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Quarterly Meeting Features Exercise for Life

Ron Karpick

THREE FITNESS EXPERTS will share their ideas on health and exercise at the Lake Barcroft Village Quarterly Meeting, Monday, November 18 at 7 p.m. at the Mason District Governmental Center.

Tim Sun, founder of Sun Fitness, LLC, is an exercise physiologist with a background in physical therapy. He and his team offer group classes and one on one personal training in your home. Karen Garcia is the founder of Studio Body Logic, which is the first Authentic Pilates studio in northern Virginia. She will share the benefits of Pilates in the form of safe, effective and complete workout that leave one refreshed and alert with a feeling of physical and mental wellbeing. Stair Calhoun will share her approach to Yoga, a 5000-year-old mind-body workout which combines strengthening and stretching poses with deep breathing and meditation. Stair owned a yoga studio for sixteen years, Little River Yoga, in Annandale and Arlington. She currently teaches for Fairfax County at Green Spring Garden Park and at her home for small groups. ■

New Hand Rail at Beach 3

Richard Morton

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, a member of the Lake Barcroft Village asked for a railing to be installed to assist those of us who are not so steady on our feet getting into or out of the lake. The Village forwarded that request to LBA and the WID, but there were other priorities for a while. This year the project was begun and has recently been completed enough to use. Caps for the posts have been installed. Design suggestions came from several sources. The idea that was eventually selected is two-sided to allow it to be used by those swimming inside and outside the ropes. It can be used by anyone, but the first reports of using it are from appreciative Village members. We appreciate the involvement and construction of the handrail by the WID.

In addition to the original suggestion and some design ideas, the Village also contributed \$500 toward the construction of the railing. ■



YEAR-END GIVING

The end of the calendar year is a time of reflection for many people, a time to prioritize support for non-profits whose work has been seen over the course of the year. Lake Barcroft Village provides a multiplier to financial contributions in the form of volunteers who contribute services. The sustainability of the Village depends on donations that supplement dues income. Gifts made now will assure that the Village will be in good shape to carry out its mission in years to come.

New Members

We welcome new Full Member Mandy Holt and new Social Members Walt Cooper and Jan Barrett, and Marie-France Smith.

THE Villager

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Lake Barcroft Village Health Support Networks

Vic Utgoff

THE LAKE BARCROFT VILLAGE Board of Directors has decided to establish Health Support Networks for chronic conditions that are privately identified by Village members as topics they would like to discuss in confidence with other members sharing the same condition.

Rationale:

Lake Barcroft Village was established as "A group of neighbors providing support and volunteer time to enable our neighbors to continue to thrive," that is, "neighbors helping neighbors." There is of course a social component to that, and Lake Barcroft Village has programs that are appreciated for their social connections. Yet, there is something that often leads to feelings of isolation that we have not addressed—health issues.

When a person is newly diagnosed with a chronic condition it is not uncommon for that person to feel that the normal circle of friends—and even family—don't fully understand. Doctors provide clinical advice. And, there may be support groups that serve wide areas. But, there can still be a desire to talk with someone who is both nearby, and familiar.

In a Washington Post column by Colman McCarthy on September 10, Dr. Kelli Harding is quoted as saying:

There's a social dimension to health that we've completely overlooked in our scramble to find the best and most cutting-edge medical care... Ultimately, what affects our health in the most meaningful ways has as much to do with how we treat one another, how we live, and how we think about

what it means to be human than with anything that happens in the doctor's office.

The Lake Barcroft Village Board expects that enabling private discussions among Lake Barcroft Village members who share the same chronic conditions can provide opportunities for more understanding discussions of those conditions and the problems they may impose.

Establishing Lake Barcroft Village Health Support Networks:

Lake Barcroft Village members dealing with a chronic condition are invited to find out if there are other members privately interested in discussing that condition. If so, they can contact the Lake Barcroft Village Executive Director Cindy Waters (703-354-052, lbvcoord@gmail.com) to register their interest. Cindy will keep a private paper record of members who register their interest in any specific chronic condition.

When a Lake Barcroft Village member makes contact with Cindy about joining a network for a specific chronic condition, but no other members have yet done so, Cindy will keep that first request pending a second. Appearance of a second will allow Cindy to provide each the contact information of the other, and a new HSN will have been formed.

When a Lake Barcroft Village member calls about joining a HSN that has already been formed, Cindy will provide the contact information of the newcomer to the members of the HSN and their contact information to the new-

Continued on page 3

Health Support, continued

comer.

