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- **INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL MAPS AND BOOKS**
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AXIS OF EVIL MAPPING NEWSLETTER #5 OF 2017 – end of May – New Titles: see below for details

BREAKING NEWS!!!

Number one son Graeme has just announced the safe arrival of the latest member of the family, a boy and the fourth grandson for Lan and myself. With Graeme's typical nonchalance, the weight of the newborn was 8/10, which translates to eight pounds, ten ounces (thoroughly normal), but mother Crystal noted that she feels twenty pounds lighter! No name has yet been determined. The proud parents have another son, Nimoy, who is now approaching two. May 29, 2017

INTRODUCTION

Spring is upon us, and what better way to spend part of the month of May than embarking on a river cruise of the Seine, from Paris to Honfleur and back, combined with a research trip to Cyprus and another to Greece? We had never 'done' a river cruise before, and felt that it was high time we educated ourselves. A river cruise is like an ocean cruise, with excellent accommodation and food, and daily stops at interesting locations. The difference is that there are only 125 or so other guests, so one gets to know people more easily than on a ship of 3,000. Also, the evening entertainment tends to be more limited, but who cares! More details on our May travels will be included later in this newsletter as everything we do eventually results in new maps. We will be in the office now until early July, our longest time so far this year, catching up on a lot of matters related to our business, and providing Linh and Phuong a welcome amount of assistance in keeping ITMB moving along smoothly.

FRANCE: ALWAYS A GOOD TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

Lan and I travel extensively on business. We feel that ground-truthing map data and checking the current accuracy of maps is best done by relying upon first-hand information. Of course, we also rely upon information provided by map users and from sources such as guide books and the internet, but nothing can beat seeing something for yourself. That brings us to France for a first-time travel experience – a river cruise from Conflans (on the outskirts of Paris) to the mouth of the Seine River at Honfleur, combined with a day-long bus trip to the American beachhead landings on D-Day (specifically Omaha Beach). The cruise included stopovers, with tours, of Vernon/Giverny (to see Monet's house and garden), Les Audalys (charming village and castle ruins of Richard the Lion-hearted), two days in Honfleur (which entranced us), a day in Rouen (where we discovered, by accident, the last charnel house in Europe), and a day in Conflans, with its medieval church – all very charming, very relaxing, and very enjoyable.

It was a new experience for us, taking a week to travel about 250 miles. We would normally do a trip of this nature by car, but I know that, if we did, we would have missed most of what the tour offered. We would not have realized the existence of a marvelous garden planted by a megalomaniac who also spent his life painting wonderful pictures of lily ponds, or learned about the time when Normandy belonged to England and guarded the Seine against the French with a huge castle. We would probably not have visited Omaha Beach, being Canadian, nor have taken the time to see the American war cemetery; we would probably have concentrated on aspects of the Normandy battle more pertinent to Canada, such as Caen or Juno Beach. So, we saw a lot of things that we might otherwise have never experienced. The charnel house in Rouen was a case in point. In the middle ages, deceased people were buried until only bones were left, then the bones were dug up and stored and the burial ground re-used. In this case, the bones were stored in the attic of a large building surrounding the graveyard. The bones have long-since been re-buried, but the yard that used to be a graveyard and the 14th century building surrounding it remain. Apparently, the ground floor was a boy's school for several centuries, replete with carved images of dead people, and most recently as a school of fine arts.

Utterly, completely fascinating!

CYPRUS: A SURPRISINGLY WORTHWHILE TRAVEL DESTINATION

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We had never been to Cyprus, and as we are working on a map of the country, decided a 'heads up' trip was in order. We flew into Larnaca, the main airport for the Greek, or southern, portion of the country and found ourselves in a huge queue of hundreds of arriving tourists. It took an hour to clear passport inspection, simply because so many people were arriving. We rented a car and found, by accident, the one and only car border crossing in Nicosia into Turkish-controlled northern Cyprus. Nicosia now has a Greek name, a Turkish name, and its traditional name, with nobody agreeing on what to call it. This was a noteworthy introduction for mappers into the 'Cyprus Problem'.

