siracusa. That started an internet search for accommodations in that ancient city at www.casedelsole.it. It lists B&B's, villas in the countryside and apartments in the city's oldest part, the island of Ortygia. After viewing pictures of pleasant rooms, details about furnishings, and maps to help locate those apartments, we booked a one-bedroom apartment on Lungomare Vittorini

So, on a dark October evening, we descended from an airport bus (we'd flown into Catania) on a street corner in old Siracusa. We were met by Case del Sole's owner, Patrice Boux, who flipped our light luggage into his small car and drove us to the apartment which turned out to occupy all of a narrow 3-storey building. We entered the ground floor kitchen-with-dining-area, ascended some open stairs to the second floor which had living room and bathroom, as well as a tiny balcony. A narrower circular staircase led us to the third floor bedroom where we had a queen-size bed, lots of closet space, air-conditioning, and best of all, a generous walkout deck with table, chairs and an unforgettable and unobstructed view straight out over the Ionian Sea.

In the morning we walked five minutes to the nearby market which overflowed several blocks near the ruins of the Temple of Apollo (the Greeks came here almost three thousand years ago and left many lasting monuments we'd see in the days we lived on Lungomare Vittorini). But first we stocked up on prosciutto and cheese, vegetables fresh from Sicilian gardens, and wine made with grapes grown on the sides of

Mount Etna. We fell into a pattern of picking up dinner ingredients at the market in the morning, then sight-seeing on foot most of the rest of the day. Only once did we dine in a pizzeria. More than once we carried our simple meal to that third floor deck off our bedroom.

We learned from Patrice Boux that some of the tile under our kitchen table was original, installed when the building was constructed in 1820, more was put in place in 1900, but the pine beams over our head in the bedroom came from Sweden in 2001, and the smooth wood of the second and third storey floors was also new in 2001 when the building was restored. The décor – from the open iron and wood stairs to the black wooden tables and shiny metal dining chairs – was

minimalist, softened here and there by silver grey branches of driftwood picked from the beach near Siracusa. The living room's sofa bed could have accommodated two more people and the kitchen had ample dishes and equipment to cook any delicacy you might find in the market ... clams, scampi, fresh pasta and so on.

We found enough Greek ruins and seaside walks (and one harbour cruise) to keep us

completely on the city's island of Ortygia except for the afternoon when we boarded a local bus at the post office and went to see the Greek Theatre, built in 500 B.C. and now surrounded by new Siracusa. If you're in Siracusa on a summer evening, you may find Greek dramas or other performances in this largest theatre of its kind in Europe. It was hewn from the rocks in an area which is now an archeological park including other Greek and Roman remnants of the past. Check the Tourist office at 33 Via Maestranza in Ortygia for information on events, bus schedules, and any information you may need. You can try e-mailing that office at aatsr@flashcom.it but keep your questions simple; English is spoken a little hesitantly. Our visit to the



Our Ortygia street - the building right was 'ours' (Bagnell)

office resulted in our attending a concert by a visiting English choir (The Hertfordshire Chorus) in Ortygia's baroque cathedral, an unforgettable evening when we sat in a cafe in Piazza Duomo watching a wedding emerge from the old cathedral before the choir assembled for a memorable concert.

During our stay, Mount Etna grumbled loudly and spread ashes as far as our third floor bedroom's deck sixty miles south of the volcano. But residents of Ortygia merely shrugged and said "We're used to it."

Case del Sole aims to promote tourism in Siracusa Province by offering better prices than hotel chains while allowing guests to "blend with the local environment and discover the Sicilian heritage, people and society." Rental prices for 2003-2004 range from €251 (at press time €1 = C\$1.63) for three nights in low season to €498 for five nights in high season, extra nights from €76 to €95. Weekly cleaning is included, but linens are rented at about €10 Euros for your stay. Booking for this or other properties can be made on line at www.casedelsole.it or by fax 011 39 0931 44 59

97. Information in French, English and Italian by phone: 011 39 0931 44 91 08 or by email: info@casedelsole.com.

Siracusa has a better supply of hotels than guide-books would have you believe, if hotels are your preference. One 3-star hotel was next door to our apartment. It's Hotel Gutkowski, www.guthotel.it; double rooms about €90 a night including continental breakfast. We also followed signs to a lovely quiet courtyard and inspected rooms at one of the 28 B&B's in Ortygia, the 3-star Magnolia Bed and Breakfast, www.residenzamagnolia.it, double rooms with breakfast less than €70 per night; triple rooms €90. E-mail: info@residenzamagnolia.it or residenzamagnolia1@virgilio.it.

Ferries run between Malta and Sicily and best fares are for one-day excursions. See www.virtuferries.com. Buses to various points in Sicily stop at Catania's airport and English is spoken at the airport's Tourist Information office, tel: 011 39 095 73 62 66.

