


*The Travel Agents' Path to Profits*

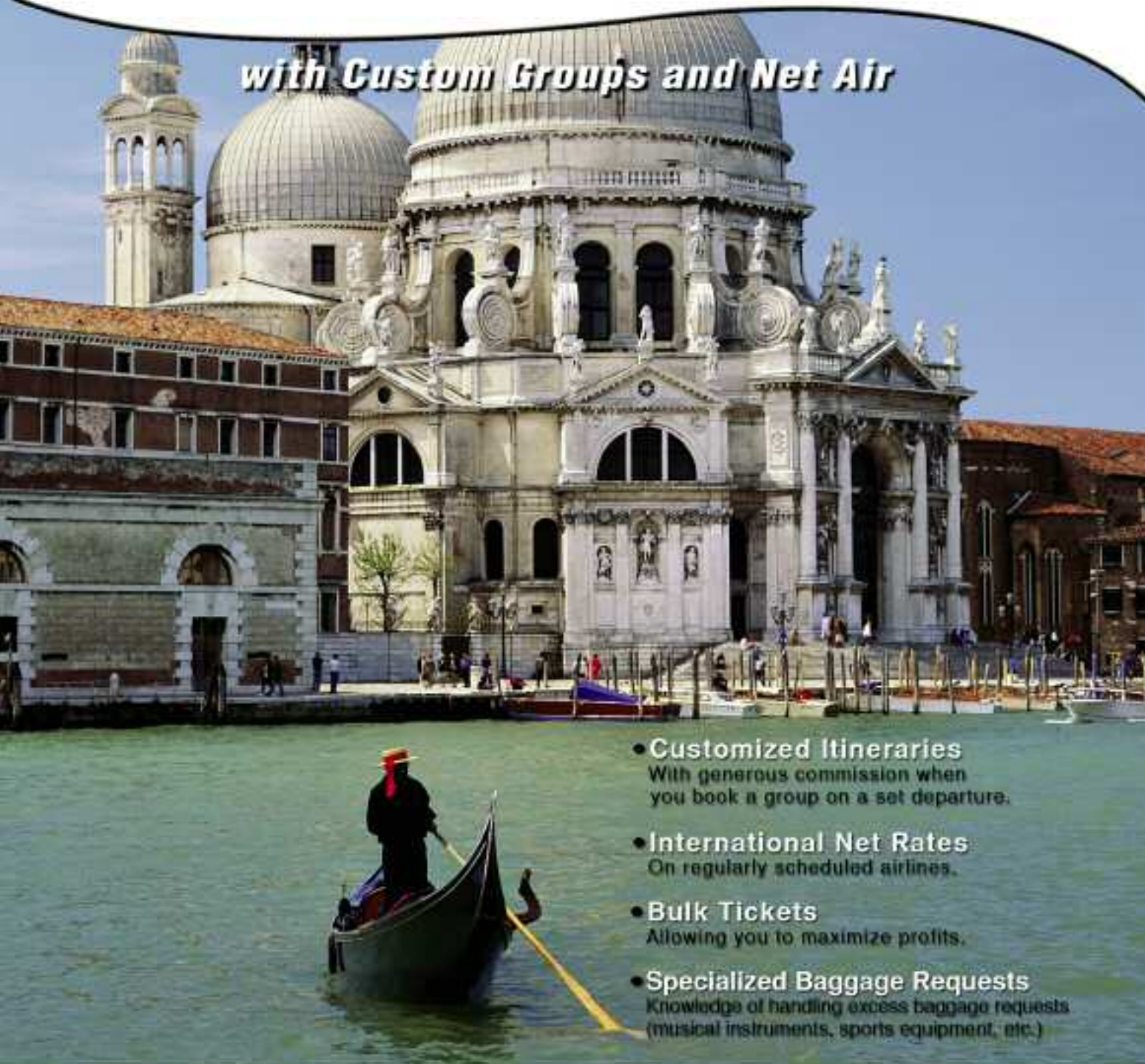
# Germany

- 
- 18 IRELAND** Finding Yourself  
**34 ISRAEL** Eilat in Winter  
**37 BRAZIL** Bossa Nova Beaches  
**40 GRENADINES** Island Hopping  
**42 ST. KITTS** ...Expansion Plans  
**44 CHINA** Reaches for the Moon



# Maximize Your Profits!

*with Custom Groups and Net Air*



- **Customized Itineraries**  
With generous commission when you book a group on a set departure.
- **International Net Rates**  
On regularly scheduled airlines.
- **Bulk Tickets**  
Allowing you to maximize profits.
- **Specialized Baggage Requests**  
Knowledge of handling excess baggage requests (musical instruments, sports equipment, etc.)

800-682-3333 option 3 • [groups@gate1travel.com](mailto:groups@gate1travel.com)

More of the world for less.  
**GATE 1**  
[www.gate1travel.com](http://www.gate1travel.com)



Europe • Asia • South America • North America • Australia • Egypt • Morocco • River Cruises • Sea Cruises



## Africa. Amazing.

Discover Africa with Kenya Airways. Connect in Nairobi for destinations throughout the continent. And with our transatlantic partners - United, Virgin Atlantic, Continental and Air Canada - you'll enjoy great service, seamless connections and the most attractive fares.



[www.kenya-airways.com](http://www.kenya-airways.com)

Sales and Reservation Offices in North America - Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Vancouver. Call 1866 KENYA AIR (1866 536 9224)







# JAXFAX<sup>®</sup> Travel Marketing MAGAZINE

## DESTINATION FEATURES AND ARTICLES



### 12 COVER FEATURE GERMANY

#### Germany's Posh Palaces and Secret Gardens

Agents can count on their colleagues at the German National Tourist Office (GNTO) to come up with at least one attention-getting marketing scheme to perk up annual travel planning. So, for all of 2008, you're well-advised to keep this diverse trio in mind: Palaces, Parks and Gardens. Adding centuries-old castles and palaces — some of which clients can stay in — makes it a compelling foursome...

- PUBLISHER'S CORNER** 6 Selling Airline Tickets Profitably with Air Consolidators
- EDITOR'S DESK** 8 Sharing the Love
- SNAPSHOTS** 11 The Month in Review
- EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW** 16 Michaela Klare Regional Manager GNTO

### DESTINATION ARTICLES

#### 18 IRELAND Finding Yourself

Do your clients like to plan ahead? If you have trained your clients well, they are savvy travelers who know they can ...



#### 24 CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE ROUND-UP

##### Developments Brighten the East

#### 32 CRUISE European River Cruises: Solid Sales

#### 34 ISRAEL Eilat in Winter: Busy, Brash and Fun

Eilat lives up to its travel posters. That's why they come by the tens and twenties and hundreds, each winter day, these tall, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Danish, young Europeans seeking the...



#### 37 BRAZIL Booking Bossa Nova Beaches

#### 40 GRENADINES Island Hopping

When I was a kid in the '80s, my family spent two weeks every December on a Caribbean island. We stayed in the same resort year after year, dining and diving with the other returning families, all of us kids measuring our growing height on...



#### 42 ST. KITTS Showcasing Expansion Plans

#### 44 CHINA Reaches for the Moon

Ancient Chinese culture is no stranger to long-term planning. So, while this year holds promise and is undoubtedly expected to be the biggest year for tourism to China, tourism executives are planning to reach the moon by 2020...



#### 47 SPECIAL INTEREST Epicurean Stars Go Global

#### 50 FLORIDA Paradise Found: Naples



## Experience you can trust

# GREECE

& the best of the Mediterranean

- The FIT experts for over 38 years
- Friendly, knowledgeable and personalized service
- Choose from over 26 outstanding and affordable tours, cruises and honeymoon packages
- Custom itineraries & group programs upon request
- Commission paid promptly

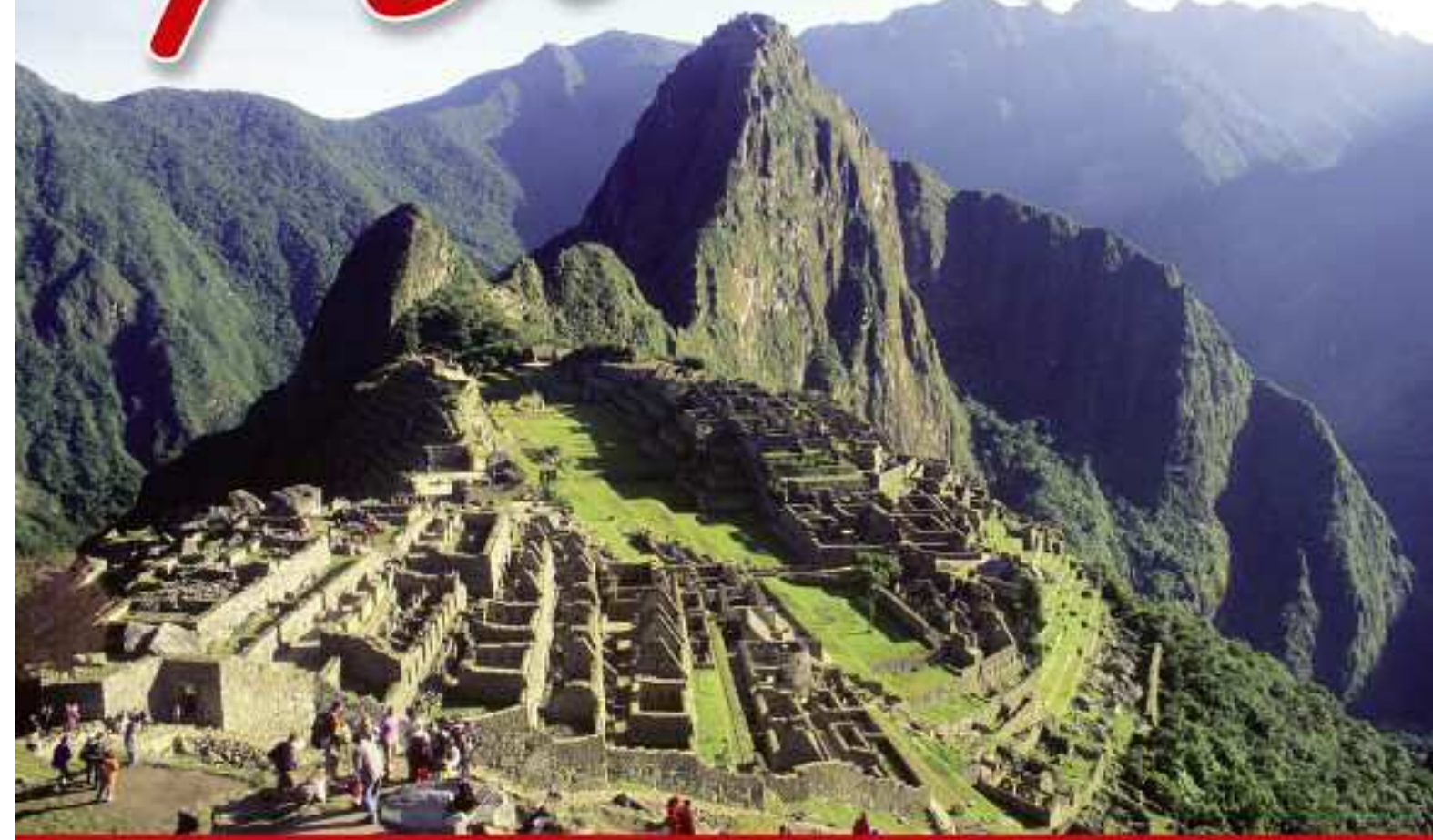


### CROWN PETERS

34-10 Broadway, Astoria, NY 11106 • Reservations: (718) 931-7800 • (800) 321-1199 • E-mail: travel@crownpeters.com • www.crownpeters.com

# Peru

## Magical... Mystical!



## 1 Week from \$999 Air & Land

Rate per person in double occupancy and including air from Miami, subject to airport taxes and September 11 Security Fees of \$98 to \$120 per person. Seasonal supplements apply.

### ATTENTION TRAVEL AGENTS

#### FOR FAM TRIPS TO PERU

Various 8-day educational trips to Peru with bi-monthly departures visit [www.HotFamTrips.com](http://www.HotFamTrips.com)

#### ADDED-VALUE FOR YOUR CLIENTS

All bookings made by March 31st to Peru qualify for free travel insurance (\$150 value per person). Special code: JXFX0803



California Registration # 2000202-20

## SUNNY LAND<sup>®</sup> TOURS, INC.

For information and reservations call

**1-800-783-7839**

or visit [www.PeruHotDeals.com](http://www.PeruHotDeals.com)





# DEPARTMENTS

<b>EUROPE</b>	<b>12</b>
NEWS • BEST BUYS	<b>20-23</b>
<b>CENTRAL &amp; EASTERN EUROPE</b>	<b>24</b>
NEWS • BEST BUYS	<b>24-31</b>
<b>CRUISE NEWS</b>	<b>32-33</b>
<b>AFRICA &amp; MIDDLE EAST</b>	<b>34</b>
NEWS • BEST BUYS	<b>35-36</b>
<b>CENTRAL &amp; SOUTH AMERICA</b>	<b>37</b>
NEWS • BEST BUYS	<b>38-39</b>
<b>CARIBBEAN &amp; BERMUDA</b>	<b>40</b>
NEWS • BEST BUYS	<b>41, 43</b>
<b>ASIA &amp; SOUTH PACIFIC</b>	<b>44</b>
BEST BUYS • NEWS	<b>45-46</b>
<b>SPECIAL INTERESTS</b>	<b>47</b>
BEST BUYS • NEWS	<b>48-49</b>
<b>NORTH AMERICA &amp; HAWAII</b>	<b>50</b>
BEST BUYS • NEWS	<b>51</b>
<b>INDUSTRY NEWS</b>	<b>52</b>
Resort Update	52
Going Green at the Ritz	54
<b>MESSAGE BOARD</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>FAM TRIPS &amp; STUDY PROGRAMS</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>CALENDAR TRADE SHOW EVENTS</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>MARKET PLACE DIRECTORY</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>LISTINGS AND DIRECTORIES</b>	<b>58-94</b>
DIRECTORY OF SUPPLIERS	<b>95</b>
LISTINGS BY DESTINATION	<b>96</b>

**FRONT COVER:** The Schloss mit Schlossgart. Photo: Tom Bross

## JAXFAX

### TRAVEL MARKETING MAGAZINE

IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY:  
**Jet Airtransport Exchange, Inc. (JAX)**  
 52 West Main Street, Milford, CT 06460  
 203-301-0255 • Fax: 203-301-0250

**BPA Audited Circulation**

Douglas Cooke, CTC  
 Publisher & Editorial Director, doug@jaxfax.com  
 Randi White  
 Vice Pres./Associate Publisher, Randi@jaxfax.com  
 Maria Lisella  
 Editor, Maria@jaxfax.com  
 Chantal Guillou-Brennan  
 Art & Production Director, CBjaxfax@aol.com  
 Marjorie Vincent  
 Business Manager, Marjorie@jaxfax.com  
 Katie Hultgren  
 Editorial Assistant, Listings and Circulation Manager  
 Katie@jaxfax.com

Clifton N. Cooke, CTC.  
 Founding Publisher & Editor-at-Large, ClifCooke@aol.com

#### Worldwide Correspondents

Tom Bross: Austria & Germany  
 Katharine Dyson: Special Interests  
 Patricia Earnest: North America  
 Danielle Hayes: Africa, South America  
 Kathy Feeney: Southeast Correspondent  
 Denise Mattia: Caribbean/Mexico  
 Merrie Murray: Mediterranean  
 J. Herbert Silverman: Britain  
 Jonathan Siskin: Cruise Editor

#### Contributing Editors

Steve Brown, Jeff Burdick, Ron Butler, Jad Davenport, Ben Frank,  
 Chantal Guillou-Brennan, Patricia Harris, Ted Heck, Jehda Honolulu,  
 Joan Jenkins, Mark Laioza, Bob Levine, David Lyon, Barbara Rogers,  
 Betty Rolston, Phyllis Cocroft Meras, Maggie Zellers

Advertising in publication and on www.jaxfax.com  
 sales@jaxfax.com

Circulation & Subscriptions  
 circulation@jaxfax.com; 800-952-9329

Member of: ASTA—American Society of Travel Agents; ATA—Africa Travel Assoc.;  
 NTA—National Tour Association; ATME—Association of Travel Marketing Execu-  
 tives.; CHA—Caribbean Hotel Assoc.; CTO—Caribbean Tourism Organization;  
 PATA—Pacific Asia Travel Assoc.; USTOA—United States Tour Operators Assoc.  
 "JAX FAX Travel Marketing Magazine" (ISSN 0279-7984) is published month-  
 ly by Jet Airtransport Exchange Inc., 52 West Main Street, Milford, CT 06460.  
 Periodicals postage paid at Milford, CT, & additional mailing offices.  
 POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to JAX FAX Travel Market-  
 ing Magazine, 52 West Main St., Milford, CT 06460. COPYRIGHT 2007.  
 All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. No part of this publication may be  
 reproduced in print or electronically without permission. Direct requests  
 for permission to the Publisher, JAX FAX, 52 West Main St., Milford, CT  
 06460 or via E-mail: Doug@jaxfax.com

Sandals "Nothing's Impossible" Attitude

## BEACH CABANA INCLUDED

WE ADMIT IT'S A SHADE OVER THE TOP

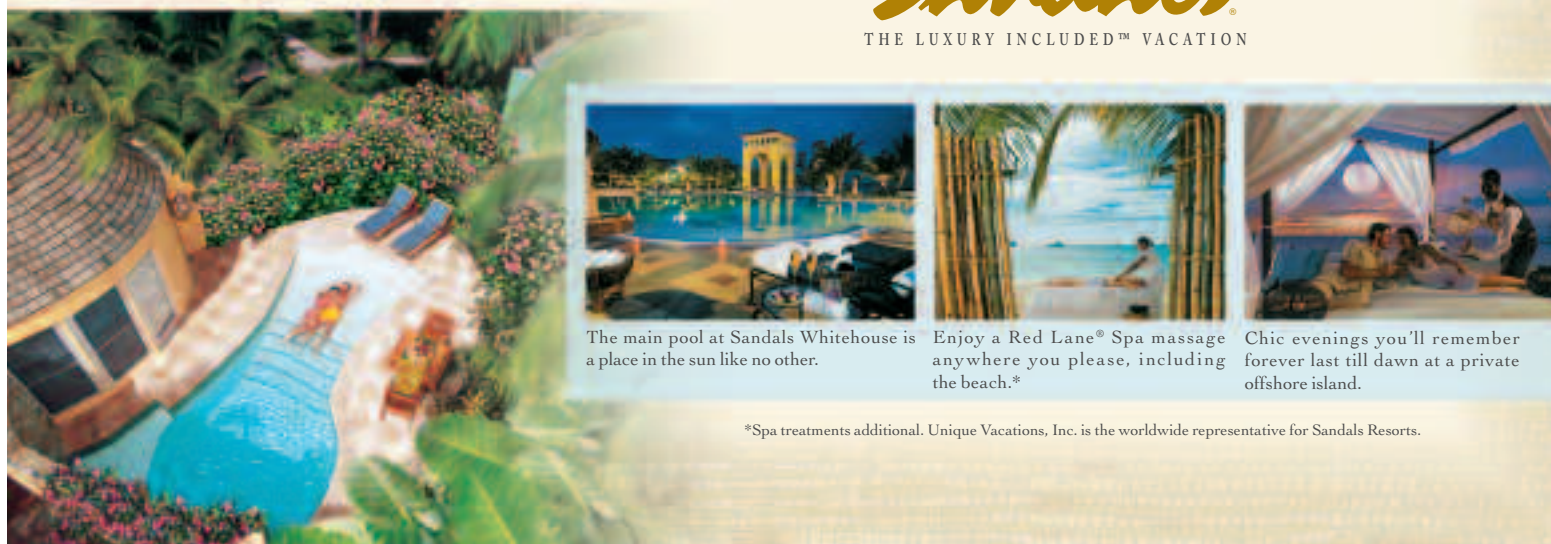


We go to extremes to please our guests so you'll always have it "made in the shade." When you're not lazing on our protected beaches being pampered beyond belief, you can discover every exotic diversion under the sun. After all, indulging is a given at the world's only Luxury Included™ Vacation. From snorkeling or diving in see-through waters off a private offshore island...to making infinite selections from an array of international gourmet restaurants...or having a personal butler draw your bath in a lavish custom-appointed suite...at Sandals, creating countless over-the-top pleasures is a breeze.

Call your Tour Operator or  
 1-800-SANDALS sandals.com

**Sandals**  
 THE LUXURY INCLUDED™ VACATION

An exotic Rondoal is a world of its own where a plunge pool is just one of many exotic luxuries.



The main pool at Sandals Whitehouse is a place in the sun like no other.

Enjoy a Red Lane® Spa massage anywhere you please, including the beach.\*

Chic evenings you'll remember forever last till dawn at a private offshore island.

\*Spa treatments additional. Unique Vacations, Inc. is the worldwide representative for Sandals Resorts.

**A toll-free guide to reach the world!** Reach us. Reach the world.



**BP :: 800-518-7781**



**MD :: 866-933-5963**



**QM :: 877-625-2942**



**UM :: 800-742-3006**



**KQ :: 866-536-9224**



**NX :: 866-606-2228**



**Q3 :: 877-592-6242**



**MK :: 800-537-1182**



**PG :: 866-226-4565**



**D3 :: 866-322-5561**



**GA :: 800-342-7832**



**8U :: 877-359-0999**





## Selling Airline Tickets Profitably with Air Consolidators

This issue of JAX FAX features the 6th Annual Guide to Working with Air Consolidators. This resource is among our most popular supplements because it provides our readers with an insider's view of what is necessary to book airline tickets profitably by working with Air Consolidators. The articles in this guide are written by Air Consolidators themselves while the profile pages inside take the guesswork out of what each company offers: from the airlines they represent, and the corresponding destinations they sell, thereby making it easier to know which one to work with to build particular client itineraries.

If you are not booking your clients' international airfares with an Air Consolidator, you are leaving good money on the table. And, even if there is not a big savings on a certain routing between the consolidators' price and the published fare, be sure to ask your favorite consolidator about commissions on published fares as well. Additionally, while not all routes offer exceptional savings over published fares, long-haul flights and particularly, Business and First Class tickets represent opportunities to make hundreds of dollars on a single ticket.

### Cruise Agents and Air Consolidators

Since most cruise lines no longer offer commissions on

air/cruise packages, Cruise Agents should always check with a consolidator for their clients who have cruises leaving out of international ports, including the Caribbean. Many Cruise Agents will book the air offered by the cruise lines because it is convenient, but doing so can keep agents from earning hundreds of dollars on the air portion of the trip.

### Home-based Agents and Air Consolidators

Home-based Agents should make booking air with Consolidators as routine as checking your E-mail. Even if the particular routing is not one that allows a markup on the consolidators' net fare, at least you are booking with a company that will work with you if your clients encounter a problem on their trip. Consolidators work very closely with their airline partners and know their airline reps' phone numbers by heart. Try getting that kind of service from an online travel agency or CRS.

JAX FAX will be moderating a panel discussion on Air Consolidation on April 28 during the Home-based Agent Show in San Diego. I would encourage you to attend, meet several leading Air Consolidators face to face and learn more about how to once again sell airline tickets profitably.

For more information, visit [www.homebasedagentshow.com](http://www.homebasedagentshow.com).

Doug Cooke, Publisher



The Leading and Award Winning Travel Technology company in the world, after Successful launches in Europe and Asia-Pacific is now Open for Business in the North American Market.

**GoQuo's Launches its award winning Suite of Travel products:**

**Flight Booking Engine for Consolidators:**  
A Flight Booking engine to distribute net fares and airline contracts to agents and offer an online booking system to maximize revenue and increase online booking.

**Booking Engine for Online Agencies and Travel Agents:**  
A booking solution that matches their marketing efforts and strategies by offering Air, Hotel and Car booking engine.

**Dynamic Packaging For Tour Operators and Travel Suppliers:**  
An online booking solution to meet the demands of consumers and travel agents with a dynamic packaging solution capable of booking air plus hotel packages online.

**Still [Go]t (Quo)estions ?** Call us to find a solution that will make your business an online success at 1-888-924-6786 or send us an email at [ussales@goquo.com](mailto:ussales@goquo.com) or visit us online at [www.goquo.com](http://www.goquo.com)

**GOQUO - jolly decent British travel technology that's bloody good at what it does**

Winner WTM 2006 Travel Technology Award for Best Dynamic Packaging Tools Online



## Villa Romana on the Amalfi Coast

6 Days/5 nights from \$420\*  
Land only, per person double occupancy






Hotel Villa Romana is a delightful family-run 4-star hotel renowned for pasta making and the true art of luscious pizza. Spend five glorious nights at the charming villa and sample the outstanding cuisine of its chefs plus share in their special secrets of making unforgettable pizza.

5 nights accommodations, 5 breakfasts, 5 dinners and 1 extraordinary pizza class from \$420 per person!

For reservations please call  
**1 800-995-7997**

[www.SplendidalItalia.com](http://www.SplendidalItalia.com)  
**SPLENDIDA ITALIA**  
by Picasso Travel

CAT0011 • COTA 1010811A 40  
Printed in USA





# Sharing the Love

Everyone loves a parade. At least that's what some folks think the American travel media want to experience when they plan to report on Europe's latest strategies to combat the embattled dollar abroad. Last month, the European Travel Commission (ETC) presented a pageant that exuded color, fantasy and a touch of madness as the event gave a whimsical rendition of visiting the Continent. Many of the "Giants of Culture," will be on display at JFK's Terminal 4 through Spring to coincide with the ETC's campaign – falling in love with Europe -- a play on the eternal and undisputable love affair Americans have had with Europe since World War II, and vice versa. The Marshall Plan helped jumpstart the underbelly of what has become the biggest industry in the world – by rebuilding the rail network that fueled the European economy at the time.

As much as anyone might love a parade or a festival for that matter, what the media missed were the nuts and bolts details of how the ETC might address the thorny

issues of the day – that tumbling dollar that could be buttressed with dollar for pound schemes or guaranteed dollar rates – the sorts of strategies agents need to pass along to clients who are scratching their heads saying, "Well, we wanted to go to Europe but the euro is killing us."

ETC Chairman, Jean Philippe Peril, who also directs Maison de la France in the Americas, reports that 13 million traveled to Europe, second to 2000 despite the weak dollar proving once again that the Continent is irresistible to Americans.

The ETC's campaign to persuade first-timers to visit Europe this year holds other mixed messages. First-timers usually run to London, Paris and Rome, but in 2008 that first-timer might do well to look toward the newly emerging countries of Slovenia, Slovakia, Croatia and other dyed-in-the wool classics like Prague, Budapest, Bucharest and lesser known places on the other side of what was once the Iron Curtain, where prices could indeed spread the love affair over the entire Continent.

Maria Lisella, Editor



- ➔ 45,000 Hotels, Tours and Transfers worldwide
- ➔ 75,000 Travel Agencies as clients worldwide
- ➔ Commissionable or net rates

**NO FEES**

**FREE INTEGRATION**

**FREE USE OF SYSTEM**


**FREE SIGN UP**

**transHotel**  
USA Inc.

GLOBAL TRAVEL SERVICES PROVIDER

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT OUR SALES OFFICE: 866 550 7901 OR VISIT:

[www.transhotelusa.com](http://www.transhotelusa.com)



# 100% OF YOUR RDA

**\*Recommended Daily Activities.**

Action Facts	
Serving Size: 5 Days/4 Nights	
Servings Per Vacation: Unlimited	
% Daily Value*	
Biking	100%
Kayaking	100%
Moonlight Walks	100%
Rock Wall Climbing	100%
Surfing	100%
Sailing	100%
Tennis	100%
Trapeze Swinging	100%
Scuba Diving	100%
Water-Skiing	100%
Snorkeling	100%
Basketball	100%
Volleyball	100%
Golfing	100%
Swimming	100%
All Night Dancing	100%

\*Not all activities at all resorts.

From screaming across the ocean on a windsurfer to a romantic stroll under the stars, to scaling a mini-mountain, from sipping a frozen margarita to ice skating in the middle of the tropics, if it's fun, it's here. And it's all included. Luxurious rooms and suites. An incredible array of land and water sports. Unlimited premium brand drinks. All meals in a variety of dining options. All entertainment. And all on the best beaches anywhere, everywhere. Jamaica. The Bahamas. Curaçao. And Brazil.






SuperClubs

**Breezes**

RESORTS

For more information on Air-Inclusive Designer Vacations by SuperClubs visit us at: [www.superclubs.com](http://www.superclubs.com) or call your tour operator or 1-800-Go-Super(467-8737). For Groups of 20 persons or more, call 1-800-Go-Super/Ext. 6632.

