

# Hideaways Life

KNOW MORE. GET MORE. TRAVEL BETTER.™

MIKE THIEL

Sea Cloud II in Siracusa, Italy

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## Gatsby Would Approve

BY HIDEAWAYS PRESIDENT MIKE THIEL

I've always felt I was born 50 years too late. The era of the Roaring '20s, F. Scott Fitzgerald, flappers, the Charleston, and ragtime music were meant for me. That era exudes a sense of elegance, romance, and adventure that has always intrigued me. Fortunately for me, it's exactly the motivation behind *Sea Cloud* Cruises, a tiny German-based line sailing just three small ships that entertain a total of no more than 250 guests in some of the most idyllic destinations. The line draws its name from its flagship, the vintage yacht launched in 1931 as a home afloat for Marjorie Merriweather Post—heiress to the Post Cereals and General Mills fortunes—and her then-husband, E. F. Hutton, the Wall Street financier.

Built in Germany, it was the largest, safest, and most elegant sailing vessel of the day, furnished with fine art, gold-plated fixtures, and marble

fireplaces and bathrooms. In short, no expense was spared. It served that famous couple and their young daughter, actress Dina Merrill, as a home-away-from-home in their world travels until the mid-1930s, when the couple was divorced—and Marjorie got the yacht!

From then on, the yacht saw a period of glory hosting kings and queens before it was leased to the U.S. government in WWII and put on submarine patrol off the Azores and Greenland. It had a rather checkered existence during the '60s, '70s, and '80s, alternately serving as a school ship and a so-so cruise ship. Then, in the early 1990s, *Sea Cloud* came to the attention of a group of German investors who restored her to her original grace, style, and five-star ambiance. The company also launched *Sea Cloud II*—a near-replica of the original sailing barque—in 2001 and, also in the same year, a vintage-looking river cruiser, *River Cloud II*.

But enough history! I first saw *Sea Cloud II* some years ago, lying at anchor in St. Georges, Grenada, one of the prettiest little harbors in the Caribbean. Her sleek white hull and tall masts

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cut quite a figure against the verdant hills and red-roofed homes surrounding the harbor. Then and there, I added voyaging aboard one of this line's sailing ships to my "Life List." And so, this past May Gail and I boarded *Sea Cloud II* in Naples, headed for adventure along Italy's Amalfi Coast and around Sicily, with a final destination of Malta. Here's our experience aboard this beautiful ship.

## "She Was Yar!"

By comparison to any of today's average cruise ships, *Sea Cloud II* is extremely simple. You could easily define the ship by what she does *not* have: no casino, no rock-climbing walls, no noisy pool scene—in fact, no pool at all—and no blaring announcements about the next activity on the Lido Deck.

I'd prefer to define her by what she is, a lithe and elegant lady, beautiful in profile, gleaming white with tall masts towering over her expansive teak decks. In port she's a real head-turner, with everyone snapping pictures of her. Under sail, she's a vision of loveliness from the past. Inside and out, the brightwork—varnished teak or mahogany to you landlubbers—is ever so shiny, and her many brass details and trim gleaming. And they should! Whenever they weren't attending to sailing the ship, the crew was polishing, painting, and scrubbing something.

Inside, she's every bit as elegant and simple. A gracious dining room is lined with windows for a panoramic view. A top deck



With a maximum of 90 guests, there's always a quiet place to watch the horizon

SEA CLOUD CRUISES

lounge with baby grand piano and comfortable leather seating offers a quiet place to read. A small library overlooking the fore-deck is another escape. And yes, there is a Lido Deck! It's an expansive teak deck at the stern with a canopied sitting/bar area and chaises sprinkled around the fantail. It served as the venue for early-riser's breakfast, lunch in the idyllic Mediterranean weather, a barbecue dinner under the stars, and quiet sunbathing in between.

To quote Dexter (Bing Crosby) as he described the yacht he and Stacy (Grace Kelly) honeymooned on in the movie *High Society*, "She was yar!" That was our first and lasting impression of *Sea Cloud II*. Anyone with saltwater running in their veins would certainly approve.

## A Day Aboard

Gail and I settled comfortably into our spacious, 247-square-foot Junior Suite with an iced bottle of champagne, fresh-fruit bowl, and goodies plate to greet us. The look and feel of our cabin, like the rest of the ship, was vintage and yacht-like. It sported a spacious sitting area with a mini-fridge stocked with free non-alcoholic beverages, plus a small TV and marble faux fireplace modeled after the originals aboard *Sea Cloud*. An elegant marble-lined bath with large (for a ship) shower/

tub and gold-plated fixtures was plenty spacious for one, a bit squeezed for two.

Most mornings, we were either sailing into a new harbor or already at anchor by breakfast time. If you were signed up for a shore excursion, you usually headed out pretty early. Only one shore excursion was offered in each port, but it was well designed to take full advantage of each destination. Separate guides were provided according to each group's language preferences, since our ship had a large German-speaking contingent and a much smaller group of English speakers.

Being independent sorts, Gail and I mostly struck out to explore ports on our own. In some places like Palermo, we took a city tour aboard the "hop-on, hop-off" bus. In smaller ports, we wandered the quaint village streets, stopping in a church, museum, or castle for a self-guided tour if the mood struck us. We did sample one of the ship's excursions at Trapani, where the ancient mountaintop walled city of Erice was too far to consider doing on our own. We felt that excursion was well run. One service the ship did not provide, and which would be helpful, was an introduction to each port before arriving.

My favorite experience aboard was the actual sailing of the ship and the full day spent at sea. Unlike other sailing ships in the cruise market, the *Sea Clouds* are manually sailed. That means when they decide to set



Lunch on Lido Deck was a delicious midday break

MIKE THIEL

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the sails, usually in the afternoon and on full days at sea, the seamen (and women!) clam-ber up into the rigging, manually unfurl the square sails, hoist the yards and jibs, and set them to the prevailing winds. Seeing those sails unfurl and catch the breezes is quite the sight, enough to bring tears to the eyes of the ancient mariner or a sailing buff like myself.

My favorite daytime activity was relax- ing and reading. I preferred to find a quiet, private, and shady place—and with a max of 90 passengers and lots of deck space, there are plenty of these—in which to read a good novel, enjoy the vistas of sea and sky, and perhaps take a siesta.

On-board entertainment was low-key, with the ship's pianist performing on the Lido Deck most evenings. Toward the end of the cruise, the crew got decked out in their fanciest nau- tical attire and belted out sea shanties. Some songs were familiar—"What Do You Do With a Drunken Sailor"—while others, like "Si Filimon," a Tagalog fisherman's song, were enthusiastically sung by the mostly Filipino deck crew. A good time was had by all!

## Cruise Dining, Extraordinaire

*Sea Cloud II* keeps the dining experience simple, unlike typical large cruise ships. It's more like dining aboard a private yacht. But don't confuse simplicity with lack of qual- ity or originality. At breakfast we enjoyed a combination of an international buffet and the usual a la carte menu of omelets, eggs to order, and pancakes. Frankly, the buffet selections of fresh fruit, smoked salmon, trout and duck breast, cold cuts, multiple cheeses, and more was so diverse and of such quality



Setting the sails is quite a show!

MIKE THIEL

that we seldom ordered off the menu. At the center of the dining room, a table groaned under the weight of a plentiful selection of fresh-baked breads, pastries, and melt-in- your-mouth croissants.

Lunch, invariably served al fresco on the Lido Deck, was the most sub- stantial and diverse meal of the day. A long buffet table offered various salads and cold dishes, while another station served pasta, fish, chicken, and beef dishes. A good interna- tional selection of wines and beers was served, gratis, with both lunch and dinner.

Dinner is served in one open sitting start- ing at 7:30 p.m., and given the ship's size, you are expected to be reasonably prompt for dinner. If I had one critique of the even- ing dining experience, it would be that no effort was made to introduce passengers to one another. No maitre d' was performing the role of facilitator in matching guests who might like to meet and share a meal. In fact, there was some degree of polarization between primarily German-speaking guests

and our smaller group of English-only speak- ers—and what better opportunity for them to get to know one another than to share a meal? It would have made for a much more interesting cruise experience.

Dinner attire was casually elegant, but the dining experience itself was very elegant. Selections for the four courses were limited but well considered, with two choices for appetizer and main courses, plus a vegetar- ian selection, one soup, plentiful desserts, and an excellent cheese tray to end the meal. We certainly were impressed by the quality of ingredients, the beautiful plating, perfect- sized portions, and the formal but friendly service. Overall, I'd give the dining experi- ence a 4.5 out of 5.0, very near Michelin one-star in terms of quality and table service.

## A Gung-Ho Crew

*Sea Cloud II* sails with a top-notch, very multi-national crew of about 60 from Germany, Italy, the Philippines, Eastern Europe, and beyond. About half the crew is charged with running the ship, the rest with taking care of the passengers—and they do a very good job at both! We hardly ever saw our cabin steward (as it should be), but our cabin was always beautifully attended to twice a day. When we did see him, our steward was cheerful and welcoming.

