

# The Best of Steenie Harvey

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Prepared by Eoin Bassett

She left school at 15 to live in a hippy squat in London. She tended bar in a strip joint...inspected bolts at a factory...waitressed in a Chinese restaurant, and clerked at a print shop where she typed invoices and lied to customers about why their orders weren't ready. Today she is *International Living's* roving Euro-editor, and regularly sends us notes from even further afield.

And as far as Steenie Harvey is concerned, it's the best job in the world. After all, who wouldn't want to travel the globe and get paid for it? With her shrewd eye for detail, and a razor sharp wit, Steenie has been enlightening and entertaining readers and all our staff here at *International Living* for more than 12 years. Possessing a wisdom that only comes from years on the road, she pulls no punches in her writing...always honest, and with the unerring knack of getting into the cracks of a place, she discovers what it's really like, and reports back with humor and style.

Now, in this free report, we've tried to bring together some of the best of Steenie's reports, articles, and tips...a near impossible task given the huge choice. To compile your own "best of" just visit our website at [www.internationalLiving.com](http://www.internationalLiving.com) and search the archive...

## **Wanted: Travel writers with cast-iron stomachs**

### **Chinese dogs...**

Photographing water buffalo across the river's far bank, we met a local who wasn't flogging anything. Mo Bin, a high school English teacher, simply wanted to chat. His burning question was about dogs. Was it true that Europeans and Americans bought special food for them?

I seized the opportunity to ask about Guangxi province's appetite for dog meat. Mo Bin earnestly assured us of its tastiness—and that maybe we'd already inadvertently tried it. Please, no. I thought. Although I'll willingly sample many things, I draw the line at munching puppies.

**"Elephants, dragons, rice fields, pagodas, karaoke, and edible puppies—going it alone in China's Guangxi province,"** Read on:

[http://www.internationalLiving.com/china/paid/chinaGuangxi\\_nov2005](http://www.internationalLiving.com/china/paid/chinaGuangxi_nov2005)

### **Portugal...**

When does a travel writer say no? Can she flatly refuse to impart to her readers the smell and taste of a city's specialty dish? Well, I'm afraid I'm refusing in Portugal. In Porto, to be precise. If you thought I was up for anything, you're dead wrong. There's no way on

this earth I'm ordering a plate of *Tripas da Modo do Porto*. It's not the price that's stopping me—you can find the dish for \$9.30 in most small restaurants under the arcades of the city's Ribeira waterfront. It's just that my guts roil at the very thought of it.

*Tripas* is tripe: The lining of a cow or sheep's stomach, to be exact. I can tell you what it looks like, certainly. It is a thick lacy lump of innards with an unpleasant yellowish tinge. It is often served with white beans and bits of smoked sausage.

Naturally there's a story behind why Porto's inhabitants are so fond of *tripas*. Back in medieval times, a Portuguese king set off to war and needed provisions for his troops. He requisitioned all the city's tastiest cuts of meat and left Porto with a mess of offal. They discovered they had a taste for tripe—and have ever since. The rest of the country calls them *tripeiros*—tripe-eaters.

Thankfully there's more than tripe on menus. Another favorite dish here is *bacalhau*—dried codfish. It's said that there are 365 ways of serving it—one for every day of the year. In the old part of Porto, you'll see *bacalhau* hanging up in sheets outside old-fashioned grocery shops. Rua Formosa is a good place to grab a photo.

### **Spanish sausages...**

La Alpujarra is a heart-stoppingly lovely region of Spain's Granada province. I'm staying in a rustic hotel called Finca los Llanos in Capileira—the village perches at the top of a gorge that's a giddy 5,000 feet above sea level. From Capileira you can follow the gorge down to the villages of Bubion and Pampileira, or strike out along forest tracks towards Pitres and the Taha Valley. And if you're feeling really energetic, you can tackle Mount Mulhacen's 11,000 feet.

The mountain air will give you an appetite, but make sure you come with a good phrase book. Translations in English are often baffling—if you know what “hoar frost rime to the table” is, you're better informed than me. Year-round, the locals enjoy feasting on hearty fare more suited to winter. Menus feature stews of venison, goat, or wild boar, rabbit, snails with rice, plates of locally-cured hams, and sausages. Here *sopa de ajo* is not a blessedly chilled soup of garlic, cream, and almond like in Granada or Seville. In the Alpujarra, *sopa de ajo* is hot garlic soup spiked with chopped fried eggs and chunks of ham.

