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# PURE SHORES

HASLEMERE  
Travel

incorporating Farnham Travel  
Established in 1988

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The Quarterly Newsletter from Haslemere Travel Tel: 01428 658777 [www.haslemeretravel.co.uk](http://www.haslemeretravel.co.uk)

The Greatest Travel Experience™



## HASLEMERE TRAVEL WINS GOLD AT THE BTA!

**Amid tough, nationwide competition, Haslemere Travel was delighted to win the coveted SMALL TRAVEL RETAILER OF THE YEAR 2011 prize at the annual British Travel Awards last November, reflecting the agency's success in its aim to keep ahead of trends in tailormade travel, as well as provide the best customer service.**

Considered by many as the travel industry's 'Oscars', the British Travel Awards (BTA) is the largest awards programme in the UK created to reward the best companies in travel, **as voted for by the British public, with 700,000 votes cast.**

There to receive the award in person was Haslemere Travel's founder and chairman Andrew Brownrigg (pictured above).

"This award means so much more to us all at Haslemere Travel, since the votes are from the public and also from an expert panel

of judges, and therefore form a seal of approval not only from our colleagues in the Industry, but also from our clients," said Andrew.

According to Gemma Antrobus, managing director of Haslemere Travel: **"Since the agency started in 1988, the skills and attributes required to be successful in the travel industry have changed dramatically,** with a greater emphasis on customer service, communication, psychology and lifestyle. These are now developed within the company's strategic programme of networking, skills development and overseas research.

**"Our recent staff appointments have been chosen more for their ability to communicate well with customers, and in many cases their knowledge of living and working overseas.** Their ability to understand the needs of well-travelled, experienced and demanding customers is of paramount importance and rests at the core

of the company's current success," said Gemma.

With plans to also expand its Elite Consultants network, Haslemere Travel has set its sights on even greater success in the future with full awareness and understanding of the increasingly competitive and demanding nature of the overseas travel market.

"In our case, small is definitely beautiful – getting to know our clients individually is crucial to our business and I am extremely proud of our progressive and forward-thinking team."

According to Lorraine Barnes Burton, CEO, BTA: "Customers have clearly been delighted with the service they have received from Haslemere Travel in the past 12 months, and the number of consumer votes which the agency achieved during this year's British Travel Awards is testament to their satisfaction. **Haslemere Travel was the clear winner this year."**

## WISHING YOU A HEALTHY, HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS 2012, FROM THE HASLEMERE TRAVEL TEAM

The happy team members pictured at our celebratory, splendid Christmas party in December (from top right) are manager Susie Atkinson; travel consultant Howard Bicknell; co-founder Di Brownrigg; senior travel consultants Terry Adams and Ash Bull; chairman and founder Andrew Brownrigg; managing director Gemma Antrobus, proudly holding the BTA trophy (see main story left); accounts whizz Alison Wallis; PR consultant Aly Cook; travel consultant Jackie McClean and itinerary guru Maureen Bias.



We hope to meet you in our Haslemere shop soon!

## Inside

St Lucia, St Vincent & The Grenadines • Gambia • Sicily • Botswana • South Africa • Maldives • News & Events • Competitions



Family



Adventure



Sport



Romance



Culture



Cruise



Beach



Safari

## Sicily - Captivating views, historic sites and fab hotels

**Surrounded by the Mediterranean, Sicily is an island of Greek temples, snow-capped mountains and volcanoes, citrus groves, white sand and windmills.**

My first two nights were spent at the Orient-Express' **Grand Hotel Timeo, Taormina**, in one of its newly refurbished suites, with amazing views of **Mount Etna** and the bay. Opened in 1863, this

glamorous hotel has long been a favourite of celebrities, with its dramatic hilltop setting and

elegant furnishings. Its entrance is also adjacent to the awe-inspiring Greco-Roman amphitheatre, which hosts summer concerts.

The hotel's sister beachside property, **Villa Sant'Andrea** is located below, on the beautiful bay of **Mazzaro in Taormina Mare**. Ideal for families, it has interconnecting rooms and a new, infinity swimming pool.

Within the Valley of the Temples (a World Heritage site), the 5-star **Villa Athena hotel** is only 200m from the Temple of Concordia, which dates back to the 5th century BC.

**The Rocco Forte Verdura Resort & Spa** on the south coast, near **Sciaccia** is ideal for sports enthusiasts, there are two 18-hole championship golf courses and a 9-hole; a spa; six tennis courts; a full-size football pitch; a 60m infinity swimming pool, gym and running trails.



