

The Alliance

bulletin

Issue 158: mid-March 2014

www.itwalliance.com

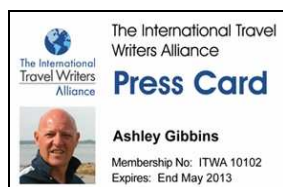
Providing key information on a no-frills format for professional who travel to write, edit, broadcast or create images. Editor : Ashley Gibbins : Ashley@itwalliance.com

Registering with the Alliance

To register with the Alliance visit : www.itwalliance.com, and register as a :

- **Member** : travel writers, broadcasters and photographers
- **Editor** : commissioning editors
- **Partner** : travel and tourism industry organisations, or
- **Agency** : agency representatives with travel or tourism clients

The Alliance press card



The International Travel Writers Alliance Press Card now provides Alliance journalists with formal recognition of their status and standing – and a roving ambassador's role - in the profession.

See Appendix one for the directory of opportunities for press card holders.

Join and follow



http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=2978414&trk=hb_side_g



@writersalliance

The Alliance bulletin

Working with the Alliance

The following travel industry partners and agencies have registered with the Alliance and are keen to work with Alliance travel writers, editors, broadcasters and photographers.

Other Alliance partners and agencies can be found at www.itwalliance.com.

Partners

The Vivat Trust (UK)

The Vivat Trust is a charity and a UK building preservation trust, who restore dis-used historic buildings. After restoration the buildings open as unique and unusual holiday lets. The income from lettings ensure on-going maintenance of these buildings.

Visit : www.vivat-trust.org. Contact : Bronwyn Neal at bronwyn@vivat-trust.org.

Mount Stuart, Isle of Bute, Scotland

One of the world's great houses, Mount Stuart, ancestral home of the Marquess of Bute, is one of the most technologically advanced houses of its age and is arguably the finest piece of domestic Victorian architecture to emerge from Britain's Gothic Revival in the 19th Century.

Set in 300 acres, the grounds are recognised as some of Europe's finest gardens and include a collection of both exotic and native flora spanning several gardens, each set against the dramatic backdrop of the Firth of Clyde.

Spectacular interiors include the stunning White Marble Chapel and magnificent Marble Hall complete with kaleidoscopic stained glass.

A Fine Art Collection and astounding architectural detail presents both stately opulence and unrivalled imagination.

With something for all the family, this award winning visitor attraction offers excellent restaurant facilities, Gift Shop, way-marked walks, picnic areas, Adventure Play Area, a full events programme, contemporary visual arts exhibition and six self-catering properties.

Visit : www.mountstuart.com. Contact : Kathryn McLaughlin at Kathryn@mountstuart.com.

Drayton Manor Theme Park, Staffordshire

Drayton Manor Theme Park, near Tamworth, Staffordshire, is one of the UK's leading attractions.

For adventure seekers there are adrenaline-inducing thrill rides, including *Shockwave*, Europe's only stand-up coaster, and drop-tower, *Apocalypse* which was voted UK's scariest ride by Channel 5's *The Gadget Show*.

Air Race, an aero-thrill ride, launches in summer 2014, with banks, loops and weightlessness to test even the most experienced thrill seeker.

For the young there is Europe's only *Thomas Land™*, featuring 21 rides and attractions based on the popular characters from the UK's number one pre-school brand, *Thomas & Friends™*.

Drayton Manor also has 4D cinema and a 15-acre zoo with over 100 different animal species from around the world.

Visit : www.draytonmanor.co.uk. Contact : Lisa O'Keeffe at Lisa@gough.co.uk.

Birding Ecotours

Birding Ecotours provides small group and custom-made birding and wildlife tours worldwide. We donate a minimum of 10 % of profits to conservation and local communities

Visit : www.birdingecotours.co.za. Contact : Chris Lotz at info@birdingecotours.co.za.

Discover Walks

Travel Company Discover Walks help visitors to discover major cities, with native-born guides on walking tours and authentic activities including ethnic cooking classes, photo tours, traditional sports.

Discover Walks activities are now available in Paris, San Francisco, Barcelona and Prague.

Visit : www.discoverwalks.com. Contact : Alexandre Gourevitch at alexg@discoverwalks.com.

The Baden-Baden Convention & Visitors Office

The Baden-Baden Convention & Visitors Office is the on site partner for all travelling to Baden-Baden and the region and promotes the elegant spa town Baden-Baden within Germany and abroad.

It provides hotels and sightseeing programs, special packages as well as tour guides and transport services. Furthermore it is responsible for the webpage www.baden-baden.com providing a whole spectrum of information for travellers and journalists.

Furthermore it keeps information and pictures for journalists from all over the world and supports research on site.

Visit : www.baden-baden.com. Contact : Marie-Lena Kuttruff at <mailto:kuttruff@baden-baden.com>

Dublin Tourism

Dublin Tourism is a state appointed, commercial agency with a strategic partnership of key stakeholders in tourism in the Dublin Region.

Dublin Tourism's principal mission is to enhance Dublin's economy through tourism development and servicing by marketing the Dublin region on a world-wide basis as a premier destination for the business and leisure traveller.

Visit : www.visitdublin.com. Contact : Áine Kavanagh at akavanagh@dublintourism.ie.

The Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance

Created in November 2000 through a partnership with the Canadian Tourism Commission, CSTA has grown from 18 founding members to over 400 members including 142 municipalities, 200+ national and provincial sport organisations and a variety of product and service suppliers to the industry.

Sport tourism is now the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry.

One of the CSTA's key objectives is to market Canada internationally as a preferred sport tourism destination.

Canada has a long and proud history of hosting international sport events including three Olympic Games , two Pan American Games, four Commonwealth Games and a variety of single sport world championships.

Visit : www.canadiansporttourism.com. Contact : Krista Benoit at kbenoit@canadiansporttourism.com.

News

The Schlitterbahn Kansas City Waterpark, Kansas

Verruckt, the world's tallest, fastest, steepest water slide will opened at the Schlitterbahn Kansas City Waterpark, in Kansas City, in late May 2014.

Verruckt (which translates from German as 'Insane' in English) is approximately 17 storeys high and boasts a descent speed of 65mph following a 264 step climb.

Visit : www.theverruckt.com. Contact : Siobhan Burke at sburke@thebrandusa.co.uk.

ScotRail named UK's best rail business

ScotRail has been awarded Rail Business of the Year and Train Operator of the Year in the 16th annual Rail Business Awards.

The Glasgow-based company also won the Sustainability Excellence category.

Visit : www.firstgroup.com. Contact : Daniel Carden at daniel.carden@firstgroup.com.

Signpost, UK

Signpost, the UK's longest established hotel guide celebrates its 75th edition in 2014.

The annual publication lists 100 of the finest hotels in Great Britain from luxury country house hotels to smart townhouse hotels with 21st century facilities.

The guide also has over 350 colour images, detailed descriptions, special indexes by hotel facility, colour route planning maps and hidden gems compiled by the editor of Hudson's Historic Houses and Gardens guide.

The Guide has been published annually since 1935 except during the war years from 1940 - 1945 when paper was scarce.

Visit : www.signpost.co.uk and www.hudsons.co.uk/shop. Contact : Tanya Aspinwall at Tanya@marketingaloud.co.uk.

Orlando becomes first US airport to install automated border control technology

Orlando International Airport is the first US airport to take advantage of this automated border control technology.

