



Providing key information in a no-frills format for professionals who travel to write, edit, broadcast or create images.

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Editor : Ashley Gibbins : travelwritersalliance@williamjack.co.uk

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● Opportunities

Press trip to Reykjavik, Iceland 13 to 17 July 2006

The rapidly growing Rezidor SAS hospitality is inviting Alliance travel writers with commissions for consumer publications, including national and glossy magazines, to apply for a place on a press trip to sample three of the group's hotels in the stunning city of Reykjavik.

The three-night trip will leave at 13.00 on 13 July with Icelandair from Heathrow and arrive back at 20.10 on the 16 July.

The visit will begin at the modern four-star Radisson SAS Saga Hotel, Reykjavik, located in the heart of the city.

On the second night guests will sample the lifestyle design of the Radisson SAS 1919 Hotel, Reykjavik.

The final night will be spent at the Park Inn Island, Reykjavik – situated on the doorstep of the ultramodern Kringlan shopping mall and in the centre of the city's business district.

Among the press trip itinerary is a full day sightseeing tour and a visit to the Blue Lagoon, Iceland's famous geothermal natural spa.

For more information and to apply for a place contact Kelly Johnstone on 020 7603 2168 or at kelly.johnstone@brightergroup.com.

Press trip to the Algarve, Portugal

The Vale do Lobo Company is to undertake the largest ever property investment project in Portugal with the development of a man-made island off the coast of Portugal's biggest luxury golf and beach resort, Vale do Lobo, in the Algarve.

The first drawings of the plans for the island – to be called "Nautilus" - show how it curves around a circular marina and will comprise a golf course, an underwater restaurant, underwater hotel, casino and 2,700 homes connected to the Vale do Lobo Resort by two bridges.

This project is considered to be comparable to "the Palm" and "the World" in Dubai.

Atlantic Estates is hosting press trips to the Algarve in September and October.

Journalists will be visiting the Monte Rei golf Resort in Castro Marim (Jack Nicklaus designed golf course) and briefed on the new Marina in Ferragudo and the Amendoeira Golf Resort as well as Vale do Lobo.

Contact Kerry Clark at kerry@tidewaypr.com or on 0208 878 0787

Holiday like the Bulgarians In Bulgaria

Away from the main tourist trail, resorts such as Sozopol, Albena and St Konstantin on Bulgaria's Black Sea Coast have long been the favourite holiday haunts of local Bulgarians.

Balkan Holidays - a specialist tour operator to Bulgaria for 40 years - would like to invite Alliance members to sample a holiday to one of these relatively undiscovered coastal gems.

Sozopol

Situated on the Black Sea's southern coast, Sozopol is a beautiful old seaside town. Artists and photographers love its narrow cobbled streets, historic churches; weather blackened eaves and wooden houses – many dating back from 18th and 19th century. Balkan Holidays offers a selection of properties in the old and new quarters of the town.

Albena

Against a backdrop of lush wood hillsides and with a 7km beach that gently slopes into the sea, Albena on the northern Black Sea coast, offers the perfect setting for families with young children – there is even a toddlers funfair.

St Konstantin

One of the oldest resorts on the Black Sea coast, St Konstantin is a quiet and relaxing holiday destination featuring attractive oak, beech and pine trees, alongside sheltered sandy beaches, rocky coves and inlets.

Alliance members interested in a facility trip during 2006 should contact Amy Clarke or Jo Gaukrodger on 020 7808 9770 or amy.clarke@bugsgang.co.uk.

Matfen Hall Hotel and Spa near Newcastle upon Tyne

Award winning Matfen Hall Hotel and Spa near Newcastle upon Tyne is inviting travel writers on a media visit to sample a Well-Being Spa Break.

Monticelli Mud and Botox in a Box are some of the treatments on the menus during your 24-hour break.

Contact Barbara Huddart at barbara@glendaleconsultancy.co.uk or 01289 388264.

Ramblers Holidays

Ramblers Holidays 'the Original Walking Co' is inviting travel writers on a press trip to discover the sights, sounds and tastes of some of the world's most beautiful countries.

Contact Amy Clarke at amy.clarke@bugsgang.co.uk or 020 7808 9770.

Concord

Concorde by Frederic Beniada is a unique celebration of this legendary aircraft.

The book charts the aeronautical enterprise and the technical and human exploits needed to ensure that this extraordinary saw the light of day. Beniada tells the behind-the-scenes story of an airliner, the like of which we will never see again: interviews with famous personalities, of co-pilots and air-hostesses reveal little-known aspects of Concorde and life on board.

For review copies or to arrange extracts and reader offers please contact Liz Rowe liz.rowe@cassell-illustrated.co.uk.

Great River Cruises Europe and The Nile

Insight Guides *Great River Cruises Europe and The Nile* is the definitive full colour, warts-and-all guide to river cruising, detailing which vessels to take and what to see.

Some 22 pages are devoted to the Nile, while in Europe rivers featured include the Danube, Rhine, Moselle, Elbe, Rhone, Seine, Po, Douro, Shannon, Volga and Dnieper.

Well over one million people take a river cruise somewhere in the world each year, with Europe and the Nile the most popular destinations.

Upcoming trends in river cruising include themed cruising, more adventurous itineraries, better variety of sporting activities and more luxurious facilities, with companies promoting the quality of the bed linen and cabin amenities and the ratio of staff to passengers.

For review copies contact Julia Spence at julia.spence@ukonline.co.uk.

Travel writing course in Orlando

The 12th annual Travel Writing and Photography course will be run by the Society of American Travel Writers from 19 to 21 January 2007, in Orlando, Florida.

It is presented by the Society of American Travel Writers in cooperation with Travel Guard, the Orlando Downtown Development Board and the Orlando/Orange County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The one-weekend institute (Friday-Sunday) is for writers, travel writers and experienced travellers who want to learn travel writing for articles and guidebooks or who already are travel writers and want to improve their performance.