**Contact Aly's colleagues on 01428 658777**

### Aly's Top Tips

- **Best time to go:** March-Sept (for direct flights)
- **Ideal destination for:** Families and 'culture vultures'
- **Favourite food:** Sweet Sicilian dessert
- **Must do:** Taormina's Greco-Roman amphitheatre and Agrigento

## Gambia - An ideal winter break, with amazing bird life



**On Howard's recent trip to the Gambia he was delighted to find some top-end luxury hotels and smaller boutique style hotels, such as Ngala Lodge and Coco Ocean Resort, as well as the more simple, coastal hotels.**

**Ngala Lodge** has amazing rooms, each with their own character with great sized bathrooms and furnishings; the lovely shelved gardens with ad hoc patios and decorated statues leads down to its own private beach. **Coco Ocean** was by far the most luxurious, with a wonderful spa and beautiful

rooms, all set along a stunning beach.

We enjoyed splendid fare in the hotels and also in local restaurants out in the town of **Kololi**. There was a great selection of cuisine available, including Indian, Lebanese, Asian and Mexican, as well as European. There is also a fair choice of wines to accompany the meal, or why not try the delicious local beer, Julbrew?

The **Gambia** is a very welcoming country and an ideal destination for those looking for heat during the winter months and with direct flights of just 6 hours (and no time change) this makes for a great getaway. It is also an excellent destination for bird watchers, as it has an amazing variety of bird life – indeed just standing on your terrace in the morning you can

spot over 10 different varieties of birds. In addition, having been a former British colony, everyone speaks English, so language is no barrier when ordering food or bartering for gifts in the local markets.

The Gambians are extremely friendly and more than willing to mix and talk to the tourists. People have the most wonderful smiles and there is a genuine



welcome for each and every visitor.

**Contact Howard on 01428 658777**

### Howard's Top Tips

- **Best time to go:** Mid October - mid June
- **Ideal destination for:** Couples
- **Favourite food/drink:** Chicken Yassa washed down with a Julbrew
- **Must do:** Cruise up the majestic Gambia River

## St Lucia, St Vincent & The Grenadines - For romantic getaways



**Ash paid a recent visit to the Caribbean, taking in St Lucia, St Vincent & The Grenadines, visiting some of the islands' best hotels.**

First up in St Lucia was the **Jalousie Plantation**, set within 100 acres of rainforest. Villas boast four-poster beds, private plunge pools and personal butler service. The new Rainforest Spa was fantastic; the food excellent.

**Jade Mountain** offers stunning views of the Bay and the Pitons, along with incredible architectural design. With the fourth wall of each sanctuary absent, rooms open onto your private infinity pool. This resort is perfect for a romantic hideaway.

Arriving at **Ladera** at sunset was a stunning start to the visit. Suites have private plunge pools and are open to the elements (though a two-bedroom villa is also available which offers closed rooms upstairs). Dinner

at the highly popular Dasheene was excellent, with fresh local produce cooked to perfection. This resort is a great option for couples, and understandably popular with honeymooners.

For the sociable, active traveller, **Le Sport** is a great alternative. Activities include golf, yoga, scuba-diving and fitness classes. There is a Wellness Centre, with a number of treatments included in your room cost. A popular option with singles and good for families travelling with older children.

Arriving at **Buccament Bay Resort** on St Vincent, situated around a series of lagoons, there was a definite wow factor. The

area is completely flat, a change after the hills of St Lucia, and all guests are provided with bicycles. Laid-back, barefoot comfort can be found at **Palm Island**, a real Robinson Crusoe castaway island. This is an all-inclusive private resort, with a wide range of accommodation types, surrounded by pristine, white coral sand beaches.

Guests are provided with a golf cart (remember to bring your driving license and purchase a permit locally).



**Contact Ash on 01428 658777**

### Ash's Top Tips

- **Best time to go:** Nov-April, to avoid the hurricane season
- **Ideal destination for:** Honeymooners, singles, families with older children
- **Favourite food/drink:** BBQ lobster at Palm Island
- **Must do:** Catamaran to Tobago Cays to snorkel with turtles. Sail to Bequia /Mustique

## Botswana - Leopards and walking with elephants



### Susie finally had the chance to visit Botswana this November.

On arrival into **Maun** we were transferred by light aircraft to the **Okavango Delta**, from where we took a drive to our first camp **Sanctuary Baines**. This low environmental impact camp has been built using commercially grown wood and recycled tin cans. The five suites at Sanctuary Baines are extravagant and luxurious, with en suite and four-poster beds. If you fancy a night under the stars, you can have your bed wheeled out onto your private wooden deck, overlooking the **Boro River** (where you may even spot a hippo).

