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NOTES FROM THE ROAD

When the Going was Good: Our 30 Favorite Trips in 2013

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The incredible team that puts together Everett Potter's Travel Report every week is a well-traveled bunch. So asking our contributors about their favorite travel moment in 2013 produced joy, angst and lengthy answers, as well as the inevitable, "Just one?"

Herewith are some highlights from our travels in 2013.

BRAZIL

Riding a horse out of dense Brazilian rain forest and into a clearing where the Atlantic came into shimmering view, during a modified version of the horseback-and-hiking trek between two of my all-time favorite hotels, [Fazenda Catucaba](#) and [Pousada Picinguaba](#). I was with the owner on a scouting mission for what will eventually become a two-day trip from the mountains to the sea (he's hoping to get it going next year), with stops for gourmet picnics with the fazenda's homemade cheese and breads and a night of glamping in a safari-style campsite, though virgin UNESCO-protected forests so untouched that we walked much of the way behind state park guides wielding machetes to break a path. – *Ann Abel*

CHICAGO

I'd never really thought of going to one of the country's biggest cities to unwind by a pool until last winter. My husband, daughter and I wanted to fly off to a beach for a relaxing winter getaway, but her UChicago break was too short. Our solution: we booked a mini-suite at the Four Seasons Chicago and promised ourselves we wouldn't let the fact that all of [Chicago](#) was at our doorstep entice us to get into urban mode. Happily we kept our promise. The hotel's Roman-columned pool, with a huge Jacuzzi and light streaming in through the skylight and floor-to-ceiling window wall let us forget how cold the Chicago winter was. We ventured out once to walk to one of the museums and take a shopping stroll down Michigan Avenue. But mostly our weekend consisted of lazing on the lounge chairs, swimming in the warm pool, and sipping cool drinks in the graciously-sized Jacuzzi. Oh yes, and enjoying room service. Pina colada anyone? – *Geri Bain*

NYC

By far it was taking my first solo trip with my son to [New York City](#). For his birthday if there was anywhere he could go in the world, where would it be? "New York City," he said and pointed to it on the map next to his bunk bed. "It's my favorite place in the universe." We spent one epic day and night in the city — stayed at the fun and funky Ace Hotel in Midtown ("What's a record?" he asked while playing with the turntable), hit the NYPL's Children's Literature Exhibit, the Nathan Sawaya Lego Art exhibit, rode the subways ("Better than a rollercoaster!") and had a fancy dinner downtown at Chef Ryan Hardy's Charlie Bird. And to celebrate the big day? An appearance in the *Today Show* crowd, a stroll through the Lego Store at Rockefeller Center, lunch and gelato at Eataly and "The Lion King" on Broadway. Even the train rides in and out of the city were a hit. More importantly we got to share our love of travel, discovery, food, people and art together! – *Amiee White Beazley*

CANADA CRUISE

Just back from my best travel experience this year—sailing out of my home port, New York City at night (a thrill!) and cruising up the Atlantic coast to Canada on Regent's Navigator. All of the stops were fun—Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Saguenay, Quebec and Montreal, but the real surprise was visiting familiar close-to-home places like Newport and [Bar Harbor](#) that I've loved on land but found a treat seen from a new perspective, as ports of call. – *Eleanor Berman*

FLANDERS

Out on the road, every year has its special moments. The Belgian province of Flanders, just beyond the center of Ypres, is where some of World War I's bloodiest fighting occurred and where many events of the Great World War I Centenary will be celebrated in 2014. Standing in [Essex Farm Cemetery](#), beside the mossy bunker of the medical station where Lt. Col. John McCrae, a doctor, penned his poem, "In Flanders Fields," I gazed out at the lines of headstones and could almost see those long-ago battlefields and hear his famous words: "In Flanders fields the poppies blow/Between the headstones, row on row." – *Monique Burns*

COLORADO

My best travel story of 2013 was staying up [Little Woody Creek Valley](#) with a recently-sited mountain lion, in a guest house once visited by Margaret Thatcher. The former Prime Minister happened to die while I was staying there, so each time I went for a walk, I imagined the mountain lion might appear and I'd suddenly find myself having tea with the Iron Lady in the ever after. – *Melissa Coleman*