Travellers from the 37 visa waiver countries will be processed via these APC kiosks, with shorter, faster moving lines for immigration processing than in the traditional solo border agent scenario.

Anna Maria Island, Florida

Anna Maria Island has been voted third Best Island in America by TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Awards 2014.

Located between St. Petersburg and Sarasota in the Gulf of Mexico, on Florida's west coast, Anna Maria Island & Longboat Key, and their coastal companions, Bradenton and Lakewood Ranch, are known for their authentic Old Florida charm, scenery and eclectic dining.

Visit : www.bradentongulfislands.com. Contact : Antonia Robinson at antonia@goshpr.co.uk.

Finnair and S7 Airlines launch codeshare

Finnair and fellow *oneworld* alliance member S7 Airlines have agreed to new codeshare arrangements.

From 26 April 2014, the Finnair code will be added to S7's new service between Helsinki and Moscow's Domodedovo International Airport, as well as to selected onward S7 services from Domodedovo to Novosibirsk, Kazan, Rostov-on-Don, Samara, Ufa and Yekaterinburg.

In return, S7 will add its flight code to selected Finnair services from St. Petersburg and Yekaterinburg to Helsinki, and to selected onward Finnair services to the Finnish cities of Joensuu, Kuopio, Oulu, Rovaniemi, Tampere, Turku and Vaasa.

About Finnair

Finnair is geared to providing fast connections between Europe and Asia via Helsinki.

The airline, founded in 1923, carries more than eight million passengers annually and connects 13 cities in Asia with more than 50 destinations in Europe.

The airline has won the World Airline Award for Best Airline Northern Europe for the past three years.

About S7

S7 Airlines has a large domestic route network within Russia, based on hubs in Moscow (Domodedovo) and Novosibirsk (Tolmachevo).

It serves 114 routes in 25 countries across CIS, Europe, Middle East, Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.

About oneworld

oneworld is an alliance of :

- airberlin
- American Airlines
- British Airways
- Cathay Pacific
- Finnair
- Iberia
- Japan Airlines
- LAN
- Malaysia Airlines
- Qantas
- Qatar Airways
- Royal Jordanian, and
- S7 Airlines

TAM and US Airways will join on 31 March 2014 and SriLankan Airlines soon after.

Visit : www.finnair.com and www.oneworld.com. Contact : Sarah at finnair@treecomunications.co.uk.

Leads

Island Packer Cruises, Santa Barbara, California

Since 1968, Island Packer Cruises have been providing Southern California with transportation between the Ventura/Oxnard Harbors and the Channel Islands National Park & Marine Sanctuary.

Three 145-capacity catamarans and one 80-passenger mono hull vessel provide half and whole day trips year round to the Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands, with trips to the Santa Barbara, Santa Rosa and San Miguel Islands from mid-April through the fall months.

Marine Wildlife Cruises include sightings of sea lions, harbor seals and marine birdlife, along with the opportunity to view whales and dolphins during the channel crossing.

Visit : www.islandpackers.com. Contact : Katie at katie@annflowerpr.com.

Austin Adventures

Austin Adventures has introduced a Hiking Adventures dossier of 13 trips to be enjoyed on foot in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Australia.

Among the new programs are mountain hiking adventures in the Canadian Rockies, Patagonia and Bavaria.

Other walking itineraries include :

- Arizona - Havasupai
- Peru - Salkantay Lodge to Lodge
- Montana/Wyoming - Yellowstone National Park
- Utah - Hiking in Bryce and Zion,
- Costa Rica - Osa Peninsula & Savegre Cloud Forest
- Peru - Inca Trail Glamping
- France - Walking in Provence
- Australia - Hiking in Tasmania
- Botswana - Okavango Delta to Kwando
- Morocco - Atlas Mountains to Atlantic Coast

Visit : www.austinadventures.com. Contact : Dave Wiggins at dave@travelnewssource.com.

North Island, the Seychelles

North Island is one of Africa's private islands, situated 30km from the main island of Mahé, Seychelles.

Extremely isolated with only 11 spacious guest villas, North Island is known for its white beaches, filigree reefs and azure Indian Ocean.

It is also a sanctuary where natural habitats, long neglected, were rehabilitated so that endangered Seychelles fauna and flora can be reintroduced and given a place to grow and thrive.

Visit : www.north-island.com. Contact : Nadia Walford at nadia@grifcopr.com.

Wilderness Collection

The Wilderness Collection has a portfolio of destinations in Africa and its islands.

All of the destinations share a philosophy of building environmental, social and financial equity and of raising global awareness around sustainability.

Visit : www.wilderness-collection.com. Contact : Nadia Walford at nadia@grifcopr.com.

Napa Valley Arts in April, California

The art collections and homegrown artists of the Napa Valley are showcased in collaboration with more than two dozen of the region's wineries throughout the month of April.

The fourth annual Napa Valley Arts in April is a month of art-focused festivities featuring a variety of work spanning medium and subject matter.

Visit : www.visitnapavalley.com/artsinapril. Contact : Margaux Lushing at margaux@visitnapavalley.com.

Boutique Breweries in South Australia

Boutique breweries are catching up with vineyards as the 'must-do' food and drink experience in South Australia.

Over the past few years there has been a growth in boutique breweries opening to visitors.

The Australian wine industry is one of the country's greatest assets in terms of domestic and international export and popularity and the boutique beer business is hoping to achieve the same.

Visit : www.southaustralia.com. Contact : Jovanka Ristich at Jovanka@jpr-online.co.uk.

Rembrandt at Buckland Abbey, Devon, UK

The world's leading Rembrandt expert has confirmed the first ever Rembrandt in the National Trust's collection of 13,500 paintings.

The Dutch Master's self portrait has been identified hanging on the walls of Buckland Abbey in Devon, the former home of Sir Francis Drake.

For the last 40 years the painting's provenance has been shrouded in mystery after Rembrandt specialist Horst Gerson and the Rembrandt Research Project (RRP) concluded that the portrait of Rembrandt was produced by one of Rembrandt's pupils.

After years of studying the Dutch Master's style, and following a new investigation of the painting by the world's leading Rembrandt expert – Ernst van de Wetering – the painting has been reattributed as being a self-portrait by Rembrandt himself.

Visit : www.nationaltrust.org. Contact Jeannette Heard at jeannette.heard@nationaltrust.org.uk

For A Cause (USA)

For A Cause organises week long cycling and walking vacations that raise money for non-profit organizations.

Visit : www.rfac.org. Contact : Rob Webber at rwebber@rfac.org.

In The Saddle Unearths - the Mysteries Of Morocco

In The Saddle, which provides riding holidays on six continents, has introduced rides in Morocco.

Horseback vacations in Morocco offers an insight into the unique culture which has Berber, Arab, African and European influences.

Rides can take in the sands of the Sahara with its date palm oases and Berber communities, to the High Atlas mountains, in the middle of the country, where riders get the chance to view peaks rising to over 4,000m and ride through woodlands of pine, oak and cedar.

Visit : www.inthesaddle.com. Contact : Lauren Barber at lauren@g-gee.com.

Lalibela Game Reserve, South Africa

Lalibela is a Big 5 game reserve on the Eastern Cape coast, 90km east of Port Elizabeth.

In addition to lion, rhino, elephant, leopard & buffalo, the 7 500 ha reserve is home to other predators such as cheetah, hyena, jackal and lynx, as well as numerous plains animals including giraffe, zebra, warthog, impala, wildebeest, blesbok and various other antelope species.

