



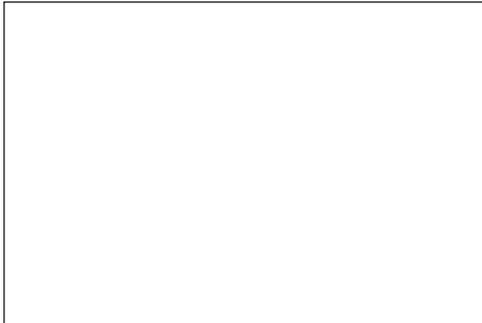
# TRAVEL ESSENTIALS NEWS

ASHLAND, OREGON

[www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com)

## 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sale! Join Us for Big Savings!

My how time flies! Travel Essentials is delighted to celebrate its 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, and we want to share it with you. Our anniversary sale takes place **Thursday, March 3 through Sunday, March 6** and we'll herald this historic event with savings throughout the store. Stock up on travel clothing, rolling luggage, matching carry-on bags, security items, electrical appliances and adaptors, guidebooks, maps, and so much more. Everything single item in the store will be discounted, and we'll offer savings of 60%



off on winter travel clothing, 25% off all globes, 20% off all DreamSacks products, 20% off all Pacsafe items, 20% off books and maps, and 10% off storewide, to name

just a few of the many discounts. With eleven years under our belt, Travel Essentials continues to expand both within the store and on the world wide web. We're up to nine employ-

ees now, and hope to add a couple more this spring. We've opened a corporate sales department, where businesses can outfit their employ-

*continued on page 3*

## Taming the Euro—How To Travel In Europe for Less \$\$

By Bob Bestor, Jr.

When the subject of European travel is raised these days, one word invariably muscles its way into the conversation—euro. It's a big, bad currency and, if you're not careful, it will bite. Based on a December trip that included Berlin, Vienna, a small town in southern Bavaria, the Swiss countryside, and Zürich, I'm here to report that the day-to-day reality of living with it is a bit intimidating. Filling the rental car with gas was \$80. Two small salads, a mineral water and a very small beer in a mid-priced Berlin restaurant—more snack than lunch—cost

\$36. Three paperback novels in English were over \$40. A liter of mineral water in an inexpensive country restaurant cost nearly \$6 and it was \$9 for a slice of Appenzeller cheese. (Ah, but didn't I recently see a veal chop on the menu at Lela's right here in Ashland for a cool \$39? I guess really good food, well prepared, is never cheap.)

With Bill Gates and Warren Buffett now betting their own cash on the dollar's continued weakness, I think it's safe for those of us who need a periodic 'Europe fix' to conclude that a pricey euro is something we'll have to live with for a while. *continued on page 2*

## Life is Short—Eat More Chocolate

By Nancy Bestor

By the time this newsletter reaches your home, Bob, our girls and I will be off seeking new adventures in Hong Kong and Vietnam. We'll spend almost four weeks in Asia—several days in Hong Kong, and about three weeks in Vietnam, where we plan to tour the South, the North, and parts in between.

Our girls (Emily 10, Sarah 8) are excited, but don't really have much idea what to expect. They know based on our trip to Thailand that it will be mostly hot (certainly in Ho Chi Minh City, where the temperature and humidity will be in the high 80s), that they'll eat

*continued on page 8*

### Travel Essential News • Spring 2005 IN THIS ISSUE

Hot New Travel Items	pages 4 & 5
Mia Barnard In Cambodia	page 6

YOUR RETAIL OUTLET FOR LUGGAGE, TRAVEL GEAR, MAPS & TRAVEL BOOKS

252 E. Main St., Ashland, OR 97520  
(541) 482-7383 (800) 258-0758  
e-mail: [travess@mind.net](mailto:travess@mind.net)  
[www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com)

©2002 Travel Essentials, Ashland, OR. All Rights Reserved.

# Taming the Euro...

continued from page 1

To lessen its impact, I've suggested a few strategies to readers of my publication **Gemütlichkeit, The Travel Newsletter for Germany, Austria & Switzerland**, ([www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)) now in its 19<sup>th</sup> year.

