

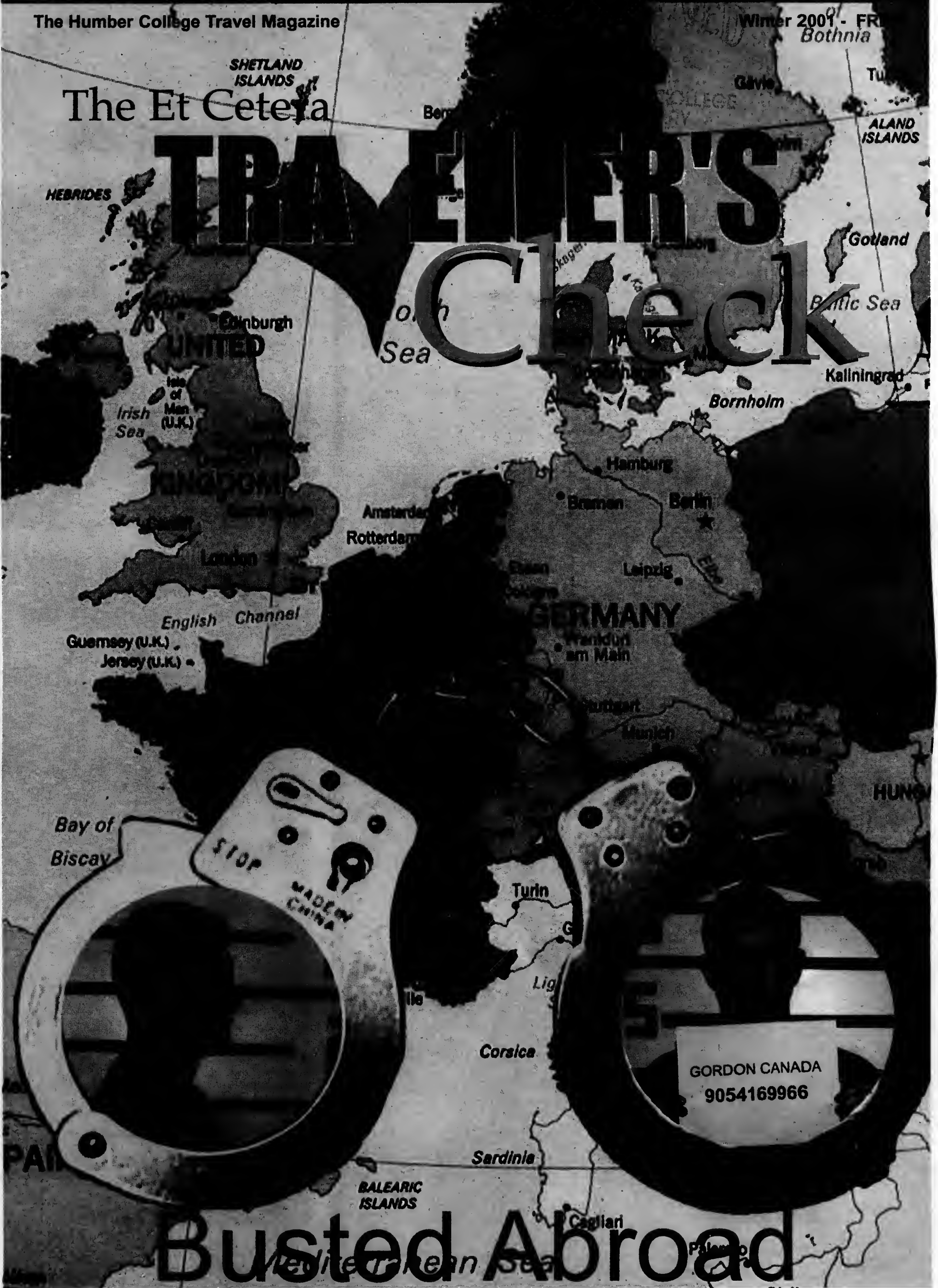
Inside: Flying Critters – Cambodia's killing fields – Beer – Hitchhiking

The Humber College Travel Magazine

Winter 2001 - FR
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TRAVELER'S Check



Busted Abroad

Traveller's Check

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Letter from the editor

Visit any bustling market in the developing world and you'll probably find remnants of western culture. New York Yankees ball caps, compact discs and Coca-Cola have become staple products from Thailand to Russia.

At home, we see the same trend - only reversed. New Age lifestyles, loosely based on Eastern religions have become mainstream. Musical snippets from Latin America and India frequently infuse our popular music.

Armchair travellers can visit exotic destinations from the comfort of their living rooms by tuning on to the Discovery Channel and Lonely Planet travel show. Internet surfers can peek at every corner of the world with the click of a mouse. As a result, a massive meshing of cultures is underway.

With the emergence of instant communication and global news reporting, the world has become a smaller place.

But still, nothing can replace real-life experience.

Toronto, located in the heart of North America's travel hub, offers its citizens the chance to literally fly halfway around the world in less than a day. Those alien-looking countries you see on travel shows are closer than they appear.

Of course, you're going to have to pay for your cultural enlightenment. The airfares, accommodations and other costs associated with venturing abroad scare off many would-be travellers. No way could a student budget allow you to trek to places you've never seen before - right?

Although the initial costs of travelling may seem high, the returns on your investment will last a lifetime. Opening your eyes to the outside world and seeing how the other half lives are truly invaluable experiences.

For a fraction of your post-secondary education costs, you can submerge yourself in a different way of life, meet people of every stripe and learn more about yourself than you ever could in a classroom.

This year's edition of *Traveller's Check* takes you, on paper anyway, to some of those far off places. Our writers guide you through the rain forests of Costa Rica, the killing fields of

Cambodia and the pubs of the Czech Republic.

Hopefully, we can introduce you to some new ideas and different perspectives. But to truly shatter your comfort-zone, you're gonna have to grab your pack, dust off your passport and find your own way. Happy trails.



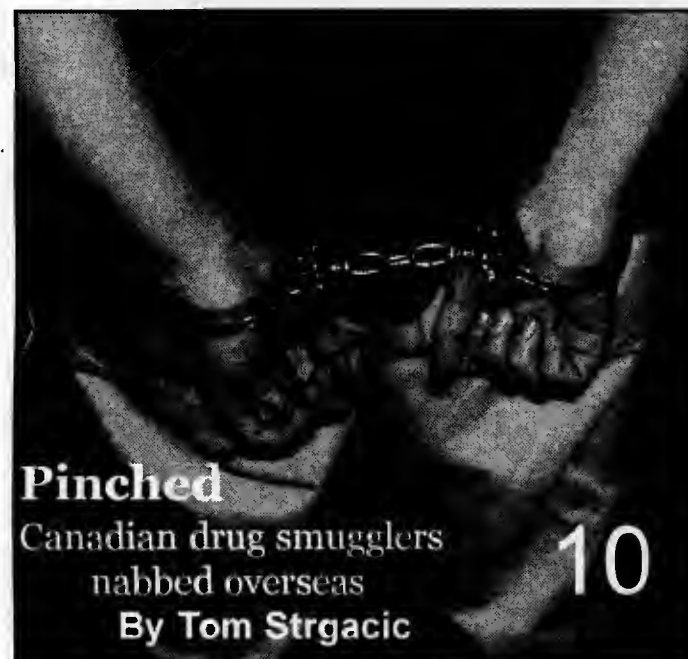
Editor-in-Chief

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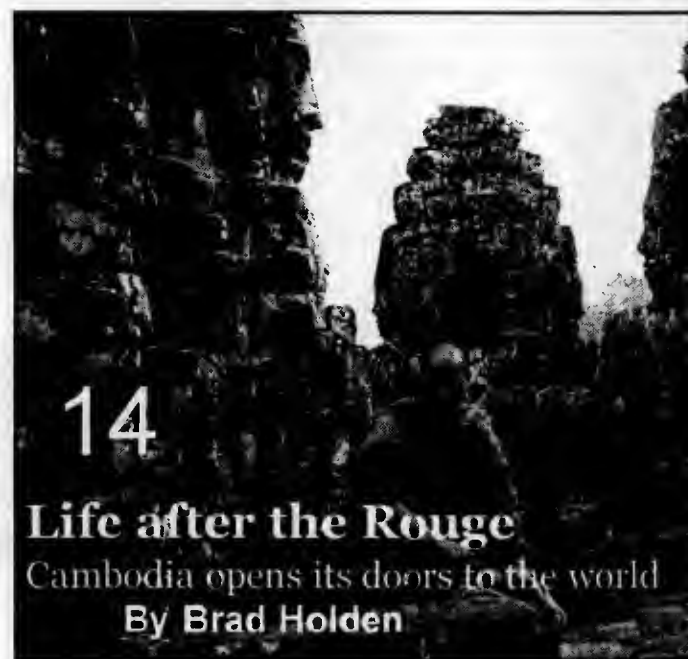


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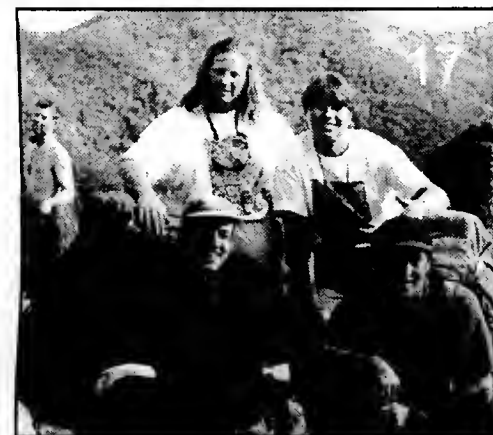
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RULE OF THUMB



By Sean O'Hara

Mexican sunset coming down; three Canadian guys stuck on a stretch of Mexico's highway 15 with no transportation and just the golden rule of "thumb" left.

In the distance, a small Mexican shantytown with a yapping pack of wild dogs and a few stray donkeys. It seems to offer refuge, but shady at that.

Before long a pick-up pulls over and offers them a ride out of the frightening prospect of sleeping on the roadside or in the ramshackle reality just down the road.

Two Mexican men, three Canucks in the back of the pick-up, tequila, a cooler of Corona and speeds of up to 140km down the Mexican West Coast into the sunset. So the Mexicans

turn out to be *Federales* (cops). It's just another Jack Kerouac-type adventure in the making.

"Hitchhiking...restores faith back in humanity."

Matt Jackson

True, Kerouac, who wrote "On the Road" in the carefree sixties, probably wouldn't recognize the hitchhiking landscape four decades on. But he'd take comfort that it is still alive and well – it just happens to be living mostly

outside of security-conscious North America.

Brett Carron, 26, one of the Canadians on that Mexican highway a couple of years ago, knows quite well the ups and downs of this unpredictable form of travelling. The thumb has won him rides throughout Canada, the United States, Mexico and most of Europe.

"I was a little skeptical in Mexico and it was probably a stupid thing to do. But when you need a ride you've got to do what it takes," he recalls ruefully.

In a telephone interview from Ireland, where he is currently crafting furniture for the "Jennie Johnston", a 19th century tall ship, Carron says he's still using his thumb to get to work.

Each morning he hitches to the shipyard, where the replica of an 1844 "coffin" ship, of a

type once used to help millions of immigrant escape the ravages of the Great Potato Blight, is taking shape. The vessel, a project funded by the Canadian and Irish governments, is scheduled to set sail for Toronto sometime in the New Year.

Carron, who hails from Ontario, says the toughest hitchhiking – in terms of simply nailing a ride – has taken place in his own backyard. But that doesn't mean he discourages newcomers to the "art" from raising the thumb in Ontario.

The secret, he says, is to stick to the rural areas, where people are less paranoid and more likely to demonstrate the values of the past.

"I think it's frowned upon now, maybe because in modern times more people have cars and 20 years ago people were more local and willing to help out," he says.

Carron says the easiest place in Canada to get a ride is Salt Spring Island, a fashionably quaint community just off Vancouver. Locals, many of them artists, husband their reputation for being laid-back and, with only one road, there's never any doubt about where a hitchhiker is headed.

His most memorable experience came after waiting with a friend along the Trans-Canada highway, in a thrashing rain, just outside of Edmonton.

"Next thing you know we were tearing down the road in a beat-up '69 Camaro with this guy who looks like [a member of] Motley Crue, and he turns and says 'good I was wondering how I was going to roll a joint and drive this car.'"

Hitchhiking in Canada can be a character-building experience.

"I had to ask myself how could I see not only the physical geography of Canada, but the human geography as well," notes veteran road warrior Matt Jackson.

The 28-year-old freelance journalist from Canmore, Alta, has spent four summers hitching rides across more than over 30,000 kms of Canada. Along the way, he has managed to take 25,000 photographs.

Starting out in 1997, Jackson hitchhiked western Canada, northern Canada [1998], and central Canada [1999], finishing up recently in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Jackson said he was surprised at how much the people in different regions of Canada had in common. He was encouraged to discover that Canadians, despite their surface differences, were



less inclined to regional chauvinism than their cousins to the south.

Currently Jackson is putting the finishing touches to a book that chronicles his hitchhiking experiences across the country. He's also talking to National Geographic magazine about a short piece on his hitchhiking adventures.

"Hitchhiking forces you to make contact with people and it helps restore faith back in humanity," Jackson said.

And while these experiences haven't always been good – he was robbed in Dawson City, Yukon – they've

always been worth re-telling, such as the time he was picked up in southern Saskatchewan by a troop of calvary re-enacting the the North Western Mounted Police's historic march west this summer.

He says he'll to hang up his hitchhiking boots this year for good to concentrate on his magazine freelancing career.

"I'm quite happy never to hitchhike again," Jackson says, laughing. "I'm quite enjoying my car now."

According to Dutch author Daan Toner, who wrote the *Hitchhikers Navigator to Europe*, hitchhiking attitudes in Europe differ from those in [North America].

"I would never hitchhike in the United States again, it's far too dangerous and nobody will give me a ride," Toner

said. "I don't mind hitchhiking in Germany or England, but not over there [North America]."

In his book, Toner, who has thumbed about 100,000 kms, passing through 171 villages, towns and cities across Europe, gives practical tips for beginners. These include maps to follow and locations of the best spots to get picked up. He also provides a list of 83 "lift centres" or drive shares throughout Europe.

Toner says motorway service areas, toll barriers and city boundaries are the best places to thumb rides. He also says that the clichéd image of a pretty mini-skirted woman getting the lift – while the guy gets left in the exhaust fumes – is no

"This guy who looks like Motley Crue...says, '...I was wondering how I was going to roll a joint and drive this car'."

Brett Carron

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I AM TOO CANADIAN.

Is the sewn-on flag becoming threadbare?

By Daniel Russell

"My name is Joe and I am Canadian. I can proudly sew my country's flag on my backpack," goes the now famous Molson Canadian beer ad.

The question is: should you sport the maple leaf before heading abroad?

"For me personally - I like it. I'm proud of my country and for some reason it just seems like the thing to do. You're going overseas, you slap a flag on your backpack," says Chris Moore, a Canadian who has travelled through Europe and Australia with a flag in tow.

Back in the early seventies it was very important for Canadians to be distinguished from Americans because of anti-American sentiments that existed throughout much of the world. Wearing the maple leaf identified Canadian travellers as citizens of a peace-loving country as opposed to arrogant, self-righteous-travellers from a country involved in a full-scale war in Vietnam.

The wide gap in treatment saw some Americans put a Canadian flag on their backpack just to take advantage of the privileged status, so the story goes.

"We're definitely number one when it comes to wearing flags," says Kent Phillips, a seasoned traveller and assistant manager at the Travel Shop in Edmonton.

American backpacker David Van Ryper is puzzled by the trend.

"I still can't figure out how everyone knows to sew a flag on their backpack," he muses. "There seems to be very few ways for Canada to express itself on an international stage and this is one opportunity that the country has to do so," he figures.

Phillips points to the recent Molson "I am Canadian" ad campaign as a reflection of the trend.

