

The itinerary

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Antoni Gaudi's Sagrada Familia church  
AP/Manu Fernandez

See Barcelona on the cheap

Barcelona is beautiful, the food is fantastic, and while you can drop a lot of money there, many of the city's world-famous attractions are absolutely free. Don't leave without seeing the work of architect Antoni Gaudi, including the massive church La Sagrada Familia, still under construction nearly 90 years after his death. Gaudi's strange and whimsical park, Parc Guell, is known for its undulating tiled seats and fairy-tale turrets. The city is also home to several Gaudi-designed apartment complexes, such as La Pedrera, and there are Gaudi lampposts on Plaza Real.

— The Associated Press

Deal: Enjoy Paris in winter

Astotel Hotels, a collection of 14 independent properties in Paris, is offering savings of up to 25 percent for stays through Jan. 19. For example, at the Hotel George Opera, two guests pay from \$111 a night, a rate that includes breakfast, a one-hour river cruise, Wi-Fi and afternoon soft drinks. The usual price starts at \$149. Info: [www.astotel.com/uk](http://www.astotel.com/uk).

— The Washington Post



A sign marks Mountains-to-Sea Trail.  
AP/Jonathan Drew

Hit the trails in North Carolina

RALEIGH, N.C. — One day, hikers will be able to step on a trail near one of Appalachia's highest peaks and follow an off-road path all the way to the Atlantic Ocean. This year, North Carolina officials say they hope to make more headway on the 1,000-mile Mountains-to-Sea State Trail by commissioning a master plan, and a nonprofit group is working on a hiker's guide. So far, 600 miles of trail have been completed. The nonprofit Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail says hikers are already completing the journey by following country roads where trails haven't been built. <http://www.ncmst.org>.

— The Associated Press



Old Faithful erupts in Yellowstone.  
AP/Craig Mellish

Fun fact

**Geysers have their own app**  
Yellowstone National Park fans can get a heads up on when Old Faithful and five other geysers are set to erupt thanks to a new app available for smartphones and tablets. Yellowstone has the largest concentration of active geysers in the world. The geyser app also features a link to a webcam so people can view live eruptions of Old Faithful and other nearby geysers. The National Park Service geysers app is available in the Google Play and Apple app stores.

— The Associated Press

Cruise



The Star Flyer is one of three ships in the Star Clippers fleet, all patterned after 19th-century clipper ships. Special to the Star-Telegram/Debbra Dunning Brouillette

Stow away

Seven nights on a clipper in the Mediterranean isn't enough, couple finds

By **Debbra Dunning Brouillette**  
Special to the Star-Telegram

BALEARIC ISLANDS, CORSICA AND FRANCE — Mediterranean blue had been nothing more than a one-dimensional color on a paint chart for me until it came to life vividly during a seven-night cruise aboard the Star Flyer, one of three tall ships in the Star Clippers fleet. Sailing through two of Spain's Balearic Islands, we hit the French island of Corsica, St. Tropez on the French Riviera, followed by the tiny principality of Monaco.

An earlier Star Clippers excursion through six of the Caribbean's Windward Islands on a ship called the Royal Clipper had taught me that I loved the small sailing ship experience. Smaller vessels like ours manage ports of call that many larger ships aren't able to visit, plus it's a more intimate arrangement with the top deck's nightly raising of the sails and the camaraderie with other passengers.

A winter email invitation to sail this way again — only in the Mediterranean Sea instead of the Caribbean — was well-timed, as the dull, brown landscape around my home routinely inspires dreams of blue seas and sandy shores.

This time my traveling companion was my husband, and



Palma's massive Gothic cathedral dominates the city's skyline. Special to the Star-Telegram/Debbra Dunning Brouillette

**When we made it to the massive cathedral, which took 300 years to build — it did not disappoint.**

we started our journey in Palma, the capital city of Mallorca, largest of the Balearic Islands in both area and population. We arrived a day early to explore the old city before boarding the ship, and I especially wanted to see Palma's cathedral, a magnificent example of Gothic architecture that dominates the city's skyline.

First, we had a bon voyage meal at Portixol Hotel's restaur-

ant, recommended for its food and an outdoor setting overlooking the sea. The next morning, we strolled through the Santa Catalina Market, observing the busy crowd of locals purchasing fresh vegetables, fruits, meats and fish.

