



The Travel Society

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Magazine

**India's Golden Triangle
Zacatecas, Mexico
London and Waterloo, Ontario**

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The Travel Society

Magazine

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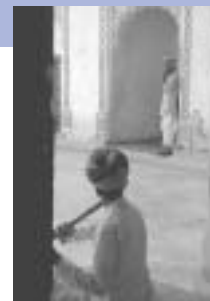
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Flute music weaves its magic in India
(L. Mayer)

editor's letter ...

So June is here at last. Time for travels in Canada, maybe, or just time for gardening, for the cottage or for sitting on the patio and dreaming about future travels. Whatever summer means to you, we hope you enjoy this edition. We have stories on two Ontario cities and an association of lovely inns in Ontario and Québec. We have a story by my friend and colleague - Isobel Warren - on a Mexican city ... Zacatecas. If you are wondering why we are including a Mexican story at the beginning of a Canadian summer it's because Zacatecas hosts a spectacular fiesta in August and we don't want you to miss it if Mexico is in your plans. And then there's India which, as contributor Lynn Mayer explains, "is not a destination to which one travels impulsively." We hope, however, that Lynn tempts you to come with The Travel Society on one of our trips to India this coming fall or in 2008. Not only does she describe beautifully all you will experience, but she also adds many useful tips and honest caveats. I'd love to be coming along as it's a country I've always longed to visit, but 23 days away from the office would mean ... no magazine the following month! I guess for me it will have to be a retirement trip.

On a more serious note, you have probably already heard that Canadian aviation authorities will, on 18 June, be distributing a "no-fly" list to Canadian air carriers that will bar anyone on the list from boarding commercial aircraft. That same day, anyone who looks 12 years of age or older will have to show government-issued identification in order to board a plane. Canadians won't need a passport for travel within Canada, but will need one or more pieces of other identification: a driver's license, health card, birth certificate or SIN card. The government says it expects a process to be in place by 18 June to deal *quickly* (my italics) with complaints about mistaken identification. No doubt what it all means to general air passengers is long delays at airports as the John Smiths, the Mr. Kims, the Wen Chans and the Mohammed Alis of this world discuss their names with security officials. (Note: over 50% of *all* Chinese people have one of just nine names!) Whatever your name, get to the airport in plenty of time!



When in India, buy pyjamas!

How many times have you travelled home on a plane or train and seen someone struggling with some weird and wonderful memento of their trip, especially when that experience has been in a foreign country? Possibly, like me, you've thought, "I wonder if that will ever see the light of day again!" While I acknowledge that some people have a knack for decorating their homes with the many interesting items picked up on their travels, most of us find our homes too small or the décor already too eclectic to indulge further for fear the place will start to look like a dollar store. Then also, on return trips, we are left wondering what to buy this time, as goodness knows, we've already enough souvenirs. I wonder, too, how many of us have opened up our precious bit of Venetian glass to find it irreparably broken into tiny pieces. Over the years my thoughts on what to buy have focused on something that is easy to pack, light to carry, useful, decorative, and as different from what my friends and neighbours have as possible.

I once had lunch on Mykonos with the purser of a cruise line and I remember that our conversation drifted to what souvenirs to buy. She told me that eventually she had found the best thing for her was pictures or other types of wall hanging. She had a long hallway in her home and these souvenirs were perfect for her to hang there. It was that conversation which got me to thinking about what would be best for me. I decided that pictures would be good some of the time, but cushion covers would also be a beautiful and useful souvenir, the sort where people exclaim, "Where did you find that?" rather than, "I see you were in Thailand". They also have the advantage of being light and easy to pack.

When it comes to clothing, I have made the mistake of buying items that looked so beautiful lying out in the

sunshine of a Caribbean market, only to end up never wearing them again. However, pyjamas are the exception. They are comfortable wherever you live or stay; so perfect for travelling as well as wearing at home. I mean the sort of beautifully embroidered cotton pyjamas that 'locals' so often wear. They pack well, are easy to wash in the basin of a hotel suite and drip dry while you are out enjoying the sights and sounds. Recently I enjoyed The Travel Society's "India's Golden Triangle" tour and asked our wonderful guide in Jaipur where I could buy pyjamas. He took me to a big store selling all sorts of cotton things. I picked out a couple of tops and then they promptly sewed the bottoms to fit me. And the pyjamas I'm actually wearing tonight as I type this I bought in Egypt. What could be better than Egyptian cotton? They cost me US\$7. Oh, I almost forgot, jewellery is always good too, but price-wise that's often a different story!

Vivien Fierson
Toronto, ON

*Years ago, on opening the little parcels in their Christmas stockings, my children looked at each other, rolled their eyes and said, "We really must stop Mummy travelling!" A survey of their shelves revealed a loyally-kept collection containing nodding Mexican birds, tiny china clogs from Holland, a Berber 'lipstick' – like a little bowl – from Morocco, worry beads (!) from Iran, masks from South Africa, a piece of wood from a galleon sunk off the coast of England fashioned into a letter opener, shells from long-forgotten beaches, a Rasta-style hat from Jamaica, even a bandit doll from Chiapas. Yes, I had to admit they had a point! As for myself, not being a keen shopper, I usually settle for a book. Not good on the "light and easy to pack" front, I admit, but I take great pleasure in my collection of books. And I don't always choose typical tourist-type photography books, though many of these certainly have a place on my shelves. In Tunisia recently, I purchased a copy of **Houses of the***

Medina, for example; a gorgeous book that gave me a glimpse into some of the homes behind the massive walls and doors that I had passed and whose interiors I could only guess at. I especially enjoy browsing the book sections of museum gift stores, and often a volume from there – a gallery catalogue or an artist's biography – finds its way into my suitcase. Years ago, trips to Turkey introduced me to their novelist Orhan Pamuk long before he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Even then his books, translated into English, could easily be found in Istanbul. And a copy of the Collected Poetry of St. Lucia's famous son Derek Walcott, yet another Nobel laureate, found in a school supplies store in Castries, is a valued addition to my poetry shelf. Sometime in the future, when I am retired and not so busy, I know I will enjoy the memories all these books bring. Now I'd love to hear the shopping strategies of other travellers! – Ed.

Cracow Notes

What a pleasure to read about Cracow in a recent edition. We spent a wonderful week there, and although it was nine years ago I know these two excursions are still relevant and I would highly recommend them. One is to the resort town of Zakopane, which is a popular ski destination in winter. It's a lovely scenic bus trip of about 2½ hours on a good road. A most enjoyable day. The second trip is to Auschwitz, again possible by bus. Pondering man's inhumanity to man on a dreary, windy, rainy Fall day is an unforgettable experience. The Visitor Centre is well organized and then you can wander around the camp by yourself. By the way, we arrived in Cracow by train from Berlin, a journey of about 8 hours.

Helen Lane
Nanaimo, BC

An Inn in Newfoundland

A wee note on the Inn at the Cape at Cape St. George, Newfoundland, a short drive out on the peninsula beyond Stephenville. If superb food, comfortable beds, gorgeous views and sunsets, whales to the front and moose and foxes at the back appeal, give it a try. It is truly affordable luxury. A large room for two opening, onto a common balcony for easy socializing, is \$99.00 (\$79 for singles), and that includes buffet breakfast *and* dinner! Be careful, though. The freshness of the air is addictive and Newfoundlanders invented kindness. You may never leave! Website: www.innatthecape.com, e-mail peterfenwick@hotmail.com or call 1 888 484 4740

*Bill McAndrew
Ottawa, ON*

Two Mexican Tips

I recently returned from a five-week adventure in Mexico, both staying with friends and travelling around using the excellent bus system. And I have two tips I would like to share with you all.

I found a great little hotel in the middle of old Puerto Vallarta. It is one block from the old Cathedral and two blocks from the Malecon (on the cor-

ner of Guerrero and Hidalgo) so in a good location for exploring the cobblestone streets. The rooms are large, en suite, have TVs and good air conditioning and the place is squeaky clean! I paid just US\$36 dollars per night for a single. Apparently it is a Government-run hotel used for training people who want to work in the hotel industry. Hotel Escuela Cecattur, e-mail: hotelescuellacecattur@prodigy.net.mx.

Now a tip for anyone flying out of Guadalajara. My flight for home left Guadalajara at noon, which meant I had to be at the airport around 9 a.m. I chose to stay at the airport hotel (there is only one) the night before and so not have to worry about a cab ride early in the morning. I knew the rack rate was US\$150 so didn't make a reservation just in case my plans changed. (I'd been told it was a huge hotel, with very few people using it.) When I arrived, the lady at the front desk was willing to give me a discount, an upgraded room, a buffet breakfast and a free drink in the bar ... all for US\$100 dollars. It was a very nice room and worth every penny after the long bus rides. And the best part, this hotel is just a stone's throw from the front door of the airport, so in the morning I checked in and checked my luggage and then went back to the hotel to wait the hours before my flight in pleasant surroundings. A good choice for a hassle free exit.

You can visit the hotel's website at www.casagrande.com.mx.

*Nancy Sollosy
Saskatoon, SK*

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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.*

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THE MAGIC OF INDIA

story and photos by Lynne Mayer

The Taj Mahal

After my husband Hal and I had booked our trip to India with The Travel Society, I was seized with apprehension. Most of my life I had longed to visit India, had studied yoga and meditation, read about Hinduism and the history and geography of the country – BUT what if the reality was a hideous let-down and my vision of India bore no relation to the country itself? The weeks leading up to our departure were a see-saw of delight and worry (with delight mostly gaining the upper hand). Although the start of our trip was inauspicious – we were bumped and arrived a day late – I need not have worried. This was one of the stellar experiences of my life.

