Lake Michigan’s MANITOU ISLANDS

The lighthouse on South Manitou Island is visible across the choppy water of Lake Michigan as visitors approach the dock on board the Mishe–Mokwa ferryboat based in Leland, Mich. The scenic shoreline also is home to a shipwreck. The Francisco Morazan was a Liberian freighter which ran aground during a storm on Nov. 29, 1960. Scenic hiking trails on the eight-square-mile south island lead to the lighthouse, shipwreck, grove of giant cedars and high dune bluffs. (Story on page 2B.)
Lake Michigan’s Manitou Islands

Indian legend adds to mystery of unique hiking experience

By Mary Ann Garber

SOUTH MANITOU ISLAND—As far as the eye can see, the choppy waves of Lake Michigan blend with the brilliant blue skyline in every direction. The summer sun shines brightly on the hot, sandy beaches dotted with driftwood, sparkles on the water and casts shadows along the wooded pathways that crisscross South Manitou Island. High above the scenic shoreline, tourists fill the circular deck of the historic lighthouse and look out at the Great Lake which separates Michigan and Wisconsin. Then their gazes shift to the curving landscape that stretches out around them and resolutely defines the resilience of this eight-square-mile mass of earth and rock—a mere 5,280 acres—in the midst of so much water.

How did this island—and the more desolate North Manitou a few miles away—somehow rise above the surface of mighty Lake Michigan, they wonder, then defy the relentless ravages of wind and water for millions of years? And how did the islands become populated with wildlife like foxes, rabbits, chipmunks and snakes? Also perplexing, why did the former settlers choose to farm there and withstand the bitter winters for several generations then eventually decide to give up their quiet lifestyle on the island in favor of the busyness of the mainland? Perhaps even more surprising, how did the Indians find the islands in the first place hundreds of years ago with only canoes for transportation?

A well-known Algonquin Indian legend claims that a mother bear and her two cubs were forced to flee a forest fire in what is now Wisconsin so they swam across the Manitou Passage, an international waterway that is Lake Michigan. But the waves were too large for the exhausted cubs and the shore was too far away. They drowned not far from land. Grief-stricken, the mother bear continued her lonely vigil until her death.

Where the cubs perished, the Great Spirit Manitou created two islands, the legend explains. Then Manitou marked the mother’s resting place with a huge mound of sand that became known as Sleeping Bear Dune. Science tells us that massive glaciers formed the two islands, the Straights of Mackinac and dune-covered shorelines about 50,000 years ago, but the Indian legend adds to the mystery and romance of the rugged region.

Now, the bear-shaped dune and the twin islands are popular tourist attractions as part of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in northwestern Michigan. Ferryboats depart from Leland, Mich., daily during the summer months for the 90-minute cruise to the south island across the Manitou Passage, an international shipping lane in the Great Lake that is guarded by the North Manitou Shoal Light to prevent shipwrecks.

Another lighthouse, built in 1871 to replace earlier warning beacons constructed in 1840 and 1858, rises high above the eastern shore of South Manitou Island. These lighthouses saved many a ship’s crew from coming too close to the shallow waters around the island over the decades. But on the cold and stormy night of Nov. 29, 1966, the captain of the Francisco Morazan, a freighter from Liberia, failed to safely navigate past the south island and ran his cargo vessel aground along its southern beach.

All of the crew members were rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard, but the shipwreck still lies rusting offshore more than 50 years later, home only to the birds that happily nest there. Day visitors and overnight campers love to hike the island’s wooded pathways to take pictures of what is left of the steel freighter off the southern shoreline.

Hikers can walk around the circular deck just below the lighthouse beacon during a guided tour offered by a National Park Service ranger. From that lofty vantage point, they can see the South Manitou Island shoreline and the expanses of blue water that is Lake Michigan.

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Hikers enjoy exploring the Coast Guard Station established in 1901, now operated by the National Park Service. Many tourists also climb the steep winding steps of the lighthouse to get a bird’s-eye view of the island and lake. Others walk across the island to see the grove of giant virgin white cedars and gaze in awe at the massive North American champion cedar, which measures 17.6 feet in circumference, stands more than 90 feet tall and dates back to before Italian explorer Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492 while on an expedition for Spain.

