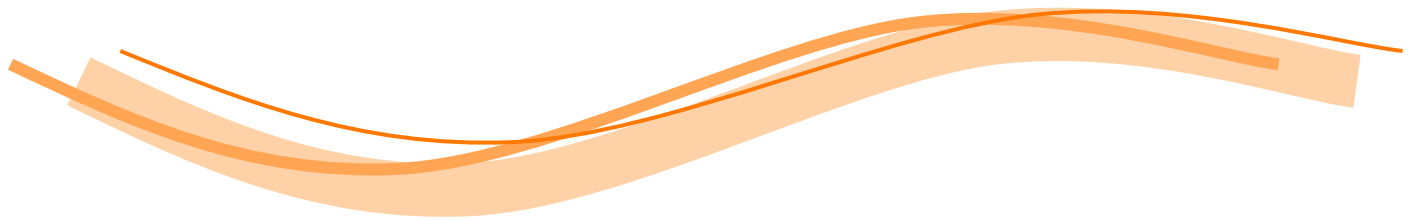




Transat Holidays & Sol Melia Cuba





SPAIN

Transat Flights:

Direct to Madrid May to October 2007

Spain is widely known for Flamenco music and dance, bullfights, fantastic beaches and endless sunshine. It is, and has been for thousands of years, one of the cultural centres of Europe with beautiful cities and towns offering a unique blend of historic monuments with futuristic architecture. Its many regions are all different from one another; geographically, climatically and even in personality. It truly is a fascinating country to get to know and experience first hand.

The Land of Don Quixote

With over 52 million visitors each year, Spain is one of the most visited countries on Earth. The Costa del Sol and Balearic and Canary islands have seen their tourist industries develop under the sign of the two most important divinities of the modern traveller: the sun and the sea. Further inland, the country varies according to the unique traits of each of its provinces: each community distinguished by its own specific character, and sometimes its own language.

Towering 650 m over the central highlands of Spain, **Madrid** is the country's capital city. With a population of 3 million inhabitants, Madrid is the political, economic and cultural hub of the country. Though it only has a few major monuments, it features more than 50 museums. The most renowned is the Museo del Prado, which dates from 1819 and is one of the most beautiful museums in all of Europe.

Barcelona was built around its port on the Mediterranean Sea. The long-standing capital of the autonomous community of Catalonia, this city of 1.5 million inhabitants has always had its sights turned north towards Europe, making for a very unique identity, compared to the nation's other cities. The emblem of Barcelona lies in the northern part of the city, in the Eixample district: the Sagrada Familia basilica. Its construction was undertaken in 1884 and it remains unfinished. This stunning testament to the genius of its architect, Gaudí, is topped with spindle-shaped towers and bears witness to its creator's outlandish taste for symbolism and the exuberant shapes of nature.

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Hanging from the southern tip of Europe and facing Africa, **Andalusia** cultivates a strong personality inherited through centuries of travels, conquests and brilliant civilisations. Located at the feet of the Sierra Morena and Sierra Nevada mountain chains, whose highest summits shine under their perpetual snow, the region's palaces, mosques and gardens evoke the golden age of the Moor Kingdoms. The riches may have passed, but the cultural and natural landscape remains the same: flamenco, bull-fighting, unbridled ferias, arid mountains dotted with small villages and the beaches of the Costa del Sol. The sunny Andalusian coastline follows the Mediterranean Sea over some 300 km, from Gibraltar to Almería, at the foothills of the Sierras. A veritable tourist Mecca since the 1970s, the Costa del Sol's mild winters and festive summer nights more than make up for its rather stony beaches.

The political and cultural capital of Andalusia, **Seville** is an energetic little town that loves to celebrate its corridas and annual feria. During Holy Week, masked penitents lead a procession through the city's streets. Central to the city is its Gothic cathedral, third largest in Europe and built during the 15th century on the former site of an Almohad mosque. The cathedral features a funerary monument which is rumoured to contain the ashes of Christopher Columbus, though the fact is disputed by the cathedral of Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic, which also claims to hold the explorer's final remains.

A historical and cultural anachronism, **Gibraltar** is an overseas territory of the United Kingdom whose population is largely Catholic and Spanish-speaking. Covering a mere 6 square km, its territory, which is only attached to Spain by a long spit of sand, lies behind the famous rock which guards the strait that separates Africa from Europe. Slightly sloping towards the Atlantic Ocean, the Rock of Gibraltar constitutes a 425 m vertical wall on its Mediterranean side. Visitors can learn more about the area at the Gibraltar Museum. Home to a number of more or less wild monkeys, the rock, which can only be reached by cable-car, offers an exceptional view of the strait and Morocco.

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	<p>Four of the 16 Balearic Islands are inhabited. The largest and most visited, Majorca (3,604km²), is also the one whose landscape is the most varied. Its capital, Palma, is located on the southern coast of the island and is surrounded by most of the major beach resorts. Minorca (680 square km) is five times smaller than Majorca and much less frequented by travellers. The most easterly of the Balearics, it is a sparsely wooded low-lying island surrounded by craggy cliffs and magnificent coves. The island's capital, Mahón, is located on the eastern coast, above a large gulf. Legend has it that the city's name was the inspiration for the French word mayonnaise, which started appearing on French tables after France's 1756 conquest Minorca. The third largest Balearic Island is the "White Island" of Ibiza (572 square km). Its uneven terrain and jagged coasts hide a myriad of isolated creeks. Discovered by hippies and artists during the 1960s, it is a major tourist destination which has nonetheless managed to retain its unique character. The contrasts are striking between the urbanizaciones that surround its beautiful teeming beaches, and the central inland area, where stepped fields abound in poppies in springtime and the farms and fortified villages of Arab inspiration recall Andalusia.</p>
<p>ITALY</p>	<p>Transat Flights: Direct to Rome May to October 2007</p> <p>Transat Program, available from May 3rd to Oct 31st Two flights per week Willing to Share option Over 130 hotels, resorts and villas Escorted tours Tour and Stay Costa Cruise Packages Independent Discovery Tours</p> <p>The land of La Dolce Vita and the Eternal City Flavours, colours, smells, human warmth and the melodious language of romance - In short, Italy offers visitors a sumptuous feast for the senses. Italy retains an exceptional legacy from peoples who have occupied it throughout the course of its history. Over the centuries, it has seen great civilizations that still permeate Europe. Rome, Florence and Venice are particularly marked by this rich cultural heritage.</p>

