

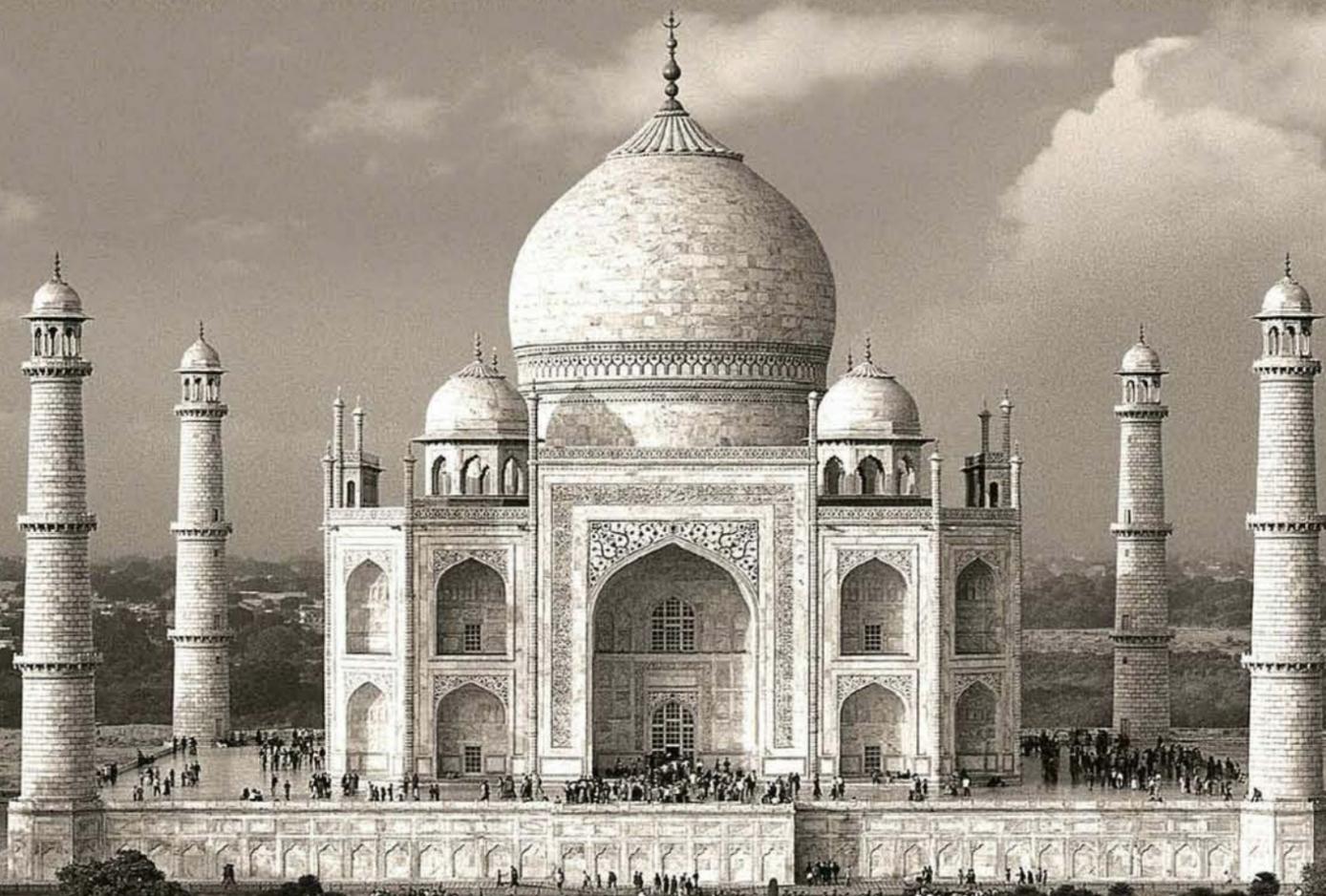
The Travel Agents' Path to Profits



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their wives.



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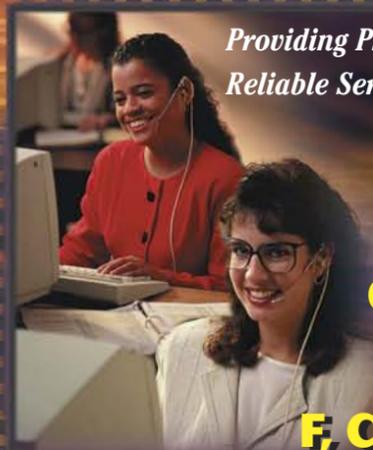
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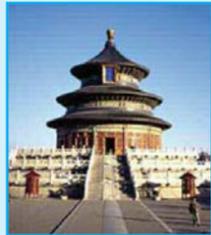
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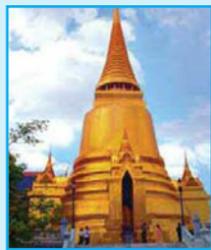
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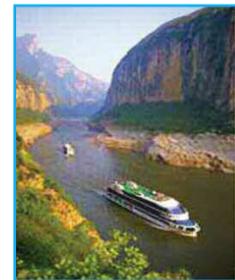


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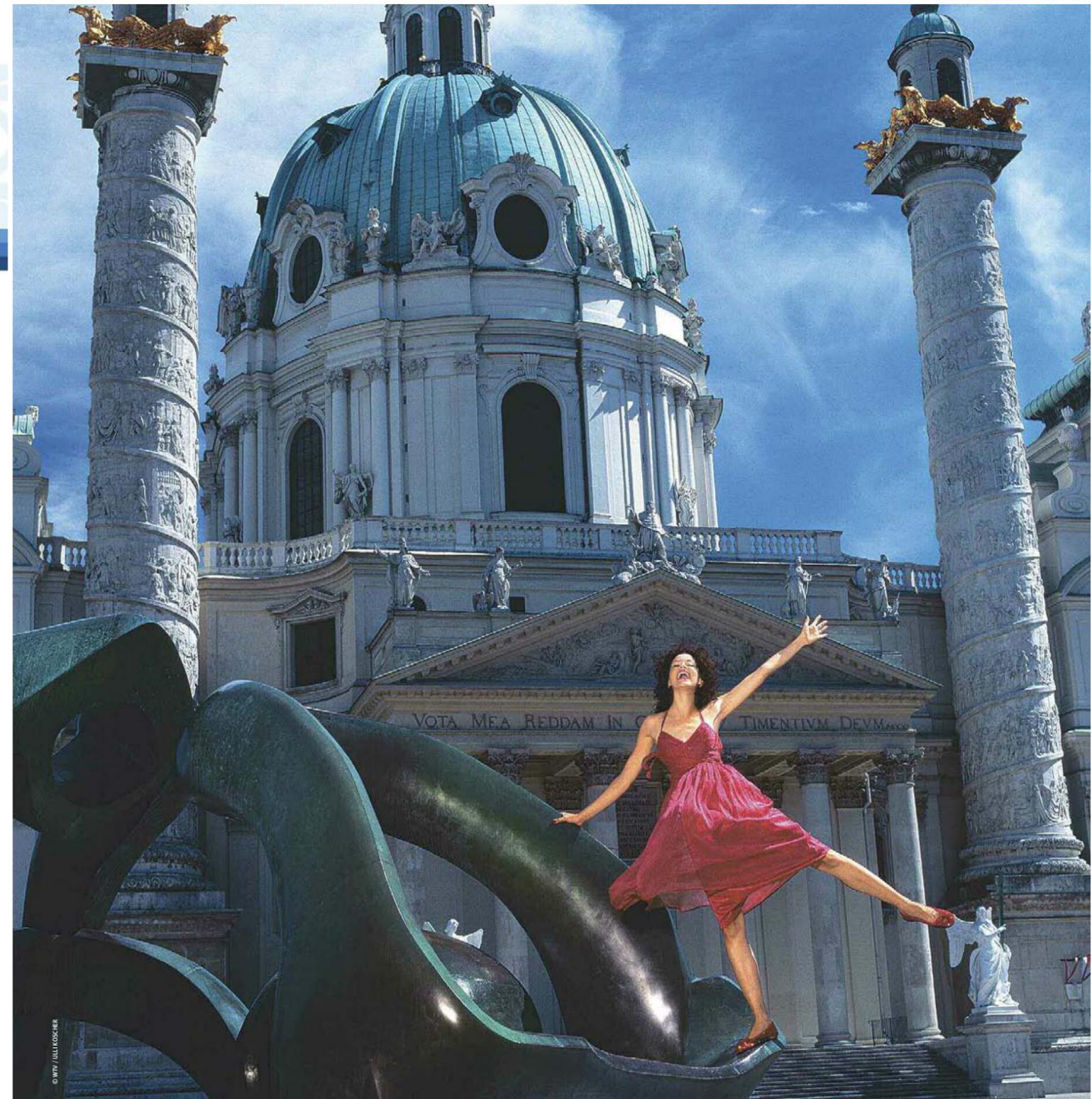
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DESTINATION FEATURES AND ARTICLES



14 COVER FEATURE CROATIA
Discovering Croatia's Wine Country

Croatia's allure in the summer months has brought visitors from around the globe to take advantage of its many islands, beaches, food, and culture. However, autumn is also a special time of year when the busy days of summer have slowed down, the weather is still warm and temperate, and the year's harvest has ushered in comfort food and great wine. This last autumn I toured Croatia's mainland and Istrian...

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Little Anguilla, just 13 miles long and three miles wide, has reached celebrity status. "Hot destination," "Swanky," and even "South Beach meets St. Barths" have replaced the understated "casually elegant" descriptions of the past...



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Coming to Peru and not visiting this mountain city of the Incas is like going to Egypt and not seeing the Pyramids. "Everyone who goes to South America wants to see it," wrote the late Hiram Bingham who found the magnificently built Inca...



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New Zealand is high on nearly every traveler's dream list. Outdoors enthusiasts fantasize over its epic hiking trails, while hedonists dream of world-class wines, luxurious lodgings...



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FRONT COVER: Photo credit: Croatia NTO
 Made by Nikola Bašić, the Zadar Sea Organ consists of 35 labiums/pipes that descend into the sea and play as the water force the air up and out the perforated stone stairs.

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Beating the Recession Depression...Summer & Fall Travel Ideas

The perfect storm is upon us. According to all the economists and media we are officially in a recession. Gas prices are reaching new record highs on a daily basis. The dollar continues to weaken against many world currencies and last, but not least, it is an election year. So does this mean that your clients are going to stop traveling? No, but it does mean that consumers will be much more selective in their choice of vacation options. According to every industry poll, Americans consider travel as their "birthright" and an essential aspect of their lives. They need you, the professional travel counselor to let them know of the many affordable alternatives available to them. Of course there is the upper tier of travelers that will not be affected by current market conditions, but the vast majority of this years travelers will be looking for a great destination at a great price. We see our job, as a travel trade magazine, to provide you with the destination information you need to recommend and sell these products to your clients.

This issue of JAX FAX highlights several destinations and travel options that you can recommend to your clients. Our cover feature Croatia is at the top of this list. Croatia tourism has shown steady growth over the past decade, with increasing numbers of American tourists discovering its pristine coastline and historic cities. Because it has not been admitted to the European Union (yet), the dollar goes much further here, and in other non-EU Central and

Eastern European countries, than it does in the Western Europe and Euro currency countries. That's not to say however, that deals can't be found in these other European countries. Our feature on Germany in this issue highlights the many ways your clients can travel affordably in Western Europe. Seeking alternative styles of accommodations and restaurants, using discount providing "city cards" and traveling outside of main city areas are highlighted.

Summer is also a great time to travel to the Caribbean. Prices are 25%-50% cheaper than in the peak winter season and the culture, beautiful Caribbean Sea, warm tropical weather and great resorts are just as appealing this time of year. Our Caribbean section this month features a host of spring and summer travel deals.

No matter where your clients travel this summer, higher transportation costs are a certainty. Whether it be driving to the shore or mountains, or flying to their vacation destination it is going to cost more to get there and this will factor into your customer's vacation planning. Using air consolidators will be one way to ease the cost of international travel while making some money for yourself. Additionally, many tour operators have held the pricing in their brochures for 2008, protecting your clients from further currency devaluations and fuel surcharges.

2008 will most likely not be a banner year for the travel industry. However, there are great travel values to be had and a well read and educated travel agent is a consumers best friend.

Doug Cooke, Publisher

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Delivering Messages with Star Status

Going against the current is often a spirited position to take on any issue, but sometimes locking step with the rest of the world, and our peers carries great value too.

For instance, this issue carries a message about environmental concerns and spotlights destinations whose innovative messages are recognized for their star quality.

The World Tourism Organization has a lot of faith in the travel industry: "The tourism sector has the potential to act effectively on the evolving common agenda of climate change response and the fight against poverty," is the message the WTO presented at a recent debate at UN Headquarters in New York. Says Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, "Tourism is one of the main services exports with a strong comparative advantage in the world's poorest and emerging countries. These are markets that are growing at twice the rate of industrialized countries. At the same time, our product is tied to climate and like other sectors, we are green house gas contributors. Responsible growth patterns must now address economic, social, environmental and climate sustainability."

Since 2004, the international film competition Das gold-

ene Stadttor or "The Golden City Gate" offers cities, communities, economic regions, hotels, airports, shipping companies and the travel industry a platform to present their films to an international audience at the International Tourism Fair at the ITB Cinema. eTurboNews is a media partner for the event at ITB.

This issue of JF features two of the top three recipients of the Golden Gate awards, Egypt and Croatia, while Switzerland and China were featured in JF's recent issues - February and March, respectively.

Egypt (featured on p. 47) bagged the coveted "Best Online Advertising" competition; while our cover feature, Croatia, also won in 2006 for its "The Mediterranean as it Once Was," campaign, coincidentally our cover feature this month. This year, "Dubrovnik" swiped third place.

According to my colleague, editor Nelson Alcantara's report, a meticulously selected jury of experts met in the span of three days, three to four hours each meeting, to decide this year's winners.

"Diamond Awards" went to the Maldives' "Recharge Your World" entry. Other winners included the Ritz Carlton (hotel), Experience Wild Beauty (spot), Poland's "Lodz-The city of cultures," and Madeira Islands (region); Sixt Car Rental also won an award for its entry "Sixt moves."

Maria Lisella, Editor

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Snapshots

THE MONTH IN REVIEW

Mongolia, Heart of Asia and Home to Friendly Nomads

At a recent press breakfast plans were unveiled, highlighting Mongolia as the emerging destination for Americans seeking travel experiences from the adventurous to the luxurious. To launch **Mongolia National Tourism Organization (MNTO)** in the U.S. market, National Geographic Adventure Magazine, which named Mongolia a "Best of 2008 Adventure Destination".



From left: David Parry, Chairman, American Tourism Society (ATS) & Chairman, Academic Travel Abroad, Inc.; Indraa Bold, Governing Board Member, (MNTO); Erdenchimeg Batmunkh, Executive Director, MNTO; Tim O'Neill, Finance and Business Development Advisor and Deputy Chief of Party, EPRC Project, Chemonics.

And The \$10,000 Grand Prize Winner is...



Marshall Leventhal of Vacation Connection, Spring Hill, Florida was this year's winner of US Airway Vacations Las Vegas Scavenger Hunt. Each year US Airway Vacations invites 30 of the previous years top producing travel agents for an all expense paid trip to Las Vegas to participate in a scavenger hunt with a \$10,000 grand prize.

WonderFALL in the Carib

From the set of Sesame Street in Astoria, Queens, CEO of Beaches Resorts, Adam Stewart announced details of the company's new WonderFALL campaign, a new annual season of events and activities designed by Beaches Resorts expressly for families with young children. Set to take place throughout the months of September and October at all four Beaches Resorts located in Jamaica and Turks and Caicos, highlights of WonderFALL include great deals such as two free nights and 45% in savings.



Adam Stewart, CEO of Beaches Resorts and Kevin Froemming, President of Unique Vacations Inc., the worldwide representatives for Beaches Resorts, with Abby Cadabby, the newest Sesame Street sensation to arrive at all four Beaches Resorts locations.

Transhotel Presentation....

The presentation was held by Alexander Kodor, Director of Sales for Transhotel USA. Transhotel, a Global Travel Services Provider with Hotels, Tours and Transfers Worldwide unveiled its new product Trans Vacations to its existing Product Line of over 45,000 Hotels Worldwide and Transfer, Tours and Excursions in over 80 countries. Among various topics that were presented were: Transhotel Online Reservation System, Free Call Center in 7 languages, 24 Hours a day customer assistance, Integration Services



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Discovering Croatia's Wine Country

By Tatijana Shoan



Varazdin Castle



Pula Arena in Istria.

Croatia's allure in the summer months has brought visitors from around the globe to take advantage of its many islands, beaches, food, and culture. However, autumn is also a special time of year when the busy days of summer have slowed down, the weather is still warm and temperate, and the year's harvest has ushered in comfort food and great wine. This last autumn I toured Croatia's mainland and Istrian region and indulged my senses with some of the best food, sights, and wine Europe has to offer.

Slavonia's Rich Countryside

My journey started in a place called Brodski Stupik in the Slavonian region. The two-hour drive east of Zagreb took me through rustic farmland and small villages where local farmers sold their harvest street side. Slowly, the sprawling wheat and cornfields were replaced with rolling hills covered with grape orchards. The final destination was a winery and hotel called Zdjelarevic (011-385-35-427-775; fax 011-385-35-427-040). The friendly, English speaking owners, Davor and Visnja Zdjelarevic, greeted me and ushered me into the wine cellar where they gave a brief lesson on the wine making process before being allowed to indulge in libations.

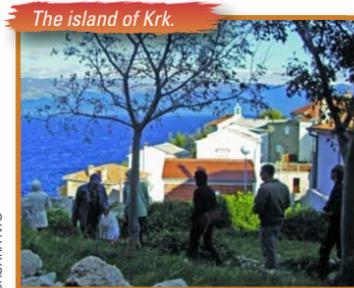


Zdjelarevic Winery

In fact, this prelude only helped to heighten my anticipation, as the smell of fermenting grapes in oak barrels stimulated my taste buds. Due to the favorable climate, wine in this region is exceptional, and this particular vintner won both the silver and bronze Chardonnay du Monde competition in France though I highly recommend their reserve Cabernet, as its complexity rivals wines

from Tuscany.

Visitors can choose to extend their visit by staying at Zdjelarevic Hotel. Clean, modest rooms are cozy and bright, and over-look their sprawling vineyard. They also have an exceptional rustic restaurant serving delicious, authentic Slavonian fare. Wine tasting and sightseeing in the region proves that this is the perfect destination for those craving the Tuscan experience, but whose pocket books won't allow the expense. It is a great option for travelers seeking to experience more of Croatia and is also a formula for a relaxing weekend in the Slavonian region.



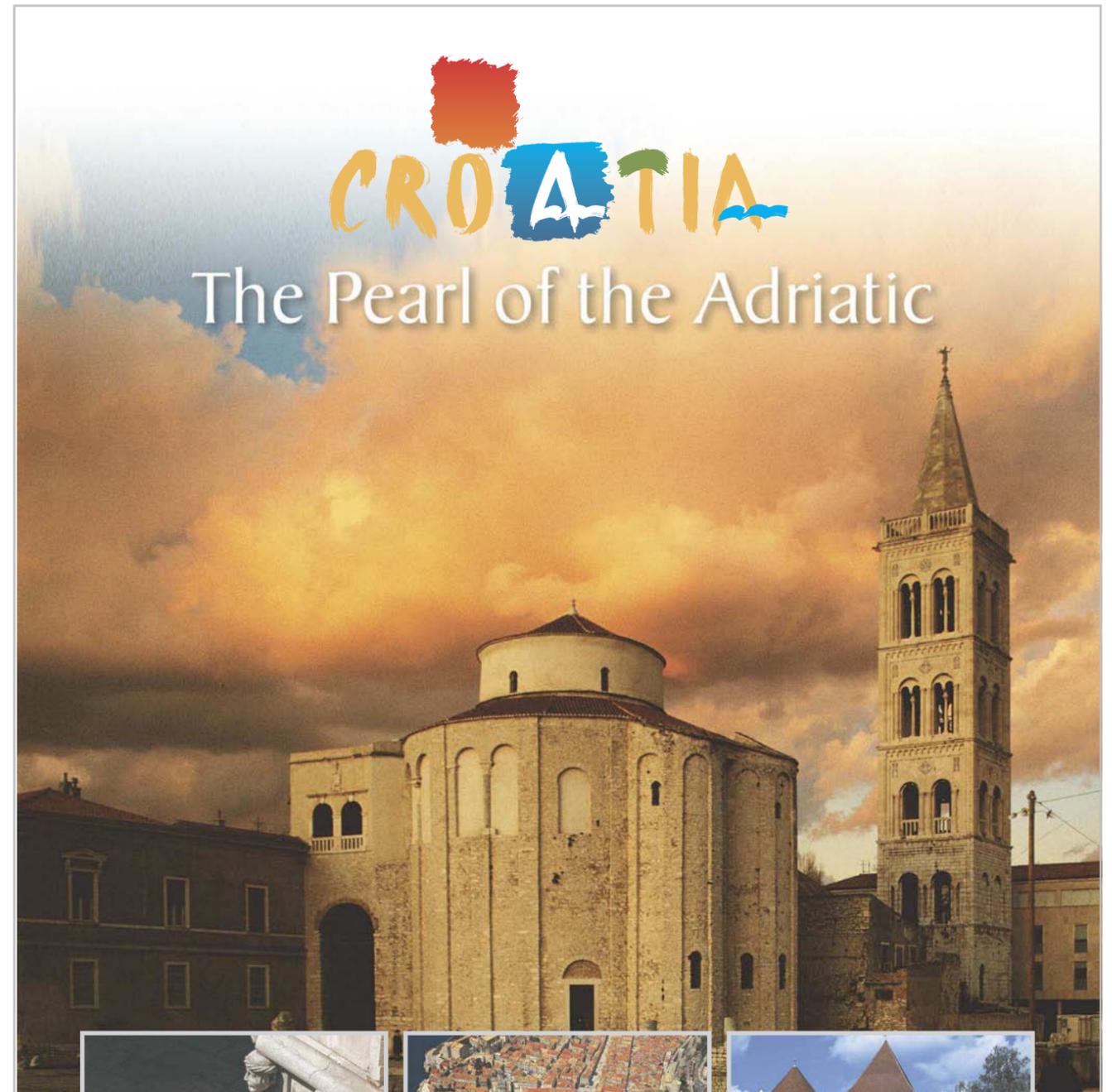
The island of Krk.

