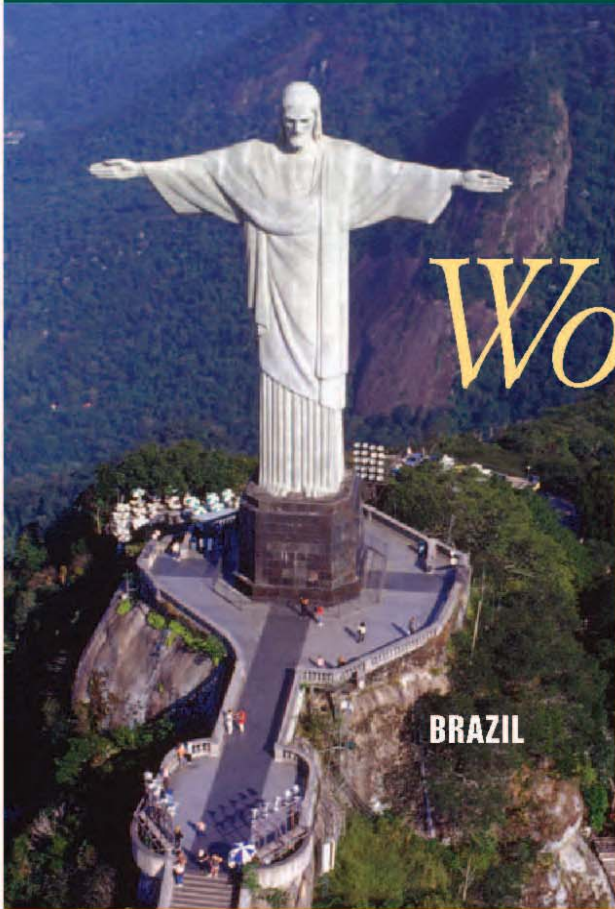


AUGUST 2007

Travel World

The Magazine for Destination Travel Specialists

NEWS®



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INDIA

7 New Wonders of the World

MEXICO

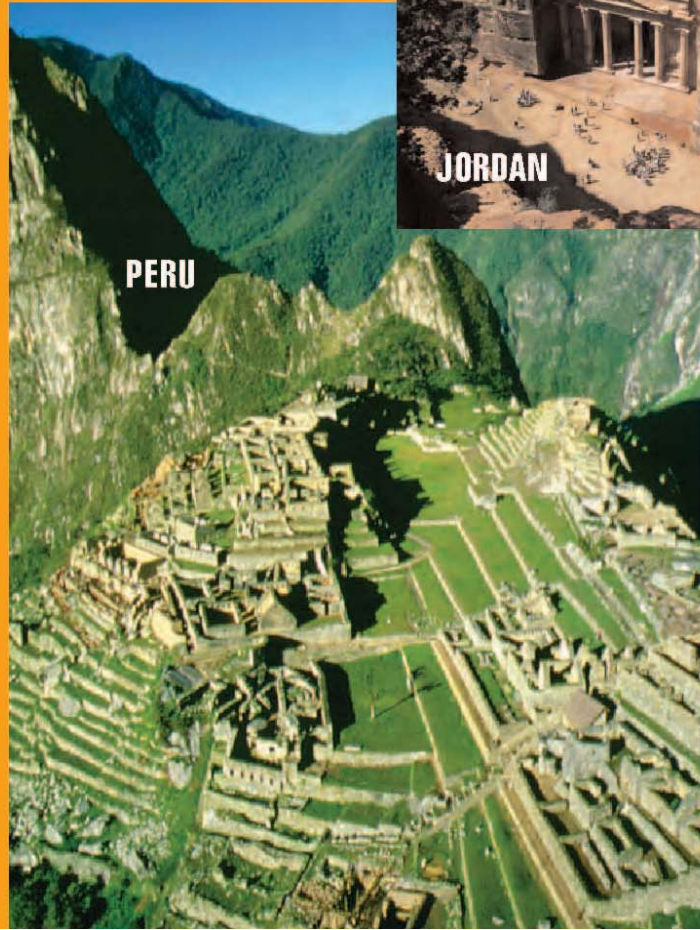


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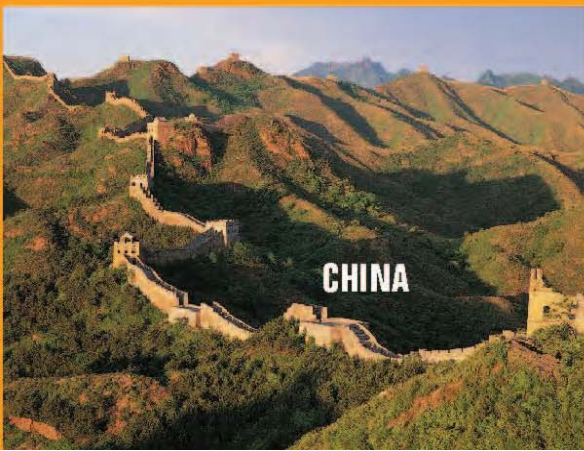
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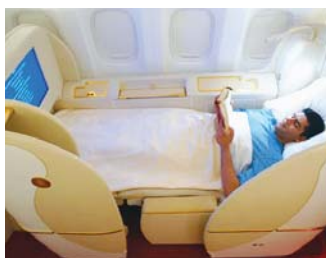


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AUGUST 2007

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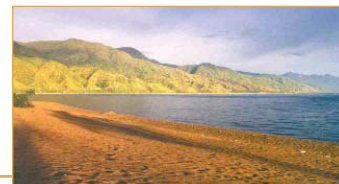
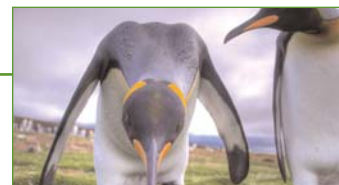
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New 7 Wonders of the World Declared

Over 100 million votes cast in the first-ever global election.

JENNIFER M. LANE

In front of a crowd of 50,000 spectators and a television audience of millions, the results of the *New7Wonders* campaign were announced in Lisbon's Benfica Stadium on 07-07-07. In the random order in which they were announced by hosts Bipasha Basu, Hilary Swank and Ben Kingsley, the New 7 Wonders of the World, as chosen by the people of the world, are: The Great Wall of China, Petra, The Statue of Christ Redeemer, Machu Picchu, Chichén Itzá, The Colosseum, and The Taj Mahal. *New7Wonders* Foundation President and Founder Bernard Weber, and Amir Dossal, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Partnerships, presented plaques to all finalists. The ceremony featured international personalities including *New7Wonders* Panel of Experts and former Director-General of UNESCO Prof. Federico Mayor, Neil Armstrong, José Carreras, Joaquín Cortés, Chaka Khan, Jennifer Lopez, Bertrand Piccard, Dulce Pontes, Cristiano Ronaldo and Alessandro Safina. It was choreographed by Olympic ceremony veteran Jacques Lemay. The event was officially hosted by the President and Prime Minister of Portugal, with ministers, ambassadors and other representatives of the finalists in attendance.

