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Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report[®]

AUGUST 2015 | OUR 37TH YEAR

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TRAVELING THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF TRULY ENCHANTING PLACES

THIS MONTH

TRAVELS IN FORMER EAST GERMANY

Dynamic Berlin and graceful Dresden, plus the castles, vineyards and tranquil countryside of Saxony and Mecklenburg.

WEB EXCLUSIVES

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IN THE NEWS

Cape Town Sensation

SOUTH AFRICAN

Hotelier Liz Biden opened her first property, Royal Malwane safari lodge, in 2000. This was followed by Birkenhead House on the Indian Ocean and La Residence in the Cape Winelands. I enthusiastically recommend all three. Next year, her portfolio will be augmented by *The Silo*, a 28-room hotel on Cape Town's V&A Waterfront. It promises to be quite remarkable. The principal occupant of the old grain silo — which comprises 42 concrete tubes, each 108 feet high — will be the Zeltz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa. The hotel, with its restaurant, spa and champagne bar, will be directly above, commanding panoramic views of Table Mountain. In less capable hands, this extraordinarily ambitious project might prove a fiasco. I suspect, however, that it will be a triumph.

STYLISH HOTELS, STELLAR RESTAURANTS, WORLD-CLASS MUSEUMS

Berlin: A European Capital Reborn



Symbol of the new Germany: Norman Foster's glass dome atop the Reichstag parliament building

BERLIN IS CURRENTLY ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING CITIES IN THE WORLD. EVIDENCE OF ITS tumultuous history is everywhere. The Sputnik-inspired Fernsehturm (Television Tower) stands next to the Gothic St. Mary's Church. World War II bullet holes pock the colonnade of the Alte Nationalgalerie. The Stadtschloss — the seat of the Prussian kings demolished in 1950 — is being rebuilt nearby. And in Potsdamer Platz, the Sony Center incorporates the ornate wall of a prewar ballroom into its otherwise contemporary façade.

This was my fourth visit to the city since the Berlin Wall fell, but I had no trouble occupying my time almost exclusively with attractions I'd never seen before. The trouble was forcing myself to skip favorite sights. I missed the Pergamon Museum, home to the magnificent blue-tiled Ishtar Gate from ancient Babylon (the wing housing the Pergamon Altar is closed for renovations until 2019). Nor did I revisit the iconic bust of Nefertiti in the Neues Museum, or the Romanticist masterpieces in the Alte Nationalgalerie. I didn't ascend the spiraling glass dome atop the Reichstag, or take a river cruise

through the heart of downtown. Perhaps most distressing, I didn't have time to contemplate the Brandenburg Gate from a room at the Hotel Adlon Kempinski, one of my favorite city hotels in Europe.

I consoled myself with a stay at my other Berlin favorite, the *Hotel de Rome*. In an ideal location on Bebelplatz within easy walking distance of the Brandenburg Gate and Museum Island, this 146-room property is one of the few major Berlin hotels to occupy an intact prewar building. Remnants of its former life as the headquarters of the wealthy

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On October 17, the m/s Paul Gauguin (332 passengers) will begin a 13-night voyage from Tahiti to Tonga via Fiji.

Global Cruise News

SOME OF MY MOST MEMORABLE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES in recent years have been on cruises: gliding through the Peruvian rain forest on the *Aqua Amazon*; witnessing humpback whales bubble net feeding in an icy Alaskan bay from *Safari Quest*; and sailing on an odyssey through the Greek Isles aboard *Sea Cloud II*. Currently, the cruise world is in a state of hyper-activity. More and more ships are being built to meet ever-growing demand, new itineraries are being crafted, such as those of the *Aqua* boat that started plying the Mekong River late last year; and adventure trips are on the rise. Here is what you need to know:

Silversea

Silversea remains a firm favorite of *Hideaway Report* subscribers. The line offers traditional itineraries on five luxury vessels — which accommodate between 300 and 550 passengers — as well as more adventurous trips aboard three smaller exploration ships. Purpose-built for the Antarctic ice, the *Silver Explorer* holds 132 passengers, along with a full complement of expert guides. Beginning this November, to mark explorer Ernest Shackleton's legendary expeditions a century ago, *Silversea* has created four journeys that will sail from Ushuaia in Argentina and visit the Falkland Islands, South



Georgia, Elephant Island and the Antarctic Peninsula. The *Silver Galapagos*, which was completely refurbished in 2014, takes 100 passengers through

the magical archipelago on a voyage that promises world-class snorkeling and kayaking, as well as unforgettable nature hikes. And the 120-passenger *Silver Discoverer*, also refurbished in 2014, follows routes in the Pacific, from Alaska and Japan to the atolls and islands of the South Seas. In 2016, *Silversea* will also offer cruises on the *Silver Explorer* to the Arctic, where travelers will be able to hike the tundra, make Zodiac forays among the ice floes and observe polar bears of close quarters.

