

INTERLACHEN



FALL 2009

T R A V E L E R

Let your travels lead you to the excitement of adventure and discovery



Dear Traveler

The new travel destinations we preview never cease to impress us at Interlachen Travel! Now is the time to plan your winter vacation and we have some wonderful suggestions for you.

Consider Botswana. Ann was recently in this African country which is a popular destination for safaris. Seeing a herd of elephants and interacting with three orphaned elephants in the bush are memories Ann will never forget. *See page 2.*

For a trip of a lifetime, consider the suborbital, rocket-powered vehicle called the Lynx. It launches to the edge of Space, allowing a spectacular view of Earth. Interlachen Travel is one of about 30 agencies authorized to represent it. *See page 4.*

In November a group of Americans will make a special humanitarian trip to help Cuba's poorest people and tour Havana and Trinidad. This is a unique opportunity to see Cuba! In October, Ann will get an advanced look at this tour. Feel free to call her to get more details. *See page 2.*

Cruises are still great values. Eleven new ships entered the water in 2009 and 14 more are expected to debut in 2010. Now is the time to take advantage of deeply discounted rates and special incentives.

River cruises are becoming popular with good reason. The ships are smaller, boats dock in the center of towns, and travelers only unpack once. Sis recently cruised the Volga River in Russia from Moscow to St. Petersburg. The history and renovation of the area is amazing. *See page 3.*

Lynn and Ann were in Buenos Aires and the wine country of Argentina; Ann was also in Morocco and on a Rhone River cruise; and Mary will be traveling to Egypt and Greece this fall. Which of these destinations are on your short list?

We now have a Facebook Group page where you can read more about our trips, see our photos, and post your own! We've also updated our website with easy access to exclusive travel packages. And, we began emailing a monthly e-newsletter in early September. If you didn't receive your copy, call us at 952.925.2940.

We always look forward to helping you plan your next vacation. Please call us with your questions, your ideas for the perfect vacation, and to make travel arrangements. We hope you enjoy this issue of the *Interlachen Traveler*.

Ann Gray, CTC
Sis Mishou, CTC
Mary Franson
Lynn Schaefer
Renee Wiley

"Interlachen Travel is celebrating 20 years of travel service! We're truly grateful to each and every one of our valued clients, and look forward to the next 20 years."
Ann Gray



Botswana Safari—An Adventure in Nature

Botswana Facts

- Much of wildlife habitat in Botswana is protected
- The Kalahari Desert covers 84% of the country
- Botswana is politically stable and has good western-style infrastructure
- The official language is English
- The name for Botswana's currency is "pula," which is also the Setswana word for rain
- Major credit cards are accepted widely and most hotels and lodges accept foreign currency or travelers checks

Rare Opportunity: Travel to Cuba on Humanitarian Mission this November

This November you could be part of a special group of Americans traveling to Cuba on a humanitarian mission. Though travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens and residents is restricted by law, travel for humanitarian purposes is allowed. And from November 14 to 22 this year, a group will travel to Cuba to deliver donated goods—medical supplies, clothing, over-the-counter pharmaceuticals, hygiene products and school supplies—to be distributed around the country.

This humanitarian group will personally deliver the donated goods to a Jewish community center and a Catholic church and meet some of the people who will benefit from the donations. They will also have an opportunity to make further contributions to Convento de Belen, a project serving Havana's poorest neighborhoods.

For the remainder of the trip the group will visit Havana and Trinidad with English-speaking guides. This is a seven-day, eight-night destination that includes breakfasts, lunches and dinners. Ann Gray is participating in a pre-trip to Cuba in October and will be able to answer questions you may have about this humanitarian trip. This trip, offered by Ya'lla Tours USA, will be operated under a Humanitarian License issued by the United States Treasury Department.

Check the Interlachen Travel website at www.interlachentravel.com to learn more or call Ann Gray directly.

Imagine seeing 150 elephants of all sizes gathered at a river to drink and bathe, and hearing the sounds of Africa's animals, birds and insects. These are some Ann Gray's favorite memories of her recent trip to Botswana with luxury travel company host Abercrombie & Kent.

An increasingly popular destination for safaris, Botswana is the size of Texas and is located in southern Africa. In addition to elephants, Botswana is home to a variety of wildlife including buffalo, leopards, cheetahs, lions, giraffes, zebras, hippopotamus as well as 580 species of insects and birds.

A variety of safari camps—from adventurous to family oriented—at all price levels are available. Desert and delta safari camps can easily be combined on a vacation. Botswana is dominated by the Kalahari Desert, which is covered with vegetation such as stunted thorn and scrub bush, trees and grasslands. The flat terrain is only occasionally interrupted by sand dunes and gently descending valleys.

Botswana's Okavango Delta is a series of permanent and fleeting waterways and floodplains. Annual flooding begins in March, filling the vast plains with water and changing the landscape dramatically. The best way to navigate the waterways and lagoons is in a dugout canoe called a "mokoro."

On Ann's trip, the first safari camp was Stanley's Camp on the southern edge of the Moremi Game Reserve, one of the most famous and beautiful wildlife reserves in Africa. Stanley's Camp is best described as rustic luxury, where guests stay in one of eight classic styled safari tents which exude classic Africa. Each unit offers en-suite facilities and a private balcony overlooking the surrounding floodplains. This camp offers some of the best big game viewing in the Okavango Delta. A highlight for Ann was a morning spent walking and interacting with three orphaned elephants that live in the bush.