**THE SUN, THE MOON & THE STARS!**  
All the ingredients for romance.



JAMAICA


BAHAMAS

BRAZIL

CURAÇAO

Breezes Runaway Bay & Breezes Montego Bay • Breezes Bahamas • Breezes Costa do Sauípe • Breezes Curaçao

Even your passports are included! Call or click for more details.



9983-2/07





**Your clients love India.**

**Our preferred India partners love to help you get them there.**

**All for this one moment.**

**Lufthansa has preferred India partners who can find you great low fares to wherever your clients are headed in India — Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai.**

Need more reasons why Lufthansa is the number one choice to get your clients to India?

- Award-winning, on-time service from 18 U.S. gateways\* on the number one European carrier to India, with 45 flights a week from Frankfurt and Munich
- To find out more, become a Lufthansa Specialist. Register at [www.lufthansa-usa.com/specialists](http://www.lufthansa-usa.com/specialists)

\*Seattle, effective March 30, 2008

**There's no better way to fly.™**



**Lufthansa**

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

# Snapshots

## THE MONTH IN REVIEW

### The Spirit of Love in Cyprus

Tasoula Manaridis, Director of the Cyprus Tourism Organization in New York was among the participants in the European Travel Commission's event, "Giants of Culture." No, this is not her portraying Aphrodite, but it does remind people of Cyprus' legendary beginnings as an island of love since Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, ostensibly emerged from the seafoam at the shores of the



island country. The Giants of Culture will be displayed at JFK International Airport.

### Hilton Celebrates Opening of First Doubletree Hotel in Costa Rica

Doubletree Hotels & Resorts celebrated the opening of the Doubletree Resort by Hilton Puntarenas. Pictured left to right are Hilton Hotels Corporation Executives: Kenneth M. Smith, Executive V.P.—The Americas Operations, Sales, Revenue Management; Danny Hughes, Area



V.P.—Caribbean, Central America, & Cancun; Tilo Joos, Regional Director of Sales & Marketing—Caribbean & Central America. The property is one of three Hilton family hotels to open in Costa Rica, marking the first full-service Hilton hotels in the country.

### El Al Israel Airlines named World's Most Secure Airline

EL AL, Israel's national airline, was been voted "Best Airline Security" by Global Traveler Magazine and presented a GT Tested Award, one of the most sought after and respected awards in the business and luxury travel industry. Offer Gat, (center) EL AL Israel Airlines CEO, North & Central America, accepted the honor at an official awards luncheon in New York City. Over three hundred travel industry professionals and media attended the luncheon.



### PATA Foundation Donates Scholarship Award



The New York PATA Chapter donated \$500 to the Joel Abels Scholarship Foundation. Shown receiving the check for the foundation are Bill McCue and Sue Shapiro (left and center) from New York PATA Chairman, Jack Maraffi (right).

### Lufthansa fares to India

Sample round-trip fares, as low as:

San Francisco – Delhi	Dallas/Ft. Worth – Mumbai
\$ <b>1352*</b>	\$ <b>1325*</b>
New York – Chennai	Detroit – Bangalore
\$ <b>1325*</b>	\$ <b>1435*</b>
Washington – Hyderabad	Chicago – Kolkata
\$ <b>1400*</b>	\$ <b>1397*</b>

Depart by March 31, 2008  
Purchase by March 28, 2008

### Contact...

**any of our preferred India partners  
and offer your clients Lufthansa's  
great low fares to India today.**

**C&H International:** 1 866 675 2288

**GTT International:** 1 800 878 4283

**Hari World Travel:** 1 888 889 2968

**Krisbi Travel:** 1 773 561 4100

**Maazda Travel:** 1 214 637 2990

**Mill-Run Tours:** 1 800 MILLRUN

**SkyLink Travel:** 1 800 AIRONLY

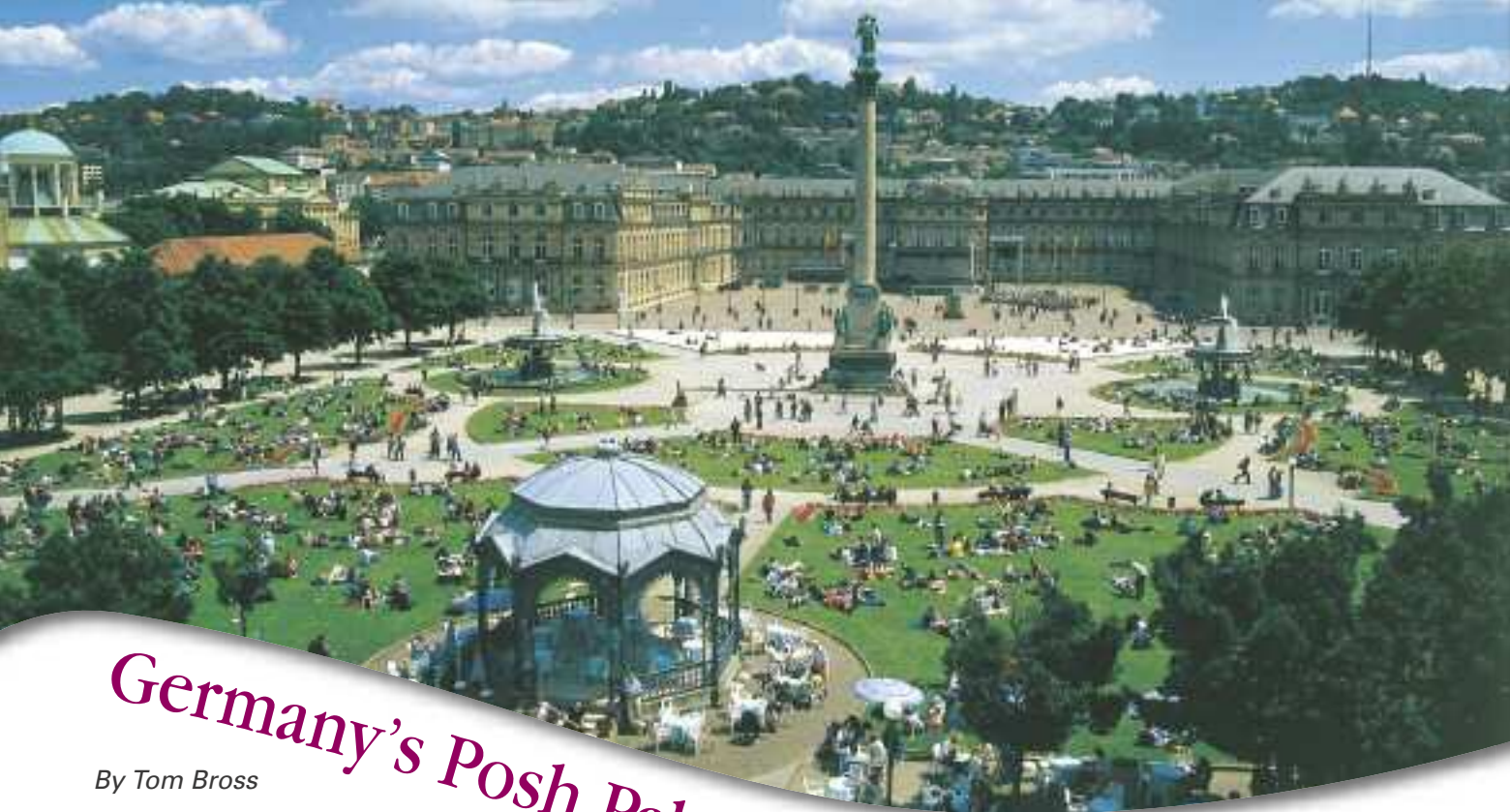
**Trans Am Travel:** 1 800 822 7600



**Lufthansa**

\*Fares are exclusively available from the above mentioned preferred India partners. Fares may vary.  
Fares shown are in U.S. dollars and are for round-trip travel in Economy Class on Lufthansa or United. Fuel surcharge is included. Saturday night stay is required and maximum stay is 12 months. Fares are subject to change without notice and are based on the most direct routing to each destination. Additional transfers will increase the fare. Fares do not include fees, taxes and airport charges up to \$215, including the September 11th Security Fee of a maximum of \$10 per round-trip. Seats are limited and may not be available on all days/flights. Ticketing, cancellation, change and other restrictions apply.





## Germany's Posh Palaces and Secret Gardens

By Tom Bross

**A**gents can count on their colleagues at the **German National Tourist Office (GNTO)** to come up with at least one attention-getting marketing scheme to perk up annual travel planning. So, for all of 2008, you're well-advised to keep this diverse trio in mind: Palaces, Parks and Gardens. Adding centuries-old castles and palaces – some of which clients can stay in — makes it a compelling foursome.

Numbering nearly 5,000 castles, (a figure some say is closer to 10,000; Saxony alone has more than 2,000 castles for sale right now) plus Renaissance- and Baroque-era palaces dot Germany's 16 federal states, on ridges and countryside landscapes as well as busy urban midsections. Up toward Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania's Baltic seacoast, Duke Friedrich Franz's 15-turreted Schloss Schwerin stands commandingly on its own garden-bordered island in the middle of a lake.

Historians credit a 16th-century Thurn and Taxis count with establishing Europe's postal service, symbolized ever since by a curved posthorn. His descendents still preside over their hereditary Schloss St. Emmeran in Regensburg on the Danube. Castle-touring sightseers are liable to bump into Princess Gloria, a familiar personality in Continental high-society social circles. Clients traveling through north-Bavarian Franconia shouldn't bypass Coburg, ancestral seat of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha dukedom, which produced British Queen Victoria's husband Albert. (While staying at **Schloss Ehrenburg**, Her Majesty no doubt dared to use Germany's first-ever flush toilet.)

### Gardens, Wines and UNESCO Accolades

Parks and flowery formal gardens are abundant, too, on municipal acreage and in outlying natural areas. Clients inquiring about German destinations could opt for a palace-and-parks itinerary or, instead, tour the Castle Road ([www.burgenstrasse.de](http://www.burgenstrasse.de)). Covering 285 miles and more

than 70 imposing landmarks, it zigzags from Prague to Mannheim via the Franconian wine country, the Neckar Valley and the Rhineland. That puts the castle ramparts of Nuremberg and Heidelberg—plus picturesque Bad Wimpfen, its skyline dominated by a fortified 13th-century imperial palace—on the route.

Traveling inspired by this year's promotional theme can be coordinated with Germany's lengthy roster of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The list includes Würzburg's stupendously Baroque Residenz, a decorative showstopper conceived with wild abandon by Bathasar Neumann as the domain of the period's prince-bishops. Indoors: the world's largest ceiling fresco, painted by Venice's Giovanni Tiepolo to symbolize the four continents, overhangs the palace's cantilevered grand staircase. Outdoors: the rococo Hofgarten, floodlit during midsummer Mozart concerts.

Similar 18th-century eminence pertains to archbishop-elect Clemens August's namesake Schloss Augustusburg and its French-style garden. Barely a mile away, that easy-living cleric kept his Jagdschloss Falkenlust as a base for falconry hunting, accessible by journeying to Brühl on the southern outskirts of Cologne. Elsewhere, UNESCO credentials distinguish Eisenach's Wartburg castle (locale of medieval Christmas markets), perched atop a 600-foot Thuringian promontory, and the classical Dessau-Wörlitz garden kingdom in easterly Saxony-Anhalt. West beyond Berlin, Potsdam qualifies, thanks mainly to Frederick the Great's Schloss Sanssouci and its terraced garden.

### Posh Places to Dream In

Dozens of nationwide palaces, castles and manor-house estates are open for close-up visits. And a welcoming few even provide overnight accommodations on the aristocratic

premises. **Gast im Schloss**

([www.gast-im-schloss.com](http://www.gast-im-schloss.com)), a Munich-headquartered Ringhotel affiliate, is your resource for bookings in nine such properties. Among those are lakeview **Schloss Waldeck**, near a golf course south of Kassel, and Saxony-Anhalt's **Schloss Tangermünde**, a Prussian royal residence dating from the 14th century, in a garden setting providing Elbe River panoramics and a courtyard dining area. We also like the stately ambience of **Schloss Kommende Ramershof** as well as its sophisticated French-Mediterranean restaurant, situated in a genteel villa district on the south side of Bonn.

A niche pricier than that supplier's rate structure, two palatial Rhineland hotels in Bergisch-Gladbach (on lofty frontage above the river, overlooking Cologne) exude five-star luxury. They feature topnotch spa amenities and epicurean cuisine at its absolute best. **Grandhotel Schloss Bensburg** has 120 guest rooms and Michelin-star Restaurant Vendôme. **Schlosshotel Lerbach** comprises 52 guest rooms and a dining salon overseen by chef Dieter Müller.

Pre-war Prussia's landed gentry endowed old-time Mecklenburg with many richly adorned manor houses and vacation estates. Now a dozen function hospitably as upscale country hotels ([www.culture-castles.de](http://www.culture-castles.de)). Circa-1750 Bömitz Manor and its intimate restaurant exemplifies the selection. The family-owned property nestles on forested grounds close to Hanseatic Anklam and a short distance inland from Usedom, Germany's second biggest island after nearby Rügen, both fringed with white-sand beaches. Another highly recommended overnight choice is Horst Sanders' double-towered **Park-Hotel Schloss Schlemmin**, displaying artworks and rare antiques. The white neo-Gothic edifice contains 35 guest suites.

### City Park Appeal

Urban layouts throughout the Federal Republic are admired worldwide for their generous percentages of public greenery. Notable is vast Munich's Englischer Garten that encompasses lakes, pavilions, riding trails and a sizeable beer garden in its four-mile-long expanse of terrain. Spreading far beyond an 18th-century Württemberg palace, inner-

city Stuttgart's Schlossgarten rambles two and a half miles northward to Bad Canstatt's Neckar riverbanks. Twenty-five miles north from there, Ludwigsburg's Schlosspark (and 432-room Residenzschloss) deserves its "German Versailles" nickname.

A similar palace-and-garden combination—an 18th-century

Experience Europe, with...

**EUROPEAN TOURS**

GREECE  
AUSTRIA  
FRANCE  
GERMANY  
SPAIN • ITALY  
SWITZERLAND  
TURKEY  
U.K.

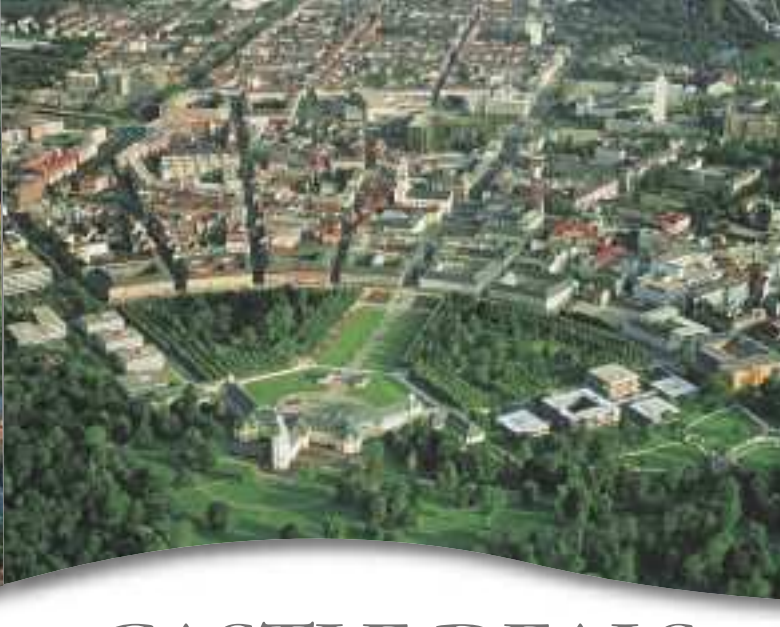


FIT's • Groups • Car Rentals • Honeymoons  
Worldwide Hotel Accommodations • River Cruises  
Greek and Mediterranean Cruises • Rail Tickets and Passes.

**800-882-3983**  
[info@europtours.com](mailto:info@europtours.com)  
[www.europtours.com](http://www.europtours.com)







Baroque ensemble on a fan-shaped city side site—makes Karlsruhe a worthwhile sidetrip stopover from Stuttgart. Hannover's Royal Gardens of Herrenhausen ensure that city's significance on Lower Saxon travel itineraries. The formal, four-part layout becomes a gathering place for summertime concerts and each year's sound-and-light spectacle: the International Fireworks Competition (May 10, June 14, Aug. 30, Sept. 13 and 27).

Two miles long between its eastern and western perimeters, capital-city Berlin's Tiergarten parkland includes an internationally famous zoo. Same for Dresden's Grosser Garten, with a zoo in addition to botanical gardens. If your clients have Hamburg in their plans, tell them about Planten und Blomen (easily translated!), where rose bushes and Europe's biggest Japanese garden reach their bloomingest best by late springtime. This open space is walkably close to downtown's ritzy shopping arcades and the Binnen-Alster lakefront.

Central Essen's Stadtgarten comes complete with a duck pond and picnic nooks, plus a pair of modernistic buildings: 1998's Opera House, designed by Finland's Alvar Aalto, and the Philharmonic's Saalbau concert hall. South from there, pathways winding through 73-acre Gruga Park—developed in 1919 for a regional horticultural show—lead to the Ruhr Valley's Industrial Heritage Trail. The looping, signposted 248-mile driving-hiking-biking route connects metro Essen's greenbelts with such other resurgent, visitor-friendly Westphalian cities as Duisburg, Dortmund, Oberhausen and Bochum, ([www.route-industriekultur.de](http://www.route-industriekultur.de)).

### Lighting Up the Evening Skies

Loaded with chronological what-where-when information, GNT0's yearly special-events calendar always proves its worth as an advance-planning aid. The 2008 edition details Rhine in Flames (May 3-Sept. 9), which treats onlookers to blue flares and bursting pyrotechnics illuminating towns, castles and gorges along the Middle Rhine. Book early for river cruises scheduled, for example, by Viking and Peter Deilmann to coincide with the extravaganza. Another fireworks dazzler bathes Heidelberg's semi-ruined castle walls in multicolored splashes of light (June 7, July 12, Sept. 6). In addition, turn your thoughts to Potsdam Palaces by Night (August 16), when Sanssoucci and its park are illuminated to dramatize an evening of music, dance, cabaret and fancy dining.

For something totally different, visit Danube-riverside Ingolstadt, influenced by Bavarian Wittelsbach royalty (and Audi automobile production). The city usually draws 120,000

visitors to its eight-hour Kaltenberg Knights' Tournament, (Friday-Sunday weekends between July 5-27) in a 15th-century castle complex. On the agenda: jousting, banqueting and an extra-big medieval market.

### Honoring Famous Music-Makers

Germany wouldn't be Germany without its tributes to musicians who have attained high stature in the nation's cultural history. Festivals devoted to major composers culminate in concerts and operas starring big-name conductors and performers. With 10 works programmed in 10 days, Dresdner Festtage (March 11-20) focuses on Richard Strauss. Nine of his operas (including Der Rosenkavalier, Elektra and Salome) had their world premieres here in Saxony's capital city, where the splendidly gilded Semper Opera House looms over Theaterplatz.

During Bonn's Beethoven Festival (Aug. 29-Sept. 28), audiences enjoy concerts in more than 20 venues, including Rhine River castles.

Johann Sebastian Bach gets proper attention during a series of musical celebrations in Weimar (March 14-July 14). Then comes Leipzig's turn to commemorate Bach (who founded the local boys' choir and is entombed beneath St. Thomas Church's altar). This year's event (June 13-22) includes Mozart-Beethoven-Schubert-Mendelssohn concerts, reminders that those classical greats were strongly influenced by their predecessor's compositions. Leipzig's Gewandhaus Orchestra was founded in 1781, hence its renown as Europe's first professional symphonic ensemble. In Franconia, Bayreuth sets the elite standard for Richard Wagner operas.

The 2008 season's 30 stagings begin with Parsifal (July 25). Oratorio connoisseurs know about Halle in Saxony-Anhalt, where an international festival (June 5-15) honors home-town hero Georg Friedrich Händel, creator of 1741's Messiah.

Munich—co-hosting next month's German Travel Mart with Augsburg—was founded by royal decree as an Isar riverside settlement for monks (Mönchen) in 1158. Which is why Bavaria's state capital has plunged into year-long 850th-anniversary celebrations ([www.muenchen850.de](http://www.muenchen850.de)). Sporting a "building-bridges" birthday motto, festivities will be at maximum intensity during spring and summer (June 6-August 3).

## CASTLE DEALS

### Schloss Reinhartshausen Kempinski

Explore the Rheingau area and the nearby attractions or just relax in the hotel's wellness center with a two-night Easter package that includes breakfast buffet, a bottle of sparkling wine from the castle's wine estate, a three-course-gourmet menu at the Restaurant "Prinzessin von Erbach" with sparkling wine and drinks on your arrival. Prices start at \$435 per person double; valid March 15-30, 2008.

Clients can get a taste of how Princess Marianne of Prussia resided by staying for three nights in a Deluxe Room (suite upgrades available), breakfast buffet in the "Wintergarten," three-course-menus on the first two nights, a five-course-gourmet-menu on the last night, a voucher valued at about \$35 for the Chateau Vinothek, free access to the wellness area, free parking and a special kids' fare on request. Prices start from \$1,099 double; valid May 9-12, 2008. Call 800-745-888; E-mail: [reservations.reinhartshausen@kempinski.com](mailto:reservations.reinhartshausen@kempinski.com); [www.schloss-hotel.de](http://www.schloss-hotel.de)

### Grandhotel Schloss Bensberg

Enjoy a "time out" from everyday stress - be pampered "Caribbean-style," A treat for all of your senses. Reward yourself with two days of Wellness treatments and massage, accompanied by two days of light cuisine. This package includes one overnight stay in an elegant superior double room including breakfast, fresh fruit in the room on arrival, a Caribbean snack at noontime in the hotel's Beauty & Spa, a full body massage with individually selected Caribbean oil, use of the pool and sauna area, as well as the fitness room and a three-course "Cucina Casalinga" dinner in the Trattoria Enoteca. Prices start at about \$415 double; valid throughout 2008. Visit [www.schlossbensberg.com](http://www.schlossbensberg.com)

### Schloss Eckberg Hotel und Restaurant

Enjoy and discover Dresden's many famous sights such as the "Semper Opera House", the "Zwinger" or the newly rebuilt "Frauenkirche" while getting pampered in the beautiful surroundings of this fairy-tale castle hotel, the Schloss Eckberg. Two-night packages include accommodations, a welcome drink as well as one 3-to 5-course menu.

Prices start from about \$265 per person double valid throughout 2008. E-mail: [info@schloss-eckberg.de](mailto:info@schloss-eckberg.de); [www.schloss-eckberg.de/english](http://www.schloss-eckberg.de/english)

### Hotel Friedrich Franz Palais – Bad Doberan

Spend days like a real Prince or Princess in Bad Doberan, a famous German Spa town near the Baltic coast. The Hotel Friedrich Franz Palais offers six two-night packages that include a double room or Junior Suite, breakfast buffet and free use of the hotel sauna, fitness and relaxation rooms. Spend a Romantic weekend for two, indulge in culinary delights, explore the region's cultural heritage or get active either with a cycling tour or golfing the Wittenbeck golf course. Prices start from \$255 per person per night (one child up to 12 years is included in the price); valid throughout 2008. Visit [www.hotel-friedrichfranzpalais.com](http://www.hotel-friedrichfranzpalais.com)

### Schlosshotel Kronberg

Be Empress Victoria's guests and spend a few days in this beautiful castle near Frankfurt where she lived until 1901. Choose between a Gourmet Weekend or enjoy playing golf at one of Germany's nicest golf courses with the Golf Weekend package. Both packages offer accommodation in an exclusive room including breakfast and multiple-course-menus in the hotel's exquisite restaurant; the Golf package includes a the Green fee for the 18-hole golf course. Prices for the Gourmet Weekend start from about \$375 per person double per night; the Golf Weekend starts from about \$470 per person double per night; valid throughout 2008.

Call 011-49-6173/701 01; E-mail [info@schlosshotel-kronberg.de](mailto:info@schlosshotel-kronberg.de); visit [www.schlosshotel-kronberg.de](http://www.schlosshotel-kronberg.de)

### Schlosshotel Lerbach

Overnight Cooking: Explore and enjoy the world of flavor and learn cooking tips from Germany's famous three Michelin star chef Dieter Müller. Besides an exclusive cooking course with Dieter Müller and a product service with his assistant, clients spend one night in a castle room including breakfast, a wine-tasting as well as a five-course gala dinner in the gourmet restaurant "Dieter Müller." Prices start at about \$685 per person double. [www.schlosshotel-lerbach.com](http://www.schlosshotel-lerbach.com)

Contact the German National Tourist Office at 800-631-1171, New York; in Los Angeles, 310-545-1350; or, Chicago, 773-539-6303 [www.cometogermany.com](http://www.cometogermany.com) or visit [www.germany-extranet.com](http://www.germany-extranet.com)—designed exclusively for the travel trade.

*For consolidator fares and tour packages to Germany see page 62-63 of the Listings Section*



# Interview with Michaela Klare Regional Manager GNTO

Having headed the NY office for nearly five years, Michaela Klare Regional Manager The Americas for the German National Tourist Offices shared her perspective on changing travel patterns among Americans to Germany for JF readers. Klare will continue her work with the GNTO in Amsterdam at the end of this month. She was among the youngest directors to head the GNTO in New York and infused her efforts with vitality and enthusiasm.

**GNTO:** Well, I am happy to report that there was a constant increase in the number of Americans traveling to Germany since the end of 2002, when I took over the office, of altogether nearly 17%. The World Cup in 2006 put some of our less known cities in the spotlight and gave Germany a big boost and in 2007, the number of overnights increased by 4.6%.

This statistic unfortunately doesn't include the fastest growing segment for Germany, which is river cruising where we have seen a shift from specialized river cruise agents to more and more programs in many tour operator catalogues.

Berlin's popularity is yet another factor for Germany's success, as so many people from the U.S. are interested in our capital and often tack on other trips to nearby cities, such as Dresden, Hamburg or Leipzig or combine it with a visit to our neighboring countries in the East. We also experienced a shift from the main season in summer to off-season travel in spring and fall, when we offer excellent values.

**JF:** Do you feel the themed marketing lines have been a solid platform from which to sell the country?

**GNTO:** One of the great advantages of Germany as a destination is that the country has so many faces and diverse aspects which can be sold as theme trips and to special interest groups. Just think of some of our most recent themes like, Musicland Germany, Art and Culture, Heritage Travel, Gay & Lesbian Travel or Religious Groups and even beer and wine tasting trips, all of which are enormously popular with Americans. Now we are excited about our new theme Castles: Parks and Gardens.

**JF:** Would you say the joining of East and West Germany has doubled the attractions in Germany?

**GNTO:** It's hard to measure, having had super attractive destinations in Bavaria, the Black Forest, Lake Constance or the Rhine Valley for example, but it opened new travel channels to the treasures of East Germany, the new infrastructure and the hospitality of the people is priceless.

Americans are witnessing the rebirth and transformation of Berlin and Potsdam;

they can revel in Dresden's treasures or experience Bach and contemporary art in Leipzig, wonder at the Spree Forest and enjoy traditional Easter festivals of the Serbs, experience the classicism in Weimar or travel in Luther's footsteps in Wittenberg or Eisenach.

**JF:** Are the prices in cities such as Berlin, lower than in other European cities since it was a city that once straddled the fence between East and West?

**GNTO:** The prices are very reasonable all over Germany. Berlin's hotels are even cheaper than in some of the Eastern European capitals according to a recent study and definitely no comparison to cities like London, Paris or Rome (i.e. Berlin € 140, Rome € 192, Paris € 298, London € 314). One of the reasons is the balance between the business and leisure markets and the hotel inventory is still growing with extraordinary new builds.

**JF:** Do you feel the travel trade has indeed been a good investment for the GNTO?

**GNTO:** By all means, the travel trade community, including tour operators and travel agents, have been enormously supportive of Germany and we are grateful for that. It is in large part due to their support that Germany has been so successful with Americans.

**JF:** How would you characterize the client profile of visitors to Germany?

**GNTO:** Germany's traditional market was, and is still largely the 50+ market. That said, thanks to the World Cup, the avant-garde and cutting edge art, architecture and culture movements, the popularity of such cities as Berlin and Hamburg, Germany appeals to the young and hip.

We see further growth of FIT travel among German-Americans searching for their roots and traveling with their children or grandchildren, thus insuring interest beyond the first and second generations.

**JF:** Do you have any projections to make on travel from the U.S. to Germany in the next five years?

**GNTO:** I think we have a challenging year ahead of us, but still believe that with the huge number of baby boomers now nearing retirement and the excellent offers on



the German and European markets, the number of arrivals will continue to grow.

**JF:** If you were to leave your successor with one solid piece of advice, what might that be?

**GNTO:** Stay the course, especially when it comes to the trade, try to continue getting more and more German partners under your umbrella to consolidate the German budget investment in the U.S., but also to experiment with new ideas with an eye on toward developments in new media.

