



Students surround a mural of the missing plane in Makati, Philippines.

LETTERS

SECURING THE SKIES

In early May, my wife and I will board Malaysia Airlines 370 from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, the same flight that disappeared on March 8 and is still missing at the time of writing. It's been widely reported in the disaster coverage that two passports used by passengers were stolen and weren't checked against the Interpol database that reports lost or stolen travel documents.

We are not nervous travelers—we took the same Egypt Air flight from New York's J.F.K. to Cairo six days after it went down in 1999—so I'm not asking because we are going to change our plans. We are not. But we are curious to know which airports and airlines are taking steps to lower this particular source of risk. **Tom Gallagher, Naples, FL**

In 2013 the United States, Great Britain and the United Arab Emirates regularly accessed Interpol's database of lost or stolen travel documents. According to Interpol, the international policing agency whose high-tech infrastructure connects law enforcement in 190 member countries, more than one billion people boarded flights last year with passports not checked against the database—roughly a third of all air journeys in 2013. While the International Air Transport Association argues that it falls to the governments to police borders, Interpol is nevertheless seeking to offer controlled database access to private companies through I-Checkit, a program being piloted by Air Arabia and Qatar Airways. Interpol hopes to expand a successful program to include more airlines and, possibly, banks and hotels. —The Editors



SRI LANKA'S WILD SIDE

Last fall, we stayed at the wonderful Kandy House in luscious Sri Lanka [The DEPARTURES 100, no. 32, "Sri Lanka's Splendors," January/February 2014]. Given the roads, the travel can be tedious, but the wildlife is slowly returning to the parks—we did see leopards, and we found that the elephant gathering at Minneriya National Park is more real than the somewhat commercial sanctuary you recommended in Kegalle. **Marcia Darm, M.D., and Bruce Berning, Portland, OR**



ASK SOPHY

This spring I'll be in Rio and Trancoso. Where should I go for a long weekend?

SPD KUDOS
DEPARTURES won a Merit Award from the Society of Publication Designers for Maira Kalman's whimsical illustration in "Portrait of the Artist as a Young Duck" (November/December 2013).

UPDATE
Bob Pittman, the entrepreneurial founder of MTV and force behind the premium tequila Casa Dragones, is at it again ("Tequila's Hour," September 2010). The new Casa Dragones Blanco—a godsend to any host with a cocktail shaker—hit markets in April (\$75; casadragones.com). Read more at Departures.com.

INSTA TRAVEL
We invite you to Instagram images of life at its best with hashtag **#departuresmag**.

Hiking across Iceland's Svínafellsjökull glacier with Ksenia Tomilina of New York



The Brazil fixer I recommend—not for detailed on-the-ground logistics (he's not the right match for impatient finger-tappers) but for his impeccable taste in where to stay—is

Steven Chew of the **Brazilian Beach House Company** (44-203/287-4345; brazilianbeachhouse.com). He mostly rents private homes (he has some great villas on the beach in Trancoso), but when a hotel is really good, he'll present it to clients. The place he keeps telling me I just have to visit is called **Fazenda Ibitipoca** (rooms, from \$580; off BR 267; 55-32/2105-5103; reservadoibitipoca.com), in Minas Gerais, about 100 miles from São Paulo. "Possibly the best hotel in Brazil—worth crossing oceans for," Chew claims. It's rustic, but if the laid-back Chew has one distinguishing talent, it's seeing soul in brick, mortar and spectacular locales—the sort that seduce novelists like William Boyd and Martin Amis, both of whom are past clients.

PHILANTHROPY

TEACHING TO THE NEXT GREAT IDEA

In “The Culture Conversation” (page 99), today’s luminaries debate the current state of the arts—and of creativity. Herewith, two participants on how education initiatives ensure a future of inspired thinking.



Damian Woetzel leads a dance class for Turnaround Arts students at New York's New Victory Theater.

DEBORAH BERKE
Architect; professor, Yale School of Architecture
 “Educating women, whether at New York City’s top girls’ schools or through global initiatives, like Girl Rising, in some of the most troubled and vulnerable parts of the world, will help realize opportunity for a wealth of new ideas and roughly twice as many innovators, artists, scientists and caring people as we have now. Girl Rising’s use of social media and digital platforms makes it very much a 21st-century organization—in fact, my daughter introduced it to me. In that sense, it works on every level: That she and other young women can be active, enthusiastic participants in a dynamic, international program is exhilarating.” *girlrising.com*.

DAMIAN WOETZEL
Director, Aspen Institute Arts Program and Vail International Dance Festival
 “An arts education can give kids the tools for creative thinking and innovation—habits like revision, editing, rehearsal and, after sometimes failing, going back and trying again. Turnaround Arts, a national initiative I’m involved in through the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, has had huge success using dance, music and fine arts to reinvigorate some of the nation’s failing schools. I just got back from Orchard Gardens school in Roxbury, Massachusetts, which used to be full of security guards and is now a bastion of the arts, and a model from which all schools can learn.” *turnaroundarts.pcah.gov*.



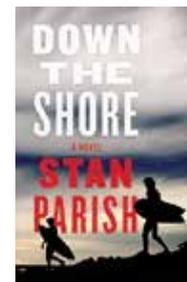
RECOMMENDED

DEPARTURES contributor Andrea di Robilant brings us **Chasing the Rose** (Knopf, April), an account of his search for the identity of the exotic rose growing at his family’s historic estate. From the 18th-century Paris gardens of Napoléon’s first wife, Josephine, to the 1,500 rose bushes of Eleonora Garlant in Cordovado, Italy, it’s at once a dignified exploration of Venice’s countryside and a meander through Europe’s social and botanical history, each deliciously entangled with the other.



ALSO RECOMMENDED

Down the Shore (Viking Adult, May), the debut novel of former DEPARTURES senior features editor Stan Parish, follows Tom Alison as he navigates an elite New Jersey boarding school, then crosses the pond on a similar quest with much higher stakes (enter Prince William) at Scotland’s St. Andrews University.



THE BUZZ

“I must take exception to Mark Shand and Tom Parker Bowles’s article on their transatlantic crossing on the *Queen Mary 2* [‘The Captain, the Queen, the Uncle and His Nephew,’ January/February 2014]. The smallest Queens Grill Suites are 506 square feet, hardly ‘a box.’ That they ‘were bored’ says much about them. The ship offers myriad activities. And the staff do unpack if requested. It is unfortunate they didn’t discuss their needs at the outset, which might have made their trip more pleasant.”
Dorothy Reminick
Jupiter, FL; trtravel.net

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