

The Travel Society

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Magazine



A Baffin Adventure
A Fall Circle Tour in Canada's West
California Dreams

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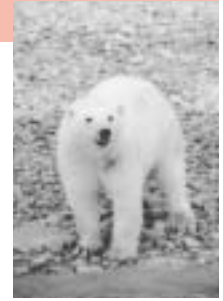
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We meet this polar bear on our first day in Nunavut (Wallace)

editor's letter ...

Seems the issue of airline packing won't go away. An amusing friend and colleague of mine - Martha Chapman - dropped me a message after reading my last letter in these pages. This is what she wrote: *Hi Ann, You will be happy to learn that Western Civilization is now safe, thanks to the freezer bag the security clerk at Toronto Airport insisted I put my hand-sanitizing gel into last Wednesday. (Silly me, travelling with a piece of hand luggage I hadn't used in a couple of months.) I'm not too sure how it goes from being a dangerous, subversive weapon to a harmless substance merely by putting it into a plastic bag. Perhaps you can explain?!*



As our days get chillier I do hope you will get cozy somewhere and enjoy this edition. An Arctic cruise may sound like a chilly story in itself, but on the whole we enjoyed lovely weather on this adventure and I want you all to have time, before next year rolls around, to consider taking this voyage. For me it was one of the highlights of my travelling life and I only hope my account does justice to it.

Observant readers may have noticed that we have not published destination stories on the United States recently. Instead, I have tried to concentrate on all the wonderful attractions - both natural and man-made - that Canada offers. However, there's no denying that a little warmth is welcome in the winter, so perhaps Nancy Macdonald will lure you to coastal California. It's an area I haven't visited, but it certainly does sound lovely.

I hope you all have a happy November. I'm sure we all agree ... it's a dreary month ... but making plans for future travels can certainly cheer it up a bit.

A Northern Adventure

I am bundled like never before: down-filled coat, fleece-lined boots, goggles, fur hat and five layers of everything else. I (a senior) am off for my first snowmobile ride and it's on the frozen Moose River. But who cares about fashion when my trip is in a wooden box on runners, towed by a powerful, black snowmobile? Up to this moment, a snowmobile in my mind was in the same category as the buzzing 'seadoo' boats that plague the summer lakes. Not so in the north, where snowmobiles are the lifeline of the people. Daryl McLeod, a native Cree, padded, helmeted and goggled, helps me and my well-worn bones into the box with the comment, "It's warm today, only minus twelve." "So what's cold?" I ask. "Minus fifty ... then we stay inside."

Soon I am seated with my back to Daryl, and facing Byron, Daryl's 15-year-old son. Daryl revs up the machine and we zip off from my safe haven at Cree Village Ecolodge on Moose Factory Island. We're headed for a day tour up the frozen Moose River and then overland to a Cree camp somewhere in this vast northern land. We fly along the snowmobile trail that runs over the ice-covered river, its banks rimmed by dark spikes of spruce. We swerve off the trail and head inland to bump and jolt along a path through the endless, uninhabited forest. The trail winds and curves and the sun makes patterns in the snow. Byron and I talk about school, the land which he loves, his family, the reserve, the youth problem, his ambition to be a bush pilot.

The camp is a lonely gray wooden cabin. I'm told the area comes alive for the spring goose hunt when schools close and whole families take to the bush to stock up for the summer season. But today the forest is silent. Within a few minutes Daryl had split wood and tossed it into the pot-bellied stove with a bit of kindling. With practiced efficiency, he adds sliced

potatoes to chunks of moose meat in a big cast iron frying pan. When everything is sizzling hot, he serves it up with pieces of bannock and we take it outside to eat on the cabin steps. The moose meat was a bit tough. "Yes, it was a big old moose," laughed Daryl.

Later, Byron sits motionless with crumbs from our left-over bannock in his hand. Two curious whiskey jacks circle, squawk, cock their heads, and then come to peck at the crumbs. Then Daryl locks the cabin door and we strap on our snowshoes. Daryl's are the originals made by his father of caribou gut and cedar. My new high-tech aluminum ones are easier to manage but don't make elegant patterns in the snow.

Back in the snowmobile we cut through the bush over a rough curving trail, down a precipitous slope and there is James Bay. The whiteness, emptiness and silence overwhelm me. I imagine how that early explorer Henry Hudson felt when he was locked into this ice-covered land for a winter. I take once-in-a-lifetime pictures, before we head down the Moose River. We pass two Cree fishermen crouched beside a fishing hole oblivious to the cold before we jolt up the river bank to the warmth and comfort of Cree Village Ecolodge.

This is where I am staying, and it is no ordinary northern lodge. Built and managed by the MoCreebec Council of the Cree nation, it combines Cree values with modern technology. Now, it's one of the most ecologically friendly buildings in the Canadian north and has just won a Canadian tourism award. You enter through a cedar lined entrance over stone-tiled floors, some bearing the foot print of a northern animal. The *Shabatwon*, the connecting great room, with its vaulted ceiling creates the effect of a great wooden cathedral. The floor-to-ceiling window overlooking the ever-changing Moose River resembles a panorama of paintings by the Group of Seven.

The picture window in my room provided me with a view of the activity on the frozen river. Snowmobiles and cars fly up and down the ice road as if they were driving on a city street. Then,

just as the sun sets, the northern sky catches fire and it is time to go into the *Shabatwon* for dinner. The room is dressed for the evening meal with natural-coloured hemp tablecloths. Meals are home style and nutritious, often with wild game or fish on the menu.

As I was on my own, it did not take long to learn about life in the north from the friendly staff. I was lucky to meet up with Jimmy Kapashesit, a local raconteur one evening. He regaled me with stories of his childhood when his family followed the trap lines, and lived in the bush for the whole winter. Some guests try an overnight or a couple of days winter camping with an experienced local guide. According to Greg Williams, the inn supervisor, they love it. "Guests from all over the world have come to the lodge. The Europeans are stunned by the vast areas with no people," he says.

I first discovered this lodge in the summer when I went to experience the Canadian north. There I found kayaking, canoeing, bird watching, fishing, exploring the island and the Hudson Bay museum. I vowed to return when Greg said, over a morning coffee, "It's even better in the winter." It was a good decision. I could have gone camping or ice fishing, or taken a day-long snowshoe hike. But exploring the island on the snowmobile and enjoying 'down time' in the lodge was adventure enough for me. I experienced a northern escape with plenty of comfort.

Would I return to Cree Village Ecolodge? In a second and for at least three days! But getting there requires a bit of planning. It is a day trip by train from Toronto on the Ontario Northlander (departing 08:55, arriving 19:25) followed by an overnight in Cochrane at the very comfortable Station Hotel. Then next day, in summer, you have two train choices to Mooseonee: the Polar Bear Express or the Little Bear. (Locals prefer the Little Bear to the touristy Polar Bear Express.) Upon arrival a freighter

canoe will take you to the island. In winter the Little Bear is the only train, departing Cochrane Mon/Wed/Fri, returning Tues/Thurs/Sat. Upon arrival, a taxi will take you over the ice to the island. An alternative is to fly from Toronto or Montreal to Timmins and then by Air Creebec to Moosonee. I chose to go by train in March when it was not so cold and I could view for the first time in my life the panorama of the never-ending white, sparse Canadian north.

Some details ...

Ontario Northlander (senior fare, one way: \$116.95, other adults \$129.95) and Polar Bear Express (senior fare, one way: \$36.95), tel: 1 800 461 8558, www.northlander.ca or, for Little Bear information and reservations call 1 800 363 7512, ex. 265.

Station Inn, located at the Cochrane Railway Station, tel: 1 800 265 2356 www.ontc.on.ca/english/04pass/04coch.html

Cree Village Ecolodge, Moose Factory, ON, POL 1W0, tel: 1 888 273 3929, www.creevillage.com. B&B rates from \$148. The lodge offers all meals, but there are other small restaurants on the island.

For excursions contact **Clarence Trapper or Moose Cree Outdoor and Discoveries**, tel: 705 658 4619 or cell: 705 365 7741 (or discuss when you contact the Lodge). This tour

company supplies down-filled coats, but you will need goggles, chin warmers, warm boots and toques.

*Katherine McIntyre
Toronto, ON*

Editor's note: I called the Cree Ecolodge to confirm some of the above details and got straight through to friendly Greg Williams who answered my questions patiently and encouraged me to visit myself some day, which I'd love to do. One point he especially wanted me to remind readers of is the fact that the lodge is on an island and that during freeze-up and break-up access is by helicopter only, which the lodge will arrange for you. Exact dates always unknown, of course, but freeze-up is expected mid to late November and break-up usually occurs in April. Greg explained to me that 'ski-doo' taxis are readily available all winter long and the flat rate of \$4 will take you anywhere on the island. "It's not necessary to walk anywhere if you don't want to," says Greg. Greg encourages potential visitors to give him a call so they can discuss their visit, and what they would like to see and do, in detail – Ed.

Notes from a Calgary reader, and more water worries!

Dear Ann:
Your October issue was extremely

interesting and I have a number of comments and observations below. Your article on Calgary and Southwestern Alberta was excellent, and very much in line with my own experiences, but I'd like to add a couple of comments. I understand that the caterers handling Isabella's Café at the Lougheed House have changed recently. This may be a good thing as I had brunch there several months ago and the group I was with agreed that it was a \$10 brunch for \$25! In the case of Waterton, you obviously hit upon the one excellent restaurant there, Kilmorey Lodge. I have been to Waterton a number of times and I have never found any other restaurant to which I would want to return. When in Waterton, I try to have all my meals there, wherever I am staying. I was very interested in your account of the Remington Carriage Museum, which I have never considered visiting. Now I shall certainly make a point of visiting it next time I am travelling in that direction.

