

COME TRAVEL THE WORLD WITH US

TravelSmart

"Best newsletter for travelers on a budget."
—Money Magazine

\$8.00 "May: Follows April and redeems many promises April has forfeited." B. Atkinson May 15, 2011

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Nine Places To Touch The Bases...

Baseball Greats

Why not take some personal time out and give the kids a crash program in baseball history on your next family vacation. Here are 9 places with winning innings for adults and children.

■ **Baltimore (MD).** The row house where **Babe Ruth** grew up is now a museum devoted to The Bambino (216 Emory St, 3 blocks west of Oriole Park at Camden Yards ☎ 410-727-1539, www.baberuthmuseum.com). Then walk to the nearby **Sports Legends Museum** (301 W Camden St in the Camden Station building, next to Oriole Park and the B&O Warehouse). It's filled with exhibits on the history of the Orioles, of amateur and minor league baseball in Maryland and more.

■ **Birmingham (AL).** The oldest stadium in the country, **Rickwood Field** (1137 Second Ave W ☎ 800-RICK-WOOD, www.rickwood.com) was built in 1910 at a cost of \$75,000. Among the legends who played here: Willie Mays, Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb and Shoeless Joe Jackson. Scenes from the 1994 movie *Cobb* and the 1995 *Soul of the Game* were filmed here. Currently being restored, there are plans to open a Museum of Southern Baseball in the future.

■ **Cooperstown (NY).** At the **National Baseball Hall of Fame & Museum** (25 Main St ☎ 888-425-5633, www.baseballhalloffame.org) you can learn about the 295 inductees, starting in 1936 with Ty Cobb, Walter Johnson, Babe Ruth and Honus Wagner. The museum has the largest library on the history of baseball — some 2.6 million items.

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KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

BackTalk

from our readers

CIVIL WAR: ANNIVERSARY #150

Nancy Dunnan recommends the **Mason Inn & Conference Center** in Fairfax (VA) for families and history buffs visiting nearby historic sites. Its **Civil War Anniversary Package** starts at just \$109/night and incl bkfst for 2 and 2 packed lunches.

The 148-room Inn, which has an on-site fitness center, is on Mason Pond Drive, steps from **George Mason University**. There's free parking and a free shuttle around the campus and to/from the Vienna Metro stop. The dining room serves B, L & D daily. ☎ 877-296-6695, 703-865-5705, www.acc-masoninnandconferencecenter.com. **Thru Oct 31.**

(Note: \$5 from each booked package will be donated to the **Civil War Trust** (www.civilwar.org)).

The Inn is also approx 20 mi from **Manassas National Battlefield Park** (www.nps.gov/mana/index.htm). This summer/fall, the Park is offering lectures, period music, parades, reenactments, dances and more.

For Further Information

- Fairfax has many **Civil War Heritage sites**. For a complete list: www.fxva.com. Type "Civil War" in search box field.
- For details on Virginia's **Civil War Trails**: www.civilwartraveler.com/EAST/VA/va-north/index.html.

Send your favorite travel tip to: TravelSmartNow@aol.com or ☎ 212-228-4769. If we publish your suggestion, we will send you a thank-you gift.

Visiting Royal Leamington Spa & Warwick Castle... special report

From The Englishman

Last month, riding the Chiltern Railway (www.chilternrailways.co.uk) out of London's Marylebone Station, we explored beautiful Buckinghamshire and two British Prime Ministers' homes — **Hughenden Manor** and **Chequers**. (Call ☎ 800-327-3633 for a free copy.) This month we continue northwest on the same line with The Englishman to visit two historic places — **Leamington Spa** and **Warwick Castle**.

GETTING THERE

By Bus: Full-day tours operated by **Evan Evans** (☎ 800-422-9022, www.evanevanstours.co.uk) leave from London's Victoria Coach Station (complimentary pick-up from many hotels) and visit Warwick Castle, Stratford-upon-Avon, the Cotswolds and Oxford; \$120/adult, \$105 ages 3-16, \$115/seniors 60+ and students. Incl admission to the Castle, Christ Church College and Shakespeare's birthplace. (The company has been in business since 1933.)

National Express (☎ 011-44-871-8178, www.nationalexpress.com) has service also from Victoria Coach Station to Warwick (approx 4 hours, with 1 transfer) for \$45 r/t or to Leamington Spa (approx 3 hours, direct) for \$35 r/t.

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William the Conqueror built a wooden motte and bailey fort in 1068 AD where the present day Windsor Castle stands. (A motte is a mound of earth on which a tower or keep stands; a bailey is an enclosed courtyard.) In the 12th century, it was rebuilt as a stone castle.





TravelSmart's TOP TEN TRAVEL DEALS

These packages ARE NOT ADVERTISEMENTS. We recommend them because we believe they are "the" best. Caution: Prices (p/p dbl), dates and blackout periods often change after we go to press. Cancellations and fully booked tours also occur. Note: Fuel charges (\$25-\$225) and airport and other fees are not always included. TravelSmart is not responsible for any data inaccuracies nor for the level of service provided by these companies.

