

## Hardcover: UK

## Don't leave home without it

'The World's Heritage' offers a comprehensive though by no means definitive introduction to the world's most extraordinary destinations

BY BRADLEY WINTERTON  
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Why doesn't Taiwan have any World Heritage Sites? The answer is fairly clear. The list, currently comprising 878 sites in 145 countries, is compiled by UNESCO, part of the United Nations. And Taiwan, despite all its best efforts, still isn't a member of the UN.

Even so, China — whose pressure is the main, indeed the only, reason Taiwan isn't a UN member — hasn't managed to include any Taiwan sites in its own listings, at least not yet. It has 37 sites of its own in this sumptuous official guide to all the current sites worldwide. The site nearest to Taiwan that the book contains is on the Ryukyu Islands — the "Gusuku Sites and Related Properties" — listed under Japan's 14 entries.

China routinely gives weather forecasts for Taipei on its domestic TV services, and it would come as no surprise for it one day to succeed in including some Taiwan sites in its UNESCO listings. The procedure for inclusion is that UN member-states submit proposals and these are then vetted by UNESCO committees. But to date no Taiwan sites appear, under any national heading.

This is a huge pity. The criteria for inclusion are deliberately set very wide, with 10 categories. Essentially, though, there are two groupings — cultural or historic significance, and outstanding natural beauty. Taiwan could well get several such places accepted for inclusion.

The Nantou mountain area centering on Yushan (玉山) would easily qualify (China got its own Mount Sanqingshan National Park in Jiangxi Province included as recently as last year). So too would our many historic Aboriginal sites — one of UNESCO's criteria is places that are "an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change."

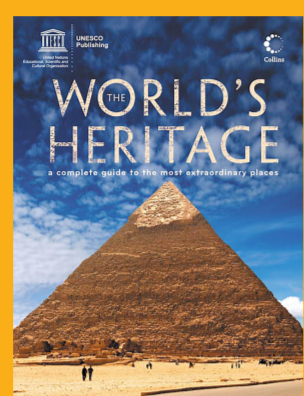
That having been said, *The World's Heritage* remains a wonderful publication, either to read through, browse, or keep for reference. It lists its contents in order of acceptance by UNESCO, and the first was the Galapagos Islands ("a tossed salad of marine species") in 1978. But the essential motive for such a collection came earlier, in the 1950s, when Egypt's construction of the Aswan High Dam necessitated the moving of the unique and vast Abu Simbel temple complex, otherwise doomed to be drowned. This was successfully achieved after a worldwide fund-raising scheme, and the concept of numerous other sites all over the globe that needed to be preserved, if rarely so dramatically, was brought to the front of people's minds.

Today Italy leads the list, with 43 sites. Spain has 40, France 33, Mexico 30, Japan 14, Indonesia seven, Malaysia (surely under-represented) three, and so on. The US has 20, and the UK 27.

Major absences, apart from Taiwan, are hard to catalogue. The English Lake District, though in little need of promotion, and hardly threatened, seems a strange omission. So does anything from Bali. Maybe the Indonesians are considering putting the entire island up for eventual admission.

But there's no question of this book, comprehensive though it is, being a definitive or in any way a final listing. "Many sites of outstanding universal value have yet to be included in the List,"

## PUBLICATION NOTES



THE WORLD'S HERITAGE:  
A COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE MOST  
EXTRAORDINARY PLACES

BY UNESCO  
832 PAGES  
UNESCO/HARPERCOLLINS

writes Koichiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, in his Forward.

This book is enormously stimulating of travel plans. How magnificent the Three Parallel Rivers of China's Yunnan Protected Areas look, containing 15 such areas (though one wonders what that means in reality) in eight geographical clusters. Of the cities included here, Venice ("an incomparable series of architectural ensembles") must be preeminent for anyone who's ever seen it, and for me, Morocco's Fez (whose Medina was included early on, in 1981) carries powerful memories. The primeval beech forests of the Carpathians (Slovakia and Ukraine) and the Norwegian fjords both look incredibly enticing.

And there's no reason why Taiwan's relative modernity — its Aboriginal settlements apart — should in any way exclude its many historic sites from consideration. Australia managed to have Sydney Opera House included in the List in 2007, for instance, hardly historic, and certainly not a natural phenomenon. China, of course, has very many sites of both historic and natural splendor, but Taiwan boasts the highest mountains in East Asia, still relatively unspoiled, as well as many urban sites displaying a fascinating history of migration and cross-cultural settlement.