- **Rent an apartment:** Or a house, chalet, or condo. With more than 50 trips to Europe under my ever-lengthening belt since 1973, I've come to realize the traditional hotel-to-hotel, pack-and-unpack routine is not the only—and perhaps not the best—on-the-Continent travel paradigm. The day-trips by car and/or train from a central location model has many advantages, one being it's cheaper. On a per-square-foot basis, vacation rentals are substantially less expensive than hotels and costs are controlled in two ways: you pay in advance in US dollars and limit restaurant exposure by cooking some or all of your meals.

But isn't it risky, you ask, to commit, sight-unseen, a week or more of precious vacation time? Indeed it is, that's why we recommend a pair of reliable Ashland-based companies that are highly respected in their industry: **At Home in France** (541-488-9467, [www.athomeinfrance.com](http://www.athomeinfrance.com)) and **Drawbridge to Europe** (541-482-7778, web: [www.drawbridgetoeurope.com](http://www.drawbridgetoeurope.com)). 'At Home' specializes in the south of France, Paris, and last year launched **At Home in Spain**. 'Drawbridge' has properties in several European countries including Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Austria.

- **Try an 'Untour' ([www.untours.com](http://www.untours.com)):** For 30 years, this solid, family-run operation has filled a need for the Europe traveler who isn't up for a group bus tour but still requires a bit of in-Europe hand-holding. Termed "Independent Travel with Support," their product consists of two weeks in a fully-equipped chalet, house, condo, or apartment. With the guaranteed-in-US-dollars price comes about as much or as little on-the-scene assistance as the traveler desires. Arrivals

are escorted to and from airports, given stacks of useful reference materials, and an arrival orientation. Assistance and advice is provided by knowledgeable, English-speaking locals. But 99% of the time 'Untourists' are left on their own to explore the country via their rail pass or rental car. The packages are sold with or without air from the U.S. and offer amazing value. For a couple, Untours' Germany packages *including air and rail or car rental*, start at less than \$2,000 per



Bavaria's Wieskirche—"Church in the meadow."

person, less than \$1800 in Switzerland and just over \$1800 Austria. France prices start at \$1,999 and Italy's begin at \$2179. Book early, because this company has a loyal following of year-after-year customers and the best properties go first. In December, Liz and I saw several Untours apartments in the 'Swiss Heartland' and they ranged from good to enchanting (to read more and see photos go to [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com) and click on Live from Europe).

- **Look for 'Bib' Hotels:** Michelin's Red Guides (20% discount from Travel Essentials in store or at [www.travel essentials.com](http://www.travel essentials.com)) identify hotels offering "good accommodations at moderate prices." The Germany guide

notes hotels offering double rooms with breakfast for less than 90 euros. France's Bib hotels are 63 euros or less in the countryside and no more than 78 euros in cities. The threshold in Italy is 80 euros and in Switzerland the ceiling is 180 Swiss francs, not as good a deal. The guides list many hotels with rooms in these lower price ranges, but those given the Bib (Bibendum, the "Michelin Man") designation are the best of the lot. We have stayed in or inspected a number of them and can confirm their excellent value.

- **Trust Priceline:** Because a credit card commitment is required before the name of the hotel you are bidding on is revealed, many are wary of the **Priceline.com** process. However, with the bidder able to specify a specific geographic location—Munich Airport, Munich City Center South and Munich City Center North—and a level of quality—4-star superior, 3-star quality, 2-star economy—it's hard to go very far wrong. And the savings can be huge. Here are some recent successful Priceline hotel bids, according to posts at [www.biddingfortravel.com](http://www.biddingfortravel.com) (by the way, be sure to visit [biddingfortravel.com](http://biddingfortravel.com) before making a Priceline bid):

**Le Meridien Montparnasse Paris**, \$112; **Munich Airport Marriott**, \$50; **Vienna's Le Meridien**, \$91, **Mercure Vienna Zentrum**, \$50; and **Rome De La Ville Inter-Continental**, \$190; and **Zürich Marriott**, \$84; These are 'per room' prices. To compare, I checked the Zürich Marriott's website and got a quote of \$185 per night.

