

Travel Scoop

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Jeju - Korea's Beautiful Island

Hawaii's Big Island

Follow the Sun to Barbados

Travel and Health Insurance

TravelScoop

The Travel Society Magazine

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Where is this?
Find out next month!



Cover: Children attending a wedding in Jeju City

editor's letter ...

A new year for us all! And a new look for *TravelScoop*! (And a new photo of yours truly ... 10 years on!) As you will see we no longer have a 'Winning Scoop' but, as before, everything you write is rewarded with a subscription extension depending on the length of the piece: three or four free issues for a letter; a free year or more for a destination piece. As always, we remain committed to bringing you honest and helpful travel news. Of course, I hope you enjoy reading our articles, but I always keep in mind that the purpose of each article is to help you enjoy a similar experience. And, as ever, this is travel information written by Canadians for Canadians. Yes ... sometimes you have to fly out of New York or Los Angeles and we often quote prices in US dollars because that is what overseas tourism providers often use, but we never lose sight of the fact that this is a magazine for Canadians. So please keep your tips and articles coming ... it is you, our readers, who are the strength of *TravelScoop*. And please don't forget to log on to our website www.thetravelsociety.com where you can see both our published photos and additional photo essays in full colour.

Time now to wish you all a wonderful 2004 with safe, happy and exciting travels on this wonderful planet of ours which offers so many fabulous and varied experiences.

Ann Wallace, editor of *TravelScoop*

A couple of tips for those who have New Zealand in their plans.

New Zealand – as Captain Cook found it!

New Zealand is one of our favourite holiday destinations. During our third extended visit last fall, we discovered a new attraction in the South Island's Fiordland: an overnight cruise on Doubtful Sound, wider, deeper and less well-known, thus less visited, than the famous Milford Sound. Doubtful Sound is not accessible by road except over the Wilmot Pass, and the only vehicles allowed on this road are the local power company's vehicles and the coaches of RealJourneys. Except for a few privately-owned fishing boats, there are usually no boats on the Sound other than the *Fiordland Navigator* which is owned by RealJourneys. This is truly nature as it was discovered by Captain Cook: a pristine wilderness with clear blue waters, birds, seals and other wildlife and the unique plant life of New Zealand.

The trip begins in the village of Manapouri but, if you do not have transportation, RealJourneys provides coach transfers from nearby Te Anau, or from the tourist centre of Queenstown about three hours away. Participants can bring a packed lunch along, or pick up a pre-ordered boxed lunch at the dock in Manapouri. The expedition begins with a boat trip across Lake Manapouri, one of New Zealand's largest and deepest lakes. After a short stop at the Visitor Centre we were transferred to the coach which had been brought in by barge. The one and only road was built for the construction of the Manipouri Power Station; it connects the power station and the Sound, but does not connect with the national road system. On the drive, and if the weather is clear, the driver makes a photo-stop at the summit but we had already taken several photos of the many narrow, high waterfalls that we'd passed and the lush green rain forest vegeta-

tion that is everywhere.

Arriving at Deep Cove mid-afternoon, we boarded the *Fiordland Navigator*, a vessel specially built for this excursion. The crew, all naturalists, showed us to our quarters and asked us to soon re-assemble for the safety drill, a talk on the activities and a welcome snack. The *Navigator* then headed out to the mouth of the Sound where we could see the breakers roll in from the Tasman Sea. Before dinner, passengers can go out in one of the inflatable tenders for a close-up look at the steep rocky shore or go on a kayaking tour of one of the smaller coves. A delicious three-course buffet dinner is served in the main lounge. After dinner, one of the naturalists shows slides of the area's wildlife in the smaller lounge or there are board and card games available. The invigorating sea air leaves most people ready for an early night, but don't forget to go outside for a look at the night sky before retiring. As there is no interference from man-made light here the night sky is magnificent

There's a difficult choice to be made in the morning: to get up early for a pre-breakfast shore excursion with the naturalists, or have a sleep-in until breakfast time. Coffee and tea and something light to eat is available whenever you rise, but the aroma of a fully-cooked breakfast wafting through the ship is a big draw. Later we enjoy the excursion in reverse. The *Navigator* journeys back to its dock where the passengers board a coach for the magnificent drive over the pass to Lake Manapouri and the final boat trip back across the lake. Arrival here is around noon, in good time to take the coach back to the departure point. There are few places more remote on this planet that can be enjoyed in such comfort on a two-day excursion.

RealJourneys is the operator of this tour and several other trips throughout New Zealand's South Island. Reservations are required, but they can normally be made just a day or two beforehand. The *Fiordland Navigator* has 19 private cabins with en suite facilities as well as eight quad-share bunk-

style compartments with toilets and showers down the hall. The four-bunk accommodation is quite adequate, especially for a family or four friends travelling together and, outside the busiest times, a couple may well have sole possession of a compartment. Twin cabin prices are NZ\$445 pp (approx. C\$365 as NZ\$1 = 82¢ Canadian), quad-share NZ\$285 pp (or C\$234) from Manapouri, about NZ\$15 more each if you include transfer from Te Anau and NZ\$67 pp more from Queenstown. The ship is affiliated with the New Zealand Youth Hostel Association, and a YHA card will get you 10% off the bunk accommodation. Many area resorts also offer a discount coupon for the private cabins. While we enjoyed the *Milford Wanderer* overnight excursion in Milford Sound several years ago, we found the *Fiordland Navigator* excursion exceptional value for a truly unique experience. In both destinations the overnight trip on board is well worth the extra cost. The day-only trip to Doubtful Sound involves spending most of the day in transit (boat, bus, tour boat and back) while RealJourney's boats are the only ones on the Sound at night. For information about RealJourneys offerings, visit their excellent website www.realjourneys.co.nz, e-mail info@realjourneys.co.nz, phone 0800 65 65 03 (toll-free in NZ), or from Canada call 011 64 3 442 7500, fax 011 64 3 442 7504 or write RealJourneys, P.O. Box 94, Queenstown, NZ.

*Ted and Judy van der Veen
Campbellville, ON*

Writers are rewarded for sharing!

TravelScoop rewards readers with subscription extensions of varying lengths for all submissions published. So whether you have a letter with a travel tip or a destination to share, please write to us!

If You're Heading to New Zealand, Don't Miss The Festival of Flowers

News in *TravelScoop* of the flower carpets in Antigua, Guatemala reminded me that in February of each year Christchurch, New Zealand, holds a "Festival of Flowers". Every church chooses a special theme for its floral design, which is portrayed in carpets or special floral arrangements in the chapels. In one church the theme was "The Journey of Life", depicting both physical and spiritual development. Another church wanted to portray an orchestra and the carpet contained designs of musical instruments. The ingenuity of the designs is quite outstanding. One marvels how so many flowers can be obtained and at the skill in which their colours and shapes are combined to produce an instantly recognizable design.

Among other attractions are dances performed several times each day. The dancers are dressed as flowers: a rose, a carnation or an orchid. They dance to Tchaikovsky's "Waltz of the Flowers". How they manage to leap about in such heavy costumes is truly amazing.

It is a spectacle not to be missed. The next festival will take place from Friday 13 - Tuesday 17 February, 2004. More information can be obtained from their web site: www.festivalofflowers.co.nz.

*Barbara Redlich
North York, ON*

A Few More Home Exchange Thoughts

Here is a small supplement to the article which Ken Harrison wrote about home exchanges in the September issue. We too have been members of Home Link for a number of years and have done several exchanges each year since 2000. As in Ken's case, our experience has always been positive.

There is one caveat which I should mention: it's pretty obvious, but if your home is your castle and is indescribably precious to you, home exchanging is not for you. You would just worry too much and not enjoy the experience.

If you live in a small country place which might be of interest to a city dweller, as we do in the Gulf Islands of BC, consider a weekend or short exchange with someone in a nearby city. We do this several times a year with Vancouver and it is always a success. It helps, of course, if your home is located in a tourist destination. When we visit Vancouver we attend the symphony, walk in Stanley Park and eat in interesting restaurants, all without the cost of an expensive hotel.

We have had exchanges in Australia, Santa Fe, San Francisco, and Ontario, all with no problems. You can put restrictions on your exchange as well, which is helpful for many people, for example: no pets, no smoking, no children, plus limitations at certain times of year. Of course, you have to be somewhat flexible as well to secure an exchange when and where you want

it. And bear in mind most exchangers from overseas will require three or four weeks in your home.

We too would be willing to share more information on our experiences.

*Marie Le Lievre
Salt Spring Island, BC
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Following The Picton Castle

In Lunenburg on 12 June last year, my wife Joan and I came across a three-masted barque named *The Picton Castle*; it was just preparing to leave on a year long trip round the world. Since then I have been following its progress on its web site. If you go to www.picton-castle.com you will see a picture of the ship and the words Join Us. Click on those and you will then have the opportunity to get the Captain's Log, the itinerary, photos of the crew, logs of previous trips, the history of the ship, its current position and lots more information. I have a map of the world on the wall and I have plotted its course to date, south from Lunenburg, through the Caribbean, the Panama Canal, Pitcairn Island and to its present location as I write this in November: near Espiritu Santo in Vanatu east of Fiji.

It's a feast for wannabe travellers! I thought other readers might be interested. It is also possible for travellers to join *The Picton Castle* for legs of its world voyage.