We stayed for two nights with a Cypriot of Turkish ancestry who is a professor/advisor/broadcaster who is dedicating himself to resolving the 'problem' that erupted in Cyprus some fifty years ago when Greek nationalists under the then President Makarios tried to ally the country so closely to Greece that the Turkish minority felt threatened and appealed to Turkey for assistance. This was provided by Turkish troops in what can only be designated as an invasion, a fair amount of bloodshed, great alarm in NATO, the EU, and the United Nations, and resulted in the separation of the two sides into (roughly) northern half/southern half, separated by a Green Line and by UN peacekeeping forces (Canadian for the first twenty-five years) and a political stalemate that has lasted half a century. The southern portion is what we call Cyprus today and is acknowledged as being the legitimate government of the island. The northern portion, called Turkish-controlled Cyprus, is an unrecognized state (except by Turkey) and is essentially a puppet state controlled in all essential aspects by Turkey, reinforced by thousands of Turkish troops.

That said, and I agree that my summary over-simplifies a reality that has been in stasis for far too long, both sides are open to tourism and there are now five border crossings in place, allowing everyone access to cross back and forth quite easily. We saw it. We did so with no difficulty. We travelled extensively through northern Cyprus with the only small difficulty of having to use Turkish lira instead of Euros. We had a wonderful time and can see the touristic appeal of this part of Cyprus. We were fascinated to discover an empty city adjacent to the port of Famagusta (which now has a Turkish name) that represents in a nutshell the depth of the Cyprus 'problem'. The city is in Turkish-controlled Cyprus, but the buildings are all owned by Greek Cypriots and negotiations as to what to do have been snarling up courts for donkey's years. It's stupid, it's unnecessary, and it's holding back both parties from getting on with life, and this is the tragedy that continues to beset every aspect of life in Cyprus. The country needs someone to cut the Gordian knot.

We then spent two days in southern Cyprus, based in Larnaca. We visited resort communities, where most tourists enjoy the sun and good food for a week before flying home. We drove the motorways and mountainous back roads that led us to breathtaking vistas and interesting villages, and drove through both the UN-controlled and British-controlled portions of Cyprus (have I mentioned that the 'problem' is complex?). The south is undeniably more prosperous than the north, but the north has more charm than the south. Both are worth seeing. For those seeking a week in the sun, almost all of the resorts are in the south. Airlines normally fly into Larnaca, in the south, and the vast majority of arriving visitors seek nothing more than a beach, a hotel, and food. There is a well-developed car rental industry in place for those wishing to travel independently, and hotels, thousands of restaurants, wonderful scenery, and interesting places to visit. One can also fly into the north, but connections are more limited.

There is also a need for a good travel reference map for Cyprus. European-produced maps tend to ignore the northern half of the island and leave off a lot of attractions. Cyprus has a lot to offer a traveller (as opposed to a sun seeker on a package tour). More importantly for me, Cyprus represents a challenge in geo-political mapping. There is a reason why the country continues to exist suspended by the fragile thread of a cease-fire (not even an armistice, as between the Koreans). There is an incredible lack of inertia to move forward and either re-unite or separate formally into two countries. If two parties cannot agree on something as basic as how to resolve an issue for 50 years, the solution is to move it forward for them. A new map might help.

GREECE: EUROPE'S TRAVEL BARGAIN

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As if supervising the French Presidential election (which took place during our time in France) and resolving the Cyprus political impasse weren't enough for us in one trip, we also decided it was time to re-visit Greece and see for ourselves whether the country deserved all the bad press it has been receiving lately. First and foremost, of course, we had our special computer linked into roving satellites, and down-loaded real-time data that showed that our current edition of our map of Greece is surprisingly accurate. We spent a week driving roads from Athens north to Thessalonica (now called Thessaloniki), east to the Turkish border, north to the Macedonian border, west to the Albanian border, and back to Athens airport via a little-used road through the middle of the Peloponnese peninsula. We couch-surfed the entire trip, staying with lovely people, visiting the Sithonia Peninsula and discovering a new highway, spending a wonderful time in ancient Pella (the capital of Alexander the Great) and visited Vergina (tomb of his father Philip II and a World Heritage site); spending two days in beautiful Kastoria (a lakeside city close to Albania), and three days in Agrinio, close to Greece's largest lake (somewhat north of Patra). Although part of the trip was devoted to checking map data information, and part to enjoy exploring ancient Greek heritage (the museum at Delphi is spectacular!), our fundamental rationale for this visit was to see for ourselves the state of current-day Greece, which we conclude is not as bad as one might think.

