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Brandenburg Gate.



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THIS YEAR, Europe and the United States are riders on the storm of the current economic downturn, and shared values are more than ever essential to American travelers. The most important of those is liberty, celebrated with the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. Now, travelers are free to explore once-hidden corners, mingle with new friends, stop, shop, drink and dine anywhere they like, and at their own pace, in all 39 ETC countries.



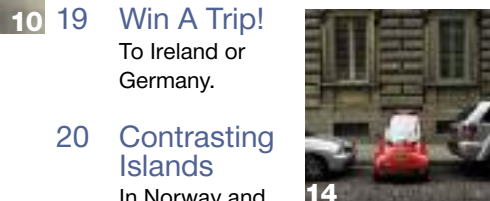
This year, that freedom is also more affordable, with a strong dollar and remarkable deals presented by the ETC's partners—Delta Air Lines, Air France-KLM and Leading Hotels of the World—as well as by other travel suppliers.

“You & Europe” in 2009—it’s a match made in heaven.



Jean-Philippe Pérol
Chairman USA, European Travel Commission

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COVER: Checking the map, on the East Berlin side of the Brandenburg Gate. Photo by Hans Peter Merten/ DZT.

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Contact information on page 26.

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'I Can't Wait to Go Again'

Making dreams of Europe come true—in times like these.



In Santorini, Mike and Emily toast the future.

EUROPE IS VERY MUCH WORTH the trip. That's what these recently returned Americans are telling their families and neighbors.

Two college friends went last summer, taking an all-inclusive tour to avoid worries over the weak dollar. A family and a couple found good-deal cruises. Others traveled in the fall and winter as the dollar strengthened and airfares fell.

All share ideas about how trans-Atlantic travelers can make the most of their time and money this spring and summer. And how each found the same bottom line: a price-less experience.

Natasha Jarmick spent the fall STUDYING IN IRELAND. She is a college senior from Bellingham, Wash.

Dublin's great! It's a big city but it still has that small town vibe. Everyone's willing to help you. I was impressed by the Christ Church Cathedral and the 1,000-year-old church inside it, and loved touring Dublin

Castle and the Chester Beatty Library.

Derry (Londonderry) was my favorite place. I was there with a friend for Halloween, and it's a million times what it is back home, with fireworks and everyone dressed up on the streets.

I loved the beauty of the countryside. We went to the Aran Islands and to County

Mayo, where the cliffs are absolutely beautiful, with the fields being all different shades of green. Limerick was tons of fun. A taxi driver gave us a tour, recommended a wonderful underground restaurant and got us into an exclusive nightclub.

In December, we heard about a new flight to Sardinia, so we said, "Let's go!" It was only €35 (about \$45) roundtrip, and there were maybe five other tourists in the whole city of Alghero. We stayed in a bed-and-breakfast; the owner was so friendly and spoke great English, which was nice, because my Italian is limited to *ciao*.

Natasha at Bunratty Castle.



Brussels & Amsterdam

Includes airfare to Brussels, return from Amsterdam; 3 nights' lodging in each capital and connecting train. From \$799. Gate1Travel.com.

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In Spain, rent a Peugeot 1007 (54 mpg, highway) for 7 days for only \$169. Or a Citroën C2 in France for \$219. VAT is additional. EuropeByCar.com.



sunsets right from our private terrace.

One day we hiked the long trail along the cliffs and caldera, and had lunch in Fira. Another day we went to the beach. Another day we went to the Sigalis vineyard for a wine-tasting. We had a couples massage at a spa, and took a half-day boat tour into the caldera and went snorkeling.

Every time we ate, we tried to have something new. Santorini is known for its little grape tomatoes and capers and a particular kind of eggplant. We ate plenty of grilled fish, and drank wine, ouzo and a Greek cognac.

After six days, we flew back to Athens and took a ferry to Hydra, where we stayed in an affordable pension. One day we hiked a trail



Carrie and Sarah (center) with alumni friends.

mentioned in our guidebook and got lost on the back side of the island—no civilization within view. Finally we came to a house; I knocked and heard muffled voices. A woman came to the door, ushered us inside, gave us water and crackers, and woke her husband from his afternoon nap. They were our saviors, and we've kept in touch.

Emily, who is in love with Italy, thinks that Greece may be even more beautiful. —C.G.

A GRAND TOUR for Univ. of California alumni included Sarah Huebsch and Carrie Harrell who spent four summer weeks in England, France, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Italy.

Carrie: The trip cost about \$5,000, including airfare, hotels and some meals—for a whole month in Europe!

Sarah: I'm a music major and hadn't been to Europe before. It was enchanting to go to Salzburg and to see where Mozart was from. Hiking in the Alps was awesomely beautiful, with wildflowers everywhere. I love The Sound of Music and I was like, wow, I can't believe this place actually exists!

Carrie: My favorite places were Zell am See, where we stayed in a resort hotel, and Plankenstein Castle.

Sarah: Brussels was colorful, with the old buildings lit up at night... You go to Europe not just for the great art and music, but to meet interesting people. And with the European Union headquartered in Brussels, there are people from every country; it's inspiring!

I am into poetry so, on the Spanish Steps in Rome, I thought, it's so close to what Keats wrote about... It was absolutely worth going and I can't wait to go again. —M.J.



Sabina makes a wish in Istanbul.

ROMANIA AND TURKEY were Christmas vacation highlights for Sabina Gault, a publicist from Long Beach, Calif., and her husband, Greg.

I'm from Romania originally. Just two days before Christmas we found—online—a flight from L.A. to Bucharest via Paris for only \$1,100 each.

Romania is a beautiful country, unique. We stayed first with my parents in

Pitesti. In Bucharest, we went to Ceausescu's House of the People, the largest building in the world after the Pentagon, built in pink marble by this madman.

In the mountains, people sell homemade smoked cheese. We stopped to buy some, and a woman invited us in for soft pretzels, hot from her oven.

Between cities, use trains. Some will stop in every village and take forever, while others

IN VENICE:

Michael Burrell, Dr. Lisa Andrea Burrell and two of their children, Gabrielle, 9, and Justin, 12, from West Palm Beach, Fla. "The kids loved riding Venice's water taxis.



"Then we boarded our cruise for the Greek islands. We loved the forts and coliseums. The people were laid back and friendly. We chose restaurants randomly; if the people looked like they were enjoying the food, we picked that one. Next: Rome and Sicily; the latter on account of family ties." —J.D.

zip along. Ask for the *rapid* or *accelerat* expresses.

We were in Istanbul for New Year's, staying at a beautiful hotel on the Bosphorus. I use TripAdvisor.com to compare prices, but often go direct to the hotel itself.

Istanbul's architecture is a fascinating mix of Ottoman Muslim design with an overlay of

continued on next page

Anniversaries

400th of Henry Hudson's river adventure...
150th of birth of Norwegian novelist Knut Hamsun... 65th of the Battle of the Bulge (Belgium and Luxembourg).

