

INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

OCTOBER 2022

ROB REID

JETS OVER
PRINCETON

AMAZON RIVER
CRUISE HIGHLIGHTS
WILDLIFE

JOURNEY THROUGH
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Cover ROB REID

Since arriving in Victoria 34 years ago, this runner has not only been a champion for the sport, but an advocate for giving back!

Credit: Viviana Ng

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Head Office Suite 302, 1581-H Hillside Ave., Victoria BC V8T 2C1 | 250-479-4705 | office@seniorlivingmag.com

Publisher Barbara Risto publisher@seniorlivingmag.com

Managing Editor Bobbie Jo Reid editor@seniorlivingmag.com

Advertising Sales Kathie Wagner kathie@seniorlivingmag.com 250-388-5279

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THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO, PUBLISHER



After two years of hunkering down, we are starting to emerge into the larger world, eager to discover what new adventures await us.

While some of you couldn't wait to scramble into your car or the first available plane and head off to some faraway place when the borders opened, others have been reluctant to hit the road.

Circumstances and personalities vary. Everyone must make the decision that suits them best.

As much as I enjoy travel and adventure, I am an introvert. Turning inward, quieting the noise, and insulating from the outside world is very much a part of my personality. I find peace in solitude. So perhaps I've found living within the constricted bubble of these past couple years easier than some of you.

At the same time, I've come to a greater appreciation of compassionate friends and thoughtful neighbours.

So, as I contemplate my next travel destination, I am wondering how to combine that recipe of "communal solitude" with my travel ambitions. How do we celebrate community while allowing individuality?

Perhaps it is spending a week with a small group in the pleasant countryside of Provence, France – absorbing the sights, sounds and aromas of glorious lavender fields?

Or possibly renting a rustic villa among the rural vineyards of Tuscany, Italy?

Or maybe floating leisurely through the countryside on a river barge, disembarking occasionally to partake in the local fare?

(If this is something you've done, feel free to send me your tips on what worked for you. I'd love to hear your insights.)

Meanwhile, I'm enjoying the last blooms of my garden

and contemplating plans on how to celebrate the turning of the season.

This past weekend, I created a scarecrow as the first element of a fall display that I will construct over the next few weeks in my front yard to share with those who walk their dogs or drive by.

Pumpkins and other festive elements will soon join the scarecrow. It's my way to bring a smile to someone's face and say "Thank You" to my neighbours who have been there for me these past few years.



Learning how to live respectfully and kindly with one another wasn't necessarily how everyone experienced these past couple years. It wasn't easy some days to shelter our hearts and minds from the turmoil and rhetoric amplified by our daily news feeds.

Yet I'm optimistic that our planet took up that challenge and will emerge with more understanding, stronger resilience, and greater willingness to be of service to one another.

Happy Thanksgiving and safe travelling to whichever destination you choose for your next adventure. |



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SHOE FITTING RULES

Snug, not 'tight'

Toes shouldn't touch the end

Support is more important than colour

Everyone's feet different

Shoe size is a number → going the other way

Rob Reid and Buster at the Frontrunners store in Victoria.
Photo: Viviana Ng

ROB REID: RUNNING WITH HEART

by HANSTAMMEMAGI

The Frontrunners store on Vancouver Street, Victoria, is like a museum, for interspersed among shoes and other running apparel are wonderful displays of running history spanning four decades. This history reflects the many and far-ranging experiences of Rob Reid, the owner of the store and one of Canada's top distance runners. I was eager to meet him, as there isn't anyone who has done more for running in Victoria than Rob.

Entering the store, Rob was immediately recognizable with his red hair and tall, slim build. As he toured me around, his loquacious Irish personality came to the fore: friendly, talkative and easy going.

He was accompanied by Buster, a tail-wagging, curly haired golden Labradoodle. Rob is tall for a distance runner (about 5' 11") and weighing about 165 pounds, up about 10 pounds from his competitive racing days, which, he says, are behind him now that he is 67.

Mounted on a wall is the Olympic torch he carried in the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. Next to it is a photo of him holding the torch with British actress Jane Seymour looking on. Many displays show the story of distance running, in-

cluding the shoes worn by well-known competitors like Dick Beardsley, Katherine Switzer and Bill Rodgers. Also displayed is Rob's own Reebok Aztec shoe that he wore while running the Toronto Marathon in 1982 in 2 hours 22 minute, his best time for that distance.

Outside the shop is a Running Walk of Fame, celebrating locals who have done well in running races and the triathlon such as Simon Whitfield, Bruce Deacon and Lori Bowden.

In a corner are several mementos of Canadian icon Terry Fox. A photo shows Rob at Mile 0 in Beacon Hill Park with the statue of Terry, which he was instrumental in having erected.

On a pillar, an attractive poster shows a giraffe and a tree silhouetted against an African sunset, an announcement for the Rift Valley Marathon in Kenya in 2013, which Rob helped to set up with a friend.

Rob's running career started almost by accident. He had no idea that he was genetically blessed in this sport until at Western University in London, Ontario while studying for a Physical Education degree, a professor asked him to join a group in a run.

Snapshot with Rob Reid

If you were to meet your 20-year-old self, what advice would you give him?

"I would tell him to travel as far as possible and meet strangers who could become friends for life. Don't make life-changing decisions until you're older and more mature. Enjoy life."



Who or what has influenced you the most and why?

"I have been most influenced by the fact I took up marathon running due to mentor Jerry Gonser, a prof at Western University who invited me to run with a group training for Boston. I was also influenced by Calgary business legend, John Forzani, who invited me to manage a run shop in Calgary; by Peter Butler, Vancouver store owner, who I partnered with in Victoria initially; then with financial support by local business owner, David Gibson, who allowed me to be the owner of Fronrunners Victoria and New Balance Victoria. But most recently – and importantly – Nick Walker, my new partner, who oversees management now with our great staff allowing me to be semi-retired and have more time for community projects."

What keeps you grounded?

"My wife, Joan Geber, who grew up on a farm in Saskatchewan and whose main traits are pragmatism and patience with me. She's a wonderful person, very important in my life and certainly keeps me grounded."

What are you most grateful for?

