

DETOURS

Mark Andrews

Souvenir DIY

Been there. Done that. Got the T-shirt. In fact I've got a whole wardrobe of T-shirts. Unfortunately, souvenirs consist of the same old things. How many key rings does a person need? Wouldn't it be refreshing to have something that's not just going to gather dust? Even better, what if it were actually made in the country you visited? And what if you made it yourself? That's possible with the Just Jade Experience in Hokitika, in New Zealand's South Island.

Hokitika is a small town (population 3,500) situated on the west coast. Settled in the 1860s, it became one of the busiest ports in New Zealand. These days, Hoki, as the residents call it, ticks along with tourism, farming, fishing and forestry. Tourism is largely centred on crafts and the countryside. Craft shops are found in Tancred Street in the centre of town. You can get anything from possum fur to gold crafted by artisans. But two businesses, Bonz 'n' Stonz and the Just Jade Experience, allow a more hands-on approach.

With Hokitika being the centre of New Zealand's jade industry,



PHOTO: MARK ANDREWS

Just Jade stands out. Loquacious master carver Gordon Wells (above), who runs the show, took up carving 25 years ago. After he failed to make it into university Wells' art teacher suggested a job in the local jade industry. About 10 years ago he met a German girl on a beach who pestered her way into his studio to create a piece of jade jewellery. Word spread, and after a series of visitors ate him out of house and home he opened a backpackers' hostel that offered an introduction to jade carving.

There are two types of jade, known geologically as jadeite and nephrite. The former (and more valuable) is a silicate of sodium and aluminium, found in Asia, particularly China. Nephrite is found in New Zealand, Canada, Australia and Russia. Wells uses jade from the Hollyford and Cascade areas of South Island.

As with all great artworks, carving jade starts with an idea and you're encouraged to design your own piece. Being artistically challenged, I plump for a traditional Maori *koru* design. Next comes the carving, carried out in Wells' driftwood- and pebble-filled workshop, where he cuts the shape from the jade, then carves the basic design before turning it over to you.

Carved piece in hand, it's up to you to make it into a wearable stone. First you use a silicon carbide stone to rub away the tooling marks. Then there are six grades of polishing sandpaper to go through, while Wells hovers, barking, "Faster!", and giving an eventual nod to move up a grade. Four of us sit around the dining-room table, rubbing. The process takes hours and I feel – perhaps this is the point – that a part of me has been indelibly rubbed into the stone.

Final polishing is done with a tin and aluminium oxide paste. Then it's time to rope up and hang the piece from a part of you. And, in case you're wondering, yes, even an art no-hoper can produce something wearable.

How's that for a souvenir? *Gordon Wells can be contacted through www.madkiwi.co.nz.*

BIG DEAL

Peter Walbrook

Two of Osaka's better hotels are on offer with Westminster Travel's three-day, two-night package. The Hilton (www.hilton.com) in Umeda is priced at \$4,390, and the Hyatt Regency (www.osaka.regency.hyatt.com) in the bayside area is going for \$4,350. Breakfast is included at both. Round-trip, economy-class flights are with Japan Airlines. Both prices, which are quoted on a twin-share basis, will be available until August 27, but the Hyatt has a blackout period from August 12 to 14. For further details and reservations call Westminster Travel on 2313 9800, or e-mail itravel@hkwt.com, quoting reference number 4467. tchecks@gmail.com

Ancient Mughal architecture, marble temples and giant sundials are some of the treasures Christina Pfeiffer discovers in India's capital city



The Taj Mahal (left) in nearby Agra is one of India's best known landmarks; India Gate (bottom) is a memorial to soldiers who lost their lives during various wars; and the Red Fort (below) provides a key backdrop to the country's history.