Our first game drive was an unforgettable experience, as we had the incredible fortune to get up close and personal with three elephants, Jabu, Thembi and Morula. While our guide was teaching us about the elephants, their lives in the

Delta and how they fit into the eco-system, Thembi showed her naughty side by taking our hats and placing them on her own head.

Our next adventure was flying to **Sanctuary Chief's Camp** in the **Moremi Game reserve**, which covers 20% of the Delta. Flying over the Delta in a 6-seater at 500ft gives the most amazing views and often landings are aborted due to wildlife on the runway. The guest pavilions at the camp are hidden away in a jackalberry and sausage tree woodland; all have their own private decks, and both indoor and outdoor showers. We were lucky enough to see a leopard kill our first evening here, and the next

morning took a drive to watch the leopard with her cubs, follow herds of elephants and watch the warthogs running around.

Next we flew to **Sanctuary Chobe Chilwero Lodge** on the **Chobe River**, where we took a river cruise to watch the hippos. Our guide also spotted monitor lizards, kingfishers and buffalo. No trip to this area would be complete without a trip to



**Victoria Falls**, a breathtaking experience.

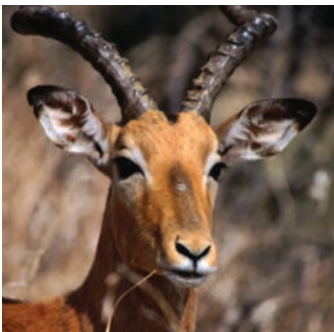
Contact Susie on **01428 658777**

### Susie's Top Tips

- **Best time to go:** Avoid February & March (rainy season in Okavango Delta)
- **Ideal destination for:** Couples, families with older children
- **Favourite food/drink:** Gin & Tonic Sundowners
- **Must do:** Walk with elephants

Read about Susie's trip to South Africa's Cape in our next issue...

## South Africa - Spectacular safaris and stunning scenery



**Terry made a long-awaited first trip to South Africa in November, visiting Sabi Sands where private game reserves offer you every opportunity to see the Big Five at close range, and magnificent surrounding countryside.**

The first night was spent at the **Michelangelo Hotel, Johannesburg**. With unsurpassed luxury, the hotel is situated at the heart of Africa's most exclusive shopping centre, and some rooms overlook Nelson Mandela Square.

Travelling east they stayed at **Lion Sands Private Game Reserve**, which is exclusively used by

guests, giving a personalised safari experience. The resort has three lodges, including the award-winning **Ivory Lodge**, ideal for groups of family and friends. Nearby **Nottens Bush Camp** is a delightful private lodge: the family-run camp has eight chalets, each with balconies overlooking the bush with no electricity in the rooms, just hurricane lamps and candles providing a rustic, but romantic atmosphere. This hotel has proved a great favourite with our clients and it was easy to see why. World-famous **Mala Mala** boasts some of the best, unfenced game viewing in South Africa, offering one of your greatest chances to see the Big Five. The resort has its own airstrip, allowing quick connections from **Johannesburg**.

**Rissington Inn**, with far-reaching views over the Sabie River, is a stylish and informal, privately owned inn, providing an excellent base for those wishing to take part in adventure activities such as horse-riding, micro-lighting, canopy trails and hot air ballooning. **Cybele Forest Lodge & Spa**, an

oasis set in 300 acres of paradise, is a great option for families wanting to combine activity with relaxation. The resort has its own helipad, and helicopter adventures and hot air balloon safaris are available. From Cybele and Rissington guests can spend the day touring the spectacular **Panama Route**, visiting the historic village of **Pilgrim's Rest, God's Window and Blyde River Canyon**.



Contact Terry on **01428 658777**

### Terry's Top Tips

- **Best time to go:** Spring & Autumn for best temperature
- **Ideal destination for:** Couples, families
- **Favourite food/drink:** Crocodile Pate, Kudu Stew
- **Must do:** Hot air ballooning from Hazyview area, which offers magnificent views of the low veld and Sabi River

## Maldives - Perfect sunshine retreat for couples

**With direct BA flights from Gatwick to the Maldives, the islands become much more accessible for a short, winter sunshine break.**

As it was not possible to visit Lamu in Kenya, we opted for the newly opened **Six Senses Laamu** in the southern Laamu atoll, a 45-minute flight from the Maldivian capital. This is a clearly defined atoll, with a good deal of vegetation on the islands.