Abandoned farms on the south island are reminders of a time when the German immigrants worked hard to stake out and maintain a livelihood in the wilderness of the northern Midwest even though winters on the islands were brutally cold and the ice cover on Lake Michigan kept them isolated for months. The settlers built a school and general store on the island, farmed the soil and set aside land for several cemeteries. A succession of lighthouse keepers kept watch for ships passing by and maintained the huge safety beacon at Sandy Point near Crescent Bay.

In 1970, the federal government legally acquired the islands and incorporated them into Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore to preserve their wilderness beauty. Key points on a map of the south island are the lighthouse and residence at Sandy Point, boat dock in Crescent Bay, weather station campground, Francisco Morazan shipwreck, Valley of the Giants grove of cedars, huge perched sandstone on the western shoreline, Florence Lake, and the ruins of four farmhouses and a cabin.

North Manitou Island is about three times larger than the south island and nearly twice as long. It’s also more desolate and has fewer amenities that appeal to many tourists. Most visitors will prefer hiking the south island, where the park ranger will help you figure out your itinerary and make arrangements for the best day of your visit.

There’s just one catch to visiting the scenic south island. The Manitou Island Transit, which operates the ferry from Leland, operates on a very strict schedule: if you miss the ferry, you’ll be stranded overnight! Unless tourists are planning to camp there, the thought of getting left behind on the island certainly adds to the excitement and fun of exploring its amazing, one-of-a-kind sights that make it a memorable vacation destination well worth returning to on another hot summer day.
Sat. 5 p.m.-midnight, games, rides, food. Information: 812-923-5785

May 27

June 1-2
St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish, 1401 N. Bosrat Ave., Indianapolis. “Summerfest,” Fri. 5-11 p.m., Sat. 3-11 p.m., Sun. 11:30 a.m.-5 p.m., rides, games, food, entertainment. Information: 317-375-8352.

June 3
St. Rita Church, 1733 Dr. Andrew J. Brown Ave., Indianapolis. African Catholic Mass, 3 p.m. Information: 317-632-9349.

June 7-9
St. Simon the Apostle Parish, 8155 Oaklondon Road, Indianapolis. Parish festival, Thurs. 5-11 p.m., Fri. 5 p.m.-midnight, Sat. 2 p.m.-midnight, rides, games, entertainment, food, $10 cover charge includes food and tickets. Information: 317-826-6000.

June 7-10
Our Lady of the Greenwood Parish, 335 S. Meridian St., Greenwood Parish festival, Thurs. 5-11 p.m., Fri. 5 p.m.-midnight, Sat. 2 p.m.-midnight, noon-9 p.m., rides, games, children’s games, food. Information: 317-888-2861.

June 8

June 11-21
St. Jude Parish, 5353 McFarland Road, Indianapolis. “Summer Festival;” Thurs. and Fri. 5 p.m.-closing, Sat. 4 p.m.-closing, Thurs. Father Carlson’s dinner. Fri. Lelia’s Italian food, Sat. fried chicken dinner, food, games, rides. Information: 317-786-4371.

June 22-23
Christ the King Parish, 1827 Kessler Blvd., E. Drive, Indianapolis. “Summer Social,” Fri.-Sat. 5 p.m.-5 a.m., food, music, games, entertainment. Information: 317-255-3666.

June 24
St. Maurice Parish, Decatur County, St. Maurice exit off I-74 then north four miles. Parish picnic, 10 a.m. Mass, chicken and roast beef dinners, mock turtle soup, sandwiches, games, country store, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Information: 317-852-4237.

July 4

July 5
St. Mary Parish, 317 N. New Jersey St., Indianapolis. “Fourth of July, Ole!’ Festival;” music, food, downtown fireworks, 5-10 p.m. Information: 317-637-3983.

July 8
Harrison County Fairgrounds, 341 Capitol Ave., Corydon. St. Joseph Parish, parish picnic, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m., food, games. Information: 812-738-2742.

