

Anita's Travel with Friends
EXPLORATION, EDUCATION, ADVENTURE!
Sharing travel information and experiences.

February 2004

Welcome to the first edition of **Anita's Travel with Friends** newsletter.

I've had so much fun the last few years putting together trips and enjoying the rewards of planning my own itineraries, activities, experiences and expenditures. And so many of my friends want to hear about upcoming plans, and have favorite travel tips to share. E-mail seems to be the perfect answer.

So here we go! (Yes, the pun is intended.)

• **African Adventure**

Three years in the preliminary planning stage, and many years on my wish list, Africa is my target for 2004. Current research and internet and phone inquiries have turned up several exciting possibilities. Most enticing among them at this point is a customized South Africa and Tanzania combination with a little bit of Zimbabwe (Victoria Falls) and maybe Namibia thrown in.

The three week trip will combine the best elements of wonderful spring flowers, dramatic mountain and ocean scenery (Cape Town and Cape of Good Hope), a taste of South African wine country, incomparable Victoria Falls, a sunset cruise on the Zambezi River, cultural tours of traditional villages and markets, and multiple Safaris to top-rated destinations in northern Tanzania.

Ngorongoro Crater, a World Heritage site, is a must-see, with both breathtaking scenery and spectacular and memorable animal-viewing. Plans also include stunning Lake Manyara, where the game drive may be arranged to include a canoe trip on the lake famous for masses of flamingos, and the Serengeti, famous for its dramatic annual migration of hundreds of thousands of animals.

The dramatic Namibian dunes and desert may be a three-day side trip by light plane, including a stay at a renowned resort, sand dune safaris, and maybe a balloon ride. Or we may decide to explore the Tanzanian seacoast and island life of Zanzibar which includes the culturally-rich and historical Stonetown. Zanzibar could also include visits to Jozani Natural Forest Reserve, Prison Island, and a Spice Tour.

Preliminary departure date is September 11th or 12th to arrive the 13th or 14th in Capetown, South Africa, with return from Johannesburg October 5th. September is springtime below the equator, and mid-dry season. Temperatures are expected to be pleasantly moderate in South Africa, and cooler than November-January in areas closer to the equator. Weather in some elevations near Kilimanjaro may be quite cold. I just learned that Arusha, a jumping off point for several safari stops and a center for cultural village tours, is at 12,000' elevation. More research needed here!

Are you excited yet? If you want to join me, sign up soon. September is high season and reservations for the most popular locations sell out fast. Overseas Adventure Travel is already sold out of their top African tour for September and October.

Prices for this tour will be in the range of \$5,000 to \$5,500 including five internal flights, vans, safari vehicles, professional rangers, park fees, day tours, lodging, and most meals. Some days include breakfast only. Excluded will be meals not specified, bar accounts, additional optional activities (such as balloon flights, etc.) visas, personal items and tips, and airfare to Capetown and from Johannesburg or Kilimanjaro back to the U.S.

Delta Airlines has a non-stop flight from Atlanta to Johannesburg, extending on to Cape Town. Approximate flight time from Atlanta to Johannesburg is 15 hours. A direct connection from Los Angeles to Atlanta with reasonable connections is available. I'll probably choose this one, using my frequent flyer miles. Other airlines may have connections through London, Paris, or other European cities. Some travelers break the journey, planning a day or two between connecting flights to rest and explore a different environment.

E-mail me soon if you want more information on this trip. Group size will be limited.

Travel tip: Mosquitoes and flies are attracted to black. Wear khaki, or other lighter neutral colors. (*Lonely Planet: East Africa*). Lucky for me beige is *in* this spring!

Recent reads about Africa:

From Cape to Cairo, David Ewing Duncan. Riding a bicycle most of six thousand miles during nine months of 1986 and 1987, this young journalist had the credentials to meet with presidents and the curiosity to communicate with farmers, itinerant workers, village dwellers, hunters and rattle-trap truck drivers. Insightful and sympathetic observations on the attitudes, emotions, and contemporary political views of a broad range of residents along the route.

