

# Travel Scoop

The Travel Society Magazine  
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Vol. 23, No. 2 February/March 2005



**A Tall Ship Adventure**  
**A Tour of Iceland**  
**Focus on Italy**

# TravelScoop

The Travel Society Magazine

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*The Caledonia on  
Canada's East  
Coast*

## editor's letter ...

Our January issue went to press before Christmas, so obviously I was unable to comment on the terrible natural disaster which unfolded in Asia on Boxing Day. I seem to have sat at this desk and commented on so many tragic things over the past ten years, but the scale and rapid timing of this event surpasses everything. Words are inadequate for such grief and displacement, but I add my condolences and hopes that smiles and joy will one day rise from the rubble.

Regarding this event, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) is urging travellers to speed up the tsunami recovery via tourism support. They state it is critical that travellers have an accurate picture of the recovery process, so they can make informed decisions about visiting the affected regions. In many popular tourist areas such as Phuket, the rebuilding or repair of the physical infrastructure is now underway and recovery is well advanced. I have travelled quite extensively in Sri Lanka and know that most of the sites of interest to well-informed travellers lie in the highlands of the beautiful interior which have, of course, been unaffected. So if Asia has been in your plans visit [www.PATA.org](http://www.PATA.org) and click on 'Indian Ocean Recovery News' where you will find a multitude of links and first-hand reports.

Looking now to the other side of the planet, I must report on the popularity of Italy among our readers. I have on file stories and letters from no less than eight writers; four of the couples had all discovered the same region - the Cinque Terre! So in this issue you'll find the first of a two-part "Focus on Italy" feature. Whether you plan to travel by train or take a driving trip; to base yourself in a villa or tour and stay in some of Italy's many appealing hotels, you'll find TS has lots of information to help you with your plans. In our next issue we'll have some more information from subscribers who went to Italy in the fall; including information on Italy's 'toe' - Calabria. If you would like an advance copy of next month's stories to help with your plans for Italy please drop me an e-mail ([ann@thetravelsociety.com](mailto:ann@thetravelsociety.com)) and I will e-mail you a copy. Happy planning!



## Choose Vence as your Base in the South of France

Who doesn't dream of savouring the sights and colours of the South of France? The classical landmarks of the French Riviera – Nice, Cannes and St. Tropez – are glamorous, but those places are hardly relaxing and have, unfortunately, become atrociously expensive – well outside the budget of the average tourist. There is an abundance of huge hotels and condominium colonies in those locations, as well as constantly-increasing commercialism, crowds of people (who are not all *that* beautiful!), frightening traffic and everlasting battles for parking spots. One must be determined in order to find accommodation in those once-lovely cities.

There is, however, a way of seeing this area of France by establishing your base elsewhere. A place that is accessible by car or public transportation would be ideal. We found such a place: a charming small town in the area of the Alp Maritimes called Vence. Vence is a charming settlement in the hills, close to Nice, Antibes and Grasse with views of the Mediterranean in the distance. In Vence you can still find the unspoiled atmosphere of the 'old' Southern France. It lies about 20 km from Nice (½ hour by car from Nice Airport), 30 km from Cannes, and 24 km from Grasse, with easy access to all by highway or, if you prefer, through lovely country roads.

Vence was founded by the Romans and retains its medieval

character with ramparts enclosing the old town. The labyrinth of narrow streets host picturesque houses along with numerous art galleries, restaurants and shops. The fountain in the old Square du Peyra is a frequent object of photographs. The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Nativity dominates the town. It is a Romanesque building from the 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries and is famous for its stalls and mosaics, representing Moses in the Bulrushes, which were donated by Marc Chagall in 1979. In addition, in a small chapel, I discovered Our Lady of 2000 created by Jean Paul Augier ... a modern statue, beautiful in its simplicity.

In remarkable contrast to this rather dark and gloomy Cathedral is the famous Chapelle du Rosaire, designed and decorated by Henri Matisse between 1947 and 1951. This is the feature of Vence that attracts tourists from all over the world. The combination of white tiled walls and simple black drawings of St. Dominic, Virgin and Child and the Stations of the Cross contrast with the stained glass windows in shades of green, yellow and ultramarine. They are spellbinding. The simplicity and lightness of the design are incomparable and very modern. There are daily visiting hours to the chapel and a Mass every Sunday when the priest conducts the service in the chasuble designed by Matisse.

We enjoyed spending mornings at Place du Grand Jardin, the central square of town. Everywhere the colours of fruit, vegetables and bunches of flowers are pleasing to the eye. Close by is an international press shop where one can buy English and other language newspapers. Armed with a paper, we'd

duck into the Old Town to read on the terrace of a coffee shop with a superb espresso served with a small square of chocolate. The crowds pass by: locals, tourists, young and old. Everyone's carrying baguettes, or bags of tomatoes, melons or peaches, or ... just cameras.

There is a great choice of restaurants serving local delicacies. My favourite was the Restaurant de Clemenceau, with a large outdoor area where efficient waiters serve famous fish soup, pizzas and a large variety of meat and fish dishes. All of them are delicious. The local wine is in abundance. Prices for a satisfying meal are less than they would be in the famous coastal cities, ranging here from €20 to €30 (€1 = C\$1.60) per person.

The Old Town and the Matisse Chapel are only two of Vence's offerings. This is a lively and living town where you can enjoy a facial, have your glasses repaired, shoes resoled, or you can visit numerous bakeries and food stores selling breads and cakes of incomparable quality as well as a wonderful selection of ready-to-eat dishes. Like everywhere today, the small shops have to compete with expanding networks of supermarkets. In Vence, the big supermarket providing all you need for your table belongs to the Leclerc group. It is open six days a week, has a good parking lot, and is very popular with locals and tourists looking after themselves. For more sophisticated gourmet food I suggest a trip to St. Laurent du Var (30 minutes by highway) to the big shopping complex, Cap 3000. Here you will find an



abundance of meats, fish, fruit and other various regional and ethnic foods.

Vence is a beautiful town with a fine panorama framed by the hills of Col de Vence with Mont Cheiron's rocky formations similar to the hills of Luberon. The mild climate and good soil enhance the rich vegetation and olive trees, cypresses, roses and oleanders which add colour to the city. The town is spread out over the hills and, in spite of local buses, the possession of a car is a great asset. However, out-of-town transportation does offer buses from the centre of town with frequent departures to Nice, Cannes, St. Paul de Vence and Grasse, with timetables suitable for day trips.

There are many 'must sees' in the proximity of Vence:

- St. Paul de Vence, a picture-postcard village full of art galleries and the famous Maeght Foundation Museum and Gallery, whose stunning architecture is complemented by beautiful gardens. Admission €1.
- Tourettes-sur-Loup – a small medieval town with charming little streets full of old houses and flowers. Every September there is a fair there, where local ceramic artists present the most beautiful exhibitions of their art.
- The Renoir museum in Cagnes sur Mer. The Domaine des Colettes,

with its park enhanced by the olive-trees so beloved by the artist, was the last home of Auguste Renoir. Ten original paintings are now displayed there, as well as several sculptures. In his studio, visitors will find a touching collection of souvenirs recalling both his personal and creative world. Closed every Tuesday. Admission €1.50.

- Grasse, with its famous perfume factories
- Trips to Cannes, Nice and Antibes, for a taste of 'the high life'
- Vence itself has no direct access to the sea. For those who yearn for the ocean, the closest beaches are in Antibes, Cagnes sur Mer or the rather distant and crowded St. Tropez. But Canadians who are used to the beaches of Mexico and the Caribbean will find the beaches of the Riviera unattractive in comparison.

#### Accommodation

There are several accommodation options in Vence. The most spectacular is the palatial **Le Chateau du Domaine de St. Martin**. This is a costly option which boasts luxurious rooms, a garden with a huge swimming pool and a restaurant with a terrace and a superb terrace view of the Mediterranean coast. It's located at Avenue des Templiers, 06140 Vence, tel: [code 011 33] 4 93 58 02 02, fax: 4 93 24 08 91, [\[tin.com\]\(http://tin.com\) €240 – €1350 per night.](http://www.chateau-st-mar-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

**Hotel Miramar:** 3-star, good view, swimming pool, no restaurant. Avenue Bougearel, 06140, Vence, Cote D'Azur, tel: 4 93 58 01 32, fax: 4 93 58 20 22. [www.hotel-miramar-vence.com](http://www.hotel-miramar-vence.com) €100 – €160 pn.

**Mas de Vence:** central location, swimming pool, restaurant. Located at 539 Avenue Emile Hugues, 06140 Vence, tel: 4 93 58 06 16, fax: 4 93 24 04 21, [www.azurline.com/masvence1h.htm](http://www.azurline.com/masvence1h.htm) (website seems to be only in French). Rates from €59 single - €79 double, with various meal plans available.

**La Coline de Vence:** an old Provençal house at 808, Chemin des Salles, 06140 Vence, tel/fax: 4 93 24 03 66, [www.colline-vence.com](http://www.colline-vence.com) Rates from €74 and there's an apartment available from €20 per week.

In addition to hotels, there are apartments and villas for rent too. To view a selection log onto [www.interhome.com](http://www.interhome.com) and enter 'France, Rivièra, Vence' in the search boxes or enter 'Vence, France' in your search engine and lots of accommodation/rental sites will pop up.

*Elizabeth R. Perera  
Toronto, ON*

*Another interesting fact about Vence is that D.H. Lawrence died there in 1930  
– Ed.*

## The Travel Society website

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Our website is fully operational. We always want 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!

## Skiing from Banff

For those of you still thinking of a ski trip, I'd like to give you a little up-date about Banff, where I met some ski pals last season. The excellent mountain slopes at Norquay, Sunshine Village and Lake Louise all lie within a short driving distance from the town of Banff, but don't let that deter you. The ski-bus system transporting skiers from Banff to all these mountains is convenient, fast and efficient ... in short, very impressive. The buses depart from one of the many hotel pick-up/drop-off points around town on a regular schedule. The bus company has representatives at all these pick-up points and if the number of skiers waiting exceed the capacity of one bus a second bus arrives, seamlessly, in seconds! Even transferring from Calgary airport to Banff is accomplished equally as efficiently using the shuttle bus or the Banff Airporter.