Without knowing what it was, earlier I'd opted for a lunch-time Alpujarran Platter. It turned out to be a weird variation of an Irish breakfast: ham, sausage, fried eggs, blood pudding, and potatoes, cooked with red and green peppers.

I'm not sure fried eggs mix well with wine, but the sausage-shaped blood pudding was particularly tasty. Now I realize that some readers may find the idea strange, but I'm extremely partial to dishes of congealed pigs' blood. (If your stomach is heaving in disgust, be sure to spurn all Spanish dishes that contain the word "*morcilla*.") But anyway, tonight in the Ruta las Nieves hostelry I'm going for a full plate of *morcillas*. And here they come...

Good grief! Does the waiter really expect me to tackle 13 blood puddings? Seems so. Costing 6 euro (\$7.30) for the entire plateful, each chunky pudding is about four inches long. The first five are succulently good; getting through the sixth starts to become a major struggle. I give up on the seventh. Even washed down with a 4.40 euro (\$5.40) jug of local wine, I'd guess even the hungriest hiker has never managed to scoff them all.

## Lessons learnt the hard way

### How to cope with Chinese squat toilets

Whenever you see a western-style toilet in Asia, never spurn the opportunity to use it. Pay a visit to the lobby restrooms of a four- or five-star hotel if you have to. It was in Guilin airport that I realized I'd entered traditional China. It's spankingly-modern except for the restrooms--the dreaded squat toilets.

If you've never encountered squat toilets before, here's what awaits: a smelly hole in the ground flanked by an enamel splash guard. It sounds archaic, but it seems to be what much of Asia prefers you'll see plenty of new squat toilets in bathroom-fittings shops. Obviously no problems for a man needing quick relief, but I'm female...So, ladies, here's the drill. Roll up your trousers to above the knees...and hope they stay up instead of flapping around at floor level. Try not to splash (I know, it's difficult). From some humiliating past experiences, I've learnt it's better to travel in a frock instead of trousers.

But whether you're male or female, having the squits in the squats doesn't bear contemplating. You may also wonder how people manage if they're physically challenged or their joints don't bend easily.

Nanning's airport restrooms come complete with the usual grossly disgusting squats, but I discovered that the handicapped restroom has a western-style toilet. You won't find handicapped facilities everywhere, but highway service stations, bus stations, and shopping malls generally yield a result. But do ensure you carry your own supply of paper.

### Read it and weep: How Steenie chucked almost \$800 worth of elephants down the drain

I was doing some research for a return trip to Thailand. And I'd just come across a Bangkok crafts retailer promising what seemed to be some pretty good bargains. Listen to this: "We have acquired four different sets of antique-style iron balance weights from the far North of Thailand. We can't verify their age, so we call them antique-style. These type of weights were used with a simple balance for weighing teas and spices in rural shops."

Hmm. If you've ever been to northern Thailand, you'll know these weights are also used for selling opium. Retailing for \$17, each set consists of six weights in the shape of elephants. They make for a great conversation piece.

Back home, you could easily sell such a set for way more than \$17. But the thing is, you're not really getting a bargain from this guy. I was in a hill tribe village near the Golden Triangle 10 months ago—and I bought my own elephant weights and opium scales. (Purely for ornamental purposes, of course.) They came cunningly concealed in a carved wooden case. And get this--I only paid the equivalent of \$3.82 for the whole lot: six weights, scales and case.

Having written and researched IL's brand-new Import/Export Kit, I now realize I missed out big time. For an outlay of \$114.60, a savvy traveler would have bought 30 sets...and

easily sold them for a minimum \$30 apiece. That's over \$785 potential profit. Buy low, sell high. This is how Import/Export works. (In many instances, mark-ups can be even higher than 800%.) And it's not a complicated business to get involved in. In less than three months time, you too could be tracking down treasures throughout the world...and reselling them back home for massive profits.

We're guessing that most readers enjoy traveling the world and meeting new people. But the Import-Export business isn't just an escape from the 9-5 routine--it's a well proven way to start a new and very rewarding life. Just imagine having the kind of dream job that pays you to explore Asia or Mexico...South America or Morocco. Find out more at: <http://www.isecureonline.com/Reports/120SIMEX/W120F1X2/>.

### **Surviving karaoke hell**

Our hotel in Nanning (the Jindu Hotel) had no lobby bar, so I suggested a foray into what its directory listed as the "Nightclub and KTV Lounge." Huge mistake. No nightclub, no lounge bar—it was an entire floor of private karaoke rooms.

