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Sarah Sze, *Cave Painting*  
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*Photograph by Justin Casanova*

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We find trip inspiration in every state (plus Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.), from sprawling rainforests and contemporary art museums to Black-owned wineries and more.

Travelers can revel in new national landmarks and glamping spots on one trip and savor local wines and Andy Warhol artworks on the next.





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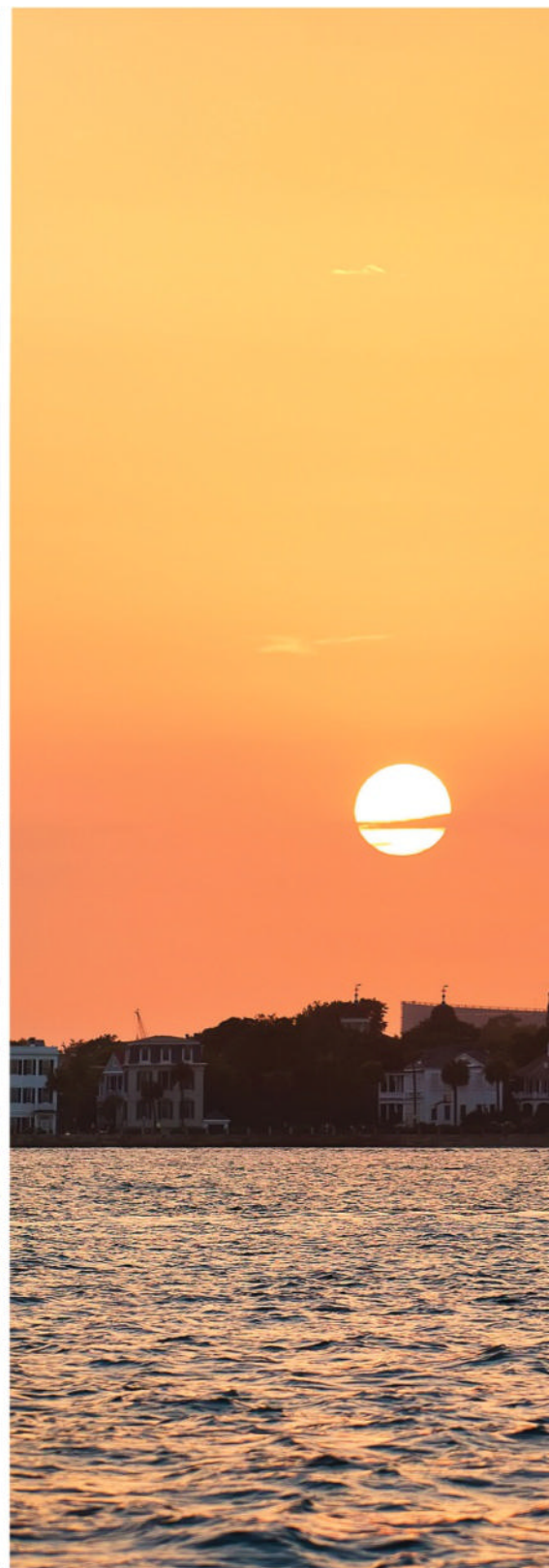
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"Halifax, Canada is a lively small city on the Nova Scotia coast that feels both sweet and ruggedly outdoorsy. The library here is one of my favorites in the world." —B.C.

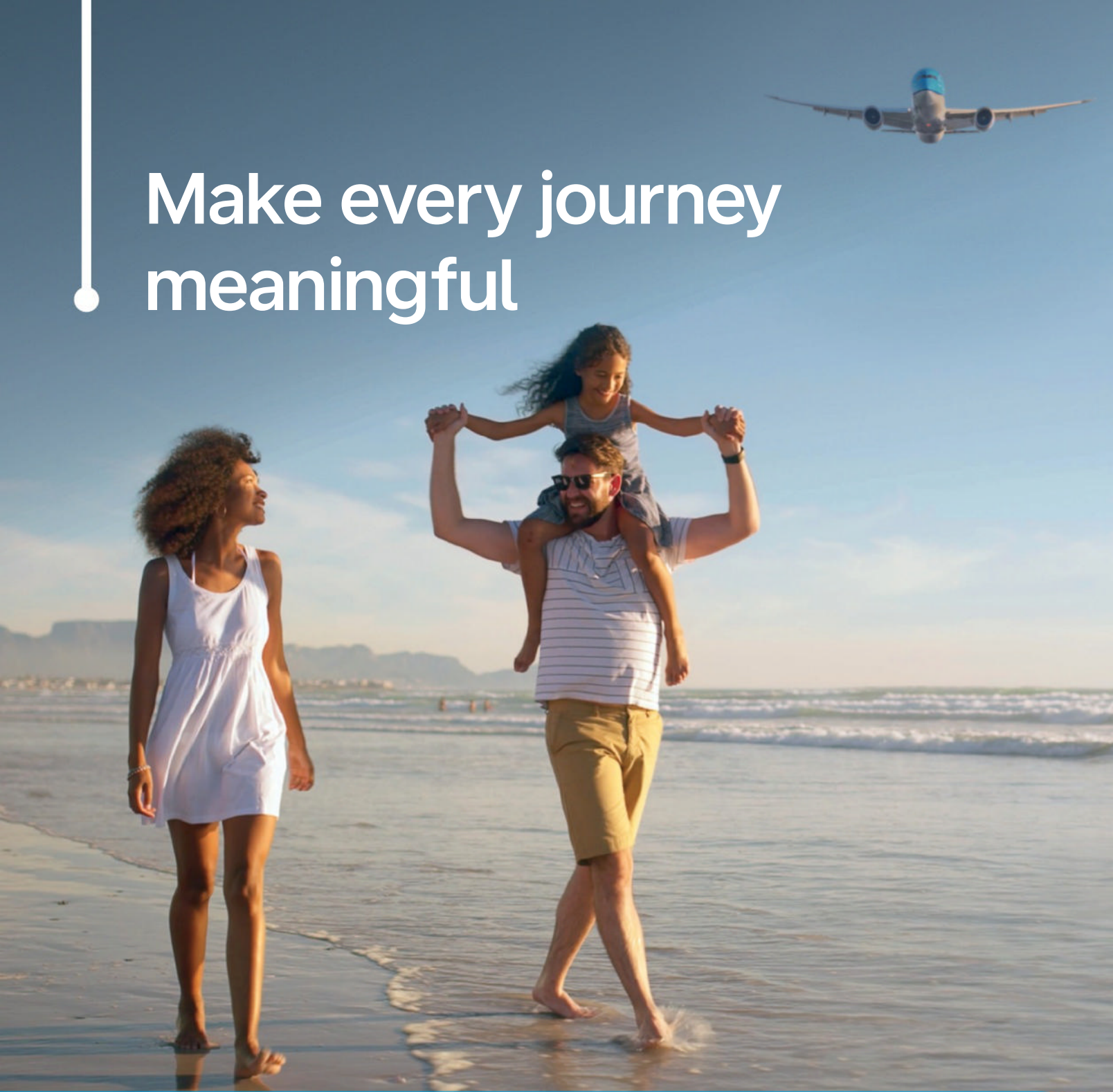
"In Charleston, South Carolina, I love to grab coffee at the Harken Cafe & Bakery and stroll through White Point Garden on the Charleston Harbor." —I.M.

"There is nothing more serene than wandering the historic district of Savannah, Georgia, sipping the city's signature Chatham Artillery punch and marveling at the antiques shops." —D.D.

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# A Big World Here at Home

**WHEN THE FIRST** issue of Afar came out 15 years ago this August, we had a clear mandate: Cover the world beyond the United States. In the original blueprint for the magazine, we wrote, “Afar is the ‘non-ugly’ American, the one who is eager to learn about other ways of living, different philosophies, and diverse perceptions that help expand our own understanding.”

If hindsight is 20/20, that viewpoint was a bit myopic. In encouraging readers to go further, *ahem*, afar and afield, we underestimated the incredible range of experiences travelers could have closer to home in North America. A couple of years later, we expanded our areas of coverage to include our own backyard—with the same approach of open-mindedness and curiosity we applied to the wider world.

In this issue, we celebrate the array of cultures and landscapes travelers can enjoy across the continent. Author Santi Elijah Holley visits New Orleans to check out what’s new in the city (page 88); Alberta-based writer Debbie Olsen traverses Canada’s vast Yukon territory by dogsled, snowshoe, and helicopter (page 100); photographer Rachael Wright road-trips along Route 66, America’s legendary highway (page 110); and our staff and contributors shout out 52 unexpected places to visit in the U.S. (page 47).

While Afar’s original geographic parameters may have changed, most other statements in the blueprint stand the test of time. One that still resonates for me: “We believe the world is to be explored, not just read about.”

I hope these stories inspire you to book your next trip—and to journey near or far.

Travel well,  
**JULIA COSGROVE**  
*Editor in Chief*



*On the streets of New Orleans, visitors may encounter second lines, the city's festive parades that typically involve brass bands, dance, and jazz.*





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Fethiye, Muğla



## A GREAT ESCAPE TO THE Turkaegean Experience

The western coast of Türkiye is where the Aegean Sea forms a lacelike shoreline framed by seemingly endless bays, creating a vibrant culture defined by barefoot luxury to be enjoyed in idyllic settings. Here is a quick look into the Turkaegean pleasures from beach getaways to isolated hillside retreats with so many options to inspire your next soulful escape.

Göcek, Muğla



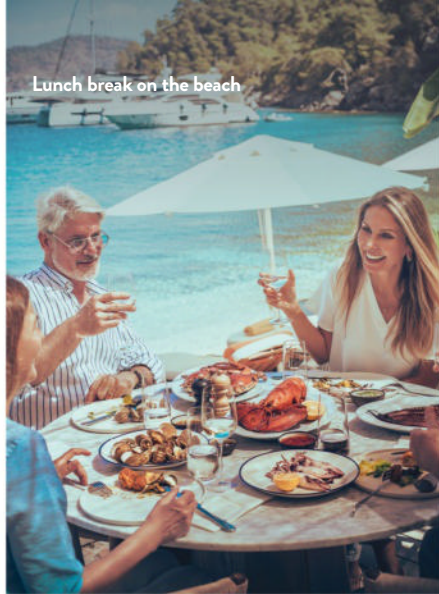
The Aegean coast of Türkiye is the coast of happiness for travelers in the know, with its 2,800-kilometer-long stretch of turquoise coves, pine-crested hills, olive and citrus groves, sleepy mountain villages with secluded hotels and villas, and sun-kissed coastal towns attracting a hip crowd with pulsating beach clubs and sumptuous resorts. Here, one can experience a very distinctive way of life replete with the provincial style encapsulated by some of Türkiye's most representative country houses, al fresco spaces, garden settings and seaside restaurants, as well as the more active aquatic culture well represented by the local surfing and yachting communities galore. Some of the most enigmatic stories about the glorious civilizations have taken place in the region. For centuries, the arts, philosophy and medicine have flourished here in these pioneering cities of antiquity, dating back as far as 8,000 century BCE. The region is home to five UNESCO World Heritage sites (Ephesus, Pergamum, Aphrodisias, Pamukkale & Hierapolis, Troy). Some of the most wondrous monuments of human history were erected on this soil, including two of the Seven Wonders of the World – the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus in Bodrum and the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus. With a good balance of luxury and serene natural landscapes, and its charm, the coast of happiness will surely tick all the boxes with the myriad of unmatched experiences it can provide, whatever your travel personality may be.

### ÇEŞME PENINSULA:

#### WHERE FUN MEETS LEISURE

**İzmir** is the third largest city in Türkiye, also a favorite holiday destination for local travellers, with its proximity to the pristine beach towns and resorts scattered about the Çeşme peninsula. After reserving one or two nights in İzmir's center to explore the area of the historic bazaar and the vibrant street culture, head to the destination of your choice in Çeşme's environs. If you are a fan of lovely countryside living and fine wines, **Urla Wine Route** is a feast for your senses with its stunning sights and sounds. Here, you will find an enticing selection of boutique vineyards and chef-owned farm-to-table restaurants, where you could sit in citrus and olive groves to enjoy local flavors. **Alaçatı** will satisfy windsurfing enthusiasts and night owls alike with its steady wind and beauty, and accompanying bars and restaurants. In and around the fashionable Alaçatı, you can stay in bougainvillea-clad stone houses with colourful shutters, jasmine-scented courtyards and head to the beach





Lunch break on the beach

to surf the waves and feel the fresh sea breeze in your salty hair. The Çeşme peninsula is also famous for its funky beach clubs catering to all tastes, where you can chill on a private stretch of sand to dance the day away with steady beats for the ears and a refreshing summer cocktail in hand.

NOT  
TO  
MISS

UNESCO World Heritage sites, **Pergamum** (Bergama) and **Ephesus** (Selçuk) are both an hour's drive from İzmir center for those wishing to see all the beauty and opulence once bestowed by the past civilizations of the Region. While you are in Selçuk, you might consider going inland to have a day trip to the picturesque town of **Birgi**, which has been selected as one of the Best Tourism Villages by the United Tourism due to its unspoiled traditional architecture, silk production and weaving. A mere 20 kilometers south of Selçuk lies the cruise port of **Kuşadası**, an old city with a well-preserved 14th – 16th century castle also the main hub of luxury cruise lines. Kuşadası can be your base to explore the cities of **Miletus** and **Priene**, both of which flourished in the delta of the Büyük Menderes (Meander) River and became the birthplace of philosophy based on natural observation. Miletus is known as the city of Anatolian philosophers like Thales, while Priene is notable as the city that applied the first example of a “grid system” in city planning.

## BODRUM:

### THE ART OF COASTAL LIVING

Thanks to its whitewashed villas with sun-bleached terraces, posh resorts and marinas, MICHELIN-starred restaurants, balmy Aegean climate, and thriving cultural calendar, **Bodrum** is the ideal year-round vacation destination. The Bodrum peninsula has cast an enchanting smile across the faces of visitors since it staked its claim as Türkiye's own slice of heaven on earth more than half a century ago. The Blue Voyage, an experience uniquely intertwined with Bodrum, offers an unparalleled journey to secluded bays and hidden islands aboard the gulet. This authentic wooden, double-masted sailing yacht, known for its distinctive design, has become emblematic of the Bodrum region. Apart from a magnificent seascape, the peninsula features several coastal towns and villages, each with its

own distinct charms. While **Gölkürkükü** and **Yalıkavak** attract a cosmopolitan clientele with their luxury beach clubs and fine dining restaurants, glitzy luxury hotels at the forefront of contemporary design and gleaming marinas berthing the mega-yachts of billionaires, **Gümüşlük** emits bohemian vibes from its jazz bars and fish restaurants located right on the beach. Bodrum center, on the other hand, is ideal for shopping therapy at its historic bazaar, swarming with artisanal boutiques selling high-quality linen beachwear, as well as authentic hand-made leather sandals and jewelry. The long coastal promenade at the center also allows you to wave the day goodbye with a sundowner at a seaside bar, enjoying the luminous waters of the bay and Bodrum Castle's iconic silhouette as the backdrop.

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Visit the **Bodrum Castle** to see one of the oldest shipwrecks ever found and a rich collection of ancient finds at the **Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology**; catch a live performance at **Bodrum Ballet Festival**, or the ancient theater or see Türkiye's most elegant sailing yachts and gulets compete at the annual **Bodrum Cup** each October.

## MARMARİS & GÖCEK:

### SAILING THE TURQUOISE WATERS

Between the Bay of Gökova and Marmaris lie the twin peninsulas of Bozburun and Datça, two beautiful swathes of land jutting out to the Aegean Sea. Both are easily accessible from the international airports of Milas and Dalaman, and integral parts of classical cruise itineraries, whether aboard a sailing yacht or motorboat, as they unveil crystal-clear coves lined up in succession. Many of these secluded corners offer hidden restaurants that are only accessible by water, serving some of the freshest seafood plates in the country.

The must-see points along this coastal stretch include **Akyaka** with its kite-surfing beaches; **Bördübet** with its teeming greenery and crystal streams pouring into the sea; **Datça** with its charming old town, notable port and azure beaches; **Bozburun** and **Selimiye** with their laid-back coastal living; and **Turunç** with its secluded cove and small luxury hotels and villas keeping watch over the expansive landscape from their patios and infinity pools.

**Marmaris**, the main port of the region that has developed around a medieval castle, is also a peaceful town to stop over for its lively market area, and maze of streets full of bars. Those who venture further south can stay in a riverside lodge in **Dalyan** to enjoy the tranquility of the natural setting and vistas of the gorgeous temple-like tombs cut into cliff walls in the ancient Carian city of Kaunos. An added bonus is discovering the endangered *Caretta caretta* (loggerheads) and green sea turtles nesting from May to August along the İztuzu Beach, a 5-km strip of golden sand near Dalyan. **Lake Köyceğiz**, a former bay that has been transformed into a lake in thousands of years, has also developed into a town that is now listed as one of five Cittaslow in the region, thanks to its peaceful nature dotted with orange groves and sweetgum (liquidambar) forests. All are explorable on a bike along miles of eco-trail routes marked around Köyceğiz. Köyceğiz Lake and Dalyan Delta are also famous for their grey mullet population and the regional caviar made of their roes, enveloped in beeswax. A mere half hour's drive away is **Göcek**, where

you can rent a bareboat and enjoy the bay's constant winds. You can further moor off a secluded isle, or berth at one of the well-featured marinas at Göcek's center to mingle with the well-traveled crowd.

NOT  
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**Datça** is famous as the center of almond harvesting in Türkiye, with their bloom beginning every February, a recurrence celebrated with the annual *Badem Çiçeği* (Almond Bloom) Festival. Make sure to stop by local food boutiques selling almonds in every form. The awe-inspiring ruins of the ancient Carian city of **Knidos**, one of the wealthiest ports of antiquity and a center of arts and culture more than two thousand years ago, also deserve a day visit at the tip of the Datça peninsula.

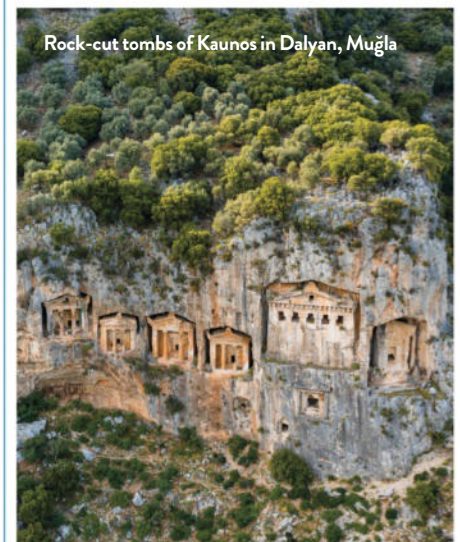
## FETHİYE:

### WELCOME TO THE LAND OF LIGHT

The ancient Lycians have bequeathed us dramatic ruins dating back to 1,500 BCE, including a monumental parliament building as well as distinguishing rock tombs and catacombs stretching from the beaches to the mountainsides. The modern town of **Fethiye** is where one can see the remnants of this bygone civilization. The town itself is worthy of attention, featuring a lively fish market where you can choose the seafood of your fancy and have it grilled right before your eyes in the marketplace. The real prize, however, is the scenic sandbank and lagoon of **Ölüdeniz**, lying at the foot of the majestic Mount Babadağ. Ölüdeniz Lagoon operates as a national park today, with paragliding from **Babadağ** offering a hovering front-row seat to these breathtaking panoramas. One can also visit the Babadağ summit by cable car year-round to behold among the best sunsets imaginable.

NOT  
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MISS

Usually shortlisted among the most beautiful long-distance treks in the world, the **Lycian Way** offers a 540-km waymarked trail (rated moderate to difficult), starting from Ölüdeniz and ending at Antalya. One can hike the entire trail in a month or enjoy shorter, multi-day segments of the entire route. The **Butterfly** and **Kabak Valleys** are two neighboring natural wonders on the Lycian Way, locales where you can indulge in ecological retreats and glamping domes. For more off-grid simplicity, **Faralya** hides some exclusive camps offering safari tents in scenic havens adjoining private rocky beaches and overseen by watchful mountains above.



Rock-cut tombs of Kaunos in Dalyan, Muğla



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# The Whole Truth

*The United States was once home to more than 46,000 plantations. Today, many properties remain across the American South. What should travelers consider before—and during—a visit?*

**WHEN I WAS 11**, my school took a field trip to Walnut Grove Plantation, one of the oldest homes in South Carolina. The way the guides explained it, Scotch-Irish immigrants Charles and Mary Moore had been “given” the property by King George III in 1763, and they built their manor there in 1765.

That day, we were told about the house’s furnishings and what life was like for white settlers. Nothing was said about the 12 enslaved people who worked on the property, which once spanned 3,000 acres. Its boundaries sat just six miles from my childhood home.

Slavery is the reason my lineage exists in this country. Brought to coastal South Carolina in the 1730s, my ancestors were enslaved people whose labor helped make the state, at one point, one of the wealthiest colonies in the world. For almost 300 years my family has survived—and at times, thrived—in this lush but hostile environment.







## Why do plantation tours exist, if not to share the story of slavery? Of America?

one-inch bands of exposed skin near my ankles. That experience, which left me with bites that turned into scars, put to bed any remaining notion that I might have had of benevolent slaveholders and loyal slaves, a fallacy we're told time and time again. This framing is an old Southern parlor trick, a sleight of hand, an act of obfuscation. Historic entities can be good at this: practicing omission, exclusion, and sometimes outright erasure to tell a more palatable narrative. But why do plantation tours exist, if not to share the story of slavery? Of America?

"I think the role of plantations is to tell raw history, and to not hold back on heavy topics," says Enfinitee Irving, an interpretive ranger with South Carolina State Parks. In her role, Irving creates and gives tours at Rose Hill Plantation State Historic Site near the town of Union. Like me, she is a descendant of people who were once enslaved in South Carolina.