The ski conditions in all resorts were well maintained. Even when it was raining at the bottom of Sunshine a short gondola ride brought us up to the base lodge where we were above the cloud and enjoyed 'hero-snow' in the sunshine all day. Nothing is too much trouble for the staff at all these resorts; it's obvious they want you to enjoy first-rate skiing. If, due to conditions, that does not happen, you return to the ticket office within an hour of starting your ski-day and the cost of your ticket is refunded, no questions asked!

Banff itself offers everything in the way of accommodation, restaurants, shopping, entertainment and scenery that you could wish for. I first stayed in the homey 2-bedroom B&B called Odenthal's where I enjoyed Freda Odenthal's full breakfast, many books and relaxed atmosphere. For a change of pace (and a special treat!) I then moved to the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel for a couple of nights to enjoy the excellence of a typical Fairmont hotel and show it off to my friends from Britain. The Chateau is up the hill, about a ten minute walk from the centre of town, but again the

buses, shuttles and taxis are plentiful and inexpensive so getting around is a breeze. The Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise also offers a great place to stay if you prefer be away from the town.

The après-ski options in Banff are plentiful. The very popular St James Gate, a typical Brit (Irish?) pub serves a great selection of beers and hearty pub-grub. Try the 'steak & kidney' with a Guinness perhaps? The Maple Leaf Grille is a reasonably-priced restaurant menu with a good wine list and warm mountain atmosphere. Caramba Restaurante has a really nice menu offering Mediterranean-style food with a few healthy options. These are just a few examples of the offerings for your evening enjoyment, but there are eateries to suit every taste and budget from inexpensive 'family' type meals right up to fabulous dining with international cuisine.

For après ski shopping, saunter Banff Avenue for a fine selection of stores offering everything from local art to those ubiquitous clothing stores. Don't miss the interesting Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies and check out the Banff Centre for Mountain Culture, [www.banffcentre.com](http://www.banffcentre.com). Events are presented year-round and include music, dance, opera, theatre, films and lectures. Yes, Banff is a fine destination in any season, but especially for skiing, with plenty to do on those 'rest days'. My friends from Britain say they will be back ... and so will I!

**Odenthal's B&B**, 510 Buffalo Street, Banff, AB T1L 1B2, tel: 403 762 2081, [www.bbalberta.com/odenthal](http://www.bbalberta.com/odenthal) \$60 per night single, \$80 double.

**The Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel**, tel: 1 866 540 4406 or 403 762 2211 [www.fairmonthotels.com/banff-springs/](http://www.fairmonthotels.com/banff-springs/)

**The Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise**, tel: 1 866 540 4406 or 403 522 3511 [www.fairmont.com/lakelouise/](http://www.fairmont.com/lakelouise/)

**Banff Airporter**, 1 888 449 2901, [www.banffairporter.com](http://www.banffairporter.com) \$47.00 each way

**St Jame's Gate Pub**, tel: 403 762 9355

**The Maple Leaf Grille**, tel: 1 866 760 7680, [www.banffmapleleaf.com](http://www.banffmapleleaf.com)

**Caramba Restaurante**, tel: 403 762 3667, [www.banffcaribouproperties.com](http://www.banffcaribouproperties.com)

The excellent, official visitor information website can be found at [www.BanffLakeLouise.com](http://www.BanffLakeLouise.com)

*Nigel Raincock  
Toronto, ON*

## An Accolade for SAGA

We are 'sold' on SAGA, the British-based travel company for the 50+ crowd ([www.saga.co.uk/travel/](http://www.saga.co.uk/travel/)) After chalking up 14 cruises over the years, our one with SAGA around the Baltic in the Fall of 2003 was the best.

Then last year we took a river cruise in France with them. From England, this included 1<sup>st</sup> class Eurostar from London (Waterloo) to Paris, a coach to the coast, then seven days on a 140-passenger river boat from Honfleur to Paris with overnight stops and an afternoon at Monet's Garden in Giverny which I'd always wanted to visit. Arrangements were smooth and the French cuisine on board was superb.

SAGA was started in 1951 by a Dutchman – D.E. Haan – who was at the time running a hotel in Folkstone, U.K. He offered special packages and deals to seniors in the low-seasons. This is now a multi-million dollar travel organization offering tours around the world and a few cruises. They also offer insurance and other travel requirements and they have one of the best monthly magazines in the U.K.

We are now planning a cruise around Britain with them in August 2005 ... 17 days aboard the *Saga Rose*, a 750-passenger ship, departing from and returning to Dover. We'll visit the Channel Islands, Cork, the Isle of Skye, the Hebrides, Edinburgh and its Festival, amongst other places. An interesting way to see some of the U.K we hope!

*Ralph Carder  
West Vancouver, BC*

# A Tall Ship Adventure

*story and photos by Heather Allen*

**W**hat could be more romantic than a tall ship? A classic, square-rigged barque, a fair wind and the *whoosh* of the seas on a summer morning by the Atlantic - and until last spring I thought it was the stuff of history. When I found it was still possible to sail on one of these legendary ships; it didn't take very long to make the decision to book!

My husband and I were originally booked on the *Caledonia*, owned and operated by Canadian Sailing Expeditions, which was to sail from Halifax to Corner Brook after taking part in the Tall Ships Challenge in Halifax harbour 28 July - 2 August, 2004. However, about six weeks prior we received notification that the *Caledonia*, the last of the Canadian sailing ships (built in 1947), was undergoing an extensive refit and was not yet ready. Thus, we were to sail on the *Europa*, a smaller ship. The *Europa* was built in 1911 in Hamburg and today represents her home-port of The Hague in the Netherlands. She is one of the last ships of the clipper era, and one of the few ships in the world to carry a full set of studding sails. Since this was a change to the trip we had booked, we were asked if we still wanted to sail. Again it took very little time to make the decision.

On 28 July we flew to Halifax from Vancouver and by

8 p.m. were cozily ensconced in our very nice B&B, Stern's Mansion, in Dartmouth. It is very convenient to take the small bus from the airport to Dartmouth, and since our B&B was only about five blocks from the harbour we could walk and catch one of the frequent ferries across the harbour to Halifax. Since both driving and parking in Halifax during the Tall Ships Parade was a nightmare, this offered a very convenient and enjoyable alternative. Stern's Mansion is a three-storey house, about 100 years old, that had been owned by a wealthy merchant and had then gone sadly downhill as a rooming house. But it has been lovingly restored by a now-retired school teacher. The rooms are filled with antiques, coffee or tea is brought to your room before the sumptuous breakfast, and the staff members are very friendly and obliging. We have stayed there on both our visits to Halifax and enjoyed it very much.

Halifax was bustling during the tall ships - there were 40 in the harbour. We and all the visitors we met were very impressed, not only with the ships, but with the organization and welcome provided by the city. Haligonians were less impressed with all that was going on as they had hosted 100 ships during the International Tall Ships Festival in 2000. But we loved it. Especially interesting was the *Tenacious*, a



vessel purpose-built by the Jubilee Sailing Trust in Britain. It is the largest wooden ship to be built in the U.K. in the last century, but more importantly it is built to accommodate people with disabilities and I actually saw a man in a wheelchair up in the rigging working on the sails. There are signs in braille and a voice-activated compass.

All along the waterfront opposite the ships were food and souvenir vendors and music pavilions. They featured any kind of music you fancied – from Celtic to blues to rock to Acadian. All venues were free from noon until 9 at night when there was a modest cover charge. Live bands played sets from noon until 2 in the morning. There was always a place to sit, cold drinks and snacks were available, and there were even enough toilets for the tens of thousands of people who crowded the waterfront. One evening, as we left the Celtic pavilion to walk to the ferry terminal, we heard the unmistakable sounds of the Rankin family and walked out to the *Bluenose* to hear Jimmy Rankin singing on the deck of Canada's most famous schooner. How Canadian can you get!

On 1 August we checked out of Stern's Mansion and boarded the *Europa*. There were 21 passengers and 17 crew. The passengers were Canadians and Americans; the crew, all passionate sailors, were Dutch and Canadian. We were shown to our cabin which was surprisingly roomy, with four bunks for the two of us, a small desk and a bathroom which included a shower. It was clean and comfortable and we even had a port-hole. The *Europa* stayed in port this day and we were given a pass to see the other ships. We climbed up to the Citadel with several of the crew for a picnic lunch, spent the afternoon listening to Celtic music, had a lobster dinner on board and then were treated to music on board the *Europa* from a pretty teenage fiddler, her father who played the guitar and her mother who had an electronic (!) bagpipe. Then it was time to watch the fireworks display from a barge in the harbour. Back to the Celtic pavilion after midnight to hear the Dack Janiels band which managed to get a hundred people dancing to 'Farewell to Nova Scotia'. We were to set sail the next day ... and here's how those days passed.

## 2 August

After lunch, with our sails up, we headed out of the harbour, at the front of the parade, with the *Bluenose* just behind us. Passengers were encouraged but not obliged to help sail, and most enjoyed the work ... several even went up into the rigging, complete with safety harness. There were tens of thousands of spectators lining the shore as we sailed around the island and out of the harbour. The Dartmouth-Halifax ferries chugged relentlessly back and forth through the 40 ships, their passengers getting the best view of all. It was very hot – at least 30° – but we did have some wind, and as



*All are welcome to take a turn at the wheel*

soon as we left the protection of the harbour and picked up more wind, the *Bluenose* sailed effortlessly past us and out of sight. She was a magnificent sight. By late afternoon it was foggy and the waves were high enough to encourage many people to either put on patches or take Graval. Two were missing from supper.