- **Don't Buy 'Stuff' in Europe:** Try to leave the U.S. as fully equipped as possible. Items like batteries, aspirin, cough drops, hand lotion, paperback books in English, voltage converters, etc., are much more expensive when purchased in Europe. The battery charger for my Nokia GSM phone failed while in Austria in December and a replacement cost 25 euros or about \$33. At the AT&T store in Medford, Oregon it was \$14.95.

- **Consider Michelin's 1800 Top**

continued on page 3



"At my age, travel broadens the behind." — STEPHEN FRY

# Taming the Euro...

*continued from page 2*

**European Values:** Perhaps the leading compilation of affordable European accommodations is the new Michelin guidebook series that identifies the best small, moderately-priced hotels in France, Italy and Germany. The books are colour-coded by geographical region, include interior and exterior photographs, brief descriptions of each property, plus practical information. In the newest of the series, *Germany: 500 Charming Hotels and Inns*, most hotels are under 100 euros. The Italy entry, *Hotels and Country Guesthouses for Less Than 100 Euros*, lists 300 properties; while 95% of the offerings in the France book, *1,000 Hotels and Guesthouses*, are less than 80 euros per night. Michelin inspectors have visited all establishments listed and each has given an objective opinion on what particularly attracted them to the property. The books list for \$20 but Travel Essentials has them at \$16, a 20% discount. Order at 800-258-0758 or at [www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com).

- **Cover Less Territory:** Train travelers will save by limiting travel to one country. In Germany a couple with a German Twin Pass can ride the fastest, sleekest ICE trains for as little as \$24.30 per person, per day. Switzerland's best per day, per person rail deal is the consecutive day Swiss Saver Pass that ranges in price from \$11.33 to \$58, depending on number of days (the more days, the better the price) and class of service. A couple that wants to see three countries—say, Germany, Austria and Switzerland—will pay \$63.20 per person per day for each of five days for the Eurail Select Saver Pass, though the per day price drops if more days are added.

Fuel has become more of a factor when considering the overall cost of a rental car. At \$5.50 per gallon, a compact car that gets 32 miles per gallon costs about 17.2 cents per mile to operate. Drive 2,000 miles on a Frankfurt, Berlin, Vienna, Salzburg, Zürich, Frankfurt tour and not only will you spend a lot of time in your rental car, the gas will cost \$344. Stick to a smaller geographic area; drive say 75 miles per day for two weeks, and

you've cut fuel costs in half.

Another item to consider is the type of fuel. Always request a diesel rental car; instead of 32 miles per gallon, that same compact car with a diesel engine is likely to get 45 to 50 MPG.

Of course, there are the obvious money-saving strategies such as:

- Travel in the off-season when airfares and hotel rooms are cheaper.
- Spend more time in the country and less in the big city.
- Drop down a category. Go from a four-star to a three-star hotel, rent a midsize instead of a full-size car, or a compact instead of a midsize, ride 2nd-class rail instead of 1st-class, etc.
- Order take-out meals. One customer reports that in Vienna he and his wife purchased delicious "to go" meals at the Julius Meinel food store on the Graben, which they then ate in their hotel room. Europe is full of shops that sell excellent, already-prepared meals for take-out.

And, of course, be alert for deals and know a good one when you see it. For example, even with the euro's recent ascendancy, rail pass prices are close to what they were two years ago and Rail Europe just made a good deal even better by adding a free day of travel with its 6, 8 and 10-day Eurail Select Passes—provided they are purchased during February and March (rail passes are good for six months after their issue date). Order by phone at 800-521-6722.

—Bob Bestor, Jr. (*father of Travel Essentials' Bob Bestor*) is the editor of *Gemütlichkeit*, the Travel Newsletter for Germany, Austria, and Switzerland ([www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)). He and his wife Liz (*yes, mother of Travel Essentials' Bob Bestor*) travel to Europe at least once every year.