Now to the main reason for this letter to you. It's in regard to your comment in the P.S. to the Editor's letter. To the best of my knowledge, all domestic flights with Air Canada provide water from the plane's tanks. The only exception is in Business Class, where bottled water is provided. (Bottled water, however, does seem to be offered to all passengers on Air Canada's international flights.) Your suggestion, making sure that the water offered has come from sealed bottles, will not work. Some time ago, when I was flying Air Canada and was seated in the front row of econ-

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omy, I was offered water from a jug. I asked if I could have some water from a bottle in the Business Class section. I was treated to a lecture by the person in charge, who told me that I should be ashamed of making such a request, and that if he were to provide me with drinkable water, everybody in the economy cabin would ask for decent drinking water.

When the flight attendants come round with the drink trolleys, there is always an alternative to water such as canned juice or pop. However, they usually come around once more, for example during a 3¼ hour flight between Calgary and Toronto, carrying a tray of plastic glasses filled with water from the tanks. If you don't want that, you go thirsty. A recent traveller told me that she took the water offered and that it tasted as though it came from the toilet. My reply was that it probably did.

*H. A. Sherman
Calgary, AB*

My thanks to Mr Sherman for this information. I believe that now, at most airports (including Gatwick which I recently used), water and other drinks can be bought in the secure area and taken on board, but of course things are still confusing and I can't speak for every airport, nor every airline. Perhaps we should also be suspicious of the tea and coffee offered on board ... brief boiling does not necessarily make water safe. Just something else to think about. Your comments welcome. - Ed.

Angry at Aeroplan!

Back in the summer I encountered a very upsetting situation with Aeroplan and I wonder if anyone else has had the same problem. Here's our story. Earlier in the year my husband had received a letter (on Prestige letterhead). This is what it said:

*Dear William Lane
Congratulations! You have earned the two enclosed Air Canada System-Wide*

Upgrade Certificates for reaching the next Aeroplan Status Mile threshold level. Keep flying Air Canada and Star Alliance airlines and you will receive two Air Canada System-Wide Upgrade Certificates every time you earn 15000 Aeroplan Status Miles. When you reach 45000, 75000 and 120000 Aeroplan Status Miles, you will instead receive two Air Canada Special System-Wide Certificates for even more flexible upgrade opportunities.

For complete details on the 2005 Threshold Bonus Gift Program and the privileges you can enjoy as an Air Canada Prestige Member, visit the Top Tier Benefits section at aeroplan.com. Giving you premium benefits and privileges is another way of thanking you – and helping to make the most out of your travel experience this year.

The letter was dated January 11, 2006 and signed by Monte Brewer, President & CEO of Air Canada and Rupert Duchesne President & CEO of Aeroplan. There followed a P.S. recommending the checking of "your statement to verify the status miles".

A few months later we planned a trip and decided to use said certificates, only to be told we were not on the list of Prestige members and could not use the certificates! However, no one could explain why the certificates were issued to us in the first place. A short time later I phoned Aeroplan regarding another matter and again mentioned the above incident. This time the agent had an explanation. Apparently the marketing department had created the congratulatory letters and issued the certificates before Aeroplan had made it known that the qualifying miles had been increased from 18,000 miles to 25,000 miles. So I wrote a letter protesting this treatment and sent it by registered mail. Some time later we received a call from an Aeroplan supervisor who told us that the marketing department had not, in fact, goofed but that the certificates could only be used in January or February. Yet there had been nothing in the original letter to indicate that the certificates could only be applied in January and February of this year. Note, in fact, that it said "this

year". The supervisor then went on to say that, due to the 'misunderstanding', Aeroplan would be sending us four Maple Leaf Lounge certificates! How insulting!

*Helen Lane
Nanaimo, BC*

*For more Aeroplan news please
turn to p. 20.*

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!

ann@thetravelsociety.com
or
**218 - 1033 Bay Street
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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.

A BAFFIN ADVENTURE

story and photos by Ann Wallace



The Lyubov Orlova anchored off Pangnirtung, Nunavut

“I thought we were the only people in the world.” It’s Thomasie Alikatuktuk talking. He’s reminiscing about his childhood, spent in a small camp close to Cumberland Sound in Canada’s Arctic. Today Mr Alikatuktuk is getting on in years, but he is a busy man. As well as making guest appearances on Arctic cruise ships he is President of the Qikiqtani Inuit Association and works internationally with the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, dealing with issues of importance to all Inuit in the region. I’m a passenger on a week-long cruise from Kuujuaq in the Northern Quebec region known as Nunavik to Baffin Island, Nunavut, and almost to the Arctic Circle. I’ve dreamed of such a trip for many years and now I’m in the ‘true north’, listening to this gracious man describe his childhood and the challenges facing his people today. Here’s my story of this trip ... one that I hope you

will consider taking too. I’ve set my account out in diary form in the hope that this will make it clear exactly what this expedition cruise entails.

Saturday

The group destined for Kuujuaq and the Cruise North expedition gather at Trudeau Airport in Montreal at 8:30 a.m. (The cruise company will make arrangements for an overnight stay in Montreal and transfers if you wish.) I sit beside two mature ladies – Carol and Marina (Carol is a great-grandmother!) – who, having cruised to Antarctica the previous year, are now anxious to visit the Arctic. “Enough of penguins,” says Carol, “now our dream is to see a polar bear!”

There is no fault that can be found with the flight on Inuit-owned First Air on a Boeing 737 that has been divided by a bulkhead into passenger and cargo sections. We’re

offered a choice of a hot or cold breakfast, both of which are excellent. Passengers begin to enquire of their neighbours, "Are you going on the cruise?" so friendships are already being formed before we land at Kuujuaq, in the northern Québec region of Nunavik, and squish into the little baggage arrival hall (more of a large shed really) to identify our bags before they are transported to the ship. Cruise North personnel are there to greet us and to take us on a tour of Kuujuaq while the ship is prepared for us, the departing passengers having only left that morning to catch the same plane as ours on its return journey to Montreal.

We all pile into old school buses for the short drive to the modern City Hall that dominates this largely Inuit community. There, in a lofty auditorium, we are treated to demonstrations by local young people – throat singing, drum dances and acrobatic games – before having a buffet lunch of sandwiches, smoked salmon, vegetables with dips and fruit. Throughout the visit locals with their children wander in and out of the hall laughing and chatting with us.

Soon we're back on the bus for our city tour, learning that this community of 2,200 is the region's largest. It lies in the sub-Arctic right on the tree line. We learn about Federal and Provincial schemes for various projects such as housing and education. We see early 'matchbox' houses where large families somehow managed to live even though the structures look barely big enough for one! Our questions about such diverse issues as employment and garbage disposal are answered, we feel, truthfully. Our guide proudly shows us the new swimming pool complex

and we have time to pop into the city's only store to see what's available. Everything, it seems, from trendy plastic shoes to bananas to fresh flowers. My fellow travellers thought me crazy when I treated myself to a bunch of the latter, but I enjoyed my daisies and carnations in my plain but comfortable little cabin for the duration of our voyage.

By mid-afternoon our ship is obviously ready to receive us. We assemble on a stony beach in a deserted harbour on the Koksoak River where large Zodiacs are waiting by the wharf to transport us – ten at a time – to the *m.v. Lyubov Orlova* which is lying at anchor in the bay. We are given our first instructions regarding safe Zodiac travel and the operation of our compact automatic lifejackets. We all make it safely (including my flowers) to the gangway and thence to

the deck where welcoming hands and smiles greet us and direct us to our accommodations.

The cabins are plain but perfectly acceptable: not too small, with good cupboard space for clothes and cases and lots of hooks which turn out to be very useful with the many changes of clothing we will do in the following days. All have outside portholes, small washrooms with a curtain in the corner for showering and lots of hot water. (I was initially pleased I had taken my own small bar of nice soap as I found the little bar provided rather harsh, but later it occurred to me that the ship's soap was probably more biodegradable than mine so, feeling guilty, I resorted to using it. So ... a tip ... take some moisturizing hand/body cream. You'll also need a wash-cloth as, in European style, these are not provided. Hair dryers are provided and there's a laundry service.)

Soon we're all gathering in the lounge for introductions to the ship and her personnel. As it's a Russian ship the officers, crew and doctor are

Russian too, but the fact that Chef Bruno and sous-chef Maxime both come from Montreal is encouraging. Also on the hospitality staff are helpful and bilingual Michelle Groulx and delightful bartender Emily Emudluk, an Inuit, who most efficiently and promptly learns our drink preferences. We're introduced to the expedition leader – Brad Rhees – and his staff (who are American, Canadian and Argentinian) and learn something of what to expect on our voyage. A little later we all gather on deck to see the anchor raised and to enjoy the passing scenery and the



Emily Emudluk and her 'berg bits' in the bar

beautiful western sky before finding the bar to toast the coming days.

At dinner we discover that there are to be three choices each night: one 'from the land', one 'from the sea' and the third a vegetarian choice. And there's a tasty first course and a dessert too. On the whole the meals were very nice. And while on the subject of mealtimes, the dining room is open seating and the young Russian women who serve are efficient (and pretty too!). Breakfasts and lunches are served buffet style with hot and cold choices, soups at lunch, sandwiches, yoghurt, fresh fruit and so on. Coffee and tea were always available in the lounge, accompanied by snacks, including yummy freshly-made cookies. For our first dinner the choices are caribou *bourguignonne*, grilled Arctic char or

vegetarian pasta. Dress is very informal at all times.

