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have Byrah

Fiona Brijnath, Director

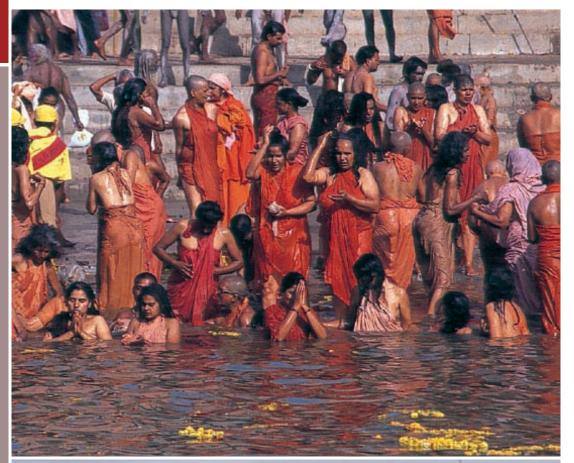
update | January 2010





**ARCTURUS** 

THE POLAR ARM OF FAR FRONTIERS TRAVEL





# what's new from FAR FRONTIERS TRAVEL



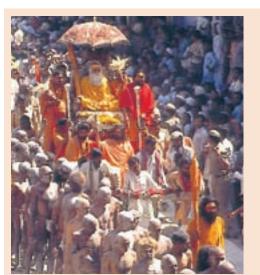
# INDIA, VIETNAM and CAMBODIA

River cruising with Pandaw

### Pioneering expedition

In October 2009 the RV Bengal Pandaw was the first passenger ship to sail between Calcutta and Benares (now Varanasi) on the Ganges since the 1930s. It was an historic occasion, but not without many challenges and difficulties. The 800-mile journey is matchless for its scenery, cultural variety and historic sites, as well as the profuse bird and wild life, but is also the most daunting for crew and passengers alike. If you want an adventure and are not put off by an itinerary that will change depending on water levels and flow rates, the weather, local bureaucracy and a hundred other factors, this is for you. The food is mainly Indian and generally good, but over 10 days can become repetitive. This is a new destination for Pandaw, working with a new crew in a country with different standards from those in South-East Asia. Read more about the maiden voyage at www.pandaw.com/pandaw-blogs-c-142.html

» price guide « £2,810 per per person including flights for two weeks



## Comfort at a stately pace

Whilst the RV Bengal operates the newest Pandaw route, don't forget the RV Mekong and Tonle Pandaws with their slick operation on the mighty Mekong River. Here, a shipping link between Saigon and Angkor is immensely practical for the traveller as it makes it possible to connect three important destinations on one trip with easy air connections at either end: Saigon the exotic Frenchified former capital of South Vietnam, Phnom Penh, the quaint Cambodian capital, and the stupendous World Heritage monuments at Angkor. One need no longer check in and out of hotels and endure bumpy roads to visit these magnificent places.

Call us for dates and prices.



## INDIA Maha Kumbh Mela 2010

The biggest religious ceremony in the world, the 'Maha Kumbh Mela' or Great Festival of Urn, takes place in the northern Indian town of Haridwar on the banks of river Ganges during the first half of 2010. Millions of people will have their ritual cleansing bath on eleven auspicious days from the beginning of January until the end of April. We can tailor-make itineraries solely to witness this extraordinary event or we can suggest a 12 day itinerary which includes the Kumbh Mela, a visit to the Taj Mahal and the best of Rajasthan.

Call us for more information.



# LEBANON AND SYRIA Spectacular sites

With the recent tensions settling in the **Lebanon**, and the parliamentary elections held last June having passed off peacefully, it's good to be able to report that the political situation currently remains calm. Lebanon makes a great add-on to Syria as a day trip to visit the breathtaking Roman site at Baalbek. Alternatively, using BMI we have the option of a superb two-country itinerary flying into Beirut to visit this renowned city and the treasures of the interior before crossing the border into Syria. In July and August Baalbek hosts the annual Baalbek International Festival, the renowned cultural event featuring classical music, dance, theatre, opera, and jazz as well as modern world music.





# OMAN Luxury fly camping

A new dimension to travelling in **Oman** is to stay in a luxury private mobile tented camp. The camps can be set up for individuals or small parties anywhere in Oman, allowing you to head out into the interior, safe in the knowledge that you can overnight comfortably in the wilderness without the long drive back to your hotel.

