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IST	\$293	\$313	\$358	\$358	\$443	\$358	\$443	\$443	\$443	\$443
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MAD	\$205	\$225	\$275	\$283	\$368	\$283	\$368	\$368	\$368	\$368
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WAW	\$213	\$233	\$293	\$293	\$378	\$293	\$378	\$378	\$378	\$378

Selling Date: October 15 - November 1, 2008 • Ticketing Deadline: November 7, 2008 • All net fares shown are USD Mid-Week, round-trip and do not include any applicable taxes, security fees or fuel surcharges. All net airfares are subject to change without notice.

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The Branding of Anguilla: The Three R's

When the young woman at the ferry terminal in St. Maarten sold me a ticket to Anguilla she remarked, "It's a very quiet place." Later, while disembarking from the ferry, I faced a panoramic view of a cloudless blue sky against an island of blazing white sand floating on an opalescent sea, I wondered, one man's "quiet" could be another man's boredom—was there anything to do here?...

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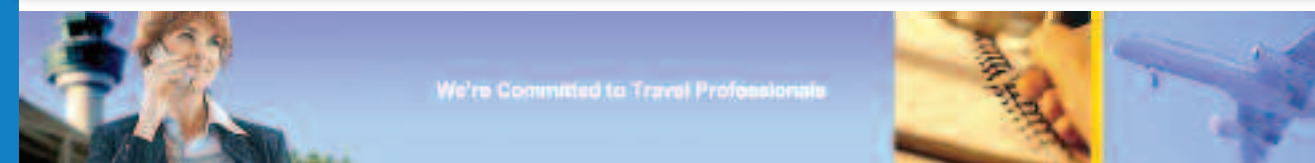
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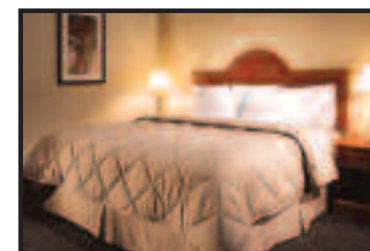
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Commission Payment Research is now available on choicehotels.com.



Wondering about the status of your latest Choice Hotels commission payment? Now it's easier than ever to find out. This month, choicehotels.com debuted a commission tracking feature in the Travel Professionals section. You can research the status of your payment by your client's name, arrival date or confirmation number, and you can perform more than one search at a time.

"This gives travel agents the best up-to-date data we have available," says Abbie Flynt, manager of customer service and training in Choice's travel agent commission department. "Instead of having to try different avenues to get the information by phone, they can now go online at their leisure."

To access the commission data, simply visit choicehotels.com and select the "Travel Professionals" tab. Then log in with your agency's IATA, ARC, CLIA or Pseudo number and first initial. Finally, select the "Commission Information" link on the right side of the screen.



Comfort Suites, Grand Cayman



Agents who have questions about reconciliation are still encouraged to go through TACSnet.com, which handles Choice's commission payments, or call Pegasus if you are an agency member. However, the new commission tracking feature at choicehotels.com allows agents to access the most recent information that's available without having to wait for the help desk's office hours.

"This really speeds things up for agents," says Flynt of the new feature. And since time is money, what's not to like about that?

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JAX FAX Launches New Website – jaxfax.com

Finally its here! The new look for jaxfax.com will launch on November 1st. And not a year too soon! We have admittedly been too far behind the times in keeping our website fresh and useful for our travel agent readers. But I am pleased to say that is a thing of the past, and our new website contains a multitude of products that will help you research and sell travel more effectively.

Consolidator Air and Tour Package Listings

The heart and soul of JAX FAX Magazine has always been our consolidator air and tour package listings and these are what differentiate JAX FAX from all other trade magazines. While we are limited in space in the magazine as to the volume of listings we can run, there are no such constraints in cyberspace. On our new website, agents will find the same listings as in the magazine in an easy to search format. But we also intend to increase the number of listings online and provide links to the respective supplier's websites.

Destination Articles

Each monthly print edition of JAX FAX has at least 10-12 destination articles that are edited to provide travel agents with the specific information necessary to sell it, including; how to get there, where to stay and what to do. We will be archiving all of these, plus others we don't have space to run in the magazine, on the new site. Additionally, we have hundreds of articles going back 5 years already archived for your reference.

Digital Edition – Going Green

Beginning in January 2009, JAX FAX subscribers will have the option of receiving either the print version or a new 'page flipping' digital version of JAX FAX each month. This new digital version will provide many new features only available in the online world. But more of that in next month's issue. Additionally, on the new home page of jaxfax.com, we are providing readers with downloadable pdf's of all our 2008 issues to date. Once downloaded, you will be able to read/use JAX FAX from your computer even when an internet connection is not available.

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Of course our website will continue to provide our readers with a multitude of other types of useful information. Fam trip postings will be enhanced, bringing agents more of what you really need in order to become more familiar with the destinations you sell. Worldwide maps, a calendar of industry events, currency converter and supplier directories will all be enhanced and migrated from the magazine to the web.

Our goal with the website is to provide our readers with all the great content from the print magazine and enhance it in ways only possible through the use of modern communication technologies. I hope you like it, and more importantly, I hope you use jaxfax.com to research and book travel for your clients. I welcome your feedback or suggestions on how we can further improve this site.

Douglas Cooke, CTC, Publisher

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Sales Gurus Always Have Something to Say

I cannot advise agents about their business, because a) I am a writer and report what they and you tell me; and b) I have never sold a Girl Scout cookie in my life, but I can ask others about sales.

My first stop is the latest sale guru: Jeffrey Gitomer, author of *The Sales Bible and Customer Satisfaction is Worthless, Customer Loyalty is Priceless*, who writes: "Business is not down it is different (understatement of the century)."

He starts off reminding us that we have come off the biggest economic boom of all time, the biggest housing boom of all time and the easiest loan requirements [don't we know that one] of all time. Gitomer's perspective is that there is still plenty of opportunity but not as much as before, ok, we pretty much know that too.

He emphasizes that this is the time to go the extra mile, answer e-mails with phone calls, do less voicemail, deliver fewer automated answers and make the time for more human-to-human contact.

Agents confide they are reorganizing while waiting for

phones to ring: they clean out their files, rolodexes (for those who use them), they read trade magazines, file new information, they get ready for 2009. This is the time they take fam trips to their specialty destinations (presumably they have saved for rainy days and downtimes) to revisit places, inspect new properties, meet the new gm's, find out what works for their clients.

One person said, it was like renewing their relationship to travel. "You have to see it in a different light because it is so easy to drown in the bad news – you have to tiramisù, get a pick me up," said one agent who preferred staying anonymous.

I asked other sales persons not in the travel industry what they do. One salesman who proffers environmental products said most companies find it easy to hit the delete button on his online ad pitches; and easier still "to be in a meeting" when he phones. He says he has had a huge success rate just by dropping in, knocking on doors the old-fashioned way—he goes directly to the office, admits to the front desk person he has no appointment, drops off a business card, with maybe a flyer follows up with a phone call.

Maria Lisella, Editor



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Snapshots

THE MONTH IN REVIEW

85 Year History of Russian Aviation Shown in Aeroflot Poster

A unique exhibition entitled 'History in the Aeroflot Posters' enjoyed great success in Moscow earlier this year and has now opened at the Chelsea Art Museum. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Yakovenko (right) and U.S. Aeroflot General Director Anatoli Deloveri (left) opened the exhibition that celebrated 85 years of Russian Aviation and the 40th anniversary of the first Aeroflot flight to New York on the IL-62 long range aircraft.



Mr. Koshlyakov, Deputy General Director of Aeroflot, expressed his strong belief that, "this exhibition is guaranteed to be an excellent event for all residents and visitors of New York, a city that is not only the financial center of the world, but also the cultural capital of the United States".

Austrian Airlines Gives Wings To The Vienna Boys Choir



Continuing its proud tradition of christening its aircraft with the names of uniquely Austrian institutions and places, Austrian Airlines recently renamed one of its Boeing 767 aircraft, the "Wiener Sängerknaben," after the world-famous Vienna Boys Choir (pictured). The 767 will service Austrian's routes to New York, Washington, Toronto, Beijing and Mumbai.

Marking its 50th anniversary this year, Austrian Airlines operates the only non-stop flights to Vienna from New York, Chicago, Washington, DC and Toronto.

Tastes of Singapore in NYC



The Singapore Tourism Board organized an event spotlighting Singapore street cuisine thrilling more than 250 New Yorkers at "Tastes of Singapore". Led by Singapore food personality K.F. Seetoh, four famous Singapore street chefs whip up a wide array of authentic Singapore dishes at The Waterfront in Chelsea, Manhattan.

From left: Divine Lim, Singapore Tourism Board; Singapore's UN Permanent Representative, Ambassador Vanu Gopala Menon; Gail Brennan, Singapore Tourism Board; and Kershing Goh, Singapore Tourism Board at the Tastes of Singapore event.

Riu Palace Pacifico Resort opened in Riviera Nayarit

An all-new Riu Palace Pacifico Resort opened in Riviera Nayarit on Oct. 3. Shown from left to right are: Luis Riu, Chief Executive of Riu Hotels; Stephanie Weffer, Asst. Mgr. Riu Palace Pacifico; and Claudia Schunk, Vice President of Communications, Riu Hotels as they hosted and escorted travel media on a pre-opening site inspection of the new resort. Riu personally conducts a site inspection of all new properties, as well as spending the night in a standard guest room the night before, to insure the quality of the resort which carries his family name.



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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 \$455, 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.

The Branding of Anguilla: The Three R's

by Denise Mattia

When the young woman at the ferry terminal in St. Maarten sold me a ticket to Anguilla she remarked, "It's a very quiet place." Later, while disembarking from the ferry, I faced a panoramic view of a cloudless blue sky against an island of blazing white sand floating on an opalescent sea, I wondered, one man's "quiet" could be another man's boredom—was there anything to do here?

Branding the Three R's

Amelia Vanterpool-Kubisch, Director of Tourism at the Anguilla Tourist Board, has a formula to this query: "Replenish your body, relax your mind and rejuvenate your spirit," she says, adding that Anguilla's resorts offer exceptional spas in which to do this. "Take in a few art galleries, make a fascinating excursion to our undersea world, then dance to world or island beats under the stars," she says. I learned that Anguilla is, in fact, full of possibilities and big on song and soul.

Starting from no more than 33 gorgeous beaches and congenial surroundings in the 1980s, Anguilla rose to become one of the world's premiere low-volume, high-value luxury destinations for celebrities and the affluent. Over the last 25 years, government administrations have encouraged investors to develop the island.

Plans happened slowly at first and The Malliouhana Hotel and Spa at Meads Bay, with 55 rooms and suites (www.malliouhana.com), and Cap Juluca at Maunday's Bay (recently refurbished under new ownership), with 72 rooms and suites and six pool villas (www.capjuluca.com), are two resorts that led the way. One new high-end tourism resort came on the scene during the 1990s. CuisinArt Resort & Spa at Rendezvous Bay opened its doors in 1999, with 93 rooms (www.CuisinArtResort.com).

The "Anguilla brand," as it became known, was hailed for what it has (remember those beaches) as opposed to what it doesn't have – cruise ships, casinos, all-inclusives and shopping malls.

A Fiscally Positive Environment

In 2002, the government instituted a fiscal stabilization plan to stimulate economic activity. Agreements were finalized with private developers for multimillion-dollar investments in tourism projects. Resorts like the intimate, impeccably landscaped, home-away-from-home Paradise

Cove, located near Cove Bay Beach, opened with 29 suites (www.paradise.ai).

Other openings included the "affordably chic" Ku (formerly the Shoal Bay Beach Hotel), with 27 suites (www.KuAnguilla.com), the Cove Castles Resort at Shoal Bay West (www.covecastles.com), the Frangipani Beach Resort (now with a new owner, Steve Kircher from California) at Meads Bay, with 18 rooms and suites (visit www.frangipaniresort.com), the Carimar Beach Club, a condo hotel also at Meads Bay, with 24 apartments for people who want to maintain a "feel" for the island (www.carimar.com) and the Arawak Beach Inn beside Island Harbor, with 17 guestrooms at a reasonable price (www.arawakbeach.com).

Accommodating More than Luxe

In January 2008, New York-based developer Flag Luxury Properties announced that it had engaged Baccarat Hotels and Residences, a subsidiary of Starwood Capital Group, to operate its exclusive ultra-luxury hotel and residences on Anguilla.

Named the Baccarat Hotel and Residences at Temenos, the property will include a 114-room hotel, a spa and fitness center and 50 oceanfront residences. Construction began in 2004 on the 286-acre resort, which is being built to Florida-grade hurricane standards. In addition to the hotel, which will house a David Boulee and a Serafina Restaurant, plans include 18 estate homes, 10 villas and 38 spa villas, along with the Temenos Golf Club (a Greg Norman Signature Golf Course) that opened in 2006.

In an interview, Vanterpool-Kubisch noted that "While Anguilla remains and is positioned as a luxury destination, we have expanded our product offering over the last few years, and there is an increase in affordable properties marketed under the umbrella of the Charming Escapes Collection." To date, there are approximately 15 properties offering a range of services in this category.

Winter Specials Worth Noting

The Allamanda Beach Club is offering a 25% discount on its rate for two guests staying five nights. Included are a continental breakfast, a one-day car rental and a one-hour massage for two. The rate applies through December 14, 2008 (www.allamanda.ai). The escape package at the stunning Ku includes four nights' accommodation for two, conti-

DENISE MATTIA

anguilla

#1 Alphabetically and Otherwise
in the Caribbean



"#1 world's best all around
beaches" - Travel Channel

"the greatest game has finally
made a proper landing" -
Travel & Leisure Golf

"anguilla has 33 powder
white beaches" -
Conde Nast Traveler

"...honeymooners seeking low-
key luxury won't find a more
perfect setting..." -
Modern Bride

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mental breakfast daily, two dinners, a massage for two, a bottle of wine upon arrival, taxi transfers and use of the Petit Spa and Gym. Rates begin at \$1,392 per night based on double occupancy (www.KuAnguilla.com).

Through November, a four-night special for two at the gracious **Paradise Cove Resort** is being offered at a gracious price – \$720 and a one-day car rental plus wine and a picnic basket are part of the bargain (www.paradise.ai). In addition to the “Suite Escape 2008,” **CuisinArt Resort & Spa** is also offering a “Friends and Family” special, valid through Nov. 16th (www.CuisinArtResort.com).

Intimate and private are keywords for Anguilla’s villas, and the **Bayberry Villa & Chinaberry Villa** (www.beachbum.ai), the **Desert Rose Estate** (www.desertroseestate.com), **The Sandcastle at Limestone Bay** (www.sandcastlevilla.com) and **Villa Paradise** (www.villaparadise.com) are offering specials through mid-December.

High Dining Standards from Roadside to Chic

Anguilla’s reputation for fine cuisine is renowned and well-deserved, and there are dozens of restaurants from which to choose. The island is safe, and your clients can roam about without concern, talk to the nicest people they’ve ever met and sample great fare from beach shacks and roadside and inland stands.

At **Ken’s Barbeque** stand, next to Brooks & Sons Complex, I sampled excellent barbequed chicken and spare ribs. Prices ranged from \$2.75 to \$6 (Friday and Saturday only). Nearby, every Sunday, Laurel Richardson serves local dishes from her **White Van** for about \$15. Next to Albert’s Market Place on Stoney Ground Road, the **Fat Cat** offers take-away meals. Lunch at **Smokeys** (near Paradise Cove) costs about \$35. From Thursday to Saturday **B&D’s BBQ** serves local dishes for about \$18. **Mango’s Seaside Grill** serves soup and a salad (\$12), snapper (\$33) and jerk chicken (\$15). There’s always live music at the **Pumphouse on Road Bay**, where entrees range from \$11 to \$35.

The view of the Temenos Golf Course is spectacular from **Zurra’s** on the club’s rooftop, while at the **Straw Hat** on the waterfront the cuisine and the ambience are well worth the steep price. During the site inspection of the CuisinArt Resort & Spa, I met Executive Chef Denise Carr while she prepared her “Chef’s Table,” a six-course dining experience, using ingredients from the resort’s hydroponic farm and organic garden.

Every second week in July, Leon Roydon, sole owner of Malliouhana Hotel and Spa, hosts **Epicurean Week**, an extravaganza of wining and dining, with guest chefs from the UK, France and the U.S. creating their favorite dishes. JAXFAX visited the spectacular Malliouhana property as Albert Lake, Jr., sommelier at the resort since 1984 conducted a private tour of the wine cellar. With 24,000 bottles of the grape at his disposal (the largest collection in the Caribbean), Lake said, “Wine is like music: there’s no end to it.” Nine wines were being served that evening. Prices during Epicurean Week are \$6,300 per couple and include accommodations, breakfast and dinner.

Gentle Island Rhythms

There’s no end to the music-makers in Anguilla either. Locals and ex-pats hang out at beach bars like Elodias and Johnno’s (right) and listen to reggae or jazz.

Festival Del Mar is a community-based festival scheduled during Easter Weekend, and Caribbean reggae is enjoyed under the full moon every March during the **Moonsplash Festival**. The **Tranquility Jazz Festival** is held annually in November with “straight no chaser.” Tickets are \$50 per person. (www.anguillajazz.org)

Among local groups, this year’s festival features performers Patti Austin, Michael Camilo, Dean Fraser and Dee Dee Bridgewater, to name a few.

The AMPP (Anguilla Music Production and Publishing Company) is a new music venture formed by a group of Anguillians and music industry professionals whose focus is on intellectual property, music creation and artist development. Additionally, their aim is to educate local children musically by implementing training internships, mentoring and introducing special events, classes and workshops.



