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Travel Scoop

*The Newsmagazine
for Members of
The Travel Society*

Vol. 21, No. 6 July/August 2003

Bavarian Getaway

by Ann Wallace

It's no secret that the most beautiful region of Germany is Bavaria, a land of sparkling rivers and lakes, vineyards, lush farmlands and forested hills that rise to the soaring Alps in the south. Of course many regions in Europe offer similar scenery, but it is the picture-postcard-perfect towns here, some of them almost unchanged since the Middle Ages, that give Bavaria its special flavour and beckon the visitor to explore.

To explore this region, Munich is both an ideal base and a city worth discovering in its own right. Less damaged during WWII than most major German cities, it offers a pedestrian-friendly old town, enough



Rothenburg ob der Tauber from the Town Hall Tower (Wallace)

fine museums and galleries to keep the art lover occupied for weeks and, if you go in October, one of the world's biggest parties in the shape of Oktoberfest.

But it was springtime when I was there, taking advantage of Air Transat's new charter flight from Toronto direct to Munich, to explore an area hitherto unknown to me, although I have visited Germany

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TravelScoop

The Newsmagazine for Members of
The Travel Society

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July/August 2003

Vol. 21, No. 6

From your Editor's desk...



Summer has arrived and it's time to send our double-month issue to the printer and to send our members warm wishes for this lovely season. Perhaps you're staying at home tending your garden or perhaps you're setting out to explore Canada or further afield. Whatever your choice ... I hope you will enjoy many happy and safe days.

I was touched by the many messages I received from you after my letter in the last edition. Yes, people said, let's remember all the wonderful folks and places in the world and let's try not to let the bad news get us down.

As I put this edition "to bed", I'd just like to record that the first issue of *TravelScoop* that I edited was the September 1993 edition. So yes ... that means I've been sending this newsmagazine to you for ten years! I'm sure you've noticed a few little errors over the years (our staff is very small, English isn't necessarily their first language and I often end up proof-reading from blurred faxes in strangely-lit, non-luxurious hotels in various parts of the world!). However, I hope that on the whole you have found our information accurate and helpful in making your travel plans.

In my first letter to you ten years ago, I stated that we at TS are committed to helping you get the most from every trip you take and, we hope, to inspiring you to visit some corners of our globe that you might not have considered. I hope I have achieved this and I look forward to continuing to do so in the years ahead.

Bon voyage in your travels and your journey through life!

coming in *September*

- *A Toast to Toronto*

- *Laos, a Budget Traveller's Dream*

- *Getting to Know Athens*

Update Items

If you travel frequently to the U.S. (family, business, etc?) you may be able to take advantage of the summer offer from United Airlines which is: fly three roundtrips before 30 September and receive a free roundtrip ticket valid for travel between 2 September and 31 December 2004 (with some blackout dates). The deal is available on flights from Canada to the 48 contiguous states. Your travel agent will be delighted to give you details because when they book six such trips they, also, qualify for a 'freebie'.

There are lots of savings and new ideas available for European train travel this summer: 25% savings on week-end rail travel for two in France, 50% reductions on the new 3-day German Rail Twin Passes (hurry and book before 31 July) and an across-the-board reduction of about 6.5% for Canadians on most European rail prices due to currency fluctuations. For information on these and all aspects of rail travel in Europe call 1 800 361 7245, log onto www.raileurope.com or direct your agent to www.agent.raileurope.com.

John Berg, the author of last month's Winning Scoop on Porto, has written to tell us his e-mail address has changed. If any of you would like to contact John about his trip to Portugal (or with information on South America ... he is person requesting 'Reader to Reader' help this month) please note his e-dress is now: johndoreenberg@telus.net.

A couple of little errors last month which have been keeping me awake! Yes, dear readers, I do in fact know a hangar is a place for storing aircraft and a hanger is for storing clothes (see p. 16, last issue). My apologies! And apologies, too, for getting the spelling of Michael Ondaatjie's lovely character Anil (not Anhil) wrong - Ed.

This Month's Winning Scoop

Another Address for the South of France

by Les & Pat Dickason, Nanaimo, BC

If you have always dreamed of spending a week (or more) in a tiny medieval village in the South of France, the apartments owned by a delightful British couple – Geoff and Ann Coombs – may be the answer to your dreams.

Tillac, about 1½ hours' drive from Toulouse Airport, is caught in a time warp. The village was founded in the 13th century and appears to have changed very little. The Coombs' apartments are at the end of a row of arcade houses built in the 14th century, but do not fear ... their interiors are modern and comfortable.

Each apartment has two bedrooms (one double, one twin), a modern bathroom, living room and well-equipped kitchen. The four apartments (three for rent, one for the Coombs themselves) share a common recreation room with washer and dryer, and there is a communal barbecue and outdoor furniture as well.

The region around Tillac is teeming with local markets, fairs, festivals (especially jazz), wineries (this is Armagnac country), farms, Bastide towns, and recreational facilities such golf, tennis, canoes, kayaks, cycling and walking trails abound. In addition the ski slopes of the Pyrenees are just over an hour's drive south on the road to Spain. And yes, the apartments are heated in winter!

Members are Rewarded for Sharing!

TS rewards members for all submissions published.

The Winning Scoop receives a 1-year membership extension.

Your Scoops receive a 3-issue membership extension.

Favourite Places receive a 3-issue membership extension.

Reader Reports receive extensions depending on length.

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

For those wanting more urban experiences Tillac is a short drive to Foix, Pau, and Lourdes, while Toulouse is within easy reach too. Restaurants abound in nearby towns, ranging from traditional French roadhouse cuisine all the way up to modern versions of classic French cooking in elegant restaurants with terraces and views. Right in Tillac, a long-closed restaurant and bar has just opened under the management of a Scottish lady with an Australian chef. It will become your own “local” about 90 metres from your apartment door.

Rates for the apartments are £250 pounds (£1 = approx. C\$2.27) per week in high season (July to mid-September), and £200 pounds outside those dates. Electricity is included, linen is extra. Discounts are available for those who book more than one week, or more than one apartment.

As the Coombs have just started to rent the apartments, there are still lots of available weeks, but this situation may not last as the word spreads. Check out the web-site www.holidaysintillac.com, or for a first hand report, please feel free to send an e-mail to us at dickason@shaw.ca. We discovered – and visited – the apartments while staying in a more expensive cottage nearby (featured in the January 2002 edition of *TravelScoop*). The spring in this region was fabulous and we are already arranging to go again next year.

Your Scoops

Heritage Canada and the National Trust

Betty Ann Crosbie’s letter in the last issue of *TravelScoop* mentioned that a membership in the National Trust is a very good deal for people touring England and Wales. I also used to buy an annual membership until I discovered Heritage Canada. Heritage Canada members have free access to National Trust properties and also those of the National Trust of Scotland and of Australia. An individual membership is just \$25 a year and includes a quarterly magazine. So for less than half the price, you get almost all the advantages of National Trust membership while supporting a Canadian organization. I did miss the *National Trust Handbook* for a while, but now it is available on the internet or it can be bought at any National Trust property.

More information about Heritage Canada memberships can be found by contacting Heritage Canada, 5 Blackburn Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1N 8A2, tel: 613 237 1066, fax: 613 237 5987, visit the web site www.heritagecanada.org/eng/member.html

Margot Walker
Dartmouth, NS

THE SHORE HOUSE AT LAKE TAHOE

This scoop departs from my usual “bargain stories” but I’ve discovered such a special destination, I just had to share it with *TravelScoop* readers who may be heading to or near renowned Lake Tahoe one day. If you do, I urge you to splurge and entrust yourselves to master innkeepers, Barb and Marty Cohen. You too will fall under their spell. My husband and I had already heard glowing reports about The Shore House when we finally checked into the bed & breakfast inn on a sunny afternoon in late February.

