

# Willamette International Travel

Experience the World

## Summer 2018 Update

### INVITATIONS

#### Windstar

Tuesday, Sept. 25  
6:00 p.m.

See page 4  
for more information

#### G Adventures

Tuesday, Oct. 16  
6:00 p.m.

See page 5  
for more information

RSVP to [johnc@wittravel.com](mailto:johnc@wittravel.com)

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### Summer 2018

With so much happening since our last newsletter in March we can honestly say there is never a dull moment in our office. Cathy Hazenberg left at the end of March after her husband Peter was offered a new position in the Bay area. Fortunately, we hired Gavi Piper in January, believing the chances of Cathy & Peter staying in the Portland were slim, so this was a relatively easy transition.

In August we will say goodbye to Rachael, who has been a wonderful administrative assistant to us all. She is moving with her family to Arizona. Nancy & Christina are interviewing for Rachael's replacement and will introduce the new employee in our November newsletter.

Several staff members took a Viking River Cruise this year. In May, Barbara took the Viking Provence Cruise. Her report is on page 14. Rachael took the Normandy Cruise and Debbie is currently cruising on the Danube, where they have been having major problems with the water level because of the European drought. Fortunately, The River Cruise Companies are very adept at making last minute changes to their itineraries. Nancy, Claudia & John will all be taking a Danube cruise this fall. Their reports will be in our November newsletter.

Gavi in May experienced a Lindblad Explorer Cruise out of Juneau, Alaska. Her report is on page 15. In April, Nancy spent a week's vacation on Maui — her report can be found on page 7.

Pam headed to Croatia in June. This is such an up-and-coming destination, and the only one who had "touched down" in Croatia was Christina, and only for a day in Dubrovnik some 20 plus years ago. She says it is magnificently beautiful, with great hotels and excellent food all much less in cost than in other parts of Europe. Her report will be in our next newsletter.

Christina & John headed to Namibia for 17 days with John first spending 5 nights in Barcelona, which he loved. They also went to Cape Town where they spent time with Laura (Township Tours) at the school she operates out of her home for some 30 children under the age of 5. Whilst there, they participated in celebrating the 4th birthday of one young girl. Being raised by her great grandmother, no one is really sure of her true birthdate, and she had never had a birthday celebration. Laura decided it was time to create her birthday celebration, to coincide with visitors from "America". A birthday cake, a special lunch and treats for all the kids, along with a special present for the birthday girl: a doll with blonde hair and blue eyes that opened and closed! That is all she had asked for! It was truly a delightful few hours interacting with all Laura's kids.

2019 will be our year for Africa. In February we will be in Tanzania (see page 11), then Namibia in August (details on page 10). We did make some changes to the itinerary for 2019, adding a flight into Etosha to avoid a very long day of driving. After Namibia we will fly to Kenya. Stanley will be one of our guides both on the trip out to Ithumba Camp and for the main safari where we will visit Lewa; Samburu; and two spots in the Mara during Migration time. See page 9. Do hope you will join us on one of these life changing experiences.

Do come and join us on **Tuesday, September 25** to learn more about Windstar small ship cruises, not only to Europe but also around Asia; Tahiti, Central America and in 2019 Alaska (see page 4). **Tuesday, October 16** we will introduce you to G Adventures (see page 5). Their representative Kara will introduce you to their partnership with National Geographic Journeys. G Adventures is a tour company that gives back to the communities where they operate helping the locals live healthier and happier lives.

— Christina

# Europe

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## ITALY

*Context Travel is one of our favorite small group tour providers, if there are 4 in your party you can take one of their tours as a private tour. All return truly happy with the guide/docent. Here is one of their Rome Guide's, Megan, tips for getting the most out of a visit to Rome.*

**Best time of year to visit:** October! Rome is famous for beautifully sunny days. In October you can still eat lunch at an outdoor cafe, but you won't roast. Also, the crowds are (mostly) gone.

**Favorite restaurant:** Salumeria Roscioli Via dei Giubbonari, 21/22.

**Not-to-miss local dish:** Cacio e Pepe (pasta with pecorino cheese and black pepper—simple but so good!).

**One tourist attraction that's worth it:** Roman Forum – The line to get in can be long and daunting, but once inside you can wander away from the masses and imagine life in Ancient Rome, it is worth it.

**Must-do Context Tour:** Caravaggio's Main Streets - wander the streets of the historic heart of Rome, see Caravaggio paintings in situ, and imagine his life and times.

**Favorite off-the-beaten path site:** MAXXI—The National Museum of 21st Century Arts.

**Best tip for visitors:** Get up early! Mid-day closures are still very common, so get out there early and then spend the "pausa" eating a great lunch. No shame in a quick nap before you head out again for more sightseeing and shopping.

**Thing you love most about the city:** La Dolce Vita is real—there is always time for friends, family, and food in Rome. Weekends are made for day trips, beach trips, and family gatherings. Mix that with lots of sunshine, great local produce, amazing wine, and thousands of years of history and it's a very special place to live.

### The Antico Caffè Greco

The Antico Caffè Greco is the uncontested Emperor of classic Roman cafes — having opened for business in 1760! Only Caffè Florian in Venice is older. Historic figures and artists — such as Hans Christian Anderson, Mark Twain and even Cassanova himself – have sipped coffee here. The interior is adorned with oil paintings — a fitting décor for an establishment of its age and esteem. You'll find this historic haunt just off of Piazza di Spagna near the base of the Spanish Steps.

## RAIL UPDATE

In the foreseeable future all tickets will be "print at home tickets". French Rail, SNCF – French Domestic & International train services will be transitioning all ticketing methods to Print at Home. This change will be done gradually within this year and the next. The first activation is planned for Wednesday, August 1st, 2018. The first fare types which will only be available with the PAH ticketing method are all French Domestic & International non-exchangeable and non-refundable individual fares. Note we will make you aware if your tickets are "print at home" or still the "paper tickets" which if lost cannot be replaced unless you have purchased the Eurail insurance.

New ticketing requirements for Eurostar, London/Paris/London. The activation is now planned for July 23rd, 2018. The Eurostar changes are the following:

1. Print at Home (PAH) will be the only ticketing method
2. Name of all passengers will be required
3. Date of Birth (DOB) will be a required field
4. Infant name (lap child, under 4 years of age) will also need to be entered
5. Assign each traveler to each fare

## FRANCE & PARIS UPDATE

Recently in our blog,(if you do not subscribe we recommend you sign up for the weekly bulletins) we announced the upcoming release of the **Navigo Easy Pass**, due out April 2019. This is an electronic (that means totally paperless!) system of navigating Paris' maze of public transport networks. This means: unlimited travel in selected zones and unlimited validity. Oh la la! Conde Nast reports that the Navigo Easy Pass will be identical to London's Oyster or Stockholm's Access cards. It will charge a flat 2 euros then you can load it up with tickets. They'll be unlimited — that means you can go virtually anywhere, the only catch is you'll have to wait at least until next April to enjoy all its benefits. But there DOES currently exist a Navigo Pass, aka the Navigo Découverte that's open to tourists and may be a good bet for travelers staying in Paris more than a

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# Europe

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week. So what's all that about and is it worth it? Find full details on our blog and why it may be worth while for you if you plan on visiting Paris in 2019.

