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A low-angle photograph of the Great Sphinx of Giza, showing its massive head and the tiered body. The Sphinx is made of light-colored limestone. In the foreground, there are several large, rounded stone structures, likely part of the Sphinx's enclosure. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

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Welcome to World Traveler



We will travel!

In this issue, we start our world-wide adventure in Sulawesi, Indonesia, as we mingle with the locals and have an amazing 'Defining Experience' by delving into their culture and ceremonies. Next, we race around to uncover 'Shanghai's Hidden Gems' in this almost otherworldly city.

We then change gears with an incredible snorkelling adventure while cruising in French Polynesia, Hawaii, and the Galapagos islands. Jetting off to the east, we find out exactly how 'Qatar Airways Qsuite Sets Precedent in Air Travel'.

Flying back to Europe, we enjoy the best that Turkish airlines has to offer, first heading to Istanbul and discovering the best this fascinating city has to offer. Close by, we then visit 'Turkey's Mountainous Gem: Bursa' and then find true magic in wonderful Cappadocia. In Spain, we head to 'The Mediterranean Pearl' on the island of Mallorca.

A quick ride later and we are in North Africa, an unbelievably diverse destination where we first learn why it is truly 'Magnificent Tunisia'.

In the Americas, we first start in Quebec's north and have 'Fun for Families in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean' region and find out why it is a place worth returning too again and again. Not far away we take a leisurely boat ride on the historic Rideau Canal with the self-drive boats from 'Le Boat' company. Still in Canada, we head to the metropolis of Toronto, and uncover the many multi-cultural neighbourhoods, each with their own charm and style.

South of the 49th parallel we are off to bite into the Big Apple and enjoy some dining pleasure in some of this city's best and most interesting eateries. Still in the states, we visit Virginia and experience the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains region. South of the equator, all that is new and exciting in the tropical paradises of the Caribbean are ours to experience before we head to the end of the world and cruise with Princess from Buenos Aires to Santiago, Chile, all the while enjoying the majestic natural flora and fauna of the best this amazingly abundant land.

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Destinations



(short informative travel pieces)

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Tana Toraja, Sulawesi, Indonesia: A Defining Experience

Article and photography by Steve Gillick

Sulawesi is a captivating destination for travelers looking to connect and interact in a personal, meaningful way. During our five day visit, we attended funeral ceremonies, visited cave, cliff and tree graves, met the fascinating Tau tau, trekked to remote villages and interacted with the locals selling their wares in the markets, planting the rice fields and doing household chores in and around their homes.

Our journey to Tana Toraja, “the land of the people of the uplands”, was motivated by an overall desire to gain insight into other cultures, inspired, no doubt, by my Grade

11 History Teacher who had us read portions of Sir James George Frazer’s classic study of mythology and religion, *The Golden Bough*.

But there was also a totally unexpected mystical intervention, when, on a flight to Irian Jaya (now Papua), our plane made a brief stop in Makassar, the capital of Sulawesi. At that time the airport terminal was designed to evoke the image of ‘Tongkonan’, the traditional, peak-roofed houses of the Torajan people. I was totally amazed and vowed that I would return one day. And I did!

Several years later, after a few days of discovery in Bali, we took the 75-minute flight from Denpasar to Makassar, where we met our guide for the seven hour (310 km) journey to Tana Toraja. Today there are one-hour flights from Makassar (a.k.a Ujung Pandang) to Palopo Bua Airport and then a two-hour drive to Rantepao, so the choice of transportation just depends on time, budget and curiosity.

We drove up the coast, making frequent stops to photograph landscapes of mountains and villages, scenes of small fishing boats and roadside stalls selling everything



from dried fish to basketball-sized Pomelo (a citrus fruit, locally known as Jeruk Bali).

In Batu Kabobong or “Erotic Mountain”, (named after the ‘use-your-imagination’ visual-shapes of the topography), we learned one of the seminal Torajan myths. In olden days, people were free to climb the Celestial Ladder to meet the deities in the sky, particularly Puang Matua, the High God. Puang Matua wanted to see the Aluk (‘the way of the ancestors’ or ‘the law’) brought down to earth, and so a man and his wife were assigned to carry all 7777 Aluk down the Celestial Ladder. But the couple could only manage to carry 777 and left the rest behind, including the Aluk on permissible marriage practices.

Many years later, a great-grandchild of the couple had two daughters and two sons. As there were no available partners for the children to marry, the parents sent an emissary to climb the Celestial Ladder and ask Puang Matua if the children would be permitted to marry each other. The emissary decided not to undertake the tiring journey and instead, made up the answer. He informed the parents that siblings were permitted to marry, and the marriage went ahead. Puang Matua was so enraged that the Celestial Ladder was hurled down to earth. Over the years, the remaining Aluk that would provide direction for all aspects of social life, agricultural practices and rituals, were conveyed to the Torajan people.

On the final leg of our journey we turned inland and after encountering miles of steep, winding roads, we finally arrived at the formal “Gateway” to Tana Toraja in Rantepao, the capital of North Toraja Regency. We settled into our hotel, enjoyed a local dinner of Nasi Goreng (fried rice with vegetables, shrimp and egg), and then fell asleep to the harmonies of chirping cicadas and crickets.

The next three days were filled with one fascinating experience after another.

Torajan funeral ceremonies allow the soul of the deceased to be transported safely to the next world. As it can be a very elaborate and

expensive ‘production’, ceremonies often take years to plan. Hundreds of guests arrive and walk around the ritual field in the village, showing off their best attire as well as the number of pigs they have brought, or baskets of rice or tubes of palm wine. Each gift represents a debt and a social tie. The guests then retire to temporary shelters, built around the field.

Water Buffalo play an important role in leading the deceased to the afterlife. After the Buffalo are paraded on the field, they are slaughtered and the meat is divided up according to the rank of the attendees (the head goes to the highest noble, the ribs are distributed to commoners etc).

And while this is taking place it’s hard not to notice the Tongkonan (meaning “sit down together”). Tongkonan honour the birth-place of the parents, grand-parents and ancestors, and are characterized by roofs that resemble boats. While some say that this tradition commemorates the ancestors who sought shelter by turning their boats into houses, others believe that the roofs resemble the shape of the sky and are a connection to Puang Matua.

Tongkonan are often elaborately decorated with colorful symbols: Two roosters signify the rule of life; a circle represents Puang Matua; snail-like decorations relate to community and the ideal of working together; and the Water Buffalo represents power. In fact the most important Tongkonan display a ‘kobongo’ on the façade; a carved buffalo head with real horns, often accompanied by a roof-to-ground display of buffalo horns, symbolizing the age, wisdom and stature of the man of the house.

During the time it takes to arrange a funeral ceremony, it’s not unusual for the body of the deceased to remain embalmed, under a house. Afterward the deceased may be formally buried in a cliff grave (inside the cliff or in a wooden coffin hanging from the cliff) or in a cave. We visited some of these gravesites but also saw tree graves where young babies are laid to rest. The belief is that the baby will be absorbed into the tree



and the wind will take their soul to the heavens.

Probably the most notable symbols associated with death in Tana Toraja are the Tau tau, a name that means “person-like”. These life-sized wooden or bamboo effigies that guard the nearby graves, are thought to be receptacles for the ghosts of the deceased. Tau tau appear to be alive, with vivid staring eyes and dressed in the finest clothes, while standing or sitting in family groups, in recesses carved into the limestone cliffs and inside caves.

Our visits to explore these important life-cycle events took us to small settlements in Lemo, Sangalla, Marante, Londa Kete, Keta Kesu and Pangli. But we also had the opportunity to trek from one farming village to another, to visit and chat with locals working in rice terraces, tending crops, and engaged in household chores.

In Rantepao and Makale, we visited the lively, crowded markets, watched the animated trading of palm-leaf-and-bamboo-bound live pigs and frantic, squawking chickens, drank fresh coffee brewed from locally grown beans, sipped palm wine from bamboo tubes, and took photos of the colorful fruit, fish and vegetable stands.

This was one amazing adventure filled with memorable conversations and smiles. For travelers with a consuming curiosity about destinations, people and culture, a visit to Tana Toraja can be a defining experience. ■

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Mallorca

The Mediterranean Pearl

ARTICLE & PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL MORCOS

The Spanish empire has a long history, and the country has withstood the tests of time to become a world player, and an absolute must spot for a trip!

There are so many locations to choose from, with cities that can trace roots back through the mists of time, to modern cities that rival New York and London.

Not to be missed is a gem found off the coast, surrounded by the azure waters of the Mediterranean sea - the Spanish Island of Mallorca!

Palma is the economic and cultural hub of Majorca, as it was once a major port, and now the riches are enjoyed as a wonderful base for exploring the island's many beaches, museums and nightlife. Palma city center is located north of Badia de Palma and extends eastwards with mostly a flat fertile

plain known as Es Pla. To the north and west, the city borders the Serra de Tramuntana, the island's major mountain range and a Unesco World Heritage site.

As a former Moorish casbah, or walled city, Palma's Old Town is a maze of narrow streets that are ideal for meandering by foot, discovering local treats and delights by the score.

The walking tour around the city centre offers a visit to the Spanish old world, with ancient buildings and history around every corner. As imposing as it is beautiful, the famous La Seu is a vast cathedral originally built on a mosque. Construction began in 1229 but it did not finish until 1601 and further restoration was undertaken in 1901, when local architect Antoni Gaudí was brought in to help. Ingenious and passionate, Gaudí's many projects are clearly influ-

enced by his love of architecture, nature, and religion. His eye for detail is clear in each his creations and integrated into them with ceramics, stained glass, wrought iron-work and carpentry.

A sight to behold, the Almudaina Palace is a fine example of Moorish architecture and how Spain endeavours to preserve the history of its past. It has seen life as a Moorish fortress, and a palace for the Mallorcan kings and today it is a museum containing pieces of art such as Flemish tapestries, an excellent collection of paintings, and a beautiful selection of oriental carpets. It is also rumoured to be the official residence when the King of Spain makes summertime visits!

In the city on top of a hill, with a great view of Palma and the sea, lies Bellver Castle. Due to its location and visibility from the sea



and city, it has become one of Palma's most recognized symbols. Originally a residence for the Kings of Mallorca, it has withstood the elements and many sieges throughout the ages. In 1931, the castle and the forest surrounding it was given to the city of Palma and was transformed into a museum that, after being restored in 1976, became the city's History museum and a hub for many different public ceremonies, cultural events, and concerts.

Museums and history are a part of Palma's fabric, and a visit to the Fundació Pilar I Joan Miró museum is not to be missed. Dedicated to the work of the artist Joan Miró, there is a main building exhibiting works donated by the artist, a library, a sculpture garden, Miró's studio Sert, and the Finca Son Boter. The museum was designed by the renowned Rafael Moneo and built in 1992.

We moved on to the city of Petra, birthplace of famous missionary Brother Juniper Serra, founder of many Californian missions including one in of San Francisco and another in Los Angeles. In a stroke of luck, our visit coincided with a Canonizing ceremony held for him by none other than Pope Francis!

The local church in Petra has many statues of saints whose names were borrowed in California including San Diego and San Francisco. His work in California included many recorded acts of piety and a dedication to his missionary efforts for which he was granted the posthumous title Apostle of California. The Pope's declaration of Serra as a Catholic saint was a controversial one, as many aboriginal tribes criticize Serra's treatment of their ancestors and associate him with the suppression of their culture.

Caves of Artá lie in the northeast of Majorca, around 60 km from the island's capital of Palma. Visiting these caves one can understand why it has been used in films like *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*, as they offer an other-worldly feel!

Once in the town of Artá we ate at the Sant Salvador restaurant, great home style Mallorcan food. Olives and almonds are

typical, and there are many delights awaiting the palate, like *sobrassada*, *arròs brut* (saffron rice cooked with chicken, pork and vegetables), the sweet pastry *ensaimada*, and a delightful herbal liqueur *Herbs de Majorca*.

As with most mediteranian beaches, the sands and azure water combine to make a memorable day for the whole family. A stop for pictures from *Es Mirador d'Es Colomer* (Pollença) must also be made, as there are breath taking views from high upon the cliffs.

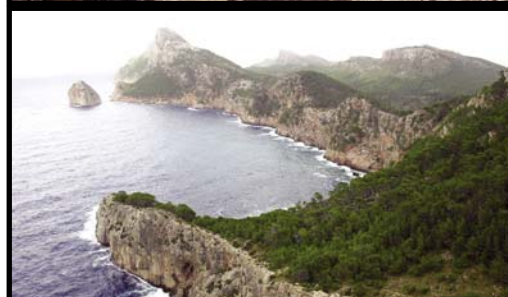
We then visited *Teixits Vicens*, a family-run artisanal textile factory and craft workshop manufacturing Mallorca fabrics that are locally known as *Roba de Llengües* (Cloth of Tongues). As a testament to their products and professionalism, they have been able to survive and keep an old trade alive in modern times, since being founded in 1854.

Soller is an agricultural town nestled in a fertile valley surrounded by olive and orange trees, vegetable gardens and produce. Regular commerce with France has created cultural consequences that are reflected in its architecture and language. Highly praised by visitors, there are wonderful walks along the cobbled path of *Barranc de Bini*, the *Plaza de la Constitució* and along the cobbled path of *Barranc de Biniaraix*.

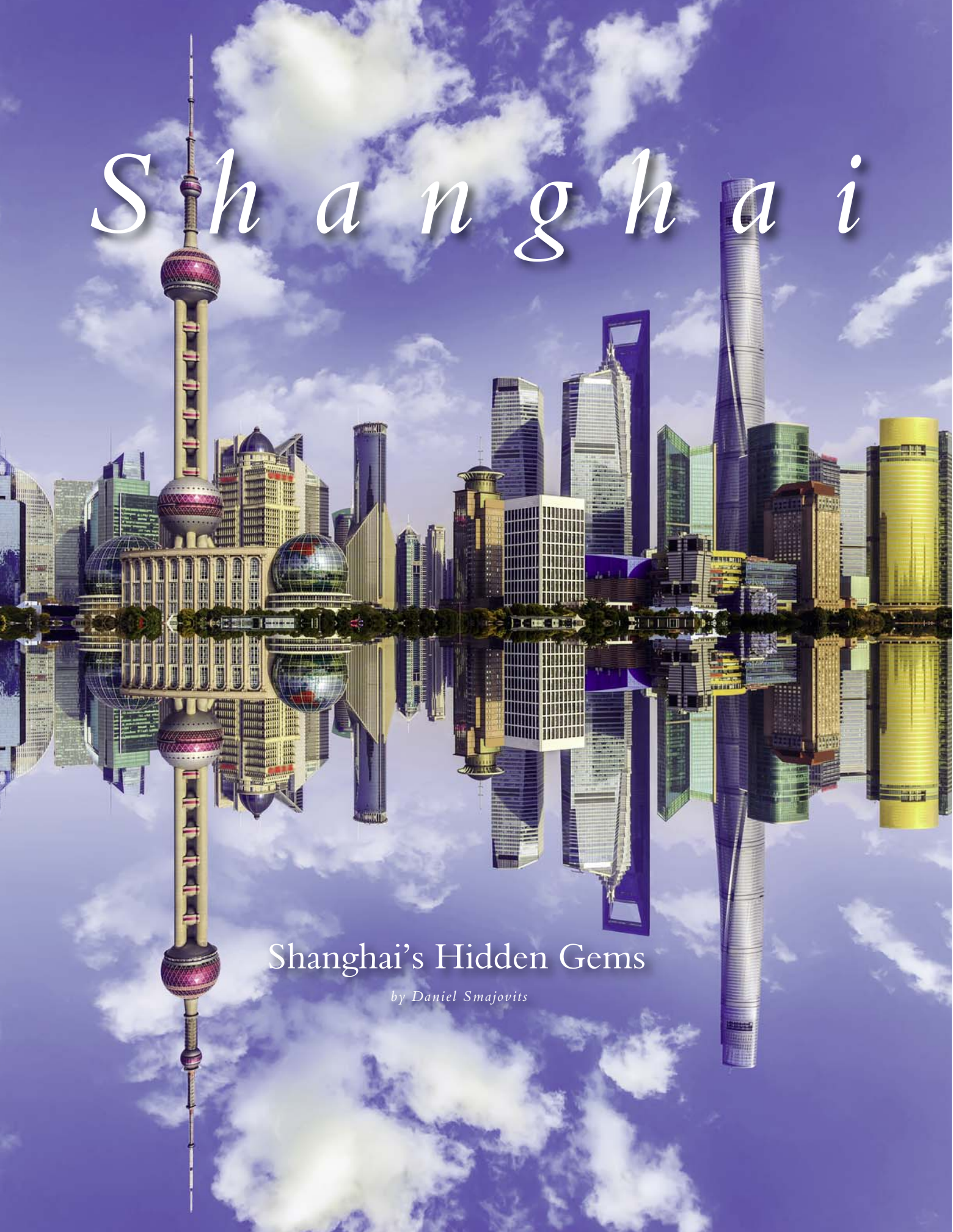
A lunch date at *Belmond La Residencia* offers a Donkey walking trail tour through the hotel's olive groves, an enjoyable visit followed by an unforgettable picnic lunch in a stone shepherd's hut. Further along is a visit to the Royal Carthusian Monastery of *Valldemossa*, where Frédéric Chopin and George Sand spent the winter of 1838-1839.

A final stop took us for a wonderful sunset while enjoying a delicious selection of finger food and cocktails at the *Puro Beach club*. All luxurious amenities are offered, including seaside food and drinks, lounges, terrace, pool & SPA treatments. Fun for day and night! ■

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Shanghai



Shanghai's Hidden Gems

by Daniel Smajovits

Tucked in between massive skyscrapers, five-star restaurants and one of the most beautiful waterfronts in the world is the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Museum: a living monument to the city's rich history.

While today Shanghai is known as one of the world's financial and shopping hubs, the museum brings visitors back to the mid-1800s when the then-quiet fishing village welcomed its first wave of Jewish immigrants.

Located at the former Ohel Moshe Synagogue in what was once the centre of the Shanghai Ghetto, the museum documents the rich and unique history of the city's Jews. Ultimately, 20,000 lives were saved during as a result of Shanghai officials offering protective visas to Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria and Poland.

The millions of tourists that flock to The Bund, Nanjing Road or Shanghai Disney often miss many of the city's incredible gems. Located away from the hustle and bustle, unique museums, markets or neighborhoods dot the map and provide guests with an incredible window into one of the world's great cities and cultures.