Located at 7170 North Lake Blvd in Tahoe Vista, California, The Shore House is the ultimate romantic getaway on spectacular Lake Tahoe. Each floor is surrounded by decks offering fabulous views of the pristine alpine lake and the snow-capped Sierras. Fine restaurants, art-galleries and top-name entertainment at Nevada casinos are close by.

Upon arrival, we are greeted by the hosts who give us a tour of the property. Barb and Marty have lived at Lake Tahoe for over 28 years and know every nook and cranny of the north and west shores. Their bed and breakfast inn consists of nine guest rooms including one cottage, each with its own special features and charm. The Forest Room becomes our home for the next few days.

Our stay begins with The Shore House tradition of complimentary wine and appetizers. A walk along the private beach whets our appetite for a delicious meal in one of the nearby restaurants. Back in our cozy Forest Room, the pampering continues. We find freshly-

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.

baked treats left by our hosts, another of their daily rituals. A soothing massage in the double whirlpool tub combined with the relaxing background music from the in-room CD player bring back the romance in our lives. An evening to remember.

Breakfast here is a celebration of the new day. Nothing could have prepared us for the exceptional pleasures enjoyed by guests at Barb and Marty's dining room. Breakfast includes fresh fruit and award-winning gourmet entrées. Many of their original dishes are featured in their recipe book, *Cooking is an Adventure, Too*.

With ten major ski areas within driving distance, a few only 20 minutes away, we capitalize on our location to do some serious schussing. Other popular winter pastimes include snowshoeing, ice-skating and snowmobiling. Summer activities consist of hiking to the mountain lakes, bicycling, tennis, golf, rafting, horse-back riding, parasailing, kayaking and boating.

Much too quickly, our stay is over. With bags packed, we take time to jot down a few words in the guest book. Peeking at com-

ments from former Forest Room visitors, we learn that the room works its same magic for others as well as for us. We come away from our visit with lasting memories of an ideal place to unwind, to get in touch with nature and to rediscover the joy of connecting with one's partner.

The details ...

Barb and Marty are members of the Professional Association of Innkeepers, the California Bed & Breakfast Association and the Lake Tahoe Bed & Breakfast Association. In addition, The Shore House is a member of the prestigious Select Registry. This guide lists 400 of the finest country inns, B & B's and unique small hotels throughout North America. In order to qualify, accommodations must be very special. A rigorous review and inspection is made by some of North America's leading hospitality professionals. The member innkeepers are all independent, professional and hard-working individuals who go the proverbial extra mile for their guests. The one and only entry for California's Lake Tahoe Region is The Shore House at Lake Tahoe (page 69). For information, see www.SelectRegistry.com, tel: 1 800 344 5244.

Rates at Shore House start at US\$160 per night. Minimum 2-night stay on weekends and 3-night minimum on holidays. Smoking is not permitted in guestrooms, dining room or hot tub area. For reservations call 1 800 207 5160, e-mail: shorehouse@tahoeinn.com, www.tahoeinn.com.

Anne Raymond
Asbestos, PQ

Calling for Views on Home Exchanging

Subscriber Anne Brooks of New Brunswick has written requesting some readers' thoughts and experiences on home exchanges. Anne says she has the feeling that the majority of requests for home exchanges in Canada are for either Vancouver and, perhaps, places such as Banff (for skiing) or other major cities, such as Toronto or Montreal. She wonders if it is harder to convince Europeans to consider places they have hardly ever heard of, such as the Maritimes. Please send your thoughts to us at [TravelScoop](mailto:ann@thetravel-society.com) via ann@thetravel-society.com or via our address on p. 2 and we'll put your responses together in an article. And please ensure you give us the name of the exchange company you deal with. Thanks!

Reader to Reader

We are senior independent travellers planning a two-month trip (maybe longer) to South America. Near the end of October we plan to fly to Lima and visit the various tourists sites and then make our way overland from La Paz to Buenos Aires then to Rio and home. If any readers can provide information regarding accommodation, transportation ideas and clothing suggestions for the different regions (wish to travel light) it would greatly be appreciated.

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often. It's a great getaway for a week and I can highly recommend it as there's so much to see and do. As you may decide to take this trip this summer or fall, let's get down to the details straight away. If you take the Air Transat Friday evening flight you'll arrive in Munich early on Saturday morning. Even if you're tired, you will immediately be interested in your surroundings, for Munich Airport has just expanded to be one of Europe's finest and most modern. You may even decide to recharge your batteries with an early-morning beer, for the airport even boasts its own brew pub! But not if you're driving, of course! The airport is located 28 km from Munich, out in the countryside, so if you are planning a driving trip and do not wish to visit the city your road trip will have an easy start ... on a clear day you can even see the Alps glistening in the distance and they can be reached in about an hour. But I really do recommend a few days in Munich. And Munich is a hub city, central to other European destinations, with the Austrian, Swiss and Italian borders all within a few hours' drive and excellent bus and train connections for the rest of Europe. The Orient Express even stops here.

The easiest and by far the cheapest way to reach the city from the airport is via the Rapid Train System, a shuttle train that costs €8 (€1 = approx. C\$1.55). If you do not already have accommodation reservations these can be made for you at the tourist booth at the airport. The train will take you to the main station and from there you will easily find a taxi on to your hotel.

Munich offers its visitors a 1- or 3-day München Welcome Card for one person or a small group. Prices start at €6.50 for a single day card, €9.50 for a partner day card, while for €15.50 and €22.50 respectively you can receive a 3-day card. This card offers no-charge transportation within the city and a variety of small



The Marienplatz, Munich (Wallace)

reductions on tours and admissions around and beyond the city. For considerably more – €26 single, €38 double – you can purchase a 3-day ticket that includes the ride to and from the airport. It's up to you to work out if this will be worthwhile. A comprehensive brochure comes with the card.

If you stay in the city centre you will immediately be delighted by the beautiful architecture, the many pedestrian streets, the plethora of pavement cafés, the vast beer halls and the tempting shops, including many small commercial art galleries offering a selection of exciting works for the art collector. If admiring rather than buying is more your art scene you won't want to miss the Alte (Old) Pinakothek, one of the world's

most important galleries. This gracious High Renaissance-style building is home to a wonderful collection of art, including works by Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Tintoretto, Titian, Canaletto, Rubens, Rembrandt and many many others. And what a stunning building houses this

collection. Eschew the elevators here and climb the remarkable, imposing stairway to the upper level.

Close by, art lovers will find many other fine galleries: the New and the Modern Pinakothek, the Municipal Gallery, the State Gallery of Modern Art, the Munich City Museum, the Glyptothek (for ancient Greek and Roman Art), the State Antique Collection and the Deutsches Museum, one of the largest technical and natural science museums in the world and excellent, I was told, if you have young people with you. In fact there are over a hundred museums and galleries in Munich, together with more than 50 venues for theatre and musical performances, including two opulent opera houses.

The more I write, the more I realize that a week isn't enough to do justice to Munich! And I haven't

mentioned the palaces, churches and gardens! No visit to Munich would be complete without a visit to the outskirts of town to see the Versailles-like summer residence of the Bavarian kings known as the Nymphenburg Palace. The Birthing Room and the Gallery of Beauties here are of particular interest. The former is intriguing because it is linked to an anteroom with an arrangement of mirrors so that officials could witness royal births to ensure that a baby boy from another source was not substituted for a royal princess. The Gallery of Beauties contains 36 portraits, all commissioned by King Ludwig I, all of extraordinary Munich women of the day, both commoners and court ladies. Of course, no one is sure how many of these beautiful women were the king's mistresses, but there is no doubt of the status of one of them: courtesan Lola Montez (La Lola of "Whatever Lola wants, Lola gets" fame). A quite extraordinary gallery. The lovely gardens and woods to the rear of the Palace are open to visitors for leisurely walks and picnics.

