

# The Travel Society

Vol. 23, No. 8 October 2005

Magazine

**Focus on New Zealand  
Tunisia  
Easter Island  
En route to Niagara**

[www.thetravelsociety.com](http://www.thetravelsociety.com)

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**The Travel Society Magazine** (ISSN#1717-242X) is an independent, consumer magazine published in Canada ten times a year. Although extreme care is taken to ensure the accuracy of material herein, **The Travel Society** does not assume any liability for errors or omissions, for changes in fares or schedules, or for readers' decisions based on the opinions of the editor or writers. Readers are advised to confirm all information prior to booking.

### Rates for CANADA (incl. GST):

1 year - \$ 49.00

2 years - \$ 95.00

3 years - \$ 140.00

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

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

### Back issues:

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

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**Postmaster:** Please send address corrections to the above address.

Printed in Canada. GST Reg # R135785962

Publications Mail Agreement:

# 40063904 & # 09925

Customer # 2289997

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

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP) and the Canadian Magazine Fund of the Department of Canada Heritage toward our mailing and project costs.

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*Cathedral Square,  
Christchurch -  
the old and new  
(C. Webster)*

## editor's letter ...

In every issue we bring you tales of happy travels that are, we hope, a pleasure to read and a stimulus (and help) to setting out on your own. Yet, as I sit to pen my monthly letter to you, I can't but help reflect on the many times I have had to acknowledge difficult times in this world of ours: 9/11, Bali and similar atrocities and last year's massive tsunami among them. Hurricanes have always been with us, of course; it's just modern technology (and courageous reporters) that to-day mean images are beamed into our living rooms. And the images from New Orleans have been truly dreadful. Now, as I sit writing this, Hurricane Rita is on its way. Let us hope lessons have been learned and that, this time, the suffering is alleviated.



This issue has no theme ... we travel with our contributors all over the place! I sobel Warren meets Santa in the Rockies; Dean and Gayle Feltham tell that if you're thinking of cruising and then exploring Alaska by land next year, now is the time to start planning; and intrepid Maria Wu finishes our New Zealand focus with some unusual stories and then tells of her 'stop-over' in the friendly Tonga islands. And there's a story by yours truly that came out of a personal getaway to the sun late last year. I'm actually not a sun chaser, but when four members of my family found they could get away for the same week we jumped at the idea. I'd been to St. Lucia about ten years earlier and it had remained one of my favourite Caribbean islands. It has a lush, hilly, rain-forest interior and, as it does not boast as many beaches as most other island destinations, it remains relatively undeveloped with fewer tourists in evidence. On my previous visit, in a bookstore in Castries, I'd purchased a volume of Nobel prize-winner Derek Walcott's poetry. The book accompanied me back to the island and helped me appreciate the past sorrows and the enduring beauty of the island anew.

## Rockin' Through the Rockies on a Merry Christmas Jaunt

The Rockies, eh? Canadians tend to take them for granted. After all, they've graced gazillions of calendars and velvet cushion covers and starred in myriad movies, many of them awful. But here's nothing ho-hum about the peak-to-peak encounter that the Rocky Mountaineer provides with its two-day daylight train ride between Banff and Vancouver. Year-round it's spectacular but in the Christmas season, with towering peaks, glistening snow and roiling rivers, it's awe-inspiring. And, especially for the special season, there's more.

The Christmas train journey begins in Calgary, with a two-hour bus ride to Banff, or in Vancouver where costumed carollers serenade you at the fancy new Rocky Mountaineer train station. The adventure can be extended in Banff or Vancouver, both nifty holiday venues, especially if you opt for the baronial Banff Springs Hotel or the impressive Hotel Vancouver. There are, however, plenty of more modestly priced hotel options in both cities.

At the Banff Springs Hotel, train hobbyist Dale Dombrowski gave us a foretaste of our journey with his 'O' gauge rail display – nine trains running on 500 feet of track in a huge balcony-ringed room, beneath a tow-

ering Christmas tree. Valued at about \$30,000, the treasured collection includes a replica of CN 6060, an engine that dates from 1944.

Next morning, motor coaches delivered us to the train station in the pre-dawn chill. The Rocky Mountaineer offers two travel categories. Gold Leaf passengers enjoy dome cars, a dining room all their own for truly gourmet breakfasts and lunches, between-meal refreshments and drinks and live commentary. Red Leaf passengers occupy standard rail cars where hot breakfasts and lunches are served airline-style at the seat and drinks cost extra. The train's lounge car and children's car are open to both categories. Everyone leaves the train at Kamloops to overnight at the quaint Plaza Heritage Hotel. The Gold Leaf price tag is about double that of Red Leaf.

Our first day began as all days should – with champagne. Within minutes, it was breakfast time and half of our fellow travellers destined for the first breakfast sitting descended a spiral staircase to the dining room, resplendent in white linens and Christmas sparkle. (There's an elevator for the mobility challenged.) The rest of us endured growling stomachs for a full two minutes before fresh coffee and huge trays of hot danishes and muffins appeared. In spite of the pre-breakfast snack, we managed to do justice to the 'real' breakfast about an hour later – artfully prepared scrambled eggs smoked salmon, fruit, warm breads and more.

Gold Leaf Executive Chef Mark Jorundson, a small-town Manitoba boy whose training and experience span several continents and myriad culinary styles, heads a 60-member team that's skilled in creating world-class cuisine on moving trains. Each dome car boasts a custom-made stainless steel galley that's a marvel of efficient use of limited space. (Safety is a factor too – every fridge and stove has locking doors and all appli-

ances are electric.) The lunch menus highlight B.C. and Alberta specialties: wild salmon, Alberta beef, freshwater pickerel and a good selection of B.C. wines. The desserts alone are almost worth the price of the trip: decadent and exquisitely garnished. And it's clearly understood by all that on moving trains, calories don't count!

In the brightening dawn, a herd of elk skittered up the mountainside, just yards from our window. Later we spied mountain goats and eagles. But most wildlife wisely hibernates for Christmas – and besides, there was plenty of wild living on board. The lounge car is a merry watering hole where a two-man jazz band comprising James Burton and Chris Jones never seems to run out of instruments, repertoire or energy. An entire car belongs to the youngsters, where Jim Raddysh, a children's television personality, sings, plays guitar, makes games, performs magic, builds neat stuff and keeps them busy from dawn to dusk.

Back in the main car, between snacks, drinks and lively conversation (our fellow travellers seemed to bond within minutes) we enjoyed a two-day primer in Canadian geology, geography, folklore and history. Attendant Rodd Cruikshank, a consummate story teller, shared nuggets of history and lore – the people, the challenges, the appalling loss of life that the railway entailed. (It's sadly estimated that two workers died for every mile of track laid.)

The Rocky Mountaineer's stately

***Writers are rewarded for sharing!***

*The TravelSociety* rewards readers with subscription extensions of varying lengths for all submissions published. So whether you have a letter with a travel tip or a destination to share, please write to us!



pace, averaging 30 miles an hour, is set by traffic up ahead – the train uses Canadian Pacific and Canadian National freight line tracks. “A broken down freight train ahead, a split rail, forest fires, trucks stalled on the tracks, native blockades, rock slides ... they’re all part of the adventure,” Rodd explained. And even on this luxury train it is an adventure. The Rockies continue to challenge any who dare tackle them. So it was that our train groaned to a halt to rescue a man frantically waving beside the tracks. As fierce winds whipped snow down from the mountains, willing hands reached down to help the old gentleman aboard.

But it was a scam. Once dusted off, he was transformed. Red suit, white beard, twinkling eyes ... we knew in an instant it must be St. Nick. He told us (and does Santa lie?) that his sleigh had broken down in the foothills, so he abandoned it, sent the reindeer north, shouldered his bag of gifts and flagged down the train. Little mouths dropped! After that, it was party time for all as our train rollicked down towards Vancouver with the music thumping, the kids whooping, the grown-ups beaming and Santa ho-ho-ho-ing from seat to seat, hugging kids and kissing any

available pretty girl, along with a few of the rest of us. Attendants metamorphosed into red-capped elves, handing out red maple-leaf-embellished scarves to adults and toys to the tinys. Vistas of BC’s valleys, rivers and gardens whizzed by and by nightfall, we were in Vancouver. ‘Twas such fun!

#### **A little more information ...**

The Christmas train is a one-way, two-day journey starting in either Banff or Vancouver. There’s one pre-Christmas round trip and one post-Christmas, with Santa a feature on all four journeys. Prices include two lunches on the train and one dinner in Kamloops. Four- to ten-day packages in Banff and Vancouver can, if you so desire, extend the experience with sight-seeing, skiing, and more. Smoking is not permitted, inside or outside on the train. No pets, except service animals, are permitted. If you have young children or grandchildren in your lives do consider treating them to this trip. They will love it, and love you for taking them! All details at 1 800 665 7245 or [www.winterailvacations.com](http://www.winterailvacations.com).