One other thing I noticed toward the end of our cruise—we'd pretty much had each destination to ourselves, and that's one advantage to traveling on a small ship with unique itineraries. That advantage struck home as we entered the dramatic port of Valletta, an ancient walled fortress designed for the small ships of the Middle Ages. We, however, entered the port as part of a parade, surrounded by mega-ships which were about to spew out thousands of passengers. As our ship was dwarfed by those around us, I felt rather smug knowing we had been voyaging aboard a *real* ship, not just a floating hotel. There, with the fortifications of Valletta as a backdrop, *Sea Cloud II* seemed at home with its vintage beauty and grace, while the mega- ships looked more like intruders.

My parents, who themselves reveled in the era of the original *Sea Cloud* and enjoyed many a passage on the grand ocean liners of yesteryear, had a favorite expression that seemed relevant to the occasion: "Diamonds don't come in dry-goods boxes!" **HL**

Read Mike's entire "ship's log" of adventures, including some early-morning volcanic excitement that got one particular day off to a "roaring" start, at [www.Hideaways.com/travelseacloud](http://www.Hideaways.com/travelseacloud).



SEA CLOUD CRUISES

**GAIL AND I LOVED** our spacious (247 square feet) Junior Suite, which seemed vintage and yacht-like in keeping with the rest of the ship. It even had a wood-paneled walk-in closet with "his" and "hers" sides. And our cabin steward was excellent and discreet.

# Down Under & Beyond

What is it that motivates us to pack our bags and board a plane to spend 14-plus hours traveling to the other side of the world—and the upside-down part, at that? For two *Hideaways Aficionado™ Club* members—one of whom traveled to Australia, the other to New Zealand—the reasons were vastly different, but the end results were essentially the same: the adventure of a lifetime and the bragging rights to say, “We did it!” Here are their reports.

## An Aussie Rendezvous

By *Hideaways member Robert Barker, Sarasota, FL*

My wife, Marilyn, and I love to travel and have planned many successful trips with *Hideaways* and our Travel Consultant, Darcy. This time, the reason for us traveling halfway around the world was our new four-month-old grandson, Jagger, born to our daughter, Julie, and her Australian husband, Clayton.

This was our first trip to Australia, so of course Darcy suggested we explore Sydney for a couple of days before heading to our final destination of Brisbane, about 550 miles up the coast, where Julie and her family live. Without a doubt, you need more than a weekend to do justice to Sydney. I'd say it would take at least a week to do it right. As it was, we managed to fit in a bus tour of Sydney—well worthwhile for getting the lay of the city—plus a visit to the Quay on Sydney Harbour and a performance at the Sydney Opera House. We saw the ballet “Onegin”; I'm afraid it wasn't very good, but at least we got to experience the stunning interior of the building.

Darcy set us up at the **Shangri-la** hotel, which completely fulfilled its name. It's located in what is probably one of the peak positions in Sydney, just above the harbor and overlooking the opera house. We found the service to be excellent. I don't know if it was *Hideaways'* influence or not—I suspect it was—but the assistant manager himself escorted us upstairs to our room, which turned out to be a lovely suite with a great view of the harbor. We also found the food there to be good, and the cocktail hour with snacks was appreciated. In fact, we were enjoying ourselves so much at the hotel

one afternoon that we completely missed our planned visit to the Sydney Aquarium.

What turned out to be the most pleasant surprise of this trip, however, was how much we enjoyed Brisbane. It's a very easy city to negotiate compared to Sydney, which is all spread out and would be suicidal if you were trying to drive yourself. And Brisbane has a more relaxed feel about it, yet there's a lot going on and a very lively bunch of people living there. Overall, the city looked fresh and modern, and I was impressed by all the parks, art galleries, and museums we saw.

One day, Julie took us to South Bank, a huge park on the Brisbane River with its own man-made lagoon and beach. You can walk along the riverfront promenade to shops, restaurants, and the Queensland Performing Arts Centre. We ended up staying in the South Bank area at the

Stunning Kauri Cliffs, on New Zealand's North Island

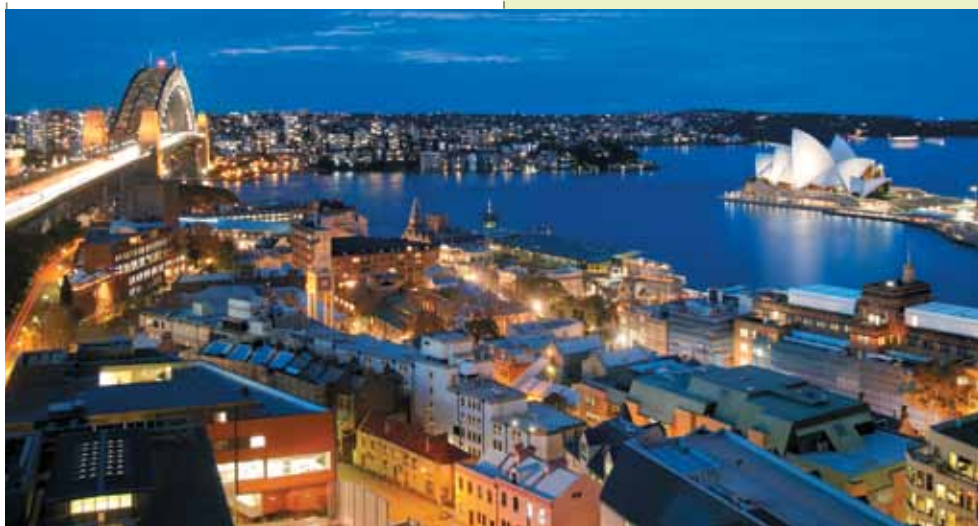


KAURI CLIFFS

centrally located **Mantra Hotel**—nice, but very expensive.

If you get to Brisbane, be sure to drive up Mt. Coot and eat at the Summit Restaurant, which has amazing views of the city and the ocean beyond. You also should make the short drive to Queensland's Gold Coast. This is a touristy area with gorgeous homes, many offshore islands, and good boating. It reminded me of the west coast of Florida, where we're from. The five of us spent a pleasant five days there on a four-bedroom, 60-foot houseboat, exploring the islands and soaking up the sunshine.

I'd say the Aussies are some of the friendliest, most easy-going people we've ever met, and I'm glad we had the chance to see just a small part of their country. I can't say we'll be going back anytime soon, considering the distance, but I'm sure glad we made the effort to experience some of Australia—and meet our new grandson!



SHANGRI-LA HOTEL

**THERE'S NO MISTAKING** the distinctive waterfront of Sydney, with its iconic Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The Shangri-la hotel, located in a prime position above the harbor, offers this breathtaking view from its heady Altitude restaurant.

# New Zealand = Adventure<sup>2</sup>

By *Hideaways* member Suzanne Barbarossa, Minneapolis, MN

Word of mouth can be a great motivator. For years, my husband, Bob, and I had been listening to stories about New Zealand from people who'd been there. Everyone raved about how beautiful the country is, and how everywhere you turn there's another picture-postcard view. And so, since this was the first winter we haven't had a dog, we felt free to get away and really see New Zealand. We decided to indulge and go for three full weeks, because there's so much to do and so much variety to see from the north to the south: cliffs, beaches, rain forest, mountains, and glaciers.

Bob and I both turn 65 this year, and we like to stay active, so (*Hideaways* Travel Consultant) Katia and I planned a pretty ambitious schedule of tours and excursions. If you're really going to see the countryside, you need to be able to get around and be physically fit. My parents went on a bus tour of New Zealand when they were in their 70s and loved it—but you don't get to do all the fun stuff that way.

## New Zealand “Must-Do’s”

So, where to start when it comes to fun? The list is endless! We packed a lot into three weeks, as you can see. Here are just a few of our favorite excursions and experiences.

### SOUTH ISLAND

**A Milford Sound fly/drive excursion with New Zealand Wild Escapes:** This was a fabulous day with just a few other people, seeing some of the most amazing scenery in the world. It included a boat ride out to the mouth of the Sound and back, plus a bus tour, with a guide who was excellent. Afterward, he took us to the airport for the flight back to Queenstown, which was *really* spectacular—total mountain and glacier views all the way from Milford, and landscapes you'd never see unless you were flying.

**A “Heli-Hike” of Franz Josef Glacier with The Helicopter Line ([www.helicopter.co.nz/helihike.asp](http://www.helicopter.co.nz/helihike.asp)):** We started off in coastal rain forest and were helicoptered to the glacier, then led on a two-hour guided hike up snowfields and through glacial ice formations. The blue of the ice was like nothing I'd ever seen, and climbing through the ice caves was amazing. Really, how many people get the chance

**NEW ZEALAND'S FRANZ JOSEF GLACIER** is a must-do on Suzanne's list. “The outfit we went with was great,” she said. “They provided us with everything we needed, from parkas to boots and crampons. It was quite an adventure!”



