THE UK'S FAVOURITE TRAVEL MAGAZINE

ISSUE 113

MAY 2018

lonely planet

MAY 2018

UK EDITION

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A DREAM TRIP TO WILD PATAGONIA

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editor's note

I'm typing this with the wobbliness of fingers that comes from a mix of excitement and frayed nerves. The *Lonely Planet* magazine team has been brainstorming, researching, designing and writing flat-out over the past few months to introduce the biggest changes to your magazine since I started work on its launch over nine (*nine!*) years ago. Our mission, more than ever, is to give you reasons to turn to us for ideas for original travel experiences and to feed your curiosity about the world – giving you a friendly refuge among the many apps, websites, social channels, books and blogs that vie to do the same. We've introduced new front sections called Explore **(p9)** and Journal **(p33)** that up the pace and deliver more across the board: more local tips, food and drink, boundary-pushing activities, opinions, and tales from the road that celebrate how the surprises – let's call it 'the mess of travel' – can be half the fun. Turn over for details of what you'll find in Explore and Journal, and know that I'd love to include your feedback as we try out more new ideas – email me at ukmageditorial@lonelyplanet.com.

PETER GRUNERT, GROUP EDITOR
@peter_grunert petervg73

PHOTOGRAPHS: MATT MUNRO, ADAM DETOUR, DANIEL JAMES CLARKE, EUGENIOCORSO72, PHILIP LEE HARVEY

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Lonely Planet magazine
Consumer Publication of the Year

Consumer Writer of the Year
Oliver Smith

Photography Award
Jonathan Gregson
Travel Media Awards 2017

Favourite UK Consumer Travel Magazine
Cheapflights Awards 2017

Young Travel Writer of the Year
Sophie McGrath
AITO Awards 2017

The calm waters of the northeast Aegean, the location for this issue's Great Escape. INSET, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Hiking in Peru, dining in Boston and Instagramming 'curves', all from our new front sections

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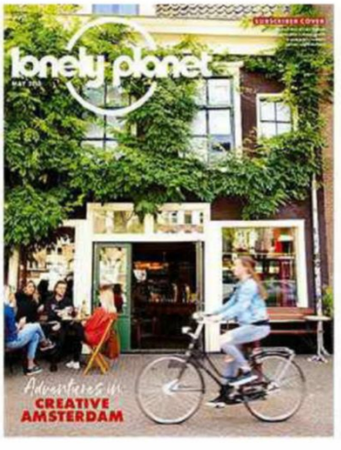
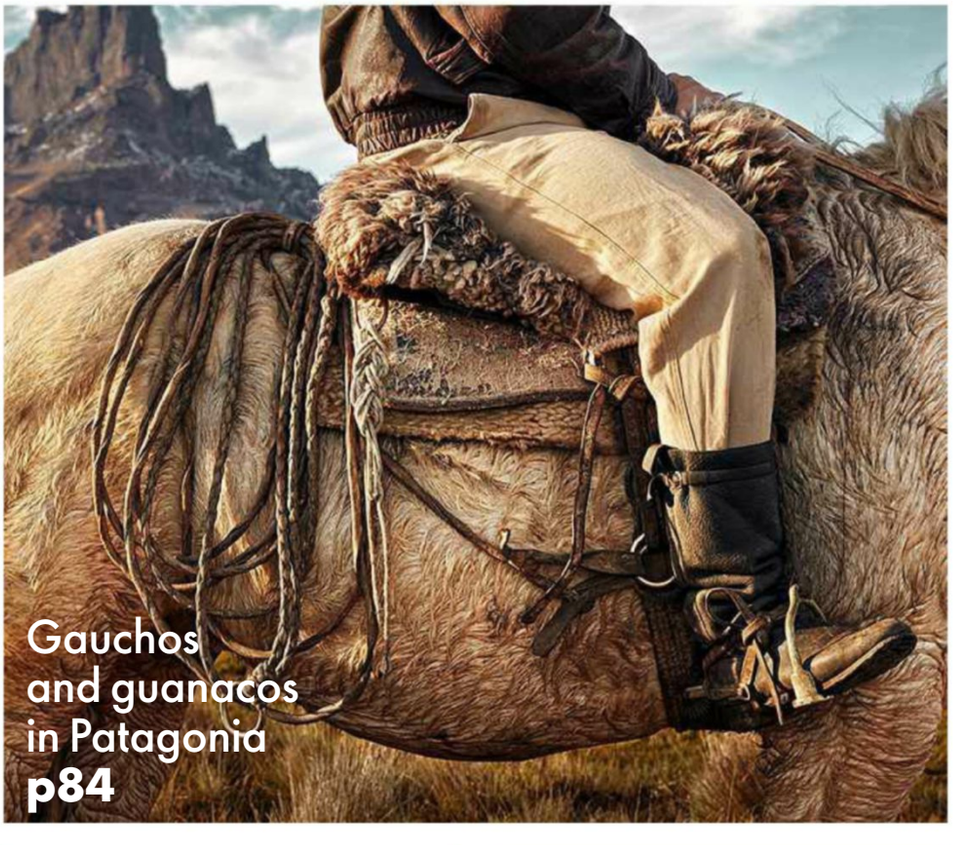


THIS MONTH'S COVERS

Little-known Astypalea stars on our newsstand cover – one of seven Greek islands covered in this issue where local life comes centre stage. On the subscriber cover, Amsterdammers make the most of a sunny day outside a canalside café.



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SUBSCRIBE P50

Get six issues of *Lonely Planet* magazine for £18.99 – a saving of 25% on the standard shop price – and receive a set of three Lonely Planet illustrated notebooks, worth £29.97.

Look for these symbols to quickly identify listings in our Top Picks guides each month

Activities **Drinking** **Eating** **Entertainment** **Shopping** **Sights** **Sleeping**

Prices throughout the magazine correct at time of going to press. Prices for hotel rooms are for double, en suite rooms with breakfast in low season, unless otherwise stated. Flight prices are for the cheapest return fares, including one piece of hold baggage, unless otherwise stated.

Introducing our new front sections

explore

YOUR WORLD OF DISCOVERIES

Whatever type of trip you're planning this month, we've got the know-how to help you on your way. Our experts and locals share their recommendations and insider tips, meaning you'll have a better holiday, whether you fancy a quick city break, an active trip that will really push your boundaries or a lazy weekend in the countryside.

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JOURNAL

TALES FROM THE ROAD

A bit of armchair travel is the best way to inspire a future trip. If you can't get away this month or simply want to drift off on a daydream for hour or two, let our writers, photographers and artists take you on a vicarious journey, whether through the narrow lanes of a Moroccan hilltop town or to the tables of the finest seafood restaurants in Boston.

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NEWSSTAND COVER IMAGE: NICK RUTTER PHOTOGRAPHY. SUBSCRIBER COVER IMAGE: MATT MUNRO.
CONTENTS PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN GRECSON

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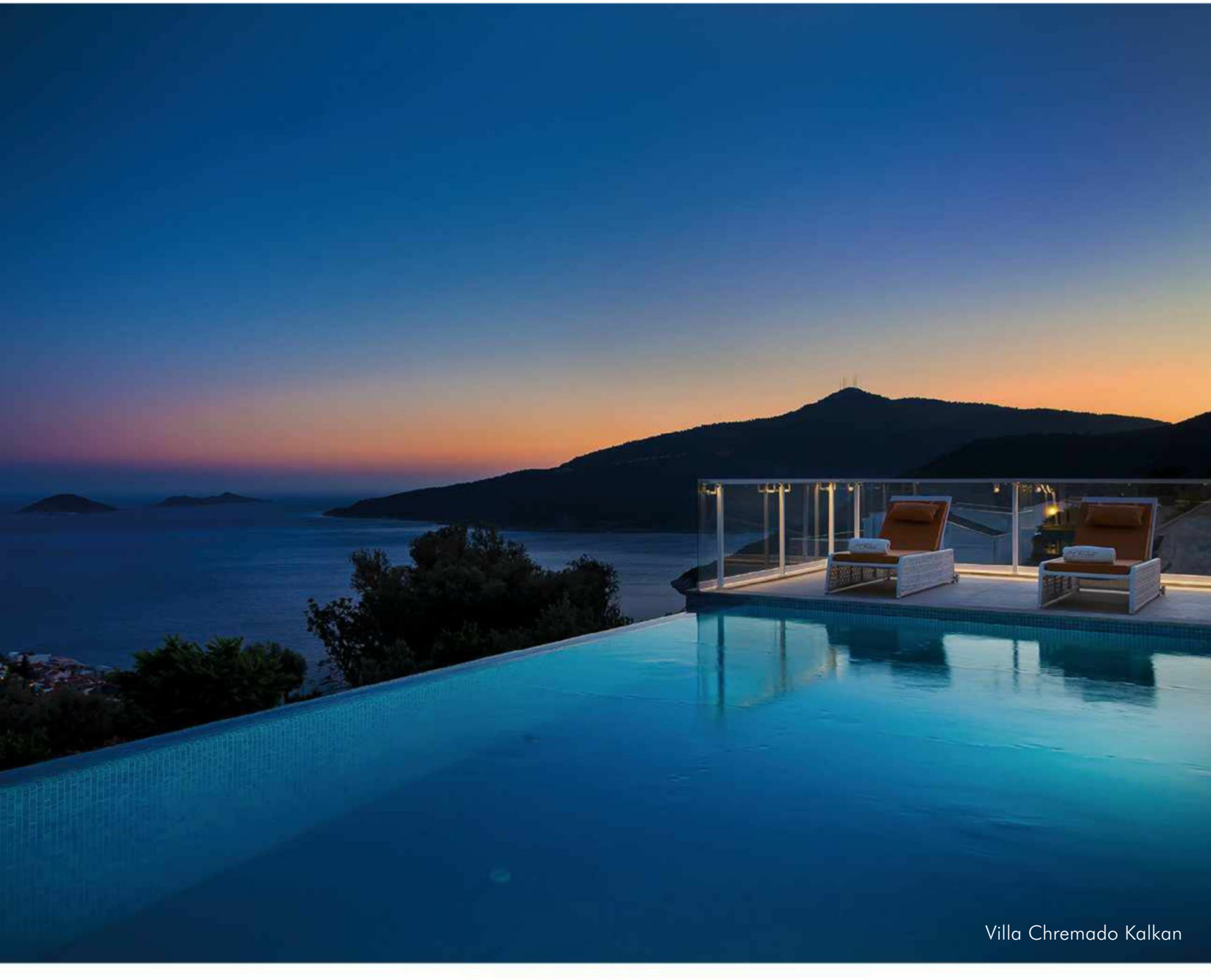
Enjoy a taste of affordable luxury on the Lycian coast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Choose from our handpicked selection of exclusive boutique hotels and stylish private villas with pools along Turkey's unspoilt Lycian coast, and you'll discover that a luxury holiday doesn't need to break the bank. So why not treat yourself?

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THE DISCERNING Collection

explore

YOUR WORLD OF DISCOVERIES

Meet a printmaker in Nashville, supersize your bank-holiday break, take a road trip along the Cornish coast, explore Seoul with a local, and more

PHOTOGRAPH: TEC PETAJA

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Hongdae, Seoul

*Seoul local **Hahna Yoon** shows us around her favourite neighbourhood, a creative district at the heart of youth culture in the South Korean capital*

@hahna.yo

JUST AN ILLUSION

'The Trick Eye Museum houses a number of surprises. First up is the museum itself – visitors step into 3D art installations and an optical illusion makes it seem as if they're diving into a dragon's mouth or floating over a waterfall. There's also an Ice Museum, with a 10-metre ice slide, and the Love Museum – to all intents and purposes, a museum about sex.'

trickeye.com/seoul/en

READING MATERIAL

'Thanks Books has a serious following of fans. It's a well-curated store that sells books, magazines and art catalogues in both Korean and English. There's a café, too, and local creatives flock here to enjoy its unique atmosphere.'

57-6 Yanghwa-ro

CULTURE BLOCK

'Sangsang Madang is a lovely independent cinema and exhibition space that features indie and foreign films and shows. I last came here to watch *Moonlight* in the atmospheric, intimate cinema in the basement. There's also a great stationery store upstairs.'

65 Eoulmadang-ro

SOAK UP THE SOJU

'Famous for its soju (rice wine) bombs, Samgeori Pocha is invariably packed with raucous groups celebrating one thing or another, singing, drinking and having a good time. Pocha means "tent where you drink": once upon a time, the bar was housed in an actual tent; then it expanded and it's now a huge, sprawling affair.'

361-12 Seogyo-dong

ILLUSTRATION: MUTI-FOLIO ART. PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE TRICKEYE MUSEUM, KT&G SANGSANG MADANG, PAUL BRIGHTON/ISTOCK/GETTY

PARK LIFE
'Gyeongui Line Forest Park is built along four miles of a disused railway line that used to run to North Korea. It's one of the largest, liveliest green spaces in Seoul and has a great atmosphere, with buskers playing music and locals picnicking on the grass. There's also a container library – people pop in, pick a book and read in the sunshine.'
147-89 Donggyo-dong

RETRO DRINKS
'For a great bar that's a little off the beaten track, head to Gopchang Jeongol. It's got one of the most loveable interiors in Seoul: it's like a time capsule back to the '80s, decked out with vintage lamps, wall-to-wall records and with old sound systems mounted on the walls. Don't miss out on the homemade Bokbunja-ju (raspberry wine).'
327-17 Seogyo-dong

SEOUL FOOD
'Hands down the best barbecue restaurant in Hongdae is Cheolgil Wang Galbisal ("Railroad Barbecue"). You grill the meat you've ordered on mini braziers at your table and the whole place has a freshly sizzling, smoky smell. I bring all my friends in here and make them try the legendary doenjang (fermented bean paste).'
4-2 Changjeon-dong

HONGDAE STYLE
'If you want to know what Korean streetwear looks like, head to Stylenanda, which mainly stocks female fashion. The clothing brand sums up downtown Seoul style in a nutshell. My favourite purchase is a pair of high-waisted "mum" jeans. There's another surprise in here that's worth knowing about – a café decorated in pink and gold, with a miniature swimming pool!'
stylenanda.com

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF VISITSEOUL, PINK POOL CAFE PHOTO BY @TINYYYSTYLE, JYLEEN21, GOPCHANG JEONGOL IMAGE BY PARK/HYUN-KOO/THE KAREN HERALD

What phrase should every visitor to Hongdae know before arriving?

'Geonbae' which means 'cheers'

WELL SPENT

Berlin

The very best way to spend €250 euros in a single day

At the time of publication, €250 = £220

STAY

€105

Book a loft apartment at the Michelberger, the hotel that most encapsulates Berlin's creative DIY spirit. Expect industrial-style rooms, friendly staff and live music in the lobby.
michelbergerhotel.com

DO

€15

Head underground on a guided visit to tunnels burrowed under the Berlin Wall, and hear tales of escapes, subterfuge and capture during the days of the Stasi.
berliner-unterwelten.de

LUNCH

€10

Grab a pizza and a beer at Clärchens Ballhaus, a 19th-century music hall complete with a parquet dance floor, ornate Mirror Hall and pretty garden.
ballhaus.de

BUY

€40

Pick up an Ampelmännchen sweatshirt at the official shop; the green and red 'traffic-light men' from the former East adorn everything from deck chairs to sweet tins.
ampelmann.de

DINNER

€70

Tuck into organic, farm-to-table dishes, such as Spreewald lamb at Katz Orange, set in a cavernous old brewery; €70 will get you three courses and a bottle of wine.
katzorange.com

DRINK

€10

Pay what you like at Weinerei; rent a glass for €2, enjoy your wine or schnapps in the living-room-style bar, then plonk some money in the pot on your way out.
weinerei.com

WHEN WE WIN THE LOTTERY

Specialist tour operator Black Tomato has just added Bolivia to its range of personalised luxury tours, dubbed 'Blink' for their pop-up nature. When you arrive at your yurt or moondome by the flamingo-flecked salt lakes of Bolivia's Salar de Uyuni, fresh from a hot-air balloon trip over the desert, you can rest assured that nobody will have had the same experience before you, and no-one is likely to follow *(from £9,500pp; blacktomato.com)*.

BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE FREE

Europe's national parks

The only entry requirement to some of Europe's wildest and most beautiful parks is a sense of adventure.

NORWAY
Jotunheimen National Park
In Norway everyone enjoys 'allemannsretten': free access to the countryside, including national parks. Jotunheimen is home to myriad hiking routes; tackling the 8.6-mile Besseggen Ridge trail is something of a rite of passage for Norwegians.
jotunheimen.com

GERMANY
Bavarian Forest National Park
Europe's largest forest is where Bavaria meets Czech Bohemia, with plenty of cycling, hiking and skiing trails within. More than 10,000 animal species inhabit these woods and you can join them: wild (and free) camping is allowed within the park's borders.
nationalpark-bayerischer-wald.de

ITALY
Gran Paradiso National Park
Once the hunting ground of a Sardinian king, today 'Great Paradise' is the preserve of hikers, climbers, skiers – and the Alpine ibex, which gads about the upper slopes. The big attraction is the mountain after which the park is named.
pngp.it

SCOTLAND
Cairngorms National Park
Britain's largest national park contains five of the country's highest peaks. These include Ben Macdui, said to be stalked by the spectral figure of Am Fear Liath Mòr ('The Big Grey Man'). You can escape him by spending the night in one of the free bothies.
cairngorms.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHS: MICHELBERGER HOTEL, VOLODYMYR GOINYK/GETTY. ILLUSTRATION: LOUISE SHEERAN. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ANDREA SCHULTE-PEEVERS

PHOTOGRAPH: MARCELINO RAMIREZ/AGE FOTOSTOCK

Springtime in Spain

Set on a slender, foot-shaped bend where the canyon of the Guadalaviar River carves through the hilly badlands of southern Aragón, the town of Albarracín is a place seemingly bypassed by the centuries. Houses of dusky-pink stone with wooden galleries press close together under sturdy fortress walls that march uphill. Step into one of the town squares and you half expect to hear a film director shout, 'And... action!' to the extras of a *Don Quixote* remake.

Albarracín is a two-hour drive from Valencia in a region that's untouristy by Spanish standards, and it's well worth visiting in spring, before the mercury rises towards the 'uncomfortable' mark. Much of the appeal comes from exploring at your own pace, deciding whether the town deserves its reputation as Spain's most beautiful settlement. Strolls should be interupted by regular stops in Albarracín's restaurants, to sample the likes of suckling kid and jamón. Book a stay at La Casa del Tío Americano (from £70), and you'll get to sample more local hams and cheeses on a terrace with views of Albarracín's blushing rooftops.
elandadoralbarracin.es; lacasadeltioamericano.com

ROAD TRIP

The Cornish Coast

Summer's calling, which means now is a great time to get behind the wheel and head to Cornwall for a weekend break full of sea air and rugged coastlines

FRIDAY NIGHT

1 Penzance

Start your weekend by checking into one of the rustic-luxe rooms at Artist Residence Penzance (from £136), a few minutes' walk from the seafront. As the name suggests, each of the 22 rooms is decorated by a local artist. For dinner, tuck into home-smoked pork ribs or whole roasted sea bass at in-house restaurant the Cornish Barn (mains from £14), where 'local' and 'seasonal' are the name of the game.
artistresidence.co.uk; thecornishbarn.co.uk

SATURDAY MORNING

2 St Michael's Mount

After a wander round the narrow streets of Penzance – once the preserve of smugglers and pirates, now more likely to house cafés and art galleries – drive down the coast to St Michael's Mount. At low tide, do as centuries of pilgrims have done before you and walk across the cobbled causeway to the island's medieval monastery (£15 for combined castle and garden entry) and the small village that grew up around it.
stmichaelsmount.co.uk

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

3 Lizard Peninsula

Spend the rest of the day getting lost down the lanes of the Lizard Peninsula. You'll want to stop at Ann's Pasties on your travels to pick up a picnic lunch of that Cornish staple, the pasty (£4). On a hot day, ditch the car and your clothes for

***Before you go**, download our playlist of new Cornish music by searching for 'Lonely Planet Cornish road trip' on Spotify*

DISTANCES

Penzance to St Michael's Mount
4 miles

St Michael's Mount to Kynance Cove
22 miles

Kynance Cove to St Mawes
33 miles

St Mawes to St Ives
34 miles

St Ives to Penzance
8 miles

Clockwise from top left: Artist Residence Penzance; St Ives; a Cornish pasty; the village of Zennor; a sign in St Ives

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OLIVER BERRY, PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHLEY COOPER/ROBERT HARDING/JUSTIN POULKES/ACORNERS/PAUL MASSEY/MACIEJTOMCZYKOWICZ/GETTY

a swim at Kynance Cove, a small white-sand beach in a horseshoe bay.
annspasties.co.uk; nationaltrust.org.uk/kynance-cove

SATURDAY NIGHT
4 St Mawes

Continue your drive north to the seaside town of St Mawes. Dump your bag in one of the nautically styled rooms of the St Mawes Hotel (from £150), then catch a RIB boat (from £35) from the harbour to the 13th-century Pandora Inn (mains from £11) for creekside fish pie and a pint.
stmaweshotel.com; stmaweskayaks.co.uk; pandorainn.com

SUNDAY MORNING
4 St Mawes

Time to get back in a boat. Fish & Trips takes people out from St Mawes for two hours of mackerel fishing (£20). If you'd rather putter about on your own, they also rent self-drive boats (from £70 for four hours). Ditch the sea legs to drive to St Ives for lunch of crab tacos or a steak po' boy at the Rum and Crab Shack (mains from £6).
fishandtripstmawes.co.uk; rumandcrabshack.com

SUNDAY AFTERNOON
5 St Ives

Visits to the Tate St Ives gallery and Barbara Hepworth gardens (£13 joint entry) could easily fill an afternoon, but try to find a bit of time to stroll the lanes of St Ives. Home to workshops showcasing Cornish-made arts and crafts, Sloop Studios is the place to pick up a souvenir of your trip. Head back to Penzance via the pretty village of Zennor; local pub the Tinners Arms is a fine place to toast the end of your weekend.
tate.org.uk; @sloopstudios; tinnersarms.com

各位会员：

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微信号 3：book308　　微信号 4：book608
微信号 5：book4008　　微信号 6：book361
微信号 7：book362　　微信号 8：book599
微信号 9：book7749　　微信号 10：book8848

其他任何途径（淘宝、微店、QQ、微博或其他任意微信号等）**都属于假冒，**本人没有淘宝和微店，因为做淘宝和微店很容易被封店处罚，原因你懂的。

2、如果你是通过上述十个微信号之一加入 VIP 的，首先恭喜你选择了正式途径！其次，**VIP 会员禁止再添加上述我的其他微信号，如有同时添加上述两个甚至两个以上微信号的，一经发现，立即取消会员资格！**（之前无意添加上述两个或两个以上微信号的会员请主动告知，近期正在清查重复好友，请注意）

3、如果你是通过其他任何收费途径获取到该杂志或该网盘分享的，很遗憾你误选择了李鬼。可能在一段时间内你获得的权益和其他 VIP 会员相同（其实更新速度根本跟不上我们），但是必定不能长久。我们近期正在利用深度路由追踪技术和网络云盘分享的蚁群算法清查假冒和倒卖行为，一经查出即取消所有权限。**如果你是从假冒和倒卖者那里获取到的 VIP 权限，请尽快联系我们，进行确认后，我们会妥善把你注册为正式 VIP 会员，以保障自己的正当权益。**

4、**如已是 VIP 会员，遇到网盘分享链接失效或其他任何问题，请联系当时参与众筹的微信号，禁止添加其他微信号，禁止！后果参看第 2 条说明。**

5、再次强调我们的众筹内容是 100 多种英文原版外刊和 30 多种中文杂志持续永久更新，一次性付费 188 元，即可终身订阅所有杂志，享受所有福利。众筹目前已经五年有余。如果你非 VIP 会员，无意中看到此说明，并对我们的杂志众筹 VIP 有兴趣，请添加特别**微信号 1295512531** 咨询办理。

祝大家阅读愉快！

Henhaus *for rotisserie chicken with Maris Piper fries*

Southeast Food Feast

There's a new place to eat, drink and be merry in London

THE GASTRONOMIC MAP of London has never really charted anywhere east of the Thames Barrier, but change is afoot with the opening of Public in Woolwich – a street-food venue inside the cavernous building that once housed the 1930s Plumstead Road Covered Market. It's the latest venture from the Street Feast team, which runs similar temples to all things food and drink in four other locations across London, from Shoreditch to Canada Water. Billing itself as a 'food stadium', Public is more a place to bring a gaggle of friends than a first date, with punters settling on to long tables with spoils from the numerous street-food traders and bars. If you want to join them, don't hang around too long: the whole site will be demolished in 2020 when the area comes under redevelopment.

Open Friday nights and Saturdays only; streetfeast.com

OUR FAVOURITE PICKS AT PUBLIC

Yum Bun *for Asian steamed buns – pork, chicken, cod or crispy tofu*

Rumhole *for mai tais, daiquiris and other rum-based cocktails*

Rust Bucket *for wood-fired Neapolitan-style pizza and focaccia*

Lava Bar *for doughnuts served with ice-cream and butterscotch sauce*

The biggest and best

NEW RECORDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Travellers who roam the planet in search of superlatives should hightail it to the UAE, which has just added two entries to the *Guinness World Records*: the world's tallest hotel (the Gevora in Dubai, with 75 floors), and the world's longest zipwire (the Jebel Jais Flight, at 1.7 miles).

IS THIS THE BEST PUB ON EARTH?

A pub in Belgium has been voted the best beer destination in the world by ratebeer.com – despite only opening on Sundays. The niftily titled In de Verzekering tegen de Grote Dorst ('In the Guarantee Against Great Thirst') serves over 250 brews. Eleven bars in Belgium made the top 50; a mere two in Britain made the cut.

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Gökotta

(SWEDISH)

To wake up at dawn in order to hear the birds sing

PHOTOGRAPHS: HOLLY CANT, STREETFEAST/SCOTT GRUMMETT

The remains of a US Navy DC3 plane which crashed on Sólheimasandur beach in the 1970s

PHOTOGRAPH: MIKKO LAGERSTEDT

Icelandic Saga

Have a desperate need to cram in as many typically Icelandic activities as you can in as short a time as possible? Then the Troll Expeditions' South Coast Elements tour is the one for you. In the 14 hours between pick-up and drop-off in Reykjavík, you will: walk behind one waterfall; climb to the top of another; go on a hike across a glacier; cycle across a black-sand beach to the wreck of a military plane; swim in a hot geothermal pool; and clamber underground through a lava cave. Just remember to breathe at the end.

£195; trollaferdir.is

HOW TO

Take pics on safari

Master the challenge of getting great photos of wildlife in a natural setting

STATS
Lens 100-400mm
Shutter 1/400 sec
Aperture f9
ISO 500

Jonathan Gregson has photographed many safari stories for us, and got this shot in Tanzania. Here, he shares his tips on capturing the best photos:

- Try to anticipate what the animal might do. I spotted this elephant heading to a water hole and asked the driver to position our vehicle behind it, in the hope he would come and drink.
- On safari, it's most common to find animals at rest during the heat of the day. When you see one in motion, don't miss the chance to shoot it.
- Elephants spray water on themselves to cool down; catching natural animal behaviour will add interest to your picture.
- Capturing the optimum moment in action is best done by shooting as fast as your camera will allow – so shoot lots and edit later.
- Letting animals come towards you will result in a more relaxed image than you trying to get close to them, stressing them in the process. Be patient!

See and buy photos at jonathangregson.store

HOW TO

Take an onsen

Taking a hot-spring bath is one way to soak up Japan's culture, but the code of conduct can be mystifying. Follow our guide to impeccable onsen etiquette.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT DOOR
Men and women almost always bathe separately. Men's baths are designated by a blue noren curtain with this symbol 男, while women's use a red noren curtain marked 女.

COVER UP THAT INK
Tattoos are associated with organised crime in Japan and as a result, many onsens ban them entirely. Cover small ones with a plaster.

DITCH THE SWIMSUIT
Traditional onsens have a strict dress code: birthday suits only. A small, strategically placed towel can be used to preserve one's dignity.

DON'T FORGET TO WASH
Entering an onsen unwashed is impolite. Sit at a wash station – each has a stool, bowl, tap and shower – and douse yourself down.

HOW TO

Pick the right chilli

Whether you're considering a dish from the Mexican homeland of the chilli pepper or from another cuisine that got the taste for them, make sure you pitch the heat at the appropriate level. The Scoville scale is a scientific way to measure the spiciness of members of the capsicum family.

BELL PEPPER	PEPPERONCINO	JALAPEÑO	BIRD'S EYE	SCOTCH BONNET	CAROLINA REAPER
0 Scoville heat units	**300 units**	**5,000 units**	**150,000 units**	**245,000 units**	**1,600,000 units**
use in salads	use in Italian penne all'arrabbiata	use in Mexican fish tacos	use in Thai green curry	use in Jamaican jerk chicken	use in ill-advised dares

PHOTOGRAPH: JONATHAN GREGSON. ILLUSTRATIONS: DUSTIN JOHNSON, LOUISE SHEERAN

PHOTOGRAPH: DANIEL JAMES CLARKE

TRY SOMETHING NEW

Multi-day Hikes

Of all the means on offer to explore this planet, it's a bold choice to opt for the most basic. But walking is a great way to reconnect with the experiences of centuries of travellers before you, and might be the only means to see a hidden lake or lost ruin. Not all hikes require tent-pitching skills; for every trail that demands wild camping, there are plenty of others where you end the day under a fixed roof, with a hot meal and a cold beer, and bags delivered by a forwarding service.

LARES TREK (PERU)

Distance: 21 miles
Duration: 3 days
One among hundreds of old paths through the Andes used by the Incas, the Lares Trek, in the mountains north of Cuzco (pictured), needs no permits and its high-altitude views are seen by relatively few visitors. The hike passes through the central hub of the Inca Empire, with well-preserved ruins.
gadventures.co.uk

HADRIAN'S WALL PATH (ENGLAND)

Distance: 84 miles
Duration: 9 days
The defences that once marked the northernmost limit of the Roman Empire have eroded in the last 1,900 years, but the landscape remains as overwhelming as it must have appeared to the soldiers scanning the horizon from its forts. The sea-to-sea trail that traces the course of Hadrian's Wall is well provided with B&Bs, bunkhouses and pubs.
nationaltrail.co.uk/hadrians-wall-path

JOHN MUIR TRAIL (USA)

Distance: 215 miles
Duration: 28 days
California's premier long-distance trail is named after one of America's great conservationists, and it runs through three national parks: Yosemite, King's Canyon and Sequoia. In between, it reaches places never seen by visitors who stick close to the roads, including the sublime Thousand Island Lake in the Ansel Adams Wilderness.
pcta.org/discover-the-trail/john-muir-trail

CAMINO DE SANTIAGO (SPAIN)

Distance: 491 miles
Duration: 30 days
Walk the Camino and you follow a tradition that dates back even before Christian times, when Celts would aim for 'land's end' in rugged northwest Spain. The most popular route is the technically undemanding 'Camino Francés' from just across the French border, but a few prefer the mountainous north-coast route.
caminosantiagodecompostela.com

Left: Celene Aubry is shop manager at the veteran letterpress business Hatch Show Print in Nashville, Tennessee

MEET THE MAKER

The Print Artist

In 139 years of uninterrupted operation, Hatch Show Print has become synonymous with Nashville's entertainment history. Meet the person who's keeping that tradition alive

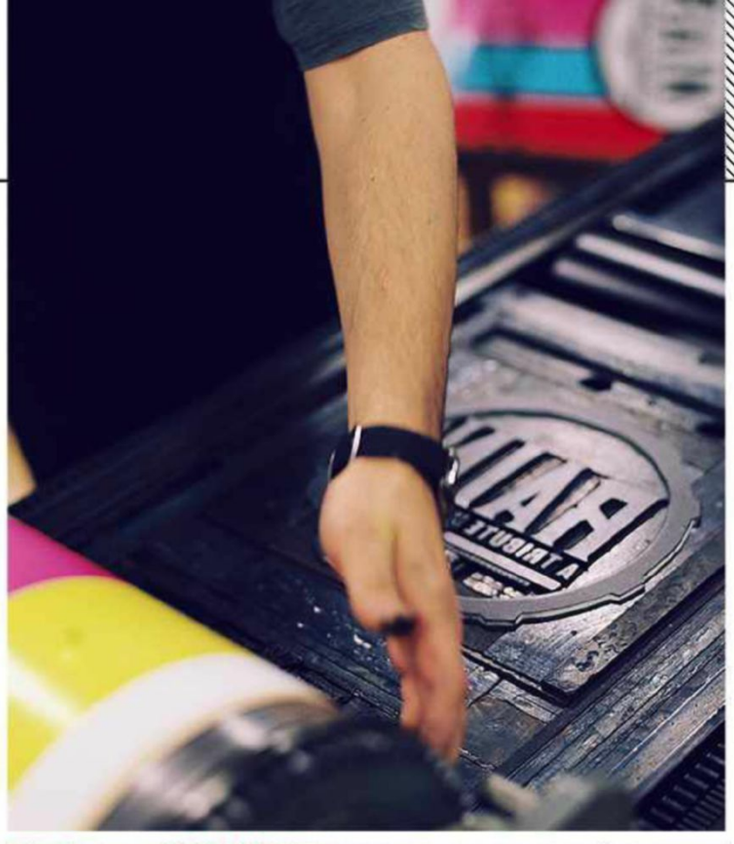
Words **ALEXANDER HOWARD** *@AlexMHoward*
Photos **TEC PETAJA** *@tecpetaja*

THE CLANK OF A WELL-OILED letterpress rings through Hatch Show Print as printmakers work to complete a batch of posters advertising a Beatles tribute band. In spite of the shop's location in the middle of Nashville's rapidly expanding downtown, inside there's an air of Music City's past, when horses outnumbered cars and before neon lit up Broadway.

Although Hatch began in 1879, its golden age coincided with the rise of Nashville's best-known export: country music. As the sound of twanging guitars, fiddles and banjos poured through rad os and dance halls across America, Hatch positioned itself as the number-one print shop for the industry, offering show posters for some of the biggest names in entertainment, including Hank Williams, Patsy Cline and Johnny Cash.

For more than a century, Hatch defined a look that became synonymous with country music: their posters characterised by bold colours, masterful carving and balanced type. In the 1980s, facing competition from computerised printing, the shop reinvented itself, adding commemorative art pieces to its repertoire.

'One of the unique things about Hatch as a print shop is that we design everything that we produce and we produce only what we design,' says shop manager Celene Aubry. 'It's been that way since day one.' She runs the store, helping with everything from ordering supplies to managing staff. Then there's the fun stuff: setting antique type, mixing ink and operating a letterpress to produce Hatch's iconic posters.



Celene laughs when asked what drew her to the craft, which uses inked, raised blocks of wood to press images and type onto paper. 'I studied architecture and physics in college,' she says, 'but I grew up in a household where creativity was encouraged and we were always making stuff.' She's fascinated with the process, the tactile nature of hand-carved type and the ease of production. 'It's the antithesis of digital design,' says Celene. 'Sometimes you can still smell the ink on the poster when you pick it up.'

Since arriving in Nashville in 2012, she has guided Hatch as it moved from its old location on Broadway to a new space next to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, and has helped develop an informative tour (£13) that demonstrates the process and shares Hatch's history. She reels off dates and details like a historian, her conversation gliding into the story of Hatch's first days. But as her hands set pieces of type, it's clear that dates and details aren't the only thing that drew her to Hatch. 'I knew that if I came to the shop, I wouldn't be able to leave,' Celene says, standing amid shelves of type stacked like old paperbacks. 'So I intentionally didn't visit until I knew I was coming for a job.'

Today, her team continues to produce an array of posters for musicians and local businesses, as well as running an art programme that features restrikes of original print blocks that haven't been used in decades, such as an Airstream ad from the 1940s. For the visitor to Music City, there's really no better place to pick up a unique souvenir.

Prints from £6; hatchshowprint.com

Clockwise from top left: The library of antique type; printing posters for Rain, a Beatles tribute band; old posters and memorabilia cover every bit of wall space in the store; mixing ink

Hatching a plan in Nashville

Here are print-shop manager Celene Aubry's tips for a Hatch-inspired trip to Nashville.

Get inky on the Art Crawl

'During the First Saturday Art Crawl, we offer a two-hour block party where we take some of the hand-carved imagery that we've made in the shop and let participants ink it up, and print it on paper and then on fabric.'

nashvilledowntown.com

See a show at the 'mother church' of country music

'Visit the Ryman Auditorium. It's incredible to have a venue that has the natural acoustics that theatre has. Everybody who plays there sounds about a hundred times better when they hit those floorboards.'

ryman.com

Dip into Nashville's art scene

'The galleries on 5th Avenue downtown have been introducing Nashvillians to art for many years. Newer galleries, such as those of Julia Martin, Dane Carder and David Lusk, are offering work that isn't as conventional, but is definitely part of the conversation.'

juliamartingallery.com
danecarder.com
davidluskgallery.com

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THE SECRET HISTORY OF

The Scottish Kilt

With the exception of the Loch Ness monster, no other Scottish icon is as enigmatic and contentious as the kilt. Read on to discover why

Sporrans have been around longer than kilts have – these medieval-style pouches turned out to be a handy alternative to the pockets that traditional kilts lack. They also act as a strategically placed weight in windy weather.

The average man's kilt uses eight yards (7.3 metres) of fabric at 28 inches wide. For a good-quality one, expect to pay at least £300 – and that's before you include accessories, like sporrans.

No question is more personal than what a 'true Scotsman' ought to wear under his kilt. Tradition says 'nothing' and fans of this approach say that the heavy fabric provides all the warmth needed, but kilt-hire companies prefer underwear to be worn, as do organisers of Scottish dancing and Highland games events.

The sgian dubh ('skee-uhn doo') is a small, single-edged knife worn (inside a protective cover) tucked into the top of long socks. As an item of 'national dress', it is exempt from UK laws regulating offensive weapons.

DESPITE SUGGESTIONS TO the contrary in *Braveheart*, the kilt is not the timeless, ancestral dress of all Scotsmen. Before it was enshrined as part of Scottish national dress in the 19th century, it divided opinion across the country. The majority Lowland population tended to think of it as barbaric, calling its bare-legged wearers 'redshanks', while Highlanders in turn saw trousers as 'unmanly'.

The wearing of kilts in Scotland was banned after the Jacobite rebellion of 1745; until the ban was lifted later that century, the penalty was six months' imprisonment if caught, while repeat offenders would get seven years' transportation to the colonies. The kilt's return to official favour came in 1822, when King George IV paid the first visit to Scotland by a reigning British monarch in almost two centuries. The much-caricatured king was encouraged by the Romantic writer Sir Walter Scott to wear a kilt – although the skin-coloured tights he paired it with were a departure from Highland custom.

Tartan patterns became formalised in the early 19th century. Since then new designs have been added, and the official Scottish Register of Tartans (yes, there is one) now lists thousands of patterns, including ones for Heineken, Domino's Pizza and the Canadian Dental Association.

If you want a kilt of your own, but can't claim Scottish roots – let alone Highland clan ancestry – tradition still allows you to wear 'universal tartans', such as the Black Watch or Flower of Scotland. The one shown here, the Stewart Hunting tartan, associated with the royal house of Stewart, is an off-duty style and appropriate for anyone to wear.

PHOTOGRAPH: ALEX CATEDRAL

Kilts: check them out

See how this key piece of national dress is made at Highland House of Fraser in Inverness, where a band of merry kiltmakers stitch, pleat and press tartan. *highlandhouseoffraser.com*

Order yourself a bespoke kilt at 21st Century Kilts in Edinburgh, where textile options controversially include leather, denim, pinstripe and camo print. *21stcenturykilts.com*

Kilts get put through their paces in events as varied as piping, tug-of-war and tossing the caber at the Argyllshire Gathering (Oban Games) in August. *shga.co.uk*

Day, Son & Hewitt's
STOCKBREEDERS
Medicine Chest

Look out at the Welsh hill country from your bathtub at Life House

The shores of Loch Harport are just a short walk from Supernova

PHOTOGRAPHS: LUXURY COTSWOLD RENTALS; LIVING ARCHITECTURE/LIFE HOUSE/PHOTOS BY JACK HOBHOUSE; SUPERNOVA/PHOTOS BY MARK WATTS © UNIQUEHOMESTAYS

THREE OF THE BEST

Spring Pads

Brighter days call for your own self-catering house in the country with winning design

ENGLAND: BENTLEYS
Kingham, Oxfordshire
A Grade-II listed house dating back to the 17th century, Bentleys is a warm hug of a place, with the cosy dimensions, wonky floors, wooden beams and stone fireplaces you'd expect from a 400-year-old home. The three double rooms are similarly burrow-like in feel, and the perfect places in which to hunker down during a bad case of April showers. There is, however, a twist to the house: linked to the limestone walls of the cottage is a modern, architect-designed glass box housing a giant kitchen, dining and entertainment space, with direct access to a suntrap of a terrace. The kitchen is worthy of a place in *Elle Decoration*, and there's a pizza oven in the garden, but you may not get to try them out: Bentleys is within ambling distance of two of the Cotswolds' best gastropubs. Michelin-starred The Wild Rabbit and the multi-award-winning Kingham Plough both serve a modern European menu and a stonking Sunday roast.
From £3,000 for a week's minimum stay; luxurycotswoldrentals.co.uk

WALES: LIFE HOUSE
Llanbister, Powys
The trend for spiritual retreats has taken off in recent years, but not everyone is ready to sign up for group chanting and cold showers at dawn. Enter Life House, a large, single-level building in deepest Mid-Wales, which might be the most contemplative environment you can escape to while retaining essential creature comforts. The interiors are as undistracting as it gets: cream-coloured walls of handmade Danish brick, a kitchen clad in pale timber, and even a dedicated room for meditation, dug into the hillside. The big picture-windows bathe the place in plenty of spring light, and look out over undulating views of green fields and wild heath that offer simple beauty but few focal points – very zen. If you prefer to do your mental uncluttering in a small group, the house sleeps up to six, in three doubles with en suite bathrooms stocked with products from REN skincare. There's a curated library and music collection for days indoors, and if serenity is not your aim, you can turn the audio system up high without any neighbours to disturb. For outdoors experiences that are as pared-back as the décor here, strike out west to the Cambrian Mountains, where hiking trails and bike routes run through a region so sparsely settled, it's been dubbed the 'green desert of Wales'.
From £1,450 for a three-night weekend ; living-architecture.co.uk

SCOTLAND: SUPERNOVA
Carbost, Isle of Skye
On a hillside overlooking a sea loch, Supernova is a former chapel that has been converted into a cosy base for two. There are a few suggestions of its former life in its tall windows and pure-white walls, but with furry throws and cushions scattered all about, it's hardly austere. Skye is known for its lack of light pollution, and in the upstairs sitting room you'll find a telescope for stargazing. The island's cinematic scenery begins right outside the door, and, at this time of year, a new cast of lambs can be spotted around its slopes. If the weather isn't tempting you towards outdoors adventures (see our Top Picks guide, p117), you can fire up the sauna at home, or head down for a dram at Talisker – Skye's only distillery, a half-mile from the house.
From £995 for a three-night weekend; uniquehomestays.com

PARIS

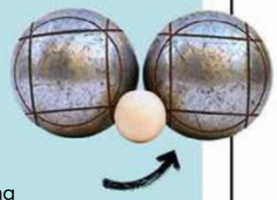
YOUR FIRST TIME

BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Do

The plan to demolish the **Eiffel Tower** after the 1889 World Fair was, thankfully, abandoned and the Art Nouveau spire is now the defining fixture of the Paris skyline. Come at dusk for views best enjoyed with a glass of champagne from the top floor *(toureiffel.paris)*.

For a truly local experience, join **Meeting the French** and try... learning petanque, making baguettes at a boulangerie, heading **backstage at the cabaret, and more** *(en.meetingthefrench.com)*.



Eat

Retro styling and hearty French dishes, like roasted duck breast (left), make **Bistrot Paul Bert** a food critics' favourite *(18 Rue Paul Bert)*.

At **Semilla**, exposed pipes and an open kitchen create a factory-style setting for a modern, daily-changing menu that might include the likes of pork ribs with cinnamon. Leave room for the outstanding desserts *(semillaparis.com)*.

Buy

Only a city like Paris could have its own designer line of souvenirs, sold in its own concept store. Pick up Paris-themed clothing, homewares, accessories – and even signature Jardin du Luxembourg Fermob **chairs at Paris Rendezvous** *(rendezvous.paris.fr)*.

The **Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen** is Europe's largest flea market, with over 2,500 stalls each with its own speciality, from 17th-century furniture to vintage toys. Get here early for the best bargains *(marcheauxpuces-saintouen.com)*.

Drink

Au Sauvignon is a wonderfully authentic 'bar à vin'. Established in the 1950s, it has a pavement terrace, original zinc bar, tightly packed tables and hand-painted ceiling celebrating French wine culture *(ausauvignon.com)*.

Pale woodwork and bare-bulb lights create a pared-back setting for quality gins and craft beer at **Tiger Bar**; it sits on bar-heavy rue Princesse, making it the ideal starting point for **a cracking night out** *(tiger-paris.com)*.

Sleep

Designed by fashion royalty Christian Lacroix and close to the the Louvre, the **Hotel du Continent** is a great deal. Expect themed floors and haute-couture styling in the rooms *(from £135; hotelcontinent.com)*.

Vintage décor and flea-market finds throughout: check. Personal iPads loaded with music in the bedrooms: check. DJs playing at the bar: check. As one of the leading characters in Paris' new breed of 'lifestyle hotels', **Le Pigalle** has all the boxes ticked *(from £160; lepigalle.paris)*.

Move over, Airbnb

All hail the new trend for a more discerning urban home stay

This summer marks 10 years since the launch of **Airbnb**, a decade that has seen the listings site grow to a global behemoth, with some 4.5 million rooms on its books. The company has seen its fair share of controversy along the way, with cities such as Berlin and New York threatening to ban it. It's high time, then, for a different way to choose a home stay. **Onefinestay** was an early adopter of a more curated approach, visiting and vetting prospective homes, and choosing only one in every 10 (onefinestay.com). An even more stringent process of quality control goes into the **Plum Guide**: it winnows out 99 out of every 100 available properties, with inspectors checking for criteria as diverse as characterful design, reliable shower pressure and decent local bars and eateries (plumguide.com). The result is a site that's as tempting for vicarious browsing of interiors ideas as it is for planning a city break – and where you won't get RSI clicking on the 'see more listings' button. The Plum Guide has just over a thousand homes in London, and is now taking on listings in a second city: **Paris**. With a plan to add more European cities later this year, it looks like a trend that's set to stay.

PHOTOGRAPHS: JOEYEAT.COM, WIM LANCLUS/ALAMY, JOHN LANDER/AGE FOTOSTOCK, BENOIT DIACRE, TIGER PARIS/CASSANDRE FAVARO, HOTEL DU CONTINENT/CHRISTOPHE BIELSA. ILLUSTRATION: LOUISE SHEERAN. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CATHERINE LE NEVEZ, NICOLA WILLIAMS AND CHRISTOPHER PITTS

Castaway

If you wish to flee the madding crowds this spring, the Blasket Islands in Ireland are just the ticket

A HALF-DOZEN RUGGED outposts off the tip of the Dingle Peninsula, the Blasket Islands have had no full-time inhabitants since 1953 – except for a few sheep and some shaggy-coated donkeys. Basking sharks join the offshore population from April onwards and boat tours around the islands offer the best chance to spot them, along with seals, puffins, gannets and perhaps the famous Fungie, a bottlenose dolphin who has been a resident mascot of the area since 1984. Most visitors who step onto the islands linger just a few hours, but we recommend forgoing the world and staying a while longer. Among the village ruins on Great Blasket, a handful of cottages offer lodging for anyone willing to do without electricity (from £62). A beautiful sand beach lies just beyond. It's relatively sheltered from Atlantic waves – though dips in this part of the world are best left to the truly chill-resistant. Steep paths reach the heights of Great Blasket, bringing stirring views of the Irish coast and neighbouring islets, such as jagged Inishnabro (pictured below). After taking in the sunset from Ireland's most westerly specks of land, guests on Great Blasket can sit down to a campfire dinner then count the stars, away from the trappings of settled life.
dingleboattours.com; greatblasketisland.net

WILDLIFE SPOTTING
Basking sharks are filter feeders, like many whales, and are the second-largest fish after whale sharks

PHOTOGRAPHS: GEORGE KARBUS

Supersize your bank holiday

Re-think familiar habits on overseas breaks this month, and buy new gear to bring more joy to your flying time

STEP 1

Take a mystery European trip

Does forward-planning make for happy travels or is on-the-ground improvisation more enriching? One way to find out your spontaneity comfort level is to book a trip with srprs.me, a Dutch company that makes the 'where to go?' choice for you, booking flights to and hotels in a European city. You can request a broad region of Europe to focus on, but if you resist the urge to check the code on your scratchcard ahead of time, you'll only find out your destination at the airport, whether that's Amsterdam, Zagreb or anywhere in between *(from £80pp for three days; srprs.me)*.