The only place to obtain alcohol was inside our own karaoke room complete with bathroom and plush couches. (Intriguingly, the "lounge" had a lockable door.) But trying to operate a karaoke machine, whose multi-buttoned control zapper is in Chinese, is problematic, to say the least. We couldn't even reduce the volume or switch it off. The cacophony of Chinese rap songs blasting out was sheer torture.

Not realizing the control also had a service-call button, I kept pressing it in an endeavor to escape the diabolical music. Servers kept banging on the door, then shuffling in on their knees waving drinks lists. We couldn't understand what they wanted—and they didn't understand why more alcohol wasn't required.

Beer was unaccountably served with a shot glass. There was a never-ending parade of baffled barmen. Cartoon creatures shrieked and danced across the KTV screen. Now permanently stuck on full volume, the machine was squawking like a colony of demented parrots. Another gibbering shuffler with a drinks list appeared. Time to abandon the beer, the microphones, and flee. Both of us were rapidly approaching mental breakdown.

A Chinese hotel manager later explained that karaoke set-ups often provide a venue for meeting prostitutes. (Honestly, I don't deliberately seek these dens of iniquity—they find me.) But it explained the lockable doors and ladies patrolling outside the elevator. With prostitution illegal in China, hotels don't take a cut from hookers' earnings. Instead, they charge clients big for their karaoke pleasures.

We escaped, paying only \$6 for two beers. Obviously realizing these particular foreigners were complete idiots, the Jindu didn't bill for the karaoke room. (The hotel manager in Sanya in Hainan Island told me the minimum charge for a room there is \$37.)

### **Bad times in Barcelos**

Buy a guidebook about northern Portugal and you're sure to come across mention of Barcelos and its weekly Feria (market). You'll be urged to go there. Held on Thursdays, it's said to be the country's largest outdoor market. From daybreak until late afternoon,

hundreds of stalls set up on the Campo de Feria, an immense square in the center of this small Minho region town.

I hate to sound downbeat, but unless you're shopping for metal buckets, it's probably not worth going out your way for. My guidebook promised me row upon row of village women squatting behind baskets of their own produce...whole avenues of ducks and rabbits...yokes for oxen...unusual regional handicrafts. Maybe Barcelos was like that when the author originally visited, but it must have been a good while ago.

I walked every inch of the market and didn't see a single duck or rabbit. In fact, the only thing remotely resembling livestock were on a pet stall--goldfish and budgerigars. I did spy one old lady with a basket of walnuts, but most fruit and vegetables are sold from ordinary market stalls. Certainly there are people proffering country cheeses and sausages, but rope-sellers and saddle-makers are about all that remains from its days as a genuine country market. Barcelos is now basically where to go for mass-produced clothes and shoes--and much of the stuff looks shoddy. You can actually find cheaper goods in the streets radiating around Porto's Praca Batalha.

Around the market's central fountain, you'll find ceramic roosters and plaster-cast monks with gross appendages poking out from under their robes. I guessed these must be the celebrated regional handicrafts. Can't tell you what the monks represent, but the roosters illustrate the legend of a miraculous cockerel which had already been cooked. Apparently it arose from a judge's dining table to crow the innocence of a pilgrim who'd been wrongly accused of theft.

Contemplating these garish objects, I felt like the guidebook writer had stolen my time. I certainly felt no urge to buy anything. And I doubt you will either...

## **Life as IL's Chief Ghost Hunter**

### **Hallowe'en, Tallinn, Estonia...**

October...and there's a chill in Old Tallinn's foggy air. But it doesn't simply herald winter's onset. Estonia's gloriously gothic capital lays claim to being Europe's spookiest city.

Tallinn comes straight from the pages of the Grimm Brothers' darker fables: dragon-headed gargoyles and squat stone towers with russet-colored caps...needle-thin spires colored black and copper...gilded weathervanes adorned with mythical creatures. Names like Long Leg Street, Goldfoot Tower, Hanging Hill, and the Wall of Hatred all add to the dark magic.

Come twilight, old-fashioned lamps add a delicious menace to the cobbled alleys and stairways. But even in daytime, you feel shadowed by otherworldly footsteps. Skeletons have been found sealed in the walls of more than a few medieval houses. And one street is actually called *Vaimu*, Estonian for "ghost."

