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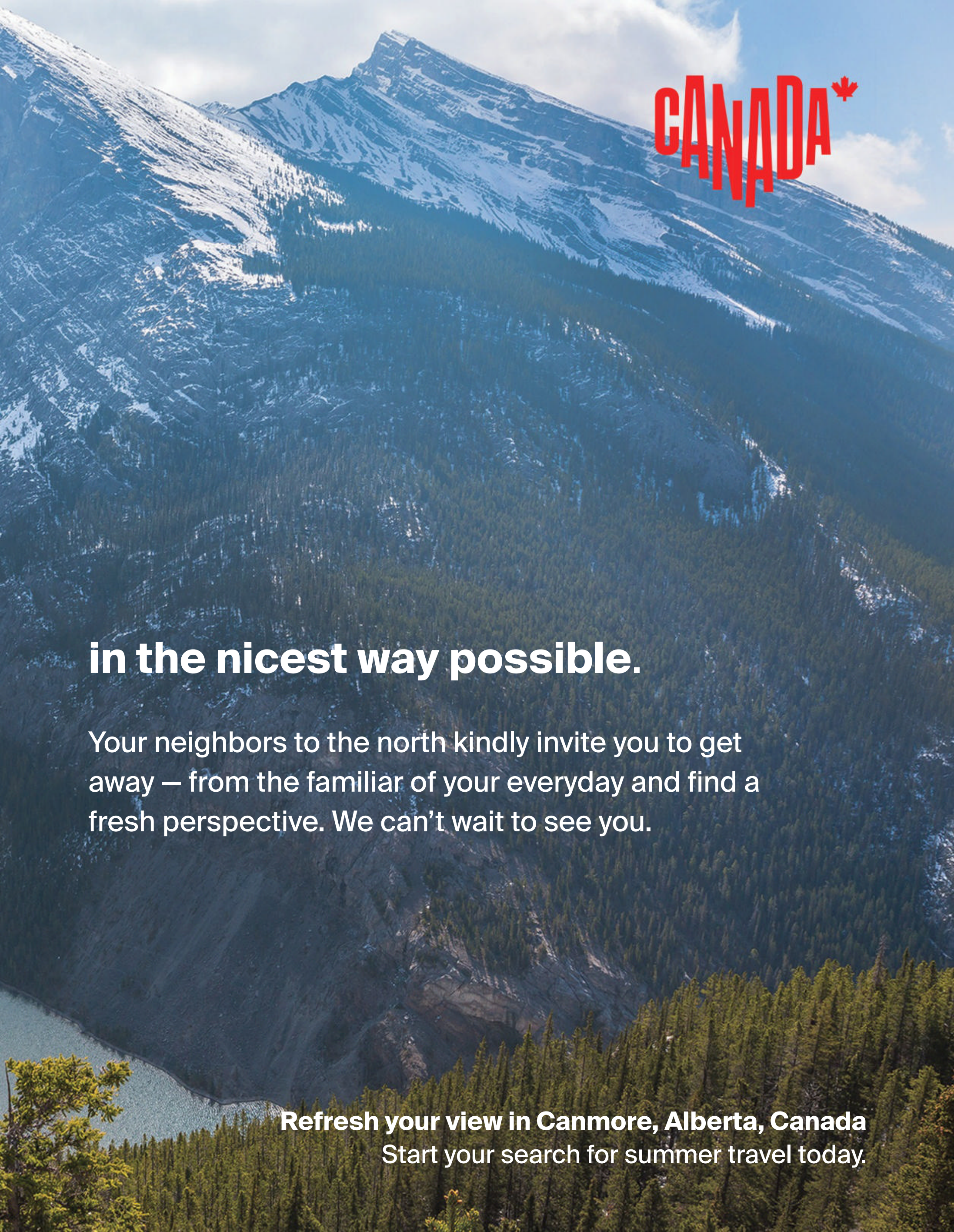
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BONNIE TSUI
Writer

Bonnie Tsui's parents first met at a swimming pool in Hong Kong, so it's only fitting that she's in love with water. The author of *Why We Swim* (Algonquin Books, 2020), Tsui contributes to the *New York Times* and loves to take dips in the chilly waters of the Bay Area, where she lives. In **Making Waves** (p.100), Tsui profiles the world's largest year-round open-water swim group. "We're wired to be called to the sea, to want to be around it," she says. "Our brain activities change around water. It does so much for mental and emotional well-being." Keep up with Tsui's ocean adventures on Instagram @bonnietsui8.

LATRIA GRAHAM
Writer

South Carolina–based writer, storyteller, and cultural critic Latria Graham is one of AFAR's new **Unpacked** columnists. In her first piece (p.25), Graham explores the complex dichotomy between wanting to travel the world and the need to protect it. "Traveling ethically is important because the world has a great number of wonders," she says. "I think people deserve to see them beyond my lifetime." Graham's writing also appears in *Southern Living*, *Oxford American*, and *Outside*. Find her on Instagram @mslatriagraham.

CARSTEN SNEJBJERG
Photographer

In 1997, Carsten Snejbjerg went on a solo 2,100-mile bike ride through China and Vietnam and took photos along the way. It was his first foray into photography—and he's been shooting ever since. In **What Lies Beneath** (p.104), Snejbjerg traveled to Greenland from his home in Copenhagen. He instantly fell in love with the country's rugged, stark landscapes. He began his journey in the south and slowly worked his way up the coast. As he moved north, Snejbjerg was astonished at how quickly the arctic landscapes changed. "I underexposed the images," he says. "I wanted [them] to be dramatic and subtle." Find more of his work on Instagram @carstensnejbjerg.

LAUREN TAMAKI
Illustrator

In **Notes on Camping** (p.72), Calgary-born, Brooklyn-based illustrator Lauren Tamaki took on the task of writing about her first time spending a week in a tent. Despite not growing up with a love of the outdoors, Tamaki says she was inspired to try it during the lockdowns of 2020. "The goal [of my piece] is for people who never considered themselves to be campers to think, 'Oh, I can do it,'" Tamaki says. "[Because] if I can do it, anybody can." Tamaki's work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Her book with Elizabeth Partridge, *Seen And Unseen: What Dorothea Lange, Toyo Miyatake, and Ansel Adams's Photographs Reveal About the Japanese American Incarceration* (Chronicle Books), comes out this fall. Follow Lauren on Instagram @laurentamaki.

VICKI LING
Illustrator

Stuck at home during the pandemic—first in Chicago and more recently, New Orleans—illustrator Vicki Ling found a way to mentally escape: by drawing birds. In **Cheep, Chirp, Whistle, Warble, Trill** (p.45), Ling illustrated Cape starlings, crested fire-backs, Scottish crossbills, and other feathered friends from around the globe. "I like birds a lot, but I didn't really know much about them before," Ling says. "Now, I'm imagining traveling internationally again to get to see them." Originally from Shanghai, Ling moved to the United States with her husband three years ago and is building a career in illustration. Her work has been featured in *Departures* and *Trix Magazine*. Find her on Instagram @vickilingart.

PAIGE McCLANAHAN
Writer

Paige McClanahan's writing focuses on the economic, environmental, and social impacts of travel. For **Up, Up, and Away** (p.36), McClanahan took to the sky to report on a beloved Alpine pastime: paragliding. She profiled Yael Margelisch, a paraglider who won the women's world championship in 2021. "I was aware of how male-dominated [the sport] is," she says. "To see this woman excelling was really interesting." McClanahan also contributes to the *New York Times* and is the host of *The Better Travel Podcast*. Keep up with her on Instagram @paigemcclanahan.

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Common Ground

I RECENTLY JOINED AFAR as editorial director. One of the things that attracted me to the company was its mission-driven approach: Instead of treating travel as a means to escape from the world, AFAR inspires travelers to engage with it more deeply. Travel allows us to pause, take in our exquisite planet, open ourselves up to new cultures, and better understand the perspectives of other people. These experiences can guide how we choose to live.

Before AFAR, I spent my journalism career writing and editing stories about global development, which allowed me to visit communities different from my own. My work required difficult and sometimes harrowing conversations on topics such as female genital cutting and infant malnutrition, but I loved connecting with people and searching for some kind of common ground, however small and fleeting. This feeling led me to publish a book last year, *Tread Brightly: Notes on Ethical Travel*. A collection of 17 essays, it poses the question, "When we arrive in a new place, how do we show up—culturally, environmentally, and socially?"

I am excited to infuse this spirit into AFAR, especially as we embark on our first redesign of the magazine since 2015. We hope this Earth Issue, and editions going forward, will invoke the sheer awe that comes from exploring the world, while empowering you to be a more thoughtful traveler.

Divided into three sections—Air, Land, and Water—this issue will help you discover and deepen your appreciation for nature around the globe. In the following pages, we soar through the skies above Verbier, Switzerland, with a prominent female paraglider (page 36); go camping on the East End of Long Island, New York (page 72); and journey to Greenland (page 104), where climate change means the icebergs are disappearing—along with the rich language to describe them. We debut new columns, including Unpacked (page 25), which navigates the complex dichotomy between wanting to experience the world and the need to protect it from further ecological devastation.

As the poet, farmer, and essayist Wendell Berry once wrote, "The Earth is what we all have in common." I'd love to hear what you think of the issue. Please drop me a line on Twitter @sarika008.

Travel well,

SARIKA BANSAL

Editorial Director

While camping in northern Kenya, Sarika Bansal hiked and played soccer with new friends from Marsabit County.

JAY LURIE

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A Locavore's Guide to Asheville

Support small businesses and help preserve culinary heritage when visiting this slow-food enclave, powered by seasonal ingredients from family farms, in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Regional comforts like fried chicken biscuits and catfish po'boys come locally sourced at **HomeGrown**. Local microbrews wash down seasonal takes on Southern classics at the **Blackbird**. Farm-to-table trailblazer **Market Place** has been serving up dishes crafted with ingredients from nearby farms and artisan producers since 1979. Book a stay at **Applewood Manor** where you can arrange a cooking class in the chef's dream kitchen—and revel in the immersive experience.

With James Beard Award winners, breweries, and more, this hub of gastronomy brims with mom-and-pop purveyors and restaurants committed to sustainability in their quest for creative, top-tier dining. Eating seasonally and locally on a trip to Asheville helps celebrate its rich traditions and distinctive communities, contributes to the regional economy, and nourishes your soul too.

Find Dining

Among the best ways to taste Asheville's delicacies is to forage for them yourself.

Go beyond merely filling your plate with locally sourced meals. Head out with area experts on expeditions that will take you into the wilds to hunt down ingredients and discover a deeper sense of place.

No Taste Like Home offers top-rated, guided Foraging Tours and Wild Food Strolls suitable for all ages and capped off with appetizers using your foraged haul at one of Asheville's award-winning eateries.

Graveyard Fields, a favorite hiking trail, is an easy, 3.5-mile loop with waterfalls, rhododendrons, and blueberries in summer months, when you can pick up to a gallon per day. Pro tip: go early in the day and season to maximize picking opportunities and lessen your impact.

ASHEVILLE
ExploreAsheville.com

by **LATRIA GRAHAM**

A Delicate Balance

AFAR's new columnist reflects on the tension between exploring our planet and wanting to protect it.

SOME DISASTERS announce themselves with a roar, others with barely a whisper. No alarm bells go off when a species goes extinct, or when birds alter their migratory patterns from vertical (north to south) to horizontal (east to west) due to climate change. There are precious few warning signs before endangered destinations, such as the Philippine island of Boracay, buckle due to littering and vandalism of habitats, causing the decimation of entire ecosystems. It's no secret that we are in the midst of a climate emergency, even when we don't see the daily proof.

Is there an ethical way to travel the Earth and not cause it harm? I believe so. But it takes planning, deliberate choices, and respect for the people and places we have the privilege of visiting. Two ideas—summaries of quotes from tennis player Arthur Ashe and poet Maya Angelou, respectively—steer me: *Do what you can with what you have* and *When you know better, do better*. Every traveler must create their own set of principles. Some of my peers have taken a hard line. My friend Janisse Ray, a naturalist, has chosen not to travel by plane for the past 13 years. Many generations

Illustrations by **SOPHI MIYOKO GULLBRANTS**

of Janisse's family have lived in the United States, a vast country filled with pockets of wonder that she reaches by train or (reluctantly) by car. This works for her: She fulfills her desire to connect with nature and communities domestically while maintaining a lighter carbon footprint.

As a Black woman living in America, I am always aware of my body. The travel decisions I make are often more complex than Janisse's hard-and-fast transportation rule. Travel—both domestic and international—affords me the ability to enter another narrative. In the best situations, it allows me to be more fully myself: highly curious, slightly adventurous, capable of cultivating joy and empathy. In my day-to-day existence, I'm not always given the space to be that person, due to the cloak of anti-Blackness that accompanies my daily reality. I have found great power in being able to roam, when my parents and grandparents, partly due to sundown towns and segregation laws, had no such luxury.

But before I book any trips, I practice some introspection. I ask myself about the origins of my interest. *Am I looking to replicate something I've seen on social media or television? Do I have a deep curiosity about the landscape and people I would visit? Have I researched the cultural and environmental impacts of the trip? If I couldn't take a camera with me, would I still go? What do I have to offer, beyond money, in this exchange?*

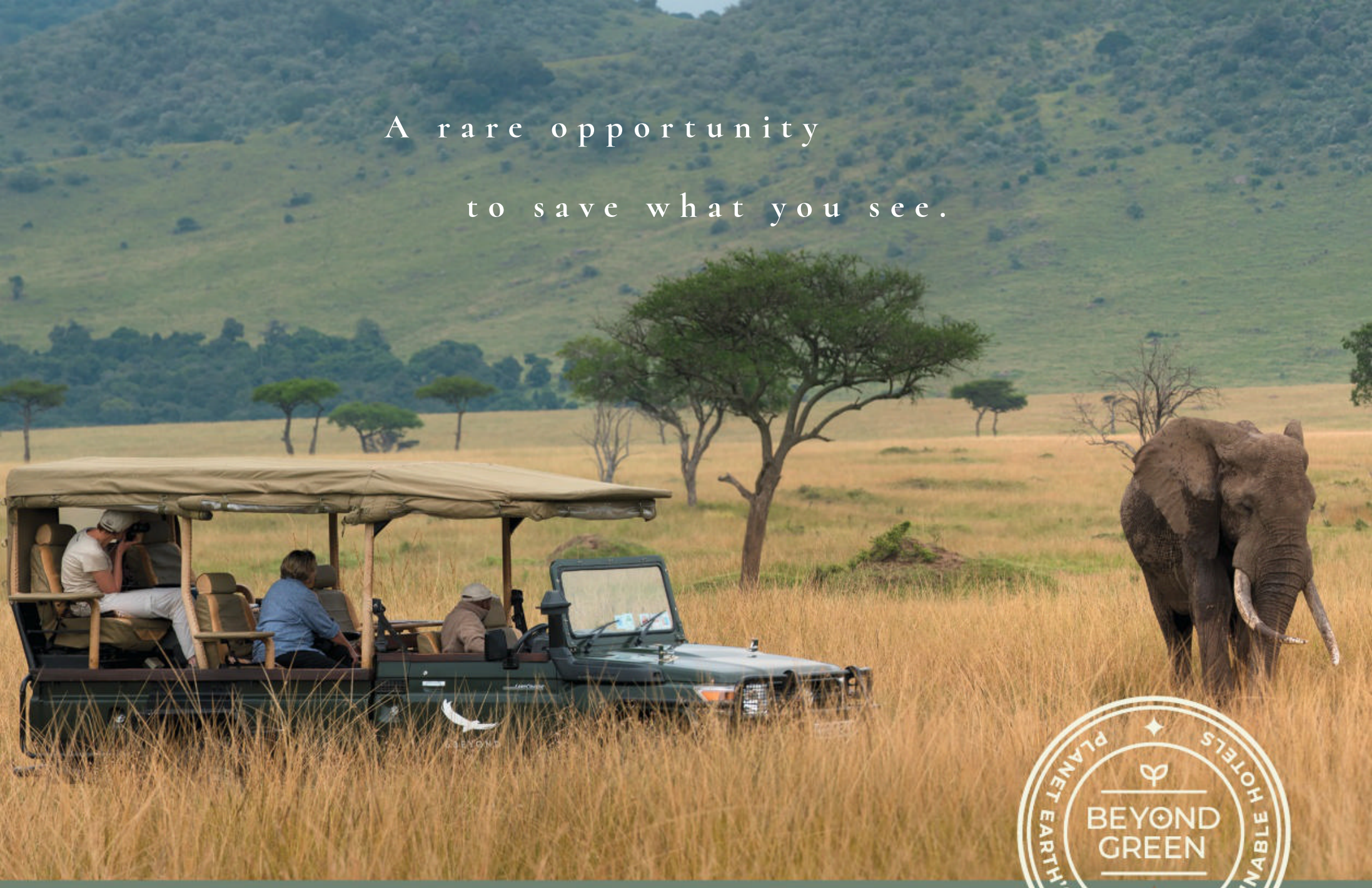
I do the best I can with the information I have, but I don't get it right 100 percent of the time.

The desire to see certain places before they disappear, or species before they go extinct—knowing that my actions would be accelerating their demise—is a sentiment I cannot stomach. I've conceded that there are places I will not ever go: the Río Plátano Biosphere Reserve in Honduras, one of the last stands of undisturbed tropical rain forest in Central America; the Galápagos Islands, due to threats posed by unsustainable visitation, overfishing, and invasive species.

When I do travel, I work to be a steward of the place I'm visiting. On the ground, I use public transportation. I note what foods are in season, to mitigate the emissions load produced by importing. I stay away from places that exploit animals or alter their natural behavior and ability to survive in the wild, and I avoid geotagging in most of my online posts, to keep fellow visitors from overrunning a particular place.

One of the biggest concerns to environmental biologists and climate change activists is the introduction of invasive pathogens or animals to sensitive habitats with endangered species. So beyond carrying reusable bottles, utensils, and totes, and practicing the principles of Leave No Trace, I have one rule that I refuse to break: When I'm going into vulnerable ecosystems, I decontaminate my clothing and shoes to eliminate pathogens before arriving. This usually means finding a washer and dryer so that the heat kills any bacteria or fungi that have hitched a ride on my gear.

I do the best I can with the information I have, but I don't get it right 100 percent of the time. I'm always curious, constantly learning, and unafraid to ask questions. I've learned no action is too small to make a difference. Travel, after all, has the power to transform us and elicit reverence for the natural world. And if we're able to see these places we visit as part of our global responsibility and treat them with respect, grace, and gratitude, that might just be enough to save them.



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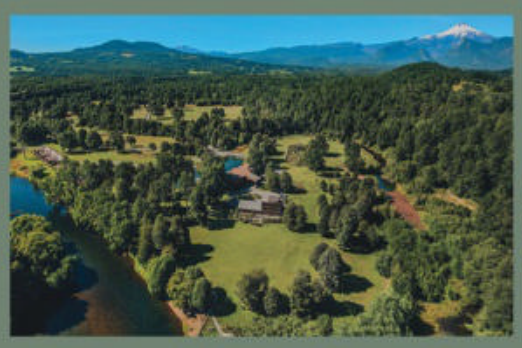

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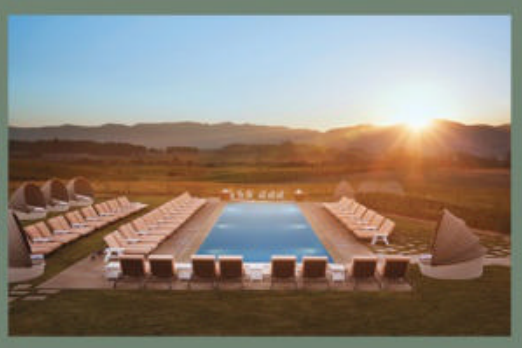

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AFAR ANSWERS

Primers for Travelers Who Care

by **TIM CHESTER** | Illustration by **ANUJ SHRESTHA**

Should I purchase carbon offsets?

OK, spell it out for me. What exactly is a carbon offset?
It's best to explain with a real-world example. Want to take a round-trip flight from New York to London? That will pump about 4,450 pounds of carbon into the air, according to online calculator Terrapass.

A carbon offset against this flight would help sponsor a project aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions or increasing carbon storage (for example: funding a wind turbine or preventing deforestation). You can buy offsets through a variety of organizations, some of which partner with airlines.

How do I know whether the carbon-neutralizing activity I'm paying for actually happens?
You want to be sure that the offset program brings about a reduction in carbon that wouldn't already happen otherwise, that the carbon stays out of the atmosphere long-term, and that there's no double counting.

The key is to ensure the offsets you purchase are verified by a third party such as Gold Standard or Verra's VCS Program.

Can you give me an example of a carbon offset project?
In Kenya's Chyulu Hills region, the nonprofit Conservation International is using offset money to preserve forests through a combination of enforcement, financial incentives, and education. Its Verra-verified plan will prevent 18 million tons of carbon emissions over the next 30 years.

In Peru, Conservation International is also working to save the Alto Mayo Protected Forest while offering training and support to coffee growers in the region.

