



French Riviera

October 25–November 5

Start in Provence, known for its verdant countryside, Roman ruins and breathtaking sunsets. Explore the sparkling seaside vistas and fashionable promenades of the French Riviera.

Bavarian Markets Discovery

November 29–December 7

Along the Romantic Road to Nürnberg, Christkindlmarkt awaits. Visit medieval

Nordlingen.

Enjoy exclusive access to the private markets in



Thurn und Taxis Castle, in Regensburg. Visit the Marienplatz Christmas Markets, and taste *glühwein*, a traditional holiday treat.

Australia Discovery

Early 2008

Journey to Australia and find out why this unspoiled country has captivated millions around the world. Spend time in Sydney, Ayers Rock and Cairns, gateway to the tropical wonders of North Queensland.



For more details on these and other tours featured in the Travel 2007–08 program, visit www.alumni.umd.edu or call 301.405.7870/800.336.8627.

alumni profile

Her Guiding Light



“I WAS ALWAYS the one that pushed the envelope,” says **Mei Xu M.A. ’92**, co-founder of Pacific Trade International Inc.—a company recognized twice by *Inc.* magazine as one of America’s fastest growing companies.

The risk taker grew up in China during a time when her newly fashionable pedal pushers drew stares from her principal; they showed too much skin. It was also a time when the government saw college students as troublemakers. After the Tiananmen Square uprising in 1989, Xu and other college graduates of that year were sent to work in the countryside and factories for their “re-education.”

Having studied to become a diplomat since she was 12, Xu became bored with her new job of tracking mineral inventories for export day in and day out. So she resigned to pursue a higher education in the United States, a country she’d always been interested in.

Now 15 years after receiving her master’s in journalism—a natural extension from her English degree—Xu is considered one of the fashion leaders in the candle and home fragrance industries. Noticing a need for candles that marry decorative and fragrant aspects of the candle, Xu and her husband, David Wang,

started Pacific Trade International. Xu began creating candles in their Annapolis, Md., basement. From just a stove, soup cans and paper towel rolls, their first brand, Chesapeake Bay Candle, was born. Today their candles are sold at major retailers such as Target, Kohl’s and IKEA. The company’s second brand, Blissliving Home, sells globally inspired and sourced textiles, which are available in 25 retail stores in China and through e-commerce in the United States. Xu also has factories and design centers in China and Vietnam.

Besides being a business leader, Xu is also a cultural ambassador. Wanting to give back to children the opportunities she was afforded, Xu created the Mei Xu Cultural Exchange Foundation. The foundation promotes English- and Chinese-language education for American and Chinese children by encouraging living and learning summer camps in the United States and China.

“To me, learning a language is not just the language and linguistic aspect. It’s really acquiring a new logic ... so you become more open-minded ... you accept other’s logic and it makes you such a better partner in any relationship,” Xu says. —MW