Croatian Soul in Wine

My next stop was the region of Istria in the northwestern part of the country on the coast. Start on the island of Krk where the surrounding sea provides the perfect setting for a wine tasting tour – and drinking wine

with the locals is the ideal opportunity to be embraced by the culture, for it is said that the soul of Croatian people can be found in their wine. A popular wine on this island is Zlahtina made from the indigenous Zlahtina grape.

The popularity of this wine is growing and it can now be found in many high-end New York restaurants. In the town of Vrbnik, Brothers Anton and Ivan Katunar offer some of the best Zlahtina wine (011-385 51 857 393). But my favorite is their Biser Mora, a sparkling wine and the perfect answer to those craving Prosecco. The wineries of Toljanic and Juranic are also in and around Vrbnik and each have a comfortable wine tasting cellar.



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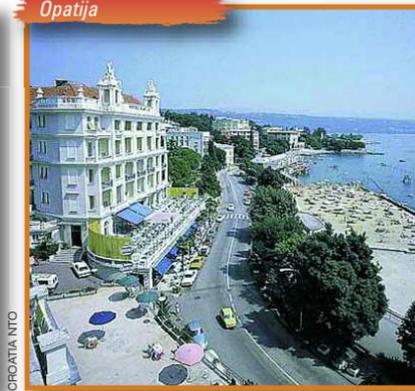
Vrbnik Aerial View



CROATIA NTO

I soon learned that the tasting glasses are generously poured everywhere you go, which is why they offer bread, cheese and olives. But it was PB Vrbnik Winery that offered something unique. Cases of wine were placed 90 feet deep into the sea where they stay at a steady temperature and get

Opatija



CROATIA NTO

an equal amount of sunlight and darkness. Sealed with a bottle cap to prevent seawater from seeping inside, they are removed after one year and sealed with

a cork. They've called this wine "Valomet," which is the Croatian word for water crashing against the rocks.

While visiting the island of Krk and its surrounding areas Hotel Draga di Lovrana (011-385-51-294-166) is a picturesque place to stay. Located high on a hill on the mainland it offers panoramic views of the sea and islands, while providing guests top quality service and cuisine in an equally elegant restaurant. This former villa has been lovingly restored and includes a quaint breakfast bar serving frothy coffee drinks and homemade pastries.

Some of the most chic villas in the Mediterranean can be found on the seaside in Lovran, many of which are summer homes owned by wealthy Europeans. Those who prefer a more exclusive retreat can now experience them.

Just a 20-minute drive up the coast from Lovran is the elegant city of Opatija, which has played host to Royalty and dignitaries from around the world and offers five-star accommodations such as the elegant waterfront Hotel Millennium (011-385-51-202-000), and The Ambassador Hotel (011-385-51-743-333).

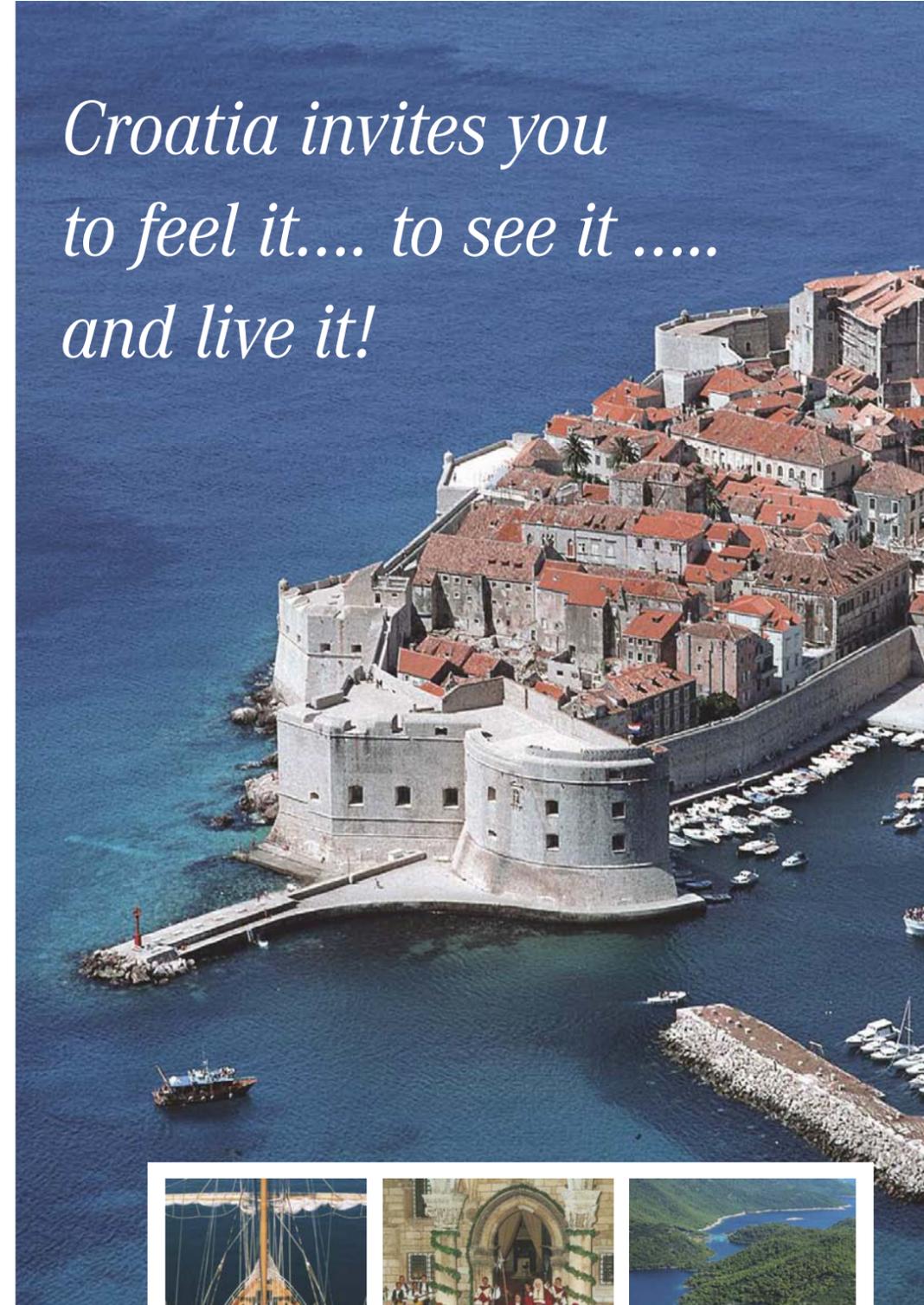
Opatija offers four and five-star accommodations, an abundance of wellness centers and an informative tourist office with multi-lingual representatives. Diners staying in Opatija and Lovran can also enjoy the seaside restaurant Plavi Podrun (011-385-51-701-223), just below the hill in the small fishermen's town of Volosko. The owner, also a master chef, prepares nuevo Istrian cuisine on artistically presented platters.

Daytrips During Truffle Season

I highly recommend day trips to the city of Pula and the medieval mountain town of Motovun. Pula is an archeological gem and perfect for travelers wishing to experience ancient history without the crowds Rome is known for. Neolithic and Illyrian remains can be found around the city nestled on the grounds of museums and government buildings. But perhaps the biggest lure to Pula is its 1st-century amphitheatre, one of the best preserved in the world. I visited in the middle of the day and was amazed to find just one local and a stray cat wandering the site. However, travelers should not miss Motovun. Situated high on a hilltop with medieval houses peppering the peak, this is a perfect example of Venetian colonial architecture.

Istria celebrates truffle season in October when recipes, infused with this rare, delicious mushroom. Visitors can sample these delights in small cafes and restaurants in Motovun and anywhere throughout Istria, but it is the town of Livade, below Motovun, where the

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Zadar roof tops



CROATIA NTO

festival takes place. Known as *Tartufada*, Livade's celebration brings farmers and villagers from around the region together to sample and show off their truffle harvest. Livade

is so proud of its truffle tradition that a statue in the shape of a truffle greets visitors as they drive in. **Zigante Restaurant** (011-385-52-664-302) is best known for serving truffle dishes, and the proprietor is in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for finding the largest white truffle in history.

Wine and Wellness

A stone's throw away from Livade is **Istarske Toplice** (011-385-52-603-000), a therapeutic spa resort where travelers can relax and be pampered. Located near a hot mineral spring, its medicinal powers have been proven to aid dermatological and respiratory diseases.

The northern Istrian coastal towns of Novigrad, Porec, Rovinj and Umag are known to house and attract artists, so they have a free and colorful atmosphere. Exceptional wellness and spa programs are offered at **Valamar Crystal**

Zadar, Monument of the Sun.



CROATIA NTO/FELBER

Hotel in Porec (011-385-52-451-440); and at **Sol Koralj** in Umag (011-385-52-701-000).

Here, I visited the wineries of **CO Winery** (011-385-52-77-91-77) and **Kozlovic** (011-385-992-77-91-77), both well-known producers of Malvasija, Muskat and Teran. Malvasija can be made sweet or dry, white or red. But any wine aficionado traveling within this region must try Teran - aggressive is the best characteristic to describe it.

Made from the Refosk grape it has a dark, ruby-red color and smells buttery and rich. However, it's extremely powerful and acidic; a favorite among locals who value it for its medicinal powers, for it has been proven to stimulate digestion and is rich in iron.

Locals say it is an "acquired taste," while one vintner tells me, "The Teran is a wild mustang who must be tamed. Those who drink Teran take on the characteristics of the mustang, that is why we are passionate people."

While visiting this region I highly recommend staying at **San Rocco Hotel Restaurant and Wellness Center** (011-385-52-725-000; fax: 011-385-52-725-026). Located in the picturesque village of Brtonigla, The San Rocco is the perfect lodging for visitors craving Croatian luxury and elegance. Landscaped to provide privacy and intimacy, and constructed with natural stone allowing visitors to indulge in Istrian charm.

The Wellness Center offers the traditional features of steam and sauna rooms, baths and jacuzzi while providing exceptional and face and body treatments. Dining at San Rocco is also a pleasure as meals are prepared with utmost care using the best quality, local ingredients.

As the days grow shorter and the tangerine sun sets behind the calm Adriatic Sea nothing can be more ideal than a Croatian sojourn in autumn.

Getting There

Currently, there are still no nonstop, direct lines from the U.S. to Croatia. However, direct service between Toronto and Zagreb operated last season (**Skyservice Airlines**); which reported a load factor of over 75%. Skyservice Airlines plans extended service to one more destination (either Split or Dubrovnik) from May to October.

At the same time, **Croatia Airlines** signed code share agreement with **United Airlines**, which will help U.S. travelers find more connections to fly to Croatia.

For more information contact the Croatian National Tourist Office at 800-829-4416 or visit www.croatia.hr

For consolidator fares and tour packages to Croatia see page 68-69 of the Listings Section

INTERVIEW WITH:
Nena Komarica, Director of
Croatia National Tourist Office

Croatia: Media Darling for 2008

By Maria Lisella



CROATIA NTO

Croatia was named a "hot and upcoming destination" for 2008 by USTOA and Travel & Leisure's "World's Best Awards" issue

ranked the Dalmatian Islands second in the European islands category, and seventh in the World Islands category. Not long afterwards, the New York Times ranked the island of Hvar 11th on the list of the "53 Places to Go in 2008." Not surprisingly, Croatia reported a total of 215,025 visitor arrivals from North America (179,227 U.S., 35,798 Canada), which represents an increase of 20% compared to 2006 for a total of 563,773 overnight stays in 2007, also reflecting an increase of 19%. JF spoke with Nena Komarica, the director who is the energy and inspiration for the wealth of coverage this relatively new nation has received.

JF: It is amazing how much coverage Croatia has been receiving in recent years. You have no public relations firm, a small budget and yet you manage to win wonderful placements, what is your secret?

CNTO: We are very pleased with the amount of media coverage Croatia has garnered as it has raised its profile among Americans, making it more popular each year. With our small budget, we place ads strategically and assist journalist to plan their visits to Croatia and publish their articles in trade and consumer publications. The CNTO organizes press trips twice a year for prominent American journalists. In 2007, there were 146 articles about Croatia published in North America, which helped Croatia become one of the most popular European destinations among American tourists.

Croatia has also received national TV coverage on PBS channels, 24 pfs production, Mojo production, NBC and Pulitzer prize winner Rudy Maxxa's "Smart Travels" ran a great episode on Croatia.

JF: Would you say Croatia is a Best Buy for 2008?

CNTO: Definitely, Croatia still has its own currency, so the dollar can be stretched further than in neighboring countries.

JF: Is Croatia appearing on more itineraries as well?

CNTO: Some of the leading tour operators have already sold their programs for 2008 featuring Croatia, and are committed to planning 2009 brochures.

JF: With all this fast growth and publicity, aren't you afraid the environment will become spoiled and overrun with tourists?

CNTO: Croatia has very strict laws protecting nature and the environment; the accent to our plans is on sustainable tourism. The Adriatic Sea ranks among the cleanest in the Mediterranean, and sea life is cared for. Great attention is given to sea pollution, so cruisers and yachts coming to Croatia are monitored and they have to follow the regulations regarding waste, recycling etc. Additionally, Croatia is rich in natural beauty, it has eight national parks and 11 nature parks; among five other attractions, the National Park at Plitvice Lakes was declared a UNESCO site. We promote Croatia as a boutique, not a mass tourist destination, therefore it will be carefully developed and preserved.

JF: And what about preserving old traditions?

CNTO: Cultural preservation is also very important in Croatia, many archeological excavations are taking place in Croatia in Zadar, Umag, old architecture is being restored. Old crafts have been rediscovered, forgotten trades are getting interest again like jewelry making, based on old traditional art and jewelry pieces, some of the art pieces have been based on old and traditional jewelry pieces that can be seen only in museums. Old jewelry designs have been reproduced in Dubrovnik, in the Northern area of Morcic such as Rijeka and Kvarner areas.

These objects carry the tag, "original souvenir of Croatia." Some of the great art designers in Zagreb on Tkalciceva Street, are also reintroducing old jewelry designs making reproductions in their shops so the old designs continue to be relevant and popular. Croatia is rich in regional and national costumes that vary from place to place such as Slavonia, Zagorje, Istria, Lika, island of Susak (mini skirts have their root in women's costumes from Susak), and Konavle (Dubrovnik region) for instance.

JF: Any new attractions in old places?

CNTO: Popular tourist destinations in Croatia like Dubrovnik, Split, Zadar always strive to offer something new, but also keep the tradition, like festivals that are taking place every year: Dubrovnik Summer Festival, Split Summer Festival, Zadar Donat Evenings - taking place every summer, as well as Umag antique festival in August. Zadar has world famous "Sea Organs", like original Heferer organs from Zagreb, one of the old European craftsmen. Sea waves are producing music when entering organ's pipes, this is unique in the world. The ancient city of Zadar dates back to 9th Century BC, and is one of two cities in the whole world that never changed its historical core or location (another one is Damascus in Syria).

The entire city was built on bedrock. Just

across from Zadar and Sibenik, is an archipelago of unspoiled islands and crystal clear waters of Adriatic Sea that form the National Park Kornati. A new national Institute and Museum of underwater archeology, as well as restoration center has opened in 2007, in Zadar. The Museum has the largest collection of Roman and Antique glass objects of art. It's worth mentioning that the Adriatic Sea has a great number (around 4,000) of potential underwater excavation sites, dating back to Illyrian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine times. UNESCO is supporting the underwater excavations here.

The "Museum of Tourism," the first of its kind in Croatia, located in Villa Angiolina on the Kvarner Riviera, one of the most well-known tourism resorts, has recently opened.

JF: Can you cite any trends?

CNTO: Along the coast, and inland, agro tourism is becoming popular. Many local farms and wineries offer locally produced fresh food and wine, olive picking, truffle hunting, in Istria indigenous "oxen" are protected. In Kvarner, on the island of Cres, "white sup" or wild culture is protected.

JF: Our cover story revolves around harvest time and wines, how is this relevant to travel agents?

CNTO: Wines from Croatia are becoming very popular around the world, in the U.S. as well. Famous wines from Istria, the island of Krk, Slavonia, Hvar, Peljesac, and regions around Zadar/Sibenik region. Bibic Wines, Toljanic, Enjegi from Kutjevo, Zdjelarevic, Plenkovic, Dingac from Peljesac, just some of the wines. Wine routes are becoming part of more and more tourist itineraries, featuring Croatia's food and wine especially in the Kutjevo region, where our press trips feature the Zdjelarevic winery as well as the other above mentioned regions. Travel Agents love to explore wine routes (*vinske ceste*), since wine is always associated with good food and become part of gastronomy programs.

JF: How important are cruises to Croatia?

CNTO: Known names in cruise industry like **Holland America, Silver Sea, Radisson, Carnival**, and small yachts cruise along the Adriatic stopping in many ports-of-call. While Dubrovnik remains the most popular, cruise destination in Croatia, other ports such as Zadar, Korcula, Split, Sibenik, Pula are also appearing on many cruise lines' itineraries. Currently, the port of Zadar is undergoing a huge renovation that will upgrade its current facilities and be able to receive more big cruisers. Additionally, smaller vessels like the m/s Monet and m/s Dalmacija will also feature Croatian ports of call this year. For more information on Croatia and land operators, visit www.croatia.hr

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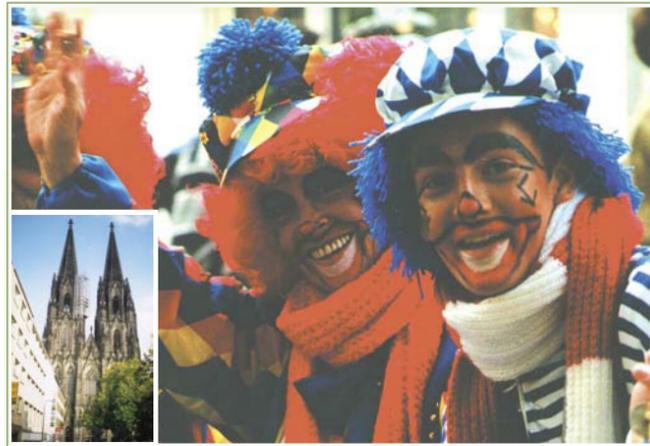
Beat the Euro in Germany...Act Like a Native

What is true around the world is definitely true for Germany. The best way to discover a country is to see it through the eyes of a local - and it also saves a lot of money. If your clients follow this advice, Germany remains an affordable travel destination despite the weak Dollar-Euro exchange rate. Below is a specially prepared "cheat sheet," if you will for agents to refer to before sending clients to Germany this summer.

Sleep Like a King on the Cheap

German hotels offer reasonable rates and special deals that can beat most comparable accommodations in the US. Berlin's hotels are even cheaper than in some of the Eastern European capitals, according to a recent study by Jones Lang LaSalle Hotels, and definitely no comparison to cities like London, Paris or Rome (Berlin 140 Euro average price per night, Rome 192, Paris 298, London 314).

Contact the local tourist office for a complete local list of accommodations for every budget. Family-run *pensions* often have great rates and combine them with personal service and hospitality. Business hotels, especially in the major cities, offer special deals on the weekends. Before you decide to visit a city, check if there is an event going on.



Cologne during Carnival season with inset of the Cologne Cathedral

Going to Cologne during Carnival season is an unforgettable experience, but hotels are booked fast, so move quickly.

A special tip for affordable accommodations in Germany: hostels. They offer a friendly, informal atmosphere and cost less than hotels. Travelers can sleep in single, double rooms or in larger sleeping-dorms. They are not only a cheap way to spend the night, but an even better opportunity to make friends and meet other travelers. A bed for a night normally costs less than 20 Euros or about \$30 person. Hostels are not only open for backpackers and young travelers. Some of them even have apartments with kitchens for families.

Who doesn't want to sleep like a king without spending a fortune? Many castle hotels throughout Germany offer wonderful opportunities to experience a bit of their noble pasts without breaking the piggy bank. Manorhomes in the northern state of Mecklenburg Vorpommern, castles along the Fairytale and the Castle Roads as well as those belonging to the member organization, (www.culture-castles.de), are a superb way to sleep like royalty without breaking your budget. Many of these hotels offer rates from 75 to 120 Euros or about \$115 to about \$185 per night for one or two people. See JF's March cover story for more details on castle stays.

Dining Around

Even without a big bank account, you can also eat like a king. If you keep your eyes open you will find great food for even better prices in Germany. In addition to "restaurants," try *Imbisse* and *Gaststaetten* (snack bars and taverns). Always ask the waiter or owner for their recommendations. They know what is fresh and are familiar with the region's specialties. If you look at the prices, keep in mind: Taxes are already included and tips are at a suggested rate of 10 percent. A relaxing way to finish the weekend is Sunday brunch. Prices start under 10 Euros or about \$15. Most restaurants also offer lunch deals.

Open-air markets are a delectable way to experience Germany as a local and to indulge your senses. Most cities host weekly farmers' markets with food stalls that offer delica-

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Get "Carded" in the Cities

German cities have so much to offer at low prices especially with city cards. Not only do these tickets give admission to museums, concerts, zoos and historic sights but also offer transportation. Stuttgart for example, offers the "Stuttcard", which is a three-day ticket providing free entry to all public museums, as well as discounts for cultural events and leisure activities. It's a bargain at 9 euros per day. If you are under 26, you'll be eligible for the "young and fun" deal. This includes one overnight-hotel stay with breakfast, a non-alcoholic drink in the hotel, a "Stuttcard," a city guide and a city magazine. Visit www.stuttgart-tourist.de

The "Hamburg card" gives discounts at more than 120 places of interest such as sightseeing tours, harbor and cruises on the picturesque river Alster as well as in restaurants and on souvenirs. It also gives free access to public transportation. The card costs between 9 and 33 Euros or about \$14 and \$50. Visit www.hamburg-tourism.de

Even without a city card, most cities have reduced fares for students, children and seniors. Movie theaters offer significantly cheaper prices for afternoon shows on Tuesdays. In Germany, fine arts are exceptionally affordable compared with the U.S. Operas and classical concerts in the main venues are subsidized by the state in Germany, so travelers can purchase tickets for about 20 Euros or about \$30, students even can find seats for less than 10 Euro or \$15. Advise clients to ask the local tourist office for more information as they may have special offers such as discount coupons.

Get Out of Town

If you want to get away from the cities, Germany offers a wide range of out- and indoor activities. The country's vast and varied natural landscapes are protected to varying degrees by 90

nature parks and 13 national parks. All national parks are free. In western Germany, the Upper Middle Rhine valley is safeguarded as a UNESCO World Heritage area to prevent further damage. A spectacular nature experience for visitors is to take hikes along the famous Rheinsteig-trail through the picturesque wine growing area.

Below Dresden, the "Saechsische Schweiz" (Saxonian Switzerland) with its sandstone formations is a miracle of nature. In the North, near Hamburg, tourists can walk through the mudflats at ebttide: or in the south, discover the German Alps with its highest elevation, the "Zugspitze."

