

# THE SERIOUS TRAVELER™

TOUR LISTING FROM TRAVEL CONCEPTS INTERNATIONAL, INC. • FALL 2015

Greeting from the Serious Traveler!

This year we are celebrating 30 years! What a remarkable journey.

Herein you will find the tours we are offering for 2016. The world is such a fascinating place and we have wonderful counterparts in all four corners. However, we have narrowed the listing to some places we really hope you will visit soon. You'll see several Iran trips including one to sites even first and second time guests have not yet visited. We are also focusing on the Balkans. You might have seen our ad in *Travel & Leisure* magazine this month. The pretty girl is my 10-year old granddaughter who we dressed in traditional garb after the Bulgarian Folk Festival this past summer. It begs me to comment on the thought of grandparents inviting their young family members to travel with them as I did, planting the seed you and I already have for better understanding the world and its people. We aren't planning a trip with multiple children, but one or two in a group adds a delightful spice to the mix. My other granddaughter, age 12, even did her homework by Internet from Russia and sent back pictures and remarks to her class!

If you don't see a destination you were expecting, then please send an email directly to me and we will try to keep you informed for the future. You plan well in advance. We do too.

Enjoy our printed newsletter and register for our email updates. We'd like to spark your interest in new destinations and provide much more information than we can put in this little newsletter. Be well, explore the world and stay in touch!



*Gwen*

-Gwen Erwood  
President, Travel Concepts International

## ASIA

### Sri Lanka's Art & Culture

Visit six of Sri Lanka's UNESCO Sites—Anuradhapura, Dambulla, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya, Kandy, Galle, Ruhunu National Park in Yala plus the enchanting Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage. Dine elegantly and stay in a historic beach resort in Bentota designed by iconic architect Geoffrey Bawa.

**\$4180 FROM COLOMBO AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

□ JANUARY 23 - FEBRUARY 4, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/SriLanka.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/SriLanka.html)

*(Asia continued on page 2)*

## EUROPE

### Treasures of Russia

Red Square at night in Moscow, three days in the countryside of the Golden Ring with Vladimir, Suzdal and Fedoskino. St. Petersburg by Sapsan fast train. Travel with retired American diplomat, Charles Magee, who will present personal insight into U.S.-Russian relations and invite you as VIP

*(Europe continued on page 3)*

## AFRICA

### Ethiopia's Historic Route

Experience the colorful St. Michael's Day festival, led by richly clad Christians surrounding their rock-hewn churches of Lalibela. Make a two-day excursion to soak up the amazing and pristine nature of the Simien Mountains National Park. Ancient Axum, which purportedly holds the Ark of the Covenant. Sip Ethiopia coffee; you are 7 years younger here!

**\$5190 FROM WASH, DC VIA ETHIOPIA AIRLINES**

□ FEBRUARY 11 - 23, 2016

□ JANUARY 2017 FOR TIMKAT FESTIVAL

[SeriousTraveler.com/Ethiopia.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Ethiopia.html)

### Omo Valley African Safari

Enjoy comfortable and unique lakeside lodges, surrounded by wildlife. Make daily excursions to meet the fascinating Konso, Desanech, Hamar, Mursi and Dorze tribal people and learn about their culture. May be a separate tour or an extension to Ethiopia's historic route.

**\$3870 AS AN EXTENSION TO HISTORIC ROUTE**

□ FEBRUARY 22 - MARCH 4, 2016

□ JANUARY 2017 EXTENSION TO TIMKAT TOUR

[SeriousTraveler.com/Ethiopia.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Ethiopia.html)

## THE AMERICAS

### Cuba—People-to-People

The transition is coming! On our final people-to-people trip, experience Cuba at a unique time before it changes forever. Our fully licensed program, you'll meet outstanding artisans and celebrities in music and art, partake in celebrated Cuban cuisine and enjoy private concerts. Anyone can see the old cars, but how many will travel to a delectable dinner in one of the old convertibles roaring down the Prado?

**\$4220 FROM MIAMI VIA CHARTER FLIGHT**

□ APRIL 3 - 10, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/Cuba.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Cuba.html)

### Crafts and Culture of Ecuador

Join expert Mauricio for visits to artisan's workshops in Otavalo, Puyo and Guayaquil. From the Amazon rainforests to the western lowlands, see ancient Inca ruins, the majestic Andes and the Avenue of the Volcanoes. Take the train on Devils' Nose.

