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WEEKEND JOURNAL.

EUROPE



Raiders of the lost vine

In Italy's Valle d'Aosta, winemakers
revive near-extinct grape varieties

Gelato goes boutique | Does 'voluntourism' help?

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Raiders of the lost vine

In Italy's Valle d'Aosta, winemakers seek out near-extinct varieties



On cover, Odoardo Zecca (in black shirt) and Marco Reinotti of the Institut Agricole Régional search an abandoned vineyard in Italy's Valle d'Aosta. (Photo: Aaron Maines)

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WEEKEND JOURNAL

EUROPE

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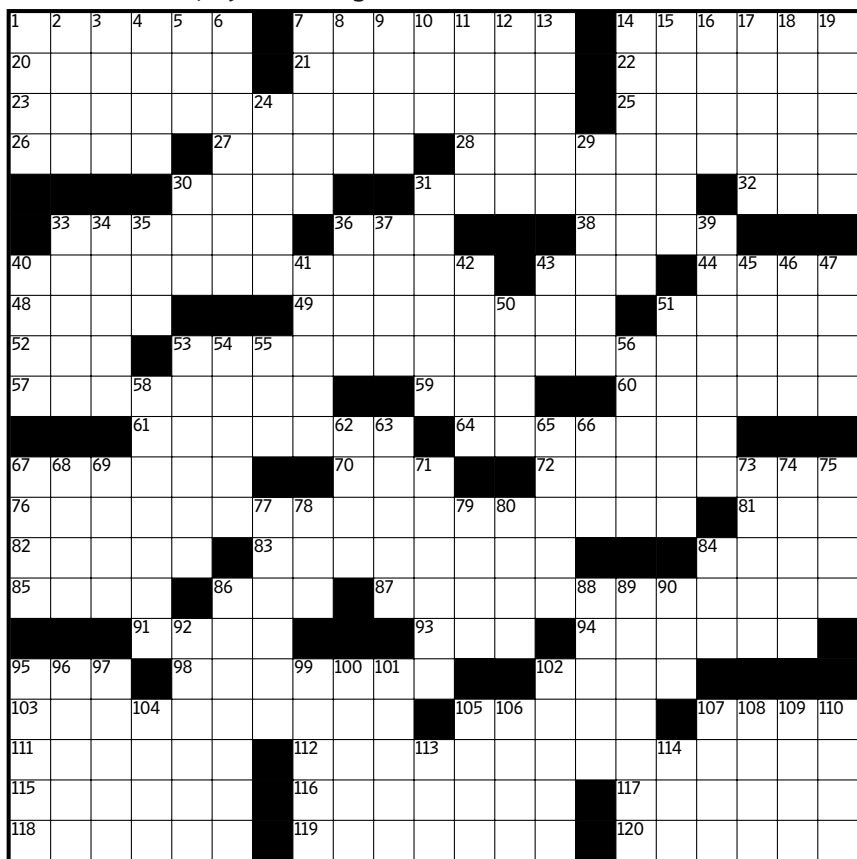
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Last week's solution



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Crossword online
 For an interactive version of The Wall Street Journal Crossword, WSJ.com subscribers can go to
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A richly human tale of a robot

THE FIRST HALF hour of "WALL•E" is essentially wordless, and left me speechless. This magnificent animated feature from Pixar starts on such a high plane of aspiration, and achievement, that you wonder whether the wonder can be sustained. But yes, it can. The director, Andrew Stanton, supported by a special-forces battalion of artists, voice artists and computer wizards, has conjured up a tender, comical love story between two robots whose feelings for each other seem as nuanced and deep as any you're likely to encounter these days in live-action drama.

Film

JOE MORGENSTERN

Better still, their story plays out in two disparate worlds that amount to a unified vision, stunning and hilarious in equal measure, of what we human creatures have been up to and where it could get us.

The hero's name is an acronym of his task: Waste Allocation Load Lifter Earth-Class, thus WALL•E. He's a garbage compactor with a pair of swiveling binoculars for a head, a square metal body and twin tracks that make him look like a midget tank. He was designed to stuff the discarded stuff of our consumer society into himself, squeeze it into dense cubes and stack the cubes into piles. By his own design, though, WALL•E has become, over time, an endlessly curious garbologist who collects objects that strike his fancy—an eggbeater, a sheet of bubble wrap, a Rubik's cube, a paddleball, a Zippo lighter, a diamond ring in a velvet box (he tosses the ring and keeps the box). And there's been plenty of time for his curiosity to evolve: WALL•E has been alone on Earth for seven centuries, ever since the last humans left and neglected to switch him off.

It's become a commonplace of contemporary screenwriting classes that a movie must grab its audience within the first few minutes, if not seconds; that's why so many of them start with clichéd explosions, collisions or violent combat. But no film-school formula could have envisioned the quietly magical pull of this film's opening sequence. The humor is so delectable, the images are so powerful, and darkly beautiful, and the music provides such a haunting counterpoint, that I'd love to describe the whole experience in minute detail. Best that you make your own discoveries, though. Suffice it to say that WALL•E, whose forebears include diminutive personages from "Star Wars" and "Short Circuit," continues to toil like a half-pint Sisyphus in a bleak cityscape dominated by garbage.

He works, that is, until love blasts in from outer space in the person of a robot named EVE (Extra-Terrestrial Vegetation Evaluator). That she is a she is instantly clear. That she is just as clearly a person is a triumph of graphic design and enchanting animation, for EVE is a minimalist from the top of her levitating, ovoid head to the bottom of her conical abdomen, which doesn't need a leg to stand on because all of her levitates ever so lightly. EVE's sleek white contours bespeak both egg and iPod. Her facial features are limited to a pair of oval blue eyes behind a black oval screen, but those come-hither orbs are so expressive that WALL•E can't help but come with her, court her, protect her and finally follow her back to the galaxy whence she came.

At this point the story takes a new tack, expressed in a new palette—colors close enough to candy to be cheerful, but also borderline grotesque. And well they might be, since this is the big reveal about the fate of humankind, or what is left of it aboard a spaceship that resembles a giant cruise liner. Most of the revelations are brilliant, both as satire and entertainment. Here again, though, you'll want to figure things out on your own, so I won't discuss EVE's animating program, which is rigidly simple until she overrides it, or WALL•E's role in regreening the earth, which is crucial, albeit inadvertent. But I will tell you that humankind's evolution, as foretold by Mr. Stanton and his colleagues, is a blissfully inspired re-



The animated robot star of 'WALL•E.'

WSJ.com

Opening this week in Europe

- **Funny Games** Italy
- **Get Smart** Estonia, Italy
- **Kung Fu Panda** Belgium, France, Netherlands, Spain
- **The Bank Job** Finland, Norway
- **The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian** Turkey
- **Then She Found Me** Belgium
- **Youth Without Youth** Germany

Source: IMDb

WSJ.com subscribers can read reviews of these films and others at WSJ.com/FilmReview

ductio ad absurdum—or more accurately inflatio ad absurdum—of the ethos of consumption that now sustains the economies of prosperous nations.

Part of the genius of "WALL•E" is the seamlessness of its tone—always entertaining, yet also polemic without being preachy. Heedless consumption is its satiric target, a healed planet is the locus of its hope. But the healing can't be achieved without bringing the consumption under control. That point is tacitly made by the film's opening shot. Rows of wind turbines standing motionless beneath sulfurous skies announce that green technologies will avail us little if the planet is engulfed by flood tides of garbage.

Another contributor to the film's success is pervasive daring—the daring of a pas de deux done in deep space by EVE, who leaves pale blue traces of her force field behind her wherever she swoops, and WALL•E, who's propelled by a small fire extinguisher's random squirts; of the integration, in the most rigorous sense, of beguiling show tunes from "Hello, Dolly!"; of a sensationally funny parody, involving the spaceship's captain, of the passage in "2001: A Space Odyssey" when an ape first stands on his hind legs; of an exquisite moment when EVE comes to understand how diligently WALL•E had protected her while she was shut down.

Since the movie wasn't made by robots, it



Angelina Jolie in 'Wanted.'

isn't perfect. The narrative might have done with much less of WALL•E and EVE being chased by robots we don't care about through the sterile environs of the space ship's innards. And I was annoyed by the appearance, on a spaceship video screen, of Fred Willard as a frazzled captain of global industry urging the ship's captain and crew to "stay the course"—not so much because of the reference to contemporary politics but because a familiar actor's presence, however brief, impinges on the purity of the animation.

That said, the film stands as a stunning tour de force. The director has described it as his love letter to the golden era of sci-fi films that enchanted him as a kid in the 1970s. It is certainly that, in hearts and spades. Beyond that, though, it's a love letter to the possibilities of the movie medium, and a dazzling demonstration of how computers can create a photorealistic world—in this case a ruined world of mysterious majesty—that leaves literal reality in the dust.

'Wanted'

Before "Wanted" reaches the end of its wild course, the violence that's been nothing but oppressive becomes genuinely if perversely impressive; the ritual carnage becomes balletic car-nage; the Walter Mitty-esque hero, Wesley, played by James McAvoy becomes a formidable enforcer of summary justice, and Mr. McAvoy, most memorably the young doctor in "The Last King of Scotland," becomes a certified star.