We suggest combining this with a week's luxurious stay at the sumptuous five star Al Bustan Palace which is offering seven nights stay for the price of five until 15 May 2010.

n increase in requests for exciting, adventurous family holidays has inspired us to put together some itineraries designed to fit within the short half term breaks or Easter holiday period. They are for families who want to move on from the easy European villa or traditional bucket and spade holiday to an adventure which will fire the imagination of all family members and can be easily adapted to fill the longer summer or Christmas holiday breaks.

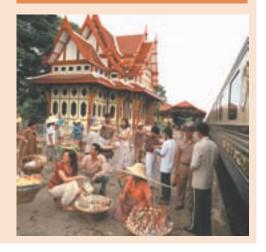


# THAILAND AND LAOS Train journey into history

In February the Eastern & Oriental Express will make its first crossing of the Friendship Bridge which spans the Mekong River between Thailand and Laos. This inaugural journey departs from Bangkok on 23 February 2010. The four day, three night itinerary includes an excursion to the World Heritage Site at Phimai with its meticulously restored Khmer temples which pre-date Angkor Wat, and a visit to the picturesque Khao Yai wine region for a tour of the vineyards and a chance to sample some 'new latitude' wines.

The highlight of the trip will be on 25 February when the E&O makes its stately voyage towards the Laotian capital Vientiane, crossing the Mekong River via the Friendship Bridge and arriving in the newly-opened Thanaleng Station - the first railway station in Laos. Following a special welcome reception, guests will enjoy a day tour of Vientiane, where charming French colonial architecture sits alongside gilded temples. Explore the sights, enjoy a delightful lunch interlude, view revered Buddhist sanctuaries, historic monasteries and monuments, observe the intricacies of Lao silk weaving, and wander among the market stalls of this timeless city. The journey concludes by re-crossing the Friendship Bridge as the E&O travels overnight back to Bangkok.

» price « £1,080 per person based on twin share Bangkok to Bangkok





#### **EGYPT**

If you are looking for sun, sand and sea, Egypt has it all. Our specially crafted family itinerary includes horse riding at Sakkara and camel riding at the Pyramids before heading down to the wonders of the Red Sea where we can include snorkeling, swimming and overnight Bedouin camping in the desert. Great times to go are at Easter or in the half-term holidays.

» price from « £1,420 per person for an eight day holiday for a family of four



#### **INDONESIA**

For those looking for a long summer holiday, we have the perfect solution – two gloriously diverse weeks in the verdant, vibrant paradise islands of Indonesia. Our itinerary includes the island of Java, bursting with volcanoes, the mysterious villages and hanging graves of the Toraja people in Sulawesi, white water rafting, pretty villages and the magical temples of Bali. Summer is the perfect time to visit.

» price from « £2,495 per person based on a family of four for two weeks

#### **MOROCCO**

Just a three hour flight from the UK, Morocco makes an excellent short family half-term break with plenty of variety. You spend four nights in colourful Marrakech in an atmospheric riad and activities during the day could include tours of the city by horse-drawn carriage, mountain biking, tree-rope adventures (including zip wires across ravines), visits to a berber school and lunch with a berber family, camel rides, quad biking and picnics among palm groves. Part two is all about relaxation at the stunning new Mazagan Beach Resort south of Casablanca. Set in 250 hectares, next to a seven km long beach, this sumptuous five star property has an 18-hole golf course designed by Gary Player, a 180 degree view over the Atlantic Ocean and a great child-friendly atmosphere.

» price from « £1,625 per person for a nine day holiday for a family of four



#### **NEPAL**

For the spring and autumn half terms or Easter break, why not consider the Panchase Trek off the beaten trail in the Annapurna Region. Here you will trek through the pristine forest and traditional villages in the shade of the Himalayas. It's a moderate trek of three nights with a high point of 2,509m. The route passes through farm villages and cool shady rainforest with magnificent views of the snow capped range of Annapurna Himalaya along the way. This will be an unforgettable adventure for your children and itineraries can be extended to include river rafting and game viewing on elephant-back for tiger and rhino.

