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IN TODAY'S NERVOUS ECONOMY WITH A WEAKENING dollar, we are all searching for rock-solid, stable investments amidst the volatility, the kind that have proven records of return. Most of us want liquidity, too. ENTREE has found the ideal investment: gold. We recently made some purchases of gold coins from a company called *Encore Gold* and we want to recommend the same to our readers. We feel gold is a splendid hedge against inflation and a safe haven given the world's uncertain political and economic status. Transparency through coin-grading services and web-listed price histories has elevated the process of trading in coins, and no less a respected investment banking firm than *Goldman Sachs* has predicted an average price of gold in 2007 of \$785. (As we write this, gold is currently selling at \$622 an ounce.) At Encore Gold you will find total professionalism. *Mike Will*, the company's president, is devoted to superior customer service, long-term relationships and successful investing. Mike is not a pressure salesman; he struck us more as a judicious banker with expert knowledge in all aspects of precious metals: gold bullion and coins, silver bullion and coins, platinum, and rare numismatic coins. He can even help you make intelligent decisions on IRAs and depository storage, plus Mr. Will is a reliable purchaser of large and small collections of coins. If you want to diversify your estate, protect and preserve your assets and eliminate the mystery of precious metals, contact Mike Will at (877) 563-8736, www.encoregold.com. Remember, gold and silver have evolved as stable currency for over 5000 years. And, we might add, gold and silver are beautiful to hold and admire.



CERTAIN DEVELOPMENTS JUMP INTO OUR LIVES AND THERE'S SIMPLY NO slipping back to the past. Our newest boast of indulgence manifests itself in a promise to never handle our luggage again once it's packed. Being weighed down in security without shoes, waiting for some boob to molest our possessions is even less dignified. We've paid our traveler's dues in full, humping hundreds of miles saddled with heavy duffel bags and painful shoulder straps. Now we leave the work to *Sports Express*, the first name in convenience for hands-off traveler's like ourselves. Sports Express picks up packed luggage at your house, and then securely ships said bags, sports equipment, or valuables to any domestic and many international destinations, with overnight, two-, and three-day service available. The energy and pain Sports Express saves is priceless to us, though the service does come with a price. Visit www.sportsexpress.com.

POTPOURRI: THE FRENCH ARE BUILDING A NEW TGV STATION IN *REIMS*. By June, it will be only a 45-minute trip from Paris to Champagne. Start chilling the Krug, please. The *Royal Horticultural Society's* legendary *Chelsea Flower Show* is scheduled for May 22-26 in *London*. If you have never seen this fragrant, colorful extravaganza—the world's best flower show—make plans now. More information at www.rhs.org.uk. A New Year's resolution: never to enter a hotel room where the maids have been instructed to leave the radio on playing saccharine music.

OUR WINES ARE STARTING TO THINK THEY'RE COOLER THAN EVEN WE think we are at times. Consider *EDGE Cabernet Sauvignon*, slinking past our palate in lush tones, from grapes raised in the vineyards of *Napa Valley's Silverado Trail* area. After spending 16 months bathing in French and American oak, EDGE is tasty now, plus it ages well for over five to eight years. The most cutting-edge aspect of EDGE is not how it is made, or the sleek, minimalist design of its bottle. It's that such a well-crafted, complex Cab can be found at \$20, quite a low price for such quality. Visit www.edgewines.com.

PERFECT FOR TRAVELERS: *THE HP PHOTOSMART M627 7.0 CAMERA*, WITH in-camera red-eye removal, 3x optical zoom, superior resolution, and big, bright 2.5 inch image display, is compact and durable with metal finish, intuitive button layout, rechargeable battery and charger, 16 MB of internal memory, plus video clips—the best camera you can buy.

