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Founded 1981...our 32nd year

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THE LAKE DISTRICT IS ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACES TO VISIT IN the *United Kingdom*. With high peaks and dazzling lakes, mystic valleys and hidden tarns, it echoes the words of the poet *William Wordsworth*, who lived in *Grasmere*. He described the area as “the loveliest spot that man hath ever found.” Along with writers, artists, and outdoor enthusiasts before us, we too fell in love with the spectacular landscape. The Lake District is teeming with literary and cultural history, picturesque villages, glorious gardens, and a myriad of outstanding outdoor opportunities. A warm Cumbrian welcome awaited us at *Lindeth Howe Country House Hotel and Restaurant*. Children's author *Beatrix Potter* once owned this unique property with a magnificent setting just south of the lakeshore village of *Bowness-on-Winderere*. Lindeth Howe offers country house living at its very best. What impressed us: six acres of beautiful gardens, sumptuous afternoon teas on the sun terrace, the photos and history of *Beatrix Potter's* family throughout, and head chef *Marc Guibert's* “Trilogy” five-course dining experience. The hotel's airy rooms are filled with antiques, landscape paintings, and fresh flowers. You will be looked after fastidiously from the moment you arrive. Cozy lounges and the library invited us to linger. The mouth-watering food is crafted using locally sourced products. Signature dishes include watercress and sun-blushed tomato risotto croquette; Cumbrian beef fillet with white



truffle mash; and a trio of rhubarb desserts. Breakfast is just as impressive with smoked salmon and scrambled eggs or a full Cumbrian special. The individually designed bedrooms have gorgeous chintz fabrics, crisp white linens, and luxurious bathrooms. Rumor has it, the lavish Potter Room is where Beatrix Potter favored to stay on her visits to Lindeth Howe, www.lindeth-howe.co.uk. We embarked on the popular *High Adventure* tour operated by *Mountain Goat*. With over 40 years experience in the Lake District, they know where to find stunning scenery and historic places. This is a perfect way to see the *Langdales*, as well as England's highest mountains and deepest lake. Our cheerful guide *Tony* was a wealth of knowledge, taking us on the steep and winding roads over *Hardknott* and *Wrynose* mountain passes. We were relieved to leave the driving to Tony. Stops at 14th century *Muncaster Castle*, *Eskdale*, and awe-inspiring *Wastwater Lake* were a real treat. Eight unique sightseeing tours, walking guide services, and much more are available. Do sample at least one Mountain Goat tour. You will not be disappointed, www.mountain-goat.com. *Dale Lodge Hotel* is perfectly situated for exploring the idyllic village of *Grasmere*. This beautifully refurbished Georgian building, located in a secluded setting, is an easy stroll from *St. Oswald's Church* and the tiny *Grasmere Gingerbread Shop*. Request one of the deluxe guest rooms overlooking the delightful garden. Another reason for a stay at Dale Lodge is *Tweedies Bar*. After a day of wandering the walking trails, Tweedies offers a little piece of heaven. Crackling log fires warm the cozy pub, while local slate floors and heavy wooden beams add character. Relax with a pint of one of their award-winning ales. Tweedies has some of the finest pub food around. We found traditional classics such as steak and Yates ale pie, Cumberland sausage, as well as modern favorites including smoked salmon and haddock fishcakes. Their food is a fusion of traditional Lake District pub food and contemporary European cuisine, www.dalelodgehotel.co.uk. No trip would be complete without a visit to *Dove Cottage* and the *Wordsworth Museum*. A guided tour of Wordsworth's beautifully preserved cottage gives wonderful insight into life at Dove Cottage over 200 years ago. Exhibitions in the museum explore the lives of Wordsworth and his friends, and include a wealth of manuscripts, pictures and personal items. Don't miss the special exhibition: *Pen, Paint & Pixels, Touring the English Lakes across 250 Years*. This contains *Thomas Gray's* descriptions from 1769, and images of *Joseph Farington's* watercolors and engravings, as well as *John Murray's* current photographs of the identical landscape. Murray's book, *A TOUR OF THE ENGLISH LAKES WITH THOMAS GRAY AND JOSEPH FARINGTON*, inspired the exhibition and is a must for anyone wanting an unusual look at the Lake District. Go to www.wordsworth.org.uk. To visit places off the beaten path in picture perfect *Coniston Valley*, we recommend