"I think [beer commercials] are great marketing tools but I don't think they are great advertising for being a Canadian," Phillips says. "I have found certain Canadians to be very obnoxious about it. I was almost embarrassed at times."

A backlash to the trend now exists.

"I've noticed slight changes in attitudes towards Canadians. There are certain negative attitudes coming out about us," the Edmontonian says.

Moore agrees, "I think there will always be people

who take things too far."

Van Ryper says he's unlikely to approach a fellow traveller because they're wearing a flag.

"It really didn't make a difference to me. In the whole travelling ethos you kind of talk to who you want to talk to, no-matter where they are from," he says.

Moore offers a different perspective.

"As far as the social thing goes, when you're travelling, meeting people for me is one of the highlights. So when I see someone with a flag on their back I can say 'hey, where are you from?' From there you have an automatic starting point for conversation."

However, both Van Ryper and Phillips agree there are still some countries in the world that are very hostile towards Americans and it's safer to be identified as a Canadian in those places.

Travellers should remember that sewing even a little flag on a backpack makes a big statement. The symbol allows others to judge Canadians without speaking to them, warns Phillips.

"There's a difference between being known as a Canadian and being known as a flag waving, over-the-top [traveller], where the maple leaf is on every single piece of clothing."

Shoestring Travel Economic realities of backpacking

By Tina Birak

Shoestring travel - Europe on \$10-a-day, is a notion of the past. Today, backpacking is often a rich man's game.

Since the early '70s, backpackers have been viewed as young nomadic travellers, riding trains and hitchhiking their way across the land on a "shoestring" budget.

But times are changing, says veteran backpacker Craig Howie.

Howie has been trekking around the world since age 17. Now 25 years old, he's seen Western Europe, Thailand, Korea, China and India and scaled Japan's Mount Fuji, all with a pack on his back. Today, he works at a marketing company in Singapore.

"I think when I was in Europe I noticed it the most - a lot of richer or maybe big budget backpackers," says Howie. "There's nothing wrong with it, everyone's still pretty laid back and cool, but I could just tell they weren't scraping by like me."

Howie says he spent four months travelling around Europe on \$4,000. With a nervous laugh he says it was an amazing feat, but made possible only

because of his three weeks of employment in London, England.

"I would say most travellers don't really plan on working when they're backpacking 'cause it's more like a vacation for them. But I don't know - it's not like I would be stranded here - if I really ran out of money. I'd have to swallow all my pride but I could call my dad in Michigan and ask for money," says Howie.

Jennifer Hind, an administrative assistant at an accounting firm, spent six weeks backpacking around Europe in the summer of 2000.

"My Visa was probably the most important thing I brought," she says.

Drew Rice, a salesperson at Mountain Equipment Co-op, the largest retailer of travel equipment gear in Toronto, says low-budget, or "grubby" backpackers are still travelling the world, but they are a dying breed.

"Today it's probably more for the upper end of the socio-economic scale," he says.

After a plane ticket, Euro or Brit rail pass, a bag and equipment, backpacking gets very expensive.

The average backpacking trip to Europe will cost \$700 in airfare, \$900 for a Euro rail pass and about \$40-\$50 a day, says Laura Im, manager of

Travel Cuts on King Street West.

"A lot of the backpackers have or owe money, but have their family's support. So yeah, we don't really see a lot of shoestring travellers," Im says.

There are basic costs that everyone must swallow when planning a trip. But expenses can be kept low by researching and planning well in advance, says John Leonard, a clerk at Outward Bound travel store.

"Definitely backpacking has changed in the last few years," says Leonard. Gone are the days when backpacking meant travelling day and night with a backpack - spending most of your days hiking and camping and staying in hostels.

"Now it's big business. It all comes down to marketing, some companies have really nice catalogues and fancy Web sites and they're getting attention from more people," says Leonard. "This store's not cheap, it's pretty expensive stuff."

The romantic image of roughing it through exotic countries with a few rudimentary supplies in your bag and a few dollars in your pocket no longer holds true. Today, travellers wanting to experience foreign countries and gain valuable life experiences abroad better take a thick wallet along with their backpacks.

Here's some advice from the experts, Drew Rice, John Leonard and Laura Im on how to keep the costs of backpacking down:

- Start shopping for a backpack early. Look into travel packs, they're versatile and all the straps can be zipped away so the bag can be used as hand luggage in the future.
- Make a list of all the things you need to buy. Talk to someone who has traveled in that part of the world and find out if all of those items are necessary.
- Take travel-eating utensils. Buy food at grocery stores and avoid eating out.
- Research hostels before you leave. Use travel guides (Lonely Planet, Let's Go) or the net. Take a list; it's hard to find a good deal when you're tired and sleepy.

TIPS FROM THE PROS

- Timing can save you a lot of money. Try and travel during off peak season (September to early December & between April and June). Consider going to an area like Australia where our seasons are opposite.

And of course, you'll need a backpack. Prices range from \$90 to \$400, and sizes range from 40 liters to 80 liters. More expensive packs offer better suspension, with weight being distributed throughout the pack. A higher-end bag also means a higher quality of nylon.

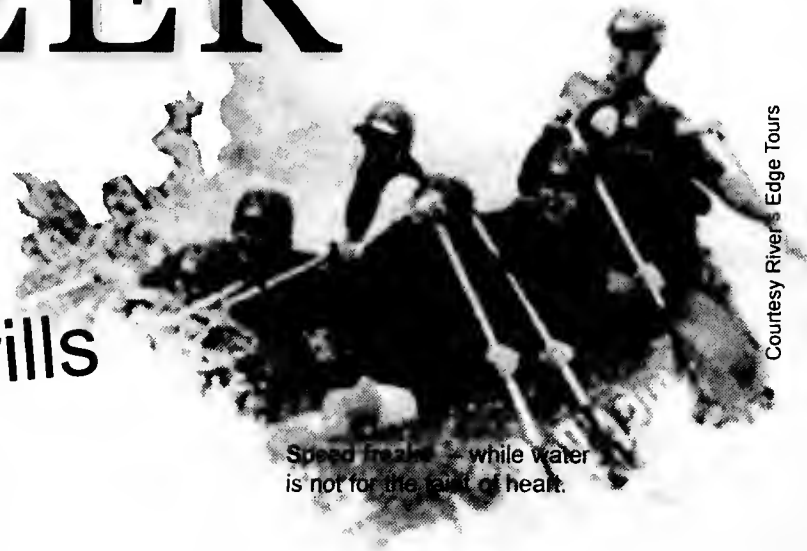
The most important factor however, is fit. Stores that sell backpacks should also fit them for you. Travel Web sites are excellent outlets for asking questions and getting personal advice:

- <http://www.travel-experiences.com/advice/kitadvice.shtml>
- <http://www.artoftravel.com/16essentials.htm>

UP THE CREEK

The thrills
and

By Ben Forbes



Courtesy River's Edge Tours

Speed freaks — while water is not for the faint of heart.

Adrenaline rushing through your veins quells any fears as you dig your paddle ferociously into the liquidy unknown. Suddenly, you are tossed from the raft like a rag doll and hurtle through the rapids. The probability of hitting rocks is high but it doesn't cross your mind while you are trying to breathe and swim to shore.

Whitewater rafting certainly isn't for land lovers, but for thrill-seekers looking for an adventure close to home.

Although rafting tours hit the rapids between May and October, this is a good time to start booking your trip. Touring companies such as River's Edge Tours, Owl Rafting and Wilderness Tours are normally booked on weekends but can fit in couples and different groups as long as reservations are made in advance. Whitewater tours are an alternative way for dare-devils to spend a day, a weekend

or even a whole week.

"Be prepared to get wet," warns Jessica Paul, office manager of River's Edge Tours and Humber College grad. "Mentally you have to like the thrill because if you dump, it is a very scary experience."

According to Paul, students are the most common customers and one does not have to be experienced to enjoy surfing the rapids. Paul went out for her first time in the fall. She says the experience was great fun

have it because you could be far away from medical facilities."

Even with experience and training as a rower, Dunn was knocked out of her raft.

"I was under the water, I was above the water, I think that if drowning feels like anything that is what it feels like, because I was terrified," Dunn explained. "The first thing they tell you is if you end up in the water say to yourself three times 'don't panic, don't panic, don't panic.' Well forget it, I didn't do that. I was not supposed to be in the water, I was supposed to be in a boat going through water and all of a sudden, boom, I was in the

water. I can swim, and I can swim damn well and I was scared."

But don't think the touring companies aren't prepared for spills. Experienced kayakers are always lingering around the raft with a safety line ready to save any unfortunate passenger. So as far as the rafting companies are concerned, it's a very safe experience. Most tour companies will go over safety tips with their rafters, explaining what to do if they should fall out and what certain commands mean. River's Edge makes their clients go through a half hour safety seminar and take a test before strapping on the life preserver.

Michelle Armstrong was 21 when she went on the adventure with many of her friends.

"I am quite terrified of water," Armstrong says. The tour guide, while handing out life-jackets and giving instructions, didn't help her quaking nerves when he pointed straight at her and said "People like her are most likely to fall out of the raft."

At the time, Armstrong was 90 pounds and five feet tall. She managed to stay in the boat, but others on the trip weren't as lucky.

"They told us to dig, to paddle hard and that would keep us in the boat because we would be

spills

of whitewater

actively digging," Armstrong recalls. "They told us not to just back off and kind of crouch down because you would be more likely to fly out."

"I did it [rafting] and I survived. I would tell people that if you're nervous about the water then it's probably not your cup of tea," she says.

Shannon Butty, a Carleton University student out for her first whitewater experience, was petrified of being ejected from the raft. She eventually got over her fears and hit the rapids.

"It was fun. I don't know if I would go again just because I was chicken at the time, but I know a lot of people who say they would go time and time again."

"I can swim, and I can swim damn well and I was scared."

Danielle Dunn

despite the cold water.

Danielle Dunn, from Carleton University, took up the challenge with Ottawa Adventure Tours on the August long weekend in 1999 at the age of 21. Her first thought of her trip was that she was going to drown.

"I was kind of nervous because you had to sign a waiver saying that if you die, your family can't sue," Dunn says. "Apparently all the companies



The seatbelt signs have been turned on — the trip begins in a raft but can finish in the water.

rafting

When dogs



Safeguarding your pet for airplane travel

fly

By Jody Johnson

When Cory Soal returned to Pearson International Airport from England, he had no idea that it wasn't damage to his luggage that he should be worried about, but rather to his cat, Effie.

"When I went to pick up Effie at the cargo claim section, she was petrified. I couldn't even see her [in the cargo hold]," says Soal. "It was completely black in there - underneath the plane, and it was absolutely freezing. I had to take her to the vet because she wasn't moving. She was in shock."

Soal was so disturbed, he considered seeking legal action against the airline.

"Of the hundreds of thousands of animals transported on commercial flights each year, more than 5,000 are killed, injured or lost," says Genie McVey, spokesperson for the Animal Legal Defence Fund [ALDF], a leading animal rights organization working nationally to defend animals from abuse and exploitation.

When pets fly, there's always the risk they'll be misplaced by the airline or harmed in some way during transportation.

Animals, like people, need to be handled with extra care while travelling, says McVey. Many cargo holds designed for animal transportation lack the fundamental requirements needed to keep the customers safe and comfortable.

"The airline industry treats live animals like baggage, transporting them in cargo holds not truly designed for life support," McVey says.

According to "Airlines For Animals Pledge - It's Time to Make Airlines Safe for Animals," a document distributed by the Animal Legal Defence Fund, airlines must ensure animals being transported in cargo holds are given sufficient oxygen. It also states that cargo holds must be heated.

"The cargo holds within Air Canada's planes are very safe," maintains Nick White, supervisor of the airline's Toronto cargo department. "They have sufficient pressurization and are well heated for the animals."

The International Air Transport Association (IATA), says proper pet cages should be used when transporting animals. Cages should be big enough for occupants to stand in a comfort and turn around. Cage door should be securely locked as well.

"I can remember when a shipment of baby chicks got out of their cage," says Pat Stocks, an Air Canada flight attendant. "The cage door wasn't properly locked. The cargo attendant, I guess, didn't check it properly. It was humorous at the time. However, when you look back on it, it could have been quite dangerous."

Stocks recalls baby chicks running everywhere - over people's shoes and under luggage. A quarter of the chicks died.

Linda Patton, a specialist in animal care and employee of Ruffins Pet Centre in Georgetown, says it's a good idea to call the airport before a flight and to talk to as many people as possible about the safest way to transport a pet.

"You have to call the airport at least three weeks before your flight. I recommend calling once in the evening, again the next morning and then the next day. You have to talk to several different people before you actually get the right information."

"You know, some of the people there [at Pearson] don't know what the heck they are talking about. They'll say, oh yeah, that cage will do, when really it is far too small," says Patton.

She recommends buying a travel cage called "Kennel Air." She says it is the best for safety and comfort. These cages range from \$19.99 for a small cat, to \$150 for a large dog.

On April 5, 2000, the Safe Air Travel for Animals Act was signed into law. It states airlines are required to report any incidents in which animals are injured, lost or killed to the secretary of transportation. It also states baggage handlers must be trained in animal care and safe transport techniques.

According to the ALDF Web site, such provisions were made to pressure airlines and government agencies to prevent further deaths or injuries to animals. However, McVey says many airline companies continue to disregard these provisions or don't take them seriously.

"Stiff fines should be imposed upon those airlines that don't adhere to these regulations," she says.

IATA has also taken a

strict stance in ensuring the safety of animals on airplanes. It

has compiled a list of regulations to promote the safety of animals on planes.

"The purpose of the IATA Live Animals Regulations is to ensure the safe and humane transfer of animals by air," says IATA spokesperson Eric Remdock, a member of the committee responsible for devising these regulations for all international airlines.

Air Canada ticket agent Tracy Metler says the airline is doing its part to ensure pet safety on their airplanes.

"Air Canada enforces many rules for the safe transfer of animals. These rules not only protect the welfare of your animal aboard our planes, but they also ensure that your animal arrives at the correct destination," she says.

"Any airline is going to maintain they offer a safe environment for animals," says Pat Stocks. "However, things can happen - and they do."

TIPS ON HOW TO PROTECT YOUR PET IN AN AIRPLANE:

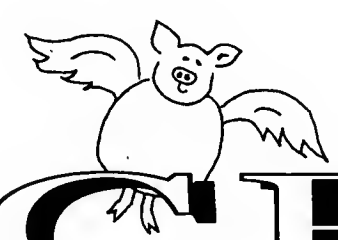
Although accidents are sometimes unavoidable, it's possible to take a prominent role in ensuring that a pet arrives safely.

1. Do you have a suitable container for your pet? All containers must be big enough for your pet to stand up in, and turn around comfortably.
2. Check with the airline company to ensure that the cargo space is properly pressurized and comfortably heated for your pet.
3. Some airlines allow you to take your pet with you in the passenger cabin, depending on the size of your pet.
4. If you fly with your animal, it is recommended that you do so on non-stop flights only, in order to prevent the misplacement of your pet.
5. Check with your veterinarian to make sure that your pet is healthy enough to fly.
6. Separate food and water containers, refillable from the outside, must be secured to the cage.
7. Tranquilizing animals prior to takeoff is not recommended. Aircraft conditions are quite different from those on the ground. Some medications, which are very effective on the ground, can be fatal aboard an aircraft.
8. Make sure your pet is properly vaccinated. Some countries have strict rules regarding vaccinations.
9. Stay with your pet at all times in the airport and watch the cargo attendants put your pet on the plane. This will make your pet more comfortable and will also ensure your pet has been put safely on the right plane.
10. Make sure your pet's name, as well as your name and address, are clearly marked on both the cage and on your pet's collar.



Make sure your pets are safe and comfortable during your long travels

PIGS in SPACE



Diamonds are a girl's best friend. But for Maria Tirotta Andrews, her number one companion is her 136-kilogram pot belly pet pig, Charlotte.

Andrews and her beloved porker Charlotte, who both flew first class, achieved international fame following a six-hour flight aboard a US Airways Boeing 757 from Philadelphia to Seattle on Oct. 17.

