



The Travel Society Magazine
www.thetravelsociety.com

Travel Scoop

Vol. 22, No. 8 October 2004

Brighten Winter with a Trip to Seville
Bequia Beckons
Costa Rica
Taos Ski Valley: Skiing As It Used To Be!
Volunteering in Kenya

TravelScoop

The Travel Society Magazine

Editor

Ann Wallace
ann@thetravelsociety.com

Contributors

Nancy Macdonald
Ted and Judy van der Veen
Richard Moore
Anne Raymond
Sandra Harper

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.

October 2004

Vol. 22, No. 8

contents

Readers' Letters

We Love These Mexican Motels	3
Travel in Australia and New Zealand	4
A Visit to Toronto	4
Two Gems in Southeast Asia	4

Destinations

Brighten Winter with a Trip to Seville	6
Bequia Beckons	8
Costa Rica	10
Taos Ski Valley: Skiing As It Used To Be!	12
Volunteering in Kenya	14



Torre de Oro
reflected in the
Guadalquivir River,
Seville
(N Macdonald)

Where is this?
Find out next month!



News

Travel Digest	16
Tour Talk	18
Cruise News	18
At the Galleries	19
Riding the Rails	19

editor's letter ...

Well, Fall is well and truly here and I hope it is glorious in your neck of the woods. Here in Toronto, after an indifferent summer, we have been enjoying a true Indian summer and Ontario looks wonderful.

TravelScoop is a mixed bag this month, with stories on a getaway to Spain, a bird-watching tour through Costa Rica, an unusual Caribbean island, an old-fashioned ski destination and some news on volunteering in Kenya. I hope these stories will inspire your own travels and, from a practical point of view, help you to follow in your fellow subscribers' footsteps (or ski tracks!).

Talking of practicalities, there's news from the U.S. Transportation Security Administration that as of 20 September all passengers must remove outer coats and all jackets (suit, sports, athletic warm-ups etc.) and place them in a bin for x-ray along with other personal belongings before walking through the metal detector. This change is designed to strengthen check point screening of passengers for explosives as recommended by the 9/11 Commission Report. In addition, an increased number of travellers will be selected for secondary screening. What all this means is that the security procedures will take more time and even longer line-ups are to be expected. This directive is for U.S. borders, but the same procedures can be expected in other jurisdictions. But now for the good news! After many complaints from international travellers about hostile treatment by immigrations officials, U.S. border personnel have been instructed to 'clean up their act' and a code of conduct has been put in place. We shall see! Apparently the complaints have come from all over the world, but the majority were from Britain.

Enjoy this lovely season and *bon voyage* in your travels.



We *L-o-v-e* These Mexican Motels

If touring independently in Mexico is in your plans there's something you should know. First, you need to be aware that, thankfully, the plethora of brand name, franchised motels that glut the highways and interstates of northern North America are not yet widely found in Mexico. The terms "motel" or "autohotel" have a distinctively different nuance of meaning here. But, with a bit of daring and a spirit of adventure, you too can learn that these hostelrys scattered on byways near most major towns, can be an ideal stop for a comfortable and economical overnight stay. Be aware, however, that you will be venturing into one of the particular cultural differences – and socio-moral anomalies in this very Catholic country – the "love motels" of Mexico.

We first encountered this lodging option on our second driving trip through Mexico. We were looking for a hotel and had been told there was nothing for at least an hour down the highway – and night was approaching fast. Suddenly, we saw up ahead a large neon palm topped by the words "Motel Paraiso" – The Paradise Motel. There was no familiar AAA approval logo, but the place looked brand new and neat and tidy. We wheeled through a narrow driveway and were confronted by two walls of what looked like huge shower curtains on either side of us, most of them drawn. We looked at each other somewhat puzzled. Did people sleep behind the shower curtains? More mysterious still, there was no office for checking in.

Just then, a man sprinted up to us and asked for the equivalent of US\$20. Having spent more than double that on even the cheapest accommodations in our two-week trip, we were suspicious and asked to see a room. We followed him to an open curtain, which sheltered a parking area beside a motel unit. He then

opened the door to the room and we saw, to our amazement, a king-sized bed-draped in fancy sheets, a carpeted floor, mirrors everywhere and a large bathroom with marble walls and equipped with large fluffy towels. A conversation pit with table and seating – also carpet covered – was off to one side of the room. It was an impressive step up from many of the more expensive rooms we'd stayed in elsewhere on our journey.

When my husband asked to register, the man said, "No, no. No paperwork."

"What kind of place is this?" Erik then asked.

"This, señor, is a hotel for lovers." And with that he took his leave of us. We soon realized how true this was. The programming on the TV was strictly adult fare, the mirrors were strategically placed and the room service menu focused heavily on liquors and chocolate.

"I wonder if in an hour we'll have to pay again," I mused. But no. We had a very comfortable night in what was to be our first, but not last, experience with a Mexican love motel.

In the last five to ten years, these establishments have sprouted up all over Mexico. They are strung along the highways leading in and out of most cities of any significant size and, sometimes, you'll find a small one in the middle of absolutely nowhere. They come in all shapes and sizes, from elaborate fantasy-themed complexes (for example "Mediterranean Nights") to rudimentary two or three-curtain establishments. They offer various amenities, from jacuzzis, ensuite-dining, large TVs and more. Their *raison d'être*, as you might have guessed, is to offer a comfortable but inexpensive place for people to conduct their romances – illicit or licit – in a country where so many couples live cheek by jowl with all their extended family, with virtually no privacy for more personal matters. Hence the shower curtains – or metal garage doors in newer models – so that no one can see whose car is there or who gets in and out. Complete discretion is the underlying principle.

We've come to love these places. Each one is an adventure, they are almost always in great locations and the cost of equivalent "conventional hotel" accommodation is far higher than these "nudge, nudge, wink, wink" facilities. But you have to know the rules, which are seldom spelled out in writing. For example, there are various price ranges per room, depending on the length of your stay, say 100 pesos (about C\$11) for four hours, 150 pesos for six hours and 250 pesos (under C\$30) for 12 hours, i.e., "Toda la noche" (all night). Another rule: once you are in, you are in. If you want to leave for a while, go out to dinner, for example, you pay again when you return. So, arrive at your love-nest/crash pad as your last stop for the evening. Respect the privacy of others is another rule. Drive into your assigned unit, shut the curtain and stay put until it's time to leave. No loitering in the courtyard to check out other arrivals. No gossiping with the neighbours next door.

Not all love motels provide the lap of luxury, though. If the charge is low at older, basic-looking properties always ask to see the room before parting with your money. But the newer, higher-end places (up to about 400 pesos or C\$45 for "Toda la noche") are invariably great value: clean, comfortable and safe – apparently all adhering to good standards due to competitive pressures. We have found amusing, imaginative and nicely appointed love motels and we

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!

have occasionally ended up in mediocre accommodations that were noisy, cramped or lacking hot water – but we’ve more often been disappointed with “normal hotels” and at far higher prices. On one occasion, early on in our exploration of the genre, we were waved away from a large autohotel outside Saltillo, with the clear implication that this was not our “type of place.” Now wait a minute there, *amigo*, don’t take that view just because we’re Canadians!

Gundi Jeffrey is a Canadian TravelScoop subscriber living in Tlaxcala, Mexico. She often writes Mexican tips and stories for us.

Travel in Australia and New Zealand

We spent several weeks in Australia and New Zealand last winter and, not wanting to drive on the left hand side of the road, we found two excellent small tour operators to do winery tours whose details we would like to share with other readers.

For tours in the Central Otago wine region near Queenstown, New Zealand visit www.winetoursnz.com and for Australia check out the site of Cultural Tourism Professionals who are based in Adelaide: www.cultural-tourism.com.au. (The latter company will do any kind of tour out of Adelaide, including tours designed

for the handicapped.)

Both operators were extremely knowledgeable and we enjoyed our time with them. They were private tours in comfortable vehicles. With each tour, we were able to choose the wineries that we wanted to visit and in Australia, Joseph Heyes arranged private tastings for us. We did just a day tour in New Zealand but in Australia, it was a seven day tour.