## Little known in Paris:

Do you know where the oldest dwelling in Paris is? Rue des Barres? Rue François Miron? Rue Volta? In fact, the oldest house in the capital city is located 51, rue Montmorency. The famous alchemist Nicolas Flamel had it built in 1407 for the district's homeless and it is now a listed building. Although used today as a typical Parisian restaurant and private home, the entire sculptured façade, including the original inscription, is still intact.

## AUSTRIA

Our friends at Avanti Destination recommend Austria in the winter — here is why. Austria is an amazing destination any time of year, but winter 2018-19 will be especially grand. Throughout Advent Season (Nov. 30, Dec. 7, Dec. 15), Salzburg will celebrate 200 years of Silent Night. For centuries, the song has crossed borders and overcome crises. It has connected people no matter their origin, age or religion, and provides a link back to the time during which it was created. For the song's 200-year anniversary, follow the traces of the world-famous Christmas song in storybook Salzburg. Included are 4 nights' accommodations with daily breakfast, tickets to listen to the Salzburg Advent Choir, watch a performance at Felsenreitschule, entrance to the Silent Night Exhibition, and join a special Christmas celebration in the Lake District tour.

In elegant Vienna, the city of waltzes hosts over 400 balls each year and is in full swing with gala events in January and February. For a dance of a lifetime, join the rest of Vienna's elite at either the Viennese Philharmonics Ball on January 24 or the Johann Strauss Ball on February 16. Don't know how to waltz? Our package includes a private waltz lesson prior to the Ball, as well as 2 nights' accommodations with daily breakfast, and entrance to the Ball. If you want to make this an especially magical experience, arrive to the Ball by horse drawn carriage. What a Cinderella moment!

## CONDE NAST: 50 THINGS TO DO IN EUROPE BEFORE YOU DIE!

*We have selected what we consider a few of the more unique suggestions on their list to think about.*

### Watch Valencia Burn During Las Fallas

Once a year, the seaside city of Valencia, Spain is set ablaze. This is no ancient riot or night of purging; rather, the annual festival of Las Fallas honors the feast of St. Joseph with several days of street parties, live music, fireworks, and carte blanche

to set off the loudest firecrackers and noisemakers you've ever heard. The jubilant celebration wraps up with "La Cremà," when 20- to 30-foot effigies are put to the torch in the town squares. There's nothing else like it. —Laura Dannen Redman

### Walk the Berlin Wall

You can bicycle or even walk the entire length of the 13-mile-long structure, now converted to a series of paved pathways, divided into 14 stages that pass from rural idyll to the bustling city center. Along the way, you'll spot abandoned watchtowers and stretches covered in colorful murals. — Chaney Kwak

### Row around Lake Bled

Backed by the high peaks of the Julian Alps, Slovenia's emerald-green Lake Bled — and its picturesque church on an islet in the middle of it — is almost too pretty to be true. And while many settle for the views from above, at Bled Castle (go for the Kremšnita, too), getting out on the lake is hard to beat. Traditional, 16th-century pletna boats shuttle passengers from shore to the church with skilled oarsmen at the helm, but you can also rent a rowboat by the hour, park it on the islet, and explore the lake's 358 acres on your own. — Katherine Lagrave

## UNITED KINGDOM UPDATE

Here are the **Top Reasons to Travel by Rail in Great Britain:** With these type of travel times, it is also possible to make your vacation headquarters in a major city and make day tours out. Out of London you can also visit Canterbury; Salisbury; Oxford; Bath; Cambridge often in under 90 minutes. Destinations are closer than you think.

Birmingham > Stratford-upon-Avon **45 mins**

Edinburgh > Glasgow **55 mins**

Birmingham > London **1 hr 25 mins**

Manchester > Windermere **1 hr 40 mins**

London > Cardiff **2 hrs 5 mins**

London > Manchester **2 hrs 10 mins**

Edinburgh > Windermere **2 hrs 30 mins**

Manchester > Edinburgh **3 hrs 25 mins**

London > Edinburgh **4 hrs 30 mins**

**1. Connectivity** – Britain has over 2,500 train stations, so your clients can reach all parts of Britain easily by rail. This will give them more time to enjoy their chosen destinations.

**2. Beautiful Scenic Journeys** – Enjoyable and relaxing way to travel. Experience the villages, towns and countrysides from the comfort of their seat.

**3. Onboard Experience** - Wi-Fi, power sockets, toilets, refreshments (food and drinks), First Class options, quiet coaches, luggage conveyance and assistance for disabled/passengers with reduced mobility.

# Recommended Tours



**SURROUNDED BY WONDERS** like the magnificent Cinque Terre, the culturally transcendent Alhambra, and the Belem Tower monument, it is easy to fall in love with the Mediterranean. With unique itineraries and immersive shore excursions, Windstar brings you closer to this spectacular part of the world. Cruise the Guadalquivir River, the only navigable river in Spain spanning 408 miles, to Seville. Anchor in the heart of Old Town Dubrovnik as larger cruise ships pass by. Visit a local Mediterranean market with our Windstar Chef, enjoy local experiences in interesting locales such as Giardini Naxos, Portofino, and Mallorca and see a new port almost every day with never more than one sea day.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A WINDSTAR EVENING

When Tuesday, Sept. 25, 2018

Where Offices of Willamette Intl. Travel  
1314 Nw Irving Street, Suite 101

Time 6:00 pm

RSVP by: September 18

Come meet Dave Schoenberg of Windstar Cruises and learn about their unique small ship itineraries not only in Europe, but Asia, Tahiti, Caribbean & Alaska.

## FEATURED TOUR



### GEMS OF THE ADRIATIC SEA

The romance begins in Venice—the city of lights, of water, of bridges—with an overnight stay that offers up all its treasures to you. In the days ahead, fall in love again and again as you explore the Balkans with their red-roofed medieval cities and turquoise travertine cascades, and the roads less traveled on Italy's rustic east coast. Savor each splendid moment of the journey up the scenic Bay of Kotor. Inhale the aroma of orange and lemon trees from Corfu. Puzzle over the strange conical-roofed trulli of Alberobello and the cave-town of Matera in Puglia. Return to Venice wishing you could do it all again.

Venice to Venice - 10 Days on *Wind Surf*

*Venice, Zadar, Dubrovnik, Kotor, Corfu, Brindisi, Bari, Piran, Venice*

# Recommended Tours

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## G ADVENTURES / NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC JOURNEYS

We invite you to come to meet representative Kara Lucchesi of G ADVENTURES/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC JOURNEYS to learn about their unique tours.

When            Tuesday, October 16, 2018  
Where           Offices of Willamette Intl. Travel  
                    1314 Nw Irving Street, Suite 101  
Time             6:00 pm  
RSVP by:       Friday, October 12

Many of our clients have traveled with G Adventures, on their Marine Tours to The Antarctic or the Galapagos. Some have taken their active trips, walking the Inca Trail. There is usually a trip for most within the G Adventure Portfolio; the 18-30 something group, family groups, those that enjoy a more active vacation, they even have family vacations. But we are truly excited to introduce you to the National Geographic Journeys which we feel meet most requirements for a memorable vacation.



### ADVENTURE, ENHANCED

National Geographic Journeys with G Adventures are a collection of unique tours designed to take you deeper into the cultures and habitats of the places we explore. They offer more inclusions, greater hands-on exploration, interactions with local experts, and the freedom to roam, all within the structure and security of travelling in a small group.



### EXPLORE MORE

Feel the freedom. We include plenty of free time for you to do anything you wish on your adventure. Before departing, you'll receive articles and tips from National Geographic to help you make the most out of your travels.



