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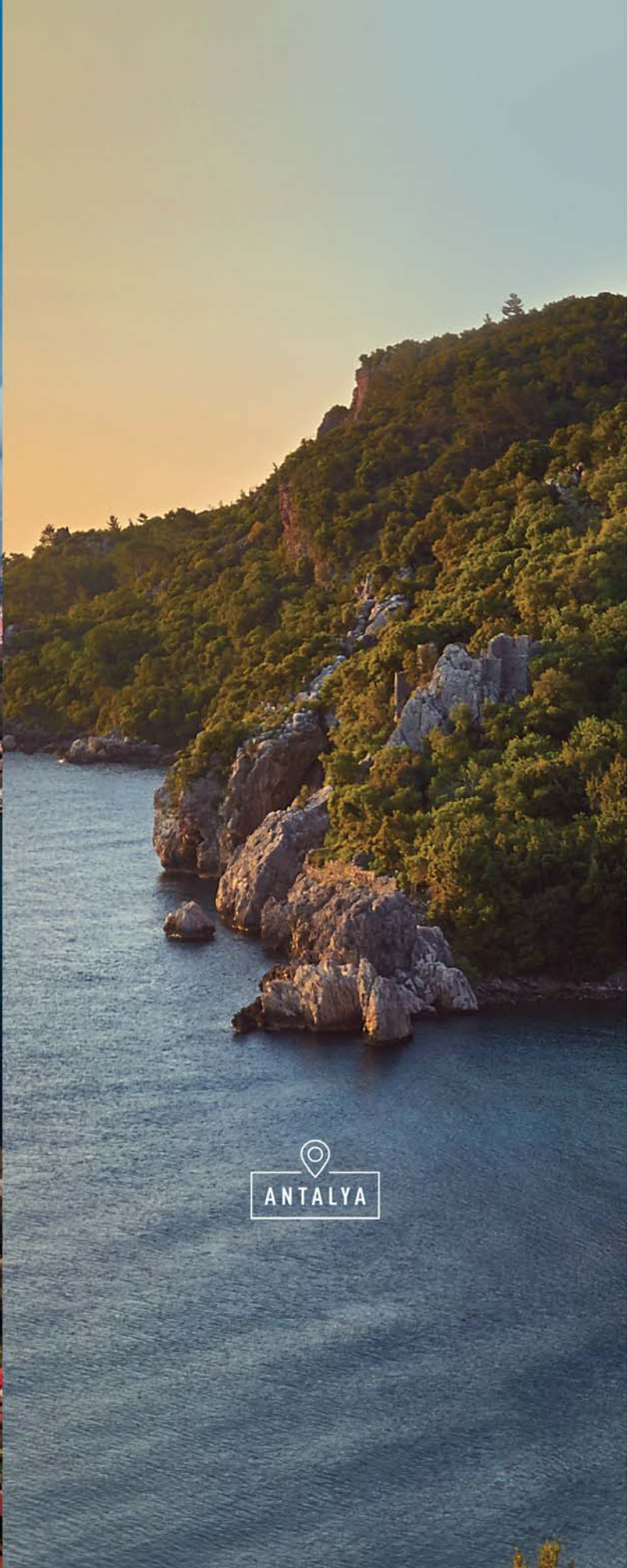
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Welcome to World Traveler



This past year, 2022, marked a very special anniversary for World Traveler as we celebrated 20 years of our multi-award-winning publications, and we are as passionate about travel as ever.

When we began, our print issues were spread far and wide. It was not long until we launched our website: www.worldtraveler.travel, which has recently merged both American World Traveler and Canadian World Traveller. In the following years we introduced new media: eMagazines, eNewsletters and World Traveler Social Media pages. Today we find ourselves with a vast reader base and electronic presence which has been growing exponentially in the past three years.



In this issue, we start our journey of discovery in the Far East by visiting the less traveled amazing city of Kokura. While in Japan, we delight our palates and taste some of the best this country has to offer in many of its Michelin Star restaurants.

Next, we head to Europe and continue our journey of delectable culinary delights at Michelin Star restaurants, this time in Istanbul. In Germany, we relive a great trip to three fascinating cities: Berlin, Hamburg and Lubeck. To the south, we board the new and beautiful Viking Neptune for a relaxing Mediterranean

cruise from Rome to Barcelona. While there, we discover the French playground of Nice before exploring central Iberia's charming and historic region of Castile-León. To end our European tour, we board another ship, this time with Poseidon Expeditions and head to the very far north to visit the best of Svalbard and Greenland.

Now in North America, and while on the topic of cruises, we discover two magnificent ships. First, we look at the Discovery Princess that sails out of the US west coast and talk all about its wonderful spaces and amenities.

Next, we board the exciting new Celebrity Beyond to find this beautiful hi-tech ship is both comfortable and classy, a real game changer in the cruise industry.

In Canada, we visit the very popular and well visited Niagara Falls region before heading to the mid-west to discover the one of a kind; Churchill museum dedicated to the past world leader, Sir Winston. South bound, we find all about the yearly Mardi Gras' tradition and festivities. In Orlando, we enjoy pampering and adult fun and finally, in Puerto Rico, we discover why this island is the 'Star of the Caribbean'.

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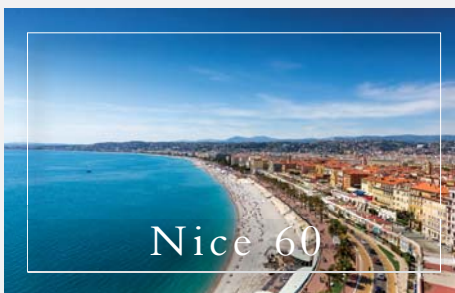
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Destinations



(short informative travel pieces)

Istanbul's Michelin Stars + Japan's Michelin Stars + Good-to-Go
G Adventures + Churchill Museum + Spanish streets + Niagara Falls
WT Vintage Front Covers + Qatar Airways + Kokura, Japan
WT 20 Years of Memorable Images + Turkish Airlines + Tropical Tidbits

Crusing Section 36



Stay & Play - 50



Luxury Hotels...Grand Resorts...
Charming B&B... Opulent Villas...
Quaint Country Inns... Ecolodges...
Luxury Safari Camps...
Ice...Cave...Treetop...Hotels



Puerto Rico - the Star of the Caribbean

Article and Photography by Michael Morcos

Puerto Rico has been on my bucket list for many years. Funny how things work out as this past year I would finally visit this beautiful paradise not once but twice. I had scheduled a weeklong tour of the island before we went on a Caribbean cruise with a port-of-call in San Juan. The one-day stop would whet my appetite and what followed a few weeks later would satisfy my hunger.

That one-day stop would be a great introduction. It would include a half day of horse-back riding through the magnificent and lush rainforest. But what struck me most was the richness of the island, after all the Spanish word 'Rico' meaning 'rich' in English was applicable to how clean and developed the island was. Having traveled to many other nearby islands, Puerto Rico looked like an opulent heaven. Yes, other island nations had natural beauty, great resorts and some a well-developed infrastructure, but none had all of these in abundance like this 'Star in the Caribbean'.

La Concha Renaissance

A destination on its own, La Concha Renaissance has what it takes to make any Puerto Rican visit complete. Situated close to old San Juan, this would be our hub for many day trips to the other parts of the island. I could only say this hotel was hip and happening, with a fresh, vibrant, and young feel to it. Our accommodation was nothing short of breathtaking. From the upper floors of the high-rise, I would have magnificent views of the ocean, beautiful beach, and sur-



Photo: La Concha

rounding district. Spacious and modern looking rooms were clean, comfortable, and relaxing. Notable to mention, the hotel's meals were delicious, well presented and world class with seating by the ocean that made it even more memorable.

So big and complete was the resort that on the national holiday - Noche de San Juan - the hotel held a spectacular fashion show, followed by DJs, dancing, and a nighttime beach party where both locals and guests partied to the early morning.

Boat ride to Culebra

Life could not be better on this beautiful hot and sunny Puerto Rican day. We would eagerly drive to a port and embark on a small boat to the magnificent Culebra Island. There we would find one of the most amazing sandy beaches I have ever been on. Crystal blue waters and lush tropical greenery dominated the scenery. Due to its distance from the mainland, there were very few tourists and we felt we found an earthly paradise, something out of a postcard.

El Yunque

Another day and another outdoor adventure. This time we would head inland and upwards to the hills of the El Yunque forest which is considered the only tropical forest in the US National Forest system. Highlights here would bring us to the top of a tall man-made stone tower to view the magnificent greenery of the surroundings. Another wonderful experience was following a trail downwards to a river and enjoy swimming in mountain fed waters. On this Sunday, we would enjoy refreshing dips in beautiful clear waters with the locals who would make a day of it by having family BBQs by the shores. The sights of the river and forest, sounds of Latino music in the background and the smells of grilled meats and vegetables made for another unique and amazing Puerto Rican experience.

Culinary Tour at Old San Juan

Gastronomy galore is the best way to describe our walking tour of old San Juan, which is what I would find out in a very short

time as we would visit something different in just about every location. All would add up to be a cross section of what has made the Puerto Rican food scene what it is today. From delicious pork dishes in small family run restaurants, to locally caught seafood in historic buildings, rum cocktails in tabernas, the islands famous coffee in quaint cafes and even candy shops and street side ice cream parlours. So much unique variety and fresh flavors within minutes of each other that I would only say, Puerto Rico is a foodie's paradise.

Caribe Hilton

Midway through our Puerto Rican tour, we would change hotels to find a different vibe and rhythm. In stark contrast to the Concha, the Caribe Hilton is a stately historic hotel. Well known by locals and longtime guests, the beautiful seaside property is renowned for the creation of the now world-famous Piña Colada. Having a tasting of this refreshing drink showed why it became so popular. Even though it is close to it all, the Caribe is like staying in paradise with seaside activities, palm trees and manicured lawns, all the while being served by a dedicated staff. This again is a resort that can be a destination on its own.

Casa Bacardi

Puerto Rico and rum have gone hand-in-hand for centuries, and there is no rum more popular than Bacardi. We would sample the best this island has to offer by visiting Casa Bacardi. Here we would tour the extensive facilities right after our delicious rum cocktail and find that there are many different styles and tastes of rum. Among them are decades old finely aged rums that rival famous whiskeys and wines from around the world. The best and funniest part of our tour was where we went to mixology class to create delicious Mojito's. Hilarious and well done by Bacardi, I am proud to say that I am now a graduate and somewhat expert of this tasty tropical refreshment.

Nightlife a la Puerto Rican style

No trip to Puerto Rico would be complete without a nightlife experience. La Placita de



9

Santurce district is the perfect choice for fun with something for all ages and desires. Packed streets with cars and pedestrian gave for a festival like atmosphere and besides lively bars, dance halls with DJs and bands, there is also a wide variety of restaurants, from the simple to full-service establishments serving a wide host of cuisines.

Bio Bay experience

Now for something completely different, a once in a lifetime experience was no less found in the dark. At sunset, we would mount two person kayaks and find our way through dense mangroves to a quiet lake-like estuary. There we would wait it out for the lightshow. As our guide would explain and we would soon find out, the show was below us and not in the skies. Soon enough, we would join all the many kayaks and cover ourselves with a dense tarp. Excited and bewildered, we would look down to the waters and witness one of nature's incredible wonders, that is microorganisms shining like the stars in the sky. This truly memorable show was followed by another bizarre experience where we would kayak back to our starting point in total darkness through the mangrove with nothing more than the small flashlight our guide.

Puerto Rico, the Star of the Caribbean is an exceptional destination! It has it all in abundance, from opulent hotels to gastronomic delights, to first world service and cleanliness, beautiful natural scenery, adventure on its shores, waters and forests and best of all, the warm and laid-back feeling that can be found throughout this earthly paradise. ■

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Shop, Dine and Spa: Grown-up Magic in Orlando

by Jennifer Merrick



Our family has loved our visits to Orlando over the years. As young kids, they dueled with lightsabers against the storm troopers and became a princess for a day at Disney World. As tweens and teens, they immersed themselves in beloved books and movies by travelling on the Hogwarts Express, zipping around via broomsticks on the Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey and saving the day with the famous web slinger on the Amazing Adventures of Spiderman at Universal Studios.

But for the first time, at a recent conference, I found myself in Orlando without my kids. Mmmm...might there be some grown-up magic I could indulge in? Most definitely, it turned out.

Mall at Millenia

The moment I stepped into this 1,118,000-square-foot shopping complex, I knew it was not your typical mall. Sunlight flooded in from its 65-foot-high glass ceiling and yet it was oh so blissfully air-conditioned on this scorcher of a day in June. Anchored by Bloomingdales, Neiman Marcus and Macy's, there were over 150 brands represented, including Anthropologie, Banana Republic, Cartier, Chanel, Gucci, Guess, Lacoste and Louis Vuitton. The center court often hosted special events and we enjoyed a fashion show with chic models strutting the latest styles. As I began my shopping excursion, I must admit I was worried that this ordinary Canadian might be out of her league. But with summer sales and low taxes, I left with a bag in each hand and a smile on my face.

Though I didn't have time to indulge in further retail therapy, Orlando has plenty of options, including:

- Orlando International Premium Outlet is an outdoor complex with big-name brands at discounted prices.
- East End Market in the Audubon Park Garden District features indulgent gourmet delights like artisan cheeses at La Femme



Mall at Millenia

du Fromage, regional produce and meats at Local Roots, and made-from-scratch, Asian-inspired French pastries at Sugar Dough Bakehouse.

- Thornton Park, a downtown pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood near Lake Eola, is known for its original artsy boutiques and art galleries.

Shopping had worked up an appetite and though the food at Mall at Millenia was notches above typical food court fare with restaurants like the Capital Grille, California Pizza and PF Changs, it was time for the next Orlando indulgence.

Four Flamingos

A playful tropical vibe permeated everything about this recently opened restaurant located at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress Hotel. My first impression was that of being transported to a Caribbean island with lush green foliage, palm trees and even a waterfall at the entrance. And playfulness? Well, flamingos, to start. These graceful, pink wading birds were everywhere from the massive mural that greeted us to the statues hidden among the vegetation outdoors and décor accents.

Why flamingos? "It's the vintage element," explained Chef Richard Blais, whose celebrity chef status has skyrocketed since his appearances on Bravo's Top Chef and his title of Top Chef All-Star.

"Four Flamingos really is my take on vintage Floridian food," said Blais and explained how his childhood memories of family vacations to the state influenced him.

"I tried to tap into the spirit of the place and what Floridian cuisine is." And through his flamingo-rose-coloured glasses, he envisioned dishes that were globally influenced, but more focussed on the Caribbean and the deep south of the US, all the way to the bayou of Louisiana.

Blais fusion inspirations shone through in menu items like tuna tostada passion fruit yolk, crab ravioli and a flavourful fish stew.

Equally creative, were the cocktails with signature twists and local ingredients that elevated classics like mule and margaritas as well as their own chef d'oeuvres. Get toasted was a festive concoction of coconut rum, banana liqueur, coconut cream, pineapple and cinnamon bark syrup.

Blais is just one of the chefs making their mark in the state's capital thriving culinary scene. Michelin recently recognized 33

Orlando restaurants, awarding four stars, seven Bib Gourmands and 22 recommendations, including the Four Flamingos. The winners of the elusive stars were:

- Capa, a Spanish-style steakhouse and tapas bar at the Four Seasons Resort at Walt Disney World, is known for its steak and seafood.
- The 10-seat Soseki features creative omakase with a contemporary twist.
- Kadence, located in the Audubon Park Garden District, is a popular sushi bar that focusses on creative bites using the highest quality fish.
- Knife & Spoon at The Ritz Carlton, Orlando Grande Lakes boasts in-house dry-aged steaks and rich seafood specialties.

Also at the Ritz was my final and most indulgent experience before flying home:

Ritz-Carlton Grande Lakes Spa

"Leave the outside world behind," the esthetician instructed as my facial began. The directive was easy to follow at this 40,000-foot oasis with inviting indoor and outdoor facilities orchestrated to relax and rejuvenate. Inside, there are 40 treatment rooms, a full salon and water circuit, including sauna, steam room and pool. Outdoors is reminiscent of a Caribbean resort with cabanas, comfy lounge chairs and pool side service, where you can order a healthy lunch from Vitale, the Spa Café, or a glass of bubbly.

The facial itself revitalized with top-of-the-line products that utilized pure, concentrated ingredients that left my skin visibly softer and smoother.

I have to admit it was hard to leave, but I had a flight to catch. However, there's no doubt I'll be back in Orlando. The question is whether it'll be with or without the kids. ■

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Four Flamingos by J. Merrick



How to Celebrate Mardi Gras, America's Best Party

Article and Photography by Nicholas Kontis

Who doesn't love a good party? I fuel at least a part of my wanderlust by scheduling my travel when a festival or other cultural event is happening somewhere on the planet. Events inevitably embrace local music and delicious cuisine. And with the Lent season come joyous winter-spring carnivals.

In February 2020, my wife and I attended Carnival on the Amazon River, in Manaus. After voyaging without internet on the riverboat MY Tucano, I returned to civilization to discover that the world was shutting down, to combat the dreaded Coronavirus. We forged on to Rio de Janeiro, just in time to witness the climax of Carnival in the "Marvelous City." Those folks sure know how to throw a party.

Fast forward to February 2022. In Louisiana, I immersed myself in two renditions of Mardi Gras, known by locals as a season of excess, sociability and tradition. I began my adventure in Shreveport, then moved on to New Orleans for the largest party in the United States.

