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Andalusia Reignites with New-Found Relevance

Even if you are not an aficionado before you go to Spain's southern autonomous region of Andalusia, the syncopated rhythms of flamenco are at the heart of everything you will see, taste, hear and feel about this region.

For years, Andalusia was sold on the strength of three words: Costa del Sol. It earned a reputation as a seniors' snowbird destination with cheap long-term stays in towns...

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You Can't Win if You Don't Play

No, I am not talking about the lottery. I am referring to the value of belonging to a consortium or similar type of travel agent's marketing organization. These organizations provide today's travel agent with the tools and training needed to stay viable in an increasingly competitive marketplace. When faced with internet travel sites and other direct to consumer marketing, it is now more important than ever that agents align themselves with an organization that can provide the resources and clout needed to stay competitive.

Educational Opportunities

Having recently returned from Vacation.com's annual conference in Las Vegas, it is very clear to me the tremendous benefits that membership in a consortium offers. This four-day event featured 400 learning and networking opportunities, including nearly 200 hours of training sessions, motivational speakers, a preferred supplier trade show, nightly receptions and show tickets. The fact that over 25% of Vacation.com's members attended the conference is a tribute to the value they place on the educational and networking opportunities. All major consortiums/marketing organizations offer their members similar annual conferences.

Technology

In this rapidly evolving industry, technology is playing an

ever-increasing role in helping travel agents organize, sell and communicate with their clients. Here again, the value of membership becomes clear. These organizations are constantly developing new programs, or partnering with technology companies, to provide their members with the latest tools. Better yet, these tools are usually provided at little or no cost to their membership.

Commissions

Perhaps the reason most travel agencies join a marketing organization is for the increased commissions from preferred suppliers. When one considers that the cost to join one of these organizations is usually less than \$300 per year, being able to make 3-5% higher commissions quickly offsets the cost of membership.

I strongly encourage anyone who is currently not affiliated with a consortium or marketing organization to give it serious consideration. Research the benefits that each offers their membership, and look at their preferred supplier lists to select one which best meets the needs of you and your clients. A good place to start your search is on Travel Trade's website at: www.homebasedtrade.com/coop_2006.htm, where they provide a comprehensive list of these organizations.

To borrow a great slogan from ASTA – "Without a Travel Agent, You're on Your Own", similarly, without a Consortium/Marketing Organization, travel agents are on their own.

Doug Cooke, Publisher

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Vacation Rations

The word "rations" is most closely associated with World Wars I and II when "real" food was unavailable. The rations ranged from A-Rations for canned unprepared food to D-rations, which were survival rations - the various levels were meant to address harsh times. Enter, the "staycation," which to me is like a vacation ration (or not a vacation at all).

When a phrase has been coined to address what we all hope is a temporary situation, it gives me what my mother would call, the "willies." The invention of a commonly used phrase intimates the current state of affairs will get entrenched in our minds rather than just be a bump in the road. According to dozens of surveys, Americans feel vacations are their inalienable right, so they may not travel far, but they want to break out of their routines even if only to see their hometowns in a new way. No, they don't want to sit around a plastic pool imbibing the latest snacks from Costco, BJ's or Price Club - that would be too depressing.

It is up to agents to get them (clients) packing even if only for a night. Use a lynchpin such as Restaurant Week in Boston, Gettysburg's new Museum and Visitor Center, Las

Vegas' rock bottom pricing or Mystic Seaport's musical concerts on the river.

The Big Apple's four man-made waterfalls now on view - on the Brooklyn anchorage of the Brooklyn Bridge; one on the Brooklyn Piers, between Piers 4 and 5 near the Brooklyn Heights Promenade; one in Lower Manhattan at Pier 35 north of the Manhattan Bridge; and one on the north shore of Governors Island - are already a cornerstone for hotel packages in Manhattan and Brooklyn.

Depending on how close they want to get to the spray, they can take a water taxi, the Circle Line, a Gray Line tour, or their bikes to one of eight viewing areas. Send them with a NYC-Big Apple tour complete with restaurant lists and walking tours (do include a copy of Travel Agent magazine's managing editor, Adrienne Onofri's Walking Brooklyn guidebook), items that do not pay commissions (obviously, charge a service fee).

One last thought: Clients will still celebrate birthdays, weddings and babies, family reunions will go on in spite of oil prices, economic downturns and spills. Round them up, negotiate a deal they will remember for the time they will indeed be ready to plunk down a few thousand for that trip of a lifetime.

Maria Lisella, Editor

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Snapshots

THE MONTH IN REVIEW

\$25,000 donation benefits CTO Foundation

During the first Annual Caribbean Tourism Summit, held in Washington D.C., Interval International made a \$25,000 donation to the CTO Foundation's scholarship fund. Shown on left to right: David Callaghan, V.P. Sales of Interval International,

Jacqueline Johnson, Chairman of the CTO Foundation and Ricky Skerritt, Minister of Tourism for St. Kitts.



Good News from Expotur Costa Rica 2008



Minister of Tourism of Costa Rica, Carlos Ricardo Benavides addresses the media during Expotur, Costa Rica's annual tourism marketplace. Minister Benavides reported that tourism arrivals for 2008 were up 13% over previous year. Expotur, held every May in San Jose, provides an opportunity for international tour operators to meet with tourism suppliers from Costa Rica and other Latin American countries.

Mexico Teams Up with the Big Apple

Mexico's Secretary of Tourism, Rodolfo Elizondo Torres, joined CEO of New York City & Company, George Fertitta, in New York City. During this meeting an agreement was made to promote Mexican destinations in New York City, in exchange for promotion of New York in the Mexican markets. Mexico's Secretary of tourism is also promoting new direct flights from New York to Mexico, Mexican destinations into the Big Apple, as well as joint campaigns between both Mexico and the US in Asia and Europe.



Vacation.com welcomes over 1,400 attendees

Steve Tracas, President and CEO of Vacation.com welcomes a full house of over 1,400 attendees June 16 – 19, 2008, at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas to celebrate the 10th International Conference & Trade Show. The conference agenda featured informative seminars from returning speakers, world-class entertainment and 400 learning and networking opportunities, including nearly 200 hours of training sessions.



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Andalusia Reignites with



Fire, Art and Food

By Maria Lisella

Your client doesn't have to know the first thing about flamenco before they go to Spain's southern autonomous region of Andalusia, because the syncopated rhythms of flamenco will mesmerize them. As will the food, in particular olive oil (which might as well be a food group in Spain), the wines (sherry is not an old lady's drink here) the art, the light, will affect how they taste, hear and feel about this place forever. And that is just for first-timers. Those who visit often speak Spanish, and maybe have even tried to dance or clap to the odd rhythms that rose out of the sound of blacksmiths pounding anvils in the countryside.

Did I mention flamenco? Or the intuitive ways its singers – the older the better, the more chances that sadness and tragedy adds richness to their *duende* or soulful cries on stage often about unrequited love? Or the dancers – old and young – who can dip, sway and stomp their way into even a non-dancer's heart. No one's feet remain still at the *tablos* and small town rooms where one can see the real thing, so close beads of their sweat hit you and the dust flies.

For years, Andalusia was sold on the strength of three little words: Costa del Sol. It earned a reputation as a seniors' snowbird destination with cheap long-term stays in towns such as Benalmadena [the 350-room *Torrequebrada* was among the properties that hosted this segment]. Today, it is as if Andalusia has gotten to know itself better and has had what Oprah calls an "ahaha" moment – it now sells itself as the soul of Spain often with icons of striking black silhouettes before a backdrop of a hot red sunset.

The art of flamenco is integral in daily life, fairs and festivals throughout Andalusia's eight provinces: Almeria, Cadiz, Cordoba, Granada, Huelva, Jaen, Malaga, and Sevilla. A series of tourist routes has been created to showcase Andalusia's scenery, his-

tory, culture (flamenco), art, food and wine experiences. Routes through Flamenco Territories will help clients focus on main sites as well as the fascinating rural towns where distinct styles of architecture, song and dance originated centuries ago and continue to flourish today.


Among the sparkling cities of Seville, Granada, Jaen, Malaga, Cadiz and Cordoba visitors will naturally crisscross other Routes: Olive oil, Tempranillo wine, Jerez (sherry), Washington Irving, and the Caliphates. Agents should avail themselves of the excellent source materials on these routes available through the tourist offices.

Towns such as Baena, Carmona, Priego de Cordoba and Osuna with its **Coto de Las Canteras**, a former quarry in the middle of the countryside that has been transformed into a theater with fabulous acoustics lend visitors respite as they ready themselves for the next breathtaking travel icon just around the bend. For the Coto de Las Canteras, E-mail naharro@elcitolascanteras.com; www.elcitolascanteras.com


Dancing Horses

A visit to the **Royal School of Equestrian Art** can work into any of these itineraries. Spectators will appreciate the skill of both horses and riders during the Equestrian show; a short trip to the on-site museum will add to their knowledge. The tradition goes back to the 15th century at the Carthusian Monastery of Jerez where monks bred this extraordinary line of horses that still define the Spanish breed. This is an event that easily accommodates groups. Visit www.realescuela.org


A new road between Malaga and Granada now takes one hour while the scenic route throughout the mountains continues to take five hours, if visitors have time, counsel them to travel by train through this pass for stress-free viewing.




Torre de Belém - Lisboa




La Sagrada Família - Barcelona




Palácio da Pena - Sintra



Palacio Real - Madrid




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www.spain.info

This route is also called the Kings' way as it hugs the Montes de Malaga, scruffy mountains not high but tufted with hearty, ancient olive trees that continue to produce the olives and oils as Spain is among the world's largest producers of olive oil claiming to have 300 million olive trees.

Andalusia fed a young Pablo Picasso, Garcia Lorca and inspired multitudes of artists and writers from Washington Irving to Hemingway and Orson Wells, all of whom had a fascination for Spain, some for bullfighting specifically in Ronda, one of the region's small white towns that dot the craggy peaks of the Sierra Nevada and others for the light, the sounds, the sherries and the snaps of castanets. Lately, the region spawned heartthrob Antonio Banderas.

From the Beauty of Marbella

Fanning from the seaside town of Marbella, with its old town and spectacular properties such as the **Ritz Carlton Villa Padierna** not far from Porto Banus harbor, are the sleek yachts of newly monied shieks and not-so-discreet celebrities. Attracting some five million visitors a year, the area has seen a spectacular building boom during the last 12 years, but you can still smell fresh fish being fried in olive oil and a Corte Ingles attracts visitors of all budgets. Marbella's aptly named Plaza de los Naranjos not surprisingly is bordered with orange trees whose blossoms freshen the air.

Málaga was settled by the Arabs in 1485 and of course there remain vestiges of their culture everywhere. At Christmastime, the Christmas crèches, a legacy from Naples, show up side by side to the fir Christmas trees that only arrived in Málaga's festivities about 40 years ago.

In the historic center stands the five-year old **Museo Picasso Málaga**, housed in a 16th-century Andalusian-renaissance



SPAIN INTO

The Kings' Way

Cranes spike the air over small towns between Málaga and Granada as the earth's hues range from browns to reds culminating in a color locals call "bermeja." On the approach to Granada, visitors will see snow-capped Sierra Nevada Mountains, the second largest range in Spain behind the Pyrennes up north.

The Alhambra Palace receives some 26,000 visitors a day, a limit set to preserve the site, and to give visitors some elbow room to wander and gaze from room to lavish room layered with poetry, imagination and a serene symmetry all at once.

Allah may be the only victor at the Alhambra but fortunately, the Moors left a gargantuan legacy for modern travelers. At one time more than 100 tunnels linked portions of the Alhambra; today just three remain. Today 60 percent of the ceramic work is original and 30 percent of the stucco, which is heavily carved with poetry. The Lions' Patio has been restored recently. The whispering room elicits a bit of whimsy with its extraordinary acoustics while pomegranates and persimmons appear like sudden jewels in the garden at wintertime. Granada hosts the International Festival of Music in June and July, a tradition that began in 1950.

The immortal writer, poet and dramatist, Federico García Lorca who was also a painter, pianist and composer, was born in Fuente Vaqueros near the city of Granada. He compiled and preserved a collection of flamenco poems, lyrics and music, still performed today. Visit www.garcia-lorca.org

Before leaving Granada, suggest clients dine at **La Taberna Tendido** as it is set inside the bullring's walls. Its high ceilings, blood brick walls echo give you only a faint sense of what the ring would be like during a bullfight spectacle, but it is an unusual setting. Advise carnivorous clients to eat as much *jamon* as they can, because we cannot bring it home. Call + 958 27 23 02; www.tendido1.com



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Pride and Dignity in Small Town Life

The towns of Priego de Cordoba and Baena can be easily visited on the same day. These energetic yet small places occupied more important roles in their respective pasts. And while those roles have faded in modern times, there is a strong sense of pride in both places.

Priego's Barrio de la Villa is the Arab Quarter follows the original plan – narrow winding streets, small squares, at the edge of town, a steep cliff once used as a defense. Today it is the perfect place for a *mirador*, a panoramic view of a sea of silvery sage colored olive trees below. Five museums are housed here, but the town's most important monument is the Fuente del Rey, the King's Fountain. Once a silk and textile center, Priego's buildings have low balconies decorated with elaborate wrought iron bars that kept señoritas more than arms' length from their suitors below. Visit turismodepriego.com

Baena dates back to the Romans, but became important during the Moorish period and is now known for its high-quality olive oils, not too shabby a role in the modern traveler's pursuits of indigenous foods, and slow food aficionados. Exhibitions on how olive oil was produced historically are on display at the Archaeological Museum on Calle Henares. Baena's Holy Week or Semana Santa celebrations are legendary. Rival teams of hundreds of drummers compete, creating the ear-splitting sound of up to 2,000 drums being struck simultaneously.

Both towns have a number of small bed and breakfast accommodations that range from 50 to 100 euros or about \$80 to \$160 per day with breakfast. Two options are **La Posada Real** (www.laposadareal.com) and the **Hotel Meson Zahori** (www.hotelzahori.es)

For a spectacular treat, agents might book a lunch or breakfast at an oil mill. **The Almazara Nuñez de Prado** family hailed from Rioja where they grew grapes for wines, but with the historic plagues that ruined the crops a century ago, they looked south for another opportunity: Spain's liquid gold. Nuñez owns one of the most accessible oil mills that can accommodate groups. Visitors learn about the oil-making process, dine on fresh local delicacies – from olives to almonds – and return home with a new appreciation for Spain's olives – ripe, juicy *gordales* for instance – as well as a few recipes the family is willing to part with.

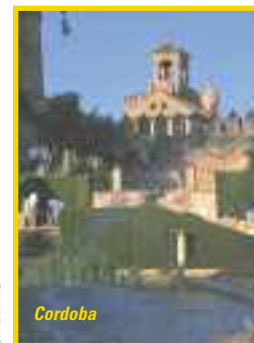
Visit www.nunenzdeprado.com

Capital of the Caliphate

Less than two hours' drive the next must-see stop is Córdoba to visit the Great Mosque, the Alcazar and the Jewish Quarter. Although the Alcazar never disappoints, much of its original designs were built over by the Christians.