# Anniversary...

*continued from page 1*

ees with the latest in travel business tools, our website at [travelessentials.com](http://travelessentials.com) is currently undergoing a redesign—it will soon have a new look with more features and better functionality, and of course we're always working to keep our customer service skills top notch.

We love our new space at 252 E. Main Street (directly next door to our old space), and the fact that it is much larger has given us the opportunity to add more brand new innovative travel products (see pages 4 and 5 for a sample), and expand upon our fabulous selection of spring travel clothing, much of which is arriving as this newsletter goes to print. Our line of guidebooks and maps (always 20% off) is expanding as well. We've added Rough Guides and Zagat City Guides, as well as the entire line of Eyewitness Travel guides. Our map department is getting bigger and better too, with the addition of Rough Guides Maps. The maps are made of a high density polyart paper and coated with clay which makes them waterproof and rip resistant.

Stop by and take a look at all we have to offer, and if you come by during our anniversary sale, March 3-6, you just might see something you need at a great discount!

As always, we know Travel Essentials would not be the store it is today without our great customers. Thank you for 11 **END**

**At Travel Essentials  
All Guidebooks and Maps  
are Always 20% Off!**

See the new 2005 Michelin Guides for Germany, Italy and France, with Charming Inns, Country Guesthouses and Hotels for less than 100 Euro.  
[www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com)



"I don't want to get to the end of my life and find that I have just lived the length of it. I want to have lived the width of it as well." — DIANE ACKERMAN

# Innovative New Travel Products

We're really excited with the new products we've found lately. Our goal this year has been to find the most useful, fun and innovative travel products on the market, and that is just what we've done. We don't have room to list them all here, but following are some of our favorites. Stop by and take a look, or see more online at [www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com).

## Ionized Hair Dryer

The latest wave in hair dryers is the Ionized Hair Dryer. This dual voltage travel-sized dryer produces a stream of natural ions, which breaks down water and pushes the moisture into your hair cuticles. This makes a big difference in how your hair looks and feels, and how long it takes it to dry (up to 50% faster!).



The Ionization feature offers an on/off button with a light that lets you know when ionization is on. At both high and low speed, the ions lock in moisture for fuller, shinier hair with less frizz and fly-away ends. The Ionized Hair Dryer has a folding handle for compact packing, and includes a travel/storage pouch. It sells for

\$39.95.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Class Sleeper

When we were introduced to the 1<sup>st</sup> class sleeper, we were skeptical. An inflatable full body pillow that really helps you sleep better on a plane? We didn't believe it, but then we began hearing great reviews



from both customers in our store, and the press alike, so we just had to try it. And low and behold, it really does make a difference! The 1<sup>st</sup> Class Sleeper is an inflatable pillow designed by veteran airline pilot Bob Duncan. The pillow provides full length back and neck support, from the tip of your tailbone to the top of your head, with just 10 or 11 easy breaths of air (10% of the pillow's total capacity). Your head won't flop again, it can only move as if you are laying on your pillow at home. Favorably reviewed by the *Wall Street Journal*, *Time Magazine*, *Business Week*, *Newsweek* and more, the 1<sup>st</sup> class sleeper is like getting a first class seat in the coach section. As an added bonus, it folds down to the size of a travel umbrella. It sells for \$39.95.

## Whizzy

Women, take a stand! The **Whizzy** is a device that enables a woman to urinate from a standing position just like a man. Designed by a woman for women, the Whizzy is formed of heavy paper that slides virtually flat between your legs and opens to form a trough. Its unique and patented shape, angle and easy-grip handles make it very easy to use.

You stand naturally, with no bending

or straddling necessary. The Whizzy is disposable, and fits easily into a purse, pocket or backpack. I know it sounds silly, but how many of us women have been traveling somewhere where the toilet seat (if there is one) is questionable at best? The Whizzy comes with 10 disposable papers for \$14.95. (No photo, just use your imagination!)

