

ENTREE

AN UNCOMPROMISING AND
CONFIDENTIAL TRAVELERS
NEWSLETTER • PUBLISHED
MONTHLY • AN INSIDER'S LOOK
AT HOTELS, RESTAURANTS &
TRAVEL AROUND THE WORLD

May-June 2010

In This Issue:

Founded 1981...our 29th year

The *Twelve Apostles* in *Cape Town*: where your every expectation will be met
A wonderful *Cape Town* restaurant
Quinta do Vesuvio's Pombal red wine
Our little secret in *Rome: Il Palazzetto*
Orient-Express re-opens their classic spots plus new ones in *Sicily*
We like *Checkers* in downtown *L.A.*
Guy Fieri's essential cooking knives
Glorious *Scottsdale: The Phoenician, The Fairmont*, baseball and more

Books to make your travels happier and musings more amusing
The *Ojai Valley Inn* for golf, spa and the good life
Catch in *Santa Monica's Casa del Mar* has a new menu
The 18th annual *Taste of Solvang Food & Wine Festival*
The *Gasparilla Inn* on *Florida's Gulf Coast*: once a secret, now open to all

AROUND THE WORLD IN eight weeks, pampered pooches all. Disembarking in *Cape Town* from an over-the-top cruise on the *Regent Seven Seas Voyager*, we eclipsed all of our new cruise buddies and fellow travelers who are not used to being eclipsed. ENTREE was met immediately upon arrival by the *Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa's, Johan du Toit*, Concierge Team Leader who was wearing tails and, along with our driver, a red carnation in his lapel. Ten suitcases later (we have good excuses for them, nah, maybe not strong excuses) we waved goodbye to our new best friends who were by now all watching and waving as we drove off. Not a one of their drivers had arrived. Most passengers had booked the hotels you would expect—lots of stars, well known, name-droppy. They weren't met, we were. The Twelve Apostles Hotel and Spa, a member of *The Leading Small Hotels of the World*, not only met but exceeded our every need and there were quite a few. We had luggage to be weighed and shipped and computer needs to be met. We wanted to make the most of our four days in Cape Town. Johan and his concierge staff gave us suggestions and we giddily accepted. We were not surprised when everything was organized perfectly. We flew from our hotel in their helicopter to Cape



PAY CLOSE ATTENTION. WE ARE GOING TO LET YOU IN ON ONE OF THE best-kept secrets in fine travel. Does the name “*Gasparilla Inn & Club*” sound familiar? Probably it doesn’t and that’s no accident, because for decades, The Inn’s owners have rather liked it that way. The Inn sits on Gasparilla Island, no surprise, which is on *Florida’s Gulf Coast* just North of *Ft. Myers*. Early last century, after the rail line was closed, Gasparilla Island became a very quiet, very elite winter colony; sort of Palm Beach without the facelifts or even Northeast Harbor with warm, sunny winters. Recently, there has been a small building outbreak but since no structure can be taller than the tallest palm tree, the air of rarified exclusivity remains. For many years, guests at The Inn tended to be friends of the owners or relatives of the island’s homeowners. The Inn does no marketing or advertising. In the past, the only publicity it received came when a society couple was married there, resulting in a discreet mention of the location in the *New York Times*. Recently, The Inn has been in the news due to the Bush family who like to check in for a week from Christmas until New Years. Jeb and “W” play golf on the *Pete Dye*-designed golf course or go out for some serious tarpon fishing. Dinner is with Mom and Dad in The Inn’s dining room where they are respectfully left alone. The golf course is open to guests and there are no tee times. Just show up and start playing. The very small village is only two blocks away and it’s cute but after dinner all just shuts down so it’s either backgammon, bridge or early to bed. Gasparilla Island may have been named after the Spanish Pirate Jose Gaspar and, as with most pirate myths, there could be buried treasure somewhere about. It’s an unverified legend but it does give the Island a bit of panache. The Gasparilla Inn is not the place if you want dress informally and use cell phones in the dining room, or watch TV during meals, or permit your children to run wild. This is your kind of place if you prefer quiet conversation, a wonderful spa, excellent staff, and fellow guests who are respectful of your space. Gentlemen are expected to wear jackets (ties are optional) and children should be well-mannered enough to eat by themselves without behaving badly. In the main dining room, Master Chef *Peter Timmins* offers a traditional heritage fine dining experience each evening. Prior to joining the Gasparilla Inn, Chef Timmins was the Executive Chef at the Greenbrier Resort in West Virginia. There are several other venues for dining. *The Pink Elephant* for steaks and seafood, *BZ’s* for cocktails and *The Beach Club*



