



# ARMCHAIR TRAVEL

**DOMESTIC TRAVEL.** What could be more domestic than staying at home? It's a far cry from our June '02 column when we recommended a bankroll of \$5 grand a day for a swellish assault on London.

Ah well, that was then, and this is now. It just so happens that our friends at Rizzoli International, the publishers and owners of the bookshop on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street, have brought to our attention some books, from which we have picked five as worthy for the times.

The first is *City Weekends: The Greatest Escapes and Weekend Getaways in and Around New York City* by Alison Lowenstein (\$22.50). It's a Baedeker for all that we should, but don't, know about our city. It's not your Statue of Liberty tourist stuff, but rather the offbeat and unusual adventures that are offered. For example, Lowenstein takes us on a guided tour of Brighton Beach, known as Little Odessa, "which will make you think you're in a town along the Black Sea."

It's filled with Russian shops and restaurants, even a nightclub (remember them?) called the National on Brighton Beach Avenue that features "good theatrical, Vegas-style" entertainment. Well, there's plenty of vodka in any case.

Outside the city, the book has a chapter on a place we've only just heard rumors of—Hudson, New York. It's a two-hour Amtrak trip up the line to Albany, and it has become a treasure trove of antiques and art galleries, bookstores, and fine

**David Cameron's Golf Courses: Fairways of the World features photographs from hard-to-get-to links.**



restaurants. There's an auction house, and the story is that the big boys from New York come up to Hudson to buy stuff, the price of which will be doubled in the city.

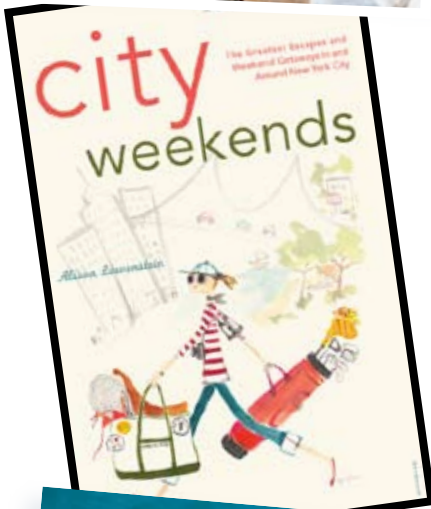
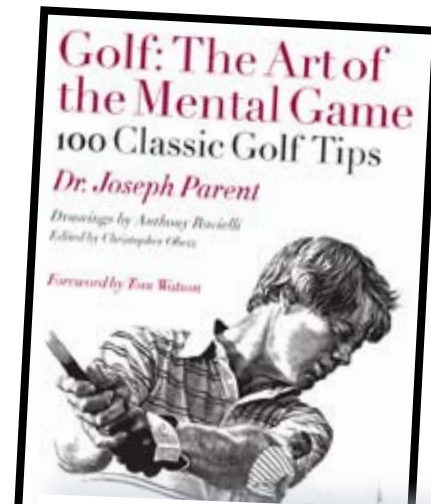
To continue the theme of getting out of the city, Susanna Salk, author of *the* book on WASP style, which we reviewed in 2007, has a new one, *Weekend Retreats* (\$45). Salk is a severe Boston Brahmin and has little time for New-Yorky ostentation. She presents in photographs and narrative prose some twenty-five understated retreats, houses that, in most cases, were rescued from years of neglect. "In every instance," she writes, "the restoring, refurbishing, and decorating were acts of intense love, often performed on a small budget."

"None of the houses nor the people who live in them," she continues, "care about pretense or taking exclusionary measures like tall hedges and walls."

Take that Southampton and East Hampton, you capitals of high hedges, walls, and electronic gates! Needless to say, none of Salk's places are anywhere near the Hamptons. But you denizens of Sodom and Gomorrah by-the-sea might just be curious to see what constitutes the weekend dream retreats of people who are not investment bankers, but rather designers, decorators, writers, artists, with informal but creative, park-your-bicycle-in-the-drawing-room, tastes.

So, we won't be taking any fancy trips abroad this year. It's time to stay home, and, say, work on the golf game. Our friend Christopher Obez has produced two new golf books featuring the unique, mesmerizing drawings of the late Anthony Ravielli. He is the artist who illustrated the most famous golf instruction book of all time, Ben Hogan's *Five Lessons: The Modern Fundamentals of Golf*. He's the Leonardo of golf artists with a style of striated conception that fascinates. His accuracy in the portrayal of the precise details of the grip and the footwork in the golf swing is far greater than possible in photographs. It would have to be wouldn't it, to satisfy Ben Hogan, the most extreme perfectionist the game has ever known.

Obez's Ravielli-illustrated books are *Golf: The Art of the Mental Game*, *100 Classic Golf Tips*, and *100 Golf Tips from*



**A few of Rizzoli publishing's most summery: *Golf, the Art of the Mental Game, Weekend Retreats, City Weekends and Golf Courses.***

*Leading Ladies' Teaching and Touring Pros* (each \$24.95).

The first is written by psychologist Joseph Parent, best-selling author of *Zen Golf* and *Zen Putting*. It is a theory of ours that great golfers are either very clever or bone stupid. Put it this way: to walk around for four hours concentrating on one small thing requires either exceptional mental acuity or an empty head. Bobby Jones would be an example of the first. We are not foolish enough to provide one for the second. But you get the idea.

Most golfers fall into the middle ground. We, being of a literary bent, sometimes find our mind wandering off to some Wordsworth sonnet—"Earth has not anything to show more fair..."—instead of gauging the wind or the slope of a green. How to avoid this is Dr. Parent's contribution to the game.

The best part of the ladies' book are the Ravielli drawings of lady golfers in the days when they wore cashmere cardigans, tweed skirts below the knee, and Maxwell spectator or kiltie golf shoes with spikes. Think Joyce Wethered.

The final golf book is photographer David Cameron's *Golf Courses: Fairways of the World*. This is a coffee table, panoramic edition, a bargain at \$50. Cameron is the official *shutterstock* for the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, so he had access to some not-so-easy-to-get-into courses, like Pine Valley and Seminole. There are splendid pictures of Bandon Dunes, the links course, about which one hears much, on the god-forsaken, wind-raked coast of Oregon.

With better time ahead, we dream of playing Gary Player's Leopard Creek Country Club in Malelane, Mpumalanga, South Africa. There is no sign of any leopard, but a nice photograph of a giraffe next to the first green.

The book confirms something that has been considered a myth. There is a golf course in Germany: the Nick Faldo-designed layout at the Sporting Club Berlin.

To speak of German golf is like speaking to my friend Taki about Greek baseball. When Bernhard Langer won his first Master's, a reporter asked him if he had an idol. Who was the greatest German golfer ever? A little taken aback, he squinted and said, "I am." ♦