Nearly every town has a special festival with food, drinks, art, music and dance. World famous is of course the Oktoberfest in Munich. During May, southern regions celebrate the planting of the Maibaum (May-Tree) a long colorful pole in the city center with a festival, while towns along the Rhine celebrate the grape harvest from August to October. Many cities have music, art and cultural festivals with free performances and exhibitions like the "Carnival of Cultures" in Berlin (May 9-12), the Jazz Festival in Duesseldorf (May 9-11), the Samba Festival in Coburg (July 11-13) or the "Museum Embankment Festival" in Frankfurt (August 29-31).

German public rail, flights and coaches offer great value and convenience. Avoiding the peak travel times of the locals, such as Fridays or the morning and evening hours, and booking in advance, will save clients more money. Public transportation by bus and subway is the best way to discover the cities. Also public transportation in the main cities often runs 24 hours.

For more information, contact the German National Tourist Office 800-631-1171 (New York City), 310-545-1350 (Los Angeles) or 773-539-6303 (Chicago); www.cometogermany.com or www.germany-extranet.com

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Germany see page 70-71 of the Listings Section

Eurofly's New American Identity: EF-USA

By Maria Lisella

Outfitted with a competitive fare base and a travel agent commission structure in place that continues to pay up to 8% when agents use the online booking engine, Eurofly entered the American market during the past three years. Founded 18 years ago, Eurofly's stock went public in 2006; it is the second largest airline in Italy counting 35 craft in its fleet comprised of Airbus A320 's and Airbus A330's which also happens to be one of the youngest in Europe - under six years old.

JF spoke with **Rosario Mariani**, (above left) the newly appointed CEO for stateside operations, and **Giulia Martinelli** the Senior Vice President for Eurofly about the carrier's role as a maverick component in building inroads to some of Italy's most pristine and un-touristed areas, places that first attract Italian Americans and secondly, the population at large, which seems to always be in love with Italy.

JF: Up to now, Eurofly's U.S. office has been affiliated with Club ABC, we hear that structure has changed.

EF-USA: EF-USA is based in New Jersey and specializes in tourism to Italy. Mr. Rosario Mariani, whose background includes extensive sales experience representing Italian products in the United States, has been appointed CEO, and Ms. Giulia Martinelli is the Senior Vice President. Combined, Mr. Mariani and Ms. Martinelli have over 50 years of experience in the travel industry.

JF: What distinguishes Eurofly from other carriers?

EF-USA: Eurofly's mission is to provide nonstop service between JFK and several points throughout Italy at very competitive pricing and avoiding major European hubs, making it the logical choice for the leisure market anxious to vacation and for business clients who want to save time.

JF: So far, how much has Eurofly penetrated the U.S.?

EF-USA: Eurofly is the principal provider for a number of Italian destinations, with a total of 68,000 passengers transported en route to and from



JF: Which alliances would Eurofly be interested in joining?

EF-USA: Alliances are under discussion.

JF: Can you give us an equipment update?

EF-USA: On the North Atlantic we are using only Airbus A330-200 with 26 Business class seats and 256 economy seats. All aircrafts are less than five years old.

JF: Any new investments being made for future?

EF-USA: Eurofly' major stock holder is Meridiana Airlines. A new industrial plan will be announced soon detailing the future growth of the company. Both companies are committed to expanding service in North America. Eurofly began servicing JFK in 2005, and in 2008 will increase its revenue sixfold.

JF: Unlike other carriers, Eurofly pays commissions — is there a commission plan that would pay more than 8% on tickets — is Eurofly a preferred carrier with any consortia?

EF-USA: Eurofly will continue to pay commissions to all travel agents when tickets are purchased via EuroflyVacations.com. We do pay up to 8%, and, based on volume, overrides are also paid. Consortia are welcome to book via the web.

JF: How many agents do you have preferred supplier status with?

EF-USA: In excess of 50 agents in the Metropolitan area.

JF: How many agencies are in your databank?

EF-USA: About 2,000

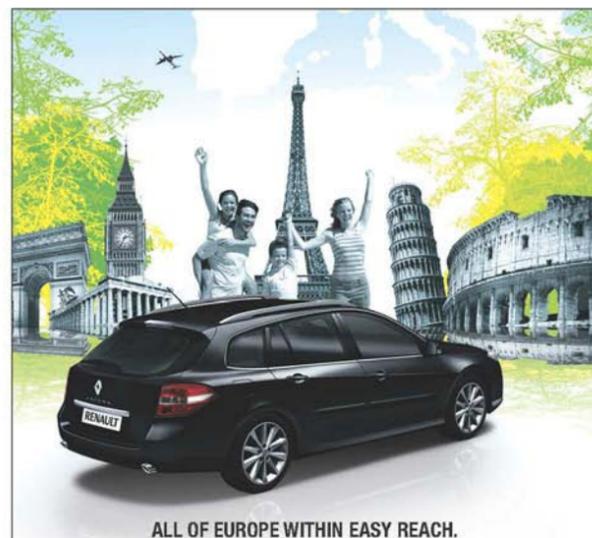
JF: Will Eurofly Vacations continue?

EF-USA: Eurofly Vacations will not only continue but will expand in offering quality tour products soon. Eurofly will create its own tours designed to support the destinations it serves. We expect our yield to go up considerably with the advent of Eurofly's new presence in North America.

JF: Where do you see Eurofly in the next five years?

EF-USA: Eurofly will become the carrier of choice, for its service, price, and non stop service to more of Italy.

For more information on Eurofly, call 800-459-4980; or visit www.euroflyvacations.com



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Breaking Barriers Along the Danube

By Tom Bross

A big splash of news came out of east-side Europe last December. The region's border-free zone (designated the Schengen Area) was expanded and now involves 24 countries. Nine newcomers include Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia. So no more frontier barriers, no more snoopy checkpoints at road and rail crossings—indicating enhanced freedom and social-economic integration. Plus: increased potential for tour operators specializing in continental itineraries.



The Linz Hauptplatz, Vienna, is the largest public square in Europe.

Those developments coincide with each year's travel-trade show in Vienna (Jan. 27-29, 2008). The industry get-together was previously known as **austrian travel business** or **atb**. Since 2007 the geographic scope has broadened, hence 2007's debut of the **austrian and central european travel business** (actb) Convention and Exposition, with Vienna continuing as host and hub city. The ongoing partnership with the **Danube Tourist Commission** has enhanced what was once an exclusively Austrian showplace. Visit www.danubesalesmanual.com

The river, flowing downstream-eastward toward Romania's Black Sea Delta—a nature preserve declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991 and Europe's Landscape of the Year for 2007-08—runs 1,767 miles through a mix of rural scenery, gorges, vineyard slopes and urban topography. "Must-see" cities are on the waterway's cruising route: Certainly Vienna, but also Budapest, Bratislava, Linz, Passau, Regensburg and Ulm. Travelers following the river's course on land or aboard excursion vessels soon learn about the Danube's international name changes. For instance: Donau (Austria and Germany), Duna (Hungary).

Petra Stolba, CEO of the **Austrian National Tourist Office**, refers to actb as "the primary meeting place and networking opportunity for everyone interested in selling travel to Austria and central Europe." This year's edition gathered 605 exhibitors and 852 international buyers, including a U.S. contingent of 58 agents, group organizers and incentive planners. Stolba introduced ANTO's new promotion campaign, with an "It's Got to be Austria" theme.

Austrian & Swiss Soccer Matches

Considering spectator numbers and vast broadcast coverage, UEFA Euro football (soccer!) action tops this year's special-events schedule. Matchups (June 7-29) involve four Austrian cities (Salzburg, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Vienna) and four in Switzerland (Bern, Basel, Zürich, Geneva), with the championship finals played in Vienna's Ernst-Heppel Stadium. Tourism officials expect an increase of one million overnight stays in Austrian locales (visit www.uefa.com).

Next year, attention shifts to a famous classical musician and a lively riverfront city. Joseph Haydn spent 30 years as conductor of Prince Esterházy's court orchestra in southerly Burgenland.

The prolific composer died in 1809, so 200th-anniversary commemoratives—including gala performances of his operas and oratorios—will attract audiences to various Austrian venues. Esterházy Palace in provincial-capital Eisenstadt is an impressively venerable setting for indoor-outdoor International Haydn Festival concerts (Sept. 10-27).

Linz, sharing honors with Vilnius in Lithuania, has been designated 2009's **European Capital of Culture** (www.linz09.at). Thirty diverse, purposely conceived programs and activities highlight the year's events calendar in Austria's third-biggest city (after Vienna and Graz), home town of delectable Linzertorte. September's Klangwolken (Clouds of Sound) ranks as the city's "signature extravaganza," drawing huge crowds to Danube riverbanks for bursting fireworks synchronized with booming orchestral music. Cutting-edge culture-year exhibitions are planned for inner-city Linz's Lentos Modern Art Museum and the futuristic, interactive Ars Electronica Center. Audiences anticipate Brucknerfest music-making in the world-class Brucknerhaus concert hall (Sept. 14-Oct. 8), followed by a Vienna Philharmonic guest appearance (Oct. 26).

Austrian Airlines flies daily nonstops Vienna VIE from/to New York JFK, Chicago ORD and Washington Dulles IAD. The carrier's **Star Alliance** affiliation gives your clients a wide choice of North American airports for transatlantic departures and returns. **Delta Air Lines** operates five weekly nonstops between Atlanta ATL and Austria's capital city. Flughafen Schwechat, the country's international gateway, is southeast of midcity Vienna.



Slovenia's Julian Alps border Austria and Italy.

Excursions in Slovenia

JAX FAX joined a two-day post-convention tour to this proudly independent little nation. **Adria Airways** flights between Vienna and Ljubljana take merely 50 minutes. Among the standout attractions in Slovenia are: the capital-city of Ljubljana, crisscrossed by seven bridges, energized by 60,000 university students. Rows of Baroque and Art Nouveau buildings wrap around a promontory topped by medieval castle ramparts.

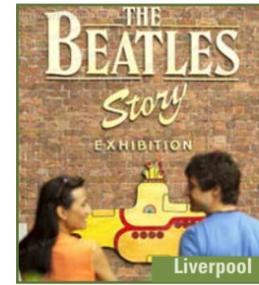
Its Adriatic seacoast towns feature historic marketplaces and trendy resort hotels. Piran, Portorož, Koper and Izola are perched on the craggy Istrian peninsula shared with Croatia. Super-scenic Lake Bled and its tourism-friendly shoreline town lined with restaurants and a walkway that circles the lake. Mountain ranges form a dramatic backdrop for the cliff-top castle, also a 17th-century church on a mid-lake island. Immense Postojna Cave, Europe's most extensive, UNESCO World Heritage Site, 20-km. network of passages, galleries and chambers.

For the 2008 manual to Slovenia, E-mail: info@slovenia.info
For information on Austria, contact the Austrian National Tourist Office in New York City at 212-944-6880; e-mail travle@austria.info; www.austria-tourism.biz

For consolidator fares and tour packages to Austria and Slovenia see page 67 and 78 of the Listings Section

Liverpool & Stavanger Share Culture Capital Crown

The city of Liverpool in England is wearing the European Capital of Culture crown this year, and 2007 marked the city's 800th anniversary. The next two years of special events, festivals, new hotel openings and other tourism developments make Liverpool a "must-visit" destination for Americans.



With a \$38 million cruise liner terminal just opened, and a \$290 million arena and convention center that debuted in January, Liverpool is awash with new developments. The Hard Days' Night hotel just swung its doors open, and the famous Beatles Story exhibition is doubled in size this year. Sir Paul McCartney will return to his native city to headline 'The Liverpool Sound' concert at Anfield Stadium on June 1, 2008. The Liverpool Culture Company and major cultural institutions will present the series with artists, performers at venues throughout Liverpool, Merseyside, and beyond. Tickets, visit www.liverpool08.com.

Free Events

Building on Liverpool's reputation for excellence in the visual art world, the year will include a city-wide public art program commissioned by the Liverpool Culture Company in association with Liverpool Biennial. For more than 12 months, public art will animate parks, plazas, pavilions and transport. Impossible to miss, this will work in tandem with a program of local and international street theater. Pavilions are at the forefront of the public interventions program, reflecting Liverpool's cultural life and its varied communities, including the city center's surrounding neighborhoods. Three specially commissioned and spectacular pavilions are planned, launching between March and May 2008.

Artichoke is planning a magical new show, created specially for Liverpool 2008, commissioned by the Liverpool Culture Company. Will You Find It? will take place across Liverpool between September 26 - 28, 2008. It will be a large scale, unforgettable piece of live theater, played out against city landmarks. Register for updates on www.willyoufindit.co.uk.

Visit www.visitliverpool.com or www.visitbritain.us.

Norway's attractive port of Stavanger set on the west coast kicked off a year-long extravaganza of performance and art in celebration of its role as one of two Cultural Capitals of Europe in 2008. The port has attracted artists from around the world as more than 200 major projects are in the works, plus a far greater number of individual performances and events. The program for the year consists of dance, theater, music, art exhibits, architecture, film, literature and festivals such as the Open Sky Kite Festival, Gladmat - Food Festival, The Tomato Festival, Stavanger Video Art Festival.



Drama on the Fjords

Many of the performances will take place in the dramatic fjords for which the region is most famous. At least one fjord performance will take place on a platform built an inch below the surface, so actors will appear to "walk on water." Not to be missed are the aerial gymnastics of Project Bandaloop from California. Instead of dancing down the sides of skyscrapers as they often do, the group will perform on July 4 off the boulders and sheer cliffs of nearby Gloppealsura. Among the highlights will be four month-long residences of several major groups: Muziektheater Transparant from Belgium, Handspring Puppets (spectacular adult puppeteering from South Africa), Inbal Pinto Dance from Israel and Oskar Korsunovas Theatre (a Lithuanian group performing Fairytales in Landscape by Jon Fosse, one of Norway's leading playwrights).

For information on Norway, call 212-885-9700; E-mail: usa@invanor.no or visit www.visitnorway.com, or information on Stavanger, visit www.Stavanger2008.com

For consolidator fares and tour packages to Britain see page 68, for Norway see page 76 of the Listings Section

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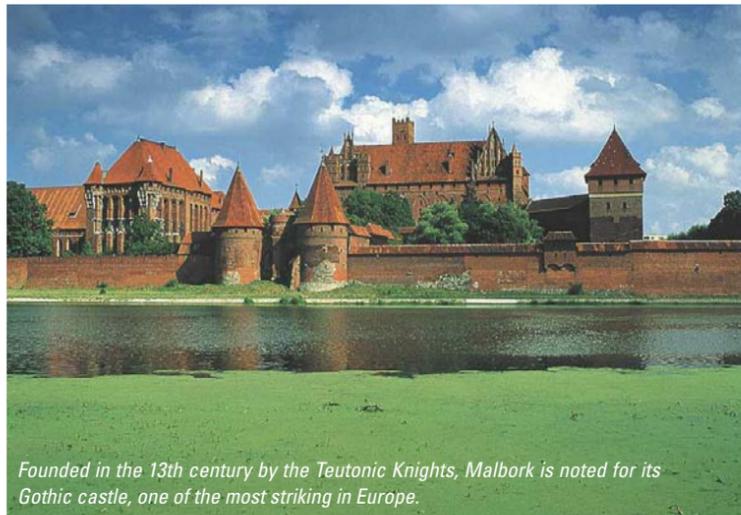
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Poland's New-Found Power

Recently Poland was ranked among the top 10 most attractive countries in which to invest in the "European Attractiveness Survey 2007," prepared by Ernst & Young. Not surprisingly, the ranking opens with China followed by the U.S., India, Germany, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation, placing Poland's economy in the big leagues. With its seventh position, Poland at the very least is an unquestionable leader in Central Europe.

The survey examined more than 800 decision makers from companies representing all the regions of the world, industries and business models as well as database tracking foreign investment projects that result in new facilities and creation of new jobs.

Poland is also perceived as the second best destination after China for foreign investment in the production sector due to its convenient geographical location in the heart of Europe and its competitive labor costs.



Founded in the 13th century by the Teutonic Knights, Malbork is noted for its Gothic castle, one of the most striking in Europe.

What is significant about these findings for the traveling public, is that Poland is economically a stable nation, a homogenous nation with a strong sense of its own culture and one in which the dollar goes a long way as the *zloty* remains the Polish currency.

Among the specialist operators to Poland stand two giants: **American Travel Abroad** and **Orbis**. While the two companies are formidable competitors, both feature competitively-priced products that are gaining more status in the U.S. market as air service to Poland has increased significantly and savvy Europe-bound Americans are curious.

Because of Poland's history, both in the Middle Ages and in modern times, the country is a breeding ground for special interest travel, which AMTA and Orbis have mined for their product lines. Among the most popular special interest programs are Jewish Heritage, Religious, Wellness, Active or Soft Adventure, Cultural Tours and of course self-drives.

Predicting a Banner Year

"Now that Poland is a full-fledged member of the European Community and the last frontier barriers between Germany and Poland have been removed, we are counting on getting more visitors from the United States than ever before," said Zbigniew Wegiel, president and CEO of **American Travel Abroad (AMTA)**, for more than 60 years the leading operator of tour programs to Poland. He continued, "Imagine, now it is possible for people to travel all the way from the Iberian peninsula or western France right up to the Polish-Russian border without ever having to show or surrender their passports. We predict a banner year of travel from the United States to Poland in 2008."

Reflecting on Poland's lengthy history with Roman Catholicism and Judaism, AMTA offers tours that highlight important sights and attractions of both religions. In addition, the agency can design tours that stress festivals, events and attractions of particular interest to religious pilgrims. Another area of increasing growth is independent travel throughout Poland, either by train or in a rental car. Some prescribed itineraries are available. However, the agency's Poland department can create itineraries to suit the traveler's needs and requirements.

While still a novelty among travelers from the U.S. the agency has noted considerable interest in spa vacations. "It is not necessary to suffer from an ailment or illness to take advantage of a stay at such a resort," said Marta Dragan, head of AMTA's Poland department. "More and more peo-

ple come," she continued, "to get a good rest or just recharge their batteries."

Jewish Root Tours

Centuries ago, Jews from Europe found refuge in the medieval kingdom of Poland after fleeing tyranny and religious persecution throughout the Continent. Prior to World War II, Warsaw had more Jewish residents than any other city in the world, with the exception of New York. But the unspeakable horrors of the following years would forever alter the look and composition of Poland and its once-thriving Jewish populace.

Typically, former concentration camps comprise itineraries that trace Jewish heritage in Poland: Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau come to mind, but there are other reminders of Jewish culture in Poland such as the early Baroque synagogue built in 1642 in Tykocin or the city of Lublin, once called "The Mother of Israel," and the Talmudic Academy in Majdanek.

Pawel Lewandowski, General Manager of Orbis, the 90-year old Polish tour operation and travel agency, and one of the world's 10 oldest tour operators, says, "In 2008, we want to become not only a gateway to Poland for our foreign visitors but also a gateway to Central Europe and the Baltic States. Orbis travel services include far-reaching facilities from trips to the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Ukraine to the Baltic States."

Avid shoppers will certainly be satisfied with Orbis' "Christmas Markets: Prague, Zakopane, Kraków" tour. For those who long for peace and rest in the mountains, Orbis has prepared a vacation in Southern Poland's ski and health resort, Zakopane. The "Study and Fun" tour is designed for young people so that they can visit Poland and gain informa-

tion on the educational opportunities for foreign students in university cities as Warsaw and Krakow.

In 2008, apart from Orbis' traditional City Breaks to the largest Polish cities, individual tourists may tap into the Wellness and Spa programs held in renowned seaside, mountain and lake resorts. Among the week-long options are Power Week in Międzyzdroje, Therapeutic package in Kolobrzeg, Thalassotherapy package in Ciechocinek and a Mind and Body Harmony package in Mrągowo

To take some of the challenge out of independent travelers driving around Poland, Orbis and AMTA have access to rental cars installed with GPS.

Whether clients are on a trip within Poland or going abroad for business or leisure, driving in unfamiliar areas can be daunting. With a navigation system clients will naturally spend less time driving in circles.

When clients pick up their cars in Poland, the navigation system will be ready to take along with you. At Orbis, prices start from \$16.50 per day for the GPS. Contact Orbis for its "Fall In Love Again" brochure.

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Call 800-TO-POLAND; E-mail us @ info@orbistravel.com; www.orbistravel.com

For general information, contact the Polish National Tourist Office, 201-420-9910; E-mail pntonyc@polandtour.org; www.polandtour.org

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Poland see page 76 of the Listings Section

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Travelers Rate Orbis

Orbis' flagship products that are dedicated to the American market are tours with guaranteed departures. Customer satisfaction surveys indicate 75 percent rank their satisfaction as a five and almost 25 percent as a four (on a scale from 1 to 5); Orbis distinguishes itself most with its 87 percent satisfaction rate regarding its certified sightseeing guides.

"In 2008, we enhanced our offers with a pilgrimage tour as well as new optional extensions to our best-selling 'Poland's Best' tour that visits Prague, Budapest or Vienna," said Lewandowski. Additionally, Orbis also offers tours in Spanish, a product line that is usually selected by clients from Spain and South America, but also from the U.S. In addition to the classic "Jewish Roots" program, Lewandowski recommends agents take a closer look at two new tours for groups interested in the Jewish heritage: "Jewish Roots – Eastern Poland" and "Jewish Tour to Ukraine."

"We especially encourage Jewish descendants and enthusiasts of Jewish culture to visit Poland during the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow (June) and the Singer Festival in Warsaw (September) that Orbis sponsored last year," said Lewandowski.

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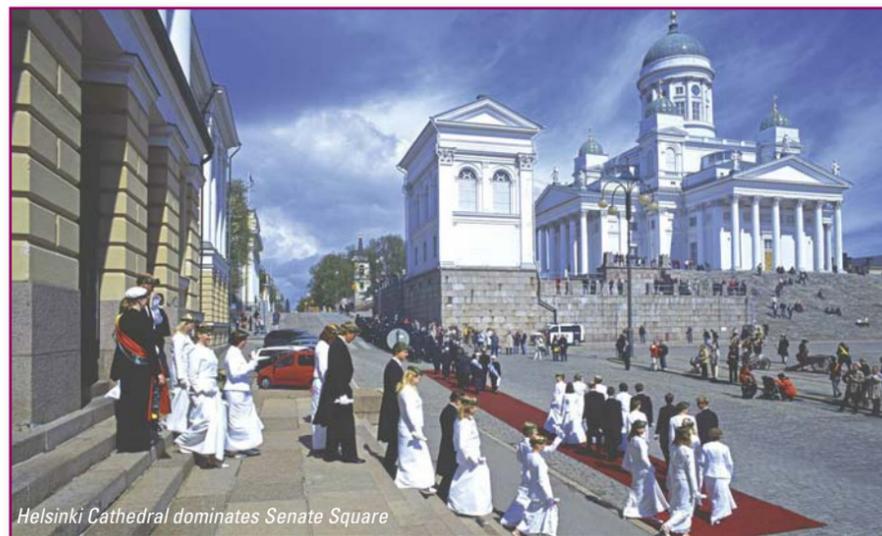
Helsinki

A 'New' Face in Europe

That first trip to Europe is one of the great American adventures. Advise clients to act on their dreams first, not on what other people (except you of course) say they should do. Travelers should see the icons. Meet Europeans with similar interests. Take in a major exhibition and/or festival. A good lunch can change one's food life forever. And all they need is a passport and a ticket, plus some good advice on how to best make that dollar stretch.

