

Tracing Pasts: Land Cruise near D.C. is something new

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<http://www.newsherald.com/search/?q=Kleback&fistype=site&x=23&y=5>

All genealogy conferences are not alike! There are the large events like the National Genealogical Society Conference, state events or local ones put on by county societies like the Bay County Genealogical Society. Another venue that has been popular are cruises, which are usually sold out very quickly as researchers take advantage of the chance to improve their skills in classes taught by experts while all enjoy a vacation atmosphere.

This year, Wholly Genes Inc., which has sponsored one of the most popular genealogy cruises in the past, is trying something new. They are holding a Land Cruise from Aug. 26-30. The Web site www.whollygenes.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?screen=CRUISE says "Our 2009 conference will be held at the Shrine Mont Conference Center in historic Orkney Springs, Virginia. This rural setting provides a very inexpensive venue for our genealogy presentations and its proximity to Washington D.C. offers us the opportunity to follow those preparatory lectures with an all-day research trip to the extraordinary research repositories of the nation's capital."

This sounds like a fun event. It is designed to be restful. Accommodations on site include no televisions, no phones in the rooms and basic furniture in the bedrooms. Wireless Internet is available in the main building, and cell phone access can be spotty. If you are used to the usual conferences held in big hotel venues, this will be a change!

The guest rooms are in various parts of the complex, which includes simple hotel rooms and cottages. None have air conditioning, but the site's location at 2300 feet above sea level with mountain breezes help keep things comfortable. Meals are buffet style and feature country cooking. If you prefer more amenities, a list of places to stay further from the complex is also provided on the Web site.

The speakers are top notch. John Philip Colletta, one of my favorite speakers of all time, is on the roster as well as Marie Varrelman Melchiori, Patricia O'Brien Shawker, and Craig Roberts Scott. There is more information about each of these talented researchers on the Web site. There will also be help for users of The Master Genealogist software. There will be at least 11 hours of genealogy programs, 6 hours of TMG instruction and two optional trips: an afternoon tour of the Manassas battlefield and a day trip to Washington D.C.

One of the greatest things about the Land Cruise is the cost. The price is about \$379 (4 days) or \$309 (3 days), double occupancy, including meals and all conference events. I say about because they do say there will be a slight increase after Feb. 6. As of that date, the conference was 72 percent sold out.

In these days of shrinking budgets, it's nice to see a group trying to offer lower priced events that are well worth the cost. Let's hope it becomes a trend!