

MUST-SEE EXHIBITS WORTH THE TRIP Los Angeles, Dallas, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Chicago, Pittsburgh, San Francisco and New York City can boast the country's best summertime exhibits, according to MutualArt.com's top 20 list of must-see museum exhibits. The Web site offers details on thousands of national and international arts exhibitions, but hopes the top 20 list will help summer travelers plan cultural excursions and experience interesting shows. Regional exhibitions coveting a spot on the list are "Calder Jewelry" at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, "Life on Mars the 2008 Carnegie International" at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh and "Louise Bourgeois" at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City. Also on view in NYC is "Buckminster Fuller: Starting with the Universe" at the Whitney Museum of American Art. For more information about the art galleries to see during your vacation, visit www.mutualart.com. — Jessica Novak



Busch Gardens goes wild

Wild Days at Busch Gardens gives guests an opportunity to get up close with alligators, flamingos, penguins, a kangaroo, lemur and even a kookaburra. Well-known animal ambassador Jack Hanna will be at the park Saturday and Sunday for Wild Days. Guests can eat breakfast or dinner with Hanna or experience other animal activities such as the National Geographic's penguin 'critter-cam.' Busch Gardens hopes Wild Days bring attention to the amusement park's Conservation Fund. Through the fund, Busch Gardens has helped reintroduce Mexican gray wolves in the south-west United States, conducted large predator research in Africa and studied penguin populations in the Galapagos Islands. Busch Gardens is located at One Busch Gardens Blvd. in Williamsburg, VA. For more information, visit www.buschgardens.com/va. — Jessica Novak

THE ROAD

There's still perfect harmony in the air

By Rafael Alvarez
Examiner Correspondent

HAWTHORNE, Calif. — Landing in Los Angeles after a splendid Memorial Day weekend in Crabtown — where my folks slaughtered the fatted lamb for the wanderer's visit, roasting it with red potatoes, rosemary and thyme — I lit out for a town I learned about in the first grade via rock and roll.

"From Hawthorne, California," announced Fred Vail on the 1964 concert album I received for a good report card, "The Beach Boys."

Five miles from the ocean that Brian Wilson and his brothers celebrated in ethereal harmony, Hawthorne is a worse-for-wear L.A. suburb just south of the LAX airport. It sits hard by the 405 and 105 freeways, whose lanes took the house where the earliest Beach Boys song — "Surfin'" — was recorded over Labor Day, 1961.

On the spot where Brian, Dennis and Carl Wilson grew up — 3701 119th St. — is a beige monument of cheap block, the kind they use these days to build elementary schools and drugstores.



Al Jardine, one of the original Beach Boys, is all smiles as he arrives for the Hawthorne monument dedication in May 2005. — AP

It resembles an outdoor fireplace grill, except for a sandstone relief of six youngsters carrying a

surfboard: The brothers Wilson (how miraculously odd that only tortured Brian survives); obscure

neighbor David Marks (known as the "lost" Beach Boy); childhood friend Al Jardine and villainous

cousin, Mike "I'm As Important As Brian" Love.

An official state landmark, the monument might be mistaken for the Tomb of the Unknown Surfer. It doesn't come close to what the group deserves on the spot where they learned piano and harmony from their mother, Audrey, and some song writing and show-biz acumen from hard-driving father, Murry.

But it's something and allows pilgrims to know they found the patch of earth where American pop standards as indelible as those of Gershwin were nurtured.

Reading all of the notes of gratitude and adoration chiseled into the blocks, I thought of a quote by one of the post-Elvis rock-and-roll monarchs, a heavy-hitter whose name escapes me.

It was about Dennis and Brian's baby brother, who died in 1998 and briefly led a side project with the coolest name of all-time: Carl and the Passions.

"Carl Wilson," declared the rock star. "Deserves a monument just for singing 'God Only Knows'"

Rafael Alvarez is a writer based in Highlandtown and Hollywood. His e-mail is smile@alvarezfiction.com

Bridging the Gap: Young adults take time out for travel before work, school

By Andrea Farnum
Examiner Correspondent

A growing number of high school and college students are emulating a long established British tradition of opting out of the rat race and taking a "gap year" to travel abroad and experience other cultures.

The idea to delay the approach of school or work can be appealing to wanna-be travelers. "I knew if I didn't do it I would regret it forever," said Charlene Rossi, an account executive from Silver Spring. "The year after college that I spent in South America was the best learning experience I've ever had."

For Brice and Naomi King of

On the Net

www.carpedeimeducation.org
www.constantradius.com

Towson, their gap year, which took them to more than 18 countries, came after their wedding when they decided to opt out of the work force, sell everything they own and travel the world for a year. "We used frequent flier miles for our air travel and asked wedding guests to help us fund our trip in lieu of gifts," said Brice.

Some choose a more structured approach of a gap year by participating in formalized programs. "We cap our gap year groups at 12 stu-

dents and two staff because traveling abroad can sometimes be intense," said Ethan Knight, founder of Carpe Diem International. "We get a lot of students that are burned out from academia and that are looking for substance and meaning in their lives."

With a fast globalizing world, seeing how others live can be eye opening for many gap year participants. "We take some our groups to remote parts of the world and let them interact with people who may not have electricity or a phone," said Knight. "After a few days you can actually hear something click for participants who realize that people can be genuinely happy without MTV, Internet or cell phones."

After a globetrotting year that



During their gap year, Brice and Naomi King trekked the Himalayan Mountains in northern Bhutan. — Photo courtesy of Brice King

started in Samoa and ended in Ecuador, King still finds it difficult to go to his nine-to-five job. "It was

a life altering experience. We now hope to do it again but this time with kids."