And when we made it to the massive cathedral, which took 300 years to build, it did not disappoint. Completed in 1601, its 144-foot central nave is

higher than Paris's Notre Dame Cathedral, while its stained-glass Rose Window is the largest round window in the world.

Getting comfortable

By late afternoon, we were welcomed aboard the Star Flyer and mingled with other arriving guests in the open-air Tropical Bar. The international mix on our sailing included passengers from 10 countries; Americans made up less than 20 percent of the total. Among the ship's 72 crew, eight countries were represented.

As the first in the Star Clippers' fleet, the Star Flyer was launched in 1991 and has a maximum capacity of 170 passengers. Its sister ship, the Star Clipper, followed in 1992. In 2001, the larger, 227-passenger Royal Clipper set sail.

Cabins are efficiently designed with adequate closets and underberd storage areas, but there is no need to overpack; a casual atmosphere prevails aboard ship. At dinner, men are asked to wear long pants and collared shirts but jackets are not required. Sundresses, skirts or slacks are recommended for women. Daywear can include shorts, capris, casual tops, T-shirts and swimsuits with cover-ups.

Evening meals include a **More on CRUISE, 10E**

West Baden Springs offers restorative stay

■ The historic Indiana property is a National Landmark Hotel.

By **Kathy Witt**  
Special to the Tribune News Service

When you round the bend in the road and spy a massive, magnificent dome partially encircled by towers, you're likely to feel like you're in Europe. In fact, it's really Hoosier National Forest in West Baden, Ind. And you're eyeing what was once called the "Eighth Wonder of the World."

West Baden Springs Hotel has a pedigree that reaches back 160 years to a time when it was built as a respite for those wishing to take advantage of the alleged healing powers of the area's mineral springs.

Designed to evoke Germany's world-famous thermal spa, Baden-Baden, this intriguing southern Indiana hotel in its early years had an opera house, a two-deck pony and bicycle track, a full-size baseball field and a reputation as a sophisticated resort where the hoi polloi would take to the so-called Sprudel Baths to restore and rejuvenate their health.

When the 1855 structure burned in 1901, builder Lee Sinclair decided it was time to erect his dream resort — a circular building topped with the world's largest free-spanning dome and decorated in the manner of the grand spas of Europe. Completed in 1902, the new hotel wowed with this engineering marvel, which topped an atrium stretching 200 feet in diameter.

Today, this National Landmark Hotel



Construction of the West Baden Springs Hotel was completed in 1902. French Lick Resorts via TNS

and member of Preferred Hotels and Resorts is the recipient of countless accolades, including being named the No. 1 hotel in Indiana in both 2013 and 2014 by *U.S. News & World Report*. It is known for its stunning elegance and architecture, Euro-glam rooms — with no two exactly alike — and fine and casual dining and spa services, among them, the once-famous Sprudel Baths.

New to the resort is the return of trolley service between West Baden and French Lick. Back in 1903, when dirt roads and horse-drawn carriages were the norm, the arrival of an electric trolley was a marvel that both fascinated and delighted. Like

the guests of more than a century ago, today's visitors can catch the streetcar to make the mile-long jaunt between the two resorts.

And now, with a new depot built at West Baden Springs Resort, adjacent to the gardens and near the original entrance and another near French Lick Casino, the trolley runs seven days a week.

The resort remains a respite for those wishing to escape and rejuvenate. Loll about the spa. Do laps in the lap pool or slip into the hot tub. Visit the French Lick Springs Resort next door for Vegas-style casino gaming or bowling. Play a round or **More on INDIANA, 11E**



# Cruise

Continued from 9E

multi-course menu with several options; sample plates are on display in the Piano Bar. Other meals are served buffet-style, along with eggs made to order at breakfast and carved meats at lunch.

The variety and presentation of meals, which included lobster and baked Alaska on one evening, was excellent, just as I remembered from my previous Star Clippers cruise. Typically, guests gravitate to the Tropical Bar after dinner for drinks, dancing and conversation. Entertainment is low-key and loosely structured, with a weekly fashion show, talent shows and trivia games. Local entertainers come aboard one night during the week.

Fitness activities include morning gymnastics and watersports activities at beaches visited throughout the week, where guests can snorkel, swim, or use the sunfish sailboats and sea kayaks. And lest folks feel they've gotten too far away from it all, Internet access cards are available for purchase.

