

The Rhythm's Gonna Get You! Selling Africa's Music Festivals with West Africa Tours

From Mali's Festival in the Desert to its annual musical extravaganza along the Niger River, this Bamako-based company offers foot-tapping, hip-swaying programs.

MARY ELLEN SCHULTZ

Your mad-for-Africa clients are planning another adventure, but want something different from, say, their Uganda gorilla trek or South African wine tour...something off the been-there/done-that track. How about going to the source of some great music in Mali? Anyone with even a passing interest in global music knows that Mali is hot, right up there on the world stage. Bordered by Senegal, Mauritania, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Niger and Algeria, West Africa's largest country measures more than 807,000 sq. mi. (roughly half the size of Texas). Dotted by towns along the mighty Niger River, the Tuareg-inhabited Sahara desert and home to one of the most exotic cities of all time — Timbuktu — Mali's been intriguing curious travelers for centuries. Although the U.S. market's been small (mostly for lack of marketing), Mali's travel treasures — ancient, modern and musical — are now more easily accessible, especially with West Africa Tours (WAT).

Who's WAT?

Timbuktu-born Mariama de Lys founded WAT in 1995, specializing in customized cultural/adventure journeys throughout West Africa. Most tours start in Bamako (Mali's capital and company headquarters) and take in Mali's World Heritage Sites, including the mythical desert outpost of Timbuktu, Biandagara (remote homeland of the cliff-dwelling Dogon people), Djenne (site of the world's largest mud brick mosque) and Mopti (Mali's "Venice" on the Niger River"). Single- and multicountry itineraries can include neighboring Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo.

De Lys hopes to expand her U.S. client base via more aggressive marketing, saying, "We want Americans to come and know this part of Africa, to experience our rich history, stunning landscapes and long tradition of welcoming visitors...plus, we live here and are proud to introduce you to our treasures! Our guides speak fluent English, and we provide the best transportation and accommodations available at each stop." She personally reviews every itinerary and frequently acts as tour leader. Asked what she loves best about her business: "Easy — happy clients! Many times, they say every day's a new discovery, with no time to get bored...they like our improvisation...for example, we'll arrive somewhere with a traditional ceremony, birthday or marriage happening, and our guides always manage to get us invited to the fiesta!"

Despite current market challenges, Mariama is determined



Inspired by the Sahara: musicians during Mali's Festival in the Desert.

to put — and keep — WAT on the radar. Key are prompt service, constant communication and, she promises, "we answer all queries within 24 hours."

WAT Festivals?

Festivals abound in Africa and two of the continent's most exciting musical celebrations take place in Mali, so why not build programs around two upcoming events: The Festival in the Desert and the Niger River Festival. Some of the country's stellar artists will be on the roster of at least one (and usually both) of these festivals: Salif Keita, Tinawaren, Amadou & Mariam, and Oumou Sangare, to name a few.

WAT has programs for both festivals. "Advance scheduling makes it easier to sell a combined tour...and what makes it exciting," Mariama enthuses, "is that all the attractions a client wants are combined into one festival: cultural heritage, interaction with local people, traditional music and art...plus the fun of being part of it!"

The following festivals can easily be combined with WAT's introductory Mali tour; sample itineraries follow event descriptions.

Festival in the Desert in Essakane, Mali (January 7–9, 2010). The Festival Au Desert (Festival in the Desert) is held annually in remote Essakane, two hours north of Timbuktu. Based on traditional tribal exchanges among Mali's southern Saharan Tuaregs (a.k.a., the dashing Blue Princes of the Desert) with songs, dances, games and camel racing, today's version welcomes all and includes an Africa/globe-spanning artists' roster. Participants are immersed in desert traditions

with all the trimmings (yes, that includes sleeping under the stars in Tuareg tents) with a nonstop, real-time Saharan music soundtrack. Celebrity-watchers note: paparazzi last year spied Monaco's Princess Caroline strolling the sand dunes during a concert break!

Festival on the Niger River, Segou, Mali (February 3-7, 2010).

Set along the banks of the serene River Niger in Segou (capital of the ancient Bambara kingdom), this festival celebrates Mali's — and all West Africa's — vibrantly diverse ethnic groups and rhythm-rich musical traditions. Beyond the plethora of world-class artists (think: Toumani Diabaté serenading you along the riverbank), the program also features cultural forums, arts and crafts expositions and workshops (pottery, sculpture, mud-painting, textiles and jewelry), traditional dance and puppet troupes, even boat races!

WAT's Where?

Customizable programs (land-only/agent-commissionable) can include Mali in 7 Days/6 Nights tour which takes in Mali's former colonial capital Segou, medieval-flavored Djenne (of the "wow!"-inspiring mud brick mosque and shopping nirvana of a market), the remote Biandagara cliff region, home to stilt-dancing, mask-making Dogon people; Mopti (of the Venice-like canals and gold-hoop-earring-adorned Fulani women, and on to legendary Timbuktu, fabled desert caravan stop where salt was traded for gold. Cost ppdo approx \$1,550; single supp. \$700.