*W. G. Coulton
Toronto, ON*

The Travel Society

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

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

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

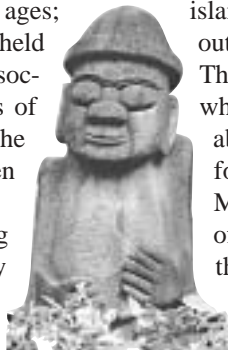


Jeju - Korea's Beautiful Island

story and photos by Ann Wallace

Strange that I should think about the sounds of Jeju when the island is so calm and peaceful; when it is possible to wander in silence in the fields and orchards where wild flowers dance and tangerines ripen in the sun. But this quiet place has been home to many sounds: the mighty rumbles of the volcano that rose from the northwestern rim of the Pacific to form the island so long ago; the whisper of the island's poignant legends passed down through the ages; the promises of peace uttered at the World Summit held here; the roar of the fans at the island's World Cup soccer match; the rustle of the wind down the slopes of sacred Mt. Hallasan; the crash of the waves on the rocky shore and the hiss of the sea on the golden beaches.

Jeju Island (or Jeju-do, the 'do' meaning 'province') is a delightful place that offers many unique and charming attractions, especially for nature lovers and even more especially for garden



lovers. So if, in my last edition, I have persuaded you to visit Korea, I hope you will include a visit to Jeju in your itinerary. I know you won't be disappointed; you will be given such a warm welcome and leave with such happy memories.

First, a few facts. Jeju is located 100 km from the southern tip of the Korean peninsula. At 1,248 sq. km (73 km west to east, 41 km north to south) it is Korea's largest island. If you were to drive around the coast road without stopping the journey would take about five hours. The island came into existence thousands of years ago when an under-sea volcano erupted, spewing lava above the surface of the water. A further eruption formed what is now Korea's highest mountain – Mount Hallasan, or Halla – which stands in the centre of the island and which is, today, a National Park occupied by 160 species of birds and a variety of mammals from deer to weasels. Today it is loved by

locals and visitors alike, who come to hike the trails to the mountain-top crater, to ride or merely to enjoy the unique flora, fauna and scenery.

Wherever your travels take you on the island you will, in all probability, start your journey in Jeju City, located on the island's north shore. This is a bustling city with a population of about 300,000. It offers a wide range of accommodation options and lots of great restaurants. Here your first stop should be the Jeju Folklore and Natural History Museum which provides an excellent introduction to the island both past and present. Don't miss the gallery of fascinating ancient world maps here. Also in the city is the living museum of Mogwanaji and its adjoining Gwandeokjeong Pavilion, one of the oldest buildings in Jeju. Here in this complex visitors can learn about Jeju's dynastic rulers and take photographs of the costumed guards or, perhaps, enjoy a cultural performance or historical reenactment. Then there's Samsonghyol Hole, the calm and beautiful sacred site within a small Jeju City park where, legend says, three demi-gods emerged from a hole in the ground, became enchanted with what they saw and settled down to become the first people to inhabit Jeju. They became the founding fathers of the island's three main families and every spring and fall members of these clans gather in a ceremony honouring these revered ancestors. Mysteriously, moisture from rain and snow does not penetrate into the hole, while the lovely surrounding trees all grow around the site at an angle, seemingly bowing to the three ancestors.

I've already mentioned the fact that Jeju is a garden lover's paradise with many world-class gardens quite out of proportion to the island's size, so come with me on that trail before I tell you more about the island.

One of Jeju's most famous gardens is located on the outskirts of Jeju City. The garden is not large as public gardens go, but I can guarantee you have not seen a garden like this one before. 'Unique' is an over-used word, but the garden known as Mok Suk Won certainly is that. It has a most remarkable atmosphere and has been selected by the French Ministry of Culture as one of the Twelve Monumental Gardens of the World. It is a garden not of flowers but of wood and rock formations, all displayed amongst trees, shrubs, mosses and ivies, surrounded with stone walls and examples of Jeju's beauti-

ful tree gates. The wood formations are the roots of the Jorok tree which are found on Mt. Halla at an altitude of 700m above sea level. After the tree has died the resinous part remains, often in the form of beautiful natural wood sculptures. Un-Chol Baek, the collector and founder of this garden, has displayed these pieces of wood with titles, challenging the viewer's imagination. And then there are the natural rock formations, many of them in amazingly-realistic human shapes, also all gathered from Jeju Island. These have been arranged to tell the legends and myths of the island and the whole effect is most intriguing. Of these displays, the most charming is the love story of Gabdori and his wife Suksumi, told in natural rock sculptures with the help of 24 carved bronze plaques set in a low stone wall (yes, in English as well as Korean).

The grounds also contain carved stone statues, traditional thatched buildings and a thatched gallery (perhaps the only thatched one in the world) devoted to photographic exhibitions. These thatches are unusual in that they are covered with a grid of wild-grass ropes, weighted with stones, that help the thatch withstand the summer typhoons that may sweep over the island.

I'm already well into this article and I still haven't mentioned the island's most famous symbol: the rock statues known as Dolhareubang or 'stone grandfathers' believed to be guardian deities. You will have noticed them before you arrive in the garden, but nowhere are they more authentic nor more beautifully displayed than here at Mok Suk Won. Their history is obscure, but it is thought they were grave guardians, and today they can be found all over the island:



Previous page: Dong-ja-sok statues in Mok Suk Won (top) and a 'stone grandfather'

Left: The stone sculptures and bonsai trees of Mok Suk Won

Below: The photography gallery at Mok Suk Won



large ancient originals and miniatures for tourist souvenirs. Also in the gardens you'll see collections of stone statues called Dong-ja-sok, smaller pieces than the 'grandfathers', that resemble little children. This beautiful place is not only peaceful and very lovely but also an inspiration to gardeners in its use of stones and wood.

There's quite a different atmosphere to be found at Hallim Park, 33 km west of Jeju City, easily found by following its brightly-coloured signs. This enormous site offers many different experiences in one: the Subtropical Botanical Garden, the Water Garden, the Hyeopjae and Ssangyong Caves, the Jeju Stone and Bonsai Garden, the Garden with Beautiful Birds, the Jae-Am Stone Exhibition Hall, the Folk Village, the Palm Tree Road, the Cherry Blossom Garden and Pine Tree Hill. Add to this the large gift store, two restaurants and the charming bird house coffee shop and you'll realize this site could engage you for most of a day. The coffee shop is surrounded by caged birds and an enclosure full of ostrich who peer in the windows while you're enjoying your lunch! (By the way, this little coffee shop offers a small selection of Western-style food, so it's a good choice if you need a pasta fix!) Try to visit Hallim Park on a week-day; this is a popular

soaring glass conservatory is home to five eco-systems: an exquisite flower garden, including orchids; a cactus display; a jungle glasshouse and a waterlily garden, while at the centre of the complex is a 38m high observation tower served by an elevator for views of the outdoor gardens which include Japanese, Italian and French designs as well as traditional Korean gardens. Look out for the topiary peacock with flowers for his trailing tail plumage. There's a little 'train' to take visitors who do not wish to walk to the various outdoor gardens.

I did not have time to visit all the gardens on Jeju; one I was particularly sad to miss was



a golden pheasant in the Hallim Park

destination for local families and you'll find it quieter during the week. Highlights for me here were the superb bonsai gardens, the kiwi vines which I'd never seen growing before, and the beautiful birds (which you can see in colour in the photo essay on our website).

Your enjoyment of these gardens will be heightened if you know a little of their history. In 1971 another Jeju resident and garden lover, one Bong-Gyu Song, recognized that tourism would become an important industry for the island and developed a plan to build a world-class recreation park near his home. He acquired a piece of barren land where nothing was growing and where nobody lived. Tons of stones were removed, to be replaced by a thousand truckloads of soil and so the lush gardens were born. It's amazing to think they have only been in existence since the 1970's. Work was also done to open the two caves, formed by an eruption of Mt. Halla and which are considered unique by geological experts, not only because they form the longest lava cave system in the world (17,000 m) but also because they contain stalagmites and stalactites – seldom found in a lava cave – as well as fossilized sea shells. A 500m portion of the cave is open to the public within Hallim Gardens.

Another major garden - the Yeomiji Botanical Garden in Chungmun Tourist Resort Complex - is one of the largest gardens in Asia, with 2,000 greenhouse species and 1,700 in the gardens outdoors, many of them rare or endangered. A

the one devoted entirely to bonsai trees. But I was not sad for long for the whole island is a garden, a garden of wildflowers. Spring, when the cherry blossoms and azaleas are in bloom and the island is blanketed in the yellow flowers of the rapeseed (or canola) plant is the islanders' favourite time of year. My visit took place early in September when the island was also beautiful, scattered with marigolds and pink, purple and white cosmos flowers.

But back to my tour. Yeomiji gardens are located in the island's main tourist region, known as the Chungmun Tourist Resort Complex, adjacent to Jeju's second-largest town – Seogwipo, the location of the World Cup Soccer stadium. Lots of information on this region can be found by entering Seogwipo in your internet search engine. Chungmun, known as the honeymoon capital of Korea, offers a wide range of additional attractions and sports facilities (including golf), beautiful sand beaches and accommodation of every description. The octagonal Hyatt is an island landmark and the vast Lotte Hotel is literally jaw-dropping in size and opulence and is, as far as I can remember, the only hotel I have ever encountered to have fresh flowers (red roses, no less) in the elevators! But if this isn't your style you'll find many other pleasant accommodation choices.