This travel writing course teaches how to prepare article queries and book proposals, how to negotiate contracts, how to work with editors, how to organize your time, how to self-publish your own books, and how to publish your travel writing on the Internet.

For more information contact visit www.satwinstitute.org.

• Industry news

Dubai

The £15.4 billion *Bawadi* project is the next phase in Dubai's tourism development. The project, which will be located in the two billion square foot, £3 billion mixed-use theme park Dubailand, will add 31 hotels over the next eight years.

Bawadi's centrepiece will be Asia-Asia, the world's largest hotel, which alone will provide 6,500 four and five- star rooms. *Bawadi* will be 10 kilometres long and is expected to host 3.3 million guests by 2016. Donald Campbell at DCampbell@dubaitourism.co.uk

California

The expanded Westfield San Francisco Centre, located adjacent to Union Square and Yerba Buena Gardens, will be the the largest urban shopping center west of the Mississippi River when it opens on 28 September 2006. The centerpiece will be the 102-foot wide steel and glass dome restored from the now-gone Emporium department store. Contact Jenevieve Randall at jenny@glodownead.com.

Canada

Canadian Affair has developed a fully portable GPS tour guide system called GyPSy, which gives independent travellers visiting Alberta a commentary on special points of interest and shared local knowledge throughout their road trip. Contact Tanya Hillman at Tanya.Hillman@kbc-pr.com.

Scotland

Golf in the Scottish highlands has become more accessible the new Aviemore and the Cairngorms 'Golf Pass' which, for £20, gives the holder a special 30% reduced rate at all eight of the finest courses within the Cairngorms National Park. Contact Caroline Keith at caroline@thekeithconsultancy.co.uk.

Serena launches loyalty card

East Africa's hotel group, Serena hotels has teamed up with Kenya bank, KCB to launch the Serena Card, which is backed by MasterCard International and is accepted worldwide. Serena Cardholders get a range of exclusive hotel benefits in addition to credit card facilities. Contact Claire Roadley at claire@ethosmarketing.co.uk.

ABTA Travel Convention in Marbella

ABTA's 2006 Travel Convention is to be held in Marbella between 27-29 November 2006. Contact Keith Betton at 020 7 307 1900.

Annoying flyers

The disgusting drunk, a recent is the most annoying travelling companion, according to a recent poll conducted by Cheapflights.co.uk.

Alcohol-addled passengers led the poll of annoyances with 40% of the vote, beating the aggravation of bawling babies by 1%. Other aggravations included the tiresome talker, who came in third with 8% of the votes, closely followed by the hostile hostess with 6% and the demanding diva with 4%. Receiving only 1% of the votes, the frightened flyer appears to receive the most sympathy from air travellers.

Manchester Airport who will now turn away passengers who turn up drunk and disorderly for their flight.

Contact Lena Day at Lena.Day@rooster.co.uk

Star Cruises

Star Cruises has launched its first brochure dedicated to cruise-only itineraries across South East Asia, India and the Mediterranean on its three cruise ships; SuperStar Virgo, SuperStar Gemini, and SuperStar Libra. Contact Sarah Rathbone at Sarah.Rathbone@sirenpr.co.uk.

UK

The Egerton House Hotel, Knightsbridge, one of London's first luxury townhouse hotels, has had a complete refurbishment. Visit www.egertonhousehotel.co.uk. Contact Arnelle Kendal at akendall@rchmail.com or 020 7514 5607.

British Tourism Week

The UK's tourism industry has announced the creation of its first British Tourism Week from 12 to 18 March 2007. The week of inter-related events will raise national and international awareness of the size, value and importance of Britain's £74 billion visitor economy. Contact Janet McCready at janetmccready@ukinbound.org or 020 7292 0561.

- Leads

New Mexico

The new Disney/Pixar movie, *Cars* embraces nostalgic ideas of long road trips and cruising Route 66. Albuquerque has one of the best preserved portions of Route 66 architecture and a variety of renovated neon signs along what is now Central Avenue. Contact Tania Armenta at armenta@itsatrip.org.

Helsinki

Helsinki offers a weekend escape where everything is within easy walking distance and an intriguing cultural mix of Swedish, Russian and Finnish influences. August is a good time to visit as many people leave the city for the summer break and markets are bustling, cafes bring out their outdoor tables and there is a major arts festival as well as smaller performances across the city. Contact Karin Jones at karin.jones@flightcentre.co.uk.

Ramblers Holidays

In its 60th anniversary year Ramblers Holidays has launched a new autumn to spring brochure featuring new destinations and hotels. Contact Amy Clarke at amy.clarke@bugsgang.co.uk or 020 7808 9770.

South Africa

Afriyoga, the organisation working to promote world-class yoga in South Africa and its charitable arm, The Afriyoga Foundation, have launched plans to take yoga into township schools. Within the year, some of the country's most disadvantaged children will be receiving free yoga lessons, in an initiative aimed at enhancing their welfare and health. Contact Joy Le Fevre at joy@afriyoga.com or 07885 066163.

Mexico

The Four Seasons Resort Punta Mita, Mexico has been named the No 1 golf resort in the world. Visit : www.punta-mitaproperties.com . Contact Samantha Oehl at samantha@andriamitsakospr.com.

Menorca

Headwater is running independent walking packages on Menorca. The island has been designated a biosphere reserve by UNESCO and contains the largest concentration of prehistoric sites of anywhere in Europe. For walkers, an ancient mule track, the *Cami de Cavalls*, follows the island's entire coastline and links up ruined watchtowers and the remains of medieval fortresses. Contact Tina Delahunty at Tina.Delahunty@Headwater.com.

Bhutan

Destination specialists, Colours, have added Bhutan to their portfolio. A small Himalayan Kingdom about the size of Switzerland, Bhutan is wedged between Tibet and the northern Indian states of Assam, West Bengal and Sikkim. The country has retained its cultural legacy whilst avoiding thoughtless modernization thereby producing a fascinating mixture of Buddhist traditionalism and capitalist progression. Contact Taffeta Bourke at taffeta@partnershiptravel.co.uk

Gozo

it's now possible to explore the Maltese island of Gozo by bike. The potential for cycling along its quiet country lanes has until now been overlooked. Visit www.headwater.com. Contact Tina Delahunty at tina.delahunty@headwater.com.