**JF:** Is there any new air service to report on?

**GNTO:** Lufthansa's new daily Seattle-Frankfurt services will be starting March 30, 2008; Orlando-Frankfurt has already started and these flights operate daily except on Saturday with more service from Chicago to Duesseldorf.

**JF:** How can travel agents learn more?

**GNTO:** They can become more familiar with our website: [www.cometogermany.com](http://www.cometogermany.com) that provides an enormous amount of information about getting there, information on special events, hotels and special deals. We just integrated a new section with offers from 13 U.S. partners with whom we are and were running a big Germany campaign over the last five years. We also have a special trade section [www.germany-extranet.com](http://www.germany-extranet.com). And we still print supplements in all the travel trade magazines that target Travel Agents, such as the this issue of Jax Fax and conduct two annual Destination Germany road shows. We participate in trade shows, seminars, and produce and publish brochures on all aspects of Germany.

**JF:** What is the impression you would like visitors to take home after they visit?

**GNTO:** We would love Americans to realize what Europeans already know: that Germany is the world's second most popular travel destination after France; and I hope they think of Germany as a European country with a diversity like no other.



# Picasso Travel

## "THE GOOD CONSOLIDATOR" ONE STOP CONSOLIDATION

Proudly serving the Travel Agent Community  
for over 28 years!

### Call us for the following carriers:

Aer Lingus	Czech Airlines	Martin Air
Aerosvit Airlines	Delta Airlines	Middle East Airlines
Aerolineas Argentinas	Egypt Air	Montenegro Airlines
Aero Mexico	EL-AL	North American Airlines
Aircalin	Emirates	Northwest Airlines
Air Canada	EOS Airlines	Olympic Airlines
Air France	Ethiopian Airlines	Qatar Airways
Air India	Etihad Airways	Royal Air Maroc
Air New Zealand	Finnair	Royal Jordanian
Air Pacific	Gulf Air	SAS
Air Tahiti Nui	Iberia	Silverjet
Alitalia	Icelandair	Singapore Airlines
All Nippon Airways	Jet Airways	Spanair
Aloha Airlines	KLM	Sri Lankan Airlines
Austrian Airlines	Korean Air	Swiss International
Avianca	Lan Chile	South African Airways
British Airways	Lan Ecuador	TACA
British Mediterranean	Lan Peru	TAM Airlines
British Midland	Lithuanian Airlines	TAROM
Brussels Airlines	Lot Polish Airlines	Turkish Airlines
China Airlines	LTU	United Airlines
Continental Airlines	Lufthansa	US Airways
Copa Airlines	Macedonian Airlines	Virgin Atlantic

# 1 800 PICASSO 1 800 742-2776 [www.PicassoTravel.com](http://www.PicassoTravel.com)



Los Angeles - (310) 645-4400  
San Francisco - (650) 579-1900  
New York - (212) 244-5454

Boston - (617) 859-5832  
Dallas - (214) 871-7252  
Chicago - (847) 329-7799

Ft. Lauderdale - (954) 564-7879  
Washington, D.C. - (202) 828-4448  
Detroit - (248) 633-2600

Picasso Travel is registered with the State of Florida as a seller of travel, Registration No. ST-31772. California seller of travel No. 1018914-40





## EUROPE

# Finding Yourself in Ireland

By Ron Butler

I didn't come to Ireland to find my roots. They found me. Upon arriving in this picturesque town of 8,000 inhabitants 75 miles southwest of Dublin, strange, wonderful things began to happen. People

were opening doors for me. Pretty ladies smiled. Little kids followed me down the street. It's a fine summer's day. I was wearing a white suit and thought perhaps that's why I was getting so much attention. (White suits conjure up thoughts of grand, far-away places and interesting people: Hong Kong, Bombay, Panama City, Tennessee Williams, Jay Gatsby.) But that wasn't it at all.

All the attention, I soon discovered, was because word had traveled that my last name was Butler. Kilkenny has been the principal seat of the far-reaching Butler family for more than 600 years, and although the town's main landmark, Kilkenny Castle (above), overlooking the fabled River Nore, was built by William the Elder in 1172, it became Butler property in 1391 when James Butler, third Earl of Ormonde, purchased it from a financially ailing nobleman. The castle has been the key stronghold of the Butler family, Earls and Dukes of Ormonde, the most powerful family in Ireland. So if your name happens to be Butler and you're in Kilkenny, it's almost automatically Guinness on the house. Talk about Irish luck.

Along with the Butlers, Kilkenny is famous for its pubs, so many in fact that the Irish refer to Kilkenny as the oasis of the southeast.

I visited a few, I'll admit to that. I stopped in Maggie Holland's, Caislean Ui Cuain, Fennelly's, Grogan's on the Bridge and the Court Arms. After that, I lost track of their names. My white suit was a shambles and somewhere during a rousing rendition of Danny Boy I lost my notebook.

Pubs (from publicus or public houses) are a national institution in Ireland. In Kilkenny, as in most Irish towns, they form the nucleus of social life. They are the common man's clubhouse, a place to meet his friends or find new ones, match wits with his enemies, and forget the cares and problems of the day by washing them all away with a creamy pint of Guinness stout.

Stout (also called porter and plain) is the national drink of Ireland; the national weakness is having just one more. There's a saying here that goes: A bird never flew on one wing. Walking, on the other hand, can be challenging after two or three.

There's another saying: An Irishman is the only man in the world who will climb over the bodies of a dozen naked women in order to get to a bottle of stout.

My father was of Irish stock, of course. His family came from nearby Waterford, where the famous crystal is made. Born in New York City, he often dreamed of visiting Ireland, but never made the journey. Instead, he spent a good portion of his life visiting all the bars and taverns in eastern Connecticut where he lived in search of his mystical past.

Kilkenny Castle, restored in recent years to reflect much of its historical grandeur, is the jewel of the city's crown. A wing of the former servants' quarters is now the Butler Art Gallery where, along with changing shows of contemporary art, family portraits abound. The old Castle Kitchen operates as a restaurant during the summer. Around the castle is a 50-acre park with a children's play area and lush green lawns. Nowhere in the world are lawns greener and better kept than in Ireland. The castle's former stables house the Design Workshop, where woolens, sweaters, linens, porcelain, glass kitchenware and Irish handicrafts are sold. The Tourist Information Office is here as well.

Another major point of interest is St. Canice's Cathedral, dating to the 13th century. One of Ireland's most beautiful, it has a superb round tower, part of which — 100 feet or so — is open to visitors. During the 17th century, Cromwell plundered the city, desecrating the church and smashing the stained-glass window and baptismal font. Horses were stabled inside. Kilkenny is also the site of the St. Francis Abbey Brewery, built around the shell of a 13th-century Greyfriar's Abbey, one of Ireland's oldest.

Too bad my father, who never had a white suit, couldn't have joined me in misty, wistful Ireland, with its tall stories and strong drink and fair maidens. Perhaps we could have crossed the edge then, one to the other, to finally view life through the very same eyes.

**Getting There:** Aer Lingus (800-223-6537) serves Ireland daily from New York. Delta (800-221-1212) operates flights to Shannon and Dublin from Atlanta. Kilkenny can be reached by train from Dublin, via the Dublin-Waterford Line. For more information, contact the Irish Tourist Board, 800-223-6470; visit [www.goireland.com](http://www.goireland.com) or [www.goireland.com/genealogy](http://www.goireland.com/genealogy)

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Ireland see page 65 of the Listings Section



Imagine a dream escorted vacation of Ireland with its breathtaking scenery, cultural delights and captivating cities.

Enjoy an enchanting luxurious tour of the Emerald Isle or Scotland with your own private chauffeur.

Discover the magic of an Italian villa, the warmth of the Sicilian sun, the romance of Rome, Venice or Florence.

Experience the wonders of the South Pacific—ancient and proud cultures, awe-inspiring and untouched landscapes.

Whether your clients are looking for a leisurely vacation, an adventurous experience or something more independent, their dreams will be realized with Celtic Tours World Vacations.

Celtic Tours offers your clients

- Fully Escorted Vacations
- Group itineraries tailored to suit
- Independent Fly-Drive Vacations
- Chauffeur-Driven Vacations
- City-Stay, Villa & Castle packages
- Golf packages

IRELAND  
BRITAIN  
ITALY  
GERMANY  
GREECE

**Celtic Tours**  
World Vacations

1-800-833-4373

Book Online [www.celtictours.com](http://www.celtictours.com)

FRANCE  
AUSTRALIA  
NEW ZEALAND  
TAHITI  
FIJI

E-Mail: [dooley@monmouth.com](mailto:dooley@monmouth.com) • Web Site: [www.dandooley.com](http://www.dandooley.com)

Call your local travel agent or Phone: 1-800-331-9301



## BEST BUYS

## \$1239 SCOTLAND

This holiday season saw the premier of Sony Pictures feature film "The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep," starring Scotland's legendary Loch Ness Monster. For intrigued viewers eager to validate the Scottish myth **Dooley Vacations** has developed a tour package to bring The Water Horse from the big screen to reality for optimistic Nessie-hunters. Available from through February 2008 and starting at \$1,239 per person double, the package includes roundtrip airfare, six-night bed and breakfast accommodation, a Historic Scotland pass (for entry to Urquhart Castle), automatic rental car, a 3.5 hour tour aboard Jacobite Cruises and entry to the 3D Loch Ness Experience in Edinburgh.

Call 877-331-9301; [www.dooleyvacations.com](http://www.dooleyvacations.com)

## \$2699 CZECH, HUNGARY

Discover the beauty of two of the region's premier cities – Budapest and Prague on an eight-day trip to Central Europe with **Gutsy Women**, a division of **Gate 1 Travel**. Included are tours of Bratislava, visits to the Mucha Museum and a carriage ride in Prague, and in Budapest, guests participate in cooking class at Gundel restaurant, and take a dip in a thermal spa for which Budapest is known. Accommodations are in the Hotel Astoria in Budapest and the Mercure Praha Old Town in Prague. The April 13 departure tour is priced from \$2,699 per person double with airfare. Other departure cities are available.

Call 866-464-8879; [www.gutsywomentravel.com](http://www.gutsywomentravel.com)

## \$384 GERMANY

**Nordique Tours** is offering a special package in Bavaria Germany this winter, highlighting the Hohenschwangau and Neuschwanstein Castles, beginning at \$384 per person double. The King Ludwig Winter Journey package includes two nights of accommodations in Hohenschwangau, which is near Fussen, daily buffet breakfast, a bottle of wine and two magnificent dinners— a Musiculnaria five-course and Bavarian four-course—served at the **Schlosshotel Lisl and Jägerhaus Hotels**. Valid through March 31, 2008. Hohenschwangau Castle, also called Castle of the High Swan County, was the childhood home of King Ludwig II of Bavaria, built by his father King Maximilian II.

The eccentric Ludwig commissioned many of the fairy-tale style castles that are the hallmark of Bavaria including the famous Neuschwanstein Castle which is near his parental home.

Call 800-995-7997; [www.nordiquetours.com](http://www.nordiquetours.com)

## \$2879 BULGARIA, ROMANIA, HUNGARY

**Continental Journeys** is selling a three-country tour that starts in Sofia, Bulgaria and travels across Romania from the south to northwest ending in Hungary's vibrant capital city of Budapest. The itinerary includes visits to the church of St. George, Church of St. Sophia and the gold domed Alexander Nevski Cathedral and Rila Monastery in Sofia, Bulgaria's capital and the Valley of the Roses in Plovdiv; the Romania portion visits the capital of Bucharest, Sinaia, one of the most beautiful mountain resorts in Romania, for a visit to the Peles Palace built by King Carol I of Romania as his summer residence. Continue to Bran to visit the famous Dracula Castle but also travels to Brasov, Sighisoara and Cluj; and finally, a full two days in Budapest. The \$2,879 per person double price includes 12 nights' accommodations in first-class properties, all with private facilities; round trip airport transfers; breakfast daily; eight dinners; services of and English speaking tour escort; all transportation; sightseeing; hotel taxes and service charges. Visit [www.continentaljourneys.com](http://www.continentaljourneys.com)

## \$448 LONDON

Culture vultures will be in their element when agents book the **Athenaeum's** most recent collaboration with The Royal Academy of Arts – a leisurely ten-minute stroll from the hotel. The Academy's latest high-profile exhibition, *From Russia: French and Russian Master Paintings 1870-1925* From Moscow to St. Petersburg brings to London, for the first time, many masterpieces by Russian and French artists working between 1870 and 1925 which are ordinarily on display in Russia's four principal state museums. The Athenaeum's Royal Academy Weekend package includes overnight accommodations and two tickets – available upon check-in so no need to stand in line at the Academy – to see "From Russia." The package, available Friday and Saturday nights for the duration of the exhibition – which is running now until April 18, 2008, is priced at approximately \$448 for two in an executive guestroom.

Visit [www.athenaeumhotel.com](http://www.athenaeumhotel.com)

## GREECE • SPAIN • ITALY • TURKEY • EGYPT • PORTUGAL

GREECE SPECIALS			
<b>ISLAND BREEZE</b> From \$ <b>1639</b> p.p.do. 9 DAYS • 7 NIGHTS Airfare, 2N ATH, 4D cruise Greek Isles & Turkey, all meals on cruise, all private transfers, 1/2 D Athens tour.	<b>MYCONIAN ESCAPE</b> From \$ <b>1799</b> p.p.do. 11 DAYS • 9 NIGHTS Airfare, 2N ATH, 3 N Mykonos, 4D cruise Greek Isles & Turkey, all meals on cruise, all transfers, Half Day Athens tour.	<b>SANTORINI ESCAPE</b> From \$ <b>1859</b> p.p.do. 10 DAYS • 8 NIGHTS Airfare, 2N ATH, 3N Santorini, 4D cruise Greek Isles & Turkey, all meals on cruise, all transfers, Half Day Athens tour.	<b>ZORBA'S ENVY</b> From \$ <b>2089</b> p.p.do. 13 DAYS • 11 NIGHTS Airfare, 2N ATH, 3N Mykonos, 3N Santorini, 4D cruise Greek Isles & Turkey, all meals on cruise, all transfers, Half Day Athens tour.

**#1 HONEYMOON SPECIALISTS**

**CALL US FOR INFORMATION ON GREEK ISLAND HOPPING HONEYMOON & JETSETTER PACKAGES**

Rates include transfers and breakfast, Air fuel surcharges & taxes Port dues additional. Add ons for USA cities available. Large selection of tours to Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Egypt, Turkey, Israel and Cyprus.\* Weddings in Santorini, Mykonos & Crete. Individual tours, F.I.T's, Groups & Customized Itineraries.

**Cloud TOURS INC.** 800-223-7880 • 718-721-3808 • Fax: 718-721-4019 • Email: [info@cloudtours.com](mailto:info@cloudtours.com)

## IN THE NEWS

## Transhotel's New Low-Cost Product

**Grupo Transhotel or the Transhotel Group** presented a new product at this year's edition of FITUR in Madrid. Transhotel currently markets more than 44,000 hotels worldwide; operates a call center fluent in seven languages; offers either commissions or net rates; free website integration; customer assistance 24/7, 365 days a year; and boasts more than 75,000 travel agencies as clients. As a result of an agreement with **NH Hotels**, Transhotel markets thousands of rooms at low cost prices in 128 properties in Spain and Portugal. Call 866-550-7901 ext. 1001; E-mail [akodor@transhotel.com](mailto:akodor@transhotel.com); [www.transhotelusa.com](http://www.transhotelusa.com)

## Renault Eurodrive on Short-Term Leases

It's no secret that driving is one of the best ways to see all that Europe has to offer. What is a secret, however, is that there's a smarter alternative to renting a car. For over 50 years, Renault Eurodrive has been offering short-term leases to foreign visitors, as a very attractive substitute for long-term rentals.

## DRIVING BUSINESS TO AGENTS

Travel agents also reap the benefits of the Renault short-

term lease programs. Agents earn their commission not only on the lease price of the vehicle, but also on the fully comprehensive insurance policy that automatically comes with every Renault. There's also a bigger potential client base for Renault Eurodrive because, unlike rental car companies, Eurodrive does not discriminate based on age. Anybody 18 and up can lease through Renault Eurodrive, and there is no upper age limit. And of course, agents will always have the confidence of knowing their clients are touring Europe in a brand-new, fully insured, fully supported Renault of their own choosing.

## MORE SELLING POINTS

Renault Eurodrive is not just an alternative to renting a car in Europe. It's simply the best choice for travelers planning on visiting Europe for a month or longer. Why? Because with a Eurodrive short-term lease, a number of perks come standard such as a brand-new factory fresh car with unlimited mileage, a fully comprehensive insurance policy valid in 43 countries with no deductible, and round-the-clock English-speaking roadside assistance supported by Renault's network of 17,000 service agents.

Call 800-221-1052; E-mail: [info@renaultusa.com](mailto:info@renaultusa.com); [www.renaultusa.com](http://www.renaultusa.com)

IF YOUR CLIENTS LOVE SEEING ITALY WITH US,

*they'll love Switzerland too*

Visit Italy Tours has expanded our borders to bring your clients the best of two exquisite countries through our new division, Visit Switzerland Tours. Whether your clients are looking for an authentic Italian or Swiss experience, book them with us. Send them on a wine lover's trip through Tuscany or the terraces of Lake Geneva. They'll delight in a romantic retreat on the Amalfi Coast or a ski trip to Zermatt.

For more information or to request our latest brochure, call 800.255.3537.

**Visit Italy Tours** **Visit Switzerland Tours**

SPECIALISTS IN ALL THINGS ITALY... AND SWITZERLAND!

Independent & Group Tours • Special Interest Tours • Honeymoons • Hotel Bookings • Car Rental

[www.VisitItalyTours.com](http://www.VisitItalyTours.com) • [www.VisitSwitzerlandTours.com](http://www.VisitSwitzerlandTours.com)



## IN THE NEWS

*Sky Launches "As You Like It" Euro Plans*

**Sky Vacations** is entering the Europe market with a new eight-night Europe product line called "as You Like It" that gives agents and clients the flexibility to sell and buy one, to five city programs for groups of 15 passengers starting at 989 euros or about \$1,400 per person at the exchange rate at press time; with 20 pax or more, prices drop. Start off with **Sky Bird Travel's** air deals from the departure city and agents build the program. Valid from April -Oct., programs include the Golden Triangle (Vienna, Budapest and Prague) or starting at 1089 euros, or about \$1,500 per person choose to visit one or all five German cities: Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Nurnberg and Munich. Clients stay in four-star hotels, luggage service for one bag per person, airport and hotel transfers, private motorcoach touring, a half-day tour in each city, bilingual tour escort, daily breakfasts and dinners.

Call 888-666-3113 ext 2649; [www.skybirdtravel.com](http://www.skybirdtravel.com)

*Gore Completes Facelift*

The **Gore Hotel** at 190 Queen's Gate, London SW7, has just completed a major \$5.9 million bedroom refurbishment. Built in 1892, The Gore blends the characteristics of an art-lover's grand private home with the relaxed ambience of a decadent members' club. The hotel's 50 guestrooms feature antique furniture, period pictures and ornate beds, and modern luxuries such as flat screen televisions and DVD players, Frette linen and wireless broadband access.

A wide range of her films on DVD are available in the room, as well as a pair of bright ruby slippers to leave guests dreaming of the yellow brick road. To celebrate the completion of the refurbishment, the Gore is offering a Champagne Weekend Package priced from \$454 including a bottle of chilled Champagne, full English breakfast for two people available on weekends through April 30.

Call 011-020 7584 6601; [www.gorehotel.com](http://www.gorehotel.com)

*Euro Pass Builds Profits on Day Services*

"Travel to Europe of Lexington, Massachusetts, offers travel agents an opportunity to save their clients Euros, Pounds and Kroner in Europe by using the new **Europe Travel Pass**," said owner, Wim Nijenberg, CTC. With the Europe Travel Pass clients get substantial discounts on travel services such as sightseeing, excursions, walking, biking, boat cruises in 24 countries; over 90 European operators participate in the program. Bought individually, the price of the Europe Travel Pass is \$10; but for travel agents it ranges from 12¢ to \$1.08 depending on quantity; buy 250 and the Pass can be customized with your agency's name.

Travel to Europe kicks off its Spring Training program for agents on Tues., March 11 and Wed., March 19; Agents can register on the web site and pay the \$15 fee by credit card or agency check.

Call 800-446-1090; [www.agents-traveltoeurope.com](http://www.agents-traveltoeurope.com)

*Sale to Rome, Eurofly launches Bari Flight*

**Eurofly**, Italy's second largest airline will be expanding service with a direct flight from JFK to Bari, Puglia via Bologna as of May 15 with fares starting at \$649 roundtrip in economy and \$1,999 roundtrip for Business Class.

Eurofly operates Airbus A330-200 aircraft with an average age of less than three years, on all its nonstop flights from JFK to Rome, Naples, Palermo and Bologna and on all direct flights from JFK to Pescara, Lamezia and Bari. All seats have individual screens for the in-flight entertainment system; evening departures are from JFK at the state-of-the-art Terminal 4. Seats are still available for Eurofly's March sale to Rome at \$279 round-trip. Commission paid on reservations.

Call 800-459-04980; [www.euroflyvacations.com](http://www.euroflyvacations.com)

*High Speeds Links Spain North to South*

Two Alta Velocidad Española, AVE, or high-speed trains are now traveling even faster from Madrid to the north and to the south. The Madrid-Segovia trip time has now been reduced from two hours to only 30 minutes, and the Madrid-Valladolid trip from two and a half hours to 55 minutes. The last section of the Córdoba-Málaga AVE line opened in December and the current four-hour trip from Madrid to Málaga in the southern region of Andalusia dropped to two and a half hours. This spring travel time from Madrid to Barcelona on the AVE train will shrink from the current four-hour trip to only three hours. Once the final section of the high-speed track is completed between Camp de Tarragona and Barcelona, the train will travel at 186 miles per hour (mph) reducing the trip to only two hours and 30 minutes. The Spanish government plans to have 4,350 miles of high-speed track operational by 2010 with all the provincial capitals only four hours from Madrid and six and a half hours from Barcelona.

Contact the Tourist Office of Spain in New York, 212-265-8822; Miami, 305-358-1992; Chicago, 312-642-1992; or Los Angeles, 323-658-7195 or Visit [www.spain.info](http://www.spain.info)

*Early Bird Specials at Rail Europe*

Purchase a 6-, 8- or 10-day Eurail Select Pass from Rail Europe through March 31, 2008 and receive one more day of travel for free. All Eurail pass categories (adult, saver and youth) are included, as are all country combinations. Rail travel days may be used non-consecutively within a two-month period up to six months from the purchase date – which means this promotion can be used during peak summer travel season, depending on purchase date.

Prices for the Eurail Select Pass start at \$444 for a six-day three-country pass (providing 7 travel days with this promotion), \$527 for an eight-day three-country pass (9 travel days) and \$605 for a 10-day pass (11 travel days); these lowest per person prices are for a Eurail Select Pass Saver (when two or more traveling together). Youth versions for travelers under 26 are less expensive.

Call 888-382-7245; [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com)

# Choose your air consolidator wisely.



Below are USACA members that provide the lowest airfares to travel agents nationwide

**BRAZILIAN TRAVEL SERVICE**  
([www.btstravelonline.com](http://www.btstravelonline.com))

**C & H INTERNATIONAL**  
([www.cnhintl.com](http://www.cnhintl.com))

**CENTRAV**  
([www.centrav.com](http://www.centrav.com))

**COSMOPOLITAN TRAVEL SERVICE**  
([www.ctsfares.com](http://www.ctsfares.com))

**DER**  
([www.der.com](http://www.der.com))

**DFW TOURS**  
([www.dfwtours.com](http://www.dfwtours.com))

**GRAND HOLIDAYS**  
([www.grandholidays.net](http://www.grandholidays.net))

**GTT GLOBAL**  
([www.gttglobal.com](http://www.gttglobal.com))

**PICASSO TRAVEL**  
([www.picassotravel.com](http://www.picassotravel.com))

**PREMIER GATEWAY**  
([www.premiergateway.com](http://www.premiergateway.com))

**SKY BIRD TRAVEL**  
([www.skybird-travel.com](http://www.skybird-travel.com))

**SKYLINK TRAVEL**  
([www.skylinkus.com](http://www.skylinkus.com))

**SOLAR TOURS**  
([www.solartours.com](http://www.solartours.com))

**TRANS AM TRAVEL**  
([www.transamtravel.com](http://www.transamtravel.com))

WHEN IT COMES TO SELECTING AN AIR CONSOLIDATOR,  
YOU'LL ALWAYS FIND **MORE** WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE  
UNITED STATES AIR CONSOLIDATORS ASSOCIATION...

- **MORE PROFIT**...low net fares, plus high commissions on published fares.
- **QUALITY SERVICE**...airfares available 24/7 including rules and restrictions on high tech online booking engines.

For more information on USACA members visit our website at  
[www.usaca.com](http://www.usaca.com)

UNITED STATES AIR CONSOLIDATORS ASSOCIATION

Integrity ★ Trust ★ Reliability



*By Maria Lisella*

In USTOA surveys of favorite destinations, Italy looms large and lovely for the fifth consecutive year in a row, but right behind that classical destination Eastern Europe—including Bulgaria and the Czech Republic—placed first as the hottest up-and-coming area for tours and packages, followed closely by South America and Asia, respectively. For hottest up-and-coming country Croatia came in first (with China close behind). In spite of rising costs even in this

At the same time, the outlook for former Eastern European countries, now more often referred to as Central European is much sweeter and promising.



The picturesque small country of Bulgaria has existed for more than 13 centuries in Europe, linking East and West. Situated in southeastern Europe, Bulgaria

24 MARCH 2008

WWW.JAXFAX.CO

Air Astana (KC 465), the national carrier of Kazakhstan has entered ARC, offering ARC agents 5% commission on all Air Astana tickets issued. Air Astana operates a modern fleet of Boeing 767, 757, Airbus 321, 320 from Europe, Asia and Dubai to Almaty, Astana and Altyrau in Kazakhstan.

**Welcome to NOMAD CLUB,  
Air Astana's Frequent Flyer Program**

Join the Nomad Club and earn points on all Air Astana flights, which may be used to accumulate free travel. Very frequent flyers may qualify for Silver and Gold cards, which carry even more benefits. For details please visit [www.airastana.com/nomadclub](http://www.airastana.com/nomadclub).

**Air Astana**  
285 Westside Avenue, Suite 277-278  
Jersey City  
New Jersey 07305  
USA  
Toll free: 888 855 1557  
Email: [usa.sales@airastana.com](mailto:usa.sales@airastana.com), [usa.reservations@airastana.com](mailto:usa.reservations@airastana.com)

Air Astana passengers can receive 'same day visa' processing from the KZ Embassy in Washington. Call Air Astana toll free on 888.855.1557 for details.

[www.airastana.com](http://www.airastana.com)





## CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

occupies the northeastern part of the Balkan Peninsula and boasts no less than nine UNESCO World Heritage sites, the Rila Monastery and the Ivanovo Rock Churches are among them. The mountain resort of Pamporovo is one of the southernmost skiing resorts in Europe. Located in the magnificent pine forests in the Rhodope Mountains, the resort is situated 4,800 feet above sea level and boasts miles of excellent ski runs and cross country skiing tracks still mostly a secret to Westerners. The World Cup downhill runs are enough to test any expert and "The Wall" remains one of the most difficult ski piste in the world. If that is not enough for the most extreme skier, there is excellent off-piste skiing and snowboarding terrain to explore.

Contact the Bulgaria State Agency for Tourism, E-mail: [info@bulgariatravel.org](mailto:info@bulgariatravel.org); [www.bulgariatravel.org](http://www.bulgariatravel.org)



### Croatia

Among the most popular countries in Europe overall, Croatia's appeal and access is gaining strength with air service and cruise calls.

At presstime, Trade Winds was still in negotiations regarding what could be twice weekly service between New York's JFK, stop in Zagreb and finally land in Dubrovnik. The historic service is significant as it is the first time the country is being serviced with direct flights; similarly Skyservice Airlines has been operating thrice weekly nonstop service between Toronto and Zagreb for the past two years.

Although visitor arrivals to Croatia remain heavily European who arrive in cars, and RVs, Americans are now making up 27% of the visitor arrivals for a total of 215,025 North American visitors in 2007. Undoubtedly, Dubrovnik remains the most popular destination for American travelers but Zagreb is gaining a reputation as one of the Art Cities of Europe. Coastal resort, Opatija will soon welcome several new four and five-star properties and wellness centers, while overall, Croatia has recently welcomed Westin, Hilton, Ugo, and Le Meridien. Additionally, a new property on the island of Rab, the Arbiana Rab, a member of Charming World Hotels has just started marketing in the U.S. Adriatic Luxe Hotels, villas

and boutique properties and wellness centers, a specialty Croatia has always been known for. Thalassotherapy has arrived in Opatija as well as in wellness centers in the Kvarner region in Crickvenica, Selce, Lovran, and the island of Losinj.