*Isobel Warren & Milan Chvostek  
???????????*

## **Hamilton History**

I read the piece on Hamilton, Ontario, in the July/August edition of your magazine with interest and pleasure and I’d like to add a few words. I don’t live in Hamilton, but have visited on quite a few occasions, enjoying the opera there or attending events at McMaster University. My most enduring link with the city, however, is via the writer John Terpstra, a Hamilton resident who, in addition to being a writer, is an expert cabinet-maker who has filled two of the walls in my Toronto home with well-crafted book cases.

His link with your story is that he has written a book called *Falling into Place*. On the cover it says, “This book is what happens when one person becomes completely enamoured of the landscape in the city where he lives.” That city is Hamilton. When I read Terpstra’s book, I thought how lucky Hamilton is to have so richly informative and evocative a treatment devoted to it.

The book is available from the Gaspereau Press (1 Church Avenue, Kentville, Nova Scotia B4N 2M7, [www.gaspereau.com](http://www.gaspereau.com), 318 pages with illustrations and maps, \$25.95).

*William Blissett  
Toronto, ON*

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## A Long Stay in Portugal

Canadians thinking of a long-stay away from our winter or chilly spring may like to consider Portugal. We spent a month there a couple of years ago. It was a combined package, with flights from Toronto to Faro and back on Air Transat. We had a one-bedroom apartment in Albuferia at the Club Praia da Ora, right on the beach with a great patio overlooking the ocean and grounds, and a car was included for the four weeks. We found driving to be no problem, and there was something interesting around every corner. We did make a few wrong turns but that just seemed to add even more interest to our excursions. We enjoyed the touristy bits for which the Albuferia area is well known: great seafood restaurants and lovely clean beaches and we also made many day trips into the surrounding hills to sample the local cuisine and wine, visit historic sites and see the hills in bloom.

Although we booked through an agent and there was a local representative available if we needed help with tours etc., we were able to do our own planning. We wandered the hills and coast at our leisure and found some great eating areas and interesting villages. Taveria to the east was a typical Portuguese city with excellent seaside fish restaurants, a little train that toured us through the city sites and to the salt flats. Querencia, in the hills above Albuferia, rated several visits to its local pub for great piri piri chicken, local wine at €0.50 a glass and interesting local Fado singers. We also visited the church of St Laurence of Almancil. The church is not large but is completely covered in beautiful blue and white tiles, dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which detail the life of St Laurence.

When self-catering we bought most of our produce and fish at the local markets. We found the one in Loule to be one of the best. The market sells every food item imaginable, including the best olives we've ever tasted, as well as local crafts and pottery. It is held every other Saturday when the whole

downtown becomes a side-walk market. One of our longer away trips was to the most interesting city of Evora and the walled village of Monsaraz. We travelled through the cork and olive fields of the province of Alentejo to its capital ... the UNESCO heritage city of Evora. Many of Evora's inhabitants live within the Moorish walled area. The day we arrived there was a huge market outside the city walls; I could have spent the whole afternoon touring through it. The old city within the walls has many sites, all easily walkable. Of its many churches the most memorable, though not for the faint of heart, is Igreja de Sao Francisco with its Capela dos Ossos, or chapel of bones. The chapel is lined with the skulls and bones of 5000 people and a sign over the door states "We bones await yours." There is an extra charge for photographing the chapel! There is also a huge Se, or cathedral, here with wonderful views from the towers; Roman ruins and the Church of St John the Evangelist which features the most beautiful Azulejo tiles. Across from the church, the Convento dos Loios has been turned into one of the most expensive *pousadas* in Portugal. And don't miss the main square – Praca do Giraldo.

We also especially liked the fortified village of Monsaraz. It is high on a hill and can be seen for many miles before arriving. It is a walled village with no vehicular traffic. We arrived on a quiet morning and wandered the old town almost by ourselves. There are several churches to tour and a castle at the end of the village. The views of the surrounding countryside are terrific.

Between Evora and the village of Monsaraz we stopped at the pottery village of Sao Pedro de Cortel. There are several pottery factories here, all open to the public for viewing, and all selling their wares. It's difficult to leave without making some purchases! The pottery is really lovely and ranges from hand-painted olive dishes and small bowls to large platters and vases ... there's something for everyone. And that can also be said for a stay in Portugal during the 'off-season'.

*Thelma Sampson  
Dryden, ON*

*Signature Vacations is also offering long-stays in Portugal this coming season, with flights from Toronto. Your agent will have Signature's Tropical Sun brochure, or log on to [www.signaturevacations.com](http://www.signaturevacations.com). Prices look very good – Ed.*

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## Accommodation in Israel

Quite a long time ago, a friend and I were considering a trip to Israel. Sadly, ill health intervened and I doubt, now, that we will ever go. However, on tidying up some papers recently I came across a brochure we had acquired for the YMCA's Hotel Three Arches in Jerusalem. A search on the internet yielded the site [www.jerusalemymca.org](http://www.jerusalemymca.org) and it looks so tempting that I thought I'd like to share the information with TS readers. The significant building, with double rooms and breakfast quoted at US\$95, is located in Jerusalem's historic district, opposite the famous King David Hotel, and if you visit the website you will see it doesn't fit any pre-conceived notions of a "Y". And on the site I learned that for its efforts in promoting peace, unity and the dignity of humankind, the Jerusalem International YMCA was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

The site also has details of the Y's property on the Sea of Galilee at Peniel-by-Galilee. Here is a quote: "The 13-room hotel is so intimate that it almost makes you feel as if you are a guest in a private house in a bygone era. Tasty homemade meals are served on the terrace. The views of the lake from every room and window make it difficult to resist the short walk to the shore for a swim. You can also retreat to the garden terraces to sit in the shade of the olive trees surrounded by a mass of oleander."

I hope this information is interesting and useful to some readers who may have Israel in their plans. Bon voyage!

*P. Wallis,  
Toronto, ON*

# Exploring New Zealand by Car

*Story by Moyra Webster, photography by Clive Webster*

*We really don't like reminding you – in our glorious month of October – that soon the snow will be flying! But we all know it will, and that a week in the sun to recharge our batteries will be very, very welcome. A lush Caribbean island is an obvious choice, especially one that is easily accessible from Canada. Here we invite you to consider beautiful St. Lucia. And over the next few months we will be featuring a few other sun destinations: two that we have not covered before: the British Virgin Island and Roatan, as well as popular St. Kitts.*

## **FOLLOW THE SUN TO ST. LUCIA**

*story and photographs by Ann Wallace*

Try to sit on the port, or left, side of the plane on your flight down to St. Lucia. I cannot guarantee it, of course, but the prevailing wind comes from the west, meaning the approach to this beautiful island usually affords spectacular views of St. Lucia's famous twin peaks – the Pitons – from the air. A few minutes later you will be disembarking, to be caressed by the island's warmth and you'll be oh, so glad you are there!

I'm usually an active, 'dash-everywhere, see-as-much-as I can' kind of traveller, but late last fall I felt in need of a few days' relaxation before a hectic (and chilly) winter. I persuaded my family to come too and chose St. Lucia because I'd visited before and loved it, because it's so easy to get to from Toronto via Air Canada (their weekly direct flight puts you on the beach that very afternoon) and because Air Canada Vacations offers Canadian-owned Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort, located on lovely Labrelotte Bay. I'd stayed there before, back in the early nineties when I was a guest of the St. Lucia Tourist Board, and I was sure one of their villas would please our small family group. I was right! The villas are still delightful (especially the one's with private plunge pools), the beach is still golden, the cocktails are as wonderful as ever and the food is delicious.

Speaking of food, it should be mentioned that this resort has garnered a considerable number of awards for its cuisine. Chef Bobo Bergstrom hails from far-away Sweden, but he has embraced the cuisine of the Caribbean and infused it with his own creations, making every meal at Windjammer a delicious adventure. Among Chef Bobo's many awards is the Gold Medal and title 'Caribbean Chef of the Year' at the 2003 'Taste of the Caribbean' Culinary Competition. He has also travelled to Canada to demonstrate some of his Caribbean dishes at the Bonnie Stern Cooking School in Toronto and to take part in a culinary fund-raising event for Canadian children with cancer. (For the non-adventurous eater who is a guest at Windjammer, rest assured there's lots of familiar choices too ... especially in the beach-side casual restaurant where big burgers, satisfying pasta dishes and many other choices are served throughout the day.) As we've moved so quickly on to the matter of food, this is a good time to point out that Windjammer is not an all-inclusive resort, although they do offer

some all-inclusive plans, such as a certain number of inclusive days during your stay. This is a great idea ... enjoy all the resort has to offer in the way of food and drinks (just plant your flag beside your beach lounge and a cocktail will be delivered to you!) on your stay-at-the-resort beach days and then enjoy some other establishments when you set out to explore this beautiful island.

(While on the subject of awards, although there were no children in our party, it's worthwhile mentioning here that Windjammer Landing also prides itself on its innovative children's programme. This has led to recognition and inclusion in many tourism lists, many of them in the UK, as this destination is a popular one with Brits. One of the "Top 10 Family Resorts Worldwide" declares BBC Holiday – a popular TV travel show; one of the "Top 50 Family Resorts" says *Junior Magazine*, a well-respected UK parenting magazine. So if you are thinking about a family vacation that includes young children Windjammer would be a good choice. However, if there are no children in your party, this need not deter you from a stay. The resort covers 55 acres, children are rarely seen out of school-vacation times and, in any case, the programme ensures they are always well amused and diverted from adults' areas.)