The Festival in the Desert 12-day/11-night program combines Essakane's nomadic Saharan-flavored festivities with Mali's other magical attractions: Timbuktu's Djingariber mosque (Islam's oldest university center) and Ahmed Baba center (housing 14th-century books); thatched-roof Dogon villages spilling down onto the sand dunes below and island-hopping/gold-shopping at Mopti. Cost \$2,420 ppdo; single supp \$254.

The Niger River Festival 10-day/9-night program blends Segou's riverside West African cultural jamboree with the Mali intro tour. Other highlights: Mopti's lively fishing harbor, where slabs of salt are still sold as in yester-year; Djenne's medieval market (dilemma: to trade your camera for a bowl of chili peppers?) and Bandiagara, birthplace of Amadou Hampate Bah, famous author who penned: "The death of an old man in Africa is like a library that burns." Price \$1,941 ppdo; single supp \$254.

Major air carriers connect via London, Paris and Frankfurt; South African Airways and Delta fly direct to Dakar from New York and Washington, DC; Royal Air Maroc to Bamako via Casablanca.

**West Africa Tours; www.westafricajourneys.com;
www.touringmali.com; westair@afribone.net.ml;
mariamaludovic@yahoo.com**

PRESIDENT KIKWETE INAUGURATES BILILA LODGE KEMPINSKI IN SERENGETI NATIONAL PARK



(Left to right) Kempinski Bilila Lodge Manager Carine Witter and His Excellency, President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, of the United Republic of Tanzania at the inauguration of Kempinski's first Lodge in the Serengeti National Park.

The Bilila Lodge Kempinski held its grand opening in July 2009, with His Excellency, President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete in attendance. Also present were Ali Saeed Albwardy of ASB Tanzania Limited, Reto Wittwer, President and CEO of Kempinski Hotels, and Lodge Manager Carine Wittwer. The Bilila Lodge Kempinski is the first luxury lodge for Kempinski Hotels in Serengeti National Park and their third property in Tanzania.

The Bilila Lodge Kempinski features 74 rooms fitted with private telescopes for game viewing, all of which overlook the plains of the Serengeti, a UNESCO World Heritage site and world-famous for the annual animal migration. With its own private game drive and an infinity pool overlooking a watering hole where animals come to drink, President Kikwete states that the Bilila Lodge is "the ultimate Serengeti experience in terms of luxury and comfort amidst the beauty that the Serengeti is." It is conveniently located 45 minutes away from Seronera airstrip by car, which is only a 50-minute flight from Arusha, the nearest international airport.

Kempinski is one of several upscale hospitality brands expanding their base in Tanzania. In addition to Bilila Lodge, Kempinski has the Kilimanjaro Kempinski in Dar es Salaam, the Zamani Kempinski in Zanzibar and is building a hotel in Arusha.

Peter Mwenguo, Managing Director, Tanzania Tourist Board, noted that the expansion of Luxury properties in Tanzania by prestigious brands such as Kempinski are a good indication of the healthy investment climate for tourism in Tanzania as well as the continued demand for luxury travel despite the recent economic challenges.

Bilila Lodge Kempinski, www.kempinski-bililalodge.com;
Tanzania Tourist Board, www.tanzaniatouristboard.com

ULTIMATE SIX-WEEK CRUISE TRANS EUROPE BY EUROPEAN WATERWAYS



European Waterways' luxury hotel barge *Anjodi* will take passengers along the canals and rivers of central Europe, from Avignon in Provence all the way to vibrant Amsterdam on a unique 1,000-mile cruise planned for November 8 to December 18, 2009.

Anjodi is the hotel barge that achieved "film star" status following its appearances during the hugely popular BBC TV series 'Rick Stein's French Odyssey,' when she carried celebrity chef Rick Stein and a full film crew on a 400-mile voyage of culinary discovery through Southwest France.

The six-week cruise takes in such famous cities as Lyon, Paris and Cologne, with local highlights and culture along the Rhone, Seine and Rhine, and enchanting smaller waterways like the Canal de Bourgogne. It will blend cruising, sightseeing and city stays with a chance to discover the regional cuisine and wines of Provence, Beaujolais, Burgundy, Champagne, Alsace and the Moselle and Rhine valleys.

Anjodi is a hotel barge of classic Dutch design completely refurbished in the tasteful tradition of Africa hardwoods, hand-crafted paneling and shining brass. The accommodation offers a choice of four air-conditioned twin/double staterooms, each with full en-suite facilities. The shaded sun deck has a heated sunken Jacuzzi and teak deck furniture. The majority of gourmet meals are taken aboard, but at least once a week passengers dine ashore.

The cruise is priced at \$25,000 per person based on a minimum of six passengers, or \$185,000 to charter a whole barge for up to eight. Rates include all meals, wines, open bar, excursions, admittance fees and transfers.

European Waterways, 800-394-8630, sales@gobarging.com, www.go-barging.com

EXOTIC JOURNEYS PRESENTS VALUE LUXURY PACKAGE TO INDIA

Luxury and deluxe tours conjure up the image of 'expensive and pricy trips' with five-star lavish hotels, private escorted airport transfers in private air-conditioned cars, private guides, and escorted sightseeing at a price not every tourist can afford. At the moment, however, thanks to present economic conditions, luxury tour packages have become more affordable as airfares and hotel rates have lowered their rates. The Chicago-based luxury tour operator, Exotic Journeys, is offering dozens of tour packages to India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Sri Lanka and Myanmar at rates

that are considerably lower than previous seasons.

