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AXIS OF EVIL MAPPING NEWSLETTER #12 OF 2017 – DECEMBER – New Titles: see below for details

INTRODUCTION

During the early part of December, Lan and myself were in the Caribbean, visiting various island nations that were badly affected by Hurricane Irma. We started in San Juan, Puerto Rico, as this US territory was devastated by the storm. Two months afterwards, about 50% of the island is still without electricity and power failures are a common occurrence in San Juan. We saw several utilities crews hard at work, so things are bound to get better. Our map of the territory is being used by first responders trying to put the island back on a sound footing. We then went on to Barbados, which wasn't in the direct path of the hurricane, and St. Vincent, to update our mapping information. We also visited St. Kitts, which is a possible future ITMB title, Antigua, Martinique, and the US Virgins, which are also using our maps to enable responders to set things alright before the tourism season is in full swing. St. Croix, in the US Virgins, the British Virgins, and Dominica were all hit particularly hard and are struggling to recover. We found it to be a worthwhile time-well-spent. Details below.

A WEEK TO SEE SIX COUNTRIES

Many years ago, someone made a movie called "If It's Tuesday, It Must Be Belgium", which was about Americans visiting Europe when doing so was relatively novel for Americans. This was in the 1960s. Needless to say, it was a comedy and followed the foibles of a hapless group of Americans on an American Express Priceless Tour, trying to cope with different currencies, sandpaper toilet paper (which was common in Europe in those days), bidets, and incomprehensible languages. We have just completed a whirlwind tour of seven Caribbean islands in seven days, and I can relate to the movie in that it is difficult even for an experienced traveller to keep all these islands in the right order. We were actually quite tired by the end of the trip and are glad to be back in Vancouver, where we can rest without wondering where we'll be or what we'll be doing each morning.

An offer came our way, as happens to us regularly, that was too good to turn down – a week in the Caribbean on Norwegian's Dawn cruise ship for \$299, taxes included. It was a special cruise to open the season and, as most travellers are squeamish about visiting a devastated part of the world, the line had to offer an inducement to fill the ship (or at least to try to do so). We wanted to spend some time in the region in any case, as our maps are being used by various relief groups involved in rebuilding damaged countries, and this cruise was including three countries we had never visited, so off we went. Here's what we found.

First, the Caribbean is open for tourism, with certain provisos. Puerto Rico was particularly hard-hit by Hurricane Irma and most of the traffic lights are still not working - which makes driving interesting! Also, most road signs and directional markers blew away, so it is easy to get lost and hard to get found if driving around the island. The US Virgins, while hard-hit, are recovering; the British Virgins will need more time to recover. Second, Dominica is a write-off for this season, I'm afraid, but all the areas we visited were up and running and desperate for tourism (their main industry). These were, in order of arrival, Barbados, Martinique, St. Vincent, St. Kitts (nearby Nevis was theoretically possible, but we lacked time), Antigua, the US Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico itself. Each of these islands has its own charm and all are open for business, so to speak.

From a travel perspective, and we're in the travel industry, all of these island countries are prime tourist destinations. Martinique uses the Euro (being a French overseas territory) and most of the others use the Eastern Caribbean dollar. US possessions, naturally, use the US dollar. All accept the US greenback readily; in fact, we never saw local currency as everything was priced in US\$. ITMB publishes excellent travel maps of Barbados, Martinique, Antigua, both sets of Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico, and can provide maps of St. Vincent and of St. Kitts. ITMB also publishes an atlas of the Eastern Caribbean, which would probably be more convenient for cruising trips than a series of individual island maps. With tensions growing in the Middle East, the Caribbean now dominates winter travel plans.

ISLAND TIDBITS

Everyone should learn something when they travel. Every corner of the planet has something different or unusual to see; that is what makes travel worthwhile (and keeps us in business). For example, on our recent trip, we learned the following:

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1. A Creole from Martinique became Empress of France. That's right; the wife of Napoleon Bonaparte was born and raised on Martinique. When Napoleon crowned himself as Emperor, Josephine was crowned Empress at the same time. An interesting lady, by all accounts!
2. St Kitts has no traffic control lights. It is apparently the only country in the world in this situation.
3. St. Kitts used to be joined with Nevis and Anguilla as an island federation. Nevis is only two miles away and St. Kitts is a fairly small island in itself, but Nevis broke away and is now a separate country. Stupid.
4. The sugar industry throughout the Caribbean has pretty much collapsed. Cuba has only two sugar mills still operating, and none of the islands we visited show much sign of producing anything out of cane sugar except rum. There are several distilleries operating, each of which claims to be the oldest.
5. The Caribbean islands were first discovered, and settled, by Christopher Columbus, who did NOT discover America in any of his four trips across the Atlantic. Of course, several Spanish explorers fairly soon discovered Central America and Mexico (Balboa and Pizarro come to mind) and Ponce de Leon explored Florida in, I believe, 1519. How can anyone sail across the Atlantic FOUR times and miss America?!?
6. Most of the Caribbean islands were lightly populated by Arawak or Carib indigenous peoples at the time when Europeans first arrived. Although some were killed in clashes with early settlers, most died as a result of succumbing to lethal diseases that the Europeans brought with them, such as smallpox.
7. The many islands of the Caribbean provided ample hiding places for pirates, but also military harbours. Nelson's Dockyard, in Antigua, developed into the most significant ship repair depot in the region.
8. What are now the American states of North and South Carolina were originally settled from the British Caribbean. This is the only instance in world history of a colony founding a colony.

WHAT PASSES FOR NEWS THESE DAYS

Being a Canadian, and an avid follower of news broadcasts, it was natural for me to turn on the television in our ship's room to keep abreast of what is happening in the world. The ship had access to Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, and another channel whose name escapes me. Surprisingly, considering that more than half the guests on the cruise were Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans (about 1,800 of them), there were no Spanish news broadcasts. More importantly, there was NO news reporting on any of the channels – just news commentary. It was fascinating to watch (I say this as an outsider unused to American news broadcasting) but incredibly, each and every broadcast throughout the nine days we were in the area had only one topic of comment. Call it Trump, or call it the fiasco in the White House, or call it the Russian Intervention, but not a single minute of news in nine days discussed anything except the soap opera unfolding in Washington. Twenty-four hours per day, with breaking news bulletins following each other in quick succession, there was no news except the unfolding saga of the collapsing American political system. The former President of Yemen was killed during fighting in Sana. Was this reported? No. Britain and the UK formed a tentative financial arrangement enabling them to move forward on separating. Was this noted in passing? No! After a week of experiencing nothing except the turmoil afflicting what laughably passes for political discussion in the USA, I could easily understand why so many Americans are thoroughly fed up and frustrated. Trump is a disgrace. His cabinet is a disgrace. His administration is a disgrace. The Senate is a disgrace. The House is a disgrace. It even appears that the Supreme Court is falling into disrepute. There is, of course, one hero quietly getting to the bottom of the quagmire Trump has created, and that is Robert Mueller, the Special Prosecutor who is unfolding layer after layer of lies, contrivances, and corrupt practices, including convicting Trump's National Security Advisor for colluding with Russia against the USA. What a sad situation, and we are only at the early stages of this modern-day Watergate.

A POST SCRIPT TO THE ABOVE ARTICLE

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One might imagine, by listening to me, that I'm un-American. I'm not, but I am appalled by what I see happening within the USA today. However, very recently, I saw a ray of hope in the results of the special election for a US Senate seat in Alabama. Personally, I could care less if a Republican or a Democrat of good quality would be elected, but the Republican candidate, one Roy Moore, a homophobic and deeply flawed character in the Trump mode, ran a campaign and served as a candidate so unacceptably that even the other sitting Senator for Alabama made a public broadcast, noting that he had not voted for Moore. Trump himself pulled out all the stops and campaigned for Moore, as did the extreme right-wing syncopate Steve Bannon. The voters of Alabama chose a moderate candidate to represent them, sidelining extremist politics in the process. Good for Alabama! Good for the USA! The election of a Democrat upsets the balance of power in the Senate, of course, and that will probably derail most of Trump's agenda, but that is not the significance of this vote. Enough good people got off their backsides and took a stand against bigotry, immorality, and outright racist rhetoric and voted out someone who should never have been allowed to run in the first place. Thank you Alabama!