Animal lover Andrews, who has a heart condition, claims Charlotte's presence reduces

her stress level. She says she took the pig aboard on her physician's recommendation.

"I love this pig. She's my best friend," Andrews told the *Philadelphia Daily News*, which took two weeks to track Andrews down following the incident.

US Airways allowed Charlotte aboard the Boeing 757, among the 200 human flyers, after designating the pig the same "service animal" classification normally reserved for seeing-eye dogs.

Charlotte slept for most of the flight, according to the airline. However, during landing the pig went "hog-wild" and started squealing about, and even attempted to enter the cockpit. And along the way, Charlotte dropped feces as she charged through the cabin.

US Airways said that this would never happen again aboard its flights. The Federal Aviation Administration is investigating how the pig got airborne in the first place.

Source: Reuters

Delivering the Goods

"The more naive you are the more adventures you have..."

Byron Lutz

By Janet Gibson

The first time Penny Papineau worked as a travel courier she landed at London's Heathrow Airport and headed for her rental car.

Without warning, a loudspeaker announced the IRA had planted a bomb in the airport. Within five minutes all four terminals in the gigantic airport were evacuated. Papineau was one among thousands forced to stand in the rain while men in white spacesuits arrived in army tanks and ordered them not to move.

Since that day 15 years ago, Papineau has taken hundreds of courier flights. She's visited her parents in London, saved money and earned thousands of Aeroplan miles which in turn have enabled her to take her family to other destinations.

Travel couriers, also known as courier fliers and air couriers, frequently take advantage of cheap flights in the United States. However, this form of budget travel has a lower profile in Canada.

"There's a lot of couriers out of the States that have fairly reduced air fares for travelling as a courier," says Michelle Heald of F.B. On Board, currently the only travel courier company in Canada.

"Ours [flights] aren't quite as reduced. We cater more to somebody who's looking to get to London, England, on really short notice. If they called up and



Travel courier - flying the friendly skies, for less.

booked a flight within two days it would be over \$1,000. Booking it with us, it would be \$760," Heald says. "Our rates never fluctuate. If you called us three months in advance, it would still be at that rate."

Here's how it works: Couriers agree to give up their luggage space to a courier company in exchange for a cheaper flight.

Perhaps a company in Toronto has time-sensitive materials that needs to get to London, England. A

travel courier will fly to London with his carry-on luggage in the passenger compartment and the courier company's cargo in the luggage compartment. He won't know the identity of the package, but it doesn't matter. He's not responsible for it.

F.B. On Board's couriers fly exclusively with Air Canada. Their only destination is London, and couriers must fly via Montreal or Toronto.

The minimum stay in London is one day and the maximum two weeks. There's also a blackout period between December 11 and December 26 when no courier travel is allowed on Air Canada.

Byron Lutz, head of the International Association of Air Travel Couriers [IAATC], based in Lake Worth, Fla., likes the enthusiasm that college-aged couriers offer.

"The good thing about students is they often don't mind travelling someplace to get someplace," he says. "When you're young, travelling is part of the adventure - so if you have to go to New York to get there, 'Hey, Better' - spend a couple of days in New York. Any excuse you can have to be on the road. The more naive you are, the more adventures you have and the more people you meet," Lutz says.

One of the hottest destinations for couriers these days is Hong Kong.

"Hong Kong is supposed to be a very expensive city for a business traveller," says Lutz, "[but] one young person that came back got a hostel room for \$7 [U.S.] a night and then made money as a film extra while she was there. So she actually made money out of the courier trip."

Mexico City is also a much-coveted spot for couriers. The low cost and the surrounding sites are a major draw.

"In the past year, round-trip fares to Mexico City from New York have ranged from \$25 [U.S.] to \$150 [U.S.] round trip," says Lutz. "There's a lot of good places within a short bus-ride of Mexico City, like Cuernavaca."

Usually the best deals are booked last minute. All a person needs is a passport and a visa, if required.

Steven Yam of Willowdale, Ontario, has travelled as a courier with both F.B. On Board and IAATC. He has travelled to Europe for between \$200 and \$400 U.S., and last minute deals can be had for as little as \$50 U.S.

Want to be an AIR COURIER?

F.B. On Board

Potential air couriers can call, fax or e-mail F.B. On Board in Montreal and fill out an application form. Applicants must be 18 years old and have a valid passport. Tickets can be picked up at the Air Canada Special Services Counter, saving couriers time by foregoing the usual queues.

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Tel: (514) 631-7929
Email: jcula@fbexpress.com
Fax: (514) 631-2603
Website: www.fbexpress.com

International Association of Air Travel Couriers

Annual membership in IAATC is \$45 (U.S.). Members receive free telephone support, fax on demand and two newsletters about the air courier industry.

220 South Dixie Highway #3
P.O. 1349 Lake Worth, Florida, U.S. 33460
Tel: (561) 582-8320
Fax: (561) 582-1581
Website: www.courier.org

PINCHED



Canadian drug smugglers nabbed overseas

By Tom Strgacic

In the 1970s it was every stoner's dream to go off to a foreign country, where drugs were cheap and plentiful, and have the time of their life. If they were lucky they would smuggle some of those drugs back into North America and sell them to their friends for a huge profit and still maintain a sizable personal stash.

But the times have changed, and so have the drug laws. More and more countries are making drug smuggling a number one priority, and small time offenders are feeling the pinch.

"It was a youthful indiscretion and at the time I thought I could get away with anything," says Harry, a 24-year-old administrative assistant from Canada, who prefers not to give his last name due to the charges being dropped. He now lives in Europe.

"I was travelling from Holland to Belgium by train and I got off at the stop in Antwerp [Belgium]. I was carrying about 20 grams of marijuana in my shoes and I thought I was already in the clear since I had passed the border. But the Antwerp station had plain-clothes policemen on the look-out for suspicious characters coming from Holland. I guess I looked suspicious because I was stopped."

He was taken into custody and asked if he had any drugs on him. He was told that if caught lying, his punishment would be more severe. He still answered no. At that point, they took off all his clothes and strip-searched him.

"That was the most frightened I had ever been," he says. "I didn't know what was going to happen to me. When they

finally found the drugs, they started to say all these bad things were going to happen to me."

After hours of waiting and receiving lectures, he was freed to go because under Belgian law, he did not have enough drugs on him to be charged.

"I was so relieved after I was let go. I promised myself that I would never do something like that again. Who knows what could have happened to me if I was in a different country that was stricter on drug smuggling. I could have gotten a life sentence or worse — the death penalty."

If a Canadian is arrested abroad the best thing he or she can do is contact the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade [DFAIT], says Carl Schwenger, a spokesman for the organization.

"We'll help anyone who is arrested get in touch with family members or friends back in Canada to let them know what is going on. We'll also provide them with a list of lawyers they can contact, although, we do not provide funding for these lawyers. We also keep tabs on all the cases that go to trial in foreign countries and provide assistance where needed.

"Once convicted and in prison, depending on the country, depending on the person, and depending on the situation we will visit them often to not very often," says Schwenger. "So if they are in a place that is very culturally different from Canada and the prison system is very tough and the person seems afraid, then the Consul General will visit them monthly."

The sad thing is that many Canadians who are convicted for drug smuggling abroad are innocent of their crime and are duped into carrying drugs by traffickers.

A tragic example of this took place in 1996. Nguyen Thi Hiep, a Vietnamese-Canadian, and her mother Tran Thi Cam, 74, were arrested for smuggling 5.5 kilograms of heroin through Hanoi airport.

Nguyen, 43, and her mother were given \$100 [U.S.] by a stranger to courier some paintings back to Canada. Inside the paintings, heroin was concealed.

A week later another Vietnamese-Canadian was stopped at Pearson International Airport in Toronto for exactly the same offence. After a few hours of questioning, the RCMP let her go, concluding she had been duped by a known drug trafficker. He was later charged with the offence.

Aware of this, the Canadian government did everything in its power to inform the Vietnamese government of the similarities. On April 24, Nguyen was executed by a firing squad. The Canadian government was not given advanced warning.

"Canadian police authorities provided the Vietnamese government with information that needed careful examination in order to establish whether Ms. Nguyen may have been duped into transporting drugs out of Vietnam," says Canadian Secretary of State [Asia-Pacific] Raymond Chan.

"Canadian police officials were to go to Vietnam to assist in the examination of this information, and this visit was pending at the time of the execution. It is most unfortunate that the Vietnamese government chose to ignore pertinent information that might have saved Ms. Nguyen's life."

"We'll help anyone who is arrested get in touch with family members or friends back in Canada"

Carl Schwenger

"As a signatory to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, Vietnam has an obligation to impose the death penalty for only the most serious crimes. We do not believe that Ms. Nguyen's conviction for drug trafficking meets this standard," Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy said in a press release after the execution.

"Nevertheless, it is equally important that national laws reflect a balance between crime and punishment. Without such a balance, international support for penalties could be eroded."

A few months later, Vietnam eased tensions with Canada by letting Nguyen's mother go as a gesture of good will.

There is a war on drugs now and the United States and a number of third-world countries are leading the charge.

Canadians travelling abroad are being warned by authorities to be cautious. They need to realize foreign countries often come down hard on drug offenders. And in some cases, the consequences are deadly.



Book'em Dano! – Trying to smuggle drugs abroad is a good way to get locked up.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade has provided a Canadian Traveller Resource Centre on its Web page [www.cnd.com/travel/drug-faq.htm] that lists do's and don'ts when it comes to drugs in foreign countries.

Some "Do's" are knowing that using, buying, transporting, and selling drugs is illegal in every country. Others include

knowing what's packed in suitcases and to never leave luggage it unattended, even for a minute.

The No-No's includes: Carrying anything, including parcels, gifts, or luggage, across borders or through customs for other people. Crossing a border with a hitchhiker or as a hitchhiker in somebody else's vehicle.

Howlin' good times

Fun seeking foreigners party under Thailand's full moon

By Steve Chester

Full moon party!

Anyone who's hit the travel track in Southeast Asia knows this party mantra. It refers to the famous monthly celebrations hosted by Thailand's most touristed spots, such as Koh Phangan.

This Thai island is said to have the most spectacular view

of the moon from earth. Every month on the night of the full moon, eight-thousand to twelve-thousand travelling revelers come and join the Thai people in once crazy beach bash.

It all starts at dusk on Haad Rin Beach, but the party doesn't really get going until midnight. Thousands of lamps burn, neon lights stretch across the beach and local traders peddling all kinds of goods are everywhere.

"There are DJs who usually work for free, or maybe a few drinks," says Warren Burgart, webmaster of Thaisite.com. "Their selections also range widely. Some bring their CDs and others bring vinyl, but getting ... a DJ is a difficult process."

Burgart, who lives on Thailand's Koh Samui island, [about a 30-minute boat ride from Koh Phangan], has been to nearly 20 full moon parties himself.

"At about 11:00 [a.m.], the party is pretty much finished on Haad Rin," Burgart says, "but there are a few bars off the beach and the crowd moves and the party continues."

But tourists are warned to keep their party practices above the table. Local police work hand in hand with beach patrollers to ensure no illegal activity takes place. And according to Burgart, a Thai prison is the last place you'd want to visit.

"Drugs – they are illegal in Thailand. There are



In Koh Phangan, the party kicks into high gear around midnight and can last until 11 o'clock the next day.

many undercover police at the party. Also, there are many other people who will tell the police if they see or smell anything," Burgart warns. "Party goers can go through hell."

This year's lunar extravaganzas will take place on the 8th or 9th of each month from January to April. For those wanting to spend a night on the beach, bungalows are available for renting. But party-goers need to be there at least a few days ahead of time to ensure accommodations.

"The basic bungalow has no air conditioning, no hot water and no screens on the windows," Burgart says. "The prices are cheap for the most part. There is no Hilton or anything above 2 stars on the whole island."



Beach patrols and stiff drug penalties keep the partying above board.

Volunteer

Canadian youth reap the rewards of working abroad

Travel

By Nicolette Beharie

When Shauna Houlton arrived in Costa Rica after a seven-hour flight, she had no idea that soon after, she would be making a 10-hour hike to her volunteer placement.

Houlton, who had come from a middle class family in Ottawa, had to carry out an exhausting trek through the Costa Rican rainforest with 11 other people she had never met.

"Getting there was the first big challenge because we had to carry all of our gear with us," Houlton says. "I had never seen an indigenous reserve before, let alone lived on one."

For Houlton, that hike would be the start of a 10-week experience that would profoundly change her life.

Houlton had just completed a Psychology degree at Carlton University when she began to question the path she had chosen. Houlton's mother spotted an advertisement in the volunteer section of the Ottawa Citizen for Youth Challenge International, a non-profit organization offering volunteer projects for youth abroad.

"My Mom jokingly said, 'why don't you go and volunteer in Costa Rica?'," she recalls. To her mother's surprise, Houlton called Youth Challenge and received an information package within two days. A week later she got on a plane and flew to Toronto to take part in a selection day.

Now, everytime Houlton walks into the local Loblaws after parking her Mazda Protege, she can't help but remember what life was like living with the Cabecar Indians. The variety she finds in the produce section was unthinkable on the Chirippo reserve and eating meat was almost a privilege.

Houlton learned the hard way that language isn't necessary for communication. She recalls lending a shovel to a neighbour on the reserve and later having to explain to his 11-year-old daughter that they needed it back. She and another volunteer were forced to frantically make shoveling gestures with their hands, until the young girl finally understood what they needed.

Nearly a year later, Houlton is working towards a degree in international development and has a field placement with Youth Challenge.

Young people interested in taking part in a project must first fill out application forms, then wait to be invited to a selection day.

"We have selection days all throughout the country, but mainly in Toronto and Vancouver," says Jen Dalton, youth program assistant

ing to clear paths."

The next step is fundraising.

"Depending on which program you're doing, the 10 or 6-week, you will need to raise about \$4,000 to go towards your participation in the program, depending on the airfare at that particular time," Dalton says. "Some people take five weeks, and some people take a year-and-a-half to fundraise."

Youth Challenge offers workshops to help participants learn fundraising techniques, but some participants bypass the process and pay their own way.

Two days before departure, participants attend a series of workshops. "They learn about cross-cultural communications, conflict resolution and about the country they're going into," Dalton says.

Canada World Youth is another non-governmental organization that offers international youth exchanges and volunteer placements. Young Canadians under the age of 30 are paired with youth from overseas, spending half the time in Canada and the other half in the exchange country.

Canada World Youth's application process is similar to Youth Challenge in that it too hosts selection days and fundraising workshops. However, the projects take on a different format and agenda.

"We don't consider ourselves an aid organization at all," says Jennifer Drummond, a past participant and administrative assistant for Canada World Youth. "There is actually volunteer work going on where a pair would be in a community placement, usually working in a social service organization."

Although the eight to 10 exchange partners work as a group, the individual partners live together in the home of a community member.

"They work as a team, but their living arrangements - and part of



A volunteer helps prepare beans on the Chirippo reserve.

"I had never seen an indigenous reserve before, let alone lived on one."

Shauna Houlton

manager for Youth Challenge International.

"The selection day tests people's ability to work in a group and their commitment to doing community development work."

But, not everyone makes it past the selection day. "We're not looking to decline people based on quota numbers," Dalton says. "We just want to make sure that they'll be good candidates and contribute to the program."

However, Dalton says there is much to gain from simply attending the selection day.

"We do some community work on that day as well so, if you're not selected, you can come out of that day having achieved something," she says. "We usually work in Toronto with the Don Valley Parkway, usually tree planting or help-

our learning component - is actually being immersed within the family as well as having work placements," Drummond says.

Youth Challenge tends to be more group-oriented in both its projects and living arrangements.

"There will probably be about 12 to 13 people in our group and when we go into a community it is not necessarily feasible for us to live with different families because we go to quite remote areas," Dalton says.