GARETH EYRES/TOURISM NEW ZEALAND

to do something like that? And talk about variety! You could hike the glacier in the morning and be kayaking on a rain-forest river in the afternoon.

**Abel Tasman National Park:** This area has a lot of great hiking and kayaking. One day, we did a full eight-hour trip that started with a scenic boat ride into the park and ended with four hours of guided kayaking, with a picnic lunch on the beach halfway through. Trust me, we never felt like we had to skimp on the food and drink on this trip, we were getting such good exercise every day.

**A stay at Hapuku Lodge & Tree Houses, Kaikoura:** This really is a neat place, and probably the nicest room I've ever stayed in. We had a big bed and a fireplace right in front of it, and we could see the ocean from our balcony. The surrounding area had spectacular coastal hiking along the cliffs, and we saw tons of fur seals—you could practically walk right up to them. [Rates start at about US\$730/night in a Tree House and include breakfast and dinner.]

### NORTH ISLAND

**A wine-tasting excursion in the Hawke's Bay region:** We opted for a guided visit to several vineyards arranged by Flat Earth New Zealand Experiences ([www.flatearth.co.nz](http://www.flatearth.co.nz)) We had a very knowledgeable driver and learned a lot about the area and how vineyards are run. We're certainly no wine connoisseurs—this was our first wine tour ever—but we enjoyed some very nice Pinot Gris that day.

**A stay at Kauri Cliffs:** We absolutely loved our two nights here before heading

home. This is a really classy golf resort/lodge on the northern coast, and a very expensive place, but we just wanted to hang out here in the middle of nowhere for a few days. You stay in these little cottages overlooking the sea and the golf course, and it's absolutely gorgeous. We really enjoyed the cookout our first night—an amazing spread of grilled seafood and lamb, New Zealand wine and cheeses, great desserts, and more. [Rates start at about US\$604/night/person and include full breakfast and à la carte dinner.]

Take my advice—if you ever have the chance to visit New Zealand, grab it! It's just a phenomenal place, and so different from anything I've ever seen before. If you're an active, outdoorsy person, New Zealand is perfect for you. **H**

*For Suzanne's complete report, including valuable tips on packing for the crazy New Zealand weather, visit [www.Hideaways.com/traveltoNZ](http://www.Hideaways.com/traveltoNZ).*



Suzanne and Bob after a Funyak Safari on the Dart River

## Spreading His Midas Touch to Italy

It seems everything Francis Ford Coppola touches is golden. First it was **Blancaneaux Lodge**™ and **Turtle Inn**™ in Belize, both highly acclaimed escapes in *The Hideaways Collection*™ offering a member-only perk of a Thai massage for two. Now the famous film director has set his sights on Italy, opening up his stunning 19<sup>th</sup>-century **Palazzo Margherita** in the southern Italy town of Bernalda—birthplace and home of Coppola's grandfather—as an intimate and luxurious villa hotel. It's already grabbed a coveted spot on *Travel+Leisure's* "It List" as one of the "Best New Hotels for 2012."

Just nine exquisite suites are decorated with hand-painted fresco ceilings, original marble floors, and antique chandeliers. Outside is a lush jungle of gardens, a swimming pool, and a cool garden courtyard. Dining at the Palazzo is an experience unto itself, as guests wander into the eat-in kitchen for a casual meal or relax in the courtyard with a dish of traditional southern Italian pasta. Rates start at about US\$450/night and include breakfast, in-room beverages, and a cooking lesson. Or you can reserve the entire villa for a completely private stay.

### Tea for Two

Taking afternoon tea in London is about as English as it gets, and top London hotels pull out all the stops to make sure *their* tea is the place to be. That's why **The Athenaeum**™ is pleased as Punch for earning The Tea Guild's prestigious award for "Top London Afternoon Tea 2012," the equivalent of winning the Oscar in the tea world. The Athenaeum and its tearoom, The Garden Room, scored high for exceptional service, great quality tea, and a highly knowledgeable and friendly staff, beating out other luxury hotels like **The Ritz London** and **The Connaught**.

Head to The Athenaeum and have tea for two. You can enjoy a dollar-rate package from US\$579/night (save 50% on a second room during low season) that includes full English breakfast, complimentary mini-bar and Wi-Fi, and free dining for kids under 12. Then stop by The Garden Room and indulge in English Afternoon Tea, complete with scones and crumpets, Devonshire clotted cream, and a variety of international teas (starting at about US\$35).

Your member-only perk: Fruit platter, two tickets to the Royal Academy of Arts, one-way transfer to or from Heathrow (3-nt. stay)

or return car transfer from Heathrow or one-way car transfer from Gatwick (5-nt. stay).

### New Orleans Comes to St. Croix

Looks like a bit of The Big Easy has landed at **The Buccaneer**™, St. Croix's family-friendly beachside resort. A brand-new level of VIP suite, the two-bedroom Ficus Suite, features design elements by New Orleans-based firm Lisambiance, including a color scheme of pinks, oranges, greens, and earth hues inspired by the costumes of Mardi Gras Mocko Jumbie stilt dancers.

The Ficus Suite offers two master bedrooms, each with a king four-poster bed, plus three elegant bathrooms, a full kitchen, a living/dining area, and an expansive patio that overlooks the pool and sea. Luxe touches include marble floors, mahogany furnishings, original artwork, and whirlpool soaking tubs. Bring the family or a group of girlfriends for the ultimate getaway. Rates start at \$1,220/night and include full breakfast, daily Kids Camp, wireless Internet access, non-motorized water sports, an intro scuba lesson, welcome cocktails, and more. Member-only perk: 25-minute massage for two (5-nt. stay).

## Really Sweet Suites

To say the seven new Penthouse Suites at **Corinthia Hotel London**™ are luxurious is an understatement. Each is an opulent retreat of more than 1,000 square feet, with a dedicated butler on call 24 hours a day. And each themed penthouse—The Actor's, The Writer's, The Hamilton, et al—uses the finest quality materials for an experience that should appeal to the world's most affluent travelers.

Take The Royal Penthouse, for instance. The largest at 5,000 square feet, it offers a rooftop terrace with a unique 180-degree panoramic view of London. The two-level suite has a palatial grand staircase, two divine king bedrooms, bathrooms fitted out in honey-toned onyx and Skyros marble, a walk-in wine cellar, and an oval dining room with a massive 10-seat dining table of highly polished Makassar ebony. All this opulence does not come cheaply, however. Plan to spend about US\$28,000 a night for the privilege of being pampered like a royal.

## News Briefs

Here are a few of the latest trends and news items from our partners in *The Hideaways Collection*™.

- We "like" this! **Laluna**™ recently established a new community program that has the lovely island retreat playing host to eight Grenadians a month. Locals who might not normally be able to visit Laluna for logistic or economic reasons—nurses, teachers, policemen, etc.—are invited to have lunch and experience the beauty of the resort for an entire day.
- Want a refreshing twist to your classic morning o.j.? The folks at Costa Rica's **Hotel Punta Islita**™ suggest blending fresh orange juice with fresh coconut water, one to one. For the over-21 crowd, mix one-third o.j. to one-third coconut water with one-third champagne for a sparkling Palm Tree Mimosa.
- Have a wellness experience at **Grandhotel Lienz**™ in Austria, and save big with their 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary "6 Nights for 4" deal, good through October 31, 2012. You'll get six nights' accommodations for two people, daily breakfast, a five-course gourmet dinner, a spa program, free bike rental, and more for only €1,390—save €600!

# The World Is His Oyster

Now *this* is what we call a family affair. Three generations of Tauck family members have been running **Tauck World Discovery™** since the mid-1920s. As one of the most well-respected operators of unique and personalized small-group tours in the world, Tauck is a brand-new preferred partner in *The Hideaways Collection®*—filling a request voiced more and more by savvy *Hideaways* members like you.

One of five siblings in the third generation who currently own and operate the company, Peter Tauck has become the public face behind the name “Tauck.” He’s candid, authentic, and passionate about showing people the world, which was evident as he spoke with us about his life in the industry.

## HIDEAWAYS INTERNATIONAL:

Does working in a family-run company make for a fun dynamic, or is it stressful?

**PETER TAUCK:** My dad Arthur, who’s 81 now, always said, “If I ever see that the business is tearing this family apart, I’ll sell it.” And he meant it. Typically, it’s the third generation that tanks the family business. There’s a saying, “The first generation is wonder, the second is thunder, and the third, plunder.” But we’re currently watching the fourth generation about to enter the business, so we’re doing something right.

One thing resonates through all three generations—customer satisfaction. My grandfather was a people person and he did this for fun, always putting his customers first. And we still do that. I think travel is the most personal thing you buy, maybe only second to health care, and so we’ve built the company around our customers, not numbers.

