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Travel Scoop

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Surprising Puerto Rico
Vermont ... a Destination for all Seasons
More of South Africa with Geometric Tours
Concerns in the East African Night

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One of the many charming stores in old San Juan, Puerto Rico

editor's letter ...

Two of our stories in last month's edition gave rise to some queries from readers. I've published Rod Paterson's reply to the query regarding buses in Mexico in a letter on p. 3. The other queries were regarding the ages and level of hiking difficulty on the Himalayan trips described by J. Helen Parkin.

Here is Helen's response to my message: "The age group in Bhutan was between 30 and 70 years and no major hiking ability was needed. The only hike of any note - between three and four hours - was to the Tigers Nest Monastery and only two members of our group chose not to go all the way. (There is a restaurant half way up for resting and/or waiting.)

On the Nepal trip our ages were 40 - 65 with just one member of 35 who was there with his retired father. Participants needed to be able to hike for six hours or so per day. Two in our group were slower than the rest and they arrived at the lodges with their own porters about an hour behind the rest of us each day. Many trekkers who are not able to go all the way to Lobuche and Kala Patar choose the 8-day trek to Tenboche Monastery."

Readers interested in these expeditions may also like to find two Lonely Planet guides: *Bhutan* and *Trekking in the Nepal Himalaya*, both by Stan Armington (US\$21.99 and US\$19.99 respectively). The former contains much information on a range of trekking options and the title of the latter speaks for itself. Available from bookstores or on line at www.lonelyplanet.com

Happy hiking!

Now I have an important correction. In the *at the galleries* feature on page 19 of our October 2004 issue we mentioned the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts' exhibition *Right under the Sun: Painting in Provence, from Romanticism to Modernism (1750 - 1920)*. We said "on now until 8 January" which is the wrong information. The exhibition, in fact, begins on 22 September 2005 and continues until 8 January 2006. I do apologize for any inconvenience caused ... and will remind you of this exhibition again next summer, in good time for viewing during the correct dates.



More on Those Mexican Buses

With regard to bus travel in Mexico, I would like to emphasize that you really do not need to buy tickets ahead of time and, in fact, with some companies you can only purchase tickets a few hours prior to departure. You can easily shop around at the bus station for a convenient time and the bus line you favour. But I did find information on the buses in the Lonely Planet guide to Mexico. These pages linked our planned destination with the appropriate bus station in Mexico City and give the bus lines operating those routes. We used Estrella de Oro to go to Taxco and ADO to Puebla and Oaxaca. A useful website is www.ticketbus.com.mx (there's a tiny icon for English in the upper right-hand corner).

*Rod Paterson
Ottawa, ON*

Chicago Promises a Great Winter Getaway

With 28 museums, a Cultural Center, many theatres, great shopping and an efficient transit system, Chicago is a great city for a winter getaway. We were surprised by what this city offers visitors, so thought we'd pen a few tips to help others plan a Chicago getaway.

Yes, there are many fine museums. They include the Arts Institute of Chicago, the Shedd Aquarium, the Adler Planetarium and the fabulous Field Museum, which is great for families. It is easy to spend a day in the Field (www.fieldmuseum.org). The Chicago Cultural Center is located in an old renovated building. It offers free tours daily, a cafeteria, museums and a theatre. It may be a good idea to make this your first stop as it is home to the city's Visitor Information Center. Visit www.cityofchicago.org/tours/culturalcenter for details. Chicago also has many the-

atre catering to all tastes. Information on 'what's on' can be found on the city's main website – www.chicago.il.org – which contains a calendar of events (lots of winter 'happenings') and accommodation information.

For shopping you can't beat Chicago's 'magnificent mile' – North Michigan Avenue from the Chicago River to Oak Street. On this mile you'll find five shopping centres, seven department stores, 75 speciality stores, 11 art galleries and many restaurants. The Water Tower Place at 835 North Michigan is alone worth the walk. And we found Filene's Basement (at No. 830) a treasure-trove of designer clothing for the whole family at basement prices.

America's most influential architect – Frank Lloyd Wright – has some of his most famous buildings in Chicago. His Home and Studio in Oak Park and his Frederick C. Rubie House on the University of Chicago campus are 'musts'. Visit www.wrightplus.org for full information, including directions by public transportation.

Which brings us to Chicago's very good transit system, which includes buses and trains. Visitor passes for one, two, three and five days are available. Also, take the efficient Blue Line from O'Hare Airport to downtown (45 minutes) or the Orange Line (35 minutes) if you land at Midway Airport. If travelling from Toronto, there is also a daily Amtrak train. If you haven't visited Chicago before, do include it in your getaway plans ... we are sure you'll be impressed.

*Rachel & Ben Schlesinger
Toronto, ON*

A Hidden Culinary Gem in Downtown Vancouver

Because it's an unusual concept, I though *TravelScoop* readers might be interested in hearing about "Culinaria" for their next visit to Vancouver. This is a fine-dining restaurant which opened

last December. It is part of the famous Dubrulle International Culinary Arts, a branch of The Art Institute of Vancouver. Here, students from the institute perform their practical work by providing outstanding food services to the public. Students, on a weekly rotation, act as chefs, maître d', servers, etc. Lunch is served between 11.30 and 1.30, Tuesday to Friday. The food was absolutely delicious and every attention was given to flavouring, presentation and serving details. While eating my lunch, I felt that I was travelling through an art gallery. It was indeed a journey of gourmet delight. The bill of \$34.23 for two was presented with two mouth-watering truffles, which had also been prepared by the students. "Culinaria" is a "must do" while visiting downtown Vancouver and the great price for such quality is an added incentive. Reservations strongly recommended: 604 639 2055. The restaurant is located at the corner of Granville Street and Dunsmuir Street and since my visit I have heard they are applying for a liquor licence.

*Maria Wu
Toronto, ON*

If Toronto is in your plans this winter – especially if you have young people with you – you may like to check out the City's newest attraction:

Olympic Spirit Toronto

It's all fun and Games at Toronto's newest attraction, Olympic Spirit Toronto. In this interactive entertainment complex that opened during the Athens Olympic Games this summer, visitors can celebrate the Olympic spirit 364 days of the year. Its five floors of displays, virtual competitions and multimedia theatres are designed to give sports fans an understanding and appreciation of what it takes to be the best in the Olympic

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quest for "Faster, Higher, Stronger".

On the 'summer' floor you can take the sprint challenge and race against an Olympic runner in the 100-metre event or try to re-enact Bob Beamon's record-setting long jump of 8.90 metres set at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City on an apparatus called the flying fox.

Ever wondered what the bird's-eye view is from the top of an Olympic ski jump or how it would feel to hurtle down a bobsled run with wind and icy spray in your face and the roar of the crowd urging you on? This is closest I'm ever going to come to experiencing either!

And if throwing a curling rock, taking a slap shot against an Olympic goalie or testing your rowing form is not for you, you can determine how much Olympic history you really know, learn the background and the

technical details of current figure skating moves, enjoy the displays of medals, team uniforms and early equipment or watch vintage film footage that shows earlier Olympians competing with a fierceness that would challenge athletes of any generation.

Keep an eye open for celebrity Olympians. Marnie McBean, multi-medalled rower extraordinaire is Director Athlete & Corporate Programs; Brian Stemmel is off the slopes and acting as Chief Leisure Officer and Denise Benning, former pairs figure skater, is Co-ordinator Athlete Programmes. And the floor staff that direct you in the operation of the simulators and answer your questions are all past, present or future Olympians.

Olympic Spirit Toronto is open every day except Christmas from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. with longer hours over the Christmas holidays, March break and summer. The trendy Podium Restaurant and Bar on the 5th floor is open for lunch and dinner, seven days a week.

Olympic Spirit Toronto is at 35 Dundas St. E., at Yonge-Dundas Square, very close to the Eaton Centre in downtown Toronto. Admission: adult - \$21, student - \$15, child under 12 - \$12, child under 4 -

free. 1 888 466 9991 or www.olympic-spirit.ca

*Yvonne Butorac
Toronto, ON*

Tips for Short-term, First-time Visitors to London

If you are to get the most out of your first-time, and perhaps short, visit to London pre-planning will save you time, money and frustration. As soon as you decide on a London visit call Visit Britain at 1 888 847 4885 and request tourist information and a map. And if your trip is for a week or less buy an abbreviated guidebook such as Fodor's Citypack **London** which lists all the highlights (and also contains an excellent map). The city offers so much that a lengthy, very detailed guide will just overwhelm you. London is vast with famous sites and attractions at almost every turn, so study the map and try to get an idea of where the major places you wish to see are located. It's a long way from the famous museums of South Kensington to the equally famous ones in Greenwich, for example! Lists will, of course, vary from visitor to visitor and it's a good idea of have 'must do' and 'must try to do' lists. Mark your

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choices on your map so you can plan your days efficiently.