For instance, Helsinki's five-star uber luxurious **Hotel Kamp** is featured in **Scantours'** three-day/two-night city break package called "Helsinki In Style." Priced from \$600, it is offered year-round and includes roundtrip air from JFK, airport transfers by private limo and two nights at the over-the-top Kamp. Visit www.scantours.net/products

It's a "nanofast" world and the cliché cities that one must "do" are fast giving way to cities that are the "new" face of Europe setting trends in technology, design, music, social environments and are natural in their lifestyle. Millennials and GenXers with Europe on their minds say "why not" to Helsinki. Even though they may not know that Nokia (headquartered in Finland) is a Finnish company they are all linked into its advanced phones. Heavy metal groups such as H.I.M. and Lordi create a language connection all their



Helsinki Cathedral dominates Senate Square

own. And the pursuit of natural lifestyles with sauna, swimming, sailing, kayaking, bicycling, hiking, snowmobiling are part of the Finn's every day routine.

In 2008 the City of Espoo celebrates its 550th birthday with a full program of activities including city events, festivals, small local celebrations, sports competitions, exhibitions and concerts. The celebrations will culminate during a festival week held Aug 25-31, which will include the traditional Espoo Day on August 27. Among the highlights of the jubilee year's cultural offerings will be the first Claude Monet exhibition to be held in the history of Finland. "Claude Monet and Finnish Impressionism, Maaria Wirkkala" will appear at the Espoo Museum of Modern Art EMMA from March 5- May 25. The theme is the dialogue between Monet's paintings and those of Finnish artists..

Additionally, the Ateneum Art Museum, the Finnish Art Gallery, houses the largest collections of art in Finland, including all the best loved Finnish masterpieces. In 2008 it celebrates two anniversaries with special exhibitions: From March 7-August 24, 2008 the

Ateneum celebrates its 120 year anniversary with a special exhibition of one of the major artists of the Finnish Golden Age, Pekka Halonen (1865-1933). Visit www.ateneum.fi

Additionally, 2008 marks the 10th anniversary of Kiasma, which kicked off the festivities with the collections exhibition Image and After: The fascinating photographs by Nan Goldin and the immense paintings by Julian Schnabel are on display through April 13. While waiting for the performance of the internationally renowned Derevo, the theater has been taken over by a contemporary musical, Riitta - the woman in the house.

Although it was built amid controversy over the design and the building materials, Kiasma opened accompanied by festivities, on the last weekend of May in 1998. During the opening weekend, the museum attracted 30,000 visitors. Kiasma has subsequently established its position as a national, and especially a local, meeting place. Kiasma welcomed its millionth visitor in May 2001. The milestone of two million visitors was reached five



Picture: Kalle Katajala

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The Helsinki Card is an economical companion for all visitors exploring Helsinki on their own. The Card also makes an excellent gift to congress or corporate guests

allowing them to get acquainted with Helsinki's attractions according to their own interests. Call 011-358-9-2288-1703; E-mail: helsinkiexpert@helsinkiexpert.fi; www.helsinkiexpert.fi

Travel with a Helsinki Expert

This year, Finland inaugurated half-day tours focusing on a wide array of special interests including Finnish artist culture tours led by Helsinki Experts. The bus tours start from Helsinki proceeding to Järvenpää – the town in the immediate vicinity of the Lake Tuusula. At the turn of the 19th and 20th century a large number of Finnish artists settled along its shores and created a distinctive community.

One of the artists was the composer Jean Sibelius (1865-1957), whose home Ainola in Järvenpää is the first visiting point. Ainola—today a museum—is preserved as it was during Sibelius' time. Many of his productions were composed in Ainola, where he could concentrate far from the amusements of Helsinki.

From Ainola the tour continues to Villa Kokkonen, one of the few private houses

designed by architect Alvar Aalto (1898-1976). The building was completed in 1969 and it is said to be a preliminary sketch of the Finlandia Hall. Villa Kokkonen was designed to be both the home and working place for Alvar Aalto's friend, composer Joonas Kokkonen (1921-1996). Nature plays a big role as it is an element in the design of the house and can be enjoyed through the large windows in the studio and living room.

Along with this new Half-day Tour Helsinki Expert's two other regular bus tours: "Old Wooden Town of Porvoo" and the "Finnish Lakes and Forest" tour to Nuuskio National Park continue operating in summer 2008. Priced at 49€/75adults adults and 20 €/30 children (7-16 yrs) but with Helsinki Card, the tours cost 42€/65 adults; 17 €/26 children (7-16 yrs). Children under 7 years ride free of charge.

Call the Finnish Tourist Board, 877-463-4652; www.visitfinland.com

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Finland see page 69 of the Listings Section

Mother's Day Deals

BELGIUM: Take your Mom antique shopping in Brussels - Designer Olga Polizzi says it is her favorite place for picking up unusual pieces for the hotels, and its weekend market at the Place du Grand Sablon is one of Europe's best. Recharge after a hard day's bargain hunting is at **Rocco Forte's Hotel Amigo**, which is offering a Wellness and Beauty Moments spa package, from just \$758 per person including a free upgrade to a Deluxe Room for Mother's Day bookings.

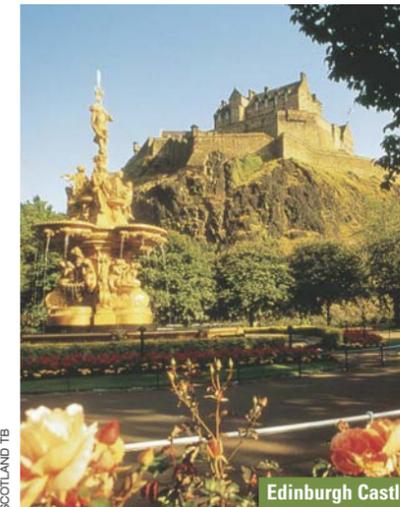
The package includes two nights' accommodation with breakfast and two treatments at the Marianne Gray Institute. Quote "Mother's Day" when booking. Call 888 667 9477; www.roccofortecollection.com

RUSSIA: A Cultural Heritage package at the Kempinski Hotel Moika 22 in St. Petersburg includes accommodations for three nights in a superior room, airport transfers, two tickets to the Hermitage Museum and the Mariinsky Theater, a three-course dinner for two with wine and wi-fi throughout the property. Housed in a St. Petersburg mansion, designed by Basil von Witte in 1853, during the reign of Tsar Nicholas I, this elegant building is set on the Moika River Embankment, overlooking one of the city's most famous sights—Palace Square and the Hermitage Museum. The package is priced from \$2,065 for two sharing a room for the three nights is valid through May 18.

Call 800-426-3135; www.kempinski-st-petersburg.com

SCOTLAND: Take mom to braveheart country at **The Scotsman**, Edinburgh's glorious, 69-room and suite hotel that joined forces with **Trike Tours Scotland** for an extraordinary sightseeing experience. Guests take to the great open-road with a three-seat, chauffeur-driven, 1600cc muscle-engine Trike. Route options include a one hour and 15-minute Edinburgh City Tour; or a two-hour and 30-minute Edinburgh and Coastal Tour. The Scotsman Trike-Tastic Pamper page leads in at about \$609 in a Deluxe Room; about \$681 in an Editors Room; or about \$815 in a luxurious Publishers Suite. Prices include accommodations; breakfast; chocolate and champagne on arrival; plus a one hour and 15-minute Edinburgh City Trike Tour. Costs are based on two sharing with a two-night minimum stay. Call 011-441-31-556-5565; E-mail reservations@thescotsmanhotel.co.uk; www.thescotsmanhotel.co.uk.

LONDON, PARIS, VIENNA, BUDAPEST: Tailor-made theatre + hotel packages from **Theatre Breaks Ltd**, are now available for online booking by agents following the relaunch of www.theatrebreaks.com. Agents can create individual itineraries, including West End shows, central hotels, restaurants, tours and attractions. The website includes Stratford-upon-Avon, Edinburgh, Paris, Vienna and Budapest in its list of destinations. Call 011-44-0-1727-834422; E-mail pat.pearley@theatrebreaks.com



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IN THE NEWS

Herzerl Tours Intros Women's Choices

When it's time to celebrate special birthdays, reunions or get-togethers with old friends, girls want more than fun – they want to combine the culture of a glittering city, and a spa experiences, preferably in a foreign country, which adds a touch of the exotic to the standard massage fare.

"Spa reunions are getting more popular because busy, middle-aged women want to relax and they enjoy doing this with their girlfriends," says **Susanne Servin**, owner of **Herzerl Tours**. According to a recent poll of American Express travel agents, two thirds of the agents reported an increase in vacations with girlfriends or female relatives. The majority of those polled said they want to re-connect with friends and "relax and recharge," highlighting the advantage of not having to "take care of anyone else" or dress-up while away. The poll also noted that women traveling together are seeking more active and luxurious vacations, looking for culinary and city sightseeing in addition to embellish their trips involving spas, beach and shopping.

To meet the new demands, Herzerl Tours introduced three European spa experiences to its tour packages. The itineraries include two days in a city followed by five days at a spa. Promoted as "culture/wellness" packages, the tours feature Vienna / Baden and Salzburg / Bad Gastein in Austria and Venice / Abano in northern Italy. The itineraries include spa and city visits, the spas selected near Vienna, Salzburg and Venice are all located in little towns that offer their own distinctive charm. "American women recognize that the spa experience is different in Europe and they value that distinction. There the focus is on promoting general well-being and health," says Servin. Herzerl Tours' European Spa packages start at \$2,675 per person double for land arrangements at four-star properties, as well as wine tastings, touring and fine dining. Call 800-684-8488; E-mail sms@herzerltoours.com; www.herzerltours.com

Off-Season Sailing Along Adriatic Coastline

Adriatic Cruises has joined forces with **Jauntee** – Croatia Expert Travel Planning, the official marketing and sales agent for the M.S. Dalmacija for U.S. and Canadian markets. Jauntee will continue reintroducing this beautiful mid-size European charm cruising vessel to American ship-going clientele in a brand new light. Jauntee launched the M.S. Dalmacija's 2008 cruise brochure and the itinerary, *Jewels and Pearls of the Adriatic* at the **New York Times Travel Show** last month. The itineraries have an abundance of great offers and savings for people of every income and interest: for singles; special occasions; families, groups, and senior citizens. "We are thrilled the M.S. Dalmacija made such an important effort to meet the standards and requirements of the American cruising clientele with this year's cabin refreshments, a number of entertainment enhancements, and with the new and exciting itineraries. Exploring Croatia and the Adriatic coast in early spring and late fall are perfect times for sightseeing, avoiding crowds and getting the best values," said Jauntee's M. Mihanovic Kuchan, CEO. Visit www.jauntee.com

Clesus Library in Ephesus.



TURKEY NTD

Cloud Over Turkey

Cloud Tours specializes in the Eastern Mediterranean, which includes combination tours to Greece & Turkey. This year, Cloud is selling two tours dedicated to Turkey. Included in all packages is \$210 airline fuel surcharge, transfers, taxes, and service fees.

The seven-night, air-inclusive Pearls of Turkey, priced at \$2,049 per person double, covers domestic flights in Turkey, three nights in Istanbul, two in Cappadocia and two in Izmir or Kusadasi, five days' sightseeing in Turkey with English-speaking guides, entrance fees, and most meals.

The Turkish Delights tour, an air-inclusive, eight-day tour, begins at \$1,729 per person double, covers domestic flights in Turkey, three nights in Istanbul, one in Canakklae, one night Izmir or Kusadasi, one in Pamukkale and two in Cappadocia, seven days' sightseeing in Turkey with English-speaking guides, six lunches, seven dinners.

In addition, the To the Land of the Gods and Sultans, a 12-day air-inclusive tour, combines Greece and Turkey in a land and cruise tour starting at \$2,419 per person double, two nights in Istanbul with a full-day tour, two nights in Athens with a half-day tour and a six-day cruise to Kusadasi (Ephesus) in Turkey and the Greek Isles of Mykonos, Patmos, Rhodes, Crete and Santorini. Includes daily breakfast, one lunch, all meals on the cruise.

Yet another choice is the Treasures of Greece and Turkey beginning at \$3,109 per person double that combines highlights of Classical Greece with Athens, Istanbul and a seven-day cruise. Covered are international air, three nights in Athens, daily breakfast, an Athens city tour, a four day classical tour of Greece including Nafplion, Olympia, Mycenae, Delphi and the Meteora Monasteries and a seven-day cruise to Istanbul, Kusadasi (Ephesus) and the Greek Isles of Mykonos, Patmos, Rhodes, Crete and Santorini. The Istanbul Caper is a four-night extension that can be added to most tours. Call 800-223-7880; info@cloudtours.com. www.cloudtours.com

A Hard Day's Night in Liverpool

The eagerly anticipated four-star boutique 110-room **Hard Days Night Hotel**, the themed with Beatles artwork in Liverpool recently debuted.

The opening follows Liverpool's reign as one of two 2008 European Capitals of Culture (the other is Stavanger, Norway) is set to attract hordes of guests and Beatles fans alike, as tourists flock to the city to see art, music and cultural events running throughout the year. Set in the heart of the 'Beatles Quarter', in Liverpool a stone's throw from the world famous Cavern Club where the Beatles first rose to fame.

www.harddaysnighthotel@eulogy.co.uk

BEST BUYS

\$5295 TURKEY **Boundless Journeys** has scheduled a special August 12 departure for a 12-day trip to Turkey priced at \$5,295 per person, double, plus \$450 for internal air. After exploring UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Istanbul such as the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque, we venture into Cappadocia, a region of exceptional natural wonders characterized by unusual geology. Highlights include: an active seven-day Turquoise Coast cruise aboard an eight-passenger traditional sailing yacht, nature walks, snorkeling, kayaking, and swimming, visits to important sites of mythology, exploration of Cappadocia, including a stay in a unique cave hotel and an evening cruise on the Bosphorus through Istanbul. Call 800-941-8010; www.boundlessjourneys.com

\$1790 EUROPE **Europeanbarging and River Cruises**, a barge and river cruise operator, is featuring several new culinary-themed cruises such as six-night chocolate cruises aboard the six passenger

barge Elizabeth, The River Cloud during tulip season is offering wine and chocolate-themed cruises. There is a "Grand Cru" wine cruise aboard the 12-passenger Napoleon cruising the Rhone Valley of France. Among the available packages is the five-night Danube River Cruise from May 18 to 23, aboard the four-star Arosa Mia and priced at \$1,790 per person double. Rate includes the five-night cruise to Passau, Vienna, Budapest, Bratislava, Passau, all meals, soft drinks and fuel and port tax. Agents earn 15% commission on each cruise booking.

Visit www.europeanbarging.com

\$3969 ITALY **AHI's** nine-night educational vacation package, "Sicily: Taormina and Mondello," spends four nights each in Taormina and in Mondello (with one night in Munich, Germany, during the journey homeward). Priced from \$3,969 per person double departing from New York; Washington; Boston and Chicago; costs cover round-trip airfare to Catania, plus transfers.

There's a four-night stay at Taormi-

na's first-class Continental Hotel and four nights in Mondello at the first-class Mondello Palace. Meals include nine breakfasts, five lunches and seven dinners.

Departures from Los Angeles and San Francisco cost \$4,139 and from Houston, \$4,149; tour dates are April 18-28, April 25-May 5 and May 9-19.

Call 800-323-7373; www.ahitravel.com

\$765 GERMANY **The Hotel Taschenberg Palais Kempinski Dresden** is selling the Fascination Semper Opera House package. Enjoy cultural and musical highlights within a baroque atmosphere, plus two nights' accommodations a sumptuous breakfast, a four-course-dinner at the restaurant Intermezzo including a glass of Champagne, a fruity welcome treat on arrival and a voucher for a house cocktail at the Classic American Bar, guests will receive first-class tickets for a visit to Dresden's Semper Opera. Prices start from about \$765 per person double; valid through Dec.31. Visit www.kempinski-dresden.de/en/home/index.htm

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Anguilla Beach at Johnno's.

Anguilla's New Celebrity Status

Little Anguilla, just 13 miles long and three miles wide, has reached celebrity status. "Hot destination," "Swanky," and even "South Beach meets St. Barths" have replaced the understated "casually elegant" descriptions of the past. With celebrity comes progress, both planned and unplanned – and with progress there are changes. With all that in mind and in blueprints, the Anguilla Tourist Board has also gathered a number of affordable package deals that could make sense for the entire family to walk the brilliant white sands of Shoal Bay

(recognized by Travel & Leisure magazine as the best beach in the Caribbean).

Located on talcum powder white Shoal Bay East is the 27-suite property called **Kú Hotel**, which opened in 2005. Kú, which means 'sacred place' in the Arawak Indian language, is close to Fountain Cave, one of the most important Indian ceremonial grounds in the Eastern Caribbean. This summer, the hotel is offering two major packages this summer. Escape to Kú is a four-night deal that includes breakfast daily, two dinners, two one-hour massages, bottle of wine

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CARIBBEAN & BERMUDA

and roundtrip transfers at a cost of \$1,392 to \$1,545 per person double.

Alternatively for the lovelorn or the lovesick, is the seven-night package called Love at Ku, which includes breakfast daily, four dinners, two one-hour massages, a bottle of Champagne, Prickly Pear excursion, and a one-day car rental for some exploring on your own. Transfers are also part of the scheme with prices ranging from \$2,520 to \$2,785 per person double. Kú is 20 minutes by taxi from Anguilla's Wall-blake Airport; 25 minutes from Blowing Point ferry terminal. Call 800-869-5827; fax: 264-497-3355; E-mail ku@anguillanet.com

At Bird of Paradise Villa, Melody Brooks Dill has spent the last 20 years perfecting her idea of the "ideal" Girlfriend Getaway. "Have you ever been on vacation where you got the room facing the garden and your friends had a beautiful view of the ocean (grrrrr)? Or...have you been starving and

wanted to have breakfast NOW, but your friend was still putting on her makeup? Well, welcome to the Bird of Paradise where each suite has its own

private view of the Caribbean and there are no "garden views."

The property's four-suite villas solve all those natty conflicts with girlfriends, mom and/or sisters and daughters. Guests can go to breakfast or swim whenever they like because each villa has its own kitchen, there are three swimming areas, four living and dining areas, not to mention each guest dons a Frette robe and slippers, uses Bulgari toiletries, each guest is entitled to a spa treatment, a boat charter with lunch, a gift package of food items, and has access to a rental car. A six-night stay costs \$4,400 each for four; \$3,200 for six; or \$2,500 for six.

Call 414-791-9461; E-mail anguillabird@yahoo.com; www.anguillabird.com

Paradise Cove Resort, one of the affordable properties of the Charming Escapes Collection in Anguilla is offering a special four-night package for \$720 in a studio suite for two, based on double occupancy, taxes and gratuities not included. The package includes a one-day car rental plus a picnic basket and bottle of wine to explore one of the many extraordinary and secluded beaches of Anguilla. Offer remains valid from April through November 2008. Call 264-497-6603; www.paradise.ai

The **Arawak Beach Inn** invites travelers to relive the days of the so-called "Dark Ages" with its Isolation Vacation. Without Internet access, TV or phones, guests will be



Party at Bird of Paradise

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Call American Eagle or The Anguilla Tourist Board at 877 4 Anguilla or visit www.anguilla-vacation.com.

* Daily flights from San Juan to Anguilla leave at 2:00 p.m. & 8:55 p.m. Returning flights depart Anguilla at 8:15 a.m. & 3:40 p.m. American Eagle features ATR 72 turbo-prop aircraft with a capacity for 64 passengers. Flight times are subject to variation. Anguilla offers no specific guarantee for departure or arrival times.



CARIBBEAN & BERMUDA

forced to enjoy all the island, and this rejuvenating escape, have to offer. The seven-night getaway, created to help overworked guests unplug and recharge, is available year-round and priced seasonally starting at \$999 per person double for less than \$143 per night, remains valid from June 1 through October 31, 2008.

The seven-night Isolation Vacation includes: oceanfront accommodations, daily breakfast, four dinners at the Inn's Arawak Café, three-day car rental, a private day-trip to an uninhabited island complete with a gourmet picnic lunch, deep sea fishing excursion, three days of snorkel equipment, round-trip airport or ferry transfers. Call 877-4-ARAWAK; E-mail relax@arawakbeach.com; www.arawakbeach.com

The CuisinArt Resort & Spa is among Anguilla's most luxurious beachfront accommodations, its superlative service, award-winning Venus Spa, and world renowned cuisine live up to the accolades this property has received. Its design is Mediterranean inspired with whitewashed villas surrounded by lush plantings and a dazzling infinity pool stretching from the main building to the beach bar at Rendezvous Bay.

The Family & Friends package, valid June 1 through Nov. 16, will cost clients \$495 per night to stay in a Junior suite and \$247.50 for the second night, representing a savings of 50%. There will be an additional charge of \$80 per night for a third person, 12 years old and older, in the same room. No additional charge for children under 12 in the same room



Anguilla's Yacht Regatta is one reason to visit this summer.

with parents; however, a maximum of two children under 12 per room is allowed. Rates include airport greeting, breakfast daily, free use of Health Club facilities, fitness classes, use of three night-lit tennis courts and non-motorized water sports equipment. Clients extending their stay qualify for the Suite Escapes package based on a five-night or more stay for \$395 per night with the same inclusions. Call 800-943-3210; www.cuisinartresort.com

Sheriva Villa Hotel has been awarded the AAA Four Diamond rating for the year 2008. SHERIVA joins a select group of AAA Four Diamond Award winners. Just 3.6 percent of the more than 32,000 AAA Rated lodgings were awarded the prestigious AAA Four Diamond designation for 2008.