**HI:** What do you do for fun as a family?

**PT:** Two summers ago, the entire family got together on the yacht *Christina*, which Tauck helped refurbish, and cruised all along the French and Italian Rivas. Then last summer, we celebrated my dad’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday with heli-hiking in Canada and a family golf tournament. You know, my dad pioneered the idea of heli-hiking in the ’70s as soft adventure for older travelers, before the concepts of “heli-hiking” and “soft adventure” were popular. Anyway, we had about 35–40 family members from three generations there for his birthday.

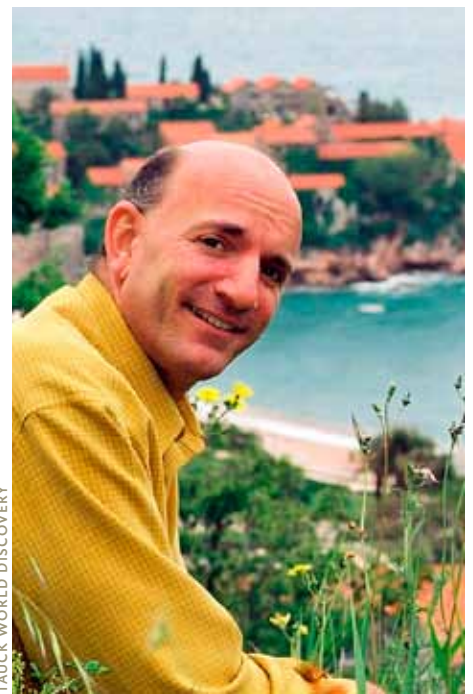
**HI:** Have you ever thought of doing anything other than the family travel business?

**PT:** Funny story—my mom once told me she went to a parent-teacher conference when I was young, and my teacher said, “When I asked the children what they wanted to be when they grew up, most of the boys said a fireman or policeman, but Peter said tour operator. What’s a tour operator?” So even back then, it was instilled in me. But I do love to build things in my spare time, so I guess I might have been a builder or an architect.

**HI:** Tauck is known for creating new and innovative travel experiences. How do you get your ideas?

**PT:** Barry Sternlicht of Starwood Hotels coined the term “Spaghetti Head,” saying you have all these strands coming out of your head, each picking up little bits and pieces of info from your surroundings that come together and generate ideas. I have a little ADD going on and get easily distracted, so the term is perfect for me. I think awareness of what’s going on around you is a big part of it.

For instance, I was in Melbourne years ago, and trolley cars and theater are two big things there. We were going out to the theater one night, and I saw this ad for trolley cars that have been converted to dining cars. And then I noticed that the tracks ran in front of our hotel *and* in front of the theater. So I’m putting all this information together, and I think, “Why not have a trolley car pick our customers up at their hotel, and once they’re on, it will be like, ‘Surprise! We’ll serve you dinner as you tour the city and then drop you off at the theater.’” It was so popular that now



TAUCK WORLD DISCOVERY

everybody and his uncle does the same thing.

**HI:** Tauck also is known for being philanthropic, both as a company and your family personally.

**PT:** I remember when we set up our family charitable foundation—with dollars that resulted from the business, of course—we each got sticky notes where we wrote down what we most wanted to support, and we put our stickies on the wall with our priorities at the top. The results just screamed youth and youth development. But we also do a lot with our national parks. Within our Tauck Bridges program, which is our family travel collection, we give people the chance to volunteer at places like Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park, doing trail work, painting signs, and so on. It teaches kids, “These are your parks, take pride in them.”

**HI:** What one thing would you like people to take away about the name “Tauck?”

**PT:** From the product side, I think it’s the fact that we’re not trying to nickel and dime people to death, which has destroyed the travel industry. We may cost more, but we emphasize quality and inclusive value, and our customers have told us not to change that. It’s having those once-in-a-lifetime travel experiences and engaging people in meaningful ways that’s always been our passion. **H**

Read our entire interview with Peter Tauck and discover where he and his four kids traveled recently on vacation, and why, at [www.Hideaways.com/gettingtoknowtauck](http://www.Hideaways.com/gettingtoknowtauck).

# SPICY VIBES, SPECIAL PLACES

Admit it: There's just something about the Caribbean that gets your blood racing and your travel juices flowing. It's a favorite *Hideaways* destination for endless water sports, long stretches of sandy beach, flavorful dishes with slightly exotic influences, days of fun in the sun, and nights spent relaxing poolside with a sundowner. Your *Hideaways* Travel Specialist can get you there in style, whether you choose a beachfront suite just steps from the sand or a hillside villa that catches the balmy afternoon breezes.

The best part is, when you book your stay with *Hideaways* Travel Services (800-843-4433) at one of these hand-picked, *Hideaways*-vetted resorts or hotels from *The Hideaways Collection*®—just a sampling of our Caribbean collection—you'll enjoy their best-available rates, a red-carpet reception, special privileges like early check-in and valuable upgrades, and a member-only perk to enhance your experience. So kick back in your lounge chair with an iced tea, browse through this enticing sample of our Caribbean escapes, and call us when you're ready to start planning.

HIDEAWAYS LIFE - JULY / AUGUST 2012



The quintessential Caribbean view from a villa at Windjammer Landing Villa Beach Resort

## THE HIDEAWAYS COLLECTION: CARIBBEAN

From Anguilla to Virgin Gorda, we've got you covered in the Caribbean. These hotels and resorts have been chosen specifically for their true-to-the-isles ambiance, their excellent service and dining, and their ideal positioning, often with direct beach access and terrific sea views.

**COVECASTLES, ANGUILLA:** A stunning villa resort with spacious one- to five-bedroom private villas rising dramatically from a gorgeous white-sand crescent beach. **Member perk:** Daily continental breakfast during Festive Season (December 16 to January 4), and complimentary Chef's Dinner for two from a special Covecastles menu (drinks not included) served in your

villa during winter, summer, and mid-season (January 5 to December 15).

**BLUE WATERS, ANTIGUA:** A classic Caribbean retreat tucked away on a series of small, secluded coves lined with powder-white beaches; enjoy the ultimate indulgence at Rock Cottage, a private and luxurious five-bedroom villa perched on a rocky outcropping and surrounded by "blue waters" on three sides. **Member perk:** A \$150 resort credit per room (min. stay of 4 nights).

**GALLEY BAY RESORT & SPA, ANTIGUA:** An all-inclusive, toes-in-the-sand resort with a freeform waterfall swimming pool and clusters of rooms and suites tucked among 40 secluded acres of lush tropical gardens, all nestled between a protected bird-sanctuary lagoon and a private, three-quarter-mile white-sand beach. **Member perk:** A 30-minute spa treatment.

### THE FAIRMONT ROYAL PAVILION, BARBADOS:

A peaceful adults-only enclave during high season, with just 72 guest rooms and suites tucked among the resort's lush tropical gardens, each offering unobstructed ocean views of Barbados' famed Platinum Coast. **Member perk:** Breakfast, afternoon tea, and a welcome gift.

**GUANA ISLAND, BVI:** A natural, private-island setting accommodating just 30 or so guests who cozy up in secluded stone cottages done in relaxed plantation style, and each with a private ocean-view terrace—plus everything's included, from water toys to meals and premium beverages. **Member perk:** A 30-minute spa treatment.

Ahhh... a seductive massage at Casa de Campo





**SCRUB ISLAND, BVI:** A luxurious private-island hideaway—the first new resort built in the BVI in 15 years—with an elegant collection of guest rooms and one- or two-bedroom suites, all topped off by a superb spa, a marina, and a smattering of hillside villas that provide the ultimate getaway. **Member perk:** A \$150 spa credit at Ixora Spa (min. stay of 2 nights).

**CASA DE CAMPO, LA ROMANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC:** A welcoming retreat offering warm hospitality and 7,000 acres of sun-splashed fun—golf, water sports, horseback riding, tennis, and more; choose from clusters of guest rooms and suites, each with a private terrace, or from a selection of two- to four-bedroom villas that include personal maid/butler service, private patios with pools or whirlpools, and enough space for an entire family. **Member perk:** A \$200 credit toward the Cygalle Spa during your stay.

### Did You Know?

Helping you choose the ideal private villa rental for your family vacation is one of our specialties, and *Hideaways Travel Services* has access to a slew of vacation villas throughout the Caribbean on some of its most popular islands—Jamaica, St. Martin, St. Croix, Barbados, and more—way more than we show on our website! You can call a villa expert at *Hideaways Travel Services* for villa recommendations based on your personal vacation needs and budget, and then get the personal touch with full planning services. Just call your Travel Specialist at 800-843-4433, or email [ts@hideaways.com](mailto:ts@hideaways.com).

**LALUNA, GRENADA:** A top-notch, low-key sanctuary that combines Balinese design elements in its luxuriously simple guest cottages (each with a plunge pool) with creative Italian-influenced dining, all set among lush and colorful tropical gardens. **Member perk:** A complimentary bottle of Prosecco.

