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EDITOR'S NOTE BY GEORGE!



What's Next Starts Now

The spark of a journey is within each of us

Adventure is about what comes next. It's about starting something new and not worrying so much about how it will end. In travel, adventure summons some of our flintiest qualities: courage, craftiness, dogged determination. It also calls forth those magical traits—optimism, humor, a flair for improvisation—that are indispensable in the face of the unknown and unknowable thing that hasn't yet happened. Our **ADVENTURE ISSUE** is all about the here and now, the places and faces of the world as we find it. We revel in the sparkling pairing of prosecco and mountain biking in the Dolomites. We look back to visionary women travelers to lean in on fearless female adventurers who are forging ahead in Sweden, Australia, Colombia, and beyond. We identify the trends in sustainability, geography, and community engagement that will secure the future of African safaris. Our message is simple: Life is an adventure. It's not about distance, duration, or difference. It's about moving forward with openness, smiling when it rains, and embracing the world. Not knowing what comes next is the joy of travel. It's why we grow when we explore, and it's why travel is a metaphor for life. Our journeys may begin with an exclamation point but they end in an ellipsis... —George W. Stone, *Editor in Chief*

Nat Geo Highlights

RUNNING WILD WITH BEAR GRYLLS

In the new season of this hit series, beginning November 5 on the National Geographic Channel, daring celebs such as rock climber Alex Honnold and actress Brie Larson test their mettle in remote spots around the globe.

TRIPS FOR 2020

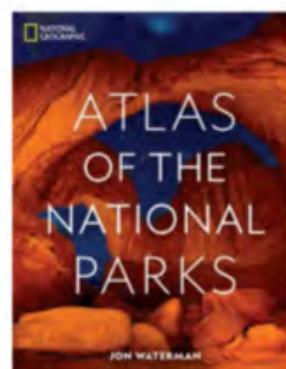
Hiking through hill tribe villages in Thailand and visiting the pyramids in Egypt are two of six new adventures offered by National Geographic Expeditions. Book now for next year at natgeoexpeditions.com/explore.

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the desert is

WILD

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"Volunteering with an Earthwatch team studying climate change in Andorra. I got to experience the magic of the Pyrenees, make new friends, and lend a hand to science. I'll be back for more!"
—B.S.

"I'm not very outdoorsy, so a camping trip along the Ring Road, which circles Iceland, really challenged me. But the surreal, otherworldly landscape made the trek so worth it."
—M.F.

"Taking my six- and eight-year-old sons on a yearlong trip around the world. We visited six continents—still hoping we'll get to see Antarctica together one day!"
—H.G.D.

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"At 21, I traveled through Indonesia. I remember being in awe of the Borobudur Temple, waking up in a barn at 3 a.m. to climb Mount Merapi for sunrise views, and watching the waves in Bali."
—J.L.

MARKET RESEARCH MANAGER Tracy Hamilton Stone

"It's hard to decide between the tombs of Egypt, the vastness of Antarctica, and the gorillas of Rwanda—so different from each other but equally amazing. And later this year, I'm going hiking in Bhutan. Do I have to pick one adventure of a lifetime?"
—S.G.

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At Australia's Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort, a porch overlooks waters of the Great Barrier Reef (p. 102).



COVER: MOUNTAIN BIKERS BRAVE THE CATINACCIO MASSIF IN THE DOLOMITES OF NORTHERN ITALY.

ADVENTURES OF A LIFETIME

Show Us Your Epic Journeys

We asked for your most spectacular travel photos—and you delivered

Nearly 22,000 entries poured into *National Geographic Traveler's* photo contest to document the greatest adventures on the planet. The winning image (opposite; see story online) frames an idyllic sunrise scene on Siargao Island in the Philippines. **MARKETA KYNCLOVA AND MATT FIELD**, from Perth, Australia, were exploring the island interior when they encountered young locals leaping into the Maasin River from a rope swing. They happily joined in, leading to a fast friendship. "We wanted to keep this moment alive forever," Field says, and the next day they rose before dawn to get this shot. *Traveler's* director of photography, Anne Farrar, loves the picture's sense of adventure. "It feels like the beginning of an epic journey," she says. —*The Editors*

1. Jason Speth HANG SON DOONG, VIETNAM

California-based Speth returned three times to get this shot of the sunbeams that rarely enter the vast cave of Hang son Doong. "Kudos for continuing to go back to capture the image you envisioned," Farrar says.

2. Alex Dawson TASIILAQ, GREENLAND

In this otherworldly picture, Dawson, who lives in Sweden, caught a free diver beneath the pack ice. "This is such an adventurous frame—it's a beautiful capture with a ton of technical difficulty," Farrar says.

3. Carmen MacLeod LAUTERBRUNNEN, SWITZERLAND

"Is this real?!" Farrar first thought. "Who spliced together Yellowstone and a quaint European village?" It is real—the Swiss Alps hamlet of Lauterbrunnen, which MacLeod, from Canada, calls "hands down one of the most magical places I have ever been."



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Life Changing Places: **Lofoten**

Untouched. Untamed. Yet bursting with endless opportunity. The Norwegian Lofoten Islands, far above the Arctic Circle, is everything an adventurer could wish for and more. So when the opportunity came to explore the majestic cliffs and wild waters of the North Sea, National Geographic photographer Chris Burkard was ready.

As a photographer, Chris is no stranger to capturing the world's sunniest beaches. Though over time, even the most warm and beautiful places will eventually become monotonous. What Chris felt was lacking from his day job was a sense of wonder, a sense of real adventure. He was eager to find a rare wilderness, one that offers an untrammeled landscape of picturesque mountains, deep fjords and fierce waters.

Looking for a new location, Chris decided it was time for a drastic change. He was going to photograph one of the coldest beaches on Earth.

"I went to the Lofoten Islands. The islands of the gods. It was like I found this whole new world that maybe others had simply overlooked. It was minus 23 degrees, icy wind, and three-meter-high waves."

Plunging into freezing temperatures, the experience on the wild coast of Norway awakened a new passion in him.

He was on a mission to dive right in (quite literally) to capture this incredible place like never before.

"If shivering is a form of meditation, then I consider myself a monk."

For Chris, capturing the Norwegian Lofoten Islands was the life-changing experience he was looking for. Gone were the days of capturing the same old beaches and the same old photographs. It was time to push the boundaries of travel and never look back. To seek unforgettable nature experiences in one of the world's most incredible places.

"I traded touristy beaches for harsh wilderness. This was the best decision of my life."

To discover more **#LifeChangingPlaces** like Lofoten Islands and to get inspiration for your next trip, visit lufthansa.com/places

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

"I came here to do something different. And now I know, I never want to do anything else again."

—Chris Burkard



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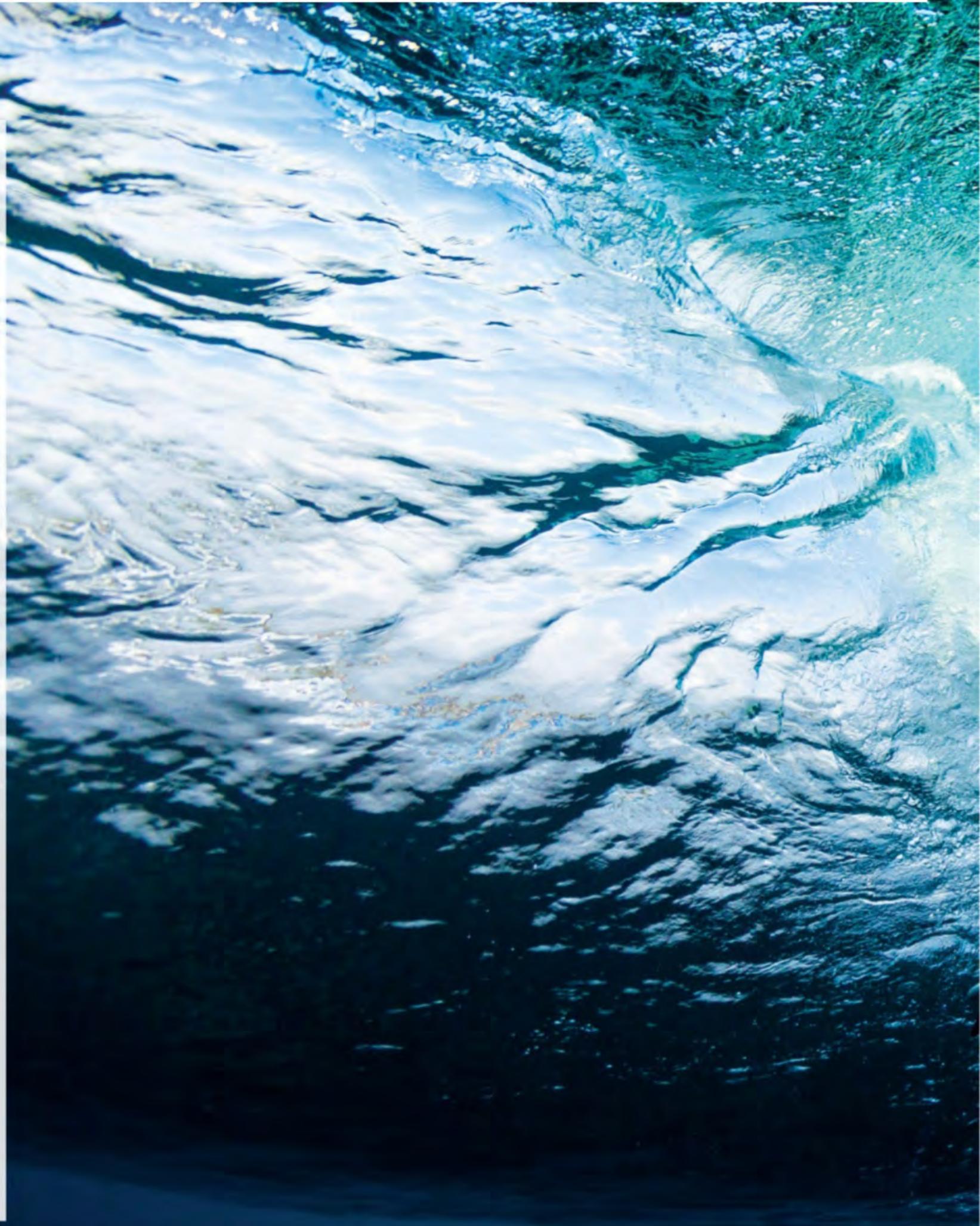
Diving In

"Everything is flowing, and you give up the idea of control." That's how surfer and world traveler Anna Ehrgott feels when she's riding an epic wave. There are plenty of those off the Big Island of Hawaii, where fellow surfer and photographer Sarah Lee captured this portrait of Ehrgott during the magical golden hour. Lee, who was free diving with just a mask, fins, and a camera in underwater housing, says "the sunset light lit her up perfectly as she pushed her board beneath the waves" (in a surfing move called a duck dive).

Though Ehrgott is based in Topanga, California, the search for surf-worthy destinations sends her around the globe. One surprising favorite? Alaska, for the snowy beaches, solitude, and animal life. "It's like surfing and a safari all in one," she says. Seeing the world's wild places has also stoked her passion for sustainability. Ehrgott collaborates with eco-friendly brands and runs her own company, Sagebrush Board Bags, which recycles vintage fabric into cool covers for surfboards. Travel, she says, "has helped me figure out what's important in my life."

—Brooke Sabin

SARAH LEE





A photograph of a lush, green forest. In the foreground, there's a calm body of water, likely a river or stream. The background is filled with tall trees and dense foliage. The lighting suggests it might be late afternoon or early evening, with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

WANDER

Charlotte. A lot of pockets of this city are simply begging to be explored. You'll quickly find that those who wander are never lost in this humming metropolis surrounded by natural beauty that boasts lush landscapes, natural havens, and even, whitewater rapids. Plan your trip at charlottesgotalot.com.

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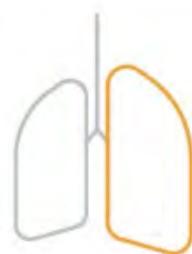
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CHARLOTTE

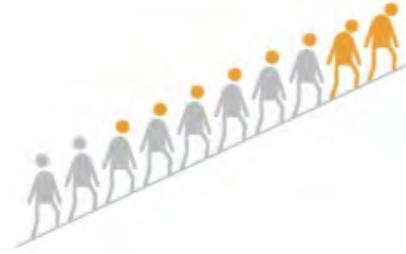
TRAVEL BETTER HIGH ALTITUDE

You don't have to climb a mountain to experience the woes of elevation. Plenty of favorite travel spots perch on high. When there's less oxygen, what happens to the body? "First it increases breathing, which can feel like a shortness of breath," says Peter Hackett, director of the Institute for Altitude Medicine in Colorado. "Second, the blood vessels in the brain expand. That gives the sensation of a headache." Ascending slowly, over two or three days, and using these tips will help you feel good at the top.



LUNG CAPACITY

People breathe at least 30 percent more at high altitude than at sea level.



MOVING ON UP

When going from sea level to 9,000 feet, 60 percent of people will get a headache, and about 25 percent will get acute mountain sickness.



POPULAR THIN-AIR DESTINATIONS

- Cusco, Peru: 11,152 feet
- Breckenridge, Colorado: 9,600 feet
- Leh, Ladakh, India: 11,550 feet
- Lhasa, Tibet, China: 11,995 feet



SAY "NO" TO A SECOND SWIG

Alcohol depresses the body's breathing response to low oxygen levels. During the first night at altitude, drink no more than one beer or one glass of wine.



TAKE CARE WITH KIDS

Children younger than six weeks should stay home, since their circulation systems aren't developed enough to handle high altitude. If you bring kids under age four or five who may not be able to express they're having trouble, make your arrival in stages.



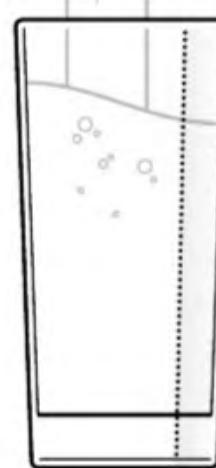
SAMPLE THE SNACKS

Stick to small meals the first few days, because the digestive system can become stressed at elevation.



GUZZLE WATER

Drinking plenty of H2O prevents dehydration, which has symptoms similar to those of acute mountain sickness: headaches, nausea, fatigue, insomnia, and loss of appetite.



SHIELD YOUR SKIN

Ultraviolet light increases by five percent per thousand feet of altitude, so accessorize with protective gear such as sunglasses, a broad-brimmed hat, and sunscreen.



PACK A HIGH-ALTITUDE TRAVEL KIT

- ibuprofen for headaches
- acetazolamide (brand name: Diamox) to help speed up acclimatization
- carbohydrates that are easy to digest, such as gummy bears or energy bars
- sun protection
- water bottle

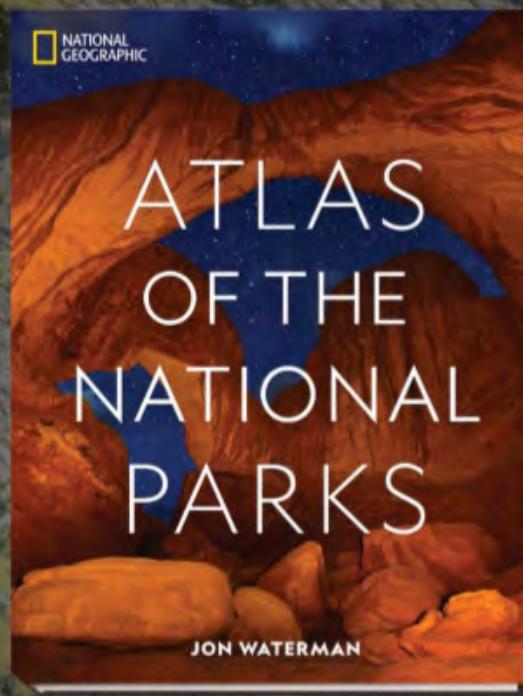
I WHAT'S ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?



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EXPLORER'S GUIDE ARCHAEOLOGY



Treasure Hunting

Sarah Parcak takes archaeology out of this world—to some 400 miles above Earth. The National Geographic explorer and winner of the 2016 TED Prize scours satellite images, including drone data and declassified spy photos, in search of buried treasures such as individual tombs or entire cities. In her new book, *Archaeology from Space*, she reveals her findings across five continents. Citizen scientists can lend an eye to her efforts by scanning images on globalxplorer.org. Here she shares three of her favorite sites to see from the ground.

—Katie Knorovsky

1 India

Immerse yourself in Hindu culture among the thousands of temples that dot the state of Tamil Nadu, on the southern tip of the subcontinent. "Visit in August, during monsoon season, for a great sense of temple ritual," Parcak says. Anchor your tour with a visit to Madurai's Meenakshi Amman Temple, with its ornate facade of painted statues depicting animals, deities, and demons.

3

Egypt

North of Luxor, the Hathor temple, dating from the Ptolemaic period, honors the namesake sky goddess. Over centuries, soot collected on the ceiling, but in recent decades, conservationists have uncovered lavish paintings. "You can see how vibrant the temple would have been," Parcak says.

Meet more National Geographic-funded explorers at nationalgeographic.org/explorers.

2

Italy

According to Parcak, no exploration of Rome is complete without a day trip to the nearly 2,000-year-old harbor of Portus and the even older seaport of Ostia Antica. Offering a counterpoint to the monumental scale of the Forum and the Colosseum, these lesser known ruins—think temples, shops, baths, and brothels—give a glimpse into daily life and into ongoing excavations.



Ornamentation reaches rare heights at Meenakshi Amman Temple in South India.

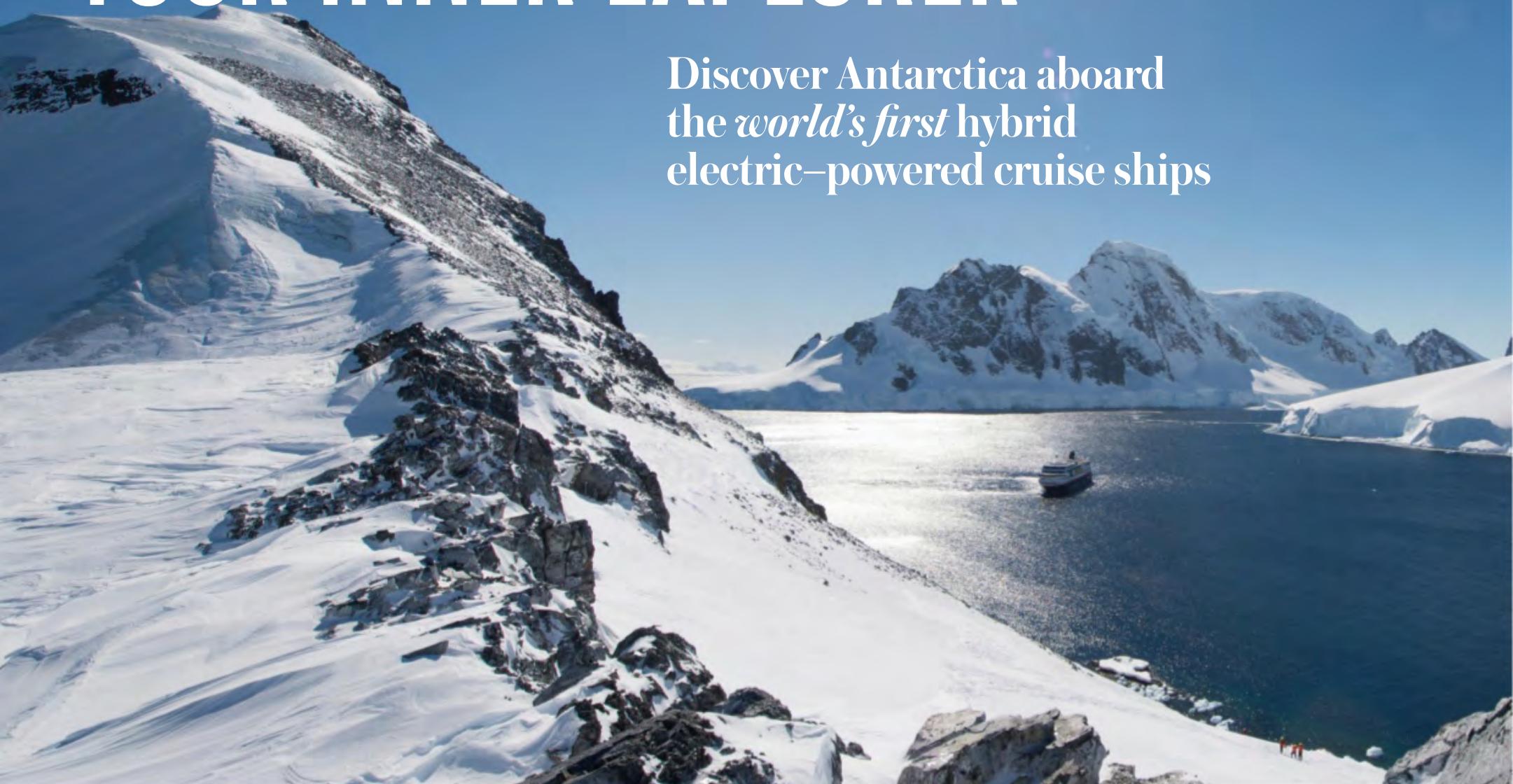
ROBERT HARDING/ALAMY (TEMPLE); MATTHEW TWOMBLY (ILLUSTRATION)



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WILD & TAME

Tasmania's natural richness comes in many forms: pristine landscapes in all shades of green, tranquil waterways, and curious wildlife that thrives in this unique environment. However you approach its unspoiled beauty, adventure awaits in Australia's island state

Words: Lee Cobaj



Mrs Hunt's Cottage,
Maria Island



IMAGE: STUART GIBSON

It feels like I've fallen headfirst into the realms of a children's storybook.

A wisdom of wombats is mowing the grass around us, mobs of Tasmanian pademelon (small, kangaroo-like creatures) leap past, and a kookaburra sings from an old gum tree. Blue skies arch above us as we rest on the grassy edge of sea cliffs, on the lookout for humpback whales. "It is surely hell on earth," says my guide Di Hollister, paraphrasing a 19th-century description of Tasmania. "The swans are black when they should be white, and devils cry out in the woods at night."

"Just awful," I reply with a smile.

We're on Maria Island, which lies in the bright blue Tasman Sea, a 30-minute ferry ride from Triabunna on the east coast of Tasmania. European explorers first set eyes on the island in 1642; settlers arrived in the late 18th century, eking out a living as whalers and sealers, while establishing smallholdings, prisons, and penal colonies. Various industries came and went over the following century: wheat and sheep farmers; Chinese abalone fishermen; an Italian silk merchant with aspirations as a hotelier; and a cement works, its old silos still sitting at the end of the pier like giant exclamation marks. Every venture was unsuccessful and short-lived, and nature now reigns supreme in this southern wilderness. Today, Maria Island is a national park without a permanent population, and visitor numbers are restricted to just a few ferry-loads of sightseers per day in the summer and a handful of outdoorsy types who come year-round to explore its beaches and bush trails with award-winning, family-run, Maria Island Walks.

I've arrived just after the summer crowds have cleared and a few weeks before the chill of winter sets in. It feels like we have the island to ourselves — just me, Di and our walking guide, Georgie Currant. I'm bowled over by the natural beauty that surrounds us: glorious beaches, fragrant forests of eucalyptus, ruffled cliffs, tranquil reservoirs, and bountiful wildlife. On the crossing from Triabunna, I eyed fat, shiny seals bobbing in the bay and enormous sea eagles circling overhead. Within five minutes of stepping off the ferry, I cooed over a mother and baby wombat, both entirely unperturbed by my presence. I've since seen dozens of the furry cannonballs, as well as kangaroos, wallabies, possums, and a colorful cast of pink robins, yellow-throated honeyeaters, and Cape Barren geese with pearl-grey bodies and sherbet-green beaks.

As the daylight begins to fade, I'm blessed with a crisp, bright evening for my first night on Maria Island. The moon appears — seemingly upside-down, as I've come from the Northern Hemisphere — and is so luminous we don't need our flashlights to wander across the fields. Di points out constellations as we go: the Southern Cross, Alpha Centauri, and Orion's Sword, which points upwards at this end of the earth.

The next morning we head to Riedle Beach, a streak of diamond-white sands and azure seas, and the first beach I've seen in years without even the tiniest scrap of plastic on it. What we spot instead are the clear pawprints of Tasmanian devils — an endangered species, released onto the island in the 1970s and now thriving, free from predators, car accidents and disease. If I see nothing else of Tasmania, my time on this Edenic isle alone will have been enough.

Complete immersion

I'm told that Maria Island is Tasmania in microcosm — and if that's the case, then Di is Tasmania personified. A veritable frontierswoman at 72 years old, her eyes are the color of the water at Riedle Beach and, just six months after a double knee replacement, she's outpaced me every step of the way on our hikes around Maria. She grows her own vegetables, brews her own ginger beer, promotes environmental causes, and has an in-depth knowledge of every bud, bloom, bird, and beast we pass. She drives like a pro, too, dodging a masked white owl in the middle of the road on the long drive through the night to our next stop in Derby, a former tin-mining town in the northeast of Tasmania.

It's home to the Blue Derby Pods Ride, where I fuel up on a feast of local sourdough and butter, pumpkin, hummus, and salad ahead of a beginner's lesson in mountain biking. Set up in 2017 by 20-something Tassies Steve and Tara Howell, Blue Derby Pods Ride combines three-day mountain biking tours with spectacular food and wine, plus accommodation in one of four wooden pods, which rise out of the mossy forest like newly germinated seeds. Come bedtime, I feel like an elf living deep in the heart of the forest. Four years ago, this clever endeavor never would have worked as there was virtually no reason for travelers to visit this corner of the island. But in 2015, the Blue Derby — a network of nearly 50 miles of world-class mountain bike trails — opened and was immediately lauded as the pinnacle of mountain biking in Australia. Soon after, the Enduro World Series headed here, and Derby was firmly on the map.

The biking tours are flexible and can accommodate anyone from seasoned riders to novices like me. "We want you to ride the way you'd go out and ride with friends," Steve tells me as we whirl downhill through mounds of fishbone ferns, past tangles of myrtle, and under the thick branches of macrocarpa trees. Botanically speaking, it's a dream. Exercise-wise, however, my backside hurts and the combination of fresh air, adrenalin, and a new challenge means I retire to my pod exhausted, yet contented in a way that only a complete immersion in nature can achieve.



