

ENSEMBLE

Vacations[®]

Inspiring your passion for travel

FALL 2009

THE SUN ISSUE

HAVANA'S
5 TOP
HOT
SPOTS

SPECIAL
WELLNESS
SECTION

Spa vacations, golfing
in Jamaica & more

SMALL SHIP
SAILING

Why you should try it

Bliss in Baja
Discover Mexico's
best-kept secret

**Crossroads
of Paradise**
Explore Panama's
San Blás Islands



HUATULCO (Wah - Tool - Co)

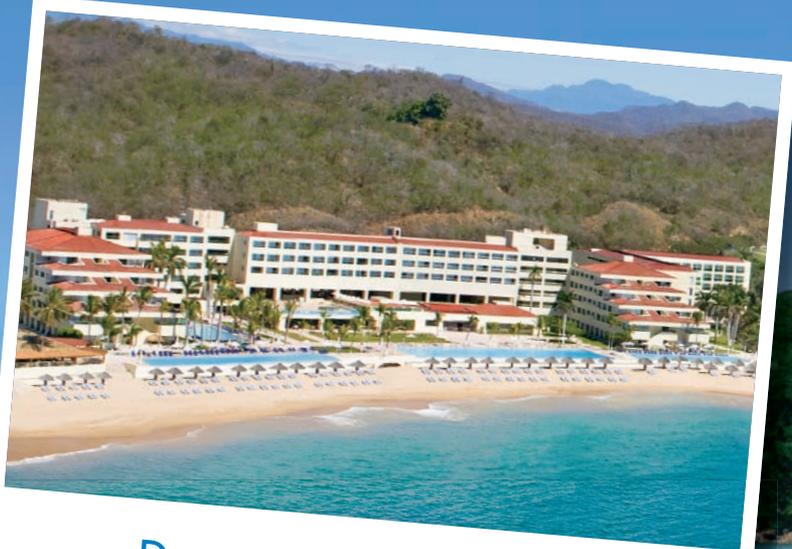
Difficult to say, easy to remember!

EXCLUSIVE to Signature Vacations



Mexico's only GREEN GLOBE CERTIFIED destination available with departures from Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver.

Explore pristine beauty while visiting the Copalita waterfalls | Taste authentic cooking at a local eatery in the small town of La Crucecita | Get a glimpse into Mexican history at the recently discovered archeological site of Punta Celeste | Tour the 'Aromatic Region', home of the world-famous Pluma coffee | Perfect your swing at the championship 18-hole Tangolunda Golf Course



Dreams Huatulco *****



Crown Pacific Deluxe Suites Resort ***plus



Refresh yourself!



Las Brisas Huatulco ****plus



Barceló Huatulco Beach Resort ****



While all reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this ad, Signature Vacations accepts no responsibility for actions, errors or omissions arising from the readers use of the information howsoever caused. Signature Vacations, a division of First Choice Canada Inc., 1685 Tech Ave., Unit #2, Mississauga, L4W 0A7, ON Reg #50014683, BC Reg #3043, QUE Reg #800231.



ANTIGUA

NEW
DESTINATION

Spectacular beaches, sheltered coves and secluded bays make this island paradise an obvious choice! With a great selection of all inclusive resorts to suit every budget, an array of exciting excursions, sublime weather and fabulous duty-free shopping, Antigua is a vacation must. This Caribbean jewel is so accessible too, with direct flights from Montreal and Toronto!

It's a beautiful world

 **transat**
HOLIDAYS

RIVIERA MAYA

Explore this fascinating region, home to Tulum's ancient Mayan ruin, one of the world's largest barrier reefs, magnificent resorts, miles of white sand beaches, "eco-archeological theme parks" and fabulous food.



OCCIDENTAL GRAND XCARET PREFERENCE CLUB ★★★★★1/2

Step out of the ordinary at this superb resort that offers the perfect vacation for both families and couples. This luxury resort features upscale Mexican architecture and elegant decor, along with a seductive ambiance and personalized attention. Best of all, this captivating resort is located adjacent to the Xcaret Ecological Park.



ROYAL HIDEAWAY PLAYACAR PREFERENCE CLUB ★★★★★

Experience true luxury in stunning surroundings as you bask under the warm Mexican sun. This superb resort offers spacious accommodation, fabulous dining and is one of The Leading Hotels of the World®. In short, everything you need for the perfect vacation!

For more details, see the Transat Holidays 2009-2010 Sun Brochure or visit your Ensemble Travel® Group agency.





Get More with Ensemble Travel® Group

Our Exclusive Programs

Our agency belongs to an international network of over 1,000 professional travel agencies. Our combined buying power and expertise enable us to take you places that will inspire your passion for travel, in a style that exceeds your expectations. Our range of exclusive programs allows us to offer you additional amenities and services that are available only through Ensemble Travel® Group.

Sail on one of our *Ensemble® Hosted Cruises*, enjoying the company and peace of mind provided by our on-board Ensemble host, and join us for a private cocktail party and shore excursion. Take advantage of our *Ensemble® Exclusives*: perks like prepaid gratuities, shipboard credits, stateroom upgrades, free gifts and more, available on many of the vacations we offer. Access award-winning four- and five-star properties through our *Ensemble® Hotel and Resort Collection* or elegant private villas that have been carefully selected to meet the exacting standards of our *Villas & Vacation Homes* program. Or, let us arrange extraordinary experiences with the help of our On Location destination specialist partners.

To take advantage of these exclusive programs, contact your Ensemble Travel® Group agent, or visit www.ensembletravel.ca for our agency locator.

 **ENSEMBLE TRAVEL Group**
Experience that takes you places



SMILE! YOU ARE IN SPAIN



Find the direct way to culture.



www.spain.info

OFICINA ESPAÑOLA DE TURISMO EN TORONTO • TOURIST OFFICE OF SPAIN • OFFICE DU TOURISME D'ESPAGNE
2 Bloor Street West, Suite 3402. TORONTO, Ontario, M4W 3E2
Tel.: 1-416-961 31 31 Fax.: 1-416-961 19 92 toronto@tourspain.es www.spain.info/ca



Cruising at its finest is surprisingly affordable with Holland America Line's special fares. Timeless ports, plus unspoiled, lesser-known locales come together in creative itineraries that offer true explorers uncompromised elegance.

14-Day Pacific Treasures

ms Volendam • 1/6/10

Roundtrip Sydney

Inside from **\$1,679**

26-Day South Pacific

ms Volendam • 4/17/10

Sydney to Vancouver

Inside from **\$2,209**

12-Day South America Passage

ms Veendam • 2/11/10

Buenos Aires to Valparaiso

Inside from **\$1,679**

28-Day South America & Amazon

ms Veendam • 3/25/10

Rio de Janeiro to Ft. Lauderdale

Inside from **\$3,479**

Enjoy Exclusive Ensemble Travel® Group amenities such as Pinnacle Grill Dinner, \$50 per person shipboard credit and champagne and strawberries on select sail dates.

To book your Holland America Line cruise, please contact your Ensemble Travel® Group agent.

Sample fares are per person, cruise only, based on double occupancy in the minimum categories. Airfare is additional. Fares are in Canadian dollars and include non-discountable amounts. Taxes are additional. Holland America Line reserves the right to re-instate the fuel supplement for all guests at up to \$9USD per person per day should the price of light sweet crude oil according to the NYMEX increase to over \$70USD per barrel. Fares based on Volendam 1/6/10, 4/17/10, Veendam 2/11/10, 3/25/10, Amsterdam 9/24/10, Zaandam 1/21/10, 2/15/10, Maasdam 2/5/10, 3/5/10 sailings, Ensemble group rates. Additional sailings and rates available. Amenities based on double occupancy and may vary per ship & sailing date. Offers are subject to availability and may be altered or withdrawn at any time without prior notice. Ships' Registry: The Netherlands.



EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES

Unbelievable value.

69-Day Grand Asia & Australia

ms Amsterdam • 9/24/10

Seattle to San Diego

Inside from **\$10,799**

15-Day Circle Hawaii

ms Zaandam • 1/21, 2/15 & 3/11/10

Roundtrip San Diego

Inside from **\$1,679**

14-Day Panama Canal Discovery

ms Maasdam • 2/5 & 3/5/10

Ft. Lauderdale to San Diego

Inside from **\$1,469**



Holland America Line

A Signature of Excellence

Spacious, Elegant Ships • Gracious, Award-Winning Service
• Extensive Activities and Enrichment Programs •
Worldwide Itineraries • Sophisticated Five-Star Dining

ENSEMBLE® HOSTED CRUISES

A HOST OF POSSIBILITIES



Ensemble® Hosted Cruises are led by sociable, well-travelled Ensemble® Hosts. They'll treat you to an exclusive *Ensemble® Traveller* cocktail party and escort you on an Ensemble® Experience, a custom-designed shore event available only to our select group of travellers.

Whether you favour glittering yachts or ocean liners, there is an *Ensemble® Hosted Cruise* that is right for you.

Ask about our 2009 and 2010 hosted cruises to Alaska, Asia and the South Pacific, the Caribbean, Canada/New England, Europe, Hawaii, the Panama Canal and South America.

Book a 2009 or 2010 *Ensemble® Hosted Cruise* at our agency and you will have exclusive access to additional amenities and special savings available only through our agencies.

To take advantage of these exclusive programs, contact your Ensemble Travel® Group agent, or visit www.ensembletravel.ca for our agency locator.

 ENSEMBLE TRAVEL Group
Experience that takes you places



HOLLAND AMERICA LINE

2010 HOSTED CRUISES

ENSEMBLE® HOSTED CRUISES

2010



It pays to book your vacation early.
200 dollars in fact.



Book a WestJet Vacations package early and you will receive a \$200 credit for WestJet flights. Simply book a minimum 7-night sun vacation before October 31, 2009 for travel between November 1, 2009 and May 15, 2010 to receive the credit.

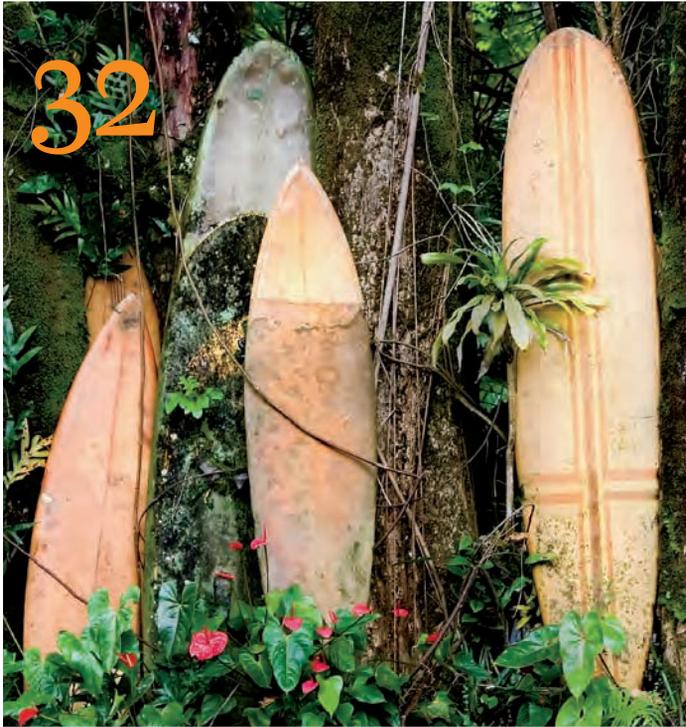
For details or to book, contact your Ensemble Travel® Group agency today.



*\$200 credit is based on one \$100 credit per adult (age 18+) maximum two credits per room booked, for each WestJet Vacations air and hotel booking made by October 31, 2009 for travel between November 1, 2009 and May 15, 2010 (blackout dates apply). Applicable for minimum 7-night bookings made to US and International destinations only. Credit is valid for WestJet air only bookings, expires one year from issue date and is not applicable towards group, online or WestJet Vacations bookings. Non-transferable. Subject to availability. New bookings only. Contact your Ensemble Travel® Group agency for details.



FALL 2009



32

FEATURES

27 Indulgence at Sea

Small ships, high style

30 Baja Bliss

Learn why Loreto is Baja's best-kept secret – for now

32 To Hana with Love

Hearts race but time stands still on Maui's north shore

34 Rhythms of the Sun

Get the lowdown on music from the Caribbean

38 The Personal Pilgrimage

Walking tours serve body, mind and spirit

40 Crossroads of Paradise

Panama's San Blás Islands offer an undiscovered oasis

44 Patagonian Adventure

From guanacos to glaciers, remote Patagonia beckons



27



30

40

44



DETOURS

- 15 **Travel File**
Hotel news
- 16 **Diversions**
Fun stuff, news and distractions
- 18 **Trends**
Style notes for fall
- 21 **Packing List**
What's new and notable
- 24 **Cultural Close-up**
Belize
- 26 **City Snap Guide**
Santiago
- 58 **Worldly Delights**
St. Croix food fest, Jamaican culinary romp
- 64 **Interview**
Mexico's Lorena Ochoa
- 66 **Things to Do**
Luxury voluntourism

- 14 **A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR**
- 67 **ENSEMBLE EXPLORER**
- 70 **GRAVITAS QUOTIENT**
- 72 **PLACE TO BE**

Publisher
Ensemble Travel® Group

Editor
Federica Maraboli

Copy Editors
Moirá Ruskell, Peter Macmillan, Moveable Inc.

Contributors
Debra Conkey, Mario Correa, Michael DeFreitas, Anita Draycott, Gregory Gallagher, Franca luele, Ilona Kauremszky, Nick Keukenmeester, Maureen Littlejohn, Federica Maraboli, Stephanie Ortenzi, Chris Ryall, Toby Saltzman, Michele Sponagle, Steve Veale

Art Direction
Federica Maraboli, Frank Viva

Design
Viva & Co.

Layout
Martina Weigl, Moveable Inc.

Production
Tamara Morgan, Andy Thomas

Marketing & Advertising
Franca luele
Ensemble Travel® Group
franca@ensembletravel.ca
1 866-442-6877 x 242

Ensemble Travel® Group
Executive Vice President & General Manager
Lindsay N. Pearlman

© Ensemble Travel Group. All rights reserved. Fall 2009 Ensemble Travel® Group. Ensemble Vacations®, Ensemble® Experience, Ensemble® Exclusive, Ensemble® Hosted Cruises, Ensemble® Villas & Vacation Homes, Ensemble® On Location, Ensemble® Hotel & Resort Collection and Ensemble® Inspired Journeys are all proprietary trademarks of Ensemble Travel® Group. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise duplicated without written permission of the publisher. Ensemble Vacations® is published three times per year on behalf of Ensemble Travel® Group member agencies.

Ensemble Vacations
69 Yonge Street, Suite 1403
Toronto, Ontario M5E 1K3
vacations@ensembletravel.ca

Registration Numbers: vary by agency; see back cover
Publication mail agreement: No. 40005027
Printed in Canada by Transcontinental



Based in Montreal, Quebec, **Gregory Gallagher** was one of the original writers for the *Sesame Street* television show and the creative force behind CBC Radio's definitive jazz documentary series *Universal Jazz*. He writes for publications including *National Geographic Traveler*, *Smithsonian* magazine, Virgin Atlantic's *Seatback* magazine, Paris' *Ulysse* magazine, *Better Nutrition*, *Canadian Geographic* and many more. Describing the philosophy of how he lives, Gregory says, "Moving through unfamiliar space, discovering the extraordinary in the ordinary and depending upon my senses for survival, while nurturing my physical and spiritual well-being. Walking is the metaphor of my life." He examines the spiritual nature of the oldest form of travel: the walking pilgrimage (page 38).



Mario Correa is a freelance journalist and writer specializing in travel and culture. Born in Santiago, Chile, Mario spent a fantastic semester at McGill University in Montreal before settling down in Washington, D.C. Santiago remains a place very close to his heart, which makes him the perfect guide to this dynamic city (page 26). He is the Central and South America editor for *Travel Weekly* and a regular contributor to *The Denver Post*, *Us Weekly*, *Modern Luxury* and *Washington Flyer*, among others.



On her first cruise – navigating Alaska's Inside Passage in 1989 – **Toby Saltzman** discovered that great ports of call are the gateways to thrilling adventures, fascinating cultural experiences and a lifetime of memories. Since then, the award-winning travel writer has reviewed the world's most exciting vessels and destinations across the globe. Her work has appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, *Global Traveler* and *World of Women's Golf*, among other publications. Toby shares her intimate knowledge of small ship sailing on page 27.



An award-winning Toronto-based writer and editor, **Maureen Littlejohn** has deep musical roots. During her career she has produced souvenir programs for the Juno Awards, edited national entertainment magazines and worked with groups such as the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada and the Songwriters Association of Canada. She loves to travel and has written about everything from Nunavut throat singers to New Orleans jazz for numerous publications and websites. On her many trips to the Caribbean, Maureen has always found the people to be warm and the music hot, hot, hot. She chronicles the various Caribbean music genres on page 34.

Serenity now

As delightful as a summer cottage visit can be, I have this ‘thing’ where I don’t really feel I’ve had a holiday unless it involves boarding a plane for a minimum three-hour flight and arriving to a blast of warm, tropical sea air. Especially now, as we toil at our desks after the summer that never was (at least in Ontario) with new plans, budgets or strategies to work on, how many of us have visions of azure oceans, swaying palm trees and daiquiris dancing in our heads? ’Tis the season for planning winter getaways and, for some, even weddings in the sunny south. (And foodies out there take note: you may want to put the upcoming St. Croix Food and Wine Experience and the Cayman Islands Cookout on your calendar – both are not-to-be-missed culinary events.)

Apropos of this, an invitation to the Caribbean Tourism Organization’s Rum & Rhythm event landed in my inbox today, and not a moment too soon. The culmination of a week-long bacchanal, Rum & Rhythm celebrates two of the region’s greatest exports with rum tastings and live music. The Caribbean has, of course, much more to offer: beautiful islands, glorious weather,



a variety of delicious cuisines and fascinating cultures, just to name a few. This region is the focus of our ‘Sun Issue,’ including Mexico and South and Central America. No matter what your inclinations, you’ll find an unlimited array of pursuits: from spectacular underwater explorations to breathtaking mountaintop views, and everything in between.

We go fishing and snorkelling in the Baja coast’s seaside village of Loreto (page 30), chill out on Panama’s serene San Blas Islands (page 40) and take a hike through Costa Rica, Chile and Mexico (page 38). We take a road less travelled on Hawaii’s Hana Highway (page 32), discover the luxuries of small ship sailing (page 27) and learn about the many different styles of music from the Caribbean (page 34).

Also, don’t miss our special eight-page *Bonne Santé* section, filled with lifestyle travel ideas that focus on health and well-being.

What’s on your travel wish list this season? Let us know. ▣

FEDERICA MARABOLI, EDITOR
editor@ensembletravel.ca

Travel File

The hottest – and coolest – hotels



A RETREAT FOR THE SENSES

From the striking banyan tree in the middle of the two-storey water courtyard to the subtle scent of aromatic oils wafting from intimately designed villas tucked into undulating lagoons, every detail of the **Banyan Tree Mayakoba** lives up to its promise as a 'Sanctuary for the Senses.'

A most eagerly anticipated introduction of the Banyan Tree brand in the Americas, this boutique hotel is a perfect fit for the eco-conscious, luxury area of Mayakoba, respectfully bringing Asian design, hospitality and tradition to the **Riviera Maya**. Its philosophy is 'experiential luxury' – connection, romance and the rejuvenation of body, mind and soul. Each villa offers a private pool, outdoor sunken bath or Jacuzzi, all tucked away amid protected flora. However, you'll want to stay here specifically for the legendary spa: therapists are hand-picked and undergo more than 400 hours of training at the **Banyan Tree Spa Academy** in Phuket, Thailand. Using freshly prepared local ingredients from centuries-old recipes, the therapists provide world-renowned massages and treatments that will leave you in an extended state of Zen bliss. Don't miss **The Rainforest**, for a uniquely sensual hydrotherapy experience. After indulging your body, tantalize your palate with several epicurean options, including the signature Saffron restaurant, spa cuisine at Tamarind or an exclusive, romantic dinner cruise for two aboard the *Ixchel*. Be warned – you just might not want to leave.

COZY 'COTTAGE COUNTRY' CHARM

With summer long gone and snow surely on the way, many families are planning their winter weekend getaways. **Quebec** offers some unique spots for skiers as well as for those who prefer a winter wonderland atmosphere, complete with the coziness of a crackling fire and a great book. The **Mont Tremblant** area is now easily accessed by Porter Airlines and offers a full program of activities for adults and children. **Le Grand Lodge Mont-Tremblant** is the ideal location to enjoy all that this resort town has to offer. Located on the banks of **Lake Ouimet**, the boutique-style hotel is a comfortable home away from home as most suites contain a full kitchen, separate bedrooms and cozy gas fireplaces. If hurtling down a mountainside is not your thing, there is a variety of amenities available on-site, including a 20-metre indoor swimming pool, giant whirlpool, outdoor Jacuzzi, steam bath and sauna, and even a huge skating rink. And most days the hotel offers a snow sculpture contest and a massive bonfire (marshmallows included). Avid skiers can enjoy the hotel's 94 trails – half of which are expert class – and follow up with a visit to **Le Scandinave Spa™** to soothe any sore muscles, located just a few minutes' drive from the hotel. When evening sets in dine at **Chez Borivage**: the log dining room overlooking the lake offers a sumptuous *table d'hôte* and is the perfect setting for a late-night hot toddy.



Diversions

Innovations and celebrations

Close encounters: Spas turn to local ingredients for innovative treatments

We've become accustomed to hearing about the 100-mile diet, but is the 100-mile spa treatment next? It seems likely as more spas incorporate locally sourced ingredients into their services.



At the **Grand Wailea Resort** in Maui, volcanic ash has been tapped for its beautifying and detoxifying minerals. It's used as a body mask in wraps and facials, and heated to boost the benefits of a hot stone massage. At the **Chaminade Resort & Spa** in Santa Cruz County, California, natural tiger clam shells are substituted for the stones for a hot shell massage.

At the **Four Seasons Resort Whistler**, seaweed gathered from the Pacific Ocean and local glacial clay (considered among the world's most nutrient-rich) coax guests into bliss during a British Columbia glacial clay wrap. At Peru's **Inkaterra Machu Picchu**'s UNU Spa, the coca leaf, prized in Andean medicine for its calcium and alkaloid content, is used in moisturizers and oils for head to toe treatments.

For true luxury, real Tahitian black pearls are locally harvested and crushed so they can buff away dry skin and improve circulation during the monoi poe treatment, available at the **Manihi Pearl Beach Resort**. Truly black magic!

Milestones to remember: The world's best-known icons celebrate

Happy 120th anniversary to the Eiffel Tower. The Paris landmark was once described as 'a horror' by some critics. These days, it's a beloved symbol of one of the world's most visited cities. A special exhibit chronicling the building process can be seen on site until the end of the year.

Cheers to Guinness! The famous Irish stout turns 250, so there's plenty of reason to celebrate. Along with releasing an anniversary version of its brew, the **Guinness Storehouse** in Dublin, which welcomes about one million visitors a year, will host events all year long.



Art lovers should put New York's Guggenheim Museum on their must-visit list. The stunning landmark, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, celebrates 50 years with a rare, full-scale retrospective of works by Kandinsky, showing from September 18, 2009 to January 13, 2010.

