

Travel Scoop

The Travel Society Magazine
www.thetravelsociety.com

Vol. 22, No. 7 September 2004



Morocco - à la famille

Lake Powell ... an Unusual Adventure

St. Martin/St. Maarten

TravelScoop

The Travel Society Magazine

Editor

Ann Wallace
ann@thetravelsociety.com

Contributors

Linda Reid
Joan and George Pitman
Martha Lasichuk
Scott M. Eddie
Barbara Redlich

Publisher

Nigel D Raincock
nigel@thetravelsociety.com

Administrator

Debbie Philip
debbie@thetravelsociety.com

Graphic Design & Production

Yong Park
yong@thetravelsociety.com

TravelScoop (ISSN#0822-9228) is an independent, consumer magazine published in Canada ten times a year. Although extreme care is taken to ensure the accuracy of material herein,

TravelScoop does not assume any liability for errors or omissions, for changes in fares or schedules, or for readers' decisions based on the opinions of the editor or writers. Readers are advised to confirm all information prior to booking.

Rates for CANADA (incl. GST):

1 year - \$ 49.00

2 years - \$ 95.00

3 years - \$ 140.00

USA: 1 year - \$ 80.00 (incl. postage)

World: 1 year - \$ 80.00 (incl. postage)

Back issues:

1 issue - \$ 5.00 3 issues - \$ 10.00

Copyright 2004 by **Travel Scoop Inc.**

Contents may not be reproduced in whole or part without written permission from the publisher.

Travel Scoop Inc.

218 - 1033 Bay Street,

Toronto, Ontario, Canada. M5S 3A5

Tel: 416 926 0111 Fax: 416 926 0222

e-mail: brit@thetravelsociety.com

web-site: www.thetravelsociety.com

Postmaster: Please send address corrections to the above address.

Printed in Canada. GST Reg # R135785962

Publications Mail Agreement:

40063904 & # 09925

Customer # 2289997

Mail preference: From time to time, we make our membership list available to specific reputable companies and organizations whose products and/or services we believe will be of interest to you. If you do not want your name to be made available, please enclose your mailing label and initial here _____

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP), toward our mailing costs.

September 2004

Vol. 22, No. 7

contents

Readers' Letters

An Historic House in Scotland	3
Travel in Australia and New Zealand	3
Some News of Anguilla	4
Memories of the Falkland Islands	4
Wisconsin Treasures	5

Destinations

Morocco - à la famille	6
Lake Powell ... an Unusual Adventure	12
St. Martin/St. Maaren	14

Where is this?
Find out next month!



News

Airline News	16
Tilley Hat Story	16
Tour Talk	17
Cruise News	17
Travel Digest	18



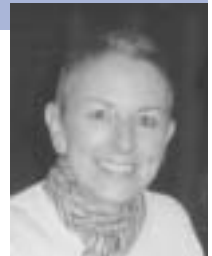
In a Moroccan market

editor's letter ...

Here it is ... September. It's the time of year that, to me, seems more like a new beginning than January; a mood no doubt carried forward from long-ago school days. I hope you all had great and safe summers and have some stories to tell me as the evenings lengthen.

For those of you who like to have a few statistics for family and friends, we can report the following preliminary figures from the World Tourism Organization. Last year France retained its number one spot as the world's most visited destination with about 75 million visitors, though this was a slight decline of 2% over the previous year's figures. Spain, the United States and Italy also retained their spots as second, third and fourth most visited destinations. China came fifth in spite of a sharp decline due to SARS and Britain retained its sixth place. Austria moved in with the top guns at number seven (the place previously occupied by Canada), Mexico was eighth, Germany also moved into the top ten at ninth position and Canada just made it at the number ten spot. Let's hope next year's figures show us moving up a few positions.

In a less-recognized part of the world, there's a new accolade for the Kapawi Ecological and Reserve in Ecuador (which our own Travel Society has been offering as an add-on to our Galapagos Islands trip for several years). Kapawi is now one of six finalists in the *Smithsonian Magazine* and Travelers Conservation Foundation's Sustainable Tourism Awards. (See www.sustainabletourismawards.com.) Winners in two categories will be announced in December and, with over two million subscribers to *Smithsonian*, this publicity is sure to create a long waiting list for Kapawi, where visitors stay in traditionally-crafted cabanas and learn about the rich heritage of the Achuar tribe. In the year 2011, the Lodge will be given entirely to the Achuar tribes. Act quickly if you've been promising yourself a visit here, for these nominations (and the possible award) are sure to bring the destination into the spotlight.



An Historic House in Scotland

With information on Scotland in the last edition of *TravelScoop* I'd like to add a wonderful recommendation of my own. It's a house available for rent in the quaint village of Pittenweem (near St. Andrews) that our family enjoyed and that far sur-



That's Gyles House in the centre of the photo! (Scott Eddie)

passed our expectations.

We found Gyles House on the internet – www.gyleshouse.com – an excellent site with good photos and full details and we rented it for the week of 1 – 8 May. Booking very early secured the rental at 2003 rates (£300 per week, at today's rate about C\$728 – a huge bargain). We were a family of six. We worked out that even a cheap bed and breakfast would have cost us around £1,000 for the week, so even though the prices have gone up for 2004, and you have to get your own breakfast, the property still represents very good value.

Gyles house is an historic, spacious, two-storey, four-bedroom house right on the harbour. Pittenweem has the only working fishing harbour left in the Kingdom of Fife and the house appears on all the postcard views of the harbour. The house can sleep seven, with three double bedrooms (one on the ground floor) and one single bedroom. In addition there are two sitting rooms

(one on each level), a dining room, a very well-equipped kitchen, two full bathrooms, one half-bathroom and even a separate laundry room complete with washer and dryer. The house is tastefully decorated and furnished and all the equipment is of a much higher quality than one usually would expect to find in a rental property. There are two televisions and even a Bose Wave Radio with CD player instead of the typical cheap 'boom box'.

The ground floor bedroom would be ideal for elderly persons in your group who like privacy but not stairs, although they would have to climb a flight to take a relaxing bath as the ground floor has only a half-bath. And

there's a door leading to the private walled courtyard of the house.

Pittenweem is in the East Neuk (Corner) of Fife, which has its own micro-climate: much sunnier and drier than is typical of Scotland. Indeed, on more than one glorious sunny day in Fife we watched as the rain fell heavily just across the Firth of Forth on the south shore. Alas, poor Edinburgh! The Fife Coastal Trail, a walking trail that runs from St. Monans to St. Andrews, passes right by the Gyles House. The walk to the next village – Anstruther – is less than two miles and is both easy and scenic. When in Pittenweem, don't miss the opportunity to go to the 'Secret Bunker' near Anstruther (www.secret-bunker.co.uk) – a massive underground Cold War installation, masquerading as a farm and intended to be the home of the government in the case of a nuclear attack. St. Andrews is only about 10 miles away with a castle, a cathedral, the University (where Prince William is currently a student), and don't miss the fine Botanical Gardens. There are many

other great tourist sites in Fife and a week was not nearly enough time to visit them all.

Full details of Gyles House are on the website. To book, one contacts the owner, William Kennaway, by e-mail, william.kennaway@btopenworld.com, or by phone, 011 44 1273 473 484 in the evening, British time. Mr Kennaway lives in Essex, south England, and the local arrangements are handled by his brother and sister-in-law, Gordon and Lorna Kennaway, in Pittenweem. We appreciated the businesslike yet friendly help of all the Kennaways and we could not have been more pleased with our accommodations at the Gyles House. We recommend it unreservedly.

*Scott M. Eddie
Etobicoke, ON*

Some News of Anguilla

I was interested to read the little snippet about Anguilla on page 19 of the July/August issue. As I have been to Anguilla at least half a dozen times in recent years, I decided to add a little information.

The airport in Anguilla accepts only propeller-driven planes. The main flights are to and from San Juan, Puerto Rico, but an easier way to get to Anguilla is to fly to St. Maarten (which has a flourishing international airport) and then take the ferry from there to Anguilla. It is about a fifteen-minute taxi ride from the St. Maarten

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!

airport to the ferry terminal, where ferries leave frequently for Anguilla, though it should be noted that the last boat leaves at about 7:00 p.m. The trip takes between 20 and 30 minutes and there are taxis at the other end to take you to your hotel.

Anguilla has several of the best beaches in the Caribbean. Hotels vary from wildly expensive to quite reasonable and villas can be rented by the week or month. The island offers some excellent restaurants, some staffed by chefs brought over from Europe for the winter season.

I understand that crime is almost non-existent in Anguilla; people leave their front doors unlocked. And the local people are exceptionally friendly to tourists, unlike some of the better known Caribbean islands! For a restful, quiet vacation in the sun I can heartily recommend Anguilla.

*H.A. Sherman
Calgary, AB*

Memories of the Falkland Islands

Your cover photo of the grand whalebone arch in Stanley was a lovely reminder of our visit there this past February. We too were travelling on the *s.s Amsterdam*, although on the later January/February sailing. Pat Toomey, husband of contributor Carrie, helped guide our ship through the ice, and his fascinating, informa-

tive lectures and comments from the bridge added much to our Antarctic experience. It's a small world.

Our day in the Falklands was delightful too, and we hope readers might like to hear of another half-day trip that we would highly recommend. This was the Bluff Cove Penguin Rookery Tour (US\$89 each). For this we were bussed out through the mine-infested countryside to transfer to the SUVs that bounced us across the peat bogs, ruts and pot holes toward the beach and an amazing sight. Hundreds of penguins were there, waddling, playing, swimming, sleeping, watching us watch them, or ignoring us and going about their day. How wonderful! As we inched closer, they did too and we looked at each other in complete fascination.

