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Trips, tips & deals

Where Gauguin escaped

Follow Paul Gauguin to the Marquesas Islands' spectacular French Polynesian scenery aboard the Aranui III adventure cruise. Half cargo boat, half upscale passenger vessel, the family-owned ship has been sailing to these islands for more than 30 years. This means the multilingual Polynesian navigators who guide you during this 14-day voyage know where Gauguin is buried, how to find hidden jungle ruins, how best to see wild horses and where the most impressive volcanoes, cliffs and waterfalls are. The itinerary is Papeete to Fakarava, Ua Pou, Nuku Hiva, Hiva Oa, Fatu Hiva, Tahuata, Ua Huka, Ua Pou, Rangiroa and back to Papeete. Departures are Nov. 23, Dec. 19, Jan. 12 and other dates in 2010. Starting at \$2,079 for shared, dorm-style accommodations and \$3,675 for standard double-occupancy accommodations (single supplement 50 percent), including daily meals with wine and most excursions but not including taxes and optional excursions. Compagnie Poly-nésienne de Transport Maritime, San Mateo, Calif.; 800-972-7268, aranui.com

A little effort, then relax

Get 2010 off to a meaningful start by reserving the 17-day "Give Back Kick Back" mission to Mali in west Africa. You will help pupils plant vegetables and fruit trees at their elementary school, the products of which they will sell to buy school supplies. After that, you will attend the annual Festival au Desert in the Sahara. Along the way, you will see UNESCO World Heritage sites, take camel rides and dine with families. The

journey goes from Bamako to Segou, Sangha, Tireli, Douentza, Timbuktu, Essakane, Mopti, Djenne and back to Segou and Bamako. The dates are Dec. 30 to Jan. 15. Book by Nov. 15. The rate is \$4,995 double occupancy (single supplement \$495), including taxes, 11 nights in hotels, three nights camping, most meals, transportation in four-wheel-drive vehicles, the services of a tour guide throughout, admission to the music festival and airport transfers. The rate does not include international airfare, gratuities or a Mali travel visa. Give Back Kick Back, Boston; 877-788-7625, givebackkickback.com

Deals at Pacifica Hotels

The Pacifica Hotel Co., largely rooted in California but with locations in Florida and Hawaii, has a promotion going for late fall and early winter. The deal is good only in California, where Pacifica runs hotels in Sonoma, San Francisco, Cambria, Pismo Beach, Santa Barbara, Marina del Rey, Redondo Beach, Laguna Beach and San Diego, among other locations. Book by Dec. 11 for stays now through Dec. 20. Under its current online winter promotion, receive 25 percent off regular rates at Pacifica Hotel properties for the next couple of months. Plus, if you bring along a new, unwrapped toy valued at \$10 or more, you get an additional \$10 per night off your bill at checkout. The hotel participates in the Toys for Tots program, so your gift will go to children in need. Pacifica Hotel Co., 800-720-0223, pacificahotels.com

— Tribune Newspapers