**ROUND HILL HOTEL AND VILLAS, JAMAICA:** A traditional and time-honored retreat popular with celebrities for its impeccable style and grace, with 36 oceanfront rooms and a distinctive collection of hillside villa suites looking out over beautiful Round Hill Bay. **Member perk:** Two 50-minute Tranquility massages (min. stay of 4 nights).



GALLEY BAY

White sand, blue sea, and your loved one lying next to you at Galley Bay—what could be better?

### STONEFIELD ESTATE VILLA RESORT, ST. LUCIA:

An unplugged oasis of secluded one- to three-bedroom stand-alone villas, complete with kitchens, plunge pools, and some of the most dramatic views in the Caribbean: imposing Petit Piton, hillsides spilling with lush vegetation, and an amazing azure sea below. **Member perk:** A 40-minute couple's massage.

### WINDJAMMER LANDING VILLA BEACH RESORT, ST. LUCIA:

A picturesque beachfront "village" of tile-roofed

white-stucco villas tucked among the trees on a hillside above pretty Labrelotte Bay, each with a secluded terrace or sundeck and many with their own plunge pools and sparkling ocean views. **Member perk:** A Sunset Cruise.

### PALM ISLAND RESORT, ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES:

An all-inclusive getaway of sugar-soft white beaches, palms waving in the breeze, and island-style bungalows drowsing in the sun, all on a serene, 135-acre private island with iguanas and land turtles sharing its nature trails. **Member perk:** A 30-minute spa treatment.

### TAMARIND BEACH HOTEL & YACHT CLUB, ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES:

A lively castaway-style hotel on a stunning white-sand beach, with 40 beachfront guest rooms, including 8 suites tucked into gardens at water's edge, and a private jetty to accommodate yacht arrivals and boat excursions to nearby islands. **Member perk:** One massage/person for two (min. stay of 7 nights).

### SEVEN STARS RESORT, TURKS & CAICOS:

A tasteful and luxurious all-suites resort on Grace Bay, anchored to a sparkling white beach and offering suites with hardwood furnishings and gourmet kitchens, beach pavilions with plush day beds, complimentary water sports, and unstinting service in a laid-back beachfront setting. **Member perk:** A 30-minute couple's massage.

### SPECIAL REPORT: CARIBBEAN



COVECASTLES

Its dramatic, award-winning design is just one reason to visit Covecastles

# Sampling Southern Italy

Before setting off to voyage around Sicily aboard *Sea Cloud II* (see cover article), Gail and I took a brief visit to Naples and its most popular island vacation spots, Capri (pronounced KA-pree) and Ischia (pronounced ISS-kia). We managed all this in five days, hardly enough time to do justice to these places. In fact, we'd recommend a minimum of three or four days in each spot, and you could easily enjoy a week in each, especially if you'd like to soak in their very different personalities and ambiance.

BY HIDEAWAYS PRESIDENT MIKE THIEL

Here is our overview of each sunny destination and how to enjoy it, including a brief review of where we stayed. If you'd like to get the real inside scoop and personal guidance with planning your travels to this area, just call Katia, our resident Italy expert at *Hideaways Travel Services*. She was born and raised in Naples, her family has a second home on Ischia, and she returns every year or so to catch up on what's new.

## Surprising Naples

Honestly, when we planned to meet our ship in Naples, I had rather low expectations for the city. I figured it was just another big, crowded, bustling, and possibly uninteresting city. Those first three impressions aren't totally wrong, but it's also a beautiful and fascinating city with lots to see and do, at least in its central historic district.

Our hotel of choice was **Grand Hotel Vesuvio**, named for its setting right on a promontory projecting into the Bay of Naples, with a panoramic view of Mt. Vesuvius. It's also very grand, with classic ambiance and decor and excellent facilities and service. The boulevard in front is a lively pedestrian way, connected by a causeway to the island Castel del'Ovo. This beautifully preserved castle was a Roman villa in about 500 A.D., then a convent, and in the 12th century, fortified as a Norman castle. Today, its fringes are surrounded by waterfront seafood restaurants, bars, boutiques, trendy night spots, and marinas. We enjoyed a leisurely dinner there our first evening with Katia's

brother and sister-in-law, getting the inside scoop on how to make the most of our short stay in Naples.

The next day, our prime destination was the old quarter of Naples, home to more churches, palaces, museums, quaint squares, and lively streets than would be possible to sample in just one day. Nevertheless, we walked off a lot of shoe leather exploring favorites like the sprawling complex of Santa Chiara, with its church, monastery, beautiful cloister gardens, and archeological museum.

Our most impressive experience was a Naples Underground tour. This one-hour adventure takes you to the previously undiscovered bowels of Naples, where you learn how Neopolitans over the ages have basically built one civilization on top of another. Little would you realize from walking the

picturesque streets of old Naples that many of the houses are built right over the top of Roman theaters, ancient cisterns, and vintage palazzos. Later we headed to the Teatro San Carlos, Naples' historic opera house, for an impressive performance of "La Bohème."

## Chichi Capri

Capri is perhaps one of the most famous islands in the world. In the first century A.D. the Roman Emperor Tiberius moved there, building a huge villa whose ruins are still one of the main attractions. Capri was rediscovered in the late 1800s as a haven for artists, authors, and, it is said, those of alternative lifestyles. It's a prime escape for the rich and famous, many owning villas tucked into lush gated gardens along its twisty cliff-side roads. The island also offers a handful of five-star hotels and a plethora of less fancy lodgings.

Capri is a small, rugged island surrounded by precipitous cliffs and rocky shores with a few cove beaches. The main town, also called Capri, sits in the saddle between two mountains, a steep thousand or so feet above the harbor. To get there from the ferry, you either take a bus or taxi up a switchback road, or hop the funicular up to the town center. There, you'll find a maze of walkways lined with cafés, hotels, boutiques bearing famous names like Hermès and Gucci, and Mediterranean-style townhomes.

The island's unique beauty, reputation, and chichi lifestyle make it a magnet for



NOW HERE'S A SETTING that will make you realize you're in the Mediterranean! The cliff-side "beach club" restaurant of Capri Palace™, called Il Riccio (The Sea Urchin), is a most scenic place to enjoy a gourmet lunch. It even has a separate room filled with desserts, aptly named the Temptation Room.

CAPRI PALACE/THE LEADING HOTELS OF THE WORLD

TALK ABOUT SEDUCTIVE! This outdoor spa treatment tent at Mezzatorre offers mesmerizing views along with a tranquil and private (with the drapes down, of course) spot in which to indulge in a sensual couple's massage.



MIKE THIEL

tourists, at least from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. when it's overrun with cruise passengers and day-trippers from Naples, the Sorrentine Peninsula, and neighboring islands, all about 40 minutes away by high-speed ferry. Thankfully, when you're staying at any of Capri's elegant hotels, you have a quiet refuge from the mid-day throngs.

## Our Palace Escape

A few miles from Capri village, clinging to the lush northern flanks of the 1,900-foot-high Mont Solara, is the smaller, quieter village of Anacapri. There, we stayed at **Capri Palace**<sup>TM</sup>, just off the town square in its own garden oasis. The hotel is small at just 78 rooms and suites, and one of the island's best, with architecture and decor blending traditional and modern styles. Everything about Capri Palace—entry, public areas, suites—reflects a passion for art, style, and elegance. At every turn, we found ourselves saying, “Wow, interesting!” because the architecture and artwork are so eclectic and even quirky, but in a good way. In its elegant dining room—the only Michelin two-star on the island—you lounge comfortably in easy chairs, while the more casual dining/bar venue has extensive

terraces serving dramatic views of the deep-blue Tyrrhenian Sea.

It was lunchtime when we arrived, so the first thing we did was take the hotel shuttle to its “beach club” restaurant, Il Riccio (The Sea Urchin), passing the gated entries of private villas along the way to the restaurant's seemingly remote setting, clinging to a cliff right next to Capri's famed Blue Grotto. I can't imagine a more scenic place to enjoy a gourmet lunch, with the ink-blue ocean lapping at the rocks below, elegant yachts cruising about, and fishermen's rowboats ferrying people to the Blue Grotto.

The rest of our short time on Capri was spent strolling the quaint streets of Anacapri and Capri, doing some shopping—not for Gucci, but for local products like chocolates and *limoncello*, Capri's distinctive lemon-based liqueur. In spite of spending only a day or so on the island, I certainly could feel the attraction of this mystical place—its dramatic scenery, quaint villages, and sybaritic lifestyle.