A drive to the western end of the island to see, and perhaps walk up, Mt. Sanbongsan is a 'must'. Local legend

says that this huge mass of rock, rising 395m above the sea, was ripped out of the summit of Mt. Halla, leaving Paengnoktam Crater Lake in its place. Halfway up Sanbangsan there's a natural grotto holding a temple and offering wonderful views. Close by stands the monument to Hendrik Hamel, who wrote the first western account of experiences in Korea. In fact Jeju was probably the first part of Korea to come into contact with the west, when Hamel and 36 other Dutch sailors were shipwrecked here in 1653. Hamel wrote of the 13 years they spent in Korea before managing to return to the Netherlands and www.hendrick-hamel.henny-savenije.pe.kr/holland4.htm is an excellent website – in English – telling the fascinating story, as well as much Korean history with old illustrations and photographs. To-day's visitors to Jeju are mainly Koreans and Japanese, many of the latter coming to view the famous gardens. I met and chatted with a few British and Canadian tourists and some young Canadians who were living in Jeju and teaching English, but I didn't encounter any Americans.

Mention of walking now leads me to another of Jeju's attractions: hiking on Mt. Halla. Unfortunately I did not have time to do this, but the views I did have of the mountain reveal what must be a beautiful place to explore. The four trails, all from different areas, range from 3.7 km to 7.3 km and from easy to 'more challenging',

and I hope to return to Jeju one day to experience this mountain for myself. I was told the shortest trail – Yeongsil – is the most scenic. Full hiking details are available in the tourist literature to be found on the island.

I have only touched on the many things to see and do on Jeju. There are many other museums, folk villages, a sculpture park, a variety of historical sites, hiking trails and many beautiful beaches; there are other, smaller, islands that can be visited; there's riding on the island's small sturdy horses; scuba and snorkelling; sightseeing round-the-island cruises; shopping for unique items including stone grandfathers that come in many sizes, as well as a variety of annual festivals to celebrate music, sports, the cherry blossoms, the rapeseed and the tangerines for which this island is famous and which you may already have tasted as they are exported to Canada. And don't miss a drive to Bugaboo Road, also known as the Mysterious Road (about 4 km from Jeju City) – a baffling optical illusion which only occurs in two places in the world: here and in Chile. I leave it to you to discover – and perhaps

explain – the phenomenon!

As you explore Jeju you'll find many of the locals shy at speaking English, even though almost all will have learned it in school. But you will be met with unfailing grace and friendliness, as revealed in the island's favourite slogan: *samda, sammu, samnyeo* ... the first refers to the three things Jeju has in abundance: wind, stones and women; the second to the three things the island lacks: thieves, beggars and gates and, finally, the three most beautiful things to be found on the island: the generosity of the people, the scenic beauty and the juicy sweet fruit.

As I briefly mentioned in last month's *TravelScoop*, I was honoured to be invited to Jeju-do to celebrate the 48th anniversary of the establishment of Jeju City on 1st September last year. I attended the formal celebrations, I met the Mayor – Mr Tae Hwan Kim – and some tourism officials and then I was treated to some tours of the island. My guides for the three days I was on Jeju were two young women from the Mayor's office. I could praise them and

describe them at length, but I think it will suffice to say that as we bade each other 'farewell' at Jeju airport we all had tears in our eyes. Now I have a simple message for you both: "Jiyeon and Euna ... I hope I can return to Jeju one day. You and your island hold a special place in my heart."



Mt. Sanbangsan, rising from the shore, offers some wonderful hiking

Some details ...

*** Getting there:** Jeju is well served by air from major cities in mainland Korea as well as from Osaka, Tokyo and other Japanese cities if Japan is in your plans

too. Car/passenger ferries also connect the island with the mainland. The overnight ferry from Busan, every night except Sunday, takes 11 hours with prices ranging from Won 180,000 (C\$200) for a *de luxe* double cabin to the simple passage charge of Won 24,200 (C\$27). Air-inclusive packages to Jeju are available from travel agencies in Seoul and other major centres on the mainland.

*** Getting around the island:** Jeju City is bustling and lively, but once beyond the city limits you'll find the island calm and quiet, with good roads, courteous drivers and clear signs, so renting a car is certainly a pleasant way to go, with excellent free parking at major attractions and near the beaches. Gas is about Won 1,300 or C\$1.45 a litre. If driving doesn't appeal, tourists find the island's intercity bus system an inexpensive, extensive and easy-to-use alternative with all buses departing from the main bus terminal in Jeju

City or in Sogwipo (the town that serves the tourist centre of Chungmun Resort). There's an excellent tourist map in the bus station, point to your destination and you will be assisted to the correct bus. The main routes of interest are the coastal road that rings the island and the two cross-island highways that pass either side of Mt. Hallasan. For those who like to travel in style, many make private arrangements with taxi drivers to act as chauffeurs and guides for the day.

* **When to go ...** in Spring or Fall. Whichever you choose, these shoulder seasons are usually perfect.

* The high volume of Korean tourists that visit Jeju in the summer months ensures that there is more than enough **accommodation** in the shoulder seasons. If you have not pre-booked accommodation, reservations can be made at the tourist office at the airport or, as already mentioned, you can make arrangements on the mainland. There's plenty of choice, from tangerine farms to the Hyatt or the Lotte.

* As mentioned in my previous article on Korea, **admission prices** throughout the country are very modest. The above large gardens, for example, which offer hours of pleasure are around C\$6 or \$7, with reductions for seniors.

* **On a practical note**, the authorities of Jeju are striving to make this island a model tourism destination. They have strict environmental measures in place and are committed to keeping the balance between the traditional lifestyles of the local people and preserving the island's natural beauty and resources while at the same time developing 'attractions' to appeal to a broad spectrum of people: gardens, children's attractions, historical re-enactments and so on. It is also worth mentioning that the island prides itself on being virtually **crime free** and the young Canadian teachers I met told me they accept rides from strangers when offered, as they often are.

* **Information on Jeju Island** is, of course, included in the *Travel Korea Guide* mentioned in last month's article and available from the Korean National Tourist Office in Toronto, tel: 416 348 9056 or 1 800 TOUR KOR. Korea's official tourism website is www.tour2korea.com, click on Jeju on the right of your screen and you'll discover a tempting photo gallery. The island also has its own website:

www.jeju.go.kr (with a small 'click' for English in the upper right corner) where you'll find a charming welcoming paragraph so typical of the people of this island, and lots of information, including



Right: View from the Lotte Hotel, Chungmun

Below: The tearoom in Hallim Park Bird Garden

accommodation details. Click on 'Tour Guide' and then on 'accommodation/homestay'; the former lists hotels in all categories, the latter the approved homes in Jeju City that welcome visitors at rates of US\$35 per night for stays of five nights, with dinners available at US\$3 or \$4. There are three homes listed here that like to have English-speaking visitors. One includes a sweet note: "I've got two daughters. They are learning English and speaking a little. We love Jeju Island because Jeju is a wonderful place to live. We like meeting and talking with people who are from overseas and also we are open minded. We live in the city, close to a park and so you can enjoy going for a walk if you visit my home. We like to travel on the weekend and we are interested in the history and culture of Jeju Island. That's why we can recommend you where to go. Our hobbies are going to the theater, listening to music and playing sports. You can enjoy time with us if you want." That sums up the charming people of Jeju ... I couldn't say it better myself. Though I will just add, once again, that I am honoured to have become

associated formally with this delightful destination. 🏠



Late in 2002 TravelScoop published two articles on Hawaii: Maui and Moloka'i in the November edition of that year, and Kauai in December. Here now is another Hawaiian destination ...

The Big Island

story and photos by Judy and Ted van der Veen

Continuing the earlier series on the Hawaiian Islands, let's go now to the Big Island - Hawai'i itself. (To avoid confusion, I will refer to the island of Hawai'i as 'the Big Island', reserving Hawaii for the state.) The most easterly and the youngest geologically, the Big Island is more than twice the size of the other main islands combined, and is still growing. Since 1983 its Kilauea volcano has been erupting continuously, increasing the island's area by about 540 acres.

The Big Island is less densely populated than the others and agriculture is of prime importance. Tourism has not brought the over-development, the high-rise hotels, and the other trappings found on the other islands. We first visited the Big Island in 1989 and returned in January 2003, when we saw that development in the west, called the Kona Coast, has produced new resorts, timeshares and vacation rental homes, many restaurants, shops, farm tours and tourist activities. But the overall impression of the island is still that this is a living, working environment where Mother Nature rules supreme. Tourists are welcome, but life does not revolve around them.