*Joan Bingleman
Calgary, AB*

A Visit to Toronto

When I read Editor Ann’s piece about visiting Toronto if one is handicapped (September 03, p. 7) I didn’t think it would apply to us. But yes ... an unexpected accident put my husband on crutches and spoilt our more adventurous summer plans. But we travelled to Toronto, stayed in the InterContinental Hotel and had a great time. The hotel was a sophisticated treat for us country folk, we loved the harbour view and it was relatively easy for us to get around and do many of the things that Ann recommended. Thanks for giving us the idea and making the outcome of the accident more enjoyable than we ever would have imagined! All mended now!

*Sonia Smith,
Medicine Hat, AB*

I thought I would include this nice letter in TS because it gives me a chance to mention the InterContinental Toronto Centre hotel once again. Back in the summer I enjoyed a great dinner in their new Azure restaurant, where chef Masayuki Tamaru and sommelier Kit Gringrich were working their magic. While enjoying this dinner I remembered my previous article and thought again what a great restaurant this is for out-of-town visitors, with its soaring glass windows and sparkling urban view. Call 416 597 8142 for Azure reservations, 1 800 422 7969 for the hotel. AW.

Two Gems in Southeast Asia

We recently visited Myanmar (Burma) for 17 days with Eldertreks of Toronto; details are on their website www.eldertreks.com or call 1 800 741 7956. Since we had travelled with Eldertreks before, we expected this again to be a very informative and exciting experience, and we decided to re-charge our batteries before embarking on the long flight home by staying for a few extra days at a local beach.

A few months earlier we had seen a travel show about Myanmar on the OLN channel, where Ngapali Beach was praised as the nicest and least-known beach in Southeast Asia, so we investigated this location further. Ngapali is located about 300 km north-

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!

west of Yangon on the Bay of Bengal. The roads there are very poor, the estimated driving time is 14 hours, thus flying appeared to be the only feasible method of getting there.

The internet only showed a few attractive photographs of that beach, and named one or two hotels there, but with some further searching we found the e-mail address of KSS Wise Ltd., a travel agent in Bangkok (there is no internet or e-mail yet in Myanmar) e-mail sheinli@ptty.loxinfo.co.th. Mr. Shein Lin recommended the Silver Beach Resort Hotel at Ngapali at \$57 (all dollar prices U.S.) per night including breakfast for the two of us, plus the flight from Yangon to the nearest airport in Thandwe at \$144 each return. No down payment was needed; the tickets and hotel voucher would be delivered to our hotel in Yangon. What did we have to lose?

We confirmed the dates with Mr. Shein Lin, and as soon as we arrived in Yangon, the tickets and voucher were delivered as promised by Mr. Shein Lin's brother who lives there.

In spite of some concerns, we found Ngapali Beach to be an absolutely beautiful spot, the water is warm, the service is good and the people are very friendly. The Silver Beach Hotel is located on the north end of the two-mile long beach; there are a number of other hotels along the beach, ranging from very inexpensive guest houses at \$10 per night to the luxurious Sandoway Hotel at the south end which costs about \$250 per night off season. A number of new hotels are under construction.

Our accommodation was in individual cottages, very clean, with good beds, minibar, large bathroom with tub and shower and A/C. Larger cottages, accommodating up to four people are also available. The hotel restaurant, overlooking the beach is good, and there are a number of other good and very inexpensive local restaurants on the street just outside the resort entrance. The local seafood is excellent. The grounds at the resort are very well cared for with many blooming plants and small lawns; all under a

canopy of the healthiest coco palms we have ever seen. Many of the staff speak some English and/or German.

There is not much to do here except resting, swimming, walking along the beach and possibly renting a boat for half a day (\$10) to go sight seeing around the small islands. The snorkelling is not very good. There are some bicycles for rent and the Bayview Hotel next door to the Silver Beach apparently will soon be renting sailboats, kayaks and windsurfers; some equipment was lying on the beach but nothing appeared to be ready yet for rental.

We were very impressed with the efficient handling of our luggage upon arrival; someone met us in the arrivals lounge, took our airline luggage stubs, and led us to the waiting bus. Within minutes the luggage was loaded onto the bus and was ultimately delivered to our room. Our return flights were confirmed by the hotel staff, and on departure, the luggage was equally well delivered to the airport inspection station.

On route to Myanmar, we also wanted to spend a few days in Bangkok. A few months before the trip we had read in the May 2003 issue of *Condé Nast's Traveler* magazine about a new boutique hotel on Khaosan Road in the heart of the city's shopping district; where Buddy Lodge was hailed as one of the world's best 80 new hotels.

Checking the internet site – www.buddylodge.com – we found the hotel offered a very attractive rates of 4,900 Baht (about \$120) for a total of three nights in a deluxe room including breakfasts. We confirmed the rate by e-mail at guestservice@buddylodge.com and made the reservation. A down payment and/or credit card details were not requested.

Arriving in Bangkok at two o'clock in the morning, we took a limousine to the hotel and found to our surprise that Khaosan Road was still humming with activity; it is closed to vehicular traffic at night. Our cab had to stop at the nearest cross street, and we walked the 100 meters or so to the

hotel entrance, which is located in a shopping arcade. In spite of the late hour, there was English-speaking staff available to check us in and to help us with our luggage. Our worries that the noisy street would interfere with our sleep were groundless; the rooms are located toward the back of the hotel away from the street and are very quiet. We were on the third floor, and our room, #309, had a most beautiful balcony with an abundance of flowering tropical plants surrounding a small pond. The restaurant/dining room is on the second floor overlooking the street, and we enjoyed our breakfast there while watching the slow awakening of the various traders, merchants and shopkeepers down below. On the roof of the hotel is a large swimming pool with a bar, and adjacent to the third floor is a spa where we enjoyed a fantastic hour-long Thai massage for 1200 Baht each (\$30).

From the hotel we could walk in 25 minutes to the Grand Palace, one of the most famous attractions of Bangkok, and all kinds of shopping is right at the doorstep. About three doors down from the hotel is a well-stocked Boots Drugstore, and next to it a small supermarket, which also sells beer and spirits. The hotel does not have an airport pick-up service, but will provide transportation to the airport, about 25 minutes at times of minimal traffic, for 100 Baht per person (US\$2.50). It's a great address to have for Bangkok.

Incidentally, anyone planning to travel to Southeast Asia should try to avoid connecting through Los Angeles where the airport is in total disarray, and four hours seem to be the minimum time needed to change planes. Vancouver is a much better alternative; we went through immigration and customs there and caught our flight to Toronto in less than 90 minutes. If anyone is interested, we would be glad to provide more information: just call us at 1 905 634 1239.

*Heinz and Inge Jaeger
Burlington, ON*

Brighten Winter with a Trip to Seville

story and photos by Nancy Macdonald



The gardens of Reales Alcázares

T

he fragrance of oranges will now always bring me memories of a delightful escape to Seville from the grey cold weather of February in Toronto. The reason? Most avenues there are lined with orange trees laden with fruit. Lately, this has caused some problems, as there are more oranges being grown in this region than the marmalade industry uses. The multi-coloured tiled benches in the parks compliment the green of these trees, the stately palms and the budding bushes. Flamenco dresses swirl in every colour imaginable, both on stage and hanging in the doorways of the gift shops. Spanish art adds its own statement of joyful abandon. Winding through Seville, the blue Guadalquivir River glistened in warm sunlight most days. Even though the Golden Tower, Torre de Oro, is no longer covered in gold tiles, as it was when built in 1220, its reflection in the river still glows. No description can prepare you for the pinks, whites, greens, yellows and blues of the buildings. Don't miss the enclosed decorative iron and glass balconies around Guzman el Bueno street.

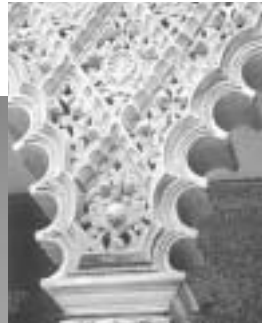
We stayed in the Santa Cruz area in the Hotel Fernando 111, an excellent location for walking to the major sights. Across the street, the square of Santa Maria La Blanco is lively with cafés. It's great fun, but noisy at night for those rooms with balconies onto the street. I'd request a quiet inside room or try the newly redecorated Hotel rey Alfonso X across the road. Don't miss the Church of Santa Maria La Blanca which was built on the remains of an old synagogue. It was redecorated in the 17th century with the most creative plasterwork in Seville, done by

the Borja brothers. It is worth a visit.

