



# Spirit Away



exotic resorts in dreamy locations



# Welcome...



Welcome to the latest issue of my regular travel magazine where I hope to entice you with the promise of guaranteed sunshine, warm waters and excellent suggestions for a well-earned break.

The first five pages of this issue are dedicated to a spotlight feature on Southern California. By nature of the territory and in homage to the great American road tradition the review follows a trail between Los Angeles and San Diego. Beat the queues with a VIP tour of a legendary studio in Hollywood, chill out on the coast, and hopefully discover what makes Southern California such an irresistible self-drive experience!

Nearer to home there is a review of the wonderful Bauer portfolio of hotels in Venice, three gems from the fabulous Oetker Collection and a quartet of Gran Melia hotels in Spain's favourite cities and coastal locations.

For those looking for the ultimate private island retreats there are four contenders ranging from the British Virgin Islands to the Great Barrier Reef. Continuing the subject of ideal tropical resorts, the legendary Curtain Bluff on Antigua is also featured.

For the regular cruising feature, turn your eyes away from the sea and look at luxury river cruising, a hugely popular option especially along the major waterways of Europe.

Personally I think that Europe in our summer time is a perfect destination being close to home, hopefully with warmer weather, and so many different options available. Obviously I can help with any destination whether it be in Europe or worldwide – Travelspeak is just a glimpse of what is new and happening in the travel world.

Since the last edition I have in fact not been anywhere exotic due to a number of reasons, so, rather than my usual 'Caroline's Travels' column, you will find an article by World Odyssey which is probably far more interesting! They are a new tour operator with whom I have been working recently, and whilst they specialise in some of the more adventurous holidays, they also offer 'fly and flop', city breaks – in fact all types of holidays. They only work with a small number of travel agents who offer the same kind of service to their clients that Spirit Away Travel prides itself on - going that extra mile to ensure that clients' requirements are met added to which their destination knowledge is second to none.

Enjoy this latest edition and if there is anything featured of specific interest that you would like to discuss, or just your travel plans in general, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Have a wonderful summer ...

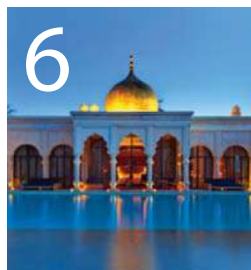
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## Captivating moments in the heart of historic Athens.



With breathtaking views of the Acropolis, the historic Hotel Grande Bretagne and the neighbouring boutique hotel King George share an ideal location in the centre of Athens. Representing the absolute essence of the *Luxury Collection* brand, they have hosted a pantheon of celebrities and they offer unrivaled perspectives of the city's mythical history.

Visit Europe's most historic capital this summer to savour the flavours and capture the finest cultural experiences at the Athens & Epidaurus Festival. This great summer festival is celebrating its 56th season, hosting some of the leading lights of theatre, music and dance. Starting in late April and ending in September, it is one of Europe's finest cultural events.

[www.grandebretagne.gr](http://www.grandebretagne.gr) / [www.kinggeorgeathens.com](http://www.kinggeorgeathens.com)

## Marbella Club Hotel • Golf Resort & Spa as glamorous today as it was 60 years ago



The hotel is celebrating its 60th Anniversary with a year of fêtes, retro beach parties, gastronomic evenings, art exhibitions and continued enrichments. Recent refurbishments include the majestic beachfront Villa del Mar, the new Kid's Club by Minimec and a refresh to the guestrooms and suites. The hotel also revamped the Grill Restaurant and the illustrious Champagne Room.

The resort's 47 luxury bedrooms, 73 suites, 14 Andalusian-Style villas exude romance, with large terraces overlooking the colourful gardens or sea. Gastronomy takes center stage at six restaurants and bars; particularly in summer months at the hotel's chiringuito, MC Beach. The Thalasso Spa offers programmes to rejuvenate after an invigorating day playing golf, horse riding or car racing at the Ascari track.

## The award-winning One&Only Le Saint Géran in Mauritius is a perfect family choice

One&Only Le Saint Géran is the most established and distinguished luxury hotel in Mauritius. Located on a private peninsula, it is a truly sophisticated and elegant resort in a beautiful, natural setting. Once regarded as a couples' retreat it is now very popular with families as well. Interconnecting junior suites offer ideal accommodation and there is a lot of child-focused activities including one of the island's best kids' clubs, a youth fitness programme with activities from yoga to junior boxing and junior spa. There is even a dedicated healthy kids' club menu.



## The Canny Traveller ...clever new technology for lost and found baggage

It is everyone's concern when travelling to keep an eye on the whereabouts of one's luggage. Well it seems that new innovations in "smart" technology may have made the process of retrieval very much easier thanks to products like the "tag-a-bag".

This clever new luggage tag utilises smart technology to enable finders of misplaced items to signal they have been found by simply touching the tag or scanning the tag's "QR" code with their smart phone. A simple 1-click procedure then relays the retrieval details with exact global position including address and google map to the owner of the lost property. Additional personal messaging will also inform the finder of any potential rewards for activating the tag so return of luggage can be easily arranged. The tags also allows users to access a host of additional features to improve the travel experience as well as earn rewards whilst they travel...