July 12-14
Holy Spirit Parish, 7243 E. 10th St., Indianapolis. Parish festival, Thurs. 5-11 p.m., Fri. 5 p.m.-midnight, Sat. 5 p.m.-midnight, food, music, entertainment. Information: 317-353-9404.

July 13

July 14
St. Mary Parish, Navelton, 7500 Navelton Road, Floyds Knobs. 5K Chicken Fun Run/Walk, 8 a.m. Information: 812-923-5419 or www.stmarynavelton.com.

July 14-15
St. John the Baptist Parish, 25743 State Road 1, Dover. “Summer Festival;” Sat. 6 p.m.-midnight, Sun. 11 a.m.-9 p.m., Sun. chicken dinner, food, entertainment. Information: 812-576-4302.

July 15
St. Mary Parish, Navelton, 7500 Navelton Road, Floyds Knobs. Parish picnic, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., chicken dinner, games, quilts. Information: 812-923-5419.

July 19-21
St. Christopher Parish, 5301 W. 16th St., Indianapolis. “Summer Festival;” Thurs. 5-10 p.m., Fri. 5-10 p.m., Sat. noon-10 p.m., food, games. Information: 317-241-6314.

July 22-28
Jackson County Fairgrounds, Brownstown. St. Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Providence Parish, Jackson County Fair, food booth 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Information: 812-522-5304.

July 28
St. Mary Parish, 777 S. 11th St., Mitchell. Hog roast and yard sale, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Information: 812-849-3570.

July 28-29
St. Martin Parish, 1044 Yorkridge Road, Yorkville. Parish festival, Sat. 5:30 p.m.-11:30 p.m., barbeque pork dinner, Sun. 11 a.m.-5 p.m., fried chicken dinner, food, games, music. Information: 812-623-3408.

July 29
St. Augustine Parish, 18020 Lafayette St., Leopold Parish picnic, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., fried chicken dinner, quilts, games. Information: 812-843-5143.

August 3-4
St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, 523 S. Merrill St., Fortville. Parish picnic, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., chicken and ham dinners, quilts. Information: 317-347-2326.

August 5
St. Bernard Parish, 7600 Highway 337, Frenchtown. Parish picnic, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., chicken, and ham dinners, quilts. Information: 317-357-5533.

August 11-12
St. Paul Parish, 9798 N. Dearrow Road, Guilford/ New Alscse. Parish festival, Sat. 5 p.m.-midnight, pork tenderloin dinner, music, Sun. 11 a.m.-6 p.m., chicken, and ham dinners, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Information: 812-623-1094.

August 12
St. Mary Parish, 2500 S. Mary’s Drive, Lanesville. Parish picnic, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Information: 812-952-2853.

August 17-18

August 17-18
St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, 466th and Illinois streets, Indianapolis. “Sausage Fest;” food, music, Fri. 6 p.m.-midnight, Sat. 6-30 p.m. Information: 317-253-4461.

August 19
St. Pius Parish, County Road 500 E, Emmann. Parish picnic, chicken dinner, mock turtle soup, games, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Information: 812-689-4244.

August 23-25
St. Ann Parish, 6350 Mooresville Road, Indianapolis. Parish festival, rides, games, food, 5-11 p.m. Information: 317-852-2809.

August 24-25
Prince of Peace Parish, 413 E. Second St., Madison. “Community Festival;” Father Michael Shawe Memorial Jr./Sr. High School, 201 W. State St., Fri. 5 p.m.-midnight, Sat. 5 p.m.-midnight, food, rides, games. Information: 812-265-4166.

August 25
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, 5692 N. Central Ave., Indianapolis. 5K Run/Walk, 9 a.m., $15 pre-registration, $45 pre-registration family of three or more, “Fall Kick-Off Fest;” food, music, games, movies, $1 adults, under 21 free, 4-11 p.m. Information: 317-257-2266.

Mount St. Francis Retreat Center, 101 St. Anthony Drive, Mount St. Francis. Picnic, 11 a.m.-midnight, chicken dinner, quilts, games. Information: 812-923-8817.
**FESTIVALS continued from page 38**

August 25-26
St. Mary Parish, 302 E. McKee St., Greensburg. Parish festival, Fri. adult night, 5:30 p.m., Sat. family picnic, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., chicken dinner, games. Information: 812-663-8427.