To begin with, we were blessed with a jewel in our escort, whose amiable presence, constant care for our well-being and unflappable manner of dealing with crises definitely enhanced our trip. When she realized that the rather manic celebrations of Holi would coincide with our first day out in Udaipur she rearranged our schedule so we would miss nothing but would not get doused with coloured pow-

der and water, as is customary during Holi. Each day she checked ahead that our hotel bookings were in order, and on one occasion when she found they were not she spent hours on her cell phone, eventually booking us into an even better hotel. We were supposed to see the Taj Mahal at sunrise but were arriving in Agra on Thursday night and the Taj is closed on Fridays, so again our itinerary was adjusted and we saw the Taj Mahal at sunset on Thursday instead. And when my small but vital tote bag was inadvertently left at one hotel she moved heaven, earth and Indian transport to ensure it rejoined us two days later.

The well-known highlights such as the Taj Mahal, the Ganges and the Jain temples lived up to expectations but it was the unexpected sites that really had an impact. For instance, the first view of the Lake Palace in Udaipur was stunning! This shimmering white palace seemed to float on the deep blue waters of Lake Pichola and only the palm trees and flowering shrubs around the perimeter hinted at the island underpinnings. That night, with a full moon sailing in a star-spangled sky and summer lightning flickering, we were ferried across to Lake Palace for dinner and marvelled

at the subtle lighting enhancing the beauty of the structure and the reflections of stars, moon and lights in the smooth water. The lapping lake water was echoed in the fountains in courtyards and atria, flowers and plants were everywhere and the courteous and dignified staff served us a delicious meal incorporating Indian and European elements. It was a magical night.

Another beauty of Udaipur is the Garden of Maidens, originally built so that the royal ladies could enjoy the open air and the gardens in complete privacy. Now they are public gardens, with ponds, statues and fountains (some gravity-fed, like those at Versailles) and a profusion of glorious flowers lining the walks and spilling over the walls. This was a delightful interlude, with not a hawker or beggar in sight and only the scents of flowers and grasses.

We were promised temples on this tour and we certainly saw them. Just outside Udaipur are the temples of Eklingji, dating from AD734. We focused on just three of

the 108 temples and shrines, those dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. These are very holy sites so we were not permitted to wear shoes or socks. The lane leading into the temple site was lined with vendors selling garlands, flowers, incense and many other items, all vying with each other for one's attention, making it more like a market than a temple – very noisy and untidy. Many of the pillars and statues were decorated

with colorful paints and flowers in honour of Holi. As well as European tourists there were many other visitors and local people, there was a man sitting in a tiny space in front of one of the temples chanting and drumming and guides trying to make themselves heard above the din. Not at all a peaceful, reverent atmosphere! Yet to me the spiritual power of the place was palpable and this was a very moving experience.

By contrast, the Jain temples we visited next day at Mt. Abu, the Dilwara temples, were blinding-white in the hot sun, very clean, very quiet and stunningly beautiful. The exteriors are intentionally quite plain, apparently to make invaders think the temples had no treasures, but the interiors more than make up for this. Every conceivable surface is covered with a riot of carving, with animals, birds, plants, flowers, gods, goddesses, dancers, disciples and graceful inter-twining vines. The Vimal Vasahi was started in AD1031 and took 14 years to build and decorate. According to my guide book 1,500 masons and 1,200 labourers were employed to create this astonishingly beautiful temple. The Vastupal and Tejpal temple is equally beautiful and it is

wonderful to see how marble can look so soft, warm and delicate when carved by masters.

In Ranakpur the head priest guided us through the huge, intricately decorated Chaumukha temple, another Jain temple, again in marble except for the stone floor, with 1,444 pillars all carved from top to bottom and no two alike. The Jains are the wealthiest Hindu sect and their tithes and offerings build, restore or maintain these glorious temples. All living things are revered, they use no transport, no alcohol, no tobacco and they dress in white. There were no beggars, hawkers or vendors at the Jain temples but the downside is that no photography is allowed inside the temples.

For me the most surprising temple site was at Khajuraho. Until I saw the itinerary I was unaware of this World Heritage site but it turned out to be perhaps the loveliest place we visited (it *is* difficult to choose). The park-like setting of the Western Group is very beautiful and tranquil, again enhanced by the lack of hawkers and beggars, who



Temples at Khajuraho

remain outside the gates (waiting to pounce!) The temples are built in sandstone, which once was painted white but has now reverted to its natural reddish shade. In addition to the usual sculptures, there are large numbers of erotic scenes on the exteriors of these temples – my understanding is that they are there to encourage worshippers to leave these worldly thoughts and practices outside but all the guides I heard were

very gleefully emphasizing this Kama Sutra in stone. Whatever the subject, the carvings are exceptional – detailed, delicate and life-like.

The origins of the site date back to the 9th century but today only 22 of the original 80 or more temples survive, and they were lost in vegetation until 1835 (according to my guide book) or 1838 (according to our guide) when British soldiers found them. Presumably the soldiers were looking for something else at the time. Here, for the first time, I saw a peacock fly – something I did not think they were capable of. It was not a very graceful performance!

The Eastern Group is not as serene but equally beautiful, and we saw a spotted owl sitting on one of the ledges and a cobra in a hole by the door of one of the temples; only its snout was visible. Finally we visited Chaturbhuj temple which contains a large statue said to be in three parts: top Shiva, middle Vishnu, bottom Krishna (or four parts including the face of Buddha). Another interesting statue here is one side Shiva, the other side his spouse Parvati.

That evening we attended the *Son et Lumière* performance at Khajuraho, a most interesting and enjoyable event

narrated by a well-known Indian actor detailing the building, loss and re-discovery of the temples with music, chanting and sound effects while the temples were lit in turn with skillfully managed lights. This was a particularly full day and a very memorable one.

We covered a great deal of ground during this tour and I found the experience of driving in India is an eye-opener. There *are* highways similar to our own but most roads are two-lane, if that, poorly maintained and heavily travelled. It seems miraculous that there are so few accidents when women carrying huge burdens on their heads; people on bicycles or motor scooters; carts drawn by people, donkeys, horses, water buffalo, camels, even an elephant; tour buses, local buses, taxis, tuk-tuks (local three-wheeled taxis, usually crammed full of people and/or animals), small, medium and gigantic trucks all vie for the little space available. Add in wandering cows, pigs, goats, dogs and chickens, and pedestrians, all seemingly with a death-wish, and you have some idea of the average Indian street scene. All this is accompanied by ear-splitting noise as every vehicle owning a horn uses it at all times – not in anger but simply ‘here I am and I’m staying here’. I speculated that the horn must be the first thing to wear out on an Indian vehicle and our guide agreed it was probably true.

One day, on the way to Ranakpur, our driver suddenly pulled off the road and drove on what was clearly a dried-up river-bed. There was a well-defined track skirting the worst potholes and hummocks and we saw other traffic using it. Our guide later enquired why we had used that route and the driver told her the whole road ahead was dug up and impassable and this was the only way. As the rainy season was approaching we wondered how travellers would manage once the river was running again.

Another unexpected hazard was the massive pilgrimage we encountered on our way to Agra. Thousands of colourfully dressed pilgrims, many barefoot, some carrying effigies of Hindu saints, all chanting and cheerful streamed along the narrow road, adding to the traffic chaos. Roadside stands were set up to provide drinks, food and a place to wash and in the narrower areas we simply had to wait for a break to continue on our way. Nobody seemed to know where exactly all these people were going or why; our driver said every day was some saint day or other for Hindus and who could guess what this was about! (We guessed he may have been a Muslim.)

As we were covering a lot of ground, some of our travel was by air when we found security in the Indian airports is even stricter than in North America. Every bag was screened as we entered the airport with some being chosen for hand-checking. Carry-on baggage

was similarly screened and my tote bag was hand-checked on two occasions. Every passenger was subjected to a pat-down (men and women separately) and security guards were everywhere, keeping an eye on passengers. This is all very time-consuming and we understood the need to be at an airport hours in advance of flight time!

The train ride on the Shatabdi Express between Agra and Jhansi was a surprise. We have all seen film or pictures of Indian trains and I was expecting something rowdy and primitive; instead we travelled on a clean, comfortable, fast train with a steward in constant attendance serving drinks and snacks and a very talkative seat companion whose daughter lives in Chicago. At Jhansi we were greeted with sweet-smelling garlands of tiny roses – I was sorry they faded so fast.

In Pushkar we went on a camel ride, a first for me. What a peculiar gait these beasts have! Watching the ones ahead of me, I worked out that they place their front feet carefully in front of each other as they walk, but the back legs simply move forward about two feet apart, producing an oddly lurching motion. The one I was riding, Krishna by name, added in an occasional belly-kick to dislodge flies, which made for an interesting ride. Mounting and dismounting is also a challenge; one mounts the seated camel then leans far back as it stands up on its back legs, then one leans forward while the front legs unfold. At the end of the ride this process takes place in reverse and the camels don’t so much sit down as collapse. Hal asked if I’d be ready to do a camel safari across the Sahara: I suppose I *could* if pushed but I’d much rather not!