For travelers considering visiting plantations, Irving suggests starting with research: Who owns the plantation today, and what is their agenda in holding tours? How is this historic site bringing stories of the formerly enslaved to life?

"When someone gets out of the car [at Rose Hill], one of the first things they see as they're walking up to the main house is a sign that says MORE THAN A MANSION," Irving tells me. "We try to get people to understand as soon as possible that this house was built by enslaved people. And if we're going to talk about this house, we need to talk about the skills and craftsmanship that went into it; how these enslaved laborers knew how to build structures made of bricks that have lasted for generations."

As a young Black girl growing up in the 1990s in the rural South, I did not see myself in this landscape, in the history books, or in the stories shared in the classroom. When slavery was mentioned, it was glossed over as an aberration, as a thing that was fixed with the Civil War.

The America we learned about was one of great wealth, enterprising politicians, and leisure time at mansions framed by formal gardens and green grounds. Precious little was ever said about the people who made such vast wealth possible—the skilled labor force held in bondage. The afterlife of slavery was all around me, yet it frequently went unaddressed.

In the search to know my family's place in the American story, I've scoured articles, books, diaries, census records, and slaveholder journals. Since that first trip to Walnut Grove, I've visited hundreds of other former plantations in Georgia, Virginia, South Carolina, and North Carolina in an attempt to better understand the roles Black people were forced into. The tours I've engaged with run the gamut. Some position the voices of enslaved people at the center. Others rebrand the plantation's original wealthy inhabitants—slave traders who dealt in human cargo—as merchants.

Once, at Hampton Plantation State Historic Site in South Carolina, I asked a ranger about visiting the fields' earthen structures—dams and dikes enslaved people built to make rice cultivation possible. She warned me about the viciousness of the mosquitoes. Covered in DEET, I set out, walking away from the Georgian house toward the creek. I will never forget the sound—the *thip-thip-thip* of thousands of insects. Clouds of mosquitoes clustered around my hands and the



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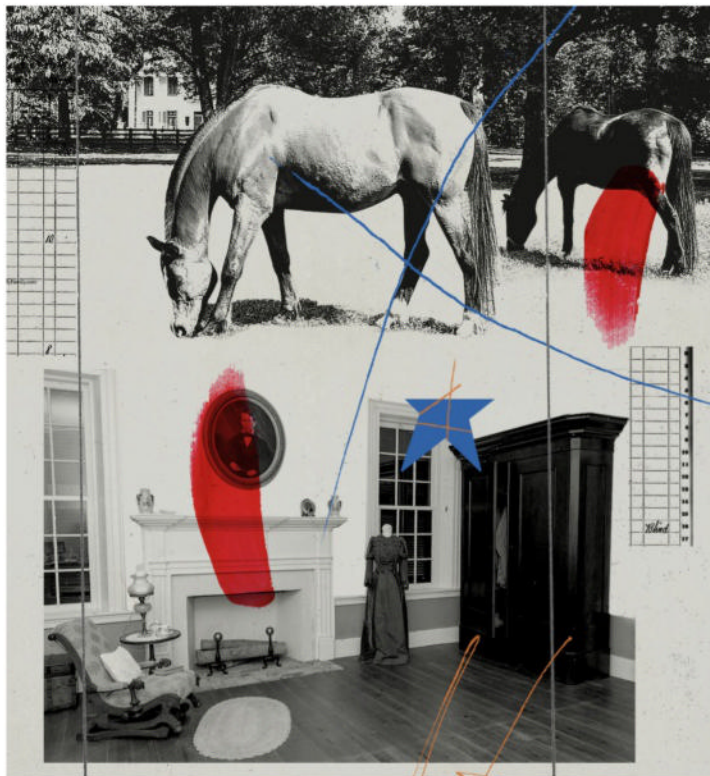


I treat plantations as sacred spaces. I step onto every property with the understanding that these beautiful homes and manicured gardens are the fruit of the suffering of a subjugated people. I listen for silences, and I ask questions about what goes unsaid. I inquire about any information gaps, and I ask where guides are getting their facts, and if the descendants of the enslaved are involved in the stories being told about the site. The best tours I've joined humanize the dehumanized, giving visitors the context to figure out the stakes each person had in maintaining the social order of the time. Rose Hill, for example, has identified 116 people once enslaved there. Their names are displayed during special events and programs.

I also remember that two things can be true at once. Landscapes like Rose Hill are the resting place for so many who did not survive the experience of chattel slavery. They are also the fertile ground from which much of American culture sprang. After all, it was in places like plantations where new culinary offerings and music and dance formed. People blended Indigenous, European, and West African elements to create something the world had never seen.

Plantations are spaces to talk about what we decide to preserve and what we leave to fade. The lessons of our past also inform the future, and plantations have stories to tell. "It takes so much for us to begin to right so many wrongs," Irving says. "But acknowledging that this happened is important." **A**

*For these illustrations, Mark Harris used images from Belle Meade Historic Site & Winery, Hampton Plantation State Historic Site, Rose Hill Plantation State Historic Site, and Stagville State Historic Site. The women pictured are Selena Giles and Louise (Giles) Browning.*



## Where to Learn More

Six places across the South that are doing the work to tell a more inclusive story.

### Owens-Thomas House & Slave Quarters

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

This 1819 mansion has some of the best-preserved urban slave quarters in the South, giving visitors a glimpse into the lives of 14 enslaved people who worked in a bustling city. Daily guided tours of the site begin every 15 minutes.

### Whitney Plantation

EDGARD, LOUISIANA

An hour's drive west of New Orleans, the Whitney Plantation is Louisiana's first museum dedicated exclusively to the history of slavery. The tour and exhibits focus on the transatlantic slave trade and slavery in Louisiana from 1719 to 1865. Every visitor receives a card that bears the story of a different enslaved person, gleaned from interviews with more than 2,300 former slaves conducted by the Federal Writers' Project in the 1930s and '40s.

### Stagville State Historic Site

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

Using archaeology, oral histories, and archival research, Stagville centers the stories and experiences of enslaved people at one of the largest sites of mass slavery in North Carolina. From 1771 to 1865, the Bennehan-Cameron plantations here spanned 30,000 acres of land, and the family enslaved about 900 people. Before visiting, call ahead to confirm guided tour availability.

### McLeod Plantation Historic Site

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

A former 1850s Sea Island cotton plantation near Wappoo Creek, McLeod features "Transition Row," six slave cabins that were home to generations of African Americans from the late 1700s through the 1980s. Tours begin every hour on the half-hour and discuss Sea Island cotton cultivation and processing, Gullah Geechee culture, and both organized and individual resistance to slavery and its legacy.

### Belle Meade Historic Site & Winery

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

This 250-acre tract of land sits seven miles from the heart of Nashville and functioned as a plantation from 1807 to 1865. The property discusses the institution of slavery as it existed in the thoroughbred horse-racing industry and utilizes primary sources and oral histories to shed light on the lives and labor of those held in bondage. Two different historic tours tell the stories of the men, women, and children who labored at Belle Meade.

### Monticello

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA

Thomas Jefferson, the nation's third president and principal author of the Declaration of Independence, who stressed that liberty and equality were natural human rights, was a slaveholder; more than 400 enslaved individuals lived and worked at the 5,000-acre Monticello plantation during his lifetime. A 45-minute tour, included in the cost of admission, focuses on Monticello's enslaved field hands, artisans, and domestic workers who left a lasting impact on Charlottesville history. —LG



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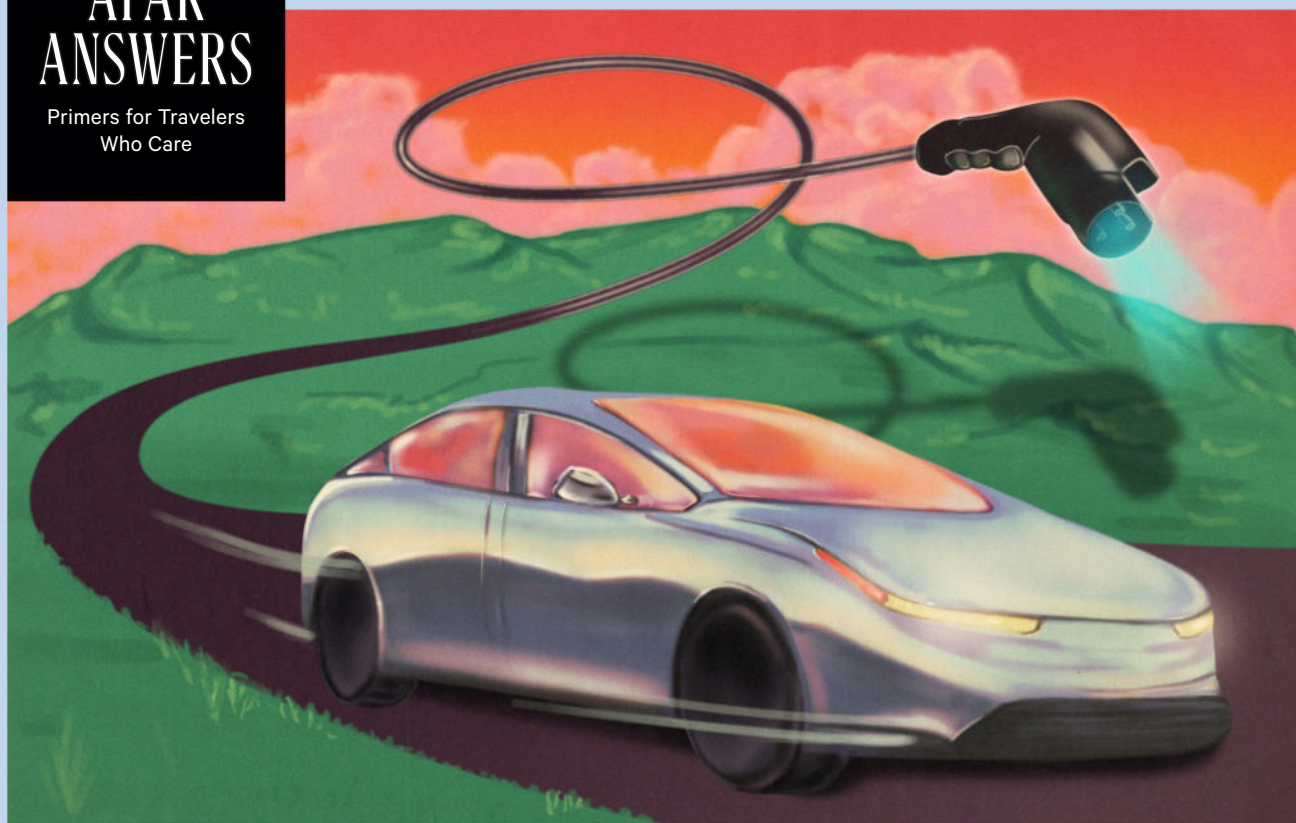


# AFAR ANSWERS

Primers for Travelers  
Who Care

by TIM CHESTER

Illustration by JULIA DUFOSSÉ



## How to Take a Stress-Free EV Road Trip

Road-tripping in the U.S. with an electric vehicle may conjure one of two images: a quiet, emissions-free ride that presages the future—or a fraught nightmare of battery-range anxiety and roadside assistance. The truth is, it can be fully the former if you keep a few things in mind. I've driven a Polestar 2 from L.A. to Las Vegas and back, and taken a multigenerational road trip to San Diego in a Rivian R1S. Both journeys were easy, cheaper by the mile, and kinder to the environment than a gas-guzzling alternative. Here's how to ensure your trip goes smoothly.

### The EV 1-2-3

There are three things to know for an EV road trip: how far the car can go on a full charge (that is, its range), where to find charging stations along the way, and how long it takes to recharge.

Ranges differ. Most modern EVs can last between 200 and 400 miles, depending on the terrain.

Likewise, charging infrastructure is not equal in all locales. In the U.S., California leads the way, with New York, Florida, and Texas on its heels. Colorado, Oregon, and Michigan have been adding charging capabilities too. The recent federal infrastructure bill channels \$7.5 billion toward introducing half a million more chargers by 2030. A fast charger can do the job in 30 minutes; slower plugs may take overnight. Car type and battery size are factors, and range and charging time can be affected by weather.

### How to rent an EV

Rental cars are a great way to take a test drive into the EV world. Hertz says it has tens of thousands of EVs at a variety of price points, although it's been in the news lately for selling off some cars. (At [hertz.com/myEV](https://www.hertz.com/myEV), find notes on charging, plus discount offers with the charging network EVgo.) Enterprise Mobility (behind Enterprise

Rent-A-Car, National Car Rental, and Alamo) has thousands of EVs in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, while Avis Budget Group (which owns Avis and Budget) has rental options too.

The peer-to-peer car-sharing platform Turo now has its own EV hub, with three curated EV collections (budget, SUV, and luxury) of more than 1,500 cars.

### How to find charging stations

ChargePoint has the most charging stations in the U.S., about 31,000. Electrify America and EVgo have more than 900 and 950, respectively. Added bonuses: Many of Electrify America's stations are solar powered, and the company's website provides an explainer on such subjects as proper topping-up techniques and plug compatibility. What's more, Tesla's U.S. superchargers are gradually opening up to other EVs.

When planning your route, look for stops with at least four outlets, says Joel Levin, executive director of the EV advocacy nonprofit Plug In America. That improves chances that one will be available. "Road-tripping in an EV can be a lot of fun, but it takes a little planning and a different way of thinking about your trip," he says.

### Essential maps and apps

Waze added EV charging stations in 2023. Google Maps now shows

them too, with the number of chargers, types, and availability, plus energy-consumption forecasts for trips. EVs with Google Maps built in will automatically suggest charging stops when you plan a route. PlugShare is a free app that shows nearby chargers and reviews from users. Most charging networks have their own apps, too.

### Book a hotel with an EV charger

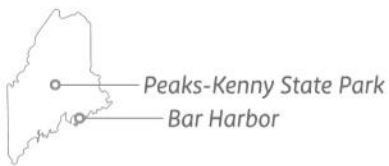
Pro tip: Find hotels with plentiful plugs. With the right combination of high range, shorter distances, and overnight charging, you may not need to re-up during your daily drives. Hilton's website has a filter to search for hotels with charging facilities (more than 1,200 in the U.S. alone). Marriott has a similar filter; I found 1,172 hotels with charging stations in the U.S. on a recent search. IHG Hotels & Resorts has facilities at almost 1,200 hotels in the U.S. And some 30 percent of Relais & Châteaux's North American hotels have chargers. (Access for nonguests varies by hotel.)

"Booking a hotel with an EV charger reduces stress and uncertainty," says Bruce Becker, owner of the zero-emission Hotel Marcel in Connecticut and an EV owner since 2011. "EV drivers actually have an advantage over drivers of gas cars because you'll wake up in the morning with a full charge, ready to hit the road." **A**





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There's plenty to love in Portland, Maine. But outside the bustle of Maine's busiest city, small towns abound. Tucked along coves and waterways or up in the iconic mountains, Maine's picturesque inland and coastal towns include Ellsworth, home to the **On the Horizon Bakery** food truck and its founder, military veteran Hailee Carter. "The word 'community' really does a good job of describing not just Ellsworth but all the towns around it," she says.

When Carter, who was born and raised near Ellsworth, isn't rolling out pastries like blackberry

Danishes and cinnamon buns, she visits her favorite small businesses, like **Treworgy Family Orchards**, just north of Bangor, where she and her family pick pumpkins and apples in the fall. A friend owns another favorite, the **Conscious Cafe at Steamy Buddha** in Ellsworth. Carter keeps going back for the "beautiful" rice and quinoa bowls filled with goat cheese, mushrooms, and spinach.

It's these kinds of experiences that make Maine a place to pause, a place to break the silence of a crisp autumn night with laughter around a campfire and to savor



every bite of your seaside lunch of fresh seafood at **McLaughlin's Lobster Shack** along the sunny Midcoast. Here, you can fall in love with a summer sunrise on Aroostook County's **East Grand Lake**, lingering over the sound of loons waking up for breakfast too. Though, unlike the loons, you can head to the side street storefront of **Sadie's Bakery** in nearby Houlton for warm molasses doughnuts or a whoopie pie. "You get past Portland," says Carter, "and it's a whole different environment."

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*Two women swim underneath a cascading  
waterfall in El Valle de Antón, Panama.*



# South by Middle East

*A new generation of chefs is revitalizing  
an immigrant cuisine in Mexico City.*

by Naomi Tomky  
Photographs by Jake Naughton





From top: The decor of the restaurant Pât Patz reflects its Middle Eastern influences; Mexico saw a wave of immigration from Lebanon and Syria between the 19th and mid-20th centuries.

Previous page: Alay Alay's shrimp taco is topped with pickled peaches and fried leeks and served on a pita instead of a tortilla.

# G

**GROWING UP** in the Mexican capital, Andrea Sayeg, now 33, dreamed of opening her own taco shop where she would serve *suadero*, *lengua*, *maciza*, and other cuts of meat typically found in Mexico City's taquerias. But the restaurant she actually opened in 2021 ended up looking nothing like that: At Alay Alay, Sayeg's specialty taco features crispy fried chicken bathed in *muhammara*, a sauce of red peppers, almonds, cashews, pine nuts, and pomegranate syrup. It's the perfect symbol of her combined culinary influences—the foods of her Lebanese heritage and of her Mexico City hometown.

Sayeg found that the two cuisines work well together. "We use a lot of cumin in Mexican food and also in the Middle East. We use a lot of oregano [here], and in the Middle East it's za'atar." Not only do the cuisines incorporate similar ingredients, but they also embody a similar approach to complex, layered flavors. Where a Mexican mole might call for 21 components, Sayeg notes that "in the Middle East, it's the same thing. A lot of ingredients in one recipe."

Alay Alay is part of a wave of Middle Eastern restaurants in Mexico City that are reexamining the culinary legacy of the hundreds of thousands of Lebanese and Syrians who poured into Mexico between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries, including Sayeg's great-grandmother. The immigrants came for many reasons—economic needs, religious freedom, to escape war. Their most famous gift is *tacos al pastor*, a descendant of shawarma and a signature food of Mexico City.

At places like El Vilsito, an auto shop in the Narvarte neighborhood that turns into a taco stand at night, *taqueros* carve spiced pork from the *trompo* (a vertical spit), wielding foot-long knives with the skill of a surgeon, the meat falling into a waiting corn tortilla. Another deft slash rains roasted pineapple on top.

In the residential Del Valle neighborhood, Sayeg's cartooned face smiles down from Alay Alay's storefront. The pink logo highlights both her break from the typical stuffiness of the city's Middle Eastern cuisine and the rarity of a woman at the *trompo*. In Sayeg's dishes, she combines techniques and recipes passed





Chef Andrea Sayeg, below, says, “We tried to make different things that didn’t exist in Mexico City.” She serves a shawarma taco with a side of tabbouleh and yogurt with cucumber, left.

Bottom right: At Pât Patz, which chef Mijael Seidel says he dubbed a “laboratory of Middle Eastern food,” baklava and hummus-based milkshakes are on the menu.



down from her grandmother with her own years of hands-on experience as executive chef at Mexico City’s Israeli fine-dining spot Merkavá. “We do traditional food with different techniques, a bit more modern, different ingredients,” she says of Alay Alay. Some of the changes are practical: It’s hard to get Aleppo chili in Mexico, so she uses *chile de árbol* and ancho. Others are functional: The house-made pita recipe uses yogurt and clarified butter to maximize fluffiness without heft, so that it can wrap like a taco. And some are just fun, like the option to add a *costra*, or cheese crust, to the pita, as offered at many trendy taco shops.

That lighthearted irreverence shows up on the T-shirts at chef Mijael Seidel’s Pât Patz, too: “Great Fk\*ng Kebabs.” His father owned a vegan taco shop in Mexico City in the 1970s, so Seidel knew about the business—and about pushing norms. But it wasn’t until he moved to New York City in 1999 for a short-lived graphic design career that he connected the two cuisines. The savory, sour, fatty flavors from a halal cart outside a Queens subway station reminded him of the cuisine from his home in Colima, Mexico—much more so than any taco truck he’d sampled in New York. “A lot of [Middle Eastern] flavors and spices influenced me throughout my childhood,” Seidel, 42, explains. “I didn’t eat them in Middle Eastern food, but we ate a lot of lentils, cumin, yogurt, and I was always looking for those flavors.” The cart’s dishes, he says, “tasted like what I knew as Mexican.”

When Seidel returned to Mexico in 2009, he missed the heaping meals so much that he offered to buy the cart’s recipes. The price tag put them out of reach, so instead he developed his own falafel-and-rice platter, which he served from an old hot dog cart in Colima. When he added a kebab, customers called it the best in the city—which meant little to Seidel until Colima’s few Middle Eastern residents echoed the sentiment. With that vote of confidence, he moved to a catering kitchen in Mexico City in 2020 and was named one of *Food & Wine en Español*’s “Best New Chefs” the same year. In June 2022, Pât Patz upgraded to its current brick-and-mortar restaurant in the hip Juárez neighborhood.

To diners, Pât Patz’s menu of hummus, kebabs, and falafel can look like a list of Middle Eastern standards, until the bright flavors explode from the plate. His smoked brisket pita sandwiches, for example, subvert expectations with horseradish sauce, pickles, tahini, and *salsa macha*. “The vegetables are as important to the pita sandwich as the meat,”





Seidel says, something that he found took Mexican customers by surprise, even though he dresses his salads to please local sensibilities—heavy on the chilies and lime. “I come from Colima, the lime capital of the world,” Seidel says. “We put lime on everything, and the acidity makes flavors pop.” When customers wonder aloud if pickles are strange or there are too many vegetables, he lets those big, familiar tastes serve as the rebuttal. “People who try it have no argument,” Seidel says with a smile.

