FYI Travel: See what's blooming at the Cherry Blossom Festival

by Tom_Roebuck

Anticipating the majestic beauty of the National Cherry Blossom Festival - held March 29 through April 12 - visitors flock to Washington, D.C., for its stunning live floral displays.

WASHINGTON'S FAMOUS CHERRY TREES - Springtime in the nation's capital is highlighted by the annual Cherry Blossom Festival, when cherry trees donated by the city of Tokyo in 1912 draw thousands of visitors. CNS Photo by E. David Luria. Guests who reserve the hotel's Very Cherry Willard package starting at $479 will receive a special cherry amenity, plus the choice of one of the following: American breakfast for two, a second room at half price for children under 18, upgrade to a deluxe room or parking. Prices are per room, plus tax, based upon availability and are available from March 29 through April 12.

This year on April 10, the Willard Intercontinental hotel is offering guests the chance to be put through their spy paces in a festive espionage escapade created in conjunction with the International Spy Museum. This adventure will take place in the historic halls of the Willard, where participants will need to blend into the hotel's swank scene while they shadow suspects in the famed Peacock Alley and listen in for suspicious whispers at the Round Robin Bar. Wit and spy savvy will be required as they gather intelligence, conduct surveillance and do on-the-spot analysis in this rare opportunity to blend real spycraft training and the allure of international intrigue, festival frivolity and seductive spies.

FYI: The Spy Museum adventure is $65 ($60 for Spy Museum members). To reserve your spot, please call 202-654-0930. For information and reservations for the Willard InterContinental Hotel, call 800-827-1747, or visit www.washington.interconti.com. For National Cherry Blossom Festival details visit www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org.

KIDS SKI FOR FREE

Silver Mountain Resort in northern Idaho, rated as one of "Skiing's Biggest Secrets" by Ski Magazine, is offering discounts until the end of the ski season. Located an hour's drive from Spokane, Wash., the resort features more than 1,600 acres of ski and snowboard terrain, a newly expanded snow tubing park and a scenic, three-mile snowshoe trail.

Silver Mountain is honoring season passes from all ski resorts in the United States and Canada in conjunction with a minimum two-night stay at Morning Star Lodge, allowing pass holders to ski for no charge for the duration of their stay.

In March through the end of the ski season, kids under the age of 18 ski for no charge with a minimum two-night stay at the Morning Star Lodge.

FYI: For more information about Silver Mountain Resort and upcoming events, visit www.silvermt.com or call 800-204-6428.

VACATIONS TO REMEMBER

Adventure tour company Boundless Journeys has announced several special travel opportunities for 2008, including a Tanzania safari with a volunteer element, a one-time-only Turkey walking tour and cruise, and an additional date for their popular Galapagos Islands cruise.

Tanzania: Migration safari.

Charity event: July 14-23; 10 days; $4,895 per person.

In the midst of one of East Africa's most beautiful game-viewing areas are people living in extreme poverty, with few resources and voices rarely heard by the rest of the world. This year when guests join Boundless Journeys' July 14-23 Tanzania safari, their participation will benefit The Foundation for African Medicine and Education.

Turkey: Istanbul to the Turquoise Coast.

Special departure: Aug. 31-Sept. 12; 13 days; $5,295 per person.

From Istanbul, the historic city astride the border of Europe and Asia, guests will venture into Cappadocia, a region of exceptional natural wonders characterized by fairy chimneys and a unique historical and cultural heritage. Here, travelers can hike amid bizarre rock formations and discover local artisans' shops. A stay in a wonderfully unusual cave hotel completes the experience. On the Turquoise Coast, guests will explore beautiful coves and hidden villages from a traditional tirhandil-styled boat. Dotted with islands and rife with mythological history, the azure waters of the Turquoise Coast invite guests to snorkel, swim, and explore the dazzling coastline on foot.

Ecuador: The Galapagos Islands.

New date announced: Oct. 30-Nov. 8; 10 days; $4,295 per person (combine with a Peru extension and save $400 on the extension price).

This naturalist-led Galapagos Islands cruise on a 16-passenger private yacht will introduce guests to the many unique wonders of Darwin's archipelago. Visit with blue-footed boobies, land iguanas basking in the sun, lively sea lions and families of penguins, among many other diverse species. This active adventure allows guests to discover the Galapagos from many different perspectives: snorkeling with sea lions, walking on volcanic islands, paddling kayaks through peaceful mangrove lagoons, strolling barefoot along sun-drenched beaches, or simply lying back and relaxing in the equatorial sun.

FYI: For more information on Boundless Journeys, call 800-941-8010 or visit www.boundlessjourneys.com.

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