

The Travel Society

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Magazine



Libya – Sea, Sand and History
Adventures in Peru
A Journey to Haida Gwaii

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June 2006

Vol. 24, No. 5

contents

Readers' Letters

Algarve Alternative	3
A Few More Words On London	5
Saving on Phone Calls	5
Travelling with Diabetic Supplies	5

Destinations

Libya – Sea, Sand and History	6
Adventures in Peru	11
A Journey to Haida Gwaii	16

News

From the Bookshelf	18
Tour Talk	19



The Fort Museum,
Tripoli

editor's letter ...

While this magazine is all about *us* travelling, it's interesting to know about others visiting Canada (or not!). Every year, in a different Canadian city, the Canadian Tourism Commission hosts a large marketplace – called **Rendez-vous Canada** – when Canadian tourism suppliers meet with tour operators from around the world. This spring, in Toronto, British branding expert Simon Anholt, whose Nation Brands Index (NBI) ranks brand awareness of countries around the world, was one of the keynote speakers. He told his audience that Canada is one of the best brands in the world, ranking third overall behind only the United Kingdom and Switzerland. Canada came first in the survey's 'Investment', 'Tourism' and 'People' categories, which led Anholt to call Canada "the most welcoming and hospitable country on the globe". Other categories of "competence" included 'Immigration' and 'Exports', while 'Culture and Heritage' provided Canada's lowest score – 14th out of 35 – which alone prevented it from achieving an even higher rank than third overall.

Unfortunately our third place rank in perceptions does not translate into third place tourist arrivals. Tourism in Canada is worth US\$1.1 trillion, which translates to eighth highest in the survey. "What are people waiting for?" one might ask. At last year's **Rendez-vous Canada**, held in Saskatoon, Canada's new slogan **Canada – Keep Exploring** was unveiled with great fanfare. Let's hope that our new advertisements under that phrase in international market are a success and that our third place 'awareness' position translates into third place in real figures.

Three great adventures almost fill our pages this month: one in North Africa, one in South America and one on our own West Coast. I hope you enjoy. Have a great June and *bon voyage* in your travels, be they near or far.



As summer arrives in Canada, the last thing we want to think about is winter. On the other hand, planning for a long getaway in our next cold season isn't such a bad way to while away a few hours. So here's some information on Portugal, and next month we'll bring you a couple of long-stay suggestions for the South of France.

Algarve Alternative

Portugal's Algarve is a well-known destination for winter-weary Canadians. It is not as tropical and warm as the Caribbean countries, but it offers a pleasant temperate winter, a low crime rate, affordable cost of living and stable economy. Canadian drivers do not need extra documentation and the road system is good. There are a number of travel companies who offer package tours that include airfare, hotel and the option of a car. The destinations are often large hotels in busy tourist areas, near golf courses, casinos and shopping. Local tours may be included. My husband and I prefer to research our chosen destinations using friends' suggestions, travel books and the internet. For us, this is part of the adventure. Our reading of choice this year is a very comprehensive *Rough Guide to the Algarve* (pub. 2002). It includes information on destinations, accommodations, restaurants and all tourist needs.

When we visited Portugal two years ago, we rented a house in a small town, Raposeira, near Cape St Vincent, the most westerly tip of Portugal. With our rented car we travelled short distances to lesser-known beaches and villages along the coast. The downside of the house was its size – it was just too big for two people. But deciding the Algarve was certainly worth another visit, and a longer stay, we rented an apartment in a hotel for three weeks

this winter past. On our previous trip we had established the place we wanted to stay and were able to book it on the internet. We find March is a good month to travel as it is the "shoulder season" with better temperatures than earlier in the year and between winter Snowbirds and Easter vacation rates.

The Hotel Algar, in the small town of Armacao de Pera, www.hotel-algar.com, has a prime beachfront location. All of its suites have oceanfront balconies overlooking a 2 km expanse of beach. The hotel is about 20 years old and run by a knowledgeable and friendly staff, all of whom have some English. The accommodation is clean, neat and well set up. The suites include a bedroom with balcony facing the ocean, bathroom, living room area with TV and a well-equipped kitchen with



The view from our balcony (Mallory)

microwave, stove and fridge. There is daily maid service and change of linens on a regular basis. An overnight stay in March would cost €55 (approx. C\$78.45), but a stay of 21 or more nights brought this figure down to €32 (about C\$45.65) per night. This includes all taxes.

The town of Armacao de Pera lies about 15 km west of Albufeira. It is showing signs of expansion as large complexes and apartment blocks are constructed to serve visitors, both Portuguese and foreign tourists who enjoy the renowned beach here. In winter months the population is about 4,000, a figure which jumps dramatically in the summer. The Hotel Algar stands in the midsection of the town. To the west are the more modern and larger establishments, including the

pricey and upscale Hotel Garbe. To the east lies a traditional fishing village. This is the area we chose to frequent when we were not walking the beach or following the paths on the neighbouring cliffs. A traditional fishing community, the lifestyle in this area manages to maintain its original rhythms.

Close to the hotel are several mini-markets, bakeries, shops and restaurants. Every day local vendors hold a market of fresh produce. Alongside this, the fishermen display a wealth of seafood, products of their daily catch. On Saturdays the market expands to include regional farmers who bring in their produce, which include honey, figs, almonds, olives, herbs, flowers and baked goods which combine to create a riot of colour and tempting aromas!

On our daily walk we would often pass the fishermen's beach where the men launch their boats and bring in the daily catch. The restaurants in this older, more authentic area of town were our favourites. Portuguese food is delicious and wherever we went we had no trouble finding fresh

and appealing dishes to suit all tastes. Tourist menus, often advertised, were inexpensive three-course meals complete with a carafe of wine. I highly recommend Estrela do Mar, right on the beach; an inexpensive spot frequented by tourists and locals alike. Next door, Pedro's Café on the beach has light lunches and a wonderful view. O Serol is a dining experience for fish lovers. One chooses fish or seafood from the display counter; it is then weighed and cooked especially for you. The place is lively with patrons well known to the staff and diners enjoying their food.

We had arranged for a rental car for one week in order to travel beyond Armacao. I had made these arrangements from Canada using Carjet, www.carjet.co.uk, a company we had

used before. This gave us the assurance that a car would be available when we wanted it. On arriving in Armacao, however, I found prices at local travel agencies were much the same as I had paid in advance and cars were readily available. Small cars are best for the narrow and sometimes cobbled streets. We had a Nissan Micra which worked very well for us. We have all heard how expensive gas is in Europe and, indeed, it is. However, we were driving a small car with standard transmission and our cost was not dissimilar to what we would pay for 100 km of travel in Canada with a North American car. (*Ed's tip: Choose a diesel if you can. European diesels are very efficient and give good and economical performance, thus saving you even more.*)

We did not travel far from Armacao but would highly recommend a visit to the Moorish castle in Silves. This area was an important port for the Phoenicians and the Romans and has a wonderful museum as well as an old cork factory. Another day we took a trip into the Serra de Monchique (mountains) to see the market town of the same name and the ancient Roman spa at Caldas

de Monchique, now a popular resort with thermal baths. This area boasts several shops with local crafts and products such as eucalyptus oil not often seen elsewhere. A lesser known destination is Milreu where a large Roman ruin has recently been excavated. This is just outside the town of Estoi, north of Faro. Not only is the site open and accessible but a museum here outlines the interesting history of the area.

Our day trips also included several small beach destinations and market towns. Close to Armacao is the village of Porches. This spot is well known for the quality of its majolica hand-painted pottery. Shops abound and it is difficult to keep one's shopping down to items that can safely travel home in flight baggage. While in this tiny village we discovered a gourmet restaurant. Mister Grilo is tucked away in an old house on a small street near the church. The interior is inviting with brightly-painted plaster walls and décor. The staff is most attentive and serve a variety of Portuguese and international cuisine with a flair for flavourful combinations with many dishes prepared or flambéed table-side. The whole evening is a won-

derful experience ... no wonder they boast that all who visit will return!

Our Portuguese longstay was an unqualified success. Here I include some travel hints for others who may wish to make a similar visit. ATMs are easy to find and the exchange rate is always current to the time of your withdrawal. Not all establishments want to deal with credit cards or traveller's cheques, particularly when only a small amount of money is involved. Internet, available at kiosks or cafés, is less expensive than long distance phone calls. Local tourist information centres have descriptive brochures on places you may wish to visit. Stop by early in your stay to find out what they suggest. Driving is not the only option for getting around. There is a very good interurban bus service. Also consider tour company bus trips to special destinations. These give you a guide and a worry-free itinerary. We found the Portuguese people friendly and welcoming. Although we try never to take chances, security was not a problem. Women can travel alone safely and walking the streets of the small towns after dark did not pose a threat.

*Jane Mallory
Kingston, ON*

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You can renew your subscription on-line too!

A Few More Words On London

I have enjoyed all the London tips in recent issues and would just like to remind readers that so many of London's wonderful museums are free. En route to Libya (*see Judy's story in this edition – Ed.*) we stayed four days in London and I'd also like to mention the St. Pancras Youth Hostel near King's Cross Station where we had a private, en suite room for £61 (about C\$128) including a cafeteria-style breakfast. The building has recently been renovated, there is 24-hour security and thus 24-hour access. It does not take groups, so no risk of groups of unruly school children. Here is the link for info: www.yha.org.uk/hostel/hostel-pages/173.html.