STEP 2

Start your holiday early

Airport hotels play an unglamorous but vital role in getting you to your morning flight without the stress of an early alarm call. But there is life beyond the big chains; these hotels prove you can find charm within striking distance of check-in.

THE OLD HOUSE INN
GATWICK

Three miles from the departures lounge, this atmospheric rural pub with rooms serves top-notch food; it'll also provide a breakfast hamper if you have an early flight *(from £90; theoldhouseinn.co.uk)*.

HAMPTON MANOR
BIRMINGHAM

Have a Michelin-starred dinner, then turn in for the night amid William Morris-inspired décor in a country estate two miles from the terminal *(from £190; hamptonmanor.com)*.

DIDSBURY HOUSE
MANCHESTER

Plush fabrics and clawfoot bathtubs are among the highlights of the 27 rooms in this Victorian villa close to the airport-handy station of East Didsbury *(from £157; eclectichotels.co.uk)*.

DAKOTA HOTEL
EDINBURGH

This darkly elegant and strikingly contemporary place (its bar is pictured above) has rooms that sport the odd world map or chrome model airplane, plus a complimentary shuttle taking 10–15 minutes to reach the airport *(from £99; dakotahotels.co.uk)*.

STEP 3

Make the flight more pleasant

LISTEN
Seal yourself off from the cabin with wireless RP-HTX80BE-C headphones *(£100; panasonic.com)*.

WATCH
Amazon's Fire HD10 tablet brings hours of diversion for a very competitive price *(£150; amazon.co.uk)*.

PROP
Enjoy a seat-back screen even on-board a budget airline with the Airhook *(from £20; theairhook.com)*.

SPRAY
Squirt a bit of cactus flower mist on your face for instant refreshment *(£29; kiehls.co.uk)*.

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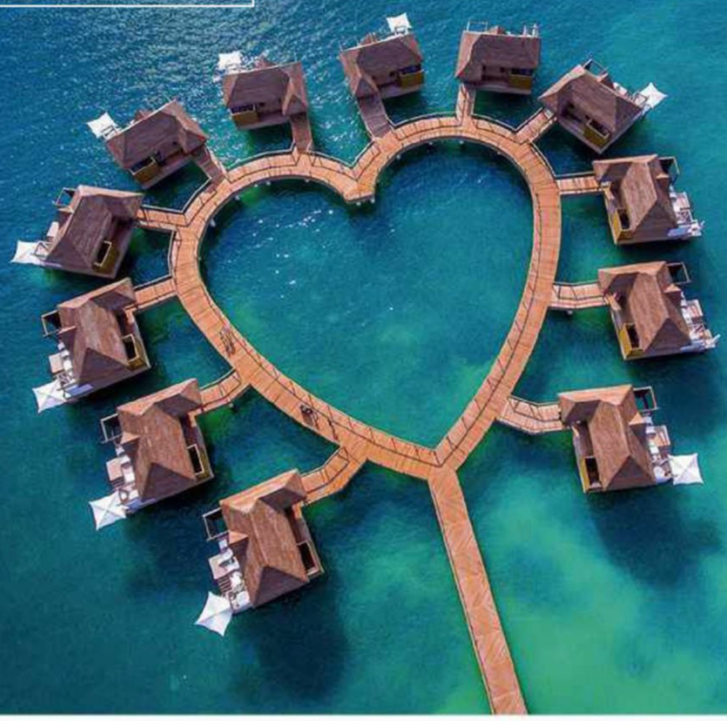

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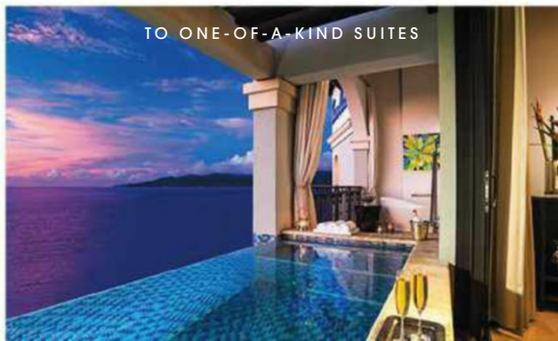
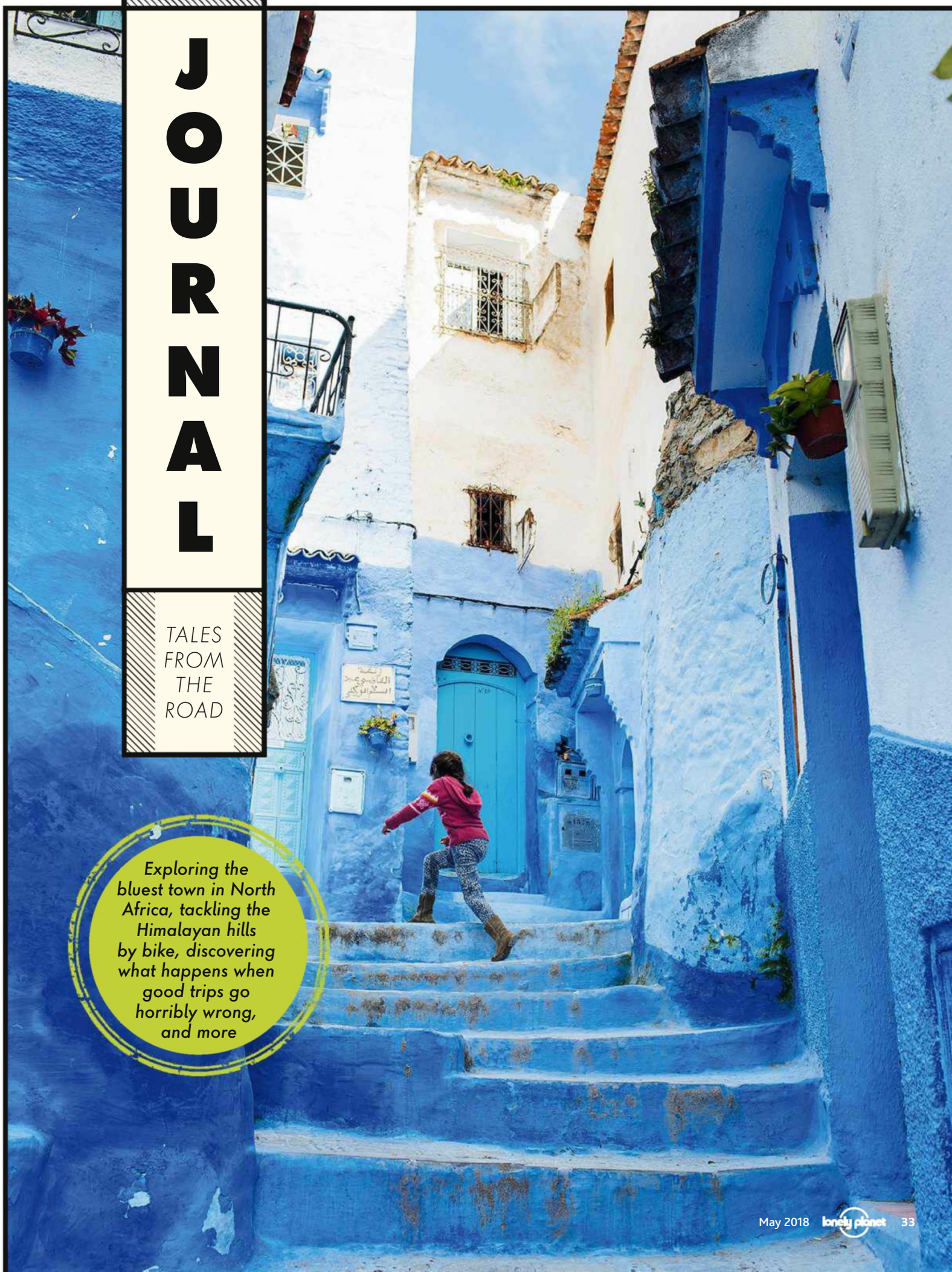


JOURNAL

TALES FROM THE ROAD



Exploring the bluest town in North Africa, tackling the Himalayan hills by bike, discovering what happens when good trips go horribly wrong, and more

PHOTOGRAPH: ADRIENNE PITTS

PHOTO CHALLENGE

Curve

Each month we set our Instagram followers a new and fiendish challenge – to submit photos on a theme of our choosing. Here we reveal the winning images for 'curve'

@lonelyplanetmags

Our favourite shot

I was in Aarhus in Denmark visiting a good friend, and went to the ARoS gallery at his suggestion. This rooftop corridor is called the Rainbow Panorama, a circular glass walkway in the full colour spectrum. What makes it so interesting is that your experience of it changes depending on the time of day, the weather, your mood or even how fast you walk through. I was surprised how different I felt passing from one colour area to the next.

ABOUT THE WINNER:
Tara Lowry is from Canada and used a tripod to take this photo of herself in the gallery
@taralowryphotography

The **Longsheng Rice Terraces** outside Guilin in China
@thejourneynotes

Bangkok's **Bhumibol Bridge** crossing the Chao Phraya River
@eugeniocorso72

They're always too fast! A blue tit in the **Cotswolds**
@tom_matthews_photography

Whirling dervishes perform the 'sema' dance in **Istanbul**
@lindz_ee

A spiral staircase in **Cărtureşti Carusel** bookshop, Bucharest
@thesofulltraveler

Kilauea volcano on Hawaii, home to fire goddess Pele (supposedly)
@wantdreambelieve

A paraglider dominating the sky in **Pokhara**, Nepal
@palm.trees.and.portraits

Natural waves set in stone in **Antelope Canyon**, Arizona
@christauziet

Built in 1970s Brutalist style, the **Hotel Uzbekistan** in Tashkent
@jonadlertraveler

PHOTOGRAPH OPPOSITE: YOUR RAINBOW PANORAMA, OLAFUR ELIASSON, 2011, AROS AARHUS ART MUSEUM

GOING FURTHER

High in the Himalayas

The challenge of cycling in the foothills of the Indian Himalayas is rewarded with more memorable local encounters than can be had sat on a bus

Words **MATT SWAINE** @MattSwaine

Illustration **MARC MARTIN** @marcmartinillo

I REALLY HAD TO ADMIRE THE BUS DRIVER: the way he greeted my horror-stricken face, which was inverted in his windscreen, with such a sweet and engaging smile. Seconds earlier, my bike's handlebars had been snared by a low-slung power line, and the bike catapulted from the bus's roof rack. Sitting cross-legged on the roof, I watched in disbelief as my bike now dangled above a rutted mountain pass while we continued our descent into the valley.

Hanging from the roof of the bus, I hammered on the windscreen. 'Stop... my bike!' Unfazed, the driver calmly negotiated the narrow mountain pass in reverse until he was positioned under my stranded steed.

I had cycled up the road to Manikaran three days before n torrent al ra n and hardly not ced the prayer flags, bunting, cables and banners that were slung above the road. I was too busy trying to negotiate the landslides, wheel-sucking mud and covert man-traps masquerading as puddles. Dangling from the power line, the bike was now aud bly fizz ng w th the threat of electrocut on.

'Do not worry. I have protective gloves!' the driver said as he waived a pair of latex kitchen gloves above his head. He clambered onto the roof of the bus and lifted the bike free from the cabling to a riot of applause from the passengers who had gathered to watch. I suspected that th s wasn't h s first aer al rescue.

I had been similarly rescued when I arrived at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport four weeks earl er and was startled to find my b ke c rcl ng the airport carousel with a buckled rear wheel, having been thrown from the aircraft with the rest of the luggage. But in Delhi's cycle market I had met an incredible artisan

who whipped off his sandals and straightened my wheels to perfection with his bare feet.

IT HAD TAKEN THREE DAYS OF CYCLING north out of the cap tal to catch my first gl mpse of snow-crested mountains and feel the cool Himalayan air. It was a welcome relief from the searing heat of the fume-choked plains, where sacred cows ruminated in the slow lane as trucks tore past.

The heat of any day was matched by the warmth of my welcome. Cyclists on single-speed bone shakers would pedal alongside, smile and engage in a light-hearted race. Slamming on my brakes to avoid a wedding party one morning, I was asked to dance with the groom, then spent the afternoon as guest of honour. And a few days later, waiting in a lay-by after a particularly long ascent, I met a motor st hold ng out a bunch of flowers and inviting me to drink chai and talk cricket.

My first dest nat on was Sh mla, the summer home of the British Empire where the government and their families would decamp to escape the heat. As I rounded a corner one day there was a rather incongruous British church, cast adrift from the age of Empire in the middle of the mountainous green of the state of Himachal Pradesh. After following the narrow-gauge train line that leads into Shimla, I was confronted with what could almost be, in places, an English market town.

It's 145 miles from there to Manikaran, where the live power cable incident put me off buses for good. By the time I had hauled my bike another 56 miles to Manali, I was taking the contours in stride and was ready for my biggest challenge yet.

The Rohtang Pass on the Manali to Leh highway takes you to an elevation of 3,977 metres. Only open during the summer months, the pass separates the Kullu and Lahaul Valleys. Its name translates as a 'pile of corpses', a reference to those who have lost their life trying to cross in bad weather.

But on the day I arrived, the road was packed with a convoy of tourist buses, bringing travellers from the south h gh nto the mounta ns to get the r first gl mpse of snow. They cheerfully alighted at the roadside stalls to rent outlandish fur coats, walking poles and hats that were clearly essential to tackling isolated patches of dishwater-grey snow. Hundreds of day-trippers, looking as though they were escapees from Narnia, threw obligatory snowballs and attempted to fashion ice and slush into snowmen and igloos.

'Waiting in a lay-by after a particularly long ascent, I met a motorist holding out a bunch of flowers and inviting me to drink chai and talk cricket'

After a couple of hours' ascent, I found the road blocked by a wall of snow, with no idea of how high I was. It certainly wasn't the top of the pass, but it was a genuinely satisfying way to end a climb. I rolled back down the h ll, finally overtak ng the tour st buses that were busily returning their arctic gear on the way home.

THE DAY-TRIPPING HIGH JINKS were in stark contrast to the spiritual aura that hangs over the hillside city of Dharamsala, home to the Dalai Lama, a few days' ride away. Its main street is lined with large, colourful prayer wheels, and monks making their way to temple, weaving between travellers who've come for meditation, enlightenment and keenly priced banana pancakes.

That week His Holiness would be blessing thousands of pilgrims who stood patiently in line for a moment in his presence. I joined in for the novelty of meeting a spiritual celebrity, but the warmth of his eyes genuinely moved me. I walked into the nearest barber's and had my head shaved. It may have been a mere fashion statement, but the sensation of the wind brushing my scalp on a fast descent out of the Himalayas the following day felt truly spiritual and made the return to Delhi something of a pilgrimage.

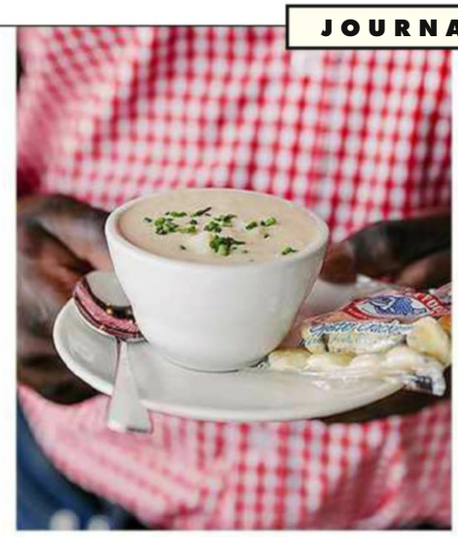
IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT

Clam Chowder

From colonial fishing ships to presidential inaugurations, we trace the origins of Boston's signature dish and go on a quest for a bowl of the city's best

Words **KEVIN SLANE** *@kslane*

Photos **ADAM DeTOUR** *@adamdetour*



Left: Lunchtime at Atlantic Fish Co. Above: A cup of chowder at Legal Seafood. Opposite: A full seafood spread at Row 34

WHEN IT COMES TO IDENTIFYING what goes into the ideal bowl of clam chowder, personal preferences vary, but one good historical reference point comes from Herman Melville's classic 1851 novel, *Moby-Dick*, whose protagon st Ishmael v s ts a fict onal chowder establishment on the island of Nantucket, off the coast of Massachusetts.

'Oh, sweet friends! Hearken to me. It was made of small juicy clams, scarcely bigger than hazel nuts, mixed with pounded ship biscuit, and salted pork cut up into little flakes; the whole enr ched w th butter, and plentifully seasoned with pepper and salt.'

Toss some potatoes and onions into Melville's ancient recipe and substitute cream for butter and you've got the mak ngs of a fine New England clam chowder. The signature dish of the region, clam chowder has been served at presidential inaugurations since 1981, barring the last one, and is ladled out by the tonne every year to tourists and locals alike.

To learn more, I'm in Boston, a city steeped in colonial history that hopefully holds answers to my questions about chowder's centuries-old origins.

As I cross a bridge over Boston Harbor, I pass the Tea Party Ships and Museum, a tribute to the colonists who dumped British tea into the harbour and helped ignite the American War of Independence. Looming behind it on the horizon are tall glass buildings, a mixture of luxury apartments and offices that have sprung up in the past decade.

I settle into a seat at Legal Sea Foods with a perfect view of the Boston Fish Pier.

'Whenever you're around a cup or bowl of chowder, it's like home'

Recently given a spot on the National Register of Historic Places, the pier opened in 1914 and became the nation's leading port by 1920. Today it still processes thousands of pounds a day of seafood, including some of the clams that go into the city's chowder. Beyond a 360° metallic bar, the cooks are hard at work in the open k tchen. The smell of fr ed fish wafts over a busy lunchtime crowd.

Sitting across from me is executive chef Rich Vellante, who has learned a thing or two about the history of chowder during his 21 years at the restaurant. Vellante tells me that New England clam chowder's origins can be traced back to colon al t mes, when fishermen from England, France and Nova Scotia went in search of fortune on the high seas. The dish's origin wasn't necessarily a country extending its culinary footprint. Rather, it was a dish born of necessity. Onions, potatoes and salt pork were all kept on board, while clams and milk were plentiful on shore. With a lack of refrigeration, the best choice for sailors was to throw everything into a big pot and make a stew.

For Vellante, who grew up 20 minutes north of Boston and has lived in the area most of his life, the dish evokes nostalgic memories of New England seafood past. 'For me, the combination of the briny, sweet clams, the →

‘Salty, fishy, dairy, potatoes, onions, all of those things. That’s where you have to start’

richness, the sweetness of the cream, the salt pork, is something that’s just so nurturing,’ he says. ‘Whenever you’re around a cup or bowl of chowder, it’s like home.’

Here, chowder is served in a white ceramic bowl with a bag of oyster crackers on the side. A throwback to the hardtack crackers used to thicken the broth in colonial times, oyster crackers are closest to cream crackers in taste and nearly every restaurant that serves chowder will have them. The clams are chewy and sweet, but not saccharine, and the potatoes offer a deliciously starchy balance in texture. There’s an aromat c, herbal flavour I can’t qu te put my finger on, but Vellante s understandably protective of the chowder’s precise recipe, a secret that fewer than a handful of people know.

‘It’s l ke the Coca-Cola rec pe,’ he says. ‘It’s our rec pe, one that we love, so there are a few things we don’t share about it.’

Later that day, I v s t Qu ncy Market, a historic building in the heart of downtown, where chowders are plentiful. Opened in 1826 as a meat and produce market, it now houses around 30 culinary merchants separated by white columns in Greek Revival architectural style. As I walk through the colonnade, workers at kiosks that serve pizza (Regina Pizzeria), hot dogs (Dog House) and chocolate ch p cook es (The Boston Ch pyard) hawk samples or call out to potential customers among the tour st-heavy crowd. It feels a b t like a shopping mall, except for the centuries’ old architecture.

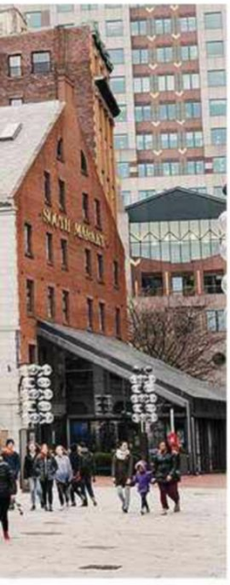
Despite the historic setting, the restaurants here are thoroughly modern in their catering. At Fisherman’s Net, manager George Maherak s, who runs the stand w th his father, Kostas, tells me that they serve the only gluten-free chowder at Qu ncy Market. They don’t use pork e ther. ‘The authentic, 100 percent New England way would be with pork,’ George admits, ‘but all the restaurants in here try not to use it, because a lot of people don’t eat bacon.’

Of the tr o of chowders I sample at Qu ncy Market, the rs s the best: a hearty chowder that doesn’t cross the line into an overwhelm ng sauce-l ke th ckness that makes you painfully aware of how much double cream goes into every bowl.

Over the next two days, I try a bevy of chowders. At Atlant c F sh Co, I s t n a w ndow seat surrounded by model ships, trying to figure out how best to eat the bread bowl t’s served n. At the crowded Yankee Lobster Co, I pa r my chowder w th a b g basket of fr es, as an arriving woman tells her three friends she is ‘literally obsessed’ with the restaurant’s chowder, while not so subtly eyeing mine.

Almost every spot I v s t does a decent job with the dish, but the quest for a ‘perfect’ chowder eludes me. I beg n to feel l ke Gold locks, find ng mprec se flaws n every steaming bowl. This chowder is too thick. This one is too thin. This one is too grainy. This one has clams that are too chewy.

Dur ng a fact-find ng m ss on to Boston Publ c Market, I get a t p from Ryan Rasys, a sales manager at Red’s Best, a seafood retailer and wholesaler. Row 34, another Seaport spot I m ssed earl er n the weekend, s known for having some of the best oysters in the region. After tasting some of the chowder from Red’s Best (a lighter broth with a noticeable garlic k ck), I’m ncl ned to trust Ryan’s taste. W th my journey’s end n s ght, I head out, ready to cross the harbour one more time.



Clockwise from top left: Chowder from Red's Best; outside Quincy Market; dining area at Boston Public Market; fresh seafood from Red's Best; a bread bowl of chowder from Fisherman's Net; onions at Stillman's Farm; Row 34 chef Jeremy Sewall

ILLUSTRATION: LOUISE SHEERAN

It's brunch hour at Row 34, and groups of twentysomethings are chattering at the tables and bars. I'm greeted at the door by owner/chef Jeremy Sewall, who leads me to a quiet corner of the restaurant. When asked what makes a great dish, Sewall says, 'To make a really good chowder, you have to stick to the core values of what chowder is. Salty, fishy, da ry, potatoes, on ons, all of those things. That's where you have to start and you can't go too far away from that.'

When I d g nto Row 34's chowder, I know I've finally found my chowder n rvana. F lled with just the right number of clams, it has a few accents I haven't encountered elsewhere. Row 34's chowder comes with a homemade cracker that crumbles nicely, but doesn't dissolve into nothingness. The potatoes are red instead of white, with the skin still on them. The broth is a little less heavy, possibly because the restaurant uses half cream and half milk, instead of double cream. Per Sewall's recommendat on, I pop n a few dabs of hot sauce, which adds a subtle but unmistakable heat.

When Ishmael and Queequeg fin sh the r chowder-filled meal n *Moby-Dick* and ready themselves for bed, an innkeeper asks them whether they prefer cod or clam chowder for breakfast the next day. 'Both,' answers Ishmael, 'and let's have a couple of smoked herring by way of variety.'

Lean ng back to d gest the meal, I'm ncl ned to th nk Melv lle was on to someth ng.

Try it at home

Cook **4 slices of bacon (diced)** in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat until fat has rendered. Remove bacon from pan and add **500g diced onion** and **340g chopped celery** to bacon drippings. Cook for 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Stir in **375ml water** and **725g peeled, cubed potatoes**. Season with salt and pepper. Boil uncovered for 15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Pour in **700ml single cream** and add **3 tablespoons butter.** Drain **2 (283g) cans of clams**, reserving the liquid. Add the clams and half of the clam liquid into the soup, cooking for 5 minutes, but do not boil. Sprinkle with the bacon and serve with crackers.

Feeling Blue

Photographer ***Adrienne Pitts*** *travelled with friends to the 'blue town' of Chefchaouen in Morocco for a few days of exploration*

THE APPROACH TO Chefchaouen had us a little nervous. As the taxi wound its way over the hills, we were a bit dubious as we saw a lot of white and very little blue dotted around the landscape. 'Huh? Where's all the blue? Did every photographer who's been here lie? Is nothing sacred any more?!'

Like many places in Morocco, the most photographed and oldest parts of the city are held within the medina. Chefchaouen has an old town and a new town, and the old town remains hidden from view until you walk through one of the gates and discover it on foot.

Walking around 'Chaouen' is kind of like being at Disneyland: total overload for the eyes. During our time there, we wandered the medina from top to bottom and back again, clambered to the old fortress wall to look out over the city, got offered hashish more times than we could count, came across so many genuinely kind people, made friends with all the cats, discovered one of the few places in town to get an ice-cold beer and took more photographs than we could possibly have anticipated. The town was dotted with more colours than just its famed blue: bags of open, powdered paint line the shopfronts, ready for you to pick your favourite hue to take home.

And that was Chefchaouen. Where we found the best kefta (meatballs), made many new friends and got lost in a sea of blue. It was definitely a place that was good for the soul.

See more of Adrienne's photography at adriennepitts.com

Solo Travel Fails

When you're alone in a foreign land, your happy journey of discovery can turn sour alarmingly fast, as Lonely Planet staff have found – but with a bit of luck the moment can become a golden one

BLUE & BAGLESS IN MOZAMBIQUE

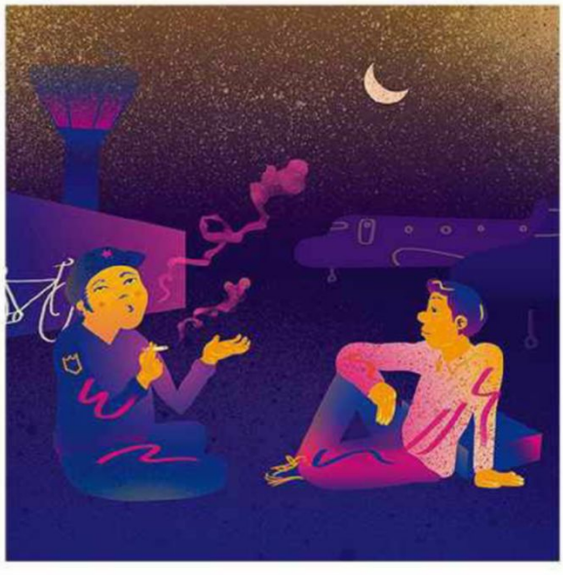
Matt Phillips
Destination editor for Sub-Saharan Africa
@go2mattphillips

I had just crossed from Malawi into Mozambique and was feeling somewhat disoriented when I attempted to change some currency with a local black-market dealer. Moments later, just after I had placed my bag on the back of a flatbed truck that I was about to ride east for more than a hundred miles, I realised that I had been fleeced out of $20. I quickly tracked down the dealer and as we had a polite disagreement, the truck – and my bag – pulled away. I chased it, but the driver didn't stop.

Dejected, I sat on the curb and wondered what more could go wrong. Miraculously, the truck returned with my bag 15 minutes later. It turned out the driver was just patrolling for more passengers! Elated, I hopped onto the truck's flatbed. My relief must have been obvious to the other passengers who, sensing my stressful day, went above and beyond to lift my spirits.

As we trundled toward the coast with arms locked and legs dangling over the sides of the truck, they offered me sugarcane, along with a vital lesson on how to correctly chew it, and when we stopped at a roadside stall for roast chicken, a fellow passenger paid for my meal. From feeling exploited to feeling like part of the family, it was quite a day. Since then, the generosity and hospitality of African people has never ceased to amaze me.

'As we had a polite disagreement, the truck – and my bag – pulled away. I chased it, but the driver didn't stop'



GROUNDED IN VIETNAM

Jack Palfrey
Assistant editor, lonelyplanet.com
@JPalfers

Whether it was the repulsive whiff of another cocktail bucket or the sight of a young backpacker showfully setting fire to a delicate part of his anatomy, at 9.30pm on a Tuesday evening I decided it was time to leave Nha Trang. Salvation, I was sure, awaited me in Hanoi, but when I arrived at the train station I was informed that all overnight trains were fully booked. With a dogged determination that bordered on derangement, I jumped in a taxi and headed for the airport.

An hour later, I arrived at a remote facility that had evidently closed for the night. Cursing my stupidity, I curled up in the deserted parking lot to sleep, only to be prodded awake by a security guard undergoing his rounds on a dilapidated bicycle. Abandoning his responsibilities, he spent the night chatting with me. His name was Duc. He was a chain-smoking Hanoian who had moved to Nha Trang to pursue a career in security. Between drawn-out drags he explained that his family still owned a restaurant in his hometown, where he insisted I dine upon my eventual arrival. He even called his mum so she would expect me.

After landing in Hanoi the next day, I followed Duc's directions to his family's rustic restaurant, burrowed deep within the warren of Old Quarter alleyways. Here, I was treated to the best – and largest – meal I had during my whole time in Vietnam. The best part: not a cocktail bucket in sight.

ILLUSTRATIONS: FERRAN CAPO

LOST & LONELY IN LAOS

Tasmin Waby
Destination editor for Australia and the Pacific
@aladyonaboat

While travelling alone in Laos, I caught a midday bus heading south from the capital Vientiane to the lesser-visited city of Savannakhet. Unfortunately, the bus dropped me outside of town in the middle of the night. No-one was around. I checked my map and realised the nearest accommodation was at least a mile away, so I put my backpack on and headed east.

Streetlights are a rare treat in this part of the world and I quickly found myself wandering down a pitch black suburban road. The terrifying barks of guard dogs drowned out the crickets that had been keeping my spirits up and it wasn't long before tears were streaming down my face as I contemplated sleeping in a ditch for the night.

Suddenly, I heard the whine of a scooter coming towards me. I couldn't see the rider but I ran out and flagged him down. A young man, probably about 16 years old, pulled over looking very confused by the sight of a chubby white girl crying in the middle of nowhere. I showed him my map and motioned that I needed a bed. He put me on the back of his bike and we sped into town through the warm night air. I was so relieved by the kindness of this stranger that I actually started laughing out loud, then he did too.

When he got me to a hostel, he banged on the door until someone came out. It was a small gesture, but the lesson has stayed with me on my travels since then. And every time I've had the opportunity, I've done the same for other lost travellers – paying it forward.

'Tears were streaming down my face as I contemplated sleeping in a ditch for the night'

THIRD WHEELING IN VENICE

Louise Bastock
Assistant editor, lonelyplanet.com
@LouiseBastock

Booking tours can be a challenge for the solo traveller. Advance bookings restrict spontaneous adventures, but waiting to form a band of new-found comrades may mean you miss out on hot-ticket experiences. And, of course, solo travellers are always at the mercy of the minimum persons required rule.

Such was my luck when I went on a kayaking tour in Venice. Not wanting to risk the tour selling out, I jumped on a trip that had already reached its minimum booking of two people. Little did I realise that those two people were a couple celebrating their recent engagement.

The two were so embarrassed to find this beaming British girl stuffed into a wetsuit at the start of their hot date that they swiftly swapped their tandem canoe for individual kayaks. If two is company, three was the most awkward crowd ever, and we took to the water in relative silence, exchanging forced smiles.

Fortunately, we all got on great in the end, and the tour itself was a highlight of my trip. I do occasionally feel pangs of guilt when I think of them sifting through their vacation photos and seeing their amorous boating escapades photobombed by a shrieking British girl colliding with a gondola.

Jack Wolfskin

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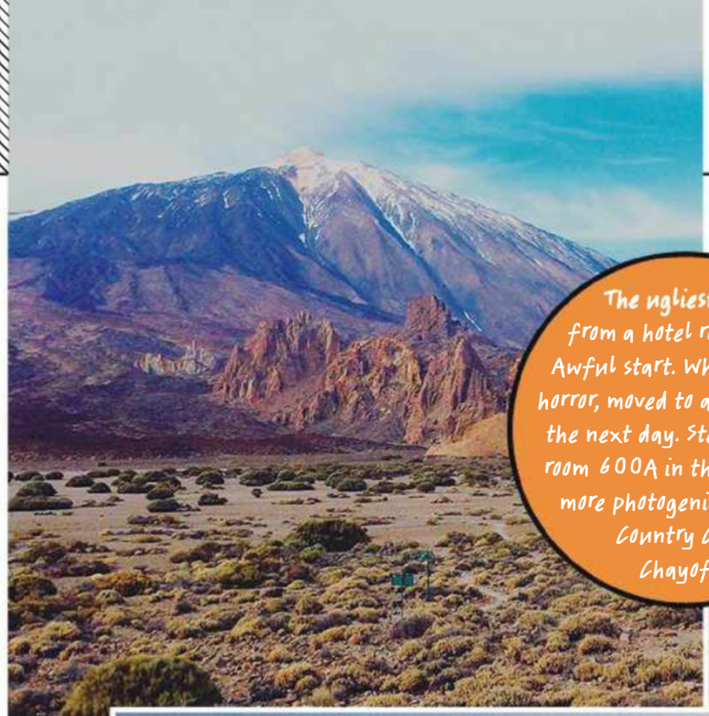
UNPLANNED

Tenerife

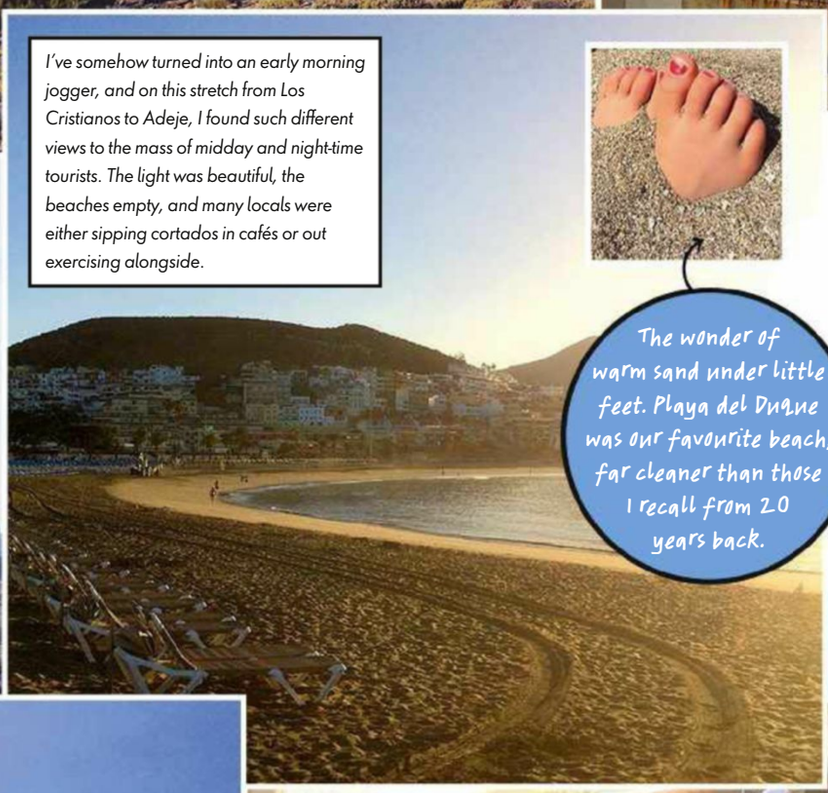
PETER GRUNERT
Group Editor,
Lonely Planet magazine
@petervg73

I SWORE I'D NEVER GO BACK to Tenerife: three times over in fact, each after holidays in my early 20s. Memories of sticky nightclubs, greasy food, scuttling cockroaches, building sites everywhere and a background scent of sewage finally led to a two-decade separation between us. But parenthood, of course, changes everything. My five-year-old daughter's second-ever half-term holiday was coming up, the south of Tenerife was looking like the only sunny place across the whole of Europe, and so the time came to give the most-visited Canary Island another chance. At the last minute we booked a hotel and overpriced budget airline flights. As it turned out, the experiences we hadn't planned were the ones we most enjoyed.

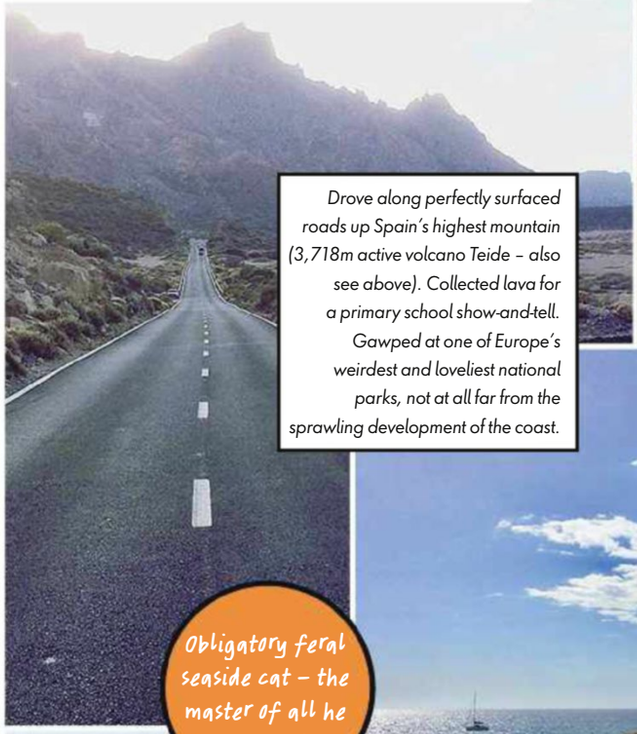


The ugliest view from a hotel room ever? Awful start. Whimpered in horror, moved to a better room the next day. Steer clear of room 600A in the generally more photogenic Regency Country Club, Chayofa.

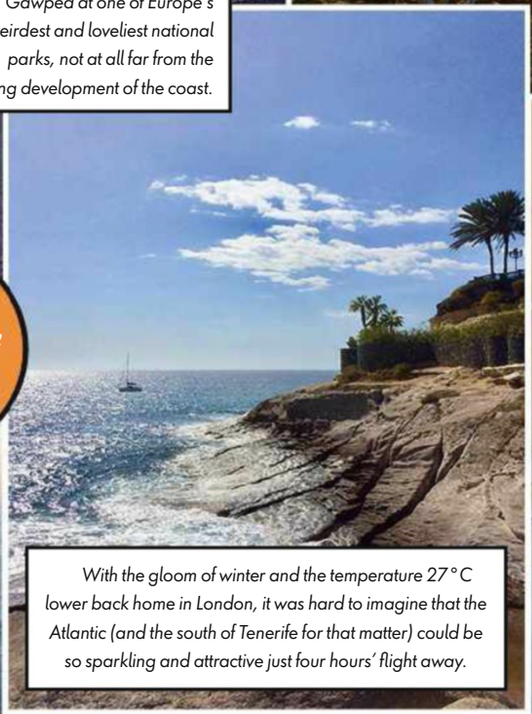
I've somehow turned into an early morning jogger, and on this stretch from Los Cristianos to Adeje, I found such different views to the mass of midday and night-time tourists. The light was beautiful, the beaches empty, and many locals were either sipping cortados in cafés or out exercising alongside.



The wonder of warm sand under little feet. Playa del Duque was our favourite beach, far cleaner than those I recall from 20 years back.

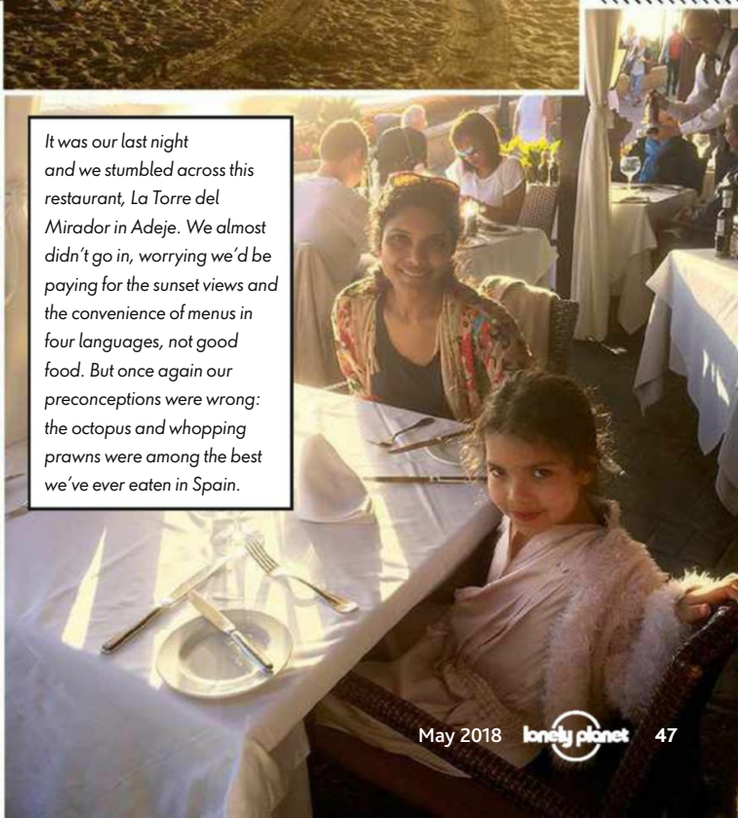


Drove along perfectly surfaced roads up Spain's highest mountain (3,718m active volcano Teide – also see above). Collected lava for a primary school show-and-tell. Gawped at one of Europe's weirdest and loveliest national parks, not at all far from the sprawling development of the coast.



With the gloom of winter and the temperature 27°C lower back home in London, it was hard to imagine that the Atlantic (and the south of Tenerife for that matter) could be so sparkling and attractive just four hours' flight away.

Obligatory feral seaside cat – the master of all he surveyed.



It was our last night and we stumbled across this restaurant, La Torre del Mirador in Adeje. We almost didn't go in, worrying we'd be paying for the sunset views and the convenience of menus in four languages, not good food. But once again our preconceptions were wrong: the octopus and whopping prawns were among the best we've ever eaten in Spain.

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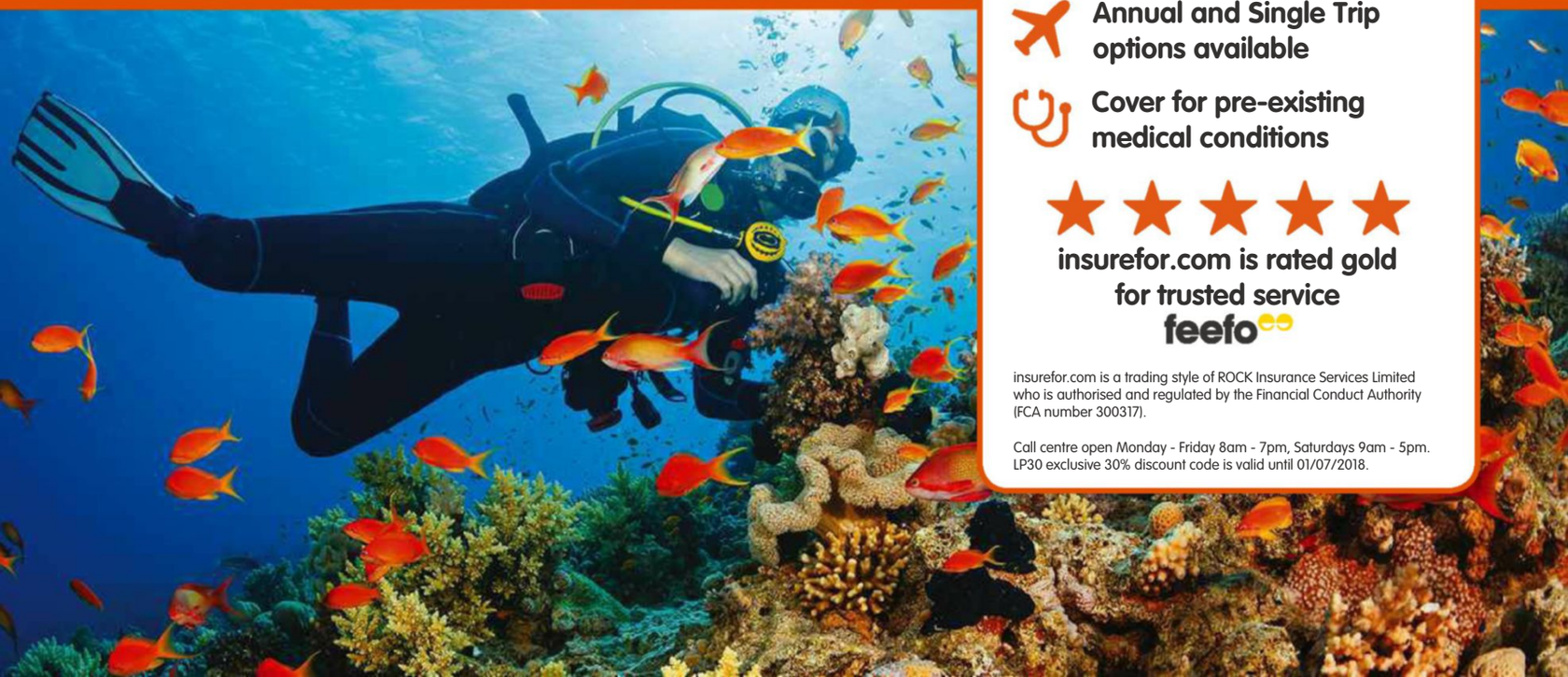


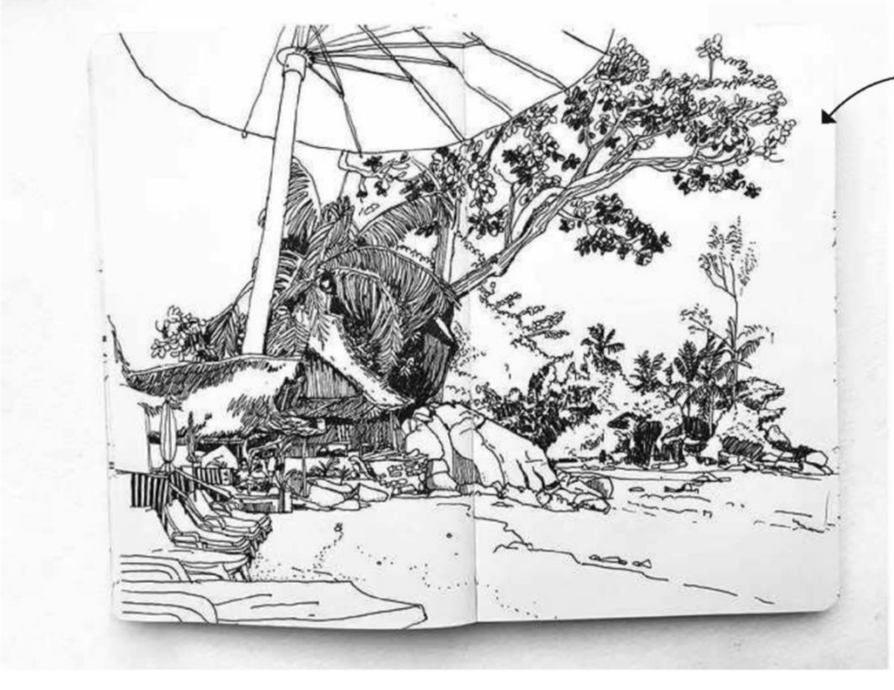
SKETCHBOOK

Buddha & the Beach

Moscow-based artist ***Gleb Solntsev*** *on his recent trip to Phuket in Thailand*

@sketchplaces

My friend and I hired scooters and drove up to the 45-metre-high Big Buddha statue in the Nakkerd Hills. At the time it was covered in scaffolding. I love construction sites as they remind me of skeletons, as if the bones of a huge animal are being put together. I wanted to capture the unique moment, knowing once it was finished it would stand in perfect form just as the architect planned.