Flavor of Ireland

Six-day guided tour to Dublin, Blarney Castle, Killarney, Cliffs of Moher. Medieval banquet at Bunratty Castle. From \$808, land only. MyGuideIreland.com.

Romantic Road Self-Drive

Frankfurt-Dinkelsbühl-Munich; 5 days' rental car, 4 nights' lodging, breakfasts, tours, Neuschwanstein Castle. From \$599, land only. PicassoTours.com.

from previous page

European influence. At Topkapi Palace there was such a line that we took a private tour from a local guide. It was only \$5 for the two of us.

We found a little restaurant where the view was magnificent. I had some of the best fish I've had in my life. With the main course, they bring four or five sides and a bazillion extras. Dessert was baklava covered with *crème fraîche*. Yummy. —M.J.



Kelley at the fish market.

FOUR DAYS IN BARCELONA capped a fall Mediterranean cruise for Kelley Briggs of Peekskill, N.Y., creative director for a marketing firm, and her boyfriend Brian Rapp, a photographer.

We always travel on a budget. The cruise was just \$549 for an inside cabin, and the non-stop, roundtrip airfare from Newark to

Barcelona was \$743 with all taxes.

In Barcelona, we took a funicular up Tibidabo mountain for a gorgeous view from the amusement park at the top. We rode a cable car up to Montserrat, the Benedictine monastery. You're suspended over a giant drop; this is not for the weak of heart, but it's very beautiful and only a couple of euros.

We stayed at the Monte Carlo, right on La Rambla for about €230 a night (around \$300). We didn't want to cut corners there. The concierge sent us to an excellent tapas bar off the beaten path. Eating a series of these small dishes is a great way to not spend a lot.

We spent a few hours roaming through Gaudi's Parc Guell. There's an amazing mosaic bench where artisans sell handmade jewelry and beads reminiscent of Gaudi's work at very reasonable prices.

At night, we followed the students to find less-pricey places to hang out. A lot of bars and coffee shops have no signage. We'd see where college-age kids with backpacks were congregating and go in there. I don't want to hang around with tourists, even though I am one. I want to get the flavor of the place I'm in. —C.G. ■

Positive Trends Over the Atlantic

ONE UPSIDE to the current economic scene is that Europe is much more affordable for Americans to visit this spring and summer than it was a year ago. Consider these three big trends:

● **Airfares** for late-spring departures are 10 to 25 percent less than those quoted 12 months ago, thanks to much lower fuel prices.*

● **The dollar** is buying 24-percent more euros than it did last summer, and its rise versus the British pound, Icelandic krona, Turkish lira and most Eastern European currencies has been even more robust.**

● **Tours, packages, cruises, hotels, rental cars...** all are going for bargain prices, whether one shops directly online or with a travel agent.

"What's more, with the hope brought by the new presidency, Americans will find one of the warmest welcomes ever this

year in Europe," promises Jean-Philippe Pérol of France, chairman of the 39-nation **European Travel Commission**. "Despite economic problems—or perhaps because of them—there is a strong sense of trans-Atlantic community.

"Travelers are appreciated more than ever," Mr. Perol said. "That's why we have teamed up with **Delta** and **Air France-KLM**—two great airline groups that are now the official airlines for the ETC.

"They can get you to more European destinations from more U.S. gateways than any other airline, with great low fares. And when you get there, **Leading Hotels of the World** will give you 30 percent off your luxury hotel room and include breakfast. That's how much we value our visitors."

There will be more to experience in Europe 2009, from the latest theater in Dublin and

London; to the annual music and cultural festivals of Istanbul, Budapest and Portugal's Algarve; to the packed programs of two Cities of Culture: Vilnius, capital of Lithuania, and Linz, on the Danube in Austria.

More Americans are discovering special ways to experience Europe: Religious travelers are up; so are the number of American honeymooners, spa aficionados, wine tasters and bikers.

Europe remains unequaled in the diversity and quality of its cuisine, even at very moderate prices. The latest craze: Dining in the total dark. This apparently concentrates the mind on the essentials of smell and taste. Just be careful when you raise your glass to make a toast. ■

You & Europe Checklist

- Start with visiteurope.com, then go to websites of countries, regions and cities. Many have good-value offers.
- When you know where and when you want to go, check big online agencies, like Expedia and Travelocity for price ranges. Then check airline, hotel and tour operator sites; many offer better rates if you buy directly.
- Make sure everybody's passport is valid. Get forms at www.Travel.State.Gov/passport.
- Search specialized websites for restaurants and B&Bs, and for special-interest activities from bird-watching to wine-tasting.
- When in Europe, stop at city tourist offices for the latest on events, passes and lodging.

* From **NEW YORK**: to London, \$439; Paris, \$416; Madrid, \$453. From **SAN FRANCISCO**: to London, \$692; Madrid, \$450 (one stop). From **LOS ANGELES**: to London, \$556; to Amsterdam, \$702; to Frankfurt, \$1,051. Mid-week, late-May flights; taxes and surcharges included. As quoted on Expedia.com, March 13.

** Based on interbank rate of \$1 = €0.78 as of March 13.

Aegean Odyssey

Escorted tour, 7 nights in top hotels. From Cos to Istanbul, stops in Bodrum, Pamukkale, Ephesus. From \$1,138, land only. PachaTours.com.

Antwerp: Art Grotesque

For Goya, it was witches; for Redon, mystification; for Ensor, hilarious caricature. See the results at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, to June 14.



KNSK/Artwarp

Spectacular Spain

A 9-day escorted tour to Madrid, Toledo, Grenada, Torremolinos, Seville. From \$1,689, airfare additional. GlobusJourneys.com.



'The Man from the Sea,' 1927.

The Surreal World of René Magritte

The **René Magritte Museum** will open in **BRUSSELS** on June 2 with the largest collection of Magritte's work anywhere. More than 150 paintings, drawings and sketches, will make up the permanent collection in the grand Neoclassical building on the Place Royale.

A careful technician, Magritte is famous for painting ordinary objects in unusual, eerie contexts, lending mystery to bowler hats, green apples and birds' nests.

Typical quote: "If the dream is a translation of waking life, waking life is also a translation of the dream."

Among the works to be shown are "Man of the Sea," "The Unexpected Answer" and "The Return." Magritte's home at Rue Essegheem 135 remains open as a separate museum.

www.Fine-Arts-Museum.be.



'Black Magic,' 1945.

Magritte images © Charly Herscovici, with his kind permission c/o SABAM-ADAGP 2009.

PULSE

WHAT'S ON WHAT'S NEW

The Quiet Ship

They cavort and feed from April to October in the bay beyond **REYKJAVÍK**'s old harbor, leaping from the water and falling back with resounding splashes.

Now visitors are getting much closer to the humpback whales of Iceland, thanks to a new whale-watching vessel—the **Elding I**.

Whales are sensitive to sound, but the *Elding I* runs silent near them, thanks to auxiliary power from hydrogen fuel cells (the first such nautical application).