## 3 August

My husband Brendan volunteered for the 4 - 8 a.m. watch and first was on look out, not an easy task in the thick fog, and then manned the wheel. The crew held a knot-tying class on deck in the morning. We arrived in Canso (pop. 700) about 3 p.m.

and were met by what seemed like most of the townsfolk and a small band and singer. Canso was celebrating its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2004. In those long ago days they took eight million cod a year from these waters – shipped the good stuff to England and the poor to feed plantation slaves in the U.S. Recently the town has fallen on hard times and many people have left Canso to find employment elsewhere. Our guide told us, "When we see someone we always stop to talk, even if we don't like them all that much – there are so few of us now." We toured a 19<sup>th</sup> century home and then went to Grassy Island where the cod was salted and dried. We sailed out of the harbour about 7 p.m. again serenaded by the band.

## 4 August

The Dutch first mate – Jorg – gave us a lecture about the history of sailing cargo ships. He believes in their future, as well as their history, as oil reserves diminish. He was 25 and had wanted to make sailing his life from the time he was

a little boy. He is ready to write his Master's Ticket and has already built a small cargo ship. The captain – Klaas – was also Dutch. When he was at the helm, with his long grey hair and speaking Dutch, it was easy to imagine you were on a ship sailing for the Dutch East Indians in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. There was a navigation lecture in the small library in the afternoon, complete with charts and a laptop computer. We had good winds and the ship was doing 7 knots, with no help from power at all. We had been asked in the morning if we would prefer to start the motor and get to Cap aux Meules in the Magdalen Islands several hours earlier, but we all opted for sail and the captain and crew were visibly happy with our decision. We sailed into Cap aux Meules just at sunset. Dozens of small boats came alongside, and there were hundreds waiting on the pier to welcome us. We walked about ten blocks into the centre of town and found a bar with a great Acadian band.

### 5 August

We had an interesting Zodiac trip this morning to the caves made out of the red sandstone for which the Magdalen Islands are famous. Our guide, Steve, had just graduated from Sherbrooke University as a history teacher and was passionate about Acadian history. "Acadians think that if they can drink and sing a few songs, that's all they need to know about their heritage, but when I teach history that is going to change," he declared. We met several kayakers enjoying the water and scenery which included the brightly-coloured houses facing out to sea. Later we took a bus to a smokery which had sold smoked herring for hundreds of years. The islands were originally settled by Acadians and all but one of the islands are French speaking. Entry Island is the sole English speaking island. Fishing is still the most important element of the economy, though tourism is a close second. Because we were getting good strong winds, it was decided to leave earlier than our midnight departure. But first we were entertained by a duo that came on board to play Acadian music: a woman playing the accordion and her son who played the guitar. We watched the sailors unfurl the sails as we listened to the music.

### 6 August

There was talk of a storm today, but we had only light rain and a few whitecaps. However, by 1 p.m. we were doing 7 knots and the boat was heeling over nicely. We all seemed suddenly conscious that our adventure was quickly drawing to a close. We passed the day doing the odd sailing chore, some climbed into the rigging, others took turns at the wheel, photos were snapped and most of us enjoyed chatting; there was always someone interesting to talk to.

### 7 August

We stopped at Frenchman's Cove this morning to pick up 'Captain Cook'. Gerard Duffy, dressed in 18<sup>th</sup> century costume, gave us all the information we could have wished, not only on the famous captain, but also on Corner Brook and Newfoundland. We docked at Corner Brook about 10:30 a.m. and very soon the mayor, Priscilla Boutcher, and the harbour 'master', Agnes McCarthy, boarded, along with a

member of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, several musicians, and a man in a sou'wester. This last man proved the most important since it was his job to 'screech' us in. We had to kiss a cod and then drink screech. The second action was infinitely more pleasurable than the first! But we did get very impressive signed certificates attesting to our now being honorary Newfoundlanders, so at least we shouldn't have to kiss the cod again.

The entertainment was great: a man on a guitar and his talented 10-year-old son on the accordion, plus a man playing the spoons. They played slow waltzes and then fast – 'close to the floor' in Newfie parlance – pieces. About half of the passengers needed to get to their flights from Deer Lake and so left in taxis before our last lunch on board. Those of us who could tarry were, later, preparing to order taxis too, to take us to our various hotels and B&Bs, but instead the mayor and 'Captain Cook' volunteered to take us. And, proving that Newfie hospitality is second to none, 'Captain Cook' also offered to pick us up to take us to a traditional Newfie restaurant that evening, and then he escorted us on a walking tour of a park high above the harbour in Corner Brook where there is, appropriately, a monument to Captain Cook. Cook charted this area on a voyage between 1763 and 1767.

As advertised, this was an unforgettable trip. It was very hard to leave the ship, and almost all the passengers expressed a wish to take another cruise in the future. It was not like an ocean cruise on a big liner: the food was excellent – the chef works in Banff during the winter – but there were certainly not acres of buffet, there was no dancing, no casinos, no splashy evening shows and the cabins did not sport televisions. Naturally the people who booked to come on the *Europa* knew this and didn't want such attractions at all. We all wanted to be on an authentic tall ship, to feel the wind in our faces, to watch the sails as they caught the wind and grew taut, to hear the sound of the waves as the ship dipped and rose.

Now that the *Caledonia* has been restored, Canadian Sailing Expeditions will be using her on its East Coast itineraries for 2005. These include sailing from Nova Scotia to Newfoundland, sailing through the fjords of Newfoundland and enjoying Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. The *Caledonia* can accommodate 80 passengers and again, as a 'tall ship', the guests will be welcome to help with the sailing.

Further information can be obtained from **Canadian Sailing Expeditions**, PO Box 2613 Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3N5, 1 877 429 9463 or [www.canadiansailingexpeditions.com](http://www.canadiansailingexpeditions.com).

**Stern's Mansion** is located at 17 Tulip Street, Dartmouth, NS, B3A 2S5, tel: 1 800 565 3885, [www.sternsmansion.com](http://www.sternsmansion.com) Rates range from \$90 to \$300 for the top-floor penthouse.

*Heather Allen is a TravelScoop subscriber who hails from Powell River, BC*

# A Tour of Iceland

story and photos by Norma Stanley



The Strokkur Geysir

**W**e had been thinking of Iceland as a destination for some time, and so in January last year we made arrangements through Eldertreks of Toronto to go in June. We had travelled with Eldertreks before and found them reliable. Also, their groups are for a maximum of 16 people which is a comfortable number.

The only way to reach Iceland from North America is by Iceland Air. At one time they had flights out of Halifax, but unfortunately no longer so it is now necessary to go via the U.S. Iceland Air has flights from New York, Boston, Orlando, Minneapolis and recently added Baltimore. Or, if you are travelling in England, it is only a three-hour flight from London with a variety of daily flights to choose from, many of them very well-priced. As we did not wish to change planes (and airports) in New York we flew with Northwest to Minneapolis and from there to Reykjavik with excellent connections. We were able to go through customs in Edmonton and check our luggage through to Reykjavik.

We arrived at Keflavik Airport at 6:20 a.m. and were met by our Icelandic guide Eirikur (Erik) and driver Roland (Rolly). Erik was a second-year engineering student and very knowledgeable and proud of Iceland. Although most locals speak English, he was certainly an asset, as Icelandic seems almost unpronounceable. We rounded up the rest of our group which consisted of a couple from Brantford, Ontario; two couples from Wisconsin; a couple from Maryland, ourselves and six ladies who hailed from Edmonton, Saanich (B.C.), Illinois, New Jersey, Florida and

London, England.

We had a comfortable, turquoise Mercedes Benz bus which could hold 18, plus driver and guide. All our companions turned out to be very amiable and co-operative and we voluntarily switched seats on the bus every day.

After leaving the airport we headed for the village of Solheimur, driving past lava fields, hot springs and bird cliffs. The first thing we noticed were the beautiful blue lupins covering the lava landscape. But we soon learned that these plants are not native but, in fact, imported from Canada and in Iceland are considered by many as weeds.

We had a late lunch in the Green Café, a warm greenhouse which served organic food and beverages. The first eco-centre in Iceland is located here and the thermally heated greenhouses produce a variety of organic vegetables and plants sold all over Iceland. It was founded in 1901 by Sesselja Sigmundsdottir, who put great emphasis on nutrition and therapy as well as the education of the disabled, many of whom are employed here.

After lunch we headed out to Thingvellir, the oldest democratic parliament (Althingi) in the world, located by a beautiful lake and wooded plain. Along one side is a long high cliff where speakers could preside over people gathered below. It was at this site, at the 1000 AD Convention, that it was decreed that Iceland be a Christian Nation. The rift between the American and European plates can be seen here through the large cracks and canyons.

That evening we had a special dinner: roast lamb with vegetables that are grown in thermally-heated gardens. Icelandic sheep roam free in summer and munch on chemi-

*right: The reconstructed farmhouse known as Saenautasel*

*below: A street in Akuryi, just a few degrees south of the Arctic Circle*



missed the tournament. They are also renowned for offering the country's best skiing.

Lake Myvatn, the capital of Northern Iceland, is one of the most geologically active areas nationwide. Its natural beauty is breathtaking with its pseudocraters, lava fields, volcanoes and hot

springs. It is also home to the largest duck colony in Europe and is a bird watcher's paradise. We had five avid bird watchers in our group who were able to provide the others with information on a variety of species such as Arctic terns, red-necked phalaropes, gyrfalcons and merlin, all of which greatly increased our enjoyment and knowledge.

From Lake Myvatn, we travelled to Husavik, a small fishing village located only 60 km below the Arctic Circle. We had lunch here at an attractive Fisherman's Restaurant though it turned out to be our only disappointing meal in Iceland ... seems they had forgotten to remove the salt from the salt cod we were

served! That evening, at 11:00 p.m, we went whale watching. We were excited to see many different types of whales and dolphins, and also came across puffins – of course – on Puffin Island. It was very cold and windy and we were glad we were wearing the warm clothing we had been advised to bring.

From Husavik, we travelled to Hveravellir, a geothermal area of fumaroles and brilliant turquoise hot springs. Some of us enjoyed a swim in the lovely hot pools – well worth the effort of having to change into our swimsuits on the bus! After our swim we enjoyed the first of many luncheon picnics laid on by Erik and Rolly.