Tallinn's spectral inhabitants include the Stable Tower's phosphorescent bone-man and a drunken monk who haunts the mischievously-named "Maidens' Tower," where medieval prostitutes were imprisoned. The gate tower on Luhike Jalg (Short Leg Street) is

apparently haunted by a fire-spitting dog, three monks (one dressed in red), a woman in old-fashioned clothing, and the unquiet spirit of a town executioner.

Don't linger too long on Rataskaevu Street. Passers-by often hear inexplicable noises coming from No. 16 after midnight. This 15th-century inn (now a sushi restaurant) is rumored to be the devil's party place. A cloaked man rented a top-floor room for the night, insisting on complete privacy. Following what sounded like the noise of a hundred people, one luckless servant peeked around the door...and saw the devil himself. Look up and you'll see the room--it's the one with the bricked-up window and false painted curtains.

Cornering Rataskaevu and Dunkri streets is the Wheel Well, also known as Cat Well. Tallinn's medieval citizens believed a demon dwelt at the bottom--a hungry demon that needed appeasing with animal sacrifices. Rather than giving it pigs and chickens, they fed it pussy-cats.

A demonic builder constructed St. Olav's church, which at one time boasted the tallest spire in Europe. The story goes that a stranger turned up, saying he would build the church in record time, if paid a huge bag of gold. However, if the townsfolk guessed his name, he would forego payment.

The church got built in the blink of an eye, and someone did indeed guess the stranger's name: Olav. He was up the spire at the time, and hearing his name called, he tumbled to his death. A toad and a serpent crawled out of his mouth--a sure sign of devilry.

In a corner of Toomkirik, the Dome Church, is the tomb of Pontus de la Gardie. A French mercenary, he led Swedish forces during one of their Estonian forays. De la Gardie had a reputation for cruelty: his favorite punishment was skinning prisoners alive. It's said he wanders Tallinn at night...and won't rest until enough unsuspecting strangers have bought the skins from him.

Are you sure you want to venture out after dark tonight?

### **Spooked in Scotland--supernatural shenanigans in black-hearted Edinburgh**

A moonless night at the Mercat Cross on Edinburgh's Royal Mile--and it's Ghost Busters gone mad. Thirty people are following a black-cloaked witch down Advocate's Close. From the screeches, something nasty is happening in the City Chambers porticoes...maybe it's to do with the body-snatcher now racing down High Street. And here comes a vampire, chivvying his charges behind St. Giles High Kirk. There'll soon be more screams if the trailing brown-cowled monk is a "jumper-oot."

Most Edinburgh ghost walks are light-hearted. Most, but not all. Tonight I'm meeting Katie, my guide for the "City of the Dead" tour. No children, no pregnant women, no people with heart conditions. Our destination is Greyfriars Kirkyard. Forget those heart-warming stories about Greyfriars Bobby, the faithful Skye terrier. The Kirkyard has a nightmarish reputation for supernatural shenanigans.

Advertising boards post rave reviews: "Puts the other tours in the shade...the capital's REAL ghost tour" (Edinburgh Evening News); "Expertly brings Scotland's dark history to life" (Discovery Channel); "The best documented poltergeist case in history" (Radio

Scotland); “Makes Blair Witch look tame” (Fox); “You're standing inside a tomb with 20 other people-and the girl next to you just fainted” (Boots 'n' All Travel Guide).

In the last four years, over 400 participants on this walk have apparently been clawed, bitten, and thumped by a poltergeist-120 were actually knocked unconscious. Fantastic...I can't wait to trade punches with a supernatural thug!

Although it's billed “The Athens of the North”, the Old Town's cut-throat alleyways are more suggestive of a “Palermo of the North”. Factor in the nightly fright-fest, and it's puzzling why whole coach-loads of visitors aren't collapsing into gibbering heaps.

Listen closely and you may hear the satanic Major Weir's death coach rattling down West Bow's cobbles toward the Grassmarket gallows. Or the lone drummer boy, trapped forever in subterranean passageways below the Royal Mile. And before wandering alone down Canongate, take heed that it's supposedly haunted by an aristocratic madman, the Duke of Queensbury's son. He roasted a kitchen boy on a spit--then ate him.

Scotland's capital teems with tales of haunted boneyards, haunted vaults, haunted inns...ghostly gray ladies, green ladies, headless ladies... Ho-hum stuff, maybe. The accounts of witch-burnings, plague, body-snatchers, and grisly torture, however, are all historically true. Even skeptics like me find it hard to dispel the notion that Edinburgh's dead aren't merely spinning in their graves--they're rising up from them at every opportunity...

