

THE VANCOUVER SUN

New trend is to far corners of earth

Volunteering in Thailand or propelled by Hollywood to see penguins, boomers are widening their scopes

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"People still live in bamboo houses and give you these tentative smiles. If you smile back you get this huge smile and a big wave."

Dodd and other local travel agents offer the suggestions below for out-of-the box holidays.

SCOTCH ON THE ROCKS

Rock-climbing and caving during the day and scotch tastings by night are the hallmarks of this nearby package, which takes visitors to the Horne Lake Caves on Vancouver Island, says Luba Plotnikoff, manager of travel media relations at Oceanside Tourism. It offers scenic accommodation at the Quality Resort Bayside in Parksville and starts at \$219 for one day and night.

HOT TRIPS TO COOL CLIMES

This will set you back \$7,000 to \$12,000, but one of the hottest new destinations is Antarctica, and chances are you'll see lots of penguins there, as well as some rugged landscapes and breathtaking scenery.

SLOW BOAT TO MANDALAY

An Orient-Express liner offers top-drawer luxury cruising on the Irrawaddy river from Bagan to the sacred walled city of Mandalay. Think African Queen meets haute cuisine, as you drift along this tranquil river in Burma, observing bathing elephants, teak and bamboo dwellings, historic monasteries and ruined temples. Four nights one way, about \$3,000.

TEMPLES, TIGERS AND TRAINS

The Palace on Wheels luxury train tours the land of the maharajas in ultimate opulence. It includes excursions to ancient temples, ruins, wildlife and bird

sanctuaries, and pottery and textile markets. "India has a lot of appeal these days," Dodd says. "Although it still has a certain health stigma for some. You know you're going to be changed when you come out. (\$240 to \$535 US per night, minimum seven nights.)

CLOSER-TO-HOME CANALETTO

Usually you have to go to England or Venice to see the highly prized works of famed Italian artist Canaletto, but pieces by this Venetian artist are on display until the end of the year at the Yale Centre for British Art in Connecticut. The exhibit features more than 60 paintings and drawings created by the master while living in England from 1746 to 1755.

DOWN UNDER APPEAL

Julie Skinner, travel manager for B.C. Automobile Association at Broadmead, says while lots of people still enjoy the Mexican Riviera, many are heading to Australia and New Zealand for Christmas and in the New Year. "It is a bit unusual, a good time to go because of the strong Canadian dollar, and most people see it as a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, so they go for a month or more. Some trips are surpassing \$10,000."

DARWIN WENT THERE FIRST

A Galapagos Islands Tour can set you back \$10,000 or more, or you can charter your own vessel for eight days for \$42,000, and buzz around on the luxury catamaran M/C Athala, which holds as many as 16 passengers.

ALL AT SEA

Repositioning cruises are superhot tickets, especially for those who want to unplug. This is the place to curl up with a good book for days on end, practise yoga, or work off the holiday overindulgence. They start in April and make super stocking stuffers! A typical cruise on Holland America, from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., to Vancouver, is \$2,299 for 20 days, Skinner says.

TRAVELLING GIFT

BCAA is offering a special new gift card this year for the first time. It can be loaded with merchandise, services and trips valued up to \$10,000.