Sleep comes easily after such a full day, though some of us hear the soft intercom announcement that fine northern lights were visible. For a while I thought I was dreaming this, so by the time I'd fumbled my way into some warm clothes and stumbled on deck I'd missed the best of nature's show, though I was well rewarded for my efforts by a view of the magnificent night sky.

Sunday

I awoke at around 4 a.m. to find the sun pouring through my porthole. I squinted at the dazzling sunrise for a few minutes before adjusting the curtain and then fell asleep again for nearly three more hours. When I did eventually arise and peek through the porthole again I was rewarded with my very first sighting of an iceberg. True it was small, but first times are always special so I hurried on deck with my camera for what turned out to be an underwhelming photograph as we were destined to see many far more splendid icebergs on our trip.

After breakfast and a turn on the sunny deck in about 15° we assemble in the lounge for a talk by charming Shoshanah Jacobs, a PhD. Candidate for her studies of thick-billed Murres. Shoshana tells us about her work on these birds and the environment as well as some of her experiences in the field, where she's had some exciting encounters with polar bears. By mid-morning our first shore excursion is on the agenda and we hurry to our cabins for our outdoor clothes, life vests and rubber boots as we've been told it's to be a 'wet' landing. But, it turns out, we land dryly against the rocky 'platforms' on the west side of Akpatok Island, from where we walk onto the pebble beach. It's a barren landscape of limestone dunes and golden cliffs here. There's no wildlife in sight, but there are lots of Arctic flowers and some of us hike up a stony ridge to see the remains of an oil exploration camp, sadly abandoned before laws required such settlements to be dismantled. However, it does provide visitors with a glimpse into the past.

Mention should be made here that on all our shore landings we are accompanied by Bruce Qinuajuak, an Inuit member of the expedition staff. Bruce is armed for our safety; he always takes the first Zodiac (usually five or six are put to use) and disembarks first to take up a position on high ground to watch for bears.

After lunch it's into the Zodiacs again. We are not going to disembark this time, but we hope to see polar bears. We have travelled around Akpatok Island during lunch and here, on the island's north-east corner there have been sightings in the past. We are told if the polar bears disappoint us we will still see the Murres that Shoshanah told us about. Bird-lover though I am it does not sound like much of a consolation prize, but we needn't have worried because we were oh so very lucky! On this, our second outing, we count eleven bears. But first we do indeed see the Murres ... hundreds of thousands of them on the ledges of the soaring cliffs and filling the air above us. Then we see our first bears, a couple of them, quite far away, climbing on the rock falls between the cliffs. Then we round a beach head and there is a large male at water's edge. He seems mildly interested in us as he ambles along the shore close to us and we "ooh" and "aah" and take photographs. How strange, I thought,



Mother shows off cubs on the beach

my first polar bear sighting has not been in a snowy landscape with icebergs nearby, but on a pebble beach with a backdrop somewhat similar to the white cliffs of Dover of my homeland! But our treat isn't over! We cruise further along the shoreline and soon see a mother bear with two cubs. They are beneath the cliffs and have bloody faces and paws from, we are told, feeding on fallen injured Murres or their eggs. Although they are quite a distance from us we

start taking photographs, sure that the mother will hurry away with them when she sees us. But we are wrong. She sees us and scrambles down over the rocks, cubs frolicking behind her, and soon they are paddling in the sea close to us, seeming for all the world as though they are making themselves look presentable for us and our cameras. I've been blessed with many exciting experiences in my life (including African safaris) but this was one of the best!

How did two hours go by so quickly? We can hardly believe it once we are back on board, setting sail again and warming up with coffee or tea or waiting for Emily to open the bar before our welcome dinner. We are travelling north across the Hudson Strait now and approaching Nunavut. Seas are calm, the turquoise sky is slipping to orange and a group of leaping harp seals are spotted to herald the close of a wonderful day.

Monday

There is a 5:30 wake-up call this morning for those who wish to go ashore in Pritzler Harbour. As we chug along we see Eiders, Glaucous Gulls and hear a distant Loon. We disembark at a lovely spot. How different it is from the stark cliffs and desert-like landscape of Akpatok Island. Here are green mosses and lichens, tiny willow bushes with cranberries, blueberries and bilberries nestled between them, with pink fireweed and white Arctic cotton as backdrop. Our on-board botanist, Dr. Susan Aiken, was in her element as she identified everything for us and Jason Annahatak, our specialist on Inuit culture, is along too to explain the traditional uses for the many plants we see.

I'm so busy devouring breakfast after this early-morning adventure that I miss the bowhead whale sightings that some were fortunate to catch. Another Zodiac expedition is scheduled for later in the morning – a trip into a fjord-like stretch of water known as Nannuk Harbour. But before we enter the channel there's something to check out. It's a beautifully sculpted iceberg, mysterious in the swirling fog and glistening in the oft-appearing patches of golden sun. Again we are thrilled; we feel as though we are immersed in a special-effects movie! At the end of the steep-sided channel that is Nannuk Harbour we see another polar bear wandering over a snow patch.

Some of the Zodiac drivers have gathered chunks of floating ice - 'berg bits' - for Emily's bar, so special lunchtime cocktails are the order of the day. Some order Emily's special, called Nunavut Sunrise, others have gin and tonics or even martinis. It's hard to believe it's Monday morning in the Arctic!

Another Zodiac trip with a landing is in the plans for this afternoon, but not before I've spent a quiet hour on the stern deck of the boat with my notebook. The sea is calm but covered with a sea fog, though there's soft sunshine above and it's too warm for the hat and gloves I've brought with me.

Our excursion this afternoon takes us through the channels dividing the Lower Savage Islands, but not before we all wait as one of the drivers has trouble starting his Zodiac. The fog has cleared and the sun warms us as we relax on the calm water. The *Lyubov Orlova* cannot navigate this channel, so has raised her anchor and departed in order to meet us round the other side of the islands. It's a strange feeling, being afloat in small rubber boats in such an isolated place without our mother ship!

At our planned landing spot we see a polar bear beating a hasty retreat up the hillside, so we have to wait on the water until we are given the all-clear by Bruce. Nevertheless, some cautious souls decide to remain close to the boats. The rest of us scramble up a short incline to be

greeted by a most glorious alpine-like meadow with a babbling brook, sparkling ponds and more of the lovely vegetation that Susan has introduced us too. It's sunny now, though chillier than the previous two days, and our photographs are great.

The Zodiacs engage in a bit of racing through the final stretches of the channel back to our ship. We all wave at each other. It's wonderful to see so many people, the majority of whom are seniors, having such fun!

The old movie *Nanook of the North* is shown in the lounge tonight. I watch for as long as I can (it really is fascinating) before I feel sleep coming over me and I creep out to bed. I wasn't the only one!

Tuesday

There's a 7:30 wake-up call this morning; time for breakfast before we're off. We've made passage through the night again and are now anchored off Monumental Island. It's raining lightly and there is some entertainment getting everyone into the Zodiacs due to the heavy swell. It's easier once the gangway and boats are moved to the other side

of the ship where the embarkation process proceeds smoothly and safely. There's a magnificent iceberg between us and the island which again becomes the subject of many photographs. Our fascination with them has certainly not waned. Monumental Island looms, austere and haunting through the light fog and we spot two large polar bears



Barbecue on deck in Pangnirtung Fjord



on a hillside, but on this occasion they are not what we've set our sights on. Our leaders know this spot often harbours walrus and again they are right. We see a herd of about 12 swimming along the rocky shore, turning occasionally to look at us and pose for our cameras.

As we make way again after lunch it's time to relax in the lounge where we attempt to learn a few Inuktitut words from instructor Jason prior to our visits to some Inuit communities, following which we are entertained by historian Lawrence Millman's illustrated talk entitled "What Happened to Henry Hudson". Then, as the sun has appeared, I take my book – *Arctic Dreams: Imagination and Desire in a Northern Landscape* by Barry Lopez – on deck to enjoy the fresh air, the ocean and the occasional iceberg. But I don't do much reading. Everyone else seems to be on deck happily chatting and I make a point of finding Carol and Marina to enquire if the polar bears have made them happy!

After dinner the movie *Atanarjuat: the Fast Runner* is shown in the lounge, but camaraderie on board is growing (along with our bar bills) and most stay in the bar area to socialize or 'help' with the on-going Scrabble game!

Wednesday

To-day is to be a big day in a week of big days. We marvel at the scenery as we sail past Baffin Island's Cumberland Peninsula and enter Panguit Fjord. A brief pause in the waters off the town of Pangnirtung enables us to

welcome aboard two park wardens from Auyuittuq National Park, which is our destination today. The park is renowned as one of Canada's most remote and most spectacular. The Zodiac ride up the fjord to the park's 'entrance' is a long one, but the scenery is dramatic with mist-cloaked mountains rising on each side of us. We are warmly dressed in the recommended layers for this day trip, have on our rubber boots for the expected 'wet' landing and our hiking boots in our hands. We are also clutching our packed lunches that chef has provided, that turn out to be more than adequate and very welcome.

The tide is out and our wet landing, on a sloping shore dotted with massive boulders left by retreating Ice Age glaciers, must be described as muddy rather than wet. With

much hilarity we squelch our way to higher, dryer ground where we abandon our 'wellies' in favour of our hiking footwear. We have been divided into two groups today: those who wish to walk more quickly than the others into Aksayuk Pass and those who are happy to enjoy gentler walks close to our landing spot and the park warden's cabin, where quite a lot of adventurers have congregated and set up camp after their two-week hike from north to south in the park, crossing the Arctic Circle. Here, once the tide is up, outfitters from Pangnirtung will pick these expedition hikers up by boat. I set out with the faster walkers, unconcerned about my ability as I've already assessed the average age of the group and I have no fears of being left behind. But we're a keen lot and enjoy a good hike along generally flat ground. We're at latitude 66° 25' north, just a few miles south of the

Arctic Circle, and the farthest north that most of us have ever been.