Fame and fortune coexist in Hollywood and 2010 is perfect timing for a vacation stop there. The **Hollywood Walk of Fame** turns 50 with a new lineup of stars destined to become immortalized, including such Canadians as director James Cameron, rocker Bryan Adams and Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté.

The bite stuff: Not-to-be-missed celebrations of food

Save the dates for these delicious events:

The Chocolate Show, October 30–November 1, New York City. Indulge your sweet tooth with culinary exhibits, chef showcases and new product samplings.

Cornucopia, November 12–15, Whistler, B.C. If you don't have a chance in your travels to taste what the world has to offer, let the world come to you in Whistler. Wineries from as far away as Chile and South Africa come together for this wine and food event that is sure to please the palate.

International Gourmet Festival, November 12–22, Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Mexico has such a diversity of culinary styles and you'll have a chance to try many of them as the country's top chefs and international guests gather for educational seminars and hands-on cooking classes.



Eric Ripert
Cayman Cookout, January 14–18, 2010, Grand Cayman.

Designed with foodies and oenophiles in mind, this epicurean week combines the barefoot elegance of the Cayman Islands with an opportunity to sample fine wine and food while rubbing shoulders

with some of the world's greatest chefs. Set in the luxurious **Ritz-Carlton** on Grand Cayman, the event will be hosted by über-talented chef **Eric Ripert**, of the famed **Le Bernardin** in New York. Ripert will be joined by a lineup of legendary chefs and celebrated sommeliers who headline four delicious days of events, tastings, beachside demonstrations, wine seminars and unique excursions throughout Grand Cayman.

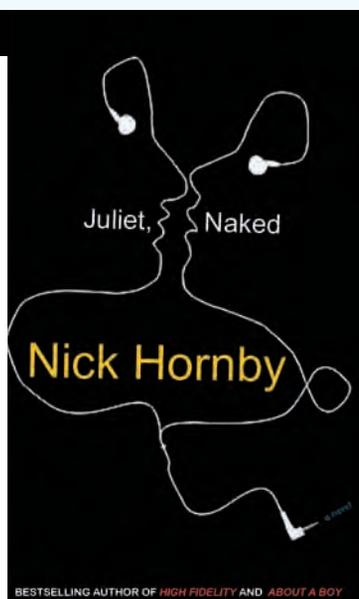
Required Reading

The best companions on sunny holidays are escapist beach reads. 'Cause do you *really* want another good-for-you Margaret Atwood book?

Juliet, Naked

by Nick Hornby
(Riverhead Books, \$32.50)

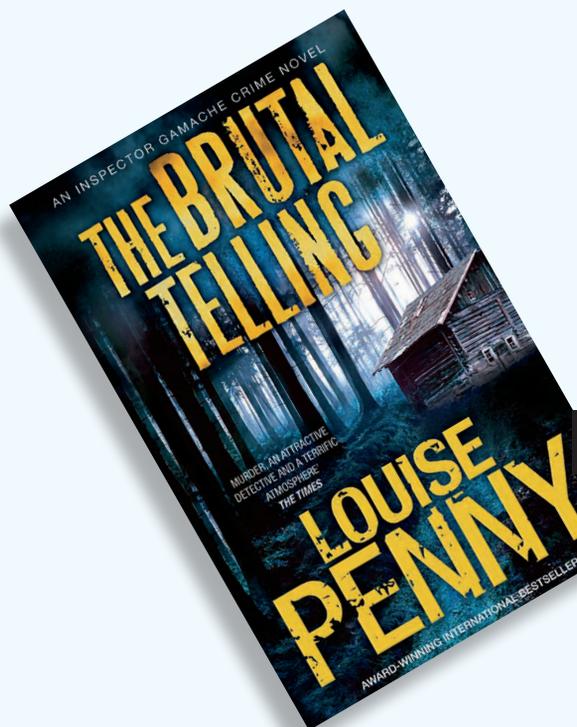
Nick Hornby tackles the intertwined themes of music, romance and regret in his latest novel. When lonely Annie starts up an unlikely correspondence with the object of her ex-boyfriend's musical obsession – the elusive, reclusive Bob Dylan-esque singer-songwriter Tucker Crowe – she has no idea how powerful their connection will be. It's the original lad lit author's best since *High Fidelity*.



Cassette from My Ex

by Jason Bitner (Griffin, \$29.50)

On that note, editor Jason Bitner recalls the bygone days before iPod playlists and file-sharing, when audio cassettes could hold the key to someone's heart. The creation of the perfect sonic calling card was an art – the ultimate audio valentine – and 60 contributors (from novelist Rick Moody to Joe Levy, editor of *Blender*) explore it in this anthology of short, bittersweet memoirs.



The Brutal Telling

by Louise Penny
(McArthur & Company, \$34.95)

There's nothing quite like cozying up with a cold-blooded killer. *The Brutal Telling* is the latest in Canadian author Louise Penny's award-winning and internationally bestselling series of Chief Inspector Gamache whodunits. Set in the not-so-sleepy fictional Eastern Townships village of Three Pines, it hits so close to home that you might never look at your friends and neighbours quite the same way again.

Trends: Style Notes



Designer Dish

A trio of fashion's biggest names have fresh scents this season.

Lola, from the inimitable **Marc Jacobs**, is a warm floral of peony, pear and geranium. It's flirty and quirky, right down to its bouquet-stoppered bottle. \$79 for 50 ml eau de parfum at [Holt Renfrew](#).

L'Eau Ambrée from **Miuccia Prada** combines light May rose, zesty Sicilian lemon, patchouli, vanilla and amber in a vintage-style atomizer bottle. \$130 for refillable 80 ml eau de parfum at [Holt Renfrew](#).

Minimalist maestro **Giorgio Armani** pays tribute to the sensual women of the world with **Idole d'Armani**, an opulent, spicy, old-school floral that mixes ginger, jasmine, saffron and rose with vetiver. \$85 for 50 ml eau de parfum at department stores and drugstores.



Helping Hands

Hand sanitizers are a necessity for intrepid travellers, whether at the resort or on a day trip to the port. Banish bacteria and germs by packing one of these petite helpers.

A tube of **Yves Rocher's SOS Clean Hands**, from the botanical brand's **Arnica Essentiel** range, is both cleansing and naturally soothing (\$6, [yvesrocher.ca](#)).

Fruits & Passion's new **Fruity Harvest Collection** purifying waterless hand soap offers the recommended daily serving of fresh market fare like peach and grapefruit-guava. The delicately scented cleanser has an innovative texture that doesn't leave hands sticky (\$6.50, [fruits-passion.com](#)).

And **L'Occitane's Lavender Clean Hands Gel** also sanitizes without water: aloe vera softens and the certified organic lavender essential oils recall the wild fields of the Camargue in Provence (\$10, [loccitane.ca](#)).

Trends: Style Notes



Made in the Shade

Oakley's new **Lifestyle** collection of eyewear, designed specifically for women, takes a different view of the iconic sport frame. While the designs maintain plenty of technical performance elements to satisfy the active woman, the new silhouettes are definitely stylish enough for the city streets – or the poolside lounger. Pure **PLUTONITE®** lenses on this **Impatient** model filter out 100% of UV wavelength so you don't have to worry about those wrinkle-inducing rays. From \$225 at oakley.ca.



My Boyfriend's Back

You can trace the trend for all things boyfriend back to Diane Keaton circa *Annie Hall*; her oversized men's blazers, baggy trousers and ties gave women licence to pilfer from their guy's closet. But exercise caution: if too ripped and otherwise destroyed (like Balmain's recent runway versions), they scream Eighties revival fashion victim. The perfect boyfriend jeans should only be gently beaten up, just worn and torn enough to channel the *gamines* of French New Wave cinema; our cheap 'n' chic fall pick is **Joe Fresh's** new slouchy distressed boyfriend jeans. Best of all? No actual boyfriend required. \$29 at Loblaws and other Loblaws companies grocery and superstores (joe.ca).



If the Shoe Fits

Diehard fans who could never part with their original Chuck Taylors might think twice when they see the **Converse Fall 2009 collection**. The **All Star** line of footwear, with new silhouettes and constructions, comes with plenty of attitude and ample originality. This John Varvatos-styled boot is a fashionable update on the classic; its modern edge and lasting appeal will *almost* make you look forward to winter. **Varvatos Sprint Grip pizarro charcoal/milk**, \$160 at various retailers across Canada.

Trends: Style Notes

Dark Victory

It was a dark and stormy night... The toe and fingertip trend for autumn is poetic and brooding thanks to moody nail enamel shades like **Lancôme Le Vernis** in indigo and burgundy (\$21 at department stores and select pharmacies, lancome.ca) and the dark emerald, sangria and inky blues from salon favourite **OPI's** latest fall series, **Colección de España** (\$10.95, 800-341-9999, opi.com). For an edgy but neutral look, try **Yves Saint Laurent Beauté's La Laque #39 Stormy Grey** (\$24 at [Holt Renfrew](http://HoltRenfrew.com) and [The Bay](http://TheBay.com) in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver).



Shagadelic, Baby!

Celebrity hair stylist **Sally Hershberger** gave Meg Ryan her trademark shag, and now you can get the signature 'do with Hershberger's **Shagg Spray**; use on dry hair for tousled layers or wet to mould and shape (both versions guarantee you'll be frizz-free). Think of it as the beach, bottled. \$11.99 for 125 ml at [Shoppers Drug Mart](http://ShoppersDrugMart.com).

Packing List

New and notable



Beauty Really Is Skin Deep

Keep your skin fortified from the inside out with **Elizabeth Grant Premier Collection**. Perfect for extended weekends, the little gold box features five travel size products from the brand new **Biocollasis Complex** line, featuring **Torricelumn™**, Elizabeth Grant's superior moisturizing compound, infused with ceramides, nano-peptides, CoQ10 and natural collagen. From \$39.99 at www.elizabethgrant.com.

Sleek and Sensible Airborne Refillables by MyTagalongs®

have answered the prayers of everyone who has cleaned up spills of personal care products in their suitcase. The five sleek, airless-pump refillable bottles and two jars are made to endure all the rigours of travel – and they come with pretty pre-printed labels. \$30.00 at www.mytagalongs.com.



Innovative Comfort

Keep cozy on a weekend getaway or flight with the **Lug™ Nap Sac**. A soft fleece blanket and inflatable pillow tuck away in a matching zip storage pouch for handy packing. Available in nine colours to match your personal style. \$28.00 at www.lugtravel.com.

Silky Smooth

Say hello to soft, moisturized skin. This compact tube of **Palmer's® Cocoa Butter Formula® Swivel Stick®**, made with 100% cocoa butter and vitamin E, leaves you silky smooth – and smelling delectable – from head to toe. The half-ounce travel size stick fits perfectly in your carry-on bag and complies with airport security rules. \$5.99 at **Walmart** and **Shoppers Drug Mart**.



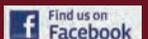


bon vivant: n. a person devoted to refined, sensuous enjoyment, especially with respect to food and drink, and also a good fellow, a jovial companion, a free-spirited person.



Does your inner bon vivant salivate at the prospect of discovering the world's best-kept gastronomic secrets? At [bonvivanttravel.ca](http://www.bonvivanttravel.ca), we have an appetite for culinary travel and a nose for unearthing the best in food and wine abroad. If you are yearning for a taste of the good life, Bon Vivant is the first stop on your culinary journey.

What type of bon vivant are you? Visit us at www.bonvivanttravel.ca



Havana's High Five

Here are the top five Havana hot spots to see before the American tourist wave hits.



1

Tropicana

Watch pure magic unfold. A hotbed for nightclub glitz and glamour, this legendary landmark is punctuated by rhythm with plenty of soul as a live orchestra accompanies dazzling dancers who sway with the palm trees. Nightly shows are year round except Christmas Eve. Reservations are recommended.



2

Coppelia

You need ice cream under a hot Cuban sun. When you arrive at this weird Jetsons-like building with its neo-modern façade, don't be surprised by the long queues. If short on time, you can choose the tourist section but we prefer to hang out with the locals. The scene is not to be missed.



3

El Floridita

Quench your thirst at this watering hole, one of Ernest Hemingway's favourite spots. Sidle up to the bar, preferably near the bronze statue of the iconic writer, order the famous daiquiri and watch how the bartenders continue to create the rum cocktail first served here.

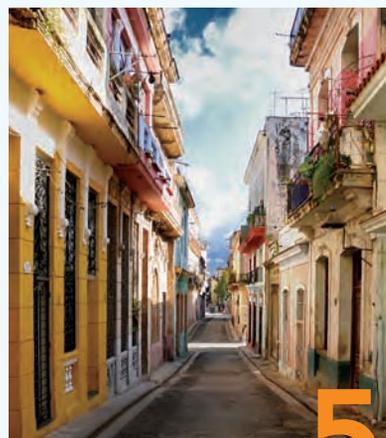
In the Fifties the Spanish colonial charm of Havana was a magnet for celebrities and industrialists. These days the Cuban capital, packed with its exotic allure, is drawing crowds to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Old Havana. Each time you return there is something new and different to discover.



4

Hotel Nacional de Cuba

Overlooking the **Malecón**, a chunk of oceanfront real estate frequented by canoodling couples and locals alike, this Spanish colonial structure radiates old world charm and has many star-studded tales to tell. Mojitos, another famous Cuban drink, are popular at the bar or along the al fresco terrace.



5

Old Havana/La Habana Vieja

We cannot forget the pearl of the Caribbean. This corner of the capital has survived years of neglect and is now slowly regaining its former beauty. The **Catedral de San Cristóbal**, the **Plaza Vieja** and the **Plaza de San Francisco** are classic landmarks. You can while away the hours around the pedestrian-only **Calle Obispo** as you stroll these ancient alleys and cobblestone streets.

Cultural Close-up: Belize

Sandwiched between Mexico and Guatemala on the Yucatan's Caribbean coast, Belize – Central America's second-smallest country (it's less than half the size of Nova Scotia) – is a melting pot of British colonialism spiced with African, Spanish and Mayan influences. Besides having the world's second-longest barrier reef, with some of the best diving, snorkelling and bone fishing in the Caribbean, Belize boasts large tracts of old-growth tropical rainforests, 300-metre waterfalls, uninhabited atolls, storybook cayes and dozens of mysterious 2,000-year-old Mayan ruins.

HISTORY AND MYSTERY



Mayan occupation began as early as 1500 B.C. and their numbers exceeded one million between 250 and 900 A.D. Mayan archaeological remains such as *stelae* or stone pictograms, palaces, temples and ceremonial centres are scattered throughout the forested interior. Some of the more popular Mayan sites include **Altun Ha**, a major ceremonial centre near Belize City, famous for its **jade head**. Located deep in the heart of the **Chiquibul Forest Reserve** in the Cayo District, **Caracol** is Belize's most important Mayan city. The country's most accessible ruins, **Xunantunich**, sit atop a hill overlooking the **Mopan River** and **San Ignacio** in the Cayo District.

WORD ON THE STREET

Belize's official language is English but **Garifuna** (an Arawakan dialect) and **Spanish** are also popular. Over the centuries the widely spoken **Belizean Kriol** (a blend of English, Spanish and African dialects) developed in response to the country's ethnic diversity. Unhurried singsong Caribbean lilt is heard along the coast while livelier Spanish and Garifuna are more common inland.

Michael DeFreitas discovers that good things really do come in small packages



EATS & TREATS

Belizean classic rice and beans (white rice and red kidney beans) cooked in coconut milk is a staple served with most meals. Accompanying this is a host of regional favourites like **Caribbean stewed chicken** rubbed with an annatto paste called **recado**. The Garifuna favourite is *serre la sus*, a rich, tasty fish soup lightly simmered in coconut milk and served with fried plantain and cassava bread. Several local dishes like spicy **chicken escabeche** (chicken smothered with onions and marinated in a base of vinegar, peppers and other spices) combine flavours from mestizo, Spanish and Mayan cultures.

On **Ambergris Caye** the food vendors and **Elvi's Kitchen** on Pescador Drive entice visitors with Caribbean favourites like johnnycakes, powder buns, fried grouper and homemade mango ice cream. The 1928 colonial-style **Fort Street Restaurant** in **Belize City** wows diners with its **Grouper Del Rey** (a baked fillet served with sautéed spinach and cheddar cheese), while the **Clarissa Falls Restaurant** in San Ignacio dazzles guests with mestizo dishes like **relleno negro**, a dark soup of vegetables, chicken and boiled egg-filled meatballs.

MOVE TO THE RHYTHM

Belize's musical soundtrack varies throughout the country. In coastal areas and the cayes it's the rhythmic sounds of the **brukdown**, an original Kriol music that utilizes various instruments such as

the accordion, a brake hub and donkey's jawbone. The heavy traditional Garifuna electric guitar rhythms of **punta rock** are common in Belize City and the interior,



while in the country's extreme northern and southern regions, the mestizo and Maya play

marimba music on traditional wooden percussion instruments.

HANG YOUR HAT

Bustling Belize City offers a wide range of accommodations, from the intimate colonial-style **Great House Inn** to the sprawling **Radisson Fort George Hotel and Marina**. On Ambergris Caye, where mostly golf carts and bicycles ply the sand streets of San Pedro – a rare blend of Caribbean fishing village and tourist boogie – most hotels like the **Banana Beach Resort** and the **SunBreeze Hotel** have fewer than 30 rooms. Inland, where the cobalt-blue horizon gives way to a sea of green, lodgings like the cozy 22 rooms of the **Lodge at Chaa Creek** are tucked into the rainforest and cater to those wishing to explore the country's natural wonders. In **Placencia**, on Belize's southern coast, the 32-room **Inn at Robert's Grove** is an ideal base for exploring the barrier reef.



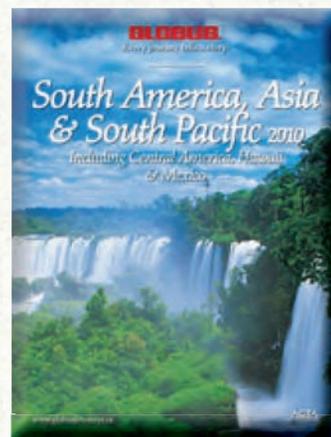
Save \$600 per couple on 2010

South & Central America Vacations.



Dancing, dining, culture and cuisine. Just a short journey south, an exotic adventure awaits. From romantic Rio de Janeiro to the intriguing Amazon Jungle, and enigmatic Machu Picchu to the fascinating Galápagos Islands, you're sure to have a vacation like no other with the Globus family of brands. And with this offer, the Globus family of brands has made it even easier to visit these colourful countries.

Save \$600 per couple on air-inclusive
2010 South & Central America vacations booked
by December 31, 2009.*



For more information, contact your Ensemble Travel® Group Agency.

GLOBUS
Every journey tells a story™

*Book a 2010 Globus, Monograms or Avalon South America vacation to receive the \$300 per person discount. Booking must be made, under deposit and discount applied between August 12 and December 31, 2009 for travel commencing through December 31, 2010. Offers not valid with any other offer except Journeys Club and applies to new 2010 bookings only. Offer reliant on space availability. Full cancellation penalties will apply. Additional restrictions may apply.

TICO# 1893775

City Snap Guide: Santiago

Ringed by the snow-capped Andes, dotted with manicured parks and bursting with eye-popping skyscrapers, Santiago thrills. The bustling Chilean capital, home to more than a third of this prosperous nation's nearly 17 million citizens, is a wildly varied mix of everything from centuries-old vineyards to world-class boutiques. And although Chileans themselves are famously reserved, their dynamic, sprawling capital is anything but low key.



Artists' market, Plaza de Armas Santiago, Chile

Mario Correa's insider take on Santiago

Past and present

A visit to Santiago starts right at the top – with a saunter up the charming **Santa Lucia** hill. The elegant park – a favourite haunt of bold young lovers (no shyness here!) – offers an amazing, bird's-eye view of Santiago's historic centre. Descend the hill and march right into Chile's surprisingly open Presidential Palace, **La Moneda**, whose name – 'the coin' – recalls its quirky past as the one-time national mint. Stroll past the caricaturists and ice cream vendors lining the city's main square, **Plaza de Armas**, but save your pesos. You may need them uptown at **Los Dominicos**, a picturesque village of artists' shops that make for the best souvenir scouting in all of Santiago.

Arts & letters

"The Santiago lifestyle is really exciting and entertaining," says Jim Davis of Fonthill, Ontario, who fell for the place on a visit with his wife, Joyce. And nowhere is Santiago's energy more vibrant than in **Bellavista**, a colourful collection of edgy galleries, lively bars and hip restaurants. But be warned: "An eight o'clock dinner really doesn't begin until ten o'clock," Davis laughs. That's because Santiaguinos like their nights late – and their cocktails sweet. Try Chile's signature pisco sour, then head on over to **La Chascona**, the touching, kooky home of iconic poet Pablo Neruda. Built to resemble a ship, the residence was the Nobel Prize winner's tribute to a lifelong obsession with – and utter phobia of – the sea.

Drink it in

Never heard of an urban wine tour? Welcome to Santiago, then! Chile's booming wine industry took root right here, in the capital region's **Maipo Valley**. Calm the urban bustle with a stroll through the scenic **Viña Cousiño**, or tour powerhouse exporters **Concha y Toro** and **Santa Rita** in idyllic settings just outside of town. Plus, you won't regret the hour-long drive to **Casablanca**, official 'sister valley' to California's Napa and the upstart home of some of Chile's newest, most exciting wineries. But pack light: Trendy **Wain**, Santiago's ultra-snazzy, three-storey wine emporium, is guaranteed to fill your suitcase with liquid souvenirs.

Summer slopes

Turns out those scenic peaks aren't just for show: The Santiago area boasts several world-class ski resorts. And since the Chilean winter runs opposite to Canada's – from June through August – the region is fast becoming a favourite of summer ski bums. The internationally known **Portillo** – with a spectacular drop of nearly 2,500 feet – draws the hearty, experienced set, while the gentler slopes at **Farellones**, among others, make for easy and affordable day trips.

GET AWAY

And speaking of day trips, Santiago is a fabulous jumping-off point for a slew of nearby attractions. Inexpensive, comfy buses make the one-and-a-half hour journey to the picturesque port of **Valparaíso**, a lively collection of hilly, winding streetscapes overlooking the Pacific. Just down the road: **Viña del Mar**, an upscale seaside resort whose world-famous **International Song Festival** draws everyone from Nelly Furtado to Bryan Adams. (Well, what Canadian wouldn't want to head south of the equator in February?) And on your way back to Santiago, insist on a pit stop at **Don Félix Brunatto's** wildly inventive artisanal chocolate shop in **Curacaví**. Never imagined chocolates seasoned with rosemary, mustard or even flower extract? Well, Don Félix himself will make a believer out of you!