A tradition in Shreveport

If you want a traditional Louisiana Mardi Gras without the raucous mayhem or exorbitant prices of New Orleans, drive 5½ hours northwest to Shreveport. Shreveport (and its twin city of Bossier) throws the best family-friendly version of Mardi Gras in the state.

Adorned in a purple, green and gold Mardi Gras costume, I tossed beads and other trinkets off the Disney-themed Krewe of Centaur float to delighted crowds. With screaming fans, this is as close I'll ever get to the fanaticism of Beatlemania. "We have gotten bigger and better every year," said Joe Duhon, Shreveport's past King of Centaur. "Our parade is on two Saturdays, 10 days before Fat Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday."

In New Orleans, I was just another partygoer, a merrymaker in the crowd showered with

gifts. But in Shreveport, I was an active participant. Riding the float, I had bags of beads, cups and other curios at my disposal to throw. The Centaur mantra is to create a better community by staging an all-inclusive, family-fun event. I was thronged by locals hoping to catch a treasure, yelling: "Throw me something, Mister!"

New Orleans' biggest party

I doubt if any city in the world, other than New Orleans, can flaunt nonstop parties from late October to Lent. Beginning with Halloween, through Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's and Mardi Gras, New Orleans offers four months of nonstop, all-inclusive mayhem and revelry.



More than 1 million people descend upon New Orleans for Mardi Gras. The lavish spectacle is full of parades, parties and a storied 600 years of carnival tradition that dates back to the pagan spring and fertility rites of Medieval Europe, and beyond that, all the way to ancient Greece.

When the influence of the Roman Catholic Church spread across the world, Carnival spread with it — first to France, then to North America in the 17th century.

What and when?

What's the difference between Carnival and Mardi Gras? Carnival refers to the season of merriment that always begins on January 6. It culminates on Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday), the day before Ash Wednesday.

Also known as Shrove Tuesday or Pancake Tuesday, Mardi Gras is observed throughout the world. In the greater New Orleans area, as many as 70 vibrant parades may roll through the streets. Since 1857, more than 2,000 Mardi Gras parades have taken place.

When is Mardi Gras? The date varies each year. It is linked to Easter Sunday, which is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon of the spring equinox, its date fixed at March 21. Thus Easter can fall on any Sunday between March 23 and April 25. In 2023, it will be on April 9, preceded by Mardi Gras on February 21.

As licensed by the Roman Catholic church, Carnival means "farewell to flesh." It is designated as a period of feasting (Fat Tuesday) that precedes the fasting of Lent. Frivolity ceases, and the period of abstention begins, at exactly midnight on Ash Wednesday — 46 days before Easter.

Mardi Gras, therefore, can fall on any Tuesday between February 3 and March 9. But the formal start to the carnival season is the Feast of Epiphany, the 12th day of Christmas (January 6), also known as King's Day.

A year-round event

As I discovered in Rio de Janeiro, Mardi Gras preparation is a year-round event, a business that never stops. New Orleans' Kern Studios is the city's oldest and largest parade design



studio, creating everything from the elaborate towering sculptures of Marilyn Monroe and Louis Armstrong to statues of the King, Queen and Baby Kong, as well as the growing female Krewe's Cleopatra, Femme Fatale and Muses. Local writer and historian Arthur Hardy has proclaimed the Kern family the most significant influence on Mardi Gras in the 20th century.

Another tradition is the addicting and mouth-watering King Cake, descended from southern France's traditional Twelfth Night cake. It is now a staple of Mardi Gras. Local bakeries make nearly 800,000 of the simple brioche sprinkled with sugar, a delectable, carnival-colored treat. Over 50,000 are shipped throughout the U.S. during holiday season, between January 6 and ending on Fat Tuesday.

A small plastic baby is hidden in each cake. Tradition says that the person who gets the slice with the plastic baby must provide the cake or throw the next party.

Locals argue for and defend their favorite bakeries. Matt Haines, author of "The Big Book of King Cake," claims to have sampled 88 King Cakes in a single Mardi Gras. As sweet fillings have evolved, the variety of King Cakes seems endless.

It takes more than a global pandemic to crush the souls and spirits of New Orleans locals. The Crescent City canceled Mardi Gras in 2021, and for the first time since 1945, Louisiana was paradeless. That made the 2022 spectacle extraordinary.

"Since the first parade rolled out in 1857, Mardi Gras has survived world wars, yellow fever epidemics, and political uprising because man's need to celebrate is universal and unstoppable," said historian Hardy.

But Covid-19 stimulated a new event — the concept of decorating houses to keep the event alive. In 2021, and again in 2022, drivers could view ornamented houses from a safe distance. "Turn your house into a float and throw the beads from your attic at your neighbors," tweeted Megan Boudreaux, founder of House of Floats. The concept snowballed.

If you go

As they say, "location, location." Hotels book quickly, so time is of the essence for both air and hotel. Most partygoers attempt to stay in or near the French Quarter and close to the parade routes. But the week leading up to Mardi Gras is the busiest week of the year, so expect to pay premium rates. While New Orleans is an accessible walking town, locals told me that a good rule of thumb is to stay close to St. Charles Street (the main parade street) or the city's hub along Canal Street.



I stayed at the Nopsi Hotel, two blocks from St. Charles and five from iconic Bourbon Street with its splendid wrought-iron balconies and cobblestone side streets. Hedonistic pleasures were never far away. For in-depth parade coverage, I downloaded the WDSU Parade Tracker app.

Other suggestions

Don't miss Antoine's Restaurant, America's oldest continually run family-owned restaurant. It's famous for its Baked Alaska.

Visit the King Cake Hub Pop-Up at the historic New Orleans Collection. This is a city tradition and a one-stop shop for New Orleans' most sought-after sweet.

Shop on Magazine Street for Mardi Gras costumes. The Funky Monkey and Miss Claudia's and two outstanding vintage-clothing shops.

Stroll with a local. Explore "Nola" and its storied history with Two Chicks Walking Tours. Small groups explore the historic French Quarter and the opulent homes of the Garden District.

The Louisiana State Museum pays tribute to the 150-year history of the Rex Krewe and the dozens of Krewe's that have followed. The collection of over 60 elegant costumes and gowns of past Krewe kings, queens and courtiers weaves a tale of the sophistication of the event.

Every year, about 1.5 million visitors flock to New Orleans to watch the Mardi Gras festivities. Mark your calendar for February 21, 2023, and don't forget to bring a handbag for the avalanche of gifts you'll be bestowed.

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Around The World (in 22 pages)



Michelin debuts in Istanbul

53 restaurants selected for prestigious culinary guide

53 restaurants have been selected for the first ever Michelin Guide in Istanbul, with five Istanbul restaurants winning Michelin stars for the first time.

The culinary map of Istanbul greatly impressed the Michelin Guide inspectors, who awarded the TURK Fatih Tutak two Michelin stars for its exceptional cuisine. Four other restaurants won one star, and 10 restaurants were awarded Bib Gourmand, a special award given to restaurants that offer a three-course meal at a reasonable price. Neolokal added a MICHELIN Green Star to its Red Star, in recognition of its pioneering approach to sustainable gastronomy.

TURK Fatih Tutak is highlighted with Two Michelin Stars

Located in the Şişli Bomonti district, on the European side of the city, TURK Fatih Tutak offers a modern and sophisticated menu of traditional Turkish flavors, including recipes which are cleverly reinvented by chef Fatih Tutak. Chef Tutak has experienced an international career with the world's culinary elite, but returned to Turkey in 2019 to open his own fine-dining restaurant.

Four restaurants awarded One Michelin Star

Reflecting the excellence of the Istanbul culinary scene, four restaurants known for their Turkish products and flavors have received One Michelin Star. They are: ARAKA, MIKLA, NEOLOKAL, and NICOLE

10 restaurants awarded Bib Gourmand

10 Istanbul eateries were awarded the Bib Gourmand, which spotlights restaurants that offer three-course meals at reasonable prices.

Michelin Young Chef and Service Awards

The Michelin Young Chef Award, recognizing professionals for their expertise and talent, was awarded to Mevlüt Özkaya at Mürver. A rising star of gastronomy, Mevlüt Özkaya has helmed the kitchens at this prestigious restaurant for two years and impressed the Michelin inspectors with his distinctive and precise cooking style, where wood fire cooking plays the lead role. ■

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Reaching for the (Michelin) Stars in Japan

With 415 Michelin-starred restaurants in Japan, it's easy to find your next spectacular meal

Japan has long been recognized as one of the premier culinary destinations in the world, so it comes as no surprise that gastronomically-motivated travellers have the chance to experience an impressive number of Michelin-starred restaurants during their visit. The country is home to 415 Michelin-starred restaurants, including 21 three-star restaurants, 74 two-star restaurants and 320 one-star restaurants - the most of any country except France.

Tokyo has the most Michelin-starred restaurants of any city in the world with 201, topping Paris with 118. But the capital is not the only place in the country to rank highly: coming in third and fourth positions respectively are Kyoto (98 starred restaurants) and Osaka (94 starred restaurants). While the majority of the establishments with stars serve Japanese cuisine, you'll also find places specializing in Italian, Chinese, Spanish and other cuisines from around the world, reflecting the global nature of these cities.

With Michelin recently entering the Canadian market with guides to Toronto and Vancouver, more Canadians are becoming familiar with the famous guide's rating system, and turning to it when researching dining experiences for their next trip. Michelin has three Japan guides: Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka, and Nara—the newest region guide just launched in May 2022. While the traditional red books are no longer published, all reviews are available online or via the Michelin app.

Michelin-starred dining experiences are usually considered the domain of luxury travellers or those celebrating a special occasion, but not every restaurant with a star will break the bank! In fact, you can find some of the best value Michelin star experiences in Japan, such as at Nakiryu and Konjiki Hototogiso - both of these one-star restaurants in Tokyo offer fortifying bowls of ramen starting at around CAD \$15. Beyond the star levels that Michelin awards, the Bib Gourmand designation denotes high quality cuisine and good value, with 444 restaurants in Japan receiving this honour. ■

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Here is a cab loved by everyone. Very affordable, under \$25, it has a beautiful color with luscious blackberry and black cherry aromas, with a subtle hint of vanilla, cedar and oak. It is a dry and full-bodied wine with lingering tannins that offers pure satisfaction with every sip. I suggest you pair this wine with a nice red meat or red sauce pasta, and even a hard cheese, you will find the spiciness from its dark fruit will provide complete enjoyment.

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From Sonoma Coast in California, La Crema 2020 Chardonnay is an elegant wine that offers tropical aromas of apricot, mango, pineapple, a hint of lime peel, and subtle hints of crème fraîche, butter, burnt caramel and oak. It is both rich and powerful in body, and leaves lingering finish that will please the pallet. Totally divine, enjoy!

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G Adventures launches new trips for 2023, including Mexico, Morocco and Iceland

More than 20 new Active and Classic adventures now available to book



As we head into 2023, global adventure operator and community tourism pioneer, G Adventures, has been hard at work designing a host of new adventures for the new year, with a focus on stepping off the beaten path and uncovering hidden gems, getting active in some of the world's most breathtaking locations, and rediscovering "that feeling" that only travel can provide.

With so much more of the world accessible since 2020, G Adventures is confident that 2023 is going to be a big year for adventure travel.

From heart-pumping challenges like taking on Morocco's Mount Toubkal and trekking Iceland's lesser-hiked southern coastline, through to sampling authentic mole in Mexico's gastronomic heartland and experi-

encing the mystical mountains of Bhutan, these new adventures span G Adventures' Classic and Active travel styles, and range from four to 12 days. The range of new trips is diverse, but they all share G Adventures' commitment to local cultural experiences and to ensuring the local communities visited benefit from hosting travellers.

David Green, managing director for G Adventures in Canada, says the new trips offer some new ways to see some of G Adventures' most popular locations as the operator's programme expands in size for the first time since the pandemic.

"Our new Classic trips offer even more immersive, authentic experiences to travellers that give back to local communities, and our new Active trips capitalize on the continued post-pandemic trend to get out in nature," says Green.

A selection of new trips for 2023 include:

The Many Sides of Mexico Puerto Vallarta to Oaxaca

This 15-day Classic style trip takes travellers through interior Mexico, visiting towns and cities rich with culture. Visit G for Good project Alebrijes Artisan Community in Oaxaca - a collective of local artisans that make intricate wood carvings that help support the local economy.

The Moroccan Coast and Marrakech

Starting and ending in Marrakech, this eight-day trip combines the sun drenched beaches of Morocco with the not-to-be-missed excitement of Marrakech. Participate in a tagine-making demonstration, dine in a souk in Agadir, hike to a waterfall and sip tea in a Berber Village with a local family.

Hiking Southern Iceland

This six-day Active style trip will get your heart pounding. Starting and ending in Reykjavik, travellers will hike the scenic Múlagljúfur Canyon, a little known gem that conjures up fairy tales, visit waterfalls and lagoons and even climb a glacier.

Highlights of the Greek Islands

This eight-days Classic trip from Athens to Santorini is an island-hopping adventure that hits the must-see sights as well as some of the more under-the-radar spots, including Tinos, one of Greece's more slower paced islands. Travellers will hike, explore beaches and of course be treated to mouth-watering local cuisine.

For a full list of the new trips for 2023, visit www.gadventures.com/new-tours/. ■

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America's National Churchill Museum, Fulton, Missouri

by Randy Mink

A historic speech given 77 years ago by one of the 20th century's greatest statesmen fuels the tourism machine today in little Fulton, Missouri.

It was in the gymnasium of Westminster College where the term "Iron Curtain," coined in an address by Sir Winston Churchill, became part of the geopolitical lexicon for two generations that lived through the Cold War.

Visitors to America's National Churchill Museum, on the Westminster campus, learn about the March day in 1946 when the ex-British prime minister and U.S. President Harry Truman, a Missourian, came to town.



Museum-goers also get glimpses into Churchill's long career of public service, including his heroic leadership during the darkest days of World War II.

Black-and-white newsreel footage shows a snippet of the "Iron Curtain" speech and scenes of townspeople who lined the streets to see Churchill and Truman motor by. Churchill's 50-minute oration called on the West to confront the expanding "Soviet sphere" in Eastern Europe.

Uttered with a dramatic gesture, the evocative phrase "From Stettin in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent..." effectively



marked the beginning of the Cold War.

At the time, less than a year after WWII ended, Churchill's party had been voted out, so the cigar-chomping leader had lost his job. "He was somewhat shocked, despondent and depressed," explains museum director Tim Riley. Having been shunted to the sidelines, Churchill was eager to re-establish his pre-eminence on the global stage.

Museum exhibits start with a timeline tracing Churchill's life from his 1874 birth into an aristocratic family residing amid lordly trapings at Blenheim Palace. Film clips, such as those showing the rise of Hitler and London under siege during the war, also tell the tale. Visitors discover that the multi-faceted Churchill was an avid painter and wrote many books, winning the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953.

Atop the museum sits the Christopher Wren-designed Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, which once stood in London. Bombed by the Germans in 1940, it lay in ruins for 20 years. The congregation could not afford to rebuild the 17th century church, so, starting in 1961, it was dismantled and shipped to Fulton, where the reassembled church and museum were dedicated in 1969. The church is used for concerts, weddings and special services. On the grounds is Breakthrough, a monumental outdoor sculpture crafted by Churchill's granddaughter, artist Edwina Sandys, from sections of the Berlin Wall.

Anglophiles also get their fix at the Loganberry Inn, a themed B&B just down the street. Memorabilia there recalls the 1996 visit of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who spoke at Westminster College. Occupants of the Winston Churchill bedroom, decorated with archival photos, can take after the charismatic politician by imbibing from the decanter of brandy (sorry, no cigars). On the bookshelf are titles like "The Wit and Wisdom of Winston Churchill."