So we move on to what there is to see and do on St. Lucia (and if you have back copies of *TravelScoop* you'll find more information in the December 1994 edition). There's a unique drive-in volcano and, of course, beaches and water sports galore. The Heritage Tourism Programme (details below) offers tours – many with lunches in unusual settings – to a variety of historic sites such as Creole estates, sugar plantations, Amerindian archaeological sites and around the capital Castries ... not a pretty town (most of it was destroyed by fire in 1948 and rebuilt during the fifties) but worth a visit nonetheless. Much of St. Lucia's interior is rain forest and the island is home to 165 bird species, so high on my list was bird-watching, both at the resort and when out-and-about, either independently or on a guided bird-watching tour. Bananaquits, or honeycreepers, will be constant visitors to your patio, balcony or even your restaurant table, especially if you tempt them with a little sugar, while guided trips to the National Rain Forest will be of special interest to bird watchers, hikers and nature lovers of all kinds. This park, along with other conservation initiatives, is one of the prides of St. Lucia, a protected area covering 19,000 acres of lush mountains and valleys. It is home to giant ferns, indigenous tree species, exotic flowers and fruits, and its paths are strewn with tiny bromeliads, wild orchids and mushrooms. Among the bird species to be found on this island are the brightly-hued St. Lucia parrot, known locally as the "jacquot", the white breasted thrasher, the St. Lucia peewee, and the St. Lucia oriole. For organized nature tours, contact the Forest and Lands Department on the island at [code 011 758] 450 2231 or 450 2078 or visit [www.stlucia.org/activity/soft\\_adventure.asp](http://www.stlucia.org/activity/soft_adventure.asp). Other interesting areas



Taieri Gorge from train

for a nature tour include the Bois D'Orange Swamp and Boriel's Pond. The Department conducts four-hour early morning and late afternoon trips at a cost of US\$40.00 per person, maximum of ten participants, minimum three. Birding books are available at book and gift stores all over the island.

A relaxing day trip is the drive to Marigot Bay, home to stories of pirate ships and the British Navy as well as the location of such movies as *Dr. Doolittle* and *Fire Power*. A steep road leads down to the marina where you can look at the sailboats before catching a ride with a local (he'll charge about one US dollar) across the bay to the Marigot Beach Club, a pretty, low-key resort, dive centre and popular bar and restaurant. This is a great place to pause for a drink or lunch and to watch the activities out on the water. Charming accommodation is also available here. Another good spot for lunch or a drink in this famous little bay is the Rainforest Hideaway, which stands on stilts over the water. Again, one of the locals will ferry you across the narrow bay to this romantic spot.

Most famous sight on St. Lucia are those twin peaks called the Pitons, now a UNESCO-protected site. They are, in fact, twin volcanic 'plugs', weathered remnants of an enormous cap over the nearby volcanic crater, formed during its last major eruption over forty thousand years ago. It is possible to climb the Pitons if you are fit (see below), but to enjoy their splendour in a relaxing fashion, plan to have lunch at Anse Chastanet Resort and Ladera Hotel ... both signposted from the town of Soufrière and both well worth a visit for their different, but spectacular views. These two famous properties (Anse Chastanet is also offered by Air Canada Vacations) are located high above the ocean, up winding roads. But your driving efforts will be rewarded (don't forget your camera) not only with those views, but also with warm welcomes from the staff of these properties and delicious food served high on their terraces. Of course accommodation is also available here; both properties offer three-sided suites that are completely private, sheltered from the elements, yet open to their own private garden or terrace and ... yes ... I must mention it again ...



A view of Napier

the  
view!

St. Lucians are a friendly and proud people who will be delighted if you are familiar with their most famous sons. They can boast of two Nobel prize winners: Sir Arthur Lewis (Economics, 1979) and poet Derek Walcott (Literature, 1992). And then there's artist (and environmentalist) Llewellyn Xavier, O.B.E., who once lived and studied in Canada and whose work can be seen in the Art Gallery of Ontario and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (and the Smithsonian in Washington and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York) as well, of course, as all over St. Lucia and in other Caribbean locations. A brochure about Xavier can be found all over the island; it contains details of how you can make an appointment to visit his studio home, where Canadians are always welcome. (I visited this wonderful house on my previous visit and was given a warm welcome by the artist and his wife, even though I made it quite clear that his beautiful works were out of my price range!)

So ... when rippling water, warm breezes, ocean sunsets, a few rum punches and some delicious Caribbean food beckon, think of simply beautiful St. Lucia.

#### A few details ...

\* Official **currency** is the Eastern Caribbean dollar, but US dollars are accepted just about everywhere. ATM's can be found throughout the island and there are Canadian banks in Castries.

\* **Taxis** are not metered, but rates are fixed by the government for all standard trips. Get a quote in advance, clarifying which currency you have been quoted. If you **rent a car** (Avis, Budget and Hertz are all here) you'll need to purchase a temporary license (US\$20) when you pick up your car. Driving is on the left; roads vary widely from just fine to routes with blind hairpin turns and potholes, especially along the west coast which is, nonetheless, a spectacular drive.

\* **Local mini buses** are a fun alternative for getting around; the local people love it when visitors board the bus! You'll see the **bus stops** on the road (they are the same as British ones) and the driver will help you with the fare if you hold

out a hand full of change. It's about a mile from Windjammer Landing out to the main road, where there is a bus stop. Try it in the morning to get to Castries or Rodney Bay ... you can always get a taxi back!

\* There's a **departure tax** of US\$21 for all air passengers over 12 years of age.

\* Your travel agent will have **Air Canada Vacations** brochures, or visit [www.aircanadavacations.com](http://www.aircanadavacations.com) for details. ACV offers 1- and 2-week packages to the two outstanding properties mentioned above (Windjammer Landing and Anse Chastanet) as well as other accommodation options.

\* **Air Canada** offers direct flights (just over 5 hours) to St. Lucia from Toronto.

\* To contact **Windjammer Landing Resort** directly call 1 800 267 7600, [www.windjammer-landing.com](http://www.windjammer-landing.com). Spectacular new villas are available on a timeshare basis.

\* The **Marigot Beach Club** can be contacted at [code 011 758] 451 4974, [www.marigotbeachclubhotel.com](http://www.marigotbeachclubhotel.com).

\* **Anse Chastanet Resort's** telephone number is 459, 7000, [www.ansechastanet.com](http://www.ansechastanet.com).

\* **Ladera Resort** and its award-winning Dasheene restaurant can be contacted at 1 800 738 4752, [www.ladera-stlu-cia.com](http://www.ladera-stlu-cia.com)

\* As the **Pitons** are protected landmarks, all hikes must be arranged through the **St. Lucia Heritage Tourism Programme**, 451 6220 or 451 6967, [www.heritage-tourstlucia.com](http://www.heritage-tourstlucia.com), or the Piton's Tour Guide Association, 459 9748, who will provide a trained guide as well as information and advice on the steep-but-safe trails before you all (maximum three people per guide) set out.

\* **The St. Lucia Tourist Board** can be contacted at 700 - 8 King Street East, Toronto, ON M5C 1B5, tel: 416 362 4242 or 1 800 869 0377 and the official tourism website is [www.stlucia.org](http://www.stlucia.org)

... continued on page 20

*Do we hear you querying an Alaska cruise story just as we start to think about winter? Well, we questioned Gayle and Dean Feltham, about timing of bookings and their response is given below. Seems winter is indeed a good time to start thinking about this cruise of a lifetime.*

# Tip on Exploring alaska by sea and Land

*story and photos by Dean & Gayle Feltham*

So you've decided to visit Alaska. Your next decision is how to go about it. Our choice was a one-way cruise aboard the *Island Princess* from Vancouver to Whittier, followed by a one-week land tour on our own. Before we give some details of our trip, we would like to state that there are three alternatives to the organized cruises. 1) You can meander up the coast on the BC & Alaska Ferry System ([www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs/](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs/), [www.bcferries.com/](http://www.bcferries.com/)) making arrangements locally to see the glaciers on small boats. The advantage of this mode of travel is that you can stay longer in the ports if you wish, and at the glaciers, seeing them from water level rather than 12-plus storeys up on a cruise ship. 2) You can travel by land in camper or car, but must bear in mind that some of the ports are not accessible by road. (*The Milepost* is the book you will need for this trip ... "since 1949, the bible of North Country travel" – Ed.) 3) You can create a flying itinerary.

For our part, our north-bound cruise took us to the ports of Ketchikan, Juneau, Skagway and viewing glaciers calving at Glacier Bay and College Fjord. On our ensuing land tour we visited Whittier, Seward, Anchorage and Denali. (For those who may be considering a similar trip and are concerned at the high accommodation prices often quoted for Denali, please see our recommendation below.)

In the planning process and on the trip itself we accumulated some 40 pages of notes, which we would be happy to make available to *The Travel Society Magazine* readers by sending us an e-mail at

[DGFThornhill@rogers.com](mailto:DGFThornhill@rogers.com).

