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TRAVEL

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SATURDAY, AUGUST 9, 2014 E1

Oliver Festival of the Grape

OKANAGAN • If you happen to be in the vicinity of “Canada’s wine capital” in the south Okanagan this fall, stop by to celebrate the fruit of the vine at the 18th Oliver Festival of the Grape on Oct. 5.

With well-known wineries dotting the landscape, such as Burrowing Owl, Church & State and Black Hills to name a few, there are also plenty of reasons to arrive for a few days before or stay for a few days after the annual event.

More than 50 wineries will be participating, as well as a convoy of food trucks. Check for details at festivalofthegrape.ca

Need a reason go to San Diego? Here are just a few

TIPS • I never need an excuse to get to San Diego: Blue skies, surf, sand, a hip downtown, great food, beer and wine, not to mention professional baseball, and its famous zoo. But if you need more reason than the fact it’s still blessedly warm — in the 20s — here are few more reasons to get to San Diego this fall:

■ Kids get in for free — October is a wallet-friendly month for families visiting San Diego. Legoland California, San Diego Zoo and SeaWorld offer free admission for kids, as well as more than 30 other attractions and museums in the area. As well, many local hotels offer discounts for families.

■ Celebration of food — Fall is a chance to check out the Bay area’s delectable dining scene. For starters, there’s San Diego Restaurant Week, the San Diego Bay Wine & Food Festival and Celebrate the Craft — three food festivals happening in the area between Sept. 21 and Nov. 23.

■ Pass the popcorn — Movie buffs can catch some of best international offerings at one of North America’s best film festivals, the San Diego Film Festival, Sept. 24 to 28. Between shows, attend Q & As or meet and greets with filmmakers. For details, check www.sandiego.org

High Tea with a proper twist

VICTORIA • Victoria’s grand Fairmont Empress hotel is known for its afternoon High Tea. Summer is also the right time for some proper iced tea on the patio. But the Fairmont bartenders have spiked it for a little indulgence on the deck with the introduction of the Veranda Iced Tea, for day or night. If you can’t get to the hotel, make your own at home.

Veranda Iced Tea

1 oz (30 mL) Fairmont Berry Berry Tea (or other berry tea)

¼ oz (7 mL) gin

¼ oz (7 mL) white rum

¼ oz (7 mL) tequila

¾ lemon

¾ oz (22 mL) simple syrup

3 oz (88 mL) Coca-Cola

Combine ingredients, shake over ice and strain over ice into a cocktail glass.

More Fairmont cocktail ideas at everyonesanoriginal.com/food-drink-mixology.

Autumn joy cycling on Island

VANCOUVER • September could very well be the most ideal time to go for a spin on Vancouver Island.

■ West Coast Food is Island Joy’s signature tour. It includes stays at some of the best boutique accommodations, and lots of luscious local food and wine. Trip goes Sept. 1 to 5. Eight spots left.

■ Transformational Travel for Women — Cycle with like-minded women on a trail of discovery through rolling rural Vancouver Island scenery.

■ Details for both trips at islandjoyrides.com

— Compiled by Lisa Monforton/
for the Calgary Herald



Photos: Alex Berenyi/For the Calgary Herald

A fishing boat appears suspended in the crystal-clear waters of Bozukkale Bay, where days easily melt away.

Sailing into the Turkish Blue

A landlubber alternates between fear and bliss while sailing Turkey’s wild southwest coastline

VALERIE BERENYI
FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

We are running with the wind, mainsail and jib nicely filled out, when an afternoon squall hits us and I find myself sliding under the table in the sailboat’s cockpit. Blue-black water churns alongside the starboard gunwale as the boat tilts frighteningly on its side. In my mind’s eye, I see myself falling overboard into the angry Aegean Sea, only to be smothered by the overturned boat that is sure to sink.

That doesn’t happen. Instead, Pierre, our captain, quickly turns the boat into the wind, which stabilizes it. I cower as my two crewmates fight to lower both sails. The reef lines on the mainsail keep jamming. Waves swamp the rubber dingy tethered behind us. Finally, sails stowed and dingy lashed to the stern deck, we go under power via diesel motor to our destination for the night: the calm natural harbour of Çiftlik Limani.

And thus begins the first day

of a two-week sailing adventure along the southwest coast of Turkey. For me, a newbie sailor, the experience of riding an emotional roller-coaster between fear and bliss marks this trip of a lifetime.

Cruising the wild, mountainous shores and picking from the countless bays and coves along Turkey’s Datça Peninsula between the port city of Marmaris and the ruins of Knidos is a dream come true.

Most people opt to see these impossibly blue waters by joining a chartered cruise aboard a gulet, a beautiful wide-bottomed wooden Turkish sailboat that puts along mostly under power. A captain, crew and cook tend to a passenger’s every need.

Not us. Along with our friends, Pierre and Deb, who live in the south of France, we opt to charter a 39.3-foot “bare” boat. Bare doesn’t mean unlimited skinny-dipping, but rather a DIY sailing trip, without hired help. We are the crew.

