

The Travel Society

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Magazine



**Nova Scotia with Ambassatours
A Maritime Learning Experience
A Northern Adventure**

www.thetravelsociety.com

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At Louisbourg, N.S.
(Wallace)

editor's letter ...

I'm confused! I think everyone is confused! After all that fuss about passports, the United States has, apparently, ditched plans that would have required passports at Canada-U.S. borders. Instead they plan to issue a new security card, about the size of a credit card, at about one-half the passport cost, which will be required by 1 January 2008. Tourism officials in Canada are relieved. Canadian authorities are to follow suit with similar security cards and hope to meet that deadline. But Alex Swann, spokesman for (as we go to print before the election) Public Safety Minister Anne McLellan, says that the process has been delayed by the election campaign and there are concerns about timing. "Developing options to a passport is a significant undertaking," Swann said, "You have to make sure you get all the bugs out. We need the time to get this right. The key is that it links with their [the U.S.] system. The difficulty for us has been to pin down what they'll accept. Now we have a better sense of how far they'll go."



But - and it's a big 'but' - travellers must remember that this document is solely for passages at border *land* crossings. The cards will not be accepted at U.S. airports and seaports, where passports will be required of Canadians at the end of the year.

Perhaps you'll decide to stay in Canada this summer? If so, I hope you especially enjoy this double issue with its stories about Nova Scotia and the opposite side of the country - the far northwest (yes, I know Alaska is part of the U.S., but you know what I mean).

We have yet more Canadian stories coming in the Spring: P.E.I and some points west. But these will share our pages with European stories and then, for your height-of-summer-reading, we'll venture into South America once again. So ... until April, I wish you a bright winter, happy reading and *bon voyage* in your travels.

A Little Place in Barbados

Rental holiday apartments are like days in May: they can be wonderful or, sometimes, not so nice! I hope it is not too late in the season to send you information about a real "jewel" of accommodation to be found on the prestigious island of Barbados.

It is Rosalie Apartments, where we rented a unit for one week in December 2005. We enjoyed every minute of it. We were picked up at the airport, as all guest here are, and transported to a lovely, tranquil residential area on the southern tip of the island – Atlantic Shores. The Rosalie residence, owned and expertly managed by Rhonda and Peter Glover, provides the maximum relaxation and comfort for the rest-seeking guest.

Our apartment consisted of one big bedroom with a comfortable, firm bed and en suite bathroom. The large living room/kitchen overlooked the expanse of Atlantic Ocean and came equipped with every possible appliance and utensil to provide full meals if desired. All apartments are non-smoking and air-conditioned. On arrival, on the kitchen table, we found a "nutritional first aid" basket containing coffee, tea, marmalade and half a bottle of rum! In the refrigerator there was a carton of milk and a loaf of bread.

An especially charming feature of the property is the large private terrace surrounding the swimming pool. This heated pool permitted us to enjoy good laps, followed by a Jacuzzi tub! Each apartment has a shimmering sea view and there's a continuous breeze. There is no beach accessible here; just rocky outcrops. For full enjoyment of the island, a car rental is a necessity as the acceptable supermarket and most of the restaurants are beyond walking distance and public transport isn't always reliable. There is an abundance of clean and comfortable taxis, but they are not cheap. So having a rental car to

explore the island, find some lovely beaches and also enjoy some of the many excellent restaurants is a good idea.

The tranquillity of Rosalie is assured as children and teenagers are not accommodated here. Daily maid service is included and there are options such as full housekeeping, cooking, internet, laundry and the organization of car hire. For one week we paid approximately US\$1,200 ... a far cry from the expensive hotels on this island and just as comfortable. For details contact Peter and Rhonda at 13 Seaside Drive, Atlantic Shores, Christ Church, Barbados, tel: 246 253 9022, www.rosalieapartments.com.

*Dr Elizabeth Perera
Toronto, ON*

An Inspiring Journey to Africa

In this letter Garth Holloway reflects about his inspiring journey to Africa made as a participant of Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR) Study Tour – a two and a half week journey to Africa that allows visitors to see development programmes in rural Africa.

The CPAR 2005 Study Tour to Uganda was definitely 'chicken soup for my soul'. All of my adult life I have had a strong interest in and connection to Africa, perhaps fuelled by reading *National Geographic* magazines in my public school library as a kid, and as a result of a two-year teaching placement in northern Nigeria as a CUSO volunteer in my mid-twenties. Since then, I have continued to read about sub-Saharan Africa, been involved in workshops, organized a conference connected to African issues at home in Toronto, and introduced African themes to the Ontario history curriculum during my teaching career.

Yet in spite of travelling extensively for the past 30 years with my wife and

children, I had never returned to Africa. We had always resisted, often citing concerns about the cost or the difficulty of travel, but I really think it was because we were afraid to see that things had remained the same despite the hard work of many Canadian development organizations over the years.

So the opportunity to return to Africa in August 2005 as part of the CPAR Study Tour after a 29-year absence was an exciting one. We were a motley group: two students, two retired teachers, a banker, two physicians and a couple of film makers. My wife, Maureen, and I had started our teaching careers in Nigeria and, as she observed, to return to Africa just after we retired was like "book-ending our teaching careers". Neither of us had participated before in an escorted travel experience in which others had set the itinerary, always preferring to travel our way and at our own convenience. What

Members are rewarded for sharing!

The TravelSociety rewards members 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!

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would it be like to have others look after our travel needs? Would we be able to get along for 16 days with the other participants some of whom were younger than our children? Would we be inspired by what we saw or overwhelmed by the immensity of Uganda's problems?

Landing at Entebbe airport at dawn almost immediately lay to rest any anxieties that I may have had. Immediately, I felt as though I was in a familiar place - the tropical light at dawn, the sounds and smells that I encountered, and the special African welcome that we received from the CPAR-Uganda staff. The next day, we embarked on a two-week discovery of Uganda.

We met government and development officials who provided us with an insight into the unique challenges that they were encountering. We visited Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps where 1.4 million Ugandans have been living as refugees as a result of the 19-year civil war consuming the north of the country. We toured hospitals and medical clinics dealing with issues such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. We met some of the 'Night Commuters' in Gulu - children who flee villages and seek refuge in towns to avoid abduction by rebel soldiers and visited rehabilitation centres which were attempting to re-integrate formerly-abducted children back into village societies. We saw programmes to assist and re-train landmine victims. We also spent time with farmers learning new agricultural methods to ensure food security for their families and visited schools involved in tree planting as an income-generating programme. We saw water purification and sanitation projects, tree nurseries and schools and villages trying to rebuild after the destruction caused by the war.

The range of things that we saw and did in two short weeks was astonishing! No matter where we went and what we saw, I always felt well prepared and knowledgeable because of the preparation by the CPAR staff

accompanying us. The de-briefing sessions at the end of the day with the other Study Tour participants were a wonderful way of putting the day's experiences into perspective. Rather than simply feeling emotionally overwhelmed at the end of each day, I felt inspired by the remarkable industry of the Ugandan people in their own efforts to overcome the problems that they faced. I also admired the help that they were extending to each other with the limited resources that they had and what they were able to accomplish within the extraordinary conditions in which they lived. I was humbled by the professional dedication, the knowledge and expertise of community members as well as the hard work of the CPAR-Uganda staff.

The itinerary established by the CPAR staff was intellectually stimulating and very well-balanced. Throughout the tour, we travelled in SUVs driven by CPAR drivers and were provided many opportunities to sightsee, explore local markets, and visit tourist attractions like the "animal rich" game reserve, Murchison Falls National Park in western Uganda that was definitely an experience straight from *National Geographic* magazine! Our hotel accommodations covered both ends of the spectrum, ranging from the very simple at the CPAR-Loro base camp to the sublime Paraa Safari Lodge at Murchison Falls. I was also pleasantly surprised to find a wide variety of international dishes on restaurant menus.

Would I recommend participation on a future CPAR Study Tour? Absolutely. For us, it was money well spent and an educational travel programme that few have the honour and privilege to experience.

For more information about CPAR's 2006 Study Tours call 1 800 263 2727, e-mail: info@cpar.ca or visit www.cpar.ca.

*Garth Holloway
Toronto, ON*

Next time around ... don't miss UMOJA!

This isn't *really* travel related, but I do know many readers, like us, have enjoyed visits to South Africa. And we've just enjoyed the spectacular show called UMOJA (a Xhosa word for 'togetherness') at Toronto's lovely Elgin Theatre. This show plays in Toronto until 26 March, after which it will be on its way to the U.S. But they have been visiting Canada for several years now ... so I'm sure they will be back. And when they do return to Vancouver or Toronto or points in between, please do go. You won't be disappointed, especially if you've been to South Africa and been delighted by its music.

Introduced by a Nelson Mandela-like narrator - Penuel Bhekizitha - this energetic troupe of 35 dancers, drummers and rock/jazz/blues band earned a wild standing ovation when we saw them and we hear they always do. The vignettes depict the history of South Africa and its music, from tribal times to colonialization to apartheid and on to the present day. There's traditional music, gospel, drumming and modern offerings. But it is the dancing that is jaw-dropping. This is no sylph-like ballet. Oh no, UMOJA proves that guys and gals of any shape and size can boogie with the best! And the audience can hardly sit still!

The show is produced by Ysis Entertainment, a social enterprise corporation with the mission of utilizing the business environment as an interactive foundation for cultural and social justice education through entertainment. Information can be found at www.umo-jatour.com and www.ysisentertainment.com or for tickets visit www.ticketmaster.ca. (Take an extra few dollars for the Nelson Mandela Children's Charity box.) Catch them in Toronto if you can before 26 March or keep your eyes open for their return in a location nearer you!