SHERIVA, the brainchild of Anguillian developer, Sheridan Smith, is a waterfront boutique villa-hotel with 20 rooms and suites. Launched in December 2006, the property's stellar accommodations -spread across three villas- range from oversized one-bedroom private pool suites to lavish, 14,000 square-foot, seven-bedroom villas. The 10-acre enclave offers privileged services such as personal chef, butler services, 24-hour concierge privé, in-villa spa treatments, private 8-seat golf cart with villa rentals, a complimentary beach shuttle to Maundays Bay and signing privileges at adjacent world-famous Cap Juluca Hotel. Call 264-498-9898 or E-mail info@sheriva.com; www.sheriva.com

Anguilla is accessible with scheduled air service from San Juan (50 minutes) or St. Maarten (five minutes), or by ferry from Marigot in French St. Martin (20 minutes) and from Juliana airport, St. Maarten (25 minutes).

For information, call the Anguilla Tourist Board 877-4-ANGUILLA or visit www.anguilla-vacation.com

For consolidator fares and tour packages to Anguilla see page 86 of the Listings Section

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IN THE NEWS

Embracing the Caribbean Diaspora

The well-heeled, highly mobile and often overlooked Caribbean Diaspora will be encouraged to take part in tourism planning at the upcoming Caribbean Media Exchange on Sustainable Tourism (CMEx). The 12th full CMEx edition slated for May 15 to 19 in Puerto Rico will also examine how local communities can benefit from tourism.

The innovative symposium returns to Puerto Rico attracting representatives of the tourism industry, government officials, media, youth delegates and development specialists to examine ways of using tourism to improve the health, wealth, environment and culture of destinations.

"Puerto Rico tourism officials, led by the visionary Terestela González Denton (Executive Director of the Puerto Rico Tourism Company), understand that a well-managed tourism industry can stimulate both economic and social development without compromising its natural and cultural resource base," said the president of Counterpart International, Lelei LeLaulu, who was pleased to host the meeting on the island for the third consecutive year.

LeLaulu said that the meeting will take a serious look at the overseas-based Caribbean Diaspora community, whether English-, Spanish-, French- or Dutch-speaking. "The Caribbean Diaspora remains a largely untapped market from a visitor and investment perspective," said LeLaulu, who added "the Diaspora is a rich source of concepts and ideas, seed and venture capital, and has been only partially exploited by Caribbean marketers and national and regional government agencies."

González Denton said she was particularly excited about exploring CMEx's theme since the Puerto Rico community in the United States, for example, plays a major role promoting the island and spending money in the local economy when they visit. "These are our ambassadors whose contributions can be directly linked to the revitalisation of communities on our island," she said. For further information, visit www.caribbeanmediaexchange.com

Air Jamaica Adds Dailies to Orlando

Last month, Air Jamaica increased to daily service to Jamaica from Orlando International Airport, offering Orlando residents, as well as travelers from Northern Florida, a centrally located flight option, and the only nonstop flight from Orlando to Jamaica. This flight operates with an Airbus A320 aircraft and offer travelers 12 Lovebird Executive Class seats and 138 Lovebird Economy seats. Flight times will be scheduled as follows: Orlando - Montego Bay: 2:40 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.; Montego Bay - Orlando: 10:30 a.m. - 1:25 p.m.

All Air Jamaica flights offer free in-flight amenities including hot meals, snacks, and in-flight entertainment. Air Jamaica is also well known for its, complimentary champagne in all classes of service and warm Caribbean smiles.

Visit www.airjamaica.com

Royal Plantation Island at Fowl Cay

By: Doug Cooke

For your upscale guests who are looking for a true "get away from it all," recommend a stay at Royal Plantation's newest property, Fowl Cay in the Exumas, Bahamas. Your clients will feel like they are the owners of this private 50-acre island since they will be sharing the island with a maximum of 26 guests.

This distinct and exclusive resort features just six villas ranging in size from one to three bedrooms, all with views of the most incredibly colored water, including every shade of blue and green you can imagine. In addition to the villas, there is a main house that serves as the restaurant and lounge for the island. It has a small pool on the front patio, along with a screened in porch with rocking chairs overlooking Exuma's collection of cays and islands. This is where island guests gather for meals, drinks and a game of pool or darts in the English-style pub. The atmosphere is decidedly informal and guests tend to get acquainted quickly. The chef is a local Bahamian, Todd Eldon, who was trained at the Culinary Institute of America. Not only is he an excellent chef, but he could also be a standup comic. He and the island's General Manager, Capt. Steve have a casual style that make guests feel at home.

As a Royal Plantation Resort, Fowl Cay is all-inclusive, so all meals, drinks, and water sports are included and each villa boasts a private motorboat for exploring the hundreds of isolated beaches and snorkeling spots found in the Exumas. The only items not included are gift shop purchases, fine wines and boat gas.

Getting to Fowl Cay

Guests arrive into neighboring Staniel Cay airport by means of either private charters (about \$450 one way for up to five people) from Nassau, or from Ft. Lauderdale on Watermakers Air (954-467-8920) scheduled service for about \$260 each way per person. Once in Staniel Cay, your clients will be greeted by Capt. Steve and walked across the street to the marina for a 15- minute boat trip to Fowl Cay.

A minimum stay of five nights is required and rates start at \$9,200 a week for two for a one-bedroom villa. The three-bedroom villa starts at \$26,000 per week for up to six guests. Speak to Capt. Steve when booking.

Call 242-357-0095; www.fowlcay.com



View from Royal Plantation Island villa bedroom at Fowl Cay.

DOUG COOKE

BARBADOS . . .

The Bajan Mancation

By: Doug Cooke



DOUG COOKE

For whatever reason, be it time to bond, escape the pressures of family and work or to just let loose, men need an occasional trip with their buddies, ie: the Mancation! I recently took one of these trips with a couple of my college friends down to Almond Beach Village in Barbados for their annual Superbowl Weekend. The following are the highlights of our weekend, which you can share with your male clients who may also be looking for an escape.

Almond Beach Village Superbowl Weekend

What better reason to get away with friends than a Superbowl party in the Caribbean, specifically Barbados. Even better, this Superbowl Weekend is hosted by ex-NFL player, Billy Taylor (runningback for the NY Giants in the early 80's) who invites several of his ex-NFL player friends to join him and resort guests for a long weekend of fun in the sun. The great thing about this weekend is the accessibility of the players. Unlike many "celebrity events" where the celebrities are tucked away in an inaccessible VIP area, here the players are hanging out and partying right along with the guests.

Activities for the weekend included a pickup basketball game, golf tournament on Almond Village's own on-site, nine hole course, beach volleyball and tug-of-war, a catamaran cruise and of course a large Superbowl party beside/on the beach. When I say on the beach, I mean on the beach! A large 10' x 15' screen was brought in and set up on the sand along with at least five other large, flat screen TV's. Traditional football fare was served and a raffle was held for a variety of autographed gifts. The cost for the weekend, including four nights room, all the above activities, as well as all the usual all-inclusive features of this resort starts at just \$1,039 per person double. This annual event is a sell-out so be sure to advise your clients to book early. For reservations call Almond Resorts at 800-4ALMOND or go to www.almondresorts.com.

Other Bajan Mancation Pursuits—Golfing at Sandy Lane

Most mancatations involve at least one round of golf and Sandy Lane's Country Club is an excellent option for golf enthusiasts. There are two courses here: the Green Monkey and the Country Club Course. For those mancationers that are not staying at Sandy Lane Hotel, the greens fees at the famous Green Money course are over \$2,000 per person. Greens fees at the Country Club Course are a more reasonable \$235. This course



DOUG COOKE

WWW.JAXFAX.COM

Surfing and Surf Lessons

The Southeast coast of Barbados has some of the premier surf breaks in the Caribbean and offers experienced surfers and wannabes a wide variety of locations to choose from. For our group of novice wannabes, we choose a quiet cove that we had all to ourselves. Our ever-patient instructor was Melanie Pitcher, owner of Barbados Surf Trips. She provided the long boards and after 2 hours of lessons we each were able to manage to catch a few waves. Surf Lessons start at \$70 per person for 2-4 people. Melanie also offers a full range of travel services. For more information, go to www.surfbarbados.com.



DOUG COOKE

Clockwise from Top: Party Host Billy Taylor at Almond Beach Village. Melanie Pitcher of Barbados Surf Trips. Ocean vista at Country Club Golf Course-Sandy Lane.

Barbados offers many other sightseeing and adventure options for your mancationing clients. For more information on Barbados Tourism visit www.barbados.org.

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GRENADA: Mount Cinnamon, Grenada's first boutique villa resort, created by British entrepreneur Peter de Savary, will open with 21 beautifully appointed, fully furnished and tastefully equipped one, two and three bedroom expansive suites and villas, the minimum of which is over 1200 sq feet in size. Each unit comes with a fully fitted kitchen; washer and dryer, plasma screen television with Bose DVD surround sound, cable and internet service and all the services and amenities of a five star resort



GRENADA NTO

Located on the two-mile white sand Grand Anse Beach, all accommodations enjoy spectacular views over the beach and the Caribbean Sea. The resort also offers a beachside cabana club with numerous water sports, tennis, spa treatments, swimming pool and gymnasium.

From March 19 to November 15 prices will be \$500 for a Hacienda Suite, \$600 for a one bedroom villa and \$800 for a two-bedroom villa.

All accommodations benefit from a double size Sofa Bed in the living room, children up to 12 years stay free of charge if sharing with adults; persons more than 12 years old will be charged \$100 per night per person sharing, based on a minimum stay of seven nights; shorter stays available.

Call 473-439-9900; E-mail reservations@mountcinnamongrenada.com; www.mountcinnamongrenada.com

JAMAICA: Point Village Resort is located in the town of Negril in Jamaica, 90 minutes from the Donald Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay and less than five minutes from the Negril Aerodrome. Situated on 14 acres of lush tropical gardens, it is located on Rutland Point where Negril's famous seven-mile beach ends and Bloody Bay Beach begins.

The resort caters to singles, couples, families and groups. The 150 air-conditioned rooms are all equipped with cable television, kitchenette, telephone, and private balcony or patio with a view of either the captivating Caribbean Sea or our gorgeous gardens. Holidays are moderately priced on room only or the all-inclusive plan.

Doubles with a garden view room run \$250 April 1 - Dec. 20, 2008. All-inclusive rates include accommodation, all hotel taxes and service charges, all meals and beverages, daily activities, nightly entertainment, entrance into our Village Beat nightclub, snorkeling gear, sunfish sailing, kayaking, windsurfing, glass-bottom boat tours and the use of our Kiddies' Centre.

Call 877-POINTJA (764-6852); E-mail Email us at: info@pointvillage.com; www.pointvillage.com

Headquartered in Montego Bay, Jamaica, **Couples Resorts** owns and operates four properties in Jamaica: Couples Ocho Rios, Couples Sans Souci, Couples Swept Away and Couples Negril.

Couples Resorts kicked off its fourth annual "Fall" in

Love Again promotion this month offering savings of up to 50% off published rates. Clients who book their fall vacation before April 30, 2007 can bring their loved one for free.

Savings do not include airfare and are based on the dates and resort category selected.

Couples Resorts announced its Ocho Rios property will be undergoing a \$15 million renovation so it will close April 1 and is scheduled to reopen on Dec. 15, 2008.

Call 800-COUPLES; www.couples.com

Two classic resorts, **Round Hill Hotel & Villas** in Montego Bay, and **Jamaica Inn** in Ocho Rios are offering the ultimate six-night vacation package replete with superb service, privacy and style. Three nights at each of these world-famous properties, including breakfast daily, private transfers between the resorts and to and from the airport, tax and service, costs only \$2,681 per couple from May 1 to October 31, 2008.

Round Hill is located on a 110-acre peninsula, just eight miles west of Sangster International Airport. The resort features profuse gardens, a secluded golden sand beach, a world class Spa in an 18th century great house at the edge of the sea. The Classics of Jamaica package includes three nights accommodation in an oceanfront room located in the Pineapple House. Call 800-972-2159; E-mail reservations@roundhilljamaica.com; www.roundhilljamaica.com

Jamaica Inn, owned by the same family for nearly 50 years, assures guests the utmost in unobtrusive service and attention. Located on a private cove, the six-acre property boasts a 700-foot private white sand beach, which is arguably the most perfect in Jamaica. Call 800-837-4608; E-mail reservations@jamaicainn.com; www.jamaicainn.com

ST. LUCIA: The chic, boutique **Coco Palm Hotel** in St. Lucia was chosen as a Best Value by Budget Travel Magazine in its first-ever Best Values list, powered by TripAdvisor. Featured in the magazine's February issue, the list showcases the top hotels around the world with the best value, earning their distinction from those who know them best

- real travelers. **Coco Palm** is prominently ranked as #3 Best Value in the Caribbean, Bahamas, and Bermuda as well as #18 out of 100 in the overall Best Value list. With summer rates starting at just \$145 a night, **Coco Palm** hotel is undoubtedly one of the best values in the Caribbean. Located in the heart of Rodney Bay Village, the island's local hot spot for cuisine and nightly entertainment, **Coco Palm** offers signature features such as the unique swim-up rooms that allow guests to literally step into **Coco Palm's** free form swimming pool from their terrace. Hotel amenities include free wi-fi service and hosts who serve as personal guides throughout each guest's stay. The hotel also offers Rodney Bay Village's hottest restaurant, **Ti Bananne Caribbean Bistro & Bar**. **Ti Bananne** overlooks the pool and boasts light Caribbean Creole fare and entertainment in an alfresco dining setting.



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ST LUCIA NTO



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ANTIGUA: Everyone is indulged at the Jolly Beach Resort & Spa (left) Palms Wellness Centre. There are fitness facials and sports massages perfect for the active man and

woman, bridal parties can de-stress and get beautiful for the big day, and couples can make the most of their precious time together with a Palms Wellness Massage for two on the beach. Even the kids will enjoy choosing their own favorite ways to rejuvenate from the Palms Pampering for Kids treatment menu.

"There has been a growing demand for spa and beauty services from Jolly Beach guests that we have now been able to meet with an integrated facility," says P. Hilary Modeste, Director of Marketing Worldwide. "A full salon has been included to address the most pressing needs from our bridal parties, we host over 300 destination weddings a year, and we have relocated our fitness centre so that it is an easily accessible part of the Palms Wellness Centre. The Spa has four treatment rooms and separate changing rooms for gentlemen and ladies. The ladies also enjoy an open-air, stone work shower. Guests who prefer outdoor settings can take their massages on the beach or in our Gazebo overlooking the pool and our mile-long white sand beach."

All-inclusive rates at Jolly Beach Resort start at \$190 per person, per night now through April 15, 2008; and \$173 April 16 through December 20, 2008. Rates are based on double occupancy and include accommodations, all meals, snacks and afternoon tea, house brand beverages, non-motorized watersports, and all taxes and service charges. All rooms are air-conditioned and face the ocean; each has a patio or balcony, direct-dial phone, cable TV and hair-dryer. Spa and beauty salon services are not included in regular all-inclusive rates. Children 3-11 years sharing a room with two adults pay \$54 per child, per night, and kids under three years old stay free at Jolly Beach all the time. Call 866-905-6559; www.jollybeachresort.com

TURKS & CAICOS: To celebrate its opening on July 1, 2008, Seven Stars Resort on Grace Bay Beach on Providenciales in the Turks and Caicos Islands is taking an additional 25% off the low season summer rates for Garden View One Bedroom Studio accommodations. The discount brings the daily rate to \$274 per room—usually \$365 during the summer season—and is valid for reservations made now to July 31 for stays from July 1-Oct. 31, 2008.

The daily rate includes a full breakfast, transfers to and from the Providenciales airport, use of tennis courts, the fitness center and complimentary private transfers to the nearby 18-hole championship golf course. Children under 12 sharing a room with two adults are complimentary. The offer is subject to availability and blackout dates may apply. Call 866-570-7777; E-mail, reservations@sevenstarsresort.com; www.sevenstarsresort.com

GRAND CAYMAN: The Reef Resort, located on the secluded East End of Grand Cayman, has always offered "Simple Relaxation™" and other convenient ways to make



GRAND CAYMAN ISLAND NTO

vacation stays easy to manage. "This summer The Reef Resort is making history by being the first beachfront resort in a generation to offer guests a premium all inclusive option," stated Tom McCallum, Director at The Reef Resort. "This offer is also being put into place to evolve the resort's

philosophy of a no-hassle, simple, no-strings-attached vacation experience and the all-inclusive offer makes it convenient and easy for families to budget and plan."

The Simply All Inclusive package rates start at \$429 for a Beachfront Studio, per night, double occupancy, to include all taxes and services charges. Unlimited drinks (including top shelf premium cocktails) in the resort's bars and restaurants, three meals daily (guests can choose anything from the a la carte menu), snorkel equipment, tennis, gym, and bicycle rentals, on-site "discover scuba diving" lesson are all included. Guests staying seven or more nights can also add a catamaran excursion to Stingray City or a Sunset Sail.

While there are many exciting off-site excursions, tours, and activities available, many guests choose to stay on property to simply relax. Three swimming pools, water aerobics (a great exercise for children and adults of all ages), a daily noon fish feeding from the resort's dock, children's activities, water volleyball, exploring, shell collecting, sandcastle building, and endless beach adventures are all at a guest's fingertips. For those who relish captivating sunsets and evening nightlife, the resort offers a variety of entertainment, including Cayman Island music legend Barefoot Man.

Visit www.TheReef.com

Spicy Celebrations in Jamaica

Jamaica is heating up the action for a spectacular 2008, offering a variety of events that will appeal to visitors of all ages from all over the world. The island kicked off the year in style with the Caribbean's biggest jazz festival, the Air Jamaica Jazz and Blues Festival held January 24-26, and closes with a bang at the Reggae Marathon in December. In between, a fascinating range of cultural and engaging activities will spice up each season. Highlights follow.

Through April 27: Carnival in Jamaica, Kingston, St. Catherine, St. Ann. The annual Carnival in Jamaica is one of Kingston's premier events, with shows featuring local Jamaican and international soca/calypso artists.

May 23 - 25: Calabash International Literary Festival, Jake's Resort, St. Elizabeth. Calabash presents three days of readings and live music, all for free, at Treasure Beach. More than 30 authors and musicians from 10 countries will perform at the 7th Annual Calabash International Literary Festival. (www.calabashfestival.org).

June 7 - 15: Ocho Rios Jazz Festival, Ocho Rios. The 18th Annual Ocho Rios Jazz Festival will feature nine days of inspiring music and entertainment that will fascinate all age groups. (www.ochoriosjazz.com).

July 1: Portland Jerk Festival, Boston Playing Field, Portland. One of the biggest celebrations of jerk cuisine, hosted in Portland, known as the "home of jerk."

July 13 - 19: Reggae Sumfest, Catherine Hall, Montego Bay. (www.reggaesumfest.com).

Call 800-JAMAICA 800-526-2422; www.visitjamaica.com



TURKS & CAICOS NTO

'O Machu Picchu' Echoes the Ages

By Ben G. Frank

Coming to Peru and not visiting this mountain city of the Incas is like going to Egypt and not seeing the Pyramids. "Everyone who goes to South America wants to see it," wrote the late Hiram Bingham who found the magnificently built Inca sanctuary of Machu Picchu in 1911. Rightly so; its imprint is stamped on South America and the allure of the Incas stands as the attractive essence of Peru itself, which obviously is an enormously significant place to visit.

"Awe" is what travelers feel at Machu Picchu, —the same "awe" they express the very second they spot the Taj Mahal or Petra in Jordan. Guides and tourists love to stand on one of the mountain's precipices and shout, "O Machu Picchu, O Machu Picchu." Rebounding is the echo of about 600 years of history: Incas, Pizarro and the Conquistadors.

Perched high upon a rock, this remarkable "lost city of the Incas," was constructed in the 1400s and contains five sq. miles of terrace and construction, with more than 3,000 steps linking it to many levels. Huayna Picchu, the mountain overlooking the site on which there are also ruins, is flanked by precipices which rise 2,500 feet from the foaming rapids in the horseshoe bend of the Urubamba river.



MACHU PICCHU

Some say Machu Picchu was used as a home for members of the Inca royal family when they were away from Cuzco. Some say it sheltered a society of the so-called "Virgins of the Sun." Some say it was the place in which the Inca leader Tupac Amaru spent his youth.

Scholars think Machu Picchu was abandoned shortly after the Spanish began their conquests of the Inca in 1532. The Spaniards probably never knew about this hidden city; it remained buried in the jungle until Bingham stumbled on it. Located in the massive Andes, it is indeed a worthwhile trip whether you hike much of it, or go by train and bus to the top nearly 8,000 ft. above sea level. But to observe the site located on a high ridge in a heavily forested part of the Andes, you have to get there. No longer difficult even for seniors, though persons of every age should consult their physician about dealing with the high altitude, 11,000 ft. above sea level.

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Visitors fly into the capital city of Lima where connecting flights to Cuzco leave daily. Cuzco was the capital of the Inca Empire, which ruled over an area as large as France, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium and Luxemburg. Because of the altitude, it is a good idea to rest the first day. Leave plenty of time after the trip to Machu Picchu for shopping, dining and seeing more Inca sites in Cuzco. Native jewelry, alpaca sweaters are good buys in this World Cultural Heritage site; a very cosmopolitan town, with many languages spoken in pubs and cafes. www.inc-cusco.gob.pe

Suggested stay is at Cuzco's five-star **Hotel Monasterio**, an **Orient-Express Hotel**, it is a restored 17th century colonial seminary located in the heart of the old city. Atmosphere, location, excellent dining room, beautiful gardens allow travelers to imagine the high point of Inca civilization. (www.monasterio.orient-express.com)

Eco-tourism company, **Inkaterra** opened three new properties in 2007: **Titilaka** (Lake Titicaca, Puno); the 11-room **La Casona** (Cusco); and **Peru Explorers Club** (Lima; March 2008). These new boutique hotels will take Inkaterra's concept of an "authentic Andean experience" to new heights, incorporating exposure to Peruvian history and culture while providing top-of-the-line accommodations. At La Casona, accommodations are evocative of the area's colonial past, from the rustically lavish suites adorned with colonial-inspired furniture to bathrooms with antique free-standing tubs. (www.inkaterra.com/en/cusco)

Machu Picchu is about 50 miles northwest of Cuzco. Because of the terrain and the time the train takes — switching backward and forwards up the mountains,— the journey on the slower trains lasts about four hours. Anticipation will be high, but the train ride is relaxing as it chugs alongside swollen rivers, flat fertile fields, rail stops where costumed children rush up to the train cars to sell

native dolls, alpaca sweaters, hats, souvenirs. Enchanting Peruvian music is piped into the train's sound system—all the way to the Aquas Calientes Station in Machu Picchu. The last leg of the trip is by bus to the top of the mountain and the citadel.