We wanted to find somewhere remote and untouched. We got chatting to some locals, and they told us about a secret beach close by, accessed through the jungle. We emerged on to a beautiful beach with clear, still water and a small café. It was surreal to have it to ourselves. I started to draw in the shade, with only mosquitoes for company.'

'I love to sketch – for me it's one of the best ways to plunge into the moment, and helps me remember a place so much more than taking a quick photo with my phone'

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ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Young at heart

Varied, beautiful and always action-packed, Malta is one of Europe's most welcoming destinations for families

Malta may be home to prehistoric temples and a fossil-flecked coastline, but this history-rich country offers plenty for young people to enjoy. The Mediterranean archipelago, which includes the inhabited islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino, offers one of Europe's balmiest climates and lots to do, making it the perfect destination to keep even the most demanding of teenagers occupied. Since it's just a three-hour flight away from the UK, Malta also makes for an easy getaway for a weekend or longer.

The Maltese capital, Valletta, is rich in cultural and historical attractions. Here, you can pique the kids' interest – and your own – with a visit to Malta 5D, a cinema experience exploring Malta's history with the help of moving seats, spraying water and strategic blasts of air. Across the Grand Harbour from Valletta are the Three Cities, where you can embark on a crowd-pleasing Rolling Geeks tour. These self-drive electric cars feature pre-programmed GPS, and will take you on a two-and-a-half-hour drive around the sights of Vittoriosa, Senglea and Cospicua, which remain surprisingly untouched by tourism. As you explore the picturesque Three Cities' narrow, cobbled streets, the Rolling Geeks car will even tell you exactly what you're looking at.

Elsewhere, the islands' varied geography provides plenty to keep families occupied. Choose from land-based activities like rock climbing on the craggy limestone of Gozo, or biking along the cycling trails that criss-cross Malta's sandy coastlines. Horse rides along the clifftops prove popular with older children, as do hikes, Segway tours and archery, all of which are on offer here. For thrill-seeking teens, you can't go far wrong with quad bikes and go-karting.

The crystal-clear waters of the islands are teeming with life, and there's world-class snorkelling and diving to be enjoyed, especially at Comino's famous Blue Lagoon and Hondoq ir-Rummien on Gozo, which is popular with beginner divers. Malta's renowned dive schools and calm seas are a great place for adults and older children alike to earn a PADI qualification.

Malta is a haven for watersports, so it'd be remiss to visit without at least considering putting on a pair of jet skis and hitting the water. If jet skiing – or indeed kayaking, paragliding or surfing – sounds too much like hard work, simply hire a boat to explore the ocean at a leisurely pace.

Whatever you're looking for from your family holiday, Malta is bursting with affordable options for a range of ages. Since this year sees Valletta take the mantle of European Capital of Culture, there's a packed calendar of world-class artistic events families can attend here. Visit valletta2018.org for the full programme and plan your trip now.

Clockwise from top Boating in Comino Cave; yachting in Comino's Blue Lagoon; horseback riding by Gnejna Tower; a view of The Three Cities overlooking Valletta's harbour

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Malta Tourism Authority

GREAT ESCAPE

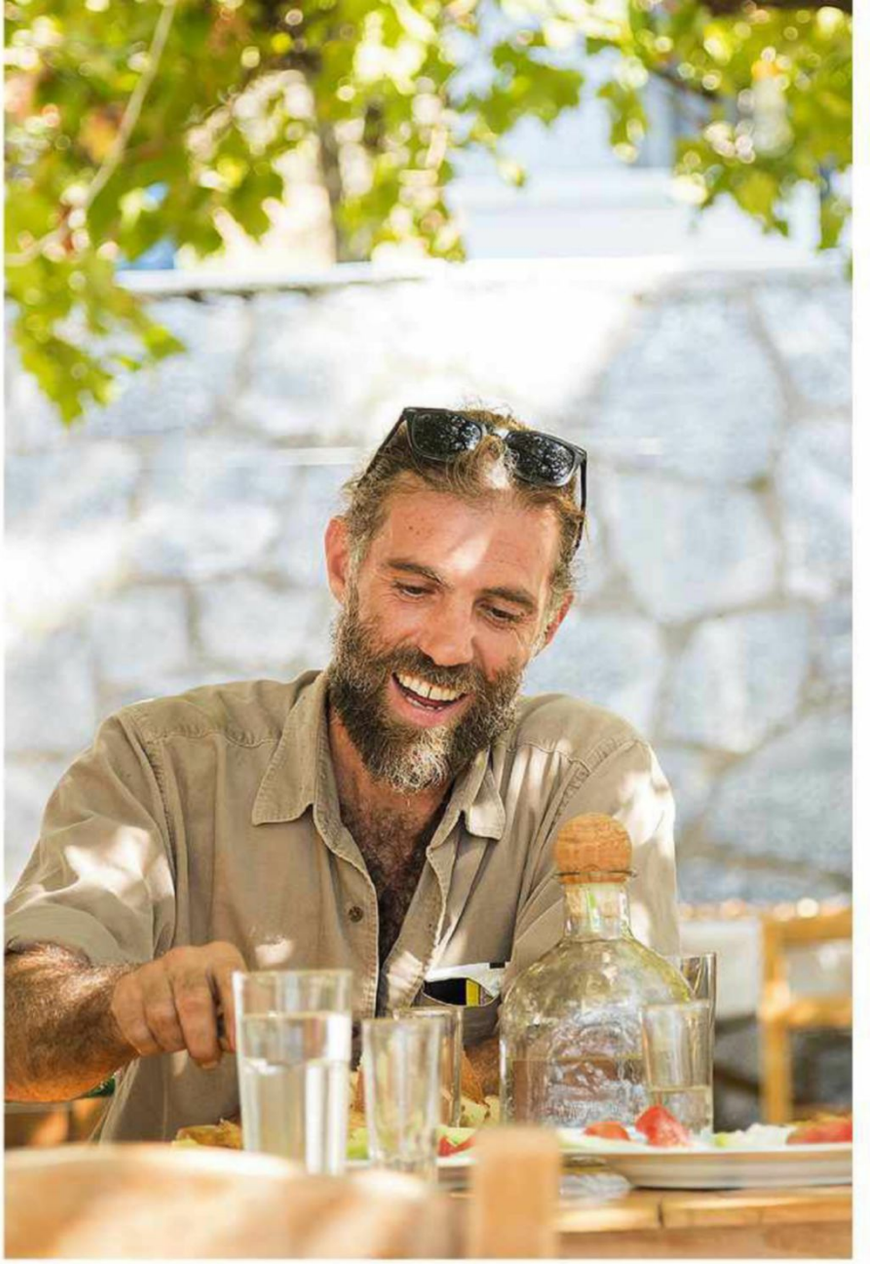
Northeast Aegean

The Greek islands in the northeast of the Aegean Sea are larger and less clustered than most of their neighbours in the Cyclades and Dodecanese to the south. A trip stepping ashore on three of them – Lesvos, Chios and Ikaria – introduces olive farmers and wild honey, hidden villages and untouched beaches, and perhaps the secret to long life.

WORDS **OLIVER BERRY** **@olivertomberry** PHOTOGRAPHS **PHILIP LEE HARVEY** **@philip_lee_harvey_photographer**

MAP ILLUSTRATION: KATE SUTTON

Savour the many flavours of Greece on **Lesvos**, from olive oil to ouzo and orange wine



OUTSIDE HIS TUMBLEDOWN TIN-ROOFED cottage, in the mountains above the town of **Plomari** on Lesvos' southern coastline, Giorgios Elether ou s serv ng breakfast. Plates of goat's cheese, figs, walnuts, tomatoes and grapes appear on the table under a pergola of climbing vines, and a pot of coffee bubbles away on an iron range. Below the cottage, olive trees cover the stony slopes as far as the eye can see, each encircled by a hand-built, drystone wall – an ancient cultivation method for retaining water. Under the shade of the trees, two horses stamp their hooves, impatient for their own breakfast.

'This farm has belonged to my family for generations,' G org os says, eat ng figs as he looks out over h s ol ve groves. 'In the past, people would spend entire summers up here. Not many do that now, but I prefer the old way of life. To me, this place is paradise.'

Known to the Ottomans as the 'garden of the Aegean', Lesvos is renowned throughout Greece for its olives, particularly the indigenous variety, kolovi. Around 10 million olive trees cover the island, many centuries old. Olive growing has been a way of life on Lesvos since ancient times, and like Giorgios, most locals still tend their family groves on the island's rocky hills.

Recently, there has also been a move back towards older, more sustainable farming practices. 'We have been on a journey to relearn the methods of our fathers and grandfathers,' explains Myrta Kalambokas, as she walks around her family's orchards at **Eirini**, the island's top organ c ol ve farm, just outs de Plomar . 'Rather than relying on chemicals and pesticides, we now plant herbs and w ldflowers to encourage poll nat on, and dust the leaves to prevent diseases, just as people did a century ago. The quality and taste of the olives is so much better. If we look after nature, it looks after us.'

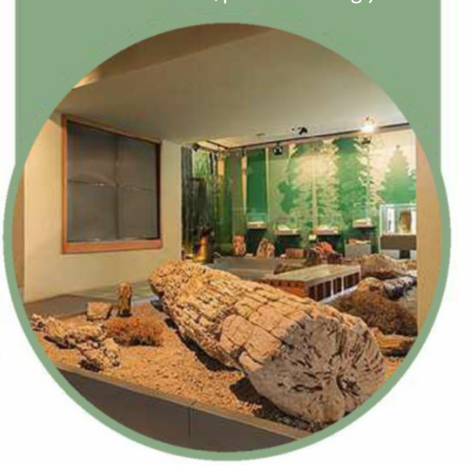
In front of the farm's futuristic, computer-controlled olive press, inside a renovated stone barn, she tastes →

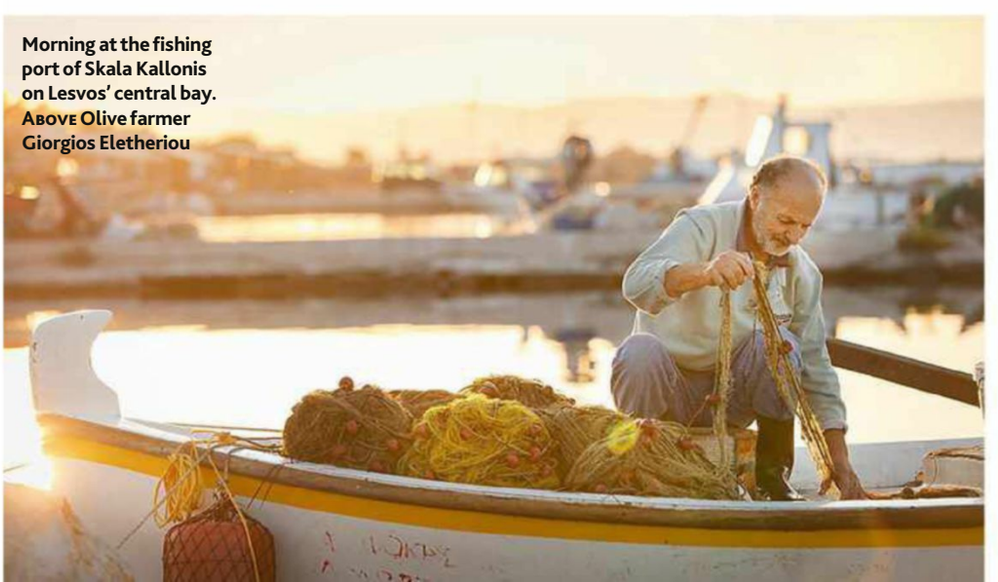
STAY

The pleasant **Aeolean Gaea Hotel** is near the fishing village of Skala Kallonis – a great place to watch the daily catch being landed. Rooms are simple but spacious, and most have little balconies overlooking the grounds; more expensive ones also have kitchenettes. There's also a cracking pool (rooms from £65; aeoliangaeahotel.com).

TREES OF STONE

While visiting western Lesvos, we took a detour to see the remains of the island's **petrified forest** – ancient trees fossilised by volcanic ash. Although only the roots and stumps survived, it's an amazing feeling to set eyes on a tree that lived 20 million years ago. If you look closely, you can even see tree bark and leaf-prints (museum admission £4.50; petrifiedforest.gr).

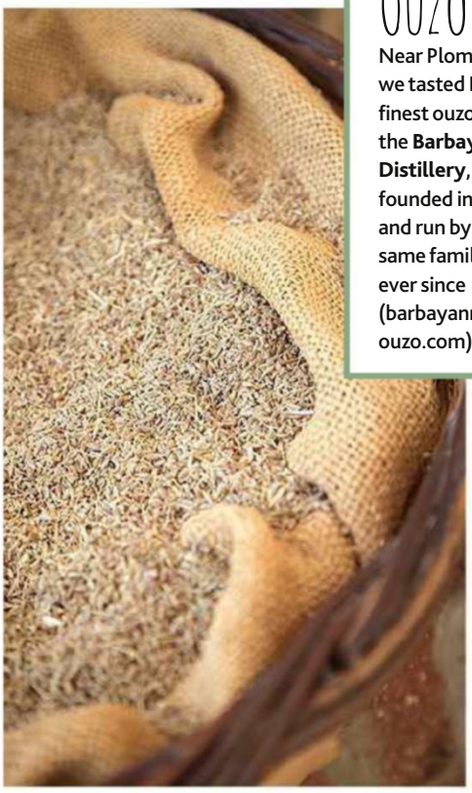




Morning at the fishing port of Skala Kallonis on Lesvos' central bay. Above Olive farmer Giorgios Eletheriou

'The ancient Greek myths used to say that honey was the food of the gods, but they're wrong. It should be olive oil!'

Old olive trees at the Eirini farm, belonging to the family of Myrta Kalambokas (pictured, inset)



Ouzo

Near Plomari, we tasted Lesvos' finest ouzo at the **Barbayanni Distillery**, founded in 1860 and run by the same family ever since (barbayanni-ouzo.com).

Old stills kept in the small museum above the Barbayanni Distillery. Far left A bag of aniseed used to flavour ouzo. Left Ouzo turns cloudy when water is added

th s season's first press ng w th fresh-baked bread. It's fruity and pungent, with a peppery aftertaste, indicating the oil is particularly high in polyphenol compounds, known for their medicinal properties.

Olives are just one example of the island's epicurean abundance. Lesvos is also famous for ouzo, the aniseed spirit that's been distilled here since the 19th century; more than half of Greece's ouzo is made on the island. And in seaside villages such as **Mytilini**, rickety boats put-put back to port every morning from the nearby Gulf of Kallon , br mm ng w th a seafood bounty: sea-bream, barboun , swordfish, anchov es and espec ally sardeles, or sardines, which are salted on the boat for freshness. After unload ng the r catch, fishermen s t bes de the quay, picking through their nets in the morning sunshine before retiring to a harbourfront taverna for a shot of ouzo and some morning mezedes.

'We have always known how to live well on Lesvos,' says Yannis Lambrou, who owns **Methymnaeos Winery**, a renowned organic vineyard on the west side of the island, near the village of Chidira. It's famous for its 'orange' wine, made with local chidiriotiko grapes, which are aged with their skins to create the wine's amber colour and distinctive jammy, marmalade taste – and oenophiles travel from all over Europe for the chance to take a tour and taste the wine in the vineyards where it's grown.

'Traditions are so important on Lesvos,' says Yannis, as he strolls among his vines at dusk. 'And there is no tradition more important than food. Apart from wine, of course! Yassas!' he says, raising a toast, as bees drone through the vines, and a warm breeze whirrs over the hilltops.

➔ **Eirini olive farm** (free entry; eirini-oliveoil.gr)
➔ **Methymnaeos Winery** (free-entry tours Aug–Sep, by prior appointment Oct–Jul; methymnaeos.com)

Classic Greek salad at Cavo Doro – a taverna by the harbourside in Sigri, near the Petrified Forest Museum

In southern **Chios**, discover a centuries-old tradition of mastic cultivation and the fortress-like villages that grew rich from it

IF YOU STEPPED INTO A TIME MACHINE AND travelled back to the year 1300, there was one luxury that would have made you rich beyond all imagining – and it wasn't spices, or incense, or gold. It was mastic, the sap of the *Pistacia lentiscus* tree, prized for its digestive-healing properties since the days of Herodotus. And if you wanted to get hold of it in the early 14th century, there was only one place where you could find it: Chios, a dry, rocky island about 60 miles to the south of Lesvos.

On a hot blue morning seven centuries later, farmer Roula Boura is on her way to her own mastic trees, →

Roula Boura shakes lumps of mastic in a sieve to remove dust from them

A street in the heart of old Mesta village. **Left** The New (or 'Great') Taxiarhes church in Mesta

Pyrgi's distinctive geometric decoration. **Left** Strings of drying tomatoes are a common sight in Pyrgi

in the parched hills on the south side of the island. To top up her income, she now runs eco-tours exploring how mastic is made through her company, **Masticulture**. Shaded by a broad-brimmed hat, she stops at one of the trees and sweeps away leaves around the trunk, creating a bare circle, which she dusts with white chalk. 'This is the trapezi, the table,' she explains. 'The chalk helps us to collect the mastic. We do this every day, for every tree.'

Next, she carves scratches in the trunk using a blade. 'We call this kenditiri, or knitting. The aim is to wake the tree up, not hurt it. The incisions bring the sap to the surface, then it runs down and hardens into crystals.' After half an hour, she stops for breakfast of bread and cheese as a warm w nd blows over the fields, and centur es-old mastic villages shimmer against the dry yellow hills.

Mast c rema ns h ghly pr zed for ts health benefits. Sc ent fic stud es have shown that the res n has antibacterial and antiviral properties. Even today, collecting mastic is a laborious process: between May and October, the resin from each tree is collected, then cleaned and polished by hand, before being sold to village co-operatives, and later transformed into products from chewing gum to chocolate. The trees are most productive from 40 to 70 years old, but even then, each one only yields around 150g of mastic per year. As such, mastic remains an expensive product, costing around £60 per kilo. But that's a fraction of what it would have fetched in its glory days, when mastic was literally worth its weight in gold.

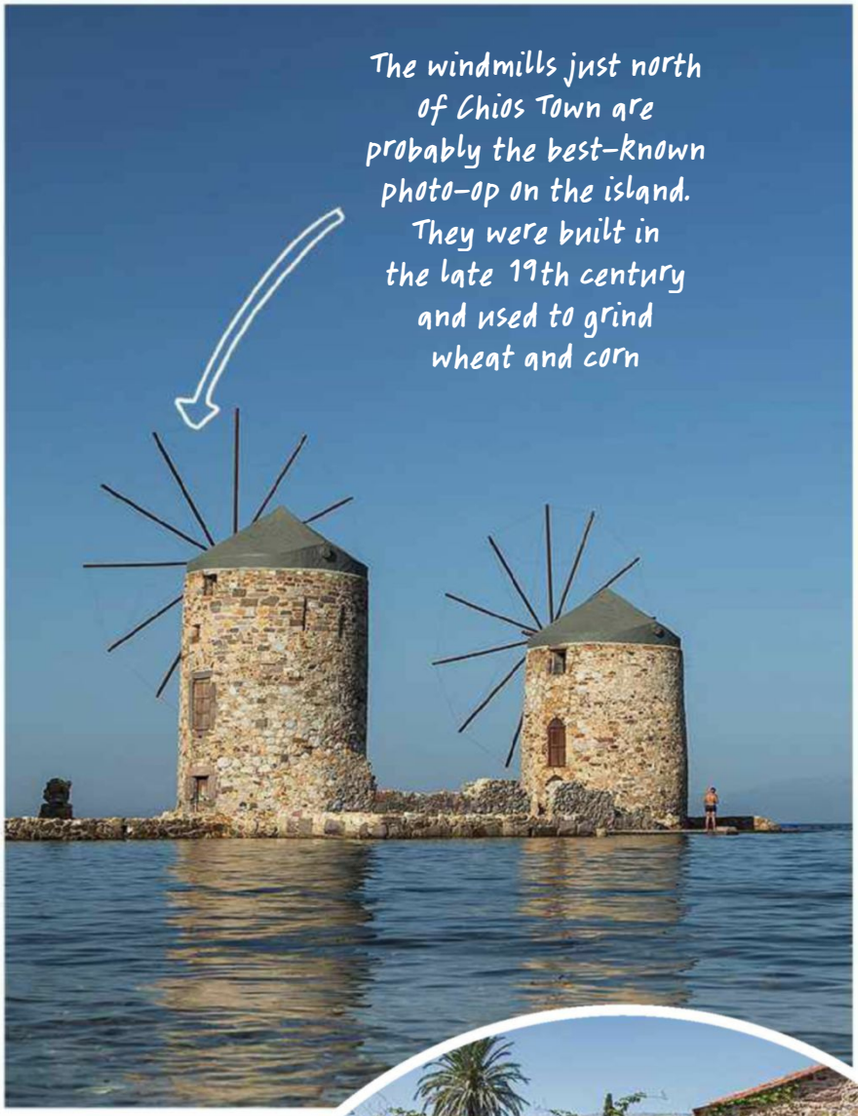
Thanks to its mastic monopoly, Chios' riches were the envy of the medieval world. To guard against pirates and raiders, mastic villages such as **Olympi** and **Mesta** fort fied themselves w th gates, walls and watchtowers. Many of them are little changed, with shuttered houses and old churches packed along flag-stoned streets, spanned by aqueducts and washing lines. Other villages chose to flaunt the r wealth – such as **Pyrgi**, where the buildings are emblazoned with black-and-white tiles like architectural chessboards.

Most of the mastic villages are located on Chios southern side, but the east coast harbours another reminder of the island's prestigious past. Here, wealthy merchants built themselves lavish estates in the neighbourhood known as **Kampos**, on the outskirts of Chios Town. Many of these sprawling mansions still stand, hemmed in by citrus groves and bordered by high stone walls. Some have been transformed into hotels and luxury houses; others lie abandoned, crumbling behind rusty gates tangled with ivy and bougainvillea.

Vangelis Xydas has found a way of preserving one of them: he now runs his 17th -century mansion as the boutique Perleas Mansion B&B. An art collector, antique restorer and sculptor, h s pass on for the house – and the Kampos area – s pla n.

'These are the secret gardens of Chios,' he says, walking through his orchard, under mandarin and lemon trees laden with fruit. 'They are a relic of a more civilised and elegant age; built to impress, but also for pleasure. For me, their beauty is impossible to put into words. They are a portal into the island's past.' →

Masticulture (tours £16; masticulture.com)
Chios Mastic Museum (admission £2.60; piop.gr)



The windmills just north of Chios Town are probably the best-known photo-op on the island. They were built in the late 19th century and used to grind wheat and corn

STAY

Behind a sturdy stone wall and surrounded by fragrant citrus groves, the handsome **Perleas Mansion** is typical of the Kampos area. In the old house, there are gorgeous, rustic rooms filled with artworks, or you can stay in a converted orchard cottage (rooms from £95; perleas.gr).

Discover old monasteries, deserted valleys and secluded beaches as you explore **Chios**' wilder western side

'READY?' ASKS GEORGE MISSETZIS, AS THE sun peeps over the v llage of **Avgonyma**. 'We have a fine walk ahead of us!' He sh fts h s pack on h s shoulders, checks for dr nk ng water and b noculars, then sets off down a narrow lane nto dry, h lly countrys de.

Before long, most s gns of c v l sat on have van shed. He leads the way nto a rav ne, spotted w th sp ndly bushes and an old stone shepherd's hut. Soon, a p ne forest r ses among the rocks, the trees' green fol age popp ng out aga nst the sun-bleached h lls des. 'In spr ng, th s valley s covered w th w ld orch ds,' says George. 'We have 92 spec es of orch ds on Ch os, a th rd of all the spec es n Europe. We also have many types of w ld tul ps. Some v s tors come back year after year to see our flowers, keep ng checkl sts l ke b rd-spotters.'

Bearded and burly, h s sk n burn shed ol ve-brown by the Med terranean sun, George M ssetz s has spent most of h s l fe on Ch os. Over the last half-century, he has explored all ts h lls, mounta ns and valleys, and reckons t's now mposs ble for h m to get lost: 'Before long, I'd run nto someone I know, anyway,' he says w th a gr n.

A hotel er, b rdwatcher, natural st and amateur h stor an, George s a fount of Ch an knowledge, and runs gu ded walks along the sland's less-frequented western and northern s des. Here, away from the ma n towns, w ld canyons and rav nes snake nto the h lls, dotted w th chapels, secret shr nes and caves burrow ng nto the heat-baked rock. Med eval monaster es cl ng to the h lls des, and between the small valley of **Fa** and the v llage of **Lithi**, a 19th-century traders' path leads down from the mounta ns to the coast, a feat of eng neer ng that doubles as the sland's best h ke.

From the barren h lltops, t w nds down along the edge of a canyon, meander ng through copses of p ne and patches of w ld rosemary, heather and thyme – although many areas have been scorched by w ldfires that have swept across the area n recent years. But even here, there are s gns of regenerat on: p ne shoots and w ldflowers sprout ng among the blackened earth and scorched tree stumps.

'F re has always been part of l fe on the sland,' says George, as he tramps down the old Fa-L th road n early even ng. 'It s a necessary process, but w th the onset of cl mate →

The neighbouring beaches of Trahili (bottom left) and Xeropotamos (centre left) are reached by an unmarked dirt track off the west-coast road just over two miles north of Lithi

The beach at Elinda is tucked into a small bay close to Avgonyma. **Left** George Missetzis runs walking tours taking in less-visited parts of Chios

change, the natural balance is shifting. That is why it is important to show people what we have here. And what we stand to lose.'

He surveys the coastline with his binoculars, watching Lithi's lights twinkle along the shoreline, and a sky melting from sea blue to scarlet. From a little further down the trail comes the sound of bells, and before long a shepherd appears, leading a herd of goats up into the darkening hills. He nods to George, greeting him by name, before disappearing on up the trail. 'An old friend of mine,' George explains. 'He makes very good cheese.'

He smiles and takes a last look over the coast, then tramps on down the hillside towards Lithi, listening to the sound of goat-bells jangling in the twilight.

STAY

In the medieval hilltop village of Avgonyma, **Spitakia** B&B offers several rustic rooms and apartments. Exposed stone, arches and old hearths lend character, and shuttered windows peek out over the church and cobbled village square (rooms from £40; spitakia.gr).

Spitakia walking tours with George Missetzis (from around £10; spitakia.gr)

Goats in the hills near Rahes in the west of Ikaria

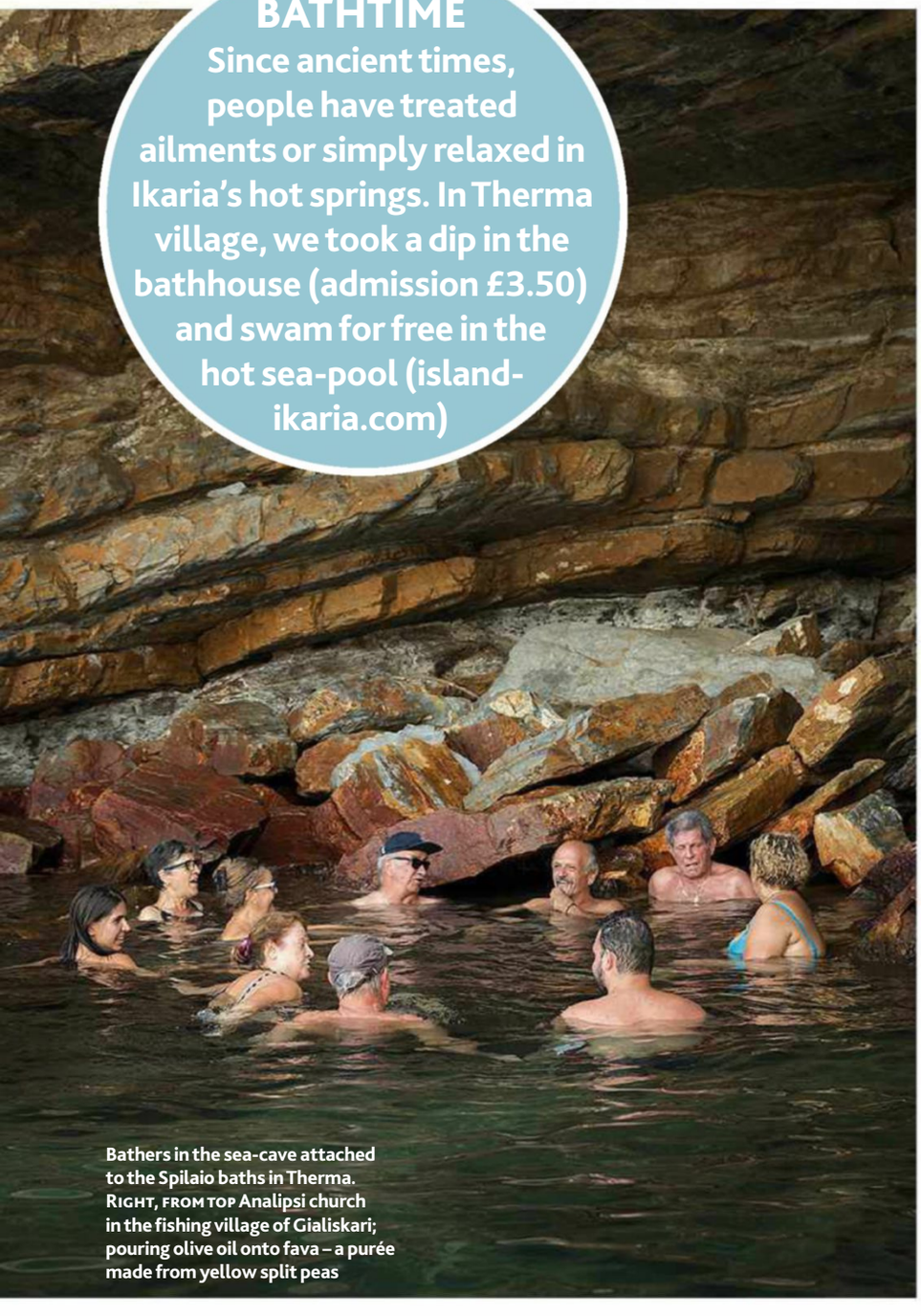
Meet the residents of **Ikaria**, who enjoy longer lives than anyone else in Europe

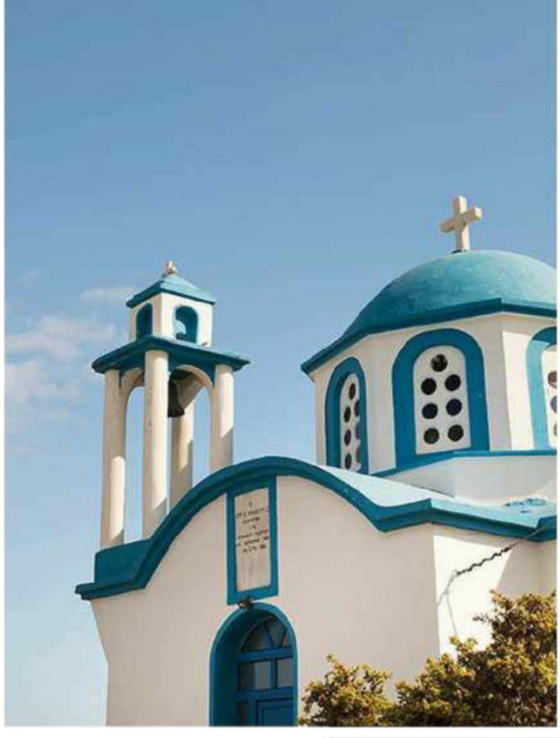
IN THE VILLAGE OF RAHES, UNDER THE BOUGHS OF a broad lime tree, another day is beginning. A waitress serves customers coffee and pastries. A rusty Jeep splutters past. Cats sun themselves on the cobbles, and a few ladies huddle on the square, swapping gossip with animated gestures and expressive headshakes. It could be any square, on any morning, in any Greek village – only there's something curious about Rahes. Apart from the waitress, none of the people in the scene are a day under seventy, and there isn't a hair that isn't the colour of steel or snow.

They're called the Blue Zones: a peculiar handful of places on the globe whose inhabitants enjoy unexpectedly protracted and productive lives. The term was coined by the American author Dan Buettner, who identified five such locations in his book of the same name: Okinawa in Japan, Sardinia in Italy, Loma Linda in California, Costa Rica's Nicoya Peninsula and the Greek island of Ikaria. On average, people here live 10 years longer than the average for their →

BATHTIME

Since ancient times, people have treated ailments or simply relaxed in Ikaria's hot springs. In Therma village, we took a dip in the bathhouse (admission £3.50) and swam for free in the hot sea-pool (island-ikaria.com)





Bathers in the sea-cave attached to the Spilaio baths in Therma. RIGHT, FROM TOP Analipsi church in the fishing village of Gialiskari; pouring olive oil onto fava – a purée made from yellow split peas

countries, and report lower rates of heart disease, cancer, depression and dementia. Unfortunately, there's a snag: no-one can figure out why.

One clue might be found in the hills above **Pigi**, where beekeeper Antoni Karimalis is harvesting one of Ikaria's best-known exports: wild honey. The hives are moved every season to allow the bees to forage from different habitats: p ne forest, heather, w ldflower meadow. 'Each locat on g ves the honey ts own flavour,' says Anton . 'And d fferent medicinal properties. Our honey is strong in antioxidants and ant - nflammator es. Many slanders take a spoonful every day to stay healthy.' Later that morning, at Antoni's workshop near Gialiskari village, he processes the honey he harvested earlier, and tourists stop in to watch the operation before stocking up on jars as souvenirs, hoping perhaps to take some of the island's longevity home with them.

A good, preferably organic, diet is something common to many of the Blue Zones. Proximity to nature, physical labour and a temperate climate also seem to have a role to play, as does a relaxed approach to timekeeping: opening hours on Ikaria are notoriously erratic, and many shops take a lengthy break for lunch, before open ng late nto the even ng. Many islanders also credit Ikaria's natural hot-water springs for their longevity: warmed by volcanic activity and rich in minerals, they have been renowned for their healing properties since ancient times. At the coastal village of **Therma**, bathers of all ages steam themselves in mica-blue pools in the bathhouse, while others relax in the superheated seawater outside, under rocky cliffs.

But there's another factor to consider: community. Ikaria's isolated villages have always relied heavily on each other, cooperating and sharing resources, and they remain close-kn t. Everyone knows everyone; people greet each other by name, hugging and enquiring after family and friends, exchanging news, and often stopping for a shot of ouzo. And once a year, each mountain village holds a bacchanalian

Antoni Karimalis harvests honey from Ikaria's western hills. **Above, from left** Bees from one of Antoni Karimalis' hives; *Erica manipuliflora*, a variety of heather, growing around Pigi

STAY

Near the village of Avlaki, **Karras' Star Hotel** has plain rooms decorated in cool shades of white and blue. The décor is sparse but the best rooms have balconies with views of the hotel's pool and the gleaming Mediterranean beyond (rooms from £70; karrasstarhotel.com).

party, known as panigyria, when the community comes together to feast, drink and dance through the night.

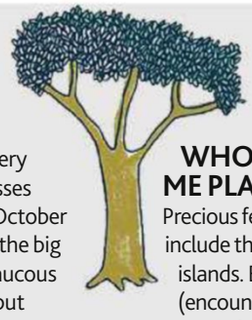
Like a good number of the island's older inhabitants, Mar a Frantzeskou s a veteran of many pan gyr a dur ng her many decades on the island. Now in her eighties, her hair frosted with silver, she's as spry as a woman half her age, with a mischievous wit sparkling behind her crinkled eyes. Even now, she st ll looks forward to the sland's annual celebrations – although for the rest of the year, she prefers the peace and quiet of the ancient hilltop **Monastery of Theoktistis** near Pigi, where she tends to her cottage garden and runs a café for visitors.

'For me, the most mportant th ng s to rema n act ve,' she says, brewing a pot of wild herb tea in her kitchen, which she serves w th home-baked b scu ts. 'Age s s mply a state of mind. If you live a good life, eat well and keep your mind and body st mulated, that s enough. Everyth ng else? Well, that's in the hands of the gods.'

Antoni Karimalis' honey workshop (00 30 22750 71420; antoniskarimalis@hotmail.com)
Further information (visitikaria.gr; island-ikaria.com)

Oliver Berry writes regularly for *Lonely Planet* magazine. In Greece he milked goats, packed sardines and consumed more types of feta cheese than any writer should have to.

PLAN YOUR TRIP



HOW DO I GET THERE?

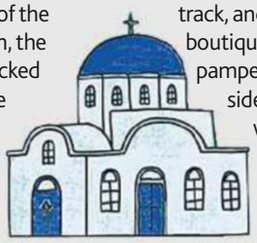
Lesvos, Chios and Ikaria all have small airports served by flights from Athens on Astra Airlines, Olympic Air and Sky Express. Flights from London via Athens into Lesvos' airport, Mytilini, and back from Ikaria start at £210 in total (olympicair.com). Flight times to and from the islands might mean that you need to overnight in Athens to get the cheapest fares.

WHAT'S MY ROUTE?

All the islands in this feature are linked by ferries run by Hellenic Seaways (hellenicseaways.gr). Daily ferries run from Lesvos to Chios in about three hours; one-way fares start at £19pp. Ferries from Chios to Ikaria's two ports (Evdilos and Agios Kirikos) are less regular, but run at least once a week via Samos,taking around 6½ hours; one-way fares start at £17pp. Public transport is sparse on the islands, so hiring a car or scooter is the only viable way of getting around freely. Rental rates for a small car start at about £35 per day, but there is only a limited supply of vehicles on some islands (such as Ikaria) so booking ahead is essential.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME TO GO?

July and August is when most Greek people take their summer holidays, and thanks to direct boat services from Athens Piraeus to all the islands of the northeast Aegean, the islands can be packed (not an ideal time to visit). Outside these months, things are far more tranquil, and you will probably have the beaches largely to yourself. May and September are perfect months, with warm weather and calm seas, and most of the restaurants and hotels will be open. Winter is very quiet; many businesses shut up shop from October to March. August is the big month for Ikaria's raucous panigyria festivals, but there are celebrations every month from May to November; island-ikaria.com has a useful list.



WHAT SHOULD I BUDGET?

In contrast to busy islands like Santorini, Samos and Kos, the islands of the northeast Aegean are a little further off the beaten track, and so you won't find many boutique hotels or super-plush pamper pads here. On the plus side, that means prices are way more reasonable: a double room in a pleasant hotel or B&B can easily be found for £50 to £70 per night. Meals and wine are cheap, too, especially if you stick to local specialities: you can eat really well with a couple of courses for £15 to £20 per person.

WHO CAN HELP ME PLAN?

Precious few standard tours include the northeast Aegean islands. Encounter Greece (encountergreece.com) offers a range of tours, plus a customised service where travellers can select their preferred destinations and duration. A sample 10-night trip includes accommodation, activities and transport within Greece for £1,300pp.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Our *Greek Islands* guide (£14.99) is an indispensable handbook, with sections on Lesvos, Chios and Ikaria. You can also separately download the chapter covering the northeast Aegean (£2.99). The Greek National Tourism Organisation has more details (visitgreece.gr).

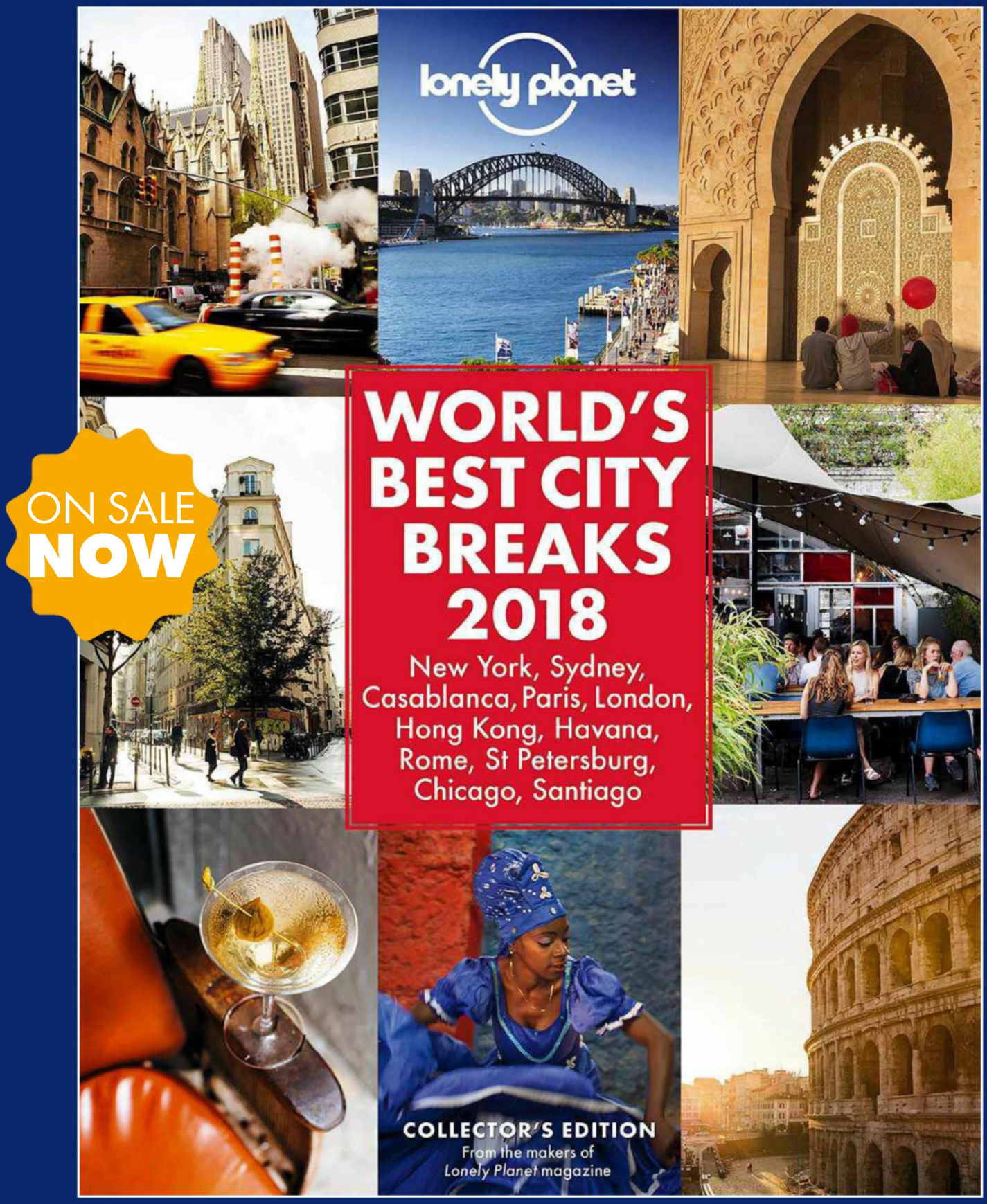
PRIZE CATCH

According to islanders on Lesvos, the best sardeles pastes (freshly caught sardines salted on the boat) come from Skala Kallonis port. To eat them, hold them by the tail and strip off the meat from both sides, leaving just the bone behind – and, for extra kudos, chase them down with a shot of ouzo.

WHAT WE LEARNED ALONG THE WAY

- For most inter-island ferries you need to arrive around 45 minutes before departure. There's usually a small café onboard, but bringing your own food is much cheaper.
- Petrol stations are rare in many areas, so stay fuelled up. A windscreen cover is also very useful, as the fierce Greek sun rapidly turns stationary cars into four-wheeled ovens.
- When visiting churches and monasteries, cover shoulders and knees. Out of respect to worshippers, avoid photographing the main altar, and don't use any flash.

ILLUSTRATIONS: KATE SUTTON. PHOTOGRAPH: PHILIP LEE HARVEY



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Secret GREECE

While the northeast Aegean is off the main tourist routes, even in the well-known Greek island groups you can find the odd place that's little changed over the decades

Dusk falls over the hilltop town of Hora and the old port of Astypalea island

ASTYPALEA
DODECANESE

WHY AM I GOING?

On the map, Astypalea appears to be a butterfly captured mid-flight between Kos and Santorini; the island's two wings are linked by a narrow strip that's also home to the tiny airport. This wayward member of the Dodecanese is conveniently overlooked by most non-Greeks, and development has been blissfully low-key. The prize view on the island is of hilltop Hora, the pristine white old town, seemingly flowing along a spur capped by eight defunct windmills, then down the slope until it reaches the harbour at Skala, Astypalea's main settlement. The island's beaches – mostly a mix of pebbles and sand – give onto vivid blue bays. The most eye-catching are actually a short boat trip away, to the neighbouring, uninhabited islets of Koutsomyti and Kounoupi. The latter's beach is a ribbon that unites the two parts of the island, rather like an Astypalea in miniature (day trips from £13; astypaleatours.gr).

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

At Fildisi, a village-style cluster of 10 whitewashed houses with royal-blue shutters steps down the hillside to the infinity pool and bar, which look out over Livadi Bay. The purist colour scheme continues inside the studio apartments (from £90; fildisi.net).

DID YOU KNOW?

Wild saffron grows across much of the island, and the costly flavouring is used in local biscuits along with soft chlori cheese. Find them at Eliana Bakery (eliana-bakery.gr).

WHAT AM I EATING?

Seafood comes with a dash of sophistication at Astropelos, set on the beach at Livadi and shaded by tamarisk trees. The ceviche catch of the day, grilled octopus and lobster spaghetti are highlights (mains from £8).

WHAT AM I DRINKING?

The Latin-Caribbean influence on its cocktail menu aside, Castro Bar is no Cuban pastiche: its sunset-friendly terrace perches under the old Venetian kastro (castle) in Hora. Keep things sort-of-local with a Mellow Mint, which includes mastic liqueur (facebook.com/castrobar.astypalaia).

PHOTOGRAPHS: MILAN GONDA/SHUTTERSTOCK, GEORGETSAFOS/GETTY

The whitewashed houses and narrow lanes of Hora, the main town in Kythira. **Bottom right** The fishing village of Avlemonas

KYTHIRA
IONIAN ISLANDS

WHY AM I GOING?
The southernmost of the seven main Ionian Islands is a beautiful outlier, closer to Crete than it is to the rest of its group. Greenery blankets most of the island, growing out of control around waterfalls such as the Neraïda cascade at Mylopotamos, whose pool changes shades of blue and green in a play of light. The island's tiny hilltop capital, also known as Kythira (or Hora), has a good choice of tasteful small shops selling hand-woven clutch bags and bespoke jewellery, while inland Potamos hosts a Sunday-morning flea market as the surrounding cafés fill up. The village is also the base for Pyrgos House, which runs a fabulous choice of outdoor activities on the island, including guided walks, sea-kayaking, olive-picking and canyoning (pyrgoshouse.com). The Ancient Greeks picked Kythira (along with Cyprus) as one of the two mythical locations for the birthplace of Aphrodite, goddess of love. If you head to the southeast-coast sands of Kaladi, keep an eye out for any Renaissance painting-worthy beauties floating in on a giant scallop shell.

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?
Be the lord or lady of all you survey at Xenonas Fos ke Choros ('Guesthouse Light and Space'). On a hilltop in the centre of the island, with views to the Ionian Sea, this sturdy traditional villa has four rustic rooms, with cushioned flagstone benches, metalwork lanterns and driftwood-framed mirrors (from £85; agreekisland.com).

