

The Travel Society

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Magazine

Follow the Sun to St. Lucia
Exploring Alaska by Sea and Land
New Zealand My Way
Tonga

www.thetravelsociety.com

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October 2005

Vol. 23, No. 8

contents

Readers' Letters

Through the Rockies on a Merry Christmas Jaunt	3
Hamilton History	4
A Long Stay in Portugal	5
Accommodation in Israel	5

Destinations

Follow the Sun to St. Lucia	6
Tips on Exploring Alaska by Sea and Land	9
New Zealand My Way	12
Tonga	14

News

Travel Digest	16
Airline News	18
Shopping!	19



One of the many views from Windjammer Landing Resort (Wallace)

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 write 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! Isobel 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, St. Lucia's capital, 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 there'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 towering 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 'in Gold' 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 ele-



*Isobel enjoying an on-board party
(M. Chvostek)*

vator 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 appliances 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.)

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!

The Rocky Mountaineer's stately 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.

*Isobel Warren
Newmarket, ON*

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, 318 pages with illustrations and maps, \$25.95).

*William Blissett
Toronto, ON*

New for 2006

The Travel Society's new tours, coming in 2006

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

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 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*

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, on the beach with a patio overlooking the ocean and grounds. 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 15th 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.

One of our longer trips was to the 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. High on a hill, it can be seen from many miles away. It is a walled village with no vehicular traffic. We arrived on a quiet morning and wandered around 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 and all selling their wares, of course. 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 season, with flights from Toronto. Your agent will have Signature's Tropical Sun brochure, or log on to www.signature-vacations.com. Prices look very good – Ed.

Follow the Sun to St. Lucia

story and photographs by Ann Wallace

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 Islands and Roatan, as well as popular St. Kitts.

The view from Ladera Resort's terrace restaurant

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 ones 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



Some of the villas at Windjammer Landing Resort

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. Other interesting areas 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.



When in St. Lucia, be prepared to share your cocktail!

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



A villa terrace at Windjammer Landing Resort

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 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.



Chef Bobo Bergstrom (centre) loves to be lured from the kitchen to discuss his creations!

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. Both properties offer spectacular 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 ... the view!

St. Lucians are a friendly and proud people who will be

... 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 fall and winter are indeed good times to start thinking about this cruise of a lifetime.

Tips 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



The Island Princess on the Alaska coast

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/, 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 vis-

ited 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.

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 passing 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 used 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). 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 maximum 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 we 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 than 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 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.cruisecritic.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

Cruise Mates: www.cruisemates.com/articles/memreviews/

Cruise Opinion: www.cruiseopinion.com/

Cruise Reports: www.cruisereport.com/

Cruise Reviews: www.cruisereviews.com/

Cruise About: www.cruise.about.com/ sometimes also has good information

THE LAND TOUR

If you are thinking of an Alaska land tour, no doubt (expensive!) Denali will be on your itinerary. Here are a few tips we'd like to share. A real "find" was **Denali Lakeview Inn**, located at mile 1.2 on Otto Lake Road, Mile Post 247 on the Parks Highway, tel: 907 683 4035 www.denalilakeviewinn.com, US\$130.00 per room in June, July and August, \$89 in May and September, all plus 7% tax. This fine back-split B&B Inn has 19 rooms, some with kitchens and/or whirlpools, on 2-3 three levels (no elevator), smoke free premises; so clean they request guests take their shoes off at door! There are common living rooms in both sections for use of guests and lower rooms with picnic tables on the patio. Excellent, comfortable accommodations in a quiet setting with beautiful views from all the rooms and balconies over Otto Lake with Mt. Healy and Mt. Dora in the background.

The property is family owned by Walt and Patricia. We met Patricia and had a delightful conversation. A breakfast was placed in our room – the Blue Moose Room – the evening before and generally consisted of assorted fresh fruits, muffins, toast, cereal, oatmeal, juice, milk, coffee, tea, and hot chocolate. Facilities in room included a refrigerator, microwave, toaster, coffee maker, dishes and silverware ... in fact the room is set up to prepare light meals if you wish. There was also a TV, a telephone with data port and a very comfortable Sealy king bed. En suite was a good size washroom with shower tub. We did find the Blue Moose Room a little tight, with insufficient room for our extensive luggage from the cruise, but the Inn has other rooms which are larger. The rooms have no air conditioning but fans are available and by leaving the screened balcony door and window open we had a very comfortable sleep.

There's a small pebble beach nearby where we saw children swimming, and the property is about 12 miles from the Denali Park entrance, a 15-20 minute drive on good paved roads and a scenic highway. To sum up, we found this to be a beautiful, relaxing retreat where one can sit and quietly absorb the Alaska scenery in near privacy; a memorable experience. You will especially be intrigued by sitting on the balcony at midnight viewing Otto Lake and the mountains in daylight!

There are other accommodations in the area which you may like to investigate (double, daily rates, in US\$, taxes not included):

***Denali Princess Wilderness Lodge**, tel: [Alaska code 907] 683 2282 or 1 800 426 0500 [\[lodges.com/denali_lodge.cfm\]\(http://lodges.com/denali_lodge.cfm\), \\$219.00 \(room only\)](http://www.princess-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

***Denali Backcountry Lodge**, tel: 644 9980, www.denalilodge.com/planning.html, \$750 (all meals). Open early June to mid September, with early and late season discounts. This is the only accommodation actually in the Denali Park.