As the heading to this story hints, timing is important and quite challenging. If you wish to do as we did (cruise plus land component), I would start planning now for next season. Book the cruise nine months ahead and continue to monitor pricing. There is substantial demand for this product and good cabins and dates go early. And, if you read on, you'll understand that a good cabin is important.

If you decide to cruise only, say Vancouver to Alaska return, then our experience indicates one can work on a shorter period. The majority of cruise lines allow cancellations 90 days prior to departure without a penalty; so one can book and still continue to shop around until decision day.

Given our interest in cruising we are on the e-mail list of several travel agents, cruises lines and cruise specialists, some of whom provide excellent notice of availabilities and pricing, which we then use to finalize our bookings.

Now let's give you some tips on the two sections of our trip.

## THE CRUISE

**Cabin choice and location.** If you want to spoil yourself, we highly recommend you select a **cabin with a balcony**. A cruise to Alaska is usually a once-in-a-life time experience and it's to see the scenery. If your trip is blessed with good weather, then you will have many memorable breakfasts, snacks, drinks, and sometimes even dinners on your cabin balcony, enjoying the pass-

ing incomparable scenery. Meals can usually be delivered to your cabin at no additional charge, though you may find the menu options are more limited than those in the dining rooms. On other cruises, we have tried to organize our dinners around the times the ship is in port or around any entertainment that interests us, but on an Alaska cruise we recommend you organize them around the scenery! We rarely went to any of the shows aboard this ship, since the main show was the passing scene, in particular in the late evening when there is still daylight ... an interesting phenomenon that took us time to get use to.

When booking you'll have a choice of port side (left side of the ship when facing to the bow of the ship) or starboard (right side) on the one-way cruises, the outside cabins that go first northbound will be starboard and southbound port sides of the ship. The difference in scenery is minimal; not enough not to go on the ship with the itinerary you want if only one side is available. (How we remember port from starboard is that Gayle is left handed and always drinks her port in her left hand! *Or, as the sailors cry, "No red port left!" – red being the colour of the port light on any vessel underway at night – Ed.*)

**Glaciers.** The reason for going on a cruise to Alaska is to see the glaciers up close. We recommend that you carefully scrutinize the cruise ships' itineraries to see that you get the maximize amount of time possible viewing the glaciers. The Princess cruise we took from Vancouver to Whittier spent a good day in Glacier Bay and substantial time in College Fjord. After cruising Glacier Bay for the day, the Captain said, "Wait till you see College Fjord!" and he was right ... the latter was the most memorable part of our trip. When you start researching you will see that some cruise lines go to Glacier Bay (Princess, Holland America, and some NCL) while others go to Hubbard Glacier (i.e. Celebrity). Unfortunately we are unable to comment on the 'pros and cons' since have only seen one and we have not been able to find reading material that compared the two.

You will note that on the whole the one-way cruises spend more time at the glaciers then the return cruises. But the trade off is that the return cruises are cheaper; no need for the return air and it seemed to us that there was more aggressive pricing on the return cruises.

**Alaska Ports.** The cruise ships use two different Alaska Ports: Princess docks in Whittier while the other cruise lines dock in Seward. Seward is a much more interesting port and you can spend a good half day there plus another full day if you go into the Kenai

National Park, before you move on to Anchorage.

**Weather.** Weather in this part of the world can be cloudy and wet. Pray to the rain gods! We were lucky; we travelled in ... and were blessed with sunshine every day.

Here are some of the websites we use. Unfortunately one has to try to read quickly through a great deal of information in order to glean useful kernels.

Cruise Critic: [www.cruise critic.com/reviews/index.cfm](http://www.cruise critic.com/reviews/index.cfm)  
(I always start with this web site, reading the editor's review first and then reading the readers' reviews, cutting and copying useful information.)

Cruise Addicts: [www.cruise-addicts.com/reviews/index.php](http://www.cruise-addicts.com/reviews/index.php)

Cruise Mates: [www.cruisemates.com/articles/memreviews/](http://www.cruisemates.com/articles/memreviews/)


Cruise Opinion: [www.cruiseopinion.com/](http://www.cruiseopinion.com/)

Cruise Reports: [www.cruisereport.com/](http://www.cruisereport.com/)

Cruise Reviews: [www.cruisereviews.com/](http://www.cruisereviews.com/)

Cruise About- [cruises.about.com/](http://cruises.about.com/) sometimes also has good information

Photos of one of the Glaciers in College Fjord

(Ann these pictures have to be blown up to 8 x 10 to get the full impact= right click on the photo, go to Format Picture, then to ze, and enlarge height to 90%)

## THE LAND TOUR

If you are thinking of an Alaska land tour, no doubt (expensive!) Denali will be on your itinerary. Here are

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*Old Roman Baths - Bay of Tunis, Carthage*

# Adventures in Tunisia

Tunisia is known worldwide for its lovely beaches, desert landscape and tourist spots but, in fact, this destination offers so much more to explore and enjoy. For a small country it is full of history and archeological sites that date back hundreds of years before Christ. We spent a month in North Africa last fall and as we haven't seen a lot in print on Tunisia, we hope some of this information may be of interest to readers.

We spent several days in the capital **Tunis**, staying at the Hotel El-Hana International. This large hotel has a huge lobby with marble floors and many tables for sitting. It is in the centre of the Ville Nouveau, across the street from the cultural centre. It would be wise to request to see your room before settling in as some were not well lit, others were being renovated and others just fine with great views of the city. There is a very nice buffet breakfast included in the price of the room.

It is a five minute walk from the hotel to the **Medina**, or old city, with its many *souks* seemingly selling everything: jewellery, perfume, brass items, souvenirs, clothes, shoes, fish and produce, even a popular souk specializing in fezes where you can actually see these red hats being made. If you doubt there is a *souk* for everything, we should tell you we were looking for a Tunisian flag for our grandson and were directed to the Souk of Flags! There are several mosques as well in the Medina, some of which are open to the public,

and a choice of restaurants. The **M'Rabat** is a Turkish café with striped red and white pillars in front of it ... you

can't miss it. The fascinating medina also has many streets with interesting buildings and you can easily spend a morning or afternoon just walking and browsing there.

While in Tunis we ate at several good restaurants within walking distance of the hotel. One, a few streets away on the rue de Marseille, was called **Chez Nous**. We walked there twice and each time were served huge five course meals that included soup, fish, the traditional *briqs* as well as a main course and dessert. These set meals cost between C\$15.00 and \$20.00. The waiters were all very friendly and willing to chat (in English) and recommend things on the menu. We found the *briqs* different almost every time we tried them. They are traditional, deep-fried pastries containing an egg mixture and/or tuna, chicken, meat, herbs and spices; we had them fluted and rolled and some, for dessert are filled with a sweet honey and almond mixture.

**Carthage, Sidi Bou Said**, the port of **La Goulette** and the famous **Bardo Museum** are all quite close to Tunis. Tour companies in the hotels offer day trips that include all these places or the local train – the TGM – or a taxi will get you there easily as well.

**Carthage** is 30 minutes from Tunis by the TGM. It was founded by the Phoenician Queen Dido in 814 BC and



above: In the Sook

right: Underground homes in Matmata

below: Matmata Berber village



ily. We were at the museum for a morning but a full day could certainly have been spent. The museum was originally a palace built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and enlarged several times. There are huge floor mosaics from the archeological sites of Sousse, the house of Ulyssus at Dougga, the roman amphitheatre at El Jem as well as Bulla Regia's underground villas. There are also bronzes, terracottas, many funerary masks and monuments as well as statutory from many sites and the famous mosaic of Virgil in an elaborate stucco-ed and tiled private apartment of the old palace. (It should be

noted that all museums and historic sites in Tunisia require a pass to take pictures; the price is usually 1 dinar at each site, which is roughly C\$1.)

The village of **Sidi Bou Said** is named after a 13<sup>th</sup> century saint. It sits high on a cliff overlooking the Gulf of Tunis, many artists and writers have lived here, and it is now the summer home of many Tunisians. It looks very Andalusian with its white buildings and blue roofs and doors, and is a very relaxing and pretty area

to wander in. There are several spots to stop and eat at in the main square and many shops selling the local artists' work. The village is about 15 km from Tunis ... about 8 dinar or C\$8 by taxi.

Here's a brief list of some other archaeological sites we recommend visiting. **Bulla Regia** for its many underground houses built for the wealthy to use during the hot summers. Several have been excavated and are open for viewing, together with baths, temples and a theatre. **Dougga**, known as the City of Temples, of which about 20 have been identified. The site itself is very impressive, overlooking the countryside. As well as the temples there is a huge Roman theatre that is still used for performances during the yearly Dougga festival and some well-preserved baths and cisterns. Dougga has been compared to Pomeii in Italy. The spectacular colosseum at **El-Jem** is another UNESCO site. Built in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD it was the third largest in the Roman Empire and is very well preserved. You can walk in the underground passageways and climb to the upper seats and look down and try to imagine all that happened here. **Thuburbo Maius** was built in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, abandoned in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and rediscovered in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This old community is in a large field 60 km from Tunis. The capitol and forum, as well as temples to Mercury and Neptune and many of the old baths, are still present, and can be viewed on a leisurely walk around the site.