*Audrey & Warren Barnes
Toronto, ON*

Touring in Nova Scotia with Ambassatours

story and photographs by Ann Wallace

A guided tour of Cape Breton is a good idea for those keen to see this spectacular part of the world without driving themselves. So, after a brief tour with my husband of a different part of Nova Scotia, I remained in the province and joined Ambassatours. As well as Cape Breton, our trip also included Halifax and the highlights of the South Shore – Peggy’s Cove, Mahone Bay and Lunenburg. Here’s a day-by-day account of my trip.

They’re Changing Guard at the Halifax Citadel

The evening before ...

I’m alone in Halifax this evening and I’ve checked into the hotel that my chosen tour operator – Ambassatours – often uses for its Halifax stays – the historic Lord Nelson. This is a gracious and recently-renovated hotel, whose front rooms overlook the lovely Victorian Halifax Public Gardens. It was built in 1928 and is still privately owned. After settling in to my comfortable room I set out on my evening ‘date’ ... the perfect answer for a lone traveller.

I’m to join an Ambassatours group on one of their ‘Historic Halifax Pub Tours’, something I certainly wouldn’t do alone but which sounds a fun way to spend an evening. And it is! At the meeting place everyone is given yellow sou’wester hats, presumably to help the group keep together for it certainly isn’t raining! We then follow our kilted guide and traditionally-dressed bagpiper down one of Halifax’s pedestrian streets to the first pub on the list. I feel a bit silly ... one of those ‘hope I don’t meet anyone I know’ feelings and I’m kind of loathe to enter the first pub outfitted in this manner *and* following an earsplitting bagpiper too. What on earth will the other patrons think, I ponder. But I need not have worried. Obviously these tours are a familiar scene on the Halifax pub circuit and we are warm-

ing welcomed as visitors 'from away' who don't know better. Incumbent customers shuffle around and make room for us cheerfully, beers arrive, the bagpiper stills his instrument and the pub's musical entertainers resume their playing. We visit three downtown pubs in this manner and have a great time. The tour obviously isn't for twentysomethings, most of whom are happy popping into bars without a group, but for me it was a great way to pass an evening that otherwise would have been spent alone. And now I know why Halifax pubs and their entertainment have such a great reputation.

In bed not too late. Tomorrow I am to meet my travelling group for our week's tour, with a day-tour of Halifax first on the itinerary.

Day 1

After a hearty breakfast in the bar of the Lord Nelson, the tour's participants start to assemble in the foyer. Ambassadors (an amalgamation of several companies, including Gray Line and Atlantic Tours, is one of the oldest tour companies of Nova Scotia) offer a variety of tours throughout Atlantic Canada and are behind the London-bus and San Francisco-style trolley tours of Halifax and beyond. And it's on the trolley that we explore Halifax. As this is my first visit, this turns out to be an ideal way to get acquainted with the city where so much has happened.



The Titanic graves at Fairview Lawn Cemetery

Before we board the trolley yet another piper, dressed in full Scottish regalia, joins the group and leads us rather noisily around the adjacent Victoria Gardens. This was an ideal way to get acquainted with other tour participants as we posed for photographs with the piper and joked about the perhaps dismayed people who had come to these gracious gardens for a little quiet time! But everyone seemed

delighted to see us and our musical escort. Between musical interludes our guide told us about the hurricane damage to the park when Juan struck in October 2003 (which some locals apparently welcomed as they felt the area had become too shaded). He also told us that the wide paths had been designed for Victorian ladies wearing crinolines!

A visit to the Halifax Citadel National Historic Site followed. The 78th Highlander regiment guard this star-shaped citadel, one of the great British fortifications of the 19th century. They are spectacularly dressed, according to rank, in kilts of Mackenzie tartan with white and black sporrans, scarlet doublets trimmed with gold lace, tartan hose and white spatterdashes, all topped with black plumed 'bonnets'. If visitors arrive on the hour (which the tour tries to do) they will witness the precision of the changing of the guard ceremony before entering the Citadel, where, within the massive walls, more Highlanders demonstrate foot and arms drills and guards of honour while skirts swirl, bagpipes peal and drums beat. It's all very rousing and certainly stirred the



Drill time at the Halifax Citadel

blood of this member of the ancient Wallace clan! The Citadel walls offer fine views of downtown Halifax while modern practicalities, including a cafeteria and gift shop, aren't overlooked.

Back on the trolley, we set out for the Fairview Lawn Cemetery. There are 150 victims of the *Titanic* disaster buried in Halifax – the largest number in the world – and 121 of the graves are in Fairview. The four rows of graves fan out from an apex point over a slight rise in the ground, the whole resembling the bow of a ship. Many sites are named, a few bear only numbers. They range in age from 13 months to 52 years. The toddler's grave is marked "Unknown Child", but this child has now been identified through DNA testing as Eino Viljami Panula, who was travelling with his mother and many siblings (all from Finland) to join his father in the U.S. All were lost. A visit to this quiet place is both sobering and interesting and prepares us for our next visit – the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, located on the waterfront in downtown Halifax.

This is a fine and fascinating Museum, celebrating Nova Scotia's long relationship with the sea. A *Titanic* gallery reveals Halifax's response to the famous 1912 disaster and holds a few original items from the doomed ship, including the recently-donated pair of infant's shoes that belonged to little Eino. Another large gallery tells the story of the Halifax Explosion of 1917, a terrible event that killed almost 2,000 people and maimed many more. Don't miss the glass case holding the little blood-stained dress belonging to Eileen Coleman who, at two years old, survived when the blast hurled the heavy kitchen sink neatly (well almost neatly, she was obviously injured) over her. For those interested in all aspects of maritime lore this museum could take a whole day and I hope to return one day to enjoy some of the galleries I missed. But it was time to move on to another attraction: Pier 21. This museum, subtitled Canada's Immigration Museum, is housed in this country's last surviving ocean immigration shed, though the word 'shed' hardly does justice to this vast space. From 1928 to 1971, about a million people entered Canada via Pier 21, and here are the stories of some of them. There's also a fine movie on the longest flat screen in the world. This museum is a work-in-progress and will appeal to most Canadians, especially those who remember Pier 21 themselves or have heard stories of their ancestors' arrival there.

Evening approaches and we return to our hotel to freshen up. But the day's treats are far from over, because tonight the group, after a good buffet dinner at the Metro Centre, is off to see the Nova Scotia International Tattoo.

This is a spectacular event, with its marching kilted bands and rousing music, but it's also very entertaining. And, last year – the Year of the Veteran – it was also very moving. Loudspeakers announced this special year, whereupon a small group of elderly gentlemen, chests ablaze with decorations and medals, followed each other to stand in a line in the centre of the vast arena where they received a long, stirring, standing ovation.

The Tattoo is held annually in the first week of July in the Halifax Metro Centre. It's a combination of historic re-enactments and competitions; acrobats, dancers and choirs, and music featuring the pipes and drums of military and civilian bands. Last year, as I believe is true of every year, we enjoyed an international cast: a group known as Pipeworkz performed tribal music and dance from New Zealand, the Russian Army Paratroopers Song and Dance ensemble proved to skeptics that army paratroopers can indeed sing and dance, the 51 Highland Brigade Band and Pipes from Britain (forty percent of whose members are female) provided some wonderful music. From Germany came the German Air Force Band No. 4 and the Flying Grandpas. The latter are a group of young acrobats cleverly disguised as old folks who chase each other and tumble around with amazing skill. The crowd loved 'em! And, of course, there are lots of home-grown Canadian offerings: the Band of the Ceremonial Guard, the Pipes and Drums of the 2nd Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment, the RCMP (including tail-wagging members of the Police Dog Service), the



*Lunenburg (left)
and Peggy's Cave
(below)*



Tattoo Choir, the Army Obstacle Race and much more. It's all great entertainment.

Day 2

Today we start our Nova Scotia tour in earnest. We meet Paul Emmons, one of the partners of Ambassatours, who is to be our guide, and Nina (pronounced NIna and not NEEna we are told) who will be driving our luxury coach. Both are wearing kilts and look very smart. The highlights of the South Shore are on our itinerary today: Peggy's Cove, Mahone Bay and Lunenburg. Most Canadians are familiar with these names, even if they haven't visited: Peggy's Cove is that famous fishing village (pop. 50, visitors in their thousands) and Mahone Bay is the pretty home of many art galleries, craft stores and churches. There I treated myself to two charming prints depicting Nova Scotian seaside cottages by Carol Ann Shelton from her gallery on Main Street.

After lunch at the spacious Oak Island Resort and Spa near Mahone Bay we set off for our afternoon in Lunenburg. Founded by the British in 1753 (while the French held P.E.I.) it is one of only two urban UNESCO sites in Canada (the other is Québec City) and is the best surviving example of a planned British colonial settlement in North America. It has retained its original layout and overall appearance, based on a rectangular grid pattern drawn up in the home country. The inhabitants have managed to safeguard the city's identity throughout the centuries by preserving the wooden architecture of the houses, some of which date from the 18th century. We enjoyed a walking tour here and learned much of historic and architectural interest. I liked the fact that the houses are multi-coloured because they were painted with left-over boat paint! There are, in fact, over 400 designated buildings in the UNESCO district, including the fine St. John's Anglican Church (originally 1753) which had just 're-opened' after being re-constructed after a devastating fire. Unfortunately the famous *Bluenose* wasn't in her berth in the harbour, but we all enjoyed a visit to the wharfside indoor/outdoor Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic. There's some great stuff for children in this museum and I loved seeing members of the Ships Modellers' Guild. I also learned some fascinating things in the "Fish By-Products" section, including the fact that the main ingredient of 'Preparation H' is shark liver oil and that herring scales are sold to chemical companies who remove the 'pearl essence' in the scales to produce the sparkle in iridescent nail polish, lip

gloss and eye shadow.