This allows passengers to commune with the whales, dolphins and porpoises that dance in the bay. About \$60 for a three-hour trip. www.Elding.is. —*Grace Bastidas*



A leaping humpback.

Meg Whitaker/Alamy



RNTO

Most festival concerts are given in the Romanian Atheneum.

Œdipe to Open Enescu Festival

It was his only opera, and it was his masterpiece. And on Aug. 30, in **BUCHAREST**, the 19th **George Enescu International Festival** will raise the curtain on a new staging of *Œdipe*. A coproduction of the Bucharest National Opera and the Théâtre du Capitole of Toulouse, it will be directed by Nicholas Joel. Oleg Caetani will conduct.

The month-long festival and competition will bring many great performers and orchestras to Romania's capital, including London's Royal Philharmonic and Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebow. The festival director is Ioan Holender, who also directs the Vienna Staatsoper. RomaniaTourism.com.

The King in His Prime

Henry VIII, that robust, wife-dispatching Tudor, will be a focal point in **LONDON** 500 years after his accession to the throne.

Henry's Women presents rarely seen portraits of his six wives and two daughters at Hampton Court, along with personal artifacts (April 10-Aug. 3).

Included are the earliest surviving portrait of Catherine of Aragon; a Van Dyck portrait of her daughter,

Mary; and a letter from wife No. 5, Catherine Howard, to her lover. For that indiscretion, she paid with her head.

Upriver, at the Tower, inspect the armor of the younger, slimmer king in **Henry VIII: Dressed to Kill**. www.HRP.org.uk.

—*Gemma Elwin-Harris*.



Gary Ombler/Royal Armouries

Scary: A helmet from Henry's collection.

London's Best, from \$639

Popular Virgin Vacations package with airfare, 6 nights' lodging and breakfasts. From New York through May 25, taxes additional. Virgin-Vacations.com.

For a full calendar of major events.



In the Heart of Rome

First-class hotel package: 6 nights, buffet breakfasts, sightseeing (including Vatican, Coliseum), professional host. From \$1,199. Low airfares available. PerilloTours.com.

In the Steps of St. Paul

Last June 28, Pope Benedict XVI declared the opening of the **Year of St. Paul** in honor of the 2,000th anniversary of the apostle's birth in the ancient city of **TARSUS**, in Turkey.

Over the year, many pilgrims—Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant—have followed Paul's steps from Tarsus to **ANTIOCH**, where he first preached to the pagan world, and to the ancient metropolis of **EPHESUS**, where he taught.

Paul's travels took him to present-day Cyprus and Greece. His epistles to the people of **CORINTH, THESSALONIKI, PHILIPPI** and others are, of course, central to the New Testament. Devotees can follow his last journey, as a captive, to **MALTA**, where he was shipwrecked, and ultimately to **ROME**, where he was tried and beheaded



All Kabas/Alamy

Image of St. Paul, in the former Church of St. Saviour, Istanbul. during the reign of Nero.

On June 29, the pope will preside over the solemn closing of the Pauline Year at Rome's **Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Wall**, where the tomb of the apostle lies. www.AnnoPaolino.org. —G.B.

The Reformer of Geneva

St. Paul was frequently cited by Jean Calvin as he helped to guide the Protestant reformation 15 centuries later.

Calvin was born 500 years ago in **NOYON**, France. He died at age 54 in **GENEVA**.

Calvin founded the University

The Lease that Begat Guinness

It has been 250 years since Arthur Guinness signed the lease on the St. James's Gate Brewery in **DUBLIN**—source of Ireland's famously velvety stout.

The brewery's visitor center, the **Storehouse**, has opened two attractions in Arthur's honor. On the new **250 Exhibition** floor you can read the original lease (and buy a copy), watch a film and raise a glass to Arthur in a new bar. For groups of 10 or more, there's the new **History of Stout** tour and tasting. Don't leave without checking out the 360-degree views from the rooftop Gravity Bar. Guinness-Storehouse.com. —G.E.-H.



The Gravity Bar overlooks Dublin.

Travstock/Chloe Johnson/Alamy

of Geneva and is buried at the Cimetière des Rois. Visitors can experience **A Day in the Life of Calvin** at Geneva's International Museum of the Reformation (April 24-Nov. 1).

The Print Collector/Alamy



Jean (also John) Calvin.

The main commemorative service will take place on July 10, Calvin's birthday, at Geneva's Cathédrale St. Pierre, where he so often preached. www.Calvin09.org. —G.B.

Sea Ventures: Volvo, Tall Ships

The Volvo Ocean Race is a 'round-the-world adventure already underway. The eight teams will have sailed their speedy VO70 boats more than 37,000 nautical miles when the competition ends.

In the final weeks, they'll cross the Atlantic from Boston to **GALWAY**, Ireland (where you can find them May 22–June 6). From there it's on to **MARSTRAND**, Sweden (June 10–14), and to **STOCKHOLM** (June 14–25), before the last dash to **ST. PETERSBURG** in late July. (See



Gabriele Olivo/Volvo Ocean Race

Volvo Race: The Telefonica Blue boat was in 2nd place overall in March.

'Join the Volvo Fleet,' below).

Each port will welcome the five-man crews and supporters with regattas, water shows, prizes, race simulators and more.

Also this summer, the **Tall Ships Atlantic Challenge**

launches May 3 from **VIGO**, Spain, to **TENERIFE** (May 14–17) before heading to Bermuda and the U.S. The fleet returns across the Atlantic, from Boston, to **BELFAST**, for a grand finale (Aug. 13–

16). There is also the **Tall Ships' Races Baltic**, gathering in **GDYNIA**, Poland (July 2–5), then sailing to **ST. PETERSBURG** (July 11–14), **TURKU**, Finland (July 23–26), and finally to **KLAIPEDA**, Lithuania (July 31–Aug. 3).

www.VolvoOceanRace.org, TallShipsRaces.com. —G.B.

WEDDING FALLS
A Croatian tradition is coming back: Young couples are again taking their vows in **Plitvice Lakes National Park**. Specifically, wedding parties are renewing the practice of earlier generations by standing in small boats behind the drop of the 210-foot Veliki Slap (Big Falls). And there they say, "I do!"

Europride Zurich

Europe's largest gay and lesbian festival goes Swiss, with a month of performances, films, sports. Opening party, May 2; closing parade, June 6. www.Europride09.eu.

Iceland Fly & Drive

Airfare and 6-day self-drive along the dramatic south coast. Guesthouse and country-hotel lodging; breakfasts. From \$1,379. www.Icelandair.us.

Join the Volvo Fleet

Buy a Volvo through Volvo Overseas Delivery, and you and a companion can join the Volvo Race fleet in Marstrand, Sweden. Three nights' hotel, free sailing, charter boat for up-close view. Only \$1,495 per couple. VolvoCars.com.



Great Shows: Matisse to Paula Rego

MADRID's Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza will show **Matisse: 1917-1942**, focusing on the central period of his career. The exhibit will

demonstrate how Matisse turned his focus to the

relationships between line, color, volume and space. June 9-Sept. 20. www.MuseoThyssen.org.

