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Dylan, U2 Offer Rock Trip

McCartney, John also bringing fans deluxe travel packages

Come fly with me

Last summer, Christina Giannoni, 40, had an experience that would thrill any Beatles fan. For about \$1,700 plus the cost of airfare, the California fan got VIP treatment at Paul McCartney's show in Gijon, Spain, including hotel accommodations, great seats and a pass to the sound check.

"I held up a sign, and Paul smiled and pointed," says Giannoni. "It was a surreal experience." The previous summer, Giannoni bought a similar package to Liverpool for McCartney's homecoming show; fans from as far away as Japan caught a rehearsal and visited the Cavern Club, where the Beatles got their start.

Fueled by baby-boomer rock fans with money to spend and a craving for creature comforts along with their riffs, rock tourism is on the rise. Artists including Bob Dylan, Elton John and U2 are either selling travel packages or have them in the works for upcoming shows. And band managers are looking for other ways to "superserve" hardcore fans, ranging from tours of artists' birthplaces to Caribbean cruises, band on board.

For the musicians, these packages add a surprising chunk of change to a tour's bottom line. "You might have \$700 in costs on a typical \$1,500 package," says Larry Peryer of UltraStar, a company that manages bands' fan clubs online. Peryer says that depending on the group and the city, you'll see as many as fifty of these packages sold per town (Dylan, for example, has already sold sixty for his New York nights in April). "Suddenly you're looking at \$20,000 multiplied by five to ten markets. That starts to rival a minor tour sponsor."

Rock tourism isn't limited to concert trips. In March, Island Outpost, a Jamaican company owned by Island Records founder Chris Blackwell, began offering Bob Marley-themed trips starting at \$575 plus airfare. Tour stops include the home where Marley was born in St. Ann's Parish; Trenchtown, in Kingston, where he was raised;

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and his Kingston home at 56 Hope Road, where the Tuff Gong Studio is still run by his sons. "In Jamaican music you have sounds of rebelliousness and confidence," says Jason Henzell, president of Island Outpost. "We just want to show you the environment where that comes from."

Last Thanksgiving, more than 1,000 fans paid up to \$3,199 to sail away with Styx, Journey and REO Speedwagon on a seven-day Caribbean cruise. And in January, Jam Cruise 3 set sail for the Bahamas with Umphrey's McGee and twenty-four more crunchy acts braving the high seas. Now others are looking seriously at the idea. Bill Leopold, who manages Melissa Etheridge, is helping orchestrate a November cruise with smooth-jazzer Dave Koz, and he's already thinking about bigger bands. "What would happen if the Eagles did a cruise?" he asks. "How high would the prices be? This isn't drawing fans from one city. For cruises, you're talking about a worldwide fan base. You're going to see a lot more of this."

BILL WERDE


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