All trips to Shanghai should begin with a peek into China's recent history. The off-the-beaten-path Propaganda Poster Art Centre offers a history lesson in Chinese politics through a privately-owned collection that lined Chinese streets and filled publications from 1910 to 1990. Opened in 2002, the museum is home to 6,000 pieces, making it then most complete and thorough collection of its kind in the world. Located in the former French Concession district of the city, which was formerly the city's premiere residential and retail district.

While most tourists leave their suits and ties at home, stopping at the South Bund Soft Spinning Market will ensure you come home ready for the ball. This unique market is home to hundreds of stalls filled with tailors ready to ensure you return home with a

bespoke wardrobe. Our personal favourite is Joyce and Rita (#129) for their excellent customer service and hotel delivery. Furthermore, your measurements stay on file, so ordering more via We Chat is as easy as a few messages upon returning home. Allow a minimum of two days for all shirts and pants to be produced and ensure to carve out time for a second visit should you purchase a full suit.

Staying on the subject of markets, Shanghai is home to perhaps one of the most unique ones in the world: the People's Square Marriage Market. Parents flock to People's Park in central Shanghai every Saturday and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m. with resumes of their eligible sons or daughters attached to umbrellas. For that adept in Mandarin, they can easily decipher the most suitable of the bunch as written on a paper taped to the umbrella is their child's age, height, job, income, education as well as miscellaneous details about their personality. Tourists are welcome to watch from a distance or even take part in the action themselves.

As with most cities, no trip to Shanghai would be complete without indulging in its incredible food scene. While famous for its buns: both the steamed and soup versions, those delicacies only scratch the surface of the city's culinary exploits.

The UnTour Food Tour will take your palate along a culinary journey unique to Shanghai. The Night Eats tour, which included five restaurants and two street stops, allows you to sample dozens of dishes and drinks while mingling with locals and tourists alike. UnTour's experienced guides provided the ideal evening activity, leaving you wanting seconds and thirds. The group operates multiple day and evening food tours in Shanghai to ensure that tourists leave with a complete picture of the city's vast culinary scene.

After familiarizing yourself with the heart of Shanghai, tourists should begin to explore beyond the city centre. On the Bund, but far away from the skyscrapers is the West Bund district, which was emerged as a haven for emerging artists. Established in 2014, the

gentrified industrial area now features more than 100 galleries with exhibits from around the world. Museums such as the Long Museum and Yuz Museum are must-visits, but make sure to spend an entire day in the area, pic-nick in tow to soak in the neighbourhood's hipster vibe.

Even further south is Jinshan Beach, a true respite from the craziness that is central Shanghai. Taking the 30-minute bullet train from Shanghai South Railway Station (10 RMB), the man-made beach is a welcome haven for tourists looking to relax on the water or bring their children for an afternoon playing in the sand. While there is an entrance fee (50 RMB), guests can pack their own food, alcohol included. Unfortunately, no swimming is allowed.

Equal parts fun and relaxing is Gongqing Forest Park. Located about 90 minutes away from Shanghai, the park welcomes many locals, but few tourists make the trek to the relatively remote Yangpu district. Families can spend a day enjoying the nature: trees, lakes and rivers, but the park is also home to activities such as a roller coaster, paintball, tea-cups and log-rides. Admission to the park is 80 RMB and the activities cost extra.

For a taste of the Shanghai of old, northwest of the city centre is the Jiading District. While known for factories and industry, the area is ripe with history. Home to one of the best-preserved Confucian temples in China, the area also boasts a museum, canals and parks. The lack of tourists ensures that the trip to Jiading will provide you with an authentic day in a city that is filled with Western influences at every turn.

Whether it's a relaxing day at Jinshan Beach, being fit for an upcoming gala at the South Bund Soft Spinning Market or indulging in some local delicacies on one of UnTour's unique tours, these hidden gems are only some of the incredible sights and sounds that can be found in the aptly named Pearl of the Orient. ■

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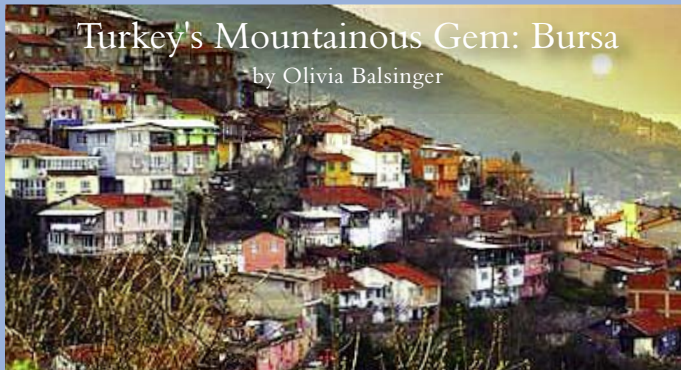




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Around The World (in 22 pages)



Turkey's Mountainous Gem: Bursa

by Olivia Balsinger

Though certainly off the beaten path, your next trip to Turkey should include at least three days in Bursa, the grandiose metropolis that lies in the foothills of Mount Uludağ, near the Sea of Marmara. A trip to Bursa is an adventure back in time—exploring the mosques and historical sites from the early Ottoman Empire makes one feel like Indiana Jones on a daring, authentic mission.

While Istanbul can be overcrowded, Bursa is still under the radar and an accessible escape into Turkey's dramatic and mountainous backdrop. Though the city is generally more conservative than Istanbul, the locals are amiable and encourage tourism. One local suggestion is to take the Bursa Teleferik up to the top of the Uludag Mountain--and at a total length of almost 10 km, this is one of the longest cable car rides in the world. Safe to say, the view, at 2,500 meters above the city, is striking (and explains why Bursa is a preeminent Turkish ski destination!) There is no better choice for a five-star stay in Bursa than the Hilton Bursa Convention Center & Spa, sandwiched in the mountains and a stone's throw from UNESCO sites, including the Osman Gazi Tomb.

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CHINA TOURISM INTRODUCES NEW BRAND LOGO

China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) has made "Beautiful China" the tag line of its tourism and introduced a new global brand logo. With an overall look as a stamp, the new logo integrates modern messaging with the ancient Chinese art form of calligraphy. The hieroglyph in the back-

ground means "travel" in ancient Chinese language, which shows a flag guiding a couple around. The blue color represents the sky, delivering China tourism's concepts - vitality, harmony and green travel. The red color gives tribute to the Chinese civilization that has been going on for thousands of years. Illustrating an international vision, the "Beautiful China" logo represents China's promising and welcoming tourism industry.



Virginia is for lovers

by Olivia Balsinger

Virginia is for lovers--the state's slogan reminds us of this constantly. But did you know that Virginia is also for adventurers, for those not intimidated to get their boots dirty and fill their soul with adrenaline? And there is no place where adventure is plentiful like the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, one of the most diverse and iconic landscapes in the United States. And with 50 percent of America's population living within a day's drive of Virginia, these mountains are easily accessible for a quick getaway into the fresh mountain air. For first-timers to Virginia beginning in Shenandoah National Park is essential.

The park, breathtaking in all seasons, is long and narrow, with the Shenandoah River and its broad valley to the west, and the rolling hills of the Virginia Piedmont to the east. Many visitors enjoy casting down Skyline Drive, which is the main park road, that gently curves through the park. And with almost 40% of the land area—79,579 acres—designated as wilderness and is protected as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System, the countless wild animals native to the area enjoy freedom and space. It is not uncommon to spot a black bear, a white-tailed deer, or even a bobcat while hiking on one of the many winding trails. And this rustic feeling of being immersed in nature doesn't end after a day in the forests. Nestled in the heart of the park are a variety of lodges that cater to all possible traveler's desires. From the cozy Skyland Resort, spanning 27 acres and with its detached cabins sitting on the edge of the ridge to the six quite primitive cabins maintained by The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, each equipped with basics like mattresses, d cookware, and a pit toilet for the more intrepid traveler, there is something for everyone in the heart of Virginia's mountain range.

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Intrepid Releases First Ever “How” To Go In 2021 List



As travel faces further uncertainty in 2021, Intrepid is shifting their focus towards how we travel in the near future. Intrepid is unveiling over 30 new itineraries as part of the announcement, with their new tours built around the 5 foundations of their How To Go list that reflect the realities of post-COVID travel.

With the impacts of COVID-19 continuing to be felt around the world, Intrepid Travel, the world's largest adventure travel company and certified travel B Corp, has released their first ever “How” To Go In 2021 list. The compilation, replacing the annual “where to go” lists, outlines five key trends that form the foundation of Intrepid’s new 2021 tour offerings.

With the timeline for reopening travel still unknown, Intrepid, who has been carbon

neutral for over 10 years and operates over 800 tours on all seven continents, developed these five foundations by looking at internal booking data, search data, as well as wider societal trends. They all helped inform Intrepid’s new tours in 2021, as they continue to reimagine adventure travel in the post-COVID world.

The five foundations that make up Intrepid’s How To Go In 2021 list are:

1. Go slower – Over the past few months, Intrepid has launched 15 new Retreats, with more planned in 2021. This new tour theme enables travellers to unpack once and commit to a more considered pace in a single location. The trips were developed in direct response to COVID-19 for travellers to engage with surrounding communities away from crowds and in a more controlled setting. The Retreats speak to the growing pop-

ularity of the “slow travel movement”, a trend developing among other tour operators. Trips highlighting the new Intrepid Retreats include the 5-day Greece Retreat: Syros Island and 5-day Croatia Retreat: Lastovo Island.

2. Go into the wild – In 2021/2022, Intrepid departs on their inaugural Antarctica Expedition on the Ocean Endeavour. This first sail celebrates Intrepid becoming a true seven-continent operator, and will offer activities like camping, kayaking and snowshoeing. Intrepid saw a 70% increase globally in searches to their Antarctica pages in September 2020. Early signs show a strong demand for all types of wilderness experiences. In North America, pandemic-fueled visitation has U.S. national parks tracking to break visitor records. Time outdoors after a year defined by lock-downs and increased screen time will be more important than





ever, as new research shows that spending more time outdoors will have a positive impact on our mental health. Beyond Antarctica, Intrepid continues to see steady bookings to the Galapagos Islands and on their Africa safaris for the second half of 2021.

3. Go on your terms – As travellers around the world face varying levels of comfort and travel restrictions, customization and flexibility will be two key pillars for the future of travel. Intrepid Travel has spent the past six months revamping their Tailor-Made offering. In 2021, all 800+ Intrepid Trips will be fully customizable and available for travellers to book with their own private group, whether it is their family, their 'bubble' or beyond. Intrepid has already seen a 120% increase in global search traffic for their custom offerings over the past six months. Across the industry, interest in solo travel has also accelerated as a result of the pandemic. As people are debating their personal level of comfort before travelling, many are choosing to simply go on their own. So far in 2021, 31% of Intrepid Travel's booked customers are solo travelers.

4. Go on a human-powered adventure – Intrepid has released four new cycling trips and four new walking trips in addition to over 90 active itineraries available in 2021. Cycling globally has been among the most widely adapted hobbies during the pandemic. Cities like London have seen up to a 300% increase in cyclists. In North America, some cities have started developing green recovery plans around reducing cars and optimizing their cities for cyclists. As Intrepid looks to provide more options for new active enthusiasts, they have launched the new 3-day England: Peak District Walking Retreat and 4-day Cycle New Zealand: Otago Rail Trail, among others.

5. Go to regenerate, not just sustain - As the world's largest travel B Corp and a carbon-neutral travel company, Intrepid has focused their efforts on advocating for a responsible rebuild of the travel industry following the pandemic. They recently open-sourced a guide to decarbonize your travel business and their animal welfare policy as tools for other travel companies and consumers to travel more responsibly in the future. Beyond sustainability, COVID-19 has also been a

catalyst for the regenerative travel movement. The goal is to minimize our impact while proactively working to benefit the destinations and communities we visit. Prior to the pandemic the global tourism industry accounted for 1 in 10 jobs, but it also contributed to 8% of global GHG emissions. In the future, regardless of where we go, adopting sustainable and regenerative travel practices has never been more important.

"In 2021, travellers around the world will continue to be faced with varying levels of restrictions and limited destinations they can visit," says James Thornton, CEO of Intrepid Travel. "This year we knew our focus would need to be less about the where and more about the how, looking at the ways in which we will travel better in the future. Whether it's closer to home or further abroad, travel has changed forever, and together we must create a new normal, focused on rebuilding travel better than it was before."

To explore the full How To Go In 2021 list, visit: <https://www.intrepidtravel.com/how-to-go-2021>. ■



About Intrepid Travel

Independently owned by the founders and staff of Intrepid Travel, Intrepid Group is a collection of three tour operator brands and 25 destination management companies united by the vision of Changing the Way People See the World. For more than 30 years, Intrepid has been taking small groups to travel the local way, on real life experiences that give back to the places and people we visit. As this style of travel has caught on, Intrepid has grown and in 2019 offered more than 2,700 trips to more than 130 countries and on all seven continents

www.intrepidtravel.com

The graphic features the text "Discover THE WORLD" in a large, white, serif font against a blue background. Below this, in a smaller white font, is "With Intrepid Travel's Where To Go list". The background of the entire graphic shows three people (two men and one woman) with their arms raised in a celebratory gesture, standing in front of a field of tall, green cacti. In the bottom left corner, there is a "Certified B Corporation" logo. In the bottom right corner, there is a red square logo with the word "INTREPID" in white.

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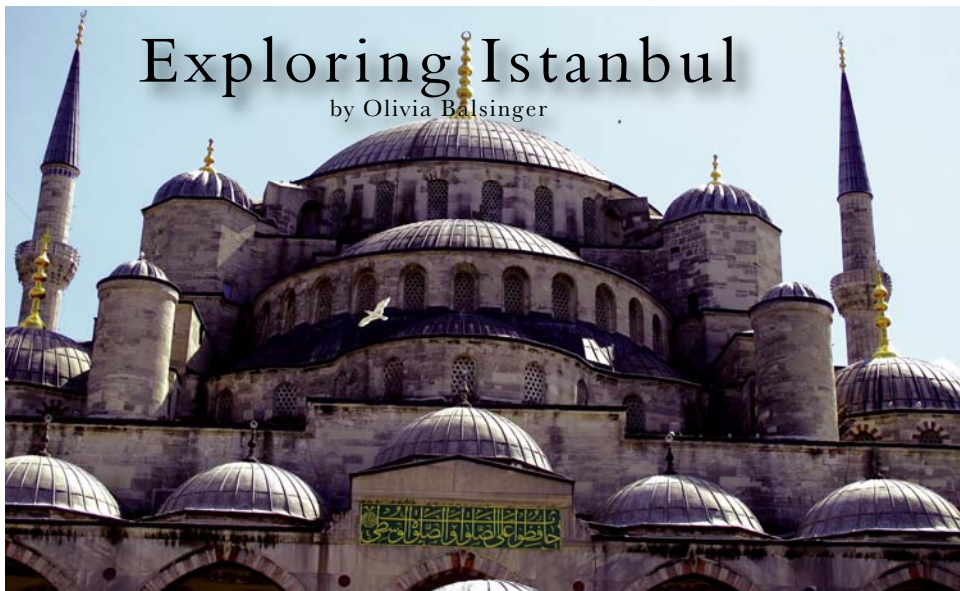
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Exploring Istanbul

by Olivia Balsinger



They say it's where East meets West. But in reality, it is so much more than that. The dichotomies in Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, are unparalleled—the metropolis is a dynamic and modern-day world center steeped in history and relevance for thousands of years. The bridge between Asia and Europe, physically divided by the Bosphorus Strait, Istanbul embodies the best of all worlds—it is truly an epicenter of art, culture, food, and history.

Surrounded by history in the heart of the Sultanahmet District, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985, On my first morning, I found shelter in a rustic coffee house. Turkish coffee is more than just a means to a caffeine-rush in Istanbul—it is an integral part of the city. There is a ritual of bringing sugar to the boil in a unique pot called a cezve, which is then served elegantly in a dainty cup and saucer.

Once caffeinated, it was time to explore the intricacies of the old city further. My first stop was the 400-year-old Sultan Ahmed Mosque, often nicknamed The Blue Mosque, as the blue tiles that envelop the structure are breathtaking. Though one of the most popular tourist spots in the entire city, The Blue Mosque is still functioning as a worship place and is not a museum. Staring at The Blue Mosque is the equally stunning Hagia Sophia museum, a testament to how sophisticated the ancient world was during Byzantine times. Built from around 537 until 143, Hagia Sophia has been the world's largest cathedral for nearly one thousand years.

Following my time travel to the ancient world and Istanbul's antiquities, I stepped back into the modern world with a visit to The Istanbul Modern Art Museum, located in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul. A homage to contemporary and experimental art, the installations and sculptures at this museum feature some

of Turkey's most acclaimed contemporary artists.

Any epic city with so much to see will surely be wary on the body. Luckily, Istanbul's traditional hammams offer authentic and rejuvenating experiences for the intrepid traveler. Hammams are not quite bathhouses and are not entirely massage parlors—they are chambers designed with wall to wall stones and a scorching altar-like slab in the middle of the room.

I split my time in Istanbul between two luxurious hotels. Located in the city's prestigious Sarıyer district, The Six Senses Kocataş Mansions lives up to the brand name. With stunning interiors, a fantastic art collection, and a spa that captivates serenity, this hotel should be on the wishlist of any discerning traveler to Istanbul. Next, I went to the heart of Taksim Square for a stay at The Grand Hyatt Istanbul, another five-star urban resort surrounded by peaceful gardens that prides itself on its four restaurants that each bring out the unique flavors of Istanbul.