Blue Badge Guide, Anna Gray. Blue Badge is the highest professional tourist guiding qualification in Britain, recognized throughout the world as a benchmark of excellence. Anna's passion for Cumbria's landscape and heritage is shared with her clients in an interesting and entertaining way. We explored areas in *Hawkshead* often overlooked by many visitors. *Drunken Duck Inn at Barn gates* was a felicitous surprise find for lunch. On our next visit we will book a *Furness Fells* hike in addition to the *Tilberthwaite* electric bicycle tour. Visit www.discoverlakeland.co.uk and www.cumbriatouristguides.org. At *The Hawkshead Relish Company*, we found an amazing selection of relishes, pickles, preserves, and sauces that all work brilliantly with the Lakeland cuisine. Their motto is "embellish with relish." Top of their bestseller list is the Red Onion Marmalade; followed by the Raspberry & Vanilla Jam, and Five Fruit Marmalade. We could not get enough of their Westmorland Chutney, or the Salted Caramel Sauce. *Mark and Maria Whitehead's* unique relishes constantly garner top awards. Check out www.hawksheadrelish.com. *Holker Hall* is the home of the aristocratic *Lord and Lady Cavendish*, who welcome visitors to one of the best-loved stately homes in Britain. With a 400-year history, the family home is filled with well-polished antiques and fine art, elegant drawing rooms, a distinguished library, and a striking carved staircase. Queen Mary stayed here in 1937. Immaculately kept formal and woodland gardens are complemented by a 200-acre natural parkland. Our favorite spots in these enchanting gardens: the Neptune Cascade, the Summer Garden with colorful borders, the Great Holker Lime Tree, and the Sunken Garden. Their Holker Garden Festival is an exciting three day event; bringing together the very best of gardening, entertainment and exhibitions. Holker Hall and Gardens. See it all at www.holker.co.uk. Everything required for planning the perfect holiday in the Lake District and Cumbria can be found at www.countrysidetimes.com. This tourist board website is filled with essential sightseeing destinations, endless choices, and plenty of local recommendations.

A GREAT READ: RECOLLECTIONS OF A LUCKY MAN BY *BON viveur Stanley S. Tollman, Paternoster Publishing, \$40*, the epic story of the remarkable and inspiring life of a great human being and wise entrepreneur from his humble beginnings in a small fishing village in the Western Cape to the heights of business and society spanning five continents. Mr. Tollman's journey is thrilling and, at times, challenging. He meets adversity and success with grace and humor, greatly abetted by his devoted wife and family. As the book closes, he takes on the United States and wins the battle against all odds. An extraordinary tale from an extraordinary man filled with valuable *bon mots*, insights and counsel.

THE IRONY OF LEAVING BEAUTIFUL *Santa Barbara* to escape to other not-so-certain realms has not eluded us. But travel we must. Travel transforms us to be the change we want to see in the world, as Gandhi put it. ENTREE recently returned from *Croatia*, a charming, coastal country along the eastern edge of the Adriatic Sea.