"I'm grateful for my children – Jeremy, Braden, Nathan and Keegan and my daughters-in-law, Brier and Mena, and my grandchildren James, Margaret, Haley and Maximilliana. I'm grateful too that I took a chance of moving to a city named Victoria to follow my dream of having a run shop to promote a healthy lifestyle and be a part of this great community."

Rob turned up wearing basketball shoes. Even so, the professor recognized a huge, latent talent. Rob started training and, in 1978, ran the Niagara Falls Skylon marathon as a qualifier for the Boston Marathon. His time of

2 hours 44 minutes was an outstanding accomplishment for his initial effort at the distance. Then, in 1979, he completed the Boston Marathon in 2 hours 43 minutes, another auspicious performance.

Rob moved to Calgary and lived there from 1980 to 1988. Running was a passion and he competed in many marathons, winning the Calgary Marathon five times. He enjoyed the competitions in the Napa Valley, which were set amongst hills, lush vineyards and a temperate climate. Probably his favourite marathon was in Sapporo, Japan, in 1988, where the scenery was delightful, and the encouragement and politeness of the crowds were overwhelming.

While in Calgary, Rob met John Forzani and started a running shop with him. Sponsored by Nike, Rob was encouraged in the new business by the company and its representative. Rob enjoyed supporting fitness, good health and the sport of running through the store.

Rob moved to Victoria in 1988 and liked the city for its friendliness, comfortable size and closeness to nature. He opened the Fronrunners store in downtown in partnership with Peter Butler, who later bowed out.

Fronrunners blossomed in the following years and Rob opened two more Fronrunners and a New Balance Victoria. Another Fronrunners store in Nanaimo was sold to the employees. During this time, Rob also dedicated himself to promoting running and good health by holding clinics, sponsoring races and much more

Almost immediately upon arriving in the city, Rob became closely involved with the Royal Victoria Marathon. He has only run the race once (a time of

2:29 in 1991) but has been a fervent supporter of the race, sitting on the organizing committee for 33 years and counting. His Fronrunners store has been a sponsor for all 33 years.

"That tradition will continue," he states emphatically.

Rob is indefatigable, standing for hours at the marathon finish line, high-fiving all the finishing runners. He organizes speakers, holds clinics and, together with an army of volunteers, sees to all the minutiae that makes such an enormous event successful. And, yes, the Royal Victoria Marathon is considered one of the premier races on the tour. Rob and his Fronrunners stores also support many other races in the Victoria area.

Since 1980, Rob has been inspired to combine fitness and fundraising.

"To me, it made sense for runners not just to develop healthy hearts, but also to exercise compassion and giving, in becoming truly balanced human beings."

One of Rob's main inspirations was Terry Fox, whose Marathon of Hope was cut short in the summer of 1981. When Terry's run ended tragically with his cancer – after 5,373 kilometres of running – Rob, who had long had an admiration for the man, sprang into action. He ran for 24-hours with his wife through downtown Calgary, to raise money for the Canadian Cancer Society. Rob says he has come to feel adversity in life, which he has personally encountered, can be helpful.

"If life is too smooth, I don't know if you get the ache in your belly to always make a difference," he says.

Since then, Rob and Fox's family have become good friends and Rob is particularly close to Terry's brother, Darrell Fox, with whom he communicates on a weekly basis. Rob was the driving force behind a Terry Fox statue erected at Mile 0 of the Trans-Canada Highway in Victoria to mark the 25th anniversary of the Marathon of Hope. Rob has long been involved with the Terry Fox Foundation and recently has been working to find a home for the Terry Fox Centre, likely in Vancouver, as a cancer education research facility

and museum to hold the many memorabilia of Terry Fox.

Rob has developed a deep bond with Victoria. He's highly visible on the business front through his Frontrunners Footwear and New Balance stores. In 2004, the Victoria Chamber of Commerce awarded him the Victoria Businessperson of the Year Award. A year earlier, his Frontrunners Footwear store was recognized as the Business of the Year. In 2012, he was awarded the New Balance Company Riley Award, honouring his community work. And the accolades keep rolling in.

Most importantly, Rob has been a tireless advocate of numerous charities. He approached like-minded runners who wanted to balance their running and giving goals and formed the Runners of Compassion in 2003. This charitable group assists with breakfast programs, carries out a Shoes for Youth program, so young people can participate in sports, assists a women's shelter, helps to end homelessness in the capital region, sponsored Tibetan refugees, helped set up an AIDS orphanage in South Africa, and the good work continues.

“If life is too smooth,
I don't know if you get the
ache in your belly to always
make a difference.”

–Rob Reid

Rob is constantly meeting running greats and other dignitaries. In 2009, for example, he met the Dalai Lama and was moved by his grace and serenity. The leader of Tibetan Buddhism said, “My religion is kindness.” A quality the two men share.

Recently, the primary responsibility for managing the stores was transferred to long-term employee Nick Walker, who became a business partner. This has allowed Rob to dedicate himself – even more than before – to projects that benefit the community, although he still maintains an active interest in the stores, as well.

Although he's retired from competition, Rob still runs for the sake of his mental and physical health, logging a run every second day. His diet is also an important factor, and he consumes gluten-free and vegetarian food. Although he claims to have gained about 10 pounds since his competitive days, he is still slim and fit.

Rubbing Buster's back, Rob says, “I love living in this area. Victoria is a nice size; people are friendly, and we're surrounded by enchanting nature. I've recently acquired a home on Salt Spring Island, which has an array of solar panels.” He summed up his philosophy well, “Life is good, but we have to keep giving.” |



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Information written and compiled by INSPIRED Magazine publisher, Barbara Risto

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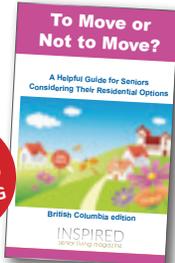
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JETS OVER PRINCETON

by MICHAEL POSER

In *Top Gun: Maverick*, 59-year-old Tom Cruise, still in peak form, pulls high Gs and intense flight manoeuvres in a real F-18 fighter jet. Cruise made the exciting flight sequences happen with the support of the US Navy and a \$150 million production budget.

