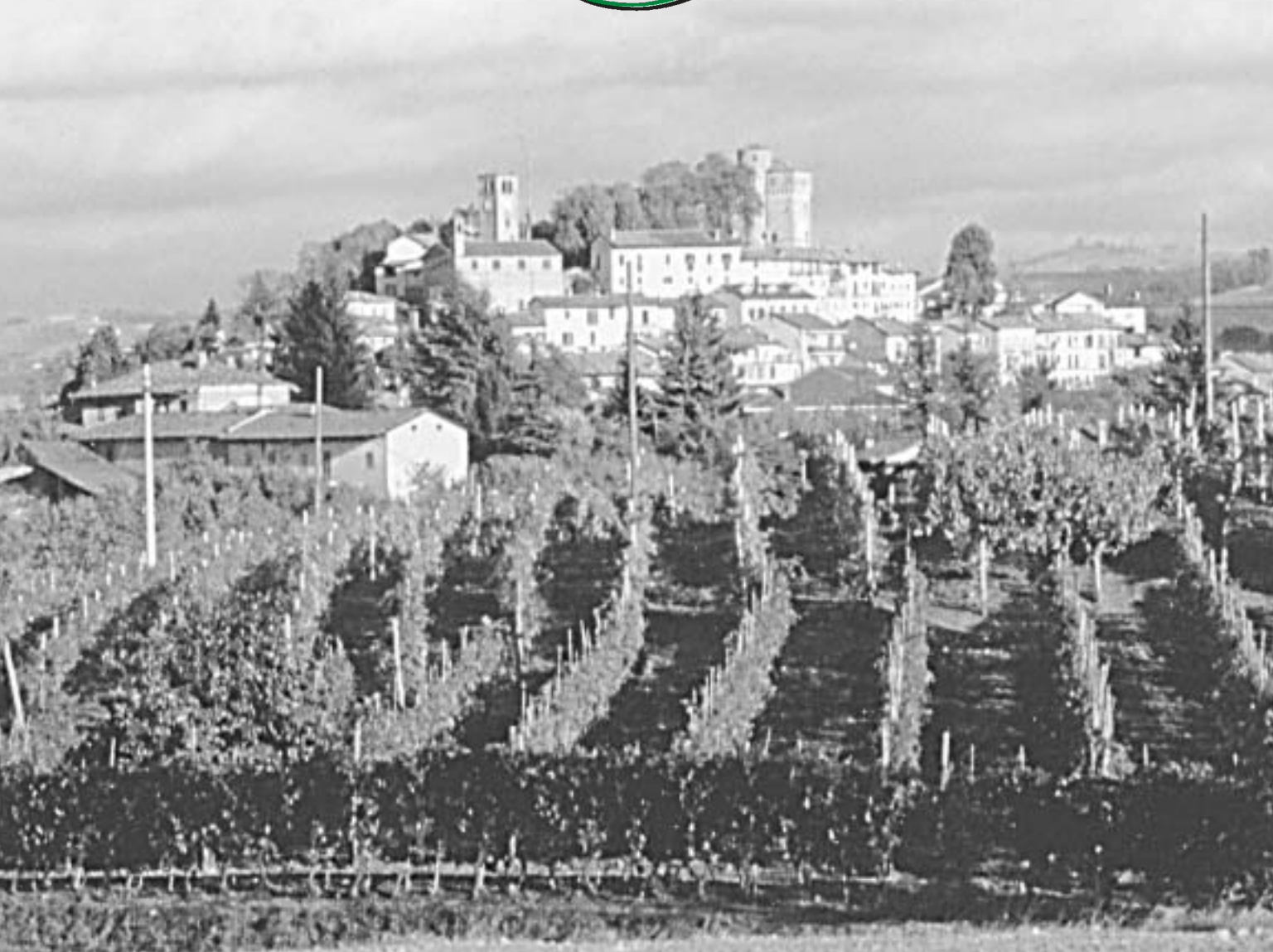


Travel Scoop

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The Road Less Travelled ... in Italy

Spring Adventures in Portugal

Europe's Dozen Best Train Trips

TravelScoop

The Travel Society Magazine

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Editor Ann spends the night in a teepee! Find out where in our next issue.



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Cover: View on the hike to Roddi in Langhe, northwest Italy (Wallace)

editor's letter ...

Here it is ... our February/March issue to take you through the end of winter and help you dream of spring. Our springtime destination articles are about Italy and Portugal. In fact, I recently enjoyed a meeting with some European tourism delegates and learned that in 2001 Canadians spent an estimated C\$18 billion in Europe, excluding air fares. Many other facts I already knew: Europe is a year-round destination, offering winter sports and sparkling cultural seasons during the winter and all of summer's beauties during the 'high' season. But the tourism delegates and I agree ... unless you wish to ski or roast on the beach, the 'shoulder' seasons are the best time to travel in Europe. Temperatures vary greatly between north and south, of course, but in general the weather is mild, there are fewer crowds and accommodation (designed around the high season) is usually easy to find and less expensive.

Perhaps you already have a favourite European destination, or perhaps our stories will prompt you to explore somewhere new in the coming months. To help you, the European Tourism Commission has an excellent new website designed especially for Canadians: www.VisitEurope.com/Canada. Whichever destination you choose, from so many, we wish you *bon voyage* and hope you'll share some of your discoveries with fellow readers.



Ann Wallace, editor of *TravelScoop*

The Pleasures of Prague

The beauty of Prague reveals itself on your first walk across the pedestrian-only Charles Bridge (Karlovy Most) over the Vltava River, the first of 40 promenades. Early morning allows you to walk the cobblestones almost in solitude, gazing upriver at the rapids and locks. An island park bisects the river. The 'golden' crown of the Opera Hall (Narodni Divadlo) marks the next Legii Bridge and the 'Dancing House' commercial building designed by Frank Gehry and V. Milunic marks the Jiraskuv bridge. The building has been described as Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire enjoying a waltz! On fine days the paddleboats swarm this area of the river. A tour boat, trailing sweet music, floats out of the lock and under the bridge. Swans and ducks scatter.

Among the statues lining the bridge you'll see the dog and the falling angel rubbed shiny gold for trust and luck. Maybe a casino win will follow? Also on the bridge, artists, caricaturists, wood sculptors, singers and bands set up as morning progresses. Ornate Gothic twin towers guard each end. The view from their tops reveals the ornate roof lines of the city. Walk through the now-busy narrow streets to the Old Town Square where guided tours can take you walking or riding a vintage car or horse-drawn carriage to identify the enchanting, multicoloured buildings of every architectural style. Near the hour, crowds will gather in front of the astronomical clock where the 12 apostles, four statues of the fates and the Golden Cock will appear to delight all, as it has done since the 15th century.

Music features large in the history of Prague. Most churches and halls you pass will be advertising their concert for that evening. On 12 May the Spring Music Festival begins. As we toured the cemetery of Vysehrad castle grounds, we enjoyed a concert that begins the festival,

commemorating Dvorjak, one of the celebrities buried here. The big ticket opening gala is in the Art Nouveau extravaganza, the Municipal House (Obecni dum). You can even take in the opera *Don Giovanni* performed by puppets.

If Art Nouveau is an interest, don't miss the A. Mucha Museum where his drawings of the seasonal women are so familiar. An English video traces his life. Abstract art is featured in the Riding School building of Prague Castle (Hradcany). This huge castle complex



Frank Gehry designed Prague's 'Dancing House' (Macdonald)

dominates one of the surrounding hills. The floodlights at night show its massive beauty from the Charles Bridge. If you need a calm interlude, enjoy lunch on the elevated patio across from the Riding School, in Lvi Dvur Restaurant. Then walk down through the Royal Palace gardens with every colour of rhododendron you can imagine. Continue across a bridge to the Hanavsky Pavilion. A panoramic view of the river and town is worth the stop. Continuing down the hill and across another bridge, you can reach the old Jewish section. The interior of the Spanish Mosque is a beauty, but the cemetery is the historic treasure for its grave sculptures from the

15th to the 18th century.

Prague is known as the city of spires and with so many beautiful buildings you risk neck strain and will use more film than you ever imagined. But we enjoyed relaxing too ... especially when we explored the experience of absinthe drinking and its ceremony involving flaming sugar!

If you go ...

◆ The Czech Tourist Authority at 401 Bay Street, Toronto, ON M5J 2S3, tel: 416 363 9928, fax: 416 363 0239, www.czechtourism.com, provides help in planning your trip. Bear in mind you will need a Czech visa that requires sending your passport to Ottawa.

◆ The tour company I use specializes in travel at a reasonable price with lots of time free for your own explorations. I always consult Sandra at Pauwels Travel Bureau, 95 Dalhousie St., Brantford, ON N3T 2J1, tel: 519 756 4900, fax: 519 753 6376, tours@pauwelstravel.com

◆ We stayed in the Best Western Hotel Kampa, Vsehrdova 16, Praha 1, 11800, tel: 1 800 780 7234 which has a convenient location. We could walk one block to a park, leading to the historic old town and offering the best views of the historic bridge across the river. The Medieval Jousting Theme Dining Room was a little scary first thing in the morning, but it offered an excellent full-buffet breakfast.