## Solitude

The Solitude™ is the most powerful active noise cancellation headset on the market. With 18dBs of active noise reduction, it is designed to outperform Bose at a savings of \$100! Its active noise cancellation technology targets frequencies of unwanted noise, and eliminates them almost entirely. High-fidelity audio reproduction offers an enjoyable listening experience, either in-flight, or at work or home. Several others features have been included to



make the Solitude™ an unbeatable value. The headband collapses, reducing it to nearly 1/3 its original size. The earcups are full-size, with more than 90 degrees of swivel motion to ensure a proper fit, increased comfort and additional passive noise cancellation. The 2 AAA batteries provide about 35 hours of usage. Comes with case, stereo pin, dual pin and adapter (all gold plated). The Solitude™ headphones sell for \$199.9

## Thermarest Compressible Pillows

The new compressible travel pillows from Thermarest offer extreme comfort in a very small package. The pillows are



"Every year it takes less time to fly across the Atlantic and more time to drive to the office." — SOURCE UNKNOWN

*continued on page 5*

# Innovative New Travel Products

continued from page 4

the best we've ever seen as far as looking and feeling like a pillow from home. They pack smaller and expand bigger than any pillows before and are perfect



for travelers, campers and car trippers. The pillows have a 100% cotton front, a 100% polyester back, and are filled with a "star foam." Just unroll the pillow from its pouch and it expands into a regular pillow shape. We sell three sizes of this pillow, the small which weighs 7 oz. and measures 12 x 16", the medium at 9 oz. and 14 x 18", and the large at 12 oz. and 16 x 23". Their prices range from \$14.95 to \$24.95.

## PacSafe

If you're concerned about your belongings being stolen off your person either while traveling at home or abroad, we've got just the product for you. PacSafe offers slash proof waist packs, shoulder bags,



backpacks and money pouches that keep your passports, money, cameras, and more safe from prying fingers.

Two of our favorite PacSafe products are the GoSafe, a shoulder bag (see photo at bottom left), and the StashSafe, a very secure waist pack (see photo below). The GoSafe features a slash proof wire reinforced front guard, a braided steel cable reinforced shoulder strap and a tamper resistant main compartment. The GoSafe can be worn as a shoulder bag or hip pack and also features internal organizer pockets, a mobile phone/digital



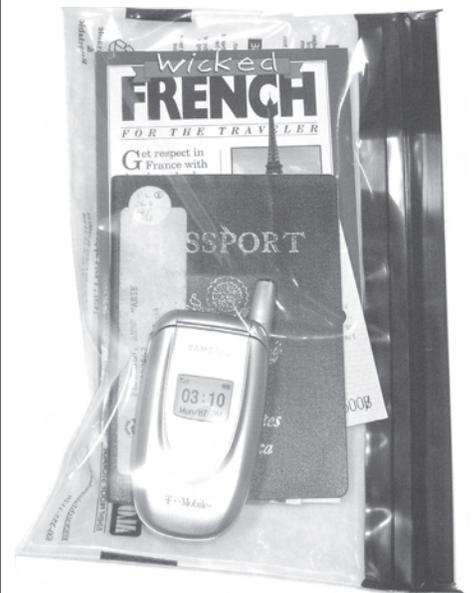
camera compartment, a key clip and a pen holder. It measures at 8.5 x 6 x 3" and sells for \$34.95.

The truly amazing StashSafe features a wire reinforced lockable belt and lockable zippers. Obviously it can be locked to yourself, but it can also be locked to any secure fixture, like a pole, chair, bed, or anything you can think of. The StashSafe has a concealed buckle and a hidden passport/boarding pass pocket in the back. The StashSafe is made of 1200D nylon and comes complete with a 20mm padlock. It measure 10 x 6 x 2.5" and sells for \$39.95.