"Interchange of values" is the first of UNESCO's criteria for inclusion, and it was under this head that China got the historic center of Macau included in 2005. Under this head, Tainan would be ripe for inclusion, and even the small historic area of Hsinchu — the main point of entry for Chinese immigrants for centuries — might not be exempt from consideration.

All in all, this is a marvelous book, a fact that's hardly surprising considering the riches it catalogues. It's easy to use, with the sites listed in order of admission to the World Heritage List, but with detailed lists for each country, plus continent maps on which all the sites are located.

In short, from now on I couldn't conceive of embarking on any foreign excursion, however brief, without consulting this book's voluminous but colorful pages (there are more than 650 photos) as part of my travel preparations. But I'm fortunate in not needing any introduction to Taiwan's own marvels. Other travelers, though, won't be so lucky.



Cisco's FlipShare TV.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CISCO



Olive's 4HD Hifi Music Server.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OLIVE

Apple's 27-inch iMac.

PHOTO: BLOOMBERG



Dell's Precision M6500.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DELL

## FLIP OFFERS A WIRELESS WAY TO GET VIDEOS FROM PC TO TV

Roughly 3 million people use a Flip, the pocket-size camcorder from Cisco that has spawned a new category of video devices that are one-button simple. Ease of use is also the capstone of FlipShare TV, a new system that enables you to wirelessly shuffle Flip videos from computer to television, then share them with far-flung friends and family.

The US\$150 FlipShare TV system has three elements: a wireless USB key that you plug into the PC that stores your videos, a receiver box that you connect to the TV, and a remote control. The FlipShare TV's USB drive and TV base are already configured to work with each other; no setup or home network is required.

As its name implies, the FlipShare TV includes an element of social networking. Users can create "channels" to share video instantly with other FlipShare TV owners. It's not an open platform like YouTube, however. FlipShare TV owners must first "friend" those with whom they want to share video, a la Facebook.

The FlipShare TV seems to be an easy and useful, if expensive, way for Flip aficionados to view and share their creations. But at US\$150, Cisco should have tossed in an HDMI connector.

## A SERVER FOR THE MOST DEMANDING OF MUSIC LOVERS

Audiophiles know that the quality of the sound from CD recordings leaves much to be desired. To hear the gold standard of recordings, Olive has created its 4HD Hifi Music Server, a US\$2,000, 2-terabyte hard drive that stores and delivers audio in studio quality, 24-bit/192 kHz oversampling format.

The drive is large enough to store 20,000 24-bit tracks, or 6,000 standard CDs. For buyers of the unit, Olive will digitize and import 100 CDs at no charge.

All of one's music can be transferred from a PC, as well as CDs, into the unit's drive, and then that music can be distributed to an existing audio system. A free iPhone app lets the user control the selection of music remotely.

The biggest challenge with the 4HD is finding 24-bit recordings. In a deal with Chesky Records, known for its high-quality recordings, the unit comes with 12 24-bit tracks already installed. The company is also in talks with the major labels to provide more 24-bit content, so you can hear that Black Eyed Peas track in all its glory.

## SOME NEW IMAC DESKTOPS ARRIVE WITH ISSUES

Apple's reconfigured iMac desktop — a bright, shiny, wide-screen example of a home computer — works beautifully ... unless it doesn't work at all, or arrives out of the box with a cracked display.

Some reviewers and, judging from a survey of some Mac forums, some users, are encountering issues with some new models.

The review team at Engadget, for example, found that their new Intel Core i7-based iMac would not boot up. (The 2.8-gigahertz Core i7 processor is sold as a US\$200 built-to-order option, and isn't generally offered on machines sold at Apple retail stores.)

And TechNews.AM reports that some customers who ordered the Intel Core i7 received cracked display screens, commonly with the damage near the bottom left corner, speculating that the problem might be due to inadequate shipping packaging. The defective products are being replaced by Apple.

This may give pause to some consumers who have been eyeing the iMac's gorgeous LED-lighted display and searingly fast processor. But many people have had another problem with the latest version of the iMac — particularly the newest model with a 27-inch display. It's so big, it's hard to find a place in the house where it will fit.

## A MUSCULAR LAPTOP THAT DEFIES THE LIGHTWEIGHT TREND

With netbooks and ever-slimmer notebook computers attracting the most consumer attention this holiday, Dell apparently believes there's still room for workhorse PCs, even if — at about 4kg — they defy current fashion. Enter the Precision M6500 "mobile workstation."