Once you arrive, the main Visitor Centre is at 1 Regent Street, but there are centres in other locations such as main railway stations. At the centres you not only get information, but also tickets for the theatre and major attractions and details of day and evening tours. You can purchase a travel card for the public transit system before you leave Canada (ask your agent) or from stations in London. They vary in number of days and the zones they cover, 'all zones' being the most expensive and zones 1 and 2 (Central London) being the cheapest. Again a good case for pre-planning your visit. If you pay-as-you-go you will have to line-up each time you want a ticket, or try to figure out the machines, and it will also be far more expensive.

Your hotel location is very important; try to be no more than a ten minute walk from an Underground station. Proximity to a bus route is also useful. I can recommend the 3-star properties Bonnington Hotel, the National and the Tavistock, all in Bloomsbury. They all meet the above criteria, being close to Russell Square Underground and bus routes and within walking distance of the British Museum and Covent Garden (for theatre, shops and restaurants).

As well as studying your maps it is also useful to familiarize yourself with the complex subway system. All good guidebooks contain a plan. Stations are clearly marked with a red circle and the word 'Underground'. At some stations several lines converge, though at different levels of course, so boarding a train may take longer than you think and you may have quite a lot of tunnel walking or escalator riding to do. You may have to change lines to reach your destination. This sounds confusing but everything is clearly marked. If you decide to take the bus, you may see buses with different numbers on the same route, though their ultimate destinations will differ. Timetables and routes are posted on the bus stop. There are two types of bus stop: compulsory (signs have a white back-

ground) and 'request' (red background signs with the word 'request'). At the latter you must put your arm out to signal the bus to stop. London has lots of metered taxis; if they are available their 'taxi' light on the roof is lit. In the rain or during rush hour a free one can be hard to find, and could become very expensive as the traffic may become horrendous. Don't attempt to pay the driver through the glass screen; get out and pass the money beside the front door of the cab. A tip of about 10% will be expected.

Many of London's best museums and galleries are free, including the Tate Modern on the South Bank, the renowned (and enormous) British Museum in Bloomsbury and the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. (Note: those pigeons who call the Square their home are not toilet trained! My advice: watch from afar!) A theatre visit is on most people's wish list. They are listed in the BTA booklets and in the daily press or visit www.OfficialLondonTheatre.co.uk. You can book on line or phone box-offices direct with a credit card and pick up your tickets before the performance. Big commercial shows such as musicals are expensive, repertory theatre such as the Royal Shakespeare and the 3-stage National are a bargain, especially for some of the best theatre in the world. The National sells rush tickets on the day of performance. TKTS is a half-price theatre outlet with booths in Leicester Square and Canary Wharf. Theatre-buffs should consider taking one of a number of back-stage tours. The one at the Theatre Royal is excellent, with actors playing the parts of famous people who have been associated with the famous theatre since its inception.

For reasonably-priced city tours I recommend The Big Bus Company and The Original London Sightseeing Tour, both of which offer tours on open-topped, double-decker buses. They offer a hop-on-hop-off service, but at £14 per person per day (about C\$31) this is an expensive way to get around. To get value from your tour, stay on the bus for the complete sight-

seeing trip. An added bonus is that you can purchase tickets to attractions from these companies, sometimes at a discount. By pre-purchasing tickets you can skip the line-ups ... a real time-saver. If you like the sinister and macabre, you will enjoy, as we did, the evening tour "Sinister London" offered by Astral Tours. We also took the unique Frog Tour which covers famous sights by road and river on board an amphibious vehicle. If you go to Madame Tussaud's don't forget your camera as you are allowed to take photos with the wax models to amuse your friends back home (though photos not permitted with 'the Royal Family'! They are on raised platforms and cordoned off).

London pubs offer generally good food at reasonable prices and the cafés in galleries and museums are usually excellent. I hope these tips help. I recently took my granddaughter to London for her first visit ... everything went perfectly and we had a fabulous time.

*Muriel Culshaw
Barrie, ON*


Reader to Reader

I will be travelling to Europe in July of next year with my wife and daughter and am wondering if any readers could give some advice on travel in the Milan area of Italy and thoughts on driving in that region? We plan to travel from Munich to Milan for a few days and would welcome any recommendations on a half-way point to stay between those two cities, as well as places to stay in Milan itself, or perhaps in the nearby Lake district. If the latter is the case, we could do day trips in to Milan. Thank you!

*Ernie Slubik
eslubik@telusplanet.net*

Surprising Puerto Rico

story and photos by Ann Wallace



The invitation was a surprise. The son of some family friends was getting married to a Puerto Rican gal ... on the beach in Puerto Rico ... and we were invited. Then someone remembered that I had one of those birthdays that end in '0' looming ... just three days before the wedding date. So it was for private reasons that my family and I set off for this Caribbean island early in January this year for a double celebration.

I didn't really have many pre-conceived impressions of Puerto Rico. I suppose I imagined it to be another Caribbean island largely devoted to tourism but, because of its ties to the U.S., heavily overlaid with American culture. I couldn't have been more wrong. Puerto Rico turned out to be one of the most surprising destinations in my travelling career and although I wasn't really thinking about *TravelScoop* while I was there, I now want to tell you a little about it and give you some accommodation recommendations.

Yes, Puerto Rico is quite unlike any of the other Caribbean islands I have visited. And since my return I have encountered quite a few well-travelled colleagues who have declared, "Oh yes, Puerto Rico is one of our favourite sunshine destinations." Yes, like most of the other islands, it is hot and it is beautiful, both in the lush, mountainous interior and along the beach-dotted coasts. But San Juan is a mostly-modern, generally prosperous city with a smart business district, an enormous cruise-ship port (the largest

home-based cruise port in the world), gracious residential areas of lovely villa-style homes and smart beach-front apartment buildings reminiscent of coastal Florida ... and then, of course, there's the famous Old San Juan, which I'll tell more about later.

Knowing its status with relation to the United States, I was surprised to find the atmosphere more Spanish/Caribbean than American. Yes, there are good (and busy) highways around and across the island and there are shopping malls, the ubiquitous fast-food outlets and U.S. television stations. There's excellent health care, a resident symphony orchestra (with a reputation as one of the eminent orchestras of the Americas), casinos, golf courses and luxurious hotels and resorts. But you'll hear Spanish spoken more often than English, although many locals are bilingual and happy to engage visitors in a conversation on their relationship – and future – with the U.S. and their strong desire to keep their island identity. The island is home to a quite astonishing number of excellent museums, galleries and artists. Festivals are plentiful and varied; they celebrate dozens of patron saints, the Three Kings, Columbus, freedom from slavery, dance and music of all kinds, including ten days of classical music every June to honour the island's most famous resident – cellist Pablo Casals – who also warrants a lovely little museum of his own in the Old Town.

We arrived in Puerto Rico on 6 January, efficiently picked up our rental car and were soon on our way out of San Juan, using the good Tourism Company map, to our beach destination. We had chosen to stay at a *parador* close to the town of Isabela, in the north-west corner of the island, and close to the beach house of our friend's future in-laws, the location of the wedding. We made good progress along highway 22 but soon some of the occupants of the car were making noises about water/beer/snacks, so we diverted to a village. It was quite a large village, but all the stores were closed and the village was virtually empty. As it was a Tuesday we were confused, but continued on our way until we saw a gas station. "Big holiday," was the answer to our question. "*Día de Reyes* ... Three King's Day." Ahh ... 6 January, an Orthodox Christmas celebration.

Back on the highway the traffic was slowing and soon we saw where all the local people were. They were part of an enormous procession winding its way along this major highway, many on donkeys and the island's unique trotting horses, other playing musical instruments, many dressed as one of the kings and all accompanying a large Nativity float. This was our first realization of what a big day this is in Puerto Rico. We were to learn that Epiphany celebrations are a big part of the Christmas festival here, a time when Puerto Ricans go caroling and celebrating in processions called *trullas* and, in fact, most families wait until this holiday to exchange gifts. Children traditionally place straw and bowls of water under their beds for the camels of the Three Kings who are tired and hungry from their long journey. Some people also place food and drinks for the travellers under their Christmas trees (which aren't dismantled until 15

January). In the morning the children find the offerings have disappeared and gifts been left in their place. There follows a day of celebration, visiting and feasting similar to Christmas Day. No wonder we couldn't find a grocery store open!