INDULGENCE AT SEA

Small ships offer style, intimacy and stellar service, not to mention the ability to go where no big ship has gone before

Toby Saltzman

Among my souvenirs is a treasure trove of priceless memories collected while cruising the world. Small ships that entered exotic and remote ports inspired thrilling escapades that linger vividly in my mind. Silversea's fleet of luxurious vessels led me to awesome experiences, from guided treks through the leafy depths of New Zealand's primeval rainforest, to deep-sea fishing in the vast waters north of the Arctic Circle, where the ship's cordon bleu chef cooked our catch for dinner. The *Paul Gauguin* cruise

around the Society Islands of French Polynesia conjures up memories of jet skiing in the turquoise waters around Bora Bora and starlight performances by Polynesian dancers. Seabourn's Caribbean itineraries perfectly balanced sunny scenery and indulgent service on decadent winter vacations, especially when the gleaming yachts dropped anchor at secluded beaches and waiters appeared waist-deep in the water proffering champagne and caviar on silver trays.



For all the excitement and abundance of options offered by the most deluxe large vessels, small ships have a certain panache and intimacy of service that's intrinsic to their style and ambience. Besides having the ability to access ports that prohibit larger ships – whether on isolated islands or at prime city harbourside locations – small ships can navigate narrow waterways such as **Chilean fjords** to maximize the views of wildlife and the sheer cliffs of glistening glaciers. The most intimate sailing experience comes on a private yacht (such as those available from **Angela Connery Yacht Charters**, which hold from two to 12 passengers), which allows you to personalize the itinerary, and then digress from it at whim, and perhaps even hone your expertise at the helm.

Without hordes of guests to look after, the small ship concierge can easily organize private tours, golf tee times at prime clubs and adventures for all passengers who prefer personalized attention. In certain locations – such as the environmentally protected **Galápagos Islands**, where the number of passengers visiting at one time is restricted – just being on a small ship can determine the quality and duration of your experience. Depending on the itinerary, some lines – for example, Silversea – may allow you to disembark for a few days of sightseeing and then board the ship again. Silversea's and Seabourn's concierges may customize full inland tours, such as visits to an **Amazon eco-lodge**, or an extended adventure near Brazil's spectacular **Iguazu Falls**. When it comes to sailing in a quiet bay, ships with an aft sports marina score the fun advantage: they will often drop anchor to allow passengers to use banana boats, sailboards, kayaks and Jet Skis.

Unique experiences are the hallmarks of small ships that cater to a discriminating and worldly clientele. Most include special events that run the gamut from arranging VIP seats in the **Sambadrome for Rio de Janeiro's Carnival** to Caribbean jazz festivals, Aboriginal performances in the heart of the Amazon or romantic sunset dinners in the shadow of **Machu Picchu**.

Granted, with limited space and the high ratio of crew to passengers, small ships can't accommodate the big bands or song-and-dance troupes found on mammoth ships. But they surpass this by providing special cultural events with the best in local entertainment available at ports on the itinerary, such as tango dancers in **Brazil**. You can also count on expanding your knowledge with a host of expert lecturers, from renowned historians, archaeologists and naturalists to *National Geographic* columnists or photographers.

True to their unique style and ultimate destinations, small ship accommodations vary from the luxurious all-suite Silversea and Seabourn vessels to the decidedly elegant **SeaDream** fleet and expedition vessels. The deferential service on small ships will surely spoil you for life. You will be greeted on board by liveried crew bearing welcoming flutes of champagne, and you will be addressed by name for the duration of the cruise. In your suite you'll find fresh fruit and flowers and a bar stocked with complimentary wines and spirits that you've selected in advance. After a day of touring, you'll return to find an array of appetizing hors d'œuvres. Sea days on deck feel especially decadent. Under a hot sun, crew appear with refreshing sprays of mineral water,



AN INTIMATE AFFAIR

Guests of *Paul Gauguin* ride the onboard Zodiac to the marina; attentive deck service at *SeaDream's Top of the Yacht*; luxury facilities on Silversea's *Silver Wind*; Seabourn cuisine.



chilled towels and frosty libations. Under cool skies, they bring cozy blankets, fragrant pea soup and hot toddies. At your leisure, you'll have access to personal amenities like iPods and laptop computers. Browsing the shops, you'll find items rarely offered at duty-free prices: for example, Seabourn now carries **Chopard** and **Aaron Basha** jewellery and **Hermès** luxury goods.

Unlike large ships, where dining en masse and at set times is the norm, small ship dining is an intimate affair: open seating lets you share experiences and nurture new friendships. Meanwhile, you can anticipate delectable meals that – besides having a continental flair – typically include the freshest meats, fish, seafood and vegetable dishes reflecting the local cuisine. If you have a penchant for a particular dish, you may request a customized feast in advance – perhaps lobster thermidor, or any Indian, Italian or Asian delicacy. Indulgence continues with room service, where meals, ordered from the dining room menu, are delivered dish by hot dish. In the evening, instead of chocolates on your pillow, you'll find chocolate-dipped strawberries, *petits fours* or edible sculptured concoctions of, say, your ship at sea.

For all the pleasures of small ships, which are literally destinations unto themselves, boasting every pleasure from balcony suites to full-service spas, these vessels head to the most alluring global destinations of the upcoming season: **South and Central America, the Caribbean and Mexico**. With itineraries that feature a variety of embarkation ports, ports of call and number of days cruising, it's easier to navigate through the options with the help of a knowledgeable agent who understands your personal needs.

South America offers a wide diversity of nature and cultural experiences, from sailing along the Amazon to circumnavigating the continent from Brazil to **Uruguay, Argentina, Peru and Chile**. The adventurous might try hiking to Iguazu Falls, navigating through Chile's scenic fjords and exploring its fragrant wine country, or embarking on Zodiacs to view the indigenous flora, fauna and sea life of the Galápagos Islands.

The ultimate Central American destinations are easily accessible from Fort Lauderdale, and can combine the lush rainforest wonderland of **Costa Rica** with **Belize** (known for the world's second-longest coral reef) and the **Panama Canal**, with stops in **San Juan del Sur, Nicaragua** (one of the oldest cities in Central America, built by

Spanish conquistadores in 1524) and **Honduras** (known for its exhilarating deep-sea diving sites and exotic jungles). Mexico's thrilling expeditions include the Mayan ruins of **Chichen Itza** and **Tulum**.

Small ship sailing in the Caribbean means exclusive entry to idyllic secluded islands far from the madding crowds. If you want action, you can prove your sea smarts during a sailing regatta from **St. Martin** by snorkelling unspoiled reefs off a deserted isle, or playing with the stash of sports gear from your ship's marina. But if it's serenity you crave, why not lounge in the shade with a frosty drink at a posh resort, or sunbathe on a soft arc of sand at **Mayreau, St. Vincent and the Grenadines; Prickly Pear, Antigua; Cruz Bay, U.S. Virgin Islands; Tobago or Martinique?**

Whatever your wish, there is a small ship itinerary destined to inspire your passion for adventure and provide a lifetime of treasured memories. ▣

SMALL SHIP SENSATIONS

Silversea's all-suite fleet is expanding with the new 540-guest *Silver Spirit*, debuting December 2009, and the elegant 132-guest expedition ship *Prince Albert II*, which has a specially reinforced hull to deal with ice, and ventures to remote locales and polar regions.

Seabourn's fleet of all-suite yachts includes the new ultra-luxury 450-passenger *Odyssey*, launched in June 2009.

SeaDream's two all-inclusive 112-passenger yachts sail the Mediterranean and Caribbean.

Available through **Abercrombie & Kent**, the 48-passenger *Eclipse* is an expedition vessel with special cruises to the Galápagos Islands.

Angela Connery Yacht Charters matches clients with the perfect private yacht for cruising the Caribbean and the Galápagos Islands, among other destinations. Typically for two to 12 guests, the yachts run from 50 to 350 feet in length and include a captain and full-service crew.

BAJA

Bliss

Trolling for dorado, swaying in a hammock and getting personal with sea lions are just some of the things **Michael DeFreitas** recommends doing in Loreto, one of Mexico's best-kept secrets on the Baja coast

A soft pink glow in the eastern sky signals the beginning of another picture-postcard day in Mexico's tiny seaside community of Loreto. As we motor out of the marina, the distant jagged hills of Isla Coronado and Isla del Carmen come into focus on the glassy surface of Bahia de Loreto.

The islands shelter the bay from the rougher waters of the Sea of Cortez. Bahia de Loreto is deep and its waters rich in nutrients, making it a favourite of anglers hoping to hook a black or striped marlin, sailfish or a giant dorado (also known as the common dolphinfish or mahi mahi). Each year the town hosts a number of fishing competitions, including the Loreto Dorado Fishing Tournament in July, a popular event that attracts anglers from around the globe.

As we approach Isla Coronado, the skipper signals us to lower the bait into the water and we start to troll along the island's west coast. We are sitting in the bow soaking up the stunning island scenery and the warm morning sun when one of the deckhands yells "Fish on!"

We dash to grab our rods, not knowing which one has a fish.

"I got one!" yells a woman on the port side of the boat.

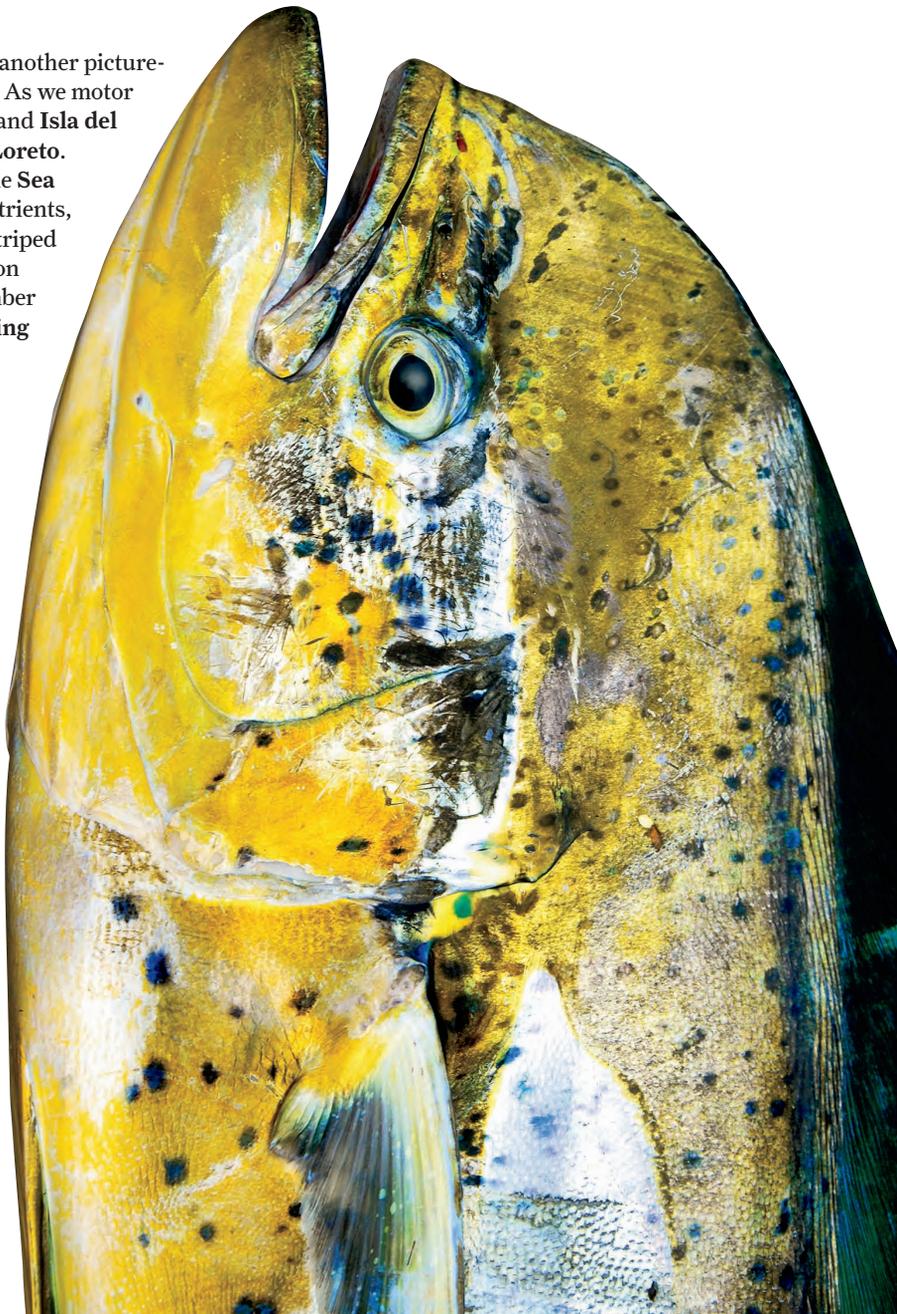
"Me too!" yells my wife.

I join in with "Me three!" A triple-header! What a way to start a day of fishing.

Thirty minutes later, three 10-kilogram, tail-slapping dorado churn the water at the stern of the boat. Sunlight glistens off their sleek yellow and blue bodies as the crew delicately remove the hooks from their mouths. Dorado are plentiful in the summer and are the favoured filling for one of Baja's best-known meals, fish tacos.

During our four-hour charter we caught and released nine more, and took a small one back to our hotel. The chef there said he would cook anything we caught, so that night we dined on mouth-watering grilled dorado with mole sauce.

Loreto's delicious 'sea-to-plate' cuisine is a big hit with visitors and locals alike. Although the catch of the day depends on the season, delicacies like steamed scallops, garlic shrimp, breaded giant squid, seared swordfish and grilled tuna are year-round menu items.





©SIME / iSTOCK PHOTO

Mexico's Galápagos

A morning spent fishing is only one of the many leisure activities you can enjoy in Baja's central region. With 300 sunny days annually and tropical temperatures in the high 20s, it's an ideal destination for golf, fishing, horseback riding, sea kayaking, whale-watching or just relaxing in a hammock on one of the dozens of uncrowded beaches that line the coasts. And the peninsula's wildlife is so rich and diverse that many naturalists view it as the Mexican equivalent of the Galápagos Islands.

In 1988, the government set aside a huge swath of central Baja as the **El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve** – Mexico's largest protected area. The reserve includes almost 750 kilometres of Sea of Cortez and Pacific Ocean coastline and the grey whale sanctuaries of **San Ignacio Lagoon**, **Magdalena Bay** and **Laguna Ojo de Liebre**. In 1993, UNESCO recognized the reserve's natural and cultural significance by designating it a World Heritage Site. Nestled on the eastern – or Sea of Cortez – side of the peninsula about 580 kilometres north of **Cabo San Lucas**, the historic, laid back fishing village of Loreto is a convenient base to enjoy Baja's central region. The town was founded in 1697, though cave paintings and petroglyphs in the adjacent **Sierra de San Francisco** and **Sierra de la Giganta** mountains suggest a human presence that dates back 7,500 years. A number of eco-tour companies offer day trips to many of the area's 200 painted caves, including **El Ratón** and **Cueva Pintada**, which feature five-metre-high animal motifs.

In order to protect the waters and deserted islands of Loreto Bay, in 1996 the government created **Parque Nacional**

Bahía de Loreto, which became Mexico's newest World Heritage Site in 2005. The bay's islands, wetlands, lagoons, mangrove swamps and seagrass beds are home to 900 fish species, 15 types of whales, dolphins, seals, sea lions, 17 species of marine birds and five species of marine turtles, including the rare and endangered black sea turtle.

Water Encounters

A number of spectacular beaches fringe Loreto Bay. **Playa Loreto**, just north of the marina, is the town's longest and busiest, with snack shops and watersport outfitters offering everything from air mattresses to parasailing. **Isla del Carmen**, a short water taxi ride from downtown or the marina, has long, deserted stretches of soft white sand, awesome snorkelling and friendly sea lions. My favourite is the secluded **Tripui Beach**, located two kilometres south of town. It's ideal for intimate family picnics and snorkelling. By far, Baja's most popular leisure activity is whale-watching, so we take a break from our beach hammocks and head over to **Magdalena Bay**, on the Pacific side of the peninsula. Each year between January and April, hundreds of grey whales visit the bay's protected waters to mate and bear young.

We board a six-metre *panga* (a local fishing boat) in **Puerto Lopez Mateos** and scan the horizon for whales as we slowly drift across the bay. Pablo, our ever-cheerful guide, utters a few words of encouragement over the low hum of the outboard motor. "They come, don't worry, they come," he reassures us. And come they did.

Twenty minutes later the bay's shimmering surface erupts with spray

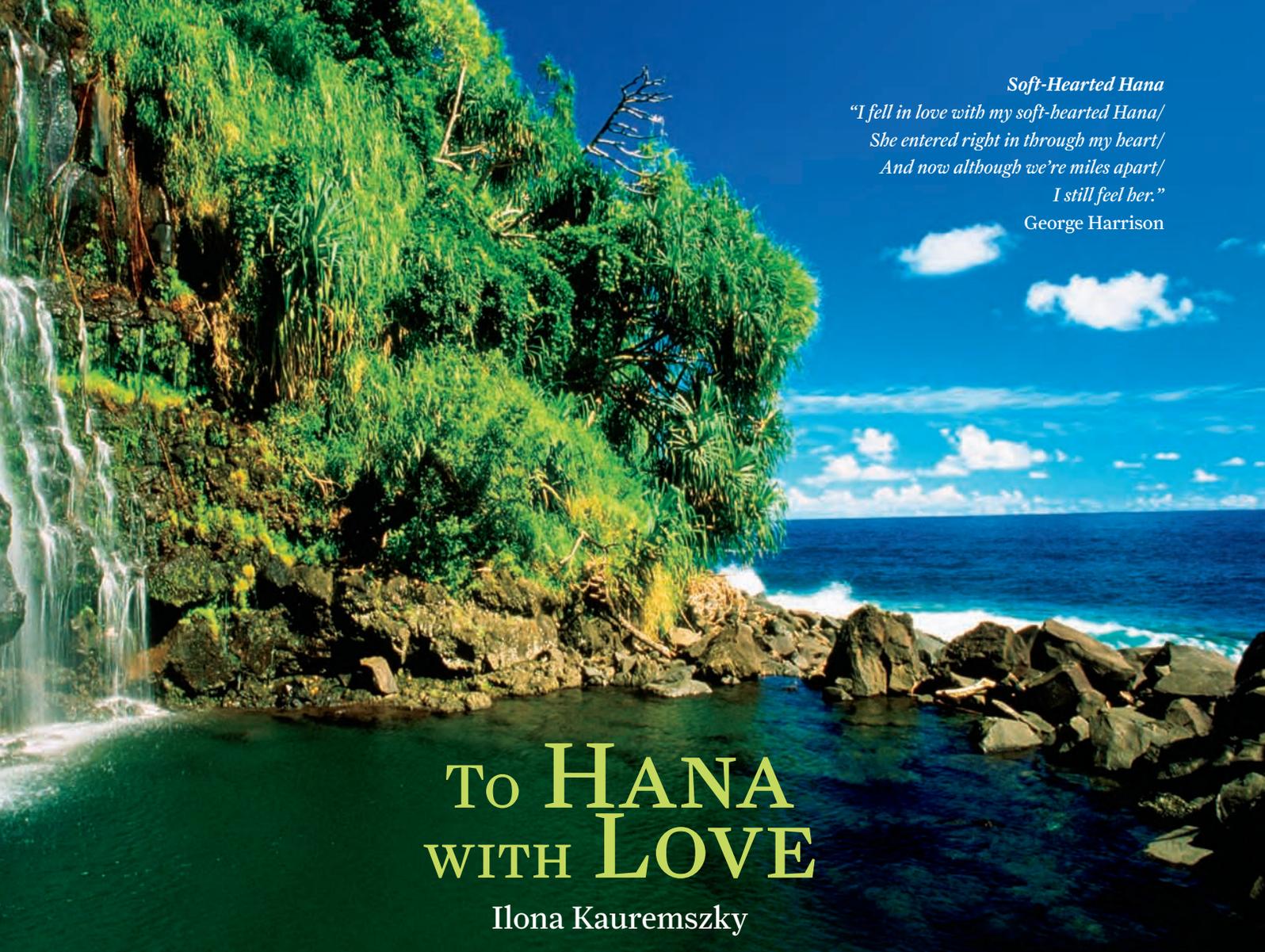
from two exhaling whales. An 18-metre, 40-tonne female and her calf surface about five metres away. We furiously snap pictures in case they take off but instead of diving, they remain on the surface, occasionally raising their massive heads out of the water as if to get a better look at us. They hang around for about five minutes before arching their backs and disappearing into the depths.

Two days later as we paddled sea kayaks around the rock outcroppings at the southern end of **Isla Coronado** in Loreto Bay, we hear a noisy cacophony of barks from the island's resident sea lions. Before we knew it they were jumping around our kayaks like playful puppies beckoning us to come in and play.

We slip on our snorkel gear and jump into the flurry of flippers and whiskers. Within seconds, groups of females and pups streak through the water around us, their thick fur trailing bubbles like jet streams. The big males stay on the rocks, torn between joining the fun and guarding their turf.

They tug at my fins and playfully zoom in for face-to-face encounters. One inquisitive young female seems especially interested in me so I approach her slowly, pausing each time she backs away. The dance continues for about five minutes until she finally builds up enough courage to touch my mask with her nose.

Like the friendly sea lions, Loreto's gracious and welcoming residents go out of their way to make you feel like family. This, coupled with good food, unique adventures and boundless beauty, make Loreto an ideal place for sun-and-fun seekers of all ages to hang their sombreros for a week...or two. ▣



Soft-Hearted Hana

*“I fell in love with my soft-hearted Hana/
She entered right in through my heart/
And now although we’re miles apart/
I still feel her.”*

George Harrison

TO HANA WITH LOVE

Ilona Kauremszky

Life couldn’t get any better, I thought.

Under a Maui sunset, with waves lapping around our catamaran, the melodic *pu conch* was paying tribute to the end of the day. “You are surrounded by the sea of love,” quipped long-time Director of *Po’okela* (‘commitment to excellence’ in Hawaiian), **Lori Ululani Sablas**, the ‘love coordinator’ at the **Ka’anapali Beach Resort**.

We were sailing to the crescendo bellowing from the conch in an ancient Hawaiian ritual in **Ka’anapali** (‘Ka-ah-nah-pah-lee’) on Maui’s western side.

The day before it was a couples’ massage in nearby **Wailea** that softened knotty muscles using locally made oils to help us reach the nirvana that could only be found on a chain of islands whose nearest landmass is 3,000 kilometres away. Who knew that during our one-week visit new discoveries were to ignite the senses each day?

But that’s how it was. Before our arrival, my only introduction to the world’s most remote archipelago (Hawaii comprises 137 islands) was through pop culture references and friends who visited.

With the exception of big hotel names like the **Four Seasons**, **Fairmont** and **Marriott**, there are no big box stores or big cities on Maui. Blessed with lush jungle foliage, exotic wilderness, remote beaches and trade winds charging from **Haleakala**, which rises more than 10,000 feet and is considered the world’s

largest dormant volcano, the island life’s slow ebb and flow submerges you in its eternal beauty. They say Maui is as close as you will ever get to paradise on Earth.

“When people come to Maui they never want to leave,” explains Lori as she gestures toward the naupaka-fringed golden beach, which she later revealed holds a strong Hawaiian legend in its white flower-laden bushes.

My other half and I were desperate for an eco-break, so last winter we packed our bags and had a plan to head to **Hana**, a tiny town perched on Maui’s north shore. Time has virtually stood still on Hana, and that’s how its 1,800 inhabitants, who are big on *ohana* (‘family’) customs, like it.

