Pack Like A Pro—It’s our Annual Pack It Up Workshop!

Travel Essentials will offer two free packing workshops with America’s leading packing expert, Anne McAlpin. The workshops, Tuesday, May 15 at 2:00 and 6:00 p.m., will take place in Travel Essentials’ Ashland, Oregon store at 252 East Main Street.

Anne McAlpin is a world traveler, packing expert and author of the popular book Pack It Up, which has been updated to include all of Anne’s latest travel tips, as well as a 30 minute packing DVD. Her appearances on Oprah, CNN and The View have reached millions of viewers. Anne travels the globe teaching the inside secrets on packing perfectly, whether for a weekend away or a European vacation. Anne’s tips include packing smart for airport security, planning the best travel wardrobe, secrets to packing the perfect carry-on bag, and more.

Travel Essentials will also offer a 10% discount on all regularly priced merchandise to all attendees. Customers who spend $100 will receive a free copy of Anne’s book, Pack It Up.

Anne’s packing workshops always bring in a full house, so reservations are a must! To reserve your spot, call Travel Essentials at (541) 482-7383 today. Don’t miss this great event!

Travel with the Honeymooners

Friends, acquaintances and customers often ask Bob and I how we came to open and run our travel store in Ashland, Oregon. The truth of the matter is, it all started with an orange VW bus.

We had each done a fair amount of traveling in high school and college, and it took just a few years of working in the San Francisco Bay Area’s “corporate world” to determine that pantyhose and power suits were not our style. Deciding to get married, we also decided to quit our jobs, purchase the aforementioned orange Volkswagen camper bus, put our belongings into storage, and for our honeymoon, take a break from it all.

The idea was to take a lap around the United States, traveling about six months... continued on page 2

Luggage For Kids Drive

Travel Essentials is proud to announce our first ever Luggage For Kids Drive. Please help us as we donate luggage to children who are less fortunate.

More than 450 foster children are currently in the Jackson County system. As these children travel to and from foster homes, most keep their belongings in a black garbage bag, because they have no other means to transport their clothing. Many don’t have much clothing to begin with, so the $400 monthly stipend paid to their foster home goes toward necessities, and does not leave much room to buy a suitcase or even a duffel bag.

During the month of May, Travel Essentials will collect NEW or GENTLY USED luggage of any size to deliver to foster children in the County. Kids will use these bags when they move from a shelter or group home to a foster home, when they are adopted, or even when they take a trip.

Please take a look in your attics and closets to see if you have any gently used luggage that you no longer need. We’ll help you put it to good use. Donate to Travel Essentials Luggage for Kids Drive today.

For more information on the Jackson County Foster Parent Program, please call 776-6120 x264.
Rolling Along with the Honeymooners...

continued from page 1

or until our money ran out—whichever came first. We left California in mid-March. We knew we wanted to be in New Orleans for the Jazz Festival, and in New York for a wedding, but otherwise the open road was our oyster. We’d stay where we wanted, for as long as we wanted, and if we got divorced in the process, at least we’d figure out early on that we weren’t made for each other.

Now, being a newly-wedded bride, I thought we’d at least occasionally stay in a quaint and charming bed and breakfast, and eat out at a nice restaurant two or three times a week. Bob on the other hand was our numbers cruncher and he knew the more we camped in the van and ate van-cooked meals, the longer our funds would last. For the record, we stayed in a motel just twice during the entire six-month trip, once when our van was broken down in the middle of nowhere New Mexico, and once in Chicago, when campgrounds were few and far between. We NEVER stayed in a charming B & B. But I’m not bitter.

There wasn’t a lot of room in the bus, so we didn’t bring much. A few trusted guidebooks (including Let’s Go USA), a Rand McNally Atlas, some beat up pots and cooking utensils, a guitar, Scrabble, a deck of cards, and the minimum amount of clothing necessary to keep us comfy in any climate. Some friends and family thought we were a little bit insane and quite a bit irresponsible—we had quit good paying jobs, had no plans for the future and spending all of our hard-earned money on this trip just wasn’t wise. As far as we were concerned however, the open road was our future, and there was no need in thinking any further ahead.

Now a beat up orange VW bus is not such an unusual site in California or Oregon, but in the south, the Midwest and on the eastern seaboard, adults stared and children pointed as we sputtered down the road, apparently looking like we were late for Woodstock. It didn’t help our image any when one of us would often have to crawl underneath the engine and hit the starter with a hammer while the other turned the ignition key, just to get the darn bus going.