Our guide was an Englishman who had come here at age 18 as a summer worker, fell in love with the area, married and is now enjoying his successful sheep ranch and his new industry as tour guide to cruise ship passengers. The rookery is on his property and he was pleased to tell us about his life and adventures. He was informative, told about the rivers of stone, thought to be from the ice age, and explained that the many mines placed there by the Argentinians were small and plastic so present much danger. The sheep on the hillsides are too light to trigger them and due to the plastic they go undetected, but a walking human can easily trip them. Hence the many, many warning signs everywhere.

By the way, we learned that the whalebone arch pictured was constructed from the massive jaws bones of four baleen whales and was placed in front of Christ Church Cathedral in 1933 to commemorate the centenary of British rule. Homes in Stanley are very British looking, made from local quarried stone and/or salvaged timber and are surrounded by very English looking flower gardens. This visit was one of the highlights of a remarkable cruise in the Southern Hemisphere.

*Marg Lynn
Lachine, PQ*

Wisconsin is a State that we do not seem to hear very much about. Yet, as Barbara Redlich tells us here, it is home to some outstanding and unique attractions and it would make a great Fall getaway.

Wisconsin Treasures

Wisconsin is blessed with much to offer discriminating travellers. The most memorable attractions are within easy driving distances of Madison or Milwaukee, but both cities themselves have sites not to be missed. The capitol in Madison is among the most splendid in the U.S. The white granite dome is topped by "Wisconsin", a gilded bronze allegorical statue. The location, right by the river, is lovely and the architecture as well as the interior are most impressive. There are delightful mosaics, paintings and a beautiful

The Travel Society website

How to visit *The Travel Society* website www.travelsociety.com

Our website is fully operational. We will constantly endeavour to improve it and welcome your input.

To access the site the password will be up-dated monthly and will appear on the back page of your *TravelScoop* within the address box.

You can renew your subscription on-line too!

rotunda decorated with splendid carvings of badgers, since the badger is the state symbol. The Governor's Conference Room is styled after the small council chambers of the Doge's Palace in Venice.

Milwaukee has the magnificent Basilica of Saint Josaphat. The idea for it came from Polish immigrants who asked a German architect to create a design based on St. Peter's in Rome. A small church was built, fell victim to fire and a somewhat larger one was built. This happened several times. Today's Basilica has a very close relationship to St. Peter's. It must be one of the finest in the U.S. Milwaukee is also home to the wonderful Milwaukee Art Museum, an architectural gem whose roof of wings (or sails?) soar over a lakeside park. It is elegant and perfect for the huge exhibitions it houses and also offers many amenities.

Among many other sites and sights in the state, Ten Chimneys and The House on the Rock easily rank among the very best attractions in the U.S. After an extensive and excellent renovation Ten Chimneys, 50 km west of Milwaukee, opened in May 2003. It is at Genesee Depot and was the home of the Lunts. American Alfred Lunt and English-born Lynne Fontanne formed an amazing and highly successful acting partnership. They decorated each room at Ten Chimneys as a small museum and the docents have many tales to tell: why or where the items were purchased, a description of events that took place in the room and many other fascinating stories. The Lunts were extremely talented: they cooked, sewed, painted, decorated and farmed with the same artistic fervour they displayed on stage.

The docent told us that Noel Coward was such a frequent visitor, that it was considered a *ménage à trois* and the house is filled with mementoes from his visits. Most great actors of the time were guests in this home and they made wonderful entries in the guest book. Julie Harris wrote: "The Lunts are not only great actors, but they are great human beings. Their home, Ten

Chimneys, should be preserved and taken care of for all time. It speaks of graciousness, of wonderful work, of extraordinary effort and beauty. We need these memories to spur us on through the 21st Century."

The house tour alone takes about two hours and there are many other buildings on the property: a greenhouse, studio, stable, barn and a delightful fully-furnished cottage. Admission prices start at \$23.00 (all prices US\$) for the Main House Tour only and goes up for the full Estate Tour and on weekends. Reservations are recommended, especially for summer week-end visits. Details from 262 968 4161 or www.tenchimneys.org

The next quite incredible attraction is The House on the Rock near Spring Green. This architectural marvel is perched high on a 60 foot chimney of rock. It overlooks the breathtaking panorama of the Wyoming Valley, 450 feet below. The breathtaking "Infinity Room" extends unsupported like a giant tentacle from the main building, projecting 218 feet over the Valley. With 3,264 windows there is truly no other room like it in the world.

Alex Jordan, builder and owner of the house, while not a traveller, was an ardent collector. The collections now in The House on the Rock were purchased through a network of agents and collectors who travelled the world, getting in touch with him when they found something of interest. Every room houses a collection. It includes the largest carousel ever built with over 20,000 lights and over 269 handcrafted animals, but not a single horse. It is valued at US\$4.5 million. There is also the music room with a wonderful collection of animated, automated music machines and gigantic pipe organs. It also includes the Blue Room, home to the world's only mechanically operated symphony orchestra. It is doubtful that anywhere in the entire world one could find a house to match this mind-boggling, incredible creation, all from the imagination of one man. The fee for a house tour is \$19.50, for information call 608 935 3639, ext. 123. www.the-houseontherock.com

Near Spring Green there also lies Taliesin, which Frank Lloyd Wright considered home. He began his illustrious career in the pastoral rolling countryside of the beautiful Wyoming Valley and built his legendary mansion, Taliesin, on a hill overlooking the lazy curves of the Wisconsin River. Later he also built a school, a small theatre and drafting studios. Tour fees start at \$15.00, for information call 608 588 7900.

If travelling by car from Ontario to Wisconsin an excellent route is to take the car ferry – the *s.s. Badger* – from Ludington, Michigan across the lake to Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The crossing takes about four and a half hours. The ferry is a small luxury cruise ship with excellent restaurants, a "Badger Boatique" which is almost a department store, a cinema and guest speakers sharing information on some interesting subjects. Should you wish, it is possible to rent a private cabin and have a really good rest while crossing the lake. For information call 1 888 CAR SHIP, or visit www.ssbadger.com Adult fares are \$47 or less, one way, and cars cost \$49.

In order to visit Ten Chimneys we stayed at Delafield, a few miles north of Genesee Depot, where there is a very nice Holiday Inn Express at I94, exit 287, visit the website www.holidayinn.com/delafieldwi for information or call 1 800 HOLIDAY. For House on the Rock and Taliesin we stayed at the Spring Valley Inn in Spring Green. It was designed by the architectural firm founded by Frank Lloyd Wright. The stunning result is a thoroughly contemporary, 30,000 square foot, AAA-rated hotel. Tel: 608 588 7828 or visit www.springvalleyinn.com. And for more information on travel in Wisconsin contact their tourism office at 1 800 432 8747, www.travelwisconsin.com.

I highly recommend a trip to see these memorable houses and other Wisconsin attractions.

Barbara Redlich
North York, ON

Morocco - à la famille

story and photos by Linda Reid

Last summer, some neighbours told us with great enthusiasm about their trip to Morocco the previous March that had included a variety of home visits. Their group leader, Doris El Harchali, was a Canadian woman married to a Moroccan. One of her Canadian friends had expressed an interest in visiting Morocco, so together they organized a group of eight loosely-connected people for a two-week trip in March 2003. This group was so enthusiastic that they went back again this year in early March to see another part of the country. So Doris decided to stay over and lead a second group on the original itinerary. So we signed up for the second group, as did my husband's brother and sister-in-law.

As it turned out, we *were* the second group. We toured the northern part of Morocco for two weeks at the end of March/beginning of April. There were us four Reids, Doris, her eleven-year-old daughter by her Moroccan husband, her seven-year-old grandson by her first marriage, her thirty-year-old Moroccan brother-in-law who helped with baggage and local arrangements and assorted family members who joined us at different points. The children were often entertained by the brother-in-law and spent some time at relatives' homes. We travelled Moroccan-style by trains and taxis. An independent traveller with some French could easily follow most of our route but would miss the social interaction with the Moroccans.

Arabic is the main language of Morocco but French is a significant second language. Most of the city people speak both French and Arabic as Morocco was a French protectorate from 1912 until independence in 1956. There are also some Berber languages still spoken, particularly in the countryside. The Moroccan French is easy to understand, perhaps because it is second-language French, and we found everyone very tolerant and eager to understand our French, however fractured. There are, of course, English-speaking tourist guides at major attractions.

We flew directly from Montreal to Casablanca via Royal Air Maroc; about seven hours. The Mohammed V airport is 60 km south of Casablanca and there is a train station adjacent to the air terminal with hourly service. The fare is 30 dirhams (one dirham equals just under 15 cents at press time) for the half-hour trip. There are several train stations in Casablanca so if you go independently you should ascertain from your hotel which one is appropriate for you.

Our itinerary included three of the historic capitals: the present capital Rabat, Meknès, and Fès, a country town called Taounate and Casablanca. With the exception of Taounate we stayed in each location for more than one night.

