

TRAVEL

Birmingham tour planner adds the personal touch

BY CORINNE ABATT
SPECIAL WRITER

If you guessed that Lois Kozlow of Birmingham started her travel business as a lark, you'd be partly right. However, 16 years later, it's become a serious, successful and exciting enterprise.

She and her husband, Richard, an internationally known painter, and their daughters have lived in Mexico, Spain, England and Costa Rica and visited many more exotic places.

"Our friends kept asking us to take them to the places we had been," she says. In 1981, she responded to those requests and offered an off-the-beaten-trip to Costa Rica under the name Lark Tours. Friends asked for more. One of those early tours (to England) and the romance of two senior citizen artists, Reva Schwayder and Lou Gotthelf, began. Their story was the sub-

ject of the award-winning movie, "Young at Heart."

Now, 25 trips later, Kozlow's enthusiasm and sense of adventure remain as strong as ever. "I approach each trip with my own experience in mind - what I would like to see and do. Getting into the corners that other people wouldn't see is my kick."

Still, careful planning, research and organization have given the carefree-sounding Lark Tours their longevity. "I never take anybody to a place I haven't been," Kozlow says. "I scout everything ahead of time. I hate surprises." She leads all the tours and makes good use of her worldwide network of local English-speaking guides and resources.

"The size is always between 15-25. I won't take any more than that. Even so, I manage to keep the costs of my trip low."

After reading the Alexandria

Quartet, four books by Lawrence Durrell, Kozlow says she had to see and experience Alexandria. Consequently, that historic city is on the itinerary of her next tour to Egypt, March 7-23, 1998.

"This trip is a little different," she says, comparing it to her two other tours to Egypt, the most recent earlier this year. "We'll spend the first five days at the Mena House Oberoi Hotel at the foot of the Great Pyramids of Giza. It was built for the Empress Eugenie who wanted a view of the Pyramids from her hotel room when she came to open the Suez Canal."

After sight-seeing in and around Cairo, a day in Alexandria, and a flight to Luxor, the travelers will take a five-day deluxe cruise on the Nile, stopping along the way to see many wonders of the ancient world including the Karmak complex, the Valley of the Kings, the Valley of the Queens, Hatshepsut's temple at Deir-El-Bahari, the temple of Kom Ombo, a tour of the High Dam at Aswan and the reconstructed temple of Isis at Philae.

It took some doing, but there will be a full moon the evening the travelers attend the sound and light show at Karmak Temple. When she first saw the show against a full moon - Kozlow knew she wanted to include this awesome experience on her next trip to Egypt, in fact the whole tour is built around seeing the full moon over Karmak.

The optional four-day trip to Jordan includes a tour of the ancient silk-road city of Petra. "Jordan," Kozlow says, "was such a surprise to me. It's so clean, you can't believe it - and the people never hassle you." She describes Petra, where the great buildings are all carved out of rock, as "one of the most outstanding, exciting places I've ever been."



Giza: The fine line behind Lois Kozlow is a highway and beyond are the pyramids of Giza, one of the many exotic travel locations she takes travelers.

Because she believes the personal touch is one thing that separates hers from the package tours, she has arranged for her group to dine and be entertained in the home of some Egyptian friends on the final day of their stay there. "They'll eat traditional food and hear real Egyptian music, which is truly beautiful."

Just Lapp of Bloomfield Hills, a docent at the Detroit Institute of Arts, who went to Egypt with Lark Tours, calls it "the trip of a lifetime." Not only has it given her a firsthand appreciation and understanding of the DIA's exhibition, "Splendors of Ancient Egypt" which runs through Jan. 4, it whetted her appetite for more.

"I'd like to go back again. I recommend it most highly. Our trip was well-researched and well-

organized. There were 18 of us. That's a perfect size." Calling the visit to Petra "phenomenal," Lapp says, "The natural coloration of the stones looked like an artist painted them."

Bob Mounsey of Birmingham was on the same trip. "It was one of the most exciting vacations I've ever taken and I've taken many," he says, adding, "And it was so well-planned." Now, he says he'd like an even longer trip on the Nile.

Kozlow, who usually offers at least two trips a year, will lead her first trip to Scandinavia in the fall of 1998. By then, she says, Bingham Farms resident David Hermelin will be installed as ambassador to Norway. His presence there, she is certain, will provide special opportunities since the Hermelins are so well-

known and liked in the metropolitan Detroit area.

As a personal favorite destination, Morocco remains at the top of her list. "It's a mysterious, exciting mixture of cultures and religions - the medinas, the souks, the Islamic architecture - the history of the Arab conquests. And there's something about the sands - the sands of time..."

When I saw the movie "The English Patient," I knew it was filmed in my desert. Once when I was there, in one day we went from a rainstorm in Fez through a snowstorm over the Atlas Mountains to a sandstorm at Erfoud."

For information on Lark Tours, call Lois Kozlow, (810)642-5512.

Petra: A group from this year's Lark Tours is dwarfed by the size of the colorful rock formations leading into the ancient city of Petra, Jordan.



