



# TRAVEL ESSENTIALS NEWS

ASHLAND, OREGON

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

## Eating My Way Through the Markets of Southern France

by Nancy Bestor

I am not a big shopper. The idea of a typical shopping trip, browsing from store to store and buying items from various establishments, sounds to me like a day

**TRAVEL**  
**FIRST PERSON** in purgatory. More than anything I like my shopping easy and convenient. If I can't find it quickly and close to home or work, I'll buy it online. Thus on a recent trip to southern France I was a bit surprised to find myself delighted to arise each morning and excitedly ask my family, "Where's today's market?"

We rented a house in Marnac, a tiny town about 20 kilometers from Sarlat in the Dordogne. Though there was a traditional super market just a few minutes away, our rental agency kindly provided a list of open-air markets in nearby villages. Happily, each day we had several markets

to choose from and gladly took advantage of this opportunity.

Each morning, we took our empty grocery bag and drove to a nearby village to fill it up. All the open-air markets we visited offered crafts, knickknacks, and even some touristy doodads, but we normally passed these offerings by and headed straight to the food. A mouth-watering array of produce and vegetables, breads, wines, desserts, pastries, meats, cheeses, and much, much more were all available. Beautiful fresh flowers and decorative plants were also in abundance.

Every day we chose something new. One day we bought fresh sausage for our dinner, from a butcher who looked like he had ground and cased it that very morning, a tasty bottle of local wine and fresh baked tarts. Another day we filled our shopping bag with vegetables and salad makings. Next it was succulent

*continued on page 2*

## Making Travel Safer and More Comfortable

Robert Louis Stevenson said, "I travel for travel's sake. The great affair is to move." Obviously he never spent 12 hours crammed into a coach seat, either too cold or too hot, tired, and unable to sleep. Although we can't upgrade you to a first class seat, there are ways we can add at least a touch of comfort to your travel experience.

### Comfort Items

For a simple, silky upgrade, we recommend **Dreamsack's Airline Comfort Set (\$59)**, which includes a silk eyeshade (also available separately for \$14.95), a silk pillowcase and a silk blanket. The pillowcase is made to fit over airline-provided pillows, giving you a soft, smooth and best of all clean surface on which to rest your weary head. The

*continued on page 4*

## Europe for the Middle Class

by Robert H. Bestor, Jr.

As the publisher of a monthly newsletter about travel in Europe—*Gemütlichkeit*, *The Travel Letter for Germany, Austria & Switzerland* ([www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)) I spend most days immersed in emails and the Internet. Each day Google and Yahoo Alerts keep my in-box full of publicity releases and European travel stories culled from the media. There's a lot of garbage to sort through—kind of an exercise in electronic dumpster-diving—but it keeps us up-to-date.

Based on these online information harvests, as well as occasional flip-

throughs of magazines such as *National Geographic Traveler*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, and *Travel & Leisure*, I've concluded that about 80 percent of European travel sellers—and those who write about European travel—are aiming at less than one-percent of the market. For example:

- A press release blithely speaks of Tuscan villas for \$26,000 per week.
- A magazine suggests travel without luggage—you send it via [www.luggageforward.com](http://www.luggageforward.com). Sounds OK until you discover the price for two

*continued on page 3*

### Travel Essentials News • Summer 2007

#### IN THIS ISSUE

Educational Travel	Page 6
Travel Tips and Advice	Page 7
Travel Photo Contest	Page 8

## TRAVEL ESSENTIALS ASHLAND, OREGON

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

252 E. Main St., Ashland, OR 97520  
(541) 482-7383 (800) 258-0758  
[www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com)

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

## Eating My Way Through the Markets...

*continued from page 1*

duck confit, prepared and canned by the family of the man working the booth, who also recommended his favorite cuts to us. We always bought fresh baguettes, and delicious local cheeses. Many of the markets also offered hot prepared foods, and we sampled delicacies like paella, potatoes with local mushrooms, and wonderfully roasted chickens all right off the grill.