WHAT AM I EATING?
Rabbit stew, veal chops and other hearty dishes are the mainstays at O Platanos, along with salads that include island barley rusks. This utterly charming kafeneio (café) takes its name from the plane trees that shade it in the centre of Mylopotamos village (mains from £5).

WHAT AM I DRINKING?
Frappé (frothy iced coffee) might be the Greek standard, but Veranda Café prides itself on its freddo cappuccino. This smart spot in Hora also has a well-stocked bar and a terrace with sea views that's perfect for a beer at sunset (veranda-kythira.gr). →

DID YOU KNOW?
Cinnamon, cloves and **tsipouro (pomace brandy)** are combined in Kythira's unique liqueur, fatourada. **One prominent local label** is simply called Phi (fatourada.gr).

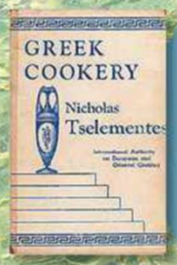
SIFNOS
CYCLADES

WHY AM I GOING?
Near the centre of the Cyclades, but far from mass tourism (there's no airport, only ferry access), Sifnos has dreamy views – particularly around the town of Kastro, a cluster of sugar-cube houses on a rock above the east coast. If you like your beaches to be big, on sheltered bays and backed up by a choice of tavernas, look south and west at Platis Gialos, Vathy and Kamares. For more intimacy, head south to Fasolou or north to Vroulidia. Sifnos also has a strong culinary reputation for an island of its size, and one place visitors can share in its creative side is at Sifnos Farm Narlis, whose cooking classes begin with picking herbs and vegetables in the garden (from £55; sifnos-farm-narlis.com).

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?
From its vantage point high on the east coast, Verina Astra has endlessly compelling Aegean views from the verandas outside its seven suites. Traditional techniques are used inside and out – dry-stone walls, basketwork – for a result that still looks very contemporary (from £125; verinahotelsifnos.com).

WHAT AM I EATING?
In labyrinthine, hilltop Apollonia, Rambagas Restaurant's tree-shaded terrace is a venue for Cycladic cuisine in new guises: summer tomato fritters in yoghurt and mint sauce, or pork shoulder souvlaki with lemon tzatziki (mains from £12; kikladonxoros.gr).

WHAT AM I DRINKING?
Choose from more than 50 Greek wines – mostly from small producers – at Omega 3. Ones from Assyrtiko grapes are a favourite. The nutrition-minded name of this south-coast beachfront bar hints at its other mainstay: all things fish (facebook.com/omega3greece).



DID YOU KNOW?
Sifnos has kitchen kudos across Greece thanks to its most famous son, Nikolaos Tselementes, who **wrote the first Greek cookery guide** in 1910. So universal did it become that the word 'tselementes' is now used to describe any cookbook.

The beach of Vathy with the Monastery of the Archangels (Taxiarchis). INSET Basket bowls adorn the wall of a room at Verina Astra

The waterside terrace at Spilia Beach Bar. LEFT A fishing village on Hydra

HYDRA
SARONIC ISLANDS

WHY AM I GOING?

Only four miles off the Greek mainland, and less than two hours' sailing from the port of Athens, Hydra is not remote in any geographical sense. Cars and motorbikes are banned here, however, so most of island life has stayed within walking radius of the main – indeed, only – town. This rises like an amphitheatre from the small harbour, in tiers of terracotta-tiled stone houses. Here, the most vivid sounds are the clop of donkeys' hooves and the babble from café tables. In the 1950s and '60s, it was a honeypot for the rich and artistically inclined: Aristotle Onassis, Maria Callas, Elizabeth Taylor and Sophia Loren among them. Each summer for the past decade, a branch of Athens' Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art has put on an exhibition in a stone-built old slaughterhouse (deste.gr). Striking out further into this spindly, but mountainous island depends on how far you're willing to hike to a beach, though water-taxis do reach some coves and there's also the option of saddling up with Harriet's Hydra Horses (rides from £23; hydradirect.com).

DID YOU KNOW?

Hydra was a refuge in the 1960s for the singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen, and before that the island also inspired the novelist Henry Miller, who described its 'wild and naked perfection'.

WHERE SHOULD I STAY?

Used in the 19th century as a sponge factory, Bratsera Hotel offers 25 rooms with wood-beamed ceilings and plastered stone walls, all arranged around its courtyard pool in the heart of Hydra Town (from £165; bratserahotel.com).

WHAT AM I EATING?

Overlooking the entrance to Hydra's main harbour, Omilos serves attractively presented, yet simple dishes such as seafood risotto or sea bass with crushed potato. In its 1960s incarnation, the restaurant was a jet-set favourite and its interior is still modishly white – the canopied waterside terrace is the highlight (mains from £12; omilos-hydra.com).

WHAT AM I DRINKING?

Continue a little further along the coast from Omilos and you'll reach Spilia Beach Bar. With cocktails on the menu, and swimmers jumping off from the rocks below the terrace, it's a carefree place to await sunset (spiliacafe@gmail.com). LP

PHOTOGRAPHS: GIORGIO FILIPPINI/4CORNERS, KONSTANTINOS – K/ISTOCK/GETTY, CBW/ALAMY, IAN DAGNALL/ALAMY

THE NEW DUTCH MASTERS

Since its 1600s Golden Age, Amsterdam has been filled with as many bright ideas as it has bikes and canals. Meet 10 modern creatives who are changing the way we eat, live… and cycle.

WORDS **KEVIN EG PERRY** **@kevinegperry**
PHOTOGRAPHS **MATT MUNRO**

DJAJA VAN DEN BERG

Community manager, Instock restaurant

One third of all the food that is made on planet Earth goes to waste, which works out to be some 1.3 billion tonnes around the globe each year. The staff at Amsterdam restaurant Instock are determined to do something about that staggering statistic, so they set out to turn unwanted supermarket leftovers into high-end meals. 'People eating here don't see that perhaps their carrot didn't look perfect,' explains the restaurant's community manager Djaja van den Berg over plates of thick French toast and bulging beef and kimchi burritos. 'They just eat it and it's the exact same taste.' Sure enough, although the kimchi was once a leftover Brussels sprout and the ice cream an overripe banana, it all looks and tastes just as you'd expect from restaurant dining. At Instock there's great attention to detail – even the chairs are recycled from local schools – but the relaxed atmosphere combined with the chance to eat a meal that makes a difference has made it a hit. 'There's a crowd of people here in Amsterdam who are open to new ideas and who want to encourage people who show an entrepreneurial spirit,' says Djaja. That local support means Instock can reduce food waste, one meal at a time.

● **Three-course dinner menu from £20; Czaar Peterstraat 21; instock.nl**

Djaja van den Berg seated below the lunch menu at Instock. **Bottom left** Crooked fried codfish with carrot chips and cauliflower remoulade

DJAJA'S LOCAL FAVOURITE

'There's a bar called Amsterdam Roest which has its own beach. It feels like you're in nature even though you're just next to a canal. That's a good place for summer vibes. It feels like you're getting away even though you're still in the city.'

Oudezijds Voorburgwal, one of the city's oldest canals

HANS' LOCAL FAVOURITE

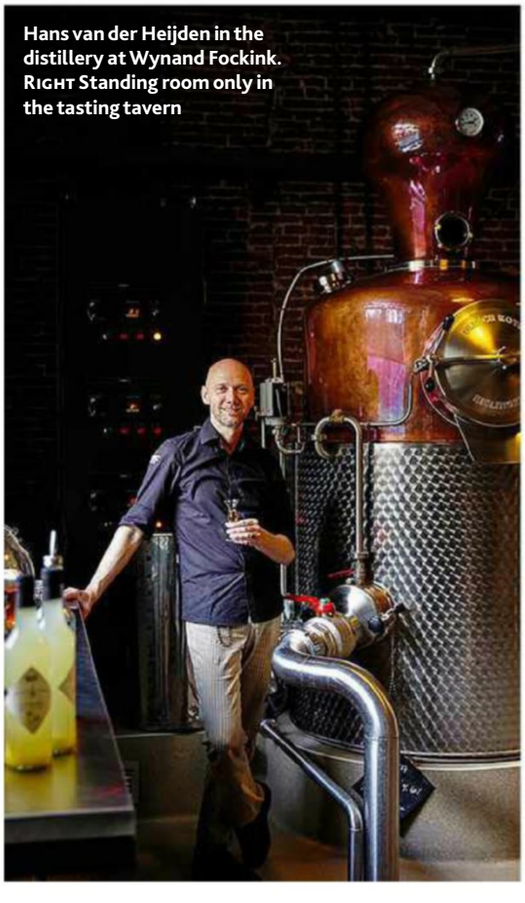
'I would advise any visitor to Amsterdam to take a boat trip out of the city centre. Amsterdam from the water is beautiful, and we have so many canals. You don't have to walk, and everyone leaves their curtains open so you can peek inside their apartments.'

HANS VAN DER HEIJDEN

Liqueurist, Wynand Fockink

Hans van der Heijden runs his eye along the bottles of liqueurs ranged on the wooden shelf behind his bar, considering all the flavours: aniseed, After Eight, apple pie, apricot. And that's just the 'A's. In all there are 70 different flavoured liqueurs available at Wynand Fockink, a tasting tavern down a little side street off Dam Square that dates back to 1679. Finally he selects a bottle marked 'Hansje in de Kelder' ('Little Hans In The Cellar') and carefully pours the golden, syrupy liquid into a tasting glass until it is so full that the liqueur rises like a shimmering dome. 'This is my favourite,' says Hans. 'It was the first one I tried as a boy.' The drink takes its unusual name from an old tradition of Dutch mothers using it to announce their pregnancy. The most famous of Wynand Fockink's drinks is jenever, a traditional juniper-flavoured liquor from which gin evolved. While there is a distillery onsite, Hans and his fellow liqueurists are not responsible for distilling the alcohol but rather understanding the history of the various flavours and also blending them in order to create new concoctions, as Hans recently did for a local private members' club. He's going to need a bigger shelf.

● **Tasting tour £15; Pijlsteeg 31; wynand-fockink.nl** →



Hans van der Heijden in the distillery at Wynand Fockink. RIGHT Standing room only in the tasting tavern

ANNEMIEKE BOOTS

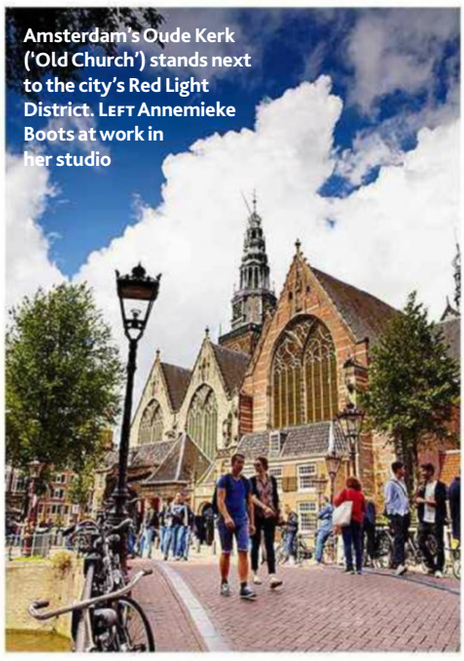
Ceramic artist

Soft light streams through the glass front of Annemieke Boots' workshop as barges laden with sand and stones pass slowly along the canal outside her window. Inside, the kiln where she fires her elegant, minimalist pottery is giving off enough heat to warm the entire room. Taking a fresh lump of grey clay in her hands, Annemieke begins to turn it deftly on her potter's wheel. Before long it takes the shape of a small bowl, starting the process that will eventually lead it to the pile of spoons, tea cups and other creations beside her: each one in muted, earthy tones, each one in some way unique. Her skill belies the fact that until five years ago she'd never made anything from clay, let alone considered ceramics as a career. She was working in a shop when a chance encounter with a ceramicist inspired her, but her city helped her believe she could reinvent herself. 'I've lived in Amsterdam for 20 years now,' she says, 'I've always liked it here because people have an open mind and a free spirit. They dare to try things. In the creative community you see a lot of people from different cultures sharing ideas. That's typical of Amsterdam.'

● **Ceramics from £8; Buyskade 128; annemiekebootsceramics.nl**

ANNEMIEKE'S LOCAL FAVOURITE

'Somewhere I really like to go for dinner is Raïnaraï in Westerpark. The chef is from Algeria and has this nomadic style of cooking. It's really nice, especially in summertime when they have a big terrace by the waterside.'



Amsterdam's Oude Kerk ('Old Church') stands next to the city's Red Light District. LEFT Annemieke Boots at work in her studio

TACO CARLIER

Bicycle designer, VanMoof

If Marty McFly had been a cyclist rather than a skateboarder, he'd have switched his hoverboard for a VanMoof Electrified S. It's a real-life bike that looks and acts like a sci-fi prop: power-assisted cycling, electric headlights, a lock that links to a smartphone app so it knows when you're near and even a turbo boost button that can help you whizz up to 20mph. It's the brainchild of Taco Carlier, a man who has made it his mission to make the whole world a little bit more like Amsterdam. 'The way of cycling here is not just going around the park on a Sunday afternoon,' he says. 'We really use the bike as a means of transport to get to your destination. In Amsterdam today, 55% of all commutes are done by bike.' Taco founded VanMoof in 2009 together with his brother Ties. They'd been inspired, naturally enough, by a cycle ride. 'Amsterdam is such a creative city because of bikes,' says Taco. 'A lot of great scientists came up with their theories on bikes.' Now, in less than a decade, they've designed a bike fit to ride back to the future.

● **Bikes from £570; Mauritskade 55; vanmoof.com** →

Taco Carlier, co-founder of VanMoof, with the Electrified S bike

TACO'S LOCAL FAVOURITE

'I love to swim in the IJ. The water is so clean there, and in the Amstel River too. Almost all our rivers are good for swimming. There are plenty of piers and jetties so that you can jump in and get out easily.'

Suzanne Oxenaar in a suite at Lloyd Hotel. BELOW Downtime in the Westerpark

SUZANNE OXENAAR

Artistic director, Lloyd Hotel & Cultural Embassy

Every room at the Lloyd Hotel in Amsterdam's Eastern Docklands is a little bit different. One has a swing, another has a grand piano and there's even a room with a bed that can sleep seven people. The variety is so broad, ranging from basic to elaborate, that it calls itself 'the first one- to five-star hotel in the world'. It's not the rooms, however, that most interest co-founder Suzanne Oxenaar. It's the people in them. 'For me, the hotel is a kind of tool to create meetings,' she says. 'We wanted to do something with all the energy that comes to visit Amsterdam. I'm interested in the cultural luggage of our guests. Are they a DJ, a filmmaker, a student? We arrange events to bring everyone together to exchange ideas.' Events include Steinbeisser supper clubs, which aim to promote mindful eating and conversation. Even the cutlery used at these clubs has been deliberately designed to encourage slow, considered eating. 'I've always been adventurous and curious, says Suzanne, 'and in Amsterdam there are no strict feelings of borders. You can feel very free here.'

● **Rooms from £50; Oostelijke Handelskade 34; lloydhotel.com**

SUZANNE'S LOCAL FAVOURITE

'The Dappermarkt, in the east of the city, is a perfect place to walk around. It's a little like the Albert Cuypmarkt, but less touristy. There's a real mixture of different kinds of stalls, so there is food but also bric-a-brac and crafts from all over the world. It's an amazing atmosphere.'

Marjolein Wintjes and Eric Meursing concoct new dishes at De Culinaire Werkplaats. BELOW RIGHT The 18th-century De Gooyer windmill is now a private home

MARJOLEIN WINTJES & ERIC MEURSING

Conceptual food designers, De Culinaire Werkplaats

Bent over his work surface beneath a harsh stainless steel lamp, Eric Meursing operates with the methodical air of a scientist and the eye of an artist. What he's making though is neither an experiment nor a painting. It's dessert. To be precise, a dessert inspired by Vincent Van Gogh's Japanese period. 'It's an almond with blossom branches,' says Eric. 'We balance the almond on top of a stone and cover it in cherry, for the Japanese touch. Then for the French connection we have thyme that we painted with chocolate.' The result is rich and strange, a tongue-baffling mixture of textures and tastes that somehow complement each other. Keeping watch is his partner, Marjolein Wintjes. Together the pair created De Culinaire Werkplaats, a design studio and occasional restaurant where they work on innovative new dishes. 'We are food conceptualists,' she explains. 'We try to find new ways of eating.' In this case, the dessert forms the final part of their five-course meal inspired by the Dutch Masters. 'When people eat here they get five stories on their plate,' says Marjolein. 'We take our work seriously, but we try to put a smile on your face as well. That's very Dutch.'

● **Five-course meal from £40; Fannius Scholtenstraat 10; deculinairewerkplaats.nl** →

MARJOLEIN'S LOCAL FAVOURITE

'If we are stuck when we are working on a new project, we close the door and go to the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. It doesn't matter what kind of an exhibition it is, you read the stories and see the art and design and suddenly it opens your mind.'

DAPHNE DE VRIES & MARTIJN GROOTENDORST

Creative directors, Theater de Roode Bioscoop

Daphne de Vries opens the creaking wooden door of the Theater de Roode Bioscoop slowly, as if granting access to a sacred space. In a sense, she is. First opened in 1913, the building once housed the socialist cinema that gave it its name. These days, however, it is Amsterdam's most intimate jazz and experimental theatre venue. Together with visual artist Martijn Grootendorst, Daphne is in charge of bringing together musicians and performers to fill out the theatre's eclectic line-up. 'We invite the crème de la crème of Dutch artists to play here, and also international artists,' she says. 'We host a lot of improvisational jazz, and people mostly play unplugged because the acoustics are great. Our role is to give people a place where they can collaborate, experiment and create. Things grow here.' With a capacity of just 70 people, it is testament to the theatre's unique appeal that renowned artists like Bonnie Prince Billy have chosen to play at Theater de Roode Bioscoop. During concerts, artists often make eye contact with their whole audience and know that every bum note they play will be picked up on. There's nowhere to hide, but that's what makes every show as special as watching a performance live in your own front room.

● **Shows from £16; Haarlemmerplein 7; roodebioscoop.nl**

DAPHNE'S LOCAL FAVOURITE

'Freud is a restaurant that employs people who have suffered from psychiatric issues. It's a socially conscious enterprise, but it's also just a really good restaurant with a great cook.'

Daphne de Vries and Martijn Grootendorst in Theatre de Roode Bioscoop's bar, which has changed little since 1913

A display of ceramic crustaceans for sale at Pols Potten. **Above** Theo Grootendorst in the showroom. **Left** Canalside tables at Café Aen't Water

THEO GROOTENDORST

CEO, Pols Potten luxury home furnishings

At the back of the Pols Potten showroom, CEO Theo Grootendorst is gesturing through the big glass windows towards a tiny speck of land known as Kompaseiland that is barely visible as it emerges from the river IJ. Theo is explaining that it was historically a significant spot for Dutch traders. 'That island is exactly to the north of Amsterdam,' he says. 'Sailors used the island to mark their compasses before setting off on their travels to India or the rest of the world.' It's fitting that Pols Potten, an interior design company that started out in 1987, should be located so close to the old landmark. This is the flagship store of a company with branches all over the planet, where they work hard to introduce people to the best of modern Dutch design. Some of it is piled up around us: neon pink potted plants, golden pineapples and cushions printed with Rembrandts. 'We give things a twist with a bit of humour,' explains Theo of the shop's curious signature style. 'We have all sorts of strange objects that will make you think: "What the hell is that?"'

● **Golden pineapple £55; KNSM-Laan 39; polspotten.nl**

THEO'S LOCAL FAVOURITE

'I love classical music so I go to the Royal Concertgebouw every month. The sound in there is unbelievable and they have all sorts of performances, from orchestras to Argentinian bandoneón concertina players.'

MAKE IT HAPPEN

AMSTERDAM

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE AND AROUND

Amsterdam is well served from UK airports: BA, easyJet, FlyBe, Jet2 and KLM all run flights (from £70; flybe.com). Eurostar trains now run direct twice daily from London St Pancras to Amsterdam in 3¾ hours, though for the return trip you'll still need to change at Brussels to clear passport controls (from £55; eurostar.com). The best way to get around the city is with an Iamsterdam City Card. It gives unlimited access to public transport for either 24, 48, 72 or 96 hours. It also lets you visit most city museums for free, as well as offering a range of other discounts (from £50 for a 24-hour card; iamsterdam.com).

FURTHER READING

Pick up our *Amsterdam* guide (£13.99) or get our free-to-download Guides app. The tourist board can help you plan your trip; buy an Iamsterdam card at their office in the airport (iamsterdam.com).

Early evening on the banks of the Amstel – the city took its name from a dam on this much-altered river

BEHIND THE SCENES

On *Super Disco Breakin'*, from their classic 1998 album *Hello Nasty*, the Beastie Boys rapped: 'Sometimes I like to brag, sometimes I'm soft spoken. When I'm in Holland I eat the pannenkoeken.' I've often found it wise to follow the advice of the Beastie Boys to the letter, so I knew exactly what would be on my plate in Amsterdam. Legend has it that Mike D, MCA and Ad-Rock came up with the line after visiting the Upstairs Pannenkoekenhuis, a tiny restaurant with only four tables at the top of a steep staircase in a traditional Dutch house that dates back to 1539. Squeezed into a corner table, I ordered the apple, bacon and cheese pannenkoeken (pancake). It was exquisite. Sorry, sometimes I like to brag.
Kevin EG Perry

PHOTOGRAPHS: MATT MUNRO

MAP KEY

1. Amsterdam Roest
2. Annemieke Boots Ceramics
3. Dappermarkt
4. De Culinaire Werkplaats
5. Freud
6. Instock
7. Lloyd Hotel & Cultural Embassy
8. Pols Potten
9. Raïnaraï
10. Royal Concertgebouw
11. Stedelijk Museum
12. Theater de Roode Bioscoop
13. Upstairs Pannenkoekenhuis
14. VanMoof
15. Wynand Fockink

SLEEPING

1. Cocomama Hostel
2. Hotel Arena
3. The Toren

PLACES TO STAY

1 **Cocomama Hostel** is a friendly boutique hostel whose private rooms represent superb value for money. Located in a tall, traditional house, there are plenty of stairs to deal with, but also wi-fi and Bluetooth speakers built into the ceilings of the private rooms. The hotel's daily activity calendar is an excellent and sociable introduction to exploring the city (private rooms from £80; cocomamahostel.com).

2 **Hotel Arena** is a stately four-star hotel built inside a former orphanage for Catholic girls, and still complete with its own chapel. The well-appointed rooms live up to the grandiose exterior, but the hotel's best feature is its location: it looks directly onto the Oosterpark, making it feel like a natural oasis in the city. The Park café-restaurant serves excellent food (rooms from £120; hotelarena.nl).

3 **The Toren** is designed with romantic getaways in mind. The hotel is centrally located in a 17th-century canalside building, and its décor is designed in the style of an 1890s French boudoir, with a black and red colour scheme throughout and plenty of mirrors. Many rooms come complete with double Jacuzzis and, in one case, a steam shower cabin. The chandelier-lit hotel bar is well-equipped (rooms from £175; thetoren.nl).

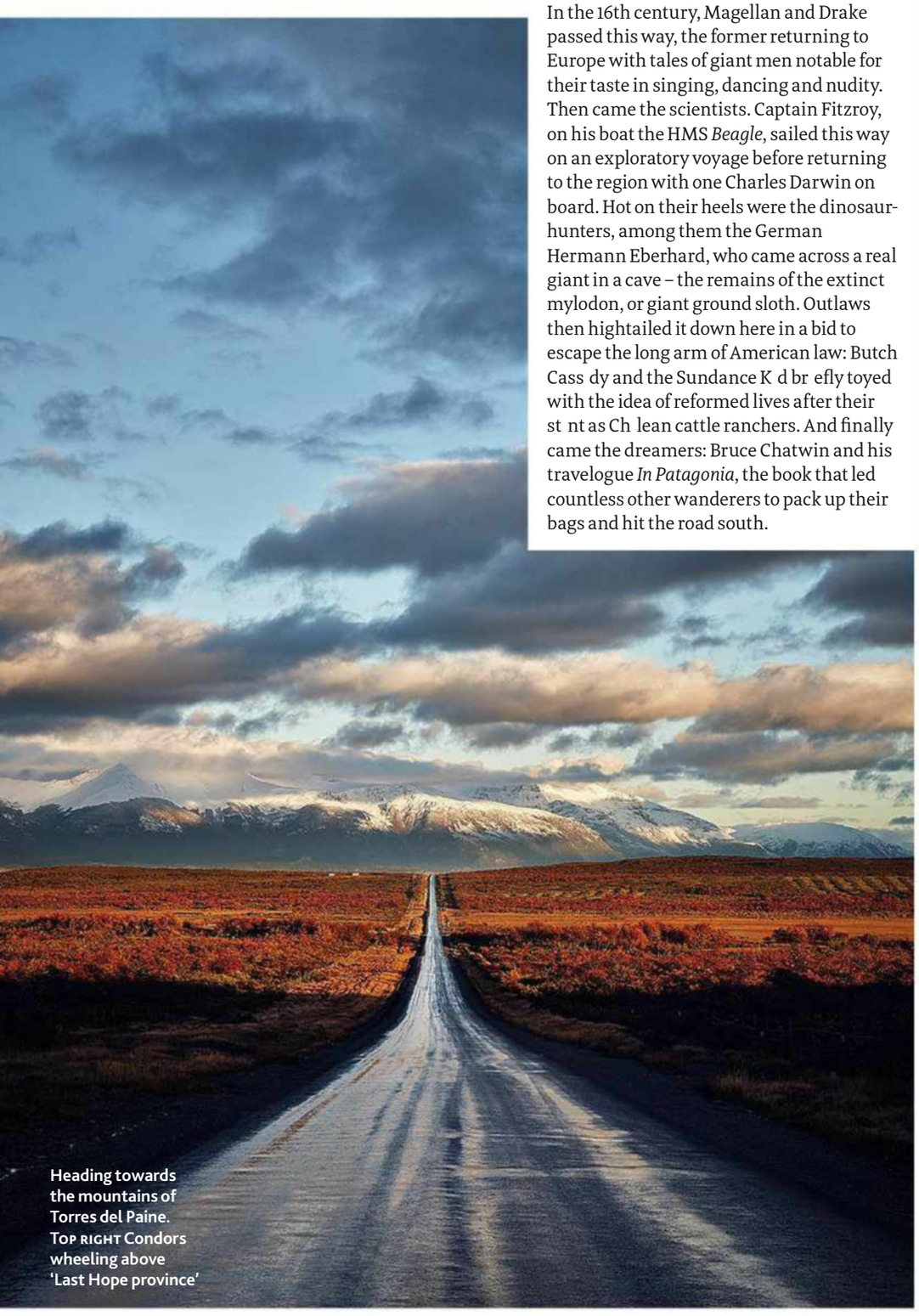
Across Patagonia

Follow centuries of intrepid travellers to wild and woolly Patagonia in southern Chile, and discover a land ripe for new adventures

WORDS **AMANDA CANNING** **@amandacanning**
PHOTOGRAPHS **JONATHAN GREGSON**
@jonathangregsonphotography

For a distant sliver of land tucked at the bottom of the world, Patagonia attracts an awful lot of attention. Over the years, a veritable who's who of explorers, eccentrics and vagabonds has appeared on the horizon and made for shore, just as the colossal continent of South America seems to run out of steam and droop towards Antarctica.

First came the global circumnavigators. In the 16th century, Magellan and Drake passed this way, the former returning to Europe with tales of giant men notable for their taste in singing, dancing and nudity. Then came the scientists. Captain Fitzroy, on his boat the HMS *Beagle*, sailed this way on an exploratory voyage before returning to the region with one Charles Darwin on board. Hot on their heels were the dinosaur-hunters, among them the German Hermann Eberhard, who came across a real giant in a cave – the remains of the extinct mylodon, or giant ground sloth. Outlaws then hightailed it down here in a bid to escape the long arm of American law: Butch Cass dy and the Sundance K d br efly toyed with the idea of reformed lives after their st nt as Ch lean cattle ranchers. And finally came the dreamers: Bruce Chatwin and his travelogue *In Patagonia*, the book that led countless other wanderers to pack up their bags and hit the road south.



Heading towards the mountains of Torres del Paine. TOP RIGHT Condors wheeling above 'Last Hope province'

Among that roll-call of adventurers is one now largely forgotten in her homeland: Lady Florence Dixie. Scotswoman, war correspondent, president of the British Ladies Football Club, Dixie headed to the southern tip of Patagonia in 1878 for that best of reasons: because her peers very much thought she shouldn't. 'Precisely because it was an outlandish place and so far away, I chose it,' she wrote in her memoirs, *Across Patagonia*. For six months, she crisscrossed between Argentina and Chile on her horse, galloping across plains and trotting up mountains, camping in the w ld, flee ng fires and alleged cann bals, and discovering whole swathes of the region unknown to outsiders. She was celebrated locally as the first European tourist in Patagonia, and returned to Scotland with a considerable amount of fame. (She also returned with a jaguar, which she named Affums and kept as a pet on her country estate.)

'Oh, everyone here knows about Florence,' says trekking guide Gonzalo Koo, pausing to lean on his walking poles. 'As the first tour st here, she is like the Virgin Mary in Patagonia.' We have spent the morning meandering through beech forests in Chile's Última Esperanza ('Last Hope') province, skirting the cave where Eberhard found his giant sloth, and clambering up towards mountain peaks shining with fresh snow. Austral parakeets and Ch lean fl cker birds have been constantly annoyed by our presence, fla l ng up from the r nests n screeches of irritation as we pass.

After a couple of hours, we emerge from the foothills and onto a broad plateau. 'Maybe Florence wasn't here on this exact spot,' says Gonzalo, 'but she would have passed through this valley.' He gestures at the landscape 900 metres beneath us. Autumn is newly arrived in the southern hem sphere, and Patagon a looks on fire, the grasslands glowing russet and the →

‘Precisely because it was an outlandish place and so far away, I chose it’

A cup of maté tea, made from yerba maté leaves and popular with Patagonian gauchos

forests flam ng red and amber. The r vers trac ng the valley floor are so far below us they look l ke s ngle strands of cotton. It s the land of a fantasy, through wh ch the hero ne must traverse to cla m her pr ze.

A movement catches Gonzalo's eye, and we have our own pr ze for the day's efforts: condors. Far below, a pa r gl des along the gl tter ng tongue of Lago Sofia as t sl nks towards the Andes. More appear, wheel ng n from the left, swoop ng up from the r ght. 'It's l ke a h ghway of w nd here,' says Gonzalo, ly ng on the rocks and peer ng over the plateau edge. 'They're look ng for a thermal so they can get back to the r nests.'

As we turn to h ke down the mounta n, we're d stracted by a no se beh nd us: the wump-wump-wump of a condor on a fl ght path that takes t just metres over our heads. I feel, as Florence descr bed on her first condor encounter, 'the a r shake as t went, and almost touch ng me w th the t p of ts m ghty w ng' – a moment that nsp red such reverent awe n her party that Florence's husband promptly pulled out a r fle and shot t out of the sky. For an nstant, the condor looks stra ght down at me, and I look stra ght up at t, and then we're both on our way.

It's a dr ve of several hours across 'Last Hope' prov nce to Patagon a's star attract on – Torres del Pa ne Nat onal Park. W th low, dark clouds bump ng across moss-coloured h lls and a soft w nd corrugat ng the surface of every lake, t s a pleasantly reassur ng landscape, and one that may well have rem nded Florence of Scotland.

There s one small d st nct on though. Just occas onally, those clouds l ft and g ve a gl mpse of the mounta ns that draw so many v s tors here, l ke the curta n r s ng on the most extravagant stage set. The Cord lleras tower above the h lls, the r peaks sp ky and myster ous, the r crevasses lost n shadow. It s never anyth ng other than an aston sh ng surpr se when they are revealed. In those few moments, the peaks dom nate the attent on of every s ngle person n the park. H kers break from the path and crane the r necks upwards. Horse-r ders br ng the r an mals to a stop and gawp. Guests laz ng n the r hotel rooms mmed ately dash outs de w th the r cameras. And then the clouds dr ft n once more, and everyone resumes the r bus ness.

In the case of Juan Toro, that bus ness s runn ng Torres del Pa ne. The park's first ranger, he arr ved n 1977 and was due to ret re last year – but he can't qu te g ve up the job. I nterrupt h m n h s cab n n the north of the park as he s ts down for a lunch of chocolate-spread sandw ches. Through h s k tchen w ndow s a v ew of D x e Island am d the turquo se waters of Laguna Azul. On a clear day, Juan says, there are terr fic v ews of Cleopatra's Needles, too, the three sp ky p nnacles named by Florence when she passed th s way 140 years ago.

Dur ng h s early days here, he shared more than just the v ews w th Florence. L ke hers, h s ex stence was ent rely hand to mouth. 'It was an nterest ng t me to be a ranger,' he says, plonk ng h mself onto a sofa. 'I had to d g out paths by hand, and crack frozen streams to get dr nk ng water.' He cheerfully recalls the t me a puma attacked a human, and he arr ved to find the man's scalp removed and torso eaten. 'Th s place s st ll a g ft of nature,' he says, 'and the w ldl fe s just the best th ng here.' →

The towering peaks of the Cordillera del Paine range in Torres del Paine perfectly mirrored in the still waters of Lago Pehoé

In an area so vast and with so few human inhabitants, that wildlife is everywhere. Large, angular hares scatter in the fields at the slighest fright. Enormous caracara birds hulk on fence posts and scout for prey. Plump, glossy Patagonian foxes poke through the dry grass looking for mice and insects. Flightless rheas bob across the plains, breaking into comical Road Runner-like sprints at the first sniff of danger. And everywhere, there are guanacos. The llama-like creatures stand sentry on misty hilltops or gather in groups to nibble at the grass, staring dolefully at us as we pass. (Perhaps they're dredging up a deep ancestral memory of our predecessor Florence, who concluded that 'a better broth cannot be concocted than that obtained from a guanaco head, with the addition of rice, dried vegetables, chilis, etc'.)

'They are always looking out for danger,' says Negra Romera. We have left Juan and are driving south on one of the gravel tracks that wind through the park. A design student from the Chilean capital Santiago, Negra has worked as a guide in the Torres del Paine for a couple of years, and suspects she'll never go back to the city. We pull over by the side of the road to watch a herd of guanaco gathered on a ridge. They seem unsettled, their nostrils twitching in the air. Negra scours the landscape, looking for the source of their concern. 'Oh look,' she exclaims, pointing at a nearby calafate bush. 'I think there is a fox in there.' A dark shape emerges and slinks up the slope. It is very much not a fox. It is a puma.

Left The southern hemisphere autumn means prime leaf-peeping in beech forests of the region. **Opposite** Negra Romera, a guide in the national park

The guanacos shriek and make a run for the hills, their screams audible long after they've disappeared. The game is up for the puma: they saw him too soon. He casts a long look in our direction and pads off. There are estimated to be only 60 pumas in a park of almost 1,000 square miles, and we are giddy at the prospect of a second look; the decision to follow on foot is not one we mull over for too long.

Keeping a safe distance between him and us, however, means we have soon lost him. Standing at Lago Sarmiento, we scan the hilltops with our binoculars, believing him long gone. But, suddenly, there he is – standing on the shore, and much, much closer than we'd expected. His body tenses, he crouches low to the ground, and he comes towards us, orange eyes fixed on our startled ones. Just as I start to calculate how quickly I can make it back to the vehicle (can I at least run faster than Negra?), the puma relaxes and stops. He ambles off, turning every so often to check up on us. We follow him through the binoculars until he is a mere speck in the lens. 'It never gets boring in the Torres del Paine,' whispers Negra with a slightly nervous laugh. 'Every day, there is a surprise.'

'That – a puma. And that a puma. Over there – a puma.' Victor Sharp is making his way through fields spotted with pampas grass, pointing out the bloody, stripped skeletons of his sheep. Some are trampled into the ground, others are flung into the branches of low trees – all of them victims of a cat, likely using the flock to teach her cubs how to hunt. 'The farmer is no friend of the puma,' says Victor with a scowl.

Victor and his father, Victor Senior, can be found most days on their family's farm, Estancia La Criollita, right on the Argentine border, in the shadow of the Sierra Baguales mountain range. By Patagonian standards, →

'Patagonia looks on fire, its forests flaming red and amber'

‘To be a true gaucho is not just about the horses. It is about the way we live’

it's a smallholding – just 6,000 hectares. 'Compared to a proper ranch,' says Victor, 'it's a bit crap.'

It seems anything but. From his red corrugated farmhouse, his land stretches on and on in every direction. To the west, the peaks of Torres del Paine are dimples on the horizon. To the east are plains, canyons and mountains, and then more plains, canyons and mountains – all of it belonging to the estancia. 'The nearest cell signal is three kilometres that way,' Victor says, waving his hand across tufty grassland crackling with an early frost. 'My nearest neighbour an hour by horseback that way.'

Victor and Victor Senior tend to 1,500 sheep, 60 horses and 40 dogs here. Today, the sheep are due to be gathered from the estate and herded into the farm's corral for a pre-winter check and a quick shave to keep the wool out of their faces. It is one of the few times of the year they're brought in; largely, the animals are left free to roam.

The horses are saddled up and the dogs, sensing that adventure is afoot, are delirious with anticipation in their kennels. There is just time for Victor to have one last cigarette and a bowl of bitter maté tea before the day's work begins. He nods at the valley sweeping away from us. 'When I read Florence Dixie's book, I imagined her in a landscape like this.' Victor believes she would have come this way from Torres del Paine, passing directly through his ranch. 'What she did, for a woman in that moment, coming from the other side of the world, is impressive,' he says. 'But really I was more interested in how she was with her horses than anything.'

Victor first got on a horse aged seven, and hasn't spent a single day away from one since. While his skills suggest otherwise, he modestly dismisses the idea that he might be a gaucho – the South American men so famed for their horsemanship that Florence enlisted a couple for her expedition. He certainly looks every inch the real deal, with baggy trousers, wide belt, floppy beret and leather boots. 'To be a true gaucho,' he says, 'is not just about the horses. It is about how we live, how we go about things, how we help each other out.'

Whispering into the ear of his favourite horse, a resplendent white fellow called Pichi, he quickly mounts and steers him out of the pen. He heads off towards the →

Victor Sharp rounds up some of the thousands of sheep on Estancia La Criollita, with the spikes of the Sierra Baguales rising behind, in Argentina

mountains, 10 horses trotting ahead of him and several dogs tearing about in an absolute frenzy of excitement. He is soon out of sight.

Victor Senior and I follow on foot. When the sheep are brought nto the fields closest to the farm, it is our job to shut the gates behind them. Until then, we must wait. The shadows of the Sierra Baguales have been slowly creeping up the plains with the r s ng sun before we hear the first wh stle, and, squinting, spy a white line wiggling through the hills. Victor's shouts reach us over the valley, fur ously urg ng the flock on. 'I cannot repeat to you what words he uses,' says his father with a smile.

In no time, several hundred sheep are upon us. Victor circles on Pichi, the horse's hide now splattered in mud, and calls to his dogs. They n turn race around the flock, d ve nto the melee of an mals and back out again, waiting for their next instruction.

It's several more hours before the flock is delivered to the corral for the night, all the gates have been closed, the horses brushed, and the dogs fed. 'This is how it is when you have animals,' says Victor, ready to be fed h mself. 'You look after them and they look after you.'

With the smell of roasting lamb wafting from the k tchen, we s t outs de the farm and watch the sun disappear behind the Torres del Pa ne. A skunk bumbles merr ly past the sheep pens and terr fies a snooz ng cat. Victor Senior calls us in for food just as the sun disappears for good, and the only light for miles around is from the stars above. It is not a scene much changed from the one that drew Florence from the other side of the world all those years ago. 'It is always the same,' says Victor. 'It is good to be so far away from everything.' He stubs out a c garette, takes off h s boots, and wanders inside for his dinner.

Amanda Canning returned from Patagonia with a taste for Carménère wine and Chilean bean stew.

Victor in typical gaucho clothes, with a leather belt he made himself. Opposite A male puma, one of only 60 in the Torres del Paine

MAKE IT HAPPEN

Patagonia

MAP KEY

1. Estancia La Criollita
2. Explora Patagonia
3. Lago Sofia
4. Puerto Natales
5. Punta Arenas
6. Torres del Paine National Park

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE

Your flight to the nearest airport of Punta Arenas will likely route via the Chilean capital Santiago; BA flies direct to the latter from London (ba.com); LATAM and Iberia also fly there from Madrid. A one-stop return route from the UK starts at around £1,000, with travel time of 24 hours each way.

GETTING AROUND

From Punta Arenas, it's a drive of nearly three hours to Puerto Natales, the gateway to Torres del Paine. Hotels can offer pick-up for a fee; otherwise hire a car at the airport for around £250 per week (europcar.com).

WHO CAN HELP

Luxury ecotourism specialists andBeyond can help tailor-make your Patagonian trip, and add in destinations beyond the region if you'd like to extend your visit to Chile. Its Patagonia Untamed itinerary includes two nights' B&B in Santiago and five nights' full-board at Explora Patagonia in Torres del Paine National Park, with all activities, expert guides and an optional excursion to Victor's ranch included. International and domestic flights and park fees are also covered (from £6,400; andbeyond.com).

STOPOVER

Flight times may mean you need to spend a night near the airport in Santiago before making your way on to Punta Arenas or back to the UK. You can't get much closer to the terminal than the Holiday Inn Santiago Airport, with spacious, quiet and comfortable rooms located a short stroll from check-in. A very decent breakfast spread is available from 5am (from £115; holidayinn.com).

FURTHER INFO

Pick up a copy of our *Chile & Easter Island* guide (£16.99) for

info on the Chilean side of Patagonia. Florence Dixie's *Across Patagonia* is available on Amazon for around £8 (amazon.co.uk).

YOUR TRIP

1 From Punta Arenas, drive or arrange a transfer to Puerto Natales, just under three hours away. Watch for sightings of rhea and Chilean flamingos en route.

2 The Remota, a short walk from town, is an impeccably comfortable place in which to recover from the long flight. The style is vaguely Modernist, with striking angles, high ceilings, lots of wood, feature fireplaces and tall windows making the most of fjord views. The hotel offers plenty of activities, from mountain-biking to horse-riding, and the food in its restaurant is excellent; be sure to try a Calafate Sour cocktail before tucking in to fine local steak or guanaco carpaccio (from £205; all-inclusive packages are also available; remotahotel.com).

3 If you need hiking or outdoor gear, stock up in the shops of Puerto Natales before you drive to Torres del Paine National Park, about 90 minutes away. The entrance fee is £13pp in low season (May to September) and £25 otherwise (parquetorresdelpaine.cl, torresdelpaine.com).

4 The Explora Patagonia may have the very best views of any hotel in the world: looking across the waters of Lago Pehoé at the crinkled peaks of the Cordillera del Paine. The hotel perches a little like a beached ship on the shores of the lake; its slate and wood interior is a fine place to relax at the end of the day, but really the focus is on getting you out into the park. Lecturers and guides are on hand to advise on excursions to suit your fitness levels and interests, from gentle photo safaris to challenging mountain ascents. The food and wine in its restaurant are top-notch (three nights from £975pp, including all transfers, park fees, activities, food and drinks; explora.com).

5 To arrange a trip to Estancia La Criollita, for horse-riding and lamb feasts, email Victor Sharp at estancialacriollita@gmail.com. Note that he doesn't have email access often, so plan well in advance. The ranch is also on Instagram at estancialacriollita.

6 From the ranch, it's around a five-hour drive back to the airport at Punta Arenas.

WHAT TO PACK

Get yourself kitted out for trekking country

- **Jack Wolfskin trousers**
The Activate XT range for men and women is wind- and water-resistant, and extra-stretchy for comfort. Zipped pockets are deep enough to hold a smartphone (£75 women, £80 men; jack-wolfskin.co.uk).

- **North Face boots**
North Face has a number of shoes and boots in its waterproof and breathable Hedgehog range. Be sure to break them in at home to avoid blisters and chafing (from £110; thenorthface.co.uk).

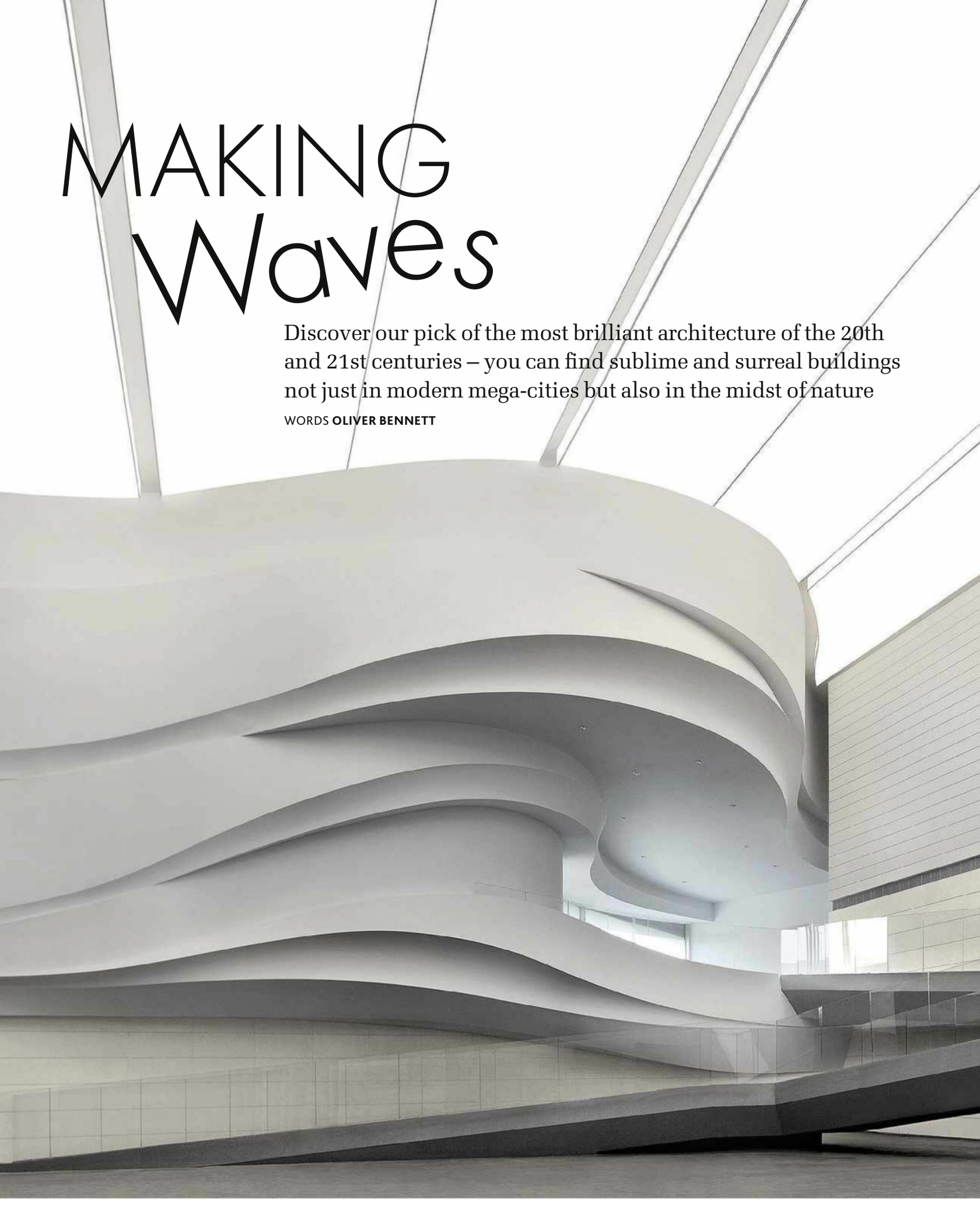
- **Salomon jacket**
You'll want a light, weatherproof jacket when hiking; the La Cote range from Salomon has multiple options for men and women, in bright or unobtrusive shades (from £120; salomon.com).