◆ Lvi Dvur Restaurant, tel: 02/24 37 23 61 for reservations.

*Nancy Macdonald
Toronto, 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!

The Jones Act ... what you should know

I wonder how many people are aware of the U.S. Jones Act and what it means to cruise passengers. In a nutshell it means that you may not embark and disembark in a U.S. port, regardless of your nationality, unless the ship has docked at a non-U.S. port at point of embarkation, disembarkation or some place in between.

This is how it affected us. We booked a cruise on *Seabourn Pride* that was scheduled to travel on a segment from New York, down the U.S. east coast and then over to Nassau in the Bahamas. We chose this cruise mainly because in three of the U.S. ports of call we have friends and thought this would be a pleasant and convenient way to meet up with them. However, we know Nassau quite well and had no desire to go there on this occasion. Also we needed to be back in Toronto on a certain date. So, we booked the cruise and told our agent that we would like to disembark in Cape Canaveral. This meant losing the Nassau segment, but from Orlando we could get a direct and inexpensive flight back to Toronto so the plan suited us well.

As our trip drew to a close on the day before we were to dock in Port Canaveral, we approached the Purser's Office and enquired whether we could pick up our passports that day or whether we had to wait until the ship had been cleared the next

day. (Why Customs has to clear the ship in every port remains a mystery to us as we had never left the United States.)

Although we had previously mentioned that we were planning to leave the ship in Port Canaveral to the Hotel Manager, the Cruise Director, the Tour Desk Manager and the Purser's Assistant, not one of these persons mentioned any possible problems. We now believe that they all must have thought we had boarded the ship in Canada, as if this had been the case disembarkation in Florida would not have been a problem.

However, at the Purser's office on our last full day the Purser explained the Jones Act to us. We could not embark and disembark in the U.S. unless the ship had called at a foreign port en route. The Purser was amazed that our travel agent was obviously unaware of the Act; apparently it has been in force for over 50 years and we learned from a fellow traveller that Americans have been fighting this law in Congress for many, many years without success.

Then came the crunch. We learned from the Purser that *if* Customs officials could be persuaded to let us disembark there would be a fine of, at the very least, US\$300 each. But apparently there's no set amount. The officials apparently have *carte blanche* as to the amount of the fine and we were particularly concerned that as Canadians we would not be popular because of our lack of support for President Bush.

While we were trying to make up our minds what to do we heard further bad news. On a previous occasion, one of the ship's entertainers and his wife, for whom the cruise line had omitted to make special arrangements, had been charged US\$3,500 each in order to get off the ship. (Seabourn Cruises had to pick up that tab, but of course they were not responsible for us.)

We decided we had no alternative but to stay on board. Then came the real stress factor ... we had no tickets to get us out of Nassau. The Purser worked very hard for us on this but could not get seats on a direct flight without a further delay. We had to travel via Cincinnati and change planes there ... especially inconvenient for us because these were small Delta aircraft and we had to board and disembark from the tarmac, up and down those steep steps. At the time, due to surgery, both of us had difficulty with this. We also lost two days of much-needed time in Toronto.

None of this would have happened if we had known of, or been advised of, the Jones Act. Had we known we could not embark in New York and disembark in Florida, we would never have taken the cruise in the first place. Beware! And if you'd like to know more about the very complex Jones Act, enter it in your internet search engine ... you'll find plenty to read!

Barbara Redlich
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

Budget Travel in Japan

I have always wanted to travel to Japan but had been a little concerned about travelling in a country where one can't speak, read or recognize anything of the language. All the tours I had seen were very expensive and, besides, we are not keen on travelling with a big tour. However, in August 2003 we found the perfect solution via a small, but great, British company that gave us the perfect mix of independent travel and guided travel at very reasonable prices.

The travel company is Inside Japan Tours. They offer small group tours, with a maximum of 12 persons and a great deal of flexibility. Although the company can customize any kind of tour in Japan, from budget to luxury, ours was not a luxury tour. For example, we were responsible for carrying our own luggage on to the public trains or buses that are used to travel between the cities (so it is important to travel light). Including in the tour price was accommodation, morning breakfast, transportation between major centres and some evening meals. For everything else, it was pay as you go. You can tour with the guide or strike out on your own with some helpful prior advice from the guide. Even when on your own you are only a cellular telephone call away from more help. Our guide, Simon, had a very flexible itinerary which changed depending on the interests and tastes of the group. In fact we enjoyed this help before the tour itself started, for we arrived in Japan two days prior. However, we were still met at the airport, escorted to our hotel and given the guidance necessary to tour around Tokyo on our own for those first two days.

The tour we chose from those offered was called 'Japan's Alpine Highway' which took us from Tokyo to Matsumoto, Norikura, Kamikochi, Takayama and Kyoto. It was a perfect mix of city tours and mountain hikes that was greatly enjoyed by my husband and our 12-year-old son. We

had a great trip, far exceeding our expectations.

Inside Japan Tours offers five organized trips in addition to our Alpine Highway (whose land price this year is £900 [£1 = C\$2.32]). The other tours are called Spring Elegance, Tokaido Trail, Essential Honshu (a trip contrasting traditional and modern aspects of Japan), A Northern Soul (using temples for accommodation) and Rising Sun (available in the Spring and Fall only). Duration of these trips is between 10 and 14 nights and prices are for land only, so participants can extend their stay, purchase train passes from the company and so on. Inside Japan Tours has an excellent, clear website: www.insidejapantours.com, e-mail info@insidejapantours.com, tel: 011 44 870 746 1044. Via the web you can request the company to call you, even outside the UK.

*Kerry Lowndes
Tisdale, SK*

A Base for Exploring Wales

For those of you who have the United Kingdom in their plans, and would like to explore Wales, I have a recommendation. During a five-week tour of England and Wales last year we stayed mainly in B&B's. All were good, but Knock Farm in Pembrokeshire, Wales, was outstanding.

Peacefully tucked away in a sheltered valley amidst trees and a thriving wildlife pond, this farmhouse and its pretty terraced garden is a true haven for nature lovers. Knock Farm is, in fact, a family-run dairy farm, providing its visitors with a true taste of country life. If you go out of the summer season you'll find a cozy lounge with a log fire burning.

When it's time to leave this pretty property you'll find there's plenty to discover, though you

will need a car ... the farm is a good mile off the main road on a one-lane side road. It's located within easy reach of the Pembrokeshire Coastal Pathway and the beautiful Preseli Mountains. St. David's, with its fine cathedral and magical Caerfi Bay, is just 20 minutes' drive, while the sandy beach of Newgale and Broad Haven can be reached in ten minutes. Fishguard and the ferry to Ireland is about half an hour away while a visit to the islands of Skomer and Skokholm is a 'must' for bird lovers. On the boat trip out to them, which leaves from Martin's Haven, you may see seals basking on rocks in the sun. Springtime is an especially beautiful time in this area, when the hedgerows are ablaze with colour: primroses, violets and occasionally wild orchids.

When the weather is not so fine the area offers many wonderful indoor places to explore: castles, museums, cheese-making farms and even a chocolate factory.

Hosts at the farm are John and Judith Williams, who are most helpful and friendly. When we arrived mid-afternoon they served us tea and Welsh cakes in their pretty garden ... no extra charge. Speaking of charges, we paid £25 (approx. C\$59) each for B&B. Our room, one of four, overlooked the garden (as they all do) and had an en suite bathroom, television and tea/coffee-making facilities. We loved it!

*Sheila Kingsley
Toronto, ON*



Knock Farm

The Road Less Travelled ... in Italy

by Ann Wallace



Castello dei Marchesi Scarampi, Prunetto, stands over a valley of mist (Hannah Hudes)

I have to admit straight away, that's not really an appropriate title for the region of Italy I am about to describe. The area is the Langhe and Roero in the province of Cuneo, located in the northwest of Italy in the region generally known as Piedmonte (or 'foot of the mountains'). Here, throughout history, the roads have indeed been well travelled: here lies that ancient route of popes between Avignon and Rome; kings and emperors have travelled here, as well as merchants and missionaries, artists and pilgrims and so many others. Yet I have called it 'less travelled' because it is an area virtually unknown to foreign tourists, whose ideas of Italy tend to be the great cities, Tuscany and, perhaps, the Amalfi coast. Although it's a region popular with Italians and the French from the border regions, and although it offers an abundance of quite wonderful accommodation options, there's barely a North American tourist to be seen. Yet it's a land as exquisite as

any in Europe, a land of vine-covered valleys and hills, adorned with ancient, unspoiled villages standing so close to each other that it's possible to walk through the vineyards and country lanes between them.

