

TRAVEL

GLORIOUS GIFT GETAWAYS

by Linda Lang

Looking for that perfect gift?
How about a trip to try out that new resort,
island escape, exotic discovery, or cruise?
A gift of travel is a great way to start
the New Year with dreams and expectations.
You will also find some great deals.

Witness the same polar landscapes that Roald Amundsen
and Robert Falcon Scott first saw a century ago in Antarctica.

Overwater bungalows
at The Bora Bora
Pearl Beach Resort & Spa



PARADISE ON SALE

For those wanting to enjoy the best of **French Polynesia's** legendary white sand beaches, aqua blue waters, tranquil lagoons and luxury accommodations, South Pacific Management has two exceptional offers. Travel to Bora Bora and Moorea and receive a 40 percent discount on your room with complimentary breakfast daily. A minimum of three nights at Moorea Pearl Resort & Spa or four nights at Bora Bora Pearl Beach Resort & Spa is required. You must also select the Manava Suite Resort Tahiti for any stopover accommodations on Tahiti. Reservation code "HS40%" must be referenced at the time of booking. To get the "Buy 5, Get 5" special, book five nights in an over-water bungalow at Moorea Pearl Resort & Spa or Bora Bora Pearl Beach Resort & Spa and receive five nights FREE at your choice of the Huahine Te Tiare Beach Resort, Tikehau Pearl Beach Resort and/or Manihi Pearl Beach Resort. Want to extend your stay? The offer is cumulative (six paid nights = six free nights). Reservation code "5=5" must be referenced at the time of booking. Both offers are valid from now to April 30, 2012. Details on these and other specials are available at www.spmhotels.com/article/special-offers or call 1-866-209-3901. Children 14 and under always stay and eat for free when sharing accommodations with parents.

LESS-TRAVELED ROADS TO DISCOVERY

Hacienda Hopping in Ecuador -- Most people travel to Ecuador in search of adventure. For those who want more creature comforts with their explorations, Enchanted Expeditions is now offering luxury trips that grant a glimpse into the country's rich past while providing glamorous hacienda accommodations, world-class spas and healing hot springs. One five-day itinerary begins two hours south of Quito at Cotopaxi National Park, site of Cotopaxto--the world's highest (19,348 ft.) active volcano, with accommodations in the 15th century San Agustin de Callo, a luxuriously-furnished farmhouse built on the site of an Inca palace that remains one of the two most important archaeological finds in Ecuador. Journeying to the northern province of Imbabura in the Andes, you'll spend two nights at Hacienda Zuleta, a 19-room, 4,000-acre working ranch owned by the family of former Ecuadorian President Galo Plaza Lasso. Host Fernando Polanco takes visitors hiking to Condor Huasi where Andean Condors are being reintroduced into the wild. You can also ride pure bred horses raised at the hacienda. The last evening is at the 23-room La Mirage Garden Hotel and Spa, the only Relais & Chateaux member property in Ecuador. The program includes all meals and excursions. For information on this and other Hacienda and

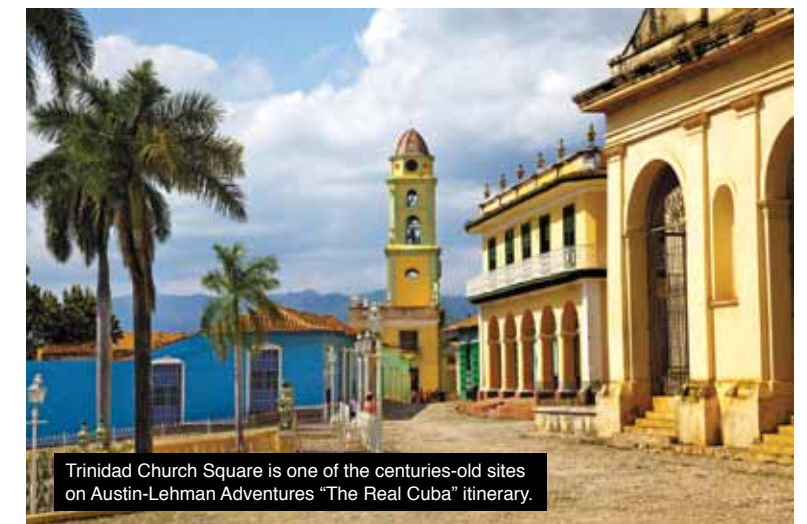


Spa tours, go to www.enchantedexpeditions.com/english/special_interest/special_interest.html.