Offsets aren't just about trees; they can also help safeguard mangroves and seagrass or fund technologies such as solar lights or cleaner cookstoves.

What are the criticisms of carbon offsets?
Some say they give rich nations and individuals a license to keep polluting. Tom Goldtooth, executive director of the Indigenous Environmental Network, declared in 2021 at the climate change conference COP26 that offsets let "governments and corporations pretend they are doing something about climate change when they are not."

A newly planted sapling in Bolivia will take decades to grow into a mature tree and remove only a fraction of the carbon dumped into the atmosphere by a flight today.

Offsets are no panacea—and no substitute for reducing carbon emissions—but they are an important part of our overall first aid kit for the planet.

Why can't the airlines sort this stuff out instead?
The aviation industry has capped international civil airline emissions at 2019 levels, meaning that any growth from that point must be carbon-neutral. To help achieve that, airlines are purchasing offsets and sustainable aviation fuels.

That's nice of them.
Don't give them too much credit. They're bound by a 2016 agreement from the International Civil Aviation Organization. Nevertheless, most of the big players have robust climate pledges, carbon calculators for passengers, and partnerships with verified offsetting programs. And industry trade group Airlines for America, which represents the major U.S. operators, announced last March that its members are committed to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Hold on. You realize 2050 is half a lifetime away—the planet needs us now.
Amen. So what are we waiting for? Offset and upward. . . . A

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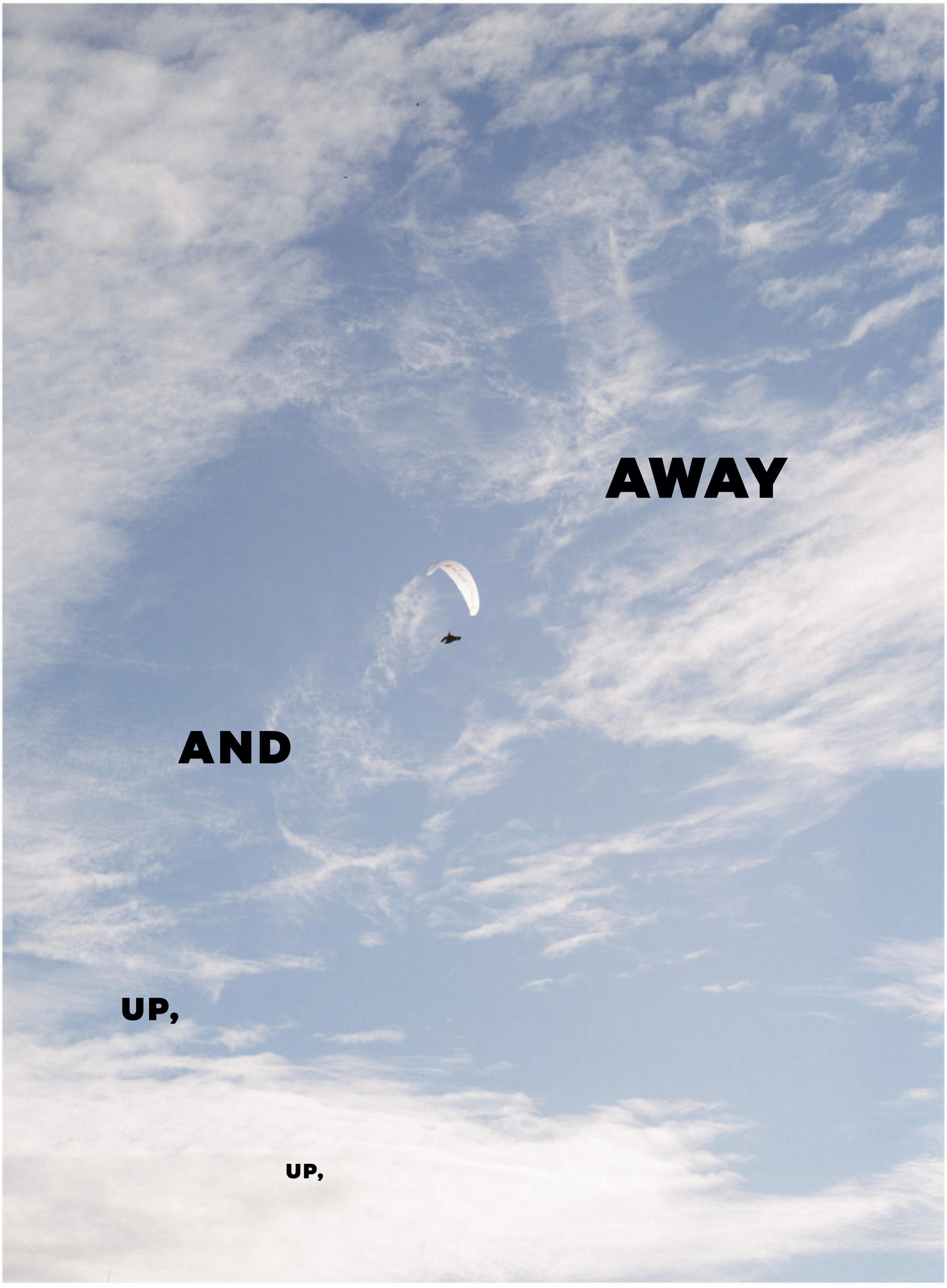
AWAY
AND
UP,
UP,

Soaring through the Swiss Alps with a champion paraglider, writer Paige McClanahan discovers the peace of seeing the world from above. Plus: In Kenya and Nepal, meet two women making flying history.

Photographs by **Federico Ciamei**

Illustrations by **QuickHoney**

“We can do a little ‘hike and fly,’ what do you think?”

I’M ON THE PHONE with Yael Margelisch, the 2021 world champion of women’s paragliding, and she wants to know if I am free the next day. We had discussed meeting the following week, but the forecast was now for snow. The next morning was our best bet. *Could I drive two hours from my home in the French Alps to Verbier, Switzerland, that night?*

Margelisch, 31, doesn’t mess around. In addition to the world champion title, she holds two official world records in women’s paragliding, including the longest distance covered in a single flight: 343 miles, during 10 hours and 20 minutes in the air. She’s traveled around the globe to compete—Ecuador, Argentina, Turkey—but she says she’ll never move away from Verbier, her hometown, where she can do all the sports she loves while staying close to her family. She can also earn a living practicing her passions, working as a ski instructor in winter and as a paragliding guide year-round.

Margelisch had a different dream as a child: She wanted to become a helicopter pilot. When a minor problem with her vision disqualified her from that career, she was crushed. But she now says it’s a good thing—it’s what led her to paragliding, an engineless form of flight in which she uses suspended handles to steer a curved wing. Under the guidance of a friend’s brother, a paragliding instructor, she made her first solo flight at 18. She landed in the trees but loved it nonetheless. Flying felt like the ultimate freedom, and Margelisch was enthralled by the perspective it gave her. Instantly, she says, she was hooked.

Progress was slow at first, in part because Margelisch struggled to gain confidence in her own ability to fly. But she kept at it, building her endurance for hike-and-fly situations through running, biking, and weight training, all while paragliding as much as she could. In 2015, after she’d been flying for about six years, she participated in her first competition, racing other paragliders to fly between fixed points in the shortest time possible. “From the beginning, I performed well, so that motivated me to continue,” she says.

Yael Margelisch paraglides year-round, logging roughly 300 hours in the air, even during the chilly winter months.

FLIGHT CLUB

The Helicopter Pilot Saving Lives in the Himalayas

Priya Adhikari’s journey to becoming the only woman helicopter pilot in Nepal started with being in the right place at the right time. In 2010, she was working as a flight attendant and happened to be at Kathmandu’s Tribhuvan International Airport when a helicopter captain asked her to go on a rescue mission. *Why her?* She wasn’t sure, but she listened to his instructions and took a seat inside the aircraft. Then her world changed.

“When the helicopter took off, I was like, *What the hell is this? I want to fly this machine*,” Adhikari says. Within four months, she had taken out a loan from her parents and was in the Philippines, training to get her license. When she returned to Nepal, she worked 365 days a year to amass the required flying hours to become a captain. While some men snickered behind her back that flying was a man’s job, she outworked them. She flew whenever she could. In 2018, Adhikari became a helicopter pilot with Shree Airlines, dropping off cargo, flying travelers on chartered trips, and performing more than 1,000 rescue missions in the Himalayas.

For Adhikari, rescues are part of the job. She’s given her oxygen to others who needed it more. She’s seen death; she’s cried with grieving family members. But then the day ends, and a new one is right on its heels. So she climbs behind the controls of her H125 chopper and takes off, again. *–Kevin Koczwara*

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There weren't many women in the sport when Margelisch began flying, though she sees more now than she used to. But paragliding, which gained more widespread popularity in the 1980s, still remains dominated by men. At the international level, Margelisch says, about 10 percent of competitors are women; in the U.S. Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association, just under 11 percent of members are women. Even in the outdoor sports hub of Verbier, of the town's 11 paragliding instructors, Margelisch is the only woman—but hopefully not for long.

Roughly half of Margelisch's clients for tandem flights are women, and in the past year she's received about a dozen messages from young women paragliders, saying they've been inspired by her. Margelisch is excited to see more women joining the sport, though a desire for

I hear the wing rustle to life behind us. Then our feet are off the ground, and the Earth falls away.

recognition has never been her motivation. She's always just done what she wanted: spend as much time in the air as she can.

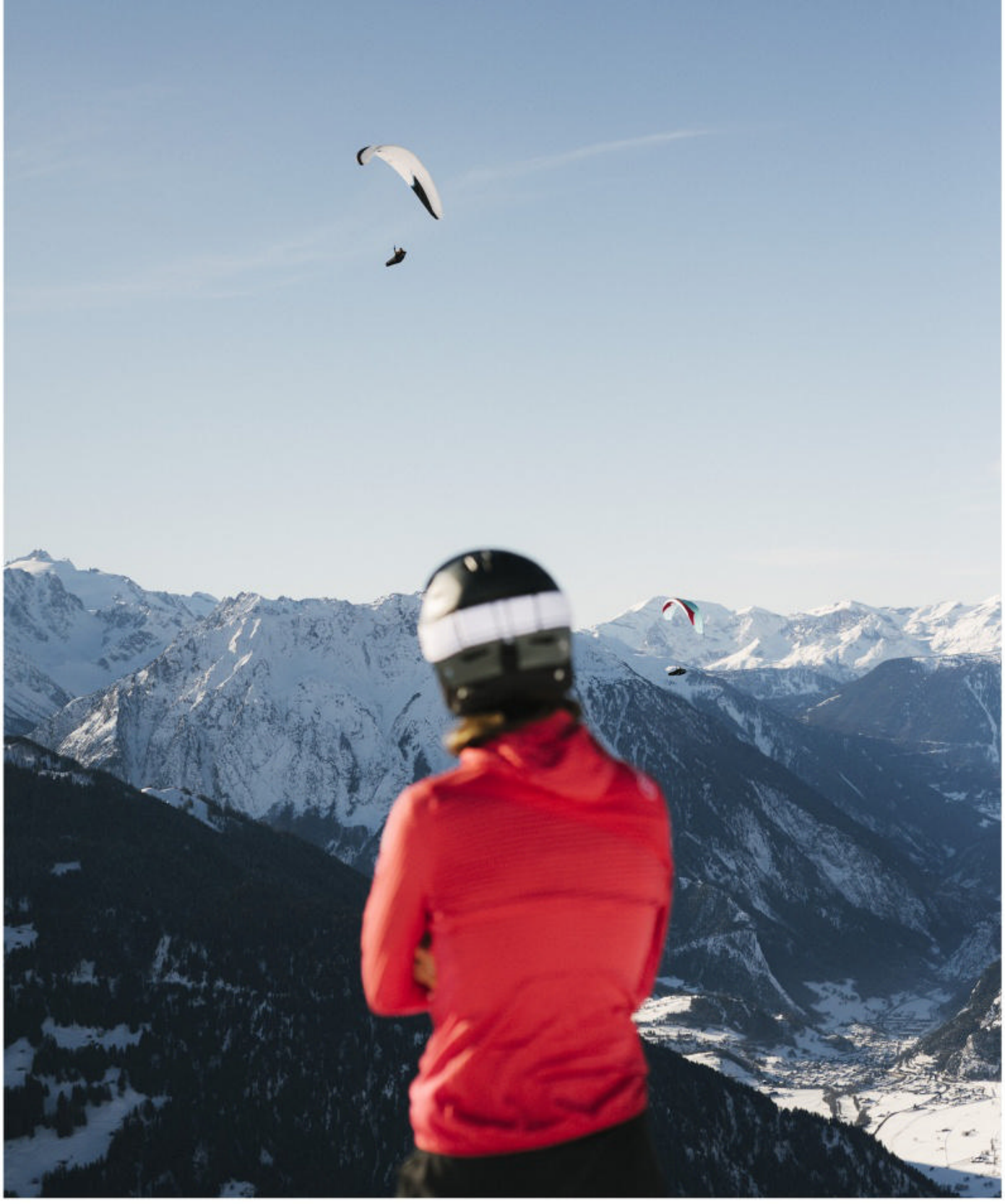
THE MORNING AFTER our phone call, Margelisch and I meet at the tidy apartment she shares with a roommate in Verbier. Margelisch has the trim, strong build of a middle-distance runner, and her brown hair is tied back in a tightly cinched ponytail. We drive to a quiet spot on the edge of town and park below a broad, treeless slope that rises more than 2,500 feet above us.

Margelisch passes me the smaller of two backpacks, then straps the bigger one—the one with the wing inside—across her shoulders. We set off hiking a roughly 2.5-mile trail that feels like it goes straight up the side of the mountain. I'm out of breath within minutes but manage to keep up—mainly because Margelisch is doing most of the talking. When she first started to paraglide, she says, she feared the turbulence, which feels like what you might experience on an airplane, but without a metal tube to shield your body from the wind.

"When you're flying, things are always shaking a bit," she says. "I had to learn to tell the difference between normal thermals and wind turbulence. Once I understood what was OK, things were much better."

After we get to the top of the slope, it takes Margelisch mere minutes to unfurl the wing from her pack. She splays it on the ground: a 37-foot-wide crescent of paper-thin fabric, its bright white, azure, and orange colors vibrant

This page: Margelisch grew up in Verbier, a village in the Valais Canton of Switzerland. Her parents run a slopeside restaurant and café that serves skiers in winter and hikers in summer.
Next page: Margelisch watches fellow pilots soar over Verbier.



Three popular paragliding schools near Verbier provide training and one-off flights: Gravité0, Fly Verbier, and Verbier Summits. Margelisch also offers visitors and locals 20-minute tandem flights for a fee. Travelers can contact her via her website, yaelmargelisch.com.

against the dull brown grass. She steps into the harness and helps me do the same, then offers a couple of brief instructions: *lean forward when you feel resistance, keep walking no matter what.* I hear the wing rustle to life behind us. Then our feet are off the ground, and the Earth falls away. Though we're floating a couple hundred feet above land, I feel more relaxed than I have in a long time.

The sunlit roofs of Verbier gleam in the distance, framed by sparkling snowcapped mountains. Above us, the wing swells in the breeze and holds our weight with a steadiness that surprises me: On this day, the crisp, late-autumn air is almost perfectly still. Behind me, Margelisch is mostly quiet as she steers us in gentle loops. My bare face tingles in the cold, and I start to laugh like a five year old on a merry-go-round. The only other noise is the wind, until I hear a yodeling sound coming from somewhere below.

"That's my father," Margelisch says. I look down and see a figure standing in a field next to a house, which Margelisch tells me is her childhood home. We float quietly, and some 20 minutes later, we land.

A few days after I return to France, Margelisch texts me a video that her father took at that moment. From a distance, we seem to be almost still in the bright blue sky. I can make out Margelisch's voice, low and steady, and then I hear my own laugh in the wind.

France–based writer Paige McClanahan is profiled on page 16. Photographer Federico Ciamei shot Umbria for the November/December 2018 issue of AFAR.

FLIGHT CLUB

The Highflier Who Leads Safaris by Hot-Air Balloon

Joyce Beckwith's day begins early. By 4:30 a.m., she is awake; an hour later, she is having coffee with her passengers and doing preflight inspections on her hot-air balloon in Kenya's Amboseli National Park. As burners blow three-yard-long flames into the balloon's envelope, Beckwith mentally maps the course of her flight, which will carry roughly 12 passengers at a time over the 151-square-mile area in southern Kenya. "In ballooning, we learn every day," she says. "Because the balloon is guided by the wind, no two flights will be the same."

Beckwith initially wasn't interested in being a pilot. As an outdoor hobbyist, she cherished regular trips with her balloon pilot husband, but was content to create bespoke travel packages and provide high-end concierge services for clients visiting Kenya and the Masai Mara National Reserve, among other travel destinations. Encouraged by her father, Beckwith went to train at Airborne Heat Ballooning in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for five months. She earned her commercial pilot license in 2018. Today, she works between Amboseli and the Masai Mara National Reserve. "I love being in the bush," she says. "It gives me so much peace to be out here."
–Anthony Langat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All around the world, bird tours and trips are taking flight. Inside, your go-to guide on how to bird, where to bird, and what gear to buy.

Once you begin bird-watching, no street, sky, or forest ever looks the same: Birds are everywhere, and their comings and goings tell stories most humans aren't attuned to. Hiring a guide or joining a birding group is worthwhile, whether to open your eyes to nature around a city or to lead you across pristine bird habitats on a once-in-a-lifetime expedition. Want to go it alone? Thanks to a slew of avian identification apps, self-guided birding has never been easier.

The birder helping others get started

SUSAN MYERS
Senior tour leader, Wings Birding Tours Worldwide

It's very hard for me to define the joy I feel when I see a bird; it's a bit like trying to define why you feel joy when you see a beautiful sunset or taste a fabulous *laksa*. I've been leading birding tours for more than 20 years, mostly in Southeast Asia, Japan, and India. ¶ The tropical rain forest is easily my favorite habitat, even though it's hot and sweaty. The biodiversity is amazing. Never a dull moment. I can go back to the same place in Borneo dozens of times, and every time, I'll see something new. It's an assault on the senses: the sights and smells and sounds. Early in the morning—you start even before it gets light—you can hear songs some birds sing only before dawn. ¶ To prepare, buy a good pair of binoculars. Get the field guide for your local area and try to get out there as much as possible. I always tell people to not get obsessed with identifying every species. Try to get the groups down. Learn what **woodpeckers** look like, or **barbets**, **broadbills**, **sunbirds**. Then work on up from there.

Hose's broadbill
Forests of northern Borneo

Scottish crossbill
Caledonian forests of Scotland

Azure tit
Russia and Central Asia

BUY BEFORE BIRDING

Experienced bird-watchers caution that binoculars are intensely personal items and should be held up to your face before purchasing. "Whatever feels best in your hands is the one you should buy," says Jon Feenstra, a senior tour leader at Wings Birding Tours Worldwide.

The most commonly recommended size is 8x42, for steadiness and powerful magnification. Here are four models to consider:

URBAN BIRDING EXPERIENCES

NEW YORK CITY

In Central Park, sharp eyes could spot 100 different bird species just by scanning the trees, meadows, water, and outcroppings, but the park is only one of dozens of world-class birding sites in the city. With its varied habitats and location on the Atlantic flyway bird migration route, New York City plays host to more than 200 species a year, including **red-winged blackbirds** and **American kestrels**. For help finding them, take a free guided walk with New York City Audubon or the Brooklyn Bird Club.

OVER-THE-TOP TRIP YOU'LL NEVER FORGET

Brazil: Pantanal Safari

Victor Emanuel Nature Tours (VENT)

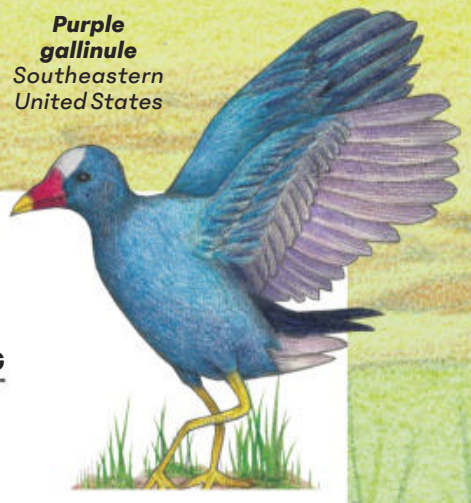
The Austin-based guiding service runs a 14-day trip to the Brazilian Pantanal four times a year, from July to September. Of the more than 100 tours VENT leads globally, founder Victor Emanuel says that the Pantanal Safari might be the most spectacular, with "special birds everywhere you turn," including **jabiru storks** and **bare-faced curassows**. The tour starts and ends in Cuiabá, Brazil, and includes three days of boating on the Piquirí River, where travelers may see jaguars and giant otters in addition to throngs of **raptors**. *From $8,195*

Nikon Monarch M5 8x42
For excellent value, birders point to this model, which is lightweight and under $300. If you can afford to spend a little more, go for the Nikon Monarch M7 8x42, which has a slightly wider field of view. *$289*

Vortex Optics Viper HD 8x42
VENT chief operating officer Barry Lyon calls the midrange model "well-constructed with good quality glass and coatings." *$640*

Maven B1.2 8x42
A top pick for binoculars in the $500–$1,000 range, this pair earns points for clarity and brightness—plus, it has a particularly silky focus mechanism. *$950*

Zeiss Victory SF 8x42
In-the-know guides laud these binoculars for their lenses, saying looking through them is "like seeing the bird for the first time again." *Audubon* magazine also praises the "fast handling and tremendous field of view." *$2,700*



Purple gallinule
Southeastern United States

Secretary bird
Sub-Saharan Africa

URBAN BIRDING EXPERIENCES

NEW ORLEANS

Louisiana's endangered wetlands provide ample opportunity for bird-watching. New Orleans, once the home of ornithologist John James Audubon, is a short drive from several marshes and beaches that serve as vital stopovers for a vast number of migratory birds each year. The hot spots include Grand Isle, Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, and Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. Visit in April to attend the Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration, or book a guided bird-watching walk with The Great Delta Tours any time of year to learn how the Mississippi River has helped mold regional avian diversity as well as the area's culture and economy.