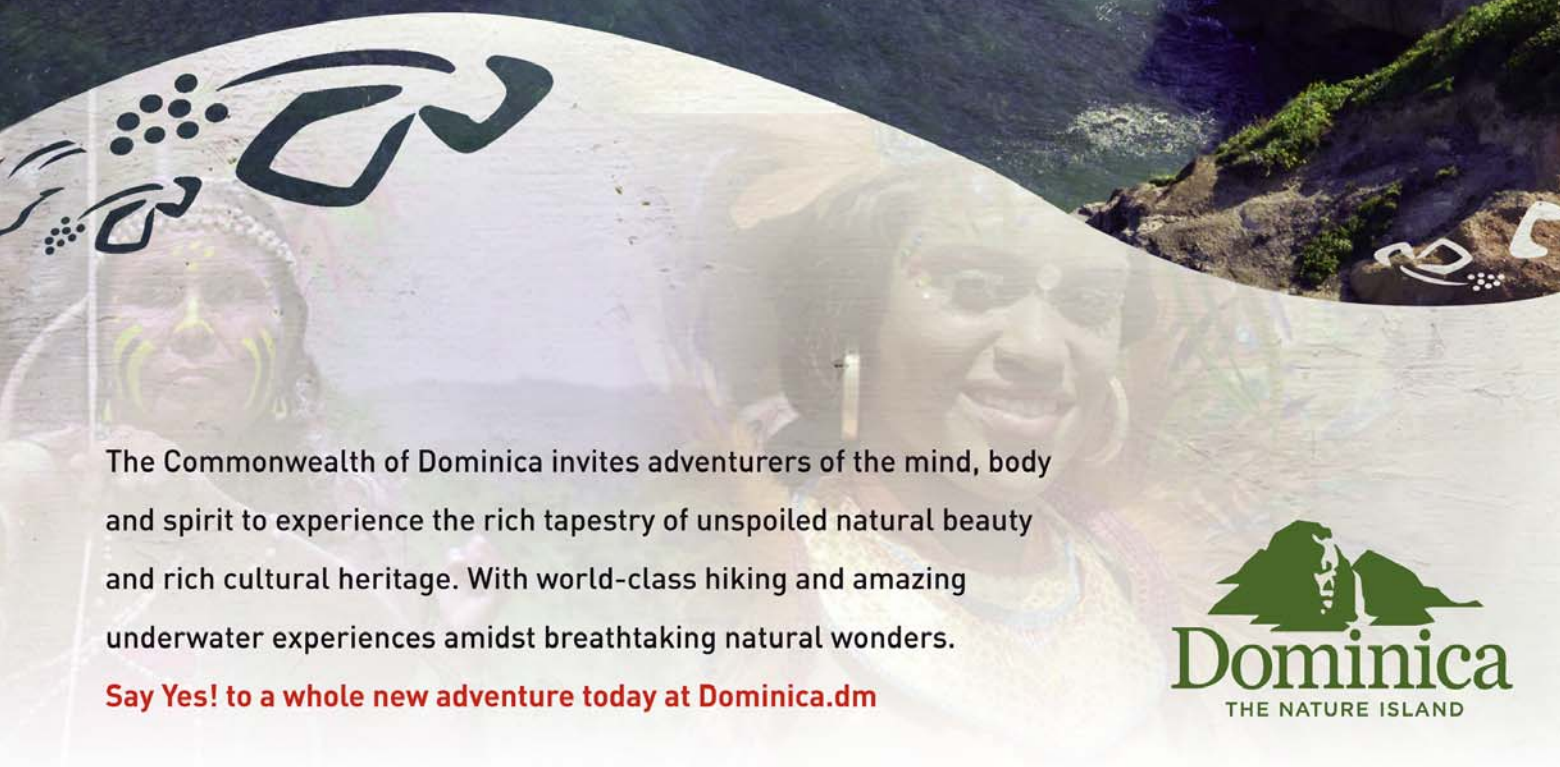
A transcontinental city bursting with history, Istanbul is one of those rare gems that services all. For the luxury traveler, for the curious backpacker, for the historian, for the lover of culture, Istanbul not only delivers but withstands the tests of time. ■

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Cappadocia, Where Magic Transcends Reality

by Olivia Liveng

As a travel writer with an intrepid spirit, I had believed that I was immune to a total sensory shock when the plane's wheels landed in an entirely foreign destination for the first time. Though traversing the world for the work was a career I could only conjure in my wildest dreams until that first assignment years back, I never realized an unintended consequence would mean that I'd soon be saturated with the ability to be amazed. That is until I landed in Cappadocia for the first time.

Cappadocia, a historical region about a 1.5-hour flight from Istanbul, is a different universe where Nature is omnipotent, and all human-made activities are built around it. The landscape is surreal, formed as a consequence of three volcanic eruptions, with the remnants spilled over hundreds of meters. Am I still on planet Earth or did I mistake my plane for a moon rocket? Usually bustling with global tourists, winter was the prime time to revel in the unspoiled beauty.

Though many choose to rent a car and adventure on their own, for my first visit, I decided to explore with the local tour company, Goreme Kelebek Travel, to be assured I wouldn't miss out on any of the magic. And just minutes after getting picked up at sunrise for the most quintessential Cappadocia activity—hot air ballooning—I was elated with my decision. Though countless operators provide this experience, Goreme Kelebek Travel differs in their exclusive packages—flights tailored for only 2, 4, or 8 provide a more sophisticated and private experience, instead of elbowing strangers for a glimpse over the side of the balloon.

But Goreme Kelebek Travel goes way beyond the classic tours here and prides itself on inti-

mately connecting tourists with Cappadocia's nature and culture. I enjoyed horseback riding through the impressive vineyards of Cappadocia valley, stopping every so often for a picture opportunity or to marvel at the landscape. Our tour ended as the sun began to set, creating an atmosphere out of a romance novel (If I weren't already married, this would have been where I'd want to be proposed to!) Another activity that tantalized all senses was our cooking class - the tour operator shopped with us to find local ingredients at the market before being brought to a rural kitchen in untouched nature where local entrepreneurial women taught us to make soup and two local dishes, dolma, and sarma.

It's not only the activities in Cappadocia that are so authentic and unique to the area. My tremendous stay at the four-star Sultan Cave Suites was an experience in itself. Perched atop Aydinli Hill, this unique hotel offers cave rooms furnished with antiques from throughout Turkey. Between the breathtaking views from the stone terraces, to the deep tissue massage that greeted me post a day of hiking, there was no better place to retreat than to my cave (and how often does a traveler get to say that!) ■

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Hikone Castle, Japan: Beyond Imagination

Article and photography by Steve Gillick

Hikone Castle is a stunning original structure dating to 1622. It was spared during the Meiji period when many of Japan's castles were demolished and it's only one of five castles that have been designated as National Treasures. After climbing the broad, stone-stepped hill on which the Castle sits, visitors can quickly appreciate the special nature of this place. A sign by the 'Time-Keeping Bell' notes that this is one of the "100 Selected Soundscapes of Japan", based on the resonance of the bell, the songs of the Cicadas in the summer, and the chorus of crickets in Genkyu-en, the Castle garden. And surrounding the Castle hill are the Shiga Prefecture Mountains, with ancient Lake Biwa (the largest freshwater Lake in Japan) shining like a jewel down below.

We chose Hikone as a day trip on our journey from Kanazawa to Fukuoka. We used our Japan Rail Pass for the two hour Limited

Express train to Maibara, and then switched to a local express train for the five minute trip to Hikone (not to be confused with Hakone, the famous Hot Spring (Onsen) town southwest of Tokyo). Any fear of getting lost was quickly dispelled by the prominent sign inside Hikone Station that portrayed a cartoon Samurai rabbit next to a large red arrow pointing to the exit, along with the caption "10 min. on foot to Hikone Castle".

An easy walk through the city leads visitors to Irohamatsu, "the street of the 47 Pine Trees", that passes alongside the Castle moat where Cormorants and Egrets compete for sun-bathing spots. And after ascending a small hill, visitors come face-to-face with the spectacularly picturesque Castle Keep, or Donjon (the best defended and most prominent structure in a Castle, resembling a multi-storied lookout).

The main castle tower features a stark white exterior, complemented by decorative black tiles that outline a variety of curved and triangular gables and bell-shaped windows. Inside the tower, visitors ascend a series of steep, steep stairs to reach the viewing windows on the top level. The stairs were part of the Castle's defensive strategy as it was difficult for an enemy, outfitted in bulky Samurai armour, to overwhelm the tower via the high, precipitous steps that could only be climbed on a one-enemy-at-a-time basis.

Eventually we descended the Castle's sloping stone ramps to the base of the hill to see Raku-raku-en (literally "paradise"), the original 1679 residence of Li Naoki, the 4th Lord of Hikone. The zelcova wood structure was built around a beautiful, expansive garden (Genkyu-en) featuring a central pond with four small islands connected by bridges, as well as rock gardens, stone lanterns and a variety trees that include pine, maple and cherry. On days with sunny, clear skies, such as the November day of our visit, the Castle, perched on the hill above, is perfectly reflected in the garden pond below.

A visit to Hikone Castle makes for a fascinating side trip. It was far beyond what we had imagined. ■

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Qatar Airways Qsuite Sets Precedent in Air Travel

by Olivia Balsinger

Galavanting around the world just got a whole lot easier—and a whole lot more glamorous. Qatar Airways has proved that travel—even luxury travel—does not have to break the bank. Further, the airline is an industry leader in aviation travel that doesn't create extra headaches or grievances.

And with direct flights to Doha from more than 150 destinations on every inhabited continent, Qatar Airways is genuinely connecting the world. As one who typically loathes flying, I was disappointed when

the flight attendant woke me up as we descended into Doha's dawn on an overnight from New York City. Qatar's Qsuite (Business Class) was undoubtedly the finest flying experience of my life. Here's why:

My Qsuite Journey

I was fortunate to travel Qsuite -the first of its kind in business class-which provided me complete privacy when I wanted it, along with ambient mood lighting and a fully flatbed. I have flown business or first

class on many airlines, but Qatar Airways sets the new standard. The lovely stewardess who greeted me as I stepped onto the flight showed me all of the (countless) amenities travelers with this airline class receive. Afterward, she smiled and told me I had the option to close my curtains, which ultimately sealed my belief that I wasn't on an airplane but in the comfort of my cozy living room.

Even better, had I been traveling with my husband or other family members, we could have even chosen seats amenable





to a four-person work area or even a double bed. Imagine that—flying with a partner and given the luxury of a double bed—heck, airplanes become more comfortable and luxurious than home!

And how often do we dread long airplane rides simply due to the pit of hunger that manifests after barely being able to digest airplane food? The airline also provides business class passengers an “à la carte” dining option, making my constant hunger more manageable. Was I on a flight or in a five-star restaurant in the center of a

metropolis? The possibilities were endless. The most difficult decision I made was to commence with a French onion soup or escargot (of course, my answer was oui to both!) The Quite menu adheres to the structure of a four-course meal - with soup, appetizers, and desserts – with a post-sleep ‘breakfast’ (starters and mains) as the final destination is in sight. Of course, there are lighter options available that can be enjoyed at any time during the flight.

The stewardess went out of her way, surprising me with champagne and chocolate when landing in Doha and with Maha Gold Service (meet and greet service) both during arrival and departure. I felt like royalty in the air.

Stopover Program

It gets even better. Until discovering oil in 1939, Qatar cultivated its most significant profit and recognition from pearl diving. But it has since grown, making its considerable mark on the tourism map. Typically, accommodation is one of the costliest expenses on vacation. However, travelers can alleviate this cost when they transit via Doha for a few days with Qatar Airways’ Stopover Program.

This generous program waives visa fees from eighty countries. It also provides accommodation at luxury four or five-star hotels, such as InterContinental Doha or Souq Waqif Boutique Hotel for two nights—for a mere USD 100 booking fee!

A Whole New World

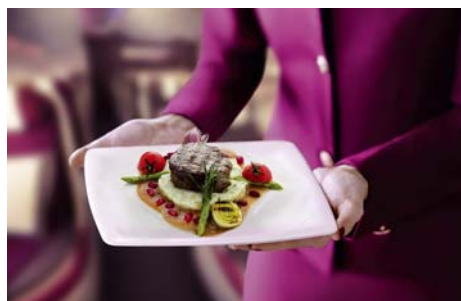
Once landed in Doha, I was equally blown away. Indeed, Doha itself has proven to be a significant tourism draw. The city is significantly smaller than Dubai and Abu Dhabi, which allows it to keep its slightly provincial feel. While travelers can still find modern high-end innovations, such as Doha Festival City with an Angry Birds theme park, Qatar stays true to its heritage in several ways. I visited the Souq Waqif, one of the most traditional in the

Middle East, to find pearl shops and tea shops where men still gather to play Dama’s classic game. Whether eating traditional Qatari food or getting whimsically bewildered in the labyrinth of people watching, the Souq is not to miss.

Qatar is also equally modern, as it is timeless. The sheer decadence and luxury found within Qatar’s hotels are reason enough to visit. Take The Mondrian Doha, in Doha’s West Bay Lagoon neighborhood. The property’s 270 rooms have views of the human-made Pearl Island. I enjoyed a luxurious detoxing massage much-needed swim in the penthouse pool. The hotel epitomizes dual elegance and creativity, described as Alice in Wonderland in real life, the whimsical architecture by famed Dutch designer Marcel Wanders. One misconception among Western tourists is that because Qatar is primarily governed under Sharia Law, there are zero legal drinking opportunities. However, five-star international hotels are allowed to sell alcohol to foreigners. Two Qatari hotspots are found in The Mondrian, Masaharu Morimoto’s new Morimoto Doha, and the bespoke Black Orchid club.

Finally, there are only two countries where the desert sand meets Qatar and Namibia’s ocean. Few things spike adrenaline more than a safari in a 4X4 through Qatar’s vast desert, about an hour and a half ride from Doha city center. The radio is blasting Arabian-French techno music as a white Land Cruiser picks up speed. The experienced guide smiles slightly mischievously and revs the engine before accelerating through this stunning natural oasis as the sound of sand descending the slopes overwhelms. Q-Explorer Tours is a professional tour operator that handles individual and group guided arrangements, catering to specific itinerary desires and budgets. In addition to dune bashing, the company provides many other opportunities to explore Qatar’s culture, gastronomy, and natural beauty. ■

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Traditional Beef Empanadas

Naya Traveler Creates Online Recipe Book

Keeping it simple and authentic, the founders of Naya Traveler has compiled a list of their favorite recipes collected over the years during their travels: the ones that they brought home with them and adopted as their own. Easy to make, no-fuss ingredients, and delicious flavors that bring them back to the busy streets of Jaipur, hidden riads of Fes, or the sleepy countryside of Cambodia. These dishes are full of heritage and distinctive character of their home countries, both for locals and travelers alike. Full recipes are detailed in The Naya Traveler Recipe Book: www.nayatraveler.com

Argentina

Traditional Beef Empanadas - Empanadas are a popular staple in Argentine cuisine. They are easy to make, convenient to eat either at home, a gathering or on the go. The fillings are as diverse as the country's own landscapes and the methods of preparing these hand-eating delights vary from region to region, where preparing them has become a well-established ritual easily reenacted at home. Nevertheless, the meat empanadas remain the most traditional and well-loved variety. Ask Naya Traveler's Argentine-native founder Sofia Mascotena, and she'll tell you

she dips them in sugar before biting into them!

Cambodia

Khmer Chicken Mango Salad - Having lived in Cambodia a few years back, this was the one recipe founder Marta Tucci took with her when she left, and it's become a recurring event in her kitchen ever since. For her, this salad is a vivid representation of everything Cambodia is - colorful, busy, a little hectic, green and tangy.



Khmer Chicken Mango Salad



Atay Bi Nana (Mint Tea)



Gazpacho Andaluz



This salad is made with a few and simple ingredients that are full of contrasting flavors and textures. Although it's possible to make substitutions (substitute the chicken with tofu for a veggie version), the key to its authentic Cambodian flavor lies in the green mango, so try to stick with this ingredient if you can. If you're like Marta, you'll want to add the last optional ingredient to give it a little kick.

Morocco

Atay Bi Nana (Mint Tea) - There couldn't be a more iconic flavor to transport us straight into the heart of Morocco than sweet and fragrant Atay Bi Nana. For founder Sarah Casewit, who was born and raised in Morocco, the ritual of Atay Bi Nana is a way to remain connected to her roots and childhood memories.



Pão de Queijo

Moroccan Mint Tea is more than just a popular drink—it is a ceremonial act and marker of great Moroccan hospitality. Therefore, when making Moroccan Mint Tea, the procedures of preparing and serving it are just as important a part as drinking it.

Spain

Gazpacho Andaluz - In the heat of Spain southern region of Andalusia, Gazpacho is the ultimate nutritious thirst-quencher. We don't like to call this a chilled soup, since there's no actual cooking involved—a drinkable salad perhaps? And since it's a raw dish, the key to a successful Gazpacho is found in the quality of the ingredients: ripe tomatoes, cucumber, red pepper, garlic, onions, bread, vinegar and extra-virgin olive oil. Finally, to turn this vegetable juice into a true Andalusian Gazpacho, you must not forget the sacramentos, a series of garnishes to taste, such as a boiled eggs, homemade croutons, and a generous dash of fragrant olive oil.

Brazil

Pão de Queijo - These oven-baked cheese bites are a popular snack and breakfast food in Brazil. Despite its simplicity, this delicious recipe is charged with cultural heritage: the origins of Pao de Queijo can be traced back to the state of Minas Gerais during the Gold Rush in the 18th century, a staple for the slave population at the time. Since then, it has become hugely popular across South America, and variations of it can be found across Latin America.

Guatemala

Guacamole - The rightful claim to this globally beloved dip belongs to the Mayas, one of the world's major ancient civilizations that once expanded throughout Central America. During the heyday of the Mayan Empire, avocados were a treasured crop eaten as a snack or accompanying more elaborate food preparations.

Not much has changed to this day, except the growth of Guacamole's popularity across the world. Residents of Antigua Guatemala are affectionately nicknamed 'Panzas Verdes' (green bellies) as a result of their reliance on avocados and guacamole at every meal.



Guacamole



Naya-Recipe-Book-Cover

India

Masala Chai, which translates into spiced tea, personifies the scent and taste that India wakes up to every morning. This spiced black tea is milky, rich and full of energizing flavor to start your day right. The fragrant aroma of the spices will immediately transport you to the eclectic streets of India, where chai wallahs (tea vendors) stationed at every corner ceremoniously blend the masala, brew the mixture and pull the tea in small metal cups for passerby's.