Though its history is rife with conflict, in more recent years, the Croats have begun to develop a thriving tourism economy. And with balmy Mediterranean weather, gorgeous beaches, fresh, unpretentious cuisine and rather unspoiled locality—free of the common snares associated with other European beach destinations—it's no wonder that those in the know are flocking to the Croatian coastline. We began in *Dubrovnik*, a UNESCO World Heritage Site near the southern tip of the country. For us, the tumultuous history was palpable as we meandered through this city. Even today, locals carry the scars of Dubrovnik's war-torn past. And yet, there is a sense of optimism here, a moving forward (or backward) into a more glorious time. The walled Old Town is a reminder of what maritime life once was. Streets are narrow and steep, unassuming corners open onto gorgeous central courtyards, residents trade in all manner of goods, from the morning's seafood catch to produce grown on declivitous farms in surrounding towns. And oh, the views—red tiled roofs against roaring cobalt waves. Everything here points towards the sea. Unfortunately, by midday the downtown becomes overrun with cruise ship vacation hordes. An unglamorous exchange of day-trippers descending upon the stone streets, haggling with shop owners for seaside trinkets, and locals who are building an identity in pandering to this market. Visit Old Town in the early morning, when the church bells ring in a new day and the doors have not yet been opened to the masses, or in the evening, when the ships have left and the swallows emerge under the wavering electric lights. Hike up the steps to *Lady Pippi* for marinated anchovies, local cheeses in oil and, of course, a bottle of Korcula wine. The views and ambiance are unparalleled in Old Town. There's no address. Simply climb the stairs to the top and you'll find it. In the evening, have a drink at *Cafe Buza*, a tiny bar hanging over the Adriatic just outside of the city walls. The cocktails are nothing special here, but you can watch adventurous travelers—far crazier than us—cliff dive against the setting sun. Details: *Crijevi_eva ulica 9 20000, Dubrovnik, +385 098 361 934, www.cafebuza.com*. We stayed at the *Hotel Kazbek*, a 12-bedroom boutique retreat located on the bay of *Gruz*. The hotel is in a renovated private residence, and while it retains the charm of home, each

room has been well-appointed with amenities one would expect from a luxury hotel. Perhaps most delightful about this hotel was its location, a twenty minute walk from Old Town, yet worlds away. This side of Dubrovnik is calmer and more authentic. The bay is surrounded by restaurants, shops and smaller hotels—chairs perched precariously along waters edge in order to allow for maximum outdoor seating and a community of locals who call to each other through windows to share news of the day's exploits. Here we saw the real charm of Croatia, a sort of intrinsic warmth, a welcomeness to jump in and appreciate the beauty of our surroundings with those who know it best. In many ways, the Hotel Kazbek embodied this humble Croatian hospitality, something we found time and time again as we travelled along the coast. *Lapadska obala 25 20000, Dubrovnik, +385 020 362 999, www.kazbek-dubrovnik.com*. We must also mention *Orsan* restaurant, easily our favorite dining haunt in town. We returned twice this trip, a rarity for us, enticed by an exquisite dinner of freshly caught octopus, tuna pâté and homemade cherry crumb cake and chocolate tart. Tables and chairs haphazardly placed on a cement slab jutting over the bay and wild cats darting between tables hoping for a scrap of food to fall betrayed the elegance of the food here. Nothing ornate or overdone, just fresh, delicious, simple food prepared to perfection, *www.restaurant-orsan-dubrovnik.com*. Perhaps our favorite stop in Croatia was the island of *Hvar*, a two hour ferry ride off of the coast of *Split*. This tiny town situated on a bay on the western side of the island is something unexpected. By day, those lucky enough to have found this furtive oceanside destination lounge, hike through steep vineyards and enjoy delightful cuisine created by the locals who summer here. At night, the small stone corridors come alive with bars and clubs, European glitterati alighting by yacht, celebrities, DJs, lovers of life. The music beats until dawn, beautiful people dance in the warm air and in the morning, like Shakespeare's proverbial Midsummer Night, the revelry dissipates, and one is left questioning the validity of memory, in the best possible way. Our time here was reminiscent of our early days on Ibiza, before it succumbed to the commonality so readily disbursed now. The *Park Hvar* was a fine hotel, in a perfect location. Don't expect luxury, or even elevators for that matter, more like a renovated apartment building. Our suite was large, with magnificent views of the harbor, but the space was awkwardly designed and the furniture felt more economical than indulgent. Still, it was an easy base for exploring all Hvar had to offer, and when we return to this island we will not hesitate to stay here again. Family owned and operated, this hotel has staved off threats from larger hospitality chains, vying for its precious real estate. And though there was no pool or other amenities to speak of, there was an ease of use to this hotel that we found to be apropos within