Through the *New7Wonders* campaign, millions of the world's citizens voted and overwhelmingly showed their enthusiasm for global dialogue. This unprecedented outpouring of support has propelled the world's heritage onto the front pages and headlines of the international media and fostered intercultural appreciation on a completely new democratic level. Founder and President of the *New7Wonders* Foundation Bernard Weber noted that, "The people of the world have created global memory—7 things that everyone will remember."

The New 7 Wonders



Chichén Itzá, the most famous Mayan temple city, served as the political and economic center of the Mayan civilization. Its various structures, including the pyramid of Kukulcan, the Temple of Chac Mool, the Hall of the Thousand Pillars, and the Playing Field of the Prisoners, can still be seen today and are demonstrative of an extraordinary commitment to architectural space and composition. The pyramid itself was the last, and arguably the greatest, of all Mayan temples.

The Mayan name "Chich'en Itza" means "at the mouth of the well of the Itza (people)." Since the Yucatán Peninsula has no

ivers, the three natural sinkholes (cenotes) at Chichén Itzá made it a good place for a city, providing plenty of water all year. Two of these cenotes still exist—the most famous is the "Cenote of Sacrifice," sacred to the Maya rain god Chaac.

The Temple of Kukulcan, often called "El Castillo" (the castle), is a step pyramid, with square terraces and staircases up each of the four sides to the temple on top. Great sculptures of plumed serpents run down the northern staircase and, because of how the shadows fall, seem to move on the spring and fall equinoxes.



MACHU PICCHU

In the 15th century, the Incan Emperor Pachacútec built a city in the clouds on the mountain known as Machu Picchu ("old mountain"). This extraordinary settlement lies halfway up the Andes Plateau, deep in the Amazon jungle and above the Urubamba River. After the Spanish defeated the Incan Empire, the city remained 'lost' for over three centuries. It was rediscovered by Hiram Bingham in 1911. There are several different theories as to what Machu Picchu was. Some believe it was the luxurious mausoleum (burial site) of Pachacútec; others think that it was an Incan "llacta," a settlement built to both control the economy of the conquered regions and to protect the top Incan aristocracy in the case of an attack. Another theory expands on this idea, seeing Machu Picchu as a country retreat for Inca nobility. It may also have been used as an observatory and for astrological ceremonies. A maximum of 750 people probably lived in the "Lost City of the Incas" at once. It is said that the silhouette of the mountain range behind Machu Picchu represents the face of the Inca looking upward towards the sky, with the largest peak, Huayna Picchu ("young mountain") representing his nose.



CHRIST THE REDEEMER

Christ The Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil is a statue of Jesus that stands atop the Corcovado mountain. Designed by Brazilian Heitor da Silva Costa and created by French sculptor Paul Landowski, it is one of the world's best-known monuments. The statue took five years to construct and is made out of reinforced concrete, with the outer layers made from soapstone. The Corcovado Rack Railway played an important part in the building effort, as the only way to get

the large pieces of the statue to the top of the mountain was by train. The statue was inaugurated on October 12, 1931. On January 20, 2003, technology brought another change to the monument—panoramic elevators and escalators were inaugurated, so it is no longer necessary to climb up 220 steps to see the statue up close. It has become a symbol of the city and of the warmth of the Brazilian people, who receive visitors with open arms.

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

The Great Wall of China is the largest man-made monument ever to have been built and it is disputed that it is the only one visible from space.

PETRA, JORDAN

On the edge of the Arabian Desert, Petra was the glittering capital of the Nabataean empire of King Aretas IV (9 B.C. to 40 A.D.). Masters of water technology, the Nabataeans provided their city with great tunnel constructions and water chambers. Today, the Palace Tombs of Petra are impressive examples of Middle Eastern culture.

THE ROMAN COLOSSEUM

This great amphitheater in the center of Rome was built to celebrate the glory of the Roman Empire. Its design concept still stands to this very day, and virtually every modern sports stadium some 2,000 years later still bears the irresistible imprint of the Colosseum's original design.

THE TAJ MAHAL

Built out of white marble and standing in formally laid-out walled gardens, the Taj Mahal is regarded as the most perfect jewel of Muslim art in India.

New7Wonders of Nature

To close the ceremony, Mr. Weber announced the Foundation's next campaign, the *New7Wonders of Nature*. The nominations will continue through 08.08.08. Then, a panel of experts will create a list of 21 candidates from which voters worldwide will elect the new 7 wonders of nature.

Nominations must be for a clearly defined natural site or natural monument that was not created or significantly altered by humans. People can nominate their favorite wonder on the website.

The New 7 Wonders of the World,

www.new7wonders.com

AIR INDIA LAUNCHES NONSTOP NEW YORK-MUMBAI SERVICE

Air India has announced that it will introduce daily, nonstop service from New York's JFK International Airport to Mumbai starting August 1. The new service will feature the state-of-the-art Boeing 777-200LR (longer range) aircraft, equipped with the latest in-flight features, including on-demand audio and video entertainment in each seat. Flight 140 departs daily at 9:30 p.m., arriving in Mumbai in just over 15 hours. Returning flight 141 will

depart Mumbai at 12:45 a.m., arriving at JFK at 7:10 a.m. the same day. Air India's nonstop service is part of the airline's latest expansion and fleet modernization program. The flights are in addition to Air India's daily 747-400 direct service from New York to India via London. Like the spacious 747-400's, the new 777-LR offers three levels of service – First, Executive and Economy Class – outstanding continental and Indian cuisines, an exceptional wine list, and flight attendants who will make the journey a relaxed and pleasant experience. For travelers continuing beyond Mumbai, Air India offers gate-to-gate connecting service from the same international terminal to 12 other major cities in India, including Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Chennai, and Hyderabad. This allows travelers to check their luggage at JFK through to their final Air India destination, where they clear customs and immigration.

Air India, 800-223-7776, www.airindia.in

FOUR SEASONS OCEAN RESIDENCES TO BE LAUNCHED IN 2010

BV International Ocean Holdings Ltd. has unveiled Four Seasons Ocean Residences. The 48,600-ton, 719-foot luxury vessel will feature an exclusive, fully private, international residential community aptly named Four Seasons and will be known as the world's most prestigious waterside address.