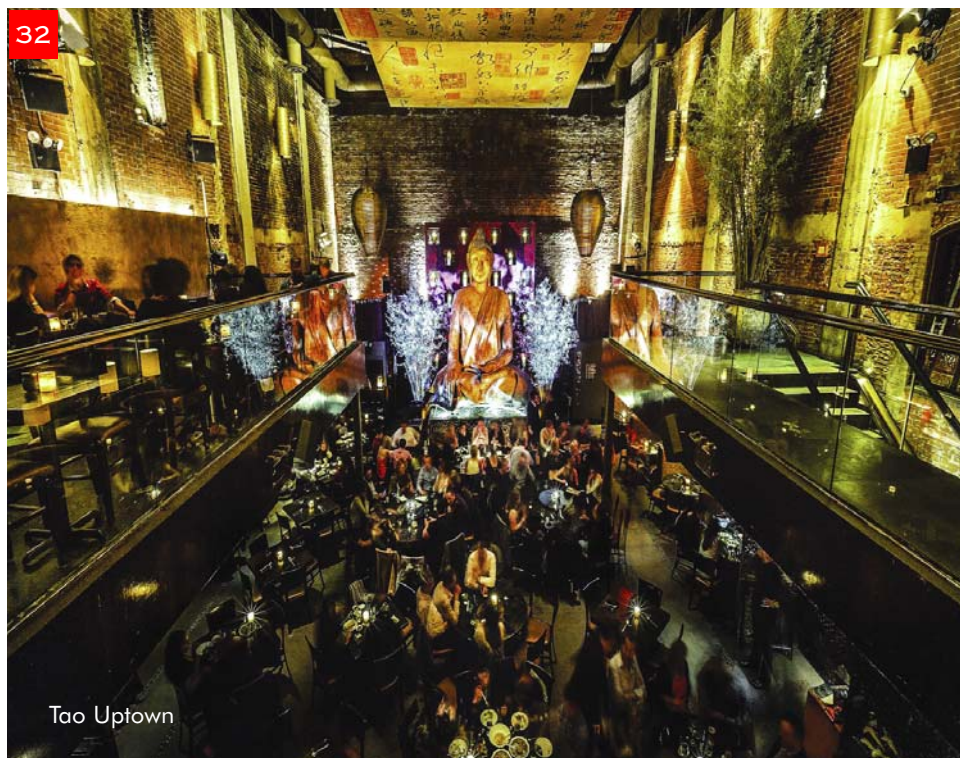
Traveling Spoon Launches Online Cooking Classes

Traveling Spoon recently launched online cooking classes with their hosts across the globe. Travel from your own kitchen and explore new cultures and cuisines, all while supporting locals around the world. All classes are private and are scheduled at your convenience. Classes are being offered for an introductory price of \$25USD for any class, up to four guests in the household. All classes will be conducted over Zoom. The first one-on-one classes launching include empanada making with Gabriela in Buenos Aires, handmade pasta with Cinzia in Florence and Moroccan tajine with Chamsi in Casablanca. View all of the classes at: www.travelingspoon.com/onlinecookingclasses. ■

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Masala Chai,



Tao Uptown

Three recommended dining tips in New York

by Mike Cohen

Earlier this year I spent some quality time in New York City and enjoyed some fine cuisine.

Tao Uptown

We were elated to get a reservation at TAO Uptown (www.taogroup.com), an upscale Pan-Asian brand, located at 42 East 58th Street. There is also a TAO Downtown, as well as locations in Las Vegas, Chicago and Los Angeles.

Tao has three levels of dining including the prized "Skybox," which offers views of this former movie theatre unparalleled in New York. In addition to its 300 seats, Tao

includes a sushi bar, lounge and two bars at which to enjoy the food and the show. We started off with some drinks: a signature Tao-tini, a glass of prosecco and a Bubbles and Berries. We then moved on to some appetizers: The Peking duck spring rolls with hoisin sauce, the spicy tuna tartare on crispy rice and the salmon sashimi followed by miso glazed Chilean sea bass, grilled 12 ounce imperial waygu ribeye (served with crispy fried onions and wow this was beyond amazing!) and lobster and kimchee fried rice. For dessert we shared a giant fortune cookie.

Black Tap

What fun it was for me to experience a Black Tap (www.blacktap.com) restaurant for the first time and no less their new flagship 35th Street location (known as Black Tap 35th). There are two others in NYC as well as locales at Downtown Disney in California and at the Venetian in Las Vegas. Internationally you can find them in Bahrain, Kuwait, Singapore, Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates.

I started off with the Queso & Chips appetizer – zesty cheese served with warm tortilla chips and a house salad. The Old

Fashioned Prime Burger was my main choice, topped with crimini mushrooms, melted Swiss cheese, caramelized onions and horse radish with some crispy fries.

I did my best to conserve some appetite for a crazy shake and opted for the Cake Shake. Black Tap 35th is located at 45 West 35th Street and open from 11 am to midnight daily.

A Brazilian Dining Experience

Fogo de Chão (fogo-dee-shown) is a leading Brazilian steakhouse, or churrascaria, specializing in the centuries-old Southern Brazilian cooking technique of churrasco – the art of roasting high-quality cuts of meats over open flame, all of which are carved tableside by Brazilian-trained gaucho chefs. There is Picanha (signature sirloin), Filet Mignon, Ribeye, Fraldinha (Brazilian sirloin) Cordeiro (lamb) and more. In addition to the main dishes, they boast a gourmet market table, authentic Brazilian side dishes, and an award-winning wine list.

There are currently 56 locations throughout Brazil, the United States, Mexico and the Middle East. I had a chance to experience this restaurant for the very first time at the beautiful West 53rd Street location in midtown Manhattan. I opted in favor of the Full Churrasco Experience, which for \$69.95 includes the trained chefs coming to your table. The beyond impressive market table and feijoada bar is included, featuring seasonal salads, soups, fresh vegetables, imported charcuterie, hearts of palm, giant asparagus, fresh buffalo mozzarella cheese, sun dried tomatoes, fresh cut and steamed broccoli, marinated artichoke bottoms, tabbouleh, smoked salmon, an assortment of fine cheeses and much more. From the dessert menu I chose the Tres Leches Cake. For more information visit <http://www.fogo.com>. ■



Black Tap



Fogo de Chão



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Come With Us & See The World!

A Journey of the Senses



At the crossroads of Europe and Asia is Istanbul, with a rich history spanning over two thousand years. Strategically located on the Bosphorus Strait, Istanbul is a vibrant city where east and west meet to create this unique cultural capital. Istanbul is home to an estimated 15 million inhabitants, built on seven hills, and topped by the minarets of over 3,000 mosques including the world-famous Blue Mosque and Hagia Sofia.

Mouth-watering tastes worth travelling for

It is the food that leaves the greatest impression. Traditional Anatolian staples such as doughy manti (dumpling), freshly squeezed juices sold on every street corner and sesame covered simit rolls, perfectly accompanied by Turkish çay (tea). The smell of fresh fish or rich Turkish coffee are often in the air.



Take flight in a hot air balloon at sunset

On everyone's bucket list should be a hot air balloon flight at sunrise. People travel to Cappadocia from all over the world to take part in this spectacular sight of hot air balloons making their gentle flight over the valleys and fairy chimneys, lit up by the rising sun. Accommodation ranges from cool and rustic cave hotels to elegant and luxurious houses. Traditional Turkish baths (hamams) in which to relax and unwind is also a highlight. During your stay, venture into underground cities, cave churches and the outdoor museums to learn more about the history of this special place. Cappadocia is also famous for its wine, and a must experience element of your meal.

The colourful Aegean coastal city of Izmir

In Western Anatolia on a bay of turquoise water is the Aegean coastal city of Izmir, where archaeological sites remind visitors of a rich history set against a backdrop of the hilltop Kadifekale castle. Spot one of the most famous landmarks of Izmir, the Clock Tower designed by French architect Raymond Charles Pere dating back to 1901. To enjoy the view and save your legs from the 155 steps connecting city streets, use the public elevator known as Asansör. Another alternative is the modern

European-style quarter of Karşıyaka which also offers excellent sea views. Notable nearby highlights are the enchanting ancient ruins of Ephesus, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The nearby village of Çeşme is a charming gastronomic paradise with its whitewashed houses and blue painted windows.

Turkish food in Izmir has many influences and flavours for every palate. Izmir meatballs, called köfte, are enjoyed across Turkey, made lovingly with local spices and served in a tasty tomato sauce. Try local specialty Kumru, the perfect on-the-go snack of sausage, cheese and tomato served in bread, or the delicious pastry Boyoz, which can only be found in Izmir and should not be missed!



The luxurious ancient port city of Bodrum

Rugged, rolling mountains meet the shores of the crystal blue Aegean Sea in the small city of Bodrum. The Aegean coastal city is spread across a double bay, mixing ancient and modern history. The city is home to the ancient Greek city of Halicarnassus, site of the Tomb of Mausolus, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Along the coastline is the well-preserved medieval Bodrum Castle which offers superb views and is home to the Museum of Underwater Archaeology.

Renowned for its unique "sugar cube" houses, Bodrum is one of Turkey's gems and is fast becoming the first choice for holidaymakers the world over.

Escape to small villages or enjoy the extravagance of its many five-star hotels and bustling nightlife, Bodrum is the place where the green of the forest meets the clear blue waters of the Aegean Sea.

Make sure your flight is part of the vacation

Vacation time is precious, so make every minute count by starting your trip the moment you step onto the plane. The award-winning products and services of Turkish Airlines' Business Class provide an unparalleled experience with the utmost elegance. Prior to take off, passengers can benefit from extra baggage allowance, priority check-in and boarding, and access to Turkish Airlines Lounges.

Relax in exclusive seats, with massage functions, that convert your seat into a 188 cm flat bed. Delight in gourmet dishes prepared and cooked to your taste by Flying Chefs, and enjoy comfort kits to maximize your wellness on-board. Business Class also offers a cutting-edge in-flight entertainment system, films in different languages, a wide assortment of audio-books, a great range of music and much more. It boasts award-winning catering designed for any palate where you can enjoy international cuisine and local Turkish specialties such as 'pide' and 'börek' with fresh fruit juices and tea.

Whether you are enjoying the wonders of Turkey for several weeks or only a few days as part of the Turkish Airlines Stopover Program, Turkish hospitality and wonder awaits.

Are you ready to Widen Your World?



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Going Further With *Turkish Airlines*

Glowing reviews and exceptional food are the order of the day for this up-and-coming airline!

Part of the Star Alliance network, Turkish airlines (THY) offers service to Canadians from Toronto and Montreal, and connections to destinations all over the world from their hub in Istanbul.

Building on their international reputation, THY has been climbing the ranks as a top provider and doing very well in Canada.

With 321 destinations, and adding new ones at a rapid pace, THY welcome travellers with smiles and a friendly hello, though often with a charming accent!

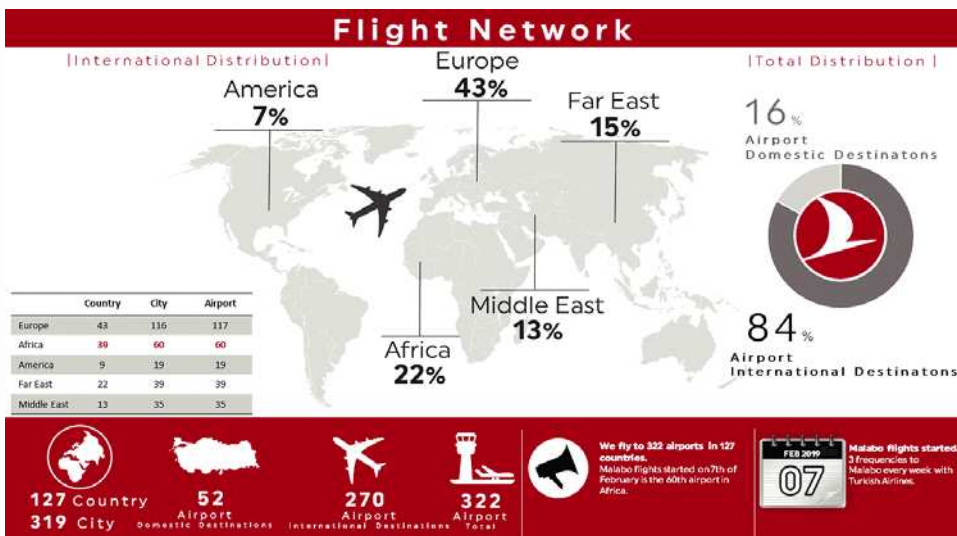
Their aircraft include A330s, A340s, B777s, B737-800s and B727-800s, all well maintained and laid-out with the customer in mind. Each section is designed with creature comforts taking front and centre. The seats throughout the plane are comfortable and the facilities are kept impeccably clean and

organized. Most Business Class passengers can expect either fully lie-flat seats or angled lie-flat seats that brings relaxation to a higher level.

Comfort Class is Turkish Airlines' premium economy section is highlighted by slightly larger seats configured in two-by-three-by-two rows, a large video screen and entertainment system with an iPod outlet and a laptop power outlet for each seat.

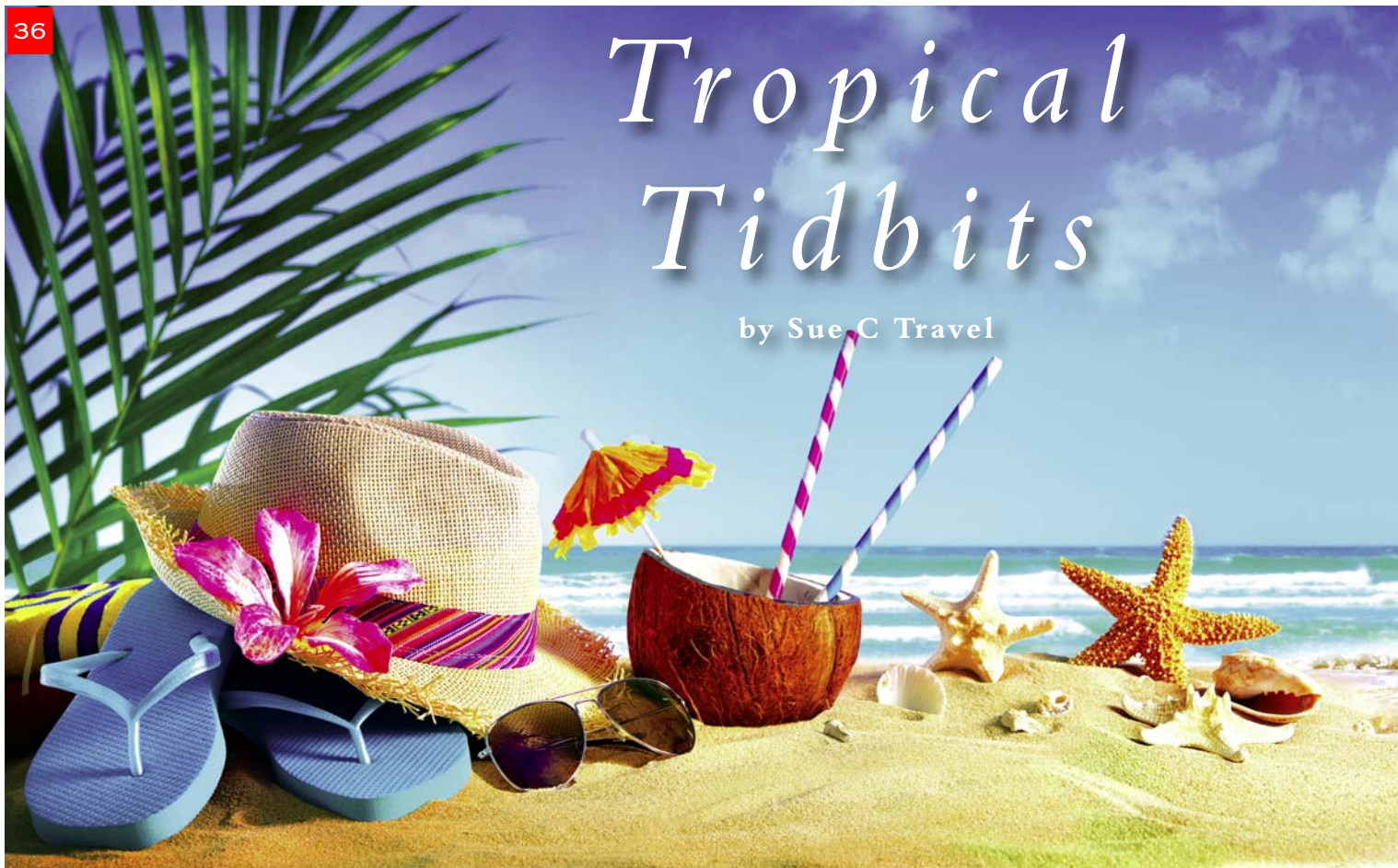
Even passengers traveling in Economy Class can enjoy an above average trip, as all passengers enjoy the famed THY complimentary meal. Though multi-course meals are provided in Business Class on extended range flights, all passengers are treated to the award winning food served on board. Considering that THY deals with one of the world's biggest (maybe the biggest) catering service and are partners with Do & Co., there is no surprise in the quality THY can offer!

WWW.TURKISHAIRLINES.COM



Tropical Tidbits

by Sue C Travel



To say 2020 was a challenging year for the travel industry would be an understatement, but things are looking up for those who cannot resist the siren call of the tropics, especially during these bleak winter months. Tropical travel this year is definitely doable for most, but the landscape is constantly changing, so make sure you're very up to date on each destination's current health protocols and that you are able to abide by them, and purchase travel insurance that covers possible pandemic issues. So, let's see what's new and what to look forward to this coming year throughout the Caribbean. Travel safe, stay positive, and test negative!

New direct air to Bonaire!

Canadians will have an easier time than ever getting to beautiful Bonaire for spectacular

diving, snorkeling and windsurfing this year with WestJet's new non-stop once-weekly seasonal service from Toronto starting February 6th, 2021. The little Dutch Caribbean island welcomes the new direct routes with open arms as historically getting there from Canada included long days and connecting flights from the US or neighboring islands. And don't forget to visit their unique pink lake with flamingoes while you're there!

<https://www.westjet.com/en-ca/book-trip/destination-guide/discover/bonaire>

Ville life is trending

One of the biggest searches on the internet recently has been for stand-alone villas in paradise where a small group of friends or a large family can holiday together in a safe,

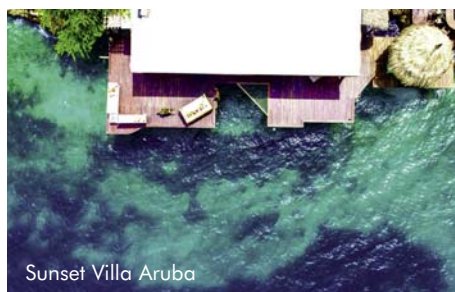
responsible and a socially distancing way. And there are many off-radar stays that can cater to your gang that won't break the bank if you split the cost with a group.