[www.tag-a-bag.co.uk](http://www.tag-a-bag.co.uk)



# Bauers Venezia

A Passion for Venice

Francesca Bortolotto Possati is a remarkable lady, who has strived with great success for the last 15 years to create a most diverse collection of fine accommodation within the centre of Venice. As President and CEO of BAUERS Group she has breathed new energy into a family hotel business that dates back to the late 19th century to create a portfolio of properties that offer the visitor to Venice with splendid contrasts both in style and location.

Her first task was a major \$100 million refurbishment of the original Bauer-Grunwald Hotel close to St Mark's Square. The result was the creation of Bauer L'Hotel and Bauer Il Palazzo, two different properties with two different entrances and two quite different moods. One is urban, a contemporary Art Deco temple, whilst the other, a veritable Venetian palace, is a sophisticated boutique hotel with ornate furnishings and a splendid Grand Canal frontage.

No sooner had she completed this grand enterprise that she then turned her eyes across the waters to nearby Giudecca Island where she purchased a former convent, which was converted into a 50-room boutique hotel. Like the nearby Cipriani, Bauer Palladio is a rare example of a Venetian resort including a generous 3-acres of gardens and parkland. It is a restful sanctuary that reflects the slower pace of Giudecca. This is a place where one can really escape the frantic buzz of Venice. It was also the place that would best benefit the siting of a world-class 500 sq. metre spa.

In addition to the former convent further buildings were acquired on Giudecca including a 15th century private villa. Also benefitting from open spaces, Villa F offers the ultimate luxury. Appealing to those who probably are looking to stay in Venice for a longer period, this gated residence offers all the comforts and services of a 5-star hotel within 11 beautifully restored apartments. It features some of the best views of Venice, a meditation pool and 24-hour butler service.

## BAUER L'Hotel

You can't mistake the BAUER L'Hotel. Its distinctive 1940's facade with luminous Art Déco windows is poised between land and sea, framed by the magnificent baroque church of San Moisè and the bustling Rio San Moisè. Tastefully refurbished, the BAUER L'Hotel is famed for its large rooms and fine furnishings where fine Art Deco furniture lives in harmony with modern sculptures.



## BAUER il Palazzo

On the banks of the fabled Grand Canal you can't help noticing a noble facade in gothic style: the BAUER il Palazzo. This five-star luxury class hotel is located in an original Venetian house from the 18th century and is often described as Venice's most luxurious hotel with 38 suites and 34 guest rooms.

## BAUER Palladio Hotel & Spa

Across the Grand Canal from Piazza San Marco is the island of La Giudecca. Here, away from the madding crowds and touristic bustle is one of Venice's most unusual and secret gems, BAUER Palladio Hotel & Spa. And, it's just a short, picturesque boat ride from the heart of the city. BAUER Palladio Hotel & Spa is an exciting, unique five-star hotel concept. This handsome building was a sixteenth-century convent designed by the greatest Renaissance architect, Andrea Palladio.



## Villa F

The exclusive 16th century VILLA F offers 11 self-contained luxurious villa-like residences, decorated with impeccable style. Each residence features living room spaces and quaint kitchens that provide guests with a home away from home and allow them to experience Venice as a true Venetian. From its location on Venice's Giudecca, the Villa provides spectacular views of the basin of San Marco.



# Three Pearls

A Paris classic, spa heaven in Baden-Baden and a Moroccan palace

Without doubt one of the world's finest selection of "masterpiece" hotels, the eight very individual properties of the Oetker Collection are one-of-a-kind experiences that achieve the very pinnacle of hospitality and luxury within the true context of their superb geographic locations.

Indeed, whether you are looking for the very best address in Paris, a palatial retreat in Marrakech or one of the most famous spa hotels in Europe, then Oetker Collection brings all this and much more to the table of the discerning traveller.

From the French Riviera to the chic alpine resort of Courchevel, from the glistening Caribbean island of St. Barths to a private island Eco-retreat in the Seychelles, the pearls of the Oetker Collection are all unique gems on a necklace of shared excellence and management. It is a story that is set to continue over the next decade as the family of Oetker Collection hotels looks to add more properties from across Europe and worldwide ...more pearls for a beautiful necklace.

## Palais Namaskar

The ultimate retreat in Marrakech

Commanding more than 12 acres of pristine seclusion, tranquil lakes and inspiring panoramas, the Palais Namaskar explores new dimensions in hospitality – indulging guests with unrivalled spaciousness, personal freedom and majestic grandeur to create an undeniably unique experience. Nestled between the Atlas Mountains and the Djebilet Hills, the Palais Namaskar hosts guestrooms, suites, villas and palaces. The décor is a vibrant combination of Eastern-inspired architecture infusing Feng Shui principles with a contemporary interior design. Almost all residences offer either a private pool or an outdoor Jacuzzi, and the Palaces offer up to 4 bedrooms.