Most visits to gracious Seville begin with a tour of the magnificent Cathedral, declared a World Heritage UNESCO sight. Like many landmarks, the local history is told in the layers of building. Begun as a mosque in 1184, this became a Christian Cathedral in 1248. Your next adventure should be to climb the Giralda Tower which was built on a foundation of Roman stones and finished in brick. The gently-pitched ramps, designed so that horses could climb them, make it an easy ascent. The later Christian tower crowns this with a Renaissance bell shaft whose twenty-four bells chiming the hour startle any photographers who may be there. Directly below you will see the Patio of the Orange Trees, Patio de Los Naranjos, with its fountain for washing before entering the original Mosque. The Archbishop's Palace is on the left side of the checkerboard plaza below. This high location in the old town is well worth the climb for the view and the chance to orient yourself. Below, in the cathedral, you'll see a chapel with more gold than most churches. I hope by the time you go to Seville the controversy surrounding the remains in Christopher Columbus' tomb – are they really his bones that were moved here 300 years after he died? – will have been settled by DNA results comparing with a great-grandson's.

Nearby, the Reales Alcazares has an unimpressive entrance but the richly-decorated interior of this mediaeval castle is breathtaking. The lush gardens and pool outside complement the colourful Moorish-style tiles and the ornate plaster decoration of the rooms. Royal Palms line the walls and overlook the Murillo Gardens. Fine statues here honour Christopher Columbus' trip with ship sculptures on the columns.

At the end of these gardens, a right turn will take you past the tobacco factory made famous in the opera *Carmen*. It is now the university. The next corner houses the most elegant Hotel Alfonso X111 which is definitely worth a cocktail visit! Then you can continue your walk along the river past the Torre del Oro, the theatre and the bull ring, Plaza de Toros de la Real Maestranza. There, a short tour is



Plaster decoration of Reales Alcazares

Statue honouring Christopher Columbus' ship - Isabel - in the Murillo Gardens

a possibility and do try wielding the cape in the rotunda.

Further along, the Museum of Fine Arts, Museo de Bella Artes, is located in a former monastery. The building is as interesting as the masterpieces, many by Spanish painters Zurbaran and Murillo. I really enjoyed the English tour at the House of Pilatos whose details I found described in the Tourist Information of Seville booklet. You can obtain this from the Spanish Tourist Office, address below.

A side trip to Cordoba introduced us to an ultimate layering of buildings. The old Christian Basilica of San Vicente gave way to the Mosque of Cordoba. Now 856 of

the original 1,013 columns remain, joined by red and white arches. Work began in 1523 on the Holy Cathedral Church built inside this huge mosque. Combining all the styles of the 16th and 17th century it is a monument to the local Spanish architects. The carved mahogany choir stalls are particularly beautiful. Walking out through the orange tree patio, you'll find the old town charming. A statue of Maimonides, the philosopher and physician, is in a courtyard of an ancient Jewish synagogue.

Another day's excursion took us to the neighbouring town of Jerez of sherry fame. We visited the winery and bodega of the House of Sandeman, tasting those less common to us, the medium Amontillado, the dry Fino and Olorosos. A highlight

in Jerez is a visit to the Royal Riding School weekly performance by the Andalusian "dancing horses".

Optional side trips to Granada and Gibraltar were offered but those could fill another article. This "City in Depth" Tour was escorted by Jacques and Sandra Pauwels. If you'd like to find out more about their very reasonably priced tours call 519 753 2695 or email: tours@pauwelstravel.com

I loved the colour and Spanish liveliness of Seville. Tapas tasting and some excellent meals were a plus at the restaurants below. Flamenco shows are plentiful and the best reflect the extended family group around the fire challenging each other to "go for it".

... continued on page 20



Bequia Beckons

by Ted and Judy van der Veen

Bequia, sweet, sweet! So sings the yellow-eyed blackbird native to the Caribbean island of Bequia (pronounced Beckway) in the Grenadines. And how sweet it is! While no longer a quiet backwater, Bequia is just developed enough to have several accommodation and restaurant options while preserving its rural character. Most visitors arrive at Port Elizabeth in Admiralty Bay by ferry from “the mainland”, the island of St. Vincent, nine miles and an hour away to the north. There is also a small airstrip at the far end of the island, but we have been told the flight can be quite rough.

Your first stop should be the Tourism Association office at the end of the jetty where you may pick up an island map as well as a copy of *Bequia This Week* which details any special events, particularly which restaurant has live music each night. One of the two banks on the island is directly across the road from the jetty. They will change Canadian as well as U.S. dollars and euros. The local currency is the Eastern Caribbean (EC) dollar; \$1 CDN = approx. \$2 EC. Most shops will accept US cash, but of course the local currency is preferred. Credit card charges are sometimes expressed in US\$, depending on the establishment.

Hilly but not mountainous, this island invites the visitor to walk – to town, to the beach, to the hilltop. If your normal routine does not include hill climbing, training by climbing stairs will help. The total area of the island is seven square miles, and, as the brochure states, there are enough paved roads “for the flow of traffic”. You will probably not need a rental car; minivans serve as buses while the taxis are actually small pick-up trucks with benches on either side, a canvas top to protect from sun or rain, and some form of step for easy access. The drivers are unfailingly polite and good sources of information. Most visitors seem to develop a relationship with

one driver; if he is not available when you call him on his mobile phone, he will send someone in his stead. A taxi ride to just about anywhere will range from \$10-25 EC. We suggest you ask your driver to give you an island tour early in your stay to help you get your bearings. This will take about three hours and cost \$45 EC per person. Your tour will invariably include a stop at the *Spring Pottery*, built into the ruins of a more than 200-year-old sugar mill. The selection is not large, but there are exquisite pieces at reasonable prices. Loyal clients include Mick Jagger on drop-in visits from the nearby island of Mustique, playground of the rich and famous. Another stop will be at the *Oldhegg Turtle Sanctuary* where Bequian Orton (Brother) King raises endangered Hawksbill Turtle hatchlings until they are of a size that will give them a better chance of survival at sea. He will be happy to explain his mission to you while you look at the turtles. A donation of \$10 EC is requested. From the circle road on Mt. Pleasant, there are stunning views over the Atlantic. This is a delightful early morning walk, although it is a steep climb to get there.

Port Elizabeth has a very good produce market as well as grocery stores and bakeries, if you are self-catering. (All bread on the island is made either at home or in these bakeries.) There are also open-air T-shirt and souvenir stalls, as well as several excellent craft shops, model boat builders, and a superb bookstore which also sells nautical maps. Most of the restaurants, bars and hotels in town are along the Belmont Walkway right on the harbour. The beach is so clean that it is possible to bathe in town; nothing nicer than to stop for lunch or a drink at, say, *The Whaleboner Bar* (the bar really is a whale's rib and the barstools vertebrae!), then have a cool dip only steps away. The "best" restaurants are at the *Gingerbread* and *Frangipani Inns*, located side by side on the Belmont; reservations strongly advised. The *Frangipani* is renowned for its Thursday night barbecue and "jump-up" with a local steel band. You really must hear dinner music played on the pans; there is no way to describe Mozart and Beethoven played by a steel band! After dinner, the livelier island music begins, tourists and locals alike dance in the sand. The second "Tourist" area of the island is Lower Bay where there are several guesthouses, private apartments, and restaurants. *De Reef* has live music, jazz with a Caribbean flavour, on Sunday afternoons. Come for lunch, enjoy the music and a swim at this excellent beach. On the Sunday we were there, the surf was high, but the waters are more often quite still. There is music somewhere on the island most evenings, the venue changing. Many of the smaller eating establishments ask for dinner reservations; this not only helps plan meals, but also influences whether or not the musicians show up – so please comply rather than risk disappointment. Not all restaurants accept credit cards. One small place has a sign announcing "Mr. Credit is totally dead." For a quiet morning swim, walk to the oft-deserted Princess Margaret Beach, lying between Lower Bay and Port Elizabeth. The road down is very steep;

there is also access from town via a path over the headland. The catamaran *Passion* does day trips to several different areas; the trip to the Tobago Cays for snorkelling on the reef and lunch at one of the smaller island resorts is an excellent choice. Boat tours hug the coast at the south end of Bequia to allow you a glimpse of *Moonhole*, a grouping of about thirty homes that have been carved from the rocks. Some of these are inhabited year round; others are vacation homes. Day tours average US\$75, including morning coffee and cold drinks all day, lunch extra.