For example: Sunset Villa (formerly Casa Alistaire) in Savaneta, Aruba, sleeps 8 in a split-level semi-overwater bungalow with a professional kitchen, a grand piano and even a massive crystal chandelier! Great swimming and snorkeling is right off their sprawling deck and there's even a stand-alone bar for entertaining. It's a sister property to Aruba Ocean Villas which is a few minutes away where you'll find the island's exclusive adult-only stand-alone overwater villas, ideal for couple's romantic escapes.

www.arubaoceanvillas.com/rooms/



Bonaire



Sunset Villa Aruba



Nevaeh Anguilla



Or on sparsely populated and pristine Anguilla, you'll find secret villa rentals like Nevaeh (heaven spelled backwards) close to Long Bay Beach where you can walk for miles and never see a soul. The Balinese inspired estate boasts nine bedrooms and you can hire a complete staff as well if you like.

<https://nevaehanguilla.com/>

And on diving paradise Bonaire, look no further than SunRentals Bonaire for an eclectic range of affordable luxe and intimate stand-alone abodes like multi-story oceanfront Villa IslaBella with six bedrooms and five bathrooms!

<https://www.sunrentalsbonaire.com/>



Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort wins prestigious eco-award

This luxurious adult-only boutique hotel on Aruba's famed Eagle Beach has been the recipient of scads of environmental awards for sustainable tourism over the past two decades, in fact, it's the most eco-certified and only carbon-neutral hotel in the Caribbean. But this last accolade was really over the top, even for these green pioneers! In the fall of 2020, they garnered the Global United Nations 2020 Climate Action Award for Climate Neutral Now, and it was also historic in so much that it was the first time in the award's 10-year history that a hotel received that ultimate honor. Congratulations!

www.bucuti.com

Jamaica Half Moon introduces new Eclipse



One of Jamaica's most historic high-end resorts is now ready to receive visitors at its classy new addition called Eclipse at Half Moon. The luxurious new escape offers 57 modern rooms, seven new bars/restaurants, and a stunning infinity-edge saltwater seafront pool. Guests can enjoy all the special experiences that Half Moon is known for as well such as golf and exceptional horseback adventures from their own on-site equestrian centre.

<https://www.halfmoon.com/rooms/eclipse>

All-inclusive news...

Curacao is getting a Sandals

I was delighted to hear that the legendary Santa Barbara Resort, that closed last year, will get new life as the island's very first Sandals soon. A major uplift of the old colo-



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nial plantation style Grande Dame expanse on Spanish Waters will transform the property to offer Sandal's unique style of adult-only, all-inclusive pleasures. It will also include access to the incredible seaside Pete-Dye designed Old Quarry Championship Golf Course.

www.sandals.com/curacao

Club Meds have you covered

This brand of budget all-inclusive really has a cult-following and their own brand of party culture-if you don't know their famous dance "Crazy Signs" better look it up on YouTube ahead so you won't feel left out! And they are happy to announce that their resorts in Cancún, Dominican Republic, and Turks & Caicos are once again open and ready to get that party started. But better yet, they have greatly enhanced their safety and hygiene measures and their Emergency Assistance Program now provides all guests with coverage for emergency medical expenses during their stay, including those related to COVID-19.

www.clubmed.ca

St. Martin Secrets reopens & AMResorts sprout on St. Lucia

Secrets St. Martin Resort & Spa on the French side of the island has reopened their luxury adult-only all-inclusive with a new CleanComplete Verification™ program, a 360-degree safety and hygiene protocol that addresses guest experiences from welcome to departure. Parent company AMResorts has also now broken ground on the lovely island of St. Lucia where they will be adding two new luxury all-inclusive resorts- a Dreams and a Zoëtry to be completed in 2022.

www.amresorts.com

Award-winning travel journalist Sue Campbell is based in Montreal but makes it her business to be on top of everything cool, hot, and new under the sun throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. World Traveler welcomes her as a regular columnist. Follow her on Instagram and Twitter @suectravel

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C R U I S I N G *with*

T W O R L D TRAVELER

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This Photo: Windstar Spirit

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Sail The World!



Cunard announces return to Mediterranean cruises in 2021 on the Queen Elizabeth

The iconic ship will chart 3 to 14 day voyages around Europe before making her way through Asia to Australia to end the season.

Cunard president, Simon Palethorpe, said, "We are thrilled to announce such a broad new program for Queen

Elizabeth, with sailings from Southampton and, later in 2021, from Barcelona. "Queen Elizabeth will finish her season with a transit through the Suez canal, crossing the Indian Ocean to Singapore, before venturing to Australia.

The 2021 itineraries will feature a series of overnight port calls to Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Lisbon, Rotterdam, Singapore and Auckland, with late evening departures from Amsterdam, Barcelona, Rotterdam, Aqaba, Colombo and Fremantle. ■

WWW.CUNARD.COM



Atlas Ocean Voyages

With six months until launch, Atlas Ocean Voyages' World Navigator was floated out at West Sea Viana Shipyard in Portugal. The 'float out' marks the first time World Navigator enters the water and floats of her own accord. Now in wet dock, the small expedition ship is being outfitted with elegant and luxurious amenities and décor. Meanwhile, construction of World

Traveller, Atlas' second expedition ship, is already in progress, and her keel was also laid at West Sea Viana Shipyard. Designed for seasoned and fun-seeking travelers to immerse in active and awe-inspiring experiences in less-trodden, bucket-list destinations, World Navigator and World Traveller will launch in July 2021 and mid-2022, respectively. Guests will enjoy one of the industry's most-inclusive experiences with the luxe-adventure cruise brand's signature All Inclusive All the Way. In addition to World Navigator and World Traveller, three additional expedition ships are on order for delivery by the end 2023. ■

WWW.ATLASOCEANVOYAGES.COM

Emerald Cruises Celebrates New Super Yacht Emerald Azzurra's Float Out



The newest offering from Emerald Cruises—ocean-going super yacht Emerald Azzurra—floated out in December 2020 at the Halong Shipbuilding Company in Vietnam. The float out marks just over a year until guests will be able to set sail on the highly anticipated 100-passenger super yacht when she debuts in January, 2022.

Once complete, Emerald Azzurra guests will enjoy a small ship cruising experience with just 100 guests in 50 deluxe suites and state-rooms—88 per cent of which include an outdoor balcony. The yacht also features an on board wellness center (including spa, gym & sauna), three tenders and a Zodiac for shore landings. Three on board dining locales give guests the opportunity to taste local flavours and savour cocktails while taking in the views. A marina platform on the yacht's aft allows easy access to snorkelling, paddle boarding or swimming. ■

WWW.EMERALDCRUISES.COM



Poseidon Expeditions Announces New 2022 Arctic and 2022-23 Antarctic Cruises

Announcing the new 2022 Arctic and 2022-23 Antarctic polar cruise seasons three months earlier than usual and announcing a return to West Greenland for the first time in four years top the list for Poseidon Expeditions' future plans for the 114-passenger expedition ship Sea Spirit.

New for the 2022 Arctic season will be a return to West Greenland, last visited by the Sea Spirit in early summer 2018. "It's a popular region for expedition cruising, combining Viking history, Inuit culture and community life, fjordland scenery and massive icebergs. We're happy to be going back," said Nikolay Saveliev, president of Poseidon. The 2022 West Greenland expedition voyages include a May 27 12-day Land of the Vikings, from Reykjavik, Iceland to Kangerlussuaq, Greenland and a June 7 eight-day Icebergs, Whales & Inuit Culture, round trip from Kangerlussuaq.

In midsummer, the Sea Spirit will head farther northeast for a full schedule of departures that explore Svalbard and the company's signature explorations of the Franz Josef Land Archipelago before returning to East Greenland in September for a pair of 11-day Arctic Sights and Northern Lights cruises that focus on the Aurora Borealis.

Like the migrating seabirds that are often the focus of Poseidon's onboard educational programs, the Sea Spirit follows the sun south in October to begin its 2022-23 Antarctic season. This includes four Antarctic Peninsula voyages of 11-12 days; three longer programs that include the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia and the Falkland Islands, from 21-23 days; and the popular 15-day Crossing 66° South Latitude expedition cruise. ■

WWW.POSEIDONEXPEDITIONS.COM

Viking announces additional sails for new Mississippi river cruises

Strong Demand Leads to Early Release of 2023 Departure Dates



Viking® has recently announced that new 2023 sailings of its Mississippi River cruises are now on sale. The company's first custom vessel, Viking Mississippi, will debut in August 2022 and will sail voyages on the Lower and Upper Mississippi River, between New Orleans and St. Paul. Viking's first river cruises in the U.S. had been highly anticipated when they were officially announced in April 2020, and several sailings have already sold out. This strong demand has led Viking to open additional 2023 sailing dates sooner than originally expected.

Viking's arrival to the Mississippi will represent a major commitment to tourism and economic development in many communities along the river, with the new cruises expected to bring more than 5,800 guests to the region in 2022 and 17,600+ during the first full sailing season in 2023. Currently scheduled ports of call on Viking's new Mississippi River cruises comprise seven U.S. states: Louisiana (Baton Rouge, Darrow, New Orleans and St. Francisville); Mississippi (Natchez and Vicksburg); Tennessee (Memphis); Missouri (Hannibal, St. Louis); Iowa (Burlington, Dubuque and Davenport); Wisconsin (La Crosse); and Minnesota (Red Wing, St. Paul).

2022-2023 Viking Mississippi Voyages:

America's Great River
(15 days; New Orleans to St. Paul)

America's Heartland
(8 days; St. Louis to St. Paul)

Heart of the Delta
(8 days; New Orleans to Memphis)

Southern Celebration
(8 days; New Orleans–Vicksburg–New Orleans) ■

WWW.VIKING.COM

Viking announces 2020-23 world cruise

Guests on 138-Day Voyage Will Sail on Newest Ship in Viking's Award-Winning Fleet



In response to strong demand for its World Cruise itineraries, Viking® has announced its new 2022-23 Viking World Cruise, which will span 138 days, 28 countries and 58 ports, with overnight stays in 11 cities. Departing on December 22, 2022 from Ft. Lauderdale, guests will sail on Viking's newest ocean vessel, Viking Neptune®, which will join the company's fleet of award-winning 930-guest ocean ships in late 2022.

Viking World Cruise guests will embark in Florida and journey to Central America, before transiting the Panama Canal and sailing up the West Coast of North America. A shorter, 121-day Viking World Journeys itinerary, is also available, allowing guests to join Viking Neptune in Los Angeles and cross the Pacific Ocean to call in Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand, before exploring ports of call in Asia and the Middle East. Finally, the ship will journey through the Mediterranean and conclude the voyage in London.

Viking's newest World Cruise itinerary visits dozens of the world's most iconic cities, alongside lesser-known destinations, in one seamless itinerary. Overnight stays in 11 ports, such as Sydney, Haifa, and Istanbul, and double overnights in Auckland, Bali, Ho Chi Minh, Yangon, and Mumbai allow guests to delve deeper. While on board, Viking offers cultural enrichment through onboard lectures and entertainment – such as the Viking Resident Historian® program, which provides guests with a high-level historical and cultural education specific to their journey. Guests will immerse themselves in the world's rich cultures during included excursions that provide unmatched insight into daily life, as well as Privileged Access® visits to cultural institutions. ■

WWW.VIKING.COM

Viking marks float out of first expedition ship



Viking® has recently announced its first expedition ship – the 378-guest Viking Octantis® – was "floated out," marking a major construction milestone and the first time that the new ship touched water. Scheduled to debut in early 2022, Viking Octantis will spend her maiden season sailing voyages to Antarctica and North America's Great Lakes. A second, identical expedition ship, Viking Polaris®, is set to debut in summer 2022 and will sail journeys to Antarctica and the Arctic.

The new Polar Class 6 Viking Octantis and Viking Polaris will host 378 guests in 189 staterooms. Designed by the same experienced nautical architects and engineers that designed Viking ocean ships, the ships are optimally sized and built for expeditions – small enough to navigate remote polar regions and the St. Lawrence River, while large enough to provide superior handling and stability in the roughest seas. The ships will feature public spaces that are familiar to Viking's ocean cruise guests but that have been reimaged for expeditions, as well as new public spaces created specifically for expeditions. Straight bows, longer hulls and state-of-the-art fin stabilizers will allow the ships to glide over the waves for the calmest possible journey; ice-strengthened Polar Class 6 hulls will provide the safest way to explore; and U-tank stabilizers will significantly decrease rolling by up to 50 percent when the ships are stationary. Viking's expedition ships will feature modern Scandinavian design with elegant touches, intimate spaces and attention to detail. ■

WWW.VIKING.COM



Cruising South America with Princess

by Daniel Smajovits

From life-changing cultural experiences, postcard worthy landscapes and the waddles of penguins at every turn, nothing excites all the senses than the 14-day journey from Buenos Aires, Argentina to Valparaíso, Chile.

A growing number of cruise lines have begun to serve this route, but as one of the pioneers in South American cruising, Princess Cruises has mastered every aspect of the journey, ensuring that as guests, your only concern is trying to squeeze the last drop out of each day.

Itinerary

From the dynamic city of Buenos Aires, Argentina to your final destination of Valparaíso, Chile, this itinerary runs the gamut of both man-made and natural beauty.

The bustling Argentinian capital of Buenos Aires is undoubtedly one of the world's greatest cities. Dubbed the Paris of South America, you're instantly captivated by outer and inner beauty of both the unique European architecture and the Porteños, or

locals. Although you will most likely remain docked in Buenos Aires for your first night on board, ensure to arrive at least three days early to fully explore this captivating city and experience its rich history and culture.

Once the cruise begins in earnest, a short sail north is Montevideo, Uruguay, where wineries and beaches are within an hour drive from the port, but only a short walk away is a thriving market and winding streets filled with a market as well as charming street art and cafés.



As your ship moves further south, prepare yourself for two days of cuteness-overload as penguins are the must-see excursions in Puerto Madryn, Argentina and Stanley, Falkland Islands. We recommend booking penguin visits at both ports as rough seas and unpredictable weather occasionally force ships to skip the tender-only port of Stanley. To ensure you make the most of your visit to the infamous British outpost in the Atlantic Ocean, reserve your Volunteer Point tour with Jimmy Curtis well in advance. The private penguin refuge caps the number of daily visitors and Jimmy's tours sell out almost instantly.

Once back on board, batten down the hatches as rough waters await you as the ship gets closer to Cape Horn and the southernmost point of the Americas. Most ships cross through the Beagle Channel and stop in Ushuaia, Argentina, often referred to as the End of the World. Natural beauty awaits as a short trip from the port is Tierra del Fuego National Park. While some travellers might opt for an expensive daytrip to Antarctica, which is only 1,000 miles south, should that not be in the cards, enjoy a myriad of outdoor activities in and around the world's most southernmost city.

Crossing the border into Chile, Punta Arenas and Puerto Montt are two unique destinations in themselves, respectively known for their wildlife and natural beauty. Shore excursions in Punta Arenas include the Magellan Penguins Natural Reserve, if you haven't fulfilled your penguin fix yet, as well as horseback riding. Puerto Montt is home to the breathtaking Osorno Volcano and Petrohue Falls.

While Valparaíso marks your disembarkation point, before you make your way to the lively capital of Santiago, ensure to spend a day enjoying the colourful coastal city and neighbouring Vina Del Mar. This region is home to some of Chile's most famous wineries and some of the freshest seafood the country has to offer, all of which can be found around the charming city.



Whether via tour or transfer, almost all guests end up in the Chilean capital of Santiago before their flights home. Despite having spent an incredible two weeks traveling, carve out at least one day to take in the best that Santiago has to offer. From high atop San Cristobal Hill to the barrios of Brasil, Lastarria and Bellavista, the city's unique atmosphere is captivating and a worthy exclamation point to your South American journey. With the sprawling Andes mountain range to the east, the city's landscape is only topped by a bevy of fine restaurants, markets and cultural attractions. The Central Market is a must stop for mouth-watering seafood and local delicacies.

On-board Experience

With both traditional and anytime dining options, guests have some of the best food available at sea regardless of the time of day. The latest creations added to the menu are dishes crafted by celebrity chef Curtis Stone, featured nightly in the Main Dining Room. Anytime dining options include a pizzeria, grill, café and a wide variety of room service options for breakfast, lunch, dinner or snack-time. A number of premium restaurants are also available to guests, as are anytime gelato and seafood outposts for an extra charge. On a 14-day journey, Princess holds two formal evenings where guests are required to wear jackets in the dining room. Business casual attire is preferred, but not required, the rest of the evenings. Like all cruises, Princess also offers an enormous buffet for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

For some, the time at sea is the highlight of their cruise and Princess ensures to provide a myriad of entertainment, leisure and active options to meet every need. Multiple pools and decks allow guests to lounge, while a full sports court and gym provides those looking to break a sweat with endless possibilities. Newer ships also feature a continuous running track. While excited children are a happy sight on every cruise, for an extra charge, guests can access the



exclusive Sanctuary, an adult-only escape from the rambunctious fun and noise. If you're looking to truly pamper yourself or simply get away from your cruise-mate, consider one or a full-day of treatments at the Lotus Spa. Selections vary per ship.

Once the sun sets, nightly comedy, variety and musical shows bring your evenings to life, while multiple bars – including Crooners, which features a live pianist – help to cap off the night. If a full day on shore has you looking for a more relaxing way to spend your night, grab two deck chairs, hot chocolate, popcorn and blankets for Movies Under the Stars.

Staterooms

With such a breathtaking journey awaiting you in South America, splurging for a balcony stateroom will take your cruise experience to the next level. Providing guests with everything in a standard stateroom, the added balcony and outdoor furniture will allow you to take in the jagged landscape from the privacy of your cabin. For guests looking for a more affordable option, the interior cabins are well appointed and provide the same amenities, minus the view.

Weather

With such a dynamic itinerary, you must be prepared for all weather conditions. For those living in North America, the seasons are reversed in the Southern Hemisphere, so the ideal time to cruise is from December to March. While it will be summer throughout your cruise and you will feel the heat at the beginning and end, some ports-of-call will feel like mid-autumn with temperatures hovering around 10 degrees (50 F). Most notably the weather in Stanley is typically British: cold and rainy, prepare accordingly. ■

WWW.PRINCESS.COM





Le Fun on Le Boat: Cruising the Rideau Canal

Article and photography by Jennifer Merrick

“Are you sure we don’t need a license to operate this?” was the first question that popped into my head when I set eyes on Le Boat. This luxury 42-foot houseboat, complete with four bedrooms, four bathrooms, spacious kitchen/living quarters and a large top deck, looked even bigger in person than it did online.

Were we really going to navigate it through the Rideau Canal by ourselves?

Most definitely. Though a little apprehensive, we were mostly excited at the prospect of travelling. Self-contained and in our backyard (which is, of course, the naturally-gifted province of Ontario), houseboating was an ideal first excursion. But first we had to learn how to pilot the Horizon 5.