# Brenners Park-Hotel & Spa

A unique urban oasis, set in a sprawling park

Baden-Baden is Germany's most renowned wellness city, and this hotel is an urban oasis set in a private park. A favourite of dignitaries and celebrities, the hotel garnered international attention when U.S. President Barack Obama and twenty-five heads of state arrived for the 2009 NATO Summit. Perhaps some of these overworked leaders enjoyed a treatment at the medical spa that boasts a team of German doctors, who oversee everything from preventive check-ups to nutrition coaching. There are also two beauty spas specialising in Asian and South Pacific therapies. The Brenners Park-Restaurant sets a romantic tone, with deep-red walls and glittering chandeliers, but it's the one-Michelin-star food by head chef Paul Stradner that makes it the area's top-rated restaurant.



## Le Bristol Paris

4 Michelin stars promises gastronomic delights



Le Bristol Paris is a unique place for its exemplary service and refinement. Located on the elegant rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, in the heart of the city's arts and fashion district, this palace has welcomed guests since 1925 and features renovated rooms and suites that are decorated in 18th century French-style. Exceptional 3-star Michelin cuisine is created by master chef, Eric Frechon (pictured right), in the newly designed restaurant, Epicure, which overlooks the French gardens. The luxury 1-star Michelin brasserie, 114 Faubourg offers an inviting atmosphere. Le Jardin Français welcomes guests for afternoon tea, or less formal lunch and dinner. Le Bar du Bristol is the new place to be seen in Paris on evenings. The swimming pool has panoramic views of Paris' rooftops and Spa Le Bristol by La Prairie completes this exceptional palace.





Belmond Hotel Caruso

# Belmond

Creating exceptional experiences worldwide

The ultimate travel curator and connoisseur, Belmond embraces a global collection of 45 iconic hotels, trains and river cruises. This diverse portfolio brings together some of the world's most thrilling journeys and destinations.

Their great travel experiences range from Belmond Hotel Cipriani in Venice to Rio's Belmond Copacabana Palace, from the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express train to Belmond Grand Hotel Europe in St Petersburg.

Explore the world of Belmond in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia including some of their hotels situated in remarkable locations. Witness the awe-inspiring mountain-top spectacle of Machu Picchu from the close confines of Belmond Sanctuary Lodge. Stay within earshot of the mighty Iguassu Falls at Belmond Hotel das Cataratas. Explore the breathtaking complex of temples of the UNESCO World Heritage Site Angkor Wat from the unique Belmond La Residence d'Angkor.

Great journeys are at the heart of all their luxury experiences, whether cruising along the Ayeyarwady River in Myanmar or travelling by train from Singapore to Bangkok, or around their collection of six Italian hotels.

Guests are invited to experience exciting excursions when staying at a Belmond product. Witness the nocturnal life of the African bush at Belmond Khwai River Lodge with the Moonlight Safari. Master the art of preparing and cooking Peruvian specialties such as quinoa, tubers, alpaca meat with the cooking classes offered at Cusco's most exclusive hotel, Belmond Palacio Nazarenas.

Masters of the art of hospitality, Belmond is known for adding inspiration to celebratory occasions of every kind. Whatever the occasion, Belmond ensures that you mark it in great style. You may be planning a lavish wedding or simply seeking a discreet table for two. Embark with Belmond on the world's most celebrated train, Venice Simplon-Orient-Express travelling across Europe and enter a world of romance and adventure. Host a lavish garden party on the leafy terrace of Hotel Ritz by Belmond in Madrid and mingle with Spain's social elite. Host your dream destination wedding by the warm sands and lapping waves of Baie Longue in St Martin. Belmond La Samanna offers an unbeatable romantic setting for weddings and honeymoons.

Whether travelling on an iconic train or moving between landmark hotels, Belmond brings together great destinations and exceptional sights.



BELMOND



Venice Simplon-Orient-Express



Belmond Hotel das Cataratas



Belmond Hotel Monasterio



Belmond Road to Mandalay



Belmond Safaris

# Gran Designs

Grand city hotels and sophisticated resorts



*Gran Meliá Palacio de Isora*

Spain remains by far the most popular European destination from the UK. The lure of year round sunshine and ambient temperatures draw visitors to the Costa del Sol and further afield, especially in winter, to the Canary Islands.

The mainland also reveals rich cultural treasures for those that visit her vibrant cities. Both Seville and Madrid offer some of Europe's most dynamic cosmopolitan environments; a heady mix of traditions,

history, music and the Spanish love of tapas and noisy banter into the small hours.

Whether you are a sun worshipper or a culture vulture we invite you to savour Spain at its very best with a stay at one or more of their very finest hotels. Gran Meliá Hotels & Resorts is the flagship brand of Meliá Hotels International and their properties are the definitive statement of traditional luxury with avant-garde style.

## Gran Meliá Don Pepe, Marbella

Iconic resort in the heart of Marbella's "Golden Mile"

One of the most acclaimed resorts in Southern Spain, the Gran Meliá Don Pepe has redefined luxury and pampering, reaching out with special touches that are the hallmark of sophisticated hospitality.