Visit : www.lalibela.net. Contact : Gail Davis at webadmin@lalibela.co.za.

Eastern Mangroves Promenade, Abu Dhabi

The Eastern Mangroves Promenade, which has opened, is the new retail and lifestyle hub located within the Eastern Mangroves complex.

It has the five-star Eastern Mangroves Hotel and Spa by Anantara, along with a mix of restaurants, health & beauty and leisure outlets.

Visit : www.easternmangrovespromenade.ae. Contact : Contact : Joanna Agnew at Joanna@houseofcomms.com.

What's on in 2014

The Budapest Spring Festival, Hungary

21 March to 6 April 2014

The 34th Budapest Spring Festival will be the biggest yet.

Over a two week period, Hungarian and international artists including musicians, singers, choirs, designers and dancers will perform classical music, opera, dance, theatre productions, ballet, contemporary dance and circus acts.

Productions will be staged in the recently renovated Liszt Academy, the Palace of Arts, the Budapest Opera House, the Budapest Music Center, the Urania National Film Theatre and churches.

Visit : www.btf.hu/btf2014 and www.gotohungary.com. Contact : Karin Jones at media@gotohungary.co.uk.

March events in Melbourne, Australia

Melbourne Food and Wine Festival

The Melbourne Food and Wine Festival brings together master classes and workshops, food trails and an ever-popular World's Longest Lunch.

Visit : www.melbournefoodandwine.com.au

Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival

17 - 23 March 2014

This consumer friendly celebration of local and international fashion takes place in venues throughout Melbourne with a line up of world-class runway shows featuring Australia's established and emerging designers, beauty workshops, industry seminars and forums and live entertainment.

Visit : www.vamff.com.au.

Ironman Asia-Pacific Championship Melbourne

23 March 2014

The Ironman Asia Pacific Championship returns to Melbourne for its third year this March.

The world's leading tri-athletes will battle it out over a 226km course between Frankston and Melbourne, finishing on the St Kilda foreshore.

Visit : www.ironmanmelbourne.com.

Melbourne International Comedy Festival

27 March to 21 April 2014

One of the three biggest comedy festivals in the world with a diverse line up of international and Australian comedy, cabaret, street performances, theatre and visual arts.

Visit : www.comedyfestival.com.au.

Visit : www.visitmelbourne.com. Contact : Rosie Beaumont-Thomas at rosie.beaumont-thomas@fourbg.com.

Warwick's 1,100 Anniversary, UK

19 April 2014

Warwick's 1,100 Anniversary will be celebrated in Warwick market square on Saturday 19 April.

The celebration will take place with a procession led by St George on horseback through the streets of Warwick and there will be a medieval market.

Warwick Castle

In addition, the world's largest bird of prey, the Andean Condor, will fly twice daily Flight of the Eagles bird show which incorporates multiple birds from the Castle's collection.

Visit www.shakespeares-england.co.uk. Contact : Tanya Aspinwall at tanya@marketingaloud.co.uk.

Memphis in May, Tennessee

Memphis in May is a month-long festival with major events each weekend such as the Beale Street Music Festival, the BBQ Festival and the Sunset Symphony on the banks of the Mississippi River.

The Beale Street Music Festival takes place from the 2-4 May and is frequently included in top 20 U.S. festival lists.

Visit : www.memphisinmay.com. Contact : Siobhan Burke at sburke@thebrandusa.co.uk.

Atlanta Food and Wine Festival, Georgia

29 May to 1 June 2014

The Atlanta Food and Wine Festival sees chefs, sommeliers, beverage innovators involved in a range of events including the 'Pig out party' promising part oyster roast, part fish fry, part Florabama and the Conch Republic.

This year's event will also celebrate the female culinary experts of the South.

Visit : www.atlfoodandwinefestival.com. Contact : Siobhan Burke at sburke@thebrandusa.co.uk.

Hangout Music Fest, Alabama

The Hangout is a music festival that takes place on the beaches of Gulf Shores, Alabama each May.

The 32 miles of white sand on Alabama's Gulf Coast attracts over 35,000 music lovers for a beach party atmosphere featuring over 70 bands across six stages.

Visit : www.hangoutmusicfest.com. Contact : Siobhan Burke at sburke@thebrandusa.co.uk.

Secret Solstice, Reykjavik, Iceland

20 to 22 June 2014

With 72-hours of daylight, an impressive line-up and a natural hot spring on site,

Iceland's new music festival, Secret Solstice, will be held during 72-hours of daylight in Reykjavik the world's most northerly capital city.

The weekend will feature 150 established and up-and-coming international acts from a range of genres.

Located in Laugardalur in central Reykjavik, the festival site will offer various outdoor and indoor stages as well as the largest thermal pool in Iceland.

Visit : www.secretsolstice.is.

WOW air

WOW air, Iceland's only low-cost airline, flies to London, Paris, Berlin and Copenhagen from Reykjavik all year-round and offers additional winter and summer destinations.

Visit : www.wowair.co.uk.

Contact : Laura Jackson at teamwow@rooster.co.uk.

Museums at Night, London UK

15 to 17 May 2014

Explore arts, history and heritage after dark at museums across London.

Packed with special events, from treasure trails to pyjama parties, Museums at Night is an exciting opportunity to explore culture in a new light.

A large number of London museums take part in this nationwide initiative, giving visitors the chance to discover new exhibitions, see special presentations and engage in a range of fun activities.

Visit : www.culture24.org.uk/places-to-go/museums-at-night. Contact : Richard Moss at richard@culture24.org.uk.

Events at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire UK

Blenheim Palace is home to the 11th Duke and Duchess of Marlborough and the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill.

Surrounded by over 2,000 acres of 'Capability' Brown landscaped parkland and the Great Lake, the Palace was created a World Heritage Site in 1987.

Special events during 2014 include :

The Blenheim Palace Flower Show

20 to 22nd June 2014

The CLA Game Fair

18 to 20 July 2014

Pre'50 American Auto Club Rally 'The Rally of the Giants'

27 July 2014

Blenheim Jousting Tournament: 'The Knights of Arkley' including falconry displays

1 to 3 August 2014

Blenheim Palace Sportive and Family Cycling Day

17th August

Blenheim Palace Festival of Transport

24 and 25 August 2014

Blenheim Palace International Horse Trials

11 to 14 September 2014

Blenheim Palace Literary Festival

24 to 28 September 2014

Visit : www.blenheimpalace.com. Contact : Stephanie Hendley at shendley@blenheimpalace.com.

Events in Flanders

Expo 14-18, it's our history, The Royal Museum of the Army and Military history, Brussels

To 26 April 2015

For the First World War Centenary commemorations : "14-18, it's our history" is based on the collections of the Royal Army Museum.

Visit : www.expo14-18.be/en. Contact : Anita at anita@visitflanders.co.uk.

Art Brussels

24 to 27 April 2014

A total of 187 contemporary art galleries from all over the world will be exhibiting here and will feature over 200 artists including some that are well-known as well as new coming talent.

Visit : www.artbrussels.com. Contact : Anita at anita@visitflanders.co.uk.

Comic Strip Festival, Mont des Arts, Place Royale, Place des Palais and main avenues, Brussels

5 to 7 September 2014

Brussels is hosting its annual comic strip festival, giving visitors the chance to see the city's connection with favourite comic characters.