So, too, does the Kazakhstan-born director, Timur Bekmambetov, whose 2004 fantasy thriller, "Night Watch," and its 2006 sequel, "Day Watch," had phenomenal success in the Russian market. He whips his action along mercilessly, but with spectacular results. The film, based on the series of comic books by Mark Millar and J.G. Jones, evokes a secret fraternity of assassins founded a thousand years ago by a clan of weavers. Why would weavers do such a thing? All I know is that secret messages are still contained in the warp and woof of textiles from a modern mill that Wesley visits. And that he's brought into the group because his severe anxiety attacks result from a superheated metabolism that bestows superpowers.

The fraternity includes Morgan Freeman—he hasn't had such a meaty role in a long time—and a less-than-fraternal Angelina Jolie, who does lots of her patented imperious pouting, but also figures, gorgeously, in several sensational action sequences. The story parses in moral terms, even though it doesn't seem to for a very long time, and the instruments of the mayhem include a garbage truckload of rats who, engorged with peanut butter, scurry forth beneath little time bombs strapped on their backs. Let's hope al Qaeda doesn't notice.



'Portrait of Willem van Heythuysen' (c. 1634-35) by Frans Hals; estimate: £3 million-£5 million.

The old masters can still surprise

NEXT WEEK'S AUCTIONS of old master paintings and drawings in London will feature some unusual sales, proving that this collecting sector still holds a few surprises.

One of the works on offer at Christie's on July 8 is even called "La Surprise." The circa 1718 painting, by French rococo artist Antoine Watteau, was thought lost for almost 200 years until found in a British country house during a Christie's valuation last year. It

Collecting

MARGARET STUDER

shows a lover sweeping a lady off her feet in a parkland paradise as a man strums a guitar. Christie's old master specialist Richard Knight describes the work as "one of the most extraordinary rediscoveries of recent years" (estimate: £3 million-£5 million).

Not to be outdone, Sotheby's will have Dutch master Frans Hals' powerful "Portrait of Willem van Heythuysen" (circa 1634-35) in its painting sale on July 9. This lively image, of a rich textile merchant balancing confidently on a tipping chair, was considered a major work by Hals until the early 20th century, when experts then declared it to be a copy. The painting eventually disappeared until re-emerging, dirty and unrecognized, at a Vienna auction in 2004. Acquired by a canny collector, the picture was then cleaned, subjected to tests and eventually recognized by experts once again as a genuine Hals. It is painted with "dashing bravura," says Sotheby's specialist George Gordon. It is estimated at £3 million-£5 million.

Christie's will also auction three dramatic Goya sketches that were last recorded at a Paris auction in 1877 and thought to be missing. They came to light when their Swiss owners contacted Christie's for an opinion on their value. The drawings will be sold separately but are expected to fetch in total more than £2 million. One scary image shows witch-like women fighting as they fly through the air; another, a man stitched inside a dead horse; and another, a repenting man with his mouth open as if to scream. Christie's drawings expert Benjamin Peronnet says the works "illustrate to perfection the inexhaustible fertility of Goya's imagination."

J.M.W. Turner's landscape painting, "Pope's Villa at Twickenham," was never lost, but it hasn't been seen on the open market for a very long time. It was first exhibited at Turner's own gallery in 1808. Estimated at £5 million-£7 million, the picture has been owned by the same family for 181 years. Turner was a great admirer of the English poet Alexander Pope (1688-1744), and the painting depicts Pope's by-then dilapidated mansion on the tranquil River Thames bathed in a golden light as the day fades.

Another way to watch the Tour de France

BY REED ALBERGOTTI

THIS YEAR'S TOUR de France, which starts on Saturday, is like a great Broadway show without the star cast. In the wake of recent doping scandals, many of its leading men have been suspended or disinvented.

Fortunately for serious cycling fans and anyone else who might want to follow the event, Tour de France jerseys come in colors other than the yellow one worn by the overall leader. This year, the more interesting race could be the one for the green jersey, which is worn by the rider who performs best in the flat, fast sections of the course designated for sprinters. While the yellow jersey attracts all the attention, the sprinters are the maniacs who risk their lives in chaotic, 70-kilometer-per-hour scrambles to the finish that often look like a cross between horse racing and rugby.

Unlike the race for the overall title, which is nearly always decided before the final stage, the race for the green often comes down to a last few meters at the finish line in Paris. And it's been especially competitive of late: Since 2001, the sprinter's title has been decided by an average of 25 points, the smallest margin in any seven-year period in the race's history and far below the historical average of 65 points for all tours since 1959.

This year's field of sprinters is one of the most talented ever. It includes four green-jersey winners and some of the sport's most recognizable stars in Australia's Robbie McEwen, Germany's Erik Zabel and



Sprinters **Oscar Freire** (left) and **Robbie McEwen** in the 2006 Tour de France.

Reuters/Landov

Norway's Thor Hushovd. The tour has raised to 10 the number of "flat" stages where sprinters dominate.

Gavin Harvey, president of Versus, which is broadcasting the tour in the U.S., says the network is beef-

ing up its coverage of sprint stages. For the first time it plans to rig a top sprinter with a heart-rate and wattage transmitter to see just how hard he is pushing in the final meters of the race.

And in the style of football color men, the network is starting a feature called the "Saab Turbo Sprint," where commentators will break down replays of sprints with advanced on-screen graphics. "If you're not focusing on the green jersey and making heroes out of the sprinters, you're missing a third of the race," Mr. Harvey says.

The green jersey was added by the tour's overlords in 1953 as a way to keep things interesting on the flat sections where time differences between the top contenders rarely occur, and where bigger, faster riders, who usually suffer in the mountains because of their weight, have a shot at victory. The race's scoring system awards 35 points to the winner of a sprint stage, 30 points for second, and so on. Riders can pick up extra points by winning smaller "intermediate" sprints along the way—which helps create drama during otherwise monotonous five-hour marathons. "I've seen some of those intermediate sprints be almost as dramatic as the finish-line sprint," says Versus commentator Paul Sherwen.

Many sprinters never emerge from the mountains. Because they are built for power and not endurance, they often struggle to finish within the designated time limits. The famous Italian sprinter Mario Cipollini, who has won 12 sprint stages in his Tour career, has never actually finished the race.

What separates sprinters from other cyclists is fearlessness and an ability to maneuver through tiny openings at high speeds. Sprinters have to keep pedaling at full speed,

even when they're being bumped and shoved and cut off from every direction. "It's like gladiator racing," says Jonathan Vaughters, a former teammate of Lance Armstrong who is director of the Garmin-Chipotle cycling team.

One of the perennial favorites is 36-year-old Mr. McEwen, who is looking for his fourth green jersey. He is known for his sneakiness and quick bursts to the finish line. Television commentators say they often don't notice him until he's nosing over the finish line. "You don't see him. And there he is. He's got a win," says Mr. Sherwen.

One rising star is 23-year-old British sprinter Mark Cavendish, who may pull out early to prepare for the Olympics. Mr. Zabel, 37, has won six green jerseys—the most in history. Spain's Oscar Freire and Australians Stuart O'Grady and Baden Cooke are also contenders.

Mr. McEwen, the three-time sprint champion, says sprinters still "tend to be second-class citizens" but that their competition can be much more fun. Yellow-jersey contenders spend most of their time logging up mountains and shaving time off of their rivals, and the race is over before the peloton even reaches Paris. "Winning with your arms in the air on the finish line—that's a real win," he says.

WSJ.com

Green is the new yellow
See a slideshow of some of this year's top green-jersey contenders, at WSJ.com/Sports

Fighting the ball wars: How the game controls distance

Far Hills, N.J.

THE MACHINE next to me has been firing golf balls down a 22-meter netted chamber for a couple of minutes now. The spinning wheels on the \$350,000 machine are firing balls at speeds that approximate an amateur's swing, making a soft "whack" as

Golf Journal

TIMOTHY J. CARROLL

they send the ball on its way through this high-tech runway. It is a pleasant sound, one I can remember making on occasion, when I make a clean hit on the sweet spot. Then the technician turns up the machine to PGA Tour swing speeds.

THWACK! THWACK! THWACK!
I am humbled. This is an altogether less familiar sound.

But it's how the pros hit it those humbling distances, and here at the headquarters of the U.S. Golf Association, in a rather nondescript building out back, is ground zero in the war to keep those distances in check. Dick Ruge, a tall, thin 60-year-old, leads the USGA's efforts to keep the technology of golf balls from ruining the finer points of the game.

It is a battle many critics say was lost long ago. Sixteen players at the U.S. Open averaged more than 300 yards off the tee last

month, while in the 1990 season, the top player on the PGA Tour averaged less than 280 yards. Jack Nicklaus uses the word "ridiculous" when he talks about the ball's distances.

But for all the hand-wringing over all the booming tee shots on the Tour these days, the distance wars are actually waning. In the past couple of decades, the USGA has introduced limits on the lengths of club shafts (48 inches, or about 120 centimeters) and the size and volume of clubheads (no more than 12 centimeters square and 460 cubic centimeters), as well as the overall distance that a tested ball can fly (320 yards). At the time those rules came into effect, some of these parameters seemed generous, and there was room for equipment manufacturers to exploit them to make the ball go farther. But it's getting much harder to eke out more distance from a ball and club and stay within the rules.

At the same time, a number of Tour players are gaining a greater appreciation for the value of the control game and are beginning to emphasize finesse over distance. The Tour pro who most consistently hit the farthest off the tee last year, Bubba Watson, averaged 315.2 yards, but that was down from 319.6 yards in 2006.