The next day we visited the Geyser Strokkur, one of the largest and most active geysers on Iceland. Every 15 minutes, with magnificent force, the geyser blows water and steam 30 metres into the air. We also had the pleasure of seeing Gullfoss, "the golden waterfall", an incredible 32 metre plunge which descends from the glacial river, Hvita, and eventually reaches the Atlantic Ocean. Hveravellir was our next stop: a geothermal area of fumaroles and brilliant turquoise hot springs. Some of us enjoyed a swim in the lovely hot pools – well worth the effort of having to change into our swimsuits on the bus! After our swim we enjoyed the first of many luncheon picnics laid on by Erik and Rolly.

From Hveravellir we continued to travel north and then circled east along the coast, enjoying many beautiful sights as we travelled. Akuryri, Iceland's second largest city, is located on a long fjord close to the Arctic Circle. It has a relatively warm summer climate which supports vegetation and gardening. It is here that the famous golf tournament – the 36-hole 'Arctic Open' – takes place at midnight on 21 June, the longest day. We were there on that date, but

A visit to the Krafla Geothermal Power Station was very interesting, especially when we were ushered two storeys down into caves which housed enlarged Goya prints and sculptures of the Nordic Gods by well-known Icelandic artist Hallsteinn Sigurdson. An unlikely gallery indeed! Another highlight was a visit to a reconstructed 19th century farm called Saenautasel located in a very remote area. It provided a fascinating glimpse of old Nordic heritage. The lady of the house was a delight with her handsome Icelandic sweater and pleasant round, ruddy face topped with a mop of curly red hair. She was surrounded by her little daughter, a cat and a dog with five pups. She explained everything about the sod house and its contents in Icelandic while Erik translated. The settlement had been struck with a volcanic eruption over 100 years ago and was covered with pumice and ashes. Most farms were rebuilt but then abandoned in 1946. However, Saenautasel remains as a museum open to the public in the summer. Here we were treated to a lunch of pancakes with rhubarb jam, hot chocolate and a taste of 'Black Death' ... the Icelandic schnapps.

At Skaftafell National Park, which covers 1600 sq. km and lies over three valley glaciers, we were escorted by pretty guide Sandra on a hike to a waterfall and then for a walk on the glacier on Vatnajökull Icecap, accompanied by mountaineer guide Arnar. Arnar claims his lineage back to the original Arnarson, the founder of Reykjavik. Because of the rugged terrain, we were equipped with crampons and ice picks as we hiked 3 km to the foot of the glacier, being careful to avoid deep cracks and faults.

We ended our tour with a day in Reykjavik, the capital. The population is approximately 180,000, which is two-thirds the total population of Iceland. Reykjavik is a lively city with brightly painted houses and many new cars (many of them SUVs). The houses are heated thermally from the underground steam. We toured the old town, city hall and the imposing Hallgrímskirkja Church which looms over the city. The church houses an impressive organ and a fine statue of Leifur Eriksson. And of course, we had a swim in the warm soothing waters of the famous Blue Lagoon where temperatures reach 40° C. The Blue Lagoon is a brilliant turquoise, mineral-rich body of water reported to have curative powers. It's a 'must see' when visiting Iceland.

For the most part we were very pleased with our accommodations. The rooms in our small hotels or guest houses were roomy and had nice bathrooms. We especially appreciated our stay in Reykjadalur – three nights in a comfortable guesthouse, taking day trips and not having to unpack. (We usually managed our own bags, but the guide and driver would unload them from the bus trailer and would help out when needed.) The Odinsve Hotel in Reykjavik was first-class and had all amenities, including a fine restaurant. (Rack rates here were US\$156 per person, per night.) For our extension day in Reykjavik we moved to the Aurora B&B. Here one night was enough: a small uncomfortable room up a narrow steep stairway with shared facilities for US\$65 per person. While touring we would usually meet the other participants before dinner to enjoy a glass of wine or beer and discuss the day's activities and one evening, in one of the rooms, we shared a bottle of 'Brennivín-Black Death' – the Icelandic schnapps – at C\$91 a bottle. A good

thing one mouthful was sufficient for everyone's taste! There were several opportunities for shopping though we found goods to be expensive. Icelandic sweaters were well over C\$100, gloves about \$30. I purchased Troll books for two granddaughters from a fine bookstore in Akuryri for about \$30 each. And if you are on your own budget C\$21 pp for the bus from Reykjavik to the airport.

All too soon it was time to leave this intriguing 'land of ice and fire'. We had enjoyed everything, and the days completely lit with natural daylight were an added bonus. Independent travel is possible here, but the uninhabited areas of the interior call for special preparation. Well-equipped vehicles must be used, as assistance and service stations are few and far between and the mountainous roads are steep with sharp U-turns. Another option for transportation is the Icelandic horse. It was brought by settlers nearly 1,100 years ago and is a sturdy, unique animal, well-suited for the rough terrain. This horse has five gaits including the 'tolt' – a running walk which is supposed to be so smooth and steady that the rider hardly notices any motion. The Icelandic horse is as functional as it is beautiful and the herds grazing in the highlands, with their diverse colourings and the wind in their manes, is a fabulous sight. There are many riding tours available locally. Iceland is not a cheap country to visit, but it is well worthwhile. Tourism has become an important industry there, and the local people are doing much to promote it. There are many travel companies and web sites that can offer helpful information when planning a trip to Iceland: [www.iceland.org](http://www.iceland.org), [www.visitreykjavik.is](http://www.visitreykjavik.is), [www.icelandnaturally.com](http://www.icelandnaturally.com) and [www.icelandexpress.com](http://www.icelandexpress.com) are all useful. (icelandexpress.com contains details of special offers on accommodation and low-priced flights from London.) Eldertreks can be found at [www.eldertreks.com](http://www.eldertreks.com) or call 1 800 741 7956 for a brochure. Their 11-day Iceland tour this year costs US\$3,995 land only, plus insurance. Eldertreks can arrange your air, extensions and stop-overs as required.

*Norma Stanley is a TravelScoop subscriber who lives in Edmonton, AB*

### Oops!

Sorry ... one digit was omitted from the local phone number for Jorley Distributing Inc., the Canadian distributor of the air purifier known as the Air Supply Mini-Mate. Jorley's local number is 905 482 9363. If calling long distance the toll-free number was correct: 1 866 724 0404 and the website again is [www.airsupply.ca](http://www.airsupply.ca) We hear lots of *TravelScoop* readers have been interested in this device.

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# Focus on Italy

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## “Ticketless” Train Travel in Italy

Italy has an efficient rail network and the Italians themselves are inveterate train travellers. It is not surprising, therefore, that the fastest, most comfortable and convenient way to travel between Italian cities is by train. Most Italians buy their train tickets on short notice suggesting that it is not necessary to book ahead of time. You will likely get the train you want, even at the last minute, unless you are trying to travel to a popular destination on a national holiday.

However, if you don't speak Italian and are unfamiliar with the Italian train system, you will probably prefer to book at least some of your Italian train travel before leaving home. Absolutely the easiest way to do this is through the web site of Italy's main state-controlled rail company, *Trenitalia*, as I eventually discovered after a good session of hair pulling spent exploring other options.

An internet search usually directs you, not to *Trenitalia* but rather to RailEurope, the same source your Canadian travel agent will use if you go to him/her. The trouble is that booking Italian train tickets through RailEurope inflates their price by about 50%. As well, many of the guide books seem to present more confusion than solution. They dwell on the different levels of Italian trains (Eurostar, Intercity, Interregionale, Regionale, Diretto, Espresso); on issues related to purchasing and validating tickets; on whether you need to book a seat or look for one when you board. But it isn't that complicated as I eventually learned once I found [www.trenitalia.com](http://www.trenitalia.com).

Go to *Trenitalia's* web site, click the Union Jack and there it is in almost perfect English. The site is easy to use, contains a great deal of helpful information and allows you to play around without committing yourself. Enter your departure and arrival points, the date and time you wish to travel and a list of the possible trains, identified by type (Eurostar, Intercity, etc.), will come up. Basically the Eurostar trains are the elite, fast trains on the main lines. Down the train hierarchy are those that are slower, serve local communities, and are cheaper with fewer amenities. Click “buy” (doing so does not commit you to buy anything) to see the ticket price by class and your ticket delivery options. (Note that for the “buy” link to work, your selection must be no more than two months off.) The easiest solution is to stick to the **Eurostar** trains and to select the “**ticketless**” option.

Seat reservations are mandatory on Eurostar trains and are included in the price of the ticket. To select seats click your choices in the diagram that shows seat layout. Seats face each other and the diagram illustrates one such grouping across the coach: two facing two on one side of the aisle; one facing one on the other. However, although not stated, the diagram illustrates the 1<sup>st</sup> class arrangement. In 2<sup>nd</sup> class, as we discovered, both sides of the aisle have two seats facing two. So, if you are travelling 2<sup>nd</sup> class and you select, as we did, the two seats facing each other on the single side of the diagram, you will get window seats facing each other but probably you will both have someone else in the seat beside you.

To purchase your tickets, go to the secure payment page (using the password you receive when you submit *Trenitalia's* online registration form) and finalize the transaction using a credit card. The transaction is promptly confirmed by an e-mail – in English – that lists the details of your booking and gives you your assigned coach and seat numbers, a reservation code (PNR) and a reservation change (CP) code. Hold on to this e-mail; it is all you need to complete your journey.

On a recent trip through Italy we took three separate Eurostar trains that we had booked online from home. We travelled 2<sup>nd</sup> class each time and found the coaches to be clean, comfortable and good value. All the trains were very punctual and fast. Once on board we found our seats without difficulty and settled in to wait for the conductor who eventually showed up to check tickets. The ticketless system is relatively new and in our coaches we seemed to be the only ones without an actual ticket. No matter. We gave him the email; he entered data (presumably name and reservation code) into an electronic gizmo that he carried and it spit out a receipt for the amount we had paid. What could be easier or more convenient?

Helen E. Parson  
Baden, ON

## Stay on the Outskirts of Rome

I have been a faithful fan of *TravelScoop* for years, and now have a great travel tip to pass along to other readers.