Wildlife Encounters on Gentle Watersports

Because there are few if any strong currents, water sports are popular with tourists and locals alike. The island’s seaward edge or fore reef is a natural buttress for the surf, making the fringing reef – corals that have grown on the rocky surfaces of coves – ideal for snorkeling and diving. Cuts in the barrier allow divers to experience the wall beyond. JAXFAX sampled a few of the 40 sites that are minutes from shore by boat, and during one dive was shown an old anchor embedded in coral.

Nurse sharks and turtles are often seen resting beneath overhangs in the reef. Deeper, JAXFAX came across a school of jacks swimming against backdrops of soft and hard corals and sea fans, and discovered a host of lobsters that had claimed a niche in the shipwreck The Commerce for their shelter.

Matthew Billington of **Shoal Bay Scuba (Karma Charters) Ltd.** (www.shoalbayscuba.com) takes divers to the reef twice daily, at 9 and 11 a.m. Snorkeling trips with lunch (\$55 per person) at Prickly Pear Island, a nature preserve, leave at 1 p.m.

Matthew offers package rates, and will give a 20% commission to travel agents booking snorkeling excursions, sun-

set cruises and private charters for dive groups. The commission applies only to funds wired to the company’s bank. The commission is 15% for credit card payments.

Sue Ricketts, owner of **ZaZAA’s**, the new chic boutique at Ku, offers a 10 percent commission on purchases to agents, or clients who present their agent’s signed business card, through Christmas (www.anguillaluxurycollection.com).

If your clients are looking for local items, suggest a visit to Sylvia Hodge at the **Local Arts & Crafts Center**, located at Brooks & Sons Complex #7, where artists’ works (pottery, handcrafts, dolls, paintings and sculptures) show a proficiency and sophistication unrivalled throughout many Caribbean islands. Prices range from \$20 for a little knitted rainbow handbag to \$1,500 for an original painting.



DENISE MATTIA

Keeping the Anguilla Brand Fresh

By Denise Mattia

JAX FAX met up with Amelia Vanterpool-Kubisch, Director of Tourism at the Anguilla Tourist Board as she had recently arrived from a trade show of marketing and public relations representatives from Germany, Italy, France, the UK, Puerto Rico

and the U.S., all of whom reviewed their performance in 2008, and to develop plans for 2009. Part of their mission was to examine the Anguilla brand and address what measures to take to remain a top competitor among the premiere low-volume, high-value luxury destinations of the world.

JF: Can you share with our readers the decisions that came out of this show?

AV-K: I think we all agreed that the efforts behind the push for the incentive market should begin immediately. We have created an incentive brochure and touched up the website. Incentive planners can now conduct business with a real response time for them and us.

Anguilla has launched a “refresher on her branding.” She has adjusted her creatives and backdrops to reflect the uniqueness of the destination, such as her Moorish architecture, and emphasized the astounding cuisine options. We are going more aggressively after the incentive market as well this year with new brochures and a specifically designed DVD. Our positioning on the villa market is being reviewed as well. We have also targeted a limited number of select consumer publications for our ads this year.

JF: How is the tourism infrastructure transforming in Anguilla?

AV-K: The hotel plant is changing. The number of rooms now is 1,200 and we anticipate that that figure will increase to 4,000 by 2020 to 2025. Anguilla is small, with only 12,000 inhabitants, and real estate developers of villas, vacation homes and resorts have to import labor. Operational proce-

Getting There

Jet Blue flies to St. Maarten and **American** flies to San Juan. The main ferry connection to Blowing Point Ferry Terminal in Anguilla is from the Marigot Port on the French side of St. Maarten. The fare is \$20, as is the exit fee.

An alternate, less frequented route that leaves from the Blowing Point Ferry Terminal is a charter boat, which docks close to the airport at Philipsburg in St. Maarten. For more information on airtservice, visit www.anguillaairservices.com

For more information, contact the **Anguilla Tourist Board**, 877-4-ANGUILLA; www.anguilla-vacation.com

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Anguilla see page 52 of the Listings Section

dures will have to be addressed.

JF: I’ve seen a SUBWAY in Anguilla. Do you expect more fast-food chains to spring up?

AV-K: The SUBWAY is a small facility, not very visible, and is operated by a local person. We are definitely not encouraging fast-food chains, but there is room for variety.

JF: How will this affect Anguilla’s economy overall?

AV-K: The economic future of Anguilla is challenging, as 65% of the tourists are from the U.S.

The high-end level may not be impacted, but Anguilla can’t ignore the housing market problem. Additionally, Anguilla is not a one-stop destination.

American Eagle reduced the flights from Puerto Rico to one per day in September and October; however, **Jet Blue** continues to fly into St. Maarten and, starting December 18th, **American Airlines** will add two new direct flights out of New York and Miami to St. Maarten.

JF: The Anguilla Connoisseur Training Program was started to market the island better by providing top agents with training resources. How is the program progressing? How many agents are participating in it, where are they from and how many have completed it?

AV-K: It is our intent to unfold the program to a total of 75 agents for participation this fall. In the first go-round we are focusing on the U.S., and as the plans unfold we will expand into Canada and the rest of the markets such as the UK, Italy, France, Germany, etc.

JF: During our discussion about this program, you mentioned a “highly unique reward/offering.” What does this entail?

AV-K: The offering, unlike other programs, will be extended to both the agents and their clients. We will partner with a strong retailer to present a unique reward or offer to each person.

JF: Can you give me an example of what the retailer would do?

AV-K: The retailer would become a partner with us to provide the rewards, such as spa treatments, special travel amenities, etc.

For more information, contact the **Anguilla Tourist Board**, 877-4-ANGUILLA; www.anguilla-vacation.com

Experience a Taste of Europe in the Caribbean

by Chantal Guillou-Brennan



ST. MARTIN INFO

Located just two and a half hours from Miami and four hours from New York by air, charming **Saint Martin/Saint Maarten** is the smallest land mass shared by two sovereign nations - French and Dutch, creating a rich cultural mix, which attracts citizens from all over the world. Although Dutch is the official language of St. Maarten, and French the official language of St. Martin, English is spoken everywhere. Nevertheless, you can hear Spanish, Papiamentu, Italian, Hindi, Chinese, and French spoken here and there, as well as Creole Patois—mostly on the French side.

This diversity is expressed not only in the culture, architecture and genuine *joie de vivre* of its inhabitants, but also in its cuisine which has earned St. Martin the title of "Gastro-nomic Capital of the Caribbean." Legendary restaurants give voice to cooking styles from far-flung corners of the globe, from the traditional **Lolo's** (local restaurants and cafes) and beachside cafes, to more than 300 restaurants offering French, Dutch, Caribbean, Italian, Chinese, Indonesian, Creole and more. Great chefs combine shellfish, seafood or meats with hints of local spices for multicultural cooking which will delight your taste buds, such as the **Waikiki Beach Restaurant** (05-90-87-4319) on Orient Beach.

This is the largest and most popular beach on the island, lined with beach bars, restaurants, shops, and watersport facilities offering parasailing and other watersports with "clothing optional" located on the secluded southern part of Orient beach.

Of the most reputed dining rooms, JAXFAX sampled a fabulous dinner à la Provençal at romantic **Sol é Luna Guest House** located above Etang Chevrise in Mont Vernon, (St. Martin) with views out to Orient Bay. This beautifully restored and carefully decorated home offers six suites, bathed in the tranquility of a well-manicured tropical garden. (www.solelunarestaurant.com).

Another notable restaurant is the beach-front **Sunset Café** at **Grand Case Beach Club** in Grand Case, recently coming under the direction of talented Chef Alexandre, who has introduced new nightly specials, while retaining many popular dishes for a fine candlelit dining experience. The Sunset Café is also open for lunch and breakfast and can make special arrangements to meet any dietary need and can create custom menus for a group event. (www.sunset-cafe.com.) Adjacent to the cafe and near the Pavilion at the Grand Case Beach Club is the Ti Case Boutique, carrying a line of jewelry and clothing for children and adults as well as many other unique items.

Low season is extra work for Resort Manager, **Steve Wright**. The steady up keep policy of the 72 units nestled between clear blue waters and flamboyant sparkled mountain has paid off with several awards. The resort was named



ST. MARTIN INFO

the best medium-sized resort two years in a row by readers of **Caribbean Travel & Life Magazine** and won the "Golden Apple Award" from Apple Vacations. It was featured on Expedia's Insiders' List, which includes only one percent of the total hotels listed by Expedia; and recently won Orbitz's Best In Stay Award in both the Leisure and Couples categories. Ending the rotating schedule of renovation, the resort now has new furniture in all the rooms.

New bathrooms have been finished in over half the units, with another 20 rooms completed this October. The balance will be done next August, to avoid having units out of service during the high season. A Fitness Center will also be ready for this winter season. Casual simplicity is the order of the day at this intimate and true beach-front property on the beautiful and quiet beach of La Petite Plage, at the far end of Grand Case Bay.

The calm waters are perfect for swimmers of all abilities with snorkeling in the best coral reef on the island and a full-service activities desk which can book clients for any watersport activity, tennis or golf. Rates start at single/double \$185 per person per night in a cool garden side studio and range from \$230 in single/double studio to \$520 in a quad two-bedroom two-bath oceanfront suite where the lapping of the waves rocks you to sleep as the breeze sings through the coconut palms. Children 12 and under stay free with parents.

Rates include daily continental breakfast, non-motorized water-sports, chaise lounges at beach and swimming pool, day and night tennis. The two-bedroom rate is based on up to four persons, for a fifth and six person in two-bedroom accommodations, add \$35 daily per person. The combined 15% charge for municipal room tax and service charges are additional. Call 888-845-5821; E-mail info@gcbc.com; visit www.grandcasebeachclub.com



GRAND CASE BEACH CLUB

Daytrip to Neighboring Islands

From the **Grand Case Beach Club** activities desk clients can book daytrips and sailing excursions to neighboring islands on the **Scoobi-Too** or **Scoobi-Free** catamarans. Visit the deserted Tintamarre Island for spectacular snorkeling and an optional volcanic mud bath, which is said to take years off of you, or at least be fun for the whole family. Later, stop at exotic Pinel Island for a delightful lunch under cool swaying palms at the Karibuni; one of the four restaurants on this former tiny French penal colony, from which it derives its name. There you can enjoy a freshly caught snapper, or choose your live lobster from one of the underwater traps kept on the seashore, or select the barbecued chicken or other caribbean flavors. Then it's back for more snorkeling or maybe a siesta in one of the shady hammocks before returning to the hotel on the comfortable vessel. For information and rates, visit www.scoobidoo.com

What to do besides enjoying the clear blue water?

Tucked deep within the island's only tropical forest on Pic Paradise (elevation 1400ft.) is **Loterie Farm** offering the "Eco Challenge" day trek to discover the island's fascinating interior region. www.loteriefarm.com

In their search for painters and galleries, art lovers will quickly find the right addresses, and their successful quest will yield the added benefit of meeting most of the artists in person. One St. Martin favorite is Sir Roland Richardson, famous for his rendering of the flamboyant tree with galleries in historic Marigot and another at La Samana's Conference center. A tour of the artist's private home in Terres Basses is available by appointment. Visit www.rolandrichardson.com.

Not forgetting the amazing shopping available throughout the island, another idea would be to just take a stroll in the street of Marigot to admire the diversity of architecture or taking a taxi to the tiny village of Colombier to discover some traditional wood-Creole houses amidst lush vegetation.

What's up in St. Maarten?

Island accommodations range from large, comprehensive resort facilities and condominiums to small, intimate guest houses, timeshares and apartments. With over 2,000 rooms on the island, there is a property to suit every taste.

In contrast to the French endeavor to preserve the island's quaint charm and character seen in the capital of Marigot with its outdoor cafes, chic designer boutiques and a 17th Century Fort, a wave of economic expansion is presently in progress on the Dutch side.

This translates in the arrival in 2009 of mega hotels chains and resorts, a shopping mall and an additional pier in the center of Philipsburg to accommodate cruise ships anchoring for a day of duty-free shopping, or an evening at the Vegas-style casinos, discos and night clubs which stay open till dawn. Porto Cupecoy on Sint Maarten, a marina village with units for sale is one such a mega complex nearing completion. (www.cupecoyachtclub.com)

Scheduled to open in October 2009 is the **Radisson St. Martin Resort, Marina & Spa** nestled in the picturesque cove of Anse Marcel, one of the island's best preserved bays. Call 888-201-1718, www.radisson.com



ST. MARTIN INFO

Getting There and Around

Air service from the U.S. to Princess Juliana International Airport in St. Maarten is provided by: **American Airlines** direct from New York, Miami, and San Juan and seasonally by: **Continental** from Newark, NJ; **Northwest** from Detroit and Minneapolis; **USAir** from Charlotte and Philadelphia, all with connecting flights to numerous cities throughout the U.S. In addition, numerous charter flights are available from and throughout the Continental U.S.

Other airlines serving the island include: **ALM Antillean Airlines** from Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire; **LIAT** from Antigua, Anguilla, St. Croix, St. Kitts, St. Thomas and Tortola; and **Windward Islands Airways (WINAIR)** from St. Thomas, St. Kitts/Nevis, Saba, St. Eustatius, Anguilla, St. Barts, Dominica and Tortola.

Jet Blue's new schedule from JFK International Airport into Princess Juliana International Airport departs JFK at 9:45 am to arrive at 2:40 pm in St Maarten with daily service starting in November. From St. Maarten, flights depart at 3:45 pm to arrive in JFK at 7:15 pm.

If clients are flying in from another French territory, such as Guadeloupe or St. Barts, they will most likely land at L'Espérance Airport (airport code SFG; tel 05 90 59 04 47) in Grand Case, St. Martin.

Public transportation is available via buses or taxi cabs. Taxis are ready and waiting at Princess Juliana International Airport and at all major hotels. Fares can be paid in U.S. dollars. Another option is to rent a car. There are a number of rental car agencies at the airport. Although this option can give the freedom to explore at will, clients may also encounter the challenge of finding a parking place and squeezing through narrow and crowded streets.

New air service to St. Maarten

American Airlines is adding two new direct flights out of New York and Miami into St. Maarten. Flights from New York to St Maarten will begin on December 18, 2008. This new flight originates from JFK International Airport and departs at 10:45 am and arrives into St. Maarten at 3:40 pm and is scheduled to run twice a week increasing to five times per week on January 6, 2009 for the remainder of the peak tourism season. Flights from Miami International Airport will leave at 5:15 pm to arrive at 9:10 pm. The aircraft will remain in St Maarten overnight and leave the next morning at 9:10 am to arrive in Miami at 11:30 am. Visit www.aa.com

For resort information on the island, visit www.visitsxm.com/accommodations

For additional information on St. Maarten, contact the Tourist office, +599-542-2337; visit www.st-maarten.com or www.vacationstmaarten.com

For more information, contact the St. Martin Tourist Office; 877-956-1234; E-mail nyoffice@st-martin.org

For consolidator fares and tour packages to St. Maarten/St. Martin see page 53 of the Listings Section

CARIBBEAN & BERMUDA

BEST BUYS

\$2710 **TURKS & CAICOS**

Island Destinations is offering a four-night getaway for two to Grace Bay Club in Turks and Caicos, starting at \$2,710. Included in the escape is an Ultimate Exclusive value-add offer: \$200 resort credit available only when booking through the luxury tour operator.

The four-night escape includes: breakfast daily, fruit and flowers en suite, shuttle to golf course. Rates for the four-night stay start at \$2,710 per room, based on double occupancy. Valid for new bookings and travel now through December 15, 2008. Travel professionals can earn up to 16% commission on any new booking for travel through December 15, 2008 by referencing the extra commission at time of booking.

Call 888-454-4422; www.islanddestinations.com

\$295 **TRINIDAD & TOBAGO**

Coco Reef Resort and Spa, Tobago: Located on 10 acres of manicured tropical gardens, this beach front property provides the ideal location for a well needed vacation. The resort is offering a four-night dive package for under water enthusiasts. Guests enjoy two tank dives for three days, deluxe ocean view accommodations with private balcony/patio, full daily tropical breakfast and transportation to and from the airport. Priced at \$950 per person, this package is valid until Dec. 20, 2008. Call 868-639-8571; www.cocoreef.com

Hilton Trinidad and Conference Center, Trinidad: Overlooks the capital city of Port of Spain, the hotel is situated on 25 acres of tropically landscaped gardens. The hotel is offering a "Romance Package" that includes signature Hilton accommodations, daily breakfast for two, fresh flowers in room upon arrival, a complimentary bottle of champagne, a gourmet dinner for two, and late check-out upon request. The package starts at \$295 valid through Dec. 31, 2008. Call 868-624-3211; www.hiltoncaribbean.com/trinidad

\$1480 **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Two Sol Melia resorts in the Dominican Republic--Paradisus Palma Real and Paradisus Punta Cana--are running special spa packages that are available for booking until Dec. 22, 2008. A 14-night minimum stay is required for stays Dec. 20, 2008 – Jan. 1, 2009; minimum seven-night stay is required for stays Feb. 15 – 23, 2009.

The four-night Spa Experience Package offers an upgrade to a Regal Partial Ocean View Room at Palma Real, upgrade to a Deluxe Junior Suite with Jacuzzi Room at Punta Cana, a 25-minute welcome massage per person, a 50-minute couple massage "under the stars," free use of the Water Ritual service, complimentary access to the resort's gym, 10% discount for all the additional Spa treatments, late check out (based on availability).

The total per person package price at Palma Real property is \$2,086 and \$1,480 at the Punta Cana property.

Call 800-33-MELIA; www.paradisusresorts.travel

IN THE NEWS

Elite's Santa Arrives with a Calypso Beat

With Caribbean Calypso music filling the air, Santa arrives via the cobalt Caribbean in a catamaran to wish families a hearty "Merry Christmas" and a "Happy New Year" and toss presents to children staying at Elite Resorts' **Verandah Resort & Spa** and **St. James's Club & Villas** on Antigua this Christmas. This Christmas season, the two eco-friendly, upscale family resorts are promoting "Kids Stay, Play and Eat Free" program from Dec. 21, 2008 to January 6, 2009, when booked by Dec. 1, 2008.

