

# Walking Adventures International's 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

## ***How did it all begin?***

Nearly twenty years ago, WAI founder George Friesen was on the verge of retiring at the twilight of his career as a high school history and language teacher. He also intended to give up his supplemental summertime occupation – guiding groups throughout Europe – and enjoy a peaceful retirement. Fortunately for all of us, things didn't quite turn out that way. George did retire from teaching, but a handful of enthusiastic walkers who had traveled with George in Europe convinced him to keep the travel dream alive and redirect his travel expertise into walking tours.

He offered the first Walking Adventures (the company was called Walking Tours, Inc., in those days) in the Alpine countries of Central Europe and ultimately did retire several years later. In the interim, his son Dan picked up the baton and helped expand this unique combination of motorcoach touring and walking to more than 50 countries and, as of December 2009, onto all seven continents!

As an alumnus of Walking Adventures International, you have had a part in shaping the travel philosophy of Walking Adventures International. Your participation and input has contributed to our push toward the goal of connecting North Americans with the history, culture, and scenery of as many special places as possible on this amazing planet. We now invite you to help us celebrate our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

We have held WAI Reunions at the 10-year mark (Branson, Missouri), and again at the 15-year mark (San Antonio, Texas). This time, we are adding a new wrinkle to the Reunion concept. In addition to the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary *Albuquerque Reunion 2009* in New Mexico, a completely new Walking Adventures cruise - the *Danube River Reunion Cruise* - is available in October, and forms the second half of our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Alumni are invited to participate in one or the other or both of these Reunion events. A special combination price is available to those participating in both Reunion events (\$400 value).

## **Walked Enough Already?! Program**

Though by some measures, twenty years is not a major span of time, most of us have aged a bit over the past twenty years, and some may no longer be able to participate in the WAI trademark 10 km walks. As was the case at the San Antonio Reunion in 2004, we have developed *Walked Enough Already?! (WEA)* Itineraries for both Reunion events for alumni travelers who would like to share in the fun and camaraderie but are no longer as enthusiastic about the walking element. The WEA Itinerary for the *Albuquerque Reunion 2009* is included in the brochure itself; the WEA Itinerary for the *Danube River Reunion Cruise* is listed in a separate enclosed flyer.

## **Who is Eligible to Attend? – What About Guests?**

Travelers who have participated in any WAI Adventures are invited to attend both events. Contrary to earlier policy, the *Danube River Reunion Cruise* is now open to alumni who are not attending the *Albuquerque Reunion 2009* event. However, a lower combination price on the *Danube River Reunion Cruise* will be extended to travelers who attend both events.

Both the *Albuquerque Reunion 2009* and the *Danube River Reunion Cruise* are open to alumni and a limited number of guests. Each alumnus may sponsor one non-alumnus companion. If you have a friend or family member you would like to share the WAI experience with, just let us know and we'll do our best to make them a welcomed guest!

## **ALBUQUERQUE REUNION 2009**

### ***Up, Up, and Away in Albuquerque!***

We'll spend all five nights of the *Albuquerque Reunion 2009* at the beautiful Hilton Hotel in Albuquerque. A full slate of walks and activities exploring the multi-faceted attractions of Central New Mexico are described in the enclosed brochure.

***...walk, talk, eat, eat, talk, walk, eat, talk, walk, eat, eat, walk, talk, eat, eat, talk, walk, eat, talk, walk, eat, eat, walk...***

This is shaping up to be our best Reunion yet! We expect at least 200 alumni to be on hand for the occasion and will be closing our office, so about 20 WAI Team members will be on hand to swap stories, hand out hugs and handshakes, and keep things generally rolling in the right direction.

### **Will George be there?**

George and his wife Gene have been invited and are hoping to attend. In fact, we would like to honor George (or maybe roast him a bit) at some point during the celebration. George's days of leading Walking Adventures were in the days prior to digital photography, so our library of photos of George are lacking. If you have a photo or two of George in action that you wouldn't mind sharing with us, please send it along. We would greatly appreciate it.