Iceland

Icelandair is passengers its transatlantic flights from Glasgow to the USA - an inspiring whale spotting excursion in Iceland, free of charge. Icelandair already offers passengers on a same-day transfer in Iceland the opportunity to relax in the Blue Lagoon geothermal spa at no extra cost. This July and August, for the first time, Icelandair will expand the stopover experience and offer an ocean-going whale spotting excursion off the coast of Iceland. Contact Rob Bates on 020 7874 1007 or at robb@icelandair.is

India

Village Ways, a responsible tourism project in India www.villageways.com is looking to improve the economic life of five mountain village communities in the wooded Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary, part of the ancient region of Kumaon. The Indian company, Village Ways Pvt has been set up by a specialist team, including Richard Hearn, founder of walking specialist Inntravel and Graham Edgeley, current chair of AiTO's Responsible Tourism Committee. The company has funded the building of authentic guest houses in each village and trained hill villagers to set up and manage a range of walking and discovery holidays. Contact Julia Spence at julia.spence@ukonline.co.uk.

Greece

Lesvos is in the North Aegean is the third largest island in Greece, but remains relatively unknown to tourists. In Vatera, it has one of the longest and most beautiful beaches in Greece. Contact Marlen Taffarello at marlen@fcdcom.co.uk.

Peru and Chile

WildWings' 20-day expedition cruise follows the path of the Humboldt Current along the coastline of Peru and the Chilean fjords to Cape Horn, offering opportunities to view and photograph up to 50 species of seabird and 20 species of cetacean, as well as many endemic land birds and some unexplained ancient creations. Contact Debra Taylor at debra@toucanmoon.com.

Florida, USA

The annual coral spawning occurs in Florida Keys and Key West each August shortly after the full moon. The corals of the only living coral barrier reef in North America are expected to start spawning three to five days after the August 9 full moon. Contact Lisa Cooper at lisa@kbc-pr.com.

UK : Isle of Wight

Cross-Solent ferry operator Wightlink has launched the *Rare Plant Trail*, an illustrated pack to encourage garden and plant enthusiasts to plan short breaks to the Isle of Wight, and *A Wighter Shade of Green*, and environmentally green guide to the Island. Contact Kirsty Nicholson at press@cballpr.co.uk

China

Shangri-La's China World Hotel, Beijing has launched "Imperial Escape," creating a modern-day emperor's lifestyle for a weekend in the capital of China, highlighted by an exclusive dinner in the Forbidden City or on top of the Great Wall of China. Contact Kate Jones atkate.jones@shangri-la.com

France

Le Mans

From 1 July to 2 September 2006 the ancient city of Le Mans will come to life every evening with the theatrical 'Nuit des Chimères' music and light spectacle. Historical figures, mythical creatures, romans engaged in ancient martial arts and monsters from medieval times will all reveal themselves against the backdrop of the city's roman walls and towers. Contact Fliss Hoad at felicity.hoad@btinternet.com.

Les Deux Alpes

Les Deux Alpes has one of the highest ski areas in the world. Between 17 June and 26 August, at 2800-3600 metres altitude, the largest skiable glacier in Europe is open for summer skiing and snowboarding. Visit www.les2alpes.com. Contact Elise Duverge at elise.duverge@franceguide.com.
Flights over the D-Day beaches

A flight over the D-Day beaches in an original WWII Dakota plane is being offered by battlefield specialist Leger Holidays. Contact Alex Rose at Alex@lucrecommunications.com.

England

Delta Aviation

During the summer of 2006, Delta Aviation, the country's specialists in recreating the golden age of flying, will offer the chance view the dreaming spires of Oxford from the stylish artdeco seats of a vintage Dragon Rapide biplane airliner. Visit www.deltaaviation.co.uk Contact Stephen Slater at 01494 776831 or ss@kingpinmedia.co.uk.

Ockenden Manor

Ockenden Manor at Cuckfield, Sussex (www.hshotels.co.uk) is offering a two night weekend break which includes a one hour morning polo tuition session at Knepp Castle Polo Club, just 15-minutes away from the hotel. After the session guests can watch the polo club action for the rest of the afternoon. Contact Toby Oliver at Toby@oliverrelations.co.uk.

Cornwall

From September to November, the summer colours of Cornwall's exotic and tropical plants and flowers make way for rich golds, reds, oranges, yellows, bronzes, with flashes of turquoise and purples as the ever changing landscape of the Gardens of Cornwall moves to autumn. The mild, coastal micro climate of Cornwall ensures many of the gardens continue to flourish into November. Visit www.gardensofcornwall.com. Contact Laura Griffiths at laura.griffiths@adpr.co.uk.

● Events, festivals and attractions

New Mexico

The 85th Annual Intertribal Indian Ceremonial will be held in Gallup, New Mexico between 26 and 30 July 2006. More than 30 tribes from throughout the United States will join together to participate in parades, tribal dances, the All-Indian Rodeo, and more at this popular event. Contact Sarah Roberts at sarahroberts@ballantinespr.com.

The Annual Zulu Reed Festival

Every September, in the heart of South Africa's Kingdom of the Zulu, thousands of people visit the royal residence of His Majesty, the King of the Zulu Nation's, King Goodwill Zwelethini's at KwaNyokeni Palace.

Here young Zulu maidens will take part in a colourful cultural festival, the Royal Reed Dance festival - or Umkhosi woMhlanga in the Zulu language.

For visitors to KwaZulu-Natal, one of South Africa's most popular tourist destinations, the Reed Dance festival offers the opportunity to experience the natural beauty and majesty of the Kingdom of the Zulus. According to Zulu tradition, only virgins are permitted to take part in the festival to ensure that they are ritually 'pure'.