Writing of gardens brings me to Munich's renowned Englischer Garten, supposedly the largest city park in Europe. Here you'll find beaches for sunbathing (naked if you so desire), lakes for boating, paths for jogging and cycling, lawns for relaxing, shady corners for kissing and beer gardens for drinking. It was here that I enjoyed lunch on the pretty lake-side terrace of the Seehaus Restaurant (tel: 381 61 30 for reservations).

Of course you will also wish to walk through Munich's many pedestrian streets, admiring the architecture and doing a little shopping. These streets invariably lead to the famous Marienplatz where, on a fine day, it seems most of Germany is meeting over a beer and to watch the Glockenspiel chime the hours on the City Hall.



Charming Dinkelsbühl (Wallace)

No tourist trip to Germany is complete without having one of those big sausage-and-dumplings-and-beer dinners in a big restaurant in a stone-vaulted cellar decorated with armour, swords, hatchets and so on where the rosy-faced servers wear traditional costumes. Two such restaurants in Munich are the Ratskeller at Marienplatz 8 (tel: 21 99 89 0) and the Spatenhaus, opposite the Opera House (tel: 29 07 060). Large portions guaranteed!

As the beginning of this article related, Munich lies just a short distance from the Bavarian Alps and many famous destinations lie within a short driving distance to the south, including Innsbruck and Salzburg in Austria, and, in Germany, Oberammergau,

Garmisch-Partenkirchen, and that most famous of all German photo opportunities: Neuschwanstein Castle, popularly known as Mad King Ludwig's castle. Many of these places lie on or close to the Romantic Road, the first of many routes created to showcase various aspects of Germany. The Romantic Road

is now 53 years old and many are the travellers who have enjoyed this great route from the River Main to the Alps.

With limited time at my disposal, I decided to head north on this route and visit the famous medieval town of Rothenburg, stopping en route to see some other picture-postcard towns and villages. Each of the towns and villages was charming, with small museums, traditional Bavarian architecture and a large selection of welcoming restaurants and inns. If you would like to follow in my footsteps I have some accommodation suggestions listed at the end of this article, but I have no hesitation in saying that if you travel this route in the spring, early summer or fall you will have no problems finding a quaint room in which to lay your head. Every town and village has a large choice of small

properties; they usually become full only when Europeans are travelling during the school holidays. (Of course a winter trip is not out of the question either. A little snow falls, to make the towns even more fairy-tale-like, but roads are clear and each destination offers the added attraction of a famous Christmas market.)

After a short autobahn drive out of Munich to the west you'll reach the town of Augsburg and join the Romantic Road which then winds south to the Alps or through gentle countryside on its way north. Heading north, Dinkelsbühl was my first stop, for lunch and to keep Kodak shareholders happy as I took photos in every direction! A fully-preserved town wall and 18 towers enclose this charming old town which appears to have changed little since the middle ages. Flower boxes spill their contents against the warmly-painted walls of the half-timbered houses and swans glide gently on the moats and ponds around the city walls, while the church bells ring and all the beautiful wrought-iron signs creak a little in the gentle breeze.

The honey-coloured Hotel Goldene Rose looked inviting, with its crimson geraniums at every window and its umbrella-shaded tables overlooking the church square, so this is where I enjoyed a light lunch of salmon and the plump white asparagus that you'll find on menus everywhere in Germany when they are in season in the spring. I asked to see a couple of rooms and can report that you will be very comfortable here.

But my hotel reservation was in Rothenburg ob der Tauber, so I had to hit the road, though en route I did stop again in the little town of Feuchtwangen. More flowers, more pretty houses and so on. But this little town offered some extras. There was a stork's nest on a chimney top with mother stork (or perhaps it was father) standing on the pitched roof and the babies

peering from the nest. Then I noticed lots of trendily painted wooden chairs all over the town. The storks were a design of nature of course, but the chairs are an initiative of the art teacher at the local school. All very charming! A pretty hotel here – complete with painted chairs outside – is the Greifen Post, bursting with German atmosphere and right on the town square.

Soon I was passing under the town gates and entering the jewel of the Romantic Road: Rothenburg ob der Tauber. This town is so perfectly preserved and in such a beautiful setting that at times it's hard to realize one is not in a vast German theme park! Of course, with

such a reputation it is also full of tourists, although out of the high season this is not such a factor. But expect lots of gift shops and even a McDonald's (though admittedly tastefully disguised) here. Of course there's lots of history too. A walk through the town will reveal the imposing Town Hall, the stately towers that guard the city's entrances, the massive walls and the fine churches and patrician houses all bear witness to an imperial and prosperous past. Your hotel will provide information on the guided tours (in English, € pp) and don't miss the tour with the Night Watchman, an actor if ever there was one, who will tell all the city's grisly tales of sieges and martyrdom (€ pp). In

addition, there are lots of festivals, historical re-enactments, dances and a famous Christmas market in the town square. And if you have a head for heights, are agile and fairly slim (it's quite a squeeze out onto the platform) take your camera and climb the steps to the top of the 60 m town-hall tower (free) for a great view over the red roofs of the town.

On a more serious note, imposing St. Jakob's Church contains some fine paintings and sculptures and the Altar of the Holy Blood, a carved masterpiece that provides an ornate setting for the Reliquary of the Holy Blood, a rock-crystal capsule said to hold three



On Rothenburg historic streets (Wallace)

drops of Christ's blood and venerated since the Middle Ages.

Also on a serious note, though highly entertaining, is the Medieval Crime Museum (admission €3.20), an exhibition of 1,000 years of European legal history and torture. This strange museum is apparently much loved by children, though I have to admit the displays of man's inhumanity to man (or – more often than not – to women) becomes rather trying after a while.

Rothenburg is chock full of charming little places to stay, although the touristy nature of the town makes them more expensive than in other towns in the area. With that in mind, the 'from €155' rates at the famous Hotel Eisenhut are not untoward, and this unique hotel does offer a most memorable

experience. Owned by the Eisenhut family for four generations, this property encompasses four 15th century mansions in a film-set-like street just steps from the town square. Stepping into the entrance hall is like entering a stately home, complete with sweeping

wooden staircase, beamed ceiling, wrought-iron chandeliers, Oriental carpets, oil paintings and a display of weaponry. Quite different in mood is the pretty dining terrace at the rear overlooking a small bird-filled garden and the distant hills. Rooms in the rear enjoy this lovely view or you can request the larger rooms that overlook the street and its other historic buildings. The food here is light and sophisticated, a far cry from that sausage-and-dumpling cuisine, and there are some

delicious wines made locally in small quantities and only available in this region.

So, I hope I've persuaded you to explore this charming region of Europe. Take advantage of all the deals the airlines are offering at the moment to reach Toronto and then take that Air Transat flight direct to

Munich. You can easily fill a week there or you can set out, as I did, to explore a little along the Romantic Road ... romance not really necessary, but of course it would add to the enjoyment!



The three buildings comprising the main section of the Hotel Eisenhut (Wallace)

Some details ...

- Many people I spoke with in Bavaria commented on the fact that global warming is noticeable here. Apparently there are far more outdoor restaurants and cafés today than in the past and the region has been enjoying **hot summers** for quite a number of years. It was certainly hot during my visit late May/early June. I make special mention of this because it is rare to find air-conditioned hotels here, a factor you may wish to bear in mind.

- You may wish to experience it all, or you may wish to miss it, but you should know that **Munich's Oktoberfest** this year is 20 September – 5 October.

- It's worth noting here that all prices shown in

Germany are **inclusive of all taxes and service charges**. It is customary to leave an additional small tip in a restaurant, but there is certainly no need for you to fret about this being a percentage of your bill.