Bequia has a long history. Its approximately 5000 inhabitants are descended from Scots settlers who arrived in the mid-1700s and the African slaves who were brought in to work the sugar plantations. The attractive stone Anglican Church in Port Elizabeth was built in 1829 to replace one destroyed by storms. Its doors and windows are always open, inviting a visit and offering a quiet spot to sit. There is a vibrant church community here that gives visitors a hearty welcome. We met many Bequians of all walks of life; many have visited Canada, have friends or family here, or children studying here. Tourism on Bequia is very low-key, but compelling; we met several Canadians and Americans who have been coming here for a dozen years or more, most having first visited on a cruise or yachting adventure. There is a steady stream of visiting yachts in the harbour.

Island accommodations range from two-storey hotels to guesthouses to self-catering cottages and apartments. We were with friends who arranged our stay with a friend, a Bequian lady who has lived many years in Canada, but now in her retirement returns home every winter. She has a home half-way up the hill overlooking the harbour; her apartment is on the ground floor, while upstairs are two spacious one-bedroom apartments, each with full kitchen, bath, living room and a large verandah where we spent most of our time. Daily maid service is provided. For serious inquiries, e-mail me at judyveen@hotmail.com putting "Bequia" in the subject line, and I will give you the Ottawa phone number of her son who looks after the business details. In 2004 the rent was US\$550 per apartment per week.

In Canada, the *St. Vincent & Grenadines Tourism Office* is at 333 Wilson Ave., Suite 601, Toronto, ON M3H 3T2, tel: 416 633 3100, fax: 416 633 3123, email svg-tourismtoronto@rogers.com. General information on this island nation can be found at www.svgtourism.com and specific information on Bequia at www.bequiatourism.com, tel: 784 458 3286, fax: 784 458 3964, or write Bequia Tourism Association, Box 146 BQ, Bequia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines. The Grenadines are reached via flights to several larger islands. We flew Air Canada to Barbados, then to St. Vincent with Caribbean Star. (LIAT also flies the inter-island routes.) It was a long (14-hour) day in transit; many people break it by staying either in Barbados or St. Vincent overnight, which allows you to buy some provisions more cheaply than on Bequia. 🇧🇩

Following the Birds through Costa Rica

story and photos by Richard Moore



Hotel Buena Vista

In January of this year, my wife and I, both retirees, took a two-week vacation in Costa Rica. We were interested both in bird watching and in seeing some of the country independently, travelling by bus. So we took an Air Transat air-only charter and five hours later were in San José. Simple and convenient. We arrived late in the evening and took a taxi directly to the Hotel Aeropuerto for some much-needed sleep.

The next morning we visited the touristy part of San José (17 km east of the airport) and found the bus terminal where we purchased tickets for our bus trip to Monteverde the next day. San José is bustling, noisy and congested with little evidence of any Colonial architectural legacy; an exception being the beautiful National Theater. Soon we were happy to make our way to our hillside hotel – the Buena Vista – just outside Alajuela. By a stroke of luck we were transferred to this hotel because the uninspiring Hotel Aeropuerto was full and we did not have reservations for the second night.

The Buena Vista is about 9 km from the airport at an elevation of 4,100 ft. It overlooks the Valle Central, with wonderful views of the valley floor as well as the Poas Volcano about 24 km away. Ed Pratt, the owner of this property, has an excellent staff of English-speaking Costa Ricans who will pick you up and return you to the airport, arrange local tours, make accommodation reservations for you any-

where in Costa Rica, and drive you into Alajuela for your bus connections to other parts of the country. This hotel has 25 rooms, a pool and dining room that serves excellent meals. Rates, including taxes and with a large continental breakfast, are around \$81 (all prices US\$). This will be our hotel of choice whenever to fly into San José again. (The address of their excellent web-site is given below.) We also stayed there on our final night in Costa Rica, after having completed a two-week, more-or-less circular route around the country via public bus, which I'll describe below.

The two most visited places by tourists in Costa Rica are the Manuel Antonio National Park and the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve. We visited the latter, staying for six nights at the Sunset Hotel after taking the bus from Alajuela. The bus leaves San José for Monteverde twice a day, with pick-ups along the way, and the trip takes five hours. It travels mostly along the Pan American Highway, exiting for a final 32 km along a very pot-holed gravel road that ends at the bus stop in Santa Elena, near Monteverde. Vitalis Mengel, the German owner of the Sunset Hotel met us and drove us to his property, about 2 km away up a steep hill. There we discovered the view from the front balcony is magnificent, with rolling hills and the Gulf of Nicoya on the Pacific in the distance.

The towns of Santa Elena and Monteverde are only 8 km apart, again along a very bad, pot-holed gravel road, but

a taxi will take you to either place. Both locations are equally good for hiking, with excellent trails, and during our time in the area, with the help of a birding guide, we spotted 73 different species of birds as well as howler monkeys and a two-toed sloth. We were delighted, especially as it is said the best months for birding are March and April. I won't go into detail concerning the bird species we spied, except to say that we both enjoy nature and hiking and find that birding adds an extra dimension to our travels. It is indeed rewarding to be able to positively identify a new species, be it a resident or migrating bird. We travel equipped with binoculars and, on this occasion, *A Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica* by Stiles & Skutch and *A Travel and Site Guide to the Birds of Costa Rica* by Aaron D. Sekerak. In addition, we had with us the *Moon Handbook Costa Rica*.

As well as the rainforest, Monteverde has a myriad of other activities: a world-acclaimed music festival (January to April), a forest canopy 'sky-walk', a butterfly garden and a Quaker community with an excellent cheese factory and ice-cream parlour.

The second leg of our journey was a trip to see what is billed as the most active volcano in the world – Arenal – near the town of La Fortuna. A straight-line-distance between Monteverde and Arenal is less than 100 km, but reality means a seven/eight hour bus trip to Tilaran around the western end of Lake Arenal or a 4 x 4-wheel jeep ride cross-country to the southern shore of Lake Arenal, a boat trip across the lake and a jeep taxi ride to La Fortuna. We chose the latter route and it took a total of three hours to arrive at our little *Cabina Doña Alicia* in La Fortuna. The complete journey cost US\$21 per person, all arranged with pick-up from lodgings in Monteverde or Santa Elena.

During our two days in La Fortuna we were fortunate to enjoy fantastic views of the volcano and, even at night,

through our binoculars, could see balls of lava and ash rolling down the slopes. There are plenty of places near La Fortuna that provide even more spectacular views, one being the Arenal Observatory Lodge, built in 1987 as an observatory for the Smithsonian Institute and the University of Costa Rica.

La Fortuna is a small town thriving on tourists, and the growing choice of hotels includes budget options and some great bargains. Outside our cabina was a papaya tree with ripe fruit that attracted no less than six different species of birds at one time. Our room, though spartan, was clean, had two beds, a hot shower and a balcony. The cost per night was US\$25 (taxes included) and breakfast an extra US\$3 each.

Leaving La Fortuna on the third leg of our journey gave us a bit of anxiety due to the fact that information on bus schedules was inconsistent with reality. The 9 a.m. bus to Cuidad Quesada (San Carlos) did not materialize, so we negotiated a fee of US\$20 for a taxi to drive us to San Carlos, a distance of about 40 km. There, we caught the bus to Puerto Viejo where we had booked accommodation (from Canada) for three nights at the Selva Verde Lodge – a wonderful spot on the north-eastern shore of the Caribbean. The lodge is located on the Sarapiquí River with a primary forest nearby over a suspension bridge. All the rooms are located in the secondary forest and each has a balcony, so you awake to the sounds of nature. All meals here are buffet style; we opted for breakfasts and dinners only (breakfast \$6, lunch \$8 and dinner \$10). Across the road, also in a secondary forest, stand five bungalows that are quiet and offer an even more remote atmosphere than the accommodation described above. If you stay in these bungalows you will need a flashlight to go to and from dinner at night. Birding in the forest

... continued on page 20



Sunset Hotel in Santa Elena

Taos Ski Valley: Skiing As It Used To Be!

by Anne Raymond

Have you ever wished you could turn back the clock and revisit a ski-resort the way it used to be? You arrive at a cozy lodge, unpack and go to meet the other guests having a before-dinner drink. You indulge yourself in a gourmet meal, exchange pleasantries with your dinner companions, relax in the lounge then retire to your room. Next morning, in the lodge dining-room, you find yourself in breakfast-heaven. With a light heart and a full stomach, you pick up your skis and take a short walk to join the others at the meeting place. You and your group are assigned a ski instructor for the week. Lessons in the morning; afternoons for trying out what you learned. As your skiing improves, you continue making new friends. Stories are shared at the dinner table, laughter is now commonplace and the meals are worthy of a culinary arts magazine. No waiting in lift-lines, no crowded slopes, no snowboards (no, no snowboards!); only sunshine, snow-covered slopes and sensational skiing. Remember those days? I've got news for you. They still exist but you have to know where to look. Perhaps New Mexico?



