

by Frank Wagner

Is 2008 the year you've vowed to take the trip of a lifetime? If so, here are a few ideas to strengthen your resolve:

GRAND TOUR

OPEN LATE - Berlin's Long Night of Museums has something for the night owl hoping to release an inner culture vulture. Around 100 museums will open their doors from 6 p.m. Saturday until 2 a.m. Sunday. CNS Photo. BERLIN AFTER DARK - Berlin's Long Night of Museums begins Jan. 26 and runs through Aug. 30. Food, music and performances add to the festiveness of the night. CNS Photo. "Grandtravel" has been coined by Academic Travel Abroad to describe packages the firm designs for adults and their grandchildren. The newest Grandtravel trip is a two-week New Zealand tour. Highlights of the Kiwi package include sailing, four-wheeling through landscapes featured in "The Lord of the Rings" films, encounters with subantarctic penguins and a trip to the Polynesian Spa. Rates are \$6,995 per adult, \$5,680 to \$6,750 per child (depending on how many share a room); these do not include airfare to Auckland, New Zealand. Packages are timed to coincide with pupils' summer vacations; the New Zealand tour leaves Los Angeles July 24, arrives in Auckland July 26 (the international date line adds a day) and leaves Auckland Aug. 6.

Other Grandtravel itineraries go to Alaska, the Galapagos Islands, South Africa, Italy, the Wild West and London and Paris.

FYI: www.grandtrvl.com or 800-247-7651.

BERLIN MUSEUM-HOPPING

Berlin's Long Night of Museums has something for the night owl hoping to release an inner culture vulture.

The city's famed collections range from the famed 14th century B.C. bust of Egyptian Queen Nefertiti to works by contemporary artists. Around 100 museums - old and new, large and small - open their doors from 6 p.m. Saturday until 2 a.m. Sunday; with one ticket you get unlimited use of a special shuttle service and admission to all participating venues. Food, music and performances add to the festiveness of the night.

The Long Night offer begins Jan. 26 and runs through Aug. 30. Advance tickets are 8 to 12 euros, day-of-event tickets are 10 to 15 euros for adults; children 12 years old or younger are free.

FYI: www.lange-nachte-der-museen.de (in German) or www.kulturprojekte-berlin.de/en/home.

WHEN IN ROME ...

Italy's Bettoja Hotels, with properties in Rome and Florence, are offering rates they promote as "dollar-friendly." Bettoja's four Roman hotels (Mediterraneo, Massimo d'Azeglio, Atlantico and Nord) and its Florentine Relais Certosa are promoting winter rates of 98-235 euros per night. The rate is based on a two-night minimum stay; the price includes tax and a full American breakfast and children 12 and younger stay at no added charge when sharing a room with two paying adults.

Bettoja's winter rates are in effect through March 2.

FYI: www.bettojahotels.it or 800-783-6904.

POLE POSITION

With six expeditions planned for the summer, Cruise North Expeditions has cruises exploring arctic Canada from June 22 through mid-September. Owned by the Inuit (Eskimo) of Nunavik, Cruise North Expeditions has planned out seven- to 12-night excursions that explore the heart of the Land of the Midnight Sun. Sailing out of Kuujjaq, Quebec, the small, ice-strengthened expeditionary ship Lyubov Orlova takes passengers to archaeological sites dating back thousands of years, explores remote outposts, retraces long forgotten paths of European explorers and visits Inuit communities. Trips include guided hikes at several points; guided kayak excursions are offered for additional fees.

Fares start at \$3,695 per person for a triple cabin; taxes and surcharges apply.

FYI: www.cruisenorthexpeditions.com or 866-263-3220.

EXPAND YOUR WORLDVIEW

If you have a third of a year and a quarter of a million dollars to spare, you too can cruise around the world and broaden your horizons aboard Crystal Cruises' world cruise.

The 108-day trip aboard the luxury liner Crystal Serenity visits 45 ports of call in 22 countries in the South Pacific, Asia, Africa and Europe. Between ports, a variety of shipboard activities are offered, among them a money management course with economist Jane Bryant Quinn, a political course by consultant Dick Morris and even a computer-learning curriculum for college credit. Other notables educating and entertaining passengers include Tony Award-winner Tommy Tune, Academy Award-winner Cloris Leachman, Olympic swimmer John Naber and former TV game show host Monty Hall.

Fares range from \$49,800 to \$261,210 per person for the full trip, which departs Los Angeles Jan. 19 and is scheduled to conclude in London May 7; 11- to 17-day segments are offered starting at \$4,890 per person.

FYI: www.crystalcruises.com or 888-799-4625.

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FYI Travel: Ways to make '08 a trippy year by Frank Wagner