Three classes of trains — "Vistadome" and "Backpacker" depart from Cuzco and the luxurious "Hiram Bingham" service departs from Poroy. The latter has a bar car and live entertainment. Buffet meals are served at Machu Picchu Sanctuary Lodge, near the entrance; same owners of the Monasterio Hotel. Return to Cuzco, or better, fly back to Lima, the fun-loving, historic capital.

Called, "The Jewel of the Andes," Lima possesses "a drowsy past, but gives tourists a feel of momentum," of things to do, especially after a trip to Machu Picchu. This cosmopolitan capital is nerve center, port, hub, mini-buses, museums and malls. Stay at J.W. **Marriott Hotel** and **Stellaris Casino** in the Miraflores district, Lima (www.jwmarriottlima.com); or at the five-star hotel, **The Melia Lima**, (www.solmelia.com) in the San Isidro section of Lima, a prestigious residential area close to International Airport Jorge Chavez and the International Pacific Exhibition Center in the historical city center.

If time permits, visit other national parks, lakes, mountain sites that make Peru a land of passions and contrasts.

Airlines with service from the U.S.: **Air Canada**, www.aircanada.com; **American Airlines**, www.aa.com; **Continental Airlines**, www.continental.com; **Delta Air Lines**, www.delta.com; **Lan Peru**, www.lanperu.com; **United Airlines**, www.ual.com. For more information, visit www.peru.info

For consolidator fares and tour packages to Peru see page 83 of the Listings Section



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BEST BUYS

\$866 PERU BCD Travel, a specialist in tours to Peru that has been in operation for nearly 30 years, sells Quickly Peru, a seven-day program that begins in Lima and visits Cuzco. The first day is spent on an in-depth city tour visiting Lima's most important sights such as the Cathedral, the Square, the Government Palace, and the catacombs, with an afternoon excursion to the Gold Museum. The next few days are spent visiting Kenko, a ritual site with underground galleries and an amphitheater and Tambomachay and the Inca baths stressing the Inca's water worship traditions. On the way to Cuzco, participants ride through the Sacred Valley to visit the Indian Market of Pisac and on to the extensive archaeological treasures found in Ollantaytambo. Finally participants visit the imposing and memorable site of Machu Picchu before departing from Lima. Accommodations in Lima are either at the Sheraton Lima Hotel & Casino or the JW Marriott and at the Libertador Palacio del Inka in Cuzco. Included in the price are breakfast daily, and some lunches as well as transfers, expert guides with sightseeing and entrance fees. Priced at \$866 per person in twin room when staying in either Casa Andina, Embajadores, Carmel or San Augustin Dorado for land arrangements; BCD pays agents a 10 percent commission on bookings. Call 888-470-7378; ; E-mail jorge.salame@bcdtravel.com.pe; www.bcdtravel-incoming.com.pe

\$2500 PERU Ten-year old Mountain Lodges of Peru (MLP) is selling a five-night program that includes all services from transfers to sightseeing, which starts in Cusco, and heads off into the mountains of Peru starts at \$1,420 net per person, double. MLP can arrange hotel, train and tour services all-inclusive land arrangements in Lima, Cusco and Aguas Calientes. Additionally, for agent's group bookings, MLP offers a series of guaranteed departures, into which you can book individual clients. That program includes a night in Aguas Calientes, a guided visit to Machu Picchu the following day, followed by an escorted return to Cusco on the afternoon Vistadome train, and transfer to hotel. The rate for this program remains unchanged for 2009 at the commissionable retail rate of \$2,500 per person, all inclusive. MLP's lodges can only accommodate 12 to 13 trekkers at one time, so agents expecting more than four departures for 2009 are urged to book early, especially in the high season from May through August. Call 510-524-2609; E-mail info@mountainlodgesofperu.com; www.mountainlodgesofperu.com

\$999 SOUTH AMERICA Azamara Cruises unlocks the hidden corners of the world for those who desire to immerse themselves in the rich details of every voyage. The deluxe ships – Azamara Journey and Azamara Quest – offer an intimate experience, while allowing access to exotic destinations experienced travelers long to reach. For the 694 guests on each Azamara Cruises ship, every moment at sea embodies the pinnacle of luxury, and each footstep on shore accentuates the difference between visiting a place and getting a true sense of place. This year, Azamara Cruises presents the best of South America and the Panama Canal, elite Asia, the most captivating Caribbean and enchanting Europe. Prices start at \$999 per person double. Call 877-222-2526; www.azamaracruises.com

\$3082 MEXICO Ideally situated on a stretch of secluded powder-sand beach, at the edge of a picturesque fishing village, lies a hidden gem in paradise - Ceiba Del Mar Beach & Spa Resort on the Riviera Maya in Mexico just 20 minutes from Cancun Airport. The Ceiba Del Mar Romance Package is designed for two guests and includes: accommodations for two people for four or seven nights, depending on room category selected; welcome cocktail upon arrival; fruit basket in room/suite; en-suite complimentary continental breakfast daily as well as Ala carte dinner daily; a fitness program daily and \$250 or \$300 spa credit per person, depending on length of stay as well as access to the beach. The package is available for bookings through December 22, 2008. Prices vary according to lodging selected and length of stay and range from \$3,082 up to \$10,180. Call 011-52 (998) 872-8060; www.ceibadelmar.com



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Egypt's Promising Future is Now

By Maria Lisella

Say the word Egypt and images of the Sphinx, the Pyramids, the Nile River predictably arise. Say it again and anyone who knows a little bit about this country would add the word discovery because no matter how the modern world fast forwards, Egypt is continually peeling another layer of civilization that illuminates yet another formidable piece of ancient and human history. And with each discovery, the tourism product is further enhanced.

Recently, the Egyptian Culture Minister Farouk Hosni announced the discovery of an almost intact Neolithic settlement and the remnants of a Greco-Roman village in Faiyum (sometimes spelled Fayoum) about 56 miles southwest of Cairo. Popular among Egyptians, vacationers and lately among European travelers, Faiyum is a 692-square mile depression that was once a lush paradise during prehistoric times and is said to have been the very first agricultural site in the world. Here fences were erected and guarded warehouses built. But agriculture is not the Fayoums only claim for being first. The Greek mummy portraits found in the Fayoum are said to be the world's first true-life portraits, and examples can be found in area museums.

Underscoring Egypt's perpetual lure, tourism authorities reported almost a



20% increase in the number of American visitors or 272,000 in 2007 while more than 11 million worldwide tourists visited, representing a 19.5% increase over 2006, according to Omayma El Hussein, Deputy Director of the Egyptian Tourist Authority in New York. Among the newest attractions are the Western desert, Oasis, & Marsa Alam, a resort area 175 miles south of Hurgada and the Red Sea Coast. Marsa Alam. Situated near the Tropic of Cancer, where the Arabian Desert meets the Al Dakhla Oasis lies in Egypt's great Western Desert.

New Star: Port Ghalib

Located on the southern coast Red Sea coast of Egypt is the new marina of Port Ghalib, set close to the airport, is expected to be one of the largest in the Middle East when completed. Port Ghalib is a new premier virgin resort destination on the Red Sea coast of Egypt with many attractions

and activities (including but not limited to: Aqua activities, conventions, sports, and adventures) It is located about 180 miles south of Hurgada with a breathtaking Marina. There are two direct flights from Cairo every week. Located along the Southern Red Sea Coast of Egypt, Port Ghalib is an integrated development that spans about 10 miles of pristine beachfront, with magnificent panoramic views of rugged desert mountains and turquoise blue water. The area offers a virgin site of breath-taking natural beauty, with its rolling hills, sand dunes, wadis, natural flora and fauna, un-spoiled desert terrain, and of course, world-famous underwater coral reefs of the Red Sea. Port Ghalib represents a new generation of environmentally sensitive resorts. Designed and master-planned by some of the World's leading companies, Port Ghalib includes nine uniquely themed villages featuring; an international marina, 23 distinctive hotels, golf course, *Continued on page 49*

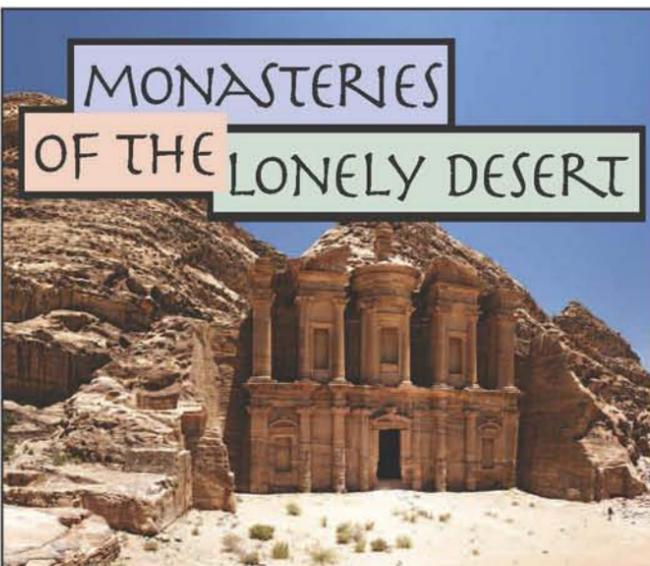
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EGYPT BEST BUYS

\$2465 EGYPT Ya'lla Tours USA's 13-day Glory of Egypt tour combines the cultural highlights of Egypt with a few days of R & R on the Red Sea. The tour begins weekly in Cairo with four nights in Cairo, a three-night Nile cruise, one night in Luxor, three nights in Sharm El Sheikh and one night in St. Catherine. All overland touring is with a private guide and driver. Touring from the cruise is in small groups. Passengers may pay a supplement to have their private guide accompany them on the cruise. The \$2,465 per person price applies to the Silver four-star category for 12 nights' accommodations with daily breakfast, domestic flights in Egypt, tour of Abu Simbel, seven days' touring, all meals on board the cruise, private transfers, entrance fees, Sound & Light show at Karnak Temple. Valid May 1 to Sept. 30, 2008; book 21 days in advance to avoid late booking fees; a \$350 per person deposit is required upon booking. Call 800-644-1595; www.yallatours.com

\$2209 EGYPT Cloud Tours' has built a strong reputation as a specialist operator in the Eastern Med, known for its Greece and Turkey programs, but this year Cloud has gone one step East, to Egypt. Cloud includes the \$210 airline fuel surcharge in all its package prices. The Nile Fantasy is priced at \$2,209 per person double, for a week-long stay: three nights at a four-star property in Cairo coupled with a full-day city tour and a three-night Nile River cruise with all meals and off-shore excursions and domestic flights in Egypt. The Majestic Nile program, priced at \$2,469 per person double adds a night's stay in four-star property in Aswan with breakfast, service fees and taxes, and an Abu Simbel tour. Both programs include a lunch at Mena House as well and private roundtrip transfers. Cloud can customize an itinerary to Egypt to suit your clients' needs and budgets. Call 800-223-7880; www.cloudtours.com

\$2198 EGYPT, AFRICA Goway's new 2008 brochure features an expanded roster of African and Middle Eastern nations such as the 18-day "Treasures of Africa" Kenya & Egypt Holiday of a Lifetime" escorted tour includes icons such as Lake Nakuru, Masai Mara, Cairo, Alexandria, Abu Simbel and Nile Cruise. New destinations featured in the brochure include Israel, Jordan, Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Additionally, among the new itineraries to Egypt several combine countries such as the 15-day "Pyramids to Petra" tour starting at \$2,198, five-day "Jordan" tour (Amman & Petra) from \$717, 9-day "Highlights of Egypt & Israel" from \$1,407 or eight-day "Holyland Tour" from \$1,186. three-day Stopovers to Dubai and Abu Dhabi start at \$269. Call 800-387-8850; info@goway.com

\$3439 EGYPT AND GREECE Homeric Tours combines Egypt and Greece on a 16-day air-inclusive program that includes three nights each in Athens and Cairo and two cruises—a four-day Greek Island cruise and a five-day Nile cruise—which includes round-trip airfare from New York/JFK including fuel surcharge, all flights within Egypt, hotel accommodations and breakfast daily in both cities - Athens and Cairo; meals onboard the cruises, sightseeing, and transfers. Call 800-223-5570; E-mail info@homerictours.com; or visit www.homerictours.com

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yacht club, residential and luxury properties, retail outlets, entertainment facilities and services. (www.discoverportghalib.com)

Eventually, plans call for Port Ghalib to be comprised of nine villages, featuring: 23 hotels, a conference center, an international marina, 18-hole golf course, yacht club, shops, residential luxury properties and entertainment facilities.

Port Ghalib already attracts a mix of tourists from family vacationers to yachtsmen, mariners, sports enthusiasts, golfers, tennis players, and fitness tourists, as well as the business traveler, eco-tourist, and adventure seeker. "Port Ghalib will attract these individuals through its uniquely beautiful coral reefs, its desert oasis, its mountains with fauna and flora, and the ancient monuments in the local area and adjacent Nile Valley," said Hussein.

First Arrivals

Among the first to arrive is Sun International, which recently opened a

luxury resort comprised of three properties, **The Palace, The Sahara Sun Sands** and **The Sahara Sun Oasis**. Each has its own distinctive style.

The Palace is a magnificent 309-room, five-star deluxe hotel designed around the original old Citadel and the architecture is strongly Egyptian with Middle Eastern influences.

The five-star Sahara Sun Oasis Hotel and 5-Star Sahara Sun Sands Hotel are linked by common public facilities. The Sahara Sun Oasis' 292-rooms are architecturally modeled on the storybook caravanserai and the Sahara Sun Sands' 347-rooms are inspired by the Nubian Desert villages.

The resort boasts 12th century architectural design features, Arabian gardens, and a secluded private beach with an offshore coral wall. A major feature of the resort is one of the largest man-made saltwater swimming lagoons in the world.

The Red Sea setting of the international Marina at Port Ghalib is fringed

to the West by soaring desert-mountains and to the East by exquisite coral reefs and a unique marine eco-system. The Marina is designed around a natural inlet and the unrivaled location has transformed the area into a superb world-class yachting destination with a berthing capacity of more than 1,000 yachts. Some of the world's most spectacular dive sites are within easy reach of Port Ghalib. The southern Red Sea is renowned for its reefs that are home to both hard and soft corals and an unrivaled variety of marine life including sharks, dolphins and turtles.

The following tour operators have added Sun International's recently opened luxury Port Ghalib resort to their portfolios:

African Travel: 800-421-8907, www.africantravelinc.com; **Big Five Tours & Expeditions:** 800-244-3483, www.bigfive.com; **Sunny Land Tours:** 800-783-7839, www.egypthotdeals.com; **Isram World:** 800-223-7460, www.isram.com.

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HOTEL UPDATE

Le Meridien Dahab Resort

Located in the Sinai, Le Meridien Dahab Resort overlooks the Gulf of Aqaba, just a one-hour drive from Sharm El-Sheikh International Airport. The hotel's leisure facilities include a choice of five swimming pools, children's club, dive and windsurfing centers, Jacuzzi, Steam and Sauna, landscaped gardens and tennis court. St. Catherine's monastery, the Sinai

Oasis and Mount Moses, Ras Mohammed national park and blue hotel (diving spot) are only few miles away. Visit www.lemeridien.com

Four Seasons Hotel in Alexandria

The new Four Seasons Hotel San Stefano in Alexandria, claims to have all the glamour of Cleopatra's ancient Mediterranean home boasting the largest decorated rooms in Alexandria some with private balconies with

views of the turquoise sea or the glittering city. Guests will be spoiled with the nine restaurants and access to the Spa and Fitness Center. Visit www.fourseasons.com

For more information, visit the Egyptian Tourist Authority's Travel Trade Specialist website for leads on fam trips, seminars. Visit www.trade.egypt.travel

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Egypt see page 88 of the Listings Section

BEST BUYS

\$1345 MOROCCO

Oussaden Tours and Travels, is offering a fam trip to Morocco's Imperial Cities for \$1,345 for travel agents for an Agents-Only program that departs April 13, 2008. Included are roundtrip airfare to Morocco via Royal Air Maroc, six nights' accommodations at four and five-star hotels, all meals, fully escorted tours that include dinner with a Moroccan family. The land portion alone costs just \$620 for agents.

Call 212-382-1435; E-mail moroccotours@att.net; www.oussaden-tours.com

\$2999 MOROCCO

Fez & Marrakech are the Imperial Cities featured in Sunnyland Tours' with accommodations in Riads, locally furnished private mansions with personalized service that is not found in traditional hotel settings. Most of these Riads are located in the most desirable section and old city centers of Fez and Marrakech. Typically, Riads consist of three to four furnished rooms and serviced by owners and servants totally dedicated to clients' full satisfaction. Sunny Land Tours' week-long itinerary features all-Riads accommodations for \$2,999 roundtrip airfare air from JFK; a private car, driver and guide at clients disposal for touring and excursions. Call 800-783-7839; www.MoroccoHotDeals.com

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(www.picassotravel.com)
- PREMIER GATEWAY**
(www.premiergateway.com)
- SKY BIRD TRAVEL**
(www.skybird-travel.com)
- SKYLINK TRAVEL**
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- SOLAR TOURS**
(www.solartravels.com)
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Luxury and Adventure in Wild New Zealand

by Barbara Radcliffe Rogers

New Zealand is high on nearly every traveler's dream list. Outdoors enthusiasts fantasize over its epic hiking trails, while hedonists dream of world-class wines, luxurious lodgings and fine dining. The good news for you and your clients is that they don't have to choose one or the other. In New Zealand they can have it all – in the same day – with an infrastructure that's designed to blend these diverse dreams into a seamless experience.

Adventure-seekers will have heard of the legendary Abel Tasman Trail, possibly the most famous hiking experience in the world. And avid kayakers know of the Mad Mile, also in Abel Tasman National Park, on South Island. But tackling either of these challenges doesn't have to mean roughing it at night. Luxury lodgings and fine dining are close at hand, midway along the shore at **Awaroa Lodge** (www.awaroalodge.co.nz).

Somewhere between an upscale safari camp and a relaxed luxury resort, Awaroa offers hikers and kayakers a genteel eco-conscious home in the wild. Here they can relax on the terraces of their spacious rooms with a glass of New Zealand wine before heading to the glass-enclosed dining room for a dinner beginning with appetizer choices of seared scallops with smoked chili marmalade, roasted duck spring rolls, crayfish omelet or fresh local oysters.

Commissionable Details

Book self-drive clients to arrive by a scenic (and commissionable) water taxi ride from the park entrance at Marahau (www.aquataxi.co.nz) or fly guests directly to the lodge's small airfield. Awaroa has state-of-the-art kayaks and all the gear, as well as guides who know the Mad Mile. Book multi-day guided kayaking trips or rentals (also commissionable) with **Abel Tasman Kayaks** (www.abeltasmankayaks.co.nz).



Mad Mile in Abel Tasman National Park

STILLMAN ROGERS

The coast encompasses the Tonga Island Marine Reserve, and trips can include paddling with the fur seals that slide into the sea from Tonga Island's low rocks. Hikers can access the Abel Tasman Track right from the lodge for a full day of climbing over headlands to beaches following cornices cut into the hillsides above the sea. The less ambitious can hike two hours to wind-carved Tonga Arches, and catch a water taxi back to the lodge.

Also on South Island is the challenging and scenic Queen Charlotte Track, a 40-mile trail along a long spiny lizard of land cut by bays, separating Queen Charlotte Sound from Kenepuru Sound.

A few steps from the track, in a tree-surrounded cove with post-card views from every terrace, is **Portage Resort Hotel** (www.portage.co.nz). Its waterside location and sea-worthy kayaks invite guests to paddle the quieter waters of Kenepuru Sound.

At the end of an active day, guests trade boots and paddles for a window table in the chic dining room as they dine on the bay's world-famous succulent green-shelled mussels. Book clients on a **Greenshell Mussel Cruise** (www.greenshellmusselcruise.co.nz) to visit mussel nurseries and sample them with the local Marlborough Savignon Blanc; this

company offers wine tastings, too.

Under the shadow of the Craggy Range, the Hawk's Bay area at the southern end of North Island offers more classy wineries, and a food scene that makes it a prime destination for active clients with gourmet tastes. They can hike a knife-edge ridge trail at Te Mata Trust Park with views to an infinity of mountain peaks, and on the other side look down into the bright blue Pacific waters and the vineyards of Craggy Range winery.

Casual in Elegant Places

Afterward they can lunch on wood-roasted mushrooms on vine leaves, or New Zealand's premier Aoraki smoked salmon in the winery's terrace dining room, **Terroir** (www.craggyrange.com). And in outdoorsy Kiwiland, nobody cares if they are wearing hiking boots at one of the island's highest-end restaurants.

Suggest that clients follow the Hawkes Bay Wine Trail to Sileni Estates, a state-of-the-art winery where they can take cooking classes or just taste wines and bring home a bottle of prize-winning olive oil. Serious foodies can follow the Food Trail from Hastings Farmers Market through orchards heavy with apples, to eat real-fruit ice cream at a berry farm, walk



Baby seal

STILLMAN ROGERS

through olive groves, watch Te Mata cheeses made and sample local honey.

No nature-lover's trip to New Zealand is complete without Kaikoura, known as "the Serengeti of sea life," to see seal colonies, dolphin pods, Great Sperm Whales and Albatross species with 10-foot wing-spans. Reserve seats for your clients on **Wings Over Whales** flights (www.whales.co.nz, commissionable at 20%) for the best whale and dolphin watching. High in the air is the only way to see the whole whale, since they lie just at the surface, and to watch dolphin pods swim in formation and interact.

Book the beautifully-furnished **Olive House** luxury apartment or Tree House suites at Hapuku Lodge (www.hapukulodge.com/treehouse.php) in Kaikoura, all elevated so they look out at the ocean from the tops of manuka trees. Suggest "dining in" on such local specialties as smoked venison and grilled crayfish fresh from the sea.

Air Tahiti Nui (www.airtahitinui-usa.com) flies to Auckland, NZ, from New York, via Tahiti (ask about a free stopover); both it and **Air New Zealand** (www.airnewzealand.com) fly to Auckland from Los Angeles.

Agents can optimize itineraries they plan for clients by enrolling in New Zealand's on-line Specialists Program, which includes access to new products, special offers and fam trips.

That and the WebNZday Webinar are available to U.S. travel agents at www.purenz.com.

For more information on New Zealand Tourism, visit www.newzealand.com

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to New Zealand see page 101 of the Listings Section

Nature Bound Down Under with Qantas

Visitors can commemorate their visit to Australia's Phillip Island Nature Park by "Adopting a Penguin," which provides an adoption certificate, personalized thank you card with photo and free Penguin Parade entry voucher, as well as regular updates on what it's eating, where it's swimming, if it's in love or is nurturing new offspring. The \$75 donation supports the Penguin Foundation (www.penguinfoundation.org.au) and builds a Little Penguin nesting box to enhance the safety of a "penguin couple" and improve its prospects for breeding. To see Phillip Island Nature Park, agents might book **Qantas Vacations'** four-day "Melbourne Discovery" package that features a guided tour of Melbourne, the Yarra River, Captain

Cook's Cottage, the Queen Victoria Market, Fitzroy Gardens and Albert Park – home to the Formula One Grand Prix.