The magnificent British Library is directly across the street - it is full of wonders such as an original copy of the Magna Carta, a Gutenberg Bible, a recording of Florence Nightingale's voice, the Beatles' lyrics in John Lennon's scribble, a musical score penned by Handel and thousands more famous manuscripts and books. And the British Museum was a pleasant half-hour walk away ... visitors can easily spend a whole day there. On another day we took the tube to Greenwich for its fine museums and to straddle the prime meridian. And the Imperial War Museum was our destination for the final day. So, for the price of a few one-zone tube rides and one longer, six-zone ride to Greenwich, we had four day outings. All these national museums are free as well as the National Gallery, the Tate

and Tate Modern, but we simply ran out of time!

*Judy van der Veen
Campbellville, ON*

Saving on Phone Calls

As I'm a journalist, my long-distance telephone charges for interviews were often high. But when I switched to YAK a couple of years ago they went from around \$300 month to \$30 month. You simply dial 10-10-925 then 1-area code + number and you are automatically charged 5¢ for any call (anywhere, anytime of day in North America). There are also great international rates e.g. 5¢ or 6¢ a minute to Hong Kong, Germany, France, Ireland etc. It can be higher for some other countries but still a fraction of the cost of normal carriers, and its simple. Check it out at: www.yak.com/en/ Finally, there's no sign up or membership or hoops to jump through. The billing simply appears on your regular phone bill.

*Sandra Phinney
Yarmouth, NS*

Travelling with Diabetic Supplies

My son is diabetic and we have often had discussions about how to carry his insulin etc. Then, just before his Christmas visit, I read in the *Toronto Star's* Travel Section about the Dia-Pak Deluxe. Designed especially for diabetic travellers, this pack contains

pouches to organize up to two weeks' worth of supplies, including syringes, swabs, etc. It also comes with a cold gel-pack to keep insulin cool for hours. The pack is made of durable nylon and is water-resistant. They are available for C\$39.95 at The Travel Stop, 130 Cumberland Street, Toronto, tel: 416 961 6088. The helpful people at this store will mail the Dia-Pak anywhere in the country; it cost me \$10 to have the Pak mailed to Vancouver. (*Toronto's Travel Shop is indeed a great store ... pay a visit if you live close or are visiting Toronto. Alternatively, enter 'Dia-Pak Deluxe' in your search engine to find lists of other suppliers – Ed.*)

*Muriel Culshaw
Kingston, ON*

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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Note: If it is possible to include wheelchair-accessible information in your letters and stories I know that would be appreciated by many. Thanks! - Ed.

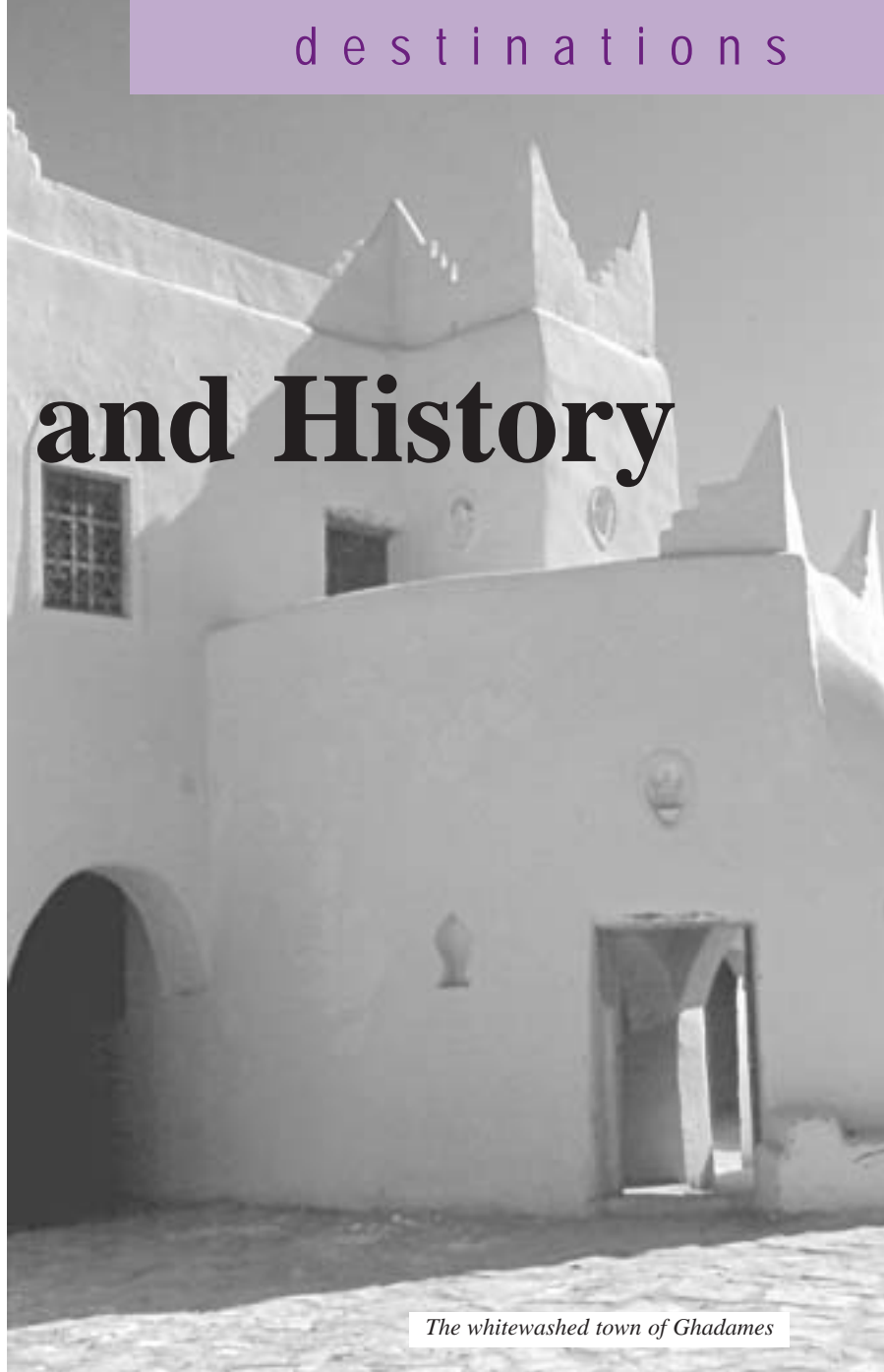
Reader to Reader

We are attending a wedding in Moldova in September 2006 and are wondering if any readers have ever travelled to Moldova? We'd be interested in 'chatting' with you if you have visited that country, especially if you can give us some accommodation recommendations. Please e-mail me at fstevens@cintek.com. Thanks a lot! *Fred Stevens*

Libya – Sea, Sand and History

story and photos by Judy and Ted van der Veen

*Co-incidences happen all the time. A few months ago **Swiss magazine** (the on-board publication of Swiss International Air Lines) arrived on my desk, with a striking cover photograph showing a bright blue sky over undulating golden sand-dunes whereupon sat the title of that month's lead story entitled **Libya, a little-known paradise**. I put the tempting magazine aside to read over lunch and turned on my computer ready for the day's work. And there in my e-mail in-box was a message from subscribers and loyal contributors Judy and Ted van der Veen telling me all about their latest travels to ... yes, you guessed ... Libya! Here's their story. - Ed.*



The whitewashed town of Ghadames

T

ake fifteen retirees from across Canada and the United States, aged 60-94, most of them solo travellers who have never met before, and send them on a trip together. Where do you suppose they might choose to go? How about an exploratory trip to Libya? Yes, that Libya, in North Africa, the one Colonel Gaddafi has had under his dictatorial thumb for thirty-six years. We've heard the reactions: "No way! Why on earth...? Aren't you afraid? Is it safe?" *Au contraire*, it is one of the safest places on earth, a vast diverse land about three times the size of France with a population of about six million. We never felt the least bit afraid; we saw no overt poverty, no beggars, no out-stretched hands. The only military presence we noticed were two guards at the gatehouse of a military base that we drove by on a desert highway. We did meet welcoming people, knowledgeable and interesting tour guides, competent and courteous bus and Land Rover drivers. We ate very well, we slept comfortably, we expe-

rienced desert camping, we toured extremely well-preserved Roman ruins and well-maintained World War II cemeteries. Libya is an up-and-coming tourist destination that has not yet caught on to all-inclusive resorts, rushed tours and chain restaurants. Cruise ships are just beginning to discover the country as a Mediterranean port, with day excursions to some of the Roman sites. So now is the time to go, before there are too many people, too many hotels and too many crowds.