One such package by Exotic Journeys Group is "Incredible India"—a 10-day trip visiting Mumbai for two nights, Jaipur for two nights, Agra for two nights and Delhi for two nights. It is priced at \$1,995 ppdo. Airport security fees and taxes are extra. The price includes airfare from New York, Newark or Chicago in economy class, eight nights' accommodations at the famous Taj Hotels, Resorts and Palaces properties, private escorted airport transfers, private guided sightseeing tours and excursions, flight between Mumbai and Delhi and ground transportation on the Golden Triangle route of Delhi-Jaipur-Agra-Delhi. An upgrade to business class travel from the U.S. to India is available for an additional \$2,700. Exotic Journeys pays 12-percent commission to agents.

Exotic Journeys, 800-55-INDIA (800-554-6342), info@exoticjourneys.com, www.exoticjourneys.com

GOWAY LAUNCHES GREAT VALUE OKAVANGO ADVENTURE

AFRICAExperts by Goway has introduced a 14-day active vacation option to Botswana—Okavango Adventure. This 13-night experience is perfectly suited for active travelers looking for an exciting, adventurous holiday. Highlights of this trip include a game drive and boat cruise in the Chobe National Park, three nights in the Okavango Delta with mokoro excursions and bush walks, game drive and boat cruise on the Kwando River and finally two nights in Livingstone to finish off in the adventure capital of Africa. Prices start at \$3,252 and include 13 nights' accommodation, flights Maun-Delta-Maun, some meals, Mokoro and bush walks in the Okavango Delta, Chobe game drive and boat cruise, game drive in Kwando.

Goway, AFRICAExperts, 800-245-0920, www.goway.com

HEALTH AND WELLNESS UNDER ONE ROOF AT GRANDHOTEL LIENZ

Relaxation, recuperation and modern medical care and health provision await, with a new state-of-the-art spa that includes its own lift on ground-floor level and reaches over two floors at the Grandhotel Lienz. An indoor swimming pool connects to an outdoor pool, whose lounging area and garden offer views of the Dolomites and the river Isel flowing next to the hotel.

Local herbs and moon phases are respected with the spa treatments used. The highlight is a private spa for two people, which includes a steam room, a whirlpool and quiet zone. There's also a Finnish sauna, Bio sauna and steam rooms.

The medical team works closely with Head Chef Thomas Gruber. Smoking cessation therapies, acupuncture, and sports medicine exams are also featured.

The hospital of Lienz five minutes away makes further exams with state-of-the-art machines. Every guest receives a doctor's letter with results and recommendations to ensure a smooth and speedy communication with one's own doctor.

Grandhotel Lienz, www.grandhotel-lienz.com

TAUCK SET TO OPERATE CULTURIOS DEPARTURES

Tauck World Discovery launched its new Culturious journeys this August. The collection of itineraries, which each deliver an in-depth, culturally immersive experience, represents Tauck's first new brand since the 2003 launch of its Tauck Bridges family travel packages.

Culturious journeys are designed to complement the company's more traditional tours, and appeal to a younger, more active, boomer-age clientele. The trips will explore a more regionally focused destination in greater depth, incorporate more immersive, hands-on cultural experiences, and also provide more time for independent exploration.

Culturious departures average approximately 16 guests, allowing groups to enjoy a more interactive experience within each destination and visit smaller, lesser-known sites and locations. The average Culturious trip ranges from seven to nine days, and the company expects trips to serve an audience from age 45 to about 65.

"The Culturious trips fill a void in our portfolio," said Mahar. "Our Tauck World Discovery itineraries are perfect for our traditional customers, and our Tauck Bridges trips allow us to reach young families."

CULTURIOS ITINERARIES FOR 2009 ARE:

Tuscany and Cinque Terre (eight days, from \$3,790 ppdo, plus air) to Florence, Carrara, Monterosso al Mare, Vernazza and Lucca; Peru (12 days, from \$5,490 ppdo, plus air) to Lima, Cuzco, Reserva Amazonica, Urubamba, and Machu Picchu; Manitoba (seven days, from \$4,550 ppdo, plus air) to Winnipeg, Churchill, and Hecla Island.

NEW CULTURIOS ITINERARIES FOR 2010 ARE:

South Africa and Namibia (13 days) to Cape Town, Langa Township, Bushman's Kloof, Cederberg Mountains, Franschoek and winelands, Kulala Wilderness Reserve, Skeleton Coast/Walvis Bay, and Etosha National Park; Provence (8 days) to Aix-en-Provence, Gordes, Joucas, St. Remy, Arles, and Avignon; Costa Rica (8 days) to San Jose, Poas, Bajos del Toro, and Punta Islita.

Tauck World Discovery, www.culturious.com, www.tauck.com

STRONG CUSTOMER DEMAND SPAWNS NEW U.S. AUSTIN-LEHMAN ADVENTURES

Austin-Lehman Adventures (ALA), rated top tour operator for 2009 by *Travel + Leisure* magazine readers, is offering two new U.S. adventures in answer to increased client demand for domestic, weeklong programs.

