



# TRAVEL ESSENTIALS NEWS

ASHLAND, OREGON

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

## In An Old House in Paris That Was Covered With Vines

by Nancy Bestor

Sure, you chose an apartment over a hotel for the true Parisian experience. And soon after arrival you even convinced yourself that you're just "one of the locals," buying scrumptious fresh food and delicious

**TRAVEL  
FIRST PERSON**

yet inexpensive French wine at the neighborhood market and bread at the corner boulangerie. But when it registers that in your jet lag induced haze you've left the security code necessary to get in to your apartment building *inside* the apartment, you realize you're just another tourist, probably an American, pretending to be cool, and failing miserably.

It was our first day in Paris. We'd dropped the bags at our new home in the Marais district (3<sup>rd</sup> arrondissement) and spent the day walking the neighborhood, eating and keeping active in an effort to stay awake and quickly acclimate

to our new time zone. We returned to the apartment about 7 pm, exhausted, hungry and loaded down with shopping bags carrying the aforementioned food and wine. We were looking forward to a simple, satisfying meal and a good night's sleep.

Approaching the huge and heavy doors that separated us from the lovely private courtyard of our apartment building, I pulled out the key given to us earlier in the day. Quickly, I realized that it was for the apartment itself. What we lacked was the five-digit code that allows passage through the outside doors and into the courtyard. The very same five-digit code that was neatly written on a crisp sheet of paper and sitting on our kitchen table...*inside* the apartment.

All four of us took turns punching close but incorrect numbers into the keypad. All four of us took turns knocking (okay banging) on the doors, but to no avail. Our girls were starting to complain,

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## Clearing Up Carry-on Rules: As Clear As Mud

With the ever changing carry-on policies of the airline industry, attempting to carry-on everything you'll need for an extended trip seems to be getting harder and harder. At Travel Essentials, customers regularly ask what they can and cannot take on board. The restrictions are significant and confusing. But here we go anyway.

Current Transportation Security Administration (TSA) regulations (as of October 24, 2007) state that liquid or gels in bottles larger than three ounces *cannot be carried on*. This includes lip-gloss, toothpaste, liquid sanitizer, liquid makeup, etc. I can't tell you how many times lately I have found myself waiting in the security line while people throw away all sorts of liquid goodies; water and juice bottles, alcohol, toothpaste, shampoo, lotions, and

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## Holiday Gift Giving Made Easy

Ah yes, the age old question, what to buy for Aunt Marge, or your dad who has everything, or your daughter who never likes any of the clothing that you pick out for her? To help make your holiday shopping a little easier, we've picked out a few of our favorite Travel Essentials' items, in the hopes that the folks on your holiday shopping list will take as much pleasure in receiving as you take in giving.

### Eagle Creek Wheeled Underseat Tote

The Wheeled Underseat Tote (\$150) is a great compact, packable carry-on from Eagle Creek. This bag truly does

fit under the seat of most airlines. The ergonomic, telescoping handle offers a smooth and comfortable carry, while the top tote handle provides a quick-grab option. Exterior pockets on the front and sides of the bag are perfect for storing your pre-boarding essentials, keys, electronics, reading materials, and anything you'll need to have on the flight. The main compartment of the bag is easily accessed through the wide, u-shaped opening, and interior mesh pockets organize your belongings even further. If you're in the market for something compact, packable,

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## TRAVEL ESSENTIALS ASHLAND, OREGON

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# In An Old House in Paris...

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it was beginning to drizzle, and a situation that was at first amusing had now become a bit worrisome. We looked at every Parisian who came by with hope. Hope that our building was theirs and that



*The interior courtyard of our Paris apartment building.*

we could sneak in behind them as they arrived home.

Finally after what seemed like hours but was really only about 45 minutes, our saviors arrived. An elderly couple walked up to the keypad and started punching in numbers. Bob was able to explain (mostly through sign language) that we were renting an apartment in the building and had forgotten the code. The helpful couple let us into the courtyard and wrote down the code for us on a piece of paper, never once complaining or making fun of us—at least not in English.