- Here are a few recommended hotels in **Munich** at various price ranges, breakfast included:

An award-winning 2-star, 40-room hotel, near the train station, is the **Monaco** at Schillerstrasse 9, 80336 **Munich**, tel: (dialing code 011 49) 89 5 45 99 40, fax: 89 5 50 37 09, info@hotel-monaco.de, double rates from €60.

The **Hotel Hahn** is a 3-star, 40 room property also near the station at Landsberger Strasse 117, 80339 **Munich**,

tel: 89 5 02 70 37, fax: 89 5 50 45 86, info@hotel-hahn.de, doubles rates from €86.

Moving up into the 4-star category, a good choice would be the **Platzl Hotel** for its fabulous position in a quiet street, though in the heart of the historic area just steps from some of Munich's famous beer halls. The address is Sparkassenstrasse 10, D-80331 **Munich**, tel: 89 23 70 30, fax: 89 23703 800, infor@platzl.de, www.platzl.de Double rooms from €69.

And if your pockets are really deep, and your trip is a special occasion, consider the renowned **Bayerischer Hof Hotel**. This luxurious property, also in the heart of Munich, is, surprisingly for a hotel of this size and magnificence, privately owned. Even you don't stay, do drop in for tea or a drink or choose their Palais Keller for your typical Bavarian dinner. Contact details: Promenadeplatz 2-6, D-80333 **Munich**, tel: 89 21 200, fax: 89 21 20 906, info@bayerischerhof.de, www.bayerischerhof.de

And a few properties in the towns on the **Romantic**

● **Road:**

You can't miss the yellow **Hotel Goldene Rose** at Marktplatz 4 opposite the church in **Dinkelsbühl**. Tel: 98 51 57 750, fax: 98 51 57 75 75, e-mail: hotel-goldene-rose@t-online.de, 33 rooms, double rates from €46.

Hotel Greifen Post, Marktplatz 8, 91555 **Feuchtwangen**, tel: 98 52 68 00, fax: 98 52 6 80 68, e-mail: hotel@greifen.de, www.greifen.de, double rates from €99, dinner inclusive packages available.

Hotel Eisenhut, Herrngasse3-7, 91541 **Rothenburg ob der Tauber**, tel: 98 61 70 50, fax: 98 61 70 545, e-mail: hotel@eisenhut.com, www.eisenhut.com. Rates from €155 and there are several packages available for 2- and 3-night stays with lots of extras. And if you opt to stay somewhere less expensive (there are lots listed in the literature and all will be more than acceptable as the town is so well controlled), please do treat yourself to dinner here.

● If you would like someone else to do the planning (and, perhaps, the driving) for you, charming **Alfred Beer**, of Beer Tours, is the man to know. Alfred is a travel agent, tour operator and bus company owner all rolled into one and he can tailor-make a trip from Munich to any part of Germany (and beyond) for you. How about putting together a small group of friends and setting out in one of Alfred's mini-buses with its

sign "Beer on Tour" that will, no doubt, feature in your photographs!

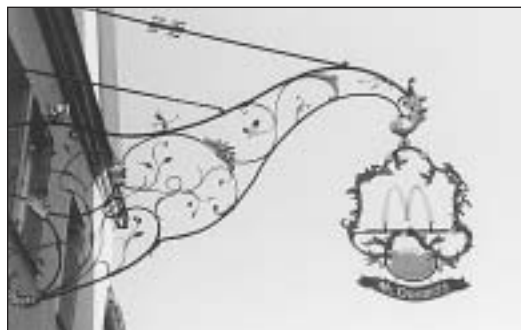
● A note on driving in Germany. The country's autobahn's have a reputation for carrying fast cars, but you do not need to let this concern you for you can comfortably explore Germany on its secondary and country roads, where you'll find the scenery beautiful and the pace leisurely. If you do decide to use the expressways you should have no problems as long as you remember to respect the very sensible plan of overtaking on the outside lane only. European drivers do not 'hog' this lane; it is only used for overtaking.

● Fine and comprehensive literature on all regions of Germany is available from the **German National Tourist** office. Call 1 877 315 6237, e-mail: gntony@aol.com, Request their Bavaria brochures, the Romantic Road literature, maps, accommodation listings and more.

For lots more information visit www.visits-to-germany.com, www.munich-tourist.de and www.romantischestrasse.de

● Remember if you fly with **Air Transat** they have an open jaws policy; you can land in one airport and leave from another. So you could decide to cover the Romantic Road from close to Munich up to Frankfurt and depart from the latter. As a financial and commercial city Frankfurt lacks the charm of Munich, however the city also boasts its share of fine museums and galleries and an attractive river-side position, so you may like to plan a day there.

Your agent will have details of the Air Transat flights to Munich aboard the Airbus A310 which depart every Friday and return from Munich on Saturday, or call 1 866 847 1112 or visit www.airtransat.com. Far cheaper than scheduled airline's Business Class is AT's upgrade option to Club Transat which offers a separate check-in counter, increased baggage allowance, priority boarding, more spacious seats in a dedicated forward cabin, complimentary bar and a choice of three tasty meals. ☺



In Rothenburg even the golden arches are tasteful!

Ecuador ... and Kapawi

by Elaine Archer

Last year my husband and I took The Travel Society's tour in Ecuador, to the Galapagos and then on to the Kapawi Lodge on the Amazon and we thought other readers might be interested in our adventure.

Yes, it was an adventure right from the beginning! We found ourselves in Houston, Texas and then learned that Continental Airlines was not going to fly into Quito because of the volcano eruption two days earlier. Apparently there was still ash in the air and so they chose not to fly. Our choices were to fly home to Winnipeg, from whence we came, or to stay in Houston while the airline decided they could land in Quito. In a bit of a quandary, we got onto the phone with The Travel Society's number in hand and called Nigel with the news "We're in Houston ... and we've got a problem!" Nigel asked us to call him back a short while later, when we learned from him that there was another option. The local airlines were flying. So we could fly to Quayaquil, stay the night and fly into Quito in the morning. This is what we chose to do.

We were met at the Quayaquil airport by Gustavo, who got us into a car to be taken to a bed and breakfast in a nice residential area. He described it as "the last room in Guayaquil" and he probably wasn't far wrong as there were hundreds of people in the airport who had also been diverted because of the problem in Quito, so lodgings were stretched to the limit. Inside the house a very nice Spanish lady pulled a set of stairs down from the ceiling to show us to our room. Yes, it was in the attic ... but a spacious clean room with its own bathroom. Breakfast was also very nice. Soon Gustavo was at the door to take us to our flight to Quito. It all worked out very well, thanks to Nigel, and we were extremely thankful for the help. We were met in Quito by a guide and continued on with our trip, only one day late.

After a tour of Quito we went north to stay at a

Spanish-style hotel, Hacienda Cusin, which was a real treasure. The rooms had fireplaces which were lit for us in the evening to take the chill out of the air. The grounds were beautiful for strolling around and it was a very nice place to call home for a few days. From there we ventured out to local towns. Our guide, Willie, was great and as our Spanish is not too good it was wonderful to have a fluently bilingual guide. He couldn't say enough about how happy he was that we had chosen Ecuador. He thanked us for coming and thought if we liked Ecuador that we should buy a home there and use it or let our friends use it for vacations! Ecuadorians are very nice people and think North Americans have loads of money and, comparatively speaking, we do. It is not expensive to live there at all. The currency is the American dollar. One of the people that we met on our trip was a Peace Corp volunteer from the States who is paid \$200.00 a month by the U.S. Peace Corps and after paying \$100.00 for rent she can easily live on the other \$100.00.