LEFT, FROM BELOW:
Bennett's wallaby; Blue Derby Pods; Blue Derby mountain bike trails





All aboard the Ark

Nature — both wild and tame — comes thick and fast in Tasmania. Flocks of green rosellas, a parrot native to the state, swoop overhead on the drive out of Derby through Scottsdale, with its rolling green hills and fields of apricots, cherries, and poppies. An overnight stay at Currawong Lakes, a luxury lodge and fly-fishing retreat tucked away in Tasmania's remote eastern highlands, brings a bevy of black swans, hundreds of Bambi-like fallow deer, and Tasmanian devils, their husky screams like something from a Wes Craven film.

From Currawong, we head west via the beautifully preserved towns of Launceston, Bothwell, and Hamilton into Mount Field National Park, one of 19 protected parklands in Tasmania. It's another vision of pastoral beauty, all fern walks, waterfalls and glassy salmon ponds; there are paint charts of greens made by the willows and swamp gums, the latter the tallest flowering plant in the world. It's here that Liam and Fiona Weaver run Tassie Bound Adventure Tours, leading small groups of kayakers on 'Paddle with the Platypus' trips through the park's sylvan waterways.

"I reckon there are more platypus on these three miles of river than anywhere else in Australia," says Liam, as Di and I pull on our lifejackets. And sure enough, as we glide down the tranquil River Derwent, we spot more platypus than humans, their little backs rising and falling in the

water like tiny Loch Ness monsters. But my closest encounter with Tasmania's wildlife comes at the Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary, where I begin to suspect the staff are inventing curiously-named animals to make fun of me. Bettong, quokka, echidna — surely all fictional?

"We're the Noah's Ark of Australian wildlife," founder Greg Irons tells me as I pet Millie the baby wombat. I learn that most of the animals taken in here have been orphaned or injured. "We're the last stand for so many special species: prehistoric species; species you won't find anywhere else in the world; species we still know very little about."

There are creatures such as eastern quolls, a cat-sized marsupial now extinct on the mainland; the Tasmanian tree frog and, of course, the Tasmanian devil, whose population has fallen by 90% since the late 1990s due to a facial tumor disease. Greg's aim is to rehabilitate and restore populations and get as many animals back into the wild as he can. In the meantime, visitors to the sanctuary are allowed to interact with many of the animals in ways that won't stress or upset them. I hand-feed kangaroos, watch Randall the echidna slurp up ant mush with his long tongue, and offer eucalyptus leaves to a rather bored-looking koala.

If Tasmania is hell, like Di says, then I plan on being very, very bad indeed.



Tasman Island and
Cape Pillar

IMAGES: TOURISM TASMANIA; JOE SHEMESH

FOUR MORE NATURAL ESCAPES

All afloat

Founded by Robert Pennicott, the first person to circumnavigate Australia in a rubber dinghy, Pennicott Wilderness Journeys offers a full-throttle adventure around the Tasmanian coast. Wrap up warm and take in sea caves, cliffside waterfalls, walls of Jurassic dolerite and freestanding sea stacks, all while passing Australian fur seals and flocks of giant albatross. Be sure to look south; the next landmass is Antarctica. pennicottjourneys.com.au

Wine and wombats

At the conservation-led Bangor Vineyard Shed, a short drive from the state capital of Hobart, visitors can drop by for a twilight bus and walking tour to spot wombats, one of Tasmania's most charismatic critters. After learning about the area's unique ecosystem, guests will return to the restaurant for dinner — washed down, of course, with glasses of refreshing Tasmanian Chardonnay and mid-bodied Pinot Noir. bangorshed.com.au

Penguin parades

This far south, it's no surprise that penguins can be seen on Tasmanian shores. The flightless birds make landfall on the northwest coast, where Bicheno Penguin Tours runs evening excursions to a private rookery. Watch as the creatures emerge from the sea and make their way uphill to their nests. Penguin numbers vary according to the season, with September to March being the best time to see them. bichenopenguintours.com.au

Gone fishing

Tasmania's first trout were introduced in 1864, having been delivered from Britain on the *Norfolk* ship. Today's bronze beauties are descended from that original batch and are considered to be the purest of the species in the world. Stay at Currawong Lakes and don your waders with instructor Roger for a meditative session casting, catching, and releasing fish while white-bellied sea eagles soar above. currawonglakes.com.au

Essentials

Getting there and around

Tasmania is easily accessible from the mainland, with major Australian airlines flying direct to both Hobart and Launceston from main Australian hubs. Tasmania is also a great self-drive destination.

When to go

The warmest months are December–February (around 75F). Spring is bright but windy, and fall offers crisp, sunny days with fewer crowds. Short winters (June–August) can see temperatures between 37F and 52F.

How to do it

Qantas Vacations offers the eight-day Wild Tasmania Immersion tour with activities including kayaking, hiking, and a trip to Maria Island. From \$1,849 per person, excluding flights. Airfares available upon request. qantasvacations.com T: 866-914-4359



To win an unforgettable adventure in Tasmania with Qantas Vacations, head to bit.ly/TasmaniaVacation19. Subject to availability. T&Cs apply. Entrants must be residents of USA

CITY GUIDE

BERLIN



► **Why Go Now:** Thirty years after the fall of the wall, Germany's capital is a study in reinvention



The mid-1800s Landwehr Canal flows through central Berlin.



Bombed to bits, torn in two, and patched back together, Berlin has undergone dramatic transformations. In the past 30 years, its evolution from a Soviet stronghold to a libertine bastion with an anything-goes creativity born from repression has made it one of the most captivating places on the planet. More recently Berlin has catapulted to the center of European power, led a country-wide push to welcome more than a million asylum seekers, and shown the world how a city can grow up without losing its edge.

"The difference between a place like New York and Berlin is that New York is settled, while Berlin is seething," says photographer Harald Hauswald, whose images of East Berlin in November 1989 captured a state poised to topple as residents took sledgehammers to the Berlin Wall. "Berlin is still a never ending start-up," he says. "That's what makes it beautiful."

—Eliot Stein



Cold War Memories

Landmarks recall the chilling days of a city divided

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Bauhaus design school, and Berlin is one of several German cities celebrating an architectural movement that continues to shape the world. But the capital's most popular attraction is a wall that no longer serves its purpose.

Today the best known places to meet Berlin's Cold War ghosts are also among its most touristy haunts: the **EAST SIDE GALLERY**, where a mural-clad stretch of the Berlin Wall remains, and **CHECKPOINT CHARLIE** (skip the latter). To understand the magnitude of how this barrier came to cleave families, a city, and two worlds, head to the nearly mile-long outdoor **GEDENKSTÄTTE BERLINER MAUER**, where escape tunnels are marked, a shoot-to-kill watchtower in the wall's former "Death Strip" still stands, and a memorial honors those who died trying to flee the East.

Next to the Friedrichstrasse subway, historical videos and the original passport control booths at the **TRÄNENPALAST** ("palace of tears") border crossing station show where East Berliners said goodbye to loved ones returning to the West. At the infamous **STASI PRISON**, former inmates now lead tours and offer harrowing accounts of how East Germany's secret police used surveillance and scare tactics to exert control.

Room Check

- TRENDY
- NEW
- CLASSIC

MICHELBERGER HOTEL

Buzzy, funky, and achingly hip, this playful indie hotel a block away from the Spree River oozes "Berlin." The former factory retains its high ceilings, exposed beams, and immense windows. Loft beds, flea-market furnishings, and an inviting communal courtyard complete the curated-crash-pad vibe.

ORANIA.BERLIN

Set in a former Weimar-era cabaret club, this restored art nouveau palace is the first upscale hotel to open in Berlin's counterculture Kreuzberg district. Floor-to-ceiling windows in the downstairs salon look out on graffiti-tagged hipster bars, while inside, roaring fireplaces, a Steinway piano used for nightly jazz concerts, and chef Philipp Vogel's Orania.Restaurant feel a world apart (tip: order the Xberg duck). The 41 rooms and suites upstairs feature handmade Iranian carpets, designer furniture, and sightlines over Berlin's punchiest neighborhood.

HOTEL ADLON KEMPINSKI

The grande dame of Berlin's five-star hotels, this neo-baroque stunner has hosted everyone from the Rockefellers to Queen Elizabeth since it opened in 1907. Indulge in a palatial 9,000-square-foot spa, a double-Michelin-starred restaurant, and views of the Brandenburg Gate.

Life Is a Cabaret

From nature to nightlife, here are ways to enjoy this city of many sides



Opt for the Outdoors

1 With more than 2,500 parks, Berlin ranks as one of the world's greenest capitals. Its idyllic centerpiece is the **Tiergarten**, a former Prussian hunting ground now filled with lakes, jogging trails, and rose gardens. An airport built by the Nazis—that became a lifeline for West Berlin during the 1948-49 blockade—**Tempelhofer Feld** now serves as a public park where cyclists speed down the runways. And on sunny days, there's no better place to people-watch than the **Landwehr Canal**, which winds for more than six miles through the heart of the city.

View Walls as Artwork

2 Known as Europe's most "bombed" (graffiti-marked) city, Berlin was named a UNESCO City of Design in part because of its wildly creative street art. The **East Side Gallery**, with 101 murals splashed across a still standing section of the Berlin Wall, is the world's largest and longest open-air gallery. Urban Nation's newly opened **Museum for Urban Contemporary Art** uses mobile facades to transform the building's architecture and exterior walls into canvases themselves. For an eye-catching barrage of makeshift murals, head to Mitte's **Haus Schwarzenberg**.

Visit Prussian Palaces

3 Berlin's history is not all dark and heavy. For proof, make a visit to **Schloss Charlottenburg**, a sparkling baroque beauty inspired by Versailles. Set amid manicured gardens, a carp pond, and an ensemble of rococo palaces, this 18th-century castle stands as a reminder of Berlin's proud Prussian past. Just a 40-minute S-Bahn ride away, Potsdam is a vast UNESCO World Heritage site (the largest in Germany) encompassing 150 buildings across 1,200 acres. Be sure to see the crown jewels of Frederick the Great's summer stomping grounds: **Neues Palais** and **Schloss Sanssouci**.

Stay Up Late

4 For many, Berlin's legendary party scene is the holy grail for hedonists everywhere. Housed in a former East Berlin power station, **Berghain** may be the world's most hallowed techno club. But beware of its infamously rigid door policy, which favors hoodies and black jeans, nothing fancy. For more relaxed clubs, try **Kater Blau** and **//about blank**. If all-night raves are not your thing, stroll the Weserstrasse, Revaler Strasse, Simon-Dach Strasse, and Torstrasse corridors for chill wine and cocktail bars, live music, off-kilter dives, and everything in between.



The grassy **Platz der Republik**, in front of the **Reichstag** building, lures loungers.



A Culinary Renaissance

Immigrant influences and local fare are refueling the food scene

Neue Wave

Traditional staples get a locavore twist in many top restaurants, some featuring quirky historical settings. Inside the gym of a 1920s girls school, chef Dirk Giesemann creates five-course dinners (with a vegetarian version) from regional ingredients for Michelin-starred hot spot **Pauly Saal**. Area farmers supply the lamb and rabbit at **Restaurant Oderberger**, an industrial-chic newcomer in an old boiler room. At **Burgermeister**, sample a juicy burger in a former subway bathroom.

Turkish Delights

There are more Turks in Berlin than anywhere else outside of Turkey, and they've created a rich culinary tradition all their own—most famously, the **döner** kebab. Some 4,000 **döner** shops dot the city, but the best is **Tadim**, in the heart of Kreuzberg's Turkish community. At **Fes Turkish BBQ**, diners grill their own marinated black Angus beef and lamb. For spit-roasted meats and stuffed eggplant with a view, claim a table at **Defne** on Berlin's most beautiful street, Planufer.

Beer Gardens

Berlin may not be Bavaria, but you can find dozens of outdoor beer gardens sprinkled around the city and open year-round. The most enchanting may be **Café am Neuen See**, flanking a lake in leafy Tiergarten park and twinkling with strings of outdoor lights. **Prater Garten**, a Prenzlauer Berg institution, has been serving pints and schnitzels since the 1850s. Drinks and dancing form a heady mix at **Birgit&Bier**, an adult playground on the bank of the Spree River in Kreuzberg.

Not Just Brats

Rivaling the **döner** in popularity, **currywurst**—slices of steamed pork sausages doused in sweet curry ketchup and topped with curry spice—once merited its own museum. The exhibits are gone, but you can try the real deal at **Konnopke's Imbiss**, a famed sausage stall under the U-Bahn tracks. Another local favorite? **Eisbein** (literally: “ice leg”), boiled and cured pork knuckle. It's been a menu star, with a side of pea puree and mustard, at **Zur Letzen Instanz** since 1621.



At Café am Neuen See, brews and pretzels come with a festive lakeside vibe.

the unexpected



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ROAD TRIP

JEFFERSON'S VIRGINIA



► Miles: 88 • Days on the Road: 3 • Indie Bookshop: Charlottesville's New Dominion • Delicious Detour: Carter Mountain Orchard off Route 53



Before becoming America's third president, Thomas Jefferson was in many ways its premier traveler. As ambassador to France, he developed a passion for fine wines. Jefferson returned to the U.S. with vine cuttings that he planted at his Monticello

estate in Virginia. While his enological experiments weren't very successful, he did create a thirst for the grape in his homeland.

Road-trippers can visit Jefferson's estate and the university he founded, but they shouldn't stop there. The central Virginia Piedmont, a few hours southwest of Washington,

D.C., is a region of rolling foothills ablaze with color in the fall, winding roads that lead to now thriving vineyards, and small towns with big charms (plus tasty pies). Here's an itinerary that would make the Founding Father proud.

—Susan O'Keefe

A young Thomas Jefferson once frolicked on the farmland that's now Castle Hill Cider, in Keswick, Virginia.



PERU

THE RICHEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD



Choquequirao, Cusco © J. Vallejo

Peru has a rich culture and amazing gastronomy, but its vast biodiversity makes it a dream destination for nature and outdoor lovers. Stunning and multi-hued flora, fauna and wildlife, spectacular waterfalls, magical cloud forests, and crystal-clear lagoons are just a few wonders travelers can find in Peru.

NORTHERN PERU was the birthplace of some of the most important pre-Hispanic cultures in South America. The **Kuelap archaeological** complex in **Nuevo Tingo**, one hour from Chachapoyas, is one of the oldest and best-preserved cultural attractions in Peru and now, easily accessible via a modern cable car system.

Its privileged location amidst the Amazon Cloud Forest is a unique mixture of the Andean Highlands and the Amazon jungle allowing visitors to watch different types of flora and fauna, such as the cock of the rocks, spectacled bear, rare toucans and orchids just to mention a few.

Another unique experience is the challenging, yet rewarding, 5.5- to 6-hour trek round trip from **Caserío de Cocachimba** to **Gocta Waterfall**. The muscle-burning ups and downs are well worth just to be able to be alone with the powerful roar of the Gocta falls, one of the 15 highest waterfalls in the world; to reach the pool below it is necessary to cross the extensive valley of rainforest that surrounds it while enjoying nature at its best.

Only reserved for adventurers, in **Southern Peru**, is **Choquequirao** in Cusco—considered the sister city of Machu Picchu—served as the last Inca resort. To reach it, travelers must take a 4-day strenuous trek which allows them to come close to an untouched natural world that also reveals secrets about the past.



Gocia waterfall, Amazonas © GettyImages

Its extraordinary location and the magnitude of its natural surroundings are dominated by the Salcantay snow-capped mountains and the Apurimac river, 1500 meters down the valley. On the road, trekkers can see extraordinary snow-capped mountains of the **Vilcabamba** range as well.

All these and more await you on your next adventure to Peru. Start planning your travel at:

perutherichestcountry.com

ROAD TRIP VIRGINIA



STOP 1

Sunrise Surprise

For spectacular views of the Blue Ridge Mountains, head to **Humpback Rocks**, a massive greenstone outcrop (at milepost 5.8 of the Blue Ridge Parkway). Start your early morning hike from Mountain Farm Trail, where a living history museum gives a glimpse of Appalachian life in the late 1800s.

STOP 2

It's Academic

Thomas Jefferson's vision for an "Academical Village" comes into focus in **Charlottesville** on the lush University of Virginia Grounds, where faculty and students have lived alongside each other in columned pavilions since classes commenced in 1825. At the heart of the university rises the Rotunda, a UNESCO World Heritage site modeled after the Pantheon in Rome and built to house Jefferson's vast book collection. Adding to the grandeur of the Grounds are Jefferson's serpentine walled gardens tucked behind each of the 10 pavilions. Take a stroll over to downtown's pedestrian mall, eight tree-lined blocks featuring stores such as the Pie Chest, the Impeccable Pig clothing boutique, and Timberlake's pharmacy with its original soda fountain.

STOP 3

House on the Hill

A self-taught architect and master gardener, Jefferson designed nearly every aspect of **Monticello**, the mountaintop estate and working plantation where he lived until his death in 1826. Set high above Charlottesville, the mostly intact house brims with Indian artifacts, leather-bound books, world maps, and innovations that saved Jefferson precious time. A walk along Mulberry Row, the main avenue of operations for the 5,000-acre plantation, highlights his dependence on the labor of enslaved people. Don't miss the exhibit dedicated to Sally Hemings, mother to six of Jefferson's children, which relates poignant stories told by her son Madison and other family members.

STOP 4

Country Comfort

Old meets new at **The Clifton** inn, built in 1799 for Thomas Mann Randolph and his wife, Martha (a daughter of Jefferson's). Both antiques and abstract art grace the guest rooms of the hundred-acre estate, which has a restaurant serving local duck, lamb, and vegetables.

STOP 5

A Tipple or Two

Historic Route 231 winds through miles of quiet hamlets and horse farms. Pull off at **Castle Hill Cider**, an 18th-century plantation that ferments its drinks from heirloom apples. Try the popular Levity cider, with hints of black cherry, lemon zest, and caramel.

STOP 6

Main Street, U.S.A.

In 1840 **Gordonsville** welcomed the first railcars to central Virginia, transforming the town into a major trading hub. During the Civil War, the same trains delivered wounded soldiers to the Exchange Hotel, a railroad boarding-house turned receiving hospital. Today the Exchange Hotel and Civil War Medical Museum displays original surgical tools and prosthetic devices, plus accounts of the doctors who by the war's end had treated some 70,000 men here. Continue south on Main Street to pick up pillows and fine linens at Laurie Holladay Interiors, or dream about decorating your own Virginia country estate with 19th-century furnishings at Annette La Velle Antiques.

STOP 7

The Wine Is Fine

Jefferson imagined that the wine from his native state would equal the European varietals he coveted. Though the vineyards he planted at Monticello never quite took, he'd be delighted to know that today Virginia has more than 300 wineries.

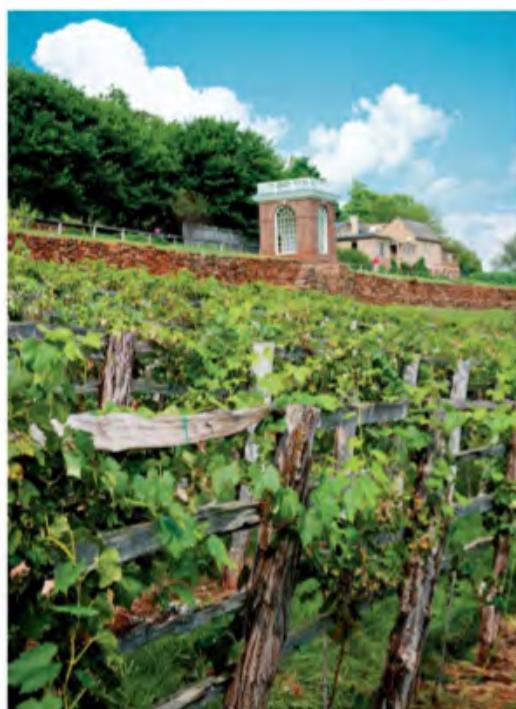
Barboursville Vineyards, one of the region's earliest and a member of the Monticello Wine Trail, uses estate-grown grapes to create vintages like the award-winning Octagon, a Bordeaux-style blend of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot. A short walk from the tasting room takes you to the fire-ravaged ruins of a mansion designed by Jefferson.



STOP 8

The Giving Trees

At **Grelan Nursery**, a sprawling tree farm, the 400 varieties come in all shapes and sizes. "Being around trees is just healthy," says co-owner Dan Gregg. Leaf peepers can hike five miles of trails to catch autumn's array of colors. For the showiest models, Gregg recommends viewing the Japanese maple, Chinese pistache, and American smoke trees. The farm's orchards invite visitors to pick their own apples, peaches, and other seasonal fruits. These also brighten the café salads, wraps, and ice cream at the Market at Grelan, which hosts hayrides and serenading musicians.



Clockwise from top: apples ready for the picking; The Clifton inn; Charlottesville's pedestrian zone; the Market at Grelan café; a Monticello vineyard

LAURENCARNES.COM (APPLES), AUDREY ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY (INN), PHIL SWALLOW PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (TOWN), EDWIN REMMBERG/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (VINEYARD), TABATHA WILSON (FOOD)

STOP 9

Rooted in Democracy

Next, turn the wheel toward James Madison's **Montpelier** plantation. (You also can reach it via a trail from the Market at Grelan that traverses Chicken Mountain and old-growth forest.) Enter the Presidential Library for a view of the expansive property and the Blue Ridge Mountains beyond. In this space, the country's fourth president contemplated democracy and shaped the ideas that would become the U.S. Constitution. Then take in the "Mere Distinction of Colour" exhibit, highlighting stories of those who lived and worked in the South Yard, and visit George Gilmore's cabin, one of the few still standing freedman's homes in Virginia.

STOP 10

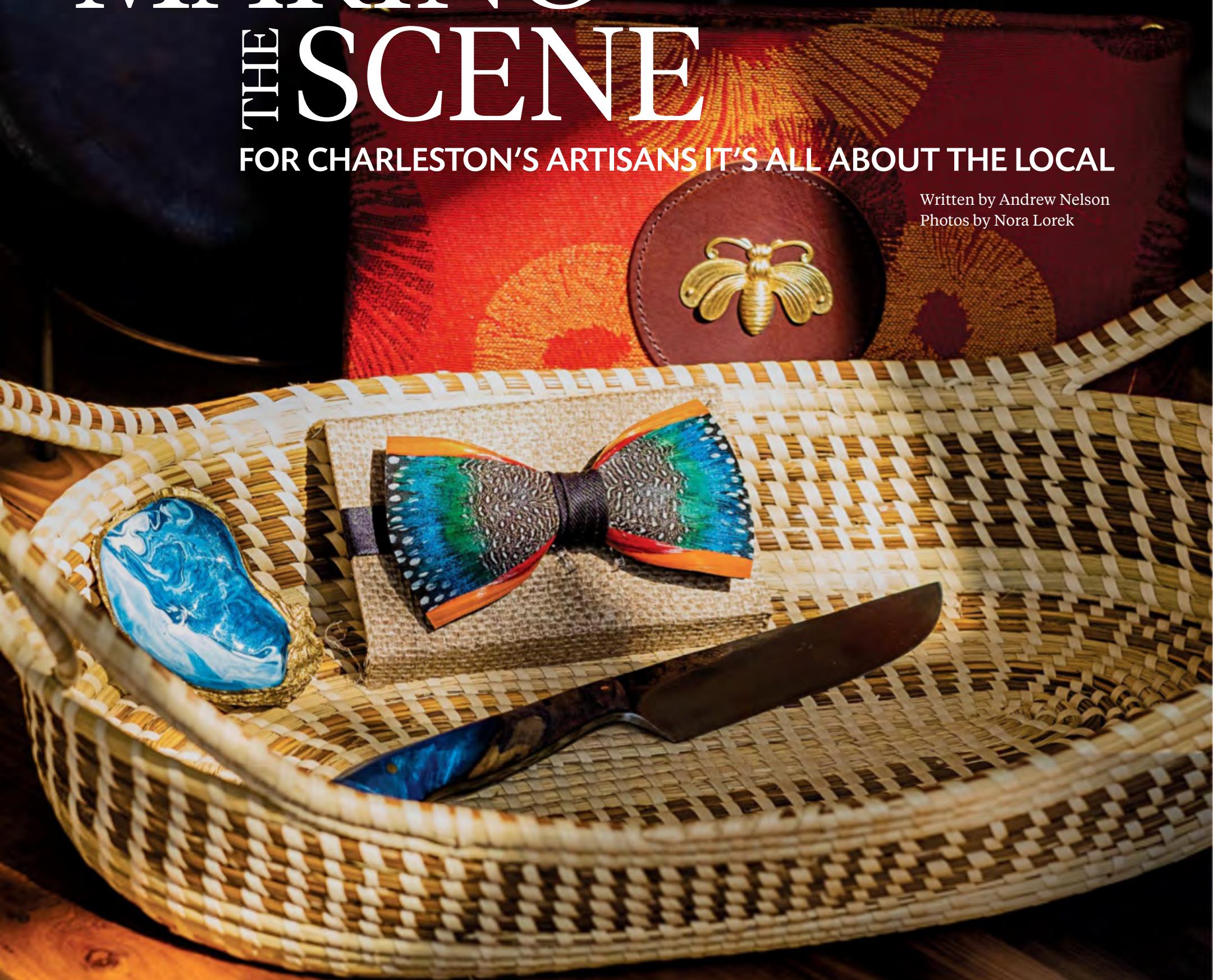
Orange Crush

Cap your central Virginia tour a few miles east in **Orange**, a friendly town with century-old brick buildings, one-of-a-kind shops, and locavore restaurants. Wander the rooms of Objects on Main, which showcase kitschy housewares, regional artwork, and plush throws. Searching is part of the fun at Finders Keepers, where you might score a well-seasoned cast iron skillet. Stop for ice cream at Grelan Downtown, or save your appetite for classic southern biscuits and stacks of fried green tomatoes at Forked on Main. The bistro is run by the owners of the nearby Inn at Willow Grove, where cozy guest rooms and historical cottages come with private balconies, gas fireplaces, and tubs made for a long, relaxing soak.

MAKING THE SCENE

FOR CHARLESTON'S ARTISANS IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LOCAL

Written by Andrew Nelson
Photos by Nora Lorek



In Charleston, South Carolina, craft and creativity are woven together as tightly as the patterns in the Gullah sweetgrass baskets sold at the Charleston City Market. Like earlier craftspeople, today's makers and their vendors draw inspiration from the city's timeless neighborhoods of oak-lined streets, historic homes, and church spires.

"There's a certain atmosphere in Charleston that grants you permission to be creative," says Jeff Plotner, co-founder of Brackish Bow Ties (a signature bow tie is pictured above). "It allows you to both express yourself and tap into the city's energy."



Clockwise from left: Croghan's Jewel Box carries gifts for every occasion such as this pewter gator stirrup cup; High Wire Distilling Company offers tours and tastings; traditional Gullah sweetgrass baskets are hand woven on-site at the Charleston City Market; Boone Hall Market is all about local products and produce.