Situated on the rainy slopes of **Haleakala**, the craggy black lava coastline butts against the thick grass-covered hillsides where Herefords now graze. Hawaiian legends remain strong here, too. The locals revel in how Hawaii’s favourite queen, **Queen Ka’ahumanu**, was born in Hana in a nearby cave; and how among Hawaii’s numerous islands, only one is named after a demigod: the hero Maui, who according to legend, created Hawaii when he fished the islands from the ocean floor.

For centuries Hana was cut off from the rest of the island. But in 1927 that all changed when a dirt road connecting Hana to **Kahului** opened. In the Sixties a narrow two-lane road with 600 hairpin turns and more than 50 one-lane bridges was constructed over streams, cliffs and jungle forests.

We left the windsurfer town of **Paia** and drove along the 'highway to heaven,' as the locals describe the **Hana Highway**, on Route 36, preparing to see some of the most awesome panoramic vistas in the world. Route 36 is considered one of America's most scenic drives, so set aside plenty of time despite the 53-mile trip and leave early so that you can admire the view from the countless lookout points.

Throughout the drive, groves of African tulip trees, mahogany and guava hugged the mountain slopes, interspersed with prehistoric lava protrusions from which freshwater streams cascaded over the cliff tops. For company we played "Soft-Hearted Hana" by the late George Harrison, who lived in his own secluded paradise off the Hana Highway at **Nahiku**.

For our eco-retreat, our temporary abode was a restored cottage overlooking **Hana Bay**, a leftover from the sugar plantation days. Now part of the exclusive **Hotel Hana-Maui**, this privately owned property offers an assortment of complimentary daily activities and guests have access to the steam room, outdoor hot tub and cold plunge pool at the hotel's **Honua Spa**.

Up at the crack of dawn, it was over to the **Wellness Center** pavilion for a morning yoga session, followed by horseback riding. Jolene was our local guide as well as guide to the stars. "You know, Oprah Winfrey bought 102 acres and today you are riding on her land," she quips and adds how she recently had the pleasure of taking Britney Spears, Woody Harrelson and Kate Hudson horseback riding.

Our celebrity wrangler takes us past a herd of cows grazing beneath banyan trees while the surf crashes onto the sharp lava rocks ahead.

Remembering Lori's mysterious love story about the naupaka, Stephen and I decided to consult Jolene. "Oh, the naupaka," she says with a smile. "These are half-shaped white flowers that relate to a Hawaiian legend. A princess in the mountains fell in love with a common fisherman. Her father disapproved and as she was leaving her lover, she tore a flower symbolizing her infinite love and gave him half. Next time you're by the ocean, watch for these incomplete white half-flowers facing down; while in the mountains, watch for naupakas whose half-flowers face up toward the sky. The two half-flowers represent love when joined together. Yet the two have never met."

The next morning, we headed upcountry to **Haleakala National Park** in search of this elusive native flower. As we negotiated the severe switchbacks, *sans* guardrails, the road suddenly narrowed to one lane. After about 11 miles from Hana the park finally appeared. At the ranger's office we checked on weather conditions and things looked good. Haleakala, which means 'rising sun,' is notorious for quick and steady rainfall, so it's always advisable to check at the ranger's office on trail closures and weather forecasts.

Armed with insect repellent, hiking shoes, bottled water and a bagged lunch, off we went into the thick of the two-mile **Piipiwai Trail**, one of the best trails on Maui. Abundant waterfalls, streams and tropical flora and fauna all add to this isolated paradise.

We ascended a dirt path toward **Makahiku Falls**, an ancient volcanic outcropping hurling a 200-foot torrent of white water over its edge into a lush green valley. "That's nothing. Wait until you get to the 400-foot **Waimoku Falls**," explains a fellow hiker.

Passing an ancient banyan tree, we trekked onward, teetering at times between the rocky inclines, hiking by more mountain streams and feeling the effects of higher altitudes. The **Piipiwai Trail** gains 650 feet in elevation.

In the distance, a hollow clanking sound was amplified the closer we got. A mysterious bamboo alley was studded with towering bamboos that swayed ominously. "Geesh, I don't know if I want to keep going," I murmured as the thick canopy blanketed the sunlight above. "Sure you do," Stephen said, taking the lead.

Deeper into this bamboo forest we trudged and then it was over. The bamboos were replaced by a rocky stream. We jumped on the rocks and made it to the other side. Ahead, the **Waimoku Falls** towered in all their glory, and lodged in a crack between the basaltic rock a hearty bush presented white half-flowers. The fleeting mountain naupaka was home. "To Hana with love," I thought. ▣



(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) OLD SURFBOARDS ADORN THE ROADSIDE; PURPLE PROTEA; THE ROAD TO HANA; A NAUPAKA FLOWER; WAIMOKU FALLS.



RHYTHMS
OF
THE SUN

MAUREEN LITTLEJOHN



*Caribbean music is joyful,
passionate and as varied as
the islands themselves*

IMAGE COURTESY OF ANTIGUA & BARBUDA TOURIST OFFICE

EVERY SOFT, WARM BREEZE IN THE CARIBBEAN SEEMS TO PULSE WITH MUSIC. In **Jamaica**, the slow and steady bass beats of reggae fill the air. The lively Afro-Spanish sounds of *son* can be heard in **Cuba**, and in **Trinidad and Tobago**, people enjoy the percussive bell-like tones of steel pan calypso music. There are many rhythms and blends of music gracing the islands, including merengue, salsa, ska, dancehall, reggaeton, compas, zouk and soca. All are played with fierce passion and are rooted in African drumbeats, brought to the Caribbean by slaves in the 1800s.

On a recent trip to **Port of Spain** in Trinidad, I heard calypso piped in everywhere, from the airport to hotels, restaurants and bars. It made me hungry to hear a live band. Walking along **Tragarete Road** in the western part of the city, a mélange of metallic crescendos caught my ear. Searching for its source, I came upon the practice yard of the **Silver Stars**, a local steel band. Approximately 60 players were standing in front of a multitude of steel drums, mallets deftly teasing notes from the pans. They told me they were practising for **Panorama**, Trinidad's world-renowned steel band competition that takes place in February, during **Carnival**. Scooting into a seat on the yard's sidelines, I settled in for a glorious evening of music. Later, I learned the Silver Stars won their first large band championship at Panorama, taking home the \$1 million TTD (\$160,000 US) purse.

Calypso was originally a form of protest music. African slaves were not allowed to talk while they worked, but they could sing. Song leaders improvised words in order to comment on the news of the day. "The Banana Boat Song (Day-O)" by Harry Belafonte, popular in the United States in the 1950s, is an example of the call-and-response form used in work songs. The government banned skin drums in 1884, so inventive Calypsonians made percussion instruments from bamboo and created what was known as tamboo bamboo bands. These were banned too, and players were left with stringed instruments, maracas, and bottles and spoons. In the 1930s they began to make drums out of metal shipping containers, paint cans and garbage cans. By the 1940s they were using 55-gallon oil drums, which are still used today. The pan, or drumming surface, is made of sheet metal stretched into a bowl-like shape with note patterns moulded onto the surface. Pans back the calypso singer, whose lyrics often poke fun at the rich and powerful.

Panorama is held during the Caribbean's biggest, splashiest annual party. Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival is the granddaddy of all Caribbean Mardi Gras-style celebrations, including Barbados' Crop Over and the carnivals in St. Vincent and Antigua. Held two days before Ash Wednesday, Carnival is a joyful explosion of music, costumes and dancing.

"Soca music is the heartbeat of all the carnivals. Artists make money from touring these events. They write calypso and soca songs each year specifically for the season," notes Rich LaMotte, director of marketing and promotions for VP Records and 2009 project manager for its annual compilation *Soca Gold*. Based in New York City, VP Records is one of the largest labels that specializes in Caribbean soca and reggae. This year's compilation features a combination of newcomers and established musicians including Edwin Yearwood, Destra Garcia, Roy Cape, Patrice Roberts, Red Plastic Bag, KMC and Rita Jones. "We chose the artists based on the winners of the carnivals' road marches," explains LaMotte. Road marches feature bands and DJs in trucks that stop along the parade route and play for the crowds and judges.

A fast, body-shaking dance music accompanied by spicy lyrics, soca emerged in Trinidad and Tobago in the 1970s. The root is calypso, but it's revved up with a driving percussion. "Hot Hot Hot," by Arrow, was a huge soca hit that captivated North American audiences in the 1980s and '90s.

Lord Shorty, a.k.a. Garfield Blackman, started the trend with his 1973 recording of "Indrani." Another pioneering group is Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, known for social commentary and risqué humour. Other superstars include David Rudder, Machel Montano and Anselm Douglas.

If soca is all about jumping up and dancing, reggae music is all about contemplative chilling. My favourite memories of vacations in Jamaica are backed with a reggae soundtrack. Sipping sunset cocktails and listening to the house band at Rick's Café in Negril, or grooving to Beres Hammond's "lovers rock" at Montego Bay's three-day Sumfest extravaganza are just a few pleasures I've had on that sun-soaked island.

Reggae was developed in Jamaica in the late 1960s. The slow, hypnotic pace of the music accents the off beat and was derived from ska and rocksteady. Ska, which is up-tempo and driven by jazzy bass lines, emerged in the late 1950s. Rocksteady, which is slower, was popular in Jamaica in the mid-1960s. Reggae is

even slower. Love, peace, poverty and injustice are familiar subjects in the lyrics. Bob Marley and The Wailers' breakthrough 1970s albums *Catch a Fire* and *Burnin'* turned reggae into a global phenomenon.

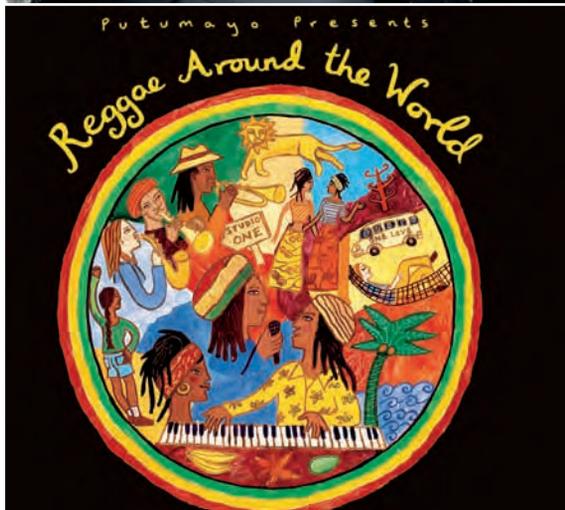
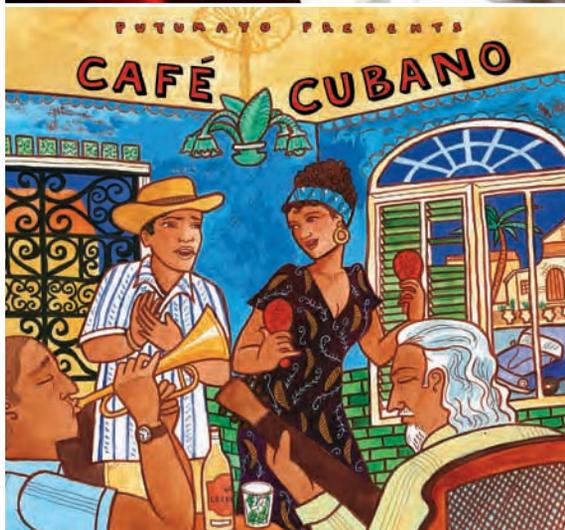
"Jamaica's music stands out all around the world. Reggae has a strong spiritual vibe. It's respected and warmly received wherever I play," Freddie McGregor tells me over the phone from Europe, where he is on tour. A Jamaican reggae star with more than 38 recordings, McGregor consistently pleases his fans with smooth melodies and rich vocals. "I put everything I've learned over the years into my work. I want the music to reach out to the world and really touch the listener," he says.

When McGregor returns to Jamaica, he'll be working on his next album with his 19-year-old son Stephen, who is producing. "It's a re-recording of 20 of my older songs. Stephen is putting his world feel into it. It is one of my best so far," says McGregor.

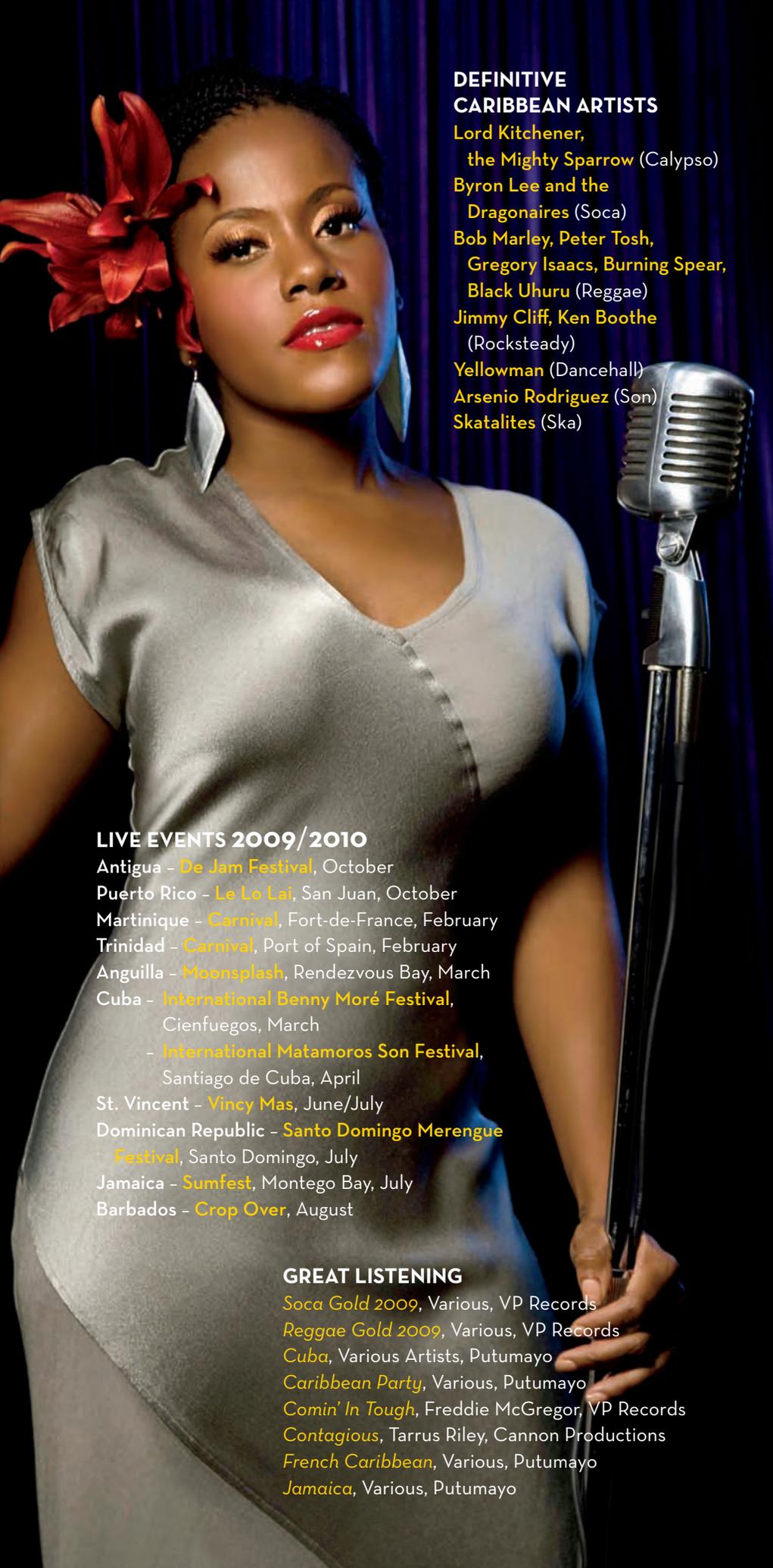
Tarrus Riley, who has just released his third album, *Contagious*, is a Jamaican artist who is gaining acclaim at home and abroad for his modern take on roots (traditional) reggae. "I honour all indigenous music from Jamaica, from ska to dancehall. People like my music because it's entertaining, but also because of the message. I don't sing about what divides us, I sing about unity and love of self, the community and the environment," explains Riley, whose crystal clear tenor garnered him best male vocalist at the 2008 International Reggae and World Music Awards. He recently performed at Sumfest, where The Jacksons played a memorial to their brother Michael.

Dancehall is another popular style started in Jamaica. I got my first taste of it at a yard party many years ago in Negril. DJs hovered over turntables on an elevated platform, shouting out rhymes while the crowd bounced below. These days dancehall is known for raunchy lyrics and flashy performers. Big-name performers include Sean Paul, Buju Banton, Lady Saw, Shaggy and Beenie Man.

Many of my Caribbean holidays have been infused with music. Around the time that *Buena Vista Social Club* was released, I took a trip to Cuba. Relaxing in the resort's beach bar on the first evening, I noticed a group of older Cuban gentlemen come in. My husband and I were looking out at the water when we heard a guitar being strummed and soft beats from a hand drum. Turning to face the men, we watched as one hit the *claves* (two polished wooden sticks), and another began to sing. We were hooked and



IMAGES COURTESY OF PUTUMAYO WORLD MUSIC AND VP RECORDS



DEFINITIVE CARIBBEAN ARTISTS

Lord Kitchener,
the Mighty Sparrow (Calypso)
Byron Lee and the
Dragonaires (Soca)
Bob Marley, Peter Tosh,
Gregory Isaacs, Burning Spear,
Black Uhuru (Reggae)
Jimmy Cliff, Ken Boothe
(Rocksteady)
Yellowman (Dancehall)
Arsenio Rodriguez (Son)
Skatalites (Ska)

LIVE EVENTS 2009/2010

Antigua - **De Jam Festival**, October
Puerto Rico - **Le Lo Lai**, San Juan, October
Martinique - **Carnival**, Fort-de-France, February
Trinidad - **Carnival**, Port of Spain, February
Anguilla - **Moonsplash**, Rendezvous Bay, March
Cuba - **International Benny Moré Festival**,
Cienfuegos, March
- **International Matamoros Son Festival**,
Santiago de Cuba, April
St. Vincent - **Vincy Mas**, June/July
Dominican Republic - **Santo Domingo Merengue**
Festival, Santo Domingo, July
Jamaica - **Sumfest**, Montego Bay, July
Barbados - **Crop Over**, August

GREAT LISTENING

Soca Gold 2009, Various, VP Records
Reggae Gold 2009, Various, VP Records
Cuba, Various Artists, Putumayo
Caribbean Party, Various, Putumayo
Comin' In Tough, Freddie McGregor, VP Records
Contagious, Tarrus Riley, Cannon Productions
French Caribbean, Various, Putumayo
Jamaica, Various, Putumayo

returned to that bar every night for the rest of our stay.

In Cuba, African drum beats back Spanish guitar and vocals in a style called son. Instruments usually include trumpets, guitars, *tres* (a Cuban six-string guitar), bongos, bass, maracas and claves. Often, two or more band members sing. In the 1940s, **Arsenio Rodriguez**, a blind Cuban descendent of Congolese slaves, added conga drum, piano and trumpet to the typical son ensemble. "Rodriguez was a pioneer. His music is soulful, gritty and awesome, and he influenced the beginnings of salsa," explains **Jacob Edgar**, president of independent world music label **Cumbancha** and researcher for **Putumayo World Music**. Putumayo specializes in global music compilations and has more than 20 Caribbean titles that are available in coffee shops such as Starbucks, at airports and in giftshops.

"*Cuba* is our all-time best-selling CD," confirms **Yann Perrigault**, Putumayo's international promotion manager. Recently remastered, the 10-year-old disc features a new track by **Nino Torrente and Son de Hoy**. A variety of artists are showcased including **Todos Estrellas**, featuring **Los Van Van** singer **Pedro Calvo**, and **Eliades Ochoa**, a participant in **Buena Vista Social Club**. The liner notes are in English and Spanish and include a recipe for Cuban rice and beans. "You can discover the culture of different islands just by listening to our recordings," says Perrigault.

Son's offshoot, salsa, is popular among Latino people everywhere. Similar to a spicy sauce, the music is a picante pick-me-up intended to make listeners dance. Call-and-response, solos and African and Spanish roots characterize the style, popularized by crossover artists such as **Gloria Estefan**. Developed in the 1960s and '70s by Puerto Rican and Cuban immigrants in New York City, salsa's pioneers include **Tito Puente**, **Eddie Palmieri** and **Ray Barretto**.

Island music is a hot pot of delicious sounds that are ever-evolving. **Puerto Rico** reverberates with reggaeton, a type of reggae and dancehall mixed with salsa and hip hop. **Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, Martinique** and **Haiti** are known for zouk, party music that fuses European, Indian and African sounds. Haiti has a unique brand of dancehall called *compas* and in the **Dominican Republic** the official music is merengue, a feverish Latin American arrangement of two-four beats.

Music is the lifeblood of the Caribbean. No matter if it runs fast, slow, hot or cool, it gets into your system. All I need to do is put on a CD and I can still feel it coursing through my veins. ▣

THE PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE

Whether religious, exploratory or athletic in nature, walking tours serve body, mind and spirit

GREGORY B. GALLAGHER



“The geographical pilgrimage is the symbolic acting out of an inner journey. The inner journey is the interpolation of the meaning and signs of the outer pilgrimage. One can have one without the other. It is best to have both.”
Thomas Merton, 1964

When asked to write about walking pilgrimages, I realized I am the perfect person for the task. As a teenager in the Sixties, I left my home in Montreal unannounced, hitchhiking across the landscape of North America to the **Haight-Ashbury** district of **San Francisco**. Along the way, I discovered what it was like to trudge many miles each day, ultimately searching for my ‘self’ in the faces of strangers and along the backroads of our collective geography. Walking takes courage, and one must be open to changes as they unfold.

These days, people are boarding jets to far-off destinations in order to go for a walk, pilgrimage or excursion. As I look further into the variety of walking itineraries around the world I am amazed to discover legions of like-minded souls guiding themselves, or being led by experts, on cultural forays and religious pilgrimages. It seems we have rediscovered the oldest form of travel.

It is the unique blend of the physical and spiritual involved in exploring nature by foot that compels us through new pastures, around ancient corners and into unknown terrain. It also fires our primal instincts, as the notion of exploring a physical place unearths qualities in us, while interaction with locals soothes our senses and satiates our wanderlust. Personal walking pilgrimages ultimately serve body, mind and spirit.

HISTORY OF PILGRIMAGES

Known as ‘the Way of Saint James’ in English, the **Camino de Santiago de Compostela** through **Spain** and **Portugal** is one of the most legendary European pilgrimages. This ancient ritual has spawned a walking culture dating back some 2,000 years. In fact, the world’s first travel guide, the *Codex Calixtinus* (circa 1140 A.D.), was written to offer advice for pilgrims in the Middle Ages headed to the **Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela** in northwestern Spain’s region of **Galicia**, the walker’s ultimate goal.

The ancient *Codex* is written in five parts, with Book V being a pilgrim’s dream. It contains suggestions of where to break from the ordeal, which sacred relics to venerate along the way, how to avoid scams and even where to watch out for bad cuisine. The other top-tier religious pilgrimages attracting travellers throughout the calendar year include **Rome**, **Jerusalem** and **Mecca**, while still other destinations are gaining popularity in this specialized travel niche, places like **Chile**, **Mexico** and **Costa Rica**.