At Phillip Island, guests visit the Koala Conservation Centre. As the sun sets the Penguin Parade begins, with thousands of Penguins arriving onshore from their ocean feeding grounds.

Per person prices for Qantas Vacations' four-night "Melbourne Discovery" package start at \$699 per person through March 31, 2009, and include three nights in Melbourne with a choice of standard, first class or deluxe hotel, half-day Melbourne city sights tour, Phillip Island luxury tour, roundtrip private car transfers and Colonial Tramcar.

Call 866-934-4359; or visit www.qantasvacations.com

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BEST BUYS

\$1638 BHUTAN

Indus Travels is selling an eight-day tour to Bhutan during the Wangdue Tschechu Festival in October, 2008. The Kingdom of Bhutan is a landlocked nation in the Himalaya Mountains, sandwiched between India and China in South Asia and is one of the most isolated and least developed nations in the world. Clients will travel to its countryside, visit shrines and crafts centers for insight into the lifestyle of this special place. The landscape ranges from subtropical planes to the Himalayan highlands in the north with some peaks above 20,000 feet. Participants spend two nights each in Paro, Thimpu, Punakha and one final night in Paro again just prior to departure. Included in the land arrangement costs are accommodations on twin-sharing basis, all meals as per itinerary, entrance fees, transportation within Bhutan; services of knowledgeable English speaking guide certified by Department of Tourism; airport transfers.

Call 866-978-2997; E-mail mail@industravels.ca; www.industravels.com

\$2940 NEW ZEALAND

Discover Downunder's two-week package, "More Than a Step Off the Beaten Path," extends from the top of volcanoes into the realm of bubbling mud pools and deep inside ancient rainforests. Visit the predator-free bird sanctuary, Tiritiri Matangi, where many of New Zealand's endemic and threatened birdlife thrive. Venture to the remote reaches of the Catlins, where winding walkways lead to secret penguin beaches and petrified forest. Accommodations vary from stays at the base of an active volcano in Tongariro, to overnights in a lodge in the Southern Alps. "More Than a Step Off the Beaten Path" packages start at \$2,940 per person double, land only, and include: 12 nights' accommodation; car rental from Auckland to Rotorua and Dunedin to Wanaka; and activities.

Call 888-836-9686; www.discoverdownunder.com

\$6125 INDIA

Greaves Tours, specialists in customized luxury vacations to India, Nepal, Bhutan and the Indian Ocean, is offering travel agents a commission bonus of 12% on every booking of Greaves' new 15-day Family India package when deposited by April 30th. The escorted tour combining Delhi, Jaipur, Agra and the Himalayas is aimed at intimate groups of between four to 12 guests in total, and is ideal for multigenerational family clients. Departures are monthly April to Sept., 2008; Nov. 26, Dec. 19, 2008; plus April 8, 2009. Lead-in package prices start at \$6,125 per adult based on double occupancy.

A four-day Udaipur extension staying at Oberoi Udaivilas, costs \$1,910 per person double.

Call 800-318-7801; E-mail tours@greavestvl.com

IN THE NEWS

Kids Fly Free to Tahiti

Families looking for a fun, economical and exotic getaway this winter need not look any further as Air Tahiti Nui is offering free air for kids 11 and younger on New York and Los Angeles flights through May 31, and Nov. 1 to Dec. 10, 2008. Two paying adults receive two free child tickets on flights from JFK, and one free child ticket on flights from LAX. Moana (economy) class air for mom and dad starts from \$1,423 per person from New York and \$1,161 per person from Los Angeles. Tickets must be booked by May 1.

Tahiti Legends' six-day "Moorea Family Special" for two adults and two children (up to age 11) features four roundtrip economy class tickets on Air Tahiti Nui from New York, five nights at the InterContinental Moorea Resort in a Garden Suite Bungalow, inter-island ferry transfers, free kid's menu meals throughout the stay, and a free dolphin encounter program for two kids. Families can also enjoy a picnic on a motu, go deep-sea fishing and catch their dinner and eat it, and take a glass bottom boat ride. Priced from \$5,400 (\$4,170 from LA), the package for four costs just \$225 per person per day. For a private luxurious getaway, consider six-day "Bora Bora Bonanza" features roundtrip economy class airfare on Air Tahiti Nui from New York, inter-island airfare, five nights at the Bora Bora Lagoon Resort & Spa in a Motu Bungalow, and welcome flower lei. Priced from \$2,199 per person, the package includes two free hotel nights.

Pleasant Holidays' four-day "Sofitel Tahiti Resort" package offers an extraordinary value for West Coasters seeking a short exotic romp. Priced from \$999 per person for travel through May 31, 2008, the package includes roundtrip economy class air on Air Tahiti Nui from Los Angeles, three nights in a superior mountain-view room at the Sofitel Tahiti Resort, and complimentary breakfast daily.

Call 877-824-4846; www.airtahitinui-usa.com

Why Asia in 2008?

Your clients may be aware that the dollar takes them much further in Asia than in Europe, few people realize that this is the ideal time to explore many countries in the region.

"Many people consider Asia a winter destination, when in fact, Japan, China, Bhutan, Tibet, Papua New Guinea and Indonesia are superb destinations to visit from March to May," says Marilyn Downing-Staff, CEO and Founder of Asia Transpacific Journeys.

Papua New Guinea incorporates the utterly remote, supremely authentic Tumbuna Sing-Sing where local tribes gather in the Highlands for an outlandish, multi-day competition of tribal rites, song and dance, while sporting wildly ornate traditional costumes. This 15-day adventure is priced at \$7,395 and departs May 18, 2008.

Call 800-642-2742; www.asiatrampacific.com



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Boomtown USA: Las Vegas Glitters and Grows

One of the most fascinating aspects of Las Vegas is that it is a city that is constantly changing. The excitement of continuous re-invention and rapid growth has helped Las Vegas to achieve record-breaking popularity, resulting in nearly 39 million annual visitors. Plus, with more than \$30 billion in projects under construction or in planning stages, in 2008, visitors will see and experience more in Las Vegas than ever before.



Las Vegas night sky.

Recently, The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA) reported the number of visitors grew to 39.2 million in 2007 making it the fourth consecutive year that Las Vegas broke its own records.

Las Vegas also matched its highest occupancy level in history, reaching 90.4 percent for the year, tying its previous record set in 1996. The destination's average occupancy level now stands at 27 percentage points above the national average. "The strength of the Las Vegas brand continues, as reflected by another record year for visitation," said Rossi Ralenkotter, president and CEO, LVCVA.

In addition to releasing 2007 visitation statistics, the LVCVA issued a projection that 39.8 million people will visit the destination in 2008, noting more than 9,000 new guest rooms are slated to be added to Las Vegas' hotel inventory this year. Nearly \$40 billion in new development is planned or under way between now and 2012, including approximately 40,000 hotel and motel rooms and five million square feet of convention space citywide.

New Accommodations

Las Vegas continues to be a dynamic construction market. Between now and 2010, approximately 38,600 new hotel and motel rooms are planned or already under construction.

In January, The Palazzo celebrated its grand opening. The newest resort by Las Vegas Sands Corporation is located in the heart of the famed Las Vegas Strip. When combined with the neighboring Venetian and Sands Expo and Convention Center, The Palazzo gives the company the largest hotel and convention complex in the world. The \$1.8 billion Palazzo features

more than 3,000 all-suite rooms and offers shopping, dining and entertainment on two luxurious levels. The 450,000-square-foot retail space, The Shoppes at The Palazzo(tm) is highlighted by Barneys New York and connected to The Venetian via The Grand Canal Shoppes. It houses approximately 60 high-end and mid-level stores from the most recognizable brands to the hottest newcomers and unique one-of-a-kind boutiques from all over the world.

Aliante Station, the latest resort project by Station Casinos and Greenspun Corporation, topped off the concrete structure of its hotel tower in November 2007. The \$675 million project broke ground in late February 2007 in North Las Vegas. The property is scheduled to open late 2008 and will feature 200 hotel rooms; a full array of gaming offerings; six restaurants; a 16-screen Regal Cinemas movie theatre; a 700-seat entertainment showroom and meeting/convention space. Aliante Station is located on about 40 acres at the intersection of the 215 Beltway and Aliante Pkwy. in North Las Vegas.

Palms Place Condo Hotel and Spa broke ground in January 2006 and, after 19 months of construction, continues to be right on schedule for occupancy in early 2008. Palms Place will feature 599 condominium-suites, from spacious studios to one-bedroom and two-bedroom suites and spectacular penthouses. Amid lush gardens, a world-class, 50,000 square-foot pool and spa enclave will boast the first hammam in Las Vegas offering a blend of ancient and contemporary treatments. The building will also feature the SkyTube, a moving walkway that will join the residences with the Palm's casino, restaurants and nightlife.

The Trump International Hotel and Tower is set for opening in April of 2008. True to the brand's form, the property will reflect the "Ultra Luxury Trump Lifestyle" in every possible fashion. The exterior, which will be clad in 24-carat gold glass will rise 64 stories, house 1,232 suites and 50 penthouse suites, a world-class spa, salon and fitness center, gourmet dining at DJT Restaurant and Bar, a pool with private cabanas, indoor meeting space and a business center. Trump will offer a personal attache service for guests.

Luxor has announced a multi-phase enhancement plan slated to take place in several phases, with the first phase encompassing the casino level and the second phase encompassing changes to the property's signature atrium and gallery areas including several retail changes, a re-branded coffee shop and new buffet. The third phase will focus on room remodeling and is planned to begin in 2009. Projects in Phase One of Luxor's evolution include a host of sexy-chic new restaurants, lounges and nightspots, as well as a spa-like poolside lounge, redesigned casino floor and Cirque du Soleil show.

Enhanced Agent Certification

The LVCVA is about to launch an enhanced version of its online certification program for U.S.-based, licensed travel agents. The Las Vegas Travel Trade Certification, or "Vegas Certified" program, is a series of 10 test modules designed to educate travel agents about the destination in order to become "experts" on selling Las Vegas. Once the program is completed, "Vegas Certified" agents are entitled to a variety of benefits and special incentives.

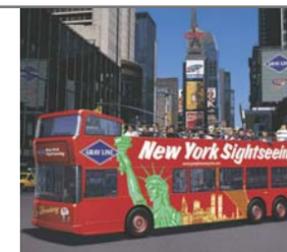
Travel agents who correctly answer and submit all questions in each test module will automatically be entered into monthly drawings for the chance to win \$500 gift certificates redeemable at GiftCertificates.com. Two monthly winners will be awarded this prize. "Vegas Certified" agents will be entitled to free show tickets when they visit Las Vegas, a special discount card, half-off and 2-for-1 offers at spas, shops and even on wedding packages.

Visit www.lvcva.com/traveltrade

BEST BUYS

\$1279 NEW YORK

New York City's Algonquin Hotel is easing family travel to the Big Apple with its Family Celebration package. The package offers a 20% discount and includes transportation to the hotel, accommodations in elegant one or two bedroom suites and the opportunity to discover the city with one of Manhattan's famed Double Decker bus tours. Families will also have the choice of mingling with their favorite stars at Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum or enjoying the city's skyline with a two-hour harbor cruise. Prices for a two-night getaway for a family of four in a one-bedroom suite start at \$1,279; valid through Dec. 31, 2008; agents earn a flat fee commission of \$50 on this particular package. Call 866-406-5341 x 2.



\$6995 ALASKA

Abercrombie & Kent is promoting its Alaska itineraries for 2008 aboard its 118-passenger Clipper Odyssey. The small ship carries a fleet of Zodiac boats that make it possible for small groups of passengers to go ashore in areas without piers or docking facilities. Alaska itineraries are headed by a team of naturalists and historians who accompany guests onshore and conduct lectures and discussions onboard.

A&K's Hidden Inside Passage itinerary, for example, includes an up-close view of the Hubbard and Le Conte glaciers and a cruise through the narrow fjords of Prince William Sound. Passengers will visit the Hidden Falls Hatchery and the "Waterfall Coast" of South Baranof Island before cruising through Misty Fjords accompanied by a Tlingit elder. The 13-day itinerary costs from \$6,995 per person, double.

Call 800-554-7094; www.akodyssey.com

\$199 PHILADELPHIA

Star Wars aficionados who just can't get enough of their futuristic friends may want to take advantage of the new "Star Wars" package currently being offered at three downtown Philadelphia Marriott hotels. This package was designed to take advantage of the new "Star Wars: Where Science Meets Imagination" exhibit taking place now through May 4 at the Franklin Institute.

The "Star Wars" package includes deluxe accommodations at your choice of hotel (Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, Courtyard Philadelphia Downtown, or Residence Inn Philadelphia Center City), plus two VIP tickets to the exhibit. The VIP tickets are untimed and undated so guests can visit the exhibit when it is most convenient for them and they also receive front-of-the-line access to the exhibit through a separate VIP entrance.

Rates range from \$199 to \$319 and are valid through May 3, 2008. When booking mention promotional code EW5.

Call 800-834-6418; ask for promotional code EW5.

IN THE NEWS

Cruise West for Kids

Cruise West is offering special pricing for kids 18 and under on all Glacier Bay, Alaska Highlights departures in 2008. The discounts represent savings of up to 75% off adult fares in a AAA cabin or 50% off the adult fare in a category A or AA cabin. Fares start at \$1,799 per adult and \$900 for one child sharing an A cabin. Cruise West's three- and four-night Glacier Bay Highlights cruises are aboard the 102-passenger Spirit of Glacier Bay, cruising roundtrip from Juneau from May to September.

Call 800-296-8307; www.cruisewest.com

Win a Week with a Sleeping Giant

Between now and May 31, American and Canadian travelers will have a chance to win a trip for four to Ontario's Sleeping Giant Provincial Park – voted one of the "Seven Wonders of Canada" by viewers of the Canadian Broadcasting Company.

"The Great Ontario Outdoor Adventure of a Lifetime" contest will give the lucky winner and three guests a chance to experience both Sleeping Giant (situated on a peninsula jutting out into Lake Superior) and nearby Thunder Bay, Ontario.

It is a seven-day adventure with a multitude of experiences that will captivate, exhilarate and inspire. Some highlights include: float plane tour of Sleeping Giant and the adjacent newly designated National Marine Conservation Area; guided camping, hiking and paddling trips in Sleeping Giant Provincial Park; sailing excursion around the Giant aboard a 40 foot sailboat; tour of Fort William Historical Park. Promotional partners include the City of Thunder Bay, Ontario Parks, Nikon Canada, West Jet, Northwest Airlines, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Wilderness North, the McGuffins and Sail Superior. Clients can enter the sweepstakes online or by calling.

Call 800-668-2746; www.ontariotravel.net/outdoor

Saying "I do" to Canada

Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver were among the first destinations in the world to roll out the welcome mat for LGBT travelers. Millions of visitors have since "voted with their feet" making these gay-friendly cities some of the most popular destinations for those seeking adventure, culture, festivals, sophistication and a warm welcome. Respondents to Community Marketing Inc.'s 12th Annual Gay & Lesbian Tourism Survey of top LGBT travel spots have voted as well, with Canada emerging as an overall favorite international destination. Vancouver, Montréal and Toronto locked up spots four, five and six on the top 10 list.

LGBT travelers will find extensive information on these award winning cities and information on gay travel to other Canadian destinations, from the Yukon to Halifax.

Visit www.gay.canada.travel/us

Hawaii's Star-Studded Courses

By Katharine Dyson

More than 26 million play the game and if the destination is special, golfers will spend the money to get there and bring their pals. Indeed, golf is close to an \$80 billion industry. Agents' commissions can include the resort stay, the airfare, even the greens fees, and clinics in some resorts.



Kauai Lagoons Chapel

KATHARINE DYSON

To better match clients' skills with the right course, consider contacting a golf specialist such as **Atlantic Golf** (www.atlanticgolf.com), **Golf International** (www.golfinternational.com), or **Owenoak International Golf Travel** (www.owenoak.com). or contact the **North American Golf Tour Operators' Alliance** (www.nagtoa.com) for a comprehensive list.

With 70 courses and near-perfect weather, Hawaii is a golfer's dream. Flowers bloom exuberantly, natural formations create drama and there is enough rain to keep the fairways lush and green. Maui, Kaua'i, Oahu and the Big Island are the places with the most golf, while Lanai has two spectacular 18-hole layouts. Owenoak's John Murray likes The Big Island for the variety of things to do; Kauai for its low-key and lush ambiance; and Maui for its off-course options.

Maui

This island has more than 10 major golf courses. Ka'anapali, the largest of Maui's resort areas with 4,700 rooms, has two championship golf courses. The Royal Ka'anapali (North) Course (right), designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. (1962) is a must-plays for visiting golfers while Ka'anapali Kai (South Course) located on a former sugar plantation, is a more forgiving course. Visit www.kaanapali-golf.com



KAANAPALI GOLF RESORT

Wailea

The **Wailea Golf Club** set on the southwest shore of Maui boasts three 18-hole layouts: Wailea Old Blue, Wailea Emerald and Wailea Gold. Play any of Wailea's three courses, Old Blue, Gold and Emerald, and you'll be hitting shots against the formidable backdrop of the sea and the towering 10,023-foot dormant volcano, Mt. Haleakala. Lush green fairways offset by black lava walls — even glimpses of humpback whales — during the right season — live up to everything a golfer is looking for.

Makena

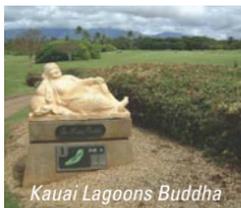
On the less developed southeast coast, Robert Trent Jones Jr. designed the two Makena courses, North, the newest and more difficult course and South, more remote. Set on 1,800 acres, elevation changes create challenges as well as provide dramatic sea views. Makena's resorts center around the 310-room **Maui Prince Hotel** (www.princeresortshawaii.com) with its Asian meditation garden and the **Maui Makena Hotel** (www.KBHMaui.com).

Kapalua

Kapalua Resort and two golf courses The Bay Course and the Plantation Course and the Kapalua Golf Academy, occupy 23,000-acres on Maui's west coast. Playing a whopping 7,411-yards, the Plantation Course unfurls across breathtaking natural geographic formations and pineapple fields. The Bay Course, an Arnold Palmer and Francis Duane design, is a good choice for all skill levels. In addition to some low-key villa communities, there is a 445-room mid-rise **Ritz-Carlton** (www.Ritz-Carlton.com) that completed a \$160 million transformation, adding the Waihua Spa.

Kaua'i

Kaua'i is one of the quietest Hawaiian islands and also one of the most beautiful. Golf courses include the highly acclaimed **Princeville Resort** courses: the Princeville, a tough long (7,309 yards) with a killer finishing hole and the three nines of the Makai Course (Lakes, Ocean and Woods) as well as other excellent tracks like Puakea, Kaua'i's newest course, and Poipu Bay home to the PGA Grand Slam of Golf.



Kauai Lagoons Buddha

KAUAI LAGOONS RESORT

Located within the 800-acre Kauai Lagoons Resort is the **Marriott Resort & Beach Club** and two Jack Nicklaus-designed championship golf courses, the Kiele Course with its cliff-hanging greens and the sportier Mokihana Course. "It's gratifying to know that visitors to Kaua'i come for many reasons, not the least of which is our wonderful golf and resort properties," says Sue Kanoho, Executive Director of **Kaua'i's Visitors Bureau**. Visit www.kauaidiscovery.com

The Big Island

Many of the courses and resorts are located on the sunny northwest Kohala coast like **Mauna Lani Resort's** North Courses set atop an ancient lava flow and Mauna Lanai's South Course. The Hapuna Golf Course is characterized by rolling, bluff-like terrain while other highly rated layouts include Hualalai Golf Course, Waikoloa Beach Course, and Mauna Kea Golf Course. South of Kohala, Kailua-Kona, boasts several courses including the Big Island Country Club, Kona Country Club's Ocean Course and Ali'i Mountain Course. Makalei Golf Club is located on the slopes of Hualalai with 900-foot elevation. Visit www.maunalani.com



Hapuna 15 holes

HAPUNA GOLF

Oahu

Here Honolulu, our country's 11th largest city, buzzes with action. Home of Waikiki Beach and Pearl Harbor, Oahu is a complex island with something for everyone including golfers. The Sony Open is held at Waialae Country Club; the SBS Open at Turtle Bay Golf Club on the north shore of Oahu and the Fields Open at Ko Olina Golf Club.

For more information on Hawaii, call 800-464-2924; www.gohawaii.com

BEST BUYS

\$ 80 SOUTH CAROLINA

Best Western International recently added the **Best Western Pinehurst Inn**, located at 1675 U.S. Highway 1 S in Southern Pines, N.C. near several championship golf courses. Located in one of the top three golfing destinations in North America, hotel guests can enjoy a variety of nearby attractions such as Rockingham Dragway, Carolina Horse Park, Malcolm Blue Farm and Town Creek Indian Mound. The 125-room hotel's amenities include an outdoor swimming pool and patio, fitness facility, guest laundry and a complimentary hot breakfast. The hotel offers free high-speed wireless Internet access throughout the hotel, a business center and meeting space to accommodate up to 45 people. Rates start at \$79.99 per night.

Call 800-WESTERN; www.bestwestern.com

\$24 MICHIGAN

The **Traverse City Convention & Visitors Bureau** has organized a special "Girlfriends Getaway" package that combines special low rates at 20 participating hotels and resorts — as low as \$24.50 per night based on midweek double occupancy through June 12. The packages include discounts for downtown shopping and wine purchases from the Chateau Chantal winery, 25% discounts at some of the area's best restaurants (North Peak Brewing Co., Blue Tractor Cook Shop, Kilkenney's Irish Pub, the Bowers Harbor Inn and The Bowery) a coupon for \$10 free play at the Turtle Creek or Leelanau Sands casinos, and \$10 in "fun bucks" good at Wingers Sports Bar, CWS Bluewater Bistro and Shimmers Nightclub, all at the Holiday Inn West Bay. Participants can also sign up for options, including spa treatments at the **Imprés Salon & Spa**, the **Elements Spa** at **Great Wolf Lodge** or the **Grand Traverse Resort and Spa**. Call 888-499-4507; www.VisitTraverseCity.com

\$259 HAWAII

The **Wyland Waikiki**, Oahu's only art-design hotel, is putting the "hot" back in "hotel" with its new "Feel the Passion" romance package available through December 31, 2008.

