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GO FAR
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JUNE/JULY 2015

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PEAK FLAVOR

Would you know the
next great food destination
if you tasted it?

by LISA ABEND

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VISION QUEST

See the saturated colors of
India through the filter
of Refinery29's trendsetting
creative director.

by PIERA GELARDI



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JUMP IN

What do grandparents and Australia's rugged Top End have in common? A wild side.

by EMMA JOHN

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*The new gold
status: your own
jet, booked on a
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*Photograph
by David Black*

*Styling by Sarah
Schussheim*

*Hair and makeup
by Lisa Forster*

*Chloé Marcie
satchel, \$795;
Theory Davah
dress, \$295*

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A

OUTBACK OUTTAKES



*Aussie grasses
hide all sorts of
creatures, including
photographers.*

There's no shortage of freaky things in Australia's northernmost Top End, from **hand-size spiders and curious crocodiles** to temperatures that can hit a muggy 100 degrees. Photographer Ériver Hijano faced it all while shooting "Jump In" (page 90). See the photos we couldn't squeeze into the story at afar.com/outtakes.



the
WAYFARER

Want to know how to travel to Cuba like a pro? Or how to spend your frequent flyer miles efficiently? Head to the *Wayfarer*—**AFAR's brand-new blog**—where you'll find daily travel tips, dispatches from our roving editors, and inspiration for planning your dream trips. afar.com/wayfarer

Fly Right

Airports are changing in some imaginative ways (see page 60 for a vision of the future). We asked you **what could make the whole experience even better.** Here's what you had to say.

"Decent, **non-rapaciously priced food**, exercise bikes, TV lounges, flights on time and not overbooked."
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"**A movie theater.**"
Stephanie Wolden



"Rest zones, a children's area, less waiting in line, and **(paid) access to all lounges.**"
Paula Van De Beek



We know you have more to say! **Mark your calendars for our #TravelVanguard Twitter chat:** Wednesday, June 17, at 11 a.m. PDT.



Follow AFARmedia on Spotify and check out the June-July Global Mix playlist inspired by this month's Mix of LP covers, page 44.

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FOUNDERS GREG SULLIVAN & JOE DIAZ

**THE
BURIED GIANT**
*"I love the worlds
that Kazuo Ishiguro
conjures up—this
one is set in a mythical
England of ogres
and dragons."*
—D.B.

TECHNOSIS
*"I'm finally going to
tackle this book by Erik
Davis. The subtitle
says it all: Myth, Magic,
and Mysticism In the
Age of Information."*
—N.R.

**COOL GRAY
CITY OF LOVE**
*"I can't wait to
get out of town with
Gary Kamiya's
kaleidoscopic portrait
of San Francisco."*
—D.R.

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concerning) stories
from Scott Stone about
backpacking around
the world will give
anyone wanderlust."*

—K.H.

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BARNEY'S VERSION

*"My recent trip to
Montreal led me to want
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in more depth, and this
novel from Mordecai
Richler seems like a good
place to start."*

—J.N.

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Dubai is well known as a gleaming, modern metropolis soaring above the desert and the sea, but that's only one facet of the Emirate. Visitors will also find an amazingly diverse culture and rich heritage, both waiting to be explored. Dubai's unique activities and off-the-beaten-path locales range from adventures in the desert to hidden ethnic restaurants and camel racing. Take a leap, and discover all that Dubai has to offer.

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In Dubai, a glittering metropolis is grounded in traditional Emirati culture. Here, visitors to the Business Events Pavilion check out a model of the city.

DESERT SAFARI

Beyond Dubai's skyscrapers is a vast desert of golden dunes. Spend the day driving over them and through the wadis (dry river beds), then spend the night under blazing stars at a desert camp. You'll experience the Bedouin way of life, from a fireside Arabic feast to sleeping in a traditional tent. Wake early to catch the magnificent sunrise with its bright colors spilling across the sand.

ART TO ART

Dubai has emerged as one of the world's most important centers for contemporary and emerging art, with top galleries like XVA Gallery and Carbon 12 showcasing Middle Eastern and international artists. Every year, the prestigious Art Dubai draws a global clientele of gallerists, artists, and clients to the UAE art scene. Spend the day in Al Quoz's Alserkal Avenue Arts District checking out the galleries, performance spaces, hip cafés, and private collections.

BUY BUY DUBAI

Dubai has some of the best shopping in the world, including the world's most famous brands and labels, but there's another side to the city's shopping scene. Local and independent boutiques, bookstores, and concept stores can be found from Jumeirah to The Dubai Mall. Studio 8 features top Emirati, Indian, and Pakistani designers, and you'll find fashionable accessories and funky gifts and housewares at the Zoo Concept.

SNOW AND SAND

In Dubai it's possible to ski in the desert, walk underwater, and sun on the beach—and all on the same day. At Ski Dubai, the five slopes range from easy green to black diamond, while the Dubai Aquarium is one of the largest in the world, with a 48-meter tunnel that passes through its largest tank—all the better to see the tiger sharks swimming overhead.

EMIRATI EATS

Get a taste of Dubai at its many authentic restaurants, hidden cafés, and small stalls that serve delicious bites like Iranian flatbread, grilled lamb kebabs, and Omani halwa. Knowledgeable guides from Frying Pan Tours will lead you down side streets and alleys to locals' favorite secret spots, or head into the city's bustling markets on your own for a true off-the-beaten-path culinary experience.