Whoa! Did you say New Mexico? What about the balmy weather, the rolling plains, the deserts? Yes, you get all that, plus the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in the Rocky Mountain Range. You can even ski Katchina Peak with an elevation of 12,481 feet at Taos Ski Valley, NM's major ski area. For Easterners like us, driving through NM is like viewing a slide-show presentation with changes in scenery around every bend.

We arrived in Taos Ski Valley on a bright, sunny morning in early January. We had left the town of Taos, NM in total absence of snow. As we made the 15-mile ascent to the resort, we were surprised to see the snow-covered vehicles on their way down. We soon discovered why. A storm had deposited a foot of snow overnight. A good omen.

Nostalgia hit as we settled into our room at The Thunderbird Lodge. Dating back to the 50's, the Thunderbird has been around for a long time. The present owners, Elisabeth and Tom Brownell, took over the management in the 70's and have pampered thousands of guests throughout the years. Once visitors have tasted the hospitality, not to mention the fantastic meals, they usually return. Among the many amenities we find an indoor hot-tub, a recreation room, free access to internet and live entertainment. A week at the Thunderbird and TSV is an experience to remember. In our hustle and bustle world, there is often little time left to unwind, forget the rat race and be good to ourselves. Even vacations can be stressful. We often set tight schedules and feel obliged to cram as much as possible into one short week. But things are different in the Valley. People come here to ski, eat, relax, share friendships and sleep (in just about that order of importance).

Opened in the 50's by Ernie and Rhoda Blake, Taos Ski Valley remains one of the few family-owned and operated ski resorts in North America. Ernie, who passed away in 1989, dreamed of a place where skiers could forget the outside world and concentrate on the sport. He also wanted guests to feel like part of a big family. The Blake children and grandchildren carry on this tradition, creating a unique experience for those fortunate enough to ski the Valley. The world-renowned Ernie Blake Ski School continues to turn out satisfied skiers year after year. Even beginners ski adequately after a ski-week with Taos instructors. My husband Nelson and I have been skiing for over 40 years. Nonetheless, after just four hours with instructor Kent McGinnis, we improved our technique considerably and enhanced the enjoyment of our favorite sport.

Learn to Ski Better Weeks are offered throughout the season for skiers of all levels. Two choices are available, 6 days (Sunday - Friday) or 5 days (Monday - Friday). Many weeks are geared to specific groups such as women, masters (50 years old or better), teens

and advanced. All ski packages include lift tickets, video analysis, NASTAR and après-ski seminars.

Okay, sounds like the perfect place, but it must cost a fortune! Guess again. There are two incredible bargains, Half Price Ski Week and Free Lesson Ski Week. During the first two weeks of December, everything is half-price: lodging, lift-tickets and lessons. This season these lift tickets will be US\$20 day. Then go on the TSV website and choose one of the many half-price lodgings for the week. There you have it, a first-class vacation at an affordable price. If you'd prefer to go in the New Year and are interested in the Free Lesson Ski Week it starts on 9 January 2005. When you purchase a 6-day lift ticket, you get 6 morning group lessons at no additional cost. Lots of additional specials and comprehensive information on the website detailed below.

If a week in the Valley still seems too much for your budget, you can always find inexpensive lodging in the town of Taos. You can get a motel, such as the Days Inn, at \$50 a night during the week including a continental breakfast. If traveling to and from the Valley each day isn't a problem for you, this could be a low-cost alternative. However, nothing can compare with a week on-site.

Whatever you choose, you are bound, like us, to fall in love with this exceptional resort where excellent skiing, fine dining and warm hospitality are the norm. These are ski vacations like they used to be. Enjoy!

For Taos Ski Valley information call 1 800 347 7414, e-mail: tsv@skitaos.org, www.skitaos.org. For lodging 1 800 776 1111. Nearest major airport is Albuquerque, NM, 148 miles away. Rio Grande Air (1 800 IFLYRGA) offers daily commuter air service between Albuquerque and Taos. ☏

When subscriber Anne Raymond is not off skiing, she calls Asbestos, Quebec, home.



... continued on page 20

WINDS OF CHANGE IN RURAL KENYA

by Sandra Harper

A dream fills my mind as I slowly wake up before six, under a gauzy web of mosquito netting. “Why,” a friend was asking me in my dream, “why, did you choose to come to Kenya?”

I emerge from sleep, saying, “Never is there a morning in Kenya, when I awake, that I am not genuinely happy.”

As I roll over and look out of the open window, the cool air sifts through, bringing relief from the night’s 30° and high humidity. Another day begins in my life as a volunteer and I know, as I do every morning, that something out of the ordinary will happen today.

I have been a teacher all my working life and wanted to share some of my expertise with people living in Kenya. I had heard great stories about ACCES, an organization started by Beth and George Scott, a retired couple from Surrey, BC. When they came to Kakamega in 1992, they saw a need for educating bright, but very poor children and young adults. They set up ACCES (African Canadian Continuing Education Society) focusing on making a difference in this one area in Kenya’s Western Province – about thirty minutes drive from the Uganda border.

Now, as a brand-new volunteer with ACCES, I am living for the next six months in the city of Kakamega, which has three main streets and a large district market. The three streets are full of pot-holes and the buildings’ exteriors are scabby with black mould. The rain that comes every day beats noisily on the rusty metal roofs. Only the main highway has a few trees on each side – the remnants of the Kakamega Rain Forest. Red dirt is everywhere – in the market and fields, on the roadsides, and covering everyone’s shoes or flip-flop sandals. The half-million people in this

area are mainly peasant farmers, with small plots of land on the rolling hills outside Kakamega, where they grow maize and beans for their own consumption

Each day as a volunteer has routines mixed-in with the unpredictable. In the early morning darkness, I write, send-off emails, and boil water in a giant kettle. My arms get a morning workout, lifting the metal beauty of ‘Kitty the Kettle’. All water I use, even for dishes and rinsing vegetables, needs to be boiled to prevent nasty stomach problems.

As the sun ignites long red streaks in the eastern skies, I run up and down the stairs to get aerobic exercise and counter-balance the 5,000 feet altitude. I’m up to 18 minutes now of mind-numbing vertical running. Breakfast is a choice of oranges, pineapples, mangoes, papayas, and bananas, all grown locally, topped with liquid yogurt, called ‘night milk’. It comes in a triangular, plasticized cardboard container that is a challenge to store, without dripping, in the refrigerator. This is followed by my favourite oatmeal porridge – a reminder of the never-to-be mentioned British, who imported it into Kenya over 80 years ago. I might vary the oatmeal with a cheese toast or eggs. As you can see, breakfast is not too different from a Canadian one. If I were a local Kenyan, it would be *Ugi* – a white cornmeal gruel – and milk tea, or, at this time of year, it might be just tea, that is grown near here.

This morning is jammed with learning routines and people’s name. All those new names have thrown me back to writing them down so I can place a name to a face. I see four bright, impoverished secondary students who are applying for annual scholarships of \$400.00 to attend university and college. I also take an hour to plan with Gilbert, a young Kenyan man, newly-hired to develop a programme of providing loans to graduates for starting-up small busi-

nesses.

At lunch-hour, I find out unexpectedly I'm needed to meet with LIFA (Learning for All) co-ordinators and teachers who are developing curriculum units for the eight primary schools that ACCES funds. These teachers are eager to work during their month of school holiday. They get to stay over, meals provided, with their colleagues. They focus on this project to benefit students' and their own learning. A group of them excitedly tell me about the occasional LIFA student who transfers into the public school system. Each is assessed before placement and every one of them score so high that they are placed in an advanced level. It is obvious that LIFA teachers have high academic standards for these children who can't afford even a pair of shoes to come to school or medicine when they are ill.

At the chime of two o'clock, I must rush to accompany the young intern to the bank. Banks are another experience. A guard with a gun marches outside, another with a baseball bat-type of club wanders inside. We wait for 45 minutes in one line to get a clerk, stand another 15 minutes for the transaction, done on the computer system, before the shillings are counted out, one-by-one. Then we stand in a second line to complete other financial matters.