our Croatian adventure. *Hotel Park Bankete 21450, Hvar, +385 021 718 337, www.hotelparkhvar.com*. We recommend at least a day at *Hula Hula Beach Club*, which, despite its name, plays hosts to many of the more discriminating island hoppers. Watch for owner, *Wolf*, who spends his afternoons fluttering through the crowd, ensuring that his guests are well taken care of. Luxurious sun beds, gorgeous cocktail servers and pristine waters. Here, it is easy to understand the allure of Hvar. Visit *www.bulahulabvar.com*. As we travelled along the coast, we found many delightful towns—*Cavtat*, just a short ride from Dubrovnik representing a much wealthier cross-section of Croatian life—and large cities such as Split, teeming with the pulse of what this country is on the verge of becoming. Here, for example, the *Hotel Luxe*, with its edgy design and discerning details stand out as a mark of what is waiting in the wings. *Ulica kralja Zvonimira 6 21000, Split, +385 021 314 444, www.hotelluxesplit.com*. Croatia is still years behind the more well-known European destinations. In some ways, this is what is so appealing right now. Still, like anything else, it will continue to grow, to take cues from those who have been successful before it and hopefully, in years to come, cater to a more deliberate traveler. Split represented for us, more than any stop, the nebulous line between past and present. Diocletian's Palace from the 3rd century—an open air stone city within the city—glistened against the bustling, economic harbor. Within these walls stood hipster coffee joints and elegant restaurants, recognized luxury shopping and unfamiliar boutiques. There was fashion, music, art and culture—all in a refreshing way. Sitting at some nameless coffee bar, surrounded by ancient stone walls and the chatter of those who now call them home, the juxtaposition was strikingly evident. Here is a country desperately pulling out of its past, a country using its history as a launching pad from which to enter the competitive modern marketplace, a country that has only begun to tap into its potential. But for the view of the islands, Hotel Luxe could have been in any European city. That's not a dig, in fact after many nights in homier surroundings it was quite a respite to find a hotel with a spa, a hotel that understood its own existence and purpose. What is most noteworthy here is that hotels such as the Luxe demonstrate the rumblings of a country's transformation. Go now, before everyone else recognizes the same thing.

SOKOL BLOSSER HAS BEEN LAUDED AS A LEGACY OREGON WINERY SINCE 1971. Today, with over 400 wineries and more than 19,000 acres of vineyards, Oregon wines are available throughout the world. Sokol Blosser has survived, grown and prospered as a family-owned and run operation, and are proud to have been part of developing and shaping Oregon's now prominent wine industry. Brother and sister *Alex* and *Alison*

Sokol Blosser, true to their parents' dedicated principles, strive to create wines of world class quality that are produced sustainably, mindful of the environment and health, and that express the distinctive flavors of their hillside vineyards. We are attracted to the Sokol Blosser *Pinot Noirs* (they make six elegant, velvety, age-worthy examples priced \$38-\$80) plus a red blend *Evolution* (just \$15) and some bright crisp clean whites: a *Pinot Gris* and a bargain 9-grape blend called *Evolution* (also \$15), plus a vibrant *Rosé of Pinot Noir White* and a deep gold *Riesling Dessert Wine*. Their whole story and offerings are at www.sokolblosser.com.

THE DALI LAMA, WHO VISITED the *Scottish Highlands* recently, was quoted as saying this stunning area was surely "God's Country."

We could not agree more. ENTREE has been a regular visitor to Scotland over the years and each time we return it seems more inviting. This is a magical land of immense natural beauty where the scenery is breathtaking and the many activities and attractions are as exciting as the landscape. One way to visit the Highlands is to rent a car in either Edinburgh or Glasgow and start driving north. While this method has some advantages, it's not for the timid or faint of heart. Driving on the left-hand side of the road at high speed on narrow country roads with inches to spare from oncoming traffic is a test of nerves. The drive has been described by some as a prolonged near-death experience. We have a much better idea, *The Royal Scotsman* train. This is one of the most beautiful trains ever built and is still the standard for luxurious train travel. Think of it as the *Orient-Express* in tartans. This train has the intimacy and style of an Edwardian country house on rails. Composed of nine vintage cars painted a deep maroon, the train welcomes passengers on board with a highland piper wailing at *Edinburgh's Waverly Station*. When first entering, passengers find that the train is both cozy in some areas and expansive in others. Compartments are intimate and lavishly paneled and decorated in rich Edwardian hues. The Royal Scotsman carries a maximum of thirty-six passengers which ensures everyone plenty of room. The train is berthed at night so you will sleep especially well. Each day, there are excursions which might include a trip to the *Strathisla Whisky Distillery*, or an afternoon skeet shooting, fly fishing, or hiking at *The Rothiemurchus Estate*. There is the occasional formal night where either tuxedos or formal kilts are worn. These are never stuffy occasions, just a lot of fun. The food service is exceptional and comes from a space just big enough for the two chefs to stand side by side. Dining is an elegant production. Meals are multi-course, candlelight affairs,