It is possible that you have not heard of the Langhe and Roero. Although I've travelled quite extensively in Italy, before my visit to Piedmont last fall I hadn't heard of these areas either. They lie adjacent to each other, separated by the Tanaro River – Langhe to the south, Roero to the north – with the towns of Alba and Bra their respective major centres. But I'm sure you've heard of Barolo and Barbaresca wines and of the precious white truffle, all so prized by gourmets the world over. Well, Langhe and Roero is where they come from! And when asked to list the Italian cities of your dreams, I'm pretty sure you wouldn't include Turin, just an hour's drive to the north. That's a pity, because it is a fine city and certainly just as worthy of a visit as, say, Milan which is often on the tourist routes. But I'll tell you more



Truffle Market was taking place as it does every week-end during that month. Entering the historic streets at this time is like stepping into a movie. The many pedestrian-only streets and the town squares are lined with stalls that could have graced an ancient jousting event, where locals dressed in medieval costumes sell, with much shouting and gusto, the foods for which this region is so famous: truffle oils and pâtés, salamis and cheeses, the delicious local relish called *cugna*, hazelnut products and, of course, wine, wine, wine! Circles made from hay bales contain upright bottles of wine and several velvet-costumed fellows who, in exchange for a Euro or two, will give you a rod and line with a ring at the end so that you can try your hand at ‘catching’ a bottle. If you do, it’s yours to keep! There’s live music all over town, historical re-enactments involving much waving and tossing of ancient flags and banners, all amidst the offerings of food samples galore. The city’s bars and restaurants are crowded. It all adds up to a wonderful atmosphere ... it’s obvious the locals are folks who work hard *and* enjoy life to the full.

about Turin in our next issue. For the moment, let’s get on the south-bound *autostrada* from Turin Airport ... a toll road, as all Italian *autostradas* are, averaging around €3.50 (€ = C\$1.63) for about an hour of driving (with gas in Italy about €1 per litre) and explore the Langhe and Roero. (But before I forget, a reminder about European motorways: the outside lane is for passing only ... hog it at your peril, for if you do you will soon greatly annoy the driver of a Ferrari or a Porsche or some such fancy car.)

Leaving the *autostrada*, our first major destination was the ancient city of Alba, the capital of the Langhe, distinguishable from a distance by its many ancient towers, where, this being October, the National White Truffle Fair and



The more serious centre of all this gaiety is the White Truffle Market itself (in the Maddalena Courtyard ... banners point the way) where the white truffles are displayed to be prodded, squeezed and smelled by gourmets with deep pockets. An adjoining café offers fresh pasta dressed with truffle oil and wines by the glass or bottle. (While in the region you may see advertisements for truffle-searching expeditions. While these are, I am sure, quite an experience – and something to tell your friends about back home – beware! Truffles fetch such extraordinary high prices that it is unlikely a hunter will reveal his secret, favourite places. Usually, below-grade truffles are hidden beforehand so that participants can see the dogs in action and get a ‘taste’ of the whole experience.)



Attempting to 'catch' a bottle of wine is a popular event at the Alba Truffle Festival (Wallace)



October is an exciting time to be in Alba, but it is well worth a visit at any time for there are many historically interesting places to see: ancient churches which hold valuable and beautiful paintings and frescoes, streets lined with medieval houses and, of course, the elegant shops for which Italy is famous.

Although no visit to this region would be complete without a visit to Alba, and its equally historic though rather less lively sister city Bra (home of the admirable Slow Food movement ... log on to www.slowfood.com to learn more about it) for most travellers it is the countryside here that will beckon. It is indescribably beautiful; a land of gentle, vineyard clad hills where unspoiled ancient villages nestle in the valleys or stand proudly atop ridges. Here the morning mists turn all into a dreamscape, to be dispersed by the rising sun that warms the land and swells the famous grapes. It's a land of palaces, castles and legends from the past, to be enjoyed with delicious food and famous wines of the present. In fact, there are over 400 'approved' restaurants in this area, many of them Michelin starred, all in a total of 94 villages. You will certainly not go hungry!

Of course I could not visit 94 villages in my short visit, although I did cover many of the area's roads. But I think it's safe to say every village holds something of interest, whether it's an ancient castle, a museum or a winery. Here

are some of the region's highlights that I enjoyed.

On a hillside on the outskirts of Alba (5 km away) stands Castle Grinzane Cavour (admission to most castles is €3.50, which usually includes a tour in English) containing a museum showing the life of a medieval soldier living in the castle, the rooms and furniture of the Count of Cavour who lived here in the mid 19th century, some fine frescoes, superb views of the surrounding countryside and, of course, a vast Piedmontese wine cellar for tasting and purchasing.

Barolo and its surrounding vineyards is home to the fine wine that bear its name, produced from the region's nebbiolo grape. Locals call it 'the king of wine and the wine of kings' as the land hereabouts was once owned by the Kings of Savoy. Here, of course, there's yet another historic castle ... this one called Falletti, erected in the 10th century as a bastion against Saracen invasions. All is calm and peaceful here now. Visitors can enjoy a visit to the Castle Museum, which contains amongst its fine rooms a beautiful library and modern (and changing) art exhibitions. Also here can be found the Regional Wine Museum with its adjoining store and tasting rooms.

The drive (or walk) along the high ridge in the hills of Alto Monferrato in south Langhe is magnificent. It may be misty in the valleys, but

if you are lucky you will rise into the sun on the ridge and the mist will appear like a white lake beneath you. Far to the north, on a clear day, you will see the Alps glistening white against the blue sky, while over the hills to the south lies Liguria and, eventually, the Mediterranean. Napoleon travelled through this region, and the area was once home to the famous Salt Way, a route for merchants peddling this once-valuable commodity throughout Europe. Although miles from the sea, the nearby village of Montechiaro d'Acqui holds an anchovy festival every summer to remember a devious merchant who avoided paying the high tax on salt by topping up his salt barrels with a layer of anchovies. To this day anchovies play an important part in the local cuisine. Along the ridge you can't miss Castello dei Marchesi Scarampi where you'll want to pause in the grounds for views and photographs. It is only open on summer weekends but it doesn't really matter if you miss the interior for the surrounding area is so magical. I was told that 48 species of wild orchids have been recorded around here in the springtime.

The town of Neive, just east northeast of Alba, is as perfect as a film set. Don't miss it. If you'd like a fine meal here in Neive I can highly recommend La Contea Restaurant and guesthouse (details below). The service here was so smooth and professional that I engaged our most senior

waiter in conversation before leaving and learned that wait-staff hereabouts undergo *three* years of training; a training that covers not only different aspects of food and wine but also courses in major European languages.

The town of Cortemilia may not be as attractive as Neive, but it is worth a visit to experience the hospitality and cuisine at Villa San Carlo (again, details below). If you did not know of it, you'd probably drive past this small, unassuming inn which offers rather plain rooms for those who wish to stay overnight. And many do, because the inn is home to one of the region's most outstanding cellars and kitchens, offering a memorable dining experience to be enjoyed in its pretty, cozy dining room. If you wander round the public spaces here you will find lots of memorabilia from the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. That is because, prior to that event, Villa San Carlo's owner – Carlo Zarri – was appointed Chief of Food Services for the Olympic Games to be held in Turin in 2006 and so was an official guest at the games in the U.S. After the event in Turin he will probably act as a consultant to the Winter Games in Vancouver. Carlo loves to engage in conversations with his guests about food, wine and travelling.

The above are just a few of the many memories I have of this region of Piemonte. 'Retirement' is not a word in my vocabulary at the moment, but I have to admit that on my whirlwind tour there I several times found myself peering at the photographs in estate agents' windows, looking for that crumbling castle in need of a little TLC! So ... have I persuaded you to visit Langhe and Roero? I do hope so. Perhaps you will hear friends say they are off to Tuscany soon and you will suppress a little smile, knowing that up in Piemonte lies a region just as beautiful, yes a little cooler,

but a region devoid of mass tourism and as unspoilt as it could possibly be. (In fact an article on the region appeared in the travel section of the British newspaper *Daily Mail* last summer under the heading 'Tuscany without crowds'.) Discover the Langhe e Roero region soon ... I know you will love it.

Some details to help you explore *Alba Bra Langhe e Roero*

● **Tours and accommodation:** I travelled through Langhe and Roero with Jacqui Budd, product director of a Canadian tour operator who, in conjunction with The Travel Society, will be offering two trips to this region in 2004: a supported **hiking trip** and a **food and wine tour**. Details will be finalized shortly and will appear in the next edition of *TravelScoop*. If you would like to be placed on our list to receive information as soon as it is available please call us at 1 877 926 2500 or 416 926 2500.

● For **independent travellers**, it's good to know that the area offers a wide range of **accommodation**, from the five-star Hotel Relais San Maurizio (a converted 16th century monastery) in Santo Stefano Belbo for those who are deep of pocket and lovers of luxury, to quaint farms where a warm welcome is guaranteed. (Note: often the latter are not working farms, but country homes that have been renovated and refurbished to make them suitable for visitors.) Everywhere you go you'll find that Italian attention to detail, whether it's in the presentation of the food or wine, or in a room with finely embroidered sheets and vases of pretty wild flowers. One thing you won't find thing here is a modern high-rise property. Here's a rather long list (they were all so charming I didn't want to leave any out) of some properties I visited, some of which will be included in the tour The Travel Society will be offering.