Fulton is 100 miles west of St. Louis and 150 miles east of Kansas City. ■

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Images of the prettiest streets in Spain



The junction of Gran Vía and Calle Alcalá in Madrid



Paseo del Borne in Palma de Mallorca



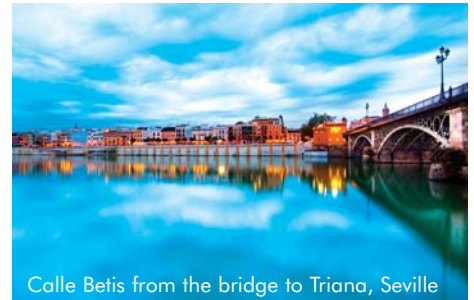
Rua do Franco in Santiago de Compostela

Have your camera ready as we will reveal some of the country's most-loved streets. Some are modern and full of life, such as Gran Vía in Madrid. Others are a reflection of local culture, such as Calle de las Flores in Cordoba and Calle Betis in Seville. Then there are those that transport us to other eras, such as Rúa do Franco in Santiago de Compostela and Calle de San Agustín in San Cristóbal de La Laguna. Don't miss the opportunity to visit your favourite! ■

WWW.SPAIN.INFO/EN



Calle del Marques de Larios in Malaga



Calle Betis from the bridge to Triana, Seville



Calle de la Compania in Salamanca



Calle San Agustín in San Cristobal de La Laguna, Tenerife



Calle Balborraz in Zamora



Calle del Angel in Toledo



Carrera del Darro in Granada



Paseo de Gracia in Barcelona, with Casa Mila in the middle



Calleja de las Flores in Cordova

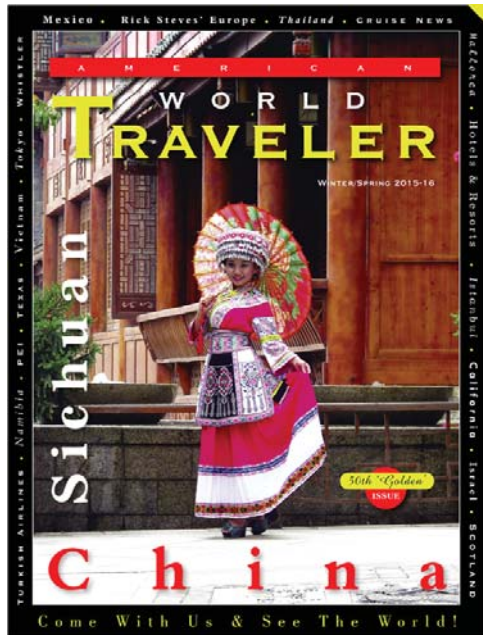
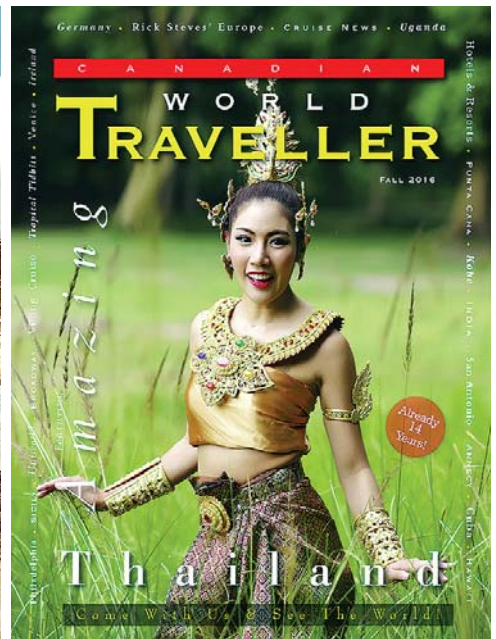
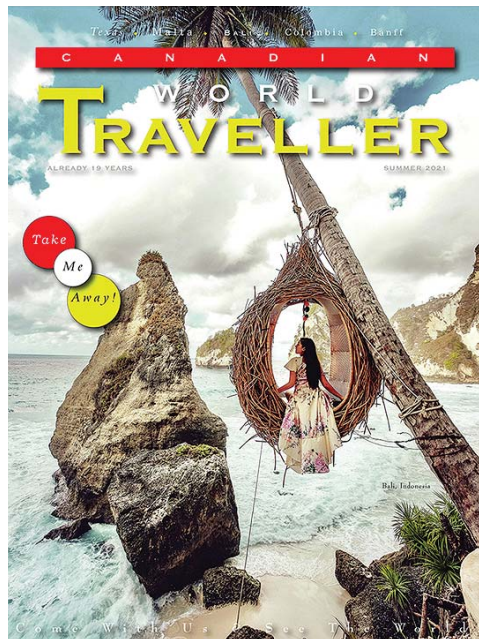
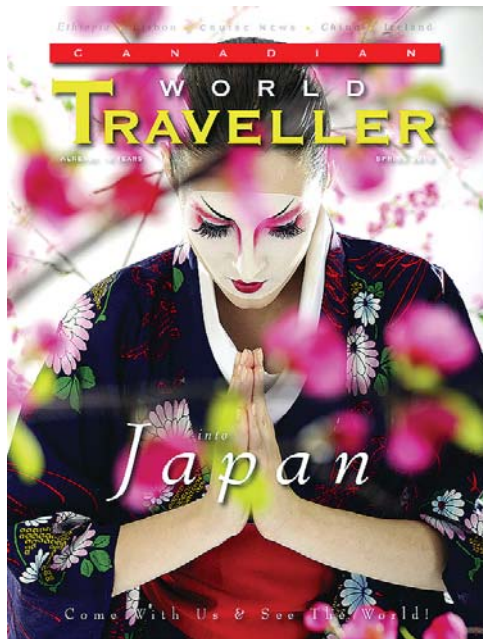
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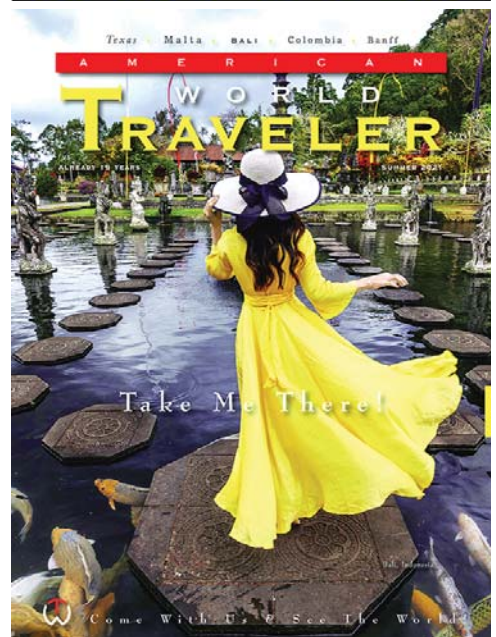
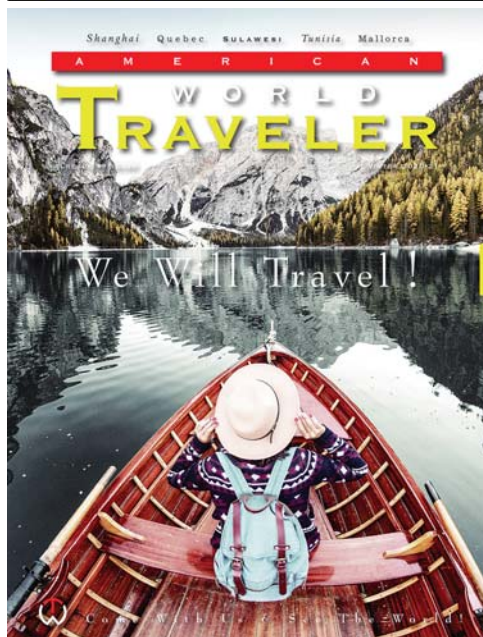
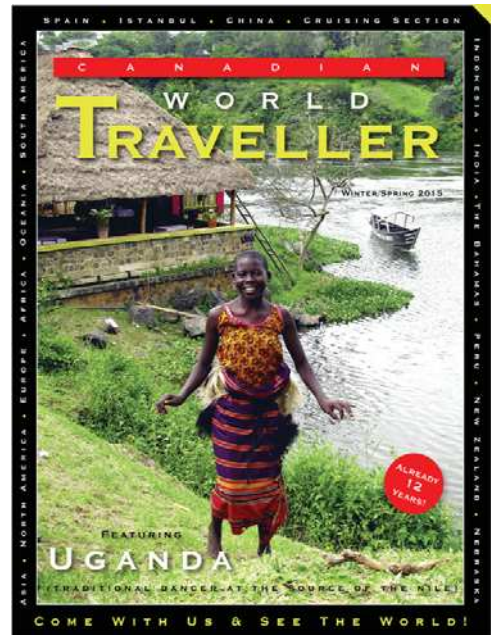
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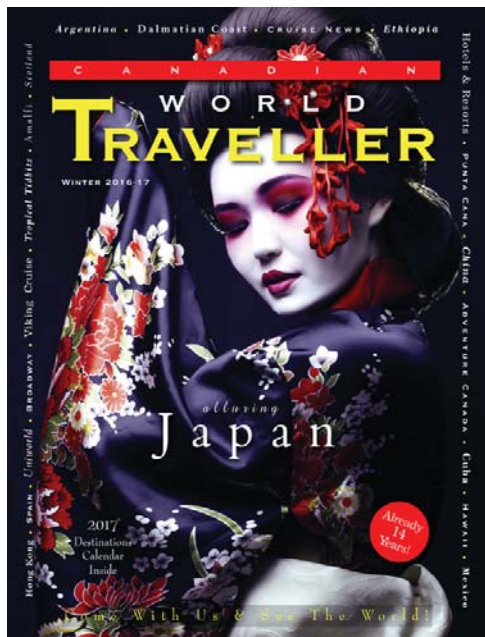
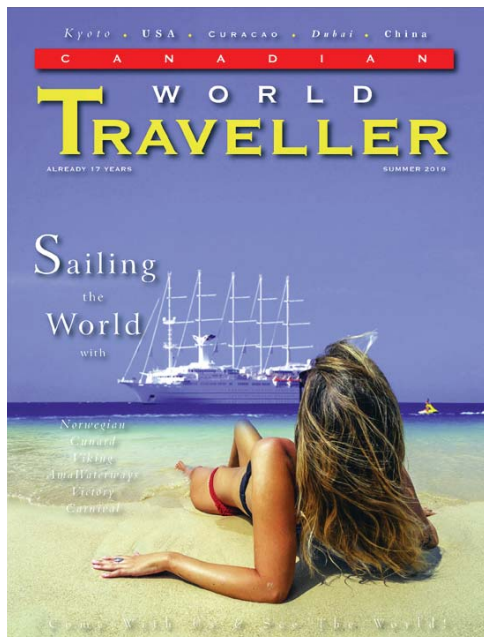
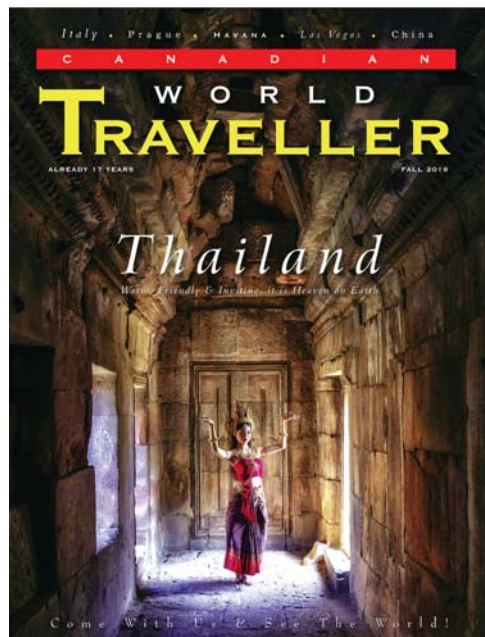
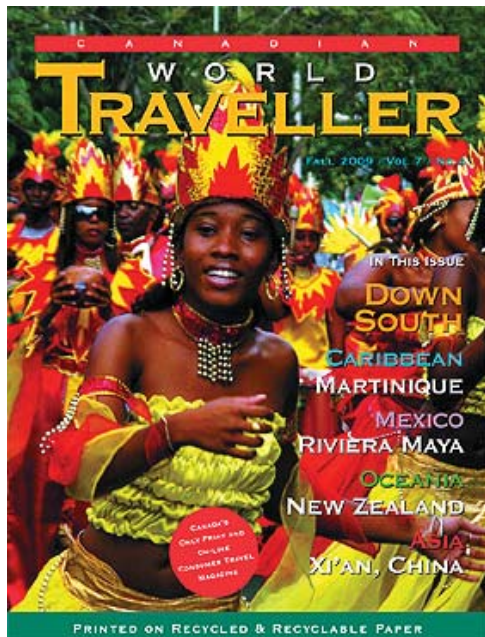
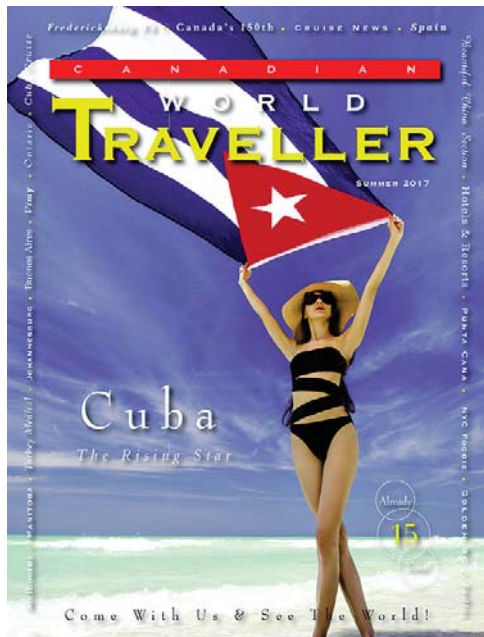
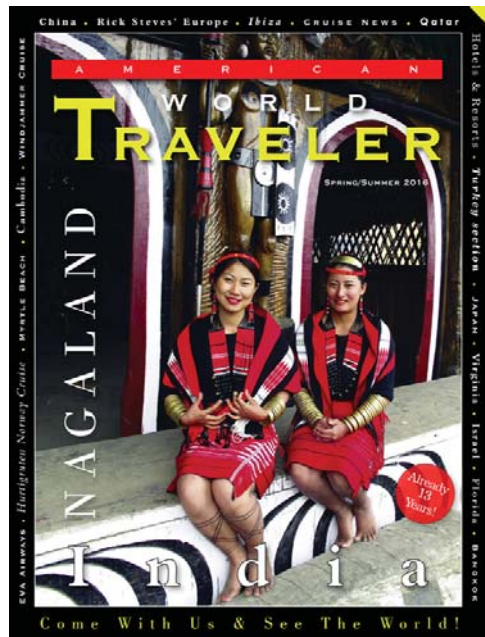
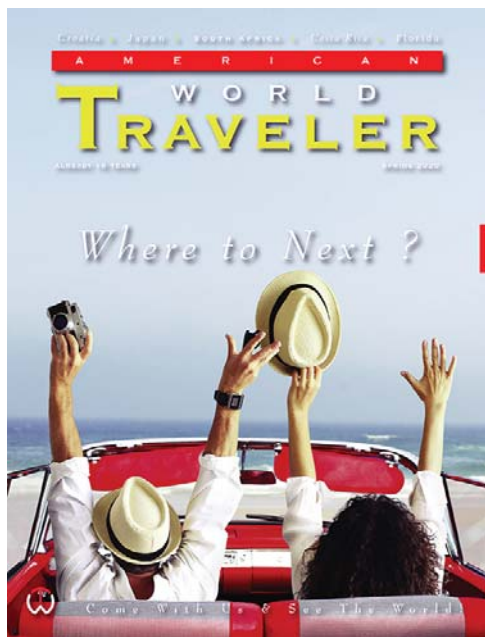
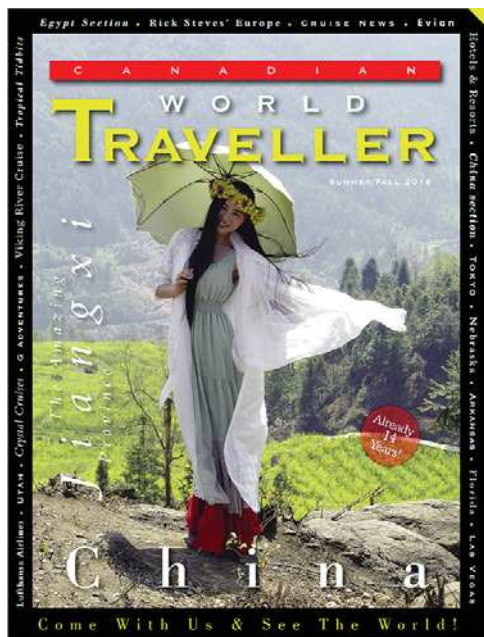
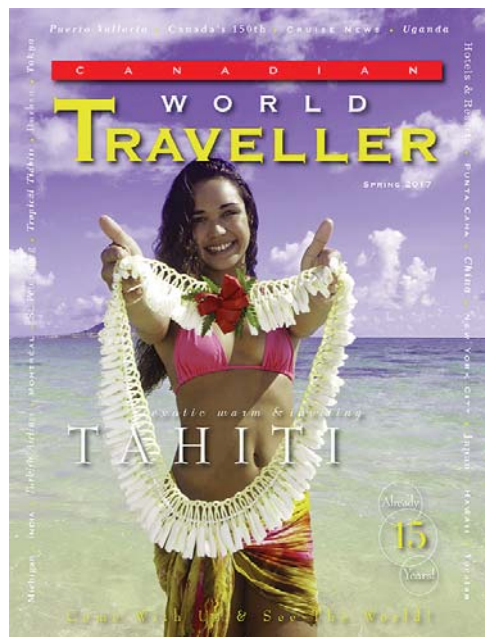
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Photography: Niagara Falls Canada Tourism

Falling for Niagara

by Anne-Marie MacLoughlin

Are mere 45 miles from Toronto, the Niagara region is host to one of the most visited attractions in Canada – the eponymous falls. Although not an official wonder of the world, the height and sheer volume of water thundering over the Horseshoe Falls places it firmly in the record books. More than 168,000 cubic metres of water flow over the falls per minute during the peak hours, plunging into a 167 foot deep pool. As tourism figures slowly recover there is much to behold in the more than 3000 acres that is Niagara parks.

Established in 1927, the park's mission is to conserve and promote the natural beauty of the region. And what beauty abounds, from the awe-inspiring falls themselves (in actuality 3 in total with the American and Bridal Veil falls on the US side) to the magnificent Niagara Parkway, 34 miles of splendour hugging the river from Fort Erie to Niagara on the Lake (NOTL to the locals!) And there is something for every travel-starved visitor.