The residential vessel, scheduled for delivery in 2010, offers 112 wholly owned private residences providing one, two, three, or four bedrooms with the onboard benefits and amenities of the legendary service of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. Elegant fully furnished residences and penthouses, designed by Tillberg Design U.S., ranging in size from 800 to over 7,000 square feet, include floor-to-ceiling windows, spacious living room areas, master bedroom suites, terraces, a full-size gourmet kitchen, and a private entrance for staff.

With 70,000 square feet of public space, the ship offers sophisticated travelers an expansive array of onboard activities and entertainment, including the Four Seasons Spa and fitness facility, a European-styled promenade, a gourmet market, a business center, wine cellar, helipad, putting greens, driving range, state-of-the-art communications technology, and a marina facility that will provide residents with ship-to-shore service, SCUBA expeditions, and a launch for jet skis or sailboats.

The 13-deck Four Seasons will tour some of the world's most vibrant cities and exotic ports of call without ever leaving home. The design of the Four Seasons allows her to circumnavigate the globe, visiting cosmopolitan centers of the world and to dock or anchor near remote habitats only accessible to a limited number of smaller sized yachts. Four Seasons can host its owners, their guests, and 220 crew members. The first journey is scheduled to depart in 2010, visiting many of the world's most marvelous places and events including Antarctica and the Amazon, as well as the 2012 Olympics in London.

Four Seasons Ocean Residences, 877-507-3393,

www.fourseasons.com

ANNETTE CHOYNACKI NAMED DIRECTOR OF BELGIAN TOURIST OFFICE FOR NORTH AMERICA



ANNETTE CHOYNACKI

Ms. Annette Choynecki has been named Director of the Belgian Tourist Office for North America. She succeeds Frederique Raeymaekers, who managed the office for 30 years.

Annette has been integral to the rise in Belgian tourism in recent years, as a result of her passion for Belgium and extensive understanding of the North American Leisure Travel and Meetings marketplace. She is a 25-year veteran of the organization, which she has served for 15 years as Deputy Director. Highly respected by her colleagues and clients for her professionalism and follow through, she has significantly contributed to the increase in travel to Belgium through innovative advertising and marketing programs for all industry segments.

Annette holds an M.A. in Art History and a B.A. in Political & Social Sciences from Brussels University. Her career and her personal passion have taken her to over 80 countries.

Ms. Liliane Opsomer who has been Press and Public Relations Manager for 15 years has been appointed Deputy Director.

Belgian Tourist Office, 212-758-8130 ext. 15, info@visitbelgium.com, www.visitbelgium.com

ORLANDO SUN RESORT AND CONVENTION CENTER NAMES TIM HEMPHILL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING



TIM HEMPHILL

The Moinian Group and Senate Hospitality Group have named Tim Hemphill as Executive Director of Sales and Marketing of the new 922-room Orlando Sun Resort and Convention Center by Lexington.

Hemphill brings more than 20 years of marketing and sales experience to the position. For the past eight years Hemphill has served as Executive Director of the Kissimmee Convention and Visitors

Bureau.

"To be involved with this dynamic new facility that has such tremendous potential is both an exciting opportunity and a great challenge," Hemphill said. "I know our visitors and guests will be as thrilled as I am with the nearly \$5 million in renovations the owners have invested in the resort."

The resort is at the location of the former Hyatt Orlando, one and a half miles from Walt Disney World. In June of 2004, the Moinian Group bought the property and kept key staff on full time until deciding to renovate and re-open the resort. All the main systems

were kept operational which minimized the time to return the property to its former luster. Almost \$1 million was invested in landscaping; the remaining \$4 million went toward interior finishes and main features such as the resort's four swimming pools.

The Orlando Sun Resort and Convention Center by Lexington includes 922 guest rooms on more than 77 acres. It offers some of the largest meeting space in close proximity to Walt Disney World. Main features include a 13,550-square-foot ballroom, a 20,000-square-foot exhibit hall and 22 meeting rooms. Additional amenities include free wireless internet access in all the guest rooms, four pools and a full-feature lounge. Food outlets include a casual upscale restaurant, a three-meal restaurant and a marketplace deli. The resort can easily accommodate meetings of up to 2,000 people. The first phase of 480 guest rooms are ready for occupancy and the balance of the rooms will be on-line by late summer.

Orlando Sun Resort and Convention Center, 877-467-5786, www.osrbylexington.com

STEVE JOHNSON NAMED NORTHEAST SALES MANAGER FOR GRACE'S DISTINCTIVE PROPERTIES, LTD.



STEVE JOHNSON

Grace's Distinctive Properties, Ltd., the leading U.S. Travel Sales and Marketing firm representing numerous Caribbean and European resorts, has announced the appointment of Steve Johnson as Northeast Sales Manager.

Mr. Johnson will be personally developing partnerships with New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania travel professionals for all of the resorts and hotels that GDP represents with a specific focus

on the new Seven Stars Resort on Grace Bay in Turks & Caicos.

Johnson comes to the project with a wealth of Caribbean travel industry experience in addition to both a Bachelor of Commerce and Master of Science degree. With his long tenure in the United States as Vice Consul/Deputy Director of Tourism for the Island of Dominica, Mr. Johnson was tapped as the ideal candidate for this key position.

"We are very happy to have acquired the expertise of Mr. Johnson." Grace Grillo, President of Grace's Distinctive Properties, Ltd., affirmed, "I have every confidence that he will bring both GDP, as well as Seven Stars Resort, to 'the next level'."

In addition to the Seven Stars Resort (Turks & Caicos) the other GDP's properties which Johnson will be promoting are Accra Beach Hotel (Barbados), Aura Resort Cozumel (Mexico), GB Hotels & Spas and Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria (Italy), Half Moon (Jamaica), Jolly Beach Resort (Antigua), Puntacana Hotel (D.R.), Punta Cana Private Villas (D.R.), The Beach House (Barbuda), and the Tortuga Bay Hotel (D.R.).

Grace's Distinctive Properties, Ltd., 516-767-3057, www.gracesdistinctiveproperties.com

TAKE A MATE FOR FREE ON BLUE LAGOON CRUISES

Blue Lagoon Cruises is offering guests the chance to 'take a mate for free.' For sales in North America and for new reservations only, one person pays the single rate and can take a companion for free on any of their Gold Club Cruises subject to availability at time of reservations.

Sales are from June 15- September 30, 2007 and travel departures are from September 10 to December 17, 2007 inclusive, and January 7, 2008 to March 31, 2008 inclusive.