In early July of 2004, my husband and I, our daughter and son-in-law, were on a driving trip of Europe that included Rome, Italy. We had not booked ahead because we wanted to stay in the nearby countryside where we could take the train into Rome each day and leave our car safely parked at our accommodation. We noticed on our map that Ladispoli, a small city 35 km northwest of Rome, had train service and was also on the coast.

We pulled into a relatively quiet city and found the train station easily. There we were told there was a hotel near the water and soon had located the Hotel Miramare, about 8 blocks south of the station. Although this was primarily a full-pension hotel, they agreed to rent us two rooms in their adjacent building (connected by a courtyard) and include continental breakfast for €85 per room, with an extra €4 for parking. The hotel faced a fine, black-sand beach with lots of facilities and safe swimming. The beach seemed to stretch for miles.

Ladispoli is a newish commuter town full of young families, good shops and no foreign tourist industry. It abounds with restaurants (lots of seafood) and gelato shops and seemed to cater to weekenders from Rome who stay in the many beachfront condos.

A ten-minute walk took us to the train station (taxis available) where we discovered a return ticket to Rome cost €6 and the trip takes 30 minutes. You can get off at St. Pietro Station (no tourist services) for a quick taxi ride (about €5.80 plus tip) to the Vatican or it's a leisurely 30 minute walk. At the main Termini Station all tourist facilities are available. We took the Hop on/Hop off Tour Bus service (several companies run these) for €18 each to get an overview of the important sites. After a hot day of intense sightseeing we caught our train back to Ladispoli and the delights of cooling down in the Mediterranean.

The train network offers excellent service to other places like Florence, Pisa, Genoa, etc. and we caught the super fast train several times for our short run, which was extremely smooth and modern. Trains run every ½ hour in an 18 hour timetable.

Our rooms at the Miramare Hotel were basic but clean and comfortable. We had a ceiling fan (no A/C), good showers, and comfortable beds on a quiet side of the hotel. We were the only people in this building during our stay although there seemed to be several other rooms available. Our car was in the locked compound adjoining our building.

We think Ladispoli, with its train connections, and the Miramare Hotel, with its beach location, to be an great base for seeing Rome and other places nearby.

**Hotel Miramare:** Via Trieste, 3-00055 Ladispoli, Roma, tel. [011 39] 6 994 6186 Fax. 6 991 2829, e-mail [info@hotel-miramare.it](mailto:info@hotel-miramare.it), [www.hotel-miramare.it](http://www.hotel-miramare.it)

*Sally & Gary Deman  
Calgary, AB*

## Accommodation Close to Rome Airport

If you have a morning departure or an evening arrival at Rome's international airport, you may be interested in knowing about the *Hotel Roma* in Fiumicino. Less than ten minutes from the airport by the hotel shuttle bus, this is a convenient and comfortable stopping place. The double bed and breakfast rate is €130. While this is, of course, more than we had paid in small towns in Italy, it certainly seemed reasonable compared to the Airport Hilton's rate of €200 or more. There are only 20 rooms, very comfortably furnished and well equipped. The adjoining Ristorante Roma specializes in fresh seafood with a limited selection of meat. We found the service efficient and friendly. As we were ending an Italian holiday, we registered, took our luggage to our room, then returned our rental car to the airport. The rental agency clerk phoned the hotel for us; fifteen minutes later the shuttle arrived to pick us up. In the evening we arranged for the shuttle to take us to the airport at 7:00 the next morning. Again the service was prompt. Although breakfast service didn't begin until 7, the staff person interrupted her setting-up routine to make our cappuccino and invited us to take yoghurt and fruit with us.

The address is Via Tempio della Fortuna 54-60, 00054 Fiumicino, Roma, tel: [011 39] 6 65 02 96 81, fax 6 65 23 713, [www.hotel-roma.it](http://www.hotel-roma.it), e-mail [h.roma@tiscalinet.it](mailto:h.roma@tiscalinet.it).

*Ted and Judy van der Veen  
Campbellville, ON*

# Springtime in Italy

*story and photos by Marg Lynn*

**T**he phrase April in Paris has a familiar ring, but have you thought of March in Italy? It is a wonderful time and place to be a tourist, with fewer crowds, no sweltering line-ups and many lower-priced hotels from which to choose.

After visiting in England, we began our 2003 adventure by flying into Pisa airport. This location, small and convenient, has frequent trains running to central **Florence** and will whisk you there in a couple of hours. Parking in Florence is nearly impossible so this solution was convenient for mini trips before picking up our car. We travelled lightly, which meant public transportation was easier to manage. Many small hotels are situated within walking distance of the central station in Florence. Lured by the advertised large rooms and muralled ceilings, we chose the B&B Residenza Millennium at €70. Oops! No en suite, but facilities were right beside us and there were few tourists so it was acceptable. A perfunctory breakfast was included.

This proved to be an excellent location from which to see many of the great treasures of Florence as well as countless less familiar works of the Renaissance. Taking a few minutes to plot your course each day helps avoiding retracing your route. The choices are mind-boggling. Stunning architecture, superb sculptures including 'David', by both Donatello and Michaelangelo, wonderful paintings and mosaics by the masters, are at every turn. Because Florence is a small city, her wonderful riches and distinctive flavour can be quite fully appreciated in four days.

Next we returned to **Pisa** by train with

overnight at Hotel Rosita (€67) a small, two-star hotel across from the station, to position ourselves for the next day's train ride to **Riomaggiore**, the first of five small towns clutching the rugged coastline of **Cinque Terra**. These five pretty towns are linked by a well-worn path, and offer beautiful vistas around every turn. One can hike, take the train from town to town or take the train to the last one and work back, stopping as you wish. We hiked the first two and took the train to the last ones because of time constraints. The weather and your time should help decide your route. These perched towns become extremely busy during the summer months when it is nearly impossible to get overnight reservations.

Back in Pisa we picked up our Auto Europe car (www.autoeurope.com) at the airport, a small one to negotiate the smaller roads in Italy, and headed off across the mountain range to **Verona**. At one time Verona was larger than London, and now, although quite industrial, is a popular venue for opera performed at the huge Roman arena in the downtown core. Other beautiful Roman ruins remain: old walls, a theatre and an Archeological Museum. It is noted for its churches and for Plaza Erbe, and of course, for the legendary Juliet's balcony.

A short drive to **Venice** was next, and parking at LaMestre for € a day proved much less expensive than across the bridge in Venice itself. Signs are easy to follow here. The train across the bridge comes frequently and from the station the *Vaporetto* #82 took us to St Mark's Square and to our chosen hotel nearby. Hotel Rio is a short walk behind the square, and at €80 with full breakfast, en suite facilities, fridge and TV is a bargain. From here St Mark's, the Ducal Palace, Rialto Bridge, wonderful markets, and the Academia with 26 rooms of breathtaking art were all readily accessible. The many charming little streets winding through the city make very pleasant wanderings. This medieval city is fabulous in any light. Often concerts are being given at some of the lovely churches. Hotels have lots of information.

Then it was down the coast to **Ravenna** to see San Vitale and the awesome mosaics of Justinian and Theodora from the 6<sup>th</sup> century. What amazing colours! At the same stop we viewed the Mausoleum of Placida with even more wonderful mosaics. It is said that Cole Porter wrote 'Night and Day' after seeing the gold background and the deep blues of some of these ceilings. Next came Appolinare Nueova with even more mosaics.

On to **Rimini** we went. From a long-ago visit I remembered the great beaches being lined with little inns, but it now is a maze of high-rise hotels. Our hotel was picked from a local list and was adequate. Interesting to see the 1<sup>st</sup> century Tiberius Bridge and Roman Portals in this city. This is also a good spot from which to visit the small Republic of San Marino, perched high on a rocky outcropp.

We continued by driving through rolling countryside with high peaks and fortresses in the distance, not deterred by a little snow in the air. But soon we were down into the

green valley where flowers were blooming everywhere and vineyards were just being started. **Arezzo** awaited us with a marvellous collection of Pierre della Francesco's works. From here on each little town and village was picture perfect, with bell towers, pretty churches and wonderful stained glass. **Cortona** was our home for two nights with its narrow, rabbit-warren streets and charming squares. Before we were able to park our wee car the passenger had to get out and fold in the side mirror! Yes, small cars are the order of the day! Our lovely, large room in Hotel Italia (€85) overlooked the plains far below. This charming hotel was previously part of a 17<sup>th</sup> century palace. Some young Canadian women were guests here too while studying at the university and it was nice to chat with them and their Canadian teachers over a most substantial breakfast.

We had not planned to visit **Perugia** but decided to drive to the new town and take the lift up to the old city. What a great idea. The National Museum of Umbria there was one of the most beautiful museums we could remember. A good reminder to be prepared to changes one's plans!

**Assisi** too is charming and is a mecca for tourists from around the world because of the famous Basilica of St Francis. Our little hotel here, Hotel San Rufino (€59) was snuggled into old walls and a great location for seeing the sights. We were unable to enter the main Basilica as there were five days of filming taking place but the lower church was spectacular.

**Orvieto** in the heart of vineyards was our next destina-



Verona

tion, and this time we stayed in a convent, Istituto Santissimo Salvatore, just off the main square; we very much enjoyed this different experience. Many good bargains are listed in a guide entitled *Lodging in Italy's Monasteries* by Eileen Barish, published by Anacapa Press. (This guide, along with its sister volume covering similar accommodation in Spain, was mentioned in *TS*, November 2003, p. 19. The guides can be ordered from your book store, on-line or by calling 1 800 496 2665 – Ed.) The rate for our lovely big en suite room and breakfast was a mere €42. Two days allows plenty of time to wander, visit the incredible Duomo with its alabaster panel windows letting diffused light into the nave. It is amazing to realize that it took 30 architects, 150 sculptors and 68 painters to produce the façade, which was being refurbished during our visit but still beautiful. The interior Chapel of Brezio by Signorelli was magnificently painted with murals, and had a small self portrait in one corner. It is said to have inspired Michaelangelo to create the Sistine Chapel. By purchasing the Orvieto Card at the tourist bureau we were able to take several tours at a discount. The underground caves tour was particularly interesting, as was the museum across from the cathedral.