August festivals in Japan

Nebuta Matsuri, Aomori (2 to 7 August)

The Nebuta (illuminated paper-mache dummies representing historical figures or Kabuki characters) are placed on carriages and pulled through the streets accompanied by people dancing in traditional Nebuta costumes, playing tunes on flutes and drums. There are many theories for how the festival began. One is that in the early ninth century, a General Tamuramaro had his army create large creatures, called "Nebuta", to frighten the enemy.

Kanto Matsuri, Akita (2 to 5 August)

The original purpose of this festival, held before harvesting was started, was to ward off sleepiness lest it interfered with the work. In a ceremony called neburī-nagashi, the spirits of sleep were cast into the river to be carried away to sea. Kanto are large decorations made from a 10m bamboo pole with 9 cross-poles from which 46 lanterns are hung. At the Akita festival 160 kantos are paraded through the streets of the city by young men balancing them on their shoulders, hips or hands.

Peace Ceremony, Hiroshima (6 August)

At 8.15am, the exact time that the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, the Bell of Peace rings out and sirens throughout the city go off. This is followed by a minute silence, which is observed throughout the country. In the evening, thousands of lighted lanterns are set adrift on the Ota River by the citizens, with prayers for world peace.

Star Festival, Sendai (6 to 8 August)

The Tanabata Star Festival traces its origins to a legend that the Cowherd Star (Altair) and Weaver Star (Vega), lovers separated by the Milky Way, are allowed to meet just once a year. People write their wishes on narrow strips of coloured paper and hang them, along with other paper ornaments, on bamboo branches.

Mount Tsukuba Toad Festival, Tsukuba, Chiba (6 August)

A unique festival held annually in August to honour toads (gama) that have given their lives to make toad grease, an ointment which was used in feudal warship as it was believed to make skin invulnerable to spears and sword wounds. The festival takes place at Mount Tsukuba Shinto shrine, famous for being toad-shaped and housing various toad paraphernalia.

Contact Kylie Clark at seejapan@news.seejapan.co.uk.

Festivals in Pennsylvania

Musikfest, Bethlehem, 4-13 August

Musikfest is a 10-day musical extravaganza that features more than 300 musical performers on 15 indoor and outdoor stages and attracts more than one million people.

The Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire, Mount Hope, 29 August to 12 October

The Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire, named one of the top 100 events in America by the American Bus Association, is a mesmerizing re-creation of a 16th century country festival celebrating a visit by Queen Elizabeth I. Over 75 shows take place daily on the 35-acre Elizabethan village, including a "Final Joust."

The Little League World Series, South Williamsport

The Williamsport Grand Slam Parade kick-offs one of Pennsylvania's iconic events, the Little League World Series, held each year in South Williamsport. The parade, in its second year, honours the unique heritage and culture of the region and is expected to draw over 10,000 people. The International Little League World Series turns 60 this year.

For a complete list of Pennsylvania's signature events and attractions, visit <http://www.visitpa.com>.

Contact Jane Wilson at jwilson@destination-marketing.co.uk.

Scottish Festivals

The Glasgow International Piping Festival

The Glasgow International Piping Festival takes place between 7 and 13 August 2006. In 2005, audiences of 25,000 people watched more than 5,000 pipers perform across Glasgow. The programme for 2006 will welcome pipers from Spain, Bulgaria, France, the U.S, Dublin and England, alongside the best of Scotland's home-grown talent. Visit : www.pipingfestival.co.uk Contact Lee Beattie at lee@burtgreener.co.uk

Highland Feast 2006

Highland Feast 2006 (29 September to 15 October), the Highlands' annual food and drink festival, will include gourmet dining afloat on Loch Ness, gala dinners in the finest hotels, open air events and barbecues and demonstrations across the Highlands. Family-focused events include the Loch Ness Marathon monster barbecue, the World Porridge Making Championships in Carrbridge and the first Aviemore Highland Half Marathon. Visit www.highlandfeast.co.uk . Contact Caroline Keith at caroline@thekeithconsultancy.co.uk.

The White Air Extreme Sports Championships & Festival

The White Air Extreme Sports Championships & Festival takes place on the Isle of Wight between the 26 and 29 October 2006. White Air will host 500 of the world's top competitors in championships across some of the most awesome water and land sports: kitesurfing, windsurfing (racing and freestyle), wavesailing, skateboarding, BMX, mountain boarding, thundercat racing, parkour and kayak racing. From the indoor 'beach café', spectators have a direct view over the competition area. For championship details visit www.whiteair.co.uk. Contact Kellie White at kellie@islandbreaks.co.uk.

• Reasons to write about

Sea-kayaking in Scotland

Wilderness Scotland's 5-night Skye Cuillin sea-kayak expedition includes all guiding, hire of sea-kayaks and associated equipment, tents and camping equipment, all meals, travel to and from Skye from Inverness *writes Neil Birnie*.

This trip is suitable for people with some previous experience of sea-kayaking. Wilderness Scotland recommends a minimum of 3-days prior experience before signing up for this trip.

A reasonable level of fitness is also required, both for the sea-kayaking and for the ascent of the peak of Blaven – a 'Munro' which is climbed from one of the remote camps.

For less experienced sea-kayakers and beginners, Wilderness Scotland also offers a 3-night 'Introduction to Sea-Kayaking' course, based at a guest house on the Morar peninsula west of Fort William. Visit www.wildernessscotland.com. Contact Neil Birnie at neil@wildernessscotland.com.

The Baltics

The surface of the Baltics has been scratched with city breaks to Tallinn, Riga & Vilnius, but beyond the capital cities these countries are perfect for family holidays, spa breaks, castles and manors, country cottages, self-drive and active holiday *writes Sally Chambers*

Belarus

Visit Minsk, the most Soviet city in the world, or explore the sleepy wooden villages and medieval fortresses of rural Belarus.

Kaliningrad

A cold war air hangs over the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad, visit a closed military city, crawl through a Soviet submarine, witness the stark Soviet architecture, and contrast all of this with the unadulterated beauty of the Curonian Spit and the pretty coastal resorts.