Walking back home, I run into shop – a tiny, unlit supermarket called Mama WaTotos. There, I get small bags of beans, flour, sugar that comes from the local fields, four eggs, a little carton of UHT milk and a package of cheddar cheese. All of this is affordable for the four *myzungos* (white people) in the district, but out of sight for most Kenyans. Then, at the market stalls, I buy a huge avocado for about 30¢; a bunch of local bananas at 25¢; a cabbage, enough for two weeks, for 35¢; and a monstrous papaya, called paw-paw here, for only 25¢. Everyone cooks with fresh produce, even though the vegetables are limited to maize, onions, garlic, potatoes, cabbage, carrots and tomatoes. When I cook, I'm pleased to report I've had more successes than failures in preparing a much simpler fare, trying to make a variety of dishes from the limited number of vegetables and no meat.

I dash back to the workshops, and eventually dinner is served. It is a feast: *ugali*, boiled ground maize and water; fried potatoes; rice; chicken with a tomato-based sauce; chapatis; a boiled kale-type green, called *sukuma wiki*, accompanied by grated, raw carrot and cabbage salad. The Kenyans say that if you don't have *ugali* in your meal, you haven't eaten. In fact, *ugali* is the staple food for every meal.

The evenings are spent in our guarded compound writing, talking with the two women who are here for a short while, and e-mailing before I get a cab to a Rotary meeting. One of the potential members, the Kakamega Town Planner, is the only other woman there. By the time I return, I find I'm not ready for sleep so I read in bed under the netting to prevent mosquitoes snuggling up to my skin. My goal is to not get malaria, which is so common here.

As I turn off my light, the lightning flashes in the black sky and the rain pounds down, a signal that the newly planted crops will survive. I smile at the rain and think about the work that our ACCES team is doing to nurture children and

adults in Kakamega. All from one dream of a couple back in Canada. Like the rains, a volunteer with ACCES has the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives in Kenya.

SOME INFORMATION

● If you are interested in more information on ACCES, go to www.acceskenya.org or call Beth and George Scott at 604 538 7267. I have already seen donations, no matter how small, make big differences in the lives of children and youth in Kakamega. \$400.00 a year provides a full scholarship for one bright student to attend university or college. Even your postage stamps are welcome!

● Over the last ten years, about 500 students, with ACCES scholarships, have successfully completed their post-secondary studies. A programme to develop HIV-awareness and to train teachers how to instill that knowledge with their students is in place. A savings and loans programme has been implemented in which ACCES graduates, whose business proposals are approved, receive loans to start small businesses in this area of over 50% unemployment. The ACCES team aims to foster social and economic development in a core of young people who can then help to bring about change in Kenya.

● Another ACCES achievement are the eight primary schools, called LIFA – Learning for All – centres for children who can't afford to go to public school. These schools have been established with the help of the communities in the most rural parts around Kakamega. Even though the Kenyan government recently passed a bill giving free education, parents must still pay for a list of things: uniforms, books, extra-curricular activities and examinations. At the LIFA schools, the class size is around 25 while classes in the public schools range from 35 to 120 students per teacher. At the LIFA schools, the children are fed *Ugi* and vitamins each morning. This may be their only meal during the "hungry months." They also receive medical treatment from the LIFA nurse. All costs for these vital services are paid by ACCES.

● Marie MacKay, a retired nurse, is here doing HIV-AIDS prevention seminars and workshops for various groups, including the teachers who are required to teach about HIV. With AIDS-related diseases affecting up to 40% of surrounding communities and about 23% in Kakamega, every family has been touched by people dying with AIDS-related illnesses. 📖

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!

BELGIUM

For those who love indoor attractions such as museums, galleries, restaurants, etc., the winter is a great time for city visits. If you've yet to add handsome **Brussels** to your list of cities visited you may be interested to hear that the luxurious, centrally-located new **Hilton Brussels City** is offering a €99 (approx. C\$157) B&B rate between 19 November and 27 February 2005. The offer is available 7 days a week, a 2-night minimum stay is required and reservations must be made at least 3 days prior to arrival. Sounds like a lovely treat! For reservations visit www.brussels-city.hilton.com or call 011 322 274 24 61, fax: 274 24 71. And for information on all that Belgium has to offer, visit www.visitbelgium.com or call their tourist office in New York at 212 758 8130.

BRITAIN

If you've seen the recently-released movie *Vanity Fair* you may be wondering where it was filmed. London, Bath, Cheltenham Spa, Winchester and Hampton Court Palace – all in England – is the answer ... all wonderful destinations for visitors to Britain. To plan your own tour to these cities and attractions, call 1 888 VISIT UK or log on to www.visitbritain.com/ca. But you may not need to do the planning yourself if you visit www.odeonfilms.com or drop in to any Crabtree & Evelyn store for a ballot. That's because VisitBritain and Insight Vacations have teamed up with Odeon Films to offer a chance to win a "Gems of Britain" 8-day tour for two. Good luck!

CANADA

The **Brackendale** region of B.C. lays claim to having the largest concentration of bald eagles in the world and between November and February **Elaho River Adventures** will take you to see them. The Eagle Safari package is a great one-day tour out of **Vancouver** or **Whistler**. It includes a 2-hour float on the Squamish River, a Mustang survival suit to keep you dry and warm, hot chocolate and cookies along the way and lunch at the cozy Howe Sound Inn. If you'd like to stay in **Squamish** overnight the company can also book accommodation. Details by calling 1 800 713 7238 or visiting www.elahoadventures.com. **Voyageur Quest** has been awarded the Canadian Tourism Commission's "Best Winter Package in Canada" accolade. Call 1 800 794 9660 or visit www.voyageurquest.com to learn more about these great winter getaways in the company's **Algonquin Park** log cabin, with transportation offered from Toronto. For families or parties or 10-12 the whole

cabin can be rented for a good-fun winter break. Fall is a great time to visit our nation's **capital**. Visit www.ottawagetaways.ca or www.ottawatourism.ca (click on 'Vacation Packages') to find full details of a variety of well-priced short breaks. An example: from \$127 per person can bring you a 2-night stay in one of 7 participating hotels, admission to the National Gallery and Museum of Civilization (including its IMAX Theatre) and a Rideau Centre Visitor Values Book for shopping discounts. The hotels are also offering 'free fall extras' such as food vouchers, valet parking etc. These packages are available until 30 November.

NEVIS

Editor Ann has visited the **Nisbet Plantation** on the delightful island of **Nevis** and confirms the property is indeed lovely. It offers wide lawns sweeping down to the beach, bordered by the charming accommodation cottages and has an historic and gracious plantation house known as the Great House. It was once the home of Fanny Nisbet, destined to become the bride of Lord Nelson. This much-awarded property has a special package between 1 November and 15 December, when 6 nights for two are being offered at US\$1,440 (58% less than the high-season winter rate). The price also includes full breakfast, afternoon tea and a 3-course dinner – all for two – daily. For more details visit www.NisbetPlantation.com or call 1 800 742 6008. Nevis can be reached via short inter-island flights from San Juan (Puerto Rico), St. Kitts, Antigua and St. Maarten, destinations well served from Canada.

SWITZERLAND

Seasonal shopping a chore? Treat yourself to a trip to Switzerland to enjoy Europe's highest-located Christmas market on **Mt. Pilatus**, due to take place 20 & 21 November. This Christmas market, set at over 6,900 ft., is unique in Europe because of its lofty location on this fabled mountain. The market features over 50 exhibitors from the nearby **Lucerne** area who offer their lovingly crafted wares. Also to be enjoyed: the delicious local food and the breathtaking views. More information at www.pilatus.ch and <http://www.luzern.org>. And, of course, you won't be staying in Switzerland for just two days, so visit www.MySwitzerland.com for lots of touring help, hotel specials and so on.

U.S.A.