August 31-September 2
St. Joseph Parish, 1373 S. Mckley Ave., Indianapolis. “Fall Festival,” food, rides, games, Fri. 5 p.m.-1 a.m., Sat. 5-11 p.m., Sun. 3-11 p.m. Information: 317-244-9002.

August 31-September 3
Sacred Heart Parish, gymnasium, 558 Neboke St., Clinton. “Spaghetti Dinner,” 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Information: 765-832-8486.

September 2
St. John the Evangelist Parish, 9995 E. Base Road, Evansville. Parish festival, fried chicken and roast beef dinners, 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Information: 812-334-3880.

September 3

St. Peter Parish, 1207 East Road, Brookville. “Labor Day Festival,” 10 a.m.-7 p.m., country style chicken dinner, 10:45 a.m.-2:30 p.m., quilts, games. Information and reservations: 812-623-3670.

September 7
St. Anne Parish, 5267 N. Hamburger Road, Oldenburg. Turkey supper, 4:30-7:30 p.m. Information: 812-934-5854.

September 7-9
St. Mary Parish, 212 Washington St., North Vernon. Parish festival, rides, music, silent auction, dinners, Fri. 5 p.m.-midnight, Sat. 9 a.m.-midnight, Sun. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Information: 812-546-3604.

September 8

September 8-9
St. Michael Parish, 145 St. Michael Blvd., Brookville. “Fall Fest,” family style chicken dinner, Sat. 4-10 p.m., Sun. 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Information: 765-647-5462.

September 9
St. Margaret (Immaculate Conception) Parish, 512 N. Perkins St., Rushville. “Fall Festival,” music, dance, Sun. 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Information: 765-932-2388.

**Restaurant road trip**

Bonaparte’s Retreat serves tasty French and American cuisine

By Mary Ann Garber

NAPOLEON—Steamy, fragrant soups were a tasty choice for lunch at Bonaparte’s Retreat, a delicious theme restaurant in a historic building along U.S. 421 in scenic Ripley County.

Given the fact that I visited St. Mary Parish in Indianapolis before dining at a restaurant named for the famous emperor, it wasn’t a tough decision. I ordered a bowl of—what else?—homemade French onion soup slathered in gooey melted Gruyere cheese and topped with crozets.

A garden salad with bleu cheese dressing—I almost asked for French dressing—and a slice of fresh-baked cherry pie completed my meal in the charming restaurant and bar decorated with countless images of Napoleon.

I could have ordered the Napoleon, a hoagie bun filled with ham, roast beef and bacon. Or the Bonaparte, smoked ham and Swiss cheese layered on thick rye bread. Or the Josephine, chunky chicken salad served on a croissant. Or the Waterloo, a trendy grilled or crispy chicken wrap.

Or I could have dined on a variety of beef, pork and poultry entrees—made with meat from locally raised animals—or chosen Icelandic cod “seasoned your way.”

The waitress said the baby-back ribs are the house specialty—“moist and tender, lightly seasoned and slow-baked,” according to the menu—and the prime rib and butterfly shrimp are other favorites.

A large painting of Napoleon astride a white horse loomed over me while I enjoyed the aromatic soup on a cold November day. With all of Bonaparte’s images preserved in paintings and on china dishes displayed throughout the restaurant, I felt like I was being watched all the time so I made sure that I ate every bite.

Built about 1830, the building housed several businesses over the years and was even a stop on the Underground Railroad, one of a variety of hiding places for slaves as they made their way north to freedom during the 1800s.

Recently redecorated by owners Ron and Debbie Power, Bonaparte’s Retreat Restaurant and Lounge is home to a fascinating collection of Napoleon memorabilia that adds to the fun of dining there. (For more information about Bonaparte’s Retreat Restaurant and Lounge, call 812-852-4165.)
Sacred Pittsburgh
Churches help preserve history of unique Pennsylvania city

By Sean Gallagher

PITTSBURGH—Several beautiful views of Pittsburgh meet the eyes of visitors to Point State Park in the heart of this western Pennsylvania city. The park sits at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, and at the start of the Ohio River.