It's been a minute since my last visit, fond memories becoming reality as we entered the main drag on our way to pick up the Hornblower Cruise for the ultimate in photo opps. Even on a weekday, Clifton Hill is a vibrant and colorful welcome. As we make our way down to the dock, the arcades soon give way to our first glimpse of the falls themselves. With our plastic ponchos securely fastened, cellphones at the ready, the boat carries us to the edge of all three waterfalls, the showstopper the 188 feet tall Horseshoe. And at 2200 feet wide the thundering wall of water dwarfs the not so little boat, those of us at the front enjoying an impromptu shower. A short trip from the dock lies the busy hub of Table Rock centre where the edge of the falls are so close you could almost reach out and touch them. This was our lucky day with not one but TWO rainbows forming in front of the bridge that's named for this natural phenomenon!

Next on the agenda, a leisurely drive along the parkway with its many points of interest. Between the falls to their point of origin in Queenston lies 7 miles of pristine parkland where you can golf, hike and see an actual whirlpool! The latter is a result of a 90 degree bend in the Niagara River; not for the faint-hearted, the Spanish Aero Car provides an aerial view 250 feet above the rapids. Not overly fond of heights, I chose to take pictures from the safety of the observation deck, the fall colors providing a warm contrast to the icy cold rapids.

As a year round destination, Niagara Falls is a must-see. Hiking on a summer day, leaf-peeping in the fall or a wintry wander around the Festival of Lights, you'll be falling for Niagara too. ■

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Come With Us & See The World!



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

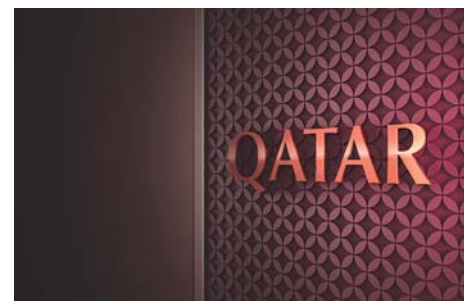
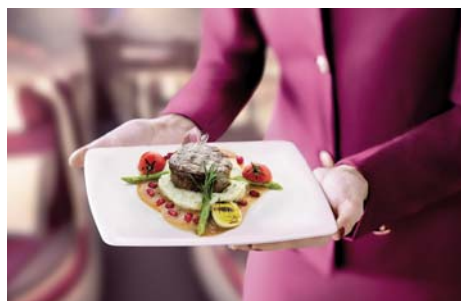
Once landed in Doha, I was equally blown away. Indeed, Doha itself has proven to be a significant tourism draw. The city is significantly smaller than Dubai and Abu Dhabi, which allows it to keep its slightly provincial feel. While travelers can still find modern high-end innovations, such as Doha Festival 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. ■

WWW.QATARAIRWAYS.COM





To Kokura, with Amazement!

Article and Photography by Steve Gillick

Travelers with a passion for history, traditional markets, photography, architecture, seafood, sake and fun, will easily fall in love with Kokura, a city in Kitakyushu (North Kyushu), in western Japan.

The Japanese expression, 'The Luck of Kokura', refers not only to the serendipitous discovery of this great city by travelers, but also to Kokura's double stroke of luck during the Second World War. Kokura City was the secondary target of the American atomic bomb attack on August 6, 1945. If the cloud cover over Hiroshima had been too dense, then Kokura, home of the Imperial Army's arsenal of weapons, would have been attacked. Still, the strategically located city was deemed to be the prime target for the second atomic bomb on August 9, 1945. On this day, the cloud cover over Kokura was too dense, and with the directive that the bomb had to be 'dropped visually', Nagasaki became the target. Kokura was spared a second time.

Nearly 80 years later, visitors find an amazing, modern city that lies on the bullet train route, 2 1/4 hours from Osaka, less than an

hour from Hiroshima, and about 2 hours from Nagasaki.

But the history of the city harkens back to 1569 when a castle was constructed by the Mori clan. Then in 1600, when the Tokugawa clan came to power (and established the Shogunate that lasted until 1868), the original castle was totally renovated. Fires destroyed most of the structure in the 19th century. The castle was fully restored in 1990. I will add that after visiting over a dozen castles in Japan, the displays inside Kokura Castle are amongst the best.



And it's easy to get to the castle from the train station. Just follow the English signs to the Kokura Castle Exit! The short walk takes visitors to the bridges over the Murasaki River, home to a series of intriguing pasta-headed people statues, the large Kokura city sign, and views of the colourful and architecturally creative buildings along Riverwalk Kitakyushu.

Then, a walk through Katsuyama Park (one of the main venues for spring Cherry Blossom viewing), leads to Kokura Castle, with four floors of exhibits plus an observation level. Aside from the displays covering the castle's fascinating history, there are two that deserve mention.

One exhibit is comprised of a series of dioramas that feature hundreds of vividly outfitted characters depicting daily life and festivals in the castle town. Photos are allowed!

Another exhibit centers on the historic duel between Miyamoto Musashi, the legendary philosopher-warrior (who lived in Kokura for a time), and Sasaki Kojiro. The contest took place on the nearby island of Ganryujima. Visitors can even pose as Musashi's wooden sword is about to strike them! And just a note



that the Castle Garden with its small wooden bridge, sculpted trees, and beautiful scenery, is also worth a visit.

Afterward, the 100 year old Tanga Market is the perfect place for lunch. Visitors can stroll by the seafood and vegetable displays, chat with the vendors, and devour fresh, savoury fish cakes, or ultra-fresh sushi or sashimi, while standing on the spot, or packaged and brought back to the hotel.

And visitors have a great opportunity to imbibe the culture of the Kakuuchi!

Pronounced "Kakoo Oochi", this unique type of drinking establishment first appeared in Kitakyushu before spreading throughout the country. At Akakabe Saketen, an 80-year old traditional Kakuuchi located on the main



market alleyway, Toshiaki Morino explained that at the turn of the century, steelworkers laboured on a 24-hour shift system. Those who completed the night shift needed a place to gather and relax with a drink, but the sake stores only sold bottles. The practice evolved for the stores to sell drinks of sake, sometimes with light snacks, in a casual, standing-only atmosphere to ensure a quick client turnover. And to honour this tradition, we sampled three different sakes, along with snack of 'saba no nukadaki', a local dish of mackerel stewed in miso. So good!

Then just outside the main market, we visited Hayashida Saketen, a contemporary Kakuuchi, where the very personable Naoko Hayashida and her mom served up sake samples and spoke about the family brewery, founded in 1837.



After a quick rest at our business hotel (there are many within walking distance of the train station), we headed to Shubo Musashi for a dinner. Our selections included Yellowtail sashimi, Ikura (salmon egg), deep-fried Oyster, tsukuneh (yakitori style minced chicken), deep-fried Fugu (puffer fish, which is very popular in Western Japan), and Octopus tempura.

The entire afternoon was a delicious way to conclude a very rewarding day, exploring and interacting with Kokura. This is definitely a destination to include on a first or second visit-to-Japan itinerary. ■

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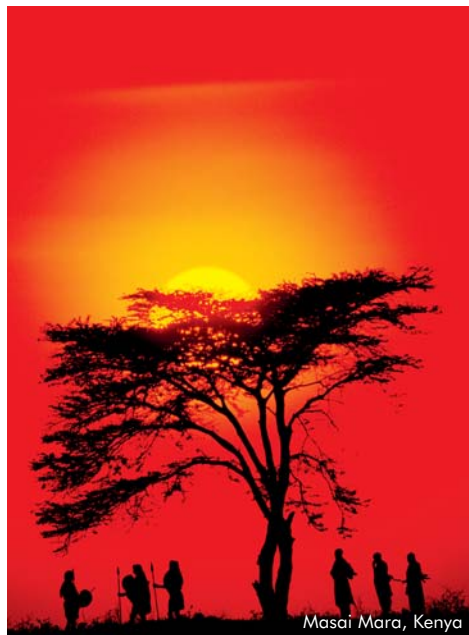
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Rice Fields, Ubud, Indonesia



Dim Sum, Hong Kong



Skiing, the French Alps

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?



33

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!

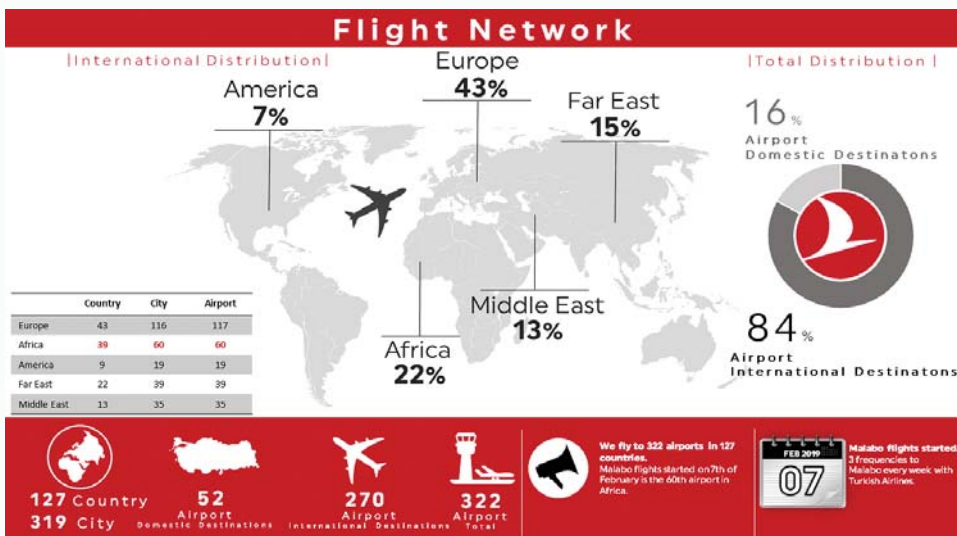
Their aircraft include A330s, A340s, B777s, B737-800s and B727-800s, all well maintained and laid-out with the customer in mind. Each section is designed with creature comforts taking front and centre. The seats throughout the plane are comfortable and the facilities are kept impeccably clean and

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



The beaches are beckoning

Sun holidays are back, baby! With so many islands dropping their COVID protocols, and so many pandemic weary folks on a mission for revenge travel, the Caribbean has seen an incredible surge in demand the past few months. Bookings for winter escapes are through the roof. And who wouldn't want to wash away the challenges of the past two years in a surreal aqua sea? Though the airlines have had their own challenges keeping up with demand, they are beginning to bounce back into some semblance of normalcy, and some have added new routes to the sun. British Airways has just included Aruba to their roster, and American Airlines is now flying direct from Miami to Anguilla. (Previously you would have to take a ferry or a small plane charter flight from St. Maarten.) So, grab your flip flops, and let's go!



<https://worldtraveler.travel> - Already 21 Years!

Best festivals are back!

Some of my best memories of island stays are when I've had the opportunity to participate in their gala celebrations when it appears as if the entire nation comes out for a boisterous street party with colorful parades. So, I am happy to say that the many traditional annual festivals that had to be postponed have returned or will be returning this coming year. Barbados has already celebrated a successful Crop Over this summer, and most islands that celebrate Carnival will do so again around Easter. "Junkanoo"- The Bahamas' answer to Carnival- will be back bigger and better than ever as well. Often Junkanoo style celebrations include stilt walkers (moko jumbies), and horn blowers are big, too, and there are always colorful costumes and lively parades with the largest blow-outs always around the Christmas holidays.



Saba's "Sea & Learn" returns

The lush, pristine little emerald gumdrop island of Saba was delighted to announce the return of its month-long "Sea & Learn" event in October after two years' absence. Going into its 20th year, this pioneering program invites locals and visitors alike to take a deep dive into understanding the fragility of the natural environment- on land and under the sea. In-depth workshops, courses, and activities include world class instruction by leading professionals who embrace ecological stewardship. There are activities for all ages. Visit: www.seaandlearn.org

Curacao Sandals Royal opens with a bang!

Though I was sad to see the end of an era when the legendary Santa Barbara Beach





Resort gave way to the construction of the new Sandals Royal Curacao (I have a gazillion happy memories of spending time there over the years) I was happy to see the replacement has greatly elevated the offerings. Christened last summer with a gala grand opening, they even had their own carnival, this Sandals couple-only all-inclusive ensures indulgence abounds at every turn. Newly minted Love Nest luxury suites, butler service, private pools, swim-out suites, and lots of deep soaking tubs add to the allure, and many firsts for the brand on the amenity front are found there, too. Complimentary mini-Coopers for high level room guests, a new two-tier infinity pool for all, and Sandals' first-ever off-site dining program, called 'Island Inclusive' that invites guests to enjoy eight partner restaurants off-property. Visit: www.sandals.com/curacao



Aruba's long table event sets record for charity donations

The highly anticipated return of the 1,000 ft. long table dinner that seats 1,000 guests at once to support local charities was an immense success. In fact, this year's "LongTableAruba" was a record-breaking event. Sponsored by Wind Creek Aruba in partnership with Renaissance Aruba, guests enjoyed a gourmet meal under the tropical stars along the marina. This year, they held a video competition for potential recipients - non-profits and causes- to state their case to receive the grand prize of \$40,000 Aruba's Animal Welfare Alliance won the video contest and the grand prize, and five worthy semi-finalists were also awarded \$10,000 each. It was the most money awarded in the event's history.

Visit: www.facebook.com/LongTableAruba

Best beach read for your Caribbean bucket list

I can't think of a better book to read while lounging on white sand beach by aqua waves than this great new compilation 100 Things to Do in the Caribbean Before You Die. Thoughtfully curated and beautifully written by fellow travel writer and Caribbean expert Bob Curley, you'll become enlightened about many adventures throughout the islands that you never even knew you wanted to do. From swimming with pigs in the Bahamas to drinking rum at a 400-year-old distillery in Grenada, or joining the party at Trinidad's wild Carnival celebration, he's been there and done that. And though I have also done many of these things, I see many more I want to do in the future. Guess I'll have to live a longer life... or get a bigger bucket! To order, visit:

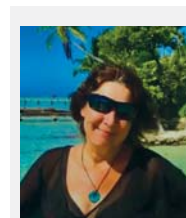
www.facebook.com/100ThingsCaribbean

Learn how to charter a boat to explore the Caribbean

Bob Curley has also been busy on another project that will help your seafaring bucket list dreams come true. He's mapped out all the ins and outs of chartering a boat to explore the wonders of the Caribbean. You need not have a captain's license to charter a crewed monohull, catamaran, sailboat,

motorboat or even a yacht. And when you compare the cost to a typical hotel stay, you'll find you can holiday even longer for less. Even well-seasoned sailors and certified captains will benefit from this online course hosted by the American Sailing Association. It examines important topics like types of vessels to charter, secret mooring spots, best ports of call, planning an itinerary, provisioning your vessel, and much more. Visit:

<https://asa.com/webinars/the-caribbean/>



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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This Photo: Celebrity Ascent

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Sail The World!



Princess Cruises Readies for Full Japan Season in 2023, Exclusive Princess MedallionClass Service comes to Japan

Following the recent decision by the Japanese government to allow the return of international cruise ships to the country, Princess Cruises has announced it will begin homeport sailing in Japan starting March 15, 2023, giving guests in the region the opportunity to enjoy the effortless, personalized Princess MedallionClass experience for the first time.

Japanese-built Diamond Princess returns to celebrate the 10th anniversary of sailing from Tokyo (Yokohama) and Kobe starting March 15 with a nine-day sailing roundtrip from Tokyo. The ship - designed exclusively with the destination in mind - will call to 38 destinations in four countries on 43 unique itineraries and 57 departures, ranging from 5- to 19-days. ■

WWW.PRINCESS.COM



CroisiEurope 2023 Brochure

After a promising return to cruising in 2022, CroisiEurope's team has worked to provide even more variety in their 2023 offerings. Discover all of the cruises, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, in this new 2023 brochure.

There you will find 170 pages covering 2023 sea and coastal cruises, river cruises, canal cruises, theme cruises, far-off and exotic destinations.

CroisiEurope offers more variety on the world's seas, rivers and canals and a wide range of escapes along the water, no matter the preferences.

The art of living and culture are still at the forefront on CroisiEurope's cruises, as is gastronomic excellence, never sacrificing quality while providing the best value in River Cruising. ■

WWW.CROISIEUROPE.TRAVEL/EN/



SeaDream Yacht Club Returns to Scandinavia and Northern Europe in 2025

SeaDream Yacht Club has announced that the luxury yachting line will return to Scandinavia and Northern Europe in summer 2025 with SeaDream II. The intimate, modernized yacht will embark on 14 memorable voyages from May through

August 2025 and call on a total of 46 individual ports on seven- to 11-night itineraries. Guests will enjoy longer summer days and the midnight sun to take in these breathtaking destinations with late-night and midnight departures on all voyages.

Travelers can also choose among four voyages, 10-night itineraries in June and seven-night itineraries in July, that spotlight some of the most quaint and picturesque villages and breathtaking fjord lands of Norway. Guests visit off-the-beaten-path destinations where larger vessels cannot reach. ■

WWW.SEADREAM.COM

MSC Cruises Takes Delivery of New Flagship, Fun-Filled MSC Seascapes



New flagship to feature a wealth of outdoor spaces, perfect for an escape to the Caribbean

Second new cruise ship to join brand in 2022, brings fleet to 21 ships

MSC Seascapes to feature some of the latest and most advanced environmental technologies currently available at sea, confirming the Line's longstanding commitment to sustainability

Recently, MSC Cruises officially took delivery of its new fun-filled flagship, the striking MSC Seascapes – the largest cruise ship to be built in Italy.

