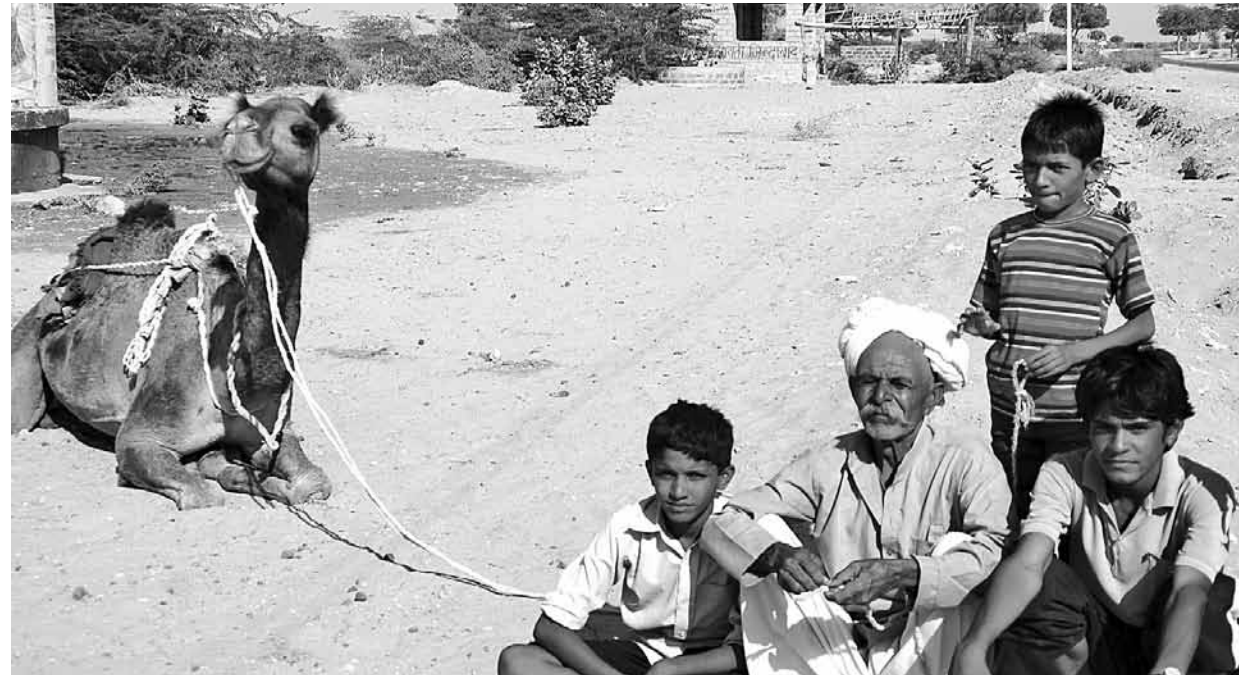




LEARNING EXPERIENCE: You can be a dolphin trainer for a day and learn about the care and training of dolphins at Vallarta Adventures in Riviera Nayarit. MARK SISSONS



PRIZED POSSESSIONS: A camel herder tends his children and his camel closely. Pushkar hosts an annual Camel Festival. LISA SIM/THE EPOCH TIMES

Creative Travel in 2010

By **TANYA HARRISON**
Epoch Times Staff

The lunar New Year is upon us! It officially started on Feb. 14. There are those who will participate in a joyous 15-day-long celebration with family get-togethers and Lantern Festival fare. For those who follow a Western tradition and celebrated and made resolutions on Jan. 1, maybe more travel was one of them.

I don't know about anyone else, but I didn't make it to all the travel destinations as I'd hoped for 2009. I set my eye on Delaware, Connecticut, Idaho, Maine, New Hampshire, and Washington state, and the territories of Puerto Rico and American Samoa to complete my experience of the United States and its territories. Although I visited many places, I only managed to quickly pass through Idaho.

No more New Year's travel resolutions for me! This year, I will just have to go where the wind takes me and enjoy the locale offerings.

EPOCH TIMES TRAVEL IN 2009 So, where did The Epoch Times take you in 2009? We featured many United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) sites found in Greece, France, and Vietnam, as well as other exotic places. We also featured eco-travel and sustainable travel from Kenya to Switzerland.

There were historic jaunts to Berlin, Germany, and Louisiana in the United States as well as cultural explorations from Acadia Canada to Easter Island to India. We invited you to places in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. We took you to an animal sanctuary in Costa Rica and played with dolphins in Mexico.

We explored the bright beauty of cherry blossoms in Japan and the rugged beauty of arctic landscapes in Norway. In 2009, adventurers also chased the Northern Lights and went in search of polar bears. Every

week we brought you new adventures in travel.

WHERE TO GO IN 2010 What would travel in 2010 look like? Where would people want to go?

In 2009 adventurers also chased the Northern Lights and went in search of polar bears.

