Budapest – A Tale of Two Cities

When shopping, it’s always a treat to find two items on sale for the price of one — in effect, a “twofer”.

Quite literally, that’s what awaits visitors to the Hungarian capital city of Budapest. Here are two literally distinct cities — Buda and Pest — with one on each side of the Danube River, but joined together in 1873 to make one city. While Pest and Buda are united, there are differences. Buda, on the western side of the Danube, is essentially flat while Pest, on the eastern side, is hilly. Pest is considered “lively” while Buda is more “elegant.” Residents even refer to themselves according to which side of the river they reside on. If you live in Pest you’re a Peshti; in Buda, you’re a Budai.

While Budapest has a 1,000-year-long cultural history that includes some rather violent periods as well as being a royal seat during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it has only emerged as a central European travel destination in the very recent past. That’s because Hungary joined with Nazi Germany in World War II. As a consequence, it suffered damage from Allied aerial bombings and almost complete destruction during the 100-days of the Soviet siege, one of the bloodiest campaigns of the war. All five of the historic bridges over the Danube were destroyed by the encircled Germans. Russian units eventually defeated the Germans, but then replaced a brutal dictatorship with Communist rule.

It wasn’t until 1989 that the Communist regime ended and the Hungarian Republic was proclaimed. Since then, as the capital, Budapest has worked to become a major European travel destination, restoring the magnificent structures so badly damaged during the war. Admittedly not as well known as Prague or Vienna, Budapest offers visitors sights, experiences and a cuisine all its own.

Budapest is now proud to be counted amongst Europe’s most beautiful capitals. You can visit Budapest by joining one of our Eastern Passage or Grand European cruises in 2015.

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Gleiding along the backwaters of Kerala is one of the most enchanting holiday experiences in the world. Come and experience the daily lives of the locals from the deck of your private houseboats. You will pass women washing their clothes in the river and farmers bathing their buffalo. Watch as local fishermen and vegetable sellers go house to house by boat selling their wares. Drift along and watch as the sun sets over the ever changing scenery before retiring to your cabin to be lulled to sleep by the gently lapping water.

A truly wonderful and unforgettable experience!

The Backwaters of Kerala are a network of interconnected canals, rivers, lakes and inlets formed by more than 900 km of waterways that were once the main mode of transportation to carry rice and spices. When modern trucks replaced this system of transport, someone found a way that would keep these boats - called “kettuvallams” - in use. By constructing special rooms to accommodate travellers, these boats came back from near-extinction to enjoy their present day popularity. Houseboats today are large, slow moving exotic barges used for leisure trips, and are in fact reworked versions of “kettuvallams” of olden times. The houseboats have all the creature comforts of a good hotel including furnished bedrooms, modern toilets, a kitchen and an amazing covered outdoor sitting and dining space to watch the world go by.

What is magical about this houseboat ride is that it offers breathtaking views of the untouched and otherwise inaccessible rural Kerala area, a truly wonderful and unforgettable experience.
Etched on the ground are creatures from both the natural world and the human imagination. They include animals such as a spider, hummingbird, monkey, lizard, pelican and even a killer whale. Also depicted are plants, trees, flowers, wavy lines, triangles, spirals and oddly shaped figures that can only be appreciated from the sky.

Most of the lines are formed by a shallow trench with a depth of between four and six inches. They were made by removing the reddish-brown iron oxide-coated pebbles that cover the surface of the Nazca desert and exposing the light-coloured earth beneath. The largest figures are over 200 m (660 ft) across and are believed to have been etched in the soil between 500 BC and AD 500. These geoglyphs were first spotted from the air in 1939 when a pilot flew over the Nazca region of the Peruvian coastal highlands and in 1994 they were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The purpose of the lines continues to elude researchers and remains a matter of speculation. Ancient Nazca culture was prehistoric, which means they have no written records.

We may never know why the Nazca peoples put so much time and care into a project that they could barely see. In spite of all that we have learned about them in recent years, the Nazca Lines remain a fascinating mystery. See if you can solve the riddle by travelling on our Wonders and Mysteries of Peru tour departing in April.
Paris and the Heart of Normandy

As you travel along the Seine River from Paris to the beaches of Normandy, you can’t help but think about the Allied invasion which signalled the beginning of the end of World War II, 70 years ago.

The service men that were injured or lost their lives attacking that 80 km stretch of coastline will be remembered for the sacrifices they made on those first days of the liberation of Europe. As Canadians, visiting Juno Beach (where the Canadian forces landed), and the Juno Beach Centre fill us with pride in the job so well done by our troops, and then visiting the Canadian Cemetery, where the graves of 2,043 young men lie, gives us time to reflect on the ultimate sacrifice these men made.

Along the way to and from Normandy, there is beauty in all directions, as well as remarkable history. In Giverny a visit to the home and gardens of Claude Monet may inspire you to take up painting with water colours. There are two parts in Monet’s garden: a flower garden called Clos Normand in front of the house and a Japanese inspired water garden on the other side of the road. Some 500,000 visitors each year come to the home and gardens of Monet.

Further down river you enter the city of Rouen, and the site of Joan of Arc’s trial and execution. Here also is the Cathedral Notre-Dame de Rouen, whose stunning Gothic structure is considered by some to be the town's most important architectural landmark. Rouen – the city of 100 spires – is the historic capital of Normandy, and the museums, gardens and parks of this city provide much to see and do during your spare time.

And then of course there is Paris, a city full of world class tourist attractions, incredible museums, galleries and beautiful parks and gardens. With so much to see and so little time, you may wish to extend your stay just to have enough time to see more.