» price from « £1,470 per person for a ten day holiday for a family of four



# FAR FRONTIERS TRAVEL trip report: Richard Taylor-Young's two days in Seville - September 2009

"A dark, rather forbidding doorway opened to reveal the bright and sunny interior of the Hotel Corral de Rey in a street of the same name. It is a real gem, a small, boutique hotel offering great comfort and style — we had our breakfast on the roof terrace beside the plunge pool in the sunshine, rather than in the elegant dining room downstairs. It is attractively decorated and furnished throughout with a wealth of fine paintings.

We saw a lot of Seville in two days, all on foot, as the principal sights are fairly close together. Well provided with maps and advice from our charming hostess, we walked out of the door into the huge traffic-free square and walked down to the mighty River Guadalquivir where ships used to unload their rich cargoes from across the world. Here we boarded one of the open-top double-decker buses for an interesting tour of the city. By now we were feeling the heat as the temperature was more than 40°C all day but, happily, with no humidity. Time for a late lunch found us in one of the innumerable little courtyards in the central area, enjoying a welcome beer. Then on to discover the Plaza de Espana, a 'must' for any visitor with its striking semi-circular square and magnificent fountain in front of the most elegant building.

Back to the hotel's roof terrace looking out over the sea of TV aerials and church towers with our books

and a tray of delicious fresh lemonade, we were soon revived and later on, near the hotel we found a clutch of small inexpensive restaurants in another courtyard for dinner.

Our second day again involved plenty of walking and visits to two magnificent places with a relaxing late lunch in between. First to the Real Alcazar, Seville's royal palace, a jewel box of exquisite patios and halls and beautifully landscaped gardens - a showcase of Mudejar craftsmanship, completed in 1366 and superbly maintained. Then to the Cathedral and La Giralda. Seville's 15th century cathedral is on the site of a 12th century mosque, and La Giralda, the bell tower, and the Patio de los **Naranjos** are legacies of this vast Moorish structure. Its internal height and decorations are awesome; once again there was much to see before we climbed to the top of the tower (no steps, just a steady uphill ramp to level 37!) Needless to say, the view from the top was stunning as we wandered all round it, and stunning in a different way when the huge clock bells struck half past the hour! A most enthralling couple of days in this beautiful city".

» price from « £500 per person based on a double room for three nights with return airport transfer, excluding flights







# ARCTURUS trip report: Arctic Norway - February 2009

I am still enchanted by the indescribable beauty of Arctic Norway, 200km north of the Arctic Circle, where I had a memorable experience learning to drive my own dog sled team!











"Crossing the Arctic Circle and lining up on its final approach, the plane dipped low, first over deep fjords and then crossing turquoise waters with a backdrop of snow covered peaks where tiny bright blue, red and yellow cabins stood starkly against the rugged backdrop of Arctic Norway. Later, as we drove towards the Dividalen National Park, elk crashed through the forest and the sun dropped behind the mountain bringing early darkness and sending the temperature plunging to minus 29°C. I, however, soon found myself cosily settled into my delightful wooden cabin, thickly insulated and beautifully warmed by a small but efficient log stove and equipped with fluffy duvets and a fridge stocked with all sorts of tasty delights. This was to be my home for the next few days - an idyllic spot close to the National Park, some two hours' drive from Tromso in the very Northern part of Norway.

Next morning dawned blue and extremely cold and I donned the thick felt-lined boots and all-in-one snow suit before starting my thrilling journey by dog sled through the surrounding hills and valleys. Without a doubt, my favourite track was one narrow trail which wound gently through whispering snow-clad pines back-lit by the weak sun as the wind





blasted the spindrift across the surface of the frozen river onto which we had emerged. My trusty dogs, all eager and willing Alaskan huskies, were pulling and panting and there was no other sound to intrude on my thoughts except the crunching of snow and hiss of the runners under my boots – pure poetry!

My Norwegian friends took me to their enchanting weekend hideout — a perfect little log cabin perched on a bluff overlooking their very own ice-rink, a stunning frozen lake where we anchored the dogs and headed inside to drink hot black tea and enjoy a delicious feast of nutty bread and smoked meats, exhaling frosty plumes as we chatted — it was clearly warmer outside than in!

Before long there was chaos in the ranks as the dogs leapt and yowled, eager to be off once more and we set the sleds on a course for home to a welcome beer and piping hot plate of elk and reindeer stew, followed by an invigorating sauna and hot tub. Racing madly through the snow from the steamy clutches of the sauna, to sink gratefully into the 70 degree waters, I ended my day bathing in the delicious warmth under a starlit sky wearing nothing but a woolly hat!