The elephant ride to the Amber Fort in Jaipur was much easier – two by two we stepped from an elephant-high platform onto the seat on the elephant’s back, adjusted our



The Ghats at Varanasi

weight so it was evenly distributed and the elephant made its stately way up the ramp to the Fort entrance where we stepped off onto another platform. The elephants took a short break and then returned for another group of tourists. Apparently the elephants only work a couple of hours each day as working in the heat is trying for them. A number of the elephants were still decorated with colourful designs which they had worn for Holi – it must be a major chore painting a creature so big. Apparently both elephants and camels are frequently owned by their riders; a source of income not unlike owning a taxi-cab.

Apart from the fun of the varied modes of transport our group enjoyed, I suppose the two most anticipated outings were to the Taj Mahal and the Ganges at Varanasi (formerly Benares). There is little need to describe the Taj Mahal; it must be one of the best known monuments in the world. I did *not* know that one cannot approach the Taj by motor vehicle. It is surrounded by a pollution-free zone (possibly the only one in India) and one is taken by bus to a gathering point and then on by electric bus to the monument itself. Photographers descend on every tourist group offering to

screens of the windows had very small openings and would have been covered by carpets to deflect the wind. The Summer Palace had similar hollow walls cooled by flowing water with windows and doors arranged to allow maximum air flow.

At Fatehpur Sikri, our afternoon tour, the Summer Palace was in the basement, dark and cool but very dull, while the Winter Palace was above, open and airy with wonderful views. This beautiful area was intended for a city but was abandoned for political reasons by the end of the sixteenth century, a great pity. Apart from some lovingly restored buildings and a mosque, it is home to the shrine of the Sufi saint Salim Chishti in whose honour Akbar decided to build his city. I found this a very powerful site; the energy emanating from the saint's tomb was astonishing.

Our trip to see the sunrise on the Ganges was similar to the Taj one in that the bus could only take us part of the way – in this case, because the streets to the ghats (the steps that lead down to the river) are far too narrow to permit access. We were up before five in the morning so as to be in time, and it was strange to be hurrying through narrow, twisting

In spite of being so well-known, I found the first sight of the Taj Mahal absolutely breathtaking.

take group pictures in front of the Taj or individual shots on the bench where Princess Diana had her picture taken.

In spite of being so well-known, I found the first sight of the Taj Mahal absolutely breathtaking. It must be wonderful to be the kind of celebrity who can insist on seeing this magnificent tomb in solitude because there is no doubt that the hordes of tourists detract from one's enjoyment to some degree. Still, the sheer beauty of the Makrana marble, Shah Jihan's favourite building material, glowing apricot in the light of the fading sun, was simply stunning. I learned that the four minarets at each corner of the site are tilted slightly outwards so that should they ever fall, they would do so away from the Taj. Also the whole structure is built on a series of boxes containing mahogany and water (if I understood correctly – sometimes with many guides talking at once it was hard to concentrate) which absorbs the shock of any tremors caused by earthquakes. I had not realized that the Yamuna River flows behind and below the Taj. At sunset the opposite bank was alive with people bringing their camels, water buffalo, cows and goats down to the shallows for a wash and a drink.

The following day we toured the enormous Agra Fort which at one time was defended by two moats, one containing water and crocodiles, the other dry with lions and tigers roaming in it – an excellent first line of defense – and from which are visible ethereal views of the Taj Mahal floating on a hill in the distance. Here we had early central heating and air-conditioning explained: the Winter Palace had hollow walls through which the heat from burning oil circulated while a metal roof kept the heat in and the usual pierced

lanes already alive with activity – people already working; the usual beggars and hawkers; people washing, brushing their teeth, arranging their hair - all out in the street; dogs everywhere, cows and goats wandering about; a funeral procession of white and orange clad priests garlanded with marigolds and carrying a bier on their shoulders, taking the body down to one of the crematoria on the bank of the river at a swift trot, chanting as they went – all overlaid with the pungent aromas of sewage, rotting garbage, cooking food, incense and other indecipherable scents. It was impossible to stop and take pictures as our guide moved so quickly and the streets were so confusing that there was a real danger of being left behind and irretrievably lost, not a comfortable thought.

From small, entrepreneurial children, we bought floating ghee lights, large foil muffin cups with flower petals arranged around each wick, to light and float on the river for luck. Once we had all boarded our row-boat, we were taken out onto the river and rowed along to see the temples, crematoria and ghats from the water. The ghats were alive with pilgrims immersing themselves in the very dubious-looking water, washing themselves and their clothes, standing neck-deep in the holy river chanting and praying. Cows and dogs also wandered up and down the steps in spite of the efforts of people to persuade them to move away. There were many other boats on the river, some with one or two passengers, others loaded like ours, and one containing an impossible number of standing Tibetan monks in saffron robes, all chattering excitedly and taking photographs while their boat laboured on, only inches from the water. We had seen these

monks before as we seemed to be following a similar itinerary, and a more joyful group would be hard to find.

As the sun began to make its appearance above the horizon, we lit our ghee wicks and set our cups to float on the river, taking our prayers or wishes with them. It was a pretty sight, dozens of little lights swiftly disappearing downstream on the dark brown river gilded by the morning sun. Even a non-Hindu felt strongly moved to be in this holy place at sunrise, surrounded by the devoted and watched by the gods and goddesses on their temples.

As appealing as New Delhi is, it was almost anti-climatic after this wonderful experience. Because Prince Charles and Camilla were expected the following day, we were unable to enter the Red Fort (Lal Qila) due to security but Gandhi's tomb, Lakshminarayan Temple and the Jama Masjid (Friday Mosque) were open to us and beautiful. We also saw the enormous Lotus Temple of the Baha'i faith, set in a large landscaped park. Here we acquired as our guide a young man from Boston who was happy to hear North American accents again. As lovely as the temple is, I confess I found it quite sterile and nowhere near as emotionally moving as many of the much scruffier but more dynamic temples we visited.

Writing about some of the highlights of this amazing trip has brought it all vividly to life again. It's hard to believe how much we packed into three short weeks! Now it is such a pleasure to sit sipping a cup of Darjeeling or Assam tea purchased in India while looking through some of the hundreds of pictures we took. Thanks to The Travel Society for their organization of this trip, to our excellent guides and to all the other members of our group which helped make it all so special. This was truly a trip of a lifetime.

Some tips for those contemplating this trip:

It's a long way to India! About 7½ hours from Toronto to London and another 8½ hours on to Mumbai. You might like to consider a stopover in Toronto if you have to fly there, and/or in London. The Travel Society is happy to arrange this for you. You also need to know that although The Travel Society books your flights, they cannot reserve your seats. Individual passengers can, however, (on line or by phone) and it's a good idea to do this to ensure getting on the flight. We didn't, and were bumped, but that's another story.

The climate must be considered. During our visit in March the temperatures were between 32 and 40 degrees, but with little humidity. The buses used are air-conditioned and sometimes quite chilly, so a light-weight fleece jacket would be a useful item to have along, mostly for use on the bus.

There is some walking involved in the trip, sometimes up steep steps. I would not describe it as strenuous, but one or two found it difficult.

Then there's the question of food. I could happily live on Indian food and am not bothered by the lack of meat vari-

ety. Beef is rarely served; mostly one is offered lamb or chicken and sometimes the menu is vegetarian. Fish does appear, but in the Golden Triangle region seafood is rare. Many hotels offer some non-Indian dishes on their buffets. Local beer is good, but be warned that although wine is available it is *very* expensive and, in some places, no alcohol at all is available.

Finally, if you gravitate toward the hygiene and order of, say, Switzerland, perhaps India is not for you. But if you *can* handle leaving a five-star hotel for noisy, smelly, dirty, crowded, beggar- and hawker-infested streets where cows, dogs and other animals wander at will, where privacy seems to be unheard of and beauty and squalor coexist, then by all means embrace the adventure that is India!

This is not a destination to which one travels impulsively. One's passport must have at least six months to run (if not, renew it) and a visa is necessary. Do *not* assume that all one needs to do is go to the consulate and apply. At present one can download the application from the consulate website (www.visatoindia.com); two visa-size pictures are required along with the fee (money order or certified cheque) according to the length of your visa (six months being the shortest) and, of course, your valid Canadian passport. If you are close to Toronto you can go in person to the Consulate General of India, Suite 400, 1835 Yonge Street (tel: 416 960 0751). Arrive early – 8:30 a.m. – and get a number from the machine in the lobby. The office opens at 9:00 a.m. At 11:30 a.m. they stop issuing numbers for that day. Then it's just a question of waiting. We arrived too late and with cash; after obtaining a money order we were allowed to leave our documents for pick up the following week. In retrospect we could have saved a lot of time and trouble doing it all by mail. And please note that all this could change ... in India change is the only constant.

Medical considerations come next. Check with your doctor about vaccinations, etc. You will probably be referred to a travel clinic and may need tetanus and diphtheria, polio, hepatitis A and/or B, flu and typhoid vaccinations as well as some form of malaria prevention. Not all of these are covered by Canadian medical plans. And do start well ahead of departure date as some vaccinations require pre-tests and others may require more than one shot, a week or so apart.

For gastric problems, a.k.a. Delhi belly, we took an antibiotic with us as a precaution and also Imodium. Both were unused because we had not the slightest problem. I did eat a lot of the natural yogurt that was available at almost every hotel's breakfast buffet and I believe that helps a great deal.

Be prepared for some dubious toilet arrangements (some toilets are the hole-in-the-ground variety) with sanitary wipes, moist towelettes and/or antibacterial hand wash.