Brussels hosts a grand fireworks display and the Place Royale is transformed into an moving comic scene with animation projected onto its facade.

Visit : www.visitbrussels.be/bitc/BE_en/comics-festival.do. Contact : Anita at anita@visitflanders.co.uk.

Lightopia, Ghent, Design Museum

Autumn 2014 to Spring 2015

Design Museum Ghent will present a light exhibition in cooperation with the Vitra Design Museum. The exhibition focuses on the changing role of light on our lives.

Visit : www.designmuseumghent.be. Contact : Anita at anita@visitflanders.co.uk.

Shakespeare 450 celebrations, Stratford-upon-Avon

26 and 27 April 2014

The birth of William Shakespeare 450 years ago will be celebrated in his home town of Stratford-upon-Avon with a weekend of activity.

The highlight will be a 1,000-strong grand Birthday Procession through the streets on Saturday 26 April.

There will also be music, street entertainers, acting and theatre make-up workshops, tours of the Shakespeare houses and children's parties.

The Royal Shakespeare Company will be running a range of free activities for all the family in and around its theatres on Saturday 26 April, including storytelling sessions, stage fighting workshops and the chance to see how fake scars and bruises are created.

Visitors will also be able to enjoy music in the foyer areas, and, for 50p, cross the river on the ferry listening to RSC actors reading sonnets.

Visit : www.shakespearesbirthday.org.uk. Contact : John Wilson at John@newslines-pr.co.uk.

The Festa Dei Ceri, Gubbio, Italy

15 May 2014 (annually)

The Festa Dei Ceri (Race of the candles) is one of the oldest Italian folklore display.

The festival began as a solemn act of devotion on the part of the Eugubini towards their Bishop Ubaldo Baldassini which started in 1160, the year of his death.

Since then, every 15 May, the eve of the day of mourning, the devotional offering to the patron Saint is a fixed appointment for the people of Gubbio who take part in a great mystical procession, carrying candles all around the town and up Mount Ingino.

Visit : www.ceri.it. Contact : Stefania Gatta at stefania.gatta@enit.it.

The 10th DC Jazz Festival, Washington DC

24 to 29 June 2014

The DC Jazz Festival offers a diverse selection of known and emerging artists performing in venues across the nation's capital and attracts over 60,000 jazz lovers from around the world. The 2014 festival highlights include:

Jazz at the Hamilton Live

24-29 June 2014

Co-presented by The Washington Post, this event features six nights of eclectic performances.

Jazz at the Riverfront

27-29 June 2014

A three-day event where fans can enjoy jazz on the Capitol Riverfront overlooking the Anacostia River.

Jazz in the 'Hoods

24-29 June 2014

This event features performances in 45 clubs, restaurants, museums and hotels around the city.

Visit : www.dcjazzfest.org and www.CapitalRegionUSA.co.uk. Contact : Jo Thomas at jo.thomas@kbc-pr.com.

Montreal International Jazz Festival

26 June to 6 July 2014

The 35th Festival International de Jazz de Montréal (Montreal International Jazz Festival) which will take place from 26 June to 6 July 2014.

Journalists covering arts & culture or travel on a regular basis can apply for press accreditation to the event.

Visit : www.montrealjazzfest.com. Contact : Greg Kitzler at greg.kitzler@equipespectra.ca.

The British Columbia Shellfish Festival, Vancouver, Canada

June (annually)

During two days in June, the community of Comox, on Vancouver Island's east coast, celebrate sustainably-harvested food from the sea.

The largest of its kind in the province, the BC Shellfish Festival is two days of cooking demos by the region's cutting-edge chefs, live beats and local entertainment, and select sea-worthy competitions.

Visit : www.bcshellfishfestival.ca. Contact : roberta@bcsga.ca.

And in 2015

World Puppet Festival, Charleville Mezières, France

18 to 27 September 2015

This bi-annual event sees puppeteers and enthusiasts from all over the world flock to this vibrant, colourful festival.

An extensive festival programme includes shows, photographic exhibitions, window displays, avant-garde performance art, and street entertainment in a carnival atmosphere where more than 30 countries are represented.

The festival attracts 150,000 visitors.

Visit : www.festival-marionnette.com. Contact : myra@myra.fr

Welcome Aboard. Suitcases and travel bags from 1850 to present, Tassenmuseum, Amsterdam

12 March to 31 August 2014

The exhibition shows the history of travel and the development of suitcases and travel bags from 1850 to the present.

Over the decades travel bags then changed from weatherproof trunks to lightweight carry-ons with wheels.

Among other items in the exhibition, the museum is showing gigantic trunks for travel by coach and ship, as well as luxurious luggage sets from the 1950s and extravagant dressing cases containing silver brushes and crystal vials.

Visit : www.tassenmuseum.nl/en. Contact : Patricia Stanco at pstanco@holland.com.

Reasons to write about

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, Maryland USA

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway shares the stories of freedom seekers who risked their lives to escape slavery in the 1800s.

While slavery still flourished in many states during the mid-1800s, thousands of enslaved people sought freedom along a secret network of meeting points, trails, waterways and sanctuaries.

This was the Underground Railroad and Maryland, located on the border between North and South, played a prominent role.

Perhaps the Railroad's most famous "conductor" was Harriet Tubman, born into slavery on Maryland's Eastern Shore and called "The Moses of Her People."

After escaping slavery in 1849, Tubman returned 13 times over the course of a decade to guide about 70 people to freedom. She was also a Union spy during the Civil War and became active in the women's suffrage movement.

The Tubman Underground Railroad Byway meanders through the countryside connecting sites associated with Tubman's early life and her later activity with the Underground Railroad.

The byway has been recognised as one of the best driving tours in the nation by the Federal Highway Administration for its scenic beauty and significant history.

Visit : www.harrietubmanbyway.com and www.CapitalRegionUSA.co.uk. Contact : Lisa Cooper at lisa.cooper@kbc-pr.com.

Lithuania

Lithuania has been awarded the title of one of the World's Top Ten Ethical Destinations by the Ethical Traveler.

The accolade is in recognition of the country's strong environmental and human rights records while creating a thriving community based tourism industry.

Lithuania's protected sites cover 15.3 per cent of the country, one third of Lithuanian territory is covered by forests.

As well as approximately 6,000 lakes of natural origin in Lithuania, the country also has some of the largest underground fresh water reserves in the world.

Lithuania (cont)

Lithuania's coastline has had Blue Flag status awarded to three of its beaches, Nida, Juodkrante and Birutes Parkas beach in the seaside town of Palanga.

Vilnius, the capital city of Lithuania, is one of the greenest cities in the world and ranks 13th in the European Green City Index making it the best performing city in Eastern Europe.

Vilnius has taken the initiative in several areas to improve policies and invest in environmental infrastructure, city bikes and park and ride options.

Visit: www.lithuania.travel/uk. Contact : Cindy Landlust at lithuania@representationplus.co.uk.

The Invisible City, London

The Invisible City, which opens this summer in London's Regent's Park will be one of 2014's most unusual events.

Never-before-seen giant tree house pavilions will be erected in the park for public use.

The artists Claudia Moseley & Edward Shuster, with the support of The Royal Parks, are using crowd funding to create this innovative public platform for art within nature.

Via the initiative, members of the public can donate money towards the project in exchange for participation in it when launched.