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Rome

Ancient Rome was founded and developed on a defensive site made up of seven steep hills along the left bank of the River Tiber (or Tevere, as it is called in Italy). Also known as the Eternal City, Roma became the capital of Italy in 1870. In the area between the Colosseum and the Pantheon stand ancient monuments, the source of inspiration for their Renaissance counterparts.

As an independent state governed by the Pope (who holds the title of sovereign pontiff), Vatican City is located along the right bank of the Tiber. The 44-ha (109-acre) walled enclave encompasses such gems as the Basilica di San Pietro (St. Peter's Basilica).

The Piazza Navona is Rome's most famous square. A refreshing, pedestrian-only oasis graced with three fountains, it is a popular local gathering spot.

The picturesque Trastevere quarter is renowned for its winding alleys and trattorie, while the Gianicolo hill offers stunning panoramic views of the Eternal City.

Florence

Located on the River Arno in Tuscany, Florence is surrounded by hills planted with olive trees, cypresses and vineyards. The surrounding countryside is bathed in soft, diaphanous light characteristic of the region. The political heart of the city since time immemorial, the grand Piazza della Signoria, surrounded by open-air cafés and restaurants, is a favourite meeting place for locals and tourists alike.

Florence is a veritable outdoor sculpture museum, with its numerous statues, including a replica (the original is now housed in the Accademia) of Michelangelo's (1475-1564) famous David.

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	<p>Venice Located in the northeastern part of southern Italy, Venice rises out of the waters like Botticelli's Venus. Set in the middle of a saltwater lagoon and crisscrossed with canals connected by countless bridges, the city is linked to the mainland by the 4-km-long (2.5-mi) Ponte della Libertà, erected in 1846. Unsurprisingly, life in Venice, a commercial and maritime city steeped in atmosphere, revolves entirely around water.</p> <p>The Piazza San Marco is the only true piazza in Venice, as the other, smaller squares are known as campi. Moreover, the historic square was long the centre of political, social and cultural life of La Serenissima, as Venice is known to locals.</p> <p>The Lagoon of Venice encompasses over 40 islands, most of which were inhabited until the 19th century. Many -- though, fortunately, not all -- have been abandoned. Murano, the largest of the islands, is famous for its glass industry, a tradition that dates back to the 13th century. Visitors can even watch artisans create these very marvels right before their eyes in the island's world-famous glassblowing workshops. Another must-see is the Museo del Vetro, which showcases ancient pieces.</p>
<p>GREECE</p>	<p>Transat Flights: Direct to Athens mid April to October 2007</p> <p>1,000 Places to see before you die: Crete; Mykonos; Delos; Santorini; Patmos; Rhodes; Symi; The Acropolis; Athens national archaeology museum; Delphi; Epidaurus; Monemvassia; Mount Athos; Hydra; Meteora monasteries</p> <p>The Best Ancient Sites</p> <p>The Acropolis (Athens): No matter how many photographs you've seen, nothing can prepare you for watching the light turn the marble of the buildings, still standing after thousands of years, from honey to rose to deep red to stark white. If the crowds get you down, remember how crowded the Acropolis was during religious festivals in antiquity.</p> <p>Nemea (Peloponnese): This gem of a site has it all: a beautifully restored stadium, a handsome museum, and picnic tables with a view of the romantic Doric temple with its three long-standing columns -- and several newly restored and re-erected ones. If you're lucky, you may see Nemea's archaeologists at work lovingly reconstructing and re-erecting more columns from the temple's north facade in their ambitious restoration project.</p>

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Olympia (Peloponnese) & Delphi (Central Greece): Try to visit both Olympia, where the Olympic Games began, and Delphi, home of the Delphic Oracle. That's the only way you'll be able to decide whether you think Olympia, with its massive temples and shady groves of trees, or Delphi, perched on mountain slopes overlooking olive trees and the sea, is the most beautiful ancient site in Greece.

Palace of Knossos (Crete): A seemingly unending maze of rooms and levels and stairways and corridors and frescoed walls -- the Minoan Palace of Knossos. It can be packed at peak hours, but it still exerts its power if you enter into the spirit of the labyrinth, where King Minos ruled over the richest and most powerful of Minoan cities and, according to legend, his daughter Ariadne helped Theseus kill the Minotaur and escape.

Delos (Cyclades): This tiny isle just 3.2 km (2 miles) offshore of Mykonos, was considered by the ancient Greeks to be both the geographical and spiritual center of the Cyclades; many considered this the holiest sanctuary in all Greece. The extensive remains here testify to the island's former splendor. From Mount Kinthos (really just a hill, but the island's highest point), you can see many of the Cyclades most days and the whole archipelago on a very clear day. The 3 hours allotted by excursion boats from Mykonos or Tinos are hardly sufficient to explore this vast archaeological treasure.

