

# NEWSLETTER

FAR HORIZONS ARCHAEOLOGICAL & CULTURAL TRIPS

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(800) 552-4575 • (415) 482-8400 • fax (415) 482-8495 • www.farhorizons.com • email: journey@farhorizons.com

## WINTER TRIPS!

Would you like to escape this winter to an exotic, sunny locale? Let us tempt you with these fascinating destinations!



See page 5 & 6 for our brochure request form.

Dear Adventurers,

Welcome to our fall newsletter where you will learn about the pleasures that await you with Far Horizons!

Over more than three decades we have designed many custom tours for small groups of family members and friends. This summer I decided to walk **Hadrian's Wall** with ten friends. We trekked about 40 miles in five days through some of the most breathtaking scenery in England. We traversed sheep pastures, climbed up and down rocky crags, stopped to explore the many forts and settlements built by the Romans 2,000 years ago, and spent the last night in a medieval castle! A memorable experience! I encourage the hikers among you to consider this experience and contact our office so that Far Horizons can create a custom adventure for you and your friends!

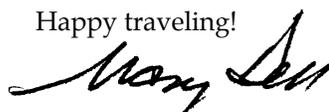


In our schedule you will see several exciting new trips. Looking for a winter escape? How about **Christmas in Oaxaca**, Mexico? Or a journey through **El Salvador and Guatemala** – with Stanley Guenter, our Maya specialist – to view archaeological remains that are rarely visited. Interested in the Silk Road, ancient Iranians, and the great explorer, Aurel Stein? Consider joining our popular scholar, Dr. Jennifer Rose, next July to visit the **Great Museums in St. Petersburg, Paris and London**. And take a look at our re-designed **Vikings** trip that will take you through Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

People often ask what separates Far Horizons from other tour companies. With 35 years in the travel business and extensive first-hand knowledge of our destinations, we are able to provide our participants with unparalleled individual attention, starting with the first phone call or email until you return home, a happy and enriched traveler. Traveling with only 14 participants allows us to stay in stylish boutique hotels and dine on creative cuisine in distinctive restaurants that do not cater to tour groups. Our study leaders, all PhD scholars, are with you from the first day of the tour until the last – 24/7. They will educate, entertain, and delight you. We open private doors at archaeological excavations that will leave you with memories that will stay with you long after you return home. With our 85% return rate, we are proud that our learning vacations offer a rich educational experience, the camaraderie with fellow travelers who share like interests, and of course, a healthy dose of fun.

So many fascinating trips, so little time.... *The world awaits you!*

Happy traveling!



Mary Dell Lucas  
Founding Director

# Gujarat's Stepwells

By Victoria S. Lautman

It's hard to imagine an entire category of architecture slipping off history's grid, and yet that seems to be the case with India's incomparable stepwells. Never heard of 'em? Don't fret, you're not alone: millions of tourists lured to the subcontinent's palaces, forts, tombs, and temples are oblivious to these magnificent centuries-old water-structures. But now, India's burgeoning water crisis might lead to redemption for at least some of these subterranean edifices which are being re-evaluated for their ability to collect and store water.

Rudimentary stepwells first appeared in India between the 2nd and 4th centuries A.D., born of necessity in a capricious climate zone bone-dry for much of the year followed by torrential monsoon rains for many weeks. Over the centuries, stepwell construction evolved so that by the 11th century they were astoundingly complex feats of engineering, architecture, and art. In many, covered "pavilions" punctuated each successive level, accessed by narrow ledges as the water level rose, and providing vital shade while also buttressing walls against the intense pressure.

By the 19th century, several thousand stepwells in varying degrees of grandeur are estimated to have been built throughout India. But stepwells also proliferated along crucial, remote trade routes where travelers and pilgrims could park their animals and take shelter in covered arcades. They were the ultimate public monuments, available to both genders, every religion, seemingly anyone at all but for the lowest-caste Hindu. It was considered extremely meritorious to commission a stepwell, an earthbound bastion against Eternity, and it's believed that a quarter of these philanthropists were female. Fetching water was (and is still) assigned to women, and the stepwells would have provided a reprieve in otherwise regimented lives; gathering in the village vav was surely an important social activity.