Croatia is also gaining visibility on the cruise front as Holland America, Royal Caribbean, Radisson Seven Seas, Celebrity and other cruise lines are dropping their anchors on the Dalmatian coast in Dubrovnik, Korcula, Split, Zadar, Sibenik, Opatija and Rijeka.

Contact the Croatian National Tourist Board, 212-279-8672; E-mail: [cntony@earthlink.net](mailto:cntony@earthlink.net); [www.croatia.hr](http://www.croatia.hr)

### Czech Republic

The city is buzzing with news from the Hilton Prague Old Town ([www.HiltonPragueOldTown.com](http://www.HiltonPragueOldTown.com)), which has officially celebrated the opening of the hotel and restaurant, MAZE, in Prague, Czech Republic. Centrally located in the heart of downtown Prague, The Hilton Prague Old Town recently underwent a complete refurbishment by noted designers David Collins and Alexandra Champalimaud, who found inspiration from the city's great architectural landmarks and artisan traditions with a subtle nod to Czech



Modernism and the Cubism movement. The Hilton Prague Old Town also is the home of Gordon Ramsay's MAZE, his first restaurant in Eastern Europe.

Recently, Czech Airlines was selected the "Best Airline in Eastern and Central Europe" by Business Traveler magazine based on the results of an annual reader poll; the respondents rated the airlines' onboard service and their range of destinations.

"Czech Airlines again confirmed this a few days ago by finishing first in the on-time rankings of the Association of European Airlines," said Czech Airlines' Vice President for Marketing and Product Development Petr Piřilak. Czech Airlines has been a member of SkyTeam since 2001.

Contact Czech Tourism, 212-288-0830; E-mail: [info-usa@czechtourism.com](mailto:info-usa@czechtourism.com); [www.czechtourism.com](http://www.czechtourism.com)



**Intourist USA INC**  
[www.intourist-usa.com](http://www.intourist-usa.com) • 800-556-5305

**RUSSIA & BEYOND:** • UKRAINE • BALTIC STATES • FINLAND • CIS  
• CZECH REPUBLIC • CHINA • MONGOLIA

• River Cruises	• Groups	• Visas	• Insurance
• Trains & Air	• Private Packages	• Museums	• Free Brochures
• Trans-Siberian Express	• Hotels	• Theatres	& much more...



### Hungary

According to a recent report that appeared in the January issue of Jax Fax, 14 five-star properties and 41 four-star choices are involved in an

ongoing campaign that entitles clients booking three consecutive nights, a fourth for free. Overall, occupancy rates have increased at a 50% clip during recent years. The wide Danube (Duna in local vernacular) determines location—either in flat Pest's commercial, cultural and government districts on the east side or over in hilly west-side Buda, dominated by Hungary's Royal Castle and traversed by narrow streets laid out in the Middle Ages

Three UNESCO World Heritage Sites augment the capital's prestige: the castle complex includes the Hungarian National Gallery, Pest's riverfront Parliament, and the one-mile stretch of thoroughly urbane Andrassy Avenue, lined with mansions and monumental public buildings, restored to their 19th-century opulence.

For Budapest at its cultural showiest, nothing beats each year's two-week Spring Festival, with #27 in the annual series coming March 14-30. For tickets [www.festivalcity.hu](http://www.festivalcity.hu).

Contact the Hungarian National Tourist Office, 212-695-1221; E-mail: [info@gotohungary.com](mailto:info@gotohungary.com); [www.gotohungary.com](http://www.gotohungary.com)

**POLAND**  
DESTINATION SPECIALIST

**FREE GIFT WITH YOUR TOUR PURCHASE**

Great Selection of TRAVEL PROGRAMS  
Excellent Service and Convenient Departures

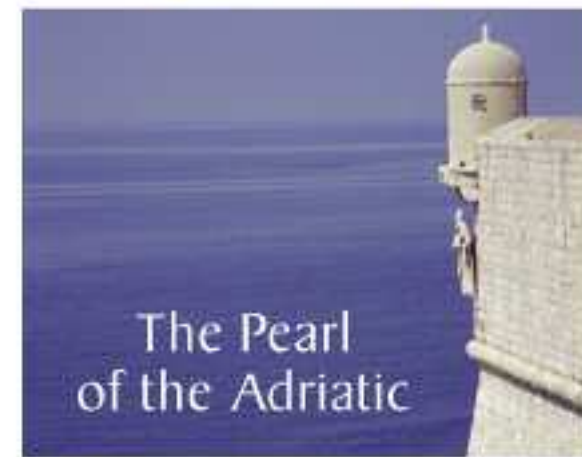
[WWW.LOT.COM](http://WWW.LOT.COM)

- ◆ Tours with Guaranteed Departures
- ◆ Escorted Tours of Central Europe
- ◆ Hotel Accommodations
- ◆ Group and Special Interest Travel
- ◆ Discounted Consolidator Tickets
- ◆ Car Rentals, FITs, Spa Vacations

**Orbis Polish Travel Bureau, Inc.**  
Please contact us via email at:  
[info@orbistravel.com](mailto:info@orbistravel.com) • [groups@orbistravel.com](mailto:groups@orbistravel.com)  
[hotels@orbistravel.com](mailto:hotels@orbistravel.com)

**1-800-TO-POLAND** [www.ORBISTRavel.com](http://www.ORBISTRavel.com)

**CROATIA**



A unique blend of European flavors, a country of fascinating diversity, rich in history and culture... Europe as it used to be.

6 UNESCO World Heritage Sites

**Croatian National Tourist Office**  
[cntony@earthlink.net](mailto:cntony@earthlink.net) 800-829-4416 [www.croatia.hr](http://www.croatia.hr)



## CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

### Poland

Warsaw, the land of Chopin, will focus on Ludwig von Beethoven as the city hosts the 13th edition of an international Beethoven Festival this year. Tour operators such as American Travel Abroad and Orbis are expected to organize packages to the event but in the meantime, queries can be directed to an alliance of hotels in Warsaw – the Warsaw Destination Alliance – a consortium of eight four to five-star properties. Among the participating properties are the Hilton Warsaw Hotel, the InterContinental Warsaw, La Regina Hotel, the Sofitel Victoria Warsaw, Holiday Inn Warsaw, the Novotel Warsaw Centrum, the Polonia Palace Hotel and Le Royal Meridien Bristol.

Contact the Polish National Tourist Office, 201-420-9910; E-mail [pntonyc@polandtours.org](mailto:pntonyc@polandtours.org); [www.polandtours.org](http://www.polandtours.org)

### Romania

Bucharest, Romania's capital city is about to welcome the country's largest luxury hotel when the 424-room new **Radisson** opens its doors this month on March 31, 2008. It is located in the heart of the city, steps from the Romanian Athenaeum, home to the Romania Philharmonic and steps from Romania's National Museum of Art. Visit [www.radissonsas.com](http://www.radissonsas.com)



Some fascinating inclusive tours have been developed for 2008, showcasing the heritage of Romania, a land where rural farmers invite travelers into their homes to share a sip of *tuica* (a potent plum liquor) and bit of homemade bread and cheese. Simion Alb, Director of the Romanian Tourist Board in New York says, "This year, it will be possible to combine tours of Romania with such nearby countries as Croatia or Hungary – all within a two-hour flight or a day's drive." Included in most tours are treasured world-heritage sites as Sighisoara or southern Bucovina's ancient painted monasteries. Additionally, Open Skies agreements coming into effect this month make it equally possible for travelers to skip endless layovers to reach some of Romania's most interesting places. Getting there is also becoming easier: **Delta** flies non-stop flights between New York-JFK and Bucharest while **Austrian Airlines**, named the preferred airline to Romania since 2002, has again been named "the designated, preferred air carrier for travel from America to Romania in 2008," said Alb.

Austrian Airlines provides trans-Atlantic service with connections from many US cities, via Vienna, to Romania from NY/JFK, DC/Dulles and Chicago/O'Hare as well as from Toronto/Pearson airports. Austria links its North American gateways with five cities in Romania: Bucharest, Cluj, Sibiu, Iasi and Timisoara.

Contact the Romanian National Tourist Office, 212-545-8484; E-mail [info@romaniatourism.com](mailto:info@romaniatourism.com); [www.RomaniaTourism.com](http://www.RomaniaTourism.com)



### Russia

International air service to Moscow is quickly moving from Sheremetyevo Airport to the modern **Domodedovo International Airport** (DME), the new air hub and terminal, which now ranks as the leading airport in Moscow. Domodedovo operates a passenger terminal at the **Paveletsky** railway and metro station in the center of Moscow. Trains (Aeroexpress) leave on the hour (every 30 minutes at peak times of the day) for the 40-minute transfer to the airport, and with the help of **Domodedovo Air Rail Service** (DARS) passengers can also travel by express from the centre of Moscow to other Russian cities. Visit [www.domodedovo.ru](http://www.domodedovo.ru)



### Slovakia

The city of Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia is experiencing a bit of a travel boom, according to Simona Kovacova, Sales & Marketing Manager for New York-based **Tatra Travel/Czech Vacations** (see Best Buys for some of Tatra's latest city-stays). Americans traveling on river cruises often become acquainted with Bratislava as it is set on the Danube and is less than an hour drive from Vienna and two hours from Budapest making it also accessible by train or boat hydrofoil as well as by bus or car using newly built highways. Its charm is getting noticed by the increasing number of visitors attracted by the coziness of this smallish city with historic charm found in its castles, palaces, and historical monuments, as well as in its cuisine, breweries, art museums and music concerts and festivals.

Contact the Slovak Tourist Board, E-mail: [slovakoffice@nyc.rr.com](mailto:slovakoffice@nyc.rr.com); [www.cometoslovakia.com](http://www.cometoslovakia.com)



### Air Service

#### *bmi Adds London-Moscow Service*

This month, **bmi** will introduce an additional service between London Heathrow and Moscow Domodedovo March 30, 2008 bringing daily service up to three flights with two services being operated by **bmi** and one by its partner **Transaero**. The additional daily service, which launches at the start of the summer 2008 timetable, builds on the success of the current daily Moscow flight which launched in October 2006 and marked **bmi**'s first venture into the mid haul market.

The new timetable will also see the introduction of an additional late evening service between Heathrow and Manchester taking the total to eight flights a day, as well as an improved schedule for the three times daily service between Heathrow and Durham Tees Valley.

Visit [www.flybmi.com](http://www.flybmi.com)

#### *Astana Links Nomad Club with Lufthansa*

Travelers can earn points on **Lufthansa's** Miles and More frequent flyer program when they travel on Air Astana's flights to and from Frankfurt, Hannover and London. Remember to quote your clients' Miles and More Frequent Flyer membership number at time of reservation or during Check-in. Visit [nomadclub@airastana.com](mailto:nomadclub@airastana.com)

Air Astana, which is the flag carrier for the Republic of Kazakhstan, operates a network serving 25 domestic and 21 international destinations from its hubs in Almaty, Astana and Atyrau. Frequency to Moscow was increased to 21 flights weekly from Almaty, Astana and Aktau; flights from Germany increased to six per week from Almaty and Astana and increased to four per week to Amsterdam from Atyrau. For Asia, Beijing frequencies increased to six per week, to thrice weekly and Seoul twice a week from Almaty.

Call 888-855-1557; E-mail [Usa.sales@airastana.com](mailto:Usa.sales@airastana.com); [www.airastana.com](http://www.airastana.com)

**CENTRAL EUROPE 2008**  
Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic & Poland

Independent, Escorted & Hosted Tours,  
Scenic Tours, City Packages,  
1, 2 and 3 week Spa Packages in Hungary,  
Wine & Castle Tours, Self drive programs,  
Hydrofoil to and from Vienna, theatre tickets,  
and much more...

For information, brochure and reservation:  
**1-800-448-4321**

**TRADESCO TOURS®**  
*A World of Traditions®*

**RUSSIAN NATIONAL GROUP**  
224 West 30th Street, Suite 701, New York, NY, 10001  
646-473-2233 • Fax: 646-473-2205 • E-mail: [info@rnto.org](mailto:info@rnto.org)

have you ever been to  
**RUSSIA**

Download our brochure at: [www.russia-travel.com](http://www.russia-travel.com)

**RNG - YOUR ONE STOP RUSSIA SOLUTION**

**RENAULT eurodrive 2008**

ALWAYS A BRAND NEW CAR  
FROM CONVERTIBLE TO 9 PASSENGER VAN

FULLY COMPREHENSIVE INSURANCE  
IN 42 COUNTRIES, NO DEDUCTIBLE

24/7 ENGLISH-SPEAKING ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

TAX FREE

NO AGE RESTRICTIONS

UNLIMITED MILEAGE

NO ONE WAY FEE

ALL OF EUROPE WITHIN EASY REACH.

**RENAULT EURODRIVE**  
[www.RenaultUSA.com](http://www.RenaultUSA.com)  
888-532-1221



## CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

### Malev Invests in Wine in the Air

In the air, the drinks selection on board **Malév** aircraft has been renewed with fine wines from top Hungarian cellars. The airline's flight attendants serve the majority foreign passengers with reds, whites, dessert wines and sparkling wines on board approximately 120 flights a day traveling to 53 destinations in 34 countries. The wine list, updated from January, was unveiled recently on board the airline's largest Boeing 767-300. Twelve winemakers entered a total of 84 wines to the Malév two-round wine tender, out of which the carrier's jury of experts picked 14 wines from 9 cellars on the basis of the wine's characteristics and, naturally, marketing and financial aspects, too. The wines of the chosen cellars already hold numerous distinguished awards and medals. And Malev clients are taking notice as Deputy CEO Zoltán Mester gave details of the wine consumption habits of their clients: "Malév customers consumed a total 291,000 bottles of wine and sparkling wine on board our aircraft in 2007. Red wine headed the list at 160,000 bottles (120,000 litres), while flight attendants served 91,000 bottles of white (68,250 litres). These numbers are a clear indicator of the significant marketing value for wines offered on board Malév flights." Visit [www.malev.us](http://www.malev.us)

### Orbis Letter to Agents

Since 1937, it is our continued effort to support travel professionals in America in providing quality product to travelers from the USA and Canada visiting Poland.

We are committed to offering safe, quality tours that really capture the flavor of the destination. Poland, a country the size of New Mexico and fifth largest country in Europe, is rich in history and culture and is becoming more and more popular each year as a holiday destination. With some of the most spectacular sceneries in the region, historical towns and cities, beautiful seaside, lakes, mountains, castles, spa resorts and excellent recreational opportunities. Over the past decade, Poland has developed into a modern, vibrant and progressive state, yet at the same time, it maintains its traditional culture. Poland remains reasonably inexpensive and safe, with hospitable people who welcome visitors. Compared to prices in Western Europe, a visitor will get good value for his/her dollar on everything from dining and wine to museum entrances and entertainment.

To better serve your clients, consider Orbis' all-inclusive escorted tours, and for independent travelers, take advantage of Orbis' hotel specials, rent-a-car deals, city tours, sightseeing, transfers, and guides.

Call Orbis Travel at 212-867-5011; fax 212-682-4715; E-mail [info@orbistravel.com](mailto:info@orbistravel.com); [www.orbistravel.com](http://www.orbistravel.com)

## Best Buys

### \$1199 EASTERN EUROPE

**Austrian Airlines**, which is the recommended, preferred airline for travel from North America to Romania, together with **IMTC, Inc.**, are offering "City Steal" packages to Bucharest as well as combined trips to Vienna, Austria and Bucharest and to Bucharest, Romania and Sofia, Bulgaria. The Bucharest and Vienna Combo City Steal, available through March 20, starts at \$1,199 per person double for stays at four-star properties with airfare from New York. Priced similarly is the Sofia and Bucharest combination with five-star accommodations starting at \$1,709 per person.

Visit: [www.austrianair-vacations.com](http://www.austrianair-vacations.com)

### \$1465 EUROPE

Hotel packages are just one of the many saleable areas in **American Travel Abroad's** all-Europe travel planner for 2008. With prices as low as \$1465 per person, double occupancy (Holiday in Prague & Vienna), most tour programs include round trip air, transfers, daily breakfast, hotel accommodations, travel by modern motor coach, special features, extensive sightseeing, luggage handling, services of a professional tour director, hotel charges and taxes. Brochures are available for the asking from American Travel Abroad's main office, located at 505 Eighth Avenue, New York 10018.

Call 800-228-0877; fax: 212-581-7925; E-mail [amtainfo@amta.com](mailto:amtainfo@amta.com); [www.amta.com](http://www.amta.com)

### \$2338 RUSSIA

**Russian National Group** is marketing the "Imperial Russia" Tour, an eight-day fully escorted vacation that covers the prime sightseeing highlights of Moscow and St. Petersburg, priced from \$2,338 for land only, or from \$2,923 from New York. Departures are weekly on Saturdays now through November 22. This package includes First-class overnight sleeper train between Moscow and St. Petersburg, 5 nights deluxe class hotel accommodations (upgrade to luxury 5 star hotels available). Hotels are well located and well selected in their categories. Sightseeing includes all main historic sights in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The journey may be booked in either direction. All services are commissionable at 10%.

Call 877-221-7120; [info@rnto.org](mailto:info@rnto.org); [www.Russia-travel.com](http://www.Russia-travel.com)

### \$3890 CROATIA, ROMANIA

Astoria, NY-based **Travel Time** is offering a 15-day tour of Croatia and Romania that includes: the cities of Split, Hvar and Dubrovnik in Croatia as well as Bucharest, Sinaia and southern Transylvania (Brasov, Sighisoara and Sibiu) in Romania. Priced from \$3,890 per person double in April and October and slightly higher in May, June and September, the program includes roundtrip airfare from New York's JFK, seven nights independent package in Croatia with breakfast daily and six nights'private escorted tour in Romania with breakfast and one lunch and dinner. The price also covers transfers in both countries, ferry tickets in Croatia and local taxes. Add-on airfares are available from other U.S. gateway cities.

Call 800-354-8728; [www.traveltimenyc.com](http://www.traveltimenyc.com)

### \$199 RUSSIA

**Intourist USA** offers rock bottom pricing for stays in both Moscow and St. Petersburg. Due to its tremendous buying power, Intourist can offer excellent accommodations at affordable prices. For instance, three-night packages in Moscow at a choice of either the five-star Metropole or the four-star Novotel or Cosmos or the three-star Vega Hotel range in price respectively during low season from \$919 to \$259 based on double occupancy. Additionally, clients can choose to add excursions, bed and breakfast arrangements, excursions and roundtrip airport transfers. A Basic package starts at \$199 per person during low season for trips to the Hermitage and Winter Palace, transfers, and a city tour. Night sin St. Petersburg are priced similarly with accommodation choices from the five-star Astoria, four-star Novotel-Center or Petro Palace or the three-star Asteria priced from \$759 to \$219 per person double at low season.

Call 800-556-5305; E-Mail: [info@intourist-usa.com](mailto:info@intourist-usa.com)

### \$1599 AUSTRIA, CZECH, HUNGARY

This Golden Triangle combination has become a classic in this region and **Paul Laifer Tours** sells it in three categories: super deluxe, superior 1st Class and moderate deluxe. The prices include roundtrip airfare on Czech Airlines out of JFK (additional departures originate out of Toronto and Montreal), four nights in Prague, and three each in Budapest and Vienna, roundtrip transfers, half-day orientation tours of each city with an English-speaking guide, First-class rail tickets between Budapest and Vienna and all other inter-European connections by air. Optional Business class supplement, one way costs \$649 per person; roundtrip add \$1,298 per person and all hotel stays can be extended. The lead-in price in spring for Superior 1st class is \$1,599 per person double.

Call 800-346-6314; E-mail [travel@laifertours.com](mailto:travel@laifertours.com); [www.laifertours.com](http://www.laifertours.com)

### \$729 EASTERN EUROPE

**Tatra Travel**, a specialist in independent travel to the Eastern and Central European region is selling several city stays to Prague, Budapest, Vienna, Bratislava, Krakow, Warsaw, Tallinn, Riga, St. Petersburg, Moscow, all of which include roundtrip airfare from New York on either Austrian Airlines, Czech or Delta Air Lines, six nights' accommodations, roundtrip transfers and a half-day sightseeing orientation tour of

Budapest. Among the properties clients can choose from is the three-star Hotel Sissi where prices start from \$729 per person double through March 13; \$929 per person double from March 14-May 15; and finally, \$1,339 per person double from May 16-June 28. All hotels are centrally located and include daily complimentary breakfast.

Call 800-321-2999; [www.tatratravel.com](http://www.tatratravel.com)

### \$1087 CZECH, AUSTRIA, HUNGARY

**Tradesco Tours'** popular Prague Express package spends three nights each in Budapest, Prague and Vienna. Travelers spend three nights in each city in a standard class property with daily buffet breakfast. They travel with first class train between the cities, and participate in a scheduled half day historic city tour of Budapest, Vienna and Prague. Participating hotels in Budapest include **Hotel Stadion**, **City Hotel Matyas**, or the **City Hotel Ring**; in Vienna, the **Levante Laudon Hotel** and in Prague, the **Hotel Chodská** or **Residence Seifert**. Hotel upgrades, seat assignments for trains, transfers and cultural program tickets are also available for extra cost. As of April 8, Tradesco will offer travel on a luxury hydrofoil, the fastest passenger ship on the Danube, from Budapest to Vienna and vice versa. The ship operates on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays until May 25; and daily as of May 30. One-way tickets in either direction cost \$149 in Travel Class and \$199 in Club Class Elite.

Call 800-448-4321; [www.tradescotours.com](http://www.tradescotours.com)

### New York-Budapest non-stop service from May!



**GLOBAL TRAVELER  
ESTD AWARDS**

As of May 2nd Malev flies 5 times a week and as of May 26th daily between New York and Budapest.

- Excellent connections to Central, Eastern, Southern Europe and the Middle East.
- Outstanding, complimentary service and comfort as standard.
- Best Airline in Eastern Europe for 2006, 2007\*
- All the advantages of Malev's membership of the oneworld airline alliance.

[www.malev.com](http://www.malev.com)  
212-566-9946 / 9949

**MALEV** Hungarian Airlines

\*As voted by Global Traveler magazine

As of May 2nd Malev flies 5 times a week and as of May 26th daily between New York and Budapest.

- Excellent connections to Central, Eastern, Southern Europe and the Middle East.
- Outstanding, complimentary service and comfort as standard.
- Best Airline in Eastern Europe for 2006, 2007\*
- All the advantages of Malev's membership of the oneworld airline alliance.

[www.malev.com](http://www.malev.com)  
212-566-9946 / 9949

**MALEV** Hungarian Airlines

\*As voted by Global Traveler magazine

# Unforgettable Cities. Irresistible Prices.

Over 130 cities worldwide are waiting to be discovered. Now we fly to 7 cities in Russia\* and 6 cities in Romania. Austrian Airlines flies straight to the heart of Europe and beyond.

Check your GDS for our attractive fares from New York (JFK), Washington (IAD) or Chicago (ORD).

**Austrian**  
We fly for your smile.



New destination in Russia: Sochi - March 21, 2008  
Newly expanded - starts 4.1.08  
New destination in Romania: Eilat Mare - March 4, 2008

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

[www.austrian.com](http://www.austrian.com)





## WORLDWIDE CRUISES

# SOLID SALES: European River Cruises

By Jonathan Siskin

From early indications 2008 will be a strong year for European river cruises as a growing number of Americans are booking river cruises that feature the Danube, Rhine, Rhone, Seine, Moselle and other rivers that crisscross the Continent. One of the main selling points for river cruises is the intimate onboard atmosphere as it typically carries a maximum of 150-200 passengers. Another advantage of a river cruise is that boats dock in cities such as Prague, Vienna and Budapest that are inaccessible to the mega-ships and passengers are literally in the middle of the city, many times walking distance to the main squares. Clients are never far from land on a river cruise and seasickness is not a concern as sailing is smooth from start to finish as river ships are built with top-notch stabilizers that make the ships feel as if they glide. With newcomers and new ships being built specifically for this market, the competition on Europe's rivers is heating up, which may keep prices in check, too.

**Amadeus Waterways** is investing about \$100 million to build four river cruise ships over the next two years. Two of the four ships are set to launch this year, and two will launch in 2009, which will bring the company's fleet size to six (not including several ships Amadeus charters). All the ships are being built in Holland and have the same dimensions as Amadeus' existing ships, the Amadagio, which launched in 2006, and Amalegro, which launched last year.

The Amacello is set to launch this month and the Amadante in June. In 2009, Amadeus will introduce the Amalyra and the Amadolce. The new ships will all operate on Europe's Danube, Main, Rhine and Moselle rivers.

Amadeus has already established a solid and successful track record with its sister ships, the ms Amadagio and ms Amalegro. "Last year, 2007, was a terrific year for Amadeus with almost 95% of our cabins occupied," said Kristine Karst, VP of sales. "Much of our success has been due to word of mouth that has generated the highest amount of new and repeat business."

Both ships are less than two years old and offer 160-170 square-foot outside cabins as well as junior suites ranging in size from 236 to 255 square feet on the upper deck. Each offers hotel-like amenities including French balconies on the upper two decks and flat screen TV with internet access.

There is superb dining in the single seating restaurant, and quality wines from Europe's most famous wine regions included with every dinner. Guests relax on the sun deck, in the whirlpool and take advantage of bicycles to explore towns and villages along the way. Onboard, there is fitness equipment, a hair salon and a masseuse. Every cruise features folklore performances, lectures and themed dinners.

Visit [www.amadeuswaterways.com](http://www.amadeuswaterways.com)

Amadeus ships are leased and chartered to a host of tour operators and among the latest to join their company is **Sky**

**Vacations**, the tour division of **Sky Bird Travel**. The association of the two companies provides agents with one of the best values for river cruising available today because Sky Bird also has agreements with more than 60 carriers for one of the largest selections of air carriers from points in the U.S. to all of Amadeus Waterways points of embarkations and arrivals. For more information on Sky Bird's consolidator activities, see JF's Consolidator Supplement in this issue.

Call 888-666-3113 ext 2649; [www.skybirdtravel.com](http://www.skybirdtravel.com)

Likewise, **Uniworld Grand River Cruises** has invested millions of dollars toward upgrading and expanding its fleet. The most recent refurbishment took place on the River Baroness that now boasts a new marble lobby and reading room plus lavishly-appointed staterooms. The Baroness inaugurated a nine-day Paris and Normandy itinerary that sailed on the Seine from Paris though Northern France and back to Paris.

Uniworld's Grand River Cruise Specialist Program provides agents with sales tools essential to selling river cruises. Upon completion of the program, agents earn complimentary cruises and savings for themselves and their clients—the specialist program can be accessed on Uniworld's website.

Visit [www.uniworld.com/agency](http://www.uniworld.com/agency)

Also on tap for 2008 is the debut of the first "space-ships" of **Scenic Tours River Cruising** that will sail on 15-day cruises between Amsterdam and Budapest with calls at Cologne, Vienna and Budapest. The Scenic Sapphire and Scenic Emerald will offer exclusive activities and sightseeing opportunities as part of its Scenic Free Choice program which allows guests to personalize their river cruise and comp land touring experiences to suit their individual tastes. Fares begin at \$4,295 per person double.

Visit [www.scenictours.com](http://www.scenictours.com)

## River Suites

A new entry in the European river cruise market this year is **Jewel River Cruises**, which will launch its first vessel, ms (Jewel Imperial Blue late this summer. The world's first all-suite river vessel will accommodate 70 guests in 35 suites divided into three categories that vary in size. Luxury amenities not found on other river ships include a specialty restaurant, wellness spa, no more cigar lounge and wine bar. The Imperial's Blue's maiden voyage is a 10-day cruise from Paris to Rouen along the Seine, and for the remainder of the year will offer a total of 22 sailings of seven to 10 days with the last departure on November 20.

During the cruise, guests can participate in private behind-the-scenes tours of the Louvre and Opera Bastille, a culinary class with a Michelin three-star chef, private vintage wine tastings with master winemakers, and a helicopter ride over the Champagne countryside. Seven-day cruises start at about \$5,999 per person double.

Visit [www.jewelrivercruises.com](http://www.jewelrivercruises.com)

## BEST BUYS

**\$1600 EUROPE** Go Barging is offering 20% to 50% discounts on select cruises in France and England for sailings departing between March 30 and May 11, 2008 representing thousands in savings on cruises booked and deposited by February 29, 2008. When agents book one cabin at the regular rate, Go Barging provides a 50% discount on a second cabin on the same cruise.