Learn all you can. Each tour includes opportunities to learn about our world through unique interactive experiences with local experts like historians, marine biologists, photographers, Buddhist monks, chefs, and others.

Change the world. Travel with National Geographic Journeys and you help fund G Adventures' community development initiatives worldwide, in addition to supporting the National Geographic Society's non-profit work in conservation, exploration, research, and education

# Domestic

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## DISNEY UPDATE

### **A clue about wait times, when Disney is opening early and closing late**

On a summer day at a Disney theme park, it's inevitable that visitors will stand in line to ride the new attractions at Toy Story Land after it opened June 30. To prepare for the crowds, Disney is opening Hollywood Studios earlier and closing it later. The marquee attraction — Slinky Dog Dash Roller Coaster — could have wait times of 200 minutes at first, but could settle down to 120 minutes in August once the newness fades, said Len Testa, a computer scientist who studies wait times and runs TouringPlans.com, a website and app that helps Disney visitors navigate the attractions. What Testa is watching for is all about operations. How many trains will run simultaneously on the roller coaster? How long will it take for people, especially children or senior citizens, to step down into their seats? All these factors could affect how many people Disney can shuttle through. Inaugural riders may wait 150 minutes to ride Alien Swirling Saucers, a spinning ride that appeals more toward young audiences, Testa estimated. He predicts the alien ride will likely draw a 90-minute wait toward the end of summer because there aren't many attractions at Hollywood Studios that appeal to those ages 5 and under. Both rides offer Fast Passes — although first dibs go to people staying at the Disney resorts who can snag one 60 days in advance before their check-in.

*More reasons to try to visit the Disney parks other than at peak season!*

## CANADA UPDATES

So few accessible adventure travel destinations — think relatively untouched places where ancient cultures and pristine nature still coexist in harmony — remain that feel truly authentic. But Canada's **Haida Gwaii**, often described as the Galapagos of the North, ranks among them. And now, visitors to this remote, mist-shrouded archipelago off the northern coast of British Columbia can experience renowned Haida culture and cuisine at a luxury floating eco-lodge on the wild western coast of Xhaaidlagha Gwaayaa'i—the "Islands at the Edge of the World."

Owned and operated by the indigenous Haida Nation, Ocean House welcomed its first set of intrepid travelers June 2018. To reach it, guests take a 70-minute chartered jet north from Vancouver and then board a private helicopter for the breathtaking, 20-minute ride over an island with a jagged spine of snow-dusted volcanic peaks. Awaiting them upon touchdown is a 10,000-square-foot, floating five-star retreat anchored in secluded Stads K'uns GawGa (or Peel Inlet) surrounded by lush cedar and Sitka spruce-canopied fjords. But, of course, days at Ocean House are not spent exclusively onboard. Guests will team up with resident Haida cultural guides to forage

in emerald-moss-smothered old-growth forests and explore ancient village sites; picnic on tide-swept beaches within sight of seals, sea lions, and whales; sea kayak as black bears patrol the shoreline; and fish for salmon off the rugged coastline. Everywhere, they will be surrounded by the primordial serenity that infuses this mystical, hidden world of sea, forest, symbols, and song. What a great way to celebrate a special birthday, anniversary and relatively in our own back yard!

### **FORBES Magazine: "Best Places to visit in the Fall"**

Many were overseas, but one that is close to home — **Charleston, South Carolina**

"While the summer months are undeniably dreamy, Charleston in the fall is pure magic — as the leaves turn, this only adds to this colonial city's charm, adding vibrancy to its myriad pastel buildings and cobblestone streets. The weather is just perfect, sitting around the mid-70s, so you won't miss out on warm weather experiences only found in this stately South Carolina outpost. To experience the rich cultural and architectural heritage of the city, the fall is privileged time to go, when the Fall Tours of Homes takes place as well as Taste of Charleston, well worth going to for an array of incredible local food and drink offerings. Charleston has a genteel but buzzy vibe, a nod to the past that surges towards the future with some of the best gastronomic offerings in the US. On that note, the autumn brings with it oyster season, and Charleston is a natural home with its many marshes and creeks, beautiful coastlines create delicious, meaty and briny oysters. Try "The Ordinary" for amazing oyster sliders and a terrific shellfish tower. Rest up at The Belmond Charleston Place, a masterful hotel with a killer spa right in the thick of things."

### **Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex Raises Ticket Prices**

Effective July 23, 2018, general admission tickets for KSC Visitor Complex will increase from \$50 to \$57. It's the first hike in ticket prices since 2012. It will cost more to see the retired space shuttle Atlantis, a Saturn V moon rocket or IMAX movies at the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex. A smaller \$4 bump will be implemented for senior citizens and military service members, who will now pay \$50, up 9%. Notable Visitor Complex improvements in recent years include the \$100 million Space Shuttle Atlantis Exhibit opened in 2013 and the \$20 million Heroes and Legends attraction in 2016, which includes a modernized U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame relocated from its former mainland site.

# Domestic

## Hawaii Updates

by Nancy Fowler

### MAUI UPDATE

A frequent question is “what activities should I reserve before leaving home?” In Hawaii, my short list includes:

- Luau – many choices, each with its own vibe and experience
- Snorkel boat trip – limited space, variety of snorkel spots offered, departure points.
- Beach Buddy Program, Maui Humane Society\*

My first visit to Maui was in 1979 and I have favorites based on my experiences over the years. Just ask. Yes, I’ve attended numerous luaus, just to winnow out the best for our clients!

### What I discovered in May on Maui:

- Saturday Market/swap meet at University in Kahului is still great fun and has good food and prices. Get there earlier than later as some of the foods sell out quickly. 50 cent admission and loads of free parking
- Drive time from Kahului airport to Kaanapali can be about an hour.
- The new Lahaina bypass works nicely; North bound, be alert on the steep drop into Lahaina, immediately followed by traffic trying to get in front of you from both sides of the road just before the traffic light.
- Stop at Leoda’s for savory or sweet pies on your way from airport to Lahaina; you avoid left hand turns that way. Takeaway or eat there.
- Aloha Mixed Plate (behind the Cannery Mall) is a great place for wonderful food at value prices. CASH only. Very casual.
- Monkeypod at Whaler’s Village is fine for Happy Hour; prices reasonable for being a Peter Merriman project. The maitai is really, really good; happy hour makes it a bargain buy for Maui. Regular menu options are so so.

Want authentic Japanese food and/or LOVE shrimp tempura? Go to the hard-to-find Tokyo Tei in Wailuku. 3rd generation Maui family run. Super reasonable prices; takes cards. Minimal atmosphere, but wow! The tempura! This would pair nicely with the Saturday Market in Kahului or a visit to Paia, Makawao. <http://tokyoteimaui.com/home/3674564>

- Alamo Car Rental’s refueling option was \$3.12/gallon. A bargain as most of the island’s pricing is \$3.94 or more – except Costco which is still more than the Alamo package.
- Yes, really; be walking into the airport 3 hours prior to flight departure. Agriculture inspection and LONG security lines pair with flights to the mainland!

### VOLCANO UPDATE

The media coverage about the Kilauea eruption on the island of Hawaii has subsided, but we understand many people still have concerns. The link below from the Hawaiian Tourism Authority may help provide answers to the most-asked questions and provides useful links.