***Grande Denali Lodge, Denali Bluff's Hotel**, tel: 1 866 683 8500, www.denalialaska.com/index.html, \$209 - \$329 for a range of accommodation from standard rooms to deluxe cabins. located high on the hill overlooking Denali Park. We recommend that you drive up for the view from this lodge. You may wish to plan to have a drink or a meal here.

***McKinley Chalet Resort**, tel: 683 8200, www.alaska-travel.com/denali-park/mckinley-chalets.html, \$239.

* **McKinley Village Lodge**, tel: 683 2265, www.denali-parkresorts.com/lodging.html, \$219.

* A hotel listed by Princess Cruises is **Mt. McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge**, tel: 1 800 426 0500 http://www.princesslodges.com/mckinley_lodge.cfm, \$179. This property has the most spectacular view of Mt McKinley but is a 2½ drive away from the entrance to Denali Park (half way between Denali and Anchorage). If you are travelling by car from Anchorage to Denali, we highly recommend that you stop off for lunch or a drink on the restaurant balcony. If it is sunny and clear you will have a view of Mt. McKinley ... another memorable experience.

* A good website which lists many more hotels, lodges and cabins in the region is www.alaskatravel.com/alaska-hotels.html

We hope some of these tips set you dreaming (and planning) a visit to Alaska. Don't forget to contact us if you'd like all our other notes! 📧

Dean & Gayle Feltham
DGFThornhill@rogers.com

If you would prefer to explore Alaska (and Yukon) by Bus, Car, Train and Ferry, we have that story coming soon! - Ed.



View from the Denali Lakeview Inn

New Zealand My Way

story and photo by Maria Wu



A glimpse of the beautiful Banks Peninsula scenery

Last month The Travel Society Magazine brought you two ways of touring in New Zealand: one a pre-arranged self-drive trip, the other a tour using the country's public transportation system. Now, Maria Wu gives us some highlights of her long-stay there, tells how she travels without reservations AND spends some weeks volunteering in exchange for free room and board.

It does not matter where in the country you go, showpiece scenery is always on display: bays sprinkled with islands, snow-capped volcanoes, bright blue mountain lakes, sea cliffs and rocky caves, rivers and waterfalls in semi-tropical rainforests, white-sand beaches, ancient and giant trees, green grassy hills that plummet into river gorges. And so it goes on. Yes, the landscape is awesome. And, as important, are the great people. Whether you are in the Visitor Information Centres or with hosts in country homes, you will be looked after by genuinely friendly, well-informed and down-to-earth folks. New Zealand's remoteness is precisely what keeps it precious and unspoiled. I have visited the country

three times over a span of 11 years and have never been disappointed. Once you get over the long flights required to get there, simply rent a car and drive around at your own pace.

I have often travelled in New Zealand with no accommodation reservations and no detailed plans. But if you would like the assurance of pre-booked accommodation I can recommend a book entitled *The Greenwood Guide to Australia and New Zealand: Special Handpicked Accommodation* by Simon Greenwood, Adam Barnes and Rachael Parsons. The guide includes a wide range of B&Bs, lodges, farms and self-catering cottages to suit any budget, your sense of adventure, interest in history, creativity or love of luxury. At these properties you will meet own-

ers who have a real liking for other people and take pleasure in looking after them. Most of them provide dinner as an option. The pleasure of sampling good home-cooked meals, personalized service and unique atmosphere without having to look for a restaurant in a strange place is, in my opinion, an ultimate treat. Another book I can recommend is *Off the Beaten Track* by Jenny Greene and Hamish Johnston, a volume that lists recommended accommodation, eating places and eco-activities.

Before I continue, I would like to tell readers of another accommodation option. This is through an organization called World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (Wwoof) which operates in New Zealand and other parts of the world. Wwoof began in the UK in 1971 and in NZ in 1974. It arranges for volunteers to stay on organic farms and join in with the various projects their hosts are engaged in. There is a variety of such properties spread throughout NZ, including farms, market gardens, communities and ventures in self-sufficiency in which organic growing plays some part. Currently there are nearly 900 Wwoof Farms in NZ. While living with the family, the 'wwoofer' is expected to join in and help with the day-to-day activities. Generally four to six hours help each day is required. In addition, help with cooking, washing up, etc., is recommended and is appreciated by the hosts. For me, Wwoof has provided the opportunity to live and experience the daily life of New Zealand families. One is not paid for the work, but one lives and eats without any charge.

Before leaving Toronto, I contacted Wwoof of New Zealand by e-mail at support@wwoof.co.nz and signed up as a member for a fee of NZ\$40.00 (NZ\$1 = C\$.80 approx.) Within a month, I received the booklet listing all the hosts with descriptions of their properties, activities and contacts. The properties were listed by regions. As my first stop would be Christchurch and I wanted to spend several weeks around the Banks Peninsula, I contacted a number of hosts by e-mail in both areas. In Christchurch, I was accepted by 'English Park Eco Accommodation' for seven days, followed by three weeks with 'Sally and Richard Gabric' at Little River, followed by three weeks with 'John Thom & Julie Wagner' at Duvauchelle. At the end of those seven weeks, I planned to set off on further travels.