MONTEREY, CA

One of the most memorable moments of our family trip to Northern California last summer took place during a guided sea kayaking tour of [Monterey Bay](#). Just at a spot where the winds got strong and paddling got a little rough, a rollicking band of sea lions and harbor seals swarmed around us and started clowning around for what seemed to be our amusement. Seals were playfully nudging our kayaks and diving in between us. Sea lions pups were leaping out of the water and striking funny poses

PERU

The Andean Explorer, [PeruRail's](#) luxury train service between Cuzco and Puno, is the greatest surface transportation trip I have ever taken in Latin America — and certainly the best choice for traveling to or from Lake Titicaca. The journey is not short — a full day, in fact — but the 10 hours go by quickly. One reason is the excellent entertainment: two different bands and dance troupes, featuring music and folklore from both the Sacred Valley of the Incas and the Andean plateau, perform in the morning and afternoon. A leisurely lunch consisting of regional specialties is included in the train fare, as is afternoon tea. Following lunch, the talented bartender in the observation car gives lessons in mixing Peru's classic cocktail, the pisco sour. The scenic highlight of the journey — best enjoyed from the open-air rear car — is watching the sunset over Lake Titicaca, framed by the majestic peaks of the Bolivian Andes. The staff provides friendly and attentive service throughout the journey; and given the international make-up of the train's passengers, there are many opportunities to strike up interesting conversations with fellow travelers from many different countries. Cuzco and Machu Picchu are deservedly the leading tourist attractions in this part of the world; but Lake Titicaca — the highest navigable body of water in the world, and home to the fascinating people who live on the lake's artificial floating islands — is a very worthwhile excursion. Especially since getting there is now half the fun. – *Buzzy Gordon*

BRAZIL

Return to Brazil – from the toucans flying overhead, monkeys rustling the trees and up-close mists of Iguazu falls from our base at the newish Orient Express Cataratas – to the chic cobblestone streets, stylish boutiques, great dining and fabulous beaches of Buzios – to the always touristy but for a very good reason Christ the Redeemer in Rio, along with climbing up the base of Pao de Acucar / Sugarloaf Mtn. Bring on the Olympics and World Cup! – *Cari Gray*

ALASKA

You've just marveled at [Alaska's](#) great receding Mendenhall Glacier and have heeded the ranger's suggestion to head to a nearby stream. Even forewarned, you're still startled by the sight of the bear pushing purposefully through the high grass toward the shallow water. As if scripted, she enters the stream. Snatches a slow moving, spawning salmon. And drops it in the grass maybe 15 feet from your privileged perch on a fenced, raised boardwalk built expressly for this moment. Her two cubs join her, but get little of this catch, as the sow bites hungrily into the fish. You're so close that you hear the salmon bones crunching. – *John Grossmann*

MINNESOTA

Mall of America...where else can you ride a roller coaster, see a movie, eat in any one of 60 restaurants, witness a wedding in a Vegas-style marriage chapel, shop for Chanel, buy naughty lingerie or a hockey stick and have any part of your body pierced? [Minneapolis](#) itself was an eye-opening experience for this admitted New York City snob. – *Shari Hartford*

HONOLULU

While checking out the Saturday Farmer's Market at Kapi'olani Community College in [Honolulu](#), my husband and I ventured up to the hillside cactus and succulent garden on the campus. Pretty wonderful we thought. And then we discovered the "po.e.tree," a virtual tree of poems written by visitors and clipped onto a hodgepodge of branches. (See if you can find mine in the pic.) Best part, though, was spotting Moriso Teraoka, a 100th Infantry Battalion Vet who founded the garden in '88 with a donation of plants and still helps to maintain it with a battalion of volunteers (that's him hiking up the stairs). Sweet guy for such a prickly project. – *Linda Hayes*

ST. PETERSBURG, RUSSIA

I'm not one for life-sized, wax replicas of historical figures. But in the Yusupov Palace on the Moika River in [St. Petersburg](#), the waxen likenesses of the men who attempted the murder of Rasputin– and of the infamous Siberian "Mad Monk" himself at the end of the table–changed my mind. There, in the dark and creaky basement, the aristocracy will give the huge, fire-eyed peasant poison enough to kill a horse....but not, it turned out, to kill him. Instead, the seemingly indestructible mystic will undergo one of the most bizarre and protracted demises in history. It's a mesmerizing and memorable stage set. – *Dalma Heyn*

THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

Floreana was the highlight of our family trip to [Ecuador](#). Spent one perfect day viewing century-old tortoises, dining at a ranch with descendants of the island's first settlers, and then snorkeling by ourselves with mega-sized sea turtles and none-too-shy sea lions. – *Steve Jermanok*

AMSTERDAM

My Best 2013 Travel Moment was witnessing, firsthand, the power of travel to heal. In June, still reeling from the death of my mother and difficult ongoing divorce negotiations, I went to [Amsterdam](#) to do two stories for EPTR. Just being airborne gave my spirits a lift; experiencing a healing Watsu spa treatment gave me the first chance to unexpectedly be in touch with my mourning and the gifts of my mother's life. New vistas, new energy, new perspective and new hope for the future sound like a lot of baggage to put onto a four-day trip, but that's what happened. Travel expands and travel can help the healing process. I discovered that, and am grateful for it. – *Mary Alice Kellogg*

LONDON

I rented an attic apartment atop a house in the Kilburn section of northwest [London](#) for two weeks – very basic, but light-filled, quiet and equipped with a small kitchen and bath – and spent my days writing, looking at art, and walking, walking, walking as I discovered areas and aspects of the city that, despite having visited nearly a dozen times before, were previously unknown to me. It was, far and away, the most enjoyable travel experience of my life. – *Marc Kristal*

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN, CA

Last April, the ski writers association held its 50th anniversary meeting at [Mammoth Mountain](#), in California. The day I arrived it seemed like spring and I was concerned about having enough snow. O me of little faith! The first morning, I awoke and discovered that a storm overnight had covered the mountain and our base area with a blanket of new snow. We skied joyfully the next few days (though it was a tad windy!) On one particular day, I skied with a retired ski writer who spends many of her days in Vermont. She was not just beautiful to watch; she was swift. I had trouble keeping up with her. When I asked how old she was, she said in a conspiratorial voice: "I'm 84, but I don't want people to know." I replied: "You're my hero!" – *Grace Lichtenstein*

THE LOIRE VALLEY

Even though I've lived in Paris for years, I hadn't done a long, comprehensive trip of the [Loire Valley](#) chateaux in many years, so it was a huge pleasure to rediscover their magnificence during a week-long trip this past May, the perfect time for visiting this part of France. I especially loved Chenonceau for its fairy-tale elegance and Villandry for its magnificent gardens and history—it was restored by a passionate couple—Joachim Carvallo, a Spanish nobleman, and Anne Coleman, a Pennsylvania steel heiress, who met while studying medicine in Paris. Other great finds were the Restaurant Olivier Arlot in Montbazou and the superb wines of the Domaine de la Taille aux Loups by winemaker Jacky Blot in Montlouis. – *Alec Lobrano*

PRAGUE

I expected to be overwhelmed by [Prague's](#) wealth of baroque, art nouveau, and gothic buildings. But I was speechless when I discovered cubist architecture unique to the Czech Republic. In 1911, Joseph Gočár designed the Herbst department store, now the landmark House of the Black Madonna and the Grand Café Orient where I had a cubist donut. Those prismatic architectural forms also welcomed me, a privileged houseguest, to my friends' flat. – *Julie Maris/Semel*

RAROTONGA

We're on Rarotonga, a reef-ringed isle in the middle of the South Pacific. [Rarotonga](#) has palm trees and beaches and tropical fish, but it's best known for its church singing. We go to church. The singing is magnificent; harmonies that start with a couple of men in a back pew, then ascend through the pews and climax with the choir. I'm floored with the beauty. That's the first revelation. The second comes when I notice what one of the choir ladies is doing during the sermon. Happily, Effin Older caught the moment with her Canon. – *Jules Older & Effin Older*

SPAIN

Tapas crawl in [San Sebastian](#), spiritual heart of Spanish tapas culture. – *Larry Olmsted*