Set in the valley of the Guadalquivir, the Sierra Morena mountains in the north defined its fate. Córdoba was the thriving capital of the Caliphate of Córdoba that governed almost all of the Iberian peninsula. With up to 500,000 inhabitants in the 10th century, Córdoba was the largest city in Western Europe and, perhaps, in the world. Walk its secluded gardens and the Synagogue. Even the city walls are worth mentioning with their small pockets of space filled with doves cooing at odd hours of the day. Among the latter day celebrities born here is the flamenco artist Joaquín Cortés.

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Carmen Country

Before even arriving, strains of the Bizet opera, *Carmen* accompanied by images of the sultry worker in a tobacco factory are the most familiar associations with Seville, but recently, films like *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Star Wars 2* have been shot here. Walking the streets of Seville is the best way to visit its squares, cathedrals, the Plaza de Espana, Maria Luisa Park where little rowboats ride in a moat under four bridges representing the four kingdoms of Spain – Navarra, Castilla, Leon and Aragon — the 52 arches represent the provinces. Hiring a horse-drawn carriage is another way to savor Seville.

Seville had the happy chance of having the only **Flamenco Museum** in the world for a year (another has since opened in Jerez de la Frontera). The museum patio can be converted to a stage – both dance and cooking lessons have taken place here; the basement is where the 18th century building's atmosphere is at its most authentic, while the first and second floors feature exhibitions that take visitors into the magic world of flamenco. Visit www.museoflamenco.com. For the Flamenco Festival program visit www.andalusiaflamenco.com

Held every two years, in the even year, the **XVI Bienal de Flamenco de Sevilla 2008**, Seville's 16th biennial takes place Sept. 10-Oct 11 for a month of supreme flamenco with several events daily, ranging from fiesta-style *juergas* to sophisticated concerts. Prices range from about \$10 to \$62 and early birds will receive a 5% discount if tickets are purchased by Aug. 22. Book online www.bienal-flamenco.org; www.Teatrolopedevega.org and www.Teatromaestranza.com. For information about the Flamenco Biennial, call 011-34-954-59-28-73; E-mail general.bienal@sevilla.org.

Accommodations

Do read Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra* because this indeed is the place he took his inspiration from in 1829. The sleepy **Washington Irving Hotel**, across from the path that leads into the Palaces and Gardens is considered a first-class property but for its inexpensive rates, according to one travel-rated website. Visit www.iberia-hotels.com

The **Ritz Carlton Villa Padierna Hotel** is built in the style of an opulent Italian villa perched above a golf course that circles the property. This is an extraordinary property in that it is surrounded by a golf course and only lately has the view over the courses been compromised by nearby new builds. During high season, its occupancy reaches 90 percent, for a year-round average of 50 percent. This property is well-suited for adults who truly want to detox from the rest of the world; it is not a place to be wired to the moon, but you could be as links are available but the prop-



MARIA LUISA



SPAIN NTO

erty has but one computer and the Library has internet access. The artwork is extraordinary – reproductions stand before trompe d'oeil lilies and small candles, balanced by serene Buddhas and Shivas with jumbles of broken columns from antiquity nearby; the golf course is opened to the public as is the restaurant. The Spa Thermae has 12 treatment rooms and a fascination with water and aromatherapy, both of which can have tremendous rejuvenating effects on the jet lagged. Owner Ricard Arranz will soon open another property in Carranque a small village about an hour from Marbella. Villa Padierna is set in Marbella, about a 30-minute drive from Malaga. Call +34-952 889 152; www.ritzcarlton.com

In Cordoba, a stay at the city's first five-star property, the **Hotel Palacio del Bailio** will sharpen your senses as it combines old Arab patio-style plan with courtyards yet employs hi-tech diversions inside the ancient walls. Call + 34-957 498 993; www.hospes.es



MARIA LUISA

In Seville, among the most comfortable, well-situated properties in town is the **Boutique Hotel Casa Romana**. What further recommends it is a highly trained and attentive staff; comfortable rooms, and a location that cannot be beat. Call + 34-954 915 170; www.hotelcasaromana.com

Getting There

Iberia Airlines is the fourth largest carrier in Europe and has reported profits for the past 12 years. Iberia operates six weekly flights from Washington, D.C.; a daily flight from Boston to Madrid; 14 weekly flights out of New York; 12 out of Miami, and a daily flight from Chicago. Passengers are allowed two pieces of luggage in economy class weighing up to about 45 lbs. each at no extra charge.

Iberibono Spain and **Iberibono Europe** are two air passes Iberia sells but hardly anyone knows about. Clients flying economy fares pay up to 60 euros or \$95 for up to 450 miles; 80 euros or \$126 for from 451 to 950 miles; and 110 euros or about \$175 from 951 miles from Madrid or further (www.iberia.com; click on **Iberibono**)

Delta Air Lines' new nonstop flights between New York (JFK) and Malaga started this June 2008. (www.delta.com)

Since Dec. 2007, the **AVE** (Alta Velocidad Española) bullet train has been sweeping visitors between Madrid and Malaga in just 2.5 hours – down from the previous four-hour trip. Madrid to Seville can be done in 2.25 hours and Madrid to Cordoba in just two hours.

The web-only rates **Rail Europe** offers on its agent-only site can save clients up to 10% over bookings made over the phone. Call 888-382-7245; <http://agent.raileurope.com>

For more information, 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; www.spain.info

For consolidator fares and tour packages to Spain see page 61 of the Listings Section

Discover Galicia The Celtic Soul of Spain

Hidden away on the Northwest corner of Spain, bordered on one side by Portugal and two sides by sea, is an enchanted emerald green land few Americans are familiar with. It's a place where nature, culture and cuisine have all conspired to make it the perfect destination.

As soon as your clients arrive, they are greeted by some of the most friendly, cultured, hospitable and artistic people in Spain. Gallegos like the



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Irish, share a Celtic background and history that dates back 3000 years. They even play bagpipes, called Gaitas. They have their own unique culture which they love sharing, especially with those coming to Galicia for the first time.

If your clients love nature, few places in Spain can match Galicia for its varied terrain to explore. Hundreds of miles of rugged coastline and craggy granite faced cliffs rising from the sea, 700 pristine beaches, mountains, as well as rivers and streams teeming with fish.

When it comes to culture, Galicia has no less to show off. Two of its cities have been chosen by UNESCO as World Heritage Cities. Lugo surround-

ed by Roman walls and Santiago de Compostela, with its magnificent Romanesque architecture.

Although Galicia has not been fully explored by American tourists, it has long been a favorite destination of gourmands from all over the world. One reason is that it's home to some of the best chefs in Spain. Another is the fact that five of the best wine regions in Spain are found in Galicia. And, then there are the natural ingredi-

ents this bounteous land provides; Full-flavored fruits and vegetables, rich creams and cheeses, tender mountain-grass-fed meats and over two hundred varieties of fish, 54 kinds of shellfish.

Pilgrims have trekked to the majestic Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela for over a thousand years seeking paradise in the next life. Today, sophisticated travelers come to Galicia seeking it in this one, in one of their many natural health spas. Visit www.turgalicia.org



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Leaf Peeping In and Out of Tokyo

One of the most populous cities in the world, Tokyo is also a thriving center of economy, culture and industry. The Japanese capital consists of the southwestern part of the Kanto region, the Izu Islands, and the Ogasawara Islands. Twelve million people live in Tokyo. When the Shogun Tokugawa established a government there in the early 17th century, the area started to develop, spreading out around his residence, Edo Castle. Most of the city was devastated by the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, and then again by the bombing in the WWII, however, Tokyo was able to achieve a remarkably rapid recovery both times.

Cultural and Economic Appeal

Tokyo is not only the political and economical center of Japan, it has also emerged as a center of the world economy and culture.

There are a number of attractions in Tokyo that should not be missed. There are large-scale downtown areas, including Ginza where famous shops from around the world stand side by side, the sleepless Shinjuku that has become the "new city center of Tokyo," Asakusa which is reminiscent of the traditional Edo (the former name of Tokyo), and Shibuya that starts the trends for the young people.

Other distinct areas include the computer town of Akihabara, a dense retail area where numerous electronic shops compete against each other, attracting shoppers from Japan and overseas, and Tsukiji, an open-air wholesale food market catering to shops and consumers from Japan.

Tokyoites look forward to the arrival of autumn with great anticipation as it brings with it crisp air and the sensational "koyo" (colorful autumn leaves) displaying a variety of warm reds, oranges and yellows throughout the city.

Inside Town

Shinjuku Gyoen boasts over 20,000 different varieties of plant and tree life, three distinct garden styles, a teahouse, an art gallery and promenade Shinjuku Gyoen is just the place to recharge and refresh after the whirl of Tokyo. Visit www.env.go.jp

Two other Tokyo favorites are

Innokashira Park, Musashino-shi in the Western part of the city Tokyo (www.jref.com/practical/kichijouji.shtml) and Rikugien Park, in the Bunkyo-ku district Visit: www.teien.tokyo-park.or.jp

Mount Takao lies about one hour, from Central Tokyo by train. Boasting a forest of centuries old cedars, maples and oak, the tranquil Takaosan Yakuoin Yokiji Temple and a stunning vista over Tokyo at the 1,965-foot summit it is easy to see why Mt. Takao continues to be one of Japan's most famous landmarks. Take it all in framed with autumn reds, greens and gold on a day hike or use the cable car to pass through a canopy of brilliant seasonal foliage. Visit www.keio.co.jp

Okutama: Located in the northwest corner of Tokyo and within Saitama's Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park, Okutama is an outdoor/nature enthusiasts dream. Historical sites, limestone caves, mountain climbing, day hikes, stream fishing, onsen hot springs and camping are just some of the fun activities on offer.

These ancient forests, breathtaking natural scenery, draped in autumn colors will leave lasting impressions on visitors to the area, who may become repeat visitors.

Visit www.town.okutama.tokyo.jp

Getting Around

The Tokyo Shitamachi Sightseeing Bus: Runs every 30 minutes, costs 200 yen or about \$1.90 for adults, half that for children and is ideal for visiting famous sites such as the Imperial Palace, Akihabara Electric Town, Ueno Park/Zoo, and Sensoji Temple. One Day passes are also available for 500 yen or under \$5.

Visit www.akibanana.com

JR EAST Online Reservation System Launched: Agents can now book the Shinkansen, Limited Express and Narita Express seats online up to one month in advance. The service is available in English for "Japan Rail Passes", "JR East Passes" and for travelers with no rail passes. Visit www.jreast-shinkansen-reservation.eki-net.com

Autumn Events

September 14 to 28, 2008 (Kokugikan Sumo Hall, Ryogoku): The September Basho (Sumo Wrestling) –



Tokyo nightlife is just one aspect of the city.

Sumo is one of Japan's most popular traditional sports. This is a sport with over 70 different throws, trips, forms and tricks. The September Basho is one of the year's six Grand Tournaments. Two others take place in Jan. and May. Visit www.sumo.or.jp/eng/

October 31 to November 4: Tokyo Designers' Week is Tokyo! Featuring up-and-coming as well as more established designers this celebration attracts more than 80,000 visitors to exhibitions and events.

The main event is held near Gaien-mae but Tokyo Designers' Week ranges all over the city from Shibuya and Harajuku to Aoyama and Roppongi.

Visit www.100percentdesign.jp

Agents to Boost Profile and Tourism

Japan is poised for major tourism growth by the end of the decade. Spurred by a 10-year Visit Japan Campaign uniting public and private sectors, the Japanese National Tourist Office aims to boost tourist arrivals to 10 million by 2010.

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For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Japan see page 82-83 of the Listings Section

BEST BUYS

\$2900 NEW ZEALAND

For those eager to explore New Zealand's two "must see" destinations real travelers on TripAdvisor chose **Down Under Endeavors'** exclusive 15-night "Combo Package" showcasing TripAdvisor's top two winners. A combination of self-drive and guided tours, this New Zealand adventure takes travelers through the breathtaking 10-mile long Milford Sound that Rudyard Kipling dubbed the "eighth wonder of the world," and Queenstown, the birthplace of Bungy jumping and jet-boating, and home to world class wineries and spas. The "Combo Package" starts at \$2,900 per person (based on doubles), which includes 15 nights accommodation from a selection of stylish lodges, bed and breakfasts or hotels; 13 days' mid-size car rental with unlimited mileage and insurance; outdoor and wildlife excursions. Package is valid through September 2008.

Call 888-229-0082.; www.downunderendeavours.com

\$8680 INDOCHINA

Goway Travel's "The Splendors of Indochina" program is a new addition to the operator's Holidays of Lifetime portfolio that already includes "The Splendors of China and The Splendors of India." The 20-day itineraries, priced at \$8,680 per person double, take in the major iconic sites of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand.

Goway's "Holidays of a Lifetime" are inclusive and exclusive first-class accommodated vacations where Goway's professional Tour Directors attend to all the daily details are priced to offer clients value for money. The Nov. 14, 2008 departure will visit Halong Bay near Hanoi, the Cu Chi Tunnels near Ho Chi Minh City, the ruins of Angkor Wat near Siem Reap, the Temples of Luang Prabang and the Grand Palace in Bangkok, to name a few. There are four additional departures planned for 2009.

Call 800-387-8850; www.Goway.com/Asia

\$2979 JAPAN

NTA America is selling one of the best deals on the market as it includes round-trip airfare, eight nights' accommodations, a seven-day rail pass, bus transport, several guided tours, and airport transfers, from \$2,979 per person—plus taxes and surcharges of about \$380 from Los Angeles, from New York fall prices range from \$3,089 to \$2,989 (Oct. 20-Dec. 11).

The program provides accommodations and a rail pass for seven days—plus guided tours and airport transfers. Given the language difference, the package offers the convenience of arranging for a complete itinerary for your clients in advance, minimizing the chance that they'll end up Lost in Translation.

The History & Nature 2008 package includes a round-trip fare on a major carrier, most likely **United** or **American**, to Tokyo's Narita airport. It also covers eight nights' accommodations divided between **Le Meriden Pacific Tokyo** (three nights), **New Miyako Hotel** in Kyoto (three nights), and **Hotel Granvia Hiroshima** (two nights). A seven-day rail pass will help clients navigate the country.

Guided tours will include a bus tour of Tokyo, with stops at the Imperial Palace Gardens and the Asakusa Kannon Temple. After a bullet-train ride, you'll tour Hiroshima (including its Peace Park) and the nearby island Miyajima, famous for its "floating" torii, or gate.

Travelers then move on to Nara, Japan's one-time capital and one of its oldest cities, where they'll take a guided tour of several Buddhist shrines. Moving on to Kyoto, they'll visit several key shrines, castles, and handicraft centers. They'll also have free time.