The MSC Seascapes sailed to Miami for an inaugural season in the Caribbean. The ship, with her iconic design, long list of fantastic features and nearly 13,000 m2 of outdoor space is particularly well-suited for the region's warm and sunny weather. MSC Seascapes will be the second Seaside EVO class ship to enter MSC Cruises' fleet, and the fourth in the line's highly innovative Seaside class, which has been redefining guests' expectations for Caribbean cruising since MSC Seaside first launched in Miami in 2017. MSC Seascapes is a testament of the Line's dedication to offer guests an enhanced experience with every new ship that joins the fleet. With revisited entertainment offerings, the latest technology and design, as well as all the favourite features that make the Seaside class special, MSC Seascapes promises a unique trip for guests. ■

WWW.MSCCRUISES.COM



Celebrity Cruises Unveils 24-25 Season



Celebrity Cruises has recently announced its 2024-2025 sailing season – it's most ambitious offering yet. Majestic glaciers, summer festivals in Japan, the pyramids of Egypt, and the rich culinary offerings of the Spice Route from Mumbai, India to Singapore are among the offerings as Celebrity sails to more than 300 destinations across all seven continents.

Top Highlights:

Newest ship, Ascent, sets sail:

Launching in late 2023, travelers will have an opportunity to experience the newest Edge Series ship in 2024, as it kicks off its inaugural European season.

New ports and revolutionized ship, Millennium:

The fully revolutionized Celebrity Millennium will kick off the Asia season in Summer 2024 with homeport in Tokyo and iconic itineraries like the 12-night Best of Japan. New ports include: Hanoi, Vietnam; Bangkok and Phuket, Thailand; Penang, Malaysia; Bali, Indonesia; Mumbai, India; and more.

Newly launched Celebrity Apex replaces Silhouette with itineraries to Scandinavia:

Transporting guests to some of the world's most jaw-dropping sights, the modern ship will offer 12-night Norwegian Fjord & Arctic Circle cruises.

New ports in the Fiji Islands:

In 2024, guests can experience new ports in Samoa, Fiji Islands, American Samoa and Tonga through cruises that depart from Australia and New Zealand. ■

WWW.CELEBRITYCRUISES.COM

Viking's Newest Ocean Ship Named in Los Angeles by NASA Astronaut & Aquanaut Nicole Stott



Viking® has recently named its newest ocean ship, the Viking Neptune, with a celebration in Los Angeles. As part of the event, the ship's ceremonial godmother, Nicole Stott, retired NASA astronaut, aquanaut and artist, offered a blessing of good fortune and safe sailing for the ship—a maritime tradition that dates back thousands of years. The Viking Neptune arrived in Los Angeles early in the morning on January 8 and departed for Honolulu following the naming ceremony.

The ship is currently sailing the 2022-2023 Viking World Cruise, an epic voyage from Fort Lauderdale to London that spans 138-days, 28 countries and 57 ports, with overnight stays in 11 cities. The naming of the Viking Neptune also comes at a time of record sales for Viking, with the launch of Viking's new 25th Anniversary Sale on January 1 resulting in the highest number of bookings in one week in the company's history.

In keeping with the naming tradition, during the ceremony Nicole used a historic Viking broad axe to cut a ribbon that allowed a bottle of Norwegian aquavit to break on the ship's hull. Prior to the ribbon cutting, the axe was presented to Nicole by Sissel Kyrkjebø, one of the world's leading crossover sopranos and godmother of the Viking Jupiter, who used it when naming her ship in January 2020. Event guests also enjoyed performances from Sissel and Norwegian violinist Tor Jaran Apold.

The Viking Neptune is the newest ship in Viking's award-winning ocean fleet of identical sister ships, which also includes the Viking Star®, the Sea, the Sky, the Orion, the Jupiter, the Venus, and the Mars. In April, Viking will also welcome another new ocean ship, the Viking Saturn®. ■

WWW.VIKING.COM

Aurora Expeditions' Sylvia Earle Departs for Antarctica



Award-winning expedition travel company Aurora Expeditions' second purpose-built small ship, Sylvia Earle, departed on her inaugural voyage from Ushuaia, Argentina on December 10, 2022, heading to Antarctica.

Chief Executive Officer, Michael Heath is on board the Sylvia Earle along with around 120 passengers on this 12-day Spirit of Antarctica expedition.

"We are excited to be leaving Ushuaia behind us and sailing to Antarctica on the Sylvia Earle, as she explores the white continent for the first time," says Heath. "She is looking amazing and performing well."

The Sylvia Earle features the Ulstein X-BOW, a revolutionary inverted bow design, for sailing across tempestuous waters creating smoother and faster crossings which helps increase the passenger comfort and importantly, reducing fuel consumption. Public spaces include multiple restaurants and bars, social relaxation and wellness areas, an outdoor heated swimming pool and Jacuzzis, a gym, sauna, a library, lounge, lecture theatre, and expansive decks offering panoramic views of wilderness and wildlife, making it the ideal 'base camp' for exploring.

The Sylvia Earle will operate nine voyages in Antarctica this season before heading to Costa Rica and the Panama Canal in April 2023. ■

WWW.AURORAEXPEDITIONS.COM.AU

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All Hail Neptune - Viking's Newest Ocean Ship

by Michael Morcos, photos courtesy of Viking

One of the flagships of Viking cruises took to the sea and became yet another Viking work of art. An update or two, but in essence the Viking Neptune is identical to its other seven sister ocean ships. Of the many trips offered, this itinerary, the 'Iconic Mediterranean' heads off to sea in the slow season, a time when there are less tourists and, being in early December, we would enjoy Christmas markets all along the Italian, French and Spanish shores.

In this part one of a two-part article we will focus on the Neptune itself, with its amenities, shows, food and services and will devote the next story to the many amazing seven day cruise that brought us from Rome

(Civitavecchia) to the Catalan shores and excursion destinations including Florence, Monaco and Barcelona.

Neptune the planet

New Viking ships have been named after planets in our solar system, and this time around it's the Neptune, which came shortly after the 'Mars' which set sail soon and proceeds the 'Jupiter' which will be launched in 2023.

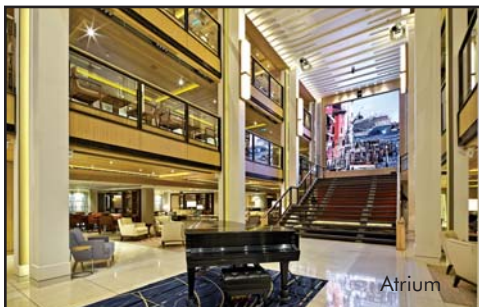
Neptune the vessel

Like it's sister ships, Neptune has a maximum capacity of 930 passengers, and is consid-

ered small when compared to other mass market ships that hold thousands of guests, (some up to 6,000). This made our trip more pleasurable, as there was very little to no waiting times for embarking/disembarking, and many restaurants and all other activities were always available and accessible. This magnificent ship had plenty of public spaces and being restricted to under 1000, we thought this sailing was not fully booked but found it was near capacity.

Design and comfort

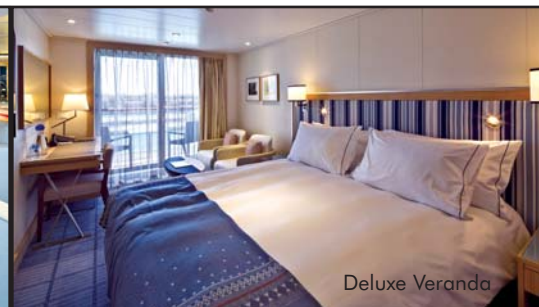
For the design, nothing is randomly placed, but rather each part of the ship is well planned, even the staircases are reproduc-



Atrium



Explorers Lounge



Deluxe Veranda

tions of the colorful and historic Bayeux tapestry and in the elevators there were hidden mystical Troll figures in the panels. All this made the Viking Neptune special, unique, and made for great conversation starters. The exterior views of the Viking are well balanced and quite pleasing with beautiful, smooth lines. This look flows into the ship's interior. The first thing a passenger would notice when entering the ship is the atrium and the overall 'less is more' Scandinavian style. There is plenty to enjoy with wonderful art and sculptures throughout the ship and it is as lovely to the eyes and soothing to the mind as you can imagine. One can relax in all corners of this vessel without being bombarded with excesses.

Staterooms and suites

In keeping with the Nordic design, our suite was stylish, well lit, very practical, and we felt comfortable for the full week. Our washroom was quite spacious considering it was on a ship and had plenty of room. Bi-daily room service by a dedicated professional cleaning staff was ideal and our stateroom was always looking and smelling fresh. The best part of our room had to be the private balcony, where we would spend many hours watching the great scenery drift on by.

Public spaces

As small a ship as it was, there was still plenty to explore. It took an entire week to finally find all the nooks and crannies and experience everything the Neptune had to offer. Our favorite was the Explores lounge on the upper deck in the bow of the ship, which covered two floors with lots of quiet corners for curling up with a book. The views from here were amazing and you could see for miles. Drinks and cocktails were served most hours of the day and there was live music at times as well.

There were other spaces as well, with a main pool both indoor and outdoor with a gigantic retractable glass roof and perfect for all weather bathing. There is the 'Living Room', a peaceful area by the atrium for socializing, and the Torshavn bar, for late night partying, drinks and dancing. Other spaces open to all passengers include the open aired Aquavit, found in the back of the ship with its wonder-

ful, heated infinity pool and was great for outdoor dining.

The Winter Garden with its fabulous Nordic inspired wooden columns and spiral ceiling is a great detail, and the spa found on the Viking Neptune is unique and a delight to visit. It consists of a large heated indoor pool with powerful jets as well as steam rooms, a small plug pool and a below zero snow grotto for that invigorating Scandinavian experience.

For those who want to keep in shape, there is a full gym to help burn off those excess calories. On the top deck there are outdoor exercise machines, golf putting greens and shuffle boards.

And for those nighttime performances, shows and daytime lectures and workshops there is the main theatre on the bottom floor that is spacious and, as with the rest of the ship, well designed.

Variety of dining options

One of the greatest joys of sailing is the choice of food. It's a good thing there is a gym! The Neptune had an ample choice, with so many choices that we never got tired of the choices. The World Café located on the upper level was most travelers favorite as there were floor to ceiling glass windows for great views of the surroundings. Passengers can even sit outdoors on the balconies. The World café is buffet style with three settings a day. With a multitude of options, there was something for every palate, from freshly prepared meat and fish dishes to vegetarian plates and even vegan choices; it was always mouth-watering.

Other options included the Pool Grill that serves great burgers, while at Mamsen's they serve late breakfasts and snacks and delectable pastry and cakes. Afternoon tea and snacks are served daily at the Winter Garden and my routine on many nights was the visit the Sushi bar for freshly made delights. Chefs on the spot prepared these exquisite delights and I just could not get enough!

'The Restaurant', yes, that is its name is an enormous space but did not feel like it. There are partitions for noise and privacy, and it

offers a sit down service open for breakfast and suppers with many choices via menu and, as on all Viking cruises, beer, wine and soft drinks are included. Guests have an extensive wine list to pick from at an added cost.

For something different, there is Manfredi's and The Chef's Table. These two restaurants are smaller and quite intimate. Both need reservations. Manfredi's is an Italian style cuisine, while the Chef's Table has a rotating theme of international dishes.

For refreshments, bars are found throughout the ship and on most public floors. Getting a drink is very easy and made easier by waiters who were always available. We had the Silver Sprints package which allowed us unlimited soft drinks, cocktails, and premium spirits.

Shops

What would a trip be without bringing home gifts and souvenirs? Viking ships offer a nice collection of boutiques and specialty shops for everything from bathing suits to chocolate bars, and all tax free. There were also shops offering brand name perfumes, fine jewelry, and designer clothing.

Wonderful staff

The ship's staff was always smiling and ready to assist us. Anywhere and everywhere the crew, from the Captain and his team down through the program director, to the kitchen staff, the maintenance personal, all made our trip that much more pleasant. As always, one of the best parts of the cruising experience.

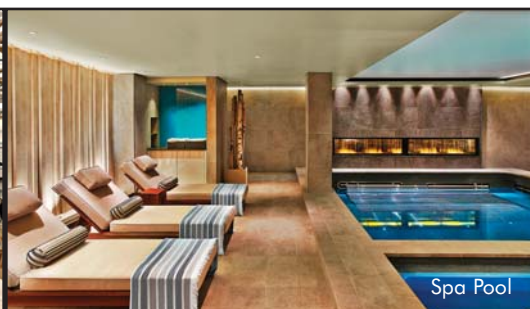
Destinations and tours

Please join us again in our next issue as the adventure beings. We will explore the many wonderful 'Iconic Mediterranean' destinations and ports on the Neptune's itinerary. Starting in the beautiful and tranquil coastal city of Civitavecchia (Rome) and ending in amazing Barcelona with many other special places in Italy and France. Sail with you soon! ■

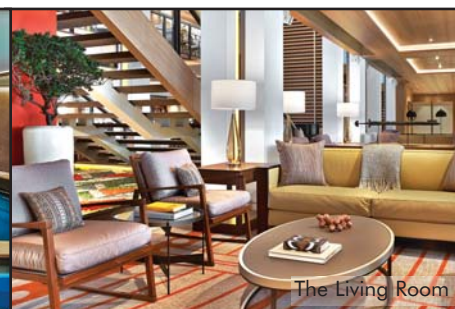
WWW.VIKING.COM



Winter Garden



Spa Pool



The Living Room



Five Reasons to Cruise on the Discovery Princess

A shipboard review by Nicholas Kontis

In early September, my wife and I joined a seven-day sailing from Seattle to Alaska on the Discovery Princess, last of the Royal class ships of the Princess Cruises. Elegant and comfortable, we found it much to our liking.

Launched in the spring of 2022, the Discovery Princess features innovated technology and a streamlined blueprint with a voguish style. With its stellar service and grand Piazza Atrium, customary to all Royal-class ships, the Discovery provides an exemplary experience. These are some highlights:

The crew

I always make friends with crew members, as I'll spend a fair amount of time mingling on the ship. At every turn on this Alaska vacation, I was greeted by happy, friendly, always-smiling staff, many from the Philippines, ready to cater to my every whim. Many of the crew would engage me with stories about their favorite journeys, hidden areas of the ship, the best times to dine, and their lives back home. The crew truly makes an onboard experience precious. The attitude and overall professionalism of all Princess associates was impeccable.

The captain

Most ship captains are friendly with guests, but few are humble celebrities. As Covid-19 infested the world in February 2020, Captain Gennaro Arma traversed uncharted waters at the helm of the Diamond Princess. Born in Sorrento, Italy, the imposing Arma has been with the Princess Cruises for 25 years.

"I go to all parts of the ship every day to see how our crew is doing," he told me. "You will see that our crew members are happy. We have people who have worked for us as long as 40 years. We treat our team members



equally. We are a family. It's part of the Princess philosophy: They have time to relax and have their own gym, pool, bar, and even their own pizzeria."

Epicurean delights

Speaking of pizza, the Italian culinary favorite is featured at just one of the seven onboard restaurants. I dined twice at Gigi's Pizzeria, located midship on Deck 7. On every other occasion, it took a lot of courage for me to pass without stopping for a bubbling, wood-fired Neapolitan pizza or calzone. The open kitchen, where chefs perform through the lunch hours, is an endless temptation.

World Fresh Marketplace on Deck 16 is the buffet option, including an omelet station for breakfast. You'll find a wide selection of lunch and dinner foods, including Indian, Middle Eastern, Asian, Mexican, fresh seafood, vegetarian, fried chicken and roast beef.

Five specialty restaurants are all reasonably priced. The Crown Grill on Deck 7 is the place for steak and lobster. The surf and turf was so good, we dined here twice at just \$29 per person. Chefs prepare made-to-order dishes in an open kitchen. Succulent steaks, Maine lobster tails and New Zealand rack of lamb are served with an assortment of salts, including applewood-smoked and Hawaiian black salt. Other entrees, served family-style by request, include black tiger prawns, beef tartare, jumbo sea scallops and Chilean sea bass. Our server wisely suggested that my wife and I save room for dessert: a warm chocolate mousse trifle and salted caramel crème brûlée cheesecake.

Also on Deck 7 is a French option, Bistro Sur La Mer, where Michelin-acclaimed chef Emmanuel Renaut serves a three-course menu for \$29. You might start with lobster bisque, garnished with lobster, scallops and mussels, or my favorite, crispy escargot in panko bread crumbs. As a main course, my wife chose roasted jumbo scallops, perfectly charred. I opted for seared duck breast, pink and juicy with a black currant demi-glâce and sides of butter-braised carrots and creamy polenta. We enjoyed outstanding sea views with our dessert, a yeast cake in a light rum-babas syrup, topped with vanilla whipped cream.

Sabatini's Italian Trattoria, on Deck 5, features family-style Italian comfort food. Princess has more executive chefs hail from Italy than any other nation, and each of them brings regional family recipes from throughout Italy. A six-course meal (\$25) starts with zonzelle, a rustic bread stuffed with prosciutto, roasted tomato and bell pepper. A soup or salad may be followed by grilled lamb skewers with artichoke and black olive relish. For my fresh pasta, I opted for a classic seafood linguini. Family-style mains included eggplant parmigiana, veal marsala, sole piccata and rosemary chicken scallopine. The Crema al Caffè is delectably decadent, consisting of espresso crème brûlée and a star anise biscotti.