The Hawaii Tourism Authority continues to post media stories and information as its updated on its Special Alert page: <https://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/news/alerts/kilauea-volcano-update/>

### OAHU: ONE OF THE BEST SPOTS TO SNORKEL

Dive into a snorkelers paradise at Shark’s Cove on Oahu’s North Shore. The popular rocky bay, part of Pupukea Beach Park, boasts sparkling, clear blue water, underwater caves and sea life everywhere, from schools of fish to honu (Hawaiian sea turtles). The adventure is waiting for you! [http://www.hawaiisnorkelingguide.com/sharks\\_cove.html](http://www.hawaiisnorkelingguide.com/sharks_cove.html)

### ALOHA FESTIVALS

Check to see if there are any Festivals during your time on the Islands. [www.alohafestivals.com](http://www.alohafestivals.com)

### Saturday, September 1, 2018

4:00 p.m. – Royal Court Investiture

5:00 p.m. – Opening Ceremony

The Royal Hawaiian Resort, Royal Grove & Royal Hawaiian Center

To kick off the festivities, the Aloha Festivals Royal Court will be introduced on the grounds of Helumoa, which was originally the home of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop. At the ceremony, the king, queen, prince and princess take their place on the royal court. The Alii court members receive their royal cloaks, helmets, head feather lei and other symbols of their reign. Traditional hula and chants make this a special event in the heart of Waikiki.

\*<http://www.mauihumanesociety.org/> Offered only 2 days a week, the Beach Buddy program sells out quickly. If interested, book now or get yourself on the waitlist. No pressure on you to adopt – the program’s goal is to get the dogs out to play, explore, socialize, and be ambassadors for the Humane Society. They are on the highway between the Kahului airport and Maalaea Harbor. Want to show support but short on time? Check the need/wish list on their website.

LEAVE YOUR FEEDBACK ON OUR YELP PAGE.

<http://www.yelp.com/biz/willamette-international-travel-portland>

# Viking River/Ocean Cruises

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*Recently Erik Kilgore and Jared Pierce, Nancy's clients, went on a Viking Ocean Cruise from Greenwich London to Bergen. Erik has been cruising since childhood; he has been on Cunard, Royal Viking, NCL, Hurtigruten, Lindblad and now Viking Ocean. He said it was his favorite so far!*

*Throughout his cruise Erik update dNancy with a lot of good information not only about the cruise, but general life aboard the ship and suggestions to pass onto other clients to help make their Viking trip a more enjoyable one. Thank you, Erik, for allowing us to pass on your amazing insights to our clients.*

## **Itinerary**

Transfer from Heathrow went flawlessly; 90-minute bus ride. Guide on board the bus pointed out the history of the neighborhoods we passed through. There was a bit of a walk from where the bus dropped us to the ship but the check in was fast and effortless. We did have to take a launch out to the ship docked in the Thames, this was unexpected and was a bumpy ride! Warn clients who may be susceptible to seasickness. Luggage went in a separate vehicle and was delivered to our cabin just 2 hours after our arrival.

Overnight on board, docked in Greenwich. We ended up wandering Greenwich, the pier is next to the Cutty Sark Museum, there is an open-air market, and the Observatory. Greenwich is a very cute town. If we had more time, we could have taken a fast train out of Docklands Rail station into Central London-station is about a 100-yard walk from where the ship's tenders dock. We sailed from Greenwich in the afternoon of our second day after mandatory lifeboat drill.

We loved Edinburgh, and had a great day in the Orkney Islands, where the weather was warmish & sunny. Walking tour from Yesneby to Skara Brae was well organized and very scenic. Next the Faroe Islands where we took a boat trip to Vestmanna Cliffs. Scenery was stunning but weather was cold and rainy and the seas choppy. Maybe think to take sea sickness pills or patches. Also, on this itinerary rain gear a must, as well as a warm jacket. Highly recommend packing light weight gloves and a wool hat.

**Lofoten Islands.** I went on a hike, while Jared and his Mom did the horseback riding excursion. Be warned there is a weight limit of 110kg (approximately 240 lbs) and this is not listed in any of the literature. For me the hike was beautiful along a gravel road for 3 miles, then down a semi-steep and muddy path. Total was 5 to 6 miles. Several of the guests brought walking sticks, which would have help greatly. I wore my sneakers which worked well.

**Kayaking excursions.** Neither the Tour Operator or Viking provided any protective wet gear. Fortunately, I had rain pants but wish I had taken waterproof shoes. Do tell anyone booking a kayak trip to make sure they have the right clothing packed.

General time in port allows one to do an excursion, but then you have limited time to explore and shop before or after the excursion. Had no time to exchange money, no bank machines at the ports. We tipped our guides in US dollars, which did not seem to be an issue. Stores and coffee shops would take Visa or MasterCard, but few took American Express or Discover Card.

## **Viking headsets**

These are provided in each cabin to use on excursions. We found one ear phone works well, but can conflict with hearing aids. Over-the-ear headphones (Bose noise cancelling ones or similar) can plug into the Quiet VOX. These worked well so perhaps for guests with hearing aids this is the way to go.

## **Life on board**

Internet very slow but functional for emails, WhatsApp, and simple internet searches. No way to stream videos or skype. However, it is free. Do not try to download any apps.

Please tell people to pay attention to the daily planner delivered to your cabin: the meal times do shift especially the morning buffet breakfast. Also, very good gym on board, all new equipment, no reason not to stay in shape!

If you like artificial sweeteners, take some with you. Earlier in the cruise there were none on board, but did appear later.

There are washer/dryer combos on each floor. They do get busy during the day, but it is open 24 hours.

Dining – they had some trouble with the reservations at the specialty restaurants; a bit frustrating but not a big deal in the grand scheme of things.

Dress – Pretty casual. At breakfast guests were in their workout clothes. Dinner a little dressier – especially in the specialty restaurants where they request men wear a collared shirt and no jeans. I had packed only sneakers but was not turned away! Buffets were always casual.

One evening we ate at the Italian Restaurant and the consensus was that although very good, we preferred the Chef's Table menu. These specialty restaurants book up very fast on sea-days, best book them as early as possible. You can also check for reservations using the Viking App once on board.

The ship is always kept at a comfortable temperature and you can adjust your cabin's temperature.

The Sun never set on our cruise, fairly light all night. Viking have light blocking shades but they do not seal out all of the light. Take eye shades especially if one needs darkness to sleep. Rooms were very quiet, and we never heard our neighbors.

Truly a very relaxing ship, with classical music played each evening in the Atrium.

# Willamette Escorted Tours

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## *Kenya - September 2019*

Below is the main safari starting with arrival into Nairobi on 13 September. There is an extension of 4 nights prior to September 13 which includes 3 nights at Ithumba Camp, the area where Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage gradually releases the orphans back into the wild.

PLEASE CALL CHRISTINA TO DISCUSS BOTH THE SAFARI AND THE ITHUMBA EXTENSION. The initial response to the short blurb in our last newsletter has been overwhelming and both this safari and Ithumba may be sold out by the time you receive this newsletter. Do call right away if you have any interest at all.