The USGA's enforcement lab here has also played a role in rein-

ing up its coverage of sprint stages. For the first time it plans to rig a top sprinter with a heart-rate and wattage transmitter to see just how hard he is pushing in the final meters of the race.

used in competition, golf balls must pass muster with Mr. Ruge's team of engineers. Golf balls arrive here after being sent by the manufacturers, as well as samples plucked from locker rooms of the PGA Tour. In addition, USGA staffers sometimes surreptitiously visit a sporting-goods store and order dozens of balls of various makes and models.

Mr. Ruge's job is "to go toe to toe with the manufacturers" and their "oodles and oodles of Ph.D.s." A few balls fail testing each year, which can bring a mild protest from manufacturers that the USGA's equipment must be off. Mr. Ruge invites the ball makers to Far Hills, where equipment is checked and statistics are scrutinized. Because the USGA licenses its testing gear to the big-name manufacturers—including its \$350,000 machine—and because the game often is to get the ball right up to the edge, sometimes the line is easy enough to cross.



USGA/John Mummert

This machine, nicknamed 'Iron Byron,' tests balls for the USGA.

would theoretically go farther.

A third test, which one manufacturer told me is the test that is constraining distance, measures initial velocity off the clubface. A rotating wheel strikes the ball and a measurement about two meters after impact is taken.

The most photogenic part of the testing process is dubbed the "Iron Byron," which measures carry and roll. While the original Iron Byron, named after legend Byron Nelson, has been retired, a new version is in its place. Instead of hitting balls into a New Jersey range, where temperature, humid-

ity, wind and wet ground could affect result and limited the days when conditions were right, now the ball is pounded into a net, with computers and cameras recording the needed data.

The final hurdle for golf-ball manufacturers is the reverse wind tunnel, as Mr. Ruge calls it. That's the \$350,000 machine that blasts balls through still air in an enclosed area, measuring lift.

There are more than 800 balls on the conforming list, which is updated the first Wednesday of every month and available online at the USGA Web site. But not every ball made and sold is sent here. Some balls, often found for sale online, trumpet their nonconforming status and promise colossal distance.

Are the ads true? I ask Mr. Ruge. "I don't know," he answers. "We don't test those balls." I bought a dozen balls from a Web site and asked Mr. Ruge to turn his engineers loose on them. When I try to hand a ball to him, he reacts like Superman being offered Kryptonite. Only after a very long and awkward pause does he take the ball, but he quickly hands it back. He seems relieved.

WSJ.com

How far is too far?
Listen to a conversation with Timothy J. Carroll about the USGA's ball-testing lab, at WSJ.com/Sports

❖ Food

La dolce vita: Gelato goes boutique

By DAVIDE BERRETTA

JUDGING FROM THE MENU descriptions, someone who has just wandered into a Grom store in Milan or Amorino in Shanghai might mistake it for a fancy wine bar or gourmet food shop. But ingredients like Pedro Ximenez wine, Tonda Gentile hazelnut from the Langhe, and Sfusato lemon from Amalfi are finding their way into ice-cream cones in these sleek, upscale and often understated shops. Around the world, these small companies are now marketing Italian gelato as a delicacy for connoisseurs willing to pay a premium for natural ingredients and in-store pampering.

Their treats don't come cheap. Prices range from €3 to €8 for a cone topped by scoops of gianduja chocolate or wild-berry mascarpone cheese. After establishing footprints in their home countries of Italy and France, Gromart Srl and Amorino are expanding in Europe, the U.S. and Asia. Another company, Amore Gourmet Gelato, founded by two Indian entrepreneurs and an Italian gelato chef, is making a strong push into India, with eight stores in Mumbai and Hyderabad.

These companies are "thinking about the product and how to present it, thinking about the way they arrange their shops, including who serves the gelato and how it is served," says Gino Cocchi, chief executive of Carpigiani, an international supplier of ice-cream machines. The strategy is similar to that used by high-end fashion brands. Manufacturers of exclusive handbag, shoe or watch labels publicize the quality of their materials and spend millions decorating their boutiques and training sales staff in order to pamper high-spending consumers.

Arbitrage

The price of one mango*



City	Local currency	€
Hong Kong	HK\$5.63	€0.46
Brussels	€1.46	€1.46
London	£1.22	€1.54
New York	\$2.49	€1.58
Frankfurt	€2.50	€2.50
Rome	€2.97	€2.97
Paris	€3.99	€3.99
Tokyo	¥1,247	€7.46

* Of about 500 grams, from a local grocery store. Prices, including taxes, as provided by retailers in each city, averaged and converted into euros.



The Grom brand was founded in Turin in 2003 and will have revenue of some €6 million this year, according to founder Guido Martinetti. The company has 19 boutiques in northern Italy. Grom, whose cones sell for between €2.50 and €3.50 in Milan (a bit higher than the average price for ice cream in the city), brands itself as, "Gelato how they used to make it." The chain emphasizes its use of all-natural ingredients. "Our gelato is among the cleanest in the world," says Mr. Martinetti.

Grom displays large, densely written panels in its shops, educating customers waiting in line about the provenance of each ingredient. Grom uses only a specific kind of mountain spring water, for example, and it has bought its own organic fruit farm in Italy's northern Piedmont region in order to have full control over the ingredients of its sorbets. The brand's popular Crema di Grom, an egg cream with chocolate and cookie bits, uses organically raised eggs, chocolate from Ecuador and biscuits from Piedmont made with five varieties of corn.

For its first location outside Italy, in May 2007, Grom picked Manhattan's Upper West Side—"an area with a good disposition towards spending on high-quality food products," says Mr. Martinetti, 33 years old, who worked in winemaking before turning to ice cream. Last April, Grom opened its second New York store in the West Village. Now, Grom is scouting locations in Tokyo, hoping to open a store there next year. A big test for Grom's business, however, is likely to come this summer when the company opens its first store in Paris.

It will face established competition from just around the corner, where Amorino has been doing business for several years. Like Grom, Amorino was founded by two Italian friends who had no experience mak-

ing gelato. The first Amorino store opened in 2002 on the Île Saint-Louis. There, Amorino goes head-to-head against one of the oldest names in Parisian desserts: sorbet-maker Berthillon. "We sort of did it on purpose. If we could make it there, we could make it anywhere," says Paolo Benassi, 42, a business partner of the store's founder, Cristiano Sereni.

Amorino emphasizes in-store experience. Colored in pale brown and prominently displaying Amorino's logo, a cone-carrying Cupid, all Amorino stores look alike. The walls are decorated with bare stone and panels in solid walnut made by a carpenter in Reggio Emilia, the hometown of the company's two founders. Amorino has specific requirements for stores, from the way lighting should fall on the vetrina—the refrigerated counter where ge-

lato is displayed—to the minimum distance between each of the elements in the store. "The ice cream is what's important, but the store is nice and cute," says Andrea Sahyoun, a student from Brazil who stops at Amorino for Italian gelato every time she is in Paris. "I adore Amorino," she says. According to the founders, on a busy summer day, an Amorino store will sell some 1,000 cups or cones, priced between €3 and €8, higher than most other ice-cream vendors in the city. In the winter, Amorino supplements its ice-cream sales



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According to the founders, on a busy summer day, an Amorino store will sell some 1,000 cups or cones, priced between €3 and €8, higher than most other ice-cream vendors in the city. In the winter, Amorino supplements its ice-cream sales

with a wide selection of high-end Italian chocolates and candy. A box of Italian bonbons sells for €29.

Amorino operates most of its 33 stores under franchises and has so far stayed out of Italy, focusing instead on France. It also has one store in Barcelona and three in Shanghai. For the stores in Shanghai, the Reggio Emilia carpenter supervised Chinese workers to make the stores identical to the ones in Europe.

Mr. Sereni, 38, says he hopes to reach 100 Amorino stores in France within the next five years, while also expanding in neighboring countries like Germany.

Mr. Cocchi, whose Carpigiani business makes ice-cream machines in Italy, the U.S. and China, says the Asian market is the next big frontier for gelato makers. The challenge, he says, is to lure consumers to a dessert that they aren't used to. "Unlike in Europe, where gelato was introduced around five centuries ago, frozen dessert is simply not yet part of the Asian tradition and way of eating," says Mr. Cocchi.

Amore Gourmet Gelato co-founder Nayyer Hussain, 46, says Amore makes and stores its ice cream with machines imported from Italy. The brand's ice-cream cones—from Tiramisu to Guava sorbet—sell for an average price of about a euro. That's more than double any local store's price, says Mr. Hussain. The bigger challenge, however, is spreading the word among Indian customers, who prefer complex flavors like star aniseed with cumin and ginger to simple, traditional Italian flavors like pistachio or plain egg cream.

"It's fair to say that most Indians don't know about it," says Mr. Hussain. To fix that, Amore is starting with the vetrina, which Mr. Hussain calls "a completely new way of presenting your product, with sculpted and decorated gelato and flavors that change every day."



Raiders of the lost vine revive long

By Aaron Maines
Special to *The Wall Street Journal*

Arlie, Italy

On a chilly spring morning, Marco Reinotti makes his way through abandoned farmland in this Alpine valley, just south of Italy's border with France and Switzerland. Passing among what were once well-tended vineyards, he pushes aside branches and brush as he ticks off the names of the now overgrown vines. "Petit Rouge... Fumin... Mayolet," he says. But Mr. Reinotti is after something he has never seen before: one of the many grape varieties lost along the hillsides of Valle d'Aosta. The region—where residents speak both Italian and French—is known among wine lovers mainly for such small-production wines as Blanc du Morgex and Torrette. But in recent years it has begun producing unusual new wines from grape varieties that have been saved from extinction.

