

Club traveler

DREAM • PLAN • GO

Take Me to the RIVER

See Europe From a Riverboat Cruise

&

BORA BORA

GPS LUGGAGE

PET-FRIENDLY RESORTS

Hilton Grand Vacations Club

The new Orlando Eye, a 400-foot observation wheel on International Drive, was modeled after the famous London Eye.



What's your favorite vacation activity? Tell us and send your pictures to feedback@clubtraveler.com.

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SUMMER 2015

DREAM • PLAN • GO

COVER STORY



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Consider a riverboat cruise for your next European vacation

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Travel Tip

Traveling internationally? Check the expiration date on your passport. Many countries require that your passport be valid for at least six months from the dates you plan to visit the country.

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Dear Club Member



It is my great privilege to join the Hilton Grand Vacations leadership team. I couldn't be more excited about working with the Club and getting an opportunity to meet Club Members.

Hospitality is in my blood. My father worked in the hotel industry, which puts me in the unusual category of second-generation hoteliers. I've spent the last 34 years working in hotels at every job you can imagine. You can learn more about me in an interview I did with *Club Traveler* on page 26.

In this issue, we also announce our 2016 ClubPartner Perk Grand Adventure, which will be our very first Club Member river cruise. River cruises are a rapidly growing segment of travel, and we're thrilled to be offering Club Members an opportunity to experience such a unique and exciting journey. You'll find more details about this Members-only vacation and an in-depth look at European river cruises in our cover story on page 20. We hope you're inspired to join us for this incredible vacation experience.

It's such an exciting time to be a part of the Club. I look forward to getting to know many of you and hearing more about your incredible vacations.

Happy travels,

Stan Soroka
Senior Vice President
Club, Resort and Brand Services

ON THE WEB

The most popular stories this spring on **clubtraveler.com**

- 1 "Ocean 22 Pictures Revealed"
- 2 "Get Pampered in Paradise at Grand Luxxe Resorts in Mexico"
- 3 "Luggage Forward Now Available at a Discount for All Club Members"
- 4 "Beware of Fraudulent Offers"
- 5 "7 Ways to Save in Las Vegas"

Send Us Your Feedback!

What do you think about *Club Traveler*? Send us an email at feedback@clubtraveler.com.



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Dream

WHERE TO GO

Dream Vacation

Club Member **Michele Hampton**, an Owner at Hilton Grand Vacations Club at SeaWorld since 1997, says her dream vacation is to go island hopping in the South Pacific for four to six weeks. She wants to visit Fiji, Bora Bora, Tahiti and some of the less popular islands. "I first became interested in traveling to the South Pacific after I met a woman from Bora Bora while on a trip to New Orleans. Her description of her homeland was fascinating."

Where to stay: Begin your South Pacific vacation at the **Hilton Bora Bora Nui Resort & Spa**. This breathtaking resort offers overwater bungalows above a crystal blue lagoon.

James Michener, author of *Tales of the South Pacific*, called Bora Bora "the most beautiful island in the world."

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Good Timing

Schedule your next vacation around these exciting events

Autumn Aloft

Park City, Utah, September 19–20

Fall foliage is spectacular in Park City, and imagine your delight at seeing colorful hot air balloons floating across the horizon. The hot air balloon festival returned last year for the first time since the 1990s, when it grew too popular. Only 15 pilots are invited to fly balloons in the prestigious event. Balloons launch both days between 7 and 9:30 a.m.



Buckingham Palace Summer Opening

London, July 25–September 27

If you have ever wanted to visit London, 2015 might be royal timing. On September 9, Queen Elizabeth II will surpass her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria as Britain's longest-reigning monarch. Expect a jubilant atmosphere and throngs of people visiting Buckingham Palace—the state rooms are open to the public for two months during the summer.



Aloha Festivals Waikiki Ho'olaule'a

Honolulu, Hawaii, September 19

The Hawaiian word ho'olaule'a means "celebration," and that's exactly what you can expect when the annual Aloha Festival closes down the streets along Kalakaua Avenue for Hawaii's largest block party. Guests enjoy local food booths, live Hawaiian music, hula troupes and so much more. It's free and open to the public.

Surin Elephant Round-Up

Surin, Thailand, November 21–22

This colorful festival dedicated to elephants began in 1960 and is held every year on the third weekend of November in the Surin province, located in northeastern Thailand. It kicks off on Saturday with a magnificent parade featuring more than 200 elephants that are treated at the end to counters full of fruits and vegetables. Other events include elephants playing soccer and a tug-of-war against 70 Thai soldiers.



Original Zen

10 stunning spas from around the world

1. Grand Spa at Rome Cavalieri, Italy

This spectacular spa is modeled after a Turkish bath, with marble platforms and Roman mosaics. The 10 treatment rooms are themed around sunsets, deserts, forests or bamboo, and luxurious treatments range from Ayurvedic to Shiatsu.

2. eforea: spa at Hilton Grand Vacations Club on the Boulevard, Las Vegas

The sounds of the Strip fade away in this soothing spot, just steps from the Vegas action. Plan to arrive 20 minutes early to enjoy the eucalyptus steam room before your treatment (we recommend the desert stone massage).

3. Mandara Spa at Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort, Hawaii

East meets west at the largest spa in Waikiki. Choose from treatments such as a traditional Swedish massage or Hawaiian lomi lomi massage, which incorporates indigenous ingredients such as coconut and Hawaiian sea salt.