In my experience, it was best to contact the hosts by e-mail. It allowed me to give a short description of myself. Each position provided me with a different experience. Initially I was apprehensive before meeting my hosts but this gradually dissipated as I found the New Zealanders I met were friendly, sincere, and helpful. I felt at home within the first hour of my arrival. Every family, without exception, was happy in their life style, had healthy diets, dressed for comfort, were involved with their local community, loved and cared for the environment. Most of them had book shelves full of books which I was welcome to read. I accepted the offers and read many books written by New Zealand authors about life in that country.

The Banks Peninsula is one of the most beautiful vol-

canic areas in Canterbury on the south island of New Zealand. I felt in love with the beauty of Akaroa Harbour when I first saw it and felt certain that the surrounding areas would be worth exploring. Since I had come without a car, I asked my host where I was staying how I could see more of the area. I was told to take a trip with the "mail run". The folks in the Information Centre at Akaroa were delighted to book my trip with Garry and Anita Trott who do the "Eastern Bays Mail Run". This is a daily excursion (Monday to Saturday) that leaves the Akaroa Information Centre at 9 a.m. Bookings are essential as there are only eight seats in the bus. Make reservations in the Information Centre or call 3 304 8600 from anywhere in Canterbury.

The trip visited no fewer than ten bays, travelled over 120 km, serviced over 100 mail boxes and climbed from sea level to heights ranging from 300 – 700 metres on no fewer than eight occasions. In addition to all this natural beauty, passengers learn how the mail gets through to these isolated bays and communities, whatever the weather. Barry and Anita were full of information: sharing historical facts of the Banks Peninsula and insider stories of the rural communities, fascinating stories not to be found in any books. Two hours into our journey, we stopped at Little Akaloa Bay, where Anita served a sumptuous mid-morning meal with scones and sandwiches she had made that morning. Afterwards we visited a quaint little church – St. Luke by the Sea – wherein they serve this meal when the weather does not co-operate. This four-and-a-half-hour trip is the best way to see the magnificent, pristine beauty of this region and the isolation of the farmsteads and hamlets.

One of the highlights of my most recent stay turned out to be time I spent at the Flying Fox, located in the lower Whanganui River Valley, surrounded by the Whanganui National Park, in central North Island. Access to this property is by boat along the river or by aerial cableway! It appealed to my sense of adventure, so I contacted Annette Main and made a reservation for a week. The fun started as soon as I entered the gate signed "The Flying Fox" and walked down a short but steep gravel road, at the end of which I found a cable car and a box containing a sheet of instructions. To contact the host, John Blythe, I blew the whistle hanging on a pole, climbed into the cable car and then waited as instructed. Five minutes later, John appeared. I shouted to him that I was ready and shortly the cable car moved off, over the river about 100 ft below. My heart skipped a beat when I looked down but my apprehension disappeared when I saw John's cheerful, smiling face. John showed me two cottages, a caravan and a camper. Each is unique, built and decorated with love, pride and creativity by John and Annette. As soon as I met them, I felt at home. My seven day stay at the Flying Fox went by far too quickly, yet I never left the property. I walked, read and enjoyed my hosts' eclectic collection of old records.

My next adventure came about using the Greenwood Guide. I contacted Jenny Thompson who owns Matawha near Raglan on the east coast, south of Hamilton on the

... continued on page 20

Discover the Tonga Islands

by Maria Wu

The Kingdom of Tonga is a group of islands in the Pacific, located between latitude 15° and 23° S and longitude 173° and 177° W. This places Tonga just to the west of the International Dateline, south of Samoa and south-east of Fiji. Tonga consists of three main island groups: **Tongatapu/Eua, Ha'apai** and **Vava'u**. There are 170 islands of which 36 are inhabited.

Tongatapu is the main island of the group, upon which the capital **Nuku'alofu**, Fua'amotu Airport and the deep water harbour are situated. I arrived from Auckland late in March this year. The hour was 2 a.m. but the foreign exchange booth and information centre were open. While I exchanged money, the information centre booked a room for me at the **Eva Mai Guest House** and arranged a taxi (TOP20.00, or about C\$12 as the Tonga Pa'anga, or TOP, equals about C\$.60) to take me there. On arrival, I was greeted by a chubby smiling face and shown to my big room. I felt immediately at ease and climbed straight into bed. The next thing I knew I was waking up to a bright blue sky and it was after 9 a.m. Downstairs, I was met by Nala, the chubby-faced lady of the night

before and her husband, Pela and daughter Nono. Together they look after the guest house for the owner, Lisieli Ve'a. While I was at the guest house, Nala made all my travelling arrangements by phone, cheerfully and efficiently. On her recommendation, I took a bus tour of Tongatapu Island in the vehicle run by Toni Guest House. This highly-recommended five-hour trip (TOP25) covered most of the interesting sites on the map that had been given to me by the Tonga Visitors Bureau.