PAST LIFE

Dubai's rich Bedouin past is definitely alive today as you can discover by partaking in traditional pastimes that are also present-day pursuits for Emiratis. View a heart-pounding camel race as these ships of the desert thunder down the track at over 30 mph, or watch a falconry demonstration, where peregrines and gyrfalcons take down "prey" in a centuries-old part of desert life.



Don't leave Dubai without an afternoon of "dune bashing" on a desert safari, followed by a dinner amid the shifting sands around a campfire—opt for a henna tattoo if you feel especially adventurous.

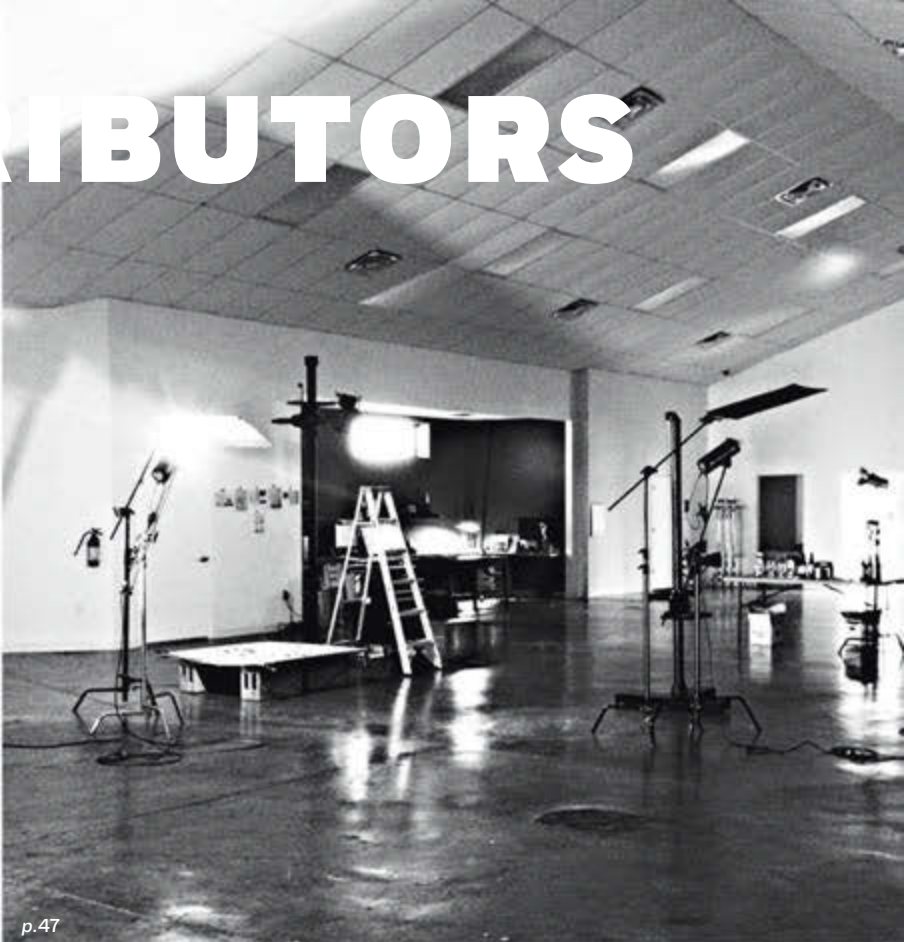


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p.86



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Writer
Round and Round
We Go p.66



THE VOORHES
Photographers
The 2015 Travel
Vanguard p.47

On braving Australia's Top End: "The humidity is oppressive; the sun feels like hot syrup on your back. Every time I stepped outside, my lens fogged up and I had to wait 10 minutes for it to acclimatize." **Out of the frying pan:** "The roads in Kakadu National Park were flooded. I'm told that when cars get stuck, crocodiles like to venture out. So I let a pilot talk me into going up in a small plane to shoot from above instead." **Check out his travel pics on Instagram:** @eeeriver.

She embraced the impromptu in India: "One day, we were hiking and heard what sounded like Rajasthani house music coming out of a truck. These guys were dancing and gestured for us to join. So we did! That's my favorite way to travel: letting things unfold." **But reined in the camera:** "I didn't take a ton of pictures, but when I looked back at them, I was surprised at how well they captured my impression of the country." **Find her on Instagram:** @pialaluisa.

His jet-setting ways: "I wanted to capture the sophistication and excitement of a jet that picks you up as easily as an Uber. I was inspired by the album *Chet Baker in Europe* shot by the legendary jazz photographer William Claxton." **How he warms people up:** "I always walk in with tricks up my sleeve and use the appropriate one once I feel the person out. It's all a glorified version of make-believe." **Go behind the scenes with him on Instagram:** @davidablack.

Her trip to Amsterdam was eye-opening: "When I left the United States, I was really angry about Ferguson and the issues around race. But the denial of racism in Amsterdam made me appreciate that there's at least a conversation in the U.S., even if it's messy." **And the stroop-wafel was placating:** "My daughter wanted one of those syrup-filled waffle cookies. She was like, 'Bring me a stroop-wafel and we'll be good.'" **Follow Sally on Twitter:** @sallykohn.