ENTREE SUBSCRIBERS ARE CONSTANTLY ASKING OUR STAFF MEMBERS about travel to *Egypt* in light of the present Middle East hostilities. In order to solve this dilemma and armed with our readers' queries fresh in our minds, we decided to revisit this fascinating destination. For the record, Egypt has generally enjoyed a "tourist-friendly" reputation, and *Cairo* has consistently been labeled one of the safest cities in the world. We are most pleased to report that there has probably never been a better time to visit this land of ancient wonders. As far as we are concerned, Egypt has gotten a "bad rap" of late due mainly to problems in neighboring countries. We found a remarkably peaceful society with tourist security a top priority at all locations. Even our motor trek across the desert from *Hurghada* to *Luxor* seemed almost unnecessarily secure. Our journey included Cairo, *Giza*, the Mediterranean city of *Alexandria* and Hurghada on the Red Sea. The balance of our agenda was spent cruising the *Nile* between Luxor and *Aswan* (150 miles). There really are no words to describe the remains of this ancient civilization along the banks of this storied river dating from 3,000 B.C. The absolute highlight of our experience was cruising and exploring the *Nile Valley* with *Abercrombie and Kent* aboard the luxury *Sunboat IV*, a floating 5-star piece of paradise. The luxe boat includes pool, fitness center, lounge decks, Internet, satellite TV, premium Egyptian wines and fine cuisine. Best of all, there were only 21 inhabitants to share these goodies. The 150-mile journey on this small, yacht-like vessel provided a rare combination of exploration and total relaxation. Our guide, *Hesham Mansour*, a 22-year veteran with A&K, is possibly the finest Egyptologist in the country. No hieroglyphic was left unexplained and his enthusiastic delivery will always last in our memory bank. A&K can also arrange complete tours tailor-made to individual preferences. Unless you have traveled to Cairo in the past, a stop at the *Egyptian Museum* is imperative. It is the world's largest, and our must-see recommendations include the following: Tutankhamun Galleries, Royal Mummy Room and the mummified animals in rooms 53 and 54. While in Cairo, our hotel choices are the *Cairo Grand Hyatt* close to the museum, or *Le Meridien*, across from the fabulous pyramids in Giza. An excellent guide for this area is *Mohamed Hegazey* of the *Egyptian Tourist Authority*. For those who have experienced Cairo and want to head straight for the Nile, here is a suggestion: travel from almost any European capital to one of the resort cities on the *Red Sea-Sharm el-Sheikh* or Hurghada. After two or three days relaxing and shaking off jet lag next to this glorious body of water, head for the Nile Valley and discover the ancient attractions with renewed energy. *Abercrombiekent.com*, (800) 544-7016; *Hesham Mansour*, *heshammans@hotmail.com*; *Mohamed Hegazey*, *mohamedhegazey@hotmail.com*.