Travel In Style to the End of the World -- To celebrate the 100th anniversary of man's first arrival at the South Pole, Kensington Antarctica, the only luxury eco-camp located in the continent's interior, is offering a new portfolio of exclusive itineraries for jet-setting thrill seekers. You will witness the same polar landscapes that Roald Amundsen and Robert Falcon Scott first saw a century ago. With a record number of tourists and cruise ships expected this year, the camp is an exclusive alternative for those who want to avoid the crowds and experience an authentic encounter in the wilds. Exclusive centennial itineraries include champagne toasts, gourmet cuisine, private jets and red carpet arrivals. Led by veteran polar explorers and expert guides, activities range from adrenaline-inducing kite skiing, mountain climbing and ice caving to champagne picnics, walks to see Adelie penguins, visits to science stations or a flight to a 12,000-strong Emperor penguin colony. Departures from Nov. 22 to Dec. 19, 2011 range from three to eight days and are accessible by private jet from Cape Town, South Africa. With temperatures averaging 23 degrees F (this is the Antarctic summer), the eco-camp is open to anyone in normal physical condition. Visit www.kensingtontours.com/Tours/Antarctica-and-Arctic.



Cuba Calling -- Since President Obama loosened travel restrictions to Cuba in January, access to the island nation is a little easier for the average traveler. To provide an in-depth experience of Cuba today, award-winning Austin-Lehman Adventures, named one of 2011's Top Best Tour and Safari Operators in the World, is introducing "The Real Cuba," a new program designed to immerse you in the island's history, current economic environment and culture. We have a preview of the 10-day itinerary which begins and ends with charter flights between Miami or Cancun and Havana. Sharing their insights daily on all facets of Cuban life today and yesterday are a group of Christopher P. Baker's Cuban friends. Highlighting four days in Havana are Habana Vieja (Old Havana); meeting with the director of the Museo Hemingway to learn about the Cuban perspective on Hemingway, his lifestyle, and former home prior to lunching at a seafood restaurant he popularized; exploring Capitolio (the former Capitol building), Malecón and Plaza de la Revolución. In Trinidad, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and most impressive of Cuba's colonial cities, adventures include taking a 1906 steam train to the Valle de los Ingenios (Valley of the Sugar Mills) with lunch at Hacienda Iznaga, a former slave plantation, to learn about the roles of sugar and slavery in Cuba's history and lace making today. In the province of Pinar del Río, there's a visit to Finca Pinar San Luis, the private plantation of legendary tobacco farmer Alejandro Robaina, and exploring the colonial village of Viñales. En route to Las Terrazas, you'll see Central via Cuevas





Havana is one of the highlights of Austin-Lehman's exclusive, new in-depth tour of Cuba.

de los Portales, Che Guevara's headquarters during the Cuban Missile Crisis. For advance information, call 1-800-575-1540 or e-mail info@austinlehman.com. For current trips, log onto www.austinlehman.com.

FOR GOURMANDS AND OENOPHILES



Chef Ken Frank of La Toque and his sous chef prepare fresh black truffles for the Napa Truffle Festival's Truffle Dinner. Photo by Faith Echtermeyer, courtesy of the Napa Truffle Festival.

Looking for some pre-holiday fun? **The San Diego Bay Wine & Food Festival**, Nov 16-20, boasts a star-studded lineup for its 8th Annual epicurean fête. More than 50 of the nation's most recognized celebrity chefs and local culinary stars and some 24 winemakers are participating. During two days of interactive food and wine tasting classes, each chef prepares a series of dishes with recipes

provided. Tasting classes feature discussions led by award-winning winemakers, mixologists, and master sommeliers from around the world. All are tasting events with guests sampling a variety of wines, beers, or spirits per class. Special events include a Reserve Tasting and Auction, Celebrity Chef Luncheon & AIWF Big Bottle Auction, and Grand Tasting. For event info and tickets, go to <http://worldofwineevents.com>. Host hotel is the San Diego Marriott Hotel & Marina on W. Harbor Dr. The site provides links to it and other hotels offering discounted rates for the event.