Travelers return to the capital by bullet train, spend a free day in Tokyo, and then return to the U.S.

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INDIA

From the Sacred to the Sublime

From the trend-seeking tourist to the sophisticated traveler, Maharashtra, India's third largest state, has an array of unforgettable tourism offerings and attractions that include ancient and historic sites of tremendous religious importance, well known in India, but still relatively unknown abroad.

Maharashtra is located in the south-western region of the country. The state boasts breathtaking landscapes of tropical forests, tiger reserves, impressive mountain ranges, relaxing beaches on the Arabian Sea and the cosmopolitan capital of Mumbai (Bombay). Home to hundreds of archaeological sites of significant historical importance and four UNESCO World Heritage Sites — the mystical Ajanta and Ellora Caves, the Elephanta caves, and the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai (Bombay) — Maharashtra boasts of tourism offerings found nowhere else in India.

Shirdi

The sacred town of Shirdi, located approximately 140 miles northeast of Mumbai (Bombay, Maharashtra's capital) is best known for being the home of the 19th Century Hindu saint and spiritual pioneer, Shri Sai Baba. Although there are no accounts of his birth or early years, Sai Baba lived in Shirdi, where he preached and acted on his ideas of love, peace, religious tolerance and forgiveness. Sai Baba grew to be one of the most popular spiritual figures of his time, and was, and is still known and revered throughout India for his powers to treat ailments.

Visitors to Shirdi can explore Sai Baba's life first-hand by visiting the places he frequented including Dwarkamai, a holy mosque where he

resided, and Lendi Baug, a flower garden planted and maintained by the guru. Nonetheless, the most popular site in the city is the Shirdi Sai Baba Temple, the resting place of the saint which is now a pilgrimage spot, attracting millions of devotees of all religions, castes and creeds from around India. The temple is a beautiful stone shrine that was built in 1919 over the tomb of Sai Baba and is set among beautifully cultivated grounds, surrounded by serene ponds and fountains. Visitors are encouraged to visit the site, particularly on Thursdays (the day Sai Baba is revered) when thousands of people come to Shirdi to pay homage to him. The Shirdi Sai Baba Temple is opened daily from 5:15 a.m. to 10 p.m. www.shirdisaitemple.com.

Nashik

The "Wine Capital of India," Nashik, is also known as the "Holy City" due to the numerous temples and religious sites that exist there. Located about 100 miles northeast of Mumbai, Nashik is a striking and colorful city, particularly in the northern section along the banks of the Godavari River.

The banks of the Godavari River, known as Panchavati, are surrounded by dozens of temples and holy sites and are a great place to shop for religious artifacts and other colorful souvenirs. Millions of pilgrims descend upon Panchavati, where the Hindu deities Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman supposedly resided for some time. This area holds tremendous religious significance and mystery, accented with strong scents of incense and magical views of pilgrims bathing along the banks of the holy river.

Nearby, another incredible and mystical experience can be had by visiting the Sita Gumpha, a holy cave next to one of the city's five famous banyan

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*Fares are exclusively available from the above mentioned preferred India partners. Fares may vary.

Fares shown are in US dollars and are for round-trip travel in Economy Class on Lufthansa or United. 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 fuel surcharge, fees, taxes and airport charges up to \$560, 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.

ASIA & THE SOUTH PACIFIC

trees in Panchavati. Here, the Hindu deities Lord Ram his wife Sita, and Lakshman are said to have prayed to Lord Shiva. To enter this small, two-room holy site, pilgrims have to crawl through a very narrow staircase that descends into the cool and magical cave. The first room holds a gilded, silver idol of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita, and the other contains a small, ancient Shiva Linga. It is in this second room where Sita is said to have meditated for many years.

This popular temple is only one of 12 Jyotirlinga, or shrines, where the Hindu Goddess Shiva is worshipped. Trimbakeshwar is well-known for its charming architecture, elaborate sculptures and for being a sacred bathing place for pilgrims from all over the world.

Finally, Nashik is also renowned for what is said to be the most spectacular religious show on Earth, the Maha Kumbh Mela. Kumbh Mela is a sacred Hindu pilgrimage and bathing festival that occurs every 12 years in four locations in India. Attended by millions of devotees from around the world, this celebration is truly a sight to behold. The festival commemorates the redemptive story of a holy nation in pursuit of victory from the evil Danavas (demons) which plagued the city with a curse. Today, this legendary tale is reenacted by pilgrims taking ritual baths at the banks of rivers, and by partaking in singing holy chants, prayer sessions, religious discussions, and assemblies. This incredibly visual and spiritually fulfilling festival is accented by the magical colors of Nashik, along with devotees adorned with colorful powders. The next Maha Kumbh Mela festival will be held in March/April 2013. Visit www.kumbhmela.org

Why Visit India in Summer

Rajeev Kohli, director of marketing for India-based **Creative Travel India** says, "There is a lot of misconception out there why India cannot be visited in summer. Not all true. There is a lot one can do in summer and the best part is that we can leverage our volumes from the season into some great deals into the off-season."

Some of the reasons include: The best value possible - you get to stay in some of the finest hotels in the world at prices that you would pay for a four-star hotel in the winter. For wildlife lovers, late April and May are the best times of year to see the famous Indian tiger. Clients can enjoy the monuments without the crowds and their hotel with lower summer occupancies

Visit www.travel2india.com

Getting There

The nearest airport is Aurangabad, and the nearest railroad is Kopargaon. The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation runs bi-weekly roundtrip bus service to Shirdi from Mumbai while Shirdi can also be reached by bus, private coach or taxi from any of the major cities in the region. Nashik is linked by rail to all of the major cities in the State of Maharashtra and is also connected by major roads and highways to the rest of the country.

Call India Tourism at 800-953-9399; 212-586-4901; West Coast: 213-380-8855; www.incredibleindia.org or visit the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation site: www.maharashtratourism.gov.in

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to India see page 82 of the Listings Section

IN THE NEWS

Sans Incredible Vacations—Incredible India

In just one year, Sans Incredible Vacations has grown from a small business promoting customized FIT vacations to India to expanding into special interest segments of the leisure markets such as honeymoons, museums, art-galleries, adventure, senior citizens and physically challenged travelers as well as theme parties, small conventions and incentives groups. Ram Chopra, who heads the company, said the company has given intensive training to its executive staff to deal with inquiries on India. To show its appreciation for the support the company has received from members of the travel industry, the company has floated FAM tours to India for them leaving every Thursday throughout the year with the cooperation of **Air India**.

During the first eight months of its existence, Incredible Vacations in the first eight months of its operation has sent more than 500 people for about 7,500 room nights in India. Besides having its own offices in India led by Nalin Kapadia, the Chairman, he is assisted by more than 30 associate offices all over the country. The company uses hotels, transportation and the services of tourist guides approved by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

Call 888-924-6342; www.sansincrediblevacations.com; E-mail ram@sansincrediblevacations.com;

Four Seasons in Mumbai

Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai is the company's first property on the Indian subcontinent and introduces a significant change in design – and concept – to the city's luxury hotel. The contemporary hotel's glass tower extends 33 stories above its low-rise neighbors serving as an iconic reference to the spirit of the 'new' Mumbai. The Hotel occupies a dominant central position in the emerging Worli district, which links North and South Mumbai. It overlooks the Mahalaxmi Race Course and the Arabian Sea and is equidistant from the Chatrapati Shivaji International Airport and the financial district of Nariman Point. Among the key features are: the largest guest rooms and Presidential Suite in the city; two sleek, contemporary restaurants serving authentic Asian and Italian cuisine – set to become favourite local establishments; more than 5,381 square feet of meetings and function space as well as a prestigious private club occupying the entire top (33rd) floor; a two-story spa with eight treatment rooms and state of the art wet areas; and finally a limousine fleet of 20 BMWs 7-Series for those extra-special clients. Visit www.fourseasons.com

Amanresorts Open at Summer Palace

Amanresorts will open **The Aman at Summer Palace**, Beijing, in the fall, although one of the resort's restaurants will be open in August in time for the 2008 Olympic Games. Just steps from the east gate of the Summer Palace grounds, The Aman at Summer Palace is housed in a series of dwellings that date back over a century and were built for guests awaiting an audience with Empress Dowager Cixi. The 250-year-old Summer Palace is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Nightly rates start at \$480 per night for standard guestrooms to \$3,800 for the Imperial Suite. Call 800-477-9180; www.amanresorts.com

CARIBBEAN & BERMUDA

JAPEX: Committed to Tourism

Story and photos by Denise Mattia

Travel and tourism industry leaders were optimistic about the future of Jamaica's tourism at the 18th annual **JAPEX (Jamaican Product Exchange)** show, which was held at the **Hilton Kingston** on April 26th and 27th.

Two days before the event, the Hon. Bruce Golding, Prime Minister of Jamaica, announced that Jamaica is a nation "committed to tourism," and "will continue to build an up-scale product that includes a projected 4,000 additional rooms on 2,000 acres of Jamaican real estate at the eastern end of the island."

The Hon. Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism (pictured on left in photo), reported Jamaica welcomed a record-breaking 1.2 million guests to their shores in the winter of 2007, and feels confident the island is "in a position to ensure a strong summer for 2008."



Backing the slogan "Jamaica – Once you go, you know" is a compelling campaign aimed at strengthening existing markets, pursuing emerging ones, introducing casino gaming and creating an iconic experience for guests. Bartlett cited that an additional 2,000 seats per week have been secured from a major legacy carrier in the United States to boost airlift to Jamaica. The service will commence November 1, 2008 and will operate through November 1, 2009. Direct flights from Russia will begin in late October, and additional flights out of Canada and Europe, in particular Italy and Spain are scheduled as well. According to Bartlett, "there are strong possibilities for code sharing with airlines from Asia, and negotiations are underway to conclude air service agreements, especially with Mexico, to facilitate another route for connecting to China."

Under the management of the **Jamaica Hotel & Tourist Association** and the **Jamaica Tourist Board**, JAPEX has grown from a home-based marketplace for small properties into a top showcase of products and services for the island's industry.

"The event is an ideal opportunity for suppliers of Jamaica's tourism products to establish arrangements with travel wholesalers and tour operators from around the world," said Minister Bartlett at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, which culminated with hundreds of balloons released into the night air, much to the chagrin of environmentalists.

At a pre convention press breakfast the next morning, Gary Williams, Vice President of Operations for **Superclubs' Breezes** and **Starfish Resorts** reported: "Visitors to Jamaica this year will have one more Superclubs resort to choose from," he said. Accommodations at the former Negril Inn start at \$100 per room per night. "And for culture seekers," he said, "Best of Jamaica at Grand Lido Braco, October 7 – 12, will showcase the traditional and trendy aspects of Jamaica's cuisine, culture and crafts."

In the convention center's pressroom, representatives from **Rose Hall** announced the **Rose Hall Triathlon** and **Wellness Festival**

in October 2008. The event is geared towards repositioning the resort as Jamaica's premier sports tourism Mecca and health and wellness hub. The festival will give visitors a peek into the true beauty of the Jamaican people, and, with nutrition, yoga and spa experts on the premises, it is expected that **Rose Hall** will be a destination guests will want to come back to year after year.

Visit www.RoseHallResort.com

Annual Road Races

The annual **Jamdammers Grand Prix Series** and the **Reggae Marathon & Half Marathon**, which have become staples of local and international road race calendars for a decade, are held in Negril on every first Saturday in December. The events combine sports, music and tourism.

For a lifetime emotional connection, the **Give Back Getaways**, a half-day experience at **The Ritz-Carlton**, offers visitors the opportunity to positively impact lives in the community. Working alongside staff and locals in the **Community Footprints** projects, guests can participate in areas of development and education, environmental conservation, hunger and poverty relief and wellbeing of disadvantaged children. "Every contribution we make is an opportunity to leave an imprint on our communities," said Bernd Kühlen, General Manager of **The Ritz-Carlton Golf & Spa Resort**. (www.ritzcarlton.com)

Chairman and Founder of the **Sandals Resorts**, Gordon "Butch" Stewart, stated that the properties remain fully committed to social and environmental responsibility. Over a period of years, the **Sandals Resorts** have received coveted awards on criteria that include environmental management and stewardship, conservation of natural resources, education and awareness programs and community activities. (www.sandals.com)

At **Jake's Treasure Beach**, an **Island Outpost** property, guests can enjoy community presence, organic and sustainable ways of life and a world-class music library. (www.islandoutpost.com)

JAPEX also provided an opportunity for non-profit and environmentally aware operations to present information to journalists and to the 62 buyer companies in attendance. Among them were the **Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust**, a non-governmental charity devoted to protecting the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park (www.greenjamaica.org.jm), **Earthbound Biodegradable Food Packaging Company** (www.earthboundja.com), the **Dolphin Cove**, where visitors can learn about local fauna and flora (www.dolphincovejamaica.com), **Chukka Caribbean Adventures**, the Green Globe certified, Jamaican owned and operated nature adventure tour provider (chukkacaribbean.com) and **Outameni** (Out of Many), a time capsule village, which reveals Jamaica's diverse history (www.outameni.com).

For more information, contact the **Jamaica Tourist Board**, www.visitjamaica.com

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Jamaica see page 71 of the Listings Section

CARIBBEAN & BERMUDA

BEST BUYS

\$595 ANTIGUA

Antigua's luxury all-inclusive resort **Curtain Bluff** is offering an amazing value this summer with rates representing a savings of 46% over the high season rates. Summer rates begin at \$595 for a deluxe room on the ocean and include all meals and drinks in addition to all activities such as snorkeling, deep sea fishing, scuba diving and more. As an added bonus to the incredible all inclusive value rate, all spa treatments at the newly-opened Spa at Curtain Bluff are offered at a 10% discount during the summer months. Summer rates are valid through August 23, 2008.

Curtain Bluff is located on 20 acres on the south coast of Antigua surrounded by two beautiful sandy beaches. Curtain Bluff offers a total of 72 beachfront accommodations including 18 Deluxe Rooms, 40 Junior Suites and two one-bedroom suites. Call 888-289-9898; www.curtainbluff.com

\$99 TOBAGO

Tobago's idyllic natural beauty combined with the charm and scenic splendor of the tropical island's unspoiled beaches makes for the perfect location for a summer's getaway. The **Blue Haven Hotel** is currently offering travelers a nightly rate of \$99, per person, that includes breakfast, superior room accommodations with private balcony and breathtaking ocean view. This summer special is valid through September 2008.

Call 868-660-7400; www.bluehavenhotel.com

\$125 ANGUILLA

The **Arawak Beach Inn**, located on the typically high-priced island of Anguilla, is offering budget-conscious travelers a rate of \$125 per room, per night for travel through October, 2008. With many rooms on the island priced at \$1,000 or more per night, this offer makes it possible for summer guests to enjoy a true island experience – without breaking the bank. Visit www.arawakbeach.com

\$1900 ANGUILLA

Featured on the cover of *Robb Report* for its Asian tropical style, lagoon-style pools, panoramic views and exclusive crescent beach, **Bird of Paradise Villa's** daily rate of \$1,900 gives guests the run of the house.