The promotion allows up to two children under 12 to stay and dine free per room when sharing the same accommodations with their parents, with a maximum of two adults and two children per room. The "Kids Stay, Play and Eat Free" plan applies to double occupancy, all-inclusive nightly rates for Hillside Suites at \$635 and Waterview Suites at \$645 at The Verandah Resort & Spa; and the Club Room category at \$685 at St. James's Club & Villas. All food, beverages, room accommodations, activities, non-motorized water sports, taxes and gratuities are included.

Call 800-345-0356; www.eliteislands.com

Jamming in Paradise at Bolongo in Nov.

Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, located in St. Thomas in the U.S.V.I., is offering a 20% discount off nightly rates for the resort's European Plan (EP) for all basketball fans coming to the destination Nov. 21-29, 2008, when St. Thomas hosts the 9th Annual U.S. Virgin Islands Paradise Jam men's and women's tournaments, which are taking place Nov. 21-24, 2008 and Nov. 27 - 29, 2008 respectively at the University of the Virgin Islands. Guests staying at Bolongo during the USVI Paradise Jam will enjoy accommodations in an ocean view room; have a "discover scuba diving" in-pool lesson; and complimentary use of non-motorized watersports. Call 800-524-4746; E-mail reservations@bolongobay.com

Sandals Partners with AARP

Sandals Resorts and Beaches Resorts announced their new partnership with the esteemed AARP organization to offer its members exclusive savings and benefits when they book a Luxury Included vacation at any one of the 12 Sandals Resorts and four Beaches Resorts located across the Caribbean.

Through this new partnership, AARP members who book a Sandals Resorts or Beaches Resorts Luxury Included® Vacations will receive a resort credit of up to \$125; year-round packages created especially for members; and a 10 percent discount on all resort shop purchases, exclusive Red Lane Spa treatments, and Snap Shots photography purchases. "We are excited about working with AARP Services and we consider this new relationship to be a key element of our efforts to align ourselves with companies that are highly regarded by our target audiences," said Kevin Froeming, president of **Unique Vacations Inc.**, the worldwide representative for Sandals Resorts and Beaches Resorts.

Call 866-498-3218; www.sandals.com/aarp

EUROPE

Finding Flanders Inside Belgium

By Maria Lisella

In the world of Belgium, that neat and tiny country tucked into the furthest corner of Continental Europe lay two distinct cultures and regions: Flanders and Wallonia. As an integral country, they are collectively known as Belgium but in the coming months, agents and the general public will be seeing the new reality of divisions of a single, wonderful destination that is easy to get to, easy to access upon arrival and a complete delight for the eyes, ears, tastes and smells.

Belgium is just six and a half hours from the East coast. With daily direct flights to Brussels (via **American Airlines**, **Continental Airlines**, **Delta Airlines**, **Jet Airways**, **Delta**, **United Airlines**, **US Air** and **Brussels Airlines** in co-share with AA), this Old World, old-flavored European nation is a short hop over the Atlantic. Once on terra firma, visitors can hop the fast trains from Brussels to Paris (85 minutes), London (1 hour, 51 minutes) or Amsterdam (2 hours, 30 minutes).

A full itinerary of Flanders might take visitors from Brussels to Bruges to Antwerp and Ghent leaving a bit of time for Mechelen and Leuven, just 16 miles from the capital.

The best thing to do in Brussels is to sit on one of the terraces of the glorious Grand'Place, sip a beer and let the world float by. Then wander through one of the wonderful museums, rich churches or antique shops. Walk the cobbled stoned streets of Bruges, where medieval bridges cross romantic canals. In Antwerp, the city of Rubens, shopping for the latest designer clothes and hunting for diamonds can be both exciting and rewarding. In Ghent view what experts call simply one of the most important paintings in the world, "The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb," a polyptic by the Van Eyck brothers. Only twenty minutes away from Brussels is the city of Mechelen. It's Grand Beguinage with its lovely gardens is cited by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Leuven is home to one of Europe's oldest universities, and history is ever present.

Bedding Down in Brussels

Over the past two years, Brussels has become a hotbed for hotel construction, with nine new openings and more in the works. The recent increase in tourism to Europe from the US is clearly being felt in the Capital of Europe now home to 145 hotels with 14,000 rooms.

In the city of Art Nouveau it is not surprising that many hotel properties are of the design-driven variety. This is good news for business and leisure travelers who favor more intimate, stylish experiences.

Located in the beautiful Brussels Forest less than 10 miles from the city center, **Dolce La Hulpe Brussels** (www.lahulpe.dolce.com) is a hip resort and conference center with 264 generously sized and fully-appointed guest rooms, two gastronomic restaurants, two bars, two tennis courts, an indoor swimming pool, fitness center, spa, Feng



Shui garden and over 47,000 sq. feet of meeting space spread out over 36 meeting rooms and four amphitheatres.

Belgium's first **Design Hotel**, **Dominican Brussels** (www.dominican.be) opened in October 2007 in the historic city center, right behind the Monnaie Theatre. Part of the **Carlton Hotel Collection**, the Dominican boasts 150 suites and luxury guestrooms as well as meeting facilities that can accommodate from four to 150 people.

Martin's Hotels seventh property, the **Martin's Central Park** (www.martins-hotels.com), opened its doors to visitors in 2007, too. Located only four miles from Brussels International Airport and five minutes from Schuman Metro Station, the hotel has been beautifully refitted with 100 rooms, five meeting rooms, a bar, restaurant and a garden.

The new lifestyle brand from **Starwood**, **Aloft Hotels** (www.starwoodhotels.com) has selected Brussels for its first European site, with 150 rooms to be built near the European Parliament and European Commission offices, with completion scheduled for late 2009.

Uptown on the prestigious shopping Avenue Louise the new **White Hotel** (www.thewhitehotel.be) furnishes all 35 rooms with design pieces created by different Belgian artists. The highly contemporary hotel opened in November 2006 and uses white as the primary color in the decorative effects of the lobby, bar, lounge, breakfast room, library and conference room.

The Dansaert district is the trendy location of the new boutique **Hotel Orts** (www.hotelorts.be) that mixes eclectic styles to set the cool atmosphere among its 13 rooms, bar and restaurant, which can seat up to 250 diners and schedules jazz performances on weekends.

Be Manos, built by the owners of Manos Premier and Manos Stephanie hotels in Brussels is situated very close to the Eurostar and Thalys terminal, the 60-room five-star property is very contemporary in design with decorative creations in black on white.

Other Brussels hotels worth noting are the **Progress Hotel** (www.progresshotel.be), **Radisson SAS EU** (www.radissonsas.com), **Sofitel Brussels Europe** (www.sofitel-brussels-europe.com), and Eurostar's **Grand Place** (www.eurostarshotel.com).

For more information, contact the Tourist Office for Flanders, Belgium, 212-758-8130; E-mail: info@visitflanders.us visit www.visitflanders.us

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Belgium see page 61 of the Listings Section

Rimini Italy Celebrates a Grand Anniversary and its Hidden Treasures

Story and Photos by Denise Mattia

Ask any European about Rimini and they'll tell you it's the hub of Italian seaside tourism. Most will also know that Federico Fellini, the famous movie director, was born in Rimini, and has a suite dedicated to him at the **Grand Hotel**, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

But there's more to Rimini than resorts on the Adriatic Sea, as JAXFAX discovered during the Fam trip developed by Succi and Partners a marketing management company led by Luigi Gianni Succi and Stefania Casadei (www.succiandpartners.com) and sponsored by the **Italian Government Tourist Board** (www.italiantourism.com). The tour was designed to introduce travel agents and journalists to a region seldom visited by North Americans.

JAXFAX, six additional journalists and 26 travel agents, most of whom came from California, converged at Bologna and were transported by bus to two charming medieval towns of Santarcangelo di Romagna and Verucchio.

As there are no mega-hotels in these districts, the company was divided into three. The first group was brought to Santarcangelo and were accommodated at **Hotel Il Villino** (www.hotelilvillino.it), a charming, rustic villa converted tastefully into 12 rooms, each equipped with a bathroom and shower or tub. The 22-room **Hotel Della Porta** (www.hoteldellaporta.com) provided accommodations for others, while the balance of our party was registered at **Hotel Oste del Castello** (www.ostedelcastello.it) in the center of Verucchio a few miles from Rimini's beaches and The Republic of San Marino.

It's impossible to travel throughout the province without learning about the tumultuous history concerning two powerful families, the Montefeltros and the Malatestas (translates into bad heads). From the Medieval Period to the Renaissance, war and treachery, an unsuccessful marriage, a Papal excommunication and immortalization in Dante's *The Divine Comedy* exemplified the regions from La Romana to Marche.

The Malatesta Fortress dominates the town of Verucchio, where the political and economic events shaped the Malatesta power and wealth. Today, mansions here are B&Bs and fortresses have been converted into museums. The Archeology Museum in Verucchio houses priceless pieces of jewelry, furniture, pottery and armor from the family's reign.

Excursions Beyond the Malatestas

To the south, Urbino was the economic and cultural capital of the Montefeltro dukedom. The Palazzo Ducal, built in the mid 15th century, is now the National Gallery of the Marche and houses one of the most important collections of Renaissance art in the world. From this site, our party was driven up the steep, winding incline of Mount Titano, where, looming out of the mist at the summit is the fortress, basilica and turrets of the Republic of San Marino (www.sanmarinonline.com).

Once inside the main gate, the towns (there are nine within the walls) become a labyrinth of narrow cobblestone streets flanked by filigreed wrought iron gates, which front centuries old stone buildings.

The **Titano Hotel and Restaurant** offers a stunning view of the valley below (www.sanmarinosite.com). Our company was treated to pasta with truffles, the restaurant's signature dish. Later, we caught a glimpse of the Adriatic, while on the way to dinner at **Ramada's chic Caffè Delle Rose** at Viale Vespucci (www.caffedellerose.com).

A tour of the 12th century Malatesta fortress at Montebello took us through the living quarters of the duke and his daughter, Azzurrina, who disappeared in 1375, and whose ghost is said to haunt the apartments. Further north, on a high cliff overlooking the Marecchia Valley is the citadel of San Leo. Arms from the 4th through the 20th centuries can be viewed in several rooms here. Toward late afternoon, our group hiked through an underground network of grottos in



Rimini, Italy

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EUROPE

Santarcangelo di Romagna and emerged at La Sangiovesa workshop, where we watched a demonstration of traditional "rust" painting on fabric, before dining sumptuously at the restaurant of the same name (visit www.sangiovesa.it).

It was late evening when we reached the famous Grand Hotel, Rimini (www.grandhotelrimini.com). The gracious 200-bed room hotel was built in 1908 and is set in an exotic park with a large private beach. It's been a national monument since 1994.

High on a hill to the south is the renovated Hotel Posillipo and Restaurant, which offers 30 rooms and two deluxe suites. The restaurant serves a seven-course fish dinner that's a gourmand's delight (www.hotelposillipo.com).

A site inspection of the Riccione Conference Center revealed a contemporary, multi-functional center that can host meetings, exhibitions and various forms of entertainment (www.palariccione.com). *Italia in Miniatura*, combines the cultural heritage of Italy with free rides. The theme park also hosts events for the young and the young at heart (www.italiainminiatura.com).

Among the older historical sites in Rimini are the Arco



Tower at San Marino

D'Augusto, the 1st century B.C. gateway to the old city, the Tempio Malatestiano, one of the most important churches of the Renaissance, and the Roman ruins at the Piazza Ferrari. Under the expert guidance of Verdiana Contibaioni (www.verdiana.baioni@adarte.com), JAXFAX and colleagues toured the world heritage mosaics at Ravenna and concluded the excursion by interviewing principals of the popular Ravenna Festival.

The Fam Trip ended by celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Grand Hotel with a gala dinner in honor of its famous son, Maestro Federico Fellini.

Getting There

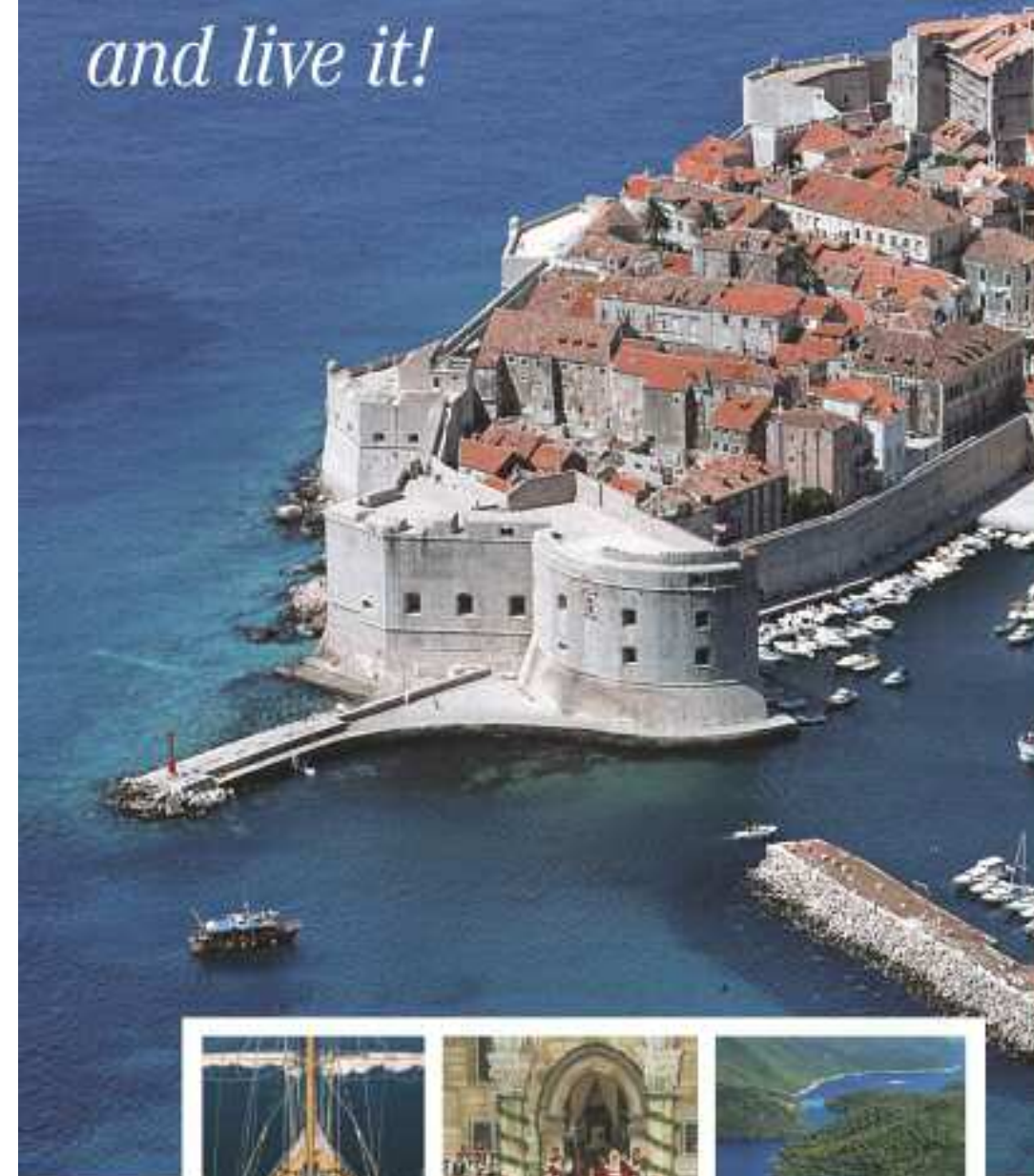
Alitalia flies from most major U.S. cities to Rome's Fiumicino Airport and connects to the G. Marconi Airport in Bologna or the Federico Fellini Airport in Rimini (www.alitalia.com). Train and bus connections can also be made

from most major cities in Italy.

For more information on Italy, contact the Italian Government Tourist Board, 212-245-5618; 310-820-1898; www.italiantourism.com

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Poland Revisited

by Edith Hall Friedheim

No other city in my experience breathes quite the same fusion of atmospheres as Warsaw. For haunted as it is by sad memories, it is a city constantly reinventing itself, its liveliness and sense of purpose springing entirely from the hearts and minds of the Poles.

From my hotel in the Old City I can walk to the park overlooking the Vistula River and from there to the monuments and historical buildings along the Royal Way from the Royal Castle to the palace in Wilanow. Wider pedestrian sidewalks paved in colorful red, yellow and gray stone have replaced the concrete of Krakowskie Przedmiescie, transforming it into the most beautiful street in Poland, and the squares, churches and palaces have all been returned to their original Classical and Baroque facades.

Two future events are sure to have a major impact on Poland's – and Warsaw's - already thriving travel industry. In 2010, Warsaw celebrates the Frederic Chopin Bicentennial with concerts, music festivals, and special exhibitions, and special "Following Chopin's Footsteps" tourist routes



designed by leading travel agencies in Warsaw and Zelazowa Wola, the village where the great composer was born in 1810. Looking even further ahead, Poland is co-hosting (with the Ukraine) the 2012 European Football Championship, the world's third largest sports competition.

In Poland in general, and Warsaw in particular, large international brands are investing heavily in new properties that include not only high-end accommodations, but also business and entertainment complexes to attract potential convention business. Hilton (www.hilton.com), Hyatt (warsaw.regency@hyatt.com), and Radisson SAS (warsaw@radissonsas.com) all have opened new properties in Warsaw within the past few years, confirming their five-star status with luxury accommodations and amenities, internet access, fitness centers and restaurants.

As for the smaller boutique hotels, none is more alluring than MaMaison Le Regina (www.leregina.com), occupying a rebuilt 18th-century palace and courtyard just steps from Old Town Square. Le Regina's 61 rooms and suites offer a superb location, elegant but cozy ambiance, spacious accommodations, and a superb restaurant, La Rotisserie, which recently won first prize in the prestigious "L'Art de la Cuisine Martell 2008."