## Menorca and a day at sea

Upon arrival in Menorca, second largest of the Balearic Islands, we walked into town hoping to find a taxi. It was Sunday and we'd been told they would be hard to find, so when taxi driver Luis appeared, he seemed heaven-sent.

Between his broken English and my high school Spanish, we were able to communicate as he led us on a tour through Menorca's countryside. Our first stop was Binibeca, a small village overlooking a picture-perfect harbor, where we strolled on cobblestone streets, admiring white-

washed villas with tile roofs that reminded me of the Greek Isles, contrasting starkly with the brilliant blue sky.

We left the coast to reach Mount Toro, the highest point on the island at nearly 1,200 feet, from which we had a 360-degree view of the island. It is also the site of the Sanctuary of the Virgin of El Toro, considered to be the spiritual center of Menorca. It was built around 1670 on the site of a 13th-century shrine.

Luis built in a surprise stop at his friend's dairy farm, where cheeses have been produced from unpasteurized cow and goat milk for five generations. While we weren't able to taste the local Xoriguer gin or try Menorcan mayonnaise — invented here in the 1700s — sampling these special Binibeca Mahon artisan cheeses and getting a behind-the-scenes look at the Alcaiduset dairy operation more than made up for it.

Back on the ship, we were told we had 240 nautical miles to travel before we would reach the southern coast of Corsica, which meant there was plenty of time to relax during a day at sea. This also turned out to be the day passengers were invited to climb the mast to the Crow's Nest, a lookout perched 80 feet above the deck.

I'd missed the chance on my first Star Clippers voyage, so I made sure my husband and I were among the first in line to be harnessed in. After climbing to the lookout platform, we were hooked onto a safety wire to enjoy the view, a world of blue on blue, blending sea and sky as far as the eye could see.

Later in the afternoon, we boarded one of the ship's tenders to circle our four-masted ship under full sail, which is always one of the week's most anticipated photo opportuni-

ties. The sea was almost dead calm as we photographed the ship.

## Playing tourist in Bonifacio, Ajaccio and Calvi

Passengers congregated on the top deck as we neared Corsica's southern tip into Bonifacio.

Its chalk-white limestone cliffs, separated from the Italian island of Sardinia by a 7-mile-wide strait, are among the island's most distinctive sights, in contrast to its mountainous granite interior.

Leaving the ship, we walked past an impressive row of yachts to the tourist train, which transported us from Bonifacio's Old Town to the upper part of the city, built on the site of a ninth-century citadel. We walked through the battlements of the reconstructed fortress, and then along the wall of the medieval city, where buildings appeared to teeter on the edges of the cliffs.

After seizing the opportunity to descend to ocean level via the legendary King Aragon's steps, a steep stairway of 187 steps cut into the limestone cliffs, we stopped at a cafe near the fortress for a glass of wine and a fortifying snack of local cheeses, crusty bread and fig preserves before walking back to the harbor down a sloping set of steps.

The star of our second Corsican port is Napoleon Bonaparte, born in Ajaccio in 1769.

Bonaparte's name graces everything from the airport to a hotel, a street, shops, bars, and even a gelateria. The French first gained control of Corsica the year of Bonaparte's birth. Before that, it had spent more than 500 years as an Italian Genoese republic. A brief period of independence followed, but since 1796, when Napoleon moved in with his army, Corsica has been a depart-



The Star Flyer approaches Bonifacio, on the southern tip of Corsica. Special to the Star-Telegram/Debbra Dunning Brouillette

ment of France.

From the top of a double-decker sightseeing bus, we passed multiple monuments to the ex-emperor and military leader on our way out of the city. Soon, we reached the nearby Sanguinaires Islands, a popular resort location for vacationers from the French mainland, then toured his birthplace, a Bonaparte family home until the 1920s and now a national museum.

While Bonaparte left his mark on Ajaccio, our final Corsican port claims another major historical figure as its own. Although still in dispute, Calvi is widely believed to have been the birthplace of Christopher Columbus. A statue at the site of his presumed home commemorates his birth in 1436, with one wall remaining within the 15th-century citadel.

Given a full day in port, we explored the town and citadel, then toured two medieval villages in the Balagne region north of Calvi, which is known for its figs, olive oil, and wine.