PULSE

The new **HERMITAGE AMSTERDAM**, 10 times its former size, will open June 20 in the restored 17th-century Amstelhof. The inaugural exhibition—**Russian Court Life**—will depict a lavish reception that the Romanov czars might have thrown; many treasures will be on view from the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Through Jan. 31. www.Hermitage.nl.

The Bauhaus Comes from Weimar celebrates one of the most influential design movements of the 20th century in the German city where it sprang from the mind of Walter Gropius 90 years ago. Exhibitions in four museums illustrate the enormous impact of Bauhaus on the look of everything from houses to furniture to typography. Through July 5. www.Weimar.de.

The Kunstmuseum **BASEL** is about to open **Vincent van Gogh—Between Earth and**

Heaven: The Landscapes. This first comprehensive showing of Van Gogh landscapes brings together 70 works from every creative period in Arles, Saint-Rémy and Auvers. April 26-Sept. 27. www.KunstmuseumBasel.ch.

BELMONTE, at the foot of Portugal's Serra da Estrela, is the site of a new Interpretation Center of the Discoveries, which opens April 26. The focus is on Portugal's maritime exploits, especially the **1500 Voyage of Pedro Alvares Cabral**, whose fleet discovered Brazil on its way to India.

Later this summer in **CASCAIS**, paintings of Lisbon-born **Paula Rego** will go on permanent exhibition in the new Casa das

Historias e Desenhos. Ms. Rego is known for her "magical realism," influenced by fairy tales and the illustrations of Beatrix Potter.

The avant-garde Dox Centre for Contemporary Art, **PRAGUE's** first modern-art venue, will feature **Douglas Gordon**, a retrospective of the Glasgow-trained artist who came to prominence in the 1990s.

June 3-Sept. 28. www.DoxPrague.org.

The Musée Granet in **AIX-en-PROVENCE** will present **Picasso-Cézanne**, with 100 works by the two artists to demonstrate the latter's influence on the former. The nearby Château de Vauvenargues, where Picasso is buried, will also be open.

May 25-Sept. 27. ■

—Eleanor Berman



Top left: Matisse's 'Interior with a Violin Case.' Above: Paula Rego in an interview.

Photo: Duarte/AP Images

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Festivals and the City Budapest and Beyond



OLD AND YOUNG find their heart's desire when it comes to culture in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary. Its museums, theaters and architecture are appetizers for the wide range of festivities between April and September—from music festivals to auto races to walks across the Chain Bridge over the Danube. Here are some hints:

The **International Harley Davidson Festival** with shows, concerts and a swarm of roaring, two-wheeled "hogs" is coming to the north shore of **Lake Balaton**, Central Europe's largest freshwater playground, June 10-14. www.Hog.hu.

The **Budafest Summer Music Festival** will take over the square in front of St. Stephen's Basilica, as well as the Budapest Opera House and the Dominican Courtyard of the

For a chance to WIN a free trip to Budapest and for more events and information about Hungary, please visit: GoToHungary.com.

Budapest Hilton to showcase opera, ballet, jazz, klezmer and ragtime. July 1-Aug. 14. www.Viparts.hu.

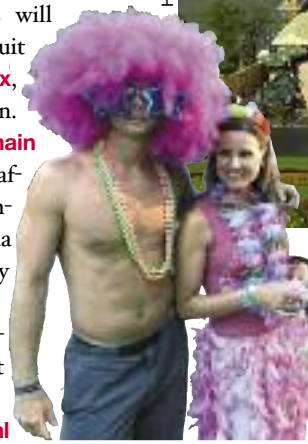
World-class Formula-1 drivers will compete at the Hungaroring circuit during the **Hungarian Grand Prix**, July 24-26. www.Hungaroring.hu/en.

Every summer weekend, the **Chain Bridge of Budapest** is closed to traffic. Walk from the Danube Promenade on the Pest side to Buda Castle across the river and enjoy the World Heritage Site view.

Along the way, take in interesting shows, concerts and handicraft displays. www.FestivalCity.hu.

All ages enjoy the **Sziget Festival** featuring international and national rock bands, theater and dance performances. Aug. 12-17. www.Sziget.hu/festival_english.

Hungary's first king, **St. Stephen**, and the **birth of the nation** 1,009 years ago are celebrat-



The **Hungarian Grand Prix** runs in July, while the **Chain Bridge** goes car-free. In August, dress up for the **Sziget Festival**.

ed Aug. 20 with concerts, family programs, parades, the **Red Bull Air Race** and fireworks over the Danube.

Can't make it this time? The **Extremely Hungary** festival brings Hungarian merry-making to New York throughout 2009. For a schedule, visit www.ExtremelyHungary.org. ■

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"Iceland is a topographical marvel: craggy, desolate, the way you imagine the surface of the moon."
—FRANK BRUNI, THE NEW YORK TIMES

"No. 2 on my list is Iceland. They just had their own currency devaluation; it's now two for one. It's a great bargain!"
—PETER GREENBERG, NBC'S TODAY SHOW

"Whether for its ethereal rock bands or wind-swept terrain, Iceland has a reputation for cool."
—TOM HAINES, THE BOSTON GLOBE



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An aerial photograph of a large white wind turbine blade. A worker in a red hard hat and dark clothing is visible on a platform near the base of the blade. The background shows a hazy landscape with fields and distant lights.

Green Giant

Europe is *the* showroom for
the eco-friendly world to come.

Turn, Turn, Turn

The blades of this Enercon E70 measure 110 feet each and generate enough electricity for 2,000 homes. Europe is now served by 47,000 wind turbines; by 2030, wind is projected to supply power to half the population.

Many wind farms will be open to visitors on June 15 for Global Wind Day. At least two offer enclosed turbine observation platforms: Windpark Holtriem in northern Germany (297 steps to the top) and Ecotricity in Swaffham, England.

Atlantide Phototravel/ Corbis
Ty Stange

500,000 Danes Can't Be Wrong

Every workday, 36 percent of the people of Copenhagen pedal their way to work, to school, to the supermarket, to the playground. The Danish capital has methodically developed the cycling culture by creating dedicated bike lanes and routes, synchronizing traffic lights and establish-

ing efficient racks. There's even a Facebook group, I Bike Copenhagen, merging the real and virtual lives of nearly 2,000 members.

POLITICIANS IN AMERICA want to be photographed kissing babies. But in Europe, the thing these days is to be seen visiting one of the continent's burgeoning array of "green energy" sites.

From the world's largest wind turbine, standing 37 stories tall in Emden, Germany, to Northern Ireland's underwater tidal generator, to the vast fields of solar panels filling sun-drenched vales in Portugal, "green" is "in" and generating clean energy everywhere.

The Europeans are competing with each other to reduce per-person use of energy, and to generate the energy they do need with far less emission of CO₂ and other global-warming, glacier-melting, ocean-lifting gasses.