Read on: [http://www.internationalliving.com/scotland/paid/jan\\_04spooked.html](http://www.internationalliving.com/scotland/paid/jan_04spooked.html)

### **Are you guys for real?—Steenie responds**

Remember the e-mail that came through from *International Living*? It was titled "[Dream Job...Dreamy Benefits...Travel Writers Needed Now](#)." It drew some interesting responses:

"I am interested in your postcards, and also your real estate, but this sounds like a scam. I cannot believe that you are really interested in travel writers."

"Can you help me believe this is a legitimate course and not a gimmick?"

"Would love to sign up, however want more information as I can't see it being real."

I can understand why there are some skeptics out there--after all, we live in a cruel world. But yes, it's a legitimate offer. The opportunity for you to explore the globe as a travel writer--and get paid for it--is very real.

If anybody should know it's me. I've been writing for *International Living* for 12 years. Last month they sent me to Mediterranean Corsica. Only last week, I was exploring Poland. Later this month I'm going back to Italy. And in July, I'll be in the land of cuckoo clocks and cowbells--Switzerland. If that's not a dream job, I don't know what is.

Now, I can already imagine those suspicious souls who are asking: "How do I really know you're a genuine travel writer? What guarantee do I have that you're not some kind of do-anything-for-a-few-bucks mouthpiece? In fact, you're probably *International Living's* bamboozler-in-chief." Well, I do have other writing credentials, you know. (Search for "Steenie Harvey" at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).)

You've probably seen the postcards IL publishes on the website, in e-mails, and in the print edition of *International Living*. Although I write as many postcards and articles as is humanly possible, my byline doesn't appear on everything. IL is always on the lookout for new writers to cover destinations around the world.

Of course, you need to know how to string words together...illuminate stories with lots of color...learn the ability to write a killer lead. As a former IL editor herself, Jen Stevens, author of the [Passport to Romance](#) travel writing course, can teach you the secrets--and she knows exactly the kind of articles the editors at *International Living* (and elsewhere) are seeking.

I can promise you that Jen is a wonderful teacher. Again, I should know—I've seen her in action. As well as the writing course, she also organizes *International Living's* travel writing workshops. I've joined her and lectured at workshops in Paris and San Miguel de Allende in Mexico.

The "Passport to Romance: The Ultimate Travel Writer's Course" program has been put together specifically for people interested in taking up the travel writer life. You can read more at: [www.isecureonline.com/Reports/120STWCR/W120D4T2/](http://www.isecureonline.com/Reports/120STWCR/W120D4T2/).

### Steenie plays favorites...

I'm lucky, I know. As a travel writer, I explore the globe on somebody else's dollar. But there are a few special places in the world where I'd willingly pay to return to...places not yet spoiled by the madding crowds...where you can still feel like a traveler, not a tourist.

So where should you consider visiting in 2006? Well, if my editor's paying attention, the following eight destinations are at the top of my New Year wish list:

**Buenos Aires, Argentina.** One of the world's best-value travel destinations right now, Buenos Aires is South America's most sophisticated city. Take a tango lesson...explore the colorful port quarter of La Boca...see who else besides Evita is buried in Recoleta cemetery...check out the San Telmo antiques market...hunt down the perfect steak...go clubbing in Palermo...join the café society...experience a local soccer match...kayak the waterways of the Rio del Plata. Short side trips could include a visit to a ranch or the beaches of Mar del Plata. For a longer add-on, you could tour the Mendoza vineyards, head south into the wilds of Patagonia, or visit the colonial northwest around Salta.

**Andalucia, Spain.** Bullfights, flamenco, and ice-cold gazpacho. Free bar snacks called tapas--how many different ones can you sample? Sugar-cube houses with courtyard patios and terraces hung with vines, honeysuckle, and jasmine. Although Cordoba, Seville, and Granada are the stars of the Andalucian show, numerous small towns and villages throughout this region also invoke the glory days of Moorish Spain. Set aside some time to hike the Alpujarras, the southern foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains...then head down to the coast to see why the Costa del Sol is one of northern Europe's favorite vacation destinations. But avoid mass tourism destinations such as Torremolinos--Europe's glitterati hang out in Marbella and the yachting center of Puerto Banus.