A Small Hotel in Trapani

by Jennifer Hastie

Last November, my husband and I spent three weeks in Sicily, mainly viewing Greek ruins. In order to see Segesta, a wonderful ruin dating from the 5th century BC, we chose to stay in Trapani. We were delighted to find an attractive, oceanside town of about 70,000 containing many lovely piazzas with palms and flowers. We found a spotlessly clean, newly renovated, user-friendly 3-star hotel called Hotel Vittoria, half a block from the oceanside on one side and another half block from a lovely piazza on the other side. From our hotel room we could see up the mountain to the famous mediaeval town of Erice, well worth a visit for its well-preserved buildings, roads and attractive craft shops. For a lovely room we paid €73 (about C\$115



The Doric Temple at Segesta (Hastie)

at the present rate of exchange) per night not including breakfast. For breakfast there were two bars very close to the hotel which served croissants and coffee at a very reasonable price. As well, there are small grocery shops in the area.

Near the Hotel Vittoria are several restaurants serving good food. Our favourite was the Safina Trattoria & Pizza, Piazza Umberto 1, where the tourist menu was only €10 and the good quality house wine was only €1.6 for half a litre.

The Segesta ruin is located in a magnificent rural setting, accessible by public transport from the train station which is near the Hotel Vittoria. Hotel Vittoria is located on

Via Francesco Crispi, 4, tel: 011 39 923 873044, fax: 011 39 923 29870, e-mail: h.vittoria@libero.it. The property has a basic website (in Italian, but with a photo): www.hotelvittoriatrapani.it ☎

Our Week of Leisure on a UK Canal Boat

by Don Howe

My wife and I spent a fabulous few weeks in the UK during May and June 2001. Our first 2 weeks were made more enjoyable by renting an apartment in the Barbican district of the City of London. We were within walking distance to many of the important sights of London and only 3 – 4 minutes walk to a Safeway, restaurants and the Barbican Tube Station using a covered route. When we couldn't walk to our destination, we used our London Transport Passes. We had a wonderful time. (Don Howe supplied us with details of this rental apartment. But upon contacting the owner for up-to-date information *TravelScoop* discovered that the property had been sold. Angela, the ex-owner, explained that since 9/11 her usual back-to-back bookings from her mostly-American guests had evaporated and she had been forced to sell. "The UK is now devoid of Americans," she wrote. What a pity ... I'm sure *TravelScoop* could have sent some unfazed Canadians her way – Ed.)

Our next experience was a week on a canal narrowboat. This was the highpoint of our trip. We had

reserved the boat from The Wyvern Shipping Co. Ltd. located near Leighton Buzzard, which is between London and Birmingham, a one-hour train ride from London's Euston Station. Wyvern is a family business that has been in operation for 27 years and they build a new boat on site every year. The folks at Wyvern were beyond belief in their assistance and courtesy as we

made plans via e-mail. They supplied a full colour brochure that gave us all the specifications of their boats and the available routes that we could cruise. We picked *Poppy* as our vessel. She is steel hulled, 48 ft. long with a 7 ft. beam (standard width for all canal boats) with a 2 ft. draft.

They have boats

to fit your needs up to 70 ft. in length, with concealed bicycle storage on the newer boats. Here I should mention I am 6 ft. 6 ins. tall and enjoyed the headroom in *Poppy*, although there wasn't much to spare!

I would advise you to purchase a map of the Grand Union Canal from Wyvern. The distances on the canal are measured in miles on the map. All the bridges are numbered and the location of towns, pubs, scenic areas, winding holes (the only place where you can



Evening on the Grand Union Canal (Howe)

turn your boat around), potable water, locks etc. are indicated as distances from the numbered bridges.

Poppy offered us outside seating in the bow, a comfortable couch (which can be made into a double bed if required), a large table and chairs for dining or game playing that can be folded and stored out of the way. Next is a pull-out liquor and wine rack under the divider between the lounge area and the galley. The latter is a full galley with gas stove, oven, fridge/freezer, toaster, full complement of dishes, silverware and food preparation tools, plus a stainless steel sink with plenty of hot water. And with TV, VCR, CD and cassette players plus an AM/FM radio one's entertainment is taken care of.

The next stop as we move aft is the head where there is everything you would expect – flush toilet, sink and bath/shower. A very comfortable double bed is the next feature. This bed area also has a vanity, sink, mirror, hanging closet space plus a heated drying closet which is put to good use on those rainy English days. There is plenty of additional storage areas throughout the boat. There are two interior doors fore and aft of the head which provide privacy if there are more than two aboard and quiet if someone is sleeping late. *Poppy* is heated by a thermostatically controlled and very efficient propane-fired hot water system. The stern hatch doors lead you to the outside tiller (steering) and the Lister 3-cylinder diesel engine compartment. There are seats on both sides in the stern area above storage compartments.