SANTA FE

The highlight for 2013 has to be our July visit to the [Santa Fe International Folk Art Market](#). This colorful gathering of some 150 artisans from all over the world—Korea, Israel, Mexico, Tajikistan, you name it—lets market-goers get up close and personal with the men and women who bring their wares and sell them on the spot. So you're free to strike up a conversation with a woman from the Ok Pop Tok weaving collective in Laos, or a wood carver from Mexico who's been proclaimed a national living treasure. One day we attended a lecture and demonstration of Tuvan throat singing, which turned out to be both fascinating and remarkably moving. (Quick: Can you find Tuva on a map?). Even better, the artisans are given the tools to return home and work in their villages to build solid businesses from their traditional crafts. All in all, we look forward to making it an annual pilgrimage. – *Tom Passavant & Karen Glenn (photo)*

KAUAI

The view over Hanalei Bay on the north shore of Kauai must be one of the wondrous in the world, a backdrop of rugged mountains that form the Napali Coast, a dragons' back covered in green. This is where my wife, daughter and I went on a short voyage on a handmade sailing canoe, crafted and captained by a local guy named [Trevor Cabell](#). Trevor took us snorkeling among 250 pound sea turtles and provided commentary on a 60-something local surfing legend as the guy caught the biggest wave of the day, 50 yards from where we floated. Then Trevor hoisted sail and off we went on a thrill ride across the waves racing into Hanalei Bay. With the extraordinary green background, it was not hard to imagine Polynesians sailing the Pacific and approaching this same shore. Covered in salt spray, we seemed to be flying over the breaking waves, as Trevor guided the outrigger using his paddle as a tiller. When the canoe finally touched the beach, I realized that what felt like a journey had been merely a two hour trip on the Bay. That's when you know that the going is good. – *Everett Potter*

DUBLIN

An unexpected breath of joy in colored stone: A leafy retreat in [Dublin's](#) Merrion Square shelters a beloved memorial to Oscar Wilde, nonchalantly lounging on a massive boulder in a natty green jacket with quilted red lapels and cuffs, looking at his long-time childhood home across the street at 1 Merrion Sq. Nearby, Wilde witticisms, graffiti-like, cover two black obelisks, to wit, "I have nothing to declare except my genius." – *Joan Scobey*

NYC

[New York City](#) — where I've lived twice in my adult lifetime—once again welcomed me like an old friend in 2013. My husband, Joe, and I explored Manhattan from stem to stern, including a tour of the historic aircraft carrier Intrepid at Pier 86, a stroll along the Highline elevated park and a preview of the poignant and powerful 9/11 Memorial. We made a delicious detour to Chef Mario Batali's Eataly, browsed the beautiful book collection at Rizzoli and meandered through Central Park on perfect fall days. You can go home again, even if just for a holiday. – *Julie Snyder*

JAMAICA

My most memorable travel moment of the year was rafting in Port Antonio, [Jamaica](#). A "captain" on the log raft beside us was coaxed into singing the "Banana Boat Song (Day O)," a traditional Jamaican folk song made popular by Harry Belafonte. The gentle soft crooning combined with the murmuring sound of the mini rapids of the river was soothing. (At least until the person next to me



decided to sing along.) – *Gerrie Summers*

OREGON

I was on a ski trip to Oregon's [Mt. Bachelor](#) last March. The nearest hotel was about 20 miles away in the town of Bend. I didn't relish the idea of driving that far every day to get to the slopes, but then I didn't know the highway ran straight through the Deschutes National Forest. Massive rocks, towering trees, and sweeping vistas at every turn. Hope to do again soon. – *Bill Triplett*

AMSTERDAM

Best Moment: Standing with my wife in late July afternoon sunshine looking at our new home in an old canal house on [Amsterdam's Herengracht Canal](#). – *Richard West*

SAN JUAN, PR

Paddle boarding with my bride — this was our 25th anniversary celebration — in Condado Lagoon, [San Juan](#). Manatees with Ben Turpin mustaches (Note to 16th-century sailors: You really thought they were mermaids?) kept rising to the surface, where they lingered so we could get a good look at them. From there we went to Roberto Trevino's Bar Gitano, a tapas bar in the Condado. Who knew they'd have soshito peppers sauteed in olive oil and salt? We polished them off and then drank way too much, but what the hell, great food + a great lady. – *Ed Wetschler*

PARK CITY, UTAH

This June, I finally understood what local say about [Park City](#), Utah – you come for winter, you stay for summer. I discovered the wonders of mountain biking on terrain I've skied so many years. And I dined on Main Street with 2,300 others one summer's night to experience the resort's fine cuisine. – *David McKay Wilson*