Each of the four suites has an equal view of the water with Bulgari amenities, Frette linens, Voss water, and more. Bathrooms include soaking tubs, outside showers, refrigerators, and coffee service. Three living areas, one with exterior fireplace. Four dining experiences. Fully equipped kitchen with custom-made tableware from Bali and a basket of food items for your arrival. Add a chef or arrange for in-villa spa treatments at an additional cost. Available Aug. 15–Dec. 14. E-mail: anguillabird@yahoo.com; www.anguillabird.com

CORRECTION - JULY ISSUE - ANTIGUA FEATURE

An incorrect website was given for **Rex Resorts** in last month's Antigua feature. The correct website is www.rexresorts.com. Visit their online training page to become a *Rexpert*. We regret and apologize for this error.

IN THE NEWS

Elite's Last Licks of Summer

When vacationers book their all-inclusive Caribbean escapes by August 15, 2008, they will save as much as 50 percent with Elite Island Resorts' new "\$299 Island Sale." The all-inclusive* nightly rate is valid for two adults per room (\$60 per child sharing the same room up to two children per room). The Caribbean sale is valid for travel now through Dec. 21, 2008 and requires a three night minimum stay. Call 800-345-0356; www.eliteislandresorts.com/site/299.html

SuperClubs' New Rooms Resort for a Steal

SuperClubs opens new **ROOMS Resort**: The best deal in Negril swings open its doors with the premiere of ROOMS on the beach, Negril. The 57-room Continental Plan (CP) hotel faces the Caribbean right on Negril's seven-mile beach, famous for its powdery white sand and spectacular sunsets. SuperClubs bought the three-acre site of the former Negril Inn last year and shuttered it for a year of upgrades and improvements to the tune of \$4 million.

This summer, rates start at \$105 per room, per night. Visit www.roomsresorts.com

Clients Fly Free to Sandals

Rising airline costs and talk of a downturn in the economy may have spurred the "staycation," travel's latest trend du jour, but would clients really rather stay home when they can be foot-loose on a Caribbean beach, cocktail in hand without having to attend to laundry or the lawn? **Sandals Resorts** doesn't think so. Beginning July 18, 2008, the Caribbean's leading chain for romance-minded travelers is offering a limited-time "Fly Free Promotion," that gives clients who book a minimum three-night stay by August 31, 2008 an air credit of up to \$550 per person.

Valid for travel between July 18, 2008 and December 20, 2009 (blackout dates apply), the promotion also features 30 percent off regular rack rates for clients who book a six-night stay or longer, with rates starting as low as \$198 per person, per night.

Those who book a seven-night stay in select top-category suites, including the luxurious Swim Up Riversuites at Sandals Negril Beach Resort & Spa, can also receive up to two nights free, in addition to 30 percent off rack rates and the air credit.

Guests who book stays between three and five nights are still eligible to receive up to 25 percent off rack rates, plus the air credit.

With fares ranging from \$270 to \$540 from major US gateways to the Caribbean this summer, Sandals Resorts' "Fly Free Promotion" is designed to cover most, if not all, of the cost of air travel. Sandals Resorts' "Fly Free Promotion" is available at all 12 resort locations in Jamaica, Antigua, St. Lucia, and The Bahamas. Air credits vary per resort.

Blackout dates apply. Fly Free offer based on double occupancy, a three-night minimum stay. Air credits include \$350 airfare credit per person for travel to Jamaica or Bahamas; \$450 per person for travel to St. Lucia; \$550 per person for travel to Antigua. Maximum 2 person limit for offer. Offer may be changed or withdrawn at any time.

Call 1-800-SANDALS or visit www.sandals.com.

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Greek Suppliers Invest & Profit

The Mediterranean season is already in full-swing and we are pleased to report that bookings are strong", said George Stathopoulos, CEO of Louis Hellenic Cruises, a subsidiary of Louis Cruise Lines, "and demand for cruising in this region is at an all time high. We have extended our sailings into November and are looking forward to a bumper year."

Similarly, business is strong at Crown Peters Travel, but executives are remaining cautiously optimistic. "Today, success is not just about keeping up with the competition, it is about delivering the best service for the best price," said Debbie Gregory, Tour Department Manager. Bolstering that claim, Crown's staffers inspect most of the listed properties in their brochures, the balance are inspected by a trusted ground operations staff with whom the company has been working for many years. "Product knowledge is essential to delivering good service," said Gregory.

Crown Peters, which has been in business for the past 38 years stands as a symbol of security for many agents. While its array of products are just as varied as any tour operator that specializes in Greece, its ability to remain steadfast is at the top of its appeal. Staffed by a knowledgeable group of individuals and based in its headquarters in Astoria, still counting the second largest Greek population outside of Athens, Crown Peters' name is synonymous with fair trade, solid programs, courteous service.

This year agents report to Crown that sales are steady. Big spenders are continuing to travel with the same aplomb as in the past while those watching their budgets are being cautious, but no one wants to stay home.

"We are seeing honeymooners who may be on modest budgets but given the occasion are willing to splurge a bit," she added.

Additionally, Crown Peters' operations in Greece are strengthened by a strong ground operator. Crown Peter's product line covers the Mediterranean as far west as Italy, which is beginning to shine as their next star in a constellation that has gone well beyond the Eastern Med, its initial specialty. Visit www.crownpeters.com



Prime Purchases

"In line with cruise market growth and our fleet renewal program, Louis Cruise Lines is expanding with the recent acquisitions of two more new generation vessels, the Norwegian Dream and the Norwegian Majesty following last year's purchase of m/v Cristal. With these new additions to our fleet, Louis Cruise Lines emerges with a stronger position in the international cruise market and enhanced services," continued Stathopoulos. Louis entered into an agreement with Star Cruises to purchase the "Norwegian Dream" and the "Norwegian Majesty" for \$380 million. The purchase price for the first ship was \$218 million and \$162 million for the second one. The purchase represents one of the most developments for Louis Cruise Lines in 22 years. The 51,000 ton-Norwegian Dream was built in France in 1992. It is a new generation cruise ship that can accommodate 2,156 passengers in 875 cabins and suites, 695 of which are outside and 48 with private balconies. The cruise ship features 10 decks, six restaurants, 11 lifts, two swimming pools, Spa & Fitness facilities, a two-tiered show lounge, casino, library and an array of bars and other public areas.

By contrast, the 41,000-ton Norwegian Majesty was built in Finland in 1992. The vessel underwent a \$53.3 million rebuilding, lengthening and refurbishment in 1999. It is a new generation cruise ship that accommodates 1,790 passengers in 731 cabins and suites, 481 of which are outside. The cruise ship features nine decks, five restaurants, six lifts, three swimming pools, Spa & Fitness facilities, an amphitheatrical show lounge, casino, library as well as a large number of other public areas.

To assist travel agents, the company issues a "downloadable brochure" from its website to view the most updated 3-D versions of both the English corporate & Spanish 16-page mini



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Cloud
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EUROPE

brochures (i.e. both editions feature the Orient Queen's new 12-Day Egypt & Ancient Med Civilizations cruise).

Louis Cruise Lines is introducing a DVD featuring exclusive new footage throughout Greece and the Greek Islands that details the benefits of traveling with Louis Cruise Lines as told by travelers. The disc, now available to agents, is designed to serve as an effective sales and marketing tool.

Call 877-568-4787; E-mail LCLUSA@louiscruises.com; www.louiscruises.com

Cloud's Cruise Tours

Cloud Tours has created a series of air-inclusive programs that combine cruising the Greek islands with plenty of on-land arrangements to deliver both city sights and languorous island stays on Mykonos and Santorini. Among the tours well suited for clients who want to see as much as possible, but would also like to stay put on the islands for a few days, Zorba's Envy is a 13-day tour that departs on Tuesdays and returns on Sundays.

Rates start at \$2,069 per person double (including fuel surcharge/excluding port dues and air taxes). Itinerary includes international and Greek domestic airfare, two nights in Athens with a city tour, a four-day Greek Island Cruise, three nights each in Mykonos and in Santorini, breakfast daily, all meals on board the cruise, hotel services fees and taxes and all transfers. The four-day cruise visits the ports of Mykonos, Patmos, Rhodes, Crete and Santorini and the Turkish port of Kusadasi to visit Ephesus.

For shorter stays, Cloud's 10-day Santorini Escapade and the 11-day Mykonos Escapade combine a four-day cruise with a stay at one of these stunning white and blue isles. Rates for the Santorini Escapade begin at \$1,839 per person double with international and Greek domestic air fare (including fuel surcharge), two nights in Athens with a city tour, a four-day Greek island cruise, three nights in Santorini, breakfast daily, all meals on board the cruise, hotel services fees and taxes and all transfers. Rates for the Mykonos Escapade begin at \$1,799 per person double with international and Greek domestic airfares (includes fuel surcharge), two nights in Athens with a city tour, a four-day Greek island cruise, three nights in Mykonos, breakfast daily, all meals on board the cruise, hotel service fees and taxes and all transfers.

Couples celebrating their anniversary may be interested in purchasing a "Renewal of their Vows" package available for \$330. What can be more romantic than renewing their vows with the

fabulous Greek Islands as the background. The ceremony is performed by the Master or Senior officer on the Bridge and includes other amenities too. Call 800-223-7880; E-mail info@cloudtours.com; www.cloudtours.com

Music in the Med

Travel Dynamics has matched up the best of the Med with some of the world's finest classical music talent and dovetailed them into a superb voyage: their Mediterranean Music Festival. The 114-passenger all-suite yacht, the Corinthian II, sails from Athens to Venice featuring classical music performances at marvelous historic sites en route - September 6 to 17, 2008.

Visit Santorini, Kefallonia, Albania, Montenegro and Croatia on the way to Venice and savor the sounds of tenor Robert White, sopranos Mela Sarajane Dailey and Martina Arroyo, and pianist William Hobbs. The Corinthian II is the ship everyone wants to sail on - small and spacious with elegant suites. Call 800-257-5767; www.traveldynamicsinternational.com

The Aegean Med and Beyond

Due to a high repeat clientele, Aegean Tours, Inc., which has specialized in tours to Greece and Turkey has added programs to Italy, Spain, China, Philippines, Vietnam, and Iceland. Among its most affordable programs is the eight-day Aegean Discovery Tour that includes a four-day cruise with departures scheduled through Nov. 7, 2008. The land price includes four nights' accommodations, all transfers, one-half day Athens city tour, entrance fees to sites and museums, a Cape Sounion tour, and two all-day tours to Delphi and Argolis (with lunch). Land tour rates start at \$970 staying at the three-star Jason Inn; an upgrade to the four-star Stanley Hotel is available. Cruise rates are additional and start at \$460 per person for an "F" category cabin during the remaining portion of the economy season, Oct. 31-Nov. 2008. Call 301-937-8673 Fax 301-937-1958; E-mail aegeantours@aegeantours.com; www.aegeantours.com

For information call the Greek National Tourist Organization at 212-421-5777; Fax: 212-826-6940; or E-mail at: info@greektourism.com; www.greektourism.com

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Greece see page 55-56 of the Listings Section

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BEST BUYS

\$1096 PORTUGAL The Corinthia Hotel Lisbon is close to the city's most important attractions. Its 518 elegant rooms are divided into Standard, Executive and Suites, sharing a blend of comfort and style. Corinthia Hotel Lisbon's Honeymoon package includes: Daily breakfast for two persons, airport pickup in limousine, flowers upon arrival, Champagne and strawberries with chocolate in room upon arrival, aromatic candles, massage oils and bath foam. Candlelit dinner with drinks in a spacious, elegant room. Rates start from \$1,096 for two persons sharing a standard double room for two nights. Available now through Dec. 31, 2008. Visit www.corinthia.com

\$425 ENGLAND Just 90 miles west of London in one of the most beautiful and culturally vibrant spots in England, the stylish **Cotswold House** in Chipping Campden recently announced its latest round of Fixed-Dollar Rates to assure U.K.-bound American travelers at least a 20% savings on guestrooms and suites. Rates start at \$425 double per night for Queen rooms up to \$1,250/double per night for the Grammar School Suite for a two-night stay, and all rates are inclusive of full English breakfast and VAT. Set overlooking a 17th-century Market Square, Cotswold House is a hidden gem. Fixed-Dollar Rates are guaranteed in U.S. dollars for stays from Sundays to Thursdays through Dec. 31, 2008. Visit www.cotswoldhouse.com

\$629 BELGIUM Belgium is celebrating native son Jean-Michel Folon, whose surreal watercolors, screen prints, sculpture and stained glass dealt with the loneliness of modern city dwellers. Special exhibits through September 28 include the outdoor sculpture exhibition at the Solvay Park around the Chateau de La Hulpe. **European Destinations** has air/hotel packages starting at \$629 departing JFK New York for three nights (not including taxes and fuel surcharges). Visit www.europeandestinations.com

\$373 FRANCE Jiva Hill Park Hotel is located on the French/Swiss border, just 15 minutes from Geneva and surrounded by the Jura mountains, with the Alps and Mont-Blanc in view, set in its own 70-acre park with magnificent views all around, the hotel boasts a huge man-made lake with a water sports center where guests can enjoy waterskiing, slalom and jumping during the summer. Each of the 28 deluxe guest rooms and six free-standing suites overlook either the Jura Mountains or the village of Crozet and feature high speed Internet access and safe. If booked online, rates for the deluxe rooms start at \$373 and the Junior Suites start at \$687 per night, double occupancy. Jiva Hill's Waterskiing Package, which includes one night in a Deluxe Room with breakfast, four ski rides of 15 minutes each, equipment rental, boat and qualified instruction costs \$567. Call +33 450 28 48 48

\$2165 LONDON The Draycott Hotel, set in the heart of London's Chelsea district, has an enticing offer for clients who want to pepper their travel with culture and fine dining. Between July 31st and December 31st, 2008, guests who partake of the London Culture and Dine-Around Package will receive three nights stay at the stylish Draycott Hotel, two admission tickets to the Churchill Museum and Benjamin Franklin House, two theatre tickets to the best available show, and a full English breakfast. Rates are \$2,165 for a deluxe double or \$2,905 for a Suite, inclusive of VAT. Call 800-747-4942 or visit www.draycotthotel.com

\$875 IRELAND Much like a visit to a friend's elegant private home, a stay at Dublin's The Merrion sells a "Family Fun" package makes it more accessible throughout August for 560 (about \$875) for two interconnecting rooms per night. The package includes luxury accommodations for up to two adults and two children in interconnecting double and twin rooms, full Irish breakfast. The rate for one double or twin room (without the extras) is normally 505 (approximately \$800), so part of the fun is the 49% savings; it is valid throughout August 2008 and includes VAT and service. Call 800-223-6800; www.merrionhotel.com