For shoppers, visit the Golden Terraces Shopping Mall (www.zlotetarasy.pl) near the central train station, which is doing a brisk business in middle- and high-end goods while the more intimate Likus Concept Store in the center of the Old City (call 022-492-7402-20) serves up delicious chocolates and unusual boutique items to Warsaw's cognoscenti.

Krakow

Untouched by the fiery fate of Warsaw at the end of WWII, Krakow is one of Europe's great, unspoiled cities and a bona fide member of the Vienna, Budapest, Prague golden tourism axis. This translates into good hotels, restaurants and nightclubs, and convenient transportation from most points in most directions - JAX FAX recently enjoyed the three-hour express train trip from Warsaw.

Krakow sightseeing essentials include the enormous medieval Market Square (Rynek Gowny) with Cloth Hall and St. Mary's Basilica; the National Museum; the Kazimierz district that housed Krakow's Jews for centuries before the Nazi occupation, and, across the river, the factory where Oskar Schindler employed some 1,200 Jews, thereby saving them from extermination at Auschwitz-Birkenau nearby. But for the Poles themselves and for most visitors, Wawel Castle and Cathedral remain Krakow's defining landmarks, its unique version of Buckingham Palace and Westminster Abbey in one beguiling, albeit eclectic complex. For reservations call 012-422-5155; or visit this site: www.wawel.krakow.pl

For a city of under a million inhabitants, Krakow's hotel

Gdansk



inventory is impressive. The international brands are represented by Radisson SAS, Sheraton, Novotel, and Holiday Inn, while the smaller, independent Amadeus (www.hotel-amadeus.pl)

and Copernicus Hotels (www.hotel.com.pl) have accommodated the likes of Prince Charles and George W.

Heading North

The Baltic city of Solidarity and amber, at various times German (Danzig) or Polish, Gdansk has shrugged off its Eastern Bloc image once and for all. Here and in the neighboring resort town of Sopot, new luxury hotels, spas, and business centers - a Radisson SAS on Gdansk's historic Long Street, a beachfront Sheraton Hotel Conference Centre & Spa next to the legendary Grand Hotel in Sopot - share space cheek by jowl with the city's landmarks.

Getting There

LOT Polish Airlines and many international carriers operate flights to Gdansk's Lech Walesa Airport. LOT flies non-stop to Warsaw from New York (JFK), Chicago and Toronto, offers connecting flights to Krakow, and code shares with other carriers. "Trans-Atlantic destinations and the U.S. market are very important to us, says LOT's Midwest sales manager Andrzej Iwanov, adding that the new Terminal 2 at Warsaw's Frederic Chopin Air-



Krakow's Wawel Castle complex

port "allows us to offer our passengers more services at the highest level. Visit www.lot.com All major European carriers all fly into Poland through their hubs. For more information, contact the Polish

National Tourist Office, 201-420-9910; E-mail pnatony@polandtour.org; www.polandtour.org

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Undiscovered Hideaway in Turkey's 'St. Tropez'

By Sophie Thornton

For those clients who have been there, done that and are always searching for a new resort destination, Bodrum (right), Turkey may just be the answer. Considered the "St. Tropez of Turkey," Bodrum is a port town in the southwestern Aegean Region of the country just over 500 miles south of Istanbul. It is easily reached via a one-hour flight from Istanbul's Ataturk Airport aboard **Turkish Airlines** or **AtlasJet**.

With the sea being the primary focus for all who visit here, Bodrum has a very relaxed ambiance. Resorts are set up to feature magnificent water views, many have outdoor restaurants so that one can enjoy the sunshine and refreshing sea breezes, and the décor is elegantly casual and comfortable. At many resorts, children are also welcome.

Visitors who seek a typical Turkish resort with an intimate ambiance may opt for **The Marmara Bodrum**, a 96-room luxury retreat — and member of **Small Luxury Hotels** — built into the hillside with spectacular views of St. Peter's Castle and the Aegean Sea with the Greek Islands off in the distance.

French interior designer Christian Allart, who conceived many of the Turkish Marmara properties, did some of his best work here, taking typical historic Turkish items and repurposing them as furnishings and artwork. Old-fashioned square saddles that once helped riders sit atop camels are now used as coffee tables. Stones now function as door-knobs. Intricately carved wooden stamps once used to place patterns on textiles are now wall art. The result is stunning, rustic, and inviting.

The resort features two restaurants; a lounge bar and pool bar; a swimming pool with a panoramic vista; The Marmara Spa where the Spa Manager mixes all of her own essential



oils including a chocolate oil which is said to make the skin incredibly soft; a fitness center; tennis and squash court; traditional Turkish Hammam; and a boat which can be rented for day sails on the Aegean. The property is just minutes from downtown Bodrum.

Visit www.themarmarahotels.com

For something on a larger resort scale, the **Kempinski Hotel Barbaros Bay** features its own beach (reachable via golf cart) as well as a magnificent 5,500 square meter spa operated by Six Senses. A bit far from downtown Bodrum, this resort is perfect for those who want to get away from it all on a grand scale and make their resort stay the main focus. The Kempinski's 148 suites are exquisitely decorated and guests can also enjoy a daily fitness program including Yoga and Nordic Walking, the Kempikids Club featuring a variety of day and nighttime activities for children, a swimming pool, heated indoor pool and whirlpool, a library, and six restaurants and bars as well as the Kids Restaurant Turtle Club. Visit www.kempinski-bodrum.com

For a resort on a much smaller scale, the **Ada Hotel** is a boutique-style Relais & Chateaux property with 14 beautifully decorated rooms in a rustic French style. There is a choice of accommodations in addition to a Family Suite. The Mahzen (Cellar) Restaurant is reminiscent of a medieval

chateau, while the Ada Beach Restaurant is actually a five-minute walk from the hotel, yet offers outstanding views and delightful cuisine. Other facilities include a swimming pool, Jacuzzi, sauna, Turkish Bath, fitness room, and massage room. Visit www.adahotel.com

Culture Corner

For travelers who want to add a little culture and history to their resort vacation, St. Peter's Castle, built in the 15th century, overlooks the harbor and the International Marina and features a fascinating Museum of Underwater Archaeology. This museum has exhibits taking visitors back in time into the worlds of ancient mariners who were ultimately shipwrecked on Anatolian shores and to the medieval Age of Knights who built the castle from stones that once were part of one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient World: The Mausoleum of Halicarnasus.

Another point of interest in the town is the Ancient Theater, which dates back some 2,500 years to the Hellenistic Period. Only recently three huge backstage rooms as well as two long tunnels used by spectators and artists to pass under the theater were restored and opened to the public.

For those who want to venture out of their hotel at night, the city offers a wonderful selection of restaurants and nightlife with a good number of popular discos and clubs. Taxis are easy to get and transport you from your hotel to



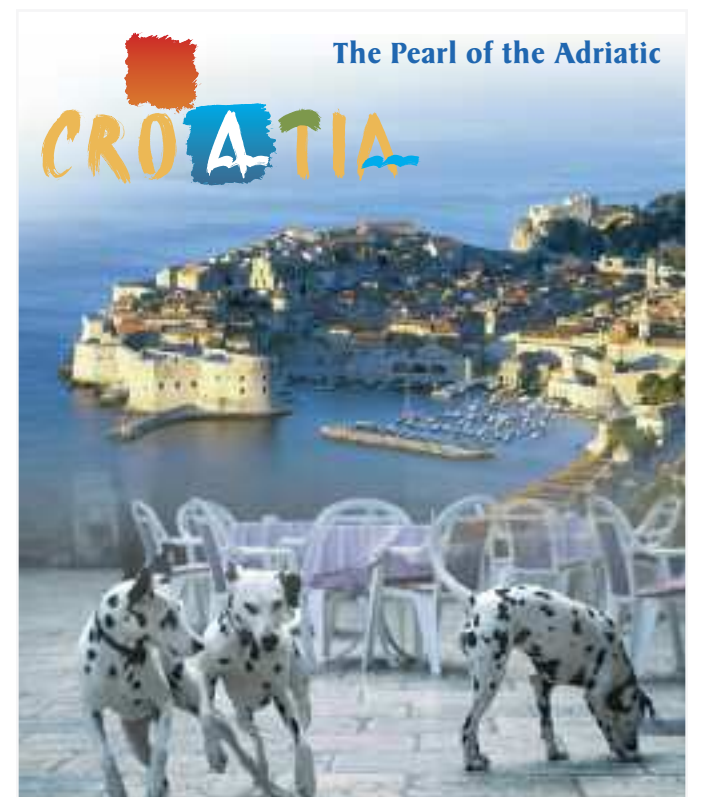
the club and back. For shoppers, Bodrum (above) is known for its leather goods, blue glass beads and natural sponges as well as carpets, sandals, and embroidery.

A visit to Bodrum features everything a sophisticated client seeks in a seaside vacation — a choice of resorts, wide variety of dining options, fabulous Turkish cuisine, warm Turkish hospitality, and the opportunity to explore some historic and cultural sights in addition to working on the perfect tan. For more information, contact the **Turkish National Tourist Office**, 877-367-8875; E-mail: ny@tourismturkey.org; www.tourismturkey.org

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Turkey see page 72 of the Listings Section

FIT Charts Turkish Waters

Foreign Independent Tours' latest full-escorted, air-inclusive program to Turkey — the 11-day Exploration of Magical, Mystical, Ancient Turkey starts at \$1,999 per person double. Right from the start, this program begins with a full day tour of Istanbul followed by a sleeper train ride to Ankara. Also featured are two full days in Cappadocia with a visit to the Kaymakli Underground City, and touring through Imagination Valley where animal-like natural formations like camels and chimneys are abundant. Truly, the Cappadocia landscape in itself is worth the trip. Passengers will drive through 13th century towns to see the Sultanhan Caravanserai on the way to Konya. There will of course be a visit to the Mausoleum of Mevlana, the worldwide famous mystic also known as Rumi. Mevlana was a philosopher and mystic of Islam. His doctrine advocates unlimited tolerance, positive reasoning, goodness, charity and awareness through love. Among the inclusions are transatlantic airfare from New York's JFK including fuel surcharges, eight nights' stay at center located four-star hotels (listed in itinerary) with optional upgrades to all five-star hotels is available at a surcharge of \$299 per person, one night's stay in a sleeper train for the route Istanbul/Ankara, daily breakfast buffet at hotels, set menu meals per itinerary (22 total), all ground transportation with a/c luxury coach, service of an English speaking, licensed tour guide, all sightseeing tours, entrance fees, and service tax. Call 800-248-3487, press Option 3, mention Tour #228; www.fittours.com



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IN THE NEWS

Vacation Packages to Italy with EuroFly

EuroFly looks forward to a new season as the company reported success and growth throughout 2008. The news comes hot on the heels of two important milestones for the company, as 2009 marks both their 20th anniversary as well as the start of the 5th year of Eurofly's operations in the United States.

In 2008, EuroFly provided travelers with access to Italy's most desirable locations, with nonstop service to Rome, Bologna, Palermo, and Naples, and direct service to Lamezia Terme, Pescara, and Bari.

Send your clients to Rome for Thanksgiving starting from \$1,999 including all fees and taxes. Packages include airfare, transfers, six nights at a four-star hotel, breakfast daily, welcome dinner, Thanksgiving lunch, excursions to Sorrento, Amalfi, Siena and San Gimignano and more. Agents earn a \$150 commission on all bookings. Call 800-459-4980; www.euroflyvacations.com

Eurail's Off-Peak Pitch for 2009

Eurail is launching a special off-peak promotion, offering free travel days on two of its classic products: the Eurail Select Pass and the Eurail Global Pass from January 2009. .

To be eligible for the additional travel days, passes must be purchased by **November 30, 2008**. Travel can start as of March 1 and must be completed by May 31, 2009.

Customers buying a 15- or 21-day Eurail Global Pass will instead receive 21 days or one month, respectively. The Eurail Select Pass three countries, valid for six or eight days within two months, now comes with an additional two travel days. These extra travel days will give Eurail's customers time to discover more of Europe at no extra cost. Eurail Sales Agents include:

ACP Rail International (www.eurail-acprail.com); Eurail (www.Eurail.com); Flight Centre (www.flightcentre.com); www.OctopusTravel.com; Rail Europe (North America: www.raileurope.com), and STA Travel (www.statravel.com).

Cloud Tours Holds 2008 Prices

Many of **Cloud Tours'** tour packages can be guaranteed at 2008 rates for travel in 2009 with a \$250 deposit booked by Nov. 30. The company has revamped its website for Greece, Spain, Cyprus, the Canary Islands, Portugal, Italy, Turkey and Egypt. The company's home page segments its portfolio into land, sea and cruise, island hopping and honeymoon and wedding packages along with a section devoted to developing group vacations. Cally Papas, president said, "We wanted to make it easy to use to be consistent with our philosophy that independent clients want to travel at their own pace and not ours; we encourage agents to let us know what clients want to do, when they want to leave and any other special interest information that will assist us in creating the 'Dream Vacation' for their clients."

Call 800-223-7880; E-mail: info@cloudtours.com; www.cloudtours.com

Golf in Andalusia with Destination Spain

Andalusia was once considered the private preserve of European golf pros. But **DestinationSpain.us**, with the support of the **Tourist Office of Spain** in New York, **Turismo Andaluz** and the **Patronato of Huelva**, hosted a group of agency owners on a Fam-Trip to Spain to introduce them to a viable alternative to the Caribbean or Mexican Riviera for their golf-loving and leisure clients.



The Islantilla Golf Resort Hotel is a real paradise of relaxation with indoor and outdoor swimming-pools, jacuzzi, massage, Turkish baths and a splendidly green golf course with view of the ocean.



With 300 sunny days a year and 127, 18-hole world-class golf courses, it's not hard to understand why. Imagine rolling expanses of lush fairways and greens with a background of snow-capped mountains and deep blue sea.

But it's what happens between games that makes playing Andalusia a truly memorable vacation. Culture and history everywhere you turn. Outstanding cuisine and wines at every meal. Miles and miles of beaches, plus the famed white sands of La Costa de la Luz, found in western Andalusia. And your accommodations are always close to the seven great cities of Moorish antiquity and rich legacy: Malaga, Granada, Sevilla, Cordoba, Almeria, Cadiz and Huelva.

The participants of the Fam-Trip recognized the potential of this region with its magnificent golf courses, beautiful hotels and Spas. And best of all, about the same price as comparable packages to the Caribbean or Mexican Riviera. It is the perfect winter getaway, for not only golf aficionados, but for their families, too.

Call at 877-276-6636 or visit www.destinationSpain.us and click on travel division.

BEST BUYS

\$315 GERMANY Bargain hunting travelers should check out the four nights of accommodations that includes daily breakfast with a car and all taxes for just \$315 in Berlin, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Munich (left) arranged by **Nordique Tours**.



Travelers can stay in one or more cities and drive around the area while paying just \$315. This extraordinary bargain is available through **Dec. 14, 2008**.

Among the properties used for the accommodations on this **Nordique Tours** deal are the **A&O Friedrichshain** in Berlin, **Holiday Inn** in Cologne, **Batavia Hotel** in Düsseldorf, **Luxur Hotel** in Frankfurt and **Ludwig Hotel** in Munich.

Do inquire about purchasing airfare from **Picasso's** consolidator division to support the air component of this package. Call 800-995-7997; www.nordiquetours.com

\$303 LONDON Drawing on the combined holdings of its own collections, the Louvre in Paris, and the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, a new exhibition at the British Museum explores the continuing dialogue between the Babylon of our imagination and the historic evidence of one of the great cities of antiquity.

The **Montague Hotel** is just steps from the museum making it ideal as a base for a London stay and a visit to 'Babylon'. The 100-room hotel, with its newly refurbished guest rooms and suites, is ideally situated for both business and leisure visitors and prides itself on personal service and attention to detail.

The Babylon exhibition runs from Nov. 13, 2008 through March 15, 2009. For clients booking a two-night minimum weekend stay at the Montague, priced between £165 (\$303) and £185 (\$340) the hotel will include two complimentary tickets to the exhibition.

Call + 44 (0)20 7637 1001; www.montaguehotel.com

\$604 SWITZERLAND **Epoque Hotels** has introduced a series of packages for the 2008 holiday season in Europe. Epoque Hotels' collection is made up of 350 boutique hotels in 101 destinations.

The **Villa Sassa's New Year's Eve** package includes two nights in a spacious deluxe room with balcony, generous buffet breakfast each morning, complimentary New Year's Eve gala dinner with entertainment (not including wine and spirits), gratis New Year's day brunch, one "good luck" cocktail for Lugano's casino, one gratis treatment at the famed onsite Aurum Spa, free access to all of the services offered by the Wellness Club Sassa as well as free access to the fitness center, including participation in all exercise classes. Per Person prices for the two-night minimum stay are US \$678 in a Royal Suite and \$604 in a Superior Room.

Call 866- 376-7831; www.epoquehotels.com

\$3327 ITALY **Tuscan Way** has introduced a new week-long "Cheese & Wines of Tuscany" tour – introducing and educating its guests on some of Tuscany's finest cheeses and wines. Guests can choose to stay at three of the company's eight locations - Casa Innocenti, Villa Poggiarello or Villa Gaia. Prices range from \$3,327 to \$3,604 per person, double, depending on location, and departures are offered throughout 2009. Prices are fixed in U.S. dollars at the time of the booking. The package includes six nights' accommodations, daily excursions with numerous cheese and wine tastings, all meals, and transportation throughout, including airport transfers. Call 800-766-2390; www.tuscanway.com

\$1950 ITALY Nestled between the sparkling blue waters of the Tyrrhenian and the chiseled peaks of the San Biagio mountains is the medieval town of Maratea, where the newly renovated luxury hotel **La Locanda Delle Donne Monache** has opened its doors to travelers. La Locanda is a two-hour drive from Amalfi and situated between the towns of Calabria and Puglia, La Locanda offers 27 distinct rooms and suites. Five nights' accommodation in a superior room, including a candlelight dinner for two at Il Sacello, roundtrip transfers to and from the Naples airport and/or train station, and a four-hour boat trip on the Tyrrhenian Sea costs about \$1,950. E-mail info@locandamonache.com; www.steinhoteles.com/locandamonache

Louis Ahead of the Pack for 2009

Louis Cruise Lines announced its 2009 fleet deployment for its popular three, four and seven-day cruises from its home port of Piraeus, Greece. The programs are priced through tour operator partners or are quoted at net rates to travel agents.