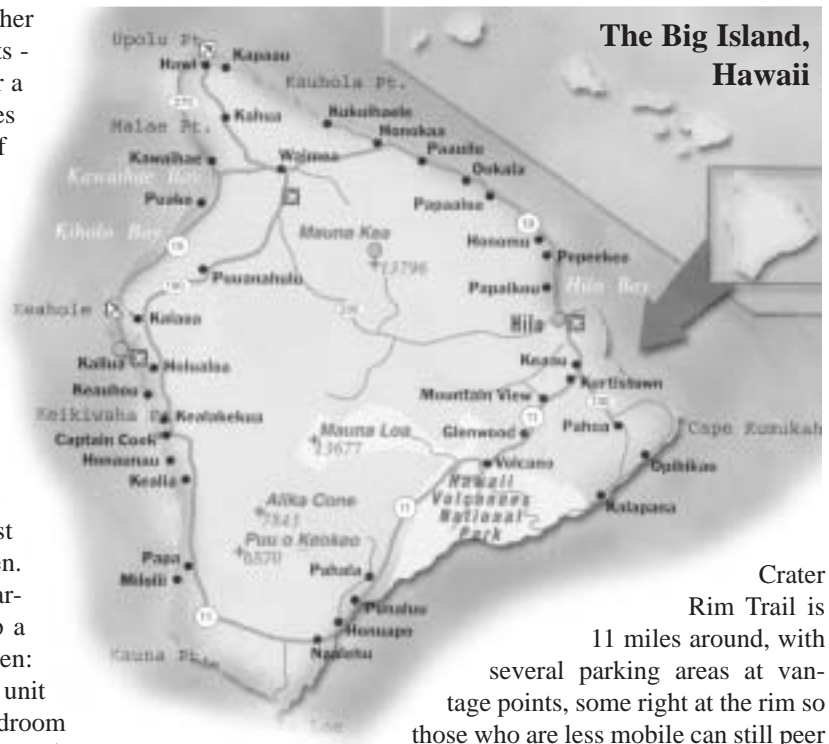
Hawaiians divide the island into two parts, Kona-side and Hilo-side, with both regions served by separate airports. Both Hawaiian and Aloha Airlines fly to both sides from Honolulu several times a day (about \$145 return) while there are some direct flights from the mainland to Kailua (also known as Kona). Flying from Honolulu is like riding the bus; if there isn't room on this plane, take the next. Barring time constraints reservations are not necessary. Most of the arrivals at Kona are tourists, while business people are more likely to fly into Hilo. Car rentals from Hilo are often lower-priced, but must be booked in advance. At Kona, advanced booking may get you a better deal, but there will be cars available from at least one of the big agencies if you just arrive. If you wish to see this island in depth, we suggest that you stay on both sides of the Island for a few days. The

round-the-island road is almost 200 miles, much of it mountainous and winding; the one road that cuts across the island is even narrower, steeper and more winding. Some rental car companies will not allow driving on this road, but it is fully-paved and, as we learned from Editor Ann's trip to Maui, not everyone obeys rental agency rules!

Let's begin with Hilo, the historic capital and commercial centre of the island, about two and a half hours by car from Kona. For many, Hilo is synonymous with its devastation by tsunamis in 1946 and 1960 which developed from earthquakes in Alaska and Chile. Over the last 15 years there has been much re-development in the old part of town with an eye to retaining the historic (1910 - 1930) structures. This has been very successful, and a walking tour of the old town (ask for a brochure) makes for an interesting half- or full-day activity. The Pacific Tsunami Museum, located in an old bank by the waterfront is very interesting. The video show takes place in the vault! Here volunteers give an informative introduction, there are the usual media displays (print, audio and video) as well as an interactive "create your own tsunami" computer experience. Up the hill, the Lyman House and Museum also merit a few hours. The restored Lyman Mission House, the oldest wooden structure on the Island, was the 1839 home of an early missionary family. The recently-renovated Lyman Museum began with a family rock collection. Today, the ground floor is the Earth Heritage Gallery which one enters through a simulated volcano; the focus is geology and natural history. Upstairs is the Island Heritage Gallery devoted to pre-European-contact Hawaii as well as the different ethnic groups that have contributed to modern Hawaiian culture. Anthropologists believe that it was here that the first Hawaiians landed about 1,500 years ago. Development of farming industries in the 19th century brought in waves of Japanese, Chinese, Philippine and Portuguese workers along with American missionaries and developers. As a result, the Big Island constitutes the most ethnically diverse county in the USA.

Although some of the old town is still rather shabby, there are over thirty cafés and restaurants - we recommend the prize-winning Café Pesto for a delicious meal - as well as interesting bookstores and antique shops. The post-tsunami town of Hilo has sprung up to the south, near the airport; it has very little to distinguish it. The larger hotels are located along Banyan Drive which is lined with banyan trees planted, from the 1930s on, by celebrities such as Cecil B. DeMille and Amelia Earhart. The hotels of Hilo Bay are standard cookie-cutter high-rise hotels, but there is another option. At the northern end of town, in an older residential area, is a gem of an inn called Dolphin Bay Hotel. We first found this European style inn in 1989 from the AAA book and returned last January. The setting is a lush tropical garden. Wake up to the sound of birds singing in the garden, then wander down to the lobby to pick up a fresh coffee and some fruit from the garden: bananas, papayas, whatever is in season. Each unit has a full kitchen while most have separate bedroom and lounge areas. Double room rates range from US\$69-99 but you might be able to arrange a discount for a longer stay. If you are prepared to accept somewhat older furnishings, un-matched cutlery and crockery, but still a full kitchen and daily maid service, there is an annex across the street which is slightly cheaper. The inn is within a few minutes' walking distance of all the attractions of the old town, also a supermarket. The striking photos in the lobby of volcanic activity are the work of John who is at the desk in the mornings. For volcano information, John is your man - an avid photographer, he will be happy to tell you the best spots to see lava flows, give you photography tips, or recommend out-of-the-way places. To contact Dolphin Bay Hotel, write 333 Iliahi Street, Hilo, HI 96720 (tel: 1 808 935 1466, fax: 935 1523), or visit www.dolphinbayhotel.com which has photos and all the details.

Being on the windward side, the area around Hilo is dense rainforest, particularly to the north. There are several Botanical Gardens within a few miles, Akeka and Rainbow Falls, a Rainforest Zoo, and commercial orchid gardens and macadamia nut plantations that welcome casual visitors. About half an hour west, and 4,000 ft higher in elevation, is Volcanoes National Park, a gem of the American parks system and, for many if not most, the highlight of a visit to the island. Admission is US\$10 per car, valid for 7 days. If you are interested in volcanoes, land formation, nature and the establishment of plant life, you will want to pay more than one visit here. The Visitor Information Center should be your first stop; not only do they have displays and films about the area, but they can also tell you what volcano activity is going on that day, whether and where the lava flows can be seen. Free ranger-led tours also leave from here. The



Crater Rim Trail is 11 miles around, with several parking areas at vantage points, some right at the rim so those who are less mobile can still peer into the crater. Others lead to walks of 20 minutes to several hours. One of the shortest and most interesting walks is to the Thurston Lava Tube; this requires some climbing, but you do walk through some very rich fern forest and a lengthy section of lava tube. In contrast with the lava fields, this is a little bit of fairyland. From the rim trail, you can follow the Chain of Craters Road for 40 miles down to sea level, then walk as close as possible to the spot where the lava flow is entering the sea. What you can see varies from day to day and it is important to ask at the information centre before you go. On our first (June) visit it was so exciting; we were able to see molten lava just a few feet away from us and observe the red-hot stream hit the ocean. What an experience! But on our last visit, the steam cloud was blowing inland and it was not possible to approach. (If you decide on a nighttime visit - for the best views if the lava is flowing - you must have sturdy footwear, long pants, and a reliable flashlight each. You must also have good mobility and balance; a walking stick is a good idea.

The Chain of Craters Road takes an hour each way. Allow an hour or more there, then add another hour to include a walk across the lava fields on the Pu'u Loa Petroglyphs Trail where you can see some of the more than 24,000 figures etched into the lava rock. Remember that you will be going from 4,000 ft to sea level, then back to 4,000 ft so breathing can be difficult. If you would like to stay in the area, the rustic Volcano House Hotel is within the park and there are lodges and B&Bs in Volcano Village as well as cabins/campgrounds in the area. If you want to take a plane or helicopter flight over the active volcano, departures from Hilo are not only cheaper than from Kona, but they also cut the flying time simply to get there. Photography buffs,

choose a flight in late afternoon when the red streams of lava show up more clearly. As for driving, it is a full two hours or more from Kona to the park entrance, making for a very long day if you want to appreciate the park fully. All the more reason to make Hilo your base.

When you are ready to move on to Kona-side you'll discover the drive around the south-western corner of the island is desolate. There are miles of lava flow on both sides of the highway.

A short detour to Black Sand Beach at Punalu'u gives you a chance to stretch your legs and perhaps see a green turtle or two basking in the sand. Na'alehu prides itself on having the most southern post office in the U.S. Just west of here is the narrow road to South Point (12 miles) and the hiking trail to Green Sand Beach. Once you are well past the turn northward, at the village of Captain Cook (he was killed near here), you enter Coffee Country. Kona Coffee is one of the most prized coffees in the world. Beware of blends. On the island, a 'Kona blend' may have only 10% Kona coffee beans, but on the mainland, one bean per bag permits a 'Kona blend' label! Of course the best is '100% pure Kona'. The free tour at Kona Pacific Farmers Cooperative is excellent, not to mention the tasting. This is an easy excursion from Kona itself.