OVER-THE-TOP TRIP YOU'LL NEVER FORGET

Kenya & Tanzania: Birds & Big Game

Rockjumper Worldwide Birding Adventures

East Africa is a must-see region for wildlife lovers, and a safari combining the best of Kenya and Tanzania will showcase hundreds of birds travelers can't view anywhere else. On a small-group, 18-day trip with Rockjumper, visitors travel in top-of-the-line 4x4 vehicles, stay in comfortable lodges, and spend time in Kenya's Amboseli National Park and Tanzania's Ngorongoro Conservation Area. Upwards of 450 different birds call the areas home, so scores of **flamingos** are all but guaranteed, plus **secretary birds, ostriches, hornbills, golden-winged sunbirds, vulturine guinea fowl**, and **Fischer's lovebirds**—in addition to Cape buffalos, lions, elephants, leopards, and rhinoceroses.
From $9,295

Victoria crowned pigeon
Swamp forest of New Guinea

Raggiana bird of paradise
Southern and northeastern New Guinea

The birder who spots similarities between birds and humans

JOSEPH TANO
Birding guide,
Trans Niugini Tours

I love my job. I take people around many different areas in Papua New Guinea, like I did for the BBC documentary *Attenborough in Paradise* with David Attenborough. Travelers come here to see some of the native or endemic species of New Guinea. ¶ There are **birds of paradise, pitohuis, pigeons, cassowaries**! ¶ More than 30 species of birds of paradise live here. The bird of paradise is like a human being. Human beings, they have a place to dance—to show off when they're hoping to meet a partner. The bird of paradise does the same thing. They have a special place where they display themselves every year in July and August. The male and female meet up; the males wag their tails. They are so beautiful. The colors are truly unbelievable. You cannot resist watching them for the whole hour.

Spoon-billed sandpiper
Southeastern Asia and northern Russia

Black drongo
Tropical southern Asia

Cinereous bunting
Southern Turkey, southern Iran, Yemen, and northeastern Africa

Crested fireback
Rain forest regions of Thailand, Malaysia, Sumatra, and Borneo

Western fire-eye
Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, and Brazil

Iberian magpie
Spain and Portugal

URBAN BIRDING EXPERIENCES

HONG KONG

More than 550 avian species have been identified in this relatively compact metropolis—many of them migratory—which means the best seasons for bird-watching are spring and autumn. The Mai Po Nature Reserve, a 45-minute taxi ride from the city's Central business district, is a particularly rich area for spotting rare and endangered species such as the **spoon-billed sandpiper.** (You'll need a permit, issued by the World Wildlife Fund, to enter the reserve.)

BUY *THE* BOARD GAME FOR BIRDERS

Wingspan
This award-winning game includes 170 illustrated bird cards, which players collect to build up their aviary. Mini eggs, dice, and a wooden bird-feeder tower are also part of the game, which can be played by one to five players ages 10 and up. *Stonemaier Games, $60*

The birder who "sees" by sound

MICHAEL HURBEN
Member of the board of directors at Birdability, which works to introduce birding to people with disabilities and to ensure the outdoors is safe and accessible to everyone

At the time I discovered birding, I was living in Colorado, working on my PhD. At the park studying one day, I noticed a **woodpecker** on the ground, which seemed strange. I wanted to know what it was called. I knew I could go buy a field guide, and I did that, and I was able to identify the bird. And then I said, "Now I need to go see all the rest of them." That's how it started. ¶ Shortly afterward, I noticed something changing with my vision. Within a few years, I was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa, which is a genetic condition that means I don't see at night or in dark conditions. During the day, I have tunnel vision. If you hold out your arm and look at the size of your fist—that's about the size of the window I can see through. ¶ When the bird is in that spot, I can see it fine. It's getting it into the window that's the challenge. My wife and I went to Ecuador on a birding trip and we were stalking a very difficult bird, a species of **fire-eye**. The guide and my wife were both seeing this bird; it was skulking around in dense brush. They tried so hard to get me on it, and every time it moved, my eyes were in the wrong place. We must have spent an hour on this bird. I never saw it, and then it left. I was literally about to throw my binoculars on the ground. But then it occurred to me that the bird was singing and that I could record it. That changed my relationship with birding. ¶ I still get frustrated when I miss spotting a bird because of my eyesight. Some birders are aghast at the idea that you can count a bird because you've heard it. But why is seeing considered more important than hearing?

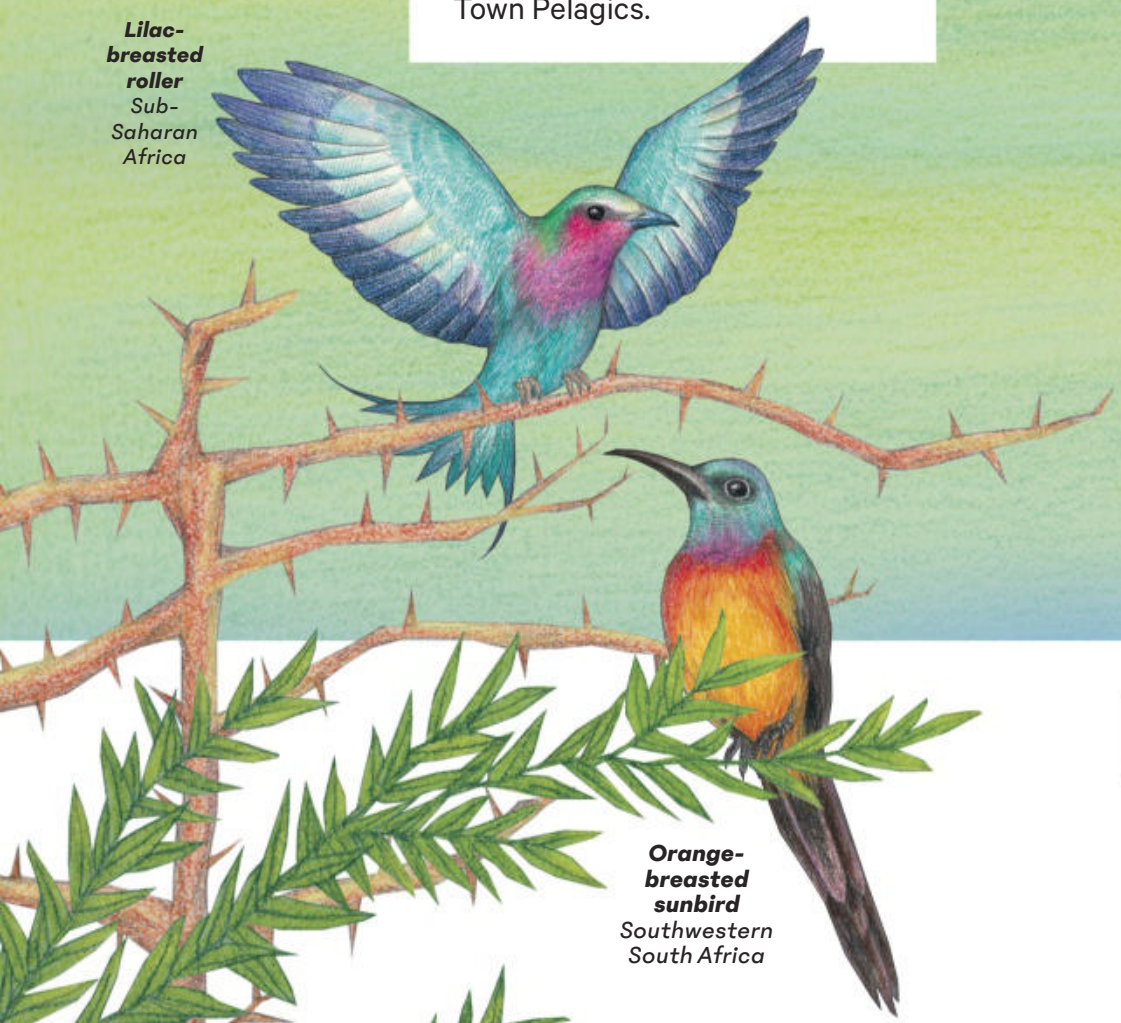
Cape starling
Woodlands of southern Africa

Northern hawk owl
Alaska, northern Canada, Scandinavia, and northern Russia

URBAN BIRDING EXPERIENCES

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

This provincial capital is home to dozens of endemic birds, including the **Cape sugarbird**, **Cape rockjumper**, **orange-breasted sunbird**, and **bank cormorant**. The Strandfontein Sewage Works—lovelier in sight than name—is the city's premier bird-watching spot, where birders may count more than 50 species on any given morning, including **black-headed herons**, **flamingos**, **Cape longclaws**, and **African marsh harriers**. The Cape Bird Club hosts regular free guided walks at other sites, and you can book a daylong bird-watching trip with Birding Africa or Cape Town Pelagics.



Lilac-breasted roller
Sub-Saharan Africa

Orange-breasted sunbird
Southwestern South Africa

OVER-THE-TOP TRIP YOU'LL NEVER FORGET

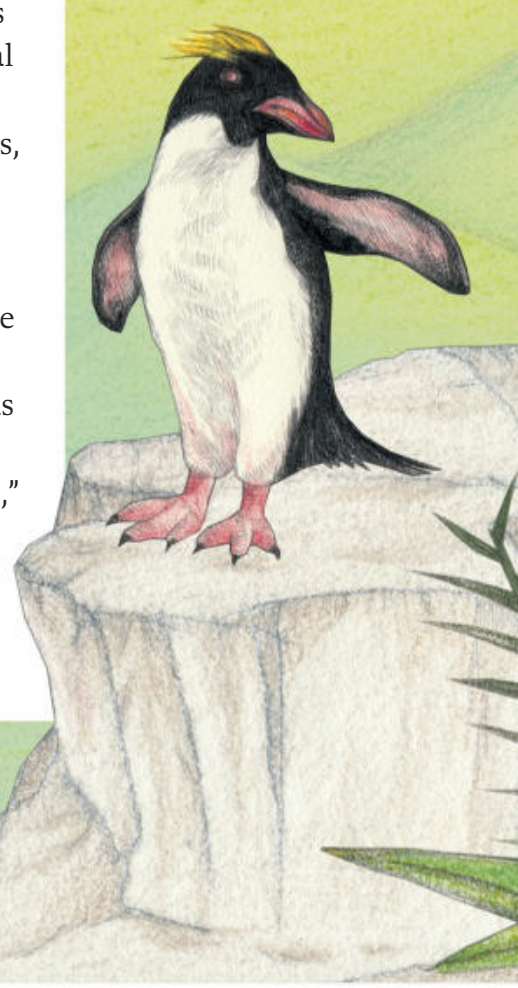
South Georgia & the Falklands

Natural Habitat Adventures/ Lindblad Expeditions

You visit these islands in the South Atlantic Ocean for spectacle, not for species diversity: The iceberg-studded vistas and enormous crowds of **penguins** are otherworldly sights. On this 14-day cruise, bookended by sightseeing in Argentina or Chile, travelers can spot the **black-browed albatross**, six species of penguin, and dozens of other **pelagic birds**, plus plenty of whales and seals. Natural Habitat Adventures, the world's first 100 percent carbon-neutral travel company, operates this tour with Lindblad Expeditions, a National Geographic partner and leader in ecoconscious small-expedition cruises. "Seeing albatross with their massive wingspan, a hundred thousand king penguins at once, as well as several other penguin species, is something one never forgets," says Wendy Klausner, a senior adventure specialist at Natural Habitat Adventures. "I loved it so much I did the trip twice."

Snowy sheathbill
Antarctic Peninsula

Macaroni penguin
Sub-Antarctic to the Antarctic Peninsula



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The birder focused on finding beauty closer to home

SORREL LYALL
Blogger, wildlife artist, and final-year student at the University of Edinburgh, where she is president of the Ornithological Society

My grandparents are birders. That's how I got into it. Birds just captured my imagination. You see a bird and you think, *What's that done today? What has its life been like? What decisions has it made that led it to come and feed here?* ¶ I'm part of a growing community of birders in the U.K. who are low-carbon birders. As low-carbon birders, we want to protect not only the birds, but the planet. In the past year, I've decided I'm no longer going to fly anywhere. ¶ I bicycle when I can. But if it's too far, then I will drive. You can't be perfect. You can make certain decisions to reduce your impact, but you can't do everything. It doesn't have to be all or nothing. ¶ During the lockdown, I began to appreciate a lot more of what's around me. In the autumn, you get loads of **pink-footed geese** coming in and birds from the Arctic. I really enjoy winter here, because we get a lot of winter migrants like **Slavonian grebes** or **red-throated divers** coming from Scandinavia. There are **velvet scoters**. They are jet black and have this orange bill and white stripe—they're just gorgeous. **Long-tailed ducks** are another favorite. Winter is the time they're in the most dramatic plumage. The males look amazing: blocks of gray, black, and white; a bit of pink; and a lovely long tail. ¶ My plan is to travel slowly and work along the way, winding my way around Europe. I've accepted the fact that I'm never going to see some rare endemic species on far-flung islands, because I'm not going to pay the carbon cost to travel there. Instead, I'm going to stay in one place for a long time and really get to know the bird life in each place. And that, for me, seems more fulfilling.

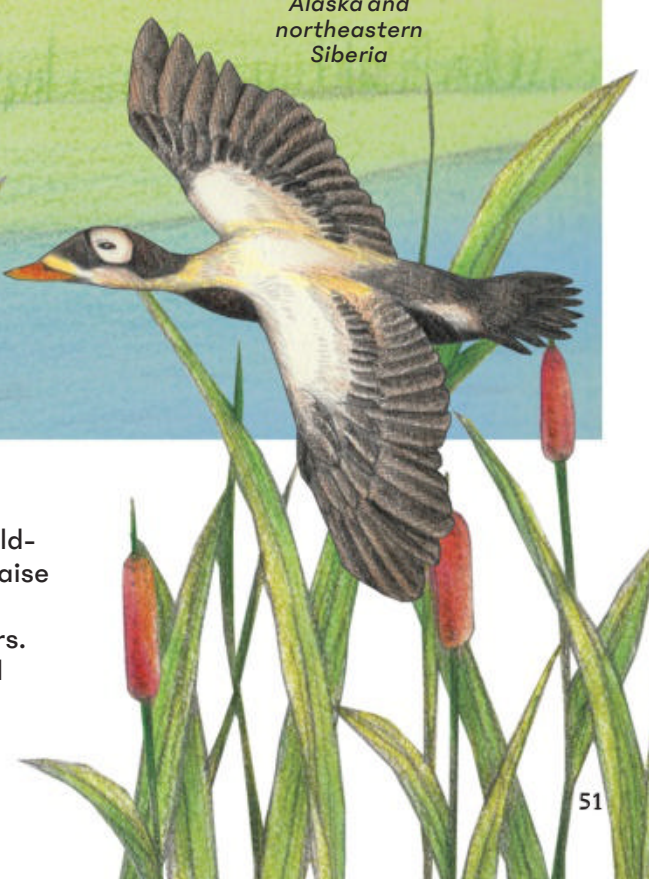
Blue-footed booby *Eastern Pacific Ocean*

Booted eagle *Southern Europe, Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, southern Asia*

URBAN BIRDING EXPERIENCES

LISBON

Portugal offers incredible biodiversity and is home to roughly 35,000 species of plants and animals. Book a full-day trip with Birds & Nature Tours Portugal, and a guide will drive you to the Tagus Estuary Natural Reserve or the Sado Estuary Natural Reserve—both are less than an hour from the center of Lisbon and among Europe's most important wetland reserves. Attentive travelers could spot 100 species over the course of the day, including **flamingos**, **storks**, **herons**, **eagles**, and **egrets**.



Spectacled eider *Coastal Alaska and northeastern Siberia*

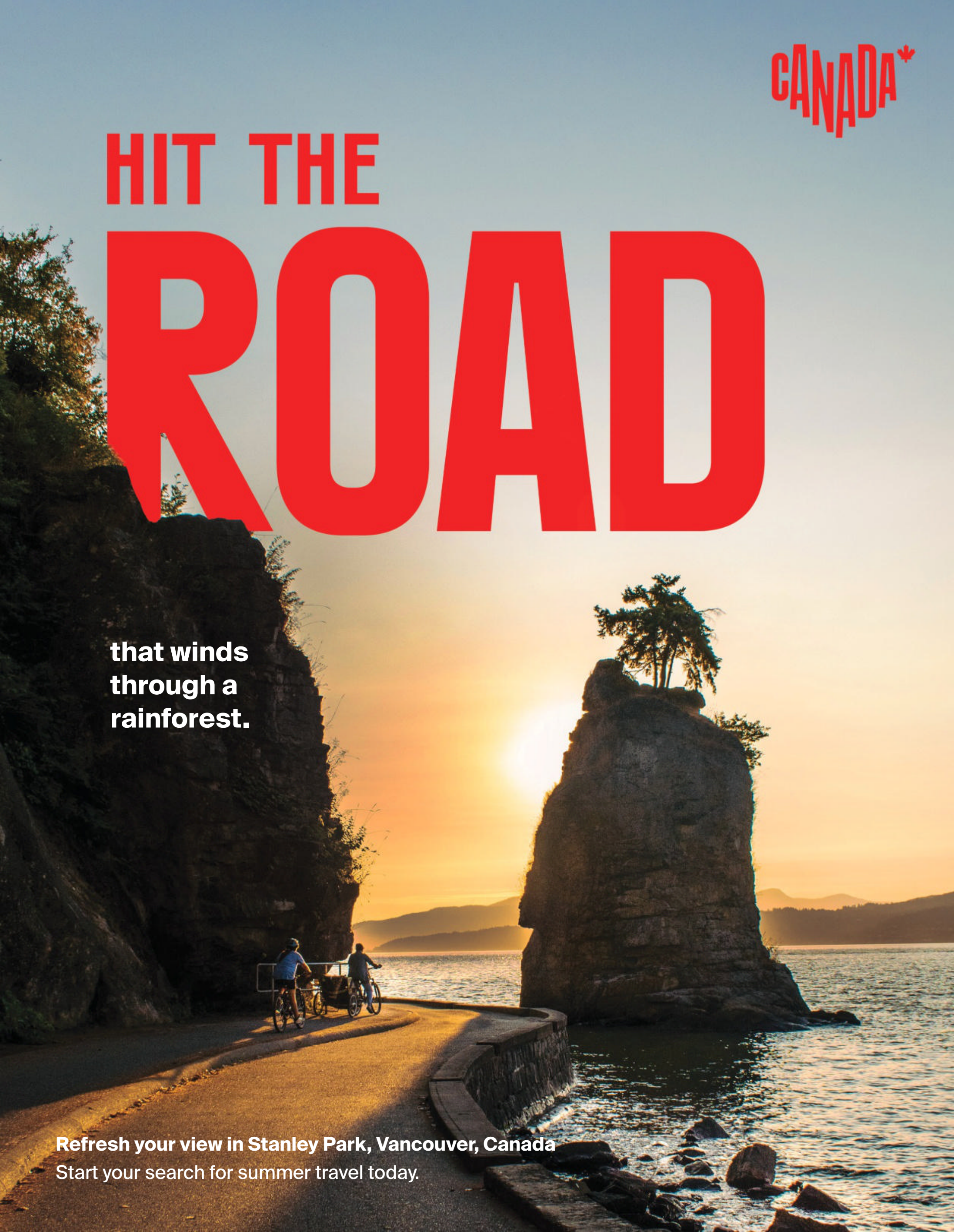
Merlin Bird ID
When you see a bird and want to identify it, Merlin—the best app for bird-watchers who are just starting out—asks three simple questions to narrow down your options. Snap a picture of your finding? Even better: Merlin's Photo ID will pull up a match. *Free, available on iOS and Android*

eBird Mobile
Like Merlin, eBird Mobile was created by the world-renowned Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Guides praise it as perfect for tracking what you've seen and where and comparing your notes with other users. All data is funneled to Cornell for worldwide bird research. *Free, available on iOS and Android* A

CANADA

HIT THE ROAD

that winds through a rainforest.