The group also stayed at Chief's Camp, an elegant and luxurious bush lodge in the Moremi, and



Ann, up close and personal with an orphaned elephant.

Botswana Safari, continued

one of the only places in Botswana where the white rhino can be seen in its natural environment. Last on their itinerary was the Chobe Chilwero Lodge located in the Chobe National Park. This lodge incorporates five-star service with breathtaking scenes of bush wildlife and spectacular sunsets as backdrops.

River Cruise Brings Historic Russia to Life

From Yangtze River cruises in China to Rhone River cruises in France and Mississippi River cruises in the United States, river cruising has become a popular vacation choice. Prices vary depending on options, the length of the trip, destination, type of cruise, etc. But one thing is certain, river cruises slow the traveler's pace and bring the destinations along the way to life.

Sis Mishou recently returned from the Splendid Waterways of the Czars River Cruise, a 1,367 kilometer trip on the Volga River through 16 locks from Moscow to St. Petersburg. The MS Volga Dream is Russia's first luxury ship. With a passenger capacity of only 109, the cabins are double the size as compared to other river boats sailing this route.

"While we were in Moscow, they were preparing for the city's 862nd birthday celebration. All over Moscow stages were being erected and many people—especially young people—were preparing for the festivities," said Sis. "There is definitely a renaissance occurring in Moscow and throughout the countryside we visited."

Many churches, having fallen under disrepair during the Soviet era, were draped in scaffolding. In Plyos, the park atop the highest point above the village is undergoing major reconstruction of walkways and construction of new gazebos. In St. Petersburg, the Venice of the North, reconstruction was also apparent. By law the facades of

An easy add-on to a Botswana destination is Zambia, where the magnificent Victoria Falls is located.

To learn more about traveling to Botswana or to book your trip, call Ann or any of the Interlachen travel agents for assistance. ☎



A church spire sticking out of the Volga River.

buildings cannot be changed, so many of them are being gutted and refurbished inside.

Ports of call included Uglich, Plyos, Yaroslavl, Goritsy, the island of Kizhi, and Mandrogi. In the middle of the waterway remains of church spires are visible sticking out of the water—leftover from the last expansion of the canal system under Stalin's regime, which flooded over 700 villages.

"This trip is filled with dramatic history," said Sis. "The cruise line assisted us in processing it all including a four-part History Channel series Russia-Land of the Tsars shown over the course of the cruise." Other activities on board included classes in speaking Russian, cooking, Vodka tasting, and others.

To learn more about the Splendid Waterways of the Czars or any river cruise, call Sis or any of the Interlachen travel agents. ☎

New Vacation Trend: River Cruises!

River cruises have grown up to 60% annually in the past five years—nearly 10 times the rate of ocean cruising. Here's why:

- Travelers get a taste of local culture and up-close views of meandering landscapes and scenic villages
- Major cities in Egypt, Europe, China and the U.S. are on rivers
- With fewer than 200 passengers per ship, river cruising is relaxing and intimate
- River ships dock in the center of a city, making access to that city easier
- The size and configuration of river ships guarantees every cabin is "outside," with a river view
- Travelers only unpack once
- Motion sickness shouldn't be an issue; there are no waves

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Celebrating 20 Years

Interlachen Travel is celebrating 20 years of travel and customer service excellence. Since 1989, Ann Gray and her team of travel agents have traveled the globe in search of the best destinations, hotels, and values available. They are dedicated to being a reliable, personal resource for all of your travel needs.

Travel to the Edge of Space

This newest ride of a lifetime is now available aboard the Lynx, XCOR Aerospace's two-seat suborbital, rocket-powered vehicle. The Lynx vehicle takes off horizontally from a runway with a powerful ascent reaching Mach 2 on its way to 200,000 feet and a view of both the blackness of space and Earth. Interlachen Travel is one of about 30 agencies authorized to offer this special indulgence. To learn more about this journey to the edge of space, visit the Interlachen website at www.interlachentravel.com and check out the YouTube video. This \$95,000

adventure is less than half the price of a competing space product.

Watch for Your Monthly Extraordinary Travels Email

Each month Interlachen Travel will let you know about travel specials and extraordinary destinations by email. If you haven't received our email recently, let us know! Call 952.925.2940 or visit our website and fill out the form under Contact Us.

More Travel, More Options, More Deals—All at Your Fingertips

Interlachen travelers can now find some of the most amazing travel programs available! From cruise sailings and land tours to hotels and car rentals, you can find options and plan your vacations. Simply go to the Interlachen website at www.interlachentravel.com and click on the Ensemble Travel Group logo to learn more.

INTERLACHEN TRAVEL SERVICES

Interlachen Travel thanks you for making your travel arrangements with us. Whether your travel is for business or pleasure, we can accommodate your needs. Each of our agents has over 25 years of experience in the travel industry. Let us help you with the following services:

- Certified Travel Expertise
- Complete Vacation Planning
- Group Travel
- Specialty Tours
- Foreign Travel
- Corporate and Incentive Travel
- Cruises
- Airline Reservations
- Consolidator Airfares
- Hotels
- Car Rentals
- Rail Passes
- Passport/Visa Services
- Travel Insurance