I was interested in visiting **Ha'apai, Eua** and **Vava'u** by ferry. On my first visit to the Tonga Visitors Bureau, the lady at the counter was polite and helpful but, it turned out, not accurate. She not only mixed up my booking for a traditional dinner and show at the Cultural Centre but also gave incorrect information about the ferry schedules. Being cautious, I went to the wharf to check and discovered that I had to choose between **Ha'apai** and **Vava'u** as otherwise it would take more than a week for a return trip. I was also warned that the schedule of the ship could be changed by weather or any other unusual circumstances. I was told there would be a boat leaving at 1 a.m. Wednesday, but the day before Nala called the shipping company and found out that the ship would



Lindsays Guest House, Lifuka Island

out that the ship would

in fact leave at midnight and passengers should there before 10 p.m. In the meantime, my hostess, Lisieli, aware that I had missed the cultural dinner and show the previous night, arranged for me to attend the same at the Dateline International Hotel with her son-in-law and grandson before taking me to the wharf. The dinner was a buffet with Western and Tongan food. The signature dish was a roasted pig with lean meat and crackling skin. The show consisted of a variety of dances from Samoa, Maui and Tonga. The most spectacular performance was the fire dance.

My boat, the *m.v. Pulupaki*, left as scheduled at midnight. Seats were in short supply, but I was lucky to find one where I tried to stretch out for a nap ... not easy in a cabin with bright lights and loud music all night! Eight hours later we arrived at Pangai Wharf. By chance I had met a German lady who had recommended **Taiana's Beach Resort on Uoleva Island** where there was no electricity and little running water, though on a tour of the resort I was surprised to find a flush toilet and a shower. Guests sleep in *fales* – Tongan huts made with bamboo and coconut palms. Host Taiana cooked simple Tongan food using local fish, sometimes even lobster. Dinner could be arranged for TOP12.00. Soon after my arrival, Kedu, their son, climbed up a coconut tree to bring me a delicious fresh coconut. Snorkelling equipment was provided, or you could choose merely to swim along a long stretch of sandy beach lined with coconut trees. For the energetic, a round-the-island walk takes about three or four hours. It's also possible to explore inland, but it would be wise to talk to Falafi, the owner, before heading out. I spent idyllic hours here, reading, enjoying the sunsets and watching the stars under a cool breeze at night. Four days later, I went to **Pangai on Lifuka Island**.

Pangai is a sleepy village. Here I stayed at **Lindsays Guest House**. Lindsays has its own café and bakery in a large courtyard. Finau, the owner and a friendly fellow, runs the local airline. Here I visited Sandy Beach, accessible by car across a causeway on Foa Island, where the swimming was the best in Tonga. There was also a small park, equipped with stone picnic tables and benches under shaded trees. I spent most of the day there reading, fanned by a good breeze and listening to the gentle lapping of the waves. I intended to walk back to Lindsays, which probably would have taken me about three hours. But the kind-hearted Tongans would not let me walk in the heat and eventually I accepted one of the many rides offered.

My next short trip was to **'Eua** via a two-hour ferry ride from **Nuku'alofa**. The island has much to offer by way of visual beauty, challenging walks and, I was told, outstanding dives. I did not go diving but people I met had and they were rapt. Hiking can be done with or without a guide but a pamphlet from 'Eua National Park is a must. Accommodation here comprises a few simple guest houses, all graciously hosted by friendly Tongans. I stayed at **Taina's Place**. It was so peaceful, with a beautiful, large garden surrounded by coconut trees. It was close to two

great walking tracks: the southern track encompassing Ha'aluma Beach, the Rock Garden, Liangahuo Cliffs and Maui Archway; the inland route going through pine forests to Lokupo Lookout. I did both without a guide. On Saturday night, I went with Taina's family to the Maxi Disco Club for dancing and on Sunday I went with them to church. I spent three blissful days on 'Eua, leaving on the 5 a.m. ferry. On arrival back at Nuku'alofa it was raining, but Lesieli – my initial hostess – was waiting to take me back to her guest house for a welcome nap.

I spent the remaining days of my trip back at Eva Mai Guest House, mingling with Nala and Lesieli, learning more about the Tongans and cooking together. We had so much fun.

I came to Tonga hoping to meet the locals, to pass the days leisurely, to eat off the land and sea, to take a few dips in the crystal clear waters with white sandy beaches and to enjoy a few hikes. All my hopes were fulfilled. I pray that Tonga will stay as friendly, unspoiled Pacific Islands in the years to come.

A few details ...

Nuku'alofa: Eva Mai Guest House, offering shared or private facilities, TOP20.00 single, TOP30.00 double, including breakfast and laundry. Tel: [code 011 676] 21893 or 22353. (Time difference Pacific +20, Eastern +17.)

Uoleva Island: Taiana's Beach Resort, traditional Tongan *fales* with shared facilities; TOP18.00 single, T\$24.00-40.00 double, dinner TOP12.00 Tel: 60612.

Lifuka Island: Lindsays Guest House, Pangai, shared and private facilities; TOP20.00 - 45.00 single, TOP20.00 - 45.00 double; breakfast included. Tel: 60107

'Eua Island: Taina's Place, cottages with shared facilities, close to airport, will pick up. TOP\$20.00- 25.00/S; T\$25.00 - 30.00/D Tel: 50186 📞

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BELIZE

The Inn at Robert's Grove in Placencia is delightful (Editor Ann has visited!) and this winter they have a great-sounding 7-night, 8-day Winter Adventure Package. For US\$1,760 guests will enjoy air transfers from Belize City; land transfers; en suite accommodation with A/C, TV, telephone, fridge and private terrace; all meals (breakfast, lunch and three-course dinner); a full-day snorkelling trip; a Mayan ruin and Cave swimming excursion; a visit to the Cockscomb Jaguar Reserve; a full-day Monkey River tour and guided trail walk; plus full use of the resort's facilities: tennis court, rooftop Jacuzzis, gym, kayaks, canoes, Hobie Kats, sailboats, bicycles and, of course, swimming pools. For more information call 1 800 565 9757 or log on to www.robertsgrove.com Package is available until 31 May, except over the December/New Year holiday season.