For the rest of us, particularly those of a “certain age,” the path to commanding a jet is much harder to find. But for the truly determined, there is one lesser-known way...

Every year around the Victoria Day weekend in May, and then again after Labour Day, a dedicated group of jet enthusiasts assemble at small town Princeton Airport, in southern BC. They gather for a few Jet-A fuelled days of flying thrills. These pilots aren't flying real F-18s, though; these are radio controlled (RC) models. Cruising at scale-adjusted speeds faster than a navy jet, these replicas rip up the sky powered by miniature turbine engines. The models look and sound just like their full-scale counterparts. They blast overhead at 350 km/h, executing manoeuvres that would even make Tom Cruise blanche.

This RC jet meet at Princeton usually gathers 20-30 jet model pilots from BC, Alberta and the US. They arrive in



ABOVE | (Top) Photo: David Hart (Bottom) Alan Blore inspects the cockpit of his A10 in preparation for a flight. Photo: Michael Poser

PAGE 9 | (Top to bottom) These ultra fast jets demand a steady hand on the sticks. Running up the A10 engines prior to take-off. Rob Dover prepares his model while Mike Allman assists. Photos: Michael Poser

motor homes, pulling trailers converted into jet-hangers. They put on an exciting show (mostly for themselves) and enjoy the camaraderie born of a shared interest and the love of flying these astonishing machines. All under the warm Okanagan sun.

Why Princeton? Well, for starters, these jet models are fast and loud. Finding large enough sites close enough to a big city is a challenge. Princeton airport with its 1.2km paved strip is an ideal venue. The City of Princeton welcomes this event because it attracts tourists.

The model jets are a feast for all the senses. Bright-coloured planes skim low passes over the runway; streams of white exhaust trailing behind some. The reverberating roar of the jet dramatically rises in pitch as it approaches. Speeding off into the distance, it leaves a slightly stinging scent of burnt jet fuel and turbine oil hanging in the breeze. It is truly amazing how these small engines put out such an impressive and authentic sound.

Pilot Roman Breuer, who has brought two magnificent jets with him from Vancouver, is a professional musician, so he has a discerning ear.

“The smell and sound are intoxicating,” he says, “it’s as close to the real thing without being in it.”

Although flying an RC jet is a pursuit that one can take up at any stage in life, this crowd is mostly senior because it takes a substantial discretionary income

and years of model aircraft experience to fuel an expensive passion like this one. The thrill of flying a model jet is addictive. But the long-term friendships, built over years of flying together, is what keeps these pilots coming back.

Over at the pit area, Kelly Williams, an experienced jet flyer explains, “It’s all about thrust and exhaust velocity. A jet can produce up to 400 per cent more exhaust velocity than a propeller driven airplane. That means when you open up the throttle on a jet it accelerates like a catapult and just keeps going faster!” With so much power there is little margin for error. Guiding these



craft makes your heart race.

By any measure, the star of this year’s show is the A10 “Warthog” built by Alan Blore of Calgary. Alan has invested more than two years in faithfully replicating the scale details of this iconic aircraft. His model weighs a hefty 34 kg with fuel – much heavier than the average model jet. The twin turbines together put out over 267 newtons of thrust. When the Warthog is just taxiing, it commands attention. When it flies overhead, it fools you into thinking it is the real thing.

Aviation lovers are welcome to attend this free event. Keep an eye on the websites linked in the IF YOU GO section

online for the next scheduled Jet event. Come out to chat with the pilots and, when you have had your fill experiencing the jets, your adventure in this beautiful region is just beginning. After your visit, you will be able to answer Maverick’s classic question “Are we having fun yet?” with a definite “Yes!” |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/jets-over-princeton

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POTATO PEELINGS, PATCHES & THE ALBANIAN RIVIERA

by J. KATHLEEN THOMPSON

Subscription to the traveller's belief that 'the universe will provide' was not helping air stay in my tire at the side of a highway in Albania. Every strategy – switching tubes, unfolding spare tires, building up layers of glue and patches on the puncture and possible others – seemed determined to foul any attempt to successfully re-inflate the tire.

And a hot sun pressing me further into the scorched bowl of dirt and debris where my bike lay, indifferent gravel truck drivers, and empty glue tubes were doing little to bolster my faith. It was clear I would need to do my own providing.

With a tire that was only somewhat inflated, I got back on my bike. It was 10 kilometres to Vlore, reputedly the northern gateway to the Albanian Riviera. Every two kilometres, I needed to stop and refill the tire, trying to keep the pumping arm and elbow out of the way of four lanes of cars hurtling past me a hairbreadth away.

It gave me hope that, with this kind of urgent comings-and-goings, there had to be a bike shop in Vlore. Albania has been changing since the fall of communism – it knew about a Westerner's penchant for 'soft adventure' and tandem rides by the sea.

When my phone GPS delivers me to a small engine repair shop in Vlore, I resort to scouting for someone who can give me real directions to a non-motorized bike shop.

A café with a French name looks promising. Propping my bike by the umbrellas outside, I stride in. I assume the well-dressed, bespectacled, young man at the counter will speak English.