Willie took us to many small villages to see where the people lived and worked. We saw many homes where handicrafts were being made. One home we saw the alpacas in the yard, a man carding the wool, a woman spinning it into skeins, and a man weaving a wall hanging. We bought a couple of baby alpaca wool sweaters at very reasonable prices.

On Saturday we went to Otavalo, which is a market town. We went early to see the animal market and then there is fruit, cooked food, clothing, musical instruments. We eventually had to buy a hand-woven wool bag to take home all our purchases. Bargaining is expected and even a neophyte like me had a lot of fun with it.

On one of our drives on the Pan America Highway we slowed because we saw a little old lady holding an outstretched rope across the road. At our approach she merely dropped the rope and we drove on, but on the

way back my husband asked if we could stop and take her picture. She gave us a big toothless grin, we got our picture and our guide then gave her 40 cents. But we were puzzled! Was she an entrepreneur of the highway, a toll collector, or the *bandido* of the Andes?

Soon, it was back to Quito to repack for our week in the Galapagos. A Galapagos trip has already been well covered in the December 2002 edition of *TravelScoop*, written by Ted and Judy van der Veen. I would just like to add that we had a very helpful crew on the ship. One of my favorites was the bartender, Hugo, who was always available with a plate of snacks as we came aboard after a hike or swim on the islands. It was so welcoming, and a real boost to our energy after a great snorkel or swim to be so well looked after. It was a great week and for a nature lovers it truly is the trip of a lifetime.

Next phase of our trip was to an ecolodge called Kapawi into the jungle. We left Quito on a medium sized aircraft (about 20 passengers) and flew to Shell, named after the Shell Oil Company, where we boarded a smaller plane and flew into the jungle. We watched a meandering river roll by below us as well as many volcanoes, some active, some dormant. And the many, many trees of the rain forest. We landed on a small dirt airstrip and were met by a young woman in large rubber boots and a waterproof poncho. She introduced herself and indicated that we were to follow her to the boat. We trekked through a community of indigenous people and down a riverbank to a waiting motor boat. There were seats in the boat and we donned our life jackets as we would soon learn to do automatically whenever we boarded a boat. There was a cover over the passengers, to keep out either the rain or the sun. We motored down the Chapawati River (which means 'piranha' in the Achuar language.) and, yes there were piranha in the river. But our guide explained that you could swim in the river; it is just at certain times of the year that it is dangerous and in fact, later, some of our group did indeed swim with the piranhas.

Soon we arrived at Kapawi Lodge, to climb up the

stairs at the dock and down the board walk to our accommodations. We were to sleep in thatched roof huts on stilts located on a bend of the river. They were quite comfortable with their own bathrooms and a balcony with hammock overlooking the water. Every afternoon a large (5-gallon) bag was delivered to each room with solar heated water and hung over the shower. You could have a shower whenever you wanted but it was best to wait for the warm water later in the afternoon. We had a little time to organize our belongings before we were served an excellent meal of sea bass in the dining room and had an orientation meeting to find out about our activities.

The daily schedule went like this: if you were an avid birdwatcher and wanted to go out in the morning, you were to be up at 6:00 for a hot beverage before setting out in the boat to birdwatch. Breakfast was then at 7:00, after which there was a daily hike in the jungle. We were all issued those large rubber boots, unless you had brought your own. You could also borrow a rain poncho. The hikes ranged from an hour and a half to three and half-hours. We went with the group who had indicated they were up to easy to moderate activity. We were



The Lodge at Kapawi

accompanied by a guide and a native guide with a machete who explained native customs and what the trees and plants meant to them. An U.S. firm called Canodros, who will turn the lodge over to the indigenous Achuar People in 2011, currently manages the lodge. Meanwhile the locals are learning the ins and outs of resort management. In this way they will become responsible for the preservation of the rain forest and be able to make a living.

Afternoons were free to relax, perhaps take a nap, or it was possible to visit a local community or engage in a boating activity. Evenings could be spent boating and bird watching or looking for caimans and other night creatures. We went with large searchlights. When the telltale eyes of a creature was spotted you could shine your flashlight on the animal to see the whole thing. We spotted a couple of caiman, a water opossum, pink river dolphins, grey river dolphins, and

We don't like mentioning the 'w-word' – winter – at the height of summer, but if you'd like to witness one of nature's unique phenomena it isn't too early to start thinking 'Mexico for Monarchs'.

Monarchs of Mexico and Canada



by Dennis Sollosy

One of the truly awe-inspiring sights of nature is a visit to the wintering grounds of the Monarch butterfly in central Mexico. We had a chance to visit this site in January this year and it turned out to be the high point of all the things we saw in over 8000 km of travelling in Mexico.

It was only as recent as 1975 that Canadian scientist Dr. Fred Urquhart discovered the location of the wintering grounds of the Monarch butterfly. Now the Mexican government has set aside a sanctuary for the Monarchs called the *Reserva Especial de la Biosfera Mariposa Monarca*. It is located about 150 km east of the city of Morelia and it includes the four mountains that the butterflies inhabit. The Monarchs can be found high atop these mountains from November through late March. It has been estimated that there are between 10 million and 20 million butterflies on each mountain top! They are present in such large numbers that they look like shingles on the balsam fir boughs that they cling to during winter months. Each insect weighs about ½ gram, but by sheer volume alone, they cause the tree boughs to bend almost straight down. It is really something to behold! The principle viewing site is located between the villages of Angangueo and Ocampo. There are bus trips from both Mexico City and Morelia to the sanctuary, so it's easy to get there if you're in one of those cities. If you're driving, you can get to these villages easily from either north or south directions.

We drove to Angangueo which is rather a picturesque village in that it is located in a steep-walled mountain valley. There is a nice church in the central square that's worth a visit. The village has four hotels. These villages are located at over 7000 ft. altitude so it

can be pretty chilly up there at night and it's worth knowing that not all of the hotels have in-room heaters. It might be something to ask about when you're looking for a room. We stayed at the Margarita Hotel in Angangueo at a cost of 250 pesos per night (C\$1 = approx. \$N8). The rooms were clean and quite large, but there was no heat. We could have had a room with a *chimnerra* (fireplace) but then we would have had to purchase firewood. They supplied plenty of blankets so we were warm enough and slept well. However, in the morning the room was pretty cool and the hot water heater wasn't working so we had a rather quick and chilly wash and made a rapid exit.

For the trip up the mountain to the viewing site and back again one should allow 4-5 hours. The ride up takes about 45 minutes. The road is quite steep in places but extremely rough all the way up. The average car will lose a muffler, or an oil pan, or springs or a few other things on that road. So if you're driving your own car it is better either to leave it at your hotel, or just south of the Angangueo at the entrance to the road up to the sanctuary. We left our car in the small parking area by the latter. Apparently there is a paved road from Ocampo, but we were told it that was for tour buses only. In Angangueo there are plenty of guys with *camionetas*, 4x4 trucks with seats in the back, who take groups or individuals up and down the mountain. The round trip cost is 400 pesos (approx. C\$50) for a truckload. It doesn't seem to matter how many people are in the load, it is still 400 pesos. We joined forces with a Mexican family and reduced our costs to 200 pesos. Whether you go as a group or as an individual, it is worth every peso you pay for the *camioneta* just to save your own vehicle from being shaken to death.


