Living like the Romans – if only for day

By Susan Wood

BATH, England – As I swirled in the water, she cradled me in such a personal and intimate way, I was immediately transported to thoughts of how a baby might feel being held by her mother.

There lies the experience of receiving a Watsu massage in the hot bath at one of the most renowned spas in the world – the Thermae Bath Spa in the center of the town of Bath.



Susan Wood looks out onto Bath from the Thermae Bath Spa. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The place is like no other. It's where mineral-rich waters were reported to have drained off limestone rock from the hills into a lower, marshy plateau where Romans bathed 2,000 years ago because they believed the water was sacred and had healing powers. Hence, the word spa reflects that image. SPA stands for *salus per aquam*, meaning health through water in Latin. Thermae, which opened in 2006, has never deviated from the belief.

Even Jessica my therapist, who placed me in an almost trance-

like state for 50 minutes as she stretched my body, told me the aquatic Shiatsu represents the type of massage that “those suffering from emotional distress” would find helpful to their wellbeing. On vacation, I had none of that. However, it put me in a mental state of bliss for the rest of the day and into the evening. The cost for a Watsu massage is 60 pounds and couples treatments are offered.

Is this how literary royalty like Jane Austen were inspired? The widespread belief is the resident and author of “Pride and Prejudice” bathed in these same waters with her brother. In the 18th century, soaking socially was all the rage for royalty and literary dignitaries in this city filled with culture. Elizabeth I gave the water rights to Bath, and the city has never looked back.

Across from the world heritage site that started it all – the Roman Baths, the Thermae Bath Spa attracts between 15 to 20 percent local residents. Of the 80 percent who are tourists, half consist of Brits on a day or weekend out. The largest portion of out-of-the-area visitors is Americans.

Guests receive a wristband to add on charges without having to return to the locker room for money. It also doubles as an electronic key for the locker.

Most guests stay for an average of two hours at a cost of 26 pounds – with many people electing to soak in the pools for the evening as reflected in the popularity of the Twilight Package. The three-hour spa session includes dinner at Thermae’s Springs Café. The restaurant urges diners to eat in their provided robes and slippers in order to return to the rooftop pool for the sunset. The experience costs 42 pounds.

“People come here to wind down instead of the pub. The atmosphere is quite a buzz,” Thermae spokeswoman Charlotte Hanna told *Lake Tahoe News* on a recent tour before we witnessed the behavior ourselves. “They’re doing something

here that people have done for thousands of years, and we encourage that.”

Thermae, which is run privately but paid for with public dollars by a council reporting to the city of Bath, has undergone mass renovations. These upgrades include construction to burrow the pipes deeper to alleviate any health safety concerns, restoring the historic buildings and installing an ultraviolet filtration system. By minimally treating, and harnessing the water that comes out of the ground at 114.8 degrees Fahrenheit, the five-story complex can funnel and cool the water flowing into a variety of pools nearly 4½ feet deep to a temperature of 98 degrees.

Beyond the pools, the Thermae Bath Spa offers traditional spa treatments, body wraps, facials and the special Vichy rainforest shower as a cleansing therapy. For heat cleansing, there are a number of aromatic steam rooms in pods – with an overhead shower situated between them to cool off. (Trying each steam room will stimulate your senses.)

Although the majority of guests are adults, it’s easy to feel and act like a child floating around on a flotation noodle – especially in the Minerva Bath.

(An interesting observation: Spending hours in the pool did not wrinkle my hands). There must be something in the water.

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Austen revered in historic British town she called home

By Kathryn Reed

BATH, England – "By a lady" – that is how many female authors used to receive credit for their literary works.

For Jane Austen, who died at the age of 41, much of her success came late in her life. And the worldwide recognition came years after she died in 1817.

Knowing I was going to be traveling to the part of the world where she once lived, I thought it time to revisit "Pride and Prejudice" – a book I had not read since I had to in school many years ago.