prepared with the finest local ingredients: Scottish salmon, Angus beef, scallops, langoustines. Wines are paired with the various courses. Dinner is served in the two charming dining cars, one of which was Winston Churchill's book-lined personal railway carriage. The tables are laid with white linen, bone china, silverware and crystal glasses. In the morning, there is a feast of fruit, porridge (with a lot of Scotch whisky), eggs, kippers, and fresh baked goods. We delighted in the time we spent relaxing in the lounge car and the observation car, the only such car with an open-air viewing platform to enjoy the passing sights. Here you can just do as you wish...read, chat with companions, sample the huge collection of single malt whiskies or just gaze out the windows. A few nights are just not enough on this grand train. If time and budget allow, combine two of the itineraries into an eight-day journey. The cost of the tour includes everything except well-earned gratuities to the train staff. Traveling by rail may no longer be the most practical of options but it can be the best way to experience the essence of an exotic place. If one of the most beautiful trains ever built moving through one of the most broodingly dramatic landscapes in the world strikes your fancy, then why not hop aboard? Visit www.royalscotsman.com for particulars and tour pricing.

IMAGINE A PRIVATE ISLAND OFF THE WEST COAST of the *Scottish Highlands* complete with a 19th century country house/hotel that looks like a movie set and you have *The Isle of Eriska Hotel and Spa*. The hotel is family run and is quiet, remote and charmingly old-fashioned. It has been owned and operated by the *Buchanan-Smith* clan since the 1970's. *Beppo Buchanan-Smith* is the engaging and knowledgeable host. The big house is a reminder of another time and staying there is akin to being in a grand old family home with its paneled great hall, the oak staircase and roaring log fires everywhere. After some time spent with the other guests, the experience is similar to joining a country house party thrown by a rich old laird. You can browse the library with a single malt whisky in hand and imagine yourself the master of the house or just relax and perhaps play the grand piano. The staff all seem to do double duty. The waitress who perfectly describes the cheese on the trolley after dinner might be the chamber maid the next day. The service is impeccable but never forced. Don't be surprised if you see Dame Judy Dench at a table next to you. Evidently she is a regular visitor. The guestrooms are equipped with large comfortable beds, several tables, overstuffed chairs or sofas (or both) and heavy draperies. The entire island is connected to the



mainland by a very old bridge which definitely sets the mood for the experience to come. There are modern amenities to be sure: golf, the stable spa, and a leisure center for those rainy days, but mainly, it is the island itself with its seals and otters, birds and the dreamlike views that many find irresistible. We literally walked for hours along the shores marveling at the views and the wildlife. The seals and otters are always busy and there is the occasional Golden Eagle. In the evening, the island's badgers provide the entertainment. Every evening, milk and nuts are set out on the steps of the library and the normally shy badgers come to feed. Of course the badgers are not the only ones well fed. Chef *Simon McKenzie*, a member of the Master Chefs of Great Britain creates a daily changing menu using fresh fish, game, and shell fish often delivered directly to the island's pier. It does not come much better than this. Visit www.isleoferiska.com for seasonal rates and while there, peruse Beppo's blog, "A Day In The Life Of Eriska." It is great reading.