Doris met us on arrival and escorted us to our hotel. We took one train to Casablanca, changed to one for Rabat, and then took a grand taxi to La Kasbah, a beachfront hotel near Skhirat, south of Rabat. Each city in Morocco has two types of taxis: petits taxis and grands taxis. The petits taxis (often Fiats) take a maximum of three passengers and travel only within the city itself. The grands taxis are old Mercedes. They accommodate four passengers comfortably but are willing to put a fifth passenger in the middle of the front seat. They travel outside the city and between cities and will sometimes pick up and drop off passengers at different points. The taxis are colour-coded to their city and are easily identifiable. There are taxi ranks at different locations but we also hailed them. You can negotiate a price to take you somewhere and for the driver to wait for the return trip.

Our beachfront hotel south of Rabat was uncrowded, as it was out of season. It wasn't swimming weather but we were able to walk the beach on our first pleasant afternoon. The downside was that the property was a 100 dirham (\$15) taxi ride from the city and the four of us agreed that it would have been more efficient to go directly to Rabat and stay there. Apparently the group from the year before had loved their time at the beach and recommended going there again to recover from jet lag, so ... tastes vary. However, we were eagerly off to Rabat the next morning. Doris led us all on a walking tour through the souks of the medina (old walled city) and we stopped at a pizzeria just outside the walls for lunch. After lunch, Doris's brother-in-law took the children to a soccer match and we continued our guided tour of the city. We visited the mausoleum of Mohammed V (grandfather of the present king) and the adjacent Hassan Tower from the 12th century. It was supposed to be 60 metres in height but only made it to 44, but it is still a striking landmark. As a fine rain started falling we took petits taxis to the Kasbah Des Oudaïas, a walled enclave on a promontory overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. There we walked through the narrow streets where most of the blue and white houses were built by Muslim refugees from Spain and enjoyed pastries and fresh mint tea in a café overlooking the ocean.

Later we went by grand taxi to the apartment of some of Doris's relatives for dinner. The food was wonderful and included salads, a *pastilla* (a savoury pie made with phyllo pastry) and couscous. In this case the *pastilla* was stuffed with fish and seafood but chicken *pastillas* are also popular.

In Morocco, couscous is not served plain but includes meat and vegetables. This was followed by pastries and fruit and more mint tea. We learned that we should plan to be hungry when visiting a Moroccan home and to pace ourselves because there would be more courses to follow. French was our common language and we talked of our plans for the next day. When I mentioned that we would be on our own the next afternoon and that the four of us thought that we would walk across the bridge to Salé our hosts were horrified. Apparently the bridge has long, low approaches on each side and the area is apparently frequented by thieves. They explained the alternatives of taking a petit taxi or a row boat.

The next morning we went into Rabat again. This time we visited Chellah in the southern part of the city. It was originally a Roman city that was deserted for centuries. Defensive walls were added by one of the sultans and in the thirteenth century the Merenids used it as a burial place. It was a peaceful spot and we enjoyed watching the storks go to and from their nests on the tops of pillars. Later we abandoned the idea of going across the river to Salé by rowboat as it started to rain.

Our next train journey took us from Rabat to Meknès where we stayed in an Ibis hotel between the medina and the nouvelle ville (the new town laid out by the French after 1912), both an easy walk away. Its location was ideal and the hotel comfortable. There is even a McDonald's next door that advertised cheeseburgers for 11 dirham though no one in our group wanted to eat at McDonald's when the Moroccan cuisine is so delicious. We would recommend this hotel and those driving a rental car would find the access easy.

As Doris and family stayed with relatives, we insisted that we could explore on our own next day, visiting the souks in the medina and the 17th century tomb of Moulay Ismail and the so-called Christian prison. My sister-in-law decided to buy a kilim rug and chose a shop where we enjoyed the ritual of carpet selection accompanied by glasses of mint tea.

One night we ate at the hotel whose restaurant followed the Ibis formula of a two-course meal (appetizer and main course or main course and dessert) for 85 dirhams (\$13) or all three courses for 105 dirham (\$15). The other night of our Meknès stay we were again guests in a Moroccan home. This time our host was a wealthy family with a maid. The parents spoke fluent French and the son, who was in the last year of high school, had a good command of English as well. The older daughters were no longer at home but we saw photos and a video of one of their weddings. This appeared to be a very elaborate affair, with much music and food, during which the bride changed into about seven magnificent dresses. At one stage in the proceedings the bridal couple sat on little thrones and the guests took turns being photographed with them.

Another day we took a side trip by grands taxis to Volubilis and Moulay Idriss, located 4 km apart just over 20



The pillars and storks of Chellah

km northwest of Meknès. Volubilis is a Roman archaeological site that was a leading centre in North Africa until 285 AD. It reminded us of the Greek ruins at Ephesus in Turkey, but without the crowds. We were glad that we hired a guide at 100 dirhams (\$15) as he was a history graduate with a good command of English and made the visit so much more interesting. Of particular note were the Roman mosaics on the floors of some of the houses.

From Volubilis we could see the white city of Moulay Idriss, described as a sleeping camel on the side of the hill. It is a holy city as it contains the tomb of Moulay Idriss, a grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, and it is a place of pilgrimage for Moroccans. There is no alcohol allowed in the city and non-Muslims are not allowed to stay overnight. There were lots of stalls of food in the main street and crowds of people eating outside them. Doris and her daughter, as Muslims, were able to enter the mosque where Moulay Idriss is buried while the rest of us just watched from the entrance. We again hired a local guide (80 dirhams, \$12) who gave us a walking tour in English of the town, including a vantage point to see the mosque with Moulay Idriss' tomb from above and a round minaret that is unique in Morocco, where other minarets are all square.

It had been Doris's intent to take us from Meknès to Fès by train but it was rush hour and her brother-in-law was not successful in flagging two grands taxis in time to make our train. As a result we ended up going all the way by grands taxis. The original asking price was 300 dirham (\$45) per taxi but he negotiated a lower price of 200 dirham (\$30). The trip took about an hour and it was dusk when we arrived at the Bab Boujloud gate to the medina. Doris telephoned as we approached and staff from the "riad" came out to meet us and assist with luggage.

There is, of course, no vehicular traffic within the medinas, where supplies are transported by donkeys. We were staying at the Riad Louna, a short walk through a couple of narrow alleys off one of the main "streets". The door in the high walls lead to an inside passage and then to a beautiful courtyard containing trees and a fountain, with bedrooms opening off it. The rooms are large and nicely furnished. This riad accommodates a maximum of twelve but on the first two nights there were just the eight of us and a French couple. You can see photos on the web site at www.riad-louna.com. We had the room with the canopied bed! The riad is owned by a Belgian couple and it is managed by Moroccans who speak French and some English. Breakfast is included and dinner by pre-arrangement. We had ordered dinner

ahead of time for our first night and would recommend doing this. It cost 150 dirham (less than \$30 per person, excluding beverages). It was nice to settle into our rooms and then go up to the dining room for a delicious meal in comfortable surroundings. We were in Fès for five nights and ate at the riad for three of them, indicating our intention for the day at breakfast. The menu was the cook's choice and all was varied and delicious. As at other hotels, we were able to order wine or beer but there was no alcohol in private homes or in restaurants in the medina. We highly recommend the Riad Louna.

The medina at Fès is huge and we appreciated Doris's wisdom of showing us medinas at Rabat and Meknès as a lead-up to it. The Fès medina is in many ways a medieval city where craftsmen still practise their trades as they have for centuries. We're glad that we saw it now because we feel that it is something that won't remain the same for much



The holy city Moulay Idriss

longer.

It is easy to negotiate one of the main “streets” of the medina on your own as you go downhill to get deeper into the medina and uphill to get out. There are approximately 9500 alleyways and some come to dead ends. Once you branch off into the little alleys it is easy to get lost. There are always lots of people willing to guide you back to a main route for a tip. The *Lonely Planet Morocco* has maps that show many of the larger alleys, but there are no names on the maps or on the alleys themselves, at least none that we could read.

Doris decided that the four of us should have an English-speaking guide to orient us on our first day in the medina. He met us at the riad at 9:30 a.m. and returned us there mid-afternoon. We told him at the beginning that we

were n't intending to shop and he never pressured us. (Guides generally get a kickback from shopkeepers from sales to their clients so we tipped him at the end in addition to the 150 dirhams Doris paid him.) He gave us an informed commentary. Particularly

noteworthy was the visit to the leather souks where we were taken out on a terrace to see the dyers at work. They gave us each a sprig of mint to disguise the smell. Some cauldrons had a white-coloured liquid that was limestone and salt to clean the skins while others were of various hues: yellow from saffron, blue from indigo and so on. The dyers actually step right in the cauldrons. Later we saw the big Kairaouine Mosque and University and other mosques (from the outside), peeked inside a former medersa (theology school), a Koranic school with three to five year olds sitting on benches in a small room, a display of beautiful carpets and another of mysterious herbal remedies and we journeyed across the river to the Andalucian sector with its mosque. We stood outside one mosque just after the noon call to prayer and watched men going in and doing their ablutions at the fountain in the courtyard. At all times we had to be ready to get out of the way of a loaded donkey.

Back at the riad we rested in the quiet garden over glasses of mint tea. Late in the afternoon we decided to go back into the medina on our own and look at some of the leather

products for sale. We walked down a main “street” and ignored offers of a guide until we thought it was about time to turn off. A young boy guided us to the leather souks, waited while we shopped, and guided us back to the main alley by a different route, pointing out things along the way. He was well worth the 10 dirhams (\$1.50) tip.

The next day we asked the riad staff to arrange a visit to the hammam (public bath) for us. The men went in the late morning and my sister-in-law and I after it switched to admit women at noon. There were rooms with water of varying temperatures and lots of soap, scrubbing, rinsing and massage, though even the hottest room wasn't as hot as I remember the hammam being in Turkey.