BRITAIN

Lovers of maritime lore will not want to miss a unique exhibition being staged in London from now until the end of year. It's an **Exclusive Nelson Collection** being staged as part of the Trafalgar Celebrations at Lloyd's ... the world's leading maritime insurers who have been engaged in that business for over 300 years. Among other artefacts on display, most hidden from view for centuries, is a complete set of Nelson's seven signatures, each marking a key stage in his legendary life. The stories behind each signature are fascinating! This exhibition will be on display at the **Corporation of London's Guildhall Art Gallery**, near Bank and St. Paul's subway stations. Admission £2.50, free on Fridays and after 3:30 p.m. daily. For full details call [011 44] 20 7332 3700 or visit www.lloyds.com or enter Guildhall Art Gallery in your search engine for a variety of links.

It's time to remind you of those popular summer courses offered by the **University of Cambridge**, as they fill up quickly. You can study for two, four or six weeks in a beautiful and historic setting, with college accommodation if you wish and with lots of social and touring opportunities. "The experience of a lifetime!" says the University. Summer 2006 courses cover Art History (*Sources of Modern Masters*); Literature (*Shakespeare to the Present Day ... tragedy or comedy?*), Science (*Innovations and Global Change*) and History, Medieval to Modern (*Power and Leadership*). For more information write to University of Cambridge International Programmes, Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge CB3 8AQ, U.K., tel: (code 011 44) 1954 280398, www.cont-ed.cam.ac.uk/IntSummer (where full information will be posted at the end of October).

CANADA

● Tourism news from BC tells us that **Victoria** has a new B&B. The historic **John Lewis House** offers 3 ensuite rooms with 'quiet season' (from mid-October) rates from

\$115. The property offers 'A Taste of the Island' ... culinary tours of Vancouver Island as well as cooking classes. B&B owner Elizabeth Levinson is a well-known local culinary author; she has partnered with Kathy McAree of 'Travel With Taste Tours' to create these offerings. For all details contact the property at 58 Government Street, Victoria, V8V 2K3, tel: 250 598 0804, www.john-lewishouse.com.

● There's cooking going on in **Ontario** too! How about a Sunday to Thursday getaway to the Cookery School of **The Little Inn of Bayfield**? This historic (1830's) inn is located about two hours' drive west of Toronto, one hour north of London, in one of Ontario's finest agricultural regions. The programmes, which run all year, vary with the seasons and operate with groups of between four and twelve people. Sounds like a great fall getaway! For more details call 1 800 565 1832, www.littleinn.com.

● There's no better way to brighten November than with a visit to Toronto's Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, especially if you can take some children. It's all a delight, from serious livestock competitions and horse shows to monster pumpkins, miniature horses, petting zoos and fabulous canines. This year the event will take place from 4 - 13 November and tickets can be obtained by calling 416 872 7777 or on line at www.royalfair.org (or call 416 263 3400 for information).



A miniature horse makes his debut at the Royal Winter Fair (Wallace)

● The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts has a delightful-sounding exhibition to brighten winter and lure travellers to France. It's lengthily entitled **Right under the Sun: Painting in Provence, from Romanticism to Modernism (1750-1920)**. Montreal is the only North American venue for this exhibition (previously at the Musée de Marseilles) and it features masterpieces by artists such as Cézanne, Monet, Van Gogh, Gauguin and others. On now until 8 January 2006. Details at 514 285 2000 or www.mmfa.qc.ca Admission \$12, \$6 for seniors (while

admission to the permanent collection is free). If you would like an appealing package to Montreal that includes this exhibition, SN Tourisme Culturel is your company. During October they are offering three nights at the 'boutique' Hotel Place d'Armes with three breakfasts, a gourmet Provencal-style dinner, a tour of old Montreal, VIP tickets to a classical concert and a guided tour of the above art exhibition for the price of \$799 pp. dbl. For details call 1 888 569 4040 or visit www.QuebecArtsTours.com.

EUROPE

If you are considering a winter vacation in Europe, but don't know which alpine country to choose, log on to the new website of the Alpine Tourist Commission, a marketing organization consisting of Austria, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. Tours, special deals and early winter get-aways are listed, along with lots more information. The site is www.alpseurope.com.

FAROE ISLANDS

Bet that heading made you read on! For those who don't know, the **Faroe Islands** are located in the North Atlantic between Iceland and the islands of northern Scotland. (Those who do know probably grew up in the U.K where "the Faroes" feature regularly in the British weather forecasts and shipping reports.) Now you know, how about planning a visit? **Baltic Design Tours** of Toronto arranges tours that include Iceland, Greenland, all Scandinavia, Baltic capitals, fjord cruises, cruises to St. Petersburg and much more ... including the Faroe Islands. You can create your own itinerary and travel independently or with a group. For information call 1 888 226 3628 or visit www.bdt.ca.