The M/V **AQUAMARINE** will operate the standard 3 & 4-day cruises as of Friday, March 6, 2009 with a 3-day cruise, followed by a 4-day cruise on Monday, March 9, 2009. The season will conclude with a 3-day cruise on Friday, November 13, 2009. The M/V **The AEGEAN PEARL** will perform the first 3-day cruise dropping anchor in Santorini and Heraklion/Crete on Friday, April 24, 2009 through October 16, 2009 (inclusive), followed by a 4-day cruise on Monday, April 27, 2009 through October 19, 2009 (inclusive) operating alongside M/V **AQUAMARINE**. Additionally, at the beginning and at the end of the season, M/V **THE AEGEAN PEARL** is scheduled to perform special cruises, details of which will be announced soon. THE M/V **CRISTAL** will operate the Louis Cruise Lines 7-day cruise itinerary commencing on Friday, April 10, 2009 through October 23, 2009 as the last departure of the season.

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

Gaylord 'Capitalizes' on Size and Location

by Merrie L. Murray



Fountain in front of the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center

MERRIE MURRAY

At the new **Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center**, a soaring 18- floor glass atrium provides a stunning introduction to this 2,000-room property and captures the sunlight and views of the historic Potomac River. With a trade show floor capable of displaying ten helicopters at once, four restaurants, world class spa and a welcoming, relaxed ambience, Gaylord National was built to appeal to the meeting and convention crowd and to leisure travelers.

Built by Gaylord Hotels, a brand with a loyal following from its properties near Nashville, Tennessee, Orlando, Florida and Dallas, Texas, Gaylord National came into town with an industry record of one million room nights sold ten months before the hotel's April opening. By July, it felt as if the mega resort had been open for three years so smooth were the operations.

This \$865 million property sits just minutes from Washington DC, upriver from George Washington's Mount Vernon home and across the Potomac from Virginia's Old Town Alexandria, founded in 1749. It anchors the 300-acre National Harbor, Prince George's County, Maryland, and together they stretch a mile and a quarter along the Potomac River with a backdrop of green.

Four Stars and Four Diamonds

Patriotic blues, reds and gold, state flags, a sea of white Italian marble and vintage photos of the Chesapeake help define the resort. Gaylord National touts its 2,300 STAR employees and attention to service, and AAA has already awarded it Four Diamonds.

Aside from the enviable riverfront location and temperature-controlled atrium, it boasts indoor and outdoor gardens with 30-foot plants, streams and shops. Children gravitate toward the atrium fountain that sprays jets of water 50 feet into the air on command with special lights and patriotic music. Don't be sur-

prised to see roving entertainers.

A huge plus is the new water taxi service provided by Potomac Riverboat Company. Guests can hop on board a water taxi at Gaylord National's pier for more dinner options and sightseeing in Old Town (seven dollars one way). Boat rides to Georgetown and Mount Vernon are also available.

An easy stroll along a waterfront promenade takes guests from Gaylord National to the still- developing two billion dollar National Harbor where a marina, four additional hotels, shops, restaurants, condos and an ice cream shop await. This multi-purpose destination on the river, developed by the Peterson Companies, is completing Phase One. The new National Children's Museum, due to open in 2012, broke ground this summer. Visit www.nationalharbor.com

Promotional Rates

With 2,000 rooms to fill, especially on weekends and holidays, it is a given there will be plenty of special events, promotions and special rates. Watch for details of "Christmas on the Potomac" November 25-December 28 with a festive 60-foot glass tree, holiday market and entertainment for the children.

All guestrooms are spacious (400 square feet), and user friendly with high-speed wireless internet, 32- inch flat screen television, cherry and walnut furnishings and oversized glass showers. Three- quarters of the guestrooms are Queen/Queen configuration.

Restaurants choices include the signature Old Hickory Steakhouse with wine cellar and cheese cave, Moon Bay Coastal Cuisine for a taste of Chesapeake crab cakes and fresh fish, and Pienza Italian Market with six buffet stations for different food moods.

National Pastime, the official Sports Bar & Grill of the Washington Nationals, features a 30- foot, high- definition video wall and sports memorabilia. Night owls gravitate to the resort's Pose Ultra Lounge on the 18th floor with fiber optics and view of the Washington Monument.

Guests should take advantage of the resort's Relache Spa (means relax or respite in French). Cool and sophisticated and decked out with black and white marble, the spa features massages, full beauty salon and relaxation room overlooking the river. Rack rates start from \$299.

Getting There

Visitors flying into Reagan National Airport can take the Super Shuttle for \$22 to be at Gaylord National in about fifteen minutes.

Call 301-965-2000; www.gaylordnational.com

BEST BUYS

\$139 NEW JERSEY

The Heldrich, New Brunswick's sophisticated new luxury hotel located in the city's cultural center announces its new Stay-with-Us Leisure Vacation Packages for the fall and winter. The Heldrich is located on "theatre row" in New Jersey's thriving restaurant and theater city – New Brunswick. The sophisticated and luxurious hotel is directly across Livingston Avenue from the storied State Theatre and The Brodsky Center at Rutgers University, the gallery and the famed Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, with one of the world's great Russian Art collections. Bed & Breakfast packages start at \$139 for one night Thurs.-Sun. Living Large on Livingston includes two tickets to a show at the State Theater, overnight stays and \$100 dinner credit for use in Christopher's Restaurant and Bar, priced from \$300 per couple; Weekend Romance starts at \$299 per couple for an overnight on Fri./Sat. nights; while a Girlfriends Getaway starts from \$342 per person double for accommodations, parking, three spa treatments and breakfast. Call 866-609-4700; www.theheldrich.com

\$139 HAWAII

The Wyland Waikiki, Hawaii's only art-design hotel in the heart of Waikiki is offering a Double Upgrade Special through December 31, 2008, which includes a double category room upgrade and daily full American breakfast for two from the hotel's new Spada Restaurant. The City View Room rates start from \$139 per night. "The traveling public is reluctant to take a vacation right now due to economic issues affecting the nation, so we're looking for opportunities to add value to the Hawaii experience and motivate them to visit," said Robin Graf, general manager of The Wyland Waikiki. "The perception is that travel is too expensive, including that dream trip to Hawaii. However, if travelers do their homework they can still find deals on airfare and great offers at hotels. If there's any time to take that vacation, now is the time." The Double Upgrade Special is valid through Dec. 31, 08 only when booking a City View or Kitchenette Category. This special cannot be combined with any other offer and is subject to change and availability. Call 866-346-4679; WylandWaikiki.com

\$199 NEW MEXICO

Eldorado Hotel & Spa is picking up the tab and giving guests a free night's stay. Travelers who book a three-night stay receive the third night free, a \$200 value! Valid now through Dec. 21, 08, this special offer, representing a 33% discount, is perfect for a last-minute summer getaway or a fall southwest retreat. Rates start at \$199 per night.

Consistently ranked as a top U.S. travel destination, Santa Fe is known for outstanding art galleries, superb restaurants, traditional southwestern shops and more. This is the perfect time to visit New Mexico's capital (the oldest capital in the U.S.) as it is commemorating its 400th anniversary. Guests can also tantalize taste buds at Eldorado's Hotel & Spa's award-winning, four-diamond The Old House restaurant. Call 800-955-4455, mention PROSTA when booking.

WWW.JAXFAX.COM

IN THE NEWS

Goin' Uptown to Harlem...

Few things are more traditional than a bus tour through "the City" – from Harlem to Battery Park, from sunrise to sunsets just in time to arrive at the Brooklyn Bridge!

Gray Line New York Sightseeing has added a new connecting Harlem tour to its long-standing Uptown, hop on and off, double decker bus sightseeing Tour Loop. The Uptown Loop, expanded to include the Madame Alexander Doll Gallery, with 85 years of doll-making history and the nearby Dinosaur Bar-B-Que Restaurant for a taste of southern home cooking, stops at some of the most exciting uptown New York sights, including Central Park, Lincoln Center, Dakota Apartments, American Museum of Natural History, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Grant's Tomb and The Museum Mile on a double decker bus.

Tickets for the Uptown Loop are \$39 for adults and \$29 for children. Tickets for the Uptown Loop with Intimate Harlem and Cloisters Tour are \$49 for adults and \$39 for children. The Uptown Loop is part of Gray Line's most popular tour package called the All Loops Tour, which in addition to Uptown, also includes Downtown, Brooklyn Loops and Night Tour valid for 48 hours. The All Loops Tour is \$49 for adults and \$39 for children. The All Loops Tour with Intimate Harlem and Cloisters Tour is \$59 for adults and \$49 for children. Agents can claim a \$5 discount for clients when purchased on-line at www.NewYorkSightseeing.com

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Worldwide Locations

River Cruise Preview for 2009

By Jonathan Siskin

One of the hottest selling cruise products nowadays are river cruises, and as the year comes to a close this is an excellent time for clients to book space well in advance on their choice of 2009 cruises. They can select from an attractive array of riverboats offering a host of intriguing itineraries on both European and US waterways.

MEET ME IN PARIS/MOSCOW HERE WE COME

A long time leader in European river cruises is Los Angeles based **Uniworld**, which features more than 500 departures and 40 itineraries on cruises to more than 20 countries throughout Europe as well as Russia, China and Egypt. For 2009, Uniworld is launching three new Paris itineraries that either begin or conclude in the City of Lights. Its 11-day cruise from Paris to Nuremberg starts at \$1,999 per person and sails on three European rivers while an 18-day Paris to Vienna itinerary through the heart begins at \$4,039. Clients in the market for a longer European itinerary should reserve space on the 32-day "Grand Odyssey" cruise from Paris to Bucharest starting at \$7,259.

Uniworld is also offering a new Epicurean Adventure program in 2009 highlighted by private wine tastings, special wine and food pairings and cooking demonstrations.

Book Uniworld cruises to Russia and/or Ukraine, the Black Sea and Istanbul prior to **November 30, 2008** and save clients up to \$1,000 per couple; those placing deposits by **December 31, 2008** can save up to \$500. The price of a 14-day "Waterways of the Czars" cruise from Moscow to St. Petersburg begins at \$2,999 per person double while a 16-day "Imperial Russia" sailing from St. Petersburg to Moscow starts at \$3,499. The 17-day Ukraine, Black Sea & Istanbul itinerary from Kiev to Istanbul starts at \$2,999.

Visit www.uniworld.com

"Our brand new ships are in the water – and the reaction has been fantastic," reports Nicole De Wilde, **Scenic Tours'** vice-president of sales and marketing for North America. Both the Sapphire and Emerald have had a busy first season on their sailings between Amsterdam and Budapest. Scenic's 2009 options will expand with the addition of 11-day city-stays and a 24-day Amsterdam to the Black Sea.

Scenic offers a "FreeChoice" menu of shore excursions that include, for example, a canal cruise or a visit to the Van Gogh Museum or in Vienna, travelers can tour the Schonbrunn Palace or relax with coffee and cake in one of the city's famous coffee houses. Scenic provides bicycles for those who prefer to take day trips on two wheels.

Travel industry veteran Michele Rauzon, who recently returned from a two-week cruise aboard the Sapphire highly recommends staterooms with spacious balconies as a great place to have your breakfast (supplied by butlers on the Danube deck). While this season is virtually sold out, there's availability for next year – and a generous early booking bonus to help agents close the sale for 2009.

Call 866-689-8611; www.scenictours.com



The Seine in Paris, France.

FRANCE INFO

Cruise West will enter the European river cruise market for the first time in 2009 with the introduction of 11 and 12-day Danube River cruises beginning at \$5,199 per person aboard the brand new 148-passenger luxury vessel Amadeus Diamond. Its Vienna to Bucharest route features tours of Budapest, Belgrade and Bucharest and also sails through the Danube Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is considered the best preserved Delta in Europe since it is home to more than 300 species of birds. Guests aboard the Diamond dine on local cuisine and experience traditional cultural events such as horse shows as well as wine tastings at world famous vineyards plus breakfast at the Nunnery of Saun and dinner along the Black Sea. Reserve space before **Dec. 19, 2008** for early booking discounts for clients of up to \$1,100 per cabin.

Visit www.cruisewest.com

AMERICA, THE BEAUTIFUL

Leading the way in the USA is **Majestic America Line**, the largest river and coastal cruise company in North America offering a unique selection of itineraries on the Columbia, Snake and Mississippi rivers aboard its fleet of six riverboats.



MAJESTIC

One of Majestic's most popular cruises is its seven-day roundtrip voyage aboard the Columbia Queen and Queen of the West out of Portland on the Columbian and Snake rivers. Visit www.majesticamericaline.com

Among the most unusual U.S. itineraries available in 2009 is offered by American Canadian Caribbean Line which is the only cruise line providing accessibility to the New York State Canal System on its 15 night "Great American Waterways" itinerary between Chicago and its homeport of Warren, Rhode Island. The RiverBarge Excursions include an eight-day voyage from Brownsville to Galveston with day trips to San Antonio and Matamoros, Mexico.

Call 800-556-7450; www.accl-smallships.com

Agent Opportunity: Viking Fams

Viking River Cruises, which offers river cruises and cruisetours through Europe, Russia, Ukraine and China, still has space on familiarization cruises and cruisetours departing mid-November and December.

See FAM trip details on page 87.

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FEBRUARY 17 thru FEBRUARY 20

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FEBRUARY 23 thru FEBRUARY 26

Atlanta, Georgia; Birmingham, Alabama; Knoxville, Tennessee; Nashville, Tennessee

MARCH 02 thru MARCH 05

Cocoa Beach, Florida; West Palm Beach, Florida; Fort Myers, Florida; St. Petersburg, Florida

MARCH 16 thru MARCH 19

Houston, Texas; San Antonio, Texas; Austin, Texas; Dallas, Texas

For additional venues in 2008-2009, please visit our website.

**Function starts at 6:00 PM with 1 hour exhibit period. Bar open from 6 to 9 PM.
Dinner served at 7:00 PM. 8:00 PM suppliers presentation and give away prizes**

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SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA

Ecuador Hosts Travel Mart Latin America

By Mercedes M. Cardona

As this year's edition of Travel Mart Latin America (TMLA) got under way in Quito, the economy and the environment were on the minds of many. Suppliers in this year's show -- the 32nd -- were emphasizing the region's greater value for the dollar and environmentally-friendly initiatives to attract U.S. tourists.

Many exhibitors went out of their way to promote their green credentials, such as the Smart Voyager seal of approval. The program administered by the Rainforest Alliance certifies operators' practices to protect the environment and native populations.

The show's organizers took pains to demonstrate their green bonafides, noting how all materials were printed on recycled paper. Even the garbage in the convention center was sorted out for recycling. "We've tried to give a sustainable character to the event, not because it's in fashion, but because it's necessary to stress sustainability," said Mariano Proaño, president of the TMLA organizing committee.

Green Consciousness

Many attendees noted that Latin American countries have become more conscious about protecting their indigenous populations and the very environment that makes them attractive to tourists. Ecuador's tourism minister, Veronica Sion de Josse, noted that the country's new tourism plan for the next 12 years calls for sustainable development and including native populations in any tourism projects.

New developments are now more conscious of environmental conservation and social responsibility, said Maria Cecilia Alzamora, commercial director for North America at Metropolitan Travel, one of Ecuador's leading operators.

Metropolitan was celebrating the first anniversary of its expansion into Peru and a recent designation by Conde Nast Traveler as a finalist in its World Savers Awards for socially responsible travel companies.

Metropolitan's latest venture, the Mashpi Lodge, will open at the end of 2009 in the rainforest two hours northeast of Quito, promoting itself as a rainforest biodiversity reserve. The lodge will have only 18 rooms and will be solar powered and accessible via an aerial tram that will prevent cutting access trails in the rainforest, Alzamora explained.

Buyers in the U.S. are very enthusiastic about green travel options, said Alfonso Tandazo, of Suretrek Tour Operator, an Ecuadorian exhibitor.

"People are accepting the offer," he said. "It's also a marketing tool." Suretrek was promoting Arcoiris Jungle Lodge, a new property in the Amazon it bills as the first all-inclusive eco-resort. Tandazo explained that by keeping the property small--it has only 40 beds--it can reduce the environmental impact. Arcoiris will handle a maximum of 2,200 visitors annually, he said.

He acknowledged that green tourism and small properties allow for slightly better pricing; rates at Arcoiris begin at \$230



Quito folklore celebration

per person, per night and are commissionable at up to 20% for wholesalers.

"We are not going to attract the mass tourism that looks for the cheap program," he said.

Americans' rising interest in the environment and global warming is also bringing up concerns about "greenwashing" non-

ARGENTINA
Buenos Aires, Iguazu Falls, Patagonia

BRAZIL
Rio de Janeiro, Salvador-Bahia, Amazon

ECUADOR
Quito, Galapagos Islands, Otavalo

PERU
Cuzco, Machu Picchu, Manu Reserve

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SOUTH & CENTRAL AMERICA

ecofriendly products to appeal to that upscale market, but suppliers and officials said relying on tools such as the Smart Voyager certification helps weed out bad actors.