Only seven years old, **Brackish** is a hometown success story fueled by iridescent feathers and friendship. Plotner's pal and business partner Ben Ross collected wild turkey feathers to handcraft one-of-a-kind bow ties as thank you presents for his wedding groomsmen. The unique gift led Plotner to think there could be a demand for them. Neiman Marcus, Orvis, and Nordstrom thought so, too, and today Brackish employs some 40 fellow Charlestonians in a suburban office park where they design and create bow ties in brilliant avian colors. A line of women's accessories, cuffs, and earrings debuted this year. The feathers' bejeweled hues are natural, with peacocks, exotic pheasants, and wood ducks as favorite species.

"We can't do any better than Mother Nature's paintbrush," Ross says. "It's the most spectacular brush in the world."

For retailers, Charleston's rich tradition of gift-giving can impart longevity to the best. **Croghan's Jewel Box**, established in 1907, has prospered for more than 100 years, tending to generations of families. The 24-person firm run

by Mariana Ramsay Hay and Rhett Ramsay Outten, granddaughters of the original founder, bustles with activity at their store at 308 King Street, the city's retail thoroughfare. Upstairs, three jewelers design, restore, and polish pieces with delicate precision. Downstairs, customers peruse display cases searching for the exactly right gift. That's vital, as Charleston excels in the generous gesture.

"You come to call, you bring a present," Hay explains. "That's just how we Charlestonians were raised."

Traditional Charleston heirlooms at Croghan's include a silver celebration cup on which a child's birth, communion, and wedding dates await engraving, and stirrup cups featuring whimsical animal heads like alligators and foxes. Turn a cup upside down and it is now a drinking glass. For those taking the long view, there is a child's silver soap bubble wand that becomes a cocktail stirrer when they grow up.

More suggestions on where to find only-in-Charleston products follow. Meantime, you can start planning your trip at ExploreCharleston.com

MORE LOCAL FAVORITES

BOONE HALL MARKET

Sample Lowcountry flavor at this unique grocery store located in nearby Mount Pleasant. It's stocked with seasonal produce from historic Boone Plantation including jarred peaches, blueberries, watermelons, and tomatoes. A dairy and meat section, café, and displays of other South Carolina products make Boone Hall a local favorite.

M. DUMAS & SONS

Since 1917 this King Street retailer has clothed Charleston's men with sartorial flair. "Southerners like being seen and dressing well," explains M. Dumas President and CEO Gary Flynn, and his store does the dapper well by offering colorful casuals, Italian suits, and its own brand of seersucker and blue blazers.

PRESERVATION SOCIETY SHOP

Charleston has nurtured a wave of small-scale designers and makers. This King Street outlet provides a platform for many of their products. As the retail arm of the historic Preservation Society, the shop curates the best local candles, soaps, accessories, and art. The backroom, stocked with locally relevant books, makes a cozy traveler's retreat.

HIGH WIRE DISTILLING COMPANY

This local spirits maker specializes in bourbon and whiskey, including one distilled from a variety of South Carolina heirloom corn called "Jimmy Red" found originally only on nearby James Island. Visitors to the tasting room can try samples (High Wire makes gin and a vodka, too) and tour the facility.

PLACES WE LOVE UNESCO SITES

World Wonders

Three ways to discover UNESCO's newest inductees

From the underwater glories of the Great Barrier Reef to the terrestrial mysteries of Stonehenge, places on the UNESCO World Heritage list reveal nature's greatest gifts and humankind's greatest achievements. And they often make dazzling destinations for travelers.

This year the World Heritage Committee met in the walled city of Baku, Azerbaijan, and added 29 new sites, bringing the total list to 1,121. Noteworthy newcomers include Italy's prosecco wine region, Japan's ancient burial mounds, and Iran's Hyrcanian Forests. Here's how to see a few of our favorite additions.

1 Enter a realm of ice and fire

At **VATNAJÖKULL NATIONAL PARK**, in Iceland, the interactions between ice and fire formed singular landscapes and ecosystems, such as geothermal bacterial communities that have persevered in the extreme environment for tens of thousands of years. "The listing underlines how unique the nature in Iceland is, and how important it is to protect it," says park staffer Helga Árnadóttir. The most popular sites are Jökulsárlón (the Glacier Lagoon) and Skaftafell nature reserve, in the southeastern part of the park, thanks to their proximity to the country's Ring Road. Travelers can go ice climbing, roam black sand beaches, marvel at the blue interiors of an ice cave, and kayak along the craggy coast. Vatnajökull is one of four natural sites added this year, including bird sanctuaries on China's Bohai Gulf and the French Austral lands in the Indian Ocean.

IURIE BELEGURSCHI

NATGEOTRAVEL.COM





OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2019

PLACES WE LOVE UNESCO SITES





2 Learn what makes a timeless city tick

Capital of the north-west Indian state of Rajasthan, **JAIPUR** got a nod for its centuries-old yet forward-thinking design. Founded in 1727 as a commercial center, it's believed to be India's first truly planned city and a model for population centers that followed. The rosy hue, grid

layout following Vedic architectural principles, and districts organized according to traditional Hindu concepts frame the historic backdrop to a bustling modern city. Visitor highlights in the Pink City include the Amer Fort (shown), perched on the outskirts, and the evocative Hawa Mahal ("palace of winds"),

with a honeycomb facade that lets breezes in and allowed royal women to see but not be seen. Other standouts recognized this year for artistic and cultural achievement are the ancient archaeological site of Babylon, Iraq, and the sacred Buddhist art and architecture of Bagan, Myanmar.

ELENA-STUDIO/GETTY IMAGES

PLACES WE LOVE UNESCO SITES

3 Hear the sound of falling water

Most honorees noted for architecture are singular places, such as the newly listed Mafra National Palace in Portugal and the historic city of Sheki in Azerbaijan. But this year the committee added eight buildings in six states that exemplify the 20th-century

ARCHITECTURE OF FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT

WRIGHT. During his 70-year career, Wright pioneered the philosophy of "organic architecture" that harmonizes with its environment, which can be seen clearly in

rural Pennsylvania's Fallingwater (pictured). In the Midwest, Wright enthusiasts can hit half of the UNESCO "site" during a weekend road trip: The oldest, Unity Temple, and the Frederick C. Robie House are less than 20 miles apart in the Chicago area. Taliesin, the architect's studio and home, as well as the Herbert and Katherine Jacobs House sit less than four hours away near Madison, Wisconsin.

—Meghan Miner Murray

ANDREW PIELAGE, COURTESY THE WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CONSERVANCY



OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2019

frankenmuth®

Welcome to Michigan's Little Bavaria



*S*ituated along the majestic Cass River in central Michigan lies a small town that piles a heaping plate of simple joys that you can share with friends and family no matter the season. Frankenmuth was founded in 1845 by a group of 15 German immigrants and they knew a charming spot when they saw it. The town those early settlers built continues to honor its heritage with Bavarian architecture, quaint streets graced by flowers, restaurants and boutiques that cater to visitors hankering for Old World flavors, and some 18 major festivals and events throughout the year. It says something about the need for people to experience a connection with older traditions when a town of 5,000 residents can attract nearly three million visitors per year.

From the architecture to the restaurant menus, many visitors don't even realize that everything in Frankenmuth has a strong and authentic tie to Bavaria, Germany. In fact, on the second Sunday of every month, **St. Lorenz Lutheran Church** still offers a worship service spoken in German for locals ingrained with their German heritage.



WORLD FAMOUS DINING

A Frankenmuth tradition, a combined 1.8 million all-you-can-eat family-style chicken dinners are served annually at both the Bavarian Inn and Zehnder's, two of the largest independently owned restaurants in America.

ESCAPE FROM THE CITY

The majestic Cass River runs through downtown Frankenmuth and makes for an amazing opportunity to relax and view the local wildlife. Take in the sights on the *Bavarian Belle* riverboat, or the Frankenmuth FunShips for a more intimate setting.

OLD WORLD BAVARIAN CHARM

Known as "Michigan's Little Bavaria," the Frankenmuth community is alive with German heritage, from the German food and architecture to festivals that celebrate the community's German roots.

WORLD'S LARGEST CHRISTMAS STORE

Bronner's CHRISTmas Wonderland has a showroom the length of two football fields filled with every type of ornament, light, and Christmas décor imaginable. Bronner's greets over two million guests annually and is truly a sight to see.



Built on Tradition, Made for Memories

While the traditions and culture of Michigan's Little Bavaria give visitors a sense of being in Germany, it's really chicken and Christmas that put Frankenmuth on the map as being one of Michigan's most popular tourist destinations. **Bronner's CHRISTmas Wonderland** has called Frankenmuth, Michigan, home since its inception in 1945. With a showroom the size of two football fields, it's no wonder it's the world's largest Christmas store. Right in the heart of downtown sits the **Bavarian Inn Restaurant** and **Zehnder's of Frankenmuth**, two of the largest independently owned restaurants in America located right across the street from one another. Together, these two restaurants serve 1.8 million all-you-can-eat family-style chicken dinners.

Frankenmuth truly is a destination offering something for everyone. From boat rides on the river by the **Bavarian Belle**, a traditional paddle wheel-style riverboat, to an intimate wine and chocolate tasting experience by **Frankenmuth FunShips**. See a different side of

Frankenmuth with **Frankenmuth Kayak Adventures**, or enjoy a climb in the trees at **Frankenmuth Aerial Park**.

With its close proximity to Detroit, only an hour away in fact, Frankenmuth is steadily becoming known as a place to go for close to home outdoor adventures.

Let's not forget the festivals. Family memories and traditions begin at the more than 18 major events that take place in Frankenmuth annually, such as the Olympic-style **Dog Bowl** featuring dog races, disc competitions and more, or the popular **Auto Fest** for those with a love of classic cars. There's also a number of cultural festivals that pay homage to the roots of the community, such as the **Bavarian Festival** or **Frankenmuth Oktoberfest**, both featuring polka bands, German dance groups and entertainment.

Whether you're young or young at heart, this four-season destination in Michigan is sure to become a family favorite for generations to come.



Just dial 1 (800) FUN-TOWN.

Yes, that's really Frankenmuth's phone number and they sure live up to it! With its fair share of annual festivals and events, Frankenmuth has something fun for everyone all year long.



Frankenmuth offers a number of fun things to do year-round, from horse-drawn carriage rides and water parks to zoos and petting farms. Or just sit at a café, listen to the glockenspiel, and watch the world go by. A clean and safe town, Frankenmuth knows how to roll out the welcome mat.

Start planning your trip today at frankenmuth.org!

WHY IT MATTERS THE ARCTIC



In Utqiagvik, Alaska, during the spring whaling festival of Nalukataq, successful whalers are flung skyward in the traditional trust-building blanket toss.

Where the World Connects

How to help protect a fragile place and the people who call it home

By Jenna Schnuer

Cheryl Rosa will never forget the light and the cold that greeted her on her first trip to Arctic Alaska. “It was extremely windy and extremely flat and extremely white,” she says of landing in Utqiagvik (then called Barrow), which sits at the edge of the Beaufort Sea. Now the deputy director of the U.S. Arctic Research Commission, Rosa first visited the region in 2000 to do fieldwork for her thesis.

The landscape grabbed the Massachusetts native whole. “Travel to the Arctic leaves an indelible impression on the visitor. Its sheer immensity and the fragility of its environment are two things that really blow people away,” Rosa says.

The Arctic is ground zero for climate change, and what happens in the Arctic has an astonishing trickle-down (or perhaps flood-down) effect on the rest of the planet. The region’s surface air temperatures have warmed at two times the rate of the rest of the globe; sea ice is disappearing rapidly; permafrost

is melting; and the number of caribou that graze the land have declined by almost half, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Arctic Program.

Scientists have made it clear that humans are driving climate change—but if we act quickly and globally, we might be able to reverse some of the damage.

The Arctic is not just an idea we read about in the newspaper. It’s land. It’s sea. It has been home to humans for thousands of years. And for those who can make the trip, there’s no better way to connect with the region than to meet some of its people, stand on the vast tundra, or look out on the Arctic Ocean.

I started visiting Alaska from my then home, New York City, 18 years ago. The trips grew longer and longer, and I finally moved to Anchorage in 2013.

The Arctic began to feel less remote, less an idea than a real place. I’d meet Arctic scientists while out at breweries, and at my local yarn store I’d make friends

with people who had grown up in the Arctic. Talk of the region swirled around me. The Arctic stopped being lines on a globe and photos in books, and became a place I wanted to explore, to write about, to protect. The Arctic is both part of the state I now call home and a region that connects the U.S. to other nations, a place we all should safeguard together. Ice doesn't obey borders when it melts into the sea, causing ocean levels to rise.

My first trip to the Arctic—a mid-July day trip with a group up to Coldfoot in the Brooks Range—only fed my growing fascination with the region. How could one ever spend enough time there, an area that crosses eight countries and 5.5 million square miles—about the size of 631 New Jerseys or 34 Californias? How could I return home ever thinking, well, I've seen enough, or I've met enough local people, or I just can't look at another walrus? Ridiculous thoughts, all.

Brooklyn-based artist Zaria Forman, who is the art curator for the new polar ship *National Geographic Endurance*, is a case study in the ways travel to the Arctic can transform a life. Forman's mother, a photographer, first took Forman to Greenland in 2007. Until that trip, Forman "knew of climate change as this distant subject," she says, but it opened her eyes to issues, including the ways locals had to adapt their lifestyles because of the changes in their environment. Now she travels to Arctic regions for at least a month at a time, photographing and sketching areas that are "intriguing compositionally" and evoke strong emotions, in order to make large-scale pastels "as realistic as possible to give the viewers the same feeling."

"There are so many kinds of ice," she says. "The Arctic is an endless source of inspiration."

Travel to the Arctic changed John Gaedeke's life even before it began. I first came across Gaedeke on Instagram, easily the most accessible way to tour the Arctic. Gaedeke is manager of Iniauk Lake Wilderness Lodge, 225 miles north of Fairbanks and 60 miles above the Arctic Circle, in the Brooks Range. His parents built the lodge in 1974. It is still his home for half of each year. The nearest neighbors are 50 miles away, in Bettles. Arctic travel grips his guests as soon as they board the plane to get there. "The big transformation is on the two-hour flight in here," he says. "Within 20 minutes of leaving Fairbanks, they don't see anything. It's so remote." Even the villages that punctuate the landscape disappear from sight within seconds.

The other day, I added a new item to the list of places I want to experience in the Arctic, a list which

What happens in the Arctic has an astonishing trickle-down effect on the rest of the planet.

includes visiting Ellesmere Island in Canada, watching polar bears in Greenland, and talking to the people of Nunavut about what it takes to collect qiviut wool from musk ox. The new place on my list is called Anaktuvuk Pass, in the central Brooks Range. I had called the Simon Paneak Memorial Museum in this Nunamit Inupiat village to interview Louisa Riley, president of the museum, and Vicky Monahan, the curator. When travelers come through the village, Monahan provides a quick immersion tour into the life and history of her people, of how the U.S. government forced them to give up their nomadic ways. She sees the impact of climate change on the land and on the Inupiat lifestyle. The summers are shorter and the winters warmer, making it harder to harvest the meat, berries, and other plants they depend on for their subsistence.

"I paint a picture where they get an understanding of what we've been through and what we're doing today," Monahan told me.

"We don't have much choice," Riley said. "You adapt. We're real resilient."

Traveling to any part of the Arctic takes time, money, and planning. Here are some ways to be a good steward of the Arctic before, during, and after your trip:

—Go with tour groups that are "respectful of Arctic residents and their culture," says the U.S. Arctic Research Commission's Cheryl Rosa. "Too many people can overwhelm small villages. Finding tour groups that work with local communities is important."

—Take nothing but photos, unless you buy art or other souvenirs from the local people.

—Learn whose land you're touring, and ask permission before taking photos of people or their homes.

—When you get home, tell your friends and family about your trip and help them understand what issues are in the balance.

Says Rosa: "I do believe most visitors leave with a better understanding of why the Arctic is important—and how high the stakes are."

The September 2019 issue of *National Geographic* magazine is devoted to the state of the Arctic. natgeo.com/arctic



JENNA SCHNUER
(@jennaschnuer) is an Anchorage-based freelance writer. She has written for Smithsonian, the New York Times, and Edible Alaska, among others.

GREAT ESCAPES DOMINICA



Big-Time Adventure

Nature dictates the day plan in Dominica—especially for adventure travelers. With mountainous rainforests, black sand beaches, and dramatic underwater realms, this island nation located between Guadeloupe and Martinique has emerged as one of the world's prime ecotourism destinations.

Don't expect the typical Caribbean tourist scene here, as Dominica has resisted the mass-market glitz that defines its more developed neighbors. Some experiences, such as snorkeling with the resident sperm whales (pictured here), are

purposefully low volume. To protect the whales, only a few permits are granted each year.

The island has achieved a remarkable recovery from 2017's Hurricane Maria, making now an excellent time for not-so-everyday excursions including fishing for an invasive species, trekking to a massive hot spring, and canyoning in deep gorges. Here's how to explore a land where wilderness rules.

—Gina DeCaprio Vercesi



FRANCO BANFI/www.wildlifephottours.ch/PICTURE TAKEN UNDER LICENSE N. RP 17 - 01/02 FIS-4 (WHALE), HEMIS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (TRAIL); NG MAPS



HIKE TO A BOILING LAKE

Countless trails crisscross Dominica's mountainous terrain, clinging to cliffs above black sand beaches or winding through lush jungle. Some routes, like the path to Emerald Pool or the Syndicate Nature Trail, reward almost instantly with cascading falls and parrot sightings, while the 115-mile Waitukubuli National Trail—the longest in the Caribbean—reveals its magic more slowly. But it's the hike to Boiling Lake, a flooded fumarole deep in the rainforest, that is Dominica's most iconic. The six-hour trek (out and back) passes through Morne Trois Pitons National Park into an alien-looking landscape of steaming vents, mud pots, and sulfur springs known as the Valley of Desolation.

RAPPEL INTO A CANYON

Every year Dominica receives more than 300 inches of rain—or liquid sunshine, as the locals call it. Over millennia deep gorges formed that conceal pristine waterfalls and rushing rivers. Akin to a natural water park, the resulting topography is ideal for canyoning—a thrilling blend of hiking, climbing, rappelling, and swimming. Inside stone chutes, bromeliads and ferns sprout from crevices in moss-covered walls flanking crystalline pools far below. Take the plunge with Extreme Dominica, which offers excursions geared toward novices. After getting your feet wet in smaller canyons, try the 260-foot rappel down Trafalgar Falls or a night adventure by headlamp.



Left: A hiker hoofs it along a path in the UNESCO-inscribed Morne Trois Pitons National Park en route to the Boiling Lake.

Far left: Some accredited tour operators, such as Wildlife Photo Tours, offer a rare chance to swim or snorkel with sperm whales, following strict regulations to safeguard their welfare.

HUNT FOR YOUR DINNER

Native to the Indo-Pacific, lionfish are an invasive species in the Caribbean, where they feed voraciously with no predators—except for hungry humans. On Dominica's southwestern tip, Nature Island Dive's Simon Walsh teaches hunting techniques to skilled scuba buffs before leading lionfish spearing missions at some of the island's best dive sites, including those within Soufrière-Scott's Head Marine Reserve, a submerged volcanic crater. Coral and rock formations create an underwater zone supporting a proliferation of colorful creatures. Easy access from shore means that snorkelers, too, can take in Soufrière Bay's subaquatic scenery.

OBSSESSIONS CEMETERIES



Grave Encounters

Discover how cemeteries can unearth intriguing plots and little known stories of the dead—and the living

By Katie Thornton

When I arrive in a new destination, I like to immerse myself in the life of my surroundings. So I go to a place that holds the grandeur of an art gallery, the fascinating tales of a history museum, and the verdancy of a public park. I go to the graveyard.

Like many seemingly odd fascinations, my obsession with cemeteries began as a teenager. The massive cemetery near my family's house in Minneapolis became my amateur photography studio, my go-to

The Victorian-era cemetery Arnos Vale, in Bristol, England, had fallen into disrepair, but is now an active space with a wedding venue and walking trails.

place for contemplative walks, and the obvious destination for close-to-home adventures. But my interest wasn't a macabre phase. After college I spent three years conducting historical research and planning public events for that same cemetery. Now, as a Fulbright-National Geographic Digital Storytelling Fellow, I travel the world interviewing people in cemeteries—from gravediggers who gave up their comfortable office jobs to stonemasons who continue handcarving tombstones even though the craft is “dying.”

I walk graveyards like a detective, using epitaphs to decode history. At Chicago's Woodlawn Cemetery, I noticed a grave marked “Unknown Male No. 1.” I walked the cemetery’s aisle as the numbers on the nearly identical tombstones climbed higher, reset at “Unknown Female No. 1,” and climbed again. Nearby graves bore the names “4 Horse Driver” and “Baldy.” More than 50 graves had nearly the same death date in June of 1918. When I reached a memorial monument in this plot known as Showmen’s Rest, the full story took shape: A circus train wreck had claimed all these victims on one tragic summer day.

At London’s famed Highgate Cemetery, I came across the inscription “Also of their infant children” on an ivy-covered family grave. Similar to the famous six-word story—“For sale: baby shoes, never worn”—this short epitaph elucidated the realities of Victorian-era infant mortality more succinctly than any history book. Through epitaphs I discover tales of daily life, epidemics and emigration, industrial booms and busts, love and loss.

But it’s not just epitaphs that help us peek into the past. By stepping inside one of Singapore’s few remaining historic cemeteries, I got to trade the superstructures of the city-state’s modern skyline for what remains of the tiny island’s majestic rainforests. Ninety percent of the country’s forests—and most of its historic cemeteries—have been cleared to make way for development in the urban nation smaller than New York City. But in Bukit Brown Cemetery, still alive with the buzz of mosquitoes, the smell of rain, and the threat of snakes, I glimpsed Singapore before urbanization. Volunteer historians used walking sticks to pull back the dominating greenery and reveal intricately tiled tombs. Families brought me to their ancestral graves, where they poured coffee for the dead and left meals their forebears might have enjoyed in life. I watched as monkeys cheekily snatched the food offerings left behind. Here, death fuels life.

Travelers like to haunt graves at Paris’s Père

Views to Die For

In many parts of the world, the dead are given prime real estate. These three cemeteries have vistas worth the visit. For additional graves with great scenery, go to natgeotravel.com.

GREEN-WOOD, NEW YORK CITY

This garden-style cemetery’s trees, plants, and views made it America’s second biggest tourist attraction in the 1860s (beaten out only by Niagara Falls). Position yourself just so within its 478 acres and you can see the cemetery’s impressive gothic entryway, the neighborhoods of central Brooklyn, and the Manhattan skyline.

OKUNOIN CEMETERY, JAPAN

Japan’s largest cemetery is located in the hauntingly beautiful, sacred woods of Mount Koya, two hours south of Osaka. Ancient pines tower over moss-covered stone lanterns, statues, and paths of pilgrimage. It is the resting place of some 200,000 Buddhist monks.

HONG KONG CEMETERY, HONG KONG

In the high-end neighborhood of Happy Valley, Hong Kong Cemetery’s terraced and compact graves ascend a mountainside, echoing the density of the neighboring skyscrapers.

Lachaise (Jim Morrison, Oscar Wilde, Gertrude Stein), Los Angeles’s Hollywood Forever (Cecil B. DeMille, Fay Wray), and Buenos Aires’s La Recoleta (Eva Perón). But I learn more off the beaten path. While hiking a seaside bluff in Scarborough, England, on a chilly mid-December day, I inadvertently came upon a small graveyard that held the body of writer Anne Brontë. She died in Scarborough in 1849 at age 29, having journeyed to the ocean one last time while suffering from tuberculosis. Hers is a grave with a killer view, overlooking the sea and backlit each evening by the coastal sunset.

Brontë’s final resting place shares an aging stone boundary wall with a small grassy parking lot. Headstones crowd the perimeter of the lot. Part of the graveyard had been repurposed by the adjoining church to provide parking for its parishioners—an act not uncommon in land-limited England. This adaptation of cemetery space reminded me that graveyards aren’t relics. They are places reshaped to meet our personal and cultural needs.

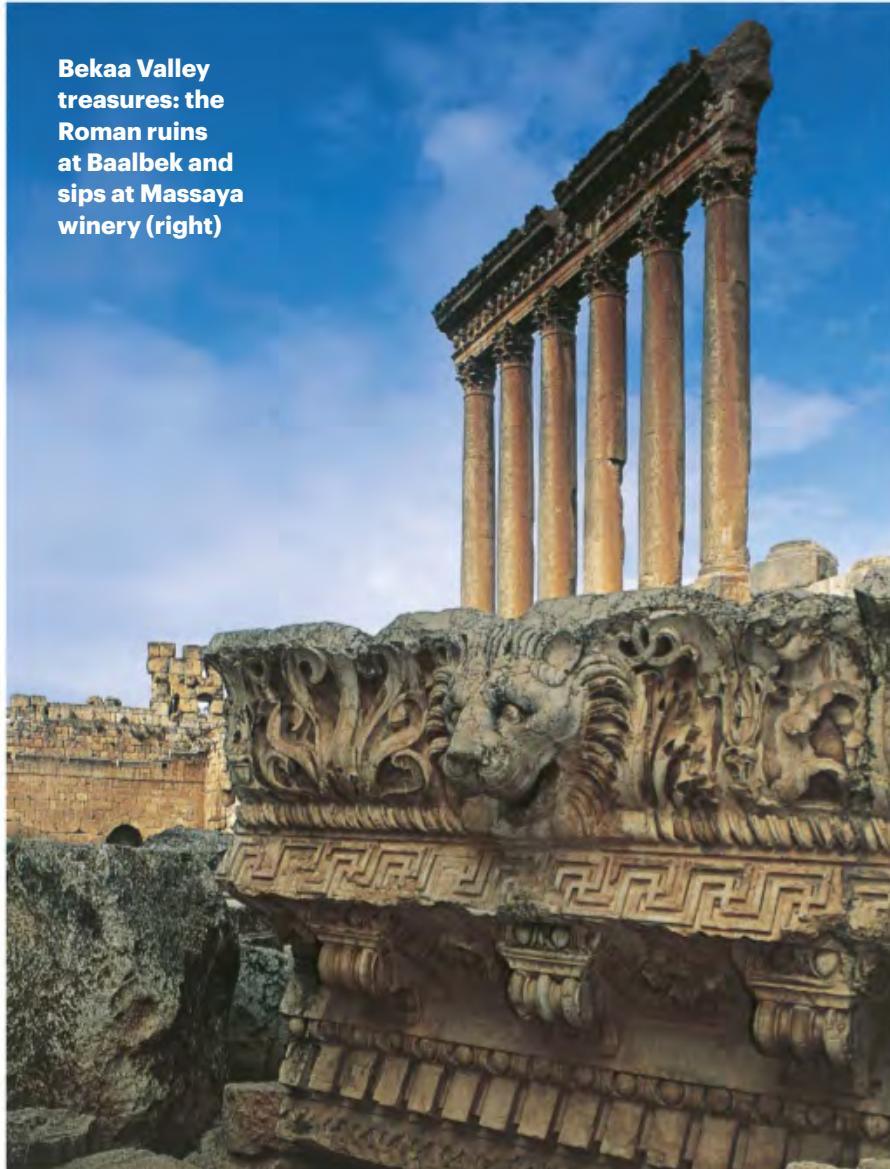
I’ve seen this reality play out all over the world. I interviewed a cemetery manager in London who reuses graves and headstones after long periods of abandonment. I visited a graveyard in Jakarta, Indonesia, a megacity of 10 million with less than 10 percent green space, where children flew kites and vendors sold food and coffee among the graves; the dire need for public park space tempered the typically solemn air of Muslim graveyards. And at Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol, England, I scanned an augmented-reality app over graves and was greeted by on-screen ghostly narrators.