ORIENT-EXPRESS PLANS TO REOPEN SANTA BARBARA'S HISTORIC *EL Encanto* hotel in March after beaucoup millions (over 100 to be sure) of total redo and restoration. Located on seven hilltop acres in the Riviera neighborhood, the hotel's restoration and relaunch hopes to capture all the romance that made it a favorite getaway of the smart set in Hollywood's halcyon era, while tapping *Patrice Martineau* as executive chef. Martineau hails from *Troyes* in the heart of Champagne country and earned his chops with notable Michelin men, including two Michelin-multi-starred restaurants in *Burgundy*, before becoming chef de cuisine at *Daniel* in *New York*, a position he occupied until his move to the executive chef post at the *Savoy* in *London*. More recently, Martineau opened *Peter* restaurant for the *Peninsula Tokyo*, telling us he is a believer in straightforward French classic cookery with international influences, executed using only seasonal elements. His approach at El Encanto will be California Coastal with a French flair and Japanese notes. El Encanto has a lot going for it: 92 carefully and romantically decorated guest accommodations, many overlooking the harbor and ocean, a spa, and the much-admired veteran hotelier *Ali Kasikci*, whose record running top luxury hotels is unquestioned. El Encanto represents a significant expansion for respected Orient-Express, their first property on the West Coast. From all we have seen, this will be a polished gem operating at the highest levels. Visit www.elencanto.com.



BEAtrice TOLLMAN, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER of the luxurious *Red Carnation Hotel Collection* has been awarded *Hotelier of the Year* at the *European Hospitality Awards 2012*. Mrs. Tollman has been recognized for continually unparalleled levels of service, excellence and luxury across all of the collection's five- and four-star properties in Europe, which include the flagship *Milestone Hotel* in *London*, *Guernsey's* only five-star property, *The Old Government House Hotel and Spa* and the famed *Hotel d'Angleterre* in *Geneva*. We noticed from our first encounter that Mrs. Tollman's driving passion has always been to make every stay memorable for every single guest, to make them feel truly welcomed and special and believes this is at the heart of everything she and her colleagues do. *Jonathan Raggett*, Managing Director of Red Carnation Hotels added: "Mrs. Tollman is truly an inspiration. She has an innate sense of what it takes to make the guest experience truly exceptional and she cares deeply about this and also about the staff that deliver this experience daily in each of our properties. We are very lucky to have her at the helm challenging and encouraging us to be the best that we can." The Hotelier of the Year award from the European Hospitality Awards is the latest in an array of recent accolades for the collection, which include recognition from Condé Nast Traveler for *41, The Rubens at the Palace*, and *The Chesterfield* as the best hotels for business in *London*, top five rankings from Travel + Leisure World's Best Awards, Certificates of Excellence from TripAdvisor for all hotels in the collection and a debut in 2012 into the Sunday Times Best Companies to Work For. Established last year, The European Hospitality Awards honors the best in the hotel industry across the continent, and judges include *Ted Tang*, CEO of Leading Hotels of the World, *Peter Bierwirth*, President of the Hotel Managers Association and *Claus Sendlinger*, CEO and President of Design Hotels. The Red Carnation Hotel Collection is an award-winning collection of five and four star family-run boutique hotels in London, Dorset, Guernsey, Geneva, Florida and South Africa. Each property has its own individual character and unique location that reflects the local environment, culture and cuisine. They all share the qualities that win Red Carnation so many prestigious awards—splendid luxury, generous hospitality, inventive and traditional cuisine, private art collections, passionate service and loyal staff committed to creating richly rewarding experiences for all their guests. For more information about these award-winning hotels and the rest of the Red Carnation Collection, go to www.redcarnationhotels.com.



OUR LATEST HOTEL DISCOVERY IS THE KIND OF PLACE PEOPLE SHARE sotto voce with friends so that its insider frisson will not be ruined. It's *Oceana Beach Club Hotel*, a small elegant hideaway in *Santa Monica*. Here you will live like a well-heeled native, far from the crowds with pristine California beach at your front door. Tailored for relaxation, suite options include ocean views and private lanais. Rooms have spacious baths, California king or two double beds, Egyptian cotton linens, C.O. Bigelow Apothecary bath products and Frette bath sheets. Of course there is high-speed internet and 42" plasma HDTV. Dining at Oceana is a destination in itself. Like a local, nosh on California Coastal Cuisine poolside, in-room, or join the scene in the oceanview Lounge. Locally sourced ingredients are paired with distinctive cocktails and fine wines. Breakfast is a groaning board buffet feast of smoked salmon, fresh fruit, waffles, bagels, gourmet jams, and hot meals cooked to order. There is a pretty courtyard private pool, fitness center and spa treatments are offered as well as group fitness classes. The hotel throws in guided hikes, beach cruiser bicycles, yoga mats and wine and spirit tastings on the house for guests. You can book a special room here starting at about \$285 a night, a splendid deal given all the high quality delivered. Check out www.hotelocianasantamonica.com. *Oceana Beach Club Hotel, 849 Ocean Avenue, Santa Monica, CA 90403, (310) 393-0486.*