The 20 minute speedboat ride from the local airport brought us to the resort in

time for a late lunch. The majority of the rooms and public areas are over water, overlooking a wonderful one-mile house reef. A handful of beach villas hide along the beautiful, sandy beaches. With a good variety of restaurants and eateries, this is a great place to unwind. For those seeking excitement, there is excellent surfing on the famous **Yin Yang break** just offshore from the island.



Contact Di or Andrew on **01428 658777**

### Di & Andrew's Top Tips

- **Best time to go:** December - June
- **Ideal destination for:** Honeymooners, couples
- **Favourite food/drink:** Dine at El Bulli-inspired Leaf treetop restaurant
- **Must do:** Dinner for two on the sandbank

# On the Waterfront

## A flavour of the Antarctic

Watching scenes reminiscent of the wonderful BBC programme, *Frozen Planet*, our clients were treated to a fascinating talk and slideshow by Natalie Read from Orion Expedition Cruises last month.



After a two-course 1221 club luncheon at **Branksome Place Hotel**, our guest speaker (pictured here with Andrew Brownrigg) gave a

detailed account of how the expedition company's 100-berth vessels visit such historic locations as Captain Scott's hut, as well as see, up close, all the amazing wildlife that the Antarctic has to offer during its summer/our winter. The Sub-Antarctic islands are home to penguin breeding colonies numbering in the millions, to Elephant Seals and Hooker Sea Lions, and the endangered Wandering Albatross.

Founded in early 2004, Orion Expedition Cruises has developed year-round voyages to regions as diverse as **Australia, Papua New Guinea, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Borneo and Russia**, and use purpose-built vessels designed to access the inaccessible, all in 5-star luxury.

**If this idea appeals, do call the team on 01428 658777 – and watch this space in our next newsletter for a full calendar of exciting client events in 2012. If you would prefer to know details asap, log on to our website or email Gemma (gemma@haslemeretravel.co.uk) to join our regular e-bulletin.**

## BAGS OF FUN!



Alan and Jean Parratt held their Eco Bag aloft in nautical fashion while on board ship during a recent trip with Celebrity Cruises in the eastern Mediterranean.



Chairman Andrew Brownrigg (left) recently seen sporting his special Eco Bag in the

sunshine while visiting the beautiful Maldives.

**Email your photos with the Haslemere Travel Eco Bag to gemma@haslemeretravel.co.uk and we will print them in the next newsletter!**

## COMPETITION WINNER VISITS VILNIUS CHRISTMAS MARKET

**Mrs Tanya Blackburn was the lucky winner of our latest competition, in association with the Lithuanian National Tourism Office and Surrey Life magazine.**

Haslemere Travel organised a fabulous competition prize opportunity for two readers to fly with AirBaltic to the city of **Vilnius, stay two nights B&B in four-star, luxury hotel, Mabre Residence** and visit its celebrated Christmas markets in December.

Mother-of-two Tanya, a teacher from Charlwood, Surrey will be travelling with her husband Sam; she is pictured below receiving her prize (second left) with Augusta Jaudegyte from the Lithuanian National Tourism Office (second right) and Haslemere Travel chairman Andrew Brownrigg (left) and managing director Gemma Antrobus (right).



## COWORTH PARK CHARITY FUN RACE DAY

**Haslemere Travel helped to raise £11,800 for racing legend Bob Champion's cancer charity at an auction at a race day event at Lingfield Park last November.**

The prize the agency organized - a one-night stay at Dorchester Collection's luxury hotel Coworth Park - raised more than £700 and was bought by Michael Baker, from West Sussex, as a 25th birthday present for his lucky son!

Channel 4 TV's racing commentator Mike Cattermole (pictured with Bob, right) was the fund-raising auctioneer, while guests included former England cricket captain David Gower.



Contact us if you would prefer to receive this Newsletter by email • Look out for your next edition of Pure Shores in the Spring!



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## CLIENT VIEW

"Thanks again for all your help, we're so pleased we ended up where we did - so tell only 'the selected few' about it - it's a hidden gem that would spoil if too many knew about it."

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