The booking code is NAMATE/0607.

Normal contract rates apply for calculation purposes and confirmation will be provided at time of booking subject to availability at time of request. Offer is valid for the North American market and for new bookings only and may not be sold in conjunction with any other offer available. Standard cancellation and no show policies apply as per current contracts. The booking code NAMATE/0607 must be quoted at time of reservation for offer above to be valid. Vouchers must also have the code NAMATE/0607 stated to be valid.

Blue Lagoon Cruises Limited, 818-424-7550, marie@bluelagooncruises.com, www.bluelagooncruises.com, www.cruiseinluxurydiveinparadise

MARK FLAGER APPOINTED TO NCMA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



MARK FLAGER

Mark Flager, Vice President-North America for Voyages of Discovery (formerly Discovery World Cruises), has been elected to an open three-year term on the Niche Cruise

Marketing Alliance's executive committee.

Flager joins existing executive committee members Susan Shultz of American Cruise Lines and Larry Haugh of Star Clippers, whose terms expire in 2009 and 2008,

respectively.

The 12 Niche Cruise Marketing Alliance members have banded together to educate travel agents on the value of concentrating on the sale of specialty cruise products. The alliance provides educational programs, seminar content, and trade show exposure for its members and this industry segment. In addition, its website has been redesigned to allow consumers in the United States and Canada to locate certified Niche Cruise Specialist travel agents by zip code, postal code or city.

The website contains direct links to the websites of all member lines. In addition, NCMA recently formed an affiliate relationship with NACTA (the National Association of Commissioned Travel Agents).

NCMA member lines include American Cruise Lines, Fred. Olsen Cruises, Galapagos Explorer II (Canodros), Imperial River Cruises, Louis Cruise Lines, Majestic America Line, Norwegian Coastal Voyage, Orion Expedition Cruises, Peter Deilmann Cruises, RiverBarge Excursion Lines, Star Clippers and Voyages of Discovery.

NCMA, NicheCruise@msn.com, www.nichecruise.com

STOWAWAY WITH CRUISE WEST AND SAVE

Cruise West has reintroduced the Stowaway Program that offers guests with flexibility the opportunity to travel on short notice and receive a savings of 25 percent on the cruise-only brochure rate. This program is available on most cruise products including Asia, South Pacific, the Sea of Cortés, Costa Rica & Panama, Alaska, and the East and West Coasts.

The Stowaway Program is a straightforward process. The traveler may request 60 or more days in advance to cruise on a specific itinerary and cabin category within a 30-day window. At the time of the request a non-refundable \$700 per person deposit is required. At least 30 days before departure, Cruise West will offer to confirm the guest(s) on a specific departure within that requested 30-day travel window. If the

guest cannot be accommodated, the full deposit will be refunded. If the guest declines the offered departure date, the deposit amount may be applied to a future cruise or cruise-tour within 24 months. The deposit is also transferable, but is non-refundable.

"We're pleased to reinvigorate this program and bring it back into the mix," said Jeff Krida, President and Chief Executive Officer, Cruise West. "Guests who have flexibility on travel dates can enjoy a savings and a memorable cruise. With the success of the program in previous years, it just made good sense to reinstate the offer."

The Stowaway Program may be combined with the five percent savings for Quynana Club members, Cruise West's return guest program, but may not be combined with Early Booking Savings, Group Savings or other offers. Stowaway savings apply to the cruise-only fare however cannot be applied to optional shore excursions or land tours. Cruise West, 800-689-1783, www.cruisewest.com

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Nashville: 200 Years Young

Music City, of course. Also art, Southern mansions, a world-class symphony, and oh yes — 14 colleges and universities.

BY ROBIN SWADOS

There are a lot of birthday bashes going on in Nashville this year as the city continues to celebrate its 200th anniversary. It is primarily—and justifiably—known the world over as “Music City USA,” its innumerable honky tonk bars flooded with country, bluegrass, jazz, rock ‘n roll, and blues music seemingly 24 hours a day. Even in bright sunshine its streets are ablaze with such legendary musical hangouts as Tootsie’s Orchid Lounge, Exit/In, Mercy Lounge, Station Inn, and Douglas Corner, as well as such famous eateries as Jack’s Bar-B-Que (416 Broadway; 615-254-5715; www.jacksbarbque.com), where the lines are long, but the scrumptious (and calorie-laden) selection of ribs, pork shoulder, smoked chicken, and Texas sausage, most at prices less than \$10, are well worth the wait. And if you think Nashville’s culinary scene consists of nothing more than biscuits and grits, think again. Some of the most talented young chefs from across the country have set up shop in Nashville, as evidenced by a burgeoning number of high-end and elegant restaurants, including the Park Café (4403 Murphy Road; 615-383-4409; www.parkcafenashville.com), with its maze-like assortment of intimate dining rooms; the super-sleek Ombi Bar (2214 Elliston Pl.; 615-320-5350; www.ombirestaurant.com); and the deco-themed F. Scott’s Restaurant and Jazz Bar (2210 Crestmoor Rd.; 615-269-5861; www.fscotts.com), where visitors can hear some of Nashville’s finest jazz musicians. Except for Sundays, F. Scott’s has a “9-Dine” program: anyone seated after 9 p.m. in the main dining room receives half off his or her food check. For those in search of more traditionally local (and less expensive) fare, no visit to Nashville would be complete without breakfast at the Loveless Café. Since 1951 the Loveless has played host to thousands of celebrities, including Paul McCartney, Princess Anne, Al Gore, and Martha Stewart, who said, “It was best breakfast I ever had.” The Loveless smokes its own meats and cans its own fresh fruit preserves (all for sale in their gift shop) and serves up mouth-watering and enormous portions of hot biscuits, eggs, ham, bacon, sausage, and...well, it’s advised to go on an empty stomach (8400 Highway 100; 615-646-9700; www.lovelesscafe.com). And a waiting period of 24 hours might be in order before heading for lunch at Swett’s Restaurant (2725 Clifton Avenue; 615-329-4418), a popular cafeteria specializing in African-American fare at very inexpensive prices.

In Between Meals...