## Ischia, the Green Isle

We hopped a fast ferry from Capri to Ischia, arriving at charming Ischia Porto, the main town and port on this, the Bay of Naples' largest island. Ischia also is a popular tourist destination—in large part because of its thermal baths and spas—though it's not nearly as crowded as Capri. The island is dominated by the 2,500-foot, often-cloud-shrouded Mt. Epomeo, clearly of volcanic origin. Noted for its rich volcanic soils, Ischia's flanks are sprinkled with terraced vineyards, gorgeous

flora, and diverse agriculture. No wonder it's called “The Green Island.”

We took the shore drive from Ischia Porto to the island's northwestern tip, passing lovely towns, beautiful marinas, and volcanic-sand beaches on our way to **Mezzatorre Resort & Spa**<sup>TM</sup>. Nestled amid some 20 lush acres on a promontory overlooking a deep bay, Mezzatorre is an oasis of tranquility with beautiful gardens, shady woods, and dramatic views. The hotel's namesake, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century watchtower, now is converted into 22 sumptuous rooms and suites and a comfy lobby and library, all with beautiful views.

We stayed in the Belleview suite, which certainly lived up to its name. Its terrace, hanging over flowering rock gardens, had the most wonderfully private prospect you could hope for of the glittering Mediterranean. That evening, I planked myself into one of our cushiony chaises, drink in hand, and watched a local fisherman set his nets for the evening. Then and there, I decided we would spend the next day and a half luxuriating at this wonderful hotel, rather than trying to cram in all the island's sights—a rarity for us.

The next two evenings, we indulged in beautifully prepared Ischian specialties at Mezzatorre's formal restaurant, Chandelier. We savored creamy pastas, rabbit, octopus, and fresh seafood, perhaps caught by that same fisherman I'd seen below our terrace. In the morning, I'd wake up and swim laps in the deliciously warm saltwater pool overlooking a cove where surf washed up on the rocky shores. At one point, we took a stroll over the hill to a winding path leading down through fields knee-high in wildflowers, to a gorgeous private swimming cove. And of course, we indulged in therapeutic treatments at Mezzatorre's beautiful and well-designed thermal waters spa.

Do I regret not having explored the quaint villages and swimming coves dotted around Ischia, or not sampling the wine at it many excellent vineyards? Well, yes. But there's always the prospect of going back. And if you want even more insight on the dos, don'ts, and attractions of Ischia, you can always pick up the phone and call Katia, our resident Ischia expert.

For me, my abiding memory is the overall experience at Mezzatorre, but especially of sitting on our panoramic terrace, sipping a fresh chilled orange juice in the brilliant light of morning, Mt. Vesuvius on the horizon, and watching that fisherman pull in his catch from the glittering blue waters below. **H**

### More Southern Italy Insight

Don't miss Mike's yummy video of Naples pizza-making, plus other informative videos, slide shows, detailed hotel reviews, and exclusive insight on even more ways to enjoy Naples, Capri, and Ischia, all at [www.Hideaways.com/traveltosouthitaly](http://www.Hideaways.com/traveltosouthitaly).

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## ANGKOR VILLAGE RESORT

SIEM REAP, CAMBODIA

RATING: 5+

In a long lifetime of traveling, this is the most beautiful hotel I've stayed in. It's set in a garden—no, it is a garden, full of flowers, trees, water, fountains, and bridges, with open-air structures dotted throughout.

On this trip, we also stayed at **The Hotel Rex** in San Francisco. It's a small hotel located near Union Square at the foot of San Francisco's Knob Hill. Quotations from California writers (Steinbeck, Jack London, etc.) are painted on the corridor walls. Food is served in a library-like setting, with easy chairs and small tables, just off the lobby.

EDWARD CARPENTER, LAKEVILLE, CT

## SILVERSEA CRUISES<sup>THC</sup>

MALAYSIA

RATING: 4.0

To sum up our trip to Malaysia—glad I went, wouldn't go back. The trip details were absolutely perfect, so *Hideaways* did a great job. Our flight arrangements, transport, hotel, etc., could not have been better, and our ship accommodations were beyond belief. I liked what I saw of Singapore, too bad we had such a short time there. We loved the Singapore zoo!

But generally, I was disappointed in the trip and the cruise line, to some extent. Perhaps some of it had to do with the length of the trip and the area itself. Our bodies never really adjusted to the time difference, and the long flights and many tour buses



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So whether your travel-planning needs are great or small, complicated or simple, don't forget to plan—and book—with us, your Travel Specialists at *Hideaways*. Call us at 800-843-4433, or email [ts@hideaways.com](mailto:ts@hideaways.com).

took their toll. Thankfully, we got to know the personal trainer on the ship, and he was a miracle worker. He fixed our aches and pains and was absolutely fantastic in so many ways. A medicine man!

I thought we would see more beautiful sights and have the option to do lots of outdoor activities. Most of the excursions required long bus trips or car rides, and then there were lots of tours in the cities. Too much for me, as I'm a more active person than that. So again, it may have been my lack of knowledge of the area or that the cruise line catered to a less-active crowd. I've been on about six or so cruises with **Regent Seven Seas<sup>THC</sup>**, and I am surprised to say, I think they are superior to Silversea. The food on Silversea was not that good, whereas Regent always had wonderful selections, no matter where we traveled.

It was a very educational trip and I found the area fascinating in many ways, particularly how so many religions live in harmony with one another in a fairly small geographical area. So it was good to have been there, but it will be a while before I travel that far again. And next time, I will choose an area that better fits my interests. However, (Travel Specialist) Katia did a great job, as always.

SHERRIE CONE, PHOENIX, AZ

*Ed Note: Hideaways is happy to arrange and coordinate private shore excursions that more closely meet your needs, especially if you'd like to set your own pace and schedule.*

## RELAIS BOURGONDISH

BRUGE

RATING: 5

The movie *In Bruges* was filmed at this hotel. Watch the movie before you go! This is the perfect place to stay in Bruges, very centrally located and with excellent service.

We also enjoyed a stay at the **Relais and Chateaux Savelberg** in The Hague. It has a gourmet restaurant, and is located in a beautiful park with swans, deer, and sheep. It's within walking distance of a quaint shopping area with lots of great restaurants, and is in an ideal location for visiting Delft and the Keukenhof Gardens (April and May only!).

LYNN ATKINSON, HOLLYWOOD, FL

## CAP MAISON RESORT & SPA<sup>THC</sup>

ST. LUCIA

RATING: 4.3

The resort upgraded us to a better suite (a *Hideaways* member perk)—that was the highlight of the trip! For that reason alone, we will definitely use *Hideaways* again.

(Travel Consultant) Katia was fantastic, too.

HIDEAWAYS MEMBER, NEW YORK, NY

“In a long lifetime of traveling, this is the most beautiful hotel I’ve stayed in . . . set in a garden.” [ EDWARD CARPENTER, RECALLS HIS STAY AT ANGKOR VILLAGE RESORT ]

### PRINCESS HEIGHTS™<sup>THC</sup>

ST. MARTIN  
RATING: 4.6

The resort has a great view and was in the perfect location for us, but you do look out over The Westin and hear noise from their delivery trucks—minor thing, though.

HIDEAWAYS MEMBER, ZIONSVILLE, IN

### JAMAICA INN

OCHO RIOS, JAMAICA  
RATING: 4.6

Everything here was “excellent plus” except for local information on things. There were very few brochures available [at the resort], and the verbal information we were given was not helpful. But overall, it was exactly what we were looking for. Thank you, *Hideaways!*

HIDEAWAYS MEMBER, ORCHARD LAKE, MI

*Ed. Note: Most of what there is to do around Ocho Rios is pretty touristy. If you’re visiting Jamaica for the first time, we suggest you do an excursion to Dunn’s River Falls, and also to nearby golf and equestrian facilities. However, we were so delighted with Jamaica Inn on our recent visit that we felt no inclination to leave.*

### THE CRANE

BARBADOS  
RATING: 4.6

The resort is more of an owners’ complex, so they don’t organize events, plan activities, or try to entertain guests. There’s no beach-bar type of location and no music in any public area. This was fine with us, but

### CALLING ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS!

Everyone loves taking vacation photos—and we want to spotlight yours in Members’ Forum! When you return our “Welcome Back” survey with your vacation comments and ratings, just pop in a few duplicate prints of you and your travel companions enjoying your getaway. Or send your best digital photos to [edit@hideaways.com](mailto:edit@hideaways.com). As space allows, we’ll run them with your comments in Members’ Forum.

it might be too quiet for someone looking for more experiences. The surf here is big (again, great for us), but families with little kids may not like the danger or the beach location.

EDWARD TOLLEY, RYE, NY

### HOTEL ALBERGO CESARI

ROME  
RATING: 5

Thank you to *Hideaways* for all your work putting things together for us. We had a marvelous time, and everything went as planned. My favorite thing on our trip was the opera music in the piazzas in Rome and Florence. In Rome, we happened upon an opera singer (tenor) in front of the Pantheon while eating our gelato. He was wonderful. In Florence, it worked well that we were there on a holiday. They had *La Notte Bianca*, so the museums were open all night and there was music in all the piazzas. We ate dinner on the Piazza Signoria while listening to four opera singers (again, excellent!).