One is a cycling tour through the Black Hills of South Dakota, with an itinerary that includes the historic Old West town of Deadwood, hiking the base of Mount Rushmore, a tour of the Crazy Horse Monument (in progress) and Wind Cave National Park. Participants will pedal back roads from open prairie to mountain forests including a section of the new Michelson Trail, an abandoned railroad grade that traverses a number of bridges and rock tunnels.

The all-inclusive rate is \$1,998 ppdo (\$425 single supplement), one of ALA's best bargains for 2010. Departures are set for June 6 and 13, and September 5, 12 and 19.

ALA is also resurrecting its Glacier National Park Multisport Adventure in Montana to celebrate the park's 100th anniversary next year. Trained naturalist guides take guests on bikes, hikes and rafts into the backcountry while explaining the dramatic meltdown of the region's once-mighty glaciers. The all-inclusive rate is \$2,498 ppdo (\$680 single supplement). The new trips, as with ALA's other domestic programs, last six days from Sunday through Friday, allowing Saturdays for travel to the locations.

"Austin-Lehman delivers an exceptional and intimate customer experience," explains co-founder Paul Lehman. "Smaller is indeed better...our guest to guide ratio is six-to-one. But most of all, it's our passion for delivering over-the-top surprise and delight that make our trips so memorable and meaningful."

Austin-Lehman Adventures destinations include iconic national parks and backcountry regions of North, Central and South America as well as southern Africa and Europe. Other new trips slated for 2010 include Utah's Canyonlands, Wyoming's Grand Tetons and a Greek Isles trip that features kayaking, hiking and cultural exploration.

Austin-Lehman Adventures, 800-575-1540, info@austinglehman.com, www.austinglehman.com



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VILLA SANT'ANDREA IN CORTONA, ITALY, IS PRIVATE RESIDENCE FOR SMALL GROUPS



Vantage World Travel has announced that Villa Sant'Andrea in Cortona, Italy, has acquired over 13 acres of agricultural land to be dedicated to the production of biologically sound, economically responsible products, including Cortona D.O.C. red wine.

The spacious, privately-owned Villa and Guest House—over 5,000 square feet—is set on more than 20 acres of olive groves and vineyards. It accommodates families and small groups with five double bedrooms, each with their own en-suite bathroom (renovations due for completion by spring next year). There are also extra beds and sleeper sofas in some rooms for extended families with children allowing accommodations for 15 in total. The Villa is fully air-conditioned.

Janette Wesley, its owner, claims different types of groups have enjoyed the villa. It's perfect for families—grandparents and all, and especially groups desiring an intimate setting. It's been the locale of weddings, special birthday celebrations, and a spot for business owners or managers to entertain special clients or have best employees rewarded. Colleges and universities have used Villa Sant'Andrea for art faculty renewal and for Continuing Education groups, as the location is rich with history and art along with culinary and wine delights.

Villa Sant'Andrea is about halfway between Florence and Rome and Siena and Perugia, around seven minutes' drive to Cortona in Tuscany. Day trips to Siena, Assisi, Florence, or the wine country of Montalcino and Val d'Orcia are simple by rented car or train.

Oriental carpets, original oil paintings, handmade artisan iron works and antique gates, antique and reproduction furniture, a hand-carved stone sink from the 1700s, a functioning 14th-century wood-fired oven, antique fireplaces, hand-hewn beams from the

1100s, comfortable beds with high thread-count linens, an extensive organic garden maintained and ready for guests to harvest for a meal plus attentive staff—all is provided by Vantage World Travel at Villa Sant'Andrea. Private cook, cooking lessons, wine tastings with selections from the cellar to wine tours, bike tours and more can be arranged.

Bookings for 2010 made by December 31, 2009, will earn agents 10-percent commission on rentals of one week, and an additional five percent on rentals of two weeks or more for the second (or more) consecutive week(s).

Vantage World Travel/Vantage Adventures,
vantage@travelvantage.com, www.travelvantage.com;
(villa) www.santandreacortona.webs.com

PINK JEEP TOURS FIRST INDEPENDENT TOUR COMPANY OFFERING IN-PARK SERVICE IN DEATH VALLEY

Beginning this September, Pink Jeep Tours is the first independent tour company to offer in-park service at Death Valley. These new tours allow guests to visit the remote areas of the park too difficult for most vehicles to access. This is made possible by Pink Jeep Tours' new Tour Trekker, the first-of-its-kind, high-end, state-of-the-art sightseeing vehicle. This comfortable four-wheel drive vehicle has seating for up to 10 passengers so guests may truly enjoy the "small group" experience.

Hotel pick-up and drop-off are available from most park hotels, including the four-diamond Furnace Creek Inn, the Furnace Creek Ranch and the popular Stovepipe Wells Village. Tours originate and conclude inside the park. To make this possible, Pink Jeep Tours has partnered with Xanterra Parks and Resorts, the nation's largest park concessions management company and leader in park and resort hospitality. Xanterra oversees and manages most resort, dining and retail offerings at Death Valley.

"Pink Jeep Tours has one of the most respected names in the tour business," says Rich Jones, regional general manager, Xanterra Parks & Resorts. "All too many past guests have not been able to visit some of the most famed attractions due to the type of vehicle they drive. We are pleased Pink Jeep Tours will soon provide an affordable way to see these attractions in four-wheel luxury."