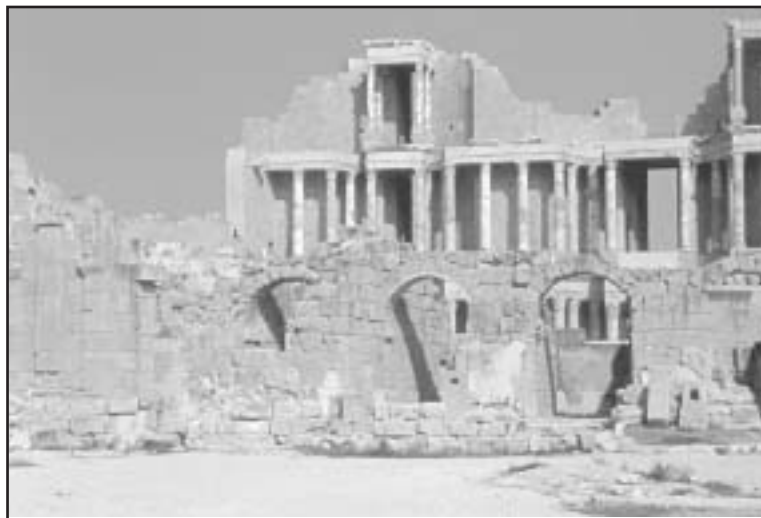
We in the west have always demonized Colonel Gadaffi, viewing him as a military upstart, an avid supporter of terrorism. This trip has certainly changed our ideas. When one looks at what he has done for Libya one cannot help but admit a certain admiration for him. He came to power in a bloodless coup, the exiled king was supported financially until his death, and the king gave moral support to the changes he introduced. He has not brought democracy to Libya as we know it, but he has brought a form of self-government with a goal of educating the people in how to participate actively. He has encouraged education and the literacy rate has sky-rocketed from 27% to 93% for those under 40 and there is free medical care. He has encouraged development of underground water resources, and thus of agriculture. The Great Man-Made River Project brings millions of cubic meters of water via underground pipelines from aquifers under the dessert to the coastal towns. He has developed the oil fields, but limited export so as not to exhaust them; Libyan oil reserves of high-quality light crudes are believed to be the eleventh largest in the world. He seems to be loved by the people. And he is only 63 years old so he may be around for many years. Yes, there are fundamentalists in opposition to his ways; yes, there are suspicious events that have occurred under his regime; but yes, he has submitted disputes to international courts. We were privileged to have a professor at the university in Tripoli address us. His field was hydrology, he has studied in the US, and he is very up-to-date. In discussions with us he was open and informative. (This was not in our programme, but was arranged through a personal contact of our guide.) No, he led us to acknowledge, we cannot eliminate the international events of the past, but we cannot ignore the positive effect Gadaffi has had on his country.

Most of us

arrive in Tripoli via London, some via Frankfurt or Rome. Our national guide meets us at the airport and escorts us to our hotel. Once settled in, we meet with the tour leader for a brief information session before dinner at a restaurant nearby. The hotel is right beside the Mediterranean and a few minutes walk from the old city. Tripoli is the capital of Libya; the city was founded by the Phoenicians about 500 BC; one can see the influence of succeeding occupiers, Greeks, Romans, Turks, Arabs, and Italians. Today it is a cosmopolitan city of 1.7 million, with a blend of old and new construction, government and trade offices, universities and colleges, and a Mediterranean air; Libyans refer to Tripoli as "The White Bride of the Mediterranean". In the morning, after a drive through the city, we visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Sabratha, about 80 km west, our first Roman site in Libya. Destroyed by an earthquake in 365 AD, the Roman colony of Sabratha was abandoned; sand filled the remaining structures until Italian archaeologists began unearthing it in the early years of the 20th century. The sandstone ruins lie strung along the coastline. The most impressive is the theatre; built about 190 AD and with an auditorium 95 metres in diameter, it was the largest theatre in North Africa. The stage is 43 m. long; the acoustics are excellent; the decoration is magnificent with its representations of the Nine Muses, the Three Graces, and other classical personages.

On day three we leave Tripoli under falling rain as we head inland through the Jebel Nafusa Mountains. We stop at two Berber granaries where crops were stored in fortified circular structures built in the 13th century. One of them features an olive press of the type still used in many parts of the country. Just after sunset we arrive in the oasis city of Ghadames, another World Heritage site, which we tour with a local guide the next day. Ghadames has been a caravan stop on the trade routes leading from the desert to the sea for thousands of years. Known as the "Jewel of the Sahara", old

Ghadames is a white-washed warren of covered streets. An open courtyard has a small café and a few shops, one of the few spots where one can purchase local crafts. Lunch today is in a typical home of Ghadames, in an ornately decorated room where we sit on carpets on the floor, relaxing against cushions placed along the walls. In the evening we drive out into the desert, to a spot where



The Roman Theatre at Sabratha

we can see the borders with Tunisia and Algeria, to watch the sunset over the dunes. While we wait, we are served tea and desert bread as a Tuareg group entertains us: the women sing and a group of young men perform traditional dances. Some in our group enjoy a ride on the magnificent white camels of the Tuareg. We climb the dunes to watch the sunset, and the two of us are privileged to see the 'green flash' as the sun dips below the horizon.

Day five is a long day driving south through the desert to Sabha where our desert adventure really begins. In the morning we meet our drivers and set off, two or three of us per Land Rover, of which there are five altogether, plus two supply trucks with fuel for the vehicles, camping supplies and all our food ... plus two cooks to prepare it. We are about to spend two nights 'wild camping'; tents, sleeping bags and blankets are provided. We carry bottled water for all purposes as we will find no other. We spend the afternoon driving through the sand dunes, marvelling at the scenery, learning to appreciate the skill of our drivers as there are no roads to follow. Each time that we crest a sand dune the scene before us is surreal; often it feels as though we are about to drop off into nothing. Late afternoon we reach the spot where we will camp. We put up the tents with some assistance from the drivers and by the time we have finished hot and cold drinks are waiting. Some of us sit around the campfire with the drivers as they talk and sing. Soon, we are called to the table for our delicious hot meal. Darkness falls quickly in the desert; there are no clouds and the moon is full. It is stunning!

After our wakeup call in the morning we roll our sleeping bags and take down the tents, ready to leave after breakfast. We head across the desert, stopping to watch a herd of free-range camels. Our drivers wend their way through the "Ocean of Stones" (so named by the Tuareg) to the valley of Wadi Methkandoush where we find a gallery of prehistoric rock carvings along the river's edge. There are hundreds of petroglyphs and we are amazed to discover they depict animals not associated with the desert: elephants, giraffes, leopards, hippopotamus, crocodiles, lizards, birds. Most are believed to be from ten to twelve thousand years old, making this one of the oldest and finest rock-art sites in North Africa.

After a delicious and attractive picnic lunch, we head back across the Ocean of Stones and back into the sand

dunes. We are all comfortable in this mode of travel by now, and the drivers are keen to show off their skills. Our driver is particularly adept, and once he realizes we are not afraid, he performs a few 'wheelies' with us on board in a photo op performance! And as he is the official 'tail' of the caravan, we make a grand entrance at every stop. Late afternoon, we pick our new camp site. Setting up takes less time than the day before, and many of us go for a walk in the dunes. As our campsite is completely surrounded by dunes, it is possible to walk for quite a long time without losing sight of the camp. (It is, of course, absolutely essential that we keep the camp in view.)

The next morning we enjoy another spectacular drive through the desert but we are surprised when we arrive so soon back at our departure point for a quick tour of the remains of an abandoned mud-walled town and the museum in Germa. The original itinerary stated two or three nights of camping; but we are pleasantly surprised to learn that our leaders have found a newly-opened inn in traditional style where we have very comfortable rooms. Indeed, it was once a prison compound and our rooms are the old cells, opening onto a courtyard. We must share the facilities, but as we are the only guests and have just spent almost three days in the desert together without running water or toilets, this is no problem. And while our camping is over, our desert experience is not.

The next day, we head back into the desert to the Ubari Lakes in the Ubari Sand Sea. These lakes are surrounded by reeds and palm trees and the entire scene provides the picture-book image of an oasis from our childhood. The water is an intense blue-green whose salt content rivals that of the Dead Sea. Here the shoppers amongst us are able to indulge their whims as we find displays of jewellery and carvings spread out in the sand. The vendors have travelled from Mali and Chad, making their way across the desert to these lakes which are even more popular with Libyans than with the few foreign tourists who make it this far into the desert. The vendors are unobtrusive, happy to show their wares to anyone who cares to look, but otherwise leaving us in peace. Late in the afternoon, we drive back to Sabha for dinner and an evening flight back to Tripoli. The desert experience, a real highlight for all of us (which surprised some of the group), has come to an end.

For our one-day stopover in Tripoli, we walk to the



Rock carvings at Wadi Methkandoush

excellent National Museum where we enjoy a guided tour of the five levels, with galleries from the Neolithic era, through prehistoric to modern times. Here are copies of rock art, including paintings that we did not go deep enough into the desert to see; statues and mosaics from the Roman sites we visited; displays of Phoenician, Greek, Byzantine and Islamic art and architecture; natural history of Libya, its geology, flora and fauna. It's a superb collection in a superb site, built with the help of UNESCO. After a late lunch at a seaside fish restaurant, we take a late afternoon flight to Benghazi, the main city of the eastern Mediterranean province of Cyrenaica. Days 11 through 15 will be spent in this area.