Tour boats often dock there to take sightseers up and down the city’s three rivers.

Across the Allegheny River are Heinz Field and PNC Park, the respective homes of the Pittsburgh Steelers, the city’s National Football League team, and the Pirates, its Major League Baseball club. And across the Monongahela River, tourists can see Mount Washington rise above the city and its metropolitan region of nearly 2 million people.

As visitors look at the mountain on the south side of Pittsburgh, a large church stands out at the top of it. It is St. Mary of the Mount Church. The prominence of this church built above Pittsburgh in a sense symbolizes the importance of the Catholic Church in the history of the city.

As the city’s population slowly grew, the Catholic Church grew with it. In the second half of the 19th century, Pittsburgh’s growth took off as the region’s steel and oil industries established bases there.

Prominent landmarks of the Church in Pittsburgh, including St. Mary of the Mount, date to that time period and are well worth a visit for Catholic tourists.

St. Mary of the Mount Parish, the boyhood home of Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington, was founded at the start of the city’s heyday in the 1870s. Its current church, which features many beautiful stained-glass windows, was dedicated in 1897.

Tourists can visit St. Mary of the Mount Church by riding the historic Duquesne Incline, which opened for service in 1877. This railroad track climbs the eastern face of Mount Washington, and has a total rise of 400 feet on a grade of 30 degrees.

The Incline is open year-round, and has a reasonable fair of $4.50 round trip for adults and $2.50 round trip for children ages 6-11.

Many restaurants offer scenic views of Pittsburgh in the neighborhood around Mount St. Mary Church.

St. Anthony’s Chapel in Pittsburgh is quite different from St. Mary of the Mount Church. It is built on the north side of the city instead of its south side, and is hidden in a residential neighborhood rather than perched atop a mountain.

Its calling card is unique with its claim that it houses more saints’ relics—at more than 4,200—than any other church in the world.

A part of Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Pittsburgh, St. Anthony’s Chapel was built on Troy Hill in the 1880s through the initiative and financial support of Father Suibert Mollinger, a Belgian-born priest who began ministering in western Pennsylvania during the late 1850s. Father Mollinger traveled to Europe several times between 1868 and 1892, and brought back scores of relics that many Church leaders in Germany, Italy and elsewhere wanted to safeguard in the U.S. for the future. At the time, they were concerned that political leaders might close churches there.

The relics, many of which came with authentication papers, are from saints who lived throughout the history of the Church. Today, the relics line the walls of St. Anthony’s Chapel in beautiful reliquaries inside walnut display cases.

The chapel is open daily, except for Fridays and holidays, from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m.

Between St. Anthony’s Chapel and St. Mary of the Mount Church stands historic St. Paul Cathedral in the middle of Pittsburgh. Dedicated in 1906, this massive church marked by its Gothic architecture is nearly 250 feet tall. The cost of construction surpassed $1 million more than a century ago.

The cathedral’s construction costs surpassed $1 million more than a century ago.

Above, historic St. Paul Cathedral in Pittsburgh features ornate Gothic spires. Dedicated in 1906, this massive church rises nearly 250 feet tall. The cathedral’s construction costs surpassed $1 million more than a century ago.

Left, the western Pennsylvania city of Pittsburgh sits at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, both of which form the Ohio River. The rivers and surrounding hills and mountains make Pittsburgh a beautiful tourist destination.

Prominent landmarks of the Church in Pittsburgh, including St. Mary of the Mount, date to that time period and are well worth a visit for Catholic tourists.