We rented our Paris apartment through [www.vrbo.com](http://www.vrbo.com), otherwise known as Vacation Rentals By Owner. Their website is a great source of rental properties all over the world. Paris apartments in all arrondissements and all price ranges abound on the site. Most property listings include a description, a few photos and the location of the property. But, since the content of the individual property pages is maintained solely by property owners, the amount of information provided can vary greatly. Also, all business transactions are between

the owner and the renter. And as you'll read next it's buyer beware as VRBO provides no protections.

We first booked another apartment through [www.vrbo.com](http://www.vrbo.com), paying half the money via a wire transfer. About six weeks later, we received an email from the apartment owner, telling us that she was very sorry but she had cancelled our reservation as she had accidentally double-booked the property. She did wire our money back, but we had a few nervous moments, knowing that she had our \$500 deposit, and we had to trust her to return it. We also had to scramble a bit to find another option.

The one bedroom apartment that we ended up in runs about \$1100 a week, all utilities included. There were comfortable beds for four, a small but well-equipped kitchen, beautiful wood floors throughout, free wireless internet, and best of all, it was located in a great neighborhood, just a short walk from many of Paris' best sites. Our kind owner lived one floor above, and delighted us with a beautiful fruit bowl upon arrival and a generous gift of delicious chocolate croissants halfway through our stay.

Each day we walked to the Seine where we caught a ride on the Batobus ([www.batobus.com](http://www.batobus.com)), a boat/bus that stops at eight spots along the river, including the Eiffel Tower, the Champs-Élysées, the Musée d'Orsay, and our stop, Notre-Dame. We bought

a five-day pass costing 17 euros for each adult and eight euros for each child. The Batobus runs about every 15 minutes until 9:30 pm, and our passes were well worth the money.

Our favorite sites included a nighttime climb to the top of the Arc de Triomphe for its outstanding view of the Eiffel Tower and the Champs-Élysées. At 10 pm, the Eiffel Tower explodes with a beautiful display of twinkling lights and at just about a mile away and well above the rooftops of Paris, the Arc de Triomphe is the perfect viewing platform. Sunset is also the best time for a visit to the Eiffel Tower. We arrived before dusk and by the time we got to the top (a mere 1063 feet above the city streets), the lights of Paris were blinking on and the view was beyond superb. It is well worth the fee (11.5 euros for each adult, 6.3 euros for kids 3-11) and the wait, which includes a line to buy tickets and enter the elevator to the second floor, and then a line for a second elevator that goes all the way to the top.

Our favorite museum, hands down, was the Musée d'Orsay. Housed in a former train station, the interior of the building is itself a marvel, and we were all duly impressed with the truly incredible collection of works on display.

Another great excursion was a visit



to the Cemetery of Père Lachaise. This famous cemetery is the final resting place of many famous artists, authors and musicians, including Frédéric Chopin, Marcel Proust, Oscar Wilde, Edith Piaf,



"The towels were so thick there I could hardly close my suitcase." — YOGI BERRA

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# \$284 a Night and No Compromises

by Robert H. Bestor, Jr.

It was a mental triple-take: one of those times where you can't believe what you've just seen so you look again and again. "It" was a headline on the my.yahoo page that collects news, weather, sports, and travel info for me. "Paris hotels under E200 (\$284) per night? Believe it or not, you can do it, and without compromising your standards." (For \$284 a night I should have to worry about 'compromising my standards?')

To be fair, after bemoaning the E400 and up rates at Paris's best hotels, the article on Fodor's website went on to mention half a dozen small hotels between E75 and E200. Its main thrust, however, underscores the fact that the ever-increasing value of the euro (now worth \$1.42) and the British pound (\$2.05) is finally starting to curtail travel to Europe.