It should be borne in mind that Tunisia has high temperatures a good part of the year and when viewing these

is now an UNESCO Heritage Site. The site is large and having a guide or using a good guide book is necessary, as there are some areas that are fairly distant. It is amazing to stand on Byrsa Hill looking out over the site. There is so much history, so many legends and so many stories of battles, rites, building and rebuilding by Romans, Byzantines and the Vandals, that it makes this a remarkable visit. Over the years the ruins have not been preserved, but pillaged by the many different civilizations that lived here. But the whole area is now a designated park and much restoration and excavation are being done as funding becomes available. There is a good museum here as well, that contains a lot of Phoenician and Roman history and mosaics as well as some of the archaeological finds.

The **Bardo Museum**, 4 km from Tunis, has collections from all the archaeological sites in Tunisia, and there are many. Again the TGM, a city bus or taxi gets you there eas-

sites one can get very warm. Good walking shoes, a hat and sunscreen are a must and early morning and early evening the preferred times to visit if possible.

The southern part of Tunisia and the desert region is quite different from the north. The Berber villages, the Great Erg Oriental, part of the Sahara desert, the oases and *palmeries* (date groves) are all very interesting. The Berber villages range from the *troglydite* (underground homes) in **Matmata** to the fortified hill villages like **Chenini** to the mountain oases of **Chebika**, **Tamerza** and **Mides**.

The Berber cave dwellings in **Matmata** are built into cliffs with the rooms tunnelled into the hills. Some are quite large, with living rooms, a kitchen area, bedrooms and a storage area. They usually have a courtyard and sometimes several families live in homes joined by the courtyards. The homes are warm in the winter and cool in the summer. If a larger home is needed they merely tunnel further into the hill to make more room.

The Berbers are also famous for their *ksars*, or fortified granaries, sometimes called the castles of the desert. These were used to store grains and olive oil and were sometimes three or four storeys high. The *ksars* are comprised of long narrow rooms called *ghorfas*, with small doors to enter and outside stairs to the upper levels. The whole area is enclosed by courtyard walls with a fortified gate so they could be guarded. The *ksars* can best be visited from **Tataouine** and taxis can be rented from there, but having your own transportation allows you to stop as often as you like and is recommended for this area.

We spent a few days in **Tozeur** and **Douz**, both entrance cities to the desert. There are many camel treks and jeep excursions into the desert available from here, for different lengths of time ranging from only a few hours to overnight stays. Both these cities have huge *palmeraie*. There are up to 250,000 palm trees in these oases producing up to 100 different types of dates. Local tours are quite inexpensive and interesting and usually you get to sample some of the different types of dates too! Both of these cities are small, so easy to walk around in. We walked the dunes at sunset, watching the camel treks and horse riders come in from their trips. The dunes are really fantastic, especially at sunrise or sunset. Our hotel in Douz was within easy walking distance of the dunes and desert.

In **Tozeur** the **Dar Charait Museum** is a museum of Tunisian life. It features a real Bedouin tent as well as wedding scenes, a *hamman* (public bath) and scenes past and present of Tunisian life. There is also much art work and other fascinating collections together with a children's theme park based on 1001 Nights. We visited in the evening when the clever lighting added to the atmosphere. Admission price was about C\$6.

If you are driving between **Tozeur** and **Douz** you will pass through the huge salt lake of **Chott Jerid**. This dry lake covers over 400 km, and the landscape is quite strange, sometimes looking like snow, with statues sculpted from the salt, and often with mirages. This area was used in the moon

scenes of the *Star Wars* movies. In fact Tunisia has featured in many movies over the year.

Tunisia is a popular vacation spot for British and other European vacationers (daily flights connect Tunisia to most European, Middle Eastern and North African centres) so the East coast on the Mediterranean has many tourist towns. **Hammamet** and **Sousse** are popular, with a variety of resorts catering to sun-loving tourists. We visited the island of **Jerba**, also on the east coast, and found it had a lot of other things to see as well as the beaches. It is a short ferry ride to the island. There is a definite *zone touristique* where all the resorts are situated, but there are also towns like the market town of **Houmt Souq** with its Islamic monuments, its old Jewish synagogue, and many wonderful ceramic factories, with great bargains if you have any room by now to carry anything else home! **Kairouan** is famous for its carpets and *kilims*, so if a carpet is on your list this is the place to buy it. Even if you do not wish to buy, the experience of sharing tea and viewing the carpets is interesting.

Arabic is the official language in Tunisia, but French is widely used and most signs, menus etc., are in both languages. English is also spoken by most people in the tourist areas.

Finally, I would like to advise anyone planning to travel in a Muslim country to think seriously of avoiding the period of Ramadan. We were in Tunisia for about ten days during Ramadan and there were almost no noon meals, lunches, snacks or anything else available for eating between sunrise and sunset. So lunches, in particular, were a big problem. We were able to buy some fruit in the open markets but very little else. We took a few things from the breakfast buffets but were very tired of boiled eggs and croissants by the end of the ten days! This was the case travelling in Tunisia and Morocco; the stricter Muslim countries such as Libya have even more restrictions. These are wonderful countries to visit and if you really want to take part in the ritual of Ramadan that is fine, but for those who

... continued on page 20



Colosseum at El-Jem

# Moais – and more – on Easter Island

*by Heinz and Inge Jaeger*

**O**ne of the most interesting, but least known, South American destinations is Easter Island. We would recommend that anyone travelling through Chile and visiting Santiago consider adding this as a side trip to their itinerary. Of course, it is not a little side trip. This little speck of volcanic residue in the southern Pacific Ocean, called Rapa Nui by the natives, is nearly 4,000 km from Santiago, and it takes about five hours flying time to get there.

We made our arrangements through **Pan American Travel**, in Salt Lake City, Utah, tel: 801 364 4300, e-mail [info@panam-tours.com](mailto:info@panam-tours.com). They arranged the flights from Santiago, three nights' accommodation on the island, transfers, two half-day and one full-day guided tours for about C\$1,600 per person. The only airline flying to the island is LAN Chile, and they only fly on certain days, depending on the season, so one may have to spend an extra day or two in Santiago. We stayed at the Best Western Hotel Majestic, at Santo Domingo 1526, tel: 1 800 788 7234, [www.bestwestern.com](http://www.bestwestern.com) or e-mail the property directly at [hotelmajestic@hotelmajestic.cl](mailto:hotelmajestic@hotelmajestic.cl). This hotel is quite inexpensive, very quiet, and it is within easy walking distance of the city centre and the Presidential Palace. The only drawback is that it has no elevator, but the staff helped us with our luggage to our third floor, garden-view room. The taxi ride to the airport cost the equivalent of about C\$22.

Easter Island is primarily famous for its Moais, the huge stone images of human figures whose purpose and meaning are still largely shrouded in mystery. In fact, very little is known about the original settlers of this island before it was 'discovered' again by the Dutch captain Jacob Roggeven in 1722. To go to the island, however, just to see the Moais is like going to Egypt just to see the sphinx. The island is very interesting in many other ways; it was isolated and unknown to the western world for many centuries and its native inhabitants almost totally destroyed its ecology by overuse.

Most archeologists now believe that Polynesians, arriving in outrigger canoes after a 4000 km non-stop voyage, sometime between the years 400 and 800 AD, initially settled the island. It is unlikely that these were just some lone-

ly, isolated explorers; the first settlers must have been a large party, prepared to make their home on an uninhabited island. They must have brought household goods, tools, probably domesticated animals such as chickens and, most important of all, they brought their women. Previous thoughts that natives from the South American continent settled here are now generally discarded, in spite of some ancient walls which do resemble Inca stonework. It is further thought that there were probably five original clans who divided the island among themselves. They lived on fruit, vegetables and fish as there were no indigenous large animals on the island. They used much of their scarce resources to cut the huge stone images from the volcanic rock to honour their chiefs, as their ancestors had done on the Polynesian islands. These Moais were displayed singly or in groups, on sacred platforms called Ahu. The higher the rank of the chief represented by a Moai, the more elaborate was its execution. The Moais of the highest chiefs had a hat or topknot, made from reddish coloured rock, added to the top of their heads, and their backs were 'tattooed'. Lesser chiefs did not have these decorations.

It appears that by cutting the trees to provide land for planting and to make the rollers they needed to move the several-ton heavy statues from the quarry to their final display places, they slowly destroyed their environment. It is estimated by about the year 1400 all trees had been cut, the soil had eroded and a general famine ensued, since without trees they were unable to build canoes and thus fishing was severely restricted. As far as we know, production of new Moais had stopped by then.

Sometimes after 1400 war broke out between the clans, and it is thought that the victor toppled the Moais from their platforms; when Roggeven landed there, he found none of them standing. The Moais presently upright on their Ahus have been restored. The toppling damaged many of the separately-cut red topknots, and it is not known exactly how many had been so adorned. It is also possible that earthquakes were the cause of the toppling, although no earthquakes have been recorded here in recent times. Presently there are about 300 Moais standing on Ahus, another 300 are



still scattered over the island and about 400 are in various stages of completion in or near the quarry at Rano Raraku.