The only excitement that eluded me on this magical trip was the Northern Lights – well, there's always next time!"

We offer a selection of dog sledding adventures from a beginner's trip to more challenging journeys from hut to hut, and extensions out to the coast to discover the picturesque Lofoten Islands or to visit the Sami (Lapp) people in their reindeer herding camps high in the mountains. Please call for detailed itineraries and prices.



As we go to press, there is still some availability and one or two good deals to be found on unforgettable expedition voyages in the Antarctic. This is a brief round up of what is on offer:

#### **Antarctic Dream** – 80 passengers

Good availability on all January and February

Antarctic Peninsula departures.

Prices from £5,025 per person (twin private cabin)

#### Professor Molchanov – 52 passengers

#### **Antarctic Peninsula**

21 Jan – 3 Feb 2010, 31 Jan – 13 Feb 2010, **£6,695** per person (twin private cabin)

Antarctic Peninsula 28 Feb – 13 Mar 2010 £5,475 per person (twin non-private cabin)

Crossing the Polar Circle 10 – 24 March 2010 £5,910 per person (twin non-private cabin)

#### Professor Multanovskiy – 52 Passengers

Weddel Sea and Antarctic Peninsula 22 Jan – 5 Feb 2010, £5,365/£6,130 per person (triple/twin non-private cabins)

#### Antarctic Peninsula

12 – 25 Feb 2010, 22 Feb – 7 Mar 2010 **£6,085** per person (twin non-private cabin)

Crossing the Polar Circle 4 – 18 Mar 2010 £6,520 per person (twin non-private cabin)

#### Polar Star – 105 Passengers

#### Antarctica and Polar Circle

22 Jan – 5 Feb 2010, 2 – 16 Feb 2010, £5,450 per person (triple non-private cabin)

Antarctica adventure expedition – exploratory 13 Feb – 1 March 2010

£5,950 per person (triple non-private cabin)
Antarctica and Sub-Antarctic Islands

26 Feb – 19 March 2010 £9,625 per person (twin private cabin)

### Polar Pioneer – 56 passengers

Across the Circle 14 – 28 February 2010 £6,570 per person (twin private cabin)

#### One Ocean's Akademic loffe – 110 passengers

10% discount on cruise price and free cabin upgrade

# We still have a few places left on the following Arctic trips:

Norway dog sledding: Explore Dividalen

9 – 14 March 2010, £1,630 per person

Norway dog sledding: The Kings Way 28 March – 4 April 2010, £2,175 per person

#### Russian summer: Solovetski Islands

13 - 25 June 2010, **£2,080** per person

Russian winter: Kamchatka

Dog sledging with the reindeer herders

7 - 21 March 2010, £4,785 per person

Dog sledging to Nalycheva Valley

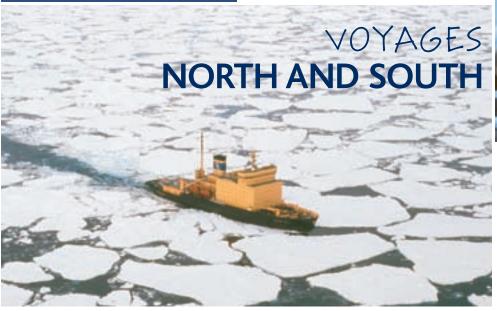
20 - 30 March 2010, £3,985 per person

The air holiday packages in this brochure are ATOL protected by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Our ATOL number is ATOL 9270. Please see our booking conditions for more information.



# ARCTURUS update

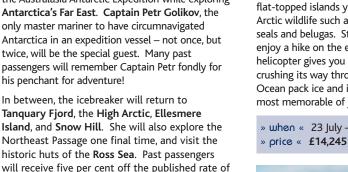


#### Kapitan Khlebnikov, End of an era

The world's legendary polar expedition vessel, Kapitan Khlebnikov, will end her career as an adventure ship in March 2012, returning to duty escorting ships sailing the Northeast Passage. The End of an Era expeditions begin with Khlebnikov's final west to east transit of the Northwest Passage, from 18 July to 5 August 2010. The finest naval historian of his generation, Andrew Lambert will participate in the voyage - he was inspired to write his most recent book, The Gates of Hell: Sir John Franklin's Tragic Quest for the Northwest Passage, while aboard the icebreaker in 2004.