The Tree Where Man Was Born: The African Experience, Peter Matthiessen with photos by Elliott Porter, 1972. Matthiessen is a most acute observer of the natural world, portraying daily lives of wild herdsmen and stone age aborigines, rural Africans, and animal behavior in East Africa. His descriptions are lyric, emotional landscapes, shaded by well-drawn accuracy of detail. His words almost make one feel the heat of the sun, the brush of the wind, the stillness of night broken only by hoof beats and howls.

West with the Night, Beryl Markham, North Point Press, © 1942. Markham's biography of growing up in British East Africa in the early 20th century is at once both pragmatic and poetic. Beginning with girlhood on a colonial era farm, taught bush skills by a native tribesman, she relates the circumstances that made earning her daily bread at a young age necessary. Without drama or adrenalin, the book describes her life raising and training race horses, then becoming a bush pilot hauling supplies and passengers to mines and safari camps across the largely empty and lonely landscapes. (This has been one of my favorites for several years.)

• **The Oldest Restaurant in Hanoi**
Vietnam, December 2003

Imagine a group of newly-arrived travelers groggy from twenty hours of long distance transit. A brief walk around the Old Quarter, learning to negotiate crossing narrow streets clogged with thousands of non-stop motorbikes before taking our guide Son's recommendation for a quick evening meal prior to falling into a much needed eight hour coma.

Cha Ca La Vong, a rickety 104-year-old house, opens directly onto the sidewalk in a row of shop houses just a few doors from our hotel. Up a tall step, we entered a wooden-floored room no larger than my living room, and set with small, square wooden tables

and chairs. The lone waiter, who could also have been the proprietor, shoved two tables together for the five of us, and after holding up one hand with fingers splayed, nodded and went away to the kitchen.

“Where are the menus?” I wondered. Minutes passed, with no one else in the room except two tables of other diners busily engaged in stirring, serving and saucing some eclectic-looking dish sizzling in a wok-like skillet over a table-top canned fire.

Our server appeared, placed two of the fire arrangements with already bubbling contents in the middle of the table, and surrounded them with small bowls of green vegetables, vermicelli, scallions, basil, chopped peanuts, cilantro, and smaller bowls of chili sauce and a clear amber liquid with flecks of dark red.

Seeing our looks of helplessness, he promptly dumped the greens and vermicelli into the skillet, added the clear sauce, stirred very briefly and chop-sticked the contents into our individual bowls, where he added the peanuts and cilantro, and more of the clear, slightly sweet-tasting sauce. (The sauce, I later learned, was a mild version of Nam Hoc. Amazingly, it tasted nothing like fermented fish, and I berated myself for not being brave enough to try it at one of the Vietnamese restaurants at home!)

The base of the dish turned out to be tasty morsels of turmeric-dusted whitefish, delicious with its piquant mix of aggressively-flavored accompaniments, especially when partnered with a cold bottle of the local beer.

It was a startling, but pleasant introduction to the tradition of a one-choice sit down restaurant.

• **You Tell Me Your Dreams, and I'll Tell You Mine**

Japan . . . Galapagos and Chile. . . Portugal and the Northwest Coast of Spain . . .
Machu Picchu. . . Iceland. . . New Zealand. . . Indonesia . . . Back to Burma?

Where do you want to go, and when? Share your favorite travel experiences, tips, and photos. (Yes, I'll figure out how to get them in the newsletter eventually.) and let's make plans, get together, and **go!**

Quote of the Month

“. . . a journey is an adventure, not a destination”. John Mosley, letter to Westways magazine.

Bon Voyage

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This newsletter is a non-commercial communication between friends. Any travel arrangements made will be a collaboration of individuals, and each participant will be responsible for their own transportation to an agreed upon departure point, payment of fees, visa and passport arrangements, and any trip cancellation or medical insurance.