From Benghazi, we visit Tolmeita (Ptolemais), founded as a trading center in the 4th century BC by the Greeks. Most of what remains today is from the transition period from Greek to Roman. We walk through the excavated parts of the city (only 10%), explore its vast underground cisterns, and visit its excellent museum. After lunch, we go to Qasr Libya, a 6th century AD Byzantine fort and church where, in 1957, Libyan dam workers discovered a superb mosaic floor comprising 50 panels that depict various gods, the nymphs of Delphi and the Lighthouse of Pharos. A Byzantine inscription here indicates the tiles were laid in 339AD. The following day we pass several hours on the bus to reach our destination of Appolonia. The plan was to make some stops en route, hike to the largest cave in North Africa then, after a picnic lunch, visit some Byzantine church ruins beside the sea, followed by another walk to a waterfall. However, a sandstorm arises, the sea is raging, and the winds are so strong we can hardly walk from the bus to the shore. And so, our picnic takes place on the bus and we are quite happy to arrive early at our hotel and have some down time. This was the only time our plans were foiled by weather. Most days were sunny with comfortable temperatures in the mid-20s.

We spend all of the next day at the ancient Graeco-Roman city of Cyrene, also a World Heritage Site. It was founded in the 7th century BC by settlers from the Greek island of Santorini, fell under the control of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC, then the Egyptians, followed by the Romans. In 115 AD it was sacked in a Jewish revolt, rebuilt by the Emperor Hadrian, until it fell into decline after the devastating earthquakes of 262 and 365 AD. Quite the history! Our local guide accompanies us for the whole day. We spend the morning in the museum and the adjoining part of the old city, with its Gymnasium, Forum and Agora with several temples. After lunch, we meet in the lower Sanctuary of Apollo for a further tour, then visit the ruined Byzantine churches and theatre of Appolonia, right beside our hotel.

The following day is devoted to modern history: World War II, the Australian "Rats of Tobruk" and Rommel's "Afrika Korps". We visit two Commonwealth cemeteries as well as the French and German, the Australian Fig Tree Hospital and Rommel's Operation Rooms. It is a long drive to Tobruk and back, but a very moving visit of tremendous historical importance. A much slower pace the next day takes us back to Benghazi for our return flight to Tripoli. We stop in the village of Slonta to view a mysterious pre-Greek temple with carvings of strange animal and human figures. Virtually nothing is known about the site. Who built it? When? What religion did they practise? Later, in Benghazi, we visit the gallery and shop of a well-known artist who makes masks from palm trees, before embarking on a walking tour of the town centre and market, including the colourful local food market.

By now it is Day 16, and we are back to spend time in Tripoli rather than just passing through as before. We take a walking tour of the old medina; have a glimpse inside the largest mosque; visit a smaller, but beautiful one; stop under the Roman Triumphal Arch of Marcus Aurelius and then walk through the modern town. We see the 20th century National Mosque, converted from an Italian-built cathedral. We pass courtyard cafés where men sit smoking hookah pipes and drinking mint tea or coffee. We notice an odd mix of traditional and modern clothing, elegant boutiques, gold shops and, right beside them, small shops offering cheap plastic goods. We visit another colourful food market.

Soon it is Day 17 and we later agree we have saved the best for last. We spend the entire day at the absolutely stunning World Heritage Site of Leptis Magna, one of the most extensive and best-preserved Roman cities in the world and a showcase of Roman town planning. For the first time, we find tour groups from cruise ships, but the site is so vast that we are still feel quite alone. Lunch time is a different mat-



At the ancient Graeco-Roman city of Cyrene, a World Heritage Site

ter, as the few restaurants are crowded. Again we have a guide with us for the entire day. We tour the museum and the main part of the city in the morning, marvelling at the magnificent Arch, the Hadrianic Baths, the Basilica, Forum, Theatre and Market. The city's heyday was in the years around 200 AD when a local boy, Septimus Severus, was Emperor of the Roman Empire. (He was killed in England in 211 AD.) In the afternoon, we visit the Amphitheater down by the sea where an audience of 16,000 could watch the gladiators, and the adjoining Circus where 25,000 could watch the chariot races. Not far away, at the Villa Sileen, the private home of a wealthy Roman family, we get an impression of how the upper classes lived, with beautiful frescoes and mosaics throughout the houses.

Tonight we have our farewell dinner in a restaurant near the Triumphal Arch. In the morning we have free time until we leave for the airport; some go back to the museum, some wander the shops, especially the excellent bookshop just minutes from the hotel, while others stroll along the promenade by the sea.

Libya; Land of Shifting Sands was the name of this November tour, the very first tour to Libya offered by *ElderTrek*s of Toronto. (1 800 741 7 9 5 6 , www.eldertreks.com.) Eighteen land days from Tripoli and three internal flights gave us a glimpse of the tremendous variety this country has to offer. We were accompanied at all times by our Canadian tour leader, by a Libyan national guide and an official guard. The tour leader has an evident passion (and a master's degree)

for classical archaeology. The national guide was educated in England and has lived many years in Europe. The guard, who spoke limited English, was attentive and helpful. At each historic site and museum we had a site guide; these

were all dedicated, conscientious, eager men (with good English) who wanted us to appreciate the culture they were revealing to us. However, we did resent the tax grab at the museums and historic sites; our admission fees were included

in our tour, but at each site there was a civil servant to collect camera fees: 5 dinars (almost C\$5) for a camera and 10 dinars for a video camera. And the guards do ask to see your receipts. Most museums do not have enough light for photos unless with flash or high-speed film (400 ASA). The hotels were satisfactory although the service is not up to western standards ... towels were forgotten, taps sometimes dripped and so on. Annoying but not unbearable little problems. Waiters in restaurants tried hard, but they are still learning what is expected. Breakfasts ranged from excellent buffets with fresh pastries and freshly-made omelettes to dry bread with jam, cheese and olives. But there were always fresh dates! Our two full meals a day were quite tasty with lots of crusty fresh bread, a choice

of soups, a small salad of tomato and cucumber, usually a choice of meat, chicken or fish, served with rice or couscous and perhaps a vegetable, then a banana or occasionally a dessert. Mint tea and plain tea were served everywhere.

Coffee might be excellent Italian espresso or merely instant. Alcoholic drinks of any kind are strictly forbidden in Libya, but we found the German-import alcohol-free beer very good. There are soft drinks such as Coke, Sprite and others and also local juice drinks, some of them quite tasty but rather sweet. Lonely Planet's *Libya* is one of the few guidebooks available; it is quite thorough and relatively up-to-date. If your idea of a holiday is

to experience a different culture, to participate in a gentle adventure and to visit historic sites without the nuisance of crowds we can highly recommend that you visit Libya. But go soon before the masses arrive. 🇱🇧



The Roman city of Leptis Magna



The Amphitheatre of Leptis Magna

ADVENTURES IN PERU

PART 1: TOURING AND SIGHTSEEING

story and photos by J. Helen Parkyn



Machu Picchu

In September last year, I and a friend from my local outdoor club went to Peru for a fabulous vacation of just over three weeks. Our trip was in two parts: two weeks of touring and sightseeing and one week of trekking in the Vilnacota Range. First we organized the trekking. This was with a company called Andean Treks Inc. of Maine and we settled on the week of 24 – 30 September. This high altitude llama- and horse-supported trek only runs on selected dates, so we arranged the rest of the trip around that week. We then read through all the travel brochures of reputable small-group adventure tour companies for a general sightseeing tour that fitted our timetable. Fortunately, one reliable company – Explore – had their *Sacred Land of the Incas* tour which fitted our dates perfectly. All we had to do was leave the group one day early in Cusco for our orientation meeting for the trek. This 13-day Explore tour cost C\$2,096 plus a local payment of US\$300. This included accommodation, planned tours and the domestic flights, but no meals. We needed about US\$20 extra per day each for the meals.

To start our trip we drove to Seattle on 8 September and stayed overnight at the Days Inn Kent/South Seattle. We were flying American Airlines via Dallas/Fort Worth to Lima. Flights out of Seattle were C\$200 each cheaper than from Vancouver and the overnight stay and car parking were very reasonable on their Fly/Stay/Park programme. We had a minor glitch the next morning at the airport, but understandable in the circumstances: we were rerouted to Miami via Los Angeles as Dallas/Fort Worth was being used for relief flights after hurricane Katrina. Thus our Lima arrival was six hours later than planned, meaning we arrived at our hotel at 6 a.m. on the 10th instead of around midnight on the 9th. We were booked into the Best Western Embajadores in Miraflores, one of the better suburbs of Lima. The cost was US\$57.33 for the two of us. We were joining the tour at 4 p.m. on that day at the same hotel.

After a morning's sleep and a neighbourhood walk, which included changing our travellers cheques (U.S. dollars to *Soles*), we met our leader – Vanessa – and five of the 17 participants who would be part of our lives for the next 13 days. (Some tour members were arriving later.) We had

a tour briefing (and paid the leader the local payment, which we carried out to Peru in U.S. cash) over the offered free *pisco sours*, a popular local drink made with brandy. The seven of us then went out to dinner in the centre of Miraflores. The El Tigre restaurant had outdoor seating near the park where Mariachi-style bands were playing. I chose *lomo saltado*, which is a type of stir fry made with beef, tomato, onion, chili and rice, served with a few French fries and plantain. The cost was Sol. 26 which is about US\$7.50.