Jane Austen Centre in Bath, England, tells the story of this author's life. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Mr. Darcy, Mr. Bingley and the whole Bennet family come to life in this 292-page classic. I had forgotten who was good, bad and what happens to Elizabeth and her sisters. It was so wonderful to reconnect with this cast of characters.

Reading this nearly 200 years after it was first published (the first printing was in January 1813) seemed surreal. The artistry of her words, the descriptions, her imagination – it reads like a time period novel, not a novel written in another time.

While “Pride and Prejudice” does not have a ton of references to Bath, five of her six novels do mention this historic British city.

Bath has turned a house down the street from where Austen and her family resided into a museum of sorts called the Jane Austen Centre. (Cost: 6 pounds.) So entranced with what they call their most famous resident, Bath puts on the Jane Austen Festival each September. She lived in the city from 1801-06.

Only one image of the author exists – a sketch her sister drew.

But plenty is known about this era and how Austen’s work became published. A swing through the center is worthwhile for anyone who is slightly interested in Austen.

As for “Pride and Prejudice”, well, it is a great classic where readers will learn about a time long ago in England, the ways men courted women, the oddities of inheritance and familial relationships.

It may be time for another Austen novel to be on the nightstand.

Then and now: Businesses and billboards



2012



1965

If I remember correctly, even before it was Meal On A Bun, it was a drive-through dairy milk stand.

Today the building houses Teaz-n-Pleaz.

Notice the Harrah's billboard across the street advertising Liberace. Billboards were banned when the city of South Lake Tahoe formed in 1965.

– Bill Kingman

Opinion: Presidential candidates lacking big ideas

By Robert Reich

The worst economy since the Great Depression and you might think at least one of the candidates would come up with a few big ideas for how to get us out of it.

But you'd be wrong. Neither candidate wants to take any chances by offering any large, serious proposals. Both are banking instead on negative campaigns that convince voters the other guy would be worse.



Robert Reich

President Obama has apparently decided against advancing any bold ideas for what he'd do in the second term, even if he has a Congress that would cooperate with him.

He's sticking to a worn script that says George W. Bush caused the lousy economy, congressional Republicans have opposed everything he's wanted to do to boost it, it's slowly on the mend anyway, the Bush tax cuts shouldn't be extended for the rich, and we shouldn't take a chance electing Romney.

Yet the public wants bigger ideas from the President, and wants to know what he'll do in his second term to get us out

of this mess. A *New York Times-CBS News* poll released last week showed that a majority of voters believe the president "can do a lot about" the economy. That's a double-digit jump from the fall 2011.

The president could propose a new WPA, modeled after the Depression-era jobs program that hired hundreds of thousands of jobless Americans to rebuild the nation's infrastructure, or a new Civilian Conservation Corps.

He could suggest permanently exempting the first $25,000 of income from payroll taxes, and making up the lost revenues by eliminating the ceiling on income subject to it. He could propose resurrecting the Glass-Steagall Act and breaking up the big banks, so Wall Street doesn't cause another financial collapse.

But you won't hear any of this, or anything else of this magnitude, because the White House doesn't want to take any risks. Polls give Obama a slight edge in the critical eight or so battleground states, so, the thinking goes in the Obama camp, why say anything that might give Romney and the GOP a target?

Besides, polls also show Romney isn't well-liked by the electorate.

So Obama has decided to campaign as the anti-Romney.

Mitt Romney is playing it even more cautiously. His economic plan is really a non-plan: more tax cuts for the rich, undefined spending cuts, and no details about how he'd bring down the budget deficit. No presidential candidate since Herbert Hoover in 1928 has been more vague about what he'd do on the critical issues facing the nation.

Romney's advisors assume Obama can't possibly be reelected with the economy this bad. Just 44 percent of registered voters in a *Washington Post-ABC News* poll earlier this month

approve of the job the president is doing on the economy, while 54 percent disapprove. Even more encouraging for Romney is that 41 percent of those polled “strongly” disapproved of Obama’s economic performance, while just 21 percent “strongly” approved – an enthusiasm gap of major proportion.