Note: For more travel deals, steals & news, updated daily, visit: TravelSmartNewsletter.com

UNDER \$2,000

1 ICELAND: From \$635 with air from Boston.

The **Build Your Own Tour** incl 2 hotel nights in Reykjavik with Scandinavian buffet bkfst, fuel surcharge and a free 2.5 hour City Bike Tour with a knowledgeable guide. With an easy pace and level biking, you'll visit various beaches, University of Iceland campus, Nordic House, Catholic Cathedral, Parliament building, Old Harbour, homes of famous residents and more. Minimum 2-night stay; maximum 7. **Note:** Slightly higher prices with air from NY, Seattle, Toronto, Washington (DC). Lowest-priced months: May, late Aug, Sept & Oct. Sgl suppl, from \$729. **Iceland Air**, ☎ 800-223-5500, www.icelandair.us. **Thru Oct 12.**

2 EUROPE: From \$776. Air only from NYC.

■ This summer, Finnair is offering special rates to 21 European destinations. ■ Newly scheduled flights incl Nice, Malaga, Aarhus (Denmark) and Murmansk (Northern Russia). ■ It flies the shorter northern route via Helsinki with connecting flights to other cities. Helsinki's compact terminal was especially designed for transfer traffic. ■ Business class passengers can place food orders from 2 weeks before traveling and up to 24 hours before departure. ■ Finnair flies the shortest and fastest direct route to 10 cities in Asia (via Helsinki) incl Delhi, Hong Kong and Seoul. Flights to Delhi start at \$836. ☎ 800-950-5000, www.finnair.com.

3 FRANCE: From \$1,270. Air extra.

Cycle together in a group of 4+ and get a discount. An even larger discount for 10+ bikers. The **Self-Guided Provence Vineyards & Lavender Tour**, for example, is regularly \$1,995 p/p; if 4 people travel together, you'll save about \$320 p/p. **Loren Siekman**, Director told us the discount reflects an increase in inter-gener-

ational travel. Company has been organizing bike and hike tours since 1994 and has offices in Scottsdale (AZ) and France.

Discover France Adventures: ☎ 800-960-2221, www.discoverfrance.com. **Thru Oct 31.**

4 UTAH: From \$1,295-\$1,450. Air extra.

These 4 and 5 day **Green River Rafting Trips** take you over 60 moderate rapids and thru beautiful Desolation Canyon — with time to explore outlaw hideouts, dinosaur habitats and to see ancient petroglyphs. Incl all meals, transfers, cots, tents, sleeping bags, chairs, etc. Ages 5-15 (\$850-\$950) get a special menu.

TIP: Company's excellent website has trips arranged by categories: first time, family, couples, group, solo and customized. In addition to Utah, it also has vacations in Idaho and the Grand Canyon.

Western River Adventures: ☎ 866-904-1160, www.westernriver.com. **Thru Sept.**

5 CANADA: \$1,525. Air extra.

On the 9-night **Polar Bear Backpacker Program**, designed for students, backpackers and adventure lovers who wish to experience Canada's arctic region, you'll travel 4 nights by wilderness rail from Winnipeg to Churchill and the shores of Hudson Bay to see polar bears in their natural habitat. Incl r/t train fare, full-day tundra vehicle tour with an experienced naturalist, 3 nights' dorm accommodations at the **Winnipeg Downtowner**, 2 nights at the **Bear Country Inn** in Churchill. Sgl suppl, \$252.

Every autumn, the bears gather along the Hudson Bay waters waiting for sea ice to form. Once the bay freezes over, they move onto the ice where they spend the winter hunting seal. You'll see the bears from a heated vehicle/buggy that seats 36 passengers, has a bathroom and an outside viewing platform. Its 6-foot diameter tires allow access onto the tundra.

Note: A shorter 5-night program with air between Winnipeg and Churchill is priced at \$1,945.

Great Canadian Travel Co, ☎ 800-661-3830, www.greatcanadiantravel.com. **Several Oct dates.**

6 THE FAR WEST: From \$1,599. Air extra.

This 7-night **Pioneer Adventures of the Old West** takes you by AC motorcoach from Phoenix/Scottsdale to Sedona, Flagstaff, Grand Canyon, Monument Valley, Lake Powell, Zion & Bryce national parks. Incl full bkfst daily, 1 three-course dinner, farewell dinner with drinks and rodeo entertainment, first-class hotels, tour directors, train journey aboard the Grand Canyon Railway, airport transfers. Sgl suppl, from \$350.

Trafalgar: ☎ 866-544-4434, www.trafalgar.com. **Thru Sept 4.**

On our Deal #5 you'll see polar bears up close. These intelligent marine mammals are extremely powerful and can travel up to 60 miles without resting and swim as fast as six miles/hour.



7 SPAIN & PORTUGAL: From \$1,849. Air extra.

This 11-night **Spain's Costa del Sol & Portugal's Riviera Package** starts in Madrid with a tour of the world famous Prado Museum with an expert. Then it's the high-speed train to the Moorish city of Cordoba with time to tour Granada's Alhambra Palace, the Cathedral of Seville and Columbus' tomb; followed by 4 nights on Portugal's Riviera, visiting Cadiz (the oldest inhabited city on the peninsula) and Fatima (the noted pilgrimage site). In all you'll see 6 UNESCO World Heritage sites. Incl sightseeing, bkfst daily, 5 dinners.