Date/Day	Activities/Travel
Sept. 13	<b>Arrival into Nairobi Kenya.</b> House of Waine for 2 nights. All meals included. Transfer from airport to House of Waine located in the suburb of Karen.
Sept. 14	<b>Day of touring.</b> Breakfast at the hotel. Touring today will include Karen Blixen Museum; Giraffe Center, Kazuri Beads ending up at 5 p.m. at Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage for the sponsors visit. All meals included.
Sept. 15	<b>To Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.</b> We will drive 6 hours north to Lewa via Nanyuki, across the equator over the shoulder of Mt. Kenya. Fresh trout lunch before arriving at Lew Safari Camp.
Sept. 16	<b>Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.</b> Full day game viewing in Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, where we should see rhinos and Grevy's Zebras, of which 10% of both species can be found on the conservancy. All meals included.
Sept. 17	<b>Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.</b> During one of or 2 full days in Lewa we will make a visit to a school where Christina & John have supported a teacher and now supporting the librarian after a group in Canada had a library built for the school. All meals included.
Sept. 18	<b>Samburu Game Reserve.</b> A short 2 hour drive to Samburu Game reserve where we will spend 2 night at one of our favorite camps: Elephant Bedroom Camp. All meals are included LDBB.
Sept. 19	<b>Samburu Game Reserve.</b> Full day to explore this magnificently beautiful reserve. We should encounter good herds of elephant, Reticulated Giraffe, Somali Ostrich, Gerenuk, Guenther's Dik-Dik and the Beisay Oryx, a very shy animal.
Sept. 20	<b>Masai Mara Game Reserve.</b> Our Origin guides will leave us afternoon of the 19th and drive to the Mara to meet up with us in time for dinner this evening. Staff at Elephant's Bedroom will take us to the air strip for our 90 minute flight to the Mara. On arrival staff at Kichwa Tembo Camp will meet up and drive us the short distance to the camp in time for lunch. All meals included.
Sept. 21	<b>Masai Mara Game Reserve.</b> With our Origin's safari guides we will head out to see if we can find the migration, this is the reason we are splitting our time between the 2 areas, and 2 camps, giving us maximum opportunity to see the migration.
Sept. 22	<b>To Mara Ngenche Camp – Masai Mara Game Reserve.</b> We will take picnic lunches with us so we can spent the day exploring the vast Mara/Seregeti eco-system arriving at Mara Ngenche Camp in the afternoon in time for pre-dinner drinks. All meals included, and the Chef at this camp is truly incredible.
Sept. 23–25	<b>Mara Ngenche Camp – Masai Mara Game Reserve.</b> 3 full days to explore out from Mara Ngenche Camp, which will give us great opportunity to find the migration as well as the lions that follow these herds. It is great feeding time for the cats of the Mara.
Sept. 26	<b>Return to Karen/Nairobi.</b> Early morning game drive is possible. Then our Origin guides will drop us at the air strip for the 11:00a.m. flight back to Wilson Field, Karen where the Nairobi staff will meet us and transfer us to House of Waine in time for lunch. Day rooms are confirmed at House of Waine. Evening transfer to Nairobi International Airport for flights back to the USA.

# Willamette Escorted Tours

## *Ultimate Namibia - August 2019*

Date/Day	Activities/Travel
August 21	Arrival into Walvis Bay — transfer to Swakopmund for 2 nights
August 22	Marine Cruise out of Walvis Bay an idea way of seeing Cape fur seals, Heaviside and bottlenose dolphins, pelicans, flamingos. Seafood lunch on board. Afternoon explore the Sandwich Harbor Sand Dunes by 4WD vehicles.
August 23	By private plane to Kaokoland where we will spend 3 nights at the amazing Hoanib Valley camp. <a href="http://www.naturalselection.travel/camp/hoanib-valley-camp">www.naturalselection.travel/camp/hoanib-valley-camp</a>
August 24-25	During our time in picturesque Kaokoland we will visit the remote Himba Tribe. With the camp guides we will head out on game drives searching for desert-adapted wildlife, including the elephant and maybe even the desert lion!
August 26-27	Private flight to Etosha National Park, Southern boundary, where our Ultimate safari guides will meet us. Two nights at Anderssons Tented Camp. Both in 2015 and 2018 we were lucky enough to see rhinos in this part of the park.
August 28-30	Drive to Eastern Etosha National Park stopping at watering holes along the way. We will be spending 3 nights at Onguma The Fort, <a href="http://www.onguma.com">www.onguma.com</a> an amazing property. We will be able to have “Zen” time day during our stay when we can take advantage of the amazing facilities, or just sit out on our large decks overlooking the camp watering hole. Game drives will be included on all days.
August 31-Sept. 1	Drive to Mahango Game Park, part of the Zambezi region of Namibia. The next 7 days will be a total contrast to the scenery we have experience during our first 10 days. This is our one long day of driving — it will be around 6 hours but on good paved roads. 2 nights at Divava Okavango Lodge. It was magical to wake up take our coffee out onto the deck and find the river shrouded in mist.
September 2	From Mahango Game Park to Bwabwata National Park, were we will spend 2 nights at the Nambwa Tented Lodge, located on the banks of the Kwando River. Although we heard a leopard on our last visit, we did not see it. We were fortunate to see wild dogs close to our camp. <a href="http://www.nambwalodge.com">www.nambwalodge.com</a>
September 4	From Bwabwata National Park to Chobe National Park, we cross onto the Botswana side but then re-enter the Namibian side where our tented camp, Ichingo Chobe River Lodge is nestled on Impalila Island along the banks of the Chobe River. There are water activities from this camp, including excursions through the beautiful Kasai Channel to see the mighty Zambezi River.
September 6	Time to say goodbye to Namibia, a vast country over twice the size of California, but with a population of only 2 million. An ageless land, with a heritage of rock art created by stone-age artists. The climate is typical of semi-desert country. Days are warm to hot and nights are generally cool. August is peak season for a safari; game viewing should be at its best. Our trip has amazing contrast in scenery. Kaokoland is one of the most remote, wild and marvelously unique areas of Namibia. It is a land characterized by rolling dunes, rocky mountains and desert plains all crisscrossed by ancient, dry riverbeds. Etosha National Park is large enough to be classified as a saline desert, it lies in the Owambo Basin, on the north-western edge of the Namibian Kahahari. The Caprivi Strip and the Zambezi region are in sharp contrast to these two other areas. Riverine forests, broad flood plain, magnificent baobabs, the bird watching in this region is spectacular. In 2013 and again this year, we all kept saying “Is this Really Africa”!
September 6	Group will be dropped off at Kasane Airport in time to make the 2.00p flight to Johannesburg and on to where-ever! Or if you wish to extend to Victoria Falls we can arrange for a transfer directly to the wonderful Victoria Falls Hotel, our favorite hotel. If your travels have already included Victoria Falls, we can organize a transfer to Livingstone and the exceptional resort Tongabezi Lodge. Opportunities are endless before and after the Namibia trip.

CALL CHRISTINA TO DISCUSS. At this time 5 spots have been taken. We have room for 10 plus John and Christina.

# Willamette Escorted Tours

## Tanzania - February 2019

Escorts will be Christina & John Cooper • Restricted to 10 plus John & Christina • Maximum of 12 in 2 safari vehicles.  
Call Christina to send you the full package, and discuss with you air routings, extensions either before or after the safari.