As Nina drove us carefully back to Halifax for our final night there, I couldn't help thinking that all Canadians should visit these three destination gems at some time in their lives.

Day 3

We're off early today for Cape Breton. As we leave town Paul gives a talk on some of the region's history and all we are going to see and do in the coming days. By now it has become obvious that Paul is a very caring and considerate guide whose tours are well geared to the not-so-young. It was never necessary to walk far if one did not wish to, and there were frequent "no need to rush" comfort stops at attractions, tourist offices and restaurants. Many of the mature members of our group really appreciated all this.

We stop for a tasty lunch in the Cove Motel in Auld's Cove before crossing the Canso Causeway and arriving on Cape Breton. On this fairly long drive Paul tells us about Nova Scotia's 3,000 unpolluted lakes, rivers and streams; tells that the province has 4,600 miles of coast with 100 lighthouses and says it's a shame we have just missed the beautiful show of June lupins.

We arrive in the town of Baddeck – 'the beginning and end of the Cabot Trail' – in the afternoon and head straight for the Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site. More fascinating hours pass as we learn about Bell's life and many inventions – in addition to the telephone – and learn of the time he and his family spent in his home high above the lake



*Inverary Resort, Baddeck
(left) and whale watching in
Pleasant Bay (below)*



here. There's a excellent movie in the Mr Bell Theatre and later all in our group are thrilled to read a quote from the famous inventor: "I have travelled around the globe. I have seen the Rockies, the Alps and the Highlands of Scotland, but for simple beauty Cape Breton outrivals them all." The Bells spent much of the last 37 years of their lives here.

Later we check in to the very nice Inverary Resort, our home for the next three nights. The resort offers rooms and suites and a few efficiency cottages. The grounds here sweep down to the water, where a boat trip around a nearby island to spot the resident bald eagle is offered to guests every afternoon. As with all of Ambassatours trips, we choose our dinners from each restaurant's menu, and tonight especially enjoy the selection at the Inverary where they offer many local seafood dishes.

Day 4

Today is our big day on the 184-mile Cabot Trail, one of the world's most spectacular drives. I'm fortunate in that I have been on several other roads so described in the world, and can vouch that this description is accurate. What a road! And how expertly it is negotiated by Nina and her big bus, enabling us to watch the trail unfold before our eyes, with frequent stops at vantage points for photographs and leg stretching.

A longer stop is made in Cheticamp, a quaint Acadian seaboard town made famous by its hookers. Rug hookers that is! We stop here for nearly an hour for refreshments and to visit the tiny museum under the gift shop where we see the ladies demonstrating their skills and practise our French with them. These beautiful rugs have been presented to royalty and presidents and there's a wide selection on sale here. Many in our group make purchases before we board the bus and head to Pleasant Bay for our whale watching excursion with Wesley. Pilot whales are so prolific in this area that whale-watching firms offer money-back guarantees if there are no sightings. Little risk of having to do that, at least in our experience, for no sooner had we left the confines of the harbour than we were surrounded by the creatures. All on board made Kodak shareholders happy and we had a memorable trip.

Nutritious packed lunches emerged from coolers on the bus at this point, which we enjoyed in a nearby picnic spot (we were in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park), before hitting the road again, this time to drive southwards on the east coast of the island back to Baddeck, in good time for a walk around town and another delicious dinner. We all agreed it had been a spectacular day. C'mon fellow

Canadians, if you haven't experienced the Cabot Trail, make this the year! Ambassatours will drive you if you don't want to tackle the road yourself.

Day 5

The group is given a choice of activities this morning: a sail on the Bras d'Or Lake on a tall ship, a sea kayaking excursion or free time to explore Baddeck and/or relax. I choose the tall ship and soon a few of us are being welcomed aboard the *Amoeba* by Captain John Bryson. This 67' wishbone rig schooner was built by John's father and passengers are welcome to relax on deck or lend a hand and chat with John about the seafaring life. We raise the sails and, unlike many

of these trips, do actually let the wind have its way with us. It was just lovely. John told us a great deal about the region and about the Bell family as we sailed past their fine Beinn Bhreagh estate high on the hill.

After an early lunch we all gather again and board our bus, glad that Nina has had a morning to relax after all her careful driving. We're off to the Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site, a drive of about 1½ hours. How lucky Canadians are to have so many fine Historic Sites, and Louisbourg must rate as one of the best. The site is, in fact, a reconstruction, the largest such historical site in North America. And yes it's vast – 12 acres, in fact, with over 50 buildings and 175 costumed staff to help interpret the history. (Paul had stressed that we should wear comfortable walking shoes and take a jacket as the sea breezes here can be

chilly.) The fortress shows life as it was lived here around 1714, as the French and British struggled for Empire, and we learn so much and have fun doing so. A fortress is a walled town containing civilians going about their daily lives, as opposed to a fort which is for military purposes only. Thus Louisbourg contains homes both humble and fine, vegetable and herb gardens, a pub and two restaurants serving food typical of the time. The costumed staff are so entertaining. We are challenged by one of the 'guards', have our ears bent by a slightly tipsy 'customer' in the pub and our costumed waitress in one of the two restaurants laments the hard life of a woman making her way in life alone at that time: "Oi'm waiting for a fine lad to come on one of them thar ships," she confides in us and we all enter into the spirit of the vignette and both tease and cheer her.

We're quite late back in Baddeck this evening, but not too late to enjoy a drink together in the Inverary Resort's friendly bar where there's often some live entertainment.



Day 6

Our tour is nearly over, but we have another full day of sightseeing ahead of us before we return to Halifax. Today we return to mainland Nova Scotia and travel to Pictou, where the first boatload of Scottish Highlanders arrived in 1773 aboard the *Hector* to make Pictou the 'Birthplace of New Scotland'. The Museum at the Hector Heritage Quay tells the inspiring – and often sad – story and the reconstruction of the ship itself, lying at an adjacent wharf, brings further respect – and pity – for the folks who endured this harrowing journey.

Our hunger pangs are appeased by lunch at the fine and popular Pictou Lodge Resort, located on the shores of Northumberland Strait, where we have more than enough time to enjoy our meal and take a coastal or woodland walk or browse in the resort's gift store. Then it's into our bus for the drive back to Halifax where we register once more at the Lord Nelson Hotel for our final night. It's nearly time to say "good-bye". We tell Nina what a wonderful driver she is and how we've enjoyed meeting her. We say the same to Paul, and thank him for all he's shared with us and tell him how we appreciate the fact that he seems to know every nice washroom in the province! I'm an independent traveller at heart, but have to admit this tour had been a great idea. I'd enjoyed the company of others and made friends and hadn't had to drive alone. The pace had been relaxed, so I too was able to relax and enjoy everything. And there is so much to enjoy in Nova Scotia: spectacular scenery, fine historical sites, fun musical interludes, outstanding art and crafts for sale, delicious food and local wines and, to be sure, a warm welcome everywhere.

An additional day

Yes, the tour is over, but I have planned an extra day in Halifax. I want to walk around the city at leisure, visit the art gallery and meet a friend for dinner. When you're in Halifax please don't miss the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and its highlight – the Maud Lewis Gallery, devoted to folk artist Maud Lewis and her tiny one-room house. This delightful Painted House was moved from its site in Marshalltown in 1984 and eventually restored and installed in the new home of the Art Gallery on Hollis Street in 1998. The gallery is a showcase for the creative talents of one of Canada's best-loved folk artists and a tribute to a life lived modestly but with joy and flair. See Maud's house and you'll be tempted to run home and paint your own doors and stairs with flowers, birds and butterflies! Try and time your visit to the Art Gallery around lunchtime, for there's an absolutely stunning little restaurant there, open for lunch and tea. It's bursting with colour and art. A lovely way to spend a few hours.

I cannot end without mentioning the Five Fishermen Restaurant, where I met my friend for my last evening in Nova Scotia. It has long (over 30 years) been a fixture on the Halifax dining scene and is an excellent restaurant with its smart bar on the ground floor and many rooms above. Once a school, mainly for poor children, the property has

links with Anna Leonowens (of *The King and I* fame) and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. If you arrive before 6:30 you can enjoy a three-course meal here – including their famous mussel and salad bar – for \$30. It was a memorable way to end my first, wonderful visit to Nova Scotia.

A few details ...

Ambassatours can be contacted at 1 800 565 7173 or www.atlantictours.com. The company offers tours throughout Atlantic Canada, so if you know Nova Scotia already you may like to consider them for a tour of New Brunswick, P.E.I., or Newfoundland and Labrador. Itineraries change every year and their offerings for 2006 are in their brochures and on-line. And although seniors make up the majority of the company's travellers, they are targeting younger people too with the inclusion of soft adventures such as sailing or kayaking in their itineraries. They also offer various tours of Halifax, including the Hop-on-Hop-off bus, the Trolley Tour and the pub 'crawl' described above.

For those who would like to spend more time in **Halifax** independently before or after a tour, here are some details to help you plan your stay ...

The Lord Nelson Hotel, tel: 1 800 565 2020, www.lordnelsonhotel.com

Halifax Citadel – admission \$10 or less, for information call 902 426 5080 or enter the words in your search engine and you will immediately reach the official site (quicker than entering their exceptionally long web address!)


Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, open year-round, high-season admission \$8 or less, tel: 902 424 7490, www.maritime.museum.gov.ns.ca

Pier 21 National History Site, admission \$8 or less, seasonally closed on some days, tel: 902 425 7770 or visit www.pier21.ca for information.

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, admission \$10 or less, tel: 902 424 5 2 8 0 , www.agns.gov.ns.ca.

Five Fishermen Restaurant, tel: 902 422 4421 for reservations.

The Nova Scotia International Tattoo, tel: 1 800 563 1114, www.nstatattoo.ca

Nova Scotia Tourism, tel: 1 800 565 0000, www.novascotia.com for excellent literature on all the province has to offer. 



Our trusty driver Nina

A MARITIME LEARNING EXPERIENCE ... courtesy of VIA RAIL!

story and photos by Ann Wallace



Our 'Learning Coordinator' Vincent Gonthier (left) and the lobster trap lesson (below)



We are already settled in our comfortable chairs in the Dome Car, glass of bubbly in hand, as we slip out of Montreal's train station. The city skyline recedes and we start to relax. We're on vacation, it's early evening, and, for the next 21 hours, as we travel to Halifax, we know we have absolutely nothing to do except enjoy the ride. We're on Via Rail's *Maritime learning experience* in *Easterly* class aboard the *Ocean* train. We've already been warmly greeted and shown our cabin, and now we've joined a handful of fellow travellers in the dome car, reserved for *Easterly* class passengers. Our 'Learning Coordinator' Vincent Gonthier has introduced himself. His title sounds serious, but from his twinkling smile (and the bubbly he is offering) we know he has fun on his mind.

The *Ocean* is Canada's longest-running, regularly-scheduled and 'named' passenger train in Canadian history. It has been in service since 1904, following the route of the Intercolonial Railway which, when it was completed in 1876, nine years after Confederation, connected New Brunswick and Nova Scotia with the rest of Canada. During both World Wars, the *Ocean* carried Canada's soldiers to their departure port of Halifax and brought the survivors home again. But it wasn't until last year that VIA introduced this special service call *Easterly* class.

Easterly class passengers enjoy exclusive use of the train's first-class, double-decker 'Park Car': a 55-year-old stainless steel 'retro' bar/dome car where there is 'up-high' seating to better enjoy the scenery, and a lower level bar car, both with panorama windows. It is in the latter that we gather throughout the trip to meet fellow travellers and to enjoy

our *Maritime learning experience*. This includes a tasting of Nova Scotia wines from Grand Pré and Gaspereau (wineries of which we make a note and that we will later visit), a lobster trap demonstration and something that confounds us all. It turns out to be a *boite d'eau*, a small model of the devices that the Acadians used to reclaim land from the sea. This knowledge will be much appreciated as we travel along the north shore of Nova Scotia in the coming days. Vincent is also very knowledgeable about our route and the history and culture of the Maritimes in general and is delighted to talk and answer questions at any time through the journey. As well as the wine that Vincent offers, the bar car always has tea, coffee and fresh fruit available. But we are happy sipping our wine and chatting with fellow passengers as the train slides along south of the St. Lawrence River and dinner approaches.

All meals are included in this trip: dinner, breakfast and lunch out of Montreal; lunch, dinner and then breakfast for those travelling from Halifax. There are two seatings for dinner and we have chosen the later 8 o'clock seating. The food is good and highlights some of the offerings of the Maritimes: mussel and shrimp antipasto, Nova Scotia halibut with lobster ravioli and a medley of Maritime vegetables, a lemon and raspberry tart to follow and a small choice of wine by the glass. Service is efficient and friendly, though the atmosphere of the dining car could be improved perhaps with more subtle lighting and a flower on each table. However, this service is constantly being up-graded so I'm sure these little touches will appear ere long ... perhaps this year. Before we retire for the night we glimpse the lights of Québec City in the distance.

There's no pretending our double deluxe cabin is spacious, but once our overnight bags are stowed and our bunk beds in place and each of us is out of the other's way, we discover smooth sheets, cozy duvets and comfortable pillows. There's a tiny (really tiny, but as small-sailboat sailors we're used to that) en suite washroom. The 'deluxe' category is the same configuration merely with the addition of a shower head mounted on the washroom wall. But towels are plentiful, there's soap, shampoo and bottled water, a copy of VIA's glossy magazine, a package of trail mix and a chocolate on each pillow. You can request your sleeping car attendant to bring you coffee, tea or juice to wake you in the morning. And how wonderful it was to stretch out and drift off to sleep as the miles rolled beneath us.

It's a good idea to get up at first light to enjoy the scenery of the Gaspé, New Brunswick and beyond: forests and farms, salt marshes and fields of wild flowers and farm animals. After our breakfast we take another coffee into the dome car to enjoy the passing scene and catch up with some of the newspapers that have been placed on board. The train makes frequent stops to embark and disembark passengers, with platform times clearly announced for those who wish to stretch their legs, have some fresh air or smoke.

This coming season, lunch will be included in the *Easterly* class service. Last year it wasn't, so we bought a

sandwich in the snack bar and enjoyed the fruit offered in our bar car. This was not due to thriftiness but due to the fact that our breakfast had been substantial and room was needed for our first dinner in Halifax.

And soon we were nearly there ... travelling through the suburbs of Halifax, then catching glimpses of that famous harbour and, finally, pulling in to the station. We gathered up our belongings and thanked Vincent for looking after us so well and teaching us so much. It had been a great way to spend 21 hours ... and we were *so* relaxed!

A few more points ...

The Montreal/Halifax *Ocean* service in fact uses two different trains: one with modern green 'Renaissance' cars, the other those old CP silver (stainless steel) 'HEP' (Head-End Power) cars. The latter are more spacious and comfortable. The Renaissance train offers only private double rooms with two beds and a washroom. The HEP train offers a wider choice of both double and single rooms and also semi-private berths for those who do not require the *Easterly* service. Out of Montreal the service connects efficiently with VIA trains from Toronto and other points on VIA's network. The all-inclusive, first-class *Easterly* Montreal/Halifax return adult fare is about \$906 while for seniors 60 or better it is about \$816. The fare also entitles passengers to use the Panorama Lounge in Montreal and a generous baggage allowance: you can check up to seven articles, four of them free. Oversized items such as bikes or kayaks can also be carried, though this should be checked at the time of reservation as the policy varies on different trains. The daily (except Tuesday) service starts 3 May and runs until 30 October. Other fares on the route (e.g. supersaver) are far less. For those who would like to visit Nova Scotia without flying or driving this train trip, combined with the aforementioned described coach tour, would be a great alternative.

While writing about this service, this is also a good time to mention that choosing to take the train is good for the environment for VIA Rail has already exceeded the Kyoto targets. At the UN Climate Change Convention held in Montreal last December, VIA Rail Canada told observers and delegates that it is proving itself as a sustainable passenger option for the future. At the Convention, Mike Greenberg, VIA's Vice-President, Environment, Procurement and Real Estate set out VIA's current and future environmental goals during a panel discussion organized by the Railway Association of Canada. "The Kyoto Protocol calls for a 6% reduction in GHGs below 1990 levels by 2012," Mr. Greenberg said. "Even though we are carrying more passengers, VIA has already cut GHGs by 11% since 1990, and cut fuel consumption per passenger km by 28%. The environmental benefits of passenger rail as an alternative to other, less efficient modes of travel, leads us to believe that the potential for the future is significant."

For more details on VIA Rail Canada's products, services and fares contact VIA Rail Canada at 1 888 842 7245 (888 VIA Rail) or visit www.viarail.ca. 

A NORTHERN ADVENTURE: Yukon and Alaska by Bus, Car, Train and Ferry

story and photos by Roy Matthews

“Oh, did you take a cruise?”

This is the inevitable response when I tell people my wife and I enjoyed a vacation in the Yukon and Alaska. But cruises are not our style; very enjoyable no doubt, but we're saving them for our dotage – and since we are only in our mid seventies that's a while off yet! Our trip was quite a bit different.

After a fair amount of research – using, above all, the excellent *Alaska-Yukon Handbook* by Deke Castleman and Don Pitcher – and reserving transport and accommodation by telephone from our home in Ottawa, we flew one fine Saturday in June to Edmonton. We spent the night at the Days Inn there, rising the following day in good time to have breakfast in the A&W at the bus station and at 8 o'clock board the Greyhound bus for destinations northwest. The weather was glorious and the farming country outside our window varied and full of interest, with the snow-capped Rockies always along the western horizon. It being Sunday, the bus was no more than a quarter full, so we were very comfortable.

In this agreeable fashion we rolled through Grande Prairie and on to Dawson Creek, the Alaska Highway's official starting point. There was a half-hour stop here, with ample opportunity to get some food, but we had brought snacks with us from Ottawa, so we went round the small but worthwhile museum. Soon we were off again, and at 5:30 our admirable vehicle reached Fort St. John, its terminus, where we checked into the Alexander Mackenzie Inn. Our dinner was a delicious one at a Chinese restaurant and on the walk back to the hotel we called in at a deli where a cheerful young woman made up some tasty sandwiches for the



A stop on the Alaska Highway. My wife seems anxious to get going again!

next day. By 10 o'clock we were in bed and asleep.

From Fort St. John onwards to Whitehorse there are only three buses a week, and there is therefore little alternative but to stay aboard for the whole distance, which is considerable. We departed Monday morning at 9:10 and travelled all that day and half the night, arriving in Whitehorse at 4:30 a.m. Tuesday. That's a long drive, and by the end of

it we had certainly had enough, yet it was a fascinating experience. It was a weekday. The bus was less than half full, the drivers (who changed at several stops along the way) and our fellow passengers (including, among others, some Japanese backpackers and a number of residents) were extremely congenial and the scenery grew increasingly spectacular as we headed up, via Fort Nelson and Watson Lake, toward our destination. Sometimes the driver would pull off the road – which, to our amazement, was paved the whole way – and say “This is a good spot for photos, folks, or some of you might want a smoke, so we'll stop here for ten minutes.” And occasionally we paused briefly at an isolated tiny settlement at which a package was delivered or picked up, demonstrating Greyhound's role as a lifeline in these remote regions.