ALMOST FIVE HOURS BY CAR OR TRAIN FROM *LONDON*, REMOTE *Cornwall* might be Britain's "last colony whose foreignness is palpable," according to columnist *Jonathan Meades*. It may be a surprising region in which to discover one of Britain's top resorts, the 29-room *Hotel Tresanton*, down narrow, hedged-in country lanes at the tip of the wild Roseland peninsula. Here is the fishing village of *St. Mawes*, named for the Celtic holy man who spent years there apparently doing little but contemplating the solitude. Still isolated, the village, even in winter, nevertheless gets its share of enterprising tourists who patronize the branches of all three major banks, the post office, souvenir stores, cafes and half a dozen pubs in as many streets. The *Tresanton* itself has a cinema, bar, sitting room, children's garden, playroom and conference facilities. Sitting on the wooden-decked terrace of the restaurant, diners gaze across the bay to a lighthouse whose image is reproduced on all hotel stationery and towels. From its inception, the *Tresanton*, owned by *Olga Polizzi* and *William Shawcross*, has attracted celebrities and the well-to-do, among them Pierce Brosnan, Kate Winslett, Patrick Swayze, Dame Maggie Smith, and Prince Charles and Camilla. Olga is the daughter of *Sir Charles Forte*, scion of what was once Britain's most extensive chain of hotels, and her husband, the British journalist and author whose father, the late *Sir Hartley Shawcross*, a former attorney general, maintained a summer home in *St. Mawes* before moving his family to a Tudor mansion in *Sussex*. There William—between assignments in Africa and the Middle East—is currently working on the authorized biography of *Queen Elizabeth II*. *Jack Silley*, owner of the *Falmouth Docks* and a celebrated yachtsman who fashioned the *Hotel Tresanton* from a cluster of old houses in the 1940s for his visiting sailor friends, was William's godfather. By the 1990s, when Olga Polizzi saw the hotel's potential, it was looking dilapidated. She recollects "very tired, with worn-out flowery curtains and hideous light fixtures." After 16 years of experience in hotel management working for the *Forte* chain, she was determined to eschew "corporate standardization," casting aside the inevitable piped music, coffee-makers, tasseled lamps and trouser presses which are the usual fixtures of traditional English hotels. The young, eager staff go about their tasks with a fresh enthusiasm uncorrupted by working in bland hotel chains. Responsible for conception, creation and construction—and a remodeling cost exceeding \$4 million—she has produced a personal work of art in which bedrooms, in soothing hues of yellow, lime, green, blue and beige, are all individually different. "What I wanted," Olga explains, "was a simple, cool nautical style with clean lines and spaces. Nothing fussy." Bathrooms have old-style basins and taps, as well as huge tubs. When not busy tackling such gourmet dishes as roast partridge with game chips, roast suckling pig or foie gras with ham hock and chicken, the restaurant staff works to stay

open all day. The hotel also provides a bewildering array of professional massages, and reflexology treatments are on offer, from Swedish-style and reiki to the intriguingly titled hot stone therapy and Indian head massage. For sailing on Falmouth Bay, the hotel owns the 50-foot racing yacht, *Pinuccia*, built in Italy in 1938, staffed with skipper and crew and accommodating six to eight people. Sailing lessons, windsurfing and fishing can be arranged, as well as picnics on nearby sandy beaches. There are miles of coastal walks, but most visitors' first stop is a visit to the nearby circular fortress built by *Henry VIII* to repel invaders who might have been tempted to drop anchor in the wide bay. Further afield are the *Barbara Hepworth Museum* at *St. Ives*, the huge dome-like structure housing the experimental global garden known as the *Eden Project*, the once pirate-infested port of *Penzance* and, two hours away, the wild beauty of *Land's End*. Fifty miles away, on the edge of *Dartmoor*, is Ms. Polizzi's second venture, the 16-room *Endsleigh Hotel*, dating back to 1812. It is situated among 108 acres of woodland in what was a hunting and shooting lodge built—and used once a year—by the *Duchess of Bedford* and her family. This has been meticulously restored “in the spirit of the Regency period” and lies only seven miles from the small market town of *Tavistock*. Partner in the Tresanton is Olga's brother, *Rocco*, who has also formed *Rocco Forte Hotels*, with top hotels in *Brussels, St. Petersburg, Rome, Geneva, Florence, Frankfurt* and the celebrated *Brown's* in *London. Hotel Tresanton, St. Mawes, Cornwall, TR2 5DR. Tel: (01326) 270 055*. Rooms from about \$300. Trains from Victoria Station in London to *St. Austell*, then taxi for about 20 miles; or train to Falmouth followed by 20-minute sail across Falmouth Bay to *St. Mawes*; or flight from Gatwick or Stanstead to Newquay, then 20 miles by taxi to *St. Mawes*.

OUR LATEST FINDS FOR GREAT GIFTS: IT'S A SCARY WORLD WHEN YOU start to question what could be harmful about using soap, but c'est la vie in these times. We prefer to be safe from toxic and synthetic chemicals by scrubbing our mitts with *Vermont Soap Organics* by *Vermont Soapworks*. Gentle and non-toxic, plus synthetic-free, this pure soap made from aloe, rosemary, and organic essential oils comes in pleasing aromas like Lemongrass Zen and actually cleans easily and completely. Vermont Soap's natural liquid soap ensures we're not actually contaminating ourselves while trying to stay clean. Visit www.vermontsoap.com or call (866) SOAP-4U2. We love *Earworms*, essential words and phrases to anchor into your long-term memory with great music, a revolutionary accelerated learning technique that takes the hard work out of mastering foreign languages, www.earwormslearning.com.