IRELAND

Thanks to its temperate climate, crisp days and spectacular scenery, the Emerald Isle attracts an increasing number of Canadian visitors during the Fall season, not only for the above reasons but because the fall months are full of high-profile festivals. There's the Guinness Cork Jazz Festival (28 – 31 October), the Wexford Opera Festival (20 October – 15 November and the Belfast Festival at Queens (21 October – 6 November) which is Ireland's largest international arts festival. And talking of Belfast, October this year sees the start of a 15-month programme of cultural celebrations as part of the **Celebrate Belfast 2006** project. Travelling to Ireland during the Fall can mean savings, too, on everything from airfares to accommodation and escorted tours. For packages call Tourism Ireland at 1 800 223 6470 and request their *Fabulous Fall 2005 Vacation Packages Brochure* or visit www.shamrock.org. The Tourist Board also has many accommodation booklets for independent travellers ... just ask! And their general travel information website is www.tourismireland.com.

ITALY

A word of caution from Italy (and our apologies if you've heard this news from other media outlets ... but it is important). Tourists who are caught purchasing counterfeit goods – handbags, sunglasses, watches, belts, etc., bearing false luxury labels such as Prada, Gucci, Fendi and others – will be liable to fines of up to €10,000 (that's about C\$14,300) with criminal charges laid against the sellers. This is no false alarm ... the legislation was implemented in May this year and the advisory was issued to the Canadian media by the Italian Government Tourist Board. Recent cases of this law being implemented have been reported in Florence, Venice, Rome and Ventimiglia.

MEXICO

Casual glances at a map do not really reveal what Jacques Cousteau called the "world's aquarium". It's the protected islands and coastal areas in Mexico's **Gulf of Baja California** which have recently been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, the 25th such site in Mexico. The figures are impressive: the 244 islands, islets and coastal areas comprising the protected areas contain hundreds of rare plants and 39% of the world's species of marine mammals, more than any other property on the World Heritage List, making it a great location for whale watching and diving. For information on this and all UNESCOsites visit whc.unesco.org.

U.S.A.

Calling all bird-watchers and nature enthusiasts. How about migrating to **Florida's Space Coast**, for the **Ninth Annual Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival**, 16 – 20 November. This festival provides a perfect combination of education and entertainment, offering expeditions from kayak adventures and boat excursions to social gatherings and kids' escapades. Headquartered at Brevard Community College Titusville Campus, the Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival includes five days of unique interaction with the world's leading ornithologists, oceanographers, wildlife biologists and naturalists. Call 1 800 936 2326 for a vacation planner kit, or visit www.space-coast.com or www.VISITFLORIDA.com for complete Florida information.

There's more to **Nevada** than gambling at Las Vegas. Ancient rock art adorns the southern Nevada landscape and tours of the cultural and archaeological treasures in the **Valley of Fire State Park** will be held on the second Saturday of each month from 12 November until May 2006. To register for the free, three-hour tours call 702 804 6723 and make a note to bring water, lunch or snacks, a hat and sturdy walking shoes. And to learn more about the Nevada Rock Art Foundation visit www.nevadarockart.org.

* **Air Canada** is standardizing its free checked baggage allowance as of 12 October. These standards apply to all domestic, transborder and international flights. Free baggage allowance is two bags weighing up to 23 kg (50 lbs.) each, changed from two bags weighing up to 32 kg (70 lbs.). Bags weighing between the newly allowed 23 kg and the previously allowed 32 kg will be charged an excess fee of \$35 for North American flights and \$60 for all international travel. The maximum allowable weight of a *single* checked bag has become 32 kg, down from the previous 45 kg (100 lbs.). For details of fees for oversized and additional bags, visit "What's New" at www.aircanada.com There are no changes to the current carry-on baggage allowances, which remain at one carry-on bag that will fit the overhead storage compartments and one 'personal item' such as a handbag.

* **CanJet Airlines** is adding Fort Lauderdale to its network ... the airline's fifth Florida destination. Non-stop service out of Toronto will commence 5 November with Wednesday and Saturday departures until 27 May. Connecting services to and from Halifax, St. John's and Moncton are on the schedule. For full details see www.canjet.com

* Planning to visit Hong Kong? Until 12 December 2005 **Cathay Pacific** is offering its Asia Miles members double miles on its flights, in any class, between Canada and Hong Kong. To qualify, travellers must be Asia Miles members and must register prior to travel; membership is free and registration can be done online at www.cathay.ca/FallDouble. Cathay offers two daily non-stop flights from Vancouver to Hong Kong and daily direct service from Toronto. They also have a daily service from Vancouver to New York, which may be useful for putting those 'points' to use.

* Something to keep in mind when planning your travels ... **Delta** and **Northwest** have filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the U.S.

* **Swiss International Air Lines** (www.swiss.com) and Air Canada are partnering to offer a daily departure from Toronto to Zurich, with onward service to Delhi, India. This new route will commence on 30 October. In addition, the new codeshare agreement offers passen-

gers a SWISS flight from Montreal to Zurich and on to Mumbai.

* **Signature Vacations** will operate a series of dedicated charter flights out of Halifax this coming winter; the first time the company has operated its own aircraft in Atlantic Canada. Destinations will include Cancun and the Mayan Riviera; the Dominican Republic and Cuba. And, additional news of interest to those worried about fuel surcharges: Signature Vacations declares that as soon as a holiday has been reserved and is under deposit, the price is guaranteed against any fuel surcharges. This guarantee is in force until the end of April 2006.