where we spent a lot of time. The bartender at the beach club has her own version of a Planter's Punch that should not be missed. Accommodations consist of 62 rooms in The Inn and 18 guest cottages which we highly recommend. Rates start at \$245 Fall/Spring Seasons and \$375 during social Season. The Inn will be closing this season, June 27 (after which they do a total overhaul) and opening for their 97th season, October 21. Undoubtedly this is why everything is in perfect shape. We do have one infinitesimally small suggestion. We prefer a classic Caesar salad, not one with "grilled" romaine. We don't think Caesar Cardini would approve. Now we will probably have to return under an assumed name. Call (800) 996-1913 for reservations. Visit www.the-gasparilla-inn.com.

ENTREE's Top Recommendations

ENTREE has always had a soft spot for the lovely town of Vero Beach on Florida's East Coast ever since that great resort community John's Island was founded there in 1970. We know of no place that can match Vero's assets: perfect weather, distinguished residents, diverse activities, upscale residential options, top golf, beautiful beaches, and more. We urge you to consider Vero Beach if Florida is in your future plans. We want to recommend Cliff Norris Real Estate to you. Cliff is the third generation of his family to be involved in South Florida real estate. He knows Vero like no one else. Cliff and his company cater to buyers, sellers and renters at John's Island but he is well-versed in all Vero Beach property. Cliff Norris Real Estate, LLC, 4853 North A1A, Vero Beach, FL 32963, (772) 231-5595.

Vivian Taylor is one great travel agent. She has a combination of personal passion for travel with real boots-on-the-ground experience and confident knowledge about destinations to exceed the clients' expectations. Deep commitment and expertise to design travel experiences that match unique hopes and ambitions with seamless execution. When you talk to Vivian, you have a pro on your case—superior know how, quick reactions, superb followup, detail orientation, impeccable contacts and unfailing dedication to her clients-24 hours a day. At her side is Jeff Rodgers who provides equally devoted client attention. No wonder so many high profile travelers turn to Vivian Taylor for their travel needs. Her exclusive status and trade tips have remained an industry secret, reserved for only the crème de la crème for many years. But now the discriminating public too can have access to her coveted insider travel services. We are not surprised that Robert and William Carr-Hartley (www.carrhartley.com), one of the most prestigious names in customized African safaris, has chosen to work with Vivian and Jeff. Vivian is available for clients anywhere in the United States and abroad. Contact Vivian Taylor International, (302) 945-7255; mobile: (310) 497-2650; (323) 270-6748; Fax: (302) 945-7266; e-mail: vivian@vivantaylor.com.

ENTREE is published monthly by ENTREE Travel, P.O. Box 5148, Santa Barbara, California 93150, (805) 969-5848, Fax (805) 969-5849, William Tomicki, Editor and Publisher, wtomicki@aol.com. Managing Editor: Hadley Tomicki. Associate Publisher: Edward L. Stephenson. Senior Executive Editor: Syd Summerhill. Editor-At-Large: Scott Smigel. Executive Editors: Barbara Daugherty, Tom Landau, Kameron Seagren. Special Senior Executive Editor: Elizabeth F. Kagan. Senior Editors: Tom Buhl, Ron Green, Barney Brantingham, Marshall Auerback. Contributing Editors: Alan Porter, Theron Tomicki. Contributors: Josh Stevens, Ben Gooder. In Memoriam: Senior Contributing Editor Mark Birley, 1998-2007. ENTREE cannot be reproduced without written permission. Subscriptions are \$75 per year, satisfaction guaranteed. Back issues are available at \$10 per copy. The number of subscribers is strictly limited to protect the rather privileged nature of ENTREE's information. See ENTREE online at www.entreenews.com. ENTREE endorses the services of Luggage Concierge, www.luggageconcierege.com, when you want to meet your luggage there and avoid all stress and hassles by shipping your bags ahead of time. We also exclusively use DMC Limousines in New York, (212) 481-6365, for the best chauffeured limousines and service possible.