It is discouraging to realize that a E100 hotel room is now \$142. Below is a snapshot of the dollar's sickening slide over the past several years as related to the cost of E75, E100 and E250 hotel rooms:

	E75	E100	E250
Sept. 26, 2002	\$74	\$98	\$245
Sept. 26, 2003	\$86	\$115	\$288
Sept. 26, 2004	\$92	\$123	\$308
Sept. 26, 2005	\$91	\$121	\$303
Sept. 26, 2006	\$95	\$127	\$318
Sept. 26, 2007	\$106	\$142	\$355

What the table doesn't take into account, of course, is inflation. You probably got a better hotel room for E100 in 2002 than you will today.

Are there any bright spots in all this? Maybe. Let's assume that 12 months ago, even though you felt the euro was outrageously expensive, you sucked it up and got your Europe fix. But this year it's up another 11% and that may be the straw that breaks the camel's back. The good news is, it may not cost you 11% more in 2007/08 than it did a year ago. Increased competition has dropped airfares to a point slightly lower than they were in the fall of '06. This month, for example, you can fly nonstop to continental Europe from the West Coast for less than \$700 and new agreements governing transatlantic air service promise even more competition and lower fares in '08.

Nor have rental car rates kept pace with the euro. In Germany—the cheapest place to hire a car in Europe—a compact car (four doors, air, perfect for two people) for a week goes for \$228. That's only about \$1 per day more than a year ago.

Let's say you're planning a two-week European vacation starting in Germany. The airfare is the same or even a bit lower than in '06 and your rental car is only a few dollars more. So far you've covered two major expense items, air and ground transport, paid both prior to departure in

**If you stay in the same hotels you did a year ago, there's no getting around it, you will pay at least 11% more than last year.**

dollars, and you're still even with last year.

Now, comes the hard part: food and accommodations. Last year you dined for E25 to E30 per person per night. Your cost for two persons then was \$64 to \$76; today it's \$72 to \$86. (Of course the fancier the cuisine, the more expensive the food, and the greater will be your cost difference vs. '06.) Let's figure, including lunches, the two of you pay \$16 more per day for food; over 14 days that's \$224.

If you stay in the same hotels you did a year ago, there's no getting around it, you will pay at least 11% more than last year. If your average hotel room cost E110 (\$140) double, this year it's going to be \$155, an extra \$15 per night for lodging, or a total of \$210 over the two weeks.

So far, your added cost over '06 is \$434. There will, of course, be other expenses: parking, fuel, public transport, entrance fees, snacks, etc., so let's add another \$200 to the difference and we have determined that the total added cost is \$634 or about \$45 per day more in 2007/08 than in '06.

But you haven't changed your style of travel. Make a few adjustments and you can whittle that \$634 difference down. A great place to start whacking is

by planning to spend more time in small towns. Five days in a three-star hotel in Bamberg (a wonderful city) instead of Munich should save about \$50 per night or \$250. For even more savings, step down in hotel category. The cheapest double room in Bamberg's Hotel Nepomuk (two Michelin roof peaks) is E118. A nice double at the less upscale but equally charming Wilde Rose (one roof peak) is E95. You save \$32 per night.

Food is also cheaper in the countryside. In smaller towns you'll find thousands of restaurants where you can dine for less than E15 (\$21). Add a few picnic lunches and you can probably reduce by half the added \$224 we figured it was going to cost you for food in '07//08.

A discussion of making your own meals—a huge saving, of course—logically segues into another cost cutter: renting an apartment. On the excellent [www.slowtravel.com](http://www.slowtravel.com) website I recently read a report by a couple with a toddler who, for E65 (\$92) a night, rented a three-room apartment in Berlin's Mitte. At the Italian grocery downstairs they ate pasta for E3.50 (\$5) and drank espresso for E.9 (\$1.28). Apartments in cities such as Paris and Rome can be more expensive than Berlin (see Paris story in this issue) but, as with hotels, you save money by getting out of town. Nice apartments in German villages start at around E300 per week. France and Italy are more expensive but still affordable. Two examples: the charming Tuscan farmhouse, Al Gelso Bianco ([www.algelsobianco.it](http://www.algelsobianco.it)), rents for from E90 to E130 per night. In Burgundy's capital, the one-bedroom apartment "My Home in Dijon" costs E665 per week ([www.rentpropertydirect.com](http://www.rentpropertydirect.com)).