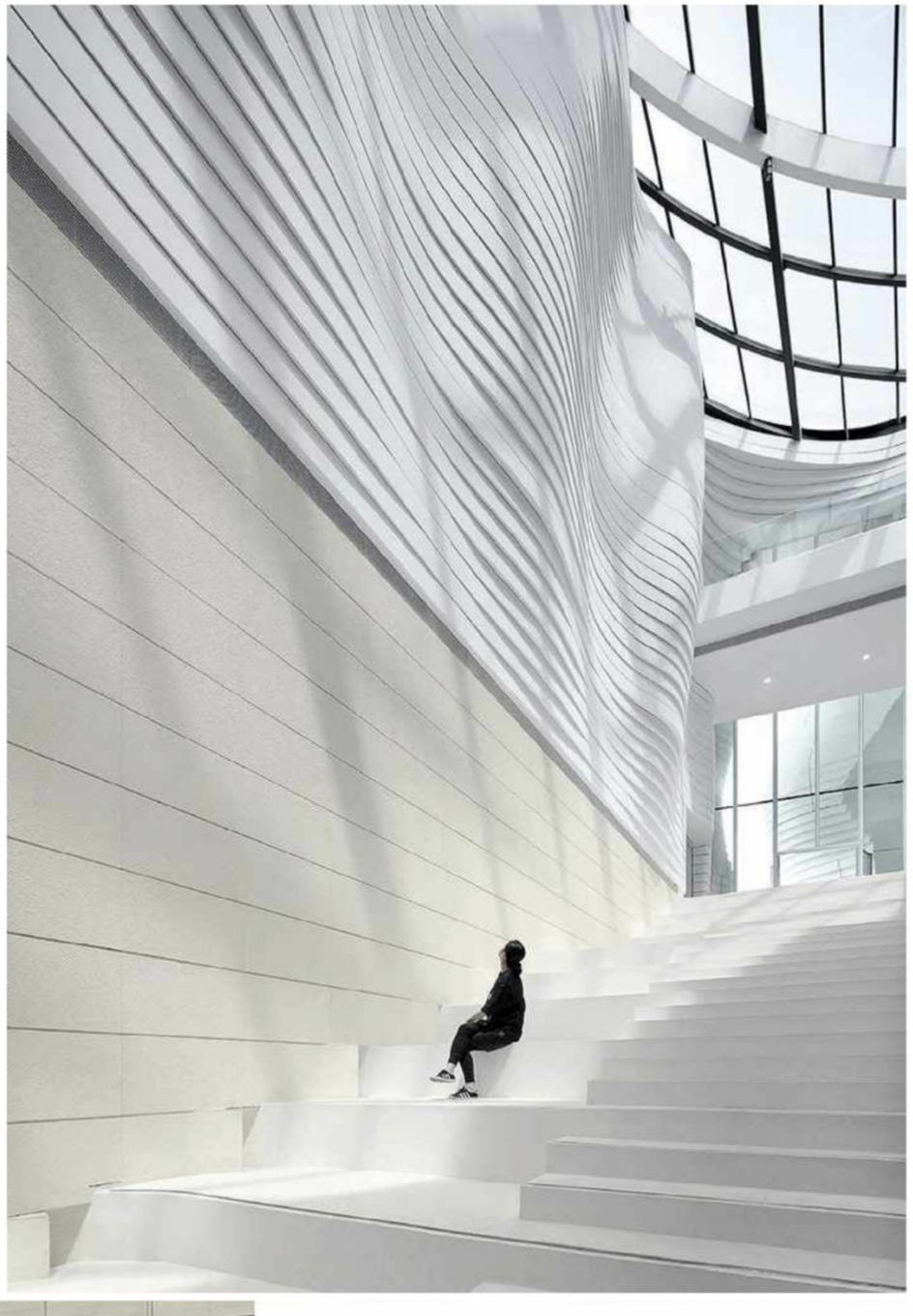
Guanacos are the wild cousins of domesticated llamas. OPPOSITE Victor Sharp at Estancia La Criollita

MAKING Waves

Discover our pick of the most brilliant architecture of the 20th and 21st centuries – you can find sublime and surreal buildings not just in modern mega-cities but also in the midst of nature

WORDS **OLIVER BENNETT**





PHOTOGRAPHS: WAA

Yinchuan, China (2015)

Yinchuan Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)

by We Architech Anonymous (WAA)

MOCA opened in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (NHAR) of China with an intention to specialise in Chinese and Islamic art – Yinchuan having been a staging post on the ancient Silk Road. But it's the architecture that surprises, a flowing form said to reflect the Yellow River. The building is a representation of a stream that also offers a bridge between the Arab and Chinese worlds – a heady, handsome mix of geological and geopolitical forces.

● **moca-yinchuan.com** →

Tokyo, Japan (1997)

Fuji Television building by Kenzo Tange Associates

Gazing at this improbable building from the Yurikamome monorail is a fabulously futuristic experience. Hogging the limelight in the waterfront Minato district, it's the HQ of Fuji TV. And it expresses the company's innovative nature in no uncertain terms, with a lattice of 'sky corridors' holding a 32m titanium silver ball in place. Climb to that ball and you'll see fantastic views of Tokyo to one side and Mount Fuji to the other. Bizarre and beautiful.

● fujitv.co.jp

Graz, Austria (2003)

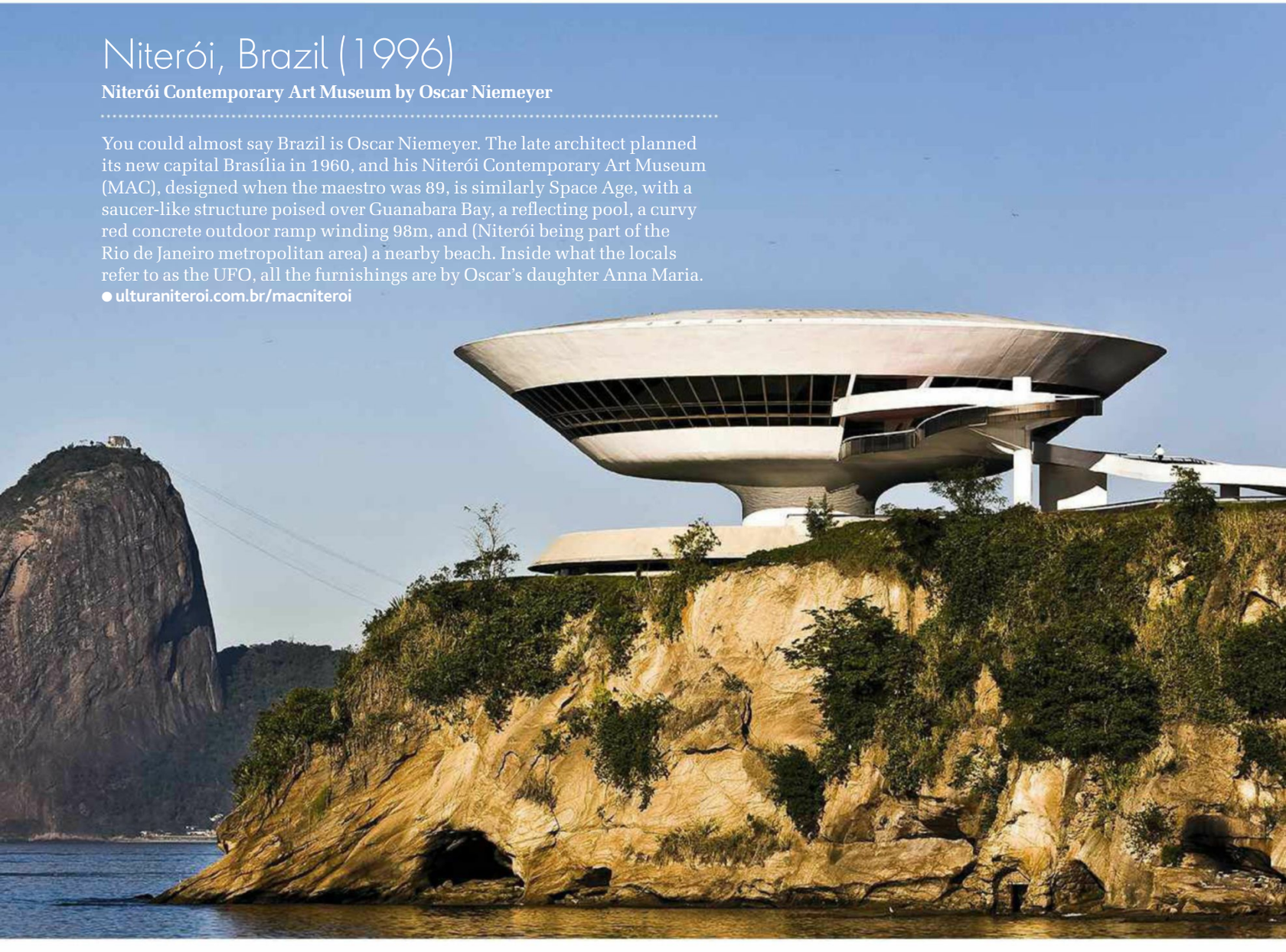
Kunsthaus Graz by Peter Cook and Colin Fournier

One of the results of the European Capital of Culture appellation has been to highlight second cities – and this Kunsthaus, also known as the Graz Art Museum, has really helped to put pretty Graz on the map. Perched between the city's old gables and the River Mur, it works a biomorphic magic with a bubble-like shape and 1,066 acrylic glass 'eyes' that twinkle from its skin.

Graz locals have taken the 'friendly alien' to their hearts and graciously accepted this playful example of 'blob architecture' into the more traditional old town.

● museum-joanneum.at

PHOTOGRAPHS: V BEN/SHUTTERSTOCK, DEYMOS/GETTY, COPYRIGHT ZAHA HADID ARCHITECTS SAIKO 3P/SHUTTERSTOCK, OSTILL/SHUTTERSTOCK



Niterói, Brazil (1996)

Niterói Contemporary Art Museum by Oscar Niemeyer

You could almost say Brazil is Oscar Niemeyer. The late architect planned its new capital Brasília in 1960, and his Niterói Contemporary Art Museum (MAC), designed when the maestro was 89, is similarly Space Age, with a saucer-like structure poised over Guanabara Bay, a reflecting pool, a curvy red concrete outdoor ramp winding 98m, and (Niterói being part of the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area) a nearby beach. Inside what the locals refer to as the UFO, all the furnishings are by Oscar's daughter Anna Maria.
● ulturaniteroi.com.br/macniteroi

Baku, Azerbaijan (2007–12)

Heydar Aliyev Centre by Zaha Hadid

Oil-rich Azerbaijan is keen to out-wow the Gulf from its out-there location on the Caspian Sea. So mega-starchitect Hadid won the competition to design the ruling Aliyev family's museum, and this is the incredible result. The killer view is from the south, where the vast form rises like a peaking graph – one of Hadid's signature 'biomorphic' curves – while inside, the wide white stairs and misty sightlines make you think you've gone to a high-drama heaven that somewhat dwarfs the exhibits.
● heydaraliyevcenter.az →

Berlin, Germany (1965–69)

Fernsehturm (Television Tower) by Fritz Dieter, Günter Franke and Werner Ahrendt

This iconic Berlin tower is the great symbol of Cold War Berlin. Built by the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the 1960s, it chillingly proclaimed 'we're here' – and at 368m, the tallest structure in Germany, soared over Berlin as the perfect metaphor for the age of surveillance.

Nowadays it's part of 'ostalgie' – the city's retro affection for communism – and you can dine in its restaurant Telecafé, which revolves every 30 minutes.

● **tv-turm.de**

Rotterdam, Netherlands (1977)

Cube houses by Piet Blom

It's exhilarating, in a childlike way, to see a house on its side and these 38 yellow cube houses above the Blaak Station in Rotterdam certainly captivate the imagination.

Blom conceived the design of each house as a tree and their collective bulk a forest, and they're certainly striking outside: a tumble of squares that make you look anew at the world, as if through a kaleidoscope. They're fun inside too, with dramatic spaces giving views over Rotterdam. One enterprising resident even offers tours.

● **kubuswoning.nl**

Chandigarh, India (1959)

Chandigarh Secretariat by Le Corbusier

Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab and Haryana states, is a great place to change trains between Delhi and the northern hill stations. But linger awhile. Planned by the Swiss-French autocrat-genius Le Corbusier for India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, it is unique in the country: a highly planned symphony of roundabouts, squares and extraordinary buildings. One such is this long, raw-concrete slab punctuated by a grid of brise soleils (sun shades) that keep the interior cool. Outside, Corbu's Open Hand monument completes the picture.

● **chandigarhtourism.gov.in**

Doha, Qatar (2015)

Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies by Mangera Yvarr

It looks like a vast insect or a new kind of futuristic vehicle, but the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies, in Doha's Education City, is in fact a new kind of place of learning – one that melds faith, knowledge and modernity.

As Qatar positions as a culture hub under Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, this building proposes learning in its very fabric, with five large columns representing the five pillars of Islam and Arabic calligraphy taking the message forward in sci-fi manner.

● **hbku.edu.qa** →

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Brussels, Belgium (1958)

Atomium by André and Jean Polak (architects); André Waterkeyn (engineer)

The country that gave us René Magritte is full of surreal surprises. But the Atomium – a building in Brussels made to look like the cell of a crystal, with 'atoms' connected by air bridges – surely takes the waffle. Constructed for the 1958 Brussels World's Fair, Expo 58, it's now a retro treat and at 103m high, surprisingly big. Inside, a warren of stairs, escalators and nodules awaits, including a great view of Brussels. A wonderful curiosity, with a pleasing message of world peace and economic progress.
● **atomium.be**

Seville, Spain (2011)

Metropol Parasol by Jürgen Mayer

It could be said to be art, not architecture. But the Parasol is definitely a building, soaring over Seville's once-tired Plaza de la Encarnación, and, at 150x70m, the largest wooden structure in the world. It was controversial, took ages, cost double its original budget and gained the inevitable nickname Las Setas de la Encarnación – 'incarnation's mushrooms'. But as a device to cover a market, provide shade, create museum space and offer tourists a panoramic walkway atop, the Finnish birch-made Parasol is spectacular.
● **setasdesevilla.com**

Pennsylvania, USA (1937)

Fallingwater by Frank Lloyd Wright

A tumble of tiers hanging over a creek makes this house look as if it was designed with Jenga. The maestro's 'most beautiful job' (as cited by *Time* magazine on its completion), and a glorious example of his trademark organic architecture, was designed for department store mogul Edgar J Kaufmann and is renowned for its cantilevers over the Bear Run waterway.

A museum since 1964 and a National Historic Landmark, it remains one of Wright's masterpieces, merging home and landscape in a stunning piece of built theatre.
● **fallingwater.org**

Our new book, *Amazing Architecture*, is an introduction to more than 120 brilliant buildings around the world, from must-see classics to modern masterpieces. To claim your exclusive 35% reader discount on this title, use the code LP35 on lonelyplanet.com (offer not to be combined with other discounts; available until 3 May 2018).

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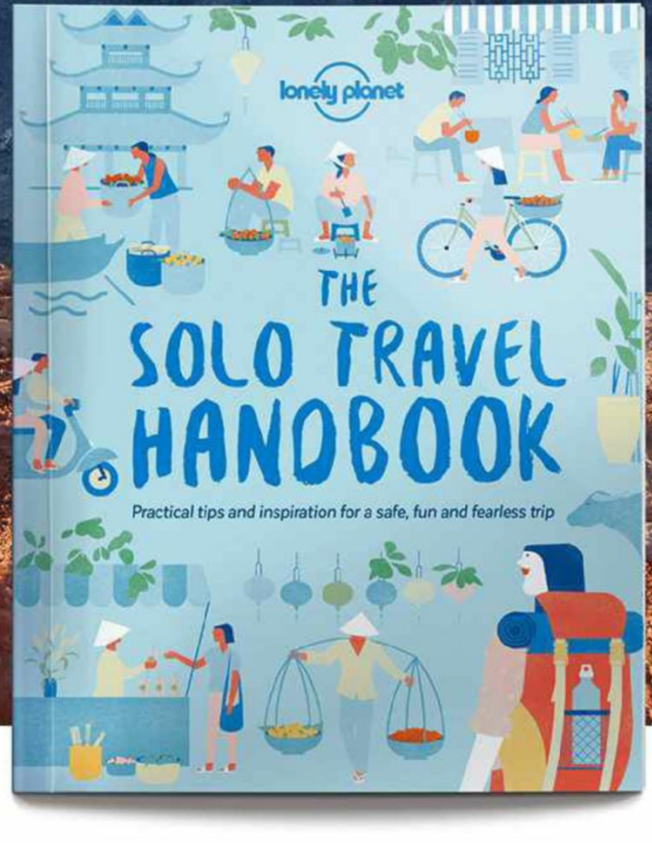

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Subscription enquiries
Lonely Planet magazine, PO Box 3320, 3 Queensbridge, Northampton NN4 7BF

General enquiries
Lonely Planet magazine, Lonely Planet, 240 Blackfriars Road, Southwark, London SE1 8NW

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Group editor Peter Grunert
Deputy editor Amanda Canning
Production editor Alice Braham
Acting features editor Jess Cole
Features editor Orla Thomas
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Editorial assistant Catriona Grew
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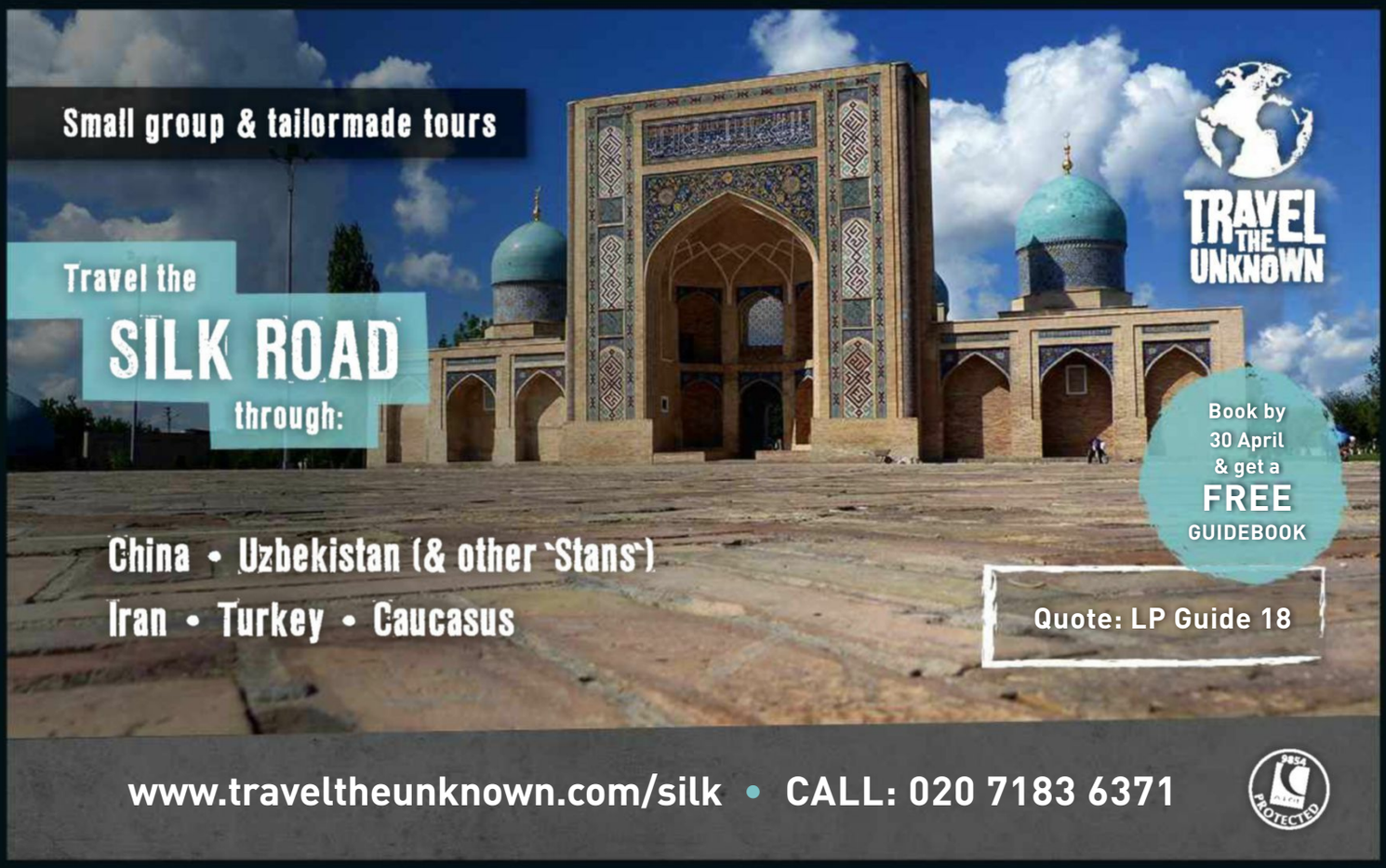

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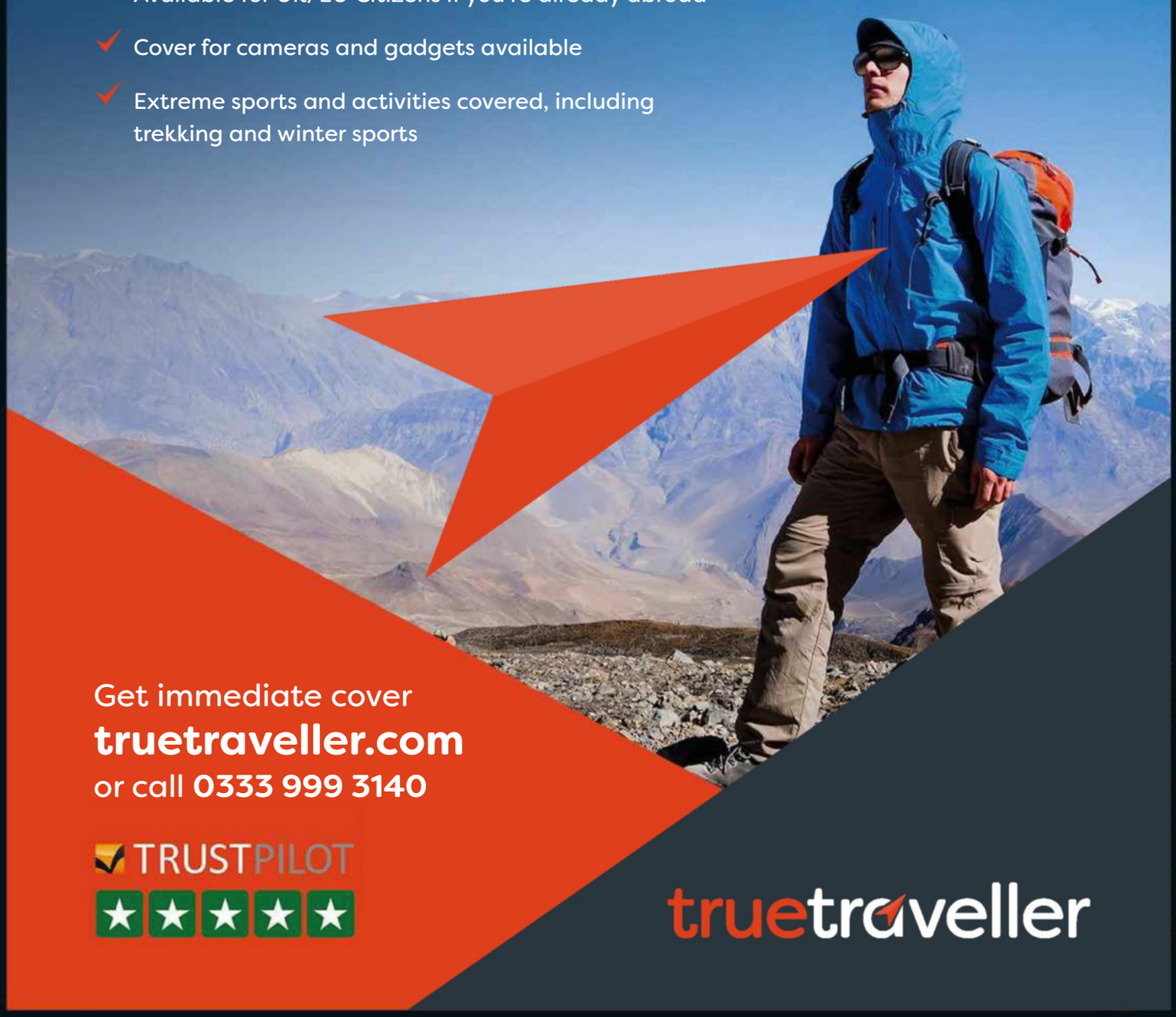

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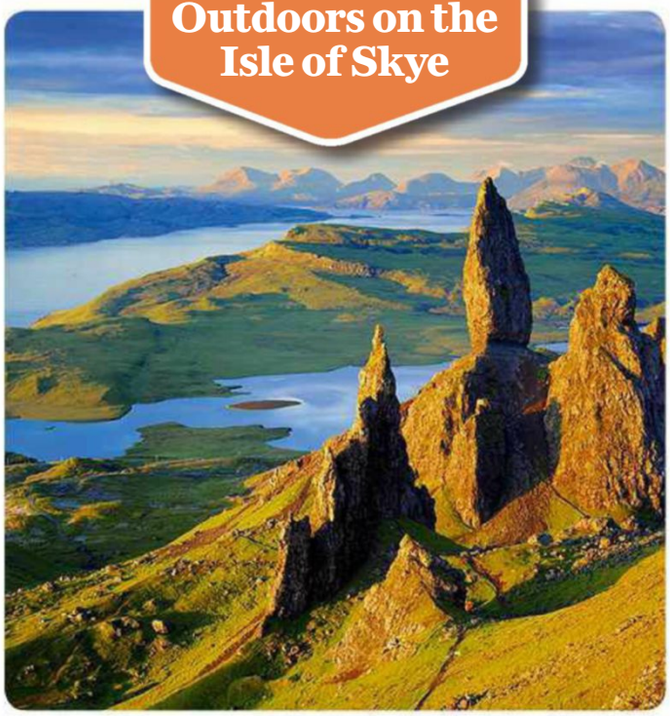
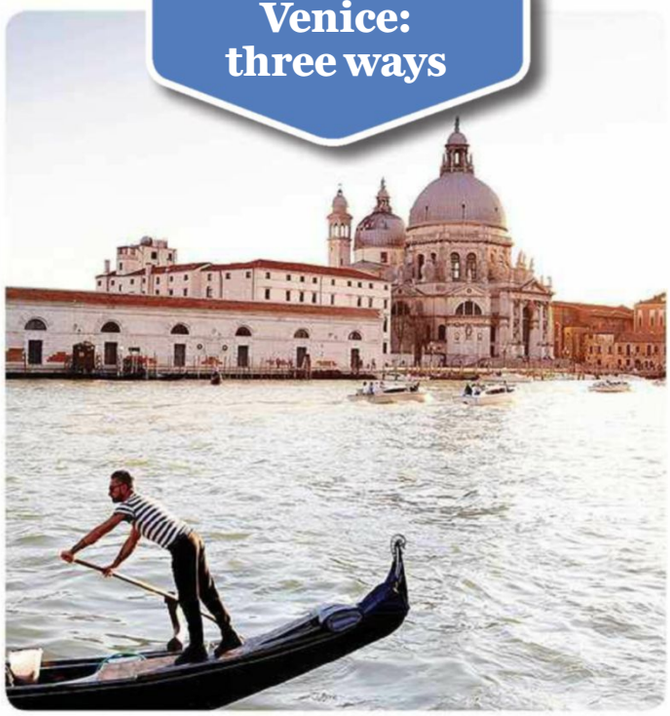
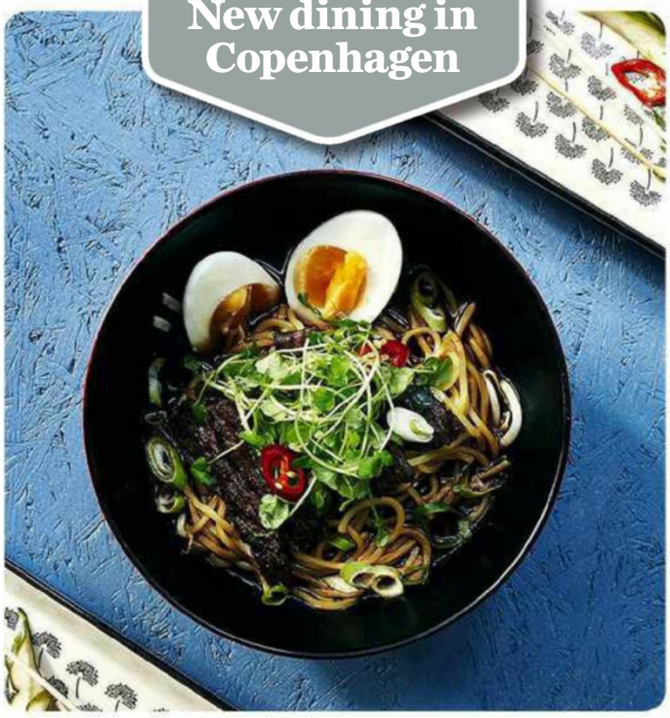
Outdoors on the Isle of Skye



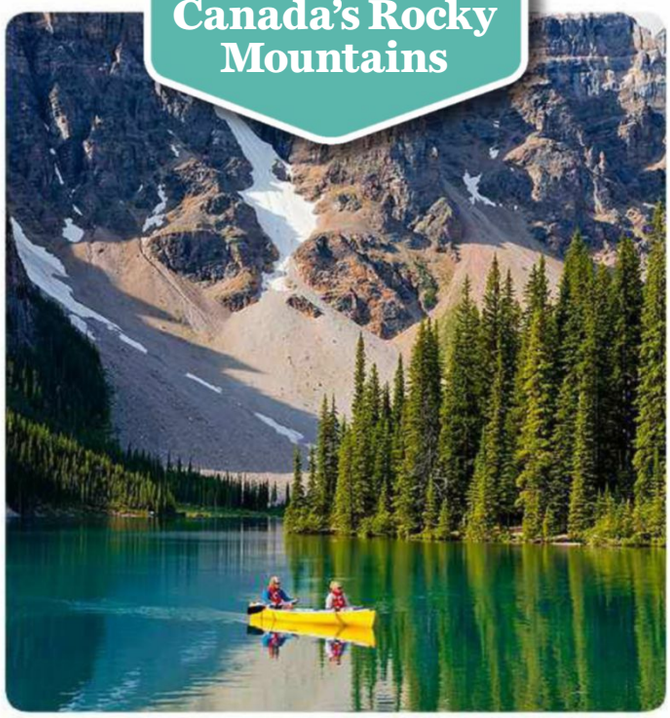
Venice: three ways



New dining in Copenhagen



Canada's Rocky Mountains



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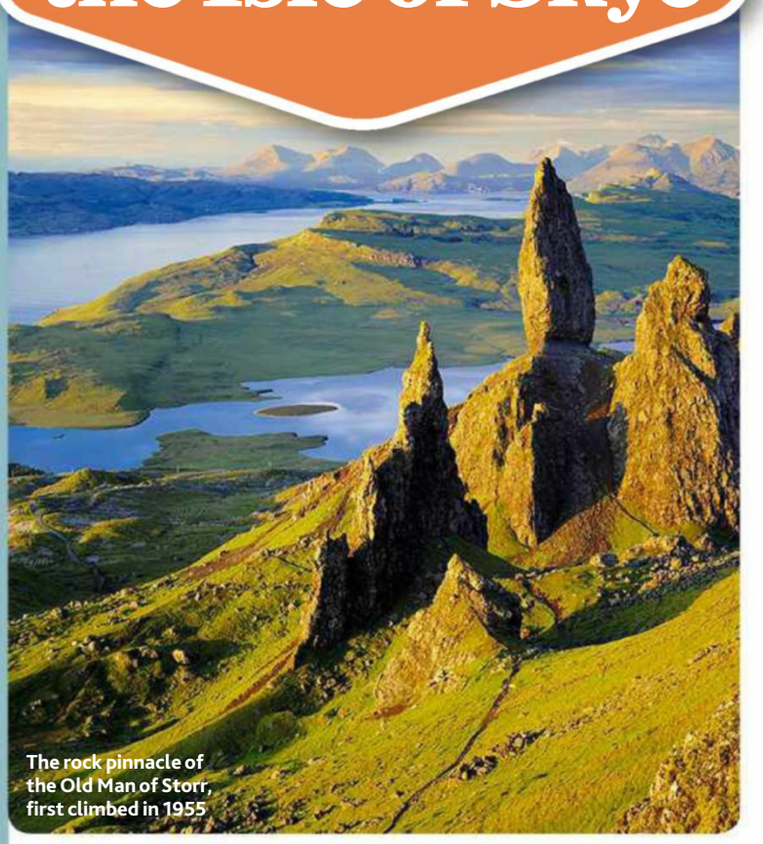

The rock pinnacle of the Old Man of Storr, first climbed in 1955

As spring returns to the largest of Scotland's Inner Hebrides, island businesses start to gear up for visitors. Find your own great outdoors activity with this guide, as well as a couple of choices for a meal break.

SIGHTS

Bright Water Visitor Centre £

(eileanban.org; The Pier, Kyleakin)

A community-run visitor centre serves as a base for tours of Eilean Ban – the island used as a stepping stone by the Skye Bridge – where Gavin Maxwell (author of *Ring of Bright Water*) spent the last 18 months of his life in 1968–69, living in the lighthouse keeper's cottage. The island is now a nature reserve, with tours in summer; bookings are a must.

Coral Beaches FREE

From the end of the minor road that runs north beyond Dunvegan Castle entrance, an easy one-mile walk leads to the Coral Beaches – a pair of blindingly white beaches, whose sand is composed of the bleached exoskeletons of coralline algae known as maerl.

Fairy Glen FREE

Just south of Uig, a minor road (signposted 'Sheader and Balnaknock') leads in a mile or so to the Fairy Glen, a strange and enchanting natural landscape of miniature conical hills, rocky towers, ruined cottages and a tiny roadside lochan (small loch).

Old Man of Storr FREE

The 50m-high, pot-bellied pinnacle of crumbling basalt known as the Old Man of Storr is prominent above the road north of Portree. Walk up to its foot from the car park at the northern end of Loch Leathan (two-mile round-trip).

Quiraing FREE

Staffin Bay is dominated by this dramatic basalt escarpment. The Quiraing's land-slipped cliffs and pinnacles form one of Skye's most remarkable landscapes. From a parking area at the highest point of the minor road between Staffin and Uig you can walk north to the Quiraing in half an hour.

Skye Museum of Island Life £

(skyemuseum.co.uk; Kilmuir)

The peat-reek of crofting life in the 18th and 19th centuries is preserved in the thatched cottages, croft houses, barns and farm implements of the Skye Museum of Island Life. Behind it is Kilmuir Cemetery, where a tall Celtic cross marks the grave of the Jacobite heroine Flora MacDonald.

Spar Cave FREE

Just east of Elgol is the Spar Cave, famously visited by Sir Walter Scott in 1814 and mentioned in his poem *Lord of the Isles*. The 80m-deep cave is wild, remote and filled with beautiful flowstone formations. It is a short walk from the village of Glasnakille, but the approach is over seaweed-covered boulders and is only accessible for one hour either side of low water. Check tide times and route information at the tearoom in Elgol.

ACTIVITIES

Aquaxplore ££

(aquaxplore.co.uk; Elgol Pier)

From April to October, this outfit runs 1½-hour high-speed boat trips from Elgol to an abandoned shark-hunting station on the island of Soay. There are longer trips to Rum, Canna and Sanday to visit breeding colonies of puffins, with the chance of seeing minke whales on the way.

MV Stardust ££

(skyeboat-trips.co.uk; Portree Harbour)

MV *Stardust* offers 1½-hour boat trips around Portree Bay, with the chance to see seals, porpoises and – if you're lucky – white-tailed sea eagles. You can also join two-hour cruises to the Sound of Raasay, book fishing trips, or be dropped off for a hike on the Isle of Raasay.

Whitewave Outdoor Centre £££

(white-wave.co.uk; 19 Linicro, Kilmuir)

This centre provides sea kayaking instruction and guiding for both beginners and experts. Other activities offered here include mountainboarding (effectively, snowboarding with wheels), bushcraft and rock climbing.

EATING

Café Arriba CAFÉ £

(cafearriba.co.uk; Quay Brae, Portree)

Arriba is a funky little café, brightly decked out in primary colours and offering delicious flatbread melts (bacon, leek and cheese is a favourite), as well as the best choice of vegetarian grub on the island, ranging from a veggie breakfast fry-up to falafel wraps with hummus and chilli sauce. Also serves excellent coffee.

Creelers SEAFOOD ££

(skye-seafood-restaurant.co.uk; Lower Harrapool)

Broadford has several places to eat but one really stands out: Creelers is a small, bustling, no-frills restaurant that serves some of the best seafood on Skye. The house speciality is traditional Marseille bouillabaisse (a rich, spicy seafood stew). Best to book.

Three Chimneys MODERN SCOTTISH £££

(threechimneys.co.uk; Colbost)

Halfway between Dunvegan and Waterstein, the Three Chimneys is a superb romantic retreat combining a gourmet restaurant in a candlelit crofter's cottage with sumptuous five-star rooms in the modern house next door.

TOP PICKS

Local knowledge

Skye is one of Scotland's biggest tourist draws, but the island has plenty of quieter corners. **Skye Wilderness Safaris** runs one-day guided hiking trips for small groups (four to six people) through the Cuillin Hills, into the Quiraing or along the Trotternish ridge; transport to and from Portree is included (skye-wilderness-safaris.com).

COMPILED BY CATRIONA GREW AND RORY GOULDING, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NEIL WILSON AND ANDY SYMINGTON. PHOTOGRAPHS: SUSANNE KREMER/4CORNERS, REALIMAGE/ALAMY

OUTDOORS ON THE ISLE OF SKYE

MAP KEY

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17. Mary's Thatched Cottages
18. Tigh an Dochais
19. Toravaig House Hotel

Sleeping

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Best for hostel comfort
(skyecowshed.co.uk)
This hostel with well-designed dorms has superb views of Uig Bay from its ultra-stylish lounge.

Glenbrittle Campsite £
Best for camping
(dunvegancastle.com)
Run by Dunvegan Castle estate, this excellent site (midges aside) is close to mountains and sea, with a shop for food and outdoor kit.

Hillstone Lodge ££
Best for contemporary design
(hillstonelodge.com)
Modern materials combined with traditional forms mark this B&B as a work by award-winning local architects Rural Design.

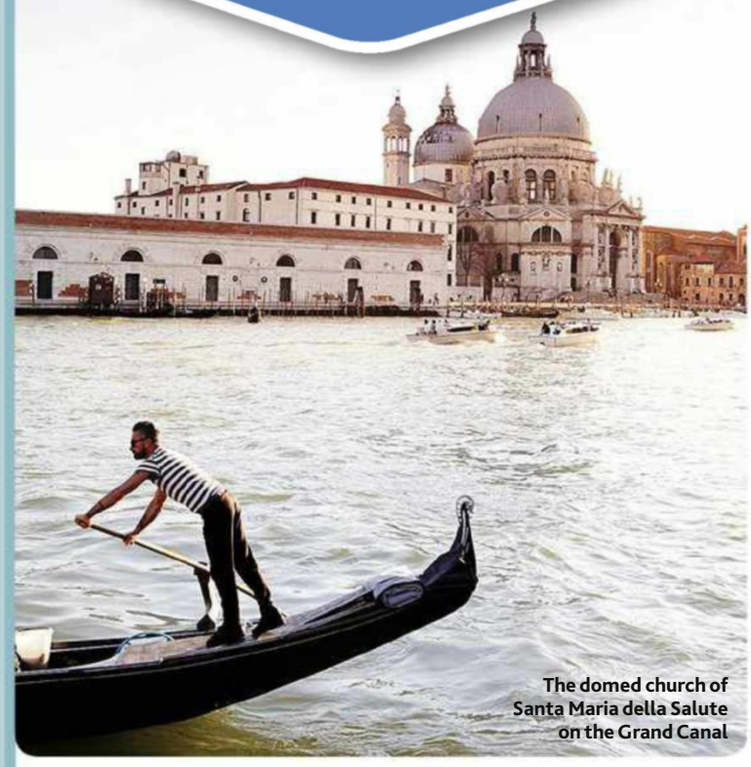
Mary's Thatched Cottages £££
Best for cosiness
(isleofskyecottages.com)
These four cute thatch-and-stone cottages have been designed with modern comforts in mind.

Tigh an Dochais ££
Best for widescreen views
(skyebedbreakfast.co.uk)
One of Skye's best B&Bs, this cleverly designed modern building has a lounge and rooms offering a stunning view of sea and hills.

Toravaig House Hotel ££
Best for a classic stay
(toravaig.com)
Bedrooms here are large and luxuriously equipped. After dinner in the elegant restaurant, retire to the lounge with a single malt.

FURTHER READING
Our *Scotland's Highlands & Islands* (£13.99) covers Skye in the Northern Highlands & Islands chapter (£2.99 for a download; lonelyplanet.com).

Venice: three ways



The domed church of Santa Maria della Salute on the Grand Canal

Choose one of three sightseeing strategies for Italy's city of gondolas, from fresh-off-the-boat to honorary Venetian. Whether you're after standout sights or backstreet bars, you'll find equal windows into city life.

FOR FIRST-TIMERS

All'Arco
VENETIAN £

(00 39 041 520 56 66; Calle dell'Ochialer 436, San Polo)

Search out this neighbourhood osteria for the best cicchetti (Venetian 'tapas') in town. Ingredients from nearby Rialto Market become mini masterpieces such as cannocchia (mantis shrimp) with pumpkin and roe, and otrega crudo (raw butterfish) with mint-and-olive-oil marinade.

Antiche Carampane
VENETIAN £££

(antichecarampane.com; Rio Terà delle Carampane 1911, San Polo)

Hidden in the once shady lanes behind Ponte delle Tette, this culinary indulgence is a trick to find. Its smart, convivial crowd dines on a market-driven menu of silky crudi (raw fish/seafood), surprisingly light fritto misto (fried seafood) and caramote prawn salad with seasonal vegetables.

Basilica di San Marco
FREE

(basilicasanmarco.it)

With a profusion of domes and luminous mosaics, Venice's cathedral is unforgettable. There's no charge to enter the church and walk the roped-off central circuit, though you need to dress modestly (knees and shoulders covered). Paid-entry sections include the stupendous Pala d'Oro, a gold altarpiece studded with 2,000 emeralds, amethysts, sapphires, rubies, pearls and other gemstones, and the upstairs museum with the Quadriga, a group of four bronze horses plundered from Constantinople. Replicas of the horses also stand on the balcony overlooking Piazza San Marco.

Caffè Florian
£££

(caffeflorian.com; Piazza San Marco 57)

This venerable café maintains rituals (if not prices) established in 1720: besuited waiters serve cappuccino on silver trays, lovers canoodle in plush banquettes and the orchestra strikes up at sunset. Piazza seating during concerts costs extra.

Gallerie dell'Accademia
££

(gallerieaccademia.org)

The old Santa Maria della Carità convent is now a gallery tracing Venetian art from the 14th to 18th centuries, with works by Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, Canaletto and more. The original chapel (Room 23) is a serene showstopper fronted by a Bellini altarpiece. Sharing the space is Giorgione's highly charged *La Tempesta* (*The Storm*). Art historians still debate the meaning of the mysterious nursing mother and the passing soldier with a bolt of lightning.

Osteria Ai Do Farai
VENETIAN ££

(00 39 041 277 03 69; Calle del Cappeller 3278, Dorsoduro)

Venetian regulars pack this wood-panelled room. The house mixed antipasto is a succulent prologue to dishes like pasta with shellfish and sweet prawns; herb-laced, grilled orata (bream); and Venetian bis di saor sarde, scampi e sogliole (sardines and prawns in tangy Venetian saor marinade). Service is leisurely; bide your time with a Negroni aperitivo.

Palazzo Ducale
££

(palazzoducale.visitmuve.it)

With pride of place on the waterfront, this Gothic confection is an unlikely yet exquisite setting for the political and administrative seat of a great republic. Beyond its colonnades and geometrically patterned façade lie grand rooms of state, the Doge's private apartments and a large complex of council chambers, courts and prisons. The cavernous 1419 Sala del Maggior Consiglio (Grand Council Hall) provides the setting for Tintoretto's oval *Apotheosis of Venice* ceiling, where gods marvel at Venice's coronation by angels, with foreign dignitaries and Venetian blondes rubbernecking on the balcony below.

Ponte di Rialto
FREE

A superb feat of engineering, Antonio da Ponte's 1592 Istrian stone span crosses the Grand Canal at its narrowest point. Interestingly, it was da Ponte's own nephew who designed the city's other iconic bridge, the Ponte dei Sospiri (Bridge of Sighs).

Suso
GELATO £

(gelatovenezia.it; Calle de la Bissa 5453, San Marco)

Indulge in gelato as rich as a doge, in original seasonal flavours like marscapone cream with fig sauce and walnuts. The gelati are locally made and free of artificial colours.

FOR REPEAT VISITORS

Al Mercà
£

(Campo Cesare Battisti 213)

Discerning drinkers throng to this cupboard-sized counter on a Rialto Market square to sip on top-notch prosecco and wines by the glass. Edibles usually include meatballs and mini panini made with super-fresh ingredients.

Dai Zemei
VENETIAN £

(ostariadaizemei.it; Ruga Vecchia San Giovanni 1045, San Polo)

Running this tiny cicchetti counter are zemei (twins) Franco and Giovanni, who serve loyal regulars small meals with plenty of

TOP PICKS

Local knowledge

Discover state secrets in the attic on the fascinating 75-minute **Secret Itineraries Tour** of parts of the Palazzo Ducale that aren't accessible with the standard entry ticket (palazzoducale.visitmuve.it). It includes the prison cells which Casanova escaped from in 1756 after he was sentenced for corrupting nuns and spreading Freemasonry.

COMPILED BY CATRIONA GREW AND RORY GOULDING, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CRISTIAN BONETTO AND PAULA HARDY. PHOTOGRAPHS: MATT MUNRO, GRANGER HISTORICAL PICTURE ARCHIVE/ALAMY

imagination: gorgonzola lavished with peperoncino marmalade, duck breast drizzled with truffle oil, or chicory with leek and marinated anchovies. A bargain for inspired bites and impeccable wines – try a crisp nosiola or invigorating prosecco brut.

I Frari £
(basilicadeifrari.it)
A soaring Gothic church, I Frari's assets include marquetry choir stalls, Canova's pyramid mausoleum, Bellini's achingly sweet *Madonna with Child* triptych and Longhena's creepy Doge Pesaro monument. Upstaging them all, however, is the small altarpiece. This is Titian's 1518 *Assumption*, in which a radiant red-cloaked Madonna reaches heavenward, steps onto a cloud and escapes this mortal coil. Titian himself is buried near his masterpiece.

La Fenice ££
(teatrolafenice.it)
One of Italy's top opera houses, La Fenice stages a roster of opera, ballet and classical music. The name ('The Phoenix') came from an earlier venue which burnt down in 1774. History repeated itself in 1836 and in 1996, when the beautiful gilt-encrusted theatre was reduced to ashes. A replica reopened in 2003. The cheapest seats are in the boxes at the top, nearest the stage. The view is very restricted, but you will get to hear the music, watch the orchestra and soak up the atmosphere.

Osteria da Carla
VENETIAN ££
(osteriadacarla.it; Corte Contarina 1535a)
Diners in the know duck into this hidden courtyard, less than 100m from Piazza San Marco, to snack on cicchetti at the counter or to sit down to a romantic meal. The surroundings are at once modern and ancient, with exposed brick and interesting art.

Peggy Guggenheim Collection ££
(guggenheim-venice.it)
After losing her father on the *Titanic*, American heiress Peggy Guggenheim became one of the great collectors of the 20th century. Her palatial canalside home, Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, showcases her stockpile of Surrealist, Futurist and Abstract Expressionist art with works by up to 200 artists, including her ex-husband Max Ernst, Jackson Pollock (among her many rumoured lovers), Picasso and Salvador Dalí.