Outdoor markets, olive groves, newly-planted vineyards and narrow curving mountain roads make driving in this region most interesting, and sometimes even created white knuckles! We did see snow several times but it was not a deterrent and soon gave way to sunny vistas. Staying for two days in most of the small cities in this region gave ample time to explore all the nooks and crannies, churches and parks, and see markets and interesting sights along the way. These smaller cities are fun to explore on foot and very relaxing with sidewalk cafés for people watching. Highly recommended!

**San Gimignano** came next, where we settled in for a week at a small apartment which we reserved through La Bella Toscana (often mentioned in *TravelScoop* – Ed). They have many apartments from which to choose although most are for larger groups. Each apartment is owned and decorated by individuals and are managed by English Gaynor Powell and her Italian husband. Our week's accommodation was €20 at low season. San Gimignano is a beautiful, multi-towered, medieval town which once boasted 72 towers. Many are in ruins now but it is still lovely and a great place to pause awhile. From here **Lucca**, **Siena**, **Redda in Chianti**, the **Tyrenian coast** and the rolling **Umbrian hills** are at your beck and call. Every road leading away is picturesque, and each day we were awed by the many surprises that

awaited us. After exploring we relaxed on our balcony and watched the twinkling lights below while planning the next day's adventures. There is a large, particularly interesting supermarket a few miles away at **Poggibonsi**, and there are many small shops and outdoor markets in the area for all eating needs, as well as local restaurants. It is always a treat to shop in new locations and try new, tasty foods.

We finished our month in this wonderful part of the world by returning our car to Pisa and staying overnight again at the Hotel Roseto before flying home, completely relaxed and totally satiated by the incredible sights and sounds of Italy.

### Accommodation

If a website is not indicated, enter the name of the hotel plus 'Italy' in your search engine and you will find the property listed under a variety of booking agencies.

Residence Millennium, Via Degli Orti Oricellari 31, **Florence**, tel: [code 011 39] 55 215254

Hotel Roseto, Via Mascagni 24, 56100 **Pisa**, tel: 50 42596, fax: 50 42087, [www.hotelroseto.it](http://www.hotelroseto.it)

Hotel Maxim Verona, Via Belviglieri 42, 37131 **Verona**, tel: 45 840 1800, fax: 45840 1818, [www.maximverona.it](http://www.maximverona.it)

Hotel Rio, Castello 4356, 30100 **Venice**, tel: 41 523 4810

Hotel Italia, Via Ghibellina 1, 42044 **Cortona**, tel: 575 630254

Hotel San Rufino, Via Porta Perlici 7, 06081, Assisi (Perugia), tel/fax: 758 12803, [www.hotelsanrufino.it](http://www.hotelsanrufino.it)

Istituto Santissimo Salvatore, Via del Popolo 1, 05018 **Orvieto**, tel/fax: 763 342 910, e-mail: [institutosansalvatore@tiscalinet.it](mailto:institutosansalvatore@tiscalinet.it)

La Bella Toscana, Via Solferino 28, 53034 Colle di Val d'Else, Siena, (for **San Gimignano** rentals), tel: 577 926 926 768, e-mail: [info@labellatoscana.it](mailto:info@labellatoscana.it), [www.labellatoscana.it](http://www.labellatoscana.it)



*San Gimignano*

# Italy's

## Cinque Terre in the High Season

by Bob and Jen Hastie

*In our previous article Marg Lynn briefly mentioned her quick visit to the Cinque Terre in the spring. Now the Bob and Jen Hastie tell of some of the pitfalls of visiting the Cinque Terre in the high season, together with a good tip regarding staying in nearby La Spezia.*



**T**he coastal region known as Cinque Terre is without double a highlight of northern Italy. The five villages that give the area its name are linked together by rail, not road, and cling to the cliffs which form part of the topography south of Genoa. It is possible to reach this area by car, but vehicles must be parked at the top of the mountain and visitors must then walk down a long, steep path to arrive at each of the villages. Not recommended with a large suitcase!

Although the villages are all appealing, the region has become famous for its hiking paths “suspended between sea and sky”, as described in the tourism literature. The trails, a mix of centuries-old stone stairs and dirt paths, run through farmlands which are above and below the pathway. At every turn there are spectacular views of the ocean, hundreds of feet below. Here the farmers produce olives and grapes for export as well as food for their own use. Along the trails you also see the rolled-up nets that will be used to catch the olives as they ripen in the fall.

The Cinque Terre has recently been designated a national park by the Italian government, hoping to preserve this beautiful region of the country. We can certainly see their reason for concern, as there are many tourists walking the trails, often leaving garbage behind. To help pay the bills of trail upkeep, garbage removal and tourist literature, the government has introduced a variety of passes: €3.60 (€1 = C\$1.60) for a day pass up to €20.60 for week. We chose to buy a day's pass for €4.40 as this also gave free transportation in the area for the day, including our initial 8-minute train ride from our hotel in La Spezia. This daily pass allowed us to alternate a hiking day with a touring day in the surrounding area, where there are other small towns and the famous Pisa, while keeping our same hotel room.

The hiking paths in the Cinque Terre can be done in running shoes, but a backpack with a supply of water is essential. As we were walking in the heat of the summer, we found the hikes demanding, but under better weather conditions pathways are suitable for anyone in reasonable shape used to hiking on trails designated “moderate difficulty.” We quickly discovered that it was advisable to be on the paths no later than 9 a.m. This allowed us to

hike in the shade, before the sun rose over the mountains and when the paths were quite quiet. It is possible to stop for liquid refreshment or a meal at any number of restaurants in the villages. Unfortunately the large numbers of tourists that the villages receive have led to restaurants that mass-produce food of rather low quality. This was a shock to us, as we were used to a higher standard of food in Italy. And check your change from the vendors carefully.

If possible, I would recommend seeing this area in the fall or the spring; when the weather would be more conducive to hiking. And perhaps the quality of the food there would improve when the restaurants are less rushed.

Unfortunately, we had no choice but to visit during the summer. We did, however, make a smart choice in our decision to stay in La Spezia, a town of about 100,000 people just eight minutes by train to the nearest southern village of the Cinque Terre. On the internet, we reserved a room in the Hotel Firenze & Continentale, less than five minutes' walk from the train station. At €97 per night with breakfast, it was not inexpensive, but the service, the condition of our hotel room, the air conditioning and the great breakfasts made this hotel a very good choice. La Spezia itself has a lovely harbour and several designated car-less streets. Palm and flowering trees abound. The shopping prices were reasonable and there are good museums and art galleries to enjoy. Two good restaurants that we found in La Spezia were Trattoria da Luciano (via Columbo 27) and Il Giardinetto (on Via del Prione, the main pedestrians-only street). The cost of a meal for two with beer or wine usual-

ly came to about €30.

As well as taking a day trip to Pisa from La Spezia, we also explored small towns nearby. And a memorable experience was taking a catamaran to Genoa for the day. Included in our boat ticket was a pass to Genoa's new and wonderful Aquarium, reportedly the largest in Europe. Genoa is home to impressive buildings, piazzas and a spectacular church near the harbour. The catamaran, which leaves from La Spezia's harbour, cost €36.15 pp. On the trip we discovered that the five villages of the Cinque Terre are only five of many villages clinging to the sides of the cliffs. These villages, largely unknown to tourists, are even less connected with the modern world than the other five, for they have no rail service.

Hotel Firenze & Continentale, Via Paleocapa 7, 19122 La Spezia, Italy, tel: [code 011 39] 187 713 210, fax: 187 714 930, e-mail: [hotel\\_firenze@hotelfirenzecontinentale.it](mailto:hotel_firenze@hotelfirenzecontinentale.it), [www.hotelfirenzecontinentale.it](http://www.hotelfirenzecontinentale.it).

*The Italian Government Tourist Board has a booklet covering the Cinque Terre region (and, of course, literature on other regions and destinations in Italy). They are located at 175 Bloor Street E., Suite 907 South Tower, Toronto M4W 3R8, tel: 416 925 4882, fax: 416 925 4799, e-mail: [enitto@italiantourism.com](mailto:enitto@italiantourism.com), and more information visit website: [www.italiantourism.com](http://www.italiantourism.com). The Cinque Terre also has a website: [www.parconazionale5terre.it](http://www.parconazionale5terre.it) which appears to be only in Italian; however the 'photo gallery' is worth a peek – Ed.*

## Florence Finds and Tips

We spent four great days in Florence last year with another couple, staying in an apartment a couple of blocks from the Duomo. It had a loft bedroom and pull-out couch in the living room below, and washer, dryer, dishwasher etc., all for €400 (approx. C\$629), plus cleaning fee, for the four days. We found this site by going to [www.emmeti.it](http://www.emmeti.it) and clicking through until we got to 'Merry-go-round' which lists several units of this type. We chose Appartamento San Gallo which was available for the days we needed. We were met by the owner at the apartment at a pre-arranged time. Although it required walking up one set of stairs (no elevator) it was clean and we would certainly book it again if it were available. You might want to bring a few extra towels if your stay is long.

A must for a trip to Florence is a visit to the renowned Uffizzi Gallery. But the lines-ups can be very long if you do not hold tickets, so it is better to order them ahead of time. You can do this over the internet at [www.florenceart.it](http://www.florenceart.it). You then arrive at the gallery 15 minutes ahead of time and pick up your tickets at a special office across the piazza from the gallery. Then there is a much shorter line for those who are holding the reserved tickets.

We found the city tour from "sightseeing Firenze" interesting and flexible. There are many stops conveniently located in touristy spots (we got on first at the Duomo). You pay once you get on the bus, and your ticket is valid for 24 hours, for two different routes. It is possible to take the bus to an attraction, visit the attraction, and then get back on later to finish the tour. The tour took us to Fiesole on the outskirts of Florence, where many of the rich and famous have villas, and along the riverfront with its interesting buildings. At €20 (about C\$31.50) these tours are not cheap, but we felt it was worth the price. Florence is a fascinating destination ... don't miss it if you're travelling to Italy.