4. Guerlain Spa at Waldorf Astoria, New York

It's all about elegance at this classy spa in the center of Midtown. The 50-, 80-, or 110-minute deep-tissue massage will address any aches and pains and leave you ready to face Manhattan's busy streets.

5. eforea: spa at Hilton Queenstown, New Zealand

The Relaxation Room at this bucolic spa features floor-to-ceiling windows with views of Lake Wakatipu and the hills beyond. The Purifying Body Experience exfoliates you with native kiwifruit and walnut before covering you with a layer of warm, mineral-rich mud.

6. Waldorf Astoria Spa, Orlando

With 22 luxurious treatment rooms providing peaceful, personalized experiences (you are encouraged to plug in your own music), you'll forget it's next door to action-packed Orlando theme parks.

7. Shillim Spa at Hilton Shillim Estate Retreat & Spa, India

A short drive from metropolitan Mumbai and nestled in the Western Ghats mountain range, this serene spa features an Ayurvedic doctor on site and 90 different treatments. There's also a meditation cave and a yoga pavilion.

8. Conrad Spa at Conrad Koh Samui, Thailand

No matter how long it took you to arrive at this gorgeous hilltop resort, recovery can be yours with this lovely waterfront spa's jet-lag treatment. Pink grapefruit and juniper berry fruits stimulate the body, while chamomile and ylang ylang relax the mind.

9. Conrad Spa at Conrad Algarve, Portugal

Choose one of the breezy yet private outdoor treatment pavilions at this Portuguese property with old-school charm. Next choose from 12 scents to suit your style for the 60- or 90-minute Essential Aromatherapy Experience.

10. Diplomat Spa at Diplomat Resort & Spa, Hollywood, Florida

After a day on the Hollywood Boardwalk checking out South Florida's finest rollerbladers, indulge in a bamboo massage at this oceanfront spa, where warm bamboo stalks penetrate your muscles and promote lymphatic drainage.



THE BIG PICTURE

The Colorado River

John Wesley Powell led the first known expedition of the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon in 1869, and adventurers have been following in his oar strokes ever since. Bobbing along the river in an inflatable raft provides a unique perspective on one of America's most treasured landmarks. The Grand Canyon section of the Colorado River runs 277 miles, offering adventurers a dynamic experience from thrilling class 10 rapids to moments of calm reflection.



How to Get There

O.A.R.S., one of the most experienced outfitters providing licensed rafting tours of the Grand Canyon, offers 5- to 18-day trips that include canyon hikes, side canyons and waterfalls. Visit oars.com to learn more, and contact a Club Counselor to exchange ClubPoints and/or Bonus Points for O.A.R.S. travel certificates.



Only 16 companies are authorized to provide guided rafting excursions of the Grand Canyon.

More than 9 million people stroll through the Louvre each year, making it the world's most visited museum.

City of Light

Your guide to visiting Paris

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What to Do

No trip to Paris would be complete without seeing its famous landmarks, including the **Louvre**, **Notre Dame Cathedral** and the **Eiffel Tower**—take the stairs to one of the first two platforms to skip elevator lines.

Where to Eat

Les Papilles, located in the vibrant Latin Quarter, serves a set four-course prix-fixe meal for dinner. What the bistro lacks in options it makes up for in quality. The city's chefs are said to eat here on their nights off.

How to Get Around

Taxis are ideal for short trips, but why bother? In Paris, strolling through the city is half the fun. Use the River Seine to help you navigate—always ask yourself “Where is the Seine?” to figure out where you are.

What to Say

Here's a trick for getting Parisians to speak *anglais* (“English”): Open the conversation with your best attempt at *Je cherche...* (“I am looking for...”). Many locals will happily show off their English fluency.

Where to Stay

The chic and stylish **Hilton Paris Opera** opened earlier this year after a \$50 million renovation. The hotel is steps away from world-class shopping on the **Avenue des Champs-Élysées**.

Plan

HOW TO GET THERE



If flying into Rome, rent a car and take the coastal route (E80) to Tuscany for beautiful views of the Italian Riviera.

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Ask the Resort

If you're planning the details of your Tuscany vacation, you may be wondering how to get to **Hilton Grand Vacations Club at Borgo alle Vigne**. We asked the resort manager, Elizabeth Cherry, what she recommends.

"Borgo alle Vigne is quite unlike any other Club resort. It is situated in a most beautiful undiscovered part of Tuscany. A taxi from Pisa airport is approximately €70 (\$75) and, from Florence, approximately €130 (\$140). We do strongly recommend that Members rent a car. If flying into Pisa, we recommend Liberty Rentals. Visitors are here to see and explore Tuscany, and I would say the majority set out very early in the morning and return quite late—exhausted but fulfilled."



Right on Track

Travel writer Larry Olmsted says GPS is the next big thing in luggage

Nothing ruins a vacation faster than arriving at your destination without your luggage. Your bags may be delayed by the airline or, worse, claimed by another passenger, either on purpose or by accident. Fortunately, satellite-enabled GPS, the same technology that guides drivers and hikers, is among the hottest new trends in luggage.

Luggage giant Samsonite is the first major manufacturer to release a GPS-enabled line, its GeoTrakR collection. Using technology licensed from baggage-tracking leader LugLoc, you can trace the bag's whereabouts worldwide on your smartphone. The built-in transmitter weighs less than three ounces and, to meet FAA regulations, turns itself off when the plane is in motion. A USB port near the telescoping handle allows for easy charging; a full charge lasts more than two weeks. The GeoTrakR line includes four sizes

of 4-wheel upright spinner bags, 19"–29", priced from \$280 to \$400.