It being mid-June, night never really came – just a sort of continuing dusk – but with the sky a little darker some animals ventured out of the woods: deer, a moose and some sheep which the driver told us were not Rocky Mountain but Stone Mountain Sheep, a slightly different species.

Finally the bus hauled into Whitehorse, a most welcome sight, and we staggered to the Family Hotel and bed, putting up a “do not disturb” sign. We slept till noon.

Whitehorse was our base for a day and a half, during

which we visited the MacBride Museum, the renowned paddle steamer *s.s. Klondike* and the spacious Yukon Government Building which has some interesting art and exhibits (and a cafeteria with nourishing food at reasonable prices). The weather turned drizzly and cool during our stay but we enjoyed it nonetheless, both the city itself and the people, with whom we easily struck up conversations; their lives tended to be quite a lot different from ours down south and many had intriguing stories to tell.

Perhaps the highlight of our time in Whitehorse was the show “Frantic Follies”, which takes place every night in one of the larger hotels. This is a hugely entertaining performance, strongly focused (like most things up there) on the Gold Rush era of the 1890’s, featuring an exceedingly talented and versatile group who double as comedians, conjurers, singers, dancers and banjo players, a woman who looks marvellous in Edwardian dresses and hats and who offers a series of golden oldies while vamping male members of the audience, and a bevy of high-kicking can-can girls. It was a fitting close to our short sojourn in the Yukon capital.

So now we were ready for the next stage in our travels, this time with a rental car. When we had made the reservation we were told it would probably be a mid-size sedan, but we were delighted to be presented with an almost-new Subaru Forester, ideal for the conditions we anticipated. Soon we were en route again, travelling farther up the Alaska Highway for 30 km and then bearing right onto the “Klondike Loop” toward Dawson City. In slightly overcast and blustery weather we drove, via Five Finger Rapids (worth a stop) and Stewart Crossing, some 520 km of mostly paved road to Dawson City, arriving in the early evening. After checking into the Triple J Hotel, right next door to Diamond Tooth Gertie’s Gambling Saloon, we set out for the Midnight Dome, which is a lookout, reached by a long, winding road up the mountain, that provides a most impressive virtually 360° panorama. In addition to an eagle’s perspective on this once-famous little town and the Yukon River running past it, one has a general overview of the surrounding landscape, which of course held what many thousands of determined men sweated and suffered to try to find: gold. The Klondike River, a tributary of the Yukon, and Bonanza Creek still bear the scars of dredging by the immense machines that ultimately replaced individual prospectors. It’s a remarkable glimpse of an extraordinary episode in Canadian history.

Returning from this aerie to ground level, we strolled the dirt streets and wooden sidewalks of “Dawson” (as everyone calls it), soaking up the atmosphere of the place. Among the notable buildings are the Palace Grand Theatre, Madame Tremblay’s Store, Billy Biggs’ Blacksmith Shop and the old Bank of Commerce, where Robert Service, bard of the North, worked as a teller. There’s also another paddle boat, the *s.s. Keno*. Parks Canada is doing an excellent job restoring these attractions without sprucing them up too much and spoiling things. Dawson City is unique, and we loved it. Everywhere we felt the presence of those ghosts,

the stampede lured here by the gold fever of 1898.

A good night’s sleep was followed by more exploring – once more in brilliant weather – and at last we tore ourselves away and drove to the ferry dock for transit across the river and the start of one of the most superb stretches of road on the globe: the aptly named Top of the World Highway. Almost exactly 100 km from Dawson to the Alaska border, this splendid drive winds along a high ridge with valleys each side beyond which are ranges of mountains – a magnificent vista on either hand. Again, the road is largely paved, with the odd rougher spot probably resulting from frost burst, and when we made the trip there was remarkably little traffic so that our many photo stops were no inconvenience to anyone. What a sensational journey.

At last we reached the lonely Canada-U.S. frontier, where a couple of bored but genial American Customs agents waved us through with minimal fuss. Just beyond was a somewhat dilapidated collection of huts bearing the name Boundary. There we found a pair of true north-country characters (seemingly the only inhabitants) running a small store and souvenir shop; they provided a late lunch of rather stale sandwiches while amusing us with tall tales. Afterwards we chatted outside with a group from Europe, heading in the opposite direction from us. They were almost in shock over the vastness of the landscape, virtually empty of people, they were passing through. Then we moved on to another tiny pinprick of a place rejoicing in the name of Chicken. Like every visitor no doubt, we asked the origin of this odd moniker and were told it was “named by a guy who couldn’t spell ptarmigan.” Well, it’s probably true, for certainly the locals seem to refer to all such birds as chickens.

After Chicken we drove quite a long way on gravel – but very well graded – to rejoin the Alaska Highway a short distance east of Tok (rhymes with smoke), where we spent the night at the Snowshoe Motel, enjoying conversations with a number of intrepid travellers over breakfast the next morning. And from Tok we pointed northwest once more, speeding over smooth pavement to an early afternoon arrival in Fairbanks, where we had a room booked in the Log Cabin B&B, right in town, operated by pleasant and jovial Al and Vern Fleming. As they and everyone else reminded us, this was 21st June, the summer solstice (and a toasty 24°C or 76° F), so naturally the locals were celebrating with enthusiasm. People were out in droves for a gigantic street party, with music and dancing, a parade of old cars, many fairground-style entertainments, stalls selling all manner of



There’s lots of atmosphere in Dawson



The White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad

items, lots of food and drink and a general feeling of fun.

Fairbanks struck us as having a good deal to commend it. Attractively situated on a river, it has a more settled and mature look than most Yukon and Alaska towns. We were thoroughly intrigued by the blooming vegetation of a location less than 200 km from the Arctic Circle, especially since some years before we had spent a week in an Inuit village on Ungava Bay in northern Quebec, a good 600 km further south than Fairbanks but above the tree line and with little growing except scrub and wildflowers. How different is the climate of an area benefiting from the Japan Current (a Pacific equivalent of the Gulf Stream). Thanks to its geographic good fortune, Fairbanks is the most northerly substantial city in North America.

We ended our day with a visit to Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge, where we saw some Sandhill Cranes, Brant's geese and other relatively rare birds before realizing that despite the continuing daylight it was close to midnight. Very strange. We hurried "home" to bed.

The following morning, still in warm and sunny weather, we went to the campus of the University of Alaska to see its museum devoted to geography, geology, climate and wildlife of the State; it definitely warrants a visit, both for its exhibits and for a gift shop selling various superior-quality souvenirs of this region. From there we drove in a new direction – south – again under cloudless skies, on a long and well paved road that skirts the eastern edge of Denali National park on its way to Anchorage.

It was today that we made our one serious mistake of the trip: we didn't go into Denali Park. Somehow the guide-books had put us off. They told us that cars had to be left at the park's entrance and a shuttle bus taken for almost 150 km into this 2.4 million hectare (6 million acre) wilderness, which made it all sound rather touristy and regimented. And the accommodations available, located outside the park on the road we were travelling, seemed mostly to be very expensive. We gathered we would be able to get views of

Mt. McKinley, the United States' highest peak (6,175 metres or 20,320 ft.) and the park's main focus, from spots further along our route, and there would be other opportunities to see animals similar to those in the park.

Well, none of this was really the case. From people we met later who had been there, we learned that the bus rides into the park were very well organized and took passengers right to the best points to see animals, often at close range. The vistas of Mt. McKinley and other peaks were unparalleled, not distant and hazy like the ones we got from the highway. While the hotels at the park entrance were certainly no bargain, there were some motels and cabins at less exorbitant rates (*see previous Travel Society Magazine articles! – Ed*). And, above all, far from being crowded and touristy, we were told Denali was a remarkable experience, an untamed and unspoiled chunk of primeval territory, as big as the State of Vermont, containing flora and fauna in abundance and variety one would find in few places in the world. We didn't see significant numbers of animals elsewhere in our journeyings, as we thought we would. In short, we ought to have gone to Denali National Park. If you, dear reader, travel to Alaska, be sure not to miss it.

But even without this extra bonus, our day driving south from Fairbanks was memorable indeed, in glorious weather; with stupendous scenery to our west all the time and light traffic. We covered a lot of road before stopping for the night in a little settlement, some 25 km off the main route, called Talkeetna, where our bed was at the motel/lodge whose name gives its location: Latitude 62. It is an area popular with hearty outdoor types, and there are flights over Denali Park from the little airport. We didn't take one, but from a hill nearby we got a good, if distant, view of Mt. McKinley in snow-covered majesty, so we were pleased about that.

The next day the weather deteriorated, leading us to abandon any idea of exploring the Denali area further, and we therefore pushed on to Anchorage, a largish city of rather strange appearance since it seems to possess no real centre, perhaps a result of the 1964 earthquake. We had lunch there and briefly visited the Museum of History and Art, which is good, before driving a short way back on the road we had come in on and then turning east for the first time. We ended our day in a town called Palmer, whose chief claim to fame is that 200 families were resettled here from the U.S. Midwest during the great depression of the 1930s, to establish a new agricultural colony. Evidently after some initial struggles most did well and the region is quite prosperous.