*left: Inner Courtyard of Villa Beccaris, Monforte d'Alba
below: Entrance to Villa La Favorita, Alba (Wallace)*



* For my first three nights in the region I stayed at the **Hotel dei Quattro Vini**, just outside the wonderful ancient village of **Neive**, Via Fausoni 7, 12057 Neive, tel: (country code for Italy is 011 39) 0173 679 874, fax: 0173 678 141, e-mail: info@hoteldeiquattrovini.com, www.hoteldeiquattrovini.com. Rate €10 dbl. Here you'll enjoy a warm welcome; stylish rooms with windows that look out over the hills and up to the village, dining, wonderful coffee (any kind you wish, all freshly made) and a small but superb buffet breakfast with smoked ham and prosciutto, cheese, fruit flans, perfect fruit, yogurt, etc. On this score I think it pretty safe to say 'ditto' for most properties in the region.

* For my final nights I stayed at **Villa San Carlo** (mentioned above), Corso Divisioni Alpine 41, 12074 **Cortemilia**, dbl. rates from €85, rooms are plain but the atmosphere is welcoming. Tel: 0173 81546, fax: 0173 81235, e-mail: info@hotelsancarlo.it, www.hotelsancarlo.it. This property offers that renowned dining experience as well as cooking and wine packages ... details on their website.

* In the beautiful village of **Monforte d'Alba** I toured a property – **Villa Beccaris** – more expensive than most in the region (from €138 dbl. b&b). The extra Euros bring you a very elegant historical property that will ensure a memorable stay. Tel: 0173 78158, fax: 0173 78190, there's a fine photo on the website (which appears to be only in Italian) www.villabeccaris.it, the villa is the property with the blue canopy on the left.

* More humble, but charming nonetheless, is a farmhouse property in **Barolo**, full of country charm, simple rooms (some split level ... great for a family) with terra cotta floors, pretty fabrics and original art. It's the **Cà San Ponzio**, tel/fax: 0173 560 510, excellent website is www.casanponzio.com €62 dbl., breakfast extra at €7.75.

* If you'd like to lay your head in a castle rather than a farmhouse, you won't be disappointed by **Real Castello** which towers above the village of **Verduno**. This unusual and memorable property with lovely gardens, a fine kitchen and rooms with period furnishings in the castle itself and other, more modern, rooms in an adjoining property, is run by three generations of women of the Burlotto family. Prices from €100 db., b&b, set dinner menu (which may be enjoyed – candlelit – in the garden) €39 – 50. The sisters also own a small property nearby with rooms from €60 ... perhaps you will decide to save as you sleep and splurge on dinner! Tel: 0172 470 125, fax: 0172 470 298, all accommodation shown on www.castellodiverduno.com

* For a stay close to **Alba** I can't imagine anywhere more charming than **Villa La Favorita**, set in a hilly residential area just three minutes' drive from the city. Charming host Roberta Girasole speaks excellent English and offers cooking lessons, help in touring the region, stunningly pretty rooms and a brunch-style breakfast. Rates from €98 b&b. Tel: 3384 715 005, fax: 0173 364 746, www.villalafavorita.it

* Last, but by no means least, is the tastefully restored

11-room property to be discovered in the town of **Castiglione Tinella** just 25 km east of Alba. Here at **Albergo Castiglione** there's magic galore behind the wrought iron gates and a charming welcome from owner Alfonso Fasola. Rates €10, which includes breakfast in the trendy breakfast room and there are also coffee makers in the rooms (unusual in Italy) and complimentary beer and wine. Tel: 0141 855 410, fax: 0141 855 977, www.albergocastiglione.com.

I have listed quite a number of properties here because they help reveal the charm of this area. Log on to any or all of the websites and you will see what I mean.

● **More information:** Almost every village has a small tourist information office which can point you in the direction of accommodation, local attractions, etc. Accommodation is easily available during the week, but it would be wise to have reservations for the summer and fall week-ends because this is a popular destination for Italians, due to its beauty, its wines and its cuisine.

● The region has an umbrella tourism office – the **Alba Bra Langhe and Roero Tourist Bureau** – located at Piazza Medford 3, 12051 Alba, tel: 0173 35833, fax: 0173 363 878, e-mail: info@langheroero.it, www.langheroero.it. The website has maps and lots of information. Another useful organization is the Tourist Consortium of the Langhe and Roero Region, Via Vittorio Emanuele 19, tel: 0173 352 562, fax: 0173 220 237, e-mail: info@turismodoc.it, www.turismodoc.it. Log on to the latter and you'll discover details of small hotels, inns, guesthouses, farms and restaurants with rooms throughout the area. For those not on line, or who like to have hard-copy literature to help them plan, please contact both organizations by phone, fax or mail. Both have staff who can speak English if you call and they will be delighted to send brochures, maps, illustrated accommodation brochures and so on to Canada by mail.

● We will be featuring a story on **Turin** in our next edition, but for those interested in advance planning information can be obtained from info@turismotorino.org, www.turismotorino.org.

● There's a wealth of additional tourist information published on this region, which is readily found once you are there. If you are **touring in Italy** this region provides easy access to the Mediterranean coast and the city of Genoa, the European Capital of Culture 2004. For details of what seems to be shaping up as an outstanding year-long event visit their official website: www.genova-2004.it as you may wish to include that city in your travels.

● **Getting there:** There are, at this time, no direct flights from Canada to Turin, but the city is efficiently served by many flights from elsewhere in Europe. I travelled all the way from Toronto with Lufthansa via Frankfurt. Another option is to use the airport in the city of Cuneo, located about half way between Turin and the Mediterranean coast.

● **Driving:** If you are touring independently here you will find good rural roads and signage to all villages. And major

... continued on page 20

What a great time I had in Portugal last year! A week of golfing in the Algarve later blossomed into a memorable solo tour of the east, heading northward. With brightly-coloured spring wildflowers growing in abundance right up to the edge of the roadways, springtime in Portugal leaves a magical and lasting impression. With no agenda, little knowledge of the language and only my return flight booked, after the golf trip I thought I'd just drive around and see what developed. The warmth and friendliness of the people and the relatively short distances to travel make Portugal a very rewarding destination.

The country is abundant in archaeological, cultural and historical sites. Portugal has been inhabited since pre-history and the remains of those times – dolmens (megalithic burial chambers), cromlechs (circle or grouped standing stones), menhir (single standing stones) and primitive engravings – are signposted throughout the countryside. Roman ruins, fortresses and walled towns are abundant in every region. Therefore, touring ruins during the day then booking into a comfortable place at night seemed to be a good enough rough plan. Certainly there are many types of accommodations available: city hotels and motels, private manor/guest houses (*quintas*), government-owned inns, (*pousadas*), apart-hotels and villas, quality inns (*estalegems*), rural hotels and boarding houses.

We travelled via Air Transat from Toronto to Lisbon and arranged for a Ford Focus with unlimited mileage through *TravelScoop's* favourite European Cars Service (contact André Burtaire at tel/fax: 416 366 2413, andre@european-cars.net, www.european-cars.net) which totalled €400 (€ = C\$1.63) for 14 days.

Leaving Lisbon airport and crossing over Ponte Vasco da Gama, we travelled southbound to Sagres (have some Euros handy to pay for the highway tolls) through Grandola and Santiago do Cacem, stopping to inspect odd-looking cork trees, walk through the Mirobriga Roman ruins and



Convento de Mafra

Spring Adventures in Portugal

story and photos by Martha V. Lasichuk

shop at a local gypsy-type market. Continuing through picturesque Odemira and Aljezur through Vila do Bispo to Sagres, our first night was pre-arranged via e-mail at Hotel da Baleeira, 8650-357 Vila de Sagres, Algarve, tel: (country code 011 351) 282 624 212, fax: 282 624 425, e-mail hotel.baleeira@mail.telepac.pt, www.sagres.net/baleeria, €70. Our small room was rather disappointing but the view of the Atlantic was not. The little town had lots of small restaurants within walking distance where meals were substantial as well as cheap.

The Algarve and Costa Azul have previously been



described in *TravelScoop* (see October 2000). Suffice to say that it retains its historical and scenic charm amid its tourist success. The most southwesterly corner of Europe is the rugged Cabo de Sao Vicente and nearby is Caldas de Monchique where spa waters, surrounded by lush scenery, are not to be missed. North of Monchique is the Estalagem Abrigo da Montanha with a hilltop restaurant serving up excellent food and a panoramic view. We met up with friends here and we discovered our previously reserved 3-bedroom villa in the Lagos area (the Monte Sao Pedro, 8600 Lagos-116 Luz, Algarve, tel/fax: 282 770669) was spacious and well equipped. Golf courses and times were booked and pre-paid from Canada via internet using Quo Vadis Travel & Services (sales@qvts.com) whose agents met us at the airport with vouchers, directions and a newsletter.

The golf week was enjoyed in warm weather under sunny skies. Returning to Lisbon's airport area for my husband Al's morning flight home to Toronto, we stayed at the Hotel Tivoli Tejo, avenue de Joao, Parque das Nacoes, 1990-083 Lisboa, tel: 218 915 100, fax: 218 915 345, e-mail: htte-jo@tivoli.pt; www.tivolihotels.com, €10, located across from the old Expo location (1998 World's Fair) which is easy to find.