All bedding, big fluffy towels, first aid kit, dish soap, everything but your food is supplied. They even gave us a large Canadian flag to fly on our stern flagstaff.

Wyvern will do your food shopping and have it on

board when you arrive if you supply them with your shopping list. If you prefer to do your own, there's a large Tesco supermarket nearby. The taxi driver that brought us from the train station helped us to put our luggage on board and then took us to the supermarket. When you return it is just a few minutes walk back on the canal bank but you are now on the wrong side of the canal. You just wave and someone lets the bow lines free on a narrowboat and poles it over to rescue and return you to the Wyvern side of the canal.

Before you leave the dock you are given full instructions on every aspect of the boat. In addition, there are full instructions in a manual on board which explains all aspects of canal boat equipment, handling and safety. It even lists the pubs and supermarkets that

are on your route, as well as highlights of the historic Grand Union Canal. We chose to take the northern route after being told that it was more rural, offered better scenery and fewer locks.

A Wyvern representative has you turn the boat around in a winding hole in the canal bank and then oversees, with



Approaching the entrance to the two-mile-long Blisworth Tunnel (Howe)

patient advice, your first half mile or so of boat handling up to the first lock. Here is where you get indoctrinated on how to operate a lock. There are quite a few of them and you soon get to know some of your fellow boaters as sometimes you must wait for a lock to clear. All locks hold two boats. Everyone helps everyone else. Before long you find yourself sharing tips as if you have been on the canal for years. You have to divide the duties in handling the boat at the locks. I went ashore to open and shut the paddles and gates while Helen became very proficient at putting the boat into a 16 ft. wide lock while another 7 ft. wide boat was alongside. Steering and manoeuvring the 48 ft. boat, while a challenge, is quickly mastered. The

top speed of the craft is a leisurely 4 mph, but you will find yourself travelling at half that speed a lot of the time.

The scenery is magnificent and so relaxing after two weeks in busy London. You can stop and tie up on the towpath side of the canal wherever and whenever you wish, using your mooring pins that you pound into the ground with a hammer. Walkers and joggers use the towpaths and as they stop to say a friendly 'Hello' you can get information on local sites and facilities. Many pubs have space for you to moor adjacent to their premises. At Milton Keynes we awakened one morning to a very strong wind that was driving the rain while we were as cozy as could be inside. When the weather improved in the afternoon we went for a walk through a beautiful park and ended up in Europe's largest covered shopping mall.

You travel through tunnels (some 2 miles long), under bridges and pass over highways in aqueducts. In the distance are large estates and manors, many looking like castles, while many beautiful homes border the canal. Grassy pastures dotted with sheep and cattle compete with areas of overhanging trees for your attention. It's unforgettable.

We stopped at pubs for most of our evening meals. We were warmly welcomed and always left with full tummies and smiles. A morning walk up a country lane that sometimes led us to the local town was a great way to start the day.

Some of the privately-owned narrowboats are works of art. A retired couple who had been living aboard their boat for seven years accompanied us through a few locks. There are over 2000 miles of canals in the United Kingdom and we met a man who spent every summer on his narrowboat and then went to Florida for the winter. Another young fellow, travelling alone, was on his way to London with another 50+ locks ahead of him. He expected to get there in a week or so. What a lifestyle!

The boats are supplied with enough propane and waste water storage for 10 to 14 days. Key controlled stations along the canal have restrooms and potable water. Your boat is equipped with a hose to top up your water tank. You will be reimbursed for any costs incurred for fuel and dumping.

After a much-too-short seven days we had to say our farewell to *Poppy* and convey our thanks to the fine folks at Wyvern for making it possible for us to have such a wonderful experience. As we continued our UK tour by car we often wished that we were back on

board enjoying the peace and quiet of the Grand Union Canal.

We would recommend this adventure to anyone. It is a vacation where you truly get out of it whatever you put into it. No hassles. No pressures. No itinerary. No schedules.

Some details ...

The Wyvern brochure explains the variety of cruises from which to choose: 3-4 days that require 18-24 hours of cruising time; two 7-day cruises – Northerly route and Southerly Route; two 10-day cruises, one of which can take you to London, the other to Coventry; two 14-day cruises which include Birmingham or Leicester. We felt our 7-day Northerly route gave the perfect introduction to canal cruising, with 27 locks, 2 aqueducts, 2 tunnels and the Canal Museum at Stoke Bruerne. We travelled as far as Braunston, passing through numerous small towns such as Fenny Stratford, Blisworth, Gayton and so on. All provided whatever we needed, even if only a stroll through town, a few provisions or a pint at a pub!

Boats must be returned to their home base in Leighton Buzzard by 9:00 a.m. on your last morning. That is why your last evening at the Globe Inn is so convenient (see below).