“You’re always learning from the moment you get on until the moment you leave,” said Sandy Crothers, Le Boat’s base man-

ager, who was showing us the ropes. And there were actual ropes to learn about as well as engine thrust controls, anchor, cooling systems, water tanks, safety guidelines and navigational maps.

The charts would be essential for us to plan our travels. Considering how close the Rideau Canal is to Toronto (approximately three hours), I’m embarrassed to admit that I had no idea how big this waterway was.





Ontario's only World Heritage Site, this freshwater highway stretched 202km from Lake Ontario to Ottawa, connecting a series of rivers and lakes with 52 dams and 47 locks. Although it was narrow in some parts, elsewhere it opened into large, deep blue, glacially-sculpted lakes with rocky shores surrounded by forests alive with birds, fish and other wildlife.

But in order to reach that cottage-country nirvana, we had to get through the locks. Sandy stayed on board for the first one in Smith Falls, where Le Boat was stationed. It was our final test before he handed over the keys. The locks, which functioned as watery elevators that raised and lowered boats between different levels, were not



only a nautical lesson but a lesson in Canadian history. Fearful of another American attack after the War of 1812, Canada (as part of the British Empire) wanted to deter a possible invasion by creating another supply route. Construction began in 1826, when thousands of labourers, under difficult conditions, worked on the canal until its completion in 1832. In was an engineering marvel of its time. Incredibly, much of the original technology is used today; and during our time on the canal, we watched in fascination as lockmasters used their muscle power to crank open the gates with traditional hand winches, known as crabs.

However, at our first lock, we weren't marvelling at this feat of engineering, but concentrating on not damaging the boat or ourselves. The most important step was to secure ropes on the lines, so the boat stayed still, which our teens accomplished like true skippers. We bade farewell to Sandy, and we were off! Slowly, since houseboat speed was a maximum of 10km/hr, which felt like just the right pace on a warm, summer's afternoon.

Our first mooring was at Beveridges, which like all the lock stations, were run by Parks Canada. Almost all had shore power as well as facilities like picnic tables, fire pits and BBQs. While the kids and their dad tried their luck with fishing, I tried out the paddle board (a rental-equipment options available on Le Boat) for a peaceful ride on the Lower Rideau Lake.

The next morning, we cruised three hours to West Port and took advantage of the bicycles on board to explore the small village. We planned to bike up to the Foley Mountain Conservation Area, but with hotter-than-normal temps we opted for ice cream and a swim at Sand Lake Beach instead. Dinner was a special treat at Scheuermann Winery, where we indulged in their wood-oven pizza and sipped wines with a view of vineyards.

The next day we set off, looking for a quiet



place with good swimming and fishing. Not knowing the area, we asked for recommendations from the Parks Canada staff at the next lock. Without fail, every lockmaster we met was friendly and helpful, and this time was no exception. We were directed to a fantastic spot on Clear Lake, where we spent a relaxing afternoon on the boat, before mooring at Davis Lock, one of the most isolated and peaceful lockstations on the canal.

The rhythm of houseboating on the Rideau Canal had now seduced us. Each lockstation had its own character, and each stop had its own charm. Jones Fall revealed the breadth of the canal's history with its massive stone arch dam (and the kids finally caught their fish!). Newboro was a nature hotspot, where we witnessed the grace of a blue heron and saw turtles lay their eggs in the ground.

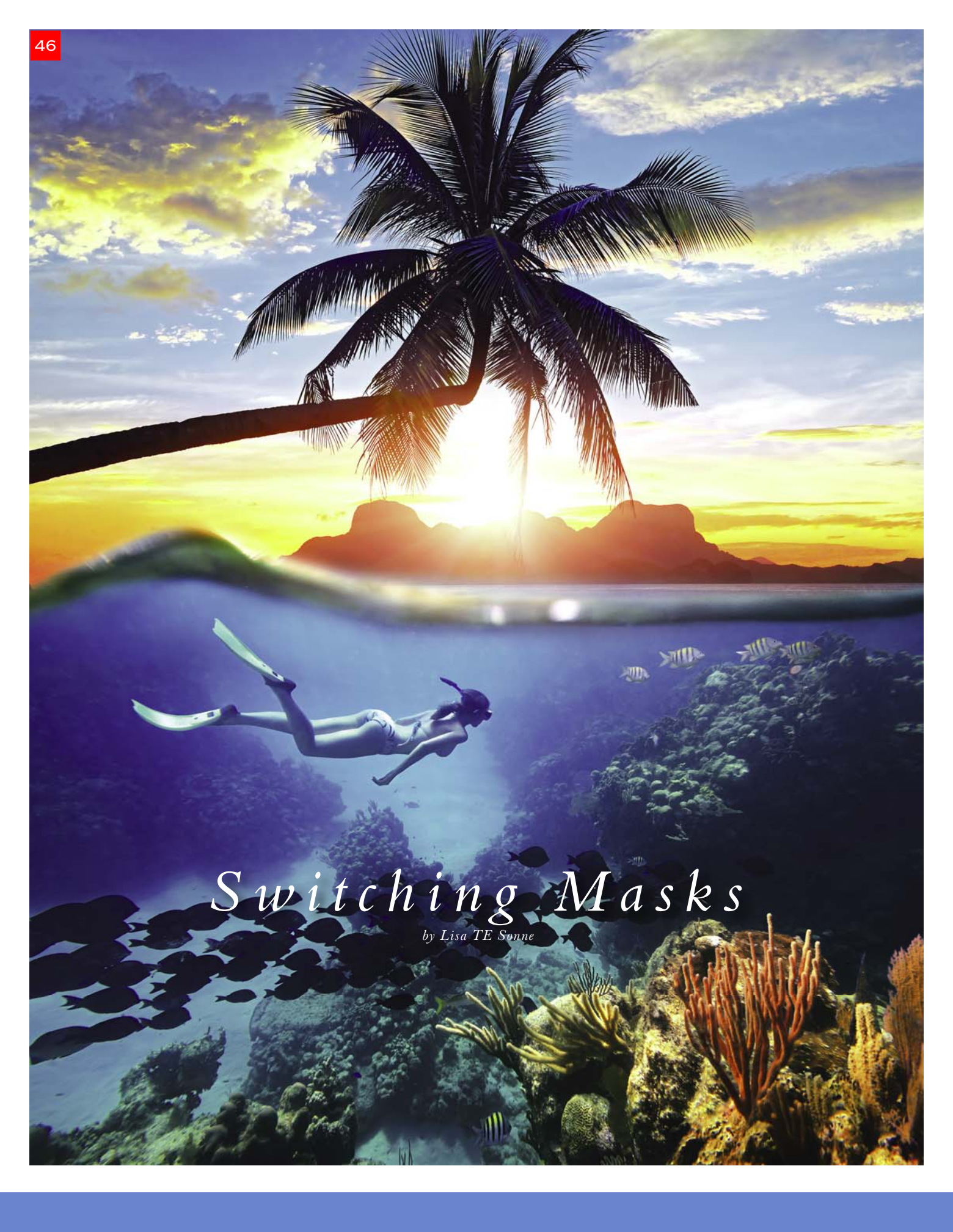
The pace was slow, but the five days flew by; and cruising back to Smith Falls, we lamented about the places we didn't get a chance to see. Plans took shape for a future trip on the Rideau Canal.

Mmmm, maybe we should get our boater's license... ■

About Le Boat: A provider of boating vacations in Europe for the last 50 years, its fleets cruise the lakes, rivers and canals of the UK, France, Germany, Netherlands and Italy. Le Boat started operating on the Rideau Canal in 2018.

WWW.LEBOAT.CA



A composite image featuring a diver in the foreground and a tropical sunset in the background. The diver, wearing a white swimsuit and fins, is swimming horizontally in clear blue water. Below the diver is a vibrant coral reef with various types of coral and a large school of dark fish. In the background, a large palm tree stands on a beach, its trunk leaning over the water. The sun is setting behind the palm tree, creating a bright orange and yellow glow that reflects on the water. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds.

Switching Masks

by Lisa TE Sonne

I am ready to switch a cloth mask for an underwater face mask and swap “stay at home” for “play at sea.” Snorkeling is an immersive sensual way to enjoy new places. It doesn’t require special training or certification, the equipment is cheap compared to most sports, and the riches of experience are bountiful. Many cruises offer “shore expeditions” that take you off-shore -- snorkeling.

With a good guide, it can be an easy way to “test the waters,” if you aren’t a snorkeling pro. For anyone who loves water, it can be a pleasing way to see what’s under some of the sea you have been cruising over.

As I wait for travel to be advisable again, I have put my prescription underwater face mask next to my cloth face mask and am savoring some happy memories of snorkeling from cruises as images float in.

Polynesia

When gliding under the tall graceful sails of Windstar in the French Polynesian Islands of Bora Bora and Tahiti, my husband and I were enthralled with a “Drift Snorkel”. We were outfitted with masks and snorkels tested so they fit well and given short wet suits, then taken on a glorious boat ride over turquoise and cobalt waters to a tropical shore of Taha’a. We then hiked under palms and by a mangrove forest to ease into the clear waters.

Currents carried us in the shallow warm sea through a gallery of colorful corals and schools of fish. The sensations of feeling weightless through wonders and going with currents without effort were both relaxing and invigorating. We held video cameras, and Victor later put together a short reel of flowing with one group of fish so you can sense how they move through the shimmering light, feed on the corral, and change directions en masse. www.OneMinuteTrip.com/Pacific.php

Hawaii

Uncruise Adventures has a wonderful island-hopping cruise that includes Maui, Kauai, Molokai, and Hawaii. Their boutique boat lets you approach the islands from sea, which the ancients and explorers did, but you can enjoy all the modern comforts with a great

staff pampering you. Since the number of passengers is small, all activities are optional and all-inclusive. Each passenger is outfitted for the week with a package of fins, mask, snorkel, and a shortie wet suit.

Off the Kona coast of the big island of Hawaii, my fellow snorkelers and I were in two rubber zodiac boats zipping across that azure blue of the open Pacific toward Kealahakua Bay, aka Captain Cook Bay, named after the famous explorer. It’s a popular tourist destination for vividly diverse fish and can feel like swimming in open aquariums. We were en route when the zodiac drivers got very excited and slowed down. Humpback whale spouts were heading our way!

A behemoth mother and baby whale swam under our boat while a male escort “spy-hopped” straight up near us to check us out! I handed one of the helpful boat team, Buddha, my GoPro for underwater views, and I snapped away topside with a Cannon Rebel. A short video of that adventure can also be found at

www.OneMinuteTrip.com/Pacific.php

And, yes, the snorkeling at our destination was wonderful, including some friendly dolphins in the bay, but the journey was the greatest joy.

Galapagos

Snorkeling in the Galapagos is so wonderful you want to create new superlatives to describe it. The equatorial waters are colder than you might think, being off the coast of Ecuador, but the cooler Humboldt Currents from Alaska keep you moving. You may see sea turtles flapping languidly by, just a day after seeing the iconic giant land tortoises. If you are lucky, you will see the primordial-looking marine iguanas jump in for a swim. You may even witness birds diving for fish — in the air and then underwater. Most cruises in the Galapagos visit one or two islands a day and snorkeling is offered often.

I loved touring with EcoVentura, who are sensitive to the environment and use local guides who brief you well on what you see. The Princess Grace yacht of Quasar Expeditions

was the honeymoon vessel that exuded luxury and was given to Princess Grace by Aristotle Onassis. Re-living either trip (above and under water) is enchanting. The snorkeling highlight, though, was when a group of Galapagos penguins decided to cavort with us — spinning right up to our face-masks then darting away. They are the only known penguins who live naturally north of the Equator. They are quite small compared to Emperor Penguins, but they impishly delighted us.

I kept laughing underwater and breaking the seal of my mask.

I hope we will all have a chance to swap cloth masks for face masks soon. ■

@ copyright Lisa TE Sonne

Sonne loves covering Underwater Travel, and has been collecting the best snorkeling experiences for a book. Sonne also loves scuba diving, is a member of the Explorers Club, and was the first woman to fly underwater in a winged submersible for a National Geographic television piece.

Larger cruise ships with less expensive cruises also often offer snorkeling opportunities on their excursion menus. Just check carefully with the Activity Director to vet the third party operators, so you can take home good memories.

It’s been many years since three generations of my family took an unforgettable Holland America Cruise through the Northwest Passage of Alaska, but while others chose shore expeditions like dog sledging or glacier hiking, my husband and I donned “dry suits” to snorkel in the icy waters to see seaweed and star fish that differed from those of warm waters. It’s also been many years, since we signed up last minute to take a Carnival cruise down the Mexican Riviera for some bargain R&R.

Choosing snorkeling for us was a fun chance to watch the playful sea lions who are as curious about people as we are about them.





Casa Cartel, Austin Texas

by Olivia Balsinger

The slogan of Texas' capital says it all: Keep Austin Weird. A city that hasn't succumbed to overpowering metropolis vibes and keeps its quirky hometown culture alive, Austin should be on any intrepid traveler's bucket list. And there is no better way to experience the authenticity and eccentric history of Austin than with a stay at Casa Cartel.

Casa Cartel is both the largest home in all of East Austin and the largest rental property in the downtown region. It sleeps 17 comfortably and offers a prime space for visitors to relax and unwind following a rigorous day of exploration.

This five-bedroom, five-bath luxury villa was built in 1976 by Abraham Kennedy and his wife, Maria--two cultural icons often considered the embodiment of the American dream and an Austin institution. The property has since been remodeled in 2018 by Jantzen Matzdorff, the designer best known from "Flip That House."

Casa Cartel is curated with antiques and art sourced from Mexico, along with custom pieces fabricated on both sides of the border, making this home historic and unique. Months of searching for the best mural artist in the world led to Curiot Talpazotl, who created the moving 20-foot-tall mural that greets all who enter the property. This breathtaking artwork combines Mayan mythology with modern spiritual outlooks.



Guests at Casa Cartel are also treated to a heated pool, a roaring indoor fountain, a dark, candlelit speakeasy with a confessional booth, two wet bars, a 15-person theater room, and spacious outdoor areas with complete privacy. Guests can choose to be driven in a one-of-a-kind custom 1969 Cadillac convertible from the Austin Airport to this astonishing property.

Casa Cartel seamlessly weaves cosmopolitan convenience with ornate elegance to create an experience guests will treasure forever. ■

WWW.CASACARTELAUSTIN.COM



The Algonquin Hotel Times Square New York

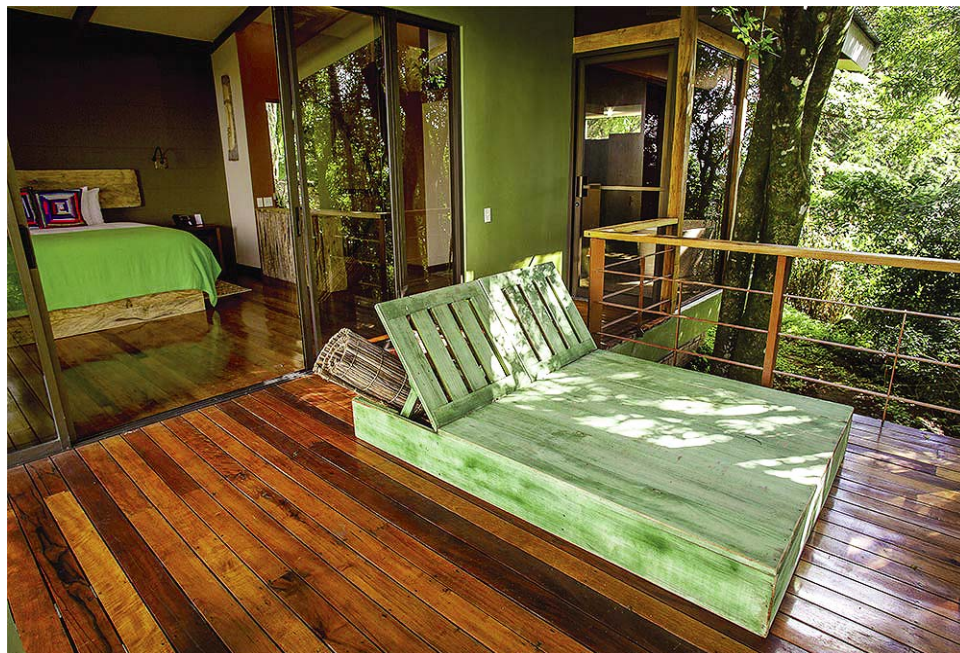
by Mike Cohen

The Algonquin Hotel Times Square first opened its doors in 1902. Today, it is part of the Marriott chain's Autograph Collection, an evolving ensemble of strikingly independent hotels. Each of the 181 rooms and 25 suites features a comfortable well-lit work desk, as well as complimentary Wi-Fi.

This is our family's home away from home whenever we travel to the Big Apple. We stayed in a very comfortable one bedroom Playbill Suite. The layout was ideally suited for us. There is a nice sized entrance, with the master bedroom to the left featuring a nice-sized bathroom. The spacious living room has a pullout couch, a large desk which was perfect for me to write my stories and good drawer and cupboard space. You can get a fridge and a microwave, depending upon availability and on request. ■

WWW.ALGONQUINHOTEL.COM





Immerse Yourself in the Beauty and Culture of Costa Rica at Chayote Lodge

by Jennifer Merrick

With its lush rainforests, Caribbean and Pacific beaches, towering mountains and exotic wildlife, Costa Rica is an exceptionally beautiful destination wherever you go. But Chayote Lodge raises the bar even higher. Located in the outskirts of the mountainous central valley, less than an hour away from the San Jose Airport, this small resort features twelve bungalows on the edge of a cloud forest almost 5000 feet above sea level. Each spacious accommodation has a private patio with a panoramic view of the valley, volcanic mountains and on a clear day, the ocean.

Perched high above, you can hear the sounds of nature: the high-pitch clattering of the toucans, the bugle-like hum of the insects

and even the howling of the monkeys and coyotes. Large blooms cover the grounds; a small trail leads you into the forest, and a yoga platform with a built-in water centerpiece beckons those inclined to meditate.

The décor is inspired by the surrounding nature and the coffee culture of the region, especially the tradition Recibidores, coffee receiving stations. Whimsical but tasteful coffee-themed touches include coffee sticks hanging from the ceiling, coffee sacks on the walls and even a hand-crafted coffee table that's shaped like a coffee bean.