**Chiang Mai, Thailand.** Silk-making, silverware, hand-painted parasols... Teak furniture, celadon pottery, even elephant-dung paper... The center of Thailand's crafts industry,

Chiang Mai offers boundless opportunities to shop. The city's mammoth Night Market is but one outlet--delve into the bustling bylanes, and you'll find plenty more artisans practicing traditional crafts. What else can you do? Well, how about sampling Thai food (both eating and cookery courses)...or encounters with hill tribes...or elephant conservation...or traditional Thai massage...or whitewater river rafting...or jungle-trekking...or a side trip to the notorious Golden Triangle. And that's just for starters...

**Crete, Greece.** In toytown harbors, weather-beaten fishermen repair bright yellow nets. Donkeys clop down steep alleyways and wayward goats try to scabble up into olive trees. White houses cascade with jasmine, cats doze away on terraces and *ya-yas* (wized old ladies) sit in doorways shelling peas and exchanging gossip. The Aegean Sea is as idyllic as in Homer's day: mother-of-pearl at dawn...deep blue at midday...shot-silk at twilight. Of Greece's hundreds of islands and islets, 166 are inhabited. If forced to choose a single destination, I'd go for Crete, the largest island. You can wander the ruins of Knossos (home of the legendary Minotaur), hike the Samaria Gorge, and visit Spinalonga (Europe's last leper colony). Best places to base yourself? The pretty-as-a-postcard village of Elounda in the east and the old Venetian town of Chania in the west.

**Mexico's Colonial Heartland.** Visiting Mexico's colonial cities is like falling through a crack in time, back to the 16th century--the heyday of the Spanish *Conquistadores*. Don't miss the creepy mummies of Guanajuato, the opal sellers of Queretero, or Zacatecas and its silver mines. (When I was in Zacatecas, you could go dancing in one of the mines, and stay in a bullring that's now a hotel.) There's also the quaint art-and-crafts town of San Miguel de Allende; Dolores Hidalgo, birthplace of Mexican independence; and Morelia, home of the *Museo del Dulce*. This candy museum showcases over 300 varieties, many the original recipes of nuns. Here, Mexican food is aimed at Mexicans, not gringos--as well as sampling the restaurants, you can take a short cookery course. Plus, you can relax in spas, go horse-riding, and shop for great buys in leather.

**Martinique and Guadeloupe, French West Indies.** Combining small island charm with Caribbean chic, Martinique and Guadeloupe are the two main islands of the French West Indies. Odd though it seems, these two islands are as French as Provence. Islanders carry French identity cards, use euros, and fly tricolors from town halls. Although you'll come across beach shacks, free-ranging hens, and throbbing zouk music, you'll also encounter six-lane highways, nudist beaches, manicured golf courses, and stylish marinas. Fishing, sailing, and diving opportunities are incredible: Off Guadeloupe's western coast is the Jacques Cousteau Marine Reserve, an underwater realm of corals, sea sponges, and tropical fish.

**Corsica, France.** Can't decide whether the charms of la belle France outweigh those of bella Italia? Then visit Corsica, birthplace of Napoleon. Although this little-known island belongs to France, its nearest neighbor is Italy. You get the best of both worlds: excellent food and wine, great summer weather, hiking trails with mesmerizing scenery, and towns steeped in vendetta history. Plus, a sea that shimmers peacock blue. If I had to pick a favorite place in the Mediterranean, Corsica would be it. Ajaccio, Bonifaccio, and Calvi make three interesting bases to discover the island--if you're looking for an entanglement with a handsome brute wearing a *kepi*, Calvi is still home to an outpost of the French Foreign Legion.

**Borneo, Malaysia.** Shared with the independent sultanate of Brunei, northern Borneo encompasses the Malaysian states of Sarawak ("Land of the Hornbill") and Sabah ("Land

Below the Wind”). The island is home to southeast Asia’s highest peaks, oldest jungles, and the white-sand beaches of the South China Sea. To get the most from this trip, spend time in both Sabah and Sarawak. For me, Sabah was characterized by mountains, snorkeling adventures, and the “People of the Forest:” silky-haired orangutans. Sarawak has more in the way of jungle, longhouse settlements, and Iban warriors. Look out for the blue tattoos on the fingers of Iban village elders--these indicate your hosts enjoyed a spot of head-hunting in their youth. (And I don’t mean the kind of head-hunting that goes on in corporate circles!)