Cost: Wyvern's rates are all-inclusive while some operations have fine print surcharges for fuel, insurance, security deposits, etc. The total charge for our week on *Poppy* was £630 (C\$1,464), which included the dreaded VAT. It is comparable to the combined cost of a car rental, fuel and hotels in the UK, but with the relaxation, unique experience and enjoyment thrown in.

Tip #1: Northbound from the Wyvern home base stop and make a dinner reservation at the Globe Inn (just north of the first lock) for the night before you return your boat. You can stay at their moorage overnight.

Tip #2: Be sure to remember to have plenty of goodies for the swans and ducks. They will be waiting to greet you along the canal.

Wyvern Shipping can be contacted at Rothschild Road, Linsdale, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 7TF, England, e-mail: enquires@canalolidays.co.uk, www.canalolidays.co.uk.

Don Howe is a TravelScoop subscriber living in Port Moody, BC

Events in Britain

Mark 400 Years Since Queen Elizabeth I

by Polly Larner

The Queen is dead ... a courtier bends over the still figure stretched out beneath rich coverlets. He takes from her finger a ring of mother-of-pearl, rubies and diamonds that he must carry north for by this token only is James VI of Scotland confirmed to succeed to the throne of England.

Elizabeth I, the Queen with 'the heart and stomach of a king' and one of England's most influential monarchs, was born in 1533 at Greenwich Palace, London. Its site is next to the National Maritime Museum where this ring will be on display as part of an exhibition marking the life and times of the Virgin Queen (1 May – 14 September, 2003). She died on 24 March

1603 at a long-demolished palace at Richmond, near London, having reigned 45 years. The Greenwich exhibition – the greatest collection of personal items, paintings and other relics linked with the monarch ever assembled – is among the highlights of a wide-ranging programme marking Elizabeth's 400th anniversary throughout 2003.

Growing up well-removed from Court at Hatfield Palace, where now stands Jacobean Hatfield House, Elizabeth was proclaimed Queen there in 1558. Hatfield, 23 miles from London, is home to the beau-

tiful 1585 Ermine Portrait of Elizabeth by William Segar and stages regular Elizabethan-style banquets.

Educated as a princess, like her doomed relative Lady Jane Grey, Elizabeth once found herself imprisoned, as Jane was, in the Tower of London. The Tower is planning a series of Tudor events this summer, including 'Soldiers of Queen Elizabeth' demonstrating the weapons and tactics of 1603, and costumed inter-

active 'Tales of the Tower', which also covers the story of Lady Jane Grey, on weekends from March 29 to July 20.

Hampton Court Palace, only 14 miles from central London, will celebrate during August when the palace will ring to the sound of the 'Music of Merrie England'

and the clash of swords as the Knights of Passion fight in armour, Tudor-style. To round off the year, from 27 December – 1 January 2004 there will be an Elizabethan Christmas of festive food and fun.

Elizabeth enjoyed travel. Her frequent "Royal Progresses" from top to toe of England saw her staying at castles and manor houses throughout the kingdom, thus guaranteeing a feast of exhibitions and events in a variety of locations open to visitors in 2003. Dover Castle on the south coast will hold an Elizabethan Festival 17-18 May, as will the romantic ruin,



Hampton Court Palace, Surrey (BTA)

Kenilworth Castle in the Heart of England – home of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, a favourite of the Queen – 14-15 June. Tilbury Fort, in Essex, from which Elizabeth’s address in 1588 inspired her army to confront the might of Spain, celebrates her reign on 8-9 August.

Other magnificent castles, among them Warwick in Warwickshire and Kent’s Hever – the home of Elizabeth’s mother Anne Boleyn (who was executed when her daughter was only two) plus Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, built in 1590 and said to be ‘more glass than wall’, have strong Elizabethan connections and will be reflecting that in their summer activities.

Cornwall’s Pendennis Castle plans an Elizabethan Festival (24-25 August) while in Devon, Sir Francis Drake’s home at Buckland Abbey re-opened March with new galleries about his contribution to Elizabethan power.

Elizabeth also enjoyed sports. Her hunting lodge at Chingford, outside London, is preserved. She was connected with Amberley Castle in Sussex from 1588 until her death, often visiting this hunting lodge now turned luxury hotel. It is also recorded she hunted at Castle Ashby, in Northamptonshire, where guests may sleep in her four-poster – now with en-suite marble bath!

In London, the arts scene marks the anniversary with summer’s BBC Promenade Concerts – the ‘Proms’ – favouring Tudor music, while the National Portrait Gallery is planning a display of Elizabethan portraits and special activities through the summer.

And for a taste of the theatre as Elizabeth enjoyed it, a visit to the Globe on the South Bank is a must. There, in addition to plays by Shakespeare and other Elizabethan dramatists, displays, demonstrations and exhibitions on 17th-century theatrical themes can also be found.