By the time we return to the shore the sun has come out and the tide has come in. We learn via our guide's

two-way radio that as the tide is in we will be picked up close to the park entrance, so we shed some of our outer clothes and enjoy sitting on the grass in the sun awaiting our ride,

though we hope someone has retrieved our abandoned rubber boots down the valley! No need to worry, they are awaiting us back on the ship where a helpful crew member with a hose helps us clean the mud off them.

Tonight, surrounded by the spectacular scenery of Pangnirtung Fjord and in the lingering sunlight of an Arctic summer evening, we have a barbecue dinner on deck. We need only sweaters or light jackets as we gather to enjoy Arctic char, spicy sausages, salads and other accompaniments, and generous helpings of mulled wine. It is all quite magical.

Thursday

Overnight we have moved slightly south again and we



above: Our Zodiacs cautiously approach an iceberg

left: We land on Akpatok Island

awake to find ourselves riding gently at anchor off the community of Pangnirtung. This is our first town visit of the trip and we are keen to get going. Town guides greet us as we disembark from our craft and lead us to the community centre where again we are entertained by gracious townspeople who show off their skills at Inuit throat singing, games and sports. We are disconcerted when we see a plane approach, not realizing that the airstrip is right in town! There is a good little museum here as well as the historic remnants of a Hudson Bay trading post and a very fine gift shop – the Uqqurmiut Centre for Arts and Crafts - offering all manner of Inuit art and locally made crafts: soapstone sculptures, jewellery, original art works and prints and a variety of woven items. Little did I think, a few years ago when I enjoyed an exhibition of Arctic weaving at Toronto's Textile Museum, that one day I would see for myself where these beautiful items are made. The weavers of the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio work in a spacious, light-filled studio behind the store and it was a great pleasure for me to spend a little time with these women, watching them work and admiring their creations. Adjoining the store there is also the Pangnirtung Print Shop and an historical Drawing Archive. Our group makes many purchases.

We also had time to wander through town, many of us trailed by cute children and friendly little dogs. We help each other remember Tuesday's lesson: "Ki-na-u-vit?" (what's your name) we ask and, later, "At-su-na-i" (good bye). We see where people live and shop (\$4.99 per kilo for bananas!), we feel compassion for the obviously unemployed men whiling away time in the coffee bar attached to the grocery store and we can't help wondering why the inhabitants don't realize how much more attractive their community would be if they would only gather up their garbage. Not for us to judge, I guess; life here must be hard.

As we devour lunch the anchor is raised and we move on, gathering on deck early in the afternoon to enjoy the scenery and wave to passengers on another expedition cruise ship that passes us on its way to Pangnirtung. Our destination this afternoon is Kekerten Historic Park. In brilliant sunshine and warm temperatures we ride the short distance from ship to shore to explore this historic site, home to an

American and Scottish whaling station in the late 19th century. There's a boardwalk here, though visitors are free to wander over the spongy tundra and many of us walk uphill for a better view of the lovely, lush scenery while Bruce takes up his position to keep an eye out for bears. What a fascinating site this is. Spread over a wide area we read the plaques and see the great cauldrons used for boiling the whale blubber, the foundations of buildings, an enormous bowhead whale skull, a beluga whale skeleton and a cemetery where the caskets are merely the barrels used for shipping the whale oil. Skeletal remains – including skulls – have spilled out from some of these. Our imaginations defy us as we try to picture what life must have been like here so many years ago.



Weaver Igah Etoangat at work in the Pangnirtung Tapestry Studio

Friday

It's to be a day at sea today as we make our way south down Davis Strait en route to Frobisher Bay and Iqaluit. But there's plenty to keep us occupied. First item on the agenda is a talk by Brenda Saunders, our polar bear specialist, although after our experiences and enjoying many of the books on the subject in the ship's little library we all feel like polar bear specialists! But, to be serious, Brenda is very knowledgeable, her talk is interesting and she's able to answer the many questions that we still have. The next speaker, Thomasie Alikatuktuk, is another treat. He is the author of this story's opening quote and he goes on to tell us about Inuit life and the importance of maintaining culture and language and respect for wildlife. The subject of global warming is touched upon and we hear that Mr Alikatuktuk is scheduled to

meet with Prime Minister Stephen Harper when both men arrive in Iqaluit on the morrow.

Early in the evening we gather in the lounge again for our farewell reception and some Russian style entertainment performed by the young dining room servers, many of whom have good voice and dance skills. Gathering for dinner we are sorry to see they have changed back into their white overalls, but a festive atmosphere prevails as we all enjoy our final dinner together. But our evening isn't over yet. We assemble again for a highlight, and one of our own making, as Shoshanah has been working hard to create a show of photographs taken digitally by the passengers. I

don't think any of us ends the evening without thinking "I wish I'd taken that one!"

Saturday

Our journey is almost over, but not quite. This morning we are heading up Frobisher Bay towards Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut. The harbour there is busy with naval and coast guard boats full of very-important-looking uniformed people strutting their stuff because the Prime Minister is, indeed, in town today. And so are we. We have packed our bags (with some confusion as we've been told of the thwarted terrorist plans in the United Kingdom) and our luggage has been taken ashore, but there's time before our flight to make a brief tour of Iqaluit and do some last-minute shopping in the extensive gift stores there. Then it's off to the airport for our flight back to Kuujjuaq and on to Montreal. We exchange contact details, we hug and wave and call "good-bye", "it was wonderful", "hope we meet again", and then ... it was all over. Together we had travelled over two thousand miles. It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience in a spectacular and isolated land; a voyage that I believe, if possible, every Canadian "from down south" should make.

A few more details ...

* This article has been long, but I could have written much more, such as a list of the dozens of **birds** sighted and listed each day on the ship's notice board, together with other wildlife. On this trip 28 polar bears were spotted.

* I should mention the little **ship's boutique** that sells t-shirts, fleece items and fine cold-climate jackets as well as hats, gloves, post cards, chocolate bars, a small selection of Inuit crafts and a few personal items such as toothpaste.

* I'll repeat that most of the passengers were **middle-aged or better** with 85 being the oldest, I believe, but also on board was a young couple and a baby! There are no elevators on board and reasonable agility is required to negotiate the gangway down beside the ship and into the Zodiacs. But there are many helping hands, a step and handrail are placed for access into the Zodiacs and there were no passengers who couldn't make it, regardless of age, weight etc. Safety was paramount at all times.

* The *Lyubov Orlova* (named after a Soviet-era Russian actress, in case you were wondering) can hold 124 passengers, but flight capacity to Kuujjuaq and Iqaluit prevents a full ship, although this may change in the future. On my cruise we were 56 passengers. Canadian passengers were in the majority, along with quite a number of Britons and a few French, Germans and Americans. The ship is shabby in places and the main lounge, unlike the bright dining room, has no windows, which is a shame. However, she is due for a refit soon so this may change. In any case, she was very clean and well kept with the crew always busy at some task or other. The cabins were as I've described. There are a few suites available which are more spacious, have windows instead of portholes and boast a small seating area, but they aren't really any more luxurious. On board there's a small but good selection of books on various aspects of the Arctic

as well as a few left-behind novels. The more we learned the more popular the Arctic books became.

* **Timing and weather.** I took this cruise from 4 August. (The week before our arrival Pangnirtung had record-breaking temperatures in the 30's!) When the sun was out the weather was warm enough to sit on deck in a sweater, but of course this may not always be the case and we did have some overcast and foggy times. Most of us overdressed for the expeditions, but when walking we just shed our clothes and picked them up on our return. Lifejackets are the comfortable modern type, like a harness, that only inflate when they hit water. Sea conditions were invariably calm; we only encountered a noticeable swell on our passage down Davis Strait.

* All talks are given in **English**, although important p.a. announcements are made in **French** too.

* All passengers receive a comprehensive booklet of **pre-departure information** from Cruise North which will answer any questions you may have regarding activities, baggage, health, weather, insurance, etc. It also contains a suggested reading list. The booklet is rather confusing only on the subject of packs for shore excursions, recommending small back- or 'fanny'-packs. However, it was my experience in every Zodiac that most passengers had packs which they placed on the floor, some of them containing photographic equipment which was quite extensive in size. You will also receive a quite hefty tome, illustrated with line drawings, entitled *The Arctic: An overview for travelers with Cruise North Expeditions* that is full of information on the Inuit People, history, nature, marine and land mammals, birds, flora and more.

* **Cruise North Expeditions Inc.** and **First Air** are owned by **Makivik Corporation**, a non-profit organization owned by the Inuit of Nunavik that came into being in 1978. Their mandate includes the relief of poverty, promotion of education, and assisting in the preservation of Inuit culture. They have been the recipient of awards for the Arctic Clean-Up Mission undertaken by Cruise North. You can read more about the Corporation at www.makivik.org. And for tourism information on Nunavik, Québec, call 1 888 594 3424 or visit www.nunavik-tourism.com.

* **Cruise North Expeditions** can be contacted at 1 866 263 3220 or 416 789 3752, www.cruisenorthexpeditions.com The cruise described above was the **Baffin Adventure**, priced this year at US\$3,895 pp. dbl. (Single travellers who indicate they are willing to share a cabin are guaranteed the double occupancy rate for that cabin, whether or not a roommate is found for them.) Other adventures are the **Arctic Explorer** (from Kuujjuaq across Hudson Bay to Churchill, MB) and the **High Arctic** (to Resolute Bay).

