

# My favourite destination



Imagine you could visit anywhere in the world. What's your favourite destination? That's the question we put to five leaders in the industry – and their responses might surprise you. From London and the USA to Scandinavia and Mongolia, these are our first five Favourite Destinations. Why not contact the Editor with your favourite destination?

## THE COTTESLOE THEATRE, SOUTH BANK



**Joanna van Heyningen,**  
Director,  
van Heyningen and  
Haward Architects



My favourite destination is the Cottesloe Theatre at the National Theatre on London's South Bank.

Its architect Denys Lasdun always wanted to include an intimate theatre (it seats around 300 people) within the National Theatre, but there was not enough money for it, and perhaps not enough will either. Still, he managed to sneak it in by sleight of hand, which is why you have to seek it out round the side of the main building I go to it every month or two, and it never palls. I am so attached to it because

- it is easy to get to;
- it benefits from being part of the National Theatre with all that is going on there, and of the South Bank, which is getting more and more interesting all the time;
- but it has none of the pretensions of the other theatres;
- the theatrical experience there is immediate, both acoustically and visually, and the plays are always interesting, and usually extraordinarily good;
- it's different each time.



## THE ROYAL SITE OF LA GRANJA (SEGOVIA, ESPAÑA)



**Miguel Angel Recio Crespo, Managing Director, Patrimonio Nacional**



Nature, history and tranquillity are the three elements that the Royal Site of La Granja offers to the inspiring atmosphere of a former Royal Summer Residence that currently has a charming decadent tune (not forsaken) to convert the site in an attractive destination for leisure, quietness and sensorial delight.

Close to a Royal Palace build by King Phillip V for his retirement (that has been recently restored) in the mountain, we find fountains, groves, canals and other engineering works hidden among the wild plants or just walking along a riverside. Amazing fountains surrounded by carefully designed and well-aligned gardens are bordered by wild forest and crystal water streams.

Although the four seasons can be perceived, the autumn is remarkable as its spreads different colours over the trees at the Royal Site. In La Granja one can still enjoy little things that are not common any longer: the noise of the falling leaves



close to a 18th-century marble statue or of a squirrel playing in a tree; things that the former kings of Spain imagined long time ago, when travelling was not as comfortable as it is nowadays. This royal jewel, well guarded by the mountains, offers to the visitor as many different worlds as one decides to dip in.



## NORTH CAPE, NORWAY



**Colin Carmichael  
Chief Executive  
Canterbury City Council**

In the summer of 1972, I travelled in a 4-berth dormobile with school friends to Scandinavia.

It is a vast subcontinent of empty space, trees, lakes and hills. The main inhabitants, to the north, are Lapps and mosquitoes.

The pinnacle – in every way is North Cape, at the very top of Europe. It is a spit of land, jutting out from a northernmost island, marked by a simple stone obelisk. All around is the Arctic Ocean, and directly ahead you can imagine the ice flows of the Arctic itself.

We came to the Cape, in the midnight sun, and sat – at midnight – in broad daylight. Overhead flew Albatross, and scuttling over the heather were Golden Plovers. We lit a fire from driftwood, opened a bottle of wine, and sat, quiet and alone, until the morning.

It is the place which has most closely brought me to our beginnings.



## OUTER MONGOLIA



**George Courtauld  
(aka The Fat Bulldog),  
Travel Writer**



As a Queen's Messenger I have travelled 3 million miles round the world and therefore have much to choose from when selecting my favourite destination.

I will start by being negative. I do not like to relax when abroad: lying on a beach in the hot sun, or lounging about on the balcony of an expensive hotel.

I dislike countries dominated by bullying or incompetent bureaucrats.

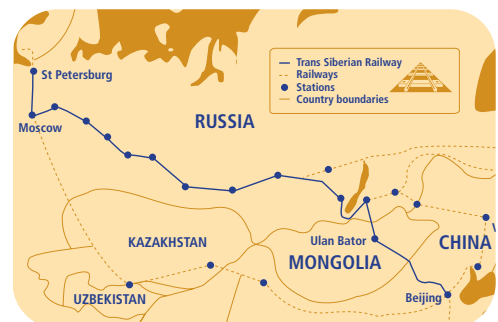
Finally, I can endure most discomforts: itchy vermin, foul food, lack of 'amenities'; but my metabolism cannot take great heat: I was recently in Oman and Delhi, places I love, but the temperature was over 120°F and I could do little but sit and sweat.

Alternatively, a place must have compatible people, lovely countryside, lots of things to keep one stimulated and busy, an interesting history to investigate and, if possible, unusual plants for me to find (I sometimes collect for Kew Gardens).



And so I opt for Outer Mongolia.

But what I like best is the train journey there: a thousand miles through China, the Gobi desert, full of gazelle and eagles, and then the ascent to Ulan Bator, through grassy valleys full of grazing ponies and sheep and mounted herdsmen; then arriving with the best of all things when travelling, the anticipation of adventure and things new and strange.



## CEDAR POINT, OHIO



**Angela Wright, MBE,  
Managing Director, Crealy  
Adventure Park, Exeter**



Home aside, I hold a number of other very special destinations in my heart. For overwhelming hospitality coupled with the best thrills in the business, my all-time favourite has to be Cedar Point in Ohio, USA. In September 2002, my husband David and I set out to discover why this Park has for the past four years been crowned "the World's Favourite Amusement Park".

From the moment we arrived at the turn-of-the-century Hotel Breakers, situated on the shores of Lake Eyrie, the courtesy extended by all staff was boundless and the generosity of spirit abundantly clear. Cedar Point is best known for amazing thrill rides, so we started with the newest roller coaster at the time, Millennium Force, the tallest and fastest roller coaster in the universe. Standing a breath-taking 310 feet into the air, this "giga-coaster" rocketed us through an incredible 93-mph journey along 6,595 feet of track that winds its way through the centre of the park, crosses a lagoon and dives onto an island. In contrast, we rode the oldest operating scream machine at the Park when we boarded the Blue Streak, built in 1964. Standing a majestic 78 feet tall, this classic "woodie" treated us to an exciting ride that featured negative G-forces, fast hills and quality "airtime." When we asked the ride operator

of the Corkscrew a simple question about his coaster prior to riding, he informed us of the ride height, speed, special features and history with such enthusiasm and humour that we felt like his very own important guests. Later in our stay, we were privileged to meet with a number of key management and learnt of the individual attention coupled with best practice structures which enable Cedar Point to inspire such dedication throughout their workforce. As one junior Catering Manager joked, when he joined Cedar Point he almost felt like he was entering an exclusive cult instead of a theme park!

Our stay at Cedar Point, Ohio, certainly cultured within us a realisation of what true customer service and world class amusement is all about and we can't wait to return to ride 2003's even bigger ride!