But the reception office at our chosen *parador* – Villas del Mar Hau – was certainly open and soon we were receiving a warm welcome at this low-key, charming property and being shown to our beach cottage under the casuarina pines overlooking a quiet, protected, sandy beach in one corner of Playa Montones. Villas del Mar Hau was originally merely the beach house of the Hau family, but over the last forty years family members have been growing up and becoming involved in the hospitality industry; villa apartments, beach cottages and cabins (most with self-catering facilities) have been added and to-day this higgledy-piggledy property offers a relaxed and delightful place to hang your sun hat. It's not luxurious, but it's just great. It didn't take us long to get into the holiday mood. In a flash we were into our flip-flops and enjoying a beer on the beach and looking forward to our dinner in the property's open-air restaurant overlooking the beach. Just a note, the beach here is protected by a large coral outcrop which creates a little lagoon ... safe for swimming and relaxing (no waves) and especially good for children.

For a change of pace (and a birthday lunch) we also discovered Villa Montaña Resort by walking about a mile west along the wild and largely-deserted Montones beach. This is a more manicured and luxurious property than the Villas Hau and hence much more expensive, but it is very attractive and we loved the romantic terrace restaurant and the excellent food here. Do go along for lunch or dinner.

There is a great deal to see and do in Puerto Rico, most of which I unfortunately did not experience as my trip was brief and family-occasion oriented. But the guide books tell of wonderful bird-watching, mountain eco-lodges, the Guánica Dry Tropical Forest (a UN World Biosphere Reserve), massive cave complexes, protected rain forest parks and many coastal nature preserves, as well as opportunities for golf and all manner of water sports. However, I did cover two of the island's highlights: a trip to Ponce for its outstanding art gallery and, of course, a stay in San Juan itself.

It's easy to reach the second biggest city in Puerto Rico – Ponce, on the south coast – via fast highways from San Juan or Arecibo. But taking some of the minor roads through the hills and mountains is quite an adventure. I had long wanted to visit the Museo de Arte de Ponce, home of the sumptuous art collection of former governor of Puerto Rico don Luis A. Ferré and his wife, doña Lorencita Ferré. It holds the reputation of being the largest and most impressive art collection in the Caribbean ... probably a claim only the National Fine Arts Museum in Havana could come close to matching. Over many years the Ferrés have assembled a remarkable collection of over 3,000 works by European and American artists – Rubens, El Greco, Velázquez, Murillo,

van Dyck, Delacroix, Tissot, Makovski, Gainsborough and so many others, including the work chosen as the gallery's symbol – Lord Frederick Leighton's *Flaming June* – popular as a framed poster the world over. In 1959 the collection was given to the State and in 1965 American architect Edward Durell Stone, a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright, was engaged to design a new building for the collection. Today around 3,000 works of art, including a fine selection of Puerto Rican and Latin American art, are housed here in Ponce and close to 100,000 visitors come to enjoy it every year. Yes, it's well worth the drive to Ponce.

Before leaving Ponce do try to make time to visit its historic area. The city was named after Juan Ponce de León, a shipmate of Christopher Columbus and the island's first governor. The city was a prosperous trading post through the 19th century, in fierce competition with Puerto Rico's 'rich port' of San Juan. Aristocratic families beautified the city with lavish homes and fine municipal buildings while encouraging – and importing – art, music and literature from Europe. History then played Ponce a bad hand: the American invasion, hurricanes, an earthquake, the Great Depression and a politically-motivated massacre in 1935 left the city much diminished and on the 'once-grand-but-now-

shabby' side. However, it's a lively place with a charming Old Town and other good museums. I was later told it was a great pity I hadn't had time to visit the mansion of the Serralleés family of Ponce who built their vast fortune on rum. It is estimated that today the mansion is worth around \$25 million. Next time! (Details in the guidebook mentioned below.)

After a couple of days spent on the beach, at a wedding and on our Ponce excursion it was nearly time to leave. But we'd left time, of course, for San Juan. From my guidebook we'd chosen to stay at Wind Chimes Inn. I was sure before we arrived at this property that we'd made a good choice because Shane in reservations had sent me such welcoming and helpful e-mails regarding buses to the Old City (25¢); a place to change and enjoy their pool or the beach if we arrived before check-in; their Boat Bar where food was available all day and the best tour guide in the city – Captain Paul from Isla Bonita Tours. This boutique hotel did indeed turn out to be a delightful choice. It's set behind high walls in a residential district just a block from fashionable Condado Beach and Ocean Park. Everything here is fresh and pretty, from the little swimming pool in the interior courtyard to the charming rooms to the fun Boat Bar/restaurant where visitors and locals gather and are soon all talking together. Our guide book (details below) says, "This tasteful inn is easily one of the island's top accommodations for location, comfort, ambiance and price and is fully booked much of the time. Book early."

We had one day left to explore San Juan. After driving around for a short while looking at the fancy residential areas, Condado Beach, the cruise ship port and all the big hotels we headed for Old San Juan where we luckily found a parking spot. My first piece of advice: if you're going to do this fine World Heritage city justice – the historic streets, the architecture, museums, galleries, cathedrals and chapels, the Fort and City Walls, patios and plazas, monuments, the cemetery, art stores (yes, many of them real ones ... not just tourist stuff), famous old hotels and oh such cool restaurants – you'll need far more than a day. It's fabulous ... and popular not just with tourists but also with locals, young and old, who come to enjoy the shopping and the fine restaurants and night spots which abound here. Good guidebooks will give you all the 'what not to miss' details. What we did was to walk around enjoying the atmosphere and covering as much ground as we could, including the walk out to the Fort. We then enjoyed a delicious, late lunch in the courtyard of La Ostra Cosa where the entertaining owner, Alberto Nazaru, would not let us order from the menu. He studied us, asked a few questions and then said, "Leave everything to me." Rum punches 'of the house' were produced, followed by a selection of dishes to share: chorizo sausages, salad, scallops, calamari, crab, shrimps and so on. It was memorable, especially as the late hour meant we had the courtyard to ourselves and half way through our lunch we laughed at



Carvings of the Three Kings are popular items for sale early in January

a downpour of tropical rain as we sat cozily under the canopy. I left my family to settle the (quite considerable) bill and went to find a hotel I had heard about.

If you would like to stay in Old San Juan there is an extraordinary property that overlooks the city and the ocean from the North Wall. It's called The Gallery Inn and is a labyrinthine 18th century home turned into a luxurious (and somewhat eccentric) 22-room inn full of art, antiques, music, birds, lush courtyards, trickling fountains and memorable rooms. Even if you don't stay here please drop in for a drink or a candlelit dinner and take a look around. Suffice to say it's quite the conversation piece!

I hope I have managed to convey that Puerto Rico is quite a different Caribbean destination

from most. Its links to the United States give it a familiar atmosphere, yet the island and its people have retained their own identity and in many ways it is quite exotic. If you like a little history and culture with your sun and sports, this is the island for you. Here you can lie on the beach, golf or go bird-watching in the morning, gaze at an El Greco in the afternoon, wander through the streets of an ancient colonial city to a restaurant with a stunning décor early in the evening and then enjoy a classical music performance or dance the night away to a Latin beat. You can stay in some of the best hotels in the Caribbean or settle for a homey *parador* or eco-lodge on the beach or in the mountains. When I look at the map or read the guidebook I realize how little I have seen and I would most certainly return. In the meantime, I hope I have encouraged you to pay a visit and that my tips prove useful. Enjoy!

Some details ... (all prices U.S., which is the local currency)

● On the advice of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company, we rented our car from **L&M Car Rental**, who have nine locations around the island. They are very efficient. They have a counter inside the airport in San Juan and a shuttle service to their nearby car park, or arrangements can be made for complimentary transportation from your hotel to other rental locations. They can be reached toll-free from Canada at 1



A glimpse of the cabins, villas and apartments at Villas del Mar Hau



800 666 0807, fax: 787 791 6104, e-mail: info@lmcarrental.com, www.lmcarrental.com Our compact cost \$39 per day and gas was about 35¢ per litre. The island is 100 miles long and 35 wide; it is circled and criss-crossed by several major highways (a few tolls ... usually under a dollar) but there are many spectacular rural roads to be explored, many of them cutting through the mountains. The island is renowned for its flora and birds and there are dozens of natural reserves on the coast and in the interior.

● **Villas del Mar Hau**, Road 466, Km 8.3, (P.O. Box 510), Playa Montones, Isabela, tel: 872 2045, e-mail: villahau@prtc.net for rates as there are many options here (not expensive). www.paradorvillasdelmarhau.com.