Mary Ogilvie  
Fredericton, NB

## Canada

Are you of 'a certain age' and have never skied? Are you put off by images of Olympic racers or those extreme skiers jumping off impossible cliffs? Take it from your editor (aged 61) – it isn't really like that! Skiing can be as slow and calm as you wish and today, with the new wide, short skis, it's quick and easy to learn. It gets you out in winter and it's fun. Now, wishing to introduce mature people to the joys of skiing, the Canadian Ski Council is inviting you to learn at discounted rates. And if you really don't think 'downhill' is for you, they are including cross-country clinics too. The 'Discover Skiing' packages are being offered at ski regions **across Canada**. The packages include discounted rates on lift passes, equipment rentals and lessons that have been designed to safely introduce the sport to mature beginners. For more information on these Discover Skiing packages, call your local ski area. (In Québec they are called Iniski and Inisurf.) A complete list of the participating areas is included on the Canadian Ski Council's website at [www.skicanada.org](http://www.skicanada.org).

If you'd rather dream of Spring, make a note that **Ottawa's Tulip Festival** is scheduled for 5 - 23 May this year. Information and special packages will be available at [www.ottawatourism.ca](http://www.ottawatourism.ca) or [www.tulipfestival.ca](http://www.tulipfestival.ca)

When word gets out, it's sure to be hard to make a reservation! It's the **Amore by the Sea B&B**, about 20 minutes' drive from Victoria, BC, which was recently named 'Inn of the Year 2005' by Pamela Lanier's 22<sup>nd</sup> annual *Complete Guide to B&Bs, Inns and Guesthouses International*.

Amore is the first Canadian property to receive this award. For more information call 1 888 828 4397 or visit their attractive website [www.amorebythesea.com](http://www.amorebythesea.com)

## Hong Kong

The new *Hong Kong Leisure Guide for Business Travellers* is a useful guide for all, with its 'at-a-glance' information on so much that Hong Kong has to offer and its range of specials offers that include free gifts and discount coupons for shopping, dining and entertainment. For a copy of the guide contact the Hong Kong Tourism Board at 416 366 2389 or 1 800 563 4582 or at [www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/travelneeds/business/index.jhtml](http://www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/travelneeds/business/index.jhtml)

## Ireland

If Ireland is in your plans and you'd like to enjoy some of that country's wide range of festivals held throughout the year, you can find lots of information at [www.irishfestivals.info](http://www.irishfestivals.info) As well as festival details the site offers accommodation booking, tours, car rentals and lots more. And then, of course, there's also the excellent website of Tourism Ireland (which covers the whole island) at [www.tourismireland.com](http://www.tourismireland.com)

## Spain

If Spain is in your plans you may like to consider a week of free accommodation and board in return for volunteering to speak English to the Spanish participants, most of whom are professionals or executives. The 20 Spanish participants (or their companies) pay, the 20 English speakers stay free and merely have to speak English through meals, excursions, scenic walks, game-playing and dedicated "talking time". Although "no Spanish is allowed", all participants enjoy cultural presentations such as Spanish music and dancing and other entertainment. If this idea appeals, visit [www.vaughanvillage.com](http://www.vaughanvillage.com) And if you do participate, please write and tell *TravelScoop* all about it ... we'd love to publish your story!

Another special feature of Spain this year is the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of *Don Quixote*. To celebrate, the region of Castile-La Mancha will be spending about \$66 million on over 2,000 art exhibitions, concerts, plays and other activities. Exhibitions with an international appeal will include *Don Quixote in Contemporary Art*, *Don Quixote in Ceramics* and *Dali and Don Quixote*. Of special interest to travellers will be the 1,000 km green tourism route from Toledo to Atienza – one of Europe's longest cultural 'roads' – that winds through some 105 villages showcasing the places where Don Quixote's adventures took place. Much of it will be handicapped accessible. For details of the Don Quixote Route e-mail [donquixote2005@jccm.es](mailto:donquixote2005@jccm.es) or visit [www.donquijotedelamancha2005.com](http://www.donquijotedelamancha2005.com).

## U.S.A.

If you're in the market for a rental car while in **Florida**, you may like to check the offerings at [www.acarinFlorida.com](http://www.acarinFlorida.com), a site that offers very competitive rates from a variety of well-known car-rental companies. This company works in partnership with Worldwide Holiday Homes, a UK-based company that offers self-catering accommodation in many destinations, including Florida. To view their rental-accommodation portfolio log on to [www.holiday-rentals.uk.com](http://www.holiday-rentals.uk.com)

A visit to sunny **Arizona** is sure to beat the winter blues. And if you are a bird-watcher there's no better time than winter! Graham County, in the south east of the State, is regarded as one of the best birding areas in the U.S., and their Tourism Chamber has information about winter birding visits as well as lists of places to stay and the region's many attractions. For information call 1 888 837 1841 or visit [www.graham-chamber.com](http://www.graham-chamber.com) and [www.visitgraham-country.com](http://www.visitgraham-country.com) And for general information on travelling in Arizona, call their Tourism Office in Toronto at 416 861 1240 or 1 866 275 5843 or visit [www.ArizonaGuide.com](http://www.ArizonaGuide.com) or, for lots of deals, [www.ArizonaVacationValues.com](http://www.ArizonaVacationValues.com)

There's quite a lot of news regarding new services from **Air Canada** recently which should help readers with future plans, points collection, etc. On 20 January Air Canada commenced a new codeshare service to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The new daily service via Hong Kong will operate twice daily non-stop flights from Toronto and Vancouver to Hong Kong, with ongoing connections to Ho Chi Minh City operated by Star Alliance partner United Airlines.

Air Canada will further expand its Asian network AC by introducing three weekly non-stop flights between Toronto and Seoul, Korea, beginning 1 July, complementing its daily non-stop flights from Vancouver. With an elapsed time of 14 hours, 15 minutes westbound and 12 hours, 55 minutes eastbound, the non-stop flight will save travellers from the east 3 hours, 20 minutes compared to the Vancouver routing. Air Canada will operate the new route using 282-seat A340-300 aircraft.

And speaking of 'service' and Air Canada, I (Editor Ann) would like to add a personal note and state that on several Air Canada flights recently I have noticed a marked improvement in attitude and service from all Air Canada staff. On one flight, when I didn't feel well, the

staff members were especially kind and helpful. Keep it up!

So many individuals and companies (especially travel companies) have contributed to various tsunami relief efforts that it doesn't seem fair to single out just a few. However, we thought it would be nice to acknowledge **Cathay Pacific** who made a large donation and provided complimentary air transportation for the shipment of aid, including medical supplies and water purification equipment from Canada. And Canada's own **Air Transat** also made a substantial donation to the Canadian Red Cross and matched donations from its employees throughout January. **American Express** have stated they will waive all merchant fees when cardholders use their cards to make a tsunami-relief contribution to a range of charities and members of the American Express rewards programme can redeem their rewards points and apply the points to a range of charities. Also, through March 31, Amex will match these contributions dollar for dollar to a maximum of \$1 million. Visit [www.travelcompaniescare.org](http://www.travelcompaniescare.org) for more interesting information.

## cruise news

**H**ere at *TravelScoop* we love receiving the monthly *Freighter Cruises* brochure from Maris and having a little dream during our coffee break. No excessive buffets and dancing girls on these cruises! No, just relaxation, a chance to interact personally with the crew and your few fellow passengers ... and lots of travelling! If you can be away for 18 weeks, you could join one of the Rickmers Line around-the-world cruises that sail every two weeks from Houston, Texas and visit about two dozen ports with an average port time of 2-3 days. After Houston and New Orleans the vessels visit a couple more North American ports before heading for Europe. Germany, Belgium and Italy are usually on the itinerary, before the vessels transit the Suez Canal en route to India or Indonesia. Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Yokohama and other Asian ports follow, before the vessels cross the Pacific and possibly call in at Los Angeles before making passage through the Panama Canal. Shorter sections may also be available and, for a limited time, special discounts are being offered on early reservations: 5% discount 6 months in advance and 10% if you reserve 12 months in advance. If a shorter cruise appeals, you may like the unusual passage along the west coasts of both North and South America from Vancouver to San Antonio, Chile with stops in the U.S., Mexico,

Guatemala and Colombia. Maris also has all the available options for those famous Norwegian Coastal Voyages: independent and escorted Norwegian tours, cruise-only and 'no frills' vacations (using older vessels ... described as 'mid-generation' ships). If this type of cruising appeals, Maris are the people to know. To join their Freighter Travel Club and receive their monthly brochure call 1 800 99-MARIS or visit [www.freighter-cruises.com](http://www.freighter-cruises.com)

**T**he 2005 brochure for those lovely sailing trips on the island-dotted coast of Maine is now available from the Maine Windjammer Association. This company offers a variety of speciality cruises: whale watching, history, full-moon sailing and lots of hand-on participation if and when you wish. *They are great and the food is wonderful* – Ed. For brochure call 1 800 807 WIND (please say you read about them in TS!) or visit [www.sailmainecoast.com](http://www.sailmainecoast.com).

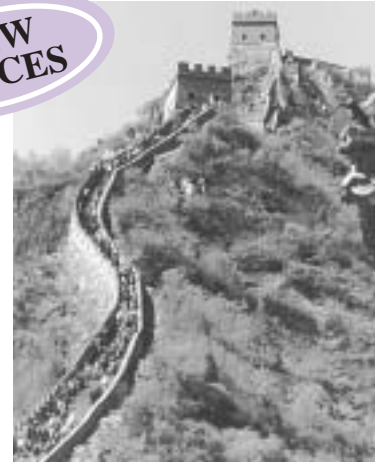
**F**or an unusual Mediterranean itinerary cruisers may like to check out this year's offering from Oceania Cruises.. Their Mediterranean Odyssey will sail from Barcelona to Lisbon, calling at Benghazi and Tripoli (Libya), Valletta (Malta), La Goulette (Tunisia), Gibraltar, Casablanca and Seville. For this and their many other cruises see your travel agent, call 1 800 531 5658 or visit [www.OceaniaCruises.com](http://www.OceaniaCruises.com).