In improving weather we continued eastward from Palmer through more gorgeous scenery. Passing north of the Chugach Mountains, we had fine views of the great Matanuska Glacier. In late afternoon we reached Gleanallen, where we turned southward off the main road to find our stop for the next two nights at an atmospheric old clapboard hostelry called Copper Center Lodge after the isolated hamlet in which it sits. Aside from this lodge there are, in fact, only a couple of rather tumbledown buildings in Copper Center, but one of them is a bar with some washing

machines and dryers out back, so we were delighted to be able to do a big load of laundry, the first in some time. We also had a chat with the bar owner, who has written a book about the copper mining that gives its name to this locality – an activity which, he told us, has earned Alaska more revenue than gold ever did.

Following a pleasant night at the lodge – which is expensive but there's nowhere else to stay (or eat) for many miles around – we made an interesting detour down to Valdez, site of that devastating oil spill. The road there took us past Worthington Glacier, over Thompson pass and through Keystone Canyon, all very scenic, and Valdez proved a most agreeable surprise: no sign whatsoever of the awful pollution this spill had caused, but a bustling little fishing town with a number of restaurants and shops, its harbour filled with boats. We spent a couple of enjoyable hours there, which included a walk round a nature trail just beyond the port area (great close-up of a bald eagle) before returning to Copper Center for our second night.

Onward east and northeast again the following day amid more wonderful scenery, via Gakona and back to Tok and the Snowshoe Motel. Tok was the crossing point (with just 25 km travelled twice) in our figure-of-eight itinerary, the route from here being directly east along the Alaska Highway rather than over the Klondike Loop to the north as on the way out.

continent and much given to Spartan and rigorous exploration of it. When, from the comfort of our car, we later contemplated the thought of an Alaska to California bike ride, my wife and I agreed that such an adventure would certainly test a relationship. We hope the couple made it to their distant destination and were still speaking to each other when they got there.

Finally, after 3,474 km of driving in ten days, here we were in Whitehorse once more at the Family Hotel. Our grimy Subaru had been returned to the rental company (whose staff were totally unfazed by its filthy state) and we were ready for the next step, a ride down to Skagway on the renowned White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad, which we were greatly looking forward to.

Imagine our disappointment when the following day dawned overcast and wet, the visibility seriously reduced. This train trip had cost a lot, and it looked as if we wouldn't see very much.

Still, we were booked, so when the bus that was to take us to boarding point at Fraser, British Columbia, arrived at the hotel, we climbed on and hoped for the best. And our luck held, for by the time we reached Fraser the rain had ceased and the clouds were lifting. In came the train and soon we were rolling down the Skagway River valley, the line clinging to a ledge on the mountainside, winding through numerous short tunnels and over frail-looking

Imagine our disappointment when the following day dawned overcast and wet, the visibility seriously reduced. This train trip had cost a lot, and it looked as if we wouldn't see very much.

Unfortunately we encountered a lot of rain over the next two days, so we saw relatively little of the St. Elias Mountains and magnificent Kluane National Park, in which stands Canada's highest peak, Mt. Logan (5,950 metres or 19,570 ft.). We encountered stretches of road that were muddy with construction in this area, but nevertheless we made steady, if fairly slow progress, crossing again into Canada and ending up for the night at the Talbot Arm Motel in Destruction Bay, whose dramatic name derives from a huge wind storm that swept across nearby Lake Kluane in 1942.

We were now on the last leg of our journey back to Whitehorse, which happily we were able to cover in gradually improving weather. In Hained Junction, where we stopped for lunch, the attraction is Our Lady of the Wake Church, built by a Catholic priest in 1954 using an old Quonset hut, with a wooden entrance added in front and a spire and bell at the rear.

It was in this section of the road that we met a young German couple at a service station shortly after one of the lengthy construction mud-baths. Incredibly, they were cycling, and of course we asked them where they were going by this strenuous means of locomotion. The astonishing reply was "from Anchorage to San Francisco!" Clearly, many Europeans are fascinated by the wilderness of this

bridges, the views unbelievably spectacular. Before long the sun came out and vistas became even more stunning, with glimpses of the storied Trail of '98, up which those gold-hungry prospectors had clambered, carrying all their provisions, from Skagway to Dawson City. This short (45 km or 28 miles) but tortuous descent from interior mountains to the sea has to be one of the most exciting train rides on the planet.

Skagway was quite an adjustment, as we were suddenly among crowds of people, tourists off the cruise ships that dock here all summer long to give their passengers a taste of the Alaska experience. It is bizarre to look down the main street of what is still, beneath the veneer of travel-poster artifice, a small pioneer town, and see the looming prow of the massive Holland-America liner *Maasdam*. But despite the hordes this remains an attractive place, with a lively atmosphere and lots to see: the Mascot Saloon; Corrington's Museum of Alaskan History; the Golden North Hotel; and the National Park Service Visitor Center. This last has a first-rate half-hour narrated "moving slide show" providing a graphic impression of the gold-rush madness, and it's not to be missed.

Our accommodation in Skagway was the pricey but extremely comfortable Sgt. Preston Lodge, and we were almost sorry to leave only 24 hours after our arrival in order

to embark on the last phase of our eventful vacation. However the prospect of that final lap was as appealing as anything we had done so far: a voyage on the *m.v. Columbia* of the Alaska Marine Highway (as this ferry service is called) down the Inside Passage to Bellingham, Washington.

Enough has been written about this magnificent sheltered ocean route – though generally as travelled by the great cruise ships – that I don't need to add many details. Suffice it to say that the ferry gives you most of what the cruise companies offer at a substantially lower price. We decided to lash out and have a double cabin, which provides quite a bit more space, and on the outside of the vessel so as to have views from our window all the time. The cost of the 3½ day, 4-night journey was approximately C\$1,500 for the two of us, and worth every penny. As the *Columbia* is much smaller than the cruise monsters – there were about 250 passengers on our trip – service is informal and friendly, and one readily becomes acquainted with other travellers. The ship is well appointed, spotlessly maintained and efficiently run. There are open and enclosed decks with plenty of seats for everyone, a nice dining room serving good food, plus a cheaper cafeteria, and various other facilities for one's comfort and convenience.

The *Columbia* stops at several ports in the Alaska panhandle: Juneau, Sitka, Petersburg, Wrangell and Ketchikan, but Sitka and Ketchikan are really the only ones where passengers can go ashore as the others are reached at night or rather early in the morning. Fortunately both are most interesting towns.

Sitka, once known as New Archangel, was the capital of Russian America from 1799 to 1867, and there are evidences of that history in the distinctive architecture of St. Michael's Cathedral, mother church for all of Alaska's 20,000 Russian Orthodox members. The Russian Bishop's House is worth a visit, and Castle Hill offers a fine view over the whole area. The dock at Ketchikan is quite a distance from the town, but an enterprising entrepreneur has acquired two double-decker British buses, which offer transport to the centre for a modest sum, the drivers giving copious light-hearted information on local attractions as they go. During the couple of hours available for exploration we enjoyed walking around this picturesque spot, with its cable car to Cape Fox Lodge, long flights of steps accessing houses perched on the hilly terrain and, above all, the much photographed quaint district of Creek Street, formerly a red-light quarter, whose wooden houses stand on stilts in the river that runs through town.

From Ketchikan on we ran down the B.C. coast without stopping, sleeping well at night, and during the day admiring the beautiful passing landscape, which sometimes was a little way off but at others right by the ship as it squeezed through remarkably narrow channels between the many islands scattered along these shores. More than once we saw whales breaching, though never very close. The weather was generally fine, occasionally overcast but dry. We made friends, ate too much and thought perhaps a cruise might not be so bad after all!

Eventually our temporary home sailed into the strait that separates the mainland from Vancouver Island. Substantial communities were now increasingly visible and more marine traffic appeared. The voyage was almost over.

Our last morning dawned bright and sunny, and at 8:00 precisely the *Columbia* slid into dock at Bellingham. Wishing our new friends goodbye we walked across the pier to the desk of the Bellingham-Victoria ferry and bought two one-way tickets. Shortly after 9:00 a.m. we boarded this much smaller and very speedy craft, and at about noon were greeted by our son-in-law as we tied up by Victoria's Inner Harbour. The rest of our vacation was spent with members of our family who live in the Victoria area., before we flew back to Ottawa. This had been a fabulous adventure that we strongly recommend to others.

Some details and approximate cost (in Canadian dollars*) for two people:

Bus Edmonton-Whitehorse (one senior, one companion): \$300.

Car rental from Whitehorse, National, 10 days: \$340, gasoline: \$220.

White Pass & Yukon Railroad, Whitehorse-Skagway:\$260, tel: 1 800 343 7373, www.travelalaska.net/railtour/whitepass.html

Alaska Marine Highway Skagway-Bellingham: \$1,500, tel: 1 800 642 0066, www.ferrytravel.com/ and other sites.

Ferry Bellingham-Victoria: \$120.

Days Inn, Edmonton: \$100, tel: 1 800 329 7466.

Alexander Mackenzie Inn, Fort St. John: \$65, tel: 250 785 8364.

Family Hotel, Whitehorse: \$90 per night (we stayed four), tel: 867 668 5558.

Triple J Hotel, Dawson City: \$85, 1 800 661 0405.

Snowshoe Motel, Tok: \$100 per night (we stayed there twice), tel: 907 883 4511.

Log Cabin B&B (Al & Vern Fleming), Fairbanks: \$100, tel: 907 452 1100.

Latitude 62, Talkeetna: \$100, tel: 907 733 2262.

Pioneer Motel, Palmer: \$100, tel: 907 745 3425.