Once inside the park, guests can visit secluded areas such as Racetrack Playa, Titus Canyon, Charcoal kilns and Mosaic Canyon, and West Side Road. In addition, guests can also join Pink Jeep's classic Death Valley tour when it arrives from Las Vegas.

This two-hour segment visits Badwater Basin, Devil's Golf Course, Zabriskie Point and Artist's Palette. "Demand is there and we predict fall will be busy," says Alix Reed, General Manager of Pink Jeep Tours. "This is a brand new way for visitors to experience areas of Death Valley they wouldn't otherwise be able to see and will be able to do so in an exciting, yet educational way thanks to our highly-trained guides."

Tour prices range from \$65 to \$165.
Pink Jeep Tours, www.pinkjeep.com

ROMANTIC TUSCAN SPA BREAK AT ADLER THERMAE



Adler Thermae Spa and Wellness Resort in Orcia Valley, the heart of Tuscany, has planned a "Romantic Spa Break" and a "Balance Program" as inviting special programs for guests to add to their visit to the Italian countryside.

The Romantic Tuscan Spa Break includes: five nights in a deluxe double at Adler Spa and Resort; sparkling "Prosecco" and strawberries in room on arrival; half board with romantic candlelight dinner in "open-air restaurant;" access to thermal pools and saunas, one "Argillae" clay bath for two, a "Vineyard Ritual" body treatment with wine; one "Grotta Salina" underground salt grotto for two; two days' rental of vintage car for romantic tours in the countryside; and a personalized "Road Book" with itineraries and tips on what to see and where to shop for typical Tuscan products. The price, approximately \$1,509 per person, is valid until March 28, 2010.

The Balance® Mind & Spirit Journey is designed to promote psycho-physical relaxation, improve the quality of sleep, enhance the capacity for self-perception, build up the body's energy and help maintain a healthy emotional balance. The program includes: four nights in a deluxe double room, full board with a wide choice of biolight cuisine or individual program based on diet meals, a consultation on natural remedies, one Bach Flowers remedy, one Bio-energy test, a private meditation and breathing class, one energy balancing treatment, one Watsu (45 minutes), one Tui-Na (a form of Chinese manipulative therapy), a private mind and spirit session, one final medical consultation, one set of natural food supplements, personalized herbal teas during the stay and free access to Adler Aquae with thermal pools and saunas and to Adler Fit with a varied program of fitness activities and sports. The price is approximately \$1,774 ppdo in the room superior double.

Adler Thermae is the result of a careful merging of the traditional thermal spa and the modern fitness resort. Its concept is based on enjoying good health, good food and service and exploring treatments, and fitness in a natural and beautiful environment.

Adler Thermae Spa and Wellness Resort, www.adler-thermae.com

FORMULA 1 SPECTATORS OFFERED PACKAGE BY TOURS BRASIL

Tours Brasil has arranged a Formula 1 package that brings visitors to the great Grand Prix race this year. The tour extends from October 15–19 and includes transfer from airport to hotel, four nights in the hotel with a buffet breakfast, transfer from the hotel to Autodrom and back to the hotel, and transfer from the hotel to airport.

The following options are available for hotel accommodations:

Three-star Holiday Inn Parque Anhembi, with a rate of \$1,175 for a Single standard room and \$790 ppdo for Double standard.

Four-star Bourbon Convention Ibirapuera at a price of \$1,590 Single standard and \$920 Double standard. (Map included.)

Four-star Hampton Park–Chambertin, with a Single standard room priced at \$985, and Double standard for \$640.

Four-star Pergamon Hotel with rate of \$930 for Single standard and \$625 Double standard.

All above prices cited are net, not commissionable and subject to change without previous notice. Prices are per person. Services are in SIB (Sit-in bus) with English speaking driver/guide.

Tours Brasil, director@toursbrasil.com.br,

toursbrasil@toursbrasil.com.br, marcia@toursbrasil.com.br;

www.toursbrasil.com.br; www.hinnbrasil.com.br;

www.bourbon.com.br, www.hamptonpark.com.br;

www.pergamon.com.br

CORAL SPAWNING 2009 AT ALL WEST/OCEAN ENCOUNTERS WEST

This year Ocean Encounters West is holding special events for the coral spawning taking place during September and October 7–12: a presentation evening on September 10 and also on October 10, including a night dive with food and drinks after the dive. Over these few months the yearly "Coral Spawning" which occurs is the phenomenon during which several coral species (but also other organisms) release their gonadal secretions into the water column at the same time under the influence of environmental circumstances such as water temperature and a very special position of the moon. All West Apartments & Diving is in the small fishing village of Westpunt. Ocean Encounters West is located at Playa Kalki in the West End of the island. With a satellite location at All West Apartments, diving services are provided to the Westpunt area including Marazul Dive Resort. Detailed information is available on their websites.

Ocean Encounters West, www.oceanencounterswest.com;

All West Apartments & Diving, www.allwestcuracao.com;

www.reefcare.org

BOLONGO BAY BEACH RESORT INTRODUCES DIVE SPECIAL FOR \$700 PER PERSON

Bolongo Bay Beach Resort in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, is offering a five-night Summer Dive Special featuring six dives per person with the St. Thomas Diving Club, a five-star PADI training facility located on-property at Bolongo. The Summer Dive Special is \$700 ppdo, valid for travel now through October 31, 2009.