IT IS REFRESHING, IF NOT AMAZING, TO FIND A RESORT THAT IN REALITY IS better than its typical flowery advertisements. It's rare, of course, but that is what we found at the *Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay*. You sort of assume that a Hyatt resort would be a somewhat prosaic clone of all the other hotels in the group. Well, it's not, and that is just surprise number one. In fact, what we found was one major delight after another, but more of that later. Maryland's eastern shore of the Chesapeake continues to be a sublime coastline. Its lighthouses, sunsets, winding rivers, luxurious forests, and the proximity to raw nature are the reasons any sensate being comes to this area in the first place. The Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay has blended itself and all its amenities into the area, without being overpowering and degrading the reason for being there. A morning walk through the 18-acre Blue Heron Rookery to observe the animals and flora reminds you of who is in charge. Fly-fishing is available with instruction by pros at *Orvis* fly-fishing school. Earlier, we mentioned surprises. Our second was the spa. We all know that everyone has a spa these days and that they tend to be generic. The *Stillwater Spa* belongs in the world-class spa category. Just one of their signature treatments is the "Waters Edge" massage, which takes you to the banks of the Choptank River itself. This resort is well known as a major golf destination. The *Keith Foster*-designed course is not only challenging, but also a lot of fun to play. Hole #17 dares you to carry over 185 yards of open water, and on #18 you are as likely to get an eagle as you are to be destroyed by the *Choptank River*. All of this lies close to Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, and even New York, with a little effort. We noticed a lot of what seemed like political-looking gentlemen and could not help wondering how much of the country's business was being conducted here. On the other hand, we decided that since they were so polite and well-behaved, they could not have been legislators. Finally, and we have saved the best for last, there is the subject of food. What a delight, and again, it is just one surprise after another. Chef de Cuisine *Shean Suter* has put together an imaginative menu with equal parts local specialties and his own talent. There are 400 rooms and suites, and rates vary with the season. When you call, ask for a corner room facing the river; the views are incredible. At the same time, ask about golf and other packages. Call (800) 55-HYATT for reservations or check www.chesapeakebay.hyatt.com.

BOOK BRIEFS FOR THE NEW YEAR: LAID TO REST IN CALIFORNIA, A Guide to the Cemeteries and Burial Sites of the Rich and Famous, *Globe Pequot Press*, burial grounds all over the state where famous or infamous people are buried, including *Santa Barbara Cemetery*, which is a beauty. Authors are *Pat Brooks* and her son, *Jonathan Brooks*; Our favorite books on CD, all from *Random House Audio*: 10 DAYS THAT

UNEXPECTEDLY CHANGED AMERICA by *Steve M. Gillon*, the pivotal days that transformed our nation; CAN'T WAIT TO GET TO HEAVEN by *Fannie Flagg*, an emotional comedy-mystery told with emotion and warmth that asks the question: "Why are we here?"; COMING OUT by *Danielle Steele*, the 87th novel by this popular author, this time set around a traditional debutante ball gone haywire, and ultimately a catalyst for change, revelation and love; MELLON by *David Cannadine*, a landmark work from one of the preeminent historians of our time about the American colossus who bestrode the worlds of industry, government and philanthropy; I FEEL BAD ABOUT MY NECK And Other Thoughts On Being A Woman by *Nora Ephron*, a candid and hilarious look at women dealing with getting older; FRENCH WOMEN FOR ALL SEASONS by *Mireille Guiliano*, more cunning secrets to enjoying wine, chocolate and other sensual pleasures by an expert in the art of joyful living; LIFE AFTER DEATH by *Deepak Chopra*, a search into the profound mystery of what happens after we die, a creative book of wisdom, discovery and reflection; PROVENCE A-Z by *Peter Mayle*, an indispensable, richly informative and entertaining sourcebook on *Provence* by the delightful writer who calls the region home.