### **How do I lock in my place for the Albuquerque Reunion 2009?**

If you are among the travelers who have submitted an Early Bird deposit (over 180 so far), your spot at the Reunion is secure until **October 10**. We need to receive your Registration Form and the balance of your deposit (\$350) by October 10. Please remember to register as either a Walker or a *Walked Enough Already* (WEA) traveler. If you have not submitted an Early Bird deposit, consider sending in your completed Registration Form and a \$400 deposit as soon as possible. We hope to have room for all comers, but we do not have unlimited space, and this invitation is going out to more than 2000 alumni!

NOTE: Because we are reserving the majority of the Hilton's rooms, it is necessary to adjust our normal payment schedule. See Page 3 for a chart detailing the payment schedule.

## **DANUBE RIVER REUNION CRUISE**

### ***The Maiden Voyage***

We are thrilled to announce that we have chartered the *M/S Kleine Prinz* for two back-to-back sailings on the Danube River next fall. This is a great little ship with space for only about 75 travelers (150 total for both sailings). All cabins face out toward the water. The company we are working with has granted us the ability to customize the sailing schedule to a degree, and we have taken the liberty of making changes that greatly enhance our walking itinerary. The brochure itself details the *Upstream* program (first departure) while a separate enclosed flyer details the *Downstream* program. All walks and excursions are the same on both programs, so the price and list of included activities in the brochure applies to both cruises.

### **Six countries, six stamps**

Three of the six countries we travel through will be first-ever visits for a WAI group, and though we are still awaiting a final decision from the American Volkssport Association, it now appears that we will be offering sanctioned volkswalks in all six countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Austria!

### **Transylvania Option**

We will be sailing *Upstream* first, starting on October 16 in Bucharest, Romania. This cruise finishes in Vienna, Austria, and will be followed immediately by the *Downstream* cruise, starting in Vienna on October 27. In addition, an optional Transylvania program will be offered for both cruises, one as a Pre-tour before the *Upstream* cruise and one as an Extension after the *Downstream* cruise. Though travelers on the main itinerary will see Romania during one port of call and a day in Bucharest, traveling over the Carpathian Mountains into Transylvania on the optional program takes us into a completely different, and more culturally and scenically vivid region of Romania.

### **Who is leading this Adventure?**

Three WAI guide teams (6 of us) will be on hand for both cruises. Though not all staff have been assigned, Dan Friesen, Lee and Loraine Dummer, and Debbie Zimel will be the lead guides. Dan and Lee established the itinerary and created the new walks during the May 2008 planning trip.

### **What is the best way to get to the starting point?**

We had initially planned to link the Danube River cruise directly to the Reunion, flying straight to Europe from the Reunion. What sounded like the most efficient use of time and airfare ended up being not so practical. Attempting to get that many people on one plane, looking at the overall length of the combined Reunion package, and struggling to synchronize the dates of our *Albuquerque Reunion 2009* with the Danube ship sailing schedule convinced us to reconsider. There is now a more workable gap of three to five weeks between the two Reunion celebrations, depending upon which Danube Cruise you opt for.

We are working on the possibility of group flights and will know more by Christmas. Airline schedules and prices are generally not firmed up until over 10 months before the date of the last flight, so we can't really tell yet how advantageous a group flight might be. Over the past couple of years, airline attitudes towards group bookings have soured us on group air

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travel. Pricing is often the same or higher than what you can purchase on your own. However, since our group will be larger than normal, we may have better luck and will get back in touch with all who are registered later this winter.

**How do I lock in my place for the Danube River Reunion Cruise?**

If you are among the travelers who have submitted an Early Bird deposit (over 120 so far), your spot on the *Danube River Reunion Cruise* is secure until **October 10**. We need to receive your Registration Form and the balance of your deposit (\$450) by October 10. Please remember to register as either a Walker or a *Walked Enough Already* (WEA) traveler. If you have not submitted an Early Bird deposit, consider sending in your completed Registration Form and a \$500 deposit as soon as possible. **We currently have only 20 spots left on the ships!**

NOTE: Though this new Adventure is now open to all alumni, those participating in both the Albuquerque Reunion 2009 and the Danube River Reunion Cruise will pay \$400 less per person as part of the Reunion combination price. In addition, due to the unique nature of chartering two entire ships, it is necessary to adjust our normal payment schedule. See below for a chart detailing the payment schedule.