● **Villa Montaña Resort**, tel 787 872 9554 or 1 888 780 9195 www.villamontana.com. Villas of varying sizes and rates (pricey, but good for sharing or families) and hotel

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Vermont ...

a Destination for all Seasons

story and photos by Ann Wallace

A drive into New England to visit friends for a special occasion was in our plans, but winter still held the east of our continent in its icy grip. So we decided to stop in one of our favourite States – Vermont – for a little skiing. The Mad River Valley in Central Vermont was the region we chose. We had skied at Sugarbush almost thirty years ago and had also heard glowing reports about neighbouring Mad River Glen Ski Area. We were also keen to see the capital, Montpelier, and, of course, we knew the region offered some great places to stay. This region is the Vermont of the imagination: quaint towns and villages of white clapboard and red roofs, each with a church steeple or two; a cuisine inspired by fertile local farms, competitive chefs and a wonderful array of inns and restaurants; covered bridges over tumbling rivers and an abundance of snow in the micro-climate created by Lake Champlain. (If you are not a winter traveller nor a skier, bookmark this article and go in the summer or the fall ... you'll still find it delightful with beautiful scenery and so much to see and do.)

Our accommodation at the 1824 House Inn just outside Waitsfield (photo above) was delightful. This location put us close to the above-mentioned ski resorts and about 15 km from Montpelier. How we enjoyed the warm welcome from hosts Karl and John (and dogs Gemma, Gertrude and Alice) after our drive from Toronto via Montreal. This is the sort of B&B where you can 'hang out' in the kitchen, chatting about food, helping if you wish or browsing through the cookbooks and where the drink you are offered is not measured but is an enormous 'glug' from the bottle. That evening, in fact, we ate in a nook in the kitchen ... our introduction to the excellent food produced by John, proudly using local products. "It is our mission to feed, pamper and spoil you," declare the hosts in their brochure, and they most certainly do.

The 1824 House was built in that year and is listed on the National Historic Register of the U.S. It was a farmhouse complete with barn, now renovated to provide a space for parties and receptions. The property stands on fifteen acres adjacent to the Mad River with direct access to the Mad River Trail for cross-country skiing or walking and, for

warm weather visitors, there's a swimming hole and opportunities to canoe and kayak. It's a great place for a getaway in any season.

During our three-day stay we enjoyed two days of skiing and a day exploring the Mad River Valley combined with a visit to Montpelier. On each day we were well set up by an excellent three-course breakfast at the inn. We skied at Sugarbush and Mad River Glen, two very different ski resorts. Sugarbush is a large and busy resort with lots of uphill capacity and a variety of slopes for both skiers and snowboarders. Mad River Glen is a less-commercial co-operative resort whose members are dedicated to environmental protection and to maintaining what they describe as a 'quirky' ski area with lots of woods skiing and an almost-unique single chair lift (the only other in North America is in Alaska). It is famous for its difficult terrain (you may have seen its popular car sticker *MAD RIVER GLEN – SKI IT IF YOU CAN*) but, in fact, they offer slopes for all levels. Tickets are less expensive here than at other resorts in the area. Check prices and specials for both at the websites given below. Both resorts offer great skiing experiences with that friendly atmosphere for which Vermont is famous.

On our day of exploration we drove around the Mad River Valley in bright sunshine taking photographs, admiring the lovely homes here and exploring the pretty villages before setting off to Montpelier. American State Capitals are nearly always worth a visit and Montpelier – the smallest of them all – is no exception. In fact residents are so devoted to preserving the history and charm of this town that no fast-food outlets are permitted! It's a delightful, relaxed place and there's plenty of room to park your car and take a walk. It also holds the title of being 'one of the 100 best arts towns in the U.S.' If you are there when there's a performance at the Lost National Theater do try to go. This professional group perform in the City Hall Arts Center and we thoroughly enjoyed the early-evening performance of *Educating Rita* that we were fortunate enough to catch there. Elderhostel offer a theatre programme here. Its three-sided thrust-style stage ensures that each member of the audience is seated within 25 ft of the action. One memorable thing about the performance we saw there was that a blind or visually-impaired group was in attendance. Each member of this group had an audio set with a commentator explaining the action on the stage. What made this experience unusual for the sighted members of the audience was seeing the rows of well-behaved seeing-eye dogs sitting in front of their owners in the front rows!

John Lumbrá, our host at our inn, had recommended we dine at the Main Street Grill & Bar in Montpelier after the performance, so that is what we did. It's just a short block from the theatre, past lots of lovely shops. What is unusual about this restaurant is that it's part of the New England Culinary Institute, and thus a training ground for aspiring chefs. They offer everything from snacks to themed buffets to

'chef's table' multi-course tasting menus ... food and service fabulous.

Vermont's lovely scenery, especially in the Mad River Valley area, and its all-season vacation offerings have long made it a favourite destination of many. This, of course, means there's a wide of choice of inns and B&Bs here and food is a hot topic, so you can expect excellent meals almost everywhere. And Vermonters pride themselves not only on their friendliness but also on their liberal attitudes. Canadians are sure to be especially welcome in these somewhat different political times for some interesting conversations!

Some details ...

- **The 1824 House Inn**, 2150 Main Street, Waitsfield, VT 05673, tel: 1 800 426 3986, e-mail stay@1824House.com www.1824house.com. B&B rates usually in the \$99 - \$148 dbl. range (all prices U.S.), but there are some good mid-week packages from \$65.50 with 3rd nights offered at a further discount. Four-course dinner is \$40.
- For information on the ski resorts mentioned log on to www.sugarbush.com and www.madriverglen.com
- For details of the offerings at the Lost Nation Theater in Montpelier call 802 229 0492, www.lostnationaltheater.org
- **Main Street Grill & Bar**, 118 Main Street, Montpelier, tel: 802 223 3188, open for lunch, dinner and Sunday buffet brunch. Prices very reasonable for the quality.
- **The Mad River Valley** region commences roughly 80 km from the Québec border down Hwy. 890. If you're heading to Waitsfield turn south onto Rte. 100 at Waterbury. Other towns in the region include Duxbury, Fayston, Warren and Waterbury. Their website is www.madrivervalley.com together with www.central-vt.com
- Call 1 800 VERMONT for excellent *Visitors' Guides* that include comprehensive accommodation listings, or log on to www.VermontVacation.com, the official Vermont Tourism site, where there's also lots of easy-to-find information and details of getaway specials and packages. 📖



A covered bridge over the Mad River

MORE OF SOUTH AFRICA

In March 2002, my husband Ben and I travelled the Garden Route in South Africa (see *TravelScoop* May 2002) with delightful Cyril Payle who runs Geometric Tours in Cape Town. We had read Editor Ann's recommendation of Cyril (see TS September 2001) and we too were impressed with him and with all that South Africa had to offer tourists. Cyril really is an excellent and knowledgeable guide and teacher as well as a very competent driver; we can't say enough good things about him or the spectacular South African scenery and the National Parks there.

So ... when we realized that we would be returning to our project in Uganda again early in 2003 we had no problem deciding where our post-trip would be. Seeing more of South Africa took top priority. We studied our maps and books and decided on the places we wanted to see, then sent an e-mail to Cyril asking him to make up a sample itinerary for our next adventure. We settled on a 19-day tour which Cyril lengthily, but aptly, named "The Great Kruger National Park and Kalahari Safari, plus the Best of Cape Town".

On arriving at the airport in Johannesburg, we were met by Cyril who had arranged our first night's accommodation at the Holiday Inn Garden Court Airport Hotel which, with its attractive rooms and beautiful gardens, must be one of that chain's top hotels. However we had little time to enjoy it for first thing in the morning Cyril was back with his red minibus ready to begin our trip to Kruger National Park. We spent most of this first day travelling across the high veld, a region that climbs to an altitude of 1800 metres and, besides being an exceptional agricultural area, is one of the most productive mining areas in the country. Late in the day we arrived at Kruger National Park where we stayed at Pretoriuskop Camp the first night, then moved to Skukuza for the second night. Accommodation at Kruger National

Park, as well as at the two other National Parks in which we stayed, was impressive with most of the conveniences of big city hotels including air conditioning (but minus television and computers!).

Every safari guide's priority is to spot the 'big five' animals that roam the parklands, so Cyril was disappointed that we did not manage this at Kruger, but we did see a great variety of wildlife and Cyril's knowledge of flora and fauna in his country makes every day an educational experience.

Leaving Kruger National Park we travelled back through the sugar plantations and citrus growing areas of the low veld and spent most of the following two days exploring Pretoria, the administrative capital of South Africa, and Johannesburg, including Soweto. A day in Kimberley was next on our itinerary, where we spent a day learning about the diamond mining industry, visiting museums and peering into the Big Hole ... the largest hole in the world dug entirely by manual labour in the frantic – and fruitful – search for diamonds. The open-air museum at the Big Hole is a fascinating grouping of nearly fifty buildings which reconstruct the Kimberley of the 1880's: miners' cottages, a tavern, shops and auction rooms and so on.