That afternoon we wandered around the gardens just outside the medina and then my husband and I took a petit taxi to the pottery souks. They had been relocated outside the medina a few years ago because of the smell of the burning olive pits in their kilns. We told the taxi driver in French where we wanted to go and he delivered us directly to the door of a factory. An unofficial



The cauldrons of the leather souks



Ablutions before entering a mosque

guide met us. He spoke French, but not English, and gave us an excellent tour explaining all the processes. We were able to take pictures of men stomping on the clay with their feet and shaping it on a wheel. We also saw men hand cutting the colourful ceramic tiles and fitting them into patterns for the traditional Moroccan *zellij* that decorate fountains, table tops and some walls. We ended at a store but weren't pressured to buy. Our guide got us back into a petit taxi for the return trip and seemed happy with the 20 dirhams (\$3) tip. We were in Fès for four days, but agreed three would have been sufficient. On the final day we made a day trip to Moulay Yacoub, nearby hot springs. It was pleasant enough to wander around the town but we didn't use the public pool which was described as dirty in the guide books.

Doris feels that it is important to see small town Morocco to understand the country and we agreed. She took us to Taounate, north of Fès, by grands taxis. We checked into a hotel that was located off an alley in the main street and ate lunch in the adjoining restaurant before two "relatives", one of whom spoke French, took us on a walking tour of the town. This town, located on the southern edge of the Rif mountains, was not directly affected by the recent earthquake on the northern edge of the mountains but a lot of aid passed through. During our visit we walked out of town to see an olive pressing facility which was interesting.

That night we were invited for dinner to the home of Doris's mother-in-law in the village of Bourdoud, about 40 minutes' drive northwest of Taounate, first by paved highway and then on a dirt road leading to the village at the top of a hill. The Rif mountains are a kif (hashish) growing area and so we had to pass a police check going and coming. We were joined at dinner by a huge extended family that spoke Arabic and were grateful to one brother-in-law who spoke French and translated. The house was adobe-style with dirt floors. The lounge area was raised a little and had carpets on the floor and the traditional padded benches along the walls. We started with mint tea and bread, then salads, couscous, chicken, a pasta dish and fresh fruit. After dinner we were shown the outer chambers of the house where a turkey was raising her own young and those of a hen whose eggs had been put in her nest, the grinding stone where the family

ground their flour and the outdoor oven where they baked bread. The household has had electricity for the last four years but water is still brought from the spring by a donkey. The taxi drivers had stayed for dinner too and drove us back to Taounate (not far, but half an hour to forty-five minutes travel time).

From Taounate we had a long travel day back to Casablanca. Grands taxis delivered us to the railway station in Fès where we stopped for lunch in the restaurant at the station before our train trip. Moroccan trains have compartments and are quite comfortable. The train took a direct route from Fès to Meknès but then went north to Sidi Kacem where some passengers made the connection to the train to Tangiers before proceeding southward, through Rabat and down the coast to Casablanca, taking almost four and a half hours. We got off at the Casa Voyageurs rail station in Casablanca and stayed at the Ibis hotel next door. This hotel had extremely small rooms, much smaller than those in the

Ibis in Meknès, but it is in a convenient location as we took the train from there two days later to the airport. The posted price for the hotel was 430 dirhams db1, or about \$64. Doris wondered aloud whether she should have put us in a hotel in the ritzy beachfront area a few kilometres to the south (the corniche) but that would have meant taxi trips into town and to the train station.



The water seller at the Bab Boujloud gate, Fez

But we did see the corniche on a taxi tour. It was pre-season and not crowded and the pools were standing empty. Hotels along the strip have names like Miami and Tahiti. For those with deep pockets the nicest place to stay in Casablanca would be the Hyatt at Place des Nations Unies.

I can't think of many positive things to say about Casablanca; it appears to be just a big, rather dirty city with lots of traffic. The Hassan II mosque is interesting but the medina isn't as good as those we had visited elsewhere. We hired a grand taxi (for about \$45) to take the four of us to the mosque, wait for us and then give us a drive along the corniche before dropping us off at Place des Nations Unies. Entrance to the mosque was 100 dirhams (\$15) each and a further 20 dirhams for a guided tour. The guided tour lasted an hour and was definitely worth the extra money. The English-speaking guide described the construction and materials used and showed us the ablution rooms on the

lower level and an on-site hammam and Turkish bath that are not yet open. This is the third largest mosque in the world, after those in Mecca and Medina, and sits by the Atlantic Ocean. It can accommodate 25,000 people and the marble floors can be heated and the roof opened to provide ventilation. We wandered around the city during the afternoon and agreed we only needed the one day there.

Now for a few general details. Food first ... for Moroccan cuisine is delicious. Couscous and the tajines (stews) are delicious. Moroccan salads include pickled beets, carrots with raisins, green peppers, tomatoes, cabbage and potato salads. Olives came with the bread at every meal. Little pastries and mint tea or fresh-squeezed orange juice provide a welcome snack and you can always order the mint tea without sugar if you prefer. Strawberries were in season. Breakfasts generally included fresh-squeezed orange juice, mint tea, coffee, café au lait, bread, buns, crepes and sometimes pastries, dried fruit, and Moroccan cheese. In the Ibis hotels there was dried cereal and hard-cooked eggs as well.

There are Internet services in most places (including Taounate), labelled "cyber". Access is quite cheap, ranging from 6 to 10 dirhams per hour (\$1-\$1.50) but the response time is very slow. The computers have French-language keyboards rather than the QWERTY ones we are accustomed to.

The Moroccans are friendly people and make you very welcome to their country, and, in our case, to their homes. It is a beautiful country with varied landscapes, even though we only saw a small part of the north. The beast of burden everywhere we went is the donkey; camels are only found further south. The touts were there but they were much less annoying than in many other places we have visited. I understand why last year's group returned to see Marrakesh and explore the south.

We had been advised ahead of time that the weather would be like Toronto in May and we had warm sunny days reaching highs of 30° toward the end of our holiday. For the first days it was cool and rainy and we were glad to have fleeces and rain jackets. Last year the group had warmer weather throughout and only two days with rain.

We're not fans of large bus tours but we appreciate having the logistics of travel taken care of for us. This trip gave us the right balance of structure and freedom. Doris was initially surprised at how independent we were during the

unstructured time as last year's group had stuck closer to her and wanted more direction. Doris was an enthusiastic guide; her strength was in facilitating social interactions with Moroccans. The visit to the town of Taounate and the village would have been impossible to do on our own. We enjoyed the family time, both the visits with Moroccans and the long, leisurely dinners with my brother-in-law and sister-in-law whom we don't see very often as they live in Sydney, Australia.

We used two guidebooks for background information, *Lonely Planet Morocco* (2003) and *Neos Guide Morocco* (2001) published by Michelin

The basic trip cost \$2,800 each. This included airfare from Toronto (Air Canada to connect with Royal Air Maroc in Montreal), hotel accommodation for 13 nights, and most ground transportation within Morocco. All the hotels included breakfast except the one in Taounate. We paid for our transportation when we went off on our own and the rest of our meals, except for family visits. For these we gave Doris

extra money to send gifts to our hosts at an appropriate time. Doris El Harchali is planning to go to Morocco again next February, March and April. If you would like to join one of her groups or have her custom-design a tour for you and some friends, you can contact her e-mail elharchali@hotmail.com. She has details and itineraries to send out and, if you live in the Toronto area, she also



Buying a kilim rug

holds information sessions from time to time. Doris says, "If at all possible I like people to attend my information sessions because it's nice to meet the people who are interested and I can go over the itineraries in detail and answer questions."

For those of you considering touring Morocco independently, I hope the following details will be useful:

Kasbah Hotel, Skhirat, tel: (code 011 212) 37 55 26 45 (fine as long as you don't mind the \$15 taxi ride into Rabat).

Ibis Moussafir Hotel, Meknes, tel: 55 40 41 41. Recommended.

Riad Louna, 21, Derb Serraj, Talâa Sghira, Fès Medina, Bab Boujloud 30.200, e-mail: riadlouna@iam.net.ma, www.riadlouna.com. Highly recommended.

Hotel du Centre, Taounate, tel: 55 68 83 02

Ibis Moussafir, Avenue Bahmad, place de la Gare Casa-Voyageurs, Casablanca, tel: 22 40 19 84

Lake Powell ...

an Unusual Adventure

story and photos by Joan and George Pitman



At nine one Tuesday morning in late April we dropped our suitcases and supplies at the top of a very long cement ramp and waited for the porter to appear. The locals said the water level was down 35 feet this year over last, so the floating docks were some distance from the parking lot at Wahweap Marina in Page, Arizona. Zoli soon spotted us at the top of the ramp and jogged up to start the loading of our belongings. Four trips and seven wagonloads got everything down the ramp and onto the houseboat. We stored everything and cast off within the hour.

Our crew of six consisted of my husband George and I from Vancouver plus friends Don and Sandy from Temecula, CA, Doreen from Toronto and Hanna from Los Angeles, CA. They had arrived before us, and the four of them had attended the instruction/familiarization session the afternoon before. So it was Don who manoeuvred the houseboat through the narrow channel of marker buoys out into Wahweap Bay and on towards Antelope Island, passing Castle Rock on the left. Our rented 20-ft runabout was tethered to the stern for future explorations. The water was very calm. We were motoring on Lake Powell, the man-made lake created on the Colorado River 40 years ago to supply hydro service from Glen Canyon Dam for Arizona and surrounding area.