Caricatures of graveyards surround us during Halloween season. However, I invite you to view cemeteries not as places of death, but as places of life. Learn about the death rituals in your destination, and, if the community welcomes visits, go. Remember that people have long been excluded from burial in graveyards based on religion, race, and inability to pay, and think about who is—and is not—represented. Feel the power of kinship as you stand beside a labor or social union’s shared burial plot, like the Butcher’s Benevolent Society tomb in New Orleans’s Lafayette Cemetery No. 2. Perhaps you will experience the joy of finding a witty quip on a headstone, like the one in Washington, D.C.’s Oak Hill Cemetery that declares, “We finally found a place to park in Georgetown!” Treat cemeteries as they are: spaces for the living.

KATIE THORNTON (@itskatiethornton) writes about death (and life) on itskatiethornton.com.

TASTE OF TRAVEL LEBANON

Bekaa Valley treasures: the Roman ruins at Baalbek and sips at Massaya winery (right)



Wines of the Times

Plots thicken in the Bekaa Valley, where great grapes grow in the eastern Mediterranean

By Jackie Snow

You could say that Lebanon, home to some of the world's oldest civilizations, is a vintage destination. What's more surprising is the deep-rooted nation's rising profile as a wine producer. There is a historical precedent: the drink has been cellared here since the Phoenician era, circa 2500 B.C., and amid the ruins at Baalbek rises a temple to Bacchus, the Roman god of wine.

Travelers can find both the temple and the vineyards in eastern Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, roughly 55 miles from Beirut. The high elevation, wet winters contrasted by sunny summers, and a tradition of young wines with few additives all help to create fresh, light reds as well as crisp whites and rosés that seem made for savoring on a breezy Beirut terrace overlooking the Mediterranean Sea.

The Bekaa Valley is resilient. Harvests pressed on throughout Lebanon's civil war (1975 to 1990) and the 34-day conflict with Israel in 2006. "A lot of other wine producers would have thrown in the towel long ago," says Michael Karam, a journalist and author of the book *Wines of Lebanon*. But the industry has kept going and now includes at least 50 wineries. Two of our favorites for sipping at the source: the sublime French-style white wines at Château Khoury and the racy red blends at Château Héritage.

NATIVE GRAPES

Try Merweh, a white-wine grape related to Sémillon, and Obaideh, the star of rich whites as well as arak, an anise-scented spirit.

STELLAR CELLARS

When Jesuit monks founded Château Ksara in the 1800s, they discovered Roman-built wine caves on the property. Visitors can tour the ancient cellars and sip the château's vintages. chateaeksara.com

TAILORED TASTINGS

Living Lebanon offers personalized winery tours that include tastings and meze. living-lebanon.com

OH, THE PLACES THEY'LL GO!

A wide-angle photograph of a vast desert landscape with numerous sand dunes under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a group of approximately eight people, including several young students and one adult guide, are standing on a large sand dune. One student in the center holds a blue and brown flag with the words "NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPEDITIONS" printed on it. The guide, a woman in a purple jacket and backpack, is reaching out towards the right side of the frame. The background features more sand dunes and distant mountain ranges under a bright sun.

National Geographic Student Expeditions takes high school and middle school students on summer trips to fascinating places near and far, from the beaches of Belize to the deserts of Namibia. Send your student out into the world to explore with our experts and photographers.



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BEST LIST

EPIC OUTDOOR ADVENTURES



► 15 life-changing experiences in North America's national parks



Travelers are dreamers who act on their inspirations. The new National Geographic book *Epic Journeys: 245 Life-Changing Adventures* is for the people who go beyond their comfort zones to experience the wild beauty of the natural world around us. The book features adrenaline-fueled forays to all seven continents. While the Nat Geo spirit of exploration spans the globe, being an

intrepid traveler doesn't have to mean summing Mount Everest or surveying icebergs in Antarctica. Some of the planet's wildest places—launchpads for all sorts of discoveries about the world and yourself—are closer to home in North America's national parks. We've selected 15 mind-blowing adventures to inspire your inner explorer.

In Utah's Zion National Park, the climb up Angels Landing brings heavenly views.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

NEXTSTOP >>

SIGNATURE EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS



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The Desert Is Wild

Scottsdale's Sonoran Desert is the perfect place to unleash your wild side. Take a sunrise hike with only cactus wrens for company. Go stand-up paddleboarding on the Salt River as wild horses graze along the banks. Or float over stands of saguaro cacti in a hot-air balloon. Get your adventure on at **AbsolutelyScottsdale.com**


SCOTTSDALE
ARIZONA

BEST LIST

EPIC OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Canyon Cycle

ARIZONA

The chasm of **Grand Canyon National Park** can seem too immense to comprehend, let alone explore. Cycling the rim allows you to cover lots of ground. For epic sunrise vistas, begin before dawn at Hopi Point.

High-Altitude Hike

CALIFORNIA

If you can't spend three weeks trekking the 211-mile John Muir Trail along the spine of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, hiking the section from **Yosemite National Park** to **Devils Postpile National Monument** is the next best thing. The three-day, 31-mile route begins at Tuolumne Meadows (elevation 8,600 feet), delivers views of snowcapped peaks, and climbs through 11,056-foot-high Donohue Pass. That's just day one. The otherworldly end point, Devils Postpile, is named for its basalt rock columns towering up to 60 feet.

Canoe Trip

FLORIDA

Paddle the 1.5-million-acre **Everglades National Park**, a mazelike mix of prairie, mangroves, marsh, woods, and water, water everywhere that's best explored December to April when fewer bugs are biting.

Rock Climb

WEST VIRGINIA

The snaking ravine carved by the New River's white water is a gravity-defying playground for rock climbers. More than 1,400 established climbing routes are located within the **New River Gorge National River** park, which protects 53 miles of river and some 70,000 acres. Cliffs range from 30 to 120 feet high, and most routes require advanced to expert technique. For daredevil thrills without the skills, snag a coveted spot (space is limited) on October's annual New River Gorge Bridge Day High Line, which sends brave souls on a 700-foot-long ride over the gorge, 2,200 feet up.

Butterfly Bonanza

ESTADO DE MEXICO, MEXICO

In the fir forests a few hours west of Mexico City, millions of migrating monarchs roost in the trees and swirl in the skies from November to March. Of the butterfly sanctuaries open to the public, **Cerro Pelón Monarch Butterfly Sanctuary** may be the hardest to reach, meaning you'll see fewer people and earn more props for making the climb—a rocky and, sometimes, straight-uphill slog on horseback from the Sierra Madre valley to the monarch's cloud-forest winter home.

Lake Kayak

MANITOBA, CANADA

Clear Lake is the crown jewel of the collection of lakes open to kayakers in **Riding Mountain National Park**, the traditional home of the Anishinabe people. Paddling makes for a stealthy way to slip into the park's serene backcountry.

Wilderness Trek

WASHINGTON

Take off-the-beaten-path hiking to the next level by tackling part of a true wilderness trail, the 25-mile Olympic Adventure Route in **Olympic National Park**. The isolated OAR ascends through cougar habitat and old-growth forests.

Horseback Ride

ALBERTA, CANADA

Saddle up for a pack trip into the hinterland of **Banff National Park**, Canada's first. Traveling by horse allows you to go deep into the wild, climbing above glacier-fed lakes for top-of-the-Rockies tableaus and crossing valleys where bison roam. Day rides often retrace trails blazed by First Nations and European explorers.

Sea Kayak

BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR, MEXICO

Blue whales, manta rays, and whale sharks thrive in the plankton-rich environment of **Loreto Bay National Marine Park** in the Sea of Cortez. The water's often rough, but the abundance of outsized marine creatures, combined with the stunning scenery—desert landscapes flanking turquoise water—make this park a top spot for sea kayaking tours.



An American crocodile soaks up the sun in Florida's Everglades National Park.



Stacking 220 separate exposures created this star trails image of Jasper National Park in Canada.

Canyon Climb

UTAH

Bagging Angels Landing peak in **Zion National Park** earns you bragging rights and breathtaking views. The five-mile trail is a test of courage with 21 steep switchbacks leading to a thousand-foot-high ridge.

White-Water Rafting

IDAHO

Hold on tight for a six-day roller-coaster ride over Class III and IV white-water rapids. The Middle Fork of the Salmon River deepens and swells as it flows through the 2.3-million-acre **Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness** (the nation's largest continuous wilderness area south of Alaska), continually dialing up the exhilaration quotient. During rare flat-water stretches, be sure to scan the shore for bighorn sheep and bubbling hot springs.

Snowmobiling

WYOMING

See the winter wonders of **Yellowstone National Park** by snowmobile with Anvil Hotel's Explorers Club. On a hundred-mile tour, spot bison and elk en route to Old Faithful or the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

Dogsledding

ALASKA

The northernmost national park in the United States is one of the wildest of the planet's remaining wild places. No roads lead into the **Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve**'s 8.4 million pristine acres, all of which lie north of the Arctic Circle. Most visitors arrive in summer by bush plane, so a winter dogsled run across the snow-encrusted expanses is among the rarest of national park experiences. Beginning in March 2020, Arctic Winter Adventures will offer five three-day dogsledding trips (one person or couple per trip) inside the park.

Subterranean Snorkel

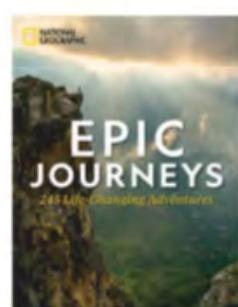
QUINTANA ROO, MEXICO

Hidden beneath the lush greenery of the Yucatán Peninsula are more than 6,000 sinkholes, or cenotes, formed when limestone collapses and groundwater seeps in. Revered by the Maya as portals to the gods, the underwater caves now draw divers eager to explore a watery window into the Earth. But no special certifications are required to go snorkeling among stalactites and stalagmites in the grottoes of **Aktun-Chen Natural Park**, 15 miles north of Tulum.

Stargazing

ALBERTA, CANADA

At some 4,200 square miles, **Jasper National Park** ranks as one of the largest dark-sky destinations. On a clear, moonless night, be mesmerized by billions of twinkling stars and, just maybe, the aurora borealis.



Purchase your copy at shopng.com/books.

THE QUEST PRAGUE



When the Planets Aligned

An astronomy geek explores an era when the Czech capital was a magnet for celestial scientists

By Alex Schechter

Around 10 p.m. on a clear night in early June, I'm staring down the end of a Zamboni-size reflector telescope. I'm in the eastern dome of the Štefánik Observatory, in the hills above Prague's Malá Strana neighborhood. Unlike unruly Old Town, things are quiet here. The observatory sits atop the Lobkowicz Gardens, and to reach it, I took a funicular. Exiting the station, I had passed through a rosarium, where bushes of pink, white, and red blooms caught the last of the evening light.

Overhead, the entire hemisphere of the roof swivels. I can hear the groan of cogs turning like spokes on a giant bicycle wheel. "Aha! Jupiter!" exclaims the Czech woman who's in charge, pointing

to a bright twinkle fixed between two pine trees in the distance. We look up in excitement, until we realize it's not fixed after all.

"No, it's an airplane," she admits. "But Jupiter looks very similar."

Fifteen minutes later, in the facility's western and even larger dome, we finally catch Jupiter, rising between the same two trees. Climbing to the top of the ladder, I peer through the lens, and witness, to my shock, the sharpest rendering of the planet I've ever seen. It looks like a pastel orange gumball floating in the pure black of space. The image is so crisp that I can even discern two bands of cloud on its smooth surface. Three moons—Callisto, Io, and Europa—punctuate the scene.

Looking around me at the four or five other figures gathered in the dark, I am perplexed: How are there not more people up here, seeing this? Then I remember: It's Saturday night, and pilsner, not planets, is what's on most visitors' minds.

Prague isn't necessarily known for stargazing, but its history with astronomy and astrology goes back to the 17th century, a time when the two disciplines often blurred together. Under Emperor Rudolf II, a patron of the arts and sciences, Prague became a beacon for astronomers, alchemists, and philosophers.

One of them, Johannes Kepler, was a talented math teacher who was banished in 1600 from Austria for his non-Catholic beliefs. Kepler came to Prague as an apprentice to fellow stargazer Tycho Brahe (the two are immortalized in a bronze sculpture less than a mile from the observatory), and lived in a small apartment at 4 Karlova Street, just off Charles Bridge. As a side gig, Kepler wrote horoscopes for the mystically inclined emperor.

Kepler's seminal text, *Harmonices Mundi*, was published exactly 400 years ago. It's an expansion of Kepler's studies on planetary motion, in which he proved the planets move in an ellipse—not a circle—around the sun.

For me, the text holds a deeper meaning: It develops the idea of the "music of the spheres," or the harmonic theory of planetary motion. ("The Earth sings mi, fa, mi," Kepler wrote.) It is the basis of my work as a sound therapist, where I apply a tool known as a planetary tuning fork to acupuncture points on the body. When I learned that Kepler spent the bulk of his time in Prague refining the theories that went into *Harmonices Mundi*, I knew I had to go.

At first, I had a hard time squaring the raucous beer



halls of today's Prague with its radical beginnings. My guide, Lenka, who leads custom city tours through a company called JayWay, explained: "Prague is in the center of Europe, and there is an extreme amount of energy here. People who are sensitive, they feel it." In other words, the same force that inspired all those philosophers back then is what lures travelers today, even if they don't know it.

Take Charles Bridge, Prague's most visited site: Back in 1357, Charles IV (another metaphysical monarch) commanded the first stone to be laid at precisely 5:31 a.m. on July 9, thus creating the auspicious palindrome 135797531.

Clues to Prague's cosmic side are scattered throughout the city. Some are hiding in plain sight, such as Old Town Square's giant astronomical clock, which draws a crowd of photo-snapping tourists every hour when

The treasures at the National Library of the Czech Republic, opened in 1722, include collections of ancient Greek texts, rare Bohemian manuscripts, and mechanical globes.

Opposite: The Astronomical Clock in Old Town Square is set in motion on the hour.

THE QUEST PRAGUE

it strikes. Gazing up at its cryptic overlay of rotating disks, medieval numerals, and heavenly symbols, I struggle to read the actual time. But that's because its function is more astrolabe than clock. The front-facing hands trace the movements of the sun and moon across the zodiac—useful for townspeople who wanted to learn the correct day to receive medical treatment or buy a new house.

I spend an afternoon at the Astronomical Tower inside the Klementinum, an old, sprawling Jesuit university in the center of the city. Filled with astronomy tools from the 17th and 18th centuries, it is in many ways the last intact monument to starry Prague. Jumping onto the last tour of the day, I join a group of 25 visitors and we ascend single file up a tightly wound metal staircase. The tower's first floor opens into the National Library of the Czech Republic, with its spiraling wood columns and collection of celestial globes, a hall little changed since 1722. If Dumbledore himself had looked up from perusing a giant tome of spells, I wouldn't have been surprised.

On the floor above, in the boxlike Meridian Hall—an active meteorological station—we stand where Kepler's contemporaries once measured the positions of planets with sextants the size of hockey goal posts. Another 50-some nearly vertical steps, and we find

ourselves at the top of the tower. On four sides, all of Prague, with its red pointed roofs and saint-decked spires, is bathed in golden light.

It is an unforgettable panorama, and one I never would have found had I not let my inner astronomy nerd lead the way. Lesser known than Prague Castle and St. Nicholas Church, this watchtower is a more gratifying visit, as it affords unbroken views of all those other sites, minus the long queues.

Walking back to my hotel, I spot a sign that reads "Kepler Museum." Excited, I follow a narrow alley down past some buildings but come to a dead end. The museum had since closed, and all that was left in the empty courtyard was a metal sphere, engraved with a Latin quote from Kepler: "*Ubi materia ibi geometria.*" Where there's matter, there's form.

Esoteric Prague is still here, a quiet contrast to the city's "beer bike" tours. If you hunt for it, a sharper image of choreographed skies and thrilling stellar discoveries comes into view, harking back to a time when humans were just waking up to the mysteries of our solar system.

ALEX SCHECHTER (@earth2alexsound) lives in Los Angeles, where he works as a freelance writer and sound therapist.

Astronomical Sites in Europe

Astronomy captured the minds of countless physicists, architects, and even musicians in medieval Europe. Its cultural impact can still be felt. Here are four places to explore.

HERSCHEL MUSEUM OF ASTRONOMY

Composer William Herschel occupied this 18th-century terraced house in **Bath, England**. On display is a replica of the seven-foot telescope that Herschel used to discover Uranus in 1781.

CATHÉDRALE NOTRE-DAME DE STRASBOURG

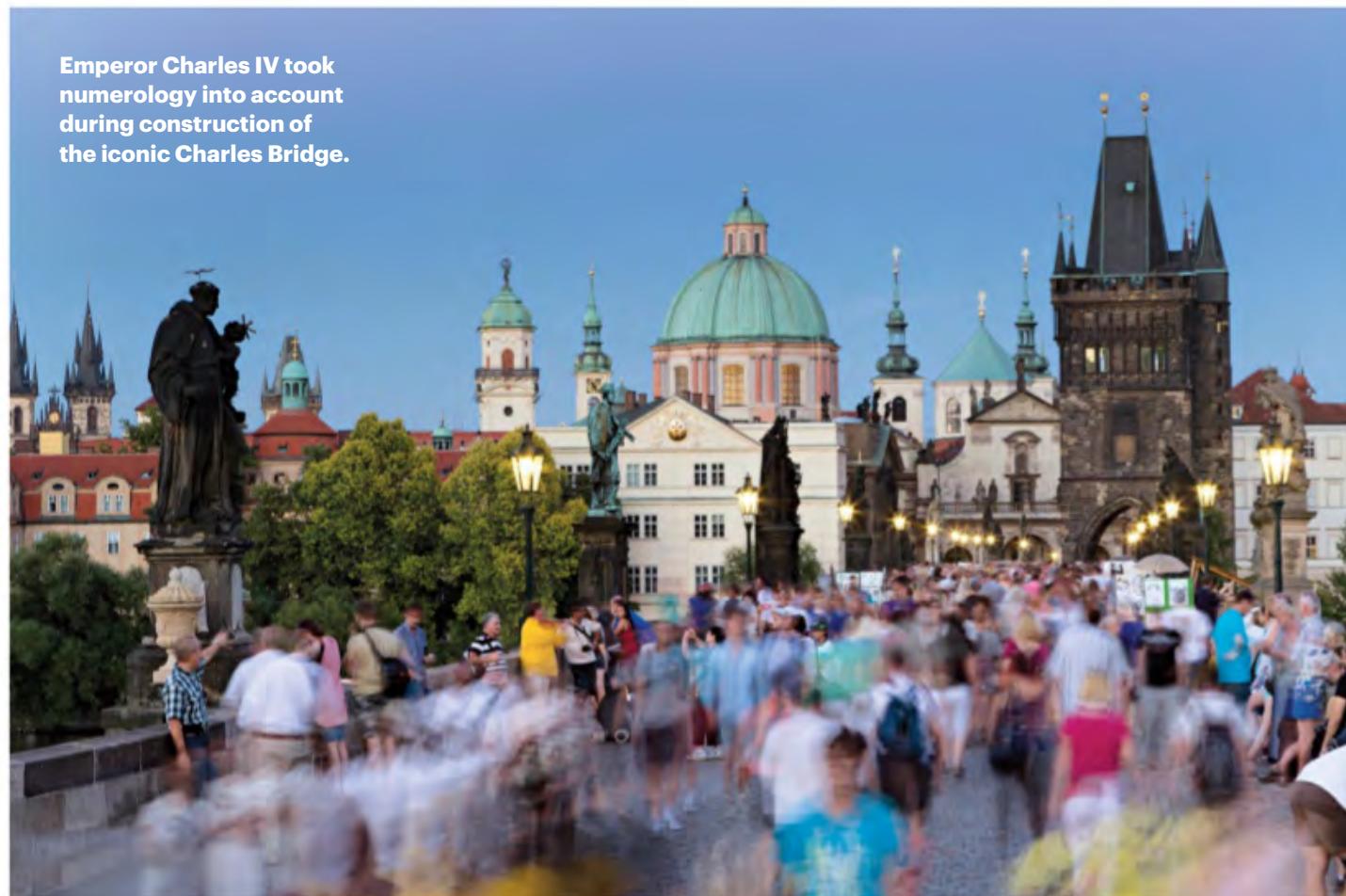
In 1842 clockmaker Jean-Baptiste Schwilgué installed a four-tiered marvel of celestial gadgetry in the cathedral in **Strasbourg, France**. Visitors now show up at 12:30 p.m. daily to watch the clock come to life.

PARMA BAPTISTERY

Considered one of the finest examples of celestially influenced architecture, this pink marble structure in **Parma, Italy**, allows sunbeams to fall on certain statues, paintings, and baptismal fonts on religious holidays.

MUSEO GALILEO

This 20-room museum in **Florence, Italy**, contains one of the world's richest collections of scientific and medical instruments from the Renaissance, including tools Galileo himself used.



CRUISING SMALL SHIPS

Up Close & Personal

Yes, good things do come in small packages, including ocean cruises. Expedition vessels with fewer passengers not only tend to be more sustainable but also have easier access to hard-to-reach ports and adventure activities.

National Geographic Expeditions specializes in this type of trip, and the new Short Escapes collection offers ultra action-packed itineraries. The 11 options include a six-day Iceland outing that scouts lava fields and hot springs along the country's rugged western coast and a seven-day Galápagos escape with just 48 travelers who snorkel with sea turtles and kayak with sea lions.

Aboard the 92-cabin **Ponant Le Bougainville**, passengers spend nine nights cruising the Vanilla Islands between the Seychelles and Madagascar with stops to glimpse rare lemurs, explore the pristine reefs of UNESCO-listed Aldabra Atoll, and take naturalist-led excursions in search of giant rays and gentle dugongs.

For an even cozier experience, set sail with **UnCruise**, whose *Safari Explorer* accommodates only 36 guests. On the seven-night "Hawaiian Seascapes" voyage, see a different side of the Aloha State by kayaking under thousand-foot sea cliffs, swimming with manta rays, and hiking to waterfalls before sitting down for a traditional local feast.

The Russian Far East will be the destination when **Crystal**'s 100-suite

Endeavor makes its maiden voyage in August 2020. Embarking from Tokyo, the 17-night cruise will offer exploration of Japan's volcanic Rishiri Island, with hikes through virgin forest, and Russia's Zhupanova River to see the brown bears that patrol its banks.

If you're an advance planner, check out **Silversea**'s April 2021 cruise from Cairns to Singapore. Over 22 days, travelers will take in the waterfalls of Western Australia's Kimberley region, the reefs of Indonesia's Wakatobi National Marine Park, and the cave tombs of Sulawesi. An onboard digital photo studio makes documenting your adventures a snap.

—Eric Rosen

TUI DE ROY/NATUREPL.COM

Playful, puppyish, and preposterous, some 50,000 sea lions inhabit the Galápagos Islands.

GO WITH NAT GEO UNIQUE LODGES



Sundy Praia is tucked into verdant forest sheltering abundant wildlife.

SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE

Fantasy Island

Wildlife-rich jungles, pristine beaches, and a vibrant culture convene on Príncipe, part of an island nation marooned some 140 miles off Africa's west coast. With tourism in its infancy here, the **SUNDY PRAIA** eco-lodge—along with three sister resorts—aims to provide a model for sustainability and community-based development. In addition to cooking with a local chef and exploring with a fisherman in a wooden pirogue, guests can create their own souvenir with a group of women artists known as Mambos da Terra, or priestesses of the earth. You'll transform recycled glass into jewelry and learn about the artistic process as well as the lives of the Príncipean artists, whose ancestors include enslaved peoples and plantation workers. Fill your days with snorkeling, kayaking, and hiking excursions in this UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. —Catherine Torphy

BOOK NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC UNIQUE LODGES natgeolodges.com/explore

CANADA

Force of Nature

When forest fires swept through the British Columbian backcountry in 2017, Allyson Rogers—owner of **Siwash Lake Wilderness Resort**—fought to save her ranch alongside a few brave staff members. She then established a nature reserve to protect the fragile postfire ecosystem. Nature's resiliency takes center stage at Siwash, where guests can join a fire ecology hike and go horseback riding in a dynamic, regenerating landscape.

COSTA RICA

Not Your Daily Grind

In the hills above San José, where a muddy motocross field once languished, lush gardens and a tree-shaded coffee farm now flourish. **Finca Rosa Blanca Coffee Plantation Resort** is the vision of owner Sylvia Jampol, whose purchase of the land in the 1980s helped revitalize the local community. A stay at the art-adorned hotel comes with Latin-fusion cuisine, panoramic volcano views, and an immersion into Costa Rican coffee culture.



BUJU KARMAN (ILLUSTRATION)

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A wide-angle photograph of a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, a dark, rocky slope descends towards a gravel road. The road curves through the scene, leading the eye towards a massive, craggy mountain peak on the right. The mountain's surface is a mix of dark rock and patches of snow or ice. In the background, more mountain peaks are visible under a sky filled with heavy, white clouds.

**This road trip in
northern Italy engages
the muscles and
indulges the senses**

BY STEPHANIE PEARSON

**EPIC
ACTION
ITALY**



Whoops of joy escape my lips as towering peaks and bursts of yellow wildflowers whiz by. I'm in the northern Italian region of Alta Badia riding a juiced-up electric mountain bike on a downhill flow trail, each bermed corner steeper and tighter than the last. Where I'm from in Minnesota, e-bikes aren't allowed on trails, which makes this ride feel extra rambunctious. I want to put the bike into "turbo" mode, but crashing would put a damper on our trip.

