

# **Travellers' Notebook**

## **Newsletter of the Blackbourne U3A**

### **Travel and Tourism Group**

August 2004

#### ***DECISIONS, DECISIONS . . .***

At the meeting on 17 May 2004, after an introduction by the convenor, John Dockerty, and a few words from Ted Finch, the first convenor, the results of a questionnaire on the future of the Group, circulated earlier in the year, were presented by Tony Sear. Following some discussion, the decisions made are summarised below:

#### **Meetings**

The time and venue (second Monday in the month at 10 am) with the format generally as before will continue: a talk or presentation by a Group member, lasting about 30-45 minutes, with time for questions; a 'round robin' with input only from those members who had made a journey or could offer information of significant interest to the Group as a whole. A record will be kept on file for future reference. Judith Constantine agreed to produce a newsletter. Jean White will take notes if Judith cannot attend at any time.

#### **Finance and administration**

An annual subscription of £6 will be payable in future. This will establish a controlled membership, with paid-up members having first choice of trips and accommodation. Membership will be kept to 35, with a waiting list. If it were beneficial for the purpose of securing a favourable discount or conditions, then the waiting-list members would be given the opportunity to join in. If further numbers might be beneficial, then the limit of that number would be offered to the main U3A. Visitors attending a meeting will be asked to pay £1.50 and could join a holiday group should space be available. The new system will start in June. A membership card with the programme will be issued to members.

#### **Trips**

The Group will aim to arrange two trips a year, one shorter, and one longer, according to destination. A sub-group will work out details for suggested trips, which will then be presented to members for discussion. Consideration will be given to economics when deciding the size of a group, with a maximum of 35, smaller groups being preferable. Destinations will normally be one ordinary and one unusual per year. It was thought preferable to deal through an established travel operator for the benefit and security of the Group. Suggestions for future holidays were put forward and the committee agreed to prepare a list for discussion.

#### ***ON THE TRAIL OF THE INCAS***

Pauline and Colin Dalton flew by charter plane to Panama City, South America, and embarked on *Minerva II* in January 2004. During the 17 day cruise they visited ports in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile. Many of the places are associated with the Inca civilisation, which lasted for about 100 years during the 1600s. The Incas are noted for

their lovely woven textiles as well as ancient monuments. The unique coastal landscape is mostly desert backed by the high Andes.

Some passengers left the ship for four days to visit Machu Picchu, but this was quite an arduous trip and some suffered from altitude sickness. Pauline and Colin went to Manta, home of the panama hat, and visited a factory where tagua nuts are made into buttons and other artefacts that look like ivory. They saw an impressive cathedral at Callao, visited a fascinating Inca market at Lima and were told that Pisco is the driest place on earth. Colin was amazed by the golf course at Arica, made on compacted sand. They disembarked at Valparaiso and flew home from Santiago.

*Minerva II* (30,000 tonnes) has elegant public areas, a large dining room and two other small restaurants. On this cruise there were 500 passengers, but at full capacity (700) it would be too crowded. The cabins are cramped: there was £1000 differential between decks 1 and 3 although the top three decks had all identical cabins each with a small balcony. The lectures were excellent and the excursions, most of which were included in the fare, were well organised by Swan Hellenic. There is a good library, but little in the way of entertainment. Mr Swan, now 83, was on board and gave a fascinating talk.

## **TRAVEL TIPS**

### **Insurance**

Yvonne Ryder obtained worldwide annual travel insurance for £65 from Direct Line with her house insurance.

### **Flights**

Peter Pinel is flying to Jersey from Shoreham airport for £49 (the plane has only nine seats!)

Ted Finch recommends that if you have a mobility problem ask for assistance at the time of booking your flight.

### **Hotels**

When booking a popular resort hotel, also check out the tour operators: David Love saved £150 with Thomas Cook (Jardin Tecina, La Gomera)

Judith Constantine booked hotels on-line for a 2000 mile tour of France, Switzerland and Italy using Relais de Silence ([www.silencehotel.com](http://www.silencehotel.com)), Inter Hotels ([www.inter-hotel.com](http://www.inter-hotel.com)), and Best Western ([www.bestwestern.fr](http://www.bestwestern.fr)).

She recommends the Vitznauerhof, Vitznau, on Lake Lucerne ([www.arabellasheraton.com](http://www.arabellasheraton.com)): idyllic location, excellent food, faultless service.

Several members recently enjoyed a break at Lenwade Country House Hotel, Norfolk (01603 872288): mid week is very good value (ask for BFP offer).

### **Destinations**

Gardone Riveria on Lake Garda is an elegant resort: ask Judith about location before choosing a hotel. The Arena at Verona is a spectacular setting for opera: worth paying extra and booking in advance for reserved seats.

### **Family outings**

Cadbury World and Warwick Castle were a great success with the Sears' grandchildren