Join us as we depart from Canada on April 23rd to cruise through and explore this historic and remarkable area of the world.

Avignon – City of Popes

This city is full of magnificent architecture, highlighted by the grand medieval fortress and papal palace, Palais des Papes.

Resting alongside the Rhone River in the Provence region of southeastern France, Avignon was the city chosen by Pope Clement V when he moved the papal court from Rome in 1309 at a time when violent chaos was taking over Rome. Pope Benedict XII commissioned the construction of the Palais des Papes, the papal palace. The building was incredibly expensive, taking much of the papacy’s income during its construction. Completed in 1363, it’s the largest Gothic palace in Europe and one of the most important in the world. Both a fortress and a palace, it dominates Avignon’s urban landscape. Together with the Petit Palais, the Romanesque Cathedral of Notre-Dame-des-Doms and the Avignon Bridge, the historic centre of Avignon has been designated an UNESCO World Heritage Site. It is a testament to the leading role played by Avignon in 14th-century Christian Europe.

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Avignon's old town is a wonderful place to wander and explore with its spider web of narrow streets, belfries and towers surrounded by magnificent ramparts. The highlight of any visit is a tour of the Palais des Papes where you relive the splendour of the 14th-century pontifical court.

You have the opportunity to experience Avignon on the Portraits of Southern France and Paris cruisetour travelling April 18 – May 2, 2015. Escorted by Don & Joanne Rostad, this tour combines three days visiting the famous French Riviera, seven days on a luxurious Viking Cruises longship sailing the scenic Rhône and Saône Rivers and finally a three night stay in Paris. C’est magnifique!

2015 River Cruises with Availability

**Tulips & Windmills**
Netherlands • Belgium
April 23 - May 3
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Dr. Bruce Miller & Rhea Jansen
April 30 - May 10
TOUR HOSTS:
Shelley & Don Buchan, Betty Hannah

**Grand European**
Netherlands • Germany • Austria • Slovakia • Hungary
May 2 - 17
TOUR HOSTS:
Jean Van Wyk & Donna MacDonald
June 5 - 20
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Susan MacAlpine-Gillis & Paul Gillis

**Southern France & Paris**
April 18 - May 2
TOUR HOSTS:
Don & Joanne Rostad

**Cities of Light**
Luxembourg • France • Germany • Czech Republic
October 14 - 26
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Das & Angela Sydney

**Paris & Normandy**
April 23 - May 1
TOUR HOST:
Scott McWilliam

**Eastern Passage**
Hungary • Croatia • Serbia
Romania • Bulgaria
May 1 - 15
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Dr. Roger & Lynda Ellis

**Imperial Jewels of China**
June 3 - 16
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Linda Ervin, Rev. Don & Pam Moore
October 13 - 26
TOUR HOST: TBA

ROSTAD FREQUENT TRAVELLER DISCOUNTS

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IF YOU TRAVELLED WITH US IN THE YEAR THEN YOU SAVE

**Can’t Travel on our Group Dates?**
Rostad Tours can provide the best rates for individuals on Viking Cruises including their new ocean cruises.

**Plus, Save up to $550 per person on 2015 river cruises with Early Booking and Viking Alumni Discounts**

Palais des Papes is one of the largest and most important medieval Gothic buildings in Europe
2015 Tours with Availability

Europe

The Beauty of Italy
May 18 - June 2
TOUR HOST:
Rev. Bill Wheeler

Spectacular Scandinavia
Denmark • Norway • Sweden
June 15 - 30
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Wayne & Marie Reed

Jewels of Scandinavia
Denmark • Norway
July 12 - 26
TOUR HOSTS:
Louise & Stewart Adams

Sun & Fun in Spain & Portugal
September 21 - October 7
TOUR HOSTS:
Jay & Angela Simpson & Leigh Shaffer

Treasures of Spain & Portugal
September 26 - October 17
TOUR HOST:
Rev. Dr. Bob & Fay Jackson

Bible Lands

Walking in His Footsteps
Israel
March 11 - 21
TOUR HOST:
Rev. Tara Livingston

Wonders of Turkey
April 16 - May 2
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Dr. Harold & Marilyn Witte

Experiencing Israel & Greece
April 23 - May 7
TOUR HOST:
Rev. Kurt Redschlag

Journeys of the Apostles
Turkey • Greece
September 16 - October 5
TOUR HOSTS:
Bishop Stephen & Jane Kristenson

Orient/Asia

Explore Exotic Indochina
Vietnam • Cambodia
January 23 - February 8
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Dr. Bob & Fay Jackson

Incredible India
February 25 - March 16
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Ross Smillie & Therese Thompson

Central & South America

Trail of the Incas and Galapagos
Peru • Ecuador • Galapagos
February 23 - March 10
TOUR HOST:
Rev. Johan Olivier

Wonders and Mysteries of Peru
April 11 - 28
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Murdo & Marie Marple

Africa

South Africa Adventure
March 7 - 26
TOUR HOSTS:
Francis & Cybele Noronha

Britain & Ireland

An Irish Adventure
September 11 - 28
TOUR HOSTS:
Rev. Larry & Betty Mitchell

Ireland & Celtic Christianity
September 16 - October 2
TOUR HOST:
Rev. Nancy Knox

Celtic Lands & Saints
Ireland • Scotland
September 18 - October 5
TOUR HOST:
Rev. David Robertson

South Pacific

Scenic South Pacific
New Zealand • Australia
November 11 - December 4
TOUR HOST: TBA

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