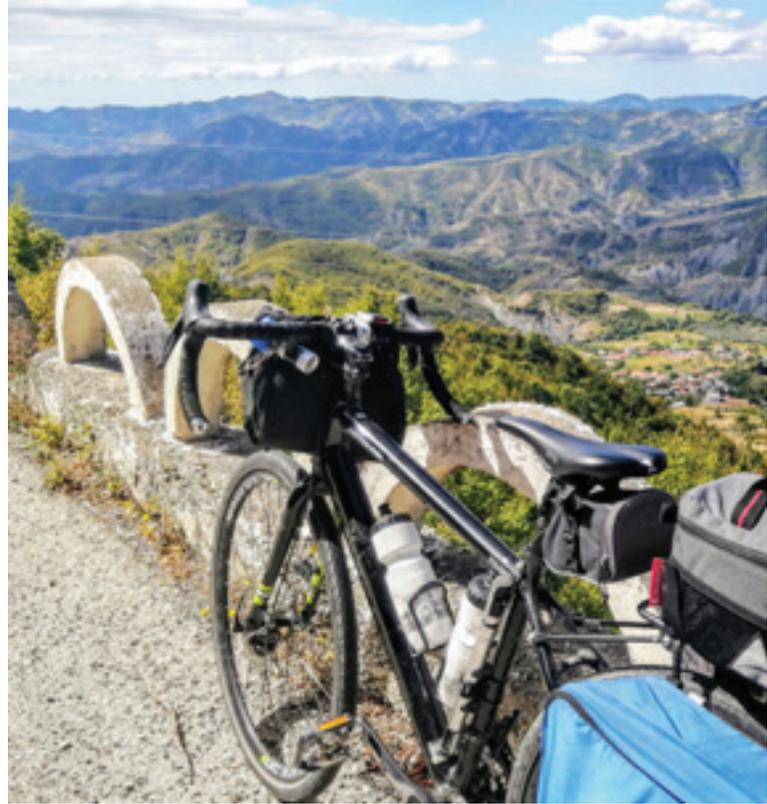
"My GPS told me there was a bike repair shop just next to you. Has it moved?" I wince at my lack of courtesy – I hadn't even said hello.

My abruptness, however, isn't the problem. It's the nature of my question.

"A bike repair shop?" His English is perfectly inflected, as is his expression of incredulity.

"Yes, this one." I pass him my phone.

"Oh..." passing my phone back to me. He didn't want to



be the bearer of bad news.

I can feel my shoulders collapsing, knowing I am now truly at his mercy. I appeal to his goodness.

"I have a flat tire I can't fix. Is there anyone who could help me?"

A moment's pause and then he makes a phone call. I don't understand Shqip, but all the nodding he was doing makes me feel hopeful. After the call finishes, he scrolls through his phone and shows me a map of the city, and route to where I might find someone who works on bikes.

"See this hotel? Go right across the street, and down a smaller one. He'll be on the right side."

The quick scrolling, the photos, the clipped directions are all assuming I have perfect eyes, ears and executive brain function. I thought that he was being very gracious considering my age must have been pretty obvious.

"Well... how do I find the hotel?" I needed this mechanic, but I didn't need to reveal any insecurity about my cognitive functioning. It would be a betrayal to other 'young-at-hearts.'

The images flash past again, but I need to trust that I've identified the key points. Right, left and then another right. The small street was kitty-corner to the hotel. Besides, if I needed to return to get the directions all over again, I know he would do it without a whiff of judgment.

Clearly the only one in town wearing spandex, and pushing a disabled loaded bike, I pick my way back up the street I had come in on, skirting shopkeepers gathering in lawnmowers and clusters of vegetables for early Saturday afternoon closing

ABOVE | Mali me Gropa Moutains, Albania

PAGE 11 | Albanian Riviera. Photos: J. Kathleen Thompson

time. Chances that this bike mechanic existed and would be open diminish with every closing door.

I locate the landmark hotel. The secondary street across from it is not much more than a one-lane pathway. Buildings crowd on both sides, laundry is splayed on patios of concrete and rebar. The business district of town is clearly behind us.

I almost pass it, but a bike rim, then another, catch my eye. Turning my head, I see a plethora of rims festooned from the ceiling and walls – indeed they are the walls – of an outdoor stall. Tires, drive chains, derailleurs, bits of bike frame – the resuscitation of every piece of bike anatomy, each one darker than the next from years of use and re-use – join the bike rims in cacophonous splendour.

Through the din of metal and steel and preciously recycled parts, I can see a tiny room, likely for tools, and refuge on rainy days.



There is someone sitting on a stool outside. She hasn't noticed me as her gaze is fixed on the potatoes she is peeling, their skins falling into the cast-iron pot at her feet.

When she does lift her head, she acknowledges my presence by summoning someone to help. A young man, in Nikes and an LA Laker basketball shirt, instantly appears. He hovers behind his mother and the pot of potato peelings, eyeing me cautiously. I take that to mean he's open for business, and hand him the front wheel of my bike. The work wordlessly begins.

He has the tire and tube off, puncture ascertained (the tub of water close by), old patches off, newer ones incisively placed and back on the rim within minutes. I bring out my other tubes, groping for ways to tell him, "I suspect these have punctures, too, as they weren't holding air either."

I settle for the Greek word for 'bad,' as many Albanians know the language of their southern neighbours. When that fails to communicate anything, I resort to the same word in Spanish, hoping that it might be close to its Italian equivalent. All the taxi drivers in Tirana had spoken Italian. He under-

stands and scans each tube for punctures. He finds many and seals them all quickly, expertly.

Realizing I have struck gold in the bike mechanic department, I am emboldened to 'ask' for one more thing. I show him my empty patch containers. He disappears into the 'sanctum' and returns with a handful of patches and... a large and resplendent tube of glue.

Never in my cycling life have I been able to secure a separate and respectable size tube of glue from a bike shop. Especially the well-stocked ones. Gulping with inexpressible joy and gratitude, I ask him the cost for his services. He writes it down. \$2.50. I wonder if he would find a tip insulting.

To respect the gods of good fortune, I ease back on my bike tentatively, politely. I am soon in another world. The alleyway opens to broad boulevards carefully inlaid with river rock and cobblestone, lamp posts and potted trees lining the sidewalks.

Widening yet again, views of the sea open, and elegant date palms stud a sweeping boardwalk along the Adriatic. Clean white high-rises and hotels ring the boardwalk, everything carefully construed to say, 'here be a stylish escape to the sun.' I pass a few tourists under beach palapas, no doubt enjoying the trifling cost of their afternoon drinks.

Dodging men in their Gucci shorts and taxis speeding by for fares, I begin to pedal faster.

Somehow, I needed the speed to blot out the palm trees and shelter the memories of the universe that had provided for me just one alleyway away. |



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Amazon River Cruise Brings Wildlife into View

by MARILYN JONES

The boat edges into a thicket of trees, and naturalist Juan Tejada draws our attention to a tree to the left. Peeking out of the tree are two owl monkeys. It is fortunate to see them as they are usually nocturnal, according to Juan.

Passengers of M/V *Zafiro* repeat this moment dozens of times as they explore the Amazon River and its tributaries in Peru.