Copper Center Lodge, Copper Center: \$175 per night (we stayed two), tel: 907 822 3245.


Talbot Arm Motel, Destruction Bay: \$100, tel: 867 841 4461.

Sgt. Preston Lodge, Skagway: \$150, tel: 907 983 2521.

"Frantic Follies", Whitehorse: \$40

Food: about \$700

Other expenses: about \$600

Plus, of course, any **airfares** you may need. Our route was Ottawa/Edmonton, Victoria/Ottawa. Our total cost (omitting our stay in Victoria) was just over \$7,000. *We made this trip in 2003 and have converted into Canadian dollars, where necessary, at the rates prevailing at the time. All taxes etc., included. 

In our last issue we brought you reassurances from cruise-line officials regarding safety and security following the pirate attack on a liner off the coast of Somalia. Now here are some other issues to consider.

CRUISES ... the not-so-good news

by Ann Wallace

It is estimated that well over eleven million people will enjoy a cruise of some sort this year, around ten million of them from North America. Many cruise ships are enormous – the size of a small town – so given the size and the number of passengers involved it's only to be expected that problems will occur from time to time, as in any 'town'. However, when I started investigating on-line I must admit I was surprised at the number of problems – some of them extremely serious ones – that I discovered.

Surprising indeed it is to find a website called www.CruiseRape.com – a forum dedicated to the victims of rape and sexual assault on cruise liners and to learn that this seems to be quite a common occurrence. I then discovered that through the summer of 2005, the U.S. documentary series *A Current Affair* had run a sequence of programmes with titles such as "Crime on the High Seas", "Crime on Cruise Ships", "Cruise Ship Rape" and "Missing Cruise Passenger George Smith".

More recently (December 2005), my travel wire news service brought the story of Kendall Carver, who had "walked out of a congressional hearing in the States, relieved that after months of waging a one-family battle to wring information from a cruise line about his daughter's disappearance, he now knew of several other families suffering similar tragedies." These bereaved folk have now formed a group (and are working on setting up a web site) to draw attention to crimes committed aboard cruise liners. George Smith's name came up again here (he had disappeared on his honeymoon cruise) and a maritime lawyer – Brett Rifkind – who is representing the Smith family will provide counsel to the whole group.

Then on the eve of this congressional hearing, the Canadian media reported a 59-year-old woman – Jill Begora – from St. Catharines, ON, had been reported missing from a ship. *The Globe and Mail* concluded its report on this incident by quoting Lawyer Rifkind who said that disappearances at sea are "happening way too often". A *Times* of London report on 14 December (www.timesonline.co.uk) mentions Mr Smith, Ms Begora and a number of other disappearances, together with some of the law suits that have been filed against various cruise lines. Of course, some of these disappearances may not be related to crimes, but where there are reports of "thuds", "bloodstains" and "a bloody handprint [that] was also found but soon after the ship docked it was cleaned and painted over" one can only surmise that a crime took place.

While not nearly so serious, of course, it seems that theft is also an issue. Passengers should read the small print of their chosen cruise line carefully and pack valuables such as jewellery accordingly as most tickets limit the line's liability for theft. It seems that this can be as low as \$100 for items left in the cabin and only \$500 if the valuables go missing from a safety deposit box, even if such box is in the purser's office.

Although the FBI keeps crime statistics, the agency admitted during the December congressional hearing that it has no way of knowing whether their data is complete because the cruise lines are under no legal obligation to report crimes and only do so voluntarily. In international waters, who is in charge of any investigation is open to question and can become a legal minefield. It has even been alleged that some lines, in order to avoid adverse publicity, help those accused avoid prosecution by assisting them in leaving a jurisdiction such as the U.S.

Of course most companies take security on board seriously. From an on-line article entitled "Cruise Control" (www.securitymanagement.com/library/000812.html) I learned that Royal Caribbean's security personnel are usually former British Navy or Merchant Marine officers. Renaissance Cruises also selects security employees from the British Navy with the further specification that they have served as master of arms aboard a war ship. They in turn oversee a team of security watchmen composed of former world-renowned British Gurkha Regiment soldiers from Nepal who must have had a minimum of 15 years' military experience as well as additional training pertinent to cruise-line security. Cruise lines and the security forces that protect them must, in fact, meet regulations laid down by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a specialized agency of the United Nations based in London, England (www.imo.org). Their mandate is 'Safe, Secure and Efficient Shipping on Clean Oceans' and Canada, who joined in 1948, was one of the first members, along with Great Britain and the U.S. In addition, in 1997, Canada issued its own set of regulations for all cruise lines visiting ports here. These regulations include security requirements covering both the cruise lines and the port authorities. Britain and the U.S. also have their own security regulations. (It is, however, perplexing to read in the "Cruise Control" article that "a typical cruise line will have only a few stowaways each year.") And although all these regulations exist, it is important to remember that, although there may be plenty of good security personnel, there are no law

enforcement officials beyond the legal powers invested in the Captain. Bear in mind, too, that if you choose a ship that operates under a 'flag of convenience' (usually the Bahamas, Liberia or Panama) this has probably been done to avoid other legal systems, labour laws and taxes.

Ah yes, labour laws. Another enormous subject. Suffice to say here that, while many passengers merely want an enjoyable vacation, others may be interested to enquire how the staff and crew on their ship (who are so often from third-world countries) are treated, though truthful answers may not always be forthcoming due to fear of reprisals. There are reports of long hours, terribly low wages, dangerous jobs without safety equipment, poor food, cramped quarters, no recreational (or outside) space and the constant threat of dismissal if anyone complains. For more on this subject read the article by Buddy Nevins of Florida's *Sun-Sentinel* newspaper. It's posted on the website of Florida maritime attorneys Lipcon, Margulies & Alsina at www.lipcon.com/news_article3.shtml. The article is headed "Cruise liners no luxury for crew as long hours, low wages prevail."

I next turned my attention to health on board and found a 24-page report by the Public Health Agency of Canada entitled "Statement on Cruise Ship Travel" (www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html and enter Cruise Ship Travel in the 'Search' field). Obviously the 24 pages of this report would fill this magazine, so I urge you to check it out for yourself. But we do have room for some interesting quotes: "Cruises pose a potentially important public health challenge. ... Because many crew members come from the developing world, they are at a greater risk of harbouring infections such as tuberculosis and Hepatitis B." And, perhaps most alarming of all: "No international body regulates the practice of medicine at sea, and the quality of care varies widely. ... Consensus-based guidelines for the practice of medicine on cruise liners exist, but their implementation depends upon each individual cruise line." Not only are there no international standards governing medical care, there are apparently no regulations covering medical facilities or equipment.

If you are the victim of harassment, a crime, an accident or suspected medical malpractice, again read the small print and act accordingly, strictly observing the time limits set for officially reporting such incidents. On board, report incidents immediately, keep notes and take photographs if relevant, keep copies of all documents relating to your case/claim etc., and don't leave the ship without your ship-board medical records.

Health of passengers leads to another issue ... health of the planet. Here's an example of an environmental infringement. In July 2002 Norwegian Cruise Line Ltd., one of the world's largest lines, signed a plea agreement with the United States. To the company's credit, they had acknowledged a felony violation of the Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships and agreed to pay a \$1 million criminal fine after turning itself in and cooperating with prosecutors. Apparently NCL discovered the violations themselves during an environmental audit ordered by new owners in April 2000. The

cruise line's environmental consultant performing the audit had actually witnessed an NCL engineer aboard the *s.s. Norway* in the act of circumventing the ship's oil water separator, a required pollution prevention device. Apparently ship's officers deliberately used fresh water to trick the device designed to detect and limit overboard discharges. NCL promptly reported the offense to the government, but only after a whistle-blower had already made allegations to the Environmental Protection Agency. The cruise line pledged its full cooperation with the United States in its ongoing investigation of potentially culpable individuals, turned over its internal investigation and fired or accepted resignations from seven senior shore-side officials. But in a Joint Factual Statement and the plea agreement filed with the Court, NCL admitted that it engaged in a practice of systematically lying to the United States Coast Guard over a period of years regarding the discharge of oil-contaminated bilge waste from the *s.s. Norway* and at least one other ship. The false statements were contained in the ship's Oil Record Books, a required log in which overboard discharges must be recorded. The intentional falsification of log books required to be carried by ships and regularly inspected by the Coast Guard was designed to conceal that oil contaminated bilge waste was being dumped overboard. The deliberate failure to maintain an accurate Oil Record Book violates the Act to Prevent Pollution from Ships, a law which implements an international environmental treaty known as the MARPOL Protocol.

"NCL deserves considerable credit for its early disclosure of violations, before the government's investigation became manifest and without any promise of leniency," said Tom Sansonetti, Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Environment & Natural Resources Division at the time. "However, the sad fact remains that the practice of dumping waste oil and maintaining false log books has proved to be commonplace in the maritime and cruise ship industry. Our oceans are not dumping grounds and lying to the U.S. Coast Guard will be vigorously prosecuted."

Many years ago I was fortunate enough to spend some time small-sailboat cruising amongst some of the 700 Islands of the Bahamas, many of them completely deserted. Yet, on disembarking and walking their idyllic beaches, it was distressing to find them, more often than not, littered with garbage. And I don't mean the occasional plastic bag. I mean great industrial size tubs or bottles that once contained such things as mayonnaise (I learned that Hellman's is a popular choice!) or cleaning fluids. When back on inhabited islands, I asked the locals where such pollution had come from. They'd shrug and simply say "cruise ships".