# China ... Yangtze Spectacular

FROM **\$3,925** FOR **18 DAYS!**

Departing 7 or 28 April, 15 September & 20 October 2005

**NEW  
PRICES**



**I**t is vast, fascinating and mysterious and it has beckoned travellers from the west for centuries. Mention it to avid travellers and they are sure to say, "Yes, I hope to visit China one day." And what would they choose to experience? **A cruise on the mighty Yangtze River (now in the process of changing for ever);** a look at the work-in-progress on the massive **Three Gorges Dam**; a walk on the ancient **Great Wall**; views of charming villages, lush terraced hillsides and magnificent mountain peaks; visits to the great cities of **Shanghai** and **Beijing**; a trip to view one of the world's greatest archaeological finds ... the 6,000 terra-cotta warriors at **Xi'an**; scenes of palaces, pagodas, pavilions and pandas; tastes of Peking duck and Chinese banquets and so much more. So how do you choose? When you decide on The *Travel Society's* tour there's no need to choose because all these highlights are included. Yes, in these remarkable 18 days you'll stay in Beijing; you'll take a 4-day first-class

cruise on the Yangtze with many shore excursions; you'll fly to see those centuries-old terra-cotta warriors in Xi'an; you'll visit bustling Chongquin and see its pandas; stay in Hangzhou and travel into the hills covered with tea plantations; explore the exquisite gardens of Suzhou, and visit Nanjing and Wuzhen. And you'll have time to explore spectacular Shanghai. Throughout the trip you'll see magnificent architecture, you'll be entertained at cultural events, you'll join your hosts at a variety of banquets, you'll have time to shop, and you'll marvel at some of the most wonderful scenery on earth, all in the company of English-speaking guides. You'll travel by plane, by luxury bus, cruise ship and river boat. Many of our members have told us it's an experience of a lifetime ... and all at an amazing price!

## AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES from:

Departing:	7 April	All other dates
Vancouver	\$3,925	\$3,995 pp/dbl
Victoria/Nanaimo/Kamloops	\$4,050	\$4,125 pp/dbl
Calgary/Edmonton	\$4,175	\$4,250 pp/dbl
Saskatoon/Regina	\$4,175	\$4,250 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$4,175	\$4,250 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$4,265	\$4,280 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,265	\$4,280 pp/dbl
Halifax/Quebec City/London	\$4,365	\$4,440 pp/dbl
St. John's	\$4,365	\$4,440 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$1,200 (Sharing can be arranged.)  
Taxes and visas extra.

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

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

**1 MONTH  
\$5,180**

# At Home in Mexico

*departures throughout February, March & April 2005 for 1, 2 or 3 weeks or 1 month*

We invite you to come to Mexico's fascinating Yucatán and to immerse yourself in this region's culture. *You will hardly believe all that this trip includes!* You'll stay in an en-suite room in a home in a gracious, residential area of colonial Mérida, where your English-speaking hosts can help you with your Spanish if you so wish. All the homes have been carefully selected by our colleague in Merida and if you would like a home with a special feature – a swimming pool, for example – we will try to please you. You will enjoy three meals a day with your hosts or away from 'home' when you are on an excursion with us. And, of course, your flights from Canada and airport transfers in Mexico are included too.

Every day – but only if and when you wish – you'll take part in an incredible variety of cultural activities, workshops or excursions. Workshops include cookery lessons, painting and sculpture, music appreciation, Tai Chi and others. Short excursions include theatrical, musical and dance events; a bull fight; museum and gallery visits; sporting events; birdwatching; traditional Mexican evenings and more, while a week-end trip will take you to Cancun and the Mayan Riviera. Again all meals, accommodation and admissions are included. In luxurious coaches you'll visit Campeche and Izamal, the fabled Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza and Uxmal, the Celestial Biosphere and much more.

To add to the experience of this trip you may also choose to take daily Spanish lessons in a pleasant Merida language school. This is the only 'extra' of the trip ... other than that you will rarely open your wallets except to purchase personal items, souvenirs and gifts.

Because Mexicans really know how to enjoy life, you will return to Canada with wonderful tales of all the fun you have had while enjoying your rich learning experience. You will have made new friends and have many wonderful memories. You can choose to go for a week or two, or for a month. On subsequent weeks you may remain with your original hosts or move to enjoy another home and make new friends. This programme has been designed exclusively for The Travel Society ... it is a unique and wonderful experience. Enjoy!

## SAMPLE PRICES INCLUDING AIR departing from:

<b>Toronto/</b> 1 week	\$2,634 pp/dbl	<b>Vancouver</b> 1 week	\$2,889 pp/dbl
<b>Ottawa/</b> 2 weeks	\$3,483 pp/dbl	Jan/Feb 2 weeks	\$3,738 pp/dbl
<b>Montreal</b> 3 weeks	\$4,335 pp/dbl	3 weeks	\$4,590 pp/dbl
Jan/Feb 1 month	\$5,180 pp/dbl	1 month	\$5,435 pp/dbl

Prices are subject to confirmation

*prices are available from all major cities*

### Your stay includes:

- Round trip international & domestic air fare
- Airport transfers
- Deluxe a/c coach transportation
- Homestay accommodation with English-speaking hosts
- Three meals a day
- English-speaking guides and escorts
- All workshops and activities
- All week-end trips with meals and hotels
- All entrance fees
- All departure taxes and fees

# 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 15<sup>th</sup> century temples, before you proceed to the famous medieval city of Jodhpur, home of the massive Mehrangarh Fort and many exquisite palaces. Then how about a camel safari ... sure to bring lots of laughs and some great photographs! Khimsar and Nagaur are next on the itinerary, where there's more sightseeing and lots of leisure time for relaxing, shopping or wandering alone with your camera. Bikaner is next - a royal walled city with a wealth of architectural heritage - where you'll visit Lalgarh Palace Museum, a combination of European luxury and Oriental fantasy and Junagarh Fort, which was started in 1587 and houses 37 palaces, pavilions and temples. You'll then travel on to Mandawa, known for its exquisite frescoes where you'll stay in Castle Mandawa, a unique desert resort. Jaipur - the pink city - is next; a city of beauty famous for its bazaar full of wonderful gifts. Here you can take an elephant-ride excursion to Amer Fort and also see the Palace of the Winds and the stone Observatory. Of course Agra is on the itinerary, for that never-to-be forgotten dawn visit to the Taj Mahal, before you travel on to famous Delhi, the capital of India. Throughout this trip you will stay in first-class hotels, travel in deluxe a/c, fully-equipped coaches and enjoy wonderful meals, banquets and entertainment. Many days will be full, but there's plenty of free time too. Haven't you always wanted to visit India? Make this the year and come with The Travel Society this fall.



## PRICES INCLUDING AIR departing from:

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

### Your tour includes:

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

21 days, prices include all airfares

# A Traveller's Turkey

Space limited to 20 people  
Fully escorted

Departing: 3 May, 20 September 2005

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Your tour includes:

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

## Copper Canyon

Departing 18 March, 8 April 2005

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

### Air-inclusive prices departing from:

Toronto, Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,984 pp/dbl
Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg	\$5,294 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$600 (Sharing can be arranged.)

Prices are subject to confirmation

Please call for prices from other departure cities

### FULLY ESCORTED

### Your tour includes:

- All air transportation on Mexicana
- Canadian domestic air
- Bilingual escort
- 8 nights first class accommodation
- All transfers, baggage handling & tips
- Meals as per the itinerary
- All train trips and tours as per the itinerary
- All taxes

NEW PRICES

# Galapagos Islands and Ecuador

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

14 days departing 12 April & 26 April 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
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prices are available from all major cities

### GREAT ADD-ONS, INCLUDING AIR:

Kapawi - from all departure points	\$1,680.00 pp/dbl
Machu Picchu	from \$1,996.00 pp/dbl

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

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.  

a NEW 19-day tour...

Space limited to 16 people  
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\$6,826

# Spectacular South Africa

Departure: 15 September 2005

Come with The Travel Society to a land of wonder ... on a South African trip unlike any other. Designed especially for our members, this trip takes in all the highlights: Kruger National Park for game watching, the famous Garden Route, the beautiful wine region of Stellenbosch and the sights of incomparable Cape Town, including Cape Point, Chapman's Peak Drive and Robben Island. But on our trip you will do far more. You will tour the Great Escarpment of Eastern Transvaal – a place so beautiful writers run out of adjectives – where you will visit God's Window, the Blyde River Canyon and historical towns like Pilgrims Rest. You'll see Johannesburg and be escorted to Soweto for lunch in a Township house and jazz in a famous nightclub. You'll enter the Kingdom of Swaziland to meet the people and enjoy more game watching. Zululand is also on the itinerary, with its historical sites and unique entertainment traditions. You'll be driven through the Valley of a Thousand Hills to East London and take the famous Outeniqua Choo-Toe train from Knysna to George. You'll visit the Addo Elephant National Park and traverse the Little Karoo Desert – flanked by great mountain ranges – to see the Cango Caves. You'll travel in a luxury air-conditioned coach, you'll stay in lovely properties ranging from good hotels to charming chalets, you'll enjoy a wide variety of entertainment and you'll enjoy South Africa's delicious cuisine and wines and you'll be escorted all the way by Satour-accredited guides. Here at The Travel Society we know South Africa well ... and we can't imagine a more comprehensive, in-depth and fascinating tour of South Africa.

PRICES INCLUDING AIR AND TAXES departing from:

Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa \$6,826 pp/dbl

Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Halifax \$7,109 pp/dbl

Single supplement TBA (sharing can be arranged)

Prices are subject to confirmation

### Your tour includes:

- Return international airfare on British Airways
- First-class accommodation throughout
- Luxury a/c Mercedes coach
- Experienced Satour-accredited tour guides
- Special Travel Society experiences
- All meals breakfast, light lunch and dinner
- All transfers with full luggage service
- All sightseeing fees (with no hidden extras)
- All taxes

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