The luxury resort is located on Marbella's Golden Mile within a 5 minute drive of chic Puerto Banus. Experience an authentic gastronomical journey in which you can choose among a temple of gourmet cuisine with 2 Michelin stars, five restaurants, two bars and elegant and exclusive dining rooms. The Life & Sun exclusive Health and Beauty Clinic at the Gran Meliá Don Pepe is a space designed for health, the purification and beauty of the body, and the balance of the mind.





## RedLevel at Gran Meliá Palacio de Isora Resort, Tenerife

Adult-only indulgence and pampering

The exceptionally luxurious Gran Meliá Palacio de Isora Resort is set amongst one of the most beautiful locations on Tenerife. With Mount Teide towering behind as a backdrop, the property boasts superb panoramic views of the Atlantic Ocean and the island of La Gomera.

RedLevel, set in a separate part of the resort, is designed for adults only (over 18) and offers a choice of demi suites and magnificent villas. RedLevel guests enjoy exclusive access to the RedLevel Lounge, butler and concierge service, exclusive access to the RedLevel swimming pool, and preferential reservations for the resort's a la carte restaurants.

The state of the art Yhi Spa and Health Club offers numerous health and well-being treatments and there is a variety of activities and entertainment in the resort which RedLevel guests are welcome to enjoy.



## Gran Meliá Colón, Seville

Historical features and contemporary touches

Renovated with a striking combination of art, colour and style, Gran Meliá Colón is located in the historic old quarter of Seville, in the heart of the shopping area, five minutes walking distance from the city's most important monuments and attractions, including the world's oldest bullfighting ring, La Maestranza, and five minutes driving distance from the World Trade Centre of La Cartuja.

Gran Meliá Colón features chic minimalist guestrooms and suites with red and gold tones, award-winning contemporary furnishings that marry modern and traditional aesthetics, and bold finishes to give the surroundings a sophisticated, Spanish atmosphere. Each floor of the hotel celebrates a different Spanish artist, from El Greco to Goya.

## Gran Meliá Fénix, Madrid

Old Madrileño charm with contemporary amenities

Just three minutes away from Calle Serrano, one of the best shopping districts in Spain, and 10 minutes away from world famous museums, Gran Meliá Fénix sits in a seemingly perfect spot in the middle of Madrid.

An impressive lobby with marble floors, antique furniture, and a stained-glass dome ceiling define the style. Spacious rooms are decorated in reds and golds, flowers abound, and the happening "DRY Cosmopolitan Bar by Javier de las Muelas" extends onto a large terrace overlooking Plaza de Colón on the Castellana.



*These are only a few options that Meliá Hotels International puts at your disposal. With more than 350 hotels in 35 countries and four continents, the Spanish hotel chains caters for all travellers under its eight brands: Meliá, Gran Meliá, ME by Meliá, Paradisus, INNSIDE, TRYP by Wyndham, Sol, and Club Meliá.*



# Languid days & mellow nights

Curtain Bluff, the legendary Caribbean resort that loves to welcome back its guests.

Curtain Bluff is a bit of a legend in international hotel circles. Dating back to the late 1950's its phenomenal potential was noted on an aerial reconnaissance over southern Antigua by American pilot, Howard Hulford, who spotted a spectacular beach-flanked bluff. He liked it so much he built his own private home here as well as an exclusive hotel with just enough accommodation for his friends.

Sadly, the familiar figure of the cigar-smoking host is no longer with us, but thankfully his sublime hotel endures under the careful ownership of his wife, Chelle. Indeed, over the decades this clubby beachfront estate has grown into a world-class 72-room resort with a two-million-dollar spa, first-rate sporting facilities and a gorgeous pool to go with its

two gorgeous beaches. And as if this was already a good thing, pretty much everything is included in the up-front price!

The true essence of Curtain Bluff is underpinned by its long-serving team, who extend to their guests a warm welcome more akin to a personal invitation to a tropical house party. You may be drawn to Curtain Bluff for the first time in the belief that you are staying at a mere 5-star luxury resort but on returning it will feel like a second home!

Taking inspiration from both classic European and Caribbean cuisine, guests can savour culinary delights accompanied by fine wines\* both at the courtyard-style restaurant of the Estate House or at the Italian-inspired deck restaurant overlooking the water.

*\*Curtain Bluff has one of the best wine cellars in the whole Caribbean.*

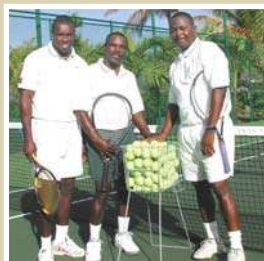




Curtain Bluff continues to make the most of its panoramic bluff setting. All 72 rooms and suites look out over the hotel's famous 'surf beach', a wide stretch of sand buffeted by the constant winds blowing in from the south-east.

There is a confidence and ease by which the clock ticks at Curtain Bluff. Mellow evenings are passed in good company up the hill at the Estate House and languid days are enjoyed at the pool or on the more tranquil 'bay beach'.