Robin Finlay on starting a studio with her husband: "I used to be an art director but quit to work with Adam [Voorhes]. As our ideas got more complicated, I had to hire someone to build things or do it myself. I did it myself." **She loves Craigslist:** "For this story, I wanted a white globe with continents raised in relief. I discovered tactile globes for the blind—I bought and painted one, and it was perfect." **See more on Instagram:** @finlayrobin and @adamvoorhes.

FROM LEFT: ELIZABETH SPIRIDAKIS OLSON, JASON SELDON

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FOUNDER'S NOTE

Introducing AFAR Journeys

SINCE WE STARTED AFAR, we have always tried to find new ways to help people travel deeper. Our magazine inspires, our website offers thousands of ideas for places to go and things to do, and our Experiences event series singles out cities and brings them vibrantly to life for small groups of travelers. Now I'm excited to announce the launch of AFAR Journeys.

AFAR Journeys are itineraries crafted for you by members of AFAR's Travel Advisory Council (TAC) and other specially selected tour operators and travel agents. The trips are tailored to specific interests: biking, food and cooking, wellness. Take a look at afar.com/journeys. The day-by-day descriptions will give you a glimpse at what's possible, whether you travel on your own or sign up for a trip offered by a TAC member. Thanks to our partners at Switzerland Tourism, their beautiful country will be our first AFAR Journeys destination.

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in the French-speaking west through the vineyards of Lavaux, to Zurich and the central and eastern German-speaking areas, and south to the Italian-speaking region of Ticino. We will offer the classic—Lucerne, St. Moritz—as well as lesser-known spots like Appenzell, where artisanal food traditions have endured for centuries; the alpine village of Kandersteg; and the Engadine, a valley near the Italian border that is home to the first national park in the Swiss Alps.

Please go to afar.com/journeys and prepare to be inspired. You'll find trips for every taste, all of them easy to book through the experts on our Travel Advisory Council, who are also happy to craft a custom itinerary just for you.

As AFAR Journeys grows, we will add more destinations, but get in on the fun early and go to Switzerland soon. I've already booked my trip!

GOOD TRAVELS,



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Cofounder & CEO



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A scenic view of a wooden boardwalk at sunset over a lake. The sky is a vibrant mix of orange, red, and purple, with a few stars visible. The water reflects the colors of the sky. In the foreground, a wooden bench and the boardwalk's planks are visible. The text "It's time." is centered in the middle of the image.

It's time.



MONTANA

FROM THE EDITOR



Listen Up, Travel Deeper



"WHENEVER I WOULD TRAVEL, I went on walking tours for the same reason that I eat my vegetables," says Andrew Mason, the cofounder of local deals website Groupon. He's only half-joking. I'm sitting with Mason in a café in San Francisco's startup-packed SoMa district. "You're in this place and you might not be there again, and you feel this moral responsibility to attempt to understand the destination, the history, and the culture. But more often than not, if you see something that makes you want to stop and explore, you can't, because you're on someone else's schedule."

In 2007, Mason traveled to Rome with his now-wife and downloaded an audio walking tour of the Colosseum onto an iPod. They each put in an earbud and wandered around the ruins. The actual content, Mason says, was just OK, but the overall experience gave him a charge: "We were free from being part of a herd, and we were learning about a place in a way that we could actually enjoy. After that, I always looked for audio tours when I traveled. And I saw how sparse and mediocre the entire ecosystem was."

Fast-forward to February of this year, when Mason launched Detour, a location-aware audio tour company, in San Francisco. His staff of journalists, public radio producers, sound



designers, and engineers unveiled a series of immersive tours that users download on their iPhones (Android versions coming soon) and walk at their own pace. One part podcast, one part itinerary, each Detour—as the audios are called—turns a focused, narrow lens onto a neighborhood. A good example: A member of San Francisco's Historic Preservation Commission narrates the "Making Market Street" Detour that puts the city's most famous thoroughfare in context.

AFAR's mission has always been to help travelers have more fulfilling experiences, so we get giddy when we discover new tools to facilitate that goal. For our Travel Vanguard Issue, we cover the five trends defining the future of travel (see page 47). From the evolution of mobile technology into something both useful and inspiring for travel, to hotels taking a page from the creative class, there's a lot that will excite globally minded travelers like you. Tell me what you think on Twitter @jules_afar.

TRAVEL WELL,

Julia

Julia Cosgrove
Editor in Chief

 Coming to San Francisco?
Plan your trip at afar.com/visit/san-francisco.



The AFAR team recently walked in the footsteps of Jack Kerouac on the Beat Generation Detour in San Francisco.





THE GALATA TOWER

Genoese built the Galata Tower as a lighthouse. The Ottomans repurposed it as an observatory building. Today it is the symbol of Istanbul's most international district. Surrounded by authentic Turkish restaurants, wine bars and great clubs, Galata is where it's happening! Discover Turkey, home of Istanbul. Be our guest!