Sacred Pittsburgh
Churches help preserve history of unique Pennsylvania city

(For links to the websites of the churches mentioned in this article, log on to the website of the Diocese of Pittsburgh at www.dop Pitt.org)
SICILY—My initial impression of Sicily was, “What a haphazard rock.” How anyone could construct a huge island dropped into the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, or even establish a rich, thick history, isn’t surprising when you realize its location. It’s near the mainland of Europe, but only 70 miles from Africa. Plato wrote about people floating on a shipwreck near a pond. Greek legends about their gods in Sicily go back to at least 1500 B.C. Sicily became a province of Rome in 227 B.C. When the Roman Empire was divided in 286, Sicily became part of the Byzantine Empire. The Vandals in Africa conquered the island in 468 A.D. Arab Muslims ruled Sicily in 757 when the Normans came in 1061. Sicily was taken over by Spain in 1282. It was from Sicily that the great fleet was raised which defeated the Muslims at Lepanto in 1571. In the early 19th century, Sicily was controlled by the Bourbons. In 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi landed at Marsala, on the west coast, and defeated a Bourbon force. Sicily was freed from Spain. It became part of Italy when the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed in 1861.

Sicily has a mixed culture of Italians, Spanish, Africans and Eastern Europeans. The Sicilian dialect is a composite of Italian, Spanish and Arabic. Sicily has a low birth rate, but many people are leaving the island in search of people migrating from Africa. I visited Sicily with my daughter, Regina, and her friend, Gina. After our arrival in Palermo, we took a cab to the Cappella Palatina in the Norman Palace. It was built by King Roger II from 1130 to 1140. Although all the mosaics weren’t completed until the 1170s. When you walk into the chapel, you are immediately struck by the fact that there is gold everywhere. The chapel is filled with mosaics that tell the story of Genesis at one level and then scenes from the Acts of the Apostles at another.

The mosaic of the earth being separated from the sea as part of creation is on the terrestrial globe as a sphere of water in which there are three areas of land. Africa, Asia and Oceania had not yet been discovered. The creation of Adam shows God giving Adam a fruit to eat. Adam is created with the same face to illustrate that God made man in his own image. There are scarlet leaves in the garden representing the forbidden fruit, their expulsion from the garden, and the story of Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob wrestling with an angel.

The cupola above the choir contains the stern figure of Christ Pantocrator, which shows an Eastern Christian influence since the Orthodox use that figure to portray both God the Father and Jesus.

We then walked to the cathedral, which dates from 1185. It is estimated that large church is on the site of a Byzantine church and, later, a mosque. It contains the tomb of Roger II; his daughter, Constance; Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, who died in 1250; his wife, Constance of Aragon, who died in 1222. The next day, the tour we were on took us to Taormina, one of Europe’s supreme cathedrals. It was built on Monte Reale—the Royal Mountain—by the Norman King William II, the grand-nephew of Roger II, between 1172 and 1174. William claimed that he had a vision of the Blessed Virgin asking him to build the church. A bronze statue in front of the church shows William presenting the church to Mary, a scene that is also depicted in a mosaic panel in the church.

Just as inside the Cappella Palatina, this church is filled with beautiful mosaics—64,000 square feet of them—telling stories from the Bible. As Regina said, “They practiced with the Cappella Palatina,” and then made this cathedral much larger. Many of the mosaic panels are identical to those in the Cappella Palatina. As always in a church with Eastern influence, the great figure of Christ Pantocrator towers above the central apse. In his left hand, he holds a Bible open to the words, “I am the light of the world. Whosoever follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life” (John 18:12)—written in Latin. East and West come together in this cathedral. It’s a Catholic church, but with Orthodox and Arab-Muslim influences. It was the Arab-Muslims who actually constructed the church for King William II.

The tombs of both William I—and his brother, Roger II—and William II are in the cathedral. We then returned to central Palermo and stopped at the Quattro Canti, the Four Corners. Each of the four corners is a central statue and fountain at the bottom symbolizing the four seasons. Above them are statues of four Spanish kings: Charles V and Philip II, III and IV. Between them are pavement mosaics of the old city quadrants: Christine, Nina, Oliva and Anna.

Just to the south of this corner, in front of the City Hall, is the magnificent Fontana Pretoria, a central fountain surrounded by statues of sea horses, mermaids, dolphins, seahorses, and especially, Greek gods and goddesses. All of the male and female statues are nude, which is not considered proper. It is also called the Piazza of Shame. We then drove to Cefalu, a city on the northwest coast of Sicily at the foot of a promontory with a sheer drop to the Tyrrhenian Sea. It has sandy beaches, and people were sunbathing or swimming. The cathedral here was also built by King Roger II.