Of course there will be those in search of more energetic distractions. Whilst the resort is already a firm family favourite, now children can take advantage of the CEEBEE club, a new kids camp enabling younger guests to make friends and experience the resort on their own terms.



### "Pro" Tennis weeks at Curtain Bluff

There are opportunities for keen tennis players to polish up their game with special "professionally" hosted tennis weeks. Both Tracy Austin and Annabel Croft are hosting separate weeks. Curtain Bluff's excellent sports facilities include 4 championship all-weather courts.

*Curtain Bluff has extended the summer opening period to 23rd August 2014.*



# Islands in the Sun

The world's finest private island retreats



## Necker Island

Sir Richard Branson's private island paradise

Necker, Sir Richard Branson's private island paradise, is situated in the British Virgin Islands, a stunning and unspoilt area of the Caribbean. At 74 acres, Necker sits in turquoise waters surrounded by coral reefs and fringed with beautiful white sandy beaches. Necker can become your own private hideaway; away from the stresses and strains of daily life. The island can be hired exclusively for groups of up to 30 people, or if you're not looking to hire it exclusively, you can still enjoy the Necker experience during Celebration Weeks when individual rooms can be booked by singles or couples to enjoy our fabulous island paradise 'house party' style. Look out for special "Family Celebration" weeks in August, or in half term during weeks commencing 18th and 25th October.



## One&Only Reethi Rah

The most exclusive resort in the Maldives

Surrounded by the crystal blue wonders of the Indian Ocean, this superb all-villa private island Maldives resort offers an unrivalled level of style, choice and personalised exploration. Sleek and spectacular, with unprecedented privacy, One&Only Reethi Rah inspires extraordinary journeys for the soul.

Set on one of the largest islands in North Male' Atoll, adorned with endless white sand coves and turquoise bays, all villas enjoy beautiful ocean views and direct access to the lagoon. One&Only Reethi Rah offers the ultimate holiday experience to those seeking the pinnacle of tropical Maldives luxury. Nowhere else in the Maldives is there a resort with this much space and exclusivity.



## One&Only Hayman Island

The wonders of the Great Barrier Reef

Forming the northernmost island of the Whitsundays, so named by Captain James Cook in 1770, One&Only Hayman Island, opening 01 July 2014, offers a front-row seat to the Great Barrier Reef and a world of leisure and adventure. Be one of the first to discover this most exclusive private island retreat. Innovative cuisine in a variety of restaurants present a range of culinary experiences and the Great Barrier Reef provides the perfect setting for exciting activities including diving, snorkelling, fishing, sailing, kayaking, waterskiing and helicopter and seaplane adventures. Relax in the tranquillity of the One&Only Hayman Island Spa, get active in the state-of-the-art fitness centre, play a game of tennis or practice your golf swing on the driving range.

## The Naka Island

A Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Phuket

Nestled among stunning beaches, lush coconut groves, the emerald-green Andaman Sea and breathtaking idyllic landscapes off the coast of Phuket, The Naka Island is an exclusive boutique resort, accessed by private speedboat. Tastefully decorated in classic Thai style, the 67 beautifully appointed villas offer private pools, a spacious outdoor area, sala and open-air bathrooms, built from natural wood and soft stone. Nestled in the verdant tropical landscape, some with spectacular views over Phang Nga Bay, all villas provide a peaceful and sophisticated space in an evocative setting. Dine at the two gourmet restaurants and indulge in soothing treatments at the Naka Island spa with its vast array of treatment rooms. The discreet staff will attend to your every need while you immerse yourself into a state of wellbeing through their range of signature treatments.



# Luxury River Cruising

The World's Best River Cruises with Uniworld and Titan

Every year, more and more discerning British holidaymakers discover the pleasures of river cruising; of settling back in luxurious surroundings, appreciating the cultural splendour of countless iconic cities and the ever-changing scenic panoramas that unfold.

If you are inspired to join them, there can be no better introduction to this style of holiday than a river cruise with Uniworld and Titan.

Uniworld vessels are, quite simply, the best on European waterways - with unparalleled all-inclusive value<sup>†</sup>, guaranteed river-view staterooms, exceptional fine dining and multi award-winning service, they really do offer a Six-Star Experience.

And, with Titan's unique, acclaimed VIP Home Departure Service<sup>®</sup> transferring you from your front door to the airport and back wherever you live in the UK<sup>‡</sup>, the picture of the perfect river cruise holiday is complete.

Alternatively, if you are a river cruise veteran, try a holiday with Uniworld and Titan - you won't believe the difference, even to those river cruise operators who rate themselves five star!

The range of itineraries is unmatched – explore the wonders of the legendary Rhine, the mighty Danube, the charming Seine, the vineyard-fringed Douro and Rhône, the delights of Venice and Italy's River Po, or a host of other stunning waterways in Europe and Asia.