WE ARE OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER THE GLORY DAYS OF FLYING when flight attendants were happy, attractive people, eager to please. Of course, this has all changed with soaring fuel prices, larger cramped planes, union strife, and the relentless pursuit by the airlines to squeeze every farthing out of every customer. So we were not exactly surprised when we encountered despair and irritating attitudes on a recent *American Airlines* flight. Food and drink service was ghastly, smiles were absent, and the whole experience was torture. And we were in First Class! The grumpy attendants could not wait to get it all over so they could disappear into their nest at the front of the plane and yak away loudly while pouring over their trashy celeb magazines. And why do they delight in hitting the ice with a hammer so much? They ignored the passengers until it was time to occasionally bark out orders. When we complained, we heard them mutter "They'll get over it." Yikes. Misery. Speaking of misery, the airlines need a dress code. If we see another man in an armpit-bearing tee shirt, we will truly have to use those barf bags.

THE GRAND DEL MAR HAS TURNED FIVE YEARS OLD. THIS 5TH anniversary celebrates the resort's past achievements including the distinction of being the only California recipient of three Forbes Five-Star Awards in 2012-Hotel, Spa and Restaurant (*Addison*). More kudos: AAA Five Diamond Awards for Dining and Hotel/Spa. In honor of its anniversary, guests certainly won't want to miss touring the Five Most Romantic Places at The Grand Del Mar. Uniquely Grand: The Only Package of its Kind is available through March 31. This behind-the-scenes experiential getaway includes: two-night guestroom accommodations for two; a tour of Addison's kitchen and tasting with Relais & Châteaux Grand Chef *William Bradley*; a tour of the resort's wine cellar and private tasting with Wine Director *Jesse Rodriguez*; customized three-hour "Train Like the Pros" golf lesson with PGA-certified Director of Golf *Shawn Cox*, including full swing video lesson and a SAM-Putting stroke analysis; private riding lesson and tour of the Equestrian Center; private hike with resort's naturalist in Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. The cost is \$3,100 for double occupancy in a Fairway King; \$5,000 for double occupancy in a Palazzo suite. Price includes hotel tax and overnight parking; does not include gratuity. For reservations, call (877) 814-8472 or book online at www.thegradndelmar.com. Situated in a spectacular private reserve in Coastal North County San Diego, The Grand Del Mar is a luxurious retreat that combines the old-world charm of a Mediterranean estate with the modern luxuries of a world-class resort. The AAA Five Diamond, Forbes Five-Star property features: 249 elegantly appointed guestrooms and suites; San Diego's only *Tom Fazio*-designed championship golf course; a Forbes Five-Star Renaissance-inspired spa; regional dining, including the award-winning Addison restaurant; four swimming pools; two outdoor tennis courts; an enclave of residential villas; and more than 20,000 square feet of indoor/outdoor meeting space.

Our Favorite Travel Agent: Vivian Taylor

Vivian Taylor is a travel agent who combines personal passion for travel with real boots-on-the-ground experience and confident knowledge about destinations to exceed the clients' expectations. She has a deep commitment and expertise to design travel experiences that match unique hopes and ambitions with seamless execution. When you talk to Vivian, you have a pro on your case—superior know how, quick reactions, superb followup, detail orientation, impeccable contacts and unfailing dedication to her clients-24 hours a day. At her side is Jeff Rodgers who provides equally devoted client attention. Contact Vivian Taylor International, (302) 945-7255; mobile: (310) 497-2650; (323) 270-6748; Fax: (302) 945-7266; e-mail: vivian@vivantaylor.com.