The next morning we were up at 6.45 and enjoyed a buffet breakfast for US\$5 which included cereal, yogurt, fruit, scrambled eggs with ham, toast, juice and coffee. We then returned to the airport for a one hour flight to Arequipa. This is a delightful old colonial town set at 7,000 ft. with a fine, sunny climate, set below El Misti volcano. We checked into the El Conquistador Hostal (Hotel) which was in an old colonial building in the front with a modern bedroom section behind. As we had had a hot ham and cheese sandwich plus small dessert on the plane, we just bought fruit for lunch. In the afternoon Vanessa led us on an orientation walk through the town ending with a visit to the Cathedral and the Plaza de Armas. The Plaza, surrounded on three sides by two-storey colonnades, was full of people enjoying Sunday afternoon. After the walk, we went to a local café and had excellent apple pie ... so good, in

farming terraces which were being used for alfalfa and cows. Spring plowing with oxen teams was in progress. Walls were pre-Inca and the ancient irrigation systems were all still functioning. We also had views of El Misti and Arequipa. There was a café where we rented the horses, so later we enjoyed a lunch of *rocotta relleno* (stuffed peppers) accompanied by a dish of potatoes with tomato and cream sauce topped with cheese. Sharing the two dishes, we each paid about US\$2.50. We flagged a taxi down for a wild ride back to town ... our driver obviously had Formula One racing dreams, but we made it safely!

Once back in town, we decided to visit the Monastery of St. Theresa, which is a convent for barefoot Carmelites only recently open to the public. It was built in 1710 of the white sillar so characteristic of Arequipa. We had a private tour as no-one else was there and saw, among other things, cactus statues, many paintings copying European styles but with local touches, a frescoed chapter room and a wonderful lemon-coloured open passageway with many arches across it.

When we returned to the square for our favourite apple pie, we found the area surrounded by police in riot gear closing the square off to locals. Apparently the President was flying in to speak to a mining convention and protests were expected. In fact we saw some of them later marching

It is a city within a city where originally each nun had her own house and servant. In its peak it housed 500 or so people in vividly-coloured streets and courts that are great to photograph.

fact, we went back for more on the following two days!

In the evening the whole group went the Ary Quepay Restaurant which offer a traditional Peruvian menu and four young musicians playing guitars and pan flutes. One of the group bravely ordered the speciality: *cuy* or guinea pig. It came with the head on and looked like a large fried rat! There appeared to be little or no meat on it either. I never tried it and I heard no rave reviews from those who did. I ordered *lomo saltado* again, but this time with alpaca meat. I don't think I would known it was not beef unless I had been told. The cost for dinner was about US\$5.

On the next day we were provided with a variety of optional activities. Several of the group got up at 2 a.m. for a day trip to Colca Canyon, some five or six hours away, for the chance to see condors rising on the morning thermals. They later reported they saw three. Colca is the second deepest canyon in the world and, according to all reports, worth visiting. However I think I would want at least two days to enjoy it. Instead my friend and I went with two others by taxi to Molina (old mill) where we rented horses. We went out for two hours and it cost us US\$18 each, but we had a ride with just the two of us and a guide. The other two 'Explore' participants were novice riders and opted for just one hour, riding slowly. We had a fine trip up through the

peacefully down the street with banners. We bought some Peruvian wine at the supermarket to try and would recommend any who follow us to Peru to buy Chilean which is also available! Dinner that night was at El Turko 2 ... an excellent meal of lamb with apricots in a hot pot plus rice and vegetables. Well cooked and graciously served for approx. US\$8.20 each.

Our second full day in Arequipa was for planned group sightseeing to two of the most important sights: the Monastery of Santa Catalina and the Museo Santuarios Andinos to see the frozen Inca maiden "Juanita". The Santa Catalina Monastery is a large religious complex built in 1579 for wealthy nuns. It is a city within a city where originally each nun had her own house and servant. In its peak it housed 500 or so people in vividly-coloured streets and courts that are great to photograph. Later we saw "Juanita", the 12 - 14 year old girl who was sacrificed on top of Ampato Volcano. There were other children found on lower slopes of this volcano and artifacts found with them are on display. It is thought Juanita was brought all the way from Cusco over the mountains and was sacrificed when a neighboring volcano was erupting and melting Ampato's ice cap. Similar conditions in 1992 led to her discovery. The ice cap in the 500 years between had preserved her almost perfect-

ly. The Inca worshipped mountains and it is believed human sacrifices were to appease angry mountains that could kill by eruptions and avalanches.

Late in the afternoon we went to the colourful local produce market for fruit for our picnic lunch the next day to accompany the biscuits and cheese from a small nearby supermarket. The market has meat, fish and chickens as well as fruit and vegetables, but some sections should be missed by anyone squeamish ... there is no refrigerated storage.

We left the next morning at 8.10 on a private bus bound for Puno on Lake Titicaca. It was a cloudy day with snow on the higher sections. It is quite a climb over a 4,500 metre pass to the lake at 3,830 m. This altitude can cause loss of appetite, headache and a poor night's sleep for some people, however most of our group were okay; the three nights at Arequipa had probably helped us adjust. On the way we stopped at Sillustani where the Colla people built notable funerary towers to bury their nobility. The outsides of these cylindrical towers are built of massive stone blocks and, as they predate the Inca period, it is thought the Incas learnt their techniques from the Colla. We also visited an alpaca farm to see the very simple lifestyle with digging done with sticks and spinning and weaving done by hand. We also noticed for the first time the Goodrich sandals that are worn everywhere. They were developed by Goodrich from recycled tires ... a most useful project. While we had been travelling on the bus, Vanessa used the time to tell us more about Peru. For example, the population is 28 million, with nine million of them living in Lima. The breakdown is 15% Criollo (of European descent), 30% *metisto* or mixed, 47% indigenous and the remainder an assortment, including 3% Chinese. Just over 50% live below the poverty line. The land is 60% rainforest, 30% mountains and 10% coastal desert.

After a night in Puno, we left the next morning for the islands. Firstly we went to the floating reed islands nearby. The islands were originally built by the Uros people to escape the aggressive folks around them. They are now a mixed people who survive on fishing and tourism. We visited two islands, travelling in a bundled reed boat between them. There is a spongy feeling walking on the reeds which constantly have to be renewed as they rot from the bottom. Islanders selling souvenirs were out in force on both islands. We then went on to Taquile Island, which is a 6 km long solid island with a population of about 2,000 and terraced



Reed islands, Lake Titicaca

fields. The island has maintained a strong local culture with all islanders wearing local dress, some of which is symbolic. For example, men wear red hats if married and red and white if single. Incidentally, the men on this island do the knitting while the women spin and weave. One of the most interesting features of the island is that they still run it themselves with no police, and decisions on everything local, from land use to law and order, are made at Sunday meetings.

We stayed at a local guesthouse where, as we had been warned in the brochure, the conditions were rustic. We were not surprised, therefore, to discover that the outside bathroom only had a bucket for a manual flush and that we were all to share one sink. However, potties were provided in the rooms. The islanders are resisting any outside hotel owners moving in. Lunch was a *quinoa* (local grain) and vegetable soup with a choice of omelets or fish from the lake to follow. That afternoon and the next morning we walked about the island viewing some old ruins, visiting the school, watching the ploughing in progress by hand or with oxen and visiting the local souvenir cooperative. In the evening locals came to the restaurant with simple local music and dancing. It was a fascinating experience.

The next afternoon we boated back to Puno and went to the market for picnic supplies for the next day. We also had time to visit the *Yavari*, an old steamship that is being restored and will soon be sailing on the lake again. This ship was designed and 'built' in 1870 in England in 2,766 parts. These were then shipped to Peru and carried over the Andes on mules over a period of six years and rebuilt for the Peruvian navy. Because there was no coal they had to power it with dried llama dung!

We were up early the following day for our 7.15 departure to the rail station. We were going to take a great train trip over the *antiplano* and down into the sacred valley to Cusco. There was a choice of paying an extra US\$93 to travel the first, or Inca class, which seven tour members took. The rest of us travelled backpacker class. However since this train is a tourist train, the backpacker class is still comfortable, with soft seats and tables between each set of seats. Locals apparently travel by bus as it is cheaper. As we crossed the dry *antiplano*, we passed small villages with flocks of alpaca, sheep and a few cattle. We climbed up into the mountains to the highest point of 4329 metres where there was a 10-minute photo stop and souvenir stalls. The

train then descended into the greener, more fertile sacred valley along the Vilnacota River, passing more villages until we finally pulled into Cusco at 6 p.m. We were transferred to our 4-star hotel, the El Dorado, which was very comfortable with all necessary services plus baggage storage and very early breakfast available.

We went as a group to the Andean Grill on the main square for dinner. With Explore it is usual for the group to dine together on the first night in a new town, but it is by no means obligatory. I had a spicy stuffed peppers again for US\$7.

