



Marylou@stargazertravel.com
203 458 0819



Parrot Head to Pineapple

Jimmy Buffet has opened one of his restaurants along Kalakaua Avenue in Waikiki. The restaurant is also home to the Honolulu Surfing Museum & Bar. Buffett said he opened the restaurant to give himself an excuse to visit and surf. "You never know when I'm going to show up on stage or out at Queen's Surf" he said.

Birthday Present

2 Sheraton Hotels located near Florida theme parks are offering guests a free night on their birthday. Just book until 8/31 for a 3 night minimum stay through 12/21 and get one night free.

Fun Fact

It cost \$7 million to build the Titanic and \$200 million to make a film about it!

Silence Your Nose

In China, do not sneeze or sniff at the dinner table. It is considered barbaric. In Japan do not use a handkerchief in public or you will be thought rude.

Stressed Out

According to research done by Carnival Cruise Lines, 51.2 million Americans will not use their vacation days. Researchers have found that sacrificing time off is not the key to job survival—we all need to take regular and well-planned breaks to recharge.



Summer Is Here!

The weather has been cool and soggy but hopefully warmer temperatures will be arriving soon. Either way, summer is a great time to think about your fall and winter travels.

Up and Down

The economy might still be fluctuating, but this is a good thing for travelers. Everywhere you look there are incentives to take a trip - discounted fares, rates dropping at hotels and cruises and two for one travel. Let me know what you are interested in and I will see if there are any special savings. Here are just a few examples:

Special Stays

Certain New York City hotels are offering a 3rd night free for stays through 9/7. In addition guests will receive an exclusive personal shopping experience along with savings at Saks.

Las Vegas hotel prices are low, most at least 23% lower than last year. Some hotels have incentives like show tickets, daily breakfast, free meals for kids under 10 and more. Travelers to Hawaii can realize a savings of up to 40% from 2008 prices on hotel costs.

Summer in Italy

One tour operator is offering a special to Florence starting at \$699.00 per person. This package is lower than the cost of advertised airfare alone. Included in the price is round trip airfare from JFK, 4 nights in a 4* hotel with breakfast daily, entrance to Palazzo Vecchio and Palazzo Medici Riccardi, a bus pass, and discounts on certain admission fees, bike or scooter rentals and tours. You can travel from 7/5 to 9/3. Airfare is available from other cities, and airport taxes and fuel surcharges are additional.

Read on about my trip to Le Marche and the certification program.

Best of Barbados

Book until 7/15 and travel to Barbados from 9/1 through 12/18 to receive the following: Air credit of up to \$300 per person, 1st night free, complimentary breakfast daily, discount cards to be used at participating restaurants and for certain ground activities. There are over 40 different hotels to choose from with this package.

River Cruising

Cruising on the many beautiful rivers of Europe is a wonderful way to visit small towns and unpack just one time. Uniworld Boutique River Cruises is offering savings up to \$2000 per couple with a pay-in-full discount by 9/30 or book and deposit by 11/20 and save up to \$600 per couple. Read on to hear about my week cruising on the Seine.

Down Under

Travel to Australia has never been better priced. Your itinerary includes round trip international flights from Los Angeles or San Francisco, domestic flights in Australia, 4 nights in Melbourne and 4 nights in Sydney, and a free upgrade to a superior hotel for as little as \$1085 per person. Just book your travel by 8/20. Airport taxes are additional and price is based on double occupancy.

Singing on the Seas

On board Costa Cruise Line's newest ship, the Pacifica, you can visit the Music Studio and record up to three takes of a song. For about \$50 an hour one or two people can feel like a recording star. Included in the charge are editing and mixing services to correct a singer's timing. For an additional fee you can even be tutored by a maestro in voice lessons!

Reminder

As of 6/1/2009 all U.S. citizens are required to present a valid passport when entering the United States. Don't delay, apply for yours today!

Trips

Took a long weekend to **Cancun** in January. The Sun Palace is a beautiful adults-only property only 15 minutes from the airport. The 252 rooms offer a double Jacuzzi, a balcony, and most are ocean-view. This all-inclusive resort offers 5 restaurant choices, 3 bars, a spa and golf nearby. The staff was very accommodating, answering all of your questions and eager to help with any situation. There is wireless internet available at no charge and you get unlimited long-distance phone calls. Aside from the beautiful beach there are 3 infinity pools, one with a swim-up bar. January is a great time to travel, especially if you can manage the week after the holidays. Airfare and hotel prices are usually excellent during this week, so next year you might want to think of giving yourself this gift after the hectic holidays!