So, for those willing to make a few adjustments in the way they travel, Europe is still achievable. And anyway, getting out of the Hilton and into "My Home in Dijon" is bound to provide a more enriching travel experience. **END**

—Robert H. Bestor, Jr. is a co-owner of *Travel Essentials*, publisher of *Gemütlichkeit*, the travel newsletter for Germany, Austria and Switzerland ([www.gemut.com](http://www.gemut.com)) and a frequent traveler to Europe.



"It suddenly struck me that this tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very, very small."—NEIL ARMSTRONG

# Holiday Gift Giving Made Easy...

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and easy to get around, the Wheeled Underseat Tote may be just what you're looking for.



## Ultimate Packing Solution Set

The Ultimate Packing Solution Set (\$39.95) from Eagle Creek is a set of Eagle Creek's ingenious packing aids, designed to help you maximize your space and keep your belongings organized and wrinkle-free. Included, you'll find a Pack-It Cube—great for storing rolled up t-shirts, underwear, pajamas, baby clothes, socks, or anything else you'd like to group and get out of the way; a Pack-It Folder 18—designed to help you fold your shirts and pants with minimal wrinkles and keep them that way. The 18 will hold 8-



12 items, depending on how thick they are. The final organizer in the Ultimate Packing Solution Set is a Medium Pack-It Sac. Lined in clear plastic, the Sac will hold toiletries, other odds and ends, or

even a damp bathing suit or two.

## Pedestrian Passport Shoulder Bag

The Pedestrian Passport Shoulder Bag (\$69) from Hobo is not only an attractive purse, available in black or chocolate brown, it's also a compact and durable travel organizer. The main compartment has a magnetic closure, keeping your belongings inside while providing easy access. Pen loops and slip pockets help you organize further, while a large zippered pocket is great for tucking away money and valuables. The zip-around front portion of the bag has even more organizational pockets, including eight card slots, and a checkbook cover that matches the interior of the bag. Its one-inch-wide shoulder strap is



adjustable, and the micro-durafiber is lightweight, tear-resistant and water repellent. Sleek, strong and incredibly packable, the Pedestrian Passport makes a great addition to any woman's collection.

## Anne McAlpin Packing Board

When you're getting ready to travel, it can be hard to organize everything in your suitcase, especially if you're trying to keep your clothes from

wrinkling. Anne McAlpin comes to the rescue again with her Packing Board, available in a small size (\$17.99) for 22 to 24 inch bags and a large size (\$19.99) for anything bigger. The Packing Board

creates a second layer in your bag and thus a second flat surface, perfect for clothes. So, pack all your odds and ends below,



slip in the packing board, and place your neatly folded clothing on top. The board will lift out easily, giving you access to the lower items without disturbing your perfectly folded garments. And, as an added bonus, Anne's famous packing checklist is printed on the board itself, so you'll have it handy every time.

## Thermasilk Long Underwear

Thermasilk's long underwear, made from 100 percent pure silk, make an excellent under-layer for winter traveling, walking, and hiking. Not only will it keep you warm in cold conditions, but when you're active, it will help to quickly lift moisture away from the body and break it down for rapid evaporation, so you'll never feel clammy. Nancy



wore her Thermasilk top and bottom underneath slacks and a sweater on a cold December weekend in New York. They



"Wherever we've travelled in this great land of ours, we've found that people everywhere are about 90% water." — DAVID LETTERMAN

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# Holiday Gift Giving Made Easy...