I've spent the majority of my 25-year career reporting stories from out-of-the-way places, and my travel philosophy has always been the more rugged and remote the better, which has led me to catching a ride on a fishing trawler to an albatross colony off the Falkland Islands and to being stranded on Class V rapids in Tasmania. As glorious as it seemed, Italy was never high on my priority travel list. It felt too manicured, too stylized, too perfect—the exact opposite of me. Where in Italy, I wondered, could I find the adrenalized beauty I craved?

I found it on a road trip from Venice north to the prosecco-producing hills of Valdobbiadene; on to the towering Dolomites, a mountain range

of arresting steeples, pinnacles, and rock walls; then west to Lake Garda, an inland freshwater sea partly ringed by peaks. The itinerary had my boyfriend, Brian, and me riding bikes, hiking to mountain *rifugi* (shelters), climbing via ferratas, and sailing on Lake Garda, all while sampling the region's sublime proseccos and meeting some of Italy's most dedicated craftspeople. We packed this journey into 10 days, but you'd be wise to linger as long as you can.

VENICE: ROCK THE BOAT

"The gondola is the only perfect boat for rowing a single oar," says Saverio Pastor. He's one of five *remieri*, or oar craftsmen, left in Venice. The walls of his shop, Le Fórcole, are lined with wooden oars he's made, and the floor space is filled with oarlocks, or *fórcole*, that look like sculptures. That's why collectors around the globe buy his work as pieces of art rather than as utilitarian boat parts.

The stop at Pastor's shop is just one of many on a walking tour I've arranged with Luca Zaggia, a marine scientist, in an effort to further understand Venetians' intricate relationship with water. Zaggia, in turn, invites Giovanni Caniato, a scholar and expert on Venice's boating history. Our timing in Venice is ideal. Tomorrow is the 45th annual Vogalonga regatta, a 20-mile boat tour in which 8,000 rowers, kayakers, and canoeists will paddle a labyrinthine course around the city.

"Coastal morphology is the main issue in Venice, especially the impact of large boats," Zaggia tells us as we walk cobblestoned streets infamously sagging under the effects of overtourism. An estimated 20-million-plus tourists visit annually, while the resident population of 55,000 shrinks by the year. I wrongly assume that the monster cruise ship I saw being tugged through the canal yesterday is the worst offender, but Zaggia corrects me.

"Cruise ships often create less damage than cargo ships," he says. He adds that while cruise ships are far from ideal vessels for Venice, one of the best ways for tourists to mitigate further damage is to avoid taking private, high-speed water taxis. Their waves cause more erosion than slower moving ferries.

At Squero San Travaso, an out-of-the-way 17th-century boatyard, owner Lorenzo Della Toffola is building a wooden gondola spine under the bright sun. It will take him 500 hours to complete one boat. Brian notices the stern *ferro*, the high point at the back of the boat, is hinged.





The Bridge of Sighs, which spans a canal from the marble-clad Doge's Palace, proves that the beauty of Venice quickens pulses as much as an extreme mountain bike trek in the Dolomites (previous pages).



"Gondolas have big problems," Caniato tells us, explaining that because of rising water levels, the boats no longer fit under the bridges during high-water peaks and have to be modified.

Our final stop is a 15th-century boatyard that houses the private association Arzaná. Caniato, a curator of the association dedicated to preserving Venetian boat culture, turns the key in the lock. Inside are ancient rudders and oars, the largest collection of fórcole in the world, and one of the association's 50 period boats. Caniato pours us a glass of red wine, and we make a toast to his beautiful city, which has survived 14 centuries. Despite its woes, he says, "I would never leave Venice."

STRADA DEL PROSECCO: EFFERVESCENCE EVERYWHERE

"The power is in the ladies; there are no men," Giovanni Zanon jokes as we power-sip an extra dry brut from Sorelle Bronca estate. We're halfway into a 32-mile mid-morning cycling loop on a hot Sunday, and this highly regarded prosecco, with hints of honeydew and pear, tastes refreshingly crisp. It's made by Antonella and Ersiliana Bronca, two sisters who took over their father's winery in 1988. The women and their families grow their grapes on a patchwork of 67 acres scattered throughout the region of Valdobbiadene. This, along with the neighboring region of Conegliano, became Italy's 55th UNESCO World Heritage site on July 7, thanks in part to its aesthetically pleasing checkerboard landscape, where rows of vines grow parallel and vertical to the sloping hills. The resulting prosecco is currently the most popular Italian wine worldwide.

Zanon owns Villa Abbazia, an 18th-century palace converted to a five-star hotel in the village of Follina. It sits across the street from a 12th-century monastery founded by Cistercian monks. Villa Abbazia also houses the only Michelin-starred restaurant in the region. Last night its Puglian chef, Donato Episcopo, prepared us an elaborate, whimsical five-course meal that included trout marinated with citrus fruits for the entrée and ended with tiramisu—the same recipe Zanon's family has used since 1955—and too much grappa. We dined on an outdoor patio overlooking the grand palace and a garden brimming with lemon trees, rhododendron, and hydrangea, feeling like royalty.

Zanon, the quintessential host, stayed up with guests until 2 a.m., but this morning, his cycling-fanatic side has taken over and he's riding with us on a route of his design that climbs 1,600 feet through jasmine-scented hills. The terrain is exhilarating, with punchy climbs; long, leisurely downhills; and minimal traffic. We stop every few miles to eat and drink with Zanon's friends. At Pasticceria Villa dei Cedri, a café with pastries that are almost too beautiful to eat, I try the traditional southern Italian cream puff, *tette delle monache*. The name, I later learn, translates to "nuns' breasts." Despite this reminder that Italy is slightly behind the curve in #MeToo political correctness, it's a luscious treat that pairs well with espresso.

It fuels me for our final climb to the new tasting room at Garbara winery, in Cartizze. Cartizze Zero is a light, smooth

prosecco known for being so pure that there's no sugar. We sip it while overlooking the verdant vine-covered hills. Only three days in, I'm already wondering how Italy can get any better than this.

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: SPORTY & CHIC

"Cortina is considered the fancy town of the Dolomites," says Carlo Cosi. "But this is my garden." A professional mountaineering guide originally from Padua, Cosi has climbed all over the world, earning a nomination for the Piolet d'Or, mountaineering's highest honor, for a route he opened in Peru. But it's the Dolomites that Cosi loves best.

We're at the base of Tofane mountain, surrounded by red-rock vertical faces with dozens of climbing routes. Ten miles east, down Falzarego Pass, is the village of Cortina d'Ampezzo. In 1956 the chic alpine resort hosted the Winter Olympics, which brought the Dolomites to the attention of the world's glitterati, from Frank Sinatra to Brigitte Bardot. In June the International Olympic Committee awarded the 2026 Winter Games to Milan-Cortina.

Yesterday morning Brian and I hiked five miles on a path hemmed in by red dolomite walls to 6,532-foot Prato Piazza Hut, a beautifully maintained rifugio sitting in a wildflower-filled pasture under the shadow of Croda Rossa peak. After lunch we hiked a few miles higher on a World War I path, past a crumbling Austrian fortification to the summit of 7,569-foot Mount Specie. Tonight we'll stay at Rifugio Lagazuoi near the 9,114-foot summit of Lagazuoi peak. A few hundred feet below the rifugio, a door opens into a half-mile-long

tunnel the Italians bored through the rock in 1915 to haul up explosives in order to dislodge the Austrian troops who were stationed above them.

Now, however, our focus is on climbing a thousand feet straight up on Ra Bujela, a via ferrata that starts near the top of Cortina's women's World Cup downhill run. Via ferratas, or "iron ways," are climbing routes that World War I soldiers built by pounding iron-runged stairs into the rock in order to climb otherwise impassable peaks. The historical routes are so popular with recreational climbers that ski resorts and mountaineering associations across the Dolomites continue to build new ones, such as the route we're about to climb. Gazing upward, Brian is frowning. He's an ultramarathon cyclist, and for the first time in the three years I've known him, he looks unnerved.

"You go first," he tells me. "The heights make me a little queasy." I haven't climbed much lately, but I'm more comfortable with the vertical exposure than he is. Sensing Brian's unease, Cosi ropes the three of us together for an extra safety measure, in addition to connecting individually via two carabiners that fasten



The steep hills of Farra di Soligo, at about the halfway point along the Prosecco Road, have long grown grapes that go into producing Italy's most popular wine.





our harnesses to the cable route. We climb the first pitch straight up a vertical wall to a narrow footbridge suspended between two pinnacles. The reliable footholds and ever present cable give rusty climbers like me an opportunity to once again feel the exhilaration of summiting otherwise unreachable heights.

"The nice thing about the Dolomites," Cosi says on our hike back down the mountain, "is that they are for everybody."

ALTA BADIA: BIKES & BAROLOS

"For us it is very important to keep Ladin—the food, the clothes, the language, the music," says Matthias Thaler, our mountain biking guide, who also happens to be a former ski racer for the Italian national team. "I play the trumpet."

We're only 16 miles northwest of Cortina, with the same drop-dead views of mountains, but we have entered the world of South Tyrol, an enclave of Austria before it was annexed to Italy after World War I. Here 70 percent of the residents speak German, 26 percent speak Italian, and less than five percent speak Ladin, a language from a culture that has existed in these valleys in South Tyrol for 2,000 years. Thaler is one of 30,000 Ladin people who remain in these valleys. He's lived here his whole life.

To cover more territory than we could on a mountain bike, we rented e-mountain bikes this morning from a shop in the village of San Cassiano. We pedaled them up to the Pralongià Plateau, a wide-open space that sits at almost 7,000 feet and serves as a natural viewing platform to 10,968-foot Marmolada Glacier, the highest peak in the Dolomites; Sella Ronda, a legendary ski touring circuit; and Sasso di Santa Croce, a massif on which Reinhold Messner opened a famous climbing route in 1968.

Just below the plateau sits Piz Arlara, a rifugio with a deck facing the Sella Ronda. We take a long lunch here, drinking lemony radlers (similar to shandies) and soaking in the view before riding the squirrelly flow trail down to the base of the mountain. Before we leave, I ask Thaler a question I've been wondering about since I arrived in the Dolomites. "Are the crosses at nearly every summit World War I memorials?"

"No," he responds, "they're a sign that we're closer to God."

South Tyrol may be closer to heaven, but the residents still love their Italian wines. The Costa family, which owns the Hotel La Perla in the village of Corvara, has one of Europe's largest collections of Sassicaia, a highly valued Italian wine. To access this wine and the 30,000 or so other bottles in their cellar, the three sommeliers slide down a firefighter's pole, then walk back up a spiral staircase with chilled wine in hand. The Hotel Ciasa Salares, in the village of San Cassiano, features a 24,000-bottle wine cellar that specializes in biodynamic small-batch varietals. Sixty percent are from Italy. During our wine tasting in the hotel's cellar restaurant, Jan Clemens, whose family owns the hotel, brings us a cutting board piled with bread, cheeses, and meats, most of which have been cured by his grandfather. After tasting six varietals, I'm not surprised that my favorite is what Clemens calls "the king of Italian wines"—a 2005 Barolo produced in

Piedmont. It's got smoky notes, reminiscent of coffee and leather. "This," says Clemens, "is the elegant part of Italy."

LAKE GARDA: SMOOTH SAILING

Thanks to George Clooney and his passion for Lake Como, Lake Garda, to the southeast, is largely overlooked by Americans. That's fine by us. Within 10 miles in any direction there are mountain bike trails, via ferrata and rock climbing routes, hiking trails, and road cycling routes. But we've come for the water—the northern third of 143-square-mile Lake Garda is off-limits to private powerboats, which makes it a mecca for windsurfers, kitesurfers, and sailors because the winds whip up like clockwork and hold steady for hours.

"The wind machine is working," says Luca Spagnoli, the owner of Sailing Du Lac, the lakeside windsurfing and sailing school at the Hotel Du Lac et Du Parc.

Lake Garda's two main winds are the Pelér and the Ora, thermals set up by a change in temperature over a change in distance. The Pelér, a northerly morning wind, blows off the mountains and is known as the "good-weather wind," creating sets of small waves that are ideal for beginning windsurfers and kitesurfers. It normally dies down before noon, just as the Ora comes from the south, generally blowing 15 to 20 knots, the perfect wind for experts.

Sure enough, this morning the lake was glassy enough to paddle stand-up boards to the other side, but it's 2 p.m. and the winds have picked up. It's time to go fast on the catamaran. Our sailing instructor, Ivan Pastor, mans

the rudder. We sail until we reach a part of the lake farther south devoid of ripping windsurfers—an impressive amount of them women—and schoolchildren racing in single-masted Optimists. Then he hands the rudder and sheets to me. I used to sail catamarans as a kid, but it's been a long, long time.

"The most important thing with sailing is learning how to read the wind," Pastor tells me. It's good advice, but I'm in the weeds trying to wrap my brain around the counterintuitive way I have to push the rudder away from me while simultaneously uncleating the sheet as I'm going about. Eventually, my sailor's muscle memory returns enough for me to steer the boat downwind. We start to heel, laughing out loud and clipping along at a pace that feels dangerously close to flying. It's a fitting way to end our prosecco-and-adrenaline-fueled road trip through Italy. And we haven't even burned a full tank of gas.

STEPHANIE PEARSON (@stephanieapears) is a contributing editor at Outside magazine who splits her time between the lakes of northern Minnesota and the deserts of the Southwest.

The 75-mile Alta Via 1 is among the most popular hiking trails in the Dolomites. The stretch around the Passo Falzarego (nearly 7,000 feet in elevation) is a thrilling walking path.





A Flying Phantom
catches wind on
Lake Garda, one
of the world's best
regatta locations,
with international
sailing competitions
held throughout the
year. Visitors can pick
up skills at lakeside
sailing schools.



Travel Wise: Dolomites Region

WHERE TO STAY

VENICE

Hotel Casa Verardo

This three-star hotel housed in a 17th-century palace is a less than 10-minute walk from Piazza San Marco, but it sits away from the fray, down a quiet alleyway. Breakfast on the terrace and an evening Aperol spritz in the walled courtyard garden frame an ideal Venice day. casaverardo.it

FOLLINA

Hotel Villa Abbazia

Joy emanates from every corner of this eclectic, relaxing estate, from the Buddhist statues at the entrance and the lemon trees in the garden to the brightly decorated rooms and the gladiolas on the linen tablecloths in La Corte, the Michelin-starred restaurant. Cyclists should reserve in advance for a ride with hotel owner Giovanni Zanon. hotelabbazia.com

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

Hotel Cristallo Resort & Spa

This five-star hotel, built in 1901, was temporarily converted to a hospital—twice—for wounded soldiers in both world wars. After the 1956 Winter Olympics, it became the preferred choice for stars like Frank Sinatra, who had a suite named after him. While it has world-class amenities such as a state-of-the-art spa, visitors most appreciate the unfettered view of the Tofane mountain range across a green valley. marriott.com

SAN CASSIANO, ALTA BADIA

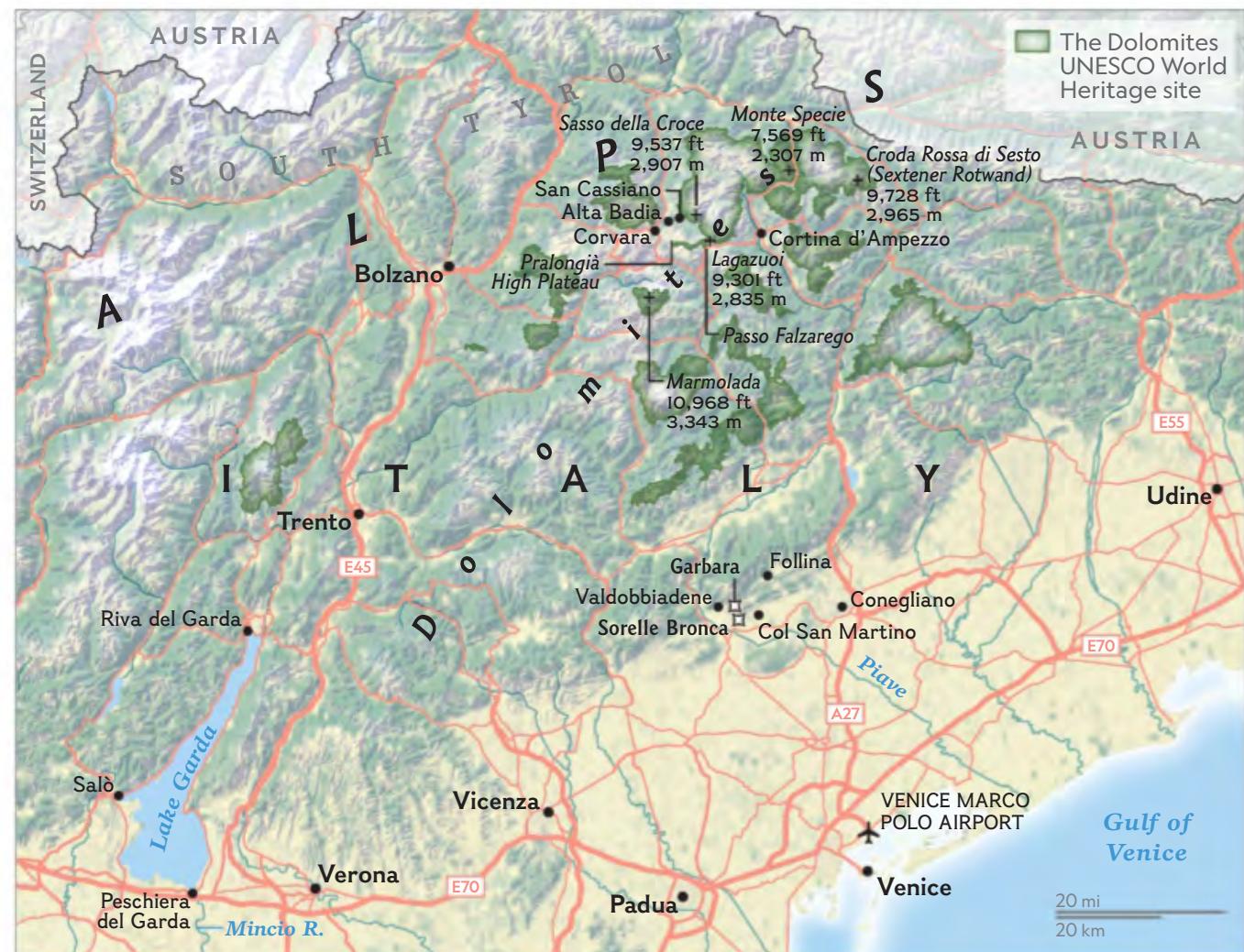
Hotel Ciasa Salares

Luxurious yet comfortable, with light, airy rooms accented by pine, this third-generation family-owned hotel is as playful as its surroundings. An outdoor garden contains a mini zipline for kids, and cheese- and chocolate-tasting rooms adjoin the Cocun Restaurant. ciasasalares.it

CORVARA

Hotel La Perla

Founder Ernesto Costa and his wife, Anni, oversee every detail in this



classically elegant, Ladin lodge. Most rooms overlook Mount Sas-songher. Five restaurants and bars onsite include one with a Michelin star. Pinarello Lounge is the most sporty, with a changing rotation of biking memorabilia on display, which might include signed Tour de France jerseys. laperlacorvara.it

LAKE GARDA

Hotel Du Lac et Du Parc

Grand Resort

Fronted by sprawling gardens that lead to the shore of Lake Garda, this resort with multiple room styles is an ideal location for both water sports and the shops and restaurants of palm tree-lined Riva del Garda, just a 15-minute walk away via lake path. Don't miss the rooftop breakfasts. dulacetduparc.com

WHERE TO EAT

VENICE

Ristorante Al Giardinetto da Severino

Glass chandeliers hang amid wandering, wine-producing grapevines in the backyard patio of this traditional Venetian restaurant a quick walk from Piazza San Marco. The same family has been serving

meals here, such as spaghetti with squid ink, since 1949. algiardinetto.it

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

El Brite de Larieto

At the base of Monte Cristallo in the middle of a cow pasture, this quaint rifugio offers classic northern Italian dishes such as casunziei, ravioli stuffed with beetroot. Follow it with grappa laced with cumin, a powerful digestif. elbitedelarieto.it

ALTA BADIA

Rifugio Gardenacia

The reward for climbing the brand-new Les Cordes via ferrata above the village of La Villa is that it leads to the Gherdenacia Plateau and this idyllic mountain lodge with a restaurant that serves thirst-quenching radlers and hearty polentas. gardenacia.it

GUIDES

DOLOMITE MOUNTAINS

With deep knowledge of the Dolomites and Sardinia, owner Agustina Lagos Marmol and her staff have a far-reaching network of freelance hiking, mountaineering, via ferrata,

cycling, and mountain biking guides and can customize anything from a one-day family journey to a month-long solo odyssey. dolomitemountains.com

CONTEXT TRAVEL TOURS

Context Travel started in Italy more than two decades ago and now has scholars as expert guides in cities worldwide, but the Italians are perhaps still the most passionate guides of all. contexttravel.com

ITALY CYCLING TOUR

Effusive, charming, and fanatical cyclists with great attention to high-quality bikes, Alessandro Da Re and his partners are based in Follina but offer trips throughout Italy. italycyclingtour.it

SEGNANA WATERSPORTS

With several locations on Lake Garda, including one at the Hotel Du Lac et Du Parc, Segnana offers a simple formula for successful sailing, windsurfing, and kitesurfing: At the end of five days of two-hour-a-day lessons, everyone will be able to sail alone on the water. surfsegnana.it



A scenic landscape featuring a lake, hills, and a small plant in the foreground.

**These five trends
are transforming
the traditional safari
experience in Africa**

BY COSTAS CHRIST

THE NEW SAFARI



Mara Naboisho Conservancy in Kenya is a haven for big cats, including cheetahs. Conservancies are now where some of the best safari experiences can be found. Previous pages: One of the last refuges for mountain gorillas is Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park, where nearby Singita Kwitonda Lodge is helping to protect the endangered animals through habitat restoration.

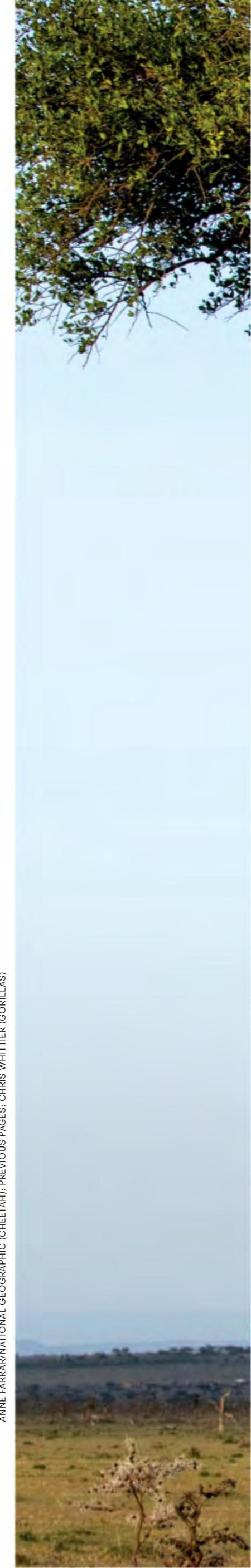
SAFARIS IN AFRICA, for most of the 20th century, often meant stalking big game with a rifle. Then a new generation of camera-toting adventurers showed up. It was the 1970s, and Kenya was among the few countries that travelers could easily visit on a continent still reeling from the era of colonialism. Zebra-striped mini vans were the popular “bush” vehicle and the only guides were men.

Not anymore. From emerging wildlife havens to women-led expeditions, the future of Africa safaris has arrived. “Community conservancies like Naboisho in Kenya were an important turning point,” says Judy Kepher-Gona, one of Africa’s top ecotourism experts. “Local villagers went from mostly being porters and cooks to becoming partners and leaders in protecting wildlife.” The results are impressive—conservancies in Kenya now encompass more than 15 million acres and protect some of the world’s rarest species, including the black rhino.

As governments have struggled to effectively manage their national parks, private organizations have also stepped in to help, including African Parks, a nonprofit group founded with the sole purpose of saving Africa’s parks and their wildlife by focusing on economic development and poverty alleviation. Success stories include Zakouma National Park, in Chad, which went from the edge of collapse to becoming a jewel in the crown of wildlife encounters today. “We are in a game-changing moment of innovation where local people and travelers alike are benefiting from a new safari vision,” says Keith Vincent, CEO of Wilderness Safaris, one of the continent’s most celebrated outfitters.

Going on safari may once have been about hunting. The safaris of today are about conservation—a good thing for local communities and the planet.

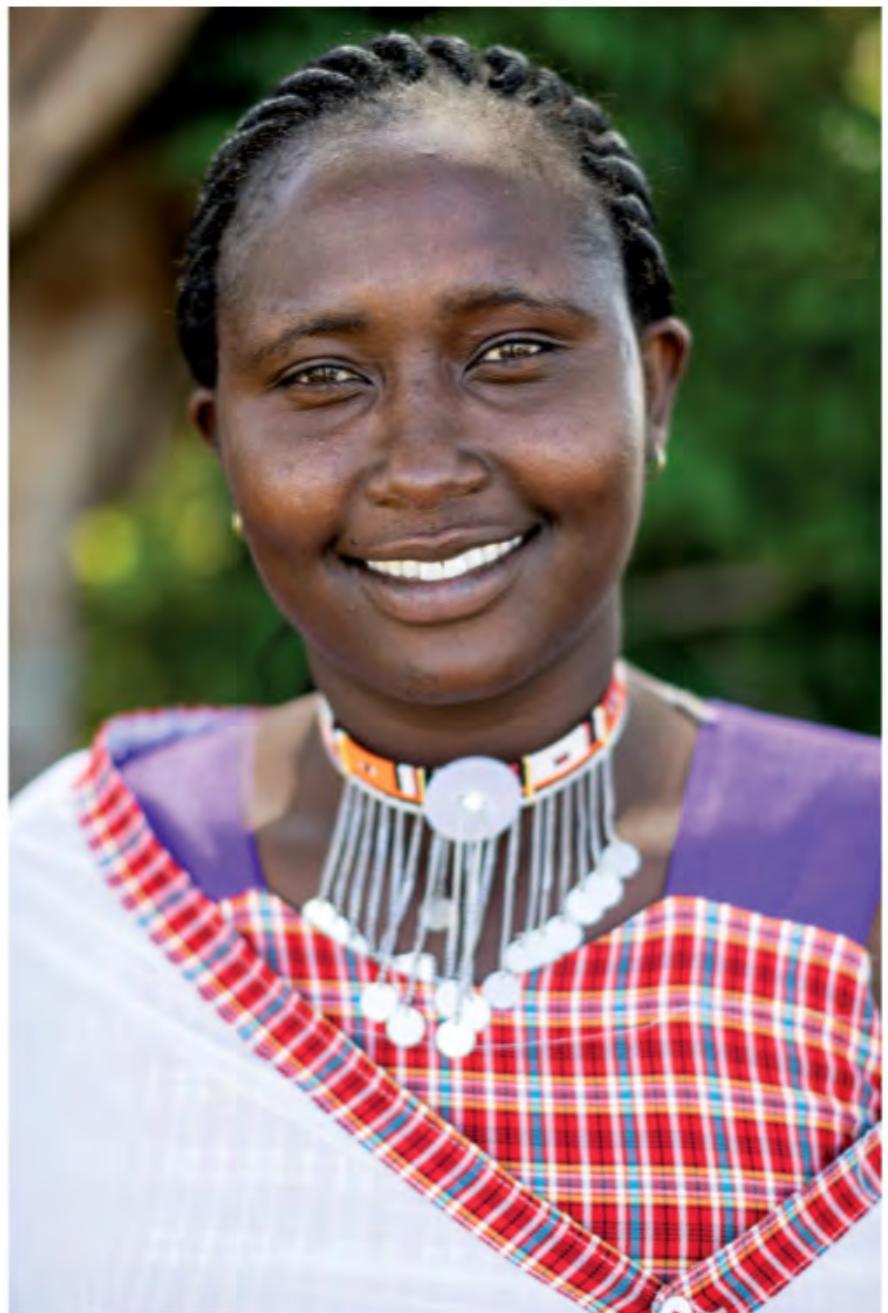
ANNE FARRAR/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (CHEETAH); PREVIOUS PAGES: CHRIS WHITTIER (GORILLAS)







ANNE FARRAR/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (ALL PORTRAITS)



TREND 1

WE TOO

From Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa's first female president, to Kenyan conservation crusader Wangari Maathai, Africa has had no shortage of dynamic women leaders. And now a new generation of African women are making it known that they have what it takes to challenge gender norms in the safari industry. "It was typical of men to insist that we did not possess the skills to be good guides," says Tshepiso Vivian Diphupu, the head of Africa's first all-female guide team at Botswana's Chobe Game Lodge. "But in my experience, women are well suited to this work. We tend to be better communicators, are more sensitive to guests' interests, and are confident and always willing to learn more." Dubbed "Chobe's Angels" by some, Diphupu and her colleagues, now 19 strong, are among the first—but not the only—women to break into what was once solely a fraternity.