Vergina (Northern Greece): In the brilliantly designed museum here, you can peek into what may have been the tomb of Alexander the Great's father, Philip of Macedon; nearby there are more than 300 burial mounds that stretch for miles across the Macedonian plain.

Messene (Peloponnese): This sprawling 4th century B.C. site has the best-preserved ancient fortification walls in Greece, an enormous Sanctuary of Asklepios and a stadium -- and views of almost all Messene and Laconia from the summit of Mount Ithomi.

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The Best Islands

Hydra (Saronic Gulf Islands): Old-timers keep waiting for Hydra, with its handsome stone mansions overlooking a picture-postcard harbor, to be "spoiled." After all, even before Mykonos and Santorini, Hydra was one of the first Greek islands to be "discovered." So far, so good: donkeys still outnumber motorcycles, and the day-trippers who blitz the appealing harborside shops leave at twilight. That means you can almost always find the table you want at one of Hydra's pleasant small restaurants.

Crete: Whether for its rugged mountains or its countless beaches, its ancient remains or its ultramodern hotels, its layered history or its intense people, Crete cannot be denied. It is not just a distinctive Greek island -- it is a world unto itself.

Santorini (Cyclades): This is undoubtedly one of the most spectacular islands in the world. The streets of Fira and Ia are carved into the face of a high cliff, overlooking the circular caldera left by an ancient volcanic eruption and now filled with the deep blue waters of the Aegean. The site of Akrotiri offers a unique glimpse into life in a Minoan city, frozen in time by the eruption 3,600 years ago. Add to this the Fira nightlife scene, and you'll see why this is one of the most popular (and overcrowded) summer vacation spots in the Aegean.

Siros (Cyclades): This tiny island has it all: a vivacious, cosmopolitan capital town; thriving beach resorts; and a starkly beautiful region of farming communities, archaeological remains, and remote beaches to the north. Siros is also one of the centers of *rembetika*, a form of Greek traditional music with roots in Asia Minor; the *Fragosiriani*, a classic known throughout Greece, was composed by the Siriot Markos Vamvakaris, and you're sure to hear its simple and infectious rhythms many times during your stay here.

Rhodes (Dodecanese): The island of Rhodes has everything a visitor could want -- dazzling ancient and medieval ruins, great food, spectacular beaches, and the hottest nightlife outside of Athens -- the one drawback being that everyone knows it.

Skyros (Sporades): Winding roads and remote beaches, one main town and a few minor villages, some ancient legends and 20th-century tales: Skyros's charms remain perhaps the most elusive of the four Northern Sporades. But though the island remains a bit difficult to access and still not overstocked with touristy amenities, Skyros also offers both a living local culture and some natural wildness.

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Corfu (Ionian Islands): Lush vegetation, some still undeveloped interior and unspoiled coast, ancient sites and a 19th-century presence, a dash of Italy and a dose of the cosmopolitan, Corfu is a Greek island like no other. Tourism may be rampant, but Corfu's attractions have survived worse.

Hios (Northeastern Aegean): You'd think that an island with such gorgeous beaches, exquisite medieval towns, and remarkable scenery wouldn't remain a secret for long. Despite the qualities that attract a small group of devotees year after year, Hios remains surprisingly quiet. If you like the idea of getting away from the tour buses, being alone on a beach to rival any in the Cyclades, and exploring towns that preserve the contours of medieval life, Hios is for you. Another benefit: the local hospitality hasn't worn thin here, as it has on many of the more heavily toured islands.

Sifnos (Cyclades): Sifnos is a green island of ravines, mountaintops, and pristine beaches. Despite its small size (a hardy walker can explore the entire island on foot), Sifnos has numerous attractive small towns which can be used as bases for your explorations. Apollonia, in the central hills, offers elegant small-town civility, with the added benefit of being the hub of an excellent public transportation system. Kastro, on its seaside rock, is the medieval locus of the island, while Platis Yialos is a quiet beach resort. Don't visit in August, when the island is mobbed with vacationing Athenians.

Athens: Birthplace of democracy, capital of Greece, Megalopolis... The cradle of western civilization, Athens is a bustling city that attracts visitors with, among other things, its legendary classical temples; its museums displaying timeless works of art; the flower-filled balconies and Mediterranean streets of the Plaka district; and its crowded, lively taverns.

The political, economic and cultural heart of Greece, Athens is located in the southern region of the country. Founded deep in a valley, 7 km (4 mi) from the port of Piraeus, the city developed around the omnipresent hill of Acropolis.

The modern city of Athens surrounds the Acropolis. On a rocky outcrop stands the magnificent Ionic temple of Athena Nike, while the Parthenon prominently occupies the highest part of the plateau. The incarnation of Greek genius, the largest ancient Doric temple was dedicated to Athena Parthenos ("virgin") and built by architects Ictinos and Callicrates between 447 and 438 BC. On the north side, on the very site where the goddess defied Poseidon in their conflict over ownership of the city, is the Erechtheion, of Ionic style, famous for its portico of the Caryatids.

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Of the several theatres of Ancient Athens, the Dionysus still remains. Located south of the Acropolis, this is where the words of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes once resounded. To the west, the restored Theatre of Herodes Atticus (a Roman theatre from the year 161) still presents concerts and shows. East of the Plaka, near the National Garden, visitors can admire the 15 remaining columns of the Olympeion, a monumental temple dedicated to Zeus.

The Plaka district, built under Turkish occupation, is the most popular and lively in Athens. Along its sinewy streets, Byzantine churches, taverns, bistro terraces, small, white houses and souvenir shops stand side by side. Farther north, the Plaka leads to Syntagma Square, the largest in the capital.