* Early booking is recommended for these cruises; the season is short and capacity is limited. When the information for 2007 is available check for the early-booking bonus.

* Yes, this article has been long, not too long I hope, and I trust I've painted a clear picture of what you can expect on this adventure. If any of you have questions that you think I can answer I'd be happy to hear from you. ☺

A Fall Circle Tour in Canada's West

story and photo by Dee MacPherson

October has come and gone, but that doesn't mean it's too late to plan a driving getaway in Canada's comparatively mild west coast and on Vancouver Island. The Bald Eagles can be seen around Squamish from November on and Tofino is famous for its winter storm watches. Or ... remember this story and plan to follow in Dee MacPherson's footsteps in a season that suits your plans.

It was mid October last year and our garden was “put to bed”. It seemed a perfect time to take a two-week driving holiday to Vancouver Island and environs. It was a great trip. Here are a few of the highlights and tips, should you be planning a similar holiday at any time of year. But it is worth noting that in the fall we found all accommodations cost less than listed in the B.C. Approved Accommodation Guide, and we did not need reservations on any ferries. Our trip was mid October to the end of October and the golden leaves were just about all gone, although in some places they were still lovely. The temperatures were coolish, but not cold enough to hamper outdoor activity. And of course, there is always a risk of snow in some parts.

The drive from our home in Edmonton to Kamloops was not new territory to us, but it is always enjoyable. If Mt. Robson (the highest peak in the Canadian Rockies) is visible to the top, it is a bonus. Unfortunately, it was cloudy and rainy on the day we went through so this time we missed it. Both the Visitor

Information Centre and the gas station were closed, although the restaurant was open.

We had intended to drive to 100 Mile House, via Little Fort, but unexpected dental problems forced us into Kamloops. We managed to receive adequate emergency dental care, and in the process located great accommodation at the Kamloops Holiday Inn Express (www.kamloopsbc.hiexpress.com) for \$104.00 plus taxes

per night (including a very nice continental breakfast). It was just the kind of comforting place we needed after the dental disaster!

The next day's drive through Cache Creek, Lillooet, Pemberton, Whistler to Squamish (highways 97 and 99) was beautiful – through farming country, reserve lands, along Kamloops Lake, and through some higher passes. The fall colours were just past their prime, although in the sun-

shine many were still a crisp golden colour. We stopped for a walk around Lillooet, which is situated on the banks on the Fraser River. From Lillooet to Pemberton on Highway 99 snow covered mountains of the coast range would peak over



On Galiano Island

the lower hills around us, as we followed the Cayoosh Creek. Between Pemberton and Whistler there is more traffic, and unfortunately some of the scenery is marred by large power lines. Also note that there may be construction delays due to improvements being made in preparation for the Winter Olympics along the Vancouver to Whistler portion of the Sea to Sky Highway. There is a website to check about delays: www.seatoskyimprovements.ca and a phone number: 1 877 472 3399.

We stopped in Whistler to do the “Whistler Stroll”. It is a **very** developed area with huge hotels and major shops. Although we did not check, it seems to be understood that staying, eating and shopping in Whistler is pricey – regardless of the season. But it’s worth a peek. Then it was on to Squamish where we had booked a B&B accommodation at the Nu-Salya Chalet, a Canada Select 5-star B&B Inn (www.nusalya.com). We stayed in the Tantalus Room, which includes a two-person whirlpool tub, for \$175.00 per night, plus taxes. Either of the other rooms would have been very nice as well.

While in Squamish, we had a tasty meal at the Eagle’s Nest Restaurant after a walk on the dyke along the Squamish River. We were hoping to see some of the many Bald Eagles who make their home in Squamish between November and February, but unfortunately we were a little too early.

After a lovely breakfast, we carried on to Horseshoe Bay to catch the ferry to Nanaimo. It is helpful to have a B.C. ferries schedule (available at Visitor Information places or online at www.bcferries.com). The ferry ride to Nanaimo was uneventful (1 hour and 35 minutes) and upon landing, we headed straight to our destination – Tofino. The day was mixed sun and cloud and the drive was scenic. From Port Alberni to Tofino the road is narrow in parts with lots of curves. Allow three hours to drive the 220 km from Nanaimo to Tofino.

We arrived mid-afternoon to check into our big treat – The Wickininnish Inn – “rustic elegance on nature’s edge”. We had a room on the third floor (worth the extra cost) in The Pointe, where all rooms face the Pacific Ocean. There is now a new section called The Beach, where all rooms face Chesterman Beach. Our room was large and lovely: a balcony with two chairs, a king bed, gas fireplace, loveseat and chair, TV, etc. Pure luxury! Our room cost \$360.00 plus taxes per night, and it was worth every penny! The Pointe at Wickininnish opened in 1996. It has 75 rooms, all with great ocean views. The brochure says – “our attentive, anticipatory service is sure to exceed every expectation.” That certainly was our experience.

The Pointe Restaurant, with floor-to-ceiling windows offering ocean views on three sides, is a five-star restaurant with innovative creations showcasing fresh B.C. seafood and produce, excellent wines and great service. We enjoyed breakfasts and dinners there and were never disappointed. www.relaischateaux.com/wickaninnish

Tofino and area offers many hiking/walking opportunities along the beach and in the rain forest. The hotel gave us

a very helpful map, and we spent two days exploring the area on day hikes. Shopping opportunities appeared to be more limited as we were “off season”, but there is an Art Studio and Gallery Map available. We thoroughly enjoyed our Tofino and West Coast of Vancouver Island experience. Of course the Wickininnish was wonderful, but regardless of your accommodation, it is a great part of the world to explore.

So it was with some reluctance, as well as anticipation of our next destination, that we left Tofino. En route to Galiano Island we made yet another discovery – Dunsmuir Lodge in Sydney (www.dunsmuirlodge.com). Listed in the B.C. Approved Accommodation Guide, but owned and operated by the University of Victoria, it offers private rooms (ours was quite large), a lovely dining room and lounge – in other words all the amenities of a hotel. It is situated on a hilltop, overlooking the Sydney Harbour. We paid just \$75.00 plus taxes for our lovely quiet room and view. Our dinner in the restaurant was very good too; a nice selection and good quality.

Our next stop was Galiano Island (one of the southern Gulf Islands) and the Galiano Inn and Spa, about one block from the ferry landing. www.galianoinn.com. The Inn is quite nice – our 2nd floor (top) room looked out onto the water and the Inn’s lawn and garden. Our rate was \$125.00 plus taxes, with no breakfast. We had a beautiful big balcony, and if the weather had been more suitable, it would have been lovely to sit dreamily watching the ferries come and go. As it was, we took some great drives and had a scenic hike to Bodega Ridge overlooking Salt Spring Island. The Inn has a restaurant, with the same great view as the rooms. Unfortunately, it was only open Thursday – Sunday at this time of year. We managed, however, to have a lovely dinner on our first night. There appeared to be only two other restaurants open on the island: Grand Central and the Hummingbird Pub. We chose the former for breakfast and the latter for dinner. Both were very good, offering local flavours. Galiano is home to a number of artists and there is a map available to guide you around the island to their galleries.

The next morning we caught the ferry to Tsawassen and travelled to Princeton, en route to the Okanagan. Princeton is a pretty, small mining and forestry town in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. It calls itself the “Best Kept Secret in B.C.” and offers some of the best year round outdoor recreation. After looking at several hotel/motel options, we settled on the Best Western Princeton Inn, at a rate of \$75.00 plus taxes, including a modest continental breakfast. Dinner that night was just down the street at the Belair Restaurant – excellent food and good value.

Oliver was next on our itinerary, where we visited several wineries. Oliver is marketing itself as the “wine capital of Canada”. There are a number of great wineries in the area, but we were not successful in finding good hotel/motel/inn accommodation. There are a number of small B&B’s (www.bbokanagan.com) but we have not test-

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CALIFORNIA

DREAMS

story and photos by Nancy Macdonald



I'm still "California Dreaming". Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, about 100 miles south of San Francisco, proved to be a wonderful escape from the grey winter of Toronto in late January and early February. Friends were renting a house, where I joined them for three weeks of crisp mornings and sunny days. Many restaurants offer heat lamps and open fires that make outdoor dining comfortable even at night. Early spring flowers, blossoming trees, vivid sunsets and green grass provide colours that we sadly miss at that time of year. The mountains, cliffs and rolling surf are exciting to photograph. No wonder Ansel Adams and Edward Weston are so famous for their photographic art, shown in local galleries and international exhibits.

There are State Parks with hiking trails right in the town of Carmel. Most mornings I entered Mission Trail Park from Mountain View Avenue and walked to the end near the Carmel Mission. This Mission San Carlos Borromeo was the second mission in California, 1797. The stone was quarried from the surrounding mountain range. The star-shaped window and the gardens were enjoyed by Pope John Paul II in 1987. I continued walking past Clint Eastwood's Mission Ranch. He bought this farm property on the edge of fields and marsh beside the Carmel River in 1986 to keep it from being turned into a condo development. The Farmhouse,

Bunk House and Hayloft now house renovated Inn rooms. A short walk connects with Scenic Drive on the beach front. Here surfers and seals ride the big waves, a wedding took place at sunset on the rocks in front of us and all the dogs ecstatically chased balls or birds.