For families and friends seeking the ultimate in luxury barging and exclusivity, Go Barging offers a 20% discount for chartering an entire barge. Regular rates to book a cabin on L'Art de Vivre start at \$3,490 per person; chartering the entire barge costs \$23,800 based on six passengers; a cabin on the Magna Carta starts at \$3,200 per person; while chartering the entire barge starts at \$16,100 based on four passengers. Call 800-394-8630; [www.gobarging.com](http://www.gobarging.com)

**\$2500 EUROPE** France Cruises tours start at \$2,500 per passenger and include the following: France Cruises Classic: the original and traditional hotel barge cruises and tours collection, including authentic French countryside tours and regional cuisine. France Cruises Luxury: new generation of ultra deluxe packages. France Cruises Signature: complete customized cruise experience per client's request. Additional à La Carte Services Hotel packages offer a wide selection of luxury hotel and lodging options. Private Chauffeur tours, culinary classes, wine tasting tours, chateau visits, hot air balloon rides and more. Visit [www.francecruises.com](http://www.francecruises.com)

## IN THE NEWS

### Adriatic Luxury Journeys Sails Croatian Coastline in Style

**Adriatic Luxury Journeys** specializes in luxury travel to sCroatia and offer a wide selection of luxury journeys such as small group escorted tours in addition to independent journeys that include private tours, honeymoons, fly-drive vacations, and customized programs. "For a few years now we have been assisting some of the most discerning travelers in designing their out of the ordinary vacations to Croatia and the Adriatic coast," said Maria M. Kuchan, CEO of Adriatic Luxury Journeys.

Croatia is increasingly seen as a hot destination and ALJ's selection includes active adventures as well.

Consider ALJ's 15-day luxury escorted journey, "Art, History and Charm of Croatia and the Adriatic," which explores fascinating periods of Croatian history, art and culture in an elegant and unique style. Guests on this tour experience the natural beauty and artistic heritage of Croatia in a most luxurious manner. They also are pampered and surprised with an abundance of Croatia's finest food, wine and entertainment each and every day of their trip.

Call 800-908-7108; [www.adriaticluxury.com](http://www.adriaticluxury.com)

## MONASTERIES OF THE LONELY DESERT

**plus:**  
**Cairo, Luxor, Petra and Amman**

WINTER 2008-2009 14-Day Cruise-Tours,  
Including a Week Long  
Red Sea Exploration  
aboard the 62-passenger  
M.S. Monet

Next winter, the M.S. Monet will introduce a new and remarkably different small ship adventure. Offered during the months when an escape to warm and sunny weather is most welcome, *Monasteries of the Lonely Desert* explores some of the world's greatest antiquities in Luxor and Petra. It also will delve deeper into the mysteries of the Egyptian desert, with visits to four early Christian monastic sites: St. Catherine's, Seven Nuns, and the monasteries of St. Anthony and St. Paul.

Your clients will enjoy comfort and convenience—as well as great food and service—while aboard the *Monet*, plus deluxe hotel accommodations in Cairo, Luxor, Petra and Amman, all excursions, transfers, educational lectures on board and expert guides in the field. **All comissionable, including air.**

**Maiden season departures:**  
**December 18, 2008 through February 12, 2009**  
**Rates start at just \$2,706 (cruise-only) or \$3,512 (complete cruise-land tour).**

**Convenient international air transportation is available, plus Early Booking Savings of \$300 per person!**

**Elegant Cruises & Tours, Inc.**  
24 Vandeventer Ave., Port Washington, NY 11050  
[www.elegantcruises.com](http://www.elegantcruises.com), [info@elegantcruises.com](mailto:info@elegantcruises.com) 800-683-6767



# Eilat in Winter: Busy, Brash and Fun

By Ben G. Frank

Eilat lives up to its travel posters. That's why they come by the tens and twenties and hundreds, each winter day, these tall, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Danish, young Europeans seeking the warm sun of Israel's resort getaway, this glitzy playground of sun worshippers who bathe in the deep purple blue of the Red Sea.

Though busy and a bit brash, Eilat flaunts itself as a happy vacationland, with sandy beaches, pear-shaped pools and romantic lounges. "It's definitely a place to hang out," says tour guide Mike Ben Avi. "It's always been a place for those who like to hike, scuba dive, snorkel; even snorkeling with dolphins."

Even the birds come here. When winter arrives in Europe, a mass immigration of storks descends on the Holy Land. This area is a birders paradise, as it is positioned as the land bridge between Asia and Africa, making it one of the world's most important bird migratory routes.

Even the French come here, thus making it not only a provincial resort, but cosmopolitan. So many Parisians have been buying condos in Eilat that real estate agents are now distributing handouts in French.

Even bike races end in this exciting place, a place where you can always expect exciting events to occur. In May of this year, for example, Israel's 60th anniversary, the International Harley Davidson Motorcycle trip from the north will end here.

Then there's the natural beauty of coral reefs, the quiet of the Red Sea, the peaceful desert surrounding the city, that forces you to relax.

One way to break the calmness is to walk along the North



Beach sea promenade. People-watch and stop at the kiosks along the way. Dine at delicious fish restaurants and munch at snack bars.

At the end of the boardwalk is a shopping mall packed with tourists, travelers and soldiers on leave. The beach is right there for a quick dip.

Tired of sun and sand, spend time in "Kings City," a Biblical castle, carnival-theme park atmosphere.

Visit [www.kingscity.co.il](http://www.kingscity.co.il)

## Families Crowd the Pool

Lots of fun for families that crowd these opulent and palatial, waterfront hotels, such as **Dan Eilat** and **Herods**. Head for the underwater museum as well as Coral World and its beautiful aquariums.

A bit north of the city is the Timna Copper Mines Park and the Hai Bar Nature Reserve. Visit both in a day-trip. At the Hai Bar Nature Reserve the animals live outside. You're inside the car traveling through the reserve. Try to be at the reserve early in the morning when the animals are out and about.

With its approximately 75,000 inhabitants, Eilat is a relatively new city that was once considered the dead end of the world. The city's past stretches back to Biblical times. Eilat is the modern spelling for the Biblical town of Elath, which is first mentioned in Exodus when the Israelites wandered the desert. Sometimes, it is identified with Biblical Ezion-geber, which was situated at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. Here Solomon based his Red Sea merchant fleet. Some even go as far as to say that the Israelites stopped here during the Exodus from Egypt into the Promised Land. Later Uzziah (Azariah) king of Judah (785-733 BC), rebuilt

Eilat, restoring it as the port of Judah on the Red Sea. A Jewish community probably existed here until the middle of the 10th century, and possibly until the crusader period. By the 14th century, the town was almost completely destroyed and later only under Turkish rule was an attempt made to develop it.

Modern Eilat stands on the site of a one-time wasteland, which bore the Arabic name "Umm Rashrash." Captured by Israeli forces on March 13, 1949 in Operation Uvdah (Established Fact), it was the last military move in the War of Israeli Independence. In December, 1948, a kibbutz was set up and in the next few years a few buildings were erected. By 1956, 1,000 called Eilat their home.

## The Greening of Eilat

Stop at **Kibbutz Lotan**, located 45 minutes north of Eilat. Worth a visit, for this kibbutz encourages holistic and ecological tourism. This collective recycles organic waste, reuses solid waste and conducts alternative building from tires, clay mud and straw bales. Except for a dairy unit, Lotan makes its money from eco-tourism.

Boasting an eco-park including a heated, crystal-clear Watsu pool for the healing powers of water and desert through water massage treatments, Lotan makes no pretensions that its facilities rate a five-star luxury-hotel. The kibbutz does contain country lodging suited for families, youth groups and individuals. Management says three-stars fit their more than 20 air-conditioned guest rooms with kitchenettes, bathrooms and a kosher kitchen.

Since Eilat is surrounded by desert formations, wide spaces with amazing geological shapes and ancient archaeological sites, as well as beautifully colored cliffs, one can enjoy driving or hiking. Observe the range of shades from sandy beige to rich red and dusky black. And oh, those red-tinted mountains of Edom and deep canyons. Highly recommended is a jeep safari. Sitting around a small camp fire, baking fresh pita bread; smearing it with thick chocolate and washing it all down with hot mint tea: a desert experience

that lingers.

One thing I would strongly recommend is that agents organizing independent tours, hire the professional services of guide Mike Ben-Avi, call 011-972-52-286-9928; E-mail [gampamike@yahoo.com](mailto:gampamike@yahoo.com)

## American Tourism to Israel

Eilat will certainly benefit from the influx of tourists that are expected this year as Israel celebrates its 60th anniversary. Indeed, in what may be a harbinger for 2008, more Americans visited Israel in 2007 than in any other year since the State of Israel was established in 1948, according to **Arie Sommer, Israel's Tourism Commissioner** for North and South America.

"We expect the flow of visitors to continue to increase in the year ahead," he added.

Some 25% of all tourists to Israel come from the U.S., with more than a half-million Americans visiting Israel in 2007. The previous record year was 1999.

"The burgeoning tourism figures reflect a growing awareness amongst Americans that Israel is a destination that is safe, and that is ideal for rewarding, inspiring and multifaceted vacations," he added.

In March 2008, **Delta Airlines** will add a second daily flight from the U.S. to Israel. **Continental Airlines** operates two daily flights from New York to Tel Aviv. **El Al Israel Airlines** offers as many as six daily flights between the U.S. and Israel, and Israel carrier, **Israir**, offers up to five weekly flights from JFK to Tel Aviv. In the summer of 2007, the Israel Ministry of Tourism launched its largest ever advertising campaign. "This is a three-year effort to double tourism to Israel by 2010, said Sommer.

For more information, contact the Israel Ministry of Tourism, 888-77-ISRAEL; [www.goisrael.com](http://www.goisrael.com)

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Israel see page 80-81 of the Listings Section

**DID YOU KNOW**

that with  
**Collette Vacations...**

- ✓ You receive a full 10% on air.
- ✓ Preferred agents will earn up to 20% land commission.
- ✓ Starting March 1, 2008, travel agents earn commission on pre-sold tour options.
- ✓ No currency surcharges in 2008.
- ✓ Guaranteed departure dates.

**With Collette, what's not to love?**

**COLLETTE VACATIONS**

**ASK AN AGENT**

YOUR BEST TRAVEL RESOURCE

For more information, call your local District Sales Manager or 1-800-611-3361 and mention promotion code A878-AX1-918. Visit [www.collettevacations.com/agents](http://www.collettevacations.com/agents).

AD834 0308

**Everything you need to know** [www.TravelEgypt.com](http://www.TravelEgypt.com)

**Our Unique Programs Include:**

- The Ladies Tour: In depth examination of Egypt's Queens & Goddesses,
- Child's Egypt: The perfect tour for families.
- Birds of the Pharaohs: combining history with incredible birding.
- The David Roberts Photography tour: for amateurs and experts.

Plus • Walking Tours • Sport Fishing • Scuba Diving • Camel Treks and more...

**Toll free: 1-877-778-3497 • E-mail: [travelegyptusa@gmail.com](mailto:travelegyptusa@gmail.com)**

History comes alive with our classic Nile valley tours led by top Egyptologists.

**EGYPT**  
Egypt Tourist Authority



## BEST BUYS

**\$1435 BOTSWANA, RWANDA** AFRICAExperts by Goway has recently released their expanded 52-page brochure for 2008.

Among the latest additions and options the company has introduced for this year are: a new four-day Chobe/Zambezi Safariboat cruise has been added in Botswana priced from \$1,435 per person double. The cruise departs daily so fits nicely into scheduled tour itineraries or F.I.T's.

On the six-day "Gorilla Safari & Chimp Treks" in Rwanda, travelers will see the famous Mountain Gorillas in Parc National Des Volcans, chimps and other primates in the Nyungwe Forest Reserve. Pricing starts from \$4,354 per person double for land arrangements only.

Call 800-387-8850; E-mail [info@goway.com](mailto:info@goway.com);  
[www.goway.com](http://www.goway.com)

**\$2343 ZAMBIA** A welcome departure from the standard African safari, EcoTraining's safari programs provide hands-on experiences in the African bush.

In May, travelers can also learn to photograph African wildlife and scenery like a pro with EcoTraining professional wildlife photographer Lex Hes.

Participants stay in the renowned **Klaserie Private Game Reserve** and part of the Greater Kruger National Park for an affordable safari option while providing opportunities to observe birdlife and regular visits from members of the Big Five. Accommodations are in cool, en-suite thatched chalets secluded under a thicket of trees.

A plunge pool, viewing and dining decks next to the river and a spacious central living area provide an ideal "bush classroom" environment. After six days spent in the African bush travelers will begin four days of intensive photography training with Lex Hes. This 10-day safari package is priced at \$2,343 per person double, including transfers and all ground transportation expenses.

Visit [www.ecotraining.co.za](http://www.ecotraining.co.za)

**\$7000 SOUTH AFRICA** Cape Grace's "Adventure Package" costs approximately \$7,000 and includes: five nights in a luxury room with views of Table Mountain or the V&A Waterfront, with breakfast. Also part of the package are: Table Mountain Abseil and Skydive professional DVD and still photos of the jump, helicopter transfer to Shark Cage Diving in Gansbaai; sunset cruise aboard a historic yacht, followed by a three-course dinner in the famous "onewaterfront" restaurant Shark Cage; a signature massage in The Spa at Cape Grace, per person; unlimited use of the Hot Spa: mineral spa bath, rain shower & body shower, steam room & sauna; unlimited and complimentary BMW transfers within Cape Town.

For an extra \$14,468, a flight in the world's only twin-engine two-seater supersonic interceptor known as The English Electric Lightning; the package remains valid through April 30, 2008.

Visit [www.capegrace.com](http://www.capegrace.com)

## IN THE NEWS

*Companions Fly Free on Ethiopian*

**Ethiopian Airlines'** "Free Companion Fare" promotion, valid through March 19, entitles travelers who purchase a regular fare to receive a "Free Companion Fare" to any of Ethiopian Airlines' 29 destinations throughout Africa with a 21-day maximum length of stay. Ethiopian Airlines flies directly from Washington Dulles International to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and connects to 29 destinations throughout Africa, including: Luanda, Angola; Bujumbura, Burundi; Douala, Cameroon; Ndjamena, Chad; Brazzaville, Congo; Kinshasa, Congo Democratic Republic; Djibouti, Djibouti; Cairo, Egypt; Libreville, Gabon; Accra, Ghana; Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire; Nairobi, Kenya; Lilongwe, Malawi; Bamako, Mali; Lagos, Nigeria; Kigali, Rwanda; Dakar, Senegal; Hargeisa, Somaliland; Johannesburg, South Africa; Khartoum, Sudan; Kilimanjaro, Tanzania; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Lomé, Togo; Entebbe, Uganda; Dire Dawa, Ethiopia; Juiba, Sudan; Lusaka, Zambia; Lusaka, Zambia and Zanzibar, Tanzania.

Call 800-445-2733; [www.ethiopianairlines.com](http://www.ethiopianairlines.com)

*El Al Goes Sweet on Honeymooners*

**EL AL**, Israel's national airline kicked off a new promotion for honeymooners heading to Israel. Couples who married between September 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008 can receive a 50% discount on one of two EL AL tickets purchased for their honeymoon, when they also purchase a five-night hotel stay at centrally-located hotels such as the Carlton in Tel Aviv, the Crowne Plaza/Holiday Inns, the Dan Panoramas, the Daniel in Herzlia, the Inbal Hotel, the Prima in Tel Aviv, the Regency in Jerusalem, and the Sheraton Moriah Hotels. In other deals, EL AL is offering special savings on roundtrip airfares for passengers traveling from New York (JFK/Newark), Chicago to Israel this month.

The roundtrip fare for departures March 4-29 from New York (JFK/Newark) is \$883 and, from Chicago, the roundtrip fare is \$1,033.

Call 800-223-6700; [www.elal.com](http://www.elal.com)

*Hot Air Over Tanzania*

"**CC Africa** has brought hot air ballooning to Tanzania's Eastern Serengeti", says Nicky Fitzgerald, Director of Marketing of Africa's foremost purveyor of sustainable luxury safaris. "This will enable guests of CC Africa's Grumeti River Camp to book a morning of aerial game viewing," according to Fitzgerald.

A 15-minute game drive takes guests from the lodge to the balloon launch pad. Once airborne, guests have the unique opportunity to view game from treetop level, and then ascend 1,000 feet to see the sheer enormity of the Serengeti. The flight ends with sparkling wine and a full English breakfast served near the landing site. The cost is \$499 per person for the balloon ride and breakfast.

Visit [www.ccafrica.com](http://www.ccafrica.com)



# Booking Brazil's Bossa Nova Beaches

By Jonathan Siskin

**C**lients in search of fun in the sun and other pleasures linked to what adds up to a carefree holiday should consider booking a trip to Rio de Janeiro. I have visited six times and look forward to returning as soon as possible to this incomparable city.

As I peeked out the window of my suite at the Copacabana Palace a little after 8 a.m. on a hot and sultry Rio morning I noticed sunbathers already arriving and staking a claim to a precious patch of sand. By late morning the beach was already packed, the sea of bodies stretching as far as the eye could see.

Going to the beach is a top priority in Rio as the bathing suit is a vital part of every wardrobe. People shop in them, dine in them and hold business meetings in them. With more than 50 miles of beaches within city limits it's no wonder that sun worshipping comes as natural to Cariocas as breathing. If they are not at the beach already, chances are they're on their way and will soon arrive.

**The Girl from Ipanema is Alive and Well**

Copacabana and Ipanema, two beaches redolent of the Rio mystique, are within walking distance of each other. Copacabana is the most frenetic beach scene with a swarm of vendors hawking tons of merchandise. Among the most popular items are the distinctive bird kites that soar and dart above the crowds on the balmy ocean breezes.

Immortalized in the international hit about the gently swaying girl, Ipanema has the well-deserved reputation as Rio's "beautiful people" beach. One of the city's most fashionable neighborhoods, Ipanema's status as the place to "see and be seen" remains intact.

It's hard to believe that any business ever gets anything done in a city that exudes such a sensual, sybaritic appeal. However, the people do work and play hard as Rio ranks among South America's leading centers of finance and commerce. The sooner you can finish the day's business, the quicker you can throw off your business attire and join friends for a late afternoon swim.

Nowhere on earth are the senses as indulged as during the feverish 'round the clock frolicking associated with the

annual Carnival celebration. Although the red-hot pace of Carnival cannot be maintained year round, the basic bacchanalian spirit suffusing the city is never far from the surface. While the beach is the center of focus during the day, the night resounds with its own inimitable pleasure beat.

**Heady Heights**

Evening's arrival is enhanced by a cable car ride to the top of Sugarloaf Mountain. From these heady heights you get a panoramic view of the miles of beaches framed by the swath of mountains that make the city an unrivalled natural beauty. Another superb aerial vantage point is from atop Corcovado, the humpbacked mountain crowned with the statue of Christ the Redeemer among Rio's travel icons that distinguishes the skyline. You arrive at the summit after a 20-minute ride on a cog railway cut through solid rock up the side of the mountain passing through a section of tropical rain forest below.

From both Sugarloaf and Corcovado you can watch as the gathering twilight bathes the city in a rich amber glow. Soon thousands of pinpricks of light arrive like a swarm of fireflies igniting the darkness. Before long the night is alive as the city sparkles in its evening finery.

**Dark Rhythms**

Nighttime in Rio moves to the distinctive Brazilian rhythms of the samba and bossa nova. It is here in Brazil's music capital that many of the country's greatest songwriters and performers have flowered. Like New York, Rio is a city that never (rarely?) sleeps as live music often gets underway very late at jazz clubs such as Vinicius' Bar and Mistura Fina. Along with music, partaking of the pleasures of wining and dining is another favorite Rio pastime. An especially popular place that attracts both Cariocas and tourists is the churrasceria (barbecue house). Here eating is an event in itself as waiters skillfully maneuver around long tables carving a variety of savory meats directly onto your plate. There is no limit as to how much filet mignon, brisket of beef, pork ribs and chicken you can eat as it is deftly delivered hot off the skewers onto your plate.



## SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA

At many Rio restaurants you can enjoy a hearty Sunday brunch known as feijoada, the national dish that seems tailored for carnivorous appetites. Among the ingredients are an eclectic mix of meats including beef, pork, sausage, ribs, tongue and black beans (to name a few). And you wash everything down with a caipirinha, the most popular and potent Brazilian libation made from chachaca, a fiery sugar cane spirit, sugar and freshly squeezed limes.

### Flying to and Staying in Rio

I flew on the Brazilian carrier **Tam Airlines** ([www.tam.com.br](http://www.tam.com.br)), which operates daily departures out of JFK's terminal 4 to Rio and Sao Paulo; **Delta** and **United** also fly to Rio from JFK. While in Rio I stayed at the deluxe **CopaCabana Palace**, the only hotel in Brazil that is a member of **Orient Express Hotels**. Since opening in the 1920s it has been the preferred place to stay for Hollywood stars and big name entertainers from Cary Grant to Grace Kelly to Mick Jagger. ([www.capacabanapalace.com.br](http://www.capacabanapalace.com.br))

For information contact the Rio Convention & Visitors Bureau ([www.rioconventionbureau.com.br](http://www.rioconventionbureau.com.br); for information on Brazil, call 800-727-2945; E-mail [visit-brazil@braziltourism.org](mailto:visit-brazil@braziltourism.org); [www.braziliantourism.org](http://www.braziliantourism.org)

*For consolidator fares and tour packages to Brazil see page 73-74 of the Listings Section*



**For upscale cruises & vacation packages to South America Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands**

**Platinum Travel Systems, Inc.**  
 "The World's Leader in Upper-Class Travel Experiences"  
[www.ptsincorporated.com](http://www.ptsincorporated.com)

With dedicated and informative Websites for land and cruises, diving, adventure travel, special interest and incentive groups  
[www.galapagos-inc.com](http://www.galapagos-inc.com) [www.alivinggalapagos.com](http://www.alivinggalapagos.com)



Over 30 years of experience in booking naturalist cruises, yacht charters and diving cruises to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands.

**Up to 15% COMMISSION on Cruise and Land Packages**

Call Toll Free: 866-672-4533  
 Tel: 858-672-4533  
 Fax: 858-672-4505  
[info@ptsincorporated.com](mailto:info@ptsincorporated.com)



California Seller of Travel Registration # 2075838-00

## BEST BUYS

**\$832 BRAZIL, ARGENTINA**  
**TAM Vacations**, a specialist in Latin American vacations is selling a five-night package to Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires for \$832 per person double that includes: roundtrip economy travel on **TAM Brazilian Airlines** day-light flight from Miami or New York, transfers to/from airport and hotel, three nights' accommodation at the **Lancaster** in Rio and the **Aspen Suites** in Buenos Aires with breakfast daily at both properties.

Optional tours of both cities are suggested including a full day tour to the Tropical Islands in Rio or, in Buenos Aires, a visit to the gardens of Palermo Balance.

Other five-night packages include an Iberostar Cruise for \$1,582 per person; Rio with Iguassu Falls starting at \$850; and a trip to Manaus for \$876 per person double.

Call 866-627-2945; E-mail [info@tamvacations.com](mailto:info@tamvacations.com); [www.tamvacations.com](http://www.tamvacations.com)

**\$1495 MEXICO**  
 Chilly girlfriends may want to think about shedding their winter coats, polish up their pedicures and migrate south of the border to Puerto Vallarta for a spring fling while exploring the beauty of Puerto Vallarta's pristine beaches and sparkling sea, benefit from warm Mexican hospitality and visit the new **Ohtli Spa** for a relaxing or invigorating massage.

The CasaMagna Marriott Puerto Vallarta Resort and Spa's "No Boys Allowed" Girls Getaway starts at \$1,495 per person double and includes: a four-day stay in a Deluxe Ocean view room; daily breakfast buffet for two at the resort's restaurants, La Estancia or Las Casitas; four spa treatments per stay; two passes to wellness areas and access to Sauna and Swiss Shower; and complimentary admittance to gym and indoor pool. Refer to Rate Code **FL**.

Call 888-PARADISE, [www.casamagnapuertovallarta.com](http://www.casamagnapuertovallarta.com)

**\$785 ECUADOR**  
 Quito-based **Gentian Trails** has enhanced its three-night program to the Antizana Reserve with a stay at the San Augustin de Callo Inca Hacienda set on a private hacienda estate near the Antisan Volcano (19,000 feet above sea level), the venue was chosen as it offers grassland habitat that attracts the Andean condor, spectacle bear, puma, paramo wolf, Andean hillstar hummingbird, beautiful gentians, and polylephis trees amongst others.

Just 1.5 hours from Quito, this is one of the most important ecological reserves in the Paramo (high grasslands). Participants will also visit several Indian markets: Latacunga food market, Pujili food market and pottery, Saquisilí food, animal, handicraft markets, and the Machachi food market. Included is sightseeing, transportation, breakfast daily, three lunches and two dinners.

Prices range from \$785 for groups of 16 to 25 participants to \$1,280 per person for two travelers.

E-mail [santiago@gentiantrails.com](mailto:santiago@gentiantrails.com); [www.gentiantrails.com](http://www.gentiantrails.com)

## BEST BUYS

**\$125 CENTRAL AMERICA & MEXICO**  
 Renting a villa in Mexico and Central America is now easy and quick for agents searching for just the right place for their clients, especially those traveling with family and groups. Agents who log on to Rentalo's website, the leading lodging directory that links agents to property owners, will find a wide variety of Mexico and Central American vacation rentals that start as low as \$125 a night.

Rentalo's new SmartSearch feature allows agents to filter their property search by location, price, number of bedrooms, amenities, attractions, activities and more. SmartSearch also allows immediate and simultaneous inquiries on several properties, so that property owners can respond quickly. Rentalo's inventory of some 200,000 properties in 15,000 destinations around the world includes hotels, inns, lodges and bed and breakfasts in addition to vacation rental villas, condos and apartments.

Call 877-710-5914; E-mail [contact@rentalo.com](mailto:contact@rentalo.com); [www.rentalo.com](http://www.rentalo.com)

**\$660 BRAZIL**  
**Brazilian Wave Tours** is selling several Amazon packages that range from one to four nights this year that include accommodations at the **Ariau Amazon Towers**, the **Amazon Village**, **Acajatuba Jungle Lodge** or the **Amazon Ecopark Lodge**. The four-day trip to Manaus and Ariau with a stay at the Ariau Amazon Towers starts at \$660 per person double or \$878 for single person for land arrangements only. The program includes a two-hour boat ride, lunches and dinners daily, jungle hikes, a canoe ride to the Acajatuba Village and a sunrise tour. Brazilian Wave Tours also sells the **TAM Brazilian Airlines** Brazil Air Pass that covers up to four cities starting at \$529 per person. Coming soon are villa rentals in Fort Lauderdale and Pompano Beach in Florida and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

Call 800-682-3315; E-mail [info@brazilianwavetours.com](mailto:info@brazilianwavetours.com); [www.brazilianwavetours.com](http://www.brazilianwavetours.com)

**\$99K MEXICO**  
 Travelers who want to experience Mexico's Sea of Cortes with a small group of friends or family now have an opportunity to explore this desert sea by private luxury yacht, thanks to **American Safari Cruises'** new charter offering for groups of 12 or under.

The new program is in response to requests for small-group charter cruises in Mexico. The eight-day, seven-night cruises aboard the 120-foot yacht Safari Quest are available for up to 12 guests now through March 25 for \$99,995, which includes a six-person crew with professional naturalist, gourmet dining, a complimentary bar with premium spirits and fine wines, all off-yacht experiences and transfers. The Safari Quest usually carries 22 guests at a higher charter rate; the special offer for 12 guests represents a savings of up to \$27,900.

Call 888-862-8881; [www.amsafari.com](http://www.amsafari.com)

## IN THE NEWS

### BETEX 2008 Takes Place in Belize City

The Belize Tourism Expo (BETEX) will be held in Belize City from July 30-Aug. 4. Organized by the **Belize Tourism Industry Association** with the support of the **Belize Tourism Board**, BETEX is held every two years and offers travel trade professionals opportunities to meet with local suppliers, get updated information on Belize and experience the destination first-hand.

The 2008 format has changed slightly to ensure an even more productive event. Due to the increasing demand and popularity of expeditions and excursions, marketplace sessions have been de-centralized and excursions have been increased by one day. With four days of countrywide expeditions and 10 itineraries from which to choose, travel professionals will be able to immerse themselves in the product and better learn how to sell the destination.

"BETEX is intended to help professionals extend their skills far beyond just selling travel to Belize," said Nicole Usher of Idea Lab Studios, BETEX's Marketing and Management Company. "BETEX allows agents to experience the destination, thus providing more knowledge to close sales."

Spaces are limited. E-mail [info@betex.bz](mailto:info@betex.bz); or visit [www.betex.bz](http://www.betex.bz)



**Great deals to South America**

ROUTE	FARE
MIA-BUE-MIA	599.00
JFK-BUE-JFK	599.00
JFK-SAO-JFK	483.00
JFK-MVD-JFK	549.00
JFK-COR-JFK	599.00
MIA-SCL-MIA	599.00
JFK-RIO-JFK	483.00
MIA-SAO-MIA	483.00
MIA-CCS-MIA	349.00
MIA-ASU-MIA	823.00
MIA-SRZ-MIA	639.00

\*Fares subject to change without notice. Airport taxes and other fees not included.