The prices were fair, not inflated for tourists. And in fact, we saw far more local villagers doing their shopping and meeting with friends than we did tourists. I was perfectly happy to shop like the French and buy just a day's worth of food, so we could visit a new village and market the next day. Our girls enjoyed it too—how could a person of any age resist buying delicious raspberries and strawberries, tarts, warm baguettes and more? As you might imagine, many of these delicacies were far too good to make it back to the car.

It was a great way to experience the real France, not to mention the cost savings we realized for cooking our own meals instead of eating out. Every item we bought at the open markets was delicious. I am convinced that when it comes to French cheese and wine, no matter the price level, it is always better than what we have here at home. We never paid more than \$12 US for a bottle of wine, and all were outstanding, and the cheese....how can I begin to describe the mouth watering cheeses we ate each day? It didn't matter what kind we bought, each cheese was the most succulent, delicious cheese I had ever tasted.

To best experience the markets, and to have a kitchen, we chose to rent a house and make it our home base for exploring the Dordogne region. We rented through At Home in France ([www.athomeinfrance.com](http://www.athomeinfrance.com)), an agency based in Ashland, Oregon that has specialized in vacation properties in France for more than 12 years. Owners Allyn Kaufmann and Bruce Dicoskey have personally visited each of the 350 homes or apartments in their portfolio,

and offered candid advice about each home we considered. We ended up in a nearly brand new and very well appointed cottage that has been converted from an old farmhouse. It featured a small but fully equipped kitchen, two bedrooms, two baths and a swimming pool. Our mid-season rental rate was \$1255 for the week and the location was excellent. We were right in the heart of the Dordogne and surrounded by ancient castles, magnificent chateaus and picturesque rolling French farmland.

A car was definitely a necessity and we rented through Gemütlichkeit auto rentals ([www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)), a Bestor-family owned business, and enjoyed driving our peppy diesel-powered Fiat through the French countryside.

Of the many castles we explored the family favorite was Chateau de Beynac in the village of Beynac et Cazenac. Just 13 kilometers from our house, this 800-year-old castle seemed to hang over the Dordogne River and offered self-guided tours of its restored rooms. Many of the rooms, including the spiral stone staircase leading to the dungeon, were lit only by oil lanterns, which made the experience a bit eerie and much more realistic and enjoyable. I half expected to see a man on the torture rack.

Another favorite site was the Gouffre de Padirac (Padirac Caves) near Rocamadour. The chasm, 338 feet below ground level was discovered in 1892. Its highlight is the underground river, on which we took a 500-meter long flat-bottomed boat ride. Our guide led us on an enchanting journey through the clear waters of the river, after which we took a short subterranean hike and admired giant stalactites, stalagmites (up to 250 feet high) and more underground lakes, pools and waterfalls.

As just about everything revolves around the Dordogne itself, a river trip is a must. We chose a canoe as our mode of transportation. Many villages, chateaus, and prehistoric cave dwellings are built high into the cliffs above the Dordogne River, and often the most spectacular views are from the river itself. There are guided boat tours, but we chose to rent a canoe for a quiet and leisurely journey down the river on our own with a stop for a picnic lunch. It seemed that every bend opened up another glorious view and we



*Chateau des Milandes, one of the many castles we toured in the Dordogne Region of France.*

got a nice workout to boot.

We were delighted to find that contrary to popular stereotypes, the locals were eager to help us. They were happy to put up with our virtually non-existent French and thankful for our business. We were quite inspired and Bob and I spoke several times of retiring in the Dordogne region. The chateaus, the baguettes, the scenery, the tarts, the markets, and the cheeses all weigh heavily in France's favor. My biggest concern is how to stay relatively thin with so much great food at my fingertips. END

*—Nancy Bestor is a co-owner of Travel Essentials. She is currently at work developing an exercise routine that would encompass visiting a different French village market each day, and eating just a little bit from each of the vendors, while at the same time burning thousands of calories. She's sure her routine will make her very rich.*



"There are only two reasons to sit in the back row of an airplane: Either you have diarrhea, or you're anxious to meet people who do." — HENRY KISSINGER

# Europe for the Middle Class...

*continued from page 1*

medium bags from the U.S. to France round trip is \$900.

- A food writer touts a restaurant in Spain that offers a multi-course fixed-price menu for \$240 per person.
- A 30-something male travel writer tells of the 140mph Autobahn speeds he achieved in a Porsche 911 rented in Munich for a mere \$1200 per day.