ONLY IN IRELAND

This apparent ghost story apparently happened to a John Bradford, who was hitch-hiking one dark and stormy night, somewhere west of Dublin, when a car appeared, moving fairly slowly through the thick fog and storm. Desperate for shelter and without thinking, John dived into the passenger seat – only to discover that there was nobody behind the wheel, although the vehicle was moving steadily forward. John was scared, but terrified when he saw a curve approaching and the driverless car veering towards a precipice. Just before the car hit the curve, a hand came out of nowhere and gently turned the wheel, averting a catastrophe. Shortly thereafter, John saw the lights of a pub appear through the gloom, so he lurched from the moving car, rolled a few times, and ran into the pub, telling everyone about his terrifying experience. Suddenly, the door opened and two men walked in out of the darkness of the stormy night. One said to the other "Look, Paddy, there's the f---ing idiot that got into the car when we were pushing it!"

CHRISTMAS WISHES

This is the last Axis newsletter of 2017. We wish to thank our loyal supporters for helping us to survive a tumultuous year. We wish each of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Naturally, we hope that 2018 will be peaceful and prosperous for all of us. Somehow, I feel that such a sentiment is being overly optimistic, given the political systems that seem to be unravelling around the world, but one can only hope for the best and then deal with the reality as it unfolds. We have lots of exciting new titles coming out in the New Year, and have provided a list of expected titles and anticipated arrival times. These titles can be added to orders being placed, but can only be provided after the stock arrives. Our expected December shipment has arrived in Vancouver, but is being held in a Customs warehouse until everyone gets back to work after the Christmas break.

CANADIAN JOKES

Most countries have what could generously be called 'stupid' jokes. In Canada, Newfoundland tends to be the butt of many 'stupid' jokes, but anyone reading these can replace Newfie with whatever one wants. Here's a few examples:

A man visits a walk-in medical clinic, claiming that his body hurts wherever he touches it. "Show me" said the doctor. The man pushes on his left shoulder and screams, then his right knee and screams, then his elbow and screams even louder. The doctor says "Are you from Ontario?" and the man replies "No, I'm actually from Newfoundland". "I thought so" replied the doctor "You see, your finger is broken".

A couple of Canadians from Newfoundland were driving to Florida to visit Disneyland. They were on the interstate, well into Florida, when they saw an overhead sign saying 'Disneyland Left', so they turned around and drove back to Canada.

A man was playing Trivial Pursuit one evening. When it was his turn, he rolled the dice and landed on Science and Nature. His question was 'If you are in a vacuum and someone calls your name, can you hear it?' The man thought for a while and then asked "Is the vacuum on or off?"

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A policeman pulls over a speeding car with Newfoundland plates. While he's writing out the ticket, a fly keeps buzzing around his head. The driver says "That's a circle fly, sor." "What's a circle fly?" asked the cop. "Well, sor, them are the flies you find in the barn around a horse's ass." "Are you calling me a horse's ass?" asked the cop indignantly. "Oh no, sor, I would never say a thing like that, but you can't fool them flies".

WORK IN PROGRESS

CURRENT PROJECTS AND OUT OF STOCK ITEMS

Alberta is out of stock. We will be bringing out a new edition in March, 2018.

Brasil is almost out of stock. We are in the process of creating a new map, no ETA.

Japan North & Hokkaido is almost out of stock. We are preparing a new edition for release in late April, 2018.

Kilimanjaro/Northern Tanzania is almost out of stock. We will be bringing out a new edition in late April, 2018.

Kuala Lumpur is now almost out of print. We are re-working this map into a new combined title; no ETA.

Lesotho is now almost out of print. We are working on a new map, combining Lesotho and Swaziland into a double-sided map; Swaziland is also getting low on inventory (see below). The new map will be available in 2018.

Mongolia is almost out of copies. A new edition is at press for release in April, 2018.

Ontario suddenly ran out of copies while we weren't looking. We're updating, but can't say when it will be back.

Saint Lucia is out of stock. A new edition is being prepared; expected in 2018.

Sao Paulo is out of copies. A new edition is being prepared; expected in March, 2018.

Stockholm is almost out of stock. A new double-sided map is at press and due in April, 2018.

Swaziland is close to depletion (27 copies). While this is not a fast-selling map, we are working on a new map, combining this very nice country with Lesotho as a double-sided map; ETA is after the current edition is sold out.

Uruguay & Montevideo is almost out of print. We haven't started a new edition yet, but we will ASAP; no ETA.

Uzbekistan is out of stock. A new, double-sided map is being prepared for release in 2018.

Warsaw is almost out of copies. A new double-sided map of the city and eastern Poland is at press; no ETA.