Guidelines for Lake Barcroft Village Health Support Networks:

The Lake Barcroft Village Board expects that Health Support Networks that form will determine for themselves how they might function. The HSNs will maintain the privacy of their members and may develop in different ways, depending on the individuals involved. (One network has already been formed: Health Support Network for Diabetes. Members of that network keep in touch by email and by phone. They have no meetings as a

whole and no group chair.)

The Lake Barcroft Village will provide no resources to HSNs, except for the initial communications provided by Cindy that are required to enable members and prospective members to make contact with one another.

The Lake Barcroft Village is not responsible for any medical advice or legal matters that may be discussed by members of Lake Barcroft Village HSNs.

Cindy has no other involvement with HSNs, other than to keep confidential paper records of the membership of any HSNs that have formed, and of Lake Barcroft Village members who have indicated that

they are interested in forming a new HSN, when and if another Lake Barcroft Village member informs Cindy of the same interest.

The Lake Barcroft Village Board notes that HSNs could be formed to support other possible needs of Lake Barcroft Village members. For example, an HSN could be formed for Wellness, or for Nutrition. Many of us have had to ditch old habits, even giving up the idea of dieting, and learn new ways of eating. Another variant might be to have a Health Support for Caregivers. Participants might be dealing with a variety of chronic conditions, yet issues of self-care and coping may be common. ■

Kent Knowles Speaks on Lake Barcroft Wildlife

Mary Margaret Flannery

DID YOU KNOW that at Lake Barcroft you might see a bald eagle flying overhead and not recognize it because of its call? Bald eagles “squeak.”

That and many other wildlife facts were presented to interested Lake Barcroft Village members at Terry Stone’s home during a September 17th evening symposium. Kent Knowles offered a relaxed presentation while he talked about mammals and birds in the Lake Barcroft environs.

Kent is a 40+ year resident of Lake Barcroft; for over two decades he worked with and was an advocate for wildlife, and specifically raptors, in the northern Virginia area. He founded and was chief raptor handler in the Raptor Conservancy of Virginia. He had to close down the organization recently, but he gained unusual experience caring for and educating the public about raptors that could not be released into the wild, and

rehabilitating and releasing those that could eventually survive on their own.

Kent talked about the many well-known animals that live in and around the lake, such as deer, foxes, rabbits, beavers, bats, racoons, chipmunks, and not-so-cute rodents. But the more fascinating information had to do with raptors, about which he knows a great deal.

Raptors are defined as large carnivorous birds that use their beaks and their talons to catch prey. The best known examples are eagles, hawks, falcons, and owls.

Kent noted that one might see three different types of owls in Lake Barcroft. One is the Barred Owl that seeks out rodents and sounds like a barking dog. Another is the Eastern screech owl which is grey and fairly common in our part of the country. A third is the Great Horned Owl, powerful enough to pick up and subdue a rabbit. Crows

will make a ruckus to warn other crows when this owl is in their vicinity.

Kent was careful to note that while a state permit may be required to handle and care for animals, one needs a federal permit to handle birds. ■



Photo by Shirley Timashev

A trained Master Gardener led a tour for the Lake Barcroft Village at Green Spring Gardens. From left to right: Clyde Williams, Master Gardener Carla Roeper, Linda Woodrow and Cathy Williams.

Interview: Chuck Haberlein

Anne Murphy O'Neil

CHUCK HABERLEIN AND I are having our conversation in the O'Neil great room where he will soon present the story and film documentary of the re-discovery of the sunken wreck of the USS Yorktown.

How did you first become interested in the ships of the U.S. Navy?

Chuck: As a wee small child, I first became interested in airplanes, watching my Dad build a model airplane. When I was six or seven, we visited a cousin who lived in Kansas. He was a real model airplane buff and gave me a couple of books on airplanes. I pored over them until they fell apart. They didn't even have any bindings left.

I got a subscription to Air Trails magazine, and started building model airplanes, while not necessarily completing them. Finally, my mom said "You're not going to bring another model airplane into this house until you finish the ones you have."

That's when I turned to ships.

We lived in Travers City, Michigan, near the bay of Lake Michigan. I loved living near water, and still do. That's where I first saw ships of the U.S. Navy. There was a reserve force, 185-foot patrol craft escorts (PCEs) and sub-chasers.

Did you pursue this interest in school?