A large percentage of those who write about travel seem bent on creating the illusion that most European travelers transition smoothly from their *Architectural Digest* homes to the first-class cabins of transatlantic jetliners to \$2,000 per night suites in Paris, Rome, and London.

It's the high end of the travel market that has created this disparity. With five-star resort hotels the major funders of tourism marketing consortia, guess what gets emphasized in ads and press releases? The sale of business and first-class seats is an airline's first order of business, so that often drives its marketing. Reflecting the needs of advertisers that pay the freight, slick-cover travel magazines have become little more than catalogs of travel products few can afford.

So where do those of us in the real world turn for travel information?

- **Gemütlichkeit.** Let us, of course, begin with my own publication. Each month in this travel newsletter (in its 21<sup>st</sup> year, \$59 annually), about Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and European travel in general, I hold forth on backroads auto travel, scenic train trips, good value restaurants and hotels, and hand out euro and franc-stretching tips and advice. At the free online version, [www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com), one can book hotels, buy travel insurance, purchase rail passes, request quotes on European car rental and transatlantic air tickets, or just browse the 1,000 or so pages of solid advice and info on European travel.
- **Rick Steves.** Though his business is package tour-driven, the guidebooks

and website are crammed with practical information and trustworthy guidance. The rail section at [www.ricksteves.com](http://www.ricksteves.com) is the best of its kind on the web, and the "Graffiti Wall's" 100 or so discussion topics are a valuable resource — "Savvy Seniors," "Flying Within Europe," and "Nude Beaches" being examples.

- **International Travel News (ITN).** It has all the panache of your phone book, but ITN's 166-plus pages are heavy with reader input, planning-level details (web addresses, phone numbers, etc.) and a huge variety of ads of interest to travelers. Cost is \$18 per year, [www.intltravelnews.com](http://www.intltravelnews.com).

**A large percentage of those who write about travel seem bent on creating the illusion that most European travelers transition smoothly from their *Architectural Digest* homes to the first class cabins of transatlantic jetliners.**

- **Frommer's Budget Travel Magazine/Website.** \$14.95 per year. A category of features labeled "How" is the magazine's strength and offers stories such as "Self-service hotels in Finland," and "Travel networking websites." Advertisers offer budget to mid-priced travel products. The companion website ([www.frommers.com](http://www.frommers.com)) has several good features, including a series of "bests" (best small villages, best spas, best cathedrals) in more than 30 European countries. The "Travel Talk" forums are lively and interesting but beware of erroneous info from neophyte

travelers.

- **Ed Perkins.** This fellow Ashlander is the founder of the defunct Consumer Reports Travel Newsletter and now writes a syndicated travel column on consumer travel issues. Links to his columns are published in the free weekly email newsletter of [www.smartertravel.com](http://www.smartertravel.com). His info on travel insurance; issues with airlines, hotels and car rental agencies; and using credit and debit cards while on the road, seems particularly well-informed.
- **Michelin Red Guides.** The single most valuable resource for the independent traveler to Europe. The notorious starred restaurant ratings are just one drop in an ocean of the Guides' useful info. A great new feature of the '07 books is a few pages of maps spotting the hundreds of "Bib Gourmand" (Bib is short for Bibendum, the official name of the white, Pillsbury doughboy-like Michelin man) restaurants that "offer good food at moderate prices" (three-course meals under E30, not ultra high-priced, starred restaurants). Other maps locate "Bib Hotels" offering "good accommodation at moderate prices" (most double rooms are less than E100). These few pages alone are worth the \$26.

Another new compilation for the Germany guide is a list of more than 300 wellness hotels. Of course, all the great old standbys are there as well: tourist office information, a mileage chart, vineyard information, a list of school holidays, international dialing codes, and a lot more. END

—Robert H. Bestor, Jr. is a co-owner of *Travel Essentials*, and the publisher of *Gemütlichkeit*, the travel newsletter for Germany, Austria and Switzerland. When not traveling Europe's backroads, Bestor can be found scouring the internet for news and information for his subscribers.