Collette: ☎ 800-340-5158, www.collettevacations.com. **Aug 11 2011-April 11, 2012.**

FOR DEEPER POCKETS

8 SICILY: From \$2,590. Air extra.

This 7-night **Splendid Sicily Tour** incl 3 nights in Palermo, Sicily's capital (exploring its medieval streets and Norman architecture) and 4 in Taormina, airport transfers, bkfst daily, 5 dinners, 1 lunch, 2 wine tastings and vineyard tours, wireless headsets for hearing guides clearly, hotel taxes and service charges and extensive sightseeing via deluxe motor coach with extra legroom. Your Palermo hotel will be the **Grand Hotel et Des Palmes** in the historic center. In downtown Taormina it's the **Hotel Villa Diodoro** with views of Mt. Etna and Naxos Bay. Sgl suppl, from \$400.

Perillo Tours, ☎ 800-431-1515, www.perillotours.com. **Thru Oct 15.**

9 NEW MEXICO: From \$2,810. Air extra.

This 5-night tour starts/ends in Albuquerque where you'll spend 2 nights at

the **Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town** followed by 3 nights in Santa Fe at the **Inn at Loretto**. Package incl 5 bkfst, 4 dinners with wine, bottled water on tours and a tour director 24/7. You'll see the Rio Grande River, Pueblo Cultural Center, Cibola National Forest, Bradbury Science Museum, the ceremonial caves and ruins of the Anasazi cliff dwellings and much more. Sgl suppl, \$550.

Gutsy Women Travel, ☎ 866-464-8879, www.gutsywomentravel.com. **Oct 21.**

10 ITALY: From \$3,305-\$3,509 with air from New York.

This new 11-night **Rome & the Jewels of the South** incl fuel surcharge, arrival transfer, half-day guided tour of Rome, daily bkfst, 3 lunches, 6 dinners, deluxe motorcoach, service charges, taxes, local guides, entrance fees, escorted sightseeing. Sgl suppl, from \$675.

You'll spend 4 nights at the resort like **Crowne Plaza Rome-St. Peter's Hotel & Spa** (with swimming pool and tennis courts) and 6 nights while on tour — incl Sorrento's **Grand Hotel Vesuvio** which overlooks the Bay of Naples and Mt. Vesuvius and the centrally-located **Hotel Politeama** in Palermo. In addition to time in Rome, Naples, Pompeii and Sorrento, you'll see the famous **Blue Grotto**, Rende (known for its Aragonese castles), Mt. Etna, the historic town of Syracuse and Agrigento's Valley of the Temples and more.

TourCrafters: ☎ 800-482-5995, www.tourcrafters.it. **Thru Oct 31.**

On our Deal #10 from TourCrafters you'll see the ruins of Pompeii. This Roman city was buried during the 79 AD eruption of Mount Vesuvius. It was rediscovered in 1599.



PICK, CLICK & GO

www.CostToDrive.com

COST TO DRIVE

With the price of gasoline skyrocketing, many Americans are thinking twice about driving, especially non-required driving.

So, before you jump into a car, head for www.CostToDrive.com. Here you'll find the answer to that key question: How much will it cost to drive from Point A to Point B?

The founders of **CostToDrive.com** designed and built the unique and easy-to-use "calculator" tool to determine just that. Simply enter where you're starting out (address, city or ZIP code), where you're going and what car you will be driving (year, make and model). The oldest car for which information is available is 1990.

TIP: You can also check the most popular drives by state. Find out, for instance the driving time and cost between Portland (OR) and Denver (CO); then compare it with flying.

Fun Facts: ■ It costs \$609 to drive from NY to Los Angeles in a Hummer H3. ■ Only \$229 with a Toyota Prius. ■ It costs \$8.39, with a carbon footprint of 53.3 lbs to drive an Acura TL from Tarrytown (NY) to Commack (NY), about 60 miles. ■ In a Honda Insight, it's about \$4.78 with a carbon footprint of 32.2 lbs. ■ The Honda uses only 1.3 gallons of gas. ■ The Acura uses 2.2 gallons.

Fast, easy and helpful, that's what I like about this site.

(Roseanne Macari)

STEAL OF THE MONTH

CANADIAN GARDENS: A RAIL JOURNEY
From US\$384. Air Extra.

■ On the **VIA Garden Route** you can visit 19 magnificent gardens, 27 award-winning Communities in Bloom and countless local gardens from Victoria to Halifax. ■ New this year: Ottawa's Central Experimental Farm and the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens in Nova Scotia.

■ Upon arrival, you can either take a self-guided tour of the gardens and Communities in Bloom or you can choose a Garden Route travel package from VIA Rail within the Windsor to Québec City corridor. ■ **About Communities in Bloom:** This Canadian non-profit organization is committed to beautification thru local involvement and a national program. ☎ 514-694-8871, www.communitiesinbloom.ca.

VIA Rail, ☎ 888-VIA-RAIL, www.viarail.ca/garden. **June 3-Sept 5.**