* If Hawaii is in your dreams you may be interested to know that **WestJet** will begin offering non-stop service to Honolulu and Maui from Vancouver beginning 9 and 17 December respectively. The airline will fly five times a week to Honolulu and twice weekly to Maui. Seats are available now ... see your agent or visit www.westjet.com

* Two European airlines, **bmi** (formerly British Midlands Airways) and **TAP Air Portugal** will soon allow their passengers to use their cell phones during flights. This announcement was recently made by Geneva-based technology firm OnAir. Trials will be conducted by each airline over separate three-month periods and the outcome will no doubt be of interest to passengers and other airlines. You have been warned!

* More warnings coming. The European Commission is attempting to create an EU-wide criteria for blacklisting airlines, but is having difficulty finding a consensus. However, France, Belgium and the U.K. already have their own lists of airlines banned in their airspace and at their airports, while a similar list is expected from Switzerland (not a EU member) soon. Most of the airlines appear quite obscure (companies based in such countries as North Korea, the Central African Republic, Liberia, Libya etc.), but inclusion of Air Saint-Thomas (US Virgin Islands) and Phuket Airlines (Thailand) may be important for our readers to note. Enter 'banned airlines' in your search engines and you will find lots of information.

More Niagara Region Information

In last month's edition, we gave the contact details of two tourism organizations in the Niagara region: Niagara Falls Tourism and Niagara-on-the-Lake. It has since been pointed out to us that **Tourism Niagara** is, in fact, the organization responsible for the 12 municipalities within the Region of Niagara. So ... if you would like comprehensive information on *all* that this delightful, and varied, region has to offer, please call 1 800 263 2988 or visit www.tourismniagara.com

Wary of the water when you travel? How about adding a SteriPEN to your luggage? Using ultraviolet light to kill viral and bacterial contamination in water, the SteriPEN weighs about half a pound and operates on four AA batteries. There's a detailed article about this device on line at www.thetravelinsider.info/travelaccessories/steripen.htm or enter SteriPEN in your search engine to find a variety of suppliers, including Magellans (see below). SteriPEN is made by an American company – Hydro-Photon – that forbids discounting of its products, so all companies that carry the pen will be charging US\$149.95.

For those of you who do not have a speciality travel store close, a copy of Magellan's (America's leading source of travel supplies)

catalogue would be a handy thing to have. New in the latest edition are Wallet Minders, PopOut Maps, Teva Walking Shoes and more. Plugs, devices for making packing easier and more efficient, lead pouches for your film, undies and travel-friendly clothes and much more can be found in this catalogue. For a free copy call 1 800 962 4943 or log on to www.magellans.com

When you stay in a hotel, are you nervous at night or, perhaps, when in the shower? If so, you may like to invest in a Personal Door Lock, a portable deadbolt that adapts to any door and prevents unwanted entry to your room. The lock is small (5 x 2 in.) and light (5 oz). It costs US\$19.95 and can be obtained online at www.personaldoorlock.com or by calling 952 240 6794.

In Case of Emergency

With most people carrying cell phones these days, here's something to consider. The Travel Society has been told that paramedics would like all cell phone users to adopt a simple idea called ICE. These days, paramedics often turn to a victim's cell phone for clues to that person's identity in an emergency or accident that renders the victim unable to communicate. 'But how do they know who to call?' we hear you ask. ICE stands for In Case of Emergency, and if you add an entry in the contacts list on your cell phone under that acronym, with the name and phone number of the person the emergency services should call on your behalf, you can save them a lot of time and have someone close to you contacted quickly. Apparently paramedics know what ICE means and they look for it immediately. Pass it on!

Reader to Reader

A friend and I are interested in going to Portugal next April. We don't want to stay in a huge apartment complex like the ones we see advertised in the travel brochures. We like history, walking and meeting people and are wondering if any other readers could help us with details of somewhere to stay in a small town or village: perhaps a small apartment or villa or in a B&B. We'd like to do some of our own cooking. We would welcome any advice or recommendations. Thank you!

Ona Sprat

(Editor's note: I would be delighted to mail your recommendations to Ona if you send me an e-mail or quick letter. If e-mailing please put Portugal for Ona in the subject line. Hope some of you can help. Many thanks - ann@thetravelsociety.com)

* To contact **Windjammer Landing Resort** directly call 1 800 267 7600, 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.

* **Anse Chastanet Resort**'s telephone number is 459, 7000, www.ansechastanet.com.

* **Ladera Resort** and its award-winning Dasheene restaurant can be contacted at 1 800 738 4752, 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.heritagetourstluciacia.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 

New Zealand, continued from page 13

North Island. Raglan has a sheltered harbour, with unusual carved rocks known as Tattooed Rocks. It has possibly the best surfing beach in the southern hemisphere. It is near Kawhia, known for its 'hot water' black sand beaches. Matawha is a 900-acre cattle and sheep station. Here I enjoyed a studio room overlooking the valley and beach with and a wide deck where one can read, eat or watch the sunset. Full breakfast is included (from NZ\$90.00 double, \$60.00 single) and arrangements can be made for lunch and/or dinner. I shared dinner with Jenny on the first night: roast chicken, vegetables from her garden, warm herb bread and a refreshing salad, followed with an English trifle. We lingered over the meal with red wine and lots of interesting conversations about New Zealand and our travels in other parts of the world.

