

WALKING

How traveling on foot enhances the journey!

By Dan Friesen

Walking and travel are a natural combination! Until relatively recently, humanity has trod the highways and byways of the planet almost entirely on foot. Although there are clearly faster ways to get from point to point, walking gifts the wanderer with a unique connection to our world completely beyond the scope of other modes of transport. For over 20 years, our Walking Adventures International team has been offering walking programs around the world! Here are just a few of the ways you'll rediscover this ancient dimension of travel with WAI:

- **A pathway through the heartbeat of a great city:** Most of the historic centers of the world's cities are small enough to survey in a morning walk. Our trail through Paris is an all-day event that starts at the Notre Dame Cathedral and finishes at our hotel by the Eiffel Tower. In between we make a head-spinning visit to the Louvre, climb the majestic Arc de Triumph, stroll along fashionable Champs-Élysées, and consider an elevator ride up the Eiffel Tower!
- **A connection with another culture:** Walking forces you out of the confining tourist bubbles – hotels, tour coaches, pedestrian malls, etc. – designed for foreigners, and allows you to experience local patterns of life that may be intriguingly different from your own. Case in point: a memorable walk in South Africa's Zululand that starts at Siphosadabletshe High School in the rural bush lands of Nompondo, adjacent to the Hluhluwe-Umfolozzi Game Reserve. We first visit with the teachers and students (looking sharp in their uniforms!), then walk through sweeping African panoramas past farmsteads where the way of life has changed little since the dawn of time.
- **A ticket to experiencing the monuments of the world:** Many of mankind's greatest achievements are best explored on foot. Hidden in the mountains of Peru, Machu Picchu can *only* be explored by wandering on foot over its ancient stone steps and through its amazing stone architecture. Likewise, China's Great Wall offers an incomparable walking experience once you're away from the main tourist access points. We begin with a fascinating stroll through rural vil-

lages, leading to an unrestored portion of the Wall at Gubeikou, where several kilometers of walking atop the Wall provide breathtaking panoramas little changed since the Wall was constructed hundreds of years ago.

- **A window of interaction with local walkers:** Participating in an organized walking event can open different cultural windows than exploring a destination on your own. Our walks through the tiny wine-producing village of Mörbisch, Austria are fondly remembered for the warmth and generosity of our hosts, and the glasses of their own vintages we've shared. In addition, Italian walking clubs have delighted us with their enthusiastic welcomes, with events that sometimes culminate in singing and dancing after lunch!
- **A moving postcard through nature's wonderland:** Certainly, the wonders of creation are also best appreciated up close and on foot! Examples abound: walking among the geysers and hot pools of Yellowstone National Park, trekking along the south rim of the Grand Canyon, and hiking with the guanacos through the amazing vistas of Chile's Torres del Paine National Park. Few nature trails can compare, however, with the walk from Kleine Scheidegg to Wengen in the Swiss Alps. Swiss brown cows are grazing, bells a'tinkling, wildflowers outdo one another with colorful displays, and looming over all are the massive, sheer, glacier-bedecked cliffs of the Eiger, Mönch, and Jungfrau mountains!

Whether you join a walking club, attend an organized event, follow a marked trail, or just strike out on your own – consider weaving the magic of walking into your travel plans. You'll discover an entirely new dimension to our world!