Some of these projects are not so sexy. A tour of the "passive houses" of Malmö, Sweden, and Freiburg and Darmstadt, Germany, takes you to sod-topped roofs and basements remarkable mainly for the absence of furnaces. Even in the dead of a Nordic winter, super insulation, triple-tight windows and ingenious ventilation keep the temperature at 70° F just with the heat given off by TVs, refrigerators and the bodies of the resident families.

Everyday life can be a revelation. Take the torrents of bicyclists commuting each day in Copenhagen and Amsterdam. Each year, more cities, from Stockholm to Seville to Kielce, in Poland, redesign streets and traffic patterns to favor bikes over cars. People make the switch, even in the rain.

BY MICHAEL RODDY

Mr. Roddy is a business editor based in London.

Photo Text By SUSAN FAREWELL

Ms. Farewell toured "green" sites last spring.

A trip to the supermarket in Dublin reveals that everyone brings his or her own tote bag for the groceries. Because Ireland taxes plastic bags, they have become quite unfashionable. Italy follows suit next year.

How did "old Europe" establish itself as the world proving ground for lifestyle changes and technologies to make the planet a greener place?

Historical factors play a key role. As the continent that launched the Industrial Revolution (and thus global warming), Europe ran through its deposits of coal early, and was blessed with only limited reserves of oil (even counting the North Sea fields). The lack of fossil fuel spurred the Dutch to dot their horizons with windmills, the Norwegians to convert falling water into hydropower and—in answer to the Arab oil shock of the 1970s—the French to build nuclear plants. Many of the latter give guided tours—including walks inside huge, misty-warm cooling towers. Today, nukes generate



Icelandic power pool.

Some Like It Hot

Iceland is teaching the world how to make the most of the geyser-hot water from its volatile underground. Case in point is the Svartsengi geothermal plant, which not only heats hundreds of homes and generates 77 megawatts of electricity, but also provides the clean, mineral-rich waters (cooled down from 158° F to 100°) that fill an adjoining lava-lined basin. The result is the Blue Lagoon, one of the most famous spas in the world, a favorite of Icelanders and visitors alike.

more than 40 percent of France's energy needs and surprisingly little controversy.

Energy efficiency remained near the top of Europe's agenda in the form of higher fuel taxes. True, gasoline costs three times what it does in the U.S. But the result is that European cars are lighter and engineered to get double the mileage per gallon.

The European Union was a driving force behind the Kyoto agreement of 1997. Europe's initiative and willpower since then have been impressive; today, the 27 EU nations

continued on next page

Malmö's green rooftops.



Malmö Tourism

Roofs with Roots

A growing "green roof" movement promoted these rooftop gardens in Malmö's Western Harbor neighborhood and in many other cities. The sod insulates, prevents flooding in heavy rain and pumps oxygen into the air. Super-insulated "passive houses" in Freiberg and Darmstadt, Germany, require no furnace to stay warm throughout the winter, and cost only 6 percent more to build than standard structures.



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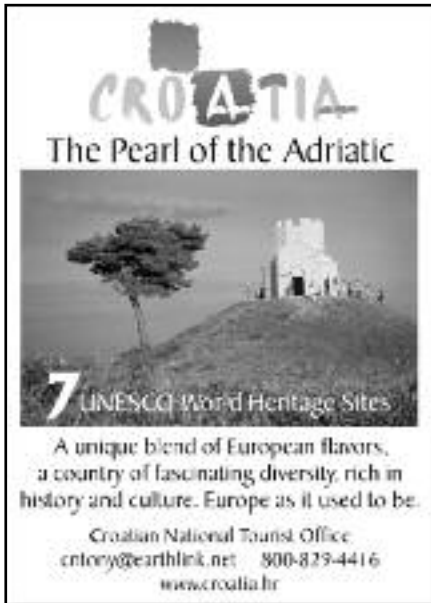
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from previous page

emit less than half the greenhouse gases per capita than does the U.S.

Iceland draws 80 percent of its energy from geothermal waters or hydropower. Spain expects to generate 12 percent of its energy needs from renewable sources by next year (that number is already 38 percent in the Basque country), and is second only to Germany in wind-generating capacity. Portugal is relying on wind farms, acres of solar arrays and the Alqueva Dam, one of Europe's newest and largest, which began generating power just five years ago.

While these are concrete examples, more esoteric policies are also at play. The EU's carbon-emissions market, in which polluters must pay extra to pollute—gives them a good incentive to kick the habit. While emissions trading is anything but simple, it remains a cornerstone of the EU's goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by a fifth by 2020.

It helps, as Americans discover, that the pace of life in Europe is less energy-intensive than in the U.S. Cities founded in the Middle Ages or earlier, were never designed for cars, let alone big ones. But bikes fit just fine. Athens is the latest city to ban cars entirely from its ancient city center, now devoted to archeological treasures and pedestrians.

Most Europeans wouldn't dream of driving six or seven hours (across, say, three countries) to visit a friend. For those trips, there is the world's best rail network, including high-speed TGV, ICE and AVE trains, which go three times faster than a car, emit only a quarter of the CO₂ per 100 passenger miles, and serve wine as well.

It's taken time, ingenuity and hundreds of millions of euros, but the payback is a greener Europe, which visitors can see for themselves.

"Six or seven years ago some of the



AVEs in Seville's Santa Justa station.

Quick and Green

France's TGVs hold the speed records, but Spain's high-speed system is catching up. The latest line, Madrid-Barcelona (386 miles in 2 hours, 38 minutes), has taken half the traffic away from what used to be Europe's busiest air route. That's 78 percent less CO₂ output per person, saving millions of tons a year.

Spain's master plan? To bring AVE service to within 30 miles of every man, woman and child. Europeans are committed to rail, racking up nearly 400 billion passenger-miles a year; 50 billion on high-speed trains. The U.S. totaled only 10 billion passenger-miles. See the map on page 18.

European industries were saying maybe it's not that important, but this train of climate change is leaving, so we better get on board to make sure it's the best policy that we can have," says Dian Philipsen managing consultant of Ecofys, a Netherlands consultancy. "And the mainstream media brings it up very often, and whatever topic is on the TV or in the news, climate change is mentioned—whether it's political developments, natural disasters, the weather, the harvest or health."

In Europe today, the "green" train has definitely left the station—and it's moving at the speed of a TGV. ■

The Ray Catchers

The world's largest solar-energy plant is being built in the valley of Baldio das Ferrarias in Portugal. To go online later this year, the plant includes 285 acres of photovoltaic panels designed to

track and capture the almost constant sunshine of the Alentejo region. That energy will be converted into 64 megawatts of power, or six times the output of the next-



Portugal leads the solar parade.

largest solar plant, above, opened just two years ago in Serpa, three miles to the south. And, as at Serpa, resident sheep will continue to graze among the panels.

High-Speed Europe 2009

The **HIGH-SPEED NETWORK** is expanding; planned routes in Spain and Turkey are indicated by dashed lines; the Channel Tunnel Eurostar is back to full speed.



The **GREEN BELT** follows the old line of the Iron Curtain, where barbed wire has given way to hiking and biking trails. See story, page 22.