**\$3990 AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

□ SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 10, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/Ecuador.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Ecuador.html)

Give someone in your family and yourself one of the greatest gifts—exposure to other worlds, other peoples, and other ideas. “Horizons broaden so much more the higher we are flying.” —Jonathan Livingston Seagull

The elections and the deal have made a huge difference in the public perception of Iran. Finally the country is being discovered as an incredible tourist destination. We have steadily been offering tours through difficult times since 1999, and it is with great pleasure to see large companies, even the *NY Times*, starting to feel confident to offer trips. This means that the hotel space is under great demand. We have five trips for 2016, and you can be assured of the top guides, accommodations and services.



In considering which is best for you, consider this. *Persian History and Culture* and *Treasures of Iran* are perfect for first time visitors. They all include Tehran, Shiraz, and Isfahan as well as Yazd. The *Summer Discovery of Persia* program is also designed for first-time guests, but scheduled when the academic community can participate. *Persia Revisited* was designed for those who want to see the west as well as return to the Big Three—Tehran, Shiraz and Isfahan. We include Yazd, the city in the desert too. Then we have a brand new trip, *Iran Through the Ages* and it is designed for those who want to go back for the second or third time and covers all new ground in the Northeast (Mashad), in the Northwest (Tabriz) and the Southwest (Susa) finishing in Shiraz. Are you with me? The trips are spaced throughout the year. Iran’s top guide, Bahman Zenhari will take the *Persia Revisited* group and also *Iran Through the Ages*, and filmmaker Jahangir Golestan, who was born in Isfahan, will escort the *Treasures of Iran*. This trip has a more leisurely pace with extra days in Shiraz and Isfahan. There is so much to see and experience. Come along! Be part of a small group no larger than 15. Even 20 or 25 is too large of a crowd! See the routes on our website at [SeriousTraveler.com/IranRoutes.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/IranRoutes.html)

## ASIA

(Asia continued from page 1)

### Persia Revisited

See seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites and all four Persian capitals: Ecbatana, Susa, Pasargadae, and Persepolis. From Tehran travel west to Hamadan to see the tomb of Esther and the monument to Avicenna, Persian Father of Modern Medicine. Continue to Kermanshah and Ahwaz to visit the site of Susa and the Chogha-Zanbil ziggurat. We won’t miss Shiraz, Persepolis, Pasargadae, the capital of Cyrus the Great, and everyone’s favorite, Isfahan. We’ll take in the desert city of Yazd to learn about ancient technological systems using *bafgirs* (wind-catchers), *qanats* (water channels from the mountains), and *yakhchals* (ice houses), making life in the desert along the Silk Road thrive. We still have a place for you. Call today!

**\$6840 FROM JFK VIA TURKISH AIR**

☐ FEBRUARY 12 - 27, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/Iran.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Iran.html)

### Treasures of Iran

Be inspired by the mosaics, architecture and gardens of Persia. See the fabulous crown jewels in Tehran. Persepolis, Shiraz, and Yazd can’t be missed. Stay in a delightful caravanserai in the exquisite and dazzling Isfahan, where you’ll soak up the beauty that has enthralled visitors for centuries.

**\$6980 FROM JFK VIA TURKISH AIRLINES**

☐ APRIL 26 - MAY 12, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/TreasuresIran.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/TreasuresIran.html)

### Summer Discovery of Persia

If you need a summer trip, here’s one that visits eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Itinerary includes Tehran, Shiraz, Persepolis, Pasargadae, Isfahan, Natanz, Kashan, Zanjan, Tabriz, Ardabil, Astara, Masuleh, and Anzali. Although this is the hot season we’ll start early, enjoy the monuments with no crowds, and have a relaxing siesta at our deluxe hotels in the afternoon. The 2015 group loved it!

**\$7840 FROM JFK VIA TURKISH AIRLINES**

☐ JULY 16 - AUGUST 3, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/DiscoverIran.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/DiscoverIran.html)

### Iran Through the Ages

Join Bahman Zenhari and Gwen for a brand new tour honoring Persian poets, literature, early religions, philosophers, architects and rulers. Fly directly to Ferdowsi’s Mashad and see Omar Ahayyám’s Neishapur, then wind our way from Anzali on the Caspian Sea, to Masuleh and Ardabil to Tabriz. Search for American Howard Baskerville, and ascend to the remote Takht-e-Soleyman! On to Hamadan, Kermanshah, Ahwaz, Susa, Bishapour, and Firozabad. Fly home from Shiraz.

