

aircraft in 1945. Fourteen people died, but the building suffered no structural damage and reopened a few days later. “I’m in my eighties so I can remember the news reports,” Warstler writes.

About a Bach

Even when both parties speak English, some things still get lost in translation. In response to Boyd Matson’s Unbound column, (“Facing Fears in Kiwiland,” April 2008) reader and ex-New Zealander **Janet-Anne Boykin** clarifies things. “Sir Edmund Hillary was not saying that he had a ‘little bash at the beach’ but was referring to a ‘bach’ at the beach. A bach is typically a small house for weekend trips or summer vacations.” The origin of the name is fuzzy, Boykin writes. It is believed to have come from the phrase ‘bachelors quarters,’ and she says these homes often had outdoor

Keeping Up With the Jenses

In July, *National Geographic Kids* Vice President and Publisher Rainer Jense sold his house and set off for a year-long, round-the-world journey with his wife, Carol, and their two sons Tyler (11) and Stefan (8). After four years of planning, what finally pushed him to leave were the questions that rattled in his mind: What can we learn from other cultures? What can we learn about our own? He says, “I realized I needed to know, and I wanted the kids to know too.” The Jenses will be blogging about the trip for *Traveler*, and



readers are already enjoying their dispatches. “The ultimate dream,” said one commenter, while another asked: “Can you take my kids for a few weeks?” Keep up with the Jenses at our blog, www.intelligenttravelblog.com.

plumbing and simple facilities indoors. “Over time these quarters grew to resemble regular homes with proper plumbing and kitchens,” she writes. “I remember spending many holidays at a bach north of Auckland, where the key was hidden outside.”

Lessons Learned

Renee Hable of Madison, Wisconsin, pointed out that our “Strange Planet” page (July/August 2008) incorrectly named the San Francisco cable cars as the only U.S. historical landmark that moved. “My husband and I just booked a three-day cruise with the Maine Windjammer Association, and several of them are registered as historic landmarks—they move too,” she wrote. Though the San Francisco cable cars were among the first moving landmarks, many trains, boats, and carousels have been named in the years since. And several readers wrote in about “Canada’s Secret Hideaways” (May/June 2008), wondering why we **had shrunk Canada** from being the second to third largest country. Oops. We confused the total land mass of the country with its total area, which includes both land and waterways.

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WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ON OUR TRAVEL BLOG



Only in Paris: Many readers were pleased when we featured the Paris café Le Refuge des Fondues, which evades a common stemware tax by serving wine in baby bottles. “Seating is cramped so you become fast friends with those around you,” said Thomas Bowden, who visited in February of last year. “Met people from all over Europe that evening and had one of the best nights of my trip.”

Parental Oversight: When the TSA rolled out a new three-tiered screening system, delegating families to the slowest lane, one commenter rolled his eyes. “As a parent who travels with his toddler, I’m concerned I’d be shamed out of the speedier line and stuck with those who don’t realize they can’t carry their guitar/defibrillator/oxygen tank through the metal detector. Some of us have our act together and have well-behaved kids, believe it or not.”

Go Team: When the International Olympic Committee revealed its short list of sites for the 2016 games, M.L. Harris quickly cast his bid. “I’m rooting for Rio. They could use the economic infusion the most, and it would be historic.”

Join the discussion on Intelligent Travel, www.intelligenttravelblog.com.

YOUR STORY

Three Hours to Burn a Body

We asked students to write about a travel adventure that changed them. Out of 500 essays, *Traveler* selected this entry as the winner. By SUZANNE ROBERTS

I have come to watch the bodies burn. I meet my guide, and he shoos away beggars and children selling shells that hold candles and marigolds—an offering for Mother Ganga. The murky river holds a thousand such lights, stars floating in dawn waters—real stars hidden by a tent of clouds. Every few minutes, the Untouchables travel barefoot down the stairs, carrying another gold-clad body on their shoulders. They chant, and the family follows their dead. I watch the Untouchables tend to the “eternal flame,” watch the living in order to avoid the dead. My guide says, “This one almost finished,” points to a pyre. I can almost make out a skull, a flame twisting from the ghost of an eye. “Three hours,” he says, “to burn a body.” My legs are hot from the flames. Ash rains onto my hair. “Good luck,” he points to the ash, “Very good luck, indeed.”

“Come,” he says, and leads me into a cold concrete building where elderly wait to die. I meet a creased and toothless woman. She holds out her hand, and a wrinkled breast sags from her sari. She tucks it back in unapologetically. The guide explains, “She needs money for her pyre. Wood very expensive. Good karma for you.” I offer her 500 rupees, a large sum by Indian standards. I want to protect my karma. The guide says, “Not enough. You must give more.” I hand over 500 more and walk back to the shore where the boatman is waiting. From the river, I look toward the burning bodies. Children run above, along the rooftop of the concrete building where a woman waits to die. The fires below create hot wind that lifts their colorful kites and their laughter into flight.



A Hindu offering at the Ganges river.

Submit Your Story! Send your favorite 300-word travel experiences to: Travel_Talk@ngs.org.