With both organizations, youth participate for different reasons. "Some people go down there specifically because they're involved in international development, they want to go to medical school, or want to do something that is some-how related to the activities," Dalton says.

Houlton enjoyed her experience and encourages others to volunteer.

"I think it is a really good way to gain a new perspective of yourself because you are placed with a group of people who don't know you, and you are put in a country that you don't know," Houlton says.

"It is a really good way to challenge yourself and really find out what skills you have, that in your everyday surroundings you might not have to tap in to."



A young Cabecar Indian helps to build a health post.

Good for

COLD~BEER



what Ales ya

Beer tours offer a fun and historic look at other cultures

By Pat Maloney

It's Saturday morning and beer tour organizer Mike Sexton is walking along a street in Prague, when he can't help but notice a group of old ladies sitting around a table, drinking black beer.

As far as he can tell, no one else in the city is even the slightest bit surprised by seeing this. "That's just part of the Prague tradition. No one's looking at them twice," he says.

Sights like these are exactly what beer enthusiasts can expect while on international beer tours.

Not to be confused with simple pub crawls or run-of-the-mill keg parties, these international beer tours are historical jaunts to beautiful countries that just happen to be the birthplaces of many of the beers we enjoy today.

"(It) is a full cultural, historical, sight-seeing exploration of different parts of the world — where beer has a great tradition — that's punctuated with visits to some of the historic breweries," explains Oliver Dawson, owner of Toronto's The Beer Lovers' Tour Co.

"It's like a wine tour for beer lovers."

The misconception that these trips are an opportunity to drink oneself into oblivion, drives Dawson to drink.

"This is not some kind of chance to see how much you can drink. Most people who come on the tour are not interested in participating at that level. Does that mean it's dry and dusty and isn't fun? Well, of course not," Dawson says.

Although beer is the common thread weaving through all the destinations, drinking beer is not the main objective. Dawson says countries that are regularly visited on beer tours — including Belgium, Czech Republic and Ireland — are so interesting, that seeing them in any form is attractive. The fact that beer has played a



A beer in the hand — European history is anything but dry

large role in their specific cultures for centuries, he contends, only makes them more attractive.

Dawson and Sexton speak passionately about the little-known cultural idiosyncrasies that can be uncovered when a society is looked at through "beer goggles."

"A church is always there, and the people might even attend it on a Sunday," Dawson explains. "But the brewery is something that they participate in every-

day, because it's the beer they drink. So by exploring and experiencing that, you've actually touched a nerve within local culture."

"You kind of study [the culture] just by the fact that you are visiting the breweries," says Sexton, who organizes tours for Beertrips.com, based in Chicago. "You see how beer affects the culture," he explains, "and there is no other way to study that than to go there."

Barbara Ono has travelled to Europe on two different beer tours. She says there is no better way for "neophytes" to explore new places.

"England revolves around beer," she says, still buzzing from her latest beer tour. "The best place to meet people, the best place to eat, the best place to do anything in England is in a pub."

"A man will go out for the evening to walk his dog, and call in to the pub on his way home to have a beer. That's life over there," Ono says.

"England revolves around beer. The best place to meet people, the best place to eat, the best place to do anything in England is in a pub."

Barbara Ono

Naturally, all these cultural and historical discoveries come with a price tag. A single person travelling with Beer Lovers' Tour Co. can expect to be tapped for \$3,000. Beertrips.com's most recent tour, an eight night jaunt through Belgium, cost about \$2,200.

Prices include food, travel throughout the tour, accommodations and of course, beer.

Tour operators seem to have no problem finding customers for their frothy jaunts. The Beer Lovers' Tour Co. has already planned four tours spanning the next year. They include a beer and chocolate lovers' tour of Belgium and Holland [Spring 2001], a beer lovers' tour of the Pacific Northwest [Summer 2000], a tour of Germany's Oktoberfest and Bohemia [Fall 2001] and a malt and ale lovers' tour of Scotland [Fall 2001].

Beertrips.com is also rife with planned expeditions, including a spring rail tour through European "beer cities" in Europe, such as London, Cologne and Berlin.

While a beer tour may never make old ladies throwing a few back before noon seem right, aficionados say it will give you a better understanding of the impact of beer on foreign cultures, and a greater appreciation for the lagers, ales and stouts you enjoy at home.

LIFE AFTER THE ROUGE



Cambodia opens its doors to the world

By Brad Holden

Jordan Lott glanced around at the unfamiliar countryside, looked down at the live grenade clutched in one hand and its freshly-pulled pin in the other, and realized that this wasn't your average vacation.

Without further hesitation [in fact, with the least amount of hesitation humanly possible], he lobbed the grenade into a muddy pond. As both Lott and his Cambodian guide turned tail and scrambled to higher ground, the pond erupted with a throaty whack, signaling another happy customer at one of the world's more bizarre tourist attractions.

"It was something else," says Lott, looking back on his grenade toss. "They just hand it to you with a smile, let you practice a couple of times with some clumps of dirt, and away you go. What a crazy feeling."

Throw a hand grenade for 20 bucks. Shoot an AK-47 for 25 - plus an extra \$20 for each clip used. These are just some of the deals available at Thunder

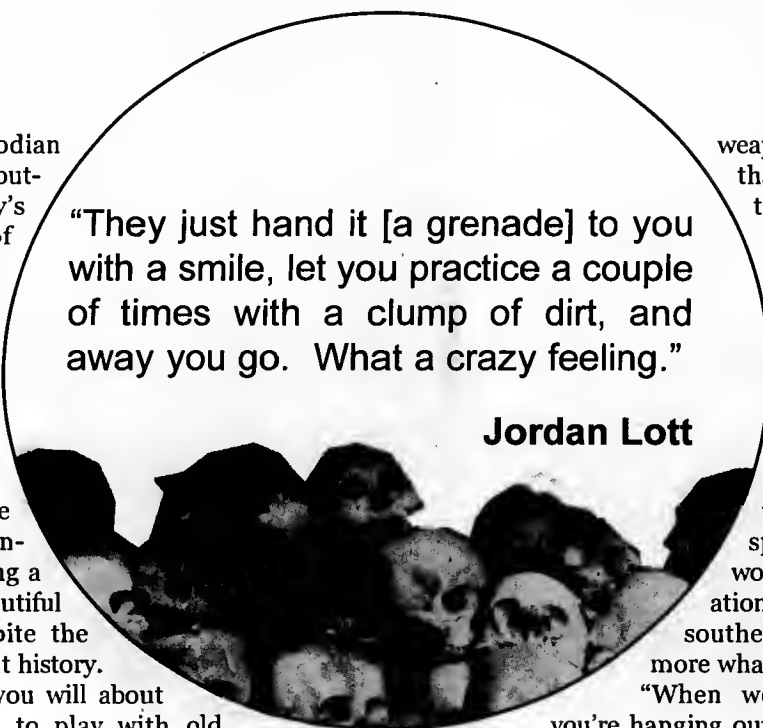
Ranch, a Cambodian tourist trap just outside the country's capital city of Phnom Penh.

The concept of a Cambodian tourist attraction is relatively new. The country is opening up to visitors, however, and more and more backpackers are venturing there, finding a country that is beautiful and friendly despite the horrors of its recent history.

And say what you will about paying big bucks to play with old

"They just hand it [a grenade] to you with a smile, let you practice a couple of times with a clump of dirt, and away you go. What a crazy feeling."

Jordan Lott



weapons - the reality is that this is the first time in 30 years that guns in Cambodia have been used for anything other than shooting other Cambodians.

Lott wasn't planning on handling live ammunition when he went to Southeast Asia last spring. A month's worth of rest and relaxation on the beaches of southern Thailand was more what he had in mind.

"When we got to Bangkok, you're hanging out with all these travellers, and the buzz about Cambodia was hard to ignore," Lott says. "I hadn't really considered going there before ... it's been pretty off-limits for a long time."

Cambodia has long been a forbidden fruit for Southeast Asian backpackers. Two decades of genocide and civil war effectively closed the country off from the rest of the world during the seventies and eighties. Although an uneasy peace was forged in 1991, general lawlessness, banditry, and an overabundance of land mines managed to put off all but the most hardcore travellers for much of the following decade.

The situation has started to change in the last few years, however. Pol Pot, the man who headed the brutal Khmer Rouge regime in the country during the latter half of the seventies and continued to lead guerrilla forces against the government for the next 20 years, died in 1998. Now, Cambodia's bloody history has finally been put to rest and the country is starting to open its doors to curious travellers.

"Phnom Penh is as safe as any other large third world city," says Pierre Lizée, a professor of International Studies at Brock University, who focuses mainly on Southeast Asia.

"Outside of the cities you have to be careful - there are still many areas with land mines, and there are still bandits around, but there is a tourist trail that has developed which is quite safe," he says.

The route that most backpackers now take



Deep in contemplation, a Buddhist monk sits among the temple ruins of Angkor Wat.

leads to Cambodia's premier attraction – the sprawling, thousand-year old temple complex of Angkor Wat, located in the jungle 300 kilometres northwest of Phnom Penh. Built by a civilization that once ruled over most of Southeast Asia, the temples of Angkor are every bit as grand and overwhelming as China's Great Wall or the Pyramids.

"Angkor was just incredible. [the temples] are so huge, we spent three days wandering around and we only saw a little of it," says Lott. "Everyone should go there."

Those in charge in Cambodia have realized this too, and have been quick to cash in. Lizee speaks of three luxury hotel developments that are currently going up just outside the entrance to Angkor Wat.

"The situation is that Cambodia is desperately looking for hard currency. They are one of the 10 poorest countries in the world," says Lizee. "Tourism is one of the main avenues for this, especially around Angkor. This is leading to all sorts of problems – mainly, buildings are going up with no sense of environmental concerns."

Time will tell whether the ongoing democratization of Cambodia will bring with it a heightened sense of environmental awareness. In case this doesn't happen, curious travellers should probably go there as soon as possible. And go while it is still cheap, says Lott.

"We were staying at really nice guesthouses for about \$3 American a night, and the food is dirt cheap," Lott says. "Usually you get your own personal motorcycle chauffeur at your guesthouse, too – they really treat you like kings, you can tell they're making the most of having peace there."

For Brock University's Lizee, this is a very exciting time in Cambodian history.

"It used to be that you could buy live grenades in the market in Phnom Penh. Now, they are cleaning all of that up. They're really trying to engineer and promote economic development.

For the time being, Cambodia is a fascinating, wonderful place," he says.

Tossing a hand grenade was definitely a memorable experience, but the real magic of present-day Cambodia came to Lott after a brush with the country's chilling past.

Like most visitors to Phnom Penh, he felt compelled to visit S-21, the former high school that Pol Pot's forces used as a death-camp during the seventies. Of the nearly 17,000 people imprisoned there over the course of four years of Khmer Rouge rule, only seven lived to tell of it.

"It's a really heavy experience to walk around in there," Lott says. "As soon as we walked in it started to rain, and the whole time we were there it was like a dark, monsoonal downpour outside. Then as soon as we left the rain stopped and the sun broke out, but the whole city of Phnom Penh was flooded under a foot of water. There were kids splashing around, playing and laughing. It was amazing – like the rebirth of Cambodia right there."

Writer Brad Holden visited Cambodia last year while on leave from an English-teaching job in Taiwan.

"Usually you get your own personal motorcycle chauffeur at your guesthouse, too. They really treat you like kings"

Jordon Lott



Cambodians set their sights on tourism

If you go, you should know...

- Political violence has decreased in Phnom Penh, but sporadic acts of violence remain possible. Canadians should avoid political rallies, demonstrations, and military buildings or compounds in Phnom Penh and in the provincial capitals.
- Canadians should travel to Cambodia by air only. Boats are often overcrowded, lack adequate safety equipment, and are susceptible to robbery by armed gangs. Travel by train is not recommended because of poor track maintenance.
- Cambodia remains one of the most heavily mined countries in the world. Do not walk in forested areas or in dry rice paddies without a local guide.

source: www.dfait.gc.ca



Taking a ride past the awe-inspiring Royal Palace, built in 1866 by King Noradom.



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giddy UP

A city slicker's guide to horsing around

By Stacy Gardner

Grandma knows best. She even has a great idea for those who are still begrudging the fact they won't be going to Florida this winter. No, she doesn't have a beach house in California. What she does have is a ranch with over 40 trained horses. Annette Milne, affectionately known as Grandma, sits back in her saddle and invites you to explore horseback riding in her own backyard.

"I've been running this business for 36-years and I've never met anyone who didn't learn to like horseback riding," says Milne proudly from her ranch in Halton Hills.

"It's important for people to come prepared. Some people sometimes shock us when we first meet them to take them out horse riding. We didn't think that it was necessary to specify in our pamphlet that you shouldn't wear a bikini when riding a horse," says Milne.

"Many people don't think of going horseback riding in the winter time, but since I tried it six years ago at a ranch out in Waterloo I've been hooked," says Mary Fedorshyn, an avid rider from Brampton. "I even managed to convince a bunch of friends from work one year in organizing our Christmas party at a ranch, which not only provided us with riding but also accommodation, food and a festive party. It was great!"

Wild Wood Manor offers a sunset ride for two that's followed with a romantic candlelight dinner. Even weddings can be organized, and some men have gone out of their way to use the ranch and its white horses to propose to their girlfriends.

Many different packages in a range of costs are available for those seeking out a new and exciting way to have fun.

"Horseback riding is an experience one cannot explain until you have tried it" coos Fedorshyn, "As for myself, I was

quite nervous when I first did it. I was afraid of falling but let go of that fear about half way through the ride, which is when I started to relax and realized that nothing bad was going to happen."

Milne understands the fear of trying something new, having started this business as a single mom with seven children.

"In the 36-years we've been in business, we've never had a serious injury – let

"There is nothing more exhilarating than participating in nature on the back of one of the world's most beautiful and gentle creatures."

Mary Fedorshyn

alone a fatality," says Milne. "Every rider is provided with a safety helmet at his or her request and we make sure that each person is matched up with a horse that best suits the rider's capabilities. Every person, whether they say they know how to ride or not, goes through a lesson with the guides before embarking on the trail."

Fedorshyn, 27, is proud she got over her initial fears. Now she can't imagine horseback riding without the gallop and the trot.

"For me, galloping is truly the highlight of riding a horse," she says. "There is nothing more exhilarating than participating in nature on the back of one of

the world's most beautiful and gentle creatures."

Perhaps it's a good idea that Paul Sinclair didn't go galloping on his first try.

"For the men who might want to show-off their 'John Wanyness,' well, they should reconsider that idea right now," warns Sinclair, Sinclair, a Toronto-based teacher for young offenders. "Upon my first ride, I decided to choose the biggest horse available in a pursuit to impress my girlfriend. Needless to say about halfway through the ride my fear of heights was starting to accelerate and my groin area felt like it was being stretched the width of the horse."

Instead of speaking up about his obvious discomfort, Sinclair continued his ride in vain for another hour. This resulted in a funny walk that lasted more than a week.

Regardless, like Sinclair, who now rides twice a week says, horseback riding allows riders of all abilities the opportunity to enjoy natural surroundings, fresh air and the company of fellow riders.

And if you're still wary about falling off your horse, snow makes a perfect landing pad.

So how much are you going to have to pony up for a trip to a riding resort anyways?

Horseback Adventures of Kitchener [www.horsebackadventures.com], offers several packages, including an overnight stay with breakfast, lunch, and of course, a ride for \$225. Wanna-be cowboys can also opt for a two-hour ride for \$45, a four-hour ride for \$70 or a six-hour ride for \$125.

Wild Wood Manor [www.wildwoodranch.com], also offers an overnight stay with all meals and a ride for \$90, a sunset ride and dinner for two for \$110, or a one-hour ride for \$20.

Remember to dress properly. That means jeans in all seasons, gloves for hand protection and warm clothes in the winter. Boots are also recommended.

THE DIRT ON CO-TOURISM



Eco-tourists in Peru. What is good for the tourist isn't always good for the environment.