I also really enjoyed the Dark Rome tour called “Crypts and Catacombs,” and would highly recommend it. Our tour guide, Karina (from Germany), was very pleasant and shared a lot of what we wouldn’t have seen or learned otherwise. We toured three places, one outside the city wall and two others—their names escape me, but I know one was a memorial to the Capuchin monks, in which their bones were made into alter art. We also ran across some sort of protest involving bicyclists that we still don’t understand, but it was interesting. We were walking to the Colosseum when the riders just laid down in the road with their bikes—so we simply climbed over them and went on our way.

The hotels were all excellent, especially in Rome (**Albergo Cesari**) and Florence (**Hotel Cerretani Firenze**)—great locations! I maybe wouldn’t use the **Hotel de la Ville** in Milan again—it was okay, but very pretentious, and the room was quite dark. But we were there less than 24 hours, so it was no big deal.

It was a bit chilly the last few days on the French Riviera, but we enjoyed them nonetheless. We took day trips to Monaco and Antibes (which we especially enjoyed), and then spent a day in Nice, where we stayed at the **Hotel Elysée Palace**.

SHERYL LEILL, MINNETONKA, MN

### ESENCIA HOTEL

RIVIERA MAYA  
RATING: 4.3

This is a very quiet resort and beach, with fantastic sand and surf. It is a place to get away and do nothing; if you want lots of activities, this is not the right place for you. It has an excellent spa, too!

HIDEAWAYS MEMBER, ARLINGTON, VA

### SHERATON WAIKIKI

OAHU, HAWAII  
RATING: 4.7

Our time in Hawaii was wonderful, and the excursions were great. A helicopter ride over Maui and surf lessons with the Hans Hedemann Surf School of Oahu were highlights. The Sheraton Waikiki in Honolulu has a great location. You can walk to many shopping and dining spots. It’s a very nice property, up to date, and with a great infinity pool. We had a nice room with an ocean view over Waikiki Beach. They also had a great concierge desk with a staff that was very knowledgeable and helpful in arranging tours.

**Hilo Hawaiian Hotel** on the Big Island was very dated, both the overall property and our room, but had an excellent location on the bay and a great view. We really enjoyed our stay at **Keauhou Beach Resort** on the west side of the Big Island. It’s in a great location, and while our room was small, the oceanside balcony was terrific for views of the ocean and the turtles in the cove below. **The Sheraton Maui** only had a king bedroom when we arrived (double beds were specified), so they had to bring in a rollaway for our son, which made things tight. But overall it was a nice property.

ROBERT ABELE, EDEN PRAIRIE, MN

## Could This Be the Next Cancun?

If you've avoided Cancun like the plague recently because it's become so over-developed, maybe you'd prefer a visit to Mexico's on-the-horizon Pacific coast region of Bahiamar, which is poised to become the next big thing in Mexico's tourism scene. The 2,260-acre parcel of oceanfront property lies between Ixtapa and Acapulco, and has more than nine undeveloped miles of beachfront and freshwater lagoons just waiting for new hotels and vacationers to fill them. Best yet, the airport at Ixtapa is only ten minutes away by modern highway, and a golf course and marina already are in the works.

FONATUR, Mexico's National Foundation for Tourism Development, has soundly endorsed the project as the next up-and-coming destination in Mexico. Overall plans call for developing a five-star marina, golf, and beach-villa resort complete with tennis courts, nightclubs, restaurants, and shopping complexes. Move over, Cancun.

### Nature's Way

One of our favorite places in the Caribbean is Dominica, also known as the Nature Island. Now you can see more of those beautiful, untouched natural surroundings on the recently opened Waitukubuli National Trail, the first cross-island walking trail of its kind in the Caribbean.

Pack along the bug spray, because you'll be hiking awhile with 14 distinct but continuous trail segments to choose from, totaling 115 miles from north to south. Along the way, you'll pass along rivers and through rain forests and mountainous heights. If that's too much walking, you might prefer Dominica's new Rain Forest Aerial Tram or the Gorge Zip Challenge, which features the highest and longest zip-line on the island.

### A Real CliffHanger

The folks who brought you such iconic, over-the-top resorts as the **Burj Al Arab** and the **Jumeirah Beach Hotel**, both in Dubai, recently opened their first leisure resort in Europe—**Port Sóller Hotel & Spa** on the island of Mallorca, just off the beautiful Mediterranean coast of Spain. Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts is known for its high level of luxury, and Port Sóller seems to live up to those standards with its spacious suites, Mercedes ML airport transfers, and breathtaking setting clinging to a cliff side

overlooking the sea. For something different, try The Lighthouse Suite with its lofty perch and amazing views. Port Sóller rates start at €325/night through November 30, 2012, and include full breakfast and one complimentary visit to Talise Spa per person.

### Water Enthusiasts, Take Note

Next time you visit Waikiki Beach, take to the water and visit the Waikiki Ocean Club, a 10,000-square-foot off-shore playground for kids of all ages. The multi-hulled platform "canoe," which opened this past April, is moored 300 yards off the beach and includes a water slide, tri-level diving platform, and ocean trampoline.

For an additional fee, guests can rent a jet ski, do a helmet dive, or get some paddleboard instruction. Hungry? They even have a grill with a full lunch and bar menu. Day rates start at \$89 for ages 16 and older. Visit [www.waikikioceanclub.com](http://www.waikikioceanclub.com).

For more on Honolulu and Waikiki Beach—including what to see and where to stay—read June and Aaron Ahmed's story, "Oahu on the Go," at [www.Hideaways.com/oahutrip](http://www.Hideaways.com/oahutrip).

### News Briefs

Here are some of the latest travel trends and news items you should know to be "in the know."

- After 125 years, you'd need a facelift, too! That's why **The Crane**—Barbados' oldest continuously operating resort, which marks its 125th anniversary this year—treated itself to a multi-million-dollar renovation, upgrading and refreshing all 232 rooms and suites. The original coral stone building still houses 18 luxurious guest rooms with exquisite high ceilings and antique furnishings. Look for summer rates starting at \$214/night.
- Speaking of renovations, the historic **Broadmoor Hotel** in Colorado Springs will undergo a \$60 million renovation over the next two years that will include upgrading accommodations in its West Wing as well as adding an Italian restaurant and an activities center, complete with bowling alley.
- Next time you fly into Spain, make sure your designated airport is still open. The country's economic woes have resulted in several scheduled airport closures, including the relatively new South Madrid Airport—built just three years ago—which shut down in April.
- Love your java? Then don't miss the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual Kona Coffee Cultural Festival, to be held on Hawaii's Kona Island November 2–11, 2012. It's the oldest food festival in Hawaii and features parades, arts & crafts, concerts, plenty of food booths, and the famed Kona Coffee Picking Contest.
- It's a bird! It's a plane! No, it's a—flying salmon?! Yes, Alaska Airlines will unveil a salmon-themed paint job on one of its 737-800s this fall, making it the world's largest salmon at 129 feet from nose to tail. By the way, the Seattle-based carrier flew 25 million tons of seafood last year from Alaska to points south in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico.
- Here's one for the "weird-but-true" category. A new **InterContinental** hotel will be built more than 300 feet deep into the side of an abandoned rock quarry outside of Shanghai, with the bottom two floors—which will include a restaurant and aquarium—actually under water. Plan on visiting after it opens in 2015.

## Silversea Sails for Galapagos

Here's great news for fans of premium cruising with an adventurous twist. **Silversea Cruises**<sup>THC</sup> is expanding its adventure offerings by adding the expedition ship, *Galapagos Explorer II*, to its small fleet of six luxury ships next year. But first, the all-suite, 100-guest vessel will undergo a major refurbishment to bring it up to Silversea's exacting standards.

Once the refitting is completed in September 2013, the yacht-like ship with just 50 spacious suites will be renamed and then sent off for year-round adventure in the Galapagos Islands. Silversea's new expedition ship will join its popular *Silver Explorer*, which is regularly deployed in the earth's two exciting and demanding polar regions. And remember, when you book any Silversea cruise, your member-only perk is a \$200 shipboard credit per suite, a complimentary bottle of champagne, and a gift membership in the *Hideaways Aficionado*<sup>®</sup> Club.

## Savings for Solo Cruisers

Looking for a reason to sail solo? We have a great one—**Tauk River Cruises** has dropped the single supplement on all its Category 1 cabins for its complete collection of 2013 European river cruises. The average savings for solo travelers should amount to about \$2,400 for Tauk's 14 itineraries on the Danube, Rhine, Rhone, Main, Maas, and Saone rivers of Europe. Tauk also announced it's reducing the single supplements on Category 3 cabins by \$1,000.