If you can only visit one museum during your trip to Athens, it should be the National Archaeological Museum, founded in 1874. Located in the northern part of town in a beautiful neoclassical building, it showcases impressive collections of marble, bronze and ceramic works, as well as treasures of all kinds. North of the National Garden are the Benaki Museum, the Goulandris Museum of Cycladic Art and, farther east, the Byzantine Museum, whose collection of icons is one of the most stunning in the world.

In Greece, the aperitif is taken around 8 or 9 p.m., so in Athens, it is not rare to see people walking into restaurants around 10 p.m. Highly convivial, its regional cuisine is rich in products of the land. Elegant, expensive restaurants are found in the city's western section, towards Kifissia, while in the Plaka, taverns provide both cuisine and folklore. Everywhere in Athens, you will find many cafés that still have an old-fashioned look, as well as bars and nightclubs that attract all types of individuals: young and old, artists and business people. Folklore-lovers shouldn't miss the Philopappos Theatre, between May and September. Another must-see from June to September is the Athens festival.

Canadian travelers' passports should be valid for at least six months upon entering Greece.

Traveler's cheques: In Canadian or Euro funds are well recognized and recommended.

Credit / Debit Cards: All major credit cards are accepted in hotels, restaurants and shops; ATM machines are available in banks on the mainland as well as on the islands.

Electric current: The standard household electrical current throughout Greece is 220V.

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	<p>Banks: All banks are open to the public from 0800 to 1400 Monday to Friday. The exchange counters of some banks in downtown Athens are also open 9 – 1 during the weekend.</p> <p>Telephone Canada Direct from Greece: Dial 00 800 1611 and your call will be charged directly to your Canadian account.</p> <p>Customs: It is permitted to bring into the country duty-free: all used personal belongings, foodstuffs and beverages up to 10 kilos; 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250 grams of tobacco; and 1 litre of alcoholic beverage or 2 litres of wine; gift articles up to total value of approx. 150 euros.</p> <p>Tipping: A service charge of 13% is included on the bill in restaurants. You can leave an additional 5 – 10% if you are satisfied; Taxis and hotels 1 to 2 euros.</p> <p>Currency: 1 Euro = \$1.54 CDN as at March 2007</p> <p>Languages: Greek is the official language of Greece. English and French are widely spoken.</p> <p>Festivals:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Hellenic Festival</td> <td>Mid June to mid September</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Epidaurus</td> <td>July to August (every weekend)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Philippi & Thassos</td> <td>July to August</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Thessaloniki: Dimitria</td> <td>October</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wine Festivals</td> <td>During harvest</td> </tr> </table> <p>Corfu: Part of Ionian Islands off NW Greece, 32 km off coast, 558 km from Athens June or Sept best months Corfu Town: Archaeological Museum; Old Fort (Sound and Light); Mandraki Harbour; Museum of Asian Art; Town Hall 1633 Venetian Loggia Paleokastritsa: diving, restaurants, great coast scenery, Angelokastro med castle</p>	Hellenic Festival	Mid June to mid September	Epidaurus	July to August (every weekend)	Philippi & Thassos	July to August	Thessaloniki: Dimitria	October	Wine Festivals	During harvest
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UK	<p>Currency: one pound = \$2.26 March 2007</p> <p>Weather: Summer temps around 20 C, rain any time; currently 15 and sunny</p> <p>Great British Heritage Pass: 7 days \$78 CDN free access to 600 castles, stately homes and gardens in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, save over 40% on admission fees, Properties include Kensington Palace, Shakespeare's Birthplace, Warwick Castle and Palace of Holyrood house.</p> <p>“This sceptered isle, this earth of majesty, this other Eden, demi-paradise” – Richard II</p> <p>“Oh to be in England now that April's there!” – Robert Browning</p> <p>2012 Olympics</p>										

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Rail: For frequent train journeys, a Britrail Flexipass allows travel for up to 15 days in two months; a Classic Pass allows travel on a certain number of consecutive days up to one month. If you are visiting just the south east region of Britain around London, then the BritRail South East Pass is for you. The BritRail Classic and South East Passes are not sold in Britain and you must buy them before you leave home. Available in Canada by contacting:

Rail Europe Tel: 1-800-555-2748 Fax: 905-602-4198 8 days \$269 US

Edinburgh Military Tattoo: 1-31 August; A dazzling and compelling celebration of music, dance and drama set against the magnificent backdrop of Edinburgh Castle. Featuring the world famous massed pipes and drums, massed military bands, highland dancers and the haunting sound of the lone piper.

Chartwell House: 7 pounds; The home of Sir Winston Churchill from 1924 until his death, Chartwell is still much as he left it, the rooms strongly evoking his career and wide interests. They include museum rooms with medals, uniforms, photographs and gifts from all over the world. An exhibition recalls Churchill's life. A studio in the garden contains many of his paintings and there is also a Golden Rose Walk, lakes, black swans, Oscar Nemon's statue of Sir Winston and Lady Churchill and his hand-built wall.

Chelsea Flower Show: May; 13 pounds; Royal Hospital Chelsea
Buckingham Palace: 12.50, kids half price; Visitors may tour the 19 State Rooms, including the Throne Room, Picture Gallery and Ballroom, the largest room in Buckingham Palace used for investitures and State banquets. All the State rooms are opulently decorated with some of the finest pictures, tapestries and works of art from the Royal Collection. The extended visitor route includes a 450 metre walk through the south side of the Palace garden.