We had been given a map, not a chart, of the waterway and located the various markers with our binoculars. Navigation is relatively easy; the markers are numbered and you just follow the map to ascertain where you are or want to go.

Within the hour the scenery became overwhelmingly unbelievable. Towering red mountains in the most unusual shapes appeared on both sides of the lake. Rounded tops and completely smooth hills were interspersed with square topped giant mountains. We saw little or no greenery except on rocky ledges where various plants cling to whatever moisture is keeping them alive. Some plants actually had blooming flowers. There were times that we thought we had headed into a dead-end due to the height of the canyon walls and not being able to see around the next bend.



This is a desert environment; the air is dry, and the sky is cloudless and sparkling blue. Glen Canyon is nestled in the centre of the Grand Circle, a collection of seven national parks, eight national monuments and numerous state parks, historical sites, prehistoric Indian ruins, colourful ghost towns and stunning geologic formations that reach from northern Arizona into southern Utah. The Lake has over 1900 miles of shoreline with 96 canyons to explore.

Our rented 59-ft Admiral houseboat had central air conditioning (which we didn't need), two bathrooms, private staterooms and all mod cons. It did take a little practice to handle the houseboat. Don and George took turns as Captain, so it was Don's choice of a protected cove and sandy beach for our first night.

It's hard to imagine what the lake would have looked like 35 ft higher, where last year's waterline showed. It was amazing to see the driftwood stuck in crevices and on ledges 30 and 40 feet up the side of the canyon walls. The Lake can be over 500 feet deep at different times of the year. None of the beaches is marked because water levels change from year to year, as do the landing spots. You just go into the coves and look for suitable areas to stop.

The houseboats are then driven onto the sand, anchor ropes attached to the stern are then attached to large anchors that are dug into the sandy beach at a 45° angle from the boat to keep the aft end in and stop it from swinging. The trick is to not to stop on too much of a sand bank, otherwise the houseboat is difficult to get off when one wants to leave. There is a gangplank stored in the bow of the houseboat. Once beached, you pull it from its hole and simply walk off.

The sand on all the beaches is fine and red and gets into every nook and cranny if there is the slightest wind. And it is windy at times. We got the mop bucket out and kept it filled with

fresh lake water to dip our feet and shoes in before entering the houseboat after hikes and beachcombing.

We were all surprised to find clamshells. There is carp, black crappie, various bass, sunfish, walleye and bluegill for game fishing. Glen Canyon lies within two States – Utah and Arizona – so a license is required from both states if fishing is your sport. There are a number of endangered fish that, if caught, must be released alive and then reported to rangers.

In order to fully enjoy a vacation, the six of us formed teams of two and each team was responsible for all the cooking and cleaning up for one day. We had previously planned our menus and wine requirements. Our friends from California had done all the shopping and preparation. But if you were flying in to Phoenix or Flagstaff, renting a car and driving to the marina, there is ample opportunity to shop for supplies in either city or in Page where there is a Costco, a Safeway and other large chain stores.

The galley on the houseboat is the size of a regular kitchen. The only things we missed were a salad bowl, tongs for the BBQ, a corkscrew and scissors. You're provided with 14 each of bowls, plates and sets of cutlery, plastic mugs and tumblers. No glass.

Clean water is one of Lake Powell's most valuable resources. Everything is contained in large holding tanks on houseboats. No garbage can be buried or burned, but must be carried out for disposal on land, including charcoal from beach fires. Desert soils lack sufficient bacteria, fungi and moisture to efficiently decompose buried organic materials. Anything taken in must be removed when leaving. The beaches were very clean and most people pick up anything

... continued on page 20



A Few Recommendations for the French/Dutch Island of St. Martin/St. Maarten

story and photos by Martha Lasichuk

With (dare we mention it?) winter approaching, TravelScoop will be publishing short accounts of some islands in the sun over the coming months for those of you contemplating such a getaway. Here's the low-down on St. Martin/St. Maarten. Next month will be Bequia's turn.

This Caribbean island is a popular winter getaway offered by many Canadian tour operators or you can plan your own visit via www.st-maarten.com or by contacting the St. Maarten Tourist Office in Toronto at 416 622 4300. If you do go, I thought you might like a few recommendations gleaned from a recent two-week vacation there to help you plan your days.

Using Air Transat we flew air-only from Toronto to St. Martin. An economy sized car with air conditioning was booked on the internet at Thrifty Car Rental's website www.thrifty.com. Our spacious two-bedroom villa at Guana Bay Beach (a timeshare property of the Geo Group: www.geoholiday.com/home.html) had a great view of the rugged Atlantic. Each day we drove around exploring the island and since there is only one main road it is easy to find your way around. Watch out for traffic jams between the capitals of (French) Marigot and (Dutch) Philipsburg. Each

Oyster Pond



capital has its particular charm – Marigot has popular market days, is full of French cafés and luxury boutiques, while Philipsburg is jammed with duty-free stores filled with cruise ship shoppers.

With only 37 square miles, the island of St. Maarten/St. Martin is the smallest landmass in the world to be divided between two governments, the Dutch and the French. And guess how many beaches? 37! We explored a different beach every day and here are some of our favourites as well as more offbeat stops or recommendations:

- **Galion Beach** is just past the frequently-mentioned tourist spot the **Butterfly Farm**. There is also a Humane Society next door; if you're an animal lover please drop off a small donation ... it is much appreciated. The road to the beach is very rough with lots of potholes, but is a popular beach for a day of sun and fun, especially for kids. A coral reef surrounds the shallow water providing very calm waters throughout the day.

- **Friars Bay**, just north of Marigot, had calm waters even when other beaches were wavy. Food, drink and shade is plentiful here.

- **Petite Plage** just past the gourmet town of Grand Case was picturesque, calm and not at all busy.

- **Anse Marcel** is at the northern end of the island where the Hotel Le Meridien is located. The road up and over **Pigeon Pea Hill** is very scenic and worth the drive solely for that reason. Spending some time at the beach, touring the hotel grounds and marina there is a bonus.

- **Dawn Beach** is another great spot known especially for its calm waters and snorkelling over the offshore reef. Scavenger's Bar has casual atmosphere with plenty of picnic tables; it's a great place to sit and enjoy a cold beer and a snack.

- **Guana Beach** is lovely, but rough with undertows so not recommended for swimming. It's fun place to plant a towel and beach umbrella and watch the surfers – both body and board, battle the choppy water.

- Anyone who knows this island will ask if you were there, so you might as well make a stop at **Orient Beach** and take in the island's most famous – clothing optional – beach. It is long and wide and has many restaurants, shops, kiosks and activities. It is certainly the most busy.

- **Paradise Peak**. In the centre of St. Martin at approx.

1,400 feet is **Pic Paradis**, the highest point on the island. You can leave the car beside the road and climb to the top, where a spectacular view of the coast and the tropical forest below awaits. This is the day to wear good walking shoes and take binoculars.

- **Loterie Farm** (admissions US\$5), opened recently to rave reviews, is located on the road to Paradise Peak amid the island's only tropical forest. The Farm offers various guided hiking trails. These groomed trails were formerly the supply routes used in the height of the sugarcane plantation era of the 18th century. There are concerts and other art perform-

ances scheduled on a regular base; check what's coming up while you are there. You can also make reservations and have dinner at the highly acclaimed **Hidden Forest Café**. Everything is fresh from their garden and our dinner enjoyed in these unusual surroundings was absolutely perfect and is highly recommended for an unforgettable night out. www.loterie-farm.com.

- **Grandes Cayes** on the northeast side is not really a beach but has the reputation of being a great dive and surfing site. This is the site of one of the Nature Reserves on the island and provides good views of **Pinel Island**, which is well sign-posted on the island roadways. If you are in the area, stop at little shack in the town of **Cul de Sac** for some "Ma Doudou Rum" which is a blend of spiced and fruit flavoured rums. This local

product comes dressed up in an unusual bottle, which is hand-painted and individually decorated by local artists. The bottle I brought back for my husband has a painting of a gorgeous blonde mermaid sitting on a rock and cost about US\$20.

- Many **artists** live in St. Martin and local artwork is prominently featured in markets and gift boutiques. Some names include Roland Richardson, Francis Eck, Antoine Chapon, etc. One we particularly liked and whose gallery we visited was Dona Bryhiel. Dona has exhibited in Paris, New York and Stuttgart and has a shop just off the road near **Oyster Bay**. There you can purchase her original oil paintings, watercolours, T-shirts, postcards and other unusual souvenirs.

- For **beachwear** at really great prices, I don't think you could beat **Rima's Beach World** products sold at many craft locations on the island as well at their head office at 95 Pond Fill Road, Philipsburg. They sell everything from pareos and



top: Martha at Pic Paradis
bottom: Great Bay at Philipsburg

... continued on page 20

Some of **Air Transat's** new offerings are mentioned in our Tour Talk column but it's worth mentioning here that an important new route being offered by this airline is the direct flight from Toronto to San Juan, Puerto Rico. We will be featuring Puerto Rico as a destination in itself in our pages this fall, but it's also an important route for many cruise departures. AT also wants us to tell you about its hygienic new leather seats now being installed in economy class as well as club class.