GREAT ESCAPES

Great Escapes features various travel news items. Send news leads to Hugh Gallagher, assistant managing editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (313) 591-7279.

ORLANDO \$69 ROOMS

Wyndham resorts at Lake Buena Vista (Orlando) is offering a moderate introductory room rate of \$69 now until Dec. 18. The resort has 394 African-themed rooms, new pool area with a 79-foot water slide leading to ruins of an ancient temple. Wyndham Safari Resort is 1/8 mile from entrance to Walt Disney World Resort Area; free shuttle to Magic Kingdom; call 1-800-423-3297.

EAST TAWAS RAIL DAYS

A glass-roofed dome car is one of the features of an unusual rail excursion being offered as part of East Tawas' Old-Fashioned Railroad Days Festival, Sept. 12-14. Several different accommodations are available. The rail trip begins just north of Bay City and travels along the Lake State Railway Line to Tawas and East Tawas where the two communities border the bay.

The trip starts at KawKawlin, near 1-75 at 8 a.m. Friday; return trip is Sunday leaving Tawas at 3 p.m. The ride will take about four hours each way. Travel is in air-conditioned cars. Visitors will be able to shop in Tawas and East Tawas and take part in festival events. An excursion bus will take those interested to the Au Sable River for a ride on the Onondaga River Queen paddle boat on Saturday. Hotel rooms have to be arranged; choices include the Holiday Inn in East Tawas located on the bay

front.

The train trip is sponsored by the non-profit Saginaw Depot Preservation Corporation. Call 1-517-362-8643 (Tawas Area Chamber of Commerce) or Brainerd Electric Trains, 1-517-793-4753; credit card ticket holds arranged at 1-517-793-6887.

GRAND TRAVERSE SPECIALS

Grand Traverse Resort's summer camp for kids continues through the end of August. Young T-shirt clad "cubs" can participate in nature, arts and crafts, archery and music daily. New this year is a program for junior golfers with resorts pro staff working with the youngsters. The resort has also announced three autumn travel packages. One, "Bed, Breakfast and The Bear," offers two nights, two breakfasts and 18 holes of golf on The Bear, the famed course designed by Jack Nicklaus.

The resort will soon feature two other signature golf courses, by Leo Trevino and Gary Player. Call 1-800-748-0303 for details on packages and specials.

BLUEGRASS/GOSPEL FESTIVAL

The 17th annual Blue Grass Festival is scheduled for Aug. 20-23 at the Wheel Inn campground near Leslie, Mich. (between Jackson and Lansing).

The campground is dedicated to family camping according to organizer Robert White. Top bluegrass and gospel acts have been booked. Call 1-419-726-5089.

BRIDGE WALK

The 40th annual Labor Day walk across the big Mackinac Bridge steps off at 7 a.m. from St. Ignace. You must start by 11

a.m. so arrive early. No bikes, skates, wagons or skateboards are allowed, nor family pets (exception, seeing-eye dogs). Free parking near bridge in St. Ignace. Bus transport will be available from Mackinac City back to St. Ignace. Some visitors chose to take the ferries to the island, then hop to St. Ignace. All three ferry lines offer free transport from St. Ignace docks back to your car. Call 1-800-338-6660.

NORTHERN INDIANA BLUEGRASS

The Tri-state Bluegrass Festival will be held Labor Day weekend, Aug. 28-31, at the Noble County Fairgrounds in Kendallville, Ind. (down I-69, north of Fort Wayne). Music will be offered day and night around camp fires, as well as stage shows and a variety of food. Amateur pickers are encouraged to join in. Free camping is included in a \$17 weekend pass, with limited water and electricity \$5 extra. Contact 1-219-432-4485; sponsored by the Northern Indiana Bluegrass Association.

AT KENSINGTON

The first weekend in September Kensington MetroPark will host "Rendezvous on the Hurons" at the park's farm center. You can stop back in time to when hogs

birch bark canoes ruled the Great Lakes as you paddle a 34-foot voyager canoe. The Cadillac

Dance Theater will re-enact Cadillac's landing at Fort Pontchartrain on Sunday, Sept. 7.

Contact farm center at 1-810-685-1661.

Mentadent CHAMPIONS

PICK THE DRAW

Connors, Borg, Gomez, Krick... Who Will Win?

Twelve tennis champions will be competing in the MENTADENT CHAMPIONS August 21-25 at The Fairlane Club in Dearborn. Correctly predict the players that will advance through the DRAW and you could WIN prizes!

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Win a trip to the MENTADENT CHAMPIONS tennis resort in Westchester, NY. Watch and Penn tennis is yours!

PLUS everyone entered into a random drawing with a chance to win the following:

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* Winners notified by phone on August 20

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NEWSPAPERS

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Entries must be received no later than August 19, 1997. No purchase necessary to enter. Must be at least 18 years old to enter.

* Odds regulations: Grand Prize will be awarded to the person who submits an entry with the exact or closest draw for the 1997 MENTADENT CHAMPIONS tennis resort in Westchester, NY. For a complete set of rules, contact the MENTADENT CHAMPIONS tennis resort, Suite 175, Boreville, PA 19312.

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