So Romney’s advisors have concluded that all Romney has to do between now and Election Day is avoid a mistake that might give Obama and the Democrats something to shoot at.

Romney has decided to campaign as the anti-Obama.

The two anti-the-other-guy strategies fit with a ton of negative advertising that’s just begun but will reach mammoth proportions after Labor Day. Much of it will be financed by super-PACs and by political fronts already taking in hundreds of millions of dollars in secret donations. Romney’s camp hopes to out-negative Obama by almost two to one.

So whatever happens on Election Day, the next president will have to contend with two handicaps. The public won’t have endorsed any new ideas or bold plans, which means he won’t have a clear mandate to do anything on the economy.

The only thing the public will have decided is it fears and distrusts the other guy more. Which means the winner will also be burdened by almost half the electorate thinking he’s a scoundrel or worse.

The worst economy since the Great Depression, but we’re in an anti-election that will make it harder for the next occupant of the oval office to do a thing about it.

Robert Reich is chancellor’s professor of Public Policy at UC Berkeley, was cecretary of Labor in the Clinton administration.

Ancient town of Bath matures into modern marvel

By Susan Wood

BATH, England – You have to hand it to the Romans – they knew how to immerse themselves in decadence early on.

More than 2,000 years ago, they discovered England's only natural hot springs west of London, dove into building a complex of bathing spots, as well as a temple to Sulis-Minerva and paved the way for three developers (Richard "Beau" Nash, Ralph Allen, John Wood) to build a chic, fun and historic city aptly known today as Bath. The mid-sized town may seem small, but is huge in culture, fashion and a celebratory blend of the old and modern-day British life.

It was the home of author Jane Austen, who has a center created on Gay Street as a tribute to her time there. It is still home to some of the oldest Georgian architectural buildings in Great Britain – including the Bath Abbey, a medieval church built in 1499.



Roman Baths provide a look

back at English history in the town of Bath. Photos/Kathryn Reed

But the absolute must for any Bath visitor would be a tour of the Roman Baths located at the popular Abbey Courtyard, where musicians entertain passersby at any given hour. Exploring the ruins can take a tourist back in time, which started about 10,000 years ago when the water draining down the hill was considered sacred by the Romans. From the terrace of the Roman Baths, one will notice the statues of historic dignitaries such as Julius Caesar, a Roman emperor who also holds the notoriety of invading Britain twice. This story is told through an informative audio tour and displays. One exhibit features coins – some representing a month's salary for soldiers. Others date back to 133 BC.

The primary attraction to the Roman Baths is the historic main pool where upon closing one's eyes a visitor can imagine them bathing there steps away from an ancient concrete atrium kept intact as a world heritage site.

Old architecture is very much celebrated here. This is demonstrated by the shape of the Circus, a circle of 33 houses inspired by the look of the Roman Colosseum; and the Royal Crescent, another complex towering over the royal park named after Princess Victoria.

History aside, the benefits to visiting Bath have stood the test of time. It is owned by the National Trust (which would be like the National Park System in the U.S.) and even private enterprise has contributed to its unique flair. Quarry owner and stamp inventor Ralph Allen built a Greek palace to ensure a superior view of the beautiful city.

Visitors seeking their own superior views are assured that on the Bath sightseeing double-decker bus tours. The 40-minute, hop on-and-off rides that start at the scenic Pulteney Bridge

offer 38 stops with an audio tour and run about every 10 minutes in the summer. One tour stays in the city. The other crests the skyline.

“We’re finding increasingly that national and international visitors are showing more interest in Bath, not just for its natural beauty but also for its World Heritage Site status,” Visit Bath spokeswoman Audra McSherry said.

Staying in Bath worth a weekend getaway or more

Bath is not one of those towns one would want to do in just an overnight stay. There’s so much to do in the city and beyond by train or car no time frame will seem adequate to cover it all.