Apparently, Roger survived a shipwreck nearby and pledged a ship to his orders of the Order of St. John, which there are three areas of interest. America and Oceania had representatives from Spain. It became part of Italy in 1570. In the early 19th century, Sicily was controlled by the Bourbons. During World War II, there were sunbathing or swimming. It has sandy beaches, and people were sunbathing or swimming. The cathedral here was also built by King Roger II.

Smoke rises from craters in Mount Etna, Sicily’s active volcano, which last erupted in 2006.†

By John F. Fink

Smoke rises from craters in Mount Etna, Sicily’s active volcano, which last erupted in 2006.†
By Patricia Happel Cornwell  
Special to The Criterion

SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC—In 1492, Italian explorer Christopher Columbus discovered America while on an expedition by the Spanish monarchy. More precisely, Columbus found a Caribbean island that he named Española, which was home to the Taino Indians. Spanish conquistadors subsequently decimated the native race, and imported African slaves to work on their plantations and in their mines.

Home to the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the island is now known as Hispaniola. The Dominican Republic is the second largest Caribbean nation, after Cuba, and 95 percent of its 10 million people are Catholic.

Half the size of Indiana, the country constitutes the eastern three-quarters of the island. Its versatile geography encompasses semi-desert land, fertile plains, swamps, rainforests and mountains.

My husband, John, and I visited our friends, Scott and Sandra, in the Dominican Republic in early January. Our flight from Miami took us to Santo Domingo, the capital, then we drove for two hours north to Las Vizca Province in the mountainous center of the country.

We passed roadside vendors offering roasted cashews, sweet potatoes, and whole roast pigs and chickens on sticks, which are traditional foods for New Year’s Eve. Women and girls walked by with large bunches of green, banana-like plantains balanced on their heads.

Motorbikes are used to carry all manner of cargo from entire families to chickens in cages. As we threaded our way into the mountains, we passed brightly painted concrete block homes and small towns with central plazas.

All of the houses are made of concrete because hurricanes are a fact of life there. In 2010, after a deadly earthquake, Hurricane Tomás struck the island, especially devastating Haiti, where buildings are not sufficiently constructed as those in the Dominican Republic.

Upon our arrival at Sandra’s mother’s home, we enjoyed a traditional New Year’s Eve supper. The centerpiece was camarão, a hearty soup of pork, beef, chicken, sausage and vegetables that is seasoned with oregano and other spices, and served with rice and avocado.

In rural areas, there is little hot water and not always electricity. Fortunately, the temperatures are moderate all year.

The next evening, we drove to a mountaintop called Jamaca de Dios, which means “Hammock of God.” After a jolting climb, we reached a fine restaurant to view the sunset over the valley and the city of Jarabacoa.

Military checkpoints are common in the provinces that border Haiti. Soldiers with rifles randomly wave cars to the side of the road to check for illegal immigrants.

We stopped in Bonao to admire the artwork on the plaza outside Museo Candido Bido. The gallery was closed, but a museum docent opened it for us. The pride of the museo is a collection of soulful, colorful works by revered painter Bido. The Fundación de Bonao Para La Cultura, which operates the gallery, offers painting, music and ballet classes for young people.

Driving in the Dominican Republic is definitely a challenge and an art. Afterward, we walked across the island, which is largely composed of volcanic rock that looks as though it has just bubbled up. While the rock looks frothy, it is hard to traverse. We leap from one rock to the next, clinging to one another’s hands. We stopped at a small cave to admire petroglyphs, faded ancient drawings of faces, likely scratched there by one of the indigenous Taínos.

As we left Casa Bonita on Jan. 6, we stopped at the small cave to admire petroglyphs, faded ancient drawings of faces, likely scratched there by one of the indigenous Taínos.

We toured the 1503 Fortress of Santo Domingo and the National Pantheon, where the country’s heroes are buried. Looking over the ancient city wall, we were startled to see a huge cruise ship discharging tourists from Puerto Rico for a day of sightseeing and shopping.