It's hard to beat a cultured meal at a casual gastropub like the Salty Dog. Meals here (\$18) begin with crunchy bread sticks, served with beer-cheddar fondue and flaked smoked salt. The menu comprises American classics such as lobster mac-and-cheese, fried calamari, burgers, fried chicken, grilled cheese and short ribs. Sweet offerings include strawberries and cream or chocolate pot de crème.

The Ocean Terrace Seafood Bar is a pay-as-you-dine, à la carte sushi bar, nestled midship on Deck 6. Open for lunch only, the small venue fills up fast—but it is worth the wait for the freshest sashimi and hand rolls. Look for the tuna lovers roll, the yellowtail roll, scallop rolls with Sriracha, eel, crab, shrimp and more.

Spa treatment

Cruise-ship spas are always nice retreats, but the Discovery Princess takes it up a notch. Within the spacious, Asian-themed Lotus Spa on Deck 5 is the Enclave Thermal Suite: Its hydrotherapy pool has cascading showers and soothing jets to provide a deep, tissue-like massage. Other frills include three steam and sauna rooms with various infused aromas and dynamic mood lighting. One of the sauna rooms is a cozy, detoxifying Turkish Hammam. Rejuvenating acupuncture, facials, Swedish and hot-stone massages are offered à la carte. A hair salon, nail bar, teeth-whitening stations, manicures and pedicures are available.



The deck plan

This is an easy ship to maneuver. Having sailed mostly smaller ships, I wondered if I might be overwhelmed by a larger vessel with 19 decks. But learning the layout of the ship was a breeze.

Everyone gravitates to midship and Decks 5, 6 and 7. Here is the three-deck-high Piazza Atrium, the ship's gourmet restaurants, entertainment spaces and shops. There's live music every afternoon and evening on Deck 5, where master mixologists craft creative cocktails at the Good Spirits at Sea bar. Also popular are the International Café, on Deck 5; Crooners Bar on Deck 6, and Bellini's, perched on an overhang to view the live music.

On Decks 16 and 17 are the aptly named Lido and Sun Decks. Here are the must-have pools, including the adults-only Retreat Pool; hot tubs, and a 300-square-foot LED screen for "Movies Under the Stars." These are served by a trio of walk-up, fast-food walk-up eateries, serving burgers, hot dogs and pizza, and The Mix cocktail bar.

The Discovery Princess, built by Italian ship-builder Fincantieri, departs from ports in Seattle, Los Angeles and Vancouver, sailing to Alaska, the sun-splashed Mexican Riviera, and the Hawaiian Islands. There are 1,346 crew members. Accommodating 3,660 passengers, the Discovery Princess ticks all the right boxes in creating an unforgettable sailing experience at an affordable price. ■

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The New Celebrity Beyond, sailing in comfort and style!

Article and photography by Michael Morcos

If I could sum up the Celebrity Beyond in few words, they would be “a true winner”. This is something that came to me just minutes after boarding this beautiful and modern ship. The Beyond was a delight on its own, as there was not much of a lineup and we embarked quickly, and with great anticipation and a huge smile we quickly made our way on board.

Having seen this beautiful ship and its sister ships in pictures and videos, I had some idea of what to expect, but nothing could be any more exciting than the first glance of the real Beyond. It is a vessel of grandeur. Upon entering, the main floor and its three-story high Grand Plaza stood in front of us, a really remarkable sight, after all this wasn't an office building or a mall but a steel and glass floating ship!

I can honestly say from my many years of sailing, this is not your grandfathers cruise ship! The industry has made many new and spectacular changes in the past two decades, and with every new generation of ships come plenty of new designs, technology, comforts, and modern fashionable luxuries. Celebrity has now raised the bar with its new era of ‘Edge’ class ships to a degree that the competition in its class just might have some catching up to do. Looking at her sister ships, the Encore and Apex, the Beyond is very similar at first glance and maybe even would say it is the same, but the Beyond is slightly bigger with an additional floor on top.

Public spaces

So much wonderful public space and still so little time. There is something for just about

everybody, including world class restaurants, lively bars, live performances, pools, gyms, opulent shops, casinos and an unbelievable amount of artwork adorning the ship, so much so that if all put together might rival some small museums.

Theatre

Of all the amazing public spaces on the Beyond, what stood out most to me was the main theater. I was taken away by the beautiful design and complex technical features that made the performances there truly magical and memorable. We would be treated to a couple of entertaining and well-polished shows that could rival any on Broadway or even Vegas! It was difficult to choose which show I liked best: Arte or the Stage Door, but were both great ways to end an evening. Add





to this, even more wonderful live entrainment at The Club and you have your fill of shows!

Food & Views

Gastronomy and eating-well go hand-in-hand on cruises. The Beyond will match and just might even surpass the palates of every guest. There is a wide assortment of restaurant choices and eating delights, so much so that on a one-week cruise, it would be impossible to visit all the dining venues. From steak-houses to seafood restaurants, an animated table show, to high class intimate restaurants, the Beyond serves it all!

Our favorite was the Fine Cut Steakhouse where we (thankfully) shared a huge and delicious Tomahawk steak with a wonderful red Cabernet-Sauvignon. The most popular and most visited eatery was the buffet style Oceanview Café, where you will find a colossal size room with just about anything your tummy desires throughout the three daily sittings, and even a little extra in those late hours of the night.



While at sea and surrounded by water, there is no lack of bathing options on the Beyond. With a central main pool, a gigantic and perfectly placed on the top deck, and various smaller pools, including many hot tubs, the choices are plentiful. It is a great place to catch the sun and ocean breeze while resting on fashionable and comfortable deck furniture. An alternative on those cool and rainy days is the handsome-looking domed indoor pool.

For me, ground zero was the Grand Plaza that centered on three floors of restaurants, bars, boutiques, and a colossal size chandelier. Lively at most times, this area gave me a compass on where everything else was on the ship.

Not to be missed is the Eden, a three-floor bar/restaurant at the bow of the ship that gave magnificent views of the sea and with so much space that there's never any problem finding seating. The Magic Carpet that serves as both a restaurant and an embarkation point is another point of interest.

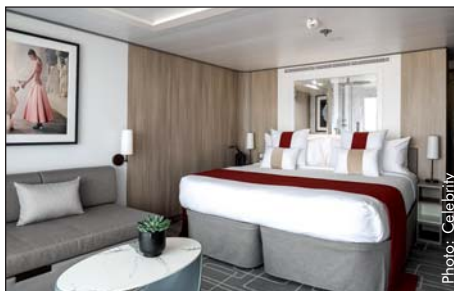
The usual, or should I say, the unusually large training facilities, included a well-equipped gym and many side rooms for fitness classes run by a trained and dedicated staff.

On the topic of unusual, there is an unusually small casino. Just might be the sign of the times where guests are now more interested in experiences rather than on gaming.

Staterooms

Pictures alone would not do justice to our accommodations. I was pleasantly surprised at the beauty and comforts of our stateroom, as they included many of the expected cruising standards but was also wonderfully decorated with a modern theme that stepping in brought an immediate sense of warmth and comfort.

Our room included an infinity balcony, and not being a big fan of these and being more used to full outdoor balconies, I did observe that the room took on a much greater sense of space. With the large two pane vertical windows, there certainly was more daylight entering the room, and while seated would have an unobstructed view to the outside. There was plenty of space for our belongings as well as an easy to use safe, a mini fridge, a charging



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station for all our devices and a great Wi-Fi signal no matter the position of the ship. The showers were perfect, well designed, clean, highly functional, with great hot water pressure and even environmentally friendly toiletries.

Environmentally friendly

Sure, enough the Beyond is more environmentally friendly than your average city's public works. I was astonished to find out that nothing more than clean filtered water is released off the ship, which means everything that serves thousands of guests and crew per day is recycled, packed and stored before being transported ashore to planned disposal facilities. The logistics are staggering, several tons of proceeded waste without a single morsel being lost and the Beyond does it to perfection.

Also respectful to the environment, Celebrity has done away with single use plastic bottles and replaced them with aluminum drinking cans. On a less appealing subject, human waste is first filtered, and then compressed, dried to something the size of a hockey puck which can then be discarded or even used as agricultural fertilizer. What will they think of next?

The Beyond is beyond expectations (I finally got to play with words), it is part art and part science and, in the end, they work in perfect harmony. Onwards and Beyond! ■

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Sailing Northeast Greenland and Svalbard

Article and photography by Nicholas Kontis

Travel is therapy, and I've attempted to take the treatment by visiting and acquainting myself with most corners of the world. My travels have taken me to over 100 countries, yet until recently, I somehow had not penetrated either polar region.

In July 2020, I booked a week-long, high-latitude adventure with Poseidon Expeditions to Norway's Svalbard archipelago. When Covid reared its ugly head, the pandemic curtailed all travel, leaving me pondering if I'd ever have an opportunity to join a polar exploration.

Two years later, I finally traveled to the world's northernmost permanent settlement: Longyearbyen, Svalbard, at 78 degrees North Latitude. It's the embarkation point for most



high Arctic polar trips with Poseidon. In August 2022, I would join a two-week expedition from Svalbard to eastern Greenland, following in the footsteps of Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen.

The Arctic contains some of the last untouched wilderness and the vastest open spaces on our planet. It's defined by colossal glaciers that shimmer in the summer's mid-night sun, lofty icebergs, picturesque fjords and mountains in polychromatic stripes. In Svalbard, polar bears outnumber humans.

Poseidon adventure

Since 1999, Poseidon Expeditions has forged routes to the Arctic, North Pole and Antarctica. Its voyages combine wanderlust — following the routes of such intrepid and enigmatic explorers as Amundsen, Peary, Scott and Shackelford — with onboard education and traverses of frigid, ice-blue waters in zodiacs and kayaks.

My wife and I were among 55 passengers, most of them global explorers from Germany. An unspoken excitement embraced all of us aboard the MV Sea Spirit: This was to be Poseidon's inaugural sailing to Greenland's east coast.

Our voyage began in Longyearbyen, following a flight with Norwegian Airlines from Oslo. Located about halfway between Norway's capital city and the North Pole, the town of a little more than 3,000 people is on the island of Spitsbergen in the Svalbard archipelago.

Longyearbyen has a handful of lodging options, restaurants and shops. A worthy destination is the Svalbard Museum, which chronicles the region's unique history. Local adventure shops sell high-quality Norwegian-made expedition gear and clothing, in case you've forgotten any essentials.



"When you've seen the world, there's always Greenland!" ... or so I've heard said by intrepid travelers. The world's largest island (after the continent of Australia), it is equal in size to France and Spain combined, yet it is also the world's most sparsely populated major island.

It took two days at sea — attending lectures but otherwise relaxing and preparing — before we arrived at Northeast Greenland National Park. We disembarked by zodiac craft to visit the Kong Oscar and Kejser Franz Josef fjord systems. Franz Josef, in particular, is known for its multi-layered mountains with rust-red, polychromatic stripes.

This biosphere reserve was established in 1974. It has no permanent human population, although around 50 scientists remain over the winter season at five marine stations. Most of the terrain consists of icecap, but in the summer months, as the snow melts, arctic flowers bloom over rugged landscapes.

Flora and fauna are fully protected. The park is home to 10,000 to 15,000 muskoxen, polar bears, Arctic hares and elusive Arctic foxes. Marine mammals include seals, walrus and multiple whale species, including beluga, narwhal, humpback, blue and sperm whales.

On zodiac landings, we expeditioners hiked into the world's largest protected area. Mountains that were ice-covered even in summer, fjords, icebergs and glaciers highlighted this Poseidon sailing. We were lucky: The unpredictability of weather and wildlife sightings allows for no landing guarantees.

Recalling Amundsen

Nearly a century has passed since the heroic age of polar exploration came to an end. Norway's Roald Amundsen defied the elements and made his way to the extremes of both poles. In 1926, Amundsen and his team of 15 men became the first party to reach the North Pole, not by ship, but by air. Two years later, on another air mission, Amundsen disappeared. His remains were never found.



There is a statue of the dauntless explorer back in Svalbard, at Ny-Alesund, a former coal-mining village reborn as the world's northernmost scientific research station. It's a curious place to visit today, with a dilapidated train that appears to be straight out of an amusement park. Now it's home to dozens of scientists from around the world (even including China) who conduct Arctic research.

Our last landing on Svalbard was at a headland known as Poolepynten. A group of lazy walrus seemed unbothered by our exploration party. The giant marine mammals lay still, almost without movement. Our guides created a line in the sand to remind us not to forge any nearer to the creatures, as the Arctic's ecological balance is highly precarious.

A 'Spirited' voyage

Built in 1991, its guest cabins and public spaces renovated in 2017, the six-deck Sea Spirit houses up to 114 passengers and 72 crew. Comfortably strengthened for travel in icy waters, the stylish vessel is a warming solace compared to the barren wilderness, icebergs and glaciers of the outdoor Arctic.

Cabins range in size from modest to the 463-square-foot owner's suite. Each has a private bathroom, small sofa, TV, refrigerator, safe, robes and slippers, as well as a window that looks to sea.

Guests spend a couple of hours each day in the spacious Oceanus Lounge attending lectures and recaps of the day's discoveries. Also aboard are a club lounge, bar, gym, library, hot tub, and outside viewing decks. Hospitality includes "welcome home" treats — warm towels and hot tea — to guests returning to the ship from zodiac excursions.

The expansive restaurant on the main deck offers open seating. That encourages everyone to get to know his fellow passengers at buffet-style breakfasts and lunches. Gourmet dinners are elaborate affairs; they begin with starters like grilled duck salad, followed by such main courses as veal marsala, chicken cordon bleu or seared ahi tuna. Desserts are delectable and there are vegetarian and Indian meal options. There is also a pre-meal happy hour with hors d'oeuvres and one formal captain's dinner, where you'll want to dress up.

Polar professionals

The stellar expedition team of international polar experts is led by Ida Olsson, whose earliest forays into Arctic climates were in the remote northernmost regions of her native Sweden. Now, as a lead guide for Poseidon, she directs glacial hikes and expeditions by kayak and snowmobile in both the Arctic and



Antarctic. In 2018, the fearless explorer led a group of women from Europe and the Middle East on skis from Svalbard to the North Pole.

Poseidon's Polar team undergoes a rigorous training program to ensure safety and provide education on the regions. Geologists, kayak masters, professional photographers, hiking guides, historians and ornithologists make this odyssey extraordinary.

Nature lovers find abundant birdlife in a range of pristine habitats, so an experienced birder is a must on most expedition sailings. Dutchman Ab Steenvoorden, another seasoned seafarer-ornithologist, kept us entertained and flaunted uncanny expertise for finding wildlife.

A few details

All flights to Svalbard go via mainland Norway. There are no direct flights from anywhere in the world to Svalbard. SAS (Scandinavian Airlines) and Norwegian Airlines fly from Oslo and Tromsø to the town of Longyearbyen.

The Arctic fascinates all those who visit, and no two voyages are the same. Expedition sailings are the best way to experience polar regions. Poseidon's small ship advantage allows for intimate encounters on and off the vessel, with two or three rapid daily landings.

The extreme northern regions of the earth are arguably its most fragile territories. Every expedition is unique, with shifting ice and animal sightings. As with any expedition, patience, tolerance and understanding are the keys to a successful journey. ■

[HTTPS://POSEIDONEXPEDITIONS.COM](https://poseidonexpeditions.com)





Bremerhaven: Climate House and ATLANTIC Hotel with viewing platform Sail City
© GNTB/Francesco Carovillano

Environment-friendly accommodations expanding in Germany

Being a responsible traveler increasingly becomes a guiding principle when vacationing in Germany. Overall, more than 3,000 certified accommodation providers and eateries have made sustainability a predominant aspect of the philosophy of running their establishment, no matter if it opens its doors to 10, 100, or 1,000 beds. Renewable energy increasingly has become the source of choice in Germany, meanwhile phasing out costly and uneconomic solutions of the past.

Hotels and accommodations are confronted with a new reality of how to balance solutions that are easy on the wallet and safe for the environment alike. Hospitality experts present doable, affordable solutions for city dwellings and family-run Bed & Breakfasts in remote areas.

The GNTB accumulated a detailed map that allows travelers to make an educated decision about where to spend their time and witness how solar power, wind energy, or hydropower effectively harnesses energy into electricity.

The map displays more than 1,500 accommodation providers who meet sustainability requirements at:
<https://www.germany.travel/en/feel-good/accommodation.html>.

The selection was made in collaboration with sustainability experts and tourism specialists in each German Federal State and provides a detailed list of certifications for responsible tourism.

Under the label Green Pearls, travelers can find "handpicked" eco-friendly resorts and restaurants using farm-to-table ingredients only. Certified accommodations include, for instance, Biohotels, which use 100% organic food and beverages.

The Umweltgütesiegel auf Alpenvereinshütten (Environmental seal of approval for Alpine Club huts) certifies remote mountain destinations, and Blaue Schwalbe (Blue Swallow) certifies especially ecologically-oriented guesthouses and inns in areas that are hard to reach by car or public transportation. ■

WWW.GERMANY.TRAVEL



New Tokyo Hotels in 2023

Bulgari Hotel Tokyo: Opening in 2023

Taking over the top seven floors of a new ultra-skyscraper, the Bulgari Tokyo will be located within walking distance of top sites in Tokyo, including Nihombashi, Ginza and Tokyo Station. In addition to its 98 guest rooms and the iconic staples of Bulgari Hotels (the Bulgari Bar, Il Ristorante, and Il Cioccolato), the Bulgari Spa will offer innovative treatments and a 82-foot-long indoor pool.

https://www.bulgarihotels.com/en_US/tokyo

Janu Tokyo: Opening 2023

Aman Resorts' sister brand, Janu, will open its affordable luxury hotel Janu Tokyo in 2023. Located within the same complex as the new Aman Residences Tokyo, Janu Tokyo will feature 120 luxury rooms overlooking a central square of lush greenery. The property also will be home to Japan's largest spa, six restaurants, a café and bars.