Weak Dollars Send Clients South

As the U.S. economy took another dive, attendees at TMLA were upbeat, betting the weak U.S. dollar will direct some of the travel flows from Europe, where a strong Euro make Americans feel like paupers. Many Latin currencies are still tied to the U.S. dollar; Ecuador, this year's Travel Mart host, uses the greenback as its currency.

The market attracted 1,000 delegates representing 275 supplier organizations, said Bill Coleman, chairman of WH Coleman Inc. and president of TMLA. The delegate body was heavily U.S.-based, with a strong European presence from Spain and U.K., he said. This is the second time Quito, nestled in the Andes, has been chosen to host the gathering and according to Coleman, it was chosen because of its "extraordinary proposals for buyers and tourism diversity."

The 350 international buyers attending made it the largest buyer registration ever, said Coleman. Some 70 suppliers from Latin America had to be placed on the waiting list for spaces on the show floor to maintain the balance between exhibitors and suppliers and the ratio between countries, he said. Next year's edition will be held in Patagonia, Chile.

For registration information for 2009's TMLA, visit www.travelmartlatinamerica.com

The Ever-Changing Face of Ecuador

Airport Updates: The long-awaited new Quito international airport is scheduled to open in October 2010. Further improving air travel to and from the city, the airport will be located at a lower altitude of 7,874 feet, expanding the air traffic area which will be able handle some five million passengers a year to begin with and up to 7.5 million by 2030. Additionally, Ecuador's first duty-free zone will be established in Quito's new airport. In other developments, the **José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport** in Guayaquil won the number one spot as Latin America's top airport by www.businessweek.com. The annual survey, called the Airport Service Quality Awards, polled 200,000 passengers in 90 airports around the world on 34 indicators ranging from the availability of luggage carts to restroom cleanliness. The brand new 400,000 square-foot international and domestic passenger terminal in Guayaquil's renovated airport is now recognized by domestic and international passengers as a wonderful start to a trip in Ecuador.

Tourists flying into the José Joaquín de Olmedo International Airport in Guayaquil will also find a new initiative of a cacao plantation growing next to the airport. The 3,600 square foot cacao plantation includes its own irrigation system. Ecuadorian cacao reigns supreme in Latin America and produces some of the world's finest chocolate. Cuenca's municipality is also financing a project for the renovation of the city's airport with an approximate budget of 4.5 million dollars. Visit www.quiport.com, www.tagsa.aero, and www.municipalidadcuenca.gov.ec

Hotel Developments: Yachana Lodge, a Geotourism Lodge and School, won the National Geographic Geotourism Change Maker Contest. Yachana Lodge provides practical, hands-on education for Ecuadorian youth in the Amazon. As the country's only school offering a degree in eco tourism and sustainable development, it is deeply involved in cultural programs, the newest being the Amazon Culinary Tour, where guests and students harvest and prepare Amazonian foods together. Visit www.yachana.com

Travelers to Quito will find a new 141-room Holiday Inn Express located in the buzzing Mariscal quarter, steps away from a myriad of restaurants that suit every pallet and wallet in addition to variety of music venues and nightlife. The new Holiday Inn Express is 12-stories high with a total of 137 rooms and four suites with amenities such as a business center, meeting space, fitness center and indoor swimming pool, and underground parking. Rooms at the new Holiday Inn Express Quito start at \$110 with breakfast, wireless connection and free local calls. Visit www.hiexpress.com



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New Convention Centers

Originally built between 1917 and 1933, the former Eugenio Espejo Hospital, a beautiful Neo-Classical set of buildings in Quito, has been rebuilt and given a new life. Since March 2008, FONSAL has restored three additional pavilions and a chapel which has created more space for cafes and offices. The complex holds a capacity of 1,200 which includes seating for 250 in each pavilion. Visit www.quito.com.ec

Guayaquil unveiled the city's new Simón Bolívar convention and tradeshow center, also called Expoguayaquil in July 2008. The convention center is 225,000 square-feet making it one of the five largest centers for conventions in Latin America. The new convention center was previously the international terminal at the Jose Joaquin de Olmedo International Airport. Visit www.expoguayaquil.com

Training through the Andes

For those interested in experiencing a taste of Ecuador's Andean culture and history, a trip on the vintage Guayaquil and Quito steam train is not to be missed. The re-opening of the 68-mile stretch from Quito to the provincial capital of Latacunga is expected at the end of 2008, which will coincide with the 100th anniversary of the completion of the entire Quito-Guayaquil line in 1908. The rehabilitation of the railway was the long-standing wish of Ecuador's President, Rafael Correa. In April 2007, he declared a 'Railway Emergency' and began the plan to restore Ecuador's steam train to its former glory and reinstate the line stretching from the Andes to the Coast.

The creation of the Guayaquil and Quito Railroad marked a beginning of a new era in 1908, uniting the country, and expanding trade and tourism. The track climbs some 11,811 feet in elevation, from the Pacific coast to the snow capped Chimborazo Volcano in the Ecuadorian highlands.

Travelers to Ecuador can arrange for steam train charters along the historical railroad from July to January. Visitors will be able to enjoy the experience of riding the rails along the Avenue of the Volcanoes while discovering a rich part of Ecuadorian history.

For news updates, visit www.purecuador.com



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For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Ecuador, see page 57 of the Listings Section

IN THE NEWS

Pre-Holiday Tour Shopping at South Star

West coast based **South Star Tours** is selling land arrangements for several Pre-Holiday Shopping in Buenos Aires- seven days/five nights - starting at \$569 per person double includes five nights' accommodations, transfers, breakfast daily, half-day city sightseeing tour, half-day shopping tour and evening dinner and tango show. Travel agents receive a well-deserved 13% commission on this tour.

Discover Costa Rica at 25% Off – is a seven-day/six-night program starting at only \$749 for the first passenger and \$561 for the second passenger. This package is commissionable at 11%.

For Agents Only: South Star is offering two Fam trips to : Costa Rica for \$580 per person for travel through Nov 30, or \$680 for travel from May 1-June 30, 2009 per agent in double and Peru & Machu Picchu through Nov 30 for \$799. Call **800-654-4468**; E-mail: info@southstartours.com or www.southstartours.com

Palace Resorts University Online

Following the launch of the Palace Resorts Online University, and the first two chapters highlighting such topics as "Introducing Palace Resorts" and "Honeymoons & Weddings," the company announced that "Chapter Three: Meetings and Incentives" is now live, and that "Chapter Four: Golf and Spa" debuted last month. "The Palace Resorts Academy is a fun and interactive way to educate the travel agent community and help them feel confident about recommending Palace Resorts and Le Blanc Spa Resort to their clients," said Maria Briceno, Director of Marketing for Palace Resorts. To participate, agents must visit the website at www.palaceresortssacademy.com to register.

On the Panama Canal Route

Panama, which is promoting responsible practices in tourism through the new Panamanian Association of Sustainable Tourism (APTISO). Land operator, **EcoCircuitos** is one of the founders of the association and a staunch promoter of a new strategy to add a more healthful contribution to the economy, the communities and the environment.

Ecocircuitos has added the Canal House, a new boutique hotel located in the Old quarters of Panama City. This hotel has only three rooms and it offers a personalized service and a great historical location.

At the same time, **Ecocircuitos** has introduced a new itinerary option: The Panama Canal Watershed & Highlands, a 12-day itinerary, featuring more than 400 species of observable birds on the Pipeline Road, highland cloudforest, Smithsonian's Barro Colorado Island, Chagres lowland rainforest, Panama city and more. This program is ideal for couples, individuals and families. Prices depend on options chosen, season and the number of participants. E-mail annie@ecocircuitos.com; www.ecocircuitos.com; www.aptso.org

BEST BUYS

\$257 MEXICO

Food aficionados planning to attend Puerto Vallarta's 14th annual International Gourmet Festival scheduled for Nov. 13-23, can take advantage of the **CasaMagna Marriott Puerto Vallarta's** Dining Escape to Puerto Vallarta Package. Valid through Dec. 5, the package offers rates as low as \$257 per night, per room and includes deluxe accommodations for two in an ocean view room, daily breakfast for two, and dinner for two at Las Casitas Beach restaurant. Enter promotional code: **ES1** to take advantage of this offer. A minimum four-night stay is required.

In other offers, **CasaMagna Marriott Puerto Vallarta Resort and Spa** is inviting guests to have fun and go shopping with the resort's new Shop n' Tan Package. Available through December 18, 2008, the Shop n' Tan Package starts at \$267 per person per night, based on a three-night minimum stay in a Deluxe Ocean View Room and daily breakfast for two at La Estancia Restaurant, a guided shopping tour for three hours per stay. Call **888-PARADISE**; www.puertovallartamarriott.com

\$139 BELIZE

Flashpackers, according to Wikipedia, are a new breed of tech-savvy, high-adventure backpackers who are willing to spend a little extra money on adventure activities, and are on the lookout for new places to explore. Belize's **Tranquility Bay Resort and Machaca Hill** are prepared to quench this group's thirst for excitement by including on-site activities in the nightly rates.

Through the end of 2008, **Tranquility Bay** is offering a 25 percent discount on all rooms, which includes daily breakfast, a beachfront cabana, and use of snorkel equipment and kayaks. Visitors literally walk right out of their cabanas onto the white-sand beaches and snorkel to the Belize Barrier Reef where fishing and diving abound. Four-night stays at **Tranquility Bay** start at \$139 per night, through Dec. 14, 2008. Call **888-843-2293**; www.tranquilitybayresort.com

\$3236 GUYANA

Wilderness Explorers offers a new tour "Harpy Eagle Explorer", an 11-day birding adventure with Harpy Eagle, Guianan Cock-of-the-rock and the Red Siskin. This tour ventures into the wild, pristine and little known interior of Guyana for a birdwatchers dream. With more than 800 species, the country is full of birding opportunities, but this expedition is targeting three of Guyana's specialties.

The Harpy Eagle or "flying wolf" is the largest eagle in the world. With limited distribution and now on the endangered list the eagle still has a refuge in the deep south of Guyana. An active Harpy Eagle nest has been located deep in the rainforest offering great views.

There is also the opportunity to see the Red Siskin, which was thought nearly extinct in Columbia and Venezuela with only a few hundred left in isolated patches until a population of several thousand were discovered in Guyana. And to top it all off you

visit a Guianan Cock-of-the-rock in the Kanuku Mountains.

The brilliant orange of the males is a sight to see, especially if you are lucky enough to experience their mating rituals. Apart from the birding clients will also experience the vast savannahs of the Rupununi, the rainforest covered Kanuku Mountains (home to 80% of Guyana's bio-diversity), the Rupununi and Maparri Rivers and the home of Giant River Otters – Karanambu Ranch. There will be the chances to see jaguar, anteaters, black caiman and monkeys. Rates for this 11-day tour are \$3,236 per person for a group of four. Call **592-22-77698**; E-mail info@wilderness-explorers.com; www.wilderness-explorers.com

\$899 PANAMA

CondorOutfitters' seven-night *The Panama Combo-Beaches, Nature, Culture and the Canal* to Panama's **Gamboa Rainforest Resort** and at the **Decameron Resort** starting at \$899 per person double and pays up to 15% commission. Highlights include visits to Embera Indian Village, a partial transit of the Panama Canal, and includes accommodations for two, roundtrip transfers, all meals at the resort. The package does not cover international airfare.

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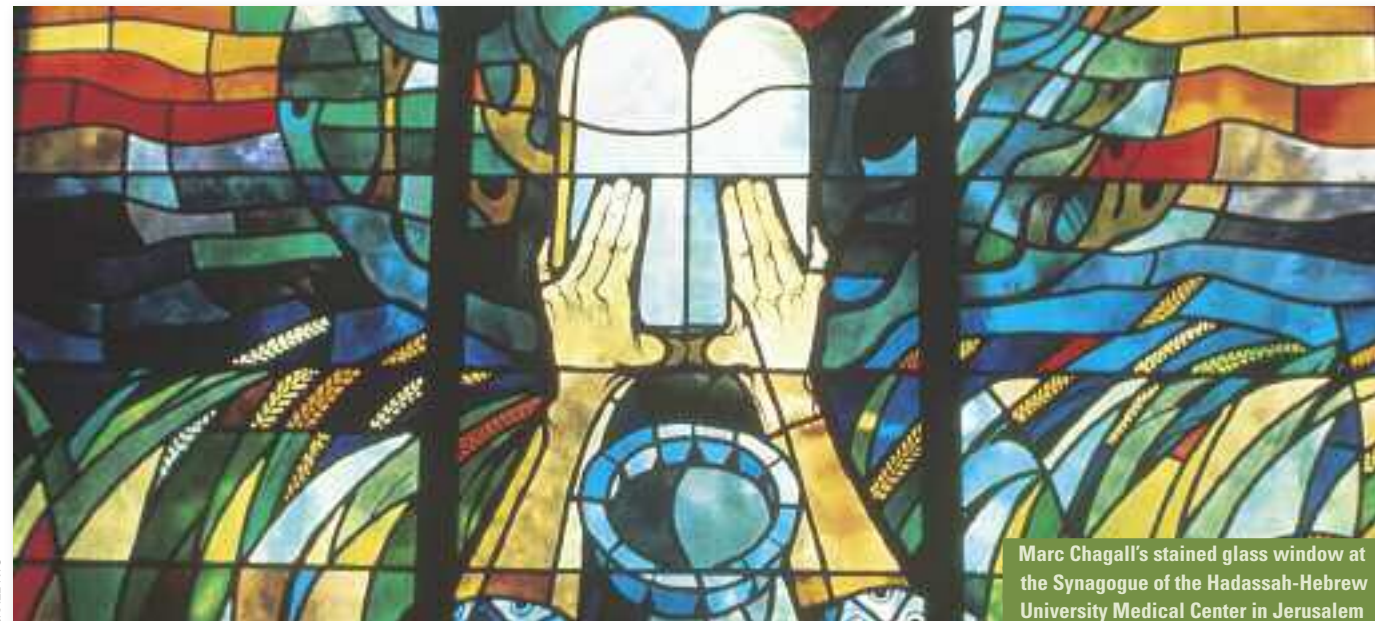
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Israel Returns to the Small Screen



Marc Chagall's stained glass window at the Synagogue of the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center in Jerusalem

After a hiatus of six months, the Israel Ministry of Tourism has resumed its nationwide advertising campaign, says Arie Sommer, Israel Tourism Commissioner for North and South America. By now, readers and hopefully their clients have seen the splashy, friendly images from the \$6.5 million campaign on their television sets in the New York, Los Angeles and Miami metropolitan areas, print advertising in national travel magazines and newspaper advertising in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Miami. A parallel TV, radio and print campaign is also running in the national Christian media, as well as an expansion of public relations efforts across the country.

"Last year was the best year ever for American tourism to Israel," observes Sommer, "and the first half of 2008 is showing an increase of more than 25%, so our advertising campaign is designed to maintain the momentum into 2009."

One outstanding factor in the upswing of tourism to Israel is that prices in Israel are generally lower than in many European countries. "The U.S. dollar has not suffered nearly as dramatically against the Israeli Shekel as it has against the Pound and the Euro," says Sommer, "which is why we have been gratified to see this year the entry to the Israel market of some major new U.S. tour operators."

Additionally, **U.S. Airways** recently announced it will launch daily service from Philadelphia to Tel Aviv in 2009, adding to the four daily USA-Israel flights operated by **Continental** and **Delta**, in addition to the 3-5 daily flights offered by Israel's national carrier, **El Al Israel Airlines**.

Targeting Your Clients

The general audience campaign was designed to expand upon the "You'll love Israel from the first 'Shalom,'" theme first introduced in color print advertisements in 2007.

"A series of four 30-second color TV commercials has

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Ayellet Beck says “Shalom” with every graceful sweep of her violin bow. She is one of Israel’s extraordinarily talented young musicians. Maybe her smile is because more Americans came to Israel in 2007 than ever in our 60 year history. And in 2008 is up 20%. Here is some of what is in store for 2009.

- We’ll be celebrating the 100th anniversary of Tel Aviv, and your clients are invited to join the party
- More new hotels will be opening – from major chains, to luxury boutique hotels, to country B&Bs
- In July US Airways will start daily non-stop service from Philadelphia. This is in addition to the eight daily non-stop flights on El Al, Continental and Delta

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Ayellet is playing in Beit She'an, spectacular home of 12 civilizations since 4000 BCE.

AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST

been created with the 'first "Shalom"' theme by our New York advertising agency Bodden Partners," says Sommer, "and they are without doubt the most appealing TV commercials ever created to promote tourism to Israel."

The advertising specifically for Christian media has been formulated by the Ministry of Tourism's Christian marketing agency, Pittsburgh-based Infinity Concepts. "Infinity created the "Israel. You'll Never be the Same" theme in 2006 and it has been one of the most popular campaigns we have ever mounted," says Sommer.

"One of the reasons for the record tourism numbers is the 60th anniversary of the State of Israel, celebrated this year," says Sommer, "and we expect the excitement to continue in 2009 as we mark the 100th anniversary of Tel Aviv."

Nighttime Touring in the Old City

Two new tours have been developed to encourage visitors to sightsee at night in the Old City. Clients can select from "The Storytelling Tour," featuring encounters with characters from the city's past and present, such as a British soldier and his followers; and "The City & A Song," a musical tour of the Old City including visits to the Cardo and Tiferet Yisrael Synagogue. Each tour culminates with a special musical performance with acts ranging in style from New Orleans jazz and Turkish folk to traditional Jewish and Arab songs.

"This is the very first time this kind of nighttime activity is taking place in the Old City," says Jerusalem Development Authority Director Reuven Pinsky. "I have no doubt that the awareness of the Old City as a place that can be enjoyed after dark will grow, bringing in many more visitors each and every day."