Enjoy this historical year if you’re travelling to

Britain!

Some useful information ...

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London SE10. Museum admission free, though there will be a charge for the exhibition *Elizabeth*. (May 1 – Sept. 14, 2003). Tel: (code 011 44) 0208 858 4422. www.nmm.ac.uk

Hatfield House, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, tel: 1707 287010, www.hatfield-house.co.uk

HM Tower of London, London EC3, tel: 870 756 7070 and **Hampton Court Palace**, Surrey, tel: 870 752 7777 are both classified as Historic Royal Palaces whose website is www.hrp.org.uk

Dover Castle, Kent; **Eltham Palace**, London; **Kenilworth Castle**, Warwickshire; **Pendennis Castle**, Cornwall; **Tilbury Fort**, Essex are all classified as

English Heritage properties: www.english-heritage.org.uk

Buckland Abbey, Devon and **Hardwick Hall**, Derbyshire are both National Trust properties: www.national-trust.org.uk

Amberley Castle Hotel, Amberley, West Sussex, tel: 1798



Warwick Castle, Warwickshire (BTA)

831992, www.amberleycastle.co.uk

BBC Promenade Concerts, London’s Royal Albert Hall and other venues across Britain. Box office, tel: 207 589 8212, www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/proms/index.shtml

Burghley House, Stamford, Lincolnshire. Tel: 01780 752451, www.burghley.co.uk

Castle Ashby, Northampton, tel: 01604 696696, www.castleashby.co.uk

Hever Castle, Hever, Edenbridge, Kent, tel: 1732 865224, www.hevercastle.co.uk

Warwick Castle, Warwickshire, tel: 870 442 2000, www.warwick-castle.com

Wigmore Hall, London W1, tel: 207 935 2141, www.wigmore-hall.org.uk

British Tourist Authority, www.visitbritain.com

We know many of our readers like to take their vacations in Canada during our golden months of summer. So, every Spring, we bring you some news and travel ideas across this great country.

Canadian Cornucopia

compiled by Ann Wallace

British Columbia

How about a **Howling Urban Adventure** in **Vancouver, BC** to add to your west coast vacation? The Pacific Palisades Hotel and Ocean West Expeditions have teamed up to present the quintessential West Coast experience. This romantic Full Moon urban escape has been precisely timed with the lunar calendar. Guests will experience an entrancing full moon sea kayak adventure with Ocean West, and the stylish luxury of one of downtown Vancouver's 'hippest' hotels. The adventure starts with a one-night stay in a spacious one-bedroom suite with in-room kitchenette and large balcony revealing city and/or mountain views. Ocean West will pick you up from the hotel and take you to English Bay for an entrancing two-hour full moon kayaking experience complete with a gourmet snack. Après paddling festivities follow at Zin Restaurant + Bar where "Howlers" will enjoy a flight of martinis and Global Tapas. Departures throughout the summer. For more information call the Pacific Palisades Hotel at 1 800 663 1815 or visit www.pacificpalisadeshotel.com.

Alberta

A small group will be participating in a learning vacation from Banff this summer. Called 'Wonder of Nature in the Rockies', the group will experience the Athabasca Glacier close-up, decide whether the Icefields Parkway is the world's most scenic drive, marvel at snow-capped mountains, enjoy rivers and alpine meadows and discover settlement history. Hosted by the Banff Centre in modern accommodation with mountain and Bow River views, with meals by their renowned chef, the group will also attend a performance of *Filumena*, featuring pioneer romance, bootlegging and murder in early Alberta. Scheduled

for 5-9 August, the all-inclusive land-only price is C\$1,125 per person dbl., single supplement \$295. For information call 1 800 884 7574, www.banffcentre.ca

Have you ever, while watching equestrian events on television, thought you'd like to go to **Calgary's Spruce Meadows** in person? If so, this may be the year to do it. Events take place all through the summer until October and include national and international events. For details of how to work a visit into your **Alberta** vacation call 403 974 4200, www.spruce-meadows.com

Saskatchewan

Perhaps this is the year to add **Saskatchewan** to your list of provinces visited. That province produces some superb tourism literature to make planning a visit truly easy. And your trip can be economical too with the accommodation guide to hand which lists every kind of accommodation as well as campgrounds. The *2003 Vacation Guide* has clear maps for the provinces five regions, with roads, parks, trails, historical and attraction sites clearly shown. How about planning to visit Eastend, in the south, with its T.rex skeleton – one of the best of only 12 such discoveries in the world – or head far north to the Athabasca Sand Dunes, the most northerly major sand dunes in the world and among the largest in North America. In between there's plenty of fresh air, grasslands, rivers, woodlands and numerous lakes. To plan your trip to this 'Land of Living Skies' call 1 877 2ESCAPE or visit www.sasktourism.com