These solo savings apply to more than 100 departures in Europe next year; call *Hideaways Travel Services* (800-843-4433) to learn more, or email [ts@hideaways.com](mailto:ts@hideaways.com). Your *Hideaways* member-only perk: A membership extension in the *Hideaways Aficionado*<sup>®</sup> Club and a \$100 Travel Certificate (conditions apply).

## SeaDream Slips the Canal

Smaller is definitely better when it comes to really *feeling* a transit of the Panama Canal, and *SeaDream I* fits the bill. The 112-passenger ship will treat its guests to a first-ever, up-close transit of the canal in 2013, sailing a ten-day positioning cruise from Barbados to Panama City on November 9, 2013.

Following the transit, *SeaDream I* will be based in Caldera, Costa Rica, where it will entertain guests with a series of seven-day cruises along Costa Rica's wild and wooly

west coast. Naturalists will be on board for all Costa Rica sailings, and port calls will include unique and less-visited spots like Golfito, Drake Bay, Isla del Cano, Quepos, and the Tortuga Islands. The ship also will visit lovely and secluded Isla de Coiba off Panama, and San Juan del Sur, one of Nicaragua's most popular beach towns.

## Oo-la-la!

French-flagged **Compagnie du Ponant**<sup>THC</sup>, operator of the luxury yachts *Le Boreal* and *L'Austral*, has announced plans to build a third luxury vessel, to be called *Le Soleal*. The 264-passenger ship is designed to navigate safely in the most extreme regions of the world, and is scheduled to launch in July 2013, operating Arctic cruises during its inaugural season. Your member-only perk: A \$100 shipboard credit per stateroom or a VIP package with flowers and a welcome bottle of champagne in your stateroom, plus seating at the Captain's table for dinner one evening, and a gift membership in the *Hideaways Aficionado*<sup>®</sup> Club.

## Water-Based Wi-Fi

Ever tried to log on at sea and found your ship's Wi-Fi service slower than a snail's pace? Well, **Royal Caribbean** hopes to change all that when it introduces Wi-Fi service throughout its mega-ship, *Oasis of the Seas*,

at the sort of wireless speeds passengers are accustomed to getting at home or in their offices. The 6,360-guest cruise ship is the first to be linked to a new satellite network that's expected to deliver fiber-optic bandwidth throughout the ship, which in turn will deliver maximum-speed Wi-Fi to passengers—essentially trading in the tortoise for a hare!

## Cruise News Briefs

Here are some of the latest cruise trends and news items in a nutshell.

- Butts out! **Silversea Cruises** will ban smoking in all its suites and staterooms starting in 2013. Cigarette, cigar, and pipe smoking will continue to be allowed in the Connoisseur's Corner and in specifically designated outside areas.
- Vegans, take note: You spoke, and **Holland America Line** listened. The line recently added a small vegan menu and 30 new vegetarian dishes to its main dining room offerings, including appetizers, soups, and entrees—and all are available on request at no extra cost aboard all 15 Holland America ships.
- Got time to spare? **Cunard** has revealed its World Voyage program for 2013, providing details on the 105- and 106-day itineraries planned for the *Queen Victoria* and *Queen Mary 2*. Both liners will sail roundtrip from Southampton, England, on Jan. 10, 2013, and together the ships will visit 55 ports of call in 28 countries. Cruise fares for full voyages start at \$19,995/person, double, with segments of 12 to 22 days also offered.
- Elvis is in the house—or on the steamboat, as the case may be. Since Priscilla Presley was named godmother of the *American Queen* steamboat at its re-christening last spring, it seems Elvis sightings may be an everyday occurrence, especially when the steamboat operates its "Elvis Cruise" from Memphis to New Orleans in December.
- Power down those handhelds and laptops. **Princess Cruises** has put the brakes on offering unlimited Internet access for its suite passengers, saying that, with limited bandwidth at sea in an era when people are increasingly online with their devices, it was becoming more difficult to deliver service.

SPECIAL OFFER

# Safari Days, African Nights

Elephants emerge from the Chobe River in Botswana, dripping wet after slaking their thirst in the shallows. Wildebeest venture close to the water's edge, keeping a watchful eye for predators. And hippos comically bob their heads up to watch you pass by, as you glide silently down the river aboard the elegant and graceful *Zambezi Queen*.

Embrace this unique way to view Africa's diverse wildlife on a 4-night water-based safari that serves as the centerpiece to **AmaWaterways**<sup>™</sup> 16-day "African Sunsets" tour. Your journey begins with a 3-night stay in Cape Town, the vibrant South African city known for its natural surroundings and local wineries. You'll visit two wine estates, take the cableway to the top of Table Mountain, and embark on a full-day tour to 12 Apostles and scenic Hout Bay.

Then the safari fun begins! After flying to the Okavango Delta in Botswana via small charter plane, you'll settle into your remote safari lodge before heading out on an evening game drive. The delta is known for its huge herds of impala, buffalo, wildebeest, and zebra, and coveted leopard and cheetah sightings are consistently good. You'll also have the opportunity for some fishing or a *mokoro*

(traditional dugout canoe) excursion.

Then it's on to the Savute region of Chobe National Park—an area known for its predators, specifically lions and hyenas—where game activity includes an early-morning drive along the dry Savute Channel looking for warthogs, kudus, wildebeests, and some 450 species of bird life, including the crested crane and sacred ibis. The pièce de résistance follows two days later, as you board the *Zambezi Queen*, docked on the Chobe River, and depart for a romantic sunset cruise, all the while watching herds of elephant and the occasional crocodile slip from sight as you pass.

For the next four days you'll cruise in style, encountering the intriguing sights and sounds of the river as you slide effortlessly down the Chobe River, stopping occasionally for a village walking tour, a game ride in Chobe National Park, or an African barbecue prepared by locals. At night, you'll be cocooned in comfort as you enjoy sophisticated dining and game watching from your stateroom balcony. Finally, you'll disembark the *Zambezi Queen* and be transferred to Victoria Falls, where a local guide will help you appreciate the area's rich natural history.

AmaWaterways' 16-day "African Sunsets" tour from Cape Town to Victoria Falls is available year-round, with departures at least once a month throughout 2013. Cruise and land rates start from \$10,995 per person, double, for January, February, and March departures; upgrades to five-star land accommodations are available throughout the year.

Rates include all lodgings, most meals with complimentary wine and beer at lunch and dinner, game drives, special excursions and dinners, a Victoria Falls National Park tour, and complimentary laundry service. International and intra-Africa airfare not included. For complete details and itinerary, visit [www.Hideaways.com/africansunsets](http://www.Hideaways.com/africansunsets), or call *Hideaways* Travel Services at 800-843-4433.



Dusk descends on Botswana's Chobe River

AMAWATERWAYS



Relax in your stylish cabin aboard *Zambezi Queen*

AMAWATERWAYS



Enjoy this unique perspective for a photo safari

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1. **Mike Thiel's entire "ship's log" of high-seas adventure aboard *Sea Cloud II***, including sailing videos and slide shows, at [www.Hideaways.com/travelseacloud](http://www.Hideaways.com/travelseacloud);
2. **An even more in-depth interview with Peter Tauck**, the personable face behind the new *Hideaways* tour partner, *Tauck World Discovery*, at [www.Hideaways.com/gettingtoknowtauck](http://www.Hideaways.com/gettingtoknowtauck); and
3. **More of Mike's inside scoop on what to see and do in southern Italy**, including where to get the best pizza and handcrafted sandals, at [www.Hideaways.com/traveltosouthitaly](http://www.Hideaways.com/traveltosouthitaly).

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## New to *The Hideaways Collection*<sup>®</sup>

We're constantly on the hunt for exciting best-of-kind lodgings to invite into *The Hideaways Collection*, so we can offer you exclusive deals and special VIP perks to enhance your experience.

Here are just a few of our newest partner hotels and resorts:

- **Cheeca Lodge & Spa, Florida:** Member perk—\$100 Resort Credit (restrictions may apply—min. stay of 3 nights)
- **Tamarind Beach Hotel & Yacht Club, St. Vincent & The Grenadines:** Member perk—One massage/person for two (min. stay of 7 nights)
- **Capri Palace, Capri, Italy:** Member perk—Bottle of regional white wine in room upon arrival
- **Grand Hotel Parker's, Naples, Italy:** Member perk—Welcome drink and 15% discount on food & beverages
- **Mezzatorre Resort & Spa, Ischia, Italy:** Member perk—One thermal water therapy and facial mask/person/stay (min. stay of 3 nights)
- **Hotel Villa Athena, Sicily, Italy:** Member perk—Basket of fresh Sicilian fruit and bottle of red Sicilian wine
- **L'Albereta, Franciacorta, Italy:** Member perk—Bottle of Vigna Leone Chardonnay, produced exclusively for L'Albereta

Intrigued? Call *Hideaways* Travel Services at 800-843-4433, or email [ts@hideaways.com](mailto:ts@hideaways.com).