The reason for concern, of course, is that Greece is in the 'bad' books of most of Europe. Greece got itself thoroughly into debt and has needed both time and support money from the rest of the EU, principally Germany, to sort itself out. I'm not interested in discussing who is to blame for what; both sides have been and seemingly continue to be, in my mind, thoroughly irresponsible. It was inappropriate of lenders to continue loaning money to Greece long after it was apparent that Greece could not pay off those debts. Equally, too much of the money loaned to Greece was used inappropriately and wasted criminally. However, much of the money loaned was properly used to improve infrastructure that greatly benefits Europe. Is Greece trying to sort out its problems? I would say yes, but with the proviso that one should separate the Greek people from the individuals who have dominated Greek politics for many years and are all too often unwilling to accept the consequences of their own actions in the past. We saw far too many empty retail stores; far too many defunct half-completed building projects; far too many empty factories. We also saw high taxes imposed on gasoline (much more expensive than in Germany); a higher rental car price due to higher taxes; fairly expensive commercial goods on sale.

Greece is learning, slowly, the hard reality that many of have to face in life. It is easy to get oneself into debt; it is extremely hard to get out of debt. One does have to sympathize with the rest of Europe a bit, in that the Greek government has been dragging its heels and the Greek electorate has been reluctant to do what needs to be done to pay back the mountain of debt that has accumulated over time. Regardless, the Greece I saw is hard working and doing a good job under difficult circumstances. Roads are being maintained and improved, motorway construction is continuing, and as far as I could see, normal administration is carrying on. Have the abuses stopped? I don't know and this newsletter is not an appropriate venue to discuss such matters. Our week-long excursion found a marvelous country, beautiful scenery, lovely people, and a part of Greece less travelled. Athens is still very popular with visitors, as is Delphi. I think more could be done to promote other ancient sites, as tourism promotion is a great way to develop a country's economy. The islands of Greece will have to wait for a future trip, but obviously money spent on tourism would pay off handsomely. I guess my point is that it will take time for Greece to recover from what has been a severe body blow, but I'm confident that it is starting to do what is necessary. The rest of Europe, Germany in particular, should not only be patient, but support the recovery by travelling to Greece as often as possible. It is a wonderful country to visit and tourism dollars (oops, Euros) will go a long way to enabling Greece to grow its economy in a new way to the benefit of all. Now, if we could only get those Italians to behave responsibly...

WHAT'S NEW WITH ITMB

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Our travels thus far in 2017 have taken us to Asia twice, Europe twice, and the USA once, so we have been out of the office far more than is wise. Fortunately, ITMB has soldiered on under the capable management of Linh and Phuong, but Lan is still in charge of cartographic development. This means that certain functions can only be carried out while we are in the office. Stock continues to deplete, updating continues, and printing problems get resolved – as long as we can maintain internet connections with Vancouver. On this most recent trip, we experienced severe difficulties with connections, so we have returned to more backlogs related to production of new material than we would normally expect. The almost-out-of stock situation has increased, due to strong sales. The newly-arrived situation has resulted in nine new titles needing to be processed with press releases, so Lan and myself will both be busy for the next couple of weeks. The good news is that demand for paper maps remains strong and we are continuing to forge ahead with innovative new cartography, as will be seen in the new releases for May (see below).

CURRENT PROJECTS AND OUT OF STOCK ITEMS

Albania is running low on inventory (19 copies left). A new edition is in preparation.

Amazon Basin is down to 59 copies and is being re-formatted into a new map; no ETA.

Brasil is approaching the end of its print run; about three months' supply left.

Canada is running low on inventory (35 copies left). A new edition is in preparation.

Delhi is almost out of copies (3 left). A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Iran/Tehran has suddenly depleted more than expected and is being updated; no ETA.