Andiamo's new iQ series, hitting shelves this fall, takes GPS a step further. It contains a proximity alarm that lets owners know when the bag is coming up the ramp—or walking away from them. So-called smart bags are packed with other high-tech features, and Andiamo includes a remote lock powered by your smartphone, a built-in scale, a removable battery pack and USB ports for device charging, and even a Wi-Fi hotspot with swappable SIM cards for global use.

Several other luggage brands, including Delsey and high-end Rimowa, have announced soon-to-be released GPS lines.

If you're not in the market for new luggage, you can retrofit your current bags with GPS. LugLoc and its chief competitor, TrakDot, sell standalone GPS tracking devices for \$50–\$70 that you can drop inside any bag.

JAMES OLIVER/CORBIS



Lighten Up

You don't need as much as you think you do. Follow these proven tips for what to pack for your next trip.

Pack three tops for every bottom, and choose clothes that mix and match. Any item you pack should go with every other item.

Take no more than three pairs of shoes: one dress, one casual and one athletic pair. Wear the bulkiest pair on your flight.

Use shoes as packing cubes. Stuff them with socks, underwear and electronic cables. Use rubber bands to bundle these items tightly.

Easy Rider

News and resources to make travel easier

Premium Bin

Long gone are the days of simple first-class and coach service. Today, travelers can choose a new kind of seat called “premium economy,” a way for airlines to charge a bit more for a more comfortable experience. Premium economy typically includes priority boarding and more legroom, though some airlines offer other comforts. Earlier this year, Delta Air Lines launched its Comfort+ service, which also includes quilted seat covers, dedicated overhead space for your carry-on bag and complimentary alcoholic beverages.

Near Miss

What should you do if you miss a flight? Travel experts say you should get to the airport as quickly as possible. Some airlines have a policy they don’t publicize called the “Flat Tire Rule” in which they’ll let you fly standby on the next flight for no fee if you show up within two hours of your scheduled departure. Be polite—it’s often at the discretion of the gate agent. If that doesn’t work, you’ll probably end up paying a change fee that often costs \$150.



Special Delivery

Don’t tote your bags to and from the airport. Luggage Forward will ship them to your resort or cruise port. Club Members receive a discounted rate when booking at luggageforward.com/hgvclub. And those traveling on our ClubPartner Perk Member cruise event this September can email partnerperks@hgvc.com to receive a certificate for \$50 off the cost of your luggage transfer.

Crown Jewel

Singapore is building the airport of the future. Its Changi Airport has begun construction on a new mixed-use complex called the Jewel that is expected to open in 2018. The glass and steel biosphere will contain shops and restaurants and connect to airport terminals. At its center, a lush indoor garden will feature a 130-foot-high “Rain Vortex” that airport officials say will be the world’s tallest indoor waterfall (pictured below).



Treasure Map

The Google Maps app for Apple and Android devices is one of the most valuable tools for travelers. Try these tricks on your next trip:

Save offline maps. Before your trip, search for your hotel and other places you expect to visit. Swipe the name at the bottom of the screen, then click the menu at top right. Select “Save offline map” so you can see the map even if you’re not connected.

Navigate the airport. Google Maps has indoor floor plans for many airports. Find the airport on your screen, and zoom in until the floor plan appears. Then scroll around to find your gate. Indoor floor plans are also available for some malls and museums.

Catch the bus. You don’t need to open another app to view public transportation schedules. Find the nearest subway or bus station on Google Maps, swipe its name at the bottom of the screen, and upcoming departure times will appear.

It's a Small World

Shutterbug Angela Tague shares tips and tricks for taking macro photos

Once you've taken dozens of pictures of turquoise oceans and majestic buildings, add another dimension to your vacation photos. Go macro. You'll treasure the rich story-telling details of extreme close-up images.

Limit your light.

Shade small subjects with your hand or body to avoid bright, overexposed images. Indirect, natural light creates even tones and rich color saturation outdoors.

If indoors, use a flash with a diffuser to soften the light or move near a window for soft, natural lighting.

Steady your shots.

A sturdy tripod is essential. Pair it with a cable release, a camera remote control or a self-timer to trip the shutter and minimize possible camera movement from pressing the button yourself, which may cause blurry photos.



Select proper subjects.

Choose small objects with ornate details or patterns such as textured seashells on Waikiki Beach or tiny freesia blooms on the Gold Coast of Australia. Use the macro lens to examine and enlarge intricacies that usually go unseen.

Focus manually.

When documenting itty-bitty details, accurate focusing is critical. The New York Institute of Photography suggests skipping autofocus and using the manual option (with a live screen preview, if available) to bring the image into focus.

Get close.

Fill the frame completely to eliminate background and foreground clutter. Place the item of main interest, such as the beady eye of a gecko in San Salvador, near the center of the frame, or askew a bit to the left or right.

Adjust exposure.

Keep close-up images sharp by using a fast shutter speed, such as 1/200 or 1/500, in the Tv (time-value) mode if you are holding the camera by hand. When using a tripod, feel free to decrease shutter speed to 1/30 or slower to allow more light to enter the camera and properly expose dimly lit subjects.



Camera Ready

Looking for a great camera for your next vacation? The **Canon EOS Rebel T5i 18-55mm IS STM Lens Kit** captures stills and video for under \$1,000. The expanded ISO sensitivity (up to 25,600 in H mode) and Handheld Night Scene mode lets you shoot stunning landmarks in low evening light without a tripod, and the stabilized lens ensures crisp shots from a moving cruise ship. Bonus feature: Seven in-camera creative filters polish images so they're ready to post online.