Shaking up two culinary legacies at once can sometimes leave this new generation of chefs straddling the line between the food they want to cook and what customers expect. One of the ways immigrants preserved their heritage here, Seidel observes, “was by not messing around with how the food

was prepared.” So even as Middle Eastern cuisine evolved elsewhere, it remained static in Mexico City for a long time. As that’s been changing, Sayeg has fielded similar questions of authenticity from some customers—including her own father. But once he tasted Alay Alay’s tacos, he offered what might be the best summary of the burgeoning fusion style and its impact on Mexico City’s dining scene: “It’s not like my mom made, but it’s delicious.” <sup>A</sup>

Seidel, below, was aware of the history of spices migrating from India to the Middle East and then to Spain and Mexico, and his cooking echoes those connections.



## Where to Taste the Middle East in Mexico City

### Alay Alay

Chef Andrea Sayeg dreams up creative riffs on classic Middle Eastern dishes, wrapped in fluffy pita bread instead of tortillas. Try the Lebanese-style pork quesadillas or seasonal lamb kebab taco.

Matías Romero 98, Colonia del Valle

### Pàt Patz

Mijael Seidel’s restaurant draws inspiration from a Palestinian-owned food cart he loved in New York City, but the dishes—such as the brisket kebab with *macha* sauce—are dressed in the bold flavors of his home of Colima, Mexico.

Oslo 7, Colonia Juárez

### El Vilsito

In the evening, this auto shop turns into one of the best spots to find the city’s classic fusion dish, *tacos al pastor*, a descendant of shawarma brought by Middle Eastern immigrants.

Avenida Universidad 248, Narvarte Poniente

### Al-Andalus

Set in a 17th-century colonial building in the historic city center, this elegant stalwart has long served Lebanese dishes such as kibbe and kebabs (below). But even the old guard sees the appeal of evolving: In 2022, Al-Andalus opened a second spot in the upscale neighborhood of San Ángel, where a more wide-ranging menu reflects a combination of flavors in such dishes as hummus eggs Benedict and a baklava with burrata.

Mesones 171, Centro Histórico  
Av. Insurgentes Sur 2475, Torre Aleph Piso 1, San Ángel





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Next, explore [Flamingo Gardens](#), a botanical garden and wildlife sanctuary that offers a peaceful escape and the chance to encounter diverse species. While the iconic pink flamingos are a highlight, the gardens have much more to offer. As you wander through the grounds, you'll encounter native plants and diverse wildlife flourishing in their natural habitats. This serene space beautifully preserves the essence of Florida's natural history, ensuring its flora and fauna endure for future generations to appreciate.



No trip to Greater Fort Lauderdale would be complete without exploring the Everglades, a vast and unique ecosystem that offers adventures unlike any other. Picture yourself in a state-of-the-art airboat gliding across the River of Grass at [Sawgrass Recreation Park](#), with tours available day or night. Or enjoy the thrill of a live alligator show at [Everglades Holiday Park](#). More than just an attraction, the Everglades is an immersive experience that brings you face-to-face with nature's raw beauty and untamed spirit.

At the [Anne Kolb Nature Center](#), the story of Greater Fort Lauderdale's natural splendor continues. Walk along scenic trails, kayak through serene mangroves, and immerse yourself in interactive exhibits that reveal the rich biodiversity of the area. This center is a testament to the region's commitment to preserving its pristine beauty while educating visitors about the importance of conservation.

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# Dive into Greater Fort Lauderdale's Beach Scene

With 24 miles of pristine sandy shores, Greater Fort Lauderdale is a beach lover's dream come true. Imagine strolling along golden sands that stretch as far as the eye can see, the gentle hum of waves providing a soothing soundtrack to your day. From the lively energy of Fort Lauderdale beach, where the action never stops, to the tranquil charm of Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, each beach offers its own unique slice of paradise. Whether you're diving into thrilling water sports, savoring fresh seafood at a beachside café, or simply lounging under a swaying palm, discover how Greater Fort Lauderdale's beaches promise unforgettable experiences for all.

## Fort Lauderdale Beach

Dive into the heart of the action at Fort Lauderdale beach, where the excitement never ends. Engage in beach volleyball, jet skiing, snorkeling, and parasailing, or take a leisurely stroll along the beachfront promenade, where a myriad of activities await. Enjoy food and drink beach service from several hotels right from the comfort of your rental beach chair. Don't miss [The LOOP](#), a beachfront park offering live music, events, yoga, and a farmers' market. From sunbathing to exploring local shops and eateries, Fort Lauderdale beach is the ultimate destination for fun in the sun.



## Pompano Beach

Just a 20-minute drive north of Fort Lauderdale beach, discover Pompano Beach, a paradise for water sports enthusiasts and fishing aficionados. Visit the newly renovated [Pompano Beach Fisher Family Pier](#), a great sightseeing spot that's free to explore. For only \$6 per person, the pier provides everything you need for a great day of fishing. Explore the [Pompano Beach Fishing Village](#), where you can enjoy shops, restaurants, and entertainment right by the water. Whether you're casting a line or savoring a meal with an ocean view, Pompano Beach promises a perfect day by the water.



## Lauderdale-By-The-Sea

Embrace the quaint, small-town charm of Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, where relaxation effortlessly blends with exploration. Known as Florida's Beach Diving Capital, this beach offers a unique opportunity to explore coral reefs located within 100 yards off the shore, allowing you to dive beneath the waves and uncover a vibrant marine world without needing a boat. The town also features a [Shipwreck Snorkel Trail](#) and is home to the SS Copenhagen, a British steamship that wrecked off the coast in May 1900. Renowned for its exceptional snorkeling spots, Lauderdale-By-The-Sea is a tranquil oasis that perfectly captures the essence of coastal living.

## Hallandale Beach

For those seeking a quieter escape away from the crowds, Hallandale Beach offers a laid-back atmosphere with ample opportunities for watersports. Whether you love kayaking, paddleboarding, or simply lounging on the sand, Hallandale Beach provides a serene setting to unwind and enjoy the ocean breeze.

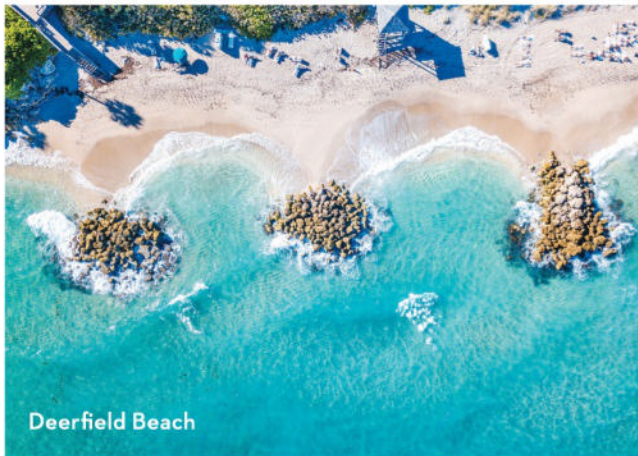


## Hollywood Beach

Hollywood Beach is a vibrant destination that pulses with energy and activity. Visitors can cycle or stroll along the Broadwalk, shop at eclectic boutiques, and dine at charming outdoor cafes. They can also explore the famous Dog Beach from “Marley and Me” and revel in revamped accommodations like Jimmy Buffett’s Margaritaville [Hollywood Beach Resort](#).

## Deerfield Beach

Nestled south of Fort Lauderdale, Deerfield Beach is a family-friendly coastal community brimming with activities for all ages. Spend the day building sandcastles, surfing the waves, or swimming in the clear waters. [Island Water Sports](#) offers free surfing lessons on Saturdays, making it easy to catch your first wave. Visit the [Deerfield Beach Arboretum](#), which features over 200 species of trees and palms from five continents. The Arboretum is fully accessible by wheelchair, ensuring that everyone can enjoy its serene beauty.



## Hillsboro Beach

Located in the tiny town of Hillsboro Beach, spanning just three miles, you’ll find a relaxing escape with historical charm. Climb the historic lighthouse for sweeping sea views and explore one of the highest densities of sea turtle nests per mile along Florida’s East Coast. It’s a hidden gem perfect for nature lovers.



## Dania Beach

Experience serenity at Dania Beach, home to a historic pier and scenic nature trails. The [Dania Beach Pier](#), a local landmark, stretches out into the Atlantic Ocean, offering stunning views, excellent fishing spots, and a nostalgic charm that draws both anglers and sightseers. The surrounding nature trails – perfect for birdwatching – wind through lush, coastal landscapes, providing a soothing getaway into the area’s natural beauty.



## Experience the Best of Beach Life

From breathtaking sunset catamaran cruises to navigating waves like a dolphin with a SEABOB—an underwater jet ski—unforgettable memories await. Want to take it up a notch? Don a water-propelled “jetpack” and experience the thrill of flyboarding that’ll send you soaring above the surf. Whether you’re seeking action, relaxation or family fun, the beaches of Greater Fort Lauderdale offer something for everyone.







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# Culture Vibes Await:

## Discover the Artistic Soul of Greater Fort Lauderdale

Greater Fort Lauderdale, long synonymous with sun-drenched beaches and turquoise waters, is quietly cultivating a vibrant cultural scene. This dynamic area offers more than just a perfect tan. It's a place where history buffs, art enthusiasts, and festival lovers can delve into a tapestry of experiences that redefine the destination. Discover how the area pulsates with artistic energy, from world-class museums showcasing diverse artistic expressions to intimate galleries nurturing local talent.

Start your exploration at the [Bonnet House Museum & Gardens](#), where history, art, and nature converge seamlessly. As you wander through the enchanting estate, you'll be captivated by its exquisite architecture and vibrant gardens. Inside, a collection of stunning artworks awaits, each piece offering a glimpse into the past. This isn't merely a place to visit. It's an immersive journey into unique stories and boundless creativity.

Next, take a leisurely walk through the [Downtown Hollywood Mural Project](#). This urban oasis is an open-air gallery where contemporary murals burst with color and creativity. As you explore, you'll discover galleries showcasing local talent, cozy cafes perfect for a coffee break, and shops brimming with unique finds.



Don't miss the excitement at the [Amerant Bank Arena](#), a cornerstone of entertainment in Greater Fort Lauderdale. More than a place for events, it's where major concerts and thrilling sports moments come to life. Picture the electrifying atmosphere as your favorite band takes the stage. Or imagine the adrenaline rush of cheering on your team, surrounded by the energy of fellow fans.

Discover the [Mad Arts Museum](#) in Dania Beach, where contemporary art comes alive. This innovative space offers a playground for the senses, with immersive multimedia installations and thought-provoking sculptures. Whether you're an art aficionado or just seeking something different, Mad Arts Museum promises an unforgettable adventure.



For an evening of world-class entertainment, head to the [Broward Center for the Performing Arts](#). Whether you're in the mood for a Broadway show, a concert, or a dance performance, this venue offers a diverse lineup that promises to dazzle and delight.

Another inspiring cultural experience awaits at the [NSU Art Museum](#) in Fort Lauderdale. With over 7,500 works, including Latin American, Cuban, and contemporary art, this museum is a treasure trove of creativity. Wander through galleries filled with world-renowned masterpieces and innovative contemporary pieces. Perfect for visitors of all ages, the NSU Art Museum enriches your South Florida adventure with its diverse exhibitions and stunning architecture.

Greater Fort Lauderdale also hosts a vibrant array of annual events that celebrate the region's cultural richness. Known as the "Best Show on H2O," the [Seminole Hard Rock Winterfest Boat Parade](#) offers a unique holiday spectacle on December 14, 2024, with boats adorned in holiday lights navigating the Intracoastal Waterway. From February 1 to March 23, 2025, step back in time at the 32nd annual [Florida Renaissance Festival](#), featuring artisan vendors, medieval entertainment, and historic crafts. Finally, don't miss the [Tortuga Music Festival](#) from April 4-6, 2025, where beachside tunes from top country and rock artists provide a fantastic atmosphere for music lovers.







# Shop Till You Drop in Greater Fort Lauderdale

Calling all shopaholics! Greater Fort Lauderdale offers a shopping experience unlike any other. Forget the same old mall routine and get ready to explore a vibrant mix of boutiques, outlets, and upscale stores.

Your journey begins on **Las Olas Boulevard**, a vibrant artery pulsating with the energy of discovery. Upscale boutiques with curated collections mingle effortlessly with independent shops bursting with personality. You might just discover that perfect outfit or that one-of-a-kind gift you didn't even know you were looking for!

Next, satiate your hunger for variety at **Sawgrass Mills**, the nation's largest outlet and value retail haven. With more than 350 stores, including over 70 luxury outlets like Balenciaga, Jimmy Choo, and Prada, and more than a dozen restaurants, it's a shopper's paradise where savvy savings meet unparalleled selection. It's basically a shopper's paradise, where you can find something for everyone, all at amazing prices.

Sawgrass Mills



Looking for a shopping adventure just steps from the beach? **The Galleria at Fort Lauderdale** is your go-to spot! As one of South Florida's premier shopping destinations, The Galleria offers more than 100 fashion retailers, including Macy's and Dillard's, and favorites like Apple, Banana Republic, Free People, H&M, Altar'd State, Michael Kors, Pandora, and Sephora. And when you need to refuel, check out the delicious dining options like Seasons 52, The Capital Grille, P.F. Chang's, and Blue Martini. Plus, you can even take the Water Taxi to get here, making it a fun and unique way to travel.

But wait, there's more! **Dania Pointe** isn't just about shopping (though it totally delivers on that front, too!). This modern marvel combines top-notch retail with delicious eats, awesome entertainment, and even two swanky Marriott hotels. Enjoy a variety of shopping options, including unique stores like Anthropologie and Sugarboo & Co. Plus, Dania Pointe features a movie theater, a bowling alley, and a premier comedy club, ensuring there's something fun for everyone. Basically, it's your one-stop shop for a shopping spree, a culinary adventure, and an epic night out – all in one place!





# Family-Friendly Fun in Greater Fort Lauderdale!



Planning a family vacation can feel like navigating a minefield - will the younger kids be bored? Will your teens be glued to their phones? Fear not, weary parents. Turn family vacation woes into wows! Greater Fort Lauderdale offers endless fun for all ages, from toddlers to teens and everyone in between!

Kick off your holiday unwinding and reconnecting with your loved ones on Greater Fort Lauderdale's 24 miles of pristine golden beaches. Younger adventurers can build elaborate sandcastles that rival medieval fortresses, while older explorers can delve into the vibrant underwater world through snorkeling or scuba diving adventures.

Next, visit the [Museum of Discovery and Science](#). Imagine the littlest ones wide-eyed with wonder as they explore interactive exhibits that take them from the ocean's depths to the far reaches of space. The teens, meanwhile, are thrilled by the high-definition spectacle of the IMAX 3D Theater while mom and dad enjoy the new Eco-Discovery Center.



Museum of Discovery and Science

As the afternoon sun climbs higher, head to [Xtreme Action Park](#) for an adrenaline-packed family adventure. Watch the kids' faces light up as they zoom around the go-kart track, test their skills in the arcade, and conquer the ropes course.

But the adventure doesn't stop there. Brace yourselves for the ultimate family showdown at the [Tigertail Lake Recreation Center](#)! Imagine this: an 8,000-square-foot inflatable water wonderland featuring slides that twist and turn, giant trampolines that launch you into the sky, and obstacles that will test your balance and teamwork skills - all in the refreshing embrace of cool water. It's a battle royale of giggles and cheers as your family takes on the challenge.



Is your crew of mini-explorers ready to blast off on an epic family adventure? Then, pack your swimsuits and your sense of wonder, and get ready to create memories that will make your family photo album sing!







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# Forks Up!

## Delicious Discoveries Await in Greater Fort Lauderdale

Begin your culinary adventure by strolling through Fort Lauderdale's vibrant [Las Olas Boulevard](#), where you'll find everything from buzzing lobster bars to casual, open-air patios perfect for people-watching. Seafood lovers will find a bounty of fresh options at [Wild Sea Las Olas](#), an all-day eatery with a stylish ambiance and a terrace overlooking the boulevard. For a taste of contemporary America, [YOLO](#) beckons with its two indoor-outdoor bars, a fire pit, and an open-air patio perfect for soaking in the South Florida sunshine.

### Award-Winning Cuisine Awaits

For those seeking a more upscale experience, board the iconic Water Taxi and disembark at the historic Lauderdale Marina to dine at [15th Street Fisheries](#) for award-winning cuisine in charming, nautical-themed dining rooms upstairs and an open-air dockside setting, perfect for family fun downstairs. Or savor contemporary American cuisine at [MAASS](#), a chic haven nestled within the Four Seasons. Prepare to be surprised by truffle mac and cheese or braised short ribs presented in a sophisticated ambiance where every bite is a celebration. For breathtaking oceanfront dining, look no further than [Dune by Laurent Tourondel](#) at the Auberge Beach Residences and Spa. Or head over to [JB's on the Beach](#) in Deerfield Beach, where Bahamian conch fritters, seafood paella and fresh-caught swordfish pair perfectly with the stunning Atlantic views.



MAASS Restaurant at The Four Seasons Fort Lauderdale

### Embark on a Culinary Journey

Feeling adventurous? [Takato](#), located at the Conrad Fort Lauderdale Beach, offers a vibrant and stylish setting for an unforgettable Asian culinary adventure. This restaurant blends Japanese and Korean flavors, offering a delightful selection of sushi, sashimi, and creative small plates. For those seeking an unparalleled view, [Nubé](#), a dreamy rooftop bar at the Hilton Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort, awaits. With panoramic ocean vistas, Nubé offers an unforgettable experience complete with craft cocktails and seasonal bar bites.



For a more laid-back experience, Greater Fort Lauderdale boasts several exciting food halls. Located in the heart of Fort Lauderdale, [Sistrunk Marketplace](#) offers an eclectic mix of culinary delights, craft cocktails, and local art. Featuring a variety of food vendors, it provides an immersive experience for food lovers and culture seekers alike. In Pembroke Pines, the innovative Asian food hall [Baoshi](#) features five food vendors under one roof, offering an authentic array of dishes. [The Bite Eatery](#) in Pompano Beach is a family-friendly haven with a diverse selection of culinary delights, from juicy burgers to international cuisine.

Downtown Hollywood presents a unique opportunity to explore [Block 40](#), a haven for innovative dining with a stylish, urban vibe. Boasting a variety of global cuisines, from Mediterranean dishes to vegan delights, Block 40 caters to every palate.

### Sip, Savor, and Celebrate Food & Wine

Greater Fort Lauderdale offers two exciting culinary events throughout the year. From August 1 to September 30, the annual [Dine Out Lauderdale](#) event allows you to explore participating restaurants that offer special prix fixe menus and discounts on treats. Indulge in some of the best bites and sips during the annual [Visit Lauderdale Food & Wine Festival](#) held in January. This week-long celebration features renowned chefs, mixologists, and local hotspots, showcasing the region's diverse culinary landscape.





# Welcome

## KIDS OF ALL AGES



Relax and reconnect in a tropical paradise unlike any other. From miles of golden beaches and scenic waterways to cosmopolitan dining and nightlife, to the world-famous Everglades, fascinating discoveries await in Greater Fort Lauderdale. And we can't wait to welcome you.



Plan Your Adventure at  
[VisitLauderdale.com](https://www.VisitLauderdale.com)



# Meet the Newest Disney Island Destination

The culture and beauty of The Bahamas meets the magic of a *Disney Cruise Line* vacation at the newest Disney island destination: *Disney Lookout Cay* at Lighthouse Point. Nestled where the deep blue Atlantic Ocean meets turquoise Bahamian waters, this tropical retreat offers signature experiences from *Disney Cruise Line*—favorite Characters, kids' entertainment and an adult-exclusive escape—plus unique, immersive moments crafted through collaboration with local artists, historians and cultural ambassadors.

Visit **DisneyCruiseLine.com** to explore itineraries from Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Disney CRUISE LINE







# Welcome

## TO SMOOTH SAILING



## THE VOYAGE BEGINS HERE

Everything needed for a seamless journey is right here. Port Everglades guests enjoy easy access through a leading international airport, direct highway connections, state-of-the-art terminals, secure parking, and boundless pre- and post-cruise possibilities in the world's most inviting destination, Greater Fort Lauderdale, where *Everyone Under the Sun* is embraced with open arms.

We make it easy.



[PortEverglades.net](https://PortEverglades.net)



A photograph of a park scene. In the foreground, there are lush green ferns and pink flowers. In the middle ground, a man and a woman are lying on a blanket on a grassy lawn, looking towards a large tree. The man is wearing a straw hat and a plaid shirt, and the woman is wearing a dark top. In the background, several other people are standing and walking around. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning. The title '52 Unexpected Places to Go in the USA' is overlaid on the right side of the image in a large, white, serif font.

# 52 Unexpected Places to Go in the USA

**There's really no place like the United States.** You can revel in landscapes as varied as the 337 million people who live here. You can visit new national landmarks and glamping spots on one trip and savor local wines and Andy Warhol artworks on the next. And after that, there's still so much more to try: sunning on sugar-sand beaches, digging for your own diamonds, feasting at acclaimed restaurants in surprising locales, and relaxing in beautiful green spaces (such as Falls Park on the Reedy in Greenville, South Carolina, pictured above). To get you started, we've spotlighted something we love in each of the 50 states, plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. They're in no particular order, because the country itself is a sprawling, brilliant grab bag—and that's part of its joy. Which of these will inspire your next trip?