<https://www.janu.com/en/>

The Tokyo Kabukicho Tower: Opening 2023

Expected to be Japan's largest hotel and entertainment complex, the massive Tokyo Kabukicho Tower will open in spring 2023. It will feature two luxury hotels – the Hotel Groove Shinjuku and the Bellustar Tokyo. The complex will also feature the Bandai Namco amusement center, the concert venue Zepp Tokyo, two floors of live theaters and cinemas, and an entertainment food hall.

<https://tokyu-kabukicho-tower.jp/>



Peppermill Resort Spa Casino, Reno, Nevada

by Randy Mink

Exploring the public rooms and pool courtyard soon after my arrival at the Italy-themed Peppermill Resort Spa Casino in Reno, I was trying not to gawk. The place was so jaw-droppingly exquisite, however, that I couldn't help myself. It was like stepping into a grand palazzo and a Tuscan village all at the same time.

The 1,621-room Peppermill combines the glitz of a Nevada casino hotel with nods to the Old World. Inside and out, the resort's Italian flavor is always there to savor, from the rustic stonework and vast expanses of marble to statuary reminiscent of the Renaissance, from red-tile roofs and stately colonnades to murals of the idyllic countryside and great cities of Italy. The three-story Spa & Salon

Toscana, with 24 treatment rooms and an indoor pool, draws inspiration from the lavish baths of ancient Rome. Indeed, there's a sense of refinement not found at Reno's other casino hotels.

One night at Romanza, the Peppermill's Italian restaurant, I feasted on a decadently creamy chicken and gnocchi soup, a main course of meat-stuffed cannelloni smothered in cheese and bechamel sauce, and a basket of breads, all washed down by a bottle of house-made limoncello. Under a celestial ceiling of clouds and twinkly lights, a rotating ensemble of classical statues and a torch show every half hour created some drama. For dessert, I stopped at Biscotti's Cafe for salted caramel gelato. The hotel has 10 restaurants, including the swank Bimini's

Steakhouse and the brand-new Sabroso taqueria, plus 16 bars and lounges.

Stunning videos on several thousand high-definition screens provide captivating touches to the restaurants, casino floor and other public areas. The Peppermill's own videographers travel the globe to capture images of bucket-list destinations, including world capitals, African game reserves and North American national parks.

Travel photography also adorns the walls of guest rooms and hallways. Windows in my corner unit in the all-suite Tuscan Tower afforded views of both the pool deck and Sierra Nevada Mountains. Outfitted with marble-top furniture, plush floral carpeting and velvety brocade drapery, the spacious nest seemed more like a drawing room fit for an Italian countess than for a mere tourist like me. ■

WWW.PEPPERMILLRENO.COM



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
WWW.PUNTACANA.COM



EXPERIENCE LIFESTYLE

At Puntacana Resort & Club

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



Stay and Play at Lake House at Canandaigua

Article and photography by Jennifer Merrick

Located in the Finger Lakes region of New York State, an area famed for its glacially-sculpted landscape and wineries, Lake House at Canandaigua is already making a name for itself. Since opening in 2020, the property has swept accolades, including TripAdvisor Traveler's Choice Award, Condé Nast Traveler's Hot List and the prestigious No. 1 Resort Hotel in New York State in Travel + Leisure's World's Best Awards.

After our fall weekend getaway to The Lake House, it's easy to understand how they earned so much recognition in such a short time. It's luxury without pretension, a place to escape the stress of our hectic lives and truly relax.

Everything about the resort is conducive to R & R from the Adirondack chairs along the lakeshore and well-cared for gardens to the

exceptional Willowbrook Spa, superb food and the friendly attentive staff. Not to mention my indulgent to-do list that was so very different than the one I'm usually ticking off at home.

✓ Detox at Willowbrook Spa with a barrel sauna ritual

A barrel sauna may sound rustic, but not this one. First off, one end is glass with a close-up view of the lake. And it's not just about a sweat with a view, but an immersive ritual. The 60-minute experience features contrast bathing (hot-and-cold cycles that trigger beneficial hormones and neurotransmitters) and a botanical honey mask that left my skin feeling like new afterwards.

✓ Sample a few of the region's many vinos on a Finger Lakes wine tour.

✓ Relax on the balcony

Over 70 % of its 124 rooms have a lakeview, and our spacious balcony was the perfect perch to sit back and take it all in. The rooms themselves have a modern but warm decor with a specially-designed four-poster bed as a focal point. There were lots of thoughtful details and touches, including a pair of binoculars for an even closer look of the mesmerizing lake.

✓ Roast marshmallows for s'mores around the fire pits

✓ Bike to a brewery

The resort's bikes are free to use and it's a leisurely pedal to Young Lion or Twisted Rail Brewery.

✓ Dine at The Lakehouse's restaurants

At Rose Tavern, we feasted on their delectable dishes like 'Nigiri' Arancini (rice balls wrapped with wagyu beef), their signature roasted Sticky Brussel Sprouts and the melt-in-your-mouth JB's Parker House Rolls. At the more casual Sand Bar restaurant, we enjoyed seafood specialties in a beachy atmosphere.

Like always, my do-do list was left incomplete but this time with items like yoga class, pool time and cocktails in the library still unchecked. So, we'll just have to come back another time to tick them off. ■

WWW.LAKEHOUSECANANDAIGUA.COM



<https://worldtraveler.travel> - Already 21 Years!





Mount Dora, Florida: R & R at the Historic Lakeside Inn

by Jennifer Merrick

“If we are to do work of the highest excellence our periods of high activity must be followed by periods of rest,” reads the quote by former US president Calvin Coolidge on a plaque in my suite. Coolidge stayed at the Lakeside Inn for a month in 1930 after the completion of his presidency. After my visit, I would say that his choice for his respite was an exemplary one. Though located only 40 minutes northwest of Orlando, the inn, like the region itself, felt like a different world.

The large inviting porch was the first feature I noticed when we drove up. If it could talk, I’m sure it would have welcomed our group and insisted we have a seat on one of its rocking chairs. Maybe it would have told us a little about the inn, too.



Opened in 1883, the inn is the oldest continuously operated hotel in the state of Florida and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Five cheery yellow and white heritage buildings feature 90 guest rooms and suites, restaurants, event spaces and a gift shop. The landscaped grounds lead to the shores of Lake Dora, a 4,500-acre lake in the Harris Chain, and there’s also a large swimming pool with a panoramic lakeview. The Waterside Bar offers poolside drinks and snacks for lazy afternoons. Other dining options include Tremain’s Tavern, a casual pub with cozy fireplaces and live entertainment on weekends, the Beauclaire Restaurant for gracious meals with a southern flair and the Verandah for outdoor lakeview dining.

Besides the property itself with its oh so lovely porch, I also delighted in its location, right in the heart of the small town of Mount Dora, where everything was in easy walking distance.

Strolling, preferable with an ice-cream treat from Scoops on 5th, is the best way to see its well-preserved buildings, boutiques, antique shops, markets and eateries. A one-hour vintage trolley bus tour is another popular choice for learning about the town’s history and highlights.

Also conducive to R & R are all the natural attractions in the region. Lake County has over 1,000 lakes and 202 square miles of water along with an abundance of green spaces.

At the Ocala National Forest, we swam in the clear, turquoise waters of Alexander Springs. One of Florida’s natural freshwater springs, it was a refreshing 72 degrees Fahrenheit and surrounded by subtropical vegetation. At nearby Rainbow River in Ocala/Marion County, we kayaked in the spring-fed waters while admiring the lush vegetation and wildlife that included cranes, egrets, turtles and even a small gator.

After the excitement of Orlando, our time at Lakeside Inn and the nature activities we participated in were soothing, reminding us of the importance of periods of rest. ■

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braided epaulets, he officiates at the presentation, regaling onlookers with the story behind the quirky tradition. Come 5 p.m., the ceremony is repeated, again with great fanfare, and the feathered friends march back to the elevator and their penthouse home, a rooftop brick abode called the Duck Palace.

Spectators can preserve their memories of the hotel's celebrity mascots by picking up a duck-related souvenir in the lobby gift shop. Merchandise ranges from duck socks and plush toys to the Blue Suede Duck, a rubber ducky with the head of Memphis boy Elvis Presley. The Lobby Bar serves a Rubber Ducky Cocktail (rum, crème de banana, pineapple juice and orange juice) that comes with a mini rubber ducky.

Just as opulent as the lobby is adjacent Chez Philippe, a palatial French restaurant with murals, crystal sconces and soaring Corinthian columns. It's the perfect place for The Peabody's traditional English afternoon tea.

The Peabody Story: A Look Back

An impressive 12-story structure designed in Italian Renaissance Revival style, The Peabody opened in 1925 and soon became a social, business and nightlife hub. In the early 1970s, however, downtowns across the nation started experiencing economic declines, and Memphis was no exception. After multiple ownership changes, the hotel closed its doors in 1975. But Memphis-based Belz Enterprises, the current owner, saved the landmark from the wrecking ball and began a multi-year renovation, reopening it in 1981.

The hotel's colorful history comes to life in the mezzanine's Memorabilia Room. One learns that Elvis Presley received the \$4,500 signing bonus of his first national recording contract at The Peabody and had attended his high school's junior-senior prom there two years earlier.

Exploration of the hotel also should include the open-air rooftop, which offers panoramic views of downtown Memphis and close-up looks at the Duck Palace. ■

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The Peabody: A Memphis Landmark

History, pageantry and architectural splendor accent one of the American South's truly grand hotels

by Randy Mink

For generations, The Peabody Memphis has been the top place to stay for anyone who wants to tap into the vibe of this musically inclined Tennessee city on the Mississippi River. Located in the heart of downtown Memphis, the venerable hotel is just blocks from the riverfront and the clubs of legendary Beale Street.

A National Historic Landmark famed for its elegance, pedigree and lobby fountain inhabited by live ducks, The Peabody is a destination in itself. While many important events have transpired there over the decades, it's those ducks that have put the hotel on the tourist map.

Ducks on Parade

For a spectacle that has been staged daily for 90 years, people throng the hotel's two-story Grand Lobby and lean over the mezzanine's railings to watch five resident mallard ducks—one male and four females—march out of the brass-trimmed, wood-paneled elevator at 11 a.m. and walk single file down the regal red carpet to the Italian travertine marble fountain.

The famous Peabody Duck March is led by professional actor Kenon Walker, who goes by the title of Duckmaster. Wearing a red, ringmaster-style coat adorned with gold-





The Mansion Resort & Spa, Bali

by Olivia Taylor

There are many reasons why all travelers would find peace and solace at The Mansion. For one, Ubud, a spiritual town located in Bali's mystical and alluring jungles, has attracted local Indonesians and ex-pats alike for decades. Ubud pays homage to the traditional Balinese culture through performance art, architecture, and spiritual ceremonies, while also integrating modern-day innovation such as trendy boutiques and technology.

But if resort lounging is what you prefer, The Mansion also has you covered there. A sprawling property with over 150 rooms to choose from, from Deluxe to Penthouse Suites, you won't feel crowded or as though you're imposing on other guests. And it is undoubtedly the spot to make all of your

tropical fantasies come true: sipping vegan mojito poolside with the sun beating down on you while local artists grace the stage playing authentic Indonesian instruments, including the suling and gamelan. Nature and culture seamlessly meld here. With six pools, including the saltwater and crystal water variety, delicately placed around the tropical, lust estate, your only concern will be having to choose where to sunbathe. Fancy being more active? Why not take a yoga class, exercise in the gym, or indulge in the resort's sauna?

And guests need not be gourmands to be tantalized by the gastronomic choices at The Mansion. At Indochine, savor the unique combination of Asian & Continental nouvelle cuisine, an ideal location for a special

dinner or gathering. For those who don't eat meat, the stunning Plumeria Restaurant offers a Pescatarian menu and a plant-based menu by Chef Alejandro Montano of Nihisumba. Plumeria is a beautiful rooftop restaurant that features an aquaponics garden restaurant, growing herbs on-site for the dishes. Moreover, the restaurant is decorated with an array of art from The Mansion's private collection. Cafe La Terrace, located by the popular SunKiss Pool, offers a casual menu with fantastic cocktails and mocktails. The Mansion also caters to unique dinners, from Tree House Dining, family-style Megibung, to Royal Rijstafels, ideal for special occasions and celebrations.

Most of all, it is the welcoming staff at The Mansion Resort & Spa who will make you feel like you're part of the family. You'll return home feeling refreshed, rejuvenated, and connected to your new Mansion family.

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Beautiful Nice is a Great Year-Round Destination for Travelers

by Alexandra Cohen



This past summer I returned to Nice for the first time in eight years and was able to enjoy a fantastic few days by the Mediterranean. Indeed, this capital of the French Riviera is a perfect city for a relaxing getaway.

For those who have not yet visited, Nice is the fifth largest city in France, with 350,000 citizens and more than 1 million people living in the surrounding areas. Located between the Alps, Provence, Corsica, and Italy, the exceptional climate makes it a great year-round destination for travelers.

During my visit, I was able to enjoy time walking along La Promenade des Anglais, a street known throughout the world. This long avenue runs right along the Mediterranean coastline, spanning a distance of 7 km, and is frequented by walkers, cyclists, and joggers alike. This area is renowned for its palm trees, its private and public beaches, and its array of hotels, including the legendary Negresco and the Palais de la Méditerranée.

Just across the street from the sea lies Vieux Nice, the historic district of the city. In Vieux Nice, you will find a hub of activity, particularly at night, where you will find an array of small restaurants with terraces, markets, craft shops, and more. Nearby, you will also find Place Masséna, a historic square known for its black and white geometric paving, red ochre buildings, and 7 statues, which when evening comes, light up with warm and lively colors.

When visiting, it is also worth exploring La Promenade du Paillon, which was inaugurated in 2013. This 12-hectare green ribbon in the heart of Nice is known for its 1,600 trees, 6,000 shrubs, and 50,000 perennials. Benches punctuate the walk to allow you to stop, relax, and enjoy the view.

Where to Stay

During my trip, I stayed at the gorgeous Hyatt Regency Nice Palais de la Méditerranée in a spectacular king room with a full sea view.

This historic and luxurious 5-star hotel is located on the legendary Promenade des Anglais, directly across the street from the

sea. There are 187 spacious guestrooms and suites, complimentary Wi-Fi, the option for mobile entry with your room key available through your smart phone, a beautiful indoor-outdoor pool, as well as a gym, sauna, and Turkish bath. The hotel restaurant, le 3e, includes a lovely terrace which overlooks the Mediterranean, as well as the outdoor pool, includes a large and delicious breakfast buffet, which I was able to enjoy every morning. The hotel also features a business and conference center on site. Dogs under 15kg are permitted on the premises for an additional fee.

All rooms include a flat-screen TV with satellite channels, air conditioning, an in-room, laptop-sized safe, an alarm clock, bathrobes and slippers, a hair dryer, an iron and ironing board, an electric kettle, and a mini-bar.

During my stay, I was very impressed with the hotel's customer service. Their concierge service is able to reserve seats for hotel guests at the nearby beach – they will give you a voucher and place the charge under your room. Response to requests for room service and other needs was always swift.

In terms of accessibility, six rooms (including one suite) are adapted for the disabled with walk-in showers (equipped with a seat on the wall and a grab rail), a sink accessible for those in wheelchairs, height equipment (bed, mini bar, safe box, toilet) for wheelchair access, as well as a wardrobe with a telescopic rod.

Interestingly, a few years ago, the hotel had its own two and a half month-old Labrador puppy as part of the association "Les Chiens Guides d'Aveugles". A hotel staff member spent two years training him as a future seeing eye dog. He was present three weeks a month at the hotel and learned obedience and savoir-vivre, following which he was made available for adoption at no charge to a visually impaired person.

Dining out

There are many fantastic dining options at your disposal in Nice. During my previous trip to Nice in 2014, I dined at Le Grand Balcon, located near the opera house. Having had such a great experience last

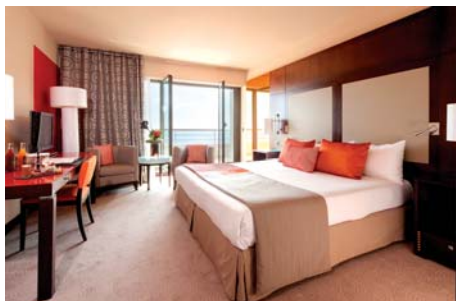


time, I was looking forward to returning, and it did not disappoint. Since my last visit, their terrace seems to have more than doubled in size, and all of their tables were full. While their menu offers numerous options, I personally enjoyed their sea bream ceviche with pomelo, the scallops with truffles and home-made mashed potatoes, and the parmesan cheese risotto. For dessert, I had a tasty, restyled lemon meringue pie. Undoubtedly, should you choose to visit, you will enjoy their creative and delicious cuisine.

Another excellent restaurant worth visiting is Bocca Nissa, a trendy restaurant and tapas bar. At first glance, the building resembles a beautiful Mediterranean town house. You will enter by walking down a hallway with walls lined entirely by greenery. Their rooftop terrace provides views of Vieux Nice and is also lined with plants and twinkle lights. Their menu contains a large array of tapas to share. I personally tried their tortilla dish, as well as their fried squid and sardines, sea bream ceviche, and beef ravioli. For dessert, their chocolate bombs were a real treat. For those less interested in tapas, their menu also boasts larger meals that one may choose to share, such as lamb chops and beef ribs.