Last month we mentioned the up-coming free-admission day at the **Museum of Modern Art** in **New York City**. We have now learned that, in fact, admission will be free every Friday between 4 and 8 p.m. with no advance

reservations necessary. This will save you US\$20 (or \$16 for seniors), so it's worth bearing in mind. Speaking of **New York**, if the city is in your winter plans you may like to take advantage of their *Paint the Town* winter travel promotion (dates not confirmed yet, but probably around 15 December – 31 March) which features special offers from over 350 hotels, museums, attractions, restaurants, theatres and stores. Details will be available on line in November – www.nycvisit.com – or call 1 800 NYC GUIDE to order a brochure. And if you plan a January visit (dates again not yet confirmed) the website will soon have details of the popular *Winter Restaurant Week*, when more than 100 of the city's top dining spots offer 3-course lunches and dinners for about US\$20 and US\$30 respectively. But book early!

If SeaWorld, Orlando and/or Busch Gardens, Tampa are in your plans, you can visit these attractions 'at par' between 1 October and 30 April 2005. You can obtain these tickets at the booths or you can log on to www.atpar.ca, www.seaworld.ca or www.buschgardens.ca and print the tickets out before you leave Canada. At par prices are applicable to both single-park and multi-park tickets.

Bethlehem is a word that is synonymous with the Christmas season. But you don't have to travel to the east to visit Bethlehem, because there's one much closer in the **Lehigh Valley** of eastern **Pennsylvania**. Known as *Christmas City U.S.* this quaint town claims to put aside the commercialized Christmas that is all too familiar and instead offers a wide selection of seasonal

music, historical re-enactments, museums revealing the town's history and its Moravian roots, European-style markets, lights and so on. The town claims to contain more original 18th century structures than Williamsburg, VA, and is full of decorations, lights and candles during the holiday season, while musical offerings include Bethlehem's Bach Choir performing Handel's *Messiah* and other seasonal works. For more information visit www.lehighvalleypa.org or call their Visitors Bureau at 1 800 747 0561. Packages including accommodation and entrance to events are available.

We hear that **Santa Fe, New Mexico**, is another great place to spend the festive season as their multi-cultural heritage results in many unusual celebrations: a traditional Spanish outdoor Christmas play, processions, performing arts, the winter Spanish market, Pueblo ceremonies, Spanish Colonial artwork exhibitions and lots more. And, of course, these city festivities could be combined with a ski vacation in the nearby **Sangre de Criso Mountains**. Visit www.santafe.org for excellent help in planning a full visit to this unique destination or call for a *Visitors Guide* at 1 800 777 2489.

Lots of non-gambling folk are keen to visit **Las Vegas** "just because it's there". If the neon city is in your plans you may like to visit www.vegas-passport.com and consider purchasing the Vegas-Passport. It costs US\$120 but promises a value of almost US\$1,000 as it features free and VIP admission to over 13 nightlife spots; drink and dining specials; gifts and discounts and lots of information.

cruise news

Many travellers would love to transit the **Panama Canal**. Obviously a boat is needed, but all too often the vessels available for this trip are enormous, glittering sailing palaces that do not appeal to everyone. If you fall into this category perhaps it's time to research the voyages offered by **Windstar Cruises** who are including the Panama Canal in several itineraries this winter. This cruise line offers the drama of transiting the Canal with a luxurious but casual cruising approach. A number of itineraries are available: 14-day voyages between Puerto Caldera, Costa Rica, and Bridgetown, Barbados as well as December holiday cruises of 10 days. Ports of call may include Costa Rica, Panama, Nicaragua, Columbia, Grenada, Bequia, Tobago, Venezuela, Bonaire, Curaçao or Aruba. Shore excursions on either side of the isthmus of Panama take guests on adventures through wildlife sanctuaries and rain forests in this exotic and endangered part of the world. Windstar offers its guests complimentary water sports activities and even a PADI-certified dive programme in the tranquil waters of tropical ports that are rich in marine life. Tropical fish and birds, endangered turtles, brilliant butterflies, exotic flowers, mischievous monkeys, fabulous scenery and the engineering marvel that is the Canal are all there to be discovered. And, of course, over the holiday season the masted sailing yachts will be decorated to highlight all the festivities. Ten-day cruise rates start at US\$3,256 pp dbl, rising to prices from US\$3,596 for the 14-day voyages. Windstar promises pampering without pretense on ships that offer all-view staterooms, open dining and a 'resort-style' dress policy. Ask your agent for more information or visit www.windstarcruises.com.

We mentioned some of the new winter offerings from **World of Vacations** in our last issue. They offer a large selection of sun destinations with departures from main gateways across Canada. One fact we didn't mention is that if you live outside the Greater Toronto area and need a stopover hotel at Toronto Airport, either when leaving or returning, WoV will pick up the tab. The hotel is the Holiday Inn Toronto Airport East, which offers lots of facilities, airport shuttle service and up to 14 days complimentary parking. Ask your agent for the WoV brochure and details of the free stopover.

For something a little different this coming winter, **Scott Walking Adventures**, known for its multi-day walking and hiking adventures in **Eastern Canada**, is going to be offering winter adventures. Their multi-day, guided adventures, to be offered during February and March next year, will provide excitement on cross-country skis and showshoes for both the novice and the more advanced outdoors person. All-inclusive packages include cozy cabin and inn accommodations, regional cuisine and equipment. The adventures will take place in **Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland** and **Kouchibouguac National Park, New Brunswick**. Imagine the scenery! And if winter expeditions don't appeal, their brochure and website has lots of walking adventures for later in the year. The 13-year-old company is based in Hubbards, NS, and they can be contacted

at 1 800 262 8644 or 902 820 2149 to visit www.scottwalking.com.

How many of you have yet to add **Timbuktu** to your list of places visited? It most certainly is possible to visit this remote town on the southern edge of the Sahara in **Mali** but you will probably be grateful for the services of **Trek Holidays**. Their fully-escorted, 13 night trip includes 7 nights in hotels and the remainder in fully-serviced camps. As well as Timbuktu, reached after a 3-day journey in long, motorized wooden canoes down the Niger River – calling in at villages perched on the banks and camping overnight on the shore – the adventurous participants will take a camel ride to a Tuareg settlement for dinner and to spend the night. Also on the itinerary is a journey through the Dogon region bordering the Bundiagara Escarpment where stops will be made in rarely-visited mud-brick villages built into cliffs where the locals are always fascinated by their visitors. Departures are scheduled for 4 December this year, and 1 January and 15 October, 2005. The land-only price is C\$2,575, which includes transportation by private bus, river boat, camel and the internal flight from Timbuktu, plus the accommodation and most meals. Trek Holidays can also arrange transportation to and from Bamako at the start and end of the tour. Call 1 888 456 3522 or visit www.trekholidays.com and click on Mali in the destination box.

riding the rails

It's certainly not too late to think about a getaway to Europe this fall. And if you go, you'll find far fewer tourists than in the summer, better prices, more performing arts and – it is to be hoped – some lovely weather. And if you'd like to travel by train, you'll find a variety of specials. Here are a few of them:

Enjoy a special C\$273 first-class 3-day **France Railpass**, on sale until the end of November and good for travel until 31 December. The pass is valid for any three days (consecutive or non-consecutive) within a one-month time-frame. Passholder bonuses include discounts on Seine river cruises and on admission to some attractions, as well as special fares on Eurostar.

Savings of around 50% are on offer on the overnight Elipsos trains between **Spain and France, Italy and Switzerland**. You'll miss the scenery but you'll be travelling, eating and sleeping for one price! These comfortable trains run Madrid-Paris, Barcelona-Paris, Barcelona-Zurich and Barcelona-Milan. They offer three classes of service: Gran Class (each compart-

ment has its own bathroom complete with shower, and both dinner and breakfast are included), Club Class (toilet and washbasin in compartment) and tourist Class (four-berth compartment with washbasin only, with restrooms in the corridor). Valid from now until 15 June 2005, fares vary, of course, with class and route. A couple of examples: instead of paying C\$462 pp. dbl., for the Gran Class trip from Madrid to Paris, the new value fare is just C\$239 while the Tourist Class trip Barcelona-Milan now costs C\$102 instead of the previous C\$220.

RailEurope is offering a 25% discount on rail passes in **Britain** between 1 November and 28 February. The discount applies to any BritRail Consecutive Pass, BritRail Flexipass, BritRail England Pass or BritRail Days Out From London Pass. This discount is in addition to the savings available any time for seniors 60 or better and for families travelling together.