The first was Sant'Antonino, a ninth-century village said to be the oldest inhabited village in Corsica and officially classified as one of the most beautiful villages in France. Its hill-top location at an elevation of 1,800 feet is often compared to an eagle's nest, as it offers bird's-eye views of the Balagne plain and the bay of Calvi.

Pigna, one of several villages on the Balagne Craft Trail, was our second all-too-brief stop.

Its distinctive blue-shuttered stone buildings line narrow streets branching out from a central courtyard, and we spied artisans' workshops offering pottery, music boxes, woodcarvings and other traditional crafts. I purchased a small ceramic plate incised with a fish design as a memento.

## And finally, St. Tropez and Monaco

Artists displaying their paintings lined the walk-



Sant'Antonino, the oldest inhabited village in Corsica, dates to the ninth century. Special to the Star-Telegram/Debbra Dunning Brouillette

ways as we entered St. Tropez, our final port of call. We left the waterfront's touristy fray of shops and restaurants to walk up a hill to its citadel, built in 1602.

Next, we wandered the streets in search of the Brigitte Bardot Museum, but its location remained elusive, much like Bardot, now 80, who reportedly resides in St. Tropez in seclusion. The '50s sex symbol, who came here to star in the 1956 film *And God Created Woman*, put the former fishing village on the map, and topless sunbathing became popular here after being featured in the film.

As we left each port, "I wish we'd had more time" became my mantra, and Monaco was no different.

We had just one day to spend sightseeing in the world's second smallest country — often compared in size to New York's Central Park — so we took a tourist train ride to get our bearings, then headed out on foot to return to the points of interest. We squeezed in visits to the Grand Casino, the Prince's Palace and the Oceanographic Museum. Eventually, the sun neared the horizon, and we found a harbor-side bistro to share a delicious meal of spaghetti with pesto sauce.

The Star Flyer's masts could be seen in the distance. Passengers would now be on board, ready to begin their own Mediterranean journey.

From afar, we bid the next batch of lucky tourists

adieu, emptied our glasses, and made our way to the train station.

## If you go

All three Star Clippers ships sail in both the western and eastern Mediterranean from April through October. Cruises booked by Jan. 30 will receive early booking discounts that take up to 40 percent off regular rates. Early booking rates on the seven-day Mediterranean cruises begin at \$1,575. On Caribbean sailings, the savings rate includes free round-trip air and taxes from select air-gateway cities (including Dallas). A downloadable 2015-2016 Europe/Caribbean brochure, with information about the ships, destinations and prices, is available at [www.starclippers.com](http://www.starclippers.com). Travelers may also sign up for Star Clippers' newsletter to receive special offers and discounts.

## Currency

Although all on-board purchases will be covered by your credit card, and most shops and restaurants also accept major credit cards, you'll still need euros for miscellaneous purchases in port. Visit the currency exchange at the airport and take your ATM card with you in case you need more cash. Note: Many credit cards add a foreign transaction fee of 1 to 3 percent to your purchases.

## Luggage

Eliminate worries about delayed or lost luggage, as well as possible fees, by packing light and carrying your luggage. Traveling with carry-on luggage also speeds time spent in U.S. Customs on the return, as there are no bags to be collected before getting in line.

## Souvenirs

For inexpensive gifts in Corsica, look for Eye of St. Lucie shell jewelry and products covered with cork from local trees, including plates, pitchers, bottles and bowls. If you visit Pigna near Calvi on the Balagne Craft Trail, seek out the Ceramica for beautiful blue pottery. Corsican foods, including honey, fig preserves, olive oils and wine, are tempting purchases if you are willing to check a bag on the return trip.



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# Passports

Special arrangements have been made with the District Clerk's Passport Section to be at the show. Be sure to bring proof of U.S. citizenship, identification, front and back copy of identification, valid Social Security number, and two separate checks for application fees; \$37 (includes the photo fee) for the Tarrant County District Clerk and \$110 for the Department of State (Adult Fees). You must apply in person. For questions prior to the event, please call 817-884-2520.

*Sunday, January 11, 2015*  
*Will Rogers Memorial Center*  
*Amon G. Carter Exhibits Hall*  
*3401 W. Lancaster Ave.,*  
*Fort Worth, Texas*  
*10:30am - 4:30pm*  
*[www.star-telegramweddings.com](http://www.star-telegramweddings.com)*

*Fashion Show by Susan Huston:*  
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