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kept her toasty warm, and she was able to look citysmart without an oversized puffy jacket! Made in both men's and women's sizes and styles, the Thermasilk top (\$32.95) and the Thermasilk Pant (\$34.95) are a great accessory to any winter travel wardrobe.

## Travel Scrabble

Tired of airline movies? Want something to do while you sit on the train platform? This packable, portable Travel Scrabble (\$29.95) makes a great gift for the globe trotting logophile. And, if you



don't have time to finish your game, but you're beating your opponent by seventy-five points, no problem. The Travel Scrabble tiles lock in place so you can fold everything up in the handy zip-up case and win the game later.

## Bucky Utopia Pillow

Fifteen years ago, on a mission to bring comfort to the masses, Bucky began producing a neck pillow stuffed



with buckwheat hulls, called the Utopia (\$29.95). Because buckwheat hulls are hypoallergenic and resistant to dust and mites, you won't have to worry about allergies. And, since the buckwheat hulls lock together under pressure, you'll get a perfectly comfortable fit that lasts. In fact, the life of buckwheat hull pillows is much longer than that of cotton or synthetic fillings. With its soft cotton velour cover, which zips off for easy washing, Bucky's Utopia pillow can add some much needed comfort to your next journey.

## Bucky Eyeshade

The Bucky Eyeshade (\$24.95) is a great companion to the Utopia, offering complete light blockage without pressure against your eyes. Plus, a pair of reusable ear plugs (included) fit into a handy pocket on the front. So, pack up, head out, and Bucky will help you sleep along the way.



## Timbuk2 Bag in a Box

We just might have the best gift idea yet. It's the perfect size, the perfect style and the perfect color (or colors). Timbuk2's Bag in a Box (\$100) is designed for the person who wants to choose their own bag, right down to the color combination (interior and exterior), size and options.

Inside a Bag in a Box is a gift card for \$100, which leads to Timbuk2's website where a secret code helps you start "Building Your Own" bag. Choices include the fabric, the three panel colors, the logo color, the lining color, whether you want a right or left handed bag, whether you want to add a grab strap, a laptop insert, a center divider, and accessories.

The gift card money can also be spent on a standard Timbuk2 bag, including a backpack, duffel, yoga bag, messenger bag,

or accessories. And if there's a balance left on the card, Timbuk2 will save the remaining amount for future purchases of accessories or another bag.



## Smartwool Socks

Smartwool socks (starting at \$14.95) have been a staple to hikers and campers for many years. Cool in the summer and warm in the winter, Smartwool takes the finest, softest wool from Merino sheep in New Zealand and weaves it into a wool that doesn't itch or shrink. And, since wool's antimicrobial properties kill odor, Smartwool socks keep your feet smelling as good as they look in Smartwool's colorful and contemporary patterns. Smartwool's dedication to helping the environments, economies and societies they touch leave you guilt-free when purchasing their products. A perfect gift this holiday



season, you may find yourself picking up a pair or three for yourself. Stop in our Ashland store or visit us online to see the many styles of Smartwool socks now available. END



"I am not a great cook, I am not a great artist, but I love art, and I love food, so I am the perfect traveller." — MICHAEL PALIN

# Adventures in Mexican Jeep Rentals

by Nancy Bestor

They say with age comes wisdom. I think wisdom comes from life experience—good and bad, but mostly bad.

Our eldest, now a middle school student, is taking a foreign language for the first time, and wants to travel to a Spanish speaking country in order to immerse herself in the local language. We have a week available at Spring Break, so we've decided to spend it in Puerto Vallarta, hanging out on the beach, eating fish tacos, and giving Emily the chance to habla some Español.

At first I was hesitant, as bad memories of a long-ago trip to Puerto still haunt my dreams. Here's how it went down.