After reaching the parking area, there is a 10 peso entrance fee (Cdn \$1.50) for the butterfly sanctuary and another 600-700 feet of climbing to do by foot. The Mexicans have constructed a very good set of steps and stairways for most of the climb, so it's not difficult going up. However, it takes a good 50 to 60 minutes of steady climbing to reach the top so a pair of good shoes and a little conditioning before hand will pay dividends. Be sure to take warm jackets because the butterflies live at an altitude of 10,400 ft. and it can be pretty cool up there, even in sunny Mexico. Also, it's worthwhile taking binoculars as the butterfly area is roped off and people aren't allowed to go right up to the trees that are laden with these beautiful insects. Viewers are kept about 20-30 ft. back from the trees. If you can arrange to be there on a nice warm and sunny day, then the Monarchs will be flitting about all over the place and feeding on the flowers so you won't have any trouble getting close to them. In fact they'll probably land right on you from time to time. Just try to imagine what it looks like to see a few million Monarchs flying about all at one time! Wondrous! But it doesn't matter if you see them shingled onto the fir trees or flying freely amongst them, it is a truly wonderful and magical sight and it's worth every effort it

takes to get to the top of the mountain.

These delicate creatures are the only insects in the world that migrate thousands of kilometres to escape the winter cold. The visit inspired me to investigate them more and their story is quite phenomenal. There was some discrepancy in the information available, but the following is a reasonable distillation of what could be gleaned.

Monarchs are found scattered throughout much of southern Canada and many parts of the USA during the summer months. Their life cycle is relatively short in that it takes only one month for the butterflies to develop from egg to adult, then the adults live for only another 4-6 weeks. When autumn arrives, the shorter day-light hours and cooler weather cause the last generation of the summer to change into a migrating mode as opposed to the normal reproductive form. This migrating generation has a life span of about 8-9 months. They fly all the way to central Mexico where they wait out the winter amid the balsam fir forests. These large, dense trees offer them good protection from winter winds and rains. During the colder days of December and January they spend most of their time clinging to the trees in a state of semi-hibernation. On warmer days they fly about and feed on the flowers in the area. In the month of March, as the weather warms up, they start to feed in earnest and prepare for mating once again. The males die after mating, which leaves only the females to begin the migration north. The females fly as far as the southern USA where they lay their eggs on milkweed plants. The new adults that emerge continue the migration, but they reproduce as they move along. Each generation of adult flies north for some distance then reproduces and dies. It takes about three generations of Monarchs to complete the migratory route back to Canada.

The effort involved for us humans to see this phenomenon is nothing in comparison. I urge you to include this fantastic experience in your travel plans next winter.

Cabañas Margarita can be contacted at Morelos 83, Michoacan, Mexico 61411, tel: 011 52 715 156 0149. Another Anganguero property is Hotel Albergue Don Bruno, Morelos 83, tel: 011 52 715 156 0026. Both properties offer rooms in the US\$35 - \$90 range. 

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.



Still no travel plans for summer? Perhaps you've decided to stay in Canada? Well, there's nothing nicer than a getaway in our own country. If you have no plans, consider these few recommendations from fellow readers.

A Few Canadian Destinations

Where in the World is Wilmer? Where in the World is the Delphine Lodge?

by Renate & Gordon Williams

On any decent-sized map of western Canada, Wilmer, British Columbia, is noticeable by its absence!

This turn-of-the-nineteenth-century silver mining town is perched on the benchlands at the end of pavement on the west side of the Columbia River Valley (aka the

R o c k y
M o u n t a i n
T r e n c h),
near where
the river has
its source,
f l o w i n g
north out of
C o l u m b i a
L a k e .
N e s t l e d
between the
R o c k y
M o u n t a i n s
to the east

and the Purcell/Bugaboo Ranges to the west, Wilmer's glory days as a frontier town have passed, but it is in the process of reinventing itself as an artists' colony. The historic Delphine Lodge, built in 1899, the Grande Dame of the town and now a comfortable bed-and-breakfast establishment, continues to preside over Main Avenue, across from the old log assay office. Jill and Sebastian Bell, the owners, fit the profile of the recent arrivals. They came to Wilmer three years ago from Calgary, having lived in New Jersey, Venezuela, California, Edmonton, Halifax and France. Originally



The area offers some wonderful views (Williams)



The Delphine Lodge (Williams)

from England, they have been proud Canadians for over 20 years. Both are writers and Sebastian is a semi-retired geologist and university professor who paints in watercolours and makes his own wines. Two frisky Jack Russell Terriers, Jack and Bertie (Bertrand?), and a soporific cat named Norton, round out the household.

The Bells and their predecessors have skilfully restored the old two-storey clapboard hotel and lovingly maintain it. Jill and Sebastian have added a spacious veranda overlooking the large, sunny English garden, and installed modern facilities throughout, including their four uniquely decorated, cozy bedrooms. In the cooler months, crackling fires provide extra welcoming warmth in the book- and painting-lined lounge and the dining room.

From Jill's crowded kitchen come the most delicious muffins, hotcakes, homemade jams and full English-style hot breakfasts.

Afternoon tea and goodies on the deck or veranda in the garden in summer, or in the lounge when the weather is less than ideal, are not to be missed.

Recreation facilities in the area abound. The lodge is five minutes' drive from Lake Windermere, 15 min-

utes from the Panorama ski resort, and a maximum of 25 minutes from any of 10 golf courses, including several of championship calibre. Hiking, canoeing, kayaking, mountain-biking, swimming, lounging in nearby hot springs (Radium and Fairmont), birdwatching (either in the lodge garden or the nearby bird sanctuary), or just relaxing and absorbing the spectacular mountain and valley scenery, round out the list of possible activities.

After a hard day's work enjoying oneself, a leisurely dinner at one of the several excellent, fully licensed restaurants within ten minutes drive, in the nearby town of Invermere, puts an appropriate finishing touch to the day.

Wilmer is approximately 3 km north of Invermere on the West Side Road (watch for the blue-and-white Delphine Lodge signs). Invermere, in turn, is just off Highway 93/95, approximately 100 km south of the Trans Canada Highway at Golden, or an easy three-hour drive through spectacular mountains from Calgary, via the Trans Canada Highway and Highway 93 through Radium Hot Springs.

The Delphine is a hidden treasure. We spent Easter weekend there this year, being treated like long-lost family, and will definitely be going back.

The Delphine Lodge can be contacted at: P.O. Box 2797, Wilmer, BC, V0A 1K0, tel: 250 342 6851 or 1 877 342 6869, fax: 250 341 6110, e-mail: delphine@rockies.net, www.bbcanada.com/delphinelodge Room rates (2003): single: \$75 - \$105, double: \$85 - \$115 which include breakfast and taxes. Discounts for stays of three days or longer. Visa, MasterCard and Interac accepted. Pets accommodated by prior arrangement This is a no-smoking property.

Exploring from Edmonton?

by Denise A. Bridge

There's an historic inn in Edmonton that readers may like to hear about. It's the beautifully-restored Glenora B&B Inn which offers a variety of bedrooms and suites, many of which are pictured on their website. With an aunt and uncle visiting from England, we had two adjoining rooms (101 and 103) with a shared bathroom. The rooms are full of antiques and have all the amenities of a hotel: hair dryer, chocolates on the pillow, amenities, bathrobes, phones and TV's. The guest lounge has a fireplace, sofas, books, games and there's a kitchen with facilities for making drinks. Our rooms

faced the street and there was quite a bit of traffic noise. If this is likely to bother you, you can request a room off the street.

A delicious breakfast is served at Nina's Restaurant and Piano Bar, one of several restaurants on the main floor. The food and service were so good we had dinner there both nights as well. This is a great address to have in Edmonton.

Glenora B&B Inn, 12327 – 102 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5N 0L8, tel: 1 877 453 6672, www.glenorabnb.com, double rates from \$85.

An Oasis on the Prairies

by Marion Magee

While driving across the Canadian Prairies on Trans Canada # 1, imagine our delight at finding a first-class hotel and spa in the small city of Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. In the past Moose Jaw has not been known for either good hotels or entertainment, but apparently that has slowly been changing over the past decade.

