

Catching the Wind

with
Drifter Sister

2012-1

Drifter Sister LLC, P.O. Box 60042, Boulder City, NV 89006 702-294-4365 ihla@cox.net driftersister.com

Welcome to a New Year and a New Look for DrifterSister.com

THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE VISITED DrifterSister.com in the past may be surprised by its new look. You may even wonder if this is the same company you have come to know and love. Rest assured, you are not lost!

This is still the same great place to find unique, small-group, in-depth tours. I hope you are enjoying the new format. It is designed to be easier to navigate and not as unwieldy as its predecessor. Go ahead and head back in. Feel free to click to your heart's content. Many of the same tours are being offered, and a couple new ones are there, too. Please let me know how you like the new look.

Out with the Old Website and in with the New

DrifterSister.com has been around for nearly a decade. It was started when *Catch the Wind Tours* was but a twinkle in Drifter Sister's eye.

At first it was going to be a vehicle to sell my photographs, and a blog-type outlet for stories and articles. This was before blogs were the 'in' thing, or I even knew of their existence. As time passed, friends started asking me to organize tours and, to make a long story short, in 2007 *Catch the Wind Tours* was born. The next natural step was to list the tours on driftersister.com. More and more was added to the website, and it got bigger, and bigger, and bigger. Before long I realized the format was not the best for this purpose, but I had neither the time nor know-how to change it.

Enter my friend Nancy, one of those tech-types who enjoys learning new things. She has built multiple sites for herself and her family, plus a non-profit she is deeply involved with, and helped another friend remodel her site. About a year ago she offered to help me. Who could refuse such an offer!

I had been looking around at other travel sites, and Nancy began doing the same. Concentrating on curb appeal, ease of use, and sticking power, we took what we felt were the best attributes of several of them. She added some nice bells and whistles, and volla, a new driftersister.com was born. I provided the content and she put it in the new format. What a team! [Lesson Learned: It's sure nice to have smart friends.]

I couldn't have done it without you, Nancy. **Thank you.**

What's the Latest?

So, what's the latest with *Catch the Wind Tours*? How many of the trips 'made it' in 2011? How are the 2012 tours coming along? Will there be enough sign-ups for all of them to happen?

First, I am pleased to report that three out of the six 2011 tours materialized 'as-is,' another morphed into a new format, and a fifth was added at the last minute.

Spain was a huge success in June, Italy with the new format was a marginal success (I learned not to mess with the tried and true itinerary), and although not enough people wanted to do a two-week tour of Alaska, a great family contracted me to take them there for 12 days, and thus the new Alaska format was born (see *Let's Go to Alaska* on the website). Only a few wanted to go to the Southwest, or New York at Christmas – not enough to make it happen – so these two tours have been placed on the back burner until demand warrants their return. However, several ladies were interested in going to the Spa in Mexico at the end of the year, so it was added at the last minute.

As to 2012, things are looking quite good for most of the tours. *Let's Go to France* filled up fast this time. Both Ireland and Tuscany have enough sign-ups to make them happen, however **a few spaces are still available on both**. The Canadian Rockies and Israel-Jordan are in need of your support, but they are later in the year, and I am optimistic we will get our 10-person minimum for each of them. **Take note that I have negotiated the price down another \$500 with the Rocky Mountaineer people, making that tour even more appealing.**

I hope you will find something you like in the line-up so we can travel together in 2012.



Flooding in Cinque Terre

Late last October, Cinque Terre, one of the most charming and picturesque locations in Italy, was hit by a storm of immense proportions and two of its little villages suffered near-mortal blows. Coincidentally, I was there the day before.

On October 24, 2011, I visited Cinque Terre while on a day trip with my group. We had a pleasant outing, although it did sprinkle a little. As my people were sightseeing, I went over to talk to Nadja, the receptionist at Albergo Amici (the hotel we stay in for the *Let's Go to Tuscany* extensions to Cinque Terre), to speak to her about my May and September 2012 reservations. At the end of the day, when we returned to Lucca, it began to rain very hard and continued throughout the night. The lights flickered off and then back on a few times. There was, without a doubt, a major storm passing through.

The next morning I learned that Liguria, the region in which Cinque Terre is located, had received **more than 20 inches of rain in three hours**. Think of it, 20 inches! As a result, two of the Cinque Terre villages, Vernazza and Monterosso al Mare, had been inundated by massive flash floods of water, mud, and debris flowing uncontrolled through their steep and narrow streets to the sea. The ground floors of buildings – shops, restaurants, markets, schools, and homes – were filled with water and mud to their ceilings. Tourists and locals had to be rescued by Coast Guard, as the sea was the only way out – train tunnels were blocked, roads and bridges had been washed out. Three people were known dead and several others were missing. When it was over, nine people from the Ligurian villages, four of them from Cinque Terre, had perished.

Many of you reading this have been to Cinque Terre with me. Together we have wandered the steep little streets, enjoying the charming shops and restaurants. We have climbed the trails. You undoubtedly remember how charming and friendly the people were. Some of you will visit here with me in the future. **Yes, we will go again.** Beginning the day after this tragedy hit, the brave and resilient people of this area began the task of digging out and cleaning up their villages.

These are the descendants of the folk who had, centuries past and with their bare hands, wrested from the mountainside terraces for vineyards, and orchards of lemon and olives trees. They will not let nature rob them of this legacy.

The latest reports are promising. Most of the mud is gone. People are repairing and repainting their buildings. Drainage systems are being cleaned out and refurbished (see photos), and everything is on track to be ready for tourists by Easter.

Is Drifter Sister going back? You betcha! Two *Let's Go to Tuscany* tours are scheduled in 2012, both with extensions to Cinque Terre. We will not abandon them. Tourism is their prime source of income, and they need us more than ever now.

To learn more about the events of this fateful day, and follow the progress of the recovery, you can visit the following websites: <http://www.rebuildmonterosso.com>, and <http://www.ricksteves.com/news/travelnews/cinque-terre-floods.htm>

Here are some photos of Monterosso & Vernazza's clean-up efforts. The flood channel under the main street has been cleaned out and rebuilt, and Vernazza artists re-beautify their village.



<http://www.rebuildmonterosso.com/2011/12/constant-progress-in-monterosso.html>



<http://www.ricksteves.com/news/cinque-terre/art-reviving-vernazza-slideshow-1.htm>

Trader Jacques

Our friend Gerard, in Agel, has reason to be VERY proud. His lucque olives are now carried by Trader Joe's!



One of the favorite activities of the *Let's Go to France* tour is the luncheon at a farmhouse, followed by a tour of a nearby olive grove, hosted by its owner Gerard. On another day, we visit and tour L'Oulibu, the olive co-op to which Gerard belongs.

Recently we learned that L'Oulibu lucque olives have been discovered by Trader Joe's. And they have already placed a huge reorder!

We are all very excited for our friend, and happy that we can relive the experience of tasting these fantastic olives at L'Oulibu! **Look for them the next time you're at Trader Joe's.**

THANK YOU

Thank you for visiting DrifterSister.com. I hope you enjoyed the website and newsletter. You will want to check back often for monthly updates.

DRIFTER SISTER, LLC
P.O. Box 60042
Boulder City, NV 89006
702-294-4365
ihla@cox.net