LINZ, Austria, and **VILNIUS**, capital of Lithuania, are this year's **CAPITALS OF CULTURE**.



Eurail's Europe

EURAIL
Global Pass countries shown in dark blue; non-Global Pass countries in light blue.

The Eurail Revolution Keeps on Rolling

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Eurail expanded eastward in 1990, when Hungary became the first country from the old Eastern bloc to join; the latest, just this year, is the Czech Republic. As a result, one can now travel on a Eurail Global Pass from Lisbon all the way to Romania's Black Sea coast. As Eurail celebrates its 50th anniversary,

the number of passes sold this year could reach half a million, the majority of them still going to Americans.

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For more information, go to EURAILGROUP.COM.

Eurail Passes are available from these authorized sales agents:

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May and June bring "Douro Blues" and a festival dedicated to the *Francesinha*, favorite sandwich of Porto and Gaia. In July, "Friday Nights Rock." In August, Festival of the Celtic World.

Homecoming Scotland

Celebrate Robert Burns with kilts, cabers, a record Clan Gathering (July 25-26), the Edinburgh Festival (Aug. 14-Sept. 6) and three whisky festivals. HomecomingScotland2009.com.

The Far-North Lofoten

WE WERE SURROUNDED by conical mountains, their fingers jutting into the sky. I stared in disbelief as our ship aimed for what looked like a tiny crevice between giant blocks of granite. The ship kept repositioning, like a skateboarder, then eased slowly into the slot.

Along with other passengers, I dashed from side to side, gauging the clearance. Emerging into a calm bay, we cruised into the fishing village of Svolvær, in Norway's Lofoten Islands.

Rust and saffron-colored fishing sheds lined the waterfront, and more mountains rose behind the town. I had longed to visit this otherworldly place ever since I'd seen pictures of it decades before.

The dramatic landscape and the quality of the light—the magical “blue light” in winter and the honey-colored midnight sun in the summer—have drawn artists from afar. Dagfinn Bakke, the owner of a gallery, said of his home, “These

islands speak to my soul. When you are in nature here, you are surrounded by such boldness and beauty.”

The archipelago lies a remote 122 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Winters bring 24 hours of indigo skies swirled with ribbons of northern lights. Summers bring briny salt air, clouds of pelagic birds and pods of orca whales.

I was on a six-day Hurtigruten cruise aboard the *M.S. Polarlys*, southbound from Kirkenes to Bergen. On board were locals and a mini-U.N. of passengers. Each day brought new thrills, from crossing the Arctic Circle to cruising past the Seven Sisters (peaks famous in Norse mythology).

The Hurtigruten (“fast route”) is Norway's chief mode of transport in the north, allowing small communities to thrive on remote islands, bays and fjords. A ship leaves Bergen daily, and makes 34 ports of call on each cruise, with stops lasting anywhere from mere minutes to a few hours.

On my trip, several teenage choirs bound

BY LESLIE FORSBERG

Ms. Forsberg writes frequently about travel in Scandinavia. She lives in Seattle.



Terje Rakke/Nordic Life/Innovation Norway

A Lofoten evening under the summer sun.

for a national festival serenaded audiences with high-energy concerts—the boys putting on sunglasses to sing about driving; the girls, in pink overalls, singing about a “special boy,” to the hoots of the young men. Between ports, movies, lectures and other activities help passengers gain a deeper understanding of the far north.

The ships themselves are floating luxury hotels, with swimming pools and spas, nightclubs and bars—and everywhere, Norwegian artwork. Yet nothing could beat the thrills of discovery—the waterfalls, glaciers and fairytale villages around every aqueous bend. ■

Escape to Büyükada

THE ORANGE-STACKED ferry slipped across the water, away from the wonderful madness of Europe's largest city to the serenity of Büyükada, the king of the Princes' Islands of Turkey. Here we were greeted by curving, sandy beaches, seaside mansions and an atmosphere thick with *bien-être*.

Büyükada and the other islands were once a place of exile for Byzantine empresses. But the islands have long since become a summer paradise for wealthy Istanbulites and anyone else just looking to get away.

There's a French Riviera feel, due in no small part to the ban against motorized transport. Horse-drawn phaetons are the

only public transportation, and they carry you to stunning views of the Sea of Marmara, with the sprawling, magnificent heap of Istanbul 12 miles off.

The view is best from the Orthodox monastery of Ayayorg (St. George), a 20th-century structure built upon Byzantine foundations atop Büyükada's wooded southern hill. A glass of the restaurant's homemade wine is a perfect reward for the 30-minute climb.

If you have made the trip in order to soak in the sun, try to avoid weekends. Also, while it is easy to claim a free patch of shoreline, the official beaches tend to be sandy and nicer; the entry fee is minimal.

Do not depart Büyükada without stopping by one of dozens of seafood restaurants lining the main street. Clam dolması, a



Alex Segre/Alamy

On car-free Büyükada, the Istanbulites learn to take it slow.

pared to haggle (which should make you some Turkish friends). Watching Büyükada grow smaller from the ferry, one might feel sorry to leave this peaceful, Old World fantasy, but fear not: Plenty more adventure waits in Istanbul, at the busy end of the Sea of Marmara. ■

BY AMANDA DUNCAN

A friend from Turkey introduced Ms. Duncan to Istanbul last summer.

* Last summer a whole fish cost eight new Turkish lira or about \$6.50; the ferry cost 4TRY each way. This March, the dollar was buying 40 percent more in lira.



The Night of Candles will recall Leipzig's massive 'Monday Demonstrations.'

Miracle Year

The Fall of the Wall still amazes the world.

FEW EVENTS HAVE THE POWER to move the entire world. The Kennedy assassination. The moon landing. 9/11. And, of course, the fall of the Berlin Wall. Hearts and minds in Eastern Europe had long been restless for change but, when it came, the collapse of Communism and the Iron Curtain caught the world by surprise.

It's been 20 years since that cold night of

Nov. 9, 1989, when the world looked on in amazement as the concrete of *die Mauer* was literally cracked open and pulled down without a shot being fired. Who can forget the images of complete strangers hugging each other, tears of joy streaming down their faces? Or the thousands of euphoric revelers cheering and dancing at the Brandenburg Gate? Amid cheers and champagne, the Cold War was over. A new era of hope and freedom began for millions of people.

This night of jubilation was the climactic moment in a year of momentous political

change that had seen Poland hold free elections and Hungary open its border to the West for anyone to cross. The Wall's demise also triggered the downfall of the Soviet-backed governments in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, and the end of the Ceausescu regime in Romania.

Two decades later, Germany and the former Eastern bloc countries are gearing up to celebrate the anniversary of these pivotal events. From Berlin to Bucharest, a busy calendar of festivals, exhibitions, concerts, tours and special events is taking shape to

continued on page 24

BY ANDREA SCHULTE-PEEVERS

Ms. Schulte-Peevers is the author of Lonely Planet's Germany Travel Guide.