Included are accommodations for five nights in an oceanview room, six dives per person, complimentary use of non-motorized watersports (snorkel gear, paddle boats, sunfish sailboats, windsurfing equipment, and kayaks), all taxes, service charges and energy surcharges. Regulator and BCD rental charges are not included.

Reservations must be made by calling or emailing Bolongo's reservations department, with mention of the name of the special at the time of booking. This promotion is not combinable with any other offers.

Bolongo features 65 beachfront rooms curved around crescent-shaped, palm-lined Bolongo Bay. Accommodations are in the midst of a makeover with new color schemes and soft goods. Bolongo offers WIFI access hotspots around pool and lounge areas, all of which can be accessed via a guest's wireless laptop. Guests can also purchase phone cards in Bolongo's gift shop to

be used in conjunction with the resort's Internet kiosk located in the lounge.

Bolongo's two seaside restaurants—The Lobster Grille and Iggie's Beach Bar & Grill—are among the most popular on St. Thomas. The Lobster Grille is the best place for lobster, fresh seafood and steaks, and Iggie's was voted the best beach bar by the readers of Caribbean Travel & Life.

The St. Thomas Diving Club provides dive programs for people at all levels of the sport as well as open-water certification courses. Scuba divers can enjoy excursions to offshore reefs with incredible coral formations, the wrecks of the Cartanser Sr. and the Warwick, tunnels, tower pinnacles and mini walls.

Visitors may learn of Bolongo's latest specials visiting the hotel's website and clicking on the mailing list and RSS feed icons to sign up.

**Bolongo Bay Beach Resort, 800-524-4746,
reservations@bolongobay.com, www.BolongoBay.com**

AQUANAUTS GRENADA ADDS 'REBREATHER' FEATURE FOR TECHNICAL DIVING

"Diving with rebreathers is like having gills—you don't make any bubbles and come very, very close to marine life such as eagle rays, jacks, sharks and even the tiny jaw fish," says Peter Seupel, owner of Aquanauts Grenada.

With this new service, facilities are offered for traveling re-breather divers—scrubber material, two and three L tanks for rent, O2 supply through a booster pump and washing/storage space. As of November, Trial Dives and CCR certification course can be booked, and provision for Trimix will be ready as well.

Diving on closed circuit units also allows for extended bottom times on Grenada's deeper wrecks and reefs. One can imagine spending an hour exploring the Bianca C or diving the whole Marine Park in one dive for a few hours. Best of all: the diver breathes warm and moist air to prevent getting cold easily.

Mike Fowler, President of Silent Diving, who conducted the training; stated: "The Grenada dive sites are perfect to dive with a rebreather—for their depth and marine life." The technical diving is further complimented by TDI courses such as the Advanced Nitrox course and decompression procedures.

Aquanauts is featuring dedicated rebreather weeks, where boat and guide are only for the silent divers, beginning September 27 until October 3, 2009.

Rebreather divers may carbon offset dive time, as during that time you do not exhale CO2 into the atmosphere, which on average a human being does about 1.6 L per minute.

A complete package including accommodation at True Blue Bay Resort may be arranged through secure online booking or by calling toll-free. Information and prices may be found on the website.

**Aquanauts Grenada, 800-513-5257,
dive@aquanautsgrenada.com, www.grenadadiveresorts.com,
www.aquatecgrenada.com**

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email:
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website: www.sunbreesesuites.com
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HOTEL FLAMINGO COZUMEL EXHIBITING WORKS OF ART BY LOCAL ARTIST, GALO RAMIREZ



In Cozumel, Mexico, Hotel Flamingo is supporting local artist, Galo Ramirez, by exhibiting his art throughout the hotel. Tom Fryer, owner of Hotel Flamingo, met Galo 13 years ago when he purchased the hotel where Galo's watercolors decorated the rooms. Galo, no longer a struggling artist, displays his art in his private

studio and on his website (www.galoartstudio.com), where his works can be purchased.

Additionally, visitors to Hotel Flamingo may take a painting home after a stay for prices ranging from \$300–\$600 per painting. The official "exhibition" will be held in September.

Hotel Flamingo is a 22-room boutique hotel with tastefully decorated accommodations and a high level of guest services. The Hotel Flamingo's Aqua Restaurant and Bar offers complimentary breakfast with all stays, and serves lunch along with cocktails throughout the day and into the evening. Live jazz is also available on Thursday and Friday nights.

Scuba Diving, horseback riding, snorkeling, sailing, parasailing, fishing and tours of Mayan ruins are available for booking by Hotel Flamingo's English-speaking staff.

Hotel Flamingo currently has on offer two diving specials: four nights with two days of diving for \$260 ppdo, and seven nights with five days of diving at \$567 ppdo. Rates include Courtyard accommodations, full breakfast each morning, two tank morning dives with aquatic sports, transfers to diving and all taxes.

For non-diving guests, Flamingo is offering 35 percent off nightly room rates with a minimum stay of two nights for travel through September 18, 2009.