I am a 'birder' and added many western species to my list. All can easily spot the noisy Scrub Jays, bright blue and beige with no crest, and Stellar Jays, all black and blue with a very large crest. Bird Island is in Point Lobos State Reserve five minutes south of Carmel on coastline highway 1. Walks are well marked and an information volunteer helps you identify the likely places to see the "barking boys" as she described the Sea Lions covering two rock islands close to shore. One sunny day the Harbour Seals were basking on available rocks while Sea Otters tangled in kelp were plentiful in the bay. A bobcat crossed the road ahead of my car and turned to have a curious look.

Another favourite hike led from a housing development just south of the Carmel River following Ribera Road. You walk along the heights, then back along the shore to the river. I spotted otter here with hungry gulls in pursuit, as they float on their backs to crack crabs on rocks propped on their tummies. For information on the numerous hikes, check out *Day Hikes Around Monterey & Carmel* by Robert Stone in the Carmel Library or order online at www.globe-

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pequot.com.

Big Sur, one hour south, is justly famous for its incredible scenery. Views of McKay Falls at Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park are a short walk from the parking lot, available even to those in wheelchairs. A favourite lunch spot is Nepentha with its many terraces and a large gift shop. Don't miss the Hawthorn Gallery at 48485 Highway #1. The distinctive architecture of the building, wonderful sculpture, exciting water features for a garden, paintings, jewellery and glass sculpture combine to make this a rewarding stop. Post Ranch Inn has breathtaking views from the Sierra Mar Restaurant, either from the balcony or the floor-to-ceiling glass-walled interior. If your budget doesn't allow for their overnight rates starting at \$525 (all prices US), at least - ladies - pop in to see the washroom full of orchids! Closer to Carmel is Rocky Point Restaurant, about 10 miles south. Outdoor or indoor space is excellent for viewing the spouts of the Grey Whales as they follow their migration path to the Baja. Spectacular views are aided by the binoculars found on each table of the California Market Restaurant in the Highlands Inn, Park Hyatt Hotel about five miles south of Carmel. Sunset views are great from their lounge and Pacific's Edge restaurant as well.

Carmel has many charming restaurants along its narrow streets, interspersed with more than 75 art galleries that reflect this town's artistic roots. The unique homes, gardens and courtyards evoke a European feel. Shopping is fun as you enter the half (Dutch) doors of many shops. There is a tour, that requires reservations, of the poet, Robinson Jeffers' Tor House and Hawk Tower. Old photos there of Scenic Drive show its origins as a deserted path. The poet carried stones from the beach to construct the family home and tower. Cultural life is evident in the reconstructed Sunset Theatre in the Community Center. The Monterey Symphony performs here. Plays, poetry readings and speakers inhabit many venues and made an extended stay delightful.

Early sunsets, about 5:00 pm at that time of year, draw everyone to Scenic Walk and the beach below. Travel a little further north on 17 Mile Drive and enjoy the view from the bar of Pebble Beach Golf Links. You can enjoy the attractions along this toll road (\$8.75) including the Lone Cypress, then spend \$20.00 in one of the clubs and receive

the toll back. We watched the preparations for the AT&T Open that takes place around the first week of February every year. We also toasted sunset at the Links at Spanish Bay. This is my favourite for its extensive 180° view of this rugged coastline. You can walk out on paths to the seaside both to the north and the south, then settle back with a glass of wine to be serenaded by a piper who walks the last few holes to close the course at sunset.

In town, we spent cocktail hour with the dogs! Cypress Inn, owned by Doris Day, welcomes any and all breeds for an extra \$25.00 a night. They were more attentive to the pianist than their owners, who were more interested in praising their own dogs' beauty and personality.

Carmel Valley leads you up a canyon created by the Carmel River and lined with ranches and wineries. Breakfast was at modern Quail Valley Lodge overlooking a pond and the golf course beyond. Our waitress at Will's Fargo for lunch said that she sees Doris Day buying groceries and Merv Griffen might drop in. The owner of an art gallery gave us lemons off his courtyard tree. A silver tea service lent elegance to afternoon tea at Bernardus Lodge, known for its winery and its spa. We enjoyed the wine with dinner at home.

It is only about 15 minutes' drive to the attractions of the Monterey Peninsula. A true must-see is the Monterey Bay Aquarium. It was suggested we go at 1:00 p.m. to avoid the

school groups. Advance tickets are available at 1 800 756 3737 or www.montereybayaquarium.org. Lunch in the glass-walled restaurant, the feeding of the sea otters and penguins, walking so close to birds that you could almost touch them and actually touching sea urchins under the supervision of the volunteers makes this a truly memorable experience. "Jellies; Living Art" displays the fine art of the marine world and almost overshadows a large installation by glass artist Dale Chihuly.

You will find many more delights if you follow my advice and stay in Carmel-by-the-Sea in the off-season. I was pleasantly surprised to find this destination affordable and geographically astounding.

Some details ...

* There is a guide to Carmel put out by the Carmel Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 4444, Carmel CA 93921, tel: 1



Mission Ranch, Carmel

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A short addition to our 'Canadian winter (or any time) city getaway' series.

I'M OFTEN OFF TO HAMILTON

photo and account by Ann Wallace

Readers with good memories may recall a piece I wrote on Ontario's 'Steel Town' – Hamilton – in our July 2005 edition. In fact, I am a fairly frequent visitor to the Hamilton area as I have a friend who lives nearby and she prefers that I make the journey rather than drive to Toronto herself. I never complain about this arrangement! I love the Royal Botanical Gardens (yes, even in winter, when the gift shop is a great lure!) while the outstanding visiting exhibitions make frequent visits to the Art Gallery of Hamilton a 'must', not to mention its fine permanent collection and audacious architecture! In return for my making the journey, my friend organizes the outings and treats, which often include a B&B stay.



The Courtney House B&B, Brantford

Thus it was that, on my last visit, after a fine concert performance by the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, we made our way to the outskirts of Brantford, about half an hour's drive from Hamilton. For my friend had learned of a B&B there that did indeed prove to be a wonderful treat. At the Courtney House you can be sure of a warm welcome from Marly and Denver Bryans, who provide divine beds in pretty rooms, bathrobes and sockies, fresh flowers, complimentary wine and snacks in front of the fire and the most delicious breakfast. A stay here really provides a touch of luxury and a memorable getaway. The Courtney House is an Edwardian house located on tree-lined Dufferin Avenue, an area that recalls the comfortable lifestyle of the old elite of Brantford. It is still a prosperous area where walks are a pleasure, especially along the nearby Grand River. You'll find full details at www.thecourtneyhouse.com or by calling Marly at 519 758 1646.

Yes, on this visit to the Hamilton area my friend had secured tickets to the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. The home of this excellent 120-year-old orchestra is Hamilton Place, next door to the Art Gallery. They offer both light and classical concerts under "Pops" and "Masterworks" headings that are well-attended (it's an enor-

mous auditorium) by Hamilton locals and visitors. Full details of their up-coming season can be found on their website. And for the upcoming season (and, no doubt, beyond) the Orchestra has joined forces with Theatre Aquarius, the Art Gallery and Opera Hamilton to form "Hamilton's Fab Four", a partnership of the four professional components of Hamilton's ever-growing arts and culture scene. These institutions have created a coupon programme for a total Hamilton cultural experience. And, of course, there's lots more to discover in the Hamilton and Brantford regions, details of which can be found in the regions' guides which are on line or only a phone call away.

As I detailed in my earlier story, Hamilton is also home to Whitehern Historic House, the impressive Dundurn Castle and many other historic sites ... fascinating places to visit on chilly winter days. The Brantford area also has its share of history, with the Bell Homestead Historic Site, the Kanata 17th Century Iroquois Village and a variety of museums, galleries and arts/crafts stores, many of them specializing in First Nations artifacts. Yes, there's lots to do in this area in any season. Enjoy and say "Hi" to Marly and Denver for me if you stay with them!

Some details ...

For **Tourism Hamilton's** Visitors Guide call 1 800 263 8590 or visit www.hamilton.ca.

Tourism Brantford's number is 1 800 265 6299, www.visitbrantford.ca

Visit www.hpo.org or call 905 526 7756 for **Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra** information.

The Art Gallery of Hamilton: www.artgalleryofhamilton.com. Their major fall exhibition, on show now until 31 December, is *Hungarian Splendour: Masterpieces from the National Gallery in Budapest*, a 75-work selection of Hungary's beloved 19th century paintings, in North America for the first time and the only North American venue for this exhibition. Admission \$12 or less. 📖

... *Canada West continued from page 14*

ed any of them yet. At this time of year, accommodation rates for hotels/motels are less than listed in the Accommodation Guide, but several places were closed. Some of the wineries have reduced hours, or are closed by the end of October, although the bigger ones (e.g. Burrowing Owl, Inkameep, Inniskillin, Tinhorn Creek) are open all year. B.C. wines have come into their own and we enjoy taking home these souvenirs! There are two wine festivals each year – Spring (May) and Fall (October) when there are many special events and new wine releases to coincide with the Festivals. Visiting the area in ‘off-times’, means avoiding crowds and some expense.

Our route home took us through Clearwater (gateway to Wells Gray Provincial Park), where we stayed at the Dutch

Lake Motel, tel: 1 888 884 4424. This is a clean, convenient motel with a nice view of Dutch Lake. Our room was \$60.00 plus taxes. Nearby is the Dutch Lake Restaurant, where we had some excellent Chinese food. The proprietors have recently moved to Clearwater and are hoping to be able to keep the restaurant going year round.