## Outstanding All-Inclusive Service

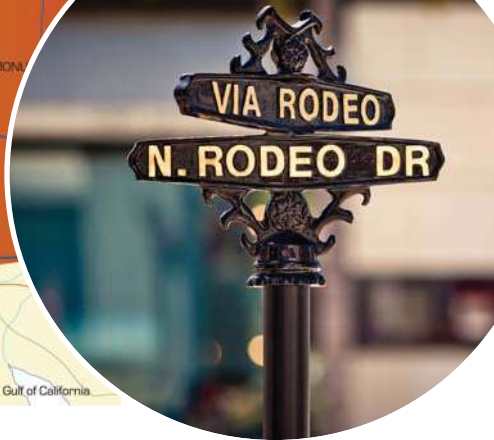
No other river cruise company - despite their claims of all-inclusiveness - picks you up and drops you off at your front door from any address in mainland UK, and none comes close to matching the elegance, opulence and amenities of Uniworld vessels, designed by the acclaimed Red Carnation Hotels team.

Plus, new for 2014, we are delighted to advise that our courteous and friendly airport representatives will be on hand to greet you at London Heathrow or Gatwick airports prior to your outbound flight, further enhancing your travel experience.

- ◆ *Door-to-door transfers from any UK mainland address at each end of your holiday<sup>†</sup>*
- ◆ *Scheduled flights – direct wherever possible – with reputable airlines*
- ◆ *All transfers*
- ◆ *All airport and port taxes, security charges, UK Air Passengers Duty and applicable fuel surcharge*
- ◆ *All-inclusive cruising<sup>†</sup>*
- ◆ *All gratuities on board and ashore*
- ◆ *Unlimited drinks on board\*, including distinctive wine, beer, spirits, soft drinks, speciality coffee, tea, bottled water<sup>†</sup>*
- ◆ *All meals on board, including al fresco dining on deck, early-riser breakfast, all-day bistro menu, Captain's Welcome and Farewell Dinners*
- ◆ *All entertainment plus enlightening lectures on board*
- ◆ *Complimentary internet and Wi-Fi access on board*
- ◆ *Shore excursions, with English-speaking local experts (Gentle Walking Tours available)*
- ◆ *Complimentary portable audio headset system on all shore excursions*
- ◆ *Complimentary use of bicycles and Nordic walking sticks*

\* Does not include premium wine and premium spirits

<sup>†</sup> European itineraries only #Home pick-up is currently unavailable from Scottish islands and Sark addresses – in which case those residents are invited to nominate a mainland address of their choice for holiday transportation



# Take it Easy

Discovering Southern California

There is so much to experience in California and so much territory to cover that it would be inappropriate to try and see everything in one go. Instead, cut the state in two halves, and then you have two fascinating holiday adventures, each of which will keep you busy for a memorable two to three week holiday. Our first instalment is the sun-soaked South.

There are four dynamics one needs to associate with Southern California - the Californian love-affair with cars, a love of the beach, an obsession with outdoor activities and the famous "laid-back" hospitality. Each

## Universal Studios Hollywood VIP Experience



# The Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles

The “Pink Palace” that lends its name to the LA’s chicest suburb

Affectionately known as the ‘Pink Palace’, The Beverly Hills Hotel is famous for legendary service and legendary guests.

Over the past 100 years, Hollywood stars have enjoyed the timeless glamour of this dramatically beautiful setting, attracted by the relaxed resort-feel and seamless service. Located on Sunset Boulevard in the centre of Beverly Hills, the hotel is surrounded by 12 acres of lush, tropical gardens and exotic flowers.

Remaining faithful to the original architecture and interior design, the hotel has been carefully renovated to preserve its supreme level of comfort and flair. Stay

in style in a luxurious room, spacious suite or opt for a secluded private bungalow.

By the palm-tree lined pool, complete with newly refurbished private cabanas, enjoy refreshing complimentary poolside mini ice-cream sundae and mojito pop treats, or dine at the acclaimed Cabana Café. For the ultimate in relaxation, experience a revitalising spa treatment at The Beverly Hill Hotel Spa by La Prairie.

The famous Polo Lounge restaurant is the place to be in Beverly Hills, while Bar Nineteen12 is a must for regular live music and spectacular views of the colourful California sunsets.



will be fundamental to your holiday. You will certainly need to rent a car to get around and you should expect to stay in relaxed accommodation en-route. Indeed, some of the classic hotels spotlighted are famed for their relaxed style and understated luxury.

Where better to start a tour of Southern California than Los Angeles, the “City of Angels”. Its climate has often been described as “perfect” and with good reason. Most days are sunny and warm, with gentle ocean breezes in the summer. The humidity is low with little rain. In fact it would be fair to say that there are no unpleasant seasons.

Covering an area 20 times the size of Manhattan you can easily devote a good week to unravelling the sights and taking in the cosmopolitan buzz. LA is the entertainment capital of the world, a cultural mecca boasting more than 300 museums. There are “must-see” tourist attractions like the iconic Chinese Theatre along with the Walk of Fame’s collection of stars (numbering 2,482, and growing by one or two a month), visit a working Hollywood film studio (see below), strut your stuff on the “hip” boardwalk of Venice Beach, shop until you drop on Rodeo and Ventura Boulevards, attend a music concert, take in the city’s famous street art ...the list goes on and on but with so

Ever wanted to be treated like a movie star? The Universal Studios VIP Experience lets you enjoy just that. This unique experience includes an extensive guided tour of the immense Universal Studios Hollywood and its motion picture studio with access to areas of the studio lot that the general public never sees.