Hotel Flamingo. 800-806-1601, info@hotelflamingo.com, www.hotelflamingo.com

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VISIT BY H.E. THE FRENCH MINISTER OF TOURISM ONBOARD LOUIS CRUISES *MV ORIENT QUEEN*



The head of Louis Cruises in France Mr. Vassilakopoulos (left) welcomes Mr. Novelli, French Minister of Tourism.

The French Ministry of Tourism and the AFFC (Association of French Ferries and Cruise Companies) held a meeting on board the Louis Cruises *MV Orient Queen* in July highlighting the continuous growth of the French cruise market and its important contribution to the overall French tourism industry.

The French Minister of Tourism, Mr. Herve Novelli arrived at the Marseilles Provence Cruise Terminal, which is now managed by the Costa, MSC and Louis consortium, and was welcomed by the head of Louis Cruises in France Mr. Yannis Vassilakopoulos in the name of the said consortium. The Minister then embarked onboard *MV Orient Queen* whereby her Master and Officers provided a guided tour.

In his welcome speech Mr. Vassilakopoulos as Vice President of the AFFC, underlined the fact that cruising is the fastest-growing tourism sector in the world and stated that the Marseilles Provence Cruise Terminal and France in general are already capitalizing on their key position in the Mediterranean and thus attracting an increasing number of passengers to the French shores and the port itself. It is precisely for this reason, Mr. Vassilakopoulos said, that the consortium has committed to substantially increasing the number of passengers using the Marseilles port and remains focused on achieving this cause. Mr. Vassilakopoulos also highlighted Louis Cruises' continuous efforts in further developing cruising in France and briefed the Minister and other officials on the multifaceted action that is being taken in promoting cruising in France but also France and Marseille as a cruise hub in the Mediterranean.

The French Minister of Tourism in his speech acknowledged the importance of cruising and its immense potential as well as its role in enriching the French tourism product. He applauded the development of Marseilles into a major cruise hub in the Mediterranean and the fact that it is increasingly becoming popular with cruise operators and passengers alike.

Louis Cruises, 877-louisus (877-568-4787),
lclusa@louiscruises.com, www.louiscruises.com

TAUCK ADDS TWO NEW RIVER CRUISES FOR 2010

Next year Tauck World Discovery is adding two new itineraries to its European river cruising and two Oberammergau extensions.

Land journeys that combine with selected Tauck river cruises and include premium-seating tickets for the village's famous Passion Play performances.

"European river cruising continues to be a very robust and vibrant segment of our business, and we're excited to continue with the careful and measured expansion of our river cruise offerings," said Tauck CEO Dan Mahar.

"By growing our river cruise portfolio slowly, we've been able to maintain the same high standards, quality of guest experience, and strong value that Tauck has been known for since 1925. Along with the launch of our new *MS Swiss Jewel* in April, these two new river cruises represent important steps in our efforts."

The 12-day "Strasbourg to Prague Serenade" cruise (from \$3,990 ppdo, plus air) begins with two nights at Sofitel Strasbourg Grande Ile, sightseeing in Strasbourg and exploration of the Alsatian wine country.

The following seven days visit Baden-Baden, Heidelberg, Miltenberg, Wurzburg, Bamberg, Nurnberg and Regensburg, before two days at the Hilton Prague Old Town with guided sightseeing.

The 19-day "Romance of the Rhine and Danube" (from \$6,790 ppdo, plus air) also starts with a two-night stay at the Sofitel Strasbourg Grande Ile and visits to many of the same cities along the Rhine, Main and Main-Danube Canal.

The 14-day cruise then continues along the Danube visiting Passau, Linz, Salzburg, Durnstein, Vienna and Bratislava, before concluding with two nights at the InterContinental Budapest.

Tauck's four-day Oberammergau extension begins in Munich with welcome reception/dinner at traditional Spatenhaus.

Next day in Oberammergau, guests view the Passion Play from Tauck's specially-reserved seating, before enjoying in-town accommodations at Hotel Maximilian.

Day three visits opulent Linderhof Palace and explores Munich before conclusion the following day.

The five-day extension also begins in Munich with a walking tour of the city plus visiting 17th-century Schloss Nymphenburg.

Days two and three provide time in the market town Garmisch-Partenkirchen, and the Passion Play in Oberammergau.

A guided walking tour of Salzburg highlights the fourth day, with the extension concluding last day.

Tauck will offer nine European river cruises total in 2010.
Tauck World Discovery, 800-468-2825,
www.tauck.com

BRENDAN LAUNCHES DELUXE EGYPT CRUISE SERIES INCLUSIVE OF DOMESTIC AIR AND TRANSFERS

Brendan recently launched a number of deluxe cruise products to Egypt featuring three- to seven-day packages. This includes the legendary Nile River cruise, which departs Aswan and concludes in Luxor.

Partnering with such four-star establishments as the Oasis Hotel and Novotel Cairo Airport Hotel in Cairo, all packages include transfers, cruise meals, hotel breakfasts and all hotel taxes and service charges. The packages will also include a Cairo Highlights Tour that includes lunch.