Lithuania

Pine trees, rolling landscapes, spectacular sand dunes, fishing villages, summer seaside party towns, traditional rural life, unique sights, spa towns, pagan festivals, Vilnius the Baroque beauty, friendly and unassuming locals, a multitude of outdoor activities, bbqs, saunas, beer by the lake.

Latvia

Life for many Latvians revolves around the vibrant city of Riga, leaving a beautiful unspoilt country just waiting for us to explore; take spa treatments in the footsteps of Brezhnev and his cronies, enjoy some pagan rituals at midsummer, take a ride on a former USSR bobsleigh training track, visit Mark Rothko's hometown and museum, take a regal trip through Latvia staying in our castles and stately manor houses.

Estonia

Imagine medieval meets modern technology, a top notch 4* spa hotel next to a medieval castle on a pretty rural island, a quaint cobbled old town hides contemporary chic cellar restaurants, beautiful restored manor houses offering modern comforts with time-honoured elegance, unspoilt national parks with all the latest outdoor activities; adrenalin rush or peaceful time-out.

Baltics and Beyond is the new venture of Sally Chambers, former director and tailor-made specialist at Baltic Holidays.

Contact Sally Chambers at info@balticsandbeyond.com or +44 845 094 2125

Golf in Kenya

There aren't many golf courses in the world where your view of the green is obscured by a wandering giraffe, your playing partner is a Masai tribesman golf pro, and you find yourself chipping between the legs of a stubborn hippo *writes Sarah Robarts*.

Maniago, one of Africa's leading tour operators specializing in exclusive safaris, offers a golf safari that combines playing some of Kenya's finest courses with viewing the country's exotic wildlife.

Kenya boasts some wonderful, challenging golf courses set in a variety of spectacular landscapes.

The majestic Windsor Golf and Country Club boasts a colony of Sykes monkeys who make for unusual, if not always engrossed, spectators. In contrast, those visiting the Aberdare Golf Club will enjoy playing a round of golf in the company of warthogs and giraffes.

After a visit to Aberdare's 19th hole, those clients keen to see more of Kenya's bountiful wildlife will be driven to The Ark for an evening of game viewing.

A trip to Mt Kenya will include a night at the renowned Mt Kenya Safari Club. At 6000ft, its elevated 9-hole golf course may leave clients a little breathless, but thrilled at how far their drives travel. Clients will also get to play at Kenya's foremost course, the Muthaiga Golf Club.

Maniago also includes a visit to the Great Rift Valley Lodge and Golf Resort, which offers stunning views and early risers the possibility of encountering a hippo strolling languidly across the fairway.

Those who would rather not see a vast mammal blocking their deft approach shot to the 12 th green but in a more fitting setting, will enjoy a visit to the Lake Nakuru National Park.

There, black and white rhinos roam amongst the millions of flamingoes, and the occasional lion and leopard. Animal lovers will also enjoy a true safari experience with a visit to the world famous Masai Mara Game Reserve.

Contact Sarah Robarts at sarah@ballantinespr.com.

Sleeping with cattle in Montana

Have you ever cozied down with cattle asks Andrea Wickham-Foxwell

Papoose Creek Lodge, near Cameron, Montna, is an eco-lodge on a working ranch, offering an opportunity to bunk with a bovine under the stars, on the lodge's sister property, the 25,000 acre Sun Ranch.

Owners Cynthia and Roger Lang are passionate in their efforts to keep their valley as traditional ranch land.

They have led many environmental initiatives, including a successful attempt to manage the wolf population on Sun Ranch. Known as the Wedge Pack, nine wolves roam the ranch property in 2006.

After dinner at the Lodge, a member of Papoose Creek Lodge staff accompanies the guests on to Sun Ranch, to the site where the herd will overnight.

There they set up tents and prepare for a night under the stars with a herd of heifers for company. Guests experience the magic of a night on the ranch, and deepen their understanding of the fragile balance between predator and livestock. In the morning, guests return to the luxury lodge for a hearty breakfast, and prepare for a day of horseback riding, fly fishing, canoeing, or hiking.

Papoose Creek Lodge is located beside the Madison River in Southwest Montana, within easy reach of Yellowstone National Park. Guests fly to Bozeman or West Yellowstone and drive through Big Sky country via the local town of Ennis.

Visit www.papoosecreek.com. Contact Andrea Wickham-Foxwell at andrea@spectacularink.com

Desroches Island, Seychelles

Desroches Island in the Seychelles is made up of white sand beaches, swaying palm trees and cerulean water. An upscale resort without pretense, spectacular but understated, and definitely unspoiled by the maddening crowds *Writes Andria Mitsakos*.

A small island some five miles long and less than a mile wide but with 11 miles of virgin, palm-fringed beaches Desroches is part of the Amirantes Archipelago, one of several that make up the legendary Seychelles.

Tucked away on this pristine paradise, the Desroches Island Resort is one of Naïade Resorts' collection of exquisite properties in the Seychelles, Maldives and Mauritius, three of the most glorious destinations in the Indian Ocean just off the coast of Africa.

Desroches Island Resort is a collection of colonial-style villas that house twenty elegant suites that come with as much comfort as they do excellent service.

The lush landscape fills the air with the fragrance of exotic blooms as guests walk from their mosquito-netted king-sized beds across polished wood floors to their ample verandas.

Visit www.naiaderesort.com. Contact Andria Mitsakos at andria@andriamitsakospr.com

Trekking in Patagonia

Walking enthusiasts can take a nine-day adventure trekking in Patagonia's most stunning national park where snow-capped mountains, rugged granite peaks, turquoise glacier fed lakes and Magellanic forests are all part of the view *writes Karin Jones*.

Torres Del Paine National Park is dominated by the massive granite towers of the 'Cuernos del Paine' mountain peaks and offers walkers some of the most challenging as well as beautiful walking in the world.

The trip is offered through Flight Centre and starts in El Calafate in Argentina.