Khlebnikov's final voyage will be from 6 December 2011 to 5 January 2012. During that expedition, she will salute the 100th anniversary of the Australasia Antarctic Expedition while exploring Antarctica's Far East. Captain Petr Golikov, the only master mariner to have circumnavigated Antarctica in an expedition vessel - not once, but twice, will be the special guest. Many past passengers will remember Captain Petr fondly for his penchant for adventure!

Tanquary Fjord, the High Arctic, Ellesmere Island, and Snow Hill. She will also explore the Northeast Passage one final time, and visit the historic huts of the Ross Sea. Past passengers will receive five per cent off the published rate of any End of the Era expedition.





## A NEW ERA BEGINS **Special offers on Plancius**

There is a new name for polar expedition and active wildlife experience in the remote Arctic and Antarctic regions - Plancius! Oceanwide's new polar expedition vessel will shortly begin her programme in the Antarctic, setting new standards in expedition cruising as she goes: space, comfort and style, modern technology and safety features. Her maiden Antarctic voyage commencing 8 January 2010 is sold out, however there is still availability and some great offers on last minute bookings for this February and March as follows so do call us for more information:

- » Falklands, South Georgia and Antarctic Peninsula 3 - 24 Feb 2010 «
- » price from « £5,245 per person (twin private cabin)
- » Classic Antarctic Peninsula 24 Jan - 6 Feb 2010, 21 Feb - 6 March 2010, 3 - 16 March 2010 «
- » price from « £4,460 per person (triple private cabin)

## **HEADING SOUTH** Join Fiona in the Antarctic

Fiona is heading down to the Antarctic in March to join **Plancius** on her extended voyage - Crossing the Polar Circle from 13-27 March 2010 - and would be delighted if you could join her. At this time of year, receding sea ice allows exploration farthest south and it's a great time to see whales. Penguin chicks, now in their adolescent state, start heading to sea and spectacular green and pink algae blooms on snow-slopes and ice cliffs while night frosts create beautiful patterns of thin sea ice on the surface. There are still some cabins available and prices start at £5,245 per person in a twin private cabin, a saving of £1,275 per person.

Please call if you are interested.



### NORTH POLE BY ICEBREAKER – The final frontier

For those who have ever dreamed of participating in a truly rare experience, a voyage to the North Pole on board 50 Years of Victory, the most powerful icebreaker ever built, will be the adventure of a lifetime. Experience first hand the splendour and raw savagery of one of the last few remaining frontiers on earth.

From Murmansk you cross the Barents Sea towards the relatively unexplored archipelago of Franz Josef Land, which was only discovered in the late 1800s. Shore landings are planned here and at 90°N, the top of the world. On Franz Josef Land's stunning flat-topped islands you will encounter fascinating Arctic wildlife such as polar bears, walrus, arctic fox, seals and belugas. Stand on the North Pole and enjoy a hike on the expansive ice. Sightseeing by helicopter gives you an aerial view of the ship crushing its way through the formidable Arctic Ocean pack ice and is an unforgettable sight on this most memorable of journeys.

» when « 23 July – 6 August 2010

» price « £14,245 per person based on twin cabin



## WILDLIFE IN KAMCHATKA Sailing this summer

Don't forget the superb wildlife voyages offered by Heritage Expeditions' delightful small ship, the 48 passenger Spirit of Enderby. She is running four magical voyages off the wild coast of Kamchatka this summer Call us for more details



# Leader's review:

Frank Ryding, Arcturus expedition leader, looks back on one of last year's expeditions in Greenland

# EASTERN GREENLAND: Scoresby Sund

Scoresby Sund is a land of contrast — a vast roughly square area of wilderness of almost 200 miles on each side, with high fjords surrounding the huge mass of Milne Land Island in the middle.

In winter it is frozen solid but in summer it's more like a Scottish autumn – the lower slopes burst into a short-lived explosion of greens, yellows and reds as grasses, flowers and dwarf-willow shrubs make use of the 24 hour daylight.