**REHOBOTH BEACH, DELAWARE**, has become one of the top queer beach destinations on the East Coast, with hundreds of LGBTQ-owned and -operated businesses in this seaside town of 1,100 residents. Pride runs deep here. For more than 30 years, the CAMP Rehoboth community center has been working to “Create A More Positive Rehoboth,” and summer visitors can get a taste through its various queer- and trans-affirming events, clubs, and wellness activities. Check into the gay-owned Rehoboth Guest House or enjoy afternoon wine and cheese hours at the Avenue Inn & Spa, a hotel that’s been around since 1937, when part of it was a “tearoom.” —*Laura Dannen Redman*



Try funnel cake, saltwater taffy, and carnival rides on the mile-long Rehoboth Beach boardwalk.

## USA

**South Dakota is famous** for Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Black Hills National Forest, and Badlands National Park. But there’s also significant U.S. history along the state’s Native American Scenic Byway, a 350-mile series of highways and roads that follow the Missouri River amid the lands of the Yankton, Crow Creek, Lower Brule, Cheyenne River, and Standing Rock Sioux tribes. On Highway 1806, across the river from the city of Mobridge, find monuments to Lakota spiritual leader Sitting Bull at his final resting place, and to Sakakawea, the Lemhi Shoshone woman who guided Lewis and Clark on their expedition west. Three hours south, the Aktá Lakota Museum in Chamberlain shares the history, art, and contemporary culture of the Lakota people. Continue farther south to the Karl E. Mundt National Wildlife Refuge and look to the skies: Between 100 and 300 bald eagles nest here in late fall and winter; watch them from a public overlook at Fort Randall Dam. —*LDR*







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**THE BUCOLIC** Berkshires of western Massachusetts have received extra attention of late thanks to a new crop of entrepreneurs revamping old properties, a tradition of sorts around here. Among the rebirths is Tourists, a roadside motel turned hip, ecofriendly lodge opened by John Stirratt (bassist of rock band Wilco) and friends in 2018; this summer they added three new rentable homes. Former spa and golf resort Cranwell is now wellness retreat Miraval Berkshires, an 1894 mansion on 380 acres designed by Frederick Law Olmsted (of New York's Central Park fame). Nearby, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, a beloved retrofit in a 19th-century factory complex, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. —LDR

The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art spans 16 acres of former mill buildings.





Sherry Pocknett named Sly Fox Den Too after her fisherman father, Chief Sly Fox.



**IN 2023**, Sherry Pocknett, a member of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, became the first Indigenous woman to receive a James Beard Award, winning for Best Chef in the Northeast. Her restaurant, Sly Fox Den Too, has put Charlestown (40 miles south of Providence) on the culinary map with dishes such as

smoked scallops, *nausamp* (yellow corn grits), and venison sandwiches on fry bread. It's a welcome addition to a town best known for its beaches, the Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge, and the Fantastic Umbrella Factory, a farmstead with gardens, a bamboo forest, and a shopping complex that includes the Native American-owned Purple Shell boutique, which sells hand-crafted wampum jewelry made from quahog clam shells. —Nicholas DeRenzo



**WITH A POPULATION** under 150, Medora is the gateway to Theodore Roosevelt National Park in the staggeringly beautiful Badlands—which the 26th president said dramatically shaped his views on conservation. Roosevelt fell in love with the area on a visit in 1883 and continued to spend time here throughout his life. Today a reenactor named Joe Wiegand channels his spirit during the summertime “Brunch with President Roosevelt” show at the Town Square Showhall. Summer also brings the Medora Musical, the evolution of an Old West-themed country music revue that has been performed in an amphitheater since 1965. Stay for a Pitchfork Steak Fondue feast, in which New York strips are loaded onto pitchforks, fried in a cauldron of hot oil, and enjoyed at tables with views overlooking the Badlands. Then relax at the Rough Riders Hotel, where the old blends with the new: It used to be a boarding house with a pressed-tin ceiling in the lobby and balconies where presidents are rumored to have given speeches; now it has walk-in showers and a restaurant serving bison osso buco. —Ashlea Halpern



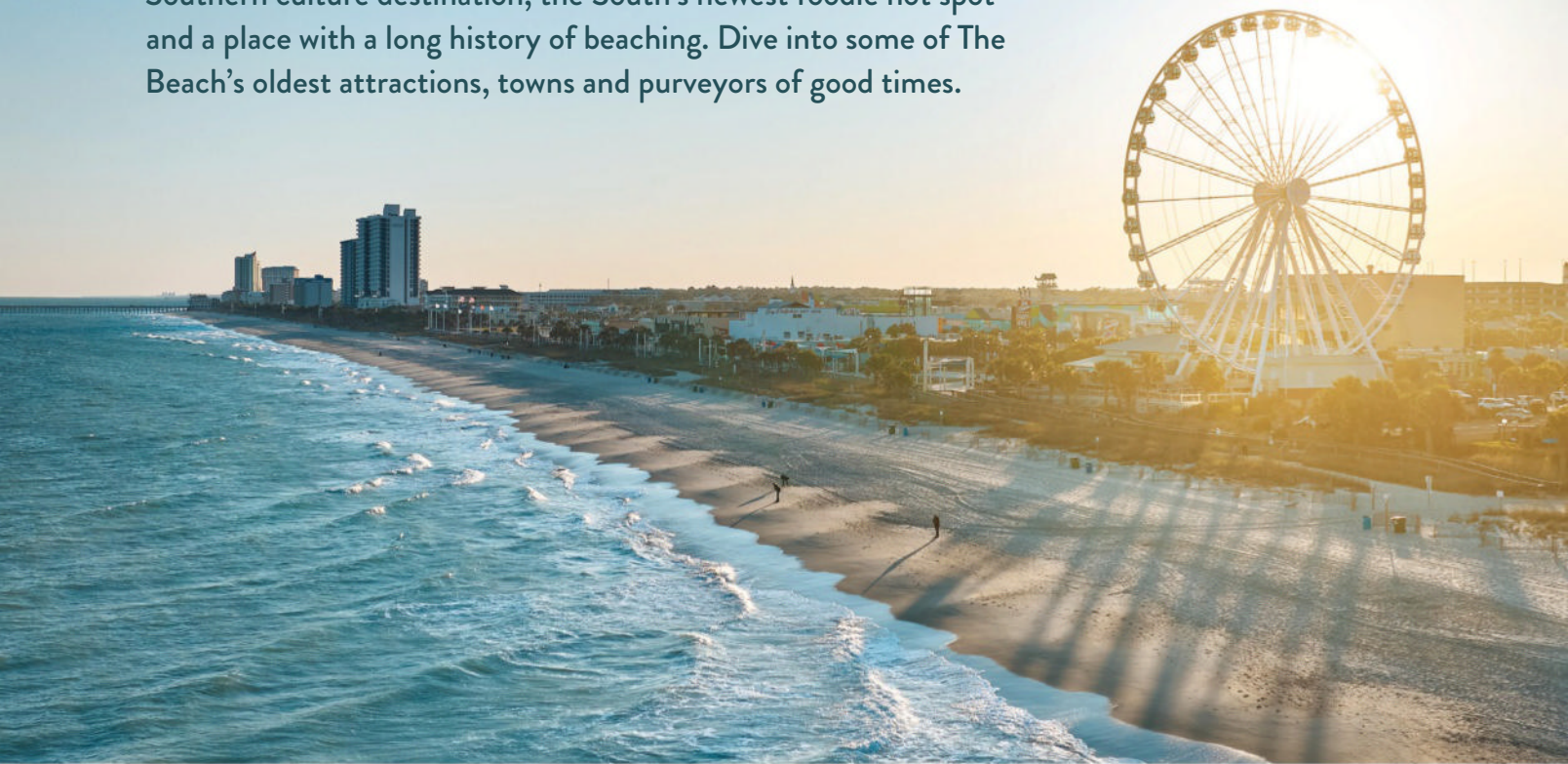
**IN 2023**, the Buckeye State welcomed UNESCO's inscription of the 25th World Heritage site in the U.S., the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks. The monumental geometric mounds, walls, and hilltop enclosures were built between 1,600 and 2,000 years ago by the Hopewell culture of Indigenous people, who used them for burying the dead, performing rituals, and tracking celestial bodies. Today the monuments are free

to visit and are spread across eight locales (five in Chillicothe, about an hour's drive south from Columbus). —ND



# There's More Than Meets the *Coastline*

You may know Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, as a 60-mile collection of 14 welcoming beach communities. But to the millions of visit every year, it's called The Beach, and it's a bona fide Southern culture destination, the South's newest foodie hot spot and a place with a long history of beaching. Dive into some of The Beach's oldest attractions, towns and purveyors of good times.



## Brookgreen Gardens

This 9,127-acre botanical garden became the first public sculpture garden in the nation in 1931. Along with the gardens, Brookgreen preserves and exhibits the history and native species of the Southeast with its Lowcountry Zoo and Lowcountry History and Wildlife Preserve.





## Conway

Conway sits about 15 miles inland along the Waccamaw River and is one of the oldest towns in South Carolina. Historic charm is everywhere – the City Hall is even on the National Register of Historic Places – but with its great food scene, local shops and murals all around town, Conway isn't stuck in the past.



## Fat Harold's Beach Club

The state dance of South Carolina is very much alive at Fat Harold's, also known as the "Home of the Shag." The shag got its start on South Carolina beaches in the '40s – and at this North Myrtle Beach dance hall, you can still learn the steps and dance the night away.

## The Bowery

The Bowery opened on the Myrtle Beach Boardwalk in 1944 and has hosted country acts ever since. Though its original claim to fame was the rise of house band Alabama, this bar (and self-proclaimed 8th Wonder of the World®) hosts live acts nearly every night of the week.

## Peaches Corner

Peaches Corner has been the go-to lunch counter on the Myrtle Beach Boardwalk since "Mamma Peach" opened up shop in 1937, serving up Peaches Burgers, footlong chili dogs and BBQ plates to hungry Boardwalkers.

## Sea Captain's House

Built in 1930 as an oceanfront family cottage, Sea Captain's House was transformed in 1954 to a nine-room inn, then finally into a restaurant in 1962. The restaurant retains much of its original look and charm and serves refined seafood dishes with ocean views.

## Little River

Little River sits on the northern end of the Grand Strand and was one of the earliest settlements in the area. Today, with its location on the Intracoastal Waterway, it's known as a fishing haven and home to the World Famous Blue Crab Festival every May and ShrimpFest in October.



Want to learn more?  
Scan to get familiar  
with The Beach.  
[VisitMyrtleBeach.com](http://VisitMyrtleBeach.com)

VISIT  
*Myrtle Beach*  
SOUTH CAROLINA





**IN THE FARTHEST** corner of the Pacific Northwest, the nearly million-acre Olympic National Park encompasses four separate rainforests. Hike the Hall of Mosses loop in the Hoh Rain Forest, where you can wander for about a mile among giant ferns and maple trees covered in beardlike moss. Then drive approximately 45 minutes southwest to the coast to admire the rock formations (called sea stacks) and seals at Ruby Beach. For travelers looking for a longer hike, the nine-mile Ozette Triangle wends through a mist-shrouded cedar forest from Lake Ozette to the shoreline. Visitors have a chance of spotting gray whales during their annual migration, peaking in April and May and then again in October and November.

—Chloe Arrojado and  
Laura Dannen Redman

#### STAY

Kalaloch Lodge, inside Olympic National Park, is an ideal base for exploring the Pacific Coast. From the cabins and some lodge rooms, guests can take in views of the ocean, especially magnificent at sunset.

Sol Duc Falls is considered by many to be the most beautiful cascade in Olympic National Park.



**IN 2015**, Tucson became the first place in the U.S. to be recognized as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy, honoring its 4,000 years of agriculture and foodways. Today, ingredients historically foraged or grown by the area's Indigenous communities can be found on menus all over the city. At Exo Roast Co., for instance, sip on cold brew infused with nutty mesquite pods or chiltepin, the country's only wild chili pepper. The chilies also make their way into salsas at Boca, a taqueria by *Top Chef* favorite Maria Mazon. Tepary beans, meanwhile, were brought back from the brink of extinction by Native-owned Ramona Farms in the late 1970s, and now show up at forward-thinking restaurants such as Anello Pizzeria and the local-food-focused Bata. —ND



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**Decorah, Iowa**, is part of the upper Midwest's Driftless Area, a region of steep bluffs and valleys that inspires outdoor exploration. Canoeing, kayaking, and tubing the Upper Iowa River are popular ways to get on the water, or you can hike to waterfalls at Malanaphy Springs and Dunning's Spring Park. Rent electric bikes from Decorah Bicycles and hit the 11-mile Trout Run Trail, or try a traditional woodworking class at Vesterheim Folk Art School, capping your day with a beer at brewing companies Pulpit Rock or Toppling Goliath. Green thumbs, take note: Decorah is the site of the Seed Savers Exchange, a 49-year-old nonprofit seed bank and heritage farm dedicated to preserving and sharing heirloom seeds. —AH



**IN SAVANNAH**, hoteliers and restaurateurs are breathing life into historic architecture to show off the city's modern creativity. In February, Hotel Bardo opened in an 1888 Victorian-Romanesque mansion on Forsyth Park. The imposing red-brick exterior gives little hint of what's inside: an urban resort with a palm-lined swimming pool, a pastel-heavy palette, and the Italian restaurant Saint Bibiana, named for the patron saint of hangovers. A few blocks off Forsyth Park, chefs Daniel Aranza and Felipe Vera moved their popular food truck Strangebird into a 1938 diner, where the menu includes Georgia shrimp *salpicón* tacos and churro-crumble-topped "naner puddin." And then there's Agatha's Coffee and Tea House, which leans into Savannah's fascination with all things eerie. The building has been a funeral parlor, a jazz club, and a pool hall; now it's a mystery-themed, bookshelf-lined hangout that shares space with King Oliver's, a reinvented club that's named for Louis Armstrong's mentor, who worked here as a janitor at the end of his life. —ND



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# THE GULF COAST GEM, **GALVESTON ISLAND**

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With 32 miles of shoreline, Victorian neighborhoods, great food and restaurants, plus shopping and entertainment, Galveston is an island off the coast of Texas that's more than a beach town. Here, pristine natural habitats and waterways meet rich history, including the birthplace of Juneteenth. Galveston also has the country's fourth-busiest cruise port, making it ideal for pre- and post-cruise stays, and is easy to get to at just an hour's drive from Houston.







Historic Downtown Galveston

*Enjoy sun, sand, and*

## MORE ON GALVESTON ISLAND

Get outside, explore nature, and step back in time.  
The charms of this Texas island await.

### History & Culture

**Dive into the past  
with activities for all.**

#### **Historic Pleasure Pier**

Ride the roller coaster, then try your luck with midway games at this amusement park originally built for World War II soldiers stationed here.

#### **Moody Gardens**

The glass pyramids at this educational theme park and hotel house a rainforest, an aquarium, and science exhibits.

#### **Historic Strand District**

Once called the "Wall Street of the South," the Strand District today buzzes with locally owned cafés and shops, including a craft brewery and vintage candy store. Shop for art and antiques and check out the Galveston Railroad Museum.

#### **Victorian Homes**

Bishop's Palace, among the country's most significant Victorian residences, and the famous Moody Mansion are listed in the National Register

of Historic Places. See restoration in progress at the turn-of-the-century League-Kempner House.

### Nature & Wildlife

**Experience scenic  
beauty on land  
and water.**

#### **Deep-Sea Fishing**

Fish for kingfish, shark, and red snapper with the award-winning, fully equipped Wave Dancer Charters. Just bring a Texas saltwater fishing license and a little luck.

#### **East End Lagoon Trails**

Among the diverse habitats, from coastal prairie to tidal wetlands, spot raptors, pelicans, and sandpipers along the paths of this 700-acre, ecologically rare preserve.

#### **Artist Boat Kayaking**

Learn about coastal restoration and conservation from passionate volunteers as you paddle through some of Galveston's most scenic spots.

#### **Baywatch Dolphin Tour**

See how many dolphins at play you can spy as you cruise through Galveston Harbor on a 45-minute tour.

### Hotels

**Check into one  
of Galveston's  
luxury hotels.**

#### **Grand Galvez Resort**

Gatsby-era touches complement 21st-century comfort at Galveston's newly renovated pink hotel on the beach. Look forward to Texas Ruby Red grapefruit massages at its spa, a bar that overlooks the Gulf, and a pool featuring pink-and-white striped cabanas.

#### **San Luis Resort & Spa**

Staying in spacious rooms with balconies, suites, or private villas and condos is just part of the experience at San Luis Resort. Ride a complimentary bike along the seawall, learn to be a better mixologist, or even take a goat yoga class.

#### **The Tremont House**

Enjoy the comfort and charm of historic downtown Galveston at the Tremont House, housed in a beautifully restored property built in 1879. Sip a daiquiri in the Toujouse Bar, share a charcuterie board at Blum & Co., and then relax in Italian linen sheets.

**Start planning at [VisitGalveston.com](http://VisitGalveston.com)**



Moody Gardens





**NEW YORK CITY'S** theater scene just got a beautiful new anchor near the Financial District. Perelman Performing Arts Center opened in September 2023 at the World Trade

Center inside a luminous cube clad in marble slabs so thin (only half an inch!) that sunlight streams in by day and the exterior glows at night. The debut season delivered a calendar almost as diverse as the city itself, including a solo show by Laurence Fishburne, a satirical play by the intertribal Native comedy troupe the 1491s, an opera about a Chinese American soldier, a reimagining of *Cats* set in New York's underground ballroom culture, and a festival of new plays by queer writers who face persecution in their home countries. Equally expansive is the menu at Marcus Samuelsson's lobby restaurant Metropolis, which draws on immigrant communities' fare from NYC's five boroughs in such dishes as gravlax, *cascatelli* with guanciale, and snapper with curry. —*ND*

#### STAY

The Perelman Center is a few minutes' walk from another architectural stunner: the Beekman, a Thompson Hotel. It also glows with sunlight, in this case thanks to a pyramidal skylight above its nine-story atrium.

**White-sand beaches.** Blue-green water. Dolphins frolicking in the surf. Where is this mythical haven? Alabama's Gulf Coast, arguably the country's most underrated beach destination, with roughly 50 miles of shoreline along the Gulf of Mexico and about 70 more miles lining the bays. Standout spots include Gulf Shores (pictured below), the family-friendly Orange Beach, and the less-touristed Dauphin Island. Visitors can take boat tours from Orange Beach to look for those playful dolphins. —*Victoria M. Walker*



**Yes, you should think about soft-shell crabs when visiting Maryland's Eastern Shore, but savvy travelers should also be thinking about chic European-influenced shops and cafés, esteemed art, and perfectly manicured public gardens. That's the town of Easton, Maryland. —Nicholas DeRenzo and Devorah Lev-Tov**



■ Get your art fix at the free Academy Art Museum, an 1820 schoolhouse with a broad collection, from Old Master paintings to contemporary pieces, such as a site-specific installation by Oglala Lakota tribe member Marty Two Bulls Jr. (through October 2024).

■ Dine at Bas Rouge, a refined restaurant with tableside gueridon (trolley) service and nods to Viennese classics. Its executive chef, Harley Peet, was just named the best in the Mid-Atlantic by the James Beard Foundation.

■ Lace up your walking shoes for a stroll through the 400-acre Pickering Creek Audubon Center, where visitors can look for more than 140 types of birds on the sanctuary's hiking trails and bird-viewing platforms, including osprey, bald eagle, and wild turkey.





**CHARLESTON** gets a lot of love from travelers, but for something a little different, head “upstate” to Greenville, South Carolina, once known as the Textile Capital of the World. The industry employed one out of three residents, and you can retrace that past on a two-hour guided drive with Greenville History Tours, which visits mills built between 1874 and 1930. Alternatively, weave together your own tour of these former industrial spaces that have now been totally reimaged. —ND

■ The 100-year-old Taylors Mill, formerly used for fabric dyeing and bleaching, houses a brewery, an axe-throwing venue, and the studios of dozens of makers, including letterpress printers, installation artists, and photographers.

■ The Greenville Center for Creative Arts is based in the old Brandon Mill, which produced textiles between

1901 and 1977. These days, the nonprofit arts organization presents rotating gallery shows and classes in media such as printmaking, fiber arts, drawing, and painting.

■ The 1912 Judson Mill has been reborn as a sustainable mixed-use building that includes a rock-climbing gym, a brewery, and a live music space.

■ A group of friends bought the Hampton Station, an abandoned cotton warehouse built in 1919. The complex now hosts such creative tenants as the artist-run gallery space Tiger Strikes Asteroid; Wandering Bard Meadery; and a nonprofit restaurant called Keipi, which serves food and wine from the Republic of Georgia.



FROM LEFT: GEORGE ETHEREDGE;  
HORATIO BALTZ; ROSS MANTLE

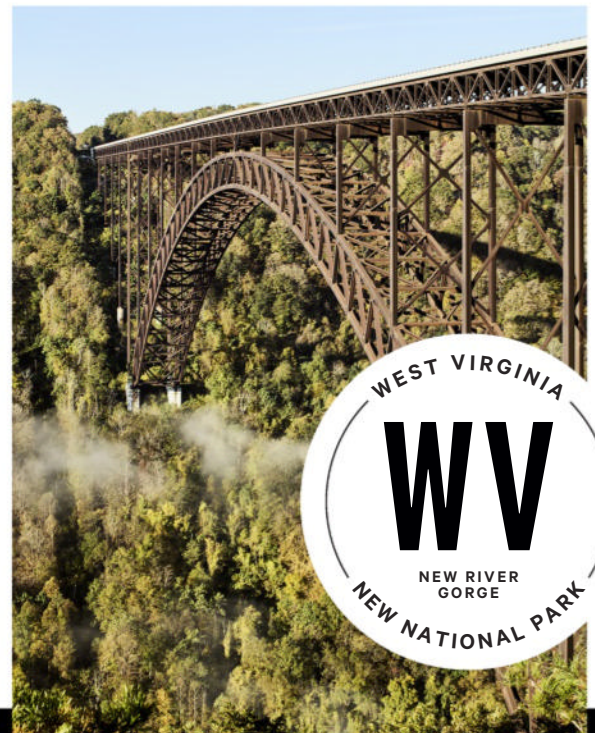
#### STAY

Hummingbird Inn is a dog-friendly B&B that occupies an 1887 Queen Anne-style house. It has six guest rooms and a wraparound porch.