Jetsgo has introduced a year-round service between Toronto and Moncton in addition to its existing service to St. John's and Halifax with, of course, connections available to Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver. Also new from Jetsgo, effective 20 September, is a twice daily flight from Toronto to New York's La Guardia and, beginning early October, Sarasota and West Palm Beach will be added to the other Toronto-Florida destinations (Fort Lauderdale, St. Petersburg, Fort Myers and Orlando). Jetsgo also flies out of Montreal to Orlando and Fort Lauderdale. And don't forget their 'Loonie Sundays' ... flights that go on sale one second past midnight (Mountain Time) for just a dollar. You can check www.Jetsgo.net on Saturday evening for the exact start time for these offers across the country.

Signature Vacations' flights with **Skyservice** will also be more comfortable this fall and winter with hot meals on all flights over 4 hours and additional legroom as 18 seats are being removed from the Signature branded B757s and 6 from the small Airbus 320.

WestJet has added three new cities – Tampa, New York and Palm Springs (California) – to its network. Non-stop service between Toronto and Tampa and New York are due to commence in the fall and between Calgary and Palm Springs in January 2005. WestJet will also offer service between Toronto and Orlando and Fort Lauderdale in October.

Air Canada has added non-stop service from Toronto to Bogota, Colombia and Caracas, Venezuela to its South and Central American network, a network which already includes Chile, Argentina and Costa Rica.

TravelScoop is wondering if any readers are familiar with **QuikAir**? This airline operates in Alberta (High Level, Edmonton and Calgary), Ontario (Ottawa and Waterloo with plans to expand to Toronto's Buttonville Airport), Québec (Montreal) with further plans to expand into Saskatchewan (between Saskatoon and Regina), to Windsor, ON., Halifax, NS., and to Boston. Details at 1 800 551 7845 and www.quikair.ca

tilley hat story

Some months ago we invited your Tilley hat stories. Several of you, including Helen Lane of Nanaimo, wrote to tell us that the hat usually identifies the wearer as a Canadian. "We recently returned from Egypt," she says, "where our group fell into conversation with an American tourist at Abu Simbel. At the conclusion of our conversation he enquired if we were Canadians and when we confirmed we were he smiled and said 'I thought I recognized the Tilley hats!'"

However, it is Helen's Norwegian experience that earns her the new hat we offered for your best story. She writes: "My husband Bill never ventures out without his Tilley hat, which was a Father's Day gift about ten years ago and which is still going strong. But he almost lost it last October when we were in Norway. We were staying in Bergen and had taken one of the

'Norway in a Nutshell' day cruises that are offered in the region. It was a beautiful but cold day on the Aurland Fjord and we were on board a ship that carries about 30-40 passengers and freight up and down the fjord. I and most of the other passengers were inside keeping warm and Bill was outside taking pictures. But while he was doing so his hat blew off into the water. Seeing how upset he was, the crew decided to turn the ship around. After some maneuvering of the vessel one of the crew managed to retrieve the hat from the water with a long pole, to the delight of Bill and the approval of the other passengers who were watching."

Thanks for sharing this story Helen and Bill. A new Tilley hat is on its way to you! Hope you manage to keep it safe and that it accompanies you on many travels! – Ed.

Visit website www.thetravelsociety.com where you can see full-colour photos and renew your subscription on-line

September is the month when the 'winter sun' brochures from the big tour operators – Conquest, Signature Vacations, Transat Holidays, World of Vacations, and so on – usually appear in travel agencies. There's business news here and a number of new destinations. Your agent will have all these big, glossy brochures or you can find each company on line.

Transat Holidays (newly named from Air Transat Holidays) has formed an alliance with **World of Vacations**, giving lots of package options as well as air-only possibilities with Air Transat. Transat has departures from **Toronto, Hamilton, London and Thunder Bay**, while World of Vacations offers sun packages from departure points **across Canada**, plus WestJet connectors to Toronto for their winter packages (air and car) to the **United Kingdom**. Transat is offering packages and/or air-only to **Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Puerto Rico** (a new Toronto-San Juan direct flight), **St. Martin/St. Maarten** and **Venezuela** as well as a wide variety of cruise packages with such lines as Royal Caribbean, Norwegian, Holland America and Costa Cruises. New – and unusual – from World of Vacations are the islands of **Roatan (Honduras)** and **San Andres (Columbia)** in

the southern Caribbean Sea. From the brochure Roatan's Fantasy Island, in particular, looks unspoiled and tempting. This is billed as a fine scuba dive destination with dive packages detailed in the WoV brochure. And both Transat and WoV offer early-booking bonuses.

G.A.P. Adventures has details of its trips to **Antarctica**, the **Falklands** and the **Amazon River**, not only for the coming season but also for 2006 for those who are thinking that far ahead. These trips are aboard the world's oldest expedition cruise ship – aptly named *Explorer*. For your brochure call G.A.P.'s head office in Toronto at 1 800 465 5600 or 416 260 0999 or log on to www.gapadventures.com

If you're considering a fall tour of **Newfoundland** you'll receive an extra day for a dollar if you book with **Maxxim Vacations**. Available until the end of October, this deal is offered with the 7-night self-drive tours known as Voyage of the Vikings and Western Newfoundland Adventure. For full details call 1 800 567 6666 or visit www.maxximvacation.com

New - and unusual - from **Conquest** are vacations in **La Ceiba, Honduras** and **Cartagena, Columbia** in addition to such mainstream destinations as **Mexico**, the **Caribbean** and **Florida**.

c r u i s e n e w s

Windstar Cruises has announced that they will be returning to **Costa Rica** in January, February and March 2005 after a 2-year hiatus. Also on the itinerary will be a stop at San Juan del Sur in Nicaragua. The 148-passenger *Wind Star* can visit small ports and bays that are inaccessible to large cruise ships, thus enabling passengers to more fully appreciate Costa Rica as an ecotourism haven. Naturalist Carlos Picado, a native of Costa Rica, is aboard every cruise to share his expert insight into his country's history, cultural, geography and biodiversity. Shore excursions include a canopy walk in Guanacaste, sailing and snorkelling from a catamaran, hiking in Manuel Antonio National Park, a tour of the ancient city of Granada and a horseback ride into the rainforest to swim in a pool at the foot of a tumbling waterfall. Or ... you can stay on board and take advantage of the vessel's swimming platform for waterskiing, kayaking, sailing, windsurfing and snorkelling or, of course, you can just relax! These cruises are luxurious but informal ... no dressing up required! If you reserve before 31 October you will find the rates for these 7-day Costa Rica cruises begin at US\$2,036 pp. Your

agent should have details of Windstar cruises, or call 1 800 258 7245 for a brochure or visit www.windstar-cruises.com

How about being one of the seven passengers on board the freighter *Golden Isle* as she sails from **Rotterdam, Holland**, via various ports in **northern Europe** to **Namibia, South Africa** and **Mozambique** in approximately 65 days? Accommodation looks attractive for this type of cruise and prices are between US\$120 and \$139 (depending on the chosen cabin) double or single, per day. (See Maris details below.)

Another interesting freighter cruise, available for just two passengers in the Owner's twin-bedded cabin, is aboard the *Licorne* as she sails from **England**, around **Europe** to **Egypt** and through the **Suez Canal** to the **Seychelles, Reunion, Mauritius, Madagascar** and to **Kenya** at a price of US\$89 dbl. per day or \$101 single. Details and cabin photos of these and many other freighter cruises available from Maris at 1 800 99 MARIS or online at www.freightercruises.com

BERMUDA

Nine renowned chefs will be in Bermuda between 11 and 16 November for that island's **Culinary Arts Festival**. Five of them hail from the States, one from England and three of them are from Canada. So if you're interested in seeing Susur Lee of Toronto and Dominique & Cindy DUBY of Vancouver at work in the sun call 1 800 BERMUDA or visit www.bermudaculinaryarts.com and plan a mouth-watering and informative trip there! Activities include seminars, cooking demonstrations, tastings, dinners and themed excursions to local farms and fresh food markets.

BRITAIN

New hotels seem to open in **London** almost every month. Check out the **Hotel Saint Gregory**, in the heart of the City district and just five minutes' walk from Liverpool Street Station, where week-end rates start at £99. Reservations at 011 44 20 7613 9800, www.saint-gregory-hotel.com.

History buffs (and lawyers) will no doubt get a kick out of staying in London's newest hotel, but with rates starting at £225 (approx. C\$535) they'll need to have deep pockets. Once the Great Marlborough Street Magistrate's Court – where cases involving many famous (and infamous) people have taken place, including Oscar Wilde – this building, located a short walk from Bond, Carnaby and Regent Streets, is now the **Courthouse Hotel**, featuring private tables at The Bar, original prison cells and a restaurant called Silk. No charge, however, for taking a peek at www.thecourthousehotel.com or call 011 44 20 7297 5555 for reservations.

Lots of good things in London come free, however, and that includes the **National Portrait Gallery**, just off Trafalgar Square, where an exhibition this fall is sure to appeal to travellers. **Off the Beaten Track** is an exhibition that celebrates women travellers over the past three centuries with their portraits, photographs, paintings and souvenirs assembled from museums and private collections around the country. At this exhibition visitors will learn how Victorian traveller Mary Kingsley defended herself with a canoe paddle when a crocodile attempted to board her boat, how Penelope Chetwode made a remarkable river crossing in India and, in addition, can prepare themselves to take Lady Hester Stanhope's advice to respectable women on answering calls of nature whilst in the desert! This exhibition is on now and daily until 31 October and more details can be found at www.npg.org.uk

Architect Daniel Libeskind is no stranger to Canadians. Check out his work (including his plans for the rebuild-

ing of the World Trade Center site) at the **Barbican Art Gallery's** exhibition **Space of Encounter: The Architecture of Daniel Libeskind** between 16 September and 23 January. Open daily, admission £8, details at www.barbican.org.uk.