Golf: For spectators there's a host of top-class action including the Open Championship, the World Matchplay Championship and the Ryder Cup. The world's very best can be seen in action on some of the oldest courses in the sport.

But the real attraction for golf lovers is the variety and quality of the many courses available to play. You could be punching the air like Ballesteros did on the 18th at the Old Course at St. Andrews when he won the Open Championship in 1987. Or would you rather recreate famous Ryder Cup duels at The De Vere Belfry in the heart of Warwickshire? And it's not just the famous courses on offer. For example the legendary St Andrews offers five other courses as well as the famous Old Course.

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The variety of other golfing challenges is amazing. You might choose to pit your wits on rugged, windblown seaside links courses offering stunning scenery of the British coastline. Many of these courses have barely changed for 100 years or more and are still as challenging as ever. If that doesn't take your fancy there are lush, parkland courses such as Wentworth in Surrey or Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire, heathland links such as Walton Heath in Berkshire and up-to-date American layouts such as St. Mellion in Cornwall, designed by Jack Nicklaus. The majority of courses are cheap to play and easy to book. Many businesses run complete golf holiday packages to cater for all your playing needs.

Cities:

London

London is the world's greatest city – and there's never been a better time to visit. The London Pass: from 12 pounds/day – free entry to 50 attractions, beat the queues

Bath

Superb Roman remains, a wealth of fine Georgian architecture and impeccable historic credentials. No wonder Bath is a World Heritage Site.

Birmingham

Birmingham in the 21st century is a city alive with the buzz of major European concerts and events, with the colour and designs of boutique shops and a pulsating nightlife.

Brighton

A sparkling mix of sea and city, Brighton is perfect for a short break at any time of year - all the fun of the seaside, in just under an hour from central London!

Bristol

Cosmopolitan, cool and cultural.... Bristol is a city of films and festivals, concerts and carnivals, theatres and museums, clubs and DJs, food and fun.

Canterbury

Historic cathedral city of Chaucer's Tales and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Great shopping, restaurants and other attractions will also greet modern day 'pilgrims' to this walled city.

Chester

Ancient, dynamic, traditional, exciting, Chester offers a fantastic break. Enjoy café society, classy architecture, world-class heritage, entertainment and festivals galore.

Hull

The historic waterfront city of Hull is today enjoying an exciting renaissance; offering an eclectic mix of history, culture, shopping, restaurants and great nightlife.

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Liverpool

Familiar to many as the birthplace of The Beatles and the home of Liverpool FC, Liverpool is now attracting attention as European Capital of Culture 2008.

Manchester

First time visitors to Manchester are always won over by its stunning architecture, cultural attractions and legendary friendliness.

Newcastle

In the North East of England, Newcastle and Gateshead face each other across the River Tyne coming together at the dazzling Quayside.

Oxford

This ancient university city is both timeless and modern, its 'dreaming spires' and tranquil college quadrangles coexist with lively arts venues.

Portsmouth

Portsmouth is a surprising place – the UK's only island city, combining centuries of maritime history with great shopping, eating and drinking, on a cosmopolitan waterfront.

Stratford-upon-Avon

Beautifully situated on the River Avon, Stratford-upon-Avon is the birthplace of England's greatest playwright, William Shakespeare, and home of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

York

Outstanding architecture and 2000 years of history combine with bustling shopping streets and numerous award winning world-class attractions.

Edinburgh

Welcome to Edinburgh, Scotland's vibrant world heritage capital.

Glasgow

Glasgow, Scotland's largest city, is famous for its culture, architecture, and design. This is Scotland with Style.

Inverness

Scotland's most northerly city is a true revelation. Inverness is known as "Capital of the Highlands" and "Gateway to the Highlands". Everything is on your doorstep.

Cardiff

The capital of Wales is one of Europe's youngest capitals, with a progressive and confident personality to match. Cardiff is also among the UK's greenest cities, so relax!

Belfast

Imagine a city where in squares, avenues and streets of magnificent Victorian and Edwardian architecture the past still breathes.

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FRANCE

Language: The national language of France is French. Most of French people who work in the tourism industry and in related fields speak English.

Population: 61 million

Website: www.franceguide.com to order your free copy of the 2007 FranceGuide magazine

Climate: Continental France is divided into four climatic zones:

- Oceanic and humid climate with often cool summers to the west of a line from Bayonne to Lille;
- Semi-continental climate with harsh winters and hot summers in Alsace, Lorraine, along the Rhône corridor and in the mountainous massifs (Alps, Pyrenees and Massif Central);
- Intermediate climate with cold winters and hot summers in the north, and in the Paris and central regions;
- Mediterranean climate with mild winters and very hot summers in the south of France.

Government: Republic with 22 regions

Currency: Euro - one Euro = \$1.54 Cdn (March 2007)

Documentation: Passports

Shopping: the best buys in France are:

Beauty Products - at a "duty-free" (non-airport variety) store or a discounter where you can qualify for détaxe, you'll see anywhere from 20% to 45% melt off your bill. Paris offers the most duty-free stores and bigger discounts on name-brand goods, but any city with a tourist business, such as Nice, Cannes, Monaco, or Biarritz, has at least one discounter.

Crafts - The main faïence (earthenware) cities are in the north, stretching from Rouen in the northeast to Quimper on the Atlantic coast. Moustier Ste-Marie in Provence is known for a type of faïence with animals. You'll find tiles in the south; check out Salernes. Soap making is an art in the south, with soap makers dotting Marseille and Provence. L'Occitane, a Provençal brand, operates boutiques in Provence and Paris.