Japan Travel Atlas is almost out of print. A new title will replace it, concentrating on the train routes.

Kuala Lumpur is almost out of copies (4 left). A newly updated map is being prepared.

Kyoto/Western Japan is running out of copies (42 left). A new edition is underway.

London and SE England is approaching the end of its current edition.

Los Angeles has suddenly depleted more than expected; a new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Mexico South is getting low on copies (6 copies), so a new edition will be needed.

Nova Scotia is out of copies. A new edition is at press and expected in July.

QCI, or the Queen Charlotte Islands, is out of copies. We are re-naming this map Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Is. to reflect the more current practice used in BC.

Saint Lucia is running out of copies (50 left). A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Sao Paulo is running out of copies (65 left). A new edition is being prepared; no ETA.

Surinam/French Guiana is running low on copies (88 left). Preliminary updating is underway.

USA Pacific Coast is selling faster than expected and running out of copies (20 left). New Ed. is being prepared.

USA as a country map is just about out of stock (50 copies left).

Uzbekistan is now down to 88 copies and is being updated; not ETA.

NEW ITMB TITLES FOR APRIL, 2017: A SUMMARY

Newfoundland & Labrador Travel Reference Map 3rd Ed. 2017 1:800,000/1:300,000 ISBN 9781771295635 UPC 817712956354 &10.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE

Salzburg and Western Austria Travel Reference Map 2nd Ed. 2017 1:15,000/1:380,000 – AVAILABLE

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Tanzania Travel Reference Map 6th Ed. 2017 on waterproof paper 1:1,300,000 ISBN 9781553414438 UPC 815534144386 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – AVAILABLE

NEW TITLES FOR MAY, 2017

Idaho, Montana, & Wyoming Travel Reference Map 1ST Ed. 2017 1:1,000,000 ISBN 9781771293600 UPC 817712936004 \$9.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – The northern mountain states of the USA are now the most recent portion of ITMB's re-mapping of the USA for travel. We had to include a small portion of Washington State and Oregon, due to the shape of Idaho, but the double-sided sheet covers the three states with very little room left over. Side 1 stretches from the Alberta border to Salt Lake City, in Utah, and from and from west of Spokane to Helena, MT. The 2nd side covers from the Canadian border south to Cheyenne, and is essentially a map of Montana and Wyoming. As such, this is the most detailed map of this region of the USA ever published, and pretty much completes our mapping of the western half of the continental USA. We have also added a new feature – a list of the most popular sites – for those with limited time, showing such well-known features as Glacier National Park and the Buffalo Bill Center of the West. We would be happy to expand this list, which highlights the top attractions with a red box. **AVAILABLE**

Poland Travel Reference Map 2nd Ed. 2017 1:650,000 ISBN 9781771296175 UPC 817712961754 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – ITMB is very pleased to re-introduce Poland as a map. In the European category, the country ranks as one of the success stories of post-Soviet Eastern Europe and a valued asset of the EU. This is a double-sided map, with an inset of central Warsaw included on side 2. The map shows the entire country in detail, including the latest information on Poland's increasingly sophisticated network of motorways. It is a large country, rich in history and touristic appeal. Our map includes dozens of castles, points of interest, and places where accommodations might be found. As Poland is now reasonably prosperous, we have included hundreds of gas station symbols, merely to encourage visitors that the country is not only safe to visit, but doing so will not present difficulties. With this map, we complete our comprehensive coverage of Europe using our own original artwork. The two sides divide the country into western and eastern portions, with about a half pleat's worth of overlap so the map can be conveniently used. Poland has great tourist potential and we hope that this new map will find favour with end users. **AVAILABLE**