While Pierre is a highly exper-



The author dives off the boat for a cooling swim in the 40 to 45C weather. Cruising the mountainous shores and picking from bays and coves along Turkey’s Datça Peninsula is a dream come true.

rienced sailor, and Deb and my husband Alex are able hands, I am your typical Calgary landlubber who doesn’t know a clove hitch from a cloven hoof. What I don’t know about sailing is a lot.

My only experience was as a teen growing up in the Okanagan Valley, where my best friend’s family had a Laser. If that speedy little dingy “heeled” — tipped precariously to one side — unless we leaned back enough to coun-

ter the wind, into the lake we went. This is my frame of reference.

But The Voyager is no dingy. She is a sleek, French-built, sloop-rigged cruising yacht with three berths and two heads — tiny WCs with a hand-pumped toilet, sink and hand-held faucet that doubles as a shower head. The forward berth is all polished wood and relative privacy.

SEE TURKEY, PAGE E2



Warmed by a burner, tea and hot water burble in a two-piece Turkish teapot.

Unforgettable tea time

While sailing the southwest coast of Turkey, instead of eating on our boat one morning, we treated ourselves to a village breakfast in the gorgeous harbour of Çiftlik Limani.

Along with a drool-worthy spread of local foods, an elaborate two-tiered teapot arrived, water steaming in the bottom pot, black tea steeping in the top. The idea is to dilute the tea with hot water to one’s preference and then hit it with lots of sugar.

I came to love everything about Turkish tea: the small, tulip-shaped glass served on a little porcelain saucer and the metal spoon that clinks enticingly as you stir in the sugar. I’m not a sweets person, but I was soon up to two lumps per half-cup of strong, astringent tea that somehow slakes one’s thirst on a hot, hot Turkish morning, noon or night.

It’s always tea time and it is one of the country’s many unforgettable pleasures.

“While Pierre is a highly experienced sailor, and Deb and my husband Alex are able hands, I am your typical Calgary landlubber who doesn’t know a clove hitch from a cloven hoof. What I don’t know about sailing is a lot.

TURKEY: Placid bays, blustery seas, sheer joy

FROM EI

Each couple gets a week in it, and it's pure luxury compared to the aft berths — essentially claustrophobic plastic tubes beneath the rear end of the boat.

In the galley there's a table for six and a well-equipped kitchen. Hatches provide much needed ventilation, especially in the heads, which reek from the get-go. (Sanitations are few and far between so standard practice is to, ugh, dump one's tanks in open water.)

Although I am reassured again and again by my patient friends that a big boat like this is unsinkable, that it is completely normal and even fun when it heels — “tres sportif!” — and that we are in zero danger, I remain mostly unconvinced.

In Çiftlik Limani — “farm harbour” — my stress evaporates as Khadir, a deckhand for the Rafet Baba Restaurant, waves us in and expertly helps us moor at the restaurant's jetty.

Here's the deal: Small restaurants have sprung up to provide free moorage, hot showers, electricity, fresh water and Wi-Fi to the growing yacht traffic plying the coast from May to October. In an unspoken understanding, boaters eat a meal at these open-air establishments — in the company of friendly, if hungry, stray cats and dogs.

We dine at the Rafet Baba on meze (Turkish-style tapas), salads, lamb kebabs and grilled calamari. Khadir, our good-humoured deckhand cum waiter, urges us to try Turkish breakfast the following morning.

We do, and it's a locavore's delight: platters of sliced tomatoes and cucumbers; dishes of olives, dried apricots, cherry jam, fresh unsalted village butter and clotted sweet cream; plates of fried free-range eggs and local cheeses. There are endless glasses of hot, sweet tea and warm, pillowy flatbread made by the restaurant owner's wife in a wood-fired oven shaded by a big tree near the kitchen. Heaven on toast, really.

And the honey. Our hosts are from the nearby village of Bayir, located up a steep mountain about six kilometres from the coast, where beekeeping accounts for 80 per cent of the villagers' income; the balance comes from tourism. The orange-blossom honey is liquid flower power.

The people here appear contented, the picture of robust Mediterranean health, and I could have lingered all day in Çiftlik Limani, drinking tea, swimming from the bay's pebble beach and learning to bake village bread, but off we sail on a gentle wind.

The landscape — sun-blasted mountains, pockets of pine forest and sage-scented air — reminds me of the Okanagan, but the rocky slopes are dotted with olive trees and shaggy goats, and the water is salty. We anchor in the opal blues and greens of a small bay to go snorkelling and it's wonderful to have a shower on the stern deck to sluice off the salt in the 40 to 45C temperatures. (Other than needle-nose garfish, the odd parrotfish and schools of pretty little blue fish, we see little marine life, which makes swimming worry-free.)

The “pinch-me-I-can't-believe-I'm-here” vibe continues as we sail into Serçe Limani, and moor in the deep cut bay. We're drying off after a late afternoon swim when along comes an affable rowboat-based entrepreneur to show us his wares: hand-spun towels, honey, pottery, figs, almonds and dried sage.

He is charming, telling us about his three girls, his limited English surpassing our non-existent Turkish. I am continually warmed by Turks' friendliness even though I struggle to learn more than “hello.”