Ontario

'Foodies' and wine buffs are enjoying the Ontario's Niagara Peninsula more with each passing year. So how about coming to the region for a Culinary

Experience? Join 'foodie' Lynn Ogryzlo and enjoy one (or more) or a variety of short getaways: Food Lovers' Day, Now That's Italian!, Peach, Strawberry and Blueberry Festivals and a selection of wine/food tasting trips. There's even a trip you can combine with golf. Here at *TravelScoop* we know Lynn well – and she knows the Niagara Region well – and we're sure you'll have a wonderful time. For a brochure call 1 877 234 0024, e-mail: tuxedo@tuxedotours.com, www.tuxedotours.com

While thinking of the Niagara region, those of you with a handicapped person in your party will be pleased to know about **Accessible Niagara**, an initiative designed to open Niagara to people with disabilities. Set in motion by Linda Crabtree, who is confined to a wheelchair herself, the information is at present only available on the web at www.accessibleniagara.com I met Linda recently and can vouch for her love of this multi-faceted region and her strong desire to share it with everyone.

Québec

We've mentioned the adventures to be found along the **St. Lawrence River** and in coastal **Québec** in these pages before, but if you'd like up-to-date information on Eco-tourism trips, whale watching, those great **Le Québec Maritime** cruises and much more call 1 800 363 7777, ex. 825 or visit www.quebecmaritime.qc.ca Something in this region we haven't mentioned before are the renowned, and often unusual, **Redford Gardens** at Grand-Métis on the south shore, 350 km east of Québec City at the gateway to the Gaspé Peninsula. They look glorious and garden lovers visiting this area certainly won't want to miss them. The gardens are open from June to mid-October, there's a restaurant, shop and museum and all is handicapped accessible. For more details call 418 775 2221, www.redfordgardens.com And still on the theme of Québec gardens, the **Mosaiculture International 2003** competition and exhibition of floral sculptures will be held from 20 June to 6 October in the Old Port of Montréal, the last time it is to be held in that city. More than 35 countries will showcase their civilizations through these immense floral sculptures. For information call 1 888 868 9999, www.mosaiculture.ca

Newfoundland, and more

A wonderful cruise of **Newfoundland and the Islands**

of the Gulf is being planned for 6 – 19 September by Adventure Canada. Aboard the *Polar Star*, and together with expedition leader Laurie Dexter, musical guest Jim Payne and guest chef Michael Smith, participants will first fly as a group from Ottawa to Narsarsuaq in Greenland, where they will rendezvous with the ship. The adventurers will then visit Paamiut (home to the largest population of White-tailed eagles in Greenland), cross the Davis Strait to the spectacular coast of **Northern Labrador** – one of the world's most remote coastlines – where the Torngat Mountains rise out of the sea to heights of over 3,000 ft. First sight of settlement will be Hopedale, where the residents will be out in force to help with local explorations. Cartwright and all the highlights of Newfoundland (L'Anse aux Meadows, Notre Dame Bay, etc.) will finally lead to St. John's. Another cruise follows (19 – 28 September) from St. John's around Newfoundland, out to the **Isles de la Madeleine** and other destinations before ending in Halifax. For full details of these and other unusual trips (a High Arctic Adventure, 3 – 13 August – with Roberta Bondar aboard, for example) contact Adventure Canada at 1 800 363 7566, www.adventurecanada.com

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.

Travel Digest

Germany

There's a new, full-colour guide available from the German National Tourist Office that profiles about 200 historic small towns throughout the country. For your copy of *Enchanting Towns in Germany – Feel the Romance, Enjoy the Culture* call 1 877 315 6237, send an e-mail to gntony@aol.com or visit www.germany-tourism.de or www.visits-to-germany.com. The guide presents the towns with a variety of photographs and a general description, plus details on how to get there, a list of the major sights in town and nearby, suggested excursions and tips on what to do and where to stay and eat, plus details of the many events happening throughout the year in each destination. The guide has divided Germany into four sections to aid travellers and comes with a referenced map of the whole country.

Kenya and Tanzania

Safari Seekers, a full-service tour operator with headquarters in Nairobi, has just published a brochure covering a wide range of safari tours in Kenya and Tanzania. And it's available from their Canadian representatives, Travel Marketing Experts, by calling 416 861 1022 or 1 888 423 3995 or by visiting safari@travelmarketingexperts.com. Safari Seekers is a 15-year-old company specializing in a wide variety of trips in the two countries, from budget camping safaris to stays in luxurious lodges. As well as wildlife safaris, they also offer such trips

as the World Cultural Heritage tour which explores ruins that dot the shore between Mombasa and Malindi. Now that's something really unusual.

U.S.A.