**ONLY 5 SPOTS LEFT!**

Date/Day	Accommodation/Location	Activities/Travel
Feb 21 - Day 1	Arusha Coffee Lodge- HB www.elewana.com	Meet/greet at JRO and transfer to Arusha Coffee Lodge
Feb 22 - Day 2	Arusha Coffee Lodge; all meals.	Day of rest and other clients might only arrive sometime today. We will arrange for a tour of St. Jude's school in Arusha.
Feb 23 - Day 3	Kuria Hills Northern Serengeti www.lemala.com All meals	Short transfer to Arusha airport and fly ARK-KOG in northern Serengeti. Big herds are not present but cats are more active in this area hunting in day as well as night. In both February 2017 and 2018, clients had close encounters with a leopard, cheetah and lion.
Feb 24 - Day 4	Kuria Hills; all meals	Game drives
Feb 25 - Day 5	Central Serengeti www.karibucampcollection.com All meals	Game drive to central Serengeti – Sametu is a wonderful small bush camp that we have used for the last decade. It's remote location allows for game viewing without many other vehicles (if any) present.
Feb 26 - Day 6	Sametu; all meals	Game drives
Feb 27 - Day 7	Sametu; all meals	Game drives. DINNER UNDER THE STARS tonight
Feb 28 - Day 8	Woodlands Camp at Naabi Southern Serengeti All meals	Game drive through the Gol Kopjes and either to Woodlands Camp at Naabi Hill or Lake Ndotu Luxury Lodge. Double permits on all nights in the southern Serengeti so you can game drive both NCA border and Serengeti National Park.
Mar 1 - Day 9	Lake Ndotu Luxury or Woodlands at Naabi Southern Serengeti	Game drives; In 2017 the large herds were all within this area, including the Hidden Valley, where our Unique guides will take us one of these 2 days. It is a long drive so we will take picnic lunches. The long drive is worth it!
Mar 2 - Day 10	Lake Ndotu Luxury or Woodlands at Naabi Southern Serengeti	Game drives
Mar 3 - Day 11	Lions Paw Camp Ngorongoro Crater www.karibucampcollection.com	Drive to Crater stopping at Olduvai. Cut down through the Crater for game drive and to Lions Paw Camp. We will arrive at the crater mid afternoon, when many visitors are leaving the crater, so we will have a very enjoyable ride through the crater before arriving at our small bush camp.
Mar 4 - Day 12	Lions Paw Camp	Early morning game drive. Return to Lions Paw for hot lunch and afternoon game drive, avoiding the midday crowds. In 2017 we were very fortunate to witness the birth of several wildebeest.
Mar 5 - Day 13	Gibbs Farm Karatu area www.gibbsfarm.com	Drive through Crater Highlands and to Gibbs Farm arriving for hot buffet lunch. Afternoon free, so you'll be able to go on walks through the wonderful gardens and coffee plantation of Gibbs Farm or venture to the local township of Karatu, and visited the local woodcarver. Or you can just hang out at this amazing place, catching up on your journal, reading a book. It truly is a great ending to a safari.
Mar 6 - Day 14	Gibbs Farm	Free day at Gibbs Farm to participate in any of the activities that are offered.
Mar 7 - Day 15	Depart	Lunch at Gibbs. Depart for Kilimanjaro airport for flights back to the USA.

# Travel Tips

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*If you already subscribe to our blog this may be redundant. Wailana, who was an employee before moving to Iceland, then Sweden and now moving to Tallinn, created this blog a few months ago and we feel the information is worth sharing with all:*

**MOOVIT:** Mootvit is a subway/transit guide with live time updates. With schedules and maps of 80+ countries worldwide, this is the perfect app to survive the wild chaos of London, Edinburgh, Sydney, Athens and more.

**Citymaps2go:** Sometimes you don't have the luxury of an overseas data plan. Or maybe you just want to get offline for the day. Citimaps2go offers offline maps to navigate those tricky streets, even when you don't have a reliable connection.

**XE Currency Converter:** For years, XE has been a favorite resource for international travelers. It converts USD to every single currency in a second — necessary for those haggling markets or souvenir shops.

**Aurora Forecast:** Northbound? If your winter travels take you to the poles, don't miss your chance at one of the greatest sights in the world — the aurora. This forecast app is a definitive resource in predicting aurora sightings.

**WhatsApp or Skype:** If you want to stay in touch with back home, either of these applications are a must. Skype is great for voice or audio connections, whereas WhatsApp delivers the message straight to your loved ones' phones.

**WIT Agent Tip!:** WhatsApp can also make phone calls — just be sure to download the app on your phone while your USA SIM card is installed. The number you register the app in, stays with the app, regardless of what foreign SIM card you use later on. This is also the number the app will send a message to for verification.

**Google Translate:** Carry a virtual translator wherever you go. It has many added benefits, like a downloadable option so you have the language dictionary always at your fingertips, even offline. With some languages, you can even hold the camera over text in the real world, and the app translates it for you. It can even translate (with varying success) complex writing systems like Japanese Kanji.

## **Last minute Wimbledon tickets; Giving through The Championships**

The Championships present a unique opportunity for the Wimbledon Foundation to support a range of charitable activities. Wimbledon's well-established and unique Ticket Resale Scheme, whereby tickets no longer required by spectators leaving the Show Courts are re-sold to other spectators, raised £346,00 in 2017 including match funding from HSBC, official banking partner of The Championships. The proceeds are distributed to charities and community

organisations by the Wimbledon Foundation. [https://www.wimbledon.com/en\\_GB/wimbledonfoundation/giving.html](https://www.wimbledon.com/en_GB/wimbledonfoundation/giving.html)

## **GOVERNMENT TRAVEL WARNINGS**

We have recommend that you read not only the warnings issued by the US Government, but that you also read warnings for the same countries issued by the U.K., Canada and Australia. They are often very different. It is also interesting to see what other countries are saying about travel to the USA. Here is one that was issued recently by the Chinese Government regarding travel to the USA

### **“China Issues Travel Warning For US Over Poor Public Security”**

Travelwirenews reports China has issued a new travel warning for Chinese nationals traveling to the United States, citing concerns about rising public insecurity in America. China's Embassy in Washington warned Chinese tourists to be vigilant over such matters as expensive medical bills, the threats of public shootings and robberies, searches and seizures by customs agents, telecommunications fraud, and natural disasters. Except for the warning about the risk of natural disasters, the alert was similar to one posted in January on the embassy's website. The warning comes amid escalating trade tensions between the two countries. Meanwhile, China's Foreign Ministry ruled out that the timing of the travel warning had been politically motivated, saying that the summer was the high season for the Chinese traveling to the US, and that Chinese embassies had an obligation to warn citizens about potential risks abroad.

## **TRACKING YOUR MAIL**

Annie Scott shared with Pam Davis this link on how to track mail you are expecting: Here is the USPS service to see your day's mail. It is called Informed Delivery. <https://informeddelivery.usps.com/box/pages/intro/start.action>.

## **10 SAFEST COUNTRIES TO VISIT**

The Institute for Economics and Peace has released its Global Peace Index for 2018, an annual ranking of the world's safest countries. Overall, the study found, the world is 0.27 percent less peaceful today than it was at this time last year. In fact, according to the institute, the world is the least peaceful it has been in the past ten years (probably not surprising for anyone who follows the news). But while world peace has fluctuated over time, one fact has remained constant: the safest country to visit for the last decade: Iceland.

### **Here is the list of the 10 safest countries:**

10 Ireland; 9 Japan; 8 Singapore ; 7 Czech Republic; 6 Canada; 5 Denmark; 4 Portugal; 3 Austria; 2 New Zealand; Number 1 For The Last Decade = Iceland.