Some details ...

● Information on Wwoof in New Zealand can be obtained from Box 1172, Nelson, New Zealand, fax: [code 011 64] 3 544 9890, e-mail: support@wwoof.co.nz. The 897 Wwoof farms in New Zealand are listed on the large website www.wwoof.co.nz where many of the properties are illustrated.

● For details of Wwoof in Canada contact 4429 Carlson Road, Nelson, BC V1L 6X3, tel: 250 354 4417, e-mail: wwoofcan@shaw.ca, www.wwoof.ca

● The two guide books mentioned above are great for planning a trip to NZ with a difference, particularly for those who are looking for something unique.

The Greenwood Guide to Australia and New Zealand: Special Handpicked Accommodation by Simon Greenwood, Adam Barnes and Rachael Parsons, available at www.amazon.ca for C\$23.94.

Off the Beaten Track, Greenstone Press, fax: [011 64] 3 731 1154, www.greenstone.co.nz

In addition, many may find the *2006 Baches & Holiday Homes to Rent Guide Book* useful. This, together with many other New Zealand guides, can be ordered on line at www.holidayhomes.co.nz, price NZ\$19.95, about C\$16.30.

● Annette Main and John Blythe at the **Flying Fox** can be contacted at P.O. Box 333, Whanganui, Aotearo, New Zealand, tel: 6 342 8160, e-mail: theflyingfox@paradise.net.nz, www.theflyingfox.co.nz Jenny Thomson at **Matawha** can be contacted at 7 825 6709, e-mail: jenny@wave.co.nz

● When I wanted to rent a car, I used Ace Tourist Rental (NZ) who offer well-priced, unlimited mileage rentals, for pick-up (or delivery to you) at one location, drop off at another. All details at www.acerentalcars.co.nz

After her travels in New Zealand, our intrepid member flew to Tonga. Intrigued? Her story starts on page 14. 

The Travel Society website

Visit *The Travel Society* website www.thetravelsociety.com

Our website is fully operational. We always want to improve it and welcome your input.

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

You can renew your subscription on-line too!

Reserve now
for 2006

China ... Yangtze Spectacular

\$3,995 FOR 18 DAYS!

Departing:

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



Please call for the full itinerary

It is vast, fascinating and mysterious and it has beckoned travellers from the west for centuries. Mention it to avid travellers and they are sure to say, "Yes, I hope to visit China one day." And what would they choose to experience? A cruise on the mighty Yangtze River (now in the process of changing for ever); a look at the work-in-progress on the massive Three Gorges Dam; a walk on the ancient Great Wall; views of charming villages, lush terraced hillsides and magnificent mountain peaks; visits to the great cities of Shanghai and Beijing; a trip to view one of the world's greatest archaeological finds ... the 6,000 terra-cotta warriors at Xi'an; scenes of palaces, pagodas, pavilions and pandas; tastes of Peking duck and Chinese banquets and so much more. So how do you choose? When you decide on The Travel Society's tour there's no need to choose because all these highlights are included. Yes, in these

remarkable 18 days you'll stay in Beijing; you'll take a 4-day first-class cruise on the Yangtze with many shore excursions; you'll fly to see those centuries-old terra-cotta warriors in Xi'an; you'll visit bustling Chongquin and see its pandas; stay in Hangzhou and travel into the hills covered with tea plantations; explore the exquisite gardens of Suzhou, and visit Nanjing and Wuzhen. And you'll have time to explore spectacular Shanghai. Throughout the trip you'll see magnificent architecture, you'll be entertained at cultural events, you'll join your hosts at a variety of banquets, you'll have time to shop, and you'll marvel at some of the most wonderful scenery on earth, all in the company of English-speaking guides. You'll travel by plane, by luxury bus, cruise ship and river boat. Many of our members have told us it's an experience of a lifetime ... and all at an amazing price!

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES:

Departing:

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.



**New
lower prices**

Galapagos Islands and Ecuador

with options to Kapawi Lodge in the Amazon and Machu Picchu, Peru
14 days departing 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: 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

*Limited to 20 Members
Fully escorted*

Departing: 25 April & 12 September 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 Kapadokya (or Cappadocia); mysterious and lovely ruins such as Aphrodisias, Pergamum and, of course, Ephesus; the fabled and beautiful Aegean coast; the peaceful Princes Isles in the Sea of Marmara and so much more.

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES: 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

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.



**Book Now
for 2006**

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



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:

Vancouver	\$5,385 pp/dbl	Toronto	\$5,135 pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$5,385 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$5,135 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$5,385 pp/dbl	Montreal	\$5,135 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$5,385 pp/dbl	Halifax	\$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 & 21 September 2006

*Space is limited call now
Fully Escorted*

**ONLY
12 SPACES LEFT!
FOR 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 nightspot. 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:

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

Single supplement TBA (sharing can be arranged)

Prices are subject to confirmation

Your tour includes:

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

From \$2634 all inclusive

Long Stays in Mexico

*departures throughout Nov & Dec 2005
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:

Toronto , 1 week	\$2,634 pp/dbl	Vancouver 1 week	\$2,889 pp/dbl
Ottawa 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
Montreal 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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