Juan explains that the name Amazon comes from the native warriors, primarily women, that attacked a Spanish expedition that reminded 16th-century explorer Francisco De Orellana of the mythical female Amazon warriors from the ancient Hellenic culture in Greece.

The river stretching through South America is the largest river by discharge volume of water in the world, travelling through Peru, Columbia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Brazil. It also has the most tributaries of any river in the world.

An estimated 16,000 species live in the Amazon. Although the rainforest is teeming with wildlife, it is hard to spot in the tree canopy. With eagle eyes, the naturalists find birds, toucans, woodpeckers, laughing hawks, macaws, parakeets, black-collared hawks and kingfishers, to name a few.

Squirrel and woolly monkeys perform acrobatics in the trees as they pick fruit and catch insects. The jungle is also home to cuddly-looking sloths, tapirs, elusive jaguars and mystical pink river dolphins.

Every day we go out on excursions in small boats. Sometimes before and after breakfast, after lunch, and after the sun

sets guests motor into the jungle. Naturalists find creatures like the boa constrictor, anaconda, tarantulas and poisonous frogs.

Discovering the rainforest's birds, animals and reptiles is part of the experience.

Understanding the Amazon people and their lives is also a valuable and enriching experience. We pass men, women and children fishing and tending to their homes and property along the river. Juan greets them in Spanish as we sail by.

Twice we fish for piranha. The first time the fish weren't biting, we all enjoyed interacting with the local children canoeing nearby and a little two-year-old playing with a giant yellow balloon. A few days later, our efforts pay off, and we are hauling in the bright orange fish with the razor-sharp teeth repeatedly. Everyone who fished caught several piranhas as well as other types of fish.

One morning, our boat driver and naturalist take us to Nauta, a city 100 km south of Iquitos, the provincial capital. Nauta, located on the north bank of the Marañon River, a major tributary of the Upper Amazon, has a population of about 20,000.

ABOVE | Owl monkeys are nocturnal. It is unusual to see them in the daylight.

TOC | The razor-sharp teeth of the piranha. Photos: Marilyn Jones

Our tour begins in an outdoor market. We walk by everything from pharmaceuticals sold by a doctor operating the booth to spices, homemade cookies, grain, kitchen goods and clothes. We go indoors to a fish wet market. Here Amazon River fish are sold, including catfish that make up 40 per cent of the river fish population.

Experts with a knife, women filet fish as we walk along the crowded aisles. They sell produce and other meat in another building, including large rodents.

We continue past murals on the side of a building depicting local superstitions about ghosts, the rubber plantation owners, and the missionaries who brought Christianity to the area. Catholicism is the most popular religion here.

During the last portion of our tour, we board tuk-tuks and tour the city. Past homes made of metal sheeting, businesses, and women washing their clothes in a seeming muddy creek, it is evident the people of the Amazon work hard and use everything the mighty river and the rainforest can provide.

After a day of exploring, there is often music in the lounge before dinner. Crew members play traditional and popular Peruvian music. And they are excellent!

Three guitarists, two drummers, two maraca players, and one with a rainmaker join to create the feeling of the river. All the guitar players have beautiful voices, and two play Peruvian

flutes. Toe-tapping and clapping turn into dancing as everyone enjoys the upbeat sound of the country.

Meals are special occasions as well. Breakfast and lunch are buffet-style with salads and Peruvian dishes, such as seasoned beans and rice wrapped in leaves, fried plantains, delicious fish, chicken, and beef and homemade bread. Beautifully plated dinner courses satisfy any discerning appetite. All topped off with dessert: cake, mousse, ice cream and fruit.

You may wonder if there was anything negative about the expedition cruise. From my viewpoint, no. I enjoyed every minute of my adventure. The staterooms are spacious, the food delicious, the boat rides and hikes educational and thrilling, and the city tour eye-opening. The entire crew is friendly and exemplary.

When is the best time to visit the Amazon River and Rainforest? According to Juan, "Now. Every season offers something different in the rainforest."

Crew members, including Cruise Director Angela Rodriguez, grew up along the river. They understand what it's like to live in the rainforest and how to showcase exotic animals and reptiles; they respect their history and the river. |

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Journey Through Australia Aboard The Ghan

by PAM & GARY BAKER

“ALL ABOARD”

From the South Australian city of Adelaide to the Northern Territory outpost of Darwin, the Ghan travels a land as diverse as it is dazzling. It’s a luxury rail journey that provides a unique travel experience with onboard comforts as well as unforgettable off-train adventures.

Soon we board, drop our luggage in our cabin, and head to the Outback Explorer Lounge before lunch. The rail ride really starts in the lounge.

Getting acquainted comes easily in the narrow, but comfortable seating on each side of the lounge. The bar lounges on the Ghan are named after famous Australian outback explorers. Ours was named after the heroic pioneer John Eyre (1815–1901). He survived a murderous mutiny to complete an incredible expedition from Adelaide across the unforgiving Nullarbor Plain to Albany in Western Australia.

With a quick jolt, the train pulls slowly out of the station gradually gaining speed past well-kept residential suburbs, cemeteries and large industrial buildings of North Adelaide. Suddenly, the view shifts to flat agriculture lands, well-groomed with tractor marks that glow faintly iridescent orange in the sunlight as far as the eye can see. Rows of eucalyptus trees separate the adjacent farming tracks.

We pick up speed and the Ghan is on its way!

THE LONGEST PASSENGER TRAIN IN THE WORLD

Travelling up from Adelaide to Darwin (or vice versa), The Ghan is a rail journey of a lifetime. It transports around 280

guests and 49 crew in 36 silver-coloured carriages that can stretch 1.1 kilometres. Two fire-engine-red 4,400 horsepower dual locomotives, with the iconic white image of a mounted camel emblazoned on their sides, pull the carriages across 2,979 kilometres of striking countryside.

Originally known as the Afghan Express, the Ghan takes its name from the 19th century Afghan camel drivers who arrived in Australia 150 years ago to help explore the country’s remote interior. At some places in its comfortable 54-hour journey, spanning two Australian provinces, the Ghan Railway follows the route of the Afghan “cameleers.”