Sample packages include: Egypt Three-Night Cruise—seven days/six nights from \$1079 land and intra-tour air (Cairo–Aswan, Luxor–Cairo): two nights at the Oasis Hotel, one night at the Novotel Cairo, three nights on the Deluxe Nile River Cruise, all meals inclusive on board the ship, hotel breakfast daily, the Cairo Highlights Tour, pre- and post-transfers and all hotel taxes and service charges; Egypt Four-Night Cruise—eight days/seven nights from \$1,149 land and intra-tour air (Cairo–Aswan, Luxor–Cairo), two nights at the Oasis Hotel, one night at the Novotel Cairo, four nights on the Deluxe Nile River Cruise, all meals inclusive on board the ship, hotel breakfast daily, the Cairo Highlights Tour, pre- and post-transfers and all hotel taxes and service charges; Egypt Four-Night Cruise—eleven days/ten nights from \$1,399 land and intra-tour air (Cairo–Aswan, Luxor–Cairo), two nights at the Oasis Hotel, one night at the Novotel Cairo, seven nights on the Deluxe Nile River Cruise, all meals inclusive on board the ship, hotel breakfast daily, the Cairo Highlights Tour, pre- and post-transfers and all hotel taxes and service charges. Additional information and full terms and conditions available on the website or 800 number. Brendan Vacations, 800-421-8446, www.brendanvacations.com

SENIOR EXECUTIVES MEET ON VIKING LEGEND DURING INAUGURAL CRUISE



Members of the executive team of Viking River Cruises held a meeting this summer on board *Viking Legend's* inaugural cruise from Amsterdam to Budapest. (Left to right) Tony Hofmann, Senior Vice President of Operations; Richard Marnell, Senior Vice President of Marketing; Guido Laukamp, Senior Vice President of European Marketing and Sales; and Ted Sykes, Chief Financial Officer stand on board deck as *Viking Legend* approaches Cologne. *Viking Legend* sails on Grand European Tour, *Viking's* most popular itinerary, from Amsterdam to Budapest. At 443 feet, the three-level *Viking Legend* is the longest in the Viking fleet, and accommodates 189 guests in 98 staterooms. Viking River Cruise, 877-668-4546, www.vikingrivercruises.com

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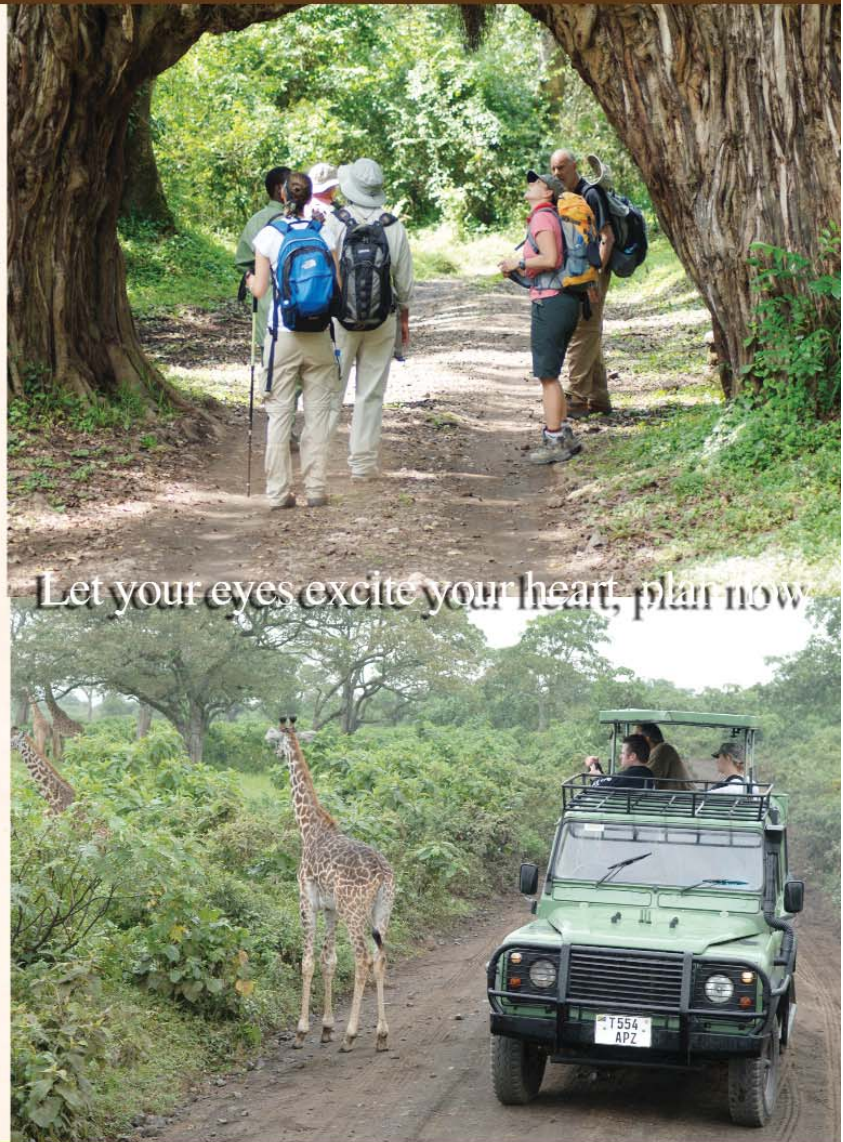


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