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IN THE NEWS

Hilton HHonors with SAS, airberlin

Hilton HHonors, the only hotel reward program to offer Points & Miles and No Blackout Dates at more than 3,000 hotels, has announced a new marketing alliance with the Nordic region's largest airline, **SAS Scandinavian Airlines**. The collaboration allows HHonors members to Double Dip® and earn HHonors points and SAS EuroBonus points during the same stay at Hilton Family hotels worldwide. HHonors and SAS Scandinavian Airlines are also supplying a special launch offer, which rewards SAS EuroBonus members with double SAS EuroBonus points when they book online and stay at participating Hilton Family hotels across Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden through August 15, 2008. Participating hotels include: **Helsinki Vantaa Airport, Helsinki Strand, Helsinki Kalastajatorppa, Stockholm Slussen, Reykjavik Nordica, Copenhagen Airport, Malmö City**. Visit www.hiltonhonor.com/sas

Hilton HHonors launched a new alliance with airberlin. The collaboration allows HHonors members to Double Dip® and earn HHonors points plus airberlin topbonus award miles during the same stay at all Hilton Family hotels worldwide. As Germany's second largest airline, airberlin operates flights to cities across Europe, Africa, America and Asia. HHonors and airberlin topbonus are also supplying a special launch offer, which rewards

airberlin topbonus members with double award miles when they book online and stay at select Hilton Family hotels in Europe between June 1 and Sep. 1, 2008. Some participating hotels include: **Hilton Barcelona, Hilton Berlin, Hilton Bonn, Hilton Bremen, Hilton Cologne, Hilton Diagonal Mar Barcelona, Hilton Dortmund, Hilton Dresden, Hilton Dusseldorf, Hilton Frankfurt, Hilton Mainz...** Visit HiltonHHonors.com/airberlin

Travel Bound Pays 20% Commission

Travel Bound is offering 20% commission on all Italy bookings between now and September 30, including hotels, apartments, tours, transfers and land packages. "Italy is enormously popular with independent travelers, and we want to show agents that there is always something new to entice both first timers and repeat clients," said Nico Zenner, Travel Bound's General Manager. "With higher commission for agents, and money-saving bonus night hotel deals to help clients save money, we're confident this promotion will boost agents' sales and profits." Travel Bound offers a total of 2,000 hotels and 276 sightseeing tours in Italy. Commissions start at 10% on all products, but all new bookings for Italy (with actual travel taking place anytime) will pay 20%. Click on "Promotions" www.booktravelbound.com

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IN THE NEWS

Spain with the Experts

Spain has been entrancing visitors since the earliest times of the Romans and Carthaginians. Today's Spain continues to be one of the world's most popular vacation destinations, with historical and cultural attractions, beautiful seacoasts and palm-lined beaches, snowcapped mountains and lively cities combining legendary nightlife with some of the world's most outstanding museums. Spain's vast wine-producing areas boast some of the world's best vintages, with well-respected regions bearing names like Ribera de Duero, Rioja, Penedes, Jerez and Priorat just to name a few.

Proudly assisting agents and travelers in enjoying the best experience of travel to Spain for nearly 25 years, **Petrabax** offers a vast selection of hotels of all price ranges. The company's **PTB Hotels** division represents the Paradores of Spain, the government chain of properties, many of which are housed in restored historical Moorish fortresses, medieval pilgrim hospices originally built by the Catholic Kings, former castles and monasteries.

Travelers who prefer a more structured vacation, may choose from Petrabax's escorted coach tours, from six nights to more than three weeks. Tour prices cover transfers, sightseeing, first-class hotels and English-speaking

guides and operated by seasoned local professionals.

Spain appeals to visitors of all ages. Younger clients may gravitate to the beach and nightlife, epitomized by iconic spots like the "infamous" island of Ibiza or the jet-set jewel of the Costa del Sol, Puerto Banus in Marbella, or the open-minded Sitges, with its artist colony and bars catering to all orientations. Sitges also boasts a noted Fantastic Film Festival each autumn, as does more upscale San Sebastian in the Basque region – also noted for its cuisine.

In Madrid travelers flock to the "Art Triangle" – the Prado, Reina Sofia Contemporary, and Thyssen-Bornemisza collections all within a few blocks of each other. Daytrips to Toledo for instance has its El Greco Masterpieces, while Picasso museums are found in Malaga and Barcelona, and not far from there is the outlandish Salvador Dali Museum in Figueres. And of course the Frank Gehry designed Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao is a major attraction on the northeast coast.

Senior clients will also find a welcome in Spain, where mild winters along the coasts in the off season offer no crowds, lower prices and pleasant weather. Paradores offer discounts of up to 30% to those over 60, and Petrabax has a large inventory of hotel properties in the \$100- \$110 range.

Visit www.petrabax.com

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IN THE NEWS

Germany's Historic Highlights Grow

Historic Highlights of Germany has announced the addition of two historic cities – Osnabrück and Mainz – to its roster of tourism marketing partners, now numbering 14. Götz Beck, the organization's chairman, foresees the two cities as strong partners that round out the group's programs: "These two new members strengthen the appeal and core messages of Historic Highlights of Germany."

Although all of the member cities share similar traits of historic structures and cultural heritage, each brings its unique character and profile to the consortium. Mainz, the capital of the state of Rheinland-Palatinate with more than 2,000 years of history, is surrounded by Germany's largest wine region. Its rich culture is apparent in its countless sites including Roman ruins; the 1,000-year-old Cathedral of St. Martin; the Gutenberg museum, focused on the city's greatest son and inventor of the first printing press with movable type; the historic Old Town; and the Citadel of Mainz, constructed in 1660.

Osnabrück, in Germany's Lower Saxony region, is more than 1,200 years old and shares with Münster the distinction of being one of the negotiation sites for the Peace of Westphalia, ending the Thirty Years' War. The city's ongoing commitment to a policy

of peaceful political engagement has earned it the title of "City of Peace." A university town, Osnabrück is the only German city set in a national park, which includes the scenic Teutoburg Forest. Visitors can take in the spectacular contemporary architecture of the Felix-Nussbaum-House, which holds the largest collection of paintings by the Osnabrück-born German artist Felix Nussbaum; St. Peter's Cathedral, founded in the 11th century; and one of Germany's most popular historic Christmas Markets.

Founded 30 years ago, Historic Highlights of Germany consists of Augsburg, Erfurt, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Koblenz, Mainz, Münster, Potsdam, Osnabrück, Regensburg, Rostock, Trier, Wiesbaden and Würzburg – all cities with distinctive profiles. The tourism marketing alliance requires that cities meet several strict criteria: history must still be evident in the buildings, lay-out and overall character of each city; the lodging and gastronomy must reflect regional individuality and specialties; the region around each city must offer an additional appeal; and populations must range between 100,000 and 300,000 inhabitants.

The organization is supported by the **German National Tourist Office, German Rail and Lufthansa.**

Visit www.historicgermany.com.

Now on sale in the USA

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 Atyrau in Kazakhstan.

Connecting flights from the US:

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IN THE NEWS

Kids in London

A fun-filled, weekend kids package, targeted to young families, features a hotel stay, sightseeing attractions and gifts for the kids. **Radisson Edwardian Hotels** is offering a "Love Your Weekend, Love the Kids" package, available on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, and valid until January 4, 2009. Guests can choose from two four-star hotels: the Vanderbilt on Cromwell Road in south Kensington, or the Grafton Hotel on Tottenham Court Road near Regents Park.

The "Love Your Weekend, Love the Kids" package includes a minimum stay of two nights at the Vanderbilt or Grafton Hotel, full English breakfast, London Pass (two adult and two child passes for two days), 10% in-store discount at Hamley's toy store, and a kids goodie bag including a teddy bear from Hamley's.

"After enjoying a full English breakfast, families can use the London Pass on the underground or buses to visit Hamley's, a spectacular toy store on Regent Street. The four London Passes included in our package, valued at £150 (\$300), include entrance to more than 55 top London attractions, with no waiting in queues. For example, with the London Pass, families can visit the London Zoo, Cartoon Museum, Tower of London, Kensington Palace or take a

cruise on the Thames River," says Linda Plant, Director of Marketing, Radisson Edwardian Hotels.

Visit www.londonpass.co

Spanair Flies from 22 U.S. Gateways

Spanair has extended its codeshare program with **US Airways** now from 22 U.S. gateways to Spain.

Business class passengers, who slip nicely into a 34-inch pitch seat, are allowed 30 kg or about 50 lbs. of luggage. Business Class C D J fare classes are entitled to full service as well as flexibility with their reservations regarding cancellations and refunds.

Avant Class Y class fare is also entitled to similar flexibility with reservations, changes, cancellations.

Economy Class passengers are entitled to carry one piece of luggage weighing no more than 32 lbs. or 20 kg, will receive inflight services at nominal charges.

Economy Plus U B M H fare classes are entitled to reservation changes on the day of travel permitted - cancellation with surcharge possible.

All Economy fare passengers in classes not mentioned above - travel with non-refundable tickets.

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Selling the Heart and Soul of Brazil

By Susan McKee

Mention Brazil to clients thinking of "somewhere different" to go on vacation, and watch what happens: "I don't like crowds," they say, thinking of the crush of tourists converging for Carnival. "I'm afraid of the crime," they say, thinking about the oft-reported robberies of visitors to Rio de Janeiro. "It's too hot," some say, thinking you intend to send them on a boat up the Amazon River at high noon in summer.



But there's more to Brazil than those iconic images. Ask clients a few questions.

Did they like traveling in Italy or Germany? What about jeep trekking across rugged terrain with magnificent views? Is sampling different wines or tasting micro brewed beer something they like to do? Is going somewhere their friends have never been appealing?

Add to those lures the lack of jetlag (you're flying within, not across, what are U.S. Time Zones), and Santa Catarina, about an hour's flight south of São Paulo, may be just the ticket.

Never heard of it? It's virtually undiscovered by American tourists. That means visitors will find fewer people who speak fluent English – but the tourism infrastructure is in place because it's a popular destination for Brazilians.

Take Florianópolis, Santa Catarina's capital, for example. It's situated on Santa Catarina Island, connected by a trio of bridges to the Brazilian mainland. Located just south of the Tropic of Capricorn, it has a subtropical climate like central Florida (which is just north of the Tropic of Cancer). The island has 42 named beaches, ranging from mere slivers of isolated sand to vast stretches where fishermen share the shore with sunbathers.

In town, don't miss the mercado (filled with fish, meat and produce vendors) and stop by the city's old town square, Praça XV de Novembro. Here, you'll find the legendary 100-year-old fig tree. Circumnavigate it counterclockwise seven times, and your future good fortune in wealth and romance are assured!

The province of Santa Catarina was settled by Europeans – primarily Italians and Germans – and their influence remains strong. In Pomerode, for example, where almost all of the original settlers in the 19th Century came from Pomerania, 90% of the population still speaks German.

Beer in Brazil

In nearby Blumenau, one of the best-known industries is beer production using traditional German methods (you can tour the Eisenbahn Brewery as well as the city's historic museum of beer-making). Each year, the residents don German costumes and celebrate Oktoberfest, even though the Brazilian celebration takes place in the spring instead of harvest time. www.eisenbahn.com.br/ingles/main/index.php

The factory in Blumenau producing hand-crafted glass is

Santa Catarina

The Best Kept Secret in Brazil!

Santa Catarina is a state in southern Brazil with one of the highest standards of living in the country. Most of Santa Catarina's inhabitants are descendants of Portuguese, German, Austrian, and Italian immigrants. Its capital is Florianópolis (a.k.a. Floripa) which mostly lies on the Santa Catarina Island.

Santa Catarina is a privileged spot, thanks to its diversity of natural beauty and its ethnic and cultural mosaic, with more than 500 years of history and the European charm with the obvious influence of European immigrants.



Santa Catarina has one of the most beautiful coastlines in Brazil, with one very busy beach resort: Balneário Camboriú. There are also many smaller resort towns, including Itapema, Piçarras, Barra Velha and Penha, home to the famous amusement park "Beto Carrero World". Santa Catarina's beaches along the 350-mile coastline are a great attraction for locals and visitors alike. Blumenau, in occidental Santa Catarina is stage to one of the biggest events here: the Oktoberfest! The heritage of Italian, German, and Portuguese immigrants can be seen in the architecture and the customs throughout the state.

Santa Catarina's infrastructure is strong: Hercilio Luz Airport has capacity to server 2.7 million passengers a year. Santa Catarina has many quality hotels --Majestic Palace, Natur Campeche, and Sofitel are among the ones we at Sunny Land Tours feature in our programs. One of the most landmark properties we feature, Costão do Santinho, is a word class Resort and Spa, located on 186 acres of land, where there are rocky coastlines and dunes preserved in a Private Natural Patrimony Reserve. An excellent "green" location to enjoy Santa Catarina from, but where you can also have an ecological experience, observing the reserve's biodiversity, such as the lagoons and streams. In short, Santa Catarina offers a peaceful, relaxing, and culturally stimulating vacation.



For information & reservations call 1-800-783-7839. Visit www.BrazilHotDeals.com

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Packages from \$990!



Here are some select Sunny Land Tours Packages Featuring Beautiful Santa Catarina:

Brazil Discovery: 6 days as low as \$990*

The landmark destination Rio de Janeiro combined with a different Brazil: Santa Catarina. This package features 3 nights in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina; and 2 nights in Rio de Janeiro. Includes all transfers, excursions in Santa Catarina and Rio de Janeiro, with accommodations to choose from tourist class, first class, and deluxe properties with daily breakfast.

Islands & Waterfalls: 6 days as low as \$1,268*

Enjoy the best of both worlds: the landmark waterfalls in Iguassu Falls, combined with a different Brazil: Santa Catarina & it's beautiful islands. Package features 2 nights in Iguassu Falls, 2 nights in Florianópolis, Santa Catarina; and 1 night in Sao Paulo. Includes all transfers, visit to both Argentinean and Brazilian side of Iguassu Falls, excursions in Santa Catarina, daily breakfast and a barbecue dinner in Sao Paulo. Accommodations to choose from first class and deluxe properties.

Florianópolis & Oktoberfest: 7 days from \$2,150*

Time to have fun: Enjoy Oktoberfest in Santa Catarina, and visit the landmark city of Florianópolis, the quaint city of Balneário Camboriú and the German City of Blumenau. Over 700,000 people attend this Oktoberfest every year in October. This festivity lasts for two weeks and allows tourists to see Blumenau's culture. The street parades, typical German bands, folklore and theatre groups savor the ambiance. You will stay 3 nights at Florianópolis (at deluxe Costão do Santinho) and 3 nights at Balneário Camboriú (at the deluxe Recanto das Águas Resort Hotel). Package includes, many excursions and 12 meals.