Sometime during or after the civil war a 'birdman cult' developed, of which many rock carvings and petroglyphs still bear witness. The central feature of this cult was an annual ceremony in which the heads of the families raced to three small rocky islands Motu Nui, Motu Iti and Motu Kao, near Orongo, to obtain the first egg of the seabirds, which nested there. The winner was named the 'Birdman', Tangata Manu, for the following year, a title that apparently conferred a number of rights and honours to the bearer.

At present the island has about 4000 inhabitants; only a few are descendents of the original settlers, which by 1850 had been reduced from sickness and forced transfer into the sugar plantations of Tahiti, to some 100 souls.

Guide Herman, who also guided us on the tours, met us at the island airport and took us to our hotel in the one and only town on the island – Hanga Roa. We were impressed with the efficiency of the transfer and check-in. There are quite a few small hotels here; we stayed at the Otai Hotel, which has single storey cabana-style rooms in a beautiful garden with an outdoor pool. It was very quiet.

Just outside the town are the foundations of two ancient dwellings, they are boat-shaped, some 10 meters long and 2 meters wide; originally perhaps only about 1 meter high. The roof was constructed from counter-balanced rocks, covered with sod. The walls were double layers of loose rock, filled with earth. The natives apparently used their houses only for sleeping; even cooking was exclusively done outside. There is also a number of small caves on the island, which on occasion were used as dwellings.

The tours took us all around the island. At Orongo we saw the petroglyphs of the birdman cult and the three little off-shore islets. The distance to swim from the shore to the islands is not far, but there are apparently vicious currents, which make the swim not only hard but also dangerous. The lake in the crater of the extinct volcano Rano Kau, is covered with floating islands of vegetation and the steep sides of the caldera are covered with lush trees. In Vinapu there are two Ahus with Moai, and the remains of a wall where the stones are fitted with Inca-like precision.


The most interesting place to us was Rano Raraku, the quarry where the Moais used to be cut from the lava stone.

There is a beautiful view of the entire island from the top of this volcano, and everywhere on its slopes are Moais in various stages of completion, and deep scars in the rock show where a completed Moai has been removed. One half-finished statue is more than 20 meters long and estimated to weigh more than 250 tons. Perhaps it remained unfinished when the carvers realized that it would be too heavy to move!

At Tongariki a huge tidal wave in 1960 had swept the Moai from their Ahu and caused quite a bit of damage; recently the Moai have been reinstalled and some of their topknots have been replaced. At Te Pitu Kura on the north shore is a ring of stones surrounding a round magnetite rock, which in the legends of the natives is the 'Navel of the World'. Nearby is the largest Moai ever placed on an Ahu.

The beach at Anakena, where seven Moai look out to the sea, rather than toward their village, is a popular place to swim, but the water was rather cold. Thor Heyerdahl landed here on the island on his Kon Tiki expedition in 1955.

In our opinion, two full days are quite sufficient to get a good impression of the island, but those preferring a more leisurely pace can rent bicycles or cars and spend more time to explore the ruins and remnants more exhaustively. There are a number of good restaurants in the small town where prices are comparable to Canada, certainly more expensive than in Santiago. This applies also to souvenirs which are less expensive on the mainland.

Some efforts are underway by the Chilean government to re-establish trees on the island to reduce soil erosion. Initially large numbers of eucalyptus tree had been planted, which thrived there, but they extracted so much moisture from the soil that it cracked and after rainfall the water flowed into these cracks and caused even more erosion. Presently coco palms from Tahiti are being planted. It is thought that these are the closest relatives to the original, indigenous trees and likely most suitable for the soil and climate. We came home with a much better appreciation of the often catastrophic and long lasting effects of environmental damage; what happened on this small island could easily happen on a large continent; let it be a warning to all of us! 

*Heinz and Inge Jaeger are Travel Society members  
who live in Burlington, ON.*

# En route to Niagara?

## Leave the Highway and be Surprised!

*story and photo by Ann Wallace*

**E**very summer a few lucky members of the tourism media get invited to a gala dinner hosted by the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA). It is at these events, held in each province, that the CAA Diamond Awards are handed out to various award-winning hotels and restaurants. Of course, the majority of guests at this event are representing the various hotels but the few media invitees can mingle with these hoteliers and chefs and learn about their various properties, their awards and tourism trends.

At the most recent of these events I was one of the lucky travel writers/editors to be invited. After mingling with a glass of bubbly, found my assigned table where I was warmly greeting by a smiling group obviously out to have fun. We introduced ourselves and I learned that they all came from the White Oaks Resort & Spa, located near St. Catharines, just outside the towns of Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake. I confessed I didn't know the property. "Well, you've probably driven past it many times," I was told. "In fact hundreds, if not thousands, of people pass it on the nearby highway every day and many of them probably have no idea what it is like. That's because the face the building presents to the highway couldn't be uglier ... just solid, plain, concrete walls." "Yes," I confessed, after I was told the location, "I have driven by many times and, no, I have not been tempted to visit!" "But you must come," the group chorused. "Come for a tour and lunch one day. Prepare to be surprised!"

And so I did. I saw the familiar ugly concrete walls, I left the highway on the nearby St. Catharines ramp, made a right turn into the hotel grounds and there it was: beautifully landscaped grounds, the flash of a swimming pool and soaring tinted glass windows above gold façade panels. I stepped inside and the surprises continued. This hotel is beautiful and 'cool' as 'cool' can be. The décor is greys, white and black; the spacious guest rooms are all differently configured; there's an elegant spa, the property gleams and fresh flowers, in inspired modern arrangements, stand in almost every corner; the staff members are noticeably gracious and the chef's creations are superb. I enjoyed my tour

and had a most delicious lunch in the hotel's elegant dining room called LIV.


But perhaps the most remarkable thing about this hotel – and this is what I learned at the CAA dinner – is that it has been ranked # 2 on Canada's Best Employers in Canada 2005 list (1<sup>st</sup> was a pharmaceutical company on the west coast) in a poll conducted by the Business Section of *The Globe and Mail*. What an accolade! No wonder the group at the gala dinner were so delightful and were having so much fun together. And no wonder this hotel has just a great atmosphere and such welcoming staff ... they are all so happy!

I promised them all I'd tell my readers. So, if you are heading to the Niagara region – perhaps to the Falls or to catch a performance at the Shaw Festival or to do a wine tour – I can heartily recommend a stay or a meal in the White Oaks Resort. They are located at 253 Taylor Road, Niagara-on-the-Lake (but close to St. Catharines) ON, L0S 1J0, tel: 1 800 263 5766. [www.whiteoaksresort.com](http://www.whiteoaksresort.com). Overnight packages are available on Sunday and Monday nights through September and October: superior accommodation, gourmet dinner, full breakfast and gratuities for \$275 for two. Treat yourself!

As many of you already know, membership in the CAA brings many advantages and money-saving deals for travellers, including discounts at hotels from luxurious to budget and free copies of a variety of comprehensive TourBooks. If you are not already a member you can find out more by calling 1 800 JOIN CAA or visit [www.caa.ca](http://www.caa.ca)

For details of the theatre offerings at the Shaw Festival call 1 800 511 SHAW or visit [www.shawfest.com](http://www.shawfest.com) The season continues until 27 November 2005.

For details of the Niagara Wine Festival, 16 – 25 September (although most wineries and their restaurants are open throughout the year), call 905 688 0212, [www.niagarawinefestival.com](http://www.niagarawinefestival.com)

For additional tourism information on the region contact Niagara Falls Tourism at 1 800 56 FALLS, [www.niagarafallstourism.com](http://www.niagarafallstourism.com) and for Niagara-on-the-Lake call 905 468 1950 for their brochure, or visit [www.niagaraonthe-lake.com](http://www.niagaraonthe-lake.com). 