Dollars and Sense

Ways to cut costs on trips to Europe

The dollar is surging overseas, making trips to Europe more appealing than ever. But a strong dollar is just the beginning of an affordable European vacation.

Fly foreign airlines.

Travelers can often save on airfare by flying European airlines that connect through overlooked, but not inconvenient, hubs. Great rates to Europe can be found on Icelandair (via Reykjavik), Aer Lingus (via Dublin or Shannon) and Norwegian Air Shuttle (via Oslo).

Pick the perfect card.

Credit cards are safer than cash, but only use one with no foreign transactions fees. Good choices include United Airlines MileagePlus cards, Citi Hilton HHonors® Reserve card and Chase Sapphire Preferred, one of the few U.S.-issued cards with the microchip widely used in Europe.

Use ATMs.

Never change dollars. You get better exchange rates withdrawing local currency from ATMs. Take out only as much as you need daily. But

use machines at banks. Stand-alone ATMs, especially in airports and train stations, often have higher rates.

Take the train.

Europe has an excellent train system with high speeds at low prices, and unlike airports, trains connect to downtown city centers directly. Individual tickets are usually affordable in Europe, but the best deals are multiday passes for multiple countries. Purchase those in advance from Rail Europe offices in the States.

Avoid taxicabs.

Many European airports have rail links to the city center that are faster and cheaper than cabs. The best example is London's Heathrow Express. Also, download the Uber smartphone app before you leave. The car service is easy to use in major European cities—and you'll be billed at home in U.S. dollars.



Eat on the go.

Most European cities have a large central food market that's fun to visit and lets you eat a varied lunch for less than a sit-down meal. It's also more enjoyable to stroll around preparing a picnic than look for a restaurant. Barcelona's Mercat de San Josep de la Boqueria in the heart of Las Ramblas offers fresh fruits, pastries, tapas and much more. Try inexpensive unknown wines since quality is typically high in Europe.

Buy a sightseeing pass.

Many European cities offer passes with discounted or free admission to multiple attractions, tours, museums and public transit. For example, the Paris Pass includes more than 60 museums, several monuments, a Seine cruise, hop on/hop off open-air bus tours, and much more. Theater- and music-driven cities like London and Vienna have half-price ticket booths for same-day performances.

Go

WHAT TO DO



More than 96 million passengers traveled through the Atlanta airport in 2014. Dubai's airport services the most international passengers, at 70.4 million.



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Local Perspective

If you travel frequently, there's a good chance you've made a connection through Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. It was named the world's busiest airport for the 17th year in a row. We asked Atlanta resident Stephen Julien how to get through the airport with less hassle.

"If you have to go through security, try to avoid the giant screening area between the north and south sides. There's another security entrance on the south side behind the Delta ticketing counters that fewer people know about. Once you get through security, or if you're just making a connection, take the underground train to your terminal, but always get on the very front car. It will let you out closest to the elevator so you can bypass the crowds."



Suite Eats

Travel writer Angela Tague shares three easy meals you can make on vacation

Turkey-Pecan Salad

Makes 4 servings

Keep lunch light and flavorful. This turkey salad comes together in just a few minutes and can easily be tucked in a tortilla wrap to make it kid-friendly. If there's a farmer's market nearby, use fresh greens in lieu of bagged mixes and local berries instead of dried cherries.

Ingredients:

- 2 bags (approximately 12 cups) mixed salad greens, washed
- 4 cups precooked deli turkey, shredded or cubed
- 1 cup dried cherries
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- 1 cup feta cheese crumbles
- Salad dressing of your choice

Directions:

1. Divide the greens among four plates, using approximately 3 cups per serving.
2. Arrange 1 cup of turkey atop each salad.
3. Sprinkle $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each of cherries, pecans and feta cheese on each salad.
4. Drizzle each salad with your favorite dressing. Poppy seed or white balsamic vinaigrette complements the salad well.

Serving Suggestion: Serve fresh muffins or scones from a local bakery you may have seen while out exploring your vacation spot.

Being a Club Member means staying in suites with well-equipped kitchens or kitchenettes. Cooking your own meals not only saves you money, but also brings your family and friends together for a festive experience on vacation.



Baked Orange-Ginger Chicken

Makes 4 servings

Ready to curl up for the evening with a warm, simple dinner? Chicken is readily available and cost-effective when feeding a family on vacation.

Ingredients:

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, about 5 to 6 ounces each
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup orange marmalade
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange juice
- 4 small sweet potatoes, approximately 4 cups after peeling and chopping
- 1 tsp. fresh ginger, peeled and minced
- 1 hot pepper, sliced (optional)

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F.
2. Place the chicken breasts in a plastic sandwich bag with the marmalade and orange juice. Gently massage to combine, and let sit.
3. Wash, peel and cube the sweet potatoes. Place the potatoes mixed with the ginger in the bottom of an 8x8 baking dish.
4. Remove the chicken from the bag and arrange atop the sweet potatoes.
5. Pour the orange sauce over each chicken breast.
6. For a spicy flavor, top each chicken breast with a few slices of a local, hot pepper.
7. Cover the dish with foil and bake for 1 hour, or until the juices in the chicken run clear when pierced with a fork.
8. Use a slotted spoon to serve the potatoes and chicken, as there will be ample liquid in the bottom of the pan depending on the type of chicken used. Season with salt and pepper.

Serving Suggestion: Toss together a pre-bagged salad mix, complete with dressing and croutons, to accompany this hearty dinner.