Florianópolis & Whale Watching: 8 days from \$2,250*

Includes 2 nights in Florianópolis, 2 nights in Praia do Rosa, 2 nights at Caldas da Imperatriz, with all meals, excursions, and whale watching activities (runs July to early November only).

*Prices are per person in double land only, subject to change.

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SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA

called Di Murano (after the famous Italian island outside Venice known for its glass). Its studio is open to visitors, who can watch glassmaking in action –and then buy something wonderful to take home.

One of the Italian-style winemakers in the region is Villa Francioni, where the attraction is not only the wine, but the winery itself. A collection of stained glass windows is incorporated into a six-story combination of production facility, restaurant and shop. No detail in design has been overlooked, from the fanciful wrought iron balconies overlooking the storage tanks to the mosaic tile floors under the aging barrels.

While there are European-style wine and beer, there also is a favorite indigenous libation – *cachaça*, a spirit distilled from sugar cane juice and aged in Ariba wood barrels.

According to a recent report in *The New York Times*, one of the best cachaças in Brazil is Armazem Vieira, distilled in Florianópolis. Visitors can sample (and purchase) cachaças aged from one to 50 years in the same trading post, or “armazem,” built in 1840 by Sergio Vieira – it’s just a couple of miles from the Florianópolis airport. While enjoyed straight up, most drink their cachaça in the trademark Brazilian cocktail, the *Caipirinha*, which adds unrefined brown sugar, fresh-squeezed lime juice and ice to the liquor.

Visit www.armazemvieira.com.br/index_english.php

North on the Atlantic coast from Florianópolis is Parque Unipraias Camboriú. A great place to spend the day, the park

combines Estação Mata Atlântica (a nature preserve with walking trails and information placards on the flora and fauna) and a couple of cable car rides to whisk you to the top from either side of the park.

Visit www.unipraias.com.br/ingles/home.php

The descent from the summit into Balneário Camboriú takes you from lush Atlantic rainforest into a distinctly modern city. A shoreline drive separates apartment skyscrapers from a working waterfront. As I watched one evening, a crew of about 30 fishermen wrangled a huge net to shore, bringing fish and other sea creatures for their dinners.

Inland, the terrain of Santa Catarina changes. After crossing the coastal plain, one drives up a tortuous two-lane highway to the Planalto Serrano, a plateau almost 5,000 feet above sea level. Here, about 140 miles from Florianópolis, is a region with heavily forested canyons and limitless vistas.

Accommodations

The province has several resort hotels that are ready for American visitors. One is Rio do Rastro Eco Resort, on the Planalto Serrano. It combines on-site facilities (including an indoor pool) with outdoor exploration options via jeep, horseback or hiking. www.riodorastro.com.br/ing/index.htm

Vida Sole e Mar, on the Atlantic coast at Imbituba, has all the usual amenities, but the big draw is the whales. Just off shore, from about mid-June to mid-November, you can

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Ponta dos Ganchos Exclusive Resort, a Relais & Chateaux property, has just 20 bungalows for those who need privacy. The cuisine, by chef Luis Salvajoli, blends traditional recipes and Brazilian ingredients for meals that meet international standards. Visit their website at: www.pontadosganchos.com.br/web/eng/home.php

On Santa Catarina Island, the sprawling **Costão do Santinho Resort** has a designated "international wing" where foreign visitors are likely to run across English-speaking staff. Costão was chosen as the best beach resort for the third consecutive year by readers of *Viagem e Turismo* magazine. www.costao.com.br/versoes/ingles/index.php

Additionally, Santa Catarina was awarded the Best Destination in Brazil prize in the same annual survey of the *Viagem e Turismo* magazine; readers crowned Santa Catarina as the best tourist destination in Brazil, surpassing Bahia, champion for the last five years and the city of Florianópolis took second place, after Rio de Janeiro.

For information, contact Santa Catarina Tourism, www.santacatarina.travel; or contact the Brazil Tourism Office, 800-727-2945; www.braziltourism.org

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Brazil see page 64-65 of the Listings Section

IN THE NEWS

Brazil Shines in South Star Portfolio

Los Angeles-based **South Star Tours** is celebrating its 18th Anniversary in organizing tours for individual travelers and groups to South and Central Americas.

South Star Tours promotes Brazil because it is exciting, vibrant, with a fast expanding economy and an ever increasing presence in world affairs. Brazil is predominantly on international news for its economy and scientific achievements, its growth has been attracting international investors, promoting better infra-structure and services to all its incoming travelers on business or leisure.

Brazil is home to some of the world's most golden beaches, with thatched roof huts serving up traditional sugar cane drinks and grilled lobster and shrimp; many remaining as virgin as they were on days of the Europeans arrival, late 1400's, to its coast. Brazil is also home to some of the world's most cosmopolitan and sophisticated cities, Rio and São Paulo; and to some of the world's most exotic cities, Salvador and Recife. Its culture, both intellectual and popular, is so rich and so particular making Brazil a very diverse and unique destination to all visitors. Recent governmental surveys confirm that more than 96% of those surveyed assured that they would return to Brazil in the near future to explore other regions.

As a scoop of great values in packages to Brazil, passengers can enjoy a four-night Rio Escape program for as low as \$1,199 per person double including airfare from Miami, hotels, transfers, tours, breakfast.

Other options for culture vulture clients are group departures for the Festival Tour in Salvador for six nights; the Boa Morte Festival, Aug 12- 20, or the African Heritage Tour in Brazil for seven nights, Oct. 26-Nov 4, either for \$1,755 per person double (land only). Travelers can opt for a look at Brazil's cultural and arty side on the seven-night Art & Culture Delights of Brazil priced from \$2,799 per person double with airfare from Miami.

August Special: Book 2009 Carnival in Rio Now

The \$2,249 per person double price reflects a \$50 savings off regular price. Packages include roundtrip airfare from New York to Rio, five nights' accommodations, daily Brazilian breakfast, transfers city tours and visit to Sugar-Loaf, one ticket for the Carnival Ball, services of an English-speaking guide. This is a limited time offer for immediate purchase. (U.S. Departure taxes and fuel surcharge are additional.)

Central and South America is made up of complex and extraordinary destinations. Clients can take advantage of an Easy Interest-Free Monthly Payment that may be arranged upon request and at the time of booking; while travel agents can enjoy at least 11% commission guaranteed.

Travel agents and a companion are welcome to participate on any fixed departure to Central and South America programs with 20% off the retail price.

Call 800-654-4468; fax 310-937-0191; E-mail info@southstartours.com; www.southstartours.com

BEST BUYS

\$1200 PERU Latin Trails announced the newest addition to their fleet, the Amazon Journey: El Arca, which operates out of Iquitos, Peru towards the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve, one of the largest ecological reserves in Peru. The Amazon Journey navigates through the Marañon and Ucayali Rivers and surrounds the Pacaya Samiria Reserve, which offers a diverse variety of wildlife and bird species. Travelers will have the opportunity to see the Amazon River, swim with pink and grey dolphins, amongst other activities. Three-night cruises are available to either the Marañon or Ucayali River for \$1,200, or combine both these routes for a full six-night cruise for \$1,935. Excursions are accompanied by an English-speaking naturalist guide with insights on the Amazon Rainforest.

Call 800-747-0567; E-mail amazon@latintrails.com; www.amazoncruises.travel

\$285 MEXICO Casa Natalia is introducing the "Casa Natalia Gourmet Package" to guests seeking a relaxing and indulgent gourmet experience. Available through Oct. 31, 2008, the "Casa Natalia Gourmet Package" includes accommodations for two, dinner daily with wine pairing at the hotel's signature *Mi Cocina*, breakfast daily, a complementary shuttle to the beach club at Casa del Mar, and a private roundtrip airport transfer, for guests who stay three or more nights. Priced at \$285 per night double. Located in Los Cabos in a secluded enclave of palm trees, waterfalls and tropical flowers, Casa Natalia resembles an authentic Mexican casa. With 14 deluxe guest rooms and two Spa Suites each richly styled by local artisans, Casa Natalia is the perfect setting for an unforgettable seaside escape.

Visit www.casanatalia.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 Arianu Amazon Towers, the Amazon Village, Acajatuba Jungle Lodge or the Amazon Ecopark Lodge. The four-day trip to Manaus and Arianu with a stay at the Arianu 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.

Call 800-682-3315; E-mail info@brazilianwavetours.com; www.brazilianwavetours.com

\$832 BRAZIL, ARGENTINA TAM Vacations sells a five-night package to Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires for \$832 per person double that includes: roundtrip airfare on TAM Brazilian Airlines from Miami or New York, three nights' accommodation at

the Lancaster in Rio and the Aspen Suites in Buenos Aires with breakfast daily. Call 866-627-2945; E-mail info@tamvacations.com; www.tamvacations.com

\$2199 ECUADOR BikeHike Adventures has the perfect solution for an active vacation. Their Ecuador Adventure with a Purpose is 11-days and combines mountain biking, hiking, rafting, horseback riding and sea kayaking with three days of volunteering in the Congal Biomarine Station. The community service portion entails monitoring wildlife species, maintaining trails and planting trees. The volunteers also spend a day in a village school with young children, doing handicrafts and teaching English. The trip begins and ends in Quito and traverses east to the coastal Caribbean. Travellers bike and hike through misty trails in the Mindo Cloud forest Reserve, horseback ride nearby the Imbabura and Cotacachi volcanoes, raft down gurgling rapids on the Rio Blanco and sea kayak through gnarled mangrove forests in Portete. Land cost is \$2,199 from Quito and includes mountain bikes, rafts, kayaks, all accommodation (twin shared), most meals, one internal flight and veteran guides.

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Egypt Gains Marketshare Each Year

Egypt has once again succeeded in expanding the tourism industry, bringing in more tourists who stay longer and come back more frequently. According to the Egyptian Tourism Authority, the country saw more than a 22% increase in visitors to Egypt in 2007.

Homeric Tours' vacations to Egypt are tailored for the American traveler, with a variety of itineraries, using only deluxe and luxury hotels and cruise ships. Each has been selected to meet clients' needs. The awe-inspiring civilization of Egypt, housing the expansive Sahara Desert, the Pyramids of Giza, the monuments of Luxor, the Nile River is among Homeric's best selling vacations.

One package is the Egyptian Escape – and eight day package, including a three-night stay in Cairo and a three-night Nile Cruise visiting Aswan and Luxor. Also included are a full-day tour of Cairo, all shore excursions on cruise, transfers and the services of an English-speaking guide. Prices start at \$1,939 per person double.

The 13-day Nile Voyager package features Egypt's most fascinating destinations – Cairo, Luxor, Aswan, Abu Simbel, and more. Four nights in Cairo, two full days of sightseeing, a six-night deluxe Nile Cruise including all meals and shore excursions and a full-day sightseeing tour of Abu Simbel, including airfare, are just some of the included features. Prices start at \$2,999 per person double. A three-night stay at a beautiful Red Sea Resort – in either Sharm El Sheikh or Hurghada – starts at \$479. Included are airfare, accommodations, breakfast and transfers. A four-night extension to Jordan's Amman and Petra begins at \$929. **Call 800-223-5570; E-mail info@homerictours.com**

Indus Travels has recently introduced a new collection of



JEFF BURDOCK

tours featured in a brochure dedicated to Egypt, Dubai and Morocco. According to Praveen Syal, clients demanded the inclusion of Egypt. "Egypt contains some of the best remains of ancient civilizations and wonders of the world along with first class scuba diving, stunning desert landscapes and total relaxation while sailing down the Nile, he added. Among the luxury programs to Egypt are Essential Egypt, an eight-day program priced from \$876 per person double for land arrangements only; to an 11-day Land of the Pharaohs program priced from \$1,386 to a 14-day program, Best of Egypt priced at \$1,352. All programs include accommodations, airport transfers, daily buffet breakfast, all meals aboard the four-night Nile cruise, transportation in private air conditioned cars, domestic airfares, the services of English speaking private guides who are Egyptologists, sightseeing and entrance to monuments. **Call 866-978-2997; E-mail mail@industravels.ca; www.industravels.ca**

Ya'lla Tours USA's "In the Footsteps of the Exodus" is a five-day, escorted tour of Cairo and Mt. Sinai. The tour operates throughout the year and begins any day in Cairo. Prices cover land arrangements only. Two days of touring in Cairo include visits to the pyramids at Giza, the Sphinx, Memphis, Sakara, Dahshour, Egyptian Museum of Antiquities, Medieval Cairo and Khan el Khalili Bazaar. On day four, passengers are transferred overland from Cairo to St. Catherine on the Sinai Peninsula. Touring there includes St. Catherine Monastery and a predawn climb up Mt. Sinai to watch the sunrise from the summit. The tour is priced from \$795 per person double including accommodations, breakfast daily,

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Norman Fidda, President

one dinner, two lunches, and four days of privately escorted touring, private transfers, entrance fees and hotel taxes. **Call 800-644-1595; visit www.yallatours.com**

Egyptian Waterways

Avalon Waterways is embarking on its most aggressive growth to date in 2009, offering more than 25 vacations in Europe, China, Egypt and the Galapagos, as well berthing two new ships.

"Traveling on the waterways that weave together the history and lore of villages and countries is not only one of the trendiest means of travel, it's also the most scenic and experiential way to vacation," said Patrick Clark, managing director of Avalon Waterways. "Small-ship cruising provides travelers big benefits including a more intimate experience, the proximity of attractions and hassle-free, all-inclusive style. Guests don't have to worry about hidden fees and currency increases."

Avalon's nine-day Egyptian Splendor is a voyage through the Kingdom of the Pharaohs. In Cairo, visitors will see King Tutankhamun's treasures, visit the Sphinx and see the Great Pyramids of Giza. Clients take a flight to Aswan for a four-night Nile River cruise to Luxor. Travelers will visit the Aswan Dam, Temple of Isis, Valley of Kings and Valley of Queens and Luxor Temple and visit Edfu to the Temple of Horus, local bazaars and stunning Karnak. Priced from

\$1,911 (cruise/land-only, including intra-tour flights). **Call 877-380-1535; www.avalonwaterways.com**

Elegant Cruises & Tours, a niche cruise line specializing in culturally focused travel, is pleased to announce its new 2009 itineraries for the 104-passenger M.S. Andrea and the 62-passenger M.S. Monet.

With the Andrea roaming the waterways of Europe and Antarctica; and the Monet positioned in the Adriatic and Red Sea, Elegant Cruises & Tours continues its long tradition of introducing travelers to delightful new destinations each cruise season. From the splendor of Europe's grand cities to the lush natural charm of her coastal islands; from the icy waters of the Antarctic Peninsula to the inviting warmth of the Mediterranean, Elegant Cruises and Tours offers cruisers 90 diverse ports of call in 2009.

The Monet kicks-off her 2009 season in the Red Sea, exploring the Gulf of Aqaba and introducing guests to the ancient Christian monasteries and relics of the vast Egyptian desert, and visiting Petra and Amman. The Monet then repositions to Venice, home port for her classic spring and summer voyages through the Adriatic. Sailing round-trip from Venice, passengers will visit the culturally rich cities, enchanting islands dotting the Dalmatian coast and lesser known ports of Croatia and Slovenia.