## CANADA

- **Gwaii Haanas National Park**, located in the Southern Queen Charlotte Islands of BC, has received the Best National Park award from the National Geographic Society after NG staff visited over 50 Parks in Canada and the US. For more information on the award, visit NG's website: [http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/06/0627\\_050627\\_bestparks.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2005/06/0627_050627_bestparks.html)
- Fall is on its way, and that means wine festivals! A new guide devoted to wine and cultural tourism in the **Thompson Okanagan** region of British Columbia is now available. This guide showcases the wide variety of wine and cultural tourism experiences available in the Thompson Okanagan, including wine festivals, wine tourism (with an insert of the British Columbia Wine Institute's touring map of all BC wineries), Syilx Okanagan Nation culture and arts and heritage venues and experiences. The *'Inspired Journey'* guide can be ordered through the Okanagan Cultural Corridor website at [www.okanaganculturalcorridor.com](http://www.okanaganculturalcorridor.com).
- The **Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise** in **Alberta** has introduced two "Fall High Adventures", 4- and 7-day retreats starting on 18 September. A cross between adventure and luxury, the packages are described as "summer camps for grown-ups, only with delicious food and comfy beds you don't have to make!" Each day, participants get to select from a variety of activities – from a day of fly-fishing, to a photography class, to yoga, to a water-colour painting session. The retreats include health-conscious buffet breakfasts, nutritious backpacker lunches, gourmet dinners and a complete range of daily workouts, hikes or endless activities to participate in. Four-day rates start at \$1,299 pp dbl, and 7-day prices begin at \$2,109 pp. For details call 1 888 765 8322 or visit [www.fairmont.com/lakelouise](http://www.fairmont.com/lakelouise).
- **Port Perry** is a quaint little lake-side town in southern Ontario, about an hour's drive from Toronto. I (Editor Ann) discovered it earlier this summer and it will be the subject of a short article in this magazine next spring. Before then, however, I would like to mention to those who are close that it makes a lovely day trip and is an ideal destination for holiday shopping, with lots of tempting stores within walking distance of each other along the quaint Victorian-architecture main street. And from now until December visitors to [www.discoverportperry.ca](http://www.discoverportperry.ca) can submit an on-line ballot for a chance to win a variety of treats such as lunch and shopping discounts and gifts.
- Beginning 1 October, the Art Gallery of Ontario in **Toronto** will be home to a spectacular exhibition: *Catherine the Great: Arts for the Empire – Masterpieces from The State Hermitage Museum, Russia*. Most of the works in this exhibition have never been shown in North America. They include jewellery, cameos, paintings, drawings, sculptures, furniture and – the centerpiece – the

Empress's coronation carriage. During the exhibition, the AGO's gift shop will be offering an extensive array of products inspired by the exhibition ... perhaps a good opportunity for some Christmas shopping? This exhibition will be on show until 1 January and details can be obtained at 416 979 6656 or online at [www.ago.net](http://www.ago.net). Admission \$18 or less, and there's a 15% discount for booking online.

- A week-end in **Montreal** is a fine idea for the fall and a visit to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts to see the exhibition *Right under the Sun: Landscape in Provence, from Classicism to Modernism (1750 – 1920)* is sure to be a pleasure for art-lovers and travel-lovers alike. The exhibition, stages from 22 September – 8 January, includes some 200 works by over 60 artists, including Van Gogh, Cézanne, Monet, Renoir and Braque. Also included in the exhibition are photographs, postcards, guidebooks and posters of this beautiful region of France. You'll enjoy Montreal and be tempted to Provence too! Details and tickets available at 1 877 BEAUX ARTS, [www.admission.com](http://www.admission.com) or visit the Museum's site [www.mmfa.qc.ca](http://www.mmfa.qc.ca) Admission \$15 or less.

## ITALY

Is Italy in your plans this fall? If you are heading to **Florence** you may like to make a note of the dates 30 September to 9 October. This is when Florence's famous Antiques and Fine Art Fair will be taking place ... the oldest consistently running antiques and art fair in Europe. Not in the market for antiques, but love architecture and history? Then you should still plan to go, as this fair is housed in the Palazzo Corsini, one of Italy's most luxurious palaces, full of Florentine paintings and frescoes, galleries and ballrooms, making a visit to the fair a unique experience. Admission price is €10 or less (about C\$14.75), with a reduction for visitors presenting a Trenitalia rail ticket. More details at [www.mostraantiquariato.it](http://www.mostraantiquariato.it) (click on the central photograph which will lead you to the English site).

## MEXICO

A comprehensive tour of Mexico is in many people's dreams. If you've ever wondered if this is feasible, or advisable, in a RV or by camping, log on to [www.ontheroadin.com](http://www.ontheroadin.com) ... a website designed by American Dorothy Bell who has been travelling in Mexico in this fashion since 1988. Bell says they have visited and taken pictures of virtually every RV and camp site in Mexico. The site also prepares the traveller with many other facts and advice. Happy driving!

## MOROCCO

You may remember the story on Morocco in our September edition last, wherein Linda Reid told about travelling with

Doris El Harchali, a Canadian married to a Moroccan. Well Doris is now busy planning her trips to Morocco for April next year; journeys with interesting itineraries in both the north and south of the country. If you are interested in these personal, small-group tours please e-mail Doris at [elharchali@hotmail.com](mailto:elharchali@hotmail.com) And if you live close to Doris in Toronto, you may like to attend the information session she is holding on 28 September to discuss these trips. She'll send you the details if you contact her. She'll also be holding a Moroccan cooking evening sometime late in September. Editor Ann hopes to be there!

## PERU

Rumours have come to our ears at The Travel Society that Machu Picchu may be 'closing' at some future date. Of course this means that travellers will be allowed to see and visit the site, but access could be limited ... apparently the authorities are becoming worried that more and more visitors are swarming over the site unrestricted. If you've always wanted to see this magnificent place, now could be the time!

## U.S.A.

**Arizona** in your plans? The **Cochise Stronghold Bed & Breakfast** in Pearce (located in Southeastern Arizona, in Cochise County) is offering a unique Arizona package for those looking to try something new. Located a few minutes' walk away from the main guest house, they have a tipi sitting in a secluded grove of manzanita, juniper and oak trees. Comfort and luxury in this roomy 20-foot diameter tipi are yours. This structure is a traditional Native American lodging, made of the finest canvas and supported by lodgepole pine. It comfortably sleeps four people with a full-size double bed and two single beds ... take the [grand]kids, maybe? In the centre of the tipi is a Franklin-style wood stove. Cost is US\$99 for single night stay, US\$89 dbl. for a minimum 2-night stay. This includes a full gourmet hot breakfast, linens, warm blankets, quilts and lots of wood for the stove. For additional persons, please add US\$25 per person/night. For more information on this one-of-a-kind experience, call 1 877 426 4141 or visit the excellent site [www.cochisestrongholdbb.com](http://www.cochisestrongholdbb.com).

## airline news

Effective 30 October, **Air Canada** will be serving **Delhi** via **Zurich** on a daily year-round basis from **Toronto**. The transfer of flights to India via Switzerland will allow Air Canada to re-introduce year-round service to Zurich while improving its schedule to India with an increase to daily flights from its current three-times weekly, non-stop service from Toronto. In addition, Air Canada plans to pursue a codeshare agreement with future Star Alliance member, Swiss International Air Lines, by which SWISS would sell seats on a codeshare basis on the Air Canada-operated flights via Zurich. **Air Canada** has expanded its service to Asia with the addition of its first-ever non-stop service between **Toronto** and **Korea**. Air Canada will operate the new flights three times weekly, complementing its daily non-stop flights from **Vancouver** to **Seoul**.

**Malaysia Airlines** has re-introduced its popular "3 City Pass" from **Toronto**, **Ottawa** and **Montreal**. Valid for departures from 1 September to 30 November, the pass offers exceptional value to passengers planning to visit the heart of South East Asia. Travellers can choose from three cities from a list that includes **Penang**, **Bali**, **Siem Reap**, **Singapore**, **Ho Chi Minh** and **Hong Kong** ... all accessible through Malaysia's hub city of **Kuala Lumpur**. Travel from Toronto, Ottawa or Montreal is via

New York's Newark gateway. In economy class this pass costs C\$1,499 and reservations will be accepted up until the final validity date. For further details contact Malaysia Airlines in Toronto at 416 925 6670 or e-mail [toronto@malaysiaairlines.com](mailto:toronto@malaysiaairlines.com)

If you've travelled with **CanJet** before, but felt a bit cramped, you'll be interested to hear that the airline has announced it will be creating more legroom on its Boeing 737-500 series of aircraft. Two seats will be removed from each of the aircraft and this re-configuration will increase the overall average seat pitch by two inches. One aircraft has already been re-configured, and work on the remaining eight will begin in mid-September and will be completed by the end of October.

Editor Ann welcomed family visitors from England this summer, three of whom travelled from Gatwick to Toronto with **Zoom Airlines**. They reported a comfortable and pleasant flight with really nice flight attendants who were exceptionally patient, especially when the plane was held on the runway for over three hours as they had landed just minutes before the Air France crash. Everyone was just happy nobody was seriously hurt on that action-packed day.

How about adding the islands of St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha to your list of countries visited? Plan a cruise on the **Royal Mail Ship St. Helena** and you can do just that, as well as visiting Tenerife in the Canary Isles, Ascension Island, Namibia and Cape Town. St. Helena and Tristan da Cunha have no airports, so this ship is the main, and virtually the only, way of getting to these remote and rugged islands where everything must be delivered by sea. And the **RMS St. Helena** does just that, travelling out of Portland, UK, with its cargo and 128 passengers in quietly elegant surroundings. A variety of sail-fly-stay packages are available in either direction, including two to seven nights on the island of St. Helena where passengers may choose to stay in a hotel or on a farm. Fares, which include the flight between London and/or Cape Town, vary between £3,210 and £6,300 pp dbl. (about C\$7,024 and \$13,785). Details available from Maris Freighter Cruises at 1 800 99-MARIS or [www.freightercruises.com](http://www.freightercruises.com) or [www.rms-st-helena.com](http://www.rms-st-helena.com).