After the airport dropoff, I was on my own. I hit the road and headed east to the architecturally renowned town of Evora, designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Roman ruins of the Temple of Diana with its elegant Corinthian columns, the Sé (cathedral), the nearby Roman aqueduct and just walking through the narrow, cobblestone streets took most of the afternoon and was an adventure. All

around Évora there is a remarkable heritage of megalithic monuments and stops are frequent. Particularly intriguing is the Cromlech of Almendres some 12 km from Évora which is comprised of a double-ringed stone circle joined to a double-ringed ellipse of standing stones. After a long and dusty day of seeing the sites, I hoped to make my first solo overnight at a *pousada*. Travelling near Sousel, I headed towards the regional *pousada* at San Miguel 7470-999 Sousel, tel: 268 55 0050, fax: 268 55 1155, €18. My room was nicely decorated and comfortable with a huge balcony offering up views of the countryside overlooking the Alentejo plains.

The Portuguese *pousadas* – categorized as regional or historical – are part of more than 40 state-owned and operated establishments located in historically rich areas. The first *pousada* was established in the 1940s to provide visitors with an appreciation of the traditional and cultural heritage of Portugal. Renovation transformed abandoned monasteries, palaces and convents into luxury hotels where national architectural heritage was preserved. Special programmes, memberships and promotions exist, such as 'golden age 3 nights for 2', family programmes, etc., as well as suggested tours featuring accommodations at different *pousadas*. Visit www.pousadas.pt. Booklets and *pousada* maps can be obtained directly from Pousadas de Portugal, Avenida Santa Joana Princesa No. 10, 1749-090 Lisboa, Portugal, or from Portuguese tourist offices. In Canada the office can be contacted at 416 921 7376, fax: 416 921 1353.

The next morning was sunny and warm, perfect for travelling past Alegrete through the pines and forests of

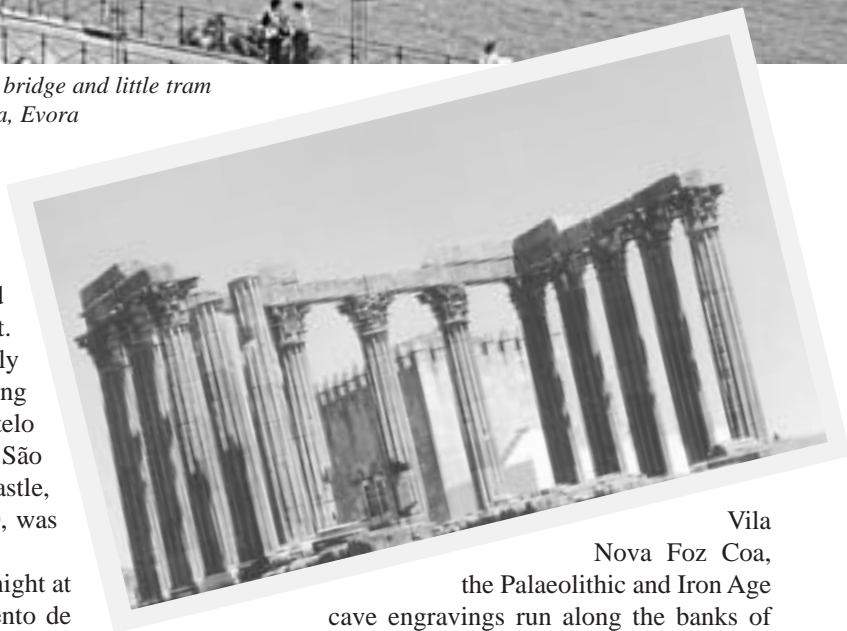


above: Mirandela with bridge and little tram
below: Temple of Diana, Evora

Serra de Mamede – a mountain range with a variety of fauna and flora part of which has now been designated a natural park. A spectacular stop is Marvão, an ancient walled city with cobblestone streets and incredible views from its castle set on an escarpment. This small and tranquil medieval town is completely enclosed by walls, with whitewashed houses blending into the granite of the mountains. Another town, Castelo de Vide, is located on another green slope of Serra de São Mamede and is known for its curative waters. Its castle, that gave the town its name and was rebuilt in 1310, was greatly damaged by an explosion in 1705.

In keeping with the day's mountain theme, overnight at a nearby historical *pousada*, the Pousada do Convento de Belmonte, 6250 Belmonte, tel: 275 9103 00, fax: 275 91 0310, where I received a reduced rate of €137, seemed appropriate. Opened a couple of years ago, it was built by renovating the ruins of a former Franciscan monastery and each of its rooms are named after a monk. Inside, the chapel and sacristy have been converted into the lounge and bar. The view of Serra Estrella, the tallest range of mountains in the country rising up to nearly 2000 metres, was memorable. An important activity in the area since early days is the making of a very good sheep's milk cheese which can be purchased in the area.

Leaving Belmonte towards Guarda and Pinhel, one of the oldest cities in Portugal, it was upward into the rocky mountains negotiated by hairpin turns. The area continued to have interesting prehistoric sites such as the photogenic dolman at Pera do Moco sitting amid a floral bouquet. At



Vila Nova Foz Coa, the Palaeolithic and Iron Age cave engravings run along the banks of the River Coa as it wends its way from south to north. These engraved panels are spread over a large area and spawned the creation of Portugal's first archaeological park which, since 1998, has been included in UNESCO's World Heritage list. The Côa Valley Archaeological Park and the National Rock Art Centre are both based there.

After crossing the Duoro river and its huge hydroelectric station, the area becomes quite isolated and mountainous, known as Trás-os-Montes or 'beyond the mountain'. The remoteness of the area has led to the emigration of a considerable part of the population and many abandoned-looking places are seen. This is Portugal's poorest and least-known region but it offers a wild and beautiful landscape, and cities and towns full of historic associations. For this overnight, I was comfortable at the Grande Hotel D. Dinis, av. Nossa Senhora do Amparo, 5370 Mirandela, tel: 278 260

100, fax: 278 260 101, €55, which is located at the end of a pedestrian bridge. You can shop in the lovely town across the river which can be reached via a charming passenger tram that crosses the bridge.

From Mirandela, it was westward into the Minho region, to the spa town of Chaves, the main centre where, lying in a fertile plain, its thermal waters have been famous since Roman times. The town was founded in the 13th century and has notable landmarks, including a cathedral built in the Romanesque and Gothic styles. After viewing the remains of Roman roads and churches outside Boticas at Beca, I continued to the historic city of Guimares. This well-preserved medieval city, 50 km from Porto (the famous capital of port wine) is linked to the birth of Portuguese nationhood. It was here in 1128 that Afonso Henriques defeated his mother's army and in the process became the first King of Portugal. Walking the walls of the 10th century Castelo Guimaraes with its panoramic views is a photographer's delight.

The area is full of wine tour signs which deserve a whole other trip. There are cruises that can be taken along the Rio Douro, and harvest time in the fall is said to be the ideal time to go. In keeping with the pastoral theme, a night at a *quinta* seemed right. These are manor houses, many being grand homes restored by their owners, that provide a tranquil atmosphere for bed and breakfast. I was fortunate to find the Quinta de Sao Comba, Várzea 4750 Barcelos, tel: 253832101, fax: 253 834 540, €50, near the town of Barcelos. The small sign on the road is easily missed and that would be shame. Comba is a working farm located in the middle of the area which produces the famous *vinho verde*. I'm sure the other five rooms were full of antiques and as comfortable as mine, which overlooked an inviting swimming pool. Walking the grounds, enjoying the gardens and photographing the private chapel made for a very relaxing evening. This was as far northwest as I would get, and the next days I would be travelling in a southward direction.

Maps and road signs indicated an abundance of thermal

spa and curative water areas, so overnight at a spa hotel became a plan. Luso is a well-known spa town among three thermal springs and is located near Mealhada and Bucaco (famous for its forest and former royal palace). Stopping in town, I made a reservation at the Grande Hotel de Luso, rua dr. Cid de Oliveira No 86, 3050-230 Luso, tel: 231 937937, fax: 231 937930, €59, as well as booking a late appointment for a hydro massage and body massage at the nearby Termas de Luso. The construction then taking place at the hotel was

to link it to the spa via underground tunnel, so discounts off the room rates were provided. While some may prefer sightseeing in the famous university town of Coimbra nearby, I opted to visit the large Roman ruins at Conimbriga, 15 km southwest of Coimbra.