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

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Maiden Voyages

AFRICAExperts by Goway has expanded its Africa portfolio linking it to the Middle East. A new 18-day "Treasures of Africa" Kenya & Egypt Holiday of a Lifetime escorted tour that includes icons such as Lake Nakuru, Masai Mara, Cairo, Alexandria, Abu Simbel and Nile Cruise.

New itineraries to Israel and Jordan in conjunction with Egypt include the 15-day "Pyramids to Petra" tour starting at \$2,198, 5-day "Jordan" tour (Amman & Petra) from \$717, nine-day "Highlights of Egypt & Israel" from \$1,407 or eight-day "Holyland Tour" from \$1,186; three-day Stopover packages to Dubai and Abu Dhabi start at \$269. **Call 800-387-8850; E-mail info@goway.com; or visit www.goway.com**

Uniworld will debut its newest, company-owned ship, the 42-suite River Tosca in April 2009 to the Nile. "We are experiencing a very strong demand in this region. We believe the River Tosca will fit in extremely well with Uniworld's existing European product line, and we are delighted to offer our loyal guests a new level of luxury when cruising on the Nile," said Guy Young, president of Uniworld. **Call 800-733-7820; www.uniworld.com**

Travel Agent Fam for 2009

Travel Egypt has organized a 10-night fam trip departing Jan. 5, 2009. Among the highlights are visits to Cairo, Aswan, Luxor and Alexandria. The peak season departure originates from New York, and includes a four-day five-star deluxe Nile cruise, all meals (throughout the journey), tips for ground personnel and a bonus of 20% commissions on all bookings after you go on the fam. Space is limited and this is the only Travel Egypt fam scheduled for 2009. Agents pay \$1,495 (plus air ticket taxes); companions pay \$1,695. **Call 877-778-3497; www.travelegypt.com/jan09fam.htm**

For more information, contact the Egyptian Tourist Authority, 212- 332-2570; fax 212-956-6439; E-mail info.us@egypt.travel; www.egypt.travel.com

For consolidator fares and tour packages to Egypt, see page 72 of the Listings Section

IN THE NEWS

Emirates Launches A-380 from JFK to Dubai

On August 1, **Emirates** will operate its brand-new A380 aircraft between Dubai and New York JFK on a commercial basis. These will be additional flights to its existing twice-a-day non-stop service. Subsequently, Emirates will deploy the A380 between Dubai and New York, on one of its scheduled twice-daily flights. The 14-hour flight is the first-ever commercial A380 service to the Americas. Emirates expects delivery of five A380s in its current financial year, all featuring its ultra long-haul configuration of 489 seats: 14 in First Class, 76 in Business and 399 in Economy; with 13 tons of bellyhold capacity for cargo. **Visit www.emirates.com**

Light Railway in the Holy Land

"Nearly a century late," says Arie Sommer, **Israel's Tourism Commissioner** for North and South America, "the first train is expected to make its maiden voyage along the 13.8-kilometer Pissgat Ze'ev-Mt. Herzl line by late 2009. The Old City, downtown and Yad Vashem will be the first tourist-frequented sites to benefit.

Ultimately, a total of eight clean, efficient, electric-powered light rail transit lines will whisk Jerusalemites and tourists from the Pissgat Ze'ev suburb in the North to the Malha mall at the city's southern reaches. Convenient stops served by equally-as-efficient feeder buses will serve the Old City's Damascus Gate as well as downtown's Mahane and Ben Yehuda shopping districts. An additional line will be the much-anticipated high-speed rail link to Tel Aviv.

Work on the Jerusalem terminus for this service has shifted into high gear. Although unfinished, the rapid transport system has already made its mark on the Jerusalem landscape with an imposing suspension bridge that now greets visitors as they enter the city. The towering white structure designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava and spanning Weizmann Boulevard, will allow trains unhindered access to the permanently frenetic central bus station.

Visit www.goisrael.com

BEST BUYS

\$1752 KENYA

Karell African Dream Vacations is selling a six-night Kenya Highlights package that was recently featured in *Arthur Frommers Budget Travel's Hot Deals*. Accommodations include one night in each of the following: at the Nairobi Safari Club in Nairobi, The Samburu Lodge in Samburu National Reserve, The Ark in Aberdare National Park, The Lake Naivasha Simba Lodge in the Lake Nakuru Reserve and two nights in The Mara Simba in the Masai Mara Game Reserve. Included in the package are meet and greet service on arrival Nairobi, roundtrip transfers airport/hotel, six nights' accommodations, seven breakfasts, five lunches, and dinners, guided sightseeing and game drives accompanied by a professional driver/guide as well as park entrance fees. International airfare is not included.

Call 888-777-1046; www.karellholidays.com

\$448 SOUTH AFRICA

An African safari is a learning experience at any age, but for children a safari can open up an entirely new world. **Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve** leads families on an adventurous excursion to catch a sight of the big five – buffalo, elephant, leopard, rhino, and lion. Families with children aged eight and above are encouraged to safely enjoy discovering the wild together in a private land rover led by experienced and acclaimed Sabi Sabi rangers and trackers, participate in bush walks and relax comfortably in luxurious accommodations.

Children two years and younger stay free of charge in a crib. Children over the ages of 13 to 15 sharing with adults will be charged half the adult rate. Suites at the Little Bush Camp start at \$448, Bush Camp suites start at \$510, Selati Camp suites start at \$555 and suites at Earth Lodge start at \$808. **Call 800-524-7979; fax 631- 858-1279; E-mail warren@kainyc.com; www.sabisabi.com**

\$3537 ZAMBIA

Norman Carr Safaris in the South Luangwa National Park is now offering 10% discount to guests stay-



Masai Sunset.

KENYA NTO

ing seven nights or longer during the peak season and wish to leave the stress of planning to the experts at Norman Carr. This offer is available starting July and lasts through October 2008. Rates start at \$3,537 per person double fully inclusive for a week on safari.

Norman Carr Safaris offers guests the opportunity to go on safari in vehicles or the more up-close and personal option of a walking safari through the bush. The company operates Kapani Lodge and four remote walking camps, these "bush-camps" have been set up so that a walk from one to the next is conducted at a non-strenuous pace with a fully qualified guide and armed game scout. The camps, although very luxurious, retain a certain rustic feel to them and are situated in remote areas of the National Park.

For bookings, E-mail kapani@normancarrsafaris.com; www.normancarrsafaris.com

\$1445 NAMIBIA

Premier Tours' 11-night tour includes camping and hotel accommodations, ground transportation, and guided tours, from \$1,445 per person double for land arrangements only, which breaks down to about \$120 per day for accommodations, food, all transportation, guided tours, camping equipment, and park admission.

The tour departs from Windhoek every other Tuesday. Nine nights' camping, two nights' hotel accommodations, taxes, daily breakfast, most lunches and dinners, all ground transportation, and the services of an English-speaking tour guide are part of the package. Camping equipment, permits, and park fees are also included in the price. U.S. passport holders will obtain a visa upon arrival at the airport in Namibia for free (as long as they're staying less than 90 days).

Call 800-545-1910; www.premiertours.com

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Waterfalls in the Heart of the Big Apple

New York City, aka the Big Apple has never had more to offer travelers – first-time visitors, families and those traveling on business with a little time to spare for fun as well as New York aficionados will be delighted at new ways of getting around: take a water taxi or hop the Circle Line to be close enough to New York's latest although temporary phenomenon, a Waterfall under the Brooklyn Bridge, on display through October 13.

The Westin New York at Times Square:

Has partnered with **Circle Line Sightseeing Cruises** to offer travelers the opportunity to see the city's monumental art exhibit, The New York City Waterfalls, from an up close, "boat-side" view. The package includes accommodations in a newly renovated guestroom, two vouchers for a two-hour cruise around Manhattan, including the once-in-a-lifetime viewing of The New York City Waterfalls, and complimentary parking.

Vouchers can be redeemed at guests' convenience, and Circle Line Sightseeing Cruise tours leave from Pier 83, a quick 15-minute walk or short cab ride from the award-winning hotel. Priced per room, per night, rates start at \$379 through Sept. 3; \$479 Sept. 4-Oct. 13. Call 888-627-7149; ask for rate code NYC FALLS.

Kimberly Hotel: A European-style luxury boutique hotel, extends its amenities beyond its walls to offer guests a yacht adventure to **Bear Mountain New York State Park** aboard its own private 75-foot yacht. A day-long sailing excursion, guests are treated to a scenic cruise along the Hudson River to Bear Mountain State Park in Bear Mountain, NY, to enjoy the park's public swimming pool, picnic areas, boating on Hessian Lake, hiking and biking trails or visiting the Trailside Museums and Wildlife Center at Bear Mountain. Priced at \$65 per person, breakfast and snacks are included and will be served on board. Guests can bring their own bikes on-board. The cruise sails Aug. 3 and Sept. 6. Call 800-683-0400; www.kimberlyhotel.com

hotel le bleu: Not in Manhattan but a short subway ride from town is the 48-room hotel le bleu, located in the trendy Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, offers easy access to this summer's hottest public attraction, New York City Waterfalls. Perhaps the most dramatic of the locations will be the display under the Brooklyn Bridge, a mere five miles from hotel le bleu. Visitors are invited to experience the waterfall exhibits up close on the **Circle Line's** three-hour Full Island Cruise, which circumnavigates island of Manhattan (212-563-3200). Rates at hotel le bleu range from \$254 - \$279.50 (15 percent discount as part of NYC & Co.'s Summer in the City) per room, per night through Sept. 1, 2008; \$299-\$329 through October. Call 866-427-6073; www.hotelbleu.com

Scaling the Waterfalls

For the best way to catch a glimpse of the environmentally friendly, aesthetically astonishing New York City Waterfalls public art installation created by Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson punctuating New York City's East River this summer, consider two tradi-

tional means of getting around.

Gray Line New York Sightseeing's deluxe double-decker buses, luxury motor coaches announced its "Red Hot Summer Sale," offering valued Gray Line customers a choice of four free New York City Harbor cruises—including cruises to the spectacular and now world-famous 'New York City Waterfalls' exhibit—or the opportunity to meet a Broadway actor, when they purchase a



48-hour, 72-hour, or other select "All Loops Tour" ticket in July, August or September. Call 800-669-0051; www.NewYorkSightseeing.com

New York Water Taxi's Unofficial Tour of the New York City Waterfalls – to get close enough to feel the spray.

This 60-minute tour, will cruise by and stop at the four temporary waterfall installations along the along the East River waterfront in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Governors

Island – one on the Brooklyn anchorage of the Brooklyn Bridge, one between Piers 4 and 5 below the Brooklyn Heights Promenade, one in Lower Manhattan at Pier 35 north of the Manhattan Bridge, and one on the north shore of Governors Island. The tour will also swing by the Statue of Liberty. Tours depart from South Street Seaport, Pier 17 and from Battery Park. Tours from South Street leave at 10:30 am, 12 pm, 1 pm, 2 pm, 3 pm, 4 pm, 5 pm. An evening tour of the New York City Waterfalls departs daily from South Street Seaport, Pier 17 at 7:00 pm and 8 pm on Saturdays. Tickets are \$25 for adults; \$18 for seniors 65+ and \$15 for children under 12. The tour runs through mid-October during the duration of the installation. Call 212-742-1969 ext. 217; www.nywatertaxi.com/waterfalls

Calling All American Girls

The **Algonquin Hotel**, a classic New York City hotel is celebrating Kit Kittredge's big screen debut in the highly anticipated movie *Kit Kittredge: American Girl*, with the Algonquin Girl package for Kit's friends nationwide. Included are accommodations for one adult and one child at the Algonquin Hotel, a \$30 gift certificate to the American Girl store, a diary so little ones can jot down their thoughts and memories - just like Kit, two tickets to a Broadway show or to see Kit's favorite sport: Baseball. Located steps away from the American Girl Place, The Algonquin Hotel provides participants with tickets to see Kit on the big screen. One-night packages start at \$394 per person double through Oct. 1, 2008. Call 866-406-5341; www.algonquinhotel.com

New York City's **Flatotel** is welcoming families this summer with packages in the newly refurbished, deluxe one-bedroom suites start at \$339 per night, plus tax through Aug. 31, 2008. Families receive a list of kid-friendly stores nearby such as American Girl Place, Build-A-Bear Workshop, FAO Schwarz, and the NBA Store, among others; along with shopping discounts and vouchers to Top of the Rock, Museum of Modern Art, and a tour of NBC Studios. Call 800-352-8683; www.flatotel.com

BEST BUYS

\$9600 FLORIDA

Three luxury resorts in South Florida have joined forces to create the ultimate motorcycle journey for those who want to live high on the hog. **Grove Isle Hotel & Spa** in Miami, **Little Palm Island Resort & Spa** in the Lower Florida Keys and **Ocean Key Resort & Spa** in Key West are the "rest stops" on this six-night scenic road trip. Guests will enjoy two nights in a bungalow suite, a couples spa treatment and breakfast daily. When it's time to hit the road again, the team at Little Palm Island Resort has detailed the motorcycle and filled the tank with gas.

Ocean Key Resort & Spa is just a little over 25 miles away in Key West. The Keysy Riders take one last drive from Key West to Coconut Grove. Once the explorers arrive at Grove Isle, they are treated to a special "Saddle Soother" fanny facial at SpaTerre.

The entire package is \$9,600 per couple, including two nights, spa experiences and breakfast at each hotel and (one) motorcycle rental; one dinner for two at BALEENmiami; available without motorcycle rental for those who own their own bikes.

Call 305-858-8300; www.noblehousehotels.com

New Canadian Travel Site launched

Exclusively Canada Ltd. today launched its latest Canadian travel website, **ViaRailVacations.com**. This new portfolio site focuses on vacation packages featuring travel on Via Rail trains and routes and is part of the company's ongoing expansion strategy. Exclusively Canada continues to experience record breaking growth year over year, despite the Statistics Canada numbers released last month showing tourism to Canada hitting an all time low.

"We continue to find strong growth in long haul travel to Canada," says Shannon Wilkinson, Vice President of Marketing at Exclusively Canada Ltd. "While the number of day trips over the US border have decreased sharply, these are not the consumers we are reaching. The high Canadian dollar and longer lineups at the border have made Canada less attractive for single day excursions, however, we are still an appealing destination for our US neighbors looking for multi-day vacation experiences, as shown by the only slight decline in visitors who spend at least one night here." Wilkinson notes that Exclusively Canada's US business has increased nearly 20% over the same period in 2007 and more than doubled in the last 24 months.

The company has also become one of the fastest growing partners for **Via Rail Canada**, by creating interesting vacation package combinations showcasing VIA Rail trains, which it promotes passionately to a variety of global markets. This special relationship spurred the creation of the **ViaRailVacations.com** website, which the company will use as a focused opportunity for marketing Via Rail vacation packages.