I thought about all the Top Whatever lists of places to go. There are so many places to go—and search for—so, I decided to limit myself to the United States. Beyond that, there are so many lists, so how do you choose? Of course, you can choose by what you want to do—that is, camp or hike, enjoy the beach, and so on. But what if you could choose a place that has it all? Or, at least, has most of it all. I decided to have fun with this idea.

I started with some basic criteria that interest me: eco or green, romantic, arts and culture, the best travel deals, top botanic gardens, and most walk-able. I threw in best retirement, just in case, in order to check out places where I might want to stay in the future. There were many other great criteria, but you get the idea.

Green reputation was determined by a Popular Science list that rates cities on their source of electric power, transportation options, green living or lifestyle, and recycling (both perspective and practice). Most romantic kind of speaks for itself. Travel deals were determined by one Web site as places with "low rates, discounts, affordable entertainment, and overall appeal." Best botanic gardens and most

walk-able cities offer the best and most sights within reasonable human-propelled range. Best retirement places featured more for the money, amenities and, well, retirement facilities and health care.

MAKING A LIST

So, what if you crossed a top green city with a most walk-able city with the most romantic one having the most arts and culture? Well, San Francisco took the top spot. That's the place to go! And if you want to add a side trip or two while you're in California, you can check out one of the Top 10 botanic gardens at the University of California-Davis Arboretum or take a trip down to Claremont, Calif., which is hailed as one of the Top 10 retirement cities.

On the way down to Claremont you can take in Los Angeles, which also made it on a top arts and culture list. This works great!

Then I thought about cost—very important these days. I crossed top value with top arts and culture with top botanic gardens with most walk-able. I got Washington, D.C. And I realized there is the added plus of the historical element if I wanted to increase my Top 10 lists.

But I was curious if I could match even more. So I crossed top value with top arts and culture with top botanic gardens with most walk-able with most green. Phew! I got, dare I say it—Chicago. I've really warmed up to this cross-listing destination search because, let's face it, it would be impossible to visit every place that ends up on a Top 10 list.

The best places to travel are where your heart and interests call you.

Unfortunately, I was unable to comfortably link travel to Hawaii, one of my personal favorite destinations, with any more than two of my lists, namely, most romantic and top botanic gardens. I was also unable to match best retirement cities with anything else. I guess I'll just have to make those destinations singular interest trips.

What is the bottom line for travel? The best places to travel are where your heart and interests call you. With a good Internet search, or amenable travel agent, you will find what suits you. May your travel adventures be creative and inspiring in 2010.

What is your 2010 travel resolution? Share the adventure with us! Write to: submissions@epochtimes.com Attn: Travel



CHICAGO MAKES THE 'LIST': The Heritage Garden at the 400-acre Chicago Botanic Gardens displays plants arranged by origin. The pyramid has sides covered in red and green Joseph's Coat, watered by a filtration system running in pipes through the structure. SHARON KILARSKI/THE EPOCH TIMES

The Epoch Times Geography Guru™

"Growing your geography knowledge"

Quiz #255



GOING IT ALONE: The end of communism in Eastern Europe brought changes to the roster of nations. While East and West Germany reunited, Czechoslovakia split into two nations. Two former communist nation-states split into many new ones. Of the current nations listed below, which formerly were part of the USSR and which were part of Yugoslavia? Some listed below were part of neither.

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Albania | Bulgaria | Moldova |
| Armenia | Georgia | Montenegro |
| Azerbaijan | Latvia | Poland |
| Belarus | Lithuania | Serbia |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | Macedonia | Slovenia |

Read The Epoch Times next week for the answer!

Answer for Quiz #254

FRIENDLY BORDER: Canadian provinces and American border states. British Columbia—Idaho; Ontario—Michigan; Quebec—Vermont; Saskatchewan—North Dakota (Massachusetts, Oregon, and Wisconsin do not have land borders with Canada.)



EL JEM GEM: The amphitheater of El Jem in Tunisia is considered the third largest such historical vestige of the Roman Empire. OLIVIER CHARTRAND/THE EPOCH TIMES

Sudoku

Level: *hard*

			8		1	5		
6	8			2				
1					5	7		
		4			7			5
9								6
2			1			4		
		3	4					9
				9			4	7
		6	2		8			

Fill in the boxes using numbers between 1 and 9 so that each column, each row, and each 3x3 square contain all nine numbers only once.

Exclusive Epoch Times puzzle by Sudoku Works. Sudoku puzzles and software at: www.SudokuWorks.com.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4	9	6	2	7	8	3	5	1
8	2	1	5	9	3	6	4	7
5	7	3	4	1	6	8	2	9
2	6	7	1	5	9	4	3	8
9	5	8	3	4	2	1	7	6
3	1	4	6	8	7	2	9	5
1	3	2	9	6	5	7	8	4
6	8	5	2	4	9	1	3	7
7	4	9	8	3	1	5	6	2

This week's solution