Stepwells fall into similar categories based on their scale, but each has a unique character. Hindu structures functioned as subterranean temples, replete with carved images of the deities to whom the stepwells were dedicated. These sculptures formed a spiritual backdrop for ritual bathing, prayers and offerings that played an important role in many Hindu stepwells and despite a lack of accessible ground water, a number continue today as active temples.

Nowhere was a more elaborate backdrop for worship planned than at India's best-known stepwell, the Rani ki vav (Queen's Well) near Patan. Commissioned by Queen Udayamati around 1060 A.D. to commemorate her deceased spouse, the enormous scale – 210 feet long by 65 wide – probably contributed to disastrous flooding that buried the vav for nearly a thousand years.

The builders realized they were attempting something risky, adding extra buttressing and massive support walls, but to no avail. In the 1980s, the excavation and restoration of Rani ki vav (which achieved UNESCO World Heritage status in 2014) were completed.

Do these unique edifices have a future? They might as the growing urgency for water conservation has spearheaded a few recent efforts to de-silt and "reactivate" a few wells in Delhi and Gujarat in the hopes that they might once again collect and store water. And then tourist itineraries will hopefully start incorporating what are otherwise an "endangered species" of the architecture world.

*Victoria S. Lautman is a freelance print and broadcast journalist specializing in architecture, art, and design. She is the author of The Vanishing Stepwells of India.*



**Travel with Dr. Jenny Rose  
to India's Gujarat and Rajasthan,  
February 3 – 19, 2018**

# UNDISCOVERED EGYPT

By Patricia Remler

"Undiscovered Egypt" has always been one of my favorite itineraries. We start out in Alexandria, and even if we saw nothing else, the new library is spectacular. Young tour guides are full of information about how to access it all online. On the lower level is an exhibition space for temporary shows, always unusual and with new information. More and more GrecoRoman sites are being uncovered in Alexandria, and on our last visit to the coliseum, we stopped to see the newly excavated mosaic floor from an ancient house.

After our day in Alexandria, we make pyramid stops at Giza and Meidum and then head south to Amarna. There is a magic about the remains of this holy city as we remember Akhenaten, its founder and religious mystic, whose belief in monotheism was far ahead of his time.

By the time we board the dahabeya, our slow sailing ship on the Nile, everyone is ready to relax. It is a great time to see local life along the Nile as we sail past the villages. One of our stops along the way is Gebel Sisila, an ancient quarry. It's remote and we usually have it to ourselves. We always look for the quarry marks made by the ancient workers, and there is a small temple nearby where we dock.

Sometimes Bob gives us hieroglyph lessons on deck and when we stop to visit a remote site, everyone looks for hieroglyphs.



**Join Bob Brier and Patricia Remler  
on Undiscovered Egypt,  
March 3 – 16, 2018**

# Cathedrals of France

By William R. Cook

In 2018 we will, for the third time, journey to the great cathedrals of France. I believe it will again be an intellectual and aesthetic joy for all participants and a spiritual one as well for people of faith. Not far behind is gastronomic pleasure! It is France after all!

Because it is so important to see how the Gothic style emerged from the earlier Romanesque, we will visit two Romanesque churches in Paris and see others in our travels, especially in Burgundy. We will visit churches built early in the Gothic period, beginning with

Basilica of Saint Denis, where I hope we are able to see the façade after its current cleaning. We will also explore Notre Dame in Paris, the cathedral in Laon, and other works of the late 12th century. We will see many high Gothic monuments including Sainte Chappelle in Paris and the magnificent houses of worship of Chartres, Amiens, and Reims.

The Gothic style lasted into the 16th century. After all, the earliest cathedral in the Americas is Gothic (Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic). We will visit some of the best, mostly smaller churches in Troyes, Beauvais, and Rouen.

When we examine each sacred edifice, we will look at its functions as well as its architecture, sculpture, stained glass, and liturgical objects such as reliquaries. We will do some climbing and actually walk on top of the vault of the cathedral in Reims, where Joan of Arc



led Charles VII to be crowned and which now contains stained glass by Henri Matisse. We will look at cathedrals not just as historical objects but as constantly changing places where the Catholic faith continues to be practiced. Won't you join me?



