

Leica Trinovid Binoculars

I wound up being disappointed with stabilizing binoculars for most uses. They are wonderful for reading license plates in the next county and resolving the moons of Jupiter, but for general viewing I find them heavy and fiddly. The clearest binoculars that are also glasses-friendly (eyecups that quickly pop in and out) I find to be the Leica Trinovid 8 X 42. The objectives (front lenses) are large enough for good twilight viewing. They're significantly heavier than light pocket binoculars, but always worth it to me. Sitting on a hillside watching a river or a hawk, you fly out of your body.

—SB

Leica Trinovid 8 x 42 Binoculars

\$995

from, for example, Ben Meadows
www.benmeadows.com
800/241-6401



Travelpro Rollboards

The original rollboard luggage is still the best, not least because the extendable handle unlocks with one hand on the handle. No bending over to release a lock with your other hand while your shoulder pack falls off your shoulder, adding further unwelcome drama to your episode with the airport security check. Since there are now so many rollboards out there, most of them black, I add bright yellow book-binders tape wrapped around the lifting handle of my bags. A huge duffel bag with wheels is sometimes necessary for the long or multipurpose trip, and in this I prefer Travelpro's offerings as well. So I have a quiver of three bags—a small 18-incher for the overnight trip, a 22-incher with suit press that still can be carried aboard on most flights, and a 30-inch duffel for checking everything I might want or might want to bring home.

—SB

18" Crew 3 Rollboard, \$160
22" Crew 3 Rollboard Expandable Suiter, \$200
30" Crew 3 Rolling Duffel, \$160
from such as
www.ebags.com,
800/820-6126



World Heritage Sites

I've slowly clued into the fact that there is a network of "World Heritage" monuments, sites, and natural parks throughout the world—places that are deemed unique enough, or endangered enough, to deserve funding by UNESCO. A site can be a monument, a group of buildings, or an entire city. But to be granted a World Heritage designation, it must "represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; or bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared."

I like to think of these creations as the Best of Civilization.

Almost every country has at least one site, and sometimes many. Some places are justifiably famous, but many are mysteriously overlooked. Heritage sites are always among the most interesting destinations to visit in any country, well worth going out of your way to see. The sites range from ruins like the famous Inca Machu Picchu, to the less known ancient city of Fatehpur Sikri, India, to preserved towns like Visby, Sweden, to unspoiled wilderness areas like the Galápagos Islands. In total UNESCO lists 630 sites in 100 countries.

In my travels I've learned to seek them out. —KK

For a full list, and criteria, check their Web site:
www.unesco.org/whc/heritage.htm#debut

BULGARIA (Year added to list)

- 1979 Boyana Church
- 1979 Madara Rider
- 1979 Rock-hewn Churches of Ivanovo
- 1979 Thracian Tomb of Kazanlak
- 1983 Ancient City of Nessebar
- 1983 Srebarna Nature Reserve
- 1983 Pirin National Park
- 1983 Rila Monastery
- 1985 Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari

The Secret Museum of Mankind

Ethnic Music Classics: 1925-48

These disks contain some of the most potent music ever captured by technology. At the very instant that the phonograph began its spread around the planet, it also began to alter people's music forever. Thus, the very first recordings of indigenous folk music were in some ways the last recordings of this music. Each of the volumes in this series features musical gems rescued off of rare 78 records from that exploratory period. The music is exotic—at once refined, but raw, well-polished, but unknown (that's the secret museum)—music that at times is almost unearthly in its diverse "otherness." If music were living species, most pop would be raccoons and foxes. These pieces are wombats, century palms, and birds of paradise. Of the five volumes, the first packs the most wallop.

—KK

The Secret Museum of Mankind

Ethnic Music Classics: 1925-48

Volumes 1-5

1995, CD

\$13.95 each

Yazoo Blues Mailorder

973/292-9519

<http://yazoo blues.com>

mailorder.com/yaz7004.htm



Nowadays, with increasing fervor, we are only beginning to examine the content of those recordings, be they in-situ or against the unnatural backdrop of a studio setting. What phono-archaeology has taught us is, on one hand, the commercial forays into the field of traditional music had arrested the decay of old-fashioned styles and song for all to enjoy today, and in some manner prolong their life in the community from which it originated. On the other hand, vanishing repertoires that had no lasting value to the communities themselves were likewise frozen in time, and lend an exaggerated view to us today. (An example of this is the failed [commercially] expedition to Indonesia by Beka in 1927. The popular tunes that circulated by gamelan orchestras from village to village had a short lifespan; perhaps a few weeks or little more. The villagers, the intended record-buying public, found it difficult to fathom the permanence of such recordings when the group's music was so easily accessible in the flesh, and moreover, a "now-obsolete" tune.) —Pat Conte, at the Secret Museum



Old City of Lijiang, China. A trading town in the highlands of southwestern China. A World Heritage site.