



7-day bike challenge on tap for New Zealand

By Phil Marty
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Mountain bikers with legs of steel and incredible lung capacity can face the ultimate challenge in The Pioneer, a seven-day stage race that will be held on New Zealand's South Island from Jan. 31 to Feb. 6. Tackling the Southern Alps, cyclists won't ride a huge number of miles — about 360. But it's the climbing that's a killer — more than 55,000 feet, including a one-day maximum of 12,240 spread over 73 miles. Riding will be on farm tracks, cycle trails, double track and single track. This is a competition, but it's open to elites and amateurs alike, and competitors must ride in teams of two. The per-rider fee of about \$1,644 includes tent accommodation that will be set up and torn down daily, breakfasts and dinners, on-course support and more. The race is limited to 1,000 riders, and registration will close Oct. 31 if not already full. There's a 3 percent service fee on top of the rider fee. Info: <http://tinyurl.com/px6hfbn>

How to cut the beer price

If you're looking to stretch your beer dollar, better head to Krakow, Poland. That's the word from GoEuro.com. Though the site's main job is to offer comparisons for bus, train and plane travel in Europe, it sometimes veers off that course and researches more important issues, like beer prices. The 2015 GoEuro Beer Price Index is the result. Looking at 75 major cities worldwide, it says Krakow is the cheapest, with a 33-centiliter bottle (a little more than 11 ounces) costing an average of 62 cents in a supermarket. In a bar it would be \$2.70, and the city's overall average price is \$1.66. Most expensive city listed is Geneva, where you'll pay \$1.87 at the grocery store and a staggering \$10.77 in a bar. Among the six U.S. cities listed, Los Angeles ranked best at 38th, while Chicago was 46th. New York was priciest at No. 71. See the whole chart at <http://tinyurl.com/nrmxt6m>.

56-night grand voyage around the world

A 56-night grand voyage from the Online Vacation Center starts with two nights in London, ends with two nights in Beijing and in between spends 52 nights on Royal Caribbean International's Ovation of the Seas, which debuts next year. The whole thing starts May 1, 2016. The cruise itinerary includes lots of days at sea while also visiting ports in the Mediterranean and the Middle East before setting sight on Asia and the Far East, including India, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam and Hong Kong. The package is priced from \$8,699 per person double occupancy for a balcony stateroom, because you probably really don't want to spend that many days in an inside cabin. For those with less time and/or money, there are nine shorter segments of this itinerary, with an 11-night version from London to Barcelona, Spain, priced from \$3,049 for a balcony. Info: 800-329-9002, <http://tinyurl.com/pa2nxlq>

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