**\$7430 FROM JFK VIA TURKISH AIRLINES**

☐ SEPTEMBER 23 - OCTOBER 9, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/AgesofIran.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/AgesofIran.html)

### Iran - Passage Through Persian History & Culture

Don’t let the naysayers diminish your enthusiasm. Experience Persian hospitality for yourself! Persepolis, a short drive from Shiraz, is one of the greatest archaeological sites in the world. Isfahan is a unique city with exquisite mosaic-clad domes, bridges and Persian gardens. Travel in security with our experienced Iranian tour manager. This perfect introductory tour also includes Kerman, the citadel of Rayen; Shiraz, the city of “Roses and Nightingales”; Pasargadae, the capital of Cyrus the Great; Yazd, the city in the desert and safe haven for Zoroastrians.

**\$6840 FROM JFK VIA TURKISH AIRLINES**

☐ NOV 1 - 16, 2016

☐ NOV 16 - 20, 2016 CASPIAN EXT • \$2240

[SeriousTraveler.com/Iran.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Iran.html)

### Treasures of Northern India with Festival of Colours of Holi

Celebrate the Festival of *Holi* in Rajasthan with the erstwhile royal family. Take heritage walks in Pushkar and Varanasi. Sunset boat ride on Lake Pichola. Lecture series in Udaipur and Agra by eminent scholars. Welcome the dawn on a boat ride on the Ganges. Taj Mahal?



Of course! Optional extension to Assam.

**\$4640 FROM DELHI AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

☐ MARCH 20 - APRIL 2, 2016

☐ APRIL 1 - 9, 2016 OPTIONAL ASSAM EXT

[SeriousTraveler.com/IndiaHighlights.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/IndiaHighlights.html)

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We update our website almost every day! Get the latest information online. See the itineraries, look at photos and read comments from past travelers. When you're ready, we have a wonderful brochure for you. It will answer your questions about flights, meals, and much more. The reservation form is part of the brochure. We can "pencil you in" to hold space with just a phone call. Would you like a brochure right now? We can send it as a PDF the minute we hear from you. Our brochures are not posted on our website, as we like to talk with you directly. We'd like to get acquainted and know how we may be of help to you. Send us an email, order from the website, call or cut out and mail this form to us. Your address should be on the reverse side. Please check and make any necessary corrections. If there are different departure dates or other destinations you'd like to see, let us know.

Name (if not on the reverse side) \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Affiliation (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
Tour (s) \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_

## How would you like to receive the brochure(s)?

- Send the PDF version to my email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mail a hard copy AND send the PDF version to my email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mail a hard copy please  
 Send a brochure and newsletter to my friend(s): Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Telephone/Fax 1-530-621-3007 • Tollfree in U.S.A. 1-800-762-4216 • email [Gwen@SeriousTraveler.com](mailto:Gwen@SeriousTraveler.com)

## EUROPE

(Europe continued from page 1)

guests to the Consulate in St. Petersburg.

**\$4680 INCLUDING AIR FROM JFK VIA FINNAIR**

APRIL 14 - 26, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/RussiasBest.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/RussiasBest.html)

### Colorful Easter in Bulgaria

Orthodox Easter and St. George's Day in the same week occurs only once in 25 years! We'll be in Sofia for the Palm Sunday Festival. In Kazanluk you'll meet the Thracians. Visit small towns like Koprivshitzta, Tryavna, Gabrovo, Bozhentsite, which you've probably never heard of, but will stay in your memory forever. Celebrate Easter Sunday in Plovdiv which will be the 2019 Cultural Capital of Europe, and St. George's Day in Varvara. Rila Monastery and the Rhodopes, too in the wonderful company of Lyuba, who will show you places you might never find on your own, and bring them alive with her vast knowledge and love of Balkan culture.

**\$4460 FROM SOFIA AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

APRIL 23 - MAY 7, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/Bulgaria.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Bulgaria.html)

### Precious Stones of Apulia

Free of crowds, the *heel* of Italy retains the cultural charm of the simple life combined with a rich historical heritage. See the Trulli of Alberobello, sojourn

in Baroque Lecce, visit Castellano, Martina Franca, Cisternino, Taranto and Matera in nearby Basilicata. Guided by the precious Lucia.