"My goal as a guide is to make every safari unique, educational, and fun," says Maggie Duncan Simbeye, founder of Maggie's Tour Company, one of the few safari companies owned by an African woman. "I have always loved nature, and my knowledge of plants and animals runs deep." Working as a safari guide in Tanzania inspired Simbeye to establish the Dare Women's Foundation, a local NGO working to empower women and girls to pursue their professional ambitions.

Both Noolamala Taek (above left) and Nareyio Koshal (opposite) are members of Kenya's Basecamp Maasai Brand, an economic initiative that aims to empower Maasai women. Members earn enough money selling traditional beadwork online and to guests at Basecamp lodges to send their children to school, build homes, and purchase livestock.

Pursuing a passion for learning about wildlife and ecosystems, Lorna Serseri (above right) made a decision to go to guide school. She is now a full-time safari guide and wants to encourage more girls to enter this field. By being a guide, she says, "I really feel empowered."

Male elephants on the Naboisho Conservancy spar with their sharp ivory tusks, which also prove alluring to poachers. One of the conservancy's goals is the eradication of poaching and illegal possession of wildlife products.







TREND 2

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

One of the most important conservation lessons to come out of Africa in the past 30 years is this: Unless local people are your allies, saving endangered species will forever be an uphill battle. Many wild animals in Africa live outside of national parks on community conservancies. Today, that is where some of the best safari experiences can be found, including tracking elephants on foot and sleeping out under the stars.

From the Maasai of Kenya to the Himba in Namibia, indigenous people have long lived in balanced coexistence with nature. “We established the Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust on our ancestral land, near Mount Kilimanjaro, to protect nature and share our traditional way of life with visitors in a more direct and meaningful way,” says chairman Samson Parashina, a Maasai elder recognized by the United Nations in 2012 as one of six Champions of the Earth.

Ecolodge Campi ya Kanzi, in southern Kenya’s Chyulu Hills, collaborates with local Maasai in all aspects, from building to programming. Here, friends and guests head to a renewal of wedding vows ceremony for the lodge’s founders, Luca Belpietro and Antonella Bonomi. The lodge is part of the Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust.

Guests stay at Campi ya Kanzi, an ecolodge in the heart of the trust’s 300,000 acres of community conservancy land, where lions, eland, and other big game roam between Kenya’s Amboseli and Tsavo national parks. “Conservancies are redefining safaris, both in terms of saving wildlife and in offering innovative guest experiences,” says Ashish Sanghrajka, president of Big Five Tours and Expeditions. Sanghrajka specializes in itineraries that support indigenous communities. “It is about being on the forefront of conservation today and also offering a great wildlife adventure. Conservancies are where the two meet.”

TREND 3

ANTI-POACHING INNOVATIONS

By 2030, tourism to Africa is projected to generate more than \$260 billion annually; photographic safaris are driving much of that economic growth—a vital source of jobs for locals. Given that kind of economic clout, many travelers were startled when Botswana—long an ecotourism and conservation leader—reversed course this year to allow sport hunting of elephants again. With so much at stake, safari companies are now funding some of Africa's most innovative anti-poaching efforts to protect wildlife. Take the Anatolian shepherd dog project at Bushmans Kloof, a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World, in South Africa's Cederberg Mountains. “The Cape leopard is one of the world’s most threatened big cats, because livestock farmers kill them trying to defend their flocks. We learned that Anatolian

shepherd dogs instinctually protect sheep and goats from predators,” says Brett Tollman, CEO of The Travel Corporation, of which Bushmans Kloof is a part. “So we donated these beautiful canines to local villagers to protect their livestock. And where we have introduced the Anatolian dogs, the result has been a dramatic decrease in poaching of Cape leopards.”

In neighboring Botswana, one of the most ambitious animal welfare projects is under way to save a species dangling at the edge of extinction. “Our goal is to relocate no fewer than 100 African rhinos into safe havens, where we maintain a robust anti-poaching presence. To date, 87 rhinos have been successfully relocated,” say National Geographic explorers Dereck and Beverly Joubert, who co-own Duba Plains Camp.

A southern white rhino is relocated from South Africa, a high poaching area, to Botswana, by Rhinos Without Borders, an organization co-founded by National Geographic explorers Dereck and Beverly Joubert.







TREND 4

EMERGING DESTINATIONS

Ever since President Theodore Roosevelt set off from Mombasa, Kenya, in 1909 with over 250 porters carrying supplies, including a library of several dozen books and a bathtub, going on safari has been mostly synonymous with East Africa's parks and reserves. But as infrastructure improves and political stability sweeps across new frontiers of the continent, lesser known wildlife hot spots have emerged that are equally as impressive, if not more so.

Chad may qualify as Africa's least known safari destination, but Zakouma National Park is changing that. "I have spent 30 years as a private guide throughout Africa, and Zakouma is one of the most amazing wildlife spectacles I have witnessed. Nothing prepares you for the sight of millions of red-billed queleas taking flight at sunrise and elephant herds almost too numerous to count," says Michael Lorentz, owner of Passage to Africa.

More intrepid wildlife lovers are also heading to Madagascar, home to tens of thousands of flora and fauna species. Seventy percent of these, including almost all of the world's lemurs, are found no place else. The third largest coral reef system in the world thrives here as well.

Then there is the west coast of Africa, never really considered a viable safari destination, until the likes of National Geographic explorer Michael Fay led an expedition to Gabon and witnessed hippos swimming in the sea, elephants roaming white sand beaches, and large gatherings of gorillas in jungle clearings.

Zakouma National Park is beginning to draw more adventurous safari-goers to Chad. Founded in 1963, the park covers more than 1,100 square miles and hosts nearly 400 bird species, including black crowned cranes.

KYLE DE NOBREGA

TREND 5

SUSTAINABLE SIGHTINGS

Not so long ago, the roar of a wild lion at night came accompanied by the steady thumping of a safari lodge's diesel generator. Plastic water bottles were routinely handed out to guests. The contradiction between celebrating nature and adding more pollution to the planet has not been lost on the growing number of today's more sustainably minded travelers. The safari world has been listening. In 2020, Xigera Safari Lodge will reopen in the biodiverse bonanza of the Okavango, powered by a 4,000-plus-kilowatt solar farm. A Tesla lithium-ion battery system will sport charging points for electric safari vehicles. It will also be free of single-use plastic. "Our aim is to create the eco-luxury safari lodge of the future," says managing director Mike Myers.

In Rwanda, one of the last strongholds of the endangered mountain gorilla, Singita Kwitonda Lodge is also taking sustainability to the next level. Natural materials were used to build the walls, and an innovative ventilation system draws in fresh air to cool the rooms, eliminating the need for energy-intensive air-conditioning.

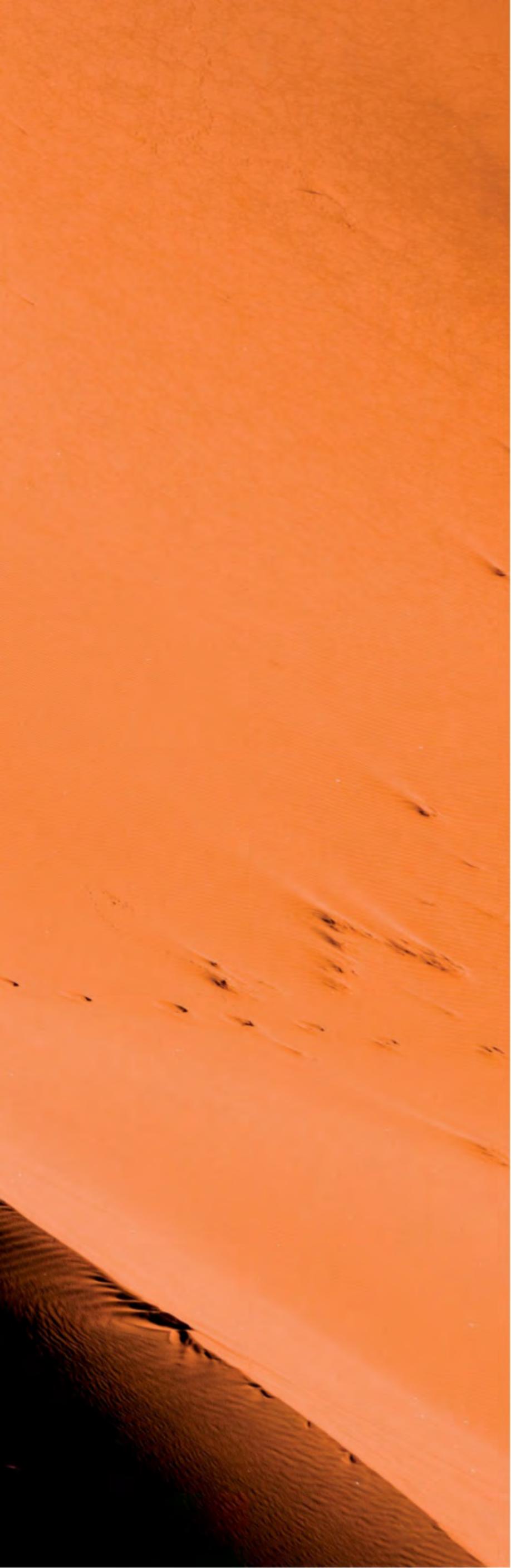
In Namibia, andBeyond Sossusvlei Desert Lodge is located in the continent's only dark sky reserve. "Deserts are particularly fragile ecologically. We have not only taken care to cause as little impact as possible during construction, but we also have a full recovery program once the build is complete," says Joss Kent, CEO of andBeyond.

Experiencing nature can and should be about protecting it.

COSTAS CHRIST ( @costaschrist) is an editor at large and senior advisor for sustainable tourism at National Geographic. To learn more, visit beyondgreentravel.com.

In the early morning, an oryx roams Sossusvlei, Namibia, where red sand dunes can reach more than 1,300 feet tall.





Sustainable Africa Safari Planner

The experts at **African Travel** have mapped out a 10-day Madagascar tour that includes key highlights such as the Analamazaotra rainforest and the spiny desert. africantravelinc.com

An extensive water conservation program is in place at Namibia's **andBeyond Sossusvlei Desert Lodge**, recycling more than 25,000 gallons per month. andbeyond.com

Community conservancies cover nearly 20 percent of Namibia, the first country in Africa to include protecting the environment in its constitution. **Big Five**'s conservancy safaris hit all the prime wildlife spots. bigfive.com

In addition to Cape leopard and the Cape mountain zebra, **Bushmans Kloof**, in South Africa, also protects more than 130 ancient San rock art sites, which adorn spectacular caves and cliffs. bushmanskloof.co.za

At Kenya's **Campi ya Kanzi**, Maasai warriors guide guests across a highly biodiverse wilderness of old-growth cloud forests and to a watering hole where wildlife gathers. maasai.com

Whether traversing the bush or scouting the Chobe River for wildlife, the **Chobe Angels** team, in Botswana, knows where and when to find big game. chobegamelodge.com

Duba Plains Camp, in Botswana, sits amid a pristine wilderness; lions are

among the majestic species visitors can spot. greatplainsconservation.com

Loango National Park in Gabon is the place where explorer Michael Fay found ocean-bathing hippos and beach-roaming elephants. **Explore Inc** takes you there. exploreinc.com

Maggie's Tour Company custom-crafts safaris to Tanzania—with its diversity of cultures and some of the planet's most iconic parks and reserves—combined with local village visits. maggiestourcompany.com

Off-the-beaten-track wildlife experiences are the specialty of **Passage to Africa**, also the go-to experts for trips to Chad's Zakouma National Park. passagetoafrica.com

Roar Africa, a luxury tour operator owned by South African Deborah Calmeyer, assists women in becoming wildlife guides and trackers; the group specializes in women-led safaris. roarafrica.com

Located on the edge of Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park, **Singita Kwitonda Lodge** doubles as a base camp for forays to see the mountain gorillas. rwanda.singita.com

Nestled under ebony trees in Botswana's celebrated Moremi Game Reserve, **Xigera** reopens in June 2020 as one of Africa's most sustainable safari lodges. xigera.com

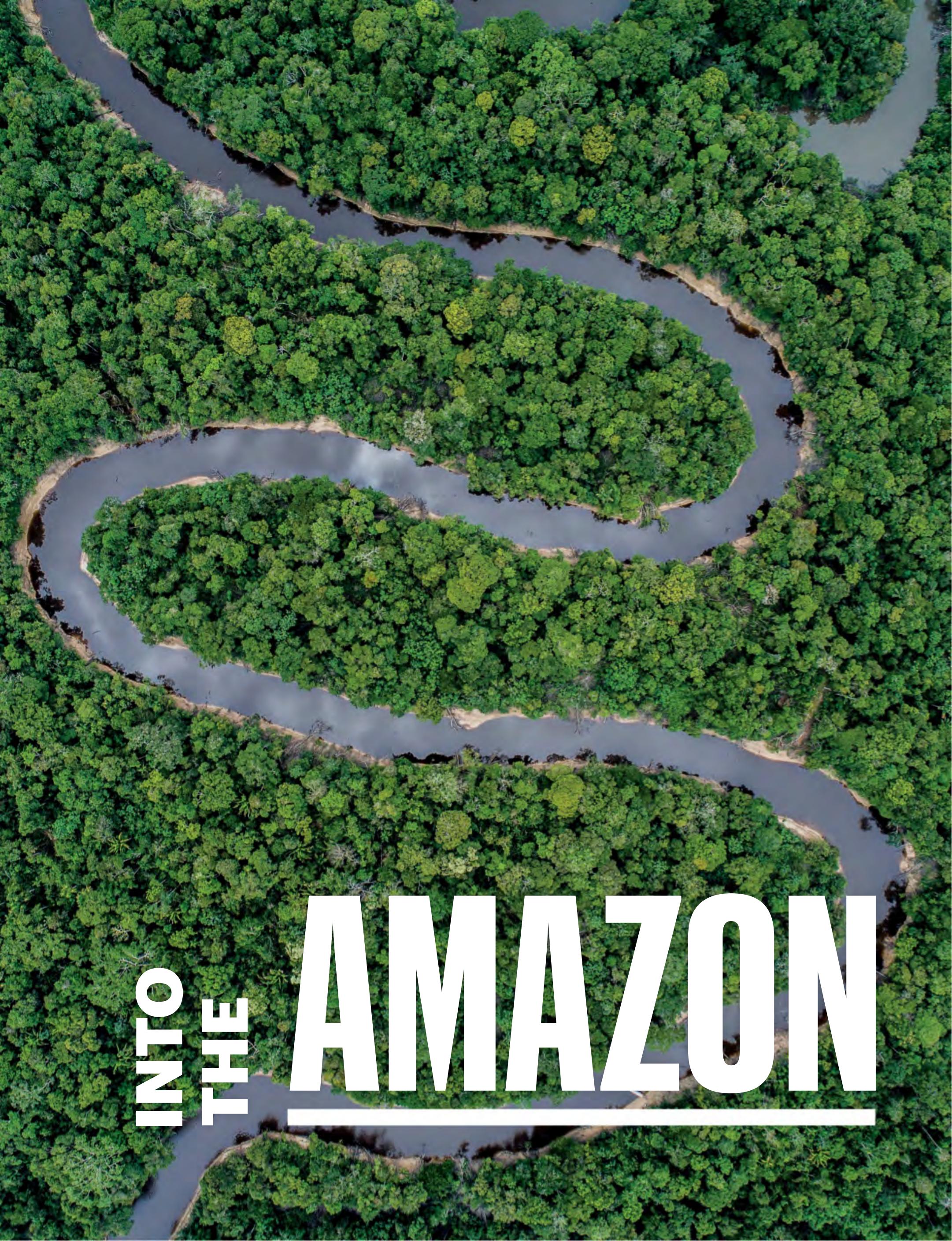


**An extraordinary
quest traces the
mighty river from
peaks to jungle**

BY AUSTIN MERRILL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
MAX CABELLO ORCASITAS



An aerial photograph showing a dark grey river flowing through a dense, lush green forest. The river's path is highly meandering, creating several loops and curves as it cuts through the vegetation. The surrounding trees are a mix of different shades of green, indicating a variety of tree species and possibly seasonal changes. The overall scene is one of natural beauty and tranquility.

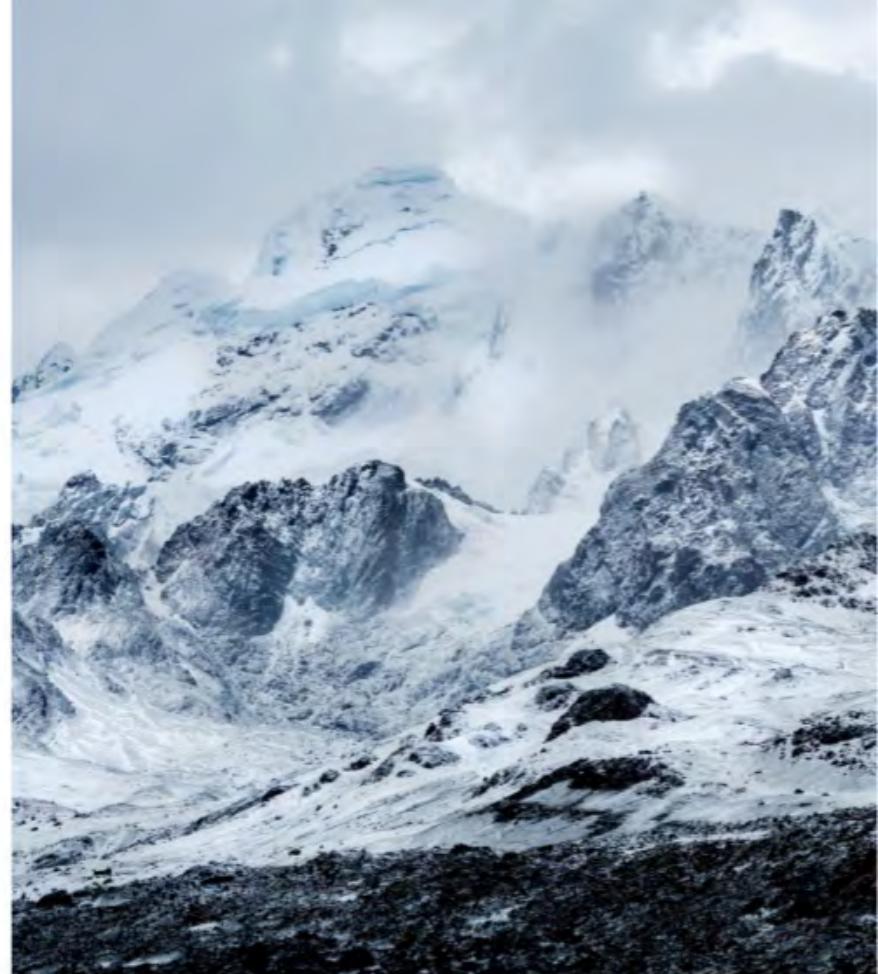
INTO THE AMAZON



WE LEFT CUSCO AT DAWN, heading southeast toward Bolivia. Breakfast was at a roadside café an hour into the drive, black coffee and a large bowl of chicken stew—a thigh and a drumstick in a tangy broth of ginger and lime, with chunks of potatoes and corn kernels the size of my thumbnail. My glasses fogged as I ate. Then we bundled back up and drove a few minutes more to the village of Checacupe, turned off the asphalt onto a dirt track and began to climb into the Andes.

I had come to Peru for the Amazon, having ditched my initial plan of traveling its broad waterways in Brazil because I was drawn to the geographical contrasts on the Peruvian side of the border. I wanted to see how the great river came together. Trekking to the source wasn't feasible—the location is still somewhat under dispute and isn't easy to reach—but I could approximate the general trajectory of the water, follow the flow of tributaries, from the high Andes down into the rainforest, in an attempt to understand the ecosystem of the largest river in the world.

The Amazon hasn't always dumped its muddy waters into the Atlantic. It was a network of rivers that flowed west until roughly 15 million years ago, when the uplift of the Andes along the Pacific coast formed a barricade, creating an inland sea that slowly became a massive freshwater lake. Other geologic shifts



In the heights (clockwise from top left): Mount Ausangate is one of the Peruvian Andes's tallest peaks; a llama walks along the Chilca River in the Sacred Valley; guide Armando Tinta explores a frozen cave inside the Vilcanota mountain range; an elderly shepherdess takes in a landscape that includes the Quelccaya Ice Cap.

Previous pages: An alpaca herdsman pauses from his work in the high Andean pastures near Cusco; the winding Yarapa River eventually flows into the Amazon.



about 11 million years ago began to push the water eastward, eventually draining the lake and forming the river we know today. The expanse of that ancient freshwater lake is now an ecological palimpsest, a zone dominated by the world's largest tropical rainforest, home to the richest diversity of plants and animals on Earth.

BY NEARLY ANY METRIC, the size of the Amazon is difficult to fathom. Incredibly, there is still debate over the length of the river, and over which river is longer, the Amazon or the Nile.

Conservative estimates put the Amazon at 4,000 miles in length, and some experts think it is closer to 4,300 miles, which would surpass the Nile. The river's rainforested drainage basin sprawls across nearly 2.7 million square miles, an area that is almost as big as Australia and twice the size of the planet's next largest drainage basin—that of the Congo, in central Africa. During the rainy season, the Amazon and its tributaries swell, solid ground vanishing in the lowlands as the river floods and nourishes the forest floor. The weight of the flooding river at low altitudes compresses the Earth's crust by about three inches. Measuring the river's flow



The waters of the Chilca River (also called the Ocefina) originate in the Cordillera de Vilcanota, southeast of Cusco.



is notoriously difficult—some estimate that at its peak, the Amazon carries 11 million cubic feet of water per second. Others joke that they can calculate the Amazon's discharge "give or take the Mississippi."

The Amazon rainforest—accounting for more than 60 percent of the world's remaining rainforests—functions as the lungs of the planet, absorbing some two billion tons of carbon dioxide annually and producing 20 percent of the planet's oxygen. The drainage basin is thought to be home to half of the world's species of plants and animals. It is the most important ecosystem on the planet. It is also the least understood. Scientists believe they are aware of only a fraction of the species that live in the Amazon and have only a rudimentary understanding of many of the ones they have documented. Locals, meanwhile, are frequently forced to abuse the ecosystem, resorting to illegal hunting, mining, and deforestation in countries that all too often do little to encourage alternative and sustainable ways of life. And far away, the industrialized world churns on, choking the atmosphere with carbon at such a rate the rainforest can't keep up.

The Amazon isn't a top travel destination. Generations of explorers promoting heroic tales of often fatal expeditions, helped along by photographers reveling in the exotic, depicted an inhospitable landscape filled with savages. It is an image that persists today. This perception, combined with unsteady (but improving) infrastructure in the rainforest and travelers' preference for nearby attractions like Machu Picchu, have kept the Amazon from attaining the same kind of rugged high-end status enjoyed by other far-flung destinations that offer similar wilderness-based adventures.

It was just this vexing blend of misperception and ecological import, there in a place of such hidden splendor, that made me want to see it. There was something mystical about the possibility that I could, over the course of only a few days, stand on glacial ice in the peaks of the Andes and then descend into the wet heat of the jungle—moving through a vast range of environments that all lay within the confines of a single ecosystem, bound together by the world's greatest river.

But first we had some climbing to do. The road from Checacupe rises high above the Ocefina Valley, following a narrow cut of silty water that tumbles over rocks and twists through farmland and pastures. The road is a rough dirt path dug into the valley's northern wall, a steep treeless face that is rutted from the gushing snowmelt waterways of early summer. Most of the peaks and hillsides were barren by the time we were there, and the drive was like an Andean single-track version of Montana's

Going-to-the-Sun Road, but with alpacas instead of mountain goats, more than twice the elevation, and no guardrails. Considering the many blind turns and rockslides, and the sheer drop-offs just a few inches from the truck's downslope wheels, Leoncio, our driver, was forever blaring his horn, a warning to whoever might be barreling toward us around the next bend.

BY MID-MORNING we had leveled out with the stream and had come to a clearing where the glacially carved valley broadened into a boggy flat-bottomed wetland, opening onto our first view of Ausangate, one of the highest peaks in the Peruvian Andes at nearly 21,000 feet. Scattered about were the homes of Quechua-speaking farmers, who live much the same way their Inca ancestors did for centuries.

Changes, though, have been coming rather quickly of late to the Andes. Warmer temperatures have allowed farmers to cultivate corn and potatoes at higher elevations than ever before, even as the rainy seasons have become less predictable and the glacial runoff more volatile. The boost in agriculture has been welcomed by locals, who have also used the expanding high wetlands to water their herds of llamas and alpacas.