Chuck: Not so much. It seems I had a great genius for taking classes I wasn't interested in. I liked history, so I thought I ought to learn about history. I signed up to take a Philosophy of History course, for instance. I got booted out as a senior.

Then I tried to enlist in the Navy, but they said my eyes were too bad. They're pretty good now, though, thanks to cataract surgery and lens implants.

So I went to work in a machine shop and learned more about museum curating than anything I had learned in college. Not just stuff, also people. So many interesting characters, the full range. The owner of the shop, for instance, was smart and analytical. He lived in northern Michigan and rather enjoyed life.

Do you still like living near water?

Chuck: Oh, yes. I used to do a lot of kayaking and stand-up paddling. In 2016 I broke my upper right arm. In the re-setting process, I had my arthritic shoulder replaced too. That brought a complete reversal of strength and control from right to left arm.

So these days I like shooting targets more. I experience muscle reflexes and the precision and awareness I need to hit the target. You and Ellen are members of the Village.

Chuck: We love the opportunities for social interaction—expanding our horizons and long-term possibilities for living.

Do you have a favorite TV show?

Chuck: No. I long ago concluded that watching TV was mind-bogglingly wasteful of my time. Ditto for movies. But I get many magazines—two subscriptions each to science, astronomy, Navy, and airplane magazines.

How high is your stock of unread magazines?

Chuck: About 6" high. I shave off about a half an inch a month.

The books I want to read would reach the moon.

You'll soon be sharing another of your fascinations—bringing back the USS Yorktown from the ocean depths where it has lain for 88 years.

Chuck: Yes. The Yorktown was sunk with torpedoes fired by a Japanese submarine at the Battle of Midway in June of 1942. Now the idea was to go out finally and find it, as part of a National Geographic documentary.

So now your friends in the Village can look forward to hearing and seeing the story. ■



Spanish Conversation Group

The group is currently talking about poems by Pablo Neruda, Chilean poet. A few weeks ago group leader Pedro Turina, Beachway Drive, started the group off with "Oda al Diccionario" [Ode to the Dictionary]. At the most recent meeting, members Beth Auerbach and Gloria Suslow, Patrick Henry Drive, talked about Neruda's "Oda al Mar," Neruda's background, and his admiration of Walt Whitman's poetry. The group also listened to the beginning of one of the first poems that made Neruda famous, "Poema 20," of his collection *Veinte Poemas de Amor y una Canción Desesperada* [Twenty Love Poems and a Hopeless Song]. ■



Gary Jewell Talks about Cruises

Shirley Timashev

GARY JEWELL has extensive experience with cruising, and he shared tips with the audience attending the Lake Barcroft Village Quarterly Meeting on September 9.

Although cruise ships can have last-minute deals, Jewell advises advance planning and making reservations early, because there is more availability and there are even possible cost savings. Include in your plans consideration of shore tours and excursions. You can usually arrange for outings that are less expensive and with fewer participants. The same advice applies to pre-cruise and post-cruise stays. You may settle for round trip airfare organized by the cruise, but arranging your own also gives you flexibility. However, if you purchase your own airline ticket be sure to arrange for arriving a day before the ship sails and plan on a night in a hotel.

There are a lot of great resources for individuals and couples who are planning to take a cruise. One website is www.cruisecritic.com, which is like TripAdvisor for cruising. It has forums that deal with specific issues, and users provide reviews of cruises. TripAdvisor.com is a source of information about port cities and things to do on landing.

The cruise line websites are important places to check, and www.cruise.com has useful information. Some travel agents specialize in cruise travel. There is a local travel club called Shillelaghs that has lots of deals, and the Lake Barcroft group known as Marco Polo can provide referrals. ■

Village Members Targeted in Scams

Jane Guttman

This month we'd like to highlight some of the scams (phone, email) that have been received (but not acted upon, fortunately) by our members.

One of our members received an email seemingly from his pastor asking for urgent help. The member responded with his phone number and that was the end of that. He reported the attempt to his pastor. Had he responded to the email asking how to help, he would have been told to purchase gift cards or wire funds by Western Union. Sometimes, these emails will contain a request for a specific amount of money to pay a hospital bill or get the friend out of jail for a driving offense. In all these cases, it is most likely that your friend's email account was hacked and emails like this were sent to their entire mailing list. Don't respond to the email; call your friend or a family member to check.