Mr. Reinotti, 29 years old, practices the agricultural equivalent of archaeology, looking for long-abandoned vines that can be brought back into cultivation and, eventually, turned into wine. "There's no way to know how many varieties are still out there, waiting to be discovered," says Mr. Reinotti, a researcher for the Institut Agricole Régional, a government-funded agricultural vocational school in nearby Aosta.

"A lot of our field work involves just talking to people," says Mr. Reinotti. "We ask about local fields and farmyards. When we hear of something interesting, we come out to investigate."

In addition to selling the wine it makes from some rediscovered grapes, the school shares knowledge with other local producers about newly cultivated vines.

The institute takes a somewhat evangelical approach to rescuing the lost vines, hoping not only to produce new niche wines from them, but also to help safeguard the long-term biodiversity of Alpine agriculture. On May 1, the first bottles of Vuillermin, a robust, complex red wine similar to Italy's Nebbiolo, will go on sale. The first Vuillermin vines, including the mother plant from which all the Vuillermin grapevines in cultivation today were propagated, were found by one of the institute's researchers in 1989 in an abandoned farmyard about three kilometers from Arlier. Without the institute's intervention, the wine would most likely have been lost forever; the only other evidence of Vuillermin's existence was in agricultural texts and 19th-century historical prints.

Midway through the 20th century, traditional agriculture in Valle d'Aosta—where crops included mainly vegetables such as tomatoes, greens and artichokes, as well as wheat—was suffering. The postwar industrialization of northern Italy was drawing the valley's young people away from farms to new factories in Aosta and further south in Turin. At the turn of the 1900s, the region boasted roughly 3,000 hectares of cultivated land. Today that number is barely 500.

When local fields were abandoned, wine-making was one of the first victims. Grapevines that had been developed and nurtured for centuries were left to wander wild. Unlike other Italian regions, such as Tuscany or nearby Piedmont, where a tradition of producing and selling "noble" wines had been established for centuries, Valle d'Aosta's wines were largely a family affair. "People in Valle d'Aosta were only producing wine for themselves and their families," says Augusto Chatel, 59, the institute's director of experimentation. "They grew native vines, varieties like



Photos: Aaron Maines



Left, a 300-year-old **Petit Rouge** grapevine in Valle d'Aosta; above, the **Vuillermin** grape, which was rediscovered in 1989 and has been used to make new wines that will go on sale starting next year.

In northern Italy's Valle d'Aosta, winemakers hunt for old varieties

the Petit Rouge and Prié Blanc that had been here for centuries."

Without a significant market to sustain a commercial winemaking industry, there was no reason for Valle d'Aostans to make much more than decent table wine. Although Valle d'Aostan wines were popular locally, they weren't profitable enough to encourage younger people to pursue the tradition.

As farmyards were abandoned, there was serious risk that Valle d'Aosta's winemaking traditions would disappear as well. The institute has helped to change that. Today, Valle d'Aosta boasts a high number of grape varieties for such a small region—with 38 different wine appellations given the official Denominazione di Origine Controllata classification. "Valle d'Aostan winemaking is a success," says Mr. Chatel, "with new producers selling our wines not just in Valle d'Aosta, but exporting too."

The institute is not-for-profit, but its work helps to boost other winemakers in the region. The school itself has a state-of-the-art cantina, or winery, that produces at only one-

third of its capacity. It gives the rediscovered varieties to nurseries, which in turn propagate, grow and sell them to producers around the valley.

Monks from the Gran San Bernardo order and Valle d'Aosta's regional administration first founded the institute in 1951. One of its first directors, Father Joseph Vaudan, was a strong believer in the valley's potential for fine winemaking. In addition to importing high-quality foreign vines like Pinto Nero, Syrah and Chardonnay into the valley, many of which still flourish today, the Rev. Vaudan made the recovery of grapevines from abandoned or disused farms one of the school's priorities. Starting in the late 1970s, the institute began a coordinated effort to locate, retrieve and recover native vines that had been abandoned.

That is what originally brought researchers to this abandoned farm, where Mr. Reinotti makes his way past rows of rotting, lichen-covered posts, the remnants of the wooden pergolas that Valle d'Aostans used to grow their grapevines. Beneath them, three thick Vuillermin plants hold their own against the high grass and encroaching forest. Faded tags reading "#1" and "#4" are still attached to two of them.

"There used to be five," says Mr. Reinotti. "One of those—I think it was the number-two vine—was the mother plant from which we propagated all the Vuillermin grapevines growing in Valle d'Aosta today. Somebody chopped it down by accident a few years ago."

Finding a lost vine is only the beginning of

a long process. Developing it into a quality wine requires at least a decade of identification, research and selection. The work starts in the field, where the school owns six different plots totaling more than seven hectares of cultivated land.

On a tour through the institute's vineyards, director Odoardo Zecca, 44, demonstrates how the evaluation process works. "All these rows of grapevines are groups of different plants," he says, pointing to row after row of vines running down a steep slope above the school, roughly 850 meters above sea level. "These are all different selections of Cornalin, Fumin and Petit Rouge grapevines we've found or developed. Four cuttings are made of each, and the replanted groups are spread out in at least three different rows. That way we can evaluate which plants perform the best, and where, and propagate them."

At the base of the valley, a 1.3-hectare plot has become a living museum, containing genetically diverse strains of grapevines which, while not useful for making wine, still represent an important biological resource. "That's our botanical garden," says Mr. Zecca. "We have an incredible variety here in the valley, with a lot of different terrains and climatic situations in just a couple of square kilometers. We're using that plot of land to preserve as many different kinds of plants as possible. The goal is to conserve genetic biodiversity among native Valle d'Aostan plants."

The process of evaluating "test" vines can take years. First, Mr. Reinotti or another mem-

g-forgotten grapes



Odoardo Zecca of the Institut Agricole Régional shows off some of the school's vineyards; below, test batches of wine (left); Vuillermin vines (middle); and the school's cantina.



ber of the staff must identify interesting new varietals. Then, Mr. Zecca has to evaluate the plants' performance in the field. Finally, selected grapes are allowed to ferment in small batches in the institute's cantina in order to identify those that will potentially produce the best wine.

"We have to wait five or six years before we can reach a preliminary conclusion," says Mr. Zecca. "There are so many variables: soil, temperature, resistance to cold or illness, and of course, identifying the individual plants that combine all these requisites to produce the best grape. In reality, you don't have a truly dependable answer about the plant's overall quality until at least a decade has gone by."

In 2005, the institute opened its high-tech cantina where staff can continue the research process, bottling small amounts in order to see what kind of results they yield. Across the hall, a temperature-controlled, brick-vaulted aging room is filled with the institute's commercial wines, aging in French oak barrels until they are ready for sale.

By producing and selling its own wines, the school walks a fine line between public service and private gain. On the one hand, it sells the wines it has worked hard to develop. But the moment these wines become too successful, the institute risks undercutting the very kind of winemaking business it aims to promote.

"We keep our production small, no more than 40,000 bottles a year divided up between 26 different kinds of wine and five different

kinds of grappa," says Daniele Domeneghetti, 31, the cantina director. "This facility's capacity is at least three times as much, but we stay within those limits to avoid unfair competition with other small producers in the valley."

For now, the institute focuses on marketing its wines to local supermarkets and restaurants. (For descriptions of a few of the wines, see accompanying article.)

At least one local restaurateur has taken issue with the institute's strategy. Elisabetta Allera, 39, proprietor of the popular local restaurant Lou Ressonon in the nearby tourist town of Cogne, says she doesn't carry the institute's wines anymore. "They don't have any policy that favors small businesses like ours," she says. "They make great wines, but then they sell higher volume to large supermarket chains across the valley at a lower price, meaning that my clientele might pay €25 for an institute wine here during dinner, then find it on sale for half as much the day after. That makes me look bad. The institute is so good at promoting our wines and helping our winemakers, why can't they collaborate with those of us on the front line of tourism?"

Mr. Domeneghetti dismisses such criticism. "Some winemakers are suspicious of the institute," he says, "and see us as unfair com-

petition. But this is not a profitable business. What we make selling our wines doesn't even cover the cost of production. Everything we're doing is aimed at celebrating and improving Valle d'Aostan products."

Back in Arlier, the institute's field researcher, Mr. Reinotti, is making the rounds of other abandoned farmyards, identifying the vines almost without thinking about it: "Mayolet...Cornalin." They are all strains the institute has helped discover, identify and improve. He identifies one vine by the thick silvery hairs growing off its fresh shoots. He recognizes a Petit Rouge by the shape of the leaf.

A dog growls at Mr. Reinotti from behind a chicken-wire fence. Adelina Aguetaz, an elderly resident of Arlier, comes out to see what the fuss is about. She and Mr. Reinotti talk for a while, their conversation ranging from grapevines to local gossip.

"That's the most interesting part of this job," said Mr. Reinotti later. "Meeting people and talking to them. Once they understand what we're doing, a chance meeting can turn into a friendship. They'll invite you in for a meal or to taste their wine. Nobody knows their land better than they do, and talking to these farmers about what's growing here is often the most important research I can conduct."