E-mail swilkinson@exclusivelycanada.com or visit www.ViaRailVacations.com.

\$1000 HAWAII

Maui-based **Tropical Villa Vacations** specializing in luxury vacation rentals, is offering a new incentive program for agents booking luxury accommodations for fall. The Fall Rewards Program offers rewards for agents and their clients for minimum five-night bookings at Tropical Villa Vacation properties with rates of at least \$1,000 per night. For qualified bookings, agents will receive 15% commission, and their clients will receive two one-hour massages (compliments of their agent) in their rental home or villa. Valid Sept. - Nov. and excluding Thanksgiving period.

Call 888-875-2818 ext 205, info@tropicalvillavacations.com

\$465 CONNECTICUT

A "Choice" Couple's Getaway: Dust off your clubs and head for **Mohegan Sun**, New England's premier gaming and entertainment destination, where a Putt and Pamper package (through September 30) lets couples golf together, spa together, or pursue their separate pleasures. Choices include a round of golf at the private Mohegan Sun Country Club, or a 50-minute massage treatment at the resort's Elemis Spa. The package also includes overnight accommodations, breakfast for two at Seasons Buffet, and 20% off at The Golf Shop. Priced at \$465 per night based on double occupancy.

Call 888-226-7711 or visit www.mohegansun.com

Leveraging Your Personal Network

What distinguishes National Trade Shows (NTS) from other companies may be the underlying harmony between two generations of a family that has thrived and built the company for the past three decades. William and Pat Gardiner founded NTS in 1974; she was active until she passed away last October, while Bill Sr. continues to be involved. Young Bill Gardiner (right) started working with them at the same time. NTS has a sister company, The William Gardiner Company (WGC), which is among the largest meeting planners in the travel industry. WGC produces more than 250 private label functions per year. William and Pat's daughter and Bill's sister, Alice Mickens, operates WGC. She has her DS in the Caribbean.

JF: Can you tell us which major events have had the most impact on the industry in the last 35 years?

Gardiner: Combined with the internet, airline deregulation, commission caps and finally 9/11 have reshaped the industry.

JF: Travel Industry trade shows are one of the most hotly debated concepts in the industry. Has technology affected your shows?

Gardiner: Face to face contact among suppliers and agents remains as crucial as it ever was. It is absolutely necessary to know who you are selling to as well what agents are selling. Clients still want and need information only agents can provide; agents prefer personal contact from suppliers to know the products they are selling.

JF: In a way, NTS is a *yenta* or a matchmaker but as such, does NTS drop out of the picture as soon as the supplier and agent have formed a bond?

Gardiner: You're right - NTS is a yenta but a very wise veteran yenta that has been in the market for more than 30 years. Companies may come and go; but our shows continue like clockwork each spring and fall. We rely on networking: contacts move from one supplier and position to another so the network of referrals grows wider. NTS has always worked with agency associations and chapters all over the country.

JF: NTS characterizes its events as Mini-Trade/Dinner Shows. Do they carry a focus such as a destination or a type of product?

Gardiner: When we first shifted from the traditional trade show to our new format in the late 70's we worked with agents and suppliers to find what the ideal format would be. If you are doing a private label function (a road show on Germany for instance) then a

theme works well. Agents need to meet as wide a variety of suppliers as possible, at the same time we limit the size of the function so each agent can meet each supplier.

JF: How does NTS calculate results?

Gardiner: Suppliers judge the Return On Investment and have asked us to evaluate the agents each year so we have been surveying all the agents. Suppliers are our main source of referrals.

JF: NTS requires that vendors provide 100 brochures and reorder cards to alleviate the need for masses of material and allows the agent to order what is needed. Are vendors moving away from heavy and expensive print material?

Gardiner: Suppliers are moving to electronics in various forms, but a basic fact sheet is always extremely helpful for home based agents. When we started the Mini-Trade/Dinner Show format, one of our key components is we pack a heat sealed kit for each vendor, which allows the supplier to distribute a selected amount of material so agents take the material in a non-back breaking manner.

JF: How important is the role of agents, the value of relationships?

Gardiner: Travel agents are playing a greater - not lesser role in the industry. Consumers still like someone to advise them about their vacation; it is an essential key to the vacation process. Considering this is the world's biggest industry it is surprising how it still takes just two people comparing notes on mutual acquaintances, experiences creating a community and not just an industry.

JF: Recently, I related a story to a young travel executive and mentioned the person I lunched with talked about his mother. The jr. exec. responded: "Yes, the personal detail,



that is a very old way of doing business." What is your take on this perspective?

Gardiner: Well it may be an old way of doing business but it is the way that business will always be done. Business is based on relationships and trust. We don't live in a vacuum and people are people not automatons. Knowing a person's family and background is part of interacting with them as a relationship develops. Besides, knowing about a client, and vice versa, allows you to go beyond just being a number.

JF: Some shows feature headliner speakers, some have developed seminar formats, others focus primarily on the press and its relationship not to agents but to the suppliers of travel, thus forming a different bond. Does NTS have any relationship with the media or do you prefer that NTS remain the power behind the show or the silent partner?

Gardiner: NTS has worked with most of the Trade Media since its inception. In fact, when we first started, my father's background was in the media. He was the Travel sales manager for the Bergen Record in New Jersey. He ran the first successful Travel Trade Show in 1971 and when he left the Record, he started most of the Newspaper Shows in the industry. We moved on to our present format in the late 70's.

We have developed our shows where our suppliers are the hosts, and the shows are run for them. NTS is the show organizer and producer but the show is our supplier's. Additionally, WGC, the sister company of NTS has developed the private labels projects which we run for our suppliers. This is where our suppliers can have us use our expertise for their road shows, seminars, conferences, etc.

Call 800-526-0041; or visit www.ntshows.com



Tripology Taps Peters for Top Spot

Tripology, the leading online travel referral service that connects travelers to knowledgeable travel specialists, today announced the appointment of travel industry veteran **John T. Peters**, CTIE, as President and CEO of the company, effective immediately. At the same time, Chinedu Echeruo, Tripology co-founder who served in the role of CEO since the company's inception, was named Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Architect

of the Company.

"We are very pleased to have John take the lead as President and CEO of Tripology," said Echeruo. He has an outstanding track record in a diverse range of travel industry sectors. This appointment helps assure the positive evolution and success of our organization and illustrates our commitment to continue building our leadership position in the travel industry.

With more than 25 years in the international travel industry, Peters most recently served as vice president of Travel Trade and Business Develop-

ment for Wyndham's Endless Vacation Rentals where he led the brand's launch into the travel trade developing revenue producing relationships including alliances with travel agencies-at-large, mega agencies, consortia, wholesalers, GDSs and ADSs, as well as other distributors of products and services related to the travel and tourism industry.

Peters began in the early 1980's joining the family business as Manager of **Zeus Tours & Yacht Cruises**. For information, call 212-324-2222 or visit www.ascendventures.com



Nevis Appoints New CEO

Nevis Tourism Authority (NTA) appointed **Mrs. Garcia Thompson-Hendrickson** as its **Chief Executive**

Officer. Thompson-Hendrickson is now overseeing all strategic and day-to-day operations. Prior to joining the NTA, Thompson-Hendrickson worked closely with the Director of Civil Aviation and the Project Manager of the Grantley Adams International Airport Expansion Project in Barbados.

She has been a strong administrative

officer and leader, demonstrating high levels of efficiency and professionalism within the Barbados Government Service for over 29 years, and has been an asset to such Ministries as Tourism and International Transportation, Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs and Labor.

Thompson-Hendrickson began her studies at the University of the West Indies at the Mona Campus, Jamaica and further enhanced her education by attending the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, in Barbados. Thompson-Hendrickson continued to

bolster her credentials by completing enrichment programs, which included Dale Carnegie Training and Public Sector Reform and being an active volunteer in the community.

The island of Nevis is located in the Leeward Islands of the West Indies archipelago. The Spanish explorers called Nevis, "Nuestra Senora de las Nieves" (Our Lady of the Snows) as a tribute to the white clouds surrounding the island's central volcanic peak.

For more information about the island of Nevis, call 866-55-NEVIS; visit www.nevisisland.com



ASTA's New Barbara O'Hara Award

Honoring nearly 30 years' of service to **ASTA**, the **Interactive Travel Services Association (ITSA)** paid tribute to

Barbara O'Hara (right), **ASTA's vice president of government affairs**, by unveiling the Barbara O'Hara Advocacy Award. As a tribute to her achievements on behalf of ASTA and the entire travel agency industry, O'Hara, who retired in June.

The award will be presented each year by ITSA to the ASTA member

who has made the most significant contribution in advocating for the interests of the travel agency community before federal, state and/or local governmental authorities.

In presenting the award to O'Hara, Bruce Charendoff, senior vice president-Government and External Affairs for Sabre Holdings, Inc. and ITSA president, said: "Barbara O'Hara set the gold standard for travel agency advocacy during her distinguished 29-year career. She has been a first rate advocate for the cause of travel agents - she is the best known and most highly

respected travel agency lobbyist on the Hill. What Barbara does is create high art - she assembles time and time again, passionate, motivated travel agents who come forward to give policymakers heartfelt reasons why government action makes sense or makes no sense at all. People return Barbara's calls. They trust her judgment. They follow her lead. They imitate her style. And so, too, do we."

ITSA's Board of Directors will select the winner from a pool of candidates nominated by ASTA's Government Affairs department. www.asta.org

THE TRADESHOW on Tap for September

THE TRADESHOW, taking place Sept. 7-9, 2008 in Orlando at the Orange County Convention Center, is offering unparalleled educational opportunities for agents to earn their CLIA accreditations. The new cruise seminars will expand their areas of expertise and capture more sales opportunities with a wide choice of educational opportunities.

At THE TRADESHOW agents will have the chance to enrich their business with a combination of education, sightseeing and networking events centered on the global reach of the travel industry. The exhibition floor offers vital interaction with hundreds of U.S. and international suppliers, enabling agents to secure more business and contacts. THE TRADESHOW is the best place to meet all the contacts you need, under one roof.

"Staying current and up to speed on their industry is something every professional should focus on; travel agents are no different," said Terry Dale, president and CEO of THE TRADESHOW partner CLIA. "Everyone knows how quickly the travel industry evolves and how quickly travel trends emerge. These cruise seminars are the best way travel agents can focus on continuing their education in this area in order to maintain their title of travel authority and stay on top of industry development in a way that will benefit their business."

The available cruise seminars include: Building Client Loyalty (Sept. 7, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.) - This program will show agents how to read their customers and sell from their perspective. Participants learn how to uncover hidden client needs, apply quality service and reinforce client loyalty. This seminar is at the advanced level and attendees will earn 10 credits toward their CLIA accreditation (ACC/MCC).

Cruising-The Ultimate Incentive (Sept. 9, 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.) - Incentive travel is one of the fastest growing segments in the industry. What makes it different from other types of group travel? Who are the buyers? What do they expect from their cruise experience? This seminar is at the advanced level and attendees will earn 15 credits toward their CLIA accreditation (ACC/MCC/ECC/ECCS).

Customer Relations Management: Made Easy (Sept. 8, 3:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.) - What's the hottest topic in travel these days? It's CRM, or Customer Relationship Management. In this seminar agents learn dozens of strategies – technological and otherwise – to help them understand and profit from their customers. This seminar is at the advanced level and attendees will earn 15 credits toward their CLIA accreditation (ACC/MCC/ECC/ECCS).

Cruise Vacations – An Introduction (Sept. 8, 3:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.) - This seminar is a comprehensive overview of the tools required to successfully sell cruise products, identify motives, apply strategies introduced to increase cruise sales, match clients with the right cruise product, and apply "insider" secrets to selling the cruise experience. This seminar is at the beginning level and attendees will earn 15 credits toward their CLIA accreditation (ACC/MCC/ECC/ECCS).

Group Sales Made Easy (Sept. 9, 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.) - This program demonstrates how to develop group business as a profit center covering the following subjects: identifying groups and

their characteristics, sources for lead development, marketing to groups, working with group leaders, analyzing group potential, pricing and promotional budgeting. This seminar is at the beginning level and attendees will earn 15 credits toward their CLIA accreditation (ACC/MCC/ECC/ECCS).

THE TRADESHOW is created and supported by the travel industry's leading organizations, including: ACTA, ATA, AirTran, ASTA, Adventures In Travel Expo, Canada Travel Press, CLIA, Destination UK Ltd, ETOA, eTurbo News, IGLTA, Jax Fax Travel Marketing Magazine, ONLY Vegas, MailPound, NACTA, NBTA, NTA, ORLANDO, Recommend, SATH, TourismCares, Travel Age West, Travel Channel, The Travel Institute, TIA, TPOC, Travel Trade, Travel Weekly, Turisver Trade Tourism Magazine, USA Today, USTOA and Vacation.com. Official media partners are: Agent@Home, vacationagent and ModernAgent.

Delegate Details

THETRADESHOW (Travel Retailing and Destination Expo) announced today special hotel, air fare and car rental discounts for delegates attending this year's show. The 2008 THETRADESHOW will take place in Orlando, Sept. 7-9, at the Orange County Convention Center.

"These discounts make it easier than ever for travel professionals to attend North America's largest travel trade show," said William Maloney, CTC, ASTA executive vice president and COO. "Attending THETRADESHOW is a smart investment for any travel agent or supplier, one they will see a substantial return on."

To help delegates get to Orlando, Air Tran, American Airlines and Continental Airlines are offering discounts on most flights. Air Tran, the official THETRADESHOW airline partner, is offering a 10-percent discount on its lowest published one-way flights. American Airlines is offering an additional five-percent discount off its lowest published fare and delegates wanting to fly on Continental Airlines can also take advantage of reduced fare flights. When searching for flights, delegates must enter a special promotional code, which can be found online.

Agents and suppliers who plan on renting a car once they arrive in Orlando will have the opportunity to take advantage of Avis Rent-A-Car's online promotion. All promotional codes needed to redeem discounts can be found online at THETRADESHOW's Web site.

Seven hotels are offering discounts to THETRADESHOW attendees. They are: The Peabody Orlando; Quality Inn Plaza; Rosen Centre Hotel; Hard Rock Hotel; Rosen Plaza Hotel; Royal Pacific Resort and the Portofino Bay Hotel. Transfers will be provided from all hotels, except the Rosen Centre and the Peabody, which are within easy walking distance of the Orange County Convention Center. Prices range from \$86 to \$183 a night. Delegates should make their hotel reservation directly with their hotel of choice by using the online booking links or phone numbers listed with each hotel. To ensure their choice of hotel and room, agents and suppliers are encouraged to book early.

Call 866-870-9333; Email: pr@thetradeshow.org; www.THETRADESHOW.org.

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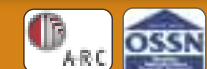
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