## Aloksak Elementproof Pouches

Looking for a bag that can keep your

belongings dry while snorkeling, diving or rafting? We've got a new line of "elementproof" pouches that will do that and more. The Aloksak line of pouches, from Watchful Eye Designs, are completely waterproof, dust proof and humidity proof, guaranteed! These amazing bags have been tested and approved by the US Navy and the SSI (Association of Scuba Divers), and have been used during the Olympics. Aloksak offers many different sizes, each featuring their patented airtight seal, which makes them submersible up to 200 feet. These lightweight, tough and indispensable pouches come in many different size



combinations. The smallest is perfect for passports and other documents, while the largest can fit film, camera, and more. Prices range from \$7 to \$22 and are a must for travelers worrying about keeping items dry. Come by or call us and we'll help you find exactly what you need.

END



"I was disappointed in Niagara—most people must be disappointed in Niagara. Every American bride is taken there, and the site of the stupendous waterfall must be one of the earliest, if not the keenest, disappointments in American married life." — OSCAR WILDE

# The Queen of Cambodia

By Mia Barnard

After finishing Peace Corps duty in Burkina Faso, Africa, my husband Jason and I decided to travel around the world. Our original plan was to go to Paris and meet up with our Peace Corps friends Amy and Mike, travel together to Amsterdam and then split up. Amy and Mike would then go home and Jason and I would continue on to Thailand, Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. Well, the first part of the plan went just fine. We got to Paris, met Mike and Amy and blundered around Paris using our West African French. We hung out waiting for two other friends from the US to show up, before heading on to Amsterdam. But then September 11th happened, and everything changed. Our US friends could not fly out, and our parents were freaking out, wanting us to fly home immediately. Yikes! We went on to Amsterdam anyway for about a week and then were unsure of what to do. With the high Muslim population we ruled out Indonesia, but were still interested in SouthEast Asia. Although it seemed so far away, we decided to head for Thailand and Cambodia.

Driving through Bangkok upon arrival was amazing—having come from a “developing” country in Africa we were stunned at how developed Thailand was. We spent three weeks at the Khao San Road Palace Hotel. Wow, after two years living the simple life in the African bush we had a room with air conditioning, our own bathroom with hot water AND a toilet, plus a TV with HBO Asia and CNN. All this for \$10 a night! It was a little bit of heaven, but we did ultimately tire of it, so we decided to move on to Cambodia.

A Bangkok travel agent got us overland tickets and visas to Cambodia for \$25 each. We didn’t have any problems

with our agent, the visas or the trip itself, but apparently things have changed since then, and it has become more difficult and expensive to cross the border. At 7:00am we boarded a big luxury coach in Bangkok and started off across Thailand for our final destination, Siem Reap, Cambodia.

The border town of Poipot, Cambodia is a bizarre place. It is like a mini Las Vegas with huge casinos lining the paved streets. As we zoomed along the “strip” in our air-conditioned mini bus I had many thoughts of, “Where are we?” But, then the moment we left Poipot the road turned to reddish dirt with potholes the size of VW bugs and the air-con broke. “Oh, right,” I remembered, “we’re in Cambodia”.

Once in Siem Reap we ended up at the very clean and friendly Green Park Guest House. Our room had a fan and

While we sat on an ancient stone wall in the dying sunlight a small boy approached and asked us if we wanted to see the “Queen”. Not really understanding, we answered with a hesitant “yes”. At this he led us on a circuitous route that had us climbing over piles of rubble and squeezing under stones from caved in walls. Scrambling down, up and over huge lintels, we were led further away from the touristed area and deeper into the heart of Angkor Wat.

Soon we were ushered into a cool, dark, candle-lit room in which knelt a tiny, ancient Buddhist nun. There was a relief sculpture of the “Queen” on the wall. Incense burned while a yellow flower garland at the base of the “Queen” provided a makeshift altar.

After sitting silently for a few minutes the nun began to speak quietly and the

boy translated, “Would you like to light some incense for blessing?” We said “yes”. The nun carefully gave us each three sticks of incense. We lit the sticks on a candle and reverently placed them in the sand at the base of the altar. The old nun bent forward very slowly and took a deep breath.

“Here it comes”, I said to myself, certain that she would now impart unto us words of Buddhist wisdom that just might start us out on the path of enlightenment for the rest of our lives.