We met a lot of interesting folks in campgrounds all over the States though, but were always surprised when we would wake up about 8:30 or 9 in the morning, look out the window and find out that all the other RVers were already long gone. (If they’re retired and traveling on the open road, what is the big hurry anyway?)

I could wax nostalgic and say this was the time of our lives, and I would not be lying. There were so many highlights on this trip that I could write a story about each one. We hiked to Phantom Ranch at the bottom of the Grand Canyon, soaked in a natural hot springs on the Rio Grande River, saw Bill Monroe, Charley Pride and Garth Brooks at the Grand Ole Opry (who all just happened to be playing there on the day we drove up), visited with the King in Graceland, saw baseball games at Yankee Stadium, Camden Yards, and Tiger Stadium, hiked 28 miles over two days in Glacier National Park, and saw the sun set at Key West, to name just a few.

We also learned that we were well suited for each other. We could both sit by an open fire and get lost in the flames, listening to music or sporting events on the radio. Neither of us needed or wanted a set plan when traveling, but preferred (and still prefer) to take it as it comes. We also realized that if we could get along in such a small space as a Volkswagen bus for six months, we would likely be able to get along just about anywhere.

The final days of our adventure found us on the west coast, where we stopped for several days in Ashland. Like many before us, one thing led to another and within a short time, we pulled our stuff out of storage, trucked it up I-5, and shortly thereafter Travel Essentials was born.

We traded that VW bus in for a more practical car, and 15 years later, we’re driving kids to soccer, softball and dance in a van that starts without requiring a hammer—I sure miss those good old days.

—Nancy Bestor is the co-owner of Travel Essentials. Her dream of retirement includes a newer (and better running) VW bus, the open road, and her husband Bob. She only hopes they’ll still wake up in campgrounds after everyone else is gone.
The State of European Travel

by Robert H. Bestor, Jr.

With that pretentious headline, let’s get the ’07 travel season underway. In a year that promises to be another blockbuster in terms of the number of American visitors to Europe, what changes are afoot?

The Euro

Its most recent run-up to $1.35 is a far cry from those halcyon days a few years ago when it was only worth 82 cents. Which way the euro is headed no one knows, but if Messrs. Buffet and Gates are betting on it, and they are, who are we to argue. Some say the euro could go as high as $1.50. The Swiss franc is equally robust, and you can figure meals and hotels in Switzerland will be at least 20 percent higher than the rest of Western Europe. With the British pound worth just about twice as much as one US dollar, the UK is frighteningly expensive. For ways to make the most of your puny dollar while in Europe, go to www.gemut.com and click on Ten Ways to Save (under Travel Advisories).

Air Travel

Book as soon as possible; both for the best price and to get the flight you want. We’re seeing high-season East Coast-Europe fares at around $900 to $1,100 and $1,100 to $1,500 from the West Coast. Just as they did in ’06, those numbers are bound to rise over the next days, weeks, and months. The airlines’ “yield management” software allocates seats at various price levels. The lowest are sold first, and as time goes on, the price for available seats increases. Again this year, space will be a problem.

Flying is a hassle and will only get worse, what with increased security and airlines desperate to increase fares while decreasing services (tried to redeem miles lately?)

Choosing a seat in advance, for example, is no a longer routine part of buying a ticket. British Air now requires that coach and business class passengers obtain pre-assigned seats through the Internet and, get this, no more than 24 hours prior to flight time. That’s in both directions, so returning BA passengers somehow have to get to a computer in Europe within 24 hours of their return to the U.S. Don’t have access to a computer? Well, as the Brits might say, hard cheese; for you it’s survival of the fittest at the airport. And, according to reliable reports, seat assignment requests by phone are denied. This policy applies to all coach and business class passengers except BA Gold and Silver Executive Club members, families with children, and those holding full-fare tickets (a RT full-fare ticket between Boston and London in March was $2,074 vs. BA’s online fare of $501). If this works for BA, other airlines are almost sure to follow with similar policies.

Car Rental

Germany is still the least expensive European country in which to rent, Italy the most expensive. Rates do not yet reflect the recent dollar weakness, so we recommend booking ASAP. As long as your reservation is guaranteed in US dollars, and you can cancel or make changes without penalty, there’s no reason not to book immediately.