In a grassy clearing not far from where the original Vuillermin plants were found, Mr. Reinotti spots a young grapevine springing up out of the thick grass. "Probably just another Vuillermin," he says with a smile, "but I'll come back and check."



Valle d'Aosta wine sampler

THE INSTITUT Agricole Régional's 26 wines are available in Valle d'Aosta, and to a limited extent in wine shops throughout Italy, but finding them elsewhere can be difficult. Some restaurants and wine shops in France and Germany carry them, and they can also be ordered directly from the institute (iar@iaraosta.it).

The institute's products share a few characteristics typical of wines produced in mountainous regions. They are generally robust and full-bodied. Reds are designed to stand alongside strong-flavored cheeses, gamey meats (typical of Valle d'Aostan cuisine) and other powerful flavors; even the whites pack a punch, and should be accompanied by foods—fresh or dried fruit, fish, even some delicate meat dishes—that won't be overwhelmed.

A look at five of the institute's wines:

Cornalin (€16)

Made from 100% Cornalin grapes—a varietal recovered and re-propagated by the institute—this wine has a rich, ruby red color and soft but intense flavors: reasonably tannic, persistent and spicy.

Syrah/Trésor du Caveau (€24)

Made from 100% Syrah grapes. As its name implies, this wine is the institute's "treasure," considered one of the best it produces. Intense purplish-red color, with a dry, full-bodied taste that is tannic and spicy.

Petit Rouge (€14)

Made from 90% Petit Rouge grapes—the most widely cultivated and consumed in Valle d'Aosta—and 10% other reds. Brilliant red color with hints of purple, and a dry, full-bodied and harmonious flavor.

La Comète (€22)

Made from 100% Sauvignon Blanc grapes, La Comète is straw-colored white with hints of gold. Intense, fruity flavor with a faint vanilla finish.

Petite Arvine (€14)

Made from 100% Petite Arvine grapes. Golden yellow with hints of bright green, the Petite Arvine is a soft, dry, full-bodied white that is perfect for hot summer months.

—Aaron Maines

WSJ.com

Old grapes, new wines

See a slideshow with more pictures of vineyards and winemaking in Italy's Valle d'Aosta, at

WSJ.com/Europe

A new nation's unspoiled charm

BY STAN SESSER

Prizren, Kosovo
THE NEWEST NATION on earth is Kosovo, the war-ravaged region of the former Yugoslavia. There may not be more than two decent hotels in the whole country, but today it is the rarest of destinations, a relatively affordable paradise nearly free of tourists and offering a first-hand view of history in the making.

At the foot of the breathtaking mountains ringing Kosovo lie two magnificent Serbian Orthodox monasteries designated as Unesco World Heritage sites. To the south is Prizren, Kosovo's cultural center, a glorious medieval city of mosques and churches. Locals—and hardly any tourists—drink coffee along the banks of the Lumbardhi River, soaking in the view. It's as if the clock has been turned back 50 years, to a time when most people in the world still vacationed within driving distance of their homes.

From Angkor Wat in Cambodia to Medellín in Colombia, the world used to be full of places where tourists feared to tread, where the dangers of travel outweighed the profusion of scenery and history. Kosovo had been high on the list for more than a decade: It was torn by years of war between Christian Serbs and Muslim ethnic Albanians. In February, the country of 2.1 million declared its independence and is recognized by more than 40 countries, including the U.S. and most European Union members.

Kosovo's dangers now are largely in the past. As a tourist traveling from one end of the country to another, I never once felt threatened. Some sacrifices, though, are required to navigate in a country where tourism is a distant memory, not a well-oiled machine. Kosovo is a land of deteriorated hotels, indifferent food, potholed roads and battle-scarred locals. The war, which took more than 12,000 lives and destroyed Kosovo's economy, bred poverty. Kosovo is the poorest nation in Europe, according to the U.S. State Department, with only one-third the per-capita income of neighboring Albania, which used to vie for that title. Pristina is Kosovo's drab capital, whose name refers not to an era of abundant street cleaners, but rather to the ancient king of the Ilyrians, the ancestors of Kosovo's ethnic Albanians.

Today, highways leaving Pristina are littered with trash, an endless landscape of auto junkyards. But almost everything in Kosovo is within a 90-minute drive of Pristina, and it is where visitors must stay if they want a hotel offering even minimal amenities. I checked out hotels all over Kosovo and can recommend exactly two, both in Pristina. Both cost about \$120 for a single room, \$150 for a double. The Hotel Victory has a replica of the Statue of Liberty on the roof. The hotel where I stayed, Hotel Baci, ran out of hot water at all one night. The views ran from a noisy street in front to dreary buildings in the rear. On the plus side, the bathrooms were modern, every room offered good wireless Internet, laundry service was free, and the friendly staff went a long way toward making up for the inconveniences.

The monasteries in the west, near the border with Montenegro, are a must-see. Getting there neces-



Photos: Alamy; Stan Sesser

sitates renting a car from one of the several agencies in Pristina. Rather than compete with Balkan drivers, I employed a tour guide, Alban Rafuna, who arranged the car rental and drove it for me. The first monastery I visited, the Pec Patriarchate, near the city of Peja, has to rank among Europe's most spectacular sights. Its stone church, with mar-

ble and stone floors, is covered floor to ceiling with frescoes dating from the 13th to the 17th centuries. A stern, black-robed nun introduced herself to me by saying, "This is a church for prayer, not a museum for tourists." Then she spent an hour showing me the frescoes and explaining their meaning.

When I visited the Visoki Decani

Above, the medieval bridge in Prizren; left, the Lumbardhi River café scene; top right, a medieval cannon overlooks Prizren and the Sharr Mountains.



shops. For 500 years, Serbian Orthodox and Catholics lived with Muslims without any problem."

Kosovo also has some of Southern Europe's best skiing. To the southeast, near the Macedonian border, is the crumbling ski resort of Brezovica. The soaring Hotel Narcis, a 300-bed Swiss-style structure of wood and glass, commands a view of snow-capped mountains, lush forests, a roaring river and red-roofed stone houses. But on a beautiful June day, the hotel had exactly five guests, all of them members of Kosovo's NATO-led peacekeeping force enjoying a brief holiday.

In the lobby, stuffing was breaking through the seams of the leather chairs; the restrooms could be smelled 20 meters away. Water leaks streaked the walls of guest rooms; carpets were stained and moldy, and bird droppings fouled the balconies. The desk clerk was in no mood to celebrate Kosovo's independence. A Serb by the name of Jel-lanka (she wouldn't reveal her last name), she is now a member of a despised minority, not of a ruling elite. Her job today bears little resemblance to the one she had here before the war. "We were always full, summer and winter," she says. "All Yugoslavia came here. We had 280 employees, and now there are six."

Today, Kosovo is grappling with how and whether its 120,000 remaining Serbs will fit into the new society. The city of Mitrovica demonstrates the transition. An infamous bridge, a symbol of the country's divisions, divides Mitrovica into two sectors—Serbs in the north, Albanians in the south. Walking alone, I crossed this heavily guarded no man's land, landscaped with coils of barbed wire, into the Serbian sector, where the signs changed from Western letters to Cyrillic.

Divisions in Mitrovica are so stark that each morning, guarded United Nations buses go to a small enclave of Albanians living in North Mitrovica to take children to schools and adults to jobs in the city's southern sector. To forestall ethnic conflicts, 17,000 NATO troops, supplemented by thousands of police under U.N. auspices, are everywhere, paying special attention to the historic mosques, churches and monasteries.

But I saw no sign that either side directs hostility toward foreigners. In Pristina, the people I met while working out at a fitness center were effusively friendly, welcoming a foreign tourist as a sign that their country was returning to normal.

As safe as Kosovo is today, though, not a single travel agency offers package tours for foreigners, says Bujar Kuci, director of the new government's Tourism Department. A former accountant and tax auditor, he wasn't able to supply data on tourist arrivals. "We cannot give you any figures on tourism because we don't have figures," he said. "Now, 10 years after the war, we can finally think about tourism."

Monastery, a young bearded monk approached me for a conversation. "There are beautiful places all over the world," he said in fluent English, "but this place is something special." It wasn't an overstatement.

Intercity buses in Kosovo, surprisingly frequent and comfortable, are a good way to get from Pristina to the medieval city of Prizren. During the 90-minute ride, the brutal landscape eventually gave way to mountain vistas and views of the city, which, unlike some other European cities, hasn't been transformed into a theme park.

"This was an even more beautiful town until the Communists came in 1945 and destroyed things," said Naim Shahini, who spent a day volunteering his labor to help renovate an old Prizren mosque. "All the streets were cobblestone," he said. "There was an old covered bridge lined with

Trip planner: Traveling Kosovo

Getting there: Several big cities in central Europe offer direct flights to Pristina.

Where to stay: The two passable hotels I found in Kosovo are both in Pristina. Hotel Baci, on Mother Theresa Street (no address, but every taxi driver knows it) is clean and friendly, with excellent Internet service. Ask for a back room; those facing the street will be noisy. (☎ 381-38-548-356, www.baci-company.com). Hotel Victory, on the same street, has a replica of the Statue of Liberty on its roof. (☎ 381-38-543-267).