Rates start at \$259 per night, based on a three-night minimum stay and includes a complimentary upgrade to a one-bedroom suite, fresh flower lei for each guest, and a "Passion Pack" featuring chocolate-dipped tropical fruit, Champagne with custom designed Wyland insignia flutes, Passion Mango massage oil, and a silk blindfold. Optional roundtrip transportation from the airport in a private sedan is also available.

Known for its diversity and beauty, Oahu offers something for everyone from the historic to the contemporary, from the urban to the rural. Waikiki is no exception with its beautiful white sand beaches, exquisite restaurants overlooking the Pacific Ocean, exciting nightlife scene, and legendary allure making it the perfect place to experience the many pleasures and romantic activities to ignite your passion.

Visit WylandWaikiki.com

\$1978 CANADA

Platform shoes, pet rocks, mood rings and hot pants - the 70s were a time of creative inventions that didn't last. In 1978, Hans Gmoser - the founder of **Canadian Mountain Holidays** (CMH) - invented Canadian Mountain Holidays Heli-Hiking in Western Canada and 30 years later, the enthusiasm among travelers for this type of mountain adventure hasn't waned. In celebration of the company's 30th anniversary, a special three-night trip is being offered to CMH's Cariboo lodge for a special price of \$1978...reflecting the company's birthdate.

www.CanadianMountainHolidays.com/1978

\$3495 NEW MEXICO

The **Hyatt Regency Tamaya** introduces open-range western style riding under the turquoise skies of New Mexico with the new "Saddle Up & Spa" Dude Ranch Experience package. Participants can hone horseback riding skills on the ancient lands of the Native American Pueblo of Santa Ana. Included are five nights' accommodations, all meals, four days of riding and participation in a Rodeo Awards ceremony, two 50-minute spa treatments (massage or facial), all transfers, \$100 outfitting credit per person and an optional add-on — a hot-air balloon ride for \$195 per person. The five-day adventure will be a memorable experience for singles, couples and families alike as they journey back in time to the "Wild West". Available select weeks from Memorial Day through Labor Day, package pricing starts at \$3,495 plus tax for single occupancy.

Call 505-867-1234; www.tamaya-stables.com

Packaging Gay Pride

The Panda Group's San Francisco Pride 2008 Package is from June 26 to June 30, 2008 and includes roundtrip airfare from Honolulu to San Francisco on **Hawaiian Airlines** with four nights at either the **Handlery Hotel Union Square** or **Hotel Mark Twain**. Travelers heading to the event from other departure airports across the United States can also be accommodated. Prices start from \$649 per person based on four in a room from Honolulu and include all taxes. A hotel-only option is available, starting from \$219 per person/quad occupancy. Call 800-508-5996; E-mail jdefreitas@panda-group.com; www.hawaii-gaytravel.com

Gettysburg Lives on as Top U.S. Destination

Gettysburg, Pa. has been named among the best places to visit whether it's students, families or tour groups. Gettysburg was named one of the "15 places every kid should visit" by **Budget Travel** magazine. "It's never too early to learn about the sacrifices of those who came before," the article read. It mentions both the Gettysburg National Military Park and the Soldiers' National Cemetery. E-mail: info@gettysburg.travel www.gettysburg.travel

For the Green at Heart: A Fable About Lighter Footprints and Used Towels

Kermit the Frog can tell you, "It's not easy being green," and it can be expensive, but you are sadly out of step if you don't even try. Environmental consciousness is one of the latest buzzwords in the travel industry. The commitment to preserve the world for future generations dovetails with other trends in travel such as experiential travel, which is woven into even the most mainstream tour programs no longer languishing on the sidelines. Even the most superficial efforts have spurred an enormous amount of creativity. From buildings of recycled materials, to reusing towels, to buying organically and locally grown produce that provide guests with the freshest ingredients while investing in the local communities, every effort is making a difference.

One of the challenges is how to keep a concept like this relevant in trend-trashing America? According to some, only time will tell if the environmental trend will sustain itself. But if it doesn't, the world of travel will be sure to diminish, a grim consequence.

Green Pioneers

For the past 32 years, Selengut has been in the forefront of building sustainable, eco-resorts on the U.S.V.I. island of St. John. "When Maho Bay Camps opened in 1976, the term eco-tourism didn't even exist. Environmentally sensitive travelers usually had to "rough it" to be close to nature," he said. Selengut's idea was to provide intimacy with the great outdoors, in the U.S. Virgin Islands (where English is spoken), with comfort and convenience, at low cost. **Maho Bay Camps** proved to be so popular that he added **Harmony Studios** and a sister resort, **Estate Concordia**, which includes **Concordia Eco-Tents and Estate Concordia Studios**. "Thanks to many new technologies, it is now possible for "green" travelers to enjoy intimacy with nature while staying in dwellings constructed almost entirely of recycled materials, powered by the sun and wind, and built with site-sensitive tech-

niques that preserve and protect the fragile eco-system of the U.S. Virgin Islands," said Selengut.

Environment 101

Companies such as **Accor's** modest **Red Roof Inn** brand places little note cards in rooms to remind guests to turn off the a/c, the lights when not in use and to use towels more than once (don't you do this at home?). Letting guests know they have a stake in the effort makes sense.

On a larger scale, **Accor's**, **Sofitel Hotels**, announced it had agreed to purchase wind energy for all nine of its U.S. hotels. The wind-generated power in the form of Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) qualifies Sofitel as a Green Power Partner, as designated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Sofitel will purchase the RECs from Community Energy.

RockResorts is raising the bar on the Eco-Friendly Wedding package that includes printing invitations on recycled paper, and opportunities to partner with an environmental non-profit, such as the National Forest Foundation to encourage the bride & groom to donate money in lieu of extravagances such as a Viennese table or cordial bar. An environmentally-friendly vehicle and access to community-based volunteer projects in the surrounding region for family and guests to partake in.

For more than 15 years, **Fairmont Hotels & Resorts** has participated in recycling and environmental protection programs. The company made a pledge to preserve the places in which we live by initiating the Green Partnership Program, an award-winning, company-wide commitment to minimizing impact on the planet. Since the late 1990s, the **Shangri La Hotels and Resorts Group** has embarked on a large-scale energy-saving program to replace inefficient and toxic cooling systems with units that use environmentally friendly HCFC^o, a refrigerant low in toxicity. Already upgraded are Shangri La hotels in Bangkok, Cebu, Kuala Lumpur, Manila (two properties), Shenzhen and Singapore. New hotels will be built with the new models.



On the Ground

ECO2 is **Renault's** "ecological signature," a label which amply proves its concrete commitment to preservation of the environment through vehicles that are both ecological and economic. Under Renault's new exacting ECO2 standards, vehicles must be manufactured at a facility that is certified by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). This ensures that each Renault vehicle in the ECO2 fleet delivers on its promises. Each vehicle must also emit under 140 g/km of CO₂, or operate on biofuels. Finally, each eco2 vehicle must be 95% recoverable at end of its life and contain at least 5% recovered plastic (of total plastic used in the vehicle). Over the past decade, Renault has reduced dangerous waste by 65%, water consumption by 57%, volatile organic compounds by 38%, and energy consumption by 25%. In 2006, Renault had 39 ISO-certified sites worldwide, and was awarded the "Environmental Management for Sustainable Development" prize by the French Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development as part of the "2006 Enterprise and Environment" awards.

And in the Air

Breakthroughs are often wobbly, although aimed in the right direction. On Feb 24, **Virgin Atlantic** flew one of its 747 jets from London to Amsterdam on a jet fuel mixture that included biofuel or renewable fuel that was a mixture of the oils from coconuts and the nuts of the babassu tree, which is native to Brazil, but does not appear to be considered a long-term solution.

"Virgin Atlantic and its partners are proving that you can find an alternative to traditional jet fuel and fly a plane on new technology, such as sustainable biofuel," said Virgin Atlantic President Richard Branson. "This pioneering flight will enable those of us who are serious about reducing carbon emissions to go on developing the fuels that will power our aircraft in the years ahead through sustainable next-generation oils, such as algae."

Elegant Plies Red Sea

Elegant Cruises & Tours, Inc., a niche cruise line specializing in culturally enriching travel to Europe is introducing of a new cruise-tour program for the Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba aboard the 62-passenger M.S. Monet.

The maiden voyage for the Monet's new Red Sea itinerary, "Monasteries of the Lonely Desert," will depart Cairo on December 18, 2008, cruising through the Gulf of Suez to the beautiful Red Sea for a 14-day sea and land adventure focused on early Christian monasteries and convents, Roman ruins, Egyptian temples and the Greco-Roman architecture of antiquity. Key port calls for the Monet are Safaga (for Luxor and Valley of the Kings), Sharm El Sheikh and Aqaba, (for Petra, Amman and Jerash).

Land portions of new itinerary include a full day excursion to the ancient Monasteries of St. Anthony and St. Paul, two of the oldest monasteries in Egypt, both dating back as early as the fourth century, A.D. The Monastery of St. Paul is located very near the site of the cave he lived in, establishing the monastic life in the Arab Dessert. Other highlights of the cruise's overland segments include jeep tours of Wadi Rum, the Bedouin village that served as a base for Lawrence of Arabia; the Monastery of the Seven Nuns; the world renowned St. Catherine's Monastery; the Church of the Prophet Moses; the Karnak Temple Complex at Luxor; the crusader castle of Kerak, the Greco-Roman site of Jerash, plus Amman's Gold Market, bazaars and the beautiful, magical desert landscapes.

Following the December 18 maiden voyage, a total of nine 14-day Red Sea cruise tours are planned for the Monet between January 1, 2009 and February 16, 2009, including special voyages featuring expert lecturers onboard.

Prices for the all-inclusive package for the cruise, all meals onboard, shore excursions, four nights land portion in Jordan, one overnight in Cairo, all transfers, and guest lecturer begin at \$3,512 per person, based on double occupancy. The Cruise-Only package featuring the cruise, all meals, lecturer, all shore excursions (exclusive of the land/overnight portions) begin at \$2,706 per person, based on double occupancy for the 14-day adventure. Group and charter fares are also available.

Call 800-683-6767; E-mail info@elegantcruises.com; www.elegantcruises.com.

Book 20, Earn 1 for Your Favorite Agent

ADVENTURESIncorporated, the exclusive adventure division of leading tour operator **Goway Travel**, has announced an opportunity for agents to earn a free trip to the Galapagos Islands. "The Galapagos Islands are one of the most popular destinations in Latin America," stated Don Forster, Product and Marketing Manager. "For agents, a Galapagos trip offers great commissions and with options such as the Amazon, high Andes and the amazing coast line, make Galapagos bookings extremely lucrative." Simply book 20 passengers on the Cachalote or Beluga, or 15 passengers on the Coral I, Coral II, Legend and Angelito in 2008 and you visit the Galapagos Islands for free.

Call 800-387-8850; info@adventuresincorporated.com; www.ADVENTURESIncorporated.com

USACA Boosts Travel Agent Confidence



By Linda Furry, CTC

Amidst all of the airfare brokers that have flooded the internet travel market in recent years, how does a travel agent go about finding the best airfares and a supplier you can trust? That is a question that the United States Air Consolidators Association (USACA) has made significant strides to answer. The USACA offers a standard of integrity and quality that more travel agents are relying on to find a good airline consolidator. Formed in 1999, the USACA serves as the national trade association for airline consolidators and sets a standard for its members that must be upheld to maintain association. It addresses three basic areas of concern that retail travel agents have about consolidators: legitimacy, airline contracts, and reputation.

Legitimacy

The USACA maintains stringent standards and its members must stay in compliance to keep their good standing. The 14 consolidators currently accepted into the USACA are some of the largest, most well-established air consolidators in the nation. Each company's annual sales generally well exceeds \$20 million at minimum.

Airline Contracts

There are two types of companies that call themselves a consolidator: Prime Consolidators and Resellers. A Prime Consolidator has direct contracts with the airlines to sell net fares and/or commissionable published fares to travel agents. A Reseller buys from the Prime Consolidator for the sole purpose of marking up the fares and redistributing them to retail travel agents. The Reseller can potentially cause two problems for the travel agent: 1.) a higher fare and 2.) Customer service can be hampered because you don't have contact with the company who has the relationship with the airline. USACA consolidators have contracts directly with the airlines and are Prime Consolidators.

Reputation

USACA members have been in business for at least 10 years and have earned a very favorable reputation in the travel industry. USACA watchdogs its members to ensure the high standard of professionalism is upheld. All USACA consolidators exceed minimum requirements for financial stability, reputation, integrity, and relationships with airline partners and travel agencies.

You can learn more about the USACA and its member consolidators at www.usaca.com. There is no charge to travel agents for the services of USACA and travel agents do not need to apply for membership to use their services. The website has a tool that allows you to search for a USACA consolidator by airline partner or by destinations they serve.

Visit www.usaca.com



Ricarda Lindner Steps Up to General Manager, GNTO

Recently the German National Tourist Office made two announcements: Michaela Klare would soon move to Amsterdam and Ricarda Lindner, who has been at the GNTO's New York office for the past 10 years, would take Klare's place.

Starting this month, April 2008, Lindner will officially assume the position of General Manager of the Americas for the German National Tourist Office (GNTO) in New York. At the same

time, Klare, will become the Regional Manager, Northwest Europe based in Amsterdam. During her tenure, Klare saw U.S. arrivals to Germany skyrocket nearly 20% since 2002. And the World Cup in 2006 benefitted lesser-known German cities that are appearing on new tours.

Lindner has been working for the GNTO in New York for the last ten years and has held the position of Marketing Manager North America since 2000. Born in Frankfurt, Lindner completed a three-year management training program at Frankfurt Airport and

received her MBA from the University of Wiesbaden.

"We are delighted to have found in Mrs. Lindner the ideal person for this position. She will continue the success and great work of her predecessor with new initiative. Our colleagues in the Netherlands, on the other hand, win in Klare a competent general manager, who will bring her comprehensive expertise to Germany's largest international incoming market," said Petra Hedorfer, CEO of the GNTO.

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its President.

His responsibilities include leading the company in its mandate to develop and market Trinidad and Tobago's tourism product and to improve the local tourism sector.

He has been involved in Trinidad and Tobago's tourism sector at the executive level since 2003. He was Group

The Tourism Development Company Limited (TDC) announced the appointment of Ernest M. Littles as

Chief Executive Office for the Crews Inn Group of Companies, where, for four years, he managed the Group's three companies - Crews Inn Hotel and Yachting Centre (hotel, marina, restaurant and retail complex), Chaguaramas Terminals (private, commercial port) and Caribbean Yacht Works (mega yacht repair facility).

Additionally, he is a past President of the Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association, where he served from 2004 to 2006. During this period, he also briefly served as Interim Chairman of the Board of Govern-

nors of the Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute (TTHTI). At present, he is a member of the Board of the TTHTI.

Tobago and its big sister, Trinidad, are the Caribbean's odd couple. Tiny Tobago is relaxed, slow-paced and Trinidad is densely populated, cosmopolitan population. Delta operates weekly non-stop service from Atlanta to Crown Point International Airport in Tobago and twice weekly non-stop service from New York to Piarco International Airport in Trinidad. Visit www.gotrinidadandtobago.com



Manuel Heredia Jr., Belize's New Minister of Tourism

Among Barrow's newly-named 16-member Cabinet, was Manuel Heredia Jr. who was appointed as the New Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, for which he has officially taken office.

Prior to his appointment, Hon. Manuel Heredia Jr. was the area representative for Belize Rural South. He is the former Mayor of San Pedro from

March 1994 to March 1997 and has since been the only United Democratic Party's candidate to retain his seat in the San Pedro Town Board election. Minister Heredia served on the Board of Directors of the Caribbean Producers Cooperative and was chairperson of that Board. In addition, he has been President of the Lions Club in San Pedro, Chairperson of the Fisheries Advisory

Board, and Vice-President of the Belize Fishermen's Cooperative. He has also served on several other boards and advisory councils repre-

senting the interests of his community. His prior experience and work with the public has prepared him for the new task at hand.

"I look forward to furthering the growth of tourism by expanding economic opportunities for all stakeholders and by building strong partnerships with the private sector," comments Tourism Minister Manuel Heredia, Jr.

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Spas at Sea

By Katharine Dyson



Crystal Cruises, Serenity.

Walking along the long passageways of the \$800 million cruise liner, **Queen Mary II**, a ship so huge, its stern stuck out beyond the pier into the Hudson (just 117 feet shorter than the Empire State building), I finally came to the door of the Canyon Ranch SpaClub. This is a serious 20,000 sq. ft spa with 20 treatment rooms, a gym, herbal and Finnish saunas, whirlpools, steam room, and a thalassotherapy pool with deluge waterfall — indigenous treatments and hydrotherapy from Vichy showers to Watsu pools are hot new trends, according to the International SPA Association's report.

After being tempted by the Stone Massage and the Ayurvedic and Thai treatments, I finally indulged in a Mango Sugar Glo massage and left smelling like a ripe fruit, my skin glowing, the stiffness in my neck and shoulders eased. Taking my spa with me while our ship moved from port-to-port...what a great idea.

Spas Are for Just About All of Us

With spas now our fourth favorite leisure activity (Americans spend more money on professional pampering than at the box office or amusement parks), the cruise industry knows having an on-board spa is a must. All new ships coming online have them, older ones are adding them.

When **Seabourn Odyssey** debuts in June, 2009, she will have a two-story 8,500 square feet space to attend to just 450 guests. A stunning waterfall will enhance the entrance and a Kinesis Wall has been installed in the gym. Two Spa Villas with lounging furniture, treatment rooms and private open decks designed for couples. Spas are so important, many cruise lines are employing professional spa companies to operate and manage them.

For example, **Crystal Cruises** offers Steiner's Elemis products and treatments on *Symphony* and *Serenity*. Last year, Crystal's spas, designed according to Feng Shui principals, received Condé Nast Traveler's "Best Cruise Line Spa" readers' award. A private sun deck, with Zen rock gardens, water fountains, and furnishings strategically placed according to ancient Chinese principles create a soothing retreat. Says Alexandra Don, Crystal's vice president, onboard guest services. "Many of our guests regularly visit spas. They expect attentive, professional service, quality products and hygienic practices. Besides being very therapeutic, the Crystal Spas are stylish and distinctive."

And it's not only women who are getting into the spas. Men are quickly discovering what women have known for years: that body treatments not only feel good, but are good for you. A recent poll by the global spa resource guide reveals that more and more men are indulging in spa travel and therapeutic treatments while on vacation. To bring men into the loop, Crystal's new men's spa menu includes its signature Urban Cleanse Facial along with sports massages that go deep into tissues and usually include some kind of stretching and manipulation.

Themed treatments appeal to special interests like Crystal's Mother/Daughter Paradise Massage, a Yin Yang Facial with essential oils, and the indulgent Spa Ceremony of Renewal featuring an extravagant Exotic Lime and Ginger Salt Glow followed by a therapeutic deep tissue muscle massage.

Steiner also operates The Greenhouse Spa and Salon on all 13 **Holland America Line** ships where spas are contemporary in design with earthy and muted tones and patterns used throughout the furniture and décor. Spa services utilize the Elemis and La Therapie treatment lines while new additions to the spa menu include acupuncture, barbering/men's services, and Polar BodyAge Analysis (this service uses a computer to determine the true "body age").

Desserts without the Calories

Often treatments sound more like desserts than spa services like Holland America's Elemis Exotic Coconut Rub and Milk Ritual Wrap or Float, an Exotic Jasmine Flower Bath and Elemis Lime and Ginger Salt Glow and the Elemis Strawberry Herbal Back Cleanse. Classes in yoga, Pilates, spinning and aquarobics are also part of the mix.

Norwegian Cruise Line's fleet carries Steiner Leisure's Mandara's Spas which are rooted in Balinese culture offering treatments like Mandara's Hot Stone Heaven, and the Four Hands Massage, where two therapists work on you at one time. NCL's Mandara to You for Two provides a romantic massage in the privacy of your stateroom. Even Disney Cruise Lines remembers that adults also need to have fun.

On a recent Caribbean cruise on the **Disney Magic**, my husband and I enjoyed a couple of wonderful hours in one of their Vista Spa Villas. Starting out with a foot cleansing on a private outdoor veranda, we relaxed in a bubbling hot tub then moved to the massage tables for a soothing aromatherapy massage. Later we sat back in our chaises, watched the sea go by and sipped champagne and strawberries. Kids? What kids. They were having a ball in the Oceaneer Club.

Shifting from Bali to France, every **Regent Seven Sea Cruises' (RSSC)** ship has a Carita of Paris Spa featuring treatments like Pro-Lift skin care therapies, renvateur exfoliating process, massage, thalassotherapy, reflexology, aromatherapy, body wraps, facials and beauty treatments. RSSC is also introducing an onboard partnership with De. Garcia, a hot star in nutrition, health and fitness with programs in a variety of health-based issues like body restoration and weight and stress management.. On board a June sailing to Alaska, Dr. Deepak Chopra who will host "Grow Younger, Live Longer" on RSSC's Seven Seas Mariner.

The 7,000 sq. ft. **World Spa** by Banyon Tree draws from centuries —old Asian traditions. As The World sails the globe, guests aboard this luxury "residential community at sea" enjoy their elegant multi-million apartments ranging from 1,106 to 4,000 sq. ft. (some available for rent) and access to the Sanctuary for the Senses where an ambience of seclusion and luxury reigns.

Whether you prefer France, Bali or anywhere else in the world where the senses are indulged, you can be assured that the ship you choose, will be sure to have a first-rate spa. We advise you to pre-book your clients' spa services before they sail.

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Indian tour operator SANS Incredible Vacations announces comprehensive fam tours for travel agents beginning in March 2008. Fam tours will be priced from \$1599 including round-trip air on major carriers from US & Canadian gateways. Two one-week options are offered: The Gold Fam includes Delhi-Agra-Ranthambore-Jaipur and the Green Fam covers Mumbai-Kochi-Periyar-Kumarakom. Combinations and extensions available. SANS Incredible Vacations: 212-695-1005 sans@sansincrediblevacations.com

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| April 28-May 1 | Home Based Travel Expo | San Diego | spring.homebasedagentshow.com |
| April 28- May 2 | TPOC at Sea 2008 | Aboard Carnival Funship | tpoc.org/conferenceinfo.html |
| May 15-18 | Travel Trade's Cruise-A-Thon | Vancouver, Canada | www.ttshows.com |
| June 16-18 | Vacation.Com Annual Conference | Las Vegas | www.vacation.com |
| June 21 to 25 | Caribbean Tourism Summit | Washington, DC | www.caribbeantravel.com |
| July 11-20 | 15th Annual Dive Fest | East Coast, USA | www.discoverdominica.com |
| Oct 13-16 | ITB Asia 2008 | Singapore | www.discoveramericapavilion.com |
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