**Call us - 1 866 580 2427**

**We offer Electronic Ticketing** Quick and Efficient Purchase with NO Extra Fees

TOLL FREE: 1-866-580-2427 FAX: (305) 455-6331 [WWW.C-TRAVEL.NET](http://WWW.C-TRAVEL.NET)





## Island Hopping in the Grenadines

Claire Bidwell Smith

to most of the larger islands, all of which have stunning white sand beaches and hilly, verdant landscapes. Bequia, Mustique, Canouan, Mayreau and Union Island are all easily accessible, if not by plane then by sailboat. The Grenadines have long been a favored yachting destination, part of what might generate the difference in tourism.

Visit [www.svgair.com](http://www.svgair.com)

From St. Vincent I flew to Union Island where I immediately settled myself onto one of Captain Yannis's ([www.yannissail.com](http://www.yannissail.com)) generously-sized and stocked yachts for a day of exploring the Tobago Cays. These five small, deserted islands are surrounded by coral reefs and sparkling turquoise water. We lunched off of Mayreau, a small, sparsely populated island to the west of the Cays. There are only two resorts on Mayrea, **Dennis' Hideaway** and the **Saltwhistle Bay Club**, both rustic resorts with only a handful of cottages. Mayreau is for those truly seeking seclusion.

East of Mayreau, we anchored off a small, uninhabited island—really nothing more than a floating green hill—for some snorkeling, which could be some of the best in the Caribbean. Unfortunately, the reefs are still recovering from damages sustained in the last hurricane, but we did spend the better part of an hour snorkeling through a popular sea turtle spot where we watched dozens of the serene creatures grazing on sea grass.

At the end of the day it was back to Union Island, which often serves as a steppingstone into the Tobago Cays as well as a stop on the way to Palm Island, a private isle dominated by the posh and pricey **Palm Island Beach Club**. Located near the southern tip of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a chain of 32 islands and cays known for stunning natural beauty and clear warm waters, Palm Island is an intimate casually-elegant resort with just 41 rooms. Through May 27, Palm Island will feature convenient complimentary Sunday Flights on Grenadine Airways between St. Lucia and Union Island, streamlining travel time to Palm Island, an award-winning 135-acre private island, upscale Caribbean resort. Guests are greeted on Union Island with bottled water and chilled face cloths and then enjoy a complimentary eight-minute private boat ride to their exclusive private island escape. Palm Island guests who book the new Sunday service will receive a \$500 savings toward their all inclusive resort stay. All-inclusive nightly rates start at \$815.

Call 800-858-4618; [www.eliteislandsresorts.com](http://www.eliteislandsresorts.com)

### Bequia is the Best

By far, my favorite island in the Grenadines was Bequia (pronounced BEK-way), a hushed secret among the yachting set. Rumored to have one of the prettiest harbors in all the Caribbean, Bequia's Port Elizabeth welcomes long-returning visitors with its gingerbread-trimmed cottages and white sand beaches. Float on your back for a while in the crystalline waters off Princess Margaret Beach and then treat yourself to made-to-order French fries and a cold beer or two at Dawn's Creole Beach Café.

In the evening, head to the **Frangipani** ([www.frangipanibequia.com](http://www.frangipanibequia.com)), a world-famous old hotel that gets the whole island hopping every Thursday with its Frangi Jump Up, a steele band and barbeque party. The next day, when you've recovered from the party, visit the **Old Hegg Turtle Sanctuary** (<http://turtles.bequia.net/>) at the far end of the island where Orton King will proudly show you the 150 turtles he is currently grooming for release back into the wild. Also don't miss **Sargeant Brother's Model Boat Shop** (784-458-3344) and maritime museum. Model boats have long been a pastime on Bequia and these carefully hand-crafted vessels are true works of art.

I spent my remaining time in the Grenadines on **Young Island** ([www.youngisland.com](http://www.youngisland.com)), a truly unique resort: The whole island is the resort and is located just a short skiff's ride from St. Vincent. (Johnny Depp stayed here while filming *Pirates of the Caribbean* in the waters off St. Vincent.) For those who can't afford to rent Mick Jagger's house on the elite Mustique, Young Island is hardly a let down. The entire island is made up of a series of unique cottages, each on its own plot of land, many featuring lap pools or private stretches of beach.

On my flight home, I leaned back into the seat and stretched my suntanned legs out in front of me, letting out a deep sigh. Although I've lost that island of my adolescence, I realized I'd discovered the Caribbean I was thought was gone forever.

### Getting There

There are no direct flights to St. Vincent from outside the Caribbean as the runway is too small to land jet aircraft. However many major airlines, including American ([www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com)) offer direct flights from many American cities into San Juan. From San Juan, **Liat Airlines** ([www.liatairline.com](http://www.liatairline.com)) flies directly to St. Vincent.

The newest service started in Jan. when **Grenadines Airways** ([www.grenadineairways.com](http://www.grenadineairways.com)) launched Sunday service that connects with non-stop service between St. Lucia and New York on American Airlines and Air Jamaica, and from Miami on American Airlines, with originating service in Chicago. Other U.S. gateways connect as well. Flights depart St. Lucia at 4:15 p.m., and arrive Union Island at 4:50 p.m. Flights depart Union Island at 1:15 p.m., and arrive St. Lucia at 1:50 p.m.

*For consolidator airfares and tour packages the Caribbean see page 78-79 of the Listings Section*

## IN THE NEWS

### Sandals Issues Passport Credits

With Americans planning summer trips, now is the busiest time of year for Passport Services, with some processing times taking as long as 10 weeks, naturally passport processing times have increased due to high volume.

Clients heading to the Caribbean, specifically if they book four nights at any one of Sandals and Beaches' 16 resort locations in Jamaica, St. Lucia, Antigua, The Bahamas and Turks & Caicos traveling prior to Dec. 21, 2008 will be reimbursed for expediting services with a \$60 resort credit per application (up to two guests per reservation for a Sandals Vacation and up to five guests per reservation for a Beaches Vacation).

The credit can be used toward services at the resorts, including spa treatments. New regulations require all U.S. citizens to have a valid passport when re-entering the U.S. by air, including those traveling from the Caribbean.

Visit [www.sandals.com/passport](http://www.sandals.com/passport) to download, print and mail the form per instructions.








### POINT VILLAGE

*For couples and families.*

*The 'village within the village' on the Sands of Negril!*

Jamaica: Prime location overlooking Negril's seven miles beach, a great ambiance and as much (or little) to do as you could imagine! All inclusive packages or accommodation only. Accommodations are in charming studios, 1 & 2 bedroom apartments

**For rates & special packages call: 877-764-6852**

Email: [pt.village@cwjamaica.com](mailto:pt.village@cwjamaica.com)

Visit: [www.pointvillage.com](http://www.pointvillage.com)





# Showcasing St. Kitts' Expansion Plans

By Denise Mattia

**R**ichard Skerrett, the St. Kitts' minister of State in the Ministry for Tourism, Sports and Culture, appeared at the gate at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport during an early morning in November 2007, wearing a white polo shirt and casual slacks, despite the fact that representatives from St. Kitts and American Airlines wore tailored dresses and suits, shirts and ties. The event was the inaugural flight of direct, non-stop service from JFK to St. Kitts. He opened his address by acknowledging that his attire was purposeful — "casual and warm like the island and the Kittitian" (pronounced Kah-TISH-an).

Speaking about the tourist industry, Minister Skerrett announced that the figures for visitors coming to St. Kitts in 2007 were down due to the revised WHTI regulation, which requires U.S. citizens to travel with valid passports. "Meetings and incentives groups, many of which are made up of travelers without passports," he explained, "found it easier to stay in the U.S. mainland, or fly to Puerto Rico or the USVs. Yet despite these setbacks," he continued, "many of our objectives to increase visitors from the US to St. Kitts are being met."

This is being accomplished with an aggressive plan to double the ministry's efforts to showcase the island's resources through familiarization trips with meeting-planners and financial services companies. **American Airline's** nonstop service for the tri-state area, and, starting February 16, **Delta Airline's** nonstop service from Atlanta is expected to increase visitor arrivals and further attract investment opportunities to the island. "We are building a luxury market and competing on value," Minister Skerrett said. "It's not always easy to convince a buyer," he added. "One has to visit to believe what is in St. Kitts."

## Who's Not Looking for an Island Like This?

**Jax Fax** was present for Minister Skerrett's remarks that evening at the **St. Kitts Marriott Resort and Royal Beach Casino**. The minister presented an overview of the island's natural resources, boasting unspoiled ecosystems that span virgin coral reefs, rare oceanic rain forests, dormant volcanoes and unique flora, fauna and birds that "populate this ecological gem." He pledged to preserve these resources and the island's cultural heritage that combines Indian, African and European influences, adding that "Travelers are looking for islands like this," he said.

## Master Plans

Looking down from an 800-foot elevation on the southeast peninsula, we were shown the beginnings of what will become **Christophe Harbour**, a master-planned community with two five-star hotels managed by **Auberge Resorts** and the **Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group** respectively. Under the leadership of **Kiawah Development Partners**, the area, spanning 2,500 acres of property with six beaches, will feature a yacht club, a heliport, world-class restaurants, villas and a **Tom Fazio** championship golf course.

Plans also include dredging the **Great Salt Pond** and breaking through to the sea to create a mega-yacht harbor, which will accommodate vessels up to 300 feet in length. The project is



designed to meet the growing demands of affluent second- and third-homeowners and affluent individuals seeking vacation homes with investment potential, which is expected to be finished by 2010. Sales and marketing efforts will be headed by **IMI**, a leading luxury real estate sales and marketing firm in North America. Visit [www.christopheharbour.com](http://www.christopheharbour.com)

Meeting exacting standards while ensuring a luxury lifestyle, **Newfound Property International**, together with local partners, is creating **Ocean's Edge**, a 40-acre complex of vacation and primary residential homes. Located along the hillside and around the beach at the neck of the peninsula at **Frigate Bay**, the design and construction of the development has been accepted into the **Green Globe Benchmarking Program**, the worldwide organization for sustainable travel and tourism. Some 36 apartments will be completed by June 2008, while the balance will be finished by December, 2009. Prices range from \$315,000 to \$1.8 million.

Visit [www.oceansedgestkitts.com](http://www.oceansedgestkitts.com)

## From the Sky to the Sea

A helicopter ride provided a bird's eye view of towns and historic sites of the lush, tropical island fringed with turquoise water lapping gently against lonely, golden beaches. Time permitted scuba diving at two sites along the southeast section of the island, where **Jax Fax** found fluted nudibranchs, lobsters and a host of reef fish. Keeping up with a hawksbill turtle provided great entertainment, until it had had enough of the game and swiftly departed.

The wreck of the **River Taw** offers divers a wide variety of curious fish, including a three-foot barracuda, which patrols the remnants of the cargo ship. In the 80s, **Kenneth Samuel**, owner of **Kenneth's Dive Center** ([www.kennethsdivecenter.com](http://www.kennethsdivecenter.com)), had the ship, a van, a bulldozer and concrete slabs towed to the spot near **Frigate Bay**, where they are fast becoming an artificial reef and home to schools of fish.

The **Coral Reef Alliance**, **The Ocean Foundation** and **Kiawah Development Partners** have assured the **Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis** that the coastal construction planned for **Christophe Harbour** will not damage these reefs. Some Kittitians think otherwise. It would be a tragedy if expansion of the island came at a cost measured in more than dollars.

Future investment opportunities can be found at the **Kittitian Hill at Whitegate**, [www.kittitianhill.com](http://www.kittitianhill.com); the **Marriott Vacation Club**, [www.marriottstkittsbeachclub.com](http://www.marriottstkittsbeachclub.com); the **Sundance Ridge Estates**, [www.sundanceridgestkitts.com](http://www.sundanceridgestkitts.com)

Continued on next page

## BEST BUYS

\$490

### JAMAICA

**Half Moon** offers a wonderful way to pamper significant others, with two romantic spa packages. The **Sweet Indulgences** package treats couples to a 50-minute chocolate massage, with sweetly scented oils and a coffee coconut body scrub. Gift certificates are available for single or couple's treatments for \$245 per person. Couples can also experience the ultimate in Caribbean luxury with the **Sea Side Gazebo** package. With this option, they will be wine and dined with **Champagne** and fresh fruits after the couple's 80-minute chocolate massage; this package is available for \$490 per couple. Visit [www.halfmoon.com](http://www.halfmoon.com)

\$65

### TOBAGO

Nestled on the Southwestern side of the island, **Tobago Island Suites** is a prime location for adventurous vacationers and minutes away from premiere outdoor excursions. Guests can ride the wave to **Grange Bay Beach** and **Buccoo Bay** to explore over and under the water adventures. Beach bums can bask in the glow of the island sun with complimentary use of portable beach chairs and

## St.Kitts Marriott Resort and Royal Beach Casino

On this small Caribbean island, that has just in the last couple of years changed its focus from sugar cane production to tourism, the **Marriott resort** stands out as the premier property. With over 500 rooms, suites and villas, the **Marriott** has 450 more rooms than its biggest competitor.

Located just a 15 minute drive from the airport, this hotel is situated on a beautiful beach between 2 secluded coves. A breakwater provides for a family friendly waterfront complete with more beach chairs and sun shading palapas than one can count. An in-water trampoline beckons children of all ages and a full complement of non-motorized watersports are available. Between the beach and the hotel are 3 freshwater pools, one with swim-up bar, as well as several dining and beverage facilities.

Guest rooms are located in the main building as well as in multiple three story garden buildings. The rooms are well appointed with a colorful, tropical d'Écor, ultra comfortable beds, private balconies and the usual amenities one would expect from an upscale resort. Other resort features include a large casino, award winning kids center and program, multiple dining venues and bars, extensive shopping area, golf course and meeting facilities.

So why recommend this hotel to your clients? The answer is that this hotel is the only one of its kind on this largely undiscovered island. With its pristine rainforests, sugarcane covered hills and largely undeveloped tourism infrastructure, now is the time to send your clients because big plans are in the works. About 10 years ago a highway (actually just a 2 lane road) was built accessing the undeveloped **Southeastern Peninsula** of the island. For now, this area remains largely undeveloped with just a few residential communities and a few great beach bars. On a typical day a drive down this road will lead to more encounters with monkeys, goats and cows than people. However, as stated in the previous article major developments are underway on this island nation so encourage your clients to come soon.

Call 800-223-6388. [www.stkittsmarriott.com](http://www.stkittsmarriott.com) or

umbrellas or thrill seekers can submerge themselves in spectacular diving and snorkeling. Golf lovers can hit a hole in one while overlooking breathtaking views of the Caribbean Sea at world-renowned **Mt. Irvine** golf course, an 18-hole award-winning course carved from the grounds of an old coconut plantation. Prices range from \$65 to \$280 per room per night. Visit [www.tobagosuites.com](http://www.tobagosuites.com).

\$1119

### MARTINIQUE

**Delta Vacations** launched its first-ever packages to **Martinique**, the 426 square-mile tres chic French enclave located in the heart of the Caribbean between **Dominica** (15 miles to the north) and **St. Lucia** (23 miles to the south). The new packages are on sale now for immediate departures, and are commissionable to travel agents at up to 15%. **Delta Vacations** packages feature weekly non-stop service on Saturdays from **Atlanta** via **Delta Air Lines** and a choice of four resorts – the **Karibea Baie Du Galion**, **Karibea Resort Sainte Luce**, **Sofitel Bakoua**, or the luxurious 50-oceanview suite **Cap Est Lagoon Resort & Spa**, a **Relais & Châteaux** property that is also **Martinique's** only four-star deluxe hotel, the 50-oceanview suites **Cap Est** is among the accommodation choices. A seven-night stay at the **Karibea Resort Baie du Galion** starts from \$1,119 per person double valid for travel from **Atlanta** through **March**.

Call 800-872-7786; [www.vaxvacationaccess.com](http://www.vaxvacationaccess.com)

HOW THE OTHER HALF SPENDS TIME TOGETHER



Sun, sand and soothing sea breezes. At Half Moon, our two miles of white sand beaches offer you a much-needed escape.



**HALF MOON**  
ROSE HALL, JAMAICA

On-site call centre: 1-877-HALFMOON • [halfmoon.com](http://halfmoon.com)



By Maria Lisella

**A**ncient Chinese culture is no stranger to long-term planning. So, while this year holds promise and is undoubtedly expected to be the biggest year for tourism to China, tourism executives are planning to reach the moon by 2020.

The glory of the Summer Olympics in Beijing (Aug. 8-24) is expected to not only attract unprecedented numbers of tourists to China, but will also shower other areas in the region, too. During the Olympics, the Autonomous Region of Tibet is hoping to catch on fire when the Olympic torch reaches Mt. Qomolangma in May 2008. Right behind the Olympics is a natural phenomenon that could keep China and some of its neighbors in the special-interest spotlight when China and the South Pacific experience a total eclipse of the sun on July 22, 2009; tours to see it are reportedly selling out almost as soon as they're announced.

### Air Access

Access to China has never been easier as it seems new service is announced daily. Recently, the U.S. Department of Transportation approved four new routes for 2009: **American Airlines** between Chicago and Beijing, **Continental** between New York / Newark and Shanghai, **Northwest** between Detroit and Shanghai and **US Airways** between Philadelphia and Beijing.

Further, paper airline tickets will soon be phased out of the domestic market after the International Air Transport Association stopped offering paper tickets for international routes to Chinese sales agencies in November, 2007. By the end of 2008, China is expected to become the first country to use only electronic air tickets on both domestic and international routes around the end of this year.

E-tickets accounted for 98 percent of all tickets sold on domestic routes on Ctrip.com, one of China's largest Web-based travel agencies, and about 50 percent of international flights, according to a report that appeared recently in the Shanghai Daily.

# China Reaches for the Moon

IATA's plan is to move toward all airlines around the world to stop using paper tickets by June 1, 2008, which would ostensibly save about \$2.5 billion annually. IATA launched its drive for e-ticketing more than three years ago and already about 84 percent of travelers on IATA carriers fly without paper tickets.

### Rail Rides in China

Right after the Summer Olympics 2008, a new luxury train operator will begin year-round services in China. **Tangula Luxury Trains** will offer passengers exclusive rail journeys to remote regions of China with three trains carrying a total of 96 guests each. The northern route traverses the Tibetan plateau from Beijing to Lhasa, Tibet (four nights). The southern route travels from Beijing to Lijiang, Yunnan (four nights), exploring the scenery of Guangxi and Yunnan provinces. The remaining routes (three nights) go in the reverse direction on both routes.

### New Attractions in an Ancient City

Currently about 100 miles of the Great Wall in Beijing is open to visitors, including the famous Juyongguan Pass and the Badaling, Simatai and Mutianyu sections of the Great Wall but millions are being spent to refurbish four scenic spots and to add six more.

As if this spectacular sight were not enough, by 2009 visitors will not only Climb the Great Wall, but will Fly the Great Wheel. Higher than both the London Eye and the Singapore Flyer, the Beijing Great Wheel, which opens in March, will tower 208 meters (682 ft) when finished in 2009. By then, it will be the highest and longest observation wheel in the world with 48 air-conditioned observation capsules, and on a good day even the Great Wall is expected to be visible from the wheel.



### China's Waterways

**Victoria Cruises** has refurbished the Victoria Empress this winter and will resume sailing this month. The multi-million-dollar refurbishment includes 99 refurbished cabins; the Grand Lobby located on the first floor of the ship now contains the front desk concierge, foreign exchange services, the shopping gallery; and a newly constructed Dynasty Dining Room with seating capacity for 198 passengers has been added; and A la carte dining services located in the multifunction room on the fourth deck.

"Every few years, we take the time to refresh and enhance our ships so everything remains top quality and impressive to our guests," said Larry Greenman, for Victoria Cruises.

By 2009, the company will grow its fleet to eight vessels with the introduction of the new Victoria Jenna in April 2009. When she edges out of port on April 26, 2009, she will be the largest and most luxurious vessel plying Yangtze waters. The Victoria Jenna will sail the highly-acclaimed Three Gorges Highlights program, both upstream and downstream between Chongqing and Yichang, as well the round-trip Three

Gorges Explorer itinerary sailing Chongqing – Yichang – Chongqing. The 2009 sailing dates for all eight ships are available online.

Call 800-348-8084; E-mail [contact@victoriacruises.com](mailto:contact@victoriacruises.com)  
[www.victoriacruises.com](http://www.victoriacruises.com)

### Post-Olympic Trips to the Moon

**Sirius Travels**, a company specializing in eclipse tours, said their first tour filled up so fast they had to open another one and are thinking about a third. The best place to see the eclipse is parts of Asia, and China is one of the prime destinations. As for the Chinese Space Agency, it is even offering a one-month space tour called the Boomerang Eclipse Sun Tour. Plans are afoot to funnel these funds toward their space agency and to test some of their equipment for an official lunar landing in 2020.

Robert Glazier, Product and Marketing Special Projects Manager, at **Goway Travel**, reports his company is operating Olympic packages from August 7-26. During this period, all package prices are considerably higher than other periods and accommoda-

tions are strictly available at a choice of only three hotels.

Among the offerings are programs ranging from seven days, Tibet in Depth starting at \$1,488 per person double to the 13-day Journey to the Roof of the World priced from \$3,246 per person double, an itinerary that includes Tibet. Pricing covers land arrangements and flights from Beijing to other parts of China.

"Goway's pre and post Olympic packages can be taken any time outside of the Olympic period as they contain very interesting itineraries which will appeal to the traveler looking beyond the usual basic China offerings," he added.

Call 800-387-8850; E-mail [info@goway.com](mailto:info@goway.com); [www.goway.com](http://www.goway.com)

**Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts** is offering four-night "Pre-Olympic Vacation" packages at its four Beijing properties through June 30.

All four packages feature visits to Olympic sites such as the Bird's Nest and Water Cube. Highlights of the "Art and Sport" package include a Peking Opera School tour, dinner at the late Peking Opera Master Mei Lanfang's

private mansion and a tour of the renowned 798 Art District, a hub of Chinese contemporary art. Guests will also visit the Beijing Sport School, where they can watch China's future Olympic medalists train.

The four packages range from \$493 at the China World Hotel, Beijing; to \$3,082 at the The Kerry Centre Hotel; \$2,808 at the Shangri-La Hotel, Beijing; and \$2,534 at Traders Hotel, Beijing.

Visit [www.shangri-la.com](http://www.shangri-la.com)

### China Travel Mart

Travel trade professionals interested in attending the upcoming **China International Travel Mart** scheduled for November 20 (Thursday) to November 23 (Sunday), to take place at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre, should contact the China National Tourist Offices in the U.S.

Call in New York, 888-760-8218; fax: 212-760-8809; E-mail: [ny@cnto.org](mailto:ny@cnto.org) or, in Los Angeles, 800-670-2228; fax: 818-545-7506; E-mail: [la@cnto.org](mailto:la@cnto.org)

*For consolidator airfares and tour packages to China see page 89 of the Listings Section*

## IN THE NEWS

### Singapore Airlines Honors Indus Travels

**Indus Travels** has been awarded Top Agent for 2006-07 by Singapore Airlines for the Essence of India program. The award was presented to honor Indus Travel's track record for quality and reliability for tours to the Indian subcontinent.

Indus Travels Inc. has been crafting private custom journeys and small group trips to India, Nepal, and numerous exotic destinations since 2001. Their regional expertise also makes Indus Travels the operator of choice for dozens of Canada & America's travel agents. The company is currently featuring two programs that do indeed focus on Singapore as well. The 10-day Capitals of Asia visits Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok priced from \$1,237 and a seven-day program that is called Singapore to Penang Tour, which visits Melacca, Kuala Lumpur, the Cameron Highlands, and Penang starting from \$747 per person double.

Call 866-978-2997; [www.industravels.com](http://www.industravels.com)

### Fall Maiden Sail on the Mekong

**Value World Tours** will offer its inaugural sailing on the Indochine river cruise ship, currently being built in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Indochine, the 48-passenger, colonial style ship is scheduled to be completed by July, 2008. Value World Tours will charter the ship for departures between October 2008 and March 2009. A 10-day cruise starts at \$1,999 per person double, or a 14-day land and cruise package with one night in Ho Chi Minh and three nights in Siem Reap, which starts at \$3,499 per person double; both include airfare from Los Angeles; other U.S. gateways are available.

Call 800-795-1633 or visit [www.valuecruises.net](http://www.valuecruises.net)



**The Best of China Exclusively for Your Clients**

Let Champion Holidays make your client's epic journey a reality. We provide a first-class experience at a reasonable price. From our trained tour guides to carefully crafted itineraries that highlight many unique cultures, it is our privilege to deliver the best of China, exclusively for you, and your clients.

**9 Day China Discovery**  
with Air Fare, Hotel, Meals and Personally Guided Tours  
**from \$1,299**

For more details or your free 2008 Tour Catalogue, please visit [www.china-discovery.com](http://www.china-discovery.com) or call 1-800-888-7658

**CHAMPION HOLIDAYS**  
DISCOVER CHINA AND BEYOND

Champion Holidays 545 Eighth Avenue, 16th Fl. New York, NY 10015



## BEST BUYS

**\$6125 INDIA**

**Greaves Tours** is offering agents a 12% commission on bookings of its new 15-day Family India package when deposited by April 30th. The escorted tour combines Delhi, Jaipur, Agra and the Himalayas for groups of between four to 12 guests, ideal for multigenerational family clients. Monthly departures are set April to Sept.; Nov. 26, and Dec. 19, 2008, (including Christmas and New Year 2009); plus April 8, 2009. Prices start at \$6,125 per adult; the agent commission rate ends April 30.

Call 800-318-7801; E-mail [tours@greavestvl.com](mailto:tours@greavestvl.com)

**\$3895 NEPAL**

With Nepal's political stability increasing, the country is making a huge comeback as a trekking destination. **Mountain Travel Sobek** just added the trek around Manaslu (26,780'), the eighth highest mountain in the world, rewarding not only for its panoramic mountain views, but for the warmth of people residing in the little-visited valleys. The 22-day trek will be led by veteran Mountain Travel Sobek guide Sergio Fitch-Watkins; departing April 7. Land cost starts at \$3,895 per person plus a \$270 special permit fee.

Call 888-687-6235; or visit [www.mtsobek.com/mts/man](http://www.mtsobek.com/mts/man)

**\$7895 JAPAN**

While many people are aware that the dollar takes you much further in Asia than in Europe, few people realize that spring is the ideal time to explore many countries in the region. **Asia Transpacific Journeys** has set out to change that perception with a number of small group itineraries that highlight Asia in springtime.

Their Quintessential Japan Small Group Trip includes an untouristed local festival amidst spectacular cherry blossoms, an overnight in a ryokan, with traditional hot spring baths and Japanese banquet, a special performance of the sacred Kagura dance in the inner chamber of a Shinto shrine, Kabuki theatre and geisha dance performances, private tea ceremony, a gondola ride to view Mt. Fuji, the exclusive Saihoji Moss Garden, and in-depth explorations of Tokyo and Kyoto. The 13-day journey departs April 8 and costs \$7,895 per person double.

Call 800-642-2742; or visit [www.asiatrassic.com/japantrip](http://www.asiatrassic.com/japantrip)

**\$4729 FIJI**

**IslandsEscapes...by Goway and Yasawa Island Resort & Spa** are celebrating the first birthday of the resort's magnificent new beachfront spa with a special offer that offers pampering in luxury - pay for five nights, stay seven. Opened last October on one of the South Pacific's most remote and unspoiled islands, the Baravi Spa draws its name from the Fijian word for beach and stands just meters from the ocean's edge on a sweep of pristine white sand.

Yasawa Island Resort and the Baravi Spa are reached by 35-minute charter flight from Nadi International Airport on the Fijian mainland. From only \$4,729 per person, travelers looking for paradise will receive round trip airfare from Los Angeles, round trip inter-island flights, an airport welcome, all meals, all non-alcoholic beverages, all activities (except spa treatments, scuba diving and game fishing), and access to the VIP airport lounge on departure.

Call 800-667-6601; E-mail [info@islandsescapes.com](mailto:info@islandsescapes.com); or visit [www.islandsescapes.com](http://www.islandsescapes.com)

## Epicurean Stars Go Global, and Guide Local

By Maria Lisella

**F**rench gastronomy authority Michelin, recently awarded Tokyo with more stars than any other city in the world, with 191 stars given to 150 restaurants prompting Michelin Guides Director Jean-Luc Naret to call Tokyo "a shining star in the world of cuisine."

Visit [www.tourism.metro.tokyo.jp](http://www.tourism.metro.tokyo.jp)

The accolade proves that passionate palates must look beyond their DNA to visit the new flavors of global dining. After all, Paris boasts but 64 stars and New York just 42. Further, witness the proliferation of food websites including those by cookbook collectors, a slightly different animal followed by educational sites on wine, beer and the sheer pleasure of dining out. Google food websites and no less than 10 million results show up.