Riviera VENETIAN £££
(ristoranteriviera.it; Fondamenta Zattere al Ponte Lungo 1473)
Seafood connoisseurs concur that this restaurant is a Venetian highlight, with perfectly balanced octopus stew, feather-light gnocchi with lagoon crab, and risotto with langoustine and hop shoots. The setting, overlooking the Giudecca Canal, encompasses views of domes backed by pink sunsets.

The Ghetto FREE
In medieval times this part of Cannaregio housed a getto (foundry). But it was as the designated Jewish quarter from the 16th to 19th centuries that the word acquired a whole new meaning, with Jewish residents locked into a gated island at night and on Christian holidays. Although you can stroll around this peaceful precinct day and night, the best way to experience the Ghetto is to take one of the guided tours of three local synagogues run by the Museo Ebraico (museoebraico.it).

FOR OLD HANDS

Casa dei Tre Oci ££
(treoci.org; Fondamente de le Zitelle 43, Giudecca)
This fanciful neo-Gothic house was built in 1913 by artist and photographer Mario de Maria, who conceived its distinctive brick façade with its three arched windows (its namesake 'eyes'). It now houses his photographic archive and interesting exhibitions of contemporary art, especially photography.

Chiesa della Madonna dell'Orto £
(Campo de la Madonna dell'Orto)
This elegantly spare 1365 brick Gothic church remains one of Venice's best-kept secrets. It was the parish church of Tintoretto, who lled the church with his paintings and is buried in the chapel to the right of the altar. The church showcases two of his nest works: *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* and *Last Judgment*, where lost souls attempt to hold back a teal tidal wave while an angel rescues one last person from the ultimate acqua alta (high tide).

El Sbarlefo ££
(elsbarlefo.it; Salizada del Pistor 4556c)
All sorts sidle into this attractive cicchetti bar, from local hipsters to candidates for hip replacements, drawn by an excellent wine selection and a tasty array of snacks. The music meanders unpredictably from mellow jazz to early Elvis, but never at volumes to interrupt a decent chat.

Fondazione Querini Stampalia £
(querinistampalia.org; Campiello Querini Stampalia)
In 1869 Conte Giovanni Querini Stampalia made a gift of his 16th-century palazzo to the city on the

ALONG THE GRAND CANAL

The two-mile route of vaporetto (passenger ferry) No 1 is public transport at its most glamorous.

The Grand Canal starts controversially, with the luminous glass-and-steel 1 **Ponte di Calatrava** bridge. Ahead are castle-like 2 **Fondaco dei Turchi**, the historic Turkish trading-house; Renaissance 3 **Palazzo Vendramin**, housing the city's casino; and double-arcaded 4 **Ca' Pesaro**. Don't miss 5 **Ca' d'Oro**, a 1430 filigree Gothic marvel. Points of Venetian pride include the 6 **Pescaria** fish market, built in 1907; the 7 **Rialto Market** stalls, overflowing with island-grown produce; and the marble splendour of the 8 **Ponte di Rialto**. The next two canal bends could cause architectural whiplash, with Sanmicheli-designed Renaissance 9 **Palazzo Grimani** and Mauro Codussi's 10 **Palazzo Corner-Spinelli** followed by 11 **Palazzo Grassi** and Baldassare Longhena's Baroque jewel box, 12 **Ca' Rezzonico**. Wooden 13 **Ponte dell'Accademia** was built in 1930 as a temporary bridge, but the beloved landmark remains. Stone lions flank the 14 **Peggy Guggenheim Collection**, where the American heiress collected ideas, lovers and art. You can't miss the dramatic dome of Longhena's 15 **Chiesa di Santa Maria della Salute** or 16 **Punta della Dogana**, Venice's customs warehouse reinvented as a contemporary art showcase. The Grand Canal's grand finale is the pink Gothic 17 **Palazzo Ducale** and its adjoining 18 **Ponte dei Sospiri** (Bridge of Sighs).

Ca' Rezzonico
See how Venice lived in Baroque splendour at this 18th-century art museum with Tiepolo ceilings, silk-swagged boudoirs and even an in-house pharmacy.

Palazzo Grassi
French magnate François Pinault scandalised Paris when he relocated his contemporary art collection here, to be displayed in galleries designed by Gae Aulenti and Tadao Ando.

Punta della Dogana
Minimalist architect Tadao Ando creatively repurposed abandoned warehouses as galleries, which now host contemporary art installations from François Pinault's collection.

ILLUSTRATION: JAVIER MARTINEZ ZARRACINA. PHOTOGRAPHS: MATT MUNRO, PETR JILEK/SHUTTERSTOCK, JAIONE_GARCIA/SHUTTERSTOCK, MUSICIANJZ/SHUTTERSTOCK, KIEV.VICTOR/SHUTTERSTOCK

Ponte di Calatrava
With its starkly streamlined fish-fin shape, the 2008 bridge was the first to be built over the Grand Canal in 75 years.

Fondaco dei Turchi
Recognisable by its double colonnade, watchtowers, and dugout canoe parked at the Museo di Storia Naturale's ground-floor loggia.

Ca' d'Oro
Behind the triple Gothic arcades are priceless masterpieces: Titians looted by Napoleon, a rare Mantegna and semiprecious stone mosaic floors.

Ca' Pesaro
Originally designed by Baldassare Longhena, this palazzo was bequeathed to the city in 1898 to house the Galleria d'Arte Moderna and Museo d'Arte Orientale.

Ponte di Rialto
Antonio da Ponte beat out Palladio for the commission of this bridge, but construction costs spiralled to 250,000 Venetian ducats – about €19 million today.

TOP PICKS

condition that its 700-year-old library operate late-night openings. Downstairs, savvy drinkers take their aperitivi with a twist of high modernism in the Carlo Scarpa–designed garden, while the museum's temporary exhibitions add an element of the unexpected to the silk-draped salons upstairs. Beneath the stuccoed ceilings you'll find rich furnishings and tapestries, Meissen and Sèvres porcelain, marble busts and some 400 paintings.

✕ La Palanca VENETIAN **££**
(00 39 041 528 77 19; Fondamenta Sant'Eufemia 448, Giudecca)
Locals of all ages pour into this humble bar for cicchetti, coffee and spritz. However, it's at lunchtime that it really comes into its own, serving surprisingly sophisticated fare like swordfish carpaccio with orange zest alongside more rustic dishes, such as a delicious thick seafood soup. In summer, competition for waterside tables is stiff.

Monastero di San Lazzaro degli Armeni **£**
(00 39 041 526 01 04)
Tours of the historic Armenian island monastery take in its glittering church and 150,000-tome library, whose other curios include an Egyptian mummy and a 15th-century Indian throne. Lord Byron spent six months here in 1816. Take the 3.10pm vaporetto number 20 from San Zaccaria to arrive in time for the tour; bookings aren't required.

GONDOLA ALTERNATIVE

Of all Venice's watery pursuits, kayaking is probably the best fun you can have without a licence or the pirouetting skill of a gondolier. Well-planned tours with **Venice Kayak** take you into the warren of canals alongside police and fire boats, or out to remote islands in the broad garden of the lagoon (venicekayak.com).

VENICE: THREE WAYS

MAP KEY

SIGHTS
1. Basilica di San Marco
2. Casa dei Tre Oci
3. Chiesa della Madonna dell'Orto
4. Fondazione Querini Stampalia
5. Gallerie dell'Accademia
6. I Frari
7. Monastero di San Lazzaro degli Armeni
8. Palazzo Ducale
9. Peggy Guggenheim Collection
10. Ponte di Rialto

EATING
11. The Ghetto
12. All'Arco
13. Antiche Carampane
14. Dai Zemei
15. La Palanca
16. Osteria Ai Do Farai
17. Osteria da Carla
18. Riviera
19. Suso

DRINKING
20. Al Mercà
21. Caffè Florian
22. El Sbarlefo

ENTERTAINMENT
23. La Fenice

SLEEPING
24. 3749 Ponte Chiodo
25. Ai Cavalieri di Venezia
26. Ca' dei Dogi
27. Generator
28. Hotel Moresco
29. Locanda Art Déco

Sleeping

3749 Ponte Chiodo ££
Best for peace and quiet
(pontechiodo.it)
This charming little backstreet B&B offers six sweet rooms with period furnishings, canal views and a private front garden.

Ai Cavalieri di Venezia £££
Best for opulence
(hotelaicavalieri.com)
Venetian glam is dialled up to the max in this palazzo hotel, whose rooms drip with gilt and damask silk, yet somehow avoid tackiness.

Ca' dei Dogi ££
Best for location
(cadeidogi.it)
Even the nearby Bridge of Sighs can't dampen the spirits of this sunny hotel. Streamlined, modern rooms look like ship cabins.

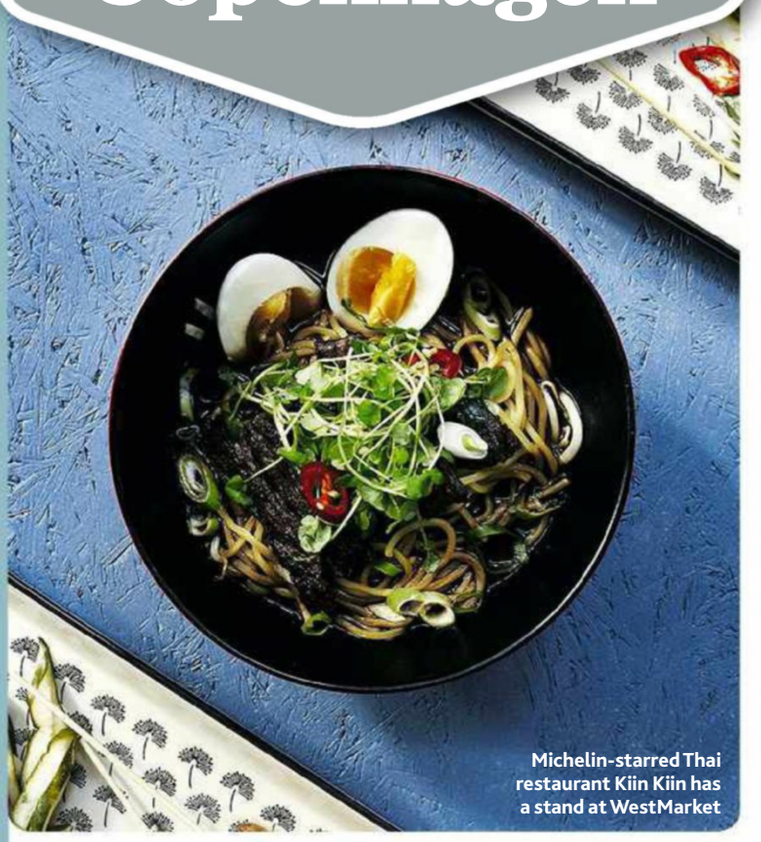
Generator £
Best for style on a budget
(generatorhostels.com)
Generator rocks a sharp interior including a fabulous kooky-kitsch bar-restaurant. Try to score a window bunk with San Marco views.

Hotel Moresco £££
Best for a home from home
(hotelmorescovenice.com)
The friendly service at this lovely hotel includes daily aperitivo hour in the walled garden. Rooms are similarly well cared for.

Locanda Art Déco £
Best for a classic look
(locandaartdeco.com)
These rakishly handsome, wood-beamed loft rooms have terrazzo marble floors, antique tables and beds in wrought-iron frames.

FURTHER READING
Pick up our *Venice & the Veneto* (£14.99) or *Pocket Venice* (£7.99) guidebooks. Venice is also on our Guides app, free to download from app stores.

New dining in Copenhagen



Michelin-starred Thai restaurant Kiin Kiin has a stand at WestMarket

The Danish capital has become one of the 21st-century's most surprising gastronomic hotspots. Is the New Nordic wave about to crest? Try these recently opened eateries to see what's next to come out of the kitchen.

✕BUDGET

Gasoline Grill BURGERS £
(facebook.com/gasolinegrill; Landgreven 10)
Some of the city's most famous chefs join the queue at this petrol station-turned-burger takeaway. The menu is refreshingly straightforward: four burgers (one vegetarian), fries with a choice of toppings and homemade dips, and two desserts. The flavour is rich without the post-feed grease. The place closes when the burgers run out; usually around 6pm. (Go at lunch to avoid disappointment.)

La Banchina CAFÉ £
(labanchina.dk; Refshalevej 141A)
There are only two daily mains at this tiny shack, served on paper plates with little fanfare. The real magic is the setting, in a small harbour cove with picnic tables and a wooden pier where diners dip their feet while sipping decent vino, tucking into grub like tender barbecued salmon, and watching the sun sink over Copenhagen.

Mirabelle CAFÉ £
(mirabelle-bakery.dk; Guldbergsgade 29)
Decked out with bold geometric floor tiles, this artisan bakery-café is a slick spot for made-from-scratch pastries, simple breakfast bites like eggs Benedict, and a short menu of Italo-centric lunch and dinner dishes, including house-made charcuterie, cheeses and organic-flour pasta.

WestMarket MARKET £
(westmarket.dk; Vesterbrogade 97)
From dodgy shopping arcade to cool street-food hub, WestMarket peddles grub from all corners of the globe: from ramen, bao and lobster rolls to risotto, bubbling pizza and tapas. For a Scandi experience, hit Kød & Bajer for harder-to-find Nordic craft beers and snacks like dried moose, then settle down at Gros for a modern take on Danish dining classics.

✕MID-RANGE

108 DANISH ££
(108.dk; Strandgade 108)
In a soaring, concrete-pillared warehouse, 108 offers a more casual, accessible take on New Nordic cuisine than its famous sibling Noma. The sharing-plate menu is all about seasonal, locally sourced ingredients, farmed or foraged, preserved, fermented and pickled. While not all dishes hit the mark, many leave a lasting impression. The glazed pork here is legendary, but don't overlook the seafood dishes, which might include silky crayfish served in a green tomato and crayfish-head broth, or fluffy monkfish glazed in a piquant, earthy sauce of fermented bread and mushrooms.

The Market ASIAN ££
(themarketcph.dk; Antonigade 2)
Dark, svelte and contemporary, The Market pumps out vibrant pan-Asian dishes like delicate brown-crab salad with apple, dashi and avocado, or expertly grilled poussin dressed in coconut sauce and mango slithers. The sushi is commendable.

Tivoli Food Hall MARKET ££
(tivoligardens.com; Vesterbrogade 3)
Tivoli's food hall, launched in 2017, is a sleek building serving a range of international cuisines as well as Danish eats. Local favourites Gorms pizza and Hallernes smørrebrød are here, as is Michelin-starred Kadeau with its fast-food venture, BobbaBella. The food hall is a part of Tivoli Gardens amusement park, but can be accessed independently.

✕HIGH-END

Barr SCANDINAVIAN £££
(restaurantbarr.com; Strandgade 93)
Meaning 'barley' in old Norse, oak-lined Barr offers polished, produce-driven takes on old North Sea traditions. The small plates are a little hit and miss, with standouts including sourdough pancakes with caviar. A better-value option is to savour the pancakes and fill up on the fantastic schnitzel or frikadeller (Danish meatballs). The selection of craft beers is outstanding. The restaurant is a joint venture between chefs René Redzepi and Thorsten Schmidt, and the space was the former home of Redzepi's restaurant Noma.

Marv & Ben NEW NORDIC £££
(marvogben.dk; Snaregade 4)
Cellar restaurant 'Marrow & Bone' has been repeatedly awarded a Michelin Bib Gourmand in recognition of its value for money. Dishes are imaginative, and evoke Nordic landscapes and moods in creations like hay-smoked mackerel with chamomile or squid with kelp and buttermilk.

Restaurant Mes DANISH £££
(restaurant-mes.dk; Jarmers Plads 1)
This rising star burst onto the scene in 2017. It's an intimate, whimsical space, complete with moss feature wall. Dining here is a good-value, market-driven, set-menu affair, each course as beautiful to look at as it is to eat. Single ingredients are often worked in various ways in the one dish, such as grilled tomato 'steak' with tomato powder and tomato wafer served in an intense, sultry brown-butter sauce.

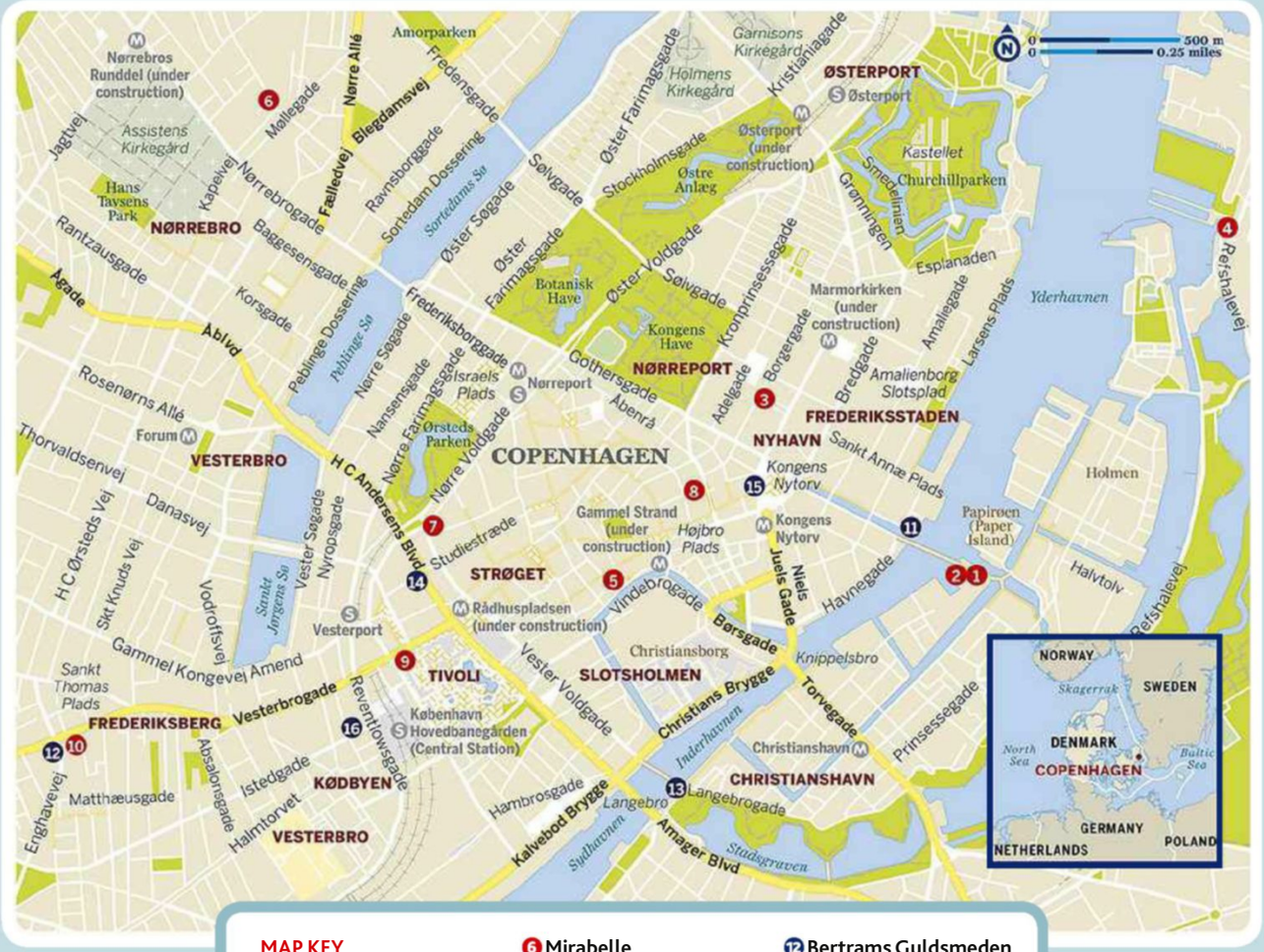
TOP PICKS

Don't miss

The annual **Ølfestival** is a three-day beer fest (31 May–2 June this year), showcasing more than 800 brews from Danish and international producers. Events – which take place in an old train workshop south of Vesterbro – include tastings, demonstrations and live music (ølfestival.dk).

COMPILED BY CATRIONA GREW AND RORY GOULDING, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM CRISTIAN BONETTO. PHOTOGRAPH: DANISH BEER ENTHUSIASTS

NEW DINING IN COPENHAGEN



MAP KEY

- ✕ EATING
- 1 108
- 2 Barr
- 3 Gasoline Grill
- 4 La Banchina
- 5 Marv & Ben
- 6 Mirabelle
- 7 Restaurant Mes
- 8 The Market
- 9 Tivoli Food Hall
- 10 WestMarket
- SLEEPING
- 11 71 Nyhavn Hotel
- 12 Bertrams Guldsmeden
- 13 CPH Living
- 14 Hotel Alexandra
- 15 Hotel d'Angleterre
- 16 Urban House Copenhagen by MEININGER

Sleeping

71 Nyhavn Hotel £££

Best for scenic location

(71nyhavnhotel.com)

Inside two atmospheric 200-year-old warehouses, small rooms face famous Nyhavn canal; those without the magical view are larger.

CPH Living ££

Best for a nautical twist

(cphliving.com)

On a converted freight boat, this floating hotel has 12 stylish rooms with harbour views, plus modern bathrooms and heated floors.

Hotel d'Angleterre £££

Best for historic grandeur

(dangleterre.com)

Hitting the scene in 1755 and renovated in 2013, the Neoclassical d'Angleterre is the city's most glamorous slumber palace.

Bertrams Guldsmeden ££

Best for a natural look

(guldsmedenhotels.com)

Part of a gorgeous local chain, Bertrams features raw stone, bare wood, crisp white linen, spectacular bath tubs and Bali-style décor.

Hotel Alexandra ££

Best for mid-century design

(hotelalexandra.dk)

The furniture of Danish design deities such as Arne Jacobsen graces the interiors of the crisp, refined yet homey Alexandra.

Urban House Copenhagen by MEININGER £

Best for budget sleeps

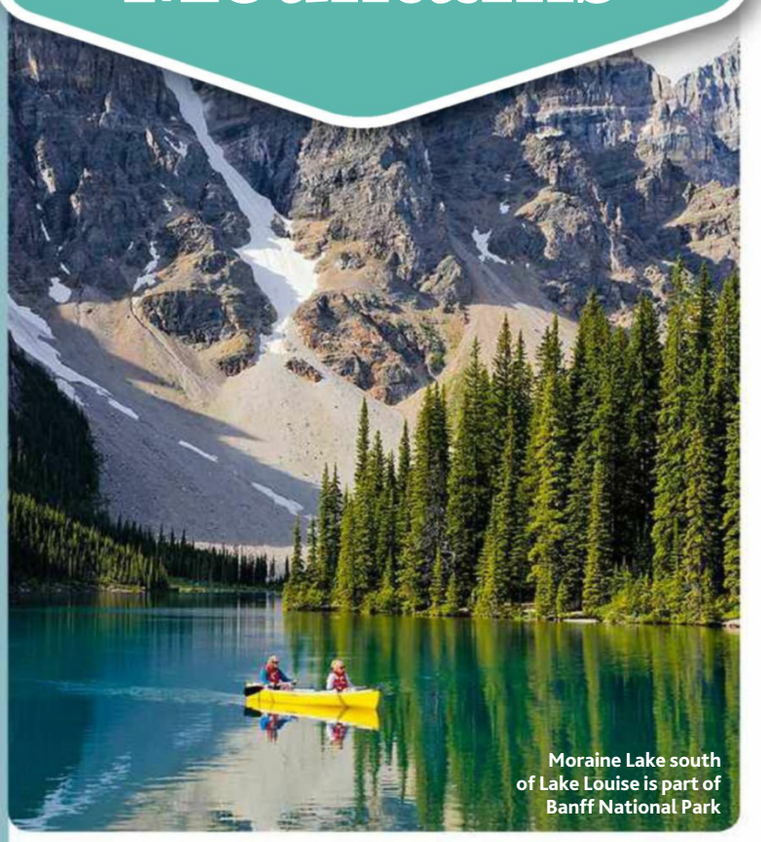
(urbanhouse.me)

This huge hostel with great facilities spans a trio of historic buildings close to on-trend Vesterbro.

FURTHER READING

Our new *Pocket Copenhagen* (£7.99) is published this April. You can also find Copenhagen listings on our Guides app, free to download from app stores.

Canada's Rocky Mountains



Moraine Lake south of Lake Louise is part of Banff National Park

Though the highest point in the Rockies is in the US, Canada's half of the range arguably steals the show. From the gateway city of Calgary, take a summer trip to these mighty peaks in Alberta and British Columbia.

COMPILED BY CATRIONA GREW AND RORY GOULDING, WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM JOHN LEE, BRENDAN SAINSBURY AND RYAN VER BERKMOES. PHOTOGRAPHS: TOM MACKIE/AWL, PAULO BURDYAK/ALAMY

SIGHTS

Athabasca Falls FREE

Despite being only 23m high, this is Jasper's most dramatic waterfall. The Athabasca River has cut deeply into the soft limestone rock, carving potholes and canyons. Visitors crowd the large parking lot and short access trail. It's just off the Icefields Parkway, 17 miles south of Jasper Town, and at its most ferocious in summer.

Athabasca Glacier FREE

The tongue of Athabasca Glacier runs from the Columbia Icefield to within walking distance of the road opposite the Icefield Centre. It can be visited on foot or in a Snocoach bus (columbiaicefield.com). To reach its toe, walk from the Icefield Centre along the mile-long Forefield Trail, then join the shorter Toe of the Athabasca Glacier Trail. To walk safely on the surface, go on a guided excursion organised by Athabasca Glacier Icewalks (icewalks.com).

Glenbow Museum £

(glenbow.org; 130 9th Ave SE, Calgary)

Temporary exhibits at the impressive Glenbow are often daring, covering contemporary art and culture. Permanent exhibits bring the past to life with strong historic personalities and lots of voice recordings. Hang out in a tipi, visit a trading post and walk through the rail car of a train.

Horseshoe Lake FREE

This idyllic, blue-green lake just off the Icefields Parkway south of Jasper is missed by many visitors, making a stopover here all the more alluring. A choice spot for a bracing summer swim or a short stroll around the shore, the lake is surrounded by steep cliffs beloved of cliff divers. It's probably safer to watch than join in.

Lake Louise FREE

Named for Queen Victoria's otherwise anonymous fourth daughter, the gobsmackingly gorgeous Lake Louise is a place that requires multiple viewings. Aside from the standard picture-postcard shot (blue sky, even bluer lake, glistening glacier), try visiting at six in the morning, at dusk in August, in the October rain or after a heavy winter storm. You can also rent a canoe from the Lake Louise Boathouse and go for a paddle around the lake. Don't fall overboard – the water is freezing.

Miette Hot Springs £

(pc.gc.ca/hotsprings; Miette Rd)

More remote than Banff's historic springs, Miette Hot Springs are 38 miles northeast of Jasper off Hwy 16, near the park boundary. The waters, kept at a pleasant 40°C, are surrounded by peaks. Raining summer evenings make for stunning, misty conditions. This area is very popular with bears and you'll often see one on the road or near the parking lot.

Revelstoke Railway Museum £

(railwaymuseum.com; 719 Track St W, Revelstoke)

Rocky Mountaineer trains pass by the attractive Revelstoke Railway Museum, which contains restored steam locomotives, including one of the largest ever used on the Canadian Pacific Railway. The line was essential in linking Canada's east and west.

Waterton Lakes National Park £

(pc.gc.ca/waterton)

Here, flat prairies collide dramatically with the Rockies, with a sparkling lake and a hilltop castle right out of a fairy tale. The park is rarely known to outsiders, and can be a pocket of sublime tranquility compared to Banff and Jasper. It abuts the USA's Glacier National Park, with which it forms an International Peace Park. Grizzlies, elk, deer and cougars are all at home here – along with 800-odd wildflower species.

Park fees

Banff and Jasper National Parks cover vast areas of the Rockies, and are crossed by important highways. Drivers passing straight through the parks do not need to pay visitor fees, but anyone planning to stop or stay within their boundaries needs to buy a pass on entry. There are frequent checks within both parks (pc.gc.ca/banff; pc.gc.ca/jasper). In this guide, we've marked attractions within the parks as 'free' if they don't need an extra fee to visit.

Yoho National Park £

(pc.gc.ca/yoho)

Although the smallest of the four national parks in the Rockies, this wilderness is some of the continent's least tarnished. East of Field on Hwy 1 is the Takakkaw Falls road, open from late June to early October. At 255m, Takakkaw Falls is one of the highest waterfalls in Canada. From here the Iceline Trail, a 13-mile hiking loop, passes many glaciers and spectacular scenery. Near the south gate of the park, you can reach pretty Wapta Falls along a 1.5-mile trail. The easy walk takes about 45 minutes each way.

Off the beaten track

The backcountry Tonquin Amethyst Lake Lodge has historic cabins with views of Amethyst Lake and the towering mountains of The Ramparts range, about 15 miles from the nearest road. The lodge can organise **horseback-riding treks**, including memorable three- to five-day pack trips (tonquinadventures.com). They also run overnight return hiking trips to the lodge.

TOP PICKS

TOP PICKS

ACTIVITIES

Alpine Art-Eco Tours £££

(alpineart.ca; 500 Pyramid Lake Rd, Jasper)

A locally run certi ed guiding company that runs year-round safaris in search of elk, grizzlies, moose and the like, accompanied by zoology-trained guides.

Hydra River Guides £££

(raftbanff.com; 211 Bear St, Banff Town)

This well-regarded company has been running rafting trips for three decades. The most popular is the 12-mile Kicking Horse Classic, with varied rapids (up to class IV) and a BBQ lunch. Hardier rafters can try the full-day trip; for novices and families there s a sedate float trip. The Flast Blast is for those short on time. Hydra also offers combo packages including horseback riding, ziplining and ATV driving.

Peter Lougheed Provincial Park FREE

(albertaparks.ca/peter-lougheed)

K-Country s quiet trails and backcountry offer superb hiking, especially around this 117-square-mile park, which includes the Upper and Lower Kananaskis Lakes and the Highwood Pass, the highest navigable road pass in Canada (2,350m; usually open from June to October). It s an excellent area for wildlife-spotting: watch for foxes, wolves, bears, lynx and coyotes. Good half-day hikes include the two-mile trail to Boulton Creek (one hour) and the three-mile hike to the natural bowl of Ptarmigan Cirque (three hours). Trail leaflets and information on conditions are available from the park s visitor centre.

EATING

1886 Buffalo Cafe

BREAKFAST £

(1886buffalocafe.ca; 187 Barclay Pde SW, Calgary)

This is a salt-of-the-earth diner in Calgary s high-rise city centre. Built in 1911 and the only survivor from the lumber yard once here, the interior feels fairly authentic with family photos and antique clocks. This is a ketchup on the table, unlimited coffee re lls kind of place, famous for brunches and especially its huevos rancheros.

49° North Pizza PIZZA £

(49degreesnorthpizza.com; 303 Windflower Ave, Waterton Park)

Seriously satisfying pizza with all of the expected renditions, plus some creative gourmet options such as bison and Saskatoon berries. If the handful of tables and patio are full, get takeaway.

Bear St Tavern PUB FOOD ££

(bearstreettavern.ca; 211 Bear St, Banff Town)

Banffites head to this gastropub in droves for a plate of pulled-pork nachos or an ingeniously flavoured pizza (such as bison and onion), accompanied by pitchers of hoppy ale.

Grizzly Paw PUB FOOD ££

(thegrizzlypaw.com; 622 8th St, Canmore)

Alberta s best microbrewery (with six year-round beers) hides in the mountains of Canmore. With beer and food pairings, big burgers and a scenic patio, it s a top spot.

Lake Agnes Teahouse CAFÉ £

(lakeagnesteahouse.com)

The two-mile view- lled hike from Lake Louise to Lake Agnes is one of the area s most popular – surely because it ends here, at this fabulously rustic alpine teahouse that seems to hang in the clouds beside the ethereal lake and its adjacent waterfall. Homemade bread, soup, thick-cut sandwiches and lake-water tea offer fuel for the jaunt back down. Cash only.

Maple Leaf Grille

CANADIAN £££

(banffmapleleaf.com; 137 Banff Ave, Banff Town)

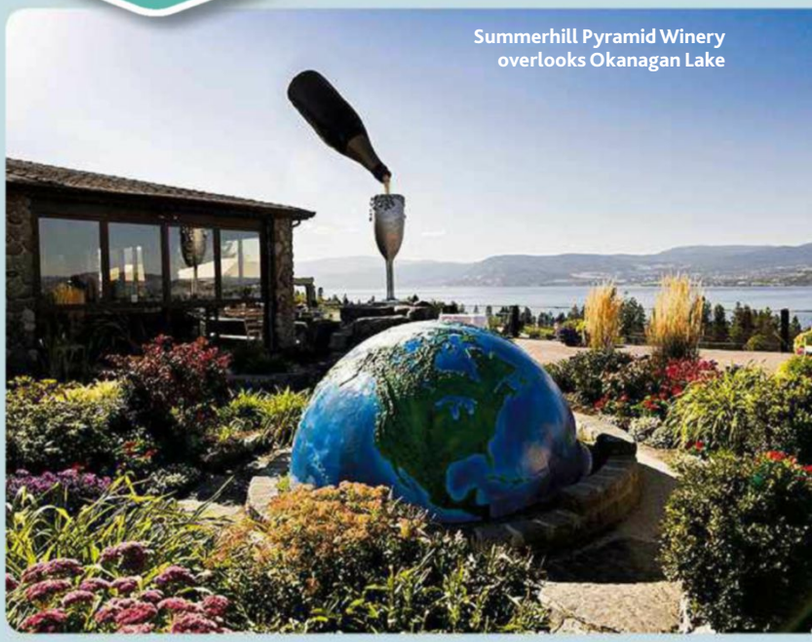
The classy Maple Leaf eschews all other pretensions in favour of one de ning word: Canadian. The menu is anchored by Albertan beef, along with BC salmon, East Coast cod and Okanagan Wine Country salad. The interior is all wood and stone, with local art.

Wolf's Den PUB FOOD ££

(thewolfsdengolden.ca; 1105 9th St, Golden)

An excellent pub with live music on Sundays. It s hugely popular with locals, who love the burgers and hearty cuisine, which is way above average. The beer menu includes some of BC s best on tap.

Worth a detour



Summerhill Pyramid Winery overlooks Okanagan Lake

Okanagan Valley wineries

The abundance of sunshine, fertile soil and cool winters in the Okanagan Valley – on the western edge of the Rockies – have allowed the local wine industry to thrive. A majority of the more than 120 wineries are close to Hwy 97, which makes tasting a breeze.

TOURS

Numerous companies allow you to do the sipping while they do the driving:

Club Wine Tours (clubwinetours.com) The 'signature' tour includes four wineries and lunch in a vineyard.

Distinctly Kelowna Tours (distinctlykelownatours.ca) Offers winery tours by valley region; many include stops for lunch.

VISITING THE WINERIES

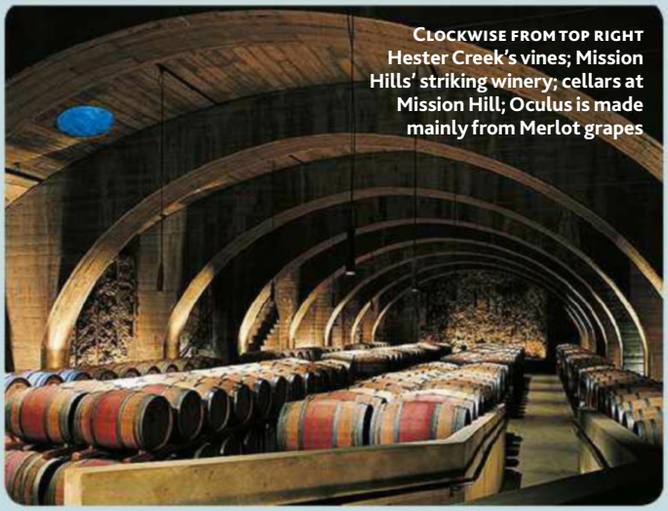
Kelowna and the region in the valley's north are known for whites, such as Pinot Grigio. South, near Penticton and Oliver, reds are the stars, especially Merlot. Tastings at those wineries open to visitors vary a lot. Some places have just a couple of wines on offer; others have dozens of vintages. Some tasting rooms are glorified sales areas; others have magnificent views of vineyards and lakes. Some charge; others are free. Among the dozens of options, the following (listed north to south) are highlights. Summerhill Pyramid and Cedar Creek Estate are south of Kelowna along the lake's east shore. The rest of the wineries can be reached via Hwy 97.

Sandhill Wines (sandhillwines.ca) Formerly called Calona Vineyards, Sandhill Wines was the Okanagan's first winery, in 1932. Its striking tasting room is an atmospheric spot to try its ever-popular, melon-note Pinot Blanc.

Summerhill Pyramid Winery (summerhill.bc.ca) One of the area's most colourful wineries combines a traditional tasting room with a huge pyramid where the wines are aged in barrels. The winery's Sunset Organic Bistro offers locally sourced dishes.

Cedar Creek Estate Winery (cedarcreek.bc.ca) Known for excellent tours, its Riesling and its Ehrenfelser, a refreshing fruity white wine. Its Vineyard Terrace has captivating views.

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY SUMMERHILL PYRAMID WINERY/KEVIN TROWBRIDGE, TONY HURLEY PHOTOGRAPHY, GAERTNER/ALAMY



Clockwise from top right Hester Creek's vines; Mission Hills' striking winery; cellars at Mission Hill; Oculus is made mainly from Merlot grapes

Mission Hill Family Estate (missionhillwinery.com) As if it were a Tuscan hill town, this winery's architecture wows. Go for a taste of one of the blended reds (try the Bordeaux) or the excellent Syrah. Terrace is one of the valley's best restaurants and sources fine foods locally; book ahead.

Hester Creek (hestercreek.com) Has a sweeping location, a great new tasting room and is known for its reds, especially its richly flavored Cabernet Franc. Terrafina restaurant has a Med accent.

Inniskillin (inniskillin.com) BC's first producer of Zinfandel is also home to the elixirs known as ice wines, which are harvested when the grapes are frozen on the vine; go for the golden-hued Riesling.

Road 13 (road13vineyards.com) Very drinkable reds (Pinot Noir) and whites (Chenin Blanc) win plaudits at this winery. The no-frills vibe extends to its picnic tables with gorgeous views.

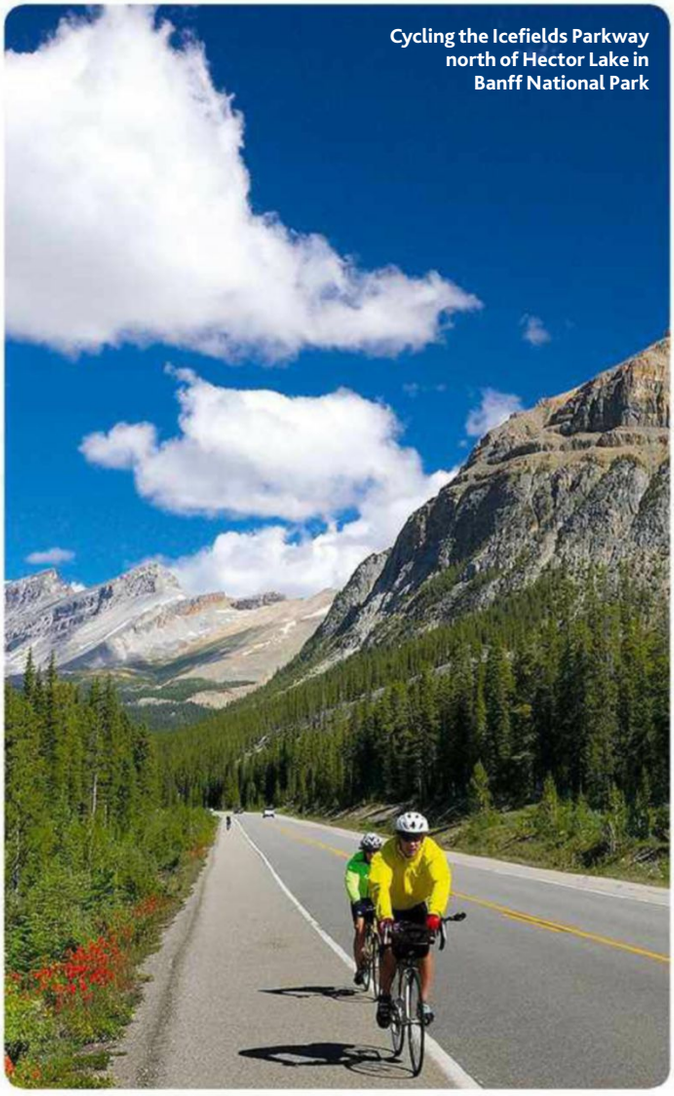
Burrowing Owl Estate Winery (burrowingowlwine.ca) Organic farm techniques go into wines such as the Syrah. Other award-winners include the Cabernet Franc and Meritage. The Sonora Room restaurant is excellent.

LaStella Winery (lastella.ca) A beautiful vision of Italy rises up near Osoyoos Lake. Terracotta roof tiles and floors and granite touches combine for one of the valley's most beautiful wineries. The Cabernet Sauvignon–based Maestoso is highly regarded.

The Rockies by bike

It's not often that getting from point A to B involves dazzling scenery, the possibility of spotting a moose and a huge dose of mountain air. The **Legacy Trail** is a 17-mile paved route that connects cyclists, pedestrians and skaters with Canmore and Banff Town. Shadowing Hwy 1 and gaining 30m elevation, the trail takes most peddlers two or three hours round-trip. For those not up to cycling/walking in both directions, Bike 'n' Hike Shuttle offers a handy bus service between the trailheads to get you back to your starting point (bikeandhikeshuttle.com).

The 143-mile-long **Icefields Parkway** between Lake Louise and Jasper is one of the world's most spectacular roads, and thus one of the world's most spectacular bicycle rides – if your legs and lungs are up to it. There are several long uphill drags, occasional stiff headwinds and 2,000-metre-plus passes to tackle. Nevertheless, the route is highly popular in July and August (don't even think about doing it in the winter), with aspiring cyclists lapping up its bicycle-friendly features. No commercial trucks are allowed on the parkway, there's a generous shoulder all the way, two-wheeled company is virtually guaranteed, and lodging along the route (both campgrounds and hostels/hotels) is plentiful and strategically placed. Backroads runs a Canadian Rockies Bike Tour, a six-day organised trip that incorporates cycling along the parkway (backroads.com).



Cycling the Icefields Parkway north of Hector Lake in Banff National Park

CANADA'S ROCKY MOUNTAINS

MAP KEY

SIGHTS
1. Athabasca Falls
2. Athabasca Glacier
3. Glenbow Museum
4. Horseshoe Lake
5. Lake Louise
6. Miette Hot Springs
7. Revelstoke Railway Museum
8. Waterton Lakes National Park
9. Yoho National Park

ACTIVITIES
10. Alpine Art-Eco Tours
11. Hydra River Guides
12. Peter Lougheed Provincial Park
13. Tonquin Valley Adventures

EATING
14. 1886 Buffalo Cafe
15. 49° North Pizza
16. Bear St Tavern
17. Grizzly Paw
18. Lake Agnes Teahouse
19. Maple Leaf Grille
20. Wolf's Den

SLEEPING
21. Deer Lodge
22. Hume Hotel
23. Jasper Downtown Hostel
24. Kensington Riverside Inn
25. Park Place Lodge
26. Storm Mountain Lodge

Sleeping

Deer Lodge £££
Best for vintage appeal
(crmr.com)
Travel back to the 1920s at this tranquil Lake Louise lodge. The larger Heritage rooms have smart, boutique-like furnishings.

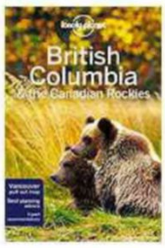
Hume Hotel ££
Best for local landmarks
(humehotel.com)
This 1898 hotel maintains period grandeur. Rooms vary greatly in size; ask for the huge corner rooms with Kootenay Lake views.

Jasper Downtown Hostel £
Best for budget sleeps
(jasperdowntownhostel.ca)
Stay in downtown Jasper for a song, in simple, modern two- to eight-bed dorms, along with comfortable private rooms.

Kensington Riverside Inn ££
Best for city stays
(kensingtonriversideinn.com)
This small Calgary inn has impeccable service and rooms to match, with soaker tubs, hi-fi Geneva sound systems and fine linens.

Park Place Lodge ££
Best for amenities
(parkplacelodge.com)
The nicest lodging close to the centre in Fernie, Park Place offers 64 comfortable rooms, and access to an indoor pool and hot tub.

Storm Mountain Lodge £££
Best for log-cabin life
(stormmountainlodge.com)
Set amid the forest in Kootenay National Park, cosy and romantic luxury cabins date from 1922. Meals in the lodge are gourmet.



FURTHER READING
Lonely Planet's *British Columbia & the Canadian Rockies* guide (£15.99) covers all areas of Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon Territory.

WIN a luxury break in Cornwall

Carbis Bay and its namesake hotel. INSETS FROM TOP Beach Club; a room at Carbis Bay Hotel

Lonely Planet magazine has teamed up with the Carbis Bay Hotel & Estate to offer one lucky reader and their guest a four-night stay on the Cornish coast.

Just east of St Ives, Carbis Bay's sands curve round for almost five miles, and the namesake hotel is just stepping distance from the Blue Flag beach in front. Set within 125 acres, the Carbis Bay Estate includes 47 individually designed luxury hotel rooms, plus a range of self-catering accommodation. This summer will also see the launch of the estate's splendid new Beach Lodges.

Beyond the estate's subtropical gardens, the South West Coast Path hugs the rocky shore to reach St Ives – an old fishing town that's home to a bumper crop of art galleries. Take in the excellent Tate St Ives, fresh from a multimillion-pound refit in 2017, before heading back to the Carbis Bay Hotel & Estate for a Mediterranean-style dinner at the Beach Club with panoramic sea views.

THE PRIZE

- **Three nights in the Carbis Bay Hotel in a Superior Room**
- **One night in one of Carbis Bay Hotel's new Beach Lodges**
- **A full Cornish breakfast daily**
- **A three-course dinner for two people at the Beach Club**
- **A three-course dinner for two people at The Sands Restaurant**
- **One couples' spa treatment at C Bay Spa**

HOW TO ENTER

To be in with a chance of winning this fantastic prize, fill in your details online at the address below. Competition closes at 11.59pm on Sunday 13 May 2018.

lonelyplanet.com/magazine/competitions

CARBIS BAY
HOTEL & ESTATE

CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

1. The promoter of this competition is Immediate Media Company London Limited. 2. The prize includes a three-night stay at the Carbis Bay Hotel & Spa in a Superior Room on a B&B basis, one night in a Beach Lodge on a B&B basis, daily Cornish breakfast, a three-course dinner for two at the Beach Club, a three-course dinner for two at The Sands Restaurant and one couple's spa treatment at C Bay Spa. 3. Bookings require 14 days' advance booking and are subject to availability. Travel must be taken by 13 May 2019. Travel not permitted 20 December 2018–5 January 2019. 4. The prize does not include travel insurance, additional meals and refreshments, UK transfers, optional activities or spending money. 5. The winner must be at least 18 years old and a resident of the UK. 6. For full terms and conditions, visit lonelyplanet.com/magazine/competitions.

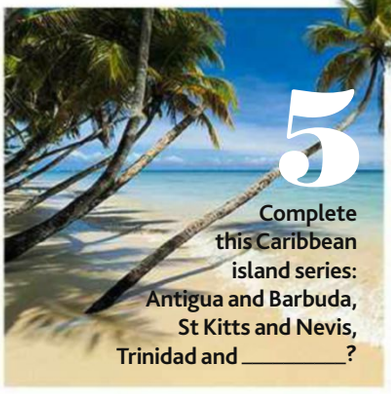
What on Earth?

1 A red cross on a white background symbolises St George, whose feast day is on 23 April. Which two differently proportioned national flags consist of a white cross on a red background?