Visit : www.kickstarter.com/projects/invisiblecity/the-invisible-city. Contact Karon Maskill karon@karonmaskill.com

The waterways and seas of Europe

The Cruise Lines International Association is highlighting the waterways and seas of Europe to commemorate 100 years since the start of World War I and 70 years since the D-Day landings.

The waterways and seas of Europe provide a tranquil way to reflect on these times and an opportunity to visit the locations which were the setting for some of the 20th Century's most significant events.

A selection of specially designed cruise itineraries and excursions for 2014 include :

AmaWaterways

New Normandy Beaches excursion

The 'D-Day Remembered' excursion, from Caudebec-en-Caux, has been added as part of AmaWaterways' summer 2014 programme of cruises on the River Seine.

The excursion takes in the Gold and Juno beaches in the British and Canadian sector, visiting various monuments en-route such as the Canadian cemetery at Beny-sur-Mer and Pegasus Monument in Ranville.

Visit : www.amawaterways.co.uk.

Azamara Club Cruises

'Memories of WWII' fly/cruise

This 11 night cruise aboard Azamara Journey departs from Lisbon and calls at St. Peter Port (Guernsey), Cherbourg (D-Day Landing Beaches), Honfleur, Boulogne-Sur-Mer, Dover and Amsterdam before arriving into Hamburg.

Guests can also take 'The North of France WWII experience' excursion, with a visit to the national cemetery of Notre-Dame de Lorette and nearby museum.

Visit : www.azamarclubcruises.co.uk

Cruise & Maritime Voyages

Historic WWI areas & marking the D-Day landings

Cruise options stopping at the ports of Ghent, Zeebrugge, Antwerp in Belgium, and Honfleur in France, allow guests to visit key places in World War One history, including Ypres, where the main conflict took place, and the Menin Gate.

There is also a special Anniversary Cruise departing from Bristol on 1st June, 2014 to commemorate the D-Day landings, taking in Normandy, Honfleur, Guernsey and Cherbourg.
www.cruiseandmaritime.tv

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

70th anniversary of D-Day

The Braemar offers a commemorative cruise visiting Zeebrugge – Tyne Cot Cemetery and In Flanders Fields Museum; Portsmouth – stopping at Southsea seafront and the D-Day Museum; before moving onto Cherbourg and Le Havre, France – where guests can visit the Allied landing areas on the 'Day of Remembrance' on 6th June 2014.

Dunkirk is the last port of call, where guests can visit the Battle of Dunkirk Museum.

Visit : www.fredolsencruises.com.

River Cruise Line

Bruges, Ghent, Ypres & the Battlefields on the Dutch Waterways

The new itinerary aboard the mps Amsterdam includes an excursion to Tyne Cot Cemetery – the largest British war cemetery in the world, Sanctuary Wood – where visitors can explore a preserved trench system, and Ypres – stopping at the Menin Gate and In Flanders Fields Museum.

Visit : www.rivercruiseline.co.uk.

Shearings

Three Battlefields itineraries

The eight, nine or ten day itineraries allow passengers to cruise along Dutch and Belgian Waterways to discover the Battlefields of Holland and Belgium with visits to Ypres, including the Airbourne Museum and National Liberation Museum, Cologne and Antwerp.

Visit : www.shearings.com.

Swan Hellenic

D-Day 70th Anniversary Cruise

This cruise crosses the Channel aboard the Minerva to Dunkirk, where guests will visit the Dunkirk beaches and museum.

It also takes in Ypres – to visit the In Flanders Fields Museum and Tyne Cot Cemetery, Caen – for the Gold and Sword beaches and Arromanches D-Day Museum, and Cherbourg – to visit the American Utah and Omaha beaches and St Mere Eglise, one of the first towns to be liberated.

On 6th June 2014, the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day landings, Minerva will cruise off the Normandy Beaches and hold a Service of Remembrance.

Visit : www.swanhellenic.com

Tauck

Ypres

Guests travelling on the Belgium & Holland in Spring River Cruise can enjoy an exclusive dinner and evening in Ypres, inside the historic Cloth Hall within the In Flanders Fields Museum. There are nine departures throughout April 2014.

Visit : www.tauck.com

Titan Travel

Centenary Remembrance Tour, 'Corners of a Foreign Field'

Expert guides take guests to the WWI Battlefields, memorials, landmarks and museums of Flanders, Artois and the Somme.

Guests will visit iconic landmarks such as Vimy Ridge and Hell Fire Corner, and the preserved trenches in Newfoundland Park, as well as the memorial to The Last Fighting Tommy.

Visit : www.titantravel.co.uk.

The Cruise Lines International Association

Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) is the world's largest cruise industry trade association with representation in North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australasia.

CLIA represents the interests of cruise lines, travel agents, port authorities and destinations, and various industry business partners before regulatory and legislative policy makers.

Visit : www.discovercruises.co.uk. Contact : Charlie Hampton at clia@bell-pottinger.co.uk.

New England food tours

New England is a region offering a wide range of food tours, some focusing on specific types of produce, others on the ethnic traditions behind local culinary spots.

Boston, Massachusetts

Michele Topor was one of America's first food guides. Resident in Boston's North End for more than 40 years and designed her 'North End Market Tour' to help visitors appreciate the traditions of the city's de facto Little Italy district.

On the tour visitors learn more about America's oldest Italian community and how its classic dishes have been adapted to a new country.

Visit : www.bostonfoodtours.com/north-end.

New Haven, Connecticut

New Haven, New England's sixth-largest city is located on the shore of Long Island Sound and has become a gourmet getaway for many New Yorkers.

Historian Colin M. Caplan leads a range of culinary walking tours such as the 'On 9' Tour.

Based around the city's Ninth Square, participants get an introduction to local produce at the co-operative Elm City Market before some heading to a number of different local eateries to experience amazing Italian, Indian and Malaysia food tastings paired with wine, beer and cocktails.

Visit : www.tasteofnewhaven.com.

Bar Harbour, Maine

The town of Bar Harbor is perhaps best known as the gateway to the Acadia National Park, but it's also among Maine's top food hotspots.

On a 'Savor Bar Harbor' those taking the Maine Foodie Tours, walking tours, visit seven different local establishments renowned for their unique offerings.

It's the chance to sample Maine mini-lobster rolls and lobster bisque, as well as artisan cheeses, home-made blueberry muffins, and farm ice cream. Maine Foodie Tours, who also run dedicated food tours in Kennebunkport and Portland.

Visit : www.mainefoodietours.com

Seaport, New Hampshire

The seaport of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, has one of the highest concentrations of restaurants per capita in the whole of the US.

Portsmouth Eats offers a 'Best of Portsmouth' walking and tasting tour that visits five top local establishments, where participants meet with the owner or chef to learn more about the history and inspiration behind their success.

Visit : www.portsmouth-eats.com

Providence, Rhode Island

Rhody Food Tours' new 'Immigrant Cuisines of Providence' tour takes visitors to four immigrant-owned restaurants, where they will meet the owners and learn more about the ingredients and cooking methods used in authentic Japanese, Bolivian, Mexican and Indian dishes.

Burlington, Vermont

In Burlington, local food and wine expert Chris Howell hosts a range of driving tours including a 'Vermont Farm Tour' which explores the connection between taste and place.

Over the course of a day participants visit three different farms, enjoying tastings of local bread, cheese, vegetables and wine.

Visit : www.vermontfarmtours.com.