**As Asheville’s** cultural offerings grow, so do its hotel options. Blind Tiger is one of the best: an 1889 residence transformed into 13 individually designed suites and rooms (and a stand-alone cabin), no two of which are alike. The Flat Iron Hotel arrived this spring with a 1920s-inspired design, and this fall brings the opening of AutoCamp Asheville, an outpost of the glamping brand known for Airstreams and luxury tents. The site will be well positioned for hikes into the Blue Ridge Mountains. —DLT

**“WEST VIRGINIA, MOUNTAIN MAMA,”** indeed. It is the only state located fully within the Appalachian Mountain range, which can be enjoyed by visiting one of 36 state parks, more than 1,500 miles of hiking trails, and some 4,000 rock-climbing routes. West Virginia also lays claim to the newest national park in the United States: the New River Gorge National Park and Preserve, a 70,000-acre playground that draws campers, hikers, zipliners, white-water rafters, and base jumpers looking to leap 876 feet from the New River Gorge Bridge, below. —AH







**Wichita has some serious arts cred.** The largest city in Kansas boasts the Wichita Grand Opera, where *Frasier*'s Kelsey Grammer starred in a recent production of *Candide*, and the Wichita Art Museum, a 1935 institution on the Little Arkansas River with one of the region's biggest and best collections of American art. Examine Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie style at the Allen House, full of Wright-designed furniture, and explore Wichita's legacy as the Air Capital of the World (including its prominence in the 1920s, when one out of four U.S.

planes was built here) at the Kansas Aviation Museum. Book a stay at the Ambassador Hotel Wichita, Autograph Collection, located in a building that was once a bank and a drugstore. —LDR



**BOISE, IDAHO**, is worth a trip for its restaurants alone. In 2023, for the first time, the James Beard Award for Best Chef in the Mountain district went to someone from Idaho: Kris Komori of Kin, a restaurant with a prix fixe menu that changes every five weeks. Also noteworthy: The Boise-area semifinalist restaurants in 2022 and 2023 represent a variety of global influences—Mexico (Amano), Ethiopia and Eritrea (Kibrom's), Spain's Basque country (Ansots), and Afghanistan (Sunshine Spice Bakery & Cafe)—and celebrate the city's diversity. To round out the experience, check the Idaho Museum of International Diaspora's website; as it works to build a permanent location, it runs pop-up exhibits and a Kitchen of Exotic Eats cooking-class program representing cuisines such as Indian and Cuban. —Mark Ellwood and Ashlea Halpern

#### STAY

The Avery is a 39-room boutique hotel that was once the Blues Bouquet nightclub. Today, it's operated by Cal Elliott, who grew up in Boise and worked as an executive chef at the lauded Dressler restaurant in New York.



Wyoming has 99 cities and towns and more than 1,000 hot springs.

**DID YOU KNOW** that Wyoming has more hot springs than towns? While Yellowstone's famed thermal pools must be observed from designated trails (they're way too hot to be safe for bathing), others around the state are open for swimming and soaking. Visit Saratoga

in the southern part of Wyoming for its free, public mineral-spring pool and bathhouse. If it's privacy you're after, stay at the Saratoga Hot Springs Resort, which has a 70-foot outdoor hot spring and five soaking pools. Or drive about 25 minutes south of Jackson (in the western part of the state) and you'll find yourself at Astoria Hot Springs, with its six man-made soaking pools of different temperatures in the 100-acre Astoria Park Conservancy. —Anna Fiorentino



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Must-visit spots in Little River include La Natural restaurant and clothing-and-jewelry shop Éliou.

Spend a weekend getting to know some of Miami's most dynamic neighborhoods.

#### DAY 1

##### Visit classic South Beach

Check into the Setai, Miami Beach, a sophisticated alternative to the frenetic party-time energy of other area hotels. Then hit South Beach and take a dip in the ocean at South Pointe Park.

#### DAY 2

##### Explore Little River

This former warehouse district (pictured) north of Wynwood and Little Haiti is an art-and-culture enclave, with a refreshing lack of pretension. Stop into Éliou for jewelry designed by childhood friends Cristina Mantilla and Duda Teixeira, then refuel at La Natural with wood-fired pizza, small plates, and natural wines.

#### DAY 3

##### Take in Downtown Miami and Little Havana

Stroll the Underline, downtown's park and outdoor art trail. Then dine in Little Havana. Carlos Ayala, the concierge at Mandarin Oriental, Miami, recommends Old's Havana Cuban Bar & Cocina for authentic Cuban cuisine. Try the *fricasé de pollo* (chicken fricassee) and *vaca frita* (crispy shredded beef). —Terry Ward

USA

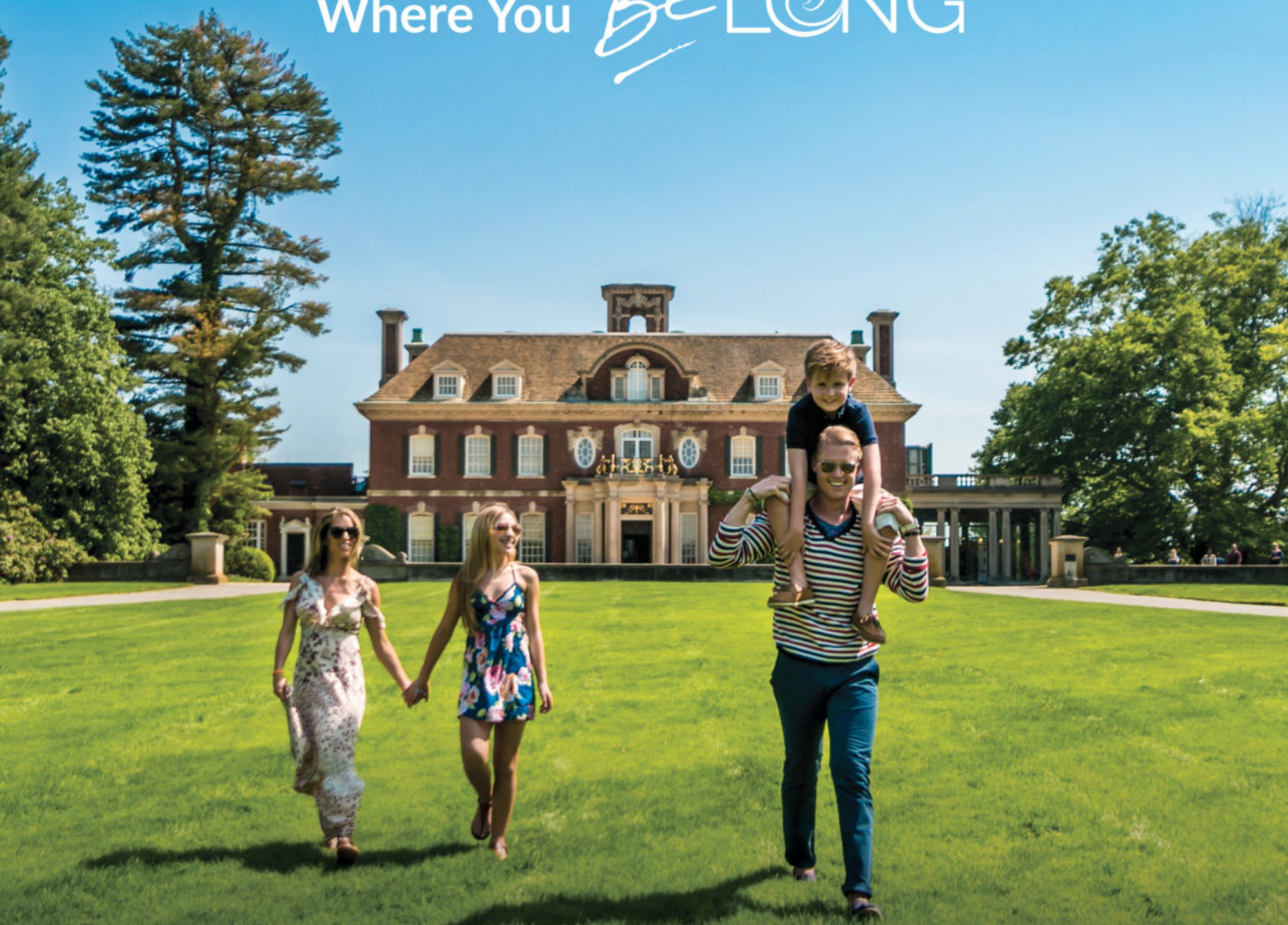


**Set on nearly 50 acres of prairie land** in the St. Croix River Valley, Franconia Sculpture Park is a popular day trip from the Twin Cities, about an hour's drive away. The grounds are open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., 365 days a year, and are free to explore—which may be why the park sees nearly 200,000 visitors a year (and why donations for parking are requested). Guests are encouraged to touch most of the nearly 100 artworks (a few are even designed for climbing), making for a fun, interactive way to spend the day, especially with young kids. Consider dropping by for all-ages arts programs such as sculpture classes, live performances, and summer films. Franconia also runs a variety of artist residencies, one of which helps to contribute new, large-scale sculptures. —Cinnamon Janzer



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**Connect with** Hawaiian communities and help Maui recover from the 2023 wildfires (and have honest-to-goodness fun) by doing some volunteer work. Feed My Sheep needs help packing and handing out nearly 70,000 meals per month. Find other opportunities at: Hua Momona Farms, a microgreens farm that feeds residents in need; Maui Cultural Lands, which leads reforestation and archaeological stabilization projects; and Kipuka Olowalu, which works on conservation and preservation efforts at Olowalu Valley, a Native Hawaiian cultural site. (Find out more via the volunteer clearinghouse website HandsOn Maui.) The Hawai'i Visitors & Convention Bureau suggests hotel stays instead of vacation rentals to support local hospitality workers; book the Ritz-Carlton Maui, Kapalua. —*Michelle Baran*



**EVERY SPRING**, “craniacs” flock to the area around Kearney, Nebraska, to see the great migration of sandhill cranes—their annual journey north along the Central Flyway from Mexico to their breeding grounds in Alaska and Canada. For a few weeks during that trip, more than 500,000 of these wading birds take a break on the 75-mile stretch of Nebraska’s Platte River to stock up on food (remnants of last year’s corn harvest) and roost by night in massive numbers in the river’s shallow waters. Easily spotted by their coloring, the gray-feathered, ruby-crowned cranes lift off by the thousands each morning, spend their days in cornfields and meadows, then return to the river at dusk. It’s a sight to behold. Viewing spots, trails, and tours at the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary and Crane Trust Nature & Visitor Center will make craniacs of us all. —*Alexandra Marvar*

**In Chicago, there’s a luxury retreat for every taste.**

■ The 1893 landmark Chicago Athletic Association was a former members-only men’s athletic and social club, and is now part of Hyatt’s Unbound Collection. Its 240 guest rooms reflect the building’s former life, some with pom-pom horses as benches, plaster-work ceilings, and ornate carved wood wainscoting.

■ Chicago invented the skyscraper—and today you can stay in the coolest of them all, designed by Mies van der Rohe and now the site of the Langham, Chicago (pictured left). Guests of the hotel’s 268 rooms and 48 suites can take advantage of top-notch concierges, who can organize a private art tour or a mixology class.

■ The new St. Regis Chicago gives travelers the chance to sleep in the tallest building in the world designed by a woman architect, Jeanne Gang—with spectacular interiors to match. The 192 rooms in the 101-story tower come with floor-to-ceiling windows, brass detailing, curvilinear furnishings, and access to butler service.

■ A Magnificent Mile mainstay, the Peninsula Chicago has 339 spacious rooms and suites, outfitted in an understated style that features Chicago’s official flower, the chrysanthemum. Details include soaking tubs with televisions and linens custom-created by Italian luxury linen company Fili D’Oro. —*Heidi Mitchell*





**Fifteen dollars grants** anyone entry to Crater of Diamonds State Park, about two miles southeast of Murfreesboro, Arkansas, population 1,495. But that small fee could turn into a fortune: The park is one of the world's only diamond-bearing spots accessible to the public. What you find, you keep. (The most valuable discovery to date is an 8.52-carat stone estimated to be worth \$1 million.) Since the park's inception in 1972, more than 35,000 of the gems—some 7,000 carats in total—have been uncovered and registered. Amethyst, agate, jasper, peridot, garnet, and quartz are also up for grabs, but it's the world's hardest material, unsurprisingly, that most visitors are after.

—Katherine LaGrave



#### ■ The parks

Tulsa has 135—and the highlight is Gathering Place, a 66.5-acre riverfront park that includes lawns, a pond, art installations and exhibits, sports courts, a skate park, and boat rentals.

#### ■ Art deco architecture

Tulsa's well preserved skyscrapers are a product of the art deco boom of the 1920s. Tour the Deco District to see the Philtower building, the Mayo Hotel, and others.

#### ■ All the "scenes"

The underground arts scene, the music scene that ranges from country-western to jazz to symphony, and the thriving craft beer scene form a trifecta of creativity and experimentation.

#### ■ Black Wall Street made history here

Don't miss the Greenwood Rising center, which opened in 2021 to mark the centennial of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, or the Pathway to Hope walking trail, which connects significant sites and commemorates the legacy of Black Wall Street.

#### ■ One city, three tribes

The Cherokee Nation, Muscogee (Creek) Nation, and Osage Nation boundaries all converge in the greater Tulsa area. Learn how they shape the region at the Osage Nation Visitors Center and Cherokee National History Museum, and at the annual Muscogee Nation Festival.

—KL

#### STAY

The art deco Mayo Hotel, which opened in 1925, offers 360-degree views from its rooftop bar, the Penthouse. JFK, Lucille Ball, and Elvis Presley all stayed here.



**WRITER WILLIAM FAULKNER.** Journalist Ida B. Wells. Playwright Tennessee Williams. Civil rights activist and memoirist Anne Moody. Mississippi's literary tradition is strong, and travelers can trace its legacy along the Mississippi Writers Trail, a series of markers highlighting the places that influenced their work, including Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak, in Oxford (pictured below), and a mansion in Clarksdale that inspired such Williams works as *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Plaques don't just denote who, what, and where; they capture the lyricism of the people they celebrate. To wit: "To Williams the alluvial area seemed so wide and so flat that 'the seasons could walk across it four-abreast.'" —LDR



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: SUSAN PORTNOY; JAMES KIRKIS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; COURTESY OF THE LANGHAM, CHICAGO



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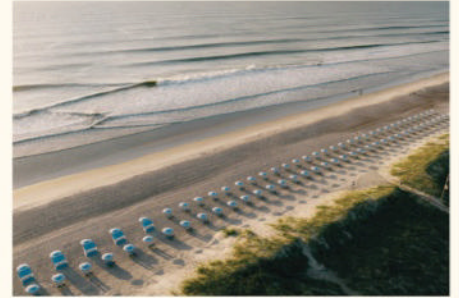
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Bigger thrills are in store too, should you desire. Take to the water on a stand-up paddleboard, fishing expedition, sailboat, kayak, or river cruise. For more speed, head out with **Backwater Cat Adventure** on zippy go-kart-style boats.

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**LONG BEFORE** beach resorts and salsa clubs, Puerto Rico was home to the Taíno, an Arawakan-speaking people. Their legacy lives on not only in the DNA of Puerto Ricans but also through artifacts and petroglyphs. This three-day road trip celebrates the island's Indigenous past. —*Jen Ruiz*



Dozens of Taíno petroglyphs can be seen in the Cueva del Indio in Arecibo.

#### ■ DAY 1

##### **SAN JUAN TO UTUADO**

From San Juan, drive an hour west to Arecibo, where you'll find the Cueva del Indio, a sea cave with the largest collection of petroglyphs on the island's coastline. Continue south into the mountains of Utuado to visit the Caguana Indigenous Ceremonial Site. There, you'll see stones covered with petroglyphs of faces and birds, *bateyes* (plazas created for sports and gatherings) that date back to the 13th century, and a museum of Taíno tools and jewelry.

#### ■ DAY 2

##### **UTUADO TO PONCE**

Another hour's drive south near Ponce, the Tibes Indigenous Ceremonial Center is considered to be the oldest ceremonial complex and astronomical observatory in the Caribbean. Nearby, stop for a meal at Barbacoa and Grill. The modern concept of barbecue derives from the Taíno word *barabicu*, describing the process of slow-cooking meat.

#### ■ DAY 3

##### **PONCE TO SAN JUAN**

Start with a one-hour drive north to Jayuya, known as Puerto Rico's Indigenous capital, with sites including La Tumba del Indio, a mausoleum where ancient remains are displayed in a glass-topped grave, and Museo El Cemí, which is shaped like a deity. Outside of Jayuya, hike 1.4 miles to Cerro Punta; it's the island's highest point at 4,390 feet and the site of the Mural de Zama, a rock wall covered in petroglyphs. Finish with a two-hour drive to San Juan. Check into the Condado Ocean Club, where the restaurant, Social, features dishes such as codfish croquettes and coconut tres leches cake.



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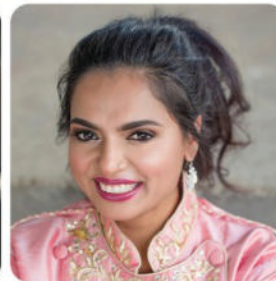


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**FROM MEMPHIS BLUES** to Nashville country, music is one of Tennessee's greatest exports. Book these tuneup hotels on your next road trip through the state. —ND



Graduate Hotels are all located in college towns.

■ **CENTRAL STATION MEMPHIS, CURIO COLLECTION BY HILTON**  
Built inside a still-working 1914 train station, this hotel has a listening lounge called Eight & Sand with a collection of 500 records, all related to the city in some way. It also has a DJ booth repurposed from an old church organ; it's named Elmertha after local music educator Elmertha Cole. If you want to tune in to what's spinning downstairs from the comfort of your own bed, just switch on your locally made EgglestonWorks speaker—there's one in every room.

■ **GRADUATE NASHVILLE**  
A giant bust of Dolly Parton, made of hot-pink chicken wire, watches over the rooftop bar White Limozeen at this location of the university-themed hotel brand. Elsewhere, the decor includes gussied-up country kitsch, such as a hooked-rug portrait of Grand Ole Opry comedian Minnie Pearl in the lobby and an animatronic, anthropomorphic band at the Cross-Eyed Critters Watering Hole karaoke bar.



**Wisconsin's 1,200-mile Ice Age Trail** was designated a National Scenic Trail in December 2023. The route, which stretches from St. Croix Falls in the west to Sturgeon Bay in the east, traces the path of the continental glacier that carved the state's surprisingly dramatic landscape more than 12,000 years ago. Along the way, you'll hike through prairies, forests, bluffs, and river valleys on what might be thought of as the Midwest's answer to the Appalachian and Pacific Crest trails. —ND

■ **HEARTSONG LODGE & RESORT**  
In November 2023, Dolly Parton opened this new resort in Pigeon Forge, minutes from Dollywood, and she told Afar that she hoped to re-create "some of that rustic living" that's associated with her Great Smoky Mountains home. "We've kind of saved as many trees as we possibly could and built the lodge [as] deep into the hills as we could, so people could actually get the feel of that," she says. In the lobby, hotel guests can catch live performances from musicians such as singer-songwriter Melissa Hale or Hillary Klug (aka the "Dancing Fiddler"), and the property is a great jumping-off point to explore the park's new Dolly Parton Experience, an immersive museum that opened in May.

**Join other** admirers of fall foliage on the popular Kancamagus Highway. Colloquially known as the "Kanc," the east-west road trip connects 34.5 miles of picturesque ponds, hiking trails, waterfalls, and scenic overlooks in the White Mountain National Forest. —LDR





**When it was founded in 1871**, the seaside resort community of Asbury Park became known for its Victorian architecture, and it has been slowly recapturing its old magic. Today, the boardwalk thrums with retro beach bars, a pinball machine museum, and the Stone Pony, which Bruce Springsteen helped make famous and where cool musicians, from indie bands to big names, continue to draw crowds. (The beloved dive bar marks its 50th anniversary this year.) Nearby you'll find such restaurants as Talula's, where the seasonal menu of handmade sourdough pizzas might feature hot soppressata with local honey or birria beef with consommé for dipping. The ice cream is made in-house too. Stay overnight at the St. Laurent Social Club, opened in 2022 inside an 1886 hotel; don't miss the saltwater pool that's available to nonguests too. —ND



**THANKS TO ITS** creativity, Portland is never out of the spotlight for long, and now a few noteworthy developments are drawing travelers once again. The Ritz-Carlton, Portland is the city's first five-star hotel, while the Soho House Portland is the first outpost of the members-only club in the Pacific Northwest. On the food front, the city has one of America's most exciting restaurants, Kann, *Top Chef* finalist Gregory Gourdet's ode to the flavors of his Haitian American childhood. Not only did Gourdet win the 2023 James Beard Award for best new restaurant in the country, but now, at his adjacent bar Sousòl, he's also raising the visibility of the nonalcoholic scene in a region better known for its love of hoppy IPAs and Willamette Valley pinot noirs. Alcohol-free craft breweries include Roaming Nobles and the brand-new Heck, which launched this spring. Take a day trip to Hood River, a little over an hour's drive east, and try a few sips at the country's first zero-proof distillery and tasting room, Wilderton Botanical Spirits. —ND

At Kann, Gregory Gourdet cooks Haiti-meets-PNW dishes.