The Temple Gardens Mineral Spa and Resort Hotel was built in the heart of the city, overlooking Crescent Park, about seven years ago. Here there are 184 attractive guest rooms, some with balconies, ranging from \$99. The resort offers Canada's largest therapeutic hot pool; it is spectacular and it's also connected by a water channel to an adjoining outdoor hot pool. At night we loved it ... so relaxing and soothing to bathe in the hot springs under the stars. Or you can enjoy the hot mineral waters in the privacy of your own room if you reserve one of the 25 jacuzzi suites (from \$170 a night).

Now a few words about Moose Jaw. After driving the long prairie distances it was a treat to park our car at the hotel and walk everywhere. Restaurants and shops are attractive and within walking distance, while the many colourful "Murals of Moose Jaw" guarantee something of interest at almost every turn. And about ten years ago a unique attraction came to life out of Moose Jaw's infamous past – tours of the underground tunnels where Al Capone and his buddies supposedly hid between gangland slayings. Another tour tells the story of the early Chinese immigrants who found this labyrinth a safe place to hide from government officials.

So if you're planning to drive through Saskatchewan, spend a night or two at the Temple Gardens, rejuvenate yourself in the mineral springs and

then hit Moose Jaw for some sightseeing!

Temple Gardens Mineral Spa and Resort Hotel, 24 Fairford Street East, Moose Jaw, SK S6H 0C7, tel: 1 800 718 7727, www.templegardens.sk.ca

Wood & Waves B&B, Manitoulin Island, Ontario

by Maria Wu

On my first visit to beautiful Manitoulin Island last August, I stayed two nights at the Wood & Waves in Little Current, a 45-minute drive after leaving the ferry from Tobermory. This property is a spacious log home situated in a wooded shoreline setting overlooking Huron's North Channel. It offers a quiet, smoke-free environment with a do-it-yourself breakfast with all the fixings provided, kitchen facilities and a comfortable living area with a fireplace. There are just two rooms (shared bathroom) both with queen beds. Guests have a private entrance which opens onto the lake.

On our first evening our hosts – Gerlinde and Dave Goodwin – built a campfire on the beach for us to watch one of the spectacular sunsets for which this area is renowned. Later we enjoyed the night sky and the shooting stars over a glass of red wine while sharing some of our life experiences with our hosts and the other guests. Sleep comes to the sound of gently lapping waves and morning is heralded by a symphony of birds.

An excursion to Gore Beach, 67 km from Wood & Waves, is a great way to spend a day. We stopped at lots of interesting places en route as described in the guidebook Gerlinde had lent us. We did an invigorating hike with lots of spectacular views in an area known as 'cup and saucer' and explored the marina at Gore Beach where there's a restaurant with an observation tower. On our way back we stopped for a swim on a sandy beach near Little Current and picked up some steaks and 'fixin's' for the barbecue which is supplied at the property.

Gerlinde provided us with lots of little extras such as fresh flowers daily, a plateful of homemade banana break and the use of her computer for

e-mails. She also has island maps, lots of tourist information and hiking tips. Her hospitality and attention to detail made our stay here sheer bliss.

Woods & Waves B&B, 55 Rocky Mountainway, P.O. Box 408, Little Current, ON POP 1K0, tel: 1 866 369 3337, e-mail: info@woodsandwaves.com, www.woodsandwaves.com. Rate \$100 double, cash only.

Tips for Newfoundland

by Ruth Whelan Hulsman

Last September my husband and I had the pleasure of staying at a B&B in Newfoundland that we would like to recommend to readers. It's the Caribou B&B, located in Port aux Basques, just 3 km from the ferry and bus terminal. Innkeepers Elizabeth and Henry Gibbons know such a lot about Newfoundland and many guests plan their complete Newfoundland vacation here once they arrive off the ferry.

The area attractions include the Gulf Museum, the 1873 Rose Blanche Lighthouse, the Heritage Train Site, beaches, birdwatching and great seafood restaurants.

The property offers five guest accommodations, three of which have private baths, at rates around \$50 double, including a continental breakfast and evening tea or coffee.

Caribou B&B, 42 Grand Bay Road, P.O. Box 53, Port aux Basques, NF A0N 1K0, tel: 709 695 3408. 



The Wood & Waves B & B (Wu)

Countdown to Athens 2004

by Ann Wallace

The eyes of the world will be on Athens from 13-29 August next year, as the Olympic Games return (close) to their ancient birthplace and to the city of their revival in 1896. They will be followed from 17-28 September by the Paralympic Games.

When I visited Athens in April/May of this year I discovered a city busily transforming itself, although I was told by locals – and soon to discover for myself – that much had already changed over recent years. There's a state-of-the-art new airport; the problem of city pollution has already been addressed and improved with many initiatives including new transport vehicles; roads are being dug up and resurfaced at a confusing rate ("Is my hotel really on this dug-up street?!), buildings everywhere – from homes and offices to the Parthenon itself – are being cleaned and repaired and the subway was been modernized and extended. In fact the gleaming new station at Syntagma Square is now more like a museum than a station. And, in fact, it is a museum of sorts, as it contains displays of the antiquities unearthed during its building and a long cross-section of an excavated area – secure behind plexi-glass now – that shows the city's historic layers and even some graves. Fascinating stuff!

Speaking of museums, a new Acropolis museum is being constructed complete with a gallery designed to hold the Elgin Marbles which the Greeks are hoping that the British will return to them in the near future. I am not party to whether this is likely to happen or not, but it's a good reason to plan to fly to Greece via London as I did, on British Airways, since no visit to Athens is really complete without seeing these magnificent artefacts whose home, at present, is the British Museum. British Airways provide an excellent choice of flights from Heathrow to Athens.

In addition, city sidewalks are being repaired; landscaped pedestrian walkways are being construct-

ed to link major cultural sites and 120 km of new highways and 90 km of upgraded highways are expected to be ready for the event.


Then there are the Olympic sites themselves, 17 in all, located in clusters in and around the city. All have been constructed under a strict environmental programme which includes the Olympic Green Spaces Programme, waste management and recycling practices and the use of environmentally-friendly materials and initiatives.

Outlets all over the city (and probably further afield too) are selling Olympic souvenirs, everything from fancy china items to t-shirts and pins featuring the two cartoon mascots of the games: Athena and Phevos. This pair – brother and sister – symbolize the idea of brotherhood among all people. They are wearing tunics of orange and blue, representing the

sun and the sea, and in my opinion are rather ugly. However ... they were apparently inspired by a 7th century BC Greek doll known as a 'daidala'. This actual doll is now in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens while similar ones can be found in museums in Paris, Berlin and Boston.

Tickets for the Olympic Games went on

sale in June of this year, offered first to Greeks, then to European Community member countries and, now, available in Canada. CoSport is the Official Ticket Sponsor of the 2004 Canadian Olympic Team and Official Supporter of the ATHENS 2004 Olympic Games is CoSport. They offer Canadian residents a range of booking options and packages, from individual tickets to ticket packages and accommodation/ticket packages. For more details, please visit www.cosport.com, e-mail cosport@cosport.com or call toll free 1-877-45-RINGS (1-877-457-4647). The website of the Canadian Olympic Association can be found at www.coa.com, while for the Athens event it is www.athens2004.com

During the coming fall *TravelScoop* will be featuring stories on Athens and the island of Amorgos, primarily with the general tourist to Greece in mind. 