Your VIP guide will also escort you to the Park’s most popular rides and attractions, taking you in via special exclusive VIP entrances. Afterwards, enjoy time to explore the vast Park on your own, when you can skip the queues at every attraction, get the best seats in the house for every show, enjoy a delicious gourmet lunch, and more.

## ***Included in the VIP Experience***

- ◆ An exclusive behind-the-scenes experience led by a specially trained guide.
- ◆ The opportunity to explore locations and sets closed to the general public.
- ◆ Tour of our world-famous multi-story prop warehouse, foley stages and other studio facilities.

## ***PLUS enjoy additional VIP privileges such as:***

- ◆ Front of Line access to ALL Theme Park rides and attractions
- ◆ VIP reserved seating at ALL Theme Park shows
- ◆ Gourmet Lunch, Valet Parking upon arrival and so much more!



## Shutters on the Beach

Santa Monica

Los Angeles favourite beachside hotel



Located right on the beach, and with views over Santa Monica pier, Shutters feels very much like a grand private residence. It seems to blend old and new with ease, juxtaposing dark wood floors and old leather sofas with light, whitewashed rooms using sand and sea colours to give you that beach house informality.

A seat in the hotel lobby is one of the most sought after spots in Los Angeles. If you'd prefer, skip the sand and soak in the sun by the poolside where spectacular ocean views await you at the largest beachside pool deck in the city. Stylish and spacious guest rooms and suites have newly redesigned interiors by the freshly appointed Obama White House designer Michael Smith - understated luxury with the feel of a private beach cottage.

much to see and do across LA you might be wise to consider basing yourself in not one but two key locations - Beverly Hills and Santa Monica, home to two of LA's most cherished hotels.

Once LA is bottled its time to cruise. Perhaps a jaunt up the rugged coast, past the star-studded hideaways of Malibu Beach and the famous Hearst Castle, to the elegant seaside community of Santa Barbara, one of the world's prettiest coastal cities, with red-tiled roofs, mountain backdrops and sea views that earn it the nickname of "The American Riviera". Visit in October and you will discover a month-long food and wine festival, Epicure. And herein lies one of the region's charms, the vineyards of Santa Barbara County, located less than an hour north from the city in the Santa Ynez Valley. Some reckon that the best wines in USA are now being made here! Tucked in the hills behind Santa Barbara you will find another treasure, Belmond El Encanto. Originally opened in 1918 this much-storied, iconic hotel has hosted Hollywood luminaries going back to Silver Screen stars Clark Gable and Carole Lombard.

Escaping LA seems to have been a pre-requisite for the stars of the silver screen and the emergence of the desert city of Palm Springs owes much to the patronage of show business. Her most famous resident, Frank Sinatra, spent 50 years of his life enjoying the striking and contrasting natural landscape, and it is not hard to appreciate his enthusiasm.

## Belmond El Encanto

Santa Barbara

Quintessential laid-back retreat in the hills of Santa Barbara



Santa Barbara's only Forbes Five-Star resort is an enchanting hideaway for those who cherish privacy and serenity.

Belmond El Encanto sits high in the hills amid lush gardens, offering a dazzling view over Santa Barbara and the sparkling ocean beyond. An icon since the 1920's, its original architectural features have been lovingly brought back to life, while modern additions include an expansive outdoor swimming pool and beautiful boutique spa.

True to its Californian roots, this is a luxury hotel that combines glamour with laid-back style.

## The Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel, Dana Point, Orange County

Sophisticated beach culture on the cliff tops

On a coastline famous for its beaches, The Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel is situated atop a one hundred fifty foot bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean midway between Los Angeles and San Diego.

Dramatic cliffs, secluded inlets and dazzling sunsets enchant visitors to the resort and the adjacent Dana Point Harbour is convenient for crossings to Catalina Island, deep sea fishing expeditions, jet skiing and wave running, sailing regattas or relaxed sunset cocktail and dinner cruises.

With balconies overlooking the ruggedly beautiful coastal landscape and lush gardens, rambling walkways and intimate courtyards available for romantic strolls, The Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel offers unparalleled service and quality while defining casual California elegance.



## The Ritz-Carlton Rancho Mirage

Palm Springs

Desert delights for the perfect escape



Elegantly enveloped within the Santa Rosa Mountain range, The Ritz-Carlton, Rancho Mirage is located on a 650-foot bluff overlooking world-famous Palm Springs and the picturesque Coachella Valley.

This luxurious Palm Springs hotel boasting 244 guest rooms with 16 suites including spacious and private spa suites, is thoughtfully-designed to complement its desert mountain location by featuring natural elements of stone, wood and fire – which reflect the local landscape, hues and regional surroundings.

High mountains encircle on three sides giving way on the open side to the great Colorado-Sonoran Desert. The climate is bone dry year round with a reputed 354 days of sunshine. Today, Palm Springs is the recreational capital of Southern California, where the “Great Outdoors” is worshipped from the valley floor to the mountain tops. Golfers will be spoilt for choice with no less than 110 golf courses which, considering we are talking about desert terrain hints at an extraordinary feat of irrigation!