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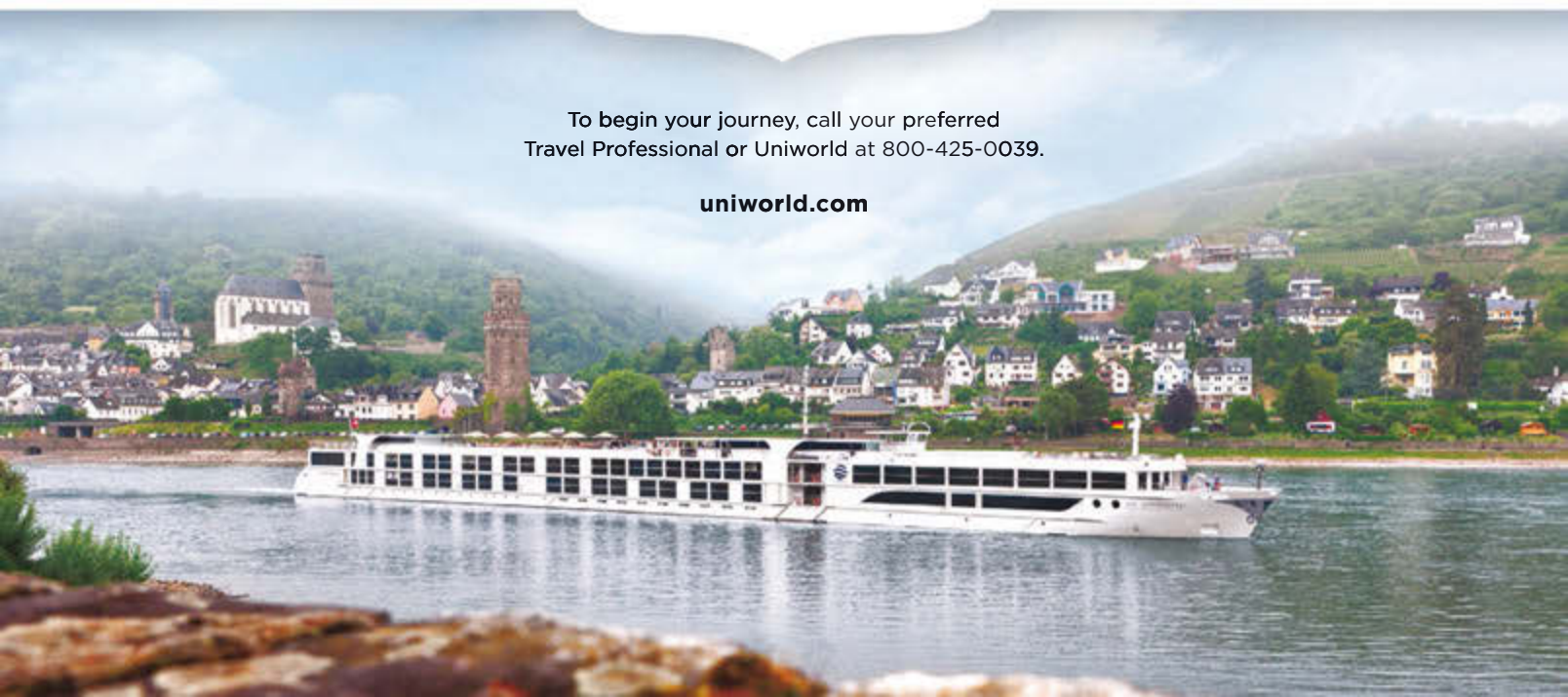
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BEFORE
SUNRISE



THE PARTY STARTS HERE

A perfect night out in L.A. begins in Hollywood's Redbury hotel and ends there, too—in its Library bar, seen here. A glamorous vibe pervades all 57 rooms.

Plus, the location offers easy access to all the stops on page 28.

W

BEFORE SUNRISE



The Redbury



Bar Covell



Good Times at Davey Wayne's

DRINK (AND DON'T DRIVE) IN L.A.

A night out in Los Angeles doesn't require a car or even an Uber account. Just ride the **Metro Red Line**, which leads from downtown bars to Hollywood stars.

by LORA SHINN

First Stop

6:30 P.M.

Pershing Square

For a 360-degree view of the city's revitalized downtown, start at the rooftop patio of **Perch**. Everything, the cocktail list included, has a French vibe. Try the cognac-based Midnight in Paris and find a cozy spot near one of the fire pits. perchla.com

7:30 P.M.

Wilshire/Vermont

Fortify yourself with *banchan* (small dishes) at Koreatown's **Kang Ho-dong Baekjeong**. Lines can be long but the rib eye, grilled on a tabletop barbecue, is worth the wait. The soundtrack's not bad either: K-pop hits and soju-fueled chatter. 3465 W. Sixth St.

9 P.M.

Sunset/Vermont

At **Bar Covell** in Los Feliz, there's no wine menu to speak of. Bartenders will match your highly specialized cravings (something, say, big and jammy with a little bit of funk) to one of 150 pours. The best seats in the house are under the vintage camera collection. barcovell.com

10:30 P.M.

Hollywood/Western

Comedians such as Amy Poehler and Nick Kroll draw big crowds to the improv theater **Upright Citizens Brigade**. Buy tickets online before the show so you get good seats for the laugh-till-you-cry performances. sunset.ucbtheatre.com

MIDNIGHT

Hollywood/Vine

Don't be fooled by the curious entrance of bar **Good Times at Davey Wayne's** (goodtimesatdaveywaynes.com). That fridge door opens to a '70s lair of plaid couches and groovy kitsch. The other surprise? A tiny trailer in the back serves boozy snow cones.