**Cathedrals of France led by Professor William R. Cook, June 1 – 11, 2018**



# Etruscan Cities of the Dead: Cerveteri and Tarquinia

By Steven L. Tuck

In southern Etruria just north of Rome are two large Etruscan burial sites, Tarquinia and Cerveteri. One of these, the Banditaccia cemetery at Cerveteri, was in use from the 9th to the 1st century BC and is the largest burial site in the entire Mediterranean region. It is a true city of the dead (or necropolis) with crypts shaped like houses, many set in neighborhoods and squares along streets and sidewalks carved out of solid rock, even including gutters and storm drains. Constructed of carved and cut stone, they preserve the best examples of Etruscan residential architecture, recreating the structural details in the rock. Many of the tombs at Banditaccia are adorned with stunning reliefs that replicate the décor of Etruscan houses with displays of armor and household objects hanging on the walls.

The Monterozzi necropolis at Tarquinia is immense, consisting of over 6,000 graves cut into the solid rock of the hill. Each tomb is entered by a staircase cut into the rock taking the visitor down to the tomb, sometimes 20 feet underground. Over 200 of these are lavishly painted giving us the largest and best-preserved painted graves in the ancient Mediterranean. In vibrant colors the scenes show us details of Etruscan life including opulent banqueting, musicians and dancers, athletic contests, and the earliest images of gladiatorial combat ever found. Other paintings provide glimpses of Etruscan beliefs in the afterlife including demons and the passage to the underworld.



**Please join Dr. Steven L. Tuck and see both of these UNESCO World Heritage necropolises during The Etruscans, June 2 – 13, 2018.**

# Maya tomb uncovered in Belize opens tales of 'snake dynasty'

Archaeologists have uncovered what may be the largest royal tomb found in more than a century of work on Maya ruins in Belize, along with a puzzling set of hieroglyphic panels that provide clues to a "snake dynasty" that conquered many of its neighbors some 1,300 years ago. The tomb was unearthed at the ruins of Xunantunich, a city on the Mopan river in western Belize that served as a ceremonial center in the final centuries of Maya dominance around 600 to 800AD. The tomb represents an extraordinary find, if only for its construction. It is "one of the largest burial chambers ever discovered in Belize", project director Jaime Awe said. It appears to differ dramatically from other grave sites of the era. Most Maya tombs were built "intrusively", as additions to existing structures, but the new tomb was built simultaneously with the structure around it – a common practice among cultures such as the ancient Egyptians, but uncommon among the Maya. "In other words, it appears that

the temple was purposely erected for the primary purpose of enclosing the tomb," Awe said. "Except for a very few rare cases, this is not very typical in ancient Maya architecture."



Many Maya sites ruled through dynastic families. Tombs for male and female rulers have been found, including those of the so-called "snake dynasty", named for the snake-head emblem associated with its house. The family dominated the region for decades in the seventh century, and shifted capital cities over time. Awe said the newly discovered hieroglyphic panels found near the tomb could prove "even more important than the tomb", by providing clues to the dynasty's history.

*Taken from The Guardian, August 7, 2016*



**Travel with Dr. Stanley Guenter and join Dr. Awe for a private tour of Xunantunich on Far Horizons' tour of Belize, January 6 – 14, 2018**

## YUCATAN

*By Vivian Mosby, Far Horizons participant*

Those of you with a sense of adventure and that have a bent towards ancient Mayan art or architecture, the trip to the Yucatan "Off the Beaten Path" with Stan Guenter is not to be missed!

I had been to the Yucatan twice previously on my own, but this was the best trip so far as we visited some impressive archaeological sites where no other tourists normally venture. One of the first stops was Dzibanche. There were very few people there and we were able to view the pyramidal structure with vaulted doorways and reliefs still visible while enjoying the



sounds of the surrounding forest. And I remember being in awe of nearby Kohunlich with giant stucco heads along the facade of the pyramid!