Napa Truffle Festival, January 13-16. For discerning gourmands, wine lovers, and growers, the second annual Napa Truffle Festival will feature an interesting gathering of leading truffle cultivation experts and scientists, food and wine experts, and internationally-renowned chefs. Program includes food and wine pairings, truffle orchard excursions and a Truffles & Wine dinner prepared by Michelin Star chefs. Keynote speaker is Barbara Fairchild, former editor of *Bon Appétit*. Two days of culinary and scientific programs, winery lunches, V.I.P. winery tastings and local truffle orchard tours, complete with truffle dogs, culminate with the Saturday Night Truffles & Wine Dinner, hosted by Michelin Star Chef Ken Frank of La Toque which features a multi-course truffle menu and wine pairing, each course being prepared by a different Michelin Star chef including Michael Cimarusti of Providence in Los Angeles; Suzette Gresham-Tognetti of Acquerello in San Francisco; Marco Gubbiotti of La Bastiglia



Viceroy Bali is a luxurious 25-villa haven for those seeking the exclusive, exotic and serene.

in Spello, Italy; and Andrew Zimmerman of Sepia in Chicago. Event tickets are available online at www.napatrufflefestival.com, accommodations not included. The Westin Verasa in downtown Napa will be the host venue and offer a special rate for the Festival weekend. Call 1-707-257-1800 for rates and reservations.

SPA VACATIONS

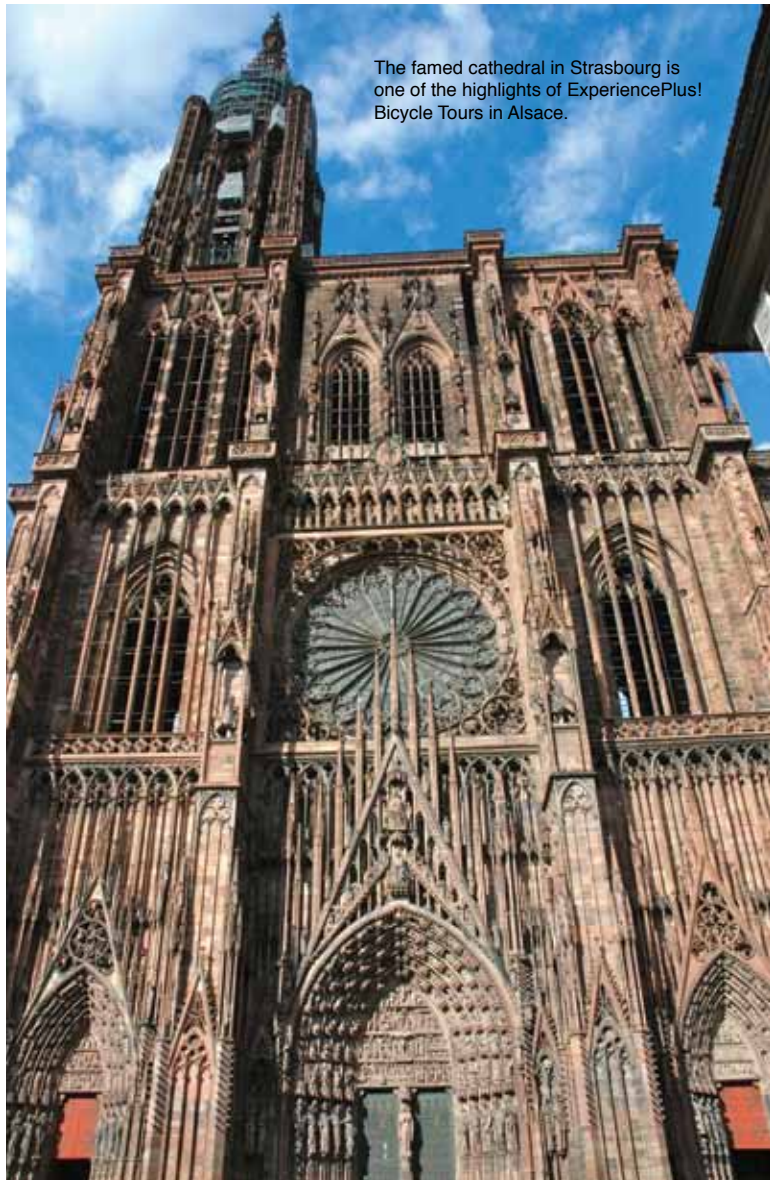
The Twelve Apostles Hotel in Cape Town just completed a major makeover of its celebrated Spa that now glistens with an all-white crystal grotto interior, seven treatment rooms, Rasul chamber for traditional steam and mud cleansing rituals, Lanyana Aromatherm room for hydrotherapy or Vichy showers, and nail salon. Coinciding with the relaunch is the introduction of B|Africa, a new line of signature spa products produced from natural ingredients without synthetic pesticides, fertilizers or animal testing. This internationally-renowned, five-star South African hideaway overlooking the Atlantic is just 15 minutes from Cape Town. In addition to the award-winning health and beauty spa, two pools perched above the ocean, two restaurants, bar lounge, and 16-seat private cinema (with popcorn, of course) complete the 70-room property. Complimentary



The Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa in Zurich has introduced a "72 Hours In Your Bathrobe" package.

roundtrip transfers are provided from the city or you can arrive by helicopter. Several specials, including an enticing two-night Hibernate to Rejuvenate package, are offered through Dec. 19 which are great for those flying into Cape Town a few days early to join a safari or other adventure. Visit www.12apostleshotel.com.

Heading for Switzerland? **The Victoria-Jungfrau Grand Hotel & Spa** has introduced a "72 Hours in Your Bathrobe" package that invites you to ditch your duds and, if you wish, spend three days lounging in plush bathrobes in and around the spa. Upon arrival in Zurich, you're met by private chauffeur and



The famed cathedral in Strasbourg is one of the highlights of ExperiencePlus! Bicycle Tours in Alsace.

driven to the hotel where you can by-pass reception and head straight to a luxurious Bel-Air suite with private balconies and panoramic mountain views. The spa promises a day of complete unwinding with six hours of custom spa treatments including ESPA or SENSAI SELECT face and body treatments, as well as indoor and outdoor pools, Jacuzzis, whirlpools, and the newly re-opened sauna with candlelit relaxation room. At night, it's your choice of attire as you can dress to impress, dine leisurely at the Spa Café or within the privacy of your suite. www.victoria-jungfrau.ch or email reservation@victoria-jungfrau.ch.

Pampering in Bali - Crowning a secluded ridge overlooking Bali's Valley of the Kings is the **Viceroy Bali**, a luxurious 25-villa haven for those seeking the exclusive, exotic and serene elegance. Once a favored retreat of royals, there are five classes of villas, each with its own pool. Amenities include an award winning restaurant, gym, Jacuzzi, steam room and complimentary Wi-Fi throughout. The Lembah Spa overlooking the lush vale offers a sanctuary with a full range of massage and body treatments blending the best of Western wellness techniques with Balinese traditions handed down over centuries. Their enticing Spa & Wellness package for two includes a three-night stay in a luxury pool villa, two-hour couples' massage, four-hand harmony massage, daily breakfast and a dinner at the resort's award-

winning CasCades restaurant. Complimentary transportation is offered between this exquisite member of Small Luxury Hotels and the nearby village of Ubud. Visit www.viceroybali.com or go to the SLH website, www.slh.com/viceroy.

FOR WESTLAKE AREA CYCLISTS

Cuisine and Culture Highlight New European Biking Adventures – Award-winning ExperiencePlus! Bicycle Tours, with programs in 21 countries on five continents, is adding five luxury tours to its 2012 European cycling programs. New itineraries range from seven to 12 days from May through October. Czech Please! Explore Moravia and Bohemia features 15th century forbidden forests and castles along world-famous greenways from Vienna to Prague; Best of Provence Plus!, a new version of an old favorite, begins in Arles and ends in Aix-en-Provence. Mediterranean cuisine, Côtes-de-Rhône wines, Roman ruins, artisans, open-air markets and a visit to a chef's home are part of the fun. Cycling through scenes made familiar by Van Gogh and Cézanne, a longer version of the trip ends in the small hilltop villages of Luberon made famous by Peter Mayle's best seller, *A Year in Provence*. Cycling Languedoc Region of France unfolds classic Mediterranean France with vast expanses of vineyards and vestiges of Roman history in Nîmes and Narbonne, highlighted by two nights in Carcassonne, the best preserved medieval fortress town in Europe. Italy's Lakes District, long a haven for writers and artists, enjoys a unique micro-climate nurturing olive and citrus groves, exotic botanical gardens, marvelous villas and endless vistas. Itinerary between Lake Maggiore and Mantua includes Lugano and Como. Between meals, a New Culinary (Agriturismo) Tour in Emilia Romagna visits purveyors of cured hams, pastas, parmesan cheese, balsamic vinegar and wine makers plus ancient castles and world heritage UNESCO sites between Cremona and Faenza. Visit www.experienceplus.com or call (800) 685-4565.



Book now, enjoy later. Travel offers a terrific potpourri of great gift ideas. Happy Holidays and Bon Voyage! ❄️



Cyclists pause for a break in Belgium.