As well as being known as “Music City USA,” Nashville has



Belmont Mansion.

also been known for the past century or so as “the Athens of the South,” a reference to its 14 colleges and universities that attract some 30,000 students (about a third of them to Vanderbilt University) from the United States and around the world. As a reflection of this, the city first undertook the construction of a full-scale replica of the Parthenon to house the international art exhibition for the 1897 Centennial Exposition. Originally constructed of brick, wooden lathe and plaster, the structure had begun to crumble, and by 1921 reconstruction began, using permanent materials. In 1931 the Parthenon was reopened to the public, attracting 10,000 visitors from around the world during its first month. The building remained virtually unchanged until 1987, when a radical 20-month renovation was begun. Today the Parthenon serves as one of Nashville’s foremost art museums and is home to one of Nashville sculptor Alan LeQuire’s monumental works, Athena Parthenos—at 42 feet high (and eight years in the making), the western world’s largest indoor statue. The occasionally controversial LeQuire’s work is also on display at the center of the traffic circle called Music Row Roundabout: Musica, the largest bronze figure group in America, consisting of nine (nude) colossal figures, celebrating the energy and diversity of the music industry in Nashville. It is, to put it mildly, a traffic-stopper (Centennial Park, 25th at West End Ave.; www.parthenon.org; 615-862-8431).

Of particular interest to both adults and families with children is the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, located in Nashville’s architecturally and historically significant former post office building, built in 1934. From the old masters to the latest in cutting-edge art, the Frist offers an ever-changing

celebration of the world's greatest art. Paintings, sculptures, photographs and interactive media from different viewpoints and time periods fill the spacious and relaxed galleries. Visitors 18 and under are admitted free, and the Frist's Martin Artquest Gallery is a child-friendly space where more than 30 hands-on stations offer individuals and small groups a chance to experiment and learn about art concepts that relate to the different exhibitions and everyday life—a place where children are free to express their creativity and grownups are welcome to join in the fun. Artwork can be stored in a digital portfolio accessible at the Frist or online. The museum also has a Kids Club, designed for 5- to 10-year-olds, and it hosts Frist Fridays, where from 6–9 p.m. live music is performed. For those 21 and older, a cash bar and hors d'oeuvres are served. The lively conversation that frequently ensues is free (919 Broadway; 615-244-3340; www.fristcenter.org).

A Fountainhead of Musical History

At the end of the day—and usually at times much earlier than that—Nashville's fame stems from its musical history, past and present. The city's contribution to the world of country music is both definitive and frequently mind-boggling in its breadth and quality. The focal point of its musical heritage is the Country Music Hall of Fame, an architecturally fascinating building whose front windows resemble black piano keys; the four disc-shaped tiers on its rotunda's roof represent the evolution of recording technology—the 78, the vinyl LP, the 45, and the compact disc; and from overhead, the building resembles the shape of a bass clef. Inside, the museum is arranged over three floors with chronologically organized exhibits containing some 800,000 items that encompass the entire history of country music. "I Can't Stop Loving You: Ray Charles and Country Music" is a special exhibit running through December 2007. Included with the price of admission is a separate bus tour to Nashville's historic RCA Studio B, the city's oldest surviving recording studio, built and leased to RCA Victor in 1957. It remained active until 1977. In its heyday, Studio B turned out an astounding 35,000 songs and 1,000 Top Ten hits, including Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You," Elvis Presley's "Are You Lonesome Tonight?," the Everly Brothers' "All I Have to do Is Dream," and Roy Orbison's "Only the Lonely," to name but a few. [Ben Weisman, who helped write nearly 80 songs for Presley, died in Los Angeles on May 22 at the age of 85.] For many years RCA executive Chet Atkins presided over the facility, where he helped create the smooth Nashville sound. Tours depart daily from the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and are available only in conjunction with museum admission (225 Fifth Avenue South; 615-416-2001; www.countrymusichalloffame.com).

A visit to Ernest Tubb's Record Shop, a short walk from the museum, is also highly recommended. Currently celebrating



ROBIN SWADOS

Schermerhorn Symphony Center.

its 60th anniversary, the store probably contains the greatest selection of hard-to-find country music (bluegrass is a particular specialty) CDs and DVDs in the world (417 Broadway; 615-255-7503; www.etrrecordshop.com).

But Nashville isn't just about musical history. In venues ranging from concert halls to intimate clubs, it's also home to some of the world's greatest and most famous live performers. Its #1 attraction should come as a surprise to no one: the Grand Ole Opry, which for more than 80 years has showcased a mix of country legends and the contemporary chart-toppers who have followed in their footsteps. It's also America's longest-running live radio broadcast, on the air since 1925 (2802 Opryland Drive; 800-SEE-OPRY; www.opry.com). Ryman Auditorium first opened its doors in 1892. With the advent of the Grand Ole Opry show in 1943, the Ryman found its identity as the "Mother Church of Country Music." Today it remains a national showplace—an iconic stage where hundreds of the country's most famous musicians and personalities, ranging from Roy Rogers to Mae West to the Metropolitan Opera, have performed, and continue to perform today (116 Fifth Avenue North; 615-889-3060; www.ryman.com). The Country Music Association is another huge tourist draw. For more than 30 years, it has presented the CMA Music Festival, a raucous, annual four-day (and -night) event that takes place each June in downtown's Riverfront Park. This year's festival comprised more than 400 performers and celebrities, 70 hours of live music, and 30 hours of autograph signings (1-800-CMA-FEST; www.cmafest.com). ABC-TV will air a two-hour special of the festival on August 2 at 9 p.m. (8 p.m. central time). At the tiny Bluebird Café, what began as a gourmet restaurant in 1982 has transformed itself into one of Nashville's hottest music clubs, where new writers and composers audition their material in front of a live audience (4104 Hillsboro Pike; 615-383-1461; www.bluebirdcafe.com).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

NASHVILLE FROM PAGE 9

Not to be outdone by cities such as New York, Philadelphia or Chicago, Nashville's commitment to the world of classical music is in full view at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, new home of the Nashville Symphony and a centerpiece of the city's downtown revitalization. Opened in September 2006, the 197,000-square-foot neo-classically inspired building, in much the same vein as New York's famed Carnegie Hall, features classical masterworks and pops programs as well as recitals, choral, cabaret, world music and jazz presentations. The Laura Turner Concert Hall—Schermerhorn's main performance space—features a motorized chair wagon, which controls the innovative seating system, transforming the orchestra level from rows of raked seating to a 5,770-square-foot hardwood floor that allows table seating for pop and jazz performances. Thirty specially designed windows, which let in light but not sound, make the Schermerhorn one of only two major concert halls in the United States with this feature (One Symphony Place; 615-687-6500; nashvillesymphony.org; free tours: 615-687-6580).

Getting Sidetracked

For those wishing to escape the occasionally frenzied Nashville cultural scene, a visit to the Jack Daniel Distillery—the oldest registered distillery in the United States—can be an especially enjoyable and informative step into the past. Located in tiny (pop. 361) Lynchburg, about 70 miles southeast of Nashville, the distillery plays host to some 250,000 visitors a year.