Though you'd be forgiven if you just want to stay on the property, activity options encourage guests to experience the authentic cul-

ture of the region. A genuine connection to this off-the-beaten-track region was owner Rolando Campos' dream when he opened the lodge four years ago. "I wanted to show people how beautiful it was here," says Campos. "But I didn't want the place or people who visited to be separate from the community."

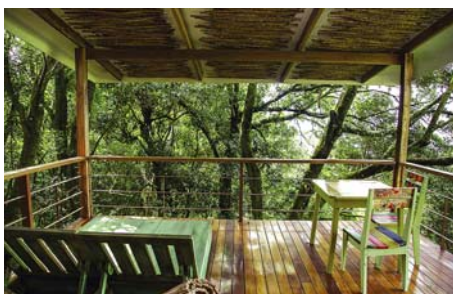
And so, the lodge's restaurant caters as much to locals as to visitors, and highlights typical Costa Rican food, including the traditional breakfast, Gallo Pinto. The soft cheese served with the eggs, rice and beans is particularly good, and I'm told that it's a speciality of the region and is from the farm up the road. For guests who want to further immerse themselves in the country's culinary heritage, Chayote Lodge offers a unique opportunity for a hands-on cooking class with a local.

"Welcome to my house," says Eldida, a proud abuela (grandmother) who leads us to her kitchen. The large brick oven is the focal point and the homey décor, like the embroidered curtains and table cloth shows the care and love of the owner. Eldida demonstrates how to prepare some Costa Rican staples, including fried plantain, potatoes, chicken, rice and beans. Our favourite dish though is the Coliflor Envuelto en Huevo (cauliflower in egg batter). Like most Costa Rican food, it isn't particularly spicy, but comforting and tasty.

An excursion to the Toro Waterfall is another experience the resort offers, and this 270-foot waterfall inside an old volcano crater, surrounded by rainforest vegetation and bright flowers is truly a sight to behold. Costa Rica's ubiquitous beauty is an onslaught of colours, lushness and grandness. This is especially true at Chayote Lodge. ■

WWW.CHAYOTELODGE.COM

WWW.VISITCOSTARICA.COM/EN



Puntacana Resort & Club - *Tropical Paradise Found*



Accommodations

Puntacana Resort & Club is the Caribbean's leading resort community on the eastern shore of the Dominican Republic. Tortuga Bay is member of the Leading Hotels of the World and the only AAA Five Diamond awarded hotel in the Dominican Republic, offering understated elegance, privacy and unparalleled personal service. Located at Playa Blanca is The Westin Puntacana Resort & Club, guest enjoys all of Westin's signature amenities and Don Queco Cigar Bar. Our Four Points by Sheraton is situated at Puntacana Village, few minutes away from Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ).

The Estates

Become a part of our magnificent paradise community with the purchase of a vacation home in the elite The Estates at Puntacana Resort & Club, where Julio Iglesias, Mikhail Baryshnikov call home. An exclusive lifestyle of relaxation, excitement and understated elegance, prospective buyers can choose among elegant homes perched above the Caribbean Sea or overlooking scrupulously manicured golf courses in Corales, Tortuga, Arrecife, Hacienda, Hacienda del Mar and Marina. Home and apartments are also available at Puntacana Village.



Golf

With 45 holes of championship golf, Puntacana Resort & Club is the Caribbean's premier golf & beach destination. The P.B. Dye designed La Cana Golf Course, consisting of 27 holes across Tortuga, Arrecife and Hacienda, was declared the number one course in the Caribbean by Golf Magazine. Designed by Tom Fazio and set between rocky cliffs, coral reefs and the expansive Caribbean Sea, the Corales Golf Course features six oceanfront holes, multiple lines of approach and picturesque canyons, making for an exhilarating experience.

Activities & Spa

Puntacana Resort & Club offers a wide range of adventures for guests of all ages including golf, tennis, kite boarding, scuba diving, horseback riding, fishing and numerous excursions by sea, land and air. The leading spa in the Caribbean, Six Senses Spa at Puntacana Resort & Club presents a range of innovative packages, Signature treatments and Asian therapies. Visit Galerías Puntacana to enjoy an assortment of shops, restaurants, playground, and our spirited nightlife.

Dining

Puntacana Resort & Club is home to 6 world class eateries with an indigenously delectable cuisine. Tucked inside Tortuga Bay, the AAA Four Diamond awarded Bamboo blends modern cuisine with Mediterranean influences. Specializing in local seafood, The AAA Three Diamond Award La Yola is located at the Marina. At La Cana Golf & Beach Club is The Grill, an American style grill offering views of the sea. The Westin Puntacana Resort & Club provides a variety of restaurants and bars from Ananí to Brasserie Grill. Next door is Playa Blanca, a beachfront tropical restaurant. Our Dine Around Program offers the best sampling of our finest culinary experience. All restaurants offer complimentary shuttle service within the resort. More dining options are available at Puntacana Village.



Corporate Social Responsibility

We believe that in development there needs to be equilibrium among the economic, environmental and social components. Our non-profit Grupo Puntacana Foundation serves both natural and social resources, while contributing to the sustainable development of our Dominican Republic. These practices have been guiding principles of our company, and along with vision, hard work and perseverance, the key to our success.

Punta Cana International airport

Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ), built, owned and operated by Grupo Puntacana, the resort's developers, and located within Puntacana Resort & Club, is just minutes away from check-in at any of our hotels or private homes. Punta Cana International Airport (PUJ) has direct service from 98 different cities around the world, making Punta Cana the most accessible destination in the Caribbean. Our VIP terminals service the needs of guests flying in private aircrafts.

The Caribbean's Premiere Golf
& Beach Resort Community
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The destination for relaxation, simplicity and convenience. With three miles of magnificent white sandy beaches and forty-five holes of championship golf, it's never been easier to call a place home. Our very own Punta Cana International Airport guarantees an effortless journey from the terminals to the lobby of our AAA Five Diamond Award-winning boutique hotel Tortuga Bay and The Westin Puntacana Resort & Club.



PUNTACANA®
RESORT & CLUB

For more Information visit: www.puntacana.com



Find your farm-to-lakefront cottage getaway at Elmhirst's Resort

by Cherie DeLory

Know someone with a cottage? Now you do. Escape to Elmhirst's Resort on Rice Lake in the Kawarthas and you'll receive a warm, family style welcome. This four-seasons cottage resort in Keene, Ontario, a quick 20-minute drive from Peterborough and only 90 minutes from Toronto, has been a family affair for over a century.

Elmhirst's Resort offers a unique farm-to-table experience in a hybrid farm and lakefront cottage setting. Cottages overlook Rice Lake, each with a private balcony, barbecue and dock. A recent round of renovations included having the wood burning fireplaces replaced with electric. There's an indoor and outdoor pool and fitness centre, and a full-service spa with DoTERRA essential oils. You can even sneak in a round of golf at the 18-course Bellmere Winds Golf Course next door.

A private landing strip is accessible in the nearby field for private aerial sightseeing tours. There's horse-back riding, and to really get into the spirit of the cowboy way, you can partake in a hearty, country "cow-boy breakfast" in the pasture.

An intimate, rustic wine cellar is tightly stocked with local Ontario wines for tastings and corporate events, and you can order fresh vegetables from the garden and meat from the farm to personally grill at your cottage. Dine in the Hearthside Dining room, with calming views of Rice Lake and the soothing crackling sounds from the wood burning stone fireplace, or settle in at the Wild Blue Yonder Pub & Patio for a trip down nostalgia lane where family aviation mementos are on display. Elmhirst's Own Angus Beef is bred and raised on the farm, as are turkeys, Pekin ducks and chickens. Fresh eggs and honey are available for sale

at the front desk. Taking a farm tour is a good way to experience an understanding of the family's commitment to sustainable farming and environmentally friendly farming techniques.

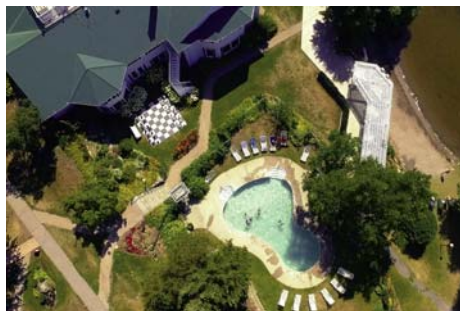
On this summer's afternoon, Culinary Team Leader, Jay Nutt, prepared a memorable gourmet farm-to-table lunch to host my travel writers' road-trip tour. A graduate of the culinary program at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Jay is the former owner of Nuttshell Nextdoor Cafe in nearby Lakefield and co-author of several cookbooks with his wife, Jennifer MacKenzie, a food writer and recipe developer.

Jay greeted us at the garden with a cool gin cocktail from Peterborough-based Black's Distillery, blended with rhubarb ginger syrup and lemonade. Lunch is "representative of our farm, gardens and local suppliers," he says. And he's certainly spoiled for choice with veggies from the garden the likes of squash, swiss chard, radishes, and asparagus in the spring. "We plan on drying our herbs later this summer and making relishes and preserves with surplus vegetables."

We were treated to a colourful medley of grilled vegetables, wild rice salad, puff pastry strudel of Elmhirst's Own duck leg with caramelized onions, a vegetarian friendly strudel with southwestern black bean and sweet potato, house-smoked Linwood Acres rainbow trout with pickled onions and horseradish mayo, and Elmhirst's Own grilled and chilled rib-eye steak.

I could barely remove myself from the table to head outside for Kawartha Dairy ice cream sundaes topped with homemade giant chocolate-coated peanut butter balls, whipped cream, and chocolate and caramel sauce. However, we were on a strict schedule. No time to linger and wallow in the pleasures of the moment. I'll leave that for next time. Perhaps a Thanksgiving feast set amidst the fall foliage. ■

[HTTPS://ELMHIRST.CA/](https://ELMHIRST.CA/)





Mitake Sanso: A Shrine Stay in Okutama, Tokyo, Japan

Article and photography by Steve Gillick

Okutama is the nature hub of Tokyo Prefecture, lying about two hours west of central Tokyo. The area is ideal for those who want to get away from the hustle and bustle of Japan's largest city and take advantage of the fresh-air opportunities available in Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park: walking trails, forests, waterfalls, suspension bridges, power spots, small towns, temples, shrines and mountains.

Mt. Mitake (pronounced mee-tah-kay) stands as an adventure all its own, and a great way for visitors to envelope themselves in the experience is to stay at a shukubo, or pilgrimage accommodation, on the mountain.

Mt. Mitake is accessible by hiking a steep path, or more comfortably, by taking the cable car that arrives at the 831 meter (2726 feet) level in about 6 minutes. From the cable car station it's a short walk along a path and then up, up, up part of the mountain, to Mitake Sanso, the traditional Inn where we spent the night.

After a late afternoon check-in to a very large Japanese-style tatami room, the first order of business was to put on the complimentary yukata (robe) and jacket and head down to the public bath for a good, hot soak. Afterward, in complete relaxation mode we enjoyed a dinner that was nothing short of a culinary celebration of the local, seasonal foods for which Okutama is famous. The incredible array of colorful, delicious dishes began with chestnut covered in bright green tea noodles, with yuzu (a citrus fruit) and plump, boiled peanuts. This was followed by konnyaku (a taro-like vegetable), marinated persimmon salad, crunchy fresh pickles, a bowl of stewed pumpkin with burdock and tofu, a tureen of red pepper, avocado, onion, scallop and enoki mushrooms, and then a creamy vegetable au gratin. The main dish consisted of fresh caught river fish (ayu) garnished with rock salt and served with a side dish of tempura mushrooms, persimmon and shrimp. The final 'end-of-the-meal' dishes included wasabi rice, sumashi jiru (a kelp-based soup) and grapes. It was a perfect way

to indulge in a true taste of our surroundings, and to appreciate the value of a stay at Mitake Sanso.

After a great night's sleep on our futons, cocooned in plush comforters, we followed the steep path to Musashi Mitake Shrine. On a crisp autumn morning, the gorgeous sunrise over an amazing vista of mountains, showcased the beautiful red and gold shrine. Our 7:00 a.m. pre-arranged meeting with the Shrine priest was a warm, humorous and educational experience as he explained (through translation) some of the history and legends of the area.

After blessings and prayers we headed back to Mitake Sanso for an incredibly tasty traditional Japanese breakfast, before checking out and descending the mountain.

This was a memorable adventure, but made even more meaningful with a stay at Mitake Sanso and enjoying Okutama hospitality and truly amazing food. Plans for a return visit are in the works! ■

[HTTPS://MITAKESANSOU.COM/](https://mitakesansou.com/)



VILLA PARADISO



*Your Escape
Jamaica*

Jamaica, the land of Bob Marley and Usain Bolt, is also ranked as one of the **top five** most favoured **tourist destinations in the world**.



There are many excellent all-inclusive hotels on the island, but if you're looking for more **private and luxurious accommodation**, then we would be delighted to welcome you to **Villa Paradiso, an enchanting seven-bedroom seaside villa in Ocho Rios**.



Villa Paradiso is located in the **secure gated community of Mammee Bay**. The two-acre Villa Paradiso property is lush with tropical plants and flowers.

Villa Paradiso combines the sumptuous elegance of a Mediterranean-style villa with the welcoming warmth of Caribbean hospitality.

As you arrive at the villa in your **private coach**, our staff will greet you with cold towels and an even colder drink. Walk onto the **63-foot veranda** and view the **glistening waters of the Caribbean Sea**, the **immaculately private white sand beach** and the inviting pool terrace. Our five professionally trained staff, led by our housekeeper **Nadine**, will look after your every need and make your vacation **an unforgettable experience**.



Exclusive Private Jamaican Paradise

All seven bedrooms are individually styled with ensuite bathrooms, overheads fans and air conditioning. Your rooms will be cleaned daily by Nadine and our laundress **Judith**. The **spacious living areas** combine comfort and elegance with lots of space to relax with a cold drink served by **Jermaine** the houseman. Mealtimes are very special at Villa Paradiso. **Leila**, our superb cook, will prepare all your meals. **Local delicacies** to try include pumpkin soup, salt fish and ackee, jerk chicken and curried goat, all seasoned with delicious local herbs and spices. Meals are served by Jermaine and **Michael**, our grounds man, in a professional yet friendly way.



There are numerous **great attractions** to visit in the **Ocho Rios area**. **Ronnie**, your coach driver can take you **rafting, tubing, or golfing**, as well as **swimming with the dolphins** at **Dolphin Cove**, climbing the famous **Dunn's River Falls**, or zip lining at **Mystic Mountain**. Then there is **Bob Marley's birthplace/museum** in the hills above Ocho Rios, and the Crafts Market and duty free shopping in Ocho Rios, only 10 minutes away.

The Riu Hotel, a five minute walk down the beach, can offer you rental of **many water sport activities including sailing and scuba diving**. We look forward to welcoming you to Villa Paradiso, **your Jamaican home away from home**.



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Live Calendar

Fun for Families in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Quebec

Article and photography by Jennifer Merrick

With so many places to see in the world and in Canada, I'm not naturally inclined to return to places I've already visited. But there are exceptions. Destinations whose sense of place and beauty touch my heart and beckon me to return. Saguenay-Lac-Saint Jean in Quebec is one of those special places.

Located 200 kilometres north of Quebec City, the region is known for its forest and waterways, most notably Lac Saint Jean and the Saguenay Fjord. Who knew Quebec had

fjords? And it's a beauty with its deep glacial waters stretching from Saint Fulgence to Tadoussac at the north of the St. Lawrence River. Our family has been fortunate to have had some wonderful adventures in this gorgeous region over the years. Here were some of our faves:

Rockhounding for crystals at Cristal du Lac: "Even after 30 years, I never know what I'm going to find," said Genevieve Chretien-Belly, an owner of this quartz mining site. It was a treasure hunt and a true family adventure.

First, we hiked a mile through the forest with interpretive stops along the way to learn about the unique geology of the area (and eat blueberries). Once we reached the open mine, we put on hard hats and gloves, and the search began. Genevieve advised us to keep our eyes peeled for pink quartz. Rare and valuable, this is the only mine in Canada and one of seven in the world where it exists. Finding these special treasures was a thrill, and we all left happy with our own little bags of treasure.



Photo: Charles David Rabitaille

Hiking in Parc national du Fjord-du-Saguenay: This 320 km² reserve showcased nature at her best with 650-ft-high cliffs, boreal forest and the fjord itself. Almost 100 kms of hiking trails offered challenging treks like climbing to Cap Éternité, as well as easy jaunts like the 3-km hike to the lookout over Baie Sainte Marguerite. This was a great spot to see the beluga whales that swim and play in this bay during the summer months.

Sleeping in a ghost town at Val-Jalbert Historical Village: One of the best-preserved ghost towns in Canada, this pulp-mill company town was abandoned at the end of the 1920s, leaving behind wooden homes, a school, general store, the mill itself, and according to some, a few ghostly residents. We didn't encounter any other-worldly folks when we spent the night in one of the restored homes, but we did get a glimpse of life in another era. We learned about a time when strict nuns ruled the school, eight-children families were the norm, and the indoor washrooms and electricity the village homes had were considered the ultimate in modern living. The focal point of the town is Ouatichouan Falls, which at 260 feet is higher than Niagara Falls. The name means white, boiling water in Innu, and its powerful cascades can be viewed from a glass platform lookout or just as you wander through the village itself.

Digging for Fjord creatures at the Musée du Fjord: Besides its natural beauty, the glacial river was home to a unique eco-system comprised of both salt and fresh water species. Armed with shovels and wearing rubber boots, we learned firsthand about the fjord's inhabitants on the Life between Land and Sea activity. We were thrilled to find clams, shrimp and other organisms with the help of our guides. Back inside, we checked out the aquariums and exhibitions. The highlight was the touch pool, where we held a slimy sea cucumber, a star fish and other creatures of the fjord.

Splunking at Parc Caverne du Trou de la Fee: These deep granite caves were discovered by chance in 1821, when workers saw an eagle disappear into the cliffs and went looking for its nest. It was a tight squeeze in some spots; but once we got through, it was surprising

how large this fairy hole was. Exploring the cave was more than enough adventure for me, but my daughter craved more thrills and so whizzed over the canyon on a zipline course offered at the park. My heart stopped just watching her and I was glad I chose the more peaceful option of a stroll along the boardwalk with gorgeous views of rivers and waterfalls.