# Client Reports

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## TRIP TO GREECE

**April 25 - May 16 | Linda Craig and Kahler Martinson**

Kahler and I signed up for a birding trip in Greece sponsored by Audubon Society of Portland from Saturday April 28 through May 12. We asked your help to plan the trip around this Audubon tour to make our travel more comfortable and to give us a few more days to experience Greece. For the most part, you succeeded beautifully!

We flew from Portland to New York, where we boarded an overnight flight to Athens, leaving 5 p.m. and arriving Athens at 9:45 a.m. This was a cramped, uncomfortable flight. The plane had so little room under the seat ahead of us that our small backpacks wouldn't fit, and they wouldn't allow us to put them in overhead bins because they weren't roller bags. The rest of our long distance flights were much more comfortable.

You had arranged for us to be met at the Athens airport for travel to our hotel, which we appreciated. You booked us into the Melia Athens, for two nights before we joined our Audubon tour. We liked this hotel very much. They let us check in early. Our room was nice and large for an inner-city European hotel. The location was great, just two blocks from the Archeology Museum and three blocks from Omonia Square. The Square was a busy transfer location with good restaurants, a subway stop, and the Hop On-Hop Off bus.

On Saturday, we took a cab to the hotel that Audubon was using near the airport, and traveled by van and plane with Audubon for the next 14 days. We birded near Athens for a day and then drove to Delphi, staying at Hotel Acropole for three nights. We birded on Mt. Parnassus and in the olive groves near Delphi and visited the archeological site. Then we returned to Athens to fly to Alexandroupoli. We stayed at Hotel Erika there for four nights and experienced wonderful birds in the Evros river delta area on the Turkey/Greece border. Next we drove to Fanari and stayed at our favorite hotel of the trip, Petrinos Lofos. It is a small hotel in a rural area, owned and operated by a married couple, with wonderful home-cooked food.

Our next stop was the birding highlight of the trip. Lake Kerkini, in north-central Greece, is the nesting area for thousands of cormorants, pelicans, and several kinds of herons. We were treated to a spectacular boat trip through the nesting islands. Our lodging was a pretty hotel, Villa Belles, at the little village of Akritochori. We recommend the hotel and this location for spring-time birding.

Back in Athens, we stayed at the Adam's Hotel. It was a pleasant hotel, just a short walk from the Acropolis. The area was very touristy, but had great restaurants and lots of shopping. After visiting the Acropolis, the Audubon tour was over.

Kahler and I flew the next day to Paros and stayed at the St. Andrea Resort. It had a nice pool and restaurant and was

great for a relaxing stop after all of that hectic travel on the birding trip. The only complaint we had about the place was feeling a little isolated. One can't walk from St. Andrea to other restaurants or beaches without walking on a busy highway, and we didn't rent a car. We did take a public bus into the nearby capital and main port of Paros, Parakia, and were delighted with the little back streets and charming shops and restaurants.

On our return, you booked a flight from Athens to Amsterdam where we stayed overnight at the Sheraton Amsterdam Airport hotel. This very nice hotel connected by a covered walkway out of the airport... couldn't be more convenient.

Both return flights (Athens to Amsterdam and Amsterdam to Portland) were in the Delta Comfort section with plenty of leg room and luggage space.

Overall, the trip was great and everything worked smoothly. Thanks, Christina, for doing such a terrific job! Let us know if you have any questions about our experiences.

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## VIKING OCEAN CRUISE TO CUBA

**Dec. 2018 | Susan & Milton Parker | Agent Barbara Baumer**

We are safely returned from our Cuban, Texas excursion. All your hard work was rewarded. No glitches, airline seats were perfect, Cuba was fascinating, the ship was really wonderful and the weather, except for one day, was awful (not your fault!)

It was a strange trip in that our first itinerary included Belize and Cozumel; then the ship was not allowed to dock in Havana so we ended up in Cienfuegos. We did not go on the tours there. I Key West was on the itinerary and we had booked the boat tour over the reef. The weather was bad and the captain said he couldn't anchor. So no Key West. The best part of this story is Havana. We booked the overnight tour which was terrific in part because our guide and bus driver were terrific. The historians on the ship had prepared us with excellent history lectures and our guide filled in with "real life" remarks.

You may remember I had asked you about exchanging dollars for Cuban pesos. Apparently the regime has a dual financial system that is fairly recent. One peso, the CUC, is equivalent to the US dollar so the dollar is accepted as currency usually with a small markup. The old Cuban peso is what workers are paid and is worth much less than the CUC. Entrepreneurial folks who have something to sell tourists manage pretty well. Teachers, doctors, government workers, however, are paid with the Cuban peso. It's a big social problem.

One could be stranded in the Dallas/Fort Worth airport configuration for a very long time. It's huge. We waited an hour and a half to get our luggage because it had been delivered to Terminal D and we were in Terminal C. All in all the trip was enjoyable and we were glad we went to Cuba and to Texas.

# Staff Reports

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## LINDBLAD CRUISES – 6 NIGHT ALASKA CRUISE

### Gavi Piper

*Gavi took her first venture into Alaska end of May flying to Sitka to board a Lindblad Cruise — also her first small ship adventure cruise.*

### SITKA: Classic small Alaskan town

Town consists of a main street (several galleries, an organic creperie, a coffee shop and an outdoor store for the 1%), a Russian orthodox church, thousands of fishing boats and two seedy bars lined with thousands of photos in uniform frames, filled with smoke so thick you can barely see your hand. Lots of chintzy souvenir galleries—save your shopping for Juneau!

**Totem Park:** worth a visit. About 10/15 minutes' walk from the town center, and the same distance from the raptor center. Beautiful forest filled with totem poles relocated from across the PNW coast for the sake of cultural preservation.

**Raptor center:** one of the best rehab centers I've ever seen. Somewhat of a symbiotic relationship with the tourism in town — it thrives because it's able to charge admission to cover costs of an incredible operation. Open-topped enclosures for birds unable to fly, so big you have to search to find eagles. Educational and hospital facilities, no euthanasia.

## LINDBLAD

### Activities and Excursions

**On-board Activities:** morning stretching and yoga, evening lectures according to where you are, including: marine mammal behavior and current research, history of fur trading in the region, geological formation of the area, intro to photography with breakout sessions (highly recommended), and Native American totem poles of the Pacific Coast.

**Excursions:** have a variety every day, catered toward different physical levels.

- Short, medium and long hikes
- Paddleboarding, Kayaking or Zodiac tours
- Hiking, Kayaking or Zodiak tours
- Hiking, cultural visit with river float, town time or flightseeing

Excursions may be limited by any of the following: wilderness restrictions, wildlife (boats not allowed in areas where seals are pupping), accessibility (established trails vs exploring with no trail), ability of the “slowest” person.

Clothing: lots of warm layers (including gloves, hats, scarf): any day in Alaska can be cold, windy and rainy. Zodiac tours can be a long activity, totally exposed with no movement, so you can get cold fast. I would say three pairs of shoes: sturdy,

knee-high rubber boots (required), tennis shoes, and “camp shoes” for on the boat. (in case your tennis shoes get wet.) I also recommend a waterproof cover for a daypack.

**Excursions in town:** entrance is covered to museums, raptor center (Sitka), cable car (Juneau), and (in Haines) a couple of drinks are covered at local distilleries. All activities in the port day (rafting, cycling, flightseeing) were covered. There's a size limit on all activities—sign up was sent out before the trip, but verification happened the first night with an option to discuss with expedition leader.