But the growth of the wetlands and farming land is temporary, bound to the fate of the glaciers that still dominate the surrounding peaks, even as they shrink at an alarming rate. "Ausangate is getting black," said Efraín Samochuallpa Solis, a biologist and

THE DRIVE WAS LIKE AN ANDEAN SINGLE-TRACK VERSION OF MONTANA'S GOING-TO-THE-SUN ROAD, BUT WITH ALPACAS INSTEAD OF MOUNTAIN GOATS.

director of ACCA, a Peruvian environmental group that is dedicated to the conservation of the Amazon ecosystem. "It's melting. Some parts are melting so fast you can see the mountain, the rock."

Up and down the Andes, glaciers are vanishing at a pace that threatens the livelihood of local villagers, larger cities, and the Amazon Basin itself. If the ice on Ausangate and other peaks is gone in 50 years, as some predict, the heart of Peru's tourism industry will be in a very difficult spot.

AT A ROCKY SWITCHBACK, we were flagged down by Santos Cabrera, a stooped 49-year-old alpaca herder who had scrambled up a path to ask for help transporting his burlap sacks of fiber to the other side of the next ridge. We loaded a dozen or so of the sacks into the truck as he complained about how much more



difficult his work had become in recent years. “The rains are supposed to begin in November, but now it’s starting in August,” Cabrera said. “Many of my animals died because of the heavy storms. The grass was washed away. They couldn’t tolerate it.”

Cabrera lifted his arm to the peaks looming over us. “All of these mountains were covered,” he said. “All the way to where we are standing now. In 12 years, the glaciers have shrunk so much. I’m scared we won’t have water in the future.” I trudged through the mud to a tongue of snow and ice that was spilling down from a high pass—a vestige of the glacier Cabrera had just described. The ice crunched under my boots and the glacier let off the sound of muffled rain as the meltwater fell away from the mountain in a buried stream.

We rumbled over the ridge and into a bank of fog as we began our descent. I’d developed a profound respect for what Leoncio was able to do with that truck. I had spent years on rough dirt roads in various parts of Africa, but I had never seen driving as sure as this. Soon some small shrubs began to appear. And not

Rainforest treks might turn up nocturnal monkeys, which make their homes in tree hollows. Opposite: Mónica Gornikiewicz, a collaborator with the Soqtapata conservation area, hikes toward a waterfall on the Saucipata River. Visitors can stay at the reserve in an open-air lodge.

long after, trees. We emerged from the fog just as the sun slipped out of reach beyond the Andes.

A FEW DAYS LATER and several valleys to the north, I was in a canoe downstream of Shintuya, on the Madre de Dios River. We had left the cloud forest behind and were dropping down into the rainforest of the Amazon Basin. The Madre de Dios was a broad river by now, a few hundred yards across. On its left bank was the thick of jungle of Manu National Park, a protected UNESCO World Heritage site and the largest tropical wilderness left on the planet. A large tapir fed on plants at the water’s edge, and macaws flew in pairs high above us.

Suddenly, my guide sat bolt upright and pointed downstream.







Ernesto and
Mateo Jicca pilot a
motorboat along the
Madre de Dios River,
which eventually
flows into Bolivia.



There on the riverbank stood nine people from an isolated tribe, watching as we floated toward them. They clearly weren't cut off from civilization entirely, as most of them were wearing clothing, probably given to them by missionaries or other travelers. Five were young children, two were teenagers, and two were adults in their 40s or 50s. Alonso Cordova, a biologist with the World Wildlife Fund, told me that the WWF has been working with the Peruvian government to create a protected reserve for isolated people. These kinds of collaborations have also worked with local entrepreneurs interested in offering eco-friendly adventures to travelers in conservation zones, providing stable jobs and slowing deforestation and illegal gold mining, and making it increasingly easy to visit fragile and stunning landscapes throughout the Amazon Basin in Peru.

The people on the riverbank seemed to want us to stop, though it was difficult to tell from their gestures. We floated past them, waved a final time, and continued downstream. A short while later, a boat full of plastic jugs sped past. "Illegal gasoline,"

Cordova said, indicating the apparent fuel traffickers on the boat. "For the gold miners."

A hundred miles or so to the east lies the Tambopata, a protected river that flows into Puerto Maldonado, connecting with the Madre de Dios before entering Bolivia and going on to become the Madeira River, one of the largest tributaries of the Amazon. In Brazil, the Madeira runs through parts of the Amazon Basin that have been hit hard by deforestation. But in Puerto Maldonado, the waterways have become known as the heart of Peru's gold-mining industry. "It used to be quaint," said Kurt Holle, co-owner and former director of Rainforest Expeditions, which runs three lodges and a private villa on the Tambopata. "We'd stop by a dredge with some of our guests, say hi, and take some photos, and the miners would explain the process."

That all changed when the price of gold began to jump in the early 2000s. Within a few years, the price soared to \$1,600 an ounce. "It became big industry quickly," Holle said. "When the price goes up, it's a massive driver of people relocating to the



rainforest." By 2009, there was a huge amount of money invested in gold mining, and the government began cracking down, sinking barges and chasing out miners. "It was a war zone," Holle said.

Through it all, Rainforest Expeditions' lodges have acted as a local "antibody," keeping mining and logging out of the government-protected Tambopata area by offering viable jobs to nearby residents. "With so many areas protected, we need to figure out how to help people make a life," said Holle, who recently became the director of WWF Peru. "Cutting trees, making farms, mining gold," he said. "Most people here are just honestly trying to make a living."

HOLLE WAS BORN IN LIMA and studied forestry in college before Amazon conservation and ecotourism captured his attention. One trick he had to figure out was how to make the rich Amazon ecosystem accessible to travelers. "In Africa you get in a truck, drive around, and see elephants, giraffes, hippos," Holle said. "We can't compete with those kinds of wildlife

In this panorama stitched together from several images, a visitor crosses a bridge leading to one of the 11 tree houses at Treehouse Lodge, along the Yarapa River. In the center stands the lodge's observation tower.

sightings. We have to get people interested in insects and birds."

To make that easier—and to contribute to the never ending work of learning about the world's largest rainforest—Holle and his team established the Tambopata Research Center, several hours upriver by boat from Puerto Maldonado. The center boasts the kind of high-end accommodations you would expect on a luxury safari in Africa, but also includes a laboratory for a dozen scientists who perform frontline research while assisting expeditions to see animal and plant life up close.

Outings start early—4:30 in the morning, just as the howler monkeys are starting their racket, like a chorus of blowtorches from on high. Parrots and macaws flash green, red, blue, and yellow at the world's largest clay lick, a short trip from the lodge. There are jaguars too, but they are difficult to see.



THE AMAZON RIVER doesn't officially acquire its name until the Ucayali River joins the Marañón near Iquitos, more than 700 miles northwest of the Tambopata. I found a room built in the crook of an ironwood tree, 50 feet off the forest floor at the Treehouse Lodge, on the banks of the Yarapa, a tiny blackwater tributary of the Ucayali that is a couple miles upstream from the Amazon confluence.

With my guide, Alex, I visited Puerto Miguel, a nearby village that had been ravaged in recent years by flooding, even as rains had decreased in these lowland areas. Most families had relocated to higher ground, but we found Raquel Inuma, a 44-year-old mother of five, in one of the last homes still standing. "There's less rain than there used to be. We feel it," Inuma said. "It's sunnier now, and more sun is good."

At sunset, we took the boat into the Ucayali and watched pink dolphins swim by as the sun went down beyond the rainforest and the sky turned a fiery orange. The broad river grew calmer now. I looked around at the emptiness and felt lost in a kind of

nowhere zone, 1,000 miles from the glaciers of Ausangate and 3,000 miles from the Atlantic. The river would enter Brazil in about 300 miles, multiplying in volume several times over on its way to the ocean and becoming something unrecognizable from the waterways I traveled over the course of two weeks in Peru. It felt too big to comprehend.

Alex had tried to sum it up earlier, when we had stopped at the massive and churning confluence of the Ucayali and Marañón. He stood up in the boat as it pitched back and forth and spread his arms wide. "This is it," he shouted. "This is the Amazon. The king of all rivers."

AUSTIN MERRILL (@austin_merrill) is a co-founder of *Everyday Africa* and *The Everyday Projects*. He frequently writes about the intersection of travel and the environment. **MAX CABELLO ORCASITAS** is an award-winning Peruvian photojournalist based in Lima. This is his first feature for *Traveler*. This story was produced in collaboration with the *Wall Street Journal*.



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The two-story common area at Treehouse Lodge includes dining facilities and an upper floor where hammocks swing.

Travel Wise: Where to Stay in the Peruvian Amazon

CAMP IN THE CLOUD FOREST

Peru has much more to offer than Machu Picchu. To experience the cloud forest, consider a visit to **Soqtapata**, a few hours northeast of Ausangate, hidden just off the Interoceanic Highway. A 23,722-acre conservation area, Soqtapata contains six microclimates (soqta means "six" in Quechua) and is thickly forested and steeply sloped, spanning 3,200 to 15,000 feet above sea level. You can trek through the forest looking for wildlife and orchids and then cool off in a mountain stream. Pitch your tent in the preserve's open-air lodge and relax with other travelers or the conservationists frequently doing research there. soqtapata.com

BE A CITIZEN SCIENTIST IN THE JUNGLE

For an unmatched adventure in the Amazon Basin, set aside three or four days to stay at the lodges of **Rainforest Expeditions** on the Tambopata River. You can see monkeys, macaws, and jaguars; geek out with scientists at the harpy eagle nest or over the many variations of moths and spiders; and listen to the rainforest while relaxing in high-end rustic accommodations. The team will pick you up in Puerto Maldonado and get you to your boat to start your journey—the several-hour ride upstream is half the fun. perunature.com

SLEEP IN THE TREE CANOPY

The Amazon River doesn't acquire its name until the confluence of the Marañón and Ucayali Rivers, near Iquitos. But here the river is already gargantuan, making it hard to visit without feeling overwhelmed by its sheer size. A great way to carve out an intimate visit is to stay at the **Treehouse Lodge** on the Yarapa River, a small tributary of the Ucayali, just upstream from the confluence with the Marañón. Go on a night excursion by foot or canoe, fish for piranhas, and stay in one of 11 tree houses, built into ironwood trees dozens of feet off the forest floor. treehouselodge.com

21

VISIONARY WOMEN TRAVELERS

THROUGH
HISTORY

These trailblazing women defied convention to feed their wanderlust. Their daring adventures opened up the world for everyone.

BY
KATIE KNOROVSKY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
BIJOU KARMAN



Nellie Bly

4TH CENTURY

EGERIA

In the fourth century, a Christian pilgrim by the name of Egeria set off from the Mediterranean to reach the Holy Land, using the Bible as her guidebook. "These mountains are ascended with infinite toil," she writes about her intrepid climb up Mount Sinai, in detailed letters sometimes called history's first travel memoir. Her insights reveal a cultural sensitivity that transcends time: At each stop she took care to inquire about local customs and traditions.

CA 985-1050

GUDRID THORBJARNARDOTTIR

Icelandic sagas immortalize the Viking wife and mother Gudrid Thorbjarnardottir as "a woman of striking appearance and wise as well, who knew how to behave among strangers." By many accounts the most traveled woman of the Middle Ages, the hardy "far traveler" is said to have crisscrossed the North Atlantic several times between Greenland and Iceland. She also sailed to North America—five centuries before Christopher Columbus—and to Rome on a religious pilgrimage.

1740-1807

JEANNE BARET

Two centuries after Ferdinand Magellan sailed around the world, a French "herb woman" disguised as a man became the first female to circumnavigate the globe. With her chest wrapped in bandages, Jeanne Baret conspired with her lover—a renowned botanist—to earn a spot on a 1766 expedition. The ruse was up two years later (the couple remained in Mauritius when the boat sailed), but Baret's feat came full circle upon her eventual return to France in the early 1770s.



1805-1881 ▲

MARY SEACOLE

Although Mary Seacole earned fame as a "black Florence Nightingale," the British-Jamaican nurse considered travel the ultimate antidote for the limiting Victorian era. Her witty autobiography, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*, recounts her exploits tending to cholera victims in Panama and at the front lines of the Crimean War. "As I grew into womanhood," she writes, "I began to indulge that longing to travel which will never leave me while I have health and vigour."

1831-1904

ISABELLA BIRD

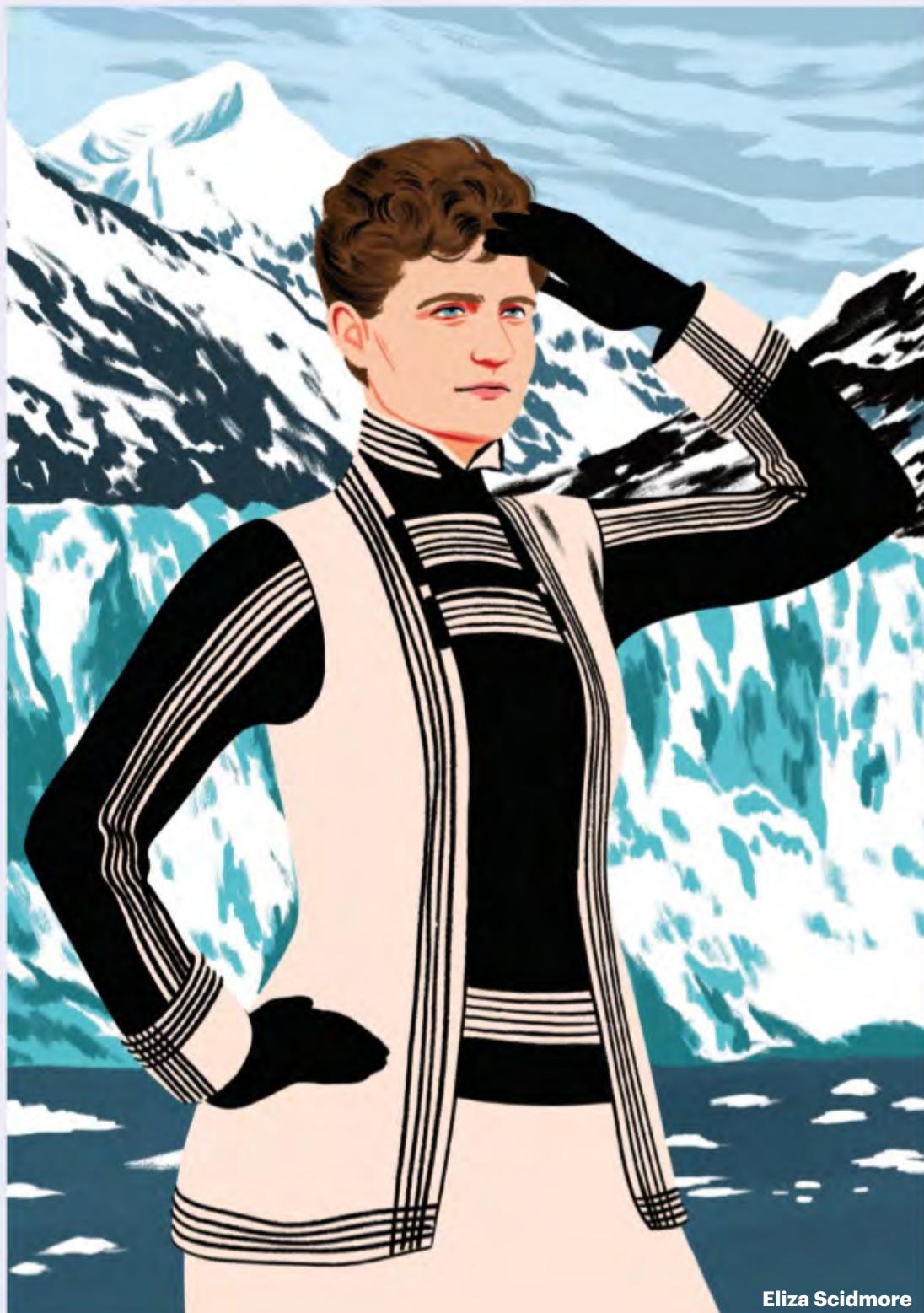
Some people live to travel; Isabella Bird traveled to live. On doctor's orders, the chronically ill Englishwoman set off for North America on her debut adventure in 1854. The open air suited her well-being as much as travel stirred her soul. The first woman elected to be a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, she went on to climb volcanoes, ride horseback through the wilderness, and commune with locals, chronicling her voyages in books about Hawaii, Tibet, Colorado's Estes Park, Korea, Morocco, Vietnam, and beyond.

1856-1928 ▼

ELIZA SCIDMORE

The first woman elected to the National Geographic board (and to have a photo published in the magazine), Eliza Scidmore likened her travel appetite to "original sin." Among the pioneering

tourists to cruise through Glacier Bay, she penned Alaska's first guidebook, in 1885. Yet the renowned "lady writer" did more than plant the seeds of wanderlust in her readers: Her idea to bring cherry trees to Washington, D.C., blossomed into a rite of passage for spring travelers the world over.



1864-1922

NELLIE BLY

In the action movie that was her life, Nellie Bly always did her own stunts—none more spectacular than her breathless voyage around the world in 1889. Moving by train, steamship, horse, donkey, and rickshaw, the 25-year-old journalist traversed 24,899 miles in 72 days. She detoured in France to meet her muse Jules Verne, visited a Chinese leper colony, and acquired a pet monkey in Singapore—all with only a small satchel and a single dress.

1868-1926

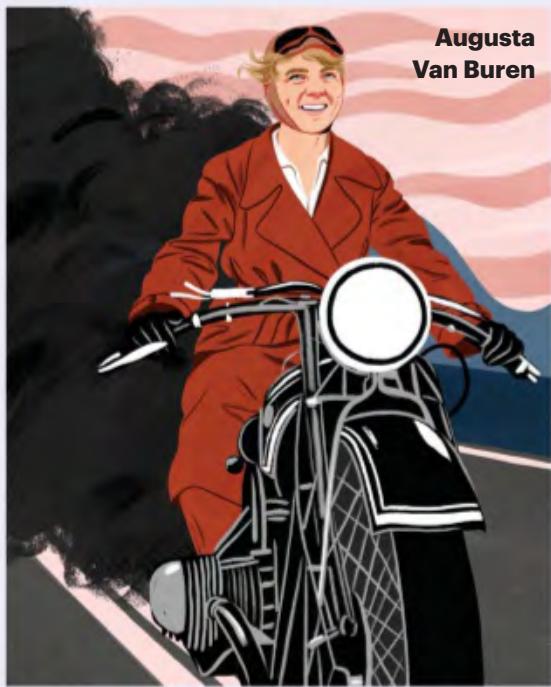
GERTRUDE BELL

Englishwoman Gertrude Bell traded upper-class comfort for desert forays by camel. A cohort of T. E. Lawrence—but with a better mastery of the Arabic language—she embedded herself in local life as she roved the sands of the Middle East, from Persia to Syria. Arabia's "uncrowned queen" helped draw the borders of modern Iraq, advised on the writing of its constitution, and established the Iraq National Museum. Bell also scaled the Alps and preserved antiquities on archaeological digs.

1875-1937

HARRIET CHALMERS ADAMS

Neither vampire bats nor avalanches could stop Harriet Chalmers Adams from venturing deep into South America in 1904. She and her husband covered some 40,000 miles in three years, crossing the Andes by horseback, wandering the Amazon alongside jaguars, and canoeing in snake-tangled waters. Exclusion from the men-only Explorers Club did not faze her; in 1925 Adams became the inaugural president of the Society of Woman Geographers.



Augusta
Van Buren

1884-1959 ▲

AUGUSTA VAN BUREN

Before Thelma and Louise took to the open road, there was Gussie and Addie, aka Augusta Van Buren and her sister, Adeline. In 1916 the socialites with a rebellious streak crossed the continental United States on motorcycles—roaring across dirt trails, cow passes, and roads pocked with mud holes as they traversed some 5,500 miles in 60 long days of heat and rain. Augusta went on to join Amelia Earhart's Ninety-Nines group of women pilots.

1887-1972

LOUISE ARNER BOYD

Louise Boyd took her vast inheritance from the California gold rush and put it on ice. The heroine of the high seas led and financed several scientific expeditions into the Arctic wilds, helped document Greenland's fjords and glaciers, completed covert missions for the U.S. government, and was one of the first women to soar over the North Pole in an airplane. "Far north, hidden behind grim barriers of pack ice, are lands that hold one spell-bound," she wrote in 1935.

1887-1973

EMMA GATEWOOD

In 1955, 67-year-old Emma Gatewood emerged from the Appalachian Trail as the first woman to hike all 2,050 miles in one season by herself. Emboldened by an article in *National Geographic*, she was nicknamed the “hiking grandma”—in fact, the mother of 11 was a great-grandma—and went on to conquer the trail two more times as well as the 2,000-mile Oregon Trail. Her marching orders to “pick up your feet” have motivated countless walkers since.

1892-1926 ▼

BESSIE COLEMAN

Bessie Coleman rose above the prejudices of her era. In 1921 she soared into history as the world’s first African-American woman pilot. Born the daughter of a maid and a sharecropper, the manicurist turned aviatrix learned to fly in France after being rejected by American flight schools. For five years she traveled the U.S., performing heart-stopping stunts in the sky—at her insistence, only at venues with desegregated crowds—until a fatal plane crash.



Bessie Coleman

1893-1993 ▶

FREYA STARK

Perusing a map was said to fill Freya Stark with "a certain madness," which provoked fearless explorations of the remote deserts of the Middle East, chronicled in more than 20 books beginning with 1932's *Baghdad Sketches*. Her preferred mode of transport was on the back of a donkey or camel, and although measles, dysentery, dengue fever, and other illnesses took their toll, her boundless spirit of adventure—and ready smile—always persevered. "Curiosity," Stark writes, "is the one thing invincible in nature."

1906-1996

ALOHA WANDERWELL

In 1922, 16-year-old Idris Galcia Hall pursued her fantasies to "sleep with the winds of heaven blowing round her head" when she answered an ad to join a world tour. She became known as Aloha Wanderwell and was promoted as the "world's most widely traveled girl," eventually driving across six continents in a Ford Model T.

1908-1998

MARTHA GELLHORN

Pursuing a life "almost explosive in its excitement," journalist Martha Gellhorn took in the "view from the ground" in 53 countries—Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War, China by sampan and horse, and the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. Describing herself as "permanently dislocated," the glam vagabond based herself for a stint in Cuba as the third wife of Ernest Hemingway, who appears in her 1978 book, *Travels With Myself and Another*.



Freya Stark

1926-

JAN MORRIS

Prolific Welsh writer Jan Morris lived the first half of her life as James Morris, posted to Palestine in 1946 as an intelligence officer and scrambling down

Mount Everest to break the news of its first successful summit in 1953. After transitioning to female in 1972 (a different kind of journey), Morris began writing about places in earnest, revealing an unparalleled knack for evocative city portraits. Her 40-plus books span Venice to Hong Kong, the U.S. to the Arab world.

1931-

DERVLA MURPHY

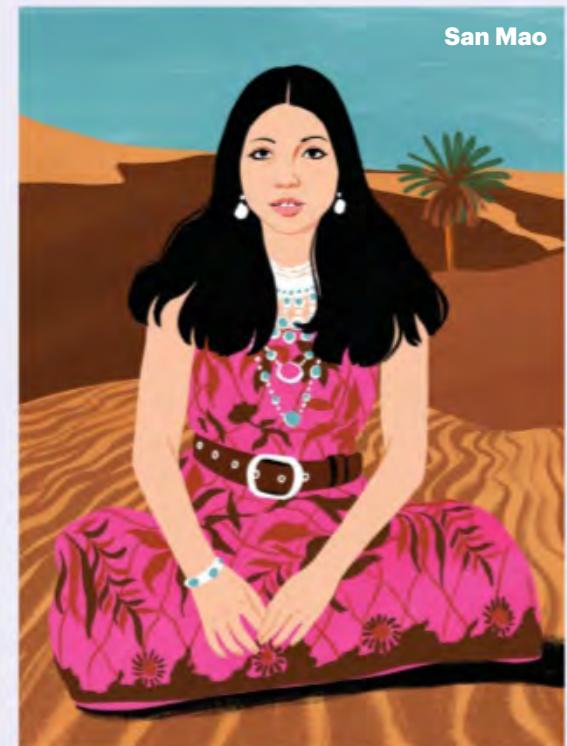
Dervla Murphy wrote the book on traveling at full tilt—literally. The Irishwoman's 1965 memoir, *Full Tilt*, chronicled her solo bicycle trip from her home to India, by way of Yugoslavia, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Subsequent books revolve around similarly voracious voyages through challenging landscapes, including a three-month slog with a mule in the Ethiopian highlands and a 1,300-mile trek through the high Peruvian Andes with her nine-year-old daughter. The familiar thread in all her exploits: Embrace the unpredictable.

1943-1991 ▶

SAN MAO

San Mao, whose real name was Chen Mao Ping, launched her bold career as Taiwan's "wandering writer" and translator with her 1976 travelogue *Stories of the Sahara*. (An example of her lyrical prose: "Every time I thought of you, a grain of sand fell from the sky. Thus the Sahara Desert formed.") The polyglot bohemian flitted among Germany, Spain, northwest Africa, Central and South America, and the Canary Islands, spending much of her life as an expat and inspiring generations of devoted readers and travelers.

San Mao



Evita Robinson



1984-◀

EVITA ROBINSON

No traveler is an island—at least not if globetrotter Evita Robinson gets her way. The three-time expat founded Nomadness Travel Tribe, an online community designed for millennial travelers of color. Whether shark diving in Cape Town or teaching English in Japan, the 20,000-plus members of Nomadness—mostly African-American women—have emerged as a force in the not-always-inclusive travel industry. "We are here, and we are relevant," said Robinson in her 2017 TED Talk about Black travel.

1987-

ERIKA S. BERGMAN

National Geographic Young Explorer Erika S. Bergman brings unprecedented depth to her travels—whether she's scaling the hazy rainforest canopy in Costa Rica or deploying underwater robots in the icy Arctic. The deep-sea submarine pilot is most at home probing uncharted waters. "Anyone can be an adventurer," she writes. Her network of engineering camps and girls' mentorship programs, Global Engineering & Exploration Counselors, puts that mantra into action.

**TO SEE THE
WORLD IS A
GIFT.
TO LOVE THE
WORLD IS A
CHOICE.
HERE IS WHAT
TRAVEL
TEACHES US.**

(IN AUSTRALIA, INDONESIA, CHINA, SWEDEN, BELGIUM & COLOMBIA)

JORDAN ROBINS



Conservation efforts starting in the 1970s transformed Australia's Lady Elliot Island and its waters into a haven for wildlife, including green sea turtles.