Camping fun for families at Villages Vacances Petit Saguenay: A summer camp for families is the best way to describe this property that had 37 cabins on a hilltop overlooking the fjord. Here, both kids and parents get their own animateurs (counsellors) who led activities that we could participate in together or apart. So, for example, while the parents could go on a hike with a reward of wine and cheese at the end, their kids could be playing organized games at the beach or doing arts and crafts. Food (cafeteria style) and activities were included in the price, making it a great deal for families. I was told that about 10% of guests were English-speaking families looking for immersion opportunities. With skits, bonfire ghost stories en français, it's a much more fun way to learn French than in the classroom.

Biking le Velo du Bluet: The Blueberry Trail is a 256-km-path that circles the beautiful Lac Saint-Jean, taking cyclists through a variety of landscapes. We biked a small portion, about 20K, of this trail with Equinox Adventures. You wouldn't think it would take long to bike that distance, but it did -- simply because we had to stop so many times. Why? Blueberries, of course. The trail was true to its name and these small, flavourful berries the region is famous for were so much tastier than the ones we buy at the supermarket. As we had no containers, the kids filled their water bottles and tummies with them. We returned to our condo accommodation at the Centre de Villégiature Dam-en-Terre with blue-stained lips, talking about how much we'd love to come back and cycle the complete route.

There are some places you just have to return to. ■

[HTTPS://TOURISME.SAGUENAY.CA/EN](https://tourisme.saguenay.ca/en)

Photo: Yves Ouellet

Sleeping in a treehouse at Cap Jaseux Park: We loved our treehouse adventure on this 200-hectare property that also offered suspended spheres, log cabins and tenting. Our wooden house was perched high among the evergreen boughs and looked out at the Saguenay Fjord. Activity options included aerial rope courses, hiking, swimming and sea kayaking. We chose the guided kayaking excursion and paddled onto the fjord at sunset.





Timeless Toronto – The Jewel in Ontario’s Crown

by Anne-Marie Macloughlin

A cooling breeze wafts gently from a lake of shining water as the geese dip their heads in search of a tasty morsel; sailboats bob languidly as a passenger ferry takes happy day-trippers to a cluster of quiet islands as they seek some quiet beach time or a lively game of Frisbee. To the north a gleaming spire winks in the sunlight, a call to all who seek culture, adventure and an unforgettable experience. This is Toronto, the city by the lake and my adopted home since the '90s.

From the Mohawk word “Tkaronto - Where there are trees standing in the water” (a reference to an indigenous fishing practice using wooden poles), the marketing organization for the city with the futuristic skyline estimates 28 million people visited Toronto in 2019, spending a record \$6.7 billion — \$200 million more than in 2018 (cbc.ca). Biased I may be but the stats makes sense – as a year round destination Toronto is hard to top with a staggering amount of activities suited to all tastes and budgets.

fare providing options for the most adventurous of palates. Many stay open later than traditional restaurants which make them the perfect destination after a late movie or night on the town. If it’s dim sum you crave, Swatow Restaurant at 309 Spadina Avenue (<http://www.swatowtoronto.com>) is a favourite with the locals; be prepared for a lineup at weekend brunch times (and don’t forget to try the shrimp har gow.)

Food and Drink

Known for its multicultural neighbourhoods, Toronto serves up a smorgasbord of culinary treats for carnivores, vegans and flexitarians alike. On Spadina Avenue between College Street to the North and Queen Street West to the South, the city boasts one of North America’s largest Chinatown districts. Vietnamese, Thai and Korean restaurants complement the more traditional Chinese

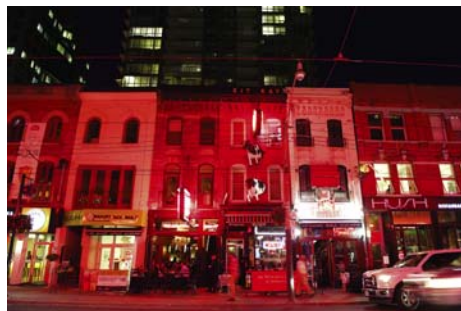




Photos: Destination Toronto

Just west of Spadina lies Kensington Market, a favourite destination for the city's budget conscious fashionistas. When you need a break from sourcing that perfect vintage piece The Moonbeam Coffee Company at 30 St. Andrew Street (moonbeamcoffee.com) is a gem of a pit stop with front and back patio for warmer days and cozy interior when the winter chill hits. Roasting their own fair trade beans onsite adds to the ambience and the option to take a little Moonbeam home with you.

After a hard day's sightseeing how better to take off a load than at a friendly watering hole? On 223 Augusta Avenue lies The Embassy (416- 591-1132) with a tiny patio, retro vinyl booths and exposed brick walls. Check the blackboard for their selection of



imported and domestic beer including draft microbrews. Note: they don't skimp on their mixed drinks either and pricing is fair. Certain nights they have a DJ spinning in back so check with venue for schedule.

Culture & Tourism

Culture vultures are drawn to Toronto for its lively and eclectic theatre scene. Hosting The National Ballet of Canada (national.ballet.ca) and The Canadian Opera Company (coc.ca), visitors can be assured of world-class entertainment and award-winning productions to rival Broadway. Home to The Toronto Fringe Festival (<https://fringetoronto.com/>) theatre buffs gather each July to witness the best in diverse and experimental theatre at a low cost. With venues ranging from University Campus theatres and warehouse spaces, The Fringe is a wonderful opportunity to support the arts without breaking the bank.

A visit to Toronto wouldn't be complete without a trip to the top of the city, courtesy of the CN Tower (cntower.ca). The pride of Toronto, the famous needle stands tall at 1,815ft5in and in 1995 was classified as one of the seven wonders of the modern world. The 360 Restaurant specializes in Canadian cuisine with arguably the best view in the city, revolving once every 72 minutes. After a delicious meal, test your mettle as you walk on the glass floor (scarier than you'd think!) or for the real adrenaline junkie, take a walk on the wild side at the tower's Edgewalk experience which involves a relaxing hands free walk OUTSIDE the tower - while harnessed securely of course. At \$195 it's not cheap but oh, what a view!

Nature – Trails and the Waterfront

One of the defining characteristics of Toronto is its abundance of green space and proximity to beautiful Lake Ontario. With year round trails and outdoor recreational options, you can ice skate in winter by the frozen wonderland of Lake O or take a summertime cycle along one of the city's many trails. The Martin Goodman trail is a popular destination for cyclists, joggers and rollerbladers, 22 km from the Beaches in the east end to Humber Bay in the west and part of The Great Lakes Waterfront Trail. No bike? No problem! Toronto Bike Share (<https://bike-sharetoronto.com/>) has stations all over the city with many dotted along Queen's Quay. At \$15 for a 72 hour access pass it's a fit and fun way to explore the city while being an eco conscious traveler. Unsure about riding an unfamiliar machine? Fear not, the bikes are maintained regularly by the company and provide a smooth and comfortable ride.

If it's peace and quiet you seek, there are many ravine and forest trails to get lost in, my

favourite being the Toronto Beltline Trail. A former railway line, the Beltline is split into three sections, the most tranquil of which is the Ravine Beltline Trail south of Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Look out for woodpeckers, chipmunks and of course the ubiquitous squirrel as you take time out from the bustle of the city (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beltline_Trail). Budding photographers and history buffs will enjoy the ancient trees and beautiful landscaped gardens in the cemetery which has served Toronto since 1876 (mountpleasant-group.com).

Feel like some urban hiking? Then head downtown to the vibrant and colourful Yonge & Dundas intersection and the CF Toronto Eaton Centre, Toronto's most popular tourist attraction and North America's busiest mall according to a study by the Retail Council of Canada in 2017. One of my favourite spots to stroll around, the mall provides a sanctuary from the searing heat of summer and brain-freezing temperatures of winter with many food and drink options to make a day of it! Bookended by Saks Fifth Avenue in the south and Nordstrom in the North, demanding shoppers won't be disappointed.

As North American cities go, Toronto is hard to beat. The mix of cultures, activities and accessibility provide a stimulating environment for all tastes, the old rubbing shoulders with the new and haute couture happily coexisting with hipster edginess. We can experience Greek tradition with The Taste of The Danforth every summer and celebrate the Chinese New year in winter. A big exhibition destination, we look forward to The Canadian National Exhibition for 2 weeks in August and The Royal Winter Fair at the end of November. Toronto winters can be undeniably harsh with summer temperatures in the 100s but don't let this deter you. The city has adapted to both extremes and with a stunningly beautiful fall beloved by leaf peepers, anytime is the right time to visit. See you soon. ■

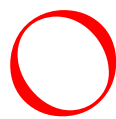
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Magnificent Tunisia

Article and photography by Michael Morcos



n the less travelled part of the Mediterranean lies sometimes forgotten and sometimes overlooked magnificent Tunisia. On this part of my second trip I would travel north and west to straddle the coast. This would prove to be in great contrast to the dry deserts and the beautiful landscapes to the south.

Both are compelling and if I had to choose between a trip to the north or south, I would object by picking a trip to visit both. As in my last visit, we would land in the capital region of Tunis. From here, we would enjoy a relaxing day on the sandy beaches and a rejuvenating Thalassic Therapy message before hitting the road for six days of exploration.

La Palais Du Baron

This palace boast an Arabic design which was built in the year 1912 A.D. The renowned La Palais Du Baron was created by French and German artist Baron Rodolphe d'Erlanger. The opulent rooms of this Arabic-Andalusian is comprised of beautiful ornaments, jewels and furnishings inside the massive interior. I found out that presently the palace holds the stamp of the Mediterranean Music Centre where numerous concerts are lined up year-round.

Carthage Port Punique

I enjoyed this charming area, also known as the "Sea of Empires." Cartage Port Punique has facilities that have been in service since the pre historic times of the ancient emperors rule in Tunisia. Comprising of the commercialized and military ports, Cartage Port Punique is positioned along high walls. The purpose of these walls was to have a resourceful military port where maximum number of boats could be hidden in the harbour.

One highlight of Cartage port Punique is that this area was first battle ground of the first Punic war. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site and hallmarked territory in Tunisia, it gives notice to this city due to its rich history related to the 11th century,



regarding the text of the Appian that has been recorded by historians as well as archaeologists.

Tunis Medina

Tunis Medina is the commercialized and administrative trading hub of the city. Close to the Mediterranean Sea and Lake Tunis, this place has three fractions - the old city or Median, the French Quarter and lastly the northern and the southern parts of the capital. Tunis Medina is segmented among the central core, which still abides by the era of its groundwork, which is the 8th century.

This outstanding layout of buildings has been urbanized from a small defrayal which is known as Oppidum tunicense, revealed by Pliny the Elder. The design was completed during the 13th century under the rule of the Hafsid dynasty.

The way the doors of the Tunis Medina are decorated along with the engravings of the gems and jewels is a symbol of the socio-logical importance of the historical times along with the geometric architectural style of art work. Some of the imagery is homage to figures and events such as the Goddess of Fertility, St Augustine of Hippo and the Ottoman Empire in Turkey.

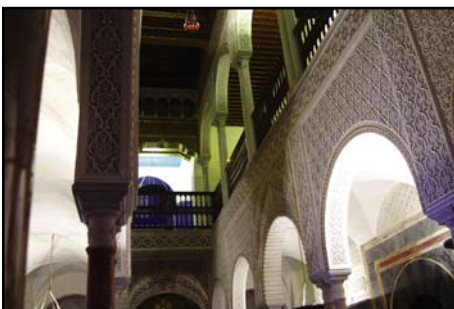
Musee De Bardo

Musee De Bardo, which is one of the renowned museums of Tunisia, was originally a palace of the Hafsid dynasty during their rule in the 13th century. Musee de Bardo is located in the outer suburbs of Tunis. This astonishing museum has a colossal collection of Roman Mosaics and antiquities from ancient Greece and Tunisia.

On the road and meeting the locals

Travelling through Tunisia is as beautiful as one can imagine. I was able to observe the daily lifestyle of the residents along the sea-side. Tunisian agriculture and farms have become a hallmark of the local landscape. I indulged in a road trip on the curvy roads

see following page





of Tunisia which was an enthralling experience, especially when I was able to stop and have a chat with friendly farmers.

The town of Tabarka

My next stopover was Tabarka. I loved this seaside atmosphere of the place, including its amazing waters which are surreal and crystal clear. Two great things to see are the gorgeous Mediterranean corals that surround the area and an exquisite Genoese castle, framed by the Khroumerie Mountains enriching the spectacular environment. This is the perfect playground for sightseers, scuba divers and fans of spending days at the sandy beach in the sunshine.

Bulla Regia

Located in the North Western side of the city of Tunisia, Bulla Regia is an archaeological site with the Bardo Museum the city of Jendouba, dating back to the Hadrianic era. The lovely shades of colours is prevalent in the dome shaped architecture.

Each subversive dwellings corresponds to the three palaces at the northern end, which can be explored by guided tour. The baths, the forum and the theatre the key places to visit at the archaeological site of Bulla Regia.

Dougga

My visit to the mesmerizing theatre of archaeology Dougga was impressive and something I've always wanted to view. This archaeological site has been named a UNESCO site in the 1990s, for its history dating to ancient Roman days.

The overall town of Dougga is popular for its Islamic influence. For example, the established Mosque of Sidi Sahbi, on the eastern side of the capital, was built during the 14th century.

Kairouan

Known as the land of pastries, Kairouan offers mouth-watering baked goods like that of the Makraoudh and Zebbia, usually made with sugar and various nuts, like pistachios. This place is a hallmark of Tunisia, sometimes called the "Cultural Capital of Islam" and is also a UNESCO site. The mosque of

Uqba is located here, which is known as the fourth pillar of Islam. The name of this city is derived from the word "Carvan," which means a "Resting Place".

This great Muslim pilgrimage site has distinctive features. In the northwest turn of the yard is a little space with a historical grave plus a burial stone dressed up with green, red and white accents. However, if you are not Muslim, you can only admire this space from the outside.

Colisee El Jem

The auditorium at El Djem was made by the Romans under the rule of emperor Gordian in Thysdrus in the year 238 AD. The key purpose to use this space for gladiator shows as well as the fierce chariot races. I found this monument to be one of the most impressive in Tunisia, especially since it looks particularly stunning at sunset.

Port El Kantaoui

Positioned at the north of the Sousse of the Central part of Tunisia, Port El Kantaoui was built in 1979 as a large tourist attraction. At this popular spot, I had a wonderful time hitting the links. The 36 hole PGA approved course also has options nearby for paragliding, yachting and water skiing. Taking a walk down the cobblestone streets here is another pleasant activity to try.

Medina and Ribat De Sousse

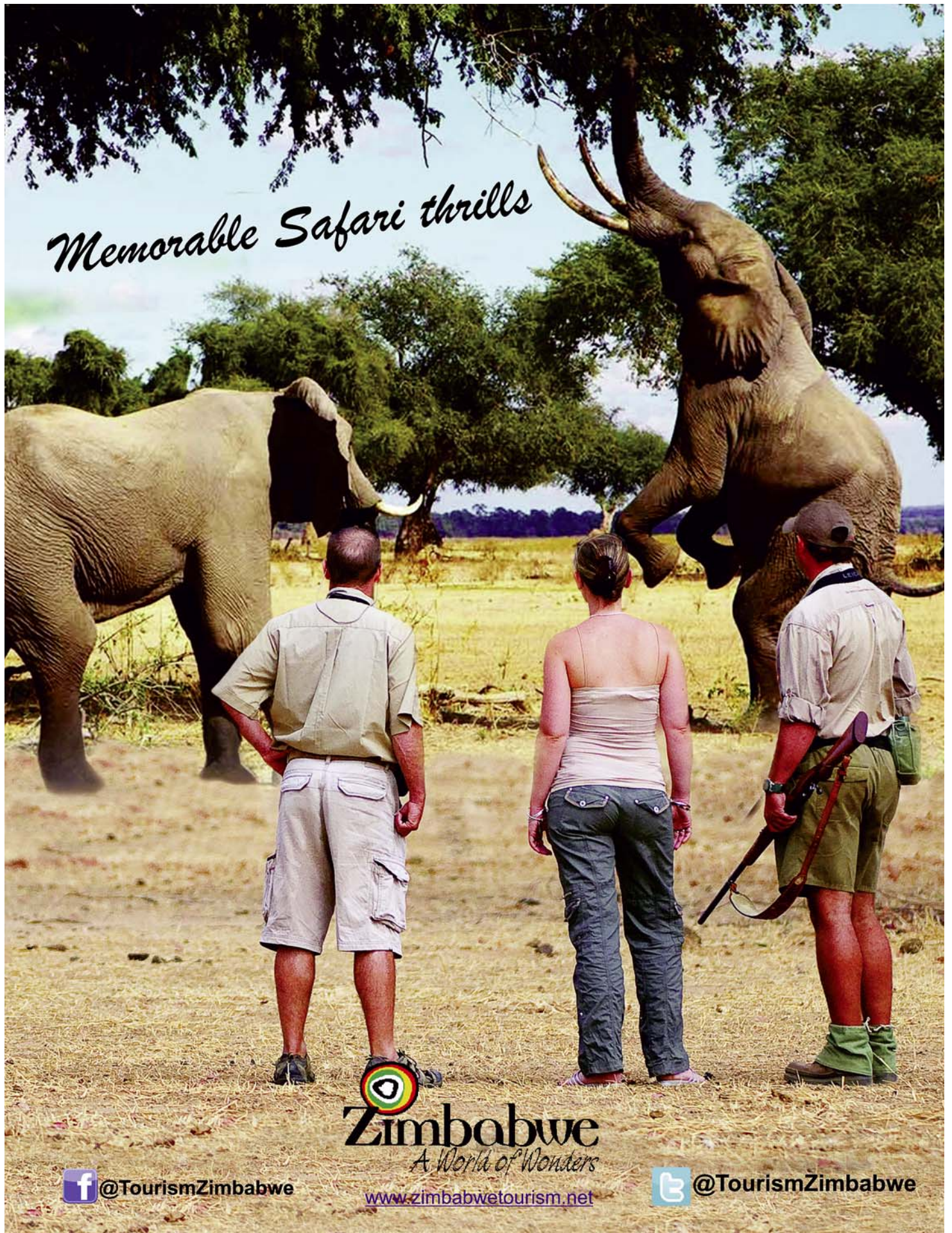
Sousse, located in the heart of Tunisia, is a trade hub for processed food, textiles, transport equipment and olive oil, to name a few. The University De Sousse, located in the area, has a rich Roman and Vandal background and is worth a visit. The Ribat today stands as a fort as well as a religious fortification.

I reached a level of contentment that is always wonderful to experience when taking trips abroad, as this destination has a fulfilling amount of memorable things to see and do that embody a rich cultural and historical background famous in this part of the world. ■

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