Following a drive across the border into Chile the first six days are spent in the park walking for several hours a day and camping out at night or staying in the traditional mountain huts along the way called 'refugios'.

The final day is a full day excursion to the famous Perito Moreno glacier one of the world's only advancing glaciers. The Moreno glacier is a UNESCO World Nature Heritage site and is an amazing 6km wide and 65 metres high. Contact Karin Jones at karin.jones@flightcentre.co.uk

St. Vincent & The Grenadines' charter yacht fleets

Expert sailors and novices alike can enjoy the luxury lifestyle of holidaying on their own private yacht while island hopping among the 32 islands of St. Vincent & The Grenadines.

Boats of all shapes and sizes can be chartered with experienced sailors pointing out the features of every boat.

Seven generations of the Barnard family, which operates Barefoot Yachts, have a fleet of 25 boats for rent including mono-hulls and catamarans

Moorings, one of the world's biggest and best-known yacht charter companies, recently established a new base on the island of Canouan, in the heart of the Grenadines chain and has catamarans and monohulls with from two to five cabins.

JT Yachting also has 10 crewed yachts available for charter in the Grenadines, each with three or four ensuite cabins. Contact svgtourismeurope@aol.com

The set of Pirates of the Caribbean

Pirates of the Caribbean II sees Dominica as the backdrop for this action sequel with its unspoilt, wild nature *writes Rachel Goldrick*.

Jungle trails lead to secret rock pools fringed with purple wax flowers to reveal dramatic waterfalls and bubbling sulphur springs. Dramatic cliff paths wind past crumbling Napoleonic lookout posts. The perfect natural stage for sword fights, secret missions and swashbuckling adventures.

The island was a stopping off point for real Caribbean pirates in the 16th century. There's even a legend of buried pirate treasure – allegedly some 3 million Spanish pesos – plundered from a Spanish fleet in 1567 and hidden on the island.

Walkers on Headwater's 8 nights guided Tropical Walk on Dominica tour can enjoy some set-jetting hikes to many of the film's locations.

They will be able to discover "Cannibal Island" when they walk from dramatic Titou Gorge to the Valley of Desolation.

And their coastal hike around Capucin Cape affords great views over what was the pirates' "Shipwreck Cove".

On another day, they explore Indian River, where pirate long boats cruised along "Pantano River" in the film.

Contact Rachel Goldrick at rachel.goldrick@headwater.com

Skiing in Argentina

Ski del Fuego organises tailor-made trips to Argentina, predominantly during ski season (August-September) *writes Rodolfo Milesi*.

This is skiing in the southernmost piste in the world (Cerro Castor, Ushuaia). The slopes are located next to the recently opened Castor Ski Lodge in Patagonia.

There is also the chance to take organised treks through Patagonia's vast forests and lakes, fly-fishing, moonlight snow walks on rackets through frozen forests, dog sledge rides and private sailboat rides.

Before or after, you can enjoy a couple of days in Buenos Aires. Contact Rodolfo Milesi at rmilesi@chime.plc.uk.

Suzhou, China

Suzhou, 88 kilometres west of Shanghai, is a classic Chinese beauty, an ancient city where the gardener's art reached its zenith over a thousand years ago *writes Kate Jones*.

The city, whose intricate canals inspired Marco Polo to describe it as the "Venice of the East," is renowned for its traditional gardens, silk-weaving and beautiful women.

Lush Life

The soul of the city is its tranquil gardens. Each has its own personality, but all share Chinese classical garden design. Trees, shrubs, fish pools, rocks and pavilions are perfectly balanced in harmony, proportion and variety.

Come at night in the summertime and Master of the Nets is an exquisitely romantic, night time setting for traditional Chinese performances including opera, music and dance.

Museums of Silk and Song

The Suzhou Silk Museum tells the long and fascinating story of silk in China and features beautiful and rare ancient silk pieces. The Museum of Opera and Theatre showcases Kun opera, the much-loved Chinese opera style of this region.

Temple of Mystery

Dating from the third century, the Taoist Temple of Mystery (Xuanmao Guan) has a great courtyard leads to the massive San Qing Hall, with its 60 red-lacquered columns, classic two-tiered roof with upturned eaves and vibrant Taoist god imagery. Its grounds were once the heart of the Suzhou bazaar and the temple area is still a shopping magnet, surrounded by a street market selling a variety of goods.

Pearl Market

The gleaming 3,000 square-metre China Pearl City, just outside Suzhou, is the heart of the China pearl world. Over 800,000 kilograms of pearls are traded here each year, two-thirds of the annual volume for all of China. On busy days, up to 10,000 people come through, examining, buying, selling and bargaining. For consumers, it's pearl heaven.

Classic Cuisine

Suzhou cuisine features predominantly seafood as well as poultry and dishes tend to be sweet with clear soups and rich gravies. Recommended authentic local eateries include:

Pine and Crane (Songhelou) Restaurant. A 2,000 year-old restaurant, Suzhou's most famous, is known for its traditional Suzhou cuisine

Attaining the Moon (Deyuelou) Restaurant. With a history that dates back to the Ming Dynasty, Deyuelou is another favourite spot for Suzhou cuisine, with over 300 dishes on the menu and lovely garden views.

Don't Miss

North Temple Pagoda

This 16th century mustard-and-vermilion pagoda, a tiny bell tinkling from each of its classical Chinese eaves, dominates the city. Climb the charming wooden staircase to its summit for spectacular views of the surrounding city.

Suzhou Sunrise Golf Club

A Jack Nicklaus-designed course that is among the best in China.

Contact Kate Jones at kate.jones@shangri-la.com

The pottoks of the Pyrenees

On the edge of the Basque country, the Bearn is a hilly area, green, with its own rich and strong culture and architectural heritage.

The pottok, small horse of the Basque Mountains, will be a companion for this trip during which people go from one accommodation to another following signed paths.

The pottok carry the luggage and accompany the youngest whilst the adults enjoy the charms of the traditional way of living with the supplied log book in their pockets.