In another incident, a member of Lake Barcroft Village was phoned by someone purporting to be her grandson. His voice was weak; the reason for that, he said, was that he had been in a car accident and his mouth was bruised. He said the woman in the other car was pregnant and might lose the baby. He was asking for money to be sent to a NY district attorney. Despite being frightened, the Village member called Information with the name of the "district attorney" and found out he did not exist. Finally, she was able to reach her grandson by cell phone and was relieved to hear that he was fine.

This writer received an email to her work email address ostensibly from the IRS, saying that she was owed a refund of \$944.79 and should click on the email to start the refund process in motion. The IRS never emails or calls—they only send letters by USPS. This was

what is called a "phishing" scam. Had I clicked on the link I would have been asked for personal information which the sender (a name I didn't recognize) would then use to hack my account. I forwarded the email to the IRS. Here are the instructions from the IRS web site:

If you receive an email claiming to be from the IRS that contains a request for personal information, taxes associated with a large investment, inheritance or lottery:

1. Don't reply.
2. Don't open any attachments. They can contain malicious code that may infect your computer or mobile phone.
3. Don't click on any links. Visit our identity protection page if you clicked on links in a suspicious email or website and entered confidential information.
4. Forward - preferably with the full email headers - the email as-is to us at phishing@irs.gov. Don't forward scanned images because this removes valuable information.
5. Delete the original email. ■

Memories of 9/11/2001

ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, I was in Orlando, FL, attending a conference on modeling and simulation hosted, in part, by the Army's modeling and simulation center in Orlando. Many of the sessions were about military applications of modeling and simulation, so many of the participants were members of the military. I don't know how the word got to the group, but I first learned about what had happened when the hotel that was hosting the conference set up a television set in the lobby of the convention area. Once word got out, many of the attendees gathered around the TV to watch the coverage. Others went back to their rooms to watch on the TVs there and to call people they knew in the Pentagon. If I recall correctly, there were a couple of attendees who had offices in the part of the Pentagon that had been hit.

On Tuesday, September 11, 2001, Dottie was in New York for a meeting. I knew she was staying in the east side midtown apartment she shared with her twin sister, and that usually she walked between the apartment and various meeting places she frequented. I waited until shortly before noon and called her, figuring she would be back in the apartment by then. She was. She told me that when she got to the office where the meeting was, everyone was huddled around a TV set, but at that point she did not know what had happened. Of course, her meeting never happened, but on the walk back to the apartment, the change in the city was dramatic. People were crying and hugging complete strangers. The word was already out that there was no way out of New York that day, so everyone should just stay where they were. The following day the trains started running again, and Dottie got home that way.

Back in Orlando, where everyone who was not local had flown there for the conference, the mood went from shock to somber to worry—about how they were going to get home since all flights had been canceled for an indefinite period. The conference went on, but



Richard Morton

This photo accompanied a Snopes on-line article published September 14, 2016

attendance at the sessions was dropping off rapidly. Word soon got out that rental car companies were telling people who had cars that they could drive them home without incurring a one way drop off charge. The conference had been scheduled to run through Friday, but by noon on Thursday everything fell apart and the rest of the conference was canceled. I had a rental car, but it did not have cruise control, and I could not drive for 14 hours without it. Then I heard that someone had gotten a seat on the Auto Train. I called Amtrak, but by then all the regular trains were sold out, but when I asked about the Auto Train, I was told, "You're in luck; we just started accepting pedestrian passengers yesterday." I got a seat, but a colleague of mine who called about 20 minutes after I did was told it was sold out. An old friend who lived in the Melbourne area offered to follow me to the car rental place to return my car and drive me to Sanford on her way home. I called Dottie to tell her what I was doing, and of course she agreed to meet the train I was on. The weird thing about the Auto Train was that people who were not traveling with someone else were not given seatmates. If I had known that I could have gotten my friend the seat next to me.

Back home, the mood of the city and my office had not improved much, nor had Dottie's despair from having seen the smoke rising above New York City. We spent the day talking about what we had seen and heard, about people who knew somebody who knew somebody, and about how we felt watching the world collapse. ■

Chuck Haberlein Discusses Sunken Ship

On Nov. 5 Chuck Haberlein treated Village members to a fascinating presentation on his experience filming the wreckage of the USS Yorktown, sunk with torpedoes fired by a Japanese submarine at the Battle of Midway in June of 1942. Anne and Will O'Neil hosted the Lake Barcroft Village Symposium, and Clyde Williams provided baklava for the event.