NEW TITLES RELEASED DURING DECEMBER

Central America Travel Reference Map 9th Ed. 2016 on waterproof paper 1:1,100,000 ISBN 9781553410645 UPC 815534106452 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – This is one of those titles that should have had a press release earlier. The artwork was updated and sent to press, arriving back long before we were expecting it. We still had ample copies of the then-current edition to sell through, and as always, once they had sold, we wanted our loyal distributors to have time to sell down the inventory of this title. We quietly introduced our new version once we ran out of copies, forgetting that we had not sent out a press release, so are now making up for that omission. There are relatively few changes to this edition. At this scale, there would have to be a new canal across Nicaragua or some such mega-project to even show on the map. The map is double-sided, with one side concentrating on Guatemala, Belize, and Honduras, with inset maps of Belize City and the environs of Guatemala City, and the other side focusing on the more southerly countries of Central America. This side has inset maps of San Jose (Costa Rica), the Panama Canal area, and of Panama City itself. My only comment about the artwork is that we have received conflicting information as to whether or not the road south to Yaviza is paved yet or not, so we have chosen to show it as unpaved pending future clarification. We have driven this road, and it is a mudbath when wet. Yaviza is still the end of the Pan-American Highway North, which then continues from a point in Colombia south to Chile. **AVAILABLE**

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Kyoto and Japan West Travel Reference Map, on waterproof paper 4th Ed. 2017 ISBN 9781771294096 UPC 817712940964 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – In times where an increasing number of countries become dangerous to visit, Japan shines as a beacon of peaceful stability. This map has two focuses. Kyoto is obviously a very important city to the Japanese, due to its many temples and historic wooden houses, and this map clearly shows everything of touristic interest, including a detailed inset map of nearby Nara. This edition includes a new feature highlighting the main touristic attractions. As a point of trivia, one should count the number of railway tracks shown west of the main railway station. Even the storage lines are shown, and there are the correct number. That shows just how accurately detailed this map is! The other side is just as important. It portrays the western half of the main island of Honshu, from Nagoya to Hiroshima and is the second-most visited portion of Japan. All the motorways and towns are shown, but more importantly, all the rail line. Japan has, arguably, the world's best rail system, and a marvelous rail pass for visitors that makes travel easy. The Shinkansen fast trains whisk one from Tokyo to just about anywhere so quickly that one doesn't appreciate the technology behind such speeds. Regardless, a map concentrating on Osaka, Kyoto, Matsuyama, and points between, at a far better scale than would be possible on a map of the entire country, is an asset of value to any traveller. **AVAILABLE**

Brasil South & East Coast Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2018 1:2,200,000 ISBN 9781771290876 UPC 817712908766 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – This is a new title for ITMB. It has been printed, but inventory is not expected to arrive in our warehouse until late January, 2018

Ireland, with Dublin & Belfast Travel Reference Map 3rd Ed. 2018 on waterproof paper 1:550,000/1:12,500 ISBN 9781771293617 UPC 817712936172 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – Printed, Due in early January

Japan West & Central Railway & Road Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2018 1:670,000 ISBN 9781771293860 UPC 817712938602 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – This is a new ITMB title. It has been printed, and inventory is due to arrive at our warehouse in late January, 2018.

Patagonia & Tierra del Fuego Travel Reference Map 5th Ed. 2018 1:2,200,000/1:750,000 ISBN 9781771296137 UPC 817712961372 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – this title will be available early April

Tel Aviv/Jaffa & Central Israel Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2018 on waterproof paper 1:12,000/1:220,000 ISBN 9781771297967 UPC 817712979674 \$12.95cdn/us E9.59 8.95GBP – Printed, Due in early January

USA Travel Reference Map 2nd Ed. 2018 on waterproof paper 1:3,500,000 ISBN 9781771298452 UPC 817712984524 \$9.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – Due in mid- April

Venice & Northern Italy Travel Reference Map 2nd Ed. 2018 on waterproof paper 1:5,000/1:850,000 ISBN 9781771293624 UPC 817712936240 \$9.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95 GBP – Printed, due in late January

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Australia East Coast Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2017 1:1,800,000 ISBN 9781771290128 UPC 817712901286 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE

Canada Travel Reference Map 2nd Ed. 2018 1:6,000,000, with detailed insets ISBN 9781771290142 UPC 817712901422 \$10.95cdn/us E9.50 E8.95 – AVAILABLE

Edinburgh & Southern Scotland Travel Reference Map 3rd Ed. 2017 1:10,000/1:370,000 on waterproof paper ISBN 9781771292597 UPC 817712925978 \$11.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE

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