**\$4240 FROM BARI AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

JUNE 24 - JULY 2, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/ApuliaItaly.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/ApuliaItaly.html)

### Albania with Macedonia and Northern Greece

Our archaeologist guide will meet you in Tirana and introduce you to Kruja, Durres, Apollonia, Saranda, Gjirokastra, Permet, Korça, and Lake Ohrid. The highlight is the UNESCO site of Butrint, where our host Auron Tare was a founding director.

**\$2590 FORM TIRANA AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

MAY 30 - JUNE 9, 2016

OCTOBER 1 - 11, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/Albania.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Albania.html)

### Seven Wonders of Bulgaria

This is our most comprehensive tour of Bulgaria. From Sofia to the Black Sea with Kazanluk, Arbanassi, Varna, Plovdiv and Rila Monastery. Learn about the Thracians, the fabled



Orpheus while in the Rhodope Mountains, Byzantines and medieval Bulgarian cultures from Bulgaria's top guide.

**\$3990 FROM SOFIA AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

JUNE 9 - 19, 2015

[SeriousTraveler.com/Bulgaria.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Bulgaria.html)



### Behind the Iron Curtain - Unveiled

Rare opportunity for students of history to delve into daily life as it was during this controversial period in Bulgaria. See artifacts and structures that will soon disappear in the sands of time. This is Bulgaria's past, dedicated to the future.

**\$3760 FROM SOFIA AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

AUGUST 4 - 15, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/Bulgaria.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Bulgaria.html)

### Phi Mu Foundation Presents The Beautiful Blue Danube!

Cruise aboard the M.S. Vivaldi from Vienna to Budapest, the *Pearl of the Danube*. Included shore excursions to Melk, Bratislava and Esztergom.

**\$2590 AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

OCTOBER 17 - 24, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/PhiMuFoundation.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/PhiMuFoundation.html)

### Wild Europe to the East

Walk on the wild side of Eastern Europe in Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Albania. Five countries in two weeks with a delightful treat every day!

**\$4330 AIRFARE ADDITIONAL**

OCTOBER 2 - 15, 2016

[SeriousTraveler.com/Balkans.html](http://SeriousTraveler.com/Balkans.html)



\*ALL DATES AND RATES ARE AS OF NOVEMBER 2015 AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

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# TRAVEL CONCEPTS INTERNATIONAL

## Celebrating our 30th Year!

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WWW.SERIOUSTRAVELER.COM



SERIOUS TRAVELER...

### 2016 TOURS

### SAVE FOR REFERENCE!

Sign up for Email Updates at [SeriousTraveler.com](http://SeriousTraveler.com)

#### Why Travel With TCI?

We are not your typical tour company. We are different in the places we visit, the way in which we travel, and the people who join us! And we're proud of our differences!

#### Expert Guides

Our tours are led by hand-picked, local guides who are fun, friendly and knowledgeable. They meet you upon arrival and stay with you throughout. Our guides are also our close friends. As friends do, they share perspective from their part of the world.

#### Life Experiences

Get ready for some great fun. We're always observant, flexible and watchful for serendipitous opportunities that touch and change our lives (and the lives of those we meet) in a positive way. You'll never be the same. Who would have expected travelers to be a part of the reunion of adopted Romanian children and their birth mother? It happened!

#### Detailed Brochures

The descriptions are here to entice you to call us. If the dates and destinations meet your needs, learn more. Rather than produce huge catalogues, we provide a detailed brochure for each specific tour. These are available by PDF or post. Just call or email to order. As a preview, look for the itinerary on our website. If you need help in navigation, please call.

#### Personalized Attention

You are unique and not just a number to us. We are available to assist—before, during and after your tour. The greatest compliment we receive is that so many travel with us again and again. We happily provide references.

#### We Go All Over

Yes, we go to Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. In 2016 we have a special focus on Bulgaria and Iran—burgeoning destinations.

#### Cultural Visits

We include musical programs, cultural exchanges, performances, counterpart meetings, embassy visits, home visits, trips to schools and crafts centers, and private lectures by local experts.

#### Choose Your Air Arrangements

What's best for you is best for us. Use your mileage, secure your own tickets or let us help you find good discounted rates.

#### Small Groups

Most of our groups are 10 to 15 citizen diplomats, both men and women, singles and couples of all ages. We offer room shares for single travelers. Our travelers are simply the best. You'll fit right in!

#### Pre-trip Study Material

Since we believe that enjoyment of the journey begins long before departure when you begin learning about your destination, we prepare you with informative pre-trip study material.



SERIOUS TRAVELER...

*Cultural Tours to Better Understand the World and its People*

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