One-Pan Breakfast Hash

Makes 4 servings

Start your day with a vitamin-packed breakfast featuring protein-rich eggs to fill you up before you tackle a day of adventure. Feel free to mix up the vegetables to showcase local flavors. Kale can be subbed for spinach, and green peppers, onions or mushrooms may be swapped out for red pepper.

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 cups frozen Southern-style hash browns (potato cubes)
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped (approximately $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups)
- 4 cups baby spinach, de-stemmed
- 8 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup precooked crumbled bacon or diced breakfast salami (optional)

Directions:

1. Measure the olive oil into a large skillet and warm on medium-high heat.
2. Add the frozen potato cubes. Pan fry for 3 minutes without disturbing. Stir, then cook another 3 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are golden brown.
3. Sprinkle the chopped bell pepper over the potatoes, lower the heat to medium and cook for 3 more minutes to soften.
4. Spread the spinach leaves over the pan, cover with a lid and allow them to wilt for 2 minutes on low heat. Then, stir spinach into hash.
5. Lightly beat the eggs and then pour over the entire pan of vegetables. Gently fold and stir until the eggs are cooked, about 4 to 5 minutes.
6. Sprinkle the hash with shredded cheese and optional meats if you prefer. Once melted, plate the hash, season to taste with salt and pepper and enjoy!

Serving Suggestion: Pair this breakfast with a side of seasonal, local fruit, such as Hawaiian pineapple cubes or halved Florida strawberries.

Golden State

3 days in Southern California

You'll leave all your stresses behind you once you arrive in SoCal. (See, even the words get simplified here.) The sun is up, the skies are clear, and with countless attractions only a seashell's throw away from Hilton Grand Vacations Club at MarBrisa, filling three days with adventure and leisure is easy. The hard part is going home.

Day 1

Go to the beach. Thirty-five miles of coastline connect Carlsbad to San Diego, spoiling you with options: Mission Beach for a buzzing carnival-like atmosphere, complete with a giant roller coaster; La Jolla Shores for activities like kayaking, snorkeling, scuba diving and surfing; or the Del Mar beaches for a quiet dip away from the crowds.

Day 2

Spend your second day at the world-famous San Diego Zoo. You'll walk a lot on your way to peek at pandas and polar bears, so bring bottled water and sunscreen. Pack lunch and picnic in the gardens at Balboa Park.

Day 3

Play a round at the scenic Crossings at Carlsbad Championship Golf Course before treating yourself to deals on designer threads at the Carlsbad Premium Outlets. In the evening, raise a glass to your three days of sun-filled fun at either Bernardo Winery or Green Flash Brewing Company.



Gateway Arch on San Diego's Mission Beach; mother and daughter Sumatran Orangutan at the San Diego Zoo.



Where to Stay

Hilton Grand Vacations Club at MarBrisa is located in Carlsbad, California, next door to LEGOLAND and a short drive from numerous Southern California attractions, including SeaWorld and the San Diego Zoo.

Water Whirled

Fun games kids can play in the swimming pool

Nothing says summer like splashing around in a spectacular pool at your favorite Club resort. Help your kids make the most of the sunshine with these fun pool games. But be sure an adult always accompanies children in the pool area and keeps a close eye on them at all times, and make sure everyone follows posted safety rules.

Pool safety comes first. Always walk slowly around the pool deck. Don't run. No diving. Do not push others into the pool and no holding anyone underwater.

Marco Polo

Choose one kid to be It. They will stand in the middle of the pool and close their eyes for 10 seconds while the other kids disperse in the pool. With his eyes still closed, It tries to find and tag the others by yelling "Marco" and listening to the others respond "Polo."

Sharks and Minnows

Pick one player to be shark, and everyone else is a minnow. All players spread out along the edge of the pool, and when an adult yells "SHARK!" all the minnows try to cross to the other side without getting touched by the shark. If tagged, they're the new shark.

Scavenger Hunt

Break the kids into two teams. Collect items that will sink—coins, goggles, plastic bottles filled with water—and while they're not looking, toss two of each item into the pool. Each team tries to collect one of every item, and whichever team does so first wins.

Octopus

Choose someone to be It. They will stand in the middle of the pool and try to touch the other kids as they travel from one side to the other. Anyone they tag must join hands like an octopus and try to tag the other kids as they swim back and forth across the pool.





Up the RIVER

21

Riverboat cruises offer travelers a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the rich culture of Europe. Travel writer **Gabriella Le Breton** reveals why you should consider a riverboat cruise for your next vacation.



Rhone River

It might surprise you to learn that river cruising and ocean cruising share only one thing in common: They both occur on water. The differences between these two popular forms of travel are vast, but can be narrowed down to the size and features of the ships, the pace of cruise life and what's included in your fare.

For centuries, rivers from the Amazon to the Zambezi have been the lifeblood of countries and continents, joining communities socially and economically while becoming symbols of immense cultural significance. River cruising offers a unique perspective on the history, culture and people of the lands these water arteries cross. Whether you're navigating the Rhine or the Ganges, the views from a riverboat are captivating and forever changing.

Sizing Up the Ships

By virtue of the waterways they navigate, river ships have always been smaller than their ocean-faring sisters. As you'll discover on most European rivers, narrow, centuries-old locks and low-slung bridges limit the dimensions of today's ships. These constraints mean the double-height theatres, glitzy casinos and lines of boutiques common on ocean ships simply aren't feasible: One restaurant, a bar and a minimalist

gym are the fairly standard amenities on riverboats.