Given the 10½ hour time difference and the long flights, we tried NoJetLag pills, a homeopathic remedy mentioned in these pages before (www.nojetlag.com). We took it as prescribed and were very pleased with the results;

however another member of our group didn't think it made any difference. This product is available at travel stores, health stores and some drug stores. The other natural product we packed was MotionEaze (www.motioneaze.com), an oil mixture that helps prevent motion sickness. One drop dabbed behind each ear does the trick, the bonus being it smells good. Indian buses on Indian roads can equal queasiness. I shared these drops with a number of people in our group and we all found them effective.

When deciding what to pack, take as much natural fibre clothing as possible. In many temples modesty required covered arms, neck and legs. As I wore mostly tunics or blouses with long, loose sleeves, and cotton slacks, I was fine. Those wearing shorts, sleeveless tops or scoop necks were made to don somewhat grubby garments to cover the offending bare parts. Remember that one removes shoes before entering most temples, but in *some* cases socks are permitted, so a pair of socks becomes something useful to have in one's bag. Tilly socks and underwear really can be washed and dried overnight, which helps cut down on the amount needed of both items. Very comfortable and well-broken-in shoes are a must, as are a hat and good sunglasses (perhaps two pairs?). We both took minimal clothing and used the laundry service at those hotels where we stayed more than one night. The cost was low and the service excellent. Two other useful items are a fan (bought at a dollar store) and a cooling face spray.

Rather than packing a bulky guide book, you might want to do as one of our group did and photocopy the relevant pages, discarding them after use.

A fee is charged at many sites for camera use. The fee for a camera was small, but for a camcorder it was quite a lot higher and in some sites photography is strictly forbidden. We took spare batteries and flash-cards for our digital camera; batteries (and film if you require it) are available but we had doubts about their freshness. You will also need a voltage adapter and transformer for any electrical items. My major regret is that I forgot to pack my binoculars – the birds of India are fascinating so make sure you take a pair along.

There are ATMs in the major centres and many shops take credit cards. It is a good idea to have some rupees with you, however, as tipping is a constant and a good supply of ten rupee notes (about 27¢) essential. My husband had the experience of having a note handed back to him as it was torn and therefore considered insulting.

Do be sure to check with your escort as to who pays for

what. On the camel ride my guide tried to convince me he had not been paid. I knew he had and only a tip was necessary from me. On the elephant ride I asked what to tip the 'driver' and was told "no more than 50 rupees per person." When I offered 100 rupees for the two of us, the young man argued it should be 100 per person. However, when I took the note back from him and started to walk away, he quickly agreed to accept it! Do not expect street vendors to give change for small purchases – they will usually claim they have none.

We were frequently asked for pens, especially by children, and our escort told us when her family travels into rural areas they routinely take pens, notebooks and other small school-type items to give away. I'd suggest taking a small supply ... the space then created in your luggage will be useful for any purchases you make!

English is spoken extensively in India. Sometimes the accent may be hard to understand and the version spoken by beggars and hawkers is, to say the least, strange. But with patience communication is possible. Regarding hawkers

(my least favourite aspect of India), repeating "No" with great firmness works, so does pretending profound deafness.

Shopping can be a challenge. I am not a haggler and probably paid too much for things, but I did get what I wanted. It is bewildering to walk into a store and immediately be surrounded by several sales people all anxious to show you everything and tell you how personally involved they were in the produc-

tion of whatever it is. As everything is on shelves behind counters, a sales person is essential in order to see anything, but it can be frustrating, when one wants a cotton shirt, to be shown twenty in silk. Only in Delhi did we find a store where we could simply walk around and look at everything without being hounded.

As a tourist destination India is still in the early stages of development. Although the hotels we stayed in were well up to North American standards, there was much that we found strange ... which is why we go to a place like India in the first place, right? There's no point in going and then complaining because it's 'too Indian'. We'd go back in a heartbeat and with more confidence a second time, having acquired some useful insights into the way things work. For me it's a magical place which has called to me all my life and continues to do so. 🇮🇳

Lynne Mayer is a Travel Society member who lives in Milton, ON.



Elephants at Amber Fort

A Mexican Treasure Awaits Canadian Visitors

story and photos by Isobel Warren



A former bullring is now the courtyard of the luxurious Quinta Real hotel

This article is riddled with prejudice and personal opinions. But let me confess. *I love Zacatecas*. I think it's the most beautiful and hospitable city in Mexico. There! Now I feel better.

Zacatecas, city and state, nestle in the northwestern quadrant of the country, an hour's flight from Mexico City, a world away from the grit, glitz and greed of Mexico's 'developed' areas. Five centuries ago, massive silver deposits fortified Spanish wealth and financed magnificent churches, monasteries, mansions and civic buildings that earned the city a World Heritage Site designation in 1993.

Sandstone in a dozen shades of pink was the primary building material and the city glows with warm colour, enhanced at night by subtle artificial lighting. The most impressive sight is the pale pink Cathedral of Zacatecas, a baroque masterpiece dedicated in 1754 and completed in 1903. The soaring façade is completely covered with intricate carvings, including all 12 life-size apostles.

Museums and galleries abound, many in picturesque old monasteries. Brothers Pedro and Raphael Coronel gave the city two splendid museums, one a repository of Pedro's own work, the latter housing Raphael's 12,000-strong collection of ceremonial masks plus works by his father-in-law, Diego Rivera.

Zacatecas' mountainous setting is both beautiful and challenging. Tracing ancient mountain paths, the twisting cobblestone streets, often connected by stone staircases, are too narrow for the growing volume of cars that now clog the city's arteries. (Note to city bosses: establish traffic-free zones that cater to walkers and, more important, protect ancient buildings from exhaust fumes.)

A Swiss-built *teleferico* swoops across the valley, a ten-minute ride that provides a panoramic view — pastel houses climbing the hills, rosy pink spires and facades lining the streets below. El Eden, an honest-to-goodness silver mine opened in 1596 and closed in 1960 after a disastrous accident killed 17 miners, takes you by tram

into the heart of the mountain to reveal the lure of the precious metal and the life-destroying task of mining it. (The El Eden Mine also has a discotheque that operates on weekends.)

And then there's Las Morismas de Bracho, a riotous, colour-drenched, blood-thirsty, ear-splitting festival that's said to celebrate the expulsion of the Moors from their last Spanish stronghold, Granada, in 1492, but actually spans 2000 years of history in a single weekend, from the beheading of John the Baptist in 33 AD to the French invasion of Mexico (led by Napoleon III) in 1862. Once a fixture of Spanish towns, Morisma was introduced in Zacatecas several centuries ago to provide entertainment for the masses (what's more fun than severed heads, burning castles, bloodied bodies and cannon fire!) It takes place on the last week-

end of August.

The festival's mandate continues to expand, according to Zacatecas archivist Manuel Gonzalez, because it is an expression of the people's will and creativity. Any historical event can be incorporated, he explained. Thus we encounter Roman centurions (responsible for St. John's martyrdom), crusaders (they invaded Spain in mediaeval times), Charlemagne (another medieval invader), Renaissance (Phillip II), French foreign legion (Mexicans have never forgotten the French invasion of Mexico in 1862) and the 20th century Red Cross (in case of genuine bloodshed). Oh and

Emperor Napoleon — no real connection with Mexico but perhaps someone had a suitable costume and wanted to wear it. But foremost are the 'Moors', in their red baggy pants and turbans, waving scimitars and guns, toting curious backpacks of bread and veggies. The 'Christians' prefer black, red and gold, with bushy black beards and long leather aprons to ward off infidel blood. Anyone can join either group and it's not unusual to see a stoic "Christian" leading a tiny Moor by the hand or a flamboyant Moor cradling a weary "Christian" baby.

Daily mock battles culminate in a major dust-up on Sunday — a morning parade with about 10,000 participants trudging through the winding streets, accompanied by drummers and marching bands, kings and generals astride gleaming horses,

queens and princesses on foot, kibitzing teens waving fake swords, tiny babies in lavish costumes, stately elders with canes and even a crutch or two.

The marchers adjourn to the Bracho hill on the outskirts of town for the final epic battle. (Spectators can stand, somewhat uncomfortably but well worth it, on the stony hillside above the battleground. Don't forget sturdy shoes.) A statue of Pope John Paul who said mass here in 1990 gazes down benignly and troupes of richly costumed Indians tread their ancient and solemn dances, to the beat of drums and guitars in an adjacent patio.

But the war must go on. With whoops and cannon blasts, the Moors roar down into the plaza, forming up row upon row, their drums never ceasing. Then on a distant hill, the Christians emerge — thousands of them forming a human



Ruins of an ancient monastery are part of the picturesque Pedro Coronado museum

cross that slowly descends to the battlefield. With drums throbbing, guns pounding, battle cries ringing, the combat begins. Generals and kings trot up and down shouting orders and encouragement, their glorious robes becoming bloodier (well, red-dyed, really) as the afternoon progresses. Bodies fall and miraculously resurrect to re-enter the fray. A gaggle of Roman centurions show off their bright green underwear with jujitsu-style flips and throws. A replica of a castle, possibly Moorish but who cares, is set ablaze and then it's time for fireworks which are fabulous. Finally, to nobody's surprise, the 'Christians' rout the 'Moors'. Somewhere along the line, both John the Baptist and the Moorish king are beheaded – I think! After the morning's two-hour parade followed by three hours on a stony hillside inhaling gunsmoke, I must confess that I lost a few little details like who killed whom. But the spectacle with its colours, its enormous energy, its panorama of history, (however loosely interpreted), was brilliant.