Visit : www.discovernewengland.co.uk. Contact : David Ezra at David.Ezra@kbc-pr.com.

Hobby related camping

Outdoor accommodation specialist Pitchup.com has an extensive range of over 5,000 holiday parks and campsites, many of which are ideally suited for people who want to combine a break with their favourite pursuit.

Fishing : Loch Tay Highland Lodges, Perthshire, Scotland

Fishing enthusiasts can hire a boat on Loch Tay to catch trout or salmon to cook at camp later.

The site can arrange fishing permits and accommodation is in a choice of cabins, wigwams and yurts.

Visit : www.pitchup.com/campsites/-/fishing-nearby and www.pitchup.com/campsites/-/fishing.

Cycling : West Stow Pods, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

West Stow Pods are well situated for scenic cycle paths for long-distance bike routes around King's Forest or Newmarket, as well as mountain biking around Thetford or Brandon Country Park.

Visit : www.pitchup.com/campsites/-/cycle-hire.

Bird watching : Higher Moor Farm Campsite, Weymouth, Dorset

Higher Moor Farm Campsite is a short distance from the RSPB reserve Radipole Lake, which has regular events, family activities and a visitor centre.

The site is home to many bird species including bittern, bearded tit, little egret, pochard and sedge warbler.

There's also the popular Studland Beach & Nature Reserve along the coast at Swanage where visitors can spot birds, wildlife and wild flowers and a mute swan colony at Abbotsbury Swannery.

Visit : www.pitchup.com/campsites/-/birdwatching.

Astronomy : PoSHHuts, Hexham, Northumberland

Northumberland National Park was awarded Dark Sky Park status in December 2013 and is now Europe's largest. Nearby Kielder Observatory has regular events for the astronomically inclined.

PoSHHuts, Hexham, are posh shepherd's huts offering a prime stargazing spot right outside the door.

Visit : www.pitchup.com/campsites/England/North_East/Northumberland/Hexham/poshhuts/

Walking : The Quiet Site, Penrith, Cumbria

The Quiet Site has pods and pitches with views of Ullswater, which is popular among hikers and walkers.

The site is within easy reach of some of the Lake District's most famous fells including Skiddaw, Helvelyn and Scafell Pike.

Visit : www.pitchup.com/campsites/-/walkers-paradise.

Adrenaline/outdoor adventure : North Lodge, Pembrokeshire

The 186-mile Pembrokeshire Coastal Path has plenty to tempt adrenaline junkies, including walking and hiking, clifftop expeditions, golfing, sailing, windsurfing, coasteering, sea kayaking, sea fishing and horse riding.

Visit : www.pitchup.com/campsites/-/walkers-paradise.

Pitchup.com is a free guide to all types of outdoor accommodation in the UK, Ireland and France.

Visit : www.pitchup.com. Contact : Cass Helstrip at Cass.helstrip@whitetigerpr.com.

South Dakota

South Dakota has five national parks, monuments and memorials as well as 54 state parks and recreation areas that allow visitors to experience the natural beauty of the state.

In the southeast, Lewis and Clark State Recreation Area features three campgrounds, biking trails, sandy beaches and the largest marina in South Dakota.

Palisades State Park features 50-foot cliffs composed of 1.2 billion-year-old Sioux quartzite, walking trails, campgrounds and historical sites.

Travellers to the northeast region of the state can visit Fort Sisseton Historical State Park, an area where history enthusiasts can take a guided tour and walk among 14 original buildings while adventurers explore the waters by canoe or kayak.

The state capitol of Pierre is located just below the Oahe Dam, Farm Island State Recreation Area and Oahe Downstream State Recreation Area allowing visitors to take in the Missouri River.

Nearby Lake Oahe offers world-class walleye fishing and outdoor recreation.

The western region of the state takes in the Badlands National Park, the Black Hills National Forest, Mount Rushmore National Memorial and the Custer State Park, Crazy Horse Memorial, Wind Cave National Park and Jewel Cave National Monument.

Visit : www.travelsd.com. Contact : Maureen Droz at maureen.droz@state.sd.us.

Strange events in England UK

Coal Carrying , Ossett, West Yorkshire

Easter

Held each year on Easter Monday, the World Coal Carrying Contest is a test of strength and stamina in which participants carry 50kg (men) or 20kg (women) of coal over a mile-long uphill course. The contest dates back to 1963.

Visit : www.gawthorpe.ndo.co.uk/coal.htm

The Olimpicks, Dover's Hill, near Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire

30 May 2014

Started by local barrister Captain Robert Dover in 1612, the annual Cotswold Olimpicks attracts thousands of spectators and features some well-known countryside games such as tug-of-war, obstacle races and wrestling as well as a few stranger events - including shin-kicking.

The two contestants first fill their trouser legs with straw - to help reduce the pain – before holding one another's arms and kicking each other wearing steel toe-capped boots.

This year marks the Olimpicks' 400th anniversary.

Visit : www.olimpickgames.co.uk

Cheese Rolling, Brockworth, Gloucestershire

26 May 2014

This annual event involves daredevils hurling themselves down the steep, grassy slopes in pursuit of Double Gloucester cheeses.

The race starts with the master of ceremonies rolling a 4kg Double Gloucester cheese down the hill. On the whistle, competitors run, roll and somersault down the hill after it.

While the Gloucestershire Cheese Rolling has a history dating back to at least the 1800s, health and safety concerns saw the event officially cancelled since 2010, creating local and international uproar from fans of the local tradition.

But that hasn't stopped loyal competitors taking to the hill, and thousands of spectators showing up, to create their own unofficial versions of the world-famous spectacular over the last four years.

And unless new organisers announce an official version of the event for 2014, Monday 26 May 2014 will see the fifth unofficial Gloucestershire Cheese Rolling in a row, with hordes of fearless contestants chasing a weighty 8lb Double Gloucester cheese (or plastic version, as was used in 2013) down a death-defyingly-steep hill.

Visit : www.cheese-rolling.co.uk

Toe Wrestling, Fenny Bentley, Ashbourne, Kent

August

Each August the Bentley Brook Inn in Derbyshire hosts the Ben & Jerry's World Toe Wrestling Championship.

Competitors locked their big toes together, and attempted to force their opponent's foot to the ground. The organisers applied (unsuccessfully) in 1997 for its inclusion in the Olympic Games.

Visit : www.bentleybrookinn.co.uk.

Gravy Wrestling, the Rose & Bowl Inn, Bacup, Rossendale, Lancashire

25 August 2014

The World Gravy Wrestling Championships take place annually as part of the Pennine Lancashire Festival of Food & Culture.

Teams slide around in lukewarm gravy and attempt to wrestle on another to the ground. Team members win points for pinning the opposition down in the gravy.

www.worldgravywrestling.com

The World Conker Championships, Ashton, near Oundle, Peterborough

12 October 2014

The World Conker Championships are held each year on the village green in Ashton, Peterborough and attract over 300 competitors attempting to become the King or Queen of Conkers.

There are various categories for the knockout competition – ladies, men, teenagers and children.

Visit : www.worldconkerchampionships.com

Contact: Natalie Ashworth at Natalie.Ashworth@visitengland.org.

A place to stay

The Royal Scotsman, UK

The Royal Scotsman, the UK's only luxury sleeper train, has launched The Golf Tour; a five day journey exploring Scotland's famed golf courses.