My very favorite afternoon was the hour plus ride via a very questionable road to the ruins of Rio Bec. You can almost imagine the archaeologists coming upon this ancient building with its Tikal-like towers in the middle of the jungle. There was a very beautiful hawk squawking and guarding the temple (and possibly a nest ) in one of the niches. A wonderful combination of nature and ancient civilization!

Stanley Guenter has great understanding into the ancient Mayan culture and different styles of architecture. Many of these sites are unique unto themselves, and Stanley took time to point out the features and characteristics of each site.

Oh.....and remember your camera and do not miss the Sopa de Lima! Yum.



*Photo by Vivian Mosby*



**Travel with Dr. Stanley Guenter on Mexico's Yucatan, February 16 – 25, 2018**

# FAR HORIZONS SCHEDULE AND BROCHURE REQUEST FORM

Below you will find a list of our upcoming tours. Which destinations are tempting you? Tear out or print this two-page form, check the tours that interest you and return to our office by email, mail or fax. We also enjoy talking with you so give us a call at 1-800-552-4575!

Far Horizons Archaeological & Cultural Trips

P.O. Box 2546, San Anselmo, CA 94979

Email: [journey@farhorizons.com](mailto:journey@farhorizons.com), Fax: 1-415-482-8495

## EUROPE & TURKEY

- Cyprus, Rhodes and Malta: In the Path of the Crusader Knights** with Professor John France  
April 22 – May 6, 2018
- Egypt in Italy** with Professor Bob Brier and Art Historian Patricia Remler  
May 14 – 24, 2018
- Turkish Treasures** with Dr. Charles Stewart  
May 19 – June 3, 2018
- Cathedrals of France** with Professor Bill Cook  
June 1 – 11, 2018
- An Exploration of Wales and England** with Dr. James Bruhn  
June 1 – 15, 2018
- In the Path of the Etruscans: From Rome to Florence** with Professor Steven Tuck  
June 2 – 13, 2018
- Denmark, Norway & Sweden: In the Path of the Vikings** with Professor Jesse Byock  
June 8 – 24, 2018
- The Archaeology of Ireland** with Dr. Enda O'Flaherty  
June 15 – 30, 2018
- St. Petersburg, Paris & London: Art of the Silk Road** with Professor Jennifer Rose  
July 14 – 25, 2018
- The Riches of Scotland** with Dr. Brian Buchanan  
July 14 – 28, 2018
- An Archaeological Pub Crawl of Great Britain** with Dr. James Bruhn  
August 5 – 17, 2018
- Georgia and Armenia** with Professor John France  
August 10 – 27, 2018
- Greece: The Dodecanese by Private Yacht** with Professor John France  
August 27 – September 8, 2018
- Bulgaria: Land of History** with Dr. Emil Nankov  
September 7 – 24, 2018
- Glorious Greece** with Professor Jennifer Tobin  
September 8 – 22, 2018
- Museums of Four Cities: Berlin, Paris, London & Cambridge** with Professor Bob Brier and Art Historian Patricia Remler  
September 14 – 22, 2018
- Croatia: Fabled Illyria and the Adriatic Coast** with Professor John France  
September 21 – October 5, 2018
- Sicily: Art & Archaeology** with Professor Jennifer Tobin  
September 23 - October 7, 2018
- Spain and Morocco in the Middle Ages: In the Path of Islam** with Professor Teofilo Ruiz  
October 26 – November 10, 2018

## THE MIDDLE EAST & ARABIA

- The Grandeur of Petra, The Splendors of Jordan** with Professor Gary Rollefson  
April 7 – 20, 2018
- Iran: Empires of Everlasting Fire** with Professor Jennifer Rose  
April 12 – 28, 2018

## EGYPT & AFRICA

- Sudan: An Exploration of the Ancient Kush** with Professor Kathryn Howley  
January 21 – February 3, 2018
- Undiscovered Egypt** with Professor Bob Brier and Art Historian Patricia Remler  
March 3 – 16, 2018
- Ethiopia: The Wonders of the Horn of Africa** with Dr. Luisa Sernicola  
September 23 – October 7, 2018
- The Majesty of Egypt** with Professor Bob Brier and Art Historian Patricia Remler  
November 3 – 16, 2018