She then gestured to a shallow bowl at her feet and said in perfect English, “put money here.”

“That’s it?” I thought. I was taken totally off guard and got a bad case of the giggles so we had to leave after putting some coins in the bowl.

The vendors at Angkor Wat cannot go into the ruins, so each time we would come out of a ruin to meet up with our guides we would be greeted with yells of, “You want cold drink, mister?” from women across the road. The kids were under the radar and had a bit more options of where to find us. There were



Jason riding a “moto” in the countryside.

private bathroom for \$5 per night. While there we hired two moto drivers to tour us through Angkor Wat. They took us to each of the main sites within the park and waited for us outside for as long as we needed. Entrance fees were \$20 per person and the guides were about \$5 each for the day.

All of Angkor Wat is spectacular, but Preah Khan was my favorite spot. We were there at the end of the day during a time the French call l’heure bleu, the blue hour—when the shadows get long and the

*“The worst thing about being a tourist is having other tourists recognize you as a tourist.” — RUSSELL BAKER*

*continued on page 7*

# The Queen of Cambodia...

*continued from page 6*

those like our guide who was a treat to interact with, and then those who followed us yelling, “Ten bracelets, \$1, you want, Mister?” for about 20 minutes.

We had heard that sunset from Phnom Bakheng was spectacular, and there are elephant rides that go to the top so we were really hoping to make it. Instead we were so enthralled by the setting sun after we climbed up to the top of Angkor Wat itself that we stayed there. Today, three years later, I read stories of people going up for the sunset with hundreds or thousands of other people and I am amazed. When we went, there were about 20 other people with us. Like I said, things have changed.

Siem Reap itself was a great little town with a wonderful feeling. I was ready to move there. Some of our favorite places were the Red Piano, a great place to people watch and sit in the shade with a cold beer. Then there was the Butterfly Bar, which has a cover charge of \$1. (Incidentally the American Dollar is the currency of choice in Cambodia.) It was another great place to spend an afternoon. The bar has a beautiful garden with a little fishpond and a net that covers the whole thing so the thousands of butterflies don't escape. One final note: restaurants around Siem Reap boast items on the menu called “happy”—happy pizza, happy chicken soup, etc., which means the food contains the traditional Khmer spice of ganja.

After 17 days in Siem Reap we decided to move on. We paid \$8 each for a five hour boat ride to Battambang. When we got to the “dock” we saw a big comfortable boat and were very excited. Then that big boat pulled away and there was this little tiny eight-seat boat, onto which 14 of us boarded. This was not the most comfortable ride I have ever had on a boat, but it was surely the most beautiful. The lush vegetation hung over

the banks of the river making it seem like a paradise. We went past floating Wats and the amazing floating village on Tonle Sap Lake. My favorite place in the floating village was when we went through a tollgate. There we were in the middle of this lake and we come to a floating building with a red and white striped toll barrier. Once we paid the toll the gate



**Jason sits in front of a temple at Angkor Wat.**

went up and we continued on.

Once we got to Battambang the tout situation was a little scary. When we were barely within sight of the shore all these guys jumped in the water and swam out to the boat. Each climbed in and then each claimed a whitey. A little guy named Mr. Sou sat next to me, put his hand on my leg and said, “You are with me”. It was a little bit intimidating. When we got to the shore we finally figured out that each man represented a place to stay. We stayed at the Chhaya Hotel, which was another great deal—we had a private room with our own bathroom, a balcony, a fan and a TV once again for \$5 a night.

Battambang is a true Cambodian city. No frills here, but I loved seeing how the local people lived. It also has some great French-period architecture along the river. And boy, do they love karaoke in Battambang. I have never seen so many karaoke places in my life.

After we were there for about a week we hired Mr. Bean and Mr. Sou to take us around the area on their motos for \$5

each. We went down all these amazing and beautiful back roads that were not even wide enough for a car. We whizzed past farms and pastures. I really liked the Khmer architecture. The houses are built on stilts and have a beautiful silhouette. There were ox drawn carts going down the same roads and huge swathes of earth were covered in big red drying chiles.