"Autumn Evenings in the Old City" is an initiative of the Jerusalem Development Authority in cooperation with the Jerusalem Municipality, the Ministry of Tourism and the **Ariel Company**. The tours begin at 6:30 p.m., free of charge. Visit www.tour.jerusalem.muni.il

For Modern Pilgrims

Israel has inaugurated the new 'Pilgrim's Route,' a trail enabling travelers to hike to its Christian holy places. Along the route leading from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, tourists can visit the site that recalls the New Testament parable of



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the Good Samaritan, the Qumran caves and the point in the Jordan River believed to be where Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist.

The Good Samaritan site, located just off the highway leading from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, is home to a Byzantine church built approximately 1,700 years ago. The mosaic floor of the church was recently reconstructed by archaeologists. In addition, the baptismal site, located near Jericho, is considered the third most important site for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, and also holds significance in the Jewish tradition as the place where the Children of Israel crossed the Jordan River when they entered Canaan.

"The new 'Pilgrim's Route' will add some additional inspiration for Christian visitors to Israel," says Sommer. "With tourism to Israel at an all-time high in 2008, we can anticipate an even greater influx of visitors hoping to follow this historic trail."

The first stage of the baptismal site's development includes shaded areas that were recently made wheelchair-accessible.

The North American headquarters of the Israel Ministry of Tourism are based in New York, with regional Israel Government Tourist Offices in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Sao Paulo and Toronto.

For more information, contact the Israel Ministry of Tourism at 888-77-ISRAEL; www.goisrael.com

For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Israel see page 59 of the Listings Section



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AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST

Southern African Mosaic

The combination of Zim-Zam-Bot was developed at a time when South Africa was more or less off the radar for many travelers. Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has become a major player in the travel world and enhances the earlier itinerary as does Namibia.

Below are a sample of tours and new developments that make a trip to this region a necessary luxury.

Diane Panasci, Marketing and Product Development manager at **Foreign Independent Tours** reports the company's has developed a Namibia and Botswana combination and is also promoting its South Africa package that combines wine and gardens in a special interest package that costs just under \$3,000 per person double with airfare (from JFK, LaGuardia, Newark, Washington Dulles, or Baltimore; add \$50 from Atlanta, Boston, or Bradley airports; add \$100 from Miami, West Palm Beach, or Detroit; add \$275 from Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Seattle).

The 12-day/10-night South Africa Sampler (Package #182) starts in Cape Town and features accommodations in hotels (four-star properties such as **Cape Manor Hotel**, **Protea Hotel Franschhoek**, **The Thorntree** and the **Knsyna's Cunningham Island Guest House**) guesthouses, and game lodges, includes a car rental, 10 breakfasts, three lunches and dinners and game drives. Specially priced at \$2,899 per per-



LOUISIANA

son double, the offer will remain valid through Sept. 2009.

At Cape Town Airport, clients pick up their Hertz rental car with 100% insurance coverage, unlimited mileage and airport surcharges (a manual shift model; for an additional \$129, clients can rent an automatic), and safaris at the **Amakhala Game Reserve**, a Big 5 reserve and participation on daytime and evening game drives. Call 800-248-3487; www.fittours.com

Last-Minute Africa

Norman Carr Safaris in the South Luangwa National Park, Zambia, is offering an extra 10% commission to agents on new reservations for travel before Dec. 20, 2008. The camps are rustic and situated in remote areas but they are comfortable and great for those who want to truly "get back to nature." Rates are \$570 for a standard room at **Kapani** and \$600 for one of the lagoon houses in the peak season. In the green season, standard rooms cost \$395 and the lagoon houses, \$420.



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Big Heart Safari
Promoted by Foreign Independent Tours and sold by Elite World Tours
9 Days From **\$5799**
Departures thru September 2009
A unique experience in responsible tourism at it's best! Created for Travelers in Peace. Explore the rich Cape Floral Kingdom and see how it is in turn helping bring a brighter future to impoverished communities. Witness how in the new South Africa black and white communities are working together to create a brighter future for all. Enjoy incredible safaris in the heart of Big Five territory and at the same time, know that you are contributing to wildlife conservation and benefiting the local community.
Price Includes: RT Air from JFK and all internal flights - please ask us for our low cost supplements from other gateways. Per itinerary: accommodations; meals (7 breakfast, 5 lunch, 7 dinner); road transfers on a private basis and all excursions. See itinerary by clicking on the "9 Day Big Heart Safari" on our South Africa page.

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The camps, usually open from June through October are \$495; with only Mchenge open in the green season at \$545. Rates are per person, per night, double for accommodations, meals, airport transfers from Mfuwe, soft drinks, house wine, game viewing activities, and park fees. Contact Christina, E-mail kapani@normancarrsafaris.com; www.normancarrsafaris.com

At **Singita Game Reserves**, land arrangement rates vary according to the itinerary, yet all are fully-inclusive of meals, beverages and lodge activities. Singita operates nine low-impact, high-end lodges in the Kruger National Park and the private Sabi Sand Game Reserve in South Africa; the Malilangwe Conservancy in South Eastern Zimbabwe; as well as in the Grumeti Reserves in Tanzania.

Among Singita's Best of Both series is a four-night combination at two of Singita's top South African game viewing destinations, with complimentary flights between lodges, or guests may extend their itinerary to include Singita Pamushana in South Eastern Zimbabwe for a luxurious seven-night Singita Relais & Chateaux Safari set in the Malilangwe Conservancy. **Reservations@singita.co.za**

The **Chongwe River Camp** in Zambia's Lower Zambezi National Park, recently added the Cassia Suite, an intimately private, stand-alone unit overlooking the Zambezi River where it joins with the Chongwe. There are no fences at Chongwe, which is surrounded by huge populations of elephant, lion, and leopard and more than 250 species of bird life, making game viewing in this area of Zambia exceptional. Rates for 2009 peak season (July to October) at Chongwe River Camp Cassia Suite is \$850 per person per night (based on two guests sharing). Price includes accommodations, meals and drinks, laundry, all game viewing, National Park fees and transfers to and from the local airstrip. Reduced rates are available for low season (April to June and November) at \$700 per person per night (dbl sharing). **reservations@chongweriver.net**; www.chongwe.com

For additional Information on Zimbabwe visit www.zimbabwetourism.co.zw. For information on Tanzania visit www.tanzaniatouristboard.com. For information on Botswana visit www.botswanatourism.co.bw.



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For consolidator airfares and tour packages to Africa see page 73-75 of the Listings Section

BEST BUYS

\$4338 ETHIOPIA Partnering with F/STOP Studio of Washington, D.C., **Ethiopian Airlines Journeys** has developed two new programs, the "Queen of Sheba Timket" and the "Queen of Sheba and Simien Mountains" photography journeys.

Each tour is led by a professional photographer from F/STOP Studio, following historic paths through ancient Ethiopia. Both journeys start at \$4,338, which includes round-trip and domestic airfare, hotel accommodations, meals, ground transportation, professional guides, and more. Call **866-599-3797**; or visit www.seeyouinethiopia.com/ltineraries/photo.asp

\$3360 MOROCCO Now through March 2009, **IsramWorld** is offering the "Ultimate Morocco" package, an eight-night trip departing every Thursday from New York. Highlights include an evening "Fantasia Gala" in Marrakech, a sunset 4x4 excursion through the Sahara, and visits to the magical cities of Rabat, Fès, Erfoud, Ouarzazate and Marrakech. Starting at \$3,360, this air-inclusive package from NY on **Royal Air Maroc** includes: accommodations at deluxe and first class hotels: the **Palais Jamaï** and **Kasbah Xaluca** (upgrades to **La Mamounia**, **Villas des Orangers**, **Maison Arabe**, **Riad Kniza** or **Riad El Mansour** (upon request), sightseeing with private guide/driver and local guides in private car/minivan, buffet breakfast daily, six dinners, and a sunset excursion by 4x4 vehicle to Sahara Dunes at Merzouga. Call **800-223-7460**; www.isram.com

IN THE NEWS

Heading East from Nairobi

Kenya Airways has announced the introduction of its three direct services between Guanzhou and Nairobi service. A Kenya Airways' spokesperson said this is in response to a growing need for stand-alone service between the two cities. "To increase capacity the service will be operated by a 322-seater Boeing-777 200 ER, of which 28 seats are lie-flat sleeper seats in Premier World." Flying time between Guanzhou and Nairobi is 10 hours 30 minutes. The news follows the start of increased direct services between Bangkok and Nairobi.

Call **866-536-9224**; www.kenya-airways.com

South Africa to Host ASTA's 2009 IDE

ASTA's fourth annual **International Destination Expo (IDE)** will take place in Sun City, South Africa, March 8-11, 2009, a six-day South African Experience with two days' exploring a province and four days' of education and networking.

Agents will become familiar with South Africa. Everything from safari adventures to beaches and cityscapes, there are enough options from which to choose. Agents will learn how to sell the extraordinary offerings of South Africa's nine provinces and surrounding regions and network with colleagues and specialized suppliers from South Africa and the surrounding regions.

Visit www.asta.org/expo



Cece Drummond Joins Travel Bound

FIT wholesaler-**Travel Bound**, recently appointed **Cece Drummond** as **Director of Strategic Marketing and Product Development**, reporting to General Manager **Nico Zenner**. Drummond has more than 20 years experience in marketing and product management, more than 13 years in the travel industry. Most recently she was Senior Director of Marketing for **Eos Airlines**. Prior to that, she was Vice President of Communications at

Rail Europe.

In her new position, Drummond will oversee Travel Bound's strategic planning and marketing activities, as well as manage the product team and business analysis functions.

"My major goal is to broaden the company's image as a truly worldwide provider and to launch innovative new products in all our destinations," she explained.

"While Europe is indeed our most popular destination, we'd like agents to think of us for independent travel everywhere, including North America."

Jenkins to Manage Product

Ruthie Jenkins has been promoted from Travel Bound's Groups department to Senior Product Manager, reporting to Drummond.

Jenkins has been with Travel Bound in the Groups department for two years. In her new position as Senior Product Manager, she is responsible for developing distinctive travel products in all of Travel Bound's destinations. Prior to joining TB, Jenkins designed products at **Tauck World Discovery** and **Disney**. Call **800-808-9541**; www.booktravelbound.com



Barbara Rubin Appointed to NYCVP Western Region

Industry veteran **Barbara Rubin** has been appointed Western Regional Sales Manager for New York City Vacation Packages (NYCVP). Rubin's territory will include Southern California, Arizona and Baja California.

With more than 20 years of travel industry experience, Rubin is eminently qualified to represent NYCVP. A former New York resident, she now resides in Southern California and is familiar with the travel agency community. "I under-

stand the need for education and training," says Rubin. "New York City can be a complicated product to sell, but I'm looking forward to teaching agents how easy and profitable it can be."

NYCVP's Vice President Joel Cohen said, "Barbara Rubin is the perfect person to carry the message about NYCVP to the travel professionals in the West. She has represented top-of-the-line tour companies like **African Travel**, **Travcoa** and **Intrav** so travel retailers trust her and her products." Rubin will continue to work with SIT Italy also. NYCVP is the largest inde-

pendent tour company selling New York City exclusively. The company's product line includes 30 Manhattan, New Jersey and Brooklyn hotels, all Broadway shows and 100s of sightseeing, dining and attraction admission options. NYCVP offers one-of-a-kind events like the 4th of July Picnic in the Park at Tavern on the Green, or Thanksgiving Insider's breakfasts overlooking the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. All components, including air or rail transportation, are commissionable to travel agents. Call **877-NYC-TRIP**; www.nyctrip.com



Pennicook Steps in as Pres. of SuperClubs' Intl. Rep

International Lifestyles, Inc. the worldwide representatives for **SuperClubs Resort**, recently announced **Paul Pennicook** will assume the role of President, International Lifestyles. A well respected and seasoned pro in hotel and airline management, Pennicook was recently senior vice president sales and marketing at **Air Jamaica**, where he oversaw worldwide sales and marketing for **Air Jamaica Vacations**.

"On behalf of the SuperClubs Resorts, I am very pleased that Paul has joined International Lifestyles as they complete their restructuring efforts," said John Issa, executive chairman of SuperClubs Resorts. "He intimately understands the Caribbean and Jamaican tourism industry and the competitive marketplace and is ideally suited to lead International Lifestyles' growth strategy."

In 2003 Pennicook was appointed Director of **Tourism for Jamaica** and served as first vice president of the **Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Associa-**

tion where he chaired the organization's marketing committee.

In 2001, the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association named him Hotelier of the Year. He was senior vice president sales and marketing for SuperClubs until 1995, and has also worked with other major hotel groups.

A graduate of the School of Hotel Administration at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, the native Jamaican will be relocating to International Lifestyles' Hollywood, Florida headquarters.

Visit www.superclubs.com

The Beijing Hotel Boom

By Helen Heales

The 2008 Beijing Olympics certainly put China's capital city in the global travel spotlight, judging from the spike in hotel development that preceded the event. Granted, increased room-supply exceeded demand by Olympic visitors to Beijing. According to the Aug. 21, 2008 issue of *BusinessWeek*, Beijing has a full one-fifth, or 5,790 more hotels than it did at the end of 2007. **Smith Travel Research Outlook** for the Chinese hotel industry reports that new hotel openings in Beijing and lighter than expected pre-Olympic demand caused occupancy to drop 10.7 percent to 61.8 percent. Although the 2008 Olympics have come to a close, these hotels are still open for business and in need of putting heads in beds. For the traveling public, this translates as future opportunity to visit Beijing at nightly rates that don't reflect Olympic inflation.

Pre and Post-Olympic Luxury

But that doesn't mean Beijing's hotel market is limited to mid-range properties. In fact, several luxury hotel chains established a presence in the city well before the Olympics came to town. Starwood's St. Regis brand was introduced to Asia in 2000 with the launch of the **St. Regis Beijing**, which recently completed a \$27 million renovation that included a redesign of its 258 rooms,



Olympic athletes may have returned home, but Beijing's new hotel rooms continue to welcome travelers

CHINA NTO

including 102 suites as well as its signature restaurants and public spaces. The hotel also offers a natural spring water spa, more than 13,114 square feet of meeting space and St. Regis' signature butler service. "With strong domestic demand, an increasing affinity for global brands and international inbound travel on the rise, our opportunity in China is perhaps unsurpassed anywhere in the world," said Simon Turner, president of global development for **Starwood Hotels & Resorts**. "As the Chinese travel abroad, they look for brands they know, and therefore Starwood's development in China today, has significant implications for our hotels worldwide."

The company continues to strengthen its presence in the city with the openings of the **Sheraton Beijing Dongcheng Hotel**, the company's 100th hotel in China, and **Four Points by Sheraton Beijing Haidian**.

Back on the luxury front, the **Sofitel Wanda Beijing** opened in October 2007 as the brand's 20th property in China and Asian flagship hotel. Along with 417 rooms, the hotel also features a signature restaurant, Le Pré Lenôtre, inspired by the Michelin-rated, three-star restaurant Le Pré Catelan in Paris. There are three additional dining experiences and two bars, in step with the brand's commitment to exceptional food and beverage options.

Following the Sofitel's Beijing opening, the 305-room Ritz-Carlton unveiled the **Ritz-Carlton, Beijing** adjacent to the Shin Kong Place shopping center, it offers club level accommodations with private elevator access. A multi-lingual concierge prints out boarding passes, makes restaurant reservations, and answers questions about business protocol in China.

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts will manage the **Fairmont Haitang Bay Resort, Sanya**, China scheduled to open in 2011 joining sister hotels in Singapore, Beijing (2008), Kunshan (2009), Macao (2010), Shanghai's landmark Peace Hotel (2010) and Fairmont Manila, Philippines (2010).

The newly-formed company **Swire Hotels** opened its first property, the **Opposite House**, in Beijing in August. Located at The Village at Sanlitun, a new open-plan shopping, dining and entertainment destination developed by Swire Properties, the

HK Express on Sale in US

Hong Kong Express Airways (HX, 851) is now available for sale in the USA via major GDS and ARC by validating on its sister carrier Hong Kong Airlines (HX 851).

The carrier has expanded its line-up of routes across Asia, with the addition of four new popular destinations: Osaka, Japan; Phuket, Thailand; Denpasar, Indonesia; and Manila, Philippines in time for holiday-makers to take advantage of the new routes for the up-coming peak Christmas season. Hong Kong Express now operates flights to 18 destinations across Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, China, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Call 888-468-5736; E-mail hx851@grouppsystemsamerica.com

IN THE NEWS

Goway's China Programs Growing for 2009

With forecasts of accelerated growth over the next several years, **Goway**, a leading North American wholesaler, has announced the enhancement of their programs to China for 2009. "Since the Olympics, the increase in requests and bookings for this fall and next year have been significant", says Doug Vogl, Goway's Asia Product and Marketing Manager. Due to popularity, the Eight Days Beijing Post-Olympics Package has

been expanded to include 2009 departures. This program is priced from \$1,499 from Los Angeles. "China Odyssey is the best-seller to China. It combines all major cities - Beijing, Xian (above), Guilin and Shanghai - as well as a Yangtze River cruise, with other unique components. We have substantially increased our departures for 2009 and have limited space available for the balance of this year", comments Vogl. Also, for 2009, Goway offers the 11 or 14-day China Odyssey. Accommodations are first class and centrally located. For an unforgettable Yangtze River cruise, Goway includes the most popular downstream cruise itinerary on one of the best ships available in the region - the President 1, and is priced from \$3,039 from Los Angeles.

Call 800-667-6601; www.goway.com

hotel has 99 studios, including nine suites, and a restaurant serving contemporary north Asian cuisine. Despite the economic downturn, another new luxury hotel group, **Guoman Hotels** is opening new properties in Asia in 2009, among them is a 460-room deluxe hotel as part of a mixed-use project in Beijing and a 360-room hotel in Shanghai.



Aman dining area.