Guided tours are available free of charge, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., seven days a week except Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day. Expect no samples, though: Lynchburg's been dry since prohibition. Friendly hint: Don't call it bourbon, which is manufactured in Kentucky (Route 1, Lynchburg;



Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum.

931-759-6810; www.jackdaniels.com.) Closer to town, but seemingly on another planet, are the Belle Meade Plantation, celebrating its bicentennial this year, and Belmont Mansion. Belle Meade, situated on 30 acres, features a lavish 1853 Greek Revival Mansion and eight other historic outbuildings. Daily tours are available M-Sat except Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's Day and Easter. Its Fall Fest Antiques & Craft Show takes place Sept. 15–16 (5025 Harding Road; 615-356-0501; www.bellemeadeplantation.com). Belmont Mansion was built in the style of an Italian villa, set in elaborate gardens with numerous outbuildings, and contains thirty-six rooms with approximately 10,900 square feet of living space and an additional 8,400 square feet of service area in the basement. The house is filled with fine furniture, paintings, and marble statues by American artists. Its Grand Salon is considered by architectural historians to be the most ornate domestic interior built in antebellum Tennessee (1900 Belmont Road; 615-460-5459; www.belmontmansion.com).

Where to Stay

Nashville has hotels to fit every taste and budget, ranging from the very mod-

est to the ultra deluxe.

For those on a medium-to-large budget, four excellent choices are the Nashville Downtown Hilton, with 330 all-suite rooms, conveniently located directly across the street from the Schermerhorn Symphony Center and the Country Music Hall of Fame (121 Fourth Avenue South; 615-620-1000; www.nashvillehilton.com); the historic Hermitage, built in 1910 (231 Sixth Avenue North; 888-767-9687; reservations@thehermitagehotel.com); Union Station, a stunningly restored, 100-year-old railway station (1001 Broadway; 615-726-1001; www.unionstationhotelnashville.com); and the gigantic Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center, with 2,881 guestrooms, including 165 suites and 741 atrium-view rooms with private balconies overlooking nine acres of indoor gardens. Gaylord's SummerFest™, which includes everything from music to horticultural tours to celebrity chefs, runs through Sept. 29.

One-, two- or three-night vacation packages start at \$107 (2800 Opryland Drive; 888-777-6779; www.gaylordhotels.com).

Nashville Convention & Visitor's Bureau, 800-657-6910, www.visitmusiccity.com

STAY ON TRACK TO HELP THE ENVIRONMENT WITH EURAIL

Carbon dioxide emissions from cars and planes play a huge role in air pollution and global warming. While people can't be expected to stop flying, they can still make wise decisions to help reduce their carbon footprint during vacation travel.

In Europe, taking the train is a sure-fire way to lessen the environmental impact of travel.

The Eurail network that covers most of Europe with its wide range of flexible and affordable rail passes makes it easy to travel "green." Aside from the environmental benefits, taking the train can make the journey as enjoyable as the destination. Since there is little urban sprawl, passengers enjoy a window seat showcasing the passing picturesque views.

What's more, trains rarely encounter mechanical or weather delays, and none of the frequent congestion that can not only stall traffic in the air and on the ground, but also further waste fuel and increase greenhouse gases.

Eurail offers a range of flexible and affordable rail passes. The classic Eurail Global Pass covers 18 countries and gives travelers the freedom to travel as far as they want, when they want, as long as they want.

For those wanting to visit a handful of countries, the Eurail Select Pass can be tailor-made to allow travel in any combination of three,

four, or five countries, provided they are linked by rail or shipping line. In response to the growing trend for shorter vacations to fewer countries, Eurail has introduced Eurail Regional Passes, valid in two bordering European countries and Eurail National Passes, allowing the in-depth discovery of a single country by rail.

In 2007, Eurail introduced exciting new destinations to the National Pass range including Italy, Portugal and the Republic of Ireland.

Eurail, www.EurailGroup.com

ATC LAUNCHES NEW INTERACTIVE WEBSITE

The Alpine Tourist Commission (ATC) has launched a new interactive website, www.WalkMyAlps.com, designed to take visitors on a virtual tour of the Alps with the help of local residents who know it best.

The innovative website enables visitors to have an authentic Alpine experience in the member countries of Austria, France, German, Italy and Switzerland. The site will be "hosted" by 10 authentic personalities who were selected because of their typical Alpine lifestyles. These locals will reveal the charm and allure of the Alps from a personal point of view. Through their first-hand

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



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ATC LAUNCHES... FROM PAGE 11

perspectives, visitors can experience a realistic journey with sights, sounds and real-life stories.

They will be invited to tour the inner working of an historic bell foundry, catch a glimpse into the kitchen of a master chef, watch a farmer make cheese, and witness a woodcarver in a toyshop. For those seeking a little more adventure, a world-renowned mountain climber ascends the heights of the Alps and shares his incredible views.

WalkMyAlps.com was developed to provide Americans with a broader view of the Alpine region and to encourage travel during non-winter months. Because of the unparalleled skiing and winter sports, many think of the Alps as a winter-only destination. The new Walk My Alps website highlights a different perspective and demonstrates that there are endless activities for all four seasons.

Picturesque towns and villages, exceptional spas, outdoor sports and outstanding wine and cuisine welcome visitors all year round.

Also on the site, among the tours, stories and photographs, is in depth travel information on hotels, restaurants, transportation and tour packages. Whether planning a trip or just learning more about the region, the Walk My Alps website is an invaluable source of information and interest.

Alpine Tourist Commission/Walk My Alps, www.WalkMyAlps.com

EL AL ADDS NEW BOEING 777'S TO ITS FLEET; NAMES OFFER GAT AS NEW CEO



OFFER GAT

EL AL, Israel's National Airline, will accept two new Boeing 777 aircraft, continuing its commitment to offer passengers exceptional service with enhanced state-of-the-art aircraft and in-flight comfort. The two new aircraft will be utilized on the New York/Tel Aviv route.

The first new EL AL 777 aircraft, named Sderot, will fly from Seattle via JFK in New York nonstop to Israel on July 25 and the second 777, called Kiryat

Shemona, will begin service in August. EL AL has a long-standing tradition to name each new aircraft after a city in Israel.

The new 777 aircraft have been specially designed for EL AL and have modern, wide spacious cabins which are among the most advanced in aviation. A state-of-the-art personal digital entertainment system is offered to all passengers. Provisions for personal computers and interactive features, as well as more comfortable seats will be enjoyed by passengers in all classes of service.