You'll find copper cooking pots in northern France, especially in the Normandy village of Villedieu-les-Poêles, 35km (22 miles) south of St-Lô, near Mont-St-Michel. Copper-lined cookware has been made here since the 1700s, and dozens of stores sell huge amounts of the stuff.

Northeastern France, near Strasbourg, is the home of Baccarat crystal, and Burgundy is known for its large hand-carved (and very heavy) furniture.

Fashion - You can find knockoffs all over, at more than affordable prices, in the two major dime-store chains. Every major city has a Monoprix (owned by Galeries Lafayette), a Prisunic (owned by Au Printemps), or both.

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Food - You'll be safe with mustard; Dijon brims with choices, but any French grocery store will have a large selection of the Maille brand. You can buy chocolates in grocery stores, but if you want to know what everyone's raving about, save up a few euros and head to the chocolatiers in Lyon or Paris, preferably in the cooler months. You should consume handmade fresh chocolate within 3 days. In Paris, the big outlets are La Maison du Chocolat and Christian Constant.

Kitchenware - Innovative kitchen appliances are promoted all over France, but their electricity requirements aren't compatible with North America's. However, the copper-lined casseroles and thick-walled roasters might last a lifetime once you recover from the shock of their prices. You can buy used copperware at almost any flea market. Copper polish is sold at markets as well. In Paris, hit rue Montmartre in the 2nd arrondissement (not in Montmartre) for a choice of kitchen and restaurant suppliers.

Perfume - Note that French perfume lasts longer than the Canadian counterpart of the same scent (it's made with potato alcohol, not grain alcohol), and most new scents are launched in France before they come to Canada.

Porcelain - head to Limoges (in the Limousin), where factory shops sell local wares and a few seconds. Note that factory shops are closed from noon to 2pm. In Limoges, look for Bernardaud and Raynaud; in Aix-sur-Vienne, there's the Ancienne Manufacture Royale de Limoges.

Tiping: The law requires all bills to say service compris, which means the total includes the tip. But French diners often leave some small change as an additional tip, especially if service has been exceptional. Some general guidelines: For hotel staff, tip 1.05€ to 1.50€ (\$1.35-\$1.95) for every item of baggage the porter carries on arrival and departure, and 1.50€ (\$1.95) per day for the maid. In cafes, service is usually included. Tip taxi drivers 10% to 15% of the amount on the meter.

Transport: In Paris the Metro is by far the quickest and most practical way of getting about 15 lines and around 300 stations.

High-speed train (TGV) - With a speed of 300 km per hour, the TGV is one of France's technological pride and joys. Safe, punctual and comfortable, it allows travel to city centres in record time: Paris-Lille in 1 hour, Paris-Marseille or Paris-Bordeaux in 3 hours, Paris-Rennes in 2 hours. Please note that booking is obligatory, even if it is just before departure time.

Driving: on right as Canada; The Canadian driving license is valid for 3 months in France.

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	<p>Beaches: France has miles of Atlantic coastal sandy beaches, the fun Mediterranean coast, or the charms of Corsica36 resorts in the Seaside Holidays club have special offers – go to website to see what is on offer.</p> <p>Biking: Paris has put a lot of emphasis on pedestrianised streets and has laid out paths reserved for cyclists and rollerbladers: widened bus lanes (used by RATP buses and taxis), safe cycle tracks are appearing nearly everywhere, especially on the major roads. On Sundays the roads by the side of the Seine are completely reserved for pedestrians, cyclists, rollerbladers.</p> <p>Timing: The best time to visit Paris is in the spring (Apr-June) or fall (Sept-Nov), when things are easier to come by - from Métro seats to good-tempered waiters. The weather is temperate year-round. July and August are the worst for crowds. Parisians desert their city, leaving it to the tourists.</p> <p>Golf: France, a land of golf, has over 500 golf courses and still more are being designed. Courses have been created here by the top architects: Robert Trent Jones Snr & Jnr, Nicklaus, Hawtree, Pete Dye, Gary Player, Robert Von Hagge, Ronald Fream, Tom Simpson, Peter Alliss. From fairways overlooking the sea to glistening snow-covered peaks. Book tee times online at website.</p> <p>Food: cooking schools in Paris – Le Cordon Bleu</p> <p>Nightlife: Opera; Crazy Horse Saloon; Folies Bergere; dance clubs; wine bars; Jazz clubs; Moulin Rouge; Lido de Paris</p> <p>1,000 places to See before you die: lots! Cave of Lascaux; Biarritz; St-Emilion; Burgundy; Giverny (Claude Monet); Mont-Saint-Michel; D-Day Beaches; Paris; Chartres Cathedral; Versailles; The Camargue; Carcassonne; Lourdes; Loire Valley chateaux; Aix-En Provence; Arles Amphitheatre; Avignon; Nice; St Tropez; Annecy; Courchevel; Chamonix/Mont Blanc...</p> <p>Health: In general, France is a safe destination. You don't need shots, most food is safe, and the water is potable. If you're concerned, order bottled water. It is easy to get a prescription filled, and nearly all destinations have English-speaking doctors at hospitals with well-trained staffs</p> <p>Safety: Much of the country, particularly central France, the northeast, Normandy, and Brittany, remains relatively safe, though no place in the world is crime-free. Those intending to visit the south of France, especially the Riviera, should exercise caution.</p> <p>Kids: Disneyland Paris – 45 mins by RER train; Paris Zoo; Eiffel Tower; Chateau de Versailles – Hall of Mirrors</p> <p>History: 52 BC Julius Caesar defeated Vercingetorix</p> <p>Museums: Paris has 134 museums!</p>
IRELAND	Transat flights to Dublin and Belfast from May to October Flights, hotels, tours, self drive – all in the brochure