Also in the area is a National Historic Park, Pu'uuhonua o Honaunau or Place of Refuge, admission \$5 per car, again valid for 7 days. The half-mile self-guided walking tour through the ancient royal grounds will reveal something of the traditional Hawaiian way of life. A stone wall built about 1550 AD containing the sacred bones of the chiefs marks the area that gave sanctuary to anyone who could reach it, whatever the taboo they had broken. On the rocks and in the waters of this sheltered bay we saw several green turtles and tropical fish. From the highway you can see out over the ocean, but an interesting diversion is to take some of the steep, narrow roads leading down to the ocean for a glimpse of 'old

Hawai'i'. As you approach the town of Kailua, commonly called Kona, the signs of tourism appear, but very low key. Ali'i Drive along the waterfront is lined with restaurants, bars, boutiques, and various rental accommodations. But go back a block or two and you are in Smalltown, USA. There are many timeshares along the waterfront south of town. We were lucky enough to get an exchange into the newest one, Kona Hawaiian Village by the Sea. The units are stunning,

built to imitate the traditional Hawaiian 'hale' but with all mod cons: full kitchen, comfortable lounge area, dining on the 'lanai' (deck), laundry, two bedrooms with ensuite baths, one with a claw-footed bathtub with jacuzzi. In the gardens of tropical flowers and fruit are barbecues for your use and a very nice swimming pool and hot tub in a natural setting. Several archaeological sites are marked off and protected. If you are into self-catering, fresh fish is available at the Marina north of town, just south of the Airport.

There are other interesting day trips to make from Kona. The section of coast north of the airport is another large lava field with oases of luxury carved out along the coast; here are the destination resorts of Kona, verdant gardens, palm tree-lined drives, golf courses, fish ponds. It is an experience just to drive through one or two of

them, and wonder at the foresight and the audacity of the initial entrepreneurs. You might choose to turn inland to Waimea, the town at the heart of Parker Ranch, the largest ranch under single ownership in the United States. Founded in 1809, this ranch once covered over half a million acres; it still occupies one tenth of the Big Island. From here you can return to Kona via the inland road, down from 2,500 ft to sea level.

If you have the time, or another day, continue north along the coastal highway, past several parks, to the village of Hawi. From this quieter end of the island, between November and February, it is usually quite easy to see humpback whales from the shore. Continue to the very end of the road to the Pololu Valley Outlook where you can hike down to the shore if you dare, but the canyons beyond are accessible only by helicopter or



Above: the Place of Refuge

Right: lava meets the ocean



... continued on page 20



*Top: The Bougainvillea Beach Resort
Above: Sunbury House*

For more information contact the Barbados Tourism Authority in Toronto at 416 214 9880 or 1 800 268 9122, www.Barbados.org

Follow the Sun to Barbados

story and photos by Glenn Murdoch

Our flight touched down at Barbados' Grantley Adams Airport at two o'clock in the afternoon. We untangled ourselves from our Air Canada seats, collected our belongings and stepped onto the runway under a tropical sun. Customs queues were muddled, and there were lots of people hanging around for no very good reason, but everyone seemed glad to see us and we were soon through the formalities and ready to start our holiday proper.

Our first priority was the rental car. We booked our trip through BCAA who had access to only one car hire firm, Drive-a-Matic. The representatives, all three of them, were

waiting for us just outside the terminal door. They too were smiling and seemed glad to see us. I was starting to grow fond of the Barbados people, or Bajans, as they like to be called. We all sat in the baking sunshine and filled out a very long car-hire form. They smiled and asked me questions. I answered and melted in the heat. Eventually yet another smiling representative presented our car to us – a tiny Daewoo, barely larger than our luggage and covered in dents. When we made the reservation we had ordered a Suzuki and my preparatory reading had warned me that Barbados car hire firms may try to downgrade us. I let them know that I was not happy with the substitute and wanted the car we had ordered. They apologised and promised to bring the proper car to our hotel the following morning. In the meantime, we could use the Daewoo. As we stuffed our luggage into this tiny vehicle, I was reminded of those circus cars that drive into the ring packed with far too many clowns!

With every window open we rattled and bumped through the parish of Christ Church to our hotel through neighbourhoods sprinkled with wooden houses roughly the size of a one-car garage. All were painted in bright, primary colours and many were perched precariously on foundations made of piled bricks and coral stone. We later found out they are called Chattel Houses and because they are not cemented in place they can be easily loaded onto a truck and moved. Long ago, people would regularly move with their houses to where the work, harvesting sugar cane, was best.

We passed through three towns like this then crested a hill and caught our first glimpse of the Barbados coastline. Have you ever seen those postcards where the water is such a perfect blue and the sand is so brilliantly white that you suspect the photo has been enhanced in some way? Barbados has those beaches. Refreshed by both the view and a cooling onshore breeze, we made our way to our hotel – the Bougainvillea Beach Resort on the south coast near Oistins. This is a fairly new, four-storey hotel with its own beach, restaurant and swimming pool built around a beautiful garden in the shape of a horseshoe (tel: 1 800 988 6904 or visit www.bougainvillearesort.com). As well as rooms, this property also offers self-catering accommodation which would certainly help with the budget.

Yes, I have to admit that Barbados is expensive. Dinner with wine at an average restaurant costs around C\$100 per person. Fast food is of course cheaper, but who wants to live on fast food? We were fortunate that our accommodation included a small kitchen so at times we bought groceries and cooked our own meals. Prices in the supermarkets vary wildly (beef is very expensive) so check around. For cash, Canadian banks have plenty of branches in Barbados with ATM's and cards are accepted at all major establishments.

But back to our vacation. We were shown to our room, dumped our bags and immediately changed into our swimwear. I looked out from our first floor balcony to the beach below. Moments later we were waist-deep in white

foam as crystal waves crashed on our shoulders. It was divine.

The next morning, our car exchanged, we set off to exploring the west coast. We planned to drive northwards until we ran out of island then head inland to get a feel for the place. Barbados is 20 km wide by 35 km and roughly teardrop shaped, but in general the roads are poor so it can take you a long time to get anywhere. The speed limit is 50 kph on most roads and this is usually ample, though many locals ignore the limit and whiz by in a cloud of dust. There is one highway, some potholed main roads, minor roads that consist entirely of patches with little bits of road showing through and the remainder are referred to as 'tracks'. It is important drivers get a good map of the island as there are few signposts and it is easy to get lost, especially in the more remote areas. However, remembering it is an island is reassuring!

Here's a little history for those that are interested. The island's first settlers arrived by canoe about 3,500 years ago and lived a peaceful life until the Spanish arrived in the early 1500's and carried many off to work as slaves. When the Portuguese arrived in 1536 they found the island deserted – apparently everyone had fled, fearing the Spanish would return. The island was still uninhabited in 1627 when the English started a colony in the northwest at what is now called Hometown. The main industry was sugar cane until around 1807. Tourism is now the primary source of income for the island. Barbados remained a British colony until 1966 and is now an independent country, though still part of the British Commonwealth. Bridgetown, the capital, is a reasonable-sized city but the lack of high-rise buildings and the colonial architecture give it the feel of a frontier town. Here we bought supplies and a detailed map of the island.

The British influence is very evident in Barbados. Bridgetown in particular has places like Tudor Street, Queen's Park and Trafalgar Square, complete with statue of Lord Nelson. They even drive on the left side of the road and we met many British tourists during our stay. (But their electricity system runs at 110 volts.)

Bajan people dress more formally than on most of the other islands, particularly for dinner and you'd be well advised to bring some good clothes for eating out. Men often wear a tie in restaurants, though a suit is not required. Our favourite restaurant was Bellini's (tel: 435 7246) in Saint Lawrence Gap. This is a lovely Italian trattoria right on the water. Prices are average (i.e. very steep) and you should reserve a seat outside on their veranda overlooking the bay. Another good restaurant was L'Azure at The Crane Resort. This is on the South coast in Saint Philip (tel: 423 5350) and made for a nice lunchtime stop on our way home from Sam Lord's Castle.

Sam Lord was a rogue who lured ships onto the rocks by his house to salvage their goods. At night, he set up lights that imitated the lights of Bridgetown harbour so the ships thought they were sailing into safe water. The ships crashed

onto the rocks then Sam and his gang salvaged the cargo. This lifestyle was so profitable that he built a large mansion for himself that he named Sam Lord's Castle, where he styled himself as a pirate king. When his wife tried to leave him, he kept her chained in the cellar. He was not a nice fellow.

After a few days of intense inactivity at the beach, we decided it was time for a little culture. Barbados has a rich history and the people in the tourist industry are only too pleased to tell you about it. We decided on a trip out to Sunbury Plantation House – a grand home built in 1660. After 45 minutes and only two wrong turns in the un-sign-posted countryside we arrived at a beautiful colonial-style whitewashed building, with a bright red roof and the Barbados flag flying proudly at the front steps. We bought a ticket for the next tour, but that wasn't due to start for thirty minutes so we took a walk around the grounds. The gardens are lovely – lush and colourful with ancient trees and bougainvillea. The Sunbury House tour was interesting and informative and the woman who showed us around imparted her great interest in and knowledge of the house. Another Sunbury House highlight was the lunch: good fare decently cooked and an all-you-can-eat buffet at a reasonable price. It was certainly the best value meal we had in our entire time on the island. We even considered returning for their five-course candlelight dinner but decided against driving the unlit, potholed country roads after dark.