A five-minute walk away from the bar, the scarlet-red exterior of the **Redbury** hotel is impossible to miss. Sip scotch in the book-lined Library lounge before heading upstairs to your suite, where a record player and LPs will keep the party going. Rooms from \$259, theredbury.com

Don't miss the hammocks in this bar's backyard.

BRUNCH THE NEXT MORNING On Sundays, a farmers' market takes over Hollywood's Selma Avenue. The easiest way to enjoy its produce is to brunch at the restaurant **Field Trip**. Angelenos flock to the sunny dining room for the city's current hot dish: fancified porridge. Try the one with heirloom Kokuho rice, braised beef ribs, and lacto-fermented mustard greens. It might not cure a hang-over but it'll definitely take your mind off of it. fieldtripla.com



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W

OUR PICKS

The pattern on these trunks is an abstract riff on coral.

A Brazilian handplane makes body-surfing twice as fun. Unlike a boogie board, it also packs easily.

Paul Smith's towel turns your plot of sand into a Moroccan-inspired mosaic.

Family-run Castañer has crafted espadrilles in Spain since 1927.

EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN

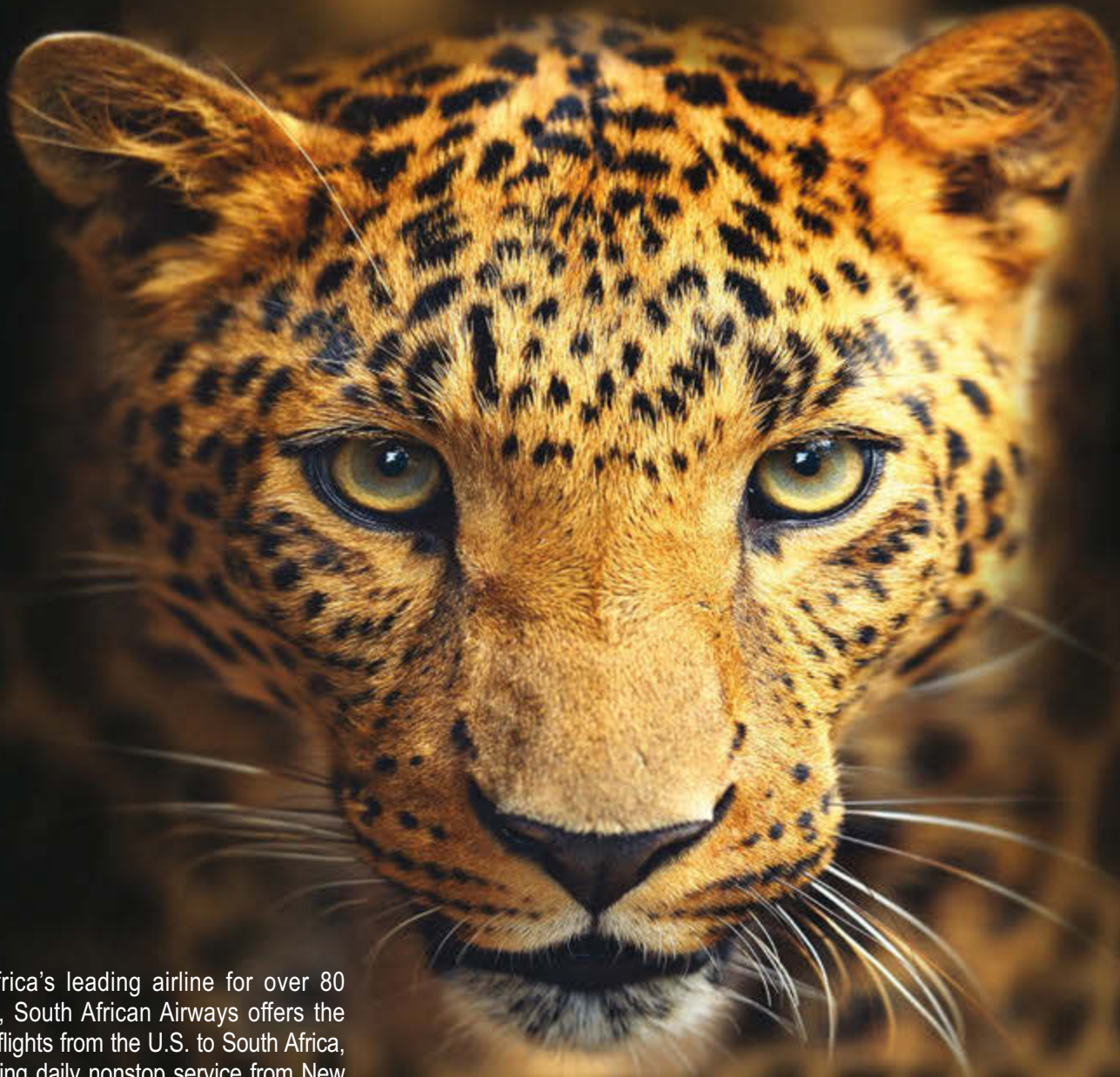
From our favorite new shades to a fresh way to ride the waves, here's what to pack for your next beach vacation.

