

Travel extras, 2/11

Article Last Updated: 02/07/2007 08:41:09 PM MST

## GEARING UP

To folks who think it was a victory for passengers everywhere when the toddler was removed from the AirTran Airways flight for throwing a crying tantrum a couple of weeks ago, noise-canceling headphones are serious business. Bose has been the industry standard because the company knows its stuff when it comes to speakers. But others are coming forward to offer alternatives, and while they aren't cheaper, they do offer locally produced and competitive options. Denver-based Able Planet is one, with their comfortable Clear Harmony Active Noise Canceling Headphones. The noise-canceling feature, which provided a slightly more elevated white noise effect than Bose, is activated with a power switch (two AAA batteries required), and a variety of input jacks are included for plugging into airline, MP3 player and other outlets, and a convenient switch along the wire adjusts the volume. The well-rounded sound quality was virtually indistinguishable from Bose, as well, so the choice may come down to the size and shape of your head and ears - testers preferred one or the other based on fit, not noise. Able Planet's comes in a hard-shell case that will take up some carry-on room, but you want to protect these babies; the spongy ear cups do turn sideways to store more efficiently.

*/ \$299, [able planet.com](http://ableplanet.com)*

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## BOOK YOUR VACATION

If ever you were going to take advantage of a snowy hike in Colorado, this would be the year to do it - as long as the cold doesn't bother you. A nice book to get you started: "Colorado's Quiet Winter Trails" (\$21.95, *The Colorado Mountain Club Press*), written by Dave Muller, former writer of the Denver Post's Hike of the Week. Muller has a laidback, user-friendly style that makes it easy to follow along on his trails, and this book offers 99 around the state, divided geographically, with a section for Rocky Mountain National Park. Each features a color photograph, a simple map with a locator in the corner, basic information including difficulty, distance and other stats and an estimate of avalanche danger, how to get there and a few comments by Muller. Here and there are sidebars, such as avoiding dehydration and trail protocol.

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## **THE ROOM REPORT**

### **THE ORLANDO**

8384 W. Third St., Los Angeles, 800-62-HOTEL, theorlando.com

**RATES:** Start at \$249 for per night for king bed. Valet parking with in-and-out privileges \$20.50. Better: a daily \$10 taxi voucher.

**STAY HERE IF YOU'RE:** In the mood to enjoy reasonably priced boutique luxuries in a great location for hitting all of L.A.

**IT'S CLOSE TO:** The Beverly Center, the Farmer's Market, West Hollywood.

**THE ROOMS ARE:** An inviting size with plush king or queen beds, sofa, attractive dark wood shelving, plasma television; bathrooms are straightforward given the hip room design but stocked with lush products.

**THEY PUT ALL OF THE MONEY INTO:** An elegant, understated room update, beckoning lobby, small-but-quality gym and a salt-water pool. The staff is helpful and discreet (we couldn't get them to divulge which guest had attracted a paparazzi flurry). Well-regarded restaurateur Gino Angelini's La Terza on the premises.

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Similar lux hotels in the area will take a bigger bite out of your budget, and they don't boast the Orlando's calming comforts. The 98-room is a foxy bargain, fit for a romantic weekend getaway.

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### **TRAVEL BY NUMBERS| Top 10 B&Bs**

The most romantic bed-and-breakfasts and country inns, according to American Historic Inns Inc. and iLoveInns.com.

Adobe & Pines Inn, Taos, N.M.  
McMillan Inn, Savannah, Ga.  
Magnolia Mansion, New Orleans  
Glasbern Country Inn, Fogelsville, Pa.  
Blair Hill Inn at Moosehead Lake, Greenville, Maine  
Candlelight Inn, Napa, Calif.  
The Place at Cayou Cove, Deer Harbor, Wash.  
Rivertown Inn, Stillwater, Minn.  
Historic Jacob Hill Inn, Providence, R.I.  
1795 Acorn Inn, Canandaigua, N.Y.

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## **travel.state.gov**

The go-to site for up-to-date information on the new and future passport requirements, as well as safety warnings for foreign travel, necessary documents and where and how to get them, facts on the avian flu and other diseases and health concerns, and required and recommended inoculations. In addition, the site keeps up with travel trends such as spring break and world events and offers special tips, and gives advice on registering with embassies, as well as living and studying abroad.

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## **GEO QUIZ | Where are these places?**

1. Palermo is to Sicily as Sapporo is to WHAT?
2. The Galápagos are to Ecuador as the Cyclades are to WHAT?
3. Urdu is to Pakistan as Sinhalese is to WHAT?
4. Mount Pinatubo is to the Philippines as Krakatoa is to WHAT?
5. Belgrade is to the Danube River as Niamey is to the WHAT?
6. The Elburz Mountains are to Iran as the Apennines are to WHAT?
7. The Mekong River is to the South China Sea as the Po River is to WHAT?
8. The Cape York Peninsula is to Australia as the Crimean Peninsula is to WHAT?
9. The Suez Canal is to Egypt as the Kiel Canal is to WHAT?
10. Amundsen Gulf is to Canada as the Gulf of Tehuantepec is to WHAT?

*ANSWERS: 1. Hokkaido 2. Greece 3. Sri Lanka 4. Indonesia 5. Niger River 6. Italy 7. Adriatic Sea 8. Ukraine 9. Germany 10. Mexico*

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