AMANRESORTS

The **Aman at Summer Palace, Amanresorts'** new Beijing hotel, recently opened its doors. 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 hotel has four restaurants, a bar, library

and boutique. The Aman Club - a large spa and pool and health center will be located underground in order to maintain the aesthetic of the surroundings. Also on the luxury front, **Traders Upper East Hotel, Beijing** opened in September as **Shangri-La's** fifth hotel in the city. The 419-room hotel is home to three dining outlets and a spa and fitness center of more than 10,000 square feet, including an indoor heated pool.

Not to be outdone, the **Hilton Hotels Corporation** is also getting in on Beijing's burgeoning hotel market as the company announced plans to unveil the 300-room **Conrad Beijing** at the end of 2010 and the **Hilton Beijing Capital Airport** this quarter, having already opened the **Hilton Beijing Wangfujing** and the **Doubletree by Hilton Beijing** this summer. The yet-to-open Conrad will showcase a rooftop bar, while Hilton's airport property will offer 324-rooms in Terminal 3 and will showcase a piano bar as well as wine and cigar bars in addition to meeting space and

BEST BUYS

\$2000 TAHITI

Air Tahiti Nui is offering three six-day packages priced under \$2,000 per person for travel Nov. 1 - May 31, 2009 if booked by Dec. 31. Added value amenities are included, with the Family Fun package featuring free flights and meals for kids traveling with their parents. Air Tahiti Nui was recently named the "Best Airline - Pacific Region" in the 2008 Skytrax World Airline Survey® for the sixth consecutive year. Skytrax named Air Tahiti Nui "Best Cabin Staff - Pacific Region" for the sixth straight year. Call 877-824-4846; www.airtahitiniui-usa/paradise

\$150 CHINA EARLY BIRD

Champion Holidays has launched an early bird incentive of up to \$150 per person for the promotion for its new China & Beyond 2009 tours. To encourage early reservations for 2009 tours, Champion is posting a discount of \$150 per person on its prime tours; and \$100 per person on its price buster tours. Reservations and deposits must be placed by Dec. 31, 2008. Champion Holidays is a leading tour operator offering superior quality and great values for tours to China as showcased by *Arthur Frommer's Budget Travel Magazine*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* among other publications. Call 800-868-7658 or visit website www.china-discovery.com

fitness facilities. The 547-room **Doubletree** in the new Lar Valley International mixed-use business complex, will boast the brand's signature Sweet Dreams by Doubletree bedding as well as executive floor rooms with an executive club lounge. Guests at the 225-room Hilton Beijing Wangfujing can view the works of local Beijing artists, scattered throughout the hotel, and a chance to dine at Vasco's, one of the few Macanese restaurants in the city. "I look forward to continuing the success of Hilton Hotels in a city that is experiencing phenomenal growth," says Nils-Arne Schroeder, general manager of Hilton Beijing Wangfujing.

For more information, contact the China National Tourist Office, 888-760-8218; E-mail ny@cnto.org in NY, or in Los Angeles, 800-670-2228; E-mail: la@cnto.org; www.cnto.org

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For consolidator airfares and tour packages to China see page 79-80 of the Listings Section

Agents Savor 'Insider' Service at Crown Peters



If service is the key to success especially during times of dwindling rewards, doing business with companies like **Crown Peters**, can provide agents with a “secret weapon” in building their clientele. According to its coterie of loyal agents, Crown Peters distinguishes itself by delivering service backed by knowledge and competence, qualities that have helped the agents in turn, close a sale and reap referrals in

the coming months. “Crown Peters helps put the entire trip together from air, to hotels, sightseeing, to cruises and ferry tickets,” said Bobbie Hirschhorn at **Austin Travel** in Garden City, NY.

Says Padma Mehta from Illinois-based **Advance Cruise & Travel**, “I have been a travel agent for 18 years, and I have had the privilege of working with Crown Peters for the past two years...they offer superior service, and know their products well and work hard to accommodate both my company and my clients.” Mehta adds she has sold a number of honeymoon vacations through Crown, each of which arrived on her own desk with a unique set of requests.

Mehta is not alone in her assessment of Crown. Thirty-year veteran agent, Florence Siegel of New York-based **Linden Travel** says, “I always work with Crown Peters’ Debbie Gregory because I think it is important to establish a relationship with someone in a wholesale/tour operator setting; I like that they are a local company and more importantly, they know every last detail about Greece and can find properties to match anyone’s budget, from budget to five-star deluxe.”

While writing this story, JF sat with Crown’s principles – Gregory and Paul Alexander, the owners, and Debbie Gregory, head of product development. The owners have been in the industry for about 40 years: Paul did stints at Olympic Airlines and Alitalia while Gregory worked at Alitalia at a time when both carriers were among the most elegant models in the air.

Crown’s staff of about a dozen members is a handpicked mix of men and women with strong travel industry backgrounds. The physical plant of the office is professional– men wear ties, no one shows up in jeans – the tone of their voices, the various languages they speak add up to a cosmopolitan approach. To buttress their efforts stateside, Crown’s Greece office is also key to establishing its negotiating power in that country and that region.

Recently Kathleen Nord, an agent with **Tour Mates Travel** in Kingston, New York had a new FIT client who came in for a last-minute Greece and Turkey itinerary. “Crown managed to find space where other larger (unnamed) vendors no longer had allotments – I attribute this to the fact that they have a Greece-based office – Crown helped me close a sale I would not have been able to service without them.”

Initially, Nord came to Crown to service a local Latin and Central American ethnic markets and used mainly the consolidator services, which she felt were superior to those of other shops.

“I work with a great agent there, Carlos, who has helped us with many last minute bookings as this is farm country and we have a large population of agricultural workers who often go home for family emergencies,” says Nord.

Hirschhorn at NY-based Austin Travel reported a vacation snafu she relied on Crown’s staff to unravel. Initially, two young women on a tight budget booked a hotel through Hirschhorn but once they arrived in Mykonos were upset that the hotel did not have a pool. “Crown Peters was able to get them permission to use the pool next door at another hotel that had no affiliation with the one they were staying at. Needless to say my clients were very happy and had a great trip,” she adds.

Slow Down that Honeymoon

JF asked Debbie Gregory how to stretch out a Greece vacation, how to get the best value at a time when some folks do not want to cancel that vacation, but may want to do it on a tighter budget. She came up with several approaches only someone intimate with both the products and the destination could deliver.

First off, she advises agents look at the Crown brochure as a big, fat suggestion – no itinerary is written in stone – flexibility is the most important factor for FIT itineraries as their very nature indicates “deviation.”

Carmelita Burks from Little Rock, Arkansas’s **All About Travel** heard about Crown by perusing a brochure. “It is one of my favorite companies to deal with,” she says, “they are knowledgeable, efficient and have excellent follow through.”

“I just had a client who returned from Greece who wanted to disembark in Satorini and stay five days and then fly home. Crown Peters worked this out.”

For clients ticking off euros and dollars, offer them a garden view room rather than ocean view and if the initial idea of buying a tour with a three or four-day cruise appeals to your client, but they feel they would not really see that Greek island long enough, Gregory offers a solution or two.

Let’s say your client wants to tour and cruise for under \$2,000 a person. Purchase either Crown Charms I or II, both of which include three and four-day cruises respectively–priced from \$1,565 per person double for a six-night program in March, ranging to \$2,595 for an outside cabin in high season; both feature Athens for three nights, a city Gregory would like to see more people visit and stay in.

Don’t Miss Athens

“The Olympics preparations brought energy and positive changes to the city and it is more magnificent than ever,” she says. The **New Seven Wonders of the World**, a Swiss foundation, reports that The Acropolis of Athens, Greece is short-listed among 20 locations for the worldwide vote. Additionally, the new Acropolis Museum just opened in September. It is a three-level, 270,000-square-foot structure, with a room on the top floor with an area reserved for the Elgin Marbles, now in the British Museum in London.

Here is how a great deviation can deliver a Greek-island stay at an affordable rate: Clients opt for Romance II B that includes a

Tough Guys Ride Scooters

EagleRider, the world’s largest motorcycle rental company, just added the Piaggio and Vespa Scooters to its portfolio fattening its inventory line of Harley-Davidson®, Honda, and BMW motorcycles available for rent.

“Strong Vespa Scooters sales growth in 2008 coupled with increasing gas prices makes the addition of the Vespa line-up a necessary choice,” Said Chris McIntyre, EagleRider President.

“Vespa is a world famous lifestyle brand that will be a great complement to our prestigious rental fleet of Harley-Davidson®, Honda and BMW motorcycles.”

EagleRider rents Piaggio and Vespa Scooters out of the EagleRider Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Orlando and San Francisco locations. Requirements to rent a scooter are: 21 years of age, major credit card and a valid motorcycle license. Call 888-817-7660; www.eaglerider.com

Gate 1 Introduces New Destinations in 2009

With nearly 30 years of experience in giving “More of the World for Less,” **Gate 1 Travel** kicks off its 2009 travel season with the debut of three new destinations: Alaska, Iceland, and Tunisia.

All three programs offer small-group experience, with a maximum of 20 people per departure.

Among the new products is an eight-day Alaskan Adventure that includes four scheduled departures, and a scenic train ride to Denali aboard the Alaskan Railroad; the eight-day Iceland Adventure has five scheduled departures and the price includes a boat tour of Jökulsárlón glacial lagoon, while the 11-day program to Tunisia has 14 scheduled departures starting in Jan. and features stays in Tunis, Tabarka, Tozeur, Djerba, Sousse, and Hammamet and highlights include visits to the ancient ruins of Carthage, the Bardo and Dar Cherait Museums, and the island of Djerba.

Call 800-682-3333; E-mail: info@gate1travel.com; www.gate1travel.com

PROFILE — Continued

four-day cruise. They depart New York’s JFK International Airport on a Tuesday, arrive in Athens on Wednesday, and stay there until Friday when they transfer at Piraeus for their four-day cruise (actually they are embarking for a three-day sailing) so clients will use the ship as deck passage.

“But they are not staying on the ship,” says Crown’s Debbie Gregory, “they will use the structure of the cruise schedule as passage for their stay in Mykonos, the first port of call.” Clients lunch on board then disembark in Mykonos and spend the weekend on Mykonos. By the time the ship returns to Mykonos, clients re-board and resume their four-day cruise, which will actually be a three-day program for them as they have used one day to get to Mykonos.

The remainder of the program includes Kusadasi, Rhodes and Heraklion and Santorini. And, again because Crown knows the cruise line’s timetables so well, they can patch in other diversions. “The ship drops anchor in Santorini around

National City Bank Boosts Clientele

National City Bank (NCB) recently announced that Craig Air Center, based in Jacksonville, Florida, has opened a Depository Escrow Account with the bank, in compliance with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations for a series of public air charters.

Craig Air Center is a full service Fixed Base Operator, FBO, that has been in business for 23 years located in Jacksonville, Florida. Craig Air Center specializes in Aircraft Charter, Sales and Management. Craig Air Center also services the Bahamas by flying their Beechcraft B1900 airliners to the Abaco Island chain five days per week. The DOT has granted Craig Air Center a Part 380 Public charter operator license in addition to their FAA Part 135 Charter operator certification. Craig is an ARGUS ‘Gold’ safety rated operator. “The Bahama service would not have been possible without the escrow services of National City” says Tim Vito, the President of Craig Air Center. “Although we are a small operation, National City treats us as one of the big airlines. They make us look good and give our passengers confidence that their funds are protected.” “I would recommend National city to anyone considering obtaining the DOT part 380 license”.

NCB is one of the leading travel industry depository banks in the nation with account relationships in the U.S. and overseas. Several new clients have joined the growing number of companies that utilize its travel industry financial services programs. The banks clients are Zegrahm Holdings, LLC, Reformation Tours, LLC, Atlas Resources LLC, Tour Resource Consultants, LLC, and Island Pass, LLC. NCB’s expertise is in delivering customized financial programs to the travel industry, including Surety trust agreements, escrow agreements for public air charters and single entity charters, special purpose depository escrow accounts and the Travel Funds Protection Plan (TFPP) escrow program which is the only consumer protection plan endorsed by the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA), the National Tour Association (NTA), and approved by the California Seller of Travel law.

Contact **David J. Valpredo: 248-729-8375**; E-mail: david.valpredo@nationalcity.com; **Lorrie Janick, 248-729-8372**; E-mail lorrie.janick@nationalcity.com

4 p.m.,” says Gregory, “clients can get off, spend Thursday, Friday and Saturday in Santorini, and fly home from there with a stop in Athens.”

A similar approach can be taken with longer stays as well, such as the nine-night Crown Choice that includes Istanbul and Athens as well as a six-day cruise. Again, Gregory recommends “slowing it all down,” by extending the cruises and the city stays in Athens and Istanbul by at least one night, “To savor the cities and the islands,” she says, and to feel, indeed, your client has not just touched down on a Greek island but has also slept there, sipped coffee at a **taverna** to the sound of lapping waves under a blue canopy for more than just a moment.

Crown Peters’ air division books consolidated airfares worldwide while it designs land and cruise vacations to Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Turkey.

Call 800-321-1199; E-mail travel@crownpeters.com; www.crownpeters.com

Europe's Christmas Markets

Christmas markets are one of Europe's most picturesque traditions, with their quaint wooden market stalls, handicrafts, food and hot drinks. **Herzerl Tours** announced that it will offer two versions of six-day holiday travel packages, each featuring the sights, smells, sounds and tastes of Christmas in Austria. The tours are available in early December.

The basic package includes accommodations in Vienna and Salzburg, transfers and selected special events. This package is offered for only \$1,775 land-only.

An all-inclusive packages includes accommodations, transfers and a program with many wonderful seasonal events. This package is offered for \$2,267 plus airfare.

On this tour travelers will be visiting magical Christmas markets in Baroque Salzburg and in the Imperial City Vienna where artisans from all over Austria display their crafts. Special events such as a concert featuring the Vienna Boys choir, sightseeing tours and great dinners round out this experience. Both versions of the package can be arranged for mini-groups or FIT's.

Call 800-684-8458; E-mail sms@herzerltours.com

Travel Bound has just announced 18 new packages for independent travel clients in cities throughout Central and Northern Europe. In addition to the more famous Christmas market towns, such as Munich and Salzburg, Travel Bound's packages are offered in Basel, Berlin, Bratislava, Geneva, Hamburg, Krakow, Prague, Stockholm, Tallinn and Vienna. "Christmas markets are the most delightful way to shop for the holidays, and a unique European experience that clients will never forget," said Nico Zenner, Travel Bound's general manager. "Our Christmas packages, particularly those in former East Bloc countries, are surprisingly affordable for budget-minded clients."

Most packages include 3 nights at a 3-, 4- or 5-star hotel plus daily breakfast, hotel tax and service charges and roundtrip private transfers from airport or rail station. Two packages - Geneva and Salzburg, include a Christmas-themed sightseeing tour.

Agents can customize these packages by selecting hotel star rating and by adding one or more sightseeing tours from Travel Bounds wide selection. Commission on all Travel Bound packages is 15%.

Sample three-night Christmas market packages and prices: Berlin – more than 50 different Christmas markets, three-nights plus roundtrip transfers – start from \$222; Bratislava, historic Old Town on the Danube from \$184; Geneva, on the shores of scenic Lake Geneva, from \$349; Krakow's historic architecture and beautiful town square, from \$193; Tallinn, the historic Old Town on the Baltic, three-nights plus roundtrip transfers starts at \$133; or Vienna for three-nights plus roundtrip transfers – from \$254. Call 800-808-9541; www.booktravelbound.com

Beginning Dec 6th Belgian shops display holiday treats such as marzipan, flat hard cakes known as 'klaasjes' and 'speculoos', a hard gingerbread in the form of St. Nicholas.



GERMANY NTO

In all major cities, shopping will be possible on the four Sundays preceding the holiday. Brussels will hold its annual European Christmas market on the Place St. Catherine, with cheerful lights, delicious aromas and a vast number of stalls, as well as an ice skating rink. www.plaisirsdhiver.be

Historic Cities of Germany capture the best of the holiday season with a portfolio of Christmas markets from late November until Christmas, the markets fill with the sounds of musicians and the aromas of mulled wine, German sausages, gingerbread and roasting chestnuts – amid hundreds of booths in each city evoking the holiday season.

New events for 2008 include Augsburg's fairy tale street, depicting "The Nutcracker" in 10 intricately decorated shop windows; Würzburg's medieval Christmas Market, complete with jousting knights and a nativity scene from the 14th century within the walls of the Marienberg Fortress; and Koblenz's Christmas Market's expansion into the Liebfrauenkirche and Münzplatz area, offering special family attractions such as a toboggan run, carriage rides and a merry-go-round.

Perennial crowd pleasers include the Christmas Markets of Erfurt, where public tours are guided by Father or Mother Christmas, St. Nicholas or a Christmas angel; a hand-carved nativity crib with life-sized figures in Mainz; and Osnabrück's 19-foot nutcracker and a music box, thought to be the largest in the world, that plays 25 Christmas songs. Regional arts and crafts are showcased in Freiburg – including a candle workshop on Franziskanerstrasse; and Potsdam, whose Sternemarkt ("Star Market") includes handicrafts from both Germany and its Polish neighbors to the east.

For more information, contact Historic Highlights of Germany E-mail info@historicgermany.com or visit www.historicgermany.com

Red Carnation Hotels London has just revealed its festive packages for Christmas 2008. The two packages provide all the sparkle of a Christmas in London, offering a range of options to make your Yuletide stay just that little bit special. Guests who select either the 'Magical London' or 'It's a Wonderful Life at Christmas' breaks will enjoy the delights of luxury accommodation, full breakfast daily and a personalised and luxurious selection of enchanting inclusions to capture the spirit of Christmas.

The It's a Wonderful Life at Christmas package is available at Red Carnation's five-star London properties, The Milestone Hotel, Egerton House Hotel and "41". The four star package, Magical London, is available at The Rubens at the Palace, The Montague on the Gardens and The Chesterfield Mayfair. Both packages run from Nov. 21 through to Jan. 11, 2009. Visit www.redcarnation.com

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