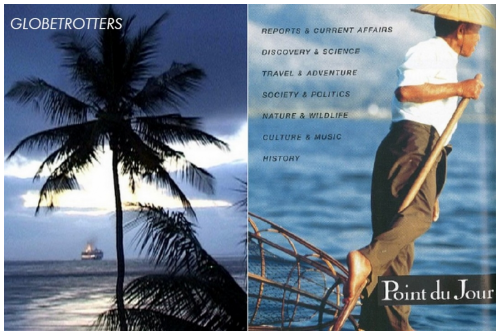


FRANCE: TWENTY-FOUR CARAT SECRET

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The people of the mountainous Jura region of France are either very circumspect or extremely modest for they hardly ever mention that the town of St. Claude was once one of the diamond capitals of the world. Early this century, almost four thousand diamond-cutters were employed in and around the town. Over the years, rising labour costs forced the diamond-cutting industry to move abroad. Today, there are less then ten cutters left in the region. Men whose eyes and ears are still essential tools in sculpting the precious stones to the nearest hundredth of a millimeter before sending them to exclusive jewelry shops in Paris. The trade is dying out. In St. Claude at least, diamonds are not for ever.

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