A disturbing trend over the past 18 months has been the increase in post-rental unauthorized charges on renters’ credit cards, such as unneeded insurance, unwanted optional winterization fees, and phantom damage. The process of picking up a car in Europe and signing the rental contract in a foreign language (some companies will provide an English copy, though they are not required to and have no legal standing) is fraught with peril. Customers of the Gemut.com travel service (800-521-6722) are given a 24/7 toll-free-from-Europe help line and urged to use it from the rental car counter prior to signing a contract if there is any question about the nature and amount of charges. You’ll not find better information about the European car rental process than at www.gemut.com. There are several pertinent articles, but I especially recommend Car Rental Advice from a Pro and 12 Car Rental Tips.

Rail Travel

The big news is that North Americans can now book and pay for city-to-city rail tickets at the websites of several national European railroads, including Germany and Switzerland. Though purchased-in-the-USA rail passes continue to be the best deal for most travelers, those who require only one, or perhaps two, point-to-point tickets, the cheapest place to buy them will likely be at the website of the railroad of the country where travel will commence. The German rail system www.bahn.de, for example, offers long-distance fares as low at 29 euros, based on advance purchase plus restrictions on refunds and changes.

In an attempt to force customers to do their rail business online, European railroads, like the airlines, have substantially reduced commissions to U.S. wholesalers such as Rail Europe and Wandrian. Those companies have, in turn, slashed commissions to retailers. This means travelers must purchase online from sellers or wind up paying a fee to order by phone.

Rail passes are no longer priced the same everywhere, so we suggest checking the prices at www.gemut.com; in many cases they are lower than you’ll find from better-known rail purveyors.

Booking Hotels

Bidding at Priceline.com is still the best way to get an inexpensive hotel in major cities—provided you don’t mind staying in corporately-owned chains like Marriot and Intercontinental. Before you bid, check www.biddingfortravel.com to get an idea of prices and hotels (see the back page of this newsletter for more on www.biddingfortravel.com).

Luggage

Last year, I put my Hartmann luggage in mothballs and switched to lighter, more versatile Eagle Creek. I also discovered Eagle Creek’s clever packing folders kept my shirts and pants virtually wrinkle free, much more so than in the Hartmann fold-over hanging bag I’d used for the last dozen years. It was thus reassuring to see that, in a test lab performance conducted by Frommer’s Budget Travel magazine, the Eagle Creek Velocity 25 rolling bag beat all competitors, including a similar, much more expensive bag by Tumi.

—Robert H. Bestor, Jr., is the publisher of Gemütlichkeit, the travel newsletter for Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (www.gemut.com), and a part owner of Travel Essentials.

“I love going on trips that shock me, where everything I believe in—my religion, my politics, my social outlook—is immediately challenged with diametrically different viewpoints...The reward of that is extraordinary.” —ARTHUR FROMMER
Spring Into 2007 with New Travel Products

From luscious clothing made from bamboo to folding dishes, here’s the latest and greatest that the 2007 travel market has to offer. Some are new, others are so good we can’t get enough of telling our customers about them.

Eagle Creek Tarmac

The Eagle Creek Tarmac ES is quite simply the best value in a rolling bag on the market today. It offers the finest combination of durability, functionality, weight and price of any bag rolling through airports anywhere in the world. When you combine the 41-inch telescoping handle, the internal organization pockets, the unconditional lifetime guarantee, and the 8 pound, 8 ounce weight of the 22 inch carry-on, with an amazing price point (just $250 for the 22 inch carry-on), this bag cannot be beat. It is also available in a 20 inch, 26 inch, and 28 inch size, and comes in black, palm and a gorgeous new sangria.

A great compliment to the Eagle Creek Rolling Tarmac is the new Tarmac Flight Bag. This carry-on sized bag can slip over the handle of any Tarmac to ride on the top through a busy airport or train station. Its large u-shaped opening, zip side pockets and internal compartments for in-transit travel necessities, along with its tote straps with a comfortable padded handle make it a great addition to any rolling bag. It is available in two sizes, large (2300 cubic inches) for $120 and small (1400 cubic inches) for $100, and also comes in three colors, black, palm and sangria.

Bamboo Clothing

We’re excited to offer a fabulous new line of travelwear made by Ashland’s own DreamSacks. Made from pure bamboo fiber with a touch of lycra, the incredibly comfortable clothing is great for wearing on planes and abroad when you want to look great and stay comfortable. The fabric is naturally soft, breathable, and renewable. Customers who have already tried on the bamboo clothing are raving about it, as are staff members and their wives too!