If good food is high on your list of priorities when planning a getaway, **New York City** will tempt you during two weeks this summer. This year the renowned *Summer Restaurant Week* has, in fact, been extended to two weeks: 23-27 June and 30 June - 4 July. During those dates *prix-fixe* dinners and lunches will be offered at over 170 of the city's finest restaurants for \$20.03 and \$30.03 respectively, a fraction of their usual cost. Reservations for this popular event can be made from 27 May. For more information log onto www.nycvisit.com or call 212 484 1222.

It's been a popular scheme with visitors to New York for many years, and now **Chicago** has launched a Greeter service. With 160 official 'greeters' speaking 20 languages, visitors can enjoy a personalized, friendly introduction to this fine city on 2-4 hour informal tours. To register visit www.chicagogreeter.com or call 312 744 8000. And for many more ideas and events to enjoy on a Chicago getaway call 1 877 CHICAGO or visit www.877chicago.com. With its fine museums, landmark architecture, good food and many music and other festivals, it's a great city for a summer getaway! A unique B&B in **New Orleans** has been brought to our attention. Log onto www.degashouse.com, or call 1 800 755 6730 for a brochure and you'll see what we mean. Once the home of French

Impressionist Edgar Degas, this property looks as though it will make a New Orleans stay even more memorable than usual. There's an interesting exhibition at the New Orleans Museum of Art that you may like to investigate before your visit. Entitled *Jefferson's America – Napoleon's France* the exhibition of paintings, sculptures, rare historical documents, military artefacts, furniture, fashions and decorative arts, celebrates the bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase. For details of the exhibition, due to run until 31 August, call 1 800 448 5252 or visit www.noma.org. And here's an address you may like to have if you're heading to the **Boston** area. The owner of the 1831 Zachariah Eddy House B&B, Cheryl Leonard, has written such a nice letter to us here at *TravelScoop* that we feel sure it's a great place to stay. Located in **Middleboro, MA**, the property lies within 35 miles of **Boston, Plymouth, Cape Cod** and **Newport** and they promise their visitors a unique a friendly experience, which includes a free lobster dinner. You can even join the owners as they travel to the nearby waters to pull up the day's catch! High season prices from US\$95 - \$129, or plan an off-season visit after late October. Call 508 946 0016 or log onto www.1831eddyhousebb.com to learn more about it all. Lots of savings available for Canadians heading for **Virginia** in 2003/2004. Once again the State's *Loonie Savings* coupon booklet is available for a variety of discounts and 'at par' offers. For your copy call 1 800 675 3230 or visit www.virginia.org/loonie

Airline News

A great deal from **British Airways** for RBC Royal Bank/British Airways visa Platinum Cardholders. Every time a cardholder purchases a full-fare round trip transatlantic ticket to **London, or beyond** in World Traveller Plus, Club World or First Class the traveller will receive a companion ticket **for free** on the same itinerary and in the same class. The offer is available for new bookings only and travel must be completed by 31 March 2004. Non Royal Bank cardholders can apply for a card by calling 1 800 ROYAL 12. To make reservations call 1 866 326 1204 or visit your travel agency.

For travellers within Canada there's an increasing number of options:

Air Transat has launched a spring "Two To Go" promotion offering 50% off the regular price of a second passenger's ticket for all flights for **travel within Canada** (and from Montréal to **Fort Lauderdale** or **Orlando**, and from Toronto to those two Florida destinations and to **St. Petersburg** as well). 30 June is the last return date. Talk to your agent or visit www.airtransat.com

Jetsgo has added six new destinations to its summer schedule: **Victoria, BC; Thunder Bay, ON; Saint John, NB; St. John's, Gander and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, NFLD and Labrador**. In addition, the existing routes **Toronto to Halifax, Calgary and Winnipeg** will see increased services. Your agent will have this, and lots more, Jetsgo information, or visit www.jetsgo.com.

Signature Vacations has just released its summer schedule for budget flights between Toronto and Vancouver to be offered daily Monday through Friday on **Skyservice Airlines**. See your travel agent or visit www.signaturevacations.com

The new Vancouver-based airline **HMY Airways**, which commenced service last November by serving western Canadians, has now added the popular **Vancouver-Toronto** route, twice daily, to its service for the coming summer. HMY promise full meals, convenient departure times, comfortable legroom and an upgraded class in addition to the full economy class. Again, see your agent, or visit www.hmyairways.com (If any readers use this airline please send us a short report – Ed.)

Still on the subject of our airlines, TS has just learned – with amazement – that **Air Canada** is planning to initiate a \$25 booking fee for passengers redeeming Aeroplan points for tickets. In addition, there will be a fuel surcharge of up to \$50 levied from 30 April on most domestic flights. As most of you know only too well, Aeroplan reward tickets are already subject to taxes plus airport and security surcharges. No comment.