PHOTOS: CHRISTINA PFEIFFER/OLIVER TSANG



PERFECT 10

Delhi

1 Dynastic legacies

You can't go to Delhi and not visit the Red Fort. Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan tried to move his capital from Agra to Delhi's old walled city of Shahjahanabad in 1638, but was imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb before he could complete the move. Although the Mughal reign from Delhi was a short one, the legacy of this dynasty is encapsulated by the majesty of the Red Fort. One of the most impressive stately halls inside the fort, the Diwan-i-Khas, once housed the diamond- and ruby-studded Peacock Throne. Other highlights are the Pearl Mosque and grand marble palaces. An evening sound and light show (9pm-10pm every day except Mondays) recreates the glory of Delhi's history. It was at the Red Fort that the British deposed the last Mughal ruler, Bahadur Shah Zafar, marking the end of the three-century Mughal rule. Many years later India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, announced the country's independence from this site.

2 Top brass

Whereas the Red Fort represents India's history, the contrasting modern circular structure of Parliament House represents the future. There are two Houses of Parliament: the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the Rajya Sabha (upper house). You can obtain a permit to sit in the public gallery to watch the lawmakers at work if you have a letter of introduction from your embassy (www.parliamentofindia.nic.in).

3 India Gate

Delhi's version of the Arc de Triomphe comes in the form of the India Gate, a majestic 42-metre memorial to the 85,000 Indian soldiers killed in the first world war and the Afghan war. It was completed in 1931, and the names of the soldiers who died in these battles are inscribed on its walls. An eternal flame underneath the gate burns in memory of Indian troops killed in the 1971 India-Pakistan war.

4 Heavenly bodies

Maharaja Jai Singh II of Jaipur was a keen astronomer who built the Jantar Mantar Observatory in Delhi, and a smaller version in Jaipur. Dissatisfied by the inaccuracies of existing observatories, the maharaja constructed Delhi's Jantar Mantar, the first of the five, to get a better look at the heavens. Wander through the enormous structures that were used to calculate planetary positions and perform sacred rituals. There's a huge sundial, the Samrat Yantra, with two stone quadrants on either side.

5 Ancient artefacts

The best place to soak up five millennia of Indian history is at the National Museum (www.nationalmuseumindia.gov.in). Its galleries display artefacts from the Indus Valley civilisation, stone and bronze sculptures from the Chola period, the largest collection of miniature paintings in the world and crumbling manuscripts. There's a Buddhist gallery, an anthropological gallery of tribal art, galleries devoted to decorative and applied arts and maritime heritage, and an entire gallery dedicated to Sir Aurel Stein's discoveries along the Silk Road.

6 Say a prayer

The 27-petal white marble Bahai Temple is Delhi's answer to the Sydney Opera House. Referred to as the Lotus Temple, it's Delhi's most innovative structure and was designed by an Iranian architect and completed in 1986. Recognised for its excellence by the US-based International Federation for Religious Art and Architecture, the Lotus Temple is open to all visitors free of charge. Its 92-hectare gardens are a green refuge from the smog of the city centre. The Bahai sect, originally from Persia, views humanity as a single race. There are four 15-minute prayer sessions each day featuring a unique combination of prayers from a number of different religions. Sessions are held at 10am, noon, 3pm and 5pm.

7 Shop and eat

On a large showground on Aurobindo Marg, in the centre of the city, is the Dilli Haat. It's set up like a traditional village market with stalls



selling crafts from all over India. There are carpets from Kashmir, colourful puppets from Rajasthan, bangles, jewellery, textiles and wooden souvenirs. Traditional bands chant and bang their drums as they weave among the shoppers, creating a festive atmosphere. Regional festivals portraying the vast diversity of cultures within India are held throughout the year. You can also fill up on food from India's different states at the open-air stalls.

8 Taj Mahal day trip

Visit one of the most recognised buildings in the world, the Taj Mahal. Situated on the banks of the River Yamuna, at Agra, just a day trip away, this architectural wonder was built by Emperor Shah Jahan for his queen and has been admired around the world for centuries. The latest offering is a moonlight tour, conducted on a few nights each month about the time of the full moon. Day tours are available from 7am to 10pm and cost 850 rupees (\$145).



