

Join TV's Burt Wolf on a food, wine, history cruise through

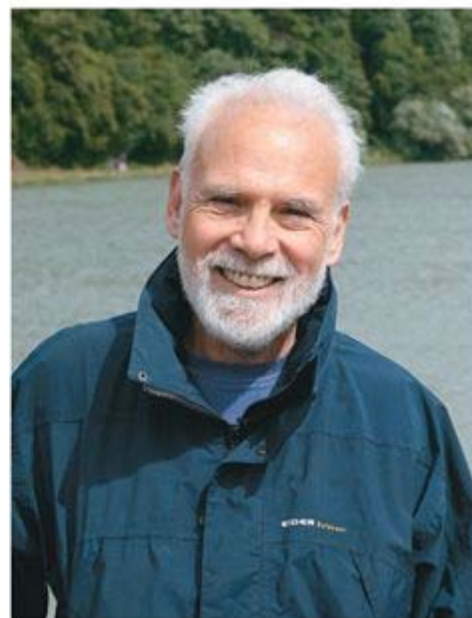
# FRANCE

By Jeff Faranco

**B**urt Wolf's exploits would fill a book. In fact, he's written or edited more than 60 books, was a Washington Post columnist, and has a whole huge life chapter on television. But he says he's no expert. On anything.

"The problem with knowing all that I know is I have no expertise," says the Renaissance man in a telephone interview from his New York City home. "What I have is a great curiosity about the planet we're on."

And he's sharing the fruits of his curiosity with viewers of his popular series on Public Broadcasting television, "Travels and Traditions" (which airs at 1:30 p.m. Saturdays on WMFE-TV, Channel 24 in Orlando). And Wolf



Burt Wolf hosts the PBS television series "Travels & Traditions."

is inviting PBS viewers to join him on a 12-day cruise on France's Saone River from Nice to Paris, May 24-June 4, aboard the Avalon Scenery.

"I've done one of these cruises this year, and we have 10 scheduled for 2009, each as a benefit for Public Broadcasting," says Wolf. "It's fun for me, and all who come along on them, and it raises money. Public television really needs support. It is the last medium free from outside influences."

WMFE and other stations that will benefit are thrilled with the opportunity and the support. "In this economy, any additional revenue source for WMFE is needed," says Catherine McManus, WMFE's senior vice president for development. "Not only do the Burt Wolf cruises provide our viewers the opportunity to support quality programming, but it allows them to engage with a television program like no other program can: experiencing what they see

on TV first-hand with Wolf as their guide."

On the cruise, Wolf says he's just one of the gang getting together amid spectacular sights, great food and wine. "I'm not like a guest speaker. I hang out," he says. Of course he also preps his guests with extensive information about where they're going and what they'll see. Then he leads informal seminars on every subject remotely related to their locales.

A native of New York City, Wolf studied British literature at New York University, then began law school at NYU. "I quickly realized I didn't want to practice law, but I loved these stories we read -

case law." His love of stories and learning has only grown.

Every December when he was young, Wolf toured Florida for several weeks with his grandmother. His love for the Sunshine State continues, and has resulted in a number of his travel shows showcasing sites here, including St. Augustine and Orlando (but not Daytona Beach "so far").

Wolf moved to Switzerland after college, working for a "major name investment bank," then decided to be a journalist. So he plunged in far from the bottom: He wrote a column for years at *The Washington Post*. And he wrote and edited books about food and travel. A few guest spots on Johnny Carson's late-night talk show elevated his profile.

That combination drew him to the attention of "this man named Turner who was putting together a new television network and wanted me to be a part of it." That was Ted Turner and Cable News Network aired more than 4,000 segments Wolf wrote and produced, traveling the world for five shows a week. Like so many of his gigs, not a bad way to make a living. He left CNN when Turner did, turning then to Public Broadcasting, where he's been since 1982. "It's a GREAT job," he says.

Now, his achievements include 800 segments for ABC television, 125 half-hour programs for the travel division of The Discovery Channel, 26 half hours for the Family Channel and 250 half hours for Public Broadcasting.

"My love is cultural anthropology," Wolf notes. "If I know what you're eating and who you're praying to, I know a lot about you."



## Cruising with Burt

The "Cruise Through France with Burt Wolf" is scheduled for May 24-June 4. The tour begins in Nice on the Mediterranean Sea and features river cruises through Provence and Burgundy. It ends in Paris.

In addition to hosting the cruise, Burt Wolf will conduct a wine tasting and several talks on wine, food and European architecture. He also will talk about his PBS TV series and how the shows are produced.

The cruise is priced from \$3,959 to \$4,608 (plus airfare).

For more information on the cruise, visit [www.wmfe.org/burtwolf](http://www.wmfe.org/burtwolf).

His credentials generally list his careers as including chef. But Wolf demurs: "Years ago, I learned a chef is someone who works in a restaurant. I've owned and worked in restaurants ... but I'm not a chef."

Nor is he a career planner. "It's all been by accident," he comments. "There never was any plan." And it's all worked out for the very best, he's quick to point out.

"I turned 70 in September," says Wolf, "and on my actual birthday, I was filming. I always try to be filming on my birthday."

Retirement? "What would I do? The whole idea of retirement makes no sense to me. Keep challenging your mind and you'll stay young."

So his goal, Wolf says, is "to die right in the middle of a piece, and have someone else step up and finish it for me and carry on." ♦



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