Depending on your client's degree of passion for food or the actual preparation of food, the market is glutted with packages and programs that can test one's mettle, one's hand at pasta making, tooling around markets at pre-dawn hours or fishing for one's supper from a kayak, agents would do well to study their options because food is indeed close to many a traveler's heart.

Below are a variety of options for gastronomes. Wending the streets with a native almost always guarantees an experience that one could never have had without that guide.

**JAPAN:** According to insiders, the very best Tokyo Food Guide is a Shinji Nohara, who some say knows everything not only about food in Tokyo including trips to the fish market, hard to find restaurants, hard to find trendy bars, street food, dessert shops, but also has his eye on spas in Tokyo. Recently, Shinji guided magazine writers Alan Richman around Tokyo for GQ; Adam Platt for Conde Nast Travelers and Jean Tang Tokyo for a cover story that appeared in a recent issue of Northwest Airlines' in-flight magazine and he is one of celebrity chef Tony Bourdain's guides for Tony Bourdain and chef Morimoto in Japan.

The most committed clients may be willing to pay Shinji's \$400 per day per



individual or couple for a very full day starting at 5 a.m. at the fish market and ending after dinner. Shinji drives his own jeep, so he can take no more than four people at a time. If it's more, and he has to rent a vehicle, that price must be added on. Because Shinji has a car he can take travelers not only inside Tokyo, but to remote fishing villages two hours outside the city limits or to cultural centers such as Kamakura or hot spring spas near Hakone. He knows the best and most exclusive spas too. E-mail: [shinji\\_247@yahoo.com](mailto:shinji_247@yahoo.com)

Chizuko Waller studied restaurant and hotel management in San Francisco and now owns some cafes in Tokyo (with her American husband Martin Waller); she helped introduce the first importing of bagels into Japan and is a fully licensed tour guide and conference interpreter. Unlike Shinji she does not have a car, so guests travel with her on the subway, which enhances this most genuine of experiences of both the city and the cuisine. E-mail [ckanbewaller@yahoo.co.jp](mailto:ckanbewaller@yahoo.co.jp)

Alternatively, Chris Rowthorn, author of the Lonely Planet Kyoto and editor of Lonely Planet Japan, has expanded his Kyoto-based tour business out to Tokyo. He boasts great guides, some of whom specialize in food. E-mail [chris@chrisrowthorn.com](mailto:chris@chrisrowthorn.com); [www.chrisrowthorn.com](http://www.chrisrowthorn.com)

**VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA:** By far one of the zaniest packages to come along is from the folks at **Edible British Columbia**, in conjunction with **Blue Planet Kayaking**, which offer a three-day/ two-night gastronomic adventure. Participants meet in Victoria at 6:15 a.m. and travel north to Departure Bay BC Ferry terminal in Nanaimo before arriving at the launch site near Cedar by the Sea. With a little guidance, your clients will paddle confidently toward Pirates Cove while passing otters, harbor seals and having very close encounters with them (they are

friendly creatures).

Clients get professional kayak instruction, go paddling through the DeCourcy Archipelago with river otters, bald eagles, and harbor seals, and enjoy two nights camping under the stars on a beautiful Gulf Islands beach. James Bray, the chef and kayak guide, will produce locally-sourced gourmet meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner with specialties such as pasture raised Cowichan Bay duck breast and confit leg with fingerling potatoes, braised local greens and a pinot noir reduction. All dinners are paired with local BC wines that compliment each dish. The two-night package costs \$699 per person; departures are in June, July, August and early Sept.; minimum group size is four, maximum is 10. Book soon. Call 604-662-3606; E-mail: [info@edible-britishcolumbia.com](mailto:info@edible-britishcolumbia.com); [www.edible-britishcolumbia.com](http://www.edible-britishcolumbia.com)

**CALIFORNIA:** Clients should plan now for their annual beach retreat in the vibrant arts community of Laguna Beach as the **Montage Laguna Beach** has just announced its 2008 package programs and among them is an epicurean delight.

The three-night Epicurean Adventure starts off with staying in a one-bedroom oceanfront suite; private wine tasting with a noted winemaker and Montage Wine Director Christopher Coon; private yacht tour to Catalina Island, complete with elegant picnic lunch and wine tastings; private flight to a noted California winery for behind-the-scenes tours and a special wine country luncheon; multi-course farewell dinner at Studio, designed by Executive Chef James Boyce priced from \$25,000 for a three-night minimum stay, 30-day advance reservation required, Sunday - Thursday through December 31, 2008. Call 866-271-6953; or visit [www.montagelagunabeach.com](http://www.montagelagunabeach.com)

**ITALY:** **Splendida Italia** is offering cooking class packages at the four-star, 55-room Hotel Villa Romana Minori on the Amalfi Coast throughout 2008, beginning at \$420 per person double.

If your clients are serious about their cooking, this program could get them out of their kitchens into one of the gorgeous Amalfi Coast. This six-night package includes accommodations at the Hotel Villa Romana, daily breakfast, six dinners

What happens when the 'Best' collaborates with the 'Best'?

India has emerged the number one travel destination in the Conde Nast Traveler magazine Readers' Travel Awards 2008, considered to be the Oscar awards of the tourism industry. The Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India awarded us the Best Tour Operator to India in North America.

Expect a truly colorful travel experience and a world class service which is superior by the name 'The Best'!

**DISCOVER**

**THE ROYAL INDIA**  
14 Days | 12 Nights | \$4,729

**CLASSICAL SOUTH INDIA**  
14 Days | 12 Nights | \$4,729

**Indus**  
Your Travel Partner

Incredible India

Indus Travels Inc. 110-8311 Westminster Highway, Richmond, BC V6X 4H7  
Tel: 1 604 279 8794, Toll Free: 1 800 998 2002 (US & CAN); Fax: 1 604 608 3421



## SPECIAL INTEREST

(four at the hotel and two at Minori restaurants), all wine, coffee and water at dinner, roundtrip transfers from Naples airport or Salerno train station to hotel, four kitchen lessons with professional gastronome and chef, English speaking escort for tours and lessons, entrance fees and tours throughout Amalfi, Villa Cimbrone, Villa Rufolo and Pompeii that include a visit to a Limoncello and cheese factory and a local fish monger. The rates vary depending on the time of the year but begin at \$2,394,

per person, double occupancy or \$2794 single supplement through April and October through December. Call 800-995-7997; [www.spendidaitalia.com](http://www.spendidaitalia.com)

**NEW YORK:** Context Travel, which pays agents a 5% commission on all bookings is proffering a Chocolate Walk in New York's SoHo that takes 2.5 hours and costs \$55 per person or \$250 per group. The Chocolate Walk starts in the West Village, the neighborhood just north of SoHo, winding past several must-see,

must-smell, and must-taste gourmet shops. Led by a pastry chef with extensive training and experience in desserts and New York's chocolate scene, she will also share information about the storied history of chocolate and its arrival from Europe to America. Window displays will range from boxed truffles and flaky pain au chocolats in one stop, to the tasting of exotic-flavored bars and retro-inspired chocolate treats. Call 888-467-1986; E-mail [info@contexttravel.com](mailto:info@contexttravel.com).

### Caribbean Food Fests

**Puerto Rico:** The Saborea Puerto Rico culinary festival, which will be happening on April 4-6, 2008 on Isla Verde Beach in San Juan. This inaugural, annual culinary festival brings together top Puerto Rican chefs and restaurateurs from around the Island to showcase traditional and nouveau Puerto Rican cuisine. The gastronomic feast will take place on the Blue-Flag Isla Verde beach in San Juan, and will feature cooking demos, rum tastings, a tasting pavilion and kid kitchens.

Visit [www.saboreapuertorico.com](http://www.saboreapuertorico.com)

**Jamaica:** The all-suite Grand Lido Negril Resort & Spa in Jamaica keeps improving and growing its annual Epicurean Escape festival, June 25-29, 2008. During this four-day gastronomic celebration, foodies will not only delve deep into Jamaica's culinary traditions, but also sharpen their own cooking skills with help from none other than Guy Fieri, of "The Next Food Network Star," and the host of "Guy's Big Bite" and "Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives" on the same network. Guy will be joined by a star-lineup of celebrity chefs, including Lynn Crawford of the Four Seasons, Daryl Gassman, Executive Chef at Chops/Lobster Bar and Chef Rupert Crawford of Buckhead Gourmet. Call 800-GO-SUPER; [www.GrandLidoNegril.com](http://www.GrandLidoNegril.com)

**St. Croix, US Virgin Islands:** Several top American chefs will spice things up at the 2008 St. Croix Food & Wine Experience, the premier culinary event of the Caribbean. Rocco DiSpirito of New York, Kevin Rathbun of Atlanta, Richard Reddington of Napa and Robbin Haas of Miami, will be guest judges at Taste of St. Croix, the islands culinary competition, and will each host a Cork & Fork dinner, intimate fundraising dinners paired with a top winery at private homes.

The four-day fundraising fete will take place April 15-19 on St. Croix, US Virgin Islands. Festivities include gourmet dinners, an island-wide culinary competition with wine tastings from celebrated vintners, wine seminars and a wine auction.

Funds raised from the events support local educational, restoration and community programs.

Visit: [www.atasteofstcroix.com](http://www.atasteofstcroix.com) or the St Croix Foundation at [www.stxfoundation.org](http://www.stxfoundation.org)



### Taste of China

China Travel Service has recently launched an 11-day tour for Connoisseurs and Gourmets, Taste of China, which also includes a spa stay in Hangzhou starting from \$3,529 per person double with airfare; \$2,689 for land only.

A trip of a lifetime, this program offers the best of the best of Shanghai, Hangzhou, Xian and Beijing. Highlights includes: lectures on Chinese food, cooking classes, spectacular cultural shows, World Heritage Sites of the Great Wall, Summer Palace, Temple of Heaven, Terra-Cotta Warriors. Gourmet dining in Shanghai & Beijing, plus a much-deserved spa stay in Hangzhou departing May 29, 2008.

Call 800-899-8618; [www.chinatravelservice.com](http://www.chinatravelservice.com)

### Dining in the Dolomites

St. Hubertus at Hotel & Spa Rosa Alpina in the Alta Badia region of northern Italy is an intimate, nine-table restaurant under the direction of Executive Chef Norbert Niederkofler that has recently joined the exclusive ranks of Relais Gourmands, a select designation from Relais & Chateaux shared by 14 restaurants in Italy and 154 dining rooms around the world. St. Hubertus was also awarded two Michelin stars for the first time in 2000, and earned 17 points from both Gault Millau and Guida dell'Espresso.

Call (011) 39-0471-849500; [www.rosalpina.it](http://www.rosalpina.it)

### Secretos de la Cocina (Kitchen Secrets)

The CasaMagna Marriott Puerto Vallarta Resort and Spa is offering foodies a glimpse into the resort's "Secretos de la Familia" program by way of the kitchen. Think you have what it takes to cook like an executive chef? Priced at \$90 per person, CasaMagna invites guests to put their cooking skills to the test alongside Chef Ruiz. The two-hour interactive cooking class includes a behind-the-scenes look at the inner-workings of a resort kitchen. Chef Ruiz will explain the most efficient approaches to store and preserve food, as well as a spin through the kitchen butchery and the always-popular pastry kitchen. For those who prefer to go straight from watching to eating, CasaMagna offers a one hour cooking demonstration priced at \$60 per person.

E-mail [adrian.ugalde@marriott-hotels.com](mailto:adrian.ugalde@marriott-hotels.com)

## BEST BUYS

### \$229 CONNECTICUT

Homewood Suites by Hilton re-opened the legendary Bond Hotel in Hartford, Conn. Nov., after a four-year long project, the extended stay hotel boasts 116 suites after \$5 million in renovations.

The Bond once hosted actress Betty Grable, the original WW II pin-up girl, Harry White, and "Honky Tonk" Pianist. Designed as the perfect home away from home, Homewood Suites by Hilton will feature one and two bedrooms, fully equipped with kitchens and high speed internet. Rates start from \$229.

Call 800-CALL-HOME; [www.homewoodsuites.com](http://www.homewoodsuites.com)

### \$1150 PALAU

Shark enthusiasts are invited to enjoy a shark themed week full of adrenalin-packed activities as the Micronesian Shark Foundation (MSF) holds its 6th annual shark week at the Fish 'n Fins dive shop, in Palau between March 27 and April 3, 2008. Packages start from \$1,150 per person double for five days dedicated shark diving (two tanks per day) with lunch on sandy Rock Island beach; seven night's accommodations; evening shark seminars; shark photography competition; diving newly discovered shark locations; DVD containing footage of the weeks events. Palau is about 10 hours from Honolulu [www.visit-palau.com](http://www.visit-palau.com).

Call 011-680 488 2637; fax 011-680 488 5418; E-mail [info@fishnfins.com](mailto:info@fishnfins.com) or [info@msfpalau.org](mailto:info@msfpalau.org)



### \$480 MONTANA

Expectant parents seeking a peaceful vacation for just the two of them before their child arrives might consider the Babymooners Ranch Getaway just announced by the 320 Guest Ranch, located near Big Sky, Montana.

The Babymooners Package includes a private mountain chalet for the new parents, chilled champagne (or non-alcohol sparkling wine), gourmet hors d'oeuvres and a romantic dinner in the 320 Ranch Steak House. The Babymooner mom can enjoy an hour-long pregnancy massage in their mountain chalet home and both expectant parents can indulge in a peaceful picnic lunch anywhere on the ranch or along the scenic Gallatin River bordering the property.

Gifts are in order to celebrate the new life coming and the 320 Guest Ranch offers a Babymooners Gift Bag with goodies for the family, including fleece baby blanket (choice of blue or pink), 320 Ranch denim shirt for dad, and for mom soothing bath jells and bath crystals in a companion bag. The 320 Guest Ranch Babymooners Package is \$480 couple, per night.

Call 800-243-0320; [www.320Ranch.com](http://www.320Ranch.com)

[WWW.JAXFAX.COM](http://WWW.JAXFAX.COM)

## IN THE NEWS

### GARDENERS' DELIGHTS IN SPRING

#### The New England Flower Show

This March 2008 enjoy two tickets to one of Boston's most beautiful and enduring traditions, the 137th annual New England Spring Flower Show, and overnight accommodations for two with the fragrant new "Flower Show" package from Doubletree Club Hotel Boston Bayside.

For almost 100,000 winter-weary New Englanders and Boston visitors who each year enjoy the arrival of Spring, the annual New England Spring Flower Show brings together the region's most talented gardeners, horticulturalists for breathtaking floral exhibits, competitions and information-sharing.

The "Flower Show" package from Doubletree Club Hotel Boston Bayside includes a one-night stay in spacious well-appointed guest rooms and two tickets to the March 2008 New England Spring Flower Show at Bayside Expo Center. This package is available March 8-16, 2008; prices start at just \$129.

Call 800-222-TREE (8733); [www.hiltonfamilyboston.com](http://www.hiltonfamilyboston.com)

#### Two Gardens, One Ticket

Garden lovers can be enchanted by two magnificent du Pont gardens, nestled only minutes apart in the historic Brandywine Valley near Philadelphia. For \$20, visitors can see both Longwood Gardens and Winterthur Museum & Country Estate, and take a guided tour of the Winterthur mansion. This special offer represents a \$14 savings for visitors, valid through April 30, 2008.

Winterthur is considered one of America's most inspirational gardens and Longwood is considered by many to be the world's premier horticultural display garden.

#### Seasonal Blooms

At Winterthur, spring arrives on a carpet of blue—or so it seems on the March Bank, where hundreds of thousands of tiny, brilliant bulbs burst into bloom. Forsythia cascades down native stonewalls, and heavenly hazes of yellow lure visitors to the Winterhazel Walk. April ushers in cloud-shaped beds of daffodils. Curving paths lead past the luscious pink and white blossoms of magnolias and Sargent cherries. The Sundial Garden—fragrant with lilacs and flowering with quince and spirea—is transformed into a larger-than-life garden bouquet.

Longwood's heated conservatory is a four-acre indoor oasis showcasing more than 5,500 different types of plants from around the world: from the bright yellow flowers of velvet groundsel, to the botanical fireworks display provided by the colorful bronze-leaved glory bower, to the vibrant blue hydrangea, dazzling and fragrant beauty awaits at every turn. Not to be missed is Longwood's award-winning Living Wall of Orchids, a meticulous collage of hundreds of orchids and greenery that create a one-of-a-kind floral tapestry.

Visit [www.winterthur.org](http://www.winterthur.org); [www.longwoodgardens.org](http://www.longwoodgardens.org)

MARCH 2008



# Paradise Found: Naples, Florida

By Kathy Feeney



Town in America" in his book "The 100 Best Art Towns in America." There are at least 130 art galleries in the greater Naples area, including the home and studio of famed black and white nature photographer Clyde Butcher. Visit: [www.clydebutter.com](http://www.clydebutter.com)

The world class Philharmonic Center for the Arts is home to the Naples Philharmonic and the Naples Museum of Art. The center and the area's nationally recognized art festivals has landed Naples on the map as a cultural destination. Visit: [www.thephil.org](http://www.thephil.org).

January through April is peak season for visitors, according to the Naples, Marco Island, and Everglades Convention & Visitors Bureau. From May through December, travelers can find great deals on hotels, because rates drop by one third to one half compared to peak season.

## Where to Stay

Accommodations available in Naples range from cottages to condos and hotels to resorts. JAX FAX stayed at **The Inn of Naples**, which is within easy access of area attractions and less than three miles from the city's upscale Fifth Avenue shopping and dining district. Billed as a "boutique family resort," the Inn of Naples is comfortable and charming with its Mediterranean style exterior architecture. Amenities include refrigerators, meeting facilities, free parking, private balconies, a fitness center, free in-room wireless High-Speed Internet access, and free local and 800 calls. The inn offers 63 standard and deluxe rooms and 36 one-bedroom suites; all non-smoking and all with private balconies. Depending on room and season, rates range from \$169 to \$269. Call 800-895-8858; [www.innofnaples.com](http://www.innofnaples.com)

At the **Naples Grande Beach Resort**, guests stay in an 18-story tower featuring 395 recently refurbished luxury guestrooms and 29 tower suites with balconies overlooking the Gulf of Mexico. The resort also has 50 Bungalow Suites. Dining choices at the Naples Grande include poolside at the Palm Terrace Pool Bar and Grill and the Strip House, a signature steakhouse restaurant. Recreational activities range from playing one of the resorts 15 Har-Tru clay tennis courts to water sports including sailing, windsurfing, and aqua cycles. The Naples Grande Golf Club offers 18-holes of championship golf designed by golf architect Rees Jones. And at the Golden Door Spa at Naples Grande, guests can find themselves in a "Zen-inspired haven of relaxation amidst paradise, featuring 12

Asian-style treatment rooms, a relaxation area, sauna, steam, and eucalyptus rooms." Rates vary with room and season starting from \$249.

Call 800-247-9810; [www.NaplesGrandResort.com](http://www.NaplesGrandResort.com)

Another excellent choice is the **Marco Beach Ocean Resort** on Marco Island. Dubbed the "boutique Ritz," by local residents, the resort features a spa and fitness center, a pool, and five miles of white sand beachfront. Accommodations feature 83 one-bedroom and 15 two-bedroom suites. The resort is a AAA Four-Diamond Award winner and offers casual and fine dining. Sale e Pepe is the resort's signature restaurant. Graced with Renaissance art and architecture, the restaurant features the menus of Chef Alberto Varetto, who was born in Torino, Italy. Depending on the room and the season, rates range from \$239 to \$1,400.

Call 800-260-5089; [www.marcoresort.com](http://www.marcoresort.com)

## Getting There

**Southwest Florida International Airport**, the region's largest airport, is just 30 minutes to the north of Naples in Ft. Myers. Fort Lauderdale International is 90 minutes from Naples and **Miami International** is two hours from Naples. The airport's new **Midfield Terminal** offers daily flights on Southwest Airlines. Air charters and aerial sightseeing tours are available out of Naples Municipal Airport.

Visit: [www.flyneples.com](http://www.flyneples.com)

Call 800-688-3600; [www.ParadiseCoast.com](http://www.ParadiseCoast.com)

## A Postcard from Naples, Florida

Debi DeBenedetto wants you to visit Naples and its surrounding neighbors. "(Our) staff is eager to assist you with travel planning for your clients, site visits, and other requests as needed," said DeBenedetto, Travel Industry Sales and Marketing Manager for the Naples, Marco Island and the Everglades Convention and Visitors Bureau. "We are not currently offering a formalized travel agent destination specialist program for Naples, Marco Island and the Everglades, but we will work with you to provide the best client experience possible in our destination."

The Naples, Marco Island and the Everglades region is "a beautiful and safe year round destination," for all of your clients, according to DeBenedetto. From travelers who adore outdoor adventure to families seeking the perfect beach vacation to couples wanting a golf getaway or a destination wedding, the Naples area offers it all. "Accommodations range in price from budget to five star and everything in between. Most properties offer travel agent commission of at least 10%," said DeBenedetto. "Don't forget that Naples, Marco Island and the Everglades is a featured destination on the Visit Florida Rewards agent miles program. Be sure to log in bookings for any of our destination's participating hotels and resorts to earn your miles! Visit Florida also offers a Florida Vacation Specialist program."

Call 239-403-2379; E-mail Debi DeBenedetto at [debid@colliergov.net](mailto:debid@colliergov.net); [www.paradisecoast.com](http://www.paradisecoast.com)

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to the US  
see page 77 of the Listings Section

## BEST BUYS

**\$349 BOSTON** The Colonnade Hotel, located in the heart of Boston's historic Back Bay, is ushering in the cold with its ever popular, Frosty Fridays weekend package valid through March 31, 2008. Guests reserving the two-night Frosty Fridays weekend package will pay only the outside temperature on Friday night, based on the 5:00 p.m. reading by the National Weather Service, for their room. If the temperature is 19 degrees on Friday night, guests pay \$19 for their Friday night stay and a special rate of \$349 for Saturday night. The package includes a double occupancy room, a choice of two tickets to either the Old Town Trolley Tour or admission and skating rentals at The Boston Common Frog Pond Skating Rink; hot chocolate for two at Brasserie JO and overnight parking.

Call 800-962-3030; [www.colonnadehotel.com](http://www.colonnadehotel.com)

**\$219 WASHINGTON, D.C.** With the warmer weather quickly approaching, The Fairmont Washington, D.C. is ushering in spring with its signature Cherry Blossom Package. Available March 29 through April 20, 2008, the Cherry Blossom Package offers overnight accommodations for two in a luxurious guestroom, valet parking and a box of assorted note cards featuring scenes of the capital's monuments and Cherry Blossoms by Washington, D.C. photographer Jake McGuire. The 2008 Festival will celebrate the 96th anniversary of 3,000 Yoshino cherry trees presented by the Mayor of Tokyo to the City of Washington as a "memorial of national friendship between the United States and Japan." This year's National Cherry Blossom Festival® will be held Saturday, March 29 through Sunday, April 13, 2008. Rates for the Cherry Blossom Package start at \$219 per night based on double occupancy.

Call 800-441-1414; [www.Fairmont.com](http://www.Fairmont.com)

## IN THE NEWS

### Disney Gift Card from United

With the current Year of a Million Dreams celebration at **Disney** and several travel deals from **United Vacations**, agents might want to encourage clients to finally book this magical vacation experience. To start, travelers will receive a complimentary \$150 Disney Gift Card with their vacation purchase of four nights or more at any of the Hotels of the Disneyland Resort including Disney's Paradise Pier(r) Hotel, Disneyland Hotel and Disney's Grand Californian(r) Hotel & Spa. Packages must be booked by April 20, 2008.

Travelers will also receive two days free at the Disneyland Resort with reduced prices on Disneyland Resort Park Hopper Bonus Tickets; valid at all California hotels offered by United Vacations for travel through April 20, 2008. Clients can earn 500 bonus miles per adult - up to 1,000 bonus miles per reservation - with packages booked online.

Call 800-835-7253; E-mail [uvgroups@unitedvacations.com](mailto:uvgroups@unitedvacations.com); [www.unitedvacations.com](http://www.unitedvacations.com)



# Resort Update

Among the biggest developments we are seeing in resorts both domestically, and internationally, is that especially among new builds, travel agent incentives top the list of things to do among executives aiming to reach travelers. Below are a few examples JF culled for this month's issue.

**Dreams Resorts & Spas** announced the launch of their enhanced **Master Agent Education Program** recently.. The seminars will cover a range of resort facilities, amenities, and services including world-class spa features at all the properties, special packages and sales tools, as well as destination wedding packages and honeymoon stays at Secrets, Dreams and Sunscape Resorts & Spas.

Visit [www.dreamresorts.com](http://www.dreamresorts.com)

In 2008, **Elite Island Resorts**, an award-winning Caribbean hotel company, has two programs to recognize and support travel agents. In addition to 15 percent commissions implemented in 2007, the company has added an Elite Island Resorts Reward Bonus Bucks program. The program awards agents a \$25 bonus for each five-night EP booking and \$50 for each all inclusive five-night booking at any of Elite Island Resorts' stunning Caribbean properties.

"Travel agents have long been vital to our success, so naturally we want to support and reward them for their loyalty," said Steven E. Heydt, president, Elite Island Resorts. "That's why, in addition to 15 percent commissions, for 2008, we decided to show our appreciation with Bonus Bucks."

Elite Island Resorts properties are all known for their friendly caring service and top notch facilities; each has its own ambience and attractions. Featured Elite Island Resorts properties include: Galley Bay on Antigua; Long Bay Beach Resort & Villas on Tortola in the British Virgin Islands; Palm Island in the Grenadines; St. James's Club & Villas on Antigua; Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort on St. Lucia; and the newest property, The Verandah Resort & Spa on Antigua.

Call 800-345-0356; [www.eliteislandresorts.com](http://www.eliteislandresorts.com)

Miami-based hotel management firm, **Desires Hotels** announced that it is marketing its portfolio of modern boutique hotels on the global distribution systems (GDS) under the two letter chain code "BT." The new chain code will enable Desires Hotels to promote its collection of hotels together to travel agencies around the world.

The Desires portfolio currently includes the award-winning 93-room Sagamore Hotel, the 66-room **Wave Hotel**, the 83-room **Circa 39**, the 40-room **Hotel Astor**, the 62-room **Betsy Hotel**, the 24-room **St. Augustine Hotel** and the 87-room condo hotel **The Strand Ocean Drive** in Miami Beach, Fla., the award-winning 76-room **San Juan Water & Beach Club Hotel** in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the 110-room **Glenn Hotel** in Atlanta, Ga., the 235-room **Hotel Mela** in New York City, NY, and the 100-room **Iron Horse Hotel** in Milwaukee, WI, scheduled to open the summer of 2008. To support this initiative, Desires has created an Internet portal specifically



designed for travel professional. The Web site provides information about Desires Hotels, how to book on the GDS, knowledge to assist agents in enhancing their clients' stay, as well as commission information.

"With the modern/lifestyle boutique hotel landscape growing, and more consumers demanding these types of hotels, it is vital to offer wider distribution that will create more visibility and appeal for our hotel portfolio," said Doug Carrillo, senior vice president of sales and marketing with Desires Hotels.

"Retail travels agents and the business they generate are an important revenue stream for our company, and we feel that our collection of modern boutique hotels should be more visible to them and their clients."

Call 305- 577-8484; [www.desireshotels.com/agents](http://www.desireshotels.com/agents)

## Hilton Kills Blackout Dates

Ever had a dream vacation thwarted because of date restrictions or capacity controls from your hotel loyalty program? Fortunately, for Hilton HHonors members, that predicament is now a problem of the past. The Hilton Family of Hotels has killed the concept – No Blackout Dates – for all members of its HHonors guest reward program beginning February 1. As long as a standard room is available, members will be able to confirm that room using their HHonors points at more than 2,900 Hilton Family hotels. Agents can visit the web site to assist clients who are registered with the loyalty program.

Visit [www.HiltonHHonors.com](http://www.HiltonHHonors.com)

## A New Species: Condo-Hotels

A new condo-hotel in Orlando, **Premier Resorts The Point Orlando** opens with an introductory family package that will save 20 percent on families of two or more traveling together. The brand new Point Orlando Resort is centrally located 1.5 miles from the Orlando/Orange County Convention Center, less than two miles from Universal Orlando® Resort, Wet 'n Wild®, SeaWorld® Orlando and just minutes from WALT DISNEY WORLD®. The Point Orlando Resort is a condo-hotel featuring four-star amenities, including an outdoor heated swimming pool and hot tub, fitness center, business center, and a three-story clubhouse.