Michael Brown has scaled the divine heights of the Bolivian Andes many times, and each time he has noticed something insidious. Litter seems to propagate and float around him like phantoms which taunt the mountains and break Brown's heart.

The litterbugs?

Back-packers and ecotourists.

"It's discouraging."

Brown says it's also ironic. Ecotourism is thought the benign twin of adventure tourism. Brown, a Gap Adventure tour leader and part-time faculty member with the Humber College Ecotourism program, defines ecotourism as "a form of tourism for people interested in adding an educational component to their travels – along with an interest in preservation and conservation of culture, tradition and the environment."

But sometimes ecotourism adventures hurt the environment.

Karen Gorecki, national co-ordinator of Sierra Youth Coalition, has witnessed ecotourism's damage. Like Brown, she is leery of environmentally ignorant nature-lovers who undermine the true idea of ecotourism.

"I worked as an ecotour guide on a whale-watching boat in Victoria [B.C.] that spewed fossil fuels which potentially affected the behaviour of whales," says Gorecki. "I also believe if I wasn't on the boat [informing] tourists about environmental issues, like dredging and the over-consumption of fish farms, the [trips] wouldn't have been effective."

It's not just the tourists who need to be educated. Both Gorecki and Brown say ecotour companies and city planners need to be educated too.

As national co-ordinator of an environmental protection agency, Gorecki has travelled across Canada, giving her a national perspective on the country's environmental problems. She's seen the benefits ecotourism can bring.

"In British Columbia," Gorecki says, "logging is a primary industry, but now, a lot of ecotourism companies are taking over as a more sustainable alternative."

But Gorecki still has reservations.

"In our national parks there is too much focus on recreation, and that's impacting our wildlife in a negative way," she says. "In Banff [National Park], major

By Jason Dean Spence

highways now run through fertile valleys separating the population of grizzlies from other species, which can lead to genetic bottlenecks and basic problems with the species. We should be thinking about wildlife first, rather than tourists."

According to Gorecki, the problems with ecotourism arise when money is the number one goal of tour companies rather than sustainability and respect for the environment.

A Web site for the Washington-based environmental group, Conservation International, notes tourism is the world's largest industry, attracting nearly \$800 billion dollars [U.S.] in capital investment. Nature tourism, of which ecotourism is a part, represents 40-60 per cent of this industry.

Not surprisingly, some tour operators compromise environmental protection for the sake of profits.

"There will always be dishonest ecotour operators as there are in any other kind of business that base their success on the exploitation of natural resources," says Leanne Stillman, an ecotourism professor at Humber College.

However, Stillman believes that if done properly ecotourism is a powerful educational tool.

"Ecotourism can also help preserve cultures and traditions which would be lost if they had not become a point of interest to tourists, such as the Maori of New Zealand," she says. "There are now Maori villages rebuilt to exemplify past traditions and lifestyles."

Yet this education can be costly. The most damning charge against ecotourism is that the mere presence of tourists in certain fragile ecosystems is disruptive.

Brown says the problem here is ignorance of "carrying capacity, or how many people a particular area can support without there being damage to the environment. The scientific research needed to cover this can't keep up with how fast the industry is growing."

Last July in Machu Picchu, Peru, the National Cultural Institute began investigating carrying capacity. As a result, it was decided that the amount of trekkers on Machu Picchu's trails would be limited to 500 per day.

"But it's a four-day hike so

you're looking at 2000 people spread out over a 40 kilometre trail," says Brown. "There are just not the facilities on that trail to support that much people."

"And if you do the math," Brown continues, "2000 people per day multiplied by 365, you're looking at three-quarters of a million people per year."

Rachel Dodds, executive manager for the Green Tourism Association [the world's first green urban tourist's association, located in Toronto], says "the ecotourism industry is growing at a rate of four to ten per cent annually."

Stillman says changes to the industry must come from above.

"In our national parks there is too much focus on recreation and that's impacting our wildlife in a negative way."

Karen Gorecki

"The best thing for the industry would be to create regulations which govern ecotourism operations. However, unless these [rules] are created by the UN – or another body at this level – and respected in countries with lower environmental standards than we enjoy in Canada, this idea would be very hard to implement."

Colin Maxwell, executive vice-president of the Canadian

Wildlife Foundation, has a different answer.

"I don't think you can pass international laws to govern ecotourism because it's a local thing. You can't even have politicians in Ottawa regulating a small area in British Columbia or a small area in Prince Edward Island. There has to be local involvement, and local people have to establish guidelines about what's acceptable."



Somewhere over the rainbow

Digging into the deep pockets of gay travellers
By Chris Iorfida



Fun in the Sun. Finding a gay-friendly resort is sometimes easier said than done.

Kevin Borden is a seasoned pro when it comes to travelling. He takes at least two trips a year, with a winter trip to a tropical locale a mainstay

"Wherever I decide to go, I don't want to penny-pinch," he says. "Let's face it, I work all year for this vacation."

The process of selecting and booking a vacation is enough to give anyone a headache, but Borden has an additional concern.

As a gay traveller, options are more limited, and finding a friendly environment is of primary concern.

Gay travellers are a varied group. They differ in age, ethnicity, gender, and income level. They range from clubbers looking to

dance the night away in an exotic locale, to the more sedate, so-called DINK-WAD couples [double income, no kids, with-a-dog].

One thing is certain – as a group, gays and lesbians are avid travellers. A 2000 report by the U.S.-based Community Marketing states: "Not only are gays and lesbians travelling more frequently, they are spending more [per capita] and visiting more exotic destinations than the mainstream."

Companies are aware of the lucrative gay market and may take advantage of unwisely travellers.

"Let's face it, it's the year 2000. Everyone is fighting for your dollar,

whether it's green or pink," says Borden.

Shelagh Fitzgerald, owner of Out and Away Travel cautions travellers of potential pitfalls.

"Just because someone slaps a rainbow flag on something, doesn't mean it's necessarily tailored to gays."

As well, professionalism and integrity are not related to sexual orientation.

Fitzgerald remembers a gay travel agent who set up shop several years ago in Toronto's gay village and left town with thousands of dollars of clients' money. "No one bothered to do a check on this guy," she says.

The type of trip, on land or sea, will also help define the possibilities.

Robert Bell, of The Travel Clinic [travel agency], is a champion of cruises.

"There's a real misconception about them, and it's taken me years to convince some clients to try one. Once they do, they love it."

RSVP Vacations, Atlantis Travel and Olivia Cruises and Resorts all offer exclusively gay cruises. They're very popular, but those boarding should be prepared to pay.

"On gay cruises, the price can be twice as much as the same [mixed] cruise on the same boat a week later, but they still sell out," says Bell.

For others, the price differential and the desire to cruise with a diverse crowd are more important. For mixed cruises, Robert Bell advises that Celeb and Carnival cruise companies are the most gay friendly.

For those staying on land, the Caribbean, Mexico, or Puerto Vallarta are king in terms of affordability. The weather and the open-mindedness of the locals are also added benefits.

With respect to gay travel for women, generalizations are more difficult. Gay women traditionally travel and spend less than their male counterparts.

Bruce Moss, manager of Escape Travel, estimates 10-per cent of their clients are women, and only a small percentage of those spend a lot of money.

Harvey Wiseberg, co-owner of Talk of The Town Travel says, the diversity of travel is also marked.

"They're more adventurous than guys and they're more in touch with the surroundings," he explains.

He says lesbian travellers often favour backpacking trips to Europe, the Far East, and the Himalayas. The types of trips he would rarely sell to a gay male.

Regardless of gender, travelling safely is paramount. Gay travellers are well advised to travel in pairs or groups, and hail a cab when leaving clubs in the wee hours.

Borden advises it's best not to be too flamboyant.

"Because of your orientation and income, a lot of the locals will see you as a target," he says.

How to support your ski habit

By Amy Whittingham

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In a perfect world, Graham Budd would be back snowboarding in Whistler.

"Within the snowboarding sub-culture, that's the ideal life – just going out somewhere and having some fun on a mountain while you make enough money to get by and enjoy the snowboarding," says Budd.

Working at ski and snowboard resorts is an affordable and exciting way to live the boarder life.

During his first year out of high school, 21-year-old Budd, worked as a snowboard instructor at Blackcomb Resort in Whistler. He says it's always been his dream to live the snowboarder's lifestyle.



The resort job can be ideal for the avid skier.

Budd landed the job at Blackcomb over the phone because of his experience as a snowboard instructor in Ontario.

Lisa Davey, human resources administrator at Sunshine Valley Ski and Snowboard Resort in Banff, says the resort has a hiring

clinic every October.

Applicants have to pay their own way to Banff, but it's a price that must be paid in order to compete against other applicants.

"We have 5,000 applicants throughout the summer," says Davey. "We just want to meet them in person."

About 700 people actually get invited to attend an interview clinic and out of those, about 400 get hired.

Sue Frkas, 25, worked as a cashier and server at Chateau Lake Louise in Lake Louise. But, her job interview was conducted at the Royal York in Toronto.

"After my interview, I got a call probably a week to two weeks later," she recalls. "I had an hour interview on the phone after my reference checks and then I got the job."

Frkas says staff accommodation at Lake Louise was a bonus.

"It was subsidized so it was really cheap," she says. "That was an incentive."

Budd also lived in staff accommodations at Blackcomb and says it's probably the way to go.

Both Budd and Davey suggest having some back-up money. Davey says that, because of weather, it's hard to predict when the ski season will actually begin.

"It's good for them [resort workers] to have a little bit of cash in their pockets to kind of get by for the slow beginning

of the year and the slow ending of the year," he says.

"If they don't have a job before they go out, they have to have some money to live on – just enough to last at least the first month in case you don't get a job [right away,]" says Budd. "I know some people who moved out there and looked for a job and they had to end up moving home because they couldn't find one."

Budd says it is possible to find work, once you get to your destination, if you're prepared to spend a few weeks searching.

"It's a big leap of faith for some people who don't have that option of teaching snowboarding," he says. "You kind of just have to go out there and do it. You can get a job if you're good about it and have experience with your resume and experience with just being personable."

It is very important to research the area you wish to work in before heading out, he continues.

"The more research you do the better," Budd says. "There's lot's of ways you can do that. The internet, phoning some resort or whatever that's in the place that you're going to, or any business that you might know is out there."

"A good thing would be not to put all their eggs in one basket," Davey says. "A lot of people do that and then they come out and they're disappointed."

DEEP FREEZE

Winter campers bear the elements

By Ian Green

Stephen Gorman gets giddy talking about winter camping. His voice rises with excitement at the prospect of sleeping, eating and playing in below freezing conditions. The author of *Winter Camping*, the definitive book on the subject, can hardly contain himself when describing one of his passions.

"The attraction is very simple. The winter environment is nature at its most beautiful. There's a certain sense of purity in a winter landscape – the snow is fresh and untracked and it's possible to get the feeling you're the first person there," gushes Gorman. "There's a sense of discovery you don't get any other time of year."

The author, wilderness photographer



Stephanie Blair shrugs off the cold

rapher and avid outdoorsman recalls his first time winter camping in 1978.

"We were in a place in Wyoming called Freeze Out Range," says Gorman. "I made every mistake possible. We froze throughout the night and were happy to see the dawn. But I was hooked."

The New Hampshire resident says the biggest obstacle to winter camping is mental. But preparing yourself for winter conditions should lead to a safe and comfortable trip.

"It's a big psychological barrier taking that first step. Being out

that first night is a big leap. But when people do it, they realize it's not that difficult.

For me, the coldest I ever get is if I'm not prepared – like if I'm walking down the street in the middle of winter in city clothes – that's when you're going to be cold, when your equipment isn't matched to the environment. If you eat enough food, drink enough water and use your [clothing] layers properly," Gorman adds, "you don't really get that cold."

Norbert Kliszczewski, a camping expert from Trailhead outdoors store on Dundas Street, agrees that outfitting yourself in the proper attire is the most important part of winter camping. And Kliszczewski should know – he has winter camped all over North America.

"A polypropylene wicking layer close to your skin will transfer the moisture away from your body and keep you dry," he says. "If you use cotton, the moisture is going to absorb into the cot-

"There's a certain sense of purity in a winter landscape – it's possible to get the feeling you're the first person there"

Stephen Gorman

ton and you're going to use your body heat to evaporate it. That means you're going to be cold very quickly."

For Gorman, snow is used as a source of entertainment. He says it can be used for comfort and fun around your campsite.

"Contrary to popular perception, winter campers don't necessarily spend 12 to 15 hours in their tents and sleeping bags. There's a lot to do in the evening, particularly if you build a fire," he says. "Snow is a wonderful material because you can build virtually anything out of it. You can get quite comfortable around a fire using snow to carve out chairs and couches and places to relax and hangout and have fun. You should build in play time," says Gorman.

Locations that offer camping in the summer time will usually

accommodate winter campers. Gorman suggests seeking out your favourite spots year round.

"There's no reason not to go back to your special haunts and locations that you visit in the summer. I don't think all trips need to be in exotic locations," he says. "You can find adventure right out your back door, in a provincial park or in an area you may take for granted. It's great to see a familiar place in a new light."

John Swick, interior supervisor of Algonquin Provincial Park, says they are open all year for those who can't get enough of the outdoors.

"We have a designated campground for winter camping, and the interior of the park is open all year round," he explains.

The cost of camping in the park remains the same, regardless of season [\$7-\$25.75 per day]. Swick says extra precautions are needed when camping off season.

"You have to be careful of hypothermia. You also need to give your itinerary to our office if you are going into the interior in case anything goes wrong," he says.

Gorman, Kliszczewski and Swick agree that winter camping is increasing in popularity. They say improvements in equipment and marketing as well as increased participation in winter sports such as snowshoeing, cross country skiing and back-country snowboarding are reasons for the trend.

But to Gorman, wanting to winter camp is just human nature.

"At one point, I decided I wanted to extend my stay in the outdoors in the winter as much as I did in the summer. Having a real love of wilderness, it seemed natural to spend as much time outdoors year round, not just limited to warm weather seasons," he energetically explains. "There's a sense of invigoration in the cold that you don't get at any other time of year."



Norbert Kliszczewski and Elizabeth Crawford of Trailhead Store, Mississauga

Gearing up for winter camping

Dressing properly is the most important part of winter camping. Norbert Kliszczewski of Trail Head suggests the following attire and equipment:

On top of a polypropylene layer, a mid-layer is required. Kliszczewski suggests wool or fleece pants and sweaters.

A waterproof and breathable outer-layer is needed. Gore-Tex and other companies make clothing that guards against rain, sleet, snow and wind.

"Following that, good socks are important. Merino wool socks are great. They should be accompanied by insulated, waterproof boots," he says.

To bear the elements, you'll need a winter sleeping bag. They come filled with down or synthetic materials and are rated according to temperature. But Kliszczewski warns that a minus 25-degree bag simply means it's warmer than a minus 20-degree bag. It doesn't ensure you'll stay warm to those temperatures.

A good, four-season tent is also a must.

"They tend to have a lot less mesh in them because you don't want snow and wind coming into your tent. They tend to be sturdier and have more poles than a three season tent to fend off the wind and snow load," says Kliszczewski.

He also suggests using one with a vestibule that attaches to the end of the tent.

"A vestibule is good for cooking in wintertime. If there's a blizzard outside you might be forced to cook inside the tent -- but you have to be careful because you can get a lot of exhaust coming off the stove – so you have to vent the vestibule properly."

Here is a list of winter camping necessities:

- Clothing - under layer - \$60 - \$120
- Clothing - mid-layer - \$100 - \$400
- Clothing - outer-layer - \$150 - \$1500
- Boots - \$70 - \$250
- 4 season tent - \$200 - \$700
- Sleeping bag - \$200 - \$1000
- Kerosene stove - \$40 - \$150

economy class

SYNDROME

Cramped airline passengers face deadly health risks

By Dave Ward



Chris McKinnon

Have you ever found yourself sitting in an airplane between two people you don't know, holding your body still because you can't stand the thought of having your leg against theirs?

If that's the case, you could be a candidate for Economy Class Syndrome.