Roaming musicians are a crowd-pleaser (far left), while wide avenues lead to Delhi's Parliament House

ENTRÉE

Judith Ritter

Boston

Better known for its place in American revolutionary history with the Boston Tea Party of 1773, there's more to this east coast city than meets the eye, especially with a plethora of new eateries on the menu adding to the centuries-old restaurants servings classics such as baked beans at Durgin Park and Locke-Ober for steak and lobster.

Brasserie Jo
120 Huntington Avenue
(www.brasseriejoboston.com)

This late-night Francophile hangout with its airy, mirrored dining room, tiled floors and white paper tablecloths has none of the fussiness associated with French restaurants. Each meal begins with an individual hot mini baguette-in-a-bag served on the table, minus bread plate. Favoured perches are along the wall of windows looking out on Boston's Avenue of the Arts, named because of its proximity to museums, art schools and Symphony Hall. The restaurant

is a hot spot for post-symphony snacks such as Brasserie Jo's signature steak and frites and the Alsace golden tarte l'union, foie gras terrine and choucroute. Main dishes cost from US\$18 to US\$30.

75 Chestnut
75 Chestnut Street
(www.75chestnut.com)
Beacon Hill, a 19th-century residential neighbourhood, is famous for its brick row houses, gas street lamps and intimate feeling in the heart of downtown. And where do the residents go for contemporary regional American cooking? 75 Chestnut is an elegant but non-stuffy nook of a restaurant that locals prefer is kept quiet. It uses only local products on a menu that includes Nantucket Bay scallops, venison and the freshest of wild fish – caught, no doubt, by a Boston fisherman. Mains cost US\$8 to US\$19.

Lala Rokh
97 Mount Vernon Street
(www.lalarokh.com)
A visit is like slipping into the plot of a romantic Persian novel – and, in fact, this small restaurant's name was inspired by a tale of a legendary Persian

princess. This brother-and-sister-owned jewel serves family recipes that date back 16 generations. With the family's collection of tapestries, etchings and miniatures on display and traditional Persian music in the air, exotic tastes are aplenty, with appetisers such as Kashk-e ademanj (velvety roasted eggplant with a hint of mint oil). One of the oldest recipes on the menu is khoresht-ghormeh sabzi (leg of lamb, aromatic greens

and the surprising limo-amanu, a dried lemon-lime hybrid from Iran). The food is sensational and, as co-owner Babak Bina says, "We're not here just to fill your stomach. We want to fill your soul." Mains cost US\$18 to US\$25.

Bob's Southern Bistro
604 Columbus Avenue
(www.bobssouthernbistro.com)
When it comes to soul, Bob's in the South End is the place to go.



For close to 50 years, locals with a craving for down-home soul food and camaraderie have headed to Bob the Chefs, an institution with deep roots in the city. Once a luncheonette, Bob's is sporting a new name and a spiffed-up interior, but the corn bread, "glorified" chicken, black-eyed peas and collard greens are still just as good. The ribs are burnished with a secret barbecue sauce invented in the 50s by the late Bob, and a few drops from



75 Chestnut (left) in Beacon Hill; and Italian restaurant Artu.

PHOTOS: JACK SYNDER

the big bottle of red-hot sauce on every table really heat up the food. And the temperature soars when Shanell Grant and her E-Water Band take to the stage to teach the real meaning of soul. Expect to pay US\$12 to US\$18 for mains.

Artu
6 Prince Street
(www.artuboston.com)
This isn't a restaurant, it's a trip to Italy. Understated and affordable, the family-run establishment is in the heart of Boston's Italian neighbourhood, the North End. If it's a cliché to say "just like grandma (or nonna) used to make it", then so be it. Chef-owner Nancy Frattaroli was so short she couldn't reach the top of the stove when she started cooking in her grandmother's tiny kitchen. Today, her grandmother's and mother's recipes (and mother still makes occasional appearances in the kitchen to keep an eye on things) are highlights of Artu's southern Italian menu. From the 100 per cent homemade manicotti to the penne alla puttanesca that one patron claimed left him speechless, the food is stunning. Main dishes cost US\$11 to US\$23.