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AUSTRIA	Transat flights to Vienna from May to October Flights, hotels, tours – all in the brochure
NETHERLANDS	Transat flights to Amsterdam from April to October Flights, hotels, tours – all in the brochure
GERMANY	<p>Location: Central Europe, bordering the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, between the Netherlands and Poland, south of Denmark; coastline of 2,389 km; highest point: Zugspitze 2,963 m</p> <p>Languages: German; much English spoken</p> <p>Population: 82 million</p> <p>Climate: Germany is not prey to dramatic climatic extremes, although there are regional differences. The most reliably good weather is from May to October, with high summer a good bet for mid 20°C (low 70°F) shorts-and-t-shirt conditions, even in the north. Autumn is a good time to visit Germany. As the tourist scrum disperses and the forests turn golden, it's not too stifling to be active but still warm enough to leave you thirsty for a few well-deserved steins. Winter is frosty and wet, especially in the south, with snow rarely settling for long except in the high country.</p> <p>When to go: The shoulder seasons (from March to May and from October to early November) bring fewer tourists and often surprisingly pleasant weather. In April and May, when flowers and fruit trees are in bloom, it can be mild and sunny. Indian summers that stretch well into autumn are not uncommon.</p> <p>Government: The Federal Republic of Germany is a democracy with a liberal market economy, religious freedom and freedom of the press. It is a member of the European Union (EU) and of NATO.</p> <p>The Federal Republic of Germany is a federation of individual states. There are 16 "Bundesländer" which are federal states with their own government. They have their own regional constitutions which have to comply with the principles of a republican, democratic and social state governed by the rule of law as laid down in the Basic Law (Germany's federal constitution). This guarantees that all German people have the same rights, obligations and living conditions.</p> <p>Voltage: 230 V</p> <p>Currency: Euros - 1.00 Euros = 1.52 Canadian dollars</p> <p>Documentation: The passport must be valid for at least another four months after entry into Germany or the Schengen area.</p> <p>Shopping: There are so many things that make a shopping tour around cities like Munich, Hamburg or Berlin particularly special: German "originals", for example, such as BOSS, Meissen porcelain, Faber-Castell and Adidas. Traditional products such as Nuremberg gingerbread and the excellent German wines are also well worth seeking out.</p>

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Tipping: It's common in Germany to round up the bill in restaurants or pubs. Since the introduction of the Euro, a tip of about 10% is customary if you were satisfied with the service. Taxi driver: 5%-10% ; Chambermaid: €2 per day ; Carrying luggage: €1 per piece.

Transport: Munich to Berlin by high speed train in 5 hours

UNESCO Heritage Sites: 33

Beaches: The rugged North Sea, the gentler Baltic, life at an island pace, bracing air, more than 1,000 kilometres of beach and plenty of sun. Add to that, a never-ending choice of sports, spectacular events and nightlife into the early hours.

History: The state now known as Germany was unified as a modern nation-state only in 1871, when the German Empire, dominated by the Kingdom of Prussia, was forged.

Hiking: Germany is a traveler's paradise with its romantic forests, picturesque hill and mountain landscapes, and tranquilly embedded seas. From hikes along tidal shores to trips through the low mountain regions all the way to mountain-top tours, everything is possible. Along many of these routes are hotels and inns that provide specialized accommodations for hikers. Many trip-organizers offer comfortable "hiking without luggage" packages. Youth groups can frequently choose from various camps, leisure activities, adventurous hiking trips and youth educational programs.

Biking: The brochure "Discovering Germany by Bike" presents a variety of offers on the most attractive routes and regions. Sign posts, bike-friendly overnight accommodations, good bicycle travel maps and main information centers are only some of the important points covered in this catalog.

Golf: weekday green fees around \$60 Cdn

Food: lots of great regional dishes

Nightlife: Hamburg, Berlin

1,000 places to See before you die: Baden-Baden; Lake Constance/The Bodensee; The Alpine Road; The Romantic Road; Bamberg; Neuschwanstein Castle; Alte Pinakothek, Munich; Deutsches Museum, Munich; Oktoberfest; Passion Play of Oberammergau; Regensburg; Berlin Philharmonic; Brandenburg Gate; Berlin Museums; Sans Souci palace, Potsdam; The Zwinger palace, Berlin; Bayreuth Music Festival; The Rhine Valley; Cologne's Cathedral Quarter; Heidelberg's Schloss; Lubeck; Sylt island; Weimar

Health: Germany has excellent health care, but its cost is expensive - come with decent insurance.

Safety: normal precautions required, otherwise very good

Kids: very child friendly – castles, parks, zoos, boat rides

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Cities: The five largest cities in Germany:
Berlin (capital of Germany) with 3,391,407 inhabitants
Hamburg with 1,736,752 inhabitants
Munich with 1,397,537 inhabitants
Cologne with 975,907 inhabitants
Frankfurt am Main with 657,126 inhabitants

Museums: Berlin has 175 museums alone!

Rail Europe: Euro Domino Pass or German Rail Pass for 4 to 10 days

Castle Hotels: Lots, eg on the Romantic Road

Music: In the field of music, Germany's influence is noted through the works of, among others, Bach, Mozart, Händel, Telemann, Schütz, Beethoven, Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Humperdinck, Nicolai, Lortzing, Brahms, Schumann, Wagner, Pachelbel, Offenbach, Furtwängler, Eisler, Reger, Strauss, Hindemith, Orff, Stockhausen, Henze and Lachenmann. Germany also has indulged in other types of music such as Hard Rock/Heavy Metal in which Oomph! and Rammstein are leading the way.