The Orlando family package includes a One Bedroom Executive suite with over 700 square feet of tastefully appointed elegance. The spacious living/dining area offers a queen size leather sleeper sofa, comfortable chairs and a dining table. There's a king bed in the bedroom and a fully equipped kitchen with full size appliances and washer/dryer offer all the convenience of home. The Family Package also includes free high speed Internet and a free deluxe continental breakfast daily. Rates start at \$129 per suite per night and are valid through May 31, 2008.

Call 866-956-2015; [www.thepoint-orlando.com](http://www.thepoint-orlando.com)

## Collette's Agent Focus Campaign

Collette Vacations is now offering travel agents an additional way to earn revenue. As of March 1, 2008, travel agents can purchase commissionable tour options for their clients who are traveling on a Collette tour departing May 1 and later. Collette Vacations is the first tour operator to provide agents with this earning advantage. "As part of our Collette Agent Focus campaign which started in 2007, we are now proud to add another potential stream of revenue for agents," Daniel Sullivan, Jr., "This is an incredible opportunity for our partner travel agents to increase their revenue in 2008 and the future," Kramich said. "To help them maximize this advantage, Collette will host webinars to train agents on how to sell these options to their clients." Collette's Agent Focus campaign also includes offering preferred agents 20% commission and all non-preferred agents 17% commission on land for departures in August 2008; January 2009; February 1 through February 15, 2009; and August 2009. And all agents receive 10% commission on air purchased with a tour. Collette also has added thousands of guaranteed departure dates in 2008, as well as guaranteed land pricing for European packages regardless of currency exchange fluctuations.

"Today's travel agents have seen a vast array of their earning opportunities decline due to various situations. At Collette we continue to find new ways for agents to make up that lost revenue," Sullivan said. "We recognize the value agents provide and we want to reward them for that value and commitment to Collette." Call 800-340-5158; [www.collettevacations.com](http://www.collettevacations.com)

## NEST Gets Cozy with New Suppliers

The Network of Entrepreneurs Selling Travel (NEST) has increased its product offerings by signing on several new preferred supplier partners listed below:

**GrandLuxe Rail Journeys** is a premier train offering deluxe rail tours throughout the United States and Canada.

**Hurtigruten** (formerly known as Norwegian Coastal Voyage) offers year-round voyages and continues a century-long tradition of year-round sailings along Norway's stunning fjord-filled west coast, Hurtigruten also has two luxury exploration ships operating in Antarctica and South America, and is one of the few cruise lines to explore the Arctic's last wilderness of Spitsbergen.

**MSC Cruises'** modern and competitive fleet of eight stylish ships offers a wide choice of itineraries and products, together with a high level of service, in the best tradition of Italian hospitality. The line is recognised as the only Italian cruise operator able to satisfy client's desires for a fusion of Italian-style cruising with the best of international features. Destinations include: the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, South America, South Africa, the Caribbean, and Trans-Atlantic journeys.

**Carey International** is the world's largest owned and franchised chauffeured services company with a worldwide network of owned and operated subsidiaries, licensees and affiliates, serving over 530 cities in more than 50 countries.

Call 888-245-NEST x3008; contact Andrew Wainer at [awainer@jointhenest.com](mailto:awainer@jointhenest.com); [www.jointhenest.com](http://www.jointhenest.com)

### Providing your travel programs an extra boost

**Our Escrow products and services enable you to:**

- **Promote** professionalism and dependability to the travel agents and consumers you serve.
- **Comply** with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), as required by charterers and air carriers.
- **Streamline** your records with an automated escrow accounting system.
- **Be efficient** with online capabilities to view account activity.
- **Be cost effective** by releasing funds to providers of transportation or travel services to cover initial deposits and prepayments as required.
- **Earn** interest while the funds are on deposit in an FDIC-insured deposit account.

We offer a variety of products to meet your varying travel industry needs – from our recognized Travel Funds Protection Plan™ to public charter depository escrows, trust agreements and special purpose depository agreements. Please call us today.

David Valpredo, Senior Vice President  
Phone: 248-729-8375  
[David.Valpredo@NationalCity.com](mailto:David.Valpredo@NationalCity.com)

**Our Travel Funds Protection Plan is endorsed by the National Tour Association® (NTA) and American Society of Travel Agents® (ASTA). Also, our plan has been approved as a consumer protection escrow plan under the California Seller of Travel Law and is in compliance with various states with Seller of Travel Law.**

Member FDIC • ©2007, National City Corporation.  
Allegiant Asset Management Company ("Allegiant") is an SEC-registered investment advisor and a subsidiary of National City Corporation. Allegiant provides travel escrow products and services through Allegiant Institutional Services, a division of National City Bank. CS-27632



# Going Green at The Ritz

By Kathy Feeney

The Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota was recognized for its environmental commitment and performance when the hotel received the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) "Green Lodging" Certification during a presentation at the resort on January 3, 2008. The Sarasota property is the first Ritz-Carlton to receive this recognition. "This designation reinforces our reputation and commitment to be known as a positive, supportive member of our community and sensitive to the environment," said James McManemon, general manager of The Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota.

"DEP is proud that The Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota is making the commitment to protect Florida's environment by joining the Florida 'Green Lodging' Program," said Deborah Getzoff, DEP Southwest District Director, who presented the certification to McManemon. "Their leadership can serve as an example to other hotels to adopt green practices, which conserve resources and save money." The Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota is the 70th facility in the State of Florida to receive the designation, according to Getzoff.

Hotels designated as members of Florida's "Green Lodging" Program must execute a variety of green practices ranging from implementing water conservation via low flow plumbing fixtures to maintaining a linen reuse program to purchasing recycled materials. Also, by using "green" cleaning products and high efficiency air filters, as well as frequently cleaning air handler units. The voluntary program was established by the State of Florida to reward environmentally conscious hotels. The greening of The Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota, "was 100 percent driven by our employees who can be credited with taking the important measures to raise awareness, improve efficiencies, and create a healthier environment for both themselves and for our guests," said general manager McManemon.

Located on the Gulf-coast of central-west Florida within easy access to Sarasota's upscale shopping, cultural, boating, and fishing amenities, the 266-room destination resort offers championship golf, private beach-front facilities, award-winning dining choices, a Ritz-Carlton Club Level with its own private lounge and concierge team. The Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota was named by "Zagat" as one of "50 Top Resorts" in the U.S., and it also garnered Mobil's Four-Star rating for its free-standing luxury spa.

Call 800-241-3333 or visit: [www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)



Deborah A. Getzoff, district director, of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), presented James McManemon, general manager, The Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) "Green Lodging Certification," at The Ritz-Carlton in Sarasota on January 3, 2008.

## TPOC Presents 6th Annual Conference

Travel Professionals Of Color (TPOC) will be combining a touch of pleasure with business at its Sixth Annual Conference and Trade Show to take place April 28-May 3 at Sea aboard with Carnival Cruise Line's The FANTASY. Among the major themes of the conference are Multi-Cutlural and Heritage Tourism.

TPOC is an association of minority travel professionals comprised of travel agency owners, managers, travel consultants and independent contractors. The organization provides training to assist travel agents reach a rapidly growing "niche" market, the multi-cultural minority travel community and seek out travel suppliers who have an interest in reaching this market; therefore, making available to TPOC members discounts on both services and products as well as the possibility of increased commission levels as the membership of the organization grows.

The group's secondary mission is to create awareness within the travel community of the professional and qualified TPOC agents who want and deserve their business.

The TPOC Conference & Trade Show was originally organized in August, 2002 by two minority travel agents in Denver, CO. Because the first Conference in 2003 was received so well, Charlotte Haymore and Betty Jones decided to take the conference to the next level and turned TPOC T into a Limited Liability Company. Its primary mission is to sponsor conferences and other positive programs for minority travel agents with a focus on profitability and raising an awareness within the travel community regarding professional services provided by capable minority travel agents.

Founders Charlotte Haymore of Charlott'es Cruises - N - Tours is known in the Denver Community as the "Specialty Cruise Diva," while current Treasurer and Conference Administrative Director, Betty Jones, has logged over 20 years in the travel business and is owner of CB Jones Travel Services.

Among the topics that will be covered at the Conference are how to direct the minority Travel money to the minority travel agents; learn how to market to all minority communities including the African American, Hispanic, Asian American and Native American Travel Community as well as general guidelines on how to make sure your Agency is run professionally and with integrity, about issues regarding financial accountability, how to earn CLIA points for accreditation.

Conference rates are \$149 per room plus tax, based on either single or double occupancy. Call 800-228-9290

Memberships cost \$1,200 for the Corporate rate; \$650 for Associate level; \$199 for Individuals; and \$149 for Students.

For information on TPOC, call 866-901-1259; fax 303-297-1402; E-mail [chaymore@tpoc.org](mailto:chaymore@tpoc.org) or [bjones@tpoc.org](mailto:bjones@tpoc.org); [www.tpoc.com](http://www.tpoc.com)

### CORRECTION

In last month's cruise column, the web site for Hapag Lloyd Cruises should have been [www.hl-cruises.com](http://www.hl-cruises.com). We regret and apologize for the error.



## Annie Dundas to Sell Pure New Zealand

Annie Dundas has been named Tourism New Zealand's (TNZ) new Regional Manager - North America, effective Monday, January 28. Santa Monica-based for her three-year term, Dundas will lead the destination's trade, media and marketing efforts in the U.S. and Canada, overseeing TNZ's offices in Los Angeles and New York. Dundas succeeds

Bruce Lahood, who completed his term on January 25.

"North America is our third largest market, accounting for 264,175 visitors in 2007," Dundas noted. "This is a strong market that is very well served in key travel niches including epicurean, active adventure, culture and wildlife; our North American focus will be ongoing support of our trade partners with the solid training and tools they need to effectively sell New Zealand.

Protecting New Zealand's pristine landscapes "tops our agenda," she noted. "Sustainable tourism will be evident when our capital city Wellington hosts the United Nation's World Environment Day on June 5.

Dundas, a 13-year veteran of TNZ who started fresh out of college in the Wellington office in 1995, has had numerous roles with the tourism board. Last year, Dundas spearheaded TNZ's Rugby World Cup Project in Paris.

Visit [www.newzealand.com](http://www.newzealand.com)



## Luis Moura to Scale New Heights for Portugal

Luis Moura is the new Managing Director of the Portuguese Trade and Investment Office in New York City, which oversees investment, trade and tourism in North and Central America. Moura was transferred to New York after four years as the Director of the Portuguese Trade & Tourism Commission in Toronto, Canada. During his time in Canada he oversaw a 40 per-

cent increase in exports from Portugal and a 10.3 percent increase in the number of sleepovers by Canadians in Portuguese hotels during 2006. Moura holds a degree in Economics from the Universidade Nova in Lisbon, his hometown.

Moura arrives at a turning point for Portugal because during the last two years, the number of Americans visiting Portugal has grown by 20%, and direct flights from the U.S. increased by 30%.

Further, Portugal is getting more

attention from other quarters: this year MSN Travel named Lisbon #1 among its top 10 Affordable European Cities; Sherman's Travel named Lisbon #3 on its list of "Top 10 Places to Go in 2008-Before the Crowds Do;" The New York Times listed Lisbon as its #2 ranked place in its list of "53 Places to Go in 2008; and, the Yahoo Travel Guide said that Lisbon is the "last affordable European city and was our top mover in 2007."

Visit [www.visitportugal.com](http://www.visitportugal.com)



## Sheraton Cable Beach Names Neubauer as GM

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide announced the appointment of 23-year hotel industry veteran Andrew Neubauer to the position of director of sales and marketing of the all-new Sheraton Cable Beach Resort in Nassau, The Bahamas.

Neubauer, who will be based in Nassau, Bahamas, will provide direction and focus to the sales, catering and convention services teams; and administer a comprehensive hotel marketing strategy including promotions, public relations, and advertising. He will also work with Cable Beach Resorts on cross-marketing and promotional cus-

tomers development endeavors.

Neubauer arrives from his post as director of group sales for the past six years at The Westin Diplomat Resort & Spa in Hollywood, Fla. where he led a team of 14 sales managers.

Neubauer held several sales management positions for The Ritz-Carlton from 1996 to 2002. As director of incentive sales for the Ritz-Carlton, Resorts of Caribbean and Mexico, he was responsible for generating \$6 million in room revenue for four resorts. Prior to that, he served as associate director of sales for The Ritz-Carlton in Amelia, Island, Fla., and The Ritz-Carlton, Huntington Hotel, in Pasadena, Calif., where he assisted leading sales teams, mentored sales managers, and

supported the director of sales and marketing in day-to-day operations, as well as positioned the resorts in the customer market place.

Neubauer began his career in the hotel industry at the Miami Airport, Hilton & Marina, in their corporate management training program.

Cable Beach Resorts is comprised of the all-new Sheraton Cable Beach Resort, Wyndham Nassau Resort and the Crystal Palace Casino. The resort's 35,000-square-foot Crystal Palace Casino is the only casino on Cable Beach offering Vegas-style gaming and features nearly 500 state-of-the-art slot machines.

Visit: [www.CableBeachResorts.com](http://www.CableBeachResorts.com); [www.starwoodhotels.com](http://www.starwoodhotels.com)



# FamiliarizationTrips

## EGYPT

Apr 16, to Apr 24. From \$999\* Air & Land (Companions Welcome). Includes: Roundtrip Non-Stop Air JFK To Cairo on EgyptAir. 2 nights in Cairo at the 5-Star Sofitel Le Sphinx Hotel, breakfast. 3-night Deluxe Queen Nabila Nile cruise, all meals. Outside Junior-Suite Cabin. All shore excursions. First Class Sleeper Train from Cairo to Luxor, Aswan to Cairo. Sightseeing in Cairo AC motorcoach.  
Foreign Independent Tours Inc: 800-248-3487; [www.fittours.com](http://www.fittours.com)

## EGYPT, ISRAEL, GREECE, TURKEY

**Port Said (Egypt), Ashod, Jerusalem-Bethlehem, Limassol, Cyprus, Antalya, Turkey, Mykonos and Santorini**

- 12 days, \$1,695.00, Dates: April 21, May 5, May 19 and June 2, 2008. Round Trip Airfare from New York, visiting Athens, Hotel, Breakfast, Tours and a 7 day cruise visiting above destinations. All transfers, service charges at hotel and all admission fees where tours are indicated in Athens.

**Mykonos, Santorini, Patmos, Rhodes, Crete, Kusadasi (Ephesus) Turkey.**

- 10 days, \$1,595.00, Dates: Every Wednesday March 24 - June 2, 2008.. Round Trip Airfare from New York, visiting Athens, Hotel, Sightseeing Tours and a 4 day cruise visiting above destinations. All transfers, service charges at hotel and all admission fees where tours are indicated on Athens.

**Mykonos, Crete Santorini, Patmos, Kusadasi (Ephesus) Turkey, Rhodes and Istanbul Turkey.**

- 12 days, \$1,695.00, Dates: Every Monday, March 31 — June 2, 2008. Round Trip Airfare from New York, visiting: Athens, Hotel, Sightseeing tours and a 7 day cruise visiting: All transfers, Service Charges at Hotel, and All admission fees where tours are indicated in Athens. Duration  
ATI Tours, Inc.: 800-417-1430; 212-302-7070; Fax: 212-354-8177; [www.atitours.com](http://www.atitours.com)

## GREECE & THE GREEK ISLANDS

**Athens, Greek Islands & Turkey Cruise**

9 Days, 3 Nights Greece & 4 Nights Greek Islands & Turkey Cruise \$1,299 ppdo + Tax. Round-trip Non-stop flight on Olympic Airlines from New York JFK to Athens, transfers, 3 nights at a 5-star Athens hotel with breakfast daily, and a 5

day/4 night cruise to the Greek Islands and Turkey. 4\* Superior Titania Hotel features 385 contemporary guestrooms and suites. Includes: Athens City Tour to the Acropolis and museums. 5 days / 4 nights Golden Classics Cruise to the Greek Islands and Turkey aboard the M/V Aquamarine of Louis Cruises. Option Tours: Athens By Night Tour (Optional - \$85 per person), Full-Day Tour of Delphi (Optional - \$115 per person; Extend your trip with a 4 Day / 4 Night Classical Greece Land Tour (Optional - \$500 per person)  
Aegean Mediterranean Cruises & Tours 888.968.0335 [aegean@aol.com](mailto:aegean@aol.com)  
[www.aegeanmedtours.com](http://www.aegeanmedtours.com)

## INDIA, NEPAL

**Delhi, Jaipur Pink City, Taj Mahal, Agra, Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur Nepal**

Depart May 30, 2008 for 12 days at \$2667. Includes, airfares, hotels, daily buffet breakfast, transfers, tours guides and noteworthy Elephant Ride tour in Jaipur, Taj Mahal by sunrise. Spouse permitted at extra supplement. Airport and security taxes extra. Optional 4 days Extension to KASHMIR. From June 9-12, 2008 is available upon request.  
Himalayan International Tours: 212-564-5164, Fax: 212-564-2188; [www.himalayantours.com](http://www.himalayantours.com)

## INDIA

**Delhi-Agra-Ranthambore-Jaipur**

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](mailto:sans@sansincrediblevacations.com)

## TURKEY

**Istanbul, Ankara, Cappadocia, Konya, Antalya, Ephesus and more**

March 20 to April 1, 2008 from \$895. 13 days/11 nights, Land only. Land+air from JFK: \$1,395. All transfers per itinerary posted online. First class hotel accommodations. Breakfasts and 11 dinners. Sightseeing. FloUSA: register at [www.flo-usa.com](http://www.flo-usa.com) or call 888-435-6872

# IndustryEvents

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
Feb 21-24	BIT 2008	Milan, Italy	<a href="http://www.discoveramericapavilion.com">www.discoveramericapavilion.com</a>
March 4,6,10,12	Discover Africa 2008	WA, CA, AZ, CO	<a href="http://www.APTA.biz">www.APTA.biz</a>
Mar 5-9	ITB Berlin 2008	Berlin, Germany	<a href="http://www.itb-berlin.com">www.itb-berlin.com</a>
March 7-9	CRUISE 3SIXTY	Ft Lauderdale	<a href="http://www.cruise360.com">www.cruise360.com</a>
March 13-16	TUR 2008	Göthenburg, Sweden	<a href="http://www.discoveramericapavilion.com">www.discoveramericapavilion.com</a>
Marrch 19-22	MITT 2008	Moscow, Russia	<a href="http://www.discoveramericapavilion.com">www.discoveramericapavilion.com</a>
April 7-9	TREX 2008	Antigua Guatemala	<a href="http://www.trexca.com">www.trexca.com</a>
April 8-10	GIBTM 2008	Abu Dhabi	<a href="http://www.reedtravelexhibitions.com">www.reedtravelexhibitions.com</a>
April 28-May 1	Home Based Travel Expo	San Diego	<a href="http://spring.homebasedagentshow.com">spring.homebasedagentshow.com</a>
April 28- May 2	TPOC at Sea 2008	Aboard Carnival Funship	<a href="http://tpoc.org/conferenceinfo.html">tpoc.org/conferenceinfo.html</a>
May 15-18	Travel Trade's Cruise-A-Thon	Vancouver, Canada	<a href="http://www.ttshows.com">www.ttshows.com</a>
June 16-18	Vacation.Com Annual Conference	Las Vegas	<a href="http://www.vacation.com">www.vacation.com</a>
June 21 to 25	Caribbean Tourism Summit	Washington, DC	<a href="http://www.caribbeantravel.com">www.caribbeantravel.com</a>
July 11-20	15th Annual Dive Fest	East Coast, USA	<a href="http://www.discoverdominica.com">www.discoverdominica.com</a>
Oct 13-16	ITB Asia 2008	Singapore	<a href="http://www.discoveramericapavilion.com">www.discoveramericapavilion.com</a>
Oct TBA	ABAV	Rio de Janeiro	<a href="http://www.discoveramericapavilion.com">www.discoveramericapavilion.com</a>
Nov TBA	CITM 2008	Shanghai, China	<a href="http://www.discoveramericapavilion.com">www.discoveramericapavilion.com</a>
Nov 10-13	World Travel Market 2008	London, UK	<a href="http://www.discoveramericapavilion.com">www.discoveramericapavilion.com</a>
Nov 15-19	2008 NTA Annual Convention	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	<a href="http://www.ntaonline.com">www.ntaonline.com</a>

# 2008

# MarketPlace

TO CREATE YOUR OWN CATEGORY  
IN THIS DIRECTORY  
CALL KATIE AT 203-301-0255.

## AIR CHARTER BROKERS

**AIR BROKERAGE INTERNATIONAL**  
800-494-7886 • [www.airbrokerage.com](http://www.airbrokerage.com)

Aircraft charter and leasing service for travel agents, tour operators, special interest/affinity groups, executive charters, cruise lines, government agencies and air carriers worldwide.

Contact Steve Berger: [steve@airbrokerage.com](mailto:steve@airbrokerage.com)  
7947 Raccoon Hollow Court, Pleasanton, CA 94588;  
FAX: 925-417-1341

## BLUE STAR JETS LLC.

866-438-9868 • [www.luxurydivision.com](http://www.luxurydivision.com)

Luxury pivate jet service provider. Only four hours notice needed to access a wide selection of jets from light to jumbo. All related services including transfers and in flight meal service.

805 Third Ave., 16th Floor, New York, NY 10022;  
Fax: 212-888-1758

## AIRLINES OFFERING CHARTER SERVICES

### NORTH AMERICAN AIRLINES

718-656-2650 • [www.northamair.com](http://www.northamair.com)

SITA: JFKSSNA; 2B757-200ER ETOPS 211 seats, convertible to 24 Business 179 Economy; 2 B737-800NG ETOPS 163 seats. Worldwide operating authority.

Contact: Bill Grobasky, Deidre Stiehm;  
[marketing@northamair.com](mailto:marketing@northamair.com); FAX: 718-995-3372  
Building 75, North Hangar Rd, JFK Airport Jamaica, NY 11430

## A WORLDWIDE CHARTER

800-501-4263 • [www.worldwidecharters.com](http://www.worldwidecharters.com)

Full service international air charter services. Providing all aircraft types, ground handling, catering and fueling. From individual charters to dedicated aircraft. Specialists in customizing charter programs for professional associates, sport teams, athletic events, university games, special events, sub-service, military and wholesale. Quotes online.

905-684-1100; FAX: 877-877-6288;  
After Hours: 905-687-1225: [sales@worldwidecharters.com](mailto:sales@worldwidecharters.com);  
81 Welland Ave., St. Catharines, ON L2R 2N2 Canada; 8710  
Hillsborough Ave., Ste 326, Tampa, FL 33615

## AIR CHARTER ESCROW DEPOSITORY BANKS

### NATIONAL CITY BANK

Contact: David Valpredo: 248-729-8375  
[www.nationalcity.com/corporate](http://www.nationalcity.com/corporate)

Leading depository escrow bank for public air charters, private charters, special purpose depository escrow agreements, surety trust agreements, stand-by letters of credit, Travel Funds Protection Plan (TFPP) and more. Our clients include: charter operators, air carriers, charter brokers, travel agents, cruise lines, wholesale tour operators and participating ground vendors. Domestic and international coverage.

Fax: 248-729-8803. [David.Valpredo@nationalcity.com](mailto:David.Valpredo@nationalcity.com)  
755 West Big Beaver, Suite 1400, Troy, MI 48084

WWW.JAXFAX.COM

## SPECIAL INTEREST TOURS

Customized F.I.T.S & Group Tours: Worldwide

**BRAGA TRAVEL CONSULTING**  
888-828-8747 • [www.chinalife.com](http://www.chinalife.com)

305-606-9894, Fax: 305-382-4294, [bonniebraga@msn.com](mailto:bonniebraga@msn.com),  
6500 Kendale Lakes Drive, Ste 107, Miami, FL 33183

Enjoy Great Activities from Asia (China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore, India, Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia...) to South America (Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru). Live the Adventure with Sports Tours and Eco-tourism (Brazil). Count on the best airfares and connections. Stay in Fine Places worldwide. Take the Leisurely Route of Cruises. Experience Study tours including Traditional Chinese Medicine. Incentive Travel. Customized bi-lingual tours in Spanish or Portuguese and English with guaranteed departures to China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand. The best of Brazil from the Amazon to Iguassu - cruises, package tours, eco-tourism, adventure.

Customized F.I.T.S & Group Tours  
Italy

### VISIT ITALY TOURS

800-255-3537 • [www.VisitItalyTours.com](http://www.VisitItalyTours.com)

310-649-9080, Fax 310-649-6880, [info@VisitItalyTours.com](mailto:info@VisitItalyTours.com)  
9841 Airport Blvd. Suite 1424, Los Angeles, CA 90045

Visit Italy Tours is Italy's finest Tour Operator specializing in F.I.T.S and custom designed tours to Italy. No one does Italy like us from the cultural capitals of Rome, Florence, Venice, Naples, Milan and Palermo or the minor art cities of Siena, San Gimignano, Assisi, Cortona, and Taormina. Choose from our vast selection of hotels, car rentals, chauffeur driven services, rail, gourmet food and wine itineraries, romantic escapades, pre and post cruise programs. Our expert staff caters to both individuals and group travel.

## TRAVEL INDUSTRY EVENT

### WELCOME TO KAZAKHSTAN!

To the 8th Kazakhstan International Fair  
"TOURISM & TRAVEL" KITF 2008

24 – 26 April  
Almaty, IEC "Atakent", Kazakhstan

### FLY



888 855 1557  
Email : [Usa.sales@airastana.com](mailto:Usa.sales@airastana.com)  
[www.airastana.com](http://www.airastana.com)

## ATTENTION AGENTS

Advertisements and statements contained within the directories (FAM/MarketPlace/Advertisers Directories) herein are the sole responsibility of the persons or entities that post the advertisement, and JAX FAX Magazine does not make any warranty as to the accuracy, completeness, truthfulness or reliability of such advertisements. JAX FAX has no liability whatsoever for any third party claims arising in connection with such advertisements or any products or services mentioned therein.

Please report any issues or complaints to: [complaints@jaxfax.com](mailto:complaints@jaxfax.com)

## WOMEN ONLY TRAVEL

Cotswolds, York, Lincoln and Bath,  
**BRITISH HERITAGE TOURS**

TOLL FREE TO THE UK: 800-964-2819

Email: [paul@bhtours.co.uk](mailto:paul@bhtours.co.uk) • [www.bhtours.co.uk](http://www.bhtours.co.uk)



Sheer indulgence at the Thermae Bath Spa, a chocolate experience, antiquing in the Cotswolds, Christmas Markets in York, Lincoln and Bath, 'Fly to China' the breakable kind at Wedgwood, Spode and Portmeirion.

Richmond Place, 125 Boughton, Chester CH3 5BH, UK  
Fax: 01144 (0)1244 320072

## WORLDWIDE HOTEL BOOKINGS

### BOOK IT ONLINE WITH



### 15% COMMISSION

Over 2500 resorts & thousands of hotel rooms worldwide. Excursions, Tickets, Transfers, Tour Programs and Professional Support Services.

Call us toll free today  
**866-390-1575**  
[www.canamreceptive.com](http://www.canamreceptive.com)

# MarketPlace

## NEW EASY FORMAT

### ANY CONTENT

your heart desires for as little as

**\$50 per insertion\***

Text...Images...Logo...  
Background tints or images  
Your imagination is the limit!

**One Simple Price**  
\*up to 5 inch of data at \$50 per inch

For details call  
**Katie or Chantal**  
at 800-952-9329





**Sky Bird Travel & Tours**  
Your Global Partner



# Best Consolidated Fares to Worldwide Destinations on All Major Airlines. We are Your Global Partner.

Leading the way for over 30 years

please call **1-888-SKY-BIRD**  
(759-2473)

or visit **www.skybirdtravel.com**  
or email **info@skybirdtravel.com**

For Worldwide Destinations:

**USA / PUERTO RICO / LATIN AMERICA / EUROPE  
MIDDLE EAST / ASIA / AFRICA / SOUTH PACIFIC**

Offices:

*Detroit / Chicago / New York / Washington / Los Angeles / San Francisco / Houston*



YOU ARE JUST A FEW STEPS AWAY  
FROM THE KINGDOM (SAUDI ARABIA)

CHOOSE FROM OUR CONVENIENT AFTERNOON DEPARTURES TWICE A WEEK NON STOP FROM NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON TO JEDDAH & RIYADH. OUR SUPERIOR ONBOARD SERVICE OFFERS A WIDE CHOICE OF AWARD WINNING CUISINE, MORE ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS AND MORE LEGROOM. EXPERIENCE THE COMFORT AND LUXURY OF OUR FIRST AND BUSINESS CLASS SERVICE ONBOARD STATE OF THE ART AIRCRAFT. TO BOOK A SEAT CALL SAUDI ARABIAN AIRLINES ON 1-800-4-SAUDIA OR CONTACT YOUR LOCAL TRAVEL AGENT.



**SAUDI ARABIAN AIRLINES**  
الخطوط الجوية العربية السعودية

[www.saudiairlines.com](http://www.saudiairlines.com)