What to see: Besides the spectacular mountains, there are three "must sees": the cultural capital of Prizren and two Serbian Orthodox monasteries, the Pec Patriarchate near the town of Peja, and the Visoki Decani Monastery near the town of Decan, both in the west. In one long day,

visitors can combine a visit to them with a scenic drive into the Rugova Valley. Another interesting trip is to drive south from Prizren for about an hour to the village of Brod, home to the small Goran ethnic minority. Take the road into the mountains for about three kilometers to the Motel Arxena, with a restaurant and excellent hiking.

Where to eat: I found two unusually good restaurants in Pristina. Il Passatore, in a big house, is run by a warm-hearted Italian woman who will make you feel like family (☎ 377-44-200-508, 2 Tasligje St., closed Sundays). Renaissance II, a tiny place that aims to recreate a rural Kosovar dining experience, has no address, phone number or name on the door. Take a taxi to RTK, the headquarters of Radio Television Kosovo. Directly across the street, between a pharmacy and a shop sell-



ing the Turkish pastries called burek, is an alley. At the end of it is a wooden door—the restaurant's entrance. A big meal with wine costs about \$20 a person.

Tour guides: Alban Rafuna will provide a guide (sometimes himself), rental car and driver for \$300 to \$450 a day, depending on the size of the car. He can be reached at ☎ 377-44-655-566 or arafuna@gmail.com.

—Stan Sesser

Does 'voluntourism' really work?

Organizers of do-gooder vacations rethink the balance between service and sightseeing

BY IRIS KUO
AND GEOFFREY A. FOWLER

Luang Prabang, Laos

LIBBY SHEARON was looking for escape and cultural exchange when she paid \$1,500 to help build a children's center in Sri Lanka. Instead, she says, she spent three weeks arguing with local staff and laborers over how to execute the project.

"It was a total culture shock," the 65-year-old London resident recalls. She struggled with what she felt was the dismissive attitude of local people toward her, and says she couldn't shake a gnawing sense that her work was simply "tokenism." The children's center was built, but Ms. Shearon concluded: "I should've just gone on a real holiday."

What Ms. Shearon took part in was an experience called voluntourism, an increasingly popular travel option in which tourists combine volunteer work with a trip to an exotic locale. Too often, though, neither the well-intentioned visitor nor the local community actually benefits from the encounter. The good news: Several organizations around the world are taking a new tack. They are designing ways for tourists to just be tourists—and still help the communities they are visiting.

Unlike many traditional voluntourism programs, which can often stretch for weeks and be pretty intense—like a six-week penguin rescue program in South Africa that involves catching and cleaning up after the birds—the new model for charitable tourism calls for tourists to spend only a few hours on an endeavor.

Vacationers "are looking for more-rewarding experiences," says Daniel Ford, a spokesman for Ritz-Carlton Co., which in April launched a program in its hotels around the world called "Give Back Getaways," through which its guests can participate in local half-day volunteer programs. In Beijing, Ritz-Carlton guests can spend a day with a translator at Dongba Village Learning Center, where they meet children of migrant workers and help finish a mural in the school library. The guests, who each make a \$100 donation to the program, get to do things the usual tourist doesn't get a chance to do, says Mr. Ford.

As the popularity of traditional voluntourism programs has grown over recent years, so has the chorus of critics: London watchdog group Tourism Concern, for instance, criticizes the wisdom of dispatching unskilled volunteers for stints so short they are just disorienting for the visitor. The group also questions projects where voluntourists displace locals on routine work "as if local people weren't able to cook things or clean things or teach," says director Tricia Barnett.

Aiming to avoid such criticism, a growing number of charities and tour groups are reverting to the idea that tourists should stick to being tourists. Groups that want to funnel aid to poor communities now are appealing first to visitors' desire for a good vacation experience ahead of their work ethic and sense of sympathy, figuring that will make for steady tourism income over the long term.

On tours to Lhasa, Tibet, luxury travelers with high-end tour group



Above, Intrepid Travel encourages guests on its tour of **China's Great Wall** to interact with locals; right, visitors to the **Sangkheum Center for Children** in Cambodia.

Abercrombie & Kent can opt to spend a day at Braille Without Borders, a live-in school for blind children, some of whom have been abused or abandoned. Tourists aren't expected to learn to read Braille, but they are often inspired to make a donation.

Another program called Stay Another Day, run by the International Finance Corp. arm of the World Bank, steers tourists via a Web site and booklets to pre-evaluated activities that benefit a local community. Tourists come to these programs to "experience the destination in a richer and more meaningful way," says Kate Lloyd-Williams, the director of the Stay Another Day program, which charges charities to be listed. "There are many good charities, but they don't have anything interesting that a tourist can come and do and experience."

In other cases, tourists actually provide a service. A Luang Prabang literacy program called Big Brother Mouse operates a community center where monks and other locals can practice their English with visiting tourists. Jodie Lambert, a 23-year-old Australian, on a recent morning swapped sentences about sunglasses and tattoos with an orange-robed novice monk named Mone. "If I could get a tattoo, I would get one here," Mone said, gesturing to his forearms and drawing a laugh from Ms. Lambert.

Personal experiences like this made Ms. Lambert feel like she was traveling off-the-beaten-sightseeing path. "I'm not just a typical tourist," says Ms. Lambert. "I'm doing something a bit more worthwhile."

The center also publishes children's books in English and Lao. Tourists are invited to buy them, at a cost of \$1 to \$3 each, and distribute them to children, teachers and others as they travel around Laos.

For their part, traditional voluntourism operators say they can accomplish these same aims—albeit with longer stays. Mark Hintzke,



who runs a two-week program for voluntourists to restore temples in Nepal, says he decided to tap tourists as a funding source because grant money was scarce. The \$2,500 fee he charges visitors covers accommodations, and also helps pay for a local architect and local la-

Of service on vacation

■ Stay Another Day

Short programs in Cambodia, Laos and, soon, Vietnam, tacked onto your vacation, range from a one-day Lao weaving class (\$55) to dining at a restaurant that trains the underprivileged (\$7). www.stayanotherday.org

■ Intrepid Travel

An Australia-based tour operator with group and individual tours in Africa, Asia and Latin America. www.intrepidtravel.com

■ Give Back Getaways

Ritz-Carlton hotels offer short cultural-immersion programs for guests. For \$20 in Cancún, gather turtle eggs and bring them to a camp for safe burial. www.givebackgetaways.com



Tips for voluntours

TRAVELERS NOW CAN find volunteer trips online at sites such as Travelocity and Cheaptickets.com. Big tour operators have offerings too, such as a 10-day trip to Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming, with a day of cleaning and landscaping with Tauck World Discovery. But choosing a trip can be confusing. Below, some advice from experts.

Start with a cause.

Michael Organ, executive director of Charityguide.org, says before considering a destination or a volunteer job, volunteers should decide what cause motivates them—like English education, infrastructure improvement or disaster relief—and look for the best way to contribute with the time and money they have.

Decide how to apportion your time among volunteering, tourism and cultural education.

The nonprofit organization Cross-Cultural Solutions runs trips to Guatemala that include lectures on Mayan cosmology and visits to museums, in addition to such work as caring for the elderly or helping local health professionals.

Ask for a breakdown of where your money goes.

In some cases, an organization may be spending a significant portion of travelers' fees on administration and office expenses—or on food and lodging. Organizations' spending should be transparent, says Christina Tunnah, a marketing director at Lonely Planet, which put out a voluntourism guide last year.

Keep expectations realistic.

For trips of one to three weeks, especially those to exotic or extremely impoverished locations, much of the time can be spent in training and getting acclimated to the new culture and surroundings. For short stays, consider volunteer options closer to home or those requiring little or no training, such as park clean-up or painting a school.

—Candace Jackson

America Isn't Dead Yet

By Thomas F. Madden

I have a simple request. As we celebrate the birth of the American Republic today, can we all stop predicting its death? It's getting depressing.

The last time I strolled through the local Barnes & Noble, there were so many books announcing the end of American power, wealth, influence, or just America itself, that I began to wonder whether my dollars would be worth anything by the time I hit the check-out counter.

First there was Patrick Buchanan ("Day of Reckoning: How Hubris, Ideology, and Greed Are Tearing America Apart"), who told me "we are on a path to national suicide." Then Chalmers Johnson ("Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic") stopped me near the coffee shop to say that the "extinction that befell our former fellow 'superpower,' the Soviet Union...is probably by now unavoidable." And don't even get me started on Naomi Wolf ("The End of America: Letter of Warning to a Young Patriot").

These are just the tip of the iceberg. I dare you—I double-dare you!—to find a recent book on America's future that does *not* predict a coming collapse. The causes are legion: a power-hungry president, domestic spying, military overreach, a faltering economy, an energy crisis, too much diversity, too little diversity, wars that are both pre-emptive and endless.

Even the optimists, like Fareed Zakaria ("The Post-American World"), tell us that the rest of the planet is rising and America had better get out of the way.

As a historian, I find this trend fascinating. After all, since humans climbed out of the trees and began surveying the lion-infested savannah, none have ever lived in a period more prosperous, secure and stable than Americans do today. The U.S. is

not only the wealthiest and most powerful country on earth now, but in all of history. There's never been a better time and place to be alive than America in the 21st century.

Rome's most famous jeremiads marked the height of its power.

So why all the decline theorists? Here's my theory: Prosperity and security are boring. Nobody wants to read about them. The same phenomenon occurred in ancient Rome, the last state to ac-

quire such a firm hegemony. By the second century B.C., Roman citizens were affluent and their empire no longer had any serious rivals. With the dangers past and the money rolling in, they developed a taste for jeremiads. If you had a stylus, ink and scroll you could hardly go broke telling the Romans their empire, culture and way of life were yesterday's news.