2 Which country, celebrating its own New Year on 14 April, is the only one whose name in English ends in H?

3 The Central African Republic is often abbreviated as CAR, but which two countries have 'car' in their names?

4 Which city – marking 300 years since its founding on 7 May – is nicknamed the Big Easy?



5 Complete this Caribbean island series: Antigua and Barbuda, St Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and _____?

6 Among open spaces in Venice, there are many campi ('fields') but only one piazza (square). What is it called?

7 Which country do stroopwafels come from?

8 In which country are you most likely to be served ouzo?

9 Where is hanbok a style of traditional dress?

COMPILED BY RORY GOULDING. PHOTOGRAPHS: LANCEBI/ISTOCK/GETTY, RAQEEBUL KETAN/GETTY, JUSTIN FOULKES, JASON LANGLEY/AWL, JOHN HARPER/GETTY, ANSHARPHOTO/SHUTTERSTOCK, PHOTOPAT/ALAMY, KAJAKIKI/GETTY, PLANSHOOT/MULTI-BITS/GETTY

YOU WANT ANSWERS?

1) DENMARK & SWITZERLAND. 2) BANGLADESH. 3) MADAGASCAR AND NICARAGUA. 4) NEW ORLEANS. 5) TOBAGO. 6) PIAZZA SAN MARCO (ST MARK'S SQUARE). 7) THE NETHERLANDS. 8) GREECE. 9) KOREA (NORTH AND SOUTH).

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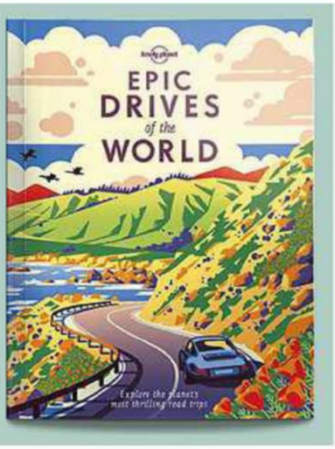
EUROPE'S BEST ROAD TRIPS

The open road holds an irresistible draw. All you need is a vehicle, a full tank, a good playlist and a sense of adventure. Here our network of travel writers recommend their favourite European road trips, from fabled routes such as Iceland's Ring Road to lesser-known but equally beguiling drives, like Croatia's Adriatic Highway. Be it solo or with a friend or family in tow, hop behind the wheel and head off to explore somewhere new. Bon voyage!

HIT THE ROAD
If you love this guide to Europe's best road trips, you can find worldwide inspiration in our book *Epic Drives of the World*, from which many of these road trips were taken. The book features 50 classic driving routes in countries from Scotland to Spain and South Africa.



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From the Basque Country to Galicia, past jagged peaks, plunging valleys and spine-tingling passes

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IN PURSUIT OF THE TARGA FLORIO, SICILY 32
Follow in the speedy tracks of motor-racing royalty on this legendary Sicilian route, the globe's original racing road

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Spin from Skye to the mainland to discover the wild landscapes of the Scottish Highlands

WINDING UP ON NORWAY'S WEST COAST 41
Hairpin bends, glacial fjords, sky-reaching cliffs and ingeniously built roads pave the way north along Norway's western coastline

BLACK FOREST HIGHS 46
Uncover icy waterfalls, woodland hikes and Michelin-star menus as you thread through the wilds of Germany's snow-dusted Black Forest

Group editor Peter Grunert **Deputy editor** Amanda Canning **Art director** Hayley Ward **Production editor** Alice Braham **Thanks to** Kei Ishimaru, Isabella Noble **Cover illustration** Ross Murray **Maps** Callum Lewis **Senior sales manager, client solutions** Nick Connell **Sales and marketing coordinator** Grace Robson **Senior production controller** Katie Panayi **Reprographics** Immediate Media Company **Printer** Ancient House Printing Group **Director of magazines** Sue Coffin

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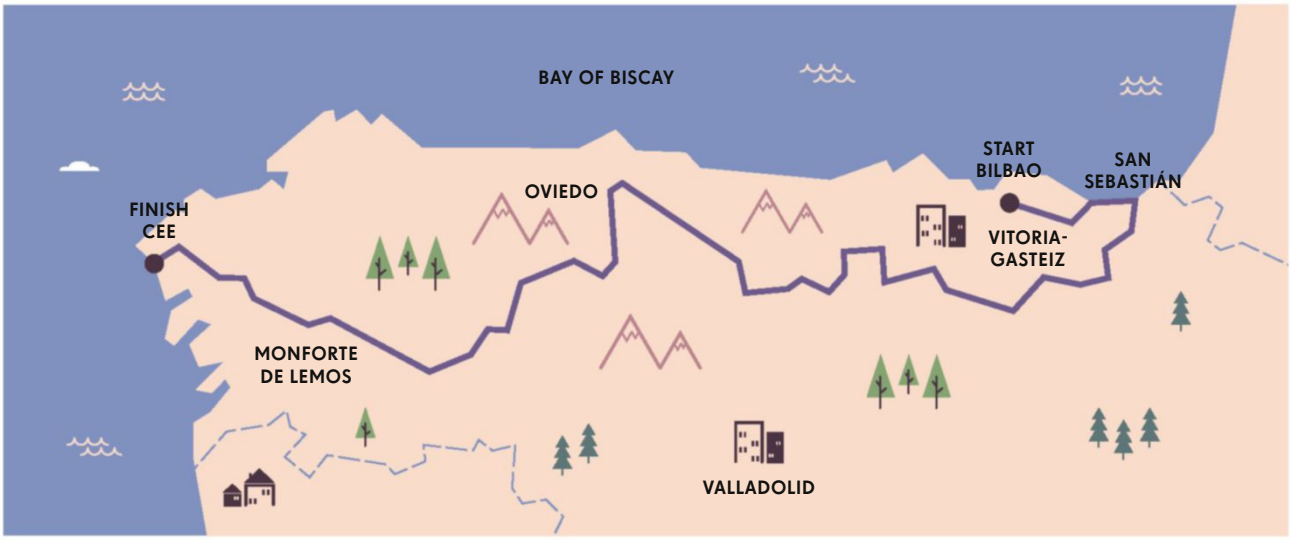
THROUGH THE PICOS DE EUROPA

The food is the big attraction on this exhilarating drive through northern Spain. No, the scenery; or maybe the people. Ah, the drink! No, it's the food. I think...

There can be few better beginnings to a road trip, or any other trip, than Frank Gehry's convoluted titanium Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Let its otherworldliness work on you, have a snack and a glass of the local cider in its outdoor café and you'll be ready for new experiences. There are many of them on this tour. Head north and east from Bilbao and enjoy the adventurous coast road which takes you to San Sebastián, the real beginning of this drive.

San Sebastián, on its sweeping bay, is a twin city. The new is all rectangular and formal as it hugs the beach, and the old a warren of backstreets and lanes tucked away under Monte Urgull. I spent an evening – a long evening, which actually didn't seem long at all – enjoying the super-sized tapas called pintxos, paired with local white wine and increasingly amusing company as I endeavoured to improve my basic Spanish.

I spent much of the next day riding through the pretty and fertile country south of San Sebastián, crossing Usategueta Pass and finally reaching Vitoria-Gasteiz. The capital of the Basque country is an open, green and relaxed city with a strong cider heritage of its own. Beware the pouring ceremony – it's best done by a local! I wasn't smart enough to do that and ended up soaked in cider from the knees down. Another great night.



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From here I stayed in the backcountry, heading for the Picos de Europa mountains over snaking country roads – some in better condition than others. I passed the Sobrón Reservoir on a narrow road through small tunnels. Rivers frequently flow in deep canyons here, their slightly sloping walls covered in vines or other crops, and, on the roads, the 180-degree 'paella turns' (as they're known locally) made for a particularly enthusiastic ride. Traffic is almost unknown here, although you may see the occasional pilgrim heading towards Santiago de Compostela.

The vast stone pillars of the Picos point to the sky, deriving their name from the fact that their height made them the first land visible to ships returning from the New World. They offer wonderful photo ops in different light, and I was tempted to stay to see in the evening, but the road was calling and I went on. One local told me the motorways were paid for by the EU, but the backroads – some good, some, well... not so good – 'are all our own'. They certainly take you to outstanding places such as the Redes Natural Park and the Tarna Pass, the León–Asturias border at 1492 metres.

Oviedo –its 'real' name Uvieo in the local but nationally unrecognised Bable language – is a surprise. It's not just the statue of Woody Allen but the many others dotting the city's streets.

Heading west and then south took me through the mountains and Somiedo Natural Park, a wonderful drive along winding roads, with good surfaces, into the mountains and up to a high pass by the same name which is one of the first to be covered in snow every winter. Eventually the road drops to the Babia Valley, a favoured holiday destination for León royalty, where they could forget their

REGIONAL TASTES

Crossing northern Spain, you pass through four regions with distinct food and drink. Many of Spain's best chefs are from the Basque country, and San Sebastián is famed for the micro-cuisine of pintxos. Cantabria's meaty cocido montañés is no ordinary stew due to its range of ingredients, and in Asturias you'll find fabada asturiana, another hearty bean stew with black pudding. Pulpo a la gallega (octopus with potatoes) is Galicia's signature dish.

Clockwise from top: delicious Spanish specialities; a relaxed resident; Santiago de Compostela's cathedral; culinary capital San Sebastián. Previous page: the Picos de Europa

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troubles. The phrase 'estar en Babia', meaning to be distracted or dream, derives from here. So did El Cid's famous horse, Babieca.

The Pozo de las Mujeres Muertas is a relatively unknown pass road which is one of the treasures of northern Spain. I'm usually keen to see new things when I'm travelling, but I rode a stretch of this pass three times – up, down and up again. I was booked into the Parador at Monforte de Lemos, and I could see the old, refurbished Benedictine monastery on its steep hill from miles away, across one of the few flat bits of country I encountered.

My targets for this ride were Santiago de Compostela and Cabo Finisterre, both to the northwest. But I had been told about the challenging ride along the Sil River, to the south, so I turned that way and enjoyed a drive through a country that might have been made by giants – enormous slopes, 500 metres down to the river, covered in vineyards – and a road that followed every twist and turn of the huge hillsides. No paella bends here; the corners were gentler, but also longer and even more exhilarating.

I eventually turned north to Santiago de Compostela. The target of thousands of pilgrims every year following the Camino de Santiago, Galicia's capital somehow remains an impressive example of classical architecture and devotional gravity. It also has one of the grandest hotels in Spain, on the cathedral square, the Parador de Santiago de Compostela. But my journey wasn't over.

The Camino doesn't end in Santiago. There is another stretch of road to cover, to Finisterre – the end of the world. I rode out past the wind turbines through the Montes de Buxantes to Cee, a fishing village just short of Cabo Finisterre. This isn't really the most westerly part of Europe, but it was thought to be since prehistoric times when pilgrims came here and burned their clothes as a sign of a new life. No need to burn your clothes now, but it's always a good idea to reconsider your life's path... **Peter Thoeming**

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'I'm usually keen to see new things when I'm travelling, but I rode part of this pass three times – up, down and up again'

DIRECTIONS

Start // Bilbao/San Sebastián
End // Cabo Finisterre
Distance // 620 miles (1,000km)
Getting there // Fly to Bilbao. Or, if you're in England, take your own vehicle on the ferry from Portsmouth.
When to drive // Summer. The sea breezes stop it from becoming too hot.
Where to stay // The Paradores: castles, palaces and monasteries that are now beautiful hotels. Printed and internet guides (parador.es) are available.
What to take // An appetite and a Spanish phrase book.
Car hire // Rent a car or motorcycle, most easily in Bilbao. Or take your own on the ferry.
Formalities // Spain is a Schengen country, so be guided by those visa regulations. Take an International Driving Permit, or your vehicle may be impounded in case of an accident.
Detours // All over the place. Really. You can't go wrong.

THE MAGIC CIRCLE

Discover haunting lava fields, wild coastline, powerful waterfalls and majestic ice caps on an elemental journey around Iceland's Ring Road.

It's mid-morning on Iceland's east coast, but it might as well be midnight. Fog cloaks the road, blending land, sea and sky into a spectral grey. Now and then, black peaks materialise from the gloom, and slashes in the cloud reveal sudden glimpses of coastline: rocky cliffs, grassy dunes, wild beaches of black sand. Gulls bank and wheel in the wind.

Wild weather is par for the course on Iceland's Ring Road – or Route 1, as it's designated on highway maps. Circling around the island's coastline for 830 miles (1,336km), the Ring Road is an engineering marvel as well as a national emblem, and this year celebrates four decades of service.

Naturally enough, all distances along Route 1 are measured from Iceland's capital, Reykjavík. Even here, among the art galleries and pubs, hints of Iceland's wilder side are easy to find. Looking north across the bay of Faxaflói, a craggy finger of land extends along the horizon, terminating in the snow-capped summit of Snæfellsjökull, used as the setting for Jules Verne's classic adventure tale, *Journey*

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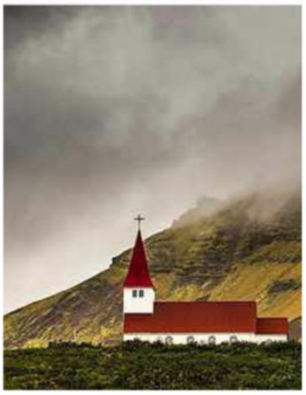

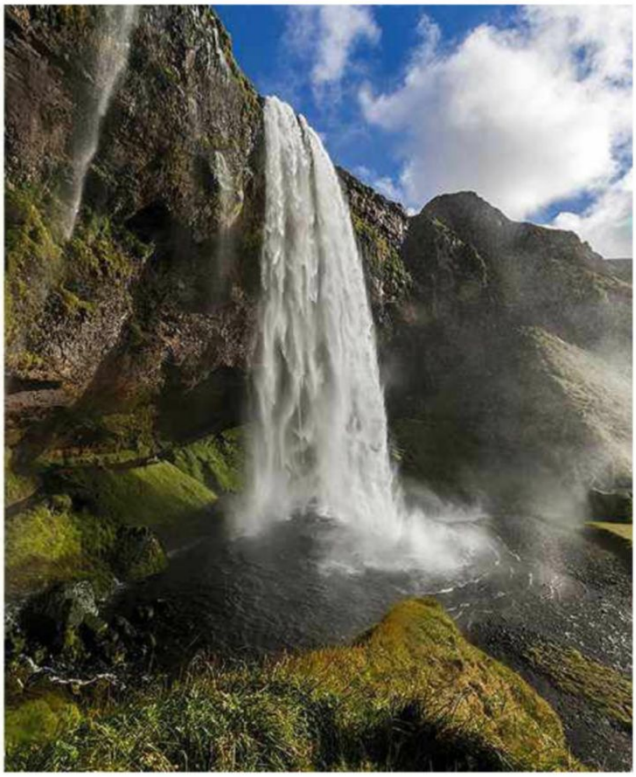

to the Centre of the Earth. The volcano remains a brooding presence as the Ring Road heads north from Reykjavík's suburbs – a reminder that the forces of nature are never far away.

Verne wasn't the first writer to find inspiration among the fjords and valleys of Iceland's west. To Icelanders, this area is synonymous with the Sagas, the tales that are a cornerstone of Icelandic culture. First written down by historians in the 12th and 13th centuries, but rooted in an older tradition of oral storytelling, these tales of family feuds, doomed heroes, warrior kings and tragic romances are part genealogy, part history, part drama.

As the Ring Road swerves inland across the humpbacked hills northwest of Borgarnes, it passes many locations from the Sagas: a farmstead that features in Egil's Saga, a hot spring where the hero of Grettir's Saga soothed his battle-weary bones. While most of the stories are rooted in fact, many have a fantastical streak that stems from Iceland's pantheon of myths and legends: strange tales of trolls, giants and dragons, as well as the island's *huldufólk* (hidden folk) of gnomes, dwarves, fairies and elves.

It's easy to see how Iceland's otherworldly landscape inspired such tales. Sculpted and scarred by thousands of years of geological activity, it often appears not altogether of this world.

Nowhere is this more true than around Lake Mývatn and Krafla, Iceland's most volcanically active area. Here, as the Ring Road drops from the uplands, it loops past Goðafoss (Waterfall of the Gods), a deafening mass of foaming white water that seems to emanate from a ragged crack in the Earth's crust.

'To Icelanders, this area is synonymous with the Sagas: tales of doomed heroes, warrior kings and tragic romances'

The cascade is the prelude to an even stranger landscape. As the Ring Road nears Lake Mývatn's shoreline, shattered boulders and volcanic pillars litter the sides of the highway, the geological remnants of ancient eruptions. Geysers gush and mud pools bubble. Fissures in the earth spew out columns of steam, a reminder that this part of Iceland sits on top of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the unstable meeting point of the Eurasian and North American tectonic plates.

As the Ring Road circles around the eastern coast, the landscape becomes wilder and emptier. Isolated villages hunker at the bottom of glacial fjords. Abandoned shepherds' cabins line the roads. Waterfalls cascade down hills, carving canyons through the rock, including the maelstrom of Dettifoss, Europe's most powerful fall.

The east coast has always been isolated, cut off by distance and geography. Prior to the arrival of the Ring Road, many villages were only accessible via mountain passes, which were often snowbound, forcing the delivery of supplies by air or sea. Reaching these villages was a big challenge for the Ring Road's engineers, and required tunnels, embankments and bridges to overcome the topography.

Iceland's most epic playground, the Vatnajökull ice cap, covers 3,000 sq miles (7,770 sq km) of the country's southeast, making it the

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largest volume of ice anywhere in Europe. Driving west from Höfn, a small port in one of Iceland's southeastern fjords, the glacier looms along the skyline, a frozen white sea slicing through a jawbone of dog's-tooth peaks.

As the Ring Road leaves Vatnajökull and cuts west, it enters the flat pastureland of Þingvallavatn, and passes two spectacular waterfalls – Skógafoss, one of Iceland's highest, with a sheer drop of 60m, and Seljalandsfoss, where the spray refracts the sunlight like a prism, conjuring rainbows from thin air. Bit by bit, countryside gives way to civilisation. Towns and villages become more frequent, and greenhouses appear along the roadside. This is also equine country, home to numerous farms that raise Iceland's pure-bred horses.

Further west, and a short detour north from the Ring Road, lies Þingvellir National Park. A place of wild beauty, it was here that the Vikings established the Alþing, an open-air assembly and Iceland's first parliament. Established in 930 AD, the Alþing has a legitimate claim as the world's oldest form of democratic government, and holds a deep historical and symbolic significance for Icelanders.

Appropriately enough, the beginning of Iceland's recorded history also marks journey's end for the Ring Road. As it snakes across the magma fields of the Reykjanesfólkvangur nature reserve, it drops down into Reykjavík's suburbs, bathed under streetlights that seem strange after a week of clear skies and starlight. Far ahead across the bay of Faxaflói, the Snæfellsnes ice cap flashes in the evening light, and the Ring Road begins its circular journey north again – a never-ending thread unspooling beneath a silver sky. **Oliver Berry**

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TOLKIEN'S ICELAND

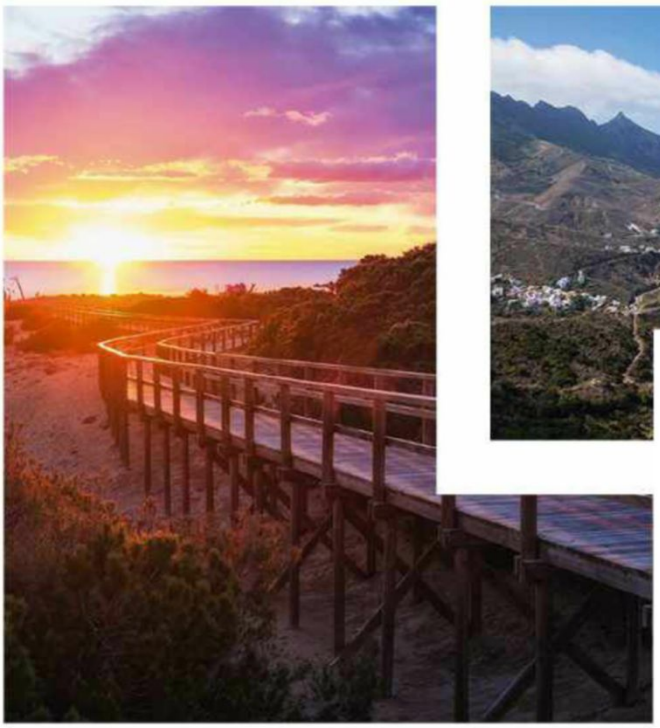
Iceland's legends were an important inspiration for JRR Tolkien, a scholar of Old Norse and the Sagas. Many Tolkien enthusiasts believe Iceland's turf houses, built from peat bricks topped by grass roofs, may have given him the idea for Bilbo Baggins' underground home, Bag End, in *The Hobbit*. They certainly resemble hobbit houses, but they were actually a pragmatic solution to one of Iceland's enduring problems – a shortage of timber.

Left to right: pure-bred Icelandic horses; a typical red-roofed church; working the annual sheep round-up; Seljalandsfoss waterfall; statue of explorer Leif Eriksson outside Hallgrímskirkja in Reykjavík. Previous page: Þingvellir National Park

DIRECTIONS

Start/End // Reykjavík
Distance // 830 miles (1,336km)
Getting there // Iceland has become far more accessible in recent years, with more flights arriving from more destinations. Ferry transport (from northern Denmark) is a good alternative for Europeans wishing to take their own car.
When to drive // June to August is peak season, with higher prices and bookings required way ahead. This is also endless-daylight season, with plenty of activities and festivals to draw you ever onward. May and September are optimal if you prefer fewer crowds and lower prices over cloudless days.
Hot tip // Don't rush – allocate 10 to 14 days to driving the Ring Road, at a minimum. With just a week to spend in Iceland, concentrate on one or two regions in detail.

BRITISH AIRWAYS



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THE CÔTE D'AZUR'S THREE CORNICHES

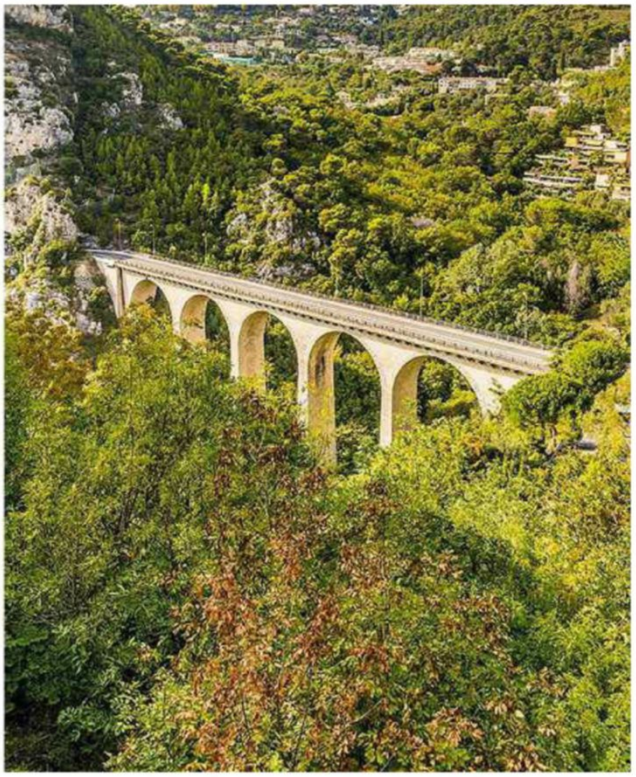
Roll down the roof, slip on the shades and enjoy France's most cinematic drive, from Belle Époque Nice all the way to the Italian border – and back again.

It's early morning on the clifftops of the Côte d'Azur, and today, the coast is living up to its name. I'm standing at a roadside viewpoint on the Grande Corniche, and my gaze is fixed out to sea, trying to work out where the sea ends and the sky begins.

The horizon is a rainbow of blues. From pale duck-egg to bright turquoise through to deep aquamarine, it's a blue symphony; a meditation on blue. I find myself thinking of the many artists who've been inspired by this coastline – from Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso to Yves Klein, who even patented his own colour, International Klein Blue, in 1960.

I stand for a while, breathing in the scents so characteristic of Provence: sweet lavender, pine sap, salty sea air. Then I hop back in my car and set off again along the clifftop road, heading higher into the crimson hills as sea birds hover and the blue Mediterranean shimmers below.

I've come to Provence to tackle France's most famous trio of roads: the Three Corniches, which zig-zag along the Côte d'Azur between Nice and Menton. Named Basse, Moyenne and Grande (Lower, Middle and Upper) after their respective elevations, each road has its own character. The Basse Corniche is the one for hedonists and high-rollers, winding through a



glitzy string of Riviera towns and beach resorts, where the traffic stretches bumper-to-bumper in the height of summer, and life revolves around the cafés, clubs and casinos.

The Moyenne Corniche is something of a quieter affair, meandering between sleepy, sun-drenched villages perchés (hilltop villages) where old men sip shots of pastis in streetside cafés, and every evening there's a game of pétanque on the village square. Highest and wildest of the three is the Grande Corniche, which climbs to a vertiginous 500m above sea level. It was built by Napoleon I in the 19th century, and memorably provided the backdrop for Alfred Hitchcock's 1955 Riviera caper, *To Catch A Thief*, starring Cary Grant and Grace Kelly. The drops are dizzying, the hairpins are hair-raising and the bends are bottom-clenching, but for driving thrills, no French road can compare to the Grande Corniche.

I set out early from Nice, rolling along the quiet boulevards, past pavement cafés and boulangerie windows stocked with freshly baked croissants and baguettes. I head out into the suburbs of Nice, and pick up the Grande Corniche as it criss-crosses up into the parched Provençal hills. Shrubs and pines dot the hillsides. The white dome of Nice's observatory zips past. Civilisation thins, and the Grande Corniche hits its stride.

It's more rollercoaster than road. It twists and switchbacks along the cliffs, winding through wild forests, surrounded by swathes of tangled maquis, fragrant with wild rosemary and thyme. The hairpins mean that it's essential to keep a close eye on the road ahead, but occasionally I can't resist stealing a glance out to sea, where the Mediterranean sparkles like a mirror in the morning sunshine.

> 'The Grande Corniche isn't only awe-inspiring, it's also ancient: in service for at least 2,000 years'

At the little hilltop village of La Turbie, I take a break and wander beneath the great Roman arch known as La Trophée des Alpes. Built by the Emperor Augustus to commemorate his conquest of Gaul in 6 BC, it's a reminder that the Grande Corniche isn't only awe-inspiring, it's also ancient: it's been in service for at least 2,000 years. The road largely follows the course of the Via Julia Augusta, which was begun around 13 BC, although the present route was the work of Napoleon I, who ordered its construction to facilitate the movement of troops and supplies during his Italian campaign of 1796.

From La Turbie, I continue east, following the Grande Corniche as it winds down the hillside and joins the Basse Corniche, zig-zagging out along the coast. Wildness gives way to civilisation. Elegant villas and belle époque mansions appear, lined up like dominoes along the shore. Near the Italian border, I feast on seafood in the seaside port of Menton, then make a volte-face west to the pretty headland of Cap Martin, a haunt of expat

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writers like F Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. Next comes the maze of Monaco, famous for its hedonistic lifestyle and historic casino – not to mention more millionaires per square mile than anywhere else on Earth. Once a year, Formula One drivers descend on Monaco's corkscrew streets for its glitzy Grand Prix, but the rest of the year, it's a tangle of traffic. It's a blessed relief to leave the high-rises behind and climb back into the quiet, rocky hills.

I pick up the Moyenne Corniche as it twists back into wild, barren countryside. I climb steadily, swerving and veering round the road's rollercoaster curves. The evening sun sinks towards the horizon, and dusk begins to fall. Around me, the landscape begins to turn technicolour, blazing with a painter's palette of oranges, ochres, russets and browns. Mist drifts over the coast below, and suddenly it feels more like I'm flying than driving, floating on a sea of silver cloud.

By the time I reach journey's end at the hilltop village of Èze, the sun has almost disappeared. I head for the bar of the Château Eza hotel for a cocktail, and a smartly dressed waiter brings me a martini as I watch the sun snuff itself out in a blaze of terracottas, scarlets, mauves and pinks.

'When I realised that every morning I would see this light again,' wrote the painter Henri Matisse in 1917, 'I couldn't believe how lucky I was.'

As I sip my martini and listen to the breeze stirring through the pines, I know precisely how he felt. **Oliver Berry**

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THE MONACO CONUNDRUM

At just 0.78 sq miles (2.02 sq km), Monaco is small, but it punches way above its weight. With a population of about 38,000, it's the world's second smallest and most densely populated country. It's a sovereign state, ruled by the Grimaldi family since 1297, with its own flag, anthem and stamps – not to mention lax tax laws. The casino – a favourite of James Bond – is in the harbour district of Monte Carlo.

Left to right: Èze, a sleepy village perché (hill village), overlooks the Côte d'Azur; lavender from a roadside store; a stone arch bridge on the Moyenne Corniche; roof rolled in Beaulieu-sur-Mer

DIRECTIONS

Start // Nice
End // Èze
Distance // 45 to 50 miles (72km to 80km), depending on the exact route taken.
Getting there // Nice airport has regular international flights to destinations across Europe and further afield.
When to drive // Summer traffic can be a headache; May, June and September are quieter.
What to take // Sunscreen, swimming gear and a stylish pair of sunglasses.
Where to stay // Hôtel Windsor (hotelwindsornice.com), L'Hostellerie Jerôme (hostelleriejerome.com), Château Eza (chateaueza.com), Napoléon Menton (napoleon-menton.com).
More info // Visit frenchriviera-tourism.com

High above the beach at Villefranche-sur-Mer

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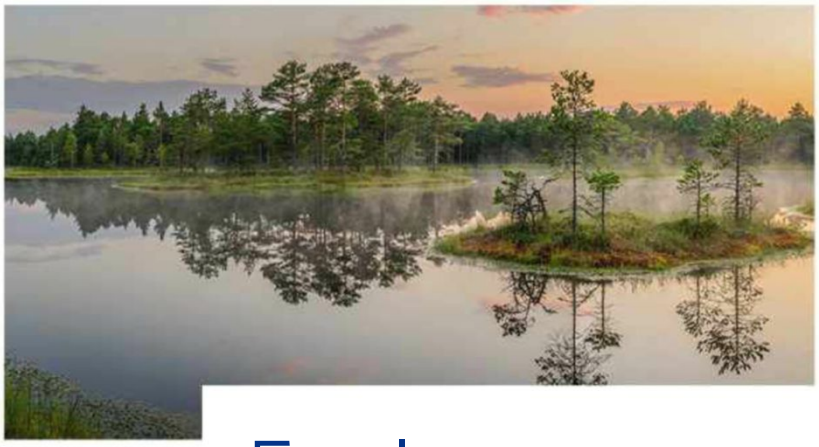
BRITISH AIRWAYS



Explore the beauty of Estonia

Start your journey with a stay in the historical and enchanting city of Tallinn. Enjoy its fantastic food scene, before hitting the road to discover Estonia's vast and beautiful countryside. There's so much to experience in this magical country. With Estonia celebrating its 100th birthday this year there's never been a better time to visit.

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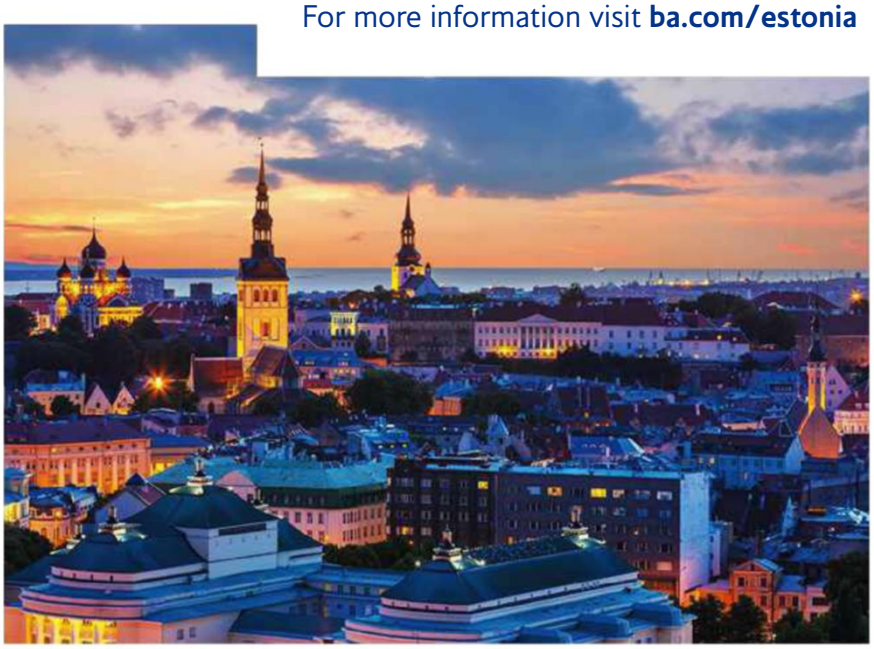


ROVING THE BALTIC: ESTONIA TO LATVIA

Take a drive through the crossroads of two mighty European powers: Estonia and Latvia twist their own brand of Northern culture with a history steeped in millennia.

At a dinner in Riga over a decade ago, as I pushed around a slab of grey pork and side of boiled potatoes, I learned that the Latvian language – one of the oldest tongues still spoken on the planet – has no word for 'mountain'. The term kalns, or hill, serves as the best substitute, as there are no true mountains in the entire region; no borrowed term has been added to the local lexicon. And there's really no need for one: the entirety of the Baltic shield is blanketed by an undulating current of towering pine.

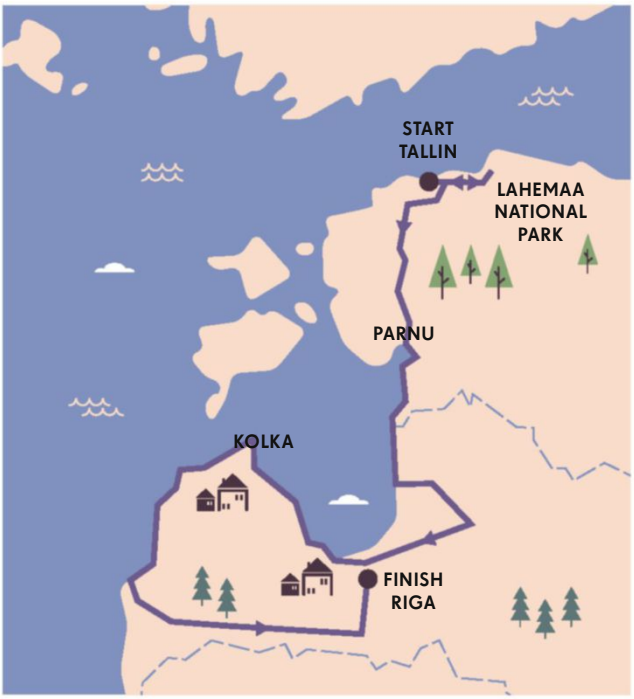
The green carpet, unbothered by the brutal winter weather, seems uniform from the car window year after year, no matter how many times I return to visit. But a turn on to a lonely side road reveals thousands of years of fascinating geopolitical history.

Departing Tallinn, Estonia's turret-topped capital with a distinctive Scandinavian feel, I forfeit the heady brew of old-meets-new, and venture south into countryside. The horizon broadens, revealing the battlefields of both ancient and modern empires – scarred storytellers of the region's nuanced history of subjugation and glory.

Latvia's largest national park, the Gauja, follows its namesake river as it snakes between tribal war mounds and medieval castle ruins; I do the same. Subtle bumps in the terrain mark the strongholds of the tribes that waged war in the region over 2,000 years ago – archaeologists have uncovered old stones from other parts of the planet lending credence to the notion that this area was an epicentre of global trade.

A rich medieval history comes to life at the rosy-red tower of Turaida Castle and at the ashen stone spires of Cēsis Castle. In Sigulda, the park's gateway town, I spot my first Soviet relic: a cluster of tenements and a strange ribbon of concrete. In the cities, the austerity of the architecture seems like an unassuming patch of the urban quilt, but in the forest, surrounded by swatches of deep greens, the structures are shockingly dour.

It was in Sigulda that the Soviet bobsled team trained for international championships, like the Olympics. The facility was



abandoned after the fall of the USSR, and today local business owners offer introductory spins on the track with various sleighs.

Following a stomach-churning ride down the concrete corkscrew, I meet up with a friend-of-a-friend who has invited me to his pirts (sauna). Like the Finnish, Estonians and Latvians have an elaborate and enthusiastic sauna culture, but without any of the modesty assigned to the ritual by other western nations.

After a hardy shake of hands, my friend-of-a-friend strips to his birthday suit and lies upwards on the thin birch planks of his pondside sauna. I follow, and an older woman, the sauna master, immediately enters the chamber holding bushels of dried twigs and flowers. What follows is a choreographed dance, as she swishes her branches through the air to raise the humidity then beats us with garlands to open our pores. The branch-beating session lasts some 15 minutes, after which I'm grabbed by the arm and tossed in the chilly lakelet out the door. Lather, rinse, repeat, with a splash of vodka and some cured meats, and by the end of the afternoon I feel fully indoctrinated into the Baltic way of life and ready to continue my journey.

The trees continue to march on like noble warriors, apart from the odd clearing marking a cool, dark lake in the near distance, until suddenly the crash of the frigid Baltic Sea breaks their stride. The seaside enclave of Jūrmala softens the transition between worlds with its cottage architecture and Art Nouveau flourishes. In summer months, the beach teems with day-tripping Rigans, but out of season the veneer fades on the holiday town, and the so-called sanitariums lie bare along the coast like beached cruise liners.

LĪGATNE BUNKER

In Latvia's pine forests lies one of the most compelling artifacts from the Soviet era, lending the land's dystopian history some context. Discovered early this century in the basement of a convalescence home, the nuclear shelter was to protect the highest officials of the Union. And no item has been changed since the 1980s: propaganda scrawled on the walls, levers in the control room, and one single bed – for the senior commandant.

Clockwise from top: Tallinn's colourful façades; the skyline of Tallinn from Toompea Hill. Next pages: blue skies over a Baltic beach; Turaida Castle above the Gauja River

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Latvia's coastline swerves north up to a point at Kolka where the Baltic Sea meets the Bay of Riga. A line, where the purple seas lap over the clearer waters of the bay, can be seen from the haunting sea stacks formed by faraway timber. The area was strictly off limits to civilians during the Soviet occupation, and therefore feels lost in time, save the odd concrete wartime watchtower along the shore.

The Cape of Kolka is the indigenous territory of the Livs, or Livonians, one of the ancient regional tribes that guarded their land claims with the legendary ferocity of the Vikings. Today, only a handful of ethnic Livs remain. Their ocean-blue eyes catch your attention as they tend to the small cottages and fish-smoking shacks by the sea.

The solitude of the cape crescendoes with activity as I pass through seaside towns. In laid-back Pāvilosta locals are zipped to the neck in neoprene, battling the Baltic waves on their kiteboards. Further on, grungy Liepāja provides an interesting contrast, with its roaring nightclubs built in old portside warehouses.

Turning inland, I follow an old shipping route back through the grazing fields and tea gardens of Latvia's interior. A detour in the country's southerly Zemgale region brings me to Rundāle Palace, the Baltic's version of Versailles but with only a fraction of the crowds (if any visitors at all.) And with opulence on the mind I head straight for Hotel Bergs upon finally reaching Riga, Latvia's capital. Once held by the country's leading family, the mansion-like complex in the heart of the city – with its contemporary embellishments – is now named in honour of its former patriarch, Kristaps Kalniņš, who assumed the surname Bergs (German for 'mountain') to lend his entrepreneurial ambitions a more cosmopolitan flair. Turns out there's a mountain in the Baltic after all. **Brandon Presser**

'The area near Kolka was strictly off limits to civilians during the Soviet occupation and feels lost in time'

DIRECTIONS

Start // Tallinn, Estonia
End // Riga, Latvia
Distance // 608 miles (978km)
When to drive // June is the optimal month for travel, when the Baltic nations embrace their pagan roots with celebrations held around the summer solstice; July, August and September remain delightfully busy along the coast as well.
Where to eat // Tallinn offers plenty of hipster hangouts: start with Must Puudel (the Black Poodle). In Riga, try upmarket Vincents (restorans.lv), which pioneered the down-to-earth food movement that supplanted pork and potatoes and put Latvia on the culinary map.
What to take // Much of the terrain between towns is undeveloped tracts of land, which lends itself well to some blissful camping experiences; pack all the accoutrements for a summertime tenting adventure.

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CROATIA'S ADRIATIC HIGHWAY

The Adriatic Highway stretches nearly 400 miles (643km) along Croatia's coast and provides a front-row seat for 1,185 islands, an embarrassment of cultural riches and slow-food prowess.

My first brush with Croatia came 20 years ago on the Jadranska Magistrala, or Adriatic Hwy, which hugs the country's shoreline from Rijeka, in the north, to the border with Montenegro. It passes nearly 1200 islands, endless vineyards, Unesco sites, national parks and olive groves. But I knew none of this at the time. I was just cruising the sea. On that initial drive, the two-lane ribbon of tarmac – part of the E65 roadway funnelling into the smaller D8 – unfurled beneath my rented, yellow Fiat as I drove between the Dinaric Alps, a string of jagged limestone cliffs teetering above me on one side, and the sea below on the other. Zen-filled open roads, extending to the horizon, would suddenly give way to white-knuckle hairpins and crawling along in first gear as a rainbow of sailboats appeared on the rocky beach below.

In those nascent days as a travel journalist, my sophomoric goal was to choose one of the many secluded villages and hole up in a writer's bungalow. There I would craft something special to stagger my non-existent editors. Salty fishermen sitting in the sun mending nets while puffing cigarettes would be a bonus. Perhaps skiffs would be scattered along a pebble beach, the deep-blue Adriatic slapping at their weathered sterns. I knew I was in the right place when I had to slow to a snail's pace behind a man, rope in hand, coaxing along his donkey loaded with baskets of grapes.

There were fishermen, by the way. And twice each day I joined the procession of villagers filling jugs with fresh spring water that flowed from a pipe sticking out of a rock wall. During those communal moments, I learned of secret beaches, caves, and where to go for activities I had, until then, not associated with the recently independent country.

Not much has changed, for me, over the past two decades. Every year I use the Adriatic Hwy for both business, as a journalist, and for pleasure. However, Croatia is no longer such a secret. But, in many ways, the popularity makes this road of slow discovery even more special.

These days, as time-pressed tourists rush to reach their must-see spots, those with a slower pace in mind, travellers in search of authentic adventure, know better.

'Five Unesco World Heritage sites crowd the highway, not including the Roman and Hellenic ruins along the route'

'Driving along this highway – or even better, riding on a motorbike – is a great way to experience the diversity of Croatia,' says Veselka Huljic, the general manager of AndAdventure (andadventure.com). The Split-based adventure tourism operator offers trips and excursions that include activities such as sea kayaking, hiking and cycling, but specialises in customer-driven, tailor-made tours. 'You can't really get to know the depth of this country until you travel without a schedule,' says Huljic. 'Stop as you please along the coast, take in amazing views of the sea, and hop onto islands to experience culture, the parks, the incredible food and wine. At this speed the country starts to feel like yours.'

Over the years, the Adriatic Hwy has become the ultimate insider reference tool for me as I learned about the country's angles and traditions. It would also be a surefire suggestion for the continuous stream of visiting friends and family.

For instance, the highway provides access to five national parks, which each open a window into the character of the coast. Northern Velebit National Park, with sweeping sea views, is a jumping-off spot for long-distance hikers heading into the Velebit mountains, part of the trans-Balkan Via Dinarica trail running from Slovenia to Macedonia. Paklenica National Park, a confluence of sheer canyons, is a famous climbing destination. Krka takes visitors to some of the continent's most beautiful waterfalls. And the island-based Kornati and Mljet National Parks give travellers a sense of the coast's hallmark remoteness.

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Four Unesco World Heritage sites crowd the highway: the Cathedral of St James in Šibenik, the historic town of Trogir, the Diocletian's Palace in Split, and Dubrovnik's walled Old Town. Each offers an insight into the timeline of the Adriatic. And this doesn't even include the Roman and Hellenic ruins strewn along the route with such nonchalance that it's common to pass by people milling about atop ancient blocks. The city of Zadar, for example, acts as an open-air museum with the original Roman forum and streets still in daily use.

For those who have heard that Croatia is a gastronomic wonderland, the Jadranska Magistrala is as much a progressive dinner as it is a road trip. The island of Pag, in northern Dalmatia is the country's sheep's-cheese capital and specialises in a sort – paški sir – that is flavoured by the salty grasses and herbs the animals graze upon. The road then passes through the village of Posedarje, known for its pršut (dry-cured ham). Further south, travellers wheel past the Pelješac Peninsula, where drivers-turned-diners pair oysters, pulled directly from the bay moments earlier, with some of the region's best red wine, from a local variety called plavac mali.

Two decades ago, the tastes and the images and the notebooks filled with illegible chicken scratch stayed with me long after I pulled off the Adriatic Hwy and returned the yellow Fiat rental. I can't remember if I sold a single magazine story from the trip. I know, for certain, that it was the beginning of my life as a writer. More importantly, the drive changed me forever as a traveller. **Amanda Canning**

REFUELLING

Forget petrol, it is the ingestible liquids on the Adriatic Hwy that will rev your engine and rewire your taste buds. All along the drive you'll see roadside stands selling homemade wine, rakia (fruit brandy), olive oil and honey. Sure, you can purchase excellent versions of each in a spiffy, labelled, glass vessel. But don't hesitate to sample the rustic versions sold in plastic bottles. They are as fresh and good as any you'll taste on the planet.

Previous page, clockwise from left: sheep on Pag island; Croatia's coast road; looking over Dubrovnik. Clockwise from left: the beautiful Majarska Riviera, north of Dubrovnik; locals in Prožura

DIRECTIONS

Start // Rijeka
End // Dubrovnik
Distance // 368 miles (593km)
Getting there // Fly in and out of Zagreb, the inland capital, and then drive or take the bus to Rijeka.
When to drive // Avoid the crowds and visit in the shoulder seasons of May to June and September to October.
How to drive // Head north to south, with the setting sun and all of Croatia's 1,185 islands to your right.
Where to stay // There is a bevy of hotels and private homestays. The latter are marked with signs and the word 'sobe' (rooms).
Rules of the road // Learn about Croatia's specific laws and where to look for roadside assistance via the Croatian Auto Club (hak.hr).

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THE WINDSWEPT WILD ATLANTIC WAY

Untamed and utterly divine, Ireland's west coast is a dramatic procession of deserted beaches and towering cliffs where traditional music and ancient castles abound.

A 'savage beauty' said Oscar Wilde and it's certainly true. Ireland's west coast is battered by Atlantic rollers, strewn with jagged cliffs and littered with wide beaches and sandy coves. It's a place where inky lakes shelter between mountains, sinewy stone walls clamber across hillsides and trees are frequently bent double by the wind. The roads here are narrow and winding, grass often grows along a hump in their middle and a herd of sheep can easily scupper all plans.

It's the part of Ireland I love most. I grew up only an hour from the coast but now that I live abroad I rarely get to spend much time here. Trips home are a whirlwind of family gatherings and, despite my best intentions, a stay on the coast never quite seems to happen. But then the contorted back roads, deserted beaches and turquoise coves of my childhood got rebranded as the Wild Atlantic Way: a 1,600-mile (2,600km) route that traces all the twists, turns and crenulations of Ireland's rugged west coast. I fell for it, hook, line and sinker.

Why take a day trip when I could investigate every little side road and dead-end route that I never had time to take? I could wander aimlessly on a set course and just let the incredible landscape unfold along the way.

The route commences on the Inishowen Peninsula in Donegal, which is a remote and rugged place that's also Ireland's most northerly point and an area peppered with traditional thatched cottages, ancient ruins and enormous numbers of birds. Donegal is wild and mountainous and I start out on my journey by meandering down coastal roads past gloriously deserted beaches. I climb the thick walls of the Grianán of Aileách,

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a 2,000-year-old circular stone fort perched on a 244 metre-high barren hillside, sit mesmerised by the views of Mount Errigal and marvel at the Slieve League cliffs, which plunge 600 metres down into the ocean below.