All these, and many more, rail offers available from your travel agent or by calling RailEurope at 1 800 361 7245 or by visiting www.raileurope.com

From a world full of fabulous exhibitions, here's just a sampling at home and abroad:

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has a delightful exhibition to brighten winter – ***Right under the Sun: Painting in Provence, from Romanticism to Modernism (1750-1920)***. Montreal is the only North American venue for this exhibition (previously at the Musée de Marseilles) and it features masterpieces by renowned artists such as Cézanne, Monet, Van Vogh, Gauguin and others. On now until 8 January. Information at www.mmfa.qc.ca

The gorgeous exhibition ***Pearls: A Natural History*** opened at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto on 18 September and will continue over the holiday season until 9 January. This unusual exhibition perfectly fits the ROM's twin mandates of nature and culture, by presenting issues of conservation and protection as well as exquisite pieces worn by Marie Antoinette, Queen Victoria, Marilyn Monroe and others. Call 1 800 461 333 or visit www.rom.on.ca for details.

Still in Toronto, if you're visiting this fall or winter chances are the CN Tower is in your plans. On view there until 2 January is an exhibition presented by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences entitled ***The Secret Life of Sets: Set Decorators at Work***. This intriguing exhibition celebrates the art of set decoration with feature film clips, artwork, photos, interview footage and the sets and items created for a number of popular movies. Toronto is the first city to host this display, and the only Canadian venue, before it travels on to Chicago and New York next year. It's open from 10 a.m. – 10 p.m. and admission is included with the CN Tower admission or with a meal at 360 Restaurant. Information from 416 868 6937 or www.cntower.ca

We share a Native North American history with our U.S. neighbours, so this exhibition will be of interest to many Canadians. Entitled ***Totems to Turquoise: Native North American Jewelry Arts of the Northwest and Southwest***, this exhibition will be staged at the American Museum of Natural History in New York from 30 October until 10 July 2005. It contains over 500 pieces of dazzling contemporary and historic Native North American jewelry honouring the beauty and symbolism of a long and fascinating tradition. For information on this and the other exhibitions scheduled at this museum call 212 769 5100 or visit www.amnh.org.

If a visit to Machu Picchu is in your plans, you may like

to consider a getaway to Chicago and to the Field Museum where ***Machu Picchu: Unveiling the Mystery of the Incas*** is running now and until 13 February 2004. This is the largest exhibition of Inca artifacts ever assembled in the U.S. and, in addition to seeing over 400 unique items fashioned out of gold, silver, ceramic, wood and stone, visitors can enter a re-creation of the King's residence, walk along a replica of an ancient Inca road, enter a replica of an Inca burial chamber and learn how Machu Picchu was 'rediscovered'.



The real Machu Picchu

And while at the Field, in quite a different vein, you may like to catch the ***Jacqueline Kennedy: The White House Year – Selections From the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum*** exhibition, running from 13 November until 8 May 2005. This exhibition examines Jacqueline Kennedy's influence on Americans through the lens of her personal style. For Field Museum information call 312 922 9410, www.fieldmuseum.org.

It's a long way away, but Denmark *may* be in your plans and a visit to the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art – beautifully set beside the ocean just a short rail journey from Copenhagen – makes a wonderful day trip. And if you are there before 16 January you'll be able to catch an exhibition that sounds beautiful: ***Flower as Image – From Monet to Jeff Koons***. This exhibition promises to be a pleasure trip through works by masters such as Van Gogh, Monet, Gauguin, Matisse, Picasso, Georgia O'Keefe, Warhol and many other more recent artists, all of whom have used the flower as a central motif. For details visit www.louisiana.dk.

These are my words to you for an enjoyable and memorable off-season interlude in Spain.

Some practical details ...

Spanish National Tourist Office, 2 Bloor St. W. Toronto, tel: 416 961 3131, www.tourspain.toronto.on.ca

The House of Sandeman, 11403 Jerez de La Frontera, Spain, (code 011 34) 956 151 700, e-mail: the.don@sandeman.com

Accommodation

Hotel Alfonso X111 Sevilla (a Westin Hotel), San Fernando 2, 41004 Sevilla, Spain, tel: 954 91702 (DIGIT MISSING) www.westin.com/hotelalfonso

Hotel Fernando 111, San Jose 21, 41004 Sevilla, tel: 954 217 307, e-mail: fernandoiiii@altur.com

Hotel rey Alfonso X, Xemenex de Enciso 35, 41004 Sevilla, Spain, , 954 210 070, e-mail: reservas@realfonsox.com,

www.reyalfonsox.com

Restaurants

Restaurante Las Escobas, Alvarez Quintero, 62, tel: 954 219 408 www.lasescobas.com

El Rey Moro, Reinoso 8, tel: 954 563 68, www.elrey-moro.com

Restaurante Las Meninas, Santo Tomas, 3, tel: 954 226 226 (great for tapas)

Robles Tapas, Argote de Molina, tel: 954 213 150, www.rablesrestaurantes.com

My personal favourite is across the river from the 'gold tower': **Restaurante Rio Grande**, Betis, 954 278 371 www.andalunet.com/riogrande.com

Nancy Macdonald is a TravelScoop subscriber who lives in Toronto. She often write for us on her frequent getaways to European cities. 📧

yielded excellent results, but for non-birders there are other options such as guided nature hikes or a river excursion (which we took) on the Sarapiquí River for \$20 per person. This lasts about two hours and is pleasant. Our guide told us that you can also take a two-hour boat trip down the Sarapiquí to the Rio San Juan, the border with Nicaragua.

The fourth and final leg of our journey took us by public bus from Selva Verde (we caught the bus right in front of the lodge at 9:30 a.m.) back to San José's international airport via San Carlos. The journey from Selva Verde takes about two and a half hours and there we bought tickets for the capital. After passing through spectacular mountain scenery we alighted from the bus directly in front of the airport, where I called the hotel Buena Vista for a pick-up. After only 15 minutes' wait we were collected and driven to the hotel for our last night. However, our next day flight was not to leave until near midnight. No problem finding something to do! The Poas Volcano looms about 24 km away, so the staff arranged to drive us into Alajuela to catch the bus for a day trip to Poas. Unfortunately it turned out to be a rather rainy, windy day. However, we were able to add a few 'lifers' (new birds not seen before) to our list of things seen, but unfortunately not the crater at Poas as it was immersed in mist. We returned to the hotel mid-afternoon and relaxed around the pool before an excellent dinner, when we were joined by some birding friends we had made at Selva Verde. Later we were transferred to the airport by hotel staff in good

time for our flight.

It had been a very enjoyable and rewarding vacation and our next trip to Costa Rica has more or less been planned. We will again use the Buena Vista as a staging point and then do a southern circuitous route, this time with the Manuel Antonio National Park on the agenda.

Bon voyage to you both, and we hope you'll write and tell us all about your second trip – Ed.

Accommodation details ...

Buena Vista Hotel, 9 km from airport, just outside Alajuela, tel: 1 800 506 2304, local 442 8595, fax: (country code: 011 506) 442 8595, e-mail: bvista@racsa.co.cr or visit the website www.arweb.com/buenavista/

Hotel Aeropuerto, 4 km from the airport, tel: 433 7333, fax: 433 7933, e-mail: info@hotelaeropuerto.cr.com, www.hotelaeropuerto.cr.com

Sunset Hotel, Santa Elena, near Monteverde, tel: 645 5048 or 645 5344, telefax: 645 5228.

Cabinas Doña Alicia, La Fortuna (speaks little English), tel: 479 9517.

Selva Verde Lodge, Chilamate, Sarapiquí, owned by Holbrook Travel in Florida, tel: 1 800 451 7111, fax: 352 371 3710, www.holbrooktravel.com, phone in Costa Rica: 766 6800, fax: 766 6011. 📧

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

FROM \$3,942 FOR 18 DAYS!

FULLY ESCORTED

Departures:

20th March, 10th April, 11th Sept. & 2nd 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.  reg #01280649

NEW

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

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

Ann Wallace, our editor, has travelled extensively in Turkey and always returns claiming it is one of her favourite destinations. So now we have organized a luxurious tour of Turkey exclusively for Travel Society members. 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

NEW

Copper Canyon

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

Taxes extra.

Please call for prices from other departure cities

Your tour includes:

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

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 March 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	\$10,019pp/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 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 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

India's Golden Triangle

FULLY ESCORTED

20 days departing 14th March & 3rd October 2005

from
\$4,496

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



PRICES INCLUDING AIR departing from:

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

Your tour includes:

- All international & domestic flights
- Deluxe a/c coach transportation
- State transport taxes
- All meals
- English-speaking 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:
 gifts