That night is rough: gusts of wind slam the bay all night, banging the main halyard (the line that hoists the mainsail) against the metal mast, which reverberates down into the forward berth where Alex and I try to sleep. The rocking of the boat, however, is comforting and I never suffer from sea sickness. Instead, I experience “landsickness,” feeling woozy whenever we go ashore.

Days melt away as we sail, swim



A mosque overlooks the moored fishing boats in Bozburum's municipal harbour.

Photos: Alex Berenyi/For the Calgary Herald



and anchor in empty bays where we cook for ourselves, or moor in pretty seaside villages for the full restaurant experience.

Toward the end of the first week nervousness nibbles again around the edges of my holiday glow. The gusts are back, along with ocean swells and whitecaps. Sailing from the harbour town of Bozburum, I realize that my terror of sailing is still there as I “ride the bronco,” my spine arching instinctively to counteract the see-sawing motion of the pitching boat. I am close to tears as we take refuge in Dirsek Bay.

The wind blows hard as we attempt to anchor, causing us to drift and cross anchor lines with a boat of Germans. Achtung! We try to bring up both anchors but it's too heavy, and the breaker on our winch trips.

Deb springs into action, calling our charter company by cellphone to locate the breaker (in one of the aft berths). Leaving me below deck to switch it on, she dons mask and snorkel and plunges overboard to assess the situation underwater.

After much confusion and shouting in multiple languages in the blazing heat — and Deb uncomfortably close to being crushed in the water between the two boats — we untangle and set our anchor and stern lines. I retreat to my berth for a little self-indulgent cry.

Although I love the water, sailing is an alien environment. I suck at knots and hauling in the sheets. I don't know the terminology. My arms and legs are bruised from scampering about the cockpit and deck and barking my shins on ladders. Every fingernail is broken and my palms have blisters, despite a pair of sailing gloves. I'm addled from heat, jet-lag and poor sleep.

I compose myself, go up on deck where my crew are having a much-needed beer. They look concerned. I tell them I feel a bit useless on this crash sailing course. Deb sympathizes: it's tough to be an adult “learner.” No one likes to be temporarily incompetent, to be “at sea,” so to speak. We talk it out, clear the air, deepen our friendship.

The next morning in Dirsek dawns calm and clear, and it's made that much sweeter by a lovely young villager delivering warm, fresh bread



by boat.

The coming week delivers more tears: going from 10 to 30 knots in seconds after rounding a cape on the way to Knidos; being way too far from land (for my timid tastes) on a blustery day.

But it brings many more unforgettable experiences: hiking up to an ancient castle ruins to marvel at the turquoise seas surrounding it; buying a week's worth of fruit, vegetables, olives and feta for about \$15 at a farmers' market in Datça; meeting a blue-eyed Turkish feminist-tour guide-entrepreneur and her family in the sleepy village of Palamut.

One of the best is admiring a Turkish crescent moon and stars as we spin, round and round our anchor on an tempestuous night (Canada Day, as it turns out), feeling equal parts of fear that we'd be swept out to sea and the sheer joy of being alive.

Fresh bread is a staple of the Turkish diet. Left, a village woman makes bread at the Rafet Baba Restaurant. Above, perfect sailing conditions await on the seas, although gusts can produce swells and whitecaps.

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I've been putting together special cruise packages for 22 years with Holland America, and there are very few times when I wonder myself whether the offer is too good to be true! Yes, the two Vancouver to Sydney sailings are 100% real and these deals are truly exceptional. The rules, however, are strict. They are based on very specific flights back to Vancouver, so if you want to extend your stay in Sydney this will affect the price considerably — but if you're good to take it the way you see it, you'll love the value. It is for new bookings only and they must be paid for in full by August 15. Prices are per person based on 2 sharing. The prices listed do not include your flight from Calgary to Vancouver or from Vancouver back to Calgary or any optional (which I highly recommend) pre-cruise accommodations in Vancouver. CruisePlus has a limited amount of space, so you need to act fast.

These repositioning sailings are really about the tropical islands and climate, gorgeous sunsets and relaxing sea days. You'll board the ms Oosterdam on September 28 in Vancouver on your 25 day cruise with ports in Seattle, Hawaii, Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu and New Caledonia in a balcony stateroom for only \$2899 CAD pp — remember, this includes your flight from Sydney to Vancouver and all taxes! If you want to spoil yourself, we have special pricing on Neptune Suites as well.

Another option with a similar itinerary aboard the ms Volendam in



Sydney's most famous landmark

a vista suite for 24 nights on September 24 is \$3899 CAD pp including air and taxes.

Besides these 2 sailings we still have some super prices on other September and early October sailings including the ms Zaandam South America to Valparaiso or Buenos Aires, the ms Statendam 14 day Alaska & Coastal, the ms Zaandam Hawaii (roundtrip Vancouver), the ms Zuiderdam Panama Canal, a couple of incredible Alaska 7 day sailings on the ms Oosterdam, the ms Rotterdam 27 – 85 day sailings from Southampton, and several prime Med and Transatlantic itineraries too.

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