TREAD LIGHTLY AND BE OPEN TO AWE

BY
ANNE FARRAR

AUSTRALIA While most guests at the Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort off the coast of Queensland were pouring their first cup of coffee, a few of us were donning wet suits and grabbing masks, fins, and snorkels, then walking 10 minutes to the far side of the island for a sunrise swim.

Peter Gash, the island's tireless steward, was the instigator of this early-morning meditation that started with a shock of cold as we eased into the pink-tinted waters. Floating facedown above corals that form the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef, we drifted alongside Gash, who pointed out underwater wonders: clown fish, moon wrasse, parrotfish, painted flutemouth, angelfish, white-banded triggerfish. A reef shark coasted by, ignoring our excited gesturing as we made sure none in our small group missed the sighting. A sea turtle popped its head up before dipping back down to find an outcropping of coral on which to scratch its shell. The crystalline water was a miracle in itself.

It wasn't always this way. Before I arrived at Lady Elliot Island, what I knew of the 1,400-mile-long Great Barrier Reef was a narrative of devastating coral bleaching that heralded its imminent death.

Lady Elliot Island itself, named in 1816 by Captain Thomas Stuart aboard the ship of the same name, was a guano-rich island mined for a decade in the 1800s, its fish and turtles depleted. Around 1873, stripped of resources, the island was abandoned to the sun and shifting winds. In 1969 Australian aviator Don Adams built an airstrip and accommodations, started replanting the island, and over time created a no-frills resort. The torch was taken up by fellow Australian pilot Gash, who brought solar power, desalination, and composting to the island. He firmly established the remote resort—now 40-plus cottages and glamping tents, many of which open directly onto the white-sand beach—as a leader in sustainable tourism, a model for other resorts along the Great Barrier Reef.

Lady Elliot Island is especially known for manta rays and participates in Project Manta, a research program based at the University of Queensland, Brisbane. Researchers have used the island as a home base for studying the mantas' migration, behavior, and health. May is the early season for mantas, and, as I bobbed in the waters of a new day, I hoped I'd get a glimpse of one. It wasn't until we turned back toward shore that we all heard someone bellow, "Raaaay!" Masks slapped down into the water. The manta, spanning more than 15 feet, hovered at a "cleaning station" so wrasse could groom its gills and fins. We hovered above on the surface, wishing we too had gills so we could glide as effortlessly, exploring the ocean's depths.

GO WITH THE FLOW—AND EMBRACE THE UNEXPECTED

BY
KATE SIBER

Lady Elliot Island and its surrounding reef system prove that the story of the Great Barrier Reef doesn't need to have a tragic ending. When people fall in love with a place and make a conscious effort to protect it, we glimpse a sustainable future where we can all keep dipping our heads underwater to experience awe.

INDONESIA I first learned about the wonders of Raja Ampat from my friend Tanya Burnett, who has logged thousands of dives all over the world. "It's an underwater photographer's dream-scape," she told me. "The reefs just explode with color and life. It's almost overwhelming for some."

It has been number one on my bucket list ever since. Recently Tanya told me of some last-minute spaces that opened up on a charter she was leading. I persuaded my husband to splurge, and that's how we found ourselves on the *Pindito*, a traditional-style Indonesian schooner, with 15 other divers.

Not long after the boat leaves the West Papuan port of Sorong, the landscape becomes streamlined. Standing on the bow, I can see only water and sky and small green islets. The swirling clouds stage a melodrama overhead, but nothing disrupts the tranquility. As beautiful as it is, I harbor a feeling of anticipation. I have come expressly to see something that presently remains hidden: one of the world's greatest collections of marine biodiversity.

The next morning, laden with dive gear, I sink under the surface of the sea, and a fantasy of marine creatures comes into view. Huge shrimp preside over the reef, their antennae reaching out in all directions. A school of surgeonfish moves like a cloud until a shark plows through, sending them scattering like wisps of smoke. At times there are so many fish I can barely see through the water.

Over 10 days, the *Pindito* motors 800 nautical miles across the Upper Banda Sea, stopping at reefs three or four times a day. It seems impossible that the trip could live up to my expectations, but each dive serves up new wonders: a manta swooping overhead, a solitary dolphin rolling around playfully on a reef, giant schools of snapper and fusiliers whirling around us like tornadoes, venomous sea kraits wafting through sunlit water.

The landscape is mostly sea, but we occasionally stop on shore. One day we clamber through a limestone cave and scamper down a dark hole to discover a room with a clear, serene pool. Naturally, we jump in, floating on our backs, suspended in the stillness. Later in the journey we motor to Banda Neira

Raja Ampat, Indonesia, is a diver's dream, with whales, sharks, and schools of fish, such as yellowstripe scad.

in the Spice Islands. The once rare nutmeg trees that dot this verdant idyll lured Dutch traders who brutalized the residents and built a thick stone fortress in the 1600s. Now, locals sell the spices in fragrant markets.

Most of the time, however, we are in the water. Among the great delights of diving is never knowing what will appear.

One day, floating after a dive, Tanya spots what look like dolphins. "No! Pilot whales!" she yells. "Come on!"

We scramble into the dinghy and race over to them. I'm not sure if these toothed whales are safe to swim with, but before I know it, Tanya is slipping over the side of the boat like a seal. My husband and I look at each other and follow suit. When I gaze down, my fear evaporates. Hundreds of sleek whales undulate in unison around and below us. I have never felt at once so present and alive, as if the boundary between human and animal thinned for just a few minutes. On the surface again, Tanya tells us that they were in fact melon-headed whales, an elusive oceangoing relative of the pygmy killer whale. Even the *Pindito*'s owner and captain had never had the opportunity to swim with them.

Some places can surpass even the greatest expectations.



MIKE COREY @FEARLESSANDFAR/DIVER MARISCHKA PRUDENCE @MARISCHKAPRUE

HAVE FAITH IN THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

BY
MONISHA RAJESH

CHINA A vase of synthetic red tulips shuddered on the table as the train sped along uneven ground. Steady my flask of jasmine tea, I held back the window curtain and peered out at the expanse of sand, reddening in the soft evening light. Then I noticed the embroidered image on the lace curtain: three Bactrian camels, double-humped and fury, mountains peaking in the background.

It wasn't dissimilar to the scene outside, deep in northwest China's Xinjiang Province. As the warm smell of wok-fried mutton and chili drifted in from the dining car, I ducked out of my compartment, threading between passengers who nodded and nudged me in the right direction.

I'd been warned not to travel here. According to China's state-run press, it was far too dangerous for foreigners, due to unrest. Despite warnings, I had no other way to continue by rail from mainland China through Kazakhstan and Russia, partly along the old Silk Route, then eventually back to my home in London. And I was determined not to let anything stop me.

Within hours of my arrival in the city of Turfan, I found the Turkic-speaking Muslim Uygur community gentle and welcoming, inviting me into their family-run cafés to try bone broth that glistened, fat chewy noodles, and mutton skewers cooked on sidewalk grills. Chinese soldiers roamed the streets. From the closed-circuit cameras placed on mosques and the enforced restriction on beards and headscarves to the patrolling tanks, a feeling of unease permeated the city.

Saddened to leave Turfan, I boarded the new high-speed service to Urumqi, which connects the two cities in just over an hour, and found a distinct absence on board of Uygur passengers, most of whom were forbidden from traveling freely within the region.

Finding an empty table, I sat down just as a Buddhist nun with a shaved head ran up to me, laughing. Flummoxed, I strained to catch a few words from her stream of chatter and eventually extracted "Indian." A fellow passenger translated, explaining that she was curious as to whether or not I was Indian, and I confirmed that I was indeed of Indian ethnicity. Thrilled, the nun clapped, slapped her thighs, and sat down, swinging her feet like a child. I learned that the nun was excited to meet someone of my origin, as India had come to the rescue of the Dalai Lama and she was grateful. The nun had fled Tibet, and unable ever to return, she had made her home near Urumqi.

Joyfully, the nun pored over my photos from the Potala Palace in Lhasa, scrolling through each one with concentration before realizing her stop was approaching. Pulling out a gold iPhone,

MOVE WITH INTENTION AND ENJOY THE FREEDOM

BY
JILL K. ROBINSON

she gestured for me to add her as a contact on WeChat, the multipurpose, ubiquitous Chinese messaging app.

Unsure what to do, I handed over my phone and she showed me how to scan her QR code. As the train slowed into the station, she tied a thin red string around my wrist, wrapped herself in robes, and picked up her bag, waving as she jumped down the steps. When the train began to roll away from the platform, I felt a vibration in my hand and looked down to see a message from the nun: a GIF of a laughing Buddha exploding in light.

SWEDEN My paddle breaks the silvery skin of the Baltic Sea. Water drips off the blades. Ahead lie a constellation of rocky islands and the sea extending to the horizon. It feels as if there are no boundaries.

Buffering Sweden's capital from the Baltic Sea, the islands of the Stockholm archipelago—called the *skärgården*—are a wonderland of rocks, skerries, and islets with pine forests, fields of wildflowers, and bare granite. The exact number of islands is debatable, but the general consensus is about 30,000.

The archipelago stretches from downtown Stockholm and brings wilderness into the city. Although regular ferry services visit most of the larger islands, I've chosen to experience these glacier-carved isles by kayak.

Exposure to nature is a central part of life in Sweden, where the country's constitution guarantees *allemandsrätten* ("everyman's right"), a freedom to roam in natural spaces. The vast archipelago is ideal for exploration by kayak because one can linger among the quiet coves and passages.

Only 40 minutes by ferry from the mainland, Utö provides a quick transition to island time. Once an active mining community with some of the oldest iron mines in the country, the island of about 250 people and only a few cars is known today for its beaches, restaurants, and the famed Utö dark rye bread that tastes of molasses and anise.

The bread makes an appearance nearly everywhere, including at seasonal fish restaurant Båtshaket. Hungry visitors arrive by bike or boat, claim a spot on the deck, and enjoy smoked salmon and shrimp on rye while letting the brief but intoxicating Swedish summer sun soak into their skin. Nobody rushes to leave, and time slows to accommodate even the napping dogs.

Despite having a tent in my pack, I find a cottage at Utö Värdshus with a view of the island's main harbor. At the tail



Two women wait for their rides outside the train station in Shache, historically known as Yarkand, one of the biggest cities in China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Window curtains on the train from Guangzhou/Shenzhen to Xinjiang show a Uygur woman riding a camel in the Taklimakan Desert.



end of summer, families are starting to head home for work and school, but many are enjoying one last summer fling. The next day, called to the sea, I pack my dry bag.

My guide, Mats Andersson, and I launch our kayaks at Södra Fladen, a small south-facing bay halfway down the island's center, Gruvbyn. Mats lives on Utö and has paddled among many of the islands in the archipelago, often kayaking between Utö and Stockholm. For a skilled paddler, it can take eight hours, but for intermediate folk, it's easier as a two-day trip from the Swedish capital.

A watery obstacle course, the bay is scattered with skerries, or rocky isles. After navigating the passage through two small islands, Brunskär and Långskär, we're no longer in the sheltered waters. Far out in the southern part of the archipelago, Utö isn't protected on its south shore, and we encounter choppy seas as we paddle toward the island's northern tip.

The brackish water splashes my arms and face, and I learn to focus exclusively on my body's actions—paddle, breathe, paddle, breathe—like a seafaring meditation. As we pass through the waves, I notice the landscape at Utö's edge. Granite boulders with green-gold lichen curve down to the water. Plants and trees hesitate higher up the incline, as if too shy to dip a toe into the sea.

We break for a picnic on the islands of Mellankobbarna and settle in among the low scrub, ferns, and rosy-pink flowers that Mats identifies as *tjärblomster*. Between bites, he schools me on the rights of allemansrätten. Aside from the requirement not to disturb or destroy, people can forage, catch fish, swim in lakes, visit beaches, set up a tent, and access any land as long as they stay out of private gardens and maintain the stipulated 70 meters (229 feet) from a dwelling.

With so many islands in the archipelago, it seems that everyone can establish camp in their own space, far from other nature lovers. But what happens when more than one group chooses to enjoy the same place?

"When you want a small island to yourself, my father has decided that the naked stretch is the best way to encourage others to choose a different site," says Mats. "He stands within view, without clothes, and takes a few minutes stretching. He guarantees people will go away."

I scan the area to see if any boaters are eyeing our private island, but nobody's in sight. Even if there were interlopers, the island is large enough for a few more people. No need to ditch my clothes.

From Mellankobbarna, it's a long, straight shot east to Huvudskär, one of the archipelago's final outposts. The water



Archipelagoes stretch the length of Sweden's coastline, perfect for kayakers both novice and experienced.

out here is deep blue, and I pause as the boat drifts, silently bobbing on the surface. It's just us and the sea. In a month or two, the weather won't allow such a far-flung trip.

On Huvudskär, heather, cotton grass, and crowberry grow in rock crevices. A lighthouse rises over small red cottages—all closed up tight against the elements. There have been fishermen and hunters here for more than 700 years, but there are no longer any permanent residents on this remote rock slab.

I watch gulls soar overhead and let my eyes rest on the unbroken horizon. It'll soon be time to return to Utö and, eventually, Stockholm. Until then, the rocky archipelago surrounds me—a shelter but not a fence, where I can roam far and free.





The medieval guild houses on the Graslei embankment are just some of the urban draws in Ghent, Belgium, best explored by bike or foot.

LOOK AROUND: YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE IS ANYWHERE

BY
EMMA THOMSON

BELGIUM “I bought a bike and started cycling” was the response veteran Irish traveler Dervla Murphy gave when she was asked how she planned her odyssey across India that would become the beloved travelogue *Full Tilt: Ireland to India With a Bicycle*. It’s proof that adventure can start with a simple push of the pedal.

Ghent, in the northern Flemish region of Belgium, may not be India, but it has a long love affair with the bike. The city has the largest pedestrian zone in Europe, with more than 120 hectares of car-free space to roam. Sandwiched between the capital, Brussels, and the fairytale city of Bruges, Ghent delights in being the underdog, but the city is far from being the ugly duckling of the trio. French novelist Victor Hugo described Ghent as “a kind of Venice of the North,” thanks to the pretty, medieval twist of streets that cluster around swan-patrolled canals.

Ghent isn’t sleepy in the least though. For 10 days in July, close to two million people turn up to enjoy a riot of free concerts and street theater known as the Gentse Feesten. And the green credentials extend further, too. Ghent is dubbed a vegetarian capital, and every Thursday is a meat-free day with restaurants and cafés dishing up veggie options for all.

In fact, I find Ghent is a city to be explored with legs and stomach. So after dipping into Sint-Baafskathedraal to see the famous 15th-century polyptych *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, I bump across the cobblestones and turn down onto Graslei quay. The city’s first commercial port, it’s lined with ancient guild houses, and I find students cooling their ankles in the water. Then it’s on to Groentenmarkt, home to Tierenteyn-Verlent, a 229-year-old delicatessen known for its homemade mustard doled out of wooden barrels, and stalls selling *cuberdons*—local cone-shaped purple candy also known as *neuzekes* (little noses).

I pass ‘t Dreupelkot, a slip of a café serving shots of *jenever* (a gin-like liquor made from malt wine) in flavors ranging from garlic to grapefruit, then pedal across the bridge to the medieval maze of Patersholt. Once a working-class district home to brothels and dingy drinking dens, it was gentrified in the ’80s and now conceals some of the most exciting (and exclusive) restaurants in the city.

For me, biking trumps other modes of transport because you don’t just see the city, you feel it. The cobblestones judder your bones, the wind streaks your hair, scents surround you, and then you can park right in front of your destination.

I wend westward away from the crowds. The streets seem to fold in on themselves, as if hiding a secret. I step off and gently roll the bike along Provenierstersstraat. I’ve entered the Oud Begijnhof Sint-Elisabeth, a medieval community founded by pious Catholic women who wished to serve God without entering

SEE THAT THE WORLD IS BIG AND SMALL ALL AT ONCE

BY
GLYNN POGUE

a monastery. Whitewashed cottages frame the dormouse-quiet cobbled street, and time seems to dial back centuries.

I cycle back towards Patersholt for a beer at local bar ‘t Velootje, its wacky decor so crammed with old bikes I can barely get in the door. Bearded owner Lieven de Vos has run this cherished spot for more than a quarter of a century.

Exiting the bar, I find the city has had a costume change, with all its iconic buildings lit from the ground up. Ready for a whole new two-wheeled adventure, I set off into the jaws of the night.

COLOMBIA It would take two full days by car, motorcycle, bus, and van to get from Cartagena to La Guajira, the desolate northernmost point of Colombia where the desert meets the sea, so my friend Sean suggested we stop in Palomino along the way. “We can do yoga and be all zen,” he said. I was in; we’d be spending our coming days atop seaside cliffs, trekking across hot sand dunes, and sleeping in hammocks. We could use the time in Palomino to prepare for the adventure.

Palomino is the type of place where soul-searching European expats with dreadlocks come to find their tribe. It’s the type of place I tend to avoid. On our way into town, our taxi driver tells us it used to be quiet around here, a home for indigenous people, but in the last few years travelers came flocking for the beachy vibe and nearby Sierra Nevada range. Developers came next, bringing yoga studios, vegan restaurants, and juice bars.

After checking into our hotel, we head straight to the beach and spread out on the sand. The weather is perfect, the sky a clear blue.

I play music on my phone, and Sean buys roasted nuts in an oil-stained brown paper bag from an elderly man. There are vendors everywhere. They sell arepas, fresh fruit, woven bags, and those patterned friendship bracelets seemingly everyone brings home from trips. A dark-skinned woman walks by holding up a binder full of images of Kim Kardashian wearing “Bo Derek” and “boxer” braids, claiming she can replicate the look for “50 mil pesos.”

A few feet away I see a woman squeezing oil from what looks like an old bottle of dishwashing liquid onto a man’s sunburned shoulders. She’s crouched down on a small stool and her firm brown hands are working on his back, kneading and slapping and pounding.

She notices me watching and shouts, “You next, *mami!*”

When she’s done with the guy, she makes her way over to



The formerly sleepy beach town of Palomino has become a popular stop for visitors discovering Colombia's Caribbean coast.

me. “It’s 25 mil pesos for *treinta minutos, y cincuenta mil pesos* for *una hora*. Pero, you need una hora, you have a lot of body, like me,” she says, gripping her thighs, which are as thick and shapely as mine.

Our eyes meet for a moment and we burst out laughing—big, open-mouthed cackles.

“You got me, girl,” I say, lifting my arms in mock defeat.

“Brenda,” she says, extending her hand.

“Glynn,” I say.

Brenda nods toward the image of a dark-skinned black woman with a big, juicy afro that’s printed on my tote bag. She peels back her sun hat to reveal a puff of thick coily hair and gives me a thumbs up.

I knew we—Black people—were here in Colombia, and I’d been hoping that somewhere along this journey I’d have a moment for this type of fellowship. So often when I’m traveling, my hair, skin, and body are what set me apart. When I can connect my diasporic dots in the midst of it, I feel a strengthened sense of self; no matter where I am in the world, I’m at home.

Brenda proceeds to bend, crack, and snap my body into alignment. We're mostly quiet throughout, but when I flip onto my stomach, she taps my butt playfully and laughs "*mismo, mismo!*" same, same! And we start cackling all over again. She repeats this word when massaging my scalp, her hands deep in my afro. "Mismo," she says, and then, "*linda*," beautiful. She whispers it over and over, "linda, linda, linda."

When she's finished, I pass Brenda the 50 mil, plus 20 more in respect for her hustle. She tucks the rolled-up bills into her bra.

We sit together for a while. My Spanish isn't great and neither is her English, but we make do. I learn she's actually from Venezuela but left six months ago to earn money to send back to her children, who stayed behind. Brenda is one of more than four million Venezuelans who've had to flee due to the country's ongoing political and economic crisis; food is scarce, the dollar is hyperinflated, and death tolls are rising.

"Colombia *es* beautiful, pero Venezuela..." Brenda sighs. "Venezuela *es... sweet*," she says, kissing her fingers to her lips. I look at her, thinking this town might be a little strange for the both of us, but in this moment we've found a sweet familiarity in each other. Sean and I had set off to Colombia in search of thrills, but, as I'm constantly reminded on each of my journeys, adventures don't have to be about adrenaline and increased heart rate. They can be about the bravery it takes to reach across cultural divides and find commonalities.

Brenda pulls a small Nokia from her fanny pack; the screen is slicked with massage oil. "*Mi hija*," she says, pointing to a photo of a smiling brown girl on the home screen.

"Linda," I say. "Que linda."

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Brooklyn-based **GLYNN POGUE** (@bedstuybrat) is at work on a collection of essays on race, class, and traveling while Black, topics she covers on her podcast, #BlackGirlsTexting.



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How a season of magical landscapes and unpronounceable words inspired a life in travel

In a few weeks I'll be traveling to Wales to attend the hundredth birthday celebration of my uncle, who lives in a village on the Gower Peninsula, overlooking a wide sandy bay. The first time I visited him and my aunt there, I was 14. That summer, I developed a serious crush on Wales.

The place appealed to a bookish introvert like me. I was deep into my King Arthur phase (to be replaced by my current Harry Potter phase), and the legendary ruler had connections throughout Wales. Caerleon is the supposed site of Camelot. Merlin is said to have come from the town of Carmarthen. One day, my aunt and uncle took me and my younger brother pony trekking on Cefn Bryn Common, a windy heath of bracken and gorse flanking the sandstone backbone of Gower. There we came across Arthur's Stone, said to have grown from a pebble tossed out of the king's shoe.

Wales's biggest national gathering is the annual Eisteddfod, a festival of poetry and music. Bardic tradition is a point of official pride. Literary celebrity Dylan Thomas was born in Swansea, the gateway city for Gower. (He called it an "ugly, lovely town.")

My uncle introduced me to the Welsh alphabet, with its unusual characters such as *ll*, which appears in everyday nouns like *llan* (church) and names like Llewellyn. A Welshman later told me the sound is pronounced "like the engine of your car starting."

That summer was the first time this suburban girl began to think about words to describe the natural world. Wales is a landscape of imagination, writ with magic and chivalry. From the Gower Peninsula's Worm's Head, a serpentine headland that is the perfect spot for a sunset stroll, to misty Tal-y-llyn Lake in Snowdonia National Park in the north, this is scenery to stock a dictionary with. Each new word I unearthed—cairn, tor, marsh mallow, oystercatcher—led to more words—*bryn*, *cwm*, *dyffryn*—until it was a landslide of language. Name it and the world seemed brighter, more knowable, but at the same time profoundly mysterious.

The fact that my uncle was as bookish as I was cemented my attachment to a country that celebrates poets. Although

he was of English heritage, he had grown up in Wales. He and my Filipina aunt, my father's sister, still live in his book-filled family home. Many afternoons, we'd sit reading in their small glass-enclosed porch overlooking the garden. Usually the proper British gentleman, soft-spoken and witty, he'd let out some mild expletive while commenting about some national politician. He wasn't the type to reminisce about his years serving in the Royal Air Force during World War II, but he would talk about playing the organ at Cambridge or why he didn't buy tickets for an all-tuba concert at the Gower chamber music festival he and my aunt patronize every year: "I couldn't visualize that. It was a whole evening, wasn't it, of tuba?" In 2016 his most recent book, a history of maritime trade in Australia, was published.

I've returned to Wales several times since that summer, but I haven't gone as often as I'd like. On my most recent visit, I came across a heart-shaped piece of inky black Welsh slate in a gift shop, with the word *hiraeth* painted on it. I asked what it meant and was told it didn't translate to one equivalent word in English. *Hiraeth* conveys nostalgia, yearning for something lost, homesickness—but not merely an ache for the four walls of home but for something bigger, a land-longing, a people-longing.

I ended up buying the souvenir; it spoke to the way I feel about Wales and family when I'm not there. And I like the idea of a word so overflowing with meaning that it takes a bunch of other words to begin to understand it.

Ever since that first Welsh summer of legends and beauty, words and travel have been inseparable for me. In both leisure and work—including 18 years at this magazine—I am forever in search of precisely the right words to illuminate places. I learned back then that these words, strung together to create true stories, can forge rock-hard bonds of soulful connection.

So here's to wheeling a hundred times around the sun, Uncle Howard! I thank you for giving me Wales—and all the wonder and words that have followed. Words, especially, such as *hiraeth*: remembrance, longing, love, gratitude.

Senior editor AMY ALIPIO (@amytravels) has yet to meet an afternoon tea in Britain she didn't like.

A Child's Summer in Wales

BY AMY ALIPIO

ILLUSTRATION BY
GRACIA LAM

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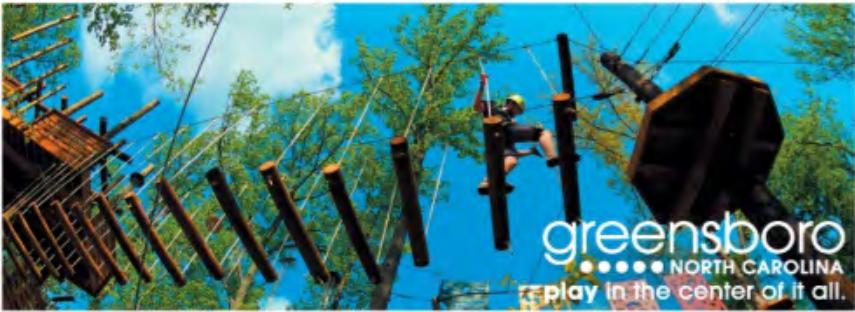
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1 The ceremonial name of this Asian capital city (above) contains 168 letters, earning it the Guinness World Record for the longest name of a place. What is it commonly known as?

2 In 1893, this country, when it was still a British colony, was the first to grant women full voting rights. Name it.

3 Short, poetic folk songs called *dainas* can be heard in which two Baltic countries?

4 Which group of French Polynesian islands were made famous by Captain James Cook and novelist Herman Melville?

5 The temple of Djoser Djoseru was commissioned by this female pharaoh of Egypt. Name her.

6 Weighing less than a tenth of an ounce, the bee hummingbird is the world's smallest bird. It flits around which Caribbean island?

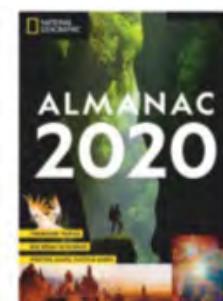
7 Identify the name of the world's tallest freestanding mountain? (Hint: It's not in Asia.)

8 China may produce the most apples, but they can be traced back to the world's largest landlocked country. Name it.

9 The inner core of which city founded by the Incas is said to be laid out in the shape of a puma?

10 Which country flies the only non-rectangular national flag in the world?

11 *Paprikás csirke*, or chicken paprikash—a dish seasoned with the aromatic powder of sweet red-pepper pods and served with noodles—is a specialty of which nation?



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