The next day was a planned tour starting with the Sacsayhuaman ("sexy woman" is a close pronunciation) Inca ruins above town, then travelling on to Pisac for the market and optional castle visit. However, when we arrived at the ruins it was obvious that a major celebration was about to start. People, mostly young men, in bright red, black, yellow and green Inca costumes were everywhere. Vanessa had not been advised of this, which annoyed her, but on inquiring found that the Warachicuy rites of initiation for young men were starting at 10 a.m. and lasting for four or five hours. Five of us chose to miss the Pisac tour in order to stay and watch, with the rest of the group picking us up on their return from Pisac at 1.30 p.m. This turned out to be a wonderful decision and a terrific

bit of serendipity as the festival was one of the highlights of our tour. There were 2,500 performers taking part in the ceremonies, with tests of manhood that young men had to go through in order to be considered Inca warriors. The ceremonies included the entrance of the Inca ruler and three sacred mummies, followed by a long, green-patterned snake, similar to those seen in Chinese parades, under which four or five dozen young men were crouched. They wove in this fashion around the arena before stopping in a long line in front of the stand. Then the llamas intended for ritual sacrifice were paraded (but thankfully taken away alive, supposedly for killing elsewhere) and a sacred fire was lit. On the hill and ruins behind the arena, there was a sea of colourfully-costumed young men holding banners. The arena was full of processions and athletic challenges on high apparatus held only by squads of men, with fires below. When the combatants fell off stretcher squads carried them off. We realized that although this is theatre, there is still a lot of macho pride in the young men, who strove not to fail and have to be carried off. We were told by a teacher sitting near



Inca initiation festival in the ruins above Cusco

us that they had been practising and rehearsing for over six months. We learned that the festival of Inti Raymi on June 24 is very well known and crowded with tourists. This festival we witnessed, while shorter and perhaps on a smaller scale, is more local; the paying crowd did not fill even one third of the available stands. The rocks behind, however, were jammed with locals watching for free. Payment, I might add, was only about US\$3. It was quite an experience.

The bus picked us up as planned before the end of the festival, but we felt we had caught most of the highlights and, moreover, some of us had run out of film. In the afternoon we had a walking tour of Cusco with its fine Plaza de Armas, Cathedral, cobbled side streets, churches and buildings that still have Inca stonework on part of their walls. In the churches, we found it interesting to look for local influences in the art and statues. For example, a guinea pig on the table in the pictures of the Last Supper and statues with the robes arranged in pyramid shapes to symbolize mountains, which were probably still worshipped in spite of the introduction of Christianity. We went to the Café Varayoc for tea and dessert and were charmingly entertained by a harpist playing there. Later the two of us had dinner on our own at Trattoria Adriano, which we enjoyed and returned to a couple of times. I had ravioli with meat sauce for US\$5 and

we shared a large plate of cooked vegetables – carrots, cauliflower, spinach and beans – which we considered a good choice in places where dodgy water makes salad a questionable choice.

Next day we were up at 4.30 a.m. for the breakfast buffet at the hotel which started early every day for Machu Picchu-bound guests. The buffet included fresh fruit, cereals, yogurts, scrambled eggs, potatoes, rolls, croissants, juices and coffee for US\$4.60. The train left at 6.15 a.m. and it took four hours to wind down the sacred valley to reach Aqua Calientes. We were to spend a night there, so we first went to our simple 2-star hotel (though the rooms still had private bathrooms) and dropped off our small overnight bags. (We had left our main luggage back at the hotel in Cusco.) We then took the bus up to Machu Picchu on a controlled bus-only road that switches 8 km back and forth to the parking lot near the entrance gate. I hardly need to say this excursion is a major highlight of any Peru trip and well worth the two-day rather than the single-day visit.

We had brought picnic lunches with us, which are not

allowed in the main ruins, but we planned to walk to the Gate of the Sun away from the main site before we would eat. It takes about an hour to walk to the gate, known as Intipunku, where trekkers coming along the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu first see the ruins. A note for those considering the entire trekking route, usually four days or so ... the trail is very crowded in the peak season of June to August. There is a limit of 200 trekkers and 500 porters per day but this is still far too many for my taste, especially at the campsites. When we returned to the main site, some of us took another trail to the Inca Bridge before going through the official entrance. These side trips are likely only an option if you are able to overnight in the area, and not watching the time for the return trip to Cusco.

Our first day was cloudy but not raining. I took many photos in case the next day was worse, but needless to say when we arrived at 7.30 the next morning, the sun was out and the sky clear, so I took most of the photos all over again! Allow lots of film for this site!

We had wandered the ruins freely late on our first afternoon, but this second morning we had a formal tour with a local guide with much discussion of what is known of the Inca as there was no written language to leave a clear record of their times. The larger empire stretching almost the length of South America only lasted around 100 years. In total there were only 13 Inca rulers before Pizarro entered Cusco in 1533. The first eight were relatively local and it was the ninth, Pachacutec, and his son who expanded north and south. Machu Picchu was a 'lost city', not found and looted by the invading Spanish due to its remote and inaccessible location. It was rediscovered in 1911 by American archaeologist Hiram Bingham and now there are concerns over the crowds and potential environmental damage.

Please note that another advantage of being able to overnight in Aqua Calientes is that the best time in the ruins is before 10 a.m. and after 2.30 p.m. when the site is without the day trippers. After our formal tour from 7.30 to 10 a.m. we had about four hours free with a variety of options. Some chose to climb up the very steep mountain, Huayna Picchu, which is not technical but "definitely a puff" according to my travelling companion who made the trip. I settled on the smaller 'bump' at the north of the ruins called Huchuy Picchu, where a fixed rope was needed to pull myself up one rock slab. However, a good photo opportunity was my reward for this effort. Afterwards, I and a few

others from our group went down the switchback road by bus, asking to be let off at the small museum and botanical gardens. We enjoyed the museum which had English labels where we learned much about the stone and metal work. We had to walk about a kilometre back to Aqua Calientes for a late lunch and the train back to Cusco departing at at 3.55 p.m.

The next day, Wednesday, our last full day with Explore, was a free day for the group with options of rafting, shopping, sightseeing, etc. My friend and I would also have more free time in Cusco as we had two additional days before we started trekking, although we had to report for our trek briefing midday on the Friday. The first free day, we had decided to go horseback riding again. We had checked with the local tour companies and all they seemed to offer was an expensive walk on a horse around more secondary Inca ruins above Cusco. Our *Lonely Planet* guidebook mentioned that the ranches were near Sacsayhuamin, so we

walked up there and met a man offering riding trips near the top. We negotiated a two-hour trip with lots of sign language, saying "no" to most of the ruins of which he showed us pictures. We actually did accept one ruin, the most distant, but our "no" to ruins won out and we had a great countryside ride customized for the two of us for about US\$8 that actually lasted nearly three hours, accompanied by a boy as a guide running on foot.



Santa Catalina Monastery in Arequipa

We walked down to the San Blas neighbourhood

afterwards for lunch and sightseeing. We ate at the Muse where we had a wonderful homemade pumpkin soup with a fresh baguette for less than US\$2 each. Nearby San Blas church is worth a visit to see a fine carved wooden pulpit created out of one piece of wood. Walking back down to the main Plaza of Cusco we found many artisan shops to explore. On the last night of our Explore tour we all went to dinner together at the Inca Grill and talked enthusiastically about all our recent experiences.

The next morning we had to pack and move hotels as the trekking company had booked us into a different hotel – the San Augustin Plaza. Fortunately this hotel was in the same chain as the El Dorado and just a block and a half down the street so a porter carried our luggage there for us. The rate for the two nights before our trek and one night after was US\$48.50 per night for the twin room and two breakfasts. As soon as we had dropped our luggage and rechecked our valuables into the safe deposit as the desk, we set out for the bus station that served Pisac. As we had

... continued on page 20

A JOURNEY TO HAIDA GWAII

(or the Queen Charlotte Islands)

story and photos by Jane Mallory



The ketch Island Roamer ...



... and roaming on the beach

Haida Gwaii is the native name for the archipelago off the northern coast of British Columbia, ancestral homeland of the Haida people, also known as the Queen Charlotte Islands. This most westerly region of Canada, known for its variety of natural species and conservation concerns, is an interesting and exciting destination for travellers interested in ecology and the environment. Last summer, after several years of dreaming of such a trip, my husband and I joined a group of 14 other Canadians and journeyed to these islands. It was a wonderful, unique and fun filled ten days.

There are few roads on Haida Gwaii. It is possible to travel to the area independently, booking accommodation and rental car through the island tourism centre in Queen Charlotte City, www.qcinfo.ca, but we decided to take a tour as we felt we would learn more that way. We decided on Quest Nature Tours of Toronto www.quest-naturetours.com, which has been in business for 35 years and leads tours and expedition voyages within Canada and to many international destinations.

We flew Air Canada from Toronto to Sandspit via Vancouver, where we met the rest of our group. Our guide for the land portion of our trip, named Charlotte herself, spent two days showing us the highlights of Graham Island. A naturalist with a wealth of knowledge and concern for the environment, she came to visit several years ago, fell under the spell of the islands and stayed. We travelled by bus and stayed at B&Bs. We visited beaches, bogs, forest ecosystems as well as museums and historical settlements. One outstanding accommodation was the Copper Beech House B&B in Massett, www.copperbeechhouse.com, where our host, David Phillips, was an excellent chef and went out of his way to introduce us to the local produce and cuisine.

There are few communities here, but we visited the villages of Massett, Old Massett and Skidegate which display their native heritage as well as the history of fishing and logging here. We visited a centre of native crafts in

Old Massett and a shop with artistic gold and gemstone jewellery in Tlell, called Crystal Cabin Gallery. A large museum is being erected in Skidegate to gather and preserve the history and culture of the Haida people. This facility is due to open in June 2007, which would make next summer a good time to visit the area. Information on this opening can be found by e-mailing the museum at muse@qcislands.net.