Seems all of Athens is getting a face-lift for 2004 (Wallace)

Travel Digest

Britain

Off to **London** soon? Theatre-lovers take note please: the National Theatre, under new director Nicholas Hytner, will be offering over two-thirds of its tickets at £10 (about C\$23) this summer and on through the season until November. In the Olivier auditorium under the National's vast roof there will be five productions ranging from Shakespeare's *Henry V* to David Mamet's *Edmond* in which Kenneth Branagh will make his National debut in the title role. Theatre doesn't get much better than this, and certainly not at that price! For details visit www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

Prefer animals? Heading to **Scotland**? Then you may like to have news of the 'Ultimate Scottish Break' package, one of several offers on a website that features some fine hotels and inns in Britain. For example: two nights in an Edinburgh town house followed by two at a country house in St. Andrews costs £397.50 pp including breakfasts and two dinners. Available until 30 September, details can be found at www.breakswithtradition.com And the animals? The new Galloway Wildlife Conservation Park in Kirkcudbright, Scotland (105 miles south-west of Edinburgh) is one of Britain's premier wildlife collections where visitors can see a lowland anoa (one of the world's smallest and rarest wild cattle), red pandas, monkeys, lynx, Scottish wildcats and more. The park is working with several

international conservation organizations to save species that are threatened with extinction. Visit www.gallowaywildlife.co.uk for more information, maps, etc.

Canada

Most of the works of French masters Chardin, Fragonard and Watteau depict charming social or romantic scenes rendered in pretty colours, so this summer's special exhibition at our National Gallery in **Ottawa** makes a great focal point for a getaway to the capital. And the Sheraton Ottawa Hotel has designed a package for art lovers which includes deluxe accommodation, buffet breakfast for two and two tickets to the exhibition for \$169 per couple. And guests who enjoy this package will be eligible to win a VIA RAIL pass for the Quebec City-Windsor corridor. For more information call 1 800 489 8333 or visit www.starwood.com

U.S.A.

There's a **National Landscape Conservation System** in the U.S. that offers travellers an alternative to the United States' increasingly crowded national parks. The system is a 40-million-acre collection of national monuments and other scenic places in 11 Western states. Although this system's creation in June 2000 received little attention, each of its sites offers an unusual diversity of vacation options for campers seeking solitude, families who want to learn about American West, or travelers in search of unforgettable canoeing, caving, and hiking experiences. "The remoteness of these deserts, mountains, red rock canyons, and rivers offers North Americans perhaps a

chance to see and understand the West as it was discovered by the first European explorers," says Dave Alberswerth of the Wilderness Society. There are fifteen monuments in **Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, and Utah**. For more information visit the Wilderness Society's webpage at www.wilderness.org

Tour Talk

You have until 28 August to research the special offers from **Signature Vacations** for the coming winter. These offers include free holidays (air too) for children, one or more free places if you make up a group of 16 or more and early booking bonuses of up to \$500 pp if you reserve and pay by the August deadline. Vacations cover all destinations Signature serves from across Canada, plus resorts in the Caribbean, Mexico, Costa Rica and more. Your agent will have the winter brochure or call 1 800 830 1111 for your own copy or visit www.signaturevacations.com

Maxxim Vacations, the Atlantic Canada vacation specialists, are offering special values on their three new 7-night self-drive packages to Newfoundland's East coast, West coast and cross-island. Starting at \$999 the tours include airfare to Newfoundland (from Toronto, Montreal or Ottawa) with CanJet, accommodation and car rental with unlimited mileage for 7 days plus a whale watching tour or dinner theatre evening. For info call 1 800 567 6666 or visit www.maxximvacations.com

continued from page 12 ...

many birds. The hoatsin is the official logo of Kapawi Lodge. It is a large (turkey sized) bird with a spiky crest. We also saw a horned screamer. Apparently it is a rare bird, though known in the area and people come from all around to see it. There were also macaws, yellow rumped cassitas and lots of herons: great blue herons, night herons. We also saw a sloth swimming in the river. Yes, the area is just teeming with wildlife and we appreciated our guides who were so knowledgeable and helpful. Sightings of spiders and snakes are also possible, but we only saw one of each and were told snakes usually hear people approaching and get out of the way.

Our next adventure involved our trip home. Our bags were outside our door at 9:00 a.m. and we were ready for our hour plus boat ride to a nearby community where we waited for a Cessna to take us to Shell. There were four passengers on this small plane. My husband is designated the co-pilot and told that his job is just not to touch anything! Well, we are back in Canada and writing this, so you know he did well! But our adventure wasn't over! Waiting at Shell for our next plane we are told there were weather problems in Quito and a plane couldn't land. But in fact there was a labour dispute and firemen had lined up across the runway so the airport at been closed. We waited and waited and eventually were taken to Quito by bus, arriving at 2 a.m. What a day!

All in all, it was a wonderful adventure. When you travel you must be prepared for some occurrences that you might not expect and consider them part of the adventure. We loved the whole trip and have great pictures as well as some fabulous video footage. 📷

Mystery Shopping

Some of you may have heard of a company called Sensors Quality Management Inc. The company was formed as a result of businesses requiring a third party to conduct independent evaluations of their operations. Hitherto the fields in which this company has offered its services have been in retail merchandising, restaurants, hotels and so on.

The company is now searching for individuals who would be interested in "mystery shopping" aboard planes and trains in return for half-priced travel. In order to take advantage of the reduced fares the inspector must successfully fill out a number of evaluation forms, generally 8 – 12 forms, with between 25 and 50 questions, most of the 'yes/no/not applicable' variety together with some miscellaneous notes. The questions will deal with the experience of making reservations, boarding, cleanliness of washrooms, food and beverage service, etc. Upon completion of the evaluations the inspector will be reimbursed 50% of the cost of the ticket.

Details of SQM can be found on line at www.sqm.ca where visitors to the site can read a variety of articles that have appeared in the Canadian press countrywide. Then, to become eligible as an inspector, candidates should complete the on-line application form "Becoming A Mystery Shopper", after which applicants should e-mail Betty James at betty@sqm.ca, writing "Travel Shops" in the subject line.

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

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

Space limited to 20 people

A Traveller's Turkey

Departing: 5 October 2003 (We have six seats now available for this departure.)

14 September 2003 (We have eight seats available for this departure.)

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

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

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

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES 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

NEW

Copper Canyon & Guadalajara

9 days departing 12 September & 10 October 2003 / February, March & April 2004

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

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

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

Please call for prices from other departure cities

Your tour includes:

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

It's time to go travelling!

There are so many places in the world and there's so little time. Take a look at these new destinations. We have been asked by our members to arrange tours to the following countries. Why don't you join them?

- South Africa, Botswana, Namibia
- India
- Sri Lanka
- More Australia, New Zealand and Fiji
- Holy week in Guatemala, plus Cuba
- An in-depth Guatemala Tour

Please call now and we will send the detailed itineraries for this fall and 2004

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

Galapagos Islands and Ecuador

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

14 days departing 14 October & 4 November 2003 / March & April 2004

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)

NEW

Chile, Patagonia and Easter Island

Departing 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 Kingdom of Thailand

17 days departing 20 October 2003 / March & April 2004

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

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.

China is safe again! Go now ... before the crowds return!

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 (now in the process of changing for ever)**; a look at the work-in-progress on the massive **Three Gorges Dam**; a walk on the ancient **Great Wall**; views of charming villages, lush terraced hillsides and magnificent mountain peaks; visits to the great cities of **Shanghai** and **Beijing**; a trip to view one of the world's greatest archaeological finds ... the 6,000 terra-cotta warriors at **Xi'an**; scenes of palaces, pagodas, pavilions and pandas; tastes of Peking duck and Chinese banquets and so much more. So how do you choose? When you decide on The Travel Society's tour there's no need to choose because all these highlights are included. Yes, in these remarkable 18 days you'll stay in Beijing; you'll take a 4-day first-class cruise on the Yangtze with many shore excursions; you'll fly to see those centuries-old terra-cotta warriors in Xi'an; you'll visit bustling Chongquing 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!

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

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

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 / February 2004

Highlights...

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

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

PRICES INCLUDE AIR AND TAXES departing from:

Vancouver	\$10,357	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.  reg #01280649

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 (a 16% saving off the regular \$95.00)
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