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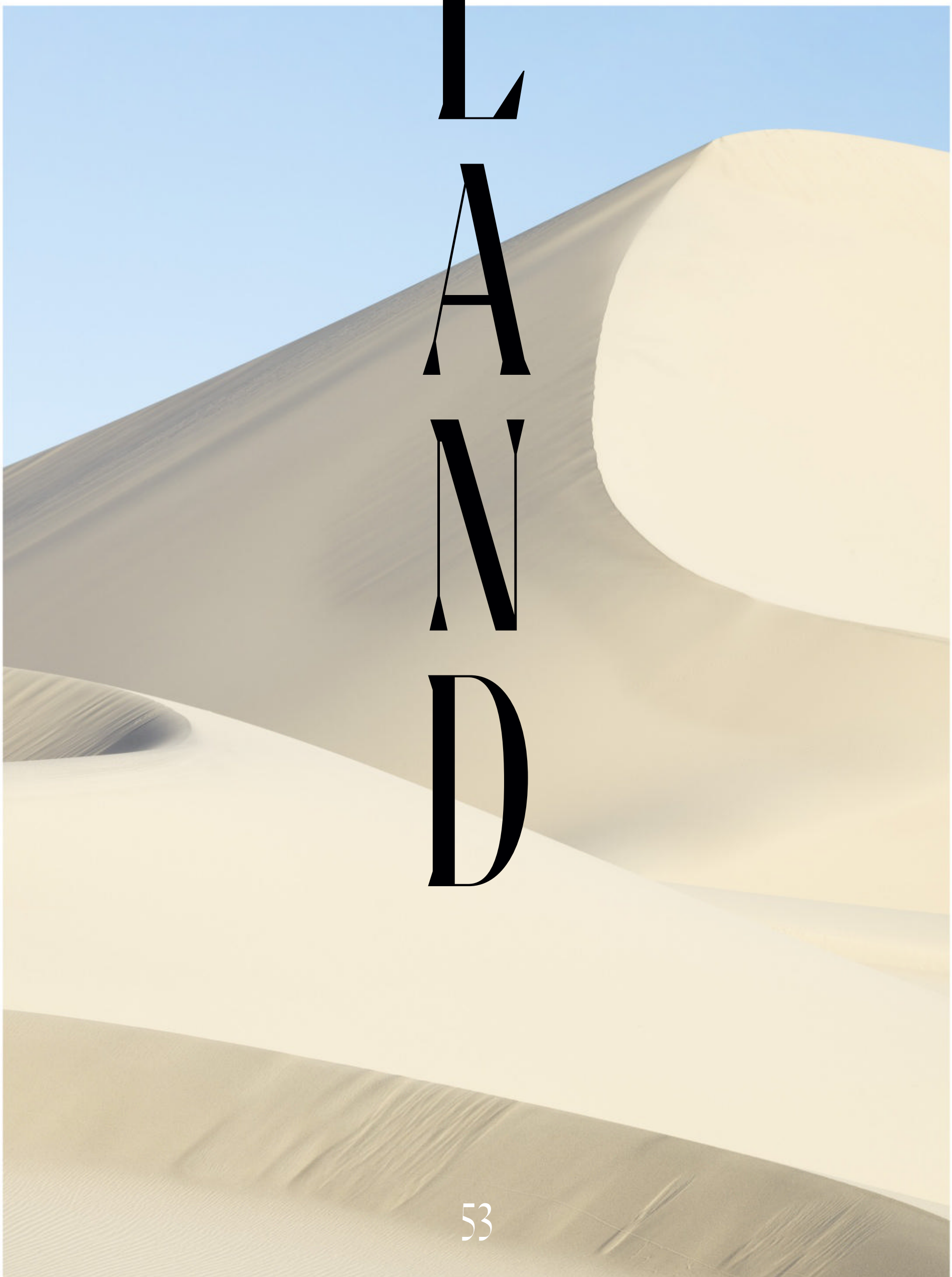
LAND



JAMES WATTS

LAND

THE FUTURE OF SAFARI

by **JENNIFER FLOWERS**

Illustrations by
TIM PEACOCK

Before my first safari six years ago, I envisioned lodges reminiscent of *Out of Africa*—think leather steamer trunks, dark wood, pith helmets, and lots of khaki. I've now experienced close to a dozen safaris across the continent, from Zimbabwe to Tanzania, and I've come to believe that the safari industry's colonial vestiges should remain firmly in the past. Luckily, change is coming—albeit slowly. Here are a few things visitors to Africa's wild places can expect in the coming years.

BEYOND THE BIG FIVE

Tourists usually go on safari to glimpse the "Big Five," a grouping that refers to some of the continent's most charismatic species. Travelers are perhaps unaware that the term itself is an antiquated hunting phrase that contributes to overcrowding in such areas as Kenya's **Masai Mara National Reserve**. Still, most first-time safari travelers want to see lions, leopards, black rhinoceroses, African savanna elephants, and Cape buffalos in the wild, says Dennis Pinto, managing director of **Micato Safaris**, based in Nairobi, Kenya. But the company is also serving a growing number of repeat safarigoers—myself included—who want to get out of the vehicle, dive deeper into more remote landscapes, and explore established ones with a new lens.

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The industry is answering the call. In Kenya, visitors can see the Greater Mara ecosystem on two feet with **Asilia Africa**'s culturally focused walking safaris. Or they can trade the Great Migration, when scores of vehicles congregate around wildebeest herds and their dramatic river crossings, for the humpback whale migration off the Kenyan coastal town of Watamu.

Then there are emerging destinations. **African Parks**, a South Africa–based NGO, works with governments across the continent to manage nature reserves that once garnered little or no revenue. If a park has tourism potential, the NGO creates safari lodges to help fund operations. I fantasize about wildlife encounters in these seldom-visited places, including **Pendjari National Park** in Benin, where a new lodge managed by **Banyan Tree** is forthcoming. About 90 percent of the world's West African lions roam the territory, and elephant herds are a rare hybrid of the savanna and forest species.

OPERATING CAMPS WITH AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

Sustainability practices are far from standardized in Africa's wilderness areas, but more parks, lodges, and camps are shifting toward operations that contribute to the longevity of their surrounding ecosystems, according to Jamie Sweeting, a vice president at **G Adventures**, a Toronto-based travel company. A growing number of camps in eastern and southern Africa run mostly on solar power, use gray water treatment systems, and are built with recycled materials. Some government policies encourage better behavior: In 2020, Kenya banned all single-use plastic in its protected natural areas.

Many camps are looking at electric vehicles, but the technology conversion process is often slow and prohibitively expensive. South Africa's **Cheetah Plains** camp, which runs entirely on solar power, owns a fleet of solar-powered Toyota Land Cruisers with Tesla batteries that eliminate the need to transport fuel into the remote **Sabi Sands Game Reserve**. For guests, the quiet machines ensure less intrusive wildlife sightings.

A growing number of repeat safarigoers—myself included—want to get out of the vehicle and dive deeper into more remote landscapes.

DIVERSIFYING CUSTOMERS—AND OWNERSHIP

Images of Black staff waiting on white visitors perpetuate troubling power dynamics, while alienating those travelers who don't fit this guest profile. Black travel to Africa has increased in recent years, but the safari crowd remains mostly white, according to Naledi K. Khabo, CEO of the Africa Tourism Association. She says business ownership also matters—especially when courting such groups as the $130 billion Black U.S. leisure travel market. "Representation is important, and there are a limited number of Black owners across the continent," she says.

That is slowly changing. The Black-owned, South Africa–based **Motsamayi Tourism Group** in 2020 debuted **Kruger Shalati**, set within a former luxury train on a bridge in **Kruger National Park** with an interior design that references regional culture. Beks Ndlovu, the Black Zimbabwean founder and CEO of **African Bush Camps**, owns 17 high-profile camps in southern Africa. And Kenya is home to a growing number of community-owned wildlife conservancies.

Dave Wilson, head of commercial development at African Parks, believes the oft-overlooked domestic traveler also plays a crucial role. A varied demographics model is working in Rwanda's **Akagera National Park**, a once-derelict area that African Parks, together with the Rwanda Development Board, rehabilitated into a thriving wildlife preserve with lodgings for both a casual, self-drive market and luxury clients. In 2019, more than half of Akagera's 45,000 visitors were Rwandans on holiday.

"When you talk about creating a constituency for conservation, it's not going to come from Mr. and Mrs. Smith from New York," Wilson says. "It's going to come from the communities around that protected area, and the [locals] who enjoy that national asset." A

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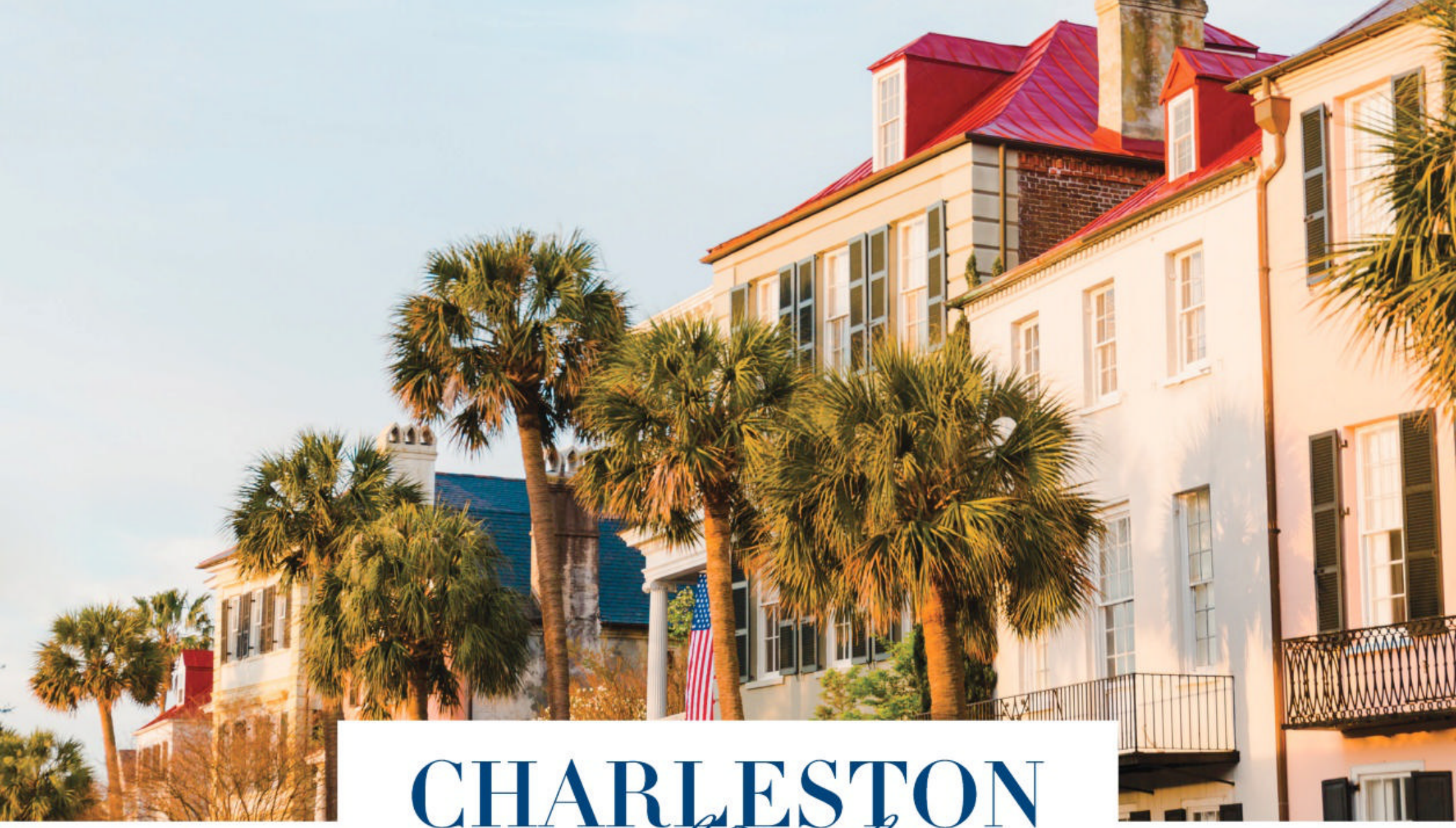

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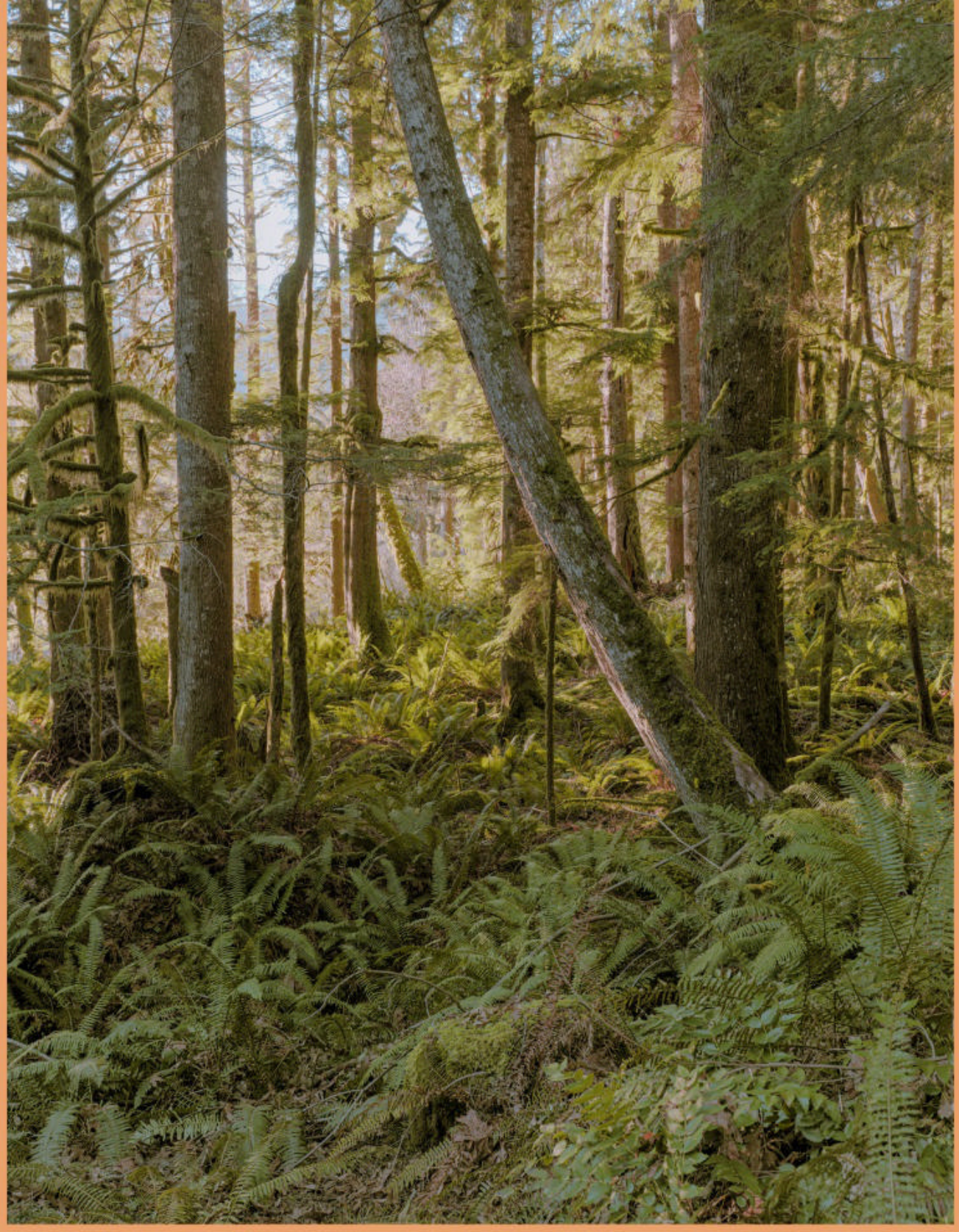


CODY COBB

Into the WOODS

Trees. They're all around us, beneath us, and above us. They allow us to breathe, heat, build, and eat—and, for many of us during the pandemic, they offered peace. On the following pages, we say thanks. You'll meet the planet's most astonishing trees, explore the flourishing world of rewilding, and learn how to take a deeper, richer walk through the forest.

edited by Aislyn Greene / illustrations by Lucy Engelman

RECREATION

Seeing the Forest for Its Trees

as told to Sally Kohn

Jane Billinghurst first started working with legendary German forester and "tree whisperer" Peter Wohlleben in 2015. She was the editor and translator of his best-selling book, *The Hidden Life of Trees*, which fundamentally changed the way many people—including Billinghurst—think about forests. Combining their forces more deliberately this time, the pair coauthored a new book, *Forest Walking: Discovering the Trees and Woodlands of North America*, which blends Wohlleben's professional and scientific expertise with Billinghurst's awe and wonder as a nature lover and master gardener. Billinghurst shares how to walk, hike, and wander with more attention—and intention.

PONDEROSA PINE: EL MALPAIS NATIONAL MONUMENT, NM

What was a walk in the woods like before you and Peter started working together?

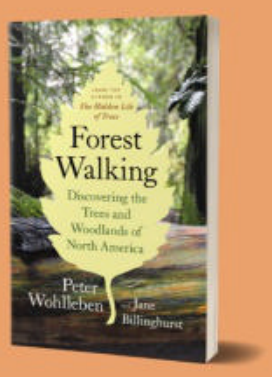
I live in Washington State, and I belong to a hiking club. We'd go out every week in the forest, and the idea was always to get from point A to point B. I mean, obviously, [we wanted] to enjoy the surroundings and be out in a wonderful forest, but mostly we wanted to get a workout. And I thought that was great.

Working with Peter, I thought: *Wait a minute, there's a lot going on out here!* I learned that the forest is so much more than a landscape to walk through. It's a place where life is happening all the time—sometimes very gradually and sometimes on a minute scale. I discovered that if I slowed down, I could catch glimpses of a complex world I had never noticed before. Over time, I have discovered I still like to get from point A to point B, but now I hike more slowly, which gives me time to scan my surroundings.

What do you mean by "scan"?

I realized that if I kept a slow, steady pace, constantly looking to either side of the trail, my eyes would begin to pick out what I was looking for. Now, as I'm walking, I look up and down and turn my head side to side. I'm trying to take in everything that I can. I usually have a particular focus for that day, because if you focus on everything, you're never going to move off a single spot—there's just so much to see.

One day my focus might be fungi, another day it might be lichens, another day it might be frogs. It might change during the hike. Once, in Silver Lake Park, up near the Canadian border, I was strolling from the campground when I realized there were slime



Forest Walking: Discovering the Trees and Woodlands of North America **(Greystone Books, April 2022)**
by Peter Wohlleben and Jane Billinghurst

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: CODY COBB; COURTESY OF GREYSTONE BOOKS
OPPOSITE PAGE: DANIEL BALLESTEROS

Tracking the world's oldest trees **80,000 years old** Pando (which means "I spread" in Latin) is a colony of quaking aspen in Utah's Fishlake National Forest. / **13,000 y.o.** A Palmer's oak

ASH TREE: PROSPECT PARK, BROOKLYN, NY

in Southern California's Jurupa Mountains has survived, scientists believe, by cloning itself. / **5,000 y.o.** Jōmon Sugi, a cedar tree on the island of Yakushima, is thought to be Japan's

molds everywhere. I had set out with no particular goal in mind, but slime molds soon became the focus of that hike. Most slime molds are neither slimy nor moldy. They like moisture and shade, and they help recycle nutrients in the forest. They move to find food, and when they are ready to reproduce, some of them develop delicate, tubelike fruiting bodies on stalks. Some are very small—a collection of fruiting bodies might not be much larger than a quarter. The fruiting bodies I found at Silver Lake were white tubes on black stalks at about eye height on a dead trunk. Every time I turned a corner, there was another slime mold. It was fascinating. Before I worked with Peter and slowed down, I had never noticed a slime mold in my life.

When you're noticing those details, what are you looking for? Or contemplating?

Let's take the case of a nurse log. That's when a tree falls in the forest, and it lies there to rot. Peter talks about how this is the process of the forest regenerating itself. This is the forest creating a closed cycle, so that all the nutrients that are bound up in the tree go back into the soil to feed the next generation of trees and other organisms.

To do that, you've got all these little critters that are busy breaking down that nurse log into its components. You'll have mites and beetles and ants, and during certain times of the year, woodpeckers, because there are a lot of [insects] for them to eat. You can see where the bark has disappeared. You can see where the log has become mushy—as the components get smaller and smaller, those little critters are taking them down into the soil where the carbon is sequestered. You're watching a whole cycle happen right there in front of you.