The Dominican Republic is the Caribbean’s largest tourist destination, no doubt because it is a beautiful place with beautiful people.

(Patricia Happel Cornwell is a member of St. Joseph Parish in Corydon.)
Visit Virginia
Colonial sites preserve artifacts from nation’s early years

By Fr. Louis Manna
Special to The Criterion

As much as I like traveling to Western Europe, there is also something to be said for going on a shorter trip to nearby places where I can easily drive. For a recent vacation, I decided to see some of Virginia, the first British colony in North America, dating back to about a dozen years before the pilgrims founded the settlement in Plymouth, Mass. So I traveled to Charlottesville, Va., for a couple of days to see a number of historical places of interest.

I chose to just explore its exterior. It is Toyko Bay.

U.S. Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur and Wisconsin’s first ironclad ship to sail for the Union in the Civil War. Most of us remember the story of the Monitor and the Merrimac from American history lessons during grade school. That navy battle was fought in the Hampton Roads area. The Monitor sank during a storm. Recently, the ship’s turret was recovered, and a display about the recovery effort as well as the turret at the Mariners’ Museum.

Another museum in Norfolk is the Nauticus, which displays the battleship Wisconsin. Many people are aware of its sister ship, the U.S.S. Missouri, where U.S. Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur and Japanese leaders signed a peace treaty to end World War II on Sept. 2, 1945, in Tokyo Bay.

Visitors can tour the inside of the ship, but I chose to just explore its exterior. It is on loan from the U.S. Navy, and can be made ready for active duty if needed.

A while back, I was researching information about religious shrines to visit on my vacation. I noticed that many of the features I saw—historical incident, education, bookstores for more information and religious artifacts—can also apply to Williamsburg, especially the area known as Colonial Williamsburg.

The Monitor is a religious shrine. It is a historical shrine to the beginning of our country. The main claim to fame there is that the Virginia legislature, located at Williamsburg at the time, sent the proposition to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia about separating from Great Britain as “a free and independent” country. This action led members of the Continental Congress to write our Declaration of Independence.

Focusing on that time period and recreating it required a lot of study to complete the work. There are DVDs and books on how things were done before the 18th century.

We are so used to having easy access to 24-hour media on television and the Internet. How did they have newspapers 235 years ago? They had to make the paper and print it with different types of ink and then sell it for enough money to make a living. The same production process was required for books. There were no bookstores filled with thousands of titles waiting to be sold.

Colonial Williamsburg shows us how labor intensive daily life was for our ancestors, and how they lived close to the earth.

One interesting event there was a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence.

“This just came from the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.” A costumed interpreter exclaimed, excitedly apparent in his voice.

Then several other actors read different sections during the interpretative performance.

An actor portraying a black slave read the part about how “all men are created equal.”

Later, as the crowd broke up, he said, “That means I’ll be free!”

An actress portraying a young woman passed by him and replied, “It said ‘all men.’ You’re property!”

She had described the slavery problem in a nutshell.

On my last visit to Colonial Williamsburg, there was a new historical presentation dealing with the American Indians. The Indians were discussing whom they should support in the coming conflicts—the British or Virginians. They wondered how their lives would be changed.

I had not considered the ramifications of the conflict from their side.

In Williamsburg, there are other presentations given by interpreters portraying Gen. George Washington, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, the Marquis de Lafayette and others. During an earlier visit, I attended a presentation about Washington. At the end was a question and answer period.

One lady asked about help from our navy.

Washington responded, “Which of our two ships are you referring to, Madame?”

His question was a powerful reminder of how Americans forget much of the facts about our early beginnings as a country.

Near Williamsburg are two other important historical sites—Jamestown and Yorktown.

Jamestown is our first settlement from England, and was founded in 1607. Yorktown is the site of the famous battle where a British general, Lord Charles Cornwallis, formally surrendered more than 8,000 British soldiers to Washington—after a hard-fought conflict against the colonial and French armies—on Oct. 19, 1781, effectively ending the Revolutionary War.

(Father Louis Manna is pastor of American Martyrs Parish in Scarsdale and St. Patrick Parish in Salem.)