OUR MEMBERS TRAVEL THE WORLD

My Secluded Botswana Safari

Linda Woodrow

HAVE YOU EVER WANTED to visit a country because of a book you read? Alexander McCall Smith's series about the "No.1 Ladies' Detective Agency" set in Botswana, Africa was such a great influence that I had to visit the country. In September my wish was fulfilled and I was not disappointed. After long flights from Dulles to Atlanta, to Johannesburg, South Africa, then onto Livingstone, Zambia, I met the other four members of our safari group. With our guide we headed to our tented camp on the Zambezi River. Immediately we began to see the first of thousands of animals we would photograph in the next two weeks. During a sunset cruise on the river, we viewed buffalo, crocodile, red lechwe antelope and many varieties of birds.

Our next day was on to Zimbabwe for a guided walking tour to explore Victoria Falls, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the world's most impressive cataract. The name of the National Park, Mosi-oa-Tunya means "the smoke that thunders." At times while walking on the gorge rim you are in a rain forest and enveloped with the spray and mist of the falls – an "African Blessing" the locals say! That afternoon we headed to a white rhinoceros preserve and with two Rangers with rifles accompanying us we trekked on foot to find 8 of the 10 endangered square lipped rhinos that are being guarded 24/7 by the Rangers. We felt very privileged to view these massive animals in their natural habitat.

A visit to a local village with a primary school gave us a brief introduction to the challenges and demands of living in the bush. We had brought school supplies and dental hygiene items for the students.

The following day by road and small motor boat we crossed the Chobe River to Botswana's Chobe National Park. Four countries,

Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe meet at this juncture and a massive bridge is being built by a Chinese company to link Botswana and Zambia. Hundreds of trucks on both sides of the river were parked waiting to board the ferry to cross the river. Only 16 trucks a day can use the ferry.

Our group took a private cruise on the Chobe River which introduced us to hundreds of buffalo and impala grazing on an island with crocodiles, hippo and monitor lizards on the banks and in the water. Herons, marabou stork and jacana birds were abundant too.

An afternoon flight on a 12 passenger Cessna took us to Linyanti private reserve- the first of three private camps we would visit by light aircraft. Each one was a different ecosystem of Botswana's Okavango Delta. At one camp we



Linda Woodrow

Photos by Linda Woodrow

found a watery marsh of interconnecting canals and rivers where hundreds of red lechwe and tsessebe antelope were browsing on the grassy islands. By mokoro, a traditional dugout canoe, and propelled by a poler we had a closer view of this watery world for animals.



Impala

Our tented camp was very typical of the early days of safari travel but adequate for our needs with a private bathroom attached and a small porch in front. Every day we went on an early morning and late afternoon game run when the animals were most active. One day while on a game run, our guide, an excellent tracker, found leopard tracks in the sand. We followed in our 4-wheel drive vehicle and discovered a beautiful animal posing on a tall ancient termite mound.



Mokoro

Continued on page 8

Travel, continued

We silently watched the leopard and took many photos. Suddenly a warthog that inhabited the old termite mound returned to find an unwelcome visitor sitting on his house. They warily watched each other with the warthog carefully circling the termite mound while keeping a safe distance. Finally, the warthog trotted fast away to safety and the cat took a snooze. It was incredible watching this drama unfold.

Elephants are what I came to see and was pleased to observe many family interactions in the following days. It was fun to watch three-month-old elephants just learning to use their trunks by splashing in a water hole. It is reported that more than 70,000 elephants are in Botswana. Our flight to another camp, the Gomoti, brought us to a different type of terrain--the



Leopard

dry savannah where acacia, mopane, mahogany and baobab trees abound. Elephants, giraffes, kudus, wildebeest, zebra, monkeys, baboons and the predators of lion, leopard and the rare wild dog were tracked and observed. These days we encountered difficult driving on the Kalahari sands where you experienced an “African massage” from the dry sandy rutted roads and off-road tracking. The animals gathered around the few water holes due to a long drought in this area. A talk by a researcher on wild

dogs gave us a greater understanding of their habits. About 900 live in Botswana and run in packs of 30 or more. We were fortunate to find one pack at the waterhole in front of our camp and later followed the group in our vehicle to discover they were all resting in the shade after a long run. Mounds of black, brown and white lumps!