Local families of the Bearn open their homes to welcome visitors as if they were friends with simplicity and kindness.

This is a good opportunity to discover and enjoy the local countryside and rural life, taking part and chatting with the locals. And above all visitors can share the passion of the locals for their region.

This trip has been elected the 'best discovery tour 2005' by a jury composed of journalists, travel agents, members of the Tourism ministry and the French Departmental Federation.

Along the way you will follow the trail of St James pilgrims, those of the lords of the Bearn and you will discover a wild fauna, a protected architecture and surprising landscapes with the Pyrenees on the horizon.

Visit : www.crt.-cr-aquitaine.com. Contact : David Guilbot at ot-salies@wanadoo.fr

Natural Charleston

Charleston, South Carolina has so many attractions that its natural beauty is often overlooked *writes Chris Nobles.*

Angel Oak

Owned and operated by the City of Charleston Department of Parks, the Angel Oak is a live oak tree, estimated to be 1,400 years old. Live oaks are not particularly tall, but have wide spreading canopies. Only in the very oldest of specimens do you find massive limbs resting on the ground, as do the limbs of the Angel Oak. It stands 65ft. high and provides a 17,000 square foot area of shade.

Audubon Sanctuary at Francis Beidler Forest

The 11,000-acre sanctuary for plant and animal life is located in Four Holes Swamp and contains the largest remaining virgin stand of bald cypress and tupelo trees in the world. A mile-and-one-half boardwalk begins at the Visitor's Center and sweeps past portions of majestic swamp, where ancient trees, migrating birds, and colorful wildflowers can be observed. Visit www.beidlerforest.com.

Capt. Bo Gator's Boat Tours

Take a ride on the wild side with Capt. Bo Gator's Boat Tours. Experience a unique glimpse into the wildlife and history of the Historic Cooper River. Venture deep into the wilds of Lowcountry swamps where you'll witness alligators, egrets, bald eagles, turtles, and more all in their natural habitats. Visit www.captbogators.com.

Cypress Gardens

Cypress gardens is a 170 acre Berkeley County park with beautiful gardens, walking paths, and cypress swamp. Visitors tour the swamp in flat-bottomed boats. The aquarium and butterfly house feature native species. The reptile house contains exotic snakes, turtles and crocodilians. Cypress Gardens is a popular field trip and reception site. Visit www.cypressgardens.org.

Old Santee Canal State Park

America's First Canal - the Santee Canal is located in this unique 195acre park. Four miles of boardwalks and trails allow for the exploration of the natural beauty of Biggin Swamp. Canoes allow an up close view of the canal and the exciting wildlife that call this sanctuary home. Visit www.oldsanteecanalpark.org.

Contact Chris Nobles at CNobles@CharlestonCVB.com

Meteor showers in Morocco

The annual Perseid Meteor shower will occur on 12 August *writes Mischa Mack*.

The foothills of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, at an altitude of 3,000 ft and in the heart of Berber countryside, is the ideal place to enjoy hours of gracefully streaking meteors.

Far away from any light pollution, reclining on a daybed, glass of wine in hand, overwhelmed by the scent of roses, you may feel just a touch too close to heaven.

The Perseids, probably the best known and most reliable of all meteor showers, are expected to peak before dawn's first light on 12 August. It's probable that 50 to 100 meteors will appear per hour.

The shower derives its name from the constellation Perseus, because the meteors seem to stream from this realm of the sky.

It is said that the Perseid Meteor Shower commemorates the time when Zeus, the king of the gods, visited the mortal Danae in the form of a shower of gold. Perseus was the result of their union.

The hotel La Roseaie is tucked into the foothills of the High Atlas at an altitude of 3,000 ft, only 90 minutes' drive from Marrakech. Set in 50 acres of beautiful rose gardens, park and farmland, there are 40 cottage-style rooms and suites.

Contact Mischa Mack at M.Mack@travelpr.co.uk.

Rosarito Beach, California

Rosarito Beach, is a place where the old and new Californians meet *writes Ron Raposa*.

This seaside city 30 miles south of San Diego attracts more than one million people a year who are attracted by stunning beaches, near perfect climate, great dining, fantastic shopping, outdoor activities including horseback riding, rich culture, lively nightlife and a family friendly atmosphere.

Attractions include the world-famous Puerto Nuevo Lobster Village and Fox Studios, where Titanic, Master & Commander and other blockbuster movies were filmed.

Rosarito Beach also has become the spa capital of Baja. Contact Ron Raposa at ronraposa@hotmail.com.

- **A place to stay**

The Villa Delle Stelle, Hollywood

Everyone is talking about the glamorous revival of Hollywood and designer Brogan Lane has created luxury suites at Villa Delle Stelle.

Meaning "The House of the Stars," Villa Delle Stelle looks to recapture the glamour of the silver screen and shows guests what it is like to "live and be treated like stars."

Nestled in the heart of Hollywood, where the famous Hollywood sign is in full view, Villa Delle Stelle offers various themed residential quarters catering to the elite.

Contact Samantha Cavallari at broganlanedesign@hotmail.com.

The Shangri-La Hotel, Beijing

The new tower complex at the Shangri-La Hotel, Beijing will open in January 2007. There will be 142 guest rooms, at a minimum of 50 square meters, of premium accommodation facilities and a choice selection of deluxe specialty suites. Contact Meanne Dizerenslau at meanne.dizerenslau@shangri-la.com

The Commune by the Great Wall Kempinski, China

The Kempinski Hotels will open an Anantara spa in its new modernist hotel, the Commune by the Great Wall Kempinski, in September.

First opened as a boutique hotel and semi-architectural museum in 2002, the Commune is situated in the Badaling Mountains in eight square kilometres of private land next to an unrestored section of the Great Wall, 30 miles from Beijing.

The hotel will have 18 spa suites including six double suites for couples – all with partial views of the Great Wall. Contact Tiggy Dean at tiggy@hillanddeanpr.com.

