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Trips, tips and deals

Roses reign on English garden tour

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A fine trip to contemplate in the gloom of winter is "England's West Country Gardens," a June 14-25 spin through southwest England in early summer when the roses are at their peak.

Warmed by the Gulf Stream and sheltered by deep valleys, this part of Britain is home to gardens from many historical periods and to a huge variety of plant life, from the medicinal, culinary and perfumery herbs of the Abbey House gardens in Malmesbury to the subtropical jungle in the Lost Gardens of Heligan near the village of Mevagissey.

Wild ponies on Exmoor, 1st Century Roman baths at—where else—Bath and a helicopter ride out to the Scilly Isles add still more diversity to this floricultural ramble. Offered by Sacramento, Calif.-based Lucas & Randall, "England's West Country Gardens" is priced at \$3,995, including accommodations, daily breakfasts, many dinners, local transportation, sightseeing, entrance fees and most gratuities. Round-trip airfare from home to Bristol is additional. (800-505-2505; www.lucasandrandall.com)

CUP OF TEE

The hot shots of men's golf tee it up at North Carolina's Pinehurst Resort June 13-19 for the 2005 U.S. Open, but a golfer doesn't have to strike it like a pro to take on Pinehurst's eight championship courses. The resort's "Championship Package" lets a Goosen- or Woods-wannabe indulge in unlimited rounds of golf for three days. There's a guarantee of at least one round on the newly lengthened No. 2, site of the Open, with a caddie wearing a jersey sporting the golfer's name.

A golf clinic and golfer's massage are part of the package, as are two nights' lodging, daily breakfast and dinner, and airport shuttles. Valid throughout 2005 except during the Open, the "Championship Package" is priced at \$2,005 per person; the non-golfing half of a duo can choose from less expensive packages that exclude time on the links. Tax and resort fees are extra. (800-487-4653; www.pinehurst.com)

OF WINE AND WAR

The German occupation of France's wineries during World War II is the subject of "Wine & War—The Tour," an April 5-13 sojourn in French wine country. Starting in Champagne, wine lovers and history buffs meet scions of wine families and hear how they or their parents struggled to save their vintage bottles and vineyards throughout the war. At Champagnes Ricciuti, Paulette Ricciuti recounts the story of the two American airmen her family hid during the war, one of whom later became her husband, while at Chateau Lynch Bages, owner Jean-Michel Cazes describes what it was like growing up under the Nazi occupation of Bordeaux.

"Wine & War" is priced at \$6,595, covering accommodations, many meals, coach transportation, tastings, admissions, guided tours and taxes. Trans-Atlantic airfare is additional. Offered by Florida-based French Wine Explorers, "Wine & War" begins in Paris and ends in Bordeaux. (877-261-1500; www.wine-tours-france.com)

HOTELS WITH A PAST

The newest Historic Hotels of America directory is a roster of 213 historically significant accommodations, among them the Crowne Plaza Quaker Square in Akron, Ohio, with its perfectly round guest rooms created from grain silos that harken back to the founding of the Quaker Oats Company. The book is a handy travel planner, listing