Doctors warn this kind of scenario can be dangerous to your health. It resulted in the death of Emma Christoffersen, a 28-year-old Briton who died when a blood clot reached her lung following a flight from Australia to England in September.

Economy Class Syndrome is the popular name given to a condition in which an airline passenger develops a blood clot as a result of sitting still too long. The medical term for the condition is Deep Vein Thrombosis or DVT. It can occur not only during long flights, but any time the body does not move for an extended period of time.

"Deep Vein Thrombosis will not, in itself, cause fatalities," says Dr. Guy Savoie, chairman of the Aviation Medical Review Board. "The blood clot has to dislodge and go to the lung. This can occur in a matter of seconds or it can occur over a couple of hours."

Paul Kite, 42, of Ottawa sat in a middle seat in the economy class section on an Air Canada flight to England in 1998. He fell asleep during the flight and awoke with a stiff leg. Several hours later he noticed a large bruise behind his knee. It later turned out to be a blood clot.

"I spent eight days in the hospital on blood thinners," says Kite. "The doctors told me the blood clot was caused by a

long period of immobility."

After being released from the hospital in England, Kite returned home to Ottawa and remained on blood thinners for six months.

He still travels frequently but takes certain precautions. "Now I take aspirin two days before and, during my trip, I drink lots of water and also get up and walk around every once in a while."

Dr. Savoie says as a result of media exposure, many think Economy Class Syndrome is a common occurrence.

"Millions of people are travelling by

"I spent eight days in the hospital on blood thinners. The doctors told me the blood clot was caused by a long period of immobility."

Paul Kite

air every day and this occurrence is actually quite rare. DVT usually affects people who are already in hospital and are immobilized," he says.

Certain factors, such as obesity, medications, dehydration, stress and varicose veins, put some at higher risk of suffering DVT.

"The best way to feel safe is to know your own medical background and to get up and walk the length of the cabin a few times during your flight," Dr. Savoie says.

There is no international regulation on seat pitch, [the distance from the back of your seat to the back of the seat in front]. Seat pitch ranges from 28 to 60 inches, depending on the airline and ticket class. The average economy class seat pitch in Canadian airlines is 31 inches. Although media coverage of Economy Class Syndrome often suggests that cramped seating is the direct cause of DVT, airlines in Canada are looking first to simpler solutions.

Warren Everson, spokesperson for the Air Transportation Association of Canada, says many airlines are showing videos before take-off that instruct people how to exercise in their seats. "I think it's fair for the operators, who are actually the people in the trenches, to wait until the specialists come to some kind of consensus," Everson said.

Until airlines are forced to increase their economy class seating pitch, travellers will have to look out for themselves.

"The best thing we can do for our customers is give them advice," says Air Canada spokesperson Laura Cooke. "But the onus is on the person who's flying to make a conscious decision about how they choose to travel."

So the next time you find yourself in a plane sitting straight and motionless, don't just stew in rage over your lack of space. Get up and walk around, because your blood might be clotting.

Economy class syndrome can easily be avoided by knowing your own medical background, drinking lots of water and exercising during the flight.

Oh, and lay off the alcohol.

THE PAIN! The Pain!

By Katy de Vries

Flyers inner ear pressure can lead to serious problems

The plane begins its descent as thoughts of hot sands, cold drinks and good times come to mind. Then the pain begins – that intense ear pain that commonly strikes air passengers.

"It was awful. I had a layover at Pearson International Airport on my way down south, and I could not hear a thing. I couldn't even hear what the guy at the reception desk was saying when I asked about my next departure because he sounded muffled and unclear," says Samantha Ward, a 22-year-old university student and first time air traveller.

Ward suffered from painful ear clogging and popping while on her way to Florida to enjoy a peaceful rest away from the books.

"The strain within the ear that afflicts us when we fly is a sensation that will affect anyone who's in a situation where the air pressure changes," explains Dr. Jim Pfaff, medical officer for Transport Canada. "Not only flying but scuba diving, driving in a hilly area, or ascending and descending in an elevator will produce the same feeling."

The pain occurs as a result of unbalanced air pressure between the middle ear, which sits behind the ear drum, and the environment outside the ear, Dr. Pfaff explains.

The laws of physics say the volume of air increases when altitude increases. So when the plane goes up, the air trapped in the middle ear expands, creates pressure in the ear and prevents the ear drum from moving effectively. As a result, the built up

pressure has trouble escaping the ear.

There is an escape. Pressure can be alleviated through the eustachian tube, which connects the middle ear to the back of the throat.

"This is why we recommend swallowing often or



The weapons fit for battle

chewing gum," Dr. Pfaff says, "it opens the eustachian tube and allows more air to go into the middle ear, and so the pressure inside the ear and outside the ear equalizes."

"I thought my head was going to explode. I had never been in such pain in my life," says Terri Mason, an agent for Canadian Airlines Solutions who has battled the pain.

"I don't think the first time flyer quite understands what is happening nor do they

realize that it's crucial to stay ahead of equalizing the pressure as the plane climbs or drops," Pfaff says.

"If you haven't stayed ahead of the pressure you can experience barotrauma. Tiny tears along the edges of the ear drum and bleeding may result. This will generally clear up on its own but it's usually a fairly painful process," Dr. Pfaff says.

However, it is possible for barotrauma to lead to permanent damage and a loss of hearing.

Geoff Hamblin, a flight instructor with the Brampton Flying Club, teaches the valsalva technique to all new pilots in ground school. He says it's one of the most important

procedures they learn.

"By pinching the nose, puffing out the cheeks and blowing gently, the eustachian tube opens and allows the pressure to balance outside and inside the ear. It does essentially the same thing as chewing gum or swallowing but is generally a more effective relief," Hamblin says.

Both Hamblin and Pfaff advise against flying while experiencing cold symptoms as it can be detrimental to the proper functioning of the ear.

"When you fly with a cold or any other condition that interferes with the normal function of the Eustachian tube, such as tonsillitis or sinus problems," Pfaff explains, "more effort is needed to open the eustachian tube because the tissues that surround the tube swell. This means that the air pressure is less likely to be released," he says.

This condition is more troublesome when the plane lands than when it takes off, although pressure problems can be experienced on both the ascent and descent.

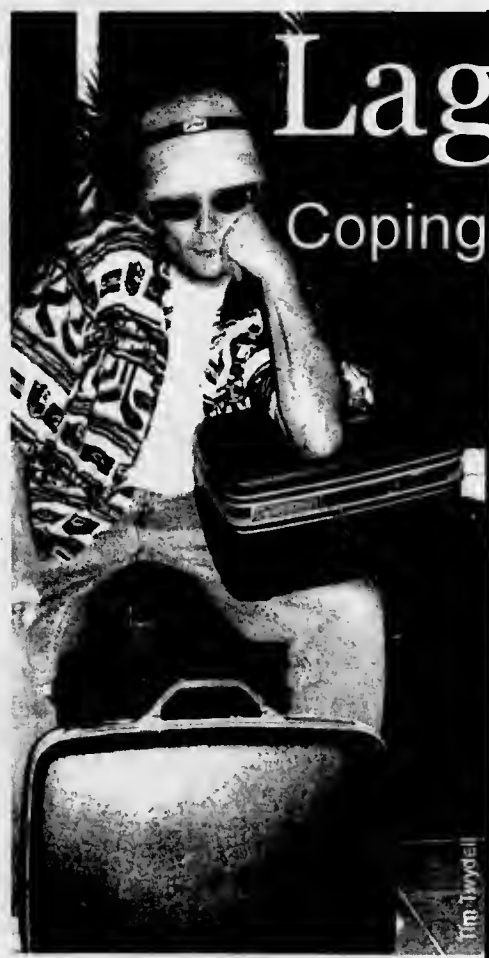
Hamblin likens the problem to a balloon. It's easier to let air out of an already inflated balloon than it is to inflate a flattened one.

Ward said she felt the symptoms of a head cold for about a week after her trip even though she felt fine before she left. She also suffered from headaches, a sore throat and fatigue.

"I tried swallowing a lot, chewing gum and moving my jaw which would relieve the pain temporarily, but I couldn't keep up with it on the way down and the pain won," Ward says.

While the problem is most common among first-time flyers, it also strikes some passengers who are more prone to pressure problems than others.

Awareness of the problem and understanding your ears is a major step to preventing ear pain while in the air. And let's face it, you've got way more important things to do on vacation than nursing your ears back to health.



Jet lag can be a drag

Lagging behind

Coping with long distance travel

By Tim Twydell

Mark Sokol can't let jet lag get the better of him. As a pilot for Air Canada, hundreds of people place their lives in his hands every time he flies a plane.

Sokol has flown through countless time zones, and dealt with jet lag – a disruption in the body's internal clock – numerous times. He prefers flying westbound, "the path of least resistance," since it seems days simply become extended. When flying east, conversely, it's possible to lose a whole day.

Sokol describes his typical schedule.

"Get into London at 9 a.m. By the time you get to the hotel, it's 11 a.m. Go to bed for three hours and you're up at 1 p.m.," he explains, sounding exhausted just reliving

the experience. "You'll feel vertigo [light headed] and have stars in your eyes. Stay up no matter how you feel, go back to sleep at 8 p.m., wake up at five in the

morning, have breakfast and be ready to fly again by 9 a.m.," he says.

Catching up on sleep is a huge challenge for pilots. They have been known to take Gravol [a medication for motion sickness] to induce sleep, or the drug Melatonin.

Melatonin is a hormone made by the pineal gland in the brain. It tells the brain when it's time to sleep and when it's time to wake up. This drug comes with nasty side effects including nausea, depression and hang over type symptoms, according to www.familydoctor.org.

Currently, Melatonin isn't available in Canada.

The kind of sleep pattern Sokol describes takes a huge toll on the body. For that reason, pilots flying long distances work no

more than 10 days or 80 hours a month.

Dr. Paul Oh, doctor of internal medicine at Sunnybrook Hospital, says jet lag and too many long-distance flights can have disastrous effects on the body.

"Metabolic conditions that require an internal clock are most at risk," he says.

Dr. Oh cites high blood pressure and diabetes as two conditions most likely to be worsened by long distance flights. Some mental ailments are also associated with disturbances in sleep patterns.

"[Jet lag] can make you tired, irritable and have poor concentration. It can lead to headaches, poor work performance and depression. Business people suffer because they try to work but all the body wants to do is sleep," he says.

The airline industry is aware of the difficulties travellers face in adjusting to time zones. British Airways has sleeper cabins with beds so their customers can catch up on their z's. American Airlines recently removed sections of its seats so customers could stretch out and relax more comfortably. Hotels such as the Singapore Hilton offer herbal treatments and spas to relax away any jet lag problems.

"Jet lag is like the common cold, it can not be cured," Dr. Oh says. "The only true way to deal with it is time."

The Lariam

BUZZ

Travellers weigh the pros and cons of this anti-malarial drug

By Kim MacDonald

When Jaime Carron walked into her local travel clinic last October, she was willing to take any drugs that her doctor prescribed.

Carron, a 24-year-old Guelph University graduate, spent six months in Nairobi, Kenya volunteering at an orphanage for children with AIDS. Her main concern before leaving was ensuring she would not contract malaria while in Africa.

"If you've never been away before, then you are pretty naive," Carron says. "My doctor did not really offer any options besides Lariam for malaria prevention, so that's what I took."

At the time, she was not aware she would soon be suffering from some of the side-effects associated with the medication.

Mefloquine, sold under the brand name Lariam, is the drug most often prescribed by doctors for people going to malarial regions. Although there have been complaints of nightmares and nausea by many who have taken this drug, doctors continue to recommend it to their patients.

Dr. Kevin Kain from the Centre for Travel and Tropical Medicine Division of Infectious Diseases, Toronto Hospital, says the reason for this is simple:

"It is extremely effective [99 per cent] and it is the most active anti-malarial currently on the market in Canada," he says.

He also believes mefloquine is the most "user friendly" medication because travellers take it

once a week as opposed to every day as with most anti-malarials.

Health Canada reports that about 20-30 per cent of travellers will experience minor side-effects from the medication. These include nausea, strange dreams, dizziness, mood changes, headaches and diarrhea.

After taking her first pill, Carron spent the day in bed with an upset stomach.

"I went to my doctor and told him that I didn't think I should keep taking Lariam. He said the symptoms would pass and they did for a while."

Dr. Kain says if a patient has any doubts concerning the drug, he will try to find another solution.

"I have no interest in prescribing something that is going to have adverse effects on someone," he says. "If you don't tolerate mefloquine, then I try to find a drug you do."

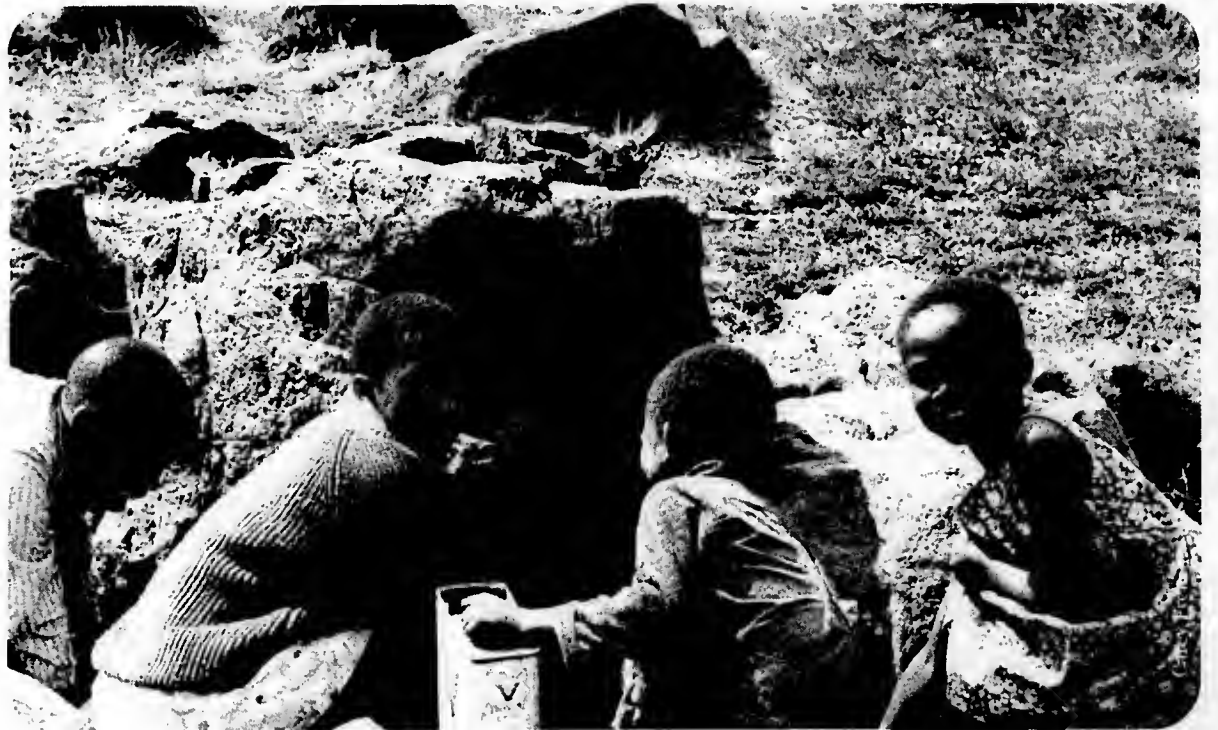
It's for this reason that he has his patients take at least three doses of their medication before they leave the country.

"That way, if they don't tolerate the drug," he says, "I can get them started on something they do tolerate."

Carron felt fine until a few weeks into her trip. Then, the nightmares started.

"Whenever I woke up I was paranoid. I had one dream that someone was standing over my bed strangling me. I thought I woke up but the dream continued," Carron recalls. "That's the difference between these dreams and regular nightmares - it's impossible to distinguish between reality and dreams. You wake up and you're still scared," she says.