Turning southward and back along the ocean, the ideal stopover on the picturesque Pacific Coast



Highway to San Diego is Dana Point, where you will discover one of the classic beach resorts of Southern California, The Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel. On the way, you could stop at Anaheim, the spiritual home of Walt Disney and the location of the original resort.

Sitting dramatically above the sweeping beaches of Orange County, The Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel is the perfect place to regard Californian beach culture. A word of warning though, there is a sensible reason why you see so many surfers wearing wetsuits and it has more to do with the fact that the coastal Pacific currents tend to run southwards from much chillier waters! Notwithstanding, nearby Dana Point Harbour is an excellent place to spend a day sailing, visit Catalina Island or wrestle with some deep sea fishing. Laguna Beach is also worth visiting. This quirky, bohemian seaside community is full of restaurants, art galleries, studios and interesting boutiques.



### *Driving times and distances*

#### **Los Angeles to Santa Barbara**

Distance - 145 Kms

Driving Time - 2 hours 15 minutes

#### **Los Angeles to Palm Springs**

Distance - 190 Kms

Driving Time - 2 hours 45 minutes

#### **Los Angeles to Dana Point**

Distance - 105 Kms

Driving Time - 2 hours 45 minutes  
(quick route)

Driving Time - 3 hours 45 minutes  
(scenic coastal route)

#### **Dana Point to San Diego**

Distance - 105 Kms

Driving Time - 1 hour 25 minutes  
(1 hour 5 minutes to Rancho Santa Fe)

At the end of the trail lies California's second largest and eldest city, San Diego, with a legacy stretching back to Spanish Colonial rule. It is also the birthplace of all that is Californian.

Many of its key attractions are within a short distance of the attractive and lively bay-front downtown district. Must do's include the world-renowned San Diego Zoo, Spanish Colonial Balboa Park, Seaworld, the Gaslight District and even a visit to the venerable, but retired liner, Queen Mary in neighbouring Long Beach. Jump on an old Town Trolley for a city tour or take the Tijuana Trolley (and passport) for a day trip south across the border into Mexico!

In this road trip we have cruised along golden coasts and into the desert, (hopefully with the hood down and the sun at our backs!). We have traced the footsteps of the stars and chilled out like the locals ...to quote a song title by the West Coast band, The Eagles, cruising Southern California sure is a glorious way to "take it easy!"

## Rancho Valencia, Rancho Santa Fe, near San Diego

Relais & Chateaux pedigree and relaxed Southern Californian living

Blending luxury with the authentic spirit of relaxed Southern California living, Rancho Valencia welcomes its guests with passion and grace. Near the chic beaches of La Jolla and Del Mar, this is an exclusive and tranquil hideaway set among 18 hectares of rolling hills, orange groves and gardens full of hibiscus and cacti.

Reminiscent of Spanish-colonial haciendas, bungalow suites boast stunning craftsmanship including hand-painted tile work and custom furnishings. With its world-renowned tennis program, innovative cuisine and rejuvenating spa, and year-round sunny climate, Rancho Valencia is the perfect place to discover this beautiful San Diego region.





# Galapagos & Ecuador

What better memories to take home than the Darwin legacy, seeing first-hand the unique species of the Galapagos, swimming with sea lions and following in Darwin's footsteps around the islands.

The Galapagos archipelago consists of 13 major islands, 6 smaller ones and scores of islets. The best way to visit these islands is to take a cruise for three or four nights. There are a wide variety of boats ranging from the small motor yachts with just a few cabins to larger boats with up to 46 cabins.

The cruises offer a variety of activities led by extremely knowledgeable naturalist guides, including on-board lectures, hikes on the various islands and snorkelling, as well as relaxing aboard your luxury yacht. It is also possible to stay at one of the hotels, most of which are located on Santa Cruz Island and you can explore other islands on daily cruises.

Having experienced one of the world's greatest natural wonders where the animals show no fear,



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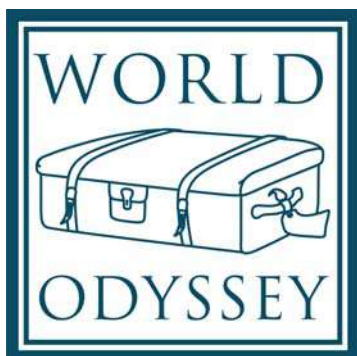
explore the highlights of Ecuador. You can gallop on horseback along the Avenue of Volcanoes, or hike in the foothills of Cotopaxi volcano or search for the stunning orchids in Mindo Cloud Forest. You might like to visit local towns nestled in the Andean highlands surrounded by spectacular scenery, such as Otavalo, Agato or Cotacachi and enjoy their bustling and vibrant markets, and wander around Quito's stunning Baroque churches, or visit the Amazon Basin and glide along the channels and rivers of the Amazon rainforest and stay in a delightful jungle lodge. You could experience all of this!

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