CHILE

As Europeans settled the world outside their own borders over the past 1,000 years, they carried their cultural and religious traditions with them. South American countries like Chile are witness to crossover religious festivities attracting new generations of global pilgrims.

In early December, the **Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary** is celebrated widely in this country. This is the time when devout residents of Santiago make a pilgrimage to **Santuario de Lo Vásquez**, a shrine some 80 kilometres from the capital. Some locals cover many kilometres on their knees as a sign of respect to the Virgin and as acknowledgement for the life She has granted to these faithful.

Each year on February 8, some 50,000 pilgrims and more than 3,000 dancers from all over Chile congregate at the **Santuario de la Candelaria** in the **Atacama** region's capital city of **Copiapó** for an important religious festival called **Fiesta de la Candelaria**. Lasting nine days, this colourful celebration honours the patron saint of the local miners.

The **Fiesta de La Tirana** is the most dramatic of Chile's festivals. For three days in July, the village of La Tirana, 64 kilometres inland near the **Atacama Desert**, is host to some 150,000 dancers who take to the streets in ribald costumes and handmade devil masks. This popular fête is a manifestation of this area's unique religious blend of Christianity and ancient indigenous traditions.

Of course, if you seek a more typical walk through the spectacular Chilean geography, companies like Gap Adventures cover the gamut of both cultural and destination sights. Travellers are able to design the length of their foray to suit their needs and interests, i.e., six days, nine days, et cetera, and the company's outstanding guides provide the expertise and itineraries.

COSTA RICA

For a more personal style of pilgrimage, or for those travellers seeking a challenging trek involving all their capabilities, there is none better than the **Transcontinental Hike** across Costa Rica offered by the **Talamancan Association of Ecotourism and Conservation in Puerto Viejo**.

"If you are crazy enough to try this 70-kilometre trek, you'll never forget it," is part of their description.

This magical ramble is listed as taking "from six to 15 days," tramping through exquisite rainforests and dreamy mountain cloud forests. Participants cross the **Continental Divide** in the company of an experienced Cabecar native guide. The adventure leads walkers from **Ujarrás** on the Pacific Ocean slope of the **Cordillera de Talamanca**, to a peak of 2,700 metres, then down through thick, mystical forests to the Caribbean village of Coroma.

For a memory guaranteed to last a lifetime, and a physical challenge of the highest degree, this transcontinental quest is sure to captivate, while providing a wonderful way to explore Costa Rica's biodiversity and gain unparalleled exposure to unusual wildlife.

MEXICO

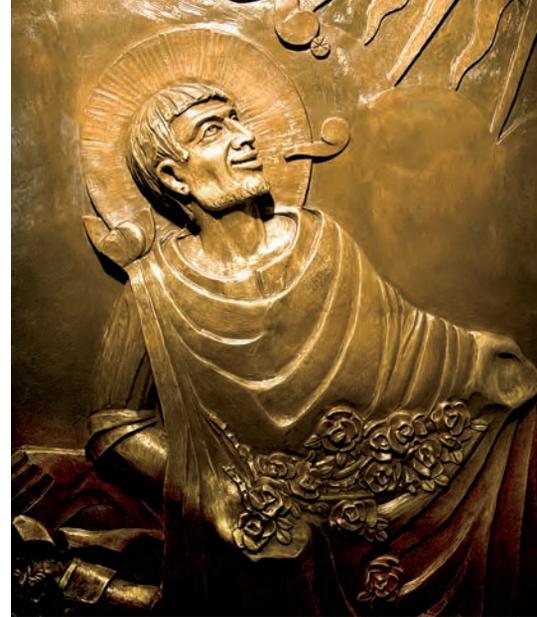
An apparition appearing on the clothes of peasant **Juan Diego Cuauhtlatzintzin** on the outskirts of Mexico City in 1531 is now the most popular religious icon in Mexico. According to legend, Juan Diego was travelling between his home and Mexico City when **Our Lady of Guadalupe** appeared to him and spoke in his native Nahuatl language.

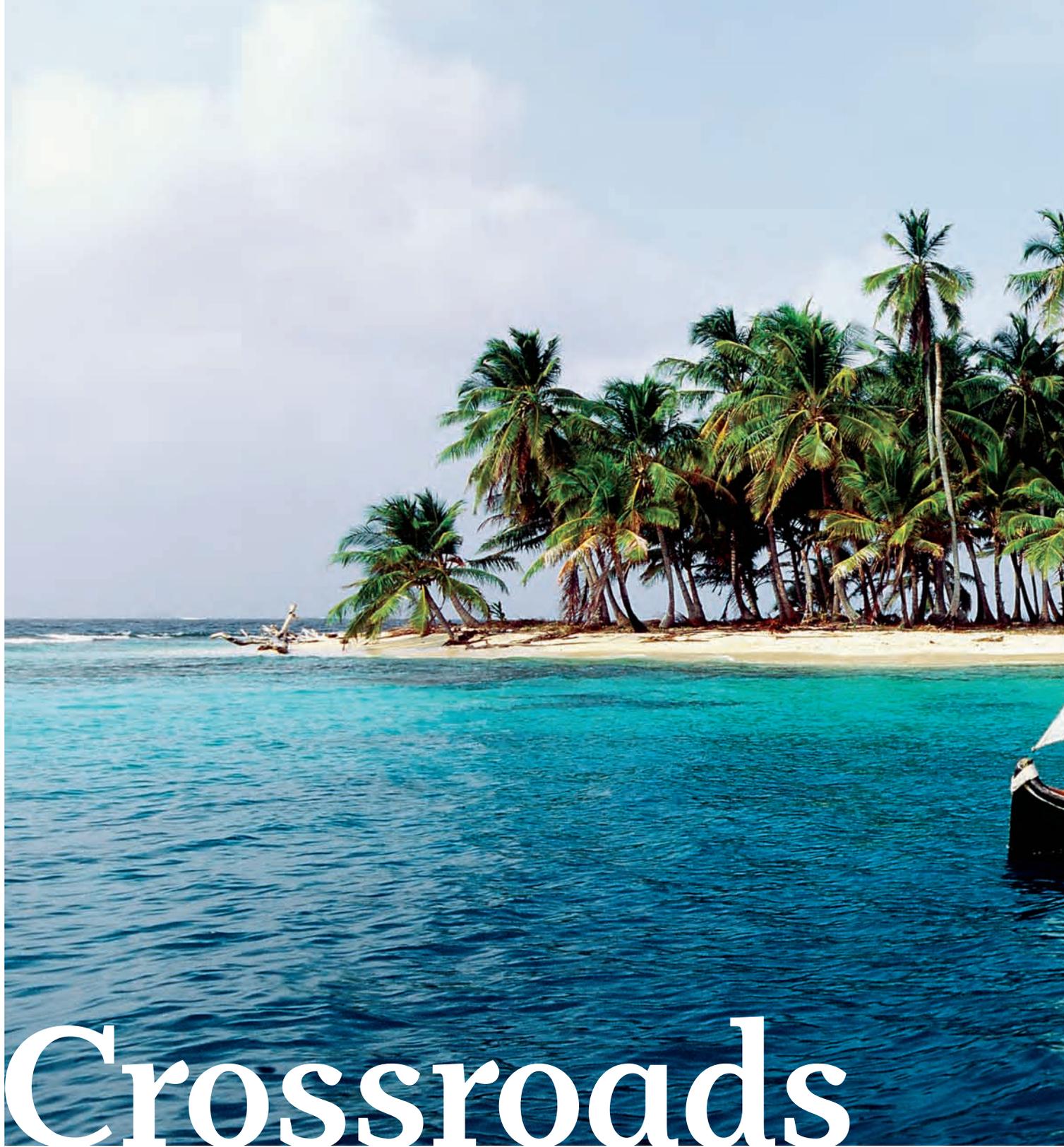
She told the peasant to build a church on that very site. When Juan Diego told the local bishop, he did not believe him, and asked for proof. According to the story, even though it was winter Our Lady told him to pick flowers, and Spanish roses bloomed immediately at his feet. As Juan Diego presented the flowers to the bishop, the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe was miraculously imprinted on the material of his garment.

In the aftermath, missionaries quickly took advantage of the power of this story to convert millions of Aztecs. It is no surprise therefore to learn that pilgrimages to the **Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe** make it the most visited Catholic shrine in the world. Ten million visitors come to this venerated site each year.

FINISH LINE

Whether you're interested in a self-guided stroll through the countryside or captivated by the cultural curiosities presented in a formal group tour, walking pilgrimages are an increasingly popular travel option. Heralding a wide menu of possibilities on all continents, the central theme of walking is, after all, to self-propel, and travel companies are set to accommodate all fashion of walkers, strollers and hikers. Be it a religious pilgrimage or a ramble driven by wanderlust like this writer had as a young hitchhiker, remember the words of Scottish-American naturalist John Muir, when he said, "Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves." ▣



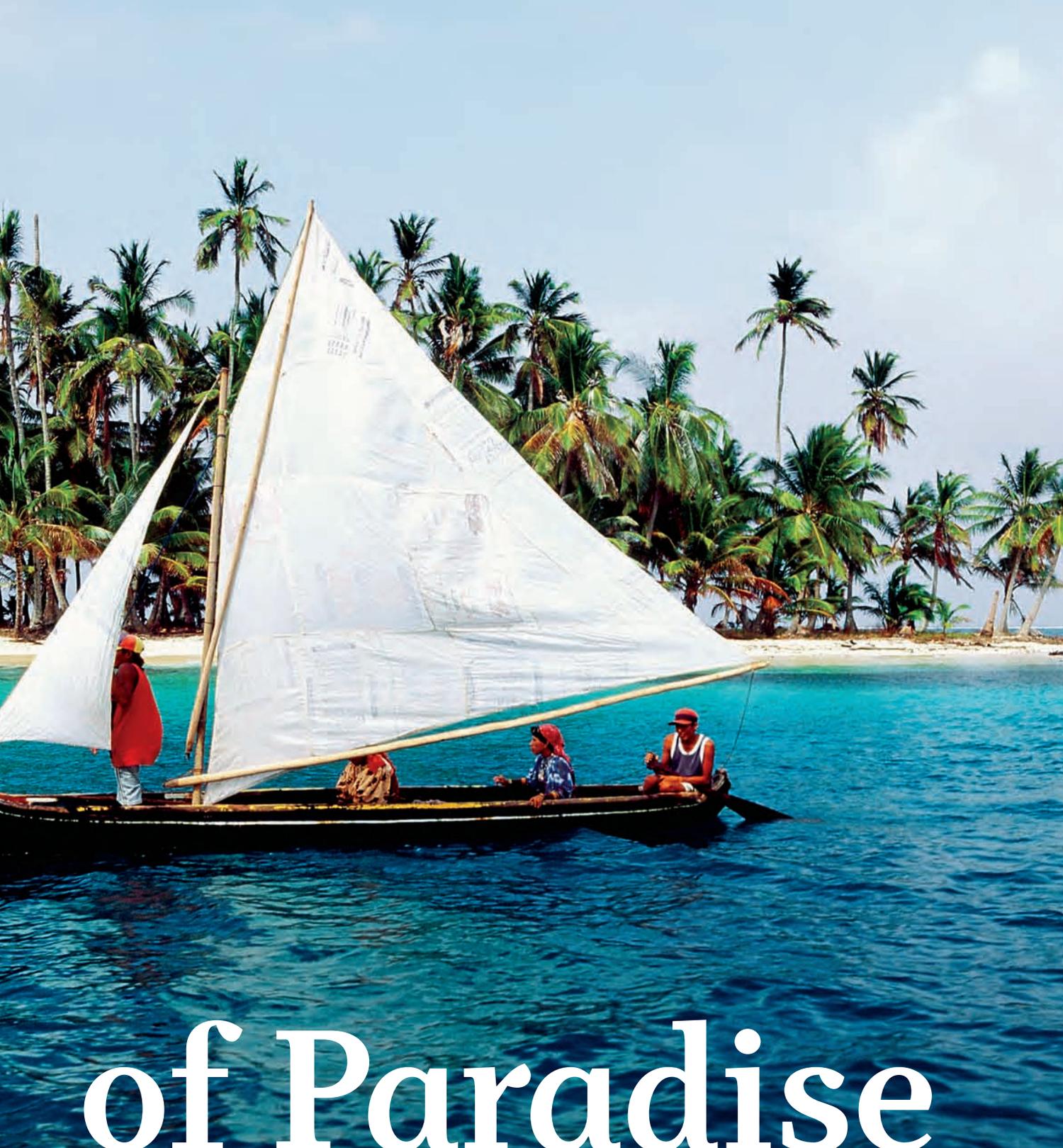


Crossroads

Not much farther than Cancún, Panama - and its surrounding San Blás Islands - is so near and yet still an undiscovered paradise
Steve Veale

As I swing slowly in a hammock slung between two palm trees, one of the workers at my 'hotel' asks if I would like a coconut. "Ahh, yes," I respond, that sounds very cool and refreshing as I lie here basking in the hot sun. All at once, my new friend scales the nearest coconut tree, picks the ripest nut, climbs back down and lops the top off with his machete.

©SIME / iSTOCK PHOTO



of Paradise

Even better, I add my own rum to blend with the cool coconut milk.

Later in the day I'm asked what I would like for dinner: lobster, crab, fish? As soon as my order is in, the divers head out in boats to bring back the freshest meal I have ever eaten. It feels as though I'm living in a *National Geographic* television special, which blends the best of the Caribbean with the islands of the South Pacific.

Panama's **San Blás Islands** share the same waters as other popular destinations such as Cuba, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. They also share the same hot and sunny weather, lush vegetation and laid back island culture. Only one element is missing: tourists.

Many people go to neighbouring **Costa Rica** but few ever cross the border into **Panama**. Too bad, because they are missing some of the finest little islands in the Caribbean.

Officially known as the **Comarca de San Blás**, or locally '**Kuna Yala**,' this autonomous region of the Republic of Panama is a spectacular 226-kilometre strip of Caribbean coastline stretching from the **Colón** province (just north of **Panama City**)



to the border of Colombia in the east. There are some 400 islands along the coast, most of them no more than 10 kilometres from the mainland.

To use an age-old travel cliché, these islands are truly ‘picture postcard’ scenic – and indeed, they have graced the covers of many prestigious travel publications over the years. As well – sailors take note – *Cruising World* and *Le Monde Voyage* have declared this area one of the top two “best cruising destinations in the world.” This is the Caribbean as you want it to be: unspoiled, unhurried, natural and relaxed.

The **Kuna Indians** have controlled the islands since the 1920s (they have two official representatives in the Panamanian legislature) and their culture is predominant throughout both the islands and the eastern mainland territory. This is one place where the souvenirs – including headscarves of colourful prints and ornate and distinctive bracelets – are truly indigenous, made by the people in the villages. You won’t find any ‘made in China’ stickers here. The truly authentic gift to purchase is the ‘**mola**,’ a traditional Kuna handicraft made of brightly-coloured squares of cotton fabric. This can be worn – it is similar to a blouse – but many find it hangs nicely on a wall.

The accommodations are mainly simple huts of bamboo and thatched roofs with basic amenities, although there are some new and fancier digs, such as the **Sapibenega Kuna Lodge** and **Coral Lodge**, on the coast itself. I recommend the **Kuanidup Island Lodge** (on the island of **Kuanidup**), with its basic and island-perfect accommodation in eight straw huts; sand floors and hammocks are both included at no extra cost. Regular beds are also available. It’s a half-hour canoe trip – in a dugout canoe, by the way – from the coastal city of **Rio Sidra**. The service is personal and unique; just ask for your own coconut. You can choose from approximately 100 coconut trees during the three minutes it takes to stroll around the island.

Some of the destinations you might want to put on the list for your San Blás getaway include **El Porvenir**, **Nalunega**, **Wichub-Walá** (for the name alone) or **Isla Pino**. Whichever island you choose, don’t expect discos or nightlife – or much daytime, for that matter. These are places to chill out and relax, bring some books, go for long walks (or short walks, depending on the island), take naps, get a suntan, go snorkelling or just take the time to smell the roses. Or in this case, count the grains of sand on your personal beach.

To get to the San Blás Islands, you first have to get to Panama City. From there you can take one of the daily island flights offered by Aeroperlas or Air Panama.

The Republic of Panama itself is an isthmus that forms a land bridge connecting North and South America. The country shares a border with Costa Rica to the west and

Colombia to the east. It also controls the **Panama Canal**, one of the most important shipping routes in the world, allowing ships to travel between two oceans.

A Spanish colony for 300 years since the early 1500s, Panama later became a territory controlled by Colombia. However, Panama fought for its independence and, with assistance from the United States government, established itself in 1903 as a sovereign state.

With a generous 2,988 kilometres of coastline, Panama borders two oceans. You can look out at the Caribbean Sea over a leisurely breakfast of eggs and fresh mango, papaya and sugar cane juice, and then enjoy a lunch of meat, rice and beans, salad and more fresh fruit at a restaurant overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Some parts of the country are only 70 kilometres wide.

In a week, you can relax on a deserted island or hike mountainous passes, wine and dine in a modern city with full amenities or discover historic UNESCO sites of ancient Spanish ruins. And, of course, explore the Panama Canal: one of the greatest feats of engineering in the world, built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1904 and 1914. Now is a good time to visit Panama and watch the massive excavation to widen the canal. This historic work is scheduled to be completed in 2014 and will double the width of the waterway.



PANAMA BY THE NUMBERS

Government: constitutional democracy

Capital: Panama City

Official language: Spanish

Other languages: English, Kuna and 14 others

Monetary unit: 1 balboa = \$1 U.S. (U.S. dollar is also used)

Electricity: 120 volts 60 Hz

ATM: countrywide (but not many in lesser-populated areas)

Tax: 10% added to all hotel bills; 5% added to all non-food items

Time zone: GMT minus 5 hours

International dialing code: +507



So why don't more people know about this country? Likely because the political overtones of the past half-century have overshadowed any thoughts of tourism. A military government first took control in 1968 and although it was repressive, people still continued with their everyday lives. It wasn't until General Manuel Noriega took power in 1981 that Panama made headlines around the world for its repression and human rights violations. Also, as we now know, the general used the country as his own personal bank and invited many notorious drug lords to do business there.

However, U.S. President George H.W. Bush ordered U.S. troops into the country in 1989 (in part) "to assist the Panamanian people in restoring democracy." For many years after – though governments have been democratically elected for the past 20 years – the legacy of Noriega, currently being held in a Florida prison, still hung over the country.

But all that is rapidly changing. Today Panama is ready to welcome tourists on a global scale. Cruise ships dock at Panamanian ports; 'birders' flock to experience an unprecedented 900 species in the parks and forests; scuba and snorkelling enthusiasts are discovering some of the finest Caribbean coral and reef fish on the Atlantic side while whale watchers gather on the Pacific side. Oh, and there are also 1,518 islands for you to discover.

The outdoorsman/woman will find a naturalist's paradise in Panama, with a full range of activities including hiking, horseback riding, fishing (try the **Gulf of Chiriqui**), boating, white water rafting (the country has 488 rivers), rock climbing and, after all this exertion, relaxing in the thermal hot springs in **Volcán Barú**.

As for more urban activities, Panama City especially – but also smaller centres such as **Colón**, **David** and **Gamboa** – boasts all the big city pleasures you could desire. Bars and restaurants, theatres and cinemas, live bands and concert halls, art galleries and shopping, local markets and craft stores. Try the **Calle Uruguay** district for nightlife in Panama City.

Dining is also exceptional – try a feast of beef, chicken, fish with rice and beans, colourful salads of beet, carrot or cabbage, potatoes and pasta and, of course, fresh fruits like mango, papaya and passion fruit. Yet the price may only be about \$10 a person. Stick to the local wine and do try the national beers, **Balboa** and **Atlas**.

Finally, as you relax and digest your meal, order some world-famous Panama coffee while you enjoy the mild evening temperatures, watching the brilliant sunset over one ocean or another. In Panama, the choice is yours.

Maybe it's time to broaden your travel horizons and discover something new. New – yet so near. ▣

Debra Conkey

“Don’t Cry for Me Argentina” is more than a song from the musical *Evita*. It’s part of the epitaph for Evita Peron, the country’s still beloved defender of the humble and poor. But after experiencing **Patagonia** in southern Argentina – encompassing some of the most pristine landscapes on the planet – along with European-flavoured **Buenos Aires** and the powerful rumble of **Iguazu Falls**, we nearly shed a tear or two upon departure.

We visited Evita’s simple black granite vault in the architecturally and historically rich **Recoleta Cemetery**, final resting place for the elite (who tried to keep Evita out), whose numbers include famous authors, presidents, generals, architects and poets.

Though Buenos Aires was delightful – we drank Malbec wine at **La Biela Café**, enjoyed grilled baby squid and homemade pasta at the hopping Italian restaurant **Sottorore** and explored the historic **Plaza de Mayo** and neighbourhoods like colourful **La Boca** and the happening **Palermo Viejo** – I came to Argentina for the far-flung landscapes of Patagonia, which comprises roughly the bottom third of the country and part of southern Chile.

We walked among the penguins of **Punta Tombo** along the beaches of the Atlantic coast, trekked atop the dazzling blue **Perito Moreno Glacier** in **Los Glaciares National Park** in southern Patagonia and photographed the jaw-dropping glacial peaks of the **Fitz Roy mountain range** in the **Andes** at the northern end of the park.

The remote wilderness inspired explorer Fernando Magellan in 1520 and opened the country to trade and plunder; thus, we have Magellan Strait, Magellanic penguins, Magellanic woodpeckers and the subalpine Magellanic forest.

Long inaccessible for all but the most intrepid, Patagonia has grown more popular due to the development of ecotourism – and new airports – as well as a favourable exchange rate (3 pesos equals \$1 CAD – Patagonia was once South America’s most expensive destination). Backpacking is not a requirement for entry these days. Adventure travel is a growing niche for families and soft adventurers alike. For those who want to experience something truly wild and spectacular, Patagonia is the ticket. You can choose from inexpensive hotels and guesthouses, or luxury accommodations. Popular cruise lines also ply the local waters.

PATAG ADVENTURE



PUNTA TOMBO PENGUIN PRESERVE Trelew, two hours from Buenos Aires by plane, is the jumping off point to Punta Tombo, which has roughly 200,000 breeding pairs of Magellanic penguins, making it the world’s largest colony. Our guide, Janet Monsalve, and driver, Carlos Solvas, met us at the airport and we drove for two and a half hours to the remote preserve. Our first glimpse was amazing – one foot-high fellow opened his short flippers wide, as if to bless his penguin pals. Some rested on the beach, others did flips in the waves, and many brayed when interlopers tried to encroach upon the nests burrowed beneath the straggly bushes. Slowly, I took in thousands of penguins, as far as the eye could see.

According to Monsalve, the males return to Punta Tombo to prepare the nests at the end of August, with the females following two weeks later. “They choose the same nest every year,” she said. “The pairs are monogamous and some spend 20 years together.”

We walked on boardwalks surrounded by the masked black and white creatures and fuzzy moulting chicks. One penguin walked right up to me, gazing upward, squinting and tilting its head from side to side. Apparently, they don’t see well out of water.