Festivals: Carnival - "Fasching", "Fasnacht" or "Karneval" are all terms used to describe Carnival, an ancient tradition which is celebrated all over Germany but particularly in the Rhineland and in the strongly Catholic regions of Germany. Mainz, Cologne, Düsseldorf and Bonn are hotbeds of Carnival fun.

Oktoberfest: Germany's biggest and best-known festival is the Munich Beer Festival, also known as the "Oktoberfest" and the "Wiesn". More than six million visitors flock to the Theresienwiese every year to drink beer from large litre tankards and eat pork sausages and pretzels.

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<p>TRANSAT HOLIDAYS</p>	<p>Transat A.T. Inc. is one of the world’s largest integrated tourism companies. The Company was officially created in April 1987 when tour operator Trafic Voyages, founded in 1982 by Jean-Marc Eustache, Philippe Sureau and Lina De Cesare, started its own airline–Air Transat–and adopted a vertical integration strategy based on a European business model. The same year, the company secured funding to attain its objectives through an initial public offering: Transat was born.</p> <p>Transat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> offers more than 60 destination countries; <input type="checkbox"/> has over 50 “source” countries where it distributes its products; <input type="checkbox"/> is Canada’s largest tour operator (outgoing and incoming); <input type="checkbox"/> is the largest tour operator in the Canada/United Kingdom market; <input type="checkbox"/> is one of the largest tour operators in France with, among others, Vacances Transat France and Look Voyages; <input type="checkbox"/> has more than 70 travel agencies in France; <input type="checkbox"/> is the largest holiday-travel carrier in Canada (Air Transat); <input type="checkbox"/> is the largest travel agent in Canada catering to the general public (with over 430 outlets and a significant online presence); <input type="checkbox"/> has revenues of more than \$2.5 billion; <input type="checkbox"/> has approximately 6,000 employees, primarily in eight countries: Canada, France, the United Kingdom, Greece, the Netherlands, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, US
<p>Mission</p>	<p>Transat Holidays offers quality vacation packages to a wide variety of destinations. Each season, the company presents a wide selection of quality products, in order to meet the diversified needs of Canadian travellers.</p> <p>In keeping with their mission, their employees aim to exceed vacationers’ expectations in order to maintain their position as a market leader. They see their role, ultimately, to turn holiday dreams into reality: making the vacation experience one of the most memorable ever.</p>
<p>Products</p>	<p>Packages, Cruises, Hotels, Flights, Tours, Car Rentals & Train Travel. With a choice of over 300 hotels located in more than 50 destinations and a complete line of itineraries offered in partnership with the most prestigious cruise lines, all products offered by Transat Holidays are subject to a rigorous standard review.</p>
<p>Awards</p>	<p>2005 Agent's Choice Awards: Transat Holidays ranked number one for a third year in a row by Canada's travel agents according to the results of the Agents' Choice Awards 2005, a survey carried out in February 2005 by Canadian Travel Press and Travel Courier.</p>
<p>Current Brochures</p>	<p>Transat Holidays Greece, Italy and Spain 2007 brochure and Britain and Europe 2007-2008 brochure</p>

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<p>Air Transat Kids Club</p>	<p>To ensure that your family vacations are fun and unforgettable from beginning to end, Air Transat has created Kids Club so that young passengers can really enjoy themselves while onboard an Air Transat flight. It is designed to make air travel a fun experience for young travellers (and for their parents!). Even before the doors of the plane are closed following boarding, every child receives a small bag containing all sorts of surprises and games. The more fun they have, the easier the flight. Furthermore, children who are members of Air Transat Kids Club enjoy certain exclusive privileges.</p> <p>Members of the Air Transat Kids Club will enjoy several benefits that the whole family can share. You can check in at a special "Air Transat Kids Club Members" counter. Thanks to these special counters located in major Canadian airports where Air Transat flies, checking-in is quicker than before. At check-in, special tags will be placed on your baggage; as a result, your baggage gets priority treatment.</p>
<p>Transat History</p>	<p>1987 Transat is created and successfully completes an initial public offering of \$8.25 million. It acquires Vacances Multitour and Air Transat makes its inaugural flight.</p> <p>On October 31, Transat ends its first year as a public company with sales of \$23 million.</p> <p>1988 Transat acquires a 50% interest in Consultour/Club Voyages, in the distribution sector, and creates Services Haycot (now Handlex).</p> <p>1989 Transat acquires Voyages Tourbec and British Airways Holidays (now Transat Holidays).</p> <p>1990 Transat acquires tour operator Vacances Fantasia.</p> <p>1991 Trafic/Multitour becomes Air Transat Holidays (now Transat Holidays).</p> <p>1992 Transat acquires a 50% interest in Toronto-based tour operator Regent Holidays, later grouped under the World of Vacations/Nolitour banner.</p> <p>1993 Transat opens offices in Vancouver and acquires tour operator Les Voyages Nolitour. Transat makes its second public offering for approximately \$21 million.</p> <p>1995 Transat creates incoming tour operator DMC Transat (now part of Jonview).</p> <p>1996 Transat acquires Look Voyages in France and a 35% interest in Canadian Holidays (World of Vacations). It issues shares for approximately \$88 million.</p> <p>1997 Transat's sales exceed the \$1-billion mark.</p> <p>1998 Look Voyages launches its Lookéa vacation clubs.</p> <p>1999 Transat takes delivery of its first Airbus A330.</p> <p>2000 Transat creates www.exitnow.ca. That same year it acquires a 50% interest (80% since 2004) in Jonview Canada, the largest incoming tour operator in Canada, and Rêvateurs, a specialized tour operator.</p>

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