Another thing that fascinated me was how much you can learn about history by looking at what's going on in the forest. If you're in the northeastern United States, you find all these stone walls. That tells you that in the past, these may have been fields. People had cleared the land, either because the wood was valuable or because they wanted to farm. So you've got a sense of a lost

"I learned that the forest is so much more than a landscape to walk through. It's a place where life is happening all the time—sometimes very gradually and sometimes on a minute scale."

BRISTLECONE PINE: INYO NATIONAL FOREST, CA

oldest tree. / **4,026 y.o.** Sarv-e Abarqu is a cypress in Iran's Yazd province that's viewed by Iranians as a symbol of immortality and beauty. / **4,000 y.o.** The Llangernyw Yew lives at

GOLDEN LARCH: NELSON, B.C.

LADY FERN: NELSON, B.C.

BALD CYPRESS: CADDO LAKE STATE PARK, TX

CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE PAGE: BETH MOON; BRENDAN GEORGE KO (2); CODY COBB

history that the forest is almost protecting and conserving—and you can go find it. You begin to understand that you're not the first person to come through this forest; it has been many things to many different people over time. It's a dynamic system.

Which forests are you most fascinated by?
I learned about some interesting woods while writing this book. For instance, there's a patch of Douglas firs in southern Texas, and they're there because of the Ice Age. The ice came down and covered the northernmost part of North America, and as it did, it pushed trees down the continent. As the ice receded, the trees migrated back up. But in some unexpected places, like right on the border between Texas and Mexico, some of these fir trees got left behind and are still growing there. It's impossible to see that and not think about geological time; trees are living in such a different time frame and in such a different way than we are. And yet they affect us, and we affect them.

How has that changed your daily relationship with trees?
I like woods that are familiar to me and have a connection with my own life. I think I understand those woods better. I live right next to the Anacortes Community Forest Lands, nearly 3,000 acres of forest, wetlands, and rocky climbs protected by the city of Anacortes [82 miles north of Seattle] in partnership with the Skagit Land Trust. It's fascinating to observe the changes, season by season, even day by day or from morning to night. On my regular walks, I check on the beaver dams, watch the trees steam when the sun comes out after a heavy rain, look for barred owls staring down at me, and listen for pileated woodpeckers.

It's also cool that [we can find forest] right where many of us live. You don't have to travel far to find amazing things to see.

St. Dygain's Church in North Wales. / **4,000 y.o.** Elia Vouvon, an olive tree on the Greek island of Crete, still produces olives and sits next to the Olive Tree Museum of Vouves.

CULTURE

Trees, Meet People

From honoring new beginnings to welcoming the harvest season, here are eight festivals and holidays that celebrate our stately friends.

by Iona Brannon

Tu BiShvat

Israel, January/February

A Jewish holiday honoring the cycles of nature, Tu BiShvat is also known as Rosh HaShanah La'Ilanot, literally "New Year of the Trees." The day is celebrated with its own seder, or festive meal, and many Jews also plant trees or donate to organizations dedicated to reforesting Israel.

Almond Blossom Festival

Morocco, February/March

Thousands of trees surrounding the town of Tafraoute produce the majority of Morocco's almonds. To honor the bounty, Tafraoute hosts the Almond Blossom Festival each year. The date of the event depends on when the trees bloom. Revelers dance, sing, and tell stories late into the night.

Bealtaine

England, Scotland, and Ireland, May 1

A Gaelic fire festival, Bealtaine celebrates summer's approach. People decorate their homes with birch and hawthorn branches, said to be symbols of new beginnings. Groups light bonfires to purify and protect the community, then participants walk around the fire or jump over it. There's also a maypole hung with colored ribbons to celebrate tree spirits.

Yunsa

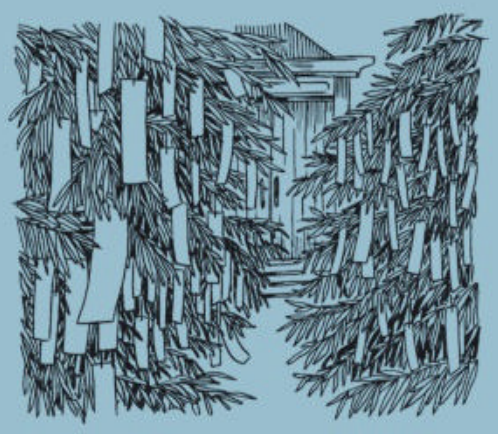
Peru, February

This Andean and Amazonian holiday, also known as Corta Montes, is a celebration of new life at the end of the Carnival festival. The focal point: a small tree decorated with presents. Pairs take turns dancing around the tree before trying to cut it down with an axe (meant to symbolize a fresh start). Following ancient customs of ecological preservation, people then plant a new sapling in place of the downed tree.

Tanabata

Japan, July/August

Rooted in Chinese folklore, the country-wide Tanabata is also known as the Star Festival. (It's held either on July 7 or August 7, depending on the region.) People write their wishes on strips of brightly colored paper and tie them to bamboo branches. Since bamboo grows quickly, the hope is that wishes will touch the heavens as the trees grow.



Yuletide

Germany, December

Many of the current Christmas holiday traditions come from the ancient Norse festival of Yuletide. Throughout Germany, to celebrate the longer days ahead, residents bring evergreen trees inside and decorate them. Historically, people might burn an entire tree as the Yule log and keep the ashes beneath the bed; now, it's usually a single log.

Lam Tsuen Well-Wishing Festival

Hong Kong, February

Lam Tsuen is celebrated during the first few weeks of the Lunar New Year. Participants write a wish on red or gold paper tied to a small orange and then toss it up onto one of two banyan wishing trees. Legend holds that the higher it lands, the more likely it is that the wish will come true.

Palo de Mayo

Nicaragua, May

Sensual dance is a large part of this Afro-Nicaraguan tradition that dates to the 17th century. Primarily observed on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast, the festival is especially lively during the final week. People dance around a tall wooden pole or a small tree decorated with fruit and colorful ribbons.

3,020 y.o. The Grizzly Giant, a sequoia in Yosemite National Park, is one of the few that exist outside Sequoia National Park. / **2,300 y.o.** General Sherman is a

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CONSERVATION

Rewilding Just Might Save Our Planet

Making the world greener—and wilder—takes time, resources, and a dash of hope. Meet the places leading the way.

by Lenora Todaro

FOR 10 YEARS NOW, one book has held a place in my ever-changing pile of bedside reading: Caroline Fraser's *Rewilding the World: Dispatches from the Conservation Revolution* (Metropolitan Books, 2009). When I first bought the book, the term "rewilding" suggested to me the restoration of an Edenic wilderness. But, as I learned, rewilding is a gradual process. It involves the reintroduction of native flora and fauna—including foundational plants and animals, known as keystone species, some of which you'll meet on these pages—so that nature can take its course with little human intervention.

In the past 50 years, the world has lost two-thirds of its wetlands, grasslands, and wildlife—and in the last five years alone, the planet has lost roughly 125 million acres of forests due to pollution, deforestation, global warming, and more. Rewilding seeks to remedy that. It looks different depending upon the location. The most successful projects consider both geographical needs and community needs that arise when "giving the land back to wildlife, and wildlife back to the land," says John Davis, executive director of the New Mexico–based Rewilding Institute.

For some activists, the point of rewilding is to create natural spaces for humans to enjoy; for others, it's to reintroduce mammals that are critical to habitat rehabilitation. Yellowstone National Park, for example, successfully reintroduced wolves in 1995. Wolves are native to Wyoming, but by 1926 they had been eradicated by hunters. Over the decades, the elk and deer populations exploded. That led to overgrazing, which decimated new tree growth, jeopardizing the bird and beaver populations, both crucial to that ecosystem's survival. Conservationists reintroduced the wolves (brought from Canada), and when you visit Yellowstone today, you'll find a lush variety of habitats and wildlife as a result.

There are other success stories. In Cambodia, NGOs and local rangers partnered to create an oasis in the center of Botum Sakor National Park, which was ravaged by illegal logging and poaching. Known as Cardamom Tented Camp and opened in 2017, the nearly 45,000-acre project provides a safe corridor for wildlife, as well as a solar-powered, luxury glamping site for travelers. In Mozambique, Gorongosa National Park has, in 18 years, been transformed from a region decimated by civil war into a thriving ecosystem of forests, savannas, and wetlands home to elephants, hippos, baboons, and many other species.

CARDAMOM TENTED CAMP, CAMBODIA

GORONGOSA NATIONAL PARK, MOZAMBIQUE

NATURE'S HELPERS

Beavers help ecosystems recover, protect against floods, and improve water quality.

Coral, the calcified skeletons that make up reefs, protects fish and other invertebrate species.

As pollinators, bees are responsible for one out of every three bites of food we consume.

FROM TOP: ANDRAS BAKO; JEN GUYTON

sequoia that *does* live in Sequoia National Park in Northern California. / **2,250 y.o.** Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi, or the sacred fig, in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, is thought to have descended from

One destination is taking things a step further: In late 2021, the Scottish Rewilding Alliance (SRA), a coalition of more than 22 organizations, urged the government to declare Scotland the first "rewilding nation." Practically, this would mean committing 30 percent of public land to rewilding by 2030; reintroducing keystone species such as beavers, lynx, and oysters; and creating a coastal zone where dredging and trawling are not permitted.

Scotland has been at the forefront of the rewilding movement for years. While the pastoral wonders many of us associate with Scotland do exist—green glens, spongy peat bogs—they are "surrounded mostly by ecological deserts," says Susan Wright in her book *Scotland: A Rewilding Journey* (Big Picture Press, 2018).

The deforestation of Scotland unfolded over hundreds of years. By the 18th century, trees were being felled on a massive scale for fuel and buildings. In the early 19th century, more trees were cleared to make space for farming. By the 1950s, only about 1 percent of the original Caledonian Forest—the forest that once covered most of Scotland—remained, according to Richard Bunting, a spokesperson for the Scottish nonprofit Trees for Life. "But we have the space, the wealth, the experience, and the global responsibility to rewild," Bunting says.

By eating sea urchins, otters maintain kelp forests that house marine animals and absorb carbon dioxide.

Wolves regulate populations, which allows other key plant and animal species to survive.

Since the 1960s, when Scotland's reforestation efforts began in earnest—starting with Glen Affric, a nature reserve 15 miles from Loch Ness—more than 15 percent of Scotland has been restored. There are currently dozens of projects taking place throughout the country (turn the page to explore them), and a bigger commitment from the government would only add more.

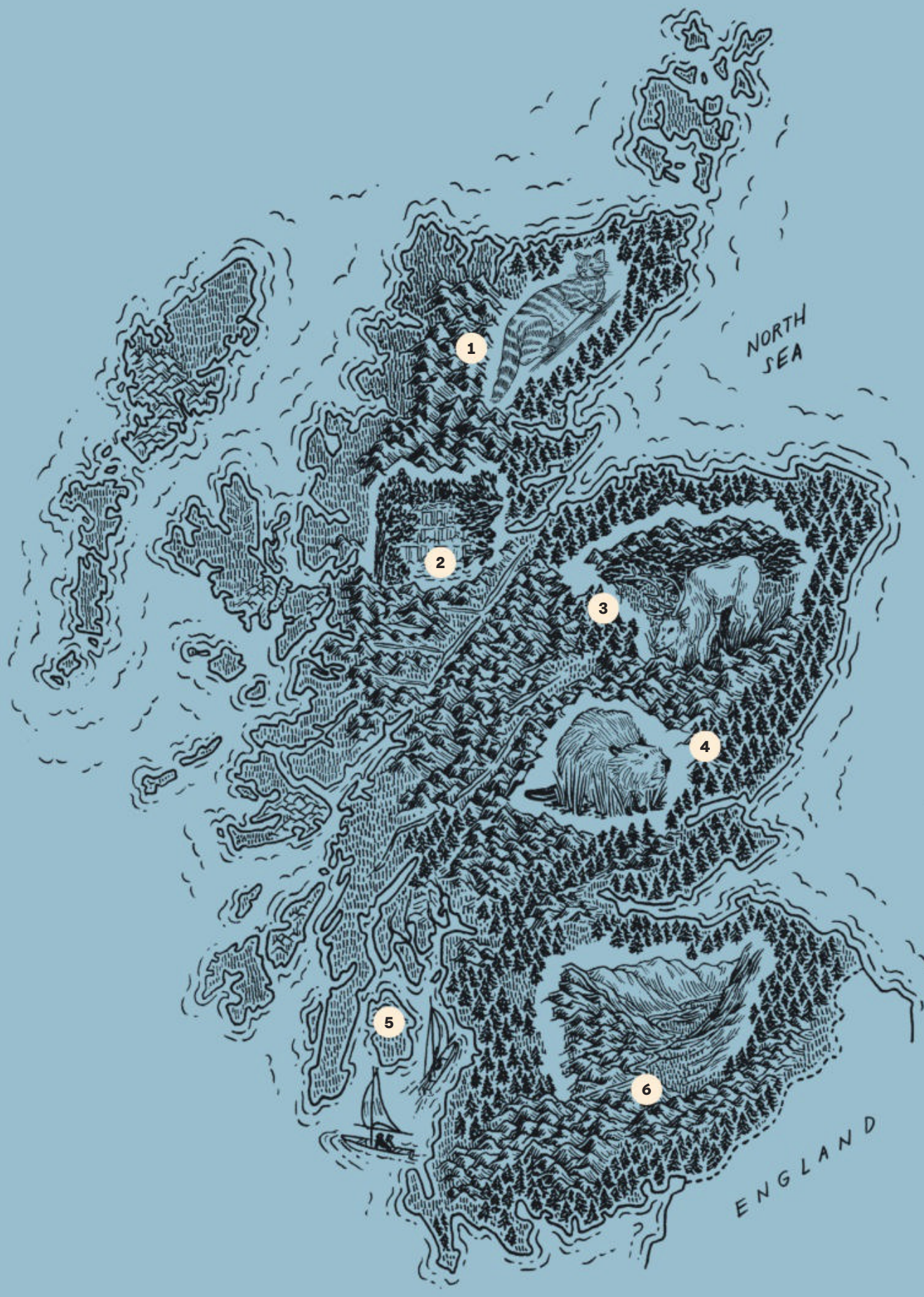
But those involved with rewilding recognize that policy isn't enough—there's a psychological component, too. Proponents need to educate the public on the value of rewilding, including the ways it can benefit human lives through improved air and water quality, as well as economic opportunities. To that end, in early 2023, Trees for Life will open a rewilding center on the Dundreggan estate near Loch Ness. The first project of its kind in Scotland, the center and the land around it will act as an educational facility, with plenty of ways to engage with the landscape, from hiking the trails and planting native trees to attending events and exhibits that showcase progress.

"Rewilding offers one positive solution for tackling the nature and climate emergencies," Bunting says. "It is a narrative of hope."

An individual saguaro cactus provides food and shelter for many desert creatures.

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK, SCOTLAND

JAMES SHOOTER



MAPPING PROGRESS

Scotland is poised to become the world's first "rewilding nation." These six projects are making it a reality.

1 / Alladale Wilderness Reserve
North of Inverness in the Scottish Highlands, this reserve has planted nearly 1 million native trees, from Scots pines to willows. The project has restored damaged peatlands, reintroduced the red squirrel to the reserve's 23,000 acres, and begun a breeding program for Scottish wildcats. Their long-term goal? Reintroducing wolves.

2 / Dundreggan
Situated in the heart of the Caledonian Forest, the Dundreggan estate was the hunting grounds for kings in the 14th century. After hundreds of years of overgrazing and timber felling for farmland, this part of the forest disappeared. Since 2008, more than 250,000 native trees have been planted in an effort to revive the forest, which will sequester carbon, reduce flooding risk, improve soil and biodiversity, and benefit the local community through nature-based tourism.

3 / Cairngorms Connect
This project stretches for more than 200 square miles in Cairngorms National Park, encompassing ancient woods, rivers, and lakes. Since restoration began, young woodlands have spread across moors; peatlands and bogs show signs of recovery; and rivers move more freely across flood plains. The habitats are home to more than 5,000 species, including pine martens, badgers, golden eagles, and Britain's largest grouse, the capercaillie.

4 / Bamff Wildland
The Ramsay family has owned this 1,300-acre estate since the 13th century. In the 1980s, Bamff's current owners, Paul and Louise Ramsay, took over, with a goal of replanting native pines and other trees on nearly 400 acres of farmland. Plant life flourished, and in 2002 the Ramsays reintroduced beavers.

5 / The Isle of Arran
An island off the west coast of Scotland, Arran has green forests, sheltered beaches, and dramatic mountain peaks. For more than 25 years, the Community of Arran Seabed Trust has been seawilding, working to protect and restore local marine life and support sustainable livelihoods dependent on the sea. The group helped establish Scotland's first No Take Zone, which has protected more than 20 miles of habitat in Lamlash Bay from overfishing and extraction. The area encourages the natural regeneration of habitats and the recovery of wildlife populations—mainly by restoring seabeds around Arran and the Firth of Clyde that have been badly damaged by trawlers and scallop dredgers.

6 / Carrifran Wildwood
Before 2000, the Carrifran Valley was typical of southern Scotland—bare and degraded from overgrazing. More than 750,000 new trees later (many planted by volunteers), the valley has been transformed and its ecosystem is becoming self-sustaining. Newly planted woodland shrubs provide cover for several kinds of birds and insects.
—*L.T.*

each autumn, creating a "carpet" where monks sit to meditate. / **1,000 y.o.** A ficus bonsai tree in Parabiago, Italy, can be visited at the Crespi Bonsai Museum, whose

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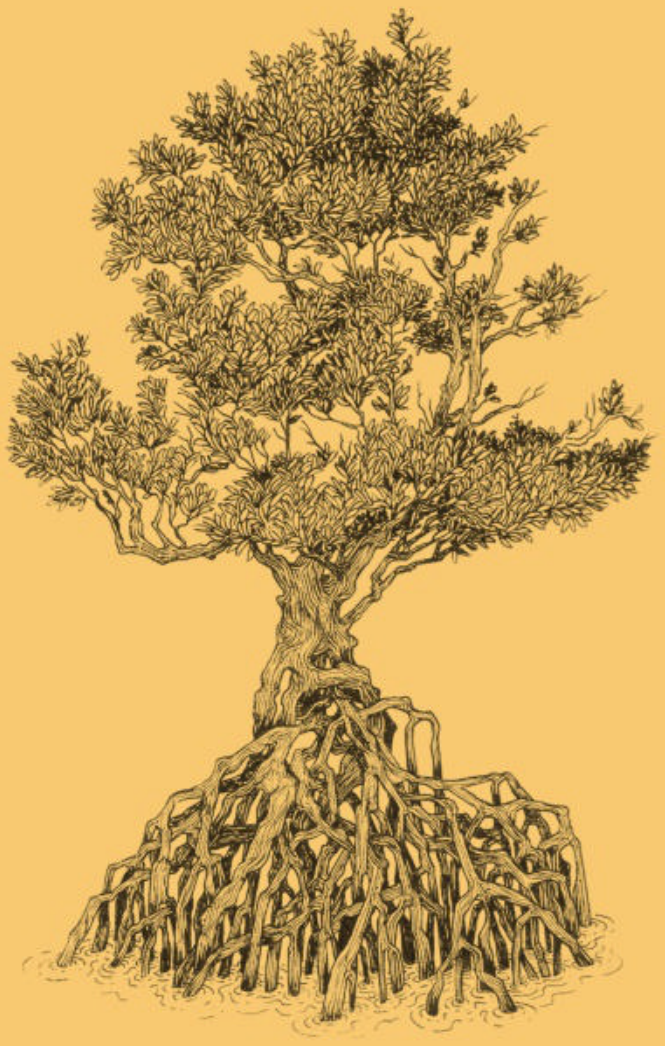
SCIENCE

Such Great Heights

Do you pine for more tree knowledge? Get to know three of the world's most unusual species.

Mangrove

Rhizophora



80

Number of mangrove species in coastal locations around the world, including Florida, Costa Rica, Panama, Tanzania, and Indonesia

The mangrove is the only tree in the world that thrives in salt water.

A mangrove root system acts as a nursery for marine life, including crabs, fish, and sharks.

Maa

One of the names for a forest goddess believed to inhabit India's mangrove-rich Sundarbans National Park. It means "mother."

In parts of Indonesia, mangroves are used as treatments for ulcers, asthma, stomach and muscle aches, and other ailments.

539 mi²

Size of Sundarbans National Park, the world's largest contiguous mangrove forest, which stretches into both Bangladesh and India

The mangrove is critical in the fight against climate change, but it's one of the most endangered trees in the world.

80 ft

Maximum height of a mangrove

In Thailand, the tannin-rich bark is used to dye textiles.

Mangroves are better than terrestrial trees at sequestering carbon from the atmosphere. One tree can absorb

3-5 times

more carbon than a redwood.

BEST PLACE TO SEE THEM

Florida's Biscayne National Park features one of the longest stretches of mangrove shoreline in the United States. The tree also grows along the entire Gulf Coast.