I saw signs printed with "Just say no to Aloe" in several places and I eventually asked the desk clerk at our hotel what it meant. She told me that many people use the juice from the Aloe Vera plant as a moisturiser and to counteract the effects of sunburn. Some entrepreneurs are harvesting the wild plants and trying to sell them to the tourists, resulting in a dramatic drop in the plant's numbers, so the government has started an awareness campaign to discourage it. That evening, a man came up to us as we took our sunset stroll along the beach and tried to sell us some Aloe. Before I could stop him, he broke open the plant and rubbed the oily juice into my arm saying it was great for my skin. We said "no thank you" and he left smiling, bidding us a good night as he went.

After two more days at the beach we were ready to drive to Holetown. This is Barbados' first major town, on the north end of the island. Holetown is a lot smaller than Bridgetown and has a lovely relaxed feel about it that makes for a nice morning walk. Half an hour was all it took to feel we had explored the town, so we got back in the car and headed for the most northern province – Saint Lucy. Saint Lucy and a fair amount of the east coast constitute the more remote areas of Barbados. The towns are smaller, the roads can be extremely bad and you often end up driving through large areas of land devoted to agriculture sprinkled with ruined buildings.

When our petrol gauge started getting low, we agreed to stop at the next gas station to get a fill-up for the car and

a cold drink for ourselves. We drove along rugged coastlines, through valleys and over mountains as the gauge crept lower and lower. Twice we asked directions and were told each time there was a gas station "just down the road". The petrol gauge had been reading 'empty' for several miles by the time we finally found one. I was sure we were destined to abandon the car and hitchhike back to Holetown. We later discovered that some of the maps you can buy have gas stations marked on them. I would recommend getting one.

The Barbados tourism industry is constantly growing. Many hotels are world class though the tourist centres tend to be clustered in small, distinct areas. Often you only have to walk a couple of blocks from your hotel to find a real Bajan neighbourhood. We found a little store just five minutes walk away that allowed us to buy items at half the price of the store in the hotel.

The beaches are the focus of the bulk of the tourist trade. Young guys cruise the coastline offering rides to tourists for a fee. Some have small catamarans and will take you out. Fortunately many businesses still seem to be small home-grown affairs, but the big chain stores are coming. If you're thinking of an island escape this winter, I recommend that you catch a taste of Barbados while it's still unspoiled.

Editor's note:

Barbados was last featured in the November 1997 edition of TravelScoop. Excellent tourism information can be obtained from the Barbados Tourism Authority at 416 214 9880 or 1 800 268 9122, www.Barbados.org and, while it is admittedly expensive, all-inclusive vacations and special deals are often available. I was briefly in Barbados in July 2003 to celebrate the 375th anniversary of the City of Bridgetown, and special events and celebrations connected with this event are due to continue into 2004.

In addition to Glenn Murdoch's account I would like to add a couple of recommendations. If you're interested in the history of Barbados do pay a visit to the Barbados Museum & Historical Society located in the old military detention barracks (1853) in the Garrison Historic Area in Hastings. It has fascinating illustrations of early life on the island and terrible details of life and conditions on the slave ships. On a lighter note, the popular Waterfront Restaurant in Bridgetown, whose slogan is 'loud food and spicy music', is recommended as a lively change from those delightful but expensive restaurants along the coast. The Waterfront is on The Carenage, the harbour inlet in Bridgetown, and it offers a bustling atmosphere, a warm welcome, different styles of live music almost every night (jazz, steel pan, show music, etc.) and a Caribbean buffet for B\$55 or C\$36 (tel: 427 0093). And, as Glenn rented a car, he did not use the public mini-buses as I did. They rattle round the coastal road frequently and will stop if you hail them. The driver will take the appropriate few coins or dollar bill as you board. It's a great way to meet the locals! Enjoy ... this island certainly has a special atmosphere. AW

TRAVEL AND HEALTH INSURANCE

In our November 2003 edition we asked readers for their stories on obtaining travel health insurance. Here are some of the stories we received.

From Fred and Robin Terentiuk of Calgary

Finding travel medical insurance with pre-existing conditions and a recent change in medication is an area of great concern to many senior travellers, and it seems as if it may get worse before it gets better.

We went through this situation a couple of years ago. We looked at the large number of insurance plans and the best we came up with was the Deluxe package from RBC Insurance. This is the insurance sold by almost every travel agent and sometimes called 'Voyageur'. This Deluxe package is expensive and includes a lot of things we don't need such as baggage insurance. And the trip duration was shorter than we would have liked: it may have changed, but in early 2002 it covered people up to 85 years of age for trips of up to 60 days as long as they had been stable for 90 days.

The difficulty is that after some ages (often 65) many travel medical policies will not cover a number of pre-existing conditions, at least until the condition has been 'stable' for some time. It is very important for travellers to read the fine print in their medical insurance policies; it is foolhardy to travel outside Canada, especially to the U.S., without coverage of all potentially serious medical conditions.

Stability is usually defined as there being no change in the condition for a period of time. The period of time is important, but it is the definition of change that must be looked at very carefully for not only does it include a new or changed diagnosis, but it also usually means *no change in medication*. That means for the specified period of time preceding departure (or preceding the date of application

for the policy) you cannot reduce the dose of a medication or stop taking a medication, as well as not adding new medication, or increasing the dose, or switching. Thus, because the stability period is often at least one year, there are people whose medical problems have been resolved but who continue to take medication they could get along without, simply because they aren't prepared to make the change and then wait a year before leaving Canada. This makes an interesting situation, where the demands of one type of medical insurance (out-of-country) cause extra costs for other medical insurance (i.e. if the person has prescription drug coverage).

If other readers report sources of coverage where this situation does not apply we would be delighted to hear of them, especially if they have had experience with making a claim. Many insurers seem to claim that *other* insurers are not easy to deal with if one makes a claim. Fortunately we have no experience with that to report.

The above facts are substantiated by Beryl and Ron Carter of Ontario, even though they had no serious medical condition ...

It seems to us that the only way you can get coverage for out-of-country travel is if you are a perfectly healthy individual. My husband recently had what the doctor could only describe as "an incident". Early one morning he had double vision for about three hours. The doctor arranged for numerous tests and an appointment with a neurologist who ordered still more tests to see if he had had a mild stroke. All the tests were negative and the specialist deter-

mined that the problem was probably due to a pinched nerve. He stated that we should advise our insurance people of the occurrence and that he would confirm that this was not a stroke.

We are insured through C.I.B.C. with Trent Health. On advising them of all the findings they promptly cancelled his out-of-country insurance and re-issued another policy at an increase of 50%. This didn't make sense, but as we were due to leave on a trip we had to take this 'offer'.

From Don Howe of B.C.

You requested information of travel insurance for 'high risk' travellers. Well, I am 71 and have a heart condition dating back about two years and take three prescribed medications daily. Both my wife (who has no health problems) and I have been insured by the British Columbia Automobile Association (BCAA) Travel Gold Insurance Program since we started to travel 20 years ago.

In that time we have had two claims: one for treatment and prescriptions after my wife suffered a spider bite near her eye while we were touring by car for a month in Turkey. The second was just last year when I was hospitalized for a few days in Roseburg, Oregon, with a stroke. Both these claims were handled with an absolute minimum of forms and/or questions.

Travel Gold has three categories of coverage; I am in the 'Highest Risk' category while my wife, who is 70, is in the 'Lowest Risk'. Separate premiums apply. Travel Gold allows us to purchase annual coverage initially based on short trips (seven days) to visit our son who lives in the U.S. Then, when we are going on an extended trip of 30,


60, 90 or 120 days we can buy coverage for the extended period as long as it does not extend past the renewal date of the original purchase. If we decide to stay a few days over the time we have purchased, a quick phone call to BCAA or Travel Gold gets us a 'per diem' extension of coverage (but, by law, this cannot be over 120 days) as long, once again, as it falls within the dates of the current term of the policy. This means a real saving in premiums, especially if you can plan your longer trips to be in the latter stages of your annual contract.

From John Brunskill of Ontario

I am most interested in the insurance question. I am 75, have a stable heart condition and am on five medications. I had a triple bypass in January 1994 and have not changed medication since August 2000.

My annual policy expired in July of last year, so in August I re-applied for 60 days' coverage and was told the maximum I could get was for 30 days and that the cost would be over \$900 and that I would have to have a doctor fill in an underwriting form before I could receive a final quote. This I did, only to find the cost and conditions were unacceptable.

I then called Medipac, who required no doctor's report and who completed all the qualifying questions over the phone, whereupon I was given a quotation straight away.

Yes, insurance is dependant on age and, if you have had health problems in the past, how long you have been stable and how long since you have had any change in medication. What seems unfair is that you are penalized if medication is reduced due to *improved health*. A lot of companies even stop insuring at 65, 70, 75 etc., but Medipac has no age restriction. 

As a footnote, and while acknowledging this story has no bearing on the age/medication question, readers may be interested in the following story which appeared in the RBC Insurance newsletter Insider, winter 2003 edition.