The tide is changing, though. New ships like Tauck's Inspiration Class, Uniworld's Super Ships and Avalon Waterways' Suite Ships are upping the ante with heated swimming pools, spas and a selection of restaurants, bars and cafés. The diminutive size of river ships, which typically carry up to 200 passengers, creates an intimate onboard environment and ensures quick, easy embarkation and disembarkation.

Unlike ocean cruises, which often sail a broad loop, river cruises typically start and end at different ports as passengers sail up or down river toward their final destination. Many passengers find they'll want to spend a few nights at their departure point, end point or both. Itineraries often range from 7 to 15 days and take in at least one port every day, providing a unique opportunity to experience a rich variety of destinations in one vacation.

Many Rivers to Choose

Europe's rivers offer a bounty of magnificent destinations. You could select the rural charms of France's Garonne, Rhône and Saône rivers or Germany's Moselle River; discover the picturesque waterways of Holland and Belgium; or explore the cultural gems of the Danube and Rhine, which pass through 14 countries between them.

The Rhine, in particular, remains one of the most popular rivers to cruise. Flowing through four countries, it immerses travelers in the vast culture and beauty of Europe. You'll explore Holland's famous windmills, walk across France's signature covered bridges, and marvel at fairytale castles in the majestic Black Forest region of Germany.

The pace of a river cruise is generally slower than that of an ocean voyage (largely because most boats can't sail faster than 10 knots per hour), leaving you ample time for exploration. As so many of Europe's major cities were built close to rivers,

you'll invariably find yourself anchored right at the heart of iconic destinations like Cologne, Amsterdam, Porto, Avignon and Budapest. You can step straight off the ship into the action, and because it's rare to sail at night, there's the option to enjoy morning coffee in a local café, take one of the ship's bicycles for a spin or go for an evening stroll, as well as join the organized shore excursions.

In contrast to ocean cruising, river cruise fares generally include all, or most, shore excursions. Furthermore, you won't be guided through medieval villages, crumbling castles and bustling markets in big packs but in small groups of about 20. Many of the excursions are walking tours of the port in which you're moored, typically split into groups of varying levels of fitness, but you can also expect outings to cultural highlights in the area: a private tour of a Bordeaux château, a wine tasting among terraced Portuguese vineyards, ballet at the Kirov or an evening at Vienna's Spanish Riding School.



The Onboard Experience

Entertainment is by no means limited to shore excursions when you're on a river cruise, albeit not quite as extravagant as that found on ocean ships. Evenings will often see local musicians come aboard to deliver rousing flamenco recitals, tranquil classical performances or jazz sessions that have passengers dancing 'til midnight. Themed voyages, like those focused on wine, music, history—the list is virtually endless—feature international experts who give informal seminars and are on hand to answer questions. There are also basic language classes, tastings of local produce and talks about the cities you'll be visiting.

If you've been on an ocean cruise, you'll know that there's always a bounty of food and beverages. While most river ships lack the sheer quantity of dining options that ocean liners offer, they do strive to serve dishes and wines local to the places you visit during



3 River Cruise Essentials

Binoculars for spotting distant castles, villages and wildlife from your ship.
Sturdy boots or shoes, as you'll be doing plenty of walking, much of it along cobbled streets in Europe.

A shower cap or two: They're handy for storing damp swimsuits, keeping your camera dry in the rain and stashing the portable headsets you're loaned for shore excursions.



the voyage. Generally speaking, dining is less formal with no assigned seating, with breakfasts and lunches typically served buffet-style. But that's not an indication of lesser quality: The Uniworld fleet are the only ships afloat with a Zagat dining rating. Furthermore, the all-inclusive

nature of river cruising often extends to include unlimited or select wines, beers and bottled water in your fare.

The inclusive fares and languorous pace of river life, combined with a strong cultural emphasis on itineraries and excursions, has long made river

cruising popular with mature travelers. However, with the launch of glamorous new ships and the introduction of more active excursions and exotic destinations, younger travelers are increasingly discovering just what a fabulous way it is to explore the world.

Come Aboard

Announcing the 2016 ClubPartner Perk Grand Adventure

Hilton Grand Vacations Club is excited to announce our very first Club Member river cruise. We'll spend three nights in Amsterdam before setting sail for an 8-day cruise on the Rhine River. Best of all, we've chartered the entire ship for this once-in-a-lifetime event.

Club Members will enjoy seven nights on board the luxurious *Scenic Pearl* as you travel from Amsterdam to Basel, Switzerland, with thrilling stops in the cities Cologne, Koblenz and Mannheim.

Rates for this amazing vacation package start at 10,000 ClubPoints plus \$5,082.95 cash. For more details, visit hgvc.cruisepartner.com or visit clubtraveler.com and search for "river cruise."



10-DAY AMSTERDAM STAY AND RHINE RIVER CRUISE

October 14-24, 2016



PRE-CRUISE STAY IN AMSTERDAM
Oct 14-17 at DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Amsterdam Centraal Station

ABOARD THE SCENIC PEARL
Oct 17 - Amsterdam
Oct 18 - Amsterdam
Oct 19 - Cologne, Germany
Oct 20 - Koblenz, Germany
Oct 21 - Rüdesheim, Germany
Oct 22 - Mannheim, Germany
Oct 23 - Strasbourg, France
Oct 24 - Basel, Switzerland

Club

YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Club Members with Elite Premier status may access personalized concierge services that include exclusive restaurant reservations and premium event tickets.

Ask the Club

What are the benefits of Elite status?