University of Washington researcher Dr. Dee Boersma has been studying the penguins here for more than 25 years. According to her website, the penguin population in South America is declining at a rate of 10 percent per decade due to multiple factors, including global warming, competition with commercial fishing companies that ‘vacuum’ the ocean floor, depleting smaller fish like sardines and krill, and the dumping of plastics and petroleum into the ocean (now rare in the area). Boersma’s research not only helps the penguins, but humans too, since according to Boersma, “penguin species are marine sentinels for [the health of] southern oceans.”

After wrapping up our penguin visit, we stopped in **Gaiman**, a Welsh colony known for its teahouses. Make sure you try the cakes at **Ty Te Caerdydd** – they were good enough for Princess Diana, who enjoyed them during a visit here in 1995.

The next day, we toured upper **Puerto Madryn**, our base for three nights, and then travelled to **Peninsula Valdez**, a UNESCO site famous for southern right whales in the winter and thousands of elephant seals and sea lions. We also stopped to view the orcas and seals at **Punta Norte**. Throughout the day,

ONIAN



our eagle-eyed driver helped us spot an armadillo, grey fox, the rabbit-like mara, black eagle, the dusky dolphin, cormorants, ostrich-like rhea, elephant seals and a variety of birds. We marvelled at a herd of guanacos – relatives of the camel – galloping beside our van along the dirt road.

We returned to Punta Tombo the following day. Near dusk, thousands of penguins stood like sentinels in their nests, with the green grassy slopes and rocky steppe softly backlit and serene. When two guanacos walked into the setting along **Punta Tombo Bay**, it became picture perfect. Two penguins touched, as if to hold hands. Others waddled in from the sea with vital food for their chicks. All was well in the penguin world.

EL CALAFATE - PERITO MORENO GLACIER

The next day, we flew two hours south to **El Calafate**, a stopover in the 1930s for wagons transporting wool from *estancias*, or ranches. The town is the gateway to another UNESCO site, Los Glaciares National Park, which runs 350 kilometres along the Andes and is part of the **Patagonian Ice Field**, second in size only to Antarctica.

Our destination: **Perito Moreno Glacier**, one of the few glaciers in the world that's not receding. A boat took us across 15,000-year-old **Lago Argentino** – the largest lake in Argentina – and we watched massive chunks of ice crack off the 55-metre-high and three-mile-wide glacier wall.

Upon landing, we trekked through a forest, ate lunch and then donned crampons that would allow for steep 45-degree ascents. Two guides stood in front of the deep blue crevasses as we carefully stomped by. People of all ages and abilities climbed stairways of ice, stood in front of ice caves and survived slick descents. Our reward was a sip of Famous Grouse scotch poured over ancient ice chips. That night, we dragged our sore muscles out for live music at an El Calafate restaurant called **Los Alamos**. We were in good company. Two women were interpreters for the United Nations, others hailed from New Zealand. We were from California. A pharmacist was from Argentina and a geologist and marketing specialist from Spain. We toasted each other, ate pizza, traded email addresses and signed everyone's journals. The overarching theme of the scribbled messages: "Friends forever, one world."

EL CHALTÉN - TREKKING CAPITAL

The next morning, we boarded a large, comfortable bus for the four-hour trip to **El Chaltén**, built in 1985. The newest town in Argentina is the gateway to the jaggedly spectacular Fitz Roy mountain range at the northern extreme of Los Glaciares. The village, lined with dirt roads and metal-roofed buildings, looks like a 100-year-old Yukon Territory frontier town. But the setting is stunning, and the food, divine.

One evening, the chef at **El Muro** surprisingly offered up a plate of perfectly presented stir-fried vegetables – fat slivers of pumpkin and vegetables topped with pumpkin seeds, along with grass-fed Argentine steak for \$8 CAD (we never had a bad steak – ever), baked potato wedges brushed with olive oil and a starter of toast with an eggplant spread.

At centre stage are two of the most dramatic granite peaks in the world, **Mt. Fitz Roy** at 3,375 metres and **Mt. Cerro Torre** at 3,102 metres, which tower above the town. We were lucky. In three days, we had clear views of both peaks, which is unusual except in March when we were there. I hiked – albeit very slowly – to the Cerro Torre lookout, where I took pictures of fellow trekkers, with the icy, spiky-peaked wonder in the background.

Every day, we rose at sunrise and waited at sunset to photograph the pinkish alpenglow, a swirl of lenticular clouds and dominating burnt orange peaks. One day, we simply sat in our hotel, gazing out a picture window at the mountain range. We relaxed, chatted with the staff and read books before heading out for another culinary treat.

We ended our trip in Buenos Aires, but first spent several nights in Iguazu Falls, another UNESCO site north of Buenos Aires. Iguazu is a magical place with hundreds of waterfalls in a rainforest of butterflies that will land on your face if you let them. Walking the boardwalks was fun, but the highlight was taking a motorized raft into the largest waterfall, **Devil's Throat**, where we got soaked. Interestingly, my sore muscles stopped hurting for several hours after the dunking – I'm sure due to the endorphins caused by laughing so hard my stomach ached. ▣

To help you plan a custom itinerary, or book a South American tour or cruise, contact your Ensemble Travel® agent.

Explore the world in style with Princess.®



EXCLUSIVE OFFER:
Receive up to
\$50 ONBOARD
CREDIT†

**BOOK BY OCTOBER 31, 2009 AND ENJOY GREAT SAVINGS AND EXCITING EXTRAS!
INCLUDING REDUCED DEPOSIT OF \$100 PER PERSON & ONBOARD VALUE COUPON BOOKLET WORTH UP TO \$325.**

7-Day Mexican Riviera Cruise

Sapphire Princess® | Roundtrip Los Angeles – 4/3/10

balcony fares from
\$1,149*

14-Day Caribbean Collection

Grand Princess® | Roundtrip Ft. Lauderdale – 3/12/10

balcony fares from
\$2,184*

15-Day Panama Canal Cruise

Sea Princess® | Ft. Lauderdale to San Francisco – 5/7/10

balcony fares from
\$2,644*

For more information, contact your
Ensemble Travel® Group agency.



PRINCESS CRUISES
escape completely®

*Fares in CDN, per person, based on double occupancy, cruise only, subject to availability, and capacity controlled. \$1149 fare is based on category BF, Sapphire Princess, 4/3/10. \$2184 fare is based on category BF, Grand Princess, 3/12/10. \$2644 fare is based on category BF, Sea Princess, 5/7/10. Government fees and taxes of up to \$2572 per person are additional. Princess reserves the right to impose a fuel supplement of up to \$9 per person per day on all passengers if the NYMEX oil price exceeds \$70 per barrel, even if the fare has already been paid in full. †\$50 maximum shipboard credit is per cabin, based on double occupancy, available only on 4/3/10 Sapphire Princess. Amenities may vary per sailing. Coupon book available on select dates, for new bookings only made from 10/1-10/31/09. Coupon book limited to the first two passengers in cabin only. There is no cash value for unused coupons. Coupons are nontransferable and are not combinable with some discounted fares. Some restrictions apply. Coupons shown reflect voyages in 2009. Coupons for 2010 may vary. Prices and discounts are quoted in U.S. dollars. Coupon book offers are based on current Onboard Value Booklet which is subject to change. Applicable on voyages of 7 days or longer. Reduced deposit applies to each of the first two passengers in a stateroom. *\$100 deposit does not apply to the World Cruises and 45+ day World Cruise Segments. The deposit for the World Cruises and 45+ day World Cruise Segments is 5% of the cruise fare. Not combinable with Flash Promotions. See applicable Princess brochure for terms, conditions and definitions that apply to all bookings. Other restrictions may apply. ©2009 Princess Cruises. Ships of Bermudan and British registry.

A woman with dark hair is lying on her stomach on a massage table, receiving a massage from a therapist with blonde hair. They are outdoors, with a large palm tree on the left and the ocean in the background. The therapist is wearing a white short-sleeved shirt. The woman being massaged is wearing a light-colored top. The scene is set against a bright, clear sky.

Bonne Santé

Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

Introduction

Bonne Santé

Re-energize your senses, reinvigorate your spirit, rejuvenate your soul.

By the time most of us get on the plane for that much-awaited vacation, we are mentally and physically drained. Cold weather, grey skies, the never-ending demands on our time, and constant deadlines and projects increase our stress to critical levels. It is no surprise that most of us need more than sand and surf to restore our mental and physical well-being.

Over the years, a new concept in travel has become very appealing: health and wellness travel, which we refer to as Bonne Santé. For women, health and wellness is mostly associated with a spa vacation or a spiritual experience, while many men prefer a golf getaway with a few close friends as a way to combat stress and fatigue. Whatever your idea of rest and relaxation, here are some ideas and suggestions to help you cope with the long winter ahead.

If the Caribbean or Mexico is on the horizon this year, most resorts now feature spa services. In the higher-end properties, world-renowned spas are now a main attraction, offering various services from basic to highly complex therapeutic remedies. Golf courses are also a staple at most destinations.



If you prefer to visit Europe or the Middle East, you might want to enjoy some natural therapeutic sources, such as the mineral-rich waters of the natural mud pools of the Dead Sea in Israel, or perhaps the sulphur springs of the Sea of Galilee.

For those seeking a more spiritual experience, there is a vast array of religious pilgrimages that take you to holy sites around the world, such as a long stay at one of India's many ashrams or a hike to a sacred location such as Machu Picchu.

Whatever option you choose, you can rest assured that a vacation focusing on rejuvenating body, mind and soul is often the best medicine to combat the stress of modern life and restore a sense of balance.

Bonne Santé!



BONNE SANTÉ

 ENSEMBLE TRAVEL Group
Experience that takes you places





Restoring Body and Soul

Palladium Resorts Vacationers know they can count on this renowned hotel chain, home of **Renova Spas**, to provide the ultimate in relaxation and pampering. At Renova Spas, beauty, health and spirit come together in perfect harmony, making every vacation an opportunity for rest and renewal. Round out your fun-filled holiday with top of the line spa services by highly trained staff in tranquil surroundings. Restore your body and your soul. Vacation in paradise.



It's a beautiful world

For more details, see the Transat Holidays 2009-2010 Sun Brochure or visit your Ensemble Travel® Group agency.



Israel

Relax, Refresh and Restore Your Senses

Israel is truly a land of contrasts, where ancient sites and religious icons stand side by side with modern structures. The rich heritage of the region and its importance for several major world religions, along with an abundance of archaeological sites, a sun-drenched climate and its natural beauty, make it one of the top must-see destinations.

One of Israel's unique destinations is undoubtedly the **Dead Sea**. At 400 metres below sea level, it is the lowest place on Earth and one of the saltiest on the planet. The high mineral content is believed to offer therapeutic benefits and throughout history the area has been coveted. Cleopatra encouraged Mark Antony to conquer the Dead Sea in order to have access to the balsam forests, which were used to produce cosmetics and perfumes, items highly valued by the Egyptian elite of the era. The Romans recognized the medicinal benefits of the water and had it imported to Italy. A low pollen and allergen content in the atmosphere and rich mineral deposits combine with the climate to create the perfect conditions for a therapeutic paradise.

Not surprisingly, the region features some of the best spas in the world:

Ein Gedi Spa and Resort Hotel

Like an oasis in the **Judean Desert**, the **Ein Gedi Spa and Resort** overlooks the Dead Sea and the Moab Mountains. The sulphur pools, great for detoxing the body, are constantly refreshed with mineral-rich



BONNE SANTÉ



66 Israel's sun-drenched climate and its natural beauty make it one of the top must-see destinations. 99

mountain spring water, while therapeutic black mud is widely used as a treatment for joint and skin diseases. The emphasis here is on complete relaxation: just 15 minutes of floating in the natural hot springs lowers blood pressure and reduces tension. Follow this up with a nap in the relaxation room or a skilled massage for maximum rejuvenation of body and soul.

The cradle of Christianity, **Galilee** is also a popular vacation destination for Israelis and world travellers who come here for the beautiful scenery and fine cuisine, as well as the renowned healing capabilities of its waters. Israel's largest freshwater lake, the **Sea of Galilee** (Lake Kinneret) is a sparkling sapphire surrounded by a paradise of trees, shrubs and wildflowers. Its lakeside promenade draws visitors year-round. The natural beauty of the region, the relics from Biblical times and an incredible selection of world-renowned spas make this a sanctuary in every sense of the word.

Tiberias Hot Springs

Located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, the **Tiberias Hot Springs Spa** offers 17 mineral-rich hot springs as well as an abundance of piloma mud, known for its skin-rejuvenating qualities. Treatment options include the thermo mineral pools that provide a host of therapeutic benefits, piloma mud pools, luxurious body treatments, ancient Turkish baths (*hamam*) as well as a health centre that features therapies for rheumatism, backache and joint pain.

Whether you seek the healing properties of the Dead Sea or the pastoral beauty and tranquility of Galilee, you can be sure that your visit will be an unforgettable one.

Ask us about these and other spa vacations to Israel.



You'll love Israel
from the first
“Shalom.”

Who can say “Shalom” more eloquently than Maya Weiser? She found her first love – dance – when she was six. She became a member of the Bat Sheva Dance Company, performing in the beautiful Susanne Delall Center in Tel Aviv, and at New York’s Lincoln Center. Recently she found a second love – saving the animals – so she is studying animal science at Hebrew University. Her next love? A considerable number of young men have their hopes up. Meanwhile, she dances and lives with her cat in the same Tel Aviv apartment where her father grew up. Israel. We hope to see you soon. Shalom!

On the beach at Tel Aviv

www.goisrael.ca
416-964-3784

ISRAEL
NO ONE BELONGS HERE MORE
THAN YOU.

Eco-Spas

Pampering with a Healthy Dose of Culture

CHRIS RYALL

Add a dash of culture to your Mexican, Caribbean and South American spa retreats.

Beads of sweat blanket my fiery hot body. Gerardo, our gentle shaman, instructs us to focus on reconnecting with our soul and the universe at large. I truly want to connect with my soul but my body feels like a human oven desperate for a chilled Mexican beer.

Welcome to my first *temazcal* experience, an ancient purification ceremony. *Temazcal* is the Nahuatl word for 'house of heat.' Constructed of concrete, our dome-like *temazcal* has a pit in the middle where large smouldering volcanic rocks are placed. Sitting on straw mats next to each other in a tight circle and wearing bathing suits and bikinis, we are slathered with Mayan marine mud to open up our pores. Let the baking begin. In total darkness we listen, we learn, we chant, we dance, we hug and yes, we sweat – for me, five pounds' worth.

For more than 20 years I've satisfied my spa passion (family and friends use a less flattering word: addiction) visiting different spas around the world. Whether it's a caviar facial, chocolate bean polish or Navajo sweat lodge ceremony, one factor motivates me: a soothing treatment that uses local ingredients and incorporates some local



culture or healing technique. And for those travelling to Mexico, the Caribbean or South America, you will find a healthy portion of culture on the spa menu.

Hacienda Tres Rios, a new all-inclusive eco-resort that opened in 2008, is located about 40 kilometres south of Cancún on 325 acres of a nature preserve. It's hard to imagine eco and all-inclusive in the same sentence, but Hacienda Tres Rios incorporates Mayan and other distinct Mexican cultures in its activities, cuisine and practices.

In such a pristine setting it was only natural that my first spa treatment take place next to a *cenote*, a natural spring, which in Mayan culture is believed to be the gateway to the underworld. Milca, my massage therapist, beckons me with her skilled hands. Only the chirping of birds and Milca's occasional melodic whisper break the silence. Later I move indoors to **Ya'ax Ché Spa**, which

“We are slathered with Mayan marine mud to open up our pores. Let the baking begin.”

translates as 'Mayan tree of life.' I observe my own tree trunk-like body and it obviously needs some purifying and shaping! Milca continues her skilled ways with a 'Richness of the Earth' treatment, utilizing local marine mud and various tree resins to help rid my body of its rat-race induced toxins.

The Caribbean, like Mexico, is blessed with as many spas as there are beaches. They range from grand 30,000-square-foot luxury edifices to more intimate – but no less satisfying – boutique environments.



Sandy Lane Hotel in Barbados has been a Caribbean favourite since 1961, not least for providing exceptional guest service. It recently reopened its Romanesque-style spa featuring 11 luxury spa suites. Combining traditional therapies from the Caribbean, the Far East and Europe, it's no wonder the spa is already popular with guests from around the world, including many celebrities and royalty. Soothe the stress away with a Bajan head massage, which uses ylang ylang and West Indian bay blended with murumura, jojoba and patchouli. It smells so good you may never want to wash your hair again.

“It smells so good you may never want to wash your hair again.”



On the island of **Anguilla**, the **CuisinArt Resort & Spa** is home to the new 27,000-square-foot Mediterranean-inspired **Venus Spa and Fitness Centre**. A member of *The Leading Hotels of the World*, CuisinArt boasts the world's only on-site hydroponic farm, which produces fresh vegetables, herbs and flowers that are harvested for both its

cuisine and spa treatments. Indulge in the hydroponic cocktail treatment: fresh scrub bar, organic garden fresh wrap and exotic essential oil aromatherapy massage. Less fragrant, but equally relaxing, is the warmed seashell massage. If you tip well they might even let you keep the shells!

Sometimes my family budget isn't in synch with my spa budget. That's when beach massages come in handy. In **Cartagena**, I enjoyed a daily massage on the beach. With her trusty tote bag of massage oils, the masseuse kneaded out the kinks for me under a makeshift open-air hut. Forget the frills, and any privacy: the massage was delivered while surrounded by her various family members. But at least it came cheap – \$20 an hour. Be wary of the hucksters and you'll find it an inexpensive option.

As yet another way to discover a destination's culture, explore the rich variety of treatments and spas available in Mexico, the Caribbean and South America. Your body, mind and spirit will thank you.

The Spa Experience – It's All About You, So Make the Most of It

What to Wear: Some spas are more relaxed, but any professional spa will drape you appropriately. Wear a bathing suit or underwear if it makes you more comfortable.

Tipping: More spas now include it in the service price; typically it's 15% – 20%.

Show Up Early: Resort spas aren't cheap; show up at least 30 minutes prior to the treatment to make use of all the spa facilities or to fill out any paperwork.

Communicate: Don't be afraid to tell your therapist to increase or decrease pressure or if you dislike the music, if the lighting is too bright or too dark, etc.

Discover: Ask your therapist about the ingredients used (for example, are they local?) and their therapeutic benefits.

Beach Massages: Observe and check first to make sure the person is legitimate and don't hand over the money right away (cash only). They probably aren't licenced therapists but you're not paying the price for one either – so don't expect formality.

Booking a Spa: Ensemble Travel® agencies are experts in spa vacations. Ensemble has negotiated exclusive money-saving and added-value benefits for our clients, which may include up to \$100 in spa credits, rounds of golf, welcoming flowers/wine and food/beverage credits. Visit your local Ensemble Travel® agency for full details.



Sensatori Azul, by Karisma, Riviera Maya, Mexico EXCLUSIVE with Signature Vacations



Refresh yourself!

... with **GOURMET INCLUSIVE** luxury.



| Pool & beachside waiter service as well as the benefits of 24-hour Room & Concierge Service | All Suites accommodations ranging from elegant Junior Suites to Swim-up Suites and In-pool Jacuzzi Suites | Fully serviced Spa offering tailored massages for couples, bridal parties and expectant mothers | All à la carte dining from 6 gourmet restaurants plus in-room & beachfront romantic dining opportunities



Refresh yourself!

While all reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this ad, Signature Vacations accepts no responsibility for actions, errors or omissions arising from the readers use of the information howsoever caused. Signature Vacations, a division of First Choice Canada Inc., 1685 Tech Ave., Unit #2, Mississauga, L4W 0A7, ON Reg #50014683, BC Reg #3043, QUE Reg #800231.



Jamaica

Jamaican Triple Treat

ANITA DRAYCOTT

Jamaica swings an 'ace' with three of its best golf courses located just 15 minutes from Montego Bay's Sangster International Airport. The Rose Hall Golf Association includes the Half Moon, White Witch and Cinnamon Hill courses, all within minutes of each other. All offer stay-and-play packages.

Bewitched

Just down the road at **The Ritz-Carlton Golf & Spa Resort**, the **White Witch**, designed by Robert von Hagge and Rick Baril, will cast its spell on golfers. Its 'beauty-and-the-beast' allure starts on the spectacular 550-yard par-5 first hole, which requires an elevated tee shot, with sensational views of the Caribbean, down to the fairway 250 feet below. The course is named after Annie Palmer, the 'White Witch,' who owned the Rose Hall sugar plantation on which it was built. Annie was a ruthless beauty who, as the story goes, murdered her three husbands.

66 Generous fairways shaped by stately royal palms, plenty of bunkers to catch errant shots and NO silly gimmicks.



99



How Sweet It Is

Playing **Cinnamon Hill** is like a swing through history. On Number 15 you putt alongside the waterfall where Elizabeth Barrett Browning is said to have penned, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." Number 14 passes the house where singer Johnny Cash lived for 30 years. An ancient aqueduct winding through the course is a reminder that this was part of an 18th-century sugar plantation. There's also a Canadian connection: Robert Ames, brother of PGA touring pro Stephen, is the director of golf.

Over the Moon

In 2008 **Half Moon** was named 'Golf Resort of the Year' (in the Rest of the World category) by the International Association of Golf Tour Operators.

I played a round with golf director, Ewan Pebbles, on the meticulously manicured 7,119-yard course originally designed by Robert Trent Jones, Sr. It's classic Jones

at his best, with generous fairways shaped by stately royal palms, plenty of bunkers to catch errant shots and no silly gimmicks. The Scottish-born Pebbles has recently opened the resort's own golf academy. The staff mission at Half Moon is "we try to exceed guests' expectations." Mission accomplished.





Caribbean Cruise Packages...lowest price guaranteed

Offering **7 and 10 night
cruise packages**
from **San Juan**, Puerto Rico
and **Ft. Lauderdale**, Florida
aboard Caribbean Princess
and MSC Poesia



FROM SAN JUAN - INTERIOR CABIN
SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN EXPLORER: JAN 17, 31
CLASSIC SOUTHERN CARIBBEAN: JAN 10, 24

\$1269

+ \$590 taxes

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR ENSEMBLE TRAVEL® GROUP AGENCY TO BOOK
AND TO RECEIVE OUR NEW 2009/10 CRUISE BROCHURE**

Price shown is per person in Cdn dollars, based on double occupancy and include airfare from Toronto, cruise fare, transfers, onboard meals, entertainment and gratuities for cabin stewards and dining room staff. Cruise package durations may vary by cruise line.

Slim Pickings

MICHELE SPONAGLE

With a smart diet strategy, vacationing and weight gain don't necessarily go hand-in-hand.

Along with sightseeing and shopping, your next trip is likely to include wineing and dining, too. But there's nothing that douses post-vacation euphoria faster than stepping on the scale and seeing the proof of added pounds. That doesn't have to be the case, according to **Christine Avanti**, nutritionist and author of *Skinny Chicks Don't Eat Salads* (Rodale, 2009). A little planning and adopting some new habits will ensure your holiday is enjoyable and full of guilt-free eating.

Why is it so difficult for us to stick to healthy eating habits while travelling?