**Is this the last time a Danube River cruise will be offered?**

No, this is the first, but hopefully not the last time we will offer this cruise. In fact, the *Danube River Cruise* will be on the *2010 Adventure Survey*, and travelers who are not able to attend the 2009 event are welcome to send in Early Bird reservations for the 2010 Danube Adventure.

## **20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

### ***The Boring Stuff***

**How is airfare arranged?**

We recommend that you contact the travel agent we work with to help book your flight arrangements. In this age of airfare complications and airport uncertainty, using a travel agent is a good investment! More details about flight arrangements and travel agent contact information will be provided in the *Adventure Advice* flyer, enclosed with your first invoice after you register for either Adventure. **Please do not book your airfare prior to receiving the Adventure Advice flyer!**

**Payment Schedule**

We entered into a different world with our suppliers when we started talking about massive numbers of rooms in the Hilton Hotel in Albuquerque and chartering entire ships on the Danube! We found that, although these suppliers appreciate the business a large group of WAI travelers brings, they are still quite concerned about having “all their eggs in one basket.” As a result, we are making a sizeable chunk of non-refundable deposits (We considered using Dan’s house as collateral!) between now and the Reunion, and we therefore need to implement a slightly different schedule of payments than is our norm.

We’ve attempted to make this altered payment schedule as simple as possible by charting it out for you below, but if you have any questions, be sure to give us a call!

#### **PAYMENT SCHEDULE**

	At Registration	March 30	June 15
Albuquerque Reunion	\$400 (incl EB)	No payment	Full balance due
Danube Cruise	\$500 (incl EB)	\$1000	Full balance due

#### **CANCELLATION DATES**

	Before Jan 15	Before March 30	Before June 15	After June 15
Albuquerque Reunion	Full refund less \$100		\$400 Cancellation fee	No refund
Danube Cruise	Full refund less \$150	\$500 Cancellation fee	\$1500 Cancellation fee	No refund

**Group Travel Credit and Walking Journals**

Since both Adventures are Reunion events, offering Group Travel Credits and redeeming Walking Journals would result in near 100% participation in these two programs and a lot of unnecessary hassle for all involved! We have therefore priced both of these Reunion Adventures at special, lower, alumni prices to begin with and will not be awarding Group Travel Credits or accepting Walking Journals.

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**Travel Insurance**

Walking Adventures has negotiated with an insurance carrier to provide travel insurance in the form of a Preferred Benefits™ policy. We are pleased to make this package available and believe that it will provide travelers with an important element of security at a reasonable price. (See the enclosures for more detailed information.)

**IMPORTANT:** The insurance policy includes time-sensitive coverage provisions for pre-existing conditions, provided you purchase the insurance at the time you register for the trip, or within 14 days of your registration. Should you choose to add the cost of your airline tickets to your insurance policy, contact our office after you purchase your airfare.

**What Happens Next?**

Upon registering for either of these Adventures, you will receive a welcome letter and an Adventure Advice memo with important information about steps to take in the months before your trip. You will then receive a reminder statement about 2 weeks before the second payment is due (Danube) and again before the final payment (both events). Along with your reminder for the final payments, you will also receive factsheets with additional information about each Adventure to help you get prepared. Then, about 3 weeks before departure for each trip, you will receive final packets with all the details of each program, including hotel names and contact information, lists of fellow travelers, and more detailed daily schedules.

To say that we are excited about sharing our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is an understatement. We look forward to a wonderful travel season next year, and hope that you will join us as we float up and away in Albuquerque and down the blue Danube!

***Thanks for Sharing the Adventure for 20 years!***



**Travelers at San Antonio Reunion 2004**



Join us for our  
20th Anniversary!

***Walking Adventures***  
**INTERNATIONAL**

History, Culture, Scenery, and Walking  
*...more than just a walking tour!*

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