These dreams occurred sporadically throughout her trip, and, although



Africa can be a traveller's paradise, but would-be explorers must deal with the constant threat of malaria.

her dreams were bad, they weren't bad enough to stop her from taking the pills.

Dr. Kain says for anyone who starts experiencing side-effects, there are options. Doxycycline is a cheap alternative that's available anywhere in the world. Side-effects of this drug are minimal, and if taken properly, it's as effective as mefloquine.

But Dr. Kain says it's important to remember that most people have little or no problem with the medication.

Tina Bellino, a 23-year-old York

University student, spent a month in Uganda as a volunteer teacher. She took mefloquine throughout her trip but didn't encounter any problems.

ence problems. In a study done at Toronto General Hospital, 1000 people were given the drug without knowing anything about it. Only five per cent had to stop taking it because they couldn't tolerate the side-effects. The study also found women were more likely to have trouble tolerating the drug than men and children had the least amount of problems.

But can the growing number of people who are reporting serious problems with Mefloquine be ignored?

Dr. Kain says the recent media focus on possible side-effects may be contributing to current negative attitudes about the drug. He refers to it as a sort of "self-fulfilling prophecy."

"I don't want to dismiss the symptoms that these people are feeling. If a patient of mine has any doubts about this medication, then I will work with them to find an alternative," he says. "But studies have been done where people have been given placebos and told that they are Mefloquine. These people have sometimes come back experiencing the side-effects associated with it."

Carron is planning another trip to Africa. She considers herself better prepared to find an alternative way to combat malaria. Although she admits the paranoia and nightmares she experienced in Nairobi could have been causes because she was far from home, she says, "I would never recommend Lariam to anyone, and I would never ever take it again."

"Whenever I woke up I was paranoid. I had one dream that someone was standing over my bed and strangling me."

Jaime Carron

University student, spent a month in Uganda as a volunteer teacher. She took mefloquine throughout her trip but didn't encounter any problems.

"I was a little nervous when I started taking Lariam, but I didn't feel any side-effects," she says. "When it came down to it, I was more worried about getting malaria than having nightmares."

Bellino represents the majority of mefloquine takers who don't experi-



Malaria is no picnic, but Lariam is no treat either.

ACCESS :

DENIED!

Disabled travellers face barriers worldwide

By Linda Johnson

As she stood in the foyer of the Prado Museum, Spain's national gallery and home of one of the greatest art collections in the world, Marina Pinto could only look with anxiety at the long staircase that lay ahead.

They were solid stone and not a single banister was in sight.

"Every time I went up those stairs, I thought 'I hope I don't slip and break my neck', literally," says Pinto, who walks with the aid of poles.

Pinto had been to Spain many times on family vacations. But this trip would be very different; this time, she was on her own.

For the physically disabled, accustomed to the greater accessibility in Canada, the difficulty of getting around abroad can come as a shock. Many public buildings have not been modified to accommodate their needs, and the lack of facilities, such as ramps and automatic doors, can transform a holiday into an ordeal.

The Prado is a clear example of Spain's failure to adapt its public buildings to the needs of the disabled. Built in the 18th century, it has undergone few structural changes in its history. What little has been done, Pinto says, has been thoughtless. Ramps, for instance, had been added in various places in the gallery.

"I know they were trying. But what were these ramps made of? Polished wood, the worst possible material because you have no traction. And the gradients were way too steep."

Such problems are by no means confined to Spain. Most European countries, according to Lucy Wong-Hernandez, executive director of Winnipeg-based Disabled Peoples' International, have not seen much improvement in recent years. There are some exceptions, she says - the UK, Scandinavia, and some parts of Ireland. Some cities, such as Barcelona, the site of the 1992 Olympics, have made significant and permanent changes in preparing to host major international events. But, on the whole, she says, the change has been very slow in coming.

"France is very inaccessible, Italy is very inaccessible because of the many landmark buildings, and because many of these buildings are also hotels," she says.

"In trying to visit significant sights, in Italy for instance, even going to the Vatican or churches and areas that are part of the history and the arts, it's very difficult."

The only way to get around is to have someone to help. But, Wong-Hernandez says that's not the way it should be.

"The idea is for people to be able to move around independently."

The predominance of buildings often

centuries old is of course a central reason for lack of accessibility in countries such as Spain and Italy. These structures are of historic importance and there is a reluctance to have them altered.

In part, Pinto believes, this is due to the lack of organized pressure.

"In Britain, people are more aware because the disability community is very vocal there," she says. "So it's different. But in a country like Spain, they've had legislation on the books since 1976 regarding accessibility, but in practice nobody pays any attention to it."

So even buildings constructed more recently aren't much better. The National Auditorium of Madrid dates from 1987. But, in terms of accessibility, it might as well have been built in the last century. Pinto recalls the afternoon she had a ticket for a concert there.

"When I got to the balcony, I was helpless," she recalls. "I couldn't get up and down the aisles. They had polished wooden steps and no banisters of any kind anywhere."

"It's a beautiful building, physically and acoustically. They just left a major item out."

Outside, the situation is no better. For the disabled, the subway in Madrid is completely off limits. It was built at the turn of the century when the major architectural influence in Europe was art deco.

"Coming up out of the subway," Pinto says, "because it was art deco, the banister follows the line of the wall, and the arch of

"Every time I went up those stairs, I thought 'I hope I don't slip and break my neck.'"

Marina Pinto

the wall goes into the ground.

"So by the time you reach the top of the stairs, you have no banister. For me, it was hopeless."

In fact, the ordeal of getting from one place to another shows just how deep is the problem of inaccessibility, and how resistant it will be to any real remedy. For, where buildings can be modified - elevators and ramps added - streets cannot.

"The infrastructure in a lot of these cities is medieval," Pinto says. "There's no curb room; there's no sidewalk room. There's no room, period."

"Mobility in the streets is difficult," Wong-Hernandez says, "because the streets there are different. For one thing, they're not paved as they are here."

The reluctance to alter historic build-

ings is understandable. But there is the more fundamental problem of awareness. It is, after all, only recently, even in countries such as Canada and the United States, that great strides have been made toward making public places more accessible, that attitudes began to change.

In many other areas, there is still virtually no consciousness of the need to provide for greater mobility for the disabled.

"In the entire time I was in Madrid, I did not see another person with a physical handicap," Pinto says. "When you consider the number of car accidents in Spain, there are a lot of quadriplegics and paraplegics in Spain. But you never see them, because they can't get out of their houses or apartments."

Although the problem of accessibility exists everywhere, it is most pervasive, according to Wong-Hernandez, in developing states. Throughout these regions, she says, travellers will find few areas - Singapore, Japan, and some parts of Thailand - where significant moves have been taken to increase mobility.

"The majority of countries in the developing world do not have laws and regulations that would implement any changes to make the environment more accessible," she says, "It's a combination of many factors. But, with developing countries, it is partly a matter of not having the sensitivity or the awareness to make their societies more inclusive."

Tour operators who specialize in tours for the disabled not surprisingly paint a more positive picture. According to Cheryl Horning, a senior travel counsellor at Travel Helpers, the facilities are there, though they may not be as obvious as in North America.

"You can't go to Europe very easily or very quickly. You have to do your homework, and know where to look."

"Even the oldest building will have a freight elevator," she says.

One great advantage of travelling in Europe, she points out, is the presence of more efficient and extensive public transport systems.

"You can get around London, for



Disabled access has historically been a problem in Europe.

instance, using the Underground or taxis. And I had a fellow a few years ago who went on his own in a wheelchair all around Europe using Rail Europe and a Eurail pass. So, you can do it."

The key, Horning says, is to do your research. Take the time to check out tourist spots, hotels, and restaurants, on the Internet for accessibility. But, she warns, you still have to be careful.

"Somebody who is not disabled has a different concept of accessibility than someone who is. So you really have to look at it," she cautions.

In the mean-time, rules regarding the treatment of disabled passengers have been set by the International Air Transport Authority and, although even major airlines still do not adhere to them as much as they should, they have brought improvement.

Kevin Humphrey has travelled widely over the last 10 years. In that time, he says, the biggest change he's seen has been in attitudes. While he still encounters major problems, such as the lack of expert airline staff, most people go out of their way to be helpful.

"Attitudes are improving because of company training programs and increased knowledge. Before, it was just ignorance, no reaction, or rudeness."

"People now are more open, more willing to help, more knowledgeable about what help is needed," Humphrey says.

Which alone is an important step forward in the struggle for greater accessibility. After all, as he says, attitude is the biggest barrier.

SHARK!

Florida's sharks take a bite out of tourism

By Nick Dixon

Every time Tom Flanigan hears the words "shark attack," he cringes.

As the communications director at Visit Florida, a state tourism and marketing agency, he knows a highly publicized shark attack in Florida's water means his phone is going to be ringing off the hook.

"Considering the number of human hours spent in the water, your chances of being bitten by a shark in Florida are infinitesimal," says Flanigan.

But according to statistics from the International Shark Attack File [ISAF], out of the 58 confirmed incidents of unprovoked shark attacks world wide, in 1999, 25 occurred in the water off Florida's beaches.

George Burgess, director of the ISAF, and 30-year veteran in the ichthyology [a branch of zoology that deals with fish] field, says if you are aware of the minimal risks when you enter the shark's domain and you take the proper precautions to avoid the risks, swimming in Florida's waters is a safe activity.

The ISAF keeps records of all known shark attacks. More than 3,200 individual investigations are currently on file, covering a period from the mid-1500's to the present.

This year, with 33 shark attacks reported in Florida, [one of them fatal], the trend is on the rise. According to the ISAF, this year's fatality is only the fifth in the last 25 years.

Shark Attack Stats

(1990-1999)

Worldwide # of attacks: 536
 # of attacks in Florida: 186 [34.7%]
 # of attacks in Brazil: 50 [9.3%]
 # of attacks in Australia: 53 [9.8%]

Worldwide # of fatalities: 71
 # of fatalities in Florida: 1 [1.4%]
 # of fatalities in Brazil: 2 [17%]
 # of fatalities in Australia: 9 [12.6%]
 Source: ISAF

Flanigan is quick to point that ISAF's numbers can be misleading. With a state population of around 15 million people, 1,800 kilometers of beaches and a tourism industry that hosts almost 60 million visitors annually, the odds of being attacked by a shark in Florida are "around one in 30 million."

"A person doesn't have the time to be measuring the height of the dorsal fin, or what shaped teeth [the shark] has."

George Burgess

He also says the the period between June and October - the busiest and hottest part of tourist season - is high time for attacks.

Most shark attacks aren't from Jaws-like man-eaters, even though it's difficult to be certain exactly what kinds of sharks do pose a threat. During an attack, as ISAF's Burgess points out, "a person doesn't have the time to be measuring the height of the dorsal fin, or what shaped teeth [the shark] has."

According to Burgess' research, the most common culprits are the spinner, blacktip, sharptip and blacknose sharks. These sharks are usually three to four feet in length.

He says most attacks are quick, as opposed to the prolonged and malicious attacks that movie-goers associate with *Jaws*.

"Ninety per cent of the attacks are hit-

and-run attacks. The shark bites the victim once and disappears."

The other 10 per cent of attacks are the more serious "sneak attack" variety. Here, sharks grab their victims and terrorize them over a longer period.

Burgess says this type of attack is more likely to result in a deadly outcome.

"The injuries are usually more serious lacerations caused by multiple bites," he says.

Burgess explains that many shark attacks on humans are a case of "mistaken identity, where sharks are interpreting flashing or movement as those of another natural prey."

Sharks don't seek out humans as a source of food, but rather mistake them for a typical meal, he said.

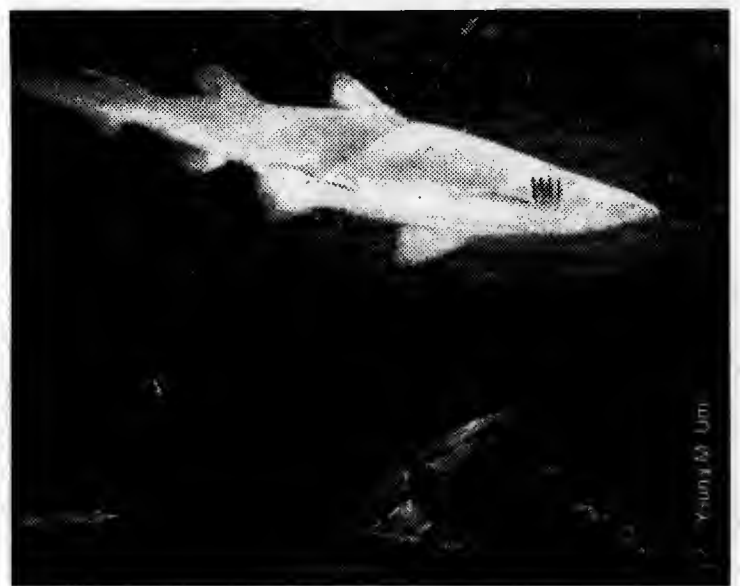
"They seek out appropriate-shaped and behaviour food items, and occasionally humans fall into that category," says Burgess.

While shark attacks do appear to be on the rise [33 is well above Florida's average for the last decade of 18.6 per year], the numbers need to be viewed in context.

An ISAF report compares the number of shark



Carrey French



Young M. Um

A hungry predator patrols the murky depths

attacks to population growth over the last 40 years. It shows that shark attacks have kept pace with the increase in the regional population.

In other words, don't assume that because the number of shark attacks has increased over the last few years that

it isn't safe to swim in Florida's waters.

Flanigan and Burgess both agree: You have a better chance of winning the Florida lottery than being attacked by a shark.

To Avoid Shark Attacks

Apart from staying out of the water altogether, here are some tips on how to avoid being attacked.

- When you're in the water, stay in groups. Sharks like to attack solitary prey.
- Avoid wearing shiny jewelry. Light shining off jewels looks similar to light reflecting off fish scales.
- Avoid swimming at dawn or dusk. While romantic, these are active feeding times for sharks and they have a sensory advantage over humans at these times.
- Avoid swimming in areas where a lot of fish are jumping out of the water and birds are diving into the water.

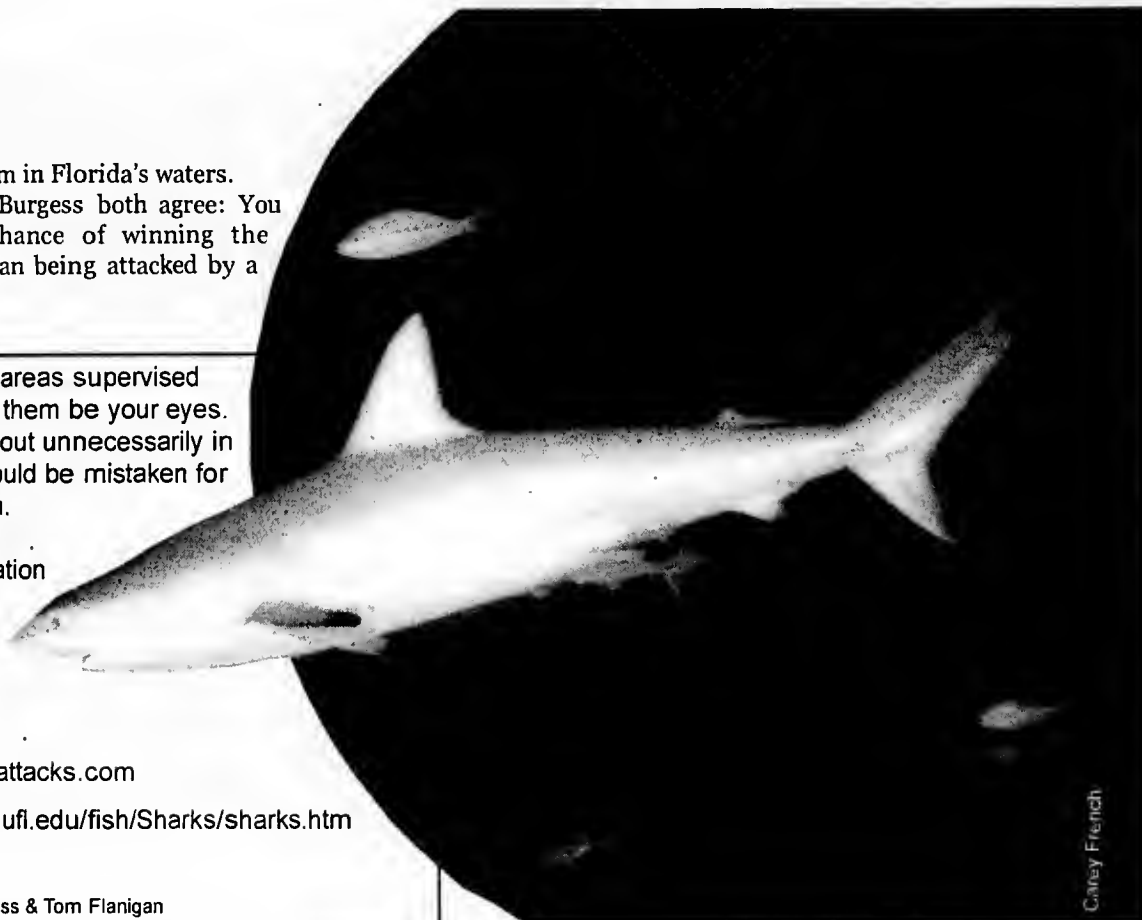
- Swim in beach areas supervised by lifeguards, let them be your eyes.
- Don't thrash about unnecessarily in the water, you could be mistaken for a floundering fish.