It seemed like a good idea at the time—a package deal that included a flight on Mexicana airlines and five night's lodging in Puerto Vallarta for under \$200. I figured we'd sit on the beach, drink Corona by the pool, and relax in the sun. After two days of relaxing however, my three friends decided we should be more adventurous. Their idea—rent a jeep. Their intention—get out of the city and into the “jungle”, where we'd see the “real” Mexico. Why go on a guided tour, when you can site-see at your own pace for a lot less money, right? The jeep looked a little worse for wear, but not wanting to be a stick in the mud, I pitched in my share of the pesos and away we

went. Besides, I thought, as long as it has an engine and four tires we should be fine.

It started well. I was in the backseat of the jeep, the wind was whipping through my hair, and we were listening to Mexican music on the radio without a care in the world. We stopped at a couple of tourist sites, including Mismaloya, where the movies *Night of the Iguana* with Richard Burton and *Predator* with Arnold Schwarzenegger were set.

Soon we were back in the car and soon after that, with no map, we were in the middle of nowhere, hopelessly lost and nowhere near the jungle. The farther we went the more remote it became and the more uncomfortable I felt.

When passing some houses, several children ran to the side of the road to “wave” to us as we motored by. Alas, five minutes later we realized they were not waving at all, but instead were throwing nails into the jeep's path. Our tire blew out, and now we weren't just lost in the middle of nowhere, we were stuck in the middle of nowhere—no map, no Spanish speakers, no spare tire, and no help in sight. It's times like these when I wish I listened to the little voice inside my head.

We sat in our jeep on the side of the road for a while, until one of my companions agreed to walk back to the houses with the “friendly” children to see if someone could give us a ride into town. Not being able to explain in Spanish what we needed, she came back empty handed. So we waited on the side of the road a bit

longer, and soon an open bed truck with a group of men drove by. They stopped (surprise, surprise) and offered me and one other friend a ride to the nearest town. We accepted and upon arrival were able to call the jeep rental company for help. An hour later, the company's mechanic came roaring up in a two-seat Volkswagen Bug, “customized” with no roof, no back seat and no doors. Yes—*no doors*. Riding back to our now three-wheeled jeep was nothing short of a hair-raising, white knuckle adventure, as our mechanic/Formula One driver slid sideways through every corner and hit 80 miles per hour on the gravel road straightaways. I was on my friend's lap, hanging on to the dashboard for dear life, sure that my demise awaited around the next bend.

Amazingly we made it back to the jeep in one piece, and the mechanic changed our tire. Having had enough adventure to last us quite some time, we returned the jeep, and of course were charged an additional \$100 for the spare tire and the mechanic's time.

For the next two days, we went back to sitting on the beach, drinking Corona by the pool and relaxing in the sun. We were \$100 poorer, but much, much wiser.

—Nancy Bestor is the co-owner of Travel Essentials. She looks forward to her trip to Puerto Vallarta, where you can be assured she will keep her rear end parked in a beach chair the entire week. END

## In An Old House in Paris...

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Gertrude Stein, Jim Morrison, and more, including most recently, Marcel Marceau. The cemetery has more than 70,000 plots, and many of the tombs and monuments are themselves works of art. The poignant and haunting Holocaust memorial should not be missed. The cemetery is so big (17 acres) that we would have been lost many times if not for the map in our guidebook.

A favorite site for the girls (and Bob and I too!) was the climb to the top of the Notre Dame Cathedral. The 387 steps of its spiral staircases lead to the

Hunchback's own 13 ton bell and great views of the Notre Dame plaza below, the Eiffel tower in the distance and the famous gargoyles up close. Dating from 1163, the cathedral itself is stunning, with its Gothic architecture, story-telling carvings and beautiful stained glass.

Our apartment was also close to the Jewish district, and we spent many a happy lunchtime eating outstanding bagels with lox (3 euros), and falafels stuffed with hummus, eggplant and other veggies (4 euros) on Rue des Rosiers. We ate all our breakfasts at our apartment and many dinners as well, buying local

produce, cheese and baguettes on a daily basis. It was great to have a home base, where we could come back, relax, watch a movie, or surf the internet, before heading back out into the neighborhoods of Paris again, this time with the five-digit code safe in our pockets and burned into our memories. END

—Nancy Bestor could easily move to Paris. She'd don a beret and roll her eyes at all the American tourists trying to fit in like the locals, completely ignoring the true locals who would be rolling their eyes at her.