"A man of ordinary talent will always be ordinary, whether he travels or not; but a man of superior talent will go to pieces if he remains forever in the same place." —WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

# Making Travel Safer and More Comfortable...

*continued from page 1*

blanket is a thicker, woven silk—not too hot, but a nice extra layer to keep



you warm in artificial, slightly-too-cool airplane air.

If you'd prefer to bring your own pillow, we recommend the **Therm-A-Rest Inflation Neck Pillow (\$29.95)**, which is not only extremely comfortable, but it inflates itself! Simply unscrew the valve, and this amazing pillow sucks air into itself. The pillow's silky cover and customizable firmness may just give you the impression that your head is cradled by a cloud. To add a final touch



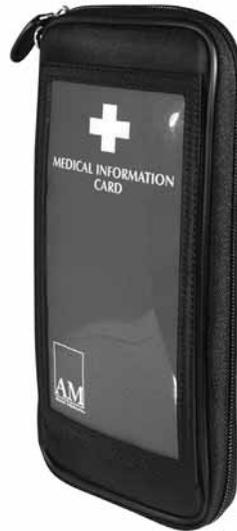
of comfort, an **Eagle Creek Inflation Lumbar Pillow (\$24.95)** will support your lower back and pack up tight in the

included pouch when not in use.

## Pill Case

The **Anne McAlpin Lockable Pill Case (\$15.95)** is a simple, sleek pill carrier that opens like a book and organizes all your pills when you're on the go. For added safety, the front cover has a clear window with a card included for listing your important personal medical information. Inside, you'll find ten mesh slots with numbered, sealable plastic pouches for your pills. To keep your medications secure, just add a small lock to the zipper and go! If you'd like more room to store bottles, Anne's

**Deluxe Lockable Pill Case (\$21.95)** adds a compartment designed specifically for storing pill bottles, creams, or other toiletry items. The Anne McAlpin Lockable Pill



Cases are perfect for keeping your medications safe and organized while you're away from home. Locks are sold separately.

**City Bagg** may look like any other purse, but there's definitely more to this bag than meets the eye. The City Bagg is specifically designed for safe, organized travel, and will keep your belongings secure but still easily accessible. The bag features a spacious main pocket that houses a detachable ID wallet and two interior zippered pockets that tuck away smaller belongings. The front of the City Bagg has several zippered pockets and a handy cell phone pouch with a magnetic closure.

## City Bagg

The **Baggallini City Bagg (\$69.95)** may look like any other purse, but there's definitely more to this bag than meets the eye. The City Bagg is specifically designed for safe, organized travel, and will keep your belongings secure but still easily accessible. The bag features a spacious main pocket that houses a detachable ID wallet and two interior zippered pockets that tuck away smaller belongings. The front of the City Bagg has several zippered pockets and a handy cell phone pouch with a magnetic closure.

But there's a whole other dimension to the City Bagg, and it's hidden beneath the front of the purse. If you tuck your

fingers into the handy magnetic closure and lift the front panel up, you will uncover a small zippered pocket and



an ID slot, as well as an organizational panel with card slots, room for pens or lipstick, and several other zippered and slip pockets. The City Bagg is perfect for travel, hiding your important items and giving you easy access to others—all the while innocently pretending to be just another stylish fashion accessory.

## Hovercraft Rolling Luggage

When you pick up one of Eagle Creek's new **Hovercraft rolling luggage (the 22" retails for \$200)**, you'll be immediately surprised at how lightweight it is. Combining the low weight of a rolling duffel and the packing ease of a suitcase, Eagle Creek has produced the perfect lightweight, rolling bag. Plus, these attractive bags easily expand when necessary, adding an extra 15 percent to your packing space. Hovercraft bags open like a book and you can easily pack and access your belongings in the large main compartment while interior compression straps help you fully utilize the available space. Extremely durable fabrics keep your belongings safe and keep the bag looking great.

And comfort hasn't been forgotten with the Hovercraft. The telescoping handle is ergonomically shaped and the padded side and top handles are gentle on your hands. If you're looking for a

*continued on page 5*



"Did you ever notice that the first piece of luggage on the carousel never belongs to anyone?" — ERMA BOMBECK

# Making Travel Safer and More Comfortable...

continued from page 4

simple, durable rolling bag, check out the Hovercraft rolling uprights from Eagle Creek.