The city is a walker's delight despite the 8,000-foot elevation and steep cobbled streets. The crime rate is low; beggars and peddlers are scarce; folks are friendly and prices are affordable. Accommodations range from \$10-a-night hostels to \$25 a night bed and breakfasts to \$150 a month houses to pricier hotels. The modern motel-style Hotel del Bosque is the

place where the teleferico begins its cross-valley swing. The picturesque Meson de Jobita, an inn for nigh on 300 years, boasts a snug bar in converted stables. The inner courtyard of the dazzling Quinta Real was, until 1975, a bull ring, dating from the seventeenth century. A unique setting, fine art, antiques, gourmet food and gracious service are its hallmarks.

The city is blessed with excellent restaurants. I will remember forever the avocado, cheese and tortilla soup at the elegant La Quija; fresh *gorditas* (tortillas hot from the grill filled with veggies, meats, spices and sauces – about 80 cents each) at Gorditas Dona Julia; the art-drenched atmosphere and spicy tacos at the century-old cantina Las Quince Letras and the hearty fare amid mining paraphernalia at El Barreteo.

But hurry. Zacatecas won't stay undiscovered forever. City and state are turning to tourism to fortify the economy

and create local jobs. Both Tourism Secretary Miguel Alonso (the city's former mayor) and Governor Amalia Garcia Medina (the country's only female governor), personally met with our group of Canadian travel writers, sending greetings and a warm invitation to Canadian travellers.

Their major concern today is the mass exodus of Zacatecans, especially youth, to the United States. "Our population is now 1.5 million," Mr. Alonso commented. "Another 1.5 million are in the U.S." But the migrants send home some \$20 billion each year, a huge boost to the

Mexican economy, while Americans benefit from cheap labour to perform menial jobs they refuse to do themselves. But Zacatecans grieve that their villages and their elders are bereft of young people, that family ties are broken and that many migrants are losing their lives and identities.

President Felipe Calderon waded in recently, suggesting that American money might be better spent on job-generating ventures in Mexico rather than the 850 km border fence that George Bush approved to discourage migrants. Mr. Calderone wants the U.S. to create a temporary worker programme that will decriminalize illegals now in the U.S. and allow them to cross the border freely. We shall see.



It's all child's play for youngsters who get into the act with guns and costumes

Getting There and Staying There

* Getting there is definitely **not** half the fun. From Toronto

or Montreal, expect a dreary four-hour layover in Mexico City before the one-hour flight to Zacatecas. Better to linger and enjoy Mexico City's myriad attractions and fly on to Zacatecas another day. For those in the west, Delta Airlines has just announced Los Angeles to Zacatecas flights to begin in June.

* For more information on this and other Mexican destinations: www.visitmexico.com or 1 800 44 Mexico.

* Accommodation suggestions:

Meson de Jobito, Jardin Juarez 143, CP 98000, tel: [country code 011 52] 492 92 41 722, www.mesondejobito.com, rates around \$150 dbl.

Quinta Real, Rayon No. 434, CP 98000, tel: 492 92 29 104, www.quintareal.com, rates about \$200 dbl.

Hotel del Bosque, Pseo Diz Ordaz #602, CP 98000, tel: 492 92 46 666, www.teleferico.hotelesdelbosque.com.mx/, rates from \$120 dbl. ☎

London and Waterloo are two fine cities located in southwestern Ontario, easily accessible from Toronto by a drive along the 401 or, in the case of London, via VIA Rail. With their renowned academic institutions, they attract some of the finest minds from across Canada and around the world; perhaps you or your children studied there, perhaps you have grandchildren with one of their universities in mind? Whatever the reason, a visit to each is an enjoyable experience. Here are a few details to set you planning a trip to ...

ONTARIO'S LONDON AND WATERLOO

story and photos by Ann Wallace



The Idlewyld Inn, London

The Thames River flows through it; it's home to a park named after Queen Victoria and streets with names like Oxford, Blackfriars and Piccadilly; it boasts a market called Covent Garden; red double-decker buses take tourists around on summer days. Of course, the city's name is London. London, Ontario, that is. A fact that must be made clear when talking about a visit there.

When John Graves Simcoe first set eyes on the forks of Ontario's Thames River, he was searching for a new location

for the capital of Upper Canada; believing that the location at that time – Newark (now Niagara-on-the-Lake) – was too close to those belligerent neighbours of ours to the south. History reports that Simcoe loved this riverside location, set in the gentle and fertile hills between the Great Lakes, but – as we all know – it was York (now Toronto) that became the capital. But that didn't mean that the little village of London was left out in the cold. Far from it. It grew apace, suffered fires, floods and other disasters but pulled through to become one of Ontario's largest cities and a prominent aca-

demical, medical and business centre. It also attracts many tourists. They come to pay homage to its most famous son, Sir Frederick Banting; to enjoy a production at the charming Grand Theatre or catch a live musical performance; to visit some of the city's many museums or to shop at one of the many specialty galleries around town. Then there are the gracious University of Western Ontario grounds to explore and the fine architecture of the city's proud residential areas to enjoy. Spiritual needs are met in a variety of beautiful churches, while the inner man/woman is catered to in the city's many eating establishments: from student-busy pubs to fine, eclectic restaurants covering cuisines from Africa and Asia to Europe and Canada itself.

Though I've lived in Toronto for 33 years, my winter visit to London this year was my first, and although I was attending a tourism conference there, I made sure I took time out to enjoy some of the city's highlights. Many people come to London for one reason: to see the home of Sir Frederick Banting, formally known as the Banting House National Historic Site. Whether your life has been touched by diabetes or you merely wish to pay tribute to one of Canada's greatest sons, a visit to this house museum is worthwhile. And the site could not have a better curator than Grant Maltman, who loves to take visitors around and answer questions. For those who don't already know the details, it is sobering indeed to learn that some 200 million people around the world have

this disease and to hear that that figure is rising rapidly. However, the Banting House is a celebration of Banting's work, which saved so many and continues to do so to this day.

As with most museums, visitors are requested not to touch the furniture or any of the thousands of artifacts. However, one exception is made. Those who wish may sit – or even lie for a moment – on Banting's bed. The reason? Well the good doctor didn't 'discover' insulin in a laboratory or even in his own tiny dispensary; his moment of inspiration occurred while he was lying in bed. The time was 2 a.m., the date Halloween 1920. The good doctor had his epiphany in a moment of wakefulness, arose, jotted down a few notes – 25 words it is said – and, presumably, returned to bed and sleep. But those few words were to lead to one

of the twentieth century's greatest medical discoveries and to life and hope for millions of people since. The bedside clock in this tiny quaint bedroom, with its floral wallpaper and white lace bedcover, is stopped at 2 o'clock while, on a shelf a few feet away, stand cards of tribute in a variety of languages, left by people who owe so much to Dr Banting's discovery: "Without you I would not be alive" and "Thanks for saving my dad." Moving stuff indeed.

The various rooms in the house depict different aspects of Banting's life, from student to doctor to decorated war hero. There are also inspiring posters and stories on famous Canadians with diabetes. And then there's Banting the artist,



Sir Frederick Banting's statue outside his home

for the great man was a painter and student of A.Y. Jackson and one room in the house contains the doctor's lovely Canadian landscape paintings. Outside stands a statue of the doctor, while nearby flickers the Flame of Hope, a reminder that, while insulin keeps diabetes sufferers alive, it is not a cure. Lit by The Queen Mother in 1989, the flame is destined to burn until a complete cure has been found when, it is planned, the scientist(s) will come to this site and extinguish the flame. If you need just one reason to visit London, the Banting House is it.

But don't rush away too soon; there's lots more to enjoy in London. The Grand Theatre is proud to be one of the nine 'category A' theatres in Canada. Together with Museum London and the London Orchestra, it provide residents and visitors with an

impressive cultural environment. Enter the intimate but impressive Grand and you will, indeed, feel you are in that other, rather bigger London, that is so famous for its historic theatres. The theatre produces a variety of entertainment throughout the year. On my visit I caught an enjoyable production of Michel Tremblay's play *For the Pleasure of Seeing Her Again*.

I've mentioned Museum London and a visit there was also on my itinerary. It's a modern-architectural gem close to the forks of the Thames River and the University of Western Ontario. The museum contains art and artifacts that tell London's history, as well as changing exhibitions. It's also home to an acclaimed restaurant – On the Fork – which is open for lunches and dinners.

Unless you need something from a department store or

a fast-food fix, you probably won't need to shop in the heart of London's downtown. Head, instead, just a few blocks north on Richmond Street to the area known as Richmond Row where you're in for a treat: gifts, flowers, art, home accents, high-end and trendy clothes and shoes ... all can be found here. It's also home to the Grand Theatre. And when your feet get tired, there are plenty of pubs and restaurants in this stretch where you can relax. The area has its own website listing the stores and restaurants. If you decide to travel to London by VIA Rail, you'll find all these London attractions can be reached by local transportation. There's a comprehensive Ride Guide easily found locally to help you get around. Of course a city the size of London has a lot more to see, experience and enjoy, but as always my time was short. However, I hope I've given you a taste of some of the things the city has to offer and that you plan a getaway there soon. There's plenty to enjoy in any season.

