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Briefs: African American Heritage Trail opens

By staff and wire reports
Sunday, April 20, 2008

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Louisiana tourism officials have unveiled the first 26 sites on an African American Heritage Trail running from New Orleans to northern Louisiana. There are 26 stops on the trail to begin with, although that will be expanded. Included are the expected -- plantations with details about slaves' lives, and the early roots of jazz -- and the unexpected -- such as Melrose Plantation, built and owned and operated by a former slave, who in turn became a slave owner.

Some of the sites on the trail are associated with prominent individuals, such as the great gospel singer Mahalia Jackson's grave in Providence Park Cemetery in Metairie; and the Arna Bontemps African American Heritage Museum in Alexandria, the family home for a writer who went on to become important in the Harlem Renaissance. Places on the trail in New Orleans are the New Orleans African American Museum, St. Louis Cemeteries No. 1 and No. 2, the French Market and the Amistad Research Center. "It will tell the stories of African Americans who have made contributions to Louisiana, to America and to the world," said Chuck Morse, assistant secretary of the Louisiana Office of Tourism. "It makes us proud, but it's not about pride totally. It's also about the economy."

Details: or 800-474-8626 or [online](#).

Alaska port opens to day-trippers

A favorite port stop in Alaska will open to non-cruise passengers in May. [Icy Strait Point](#), a 20-minute flight from Juneau, previously was open only to cruise ship passengers. Based in a restored salmon cannery building just outside the Tlingit Indian village of Hoonah, Icy Strait Point offers 16 scheduled tours and activities for visitors, including bear viewing, kayaking, whale watching, fishing and the ZipRider, the world's largest zip line. Visitors also find ample shopping and dining opportunities in the cannery.

Independent travelers can visit Icy Strait Point on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays between May 4 and Sept. 26, as well as the last Saturday in May, June, July and August. Visitors are welcome on any of the port's excursions, but cannot make reservations in advance. With no more than one cruise ship docking at a time, space usually is available on excursions.

Icy Strait Point is owned by Huna Totem Corp., the native village corporation for Hoonah, and is the only privately owned cruise ship port in Southeast Alaska. In 2008, 120,000 cruise ship visitors are scheduled to call on the port at Icy Strait Point.

British Airways offers spring bargains

[British Airways](#) is offering packages to London, Paris, Rome, Athens and Prague. Prices with three nights' hotel accommodations range from \$644 per person, double occupancy, for London, to \$922 to Athens. Taxes are \$164 to \$240, depending on destination, and are extra. Travel package must be booked by May 15, and departure must be by May 22; some dates are sold out.

Details: 877-428-2228.

Armchair traveler

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Everything is relative, of course, and what one person hears differs from what another person hears, but Guatemalans boast that because of their precise pronunciation and lack of accent they speak the purest Spanish in Latin America. Weather-wise, too, Guatemala seems hard to beat: Its near-perfect climate lasts year-round. Read more about it in "Fodor's Guatemala," the first-edition guidebook issued in February.

The Mayan ruins in Tikal attract countless visitors, as do the country's many historic churches, including, most famously, the 18th-century Basilica of Esquipulas in the Atlantic Lowlands region, considered an important pilgrimage site. There is also the great outdoors (bird watching, biking, hiking, climbing, rafting, fishing, boating, exploring caves) and Guatemalan markets (every town holds its own market day, usually one or two days a week).

And there are visits to the country's colorful cemeteries, where the colors of the tombs indicate the role the deceased played in the family -- not as morbid as it sounds, as entire families visit their deceased relatives on Sundays, often with a bottle of alcohol in hand. But if that's too somber an experience, visitors can always dance the punta, a Guatemalan music that combines elements of reggae, salsa and hip-hop. (Fodor's, \$19 softcover; 288 pages)

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