Using long lines of camels to transport provisions, mail, goods, building materials and early explorers, the cameleers rode across the barren desert and into the Red Centre of the continent.

The Ghan made its first journey in 1929 from Adelaide to Alice Springs, but the track was extended 75 years later to Darwin in 2004. The Ghan’s journey only takes two nights and three days for a one-way trip. The average train speed is 85 km/h with a maximum speed of 115 km/h. And it claims the title of the longest passenger train in the world.



ABOVE | The Ghan passing the MacDonnell Ranges near Alice Springs. Photo: Journey Beyond

PAGE 15 | Bonfire and coffee at Marla as the sun rises.

TOC | Statue at Alice Springs train station honoring the cameleers. Photos: Pam & Gary Baker

OFF-TRAIN ADVENTURES

For a breathtaking blend of beautiful scenery, the railway between Adelaide and Darwin provides glimpses of the Outback, a natural wonderland, vast yet complex. A parched reddish copper-coloured desert dotted with stone outcroppings like Uluru resemble a vast Neolithic site.

The morning starts early the second day with the “Marla knock” when staff taps on our cabin door to wake us up. We’re stopped at the remote Marla station where we join fellow passengers outside the train to watch the sunrise over the Outback. Stunning red dawn colours spread across the sky and the mulga scrub landscape. It eventually illuminates the shiny silver siding on the carriages of the train and then reflects in golden hues from the windows of the carriages. It’s like witnessing two sunrises in one morning!

All the while, ever attentive staff have set up coffee stations on tables assembled around the warmth of large bonfires. They pass out egg and bacon sliders while we continue to watch nature’s dawning light show.

Later in the day, we reach the capital of Australia’s Red Centre, Alice Springs. Named after a telegraph operator’s wife and an old Outback water hole, this is a four-hour stop for the Ghan, offering several off-train excursions. We opt for the helicopter ride.

After a thorough safety briefing, we climb aboard, donning headsets with microphones. With the swirling clatter of copter blades, our knowledgeable and skilled pilot gently lifts us off. Once airborne, her deft handling of the craft allows us to sweep into graceful high altitude turns. The manoeuvre reveals magnificent views of the small town as well as the stark yet stunning landscape surrounding Alice Springs.

From the helicopter, we view the beautiful MacDonnell Ranges and other significant landmarks like the iconic Simpson’s Gap (waterhole) and Angkerle (Stanley Chasm). We see spectacular Outback scenery from a unique aerial perspective, snapping photos through the small, open windows of the helicopter doors.

The panoramic landscapes of the West MacDonnell Ranges are extraordinary for their immensity and array of sunburst oranges, maroon, and purple colors.

On the morning of the third day, the Ghan arrives at Katherine, considered a big town in this part of the world. Over a few millennia its namesake river carved out a series of 13 deep sandstone gorges. We head to the national park for a two-hour scenic tour of Nitmiluk Gorge.

While floating through the gorge seated on awning-covered cruise boats, our guide provides a running narrative of the geologic and spiritual history of the stunning 70-metre-high sandstone cliffs that glow in the changing morning light. In the first gorge we’re encouraged to keep our eyes peeled for freshwater

crocodiles and in the second gorge, for saltwater crocs, as well as delightful birdlife.

THE RESTAURANT AND DINING

Cuisine and wine are part of every Ghan journey. Both engage your senses and open windows to the essence of a place. The dining on the Ghan is an ideal setting for hospitable, attentive and personalized service amid casual, white linen elegance.

The art deco style of the Queen Adelaide Restaurant reflects the golden era and romance of rail travel. Named after the monarch who was the consort of King William IV in 1836 when South Australia was settled, the restaurant serves a wide choice of culinary options.

Through fresh fare and regional cuisine, Australia comes to life aboard the train. The menu offers Australian favourites like roasted lamb rump with minted pea puree, aioli, warm potato, and grilled vegetable salad. Or regional options like a South Australian Coast tasting plate with Coffin Bay baby octopus, Spencer Gulf prawns, soused Port Lincoln sardines, caponata, and sea parsley.

Want to try a little grilled kangaroo or curried crocodile? Those options are available too, along with vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options. And, of course, standard fare like a classic breakfast with eggs, bacon, sausage, and toast or grilled chicken salad are available.

The wine served onboard represents wine regions across Australia including Barossa Valley, Margaret River, and Hunter Valley. A modern-style Chardonnay, a refreshing Chenin Blanc, a well-structured

Rhone-style red blend, and Australia’s hearty Shiraz are just a few of the choices from the well-curated wine list.

WHY TAKE THE TRAIN?

Most people travel to explore, to learn and to understand. It is a doorway to cultural insight and personal enrichment. And the best way to immerse yourself in new cultures is to explore your world by train.

Travel by train slows down the journey. It allows us to sit in the lounge, meeting fellow travellers and learning their stories. And socialize, we did!

Our first new friends are two sisters travelling together following the death of the younger sister’s husband. Our first meal shared with a couple from Wollongong turns into a fast friendship. Before the trip was over, we exchange contact information and make plans to meet up once we’re back in Sydney. And the retired dairy farmer and his wife provided us with real insight as to what life in rural South Australia is like.

On the Ghan, from the moment you step aboard, you can feel it, the beginning of a folkloric journey. The intimate access to the wild that this transcontinental railway provides is surreal, albeit,



at times, only through the window of a train. However, it's the kind of window that begs you sit by it on your comfortable carriage couch and contemplate place and connection as ever-changing landscapes quickly pass by.

THE FINAL LEG OF THE JOURNEY

After lunch on the third day, we pack our bags and watch the red dirt landscape flow past our panoramic cabin window as we make our final leg of the journey to Darwin. Eventually, we find our way back to the Outback Explorer Lounge to enjoy one last glass of wine with our newfound friends.

We are fascinated by the preponderance of termite mounds and domes of various sizes across the Top End. We keep a keen eye out for the many species of wildlife and unique plants that have adapted to this arid, desert environment north of Alice Springs.