**TRAVELERS COULD EASILY** enjoy Glacier National Park by focusing on its diverse topography and wildlife (bears! mountain goats! wolverines!), but that's only part of the story. The park borders the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, which, at 3,000 square miles, is bigger than Delaware. Learn more about the area's original inhabitants on a guided drive with Native-owned Sun Tours, a backcountry hike or a horseback ride with Blackfeet Tours, or a workshop run by Iron Shield Creative, a group of Blackfeet Nation storytellers who share their knowledge of traditional songs, sacred sites, and plant medicine. —ND

Indigenous craftspeople in Montana are known to make dream catchers, beaded jewelry, and fine quill embroidery.



**When it opened** in 2022, everyone was talking about the Hotel Marcel New Haven, Tapestry Collection by Hilton. And for good reason: It aims to be the country's first net-zero hotel by 2025—meaning that it will generate at least as much energy as it uses. An empty 1970 brutalist office building might not seem like the likeliest place to encounter innovative hotel design, but architect Bruce Becker found ways to experiment with solar canopies, triple-glazed windows, and EV charging stations. Even the elevators contribute to the net-zero goal, utilizing regenerative braking technology that recaptures energy created during slowdown and feeds it back into the building's power system.

—Bridget Reed Morawski





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**THERE'S A FEMINIST** wind blowing through the nation's capital, shaking the dust off a city that has long been controlled by men in suits. Tap into it on a weekend trip. —Karen Carmichael



Russian imperial portraits and a French railing adorn the entry hall at Hillwood Estate.

#### ■ FRIDAY

Check into Eaton DC, which third-generation hotelier Katherine Lo (her father, Lo Ka Shui, is the executive chairman of Langham Hospitality Group) founded in 2018. Here, artist residencies, music nights, and soundbathing are part of the experience.

#### ■ SATURDAY

Start your morning at the National Museum of Women in the Arts, which reopened in October 2023 after a two-year renovation. It highlights often-overlooked aspects of women's lives and prominently features emerging artists from groups underrepresented in the art world. The Smithsonian museums are next: The National Portrait Gallery's exhibit *Brilliant Exiles: American Women in Paris, 1900–1939*, showcases such notable figures as dancers Josephine Baker and Isadora Duncan; and the Renwick Gallery's *Subversive, Skilled, Sublime: Fiber Art by Women*, illustrates the ingenuity and significance of the art form. Both run through early 2025.

#### ■ SUNDAY

Visit Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, the former home of Marjorie Merriweather Post (owner of the Post cereal company in the early 1900s, major philanthropist, and the one-time wealthiest woman in America). Sometimes called D.C.'s Downton Abbey, it's now a museum filled with imperial Russian and 18th-century French decorative art and other treasures, along with 25 acres of gardens and one of the country's best orchid collections. For more modern wares, drop into Femme Fatale DC to shop for vintage home decor, jewelry, photographs, and other items from more than 60 women-owned businesses.



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restaurants, bars, food trucks, lounges, breweries, distilleries, tap rooms, saloons, and holes in the wall are spread across Sheridan County. That's 101 different ways to apres adventure in the craft capital of Wyoming. We are also home to more than 40 hotels, motels, RV parks, and B&Bs.

4

seasons in which to get WYO'd. If you're a skijoring savant, you'll want to check out the Winter Rodeo in February. July features the beloved Sheridan WYO Rodeo. Spring and fall are the perfect time to chase cool mountain streams or epic backcountry lines.

∞

Sheridan features a thriving, historic downtown district, with western allure, hospitality and good graces to spare; a vibrant arts scene; bombastic craft culture; a robust festival and events calendar; and living history from one corner of the county to the next.

[SHERIDANWYOMING.ORG](http://SHERIDANWYOMING.ORG)





**COME SUMMERTIME,** Maine's lobster shacks shouldn't be the only stop for seafood lovers. In fact, the state is home to an official Oyster Trail, linking raw bars, mobile "shuck trucks," and some of Maine's 150 oyster farms. Here are five of our favorite ways to enjoy freshly harvested bivalves. —ND

■ Visit oyster farms with Damariscotta River Cruises, which offers itineraries on its eponymous river an hour northeast of Portland. Lucky travelers may also see playful harbor seals.

■ Sea kayak out to an oyster farm near Brunswick with Alice Bean Andrenyak, who leads Alice's Awesome Adventures.

■ Sip oyster-infused stouts and ales from local breweries, including Oxbow Brewing Co., Maine Beer Company, and Orono Brewing Company. Orono uses Bombazine oysters to add minerality and brininess to some of its brews.

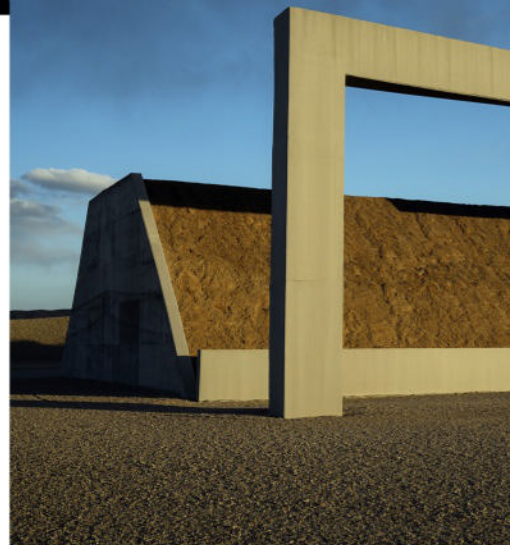
■ Shop for painted jewelry dishes made from oyster shells at Lisa-Marie's Made in Maine, with locations in Bath and Portland.

■ Join sommelier Erica Archer on the 74-foot sloop *Frances* for a Wine Wise sailing around Casco Bay, during which you'll pair oysters with different wines.

#### STAY

The Longfellow Hotel, which recently opened in Portland, has a lobby bar called Five of Clubs, where guests can sample ice-cold seafood—oysters on the half shell, scallop crudo, tuna tartare—as well as cocktails such as a passion fruit Negroni.

**THE SPHERE,** Las Vegas's futuristic concert venue, is not the only showstopper to open recently in Nevada. Land artist Michael Heizer debuted *City* in 2022, one of the largest contemporary artworks ever created at three-quarters of a square mile. It's a massive complex of gravel pathways, concrete shapes, and earthen mounds that have been compared to everything from ancient metropolises to alien crop circles. It's all influenced by Heizer's travels with his archaeologist father. Located about four hours north of Vegas in the desert of the Great Basin, the piece took 52 years and about \$40 million to complete. It's open to only six visitors a day, costs \$150 per adult, and books up months in advance. —ND



**There's about to be** a new way to visit the sequoias, waterfalls, two remaining glaciers, and magnificent gran-

ite cliffs at Yosemite National Park. Under Canvas, a brand known for its safari-inspired tented camps near national parks, will open its first-ever glamping outpost in California in May 2025 on 80 acres of pine-dappled forest 10 minutes from the park's west entrance. Amenities include king-size beds and indoor-outdoor café-style dining as well as adventure concierges who can arrange rafting and rock-climbing excursions or guided hiking trips. Book summer 2025 travel now: The camp is open for reservations. —Bailey Berg







**Colorado's natural** wonders are understandably a major draw, but the state's human history is just as fascinating. In 2022, President Biden created the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument, incorporating the old training grounds of the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division, where civilian skiers were trained to be soldiers for the World War II effort in Europe. The land is sacred to the Indigenous Ute people, and the national monument honors their past as well. This year, Amache, a Japanese American internment camp from 1942 to 1945, was named a

National Historic Site, joining two recently designated National Historic Landmarks: Temple Aaron, a 19th-century synagogue in the town of Trinidad, and Winks Panorama, a resort opened in 1928 to cater to African American tourists. —ND

Here are eight spots that make a perfect culture trip in the Steel City. Visitors to Pittsburgh can also check the website Artsburgh for happenings across the art, comedy, music, and theater scenes. —LDR

■ The Carnegie Museum of Art displays a wide range of art and artists, from photography and textiles to furniture and architecture.

■ The Andy Warhol Museum has the world's largest collection of Warhol art and archival material.

■ The August Wilson African American Cultural Center focuses on the African American experience through lectures, films, and other events.

■ The Mattress Factory exhibits large-scale installations of contemporary art,

including pieces by Yayoi Kusama and James Turrell.

■ The Frick Pittsburgh Museums and Gardens feature 18th-century French decorative arts, early Italian Renaissance paintings, Chinese porcelain, and a greenhouse with 10 acres of gardens.

■ The Senator John Heinz History Center is a Smithsonian Institution affiliate that traverses the city's past, including exhibits on *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and Heinz ketchup.

■ The Westmoreland Museum of American Art features more

than 3,400 works that span four centuries, with a focus on artists from southwestern Pennsylvania.

■ Carnegie Mellon University School of Drama and its theater are training grounds for future stars of TV, Broadway, and film.

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: JOSH CARTER/  
UNSPASH; REDUX PICTURES/TODD HEISLER/  
THE NEW YORK TIMES; SCOTT SLUSHER



**LAST DECEMBER**, Bowie House, Auberge Resorts Collection arrived in a blaze of glory and boot shines in Fort Worth's Cultural District. The resort is designed to feel "like the living room of Fort Worth," says general manager Gaylord Lamy. Guests can savor the modern Western aesthetic—white-wood floors, leather, boot benches, hat racks—throughout the 88 studios, 12 lofts, and six suites, as well as at Bricks and Horses, the hotel's lively restaurant.

Some 400 pieces of original artwork, collected by hotel owner (and acclaimed equestrian) Jo Ellard during her travels, are on display throughout the property, reflecting the Cultural District's art-centric appeal. Bowie House offers complimentary two-step dance classes with choreographed routines and topped off with fresh margaritas. Visitors can also book such experiences as a night at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and a tour of AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys. Hang your hat and stay awhile. —TW





**MANCHAC**, about 40 miles northwest of New Orleans, is one of the many wetlands that cover a third of the state of Louisiana. A mainstay of local culture, these swamps contribute to the state's seafood industry, protect against storm surges, harbor wildlife, and hold their own folklore. A special sort of calm emerges when visiting this particular marshy strip of land between Lakes Maurepas and Pontchartrain, where alligators, birds, and turtles are shielded by tall cypress trees and water tupelos. Here, the scenery appears painted with the glow of the sun, and the surroundings are almost completely silent. A few hours on the marsh can help travelers and locals alike establish a real connection with a state treasure, and

Wild Louisiana's kayak swamp tours provide a conscientious way to do that: The company's ecofriendly adventures allow for quiet exploration, as the kayaks don't produce the runoff or noise of gas-powered boats. —*Kayla Stewart*



The wildlife in Manchac Swamp includes turtles, migratory birds, and alligators.



**VIRGINIA IS FOR** (wine) lovers. Not only does it have more than 300 wineries, but it's where John June Lewis Sr. opened Woburn Winery in 1940—the nation's first Black-owned and -operated commercial winery. A strong vintner tradition lives on today. Here are three Black-owned wineries worth a trip. —*LDR*

■ **Delaplane Cellars**

Taste cabernet franc, red blends, and sparkling chardonnay on a sweeping 32-acre estate an hour west of D.C.

■ **Sweet Vines Farm Winery**

In Unionville, located an hour northeast of Charlottesville, enjoy fruit-forward wine and fun vibes with reggae nights and crab feasts run by owner Seidah Armstrong.

■ **Harmony Wine**

"Do you have a mouth and a glass? Cool," says owner Matt Harmon. All are welcome at this pretense-free Charlottesville winery, where the French rosé flows—and can even be purchased in cans.

USA



**On March 16**, the Kansas City Current soccer team moved into the \$117 million CPKC Stadium, which has the unique distinction of being the world's first stadium built for a professional women's sports team. Spend a weekend celebrating the city's pioneering athletes by starting with a soccer game and then visiting the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum. Book a stay at Hotel Kansas City, a former men's social club built in 1922 that was transformed, appropriately, into a boutique hotel by a woman-owned firm, KTG Y Simeone Deary Design Group. In each guest room, look for a portrait of Bertha Goodwin, the first woman to apply (unsuccessfully) to be a member of the club in the 1920s. —*ND*





# AN OASIS OF *art*



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**Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian** people have occupied southeast Alaska—including the rainforested region around what became the capital—since long before it was named for gold prospector Joe Juneau in the 1880s. Today Juneau showcases Indigenous artistry everywhere, from town signage to public murals. A standout is the Kootéeyaa Deiyí, or Totem Pole Trail, debuted in 2023 by the Sealaska Heritage Institute, an Indigenous-run nonprofit that supports many of the contributing Native artists whose work can be seen around town. An initial set of 13 poles (beautifully rendered by Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian master carvers with the help of apprentices) now lines the Juneau waterfront, with storyboards that explain the clan crests and histories they depict.

—*Elaine Glusac*



The Yanyeidí totem pole, carved by Haida master artist Joseph Young, is one of 13 in Juneau that honors seminal moments in Indigenous history.



**UTAH HAS LONG** enjoyed a reputation as a teetotaler's paradise, but there's an unexpected new wine region around Zion National Park—with a Mormon connection. In the 1860s, the church recruited 30 recently converted families from Switzerland to cultivate grapes for sacramental wine and as a cash crop. As the church turned away from alcohol in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the vineyards were replaced with other crops, but in 2012, a new generation of winemakers began taking advantage of what those pioneers discovered: Despite its arid appearance, this land is great for grape production. It sits at the same latitude as southern Europe and at an elevation averaging 4,500 feet, which allows for the preferred sunny days and cool nights. String together tastings at five area wineries, all within about an hour's drive, including I/G Winery for private barrel tastings and live music, and Water Canyon Winery for natural wines. —*ND*

#### STAY

Bring some bottles of wine back to AutoCamp Zion, a cool collection of Airstream trailers, safari tents, and modern cabins, and then pair them with the resort's grill kits. They include steak or chicken with all the sides (plus s'mores ingredients) and are designed to be cooked or heated over a campfire.



A SPECIAL NOTE FROM AFAR



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because I've never been out of the  
country before."*

—Brandon,  
who traveled to Ghana with Learning AFAR

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**Consider pairing** a trip along the official Kentucky Bourbon Trail with dinner on the unofficial Edward Lee trail. (Hey, Kentucky, maybe it should be official?) Korean American chef and writer Lee gained recognition for his new take on Southern cuisine when he took over Louisville's 610 Magnolia restaurant in 2003. More recently, he opened Nami in 2023, a modern Korean steakhouse in downtown Louisville with individual table grills and Korean-inspired drinks. In between came many TV appearances, a restaurant in Washington, D.C., a blended whiskey intended to be paired with spicy food, and 10 James Beard Award nominations and a win for his book *Buttermilk Graffiti* (Artisan, 2018). His biggest claim to fame, though, may be the LEE Initiative, winner of the James Beard Foundation's Humanitarian Award. A nonprofit he cofounded to improve diversity and equality in the restaurant industry, the LEE Initiative sponsors fundraising events and mentorship programs. —LDR



Diners at Edward Lee's Nami can also enjoy the karaoke room upstairs.



**FEW PLACES** punch above their architectural weight class quite like Columbus, Indiana, a city of roughly 50,000 residents, located 45 miles south of Indianapolis. And that's thanks to one man: Beginning in the 1950s, J. Irwin Miller, CEO of the Cummins Engine Company, offered to pay the architect fees for public buildings and projects around town. The patronage resulted in churches, banks, schools, libraries, and more designed by such legends as Eero Saarinen, I.M. Pei, Richard Meier, and César Pelli, earning the town the nickname "Athens of the Prairie." Today, seven of those buildings are designated National Historic Landmarks, and the city offers a two-hour guided shuttle tour of some of the highlights. —ND



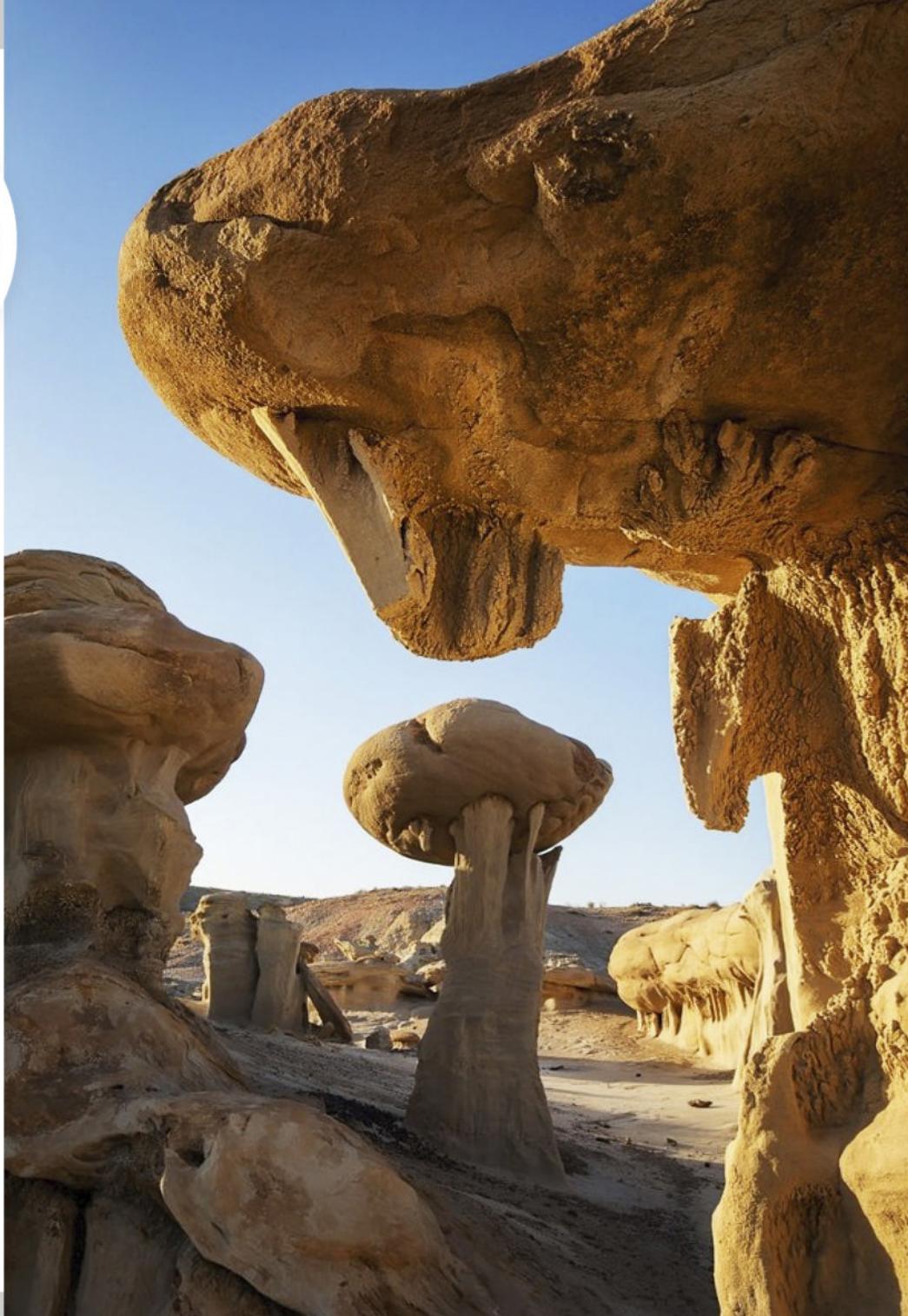
**MICHIGAN'S ISLE ROYALE** National Park is one of the least visited national parks in the U.S., and one of the most remote. Located in Lake Superior and open only from mid-April to October, it calls to day-trippers and overnighters alike, who must take a ferry, private boat, or seaplane from select points in Minnesota and Michigan to reach it. Start at the main island's visitor centers to join ranger-led activities and trek along forested trails. Or explore the hundreds of surrounding small islands by canoe, kayak, or sightseeing cruise (pick one up at Rock Harbor Lodge, which is the only accommodation in the park beyond campgrounds). Isle Royale is also known for freshwater scuba diving thanks to 10 shipwrecks from the late 1800s to mid-1900s, when its waters were plied by traders and prospectors. Check the park's annual newspaper, *The Greenstone*, for the season's transportation options, campground and trail information, safety tips, and things to do. —BB






**THE ARID LANDSCAPE** of the Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah Wilderness is otherworldly: fields of stone mushrooms, mazes of alien spires, and gaping maws of rock. The 7,242-acre badland is a fantastical place for a hike. Heads up that there are no marked trails in this Bureau of Land Management area; no facilities or water, little to no shade, and spotty cell service. Download a map from the BLM website before driving three hours northwest from Albuquerque and begin your wander at the informal parking area off State Highway 57. Be prepared, be careful, be respectful—and get ready to be awed. —*Billie Cohen*

The name “Ah-Shi-Sle-Pah” derives from a Navajo phrase meaning “gray salt.”