In April, I attended a certification program in the **Marche region of Italy**. "Italy in one Region" - Le Marche offers stunning countryside, Renaissance art and architecture, and beautiful beaches. It is rich in history, yet still relatively undiscovered and flanked by the Adriatic Sea and the Apennines. We visited the five provinces and got a glimpse of what this area has to offer.

There are 120 miles of coastline with 26 seaside resorts along the Adriatic Sea. Travel inland and you find small hillside villages, 2 National Parks, 9 ski resorts, caves dating back 1,400,000 years, 4 universities, archeological sites, 344 museums, 113 theaters, opera festivals and more!

We started in *Urbino*, or city on two hills and Raphael's home, visiting the Ducal Palace and the National Gallery to see the Raffaello exhibit.

Next we saw *Urbania*, known for ceramics and pottery classes, Italian language institutes and the textile industry. The following day a brief stop in *Senigallia*, known for its "velvet beach" and wonderful seafood, then on to *Cupramontana*, through the Verdicchio hills for a wine tasting, and finally a visit to *Grotte di Frasassi*. The Frasassi caves are one of the most complex systems in Italy and offer an underground world of lakes, stalactites, vaulted caverns and alabaster formations. Discovered in 1971, the caves extend over 20km on 8 different levels. That evening ended with a stay at Borgo Lanciano, a country resort in a peaceful setting within a large park and a presentation by a folkloric group with music and dancing.

On our way to *Ascoli Piceno*, with the wonderful Piazza del Popolo, museums, churches and Teatro Ventidio, we stopped at one of the several famous Italian designer outlets that the region is known for. We had lunch in *Fermo*, a medieval hilltop town known for its Roman cisterns, in a beautiful bed and breakfast located in the Palazzo Romani Adami, part of an 18th century palace. On our way again we stopped in *San Benedetto del Tronto and Grottammare*; seaside resorts offering long, clean beaches and a promenade with over 7,000 palm trees.

Our last full day started with a stop in *Riviera del Conero* for a wonderful view of the limestone rocks rising up from the sea, a visit at *Sirolo*, a golf course, the *Basilica of Loreto* and on to *Recanati*, a fortified city, birthplace of the poet Leopardi and location of the Museo Gigli dedicated to Beniamino Gigli, a world famous tenor.

At the end of the month, I traveled to **France**. We took the train right from the Paris airport and traveled to Lille, a lovely Flemish town on the Belgium border. Often called "little Paris", Lille offers a wonderful main square with shopping and restaurants, great art museums and an old town filled with quaint shops and great dining. Hopped back on the train to return to Paris and board **Uniworld's River Baroness** for a cruise up the Seine. Uniworld offers boutique hotel-style ships with riverview staterooms. All meals are prepared fresh daily using the finest local ingredients. Dinners offer several courses and are served with complimentary fine wine, beer, and soft drinks. There are two special dinners, The Captain's welcome and Farewell Dinner.

Each day a shore excursion is included and is hosted by English speaking local guides using state-of-the-art audio headset systems allowing everyone on the tour to hear the guide. Optional tours are offered in the afternoon or you can wander in the villages on your own or venture out on one of the bicycles available. Each night we had entertainment onboard while enjoying sailing on the Seine.

We started in *Paris*, using the ship as our hotel for one night. We had magnificent views of the Eiffel tower at night as we sat in the lounge.

Our next port was *Les Andelys*, 60 miles from Paris, where the Chateau Gaillard is located. This was the castle constructed in the 14th century by Richard the Lion Heart to protect Rouen 26 miles away.

Rouen, our next stop, is the historical capital of Normandy. Heavily damaged in World War II, the Cathedral of Notre-Dame was the subject of a series of paintings by Monet. In Rouen you will also find the church of Joan of Arc and several museums.

The highlight of the trip was a full day excursion to the *beaches of Normandy*. It was especially moving to see the broadcasts from the American Cemetery on June 6 this year, the 65th anniversary of D-Day. We were given ample time to visit the town of Arromanches and the cemetery, where we were each given a flower to place on a grave.

We next docked in *Caudebec*. Our morning tour took us to *Honfleur*, a beautiful harbor located on the southern bank of the Seine. This picturesque port is characterized by slate-covered houses and has been the subject of many artists.

Our next morning's tour was to *Giverny*, and the gardens and Claude Monet's house are magnificent. Monet lived here from 1883 until his death in 1926. After lunch on-board, we took the optional tour to *Versailles*. Versailles is an extraordinary example of opulence in its famous "Hall of Mirrors" and incredible gardens and fountains. We set sail for Paris again and our Captain's Farewell Dinner was bitter-sweet as the food was wonderful but we knew our trip was coming to an end.