In a flash, we cross the wide, majestic Elizabeth River, a welcome blue expanse providing a momentary respite from the red dirt scrub. Black wallaroos, along with several species of rock rats, mice and bats are endemic to the Northern Territory. Skinks are the most abundant reptiles in the territory, yet saltwater crocodiles are the biggest tourist attraction.

Late in the afternoon of the third day, the Ghan glides into tropical monsoonal Darwin, the lesser-known gateway to Australia. Although not the farthest northern point on the continent, it is closer to Indonesia than Sydney. A former frontier outpost, Darwin sits on a plateaued peninsula overlooking Darwin Harbour, a drowned river valley into which the Elizabeth River has flowed for thousands of years.

We disembark at the Darwin Rail Terminal and gather our luggage, realizing that our journey on the Ghan was more than just a train ride. It's a hidden world of shifting landscapes and rugged beauty, where the call of the wild meets luxury accommodations, gourmet cuisine, impeccable service, and new friends with a similar love of travel. |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/the-ghan-australia



When Robert, a Canadian-UK citizen, came home to Canada to visit his parents in May, he asked his mom if she'd like to come to London in June. "No," she said, having just returned from a week in New York.

Robert explained that he and Laura, his American-UK girlfriend, had been joking about creating a "Mom Week" in London, where they both lived and worked.

The two had been talking about how to make her American mom's upcoming one-week visit special and fun. That's when they devised the idea of entertaining both moms at the same time.

"We looked at each other, paused, and then thought, why not?" says Laura. "Then it evolved naturally that it would be fun to have a 'Mom Week' with both of them", adds Robert.

It didn't faze either of them to bring the two moms, who had never met, together for a long-distance visit.

"We thought it would be great, and then it all just came together," says Robert. "We decided to make the visit worthwhile and a good experience for everyone."

Even with little lead time, the two moms, from their separate and far-off North American destinations, decided to go for it. They each started packing. US mom arranged time off work, and doggy care. Canadian mom needed a plane seat with extra leg room for the long flight, and quickly arranged it.

Then the London couple went into high gear planning an itinerary for the week.

Dinner with Laura and Robert and US mom, who arrived a day earlier, then lunch with Laura and Canadian Mom a few days later. By mid-week, lunch with Laura and the two moms at Covent Garden was followed by afternoon outdoor pool time for both avid swimmers.

Laura then created a stunning and lavish home-cooked, multiple-course dinner, complete with careful wine pairing, at her flat. On Friday all four of them met up for a light Greek tapas-style dinner out.

In between the thoughtfully planned activities, the moms found bits of quality time to catch up with their respective adult children.

The finale on Saturday was to spend a full day together at the Ascot Racecourse, southwest of London.

Dress codes for the Royal Enclosure were clarified; outfits were in order; morning hair appointments and hats were organized by Laura, while Robert took charge of packing a picnic that included champagne.

Parlour games (Never have I ever.... etc.), childhood stories, and lots of laughter on the road trip there made it a fun ride to the races, which still boast the best thoroughbred racehorses globally.

Just short of a week after arriving, the two moms shared a car to Heathrow, flying back to their respective destinations within 20 minutes of each other.

"This could become an annual tradition," reflected Canadian mom on returning home. "'Mom Week' was a memorable adventure. Designed with much care and love." |

INSPIRED MAKEOVER: HELEN PRINCE

by INSPIRED Staff

When Helen Prince retired from her career as an English as a second language instructor, she wanted a new look to embark on the next chapter and her new lifestyle.

This multi-passionate mother of two adult children loves being active outdoors, whether she's cycling, hiking or swimming. But her greatest passion is dancing!

"I speak five languages, so engaging with people from other cultures is always a pleasure. I love all the arts – written, visual or musical," says Helen.

Of the makeover experience, getting the facial was Helen's favourite part. "Such a peaceful oasis of calm in the midst of the flurry of activities before the final show."

While she admits the fashion show was a step outside her comfort zone, she was proud of herself for trusting the process.

"The whole experience was exciting, fun, surprising, heartwarming and also, at times, intimidating when I was out of my comfort zone," says Helen. "The final event took place just before my trip abroad... by the end of the fashion show, I felt an added sense of confidence and accomplishment."

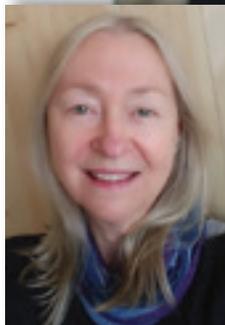
"I'm very happy I decided to give the makeover a try and feel really fortunate and very grateful to have had this opportunity," she says, "not just for the makeover, but also because of all the wonderful people I met in the process! I would certainly recommend it to others."

WHAT THE STYLIST DID:

Helen came in with beautiful, blonde hair past her shoulders, mostly all one length. Given its fine weight and the length and cut, her hair hung straight and flat.

Fine hair has difficulty with volume and movement if it gets too long. So, the first decision I made was to bring up the length. Together, Helen and I agreed to a nice clean bob, around chin length. A graduation at the back of the head gave the hair a slight roundness, which equates to the appearance of more volume. To change it up, we went with some bangs that framed her face and will allow her to get more volume in the front. This cut, while a classic look, gives her hair more bounce and swing on the dance floor.

For the colour, Helen didn't want high maintenance, meaning she didn't want to be in this salon every month. Instead, she was more comfortable going every three months, so I went with the blonde highlights she already had to mimic some of the white hairs coming in. I also added some low-lights to blend with her natural colour. This also gave the hair a little more dimension, which will give it the appearance of movement.



For Helen's makeup, we started with a primer. Primers fill in pores and fine lines. This allows the concealer to smooth over the skin. Next, I chose a concealer that had BB cream in it, which

is a moisturizer and foundation in one. It blends well on the skin and skims over some of the fine lines. I also used a concealer with a bit of a yellow tone to help to cancel out some of the slight purple from the darker tint under the eyes.

For the eye shadow colour, I went with a soft brown in the corners of her eye lids and lighter brow along the crease of the eye. I used a light white-beige just under the brow to highlight it. Also, the light colour was used in the corners of the eye. Adding a shimmery highlight to the inner corners of your eyes creates a bright, open and youthful appearance – perfect for day or night. It reflects light and helps mask the look of fatigue.