The Club offers three tiers of Elite recognition privileges to Members who maintain a designated minimum number of qualifying ClubPoints annually: Elite (14,000 ClubPoints), Elite Plus (24,000 ClubPoints) and Elite Premier (34,000 ClubPoints). Elite Members receive access to a dedicated Club Member Services phone number, designated check-in area at select Club resorts, HHonors® Gold Elite status, reduced online reservation fees, discounted open season rates and other benefits. Elite Plus Members receive those privileges, plus in-room welcome gifts and upgrades at select resorts, reduced online transaction fees and other benefits. Elite Premier Members receive those privileges, plus an exclusive phone number for priority servicing, access to The Registry Collection's exclusive luxury vacation exchange, complimentary town car transfers from the airport to select Hilton Grand Vacations Club resorts, HHonors Diamond Elite tier privileges and other benefits. For a complete list of benefits, visit hgvcelite.com.



Meet Stan

Get to know the newest member of our leadership team



Your Club has a new leader. Stan Soroka has been appointed senior vice president of Club, Resort and Brand Services. To help Club Members get to know Stan better, *Club Traveler* interviewed Stan about his background in the hospitality industry, his vision for the Club and his recent travels.

How did you get started in the hospitality industry?

I am a second-generation hotelier. My father was a general manager of hotels around the country for 25 years, and I lived in hotels. During that time, we would live in rooms or apartments that were inside hotels, and we would move to various locations from Denver to Pittsburgh to Arizona to California.

He was working in the Houston area when I decided to go to college at the University of Houston, where I got a degree in hotel and

restaurant management from the Conrad N. Hilton College of Hotel and Restaurant Management. It's a dedicated program for hospitality funded by Conrad Hilton. They have a live kitchen and a Hilton hotel on campus that the students help run and manage.

From there, I worked my entire career in the hotel industry, and I've worked just about every single role at a hotel: assistant executive stewarding (which is the person who cleans the dishware), executive housekeeper, assistant front office manager, hotel manager, to name just a few.

What are you most looking forward to about your new role with the Club?

I'm looking forward to getting to know more about Club Members, which I think is a big opportunity for us. I believe it's our Club

Members who should give us direction as we move forward, so I'm constantly asking the question, what do our Owners say?

How do you foresee the Club growing over the next few years?

We're exploring some terrific opportunities that would bring more benefits to Club Members. I can't say anything specific now, but I'm very excited about some options that would provide more value at no additional cost. We'll be talking more about that over the next year, and Club Members will hear more about them in *Club Traveler*.

There is one particular development that I can share now. We are working on a new Club Member website that's in development. The new website will be more stable while continuing to provide high security standards.

Where was the last place you traveled?

I went to Japan for a week and stayed at the Conrad Tokyo. I met with our Japanese teams there and had a wonderful time. In fact, Tokyo is now my wife's favorite city. I was in business meetings all during the day, and she just hopped on trains and explored Japan by herself. The people were all very friendly, and we were just impressed at how hospitable Japan was to outsiders who may not speak the language. It was quite exciting. She wants to go back soon.

What is the best travel tip you've ever been given?

Fold your clothes in the plastic bags you get from the dry cleaners. I save those to put my clothes in because they reduce the number of creases you get in your clothes. It actually works!

What is your dream vacation?

Anywhere that has a golf course! I would love to play Pebble Beach, and I would love to play St. Andrews.

Gold Stars

What people are saying about Hilton Grand Vacations Club resorts

Hilton Grand Vacations Club at The Flamingo

Mary Hill, a Club Member who has owned at Hilton Grand Vacations Club at The Flamingo since 1992, says:

"This is my favorite Hilton Grand Vacations Club resort. I became an Owner in 1992 and seldom have a complaint about anything at this resort. Management and staff are responsive and cooperative in all areas. In fact, the concierge provided us extra assistance when trying to recover a lost billfold full of money and credit cards!"

Tip: The resort shares the grounds with the Flamingo Las Vegas, and inexperienced taxi drivers may drop you off at its entrance. Tell your driver to take you to Linq Lane, off East Flamingo Road.

Hilton Grand Vacations Club at McAlpin – Ocean Plaza

Cindy Barnes, a Club Member who has owned at Hilton Grand Vacations Club at SeaWorld since 1998, says:

"I purchased in 1998 and have visited Hawaii, Las Vegas, Orlando and Sanibel Island to name a few. Always a great experience, but a real favorite is South Beach for the weather, restaurants and the beach."

Tip: Miami Beach is a popular destination that fills up quickly. Request reservations as early as possible—Club reservations can be requested up to 276 days prior to desired check-out date.

Hilton Grand Vacations Club at SeaWorld

Elizabeth Moretti and Mary Villani, Club Members with Elite status who have owned at Parc Soleil by Hilton Grand Vacations Club since 2004, say:

"We just spent 16 days at Hilton Grand Vacations Club at SeaWorld. It was our fourth stay there and we just love it. The suites are immaculate and very comfortable, and the staff is wonderful. They took care of ordering our rental car and making sure that our needs were fulfilled. It's like our home away from home. We will be back!"

Tip: The resort provides complimentary shuttle service to SeaWorld, Aquatica, Discovery Cove and Universal Orlando.

Want to give a shout-out to your favorite Hilton Grand Vacations Club resort? Email us at feedback@clubtraveler.com. We may feature your comments.





Ruff Life

Your pets are welcome at some RCI exchange resorts

Pets are part of your family, and many families wouldn't dream of going on vacation without them. Playing fetch with your dog in the surf can be one of the great joys of summer.