After all, a visitor will want to spend an entire day at the Thermae Bath Spa, the royal bath built in 2006 at the Abbey Courtyard next to the Roman Baths historic site. Thermae uses the natural hot springs in its multi-pool, multi-facility complex for the modern-day visitor to enjoy and soak like the Romans.

Also relaxing, though in a much different way, is the Marlborough House. The bed and breakfast is an elegant and enchanting Victorian house known for its made-to-order vegetarian, organic breakfasts and inviting atmosphere. The rooms are exquisitely decorated with lacey curtains and provide nice touches including a heated bath floor, ample toiletries, a push-button shower and a tub that makes it clear these people know how to bathe. A hostess tray of snacks and refrigerator are on hand, along with a bottle of sherry for a nightcap to unwind from the day. Rooms range from 80 pounds for singles to 145 for families.

The staff is led by owner Peter Moore, who took over the inn the same year Thermae opened. He has much support from his workers Sarah and Lily, who go out of their way to ensure a place to enjoy before and after a day out taking in the sites

and multitude of eateries. (Highly recommended: Sarah's suggestion of the Lime Lounge for dinner with its discounts and outrageously tasty fish and chips is a must.)

When a guest wants to venture outside Bath, the award-winning Marlborough House presents an ideal launching pad to some of southern England's most picturesque countryside. These include the roads to Stonehenge, the sacred, ancient rock site outside of Amesbury that is one of the most recognizable attractions in the world.

Shuttles to the world heritage site are offered through Bath's local Scarper Tours starting at 9am. But for the ambitious who want to witness its spectacle at sunrise, a 10-minute walk from the Marlborough House is the town's Hertz rental car station. Stonehenge isn't open at sunrise, but the formation can be seen from the road. It is a memorable experience no matter the time of day.

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Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• A bill sponsored by state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Rocklin, to name the Highway 50 interchange at Hazel Avenue in Sacramento County as the "Sen. Dave Cox Interchange" cleared the Senate floor with unanimous support. Cox was once Lake Tahoe's rep in the California

Legislature.

• The Douglas County Parks and Recreation Department is recruiting officials and referees for youth flag football, basketball and volleyball. Contact Anthony Davis for info – (775) 782.9828 or adavis@co.douglas.nv.us.

• Here are the coming week's roadwork schedules from Caltrans – El Dorado-Tahoe, Sierra.

• On Aug. 13 at the Valhalla Boathouse Theatre in South Lake Tahoe Jesse Kalin will take center stage performing his original music in an intimate concert setting. The show starts at 7:30pm. Tickets may be purchased online or by calling (530) 541.4975.

• On Aug. 15 from 6-8:30 is a meeting about all things Meyers. It's at the Lake Valley fire station in Meyers. Click on the flyer for more info.

Skate the Lake raises money for breast cancer awareness

Boarding for Breast Cancer is hosting the 8th annual Skate the Lake on Aug. 18 and 6th annual Skate the Coast on Sept. 29.

For 2012, B4BC will be dedicating funds raised by the dual events for the B4BC Survivorship Fund, which connects breast cancer survivors with health and wellness experiences in order to enhance their path of healing and long-term survivorship. Additionally, a portion of the proceeds will be granted to nonprofits in Lake Tahoe and Los Angeles County that support

the Survivorship Fund’s mission.

Since their inception, both events have attracted more than 1,000 participants who have fund-raised more than $75,000 in support of advocating an active lifestyle and raising awareness and funds for B4BC’s educational programs.

Skate the Lake will again return to North Lake Tahoe where the event has taken place since 2004. The longboard-a-thon course runs along a 28-mile portion of North Lake Tahoe, beginning and ending at the Heritage Plaza in Tahoe City (590 North Lake Boulevard) from 7:30am to approximately 9pm.

There will be a post party that will feature live music, food, drinks and more. On Aug. 19 is the first Stand Up for Survivors that invites breast cancer survivors and the community to participate in standup paddleboard demos and wellness activities.