From Kimberley we travelled northwest into the area known as the Green Kalahari, the area through which the Orange River flows, with its water used to irrigate land on both sides of the river for crops and vines. We stayed overnight in the town of Upington, the economic and cultural capital of Northern Cape Province before travelling farther north to Kgalagadi Trans Border National Park which is partly in South Africa and partly in Botswana. The South African section is known as the Kalahari Gemsbok Park and is tucked between Botswana and Namibia. It gets its name from the park's numerous gemsbok, claimed to be the most majestic, gracious and adaptable of all antelope.

In the early morning, before the temperature rose to 40° C+, we hiked through part of the Kalahari desert lands and across a dry river bed to the water hole where the park animals come to drink. Our park tour guide was a very knowledgeable young man. His stories about the life history of

WITH GEOMETRIC TOURS

various indigenous insects and their peculiar mating and food-capturing habits were especially fascinating. We were accompanied on our excursion by a park employee with a long rifle slung over his back, but we never at any time felt in danger from the animals. In the evening we rode out into the desert in search of nocturnal creatures, several of which we saw, including a pride of lions out for an evening prowl. What an experience!

From Gembok we travelled back through Upington then westward, at times along the Orange River Valley and through more of the Green Kalahari where numerous wineries are located. Some of the grapes grown in this area are laid out in the sun to dry into raisins; areas as large as super-market parking lots would be covered with them, while others were on racks in layers to dry more slowly.

Augrabies Falls National Park was our next destination, the smallest but in our opinion the most beautiful of the three national parks we visited. The Orange River cuts through solid granite here to form a spectacular gorge and waterfall, the second largest in Africa after Victoria Falls. Even though the area had experienced severe drought conditions at the time of our visit there was a plentiful supply of water going over the falls. And apparently during the spring rains the river can overflow its banks and a wider and even noisier fall is formed. The river then winds its way through the gorge for many kilometres before flowing westward to form the boundary between Namibia and South Africa.

Our journey then took us further west through extremely arid land into Namaqualand, the home of the Khoi people, early inhabitants of the Cape region who, with the arrival of the Dutch and British on their lands, moved farther and

farther north. It is an area of extreme contrasts, notable because for a week or so following the spring rains (August and September) the dry arid landscape becomes a kaleidoscope of colour from the wild flowers that appear almost overnight and bring tourists from far and wide.

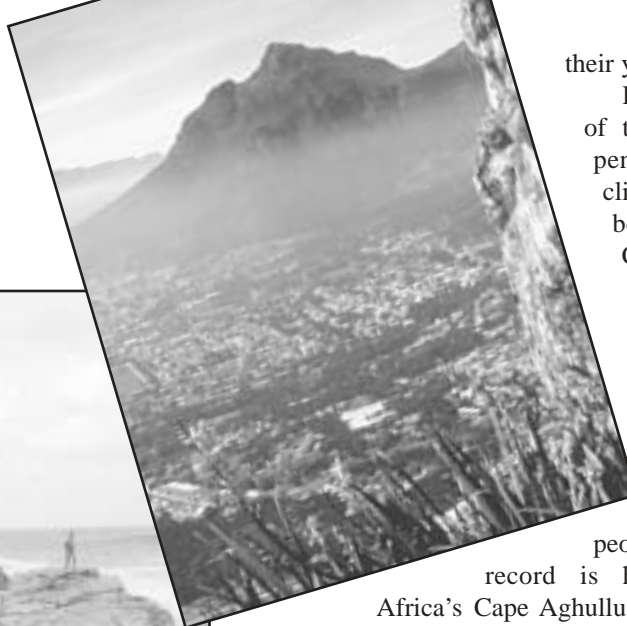
We stayed overnight in Springbok, the largest town in Namaqualand, famous for its copper mines that border the town, and then headed south toward Cape Town, stopping in Clan William with its gigantic dam on the Oliphant River. From Clan William one can enter the Cedarberg Mountains, famous for their unusual rock formations and abundance of Bushman art. We stayed overnight at a Traveler's Rest Guest Farm and spent the next morning hiking to the Bushman paintings in caves in the mountains. The paintings in this area are some of the best-preserved and most



Model of Cecil Rhodes outside the Kimberley Mines Museum, site of the "Big Hole", the most famous diamond mine in the world.

Right: Cape Town from the Table Mountain cable car

Below: Ben and Norma Fear at the Cape of Good Hope



their young.


Reaching the end of the road on the peninsula, we climbed up to the beacon at the Cape of Good Hope, the south-western tip of the Continent of Africa (though not the most southerly, as many

people think ... that record is held by South

Africa's Cape Agulhas, some distance to the east). Nonetheless, a visit to the Cape of Good Hope is a 'must', for its spectacular views both of the peninsula and of the ocean, which hides hundreds of sunken ships which had tried to round the Cape too close to shore and floundered on the rocks which extend several kilometres out into the ocean.

One afternoon we spent wandering through Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, an internationally acclaimed garden and sculpture park on the 'back' slopes of Table Mountain. Cyril's knowledge of plants, shrubs and trees added greatly to our enjoyment of this large, spectacular garden where many exotic plants were in bloom.

On our last morning we were able to fit in a lovely visit to the wine lands of the Boland area, with a tour of a vineyard in the mountain at Bergkelder where we were treated to samples of several different wines. We also visited gracious Stellenbosch, the second oldest town in South Africa, with its charming old houses and well-preserved main street stores. The town is known as the Oak Town because of the many old oak trees planted in the 1600's by the Governor at that time, Simon van der Stel. Then it was off to the airport and a sad 'farewell' before our flights home, but we left with the feeling that Cyril had shown us a great deal of his beloved, beautiful country.

For private, personalized tours of South Africa, contact Cyril Payle at Geometric Tours, Box 371, Kasselovlei, Belleville, South Africa 7533, tel/fax: [011 27] 21 951 3378 or e-mail gemtours@mweb.co.za 

The Travel Society is in the final stages of putting together a special South African trip with Geometric Tours. Please call us if you would like to be placed on the list and receive information as soon as it becomes available - Ed.



Cyril Payle, President Geometric Tours

artistic of any found in Africa and although their age cannot be accurately determined they are believed to be as old as 6000 years.

From the Cedarberg Mountains we travelled west to the Atlantic coast and stayed overnight in the town of Lambert's Bay, famous for its Bird Island, a protected roosting and breeding area for seabirds such as gannets, gulls, cormorants and penguins. Our trip continued southward with brief stops in Eland's Bay, the West Coast Fossil Park, Saldanha Bay – a busy port due to the large manufacturing plants in the area – and then on into Cape Town.

In Cape Town we settled into the Town House Hotel, an excellent choice in the middle of the downtown area, within easy walking distance of the Government Buildings, the Company Gardens, St. George's Mall and Greenmarket Square. With Cyril still our chauffeur and guide we spent three days seeing the sights which we had missed in 2002, including a trip up Table Mountain on a beautiful clear morning when we could see miles out to sea as well as a good deal of Cape Town surrounding the mountain.

We visited Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was held prisoner for so many years, and toured the island and buildings where ex-political prisoners act as guides and answer visitors' many questions. This is an emotional experience, although the guides maintain it is therapy for them.

En route to the tip of the Cape Peninsula, known as Cape Point, we visited the area around Duiker Island by boat, to watch hundreds of Cape Fur Seals on the rock island enjoying the stormy sea and the huge waves. We also visited the African Jackass Penguin Sanctuary at Boulder's Beach in an area where they are protected and able to hatch

CONCERNS IN THE EAST AFRICAN NIGHT

story and photo by Rose and Fred Stevens



Kenya is a land of beauty, smiles, wonderment and – sadly – poverty. We had long dreamed of a safari there. It turned out to be one of our most exciting, difficult and adventurous trips, as we chose to be near nature – tenting in the wilderness and sometimes encountering real dangers.

We began our trip in Nairobi, on 18 January 18 2003, where we met our six travelling companions, our tour leader, Sandy, cook Issaya, and driver Joachim. Our home for two-weeks was a converted 4x4 German military vehicle, which could go almost anywhere. We jiggled along some very rough, dusty red-dirt roads in national parks, game reserves and on some of Kenya/Tanzania's highways as well. We named our truck 'Elvis'. The majority of the time, our wake-up call was 5:00 a.m. and we would break camp in the dark while our cook prepared breakfast over hot-grated coals. We would be on our way by 7:00 or earlier. The make-up of our group was British, Australian and three Canadians and our ages varied from 27 to 65. What a congenial/bonding group in spite of our age differences! Stories and life-experiences were shared around evening campfires and the younger generation was curious about our marriages and how our husbands proposed. (There was only one other married couple and they were our age.)

Our excitement was unconfined when we saw our first wildlife. "Oh, look zebras!" and we all rushed for our cameras. Sandy was undaunted and warned us that in a few days we would all be very blasé when zebras appeared. He was so right, as we continued to add lions, Cape buffalo, elephants, hippos, rhinoceros, giraffe, elands, wildebeests, impala, topi, gazelle, leopard, cheetah, crown cranes, flamingos and lilac-breasted rollers to our long list of wildlife and birds.