Little Sting Becomes Big Insurance Claim

Mr X and his wife were spending the winter in the U.S. and decided to take a side trip to the Carribean, where Mr X received a bee sting. Back in the U.S., Mr X's leg worsened and on 12 February he was admitted to hospital with a bacterial infection. He would need aggressive antibiotic therapy. On 13 and 17 February he was taken to the operating room for treatment and was informed that hyperbaric chamber sessions would be required. Assured Assistance Inc., knew there were a limited number of Canadian facilities able to provide the needed treatment and immediately started looking for a re-admission bed. They were successful, and then waited for Mr X to stabilize. On 25 February the insured was told he was stable enough to travel. The air ambulance picked him up and he was back in Canada the following morning.

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Total days in hospital: | 14 |
| Total claim: | \$131,000 |
| Govt. health plan contribution: | \$ 2,650 |
| Paid by RBC Travel Insurance: | \$128,350 |

... from a bee sting!

BERMUDA

For those of you considering a winter getaway to Bermuda (just 2½ hours from Toronto ... not hot hot hot in winter, but pleasant) you may like to know that a colleague reports that the island has recovered well from September's Hurricane Fabian and is as beautiful as ever. Your agent will have packages and/or ideas, or visit www.bermudatourism.com

GERMANY

There is so much spa news around these days that we tend to avoid spa stories. However, travellers with Germany in their thoughts for 2004 may like to have a copy of the German National Tourist Office's full-colour brochure *Welcome to Wellbeing – German Spas and Health Resort Offers* detailing 40 spa packages in Germany. Also from the GNTO: the *Individual Travel in Germany* guide, with tips and a list of 300 typical hotels in the mid-price range, each with a photograph and all cross-referenced to maps. For copies of both guides call 1 877 315 6237, e-mail gntonyc@d-z-t.com or visit www.cometogermany.com and/or www.germany-tourism.de.

MEXICO

It's not usual for Government-run tourist offices to form a partnership with a commercial company, but the Mexican Tourist Board has its name firmly behind a new website for consumers. Now travellers with Mexico on their minds can log on to www.mexico.itravel2000.com for information and to make reservations with *itravel2000's* tour operators.

SWITZERLAND

There are some winter packages available in the Lake Geneva region from 1 February – 28 March. For example, visitors to Château-d'Oex can stay in a 3-star hotel for €505 per person for a week, b&b and a 6-day ski pass included. Similar offers available at the Hotel le Chamois in Les Diablerets. For details and to reserve log onto the excellent website www.lake-geneva-region.ch

U.S.A.

Because **Florida** is awash in winter bargains for Canadians this season, readers heading south may like to visit a new website which features Florida deals and discounts as the state continues to woo snowbirds and

sun-seekers. Yes, dozens of deals and discounts are documented on-line at www.florida-eh.com, the companion website to *Florida, Eh? A Canadian Guide to the Sunshine State*, recently published by Isobel Warren and Milan Chvostek. Florida bargains range from Canadian dollars at par, discounts and free upgrades and extras. While some offers are seasonal, many deals continue year-round. Several cities, including Fort Lauderdale and Daytona Beach, have created coupon books that chop the price of everything from lodging to meals to festivals. In many cases, the coupons are available for downloading on-line. Canadians need proof of citizenship to qualify for the discounts. Along with deals and discounts, the Florida-Eh? site also offers information and updates on Florida hotels, attractions, events and resources.

Winter packages in **New York, New York** start at US\$105 per person and include a night's stay at a good hotel, tickets to an on- or off-Broadway show, dinner at a great restaurant and lots of shopping discounts. Called *Paint the Town* packages, they are available for 1, 2 or 4 nights until 31 March. For information or to receive a free *Paint the Town Guide* call 1 800 NYC GUIDE or visit www.nycvisit.com

from the bookshelf

What could be a nicer pastime during our Canadian winter than curling up with a good travel book and dreaming of warmer weather? Two new guide books on London and environs provide fascinating reading (how the Unknown Soldier for Westminster Abbey was chosen, for example) and tempt the traveller to a return visit. They are *Secret London: Exploring the Hidden City, with Original Walks and Unusual Places to Visit* by Andrew Duncan (192 pp., C\$28.95) and *Walks in the Country Near London* by Christopher Somerville (208 pp., also \$28.95) both volumes in the Interlink Walking Guides series (which also includes Italy, Tuscany, the Alps and Jordan). The books offer exceptionally clear maps, public transportation links (in fact the country walks are all based from a railway station), places of interest along the way with interesting historical information and enough fascinating facts to keep the armchair traveller happy too. Highly recommended! www.interlinkbooks.com

Also from Interlink Books are a series of *Charming Small Hotel Guides*; neat, finely-produced volumes that list and illustrate properties that fit that description (usually with fewer than 20 rooms) in Austria, Britain, Florida, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Mallorca, New England, Paris, Southern France, Spain, Switzerland, Tuscany & Umbria and Venice and North-East Italy, all at around C\$32. The newly-released title in the series covers **Germany** (edited by Helen Varley) and browsing through it makes one want to set off immediately to discover that converted castle in Colmberg or that charming town villa in Berlin.

- **Air Canada** has launched an expansion to Latin and South America with three flights a week to Havana, Cuba (Air Canada's fifth Cuban destination) and non-stop service to Santiago, Chile with same-plane service on to Buenos Aires, Argentina. AC's service to Havana will operate on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays using 120-seat Airbus A319 aircraft in a two-cabin configuration.
- **Air Transat Holidays** (ATH) is offering Thursday flights from St. John's, Nfld., to Varadero, Cuba from 12 February to 13 May 2004.
- On 2 December **Cathay Pacific** celebrated its first flight between Hong Kong and Beijing in 13 years. The launch of the new service marks an important step in the airline's efforts to position Hong Kong as the gateway to China. To commemorate this new service, Cathay Pacific is offering travellers who purchase a qualifying Economy, Business or First Class roundtrip ticket from Canada to Beijing, between the period 2 December 2003 and 4 March 2004, a three-night complimentary hotel stay in Beijing. Travellers will also earn bonus Asia Miles (in addition to the normal mileage eligibility): 2,000 miles for Economy Class, 4,000 for Business and First Class. To qualify, travellers must be

enrolled in the free Asia Miles programme prior to travel. More details on both these promotional offers can be found at: www.cathaypacific.com.

- This news may affect some of you who are collecting Star Alliance points: **Mexicana's** membership in the alliance is due to end on 31 March 2004. No reason was given, but in a joint statement Mexicana and the Alliance stated they would "maintain the current Star Alliance product offering, including frequent-flyer and lounge access benefits, to their customers until the set date."
- **WestJet** and **VIA Rail Canada** now have an agreement to provide travellers with "excursion-rate", multi-modal fares to destinations served by both companies. Brewster, one of Canada's leading tour operators, will be the exclusive sales agent for these package tours. Travellers will be able to combine rail/air travel with Brewster tour packages that include sightseeing and hotel stays. The packages will go on sale this month for the 2004 winter season and will include Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal and Moncton. For more details call 1 888 VIA RAIL or visit www.viarail.ca

looking ahead

A selection of some forthcoming events in Canada and around the world:

- * **Ottawa's** Winterlude will take place on three weekends from 6 - 22 February. Details at 1 800 465 1867 or visit www.canadascapital.gc.ca/winter. And indoors, two looks at the sixties are due to take place in the capital: the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography (www.cmcp.gallery.ca) will present *The Sixties* from 24 January - 2 May, while at the National Gallery (www.national.gallery.ca) an exhibition *Pushing the Boundaries: The Sixties in Canada* will take place 30 January - 30 April. For a springtime visit to the Capital, the Tulip Festival is scheduled to take place from 7 - 24 May. www.tulipfestival.ca
- * **Montreal's** High Lights Festival (19 - 29 February) is a good time to pay a visit to enjoy new dining experiences, dance, theatre and music that celebrate winter. www.montrealhighlights.com
- * The Royal Ontario Museum in **Toronto** has a major exhibition coming 28 February - 30 June. *Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from The British Museum* contains many objects that have never before left the British Museum; it's sure to be a fine exhibition worthy of a getaway to Toronto. www.rom.on.ca
- * The **Philadelphia** Flower Show (7 -14 March) will celebrate its 175th anniversary with a display of the largest collection of orchids in North America among its many

other exhibits. Details at www.theflowershop.com or by calling 215 988 8800.

* Orchid enthusiasts will also enjoy Orchids Exposed, the 10th annual orchid festival (14 February - 14 March) to be held at **England's** famous Kew Gardens, just outside London. www.kew.org


* Lovers of modern architecture may like to mark their calendars **Denmark**, 2 April - 29 August, the dates of a major exhibition: Jorn Utzon: The Architect's Universe at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art just outside Copenhagen. Utzon created one of the 20th century's great buildings: the Sydney Opera House. www.louisiana.dk

* From Bach to Telemann to Kurt Weill ... **Germany** has so many musical festivals the details would take up most of these pages. Some highlights: the Heidelberg Music Festival 27 March - 25 May; Herbert von Karajan in Baden-Baden 28 May - 6 June and so much more. To help plan your musical travels in Germany this year log on to www.germany-tourism.de for all the details.

* In **Hong Kong**, the 2004 Arts Festival is scheduled from 3 February - 7 March with music, opera, ballet, jazz, Shakespeare (in English) and more, all by renowned international groups and performers. Visit www.hk.arts-festival.org for details.