Once you've made up your mind to visit, you'll need accommodation. That's easy. London is home to most familiar hotel chains, including a Hilton, Sheraton and Holiday Inn. Of historic interest is the Delta Armouries Hotel, whose public rooms are located in the historic Armoury which opened in 1905 and housed the Canadian military until 1976. A modern tower rises behind it containing the majority of rooms. It is a popular spot for local weddings, especially for those with military connections, and it hosts a well-attended Sunday brunch in an historic setting. The Best Western Lamplighter Inn on the outskirts would be a good choice if you have children in tow as it offers special facilities for kids, including a vast multi-tiered atrium, enclosed under a retractable clear-panel roof, featuring palm trees, indoor pool, hot tub, lighthouse, koi pond and exotic gardens. My personal choice? The gracious Idlewyld Inn is a delight. Along with the Waterloo Hotel mentioned below, it is one of about 40 properties in the Ontario's Finest Inns group. Located in its own grounds in a gracious residential district, Idlewyld Inn began its life as one of London's premier private residences, reflecting the wealth and good taste of the prosperous Victorians who built it. Today the property offers visitors 23 traditional bedrooms, gracious public spaces with beautiful wood carv-

ing and a sparkling dining room, open for all meals (details below).

Then I was on my way to another city that I knew only by reputation. And Waterloo, like London, has a fine one. It's home to both the University of Waterloo and the Wilfred Laurier University, as well as the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics and well over 100 high-tech firms, many of them – such as Research in Motion of BlackBerry fame – giants in their fields. (You can read about Waterloo's excellent developing technology record at www.intelligent-community.org.) It also offers the more general tourist plenty to enjoy. There are guided historical walking tours, a

the lovely Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery with its tempting gift store and, reflecting the fact that many German immigrants settled in this area, Oktoberfest. But one of the things that makes Waterloo renowned as a tourist destination is its proximity, on the outskirts of town, to St. Jacobs Country, home of the quaint village of St. Jacobs and the region's famous Farmers' Markets. These are full of craft items and good food and, on a Saturday morning, lots of folks having a fine time over breakfast/lunch offerings and great coffee. Visitors and locals come here to stock up on goodies such as locally-made preserves and chutneys, apples, meats, baked goods, wonderful salamis and more. The thing that makes this farmers' market unique is that you will often be served by members of local Mennonite families who have produced the goods on their own farms and in their own kitchens. I plan to

return soon for some more 'no-refrigeration-needed' salamis. The one hanging in my kitchen didn't hang around for very long!

The countryside surrounding the Waterloo/St. Jacobs area is a delight to explore (as it is around London too) and it's fascinating to see the Mennonite families travelling to market and back in their horse-drawn buggies. One can't help reflecting, as technology makes our world increasingly complex and stressful and our descendants face a world without oil, whether we shouldn't be learning more from these gentle people about self-sufficiency and resourcefulness in this fast-changing world. At the Visitor Centre in St. Jacobs one can learn more about Mennonite history, faith



Visitors can imagine the good Dr. Banting working here

and lifestyle through a series of interactive displays and a video. The village is also a popular centre for arts and crafts as well as specialty food shops that support the “buy locally” philosophy.

Two other things will lure me back to Waterloo: the quaint old Waterloo Inn and one of the most memorable restaurants I have experienced in a long time, with the intriguing name of Bhima’s Warung International. Some of you well-travelled folk may recognize a Balanese connection and you’d be correct. Bhima’s Warung carries the ‘International’ addition to its name because a similar establishment exists in Bali. Imagine the window signage: in Bali and Waterloo only! Reservations are a necessity here, because this restaurant is always packed with patrons awaiting specialities from Vietnam, Cambodia and Bali served with a Canadian or European twist. The restaurant is noisy and informal, decorated like a Balanese beach patio and the menu reveals the owner’s sense of humour: “Good old hippie Indonesian salad of unappreciated vegetables” and “Black Angus steak with a damn hot red curry sauce.” It’s not inexpensive, but it’s quite wonderful and one of the best meals I’ve had for a long time. I’ve vowed to return, at least until I’ve tried everything on the menu!

The Waterloo Inn is about a 10 minute walk from the restaurant and it’s a great place to lay one’s head. It’s a heritage city landmark that dates back to 1890. Now fully and beautifully restored it contains, above a sweeping oak staircase, 14 rooms all with high ceilings and all furnished with period antiques. Each bears a name reflecting its décor: the Stained Glass or Elephant Rooms, the Garden, Music, Library or Marine Rooms and so on. Most rooms have comfortable seating areas with TVs. A door in the lobby leads to the Symposium Café where your breakfast is served (your room comes with coupons for same) ... the usual choices with great coffee and friendly servers. The property is listed in the Select Registry as “a distinguished inn of North America” and, like the Idlewyld above, is a member of Ontario’s Finest Inns group.

As this article started by saying, there are many reasons that lure people to London and Waterloo: careers in academia or high-tech companies, prospective learning institutions for young people in your family, specialized health treatment and so on. But you don’t need a reason to visit, both cities and their surrounding rural regions hold much interest for the general traveller and I’m so glad that I now have memories of these destinations that I’d heard about, but not visited, for far too long.

Some details for London:

* **Banting House National Historic Site** is located close to central London at 442 Adelaide St. N, London, tel: 519 673 1752, www.diabetes.ca/Section_About/BantingIndex.asp The house is open Tuesday – Saturday, noon – 4 p.m., admission \$4 or less.

* **Museum London**, 421 Ridout Street North, tel: 519 661 0333, www.museumlondon.ca, open noon to 5 p.m., closed

Mondays, admission by donation. On the Fork Restaurant, tel: 519 850 FORK, www.onthefork.com

* **The Idlewyld Inn**, 36 Grand Avenue, London, tel: 519 433 2891 or 1 877 435 3466, www.idlewyldinn.com or visit www.ontariosfinest.com. With rooms from \$129 this property offers a luxurious getaway without breaking the bank.

But there’s also a wide choice of B&B’s available, all approved by Tourism London and listed in their *Visitors Guide*, along with seasonal accommodations offered in some of Western University’s residences.

*The **Delta London Armouries Hotel**, tel: 519 679 6111 or 1 800 668 9999, www.deltahotels.com

* For lists of businesses on **Richmond Street**: www.richmondrowlondon.com

* **The Grand Theatre** is located at 471 Richmond Street, tel: 519 672 8800, www.grandtheatre.com.

* London has an **International Airport** served by a variety of Canadian airlines, and all major car rental companies are represented there and in the city.

* If you don’t wish to drive or fly to London, the city is efficiently and inexpensively served by **VIARail**, who offer a variety of special packages on travel throughout the year. The rail station in London is conveniently located downtown. Treat yourself to an upgrade and enjoy a tasty meal and drinks en route.

* London offers two **Tourism London Centres**; call 519 661 5000 for locations and opening hours. There’s also a *London Visitors’ Guide* available by calling 1 800 265 2602 or visit www.londontourism.ca.

* Since writing this story I’ve returned to London once more ... on this occasion to catch the Rod Stewart concert at the John Labatt Centre. What an evening and what a great, all-purpose sports and entertainment facility! It holds 10,000 and every seat was full of rockin’ Londoners and their visitors. Visit www.johnlabattcentre.com for future events.

... and for Waterloo

* **The Waterloo Hotel**, 2 King Street N., Waterloo, tel: 519 885 2626 or 1 877 885 1890, www.waterloohotel.net, B&B from \$140 per night, with special packages available at times.

* For **rural B&B** accommodation in and around St. Jacobs, the local Guest Homes & Inns Association properties are listed at www.bbcanada.com/associations/stjacobs

* **Bhima’s Warung Restaurant**, 262 King Street N., tel: 519 747 0722.

* Waterloo can be reached by a 1½ hour drive along **Highway 401** from **Toronto**, while the **Waterloo-London** stretch of the road takes about 1 hour.

* The **Waterloo Airport** serves the region, with scheduled and charter flights. WestJet has just announced it will be flying to Waterloo this summer.

* For your *Experience Waterloo Tourism Guide*, which lists the region’s many activities – sporting events, theatres, jazz festival, quilt auctions and much more – call 1 800 265 6959 or visit www.kw-visitor.on.ca 

The Association of “Ontario’s Finest Inns”

The two inns that I enjoyed in London and Waterloo – the Idlewyld Inn and the Waterloo Hotel - are, as I mentioned, members of a group known as Ontario’s Finest Inns and Ontario’s Finest Spas. Since there are 38 properties in this association (plus four that, in spite of the association’s title, are in Québec), I thought a few more words about them may be useful for both out-of-province readers and those who live in Ontario. I have stayed in, or visited, a number of the properties and have found them all to be outstanding.

The Inns are located in both rural or lakeside locations or in the heart of towns. Geographically they can be found from close to Windsor in the west – the Vintage Goose Inn on Lake Erie – to the Carmichael Inn & Spa in Ottawa and Sam Jakes Inn on the Rideau Canal (both mentioned in our Rideau Canal article last month) and north to the lake regions and Trent-Severn canal. There are six properties in or near Niagara-on-the-Lake, close to Niagara Falls and the wine regions of the Niagara Peninsula. A further ten properties stand close to or beside Lake Ontario and Highway 401 between Toronto and Gananoque, a charming town on the shores of the St. Lawrence amidst the beautiful Thousand Islands region. There are four properties to choose from in Prince Edward County and there’s even one in the west end of Toronto – the Old Mill Inn – in a leafy garden setting yet adjacent to the city’s subway.