Many highlights come to mind, as I reflect on our journey, but one for sure stands out. On Day 8 we travelled into the remote Western Corridor of the Serengeti National Park. About midnight our wilderness campsite, minus fences and

an *askeri* (guard or watchman), resounded with lion roars that seemed only meters away from our tents. Lions make a sound that is felt rather than heard and can be best described as a deep guttural cattle-like bawl that ends in a growl. There was no sleep happening inside anyone's tent and I was personally wishing the night away, hoping I would see morning. When I ask my usually undaunted husband, "How are you feeling?" he responds, "I'm concerned." We hear the Serengeti Lodge truck arrive at 5:00 a.m. to pick up two of our young female companions who had organized a sunrise balloon ride over the grassland plains. (The African sunrises and the evening sunsets were alone worth the trip.)

Finally, it is morning proper and we get the scoop from our well-informed South African tour leader. There were 10 - 12 lions (two of them males) feeding in the vicinity of our tents. In addition, hyenas were close at hand for the leftovers.


On Day 9 we remain in the same campsite. Our afternoon game drive produced the most impressionable image of all. Only about 100 meters from our campsite a string of 10 - 12 lions crossed leisurely in front of our vehicle into a shaded area nearby, where they proceeded to dine on a fresh kill. Ever vigilant and cautious Sandy, who earlier in the day had accompanied all eight of us to the showers (read a metal garden pipe, inside an enclosure), noted the vultures circling in the thermals. After our evening camp meal, he announced that it was unsafe to stay in our tents and that we should sleep on top of the truck. We joked a lot about falling off the edge and having to make a 'night trip' as we layered our mats and sleeping bags 10 feet off the ground. Then, gazing at the star-studded heavens, we settled down until sleep came. There were three other trucks in the campsite, who had taken similar precautions.

About midnight and then again at 3:00 a.m. flashlights were shone into the wilderness. Our Dragoman neighbour tour leader spotted three lions prowling around our tent (yes, this writer's tent!). In the vicinity lurked an elephant, hyena

and a jackal.

As you can see the trip was packed with adventure; it was the experience of a lifetime. However, there are several costs over and above the tour and airfare that one should be aware of. Visas and vaccinations are necessary before you leave home and should be arranged several months before departure. Upon orientation (our start point was Nairobi), there is a local payment, plus tip kitty that needs to be paid up front. Water/drinks are supplied at a price throughout the safari. It operates on an honour system and you pay at the end of the two-week trip. For example, our water bill was C\$80.00 for the two of us, with only a few (warm) beers or soft drinks mixed in. Our travel company was Explore Worldwide, but there are dozens to choose from. Even as you walk the streets of Nairobi someone will attempt to sell you a safari trip. However, we preferred to organize our trip

from home with a reputable, well-known company; we were not disappointed. We booked this trip through a British company – Explore Worldwide, located at 1 Frederick Street, Aldershot, Hants, GU11 1LQ, tel: [011 44]1252 760 000, fax: 1252 760 001. The company's agent in Canada is Trek Holidays: in Vancouver tel: 1800 663 5132, Calgary: 1 800 690 4859, Edmonton: 1 800 387 3574, Toronto: 1 800 267 3347, www.trekholidays.com

And here is a handful of other useful websites to help you plan a trip to Kenya: www.Magicalkenya.com, www.kenyabeasts.org.uk, www.kenyaweb.com/history, www.geographia.com/kenya, www.jambokenya.com, www.kenyaembassy.com 

Rose and Fred Stevens are adventurous TravelScoop readers who live in Cranbrook, BC

CANADIAN TOURISTS CAN HELP STOP THE IVORY TRADE

With a couple of African articles in this edition of TravelScoop we thought it timely to publish this notice from the International Fund for Animal Welfare in Ottawa.


Tourists Africa-bound may inadvertently be fuelling the ivory trade and putting the earth's last elephants at risk. Ivory poachers kill an average of one elephant a day. Poachers profiting from ivory markets often kill elephants in national parks and other reserves where tourists gather to catch a glimpse of these gentle giants.

While the debate over opening the ivory trade continues, the IFAW is extremely concerned that even a limited ivory sale can cause the widespread slaughter of elephants. IFAW Canada Director Sherri Cox says. "Those people travelling through places where elephants are purportedly protected have a rare opportunity to help stamp out the ivory trade simply by not buying ivory."

Conscientious purchasing strategies can help stop the ivory trade and allow the elephants to live without threat. Here are eight steps tourists can take to help stop the ivory trade:

- Don't buy anything made from ivory.
- If a tour guide takes you to shops or markets where ivory or other elephant products (stools made from elephant feet, elephant leather bags, etc.) are sold, ask the guide to help by telling members of the tour group not to buy these products.
- If a shop in your hotel sells ivory, write a letter to the hotel manager asking he request the shop to stop stocking ivory items.

- Spread the word to other tourists who are considering buying ivory that their purchase will destroy the wildlife they have come to see on their trip.
- Give your friends and other people a leaflet explaining why they should not buy ivory or other products from endangered species. Call 1 888 500 IFAW for these leaflets
- In some tourist centres such as Bangkok or Delhi, elephants are taken through the streets 'begging'. Tourists pay to 'feed the elephant'. However cute they look, don't give money. The elephants, sometimes babies, are forced to live in horrible conditions – for instance, under highway bridges – and are often drugged to keep them docile.
- Don't visit places that keep elephants in cruel captivity. If you do find yourself in such a place, protest.
- Try to support projects that help elephant conservation. Visit or donate to a wildlife refuge, or enquire when you book a safari if the company donates to animal conservation and/or local communities. They may not, and you may still decide to book with them, but at least you may have 'sown a seed'.

For comprehensive details of the state of the ivory trade and elephants in general, visit the website of the International Fund for Animal Welfare at www.ifaw.org and enter 'elephants' or 'ivory trade' in their search field. 

ANTARCTICA

Calling all those of you fascinated by the survival story of Sir Ernest Shackleton. Antarctic journeys called 'Spirit of Shackleton' are planned for winter 2005 and 2006 by Fathom Expeditions of Toronto. This voyage was voted the greatest Antarctic trip in the world by *National Geographic Adventure – 2003* and the experienced organizers and crew of this 95-passenger crew were responsible for the travel and logistics involved in the filming of the Shackleton IMAX film, so you know you'll be in good hands. For full details of this and other expeditions aboard the *m.v. Explorer* call 416 646 2688 or 1 800 621 0176, e-mail: info@fathomexpeditions.com, www.fathomexpeditions.com

BRITAIN

England's University of Cambridge offers summer courses for all in July and August and details are available now for the 2005 sessions. Students are of a wide range of ages and nationalities and accommodation in a Cambridge College is an option. Courses of between ten days and six weeks are offered and there is plenty of free time to explore this historic city and surrounding areas. Subjects? Shakespeare and English Literature, Art History, Current Issues in Science (genetics, climate change, etc.), Medieval Studies, International Relations and Art History. For information contact University of Cambridge International Programmes, Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB3 8AQ, U.K., tel: [011 44] 1954 280 398, fax: 1954 280 200, e-mail: intenq@cont-ed.cam.ac.uk, or visit the website: www.cont-ed.cam.ac.uk/IntSummer

CANADA

* Pacific Sands Beach Resort in **Tofino** on Vancouver Island are offering 'Wild for Winter' packages from now until 24 February. Ocean view suites, with fireplaces and equipped kitchens, start at C\$85 per night for a 7-night stay, \$110 for 3 nights. Larger, beachfront villas are also available. The resort can be contacted at 1 800 565 3233 or visit www.pacificsands.com

* Book a 2005 Rocky Mountaineer Vacations package before 15 January and each couple will receive a free "Explore Vancouver" package valued at C\$438 which include one night's accommodation and a sightseeing tour. Details from 1 800 665 7245 or at www.rockymountaineer.com.

* For those who'd like to experience skiing at **Marble Mountain, Newfoundland**, (see last month's issue of TS) Maxxim Vacations is offering packages from \$749 which include air from across Canada, four nights' accommodation, four day car rental and three days of lift tickets. Extensions are easily arranged and the trips should run until mid-April. Ski packages in Québec (Mont-Sainte-Anne and Tremblant), Banff and Whistler also available. Ask your

agent for Maxxim's winter brochure or call 1800 567 666 or visit www.maxximvacations.com.