When we're on vacation, we are completely off our regular routine. Sleeping and eating patterns are dramatically altered, and thus our eating schedule and habits become irregular. Many people like to mentally tune out of the norm and treat themselves to different pleasures – food being the most popular indulgence. I think we tell ourselves that it's okay because we don't normally eat this way, so why not enjoy our vacation to the fullest?

Top Tips for Keeping Weight Gain at Bay

Don't skip meals. Try to eat every four hours. If that's not possible, pack a healthy snack so you are not starving and ready to devour everything in sight at your next sit-down meal.

Keep healthier snacks on hand, such as energy bars from Cliff, Luna or Go Organic, turkey or salmon jerky, or dried fruit and raw nuts.

When dining out, **opt for grilled fish, poultry or lean cuts of beef** such as filet mignon or beef tenderloin. Add a healthy carbohydrate like brown or wild rice, a baked yam, a baked potato or a bowl of fruit. Finally, add fresh or steamed veggies to your meal.

Avoid restaurant salads because they tend to be extremely high in fat and low in carbs, which can cause sugar cravings later. If you want to enjoy one, hold the dressing and try vinegar, citrus juice, soy sauce, ponzu sauce or salsa instead.



“When you get off the plane, avoid the temptation to eat at the first fast food spot you see.”

Secondly, we cut entire nutrient groups, primarily carbohydrates, and then end up bingeing on them later. Low-carb dieting never works in the long term.

We eventually eat carbohydrate-loaded foods because carbs are the body's main fuel source for the brain and nervous system.

When we're overly hungry, we tend to grab fast, unhealthy food. What are some better options for handling a rumbling tummy during a holiday?

If you are going on a road trip, I recommend packing a mini-cooler of healthy sandwiches, filtered water and fresh fruit. If you're flying, you can pack a brown bag lunch instead of succumbing to the salted nuts and preservative-laden packaged snacks the airlines offer. When you get off the plane, avoid the temptation to eat at the first fast food spot you see.

If you don't have other options, check my healthy 'Fast Food Guide' on my website (www.christineavanti.com). The guide outlines the best and worst fast food meals at most major chains.

What are the most common mistakes we make trying to be 'good' on a diet?

There are two common mistakes. First, we starve all day with the intention of saving our calorie expenditure for one huge meal in the evening. This meal usually becomes the calorie equivalent of five meals. The body cannot possibly burn all of those calories in one sitting so it stores unused calories as fat. It's better to eat small meals throughout the day.



Watch out for sneaky calories in the form of heavy cheeses, fried meats, nuts and croutons. Choose 'good' carbohydrates like fresh fruit, steamed rice, beans or a baked potato to help you feel satiated. That will help keep away cravings later on.



Worldly Delights: St. Croix



©TED DAVIS

Gastronomy and eco-farming make the tiny island of St. Croix a serious contender in the culinary world
Stephanie Ortenzi

Along with the aquamarine waters we imagine when we think of the Caribbean, or the lush, less-travelled tropical groves inland, the islands also have no shortage of great cooks. Their food may feature **floral black peppercorns**, **sweet curries** with a long African and Asian lineage, and **fruits** as sumptuous and rich as moist pieces of tender meat.

To honour Caribbean fare, St. Croix stages an annual **Food and Wine Experience**, an elegant, week-long bacchanal organized into imaginative and ambitious programs that bring together chefs, vintners, restaurateurs and epicures.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary in April, the festival begins with a three-restaurant crawl for a wine-matched course at each. **Champagne** accompanies dessert to make the meal's finale even grander.

Difficult choices begin to emerge on the second and third evenings. There are two wine dinners hosted by another two restaurants, and on the third day there's a chef's cooking demonstration that brings to mind a twist on an old adage: you can present a gastronome with numerous opportunities to eat inspired meals, or you can teach her to make them herself and enjoy the experience again and again.

Then comes the jewel in the crown of the food festival: a cooking competition representing 55 island restaurants from **St. Croix, St. Thomas, St. John, Water Island, Puerto Rico** and **Tortola**.

Taking a prize for one of his plates is one of St. Croix's shining culinary lights, **Brian Wisbauer**, executive chef of **Zebo's Wine Bar and Restaurant**.

Wisbauer is a New Jersey native who cut his teeth cooking in Manhattan eateries before making St. Croix his home. Wisbauer brings an adventurous sensibility to his cooking. He gets a lot of attention for his truffled macaroni 'n' cheese, but his true strength is his use of indigenous ingredients, like the papaya and local honey in his dish for another cooking competition earlier in the month. Wisbauer crusts **red snapper** with grated **cassava**, and stews it with **tomato, coconut water** and local **honey**. The finishing touches to this plate are a classical French-inspired **quenelle** made of **chicken** and **papaya**, and what he calls 'egg salad,' essentially a cream-rich **frittata**; julienned, tossed with herbs and dusted with toasted coconut, with the fish's braising liquid as its dressing.

On the fifth day comes the **Cork & Fork** series of wine dinners. It's worth noting the jaw-dropper first, the coveted \$1,000 per plate dinner priced to match the calibre of the food, wine and venue, and the company you'll be keeping during dinner. This past April, guests broke bread with Iron Chef **Kevin Rathbun** from Atlanta, and Mondavi vintner **Gustavo Gonzalez** from Napa.

The next two Cork & Fork dinners are held in private homes, and they sell for \$500 or \$750 per plate, once again reflecting the luxury of both the ingredients and the venue.

Finally, for \$250 per plate, dinner is served at the **Creque Dam Farm**, in the 84-square-mile island's northeast, arrived at by way of a winding drive through a

rainforest. The organic farm has 100 acres of rolling hills, and it's the heart and soul of the **Virgin Islands Sustainable Farm Institute**, which calls St. Croix home.

Appropriately, both the institute and the farm are completely solar powered and off the grid. The farm takes on interns and apprentices who come to learn about sustainability. Forestry, community-shared agriculture, food production, environmental chemistry, gravity irrigation and biodiesel technology are some examples of the expertise on the institute's team.

Founder **Ben Jones** got started with his own five acres of chilies in his native Georgia. He also eco-farmed extensively in Ecuador and Cuba. Jones began planting on St. Croix in 2003, while developing the institute's infrastructure as a learning institution and an agricultural and ecotourism hub. The institute offers U.S. college-accredited studies in anthropology, ecology, forestry, and soil and crop sciences.

On the culinary map of the St. Croix Food and Wine Experience, Creque Dam Farm offers something you can't get anywhere else. In the case of a Cork & Fork dinner, there's gastronomy with the surround-sound of a rainforest. Apart from the food festival, the institute hosts a 'farm stay' in a private solar-powered cabana constructed from local sustainable wood. There is of course a gastronomic component: a romantic meal in the field, prepared by a chef. The Caribbean gets its due credit for the richness of its island beauty, and the meal tastes simply delicious.

Worldly Delights: Recipe

Menu

Braised Cassava-Crusted Red Snapper *Papaya-Chicken Quenelle* *Caribbean 'Egg Salad'*

Serves 2

Cassava-Crusted Red Snapper

2 red snapper fillets (5 oz), skin on, scaled, deboned
¼ cup grated fresh cassava
2 tsp all-purpose flour
1 egg yolk
2 cups fresh coconut milk
1 tbsp honey
⅓ cup tomato pulp and seeds, no skin
salt and pepper to taste

Season both sides of fillets and lightly brush with egg yolk. Pack a generous amount of grated cassava on the skin side. Lightly flour the top and pan fry on medium-high heat until golden brown, about 1½ minutes. Turn the fish over and turn the heat down to low. Combine coconut milk, tomato and honey. Add to the pan around the fish and stew for four minutes. Turn off heat and leave the fish in the hot pan.

Papaya-Chicken Quenelle

6 oz boneless, skinless chicken breast, medium dice
2 egg whites
3 oz diced papaya
2 tbsp corn starch
2 tsp sliced scallions
2 cups vegetable oil for deep-frying
salt and pepper to taste

Bring three quarts of lightly salted water to a simmer. Purée all the ingredients in a food processor to the consistency of peanut butter. Form two evenly shaped quenelles, a three-sided oval made by shaping the mixture with two spoons. Drop them into the simmering water, cook for four minutes and drain. When cool enough to handle, roll the quenelles in cornstarch, deep fry, drain and keep warm.

'Egg Salad'

3 whole eggs, beaten
3 tbsp thinly sliced scallions
½ cup diced tomato, seeds removed
1 tsp each of diced mint, basil and cilantro
1 tbsp heavy cream
2 tbsp toasted coconut
salt and pepper to taste

Whip cream into the beaten eggs. Cook in two teaspoons of butter in a non-stick pan until firm and without colour, and turn over onto paper towel. When cooled, slice into ribbons and place in a bowl with all the other ingredients, except for the coconut.

To assemble

Set the snapper in a pool of its braising liquid, some 'egg salad' on the side, with the quenelle on top of the egg and a sprinkling of toasted coconut to finish.

Worldly Delights: Southern Comforts



A world-weary traveller can't settle for a gin and tonic, and vodka is *so* last decade. Here are the spirits of choice for hip people – or those looking to try something new.

But handle with care – *cachaça*, *pingo* and *tequila* can make you suave or make you cry.

Nick Keukenmeester



TEQUILA

The name 'tequila' comes from the region where most of the good stuff is made. That's in Mexico for the geographically challenged. Tequila is made not from cactus as people tend to assume, but from another succulent altogether. This is the exotic-sounding **blue agave**. That's the good stuff, anyway. The cheap stuff gets 49% of its sugar from other sources like...well...sugar.

There are three main styles of tequila. You get clear **blanco** or '**silver**' tequila, which is fairly bland like most white spirits. (Sorry, vodka lovers!) Then there is **añejo** at the other end of the spectrum. It is aged in oak for at least one year and it is the most expensive. However, the oak can overpower tequila's natural aromas and flavours. Lastly, you get **reposado**.

For me this is the real stuff. Reposado means 'rested' and it spends between two and 12 months in oak and has a hint of colour. It is best served neat or in a margarita. Look for the **Patrón** and **Cazadores** brands at the 100% blue agave end of the market.

CACHAÇA

Cachaça (pronounced 'ka-sha-sa') has its home in Brazil and most of it is drunk there. It is (like rum) the product of distilled sugar cane. It differs from rum in that it is not made from molasses, but from the juice of the cane itself. It can be aged in oak (gold) or bottled immediately (white).

Caipirinha (pronounced 'ky-pa-reen-ya') is the national cocktail of Brazil and one of my favourites. It is both refreshing and full of flavour. Don't use aged cachaça for this. Stick to the 'white' cachaça. To make a caipirinha, combine 20 ml of sugar syrup and half a cut and smashed up lime (cut into sections and use a muddler). Cover in crushed ice and add about 50 ml of cachaça.

The **Sagatiba** brand gets a hard time from connoisseurs for being too commercial, but I find the quality to be high. Standard pricing in Canada is between \$37 and \$40, but the LCBO is currently selling it for \$29.99.

PISCO

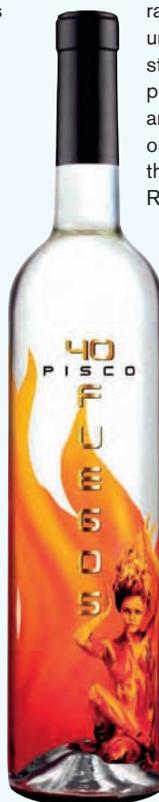
A friend of mine told me that a few years ago she and a boyfriend vacationed in the jungles of Peru. He could handle his drink well and one afternoon she went for a nap, leaving him by the pool in the company of a local sergeant major. They were drinking **pisco sours**. When she returned she found him blathering and the sergeant major said they'd had a wonderful discussion. She found this surprising since the sergeant major spoke no English and her boyfriend spoke no Spanish.

Chile and Peru have been disputing the home of 'genuine' pisco (pronounced 'pees-ko') for generations, though there is considerable evidence that it was created in the latter country, brought by the Spaniards who colonized Peru. After the gold rush and up until the 1970s, before political upheaval in Peru nearly devastated the production of the spirit, pisco was the most popular drink in San Francisco. For many years after it fell into disfavour, even

among Peruvians, and earned a rather nasty reputation. It wasn't until recently that entrepreneurs started buying back land and producing pisco according to artisanal traditions. As the quality once again improves, helped by the government-run body Consejo Regulador del Pisco (CRP),

which oversees its production, pisco is slowly reclaiming its popularity and pisco-based drinks are popping up in bars around the world.

If you're in the mood to try it, or it's the first Saturday in February (**National Pisco Sour Day** in Peru), here is how you make a pisco sour. Mix 60 ml of pisco, 30 ml of lime juice, 1 egg white, 25 ml of sugar syrup and a dash of bitters (preferably local or **Angostura** if Peruvian is not available). Feel free to adjust the quantities, but don't substitute lemon for lime juice. Shake it over ice before serving. It should froth. ▣



Worldly Delights: Jamaica: from Jerk to Java

Anita Draycott steps into the kitchens of Jamaica and finds that she can stand the heat



"White men *can* jerk," insists chef **Walter Staib**, a self-confessed expert on Jamaican food and the culinary ambassador to Sandals Resorts.

Indeed, the German-born chef, who began his career in Europe, has been jerkin' and jammin' elbow-to-elbow with local Jamaican cooks at jerk huts, church suppers and food stalls over most corners of this lush West Indian island, as well as foraging in the local markets, fruit and spice orchards, and rum and coffee plantations, for more than 30 years. The first inductee into the **Caribbean Culinary Hall of Fame**, Staib has extensively researched the roots of Jamaican cuisine at the University of the West Indies in Kingston.

On a recent visit, Staib led our small group of 'foodies' on a culinary island romp. The heat was on at our first stop, **Billy's Roadside Canteen** in **Middle Quarters** on the south coast. Billy was tending about 10 Dutch ovens as they

simmered over a pimento wood fire. At this Jamaican version of a drive-through, locals pull over, roll down their windows and order lunch. According to Staib, the cost depends on how you're dressed and what kind of car you're driving. For tourists like me that translates into about \$5 for a dish of rice and peas, Billy's famous **pepper shrimp** and a scoop of surprisingly tasty **peanut porridge**. These traditional island recipes have been passed down, literally by word of mouth, from Billy's grandmother.

As we rattled past several fruit stands and even more rustic rum shacks, Staib chatted about Jamaica's culinary heritage which, by the way, is much easier to understand than the local Creole patois – a mixture of German, English, African dialects and Spanish – which explains the country's motto, "Out of many, one people." Both English and Spanish plantation managers planted starchy crops, such as **breadfruit, yams**

and **cassava**, that were cheap fodder for the slaves. Jamaica's national dish, **ackee and saltfish**, probably began when a slave brought an ackee seed from his native Africa and either dropped or planted it. The fruit is related to the lychee and has the texture of scrambled egg. Back in the 1700s Newfoundland sailors traded dried salt cod to Jamaicans for rum. Salting the fish was an ideal way to preserve it in the days before refrigerators.

In addition to nutmeg, allspice, ginger and mace, 10 species of peppers grow here, the most important being the fiery **Scotch bonnet** used in jerk. More than a spice, Scotch bonnet is also a preservative. The original jerk recipe called for marinating the meat, chicken or fish in a rub of Scotch bonnet, thyme, onion, scallions, garlic and allspice, then cooking it slowly over the ashes from a pimento wood fire. The word 'jerk' probably originates from *charqui*, which means 'dried meat' in Quechuan.



By the time our culinary history lesson was over we had reached **Little Ochie** on the beach in **Alligator Pond**, where Albert was pulling jerked conch off his grill. Albert's recipe for success is simple: buy the freshest fish, season it and grill it over a pimento wood fire. There's no need for propane stoves or refrigerators, except, of course, to chill the **Red Stripe** beer. A blackboard menu lists the catches of the day. Order what you want and then chill out on the beach with a cool drink until it's served. We feasted on lobster with lemon garlic butter, jerked crab and conch, as well as festival, Jamaica's caloric version of cornmeal fritters.

Little Ochie, with its idyllic beach location and laid back attitude, is the sort of funky place where your lazy lunch turns into an evening beach party with jammin' to the beat of local reggae bands. There's no such thing as closing time. As we were leaving, I asked about a sign above the bar advertising bush root juice.

"That's Jamaican Viagra, mon," explained the bartender with a wink. "Only better."

The next day we drove to **Port Antonio** on the north coast for an adventure on the **Rio Grande**. Actor Errol Flynn, after observing locals transport bananas on bamboo rafts, suggested that river rafting might be a hit with tourists. Miss Betty, a lady of indeterminate age, decided to open a riverside canteen. At first she boiled a few ears of corn but now, she and her daughter, Miss Wissy, greet hungry rafters with a potluck of local recipes that have been handed down for centuries. Depending on the day, you might sample her famous **pepper pot soup**, **goat curry**, **chicken fricassee** and **callaloo stew**. Be sure to save room for the **coconut-ginger cookies**. Chef Staib credits Miss Betty, with whom he apprenticed for weeks in her remote bush house, with teaching him all he knows about real down-home Jamaican food.

Lifting a lid from one of the Dutch ovens bubbling on an open fire on the beach, Miss Betty declares, "What you got here is hell on the top, hell on the bottom and hallelujah in the middle." When she's not tending her pots, chances are Miss Betty

is making a call to her bookie on her well-worn cellphone. Mother and daughter rely on the 'ankle express' service of friends and relatives to transport their moveable feast from their home in the hills above the Rio Grande down to the shore. (Note: there are no bathroom facilities and it's best to call Miss Wissy a few days ahead at 876-389-8826 to order your lunch.)

One morning Staib organized a coffee tasting at **Firefly**, the cliff-hanging estate, "far from the madding crowd" in **Port Maria**, where playwright Noël Coward lived, entertained royalty and movie stars and was buried in 1973. Visitors can enjoy a guided tour of his home crammed with memorabilia. In 1728 Sir Nicholas Lawes, former governor of Jamaica, introduced the first coffee plants to the island. Now some of the world's best and priciest java grows in the highlands of the **Blue Mountains**. You can drink the mellow brew with a clear conscience, as the farmers are paid top dollar and the crops are rotated to protect the soil.

When we weren't gallivanting to local haunts with chef Staib, we took a short boat ride over to the **Royal Thai** restaurant on the resort's private island, where the Bangkok-born chef marries Asian and Jamaican flavours in dishes such as **jerk pork pot stickers** and **spicy saltfish shao mai**. Back in the days when explorers were searching for the New World, Jamaica was a stopover and benefited from the introduction of spices such as cumin, coriander, cardamom and turmeric. Hence the popularity of **roti** stuffed with **curried goat**.

By now I was a true jerk junky, hooked on the bold, spicy flavours of Jamaican cuisine. Converts like me can take home a line of **Lifestyle** products, including several jerk and barbecue sauces and Blue Mountain coffee. So now you can crank up your Bob Marley tunes, fire up your grill and enjoy a Jamaican reggae party in your own backyard. It's probably just as well that you can't bring home a bottle of local moonshine rum infused with *ganja*, which Staib warns will "leave you dancing on the moon." ▣

Numero Uno



Anita Draycott catches up with a dynamic, yet humble, 27-year-old in her hometown of Guadalajara

Mexico's **Lorena Ochoa** has led the pack in the Women's World Golf Rankings since April 2007. In a country where golf is enjoyed primarily by the wealthy, she has nevertheless achieved 'rock star' status with her loyal fans from all echelons – from politicians to taxi drivers. In 2001, then president Vicente Fox presented her with Mexico's highest athletic accolade, the National Sports Award.

How and when did you get involved in golf?

I started when I was five years old thanks to my dad. Our house was beside the Guadalajara Country Club so it was easy for me to play after school. I have always been competitive so I started entering tournaments when I was six.

You take your role as Mexico's (and the world's) best female golfer seriously. Tell me about the Lorena Ochoa Foundation and Ochoa Golf Academy.

Mexico is very important to me and I feel proud to represent my country. Being an example for children in Mexico is a huge responsibility. I would like to influence kids to believe in themselves and their dreams and for that reason I started my Lorena Ochoa Foundation. The main objective is to give underprivileged kids

an education at La Barranca elementary school. We currently have 250 students enrolled. I believe the more tournaments I win, the more I can help these children.

The Ochoa Golf Academy by Rafael Alarcón (who is my personal coach) is a golf school where children and adults can learn using my own techniques with specially trained coaches. I would love golf to become an important sport for all Mexicans.

What are your favourite golf courses?

I like courses close to the ocean, such as St. Andrews in Scotland and Mission Hills in California. My favourite is the Guadalajara Country Club, where I've always played.

You're very fit. Can you tell me a bit about your physical and mental routines?

It's important to take care of the physical and mental parts equally, especially in golf. Mentally I try to live a normal life and take time to be with my family and friends. For me, God is very important because he's my spiritual leader. I try to give 100 percent every day and to stay focused and calm. I live day-by-day and don't dwell on the negative. Yoga and running help me manage my stress

LORENA'S GOLF TRAIL

Mexico's second-largest city has plenty of excellent golf facilities:

Guadalajara Country Club

Ochoa's home turf is ranked as one of the best private clubs in Mexico. Non-members may play at certain times.

El Cielo Country Club

Cielo means heaven in Spanish and this new 6,763-yard tract, perched 500 metres above Guadalajara, lives up to its moniker.

El Rio Country Club

Located about an hour from Guadalajara, this challenging Jack Nicklaus Signature course takes maximum advantage of steep valleys and canyons. After your round, head to the nearby town of Tequila for a tour and tasting of Mexico's national tippie.

Atlas Country Club

This semi-private gem is home to the newest Ochoa Golf Academy by Rafael Alarcón. Instruction is based on Ochoa's techniques and drills.

levels and find inner peace. In the off-season my routine is intense. I play golf for six hours a day and then work out at the gym.

You've mentioned before that you don't plan on playing into your forties. What do you see yourself doing if you indeed retire early?

Well, you never know, but if I weren't playing golf I'd be devoting my time to my Foundation, and of course to having a family.

SHORT SHOTS

Favourite food? Mexican chilaquiles, a nice steak, sushi.