CANADA

Experiencing Canada's winter wonderland can be a joy for the passengers in a car, but a nightmare for the driver. Why don't you turn your whole party into passengers this coming December and enjoy a festive Rocky Mountaineer train journey in **Canada's West** and the **Canadian Rockies**, "the land of a million Christmas trees". A great idea if you have children along as the train meets Santa's sleigh route, or if you're a party of adults (perhaps with visitors from overseas here for the festive season) you're sure to enjoy the specialty coach featuring live jazz and a bar serving mulled wine and eggnog as well as the usual offerings. Throughout these 2-day journeys guests can move between the coaches and enjoy entertaining commentary on the history, geography and culture of the region as well as the sparkling scenery and fine Canadian cuisine. For details of these and other, longer, train vacations see your travel agent, call 1 800 665 7245 or www.WinterRailVacations.com

But before winter comes, how about a fall getaway in the beautiful **Ottawa Valley**? The new *2004 Ottawa Valley Autumn Highlights* brochure is filled with a variety of specially-priced fall packages, including romantic getaways, a new inn and spa nestled in the forest, paddling opportunities at a historic inn, activity filled-resort stays, discounted golfing adventures, biking tours, ski chair lift rides to view the magnificent colours, a spectacular waterfall attraction that promotes the square pine timber and lumbering era in Quebec, a 2-day self-guided auto tour through the rural routes and various agrifood operations of the scenic Ottawa Valley. For your copy of the brochure, please contact the Ottawa Valley Tourist Association at 1 800 757 6580 or visit www.ottawavalley.org.

The **Gatineau Hills**, in Québec and close to Ottawa, are also famous for their fall colours and there are lots of packages and activities planned around them. For details call 1 800 465 1867 or visit www.canadascapital.gc.ca/gatineau

Fancy spending some time in **Montreal**? Check out the lofts designed for both short-term and extended-stay guests at the history Auberge du Vieux-Port. They offer full kitchens and many other features and they look very nice indeed. For a look at what's in store visit www.aubergeduvieuxport.com

It's not too late to catch some outstanding theatre or wine tour packages in the **Niagara** region. **Four Points by Sheraton St. Catharines Niagara Suites** is offering a variety of getaways this fall that are well-priced for this area, that is becoming quite expensive. For full details call 905 984 8484 or 1 877 848 3782 or visit www.four-points.com/stcatharines

It's almost 50 years since Hurricane Hazel hit **Ontario** and there are several events being planned to commemorate the event. On Friday, October 15 the **Humber Heritage Committee** will be presenting its annual event that includes videos, slides, talks and audience participation. Further details by calling 416 767 7633. Special for the 50-year anniversary is the **Weston Historical Society's** 16 October walk at 10 a.m. (for information e-mail westonhistoricalsociety@msn.com) while on the same day at 1 p.m. the **Ontario Heritage Foundation** will host an event to unveil a provincial plaque in Kingsmill Park (information by calling the foundation at 416 314 4907 and asking for Kathryn Dixon).

ITALY

With the Olympic Games in Athens now behind us, sports fans will be starting to think "**Turin**". Scheduled for the winter of 2006, many details can already be found on the official website www.visitturin2006.com including news of tours that can be taken now of the spectacular sites, all designed by renowned architects and already well under construction.

KOREA

The Korea National Tourism Organization has released new editions of its excellent *Travel Planner's Guide* and *Korea Travel Guide*. Available on line at www.tour2korea.com, they list accommodation, transportation details, attractions, maps and more. And if exploring Korea independently is in your plans you'll be pleased to know that travellers can now purchase the KORAIL Pass directly from www.korail.go.kr prior to leaving Canada. KR passes are excellent value. They are available for unlimited, continuous rail travel and range from C\$83 for a 3-day adult pass to C\$181 for a 10-day pass. Holders of the pass can also take advantage of additional services and discounts at participating hotels, rental cars, city tours and more. And Seoul's new ultra-modern rail station has just opened, providing easy rail, subway and bus connections with dozens of ticket booths, six information counters for assistance in a variety of languages and state-of-the-art signage.

U.S.A.

Arizona prides itself on offering visitors a wide range of fascinating learning experiences. How about taking part in an archaeological adventure that offers guests the opportunity to participate in a hands-on working field programme to map and record unexplored sites among incredible scenery? Excursions range from one to 10 days. For more information visit www.archaeologicaladventures.com. As well as being home to many ancient sites, Arizona provides a home to a wide variety of birds. One of the most incredible annual events is the hummingbird migration, when up to 17 species can be seen. Two conservation areas welcome guests to watch and assist research associates as they weigh and band some of these delicate creatures. If you'd like to be involved visit www.visitsierravista.com. For more learning ideas visit www.arizonaguide.com and for great fall deals see www.arizonavacationvalues.com or call 1 866 275 5843.

If **New York City** is in your plans and you'd like to visit the **Statue of Liberty**, newly opened after two years of extensive renovations and security upgrades, you risk be disappointed unless you have advance reservations, for a timed-pass ticket is now required to enter the monument (although a limited number of daily tickets are available on a walk-in basis at the Circle Line ferry office). Tickets can be obtained at www.statuereservations.com or by calling 212 269 5755. Admission to the Statue of Liberty (and **Ellis Island**) is free, but a ferry ticket is required which costs US\$10, less for seniors and children. If you don't make a reservation you can still visit **Liberty Island** and take a guided or audio tour, but you will not be allowed inside the monument. Once inside the monument visitors can reach the observation platform level only; the statue's crown and torch are no longer accessible.

A visit to **New York's Museum of Modern Art** is on many visitors' wish list but its US\$20 admission is a bit steep. However, on 20 November MoMA will reopen its midtown Manhattan building after extensive rebuilding and renovations and on that day you can visit for free. No doubt it will be very crowded, but it will be quite an historic occasion. For museum information call 212 708 9400 or visit www.moma.org

And if you are in the state of **New York** this fall, why not plan to enjoy a day or week-end cruise close to New York or on the **Hudson River**? **NY Waterway Cruises** has an appealing range of outings, from half-day 'Autumn on the Hudson' excursions to river trips that visit some of the area's legendary estates or **West Point Military Academy**. Details by calling 1 800 53 FERRY or at www.nywaterway.com

found that shouldn't be there.

The next morning four of us jumped into the runabout and headed for Rainbow Bridge, a popular destination. The Bridge arches 290 feet above the stream bed on arms of sandstone 33 feet wide, creating the world's largest natural bridge. Although the Navajo Tribe knew of the bridge, the first white man did not see it until 90 years ago. If visitors are not travelling by houseboat, daily tours are operated out of Wahweap Marina to view this spectacular monument.

What is so different about Glen Canyon is the variety of the walls, shapes, stone formation and unusual beauty. Huge curved arches have been worn out from steep sides forming a bandstand shape. Unusual hole formations may go across a wall in a straight line, looking as though they were man-made rather than formed by the force of wind and water. Gigantic, square-shaped rocks sit atop spindly necks, the sandstone sides having been washed or blown away. Some of the cliff walls are stained with what is called "desert varnish" which gives a dark, polished look to the rock face. The scenery was fabulous. You have to admire the creatures of the desert, their survival and tenacity in such a barren yet wonderful land. At night, with the generator off, the only sound was the occasional fish jumping. The night sky was stunning. Five days wasn't long enough. We all definitely

want to go back.

There are lots of opportunities for the fit and experienced to hike into different canyons, or wonderful walks for the less active. There are a number of natural wind tunnels or slot canyons to view. Slot canyons are narrow, deep and often overhanging. Some measure less than a meter across at the top but drop hundreds of feet from the rim to the natural floor. We boated (in the runabout) into a very interesting crevice, where we could touch the sides of the walls as they narrowed to the top. Canyon wrens could be seen as they darted in and out of cracks.

Air Canada or America West fly into Phoenix, where car rental is easy. Tourist brochures offer great discounts for hotels in and around the airport. We paid US\$39.00 walk-in rate with a coupon the night before our 07:20 departure home. For houseboat rental call 1 800 528 6154 or www.visitlakepowell.com. The cost worked out to about US\$1,000 pp, not an inexpensive trip, but it was certainly one of the most interesting we have ever taken. Even the drive from Phoenix and Flagstaff through the desert is awesome. 🇺🇸

Joan and George Pitman are TravelScoop subscribers who live in Vancouver, BC

St. Martin ... continued from page 15

caftans to hats and beach bags. Pack light and support Rima! www.beachwearima.com

● Oh yes, if you're so inclined bring some spending money and try your luck at **casinos** on the Dutch side. We discovered some of the machines actually pay out! Try downtown Philipsburg or go out to the larger one at Princess Beach Casino at Marina Port de Plaisance. Good luck!

I hope these tips help you get the most out of a visit to St. Martin/St. Maarten whose apt slogan is "A little European, a lot of Caribbean." Have a great time! 🇺🇸

Martha Lasichuk is a TravelScoop subscriber who lives in Bolton, ON

*As already mentioned, the St. Maarten Tourist Office can be contacted at 416 622 4300 or visit the official website at www.st-maarten.com. The office has a variety of brochures available, including one giving details of small properties. I met with a representative from this office a week or so ago and she had a couple of 'personal favourite' recommendations to pass on: the historic **Pasangrahan Royal Guest House** in Philipsburg (but also on the beach), where rooms are from US\$88 per night (and you can request the *Queen's Room* where *Queen Juliana of the Netherlands* once slept), and the charming **Mary's Boon Beach Plantation** on Simpson Bay Beach where rates are from US\$75 - Ed.*

travel society news

Just a couple of notes regarding *TravelScoop's* Travel Society. You will have read on page 2 that **Kapawi Lodge**, an add-on option to our Galapagos Islands tour, has been short-listed for an award by the prestigious *Smithsonian Magazine* and Travelers Conservation Foundation, both of the United States. These awards will be made in December, so please act quickly if you've been considering this trip as we are unsure of availability if this destination receives this award.