**“The Ski Capital of the East,”** Stowe, Vermont, is one of America’s most charming European-inspired ski towns. In 1937, Austrian Sepp Ruschp started directing the ski school at Mount Mansfield, now Stowe Mountain Resort. By the 1950s, climbers and skiers were traveling from out of state to the Trapp Family Lodge. Rebuilt in 1980 after a fire, the resort is still owned and operated by the descendants of Maria and Baron Georg von Trapp of *The Sound of Music* fame and boasts the country’s first cross-country ski center, a beer hall restaurant, and a coffee house. —*AF* 





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VISIT  
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# FEATURES





# EASY DOES IT

WRITER  
**SANTI ELIJAH HOLLEY**

→ HEADS TO

## **NEW ORLEANS**

TO EXPLORE HOW the CITY'S  
LATEST OFFERINGS HELP TELL

A DIFFERENT,  
MORE  
INCLUSIVE STORY.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **SINNA NASSERI**









IT IS LATE MORNING, the sun already bright and hot, and I've just arrived at Tchoupitoulas Street, a mostly non-descript corridor of New Orleans. As I stand on the sidewalk, cars whiz past, and I look in front of me at an expansive mural. It is colorful and vibrant, rich and impressive in its scale. But it is still evolving—much like the city itself. ¶ New Orleans-born artist and educator Jamar Pierre first conceived of the Tchoupitoulas Flood Wall Mural in 2018, after the NOLA Foundation selected him to create a painting for the city's tricentennial. That painting, *Resilience*, inspired Pierre to embark on something more ambitious, and after years of red tape, he was able to begin working. ¶ When completed, the mural will depict more than 300 years of New Orleans history, beginning with the Houma Indigenous peoples and including the Louisiana Purchase and the 1815 Battle of New Orleans. The Ursuline nuns, herbalist and voodoo practitioner Marie Laveau, and gospel singer Mahalia Jackson are already featured in the completed portion of the mural. Currently, it is less than 25 percent done, covering 1,200 of its anticipated 4,994 linear feet. But when it's finished, Pierre hopes it will become one of the city's top sites. ¶ "It's a long process," Pierre says as we walk the mural's nearly mile-long stretch, past images of the trumpeter and vocalist Louis Armstrong and the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition, past mermaids and alligators depicted emerging from cerulean waters. "If you want something monumental, if you want something historical, you can't rush it. This is going to be our Eiffel Tower. This is going to be our Statue of Liberty."



N

MURAL ARTIST  
JAMAR PIERRE

**NEW ORLEANS ARCHITECTURE** is distinctive: shotgun houses, 19th-century cottages, wrought-iron balconies. More than 200 of the city's buildings and districts are on the National Register of Historic Places. But situated in the Mississippi River Delta, between the Mississippi River and Lake Pontchartrain, New Orleans is also especially vulnerable to climate change; more than half of its 350-square-mile official city area is water.

Nearly two decades after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, which hit in August 2005, New Orleanians speak about it as if it happened last month. One afternoon, an Uber driver points out residual flood damage on the side of his church. Another day, a bartender downtown still sounds heartbroken as she tells me how her mother relocated to Texas after Hurricane Katrina and never felt safe enough to return. That's the thing about history: It's not confined to the past.

Vue Orleans opened in March of 2022 inside one of the tallest buildings in the city. The second floor hosts an interactive museum and movie theater exploring New Orleans history and culture, and the main attraction is the indoor and outdoor observatory deck on the 33rd and 34th floors, offering a 360-degree view of the skyline. From the lobby, I ride the elevator and step onto the terrace, 407 feet aboveground. This is my third visit to New Orleans, and as I look out at the sprawl of streets, homes, churches,





and bridges damaged not long ago, I consider how the city always feels so full of joy and life to me. Only a place that has been knocked down, given up for lost, and rebuilt time and time again knows how to mark every day like it's a gift.

After taking in New Orleans from great heights, I'm ready to return to Earth. I descend and walk up Gravier Street, arriving 20 minutes later at Chapter IV, opened in January 2023 by chef Edgar "Dook" Chase IV and his wife, Gretchen. It is the latest installment of the Chase family's celebrated culinary history in New Orleans dining, which began nearly 80 years ago with Dook's grandmother, the late Leah Chase. Known as "the Queen of Creole Cuisine," Leah fed everyone from Martin Luther King Jr. to the writer and activist James Baldwin. In 2008, she slapped Barack Obama's hand before he could put hot sauce in her gumbo, as she wanted him to taste it without seasoning first. ("I had to reprimand him," she later said.)

Informally trained by his grandmother and formally trained at Le Cordon Bleu in Paris, Chase tells me that, after watching his grandparents' livelihood destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, he committed himself to restoring the family business and "continuing that legacy that built my family up." Inside, Chapter IV is shiny and white, with blue benches, fresh flowers, and original artwork by emerging Black artists. The diners are a mix of families, older couples on dates, and businesspeople on breaks. Chase circles the room to say hello to nearly everyone, sometimes even sitting down at a table. "Growing up, [my grandparents] always taught us that true hospitality meant service to our community," Chase says. With my first spoonful of gumbo—thick with shrimp, chicken, and coins of smoked and spicy sausage—I close my eyes in delight. For the next





spoonful I surreptitiously shake a few drops of hot sauce into my bowl, with silent apologies to Leah Chase.

From Chapter IV, I head a mile north to the New Orleans African American Museum (NOAAM) in historic Tremé, considered the oldest Black neighborhood in the country. Founded in 1996, NOAAM suffered numerous financial hardships in its early days and extensive damage from Hurricane Katrina; it reopened in 2019. Located on a former plantation site and brickyard, the museum is housed in a 19th-century Creole cottage and includes African masks and beadwork as well as fine art and photography by local artists. It's a small space that makes use of every available inch. "Our goal is to help bring to light individual stories of Black New Orleanians in order to humanize the Black experience," says Gia M. Hamilton, a New Orleans native and anthropologist who has been NOAAM's executive director and chief curator since it reopened.

The museum, which is located on a two-acre campus, highlights the artistic and cultural contributions of peoples in the African diaspora and educates visitors about the earliest history of New Orleans—what was referred to as *Bulbancha*, or "the land of many tongues," by its Indigenous Choctaw inhabitants.

"We've designed our programming for the family that hasn't felt comfortable coming to a museum," Hamilton tells me as we sit beside bright, elaborately decorated Black Masking Indian women's dresses and crowns, on loan to the museum from artist Cherice Harrison-Nelson, cofounder of the Mardi Gras Indian Hall of Fame. "We focus on education, on accessibility, and complicating the narratives that have traditionally been told by the tourist industry."

That evening, I head to dinner at LUFU (Let Us Feed U), which chefs and founders Sarthak Samantray, Aman Kota, and Sachin Darade opened in July 2023 after building a following during the restaurant's first two years as a pop-up. They moved to New Orleans from India after culinary school and saw an opportunity to educate diners on India's culinary range and add to the city's diverse food culture. It is one of more than 40 new restaurants to launch here in 2023.

The LUFU menu changes every six months. After finishing my Darjeeling old-fashioned (bourbon with tea and bitters), I order *bhatura*, an impressively puffy, fried bread popular in the northern Indian state of Punjab, and *manso kosha*, a Bengali dish of goat in a dark brown curry. Nearly done with the *manso*, I use the last bits of *bhatura* to mop up what's left of the sauce, eager to make the experience last a little longer. The sun sets, and I walk two blocks to the Rubenstein Hotel to fall into bed.



NEW ORLEANS  
AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
GIA M. HAMILTON







DINNER AT  
LUFU (LET US FEED U)



**IN 2021**, the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience opened with a mission: to tell the 350-year history of Jews in the South. One morning, I arrive soon after the doors open and linger long in front of the exhibits, the only guest at this hour. Photographs, historical documents, and artifacts are arranged chronologically, beginning with the arrival of immigrants in the 18th century, to the role Jewish people played as abolitionists and slaveholders, all the way forward to their participation in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Modern Jewish communities across 13 Southern states are represented as well—and the museum's decision to include contemporary voices is meaningful, executive director Kenneth Hoffman tells me.

"We're not the museum of Southern Jewish history. We're the museum of the Southern Jewish experience," Hoffman says. "Because it's continuing, and it continues to evolve. It's not all about 19th-century peddlers. We're a living museum."

An interactive exhibit invites visitors to contribute to an expanding digital quilt by creating a square representing their identity. Inspired by the multicolored "crazy quilt" at the museum that was assembled in 1885 by the Ladies Sewing Circle of Temple B'nai Israel in Canton, Mississippi, this invitation connects visitors to their own individual and communal identities. But my eyes are drawn behind the front desk, where a wall displays a collection of mezuzot, the small containers that traditionally hold a parchment scroll written with a Hebrew blessing, affixed to doorposts in observant Jewish homes. These have been donated by Jewish supporters across the South, and as I admire them, an older couple stops to do so, too, remarking that one day they might have one to add.

"We're expanding people's understanding of what it means to be a Southerner, what it means to be a Jew," Hoffman says. "Ultimately, what it means to be an American."

What does it mean to be American? Days into my time in New Orleans—founded in 1718, one of the oldest cities in the country, older than the nation itself—I reflect on that question as I leave the museum. I review my first few experiences, eating Creole and Indian food and learning about the contributions of Black and Jewish diasporas. I think about how New Orleans is a unique and peculiar American city, so shaped by its geography. And I think of the way this geography has contributed in part to its tragedies, and that it's this awareness of tragedies, both past and potential, that gives the city a feeling unlike anywhere else.







A CLOSER LOOK:  
**SECOND LINE PARADES**

From fortune tellers to festivals, New Orleans is known for its spirited street life, and one of its most emblematic displays is a second line parade. Often led by a grand marshal who's trailed by a brass band and revelers dancing, strutting, and shaking handkerchiefs, second lines are a form of festive celebration; they are also used to honor members of a community. In New Orleans, hundreds of the parades take place every year. Look for them on Sundays in the Tremé and French Quarter neighborhoods and get ready to jump in and join—anyone is welcome. —Katherine LaGrave







← BAKED GOODS AT  
AYU BAKEHOUSE



FOUNDER OF BALDWIN & CO.  
DJ JOHNSON

C

**COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION** are on display at Ayu Bakehouse on Frenchmen Street, across from Washington Square Park. Opened in 2022 by Samantha Weiss and Kelly Jacques, who met while attending New York's International Culinary Center, Ayu (which rhymes with "bayou") offers pastries made in small batches. Inside the light-filled space, muffuletta breadsticks share a shelf with *kaya* buns, made of a sweet coconut spread wrapped in laminated dough—the latter inspired by Jacques's Indonesian grandmother. (Jacques and Weiss call the food at Ayu "Southeast Asia meets the South.") I'm tempted to try one of everything, and nearly do, packing my bag with babka knots, breadsticks, and boudin boys: pockets of flaky croissant dough stuffed with crumbled Cajun sausage and soft-boiled egg. I take the riches back to my hotel, where I share the wealth with two very excited front desk clerks.

After breakfast, I wander through several of New Orleans's distinct neighborhoods. I consider all the different people I've met over my four days here: Hoffman and Hamilton, Jacques and Weiss among them—locals and transplants alike who are finding new ways to contribute to the city. I'm struck by the almost implacable resolve of New Orleanians to build and rebuild. It is a shared sentiment: To appreciate the city's beauty is to acknowledge everything that New Orleans and its residents have endured, DJ Johnson, founder and owner of Baldwin & Co. bookstore and coffee shop, tells me later. "When you go through a

difficult time, you really learn to appreciate things on a different level," he says. "I think that's part of our resilience, and I think it's helped manifest this culture, which is so beautifully genuine and compassionate."

Opened in February 2021 to great excitement—Johnson remembers lines of people stretching down the street during its first week—Baldwin & Co., named after author and cultural critic James Baldwin, is focused on elevating the local community: not only the Marigny neighborhood where it's located, but greater New Orleans. Offering books predominantly by BIPOC writers, Baldwin & Co. also promotes the arts through its foundation, which hosts author events, story times, and book drives.

"In creating this space, I was intentional," says Johnson, who grew up in New Orleans. "I didn't want it to just be a place of consumption. I wanted it to give back and enrich and cultivate the community."

Later that day I make my way to Central City to see a business that is as much a part of the community's future as of its past. First opened by civil rights advocate and businessman Frank Painia in 1939, the Dew Drop Inn grew from a restaurant and barbershop into a hotel and nightclub—James Brown, Ray Charles, and Tina Turner all performed here. It also served as a welcoming space for the city's Black LGBTQ community, and hosted the annual New Orleans Gay Ball in the 1950s and '60s, emceed by celebrated drag performer Patsy Vidalia.



THE SECOND LINE PARADE OF  
OLE & NU STYLE FELLAS





Over time, the Dew Drop Inn fell into major disrepair. It flooded during Hurricane Katrina, then sat abandoned until its purchase and \$11 million renovation by local developer Curtis Doucette Jr. In March 2024, the Dew Drop Inn reopened. Now including an outdoor pool and two suites with views of the performance stage, the hotel is hoping to help bring entertainment and visitors back to Central City, a neighborhood above the Garden District known mostly for its parades. “This is a community that is undergoing revitalization,” Lauren Usher, Dew Drop’s director of communications, tells me as we tour the hotel. “And I think the Dew Drop can be a catalyst to help push that along.”

That evening, I walk into a converted home in the trendy Uptown neighborhood to experience the work of another catalyst for change: chef Serigne Mbaye, whose Dakar NOLA took home the 2024 James Beard Award in the Best New Restaurant category. Senegalese American Mbaye had previously cooked at restaurants in New York and San Francisco. But after he visited his childhood home in Dakar, he returned to New Orleans and opened Dakar NOLA, first as a pop-up in the Bywater neighborhood in 2020, then as a brick-and-mortar restaurant in November 2022. Seating is communal and all dinners are prix fixe, with each of the seven pescatarian courses introduced either by Mbaye or his managing partner and wife, Effie Richardson. “In West African culture, we dine communally with our family, and sometimes your family is your neighbor,” she says.

The meal begins with *ataya* tea, followed by a salad of greens from the farmers’ market, and locally sourced seafood in a spicy Senegalese *yassa* sauce. Though the dishes change frequently, all emphasize the oft-overlooked influence of West Africa on New Orleans’s fare. One constant is the “Last Meal”: black-eyed pea soup with crispy rice, palm oil, and chunks of Louisiana blue crab, inspired by the food served to enslaved West Africans before they were loaded onto ships bound for the Americas.

As I eat, I fall into conversation with my tablemates: two Black women who are longtime friends, and three white women who travel together once a year. Though we are all visiting from other parts of the country and come from different backgrounds, we agree that we are fortunate to find ourselves here. By the third hour of our meal, I consider the ways this is like no other dining experience I’ve had in New Orleans, and yet it feels perfectly at home here, in this city where community takes precedence, where residents are effecting change from the inside, where the present always seems to tangle with the past. “This is our story and this is who we are,” Mbaye says. **A**

*Santi Elijah Holley lives in Los Angeles. He is the author of An Amerikan Family: The Shakurs and the Nation They Created (Mariner Books, 2023). Sinna Nasser’s photographs have been featured in the New York Times and Vogue.*



## WHERE to GO → NOW IN NOLA

The restaurants, food halls,  
and hotels to consider for your next trip  
to the Crescent City.

### EAT & DRINK

#### MaMou

Chef Tom Branighan and sommelier Molly Wismeier launched MaMou in fall 2022 on the edge of the French Quarter, and it delivers an art nouveau aesthetic and inspired cuisine: From the braised celery hearts appetizer to the must-try *poisson à la Florentine*, it all comes together to evoke “Parisian brasserie meets the Big Easy.”

#### Hungry Eyes

Uptown is arguably New Orleans’s buzziest destination. Hungry Eyes, which the Turkey and the Wolf sandwich shop team debuted in April 2023, adds to that reputation. Step inside the space (neon lights, new wave playlist) and feel transported; the dishes (artichoke hearts on the half shell, pastrami with barbecue marinade) are equally irreverent.

#### Fives

In the French Quarter, Fives stands out for its selection of raw oysters from the Gulf and East coasts, and original cocktails alongside the classics. Thanks to its horseshoe bar made of green marble and small wooden tables scattered throughout the space, Fives feels intimate and—despite opening in summer of 2023—lived-in. “We wanted it to feel like it’s always been here,” says bar manager James O’Donnell. “Like it’s timeless.”

#### St. Roch Market

Historic St. Roch Market reopened on the edge of the Marigny neighborhood in 2015 after a revamp of the building, which dates to 1875. A myriad of local food purveyors means visitors can choose their own adventure—Cuban, Sicilian, Vietnamese, and more.





## STAY

### ONE11 Hotel

This 83-room hotel sits near the French Quarter, steps from the Central Business District and Mississippi River. Close to the Sazerac House museum and Woldenberg Park, it has enviable river and city views from its rooftop terrace, and its ground-level outdoor pool is perfect for winding down at the end of the day.

### Rubenstein Hotel

Occupying the same building as its century-old namesake (the Rubensteins men's clothing store), this 40-room hotel opened its doors at the beginning of 2024. Situated at the corner of Canal Street and St. Charles Avenue, it has a wraparound second-floor balcony that offers guests a veritable front-row seat to the inevitable Mardi Gras bacchanalia.

### The Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans

Located in a Beaux-Arts building that was once a department store, the 528-room Ritz-Carlton takes up nearly a whole block. It completed a \$40 million renovation in 2023. Don't miss the jazz bar and the 25,000-square-foot spa—it's the largest in the city.

### Four Seasons Hotel New Orleans

Housed in a tower that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Four Seasons' New Orleans outpost debuted in 2021 with 341 elegant rooms and a rooftop pool. Miss River, one of the hotel's two restaurants (by James Beard Award-winning chef Alon Shaya) and the lobby Chandelier Bar (a nod to its 15,000-piece chandelier) are destinations unto themselves.



↑  
THE DINING ROOM AT  
HUNGRY EYES



# W O N

Dogsledding,  
snowmobiling,  
snowshoeing:  
On a trip to the  
Yukon, writer  
**Debbie Olsen**  
experiences the  
beauty and  
bounty of Canada's  
westernmost  
territory—and  
learns from the  
locals who  
call it home.





# DEER

A high-angle photograph of a snowy mountain range. The foreground features a prominent, jagged rock peak partially covered in snow, with long, dark shadows cast across the snow-covered slopes. The background shows a vast expanse of snow-covered mountain ridges and valleys under a clear blue sky. The word "DEER" is overlaid in large, white, serif capital letters across the top of the image.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY Kari Medig



# A

At more than 62 miles long, Tagish Lake stretches from the Yukon into British Columbia. In summer, the lake is surrounded by dark green spruce and formidable gray peaks. In winter, the landscape is frozen as far as the eye can see, asleep under a blanket of downy white. I stand at the shore, and one of the few signs of civilization is the glow of lights from Southern Lakes Resort & Restaurant and its water-front log cabins behind me.

Then there's the hockey. As I watch a game on the lake's makeshift rink, a player pauses and points. I turn to see glowing waves of green, the northern lights dancing their way across the sky. The Yukon sits directly under the auroral oval, the area surrounding Earth's geomagnetic North Pole where this activity is best and brightest; the lights shine regularly between late August and mid-April. The locals resume their competition, but I keep my eyes upward, watching the lights swirl around the stars. It feels like a window into the cosmos, a celestial postcard delivered in real time.

At 186,272 square miles, the Yukon is almost the same size as Spain, but has just one city, three towns, four villages, and some unincorporated communities for a combined population of roughly 45,000 residents. The territory also lays claim to Canada's tallest mountain, its second-longest river, and the largest nonpolar ice field in the world. Yet it remains mostly known for something else: the discovery of gold near the Klondike River and the gold rush between 1896 and 1899, which brought thousands of people and international awareness to the destination. But the Yukon's story goes back millennia, lived by Indigenous peoples.

As a Canadian, I've visited every province and territory in the country, and I'd been to the Yukon before. I'd loved what I'd experienced but still wanted more—more of its winter. Winter, after all, is legendary here. Newcomers were once called *cheechakos* until they had survived a season—jargon for “new arrivals.” Winter in the Yukon is long, dark, cold, and quiet. But I'd also heard it was magical. And so in February, I traveled from my home in Alberta for a seven-day trip with tour operator Entrée Destinations. I was ready for the wonder.

**THE NEXT MORNING IS** even colder than the night before, and the air burns my cheeks as I walk to Tagish Lake to meet



## Michelle Phillips of Tagish Lake Kennel for a dogsled ride.

A Yukoner from birth, Phillips greets me in a fur-trimmed parka with a warm smile and the flushed face of an outdoorswoman. Phillips is one of the region's best mushers—people who drive dogsleds—and has participated in the Iditarod race multiple times. In 2024, she won the 450-mile Yukon Quest from Whitehorse to Dawson City for the second consecutive year.

Dogs were once vital to transportation in the Yukon. Able to cross frozen rivers, navigate thick woodlands, and traverse challenging terrain, they brought supplies as well as communication to remote communities. In 1898, less than two years into the gold rush, there were approximately 4,000 dogs working the region. Today, sled dogs have largely been replaced by snowmobiles, but some people here still use them to get around and to show visitors the heart of the Yukon. Phillips is one of them.

The dogs bark, yip, and pull at their harnesses, eager to get going. I climb inside the basket of the sled and wrap myself in blankets. Phillips stands behind me with both hands on the sled handle and one foot on the brake; she releases it and the pack takes off. As we pick up speed, I swear some of the dogs have smiles on their faces.

We glide along, the landscape unfolding at ground level, and Phillips introduces each of the animals: Dougal, Astro, Adira, Lambo, Selene, Waylon. She explains their roles on the team and the guide commands: “gee” for right, “haw” for left, “whoa” to stop. We wind deeper into the forest, trees heavy with snow, the dogs' paws thumping on the trail. I consider how special it is to use a mode of transportation invented by Indigenous peoples and honored for centuries. When we stop for a break, the animals are tended to first. “I love the vastness of the Yukon,” says Phillips, who resides near Tagish Lake on 40 acres with 65 dogs. “The light, the peacefulness, the stillness.”

A few hours later, after Phillips drops me back at the resort, I find myself crossing Tagish Lake again, but this

*Opposite page:* During the winter, the Yukon experiences roughly 5.5 hours of sunshine each day, compared to 19 during the summer months.

*Previous page:* Tombstone Territorial Park protects a diverse range of flora and fauna, including around 150 species of birds.







time on a snowmobile, and this time in the opposite direction, hoping to catch the sunset from higher ground. The sun starts to slide into the horizon, making the snow twinkle orange and yellow, and I think about what Phillips said about vastness.