Our first stop as we zoomed around was the Wat on top of Phnom Sampeau. At the top is the wat, and lots of Buddhist monks. Around back is a “killing cave”. During Pol Pot's horrible rein, people had their throats cut and were then thrown down into the abyss. The cave features a reclining Buddha statue and a cage filled with human bones. Evidently the bones were originally strewn about the

cave, but too many people took them for souvenirs so the bones are now kept in the cage.

The Cambodian people we came in contact with were some of the kindest, gentlest people I have ever been around. Each had a horrible story about how their family was affected by Pol Pot, but their hearts and heads are filled with hope and vision for the future.

Jason and I mostly manage, by luck or insanity, to travel in the shoulder or off-seasons. True, what you see might not be the picture post card that you always dreamed of seeing. It might rain or be the kind of heat that Jason and I call, ‘the heat of insanity’, but chances are you will have the place more to yourself and better see the rhythm of local life.

—Mia Barnard is the queen of the sales floor at Travel Essentials. She is also known as the floor manager and book and map buyer.

END



“Life is like a taxi. The meter just keeps a-ticking whether you are getting somewhere or just standing still.” — LOU ERICKSON

252 E. Main Street • Ashland, OR • 97520  
541-482-7383 • 800-258-0758  
www.travelessentials.com  
email: travess@mind.net

PRSRT STD  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT NO 125  
MEDFORD OR

---

## Life is Short...

*continued from page 1*

a goodly amount of steamed rice, that the bathroom situation will require a fair amount of squatting, and that many things will be quite different than they are at home, but they don't *really* know. For that matter, I'm not sure Bob and I really know what to expect either! We have hotel reservations for the Hong Kong portion of the trip—we'll stay at the Hong Kong YMCA Salisbury Hotel—and we'll book hotel reservations for our first couple of nights in Ho Chi Minh City, but otherwise we'll figure it out as we go. Generally speaking, we know where in Vietnam we want to go—Hanoi in the North, a beach town somewhere along the coast, and Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta in the South, but that's about all we've figured out. We may travel by train, we may travel by bus or plane. We've even toyed with the idea of going into Cambodia to see Angkor Wat, but will just play that by ear.

I could easily let myself get a little panicked about this upcoming trip (and honestly there have been a few nights

that I haven't slept all that great thinking about the details, or lack thereof, and I won't even begin to tell you about the snake and dog dinners I've read about). The devastating tsunami that destroyed so much in Asia could add to my panic—we spent 11 days two years ago on Kho Phi Phi, Thailand, the island that was virtually destroyed by the tsunami. I could worry about malaria, avian flu, dengue fever, etc., etc. I could say "Gosh, with our two kids, we should stick to traveling in more developed countries." But without getting too philosophical here, Bob and I have taken the approach to living that is to live it. We'll be careful with our girls, not let them drink tap water, eat ice or ice cream or touch live birds or chickens, but we'll accept our upcoming adventures—knowing some may be good and some not so good—and try to experience life to the fullest.

We first traveled with our girls when they were almost 4 and 2, taking a three-week trip to Italy and Croatia. Sarah was still in diapers and drinking milk from a bottle, which made for some

tricky packing and traveling. People asked why we were traveling with such young children who wouldn't remember the trip when they were older. Our philosophy was, and still is, that it's not so much the remembering of a specific trip that we are hoping for, but the ability to become flexible under all kinds of circumstances, and understand that the rest of the world doesn't necessarily live like we do, with the same advantages we have. Our visit to Thailand changed our family's perspective on what's most important in life, and I'm guessing Vietnam will do the same.

Life is short—I learn that again and again every day, and like the title of the Ashland High School play this past fall, you can't take it with you. So I'm sure I'll have minor moments of freaking out before and during this trip to Asia, but I'm willing to trade those moments for experiences that will last a lifetime.

—Nancy Bestor is the co-owner of *Travel Essentials*. She was last seen at the library, researching malaria, avian flu and dengue fever.