As we said at the outset, millions of travellers enjoy cruises every year and, considering the numbers, problems are relatively few. However, it doesn't hurt to be aware, to look out for each other, to be cognisant of troubles related to alcohol and illegal drugs (which are often smuggled on passenger ships), to safeguard your valuables, to raise your voice if things seem amiss and to keep an eye out for our planet. Happy sailing everyone! 🍷

CANADA

● **Fairholme Manor**, a restored Victorian/Italianate mansion located in **Rockland, Victoria, BC**, has won the accolade 'Canada's Bed & Breakfast of the Year' in the American *Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report 2006*. Fairholme offers five suites, a quiet park-like setting next door to BC's Government House and full breakfast. Rates are from C\$110 - \$325 dbl. depending on the season. Check it out at www.fairholmemanor.com or call 1 877 511 3322.

● Here at TS we do try not to be **Toronto-centric**. However, there's no doubt that at the moment we are excited by all that's happening here. Our new **Opera House** has taken shape and will open later this year and the **Art Gallery of Ontario** is open and busy, but much of it is mysteriously shrouded as it undergoes massive renovations. The fine **Soulpepper Theatre** has become a year-round event and has moved into its new, permanent location in the **Distillery District**. A call to 416 866 8666 or visit www.soulpepper.ca and play to catch a play if you're near Toronto or plan to visit soon. Our other big news is the opening on Boxing Day of 10 new and renovated galleries at the **Royal Ontario Museum**. The new spaces and



The new grand entrance hall at ROM

exhibits are stunning and I do urge you not to miss a visit to the ROM when your travels bring you to Toronto. Don't let the construction surrounding the old building put you off ... it doesn't affect the interior and it's interesting to catch a glimpse of the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal under construction. New galleries include those devoted to China, Japan, Korea and Canada's First Peoples while all year (until 28 January next year) there's a lovely exhibition called *Déco Lalique*: over 60 pieces designed by the famed French glass designer René Lalique. ROM information can be obtained from 416 586 8000, www.rom.on.ca

● **Ontario's Prince Edward County**, less than two hours' drive from Toronto, is an (almost) undiscovered gem, though it does offer many B&B's and fine inns so we know it is enjoyed by many. And every spring thousands of migrating birds and hundreds of species pause on the county's southern shore after crossing Lake Ontario and before heading for more northerly breeding grounds. If you love the birds, plan to visit some time between 13 and 22 May for the County's Spring Birding Festival. For more infor-

mation visit www.thecounty.ca/birding or call 1 866 845 6644. And if history, culture and architecture are your interests, there's a County programme for you. On 3 & 4 June the region will be hosting their first Doors Open Prince Edward County event, when over 23 unique sites will open their doors free to the public for guided and self-guided tours. For information visit www.doorsopenontario.on.ca or call the above number.

CROATIA

We're proud we ran some articles on Croatia in our pages last year because, according to a recently survey of the U.S. Travel Association, "the hottest new tourist destination for 2006 is Croatia!" *National Geographic Adventure* magazine also awarded Croatia "The Best Destination" this year, while it was proclaimed No. 1 by the Lonely Planet guides last year. www.croatia.hr is the official tourism website, while www.croatiatraveller.com (created by Jeanne Oliver, author of the Lonely Planet guide to Croatia) is also very helpful. Don't leave it too long to go ... sounds as though it may soon get very busy.

FRANCE

Looking for luxury in Paris? A stay at the Ambassador Hotel isn't normally for the budget conscious, but a new offer makes for considerable savings if gallery-visiting is high on your itinerary there. That's because a 3-day package at the hotel will bring you 2 Paris Museum Cards for free admission to over 70 museums and monuments in the city, together with 2 tickets for a Seine cruise and a 10% discount card for shopping at the Galeries Lafayette department. The package cost is US\$725 for 3 nights' accommodation in a double superior room and daily breakfast. This offer, the hotel claims, amounts to savings of over 40% over the normal room rate. Available until the end of 2006, details can be found at www.concorde-hotels.com, click on "Special Offers".

IRELAND

Isn't it nice when an overseas tourist organization makes a brochure especially for Canadians? That's what Ireland has been doing for a number of years now, and very handsome and helpful they always are, with full-colour photographs, maps, suggested itineraries, festival and events lists, ancestor-tracing help, information on getting to Ireland and more. This year, the beautiful image on the front cover of Ross Castle in Co. Kerry is alone enough to make you want to visit. Both the north and south of Ireland are now promoted by one tourism board, so the publication makes planning a visit even easier. For your copy of *Your very own Ireland Vacation Planner 2006* call 1 800 223 6470 or e-mail info.ca@tourismireland.com. And their website is www.tourismireland.com.

China ... Yangtze Spectacular

\$4,145 FOR 18 DAYS!

Departing:
19 April, 6 September, 11 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!

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Vancouver	\$4,145 pp/dbl
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Toronto	\$4,590 pp/dbl
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Halifax/Quebec City/London	\$4,850 pp/dbl
St. John's	\$4,850 pp/dbl
Single supplement \$1,195 (Sharing can be arranged.)	
Taxes and visas extra.	

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

ADD-ON HONG KONG

4 days/3 nights	\$1,288 pp/dbl
Single supplement	\$544

ADD-ON BANGKOK

4 days/3 nights	\$1,185 pp/dbl
Single supplement	\$350

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4 days/3 nights	\$1,375 pp/dbl
Single supplement	\$299

ADD-ON KYOTO

4 days/3 nights	\$1,450 pp/dbl
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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
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- Special banquets in Hangzhou, Xi'an and Beijing
- Evening cultural shows
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- English-speaking local guides
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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.



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14 days departing February, March, April, May, September, October & November 2006.

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PRICES INCLUDE AIR: Toronto \$5,895.00 pp/dbl

prices are available from all major cities

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Your tour includes:

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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	\$5,995.00 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$6,175.00 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$6,175.00 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$6,395.00 pp/dbl
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Single supplement \$455 (Sharing can be arranged.) **Prices are subject to confirmation**

Your tour includes:

- Round trip transatlantic flights with Air Canada/Lufthansa/British Airway
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- 40 seat air conditioned luxury bus
- Admission to all sites
- An English-speaking guide/director and a Travel Society host
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**A New
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India's Golden Triangle

21 days departing 11 March & 9 October 2006

**No charge
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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 all the highlights and more, including camel and elephant rides ... guaranteed to give wonderful photographs! You'll start your tour in Mumbai (once known as Bombay) where you'll visit Dhobi Ghat, the Gateway of India, Marine Drive, the Hanging Gardens, Jain Temple and the Prince of Wales Museum. There will be free time also, perhaps for a little shopping, before you fly to Udaipur, home of the Maharna City Palace, the Jagdish Temple, Garden of Maidens and so many other sites. And here you'll dine in the spectacular 250-year-old Lake Palace that seems to float on an island on Lake Pichola.

A drive to Mount Abu, a beautiful hill resort, comes next, followed by fabled Ranakpur, home of the beautiful Ranakpur Temples. Ancient Jodhpur is next on the itinerary, then it's on to the pilgrimage city of Pushkar with its temple dedicated to Lord Brahma. It's in Pushkar that, if you wish, you will take a camel ride into the sand dunes. The famous Pink City - Jaipur - the capital of Rajasthan comes next and you will spend two nights there, with days full of exciting sightseeing and an excursion to the Amber Fort by elephant. Jaipur is also famous for its bazaar full of wonderful gifts ... and of course you'll spend time there.

Agra is the home of the Taj Mahal and so, of course, it's on

PRICES INCLUDING AIR departing:

	11th March	9th October
Vancouver	\$6,094 pp/dbl	\$6,296 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$6,094 pp/dbl	\$6,296 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$6,094 pp/dbl	\$6,296 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$5,825 pp/dbl	\$6,055 pp/dbl
Ottawa	\$5,885 pp/dbl	\$6,154 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$5,885 pp/dbl	\$6,154 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$6,094 pp/dbl	\$6,296 pp/dbl
Single Supp	\$1,430	\$1,480

**Fully
Escorted**

our itinerary too. You'll have an early night and leave before dawn to watch the beautiful Taj revealed by the rising sun. Then it's on to Jhansi by the famous Shatabdi Express train - an incredible excursion. You'll be met by your bus there and driven on to Khajuraho, site of the World Heritage Temples - the eternal images of love. Varansi has been requested by many of our members and we've arranged for this destination to come next. You'll never forget your early-morning boat ride on the River Ganges here, nor the narrow by-lanes of this, one of the most ancient living cities. Your last destination is Delhi, reached by air to allow for plenty of time to see the sights and do some last-minute shopping.

Throughout this trip you will stay in first-class hotels; travel in de luxe 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! Twenty-one days! A life-time time of memories! Come with The Travel Society and enjoy the best of Rajasthan with fellow members!



Your tour includes:

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Air-inclusive prices:

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- 8 nights first class accommodation
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- Meals as per the itinerary
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a 19-day tour at an incredible price ...

Spectacular

South Africa

*No charge
London stopover*

Departure: 21 September 2006 & February & September 2007

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-Toe train from Knysna to George. You'll visit the Addo Elephant National Park and traverse the Little Karoo Desert – flanked by great mountain ranges – to see the Cango Caves. You'll travel in a luxury air-conditioned coach, you'll stay in lovely properties ranging from good hotels to charming chalets, you'll enjoy a wide variety of entertainment and you'll enjoy South Africa's delicious cuisine and wines and you'll be escorted all the way by Satour-accredited guides. Here at The Travel Society we know South Africa well ... and we can't imagine a more comprehensive, in-depth and fascinating tour of South Africa.

PRICES INCLUDING AIR AND TAXES departing from:

Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa \$7,315 pp/dbl

Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Halifax \$7,675 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$790.00 (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

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

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