

COLIN'S TOURS NEWSLETTER

March, 2008

The last Newsletter which was circulated in November 2007, previewed the three tours proposed for 2008. The *Highlights of China Study Tour* planned to run in May this year, filled very quickly, and takes off very soon as a group of 24 on a very interesting itinerary. The second tour of the year, is a repeat tour of last year's very successful one in September/October; this is the *Best of the Balkans Study Tour* which will take place at exactly the same time of year, 12 months later, to take advantage of the autumn forest colours which are brilliant in the northern areas of the tour route. It really is an exciting tour if you have not previously visited this very beautiful and historically interesting part of the world. The highlights are the Dalmatian coast – one of the most magnificent pieces of coastline in the world, the incredibly wonderful medieval walled city of Dubrovnik, Plitvice National Park with its 18 turquoise lakes linked by waterfalls, and glacial Lake Bled in its magic setting with island church and cliff-top castle. But there is much more including the country's capital cities, each quite unique in its own way, and places that are off the more normal travel routes such as Albania, previously unknown to the outside world, fascinating Bulgaria, and the beautiful Istria Peninsula with Opatija, Pula and the picturesque fishing port of Rovinj.

Coming near the end of the year, is a very exciting new tour. The *Wild and Wondrous India Study Tour* was described in the last Newsletter, but has had to have some small changes made to its itinerary, and, as a consequence, necessitated the production of a revised tour brochure. Initially, it looked as though it needed a major revamp because construction of the Far Horizon cruise boat - the *M.V. Mahabaahu* - was being delayed again and I had found an alternative boat to use in its place. During January, I went to India on an inspection tour of the places being visited and included a 7 night cruise in this Assam Bengal Navigation (ABN) Company vessel on the Brahmaputra River. I ended up being impressed with everything about this alternative cruise and decided we would use it, but the Far Horizons boat is now back on track for completion in September, with trial runs in October, and scheduled departures in November at reduced introductory prices much less expensive than the ABN programs which have been operating for two years.

The major alteration to this revised *Wild and Wondrous India Study Tour* is the fact that the cruise is offering us 3 alternative types of cabin with different prices. The Standard Cabins are included in the original price we were quoted for this tour – \$8,835 twin share, and a single supplement of \$3,345, but cabins of this type are limited in number. For a Superior Cabin, it costs an extra \$510 per person for twin share and an extra \$840 for a single, and for a Deluxe cabin it is an extra \$860 per person twin share, and an extra \$1450 for a single. Unfortunately, all of the river cruises, in both companies, are expensive, but, for what can be seen and experienced, they are far superior to a tour by road with hotel accommodation in the area, and you don't have to repack your suitcase for a whole week. For single travellers willing to share for just the cruise, the total single supplement payable for the tour is reduced from \$3,345 to \$1,495, and even if you were to share a Deluxe cabin, the tour single supplement becomes less than that for the tour with a Standard cabin.. The new brochure outlines the revised itinerary for our upstream cruise of 8 days/7 nights.

>>>> 2.

2.

On my reconnoitre tour to India in January, I enjoyed the *Rathambhore National Park* but missed out on seeing a tiger while some safari groups on the same days saw up to 3 tigers, and including a mother with cub. Many interesting birds were seen in the *Keoladeo National Park*, but their numbers were not considered as good as normal because drought had reduced water levels this winter. The *foothills region of the Himalayas* around Darjeeling and in Sikkim was magic, with wonderful views of the snow-capped main range including the world's third highest peak directly opposite; and the culture of this region is again totally different to the rest of India – Tibetan Buddhism. And the *Brahmaputra River Valley* was just an incredibly wonderful experience - I can't give it enough praise; as well as the unique Assam culture and its delightful people, I enjoyed seeing the wild elephants, rhino and birds in particular, in *Orang* and *Kaziranga National Parks*.

Plans are well advanced for the running two major Study Tours for the Geographical Society of New South Wales in 2009. The ***Highlights of Spain and Portugal Study Tour*** planned for May is a roughly clockwise tour of the Iberian Peninsula starting and ending in Madrid and travelling via Caceres, Badajos, Evora, Lisbon, Obidos, Nazare, Batalha, Porto, Guimares Braga, Viana do Castelo, Santiago de Compostela, Coruna, Oviedo, Leon, Bugos, Bilbao, San Sebastian, Andorra, Barcelona, Valencia, Granada, Malaga, Gibraltar, Sevilla, and Cordoba. The ***East Canada and New England in the Colourful Fall*** planned for September-October, is also a roughly clockwise tour; it is a repeat tour of the very successful Study Tour of 2000 at exactly the same time of the year when the autumn colours are at their best. Starting and ending in Toronto it will travel via the Thousand Islands of the St Lawrence, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, the Saguenay Fiord, Saint John, Green Gables country on Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Halifax, Peggy's Cove, Annapolis, the ferry from Nova Scotia to Maine, Bar Harbour, Arcadia National Park, the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Green Mountains of Vermont, the Adirondacks, Lake Placid, and Niagara Falls. After returning to Toronto there is to be an optional extension tour to New York City for 4 nights before coming home for those interested.

If you have an interest in either of the two remaining Study Tours listed for 2008, it would be wise not to delay making a deposited booking, as each group has a maximum number of participants and experience has shown that the Geographical Society Study Tours are sufficiently popular to fill very quickly and leave some people disappointed when they can't be included. In most cases, the balance of the tour payment has to be paid 10 weeks before the departure date. If you are interested in either or both of the tours listed for 2009, you may care to let me know of your possible interest, preferably in writing (email, fax or Snail-mail) and I'll make sure you are first to receive the brochure when they are ready

Best wishes to all,

Colin Sale

colsale@ozemail.com.au or colsale@acrtravel.com.au

Group Tours Manager, ACR International Travel, Level 5, 49 Market Street, Sydney, 2000

Fax: (02) 8252 8919