A highlight of this time was a traditional feast hosted by a Haida family in their home. We had a chance to sample local delicacies including kelp with herring roe, small barbecued fish, venison, several varieties of salmon, wild rice and a dessert of wild berries.

The next day we bid goodbye to Charlotte and were driven across logging roads to Moresby Camp. Here we met the crew of the *Island Roamer*, a 68 foot sailing ketch which was to be our home for the next week while we made our way along the coast of Moresby Island to Ninstant, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The crew consisted of skipper, mate, cook and biologist, a friendly and knowledgeable foursome who looked after us and led our expeditions into the rainforest, along the tidal beaches and through the abandoned Haida settlements. Our accommodation was in double-bunk cabins. Our interest in this trip was the natural history of the area, rich in diversity of fauna and flora, the temperate rainforest environment, and the history and culture of the Haida people. We were not disappointed in our experience. The operators of the marine tour, Bluewater Adventures, www.bluewateradventures.ca, are strongly committed to education and conservation. They work in partnership with local research programmes, sending their observations and experiences on to environmental study groups. Quest tours had booked our stay on the boat as part of our 10 day trip. A similar week-long sail around the islands can be booked separately on an individual basis.

Our days were full. Most mornings we would go ashore in a Zodiac to explore the shoreline and hike along wooded trails. Over the course of the week we visited several forest ecosystems and on our walks learned about unusual species that make their home in these islands. We also kept a list of things we observed. By the end of the trip we were amazed at how many species we had seen, a number of them unique to these islands.

We visited several Haida village sites, now maintained

by resident 'watchmen', who can describe the history of the local Haida. The arrival of European explorers and traders served the indigenous population poorly. In the meeting of the cultures the newcomers brought not only outside authority but smallpox, which wiped out close to 90% of the local people. The survivors were unable to sustain life in their villages and moved to Massett and Skidegate on Graham Island. The remains of the longhouses and totem poles lie undisturbed where they have fallen, a tribute to the people who lived here.

Several times we were privileged to meet and hear stories of their history from Haida Elders. This was no ordinary tourist trip but a chance to learn about the history and culture of this important West Coast aboriginal group.

As we travelled along the coast we moved into the Gwaii Haanas, a National Park Reserve jointly managed by Ottawa and the Haida people. Development and residency is limited here and entry is by permit only. Stringent laws protect the environment.

Shore walks and forest rambles were not our only activity. We travelled daily towards the southern tip of Moresby Island, mooring each night in sheltered coves. I had been somewhat concerned about sailing on a small craft in potentially stormy seas but the water was fairly calm at that time

of year (August) and the crew considerate of our landlubber ways. While under way, most of us stayed on deck to observe our passage and chat with the crew. Below deck was an extensive library of information on the Haida culture and the islands. Accommodation was somewhat cramped but comfortable and our meals were varied, delicious and hearty.

Whale watching was a favourite pastime. One day we spent close to five hours, with the engine and generator off (our crew being very environmentally conscious), as we watched several pods of whale feed around us. The naturalist estimated close to 100 creatures: fin, humpback and minke whales and white-sided dolphins circled the boat unperturbed by our presence. It was an incredible once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Most of our days were sunny but when we had misty or rainy weather we went forth anyway, having been advised to bring rain

suits and rubber boots in our gear. One misty drizzly morning we took kayaks or travelled by Zodiac to explore tidal



Craft Lodge, Old Massett

pools around an inlet. We saw a variety of starfish, molluscs, sea urchins, jellyfish and crabs. It was so interesting we forgot the weather!

Our destination at the southern tip of Moresby Island was Ninstints, known to the Haida as Skung Gwaii. Here stand the remains of a major Haida village. Some totem poles are still standing but time and weather are taking their toll. Haida elders do not want reconstruction or any interference for they feel the spirits of their ancestors are here and the site should be left to return to its natural state. Like many of the other communities we visited, it was abandoned in the 19th century when smallpox invaded. A visit to such a special place was almost beyond description. We had learned a bit of the culture of a proud people. We

had seen the remains of their history in this site, the quiet forest and open beaches, the totem sentinels standing or lying awry, as nature reclaims its own. These are memories that will stay with us for a long time.



Going ashore!

We returned home from our trip with so many stories of our adventures, too many to relate here. Experiencing lush rainforest and primal nature within our own country, hearing the history of the Haida people from the Elders, living closely with like-minded travellers on a sailboat for a week ... these things and so much more made this an outstanding trip.

From now on I will be aware of the heritage of these islands and will always call the Queen Charlottes by their original name – Haida Gwaii. 🇺🇸

from the bookshelf

HAIDA GWAII

QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS

Land of Mountains, Mist and Myth

Photographs by George Fischer

If Haida Gwaii is indeed in your plans, you may like to treat yourself to a newly-published book with the above title. It will inspire your own photography and be a wonderful souvenir of your visit. Within the book's pages, George Fischer reveals the islands' varied topography: its rugged terrain and coasts, snow-capped mountains, alpine meadows, spiritual rain forests, deserted beaches and unique culture. Stunning photographs have been assembled from all areas of the islands to capture the landscape, atmosphere and sense of community.

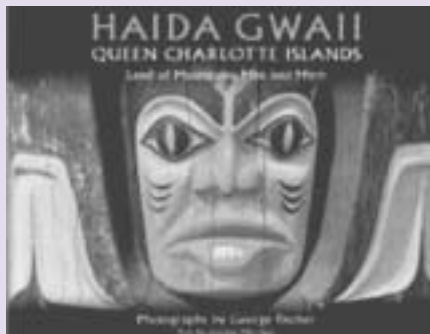
Books by Toronto-based George Fischer have been mentioned in our pages before, and many travellers have seen his beautiful Canadian posters which include Ile-de-la-

Madeline, the west coast, lighthouses and waterfalls, the signs of Toronto and Montreal, the St. Lawrence River and the Historic Houses of Fredericton. George has also published books and posters on a variety of overseas destinations, including Cuba, Guatemala, Paris and the Maldives.

A visit to www.georgefischerphotography.com gives

a good idea of the range and beauty of George's work and his books and posters can be ordered on line. They make wonderful gifts. On the site you will also read that George occasionally leads photographic tours from his summer home in the Magdalen Islands.

Haida Gwaii contains 80 full-colour photographs in its 96 pages; the cost is C\$29.95. Enjoy!



Nature Tours of Yukon has announced the launch of its newly-designed website www.naturetoursyukon.com. This company offers a comprehensive selection of packaged summer tours that showcase the beauty and versatility of true Canadian Northern Adventure. Choose between soft adventure tours like hiking the famous Chilkoot Trail and paddling the mighty Yukon River or join van tours up the Dempster Highway, crossing the Arctic Circle and dipping toes in the Polar Sea, while staying at nice hotels in the evening – a unique and unforgettable experience! The company also assists travellers with their self-guided adventures, if that is what they prefer. They offer transfers to all major rivers in the Yukon, rent first-class equipment such as canoes, camping and paddling gear, as well as taking care of charter flights and other travel needs. Their third expertise is designing customized vacations. Whether it is a self-drive tour for a couple or group of friends or a comprehensive three-week adventure trip for a school, Nature Tours can help. As a company spokesperson says: “The Yukon Territory is one of the last spots on earth with wide, pristine wilderness, scenic beauty and natural phenomenon like the midnight sun and northern lights. Come up north and see for yourself. We promise you'll find a magical place that is ‘larger than life.’” For more information contact Torsten Eder at torsten.eder@naturetoursyukon.com or visit www.naturetoursyukon.com.

Transat Holidays has released its new Summer/Fall 2006 brochure, featuring a total of 74 hotels located throughout Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Saint-Martin/Sint Maarten. Again this summer and fall, Transat will be featuring an early booking bonus programme. The operator says the best deal is the Paradisus Palma Real in Punta Cana where savings of \$720 per couple for a two-week stay in a Deluxe junior suite are available. As well, agents can save their clients money all season long by getting them to book and pay for their holiday at least 35 days prior to departure. Savings of up to \$400 per couple will apply at the Crown Paradise Club, in Cancun, for guests booking a two-week stay in the Crown Club room. For complete details on the new program, check out www.transatholidays.com.

Sunwing Vacations is offering a special “Worry Free Vacation Security Plan” for travellers over 50. The plan features two components – a travel protection plan and a cancellation policy. The travel protection

plan provides travel with full medical coverage up to \$1 million dollars with no age limit. As well, there’s also coverage on post-departure trip interruption, travel delay and baggage delay and baggage/travel document loss. The cancellation policy allows any passenger to cancel their trip up to three hours before departure for any reason. Travellers will be given a financial refund and travel vouchers (amount of each depending on the date of cancellation), and allowed to re-book within the year at no extra cost. Rates for Sunwing’s “Worry Free Vacation Security Plan” range from \$59 to \$129, depending on the length of stay, with coverage for a traditional seven-night holiday costing \$99 per person. Sunwing is also offering vacationers a No Charge Hurricane Threat Guarantee for vacations from 1 June through 30 November. This guarantee means travellers can change their departure date, exchange the trip for another destination or cancel with a full refund. For more information visit www.sunwing.ca.