10,200 mi²

Size of the mangrove forests that spread across Indonesia, where mangroves are most concentrated

25% Reduction in shoreline damage from Hurricane Irma thanks to Florida's mangroves

Mangroves act as natural water purifiers: Roots filter out salt, as well as toxic runoff that might flow into a larger water system.

Bengal tiger The only large, land-based predator adapted to life in a mangrove forest

Baobab

Adansonia

There are at least **8** species of baobab.

108 ft

Maximum height of a baobab

BEST PLACE TO SEE THEM

Along the Avenue of the Baobabs near Morondava, Madagascar

Reniala

The name of the largest baobab species in Madagascar, which translates to "mother of the forest"

146 ft

Maximum known circumference of a baobab trunk

The baobab, a deciduous tree, is native to Australia, Madagascar, and sub-Saharan Africa.

2,450 years

Age of the oldest known baobab tree

32 Number of African countries in which baobabs grow. It's known as the "tree of life."

founder spent more than a decade trying to acquire the tree. / **600 y.o.** Drago Milenario, or the Dragon Tree, in Spain's Canary Islands, secretes a red resin—dragon "blood"—that gave

300

Number of uses for the tree. Young leaves can be eaten, seeds can be pressed for oil, and the baobab's bark can be used medicinally.

The flowers of a baobab bloom only at night—and last just 24 hours.

The sour pulp of the baobab fruit is the foundation of a juice popular throughout Africa.

26,000

Gallons of water a tree's trunk can store. Humans have used baobabs as cisterns (without harming the tree) in dry seasons.

There are several fables about the tree, including one legend that the baobab was one of the first God planted. As a result, the baobab grew vain. God punished the tree by pulling it out of the soil and replanting it with its roots sticking into the air—hence the baobab's unique look.

A proverb in Ghana states:

"Knowledge is like a baobab tree; one person's arms cannot encompass it."

Monkey Puzzle Tree

Araucaria araucana

19th

Century in which the tree's nickname was coined. Englishman Charles Austin noted that the tree would be a challenge even for a monkey to climb. The common name stuck.

164 ft

Maximum height of a monkey puzzle tree

Pewen

Name for the monkey puzzle (Chile's national tree) among the Mapuche people who are native to the Chilean Andes, where the evergreen thrives.

Désespoir des singes

Name of the tree in French. It translates as "monkeys' despair."

BEST PLACE TO SEE THEM

In one of the many national parks and reserves in Chile home to araucaria forests: Conguillío, Tolhuaca, and Huerquehue

You'll now find monkey puzzle trees all over the world, except in places with severe winters. They're often used ornamentally in Europe and North America.

13 in

Average growth each year. (It is extremely slow-growing.)

10 lbs

Maximum weight of a cone. (Don't stand beneath this tree!)

250

Number of edible seeds each pine cone can produce. They are slightly larger than almonds with a flavor similar to pine nuts.

Araucaria seeds are a large part of the diet of the Mapuche people. They also make a form of *chicha*, an alcoholic beverage, from the seeds.

1976

Year the species was declared a national monument in Chile

In the U.K., legend holds that the devil resides in the tree, and speaking while passing one can invite bad luck.

Araucaria wood is prized for its strength and durability and is used to build bridges, furniture, boats, and even mine shafts.

20 years

Age at which a tree starts to produce cones

the tree its name. / **550 y.o.** The Comfort Maple in Pelham, Ontario, was named after the Comfort family, who purchased the land with the tree in order to protect it.

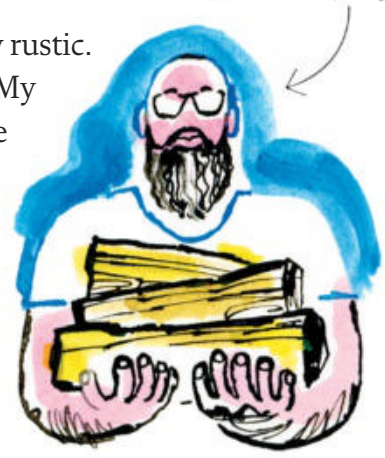
LAND

NOTES ON CAMPING

Written and illustrated by Lauren Tamaki

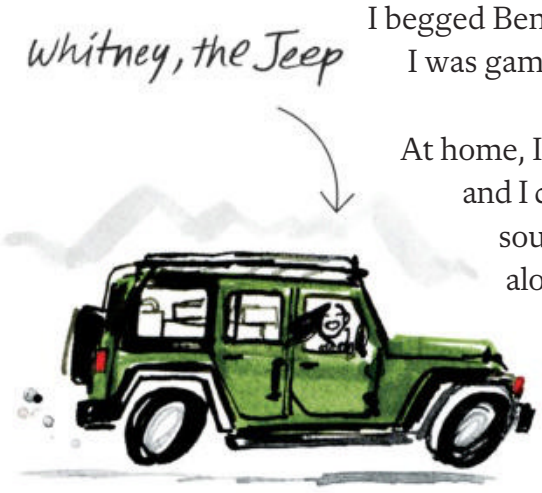
An outdoors novice discovers the joys—and occasional tribulations—of spending the night in nature.

On our second-to-last night camping at Hither Hills State Park in New York, the storm hit. Our tent shook violently while the rain, droning like TV static, ensured no one would sleep. Frazzled and exhausted, I asked myself, "How did I get here? And why does anyone camp?"

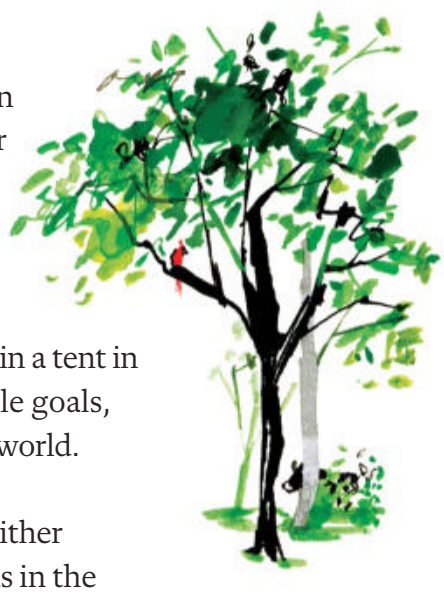


Let me back up. The Tamakis—my family—are a hearty people but not especially rustic. While I was growing up, I don't think anyone uttered the term "camping" once. My uneasy feelings on the matter were cemented by a bogus summer camp and some mildly traumatizing Girl Scouts trips. The familiar feeling of being out of place in predominantly white surroundings added to my aversion to camping.

Up until 2020, I had attempted to camp twice in my four years with Ben, my wilderness-loving mountain man. Throughout our relationship, he would take off to the woods with family and friends while I happily stayed home in Brooklyn. I had never understood the appeal of sleeping on the ground when you had access to proper shelter, but when the world changed, like many apartment-bound city-dwellers, I was greedy for anything but the four walls that contained me. One day, desperate to escape, I begged Ben to take me with him on his next camping trip. After that first weekend, I was game to camp any chance I got. Ben was overjoyed!

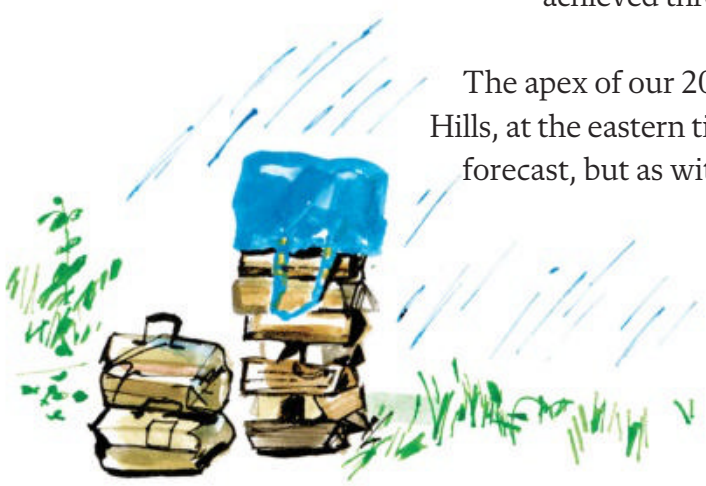


At home, I often found myself whipped up into an anxious meringue. But when Ben and I camped, my shoulders relaxed. We hiked for miles without seeing another soul (or being exposed to their germs). The trips provided sweet isolation along with the unlimited square footage of nature.



I learned to camp like I learned to build a fire: stick by stick, with loads of patience and guidance. In a year I quadrupled the times I had slept in a tent in my life, and I felt my confidence mounting. Camping had quantifiable goals, achieved through repetition. It gave me a sense of agency in an uncertain world.

The apex of our 2021 camping season was a seven-day stint in September at Hither Hills, at the eastern tip of Long Island in Montauk, New York. Yes, a hurricane was in the forecast, but as with most outdoors stuff, I left the planning up to the expert.



THE SURROUNDINGS

After our four-hour drive, with our bellies full of roadside Ipswich clams, we pulled into our spot in a camping area primarily for RVs. Surrounded by these condos-on-wheels, I questioned whether chilling in your RV even qualified as camping. Ben, democratic as ever, assured me that all types were valid: RV, car, tent, backpacking, cowboy (sleeping under the stars). I'm certain some campers would think my preferred style—in a six-person tent with a queen-size air mattress near a flush toilet—wouldn't count as "real" camping, but to each her own.

BEN'S ESSENTIALS

Tent

Miles of cordage

Quality metal stakes

Canopy

Ben's mantra:
Make camping comfortable for you, whatever that requires.

HAMPTONS REAL ESTATE

To identify themselves—and signal the people they wanted to talk to—campers festooned their vehicles with various flags.

DON'T TREAD ON ME

It's 5 o'clock Somewhere

LAKERS

Wood fires were prohibited at Hither Hills at the end of the season but I'm always practicing the art of wood stacking.

LAUREN'S ESSENTIALS

Silk pillowcase

Skincare products

Back massager

The pee funnel

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THE HURRICANE

I knew Hurricane Ida was coming, but I put it to the back of my mind. Ben had it covered, and anyway, we had already been through some extremely rainy nights in the tent. This, though, was a storm of a different color. Fear and the earsplitting sound of the rain kept me on edge, and my resentment grew with every waking moment. But when I heard the canopy collapsing and whipping dangerously in the wind, I threw on my big coat and jumped out of the tent. I knew I had to put my exhaustion aside to team up with my partner, who was already wrestling with the minor disaster. I'll never forget what he said later that day:

"...And there you were! Bounding out of the tent like a superhero with your cape!"

A site administrator with lovely cheekbones drove by the next morning wearing a look of relief when she saw we were mostly intact. She had made the rounds before the storm to alert tent campers that they were staying at their own risk and it was probably wise to seek more stable shelter. We missed that warning because we were out getting pizza. We survived in the end—and the pizza was fantastic.

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A night under the stars

BY DAVID

Perched on a rocky escarpment in northern Kenya, Loisaba Star Beds is blessed with views that stretch for miles over a bush-scattered valley and a permanent waterhole where you can see animals big and small quenching their thirst. Your bed is set on a raised wooden deck, backed by a thatch-covered private bathroom. As you sip drinks at sunset, you might hear the whoops of hyenas, the trumpeting of elephants, and the booming roar of a lion. Once day turns to night, gaze skywards to spot constellations and shooting stars.

Safaris by camel

BY TOM

I can't imagine a more novel way to explore Kenya's wildlife-filled landscapes than from the humps of a camel. In the remote Karisia Hills, camels will accompany you on walking safaris led by Samburu guides, whether you're out exploring for a few hours or on a multi-day hike. As well as carrying your supplies, they'll provide a moving seat for when your legs need respite — particularly great if you're traveling with children. It means you can focus on looking out for giraffes, dik-diks, and leopard tracks.

Masai Mara drama

BY LAUREN

Between July and October, the herds of wildebeest and zebra that form the Great Migration have traveled north across the Serengeti to Kenya's Masai Mara National Reserve. To reach their destination, they must first cross the Mara River, where crocs lie in wait and big cats prowl the banks. I recommend staying at a camp close to the Mara River for the best chance of witnessing these frenzied crossings. But, there's far more to see on morning and afternoon game drives, from lions, leopards, and cheetahs to hyenas and elephants.

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or visit **www.audleytravel.com/kenya**

THE TAKEAWAY

The past two years have shown me that I do belong at a campsite, even though I'm a woman of color and a relative novice. Camping prevented me from imploding with worry in 2020. While escaping the city didn't make my troubles disappear, the shift in context was necessary; I was clinging to the idea that I could take care of everything. Camping helped me realize I couldn't control the world or the health of my loved ones, but I could set up a tent and build a fire.

Being a true beginner was an uneasy fit, but I managed to flourish in discomfort. Every camping trip builds my confidence, bit by bit.

Ben opened up his world to me, and I'm glad I finally took him up on the offer. He taught me that anywhere can be home with the right tools and the right person. Weathering the storm was a great, if spontaneous, team-building exercise and I believe we're now more equipped to deal with future crises.

Camping reminds me that I don't need to be perfect at everything immediately (or ever!). I can slow down and accomplish tiny goals. I'll just keep stacking logs, and with a little time and patience, I'll see the embers flare. A

Canadian illustrator Lauren Tamaki lives in Brooklyn. She is *profiled on page 16.*

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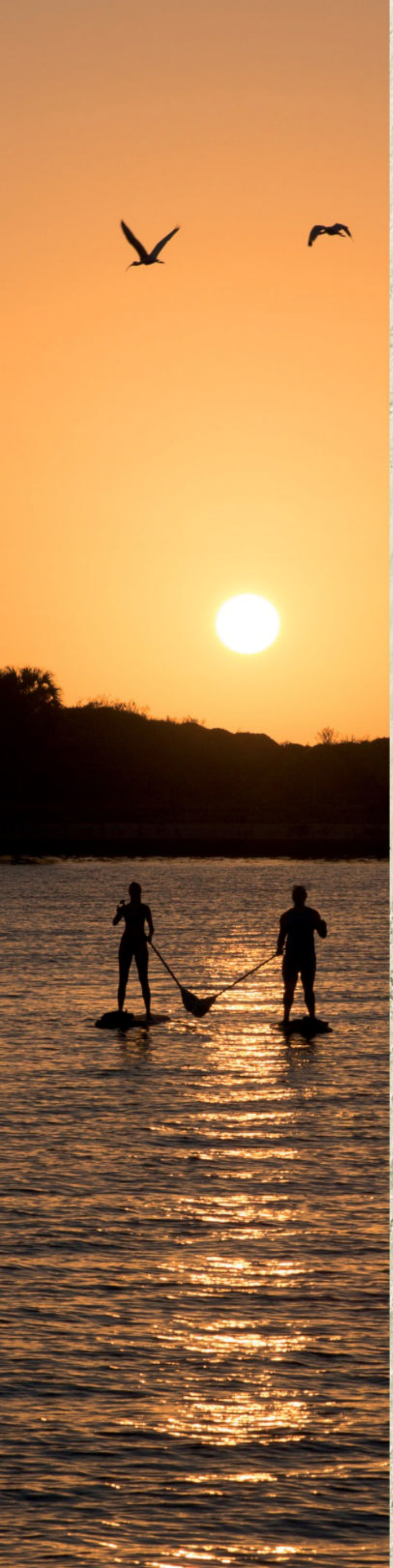
Destinations That Are Journeys Unto Themselves

Some places are more than just an escape. From head-to-toe wellness to surprising culinary scenes, here's where to go in Florida to level up your next vacation.



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Preview the Dalí Museum

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St. Pete/Clearwater's thriving art scene—from public installations to local artists—makes it so much more than a warm-weather destination.

A cloud-like, mesh sculpture shifts overhead with the breeze along the St. Pete Pier. Visitors immerse themselves and snap pictures throughout an art-and-technology installation in the flourishing Warehouse Arts District. The bright colors of large-scale murals tower above passersby. Rivaled only by its sugar-sand beaches, art is everywhere you look in St. Pete/Clearwater.

A distinctive blend of fine and street art defines this coastal haven, which has upwards of 400 murals and 30 museums and galleries. Explore surreal wonder at the Dalí Museum or dazzling glassworks at the Chihuly Collection and the Imagine Museum. Dive into cultural heritage at the James Museum of Western & Wildlife Art or the Museum of the American Arts & Crafts Movement. Celebrate the power of art in public spaces during the annual SHINE mural festival in October when local, national, and international artists decorate St. Pete. It all adds up to a vacation that's revitalizing—and relaxing.

Learn more at VisitStPeteClearwater.com.

Street art/mural image photo: Derek Donnelly

Key West has always been protective of what can only be described as a remarkable way of life. But it's not just our gin-clear waters, world-class fishing and diving, kayaking, boating, art galleries and historical sites we're watching over. It's also an open-minded attitude where everyone's welcome.

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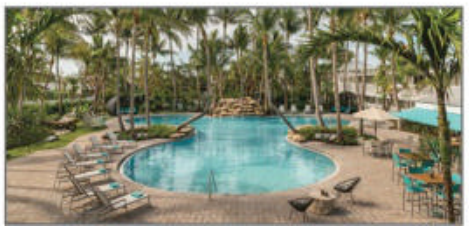

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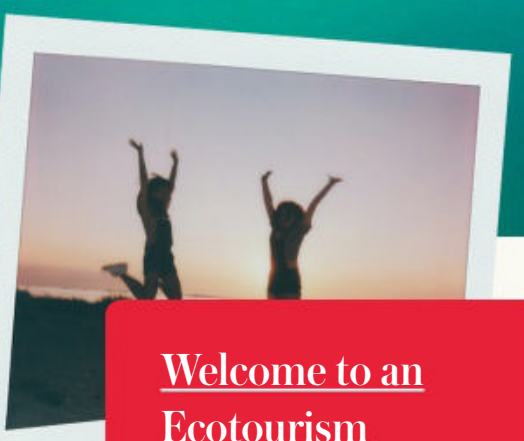
As your kayak floats through a mangrove tunnel, you paddle softly to avoid disturbing a hawksbill turtle nearby. You glide by and continue your journey through the shallow lagoons, looking for great white herons.

These kinds of deep connections with nature are what make visiting Key West such a singular experience. Traveling among the islands, natural habitats for so many native plants and animals—many of them endangered—means respecting what's here and leaving the smallest footprint. It turns out that's the most fun way to do it too.

Whether you're sailing, swimming, or strolling, there's an abundance of awesome—and environmentally friendly—ways to experience Key West as you hop from one island to the next.

Learn more at fla-keys.com/keywest.



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Visitors can also enrich their minds at a wide variety of museums and historic sites, awaken their senses with eclectic cuisine, and feed their souls at family-friendly events. When it's time to unwind, indulge in sublime treatments at one of the island's premier spas. You'll head home feeling totally rejuvenated.

Learn more at AmeliaIsland.com.

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The Spa at Omni Amelia Island Resort
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The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Amelia Island
An oceanfront paradise, this refuge incorporates chakra balancing, reflexology, meditation, and yoga into the spa experience for pure relaxation.

In the northern tip of India, the Ladakh region offers travelers a fascinating mix of cultures, sparsely populated landscapes, and the opportunity to drive the highest road in the world.

Photographs by Yuri Andries

Altitude Shift

The Belgium-based photographer Yuri Andries visited Ladakh, India, in 2017. He spent five weeks traveling the region on a motorcycle without a fixed itinerary, photographing people and landscapes. He discovered extremes everywhere he turned: May temperatures ranged from 86 degrees during the day to 20 degrees at night; apricot trees bloomed pink against stark gray hills; and warm, generous people brightened the lonely, sometimes inaccessible roads.

For Andries, traveling around Ladakh was an escape from his own fast-paced life. He was able to experience a place where locals share values of self-sufficiency and a strong relationship with nature. "There is the time and space to just be," he says. "The experience was meditative." Starting at an altitude of about 8,400 feet, the union territory of Ladakh—which opened to foreign travelers in 1974—retains characteristics of centuries past, when it became a flourishing site of Tibetan Buddhism and an important stop on the ancient Silk Road. *Gompas*, or Buddhist monasteries, jut out of hilltops in their red and white shades.

It is hard to look away from the harsh realities the region faces today. Its sensitive location, alongside China, Tibet, and Pakistan, has meant the constant presence of the Indian army. Himalayan glaciers, a major source of water for Ladakhis, are melting at a significant rate.

Despite these challenges, Andries says he intends for his pictures to "translate the calmness and tranquility of the place" that he experienced: "This is a love letter to Ladakh."