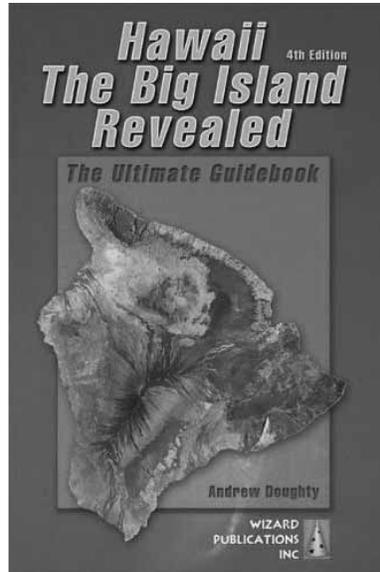
“From birth, man carries the weight of gravity on his shoulders. He is bolted to earth. But man has only to sink beneath the surface and he is free.”—JACQUES YVES COUSTEAU

# The Real Hawaii—Revealed by Real Hawaiians

The *Hawaii Revealed* series of books (\$15.95 each) explores the four main Hawaiian islands (Hawaii: The Big Island, Kauai, Maui, and Oahu) individually, offering tips on attractions, travel, accommodations, restaurants, beaches and more. But, unlike most guides, the Revealed series, published in Hawaii by Wizard Publications, is written by Hawaiian locals who share with you the secret tips, tricks and favorite haunts of Hawaiian residents. Plus, each book offers you a login code for a website containing up-to-the-minute information, so you'll never be unprepared. Beautiful images, easy-to-read maps and honest, helpful information make these books ideal for any adventurous traveler or vacationing spendthrift. The authors have seen and done everything covered in their books. They've been to the restaurants, hotels, beaches, drives, sites and more that are in each guidebook.

We've had personal experience with *Maui Revealed*, which tipped us off to

two great sites—a spectacular blowhole and wonderful ocean pools that no other

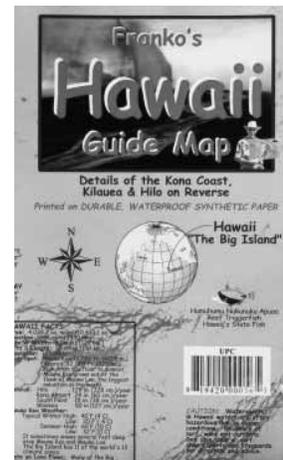


guidebook had listed. Both of these Maui sites are not to be missed, and *Maui*

*Revealed* gives detailed directions for each.

For added detail and diving tips, *Franko's Dive Maps* (\$6.95 each) can't be beat. Made of durable, waterproof paper, these maps not only contain great diving suggestions but pictures of underwater flora and fauna (with names in both English and Hawaiian.)

END



## Clearing Up Carry-on Rules...

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more. If a person could just stand next to the security checkpoint, and collect all the items being thrown away, they'd be set for life with toiletries. (Question: are they really being thrown away, or is some entrepreneurial airport employee selling these on the black market? Inquiring minds want to know.) Even if you have a container larger than three ounces, but only fill it with three ounces of liquid, it will still be thrown out. Toothpaste tubes larger than three ounces, but rolled up with just a little left—yes, those too will be discarded! And finally, all liquids and gels of legal size (once, again, three ounces or less) must be packed into a single one quart, zip top clear plastic bag. Each traveler may carry only one such bag.

Certain exceptions have been made for items like baby formula, breast milk, and over-the-counter and prescription medications. For a complete and up-to-date list of permitted and prohibited

items, and for answers to lots more questions, go to the TSA website at [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov) and choose the "For Travelers" link.