* From mid-November until mid-April, a daily shuttle is available between 11 major downtown hotels in **Québec City** and the surrounding winter sports centres. Round-trip costs \$23. Ski resorts served are Mont Sainte-Anne, Massif and Stoneham. Tickets for sale at the hotels. And for more winter activities, mark your calendars for the Québec Winter Carnival – 28 January to 13 February and check all that's in store at www.carnaval.qc.ca.

* **Salute to Vienna** concerts will be held in 11 major Canadian cities on the afternoon of New Year's Day or 2 January. For information and tickets to these popular concerts call 1 800 545 7807 or visit www.salutetovienna.com

CUBA

Just a reminder that the U.S. dollar is no longer accepted in Cuba. All purchases have to be made in the Cuban Convertible Peso (CUC). It will be possible to exchange U.S. currency, but a 10% fee will be charged. Canadian currency and traveller's cheques can be changed at banks, international airports and major hotels without the 10% fee and it will be possible to change any unspent pesos back to Canadian dollars at the airport (if they are available). Credit cards continue to be accepted in major establishments provided they are not issued by an American bank. And American Express cards are difficult to use, regardless of country of issuance. Visa or MasterCard holders may obtain cash advances in CUCs at banks, hotels, or Cadeca exchange houses. In Havana, ATMs giving cash advances of pesos from Visa cards are located at Hotel Parque Central, Hotel Cohiba, Hotel Nacional, and Miramar Trade Centre. In Varadero, Visa's ATMs are located at Plaza America and at banks. If you use an ATM, you are advised to do so during business hours at a location inside a bank, supermarket, or large commercial building. And it is important to remember that now the Cuba Departure Tax can be paid only in CUC. The exchange rate of the CUC to the U.S. dollar is fixed, one to one, and so the departure tax is 25 CUC.

HONG KONG

Chinese New Year is always an extra-special time in Hong Kong, and next year's welcome to the Year of the Rooster will be no exception. To help Canadians experience many of the exciting events associated with the New Year, Tour East Holidays (Canada) Inc., is offering a special package from 4 – 11 February 2005. This trip will take participants from major Canadian gateways to Hong Kong with Cathay Pacific Airways, will provide transfers and accommodation (with breakfasts) in the deluxe Langham Hotel, will include a half-day tour of the highlights of Hong Kong Island and offer a selection of additional optional tours. Then, on the evening of 9 February, it will be time to enjoy the spectacular International Chinese New Year Night Parade, an extrav-

aganza of magnificent illuminated floats, exotic dance troupes, stirring music and breathtaking lighting effects, with Canada proudly represented by our own *Caribana* performers. The following day sees the start of Hong Kong's famous New Year's sales, so that will be a free day for those who love to shop, before the evening's excitement – 'the New Year Fireworks and Symphony of Lights'. Prices for this Hong Kong Celebration package start at C\$2,238.00. Your agent will have details of Tour East's vacations or take a look at www.toureast.com

PORTUGAL

New from Signature Vacations this winter is a brochure dedicated solely to their new winter holiday destination: Portugal's Algarve. Resorts, 'aparthotels' and self-catering studios are available, as are rental cars, for periods between one and eight weeks. A week in Portugal, including air from Toronto, starts at just \$1,199 plus tax, while eight weeks cost from \$2,239. Available dates are between 10 January and 24 April. For details see your agent or check out www.signaturevacations.com/portugal

SCOTLAND

A new website was recently launched to help those with Scottish ancestry plan a trip to trace their ancestors. The site offers information on clans' history, tartans, crests and more and there are seven travel itineraries themed around the history, castles and sites of the most famous Scottish clans. Log on to www.ancestralscotland.com for all the information. Here in the *TravelScoop* offices we also have three copies of the *Collins Guide to Scots Kith & Kin – A Guide to the Clans and Surnames of Scotland*. Send us a note telling us why you are thinking of a trip to Scotland and we'll award copies of the book to the three letters or messages we like best. (Editor Ann's contact details on p. 2).



a i r l i n e n e w s

- **Air Canada** is going to launch daily non-stop flights between Australia and Canada on 16 December 2004 using 282-seat Airbus A340-300 aircraft. The non-stop service will be offered northbound from Sydney to Vancouver. Southbound flights will require a brief refueling stop in Honolulu but passengers will be allowed to stay on board, thus eliminating any U.S. customs or visas issues. With a flight time of 14 hours and 40 minutes, Air Canada's new service will reduce northbound flying time by 2 hours and 15 minutes. For more information see your agent or go to www.aircanada.ca.
- **Air Canada** has also increased its South American service. There is now a new three times weekly non-stop service between Toronto and Lima, Peru and a non-stop service between Toronto and Buenos Aires has been added to its three weekly flights to Buenos Aires via Santiago, Chile.
- **Jetsgo** is commencing non-stop flights from Québec City to Fort Lauderdale on 19 December. The new service will offer weekly flights on Sundays until the end of April. Flights will depart Quebec City at 4:15 p.m. with one-way fares starting at \$192. For details visit www.jetsgo.net.
- Travellers looking for value fares to Maui will be interested to know that starting 8 January **Harmony**

Airways will be offering six flights a week out of Vancouver. Harmony will also be offering a Vancouver – Palm Springs service and an additional Vancouver-Toronto flight which brings this route to a daily service. www.harmonyairways.com is their site.

- **Transat Holidays** may fit the bill for your European trip next year and if you book before 13 February you will save \$150 per person. Readers may remember we checked out one of the hotels used by TH in London last year – the Montcalm – and we found the whole package boiled down to one excellent value. Next year's offerings are sure to be similar. Your agent should have preview or full brochures soon and travellers can combine two or more destinations if they wish. There are dozens of destinations on offer in Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany and France.
- A useful website for travellers is www.seatguru.com, which describes itself as "your enlightened guide to airline seating". It lists major airlines, including Air Canada, with details on every aircraft operated by each line, details of good and bad seats, seat and pitch dimensions and lots more information on such things as power points, in-flight amenities and so on. There are also links to on-line booking sites for reduced and last-minute flights.

* **Diners Club** and **MasterCard** have formed an alliance that will provide enhanced global acceptance to Diners Club North America card members and enhanced U.S. and Canadian acceptance for Diners Club International card members. Under the arrangement Diners Club cards issued in the U.S. and Canada will be redesigned to include the MasterCard brand mark and hologram on the card in order to function as MasterCard cards. These cards will be accepted at the more than 22 million merchant locations worldwide where MasterCard credit cards are accepted. Diners Club cards offer frequent travellers many benefits. For details go to www.dinersclubcanada.com or www.mastercardinternational.com.

* **MasterCard** remains in the news with a new alliance with Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, a group that includes Westin, Sheraton, St. Regis, The Luxury

Collection, W and Four Points properties. The **Starwood Preferred Guest MasterCard** credit card is the first hotel affinity card offered in Canada and designed exclusively for Canadians. The no-annual-membership-fee card offers holders all the features of the Starwood Preferred Guest Programme – the award-winning hotel rewards programme featuring no black out dates and instant redemption – with a number of special credit card member benefits that include the opportunity to earning Starpoints at more than 750 properties in 80 countries. Retail transactions will reward card members with one point for every C\$2 spent. Bonus offers include 5,000 points when the card is first used at a retail outlet, 5,000 points when a stay at one of the properties is first charged and bonus points when certain spending levels are exceeded. Applications for the new Starwood Preferred Guest MasterCard are available online at: www.spg.com/MBNA.

from the bookshelf

It's time to think about gifts, and you can't go wrong with books, especially if they tie in with friends' plans or love of travel. (And see our special *TravelScoop* gift offer on p. 24!)

- A few practical guides first. *TravelScoop* readers in Southern Ontario who regularly do the drive to Florida will know all about Dave Hunter's unique guide ***Along Interstate 75***, now in its 12th edition. As Dave explains, "This is a 'how-to-get-there-and-be-entertained-along-the-way' guide." Yes, it's that and more; 'upside-down' maps, tips and recommendations, money saving notes and coupons, gas stations, speed trap locations, interesting mini-trips within minutes of the highway and so much more. Don't leave the border without it! (From bookstores, online bookstores, AAA and CAA travel offices, online at www.i75online.com – a 15% discount here if you pay by cheque – or by calling 1 800 431 1579, C\$29.95.)

- But if the I-95 is the route you favour as you head south, there's now a similar, award-winning guide by Canadians Stan Posner and Sandra Phillips-Posner – ***Drive I-95*** – that covers the highway from Boston to the Florida border. It follows the same helpful format as the above guide. Even if only sections of these routes are on your driving itineraries these books are well worth having. Available at stores and online, or by calling 1 888 484 3395 or via www.drivei95.com. C\$29.95.

- Frequent road-warrior travellers in Canada will surely like to have a copy of ***The Canadian Bed & Breakfast Guide*** by Marybeth Moyer in their cars.