The Mombasa Serena Beach Hotel

The Mombasa Serena Beach Hotel opens on 1 July 2006 after a three-million dollar refurbishment programme that will see it becoming a flagship hotel on the Kenya coast. Contact Claire Roadley at claire@ethosmarketing.co.uk.

Casa del Mar Beach Golf & Spa, Mexico

The renovation of Casa del Mar Beach Golf & Spa, a hacienda-style luxury resort located in the tourist corridor of Cabo San Lucas will be completed in October 2006.

Situated in a stunning landscape where the desert meets the white sand and turquoise waters of the Sea of Cortez at the tip of Mexico's Baja California, Casa del Mar is an intimate 56-room hacienda-style resort. Visit www.CasadelMarMexico.com.

Grand Heritage Hotel Group, one of the nation's premier owner-operators of independent historic hotels, is the new owner and management group of Casa del Mar Beach Golf & Spa Resort. The company was founded in 1989 by owner John Cullen and includes a total of 15 properties in the United States and in highly sought-after destinations.

Contact Carlos Coriano at carlos@andriamitsakospr.com.

The Hilton Curacao

Curacao is one of the best coral spawning spots in the world and during September the coral reproductive season takes place. This unique and beautiful event is displayed by the coral releasing millions of miniature beads of lights, which bounce and leap off each other. It is an incredible time for photographers and dive enthusiasts alike.

The Hilton Curacao is surrounded by stunning beaches and beautiful waters, teeming with multi-coloured fish, sea anemones and coral. Contact Olivia Warne at Olivia.Warne@hilton.com.

• Transport links

Air travel

Zoom

Zoom Airlines' has launched the first transatlantic flight linking both Wales and Ireland with the West Coast of Canada. The service is from Cardiff to Vancouver via Belfast. Contact Lorna Englis at Lorna@mediahouse.co.uk.

Flybe

Flybe, the low-cost airlines, has started services to the German cities of Düsseldorf and Hannover from Southampton Airport. The airline is also to launch its first ever low cost route to Amsterdam from Southampton airport. Contact Sophie Jackson at sophie.jackson@redconsultancy.com.

Aer Lingus

Aer Lingus, has announced plans to introduce five new routes from Dublin and Cork to Europe in its winter schedule. From October the airline will include Dublin to Turin and Newcastle and Cork to Madrid, Lanzarote and Prague. Existing summer operations from Dublin to Poznan and Seville and from Cork to Berlin, Birmingham, Faro and Tenerife will now operate year round services. Visit : <http://www.aerlingus.com>.

Virgin Nigeria

Virgin Nigeria, the fully private sector airline of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, has launched thrice weekly services between Lagos and Dubai. Contact Katie Francis at Katie.Francis@fly.virgin.com.

Malév Hungarian Airlines and British Airways

Malév Hungarian Airlines and British Airways have agreed to code-share on each other's flights from 1 November 2006. Malév's flight code will be placed on British Airways' three daily flights from London Heathrow to Budapest and British Airways' flight code will be placed on Malév's two daily flights from Budapest to London Gatwick. Contact Wendy Walker at w.walker@ittfa.org

Air Berlin

Air Berlin, has won the best Low-Cost Airline 2006 award and the best European Low-Cost Airline in the 2006 World Airline Awards ® are based on the annual World Airline Survey conducted by Skytrax. The Survey measures over 35 different aspects of passenger satisfaction for an airline's product and service standards to evaluate the 'typical' travel experience. Contact Angelika Schwaff at schwaff@airberlin.com.

Jet2.com

Jet2.com, the North's low cost airline, today announced the addition of Tenerife to its list of destinations available from Manchester Airport.

For the first time in its 152-year history, the America's Cup will be held off mainland Europe when the port of Valencia hosts the event in June 2007. To meet the anticipated demand for flights, Jet2.com has opened up sales from Manchester early for Summer 2007. Jet2.com is the only airline to offer direct flights to Valencia from Manchester.

Jet2.com launches a new four times a week service from Blackpool airport to Prague in October. Contact Jonathan Priestley at jonathan@lucrecommunications.com.

Flybe

Low cost airline, Flybe's winter schedule sees 13 new destinations in Germany, The Netherlands, Ireland and the UK. Contact Lisa Sabin at lisa.sabin@redconsultancy.com.

Air Transat

Air Transat has launched its winter schedule from London Gatwick, Manchester and Glasgow to Toronto. Air Transat offers departures from Canada to some 90 destinations in 25 countries including to more airports in Europe than any other carrier. Contact Frederique Barral at Frederique@completemediagroup.co.uk.

Virgin Atlantic

Virgin Atlantic Airways is to fly a direct service between London and Mauritius from November 2007. This new service will bring the airline's total number of destinations to twenty-eight. Contact Katie Francis at Katie.Francis@fly.virgin.com.

- ## Useful information

Responsesource

Responsesource.com offers travel writers a range of free tools to gather information, make new contacts and find job opportunities.

The Response Source journalist enquiries system lets you quickly request any help you need with editorial research from thousands of PRs in all sectors. The press release wire offers emailed news by sector or a keyword customised feed.

Freelancers can make sure commissioning editors and PRs can contact them with a listing on the Freelance Journalist Directory, and all journalists can receive a weekly newsletter which includes media moves and job alerts.

Visit www.responsesource.com or email Vanessa McGreevy at vanessa@dwpub.com.

The Association of Independent Tour Operators

The Association of Independent Tour Operators (AITO) comprises more than 155 independent and specialist travel companies. Visit www.aito.co.uk Contact Ian Bradley at I.Bradley@travelpr.co.uk.

- **The next issue**

The next issue of the International Travel Writers Alliance bulletin will be issued in August. Previous issues are available at www.internationaltravelwritersalliance.com.

- **Contacts**



The International Travel Writers Alliance bulletin is produced by :

Ashley Gibbins at travelwritersalliance@williamjack.co.uk or +44 (0) 776 419 8286, and Charo Moreno at travelwritersalliance@williamjack.co.uk or +44 (0) 781 805 2331