Travelling after Thanksgiving meant cooler weather, less vibrant colours, and discovering some things closed. The advantage, however, was that accommodation was less expensive and there were fewer other tourists. We thoroughly enjoyed our circle tour of British Columbia, explored some new (to us) areas, enjoyed delicious meals, drank some fine wines and made many happy memories. What more can you ask of a holiday?! 🇨🇦

... *California continued from page 16*

800 550 4333, www.carmelcalifornia.org. The Visitor Information Center on San Carlos between 5th and 6th told me that they have lower rates for unused rooms that are available on the day. They are very helpful with maps and directions for any specific interests. * In my opinion the best hotel value for location, variety of rooms and charm is **Hofsas House**, where family hospitality has been offered for 45 years. Continental breakfast is included and some rooms have fireplaces and kitchens. There is a heated swimming pool and sunset views of the ocean from a rooftop deck. Hofsas House, P.O. Box 1195, Carmel, CA 93921. Lowest walk-in rates were \$65-\$75. Tel: 1 800 221 2548 www.hofsashouse.com.

* A passion for dogs would lead you to Doris Day's hotel. Rates \$125 to \$550. **Cypress Inn**, P.O. Box Y, Carmel. tel: 1 800 443 7443, www.cypress-inn.com.

* Clint Eastwood's **Mission Ranch** offers views of the Carmel River, the ocean and Point Lobos combined with historic atmosphere. Mission Ranch Resort, 26270 Dolores Street, Carmel, CA 93923. Rates \$110 – \$265.

Tel: 1 800 538 8221, www.missionranchcarmel.com

* Restaurants. You can eat out for every meal for weeks in Carmel, but here are some I enjoyed to start you on your own exploration. Start your day with breakfast at **The Cottage Restaurant**, Lincoln, between Ocean and 7th. Dungeness crab were plentiful and huge when we visited **Flahertys Seafood Grill and Oyster Bar**, Sixth Street between Dolores and San Carlos, tel: 831 625 1500. **The Forge in the Forest**, SW Corner of 5th and Junipero has outdoor fireplaces and heaters that allow outdoor dining even when the evenings are cool, tel: 831 624 2233. There's great Italian food at **Little Napoli**, Dolores and 7th, tel: 831 626 6335. For a very special dinner in a lovely setting head for **Anton and Michel** in Mission, between Ocean and 7th. Tel: 831 624 2406. Just out of Carmel and worth the drive for the views, is **Rocky Point Restaurant**, 10 miles south, tel: 831 624 2933, www.rocky-point.com. And **California Market Restaurant** in the Highlands Inn, Park Hyatt, comes complete with those binoculars on the tables! 🇺🇸

Shongololo Express - Namibia

Were you fascinated by the account of the trip through Namibia on the Shongololo Express in September's issue of *The Travel Society Magazine*? If so, please call us as we are organizing a group to participate in this journey. Our

departure date will be 25 March 2007 and the trip will be for 20 days. By the time you receive this edition we will have all the details, so please give us a call and we will send you the full itinerary with pricing.

BRITAIN

We've heard of a new hotel right in the centre of **London** that looks appealing and seems to be a good price for the capital. It's the 16-room **Montagu Place**, described as a Town House Hotel, that offers 16 rooms in 'comfy', 'fancy' and 'swanky' categories. All are en suite and can be seen on line at www.montagu-place.co.uk or call [011 44] 20 7467 2777. Please let us know if you stay at this property ... we'd love to hear all about it.

CANADA

Ottawa in your plans? With all its galleries and museums it's a great destination for a winter getaway. The trendiest area of the city is the ByWard Market, located in the centre of town. It offers a wide variety of excellent restaurants and shops. And now the market area has an inn. It's described as "a charming small property conveniently located amid the bustle of the ByWard Market neighbourhood. The **ByWard Blue Inn** opened in the summer of 2006 on a quiet residential street literally steps away from most major attractions, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Royal Canadian Mint, Parliament Hill and more. The Inn is an exceptional value with rates that start at \$79 per night, including breakfast." Visit www.byward-blueinn.com for more information or call 1 800 620 8810.

COSTA RICA

Enjoy hiking? Single? Then you make like to hear about Comfortable Hiking Holidays' Costa Rica adventure in 2007. This 8-day trip visits the volcanic springs in **Tapanti National Park**, the **La Selva Biological Station**, takes a boat tour of the **Cano Negro Wildlife Refuge** and a trek to the **Arenal Volcano National Park**.

Accommodation will be a mix of hotels, lodges and casitas, often right in the heart of the rainforests and reserves where the hiking has taken place. Departure date is 17 February at a land-only cost of C\$1,999 which includes en suite accommodation, all meals, 6 guided hikes, park fees, ground transportation and transfers. For further information tel: 416 445 2628, e-mail: info@letshike.com, www.letshike.com

CUBA

Cuba is planning a new tourism campaign – watch out for it in newspapers and on TV – with a view to encouraging Canadian 'snowbirds' to the island. Apparently Canadians are the only visitors that can stay in Cuba for up to six months. For information and ideas log on to www.cuba.tc or enter 'Long stays in Cuba' in your search engine.

JORDAN

When Jordan is included in tours of the Middle East it seems to be accorded only a couple of days ... usually just time enough to visit the magnificent site of **Petra**. From what we hear at TTS that seems to be a shame as obviously the country has a great deal more to offer. This becomes apparent from their *Visitors' Guide*, which – along with full-colour photographs – gives information rather as this publication does: accommodation and restaurant suggestions in all price ranges from "luxurious" to "rest house", museums and other attractions, admission charges, driving directions from **Amman** to other destinations or the bus companies that serve them, desert camps, birdwatching, Dead Sea resorts and more. Request a copy of *Jordan Visitors' Guide* and see if you think a visit to this country is for you: 1 877 SEE JORDAN, or order online at www.see-jordan.org. Other tourism brochures include *Biblical Jordan*, *Eco-Jordan* and a *Jordan Overview*.

NEW GUINEA

A new heading for these pages, we believe. Tour company Tauck have announced that it has a new cruise to some of the 600 **New Guinea islands** in October next year. The 15-day trip isn't cheap at prices from US\$8,490 per person, plus air, but it certainly sounds unique: a two-night pre-stay at a five-star beachfront resort in **Australia**, a one-night post-stay in **Cairns** and an 11-night exploration of New Guinea onboard the 106-passenger luxury expedition vessel *m.y. Orion*, which carried Zodiacs, sea kayaks and snorkeling gear. The islands are home to nearly a thousand different tribal groups, many living much as they have for centuries, and many with their own distinct language. New Guinea is also a natural wonderland, with coral reefs, fjord-studded coasts, rainforests, and deserted beaches. Although it represents less than 1% of the world's total landmass, New Guinea contains more than 5% of the world's biodiversity and includes many species found nowhere else on the planet. Two trips are planned for 2007, departing 9 October and 20 October. For the full details call 1 800 214 5158 or visit www.tauck.com and click on 'Australia'.

U.S.A.

How about a luxury fall/winter week-end getaway to **Chicago** to visit some museums or do a little shopping? The Hyatt Regency McCormick Place has a week-end package 19-23 November and every week 9-30 December at a nightly rate of US\$119. Call 1 800 233 1234 or visit www.hyatt.com for details.

● Calling all those with allergies, celiacs, etc. You may like to know about the *Multi-Lingual Phrase Passport*, part of the *Let's Eat Out! Your Passport to Living Gluten and Allergy Free* series, which has just won the Best Books 2006 National Award in the Language Guides category from USABookNews.com. The press release on this book and its award states “[This] innovative pocket-sized guide empowers travelers with food allergies, celiac and those following specialized diets to safely eat outside the home. The *Passport* includes over 1200 food allergen phrases about corn, dairy, eggs, fish, gluten, peanuts, shellfish, soy, tree nuts and wheat to help readers confidently travel in foreign countries. These considerations outline ingredients, food preparation, techniques, dining requests, breakfast dishes and health statements.” The languages involved are what we, in the West, would consider ‘mainstream’: French, German, Italian and Spanish, but nonetheless this opens a wide choice of countries to those who hesitate to travel because of food constraints. Each phrase has been translated by professional translation services and validated by native speakers to ensure accuracy and consideration of contemporary cultural idioms.

Both the 500-page full-colour *Let's Eat Out!* and the companion *Passport* are co-authored by Kim Keoller and Robert La France. Koeller, with an MBA in International Management, is a celiac businesswoman who has to deal with over a dozen food-related allergies as she travels the world and eats about 80% of her meals away from home. La France is a veteran of the restaurant industry, a specialist on how restaurant staffs can (and should) accommodate guests with special dietary needs.

For more information visit www.allergyfreepassport.com or www.glutenfreepassport.com. The series is available from R & R Publishing, www.rnrpublishng.com or from on-line book distributors or at local bookstores worldwide. On the publisher's website the prices for the two volumes are US\$24.95 and \$9.95.

● *First-Time Around the World: a Trip Planner for the Ultimate Journey* may sound like a book you do not need, but even if the ultimate journey is not in your plans you are sure to pick up interesting information and many a tip from this book, published by The Rough Guide people. It has chapters on costs and savings, working and volunteering, documents and insurance, staying in touch, health and security and much more. It also contains regional profiles, broadly divided into continents. Priced at C\$23.99 this would make a great little gift for travelling friends or young people contemplating that first big trip, whether it's actually around the world or not.