by ANDREW RICHADE

1 Rachel Comey one-piece, \$288, rachelcomey.com 2 RRL hat, \$145, ralphlauren.com 3 Lacoste Live trunks, \$95, lacoste.com 4 Frescobol Carioca hand surf, \$235, frescobolcarioca.com 5 Mar Y Sol tote, \$135, shopmarysol.com 6 Castañer espadrilles, \$140, mrporter.com 7 Shiseido sunscreen, \$36, shiseido.com 8 Oliver Peoples sunglasses, \$510, oliverpeoples.com 9 Dusen Dusen towels (bottom two), \$38, dusendusen.com 10 Paul Smith towel, \$125, paulsmith.co.uk

STYLING BY ANA MONFORT, SET DESIGN BY KIMM XI

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IN BLOOM

It used to be the norm to stop and smell the flowers, but now you can drink them, eat them, even plan a whole trip around them. From expeditions that guide you through carpets of wild geraniums to rose-scented spa treatments and bouquets that have been harvested with extra TLC, we bring you a host of new ways to enjoy posies around the world.

by ANDREW RICHDALÉ



Chef Trabocchi tops his chocolate terrine with violet blossoms, which give the dessert a sweet, minty flavor.

BUDDING GENUS

Recently, Alaskan horticulturists made an advantageous discovery: The state has the perfect summer soil for peonies, grown elsewhere during a tiny window in spring. They distribute them now to the Lower 48. Buy the showy buds through August from California's Farmgirl Flowers or your local organic flower shop. farmgirlflowers.com



A KISS FROM A ROSE

Mandarin Oriental's spas (below) recently began using **Inner Strength** oil, which has a delicate rose scent, for massages; **Diptyque's** new **Rosafolia** candle (\$65) smells like rose blossoms and freshly cut stems.

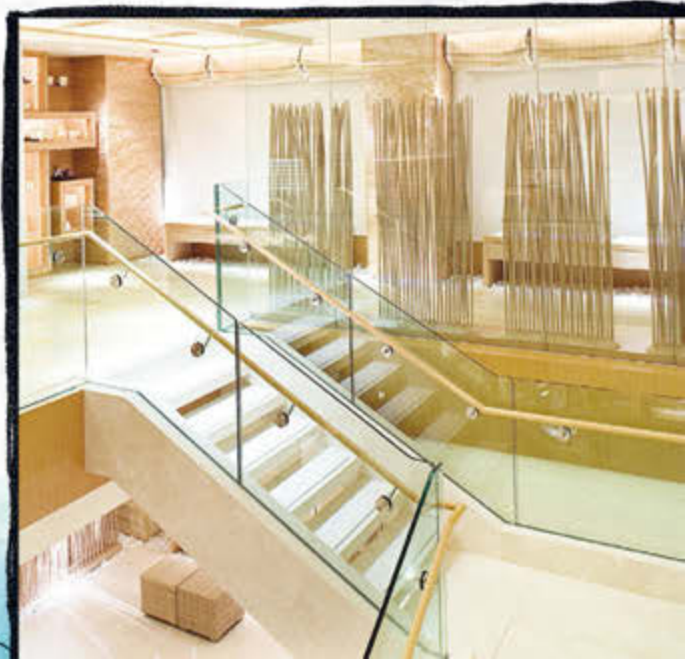


EDIBLE ARRANGEMENTS

The kitchen of **Washington, D.C.'s Fiola Mare**, a recent James Beard "Best New Restaurant" nominee, has as many blooms as a florist: More than 15 edible flowers are always in rotation. "I don't use them as just ornaments," explains chef Fabio Trabocchi. "Blossoms from herbs or veggies, such as basil and chive, can deliver concentrated aromas of the plant."



In Southern Utah, the Amangiri resort serves Numi Organic's handpicked Flowering Tea blossoms.





FLOWER POWER

For Marni's 20th anniversary, the fashion label turned Milan's historic Rotonda della Besana, a Baroque-era complex, into a flower market during fashion week. The accompanying fashion show (right) was a parade of floral prints. In Paris, Céline (above) showed daisy dresses with a '70s bent.



Bonobos
floral tie,
\$78

Marni's spring
collection featured floral
prints and flowers
made of raffia.



George
Venson for
Voutsas,
\$250/five
yards



THE WALLFLOWERS

The recently renovated **Dormy House** (from \$340, dormyhouse.co.uk), a hotel in Britain's rural Cotswolds, is plastered with florals. Cult New York artist **George Venson** now prints floral designs on wallpaper.

South Africa's
Namaqualand
is best known for its
flowering desert.



Fashion house
Christian Dior uses
pink quartz in its
rose blossom rings.

Dior, \$5,500

VISIT THESE BUD STOPS

Book the **Cape Floral Kingdom tour** with Butterfield & Robinson to roam South Africa's wildflower-rich plains; in Holland, guests aboard Uniworld's new **Tulips & Windmills cruise** explore color-blocked gardens.