Conimbriga is the biggest Roman ruin in Portugal and one of Europe's greatest Roman archaeological finds. It was an important town already at the time of Augustus (1st century) and had been inhabited since at least the 9th century B.C. Its oldest objects are identified from the Late Bronze Age. The Romans made it into a fine city, which flourished through the development

of new manufacturing processes and arts. Grand monuments, imposing residences served by a local mosaic school created a

unique urban centre, later plundered and burned under the invading Swabians. The resulting archaeological site has been under excavation since 1898 and collections are housed in the Museum of Conimbriga created in 1962. The extensive ruins feature the refined environment in which the richer families lived. Mosaics have been unearthed in almost perfect condition and remains of fountains in courtyards, reflecting pools and temple ruins are everywhere. Modern facilities are on site, with library, auditorium, educational services, field archaeology and support materials. Entrance to the ruins and museum is €3; free on Sunday. I stayed at the ruins for the better part of the day, and the massage afterwards certainly was a good idea.

Next day, my first stop was the town of Fatima and its famous Sanctuary. This is the most visited pilgrimage site in



Interior of the Belmonte pousada

Iberia (with pilgrims over-running the town on May 13 and October 13). It was in Fatima in 1917 that three shepherd children are said to have witnessed the miracle of the apparition of the Virgin Mary. The first national pilgrimage to Fatima took place in 1927, and the huge basilica was begun in 1928. It is flanked by hospitals and retreat houses and faces a vast square in which stands the little Chapel of the Apparition.

Batalha provided another famous site – the Mosteiro de Santa Maria da Vitoria. This 14th century Cathedral is said to be one of the greatest masterpieces of Manueline and Gothic architecture. Inside is the tomb of one of Portugal's most famous sons: Henri the Navigator. Nearby is the opulent 18th century Convento de Mafra, (Palacio Nacional) built from the fabulous wealth pouring in from Brazil. It is Portugal's largest religious monument with the building alone covering 10 acres. This baroque masterpiece reputedly employed 50,000 workers at this the height of its 13-year construction, which began in 1717.

Another type of sanctuary was mentioned in the *Lonely Planet Guide to Portugal*. The Iberian Wolf Recovery Centre and Sanctuary (c/o Apartado 61 2665 Malveria, tel/fax: 351 617 85037) near Vale da Guarda was rather difficult to find, but I had a terrific time being shown around by the resident biologist. Here is a place where wolves that were formerly in captivity or mistreated by humans live in a protected environment similar to their natural habitat. The centre is used to stimulate students and researchers to produce studies on the behaviour and habits of these beautiful creatures, and 'adoption' of a wolf is possible. I was fortunate, for the brochure says that visits should be arranged in advance via letter, phone or fax. The centre is only open to visitors at the week-ends.

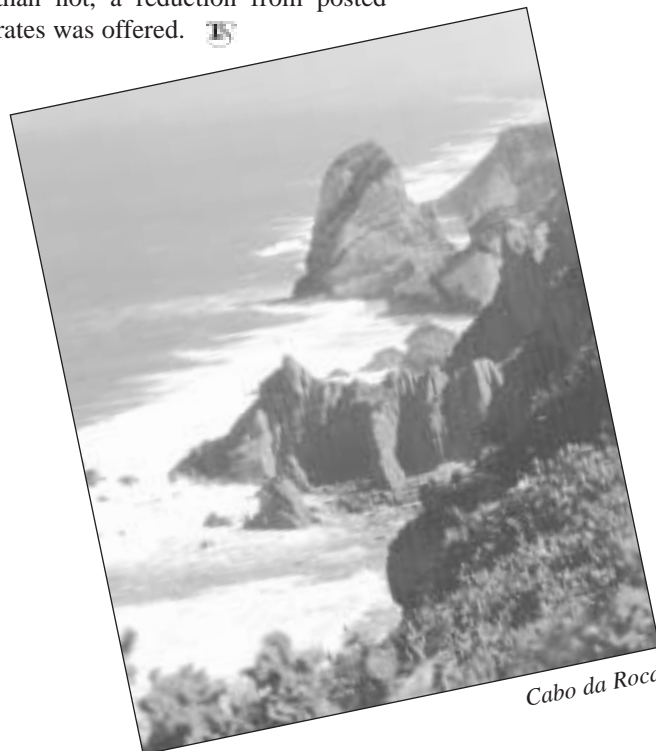
I was lucky to stay overnight at the lovely Estalagem de Colares, Estrada Nacional 247, 2705-199 Colares, tel: 219 282 942, fax: 219 282 983, €60. Previously a cozy tavern, the premises have been transformed to include 12 comfortable rooms. Their traditional restaurant features a large fireplace and garden views where their self-serve breakfast equips you well for the day ahead. Leaving Colares the forest drive is spectacular ... and then you glimpse the sea! The Sintra coastline drive is awesome. In Cabo da Roca, with its wild sea, wind and rocks – the most westerly point in continental Europe – you can buy a certificate recording your visit 'where the land ends and the sea begins'. This gives way to the Estoril Coast, a cosmopolitan area with a waterfront of palaces, fortresses and hotels in a region known as the Portuguese Riviera.

Again, using the Expo site close to the airport, my last and very comfortable night was spent at the Melia Oriente Hotel, Av. D. Joao II, Parque das Nacoes, 1990-083 Lisboa, tel: 21 893 0000, fax: 21 893 0099, e-mail melia.confort.oriente@esoterica.pt, €5. Shopping at the large Vasco Da Gama Mall across the street meant last-minute gift buying was quickly accomplished.

It was tough to get adjusted to being back in the city and the thought of going home. Lisbon seemed so busy and Canada seemed so new. There was so much more I wanted to do and see, but it will have to wait for another time. I'm somewhat comforted knowing that those strange and eerie dolmen and standing stones have been there for centuries and will await my return. Soon, I hope.

Some details ...

- Portugal is approx. 92,000 sq km; 560 km north to south; 220 km east to west. Rio Tejo just about divides the country in half. The north is more mountainous; the south low-lying to flat.
- Frommer's *Portugal – the Best of the Cities, Coast and Countryside*, 16th edition (2000) is a reasonable information source, but the lack of key Portuguese phrases is in my mind a serious omission. Other reading included *The Lonely Planet Guide to Portugal* and the dated, but useful Sarah Bradford's *Portugal* (1973) for historical background.
- Some internet sites of interest (www.Portugal-live.net; Portugal.com; Portugal.org; portugalvirtual.pt; pousadasofportugal.com; maisturismo.pt)
- I drove a total of 2,700 km at a total gas cost of €23 and toll charges of €16.
- The hotel prices I give above were for one person for one night. They included service, VAT and breakfast. I always enquired whether there were any discounts or specials available for a single traveller and, more often than not, a reduction from posted rates was offered. 📖



Cabo da Roca

Martha V. Lasichuk is a TS subscriber who lives in Bolton, ON

EUROPE'S DOZEN BEST TRAIN TRIPS

compiled for TravelScoop by RailEurope

In December we brought you news of some of the best car journeys in the U.S. But in Europe the train is king. Here, now, a list of some of that continent's famous rail journeys ...

For beautiful scenery, fascinating sightseeing and a fine travel experience, Europe's rail system offers the traveller an enjoyable, comfortable and convenient way to enjoy the best the continent has to offer. Trains give you great scenery up close through your private window so that you can give your full attention to the view ... something that's not possible when you're driving a car or in a plane above the clouds. And the price is right.

Here at RailEurope we pride ourselves on being the top distributor of European rail tickets and passes in North America. *TravelScoop* asked for our favourite European rail journeys and here they are; journeys that offer outstanding scenery as well as trips that link top tourist destinations.

- For one of the best day-long train adventures in Europe, try **Austria's Arlberg Valley** between **Salzburg**, the city of Mozart, past Winter Olympic-famous **Innsbruck**, into **Switzerland** and on to **Zurich**. On this trip you'll pass the stunning Tyrolean Alps, lush farmlands studded with onion-tower Baroque churches and the rushing River Inn.
- Another very special mountain day trip is in **France**, between the Mediterranean resort city of **Nice** with its Matisse and Chagall museums and the inland town of **Digne**. Deep valleys, gorges and fortified villages are some of the sights awaiting the traveller on this trip.
- At the top of Europe is the glacier-viewing train journey

between **Norway's** capital city of **Oslo**, with its striking town Hall and interesting Viking Museum, and the picturesque, culturally-rich port city of **Bergen** on the west coast. Bergen was the home of Grieg and a visit to his home is well worthwhile.

- The legendary castles on **Germany's Rhine River** are often on travellers' wish lists and they can be seen to great advantage on the rail trip between **Koblenz** and **Mainz**, home to the Gutenberg Museum and its famous Bible. The train passes beneath the vineyards in the river valley, the legendary Lorelei rock and picturesque towns such as **St. Goar**, **Assmannshausen** and **Bacharach** where travellers can savour the full flavour of the beautiful Rhine River at its best.
- A Swiss train trip that takes about half a day is the Gold Pass route between **Luzern** and **Montreux**, which carries passengers high into the lush hills of central and eastern Switzerland. Luzern has a picturesque wooden bridge over its lake, while Lake Geneva's massive mountains that tower over the lovely town of Montreux are an impressive sight. On this journey the train passes **Interlaken** and many other resort towns set in beautiful hill and lake scenery.
- Another famous **Swiss** train journey is the one from the upscale ski resort of **St. Mortiz** to **Tirana** on the **Swiss-Italian** border. This breath-taking 'Bernina Express' trip is one of Europe's finest and most dramatic alpine train rides, with mountains, glaciers, lakes and upland meadows to be enjoyed.