● Other very nice gifts for your travelling friends (or, of course, yourselves) would be a volume from the *Traveller's Companion* series, published by Interlink. Rather than being a standard-type guide of places to see, places to stay (which your friends may already have) these guides are designed for the “cultured tourist”; they bring cities to life through the letters, memoirs, diaries and literature of both locals and visitors, from kings to courtesans, through the ages. Cities such as London, Dublin, Moscow, Istanbul, Madrid, Florence, Venice and Prague are included in the handsome series. I can't imagine a more interesting way to spend a few airborne hours than with these travel/history books. Their prices in Canada are around the \$23 mark. If nature rather than cities is the interest of you or your friends, Interlink also publish a fine series of *Wildlife Guides* to destinations such as the Galápagos Islands, Peru, Costa Rica and Belize. Each volume contains full-colour illustrations of local flora and fauna with information on locations, ecology, conservation and more. Each book is written by professional wildlife biologists or zoologists and they'd make ideal companions for nature-loving travellers. Prices in Canada around \$45. These volumes can be found in bookstores or ordered on line from your favourite book site or directly from Interlink at www.interlinkbooks.com. Happy reading and enriched travelling ensured!

airline news

Aeroplan miles ... use 'em or lose 'em!

You may have read about it in the daily press, but I'd better give you the 'head's up' here too, just in case you were away and missed the brouhaha. Air Canada's Aeroplan rewards programme is changing and, in the opinion of most, not for the better.

As of 1 January, 2007 Aeroplan will start date-stamping its miles each month and any miles not redeemed within a seven year period will be deducted (i.e. gone, not yours anymore) from members' accounts. Aeroplan chief executive Rupert Duchesne said of the new plan, that seven years is a long time and he doesn't expect much resistance. Mr Duchesne obviously doesn't realize that some folks are collecting miles on, say, short business or family trips with a view to the big trip one day when they retire.

And, if that's not enough to worry about, also beginning next 1 July, Aeroplan members must keep in mind that they

must use their accounts at least once a year to keep them active. If points are not added or redeemed at least once during that time - they automatically expire. Again, according to the company it its wisdom, members “should have little trouble keeping accounts active: a tank of gas at Esso, a Bell bill, or an Air Canada flight once a year will do it.” True, but it's just something else to think about and an underhand way of doing business. But not to worry, Aeroplan partners (that's a laugh) can reinstate their expired account for \$30 plus one cent per restored mile. Gee thanks!

In an effort to provide some good news along with all this, Aeroplan also announced they will make it easier for members to redeem their points for *any* seat on Air Canada flights. However, as Aeroplan will have to buy seats directly from Air Canada, redeeming points on some routes will/may require more points than flyers anticipate. Good luck all! AW

A new tour

CHINA SILK ROAD

Departing: 15 March & 10 September 2007

Perhaps you are one of the many people who have come with The Travel Society on our China Yangtze Spectacular tour of China? Or perhaps you have always been fascinated by tales of the Silk Road? Whichever the case, we hope you will be thrilled to hear about our new, 20-day Silk Road tour. Come with us from Canada to Beijing, Urumqu, Kashgar, Turpan, Jiayuguan, Dunhuang and Xi'an before ending your tour in Shanghai. Lakes at sunset and mountains at dawn; lush vineyards and spectacular deserts; exotic walled cities and ancient ruins; colourful ethnic minorities, nomads, imams, merchants and saints; Great Bazaars

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing:

Victoria	\$5,490 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$5,370 pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$5,500 pp/dbl	Calgary	\$5,500 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$5,620 pp/dbl	Halifax	\$6,100 pp/dbl
Toronto, Montreal & Ottawa	\$5,670 pp/dbl		
Single supplement	\$1,290 Prices are subject to confirmation		

selling camels and donkeys, carpets and spices; caravansaries, gardens and pagodas; train trips and cultural shows and, would you believe, the 492 Mogao grottoes known as the Cave of the One-Thousand-Buddhas. All this and more you'll experience on this trip. Call us now for the detailed itinerary and start dreaming of discovering part of the fabled Silk Road of China.

Your tour costs includes:

- Round trip transpacific air on Air Canada
- All domestic air and coach transportation
- All transfers and baggage handling
- 4-star accommodations
- 1 sleeper on overnight train
- 3 meals (except on free days in Beijing & Shanghai)
- Daily sightseeing
- Local English-speaking guides

China ... Yangtze Spectacular

New itinerary for 2007

\$4,145 FOR 18 DAYS! Departing: 4 April & 26 September 2007

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 hill-sides and magnificent mountain peaks; visits to the great cities of Shanghai and Beijing; a trip to view one of the world's greatest archaeological finds ... the 6,000 terra-cotta warriors at Xi'an; scenes of palaces, pagodas, pavilions and pandas; tastes of Peking duck and Chinese banquets and so much more. So how do you choose? When you decide on The Travel Society's tour there's no need to choose because all these highlights are included. Yes, in these remarkable 18 days you'll stay in Beijing; you'll take a 4-day first-class cruise on the Yangtze with many shore excursions; you'll fly to see those centuries-old terra-cotta warriors in Xi'an; you'll visit bustling Chongquin and see its pandas; stay in Hangzhou and travel into the hills covered with tea plantations; explore the exquisite gardens of Suzhou, and visit Nanjing and Wuzhen. And you'll have time to explore spectacular Shanghai. Throughout the

trip you'll see magnificent architecture, you'll be entertained at cultural events, you'll join your hosts at a variety of banquets, you'll have time to shop, and you'll marvel at some of the most wonderful scenery on earth, all in the company of English-speaking guides. You'll travel by plane, by luxury bus, cruise ship and river boat. Many of our members have told us it's an experience of a lifetime ... and all at an amazing price!



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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing:

Vancouver	\$4,145 pp/dbl	Victoria	\$4,195 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$4,420 pp/dbl	Edmonton	\$4,420 pp/dbl
Saskatoon/Regina	\$4,590 pp/dbl	Winnipeg	\$4,590 pp/dbl
Toronto	\$4,490 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$4,490 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$4,490 pp/dbl	St. John's	\$4,850 pp/dbl
Halifax/Quebec	\$4,850 pp/dbl	London	\$4,850 pp/dbl
Single supplement	\$1,195 (Sharing can be arranged.)		
Taxes and visas extra. Prices are subject to confirmation			

ADD-ON HONG KONG

4 days/3 nights \$1,288 pp/dbl
Single supplement \$54

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

Spectacular South Africa

No charge
London stopover

Departures: 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-Too 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	\$7,680 pp/dbl
Ottawa	\$8,040 pp/dbl
Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Halifax	\$8,040 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$790.00 (sharing can be arranged)

Prices are subject to confirmation

Pre-tour - Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe ~
3 days \$1,245 including Air

Pre-tour - Victoria Falls and Chobe National Park,
Botswana ~ 5 days \$2,456 including Air

Post-tour - Namibia & Etosha - Desert Wildlife
Experience ~ 4 days \$1,185 including Air

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

The Grand Tour of Asia

Departing: 2 April 2007

Why fly around Asia when you can take a luxury ship? Our new Grand Tour combines luxurious cruising with 4- and 5-star hotel accommodation in a variety of cities. On this unique 18-night trip you'll spend a total of 6 nights in hotels in the following cities: Kyoto (4-star), Beijing (5-star), Shanghai (5-star) and Hong Kong (5-star). The rest of the trip you'll sleep aboard Holland America's *m.s. Statendam* as

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES departing:

Toronto, Montreal & Ottawa	\$6,950 pp/dbl
Victoria	\$6,900 pp/dbl
Vancouver	\$6,750 pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$6,900 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$6,900 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$7,020 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$7,360 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$2,370 Prices are subject to confirmation

Upgrade to outside large E Cabin
\$590.00 pp/dbl

Extra night(s) Hong Kong
\$190.00 pp/dbl

A cruising tour of Japan, China and Hong Kong

she takes you from Kyoto to Nagasaki, Pusan, Dalian and Taipei as well as the above destinations. These unique "trips within your cruise" enable you to spend longer than the single day usually offered by cruise lines in the major cities, in all of which you will enjoy guided tours of the highlights. You then return to your ship to sail on to the next city, finally ending your trip in Hong Kong. And this mode of travel means that interspersed with your busy sightseeing days you'll have 5 days at sea; time to relax or take advantage of all that your cruise ship offers so that you arrive in your next destination refreshed and ready to go! It's a wonderful blend of experiences in a unique trip.

Your tour includes:

- Round trip transpacific air on Air Canada
- All transfers (airport/pier/hotel/sightseeing)
- 4- and 5-star accommodations
- Daily American breakfast
- Daily lunch and dinner onboard *Statendam*
- Meals ashore as per itinerary
- *Statendam* inside K Cabin (upgradeable)
- Local English-speaking guides
- All sightseeing admissions
- All local tours

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

Small Ship
Galapagos Islands Cruise & Ecuador
 with options to Kapawi Lodge in the Amazon and Machu Picchu, Peru

14 days departing 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 \$5,995.00 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

Copper Canyon and Mexico City

New itinerary!

Departing: 1 December 2006 & 12 January, 9 February, 9 March, 6 April & 4 May 2007

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	\$3,760 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$3,830 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$3,760 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$3,994 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$3,994 pp/dbl	Halifax	\$4,196 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$3,994 pp/dbl		

Single supplement \$798 (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

22 days from \$5,995

A Traveller's Turkey

Limited to 20 Members

Departing: 24 April & 11 September 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

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Your tour includes:

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- 40 seat air conditioned luxury bus
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- An English-speaking guide/director and a Travel Society host
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Please call **The Travel Society** 1 877 926 2500 x24 or 416 926 2500 x24 for the full details. All our tours are specially priced for *Travel Society* members and are only available at these prices through our office. **TICO** **ACTA**

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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!

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- All taxes and meals
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- All entrance fees
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- Baggage handling

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