Departing from Edinburgh, on 18 May and 22 September 2014, the train will travel through the Scottish Highlands, enabling offers to tee off at three of the region's most prestigious courses :

- The Royal Dornoch, the most northerly of the UK's championship courses
- Castle Stuart Golf Links, the host venue of the Scottish Open for the past three years, and
- Cruden Bay Golf Club, designed by golfing legend Tom Morris.

The Royal Scotsman is often referred to as 'a country house on wheels', and accommodates just 36 guests in Edwardian style carriages.

Those on board sleep in en-suite cabins and enjoy a personal steward service throughout their stay.

Fine cuisine is created at every meal by the on board Michelin standard chef and the observation car, with its open veranda and comfortable interior seating, provides viewing of the passing landmarks such as the Kyle of Lochalsh and Cairngorms National Park.

Visit : www.royalscotsman.com. Contact : Samantha Strawford at samantha.strawford@orient-express.com.

Ritz Carlton, Kyoto, Japan

The Ritz Carlton, Kyoto luxury-urban resort has opened on the Kamogawa River, Nijho Ohashi, close to Kyoto's downtown areas including Gion and Kawaramachi-dori, the city's retail and entertainment district.

The hotel's guest rooms offer views of the river and the Higashiyama Mountains.

Visit : www.kyoto.travel. Contact Jessica Meins at jessicameins@mcluskey.co.uk.

Poruwa, Sri Lanka

Poruwa, the traditional wedding ceremony believed to have existed in Sri Lanka since before the introduction of Buddhism, can now be celebrated at Centara Passikudah Resort & Spa in a wedding package that includes documentation, the ceremony, and a choice of wedding venues.

The resort, set on the beach at tranquil Passikudah Bay, also provides a wedding coordinator who will take care of all the arrangements.

Under the package, the ceremony takes place on the traditional Poruwa wooden platform, with the room being decorated in traditional style. Sri Lankan girls sing the blessings, a wedding cake is provided, and there is a bottle of sparkling wine for toasting the future of the happy couple.

Visit : www.avenuesales.co.uk. Contact : Sharan Bearman at sharanb@avenuesales.co.uk.

Fort Young Hotel, Dominica

Fort Young Hotel, Dominica's leading heritage hotel, is located overlooking the ocean on the outskirts of Roseau, the capital of this rugged island in the Eastern Caribbean.

The Fort Young's has 32 original Fort rooms coupled and 38 Oceanfront and Deluxe Oceanfront rooms, along with three suites.

About Dominica

Dominica, is promoted as the "Nature Island" due to its abundance of natural environment including 365 rivers, the second largest boiling lake in the world, volcanoes, mountains, waterfalls, hot springs and black and white sand beaches.

Much of the island is protected under national parks, one of which has been given UNESCO World Heritage status. Dominica is a paradise for divers, hikers, birdwatchers and nature-lovers.

Visit : www.fortyounghotel.com. Contact: Stephanie Worth at Stephanie@adams-pr.com.

The Setai, Miami Beach, Florida

The Setai, Miami Beach, voted in November 2013 as "Best Hotel in Miami" by readers of Condé Nast Traveler, will unveil its Ocean Suites at The Setai, Miami Beach in April 2014.

Comprised of one-, two- and three-bedroom suites, starting at 900 square feet, all Ocean Suites feature balconies with views of the Atlantic Ocean.

Located at Collins Avenue and 20th Street, directly on Miami Beach, The Ocean Suites are situated among the luxury shopping, fine dining, cultural events and nightlife of Miami Beach.

Visit : www.thesetaihotel.com. Contact : Claire Mans at claire@masonrose.com.

Cheval Three Quays, London

The Cheval Three Quays, a new collection of 97 serviced and 62 extended stay luxurious apartments opens next to the Tower of London, overlooking the River Thames, during March 2014.

Cheval Three Quays will be the latest addition to the portfolio of luxury apartments from Cheval Residences.

The one, two and three-bedroom apartments at Cheval Three Quays feature floor to ceiling windows allowing guests unobscured views down the River Thames with most boasting private glass and steel balconies with views of London landmarks such as the Tower of London, City Hall and the Shard.

Other Cheval Residences also have apartments, cottages and houses in some of London's most desirable addresses including Gloucester Park, Knightsbridge and Hyde Park Gate.

Visit : www.chevalresidences.com. Contact : Sarah White at sarah.white@fourbgb.com.

Two Cornish Hotels, UK

Karen and David Richards, owners of The Idle Rocks, Cornwall have acquired a second hotel in the Cornish seaside village of St Mawes.

The St Mawes Hotel, situated alongside the harbour, is 200 yards from The Idle Rocks.

The Idle Rocks first opened in 1913 and has since seen many incarnations. It became a popular luxury hotel in the pre-WW2 years, continuing to flourish after the war, with St Mawes being promoted as England's St. Tropez.

Visit : www.idlerocks.com. Contact : Kelly Luchford at kellyluchford@luchfordapm.com.

The Lodge at Torrey Pines, San Diego, California

The Lodge at Torrey Pines has captured one of the travel industry's most coveted designations: the 2014 AAA Five Diamond award.

Since its opening in 2002, The Lodge has maintained its Five Diamond designation annually. Overlooking the Torrey Pines Golf Course, the property has 170 guest rooms and suites.

Being recognized as a "Worlds Best Hotel" by Sunset Magazine The Lodge is located in San Diego's La Jolla neighbourhood.

Visit : www.lodgetorreypines.com.

Moorland Garden Hotel, Devon UK

Located within nine acres of gardens on the western edge of Dartmoor National Park, the Moorland Garden Hotel is owned by Brian and Sonia Meaden, celebrates its 80th anniversary in 2014.

The hotel has launched a packed calendar of special events for 2014 to mark the milestone anniversary.

From a vintage May fete to a 1930s/40s Sparkles and Spitfires dinner dance, a host of themed events will help guests indulge in the nostalgia of a bygone era to mark the hotel's founding decade.

The Moorland Garden Hotel won Gold in the Restaurant category and Silver in the B&B category in the Taste of the West Awards 2013, as well as being named Best Restaurant in the South West.

The Moorland Garden Hotel will be delighted to consider offering accommodation to Alliancepress card holders able to feature the property.

Visit : www.moorlandgardenhotel.co.uk. Contact : Samantha Kirton at samantha@ipr-online.co.uk.

Hotel Riu Playa Blanca, Panama

The Hotel Riu Playa Blanca will open in early April.

Located on the west coast of Panama, the hotel is situated in the province of Coclé, on a white beach adjacent to the mouth of the Farrallon river. It is two hours from Panama City.

Visit : www.riu.com. Contact : ines@brandinglatinamerica.com.

The Mayflower Grace, Washington, Connecticut

Grace Hotels has opened the Mayflower Grace, a 30-room property that has been granted both Forbes five-star and AAA five-diamond status.

Visit : www.gracehotels.com/mayflower. Contact : Siobhan Burke at sburke@thebrandusa.co.uk.

Highlands Country House, Cape Town, South Africa

Highlands Country House, which is located in Cape Town's southern suburbs, was built in 1900.

Highlands' enjoys close proximity to attractions including Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and the Wine Farms in Constantia Valley.

The beaches and Cape Town itself are a 20 minute drive away.

Visit : www.highlands.co.za. Contact : Carole Armstrong-Hooper at carole@highlands.co.za.

XV Beacon, Boston MA

XV Beacon is a boutique hotel, located on Boston's Beacon Hill in a 1903 Beaux Arts Building.