Workstations are just that: monster-spec machines intended for high performance and powerhouse applications. Dell's just-released package, priced to start at US\$2,750, is structured around an advanced Intel Core i7 quad-core processor — among the first mobile PCs to use that chip — and a 17-inch LED backlit screen, 1920 by 1200 pixels. There's a gaudier variation, the Covet in hot copper orange (US\$4,220), that makes the Apple MacBook Pro look like the Fisher-Price version.

While the base version is loaded with only 2 gigabytes of memory — not nearly enough for a computer with this potential — it will accommodate up to 16 gigs in four memory slots, a feature normally found on desktops, not on laptops.

The nine-cell battery should perform strongly, although its life on the road depends on how the PC is configured.

— NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE

## Hardcover: US

## One final adventure

'Pirate Latitudes,' Michael Crichton's posthumously published story, follows the uncomplicated form of the author's early work

BY MICHAEL BERRY

NY TIMES NEWS SERVICE, SAN FRANCISCO  
When Michael Crichton died of cancer last year, he left in his files a complete manuscript, now published as *Pirate Latitudes*. Posthumous publications are a notoriously dicey proposition, even for writers as professional and competent as the author of *Jurassic Park* and *The Andromeda Strain*.

The good news here is that *Pirate Latitudes* doesn't seem to have been assembled from drafts, notes and the input of after-the-fact collaborators. It reads like

something its author would not have minded seeing published with a cover emblazoned with his name above the title.

Set in the Caribbean in 1665, *Pirate Latitudes* is pretty much a straight-ahead adventure story. It's not an ironic pirate novel. It's not a pirate novel with a secret gimmick. It's simply an entertaining tale filled with crafty privateers, despicable villains, treasure hoards, double crosses and a sea monster. Go figure.

The protagonist of *Pirate Latitudes* is Captain Charles Hunter, Harvard graduate and

privateer, who agrees to set off from Port Royal, Jamaica, in search of the Spanish galleon *El Trinidad*, rumored to be full of gold and anchored for repairs in a nearby, but very heavily fortified, harbor. He assembles a crew of specialists and devises a plan that will allow them to outwit Cazalla, the ruthless commander charged by Philip IV to protect the fortress. Of course, nothing goes as planned, and Hunter must contend with lopsided naval battles, a hurricane and the treachery of some of his confidants.

Crichton began his literary

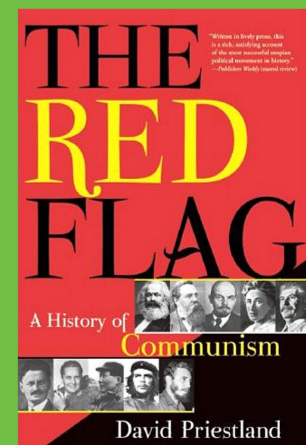
career as a medical student churning out short, clever thrillers with titles like *Zero Cool* and *The Venom Business*, published under the John Lange pen name and others. *Pirate Latitudes* exhibits a similar kind of freedom from high expectations. Unlike some of Crichton's best-sellers, it isn't burdened by a need to prove that global warming is a sham, that the Japanese might end up owning the US or that nanotechnology may be the death of us all. There are no appendices, no footnotes, no URLs for further research. Which is something of a relief.

Not that *Pirate Latitudes* doesn't display Crichton's long-abiding interest in technology, though focused this time on 17th-century gadgetry. Crichton wasn't as steeped in maritime history as, say, Patrick O'Brian, author of *Master and Commander* and the other Aubrey-Maturin novels, but he acquires himself well enough in describing how slower-burning fuses can be made from opossum guts, how to survive a hurricane at sea and how to sabotage Danish cannons. The precision of the historical detail helps conceal the thinness of the characterizations, as

everyone in the book, from Hunter on down, is a type, not a three-dimensional individual.

It's hard to say how Crichton's many fans will react to *Pirate Latitudes*. There's no big "Oh, wow!" moment in it, and parts of the plot feel rushed. But much of Crichton's appeal, lost in some of his later work, lay in his boyishness, his enthusiasm for sci-fi and spy novels, his delight in killer dinosaurs and talking gorillas. *Pirate Latitudes* recaptures some of that verve, and this final novel proves to be a diverting coda to a remarkable popular writing career.

## PUBLICATION NOTES



PIRATE LATITUDES

BY MICHAEL CRICHTON

312 PAGES

HARPER