Most of the properties offer special packages that range from spa treatments to golf, cooking lessons or wedding/elopement getaways. ‘The Elopement’ is, in fact, offered by London’s Idlewyld Inn and includes the wedding officiant, two witnesses, photography, a bouquet and boutonniere, candlelit dinner, wine, wedding cake for two, massage for two, and a two-night stay in a

Jacuzzi suite with breakfast in bed both mornings. No ladders involved!

In the past I’ve enjoyed the cozy Trinity House Inn in Gananoque, just two blocks from the 1000 Islands Playhouse which, I firmly believe, must be the most beautifully situated theatre in the world. Where else can you walk out onto a dock in intermission and enjoy views over an island-dotted river?

Two of my personal favourite inns are located in Prince Edward County. This lovely area, full of farms, vineyards and pretty villages is *almost* an island. It’s



*The Waring House Inn, near Picton,
Prince Edward County, Ontario*

separated from the mainland by the Murray Canal, but easily accessible via several roads that cross the canal or via the free Glenora car ferry, easily accessible from Highway 2. It’s quite wonderful to sit on the restaurant patio of the Devonshire Inn on the Lake watching the waves come and go on the pebble beach below, or to step into the British-pub atmosphere of the Waring House Inn bar before enjoying dinner in its gracious dining room.

For those whose idea of a getaway is leaving the car at home, many of the inns are accessible by VIA Rail and those innkeepers willingly arrange shuttle services for their train travelling guests.

In addition to each inn’s special packages, the association has a ‘passport’ and V.I.P programme: three stays from different inns earns a \$25 certificate towards a future visit plus entry in a monthly draw for a free one-night stay at any inn. For a copy of the fully-illustrated brochure of all the inns call 1 800 340 INNS or log on to www.OntariosFinestInns.com. Gift certificates are also available. A great idea for birthdays, anniversaries, Valentine’s Day and so on if you have friends or family members living in southwestern Ontario. Have a lovely stay and sleep well! - AW

BARBADOS

Have you ever regretted that you didn't experience a flight on Concorde? Well, in Barbados, you can now do the next best thing. The island's newest attraction – a multi-media display called The Barbados Concorde Experience – has been officially unveiled and includes one of the retired planes. Present at the unveiling was also-retired Concorde captain, Mike Bannister, who described the exhibit as being the most impressive of its kind he had ever seen. Bannister, who was the youngest pilot to fly the supersonic jet, told that Barbados will always hold many treasured memories for him. "My most memorable experiences of piloting Concorde will always be flying with the Red Arrows over Buckingham Palace to salute the Queen; secondly it was flying to Barbados for the very first time; and thirdly, flying the aircraft back 'home' to Barbados for the final time in 2003." The new US\$3.5 million attraction boasts an interactive flight school, a departure lounge, an observation deck, and an in-flight experience multimedia presentation. Barbados beat out more than 70 countries worldwide to showcase the aircraft, which travelled at twice the speed of sound. The Barbados Concorde Experience is open 9-6, seven days per week. Admission for non-residents it is \$35.00 for adults and \$25.00 for children. There doesn't seem to be an official website yet, but there are several links if you search via The Barbados Concorde Experience. And for details on visiting Barbados, visit www.barbados.org.

CANADA

- The **Vancouver** Art Gallery will present an exhibition of European painting and sculpture this summer named "*Monet to Dalí: Modern Masters from the Cleveland Museum of Art*." On view from 11 June to 16 September, the exhibition will showcase over 80 paintings, plus drawings and sculptures, by such masters as Cézanne, Gauguin, Manet, Monet, Picasso, Seurat and van Gogh. This represents the largest showing of European art ever presented in Vancouver. Opening in Beijing, China, the exhibition has so far travelled to Tokyo and Seoul prior to its date at the Vancouver Art Gallery. For more, visit www.vanart-gallery.bc.ca.
- Are you a fan of Canadian folk art? If so, plan to head to the Art Gallery of **Hamilton**, Ontario, for their summer exhibition (2 June – 3 September) *Wit and Whimsy*, which will bring together over 50 works by renowned folk artists from coast to coast. Other summer exhibitions at this gallery include *Henry Rousseau, The Group of Seven and their Contemporaries* and more. For full details visit www.artgalleryofhamilton.com (and don't forget previous issues of this magazine contain accommodation suggestions in and around Hamilton).
- Back to **B.C.**, if you have a self-guided driving tour of the

province in mind you might like to visit www.circlefarm-tour.com to learn more about the new and innovative programme that involves farm visits in the 'Mighty Fraser Country' region.

- Perhaps a driving tour of **Ontario** beckons? There's a programme for that too, devised by the Ontario tourism folks especially with families in mind. Log on to www.ontariotravel.net/greatdrives where you'll find itineraries for exploring such regions as Lake Superior's North Shore, Niagara to the Grand River, Bytown (Ottawa) and Beyond and more.
- It has already garnered many awards, and now **Nova Scotia's** Trout Point Lodge near Kemptonville adjacent to the Tobetic Wilderness Area, has won "Top 10 Status" on the influential www.gayot.com website, along with properties in the US, Mexico, Italy and Australia. Opened in 2000, the lodge claims to "offer luxury-level accommodation in the style of the Great Camps". It certainly looks wonderful ... take a peek at www.troutpoint.com or call 902 761 2142 for a brochure. The property also has cottages for rent ... click through on 'cottages'.

HONG KONG

The ever-efficient Hong Kong Tourism Board has a new online tool that enables visitors to create personalized itineraries before they arrive in Hong Kong. All visitors need do is select their length of stay and activity preferences and the planner will help send them on their way with recommendations, tour information and transportation links. If Hong Kong is in your plans visit www.DiscoverHongKong.com/planner and see how the website can help you.

IRELAND

Calling all garden lovers. This summer will see the launch of Ireland's first International Garden Festival, which will be staged at the Emo Court Mansion (about an hour's drive from Dublin) for three months – 29 June 29 to 23 September. The festival will showcase 15 very different contemporary gardens, all fully maintained for the duration of the festival so that returning visitors can see how they mature and change through the season. Emo Court Mansion is a neo-classical 1790 mansion surrounded by parkland. The festival will be held in the midst of this picturesque landscape, adjacent to the lake. Innovative and original garden/landscape designers from all over the world were invited to submit plans for the festival and the final 15 have been selected for the excellence of their designs. The theme for this, the first year of the festival, is "Roots - gardens that evoke a sense of belonging." Open daily, 10-6, admission about \$20 or less. www.igf.ie

Air Canada is expanding service to Florida by adding a year-round, non-stop weekly flight (Saturday) between Toronto and Fort Myers, starting 16 June.

Looking ahead, those with New Zealand in their thoughts may like to know that **Air New Zealand** will commence new non-stop flights from Vancouver to Auckland on 2 November this year.

On May 10, **Air Transat** and **Transat Holidays** commenced their new Toronto-Vienna route. The Toronto-Vienna flight is scheduled for every Thursday from 10 May to 15 October and as of 24 June, a second weekly flight will be added. The airline offers a free 'open jaw' option that allows travellers to arrive at one European destination and leave from another. This year, Transat Holidays offers Canadians travelling to Vienna and Austria a wide range of packages, à la carte accommodations, escorted tours and car rentals.

Low-cost but award-winning Scottish carrier **flyglobespan** was launched in eastern Canada on 1 May with a good selection of routes and prices out of Ontario's Hamilton Airport ... good news for those in this well-populated region who'd rather not drive to Pearson. Flyglobespan will be flying from Hamilton to 13 destinations in England, Scotland and Ireland. The full list is: London Stanstead and London Gatwick, Exeter, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Doncaster, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin and Shannon. Hamilton Airport is about as good as an airport gets these days on account of it being small enough to ensure rapid passage through all the formalities. Parking at Hamilton Airport is \$50 per week, \$150 a month. For details of other transportation options – shuttles and trains, etc. – visit www.flyhi.ca. And for the new airline's details log on to their Canadian website at www.flyglobespan.ca.

Readers may remember our story in the February/March 2006 edition on "Easterly Class: A Maritime Learning Experience". The article told the story of VIARail's first season (2005) offering this learning experience to passengers on its Ocean train. Easterly Class includes on-board learning co-ordinators knowledgeable about the history of the Maritimes and familiar with everything from regional

We mentioned **Harmony Airways** and its "increased summer schedule" in our April edition. Unfortunately, since then, Harmony has ceased operations. **WestJet Airlines** has added daily flights from Vancouver to several destinations, including Hawaii, in response to the demand after Harmony's announcement. **Air Pacific**, the national carrier of Fiji, is also poised to operate flights between Vancouver and Honolulu.

If you've long wanted to visit Jordan, the fact that **Royal Jordanian** commenced a twice-weekly non-stop from Montreal to Amman on 25 May may be welcome news.



Photographers and journalists were on hand to welcome flyglobespan's first flight into Hamilton, ON

On 14 May **WestJet** commenced seasonal non-stop service to three new destinations in Eastern Canada: Waterloo (Ontario), Saint John (New Brunswick) and Deer Lake (Newfoundland), bringing WestJet's total number of destinations to 38 – 26 across Canada and 12 in the U.S. and the Caribbean.