Interest has picked up again for our **China** tours. We expect to host a number of these well-priced tours covering China's highlights next year, so there is good availability. And there is still space available on our second fall tour scheduled for 17 October this year. If you're planning on going to China, now is the time, before the crowds of tourists start returning. Please call us and join our October tour or register for one of our departures next year. Details on p. 21.

FROM \$3,942 FOR 18 DAYS!

FULLY ESCORTED

Departures: 17 October 2004

March, April, Sept. & Oct. 2005



It is vast, fascinating and mysterious and it has beckoned travellers from the west for centuries. Mention it to avid travellers and they are sure to say, "Yes, I hope to visit China one day." And what would they choose to experience? A cruise on the mighty Yangtze River (now in the process of changing for ever); a look at the work-in-progress on the massive Three Gorges Dam; a walk on the ancient Great Wall; views of charming villages, lush terraced hillsides and magnificent mountain peaks; visits to the great cities of Shanghai and Beijing; a trip to view one of the world's greatest archaeological finds

centuries-old terra-cotta warriors in Xi'an; you'll visit bustling Chongquin and see its pandas; stay in Hangzhou and travel into the hills covered with tea plantations; explore the exquisite gardens of Suzhou, and visit Nanjing and Wuzhen. And you'll have time to explore spectacular Shanghai. Throughout the trip you'll see magnificent architecture, you'll be entertained at

China ... Yangtze Spectacular

... the 6,000 terra-cotta warriors at Xi'an; scenes of palaces, pagodas, pavilions and pandas; tastes of Peking duck and Chinese banquets and so much more. So how do you choose? When you decide on The Travel Society's tour there's no need to choose because all these highlights are included. Yes, in these remarkable 18 days you'll stay in Beijing; you'll take a 4-day first-class cruise on the Yangtze with many shore excursions; you'll fly to see those cen-

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!

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing from:

Vancouver	\$3,942 pp/dbl
Victoria/Nanaimo/Kamloops	\$4,089 pp/dbl
Calgary/Edmonton	\$4,188 pp/dbl
Saskatoon/Regina	\$4,434 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$4,372 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$4,298 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,372 pp/dbl
Halifax/Quebec City/London	\$4,495 pp/dbl
Thunder Bay/St. John's	\$4,643 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$1,200 (Sharing can be arranged.)

Taxes and visas extra.

GREAT ADD-ONS:

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

Prices are subject to confirmation

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

Your tour costs includes:

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

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



Guatemala Grandeur

Departing 11 February 2005

Each tour is limited to 18 people

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

Your tour includes:

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

21 days, prices include all airfares

Space limited to 20 people

A Traveller's Turkey

Departing: May & September 2005

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

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

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

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

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

Toronto	\$5,073.00 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$5,073.00 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$5,073.00 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$5,324.00 pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$5,324.00 pp/dbl	Calgary	\$5,324.00 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$5,253.00 pp/dbl	Halifax	\$5,253.00 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

Please call 1 877 926 2500 or 416 926 2500
for the complete itineraries



Copper Canyon

October, November 2004, February, March, April 2005

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	\$3,448 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$3,448 pp/dbl
Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg	\$3,648 pp/dbl

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

Please call for prices from other departure cities

Your tour includes:

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

NEW PRICES
from
\$9,899

Down Under in Australia & New Zealand Cultures, Trains & Wineries 28 Days.

With optional 3-day Fiji extension Departure: 13 Nov 2004 & 12 Mar 2005

Highlights...

Cairns, Great Barrier Reef, Ayers Rock, Alice Springs, The Ghan, Adelaide, Barossa Wine Valley, Great Ocean Road, Melbourne, Sydney Opera House, Hunter Valley, Queenstown, Milford Sound, Mt. Cook, Christchurch, Tranz-Alpine Express, Wellington, Overland Express Train, Rotorua

Imagine spending almost a month of your life being pampered as you are shown two of the world's very special – and unique – destinations. Come with The Travel Society to Australia and New Zealand and, yes, you will enjoy a luxurious trip and be shown most of the highlights of 'downunder', all at an exceptional price. What would be on your list of highlights for these two countries? Cairns and the Great Barrier Reef in a glass-bottomed boat or with a snorkel; a ride on the spectacular Kuranda Railway; a trip to the Outback, Alice Springs and Ayers Rock; a trip on the legendary Ghan train; wine tasting in the Barossa Valley and Coonawarra; a trip on the Great Ocean Road – one of the world's most famous drives; Melbourne and Canberra; Sydney, with dinner and a performance at the Sydney Opera House; penguins, koalas and kangaroos; New Zealand's handsome city of Queenstown; a cruise on Milford Sound; Mt Cook; New Zealand wine tastings; Christchurch; the Tranz-Alpine Express train ride; the ferry ride to Wellington on the North Island; the Overland Express train to Rotorua; Auckland; the glowworm-lit Waitomo Caves; Maori villages, songs and dances; kiwi birds and other unique wildlife? Those are the highlights our trip covers, but of course there's lots more to tell you: excellent hotels, gourmet dinners, visits with local families, flightseeing tours, time for shopping and museums ... in fact 28 days filled with new sights, sounds and friends. It's the Travel Society's 28-day Cultures, Trains and Wineries tour of Australia and New Zealand. And while you're over in that part of the world, why don't you also enjoy a 3-night extension to Fiji where you can take an island tour, explore South Pacific Island culture and relax for a while on the island's sandy beaches beside clear ocean waters.

PRICES INCLUDING AIR AND TAXES departing from:

Toronto	\$9,999 pp/dbl	Calgary	\$ 9,949 pp/dbl
Ottawa	\$9,999 pp/dbl	Edmonton	\$ 9,949 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$10,099 pp/dbl	Victoria	\$10,019 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$9,999 pp/dbl	Halifax	\$10,099 pp/dbl
Vancouver	\$9,899 pp/dbl		Single supplement \$1,750

Optional add-on 3-night Fiji \$895 pp/dbl

Prices are subject to confirmation

Your tour includes:

- Return trans-Pacific airfare with Qantas
- Domestic air from your gateway
- First-class hotels accommodation throughout
- Luxury a/c touring coaches
- All tain fares
- An experienced tour escort
- Special Travel Society experiences
- Meals as per itinerary
- Fully comprehensive insurance
- All transfers with full luggage service
- All sightseeing (with no hidden extras)
- Hotel taxes and Australian and NZ GST.

NEW PRICES

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

14 days departing 12 Oct, 9 Nov 2004, 18 Jan, 15 Feb, 12 Apr 2005

The Travel Society is proud to be able to offer its members an outstanding trip to some of the world's most spectacular destinations. Who hasn't dreamed of cruising to the Galapagos Islands and seeing wildlife as Darwin witnessed it? Think of the unique adventure you will enjoy, of the stories you will have to tell and the photographs you will take! You will spend a week aboard your first-class 20-passenger ship, taking daily shore excursions to a variety of the islands with experienced naturalists in groups of no more than 10 people per guide.

You'll also visit other destinations in Ecuador, and then you can choose to enjoy the exciting optional extensions: to Kapawi - a ecological lodge in the Amazon and/or a visit Machu Picchu in Peru. We'll take care of all the travel details. All you have to do is enjoy!

PRICES INCLUDE AIR AND TAXES departing from:

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

Please call

GREAT ADD-ONS, INCLUDING AIR:

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

Please call

Prices are subject to confirmation

Your tour includes:

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

Please call **TheTravelSociety** 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

India's Golden Triangle

FULLY ESCORTED

20 days departing 11 October 2004, March/April 2005

from
\$4,496

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



PRICES INCLUDING AIR departing from:

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

Your tour includes:

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

YOUR DISCOUNT VOUCHER FOR RENEWALS, GIFTS AND NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS

Don't let my subscription run out ...

- please: **RENEW MY SUBSCRIPTION** _____
 or **START A NEW SUBSCRIPTION** _____
 or **SEND A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION** _____

check your discount choice, we will extend your subscription from the expiry date:

- ___ **3 years for \$110.00**
 (a 21% saving off the regular \$140.00)
 ___ **2 years for \$79.50**
 (a 16% saving off the regular \$95.00)
 ___ **1 year for \$44.00**
 (a 10% saving off the regular \$49.00)

All prices include GST.
 ___ my cheque is enclosed, or charge my:
 ___ VISA ___ Mastercard ___ AmEx
 card #: _____
 expiry: _____ tel: _____
 signature: _____

I agree to pay TravelScoop the above amount in accordance with the card issuer agreement.

Address for **NEW** or **GIFT** subscription only

name: _____
 address: _____
 town: _____ prov: _____
 postal code: _____ tel: _____
 gift message: _____

Send to: *TravelScoop*

218-1033 Bay St Toronto ON Canada M5S 3A5
 Fax: 416 926 0222 e-mail: brit@thetravelsociety.com
 Publications Mail Agreement: # 40063904 & # 09925

your subscription expires on:
 (month - year)

**Password:
chilly**