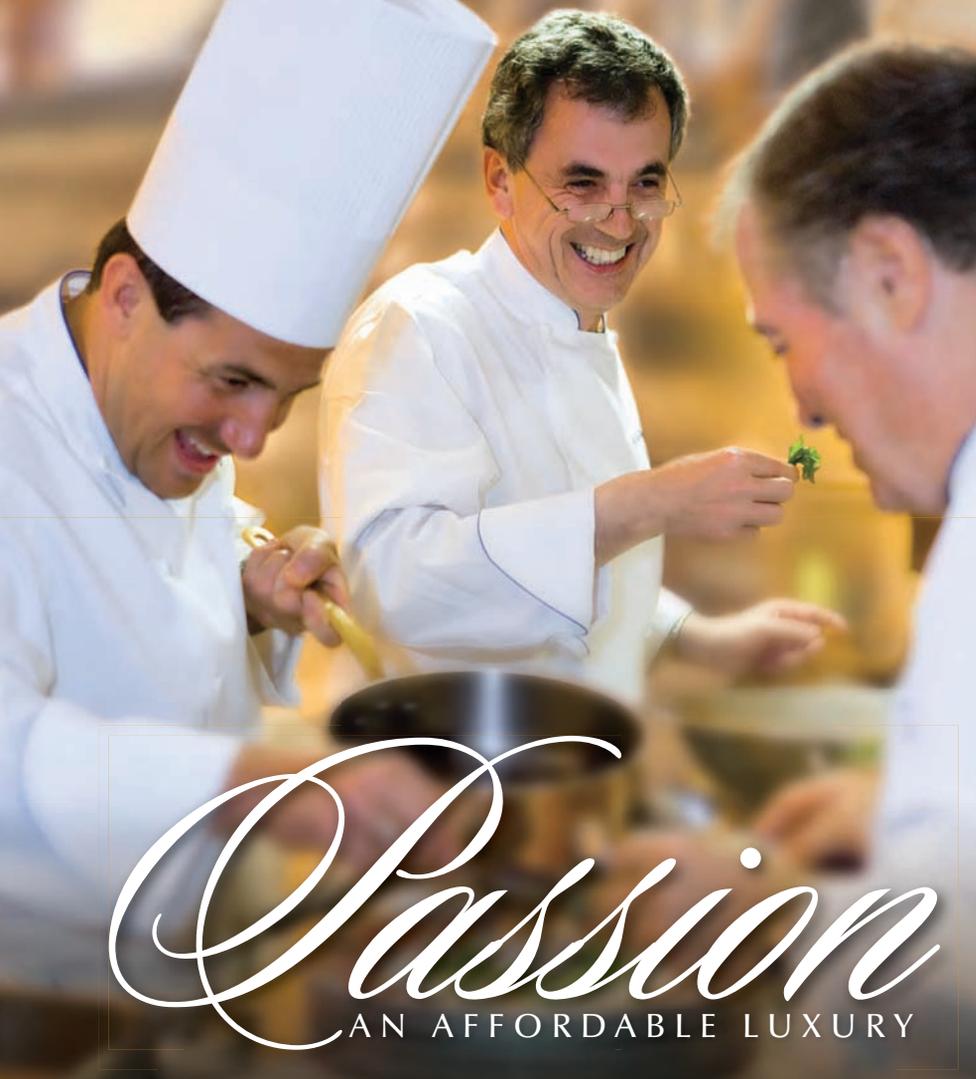
Person(s) (dead or alive) you most admire? My parents.

One regret? One shouldn't regret things but instead learn from them.

Favourite place? Our house in the woods at Tapalpa.

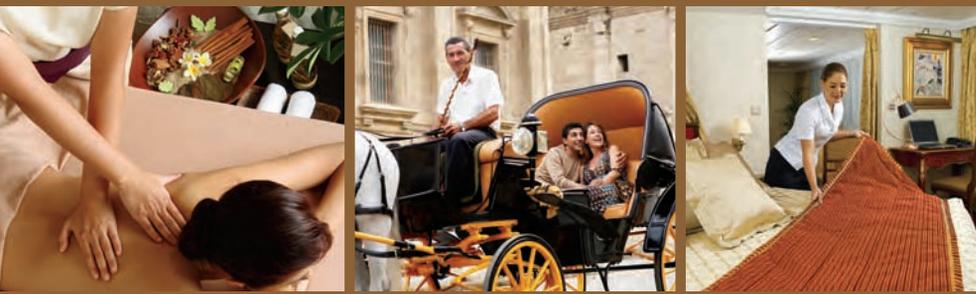
Indulgence or weakness? Chocolate.

Your dream foursome (including you)? Tiger (Woods), Annika (Sörenstam), Jack (Nicklaus) and me. ▣



Passion

AN AFFORDABLE LUXURY



True passion is born when a team is devoted to perfection. Oceania Cruises' chefs present the finest culinary experience at sea as inspired by Master Chef Jacques Pépin. Dine whenever you wish and with whomever you choose in four complimentary and distinct gourmet restaurants. Immerse yourself in cuisine and culture of more than 200 global destinations. Or simply relax with a massage in our Canyon Ranch SpaClub®.

Our passion is *Value* without compromise.



OCEANIA CRUISES®
Your World. Your Way.®

EUROPE • ASIA • AUSTRALIA • SOUTH AMERICA • CARIBBEAN

\$2,000

Price Reduction

**OFF 2 FOR 1
CRUISE FARES
WITH FREE AIRFARE**
per stateroom*

plus

**ENSEMBLE TRAVEL® GROUP
EXCLUSIVE \$100
CANYON RANCH SPA CLUB
CREDIT**

**ISTANBUL TO MARSEILLE
10-DAY VOYAGE**
from

\$3,928

MAY 14, 2010 ONBOARD *INSIGNIA*

**MARSEILLE TO VENICE
12-DAY VOYAGE**
from

\$4,343

MAY 24, 2010 ONBOARD *INSIGNIA*

**BARCELONA TO ATHENS
14-DAY VOYAGE**
from

\$4,973

APRIL 18, 2010 ONBOARD *INSIGNIA*

*Offer expires November 30, 2009. Discounts are per person based on double occupancy. Fares listed are cruise only in U.S. dollars, per person, based on double occupancy and include Non-Commissionable Fares. Cruise Ship Fuel Surcharge may apply. All fares and offers are subject to availability, may not be combinable with other offers, are capacity controlled and may be withdrawn at any time without prior notice. 2 for 1 fares are based on published Full Brochure Fares; all fares are cruise only, and do not include Prepaid Charges, Optional Facilities and Services Fees, and personal charges, as defined in the Terms and Conditions of the Guest Ticket Contract which may be viewed at www.OceaniaCruises.com. Full Brochure Fares may not have resulted in actual sales in all cabin categories and may not have been in effect during the last 90 days. Promotional fares may remain in effect after the expiration date. Air promotion applies to economy, round-trip flights only from select Oceania Cruises U.S. & Canadian gateways and does not include ground transfers. Free Airfare is available only from Toronto, Vancouver, ATL, BOS, ORD, DFW, DEN, IAH, LAX, MIA, JFK, EWR, MCO, PHL, PHX, SAN, SFO, SEA, TPA, IAD. Advertised fare includes all surcharges, airline fees and government taxes. Airline imposed baggage charges may apply. Airfare is available from all other U.S. & Canadian gateways at an additional charge. Oceania Cruises reserves the right to correct errors or omissions and to change any and all fares, fees, and surcharges at any time. Additional terms and conditions may apply. Complete terms and conditions may be found in the Guest Ticket Contract. Ships' Registry: Marshall Islands. PRO26067

Trends: Luxury Voluntourism



Whether it's the call of the **Serengeti** with its primal wilderness, the restoration of a watershed refuge on **Maui's** lush mountain ridges or a coastal setting in the **Caribbean**, where throngs of endangered female hawksbill turtles return to their nesting ground, locals are welcoming like-minded tourists who wish to give back and help rebuild communities.

The idea of 'voluntourism,' in which travellers volunteer their vacation time toward worthy causes, has been a popular pastime, but in the past year voluntourism has extended into luxury vacations. Voluntourism travel

Iлона Kauremszky discovers luxury voluntourism: high-end holidays that inspire hope

expert David Clemmons, founder of the non-profit organization **Voluntourism.org**, suggests there are two main causes: current economic conditions and a number of big-name celebrities participating in charitable causes. "Extremely wealthy individuals like Bono, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt, Sir Richard Branson, Warren Buffett and Bill Gates are putting humongous sums of money into social causes," he says. That's translating into a 'consumer consciousness' around social responsibility, he adds, "and a movement within the luxury market to [create] social purpose within their offerings."

Luxury hotel chains and tour operators are putting community consciousness front and centre, with many including philanthropic travel on their trip menu. In **New Orleans**, for example, Pitt's work to rebuild the city after Hurricane Katrina has helped draw a wide range of volunteers – including luxury hotel guests. The **Marriott** and **Renaissance** hotel chain in New Orleans is inviting guests to sign up for hands-on community involvement. Its **Big Easy Spirit to Serve Voluntourism Getaway** allows guests to join the local chapter of **Habitat for Humanity** to spend a day rebuilding a home in the **Musicians' Village** in the city's **Upper Ninth Ward**.

Likewise, guests of **Fairmont Hotels and Resorts** can sign up for **Community Conscious Vacations**, a program currently available at 15 of the luxury hotel properties. "The impetus behind developing Community Conscious Vacations was the understanding that many guests share our commitment to the community and planet and are looking for ways to volunteer or take part in something that truly makes a difference," explains Mike Taylor, public relations manager for Fairmont Hotels and Resorts.

In **Winnipeg**, the **Fairmont Winnipeg** offers a **Home Sweet Home** package that has its guests work on a house for the local **Habitat for Humanity**. Candice Craig, a police officer from Regina,

has no regrets about signing up for a **Habitat for Humanity** build. "I'll never forget walking into the lobby of the **Fairmont** wearing my hard hat and steel-toed boots, in stark contrast to my surroundings. I had the privilege of putting my hands to work for a family in need who had suffered things I will likely never have to experience. It's hard to explain the effect being involved in such a project has had on me. I came home tired and sore but at the same time feeling a great sense of elation and satisfaction," Craig says of her stay. She has since participated in two other **Habitat for Humanity** builds and plans to take part in future projects.

These hotels are meeting a new and clear customer demand. "If you want to maintain your relationship with your consumers, which is what the luxury market relies upon," Clemmons says, "then it is imperative to develop products and services with a social purpose."

Abercrombie & Kent, a luxury travel company, incorporates social projects with its program called **Philanthropic Journeys**, a series of trips in which participants play a hands-on role in communities, working on-site at projects that benefit the people as well as the environment. "We place great importance on enabling guests to become personally involved in the lives of the people they meet. These experiences – which bridge vastly different cultures – are usually the first stories our guests share when they return home," says Jorie Butler Kent, vice chair of **Abercrombie & Kent**.

For guests interested in more in-depth philanthropic experiences, **Abercrombie & Kent Philanthropy (AKP)** has designed journeys focused on conservation – cultural and ecological – and humanitarian efforts. So now high-end holidayers can replant endangered **Bermuda cedars** in **Bermuda**, help restore turtle habitats in **Mexico** or take a guided kayaking excursion through **Puget Sound** while learning about local waterways and sustainability.

That's luxury with a soul. ▣

Cruising the Magical Galápagos Islands

Kim McDonnell, Ensemble Travel® agent, Cambridge, Ontario



The inspiration for Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by means of natural selection, the Galápagos Islands are home to some of the world's rarest land and sea animals, as well as plant life found nowhere else. If you want to get up close and personal with some of the most magnificent wildlife on our planet, make sure you add this fabulous destination to your bucket list. I was fortunate to share this experience with my husband and we feel very privileged to have had the chance to experience the magic of these tiny islands.

Our adventure began as we boarded our flight in **Quito**, Ecuador and flew three hours to the island of **Baltra**, approximately 600 miles off the Ecuadorian coast, where we would embark on a seven-night journey cruising the islands of the Galápagos. From the marina, our very comfortable Zodiac whisked us to our beautiful vessel, Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Xpedition*, which offered us all the amenities you would expect on a once-in-a-lifetime adventure. With a maximum capacity of only 96 guests, you immediately feel as though you are sailing on your own private yacht. The ship is very well equipped with two dining rooms, the outdoor **Beagle Grill** and **Darwin's Restaurant** serving buffet and à la carte meals. It even offered a massage service. Watching the world pass by as we soaked in the on-deck hot tub was a favourite activity! We would also pass time in several areas of the ship that provided shade, very important when



you are travelling along the equator. The hub of activity was definitely the **Discovery Lounge**, where every evening our cruise director would explain the next day's adventure, after which you would have an opportunity to choose the activities of interest to you. Every activity includes a naturalist who accompanies you on each excursion. The Galápagos Islands are a national park; no one can venture off alone, and the Ecuadorians have done a wonderful job protecting these special islands. You will find no litter and often no bathrooms on many of the islands, but this is not a problem as most excursions are only two hours long.

We visited 14 islands and each one offered something totally different. Some islands were volcanic and you felt as though you were walking on the moon, while others offered fantastic hiking opportunities where your reward was the stunning view from the summit. Surrounded by the beauty of the Galápagos, you become one with Mother Nature.

Our trip to **Isla Española** was an extra special day, an experience that will remain with me forever. Our morning adventure started off with a dry landing, meaning you land on shore rather than wading through the water when you disembark from the Zodiac. Stepping on land, we literally tried not to trip over our welcoming committee of sea lions. There must have been at least 100 of them lying on the footpath before us. We simply had to go around them to get back on the trail. As we walked a bit farther I felt

something tugging at my backpack. Lola, our naturalist, said "Don't worry, it's only a Darwin finch just being curious." We continued to walk toward the ocean when Lola became very excited. "Look, look, they are back!" she exclaimed. At first I was not sure what we were looking at but Lola explained that this was an albatross, which spends most of its life at sea, coming ashore only once a year to mate. Isla Española is the only place in the world where it reproduces. I can't begin to explain what a magnificent sight it was to see this enormous bird up close.

Continuing along the trail we came across a colony of blue-footed boobies. Our guide mentioned that there were upwards of 1,000 birds in this particular colony. During mating season, the male blue-footed booby dances, bringing his tail up while spreading his wings and whistling toward the sky, trying to attract a potential companion. It really was a very entertaining sight. Although we could see the end of our path, this was by no means the end of our adventure for the day, because guiding us back to our Zodiac were huge, prehistoric-looking land iguanas. They were everywhere as far as the eye could see and they were completely unfazed by our presence.

Absolutely every day is a different adventure, with the highlight always being the unique wildlife. In the course of one week, we hiked to see giant land tortoises, some 500 pounds and more than 120 years old. We also saw great frigate birds, flightless cormorants and Galápagos penguins. We played with sea lions, which even tried to steal our knapsacks. We snorkelled with sea turtles and huge schools of beautiful fish. This was some of the best snorkelling I have ever done, and was in my opinion even better than the Great Barrier Reef.

As I settle back into the routine of everyday life I fondly remember living the 'dream trip' to the Galápagos, and I prepare, with great anticipation, for my return this winter, when I will be leading a group to these magical islands. ▣



GRAND SUNSET PRINCESS ALL SUITES RESORT & SPA ★★★★★

SWG CLUB JUNIOR SUITE
FROM TORONTO • 1 WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE

This stunning all junior suite hotel sprawls along a magnificent powdery white sand beach only 15 minutes from the charming town of Playa del Carmen.

NOV. 11,12,18,19, 25,26 & DEC 1,2 **\$745** +\$277 taxes

RIVIERA MAYA
Paradise is Forever



IBEROSTAR PARAISO BEACH ★★★★★

HOTEL ROOM
FROM TORONTO • 1 WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE

Great dining, exceptional service, lots of watersports and activities for everyone. Plus, you get to enjoy all the facilities at Paraiso del Mar.

NOV. 11,12,18,19, 25,26 & DEC 1,2 **\$865** +\$277 taxes



VALENTIN IMPERIAL MAYA ★★★★★

DELUXE JUNIOR SUITE GARDENVIEW
TORONTO • 1 WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE

Featuring all junior suites, this resort fronts more than 1km. of powdery white sand beach. Adults only (18+)

NOV. 11,12,18,19, 25,26 & DEC 1,2 **\$995** +\$277 taxes

FLIGHTS FROM OTHER GATEWAYS ALSO AVAILABLE. PRICES VARY.

CHOOSE YOUR TRAVEL STYLE

México

Yes U can...eun



OASIS CANCUN ★★★★★

HOTEL ROOM
FROM TORONTO • 1 WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE
A fun filled holiday for the young at heart!
Canadians have been returning to this resort time and time again!

NOV. 11,12,18,19, 25,26 & DEC 1,2 **\$545** +\$277 taxes

eun
www.cancun.travel



TEMPTATION RESORT SPA ★★★★★

DELUXE ROOM
FROM TORONTO • 1 WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE
An exciting new concept for singles and couples to experience a contemporary take on the all inclusive holiday in this adults only resort (21+)

NOV. 11,12,18,19, 25,26 & DEC 1,2 **\$745** +\$277 taxes



DREAMS CANCUN RESORT & SPA ★★★★★

SWG CLUB DELUXE ROOM
FROM TORONTO • 1 WEEK • ALL INCLUSIVE
Surrounded on 3 sides by the crystal clear Caribbean and just steps away from the shops and nightlife of Cancun. Features the 1st resort dolphinarium in Latin America!

NOV. 11,12,18,19, 25,26 & DEC 1,2 **\$1645** +\$277 taxes

FLIGHTS FROM OTHER GATEWAYS ALSO AVAILABLE. PRICES VARY.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT YOUR ENSEMBLE TRAVEL® GROUP AGENCY



David Rocco
Host of the
Food Network's
Dolce Vita

Where would you most like to live?

Rome and Toronto.

In Rome, the weather from November to February is incredible, the streets are filled with history and art, and the people are fun, with lots of attitude.

Toronto is where I'm from and grew up. We have lots of friends here and I love it...except for the winters, so that's when you leave for Rome. Especially over the past 10 years, Toronto has matured into a great city. You can live in a pocket in the heart of downtown that is family- and kid-friendly, but still gives you an urban vibe.

When and where have you been happiest?

2001 in Ravello on the Amalfi Coast. What started out as a three-day holiday turned out to be our entire four-week vacation. It was where we met some of our closest friends and every night was a party with great food, wine and music. It was magical.

What do you wish your mother understood about you?

That I really do work and have a job... I'm not in Florence just eating and drinking chianti!

What question do you most want to have answered?

Why do Italians keep voting for Berlusconi?!?!

When did you last feel transported?

The first time I held my newborn twin daughters Emma and Giorgia in my arms.

What is your own personal tipping point?

When people lack a generosity of spirit. Life is too short.

Who is the stranger at the door?

I'm not sure... My therapist has warned me not to answer the door!

How do you know you are about to have an epiphany?

I'm still waiting to have one but I would like to have them regularly. I think I had a near epiphany the other day when I thought of a new recipe.

When are you better than you think?

You will have to ask my wife Nina. I hope it will be off the record.

How do you express adoration?

With a smile.

What saved you?

Fritz at Vidal Sassoon.

How do you use your wriggle room?

There is lots of wriggle room in my recipes for people's innovations.

What does it take to reveal who you really are?

A magnum of Veuve Clicquot champagne. ▣

GRAVITAS

THE GAME

Invented by Canadian **Alan Gratias** after hosting a particularly interesting dinner party, Gravitas is a game of discovery – of who we are and how we live. There are no dice or cards, just questions with no right or wrong answers. Although the game calls for reflection, you can make it as lighthearted as you wish. The player with the highest Gravitas Quotient (GQ) wins! Why not test your own GQ? Find out more about the game at www.gravitasthegame.com.



Travel from Budapest to Passau ...and unpack only once!

Enchanting Danube

Budapest to Passau, 9 Days
from \$1,897USD per person, cruise only*

Uniworld's Value-Packed Enchanting Danube River Cruise Includes:

- Boutique hotel-style cruise ship with lavishly appointed riverview staterooms
- All meals prepared fresh daily using the finest local ingredients
- Complimentary fine wine, beer, and soft drinks at dinner; bottled water in staterooms; and 24-hour specialty coffees and teas
- Captivating shore excursions led by English-speaking guides using Quietvox headset systems
- Captain's Welcome and Farewell Dinners
- All transfers on arrival and departure days

For more information, contact your Ensemble Travel® Group agency.



UNIWORLD
BOUTIQUE RIVER CRUISE COLLECTION™

* \$1,897USD is per person, double occupancy, cruise only, based on Cat. 5, *River Beatrice*, Moselle Deck, 11/14/10 departure. Rate does not include government fees, taxes, airfare and other non-discountable amounts. Rate includes port charges. Capacity controlled. Subject to change. Refer to www.uniworld.com for complete terms and conditions. CST #2075415-20

AIR CANADA VACATIONS

*Book early
and save big!*

Book and pay in full by Nov. 2 and

**SAVE
\$400**

per couple (\$200 per adult)
on all Air & Hotel packages
to Sun destinations.

— or —

**SAVE
\$200**

per couple (\$100 per adult)
on all Air & Hotel packages
to the U.S. and Europe.

Offers valid for travel from Nov. 1, 2009 and completed by April 30, 2010.



aeroplan

Earn Aeroplan® Miles for every passenger you book

For more information contact your
Ensemble Travel® Group agency

Early booking bonus not applicable when hotel is on sale. New bookings only. Subject to availability. Not applicable to group bookings. Offer is subject to change without notice and cannot be combined with any other offer or promotion except early booking bonus offered by hotels/resorts. Flights operated by Air Canada. For applicable terms and conditions, consult the Air Canada Vacations brochures. Ontario registration #50013537. Quebec permit #702566. BC registration #32229. Aeroplan Miles are not actual miles, but points towards rewards including travel rewards. For terms and conditions of the Aeroplan program, consult www.aeroplan.com. ■ Aeroplan is a registered trademark of Aeroplan Canada Inc. ©Air Canada Vacations is a registered trademark of Air Canada, used under license by Touram Limited Partnership, 2700 Matheson Blvd. East, Mississauga ON.

R774

PLACE TO BE

Hot Nights, Cool Sounds in Cayman

She caught the world's attention in 2001 and we've been transfixed ever since. In just a few short years, **Alicia Keys** has skyrocketed to fame, winning nine Grammy Awards and breaking countless records with her signature style and soulful tracks. Now fans of this incomparable singer can enjoy an intimate performance, as she completes yet another year at the top of the charts and as the headline act of the sixth annual **Cayman Jazz Fest**. Taking place on Grand Cayman, the festival runs

December 3-5, 2009 and promises to be a phenomenal weekend for music lovers. R&B legend Keith Sweat, eight-time Grammy nominee jazz saxophonist Kirk Whalum, soul vocalist Oleta Adams, multi-year Cayman Jazz Fest performer Mike Phillips and Peabo Bryson and Everette Harp round out the multi-talented line-up set to rock the stage along with the one and only Alicia Keys.

The festival will take place in the town centre of **Camana Bay**, a brand new 500-acre community at the heart

of Grand Cayman. Fast becoming *the* gathering spot and a cultural hub for visitors and locals alike, Camana Bay features outdoor promenade shopping, restaurants and entertainment facilities including a six-screen cinema.

Keys takes to the waterfront Camana Bay stage on the final night of the festival, playing her latest hits along with many of her popular favourites in an intimate venue that allows fans an up close and personal glimpse of the real artist. ▣



Cosmopolitan

GRAND CAYMAN

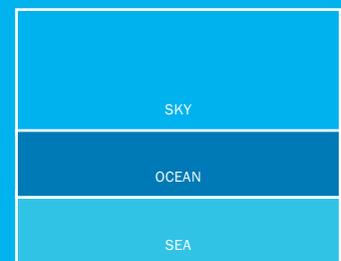
Definition:

Having a wide and refined knowledge of the world especially from personal experience.

Related Words:

Smart, sophisticated, worldly, suave, welcoming; civilized, cultivated, cultured, hospitable, polished, refined; experienced, knowing, practiced, schooled, seasoned.

Grand Cayman Colour Palette



www.caymanislands.ky

For more information, contact your Ensemble Travel® Group agency.



*The magic of Mexico
remains the same.*

Welcome Back.



The sweeping vistas and majestic mountains. The ancient history and cultural treasures. A landscape as warm and inviting as its people. All the things you love about Mexico remain. Rediscover the magic once again.

For more information, contact your Ensemble Travel® Group agency.

México