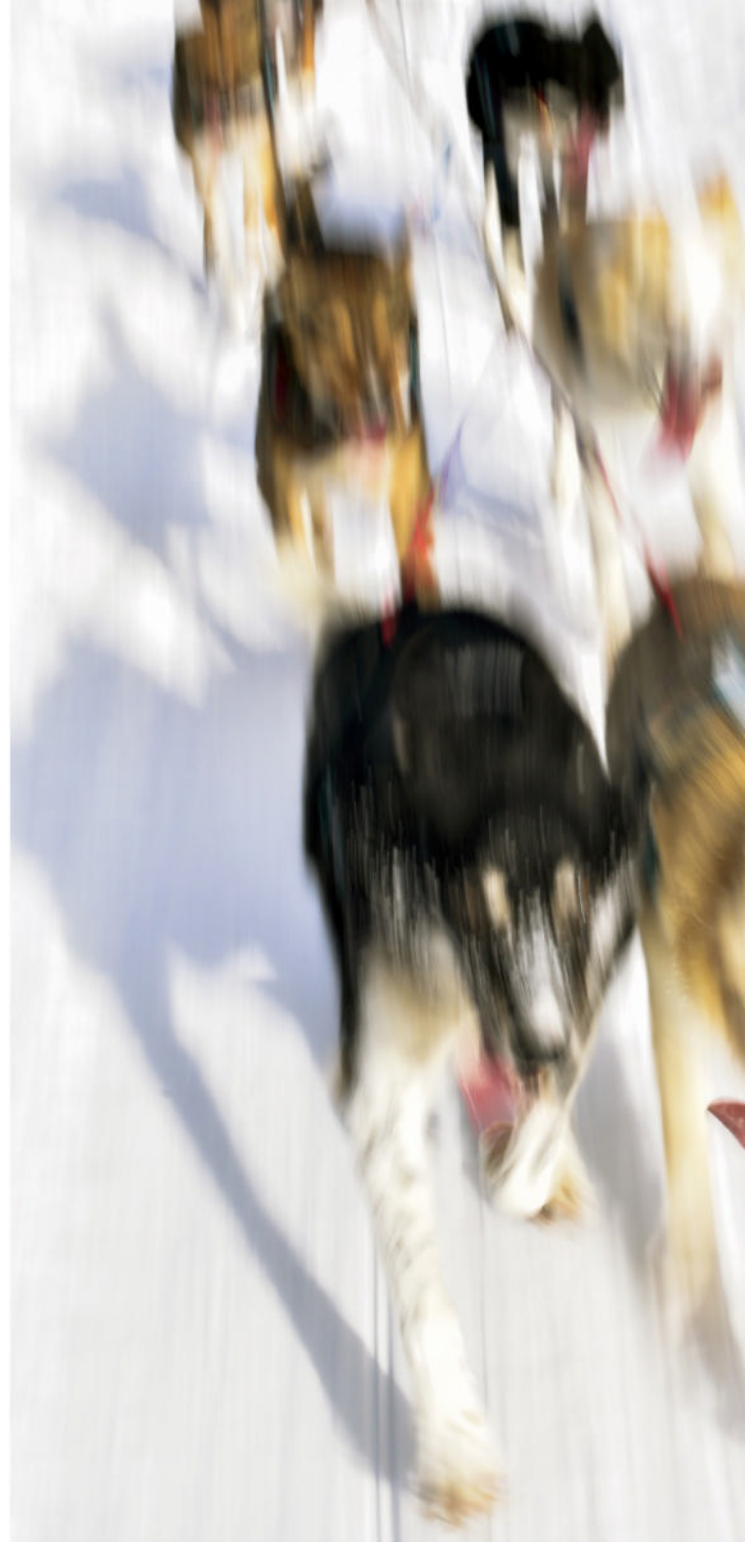
“We don’t have any five-star restaurants, but I like to think that we have these kinds of five-star experiences.”

**YOU KNOW YOU’RE** in the far north when you see signs for the Arctic Ocean. The 458-mile unpaved Dempster Highway is the only public road in Canada that crosses the Arctic Circle and is open year-round. Two days after traveling with Phillips, my Entrée Destinations group of four meets **Jesse Cooke**, founder of tour operator the Klondike Experience, to drive the highway to Tombstone Territorial Park. As Cooke explains the day’s agenda, the snow glistens off the mountains standing like sentinels along the road.

Cooke is from Ontario but has been in the Yukon since 2005. “We don’t have any five-star restaurants, but I like to think that we have these kinds of five-star experiences, in the sense that you come up here and you live something real and you live something authentic,” he says.

The 849-square-mile Tombstone Territorial Park was created in 2000 as part of the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in land claim agreement, a modern-day treaty between the Yukon Territorial Government and the Indigenous peoples; the park lies entirely within their traditional territory. In summer, its trails and placid lakes are popular with hikers and campers. In winter, the park is a draw for snowshoeing, dogsledding, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing. Year-round, it’s home to caribou, moose, Dall sheep, wolves, and grizzly and black bears.

The Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in First Nation call this area Ddhāl Ch’ël Cha Nān, which means “ragged mountain land,” and as I strap on snowshoes and follow Cooke through the woods, I see why. I pad past fragrant spruce, leaving racquet-shaped patterns in the snow, and feel my own insignificance. I am a small speck in a vast landscape; an ephemeral visitor in an ancient place where Indigenous peoples have lived since time immemorial. Except for the sounds of our group laughing and talking as we move along the trail, the only other noise is the flutter of gray jays through the trees. Wondering how deep the drift would be just off the trail, I remove my snowshoes and promptly sink to my waist.



*From left: Michelle Phillips has twice been awarded the Iditarod’s Herbie Nayokpuk Memorial Award, which is given to the individual who best exemplifies the spirit of Nayokpuk, a renowned Inupiaq musher.*





## MICHELLE PHILLIPS

is a born-and-raised Yukoner and a long-distance musher. She runs Tagish Lake Kennel and offers dogsled tours.

I started dogsledding in my late 20s when I met my partner. I went on a training run with him and noticed how incredible the dogs were, how athletic they were. When I was 31, I decided to do the 1,000-mile Yukon Quest. Since then, I've run 21 of those 1,000-mile races. I've been dragged down a mountain, dragged up a mountain on my face. I've been in storms with

winds up to 80 miles an hour, and in water up to my waist. A race is never boring, that's for sure. Dogsledding as a sport is really growing, and it truly is one where men and women are equal, which is really neat.

I'll do the Iditarod next year, but maybe it'll be my last hurrah. It's hard to say. I won't stop sledding; I'll keep giving tours. I started my business 21 years ago, but my hope is the same: I hope my guests get the connection between man and animal and the love, care, and respect we have for our dogs. How much they enjoy their work.







After we reach the end of the snowshoe trek, I prepare to take in the landscapes from a different vantage point. I climb inside a helicopter, buckle my seat belt, and put on headphones to hear the pilot. Tombstone Mountain, which gives its name to the park, sparkles in the afternoon light. From the air, the “ragged mountain land” seems even more epic, and I feel my heartbeat quicken as the aircraft dips. The line of a frozen river, the dense forest, wide valleys, and steep summits stretch out seemingly endlessly. Seeing the park’s scale, I have even more admiration for the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in people who have thrived in this place.

The helicopter touches down outside Dawson City, once known as the “Paris of the North,” partially for its grand facades and opera houses. Many of the buildings erected during the gold rush remain—part of a national historic site with tours offered by Parks Canada staff, who share gold rush history. In recent years, they have incorporated more information about the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in. A few of us from the tour group pop by the Westminster Hotel, in operation since the 1930s, to visit “The Pit,” a cornerstone community bar with a canoe hanging from the ceiling. Alongside locals, we toast to a perfect day.

**IT FEELS FITTING** to end my time in the territory with Jackie Olson, a Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in artist and the granddaughter of Joe and Annie Henry, two celebrated pioneers who lived near the Dempster Highway. (Locals call the road the “Joe Henry Highway,” because he guided the surveyors who marked its route in 1958.)

As the sun streams into her Dawson City living room, Olson sits with a cat on her lap and two dogs at her feet. After traveling the world as a young artist, Olson returned to Dawson City to work on her abstract expressionist pieces, often made with bark and feathers. She has been instrumental in building its community, including championing

## JESSE COOKE

is the founder and CEO of the Klondike Experience, which provides guided day tours and multiday experiences.

I’ve been in the Yukon for nearly 20 years. What keeps me here is the culture, the people, the lifestyle, the pace of life. It’s different from any other place that I’ve ever been.

When I started the business in 2012, it was just me and my wife. Now we have 13 employees. We have guests from all over the world. What I love about hosting sounds cheesy, but it’s true: experiencing the awe and the wonder and the beauty of the Yukon through a traveler’s eyes for the first time, over and over again. I can feel the excitement, and I love it.

Most people who come to the Yukon are already searching for something off the beaten track. But for visitors, I always like to remind them to experience the place as it is. Not as you would expect it to be, or not as you wish it would be. Really as it is. Get into the communities and get into the culture.



*This page, from top:* Jesse Cooke first came to the Yukon as a student to study glaciology; Violet Gatensby’s artwork is exhibited across Canada.

*Opposite page:* During winter months, visitors who spend three nights in Dawson City have a good chance of seeing the northern lights.





## TAKE THIS TRIP

Writer Debbie Olsen traveled with Entrée Destinations, whose “Winter in the Yukon” itinerary is offered February through April. It is one of 20 “Stories of Canada” tours that the company developed with Indigenous community leaders, the Canadian government, and regional tourism boards. The trips are designed to connect visitors to new experiences, places, and communities. “Most people who travel to the Yukon in winter go for the northern lights, but there’s so much more to see and do here,” says Marc Telio, owner of Entrée Destinations. “The Yukon is exhilarating.” *From \$7,350 per person for 7 nights.*

*This page:* Violet Gatensby stands in front of the Haa Shagóon Hídi Cultural Centre in her home community of Carcross, where her carved artworks are on display.

*Opposite page:* In wintertime, Southern Lakes Resort & Restaurant in Tagish offers aurora borealis viewing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, and dogsledding tours.

the designation of Tr’ondëk-Klondike, which is centered on the Yukon and Klondike rivers. In September 2023, it was named the Yukon’s—and Canada’s—newest UNESCO World Heritage site. With eight parcels of land in the Dawson City area, it examines the effect of rapid colonization during the gold rush on Indigenous peoples—another, different story about the Yukon.

Olson’s work is part of private and permanent collections throughout the world, from the Indigenous Art Centre in Québec to the Amerikahaus Munich. Olson is one of 10 Indigenous Yukon artists—along with Carcross/Tagish First Nation artist **Violet Gatensby**—whose work is now part of the Global Affairs Canada Visual Art Collection and displayed in Canadian embassies and buildings in more than 100 cities. In 2022, she was awarded the Yukon Hall of Innovators Lifetime Achievement Award for her “transformative reimagining of age-old Yukon practices as an inspired new way of creating art.”

Now, Olson offers art classes focused on the willow trees she finds while foraging. “The more you work with willow and cut it back, the stronger it becomes,” she says. “It feels like a good way of instilling care of the land.” Her dream, she tells me, is to finish the cabin she’s building for herself at the entrance of Tombstone Territorial Park and bring visitors there to help them learn about the Yukon, its willows, and its many wonders. “I have this really strong feeling the land is calling me home,” she says. **A**

*Debbie Olsen wrote about Canada’s Prince Edward Island in Afar’s Winter 2023 issue. Kari Medig photographed Jordan for Afar’s Fall 2022 issue.*

## VIOLET GATENSBY

is a Carcross/Tagish First Nation artist who apprenticed with Tlingit master carver Wayne Price. She designed the commemorative medals used to mark the 125th anniversary of the Yukon becoming a Canadian territory in 2023.

When I first started thinking about being an artist, I was in the process of going to work in a mine. I had dropped out of high school; I needed to make money. While I was at home, I was painting. Somebody who came by to visit my dad saw my paintings and bought one right then and there. It changed the course of everything. I realized that I could make a living doing what I loved.

I went to the Individual Learning Centre in Whitehorse the very next day. I said, “I want to go to art school and I need my tenth-grade diploma. Can you help me get it?” And the person there said, “I’ll help you if you promise that you’re going to come back and get your full high school degree.” So, I went and finished sophomore year. I got accepted into college, finished high school, and completed art school.

One moment made all the difference in the world. And I’m grateful that I was brave enough to follow that gut feeling, because now that I’m here, I would never want to do anything else.







# American



# Idol

On the brink of Route 66's centennial celebration, photographer **Rachael Wright** honors the unconventional beauty and oft-overlooked backstories of the country's most legendary highway.

by Ashlea Halpern













# R

*Previous page:* Wild donkeys mosey along the road to Oatman, Arizona. "The town looks like something from an old Western movie," photographer Rachael Wright says.

*Opposite page:* Angel Delgadillo was 91 years old when Wright took his portrait. Now 97, he has lived on Route 66 all his life. His family still runs Delgadillo's Snow Cap, a café in Seligman, Arizona. He advocated in the 1980s for sections of the neglected road to be named a historic highway. "People call him 'the father of the Mother Road' because he has always been championing it, trying to bring tourists back after I-40 made Route 66 almost nonexistent," Wright says. "He's the DNA of this place." Delgadillo sits in front of a mural of Route 66 near the café.

*Below:* Holbrook, Arizona, is known for one of America's odder attractions: 14 concrete dinosaur statues, which visitors can spot while en route to Petrified Forest National Park.

**ROUTE 66 EXEMPLIFIES WHAT** photographer Rachael Wright calls "the enduring mythology of the American dream." She moved to the U.S. from England about 15 years ago, but the highway's vast and varied scenery across its 2,448 miles and eight states—particularly the neon and mid-century modern relics celebrated in pop culture—have intrigued her since childhood.

As an adult, Wright also became fascinated with the road's complex history. In 1926, as the U.S. was launching its first federal highway system, government officials cobbled local, state, and national roads together to create Route 66. Writer John Steinbeck called it the "Mother Road" during the Dust Bowl migration of the 1930s as poverty-stricken Americans used it to head west in search of jobs. Since then, Wright says, it has lived many lives: a military road during World War II, and by the 1950s, a popular east-west path for leisure travelers.

Wright's first trip along Route 66 was in 2016. She drove from Flagstaff, Arizona, to Monument Valley on the border of Arizona and Utah. Wright was in a transitional period with work and feeling unmoored; the journey gave her a sense of purpose, even if her actual plans were loose. "Sitting in the driver's seat is a metaphor," she says. "You're deciding where you're going and what you're going to see."

A year later, Wright drove the California-to-Arizona leg with her mom, who shares her affinity for classic cars and vintage signage. Wright noticed that some of the roadside attractions she had admired on her last trip (an old laundromat here, a COLOR TV hotel sign there) had either fallen into disrepair or disappeared altogether. "I wanted to see more of [Route 66] before we lost it," says Wright, whose photography often grapples with themes of impermanence.

In 1985, Route 66 was decommissioned, replaced over the years with five multilane







Left: In 1938, Roy Crowl (along with his daughter, Betty) opened Roy's Motel & Café in Amboy, California, 200 miles from Los Angeles. The family ended up in Amboy in 1924 when their car broke down, and they never left. In 2019, Wright attended the relighting ceremony of the neon sign. "I'm used to seeing things disappear on Route 66, so I thought it was worth the drive to see an icon come back to life," she says. "It was kind of emotional to see it light up and how happy that made everyone."

Right: Wright swung off Route 66 several years ago to attend the Oklahoma State Fair, where she observed pig races (pictured), kids wearing cowboy boots gobbling down deep-fried carnival fare, thunderous clogging performances, best-in-show vegetables, and mutton busting, a rodeo event in which young children attempt to ride sheep.



interstate highways. Today, it's still possible to drive across big sections of the Mother Road, but it is no longer one continuous route. That said, passionate preservationists at the Road Ahead, a group of organizations that support the thoroughfare's revitalization, are working to save and maintain its buildings, landscapes, and communities.

"I love to think about the people who've traveled this route before me and their reasons for doing so," says Wright, who is considering the trip for 2026—the 100th anniversary of its founding. "Route 66 is so much more than a road," she says. "It's a great American story." **A**



Right: The Google-style architecture of the lobby at Roy's Motel & Café is more "time capsule and museum exhibit" than a functioning reception area for guests, Wright says.





## How to Plan a Route 66 Road Trip

The original Route 66 cut across eight states and numerous climates. Travelers driving its approximated entirety today will pass through cities, small towns, deserts, mountains, and grasslands between Illinois and California. May and June are the best months to tackle the drive, says photographer Rachael Wright, for both the milder weather and the longer daylight hours. Expect increased interest in the route over the next couple of years, in the lead-up to its 2026 centennial. Here are some of the must-see stops along the way.

### WHERE TO SLEEP

"Places like the Wagon Wheel Motel in Cuba, Missouri, and the Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico (pictured here), might not be around forever," says Wright. She also has a soft spot for La Posada, a restored railroad hotel in Winslow, Arizona, and the Wigwam Motel in Holbrook, a half hour east. For a more pampered experience, book a room at one of the luxury or boutique hotels along the route, including the Peninsula Chicago; the Barfield Hotel in Amarillo, Texas; Bishop's Lodge in Santa Fe, New Mexico (an Auberge Resorts Collection property); and L'Auberge de Sedona in Arizona.

### WHERE TO STOP

Iconic roadside photo ops include: the Blue Whale, an explorable structure located next to a pond in Catoosa, Oklahoma; Giganticus Headicus, a 14-foot sculpture that pays homage to the statues of Rapa Nui, in Kingman, Arizona; and Cadillac Ranch, a public art installation with 10 graffiti-covered cars buried nose down in a wheatfield in the Texas Panhandle. Wright also likes the classic 66 Drive-In movie theater in Carthage, Missouri, and the Oklahoma Route 66 Museum in Clinton, which "just looks so cool at night." Continue an hour west from Clinton to Erick, Oklahoma, to potentially meet one of the wildest characters on the Mother Road: Harley Russell, who runs Sandhills Curiosity Shop, a memorabilia-stuffed store where nothing is for sale. Don't be surprised if Russell pulls out his guitar or offers a tour of what he deems his "redneck castle and sanitarium."

### WHERE TO DETOUR

Not every place worth pit stopping is located directly on Route 66. Petrified Forest National Park, the Painted Desert in northeastern Arizona, and the 50,000-year-old Meteor Crater in Winslow, Arizona, are among Wright's best-loved diversions. Other highlights include the manicured gardens at the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma; the National Museum of Nuclear Science & History in Albuquerque, New Mexico, which is affiliated with the Smithsonian; and the always-epic Grand Canyon.

### WHERE TO EAT

Wright is fond of the landmark Tower Station in Shamrock, Texas, built in 1936 and topped with a distinctive metal tulip. Within the Tower Station complex, the lovingly restored U-Drop Inn Café serves a mean root beer float. She also raves about the steak at Crush Wine Bar and Grill in Amarillo, Texas. For a pick-me-up, swing out to Pops 66 in Arcadia, Oklahoma. Part restaurant and gas station, part international soda supermarket, it stocks upward of 700 types of fizzy drinks. —AH











Top: A framed print of photographer Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* hangs in the gas station gift shop at Roy's Motel & Café in Amboy, California. "I didn't notice it until my third or fourth visit, and I love that they have a subtle homage to the road's history," says Wright, referring to the Dust Bowl migrants who took the route out west in the 1930s.

Above: At Delgadillo's Snow Cap, visitors can check out a 1936 Chevrolet that belonged to the café's first owner, Juan Delgadillo, brother of Angel on page 112.

Right: On the Santa Monica Pier, at the terminus of Route 66, Wright captured what she considers one of the portfolio's most tender and poignant moments: a man teaching his grandson how to bait a hook.







Top: Plains Indian dancers take center stage at the Oklahoma State Fair.

Left: A classic inflatable flops around at a car wash in Kingman, Arizona.

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Photographer Rachael Wright is based in San Francisco. Ashlea Halpern wrote about Minnesota's Twin Cities in *Afar's* Summer 2023 issue.





# The Greater Lesser Antilles

by Jennifer Flowers, *Afar Senior Deputy Editor*

**AFTER A HECTIC** business trip filled with beige conference rooms and noisy cocktail parties, I needed to find a place where I could unwind and reconnect with nature, art, and culture. Enter the Lesser Antilles, the Caribbean archipelago that stretches from Puerto Rico to the top of South America.

First stop: St. Martin, where I headed to La Samanna, a Belmond Hotel. From one of the property's terraces, my partner and I enjoyed a tangerine-hued sunset over the sea. The next day, I met artist Sir Roland Richardson (pictured above with his wife, Laura). He is considered the father of Caribbean impressionism; his French Caribbean roots date to the 1700s. After he talked me through his vivid paintings of coastal scenes that hang throughout La Samanna, I noticed myself pausing to appreciate the island's light and color.

Next we visited Anguilla's Cap Juluca, another Belmond Hotel, where the white-domed villas are inspired by Morocco. To get a better sense of local life, we met up with Anguillian fisherman Shawn Romney on a rocky promontory for a yellowtail snapper catch-and-release session.

Our last stop was St. Bart's, where we were looking forward to exploring a quieter side of the glamorous island. We checked into Rosewood Le Guanahani and rented a car to reach a couple of the hidden beaches enthusiastically recommended by staff. At Anse du Gouverneur, we lounged under an umbrella and played in the gentle aquamarine waves. Another day, we hiked the cliff-hugging Colombier Beach Trail until we reached a secluded stretch of sand. Here was the slower pace of life I was seeking. **A**



# CANADA'S WILD SIDE

A person in a blue jacket and dark pants stands on a snowy, icy landscape, painting the Northern Lights on a large canvas. The canvas is on an easel. To the left of the easel is a small wooden crate with paint cans and brushes. To the right is a lantern. The background features snow-capped mountains under a dark sky with the Northern Lights visible. The scene is illuminated by the green and blue light of the aurora and the warm light of the lantern.

CANADA'S  ALBERTA

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