—*Sarita Santoshini*

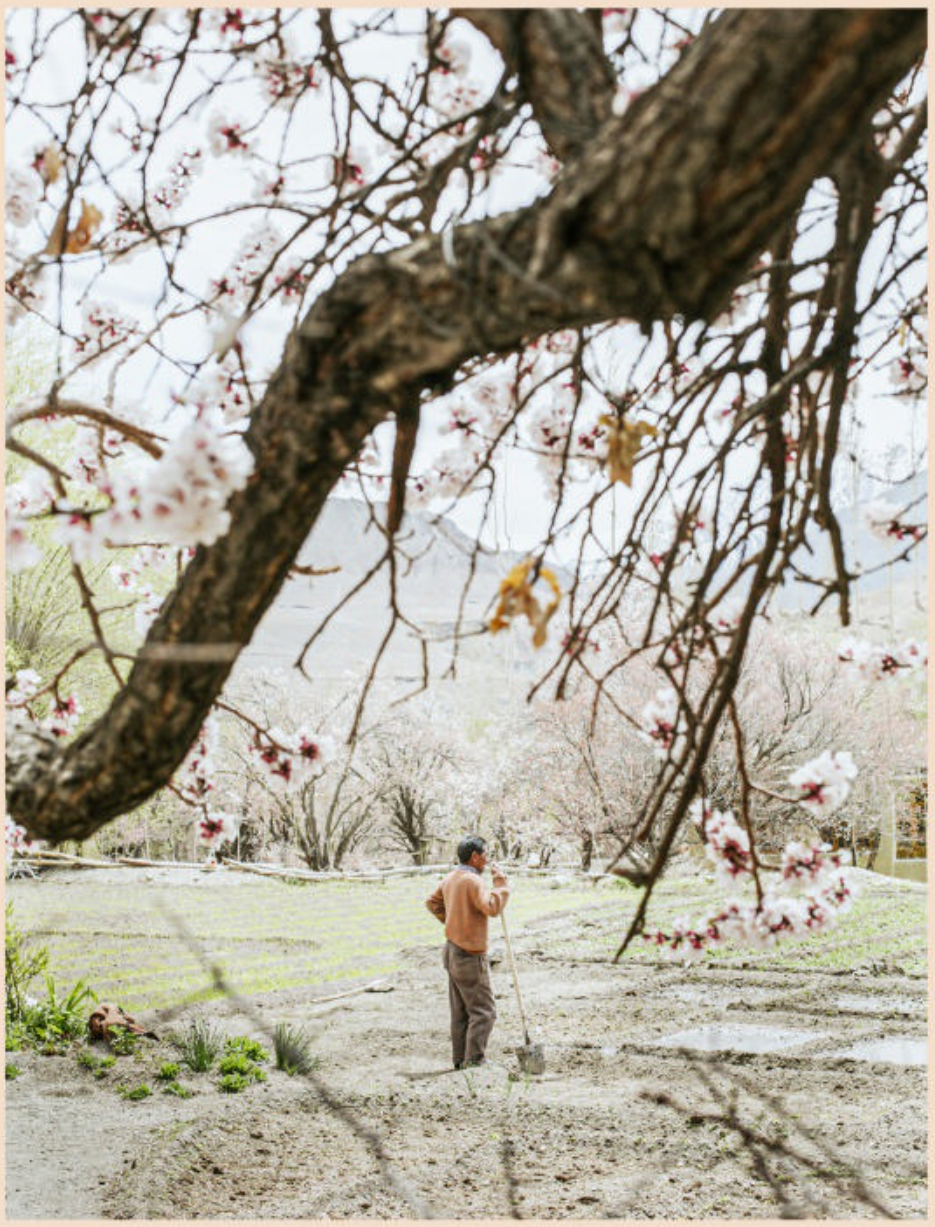
→ The living quarters for the Karma Dupgyud Choeling Monastery are located about five miles from Leh, Ladakh's largest city (population: 30,000).

↓ Exploring Ladakh on a motorcycle meant that Andries was often alone on the road for hours at a time. There was no cell phone coverage and only the barren landscape for company. "It felt uncomfortable at first, but [then] it was liberating," he says.

↑ In a restaurant in Diskit, a town 70 miles north of Leh, Andries was drawn to the framed image of an Asiatic ibex.

← Previous spread: Perched on a hilltop 11 miles southeast of Leh, the sprawling Thiksey Monastery is home to about 100 monks.

↑ Students play outside at the Lamdon Model School in Leh. While there, Andries saw three children helping each other climb a concrete block. He remembers how strong they were, and how, after falling, instead of crying or getting upset, they simply tried again.



→ This colorful truck passes through Himalayan terrain on the Chisumle-Demchok Road. Exceeding 19,000 feet in altitude, it is the highest motorable road in the world.

→ The Nubra Valley lies to the north of Leh, across Khardung Pass. Andries walked for about three hours there alongside the Shyok River to the sand dunes of Hunder, where he met this gentleman and a rare double-humped camel.

← "In Ladakh, I had to embrace the idea of not being able to understand everything," Andries says. Due to the language barrier, "I had many encounters where I was sharing the same roof, food, and time with people, and that was it. It was enough to have a connection with each other. That is the perspective with which I was trying to photograph as well."

How to experience Ladakh

Several airlines, including Air India, offer direct flights between New York's JFK Airport and New Delhi; from Delhi, there are direct flights to Leh's Kushok Bakula Rimpochee Airport. The main tourism season runs from late May to September, though some outings, including trips to look for snow leopards and treks to the frozen Zanskar River, only occur in winter.

U.S.-based outfitter Geographic Expeditions runs a 12-day luxury group trip to Ladakh (from $9,945 per person), and Leh-based Active Adventures organizes year-round itineraries based on different interests. Voygr Expeditions offers a snow leopard tour (from $5,752 per person).

For travelers interested in exploring the region independently, photographer Yuri Andries recommends visiting Nubra Valley, Tso Moriri, and Lamayuru. He also suggests booking homestays or farmstays to experience Ladakhi hospitality, life, and culture. The Himalayan Institute of Alternatives in Ladakh runs farmstays in Phyang village near Leh, and the Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust runs the Himalayan Homestays initiative, which offers accommodations in villages across Ladakh.

At the Druk White Lotus School in Shey, children meditate as part of their daily routine.

Throughout Ladakh, vast stretches of craggy valleys surround snowcapped mountains. Bright green oases punctuate the arid landscape, along with crystalline lakes and shaggy wild yaks.

CANADA

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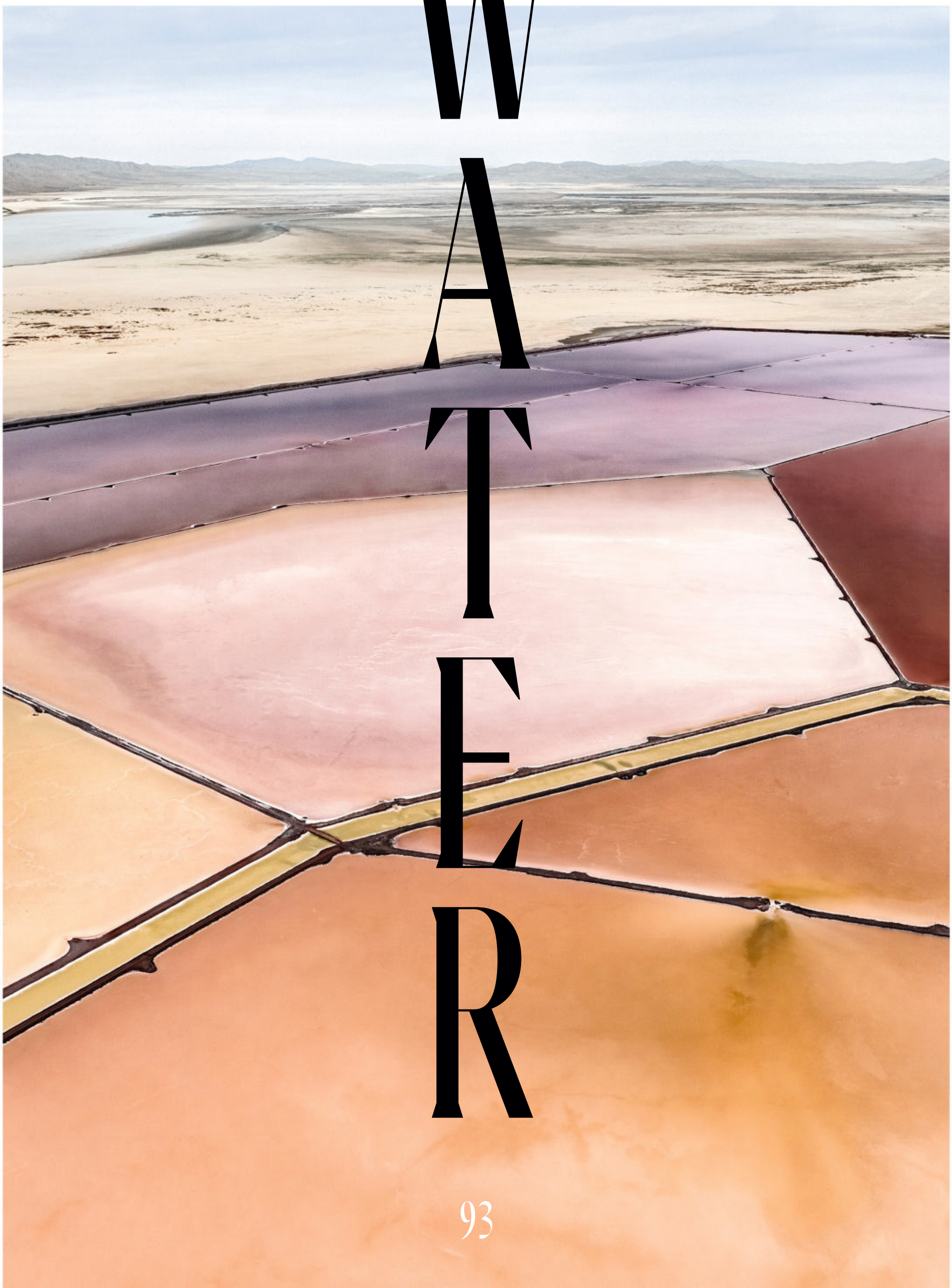

TOM HEGEN


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THE FUTURE OF CRUISING

by **FRAN GOLDEN**

Illustrations by
TIM PEACOCK

Emerging from the forced pandemic pause, cruise companies are creating stricter health and safety protocols, committing to carbon neutrality by 2050, and finding new ways for guests to meaningfully interact with local cultures and communities in the places they dock.

Cruisers are back on the water: dancing on open decks to live music, joining guided expeditions for close-up views of glaciers and penguins, and stepping off river ships to amble around such cities as Luxor, Egypt. In other words, they're safely traveling.

It has been a rocky two years for cruise lines. After early COVID-19 outbreaks on ships, the industry essentially shut down in March 2020—and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) stopped ships that visit the United States from sailing until June 2021. The industry started to get back on its feet in the summer of 2021, only to face further setbacks due to the Delta and Omicron variants; in January 2022, the CDC deemed cruises a "very high-risk" activity (the agency lowered cruising to "high-risk" a month later).

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Today, travel advisors are reporting high pent-up demand from their clients, and some itineraries are sold out well into 2023. "Antarctica is flying off the shelves," says Judy Perl, president of Judy Perl Worldwide Travel and a member of AFAR's Travel Advisory Council. "Many of our cruise clients are new to cruising and are interested in expedition travel, celebrating milestone events, and multigenerational reunions."

While no one knows what the future will hold, the year has started with the cruise industry feeling optimistic for the first time since 2020. Here are a few changes cruisers can expect as they return to the sea.

While no one knows what the future will hold, the year has started with the cruise industry feeling optimistic for the first time since 2020.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

In the last year, cruise companies embraced protocols such as mandatory vaccines for passengers and crew, precruise PCR tests, and mask requirements. While masking has since been relaxed, "Many health and safety protocols introduced during the pandemic are here to stay," Perl says. She cites booster shots, required with most cruise lines, as well as apps that allow for a paperless, touchless guest experience.

Many lines, such as Seabourn, Windstar Cruises, Regent Seven Seas, Oceania Cruises, and Lindblad Expeditions, have updated their HVAC systems for better ventilation. Ships have cabins set aside for quarantine in case of positive COVID cases on board, as well as procedures to get ailing passengers to shore. **Viking Ocean Cruises** added full-service PCR labs on each of its ocean and expedition ships.

SUSTAINABILITY

The cruise industry is pursuing net carbon neutrality by 2050, though it will take significant engineering, supply, and regulatory efforts to achieve that goal. Such companies as **Carnival Corporation** and **Royal Caribbean Group** made new commitments related to sustainability that include offsetting their carbon footprint, building ships that run on liquefied natural gas (LNG), and exploring alternatives to heavy fuel, such as biofuel and methane.

In the spring of 2022, **Hurtigruten's** second hybrid fuel-and-electric ship, the polar-class ***MS Fridtjof Nansen***, will set sail along the Norwegian coast. The ship can run its engines on batteries, reducing emissions by 20 percent. The new 245-passenger icebreaker ***Le Commandant Charcot***, from the French company **Ponant**, sails for up to eight hours using zero-emissions electricity and the rest of the time on LNG. Big ocean liners are going the cleaner-fuel route as well, including **Disney Cruise Line**, which this summer will launch its first LNG-fueled ship, the 4,000-passenger ***Disney Wish***, for journeys from Port Canaveral, Florida, to the Bahamas.

CULTURE

Small ship and luxury cruise lines are putting more attention on local cultural interactions, both on board and ashore. In June 2021, ultraluxury line **Silversea Cruises**, on its 596-passenger ***Silver Moon***, introduced the S.A.L.T. (Sea and Land Taste) program to educate guests on destinations via regional food and drink. On a Greek Isles cruise, passengers might learn to make a fig and goat cheese tart; dine on Santorini's yellow fava dip served with onions, capers, and Greek olive oil; and dock in Mykonos to sip ouzo and meet with organic cheese producers.

To gain a greater understanding of a destination, more travelers are opting for a locally owned cruise operator based in the region they are visiting. For example, **Adventure Canada**'s 198-passenger ***Ocean Endeavour*** returns this year, and several itineraries include visits with Inuit and First Nations elders. Passengers may hear throat-singing or participate in a discussion about subsistence hunting.

Kontiki Expeditions, a startup Ecuadoran cruise company, waited two years to launch the luxurious 18-passenger ***Kontiki Wayra***, which finally set sail in March 2022. The ship visits less-touristed areas of the coastline, such as the tuna-fishing capital of Manta and the city of Guayaquil. When not swimming in crystal-clear waters or admiring howler monkeys, guests might meet cacao producers and artisan straw weavers or help the chef gather local ingredients. Ⓐ

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EVERYONE UNDER THE SUN

Making Waves

One writer finds community in the world's largest open-water swim group—and picks up some trash while she's at it.

by Bonnie Tsui
Photographs by Blue Wesley / Illustrations by Josh Cochran

ON AN ABSURDLY picturesque Thursday evening at Encinitas's Moonlight State Beach, a stretch of white sand on the coast of Southern California, 50 of us circled up under a 100-foot-tall palm tree. Bryan Mineo, an enthusiastic 37 year old with the abs of a Marine and sleeve tattoos that reflect his dual passions in life—the ocean and music—gave us our brief. *Sprint to the ocean with buoys, swim for 500 yards, exit to pick up beach trash, dive back in the water for another 500 yards, and emerge to pick up more litter.* Rest, then repeat.

For the nonprofit One With the Ocean (OWO), the world's largest open-water swim group, it was just another Thursday night "SLOG," or what Mineo, OWO's founder, described as the swim version of the Swedish fitness trend of "plogging": jogging plus *plocka upp* (picking up) trash. A random sampling of OWO's collection this year includes dental floss, cigarette butts, rugs, broken chairs, discarded clothing, sex toys, and countless plastic items—bottle caps, buckets, bags. I looked around at the happy beachgoers bathed in this golden-hour light, seemingly incapable of chucking anything like a dildo or a doughnut wrapper into the sand. But humans will do as humans do, even at the beach.

"So what *we* try to do," Mineo said cheerfully, "is clean up after them."

As the sun descended over a mercury-hued Pacific, setting the beach's bluffs aglow, we tumbled out of the water, each of us by turns chatty and euphoric. (Picking up trash on the beach was the focus, but if we saw some in the water, we grabbed it, too.) Mineo, an open-water swim coach, wasn't swimming that night. From his perch atop a surfboard, he was acting as safety spotter, monitoring the group's whereabouts, cheering swimmers on, and providing a resting place for anyone who needed it. But he was smiling just the same. Forty-five minutes later, we came away with the flush of exercise, a sense of communal accomplishment, and a dozen inflatable neon swim buoys filled with garbage.

THE FIRST TIME Mineo swam in open water, as a teenager at a lake near his childhood home in Dallas, he nearly drowned. Years later, in 2010, it was this same lake that hosted his earliest OWO-like action: a free, all-levels, open-water swim group. Since then, Mineo has expanded the nonprofit into a 19-chapter, 4,000-member open-water swimming organization that focuses on conservation and community building. OWO is inclusive of swimmers whose ability levels range from beginner to Olympic. Currently all chapters are in the United States—including O'ahu, Hawai'i; Long Beach, California; Portland, Maine; Miami; and Boston—and their members range in age from teenagers to octogenarians. In 2021, with many public pools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a glut of people desperate for movement and beauty and fresh air, OWO's membership grew by 30 percent.

As the author of the book *Why We Swim*, I'm often asked about the best way for people who don't necessarily call themselves swimmers to begin open-water swimming. One nice thing about wild bodies of water is that they're almost always open for business. And immersing yourself in them brings you acutely closer to nature—floating to observe the changing colors in a predawn sky, or taking a breather to watch seals and dolphins cruise the coast. You don't have to worry about speed or distance or getting in the way of anyone in your lane. This kind of swimming is, well, freeing. I usually offer two pieces of advice: Find a buddy, someone who knows the body of water you want to swim in and can help familiarize you with currents and hazards; and start slowly, doing a little bit more

Opposite page: In La Jolla, California, One With the Ocean swimmers take to the Pacific.

This page: When he's not swimming, founder Bryan Mineo serves as spotter and cheerleader.

each time as you acclimate to the conditions.

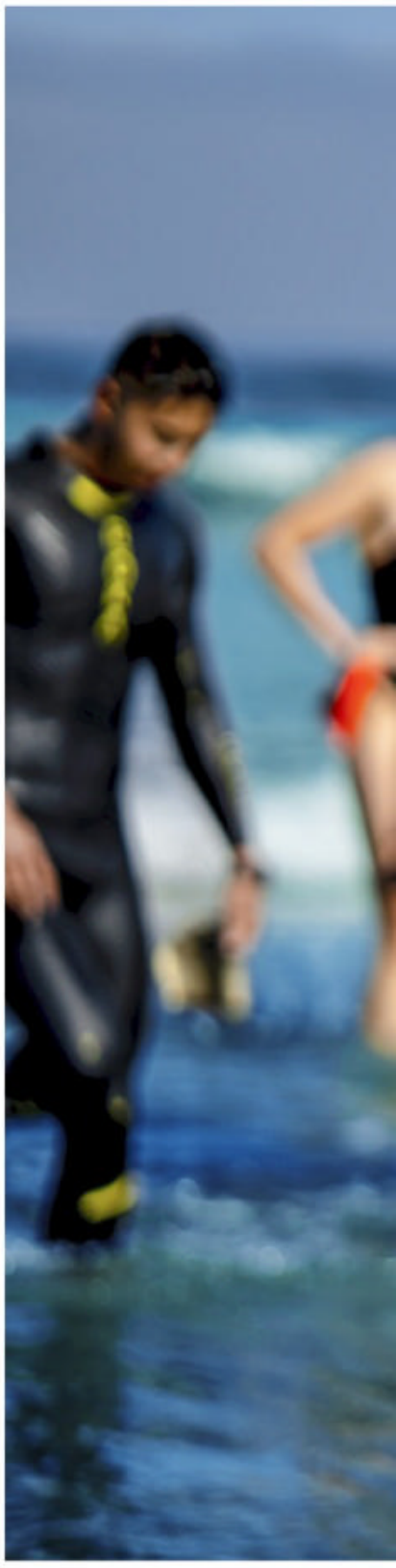
Though the Encinitas sunset swim was my first with OWO, I knew that Mineo had created something special: a group of conservation-minded swimmers who supply the knowledge and meet you where you are. Anybody can join for a swim at any chapter; new attendees are given OWO swim caps and welcomed for a free swim. Membership dues and donations go toward supporting core initiatives, including regular organized swims; more than 600 beach sweeps a year; and Play in the Waves, a program that offers free ocean education and swim lessons to kids in underserved areas.

That night on Moonlight Beach, I met OWO coach Antony Nguyen, who made it a priority to make everyone feel welcome at the swim. I swam to shore alongside a chatty swimmer named Ricardo Villa ("Call me Ricky Ricardo"); I'd learn later that he taught salsa dancing and was often the life of the party. And I met Anne-Marie Coman, who told me that she'd just started swimming with the group several months before. Like a lot of us, she'd had a hard year. As we watched the stars wink into view in a cloudless sky, we talked about the relief and joy to be found in the open water. To float is to forget, if just for a moment, the weight and worries of the world. It is improbable magic, a liminal state of grace that is not gotten to without some effort. Coman quoted back to me a phrase from my book: *Swimming is a constant state of not drowning.*

"That's my mantra now," she said. Then she teared up, and I did, too.

This page: OWO holds an open-water swim at Moonlight State Beach, San Diego County.