- Still in **Switzerland**, the trip that most certainly cannot be omitted is the climb to the highest station in Europe on the **Jungfrauoch**, overlooking the threatening north face of the Eiger. Leaving from **Interlaken, Grindelwald** or **Wengen**, the train passes through some of Europe's most spectacular glacial scenery to the roof of the continent on a modern cog wheel train. It's an unforgettable experience. The train's large observation windows give riders a perfect view of this dramatic scenery, accessible *only* by train as there are no roads up there! From the 11,333 ft. summit of the Jungfrau travellers can see across the Alps as far as Germany's Black Forest as well as the Vosges mountains of France.

- Between **Geneva, Switzerland** and **Barcelona, Spain**, via **Montpellier, France**, travellers pass through the historic treasure land of Roman France – **Avignon** and its ancient Papal Palace, **Nimes** with its Roman arena, **Beziers** and **Narbonne** – as well as parts of the scenic Costa Brava region of northeast Spain along the Mediterranean. Geneva's quaint Old Town and famous wall honouring Calvin and Knox, as well as Barcelona's Gothic Quarter and fascinating church of the Sacred Family by architect Gaudi are major sights in these two fine cities.


- In **Italy** travellers can enjoy the best of two of the country's richest sightseeing cities – **Rome and Florence** – by whisking over the tracks on the 1 hour, 35 minute Eurostar Italia high-speed train, one of Europe's first high-speed train adventures at speeds over 150 miles an hour. The convenience of these comfortable modern trains helps tourists make the most of their time in this country that has so much to see. **Milan, Naples, Turin, Venice** and most places in between can be reached by fine Italian trains.

- **Spain**, too, offers some exceptional train trips. The one

that combines beautiful coastal views and moderately high-speeds (140 miles per hour) is the new 'Euromed' train between **Barcelona** and **Alicante**. This 3-hour journey runs along the Mediterranean coast and provides passengers with high comfort and intriguing sea and landscapes between the Catalan capital and southern Spain.

- Another famous coastal trip is the one that follows the Mediterranean coast of the **French Riviera**, starting at the port city of **Marseille** and travelling east through the famous beach resorts cities of **St. Raphael, Cannes, Antibes** and **Nice** and on into **Italy**. Stops can, of course, be made along the way, including a visit to **Monaco** and the famed gaming tables of **Monte Carlo**.

- To complete the dozen ... *two* trips, both of which qualify for the 'twelve best list'. First is the exciting 186 mile-per-hour, 2-hour 35-minute, 'Eurostar' ride between **London** and **Paris** that takes passengers through the **Channel Tunnel** that connects England and France under the English Channel. On the new British train tracks, which now make the high-speed possible, travellers pass through the beautiful countryside of Kent, which is especially lovely in spring. Another speedy and convenient inter-city trip is offered by the new Thalys trains that link **Paris** and **Brussels** in 1 hour, 25 minutes, also at a speed of 186 miles per hour. These short trips give European visitors the delight of these three well-known destinations, with their stellar sightseeing opportunities, in great comfort and speed.

RailEurope is the source of a wide variety of national and international European rail passes and tickets that can be combined to suit any itinerary and budget. Their Canadian office can be contacted at 1 800 361 7245 or log on to www.raileurope.com 

riding the rails

In addition to the above, there's lots of railways news for the coming season.. Some examples ... two new 2-country railpasses - the **France 'n Switzerland Pass** and the **Switzerland 'n Austria** - have been introduced, offering unlimited travel on a given number of days on the national rail networks of the featured countries, as well as valuable passholder bonuses, such as free passage on scenic rail lines and discounts on private railroads, cruises, ferries, tours, museums and other attractions. An example of cost: the basic pass combining France and Switzerland starts at C\$355 per person (when two people are travelling together), first class, on 4 days of train travel within a 2-month period. Additional days may be purchased.

A new BritRail **England-only** pass is now available from RailEurope at a price 20% lower than the regular BritRail Pass which covers rail travel for the whole of the U.K. This is a great saving as long as you plan to travel in England only. Starting at C\$205 the England-only pass offers 4 days of travel, standard class. Pass holders can also receive a discounted fare on the Eurostar train connecting London with Paris or Brussels.

Which brings us to a further mention of Eurostar, which is fast becoming the way favoured by Londoners to travel between **London** and **Paris** and **Brussels**. Thanks to the recently-opened section of high-speed track in the UK these journeys are now faster than ever and rail is thus winning the market share over flights from England to these destinations. With Eurostar's 10-minute check-in times and comfortable lounges and trains, it's no wonder people are forsaking the airports on these routes. Prices from US\$90. And there's a free "on to any station in Belgium" offer. Visit www.raileurope.com or www.eurostar.com or consult your agent.

BARBADOS

Beginning 1 March this year Canadians will require a valid passport for entry into Barbados. A policy permitting entry with only photo identification and birth certificate is being discontinued for security reasons.

CANADA

If you feel like a winter getaway, the packages offered by Radisson Hotels across Canada may fit the bill. Visit www.radisson.com or call 1 800 333 3333 and learn about the escapes available in **Toronto, Kitchener, Niagara Falls, Canmore, Ottawa,** and more.

Some great **Ontario** getaways, many of them available on into the spring and summer, have been put together by the Ontario Receptive Alliance. These packages include winter sports, theatre programmes both in Toronto and at smaller theatre festivals in the Ontario countryside, attractions packages, cultural themes, outdoor adventures, accommodation in quaint B&Bs and small inns and more, all at great prices. For details see www.ontariocanadatravel.com or request a brochure by calling 1 800 ONTARIO.

If an overland safari in the wild interior of **British Columbia** appeals, you may like to investigate GeoQwest Excursions Ltd., a company that can take you to backcountry areas that few travellers ever see, using a luxury 7-passenger Ford Excursion SUV. On GeoQwest's trips you may see lost gold mines, mountaintop forest lookouts, remote native villages, working ranches, flora and fauna and much more. Visit www.geoqwestexcursions.com or call 250 769 0031 for information.

If you are thinking of taking a Canadian rail vacation you will like to know that John Steel Rail Tours invites you to extend your stay in one of Canada's cities and they will pick up the tab. Yes, guests travelling on a

John Steel Independent Holiday of 7 days or more, before the end of April, can stay in **Calgary, Vancouver, Halifax** or **Toronto** for an extra, luxurious, night. 'Luxurious' because the properties on offer are Fairmonts (in Calgary, Vancouver or Toronto), the Delta (in Calgary or Halifax) and the Crowne Plaza in Vancouver. For details of John Steel Rail Tours consult your agent, call 1 800 988 5778 or visit www.johnsteel.com. And don't forget, these trips make great 'see Canada' vacations for your friends and relatives visiting from overseas.

ITALY

If Italy is in your plans, you may wish to visit the incomparable city **Venice**. We don't have a first-hand report, but we do have a very nice letter from the owners of 2-star hotel Alloggi Barbara which readers might like to investigate. It doesn't look luxurious, but it looks welcoming and modern and the prices (from €90 dbl) seem good for this very expensive destination. To take a look log on to www.alloggiabarbaria.it.

SCOTLAND

If Scotland is in your plans you may like to investigate staying in a serviced apartment. The Spires Company offers 77 such apartments in **Aberdeen** and **Glasgow**, both one- and two-bedrooms and with living space, home entertainment systems and well-equipped kitchens. Rates start at £85 (£1 = approx. C\$2.32) per night for one bedroom and £105 for two bedrooms which can sleep up to six ... making this quite a bargain for families or a group of friends. For more details place a quick call to 011 44 845 270 0090 or log on to www.thespires.co.uk

SOUTH AFRICA

We've said it before, but we don't want you heading to South Africa independently without the Portfolio

accommodation guides in your suitcase. New editions, covering a variety of categories: B&B's, safari lodges, etc., are available for 2004 from The Portfolio Collection, Box 132, Newlands 7725, Cape, South Africa, www.portfoliocollection.com e-mail: info@portfoliocollection.com

U.S.A.

With the exchange on our dollars still a factor here at *TravelScoop* we are hesitant about directing our readers across the border to ski. However, there's no denying the charms of the New England states, so readers may like to know that ten mountains in **New Hampshire** are offering Canadians 50% off lift tickets. A minimum of five days on the hills is the only requirement and pass holders can ski at any or all of the resorts. For details visit www.skinewhampshireusa.com or call 1 800 937 5493. And for a free copy of the NH Guidebook call 1 800 386 4664, www.visitnh.gov

For those in or heading west, a luxurious break in **San Francisco** may fit the bill where the **Pan Pacific Hotel** has a special rate of US\$99 per night. Call 1 800 533 6465 or visit www.panpacific.com for details. Also in San Francisco, the luxurious **Argent Hotel** is offering seniors 55 or better a package that would normally cost around US\$413 for US\$159. This deal, available until 1 June, includes room, two tickets for a half-day tour and a 15% discount coupon for any meal in the hotel's restaurant. In addition, a Bay Cruise tour can be enjoyed for the discounted price of US\$14 pp. Available only by phone at 1 800 974 7477, although you can view the hotel at www.argenthotel.com. After San Francisco, how about heading to **Seattle**, where savings of up to 70% off regular room rates are on offer at 48 Seattle hotels. Available until the end of March, this promotion is offered by the Seattle Visitors Bureau on line at www.seattlesupersaver.com or by calling 1 800 535 7071.