New in 2004 is an unusual offering from Trek Holidays. Called 'The Kingdoms of Gold' this trip is an exploratory journey to the West African countries of Ghana, Togo and Benin. The first trip is scheduled to depart 21 February and then almost monthly through 2004-05. This 16-day journey will show participants ancient salve castles, voodoo ceremonies and fetish shrines, interspersed with pristine beaches, inland rain forests that are homes to ancient kingdoms and traditional festivals and the savannah lands with their tribal cultures and amazing adobe architecture. Just image the photographs! Anne Fairlie, who designed the trip for Trek Holidays, says, "The people are wonderful. The market in Kumasi is full of laughing women vendors with their crafts and produce. For nature lovers, the Mole National Park offers a walking safari to a water hole where elephants and antelope can be found. And then there's a village on stilts and the longest and highest suspended rope

bridge in the world. It all adds up to a great taste of the diversity of Africa." Even the accommodation is intriguing: 8 nights in tourist hotels, 4 nights in bush camps, 2 nights in forest guesthouses and one night in a stilt house. Land-only prices start at C\$3,420 and Trek Holidays can be contacted at 1 888 456 3522 or visit www.trekolidays.com

Tours of Exploration have a lovely offering for this spring (3-17 April and 17 April - 1 May). It's a Tuscan Painting vacation: learning to draw and paint out of doors in Tuscany under the tutorship of UBC art graduate Ursula Medley. Participants will stay at the Villa Fattoria Bacio in La Meridiana, near the ancient hilltop town of Certaldo, 40 km from both Florence and Siena. This company also offers art tours to New Mexico and to Canada's own Malibu Arts retreat in BC. Land-only price for the 14-participant Tuscan Painting Workshop is \$2,430. For full details call 604 886 7300 or 1 800 690 7887, www.toursexplore.com 


Hawaii ... continued from page 12

mule train! On the way back to Hawi, stop to see the original bronze statue of King Kamehameha I, the king who united the Hawaiian islands about 1810; his birthplace is nearby.

If you are interested in the heavens, you will want to head up the slopes of Mauna Koa. There are tours offered, but to do this independently you must drive that sometimes forbidden (to rental cars) Saddle Road which passes between Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, the world's two tallest mountains if measured from the sea floor. Access is from either side of the island. From Hilo, keep driving past Rainbow Falls. From Kona, head up towards Waimea and watch for the road on your right. At Mile Marker 28, in the midst of a lava field, is an outcropping of trees. You are now at 6,000 ft altitude, and those in the know recommend that you take the hour's hike around here to help you acclimatize. Then take the road leaving the highway that climbs steeply up to the Visitors Information Service at 9,300 ft. There are interesting displays, videos, and at 6:00 p.m. daily one of the rangers gives a presentation on the observatories that are located "up the hill" at 13,796 ft. This is the world's largest concentration of telescopes (with Canada one of the sponsors); the air here is so clear, above 40% of the Earth's atmosphere and 98% of its water vapour. If you have acclimatized for at least an hour, if the weather conditions are good, and if you are properly kitted out in winter gear (temperatures can be freezing and winds 70 mph) and preferably with a 4-wheel drive vehicle, you may be allowed to continue up the road. It is advisable to call ahead for weather conditions. Even so, and having been told it was clear, we arrived at the VIS about 4:30 and in sunshine, but the road beyond was already closed because of deteriorating conditions and, at 5:45 when we had to decide about the presentation, it was cold and foggy, with drizzle. We decided to leave. The drizzle became rain, and the drive down in the

dark was no picnic. Next time, we'll opt for a tour!

Of course, the Big Island offers many other activities: snorkelling, scuba diving, para-sailing, surfing, helicopter rides, horse-back riding, mountain biking, whale watching, deep-sea fishing, luaus, and so on. Pick up a free copy of the booklet *101 Things to do on Hawaii, the Big Island* and peruse it carefully before you buy tickets. You can do a lot and spend a lot, but on the Big Island you can also do a lot and spend very little. For lodgings, there are B&Bs and inns around the island; there is no need to stay in a resort or chain hotel unless that is your thing. The Big Island of Hawaii Travel & Tourism web-site www.bigisland.org has links to attractions and accommodations of all types or call Hilo Visitors Bureau at 1 800 648 2441 or West Hawai'i Big Island Bureau at 1 800 648 2441 and request their Vacation Planner.

Just one more note. Friends of ours recently told us about their latest adventure in Hawaii, travelling by camper van. Available on the Big Island, Maui and Oahu, these are older VW camper vans, complete with cooking equipment, bedding and towels. Imua Camper Co. rents these vans for about US\$85 a night, with a 5% reduction for a 7-night rental, 10% for 2 weeks or more. A great money-saver and what a way to go, just set up wherever you end up each day, then carry on in the morning. Support is just a phone call away should you have any mechanical difficulties. Maps and details of campsites are included. While the vans do sleep four, our friends reported it was very crowded for four singles, but would be fine for a family, one or two couples or two singles. For all the details, visit www.imua-tour.com or call 1 808 896 3158. 

When Ted and Judy van der Veen are not travelling they call Campbellville, ON, home.

from \$3,942 for 18 days

New Pricing!

China ... Yangtze Spectacular ~ 18 days

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

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



It is vast, fascinating and mysterious and it has beckoned travellers from the west for centuries. Mention it to avid travellers and they are sure to say, "Yes, I hope to visit China one day." And what would they choose to experience? **A cruise on the mighty Yangtze River (now in the process of changing for ever);** a look at the work-in-progress on the massive **Three Gorges Dam;** a walk on the ancient **Great Wall;** views of charming villages, lush terraced hillsides and magnificent mountain peaks; visits to the great cities of **Shanghai** and **Beijing;** a trip to view one of the world's greatest archaeological finds ... the 6,000 terra-cotta warriors at **Xi'an;** scenes of palaces, pagodas, pavilions and pandas; tastes of Peking duck and Chinese banquets and so much more. So how do you choose? When you

decide on The Travel Society's tour there's no need to choose because all these highlights are included. Yes, in these remarkable 18 days you'll stay in Beijing; you'll take a 4-day first-class cruise on the Yangtze with many shore excursions; you'll fly to see those centuries-old terra-cotta warriors in Xi'an; you'll visit bustling Chongquin and see its pandas; stay in Hangzhou and travel into the hills covered with tea plantations; explore the exquisite gardens of Suzhou, and visit Nanjing and Wuzhen. And you'll have time to explore spectacular Shanghai. Throughout the trip you'll see magnificent architecture, you'll be entertained at cultural events, you'll join your hosts at a variety of banquets, you'll have time to shop, and you'll marvel at some of the most wonderful scenery on earth, all in the company of English-speaking guides. You'll travel by plane, by luxury bus, cruise ship and river boat. Many of our members have told us it's an experience of a lifetime ... and all at an amazing price!

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

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

Taxes and visas extra.

GREAT ADD-ONS:

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

Prices are subject to confirmation

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

Please call The Travel Society 1 877 926 2500 x24 or 416 926 2500 x24 for the full details. All our tours are specially priced for Travel Society members and are only available at these prices through our office.  reg #01280649

21 days, prices include all airfares

Space limited to 20 people

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your tour includes:

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

28 days, prices include all airfares

Space limited to 20 people

NEW Turkey - An Anatolian Adventure

Departing: 28 August 2004

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

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

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

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

Your tour includes:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Great add-ons:

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

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

Your tour includes:

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

NEW **Copper Canyon** 26 February & 10 September 2004

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:
Toronto \$3,245 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal \$3,245 pp/dbl
Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg \$3,460 pp/dbl
 Single supplement \$600 (Sharing can be arranged.) Taxes extra.

Please call for prices from other departure cities

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

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

Departure Dates: 18 February and 20 October 2004

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

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

PRICES INCLUDE AIR AND TAXES departing from:
Vancouver \$10,934 pp/dbl
Victoria \$11,226 pp/dbl
Calgary & Edmonton \$11,497 pp/dbl
Winnipeg \$11,545 pp/dbl
Toronto \$11,545 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal \$11,545 pp/dbl
Halifax \$11,629 pp/dbl

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

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

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

14 days departing 9 March & 20 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)

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

Guatemala Grandeur

with an optional add-on to Havana, Cuba

Departing 13 February & 12 March 2004

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

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

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

Each tour is limited to
18 people

Your tour includes:

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

Guatemala - Holy Week and Havana, Cuba

Departing 3 April 2004

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Toronto | Please call for prices from other departure cities |
| Ottawa & Montreal | |
| Vancouver | |
| Edmonton & Calgary | |
| Halifax | |

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

Each tour is limited to
18 people

Your tour includes:

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

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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 or **START A NEW MEMBERSHIP** _____
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(a 16% saving off the regular \$95.00)
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All prices include GST.
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 ___ VISA ___ Mastercard ___ AmEx
 card #: _____
 expiry: _____ tel: _____
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I agree to pay TravelScoop the above amount in accordance with the card issuer agreement.

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 town: _____ prov: _____
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Send to: *TravelScoop*
 218-1033 Bay St Toronto ON Canada M5S 3A5
 Fax: 416 926 0222 e-mail: brit@thetravelsociety.com

your membership expires on:
 (month - year)

Password:
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