Our days were filled with the excitement and adventure of the search for zebra, giraffe, elephants, hippo, lion, ostrich, crocodile, monkeys, baboons, wild dogs, impala, other antelopes, and many varieties of birds. Too soon it was time for the drive to the last airstrip to head back to civilization and home. For me this was an incredible journey meeting the kind and friendly people of Botswana, absorbing the culture, and observing the flora and fauna of this special country—and all because of a book! ■

Family photos



Delightful Reykjavik

Marcia Grabowski

Rick Kercz and Marcia Grabowski at Gullfoss

OVER FOUR DAYS in Reykjavik, we packed in everything of interest, in a window of extraordinarily sunny, warm weather for late September.

We started out with the day-long Golden Circle Tour in southwest Iceland. Located in the Hvita river canyon, Gullfoss (“Golden Falls”)—

one of Iceland’s most beloved waterfalls—is one of three main attractions on this tour. The location almost became a hydroelectric dam in the 20th century when its owners signed a deal with foreign investors to construct a dam across the river. Fortunately, the daughter of one of the owners, Sigridur Tomasdottir, saved it by taking legal action against the developers. Gullfoss and the surrounding area was later sold to the Icelandic government, and made a permanent conservation site in 1979. Sigridur is often referred to as Iceland’s first environmentalist.

Thingvellir, the second site on the tour, is a national park founded

in 1930, and one of three UNESCO World Heritage sites in Iceland. It is the site of the Althing, Iceland’s parliament from the 10th to 18th centuries. The park is in a rift valley marking the crest of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, and the meeting place of the North American and Eurasian tectonic plates. This geology created rocky cliffs and fissures like the Almannagjá fault, which marks the boundary of the Mid-Atlantic Rift, the space between the two plates. There are daily earthquakes, most of them in the 2 and 3 magnitude range on the Richter Scale. Throughout Iceland, there are ravines and fields of lava rock, caused by the plates and volcanos. There are over 100 volcanos, the most famous active

Continued on page 9

Travel, continued

one being Mount Hekla, which erupted last in 2000. A volcano on the island of Heimaey erupted in 1973, after a hiatus of about 5,000 years. The town was mostly evacuated to the mainland by boats and aircraft during the first night of the five-month-long eruption, which nearly destroyed the village.

The third site on the Golden Circle tour is The Great Geyser (“Gusher”). It erupts about every 15 minutes, to everyone’s delight. This was the first geyser described in print; it can throw boiling water up to 200 feet. The Strokkur geyser nearby is now the most active.

On our last night, we saw a performance at the Harpa Concert Hall. Opened in 2011 - designed by a Danish firm in consultation with the pianist and conductor Vladimir Ashkenazy - the building has a steel frame with geometric-shaped glass panels of different colors. We were told by a cab driver that each panel has a unique shape. Given that there are thousands, we took his word for it. The views from inside the building toward the harbor are worth a visit.

Finally, two art exhibits we ran into unexpectedly and happily: the first, an exhibit by the living Icelandic artist Hulda Hakon at the National Gallery. Most of Hulda’s work is in bas relief, and her themes run from concern for the environment to customs of communication. Many of her works feature geese, swans and ravens. The second was the “Monument to the Unknown Bureaucrat,” Iceland’s tribute to its civil servants sculpted in 1994, located close to the harbor. It is the figure of a man carrying a briefcase, with a large slab of volcanic basalt where the



Left: Rick at lava field

Above: Monument to the Unknown Bureaucrat

Lower left: The Blue Lagoon

torso and head should be. Is it serious or satirical? You decide.

Other notes: tipping is truly not expected, more so even than in other parts of Europe; we were amazed at the surprise of taxi drivers and waiters when we tipped. Menus in restaurants include items such as minke whale and puffin, both of which were not unexpected, nonetheless dismaying to see. Sales tax on most items is around 25%; we were grateful to discover this was included on the price tag of the item, NOT an additional amount. (It’s very easy to get the VAT refunded at specific VAT windows at the airport.) Though beautiful, the

Blue Lagoon is a tourist trap. The expressionist style (modern Gothic?) Hallgrímskirkja, designed after the rocks, mountains and glaciers in Iceland, is not to be missed.

Overall, we had a lovely trip and found Reykjavik easily walkable, safe, extremely friendly, with delicious food of all sorts and easy-to-access transportation. The icing on the cake, I must say finally, was the Hotel Holt, a family-owned small hotel ideally located, with impeccable service and cleanliness, as well as an amazing collection of the finest Icelandic art throughout the property. ■