For more information on shark attacks visit the following web sites:

<http://www.sharkattacks.com>

<http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Sharks/sharks.htm>

Source: George Burgess & Tom Flanigan



I DECLARE

From exotic animals to deadly weapons, Canada Customs has seen it all!

By Young M. Um

Like most travellers, James Rhydderch felt a little nervous going through Canada Customs. Rhydderch and a friend, who were returning home after a three month backpacking trip in 1998, had purchased some unusual souvenirs from Indonesia.

"One of the questions you have to fill out in the Customs declaration card is 'are you carrying any weapons,'" Rhydderch recalls. "So we put yes, and what the items were — long knives and blowguns."

The declared items, he says, were more like wall decorations than weapons. He intended to give these items, costing about \$30 each, to family and friends back home. But the bamboo blowguns, cow-bone blowgun, and some rather large ornate knives never reached the intended recipient. Customs officers at Pearson International Airport confiscated the souvenirs.

"I'll never forget the customs officers, they were by the books-type people," he says. "Eighteen hours after flying you just can't believe it."

But he adds his customs experience could have been worse.

"We were being pretty honest. They didn't go through our stuff. They asked to see what we'd declared. So, we showed it to them. That was it."

So, the weary travellers left the airport — with much lighter luggage, a receipt listing the seized items and instructions for the appeal process.

Duncan Smith, a spokesman for Canada Customs, says a person has 30-days from the time of the seizure to file a written appeal. "Anything that is detained by Customs — the person has the option of appealing it," Smith explains,

noting that the length of the appeal process is case dependent and can even last a year or two.

"Souvenirs to me are things people collect, like salt and pepper shakers," he says, "you're talking knives ... that's not a normal souvenir." And regardless of the intended use of the souvenir, he says, a weapon is a weapon. He adds, blowguns are one of the more bizarre items Customs has seized over the years.

Not surprisingly, Rhydderch's appeal was later denied. He never saw his gifts again.

Rhydderch's "weapons-souvenirs" are just one type of illegal items travellers are bringing back to Canada. Smith recalls some of other unique souvenirs that have crossed the Customs path.

"The most famous one over the years involved a woman who had a live parrot in her bra," he recalls. "I had a gentleman with a tobacco can in his suit pocket with live finches. And there was one person who had a parrot under a wig."

Besides "live" bird souvenirs, Smith says Customs officials have seized a barrage of items made from "dead" species — stuffed iguanas being a popular item.

Travellers, whether knowingly or not, are returning home with souvenirs made from endangered species. These souvenirs include items made of ivory, marine turtle shells, whalebone carvings, cat claws and skins, and live plants, such as cacti and orchids.

The Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora [CITES]

Types of souvenirs not allowed into Canada:

- tupilaks from sperm whale teeth
- suntan lotion from marine turtles
- large spotted cat skins and fur articles
- tortoiseshell jewelry
- elephant ivory and products containing ivory

- stuffed crocodiles and leather products
 - all rhinoceros products from most African populations
 - carapaces from marine turtles
- [source: www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/cites/notes2_e.html]

For more information visit the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency web site [www.cra-adrc.gc.ca] and the CITES web site [www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/cites] or contact the CITES Administrator.

The complete CITES control list is available at www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/cites/intro_e.html.

regulates trade of more than 30,000 species of wild animals and wild plants and their products. Nicole Pelletier, a CITES specialist at the Canadian Wildlife Service, explains that travellers can bring back just about any souvenirs to Canada — as long as they obtain the correct import and/or export permits.

"The problem is that most of the time travellers don't get the permits," Pelletier says, "so when they don't have the permits the items are detained at customs when they arrive."

"We always advise people to contact us first, and to contact the country where they are going," she says, noting that the CITES permit regulations are often complex and vary among countries.

Although illegal souvenirs may be widely available in the tourist areas abroad [as in Rhydderch's case in Indonesia], Pelletier warns that just because the items are available does not mean travellers should buy them. "There are a lot of illegal items on the market in many foreign countries," she says. "The souvenirs can be on sale in very nice shops, but it doesn't mean that the items were obtained legally."



Peddling prohibited wares

By Drew Harmer

The Dark Side of the Sun

Remember the last time you walked along the beach or rode your bike in the mountains? Remember skiing the slopes or taking your boat out on the water? Now ask yourself, amidst all the fun you were having, did you honestly think about how much damage the sun was doing to your body?

Arming yourself with proper sunscreen and sunglasses will make your sunny days safe days.

"If you want to spend any amount of time in the sun and you don't want to burn at all, use an SPF 60. The higher the SPF or the sun protection factor, the less vulnerable you are to the damaging rays," says Dr. Charles Lynde of the Canadian Dermatology Association.

Lynde says some people are more susceptible to serious damage than others.

"People who have already experienced skin cancer should be especially cautious. So should people who have burned easily in the past."

And according to Lynde, age also makes a difference. The damaging effects of the sun accumulate over years.

"If you continue to burn yourself, you're doing permanent damage to your skin," Lynde says.

"People who play sports or go swimming should reapply their sunscreen often. Sunscreen can wash

off in the water or when you sweat a lot."

Lynde says sport gels and sprays work as well as the lotions, but he warns "not all of them offer the same SPF ratings, the lotions usually have the higher SPFs."

Even the shade isn't entirely safe. "The sun's rays can reflect off your surroundings. They can bounce off the water, the sand, the snow, even concrete. You're really not safe outdoors unless you're protected," Lynde says.

It's also important to remember your proximity to the equator when you're in the sun.

"Spots near the equator are worse on your skin, so are high elevations. Basically, if you're outdoors anywhere during the middle of the day [between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.] you're in danger," he warns.

Sunglasses are also a must to enjoy a safe day in the sun.

"Most sunglasses are 100 per cent protective against both UVA and UVB rays. Those are the ultraviolet rays that do the most damage to our eyes and skin," explains Toronto optometrist Dr. Julie Paterson. "Without protection you can suffer from inflammation of the cornea. You can also sunburn the surface of your eye, injuring your retina and causing nerve damage."

Paterson says consumers often think about style over function

when shopping for sunglasses.

"Most people buy sunglasses because of the frame, they don't think about how safe they are. The tint of the lens isn't important, neither is the material the lens is made from, it's the protective coating on the lens that's most important," she says.

The best glasses protect against UVC rays as well, the "kind that cause cataracts," Paterson says.

Choosing the correct lenses is especially important when buying glasses for young children.

"The cheap little glasses that kids wear usually don't have UV protection in them. Kids' pupils are bigger than ours and need to be protected better than that. Make sure you ask for advice before buying glasses for your children," recommends Paterson.

Kathleen Gregoris, a counter attendant at the Sunglass Hut in Toronto, says only two brands offer UVC protection.

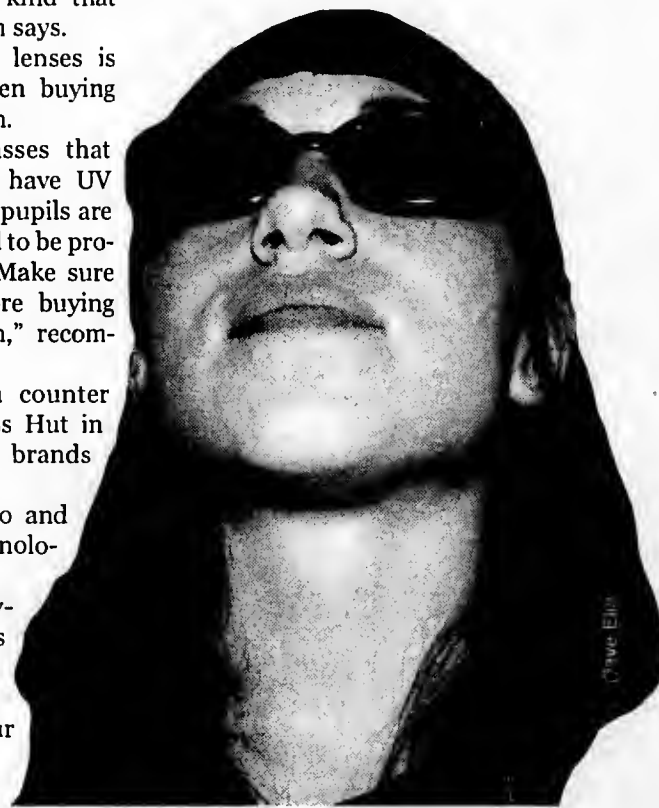
"Right now, only Revo and Maui Jim have the technology."

Paterson wants everyone to remember, "Clouds do not block UV rays. If you're outdoors you should always protect your eyes."

It may seem like a pain to oil up and

don the shades every time you hit the great outdoors. But in the long term, it will result in years of healthy, happy vacationing. And hey, you'll look cool too.

For more information, log on to The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention web site at www.cdc.com.



If you're going to spend time in the sun, make sure you cover up

KID'S Play

Keeping the little ones busy during the holidays

By Elvira Martinovic



Casa Loma is the perfect winter remedy for the bored

It's that time of year again when Santa's revving up his sleigh in preparation for the holidays. For youngsters, that means more time spent indoors. Many of the extra-curricular activities kids are involved in take a break during this time. But for the moms or dads who have to endure the timeless mantra "I'm bored," help is on the way.

Around town, Casa Loma remains a popular outing during the Christmas season. A walking tour through the castle reveals hidden caverns, stables and an underground tunnel. There are narrow stairwells that lead to the towers offering a view of the courtyard, and 22 theme rooms decorated for the holidays. And after all that, top it off with a visit to Santa's workshop where Santa is available to hear requests.

Casa Loma also offers live entertainment over the season.

"This year there will be a marionette puppet show as well as our presenta-

tion of Beauty and the Beast. There will be a \$1.00 surcharge on the show with .25 cents going to the ChumCity Wish Foundation," says Shannon Callon, spokesperson for Casa Loma.

"We also offer group rates on admission prices, for groups of 10 or more."

For something a little different to stimulate the imagination, a visit to the Ontario Science Centre offers displays, exhibits and hands-on learning. There is also an Omnimax theatre on site.

"We offer tickets for Science Centre and the Omnimax theatre, for groups of 25 or more. It works out to be a 23 per cent discount," says Ellen Hui, office co-ordinator.

For young hockey fans, check out The Hockey Hall of Fame located in beautiful BCE Place. Interactive displays, hockey history and trivia will keep the kids busy.

Parents can feel free to pack a lunch to save on costs as all of these places offer facilities for outside food.

When the fast pace of city life gets too much, relief can be found at Mount St. Louis Moonstone Resort, located in

Coldwater, Ontario [15 minutes north of Barrie]. Mt. St. Louis is conveniently close to city dwellers, and offers the relief we all need from the rat race.

"We are known as a family resort, but we can accommodate thousands of people. We have lots of rentals, instructors, and we have our Discover package which is a great way to introduce someone to skiing or snowboarding," says Robert Huter, general manager.

The resort also offers group rates as well as other day and overnight packages.

"If you go to our Web site there is a \$5.00 coupon that can be printed out, straight from the computer. And it is valid seven days a week," says Huter.

There are also places of history and amusement to visit outside the city. Dundurn Castle in Hamilton and children's interactive museum in Hamilton and London will keep kids occupied.

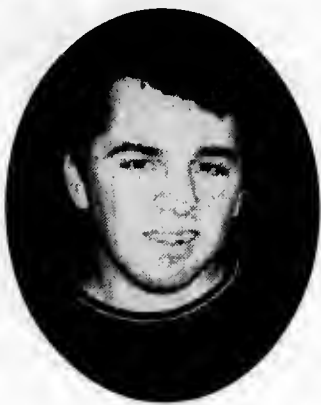
There's no shortage of activities for the kids in and around the mega-city. Cries of "I'm beat" should come as a welcome change to the age-old complaint of "I'm bored."

Word on the Street: Traveller's Edition



David Borg
**Founder of Tribal
 Renegade**

"When I was in Sumatra, a lady lost her purse. As I walked through the jungle I saw an orangutan rifling through the woman's bag. Its hands were covered with hand cream, a toothbrush was in its mouth and it had an Indonesian guide book out - which had a picture of an orangutan on the cover."



Ryan Kulchoski
CICE
First year

"The Sea-Doo I was riding ran out of gas and I was stranded. I fell off too and I could feel sharks and fish under my feet - I was terrified. But I was rescued by a yacht, which picked me up. The owner of the Sea-Doo was looking for me afterwards."



Pintcu Singh
Mech. Engineering
First Semester

"At the New Delhi airport, someone stole our luggage from the carousels. They later approached us and made us pay to get our luggage back. So we paid - there was nothing we could do. They're usually looking for passports to steal."



Diana Digioranni
Journalism
First year

"I was in New York City and I saw a fire truck and ambulance stuck in traffic. Nobody was moving for them - it was really scary. I never want to get in an accident in that city."

Tales from the Road

• Pub goes in Huntley, Illinois consumed 800 lbs of deep-fried turkey testicles during Thanksgiving celebrations. The party has been Parkside Pub's practice for over 20 years.

• Customers are rushing to lie down at the trendy B.E.D. restaurant in Miami. The restaurant serves its patrons in beds ranging from double-size to 10-person mattresses. Many of the Mediterranean dishes are pre-cut into manageable size - but no soups are available.

• A Japanese study has found that people who eat and drink before flying reduce the risk of suffering serious health problems while in the air. Test subjects who ate and drank [as opposed to those who fasted], maintained blood pressure and increased oxygen levels in the brain and organs.

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Travels and Tribulations



Animal photos: David Borg

Protecting your health.

Barbara Beattie works with her detector dog Rookie and her colleagues at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. They help stop forbidden items from entering Canada that could damage our plants and animals or contaminate our food supply. This is just one of many services aimed at protecting the health of all Canadians.

To learn more about the hundreds of services available from the Government of Canada:

- Visit the **Service Canada Access Centre** nearest you
- Visit www.canada.gc.ca
- Call **1 800 O-Canada (1 800 622-6232)**,
 TTY/TDD: **1 800 465-7735**

Canada



TIME TO SPARE?

TAKE A BREAK FROM THE BOOKS AND GRAB A BITE TO EAT!



Lickerich

THE JOLLY FRIAR
Fish & Chips

The
Salty Pepper

The Albion
Bar & Grille

CJ's
BILLIARDS & SPORTS BAR

P.A.M.'s
Coffee & Tea Co.

MR. SUB

TACO VILLA

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