The bamboo fabric offers unparalleled advantages, including strength, versatility, and luxurious softness. Bamboo’s thermodynamic properties ensure that you are warm in the winter and cool in the summer. It also contains kun, a naturally occurring anti-microbial agent that prevents bacteria from cultivating, thus keeping you odor free. The cross-section of bamboo fiber reveals various micro-holes that provide superior moisture absorption. This allows bamboo cloth to absorb and evaporate perspiration rapidly. Better yet, bamboo naturally provides added protection against the sun’s harmful UV rays.

Five bamboo styles are available; a cross over 3/4 sleeve top ($39.95), a tank top (24.95), a zip up jacket (59.95), cropped pants (52.95) and long pants ($54.95). The sizing is generous, and available in small (6-8), medium (10-12), large (14), and extra large (16+). Bamboo clothing is available in great travel colors, such as black and chocolate brown, as well as more fun colors for spring and summer. Check them out online at www.travelessentials.com.

“I tell you, we are here on Earth to fart around, and don’t let anybody tell you different.” — KURT VONNEGUT
Spring Into 2007 with New Travel Products

Steripen Water Purifier—Lower Prices!
The world is full of places where the safety of drinking water is questionable at best. We've traveled in countries where I have not been comfortable using tap water to brush my teeth. That's why we love the Steripen. It's the only portable water purifier on the market using ultraviolet light to destroy the DNA of the microbes that can make you sick. It is effective against the germs that cause diarrhea, dysentery, hepatitis, and legionnaires' disease, as well as viruses, bacteria, giardia, cryptosporidium, bird flu, e.coli and salmonella to name just a few. The Steripen works in just 48 seconds on .5 liters of water with a push button automatic microprocessor and sensor controlled timing. The classic Steripen measures seven and a half inches high and weighs about eight ounces with batteries. Its price was recently lowered to $99.95.

The maker of Steripen has just released a smaller and lighter weight version that is half the size of the classic Steripen but still offers all the same features. Weighing just 3 1/2 ounces and measuring six inches long, the Steripen "Traveler" costs $129.99.

Microfiber Travel Towel
The microfiber travel towel, designed by Anne McAlpin, is great for any trip. We've used this versatile towel as a beach blanket and bath towel, airline blanket, sarong, and shoulder wrap. Tiny Micronet fibers allow the towel to absorb 5 times its weight in water, and for quick drying, 90 percent of the water can be removed by hand wringing. The towel is easy to care for too because it can be machine washed and machine dried. It opens to a roomy and comfy 35 x 62 inches, but conveniently packs down to the size of a paperback book. Anne McAlpin’s Travel Towel now comes with a deluxe travel bag that is perfect for your swimsuit, sunscreen and sunglasses, or even in-flight snacks and necessities.

Thirty percent of net profits from the sale of the Pink Micronet Microfiber Towel by Anne McAlpin go to The Breast Cancer Research Foundation. The towel sells for $29.95, and is available in pink, silver, plum and blue.

Travel Compression Socks
While it's true that socks aren't sexy, they do serve a useful purpose, and in the case of these TravelSox, they have a medical purpose as well. TravelSox are the graduated compression socks specifically designed for superior comfort when traveling. Their patented design helps stimulate blood flow and reduce swelling on long flights, car trips and train rides. If you're stationary or in a cramped space for an extended period of time, TravelSox will help keep your circulation levels higher. The socks are made mostly of polyester/coolmax, with a small amount of lycra and nylon. They are available in khaki and black, in both medium (shoe size 7.5-11 women and 6.5-9.5 men), and large (shoe size 10-14 men). One pair of socks sells for $24.95.

Fozzil Travelware
Why carry three dimensions when you can get the same performance from two! These thin polypropylene ThinkFLAT designs pack flat and flexible then snap into innovative dishes that save space and weight without sacrificing convenience. Fozzils are virtually unbreakable, absurdly light, and have a non-stick, odor free, easy clean surface. Integrated packaging doubles as a super thin storage case and a handy prep tray or cutting board.
The Solo pack has everything you need for a hike, picnic, or around the world adventure in one slim package. The set includes a dish, bowl, cup and spoon, and sells for $14.95. Individual pieces are also available separately.