Needless to say, I absolutely look forward to returning to this piece of paradise in France.

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Spain at its Best - Straying off the beaten path in Castile-Leon, a region ripe for discovery

Article and photography by Randy Mink

Does your town have a distinct look or personality? Something that really sets it apart from others?

In western Spain, tiny Mogarraz (pop. 250) plasters its personality all over town, festooning houses with pictures of residents past and present. These portraits are large artworks that visitors can't help noticing as they prowl the little plazas and narrow streets of this obscure town in the Sierra de Francia Mountains of southern Salamanca province.

Overlooked by most travel guidebooks, quirky Mogarraz was one of my favorite discoveries on a recent trip that included some under-the-radar places in Castile-Leon, one of Spain's 17 autonomous regions. Our group concentrated on the region's less-traveled western frontier, dropping in on remote rural areas, sampling three of its designated wine routes

and venturing as far as the Portugal border.

This was my first trip overseas in three years, so I was more than revved up. Like a lot of North Americans whose international travel plans were stifled by the pandemic, I had been itching to travel abroad. What a joy it was to be in Europe again! Each day was a revelation, a real adventure delving into art history, gastronomy, wine and everything that gets me psyched about Spain. Talk about pent-up wanderlust. The week-long trip provided a much-needed boost indeed.

Castile-Leon, situated west and north of Madrid, makes up about 20 percent of Spain's total area but is only its sixth largest region in population (2½ million). Consisting of nine provinces, the vast chunk of real estate is slightly bigger than Portugal. Castile-Leon claims nine of Spain's 34 wine routes and counts more than 400 wineries. It boasts three UNESCO World Heritage Sites—Salamanca (which our group visited), Segovia and Avila.

The quaint medieval village of Mogarraz, on the Sierra de Francia Wine Route, would be a delightful destination if just for the enchanting cobblestone lanes that snake past its stone and half-timbered houses, many with flower-filled balconies. But portraits of the people who live in these ancient buildings add a strange twist.

The novel art project began in the 1960s, when poverty in the area drove many residents to seek jobs in South America, for which they needed a photo ID card. These IDs inspired the idea of decorating houses with photographs of the adults who lived in them. In 2012, local artist Florencio Maillo took over the project and today he paints each of the 300-some portraits, from wizened grandmothers to young men in military caps.

Mogarraz and other towns in this mountainous region base their economies on tourism and winemaking. The delicate, dark-skinned rufete sgrape is special to the Sierra de Francia area in southern Salamanca province, where vines have been tended in terraces for centuries.

Our nest for the night, Hotel Spa Villa de Mogarraz, was right in the heart of the fairy-



tale town and just steps from Bodega Vinos La Zorra. Under a tent canopy on La Zorra's streetside patio, bistro patrons savor wines and tapas at tables fashioned from colorfully painted oil drums. We noshed on croquetas (croquettes), those addictive deep-fried balls of mushy goodness, and patatas meneas, mashed sweet potatoes flavored with garlic and paprika and topped with a pork rind.

Our group also went back in time in Miranda del Castanar, another gem on the Sierra de Francia Wine Route. With a guide we wandered the cobbled streets and took in forested panoramas from the 12th century walls of the pretty hilltop village. The medieval castle is now a brewery.

The city of Salamanca, unlike sleepy Mogarraz and Miranda del Castanar, is rather well known as a visitor destination, its historical core centering around the venerable buildings of Spain's oldest university, founded in 1218. With a magnificent central plaza, lively pedestrian streets and youthful vibe, the manageable, medium-size city of 150,000 offers just the right ingredients for a pleasant day or two of seeing the sights and soaking in the ambience. To me, it's Spain in a nutshell.

In Salamanca's Old Town, an open-air museum of radiant sandstone buildings, prime attractions lie within walking distance of each other. I recommend these five experiences:

1. Touring the Old and New Cathedrals. Built centuries apart, they are attached; you can't visit the 13th century Romanesque church (Cathedral of Santa Maria) without going through the Cathedral of La Asuncion de la Virgen, or New Cathedral, which isn't new at all. It was built hundreds of years ago in the Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque styles.

2. Ascending the "Stairway to Heaven" on a 200-step climb up Le Clerencia Church's bell towers for bird's-eye views of Old Town. The colossal Baroque building, now Pontificia University, began life in 1617 as a training school for Jesuit missionaries.

3. Walking across the River Tormes' Roman-era bridge while admiring the classic Old World skyline.

4. Touring the University of Salamanca, a popular place for North Americans and other

foreign students to study Spanish. Standing before the main building's intricately sculpted sandstone facade, tourists try to find the "hidden" frog, said to be a symbol of good luck.

5. Relaxing over tapas at a cafe on postcard-perfect Plaza Major, one of the largest and most beautiful squares in Spain. Try hornazo, a meat pie with layers of pork chorizo, pork loin and ham wrapped in lattice-crust yelow dough.

Zamora, a town of 60,000 north of Salamanca, is called the "Romanesque City." Its 23 Romanesque churches, 10th century walls and Duero River bridge ruins provide a magical setting for communing with the past. The Cathedral of Zamora impresses with its Byzantine-style dome, richly carved choir and 15th century Flemish tapestries.

The Zamora Wine Route in Zamora and Salamanca provinces takes travelers through traditional rural landscapes of sheep pastures, hay fields, vineyards and unspoiled villages with stone houses and Romanesque churches. In Villanueva de Campean, we did wine tastings in the barrel room and vineyards of Bodegas Vinas del Cenit, which makes Cenit Tradicion, an unusual blend of red and white grapes (mostly tempranillo)—a light, refreshing wine with less alcohol. The vines have been mixed since the times of the Franciscan friars who tended them from their 15th century monastery, the ruins of which we saw in the distance. (Older locals remember when monks still inhabited the monastery.)

Cenit's 90-year-old vineyards are threaded by the Via de la Plata, or Silver Route, one of the 11 pilgrimage routes to the tomb of St. James in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia; visitors may encounter pilgrims making the trek.

In the nearby village of Casaseca de Campean, our group enjoyed an atmospheric wine country lunch at Cafe de Quintano. Deep underground, we feasted amid the rustic trappings of a vaulted, 200-year-old cellar. The hard-working servers must have made 20 trips each from the upstairs kitchen to our cozy "cave." Besides wines, the group menu featured platters of cheeses and paper-thin slices of cured ham, chickpea soup, tuna steak in garlic sauce and Iberian pork steak with deep-fried vegetables. At dinner the previous night we had two regional specialties—roast suckling leg of lamb and Zamoran-style rice, a zesty dish with pork and paprika.

My best memory of the Zamora Wine Route was touring Quesaria La Antigua, a high-tech dairy in Fuentesauco. Donning a white plastic coat, hairnet and shoe covers, we followed guides who explained how sheep's milk is turned into prize-winning cheeses. Afterwards, we watched a video and sampled six varieties, including one with tempranillo

grape skins in the rind, another flecked with paprika flakes. Under construction is a museum that will showcase La Antigua's passion for making cheese.

When our bus passed a shepherd tending his flock later that day, we got giddy and were granted a photo stop. We were en route to the far western stretches of Zamora and Salamanca provinces where the Douro River's scenic canyonlands straddle the Spain-Portugal border. ("Douro" is the Portuguese spelling; it's "Duero" in Spanish.) For Spaniards, this remote valley of granite cliffs and outcroppings is considered the "Wild West."

Our introduction to the Arribes del Duero Wine Route, set against the backdrop of the valley's Arribes del Duero nature park, involved vineyard and winery visits hosted by Bodega el Hato y el Garabato in tiny Formariz. Dinner and overnight were in the comfortable Posada Dona Urraca in Fermoselle, a quiet Spanish border town famous for its centuries-old network of wine caves (more than 1,000, so they say), a few of which have been opened for tourism. After our subterranean tour and wine tasting, we did more sampling at Bodega Frontio, a winery started by a young Danish entrepreneur who goes by the nicknames "Chus" and the "Crazy Dane."

A brief foray into Portugal the next day took us to Miranda do Douro, where we boarded an excursion boat for an ecology cruise focusing on the geology, flora and fauna of the UNESCO Meseta Iberia Biosphere Reserve. Our one-hour journey provided a chance to witness up-close the spectacular gorge topography we had viewed from a lookout point earlier that day.

Exploring Fermoselle and other villages tucked away from the crowds, we often felt as if we had Castile-Leon to ourselves. On early morning strolls up and down the twisting, shadowy alleyways, sometimes the only sounds were chirping birds, crowing roosters and our own footsteps. It was good to be back in the Old Country, making new discoveries in corners of Spain off the beaten track. ■

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Three cities, three different Germans

Article and photography by Michael Morcos

Three different German cities and three different atmospheres. At times, they almost seemed like three different countries! This was my first return trip to Germany after some twenty-five years. I would revisit Berlin to find a transformed city and also tour the harbour city of Hamburg and the charming Baltic Sea town of Lübeck for the very first time.

The distance between the three is short but their characters are far from the same. Berlin and Hamburg are city-states on their own, which would partially explain how they differ in attitudes. Berlin had a more stately air while Hamburg was anything but and Lübeck was totally laid back.

Cosmopolitan Berlin

Time changes everything! Berlin used to be overshadowed by other European capitals, but no more.

In fact, with so much more to see and do than there was when I first visited the city, I realised that three days would only allow me to just scratch the surface of all of the new attributes that this world-class cosmopolitan city has to offer its visitors.

My return visit reaffirmed to me that Berlin has just about everything a traveler could desire. Berliners enjoy a certain joie-de-vivre, which they willingly share with tourists, and are justly proud of the abundance of interesting historical sites and attractions found in their city.

These include Bellevue Castle, Alexander Platz, the Brandenburg Gate, the Tiergarten, the Berlin Zoo and the exquisite 18th century baroque palace, Schloss Charlottenberg.

Adding to all this is the Berlin 's legendary nightlife. It seemed that many locals dine at restaurants or outdoor cafes almost every night before moving on to live it up at the city's popular bars and clubs, until the wee hours of the morning.

The New Reichstag

After the reunification of the two Germans, a vote was taken in parliament and it was decided, by a narrow margin, that the capitol of the new Germany would be moved from Bonn back to Berlin and the parliament building would be the Reichstag.

The Reichstag was heavily bombed and largely destroyed during the war. Its reconstruction preserved the old facade while giving the building a modern interior and glass dome, making it one of the most impressive buildings in Berlin and one of the most visited. The wait in long queues is well worth it!

At first glance the mix of old and new stunned me and I was particularly taken aback by the



ultra-modern shiny metal railings and glass dome. A ramp that circled the dome led to a platform with an amazing 180-degree view of Berlin. The remodelled building is truly a great work of modern art.

The Famous Wall

Was there any other wall constructed during our lifetime that was as famous as this one? On August 13, 1961, two events occurred. One was the start of the construction of a wall by the East German government to physically divide the eastern sector of Berlin from its western sector, thereby stopping its citizens from defecting to the West.

The second very important event that happened on the same day was my birthday, not quite a world event, but now the wall is mostly gone and I'm still standing and able to visit what remains of my twin.

On my last visit to Berlin in 1984, I was able to walk for hours alongside the western side of the wall. Today, there are only three places left where you can still see remnants of it and none of these gives one a true feeling of that unforgettable symbol of the Cold War.

Checkpoint Charlie

During the Cold War, when the wall was erected, Checkpoint Charlie became the one and only official border crossing between West and East Berlin.

It is now a tourist site where visitors have their picture taken standing beside a German stand-in dressed as an American G.I. Of course today, everyone can move freely between the former Western and Eastern sectors of the city.

Berlin Hauptbahnhof

There are train stations and then there is the Berlin Hauptbahnhof. I cannot remember ever visiting a central station that uses such a relatively small space with such efficiency while doing so in such a visually pleasing manner.

Built on many levels, it has its own food court and stores. This is also the station where city, national and international train lines intersect. This amazing building is at the crossroads of Berlin and has some 1,100 trains leaving daily from its 14 multi-levelled platforms.



Once again, this was astonishing evidence of the new, unbelievably dynamic Berlin that that didn't exist 25 years ago.

Distinct Traffic Lights

One city, two different pedestrian traffic lights! When the East and West Berlins were united it was understood that the Easterners would be respected in keeping what they had and that the unified government would not arbitrarily change those things.

So, with a bit of protest from Westerners, East Berlin's lights remained unchanged so today you can still tell if you are in the former Western or Eastern Sector just by the pedestrian lights.

Personally, I found the Eastern lights more interesting, as they are unlike any seen worldwide.

Hamburg: Port City & More

A short train ride from Berlin brought me to the second of three German city-states. Hamburg is a city of canals and there are over 2300 bridges.

That is more than those found in both Venice and Amsterdam combined. The port of Hamburg is the second largest in Europe and the ninth largest in the world.

Naughty St-Pauli

Hamburg has many faces but one that stands out is its 'bad-boy' partying reputation. It goes without saying that wherever there are sailors coming ashore; there will be a raucous party atmosphere and a red-light district somewhere in the town.

In this regard, Hamburg is no exception and is generally known for its hearty acceptance of this reality.

As evidence of its 'naughty' reputation, I could say that I have never witnessed a bigger party scene than that of Hamburg's St-Pauli district. Hamburgers and tourists thronged the streets till the early morning, quaffing mostly local beer (pils) and dancing the night away at its clubs.

St-Pauli's red-light district, where prostitution is legal and controlled and taxed by the government, is located on the Reeperbahn. This major street is barricaded by high fences, where only those 18 years or older are permitted to enter. This was a different and somewhat amusing travel experience and most visitors were only there to window-shop.

In fact, there are lots of other interesting aspects of Hamburg waiting to be discovered.

see following page





Historic Rathausmarkt

Standing on Rathausmarkt Square is Hamburg's town hall (Rathaus), an impressive Neo-Renaissance building dating from 1897 and the symbol of the city. It is located facing Lake Alster and close to the city's main pedestrian shopping area and the business district.

Picturesque Lake Alster

Not many cities can boast about 164-hectare lake at its centre. This is not a natural lake but was manmade by a farmer who dammed the river because he needed a large source of water to run his mill.

Lake Alster is now a recreational venue and adds immeasurably to beauty to the city. A favourite with locals and visitors, Lake Alster is surrounded by parks, walkways and cafes. It is the perfect place for strolling around or sailing across in small boats.

Harbour Cruises

A harbour cruise of Hamburg is a perfect way to get oriented. Boats leave and drop of passengers all along the way in a ferry-style vessel. The price is also right and you could see the many important buildings and districts from the top deck.

New Role for Warehouses

Hamburg is home to Europe's largest inner-city development project. HafenCity, which is located near the harbour and the old warehouse district, will be the new face of this dynamic city.

This area was largely abandoned after it was destroyed in WWII, but now it's a highly desirable district with more than 80 ambitious construction projects in development or in the planning stages.

Once completed, the Elbe Philharmonic Hall, which is being built on top of an old warehouse, will become a stunning Hamburg landmark, much like what the Sydney Opera House is to that city.

Charming Lübeck

My day trip to Lübeck was short but there was still just enough time to fall in love with this beautiful Baltic Sea city.

Things just seemed to move along at a much more leisurely pace compared to Berlin and Hamburg. It also felt like time forgot this city, as its well-preserved architecture gave it a pleasant yesteryear look.

Lübeck is one of the major ports of Germany and due to its unique brick houses it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The city suffered great damage during the war, but the Gothic town hall survived the attack

and the historic structures in its old town have all been faithfully rebuilt.

Lübeck is also known for its many picturesque alleyways and courtyards. With space being limited in the old town, residents use every possible place to plant the flowering plants that grace their doorways while still leave enough room for pedestrians to pass by unimpeded.

Lübeck Landmarks

Among the many very impressive buildings to see in Lübeck is the Holstentor Gate, which is the emblem of the town; St. Marien Church, which is larger than the local Cathedral and holds many of the city's great art treasures; and the Dom (Cathedral), which dates back to 1230 and should be considered a must-see site.

There is also the city's historic Rathaus (town hall) which features exquisite architecture and unusual walls and turrets.

Seaman's Guildhall

Originally used as an assembly hall for the seamen of Lübeck, this building dates back to 1535 and is now a popular restaurant with both locals and tourists.

The decor has remained almost unchanged throughout the centuries. Its dark wood paneling and other historic touches made it a great venue for a lunchtime meal. Unsurprisingly, the catch-of-the-day was the main item on its menu.

Niederegger Marzipan

When in Lübeck, do as the Lübeckers and have a coffee and a desert at Niederegger's. Established in 1806, Café Niederegger is well known for its marzipan creations, so much so that I am able buy their products in my hometown.

Uniquely, the café's museum, located on its premises, features giant life-like marzipan figures. These were in the images of historical characters and made entirely out of the world-famous almond paste. A visit to this unusual type of museum was yet another first for me.

So Much Germany to See

Not enough time is always the case when travelling to interesting destinations. As previously noted, Berlin, Hamburg and Lübeck are only short distances away from each other yet they are miles apart in styles and attitudes.

My return visit to Germany was a revelation, especially when I realised that there was so much more to see in this incredible country. I must make sure that my next visit will not be in another twenty-five years! ■

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