



Date: May 2008
To: All my favorite savvy travelers
From: Teresa Beall Expeditions

Dear Friends!

Once the travel bug bites, it'll itch for the rest of your life. You will long to go where you have never gone before and to try things you have never ever tried. Trust us. We should know. Travel is our passion and our profession. We've got wanderlust in our blood. When we're not on some sort of expedition, we're in the office dreaming about and planning for the next adventure. Our files bulge with brochures, books and articles describing travel experiences and of destinations on the "travel wish list". We certainly haven't been everywhere, yet, but we're trying.

With all the recent gloomy travel news – airline bankruptcies, flight cancellations, Olympic controversies, hurricane season warnings – it is *almost* enough to make you want to stay home. And with the plunge in the value of the US dollar (and the mighty Euro packing a punch), the typical summer vacation to Europe will require top dollar for the privilege of joining the throngs of tourists who make their way across the Atlantic during peak season. Apart from the outrageous airfares, you also have to contend with over crowding and excessive waits in lines at cultural institutions, exorbitant hotel prices, minimum stay requirements and (in some cities) a percentage of retailers and restaurateurs closing down for a month or two so they can take their own vacations. The solution of course is to avoid traveling during the peak months. Unfortunately many families don't have that option.

Here's my suggestion: Look at an alternate destination.

If you want to capture the romance of Paris, the medieval charm of Spain, or white-washed villas of the Greek Isles without actually heading to Europe, listen up. Set your sights on some place a little closer to home or at least think about venturing south rather than east. You're likely to save a few dollars and still have a rich travel experience. Here are a few options that may entice you to give your European sojourn a second thought.

Paris may be the quintessential city for love and passion on the European continent, but **Buenos Aires** serves up a fiery alternative where you can spend those dollars you'll be saving on some tantalizing Tango lessons. Whereas an economy class round-trip flight to Paris mid-summer will generally cost upwards of \$1100, a flight to Buenos Aires this summer (which is their winter) starts from approximately \$800. Although the airfare saving is not particularly large, accommodation savings can be sizeable in both price and quality. A centrally-located but basic three-star hotel in Paris in August will conservatively cost between \$200 and \$300 a night – that is if you can find one available, as many properties are already sold out. Comparatively, in Buenos Aires you can stay at a funky boutique hotel for about \$150 per night.



The image of whitewashed villas draped in purple bougainvilleas isn't a purely Greek Island phenomenon. You can find many of the same charms and architectural features rather close to home in the Pacific beach town of **Puerto Vallarta**. Its mix of cobblestone streets, whitewashed buildings and the occasional donkey give it a village atmosphere even though it is actually a major resort destination. Unlike the Yucatan coast though, Puerto Vallarta's scale seems more in line with its European counterparts and although there are a few larger hotel properties, you never feel that you are in a high rise haven. Summer flights to Santorini or Mykonos will currently set you back in the range of \$1500 to \$1800, or more; however a flight to Puerto Vallarta will be less than half of that. A popular two-star hotel in Mykonos is priced at a massive \$330 per night including breakfast for a double room during the months of July and August. Ridiculous, I know, but for about \$100 per night you can stay in the lap of luxury at one of Puerto Vallarta's most sought after five-star boutique hotel, the Hacienda San Angel. Located in PV's historic town center, these whitewashed villas are filled with exquisite antique furniture and Mexican art, three swimming pools, a rooftop Jacuzzi, complimentary continental breakfast served in your guest suite daily and free afternoon cocktails and snacks and – in the background - musicians playing romantic Mexican tunes.

The Spanish influence in the New World is obvious in so many beautifully designed cities across the Caribbean, Central and South America. Take a trip back to 16th century Spain with a visit to **Old San Juan, Puerto Rico** and have the added bonus of stunning beaches. Walk along cobblestone streets, visit historic Spanish forts and practice speaking Spanish. You won't even need a passport and there's no currency conversion to deal with. Airfare to Barcelona this August would set you back close to \$1200, but you can fly to San Juan during the same period for about \$500, including all taxes. And, a three-star centrally located Barcelona hotel like Hotel H10 Catalunya Plaza is quite basic but priced at \$200 per night for a standard double room in August. For considerably less you can take your pick of up-market San Juan properties, many of them immaculately restored in the classic Art Deco boutique style, for about \$150 per night.

Obviously restaurant and public transportation costs in these alternate destinations will also be considerably lower, as will shopping in general.

Either way, if your heart is still set on a European vacation this summer (or even this Fall) or if you are more inclined to consider a more-bang-for-your-buck destination, call us and we'll help you orchestrate something remarkable.

NOTE - Each month (sometimes more or less often than that) we send out an e-newsletter containing timely announcements, notices and tips intended as useful, up-to-the-minute information for discriminating domestic and international travelers - you, our clients. The intent is NOT to send unwanted information. If you are not interested, please let us know and we will promptly remove you from our database!

Best, Teresa

...Traveling makes people feel younger. It should be administered periodically, like medicine.