Check out Travel Essentials’ brand new website at www.travelessentials.com

“Comfort has its place, but it seems rude to visit another country dressed as if you’ve come to mow its lawns.” — DAVID SEDARIS
Eighteen baseball seasons ago I had the unique opportunity to attend a professional baseball game in Japan. The game was held at Seibukyujo Stadium in Tokorozawa, Japan—less than an hour west of Tokyo by train. The game left an everlasting impression on my mind, not because of the way the game was played or who won (as I don’t even remember who the Seibu Lions were playing, let alone who won) but because of the fans. About the only thing I can still remember from that game is the chant that went “Ka-To-Bo-Se Kiyohara!”

Kazuhiro Kiyohara was the slugger at the time for the Lions and the fans were cheering for him to hit a home run. Not once, but continually throughout every one of Kiyohara’s at bats during the game the mantra continued. Hence, the cheer became forever imprinted on my brain.

Fast forward to 2007 and a trip I made to Japan with my wife and kids. The trip coincided with the beginning of the Japanese professional baseball season. Initially I wanted to see a game featuring the Hanshin Tigers because their fans are supposed to be the craziest in the world. However, the Tigers opening series was sold out long before the season started. My next choice was the Lotte Marines, managed by American Bobby Valentine, because their fans are supposed to be the second most fanatical. On game day, though, the forecast was rain and the Marines play outdoors. The backup plan was to once again go see the Lions as they have built a dome over Seibukyujo since the last time I was there. I was a little disappointed at the prospect as the Lions’ fans are supposed to be pretty mellow by Japanese standards. After losing Daisuke Matsuzaka to the Boston Red Sox, I figured the fans would be even more tame than usual.

We arrived at the game without tickets and purchased outfield seats at the walk-up window. As we proceeded to the area in which we could sit we discovered that everyone around us was a Rakuten Eagles fan (the team the Lions were playing that day). Sitting in the visitor’s section would not do. (Large numbers of visiting fans attend away games in Japan since the public transportation system is so efficient in the country.) So we went over to the Lions’ side of the outfield only to find that it was packed, and we were too late to get a seat in the home team section.

Out of the tens of thousands in attendance, we were the only non-Japanese people, and just as we were wondering how we would get a seat before the game was to begin a Japanese lady appeared out of nowhere and asked if she could help. I responded that it didn’t look like there were any places left to sit. She apologized that the seats were in the front row. “All the better,” I responded as we proceeded through the masses to the front.

It turns out that she has a daughter Maya, the same age as my daughter Ellie, and the two became fast friends through non-verbal communication and are now email pen pals. I should point out that Maya and her mom speak only Japanese. My wife and kids can’t speak Japanese either, so all communication was being done through me in my rusty Japanese.

Anyway, the pregame particulars and top half of the first inning proceeded as in America with the national anthem (of Japan of course), announcements including lineups, and the visiting team batting. After the first three outs Maya’s mom told us to stand up. I translated for my family and we all stood up though we were not sure why. As it turns out Japanese fans cheer non-stop, while standing, from the time the other team makes their third out until the home team makes their third out. I figured this was just for the first inning, but Maya’s mom told us to stand up again after the top half of the second inning. After that she told us to follow her. I thought she was an usher when she then informed me that she would be honored if we would sit with her family even though it might be tight. I gladly thanked her and said that would be wonderful. She apologized that the seats were in the front row. “All the better,” I responded as we proceeded through the masses to the front.

One day if I do go to heaven...I’ll look around and say, ‘It ain’t bad, but it ain’t San Francisco.” —HERB CAEN
I Spy a Great Eyewitness Travel Guide

When asked to recommend a guidebook that will give someone a good idea of the country they plan to visit, the Eyewitness Guides from Dorling Kindersley are always at the top of Travel Essentials’ staff lists. DK publishes books that are known for their excellent illustrations and photography, and their Eyewitness Travel Guides are no exception. They make a delightful tour guide for an armchair traveler, or someone planning a trip.

Vibrant and simple to read, the books are filled with color photographs, maps, charts, and sketches to lead you through the historic sights and modern marvels of cities all over the world. The guides include history, schedules of events and festivals, as well as practical travel information, such as where to stay, eat shop and be entertained.

The meat of the Eyewitness Guides is the area-by-area breakdown of the city and region. In each section, you will find maps, photographs, and descriptions. You will also find tourist hotspots, architectural marvels, historical locations, and anything else that might be of interest. Cutaways and floorplans of all major sights and 3-D aerial views of districts are just a few of the special features that make these guidebooks really stand out.

Travel Essentials’ offers more than 30 Eyewitness Guidebooks on cities and countries throughout the world. Their prices range from $10-30. See them online at www.travelessentials.com.