1989

THE TURNING POINT

The Iron Curtain divided Europe for more than 40 years; the Wall surrounded West Berlin for more than 28. In early 1989, few imagined that they would be gone 10 months later.



Berlin, 1964.

Granger Collection



Lech Walesa.

Hulton Archive/Getty Images

APRIL 5 – In Warsaw, Lech Walesa and Solidarity negotiate with beleaguered Communist leaders for the right to contest the next elections.

APRIL 14 – In Bucharest, Nicolae Ceausescu declares success of Romania's austerity program to eliminate debt. But shortages and hard-

ship continue.

MAY 2 – In Hungary, Miklós Németh, Imre Pozsgay and other reform-minded Communists order the initial demolition of fences and removal of mines from the border with Austria.

MAY 8 – In Poland, the *Gazeta Wyborcza* rolls off the press as the first legal opposition newspaper in the Eastern bloc.

JUNE 4 – Solidarity candidates sweep all but one of Poland's contested seats in the parliament and Senate.

JUNE 26 – Hungary's foreign minister, Gyula Horn, and his Austrian counterpart, Alois Mock, ceremo-



Mock and Horn.

Károly Matusz/MTI Photo

nially cut the barbed wire at their border, near Sopron.

JULY 7 – At a Bucharest summit with Eastern leaders, Mikhail Gorbachev presses his policy of *perestroika*, signalling that the Soviet Union will not use force to interfere with reform.

AUGUST – Thousands of "vacationing" East Germans seek refuge with friends and the West German embassy in ➔

from page 22

explain the realities of that long period of division. This is a great year to visit and experience one of the great turning points in history.

GERMANY

Berlin is naturally the focus of festivities for the entire country but on Oct. 9 the spotlight will be on **LEIPZIG**, center of the mass protests of East Germans that began in the fall of 1989. Since 2007, the city has celebrated this act of courage in the Augustusplatz (Karl-Marx Platz in 1989) with a festival called the **Night of the Candles**. Again this year, locals and visitors will be asked to arrange thousands of candles in the shape of a huge 89 as local choirs sing and light installations bathe streets in festive flair. If you want to better understand the historical background, check out **Leipzig on the Path to the Peaceful Revolution**, an exhibit in the former Stasi (secret police) headquarters.

It's **BERLIN**, capital of reunited Germany, that is putting on the most ambitious cultural program all year long. Highlights include a major open-air exhibit on the **Peaceful Revolution** on the Alexanderplatz and a traveling **Red InfoBox** that charts the city's changing face over the last 20 years, from the Potsdamer Platz skyscrapers to the Reichstag dome. And on Nov. 9, the eyes of the world will again be on Berlin for the symbolic restaging of the fall of the Wall. Part of a megabash at the **Brandenburg Gate**, it will culminate in the toppling of

A 'Fall of Communism' exhibit opens June 4 on Solidarity Square in Gdansk.

oversized dominos set up along the wall's former line. For the full schedule of events, see www.MauerFallo9.de.

No matter when or where you are in Berlin, you'll find history staring you in the face: at the **Checkpoint Charlie** crossing; at the longest remaining stretch of the Wall, called the **East Side Gallery**; at guard towers turned museums. You can follow the course of the Wall with a Discovery Tours WallGuide, a nifty GPS-driven multimedia device that provides commentary along with original historic footage on key locations along the way. Ambitious types can also hit the 100-mile long **Berlin Wall Trail**, a sign-posted walking and cycling path that encircles the entire enclave that was West Berlin.

Back in town, you can peel back the layers on daily life behind the Iron Curtain in the interactive **GDR Museum*** or commune with ghosts of the Stasi in the eerily quiet **Ministry of State Security**. In nearby **POTSDAM**, too, you can delve into the dark world of secret agents on tours of the KGB's European headquarters and at the **Glienicke Bridge**, site of legendary spy exchanges.

More chills await on the **Green Belt**, along which ran the fence dividing West and East Germany (see map, page 18). Bump

* For the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

along the ex-death strip in a Mercedes Unimog military vehicle and marvel at how harmless it appears, now that the minefields, spring guns and dog runs are gone. For a reality check, drop by **Point Alpha**, a U.S. Army observation post recast as a museum and memorial site. It overlooks the **Fulda Gap**, a key potential Soviet invasion route during the Cold War.

Ironically, flora and fauna flourish in this former no-man's land. Today it's some of the most pristine and beautiful terrain in united Germany. To protect it, several regions have banded together to create the **Green Ribbon Experience**. A natural place to strap on your boots and hit the trail is **Harz Mountains National Park**, which straddles the former East-West border. Discover more relics of German division as you trek up the mystical **Brocken** mountain along the **Goethe Trail** or traverse the fairytale forests and romantic meadows of the **Harzer Border Trail**.

For an excellent booklet outlining historic locations related to the long division of Germany and to the 20th anniversary, go to ComeToGermany.com.

POLAND

Poland led its neighbors in bringing an end to Communism, thanks in large part to two men. The first was Pope John Paul II, who used his 1979 visit to encourage his countrymen "to be not afraid" of pushing for change.

The man who ignited that push was Lech Walesa, founder in 1980 of the Solidarity

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Budapest, anticipating that Hungary will open the gates to Austria.

SEPT. 4 – In East Germany, Leipzig becomes the center of dissent, as the first "Monday Demonstration" begins with a prayer

rush into Austria and on to West Germany.

SEPT. 12 In Warsaw, Solidarity's Tadeusz Mazowiecki is confirmed as prime minister of the first non-Communist government in the Eastern bloc since 1948.

SEPT. 30 – In Prague, the Czech regime reluctantly permits more than 5,500 East Germans crowded into the West German embassy to board special trains that are then allowed to run through East Germany directly to West Germany.

OCT. 6-7 – Visiting from Moscow, Gorbachev urges East German leaders to embrace reform as they mark regime's 40th anniversary. Eleven days later,

Erich Honecker is forced out as head of state.

OCT. 9 – Leipzig's Monday demonstrations swell from 20,000 (Oct. 2), to 70,000 on this date, to 120,000 (Oct. 16).

OCT. 23 – In Budapest, parliament proclaims the Republic of Hungary on the anniversary of the unsuccessful 1956 revolution and spells out the transition to multi-party elections.

OCT. 30 – In Leipzig, more than 400,000 East Germans join the Monday demonstration, chanting "Wir sind das Volk!" (We are the People).

NOV. 4 – In East Berlin, nearly a million people gather in the Alexanderplatz to demand political

Crossing into Austria.



freedoms, including the right to travel. The police do not intervene.

NOV. 7 – As mass demonstrations spread, all of East Germany's ministers resign, followed the next day by the

Communist Politburo. **NOVEMBER 9** – East German citizens, upon hearing that travel restrictions have been lifted, rush by the tens of thousands to the borders. In Berlin, police stand back as the wall is scaled and then breached. The scene is delirious on both sides. Over the next three days, more than 3 million East Germans visit the West. **NOV. 10** – In Bulgaria, the

Peter E. Varkonyi/MTI Foto

Brandenburg Gate, Nov. 10.