## Petzl Headlamp

Whether you're riding your bike at dusk, changing a flat tire on your way home from dinner and a movie, or just strolling after dark, the new **e+LITE** from Petzl (\$29.95) will provide all the light you'll need to see and be seen. Lightweight, durable and packable, the e+LITE weighs less than an ounce and fits easily into your pocket, even when inside its compact carrying case.



Designed with emergencies in mind, the e+LITE is a handy companion to have

around—not only is it waterproof, but it is able to withstand extreme climates, both hot and cold. With a shelf-life of ten years, you won't have to worry about letting the e+LITE sit in your backpack or glove box, it will be ready to go when you need it most. Plus, lightweight lithium batteries (included!) give you up to 35 hours of light on maximum, or 45 hours if you switch to the economic setting. With a fresh battery, the e+LITE will shine more than 50 feet!

## Women's Laptop Brief

The **Soma Women's Laptop Brief** (\$99.95) is a durable and stylish bag that brings together the classic lines of a briefcase and the durability of the modern messenger bag. Ballistic nylon in four unique and elegant colors offers an exterior that looks great and provides impressive protection for your computer.



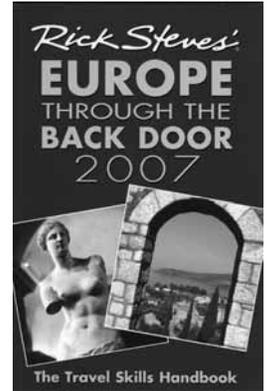
A central molded laptop pocket splits the main compartment and leaves you with plenty of space for files, books, and other items.

A quick access pocket on the back of the Soma is a handy place to store a newspaper or magazine for the commute and you can easily store your cell phone, pens, cards, change, and much more in the organizational panel found in the front pocket. No matter how much you stuff into your Soma, it maintains its sleek lines, giving you the freedom to pack all you need and still look professional.

The Soma Women's Laptop Brief is light and easy to carry - simply slip the extra long handles over your shoulder and you're ready to go!

## Rick Steves Guidebooks

Rick Steves offers two types of books: those you read before your journey and those you take along to guide you as you travel. The most popular of his read-before-the-trip books is undoubtedly **Europe Through the Back Door** (21.95). Written almost 30 years ago and updated annually since, it gives amazing tips on packing, transportation, traveling healthy, traveling alone, eating and sleeping cheap, exchanging money, avoiding theft, and much, much more. The 2007 edition also lists 38 of Rick's favorite "back-door" destinations. These are some of Europe's most overlooked places and attractions—sights you can visit without running into huge crowds.



Rick's country and city specific guides cover the whole of Europe and are meant to accompany you on your journey. These are inspired collections of the best places to go. Rick doesn't cover everything, but he covers the essentials, giving the busy traveler a break and doing a lot of the planning. One Rick Steves fan described it as follows: "He takes your fantasy of a place and makes it come true. He tells you how to have that essentially Italian (or French or German) experience you've always dreamed of." So, if you're looking for a personal guide through Europe's most exciting destinations, Rick Steves is more than happy to show you the ropes. **END**

All items in this story are available at [www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com)

Orders over \$100 always ship free freight.



"I do not want my house to be walled in on sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible." — MAHATMA GANDHI

# Educational Travel: For the Few and the Fortunate

by Beth Geismar

As modern travelers we have many decisions to make: Where to travel? When to travel? With whom to travel? But what about, how to travel?

Everyone has their own style and preferences for how to travel, but many are unaware of a small but expanding niche of the travel market: educational travel. This is not for those who insist they want to travel on their own. Instead this is group travel, but with a key difference. Accompanied by a study leader (or enrichment lecturer, as some companies call them), the group has access to people and places not normally accessible to the traveler on their own.

Many museums, an increasing number of university alumni groups and other organizations have created unique travel programs for their members. These organizations match staff members such as museum curators or university professors to tour destinations where they have in-depth knowledge and special contacts that can open doors for their



*From negotiating pedicab rides in Old Delhi to explaining Indian politics to helping visitors find a shop to buy custom-made clothing, our guide Suri was fabulous.*

travelers. Often such tours can offer visits to popular museums and historical sites before or after public visiting hours (imagine the Hermitage in St. Petersburg or the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna without the crowds), or meetings with embassy staff or archaeologists in foreign countries, who can tell you firsthand about their experiences.