THE RITTENHOUSE HOTEL, PHILADELPHIA'S MOST ACCLAIMED HOTEL, continues to put its competition to shame. The Rittenhouse is an independently owned, 98-room masterpiece built in 1989. It is a jagged concrete and glass high-rise off the western end of Philadelphia's most distinguished square. The lobby is tranquil and lovely, with inlaid marble floors and a series of chandeliers and sconces. Guests of the hotel are treated to Champagne and chocolate-covered strawberries, and the experience only gets dreamier from there. Guestrooms are actually suites with living room, bay windows, and reinforced walls between rooms for a quieter stay. All rooms have great visibility to the park-like square, which is leafy and lovely most of the year. The higher up you are, the better the views, so try for at least the 9th floor. The western view of the *Schuylkill* and the parkway is quite dramatic. The original art by local artists, which decorates the walls, is a very nice touch. Restaurants include *Lacroix*, a chic spot overlooking the park, which is run by *Jean-Marie Lacroix*, formerly of the *Four Seasons*. For a great steak and the area's most convivial bar there is *Wollensky*, the NY steakhouse. The Rittenhouse, it is said, is the hotel *du jour* for traveling celebrities in Philadelphia. That's fine with us; they deserve a nice place to stay. We are not usually interested in which celebs stay at any given hotel, as much as we are interested in being treated as celebs while we are there. At the Rittenhouse, we are treated like we are the most important people under this loving roof. *Rittenhouse Hotel, 210 W. Rittenhouse St., Center City, Philadelphia, (800) 635-1042.*

THE *T3 OVERNIGHT* SOUNDS LIKE A TERMINATOR MOVIE AND SORT OF looks the part. A sleek, silver, foldable travel hair dryer of quality and great engineering, the T3 tackles sopping hair in minutes. Lightweight and easy to stow away, the T3 Overnight's magic comes through built-in tourmaline gemstones, used for optimal infrared heat, which helps lock in natural moisture and leaves hair with extra shine. Whether you're invited to a private ceremony with an African king, or simply trying to catch a superior, dry 'do while on the move, the T3 is the machine for the job with two volt settings, along with a high/low output. Available at www.t3tourmaline.com.

GEORGE CHRYSsaidis's *ATHENA CAFÉ* IN *ST. AUGUSTINE* HAS LONG drawn a crowd for its hearty plates of homemade Greek food, filled with quality and passion for both ingredients and craft. For those content to stick closer to home, Mr. Chryssaidis's renowned extra virgin olive oil is available to them, straight from *Frixa, Greece*. Frixa Extra Virgin Olive Oil is supreme, with a strong, rich flavor. Its production is personally overseen by Chryssaidis's partner, while the man himself handles the import and distribution of the limited output, sent directly to gourmet stores and customers who appreciate quality, keeping it out of the hands of big distributors. It is an olive oil of distinction, fit for Zeus himself. You can get yours by visiting www.frixaoliveoil.com.

THERE ARE SKIN-CARE PRODUCTS AND THEN THERE ARE SKIN-CARE products, if you get the cut of our jib. While one category can be found for under \$9 at *Rite-Aid*, the latter embodies the ultimate in pampering, preservation and restoration for your face, plus typically bears the price tag to show it. As the winter draws an ever-colder shroud about our epidermal region, we reach for *Epionce's* dependable *Intensive Nourishing Cream*. An advanced, ultra-emollient protects and nourishes skin with maximum hydration while Soft-Focus technology reduces the appearance of damage. Specifically for super-dry and photo-aged skin, Epionce's fragrance-free Intensive Nourishing Cream is one of the silky smoothest and most essential treasures in our beauty cabinets. Visit www.epionce.com.