# FAR HORIZONS SCHEDULE AND BROCHURE REQUEST FORM

## INDIA, ASIA AND CHINA

- Burma (Myanmar) with Dr. Bryce Beemer**  
January 3 – 17, 2018
- Cambodia & Laos with Dr. Damian Evans**  
January 6 – 22, 2018
- India: Gujarat and Rajasthan with Professor Jennifer Rose**  
February 3 – 19, 2018
- Central Asia: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan Central Asia with Professor Johan Elverskog**  
April 18 – May 5, 2018
- Sri Lanka: Resplendent Land with Study Leader to be announced**  
August 18 – September 4, 2018
- China: Along the Silk Road with Professor Johan Elverskog**  
September 13 – 29, 2018
- South India: Temples and Traditions with Professor David Eckel**  
December 5 – 21, 2018

## OCEANIA

- Chile and Easter Island's Tapati Festival with Dr. Sidsel Millerström**  
January 29 – February 9, 2018

## THE AMERICAS

- Christmas in Oaxaca, Mexico with Dr. Stanley Guenter**  
December 20 – 28, 2017
- Belize with Dr. Stanley Guenter**  
January 6 – 14, 2018
- Capital Cities of the Ancient Maya with Dr. Stanley Guenter**  
February 2 – 14, 2018
- Mexico's Yucatan: Off the Beaten Path with Dr. Stanley Guenter**  
February 16 – 25, 2018
- Guatemala & El Salvador: Lost Cities of the Ancient Maya with Dr. Stanley Guenter**  
March 1 – 11, 2018
- Mexico: In the Path of the Olmecs with Professor F. Kent Reilly III**  
March 9 – 18, 2018
- In the Path of the Snake Kingdom: El Mirador, La Corona, Holmul with Professor Marcello Canuto**  
April 21 – 26, 2018
- Central Mexico: The Toltec Heritage with Dr. Stanley Guenter**  
May 26 – June 5, 2018
- Peru: Inkas & Their Ancestors with Professor Clark Erickson**  
June 8 – 23, 2018
- American Southwest with Dr. Todd Bostwick**  
September 7 – 16, 2018
- Guatemala: The Enduring Maya with Dr. Stanley Guenter**  
October 21 – November 2, 2018

Our mission is to design unusual itineraries to new destinations led by renowned scholars. This combined with our 85% return rate means that many of our tours fill quickly. The best way to remain updated is through Far Horizons email newsletters. Please return both sides of this form by one of the following methods:

**Email:** [journey@farhorizons.com](mailto:journey@farhorizons.com)  
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*Please note that we respect your privacy and do not share or sell our mailing list to any other company or organization.*

# Easter Island

By Don Swanson, Far Horizons participant

Rapa Nui (Easter Island) beckoned ever since I moved to Hawai'i and developed an interest in Polynesian culture and history. When I saw the Far Horizons advertisement, I had to go. Rapa Nui is famous for its isolation – the easternmost island in Polynesia – the fragile environment. The moai, those huge statues carved from rock and moved many miles by unknown and highly debated means, lend an intriguing mystery to the place that cannot be forgotten.

The Far Horizons trip outdid my expectations. Under Sidsel's patient and knowledgeable leadership, our group of 12 "did the island." The timing couldn't have been better, coinciding with the Tapati cultural festival just steps away from our lodging. The moai seem larger than advertised, and Rano Raraku, the quarry where they were carved, is a place of striking beauty and wonder. And the five moai



standing guard over the coral sand of 'Anakena are breathtaking. A specially-arranged early morning drive enabled several of us to see the famed 15 moai of Ahu Tongariki at sunrise after viewing them in daylight earlier in the trip.

It's hard to pick a favorite, but I found our visit to the village site of Orongo on Rano Kau to be both inspiring and beautiful. We learned about the Birdman cult there. For me personally, I really enjoyed hearing so much of the local language, Rapanui, spoken on the streets of Hanga Roa and during the Tapati festival. I could even understand some of the words, given a rudimentary knowledge of Hawaiian. And, don't miss the ice cream sold at the little shop on the fishing harbor of Hanga Roa, just down the street from our hotel!