Beacon Hill itself is an historic neighbourhood with quaint brick sidewalks, authentic Federal and Greek Revival row houses and gas-lit streets.

It is close to the gold-domed Statehouse, Boston Common and Public Garden and the Faneuil Hall, Quincy Marketplace.

The Boston Freedom Trail is a particular highlight of Boston's historical past and provides an introduction to the historical and popular sites of the city.

Visit : www.xvbeacon.com. Contact : Julia Perowne at xvbeacon@verypcc.com.

The Dorchester Collection

The Dorchester Collection is a portfolio of luxury hotels in Europe and the USA, which includes :

- The Dorchester, London
- The Beverly Hills Hotel, Beverly Hills
- Le Meurice Paris
- Hôtel Plaza Athénée, Paris
- Hotel Principe di Savoia, Milan
- Hotel Bel-Air, Los Angeles
- Coworth Park, Ascot, UK
- 45 Park Lane, London
- Le Richemond, Geneva, and
- Hotel Eden, Rome.

Visit : www.dorchestercollection.com. Contact : Olivia Johnson at olivia.j@peretti.com.

The Patina Capitol, Singapore

The Patina, Capitol Singapore, which will open in late 2014, will be located in the heart of the Art and Cultural District of Singapore and housed in two heritage buildings as part of Capitol Singapore.

The property is currently being restored by Pritzker-prize architect Richard Meier.

Visit : www.patinahotels.com and www.yoursingapore.com. Contact : Emma Howard-Smith at SingaporeTeam@fourbgb.com.

The Sheraton Melbourne Hotel

The Sheraton Melbourne Hotel will open on 31 March 2014 at the fashionable 'Paris end' of Collins Street in the 31-storey 'wavilinear' building,

The hotel will feature 174 guest rooms, including 11 'Terrace Suites'.

Visit : www.sheraton.com/melbourne. Contact : Rosie Beaumont-Thomas at rosie.beaumont-thomas@fourbgb.com

Kuoni's 'wallet-friendly' resorts

Hotels in Sri Lanka appear at number 1, 3 and 8 on the top 10 list of best-value worldwide holidays in the Travel Edit by Kuoni 2014.

The Maldives is the second most popular wallet-friendly destination on the list, with others including Thailand, Mauritius and Barbados.

The Kuoni top 10 list is :

- Club Bentota, Sri Lanka
- Biyadhoo, Maldives
- Mount Lavinia, Sri Lanka
- Kuredu Island Resort, Maldives
- Sugar Cane Club Hotel & Spa, Barbados
- The Regent Cha Am Beach resort, Thailand
- Kantary Bay Hotel, Phuket – Thailand
- Cinnamon Citadel, Kandy - Sri Lanka
- Velidhu Island Resort, Maldives and
- Veranda Pointe Aux Biches, Mauritius

Visit : www.kuoni.co.uk. Contact : Jemma Purvis at jemma.purvis@kuoni.co.uk.

The Metropole in Llandrindod Wells, Wales

The Metropole in Llandrindod Wells, Walehamas launched The Timeline, an exhibition into the hotel's history to celebrate five generations of family ownership.

The hotel has been in the same family since 1897 and is now run by the great, great grandchildren of Elizabeth Miles, the original owner.

Siblings, Justin Baird-Murray and Sarah Hill are now the Metropole's managing director and finance director, respectively.

The discovery of a cache of fascinating black and white photographs charting the hotel's past led to the launch of The Timeline.

Visit : www.metropole.co.uk. Contact : Nerys Lloyd-Pierce at nerys@lloyd-pierce.co.uk.

The Viceroy Hotel Group

The Viceroy Hotel Group has a portfolio of 16 boutique luxury properties worldwide including :

The Viceroy New York

The Viceroy New York in Manhattan, which opened in October 2013, is located on West 57th Street – a crossroad for business, leisure, art and commerce.

New York's most famed landmarks are within walking distance.

The Viceroy Anguilla

The Viceroy Anguilla is located on the little British Virgin Island of the same name.

Known for its white sand beaches and turquoise clear sea, the Viceroy stretches over two bays with 3,200 ft of beach frontage.

The Viceroy Maldives

The Viceroy Maldives is located in the uncharted northern edge of this archipelago, and offers pristine reefs surrounding the resort island.

Visit : www.viceroyhotelsandresorts.com. Contact : Angela Appleby at Angela@masonrose.com.

Travel guides

The following travel publishers will provide review copies to Alliance members.

AA Travel Guides

Visit : www.shop.theaa.com/store/travel-guides. Katie Stephens at katie.stephens@theaa.com.

Anova Books

www.anovabooks.com. Helen Ponting at hponting@anovabooks.co

Berlitz

www.berlitzpublishing.com.

Bradt Travel

www.bradtguides.com. Rachel Fielding at rachel.fielding@bradtguides.com

Brit's Guide

www.foulsham.com. Margaret Lashbrook at margaret.lashbrook@lineone.net or Sue Wilkins at wilkins@foulsham.com.

Cicerone

www.cicerone.co.uk. Contact : Sarah Spencer at sarah@cicerone.co.uk

Eland Publishing

www.travelbooks.co.uk. Barnaby Rogerson at barnaby@travelbooks.co.uk.

Fisher's Travel SOS

www.fisherstravelsos.com. Furgan Syed at furqan.syed@fisherstravelsos.com.

Global Travel Publishers

www.africa-adventure.com. Kate Bandos at kate@ksbpromotions.com.

Globetrotters LogBook

www.globetrotterslogbook.com. Giedo Claes at giedo@globetrotterslogbook.com

Inn House Publishing

www.innhousepublishing.com. Kathryn McWhirter at kathrynmcwhirter@btopenworld.com.

Insight

www.insightguides.com. Julia Spence at julia.spence@ukonline.co.uk.

In your pocket guides

www.inyourpocket.com. Craig Turp at editor@inyourpocket.com.

Jane's Smart Art Guides

www.JanesSmartArt.com. Jane McIntosh at MJM@JanesSmartArt.com

Jonglez Publishing

www.jonglezpublishing.com. Alexandre Thery at alexandre@editionsjonglez.com.

Kuperard Publishers

www.kuperard.co.uk. Contact : Geoffrey Chesler at geoffreychesler@btinternet.com.

Morris Communications

www.themilepost.com. Contact Kate Bandos at kate@ksbpromotions.com.

Odyssey Books & Guides

www.odysseypublications.com. Contact : Caroline Eden at caroline@odysseypublications.com

Oxygen Books city-lit

www.oxygenbooks.co.uk Malcom Burgess at malcolm@oxygenbooks.co.uk

Rough Guides

www.roughguides.com. Contact : press@roughguides.com

Summersdale travel publications

www.summersdale.com. Contact : Dean at dean@summersdale.com.

Take two Books

www.taketwobooks.com Sarah Duvall at Sarah@taketwobooks.com.

Turnleft

www.turnleftguides.com Contact: Nick Buteau at nick@turnleftguides.com

The International Travel Writers Alliance

AllWays traveller



The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel writers, editors, broadcasters and photographers.

www.itwalliance.com

AllWays traveller provides independent travellers with an equally independent view of the world from the professional travel journalists in the Alliance

www.allwaystraveller.com



Ashley Gibbins FCIPR, MCIQJ
0776 419 8286
Ashley@itwalliance.com