Each participant must fundraise a minimum of $50 to register. Learn more about how you can get involved with Skate the Lake online.

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2 educational days about fishing in Tahoe area

Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences is putting on two fishing events this month.World-class fly fishing is available

all around the greater Tahoe area.

Join local fishing expert Victor Babbitt to learn about how, where and when to fish in and around Lake Tahoe at a presentation on Aug. 16 at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences building ion the campus of Sierra Nevada College. (291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village)

Babbitt will discuss local fishing options and will allow plenty of time for questions and answers at the Aug. 16, 6pm event.

Babbitt is owner-guide of Tahoe Fly Fishing Outfitters in South Lake Tahoe, the only full-service fly shop and guide service in the basin.

The next event is Aug. 18 from 10am-2pm at the Tahoe City Field Station (Historic Hatchery) 2400 Lake Forest Road, Tahoe City.

This will be the time to get fly-casting instruction, be part of tying demonstrations, and discuss how and where to fish in and around Lake Tahoe. Young, old and families are welcome.

For more information, contact Heather Segale at (775) 881.7562 or email hmsegale@ucdavis.edu.

Refinery expected to cause California gas prices to spike

By Mark Glover and Richard Chang, Sacramento Bee

California drivers will soon feel the heat from the fire Monday evening in the sprawling Chevron refinery in Richmond.

Energy analysts expect gas prices to surge to $4 a gallon or more in the weeks leading up to the Labor Day holiday weekend.

GasBuddy.com, which tracks gas prices in Sacramento and other cities, warned that gas costs in California – which were already rising – are likely to spike between 10 and 25 cents this week alone.

“Spot (wholesale) prices have already increased by as much as 30 cents per gallon in some West Coast markets, and that’s before the refinery damage has been fully assessed,” said Patrick DeHaan, senior petroleum analyst for GasBuddy.

“While wholesale increases do not always translate directly into retail increases of the same amount, they certainly point to the direction for which consumers should be prepared.”

Even before the fire, California prices were affected by the shutdown of the Valero Benicia facility in July for maintenance. On Monday, SactoGasPrices said the average price of gas in the Sacramento area rose 5.8 cents over the previous week to $3.73 a gallon.

Read the whole story

Suspect on the loose in drive-by shooting in South

Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

Shots rang out in the Al Tahoe neighborhood late Friday night, leaving a window of a home shattered, bullet holes in the siding and residents shaken.

Justin Pecsi told *Lake Tahoe News* he is pretty sure he knows who the shooter was who was driving a black Charger, but doesn't know why the man would want him dead. His connection to the suspect is that he dated his girlfriend's sister.



A front window of a house on Nevada Avenue in South Lake Tahoe is shattered after a drive-by shooting Aug. 11. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Pecsi claims the man believed to be the shooter got out of jail a few days ago.

"At this point we have nothing to indicate this shooting is gang related," police Lt. Brian Williams told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Other city officials said six shots were fired, a gun has been recovered and that there have no arrests.

Pecsi said when cops were at his house on Nevada Avenue on Aug. 10 the suspect drove by. Officers went after him at a high rate of speed down San Jose Avenue, but never caught him, Pecsi said.

Pecsi said he asked the officers why they weren’t looking at the tire marks to be able track them back to the vehicle he believes was involved in the shooting.

“‘This isn’t CSI. It’s not TV’,” is what Pecsi said the officers told him.

On Saturday afternoon, glass still littered part of the front yard. The bullet holes in the window had not been boarded up or fixed.

Pecsi believes the casings left behind are from a Glock .45-caliber handgun.



Evidence from Aug. 11's shooting.

The four-year South Lake Tahoe resident says he isn’t sticking around, and plans soon to be headed to Los Angeles.

Officers have not said if this was an isolated incident or if there is a random shooter on the loose.

Where the shooting occurred is walking distance to the popular Regan Beach.