**Drinks:** Unlimited free cappuccinos/espressos/lattes. Beer on an honor system tally sheet that gets added to your account.

While alcohol drinks are not free, there were at least three meals with complimentary beer or wine: first night's dinner, second day's lunch, last night's dinner. There were also two other occasions when alcohol was given out:

1. We returned from a cold zodiac tour and the bartender was waiting at the sign-in board with a vat of apple cider and your choice of Captain Morgan or... some other liquor.

2. Half way through the zodiac tour to the glacier, another zodiac full of crew dressed as Vikings “raided” our boat and distributed hot chocolate with a choice of alcohols, and whip.

**Kids:** In order to be kid-friendly, you will really need to have kids booked on a program with a kids' program naturalist on board. Itineraries with this component include almost every Alaska cruise (call to double-check fringe-season) and every Galapagos cruise. If a kid is uninterested in an activity and wishes to stay on the boat, a parent must accompany them. Activities are not generally geared toward kids on trips without a kid naturalist (ex: evening lectures rather than entertainment with other companies).

**Boats:** Both the Sea Lion and Sea Bird just spent a while being retrofitted. The Sea Lion has seen a bit more use since it goes all the way down to Central America during the winter rather than just to Baja.

**Cabins:** Comfiest beds ever. Small “cozy” cabins but to be expected as it's a yacht-style boat. About half the space beneath the bed is open storage and the other half of the bed has a drawer that pulls out. There is also a cabinet with several hangers and a shelf.

The bathroom is just big enough for a stand-up shower and toilet, but there is a curtain that can be pulled so the toilet stays dry. A small clothesline is provided in the bathroom, but it would wise to bring another longer one (there is no electrical dryer on board).

**Food:** Locally and ecologically sourced. It takes a while for the main course to come since it's made to order in the evening,

# Staff Reports

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on a boat. Buffet breakfast, buffet lunch, “formal” dinner. Tons of options and variety for breakfast and lunch. Dinner has three protein choices that change daily. Beautiful food and appropriate portion sizes so waste is avoided.

Snacks available throughout the day at the bar, free of charge. Appetizers put out at 6:00 pm every day in the lounge during recap.

## **JUNEAU: Officially home to the USA’s 50th-most-attractive state capitol building**

Cable car is great on a clear day. Maybe a five-minute ride up and down with views down the channel, and a few trails at the top.

Most “galleries” in town are maintained by cruise companies. Two or three are worth visiting:

- Mt. Juneau Trading Post: Family trading post maintained for generations by a Tlingit family. Old and new art from all over the Northwest coast, ranging from \$5 to the sky.
- Trickster: Northwest art designed and applied to modern purposes: skateboards, home décor, jewelry, apparel, etc.

The Westmark Hotel (recommended by Lindblad) is located a couple blocks from gallery streets.

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## **VIKING LYON AND PROVENCE**

**May 6-13, 2018 | Agent Barbara Baumer**

The Viking ship was docked in a central part of Lyon, walking distance to old town Lyon, and a long (probably 5K) walk to the confluences of the Rhone and Soane Rivers. The ship stays in Lyon for 2 days. Viking offers an “active” walking tour of old town Lyon for an additional cost, we had some great experiences on this excursion — we were taken to a small silk shop where a young guy and his father still make silk using old fashioned looms, which use punch cards to make the pattern. Some pictures on the walls of the shop looked like black and white drawings, but were actually silk designs. We also got to ride the funicular to the top of the hill above Lyon. The views were amazing, and on our walk down the hill we saw an old amphitheater still used for presentations and productions.

We also took an optional tour to Château de Fléchères, an older mansion that is being restored by two people who purchased it over 20 years ago. When they removed some of the wood paneling, they found frescoes behind the wall paneling!

Viking also offers an optional trip to Perouges, a medieval walled town perched on top of a hill not too far from Lyon, with cobblestone streets and beautiful old stone houses. Here we were given a taste of the local food — galettes de Pérouges, sugar coated goodie on a thin pizza like crust.

On Tuesday afternoon we finally set sail! Next stop is Vienne — originally settled by the Romans — again there is a choice between leisurely or active walking tour. In the afternoon, we experienced our first set of locks on the Rhone river!

During our stop in Tournon we were taken on a steam train ride of the Doux Valley. That evening we stopped in Viviers and had an evening walking tour of the town, it was dark and the town had many small lights, it was one of the more unique experiences we had, to top it off our guide lived in Viviers so she gave us many insights.

Friday, we arrived in the walled town of Avignon. There is so much history here, our tour included a stop at the “Pont d’ Avignon”; many of us learned the children’s song in French class! Viking’s optional excursion to Pont du Gard Aqueduct is very interesting, a huge structure built over 2,000 years ago without mortar, and still standing!

Our last stop was in Arles, where Spain’s influence is still visible as this town still has bull fights, we also saw the famous yellow café where Van Gogh spent time.

Overall, we quite enjoyed our trip. Viking’s Long Ships are very comfortable, meals were good, staff is good, cabins are well set up with lots of storage. There was a good combination active time and time to relax. We had very good weather which made the trip even more enjoyable. We were able to enjoy breakfast and lunch on the Aquavit Terrace, Vikings outdoor dining area.

After our Viking cruise we made a short stop in Berlin, we found this to be a very interesting city, highlights were the historical walking tour which included a stop at Check Point Charlie, Brandenburg Gate, Hitlers bunker, Museum Island, Berlin Television Tower, Jewish War memorial and The Wall Museum which gives you a feeling of what it was like in Berlin before the wall came down. The Welcome Berlin card was included when we purchased our ticket on the airbus to town, it came in quite handy, giving us discounts at some of the museums we visited.

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Return Service Requested

## *What you say...*

### **Delta Vacation package and Holland America cruise to North Cape Chester and Darcie Benson Agent Pam Davis | May 2019**

We got back from our trip to Norway and London a few days ago, and I wanted to let you know we had a wonderful time and over all we were very happy with it. We definitely will be visiting England again – it's one of our favorite places – and we plan to cruise more too. I thought you might find useful some of our comments and suggestions about some aspects of the trip.

(Delta business class package was used for the air and hotel in Amsterdam. The Benson's did have some issues with the Renaissance Hotel in Amsterdam, and Pam has taken up their concerns with Delta Vacation management).

The cruise to Norway was great. We still like Holland America, 14-day trip was really good: the stops were well chosen and interesting. We ran into a couple of troubles involving shore excursions which we discussed directly with Holland America. The Koningsdam is one of the newer ships and has five specialty restaurants instead of just one. We bought the package that allowed us to try all of them and were glad we did. Every meal was excellent. All of the crew were friendly and efficient, and everyone we dealt with spoke excellent English. Our cabin was a bit small and cramped, especially the bathroom, but it had a lot of storage and it was comfortable. I don't think we would ever

go on a cruise without having a verandah. It was sometimes too cold to sit out there on this trip, but even then, it's nice to have the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Along with the usual things like the London Eye and the Tower, something we would recommend to some of your clients is the Harry Potter experience. Warner Brothers Studios London has created a huge exhibit showing how the Harry Potter movies were made, with lots of explanations of costumes, set construction, art, special effects, etc. It's as good as the best studio tours in southern California, but focused only on Harry Potter, and it's really outstanding.

Thank you for all your help. We're looking forward to traveling more soon!

#### **ANSWERING SERVICE**

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