Seabourn

This other perennial favorite of Harper subscribers will add a new and larger class of vessel to its fleet in 2016. With interiors conjured by the noted designer Adam D. Tihany, the *Encore* will accommodate 604 passengers in considerable style.

Un-Cruise

It was Un-Cruise that took us on our unforgettable Alaska trip. The company specializes in seven- to 21-night voyages that explore the Inside Passage and Glacier Bay National Park. Two new Alaska itineraries are being

added in 2016. "Exploring Muir's Wilderness" is a seven-night cruise aboard the 84-passenger *Safari Endeavour* through the landscapes that inspired John Muir. Highlights will include the Grand Pacific and Margerie glaciers, whale-watching in Icy Strait and explorations of Port Houghton and Chatham Strait by kayak and skiff. "Yachters' Alaskan Frontier," a seven-night cruise aboard the 22-passenger *Safari Quest*, will also feature hiking, kayaking and whale-watching. Next year will see Un-Cruise launch its first Galapagos expedition aboard the 48-passenger *La Plata*.

Crystal Cruises

Earlier this year, Crystal Cruises was bought by the holding company Genting Hong Kong. The new owners have announced that they will add a third ship to join the *Symphony* and the *Serenity*. *Crystal* is offering an alluring set of itineraries in the North and Canada this fall, with an emphasis on active pursuits. Trips out of Halifax, Nova

Scotia, feature hiking and cycling options. Hikers will visit Blomidon Park and Grand-Pré National Historic Site, among Canada's newest UNESCO World Heritage sites. The cycling excursions will take guests through wildlife habitats along the Lawrencetown Beach trail and include a visit to the Kuhn Conservation Area. Hikers and joggers should also find trips out of Bar Harbor, Maine, to be of interest. The jogging shore excursion will be on the car-free carriage roads of Acadia National Park. "Hiking the Ocean Trail of Acadia" involves a trek along the spectacular rockbound coastline, guided by a naturalist.

National Geographic

Polar bears seem to hold a particular fascination for Harper subscribers, and the Travel Office receives numerous requests for information. In addition to the *Silversea* Arctic trips, I would also cite "Land of the Polar Bears," an



11-day voyage aboard the newest ship in the National Geographic fleet, the *Explorer*, an ice-class vessel carrying 148 passengers. The ship plies the waters around the Norwegian Svalbard Islands. The onboard team includes naturalists, historians and a National Geographic photographer. There are three sailings in 2016.

PONANT

This French line enjoys a rapidly expanding reputation for a fleet of elegant

and luxurious smaller vessels. This past spring, it launched *Le Lyrial* to join three sister ships (and one three-masted sailing yacht). With just 122 cabins and suites for a maximum of 264 passengers, *Lyrial* is a self-described "mega-yacht." In 2016, the ship will follow itineraries in Antarctica, South America, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean.

Belmond

In gathering the information for this update, I found myself suddenly impatient to be afloat once again. Could I find a free week or two this fall? I wondered. Preliminary research revealed two cruises of instant appeal. What could be more pleasant than a leisurely barge journey through the French countryside? Belmond offers a particularly attractive autumn itinerary along the Burgundy Canal. Departing on October 18, the six-guest *Fleur de Lys* will sail from Vandenesse-en-Auxois, arriving six nights later in the gastronomic mecca of Dijon. (Belmond operates five barges in France, two of which, *Amarylis* [eight passengers] and *Alouette* [four passengers], are available for private charter only.)

Paul Gauguin

With the end of summer in prospect, my thoughts also turned to the azure lagoons of the South Pacific. Paul Gauguin Cruises has a particularly seductive cruise this fall. On October 17, the m/s *Paul Gauguin* (332 passengers) will begin a 13-night voyage in Tahiti, threading its way through the Society Islands, before sailing west to the Cook Islands, Fiji and finally Tonga. Why do I hear the strains of Rodgers and Hammerstein? ☺