AL FRESCO BERLIN

Stroll down **Rykestrasse** on a summer's day and you'll find farm-fresh strawberries, cocktail-sipping expats—and one of Europe's best patio cultures.

by BERNADETTE GEYER



1

ÜBER COCKTAILS

In a black-tiled space, **BRYK Bar** rides the mixology wave with unusual ingredients, including horseradish and chestnut honey, and cocktail names that sound like indie movies: *Crocodile Dundee Is Going Hunting* and *Kamasutra with a Hangover*.
Rykestrasse 18

2

GREEN SPACE

On sunny days, Berliners head to the closest park—and anyone is welcome to join. Near Rykestrasse, you have two options: **Wasserturm Park**, home to a historic water tower and a coveted Ping-Pong table, or the elegant **Kollwitzplatz**, where farmers sell seasonal fruits and vegetables at the markets on Thursdays and Saturdays.



3

HOME SWEET HAUS

With its Balinese-style courtyard filled with plants and benches, the **Ackselhaus** hotel may have the best patio on the block. Themed rooms are just as transporting. Check in to the *Picasso*, a blue-accented swirl of patterns.
Belforter Strasse 21



4

AROUND THE WORLD in 80 BITES

The epicenter of Berlin's street food boom is the **Kulturbrauerei**, a cultural center in a former brewery that hosts the massive Street Food auf Achse market on Sundays. Start with breaded-veal sandwiches from the **Schnitzel Truck** or meander over to **Gorilla Barbecue** for a pulled pork burger. Craving something funky? **Fräulein Kimchi** makes a tangy-spicy quesadilla using the Korean staple. Vegan food is having a moment as well: Try the grain-based *ShaVarma* from **Vegan on Grill**.
Knaackstrasse 97



5

WAKE UP, WIND DOWN

No Fire No Glory was the first Berlin café to source beans from such roasters as Copenhagen's Coffee Collective. Though purist shops now populate the city, locals still lounge with pour-overs at the tables here.
Rykestrasse 45

6

AN EYEFUL & A MOUTHFUL

When **Akemi Asian Soul Kitchen** revamped its look last year, it turned to Miriam Jacks, a L'Oréal makeup artist with a studio nearby. Her eclectic touch (geometric light fixtures, an ocean mural) sets the scene for the restaurant's inventive dishes (sushi spring rolls, mussel sashimi).
Rykestrasse 39





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An old Irish proverb puts it best: “Laughter is brightest in the place where the food is.” The laughter—as well as the new flavors and friends—in Ireland’s markets and restaurants may be the most lasting memory from your trip. As you plan your culinary itinerary, here’s a tasting menu of a few of the country’s highlights.

To Market

St. George’s Market, one of Belfast’s oldest attractions, started off the century with a refurbishment that restored the beloved brick and sandstone building to its Victorian splendor. You’ll find Irish specialties, books, and antiques for sale while performances by local musicians have shoppers dancing as they browse.

Stars Are Out

A total of nine Michelin stars can be spotted in Ireland. Four of the restaurants recognized by Michelin are in Dublin, including the island’s two-star Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud, but others can be found throughout the country. Modern Irish fare shines at The House in Co. Waterford, while Campagne in Kilkenny has been praised for its French menu.

Spirited Excursion

For hundreds of years, perhaps as early as when monks arrived from the Mediterranean in the 11th century, the Irish have been distilling whiskey. A visit to Northern Ireland’s Old Bushmills in Co. Antrim provides a glimpse into Irish whiskey’s long history—it’s the oldest operating distillery in the

world. Pick up a bottle of the 12-year-old Distillery Reserve—you can’t buy it anywhere else.

The Joys of Cooking School

During recess at the world-renowned Ballymaloe Cookery School, you can wander amid the herbs and fennel, beans and fruit trees of the 100-acre organic gardens. It’s one of many cooking schools offering classes ranging from an afternoon to three months. At Northern Ireland’s Belle Isle you can sharpen your knife skills at a 12th-century estate spread over eight islands and the Dunbrody Country House Hotel in Wexford will teach you to prepare unforgettable dinner parties with classic and contemporary dishes.

Festivals and Feasts

If you love oysters, here’s a number to ponder: An estimated 3 million of them have been consumed at Galway’s Oyster and Seafood Festival since it began in 1954, all washed down with countless pints of stout and bottles of champagne. When not eating and drinking, festivalgoers can watch shucking competitions, attend cooking demonstrations,



and join a “Mardi Gras” Masquerade parade through the city streets. From prawns to potatoes, every ingredient and every county has its day on Ireland’s calendar of culinary festivals.