Special fares on offer from **Mexicana**. On sale until 19 June, for outbound travel before 31 August, direct flights to **Mexico City** from **Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver**. These special fares start at C\$598 from the east, and C\$798 from the west.

Riding the Rails

Airlines may be in a state of flux, but one thing is certain: **VIA Rail Canada** has a great offer for Canadian seniors this year. It's the Senior Companion Fare offer. In economy class, seniors get a free ticket for the person travelling with them, regardless of that person's age. In all other classes, there's a 75% discount for the personal travelling with the senior passenger. In the Maritimes and Western Canada this offer is already in place. Within the Québec City-Windsor Corridor the Economy Class offer starts on 1 May, while in VIA 1 Class it is valid from 1 July. Some restrictions apply and seats are limited. For travel in the Corridor, tickets must be purchased at least 10 days in advance of travel. For more information see your agent, call 1 888 VIA RAIL or visit

www.viarail.ca

Travelling in Europe this summer? **Rail Europe** has just announced ways to save money on Europe's high-speed 'red train' – Thalys – that connects Paris to cities in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. The *Summer Special* offers a discount of 50% on both 1st and 2nd class full-fare tickets on all routes for travel taking place between 15 June and 31 August, when booked between 15 May and 15 August. An additional offer, called *All Belgian Stations*, will be available all year round and will enable travellers with a regular Paris-Brussels ticket to pay just C\$2 – \$18 more and include any other destination in Belgium, for example Bruges, Ghent and/or Antwerp in their trip. Full details from your agent or by calling 1 800 361 7245.

continued from page 8 ...

wine and dessert with top quality service at the **Ristorante Alla Vecchia Fontana**, via Appia 148, near the Piazza di Testa. **La Ciociara**, Via Divisioni Julia 25, has almost as good food and was slightly cheaper. Even the bar in the train station efficiently served very fresh sweet buns daily and excellent coffee each morning for our breakfast.

Formia is built on the side of a hill. Once you become familiar with the town, it is easy to find a quick walkway down to the sea from the top of the town. In the centre of town is an interesting local museum showing Roman artefacts from excavations in this area. In fact, the entire town of Formia is built on a Roman ruin, as this was a Roman stronghold dating from 300 B.C. There are excavations going on right underneath some of the present streets, the museum explains. On the outskirts of Minturno, another town approximately half an hour by bus east of Formia, you can visit an excavation of a Roman city. Unfortunately, the bus from Minturno to the ruin was discontinued for the winter months, but the regional bus runs to the ruin, located a short distance from Minturno.

To the west of Formia lies Gaeta, a picturesque medieval town with interesting streets and two cathedrals from that period of history. Gaeta also hosts an American naval base; consequently, we found higher

restaurant prices here compared with Formia. Gaeta has also set aside a 171 metre hill, Monte Orlando, as an urban regional park. This park houses walking paths and spectacular views of the gulf below. At the top lies a mausoleum of a Roman official dating from the 1st century B.C. The outside of the mausoleum is in perfect condition and is, apparently, unrestored.

North of Gaeta, also available by public bus, lies Sperlonga, another seaside town and known for the ruins of the Emperor Tiberius' summer villa. We did not have time to explore this area, nor the hillside towns above the seaside towns. But we had to save something for a return visit! There are also three islands accessible by public ferry or hydrofoil off the shore from Gaeta and Formia. One of the islands, Ventotene, was the site of a Roman port from early times and the island hosts a museum devoted to the archeological finds from the port.

Grocery stores, delicatessens and bakeries abound in Formia, but the locals still enjoy a three-hour rest in the afternoon when the shops and restaurants are closed. For those wanting a more upscale hotel, we noted that there are three 4-star and four 3-star hotels in Formia as well as several other 2 star ones. Information about this delightful area can be found at www.apllatinaturismo.it or info@apllatinaturismo.it. 📧

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 be compatible.

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

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

The Kingdom of Thailand

17 days departing 20 October 2003

with optional Angkor Wat (Cambodia)
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

Galapagos Islands and Ecuador

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

14 days departing 10 June, 14 October & 4 November 2003

Each tour is limited to 20 people

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)

France a Culinary Extravaganza

Wine & Culinary Tour to the Bordeaux Region of France

14 days departing Date: 21 October 2003

Space limited to 20 people

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 luggage

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

**from \$4,950 for 21 days
including all airfares**

Space limited to 20 people

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 a luxurious tour exclusively for Travel Society members. It is due to take place in October 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 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
- 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

Copper Canyon & Guadalajara

9 days departing 23 May, 20 June, 12 September & 10 October 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

Chile, Patagonia and Easter Island

Departing 20 June, 5 September & 10 October 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.)

Great add-ons:

Easter Island	4 days/3 nights	\$ 894 pp/dbl
Patagonia	6 days/5 nights	\$1,794 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.

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

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

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