Polybius blamed pandering politicians, who, he predicted, would transform the noble Republic into mob rule. Sallust claimed that Rome's vicious political parties

had "torn the Republic asunder." Livy wrote his entire "History of Rome" just so that his fellow citizens could "follow the decay of the national character...until it reaches these days in which we can bear neither our diseases nor their remedies."

The Romans may have been unquestioned masters of their world, but they sure didn't like reading about it.

And when the empire actually *did* start its decline in the third century A.D., criticisms and predictions of collapse became noticeably thinner on the ground.

The military dictators who seized power in Rome and led the empire on its downward spiral did not much like reading about their own shortcomings, and they had ways of making sure that they didn't have to. These were the days of the panegyric—an obsequious form of literature that praised the emperor and empire to the skies. When you start seeing those, it's time to worry.

Of course America could be falling, but I have my doubts. For one thing, the book market is too strong. So, on this Fourth of July, I am going to watch the fireworks and be grateful for the place and time in which I live. When Polybius, Sallust and Livy wrote their books the Roman state still had more than a millennium of life in it. Perhaps ours does too.

Mr. Madden, a professor of history at Saint Louis University, is the author, most recently, of "Empires of Trust: How Rome Built—And America Is Building—A New World," out this month by Dutton.



The U.S. won't be burning to the ground anytime soon.

Pepper . . . and Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"It was productive once we found someone to blame."

Liberty as Statue and Symbol

New York

Familiarity does have a way of breeding, if not contempt, then a kind of numb oblivion. Today, when the field of sculpture has been broadened to include a building wrapped in cloth and a shark's corpse afloat in formaldehyde, we take the Statue of Liberty for granted, too often glancing at it without actually seeing what it represents as both a monumental work of sculpture and an allegory of national and international significance.

Bartholdi's great sculpture is rich with allegorical meaning.

Its sculptor, the Alsatian-born Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi (1834-1904), had been profoundly impressed by the spare majesty of Egyptian monumental sculpture he saw on a tour of the Near East and returned home determined to produce similarly grand sculpture. In 1865, Bartholdi, brainstorming with a group of French republican intellectuals, devised a plan to present the U.S. with a serious piece of fine art to honor its revolutionary heroism a century earlier, when absolute monarchs ruled most other nations. The statue also was to commemorate France's alliance with America during that time. It was, after all, the American Revolution that inspired the French one.

But Emperor Napoleon III's increasingly conservative government in France would hardly encourage such a conception. So Bartholdi channeled his ideas toward plans for a colossal lighthouse at the northern entrance of the French-financed Suez Canal, then nearing completion. The envisioned lighthouse was to take the form of a gigantic female figure in Egyptian veils and headdress holding a lantern aloft. That project came to naught in 1869, when Bartholdi's small sculptural models were rejected by the Egyptian khedive, Ismael Pasha, already up to his vice-royal ears in debt.

But in 1871, after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War and Napoleon III's exile by the new Third Republic, the idea for a monument to liberty was regarded more positively. Bartholdi refashioned his Egyptian design—the lantern became a torch, the headdress a crown of rays. He called his proposed sculpture "Liberty Enlightening the World."

Sailing to America, he garnered support from President Ulysses Grant and other public leaders. His idea was to erect this monument in New York Harbor, America's busiest port, where it would be seen by the greatest number of people, both Americans and travelers. The plan was for it to be finished by 1876, in time for the nation's centennial celebrations. And as a symbol of the friendship between the two nations, the statue was to be funded not by the French and U.S. governments, but by French and U.S. citi-

zens. Popular subscriptions were launched in France to pay for the gift itself and in America to underwrite the construction of the base.

The sheer size of a 150-foot-high sculpture posed unprecedented technical challenges. Traditional bronze casting was impractical—too costly, too heavy and too difficult to assemble in France and reassemble in America. Instead Bartholdi adopted the newer technique of fashioning the statue of

plates of repoussé copper—shaped by hammering the metal against wooden molds. The plates were also fashioned with slip joints to allow expansion and contraction in changing temperatures. To support this hollow construction, Bartholdi required a strong iron skeleton, for which he engaged a promising young engineer, Gustave Eiffel, whose eponymous tower would astound the world two decades later.

Meanwhile, Bartholdi faced money problems. The statue's \$400,000 price tag was a formidable sum for the French people to raise so soon after the Franco-Prussian debacle. Nevertheless, they eventually came through, and "La Liberté éclairant le monde" was temporarily assembled in Paris to let the French see the result of their donations. But in America, public interest

main façade) designed the pedestal in a massive style combining restrained Neoclassical pilasters with rusticated stone textures.

Hunt's pedestal was finished in 1886 on Bedloe's (now Liberty) Island. The rest of Bartholdi's statue and its skeleton had been shipped from France the previous year in 214 crates. Assembled on its place of honor, "Liberty Enlightening the World" was dedicated before a crowd of thousands by President Grover Cleveland on Oct. 28, 1886, and almost immediately was widely regarded as a symbol of the nation. At the time, the copper statue was a dull red-brown, but exposure to the elements gradually imparted the familiar green coat of verdigris.

Bartholdi reportedly used his mother as the model for the draped figure, whose Neoclassical drapery recalls the sculptural traditions of such late-18th-century artists as Antonio Canova and Antoine Houdon. His deliberate conservatism achieved an allegorical timelessness that Bartholdi deemed appropriate to the political ideal he wished to exalt.

Moreover, Bartholdi's figure conveys a series of ideas with conspicuous eloquence: Liberty's serious demeanor underscores the idea that liberty itself comes at a cost and must not be taken lightly; her robes evoke the republican ideals of ancient Greece and Rome. Her left hand and arm hold a tablet of the law—like that of Moses descending from

Mount Sinai—inscribed "JULY IV MDCCCLXXVI," the birth date of the nation (visible only from the viewing station in the crown, now closed to the public).

And no jokey foam-rubber replica of the crown can detract from the sublime balance of the real diadem, whose seven copper rays—symbolizing the seven seas and continents—complement in sculptural form the flood-lit gilt-copper flame of the torch (which replaced the former glass-and-copper-mesh torch during the statue's restoration of 1984-86). Finally, almost covered by the drapery, Liberty's left foot, which few viewers get to see, treads upon the broken shackles of tyranny. The receding position of her right leg makes the statue, when viewed from the south, seem to be striding on-



viewed from the south, ward to shed her light before her.

was sluggish. After the statue's massive torch-bearing arm was exhibited at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, it was installed in New York's Madison Square, where it stood as a curiosity for several years. Yet funds for the base only trickled in.

Finally, Joseph Pulitzer launched a fierce editorial campaign in his newspaper, the *World*, castigating America's wealthy for their parsimony and America's middle class for waiting to see what the rich would do. Pulitzer's hectoring worked: By 1885, the necessary \$250,000 was raised for the pedestal. To lend satisfying visual support to the immense sculpture, Richard Morris Hunt (future architect of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's

erica era has led pundits to denigrate the kind of monumental 19th-century sculpture represented by the Statue of Liberty and to reduce it to a cliché. But Bartholdi's masterpiece is a major example of traditional French academic art, and like so much refined academic work of its time, its details offer a narrative that we can still "read" for its symbolic meaning. Everyone knows the Statue of Liberty as a pre-eminent national icon. It's also a great work of art.

Mr. Scherer writes about music and the arts for the Journal. His new book is "A History of American Classical Music" (Sourcebooks).

❖ Top Picks



Actors playing Scottish soldiers in 'Black Watch.'

Manuel Harlan

A starkly physical look at Iraq war's human cost

London ■ theater

It was the big hit of the 2006 Edinburgh Festival and has toured everywhere from a warehouse under the Brooklyn Bridge to a former train factory in Sydney.

But because director John Tiffany's National Theatre of Scotland production "Black Watch" is conceived for a traverse stage, it is only just now being seen in London, in the converted Barbican Theatre as part of bite08. "Black Watch" is a masterpiece—there's no other word for this amalgam of narrative, dance, calisthenics and music. I have never seen a better example of physical theater, or a more thoughtful one.

The cast of 10 very fit men show, in words (mostly four-letter ones) and balletic movement, what it was like to be a soldier in the Iraq war as part of the Black Watch. That storied regiment has now, shamefully, lost its identity and been absorbed as a battalion in the Scottish regiment of the British Army.

Based on interviews between playwright Gregory Burke and returning veterans of the Iraq war, this is a spectacle that is seldom less than beautiful, as these young actors reveal what it was like to fight a hard-to-identify enemy defending its country against invasion—and what it was like to return home to countrymen who didn't value, and sometimes even disapproved of, what you'd done and suffered.

More, this two-hour performance is an elegy for a fighting unit with a 250-year history of recruiting from homogeneous groups of Scots with, says Mr. Burke, "lads serving alongside their fathers...groups of friends from even the smallest communities...our soldiers don't fight for Britain or for the government or for Scotland. They fight for their regiment. Their company. Their platoon. And for their mates."

The actors demonstrate this mutual complete trust as they give a convincing show of hand-to-hand combat; mime a game of pool, then transform the pool table into a transport vehicle hit by enemy fire; and carry off their injured and the dead, who dangle like puppets on strings. Their drilling is supremely precise, yet touching.