I finished Helen's look with a light peach lip gloss. |

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- Hana Akai of Akai Hair Design & Esthetics in Victoria for Helen's hair and makeup. 2559 Quadra St Suite 101, Victoria, BC. 250-383-3227.
- Chelsea Michelle Esthetics for Helen's manicure and facial. 350 Marigold Rd, Victoria, BC. 250-580-2799.
- Suzanne & Jenny's for Helen's outfit. 777 Royal Oak Dr #190, Victoria, BC. 250-658-3618.
- "After" photography by Timothy West. timothywest.com

FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES



PLANTS IMPROVE HEALTH AND AIR QUALITY

Many of us spend a lot of time indoors, usually because of our occupations and long work hours. Of course, recent world events had us spending even more time indoors. We know being outdoors can boost our health due to many factors; one of them involves being in nature. So, can we rely on indoor plants to keep us healthy when we're stuck inside?

It's long been known that plants can absorb toxins and improve indoor air quality. More recent studies suggest other benefits to our health. Perhaps we can consider indoor plants as more than merely beautiful decor.

During a series of experiments, researchers calculated plants could reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) – a common pollutant – by as much as 20 per cent in some conditions. For example, a poorly ventilated small office (15 m³) with high levels of air pollution would need about five houseplants to reduce NO₂ levels by around 20 per cent. In a larger space (100 m³), the effect would be smaller – 3.5 per cent reduction. However, more plants could be added to increase the impact. While these calculations are accurate, the exact mechanism of how plants reduce NO₂ levels remains a mystery.

Plant microbiome or microorganisms (bacteria and fungi) also need to be better understood. The bacteria and fungi living on the plant and in its soil can help remove airborne pollutants and offer certain properties to enrich our own good health. However, we don't know enough to differentiate which microbial species are helpful or harmful (some may trigger allergies or other health issues).

Another recent study found our immune systems are enhanced by a plant's effect on our skin microbiota. 'Green walls' installed in offices significantly increased skin lactobacilli and gammaproteobacteria, which are linked to decreased inflammation and effective immune regulation.

To date, there are several plants recommended for their ability to enhance our good health and help 'clean' indoor air: peace lily, Boston fern, asparagus fern, corn plant, golden pothos, Areca palm, lady palm, bamboo palm, dwarf date palm, rubber plant, Ficus Alii, Ficus tree, purple heart, dracaena, philodendron, and many others. Some ivies and the Spider Plant are also suggested. However, more evidence is needed to verify the extent of each plant's effectiveness.

If you don't have plants at home or in the office, there's good evidence to consider buying a plant or two. And they can also serve as a reminder to spend some time outside! |

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Eve Lees has been active in the health & fitness industry since 1979. Currently, she is a Freelance Health Writer for several publications and speaks to business and private groups on various health topics. www.artnews-healthnews.com

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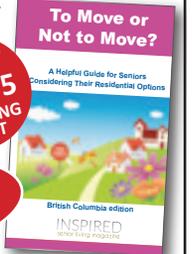
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VOTING RESPONSIBLY



Living
on purpose

by LAURIE MUELLER

One election season in the community in which I was living, there was a race that had two candidates vying for the top job. One candidate had proven skills for the position and the other candidate had an excellent marketing team. The one with the marketing team won by a healthy margin. Their term in office, however, was fraught with disaster. They didn't make a second term.

My friend, Pat Nichol, who wrote the column, 'Courageous & Outrageous,' in this spot for many years, would often tell people: "It's your privilege and your responsibility to get out and vote." Each election, she would volunteer to drive people to the voting booth.

I want to add to Pat's sage advice: Do your homework and vote responsibly.

After one election, I walked into my place of business, downhearted at the results of the election. A staff member and new Canadian told me happily that they had voted, and their candidate won!

"How did you decide on which way to vote?" I asked.

"Oh, that was easy! I just voted for the top name on the ballot."

This isn't a joke. After we had a discussion, I offered to help them research the candidates in the next election, so they could make their choice from facts rather than alphabetical positioning.

How do you make your election decisions? We have all lived long enough to remember both favourable and unfavourable results. We may not always get the candidate of our

choosing, but I know when I vote I have done my part by doing my homework and considering the candidates as if they were applying for a position in my organization.

If you're not sure where to learn more about perspective representatives, here are a few places to start:

1. Get a full list of the election candidates.
2. Check out the candidates' internet presence through their website, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter.

If you're not comfortable navigating online, ask a friend or family member for assistance.

3. Attend the public forums offered.
4. Listen to others in the community. Ask those you trust who their choices are and why. Of course, you can do the opposite, as well. Find out from people you disagree with who they are voting for (if they're willing to share) and do more research on their favoured candidate.
5. Watch or attend council meetings throughout the year.
6. Create a set of important questions you can ask each candidate. Include specific questions about what is happening in your community and broader questions that encompass overarching issues. For example: "Will you support the development proposal coming to Council this winter at (address)? Why or why not?" "What is your stance on houses with odd numbers being mandated to be painted purple?"
7. If you cannot meet the candidate in person, call their office to ask your questions.
8. If they are an incumbent, check their record on how often they attended meetings, as well as their stance on various issues.

On October 15th during the BC municipal elections, join me in voting responsibly. |

Laurie Mueller, M.Ed is retired and lives in Victoria with her husband, Helmuth. She recently published *The Ultimate Guide on What to Do When Someone You Love Dies* on Amazon. To reach Laurie: laurie@lauriemconsulting.com or www.lauriemconsulting.com or on Facebook.

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New Year's in Spokane	Dec 29	6 days	\$2335
New Year's in Vancouver (EB)	Dec 30	4 days	\$1560
Caribbean Cruise & Panama Canal (EB)	Jan 22	16 days from	\$6025
Ice Hotel & Quebec Winter Carnival (EB)	Feb 10	6 days from	\$3540
Banff Springs Hotel (EB)	Feb 19	7 days from	\$2995
Trans-Atlantic Cruise to Spain (EB)	Apr 5	21 days from	\$7195
Machu Picchu & Lake Titicaca (EB)	Apr 10	20 days	\$10,685

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