* A reminder that you only have until 12 April to see the **Canadian Museum of Civilization's** exhibition *Ancient Treasures and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, an event that has been so popular that its hours have been extended. The Museum is located in Hull in the capital region of **Hull/Ottawa** and more details can be found at 1 800 555 5621 or www.civilization.ca.

* In **Washington, D.C.** the Library of Congress has a major exhibition on Sir Winston Churchill and his ties to the United States, which includes much memorabilia from WWII, recorded speeches and so on. Due to run in the Library from 5 February until 26 June, *Churchill and the Great Republic* is presented in conjunction with the Churchill Archives Centre in the U.K. Admission is free and the exhibition is open from 10:00 – 5:00, Monday-Saturday. Visit www.loc.gov for lots of Library of Congress information.

* In **Saint Charles, Missouri**, a 14-23 May event entitled *Preparations Complete, the Expedition Faces West* will commemorate the Lewis and Clark expedition's historic departure. For details of this and other Missouri festivals go to www.VisitMO.com.

* If you'd like a spot of seaside during your travels in **England**, plan to be in the south-coast city of **Brighton**, about an hour from London by train, during 3 – 25 May for their three-week *Brighton Festival*, England's largest international arts festival that features world premieres and cutting edge performances in theatre, music and so much more. Details at www.visitbrighton.com

Still in England, **London** has an interesting-sounding exhibition at the **Museum of London**, on from now until 18 July. Called *1920s, the Decade that Changed London* the exhibition brings together fashion, art, architecture, film and politics of the decade, from Pavlova's ballet costumers to letters from Ghandi. More details at: www.museumoflondon.org.uk

Still in **London**, especially if you have children with you, head to the **Tower of London**, whose special events during 2004 will be on the dark theme of imprisonment within its massive walls, including a series of re-enactments and a major exhibition *Prisoners of the Tower: 1100-1945*. The Tower is in the care of Historic Royal Palaces, www.hrp.org.uk.

shopping

New from Tilley ... the Hemp Hat

Yes ... I know you swore you'd never get rid of your Tilley hat, but you may be tempted. That's because Tilley Endurables, the Canadian travel clothing experts that now retails in 18 countries, will be launching a new product in March. It's the Tilley Hemp Hat, made – of course – from hemp, the world's strongest natural fibre and one that is naturally resistant to UV light, mold, mildew and salt water. And as with previous Tilley hats, it's virtually indestructible (it is reported that a hat was once even tested by the digestive system of an elephant!).

These hats, along with Tilley's comprehensive range of travel clothing, are available at many retail outlets across Canada, at their own stores in Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver, or via mail order catalogue by calling 1 800 ENDURES and on the web at www.tilley.com.

If you have a Tilley hat experience you would like to share with other readers, please drop us a line. We will award a new Tilley Hemp Hat to the best story we receive.

No more excuses for not going to the gym!

Sneakers are bulky items to pack if you only use them for the hotel gym. But now there's an innovative new product available called the ExerSock™, a non-slip sock suitable for wearing to the hotel gym for low-impact exercise, yoga and pilates. Designed by a company called Crescent Moon Yoga, these socks, and other fitness items, are available on-line at www.crescentmoonyoga.com. The price of the socks, which are available in men's and women's sizes – in black, white, oatmeal and grey – is US\$9.99 per pair.

We thought readers might enjoy this list. It is interesting that the Ossuary in the Czech Republic and the Museo de las Momias in Mexico have both been mentioned in the pages of [TravelScoop!](#)

FORGET THE USUAL TOURIST TRAPS - HOW ABOUT PRISONS, MINES & MUMMIES?

If the thought of entering a Bolivian prison out of choice for a quick tour of the facilities or wandering around a collection of rusty old cars displayed as a mini Stonehenge in Nebraska appeals, then you may want to take note of the following list of the world's most bizarre tourist attractions.

Consultants who work at Flight Centres around the world come across some of the world's strangest attractions in their travels and have compiled a list of the most offbeat sights they have visited. Allison Eaton, Public Relations Manager for Flight Centre North America, says "Travel is all about broadening your horizons and some of the attractions our consultants have visited over the years have certainly helped to do that. Getting off the beaten track to more obscure places not only means you can learn more about the culture of a destination, but you're certain to bring home some unique stories and experiences!"

- Top of the list is the **San Pedro Prison in La Paz**, the capital of **Bolivia**. This unique prison, recently written about in the book *Marching Powder* by Rusty Young, is operated as a cooperative by the prisoners themselves. The guards at the gates let you in for a few dollars, but once inside visitors are lead by the convicts on a highly unusual tour.
- **Bolivia** appears again on the list with a visit to the 800-year **silver mines in Potosi**. Once the richest city in the Americas, Potosi got its wealth from mining silver at the nearby 'Cerro Rico' (or rich mountain). Unfortunately, today the few miners that are left to mine the scraps make more money from visitors who are brave enough to go down one of the shafts, in what is perhaps one of the most har-

rowing and moving of all the 'attractions' on the list.

Other strange sights visited by Flight Centre consultants worldwide include:

- **Carhenge, Nebraska, USA** America's attempt to re-create Stonehenge out of old cars in the middle of a corn field.
- **Museo de las Momias, Guanajuato, Mexico** A museum featuring 122 mummies further highlighting Mexico's fascination with death.
- **Hair Museum, Avanos, Turkey** Created in 1979, the museum displays a collection of hair from women around the world and has found its way into the *Guinness Book of Records* with more than 16,000 different hair samples.
- **Historic Sewers Tour, Paris** This tour of one of the world's longest sewer systems takes visitors along hundreds of yards of underground water tunnels lined with interesting displays.
- **Kutna Hora's Ossuary (bone church), Czech Republic** The ossuary is located in a graveyard of the Church of All Saints and is decorated with the bones of 40,000 people, many of whom died from the plague, and features a chandelier made with every bone of the human body.
- **Vegetarian Festival, Phuket, Thailand** A bizarre festival held in September and October, where devout Buddhist undertake a strict vegetarian diet and perform a number of amazing feats such as climbing ladders made from knives and piercing their faces with hooks, skewers and various other sharp objects.
- **All things 'Big' in Australia** Theme parks built around whatever the 'Big' item is, such as the Big Pineapple, the Big Shrimp and the Big Banana!

Italy ... continued from page 10

Italian towns are linked by fine *autostradas*.

- **Best times:** Fine photography books of Langhe and Roero reveal a region that is beautiful in all seasons, but the locals I spoke with recommended the spring and fall. My visit was in October, the time of the truffle and harvest festivals, and it was glorious. The vines were turning red, roses were still blooming and oranges were hanging in the trees. The mornings were cool and misty (on with a jacket) and the later hours soft and warm (off with the jacket). It was reported in the press that the season's first snow had fallen on the distant Alps, but down in Langhe and Roero it seemed that winter was still far off.

- **Guidebooks:** Insight Guides' *Italy* and *Northern Italy* (each about C\$36) give fine, illustrated overviews of this fabled country and are an inspiration to photographers. For

those travelling extensively and independently in Italy, Interlink Books *Charming Small Hotel Guide to Italy* (C\$32) may be useful, although I do not think the book does justice to the Langhe and Roero region.

- **Things to do in the region:** Eat and drink, of course! Every village, no matter how tiny, has an *enoteca* or wine selling/tasting establishment. This area is perfect for a walking vacation, with short distances between villages and marked trails, available maps, etc. Flowers and birds are in abundance. If you're not an artist you'll wish you were, but photography is a great substitute. Lots of historical sites and art treasures galore. There are no fast food outlets; no casinos; no high-rise buildings. Don't forget, if you'd like to join a Travel Society tour give us a call or watch out for the details in our next edition. 📷

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. **TICO** reg #01280649

NEW Guatemala Grandeur

with an optional add-on to Havana, Cuba

Departing 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

Space is still available

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

NEW 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 was featured in the October edition of *TravelScoop* as Editor Ann enjoyed this trip last 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	\$4,696.00 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	
Vancouver	
Edmonton & Calgary	
Halifax	

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

Please call for prices from other departure cities

Space is still available

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

NEW Chile, Patagonia and Easter Island

Departing 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 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:

- 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: 10 March 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 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

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)

Each tour is
limited to
20 people

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 Kapatokya (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	\$4,950.00 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$4,950.00 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$5,195.00 pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$5,195.00 pp/dbl	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 flights with Air Canada
- 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

28 days, prices include all airfares

Space limited to 20 people

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	\$6,850.00 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$6,850.00 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$7,150.00 pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$7,000.00 pp/dbl	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 flights with Air Canada
- All domestic flights
- 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

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