Baseball—Japanese Style...

continued from page 6

didn’t need to prompt us again and we were on our feet in a timely manner for the remaining seven innings.

Late in the game my wife Linda was going to purchase some food from the concession stands (as the mobile vendors in Japan sell mostly beer and whiskey rather than the hot dogs and peanuts we see in the states). She couldn’t get to the better concessions due to her outfield seat ticket and her inability to speak Japanese to explain why she wanted to enter the other seating area. Out of nowhere, again, our guardian angel—Maya’s mom—appeared and got her into the other area by telling the usher that she was shopping.

Maya’s family was incredibly nice and hospitable. Not only did they split their seating space with us but they also shared their food with us, loaned us cheering devices and cushions, and gave my daughter a Seibu Lions jersey. I’ve been to hundreds of professional baseball games in the states and have never witnessed such kindness being offered to complete strangers.

The cheers haven’t changed much in the past 18 years although the names have. The Lions’ star player these days is Alex Cabrera (Kaburera when rendered into Japanese). So his cheer, among many, went “ho-mu-ran, ho-mu-ran ka-bu-re-ra, ka-to-ba-se ka-bu-re-ra.” “Homu ran” is the Japanese rendering of the English “home run.” Hopefully, it will be less than 18 years before I can replace this cheer, which is now stuck in my head, with another, by experiencing professional Japanese baseball, and especially their magnificent fans, yet again.

—Al Case is an associate professor in the school of business at Southern Oregon University in Ashland. When he’s not teaching students how to crunch numbers, Case is often crunching the statistics of his fantasy baseball team, and cheering on his favorite United States major league team, the Oakland Athletics.

“In Paris they simply stared when I spoke to them in French; I never did succeed in making those idiots understand their own language.” — Mark Twain
News and Advice for and from Fellow Travelers

Medical Assistance for Travelers

Travelers worried about medical costs for emergencies or even routine medical needs while traveling abroad should check out the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (www.iamat.org). By joining the association, with a donation in the amount of your choice, you receive a membership card and a booklet listing English speaking doctors in 125 countries and territories. These doctors agree to provide services for set fees to members ($80 office visit, $100 house calls at hotels, and $120 night calls, Sundays and local holidays).

Germany, for example, lists two doctors, one in Bonn and one in Munich. Kenya lists four; Mombasa-Nyali, Mombasa, Malindi, and Nairobi. In Nairobi, you can also obtain a “tourist membership”, where if taking a safari, you pay $15 per person for two weeks, which entitles you to an ambulance flight from your safari location to Nairobi if necessary.

IAMAT is a non-profit association that was established in 1960. Their aim is to make competent care available to travelers anywhere in the world, even in very remote locations, by doctors who speak English and have had medical training in North America or Europe. IAMAT continuously inspects clinics in an attempt to ensure that travelers receive competent medical care.

Once you subscribe to IAMAT, you receive a booklet listing doctors around the world, a world immunization chart, a world malaria risk chart, and a brochure on how to protect against malaria. For more information go to www.iamat.org. Thanks to an Ashland Travel Essentials’ customer for turning us on to IAMAT.

Homestays in London

The Bestor family is headed to London for a week this summer, and to save money on lodging, we’ve booked a homestay with a couple through Happy Homes (www.happy-homes.com), an English host family agency. We first heard about this lodging option in an article by Arthur Frommer in the San Francisco Chronicle’s Sunday Travel section.

The cost for our family of four, for one week’s lodging and continental breakfast, is 490 pounds, about $975 US. This is much cheaper than any hotel lodging we have been able to find for the four of us, particularly because hotel rooms in London can rarely accommodate four people. Other similar agencies we researched were London Homestead Services (www.lhslondon.com) and At Home in London (www.athomeinlondon.co.uk). We are looking forward to our adventure of meeting new people and trying out a different method of travel. We’ll report on our stay in our next newsletter.

Priceline Assistance

Most travelers have heard about bidding for hotels, rental cars and airline tickets via the popular www.priceline.com website, but many people are not aware of www.biddingfortravel.com, a website that assists priceline bidding. Bidding for Travel lists winning bids, and provides bidding assistance, specifically for Priceline usage. For example, if you are getting ready to bid on a hotel in Bangkok, Thailand in June, you can go to www.biddingfortravel.com and see winning bids for different hotels in Bangkok. This is a great website for people who like www.priceline.com to make informed bids that will save them the most money possible.