Scottish Castles/Whisky Distilleries Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2017 1:370,000 ISBN 9781771297028 UPC 817712970282 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – What does the word 'Scotland' mean to first-time visitors to the country? The history of the nation is fascinating and, being of Scottish ancestry myself, the castles and battlefields that have shaped Scottish history for a thousand years is a big attraction. On this map, we have emphasized the top ten 'must see' castles, including my clan home, Eileen Donan (Mackenzie clan). These have been highlighted in blue and we would be happy to add more wonderful castles open to the public in future editions. The top whisky distilleries of the nation are actually a huge tourist attraction, with tours and sampling sessions and deserve emphasis for this reason alone! They are highlighted in magenta and, again, we would be happy to add more in the next edition – hic! For good measure, we have added a list of the top 'other' attractions of Scotland, such as Loch Ness and Robert Burns' birthplace. The joy of this map is that it is an excellent road/rail map of Scotland, based thematically, double-sided, with two separate covers (one focused on castles, the other for distilleries, so can be marketed in two different ways. This is a bit of a new direction for ITMB, in that this type of map is oriented thematically, but it is a lovely-looking map and we hope it will fill a market niche. **AVAILABLE**

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Wales & SW England Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2017 1:300,000 ISBN 9781771298988 UPC 817712989888 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – Finally, we have been able to create our own map of the lovely country of Wales. I use the word ‘country’ in its truest sense, as Wales was invaded and taken over by the English centuries ago. Regardless, the Welsh language and Welsh culture continue to flourish, although English is commonly spoken. We have visited Wales on several occasions and find that the attractions are so numerous that we could never see them all. There are too many castles to count, but some of the best preserved in the British Isles are in Wales, notable Caernarfon, but nearby Harlech is a World Heritage Site. St. David’s must be one of the smallest and loveliest cathedrals in the world, and Tintern Abbey ruins among the most poignant anywhere. We took Johnny to Abergavenny for lunch in March, not that it made any difference; he just pined for a McDonalds. This map is double-sided, with Wales on one side and the West Country (southwest England) graces the other side. Excellent coverage of Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset is provided, along with a fair portion of Dorset and Wiltshire. The eastern extreme of the map is Salisbury/Swindon, so a lot of ground is still being covered. The peculiar way that motorways are designated means that ‘true’ motorways are shown in blue while equally good non-motorways are in green casing, with not a tinker’s difference between them. My own favourite place is Mousehole, on Mount’s Bay; Tintagel ranks a close second. The map is loaded with touristic attractions; both well-known and more local. For something really unusual, visit Hay-on-Wye, west of Hereford. It is actually in England, smack on the border, and its claim to fame is that it is the world’s largest concentration of bookstores – an amazing place! This was obviously a fun map to make, as it includes so many ‘favourite’ places. This map will be invaluable for anyone visiting Wales!
AVAILABLE

Western Canada Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2017 on waterproof paper 1:2,000,000/1:1,400,000 ISBN 9781771291606 UPC817712916068 \$12.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – This is actually our second attempt at mapping the western portion of Canada; the first covered everything from northwestern Ontario to the Pacific Ocean and, while it was an excellent map, the scale that such a huge area covered necessitated severe problems. In this version, all of British Columbia, Alberta, and the Yukon have been mapped from fresh digital data and presented at 1:1.4T scale. This would have been impossible when we prepared the first map. The Northwest Territories portion had to be compressed in two ways; first, the scale is 1:2M; second, only the portion with roads is shown. This is still an extremely large area. One has to consider the actual size of Canada when designing a map. Most countries in Europe would fit into this area, which only covers 20% of Canada. The Fort McMurray forest fire of a year ago covered an area larger than France, and Cyprus would fit nicely into Great Slave Lake, if it had Malta to keep it company. Because size is so important when mapping Canada, we compromised and followed the norms used by our competitors in deciding what ‘Western’ meant to potential buyers, who are probably visitors to this country and are unaware of its vastness. The norm appears to be the two westernmost provinces of BC and Alberta and the Yukon Territory. Given that parameter, the map fits nicely as a double-sided map, with the provinces on one side and the two territories on the other. I should advise that more detailed separate provincial/territorial maps are available. Roads are shown, but the new road under construction north of Inuvik is being created under extremely trying circumstances, and until it is actually open to traffic, we have opted to show it as a winter road only. Once this marvel of tundra engineering is open for vehicle use, it will be possible to drive from the Arctic Ocean to the Panama Canal, something that is not possible to do now. Please note that the Western Canada Travel Atlas continues in print, as its book format allows us to portray a larger area of coverage. **AVAILABLE**

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