And in a stunning, long coup de théâtre, they tell the history of the regiment as the company dresses and undresses the speaker in the changing uniforms of the Black Watch, while tumbling him over their shoulders and backs using the movements for assembling and disassembling a cannon.

But this isn't just a high-energy, brilliant ensemble performance. It's theater in the service of truth, and sympathy and justice for these men and their culture which, amazingly and thrillingly, the National Theatre of Scotland has transformed into art.

—Paul Levy

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www.barbican.org.uk

Istanbul ■ art

The work of German multimedia artist Rosemarie Trockel is both diverse and obsessive. Known for her unconventional use of materials—from the wool in her so-called knitted pictures to the human hair in her contraption-like sculptures—Ms. Trockel (born 1952) returns again and again to a set group of images.

One of the first feminist artists to win a wide international following, Ms. Trockel transfers domestic objects or materials, like yarn or stove tops, into the realm of high art and along the way poses fundamental questions about human existence.

In "Occupying Territory," a beautifully curated show of video art at the Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, four of Ms. Trockel's videos from the early 1990s are placed alongside more recent works by two younger American women, Anna Gaskell and Miranda July. Compared to these newer, more technologically advanced works, Ms. Trockel's videos have the timeless urgency of a great silent film.

In "à la Motte," a 54-second piece from 1993, Ms. Trockel runs a black-and-white clip forward and backward to show a moth eating through, and then apparently restoring to its original state, a patch of cloth. The video has a primitiveness reminiscent of 1930s cartoons but also a mythic pull, as it reminds viewers of the tale of Penelope, Odysseus's wife, who wove and then unwove the same piece of cloth every day to forestall her suitors.

In "Mr. Sun" (1991), Ms. Trockel contrasts a soundtrack of Brigitte Bardot singing the chipper title song with dire images of an ordinary stove. Gradually a chasm opens between the remote appeal of the crooning Ms. Bardot (who appears frequently in Ms. Trockel's work), and the reality of everyday life.

The videos by younger women show that feminist aesthetics have moved on but not necessarily up. In "Still Life" (2007), photographer and filmmaker Ms. Gaskell (born 1969) uses split screens to chronicle a faceless woman's identity crisis. In "Haysha Royko" (2003), performance artist and author Ms. July (born 1974) uses a single take and digital manipulation to render the high pathos and low comedy of an airport waiting room.

While the newer videos are compelling—we leave their little theaters glad we saw them—Ms. Trockel's work follows us out of the museum.

—J. S. Marcus

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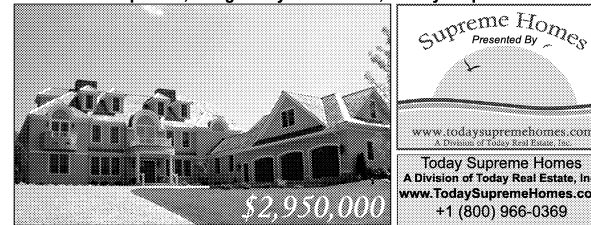
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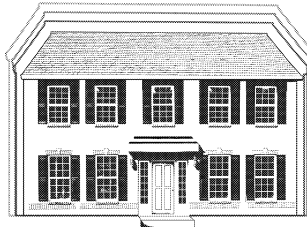


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Beurs van Berlage Museum
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www.beursvanberlage.nl

theater

"Vondelpark Open Air Theater 2008" is a series of weekly free open-air music, dance, comedy and cabaret performances in Amsterdam's Vondelpark.

Vondelpark Open-Air Theater
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☎ 31-20-4283-360
www.openluchttheater.nl

Barcelona

history

"Coinage at War: Catalonia in Napoleonic Europe" examines the political role of coins and minting during the Peninsular War (1808-1814).

Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya
Until May 3, 2009
☎ 34-93-6220-376
www.mnac.es

Berlin

photography

"Berlin in the Spotlight: the Blockade of 1948/1949—The Photojournalist Henry Ries" shows black-and-white photographs documenting the Soviet Union's attempt to force the Western allies out of post-World War II Berlin.

German Historical Museum
Until Sept. 21
☎ 49-30-2030-40
www.dhm.de

photography

"Pigozzi and the Paparazzi" shows photographs capturing celebrity culture and paparazzi imagery by Erich Salomon, Jean Pigozzi, Weegee, Helmut Newton and others.

Museum für Fotografie
Until Nov. 16
☎ 49-30-3186-4825
www.smb.museum/smb

Bern

art

"Charles the Bold (1433-1477)" shows art from Burgundian court culture, including tapestries, luxurious fabrics and embroideries, books, panel paintings, parade armor and jewelry.

Historisches Museum Bern
Until Aug. 24
☎ 41-31-3507-711
www.bhm.ch

Budapest

photography

"Soul and Body" follows aesthetic and technical changes in photographic history through works by Hungarian-born photographers André Kertész, László Moholy-Nagy, Brassai and Robert Capa.

Museum of Fine Arts
Until Aug. 24
☎ 36-1-4697-100
www.mfab.hu

Dublin

festival

"Dublin Circus Fest 2008" presents performances in the streets of Dublin's Temple Bar district.

Dublin Circus Fest
July 10 to July 13

☎ 353-1-6772-255
www.templebar.ie

festival

"Waltons Guitar Festival 2008" features classical, jazz, folk and world acoustic guitar music in various Dublin venues.

Waltons Guitar Festival
Until July 6
☎ 353-5991-46287
www.gfi.ie

Florence

art

"The Inheritance of Giotto—Florentine Art from 1340 to 1375" shows 60 works, including paintings by Giotto, sculptures by Andrea Pisano and works by such artists as Agnolo and Taddeo Gatti.

Galleria degli Uffizi
Until Nov. 2
☎ 39-055-2388-651
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Frankfurt

art

"Total Enlightenment: Moscow Conceptual Art 1960-1990" shows works from late and post-Soviet Russia by artists Erik Bulatov, Ilya Kabakov, Komar/Melamid, Alexander Kosolapov and others.

Schirn Kunsthalle
Until Sept. 14
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www.schirn-kunsthalle.de

art

"Parmigianino and his Circle: Prints from the Baselitz Collection" shows prints by the Mannerist painter Francesco Mazzola, known as Il Parmigianino (1503-1540).

Collection Marianne Lehmann, photo Johnathan Watts, MEG



Vodou bottles with three faces, in terra cotta, on show in Geneva.

'Project to Construct

Glasses for Every Soviet Citizen,' from 1976, by Leonid Sokov, on show in Frankfurt.

Städel—Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie
Until Sept. 7
☎ 49-69-6050-9802-00
www.staedelmuseum.de

Geneva

ethnography

"Vodou, a Way of Life" shows a collection of Haitian Vodou objects.

Musée d'ethnographie
Until Aug. 31
☎ 41-22-4184-550
www.ville-ge.ch/meg

Hamburg

fashion

"Adieu Yves Saint Laurent" pays tribute to recently deceased French fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent with an exhibition of the museum's prêt-à-porter collections created 1970-2000.

Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe
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London

art

"The Ramayana: Love and Valour in India's Great Epic" exhibits 120 intimate narrative paintings from the British Library's 17th-century manuscript illustrating the Hindu epic tale of the Ramayana.

The British Library

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photography

"Painted Photographs: Coloured Portraiture in India" shows photographs of Indian rulers standing against dramatic and theatrical backdrops colored by hand with paint, a technique that developed during the second half of the 19th century.

The Brunei Gallery
July 10 to Sept. 27
☎ 44-20-7898-4915
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Madrid

film

"Chaplin in Images" follows the career of Charlie Chaplin through photographs, posters and film clips.

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Monaco

history

"Egyptian Queens" shows artifacts illustrating the lives of Cleopatra, Nefertiti, Nefertari and other wives, mothers and daughters of pharaohs.

Grimaldi Forum Monaco
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Munich

art

"From Düsseldorf to Munich: Artifacts from the Estate of Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz" shows a selection of ivory carvings, bronze sculptures and miniature paintings from the art collection of Johann Wilhelm von der Pfalz (1658-1716).

Bayerisches Nationalmuseum
Until Sept. 28
☎ 49-89-2112-401
www.bayerisches-nationalmuseum.de

Paris

art

"Traces of the Sacred" shows major works by 200 internationally renowned artists tracing the need for spirituality in the art of the 20th cen-

tury. Included are works by Carl David Friedrich, Kandinsky, Malevich, Picasso, Bill Viola and others.

Centre Georges Pompidou
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city tour

"Paris Treasure Hunt," organized by the Paris City Hall in partnership with the 3rd, 6th, 13th, 18th and 19th arrondissements, gives participants the chance to discover unusual sights of the city. The contest involves navigating Paris streets and asking mysterious Paris characters for clues to the hidden "treasures."

Tresors de Paris
July 5
www.tresorsdeparis.fr

fashion

"Valentino: Themes and Variations" exhibits 200 haute couture designs in a retrospective of Italian couturier Valentino Garavani.

Musée des Arts Décoratifs
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☎ 33-1-4455-5750
www.ucad.fr

Rome

history

"The Inheritance of Luigi Einaudi: The Birth of the Italian Republic and the Construction of Europe" commemorates the 60th anniversary of the election of Luigi Einaudi as president of the Republic of Italy.

Palazzo del Quirinale
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Vienna

furniture

"Formless Furniture" shows a collection of experimental seating furniture that traces the rejection of traditional furniture forms from the 1960s to today.

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