In small covered launches we explored the labyrinth of fjords, delighting in the seal, narwal, bird life and the staggering scenery, including Hallbredning Fjord where hundreds of intricately shaped icebergs, many larger than houses, process imperceptibly forward. At Øfjord we saw glaciers coming down the sides every few hundred metres; some as wide as motorways leading up into the mists, others small, impossibly steep, like static frozen waterfalls.

Leader's review:
CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

Dr Lorraine Craig, Arcturus expedition leader, describes the excitement of encountering bears in the Russian Far East and what to expect when skiing in Liverpool Land...

#### **RUSSIA: Kamchatka**

We sat where the river entered the lake and waited for the bears to come out of the woods and start fishing for salmon. Within

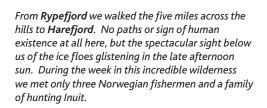
a few minutes
there were three
bears a short
distance away.
After a little
while one ran towards us
catching the fish about
three metres from us —
I think our hearts missed a
beat! Then Valisi, our
warden, with his hand on his
rifle and flare as normal.

indicated to us to turn around: a bear was crossing the spit a few metres behind us, perfectly framed in front of the most wonderful volcano.

That evening there was a commotion outside the banya (sauna and washhouse). Clad in a towel, I rushed out to see two bears playing with the markers on the helicopter landing pad right outside the door! Bears, reindeers, warm, friendly local Russian guides and a magnificent country are my memories of this year's trip to Kamchatka. And of course, the truly wonderful volcanoes, many of them still active that rise from the forests are the best of all.... but then as a geologist I am a bit biased.

Kamchatka in early summer 18 – 30 June 2010 » price « £3,995 per person

Kamchatka in late summer 27 Aug – 13 Sep 2010 » price « £4,435 per person



#### Fjords of Scoresby Sund

- » when « 3 15 September 2010
- » price « £4,685 per person



### GREENLAND: Liverpool Land

Is the ice-melting? (Answer, possibly). Is there less snow than in

previous years? (Answer, no, last year there was much more). Will we see polar bears? (Answer, not often in spring). There are all questions that I am asked by slightly anxious skiers each year as we head north to **Greenland**. The simple answer is that we never know quite what to expect. In spring 2009 our base was a hut in the village, but this year we will be back to travelling with a mobile campsite guided by the local Inuit hunters who also prepare our meals in the evenings. With the dog-sledges carrying our heavy packs, we ski with day-packs.

The distance we travel each day depends on the snow conditions, but there is plenty to keep most competent cross-country skiers happy. Our small group will aim to make a circular route through Liverpool Land ending in the village which gives us all time to relax before retracing our route by helicopter to Constable Pynt for the flight to Iceland and home.

Cross country skiing in Southern Liverpool Land 2 – 11 April 2010

» price « £3,195 per person

### Your feedback

Here is a selection of comments we have received recently from our Far Frontiers Travel and Arcturus clients about their trips.

"The trip was very good, much better than expected. Friendly people in both countries, nature is magnificent." Mr Sjaak de Groot, Botanical tour to Azerbaijan and Armenia, April 2009

"Thank you for arranging our trip to the Arctic. We found Fiona to be extremely helpful and very knowledgeable about

the destination. We had a fantastic time and really enjoyed the Arctic experience. We wouldn't hesitate to recommend it to friends and would certainly use Arcturus again." Gillian and Neville Ham, Spitsbergen and NE Greenland, August 2009

"Seeing this wonderful country in the wild, the plains, the golden larch forests and the mountains was an experience I shall never forget." Gretta Robertson, Mongolia, September 2009

"Pre-departure Fiona had a lot to contend with but was always courteous and very helpful. On holiday we had the very best of crew. All in all a wonderful experience, many thanks to all concerned."

Bernice Jopling, Mongolia, September 2009

"Wonderful, beyond expectations, well organised and always a Plan B if Plan A didn't work out. Lorraine was a superb leader. Pre departure information was thorough and clear." Sue Hynard, Arcturus' Kamchatka group, August 2009

# WANTED – your email addresses for chocolate!

Sometimes we have fantastic offers at short notice and if we hear about them between newsletters the best way to share them with you is via email. We promise not to bombard you with information, but if you would like to receive the occasional electronic communication, please send us your email address (with your name and address so we know who you are!) by email to fiona@farfrontiers.com.

We will send a large box of delicious hand made Devon chocolates to the name that we randomly select on 1 March 2010.