There's a map of every province with the location of the accommodations indicated. Black and white photographs show every property and in addition there's a list of many information services and a separate list of properties that are suitable for the physically challenged. Cities are featured as well as rural properties. Published by Fitzhenry & Whiteside, \$23.95

- There's nothing like an Insight Guide to set you dreaming of visiting a destination. And their new guide ***New Mexico*** is no exception. Lavishly produced with fabulous photography, this guide really does a wonderful job of celebrating the State that has been the cross-road of so many diverse cultures. Whether you give it as a gift or keep yourself ... you'll all want to go! In fact, that can be said of any Insight Guide, so if you know of your family's or friends' travel plans for next year, give them the corresponding volume. They'll love it. Published by Langenscheidt, these books cost around \$30 in Canada. Visit www.insightguides.com for a complete list.

- I don't really like the title – ***Unforgettable Places to See Before You Die*** (something like 'Travel List for a Fabulous Life' would surely have been better!), but this list of 40 wonders worldwide with, of course, great photographs is sure to be a conversation piece and a stimulus to travel. I won't give any of the locations away – I'm sure many, thought not all, can be guessed at – but I will mention that, unfortunately, Canada isn't featured. This beautiful book, an inspiration to travel photographers, is by Steve Davey and is published by Firefly. Pop it in someone's stocking for C\$24.95.

rooms from \$190 per night.

● **At Wind Chimes Inn**, Ashford Avenue & Taft Street, San Juan, tel: [code 787] 727 4153, fax 728 0641, e-mail: reservations@atwindchimesinn.com, www.atwindchimesinn.com. High season dbl. rates from \$99.

● **The Gallery Inn**, 204-206 Norzagaray, Old San Juan, tel: 722 1808, fax: 724 7360, e-mail: reservations@thegalleryinn.com, www.thegalleryinn.com Rooms from \$145 to \$350 (for the 'topside suite').

● **Isla Bonita Tours**, tel: 787 587 7917

● **La Ostra Cosa Restaurant**, 154 Cristo Street, Old San Juan, tel: 722 2672.

● For those of you with very deep pockets or a special anniversary on its way, you may like to know that Puerto Rico is one of just a few Caribbean islands offering a Relais and Chateaux property. Details of **The Horned Dorset Primavera** can be found at www.horneddorset.com or on the R&C site www.relaischateaux.com This property has often been voted the best in the Caribbean by the readers of *Condé Nast Traveler*.

● I learned about Villas del Mar Hau, At Wind Chimes Inn and The Gallery Inn from the **Hunter Travel Guide Puerto Rico** by Kurt Pitzer and Tara Stevens, \$18.95, www.hunter-publishing.com.

I found this book to be a helpful and trustworthy guide to the island and will keep it on my bookshelf for a future visit.

● The **Museo de Arte de Ponce** is located on Avenida las Americas and is well sign-posted as you drive into Ponce. There is plenty of parking in the surrounding residential area. The museum has a fine little gift store and two garden courtyards, but there is no restaurant. For more details visit www.museoarteponce.org where the English site is 'under construction' but the Spanish is easily understood. Admission to the museum is \$4 for adults, \$2 for seniors. (It was here, on the day after my 60th birthday, that I was first asked if I qualified for the senior's rate!)

● Air service direct from Canada to San Juan is on the increase, no doubt with the cruise passenger in mind. If you plan to cruise out of Puerto Rico, do add on some days to explore the island.

● For tourism information, including helpful and attractive regional Travel Planners and an excellent free map, contact **Puerto Rico Tourism Company**, 301 – 41-43 Colbourne Street, Toronto ON M5E 1E3, tel: 416 368 2680, fax: 416 368 0350, www.gotopuertorico.com (this website has a link to all the islands *paradors*). 🇵🇷

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India's Golden Triangle

FULLY ESCORTED

20 days departing 14th March & 3rd October 2005

from
\$4,496

India is one of the world's greatest travel destinations. But unless you're a young backpacker, a tour is the way to go! And The Travel Society is offering the ultimate tour of India's fabled northwestern region, known as The Golden Triangle. This tour will show you the highlights of this fascinating region. You'll spend time in the economic powerhouse of India - Mumbai (once known as Bombay) where you'll drive along Marine Drive, visit the Hanging Gardens, enjoy the Prince of Wales Museum and stroll through Neru Park. On another day you visit St. Thomas Cathedral, the Jain Temple and see the memorial to Mahatma Gandhi as well as take an optional tour to Elephanta caves. Then it's on to Udaipur, the most romantic city in all of Rajasthan, known as the city of lakes. Here there are palaces and temples to visit as well as beautiful gardens with pools, fountains, pagodas and carvings. Mt. Abu-Ranakpur is next on the itinerary, famous for its 15th century temples, before you proceed to the famous medieval city of Jodhpur, home of the massive Mehrangarh Fort and many exquisite palaces. Then how about a camel safari ... sure to bring lots of laughs and some great photographs! Khimsar and Nagaur are next on the itinerary, where there's more sightseeing and lots of leisure time for relaxing, shopping or wandering alone with your camera. Bikaner is next - a royal walled city with a wealth of architectural heritage - where you'll visit Lalgarh Palace Museum, a combination of European luxury and Oriental fantasy and Junagarh Fort, which was started in 1587 and houses 37 palaces, pavilions and temples. You'll then travel on to Mandawa, known for its exquisite frescoes where you'll stay in Castle Mandawa, a unique desert resort. Jaipur - the pink city - is next; a city of beauty famous for its bazaar full of wonderful gifts. Here you can take an elephant-ride excursion to Amer Fort and also see the Palace of the Winds and the stone Observatory. Of course Agra is on the itinerary, for that never-to-be forgotten dawn visit to the Taj Mahal, before you travel on to famous Delhi, the capital of India. Throughout this trip you will stay in first-class hotels, travel in deluxe a/c, fully-equipped coaches and enjoy wonderful meals, banquets and entertainment. Many days will be full, but there's plenty of free time too. Haven't you always wanted to visit India? Make this the year and come with The Travel Society this fall.



PRICES INCLUDING AIR departing from:

Vancouver	\$4,696 pp/dbl	Toronto	\$4,496 pp/dbl
Victoria	\$4,896 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$4,496 pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$4,696 pp/dbl	Montreal	\$4,496 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$4,696 pp/dbl	Halifax	\$4,696 pp/dbl
Saskatoon	\$4,696 pp/dbl	St. John's	\$4,896 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$4,696 pp/dbl	Single supplement	\$794
Prices are subject to confirmation		Taxes extra	

Your tour includes:

- All international & domestic flights
- Deluxe a/c coach transportation
- State transport taxes
- All meals
- English-speaking guides and escort
- All entrance fees
- Elephant ride
- Village safari in Jodhpur
- Baggage handling

**NEW
PRICES**

Galapagos Islands and Ecuador

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

14 days departing 18 Jan, 15 Feb, 12 Apr 2005

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	\$6,589.00 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	
Vancouver	
Calgary	
Halifax	

GREAT ADD-ONS, INCLUDING AIR:

Kapawi - from all departure points	\$1,680.00 pp/dbl
Machu Picchu -	: Toronto \$1,996.00 pp/dbl
When departing from	: Ottawa, Montreal
	: Vancouver, Calgary
	: Halifax

Prices are subject to confirmation

Your tour includes:

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

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

New Tours for 2005

- South Africa - 20 days
- Oriental Spendour - 17 days (Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong and more)
- Japan - 14 days
- South America: Chile, Argentina, Patagonia, Iguazu Falls etc.

Please call for the full itineraries and departure dates

NEW

Guatemala Grandeur

Departing 11 February 2005

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

21 days, prices include all airmiles

A Traveller's Turkey

Departing: 3 & 24 May, 20 September & 11 October 2005

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. 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	\$5,900.00 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$5,975.00 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$5,975.00 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$6,145.00 pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$6,145.00 pp/dbl	Calgary	\$6,145.00 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$6,145.00 pp/dbl	Halifax	\$6,075.00 pp/dbl

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

Space limited to 20 people
Fully escorted

Your tour includes:

- Round trip transatlantic flights with Air Canada/Lufthansa
- All domestic flights
- 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

NEW

Copper Canyon February, March, April 2005 FULLY ESCORTED

We are offering a new fully escorted 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	\$4,934 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,934 pp/dbl
Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg	\$5,294 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$600 (Sharing can be arranged.) Taxes extra.
Prices are subject to confirmation

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, baggage handling & tips
- Meals as per the itinerary
- All train trips and tours as per the itinerary

FROM \$3,942 FOR 18 DAYS!

FULLY ESCORTED

New departures dates:

7, 28 April, 15 September. & 20 October. 2005



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

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

China ... Yangtze Spectacular

... 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 cen-

tural 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!

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

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.

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

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