In First and Platinum Business classes, the new aircraft will be equipped with even more roomy seats. Expanded pitch and recline options provide increased in-flight comfort and dramatic physical improvements. In both classes of service, the seats will offer an articulating arm, a personal reading light, a large one-piece tray

table, an individual cocktail table, a coat hook and a 110-volt PC power outlet.

Three automatic pre-set positions plus the option of personal seat position adjustments will fit any passenger's preference throughout their flight.

First Class will feature adjustable, wide flat-bed seats with a 77-inch pitch (reclining to a full horizontal position), a complementary sleep suit and a personal shoe compartment. Passengers can enjoy privacy as each seat is separated from the passenger seated nearby. The new Platinum Business Class will feature flat bed seats with a 62-inch pitch (reclining to a 170 degree flat bed position).

"We are proud to offer passengers the opportunity to fly to Israel in increased comfort on the new aircraft which provide the latest technology.

EL AL passengers flying in any class of service will now have an enhanced and more memorable EL AL travel experience," stated Offer Gat, EL AL CEO, North and Central America.

The same new, more comfortable First and Platinum Business class seats in the new aircraft will also be installed on all of EL AL's existing 747-400 and 777 fleet by the end of 2008, ensuring an enhanced in-flight experience for any EL AL passenger. Every seat on all 747-400 and 777 aircraft is additionally equipped with state-of-the-art personal digital entertainment systems, offering a wide selection of in-flight entertainment.

In additional news, EL AL President Haim Romano has appointed Offer Gat as the new CEO of EL AL Israel Airlines in North and Central America, effective immediately. Mr. Gat is responsible for overseeing the airline's day-to-day operations and managing the development of EL AL's growing North and Central American markets.

He is based in New York City, the EL AL headquarters in the United States.

For 17 years, Mr. Gat has held top management positions at the largest travel companies in Israel. He has a proven reputation for bringing organizational efficiency, initiating cutting edge computer technology and developing sales and marketing activities to unprecedented levels.

Mr. Gat was previously President and CEO of Clal Holdings Travel and Tours (The Diesenhau Group), which controls a network of 17 travel related companies, a position he held for six years. From 1996 to 1999, Mr. Gat successively served as President and CEO of Third Millennium Tourism and Recreation Holdings; and was Managing Director of Zabar Tours, Recreation and Events, the leading Israeli company in domestic tourism. Mr. Gat also served as President and CEO of ISSTA Lines (Israel Students Travel Company) from 1987-1995.

Mr. Gat is a Lt Colonel in the Israel Defense Force (IDF) Reserves. He received both an MBA and his undergraduate degree in political science from Tel Aviv University. Mr. Gat is married with two daughters.

EL AL, 800-223-6700, www.elal.com

VISIT THE MALTESE ISLANDS WITH GODDESS TOURS TO MALTA

Individual and private tours with great attention to detail offered by Goddess Tours to Malta make a visit to the Maltese Islands one of the most memorable travel experiences ever. Choose the dates for travel, make the airlines reservations and Goddess Tours to Malta will do the rest. Their specialty is Neolithic archaeology, but they do not neglect the many other facets of Malta's 7,000 year history.

Explore local folklore, crafts (hand-blown glass, silver filigree, and the exquisite hand-made bobbin lace of Gozo), and fine food and dining experiences all woven into a seamless itinerary to make the most of the visit and allow all the time for travelers to do the things they want to do.

Goddess Tours to Malta, info@goddesstourstomalta.com, www.goddesstourstomalta.com

LOUIS CRUISE LINES ANNOUNCES 2008 FLEET DEPLOYMENT AND ITINERARIES

In order to satisfy the market's increased demand, Louis Cruise Lines have repositioned the 525 cabin *M/V Aquamarine* for the operation of their three and four-day cruises from March 7 through November 14, 2008. The recently acquired 480 stateroom *M/V Cristal* (formerly *M/V Opera*) will operate their seven-day cruise itineraries from mid May until the end of October 2008. All seven-

day Greek Islands and Turkey cruise itineraries will depart from Piraeus three hours earlier in order for passengers to enjoy more time at Istanbul's Grand Bazaar on Saturdays in addition to the full day on Sunday dedicated for sightseeing.

In 2008 the *M/V Cristal* will also operate a total of six new seven-day unique cruise itineraries at the beginning and at the end of the 2008 season. Besides Istanbul, this will include an overnight stop in Alexandria/Egypt. The 395 cabin *M/V Perla* will operate the three-day itinerary visiting Santorini and Heraklion/Crete (instead of Rhodes), and the standard four-day cruise with a slightly revised ports of call sequence, along with a few seven-day cruise itineraries at the beginning of the 2008 season.

The *M/V Coral* will repeat its very successful seven-day Western Mediterranean itineraries from April through December 2008 from Genoa or Marseilles, followed by alternating eight and 10-day Western Mediterranean cruises from November 15 through December 11, 2008.

In addition, the *M/V Orient Queen* will take over Sapphire's unique 10-day cruise itinerary starting on April 9 from Marseilles, Genoa and Piraeus, along with their distinctive seven and eight-day Libya cruises on April 19, November 2, and November 10, 2008.

All Louis Cruise Lines cruises are sold in North America through major tour operators.

Louis Cruise Lines, LCLUSA@louiscruises.com, www.louiscruises.com

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AIR MALTA: FOCUSING ON CUSTOMERS

Air Malta started operating in April 1974 and today is the largest airline operating in and out of Malta. The airline carries some 1.6 million passengers every year. Throughout the years it has invested in markets which have the potential to augment the island's tourism intake, offering the most extensive choice of air services to get to Malta. Air Malta continues to be the prime Maltese air transport enterprise.

With a fleet of 13 Airbus and two Boeing aircraft configured in business and economy, this summer Air Malta will operate no less than 200 flights every week to/from 46 scheduled destinations to Europe, North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Air Malta is constantly investigating in service improvements. The airline has just concluded a four and a half year aircraft fleet replacement project.

The airline's fleet consists of 12 new state-of-the-art Airbus planes from the A320 and A319 aircraft family. The average age of Air Malta's aircraft fleet has gone down to 2.5 years, and is considered to be one of the youngest fleets in Europe and throughout the world.

The introduction of Flypass, the airline frequent flyer scheme, was another major service improvement. The concept follows several other international frequent flyer programs. At absolutely no cost or obligation, Flypass gives passengers the opportunity to earn KM miles every time they travel. KMiles can be collected when flying with Air Malta and redeemed against Air Malta's scheduled services or through more than 60 portfolio partners.

