

Destination **DIFFERENT**

by Mira Temkin

A well-traveled bunch, Highland Parkers have cruised the Caribbean, anchored in Alaska and trekked through Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Been there. Done that. Several times. Short of going to the moon (though doubtless a local will be the first regularly scheduled ticket into space), we all want to enrich our lives with break-out experiences. From “babymoons” to cooking with a continental chef to face time with foreign officials, Highland Parkers can see the world on our own terms—with a little help.

Veteran Highland Park travel agents Aldo Caronia and Cookie Anspach Kohn specialize in guiding locals along the road less traveled across the globe.

Aldo Caronia, owner of **Romantica Tours** (580 Roger Williams, 847-433-7560, www.romanticatours.com) customizes individual and small

group tours in Italy as well as France. “My customers have already seen the classics in Italy—Florence, Rome, Venice. Now they want to ‘do,’” says Aldo. One favorite option is the “Joys of Italian Cooking,” which can include hands-on cooking classes, wine tasting or pasta making. He explains, “You start by going with the chef to the market, buying fresh ingredients, preparing the dishes, learning the secrets of traditional recipes and enjoying the meal, paired with the appropriate wines. It’s a total package that stimulates all the senses.”

Aldo also offers a special sailing tour of the enchanting Venetian lagoon in a *bragozzo*, a traditional handmade sailboat. Travelers meet the boat-builder who shares the history of Venice while sailing to nearby islands. Or perhaps your taste runs to a private opera performed in a palace? Consider it done!

Cookie Anspach Kohn’s mantra is “nothing is impossible.” Cookie has 40 years in the travel industry, formerly with Anspach Travel and now at **Valerie Wilson Travel** (426 Park Avenue, 847-432-1211, vwti.com). An independent consultant, Cookies happily describes some of the more challenging excursions she’s arranged for her lifelong clients. “I remember one aficionado, who wanted to discuss art with a European expert. I arranged for him to meet with a professor at the University of Berlin. The professor then escorted him through the Old National Gallery.”

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“Another unique request was a traveler who asked to speak with government officials in the Kingdom of Bhutan, a small country between India and China. I set him up to meet a member of the National Assembly.” Compared to this, dinner at the Palace of Versailles is a piece of cake—with no apologies to Marie Antoinette!

Expecting the best

A simpler trip, but very trendy is the “babymoon” for couples who want one last fling before the arrival of their new baby. Defined as a romantic getaway or quiet time spent together, the babymoon lets couples reconnect, relax and rejuvenate. Many resorts and spas cater to this new phenomenon with pre-natal massages, special childbirth classes and other relaxing experiences.

Cookie says, “I’ve recently sent couples to San Diego, Palm Springs and San Francisco. What I find especially gratifying is that I had planned many of these couples’ honeymoons. The babymoon represents the next generation.”

Finding your inner voice

Long-time Highland Parker Rae Luskin ventured to Rome on a Rites of Passage Retreat with other American and European writers as well as artists. This was a highly spiritual experience designed to awaken creativity through art, writing and dance. Rae spent several weeks in Italy, traveling, living and drawing the sights. What attracted her to the retreat was the opportunity for unique creative, meaningful interactions around art and literature, similar to

the salons of 19th century Europe. “Every place we visited like Plaza Navonna or a monastery in Rome also gave us pause for spiritual reflection, which was represented in our art,” Rae comments. “Working with both watercolors and acrylics, I was able to recreate those places as well as the stunning views from my villa.”

Riding on the wild side

Highland Park attorney Barbara A. Weiner has seen the world, but feels her African safari was truly “the trip of a lifetime.” Traveling with a group from Abercrombie & Kent, the Mercedes of escorted tours, Barbara got up close and personal with giraffes, lions and zebras while riding in an open-air jeep. “Having a herd of 150 elephants walk around our transport was the ultimate game-viewing encounter, really putting us in touch with wildlife. And, riding a camel was a real ‘hands on’ experience,” Barbara relates. (That’s Barbara in the photo that opens this story.)

She was also fascinated with the beautiful Masi people who use the bark of a tree to brush their gleaming, white teeth and who weave beautiful ceremonial necklaces. Staying in a tented camp was nothing like what she’d imagined. Traditionalists say, “It’s not a safari unless you spend time under canvas.” Not to worry. Barbara found that tented camps with modern amenities like spring beds, crisp linens and in-suite facilities are a pleasure. She adds, “Everything you need for your trip can be bought right here in Highland Park, especially Uncle Dan’s for outdoor adventure gear.”



Start local, travel global

Indeed, there’s a wealth of hometown resources. Travel is the single most frequent search at the **Highland Park Public Library**. Borrow informational e-books, travelogue audios, language instruction recordings and currency conversion charts. Then buy what you can’t go without at **Borders** (847-433-9130, 595 Central).

The **ENH OMEGA Travel Clinic** at Glenbrook Hospital, 847-657-5670, provides counseling for overseas travel as well as immunizations and medications. To carry fluids and meet FAA regulations, try the Pack-It Liquid Gels Set (it’s clear and has four 3-oz. bottles) to get through security. It’s at **Uncle Dan’s** (1847 Second Street, 847-266-8600, udans.com), along with a Security Neck Pouch for your passport and cash. Wear that under your clothes at shoulder, neck or waist. And just so you don’t overpack, **Kaehlers TravelWorks** (847-433-6500, 654 Central, worldtraveler.com) has a compact luggage scale that includes a tape measure. You’ll never pay for overweight or oversized bags again.

Wanderlust got you? Then go! Start in Highland Park, see the world and come home safely.

Mira Temkin is a North Shore writer specializing in advertising, promotional marketing and public relations. Her most memorable adventure was taking the helm of the winning yacht in the St. Maarten “America’s Cup Sailboat Race.” She’s currently docked at mtemkin967@aol.com or 847-433-2109.