Heading south, the familiar, flat-topped monolith of Benbulben soon appears, every bit as beautiful as I remember it. From Streedagh Beach the view is sublime, back to Slieve League and south to mountain tops littered with prehistoric graves. I'm tempted to climb to Queen Maeve's grave but speed off instead to Enniscrone and unwind with a hot and slippery dip in an Edwardian seaweed bath. I forge on, aware there's a long way to go and little time to linger. I pass the Céide Fields, the world's most extensive Stone Age monument, holler in the wind on the beach at Belmullet and feel the sorrow of the past in Achill's abandoned famine villages.

Impetuous weather and tortuous roads remind me that it's a harsh place to live but it's all forgotten in a blur of colourful good cheer and rousing traditional music in Georgian Westport. I climb Croagh Patrick, Ireland's holiest mountain, and am treated to a clear view of the islands of Clew Bay. I stop for

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a bowl of steaming Killary Harbour mussels at the head of the moody inlet, see salmon being smoked on the pier at Ballyconneely and watch the sun set over turquoise waters from the idyllic white sands of Dog's Bay.

Vibrant, bohemian Galway soon gives way to the limestone fields of the Burren, the precipitous Cliffs of Moher and the reels and jigs that are a feature of Doolin's pubs. The driving is easy; the challenge is not getting waylaid along the way.

I make my way to places I've only ever heard of on the shipping forecast, where colourful lighthouses pilot ships to safety. In a downpour I remind myself why I set out to do this at all, to reach places just like this, that I would never have bothered to visit otherwise, where dead-end roads question my commitment but reward me with incredible views.

I take a ferry across the Shannon Estuary and enter the 'kingdom' of Kerry. I drive Slea Head and round furrowed headlands to see brilliant beaches embraced by rocky cliffs. The Blasket Islands look beguiling but I struggle to see beyond the tales of unrelenting hardship recounted by author and islander Peig Sayers, which are a staple on the Irish school curriculum. I revel in Dingle's traditional pub-cum-hardware shops before blowing away the cobwebs on the sweeping expanse of Inch Beach.

Then it's on to the Ring of Kerry to wind my way around Ireland's highest peaks, Macgillycuddy's Reeks, and past the jagged Skelligs where a 6th-century monastery doubled as Luke Skywalker's secret hideaway in *The Force Awakens*. As I head south from Kenmare the traffic eases away as I make my way along the wonderfully remote Beara Peninsula. Vividly painted fishing villages and farming communities dot the mountainsides, sheep wander everywhere, some even transported to their island home by cable car.

The scenery calms as I make my way through prosperous West Cork and I can feel my journey is almost at an end. I soak up the sun in remote Barleycove before making the final push through picturesque villages with quaint names and bobbing yachts, trendy shops and organic farmers' markets to the narrow, winding streets of Kinsale, where gourmet restaurants tempt me to celebrate the end of this epic journey.

I don't really feel like celebrating, though. Instead of scratching an itch, this invigorating journey has succeeded in opening up a legion of longing. I want to go back again, to do all the things I missed this time around: to hop on ferries to outlying islands, kayak around headlands, hike up mountains, scramble over castle ruins, visit oyster beds and spend however long it takes to learn to surf.

Yes, the rain poured and the wind whipped at my skin at times, but it's only when you've given up on the downpour ever stopping that you appreciate the magic of the clouds parting and the sun lighting up the hillsides. It's only then you realise that there's nowhere quite so beautiful. **Etain O'Carroll**

FRUIT OF THE SEA

Great seafood is one of the consummate joys of driving the Wild Atlantic Way, with everything from slick restaurants to cosy pubs and roadside trailers serving succulent lobster, oysters, mussels and salmon straight from the sea. You can forage for seafood with a local guide, visit smoke houses and mussel farms, tour oyster beds or join in a food festival to see how the landscape and customs influence the fine foods the region produces today.

Left: the still waters of Derryclare Lough in Connemara. Previous page: Fanad Head lighthouse, near the Inishowen Peninsula

DIRECTIONS

Start // Inishowen
End // Kinsale
Distance // 1,600 miles (2,600km)
Getting there // Just across the river from Inishowen, Derry has a small airport but Belfast, 95 miles (150km) away, has more choice. Kinsale is 12 miles (20km) from Cork Airport.
When to drive // April to October when it's marginally less inclined to rain.
What to take // Raincoats, wellies, hiking boots, umbrellas, wetsuits, an ark; whatever it takes to withstand the changeable weather.
Car hire // At Derry and Belfast airports in Northern Ireland, but returning to Cork Airport will incur a hefty fee. It's better to hire and return to the same spot in the Republic.
More info // thewildatlanticway.com

TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

Europe's accessibility and beautifully varied scenery make it ideal for a British Airways fly-drive getaway

One of the most alluring aspects of travelling to the continent is the prospect of experiencing different destinations at every turn. And on a road trip, with scenery gently rolling past you and the ability to take things at your own pace, the journey can be as rewarding as the destination. On a fly-drive or multi-centre holiday with British Airways and Avis, Europe's greatest road trips open out in front of you, ready to be enjoyed.

Italian adventures

An efficient way of taking in Italy's attractive combination of ancient architecture, charming hospitality and idyllic Mediterranean coastline is a multi-centre drive encompassing Rome, Tuscany and Pisa. Avis has a wide range of vehicles to suit parties of all sizes and budgets, from small and compact to roomy SUVs, and if you're starting in the lively streets of Rome, something small and nippy may be in order.

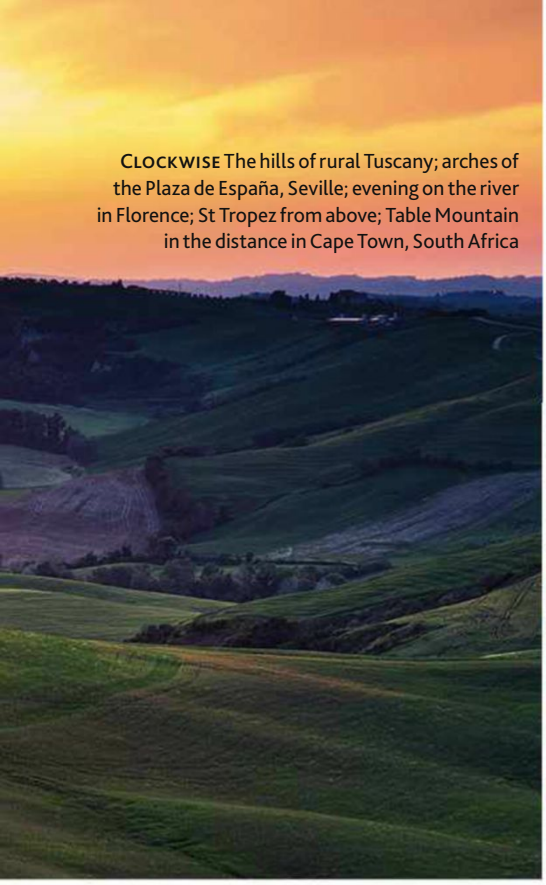
Rome's abundance of historical riches includes Vatican City and the opulent Sistine Chapel within it, the dramatic Trevi Fountain and the Colosseum in all its atmospheric vastness. When the time comes to leave the capital, hop into your Avis vehicle of choice and head north on the E35 to Florence, and its rich Renaissance aesthetic. Here, visit the imposing Galleria degli Uffizi, home to the world's biggest collection of Renaissance art.

For the most scenic route, venture north towards the Tuscan coast, through rolling hills and south through quaint seaside towns such as Massa and Viareggio, until you reach Pisa. As well as the world's most famous architectural error, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, you'll find the exquisitely detailed Duomo cathedral and accompanying Battistero (Baptistry) here.

A Spanish lap of honour

The Spanish region of Andalucía is another ideal canvas for a road trip. Begin in Seville, a city that revels in the contrast between old and new. Visit the Unesco-listed Real Alcázar – an impressive palace combining Christian and Moorish architecture originating from the 10th century. Over at the Hospital de los Venerables Sacerdotes museum, you can see 17th-century paintings, and for a more modern artistic pursuit, check out the locally divisive Metropol Parasol. This giant undulating sunshade, designed by German architect Jürgen Mayer, is said to be the largest wooden structure in the world.

From Seville, head north-east to Córdoba to see the Mezquita mosque – a multi-arched masterpiece and fitting reminder of Spain's diverse history. Further overtures to its Moorish past lie in Granada, specifically the Alhambra palace, replete with ornate stone carvings. Conclude your trip in Málaga, a bright spark on the Costa del Sol where you can visit the Museo Picasso Málaga for a unique insight into the city's favourite son, as well as the 16th-century cathedral on the site of an old mosque. The lure of Malagueta beach may also prove irresistible.



Clockwise The hills of rural Tuscany; arches of the Plaza de España, Seville; evening on the river in Florence; St Tropez from above; Table Mountain in the distance in Cape Town, South Africa

Cruising the Côte d'Azur

Is there a more apt location in the world to try Avis' range of luxury cars than the French Riviera? You certainly won't look out of place in glitzy St Tropez, which makes the ideal starting point for your jaunt through the south of France. Take in the modern art collection at the Musée de l'Annonciade and enjoy the views from the 17th-century stone fortress Citadelle.

Nice, the unofficial capital of the French Riviera, is just under two hours' drive up the coast. Stroll through Vieux Nice, all delis and cafés adorned with turquoise shutters. Its pièce de résistance is the Cours Saleya, a lively market square with large, seductive floral displays including fuchsias and dahlia. A little out of town lies the Musée Matisse, which houses an eclectic assortment of works by Henri Matisse, who died here in 1954.

For a luxurious finale, carry on the short distance to the tiny principality of Monaco, where you can take a chance in the world-famous Casino de Monte-Carlo, or catch a glimpse of royal life at the Palais Princier de Monaco. For a taste of life before high society rolled in, head up the cliff to Le Rocher, an old town full of medieval lanes, seemingly a world away from the bejewelled glamour below.

Further afield?

British Airways and Avis can make your fantasy road trip a reality pretty much anywhere, whether it's an American dream of Route 66, the Great Barrier Reef drive in Australia or the coastal majesty of Cape Point in South Africa.

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IN PURSUIT OF THE TARGA FLORIO, SICILY

Motor racing started on public roads before moving to specialised racing tracks and none of those early road circuits conjures up the magic better than Italy's ultimate test.

The photograph was taken in 1970 and I had no trouble tracking down its location in Campofelice. The coastal town is an easy drive east of Palermo, on the north coast of Sicily. Campofelice di Roccella has a long beach, an important church, a 14th-century castle, and nearby there are the Greek ruins of Himera, but it's what's happening in the street on that Sunday in May that has clearly entranced a large contingent of the local population. Under the building balconies, which I found so easy to identify, the citizens of Campofelice are lining the pavements, leaning out into the street, waving ecstatically, clearly cheering loudly for a local Palermo schoolteacher.

The schoolteacher is Nino Vaccarella and he is hurtling towards them, obviously travelling at something approaching warp speed, in a bright-red 600 horsepower Ferrari 512S – and he is in the lead of the Targa Florio. He didn't go on to win the Targa Florio that year, but he did the following year and again in 1975, when he clinched his third Targa victory. That 1970 photograph summed up what made the Sicilian sports car race so utterly irresistible: the setting, the enthusiasm and the sheer absurdity of it. You simply do not let people stand in the street, totally unprotected, when racing cars are hurtling past.

From 1906 to 1977, however, the world's oldest sport cars race did exactly that. At first the race was a complete circuit of Sicily, and over the years assorted other routes were tried, but from 1951 the race used the Circuito Piccolo delle Madonie. The Madonie is one of Sicily's principal mountain ranges, and since *piccolo* is Italian for 'little' this was the small racing track in the mountains. The short one, the little track with more than 700 corners. You went around it 11 times if you were going to win the Targa Florio. And although the long straight that stretches along the

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coast towards Palermo might have given Signor Vaccarella the opportunity to push his Ferrari to its maximum speed, all those twisting corners as the circuit climbed up into the hills meant that the fastest anyone ever got around the circuit was an average of just under 80mph (129km/h).

Nino Vaccarella, now in his 80s, still turns up at historic motoring events to demonstrate the fire-breathing racing monsters of his heyday. Although he did drive in a handful of Formula 1 Grand Prix races, sports cars were his speciality, when he could get away from his day job: teaching accounting. He won all sorts of races, including the Le Mans 24-Hour-Race, but it was the Targa Florio where he was always the popular favourite. When he crashed his Ferrari into a wall and out of the race in 1966, 'Viva Nino' was graffitied on the wall he hit.

From Campofelice, where I tracked down that evocative motor racing photograph, it's about six miles (10km) along the coast to where the track turns sharp left and starts to climb – and twist and turn – from sea level towards the town of Cerda at 272 metres. Cerda was the start and finish point of the Targa Florio; on such a narrow winding track it was impossible to start the cars together so, like the Mountain Circuit Tourist Trophy (TT) motorcycle track on the Isle of Man, the cars started one by one, 15 seconds apart. The starting order was often a confusing jumble, but even if they didn't all start together there would soon be plenty of racing on the road. The pit counter still stands beside the old starting line, and manufacturers still like to bring their latest creations down to the track to try them out. The

SICILIAN PIT STOPS

Casale Drinzi, which is just a short stroll out of Collesano, features an acclaimed Slow Food restaurant that serves hearty Madonie mountain specialities on the menu and pizzas at night. If you've imbibed too much Sicilian wine there are also B&B rooms available. With Casale Drinzi's food, wine, architecture, old churches, history and beautiful Sicilian mountain scenery, motor racing almost comes as something of a surprise bonus.

Clockwise from top: the town of Collesano; central Palermo; Mondello beach, Sicily. Previous page: Luigi Tarramazzo's Ferrari 250GTO takes a bend in the 1964 Targa Florio

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impossibly beautiful countryside with its photogenically perfect driving roads certainly helps.

If the road wasn't already torturous enough, from Cerda it really begins to corkscrew as it hairpins its way up to Caltavuturo, the 'Fortress of Vultures,' at 635 metres high. From the coast the track has been running south, but now the route turns north and starts the descent back towards the coast, dropping down through Scillato and Collesano at 468 metres before the final breakneck plunge down towards the sea. Collesano has Greek and Arab historic connections, the remains of a Norman castle and an assortment of interesting churches. It also boasts the official Targa Florio Museum, which features a model of every race winner.

Targa simply means 'plate' and the plate in question was presented as a prize by Vincenzo Florio, a wealthy Sicilian businessperson, wine merchant and fast car enthusiast. The name lives on in the Targa Tasmania, an annual race around the Australian island state, and in every Porsche 911 Targa to cruise Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles or the King's Rd in London's Chelsea. Porsche was a Targa Florio specialist; it won the race 11 times, although that's only once more than Alfa Romeo.

In the Targa Florio's racing days, drivers would often practise when the road was open to everyday traffic, and dodging wayward donkeys was part of the fun. But with so many corners to memorise, regular racing practice time was clearly inadequate. The Circuito Piccolo delle Madonie is still a wonderful road to drive, although you're obviously not going to do it in anything like the sub-34 minute lap record. Two hours and seven minutes is the suggestion from Google Maps, an average speed of just over 20mph (35km/h). Given the 700 corners, the twists, the turns, the climbs, the descents... that's probably quite fast enough. **Tony Wheeler**

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'In the Targa Florio's racing days, drivers would practise when the road was open to traffic – donkeys included'

DIRECTIONS

Start/End // Cerda, Sicily

Distance // 45 miles (72km) and – apart from 5 miles (8km) along the coast, good for 200mph (322km/h) when the roads were closed – it's all either corkscrewing uphill or twisting and turning down.

Getting there // Palermo, the capital of Sicily, which welcomes frequent flights from all over Europe and plenty of ferry services from other Italian ports, is just 31 miles (50km) to the west.

When to drive // Avoid summer crowds or go very early: venturing out at dawn for a pre-breakfast Targa lap is recommended.

What to drive // A Porsche or an Alfa Romeo are totally appropriate, but in Italy, for anything requiring some speed, a Ferrari can't be beaten.

Where to stay // Lots of excellent little hotels along the coast or in the mountain villages.

REACHING THE ISLE OF SKYE

From Portree on the Isle of Skye to the coastal township of Applecross on the mainland, here is a breathtaking journey around and up the Scottish Highlands.

Portree and Applecross are only 74 miles (119km) apart by road, but the route between them is epic in the most elemental sense. Driving in an arc from one to the other, the panorama from the passenger's side window is a near-constant of bruised-blue open seas or gaping loch, these waters often churning and frothing. The landscape is otherwise one of verdant pine forest, even greater expanses of rugged, rock-strewn moorland and towering mountain ranges. Separating these two townships, one located just off the West Coast of Scotland, the other just on, is the highest and the most otherworldly pass traversable by car in the British Isles.

The first time I took this extraordinary drive was in the summer of 2011, going in the reverse direction. Today, I depart from Portree on a frigid midwinter's morning with a bank of gun-grey cloud brooding over the humpbacked peak of Ben Tianavaig, one of the two prominences that flank the town's natural harbour. Within a mile I'm in the midst of Skye's open country, panoplies of rolling, craggy dun-coloured moor dotted with battalions of pine. A bubbling stream runs parallel to the road. Tendrils of mist snake over the water, a common sight here. In the 9th century, Viking invaders from Scandinavia gave the island the name Skuy, Norse for 'misty isle'.

Even those marauding Norsemen must surely have been struck by the Cuillins, the twin mountain ranges that bisect the island at its midpoint. The A87 winds right through them: the Red Cuillin – triangular-shaped peaks as if a child's drawing or a Martian landscape – looming on one side of Glen Sligachan; on the other the more ominous Black Cuillin, jagged like a row of broken teeth. I drive up and around the Cuillin, which provide company until the road drops on to the flatter land of Broadford Bay, where I can look out at Skye's little sister isle, Raasay, high and rocky.

I follow the bend of the bay to the southern tip of the island and the Skye road bridge. Opened in 1995 and spanning the picture-postcard Lochalsh Sound, this replaced a ferry service that had been sailing in one form or other since the 1600s. From the outset, the bridge was controversial. The private operating company appointed by the government to run the bridge imposed a prohibitive toll which locals refused to pay. More than 100 arrests were made, but Skye folk did what they have been doing for

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‘At the plateau, an alien netherworld unfolds: a wilderness of black rock, a blacker sky, snow and ice on the ground’

centuries, which is to say dug in, and in 2004 the toll was scrapped. This region as a whole demands hardiness. That much is apparent as I head out of the town of Kyle of Lochalsh towards the buttresses of Glen Shiel, menacing black slabs stretched across the horizon, with a cold wind howling in off the Sound.

Turning left off the A87, roughly three miles (5km) further down the road and just after the tiny village of Auchtertyre, I join the Wester Ross coastal route. I might as well be passing into Middle Earth. As the meandering road rises, falls and climbs again, it does so through curtains of pine and silver birch. Ahead of me are the sheer peaks of the Torridon range, snow-capped and foreboding. To the right, banks of steep hillside are flecked with deep purple heather; below, glistening, is the enormous spread of Loch Carron. Raven stalk the higher ground; a buzzard perches on a roadside sign, motionless and watchful.

Unspoilt, untamed beauty surrounds me for 20 miles (32km), yet it is a mere prelude to the wild heart of the drive. The turn off for Bealach na Bà – the Pass of the Cattle – is two miles (3km) on from the township of Kishorn. Ahead of it, a large red sign spits out warnings: 'Not suitable for caravans, large vehicles or learner drivers! High risk of snow!' Like Frodo Baggins, I am off to Mordor.

In total, Bealach na Bà stretches out and up for 11 miles (18km), rising at a one-in-five gradient to 2053ft (626 metres) and then plunging back down to Applecross Bay. Initially, it is deceptive, almost benign. As I guide the car up a gently climbing bend, I am afforded a view out to sea with the sun breaking through the cloud. On the hillside, I spot a pair of red deer, stags, standing sentry and watching me. Soon enough, though, the road tapers to a single track and the true drama begins. Here, the road bucks and with it the car engine whines in protest. At the same time, the bends become more acute until the route is but a series of head-spinning hairpins – a rusty barrier all that stands on one side between narrow track and a straight drop of hundreds of feet. More than enough to make one's stomach churn.

At the plateau, a kind of alien netherworld unfolds. This is a wilderness of black rock, a blacker sky, snow and ice on the ground, all else indistinct in the gloom. And then, magically, at the apex of the descent and under the charcoal cloud line, there is clear sky and the sun once more kisses the land and sea, lighting them up in a chorus of greens and blues. Down, down I go towards Applecross. Its Gaelic name is A'Chomraich, 'The Sanctuary', and entirely apt. Such as it is, the town is but a ribbon line of white-walled houses, a shop and an inn set along the seafront, looking out to a deep, wide bay. It is hushed, peaceful and welcoming.

I drive another three miles (5km) west of Applecross and pull off the road at a small, rough-hewn car park. A track leads off it and down on to a bowl-shaped beach of golden sand, a bank of it rising 70ft (21 metres) back up to the roadside. There is no one here but me. The tide is out, and I walk across wet sand to the sea's edge. From there, I am able to regard, across the water, Raasay and Skye beyond. So close, but also seeming so very far away. **Paul Rees**

WEE BEASTIES

The West Coast of Scotland is home to rich wildlife. Both white-tailed and golden eagle have become a familiar sight in the skies over the Cuillins and Raasay, while it is not unusual to spot common and bottlenose dolphin, harbour porpoise and even minke whale from sites on the Skye shore, as well as common and grey seal and otter. Take one of the boat trips from Portree, Elgol or Shieldaig, and you might also glimpse rarer visiting whales.

Clockwise from left: a white-tailed sea eagle; the Bealach na Bà road; sunset at Portree. Previous page: untamed scenery on the Isle of Skye

DIRECTIONS

Start // Portree
End // Applecross Inn car park
Distance // 74 miles (119km)
Getting there // The nearest major airport is Inverness, 129 miles (217km) away, where car hire is available. The Skye Bridge means that the island is accessible by road from anywhere in the UK.
Where to eat // Lunch or dinner at the Applecross Inn is a must, especially the divine fish and chips, and fresh seafood platters. You can stay the night, too, but will need to book in advance (applecross.uk.com/inn).
Hot tip // Before setting off, check that the Bealach na Bà route is open: it often closes in winter.
More info // There are helpful tourist information offices in Portree and Applecross.

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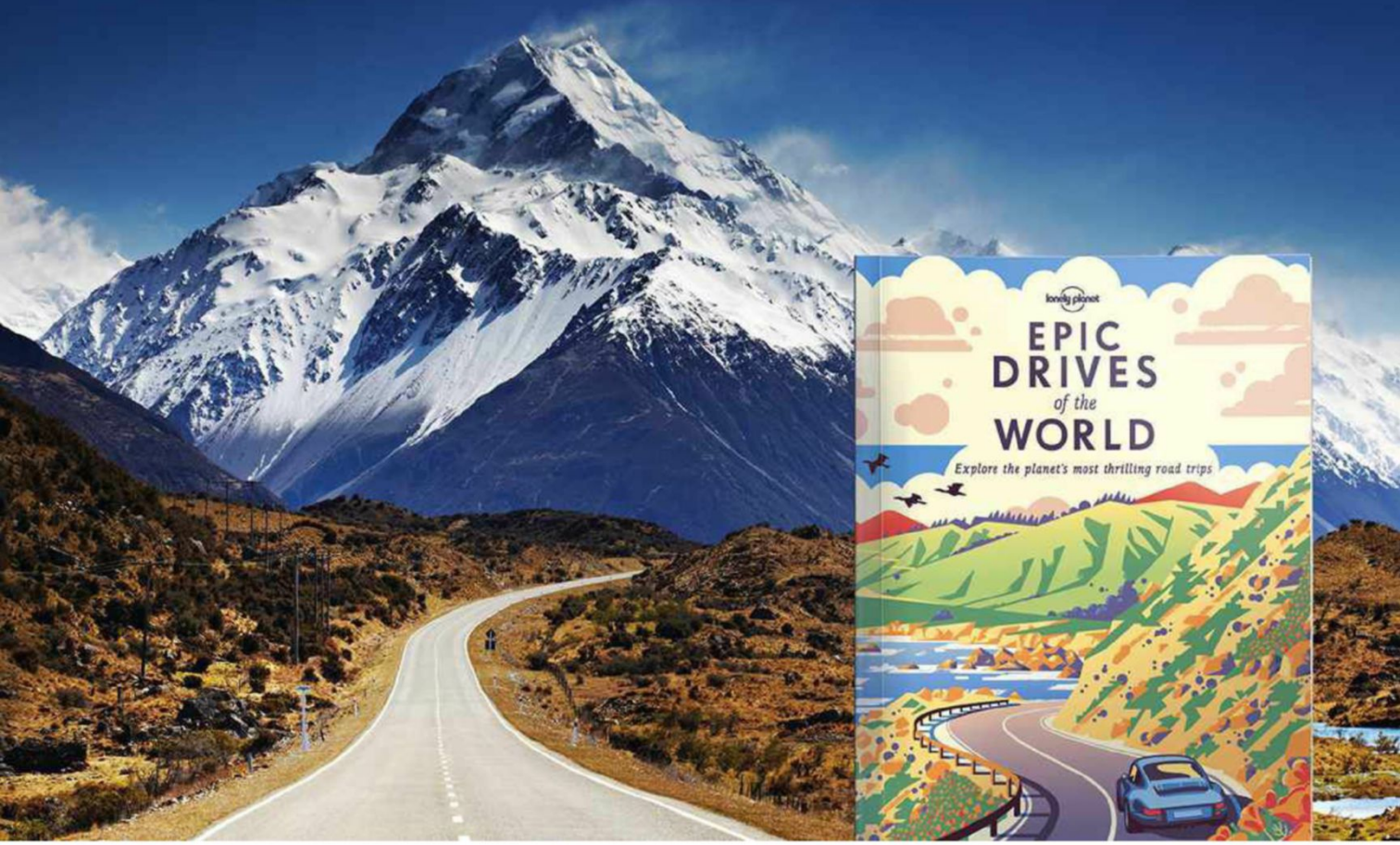

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WINDING UP ON NORWAY'S WEST COAST

Norway may not be the cheapest country for a drive, but the upside is you will mostly have its majestic beauty and prize-winning roads to yourself.

Norway means 'narrow way through the straits', rather apt, given the mighty glacial fjords that lacerate its western coast. Admittedly there's not much that's spellbinding as I roll north out of Bergen. The majesty comes later; for now I'm passing the engineering workshops and other small factories serving the oil and gas industry that has made the city rich – again. The charming buildings that surround the harbour are a reminder that Bergen was a successful business centre for many centuries, going back to its days as a Hanseatic port.

I'm riding out in the wonderful, slightly watery, sunshine typical of Norway. As I follow the fjord first east and then north before turning inland again to Voss, the rugged, often vertical countryside begins to work on me, raising thoughts of Vikings and moody gods.

Norway's roads, bridges and tunnels are sparkling examples of their builders' skill and tenacity, but they shrink to scratches on the mile-high cliffs if you look up a little. Whoops! Not enough attention on the road and a long frost break is trying to turn my front wheel into oncoming traffic. Norway's main roads are excellent, but not all back roads survive the brutal winters unscathed.

I turn north at Voss and then take Stalheimskleiva, the loop of road which runs between two waterfalls and offers 13 hairpins on its mile-long 20-degree climb to the eponymous hotel. It took seven years to build the whole six miles (10km) of road, finishing in 1849. The view towards Gudvangen from the hotel is spectacular, with near-vertical cliffs boxing in the narrow green valley bottom.

Not far past Flam, I face a decision. Carry on straight ahead through the world's longest road tunnel, a 16-mile (28km) marvel, or take the old road across the top? I've ridden through the tunnel before, so the choice is easy. I don't regret it. There are deep snow banks alongside the 30-mile (48km) stretch of narrow, steep and twisting road but its surface is clear and tempts my inner boy racer.

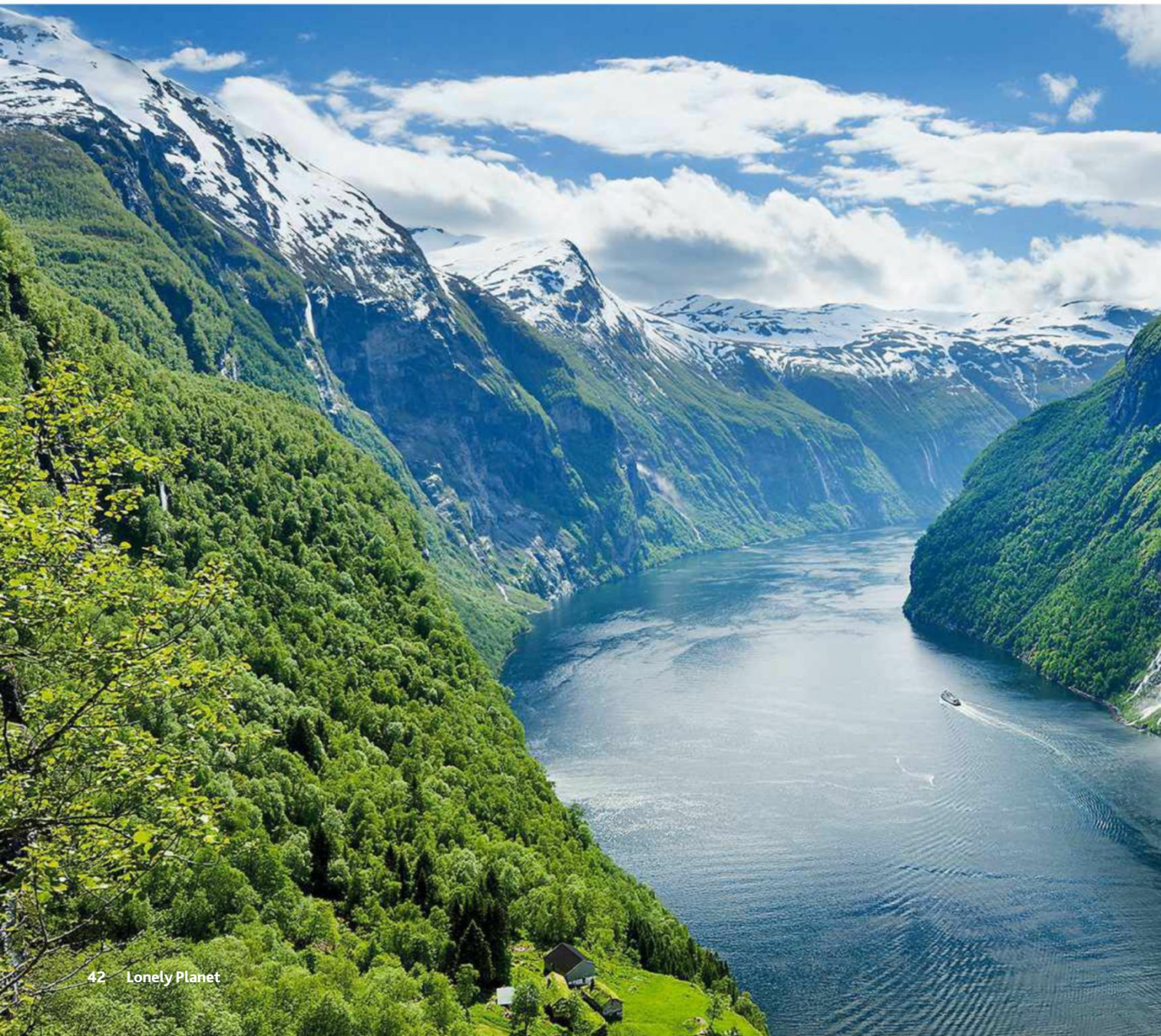
Back at sea level I am speeding along one of the tentacles of

Sognefjord. I cross it on a ferry and turn west along its shore before another ferry takes me across to Dragsvik and on to the E39 main road. It's an intoxicating run north and east from here, always either alongside a fjord or crossing a rocky range by hairpins, smooth, long curves and regular blinks of tunnels.

At Grotli I turn west again, and after following the waterside for a while, climb back up to the high, icy country that interrupts the fjords. The drop back down to sea level at Geiranger is a superb stretch of road, which deservedly won a prize at the 1924 World Expo in Paris. Climbing back up from Geiranger is just as impressive. This is Ørnesvingen, the Eagle's Road, and it has a wonderful lookout like a long tongue of concrete at the top.

The high valley before Trollstigen is renowned for its strawberries, and the fields stretch as far as I can see. A quick visit to Jordbaestova, a cafe advertising the best strawberry cakes in Norway, and then I reach the top of the Troll's Ladder. I pull in at the car park and walk to the viewing platform. Piles of stones, balanced on one another, dot the rocks. 'The tourists think the trolls like them,' says a local. 'They don't. Anyway, there are no such things as trolls.' I'm not sure about that. There's one outside the futuristic information centre, with its odd looks combining humour and veiled threat.

The brochure about Trollstigen claims only 11 hairpins for the descent. That may be true in the strictest sense, but it feels like a lot more, as my bike takes me over bridges spanning the white water



tumbling the 762 metres to the valley floor, and along short straits with steep drops on one side and more sheer rock on the other. Then it's a short run along Romsdalsfjord and up the peninsula that has Ålesund at its tip. This is a lovely town, best seen from the hill behind its sprawl around the waterways that define it.

There is one more marvel to tackle – the Atlantic Road to the north, on the way to Kristiansund. It's only five miles (8km) long, but it squeezes eight bridges into that distance, including the twisting Storseisundet Bridge, which you've probably seen in a car commercial on TV. It's an exhilarating ride, especially when the sea is up, and when I finally reach the long tunnel that will take me to Kristiansund, I'm ready for a beer. **Peter Thoeming**

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Geirangerfjord and the Seven Sisters waterfall

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Alcoholic drinks are expensive in Norway, so it pays to stock up on duty-free en route. You won't be the only traveller on the ferry with a shopping cart of beer, spirits, wine or magnums of champagne. There is a limit to what you can bring in, so don't be as confident as many locals who believe that no-one checks. Check alcohol and tobacco limits at Norwegian Toll Customs (toll.no/en/goods/alcohol-and-tobacco/quotas).

DIRECTIONS

Start // Bergen
End // Kristiansund
Distance // 650km (404 miles), depending on which side roads you take.
Getting there // Take a ferry to Oslo or Kristiansand and ride or drive. Alternatively, take a Hurtigruten ship. These run up the coast frequently and carry both bikes and cars.
When to drive // Between June and August, when Trollstigen is open.
Where to stay // Pre-book hotels or cabins at the many camping grounds.
Visas // Norway is part of the Schengen area. Many Europeans won't need a visa; other nationalities should check.
Vehicle hire // It's best to bring your own. It's possible to rent both motorcycles and cars, but expensive.

Bergen's shopfronts in the afternoon sunshine

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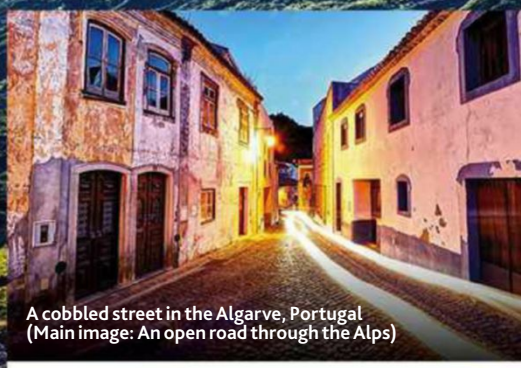
MADE TO MEASURE



A cobbled street in the Algarve, Portugal (Main image: An open road through the Alps)

Villefranche-sur-Mer in the French Riviera

Winding roads of Santorini, Greece

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Say you've settled on Portugal, where your itinerary begins in a villa in the sunny splendour of the Algarve. There you can marvel at the multi-coloured sandstone cliffs, and visit the tiny but pristine beach at Ponta da Piedade in Lagos, or the Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Carmo & Capela dos Ossos church in Faro, made from brilliant white stone, gilded in Brazilian gold.

But if you then crave a bit of urban buzz, it's an easy three-hour drive up the coast to the capital, Lisbon. Here you can stroll the cobblestones of the romantic Alfama district; pay a visit to the Unesco-listed Mosteiro (monastery) in Belém; and grab a coffee in the Praça do Comércio, which in times gone by would be where boat passengers would arrive in the city, and whose walls are as yellow in colour as the custard in a pastel de nata.

Wherever on the continent you choose, it's so easy to design a varied itinerary for yourself that you'll be itching to get going. If logistics and budget allow, meander along the French Riviera in a chic luxury car from Avis' wide range of vehicles, which also includes roomy estates, executive saloons and smaller models to suit all budgets. If you're a larger party looking for an affordable getaway in a Mediterranean climate, why not opt for a people carrier and tour the ancient ruins and welcoming villages across Greece?

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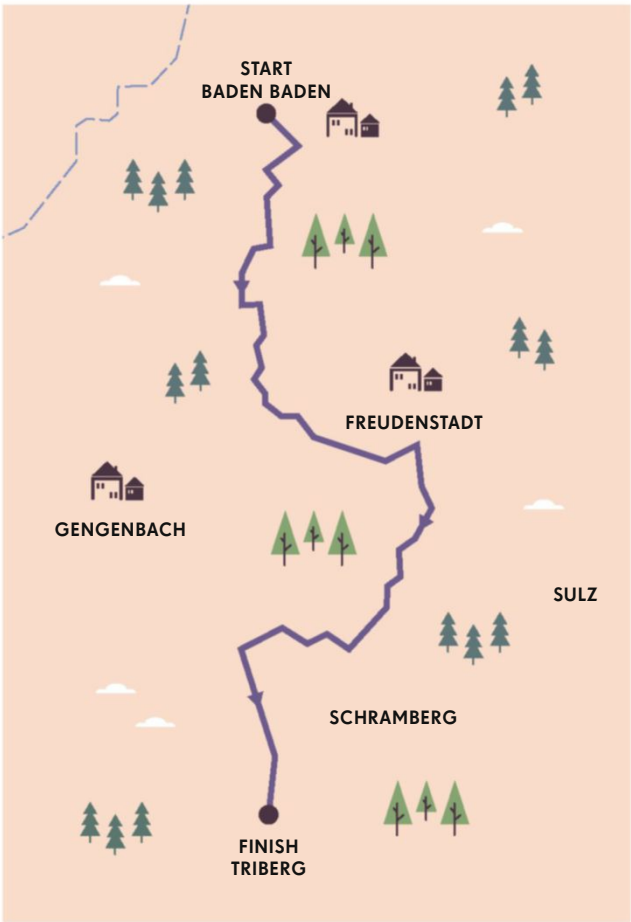
BLACK FOREST HIGHS

Layered with mountains and rippled with mysterious woods, the Black Forest High Road is a drive with altitude, serious curves and scenery straight from a Grimm's fairy tale.

It's like a Christmas card come to life: overnight a fresh layer of snow has blanketed the highest peaks of the Schwarzwald (Black Forest), some topping out at around the 1400m mark. Frosted fir trees glitter in the morning sun, some bent under the weight of ice-laden branches. Down in the valleys, toy-town villages huddle below slender-spired churches and smoke curls from the chimneys of farmhouses, their steep-pitched roofs shingled with wooden tiles. The Schwarzwaldhochstrasse (Black Forest High Road) is quiet at this early hour but, this being Germany, still drivable, natürlich – it has been groomed by a snowplough while the world was still fast asleep.

Of all the roads that carve up the Black Forest, the Schwarzwaldhochstrasse, otherwise known as the B500, is regularly touted as being the most beautiful – and with good reason. This is a road with spirit-soaring views and more twists and turns than a pretzel. One of Germany's oldest panoramic drives, the road climbs steeply from the swish little spa town of Baden-Baden to Freudenstadt, 37 miles (60km) distant, running right through the densely forested heart of the Black Forest National Park. At elevations of between 600m and 1000m, the road opens up the landscapes of the Schwarzwald like a pop-up book. Every gear-crunching bend reveals glorious spruce forest on repeat and landscapes plucked from a bedtime story: a gingerbread village, a castle-crowned hillside or a cuckoo clock that's the size of a house. On clear days, the views stretch to the Upper Rhine Plain and the Vosges Mountains over in neighbouring France. And thankfully, this is one of them.

I've chosen a crisp winter day for the road trip and the contrast to the traffic-clogged autobahn is striking. Up here the cars are



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few and far between and the silence is near total. Viewpoints on the road abound, as do trails; within a couple of minutes' walk of the car, I can find myself alone in a forest of tall firs and pines, which sprinkle me with blizzards of snow at the slightest touch. Listening carefully, the only sound I can decipher is the tentative hammering of woodpeckers.

The Black Forest might be easily accessible and family-friendly, but it is also a pocket of true wilderness that can feel properly remote. Some liken the region to Canada in miniature – minus the bears – and they've got a point. The Schwarzwald is lovely at any time of year: in spring when in bud, in summer when the heather flowers up on the high moors and in autumn when the forest goldens and mushrooms pop up in mossy glades. But it is never lovelier than in the monochrome midwinter, when the first snow cloaks the hills that roll west to France and south almost to the border with Switzerland. For it is only really in winter that you can see how the forest earned its name, its dark hills plumed with trees standing out in bold relief, looking black and impenetrable.

Stretching 100 miles (160km) from top to toe and 37 miles (60km) east to west, the Schwarzwald is not only the Germany of your wildest childhood dreams, it's also blessed with some darn fine road trips, many of which are short enough to squeeze into a weekend of leisurely cruising.

The major attractions on the Black Forest High Road are of the natural kind, such as my first stop: the Geroldsauer Wasserfall, now encrusted with icicles. Beyond the falls, a trail picks its way through the woods to the Waldgaststätte Bütthof, which is a tavern full of woody warmth and local characters sipping spiced Glühwein (mulled wine) and devouring thick-cut bread topped with smoky Schwarzwälder Schinken (Black Forest ham). It's a great stop for a snack before easing back into the drive, which weaves through a delicate fretwork of forest, high moors and gently rounded hills.

I crank up the Volkmusik on the radio and drive on to Mummelsee, a forest-rimmed glacial cirque lake full of local legend; the myth goes that an underwater king and nymphs dwell in its inky depths. From the lake, it's just a short hike up to Hornisgrinde, the highest peak in the Northern Black Forest at 1164m. The plateau is quiet but for the occasional swish of a passing cross-country skier disappearing into the twinkling white woods. Daylight is fading swiftly as I crest the summit and gaze across overlapping hills, silhouetted in a sunset that's like the embers of a dying fire.

After a night at the rustic-chic Berghotel Mummelsee on the lakeshore, dawn lifts a curtain on another bright day. The morning's itinerary is an easygoing one: a visit to the Allerheiligen falls, which stagger over cliffs in a series of cascades. Here a short trail leads through a wooded gorge to a ruined Gothic abbey, its nave exposed to the sky. The onward road takes me past an area that was reforested in the wake of Hurricane Lothar in 1999, a fierce windstorm that

BLACK FOREST FOOD STARS

Four miles (6km) north of Freudenstadt is Baiersbronn. The village may have fewer than 16,000 residents, but it shines with an incredible eight Michelin stars, including two restaurants with three-star status. At Schwarzwaldstube, Harald Wohlfahrt performs culinary magic while staying true to French cooking traditions, while at Restaurant Bareiss, Claus-Peter Lumpp has won plaudits for his brilliant seasonal menus.

Left to right: pausing in a forest glade near Wolfach; half-timbered houses in Schiltach. Previous page: the hills of the Black Forest beckon. Next page: A wooded valley near Gutach; the region is known for its clockmaking

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'Minutes from the car I am alone in a forest of firs and pines, the only sound the tentative hammering of woodpeckers'

whipped through the Schwarzwald at speeds of up to 100mph (160km/h) felling vast tracts of woodland.

The drive officially ends in Freudenstadt which, despite having Germany's largest town square (219m by 216m, for the record), is something of an anticlimax. Heavily bombed in WWII, it lacks the charm of other Black Forest towns. So I push on further south, tagging on an extra couple of days to linger in the horseshoe-shaped Kinzig Valley, lined with half-timbered, candy-coloured villages such as Schiltach, Hausach and Gengenbach – each one prettier than the last.

From the Kinzig Valley, the B33 dips south to castle-topped Hornberg en route to Triberg, where one of Germany's highest waterfalls thunders and the world's biggest cuckoo clock calls on the hour. The town is quite literally the icing on the cake to my road trip. For here is Café Schäfer, home to the original 1915 recipe for Schwarzwälder Kirschtorte, or Black Forest gateau. 'Baking a good gateau isn't rocket science, but it takes time, patience and fresh ingredients,' Claus Schäfer tells me, as I try a forkful of the real deal. It is every bit as deep, dark and delicious as the region it hails from. **Kerry Christiani**

DIRECTIONS

Start // Baden-Baden
End // Triberg
Distance // 37 miles (60km) on the Black Forest High Road; 75 miles (121km) including the Kinzig Valley and Triberg.
Getting there // The closest airport is Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden (airport-baden-baden.com).
When to drive // The road is accessible year-round, though check weather conditions before setting out. Be prepared for flurries of snow in winter; fit snow chains and winter tyres.
More info // For details of sights, attractions, hotels and restaurants, visit schwarzwaldhochstrasse.de. General information is available at blackforest-tourism.com.
Visitor centre // The Black Forest National Park visitor centre is in Seebach on the B500 (schwarzwald-nationalpark.de).

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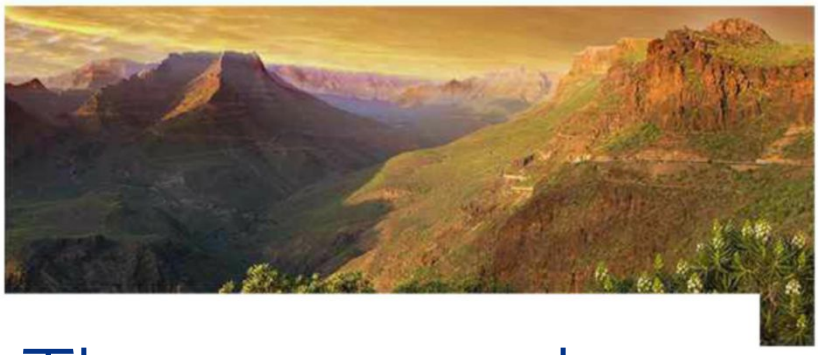

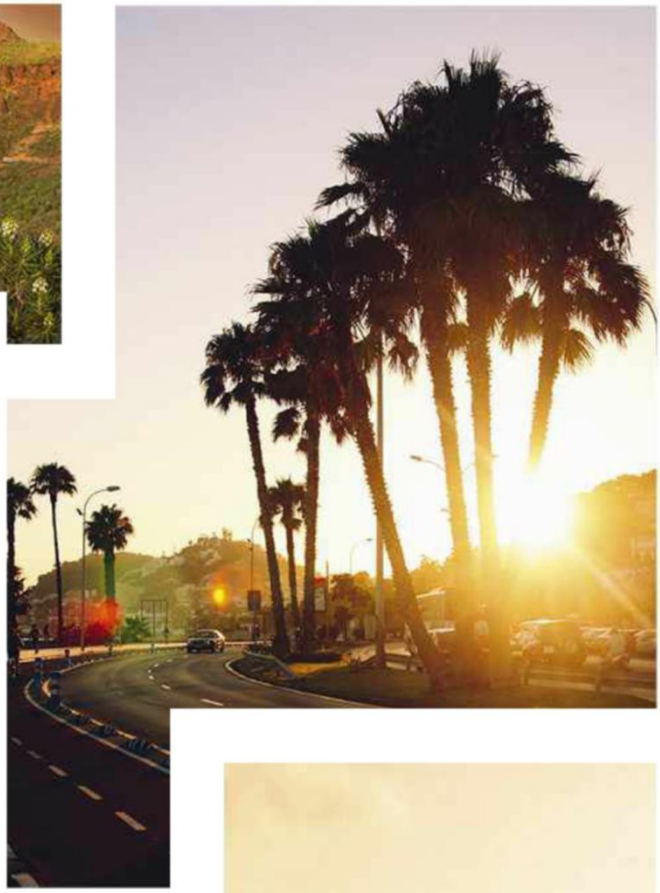

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