Not all resorts allow pets—for good reason. Other guests may be allergic, and some mischievous pets (not yours, of course!) may make noise or damage the furnishings.

Did you know that some RCI exchange resorts allow guests

to bring their four-legged family members? To find resorts that do, go to the RCI search page and select a region you'd like to visit. In the "Resort Amenities" menu in the left-hand column, click the "Pets Allowed" link. You'll see a list of resorts that allow pets, though keep in mind they may charge additional fees or require a pet deposit.

Before taking your pet on vacation, you should heed practical travel

and safety tips. The American Veterinary Medical Association recommends that all pets be properly vaccinated before a trip, and you should travel with records. Look online before you leave for a local veterinarian in case of an emergency. If you're driving, use an appropriate carrier or harness for your pet. If flying, book nonstop flights and avoid flying during busy times such as holidays.





Going Places

4 exchange destinations to book for your next vacation

PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

Imagine a majestic oasis filled with midcentury modern architecture and lush, green lawns in the middle of the California desert. That's Palm Springs, a resort city known for its laidback charm, outdoor activities and 354 days of sunshine each year. You could spend an entire week relaxing by your resort's sparkling pool. But don't forget to explore Southern California's natural beauty. Joshua Tree National Park, known for its giant branching yuccas, is just an hour's drive, while the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway will transport you 8,000 feet to the top of San Jacinto Peak for incredible views of the surrounding landscape. You'll pass through five life zones on the way up as you travel from Sonoran Desert to alpine forest at the top of the mountain.



OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND

If you're looking for the perfect beach vacation, look no further than Ocean City, the quintessential American beach town. Located on the coast of Maryland overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, it is a popular vacation destination for people all over the mid-Atlantic region. Ten miles of sandy beaches offer swimming and sunbathing, but the historic three-mile boardwalk is what really sets Ocean City apart. Featuring arcades, shops and old-fashioned foods like salt-water taffy and caramel popcorn, it's no wonder it frequently appears on "best boardwalk" lists.

FT. LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

Why visit just one Florida destination when you can have two? Ft. Lauderdale is 30 minutes north of Miami, close enough that you can enjoy the fancy restaurants and glitzy nightlife of South Beach, but far enough away that you can escape to laid-back, less-crowded tranquility. Once a spring break party spot, Ft. Lauderdale now attracts a more upscale crowd taken in by its luxury shopping malls, numerous coffee shops and al fresco restaurants. But it's the beach that draws most people, and Greater Ft. Lauderdale delivers with 23 miles of golden sand and clear blue-green waters.



SILVERCREEK, COLORADO

A Colorado Rockies vacation is an outdoor lover's dream. Silvercreek, a tiny resort community on the edge of Rocky Mountain National Park, offers so much to do, from hiking and horseback riding to skiing and ice-skating. The Inn at Silvercreek is a pet-friendly resort with walking paths and spacious rooms. Ideally situated for access to Winter Park, Granby Ranch and Rocky Mountain National Park, it's perfect for families seeking outdoor activities or couples looking for a romantic getaway.



Ready to explore exchange vacation destinations or book an exchange vacation with RCI? Log in to your member website at hgvclub.com or myhiltonclub.com. Then click the "My Club" tab and select the "RCI Affiliated Resorts" link.

DESERT OASIS

Club Members share their vacation memories



Jim and Carol Ilten

Club Members since 2010

Recent trip: Palm Desert,
California, September 2014,
Club Intrawest – Palm Desert

“This was our first stay at Club Intrawest in the desert, and our week there was more than we had anticipated. It’s a beautiful property with several pools—I think five in all. Every single staff member was friendly and helpful. It was quiet and restful, yet there was plenty to do at the resort and in the area. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay and plan to return.

They have so much there for guests to do. We enjoyed the fire pit and the swimming pools, checked out several movies at the Club’s registration center to enjoy in our unit, and went on a guided nature hike to take in the scenery and learn about desert plant life. We also played a round of golf at the Cimarron, Indian Canyon and Desert Willow courses. The Desert Willow course is adjacent to Club Intrawest, and both it and Indian Canyon are beautiful courses that are fun to play.

The two most memorable meals were lunch at Sherman’s Deli (there are two locations in town), where the food is both plentiful and delicious, and dinner in “downtown” Palm Springs at Sammy G’s. We went there in the evening and sat outdoors on the lighted patio. It was so romantic, and both the food and the service were great.

I think the highlight of the trip was the ride on the tramway and the view of Palm Springs from the top. At the mountain station there are several display cases containing examples of local wildlife. There’s a wonderful outdoor picnic area and a large indoor cafeteria. A movie room runs a video explaining when, why and how the tramway was built. It’s truly an engineering marvel! It was just a magnificent experience, and I would not hesitate to do it again when we have guests from out of town who haven’t been there. For those who like to hike, there are many trails to explore. It’s a very worthwhile way to spend half a day (or even longer if you take walking/hiking shoes and a backpack and are prepared to explore). And do take binoculars and a camera; the views are spectacular!”

VACATION
TIP:

The Palm Desert area has more than 100 golf courses and gets an average 348 days of sunshine a year. Expect a great game any time of the year.



Hilton Grand Vacations Club

COMING THIS FALL!
GET READY FOR A BRAND-NEW
ONLINE EXPERIENCE.

We're updating the Club Member website with a modern design and sleek new features. Stay tuned for more information about the all-new **hgvclub.com**.

A VACATION STATE OF MIND