Another initiative launched recently was the introduction of In-Flight Entertainment (IFE) onboard its flights. Through this new product, Air Malta started offering an enhanced level of in-flight service which is the best in-flight entertainment on the Malta route. The systems are aimed to provide a more enjoyable experience when traveling on Air Malta by providing audiovisual and print entertainment to passengers. Passengers traveling on Air Malta are now being presented with an in-flight magazine called Sky Life. Apart from the new magazine, Air Malta passengers are able to watch a number of feature films, light and humorous shows, and in-

sightful documentaries on a broad range of topics.

The signing of the code-share agreement with Lufthansa German Airlines in November 2006 has been another milestone for Air Malta. This agreement is offering seamless travel arrangements and connections to the airline's passengers and falls perfectly into Air Malta's strategic plans. In fact, as from this summer, Air Malta and Lufthansa will codeshare the daily direct service from Munich to New York JFK and Washington Dulles.

The airline is continuing in its endeavors to always present full service treatment while offering low fares to its customers.

Air Malta, www.airmalta.com

NEW FLOATING HOTEL TUYA DEBUTS ON NILE RIVER

Emeco, a leading travel organization and destination management company in Egypt, has announced that it has launched its latest floating hotel called *Tuya*.

Tuya will soon set sail on the Nile River, joining its sister cruiser *Tiyi*. Both floating hotels, managed by Creative Hotels and Resorts, provide guests with stellar service, exciting activities, fabulous dining, and first-class facilities.

Tuya features 60 deluxe five-star rooms, as well as three royal suites. Some of the hotel's impressive amenities include three dining facilities and bars; swimming pool with integrated Jacuzzi; in-house spa with sauna, gym, and massage treatment; children's pool; medical clinic with emergency care; business center with internet connection; and boutique and gift shop.

"*Tuya* follows the illustrious Ancient Egyptian Royal tradition maintained for the last three years by its sister cruiser *Tiyi* – the talk of the trade due to unparalleled services offered since it first set sail," states Emad Zenhorn, Marketing Officer at Emeco Travel.

"Soaking up the glorious sun and relaxing under the starry sky by night has never been so therapeutic. If panoramic views offered of the picturesque riverbank, exploring the magnificent ancient world and being at one with nature aren't enough, *Tuya* offers a wide variety of fun and exciting entertainment for all guests."

Emeco, www.Emeco.com

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ANTIGUA

Jolly Beach Resort, Antigua's best all-inclusive resort value, is inviting all accredited travel agents to come and experience first-hand all it has to offer.

Jolly Beach has set a special rate for agents and one guest of \$75 ppdo valid now through December 20, 2007 and includes accommodation in a Standard room, all meals, snacks and afternoon tea, house brand beverages, non-motorized watersports, and all taxes and service charges.

Travel agents must present their valid IATA or CLIA card on arrival. Specify booking code TAUS07 when making reservation. At Jolly Beach Resort, travel agents and their companions will enjoy the beach, a choice of five restaurants and bars, and two pools. The Jolly Beach all-inclusive rate includes a range of complimentary watersports from snorkeling, windsurfers, pedal boats and kayaks, to Sunfish sailboats and Hobie Cats. On land choices include tennis, basketball, pool and table tennis, and a variety of activities compliments of the Jolly Beach entertainment staff. **Jolly Beach Resort, 866-905-6559, reservations@JollyBeachResort.com, www.JollyBeachResort.com**

BELIZE

From now until December 15, The Lodge at Chaa Creek is offering travel agents a 50 percent discount on rooms (maximum two nights) and a 30 percent discount on additional nights. Free use of onsite activities is also offered.

The Lodge at Chaa Creek, 877-709-8708, reservations@chaacreek.com, www.chaacreek.com

BELIZE

CottonTree Lodge is offering a special FAM: stay the first night free and get 50 percent off subsequent nights. The price is all inclusive of accommodations, meals, excursions, and airport transfer. In addition, there are special offers for travel agents to begin partnerships with CottonTree Lodge including receive a 50 percent commission on the first two bookings (no restrictions from now through October 31, 2007); and

receive a 20 percent commission for future bookings that will grow up to 30 percent based on volume. CottonTree Lodge is located between the river and rainforest beneath a towering Cotton Tree in Southern Belize. Stay in private cabanas and awaken to the song of exotic birdlife and the roar of monkeys in the distance.

CottonTree Lodge, mark@cottontreelodge.com, www.cottontreelodge.com

LONDON

From now until December 2007, accredited travel agents can check out the newly restyled five-star Athenæum Hotel by staying in one of the Athenæum's luxuriously appointed apartments for \$299 per night plus tax. For individuals wishing a more traditional setting, a \$199 rate is also available on the hotel's popular executive guestrooms. As this special travel agent rate is subject to availability, all requests must be made in writing to the hotel's reservation manager on agency stationery. A credit card number is required to guarantee the reservation and agents must complete a research questionnaire. An IATA number or personal registration ID number is also required. The Athenæum's entire ground floor—lobby, bar, restaurant and lounge—was recently given a new look. This latest phase follows the recent renovation of the property's award-winning apartments. The hotel is close to many of the city's main cultural attractions, including the Royal Academy of Arts, Trafalgar Square and Churchill's Cabinet Rooms. **Athenæum Hotel and Apartments, 800-335-3300, fax 800-335-3200, info@athenaeumhotel.com, www.athenaeumhotel.com**

THAILAND

F T Tours is offering a 10-day Deluxe Familiarization Trip to Thailand featuring four days in Bangkok and five days in Chiang Mai departing September 17, 2007. The FAM features seven nights deluxe class accommodations (three nights deluxe accommodations in Bangkok at the Imperial Queens Park Hotel and four nights

deluxe accommodations in Chiang Mai at the Central Hotel), including buffet breakfast daily; six private tours including Damnernsaduak Floating Market, the Grand Palace, an Elephant Safari & Longneck Hilltribes Tour; some hotel inspections; and most meals. There will be leisure time for shopping and other activities. Optional excursions to Pattaya, Hua Hin, Phuket, Mae Hong Son and Chiang Rai are also available. The Chiang Rai trip features a full-day Golden Triangle excursion and more. Excursions to other parts of Indochina can be arranged. Companions and all travel professionals are welcome. The FAM includes roundtrip air from LAX and inter-Thailand air for \$1,568 ppdo for qualified travel professionals. Confirmed air upgrades are available at an additional cost. FAMs are also scheduled for October 15 and November 5, 2007. Seats are limited.

F T Tours, 800-350-0487, www.ft-tours.com/fams

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M/V Orient Queen



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For Brochures and list of tour operators send request to: LCLUSA@louiscruises.com
Additional information can be found online at: www.louiscruises.com