Standard luggage locks are another no-no for all bags, checked and carry-on. Only TSA approved locks can be used. These locks come with a keyhole specifically for a TSA pass-key and are available at Travel Essentials for \$10.

So if the extensive list of banned items doesn't scare you off from carrying on your luggage, you can move ahead to the next obstacle. How many bags can you carry on, and how big can they be? The TSA will allow any bag through security that fits through the x-ray machine, but once past security, each airline has its own carry-on restrictions. As a general rule, U.S. based airlines allow one bag measuring 22" x 14" x 9" or less, or 45 linear inches (length, height and width added together). You may also carry on one "personal item" that will fit under the seat, such as a purse, laptop or small

backpack.

For the most part all U.S. based carriers go by the above. But we suggest always checking with your airline as exceptions often occur. For example, flights to and from the United Kingdom currently allow *one total* carry-on bag. If you have a purse or laptop, it must be inside your carry-on bag.

So perhaps now you're thinking that with all the current restrictions you might just want to check your bags. Well, checked bags have restrictions as well and these too are airline specific. United Airlines for example, will allow two bags up to 50 pounds and 62 linear inches each. Bags over this allowance will be charged a fee (usually per pound). So once again check with your airline. But also beware as the U.S. Department of Transportation statistics on "mishandled baggage" (otherwise known as lost luggage) report that in August of 2007, close to 1% of all travelers on U.S. carriers lost their luggage. If the average domestic flight carries 150 passengers, that's about one person per flight. We hope you don't draw the short straw.

END



"There is no such thing as fun for the whole family." — JERRY SEINFELD

## News, Advice and Tips For Travelers

- Beginning January 1, 2008, fourteen French museums and monuments will experiment with opening to visitors free of charge for six months. Three of the museums are in Paris — Guimet, Cluny, and Arts et Metiers. Officials will study the experiment's results and decide how to proceed. The measure only applies to museums' permanent collections, and visitors will still have to pay for temporary exhibits. As part of the experiment, a few museums, including Orsay in Paris, will open for free one evening a week to young people between the ages of 18-25. Several other European countries, including Britain, already offer free museum entrance. Since 2001, when Britain began offering free museum entrance, nearly 30 million more people visited British museums. In the United States, the Smithsonian Institution museums and National Zoo in Washington are free of charge.
- Searching for an airline ticket online? The *National Geographic Traveler* website recommends you trash your "cookies," small files (stored in your Internet browser) that record the websites you surf—and the transactions you make. Say you go online and purchase a \$200 plane ticket from Chicago to Omaha. The next time you visit that site, you could be quoted a higher rate than what's actually available because of your spending history. Avoid this problem by deleting these files each time you log on; detailed instructions can be found under the "Help" option in your browser menu.
- Looking for a warm vacation in January? Here are two online weather guides for vacation planning. **Weather.com** has a trip-planning tool including climate comparison data, updated forecasts for hundreds of destinations, and weather maps. **Weatherunderground.com** offers a trip planner that focuses on historical data, taking the past several years into account. It shows the temperature, cloud cover, wind, humidity, and daily observations from recent years.
- If you like to be prepared with a country's currency when your plane lands at your destination, you can have foreign currency delivered to your doorstep before your departure. For an \$8 fee, Wells Fargo Bank lets you order 14 different currencies, worth up to \$3,000, at **www.foreignexchangeservices.com**. This service is open online to all travelers. Ordering in person at a Wells Fargo branch can incur extra fees for non Wells Fargo customers.
- Here are a few of our latest finds in the travel website department: **www.seatguru.com** provides detailed information on airplane seating, in-flight amenities, and airline information; **www.gasbuddy.com** finds the lowest gas prices throughout the U.S. (great for road trips); **www.sidestep.com** is a free search website similar to orbitz, expedia, and kayak; and, one of my old time favorites, **www.tripadvisor.com**, which is great for personal and independent reviews of hotels. Happy surfing.

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