Opposite page: Swimmers emerge from the ocean after an OWO event in La Jolla.



SWIMMING HAS THE power to give us an out-of-the-ordinary perspective on a place, whether that place is beloved and familiar or brand new to us. I love entering a location alongside the fishes—the dramatic limestone and lush green of Barton Springs in Austin, Texas, say, or the view of the Golden Gate Bridge on the swim from Alcatraz to San Francisco. Both grant sensory immediacy: the metallic scent of a limestone spring, the cold dark pull of the open ocean. Perhaps goggle vision also grants a kind of imaginative sight, allowing us to expand our perception of what's possible.

Imagination is necessary for generating hope during a dark time. The specificity of place—*this* body of mine, in *this* body of water, right *now*—is important. We humans are wired to care about the communities closest to us. If swimming can generate an intimate connection to places nearby, it's a good starting point to caring for the larger world. As the climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe has said, every action matters: "To those already suffering the impacts of climate change," she wrote, "there is always something we can do to help each other."

Each OWO chapter offers a range of training swims, workouts, race events, and beach cleanups. Of all the initiatives, Mineo said, the SLOG swims have been the fastest growing. "We're running around in Speedos with bright buoys attached. People are watching us and saying, 'What is *that*?' And every time, there are three or four people asking us how they can help. It's a visual reminder of a problem that is easy to forget," he said.

Over the ebb and flow of a year, OWO swimmers said they have noticed that summertime produces the most trash, due to the increase in people on the beach. The ironic thing about the mentality around disposability, of course, is that when it comes to the ocean, what you leave behind ends up traveling somewhere else—and may well end up closer to home than you think. With the idea that all paths point to the ocean, OWO also gives each member a recycled beach cleanup bag and tongs and encourages them to do "solo sweeps," cleaning up a mile of local beach, park, or road whenever they have time.

Since January 2020, OWO swimmers have held more than 1,500 beach cleanups, covered more than 3,000 miles of beach, and collected more than 53,000 pounds of litter. It won't make a serious dent in an estimated 17.6 billion pounds of plastic we dump into the

As we watched the stars wink into view in a cloudless sky, we talked about the relief and joy to be found in the open water. To float is to forget, if just for a moment, the weight and worries of the world.

ocean every year. But it doesn't mean that OWO's work is insignificant.

It's easy, of course, to despair. It's harder to muster up the effort to think carefully about a problem and try to help solve it. These swims, though small in the scheme of things, are about connecting to a place, and its people, through water. They're about taking care of that place and leaving it better than we found it.

Late one evening, as I was finishing this story, my phone dinged. It was a text message from Mineo.

"We just picked up 50+lbs of tar at SLOG from the oil spill," he wrote. A major pipeline breach had just been detected off the Southern California coast, releasing an estimated 25,000 gallons of crude oil into the ocean, which washed up on beaches and wetlands. "Was epic and really sad." It was also, he noted, the group's most successful cleanup to date.

Bay Area–based writer and swimmer Bonnie Tsui is profiled on page 16. This is her first story for AFAR.

WATER

Greenland has a rich vocabulary for ice and snow. But what happens to language when those natural phenomena start to disappear?

by Lisa Abend

Photographs by
Carsten Snejbjerg

I came to think of it as the Valley of the Howling Dogs.

IT WAS MY second day in Ilulissat, Greenland's third-largest town, and after exploring the modest center, I soon found myself on the outskirts, walking beside a broad meadow carpeted in sled dogs. There were hundreds and hundreds of them, all tied on lengths of chains and waiting desultorily, it seemed, for snow. They paid me no mind, but as I passed the last of them, a sound I had never heard before—half joyful yodel, half demonic despair—rose from their midst: It was feeding time. I continued for a mile or so as the road turned to trail, but without trees to block the sound, the noise of the dogs stayed with me. When I finally reached the edge of the fjord, on Greenland's western coast, their cries formed an appropriately otherworldly soundtrack for the fathomless spectacle that lay before me. Towering in the bay like some kind of marvelous ghost city were massive icebergs, tinted pink and lavender by the setting sun and

***apussineq:** snowdrift*

***kassoq:** black ice*

***masannartuliorpoq:** snow that's falling and wet*

***imeq:** water*

*** Greenlandic 101:**
Essential terms for weather and precipitation

floating ethereally on the glassy sea. I tried to formulate words for what I was seeing, but they wouldn't come.

The beauty of it was awesome, and I don't mean that in the California dude sense. I mean it in the original sense of the word: wonder tinged with a degree of dread or fear. It was impossible to look across the ice fjord and Disko Bay and not feel reverence for the ravishing beauty of it. But this being Greenland, a land that for at least the past 100,000 years has been largely covered and surrounded by ice, it was also impossible not to feel a certain foreboding. As those spectacular floating sculptures set ominously to the cries of hungry dogs reminded me, the ice is disappearing. However much we may think we know what that means—rising sea levels, extreme weather events, endangered species, including us—Greenland speaks of the climate crisis in a language too articulate to ignore. So it is somewhat ironic that among the many things affected by the disappearing ice is the Greenlandic language itself.

alutsinneq: *a steep snowdrift*

imaq: *seawater*

perseq: *windblown snow*

Or at least that's the theory. Long before I'd landed in Greenland, I'd read an article about the unexpected effects of climate change. The piece included a fascinating hypothesis by linguist Lenore Grenoble, whose work focuses on language shifts in the Arctic. She argues that as weather and nature patterns change, so too does the Indigenous vocabulary that describes them. Could language really be that sensitive? In late summer, just a couple of weeks before the first snow traditionally arrives, I went to Ilulissat, whose very name translates as "icebergs," to find out.

IT'S A CLICHÉ that the "Eskimos" have 50 words for snow, and it's not even true. In the late 19th century, anthropologist Franz Boas was conducting field research among the Inuit, an Indigenous people in the Arctic whom Europeans at that time referred to—offensively—as Eskimos. He observed that the Inuit had four different words for snow: *aput* (snow on the ground), *qana* (falling snow), *piqsirpoq* (drifting snow), and *qimuqsug* (a snowdrift). Over time, Boas's intention in describing these words was distorted by other scholars and popular culture, and the number of snow names ballooned into 50 or more. Yet the transformation of the Inuit vocabulary into myth does not mean that its roster of snow and ice words isn't rich or meaningful. In fact, a fascinating feature of the Inuit language family, which includes Greenlandic, helps explain why the legend has endured: All Inuit languages use polysynthesis to form words, attaching prefixes and suffixes to roots, so that a huge amount of information—what would be entire sentences in other languages—can be conveyed through a single word.

imarnersaq: *melted snow that has accumulated on ice*

qannerpoq: *falling snow*

This page: It may look remote, but Disko Bay is the most visited place in Greenland.

Opposite page: Greenland is known for its colorful architecture, a practice instituted in the 18th century to identify a building's function. Red was for churches, schools, and trade; yellow for hospitals; and blue for fish-related work.

Only 10 to 15 percent of an iceberg is visible above the surface of the water—icebergs can stretch more than half a mile beneath the sea.

In the case of Greenlandic, which is spoken by roughly 50,000 people in Greenland and Denmark, polysynthesis results in words like *isersarneq*, which translates roughly as "a wind in the fjord that comes in from the sea, and makes it hard to get home, but once you get out of the fjord, it's nice weather." There may not be 50 or 100 *root* words for snow or ice, but Greenlandic can articulate precise detail where detail matters. Yet the details themselves are under pressure, according to University of Chicago–based Grenoble. "Climate change is causing massive cultural disruption," she said. "And that is changing the language."

nataqqornaq: *hail*

anorersuarujussuaq nittaalartalik: *an orderly snowstorm*

sermersuaq: *ice sheet*

MORE THAN 80 percent of Greenland is covered by an ice sheet that, in some places, is nearly two miles thick. In the past decade, an estimated 3.5 trillion tons of it have melted. The sea ice that surrounds the island is also thinning. The impact on Greenland's fauna is already detectable: Polar bears starve as the ice becomes too thin for them to hunt on; caribou are forced to flee the grasslands where they graze in summer, because the mosquitoes have multiplied.

From Ilulissat, you can practically watch climate change happen. The town is positioned on a spit of land where the ice fjord connects the Sermeq Kujalleq glacier with Disko Bay. Sermeq is nearly 40 miles long and three miles wide, though it was once much larger—for the past 20 years, it has been Greenland's fastest-thinning glacier, a dubious distinction. This, however, hasn't scared off travelers. Though Ilulissat's population is less than 5,000, the town draws roughly 36,200 visitors a year who want to see the glacier in action.

anorersuapilorujussuaq nittaalartalik: *a terrific snowstorm*

qanik: *snowflake*

Because the shrinking glacier is actively calving, creating icebergs, the fjord is full of floating chunks of ice moving slowly toward the bay. (In fact, legend holds that the fjord is the birthplace of the iceberg that sank the *Titanic*.) Before they reach the open sea, the icebergs bunch together in that marvelous ghost city I witnessed. Eventually, they break free, and many float around to Ilulissat's harbor. They are slimmed down but still sparkly and wondrous, and it is impossible to do them justice with the paltry word *beautiful*.

THE HOTEL CAFÉ where I met Nivi Pedersen a few days later overlooks that miraculous bay. She is a young actress and filmmaker, and after discussing her current shoot, we turned, almost inevitably, to the ice and its associated words. "Language describes the necessary," she said. "Which is why we only have one word for 'snake' [there are none in Greenland] but many for ice. At one point in our history, it was extremely necessary to vocally distinguish between the condition of the ice: Is it safe? Is the snow we see on top hard or soft?"

sikoqannginnersaq: *ice-free waters*

Pedersen's comments reminded me that there's something about naming that makes the ineffable real. For English speakers, *schadenfreude* might be the best example. We know what it means to take joy in others' suffering, even if we must borrow a word from German

qerisoq: *frozen*

HOW TO VISIT GREENLAND

Remote and sparsely populated, Greenland appeals to travelers who want Arctic landscapes and the great wide open. Currently, there are no direct flights from the United States to the island—all flights have a stopover in Reykjavík, Iceland. If you're traveling to Greenland with a valid U.S. passport, you don't need a visa to enter unless you're staying more than 90 days.

How to get around

Greenland is an extremely rugged place, and none of its cities or settlements are connected by roads. Residents and travelers get around on small planes, helicopters, and boats, many of which are only available on a seasonal basis (May through September), so it's best to book travel far in advance. Traveling with an outfitter makes things easier. Most tours involve travel by sea—and many start or end in Iceland, Denmark, or eastern Canada.

Tours to book

Adventure Canada offers small-ship excursions that begin in Greenland, cross the Arctic Circle, then cruise down the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador with an extensive stop at Torngat Mountains National Park. *From $6,995*

Travelers can also sail to the island from Iceland on the *Ultramarine*, a new Arctic ship from **Quark Expeditions**. The company offers two different Greenland trips on the ship—and a third on its *Ocean Adventurer*—varying from 9 days to 15 days in length. The trips explore both remote areas and pristine biomes. *From $7,200*

Luxury tour operator **Abercrombie & Kent** offers a 24-day, over-the-top Northwest Passage cruise, which begins in Montreal, includes 6 days in Greenland, and ends in Nome, Alaska. *From $32,995*

For a more boots-on-the-ground approach, try **Sila Greenland DMC**, an outfitter that provides intimate access to some of Greenland's most isolated regions and communities, such as Camp Kiattua outside Nuuk, the capital. *Bespoke trips typically from $6,000*

To book an excursion in Ilulissat—or the Glacier Lodge Eqi where writer Lisa Abend stayed—explore the **World of Greenland**, a locally owned outfitter and lodge operator.
—Mae Hamilton

naggutit: *small pieces of sea ice*

to describe it. But there are so many others. Once, in a poem translated from Sanskrit, I came across a single word that means "the feeling you get when you know your lover is going to leave you, but he hasn't left yet." I recognized the sentiment immediately. I just hadn't realized, until I learned it had a name, that others felt it too.

Perhaps that's why it feels so important to name the linguistic threat facing Greenlandic. Receding ice has made Greenland's vast reserves of minerals and other resources more accessible, a development that may bring new wealth to the island. It also means that when Greenlanders migrate to larger towns, they now encounter a language challenge not only from Danish speakers—when Greenland gained home rule from Denmark in 1979, the government removed Danish as an official language, though it's still widely spoken—but also from international workers whose lingua franca tends to be English.

nutarneq: *recently formed sea ice*

quasak: *slippery ice*

For Pedersen, who listens to Greenlandic music, reads Greenlandic novels, and shoots her films in Greenlandic, the language is simply part of her daily life. She once had a professor who believed Greenlandic got some of its power from the island's antagonistic relationship to Danish. "I don't know if people are going to oppose English in the same way," she said.

iluliaq: *iceberg*

And as lifestyle changes, so too does vocabulary. Climate change has made life in coastal villages more difficult in some ways, contributing to the decline of traditional means of sustenance, including hunting. That, in addition to other factors, has spurred continued migration to the capital, Nuuk, and other towns where people are more likely to be exposed to the colonial language.

"Some people there use Danish all the time. If there's one kid in a class who only speaks Danish, they'll all switch to it," Grenoble, the linguist, explained to me. "That alone affects the language ecology."

ilulissat: *icebergs*

Grenoble has already encountered Greenlanders who, unable to relay the names of sea ice, tell her she must go farther north if she wants to learn them. "The problem is that sea ice doesn't look like it did 10 years ago, let alone 40," she said. "There's going to be no reason to use these root words for very thick, old sea ice when it doesn't exist anymore."

qaanngoq: *ice foot (the fringe of ice attached to the coast)*

NOT EVERYONE sees that as a bad thing. Diminishing sea ice has brought new opportunities: Cruise ships muscle their way into Ilulissat harbor, and the town is full of places selling adventure gear and Thai food to travelers. The Icefjord Centre was built with them in mind. A glorious wood-and-glass swoop of a building, it is

Aron Petersen is a park ranger at Ilulissat Icefjord, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

as much a part of the landscape as it is a frame for it. Inside are exhibitions about ice: how it forms, where it has been, what's happening to it now. An inner chamber features sounds of the ice, directly transmitted from several research stations. Outside, paths lead to the fjord and its frozen metropolis.

sikuaq: *a dark, thin, elastic crust of ice*

I found myself drawn back repeatedly to the Icefjord Centre and the trails around it. On my second afternoon I followed a slatted wooden path, passing women drawing red plastic rakes across the low brush; they were, I learned, collecting tart crowberries. One morning I got up early and hiked past a cemetery whose views would surely take the edge off being dead. And one day, I met Aron Petersen, a park ranger.

apisoq: *snowing*

He is 67 years old, with a weathered face and eyebrows that meet in a sharp V. When I asked if he was seeing any effects of climate change yet, he was alarmingly precise. "In the 1980s, it would be –30°[C] for a long time in winter," he responded. "And there would be ice on the sea as far as you can see. Now, it gets to maybe –20° for one week, and by June, the standing sea ice is gone."

To be clear, the alarm was on my part; Petersen, I discovered, is less concerned. He knows that Greenland's melting ice is raising sea levels—"like what happened in Louisiana in the United States," he said—and thinner ice has meant he can't use dogsleds as much. But he's found a workaround. "We just take the boat more often when we go fishing," he told me.

qaatsineq: *wet snow area in the tide crack (where the ice foot meets the shore ice)*

The melting ice has had an impact on his work, though. When I asked him about his days, he said that, in summer, he spends most of his time collecting trash. I was surprised to learn that people still litter in this breathtaking landscape. "Oh, it's not all from now," he replied. "Most of it is old glass that was left a long time ago. It's just now, when there's no snow, that it comes out."

Shouldn't there be a word for that? For the kind of trash that surfaces a season or decades after it was first dropped? For the things we believe to have disappeared, but that linger?

"Climate change is causing massive cultural disruption," Grenoble said. "And that is changing the language."

WATER

Captain Jørgen Kristensen helms a boat that leads day trips to the Eqi glacier, located on Greenland's west coast.

Will there be fewer words for snow and ice, and more for rain, flood, and heat?

I THOUGHT ABOUT disappearances the whole way to Eqi. Located 37 miles north of Ilulissat, it is among the most active glaciers in the world, which means that pieces of it frequently break off into icebergs, and travelers who make the journey north by sea are practically guaranteed to see it calve. Yet the trip would have been worth it even if there weren't a glacier shedding chunks of itself at the end. Until then, I had only seen icebergs from land, but the experience of meeting them, as it were, on their own imposing terms, turned up the awe dial. It wasn't just the size of them, though some are massive—300 feet tall (from the ocean's surface) and just as wide. They are also astonishingly varied, coming in an array of shapes and textures that, though entirely and magnificently nature's work, hint uncannily at the humanmade.

sermeq: *ice*

Castles, skyscrapers, geodesic domes. A jester's hat, a fighter jet, a Rajasthani fortress. In one stretch we passed a series of what resembled renowned opera houses: Oslo, New York, Sydney. The side of one iceberg was so cleanly cut it looked like it had been shaved by a guillotine; another was as swirled and airy as cupcake frosting. A striated third looked for all the world like a Hasselback potato. It was hard not to think of each one as alive, like some kind of fantastic aquatic plant that sucks sustenance from the frigid water and blossoms above the surface.

tippuigutit: *ice that moves on a current to the beach*

When words themselves are insufficient, we reach for metaphors. Which is probably why, once we finally reached Eqi, all I could think of was *Game of Thrones*. Like the Wall, the glacier is daunting: a chiseled front that is two miles long and 656 feet high. Anywhere from 98 to 590 feet of that height is visible above the water's surface.

tullut: *frozen chunks of ice combined by wind or current*

The boat idled several hundred feet from the front, far enough to protect us from falling ice. As we waited, I struck up a conversation with the ship's captain, Jørgen Kristensen. He is 57 years old and, it turns out, a dogsledding champion. But what really excites him is the stuff that was all around us. "People think my first interest should be dogs," he said. "But actually, it's ice."

sermersooq: *a place with many glaciers*

I couldn't believe my luck: Kristensen collects Greenlandic words for sea ice. His face lit up when I told him I'd like to learn some of them. "It's going to take a while," he warned.

He pointed to a small, clear chunk floating near the boat and wrote down *kassoq*. "It's what we call 'black ice,' because you can't see it," he explained. It's different from ice that is actually black, at least in stripes: That is called *anarluk talik*, literally "shit ice." There is *inguneq*, the ridge of ice created when cracked pieces are pushed together. There is *qaanngoq*, which is the thick ice that forms near the coast, and *ilulissap eqqaa*, the ice that forms around the base of an iceberg. As he wrote, I could see that in some cases he was combining root words with suffixes, but every now and then an outlier would pop up. For *allu*, he drew what looked to be a small hill with a head poking its way out beneath it. The word, which fittingly sounds like *aluu* or "hello," refers to the holes in the ice that seals use to breathe.

sikusiaq: *ice one has observed*

We were interrupted by what sounded like a shotgun crack as a piece of glacier tumbled into the sea. It was both mesmerizing and terrifying, and though he had witnessed it thousands of times before, Kristensen seemed just as entranced by it as I was. He wrote down one more word for me: *imarorpoq*, which means "the sea ice disappears." It prompted me to ask him about linguist Grenoble's theory of climate change and its impact on Greenlandic. "Am I worried that we will lose the words along with the ice?" He shrugged. "Maybe we'll make new words."

All languages change. But my time in Greenland made me wonder what its new words would be. Will there be fewer words for snow and ice, and more for rain, flood, and heat? Will the old vocabulary endure, outliving the ice it once described? Or will we somehow overcome the limits of language to persuade each other of realities—the flooded cities, the extinguished polar bears, a frozen Arctic that exists in memory only—that we sense but perhaps cannot make ourselves act upon until we have named them?

sisoornerit: *landslides with lots of snow*

Alongside the glacier was a small lodge, also called Eqi, where the boat left me and a handful of other passengers. That night, one of the staff members told us that, when she took her first hike of the season to the inland sheet, she noticed it had shrunk from the previous summer. The following morning, on a walk to the glacier's edge, another staffer would tell me that it is retreating so quickly, "in 10 or 15 years, you won't be able to see it from the camp."

But I already had an inkling of that. In my cabin was a photo of the glacier taken in the first half of the 20th century, and I could see for myself how much farther into the sea it had reached. That night, I sat on the porch and watched the northern lights ripple in time to the rumbles and crashes of its calving. It was terrible and beautiful, and I found myself, once again, at a loss for words. Ⓐ

sermip ningimanera: *glacier*

Contributing writer Lisa Abend wrote about Copenhagen in the January/February 2022 issue of AFAR. Photographer Carsten Snejbjerg is profiled on page 16.

Where Travel Takes You

"During the last two years, I've noticed more families out enjoying the local hiking trails I frequent. While people respond to nature in many ways, it's always satisfying to see that look, *the one people get when filled with awe, dumbstruck by the view before them. The collective feeling of wonder when in nature—that's what I wanted to capture in my painting."*

by **SALLY DENG**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