Educational itineraries may look similar to what a standard tour operator would offer: go to Egypt and see pyramids and tombs, and cruise on the Nile. But a recent tour I chaperoned showcases how educational travel can differ. Instead of the standard two hours with a local tour guide, we spent an entire day with Dr. Zahi Hawass, a world-renowned archaeologist and Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and Director of Excavations at Giza (as in the Great Pyramids at Giza), Saqqara and the Bahariya Oasis. Dr. Hawass is responsible for many exciting recent discoveries, including the Tombs of the Pyramid Builders at Giza, where he took our group to explore an amazing archaeological site not open to the public, which his workers are uncovering for the first time in millennia.

Other educational trips I've led have offered adventures like exploring New Zealand with Neville Peat, an award-winning author responsible for garnering World Heritage Status for regions of southern New Zealand. Touring the gardens of Scotland and Ireland with the head gardener of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. And a South Africa trip featured a lecturer who has served in the national government for nearly 50 years, and who shared with us stories of the stunning changes in that

country over the decades.

All educational museum tours and most alumni tours are open to anyone for a small annual membership fee on top of the tour costs. Some of the larger



*In Kyoto, one woman invited our group into her 18th-century home and provided snacks and tea on short notice, eager to share her culture.*

museums, such as the Smithsonian, and some alumni groups make a special effort to create tiered pricing for different programs and different budgets. While it is more expensive than traveling on your own, the benefits are many:

- Experienced experts with inside contacts have arranged lodging and meals, so you're guaranteed accommodations in reputable hotels and meals at the best restaurants.
- With a pre-arranged itinerary, there is maximum time to explore your destination, without spending time on more mundane travel administrative duties like seeking out lodging and restaurants or researching museum hours.
- On the best tours (and that does sometimes mean the most expensive), all costs are included, eliminating concerns over tipping, transfers to and from airports, negotiating with private guides, even choosing what to read before leaving home for the best background information.
- All this on top of that prime educational tour element—lectures

*continued on page 7*



"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

# News, Advice and Tips For Travelers

- Avis is adding Internet hot spots to car rentals at some airports around the country at a cost of \$10.95 a day. The cars can be found at San Francisco International Airport, San Jose, Fort Lauderdale, Newark, LaGuardia, and Dallas. Los Angeles and Miami will soon be added. Avis Connect enables travelers to enjoy broadband wireless Internet connectivity at all times and places during their travel, from airports to meetings to hotels, and everything in between. The service is simple to use and does not require any software or technical expertise. Anyone who has a Wi-Fi enabled laptop or device can simply log on and surf. For more information, visit [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com).
- The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has unveiled the newest edition of its guidebook on healthy international travel. The "Yellow Book" provides information on a range of health risks from sunburns and travelers' diarrhea to avian flu and natural disasters. The book was developed to provide up-to-date and comprehensive information on immunization requirements and health recommendations to protect and promote the health of international travelers. New features in this edition of the book include an expanded section on preventing injuries and life-threatening blood clots that develop after sitting for hours on a plane. The book is published every two years and is available free online at [www.cdc.gov/travel/](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/) or in hard copy for \$24.95.
- The mayor of Paris wants Parisians to smile more for the tourists. Paris is the world's most visited city but the residents don't seem to be happy about that. The city recently launched the first Paris Tourist Day, a new campaign aimed at making Parisians understand how important tourists are to their city's economic growth, and to help them improve their habits when dealing with foreigners. Twelve percent of jobs in Paris are directly connected to tourism. Cab drivers were urged to smile and waiters to try out their English. Tourists, too, were given tips like "try out French products" instead of heading to the first Starbucks in search of friendly service.
- Lonely Planet is testing a new travel guide product called *Pick & Mix* that allows travelers to select and purchase individual chapters from a range of Lonely Planet guides. Currently the trial covers Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and South America. Over 350 chapters across 35 guidebooks are available, including destination guides, phrasebooks and activity guides such as trekking. They are downloaded as a PDF document. The trial is going well and may expand to other destinations and other functionality. For more information go to [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com).
- The best way to exchange money in Europe continues to be the ATM machine. On a recent trip in Paris, we paid an additional 3% over ATM rates to change US dollars into Euros at an exchange bureau, as we could not find a bank in Paris who is currently exchanging money.
- Most wireless phone companies now make it easy to use your cellphone abroad. Cingular Wireless charged us \$5 a month, and \$1 per minute to receive or make calls in Europe. Using a pre-paid phone card is the cheapest way to go when you only need to call home, not receive calls.
- A recent Air Canada flight from San Francisco to Toronto was charging \$2 for the use of a blanket and pillow. How long before the airplane toilet has a coin operated door? END