Looking across to Ireland from the East Coast? If so, the fact that **Zoom Airlines** will fly from Halifax to Belfast weekly during the summer will also be

welcome news. Zoom operates a variety of routes from Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Halifax, Ottawa, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Montreal to Glasgow, London (Gatwick), Manchester, Belfast, Cardiff and to Paris. Zoom is also already looking forward to the Winter 2007/2008 season, offering early booking discounts to travellers who may have the U.K. or Paris in their winter plans. Eastern departures start at \$179 one way, western departures from \$279. New for that season will be a second weekly flight from Montreal to London Gatwick (allowing for 10/11 night stays), a new weekly service between Vancouver and Belfast and a change to the operating days on flights from Calgary, with Sunday departures to London, Glasgow and Manchester.

riding the rails

wines to the use of the *boite d'eau* to lobster trapping. The cuisine is also designed to celebrate the bounty that is eastern Canada. It's a great way to get from Montreal to Halifax and this year the programme is scheduled to return for its third season. The programme runs from 13 June until 14 October and details can be found at www.viarail.ca

A 19-day tour with Cyril Payle at an incredible price ...
Spectacular **South Africa**

Departures: 12 October 2007, 7 March & 10 October 2008

No charge
London stopover

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 scarpment of Eastern Transvaal - a place so beautiful writers run out of adjectives -

PRICES INCLUDING AIR AND TAXES departing from:
Toronto, Montreal \$7,680 pp/dbl
Ottawa \$7,940 pp/dbl
Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg \$7,940 pp/dbl
Halifax \$8,040 pp/dbl
 Single supplement \$850.00 (sharing can be arranged)
 Prices are subject to confirmation

Pre-tour - Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe ~
3 days \$1,548 including Air

Pre-tour - Victoria Falls and Chobe National Park,
Botswana ~ 5 days \$2,946 including Air

Post-tour - Namibia & Etosha - Desert Wildlife
Experience ~ 4 days \$1,688 including Air

where you will visit God's Window, the Blyde see Johannesburg and be escorted to Soweto for lunch in a Township house and jazz in a famous nightspot. You'll enter the Kingdom of Swaziland to meet the people and enjoy more game watching. Zululand is also on the itinerary, with its historical sites and unique entertainment traditions. You'll be driven through the Valley of a Thousand Hills to East London and take the famous Outeniqua Choo-Toe train from Knysna to George. You'll visit the Addo Elephant National Park and traverse the Little Karoo Desert - flanked by great mountain ranges - to see the Cango Caves. You'll travel in a luxury air-conditioned coach, you'll stay in lovely properties ranging from good hotels to charming chalets, you'll enjoy a wide variety of entertainment and you'll enjoy South Africa's delicious cuisine and wines and you'll be escorted all the way by Satour-accredited guides. Here at The Travel Society we know South Africa well ... and we can't imagine a more comprehensive, in-depth and fascinating tour of South Africa.

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

Small Ship

Galapagos Islands Cruise & Ecuador

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

14 days departing 30 August, 6 & 20 September, Oct, Nov & Dec 2007, Jan, Feb, Mar & April 2008

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

Departing: 8 & 22 June, Sep, Oct, Nov & Dec 2007, Spring & Fall 2008

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

Single supplement \$798 (Sharing can be arranged.) Prices are subject to confirmation

New itinerary!

Your tour includes:

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

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

22 days from \$6,275

A Traveller's Turkey

Limited to 20 Members

Depart: 11 September 2007, 28 April & 15 September 2008

It is one of the cradles of civilization and one of the most wonderful countries on the planet. Here are fabled cities, unique landscapes, incomparable historic sites and calm, friendly people who are eager to show that their land is, indeed, both historic and modern.

Ann Wallace, our editor, has travelled extensively in Turkey and always returns claiming it is one of her favourite destinations. So now we have organized a luxurious tour of Turkey exclusively for Travel Society members. We have combined our extensive knowledge with careful research to ensure you see the very best that Turkey has to offer. You'll stay in first-class historic or very specialized hotels, travel in a 40-seat air-conditioned luxury bus, enjoy cruises on private boats, sample fine food and be entertained by cultural performances. And the itinerary? Magical Istanbul (plenty of time there); Ankara, home of one of the world's finest museums; the unique 'geological poem' called Kapadokya (or Cappadocia); mysterious and lovely ruins such as Aphrodisias, Pergamum and, of course, Ephesus; the fabled and beautiful Aegean coast; the peaceful Princes Isles in the Sea of Marmara and so much more.

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES: 22 Days

Toronto	\$6,275.00 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$6,475.00 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$6,275.00 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$6,395.00 pp/dbl
Edmonton	\$6,495.00 pp/dbl	Calgary	\$6,395.00 pp/dbl
Winnipeg	\$6,495.00 pp/dbl	Halifax	\$6,495.00 pp/dbl

Single supplement \$750 (Sharing can be arranged.) Prices are subject to confirmation



Your tour includes:

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



WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO NEXT?

The Travel Society is researching new tours exclusively for our members. If you'd like to take a moment to tell us some of the destinations on your wish list, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Some thoughts are ...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Australia/New Zealand | <input type="checkbox"/> Egypt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Europe (Eastern) | <input type="checkbox"/> Europe (Western) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Korea | <input type="checkbox"/> Kenya & Tanzania |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Malaysia | <input type="checkbox"/> Malaysia/Vietnam |
| <input type="checkbox"/> South America (Brazil, Peru, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> United Kingdom |
| <input type="checkbox"/> United Kingdom plus Eurostar to Europe | <input type="checkbox"/> Other suggestions _____ |

Please check the destinations that appeal to you, clip and pop this panel in the mail or fax it to us, (see page 2). Or, of course, feel free to send us an e-mail. And if you have any other destination ideas, we'd love to hear them and we'll do all we can to put the trips together for you.

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

A new tour

CHINA SILK ROAD

Departing: 10 September 2007, 24 March & 15 September 2008

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, Urumqi, 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 \$1,100 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

FROM \$4,145 FOR 18 DAYS!

Departing: 3 October 2007, 17 April & 17 September 2008

It is vast, fascinating and mysterious and it has beckoned travellers from the west for centuries. Mention it to avid travellers and they are sure to say, "Yes, I hope to visit China one day." And what would they choose to experience? A cruise on the mighty Yangtze River (now in the process of changing for ever); a look at the work-in-progress on the massive Three Gorges Dam; a walk on the ancient Great Wall; views of charming villages, lush terraced hillsides and magnificent mountain peaks; visits to the great cities of Shanghai and Beijing; a trip to view one of the world's greatest archaeological finds ... the 6,000 terra-cotta warriors at Xi'an; scenes of palaces, pagodas, pavilions and pandas; tastes of Peking duck and Chinese banquets and so much more. So how do you choose? When you decide on The Travel Society's tour there's no need to choose because all these highlights are included. Yes, in these remarkable 18 days you'll stay in Beijing; you'll take a 4-day first-class cruise on the Yangtze with many shore excursions; you'll fly to see those centuries-old terra-cotta warriors in Xi'an; you'll visit bustling Chongqing and see its pandas; stay in Hangzhou and travel into the hills covered with tea plantations; explore the exquisite gardens of Suzhou, and visit Nanjing and Wuzhen. And you'll have time to explore spectacular Shanghai. Throughout the

trip you'll see magnificent architecture, you'll be entertained at cultural events, you'll join your hosts at a variety of banquets, you'll have time to shop, and you'll marvel at some of the most wonderful scenery on earth, all in the company of English-speaking guides.

You'll travel by plane, by luxury bus, cruise ship and river boat. Many of our members have told us it's an experience of a lifetime ... and all at an amazing price!



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 \$544

ADD-ON BANGKOK

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

ADD-ON TOKYO

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

ADD-ON KYOTO

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

Your tour costs includes:

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

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

Now 23 days

India's Golden Triangle

No charge London stopover

23 days departing: 24 September 2007, 17 March & 6 October 2008

India is one of the world's greatest travel destinations. But unless you're a young backpacker, a tour is the way to go! And The Travel Society is offering the ultimate tour of India's fabled northwestern region known as The Golden Triangle. This tour will show you all the highlights and more, including camel and elephant rides ... guaranteed to give wonderful photographs! You'll start your tour in Mumbai (once known as Bombay) where you'll visit Dhobi Ghat, the Gateway of India, Marine Drive, the Hanging Gardens, Jain Temple and the Prince of Wales Museum. There will be free time also, perhaps for a little shopping, before you fly to Udaipur, home of the Maharna City Palace, the Jagdish Temple, Garden of Maidens and so many other sites. And here you'll dine in the spectacular 250-year-old Lake Palace that seems to float on an island on Lake Pichola.

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

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

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

Throughout this trip you will stay in first-class hotels; travel in de luxe a/c, fully-equipped coaches and enjoy wonderful meals, banquets and entertainment. Many days will be full, but there's plenty of free time too. Haven't you always wanted to visit India? Make this the year! Twenty-one days! A life-time time of memories! Come with The Travel Society and enjoy the best of Rajasthan with fellow members!



Your tour includes:

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

AIR-INCLUSIVE PRICES: 23 Days

Toronto	\$6,275.00 pp/dbl	Ottawa	\$6,475.00 pp/dbl
Montreal	\$6,375.00 pp/dbl	Vancouver	\$6,548.00 pp/dbl
Calgary	\$6,548.00 pp/dbl	Winnipeg	\$6,650.00 pp/dbl
Halifax	\$6,650.00 pp/dbl		

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

YOUR DISCOUNT VOUCHER FOR RENEWALS, GIFTS AND NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS

Don't let my subscription run out ...

- please: **RENEW MY SUBSCRIPTION** _____
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