**Travel to Easter Island  
with Dr. Sidsel Millerström,  
January 29 – February 9, 2018**

# Central Asia: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan

By Johan Elverskog

In 1904 the diplomat and scholar Halford MacKinder proposed the Heartland Theory, which asserted that if any power wanted to control the "World Island" (Africa, Asia, and Europe), it would need to control Central Asia. While this idea was proclaimed at the height of the Great Game, when the British and Russian Empires were vying for global dominance, it is no doubt still relevant today. Indeed, many academics and politicians now claim that there is a "New Great Game."

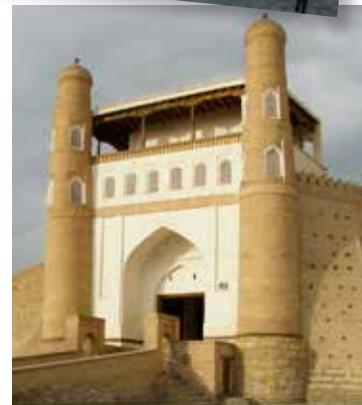
Thus while America is involved in its longest ever war in the region, China has recently initiated a one trillion dollar infrastructure project – the One Belt, One Road initiative – that aims to tie together Asia and Europe by building roads, railways, pipelines, and telecommunication networks throughout Central Asia.

So, in short, Central Asia matters. Yet historically Central Asia was not simply a pawn in the grand strategy of others. Rather, on account of its location in the center of Eurasia it has been a driving force in world history. This region's glorious past is revealed in multiple layers such as the ancient city of Merv and its connections with the Persian empire, as well as the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara that were the main entrepots of the



fabled Silk Road during the first millennium. Precisely because of this centrality in the world of trade and the wealth that it produced that enabled Central Asia to eventually become the center of Eurasia's intellectual life. Its universities were the Harvard and Princeton of the medieval period which changed forever the intellectual history of the world. In turn, the developments in the sciences laid the groundwork for the cultural florescence that blossomed in the early modern period.

Thus travel to Central Asia enables us to learn not only about its glorious past and its resonances in the present, but it also makes us appreciate its importance for both the present and future.



**Travel to Central Asia  
with Dr. Johan Elverskog,  
April 18 – May 5, 2018**

## Why choose Far Horizons?

- Maximum of 14 participants.
- Specially-arranged private entrée events hosted by directors of archaeological and other scientific projects.
- Carefully chosen PhD Study Leaders.
- Far Horizons helps fund scientific projects.

*The adventure, education, camaraderie of like minded travelers and a new understanding of the world's cultures, both past and present, have given us an 85% return rate of intellectually curious travelers who return to explore with Far Horizons again and again.*



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# Guatemala & El Salvador: Lost Cities of the Maya

Although way off the tourist trail, these two Central American countries have much to offer the resolute Maya enthusiast. Begin in the Petex-Batun, the most inaccessible and rarely-visited region of Guatemala. Today it remains lightly populated, and yet more than 1500 years ago Maya rulers jockeyed for supremacy as they created immense cities here. Today, the glorious remains and the texts written on carved stone monuments affirm the power of these kings. Our explorations take us by river boat along the waterways to Dos Pilas, the most remote city in this region, Aguateca, and Ceibal, where recent studies have pushed the dates for the city back to 1,000BC.

Then we cross into El Salvador, home to significant archaeological finds including the remains of several Mayan settlements. Tazumal features structures that date to the first century. Cihuatán was an immense post-classic city that controlled trade with Honduras and the Caribbean. Like Pompeii and Herculaneum in Italy, Joya de Cerén was buried under layers of ash from an eruption of a volcano about 600AD. The remarkable preservation formed a time capsule of exceptional scientific value, and in 1993, it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Influenced by Mexico's mural

legacy, El Salvador has developed its own wall painting style. In Concepción de Ataco and to Suchitoto, vibrant murals adorn buildings reflecting cultural and political identities.



**Travel with Dr. Stanley Guenter  
to Guatemala & El Salvador,  
March 1 – 11, 2018**