## Educational Travel: For the Few and the Fortunate...

*continued from page 6*

and tours led by experts.

So, how to find the best tour for you? As with any travel research, word of mouth is a great way to start. Send out feelers amongst friends and family for any recommendations, ideas or experiences they might have. The internet, of course, is loaded with information, but be skeptical. It is key to determine important details like what services or events are included and what is not included? Who will be available to help you or answer your questions before, during, and after your tour? And, maybe most important of all, who your fellow travelers might be?

There is a saying that "war is God's way of teaching Americans geography." But I think there is a better way. I love noting that, whenever I return from a trip, I suddenly find I am reading about that country in the newspaper, and I know a little bit more about it. The Croatian-Serbian conflict is felt more viscerally when you see the steep hills rising around Dubrovnik, from which the city was shelled. Is Western Morocco really a separate country? What is it like to be a Russian whose parents raised you with stories of the Siege of Leningrad, and now you can travel freely?

Study tours aren't for everyone, but

for many travelers they offer a wonderful way to explore the world. Perusing catalogs or web sites for Geographic Expeditions, Smithsonian Study Tours or American Museum of Natural History worldwide expeditions is a fun armchair activity—and can launch some of life's best adventures. What are you waiting for? END

—Beth Geismar worked for many years as the marketing director for a tour operator specializing in educational travel. Geismar also went out on tours each year as tour manager. Two years ago she started her own travel company, Bonnywind Travel ([www.bonnywindtravel.com](http://www.bonnywindtravel.com)). She leads 2-3 trips each year, and her goal remains for every traveler to say, "That was the best trip I've ever taken!"



"Kilometers are shorter than miles. Save gas, take your next trip in kilometers."  
— GEORGE CARLIN

## Say Cheese!—Seventh Annual Travel Photo Contest

It's time once again for all budding travel photographers to print their favorite travel photographs and send them in to Travel Essentials for the Seventh Annual Amateur Travel Photo Contest!

Now through August 31, enter any two of your travel snapshots, and you'll be eligible to win fame and prizes, *and* have your photo displayed in large format online and in the display window of Travel Essentials' Ashland, Oregon store. Here are the rules:

- Submit any size, color or black and white photograph (no negatives or slides please), in person or mail to Travel Essentials, 252 E. Main St., Ashland OR 97520. You may also submit your entries electronically to bob@travelessentials.com. Include your name, address and telephone number, as well as the place the

photo was taken. If entering online, please put "Travel Photo Contest" in the subject field.

- All photographs will become the property of Travel Essentials. Please

make copies for yourself before sending!

- Travel Essentials will be the sole judge of the contest, and reserves the right to display the photographs.



2006 Photo Contest Winner Ralph Walker took this photo of the Great Pyramid Chichen-Itza.

The contest is open to amateur photographers from the U.S. and Canada, and no more than two entries will be accepted per person.

Prizes are as follows:

**1st Prize:** A \$500 gift certificate to Travel Essentials.

**2nd Prize:** A \$200 Gift Certificate to Travel Essentials.

Five honorable mentions will receive a \$50 Gift Certificate to Travel Essentials.

To see a slideshow of some of the amazing photos entered last year, visit the 2006 Photo Contest Winners at our website, [www.travelessentials.com](http://www.travelessentials.com).

So wow us with your most stunning travel images. We look forward to seeing your photos! **END**