Another freighter-style cruise available from Maris is the 16-day voyage from Tahiti to the Marquesas island aboard the **Aranui 3**. No budget-style freighter this ... the ship offers spacious accommodations, sweeping decks, an outdoor swimming pool and a gym together with facilities for ocean swimming, fishing and diving. Guides lead on-shore expeditions in 15 of these beautiful islands. The vessel offers 10 suites, 12 de-luxe cabins and 63 standard cabins with prices starting at US\$3,500, standard. Meals with wine, shore picnics and guided excursions are included. Details from Maris as above.

**Transat Holidays** has just released its 2005-2007

*Cruises* brochure featuring seven cruise lines. Over 400 itineraries are listed and passengers who book select cruise packages before 31 October will be eligible to win a free trip to Europe. Request a copy of the brochure from your agent or visit [www.transatholidays.com](http://www.transatholidays.com).

**Princess Cruises** is calling the Fall the 'Canada and New England Cruise Season' as its **Star Princess** and **Sea Princess** sail the northeast coast for the first time. Between 18 September and 28 October this line offers 9 departures and 3 different fall-foliage itineraries, including 7-day round trip cruise from New York City and a 10-day voyage between New York and Québec City. Ports of call on the round trip include Halifax, Saint John, Bar Harbor, Boston and Newport, while the NYC-QC trip will include a new port of call: Ville Saguenay. Then on 28 October, **Sea Princess** is offering a special 14-day Canada & Colonial American voyage between Québec City and Fort Lauderdale, with calls at the above ports as well as Corner Brook, Philadelphia, Norfolk and Charleston. See your agent, call 1 800 PRINCESS or visit [www.princess.com](http://www.princess.com) for details.

**Windstar Cruises** is planning 10- and 11-day Caribbean cruises aboard its motor sailing yachts over the coming Christmas/New Year season, exploring places such as Tobago, Bequia, Roseau, Mayreau and Guadeloupe. Most departures are from Barbados or the US Virgin Islands. Holiday cruises offer traditional fare, decorations and entertainment and rates for these special vacations start at US\$2,695 pp. dbl. For brochures and details contact your agent or Windstar at 1 800 258 7245 or [www.windstarcruises.com](http://www.windstarcruises.com)

## A new service from *The Travel Society*

### **FIT (Fully Independent Traveller) South America – it's time to go!**

We are offering our members customized itineraries that can be as long or short as you like. We can arrange the itinerary of your dreams, visiting all or any destination in South America ...

Machu Pichu, The Amazon, Galapagos Islands, Ecuador, Patagonia, Chile, Argentina, Peru and Brazil (...Costa Rica too).

All these arrangements can be made from the comfort of your armchair. And The Travel Society offers extremely competitive pricing. Just give us an outline of where you would like to go and we will create an itinerary especially for you.

Call now; we can have you dreaming about the spectacular beauty and excitement of South America and send you on your way to some of the world's most dramatic destinations.

**Please call 1 877 926 2500 x 24 or 416 926 2500 x 24**



*Tunisia, continued from page 13*

like to have a midday meal be aware ... even in large cities such as Tunis and Casablanca, eating midday is a problem. Ramadan this year commences 4 October and ends 2 November, and in 2006 the dates are 24 September to 22 October.

**Here are some of the hotels we stayed in:**

**Hotel El-Hana International**, Avenue Habib Gourguido #49, **Tunis**, [www.elhanainternational.com](http://www.elhanainternational.com).

Elsewhere we often used the El Mouradi chain: [www.elmouradi.com](http://www.elmouradi.com) Many of these hotels are in the areas called *Zone Touristique*, some a little far from the main centres, but you can always take a taxi or *louage* (shared taxi) into the city.

In **Djerba** we stayed at **Melia Djerba Menzel**, fax: [country code 011 216] 75 750 496, e-mail: [infojerbamenzel@elmouradi.com](mailto:infojerbamenzel@elmouradi.com). This is another large hotel, right on the ocean, with huge pools.

In **Douz**, **Oasis El Mouradi**, fax: 75 470 905, e-mail: [infodouz@elmouradi.com](mailto:infodouz@elmouradi.com). This property has a nice pool and you can walk to the dunes through a small *palmerie*.

**Sousse Port El Kantoui, Sol Club Kantaoui**, fax: 73 348 450, e-mail: [infoclubsantaoui@elmouradi.com](mailto:infoclubsantaoui@elmouradi.com)

Current prices for this chain can be found on their website.

[www.tourismtunisia.com](http://www.tourismtunisia.com) is Tunisia's comprehensive tourism site, with additional good information to be found at [www.tunisiaonline.com](http://www.tunisiaonline.com). Maps and brochures can be ordered from both sites.

There are many tour operators in Tunisia. The one we used, with excellent guides, was **Atlantis Voyages** 22 Av Habib Thaneur, 1000 Tunis, [www.atlantisvoyages.com](http://www.atlantisvoyages.com) A guide at the sites is really an asset in order to appreciate everything there is to see.

*Thelma Sampson is a Travel Society member who lives in Dryden, ON*

**New for 2006**

## **The Travel Society's new tours, coming in 2006**

- Mozart's Musical Cities - 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
- Chile, Argentina and Patagonia (incl. Iguazu Falls)
- Argentina - Bird Watching & Nature Lovers' tour
- Wonders of New Zealand

Reserve now  
for 2006

# China ... Yangtze Spectacular

**\$3,995 FOR 18 DAYS!**

Departing 20 October 2005

16 March, 20 April, 5 September, 10 October 2006



Please call for the full itinerary

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

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

## AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES:

### Departing:

Vancouver	\$3,995 pp/dbl
Victoria/Nanaimo/Kamloops	\$4,125 pp/dbl
Calgary/Edmonton	\$4,250 pp/dbl
Saskatoon/Regina	\$4,250 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$4,250 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$4,280 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,280 pp/dbl
Halifax/Quebec City/London	\$4,440 pp/dbl
St. John's	\$4,440 pp/dbl

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

Taxes and visas extra.

## ADD-ON HONG KONG

4 days/3 nights \$1,288.00  
Prices are subject to confirmation

## 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.



# Galapagos Islands and Ecuador

**New  
lower prices**

with options to Kapawi Lodge in the Amazon and Machu Picchu, Peru  
14 days departing 4 & 25 October, 9 & 23 November 2005. Jan, Feb, Mar & April 2006.

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: Toronto \$5,895.00 pp/dbl**

**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 international air transportation
- All domestic air transportation
- All accommodation
- First class Galapagos small ship cruise
- All meals as per the itinerary
- Admissions to all sites
- Expert Galapagos guides
- Transfers & baggage handling
- All taxes

# Copper Canyon and Mexico City

Departing: 7 & 28 October and 4 & 18 November 2005

January, February, March and April 2006

We are offering a new 9-day tour to Mexico City and 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:**

**Toronto, Ottawa & Montreal \$3,540**

**Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg \$3,794**

Single supplement \$748 (Sharing can be arranged.)

Prices are subject to confirmation

**New lower prices!**

### Your tour includes:

- All air transportation on Mexicana
- Canadian domestic air
- Bilingual guides
- 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

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

**22 days**

# A Traveller's Turkey

Departing: 9 May & 6 June 2006

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 Cappadocia (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: 22 Days**

**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.) Prices are subject to confirmation

### 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
- All Taxes

**Limited to 20 Members  
Fully escorted**

**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.**



**\$5,135**

# India's Golden Triangle

## FULLY ESCORTED

20 days departing 6 March & 9 October 2006

**LIMITED  
SPACE**

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



### Your tour includes:

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

### PRICES INCLUDING AIR departing from:

<b>Vancouver</b>	\$5,385 pp/dbl	<b>Toronto</b>	\$5,135 pp/dbl
<b>Edmonton</b>	\$5,385 pp/dbl	<b>Ottawa</b>	\$5,135 pp/dbl
<b>Calgary</b>	\$5,385 pp/dbl	<b>Montreal</b>	\$5,135 pp/dbl
<b>Winnipeg</b>	\$5,385 pp/dbl	<b>Halifax</b>	\$5,485 pp/dbl
Prices are subject to confirmation		Single supplement \$1,178	

a 19-day tour at an incredible price ...

Spectacular

# South Africa

Departure: 23 February 2006

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-Ttoe 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:

<b>Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa</b>	<b>\$6,826 pp/dbl</b>
<b>Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Halifax</b>	<b>\$7,109 pp/dbl</b>

Single supplement TBA (sharing can be arranged)

Prices are subject to confirmation

*Space is limited call now  
Fully Escorted*

**ONLY  
8 SPACES LEFT!  
FOR FEBRUARY 2006**

### 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

From \$2634 all inclusive

# Long Stays in Mexico

departures throughout  
Jan, Feb, Mar and Apr 2006 for 1-, 2-, 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:

<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	2 weeks	\$3,738 pp/dbl
or 3 weeks	\$4,335 pp/dbl	3 weeks	\$4,590 pp/dbl
<b>Montreal</b> 4 weeks	\$5,180 pp/dbl	4 weeks	\$5,435 pp/dbl

Prices are subject to confirmation

prices are available from all major cities

Please call for the full itinerary

### 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

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