Sipa



Leipzig, Oct. 30

LTM-Amin/Kuhne

meeting at St. Nikolai Church and builds a crowd in Karl-Marx Platz. **SEPT. 10** – Hungary officially opens its borders, allowing more than 25,000 waiting East Germans to



For the latest travel-planning information, go to visiteurope.com, with quick links to each of the member countries of the European Travel Commission.

As throughout this magazine, the "www" prefix has been dropped for all ".com" websites.

Austrian Tourist Office
www.Austria.info
212-944-6880

Belgian Tourist Office
VisitBelgium.com
212-758-8130

Tourist Office for Flanders, Belgium
www.VisitFlanders.us
212-584-2336

VisitBritain
www.VisitBritain.us
800-462-2748

Bulgarian Tourism Authority
www.BulgariaTravel.org

Croatian National Tourist Office
www.Croatia.hr
800-829-4416

Cyprus Tourism Organization
VisitCyprus.com
212-683-5280

CzechTourism
CzechTourism.com
212-288-0830

VisitDenmark
VisitDenmark.com
212-885-9700

Estonian Tourist Board
VisitEstonia.com

Finnish Tourist Board
VisitFinland.com
212-885-9700

Maison de la France
US.FranceGuide.com
514-288-1904

Department of Tourism and Resorts of Georgia
www.Tourism.Gov.ge

German National Tourist Office
CometoGermany.com
800-651-7010

Greek National Tourism Organization
www.VisitGreece.gr
212-421-5777

Hungarian National Tourist Office
GotoHungary.com
212-695-1221

Icelandic Tourist Board
IcelandTouristBoard.com
212-885-9700

Tourism Ireland
DiscoverIreland.com
1-800-SHAMROCK

Italian Government Tourist Board
ItalianTourism.com
212-245-5618

Latvian Tourism Development Agency
www.LatviaTourism.lv

Lithuanian State Department of Tourism
www.Travel.lt

Luxembourg National Tourist Office
VisitLuxembourg.com
212-935-8888

Ministry of Economy, Republic of Macedonia
www.Economy.gov.mk

Malta Tourism Authority
VisitMalta.com

Monaco Government Tourist Office
VisitMonaco.com
212-286-3330

National Tourism Organization of Montenegro
www.Visit-Montenegro.org

Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions
Holland.com

Innovation Norway
VisitNorway.com/us
212-885-9700

Polish National Tourist Office
www.Poland.Travel
201-420-9910

Portuguese Trade and Tourism Office
VisitPortugal.com
646-723-0200

Romanian National Tourist Office
RomaniaTourism.com
212-545-8484

San Marino Ministry of Tourism
VisitSanMarino.com

National Tourism Organization of Serbia
www.Serbia-Tourism.org

Slovak Tourist Board
CometoSlovakia.com

Slovenian Tourist Board
www.Slovenia.info

Tourist Office of Spain
www.okSpain.org
212-265-8822

VisitSweden
VisitSweden.com
212-885-9700

Switzerland Tourism
MySwitzerland.com
877-794-8037

Turkish Tourist Office
www.TourismTurkey.org
212-687-2194

National Tourist Organization of Ukraine
www.mfa.gov.ua/usa/en

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movement. His vision and his comrades' courage led to the first free elections in the entire Eastern bloc since World War II. They took place on June 4, 1989, which is now widely considered as the day when Communism in Poland fell.

The first major event of 2009 will take place June 4 in the port city of **GDANSK**, the birthplace of Solidarity. Celebrations will begin with the opening of a **Fall of Communism** exhibit on Solidarity Square. The main goal is to demonstrate the central role that Solidarity and Poland played in bringing down Communism throughout the Eastern bloc. The day's festivities will wrap up at night with a spectacular open-air concert in the Gdańsk shipyard.

HUNGARY

If Poland led the way, Hungary's role was critical to the final act. It was the decision of a reform Communist government to finally let Hungarians travel freely and to open the nation's borders with Austria. That also allowed thousands of East Germans who had gathered in Hungary that summer to escape to the West, putting great pressure on the East German government.

In **BUDAPEST**, a major photo exhibition at the **Hungarian National Museum** chronicles the events surrounding the border opening with additional festivities planned for later this year.

CZECH REPUBLIC

The Berlin Wall had been breached for less

ouster of Todor Zhivkov, the Communist leader since 1954, marks the first step toward free elections the following June. **NOV. 17** – Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution" begins with mass protests in Prague's Wenceslas Square. The first, led by students, are broken up by police. Vaclav Havel is voted to lead the Civic Forum coalition, which draws 500,000 on Nov. 20. **NOV. 24** – In Bucharest, Ceausescu, the Communist leader since 1965, is re-elected party secretary general. Might Romania also adopt reforms? "The apple tree will sooner produce oranges," he says. **NOV. 28** – In Prague, the Czech govern-

ment and Communist Party surrender absolute power.

In Bonn, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl announces plan for German reunification.

DEC. 2 – Gorbachev meets with Pope John Paul II at the Vatican, the first between a Soviet premier and a pope.

DEC. 4-11 – Czechoslovakia opens its borders with Austria and Germany.

DEC. 17 – In Romania, a government attempt to evict

dissident Pastor Laszlo Tokes in Timisoara mushroomed into a large-scale uprising against the Ceausescu regime.

DEC. 22 – Ceausescu flees Bucharest by heli-

than a week when Bulgaria's longtime Communist premier was quietly ousted.

But the next great drama developed in Prague, when mass demonstrations triggered the Czech "Velvet Revolution." And it would be only another month before a democratic government led by Vaclav Havel and Alexander Dubcek replaced the Communist regime. **PRAGUE** will mark the momentous events in grand style with a performance by Pink Floyd on a floating stage in the Vltava river in June and a concert extravaganza featuring the country's brightest young artists on Old Town Square on Nov. 17.

For an eye-opening journey back to the "bad old days," swing by the **Museum of Communism**. Using a veritable flea market's worth of memorabilia, the exhibit lays out various aspects of daily life behind the Iron Curtain—sports to censorship, police to propaganda—in entertaining yet insightful fashion.

ROMANIA

Romania's was the last Eastern European Communist regime to tumble during the heady days of 1989. In **BUCHAREST**, from July 3 through Sept. 30, a new exhibit at the Romanian National Museum of History will illuminate unique aspects of the country's Communist past. For much of his rule, for instance, Nicolae Ceausescu was relatively independent of Moscow, and had famously opposed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. But he lost touch with the people, and was the picture of shock and disbelief in his final days in Bucharest. □



Pope greets Gorbachev.

copter a day after he is mercilessly jeered during outdoor address. Protests and fighting spread through Romania. Three days later, he and his wife, Elena, are tried and executed.

DEC. 28-29 – The Czechoslovak parliament elects Alexander Dubcek as speaker (he led the country during the Prague Spring of 1968) and Havel as president. Four years later, the Czech and Slovak republics peacefully agree to independence from each other. □



Vaclav Havel.