Wild Women Expeditions (WWE), Canada’s largest all-women adventure company, is reporting a large increase in the number of participants in their all-women getaways in 2006 over last year. Wild Women Expeditions (WWE), in operation since 1991, expanded its offerings beyond Northern Ontario in 2005 to include adventure trips across Canada from the Pacific Rim to Cape Breton and as far north as Hudson Bay. Visit www.wildwomenexp.com.

Calling all food lovers! There’s a Toronto-based company called **Gourmet Safari** that can take you to in search of good food and wine! Destinations include Italy, France, Spain and Morocco and details can be found at their excellent website www.gourmetsafari.com or by calling 1 800 839 5795. TS has met with company owner Jackie Deknock who is delightful ... we are sure on any of her trips you will be in good hands!

Bhutan anyone? **Active Journeys** offers 9-day vacations to this mystical land between September and November (with the 22 September departure trip increased to 10 days - at no extra charge - in order to include the Thimpu Festival). This is largely a trekking tour, following the wilderness trail know as the Druk Path - one of the most scenic and famous in Bhutan. For information and brochures on this and the other fascinating offerings from Active Journeys, call 1 800 597 5594 or visit www.activejourneys.com

missed the Pisac excursion due to the festival, we planned to do it on our own. The local bus cost us about 70 cents each way and took an hour. Upon arrival we wandered through the very tourist-oriented market for a while before setting out for the Inca citadel above the town. There is a steep 5 km climb up on foot or a 10 km road route for taxis. We walked up as we felt we needed to make the effort as training for the trekking to come and took a taxi down which cost about US\$8. The trail climbed up through agricultural terraces and gave good views of the valley below. We had brought a picnic lunch to enjoy on one of the cliff view points.

The site has defensive ruins, temples and several irrigation channels that still work, all covering an extensive area. After our return to town, we bought several small pottery souvenirs from an artisan we had watched painting them (they were about a dollar each) before returning to Cusco on the 3 o'clock bus. That evening in Cusco we went to a folklore show that was free with the tourist ticket given to us by Explore on our first day in Cusco – a ticket that in fact covers 16 different sites and/or events in the area. There were 10 dancers in a variety of costumes who danced for over an hour. I wouldn't call it a great show, but it was quite a pleasant way to spend an evening.

On our last day before the start of the trek, we spent the morning sightseeing around Cusco, visiting the Inca Museum, the beautiful 5-star Hotel Monasterio del Cusco set in a historic convent and just wandering some of the interesting old streets. At noon, we went to Andean Treks head office to meet our guide and to be briefed further on our trek, which was to cross two 5,000 metre passes and climb one trekking summit of 5,500metres (or 1,7876 ft.). We were also given our trekking duffle bags which we took back to our hotel to pack. That night we went to the Govinda veg-

etarian restaurant where we enjoyed spinach soup followed by a tomato, spinach, cheese and rice main course plus a pineapple dessert, all for about US\$3 each.

We were to leave early the next morning for the trek which will be covered in Part 2 of my story. Highlights for us in our touring and sightseeing section had been the lovely colonial town of Arequipa with its fine old convents, the Inca festival and of course Machu Picchu. But other memories will linger, such the locals spinning, knitting and weaving on Taquile Island, the train trip from Puno to Cusco and horseback riding through the countryside. No one in our group had any personal safety concerns and, using money belts and hotel safe deposits, no theft problems. We did have a couple of people who had minor intestinal problems in spite of always drinking bottled water, but Imodium and appropriate medication dealt with them quickly. Peru makes a very fine touring destination.

Explore Worldwide can be contacted at Trek Holidays in Edmonton, tel: 1 888 456 3522 or adventures@trekholidays.com I find most experienced travel agents know this company (and if they do not I would recommend finding another agent). **Andean Treks Inc.** is likely not as well known. They can be found at www.andeantreks.com or 1 800 683 8148 or 32 Russall Avenue, Waterton, Maine 02472. My agent and I find telephoning is usually the best way to go. 🇺🇸

J. Helen Parkyn's account of her trek in Peru will appear in the next edition. Lest you think such an adventure is not for you, Helen tells us in her second story that she is, in fact, a retired senior – "a fit one" she adds. So get out those hiking boots!

airline news

*Philanthropists among you may like to hear that **Aeroplan** has launched a new programme called *Beyond Miles*, whereby Aeroplan members can donate their Aeroplan Miles to programmes committed to improving lives and enriching communities at home and abroad. The organizations include Engineers without Borders, Médecins Sans Frontières, Schools Without Borders, the Stephen Lewis Foundation and Veterinarians Without Borders. Beyond Miles also supports Air Canada's Kids' Horizons programme. Full information at www.aeroplan.com.

* If you find your travel agent is reluctant or unable to book you on **Tango**, the reason is that **Air Canada** has removed these flights from agents' Global Distribution Systems and thus are no longer paying agents' commission. As is to be expected, there has been an outcry in the travel industry.

at the movies

As a travel editor I sometimes get invited to fun - and unexpected - events. Thus it was that I recently enjoyed the media opening and Toronto premiere of the OMNIMAX film **Bugs! A Rainforest Adventure**. My hosts thought it would be of interest to travellers with a rainforest in their plans. This film is really aimed at children, but it is enjoyable (as long as you do not have an insect phobia) and certainly reveals the rainforest environment in a new light and increases one's appreciation for our amazing natural world. Filmed in Malaysia, the film shows a world where a blade of grass is as high as a skyscraper and raindrops are as big as cannonballs! Take some children and watch their amazement, as I did when the media opening was shared with some excited school groups. On now at Toronto Science Centre, Vancouver's Science World and Calgary's Science Centre. - Ed.

a 19-day tour with Cyril Payle at an incredible price ...

Spectacular South Africa

No charge
London stopover

Departure: 21 September 2006 & 1 March & 11 October 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 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

Galapagos Islands Cruise & Ecuador

Small Ship

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

14 days departing 7 September, 12 October, 2 November & 7 December 2006,
4 January, 15 February, 8 March & 5 April 2007

The Travel Society is proud to be able to offer its members an outstanding trip to some of the world's most spectacular destinations. Who hasn't dreamed of cruising to the Galapagos Islands and seeing wildlife as Darwin witnessed it? Think of the unique adventure you will enjoy, of the stories you will have to tell and the photographs you will take! You will spend a week aboard your first-class 20-passenger ship, taking daily shore excursions to a variety of the islands with experienced naturalists in groups of no more than 10 people per guide.

You'll also visit other destinations in Ecuador, and then you can choose to enjoy the exciting optional extensions: to Kapawi - a ecological lodge in the Amazon and/or a visit Machu Picchu in Peru. We'll take care of all the travel details. All you have to do is enjoy!

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

prices are available from all major cities

GREAT ADD-ONS, INCLUDING AIR:

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

Machu Picchu from \$1,996.00 pp/dbl

Prices are subject to confirmation

Your tour includes:

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

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.



22 days from \$5,995

*Limited to 20 Members
A few places left!*

A Traveller's Turkey

Departing: 12 September 2006, Spring & Fall 2007

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
Edmonton	\$6,275.00 pp/dbl	Calgary	\$6,245.00 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$6,275.00 pp/dbl	Halifax	\$6,295.00 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$455 (Sharing can be arranged.) **Prices are subject to confirmation**

Your tour includes:

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

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

Copper Canyon and Mexico City

*Departing: 11 September, 9 October, 6 November,
4 December 2006 & Spring 2007*

*New
itinerary!*

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

Air-inclusive prices:

Toronto, Ottawa & Montreal	\$3,760 pp/dbl
Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Winnipeg	\$3,994 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$748 (Sharing can be arranged.)
Prices are subject to confirmation

Your tour includes:

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

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



New itinerary
for 2006 & 2007

China ... Yangtze Spectacular

\$4,145 FOR 18 DAYS!

Departing: 6 September, 4 October 2006,
Spring & Fall 2007



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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES:

Departing:	
Vancouver	\$4,145 pp/dbl
Victoria/Nanaimo/Kamloops	\$4,195 pp/dbl
Calgary/Edmonton	\$4,420 pp/dbl
Saskatoon/Regina	\$4,420 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$4,590 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$4,490 pp/dbl
Ottawa & Montreal	\$4,490 pp/dbl
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

ADD-ON TOKYO

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

ADD-ON KYOTO

4 days/3 nights	\$1,450 pp/dbl
Single supplement	\$325

Your tour costs includes:

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

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



**A New
Tour**

India's Golden Triangle

21 days departing 9 October 2006, Spring & Fall 2007

No charge
London
stopover

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 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!

**Fully
Escorted**

Your tour includes:

- All international flights with British Airways
- Domestic flights
- Deluxe a/c coach transportation
- Shatabdi Train Fare
- State transport taxes
- All taxes
- All meals
- English-speaking guides and escort
- All entrance fees
- Elephant ride and Camel safari
- Baggage handling

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES: 22 Days

Toronto	\$6,055.00 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$6,154.00 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$6,154.00 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$6,296.00 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$6,296.00 pp/dbl	Winnipeg	\$6,296.00 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$6,296.00 pp/dbl		

Single supplement \$1,480 (Sharing can be arranged.) Prices are subject to confirmation

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