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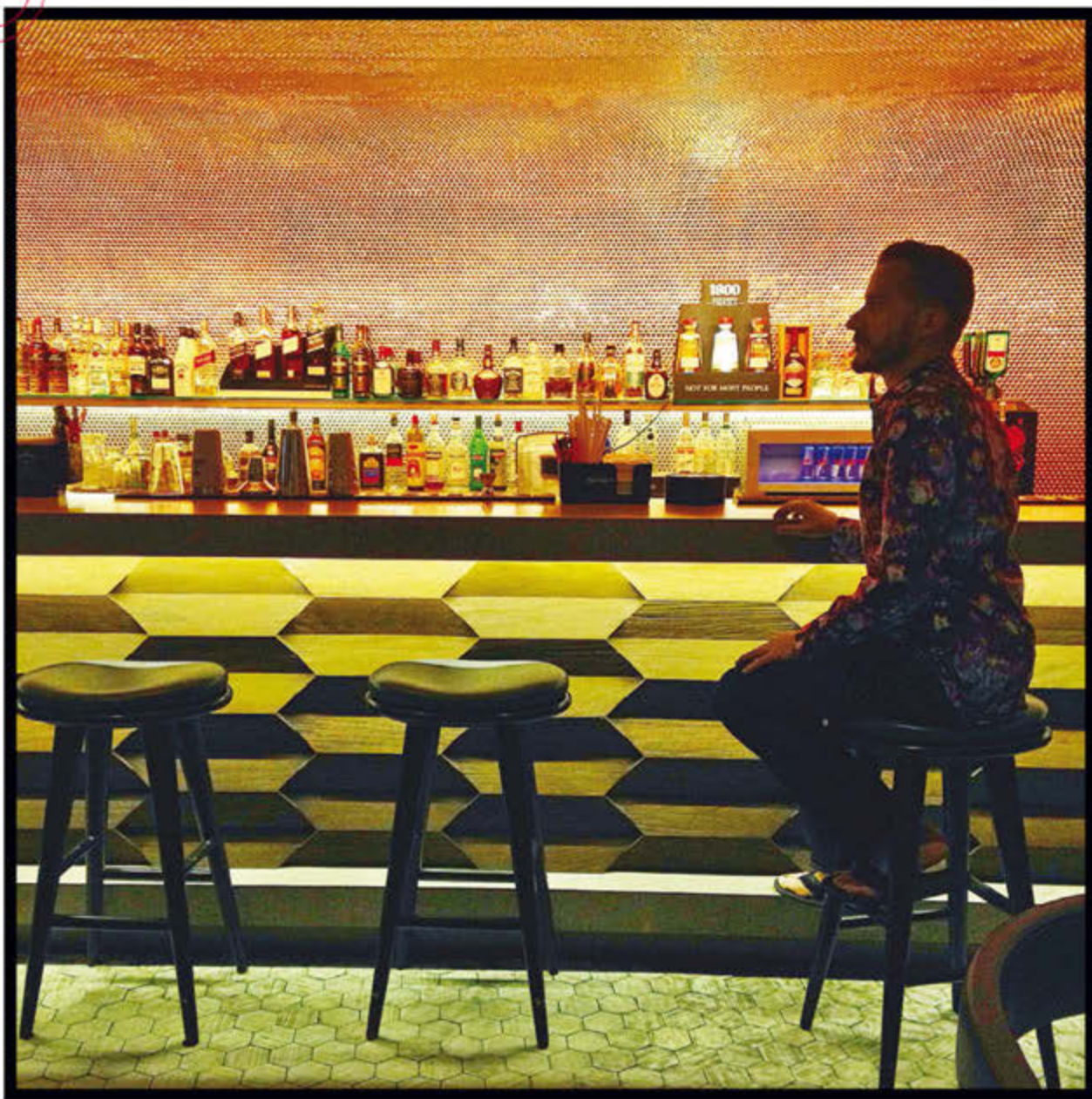
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JUST BACK FROM VIVA LA VIVID

Yes, Guatemala is full of memorable adventures, but AFAR photo director **Tara Guertin** was taken by its unforgettable colors.

● The year I spent backpacking through South America, everywhere I went people raved about Guatemala. But I ran out of money before I could get there. When I finally visited this year, I was struck by how vibrant everything was: the

greens of the highlands, the ochres and reds of the buildings in the city of Antigua, and the hues of the textiles, which change from village to village. In **Santa María de Jesús**, girls in full regalia passed by as everyone streamed toward a

festival in the main square. And at the biggest market in the country, **Chichicastenango**, the labyrinth-like passageways were lined with stalls selling handicrafts and street food. I wanted to hit the surf spots that are popping up on the Pacific Coast's black sand beaches. In El Paredón, a tiny town with pigs and chickens everywhere, I stayed in a bungalow on the sand at the **Paredón Surf House**.

One great surprise on the trip was that, for \$250 or so, you could get a room that would be \$500 to \$1,000 anywhere

else. **Casa Palopó**, for instance, is a wonderfully romantic resort overlooking Lake Atitlán and a trio of volcanos. And in Antigua, my palatial room at **Mesón Panza Verde** had a view over the courtyard restaurant, where my boyfriend and I listened to a musician play the *tres cubano*, a type of guitar.

Before my flight home, over a cocktail at the **InterContinental** (above) in Guatemala City, I made a mental to-do list for my next trip: the white sand beaches on the Caribbean coast and Río Dulce's crystal-line swimming holes.

GET OUT THERE

Japan's Secret Shore

A surf-wear designer shares the off-the-beaten-path beach that keeps luring him back.

Morgan Collett, cofounder of **Saturdays Surf NYC**, has caught waves everywhere from Costa Rica to Indonesia. He makes one destination a routine, though: **Kamakura, Japan**. It's not just the perfect water conditions that have appealed to him. Only an hour away from Tokyo, the beaches of this city offer an experience you can't get anywhere else. "You feel so completely hidden away," Collett explains. "The beach has dark black sand and is lined with all of these coves and rolling hills. Then, in the distance, you can see Mt. Fuji." There's more than just the outdoors to explore in Collett's paradise: Travelers can visit shrines such as the 13th-century Kencho-ji and fill up on handmade soba noodles from Nakamura-an, an institution locals swear by.

—JENNIFER FLOWERS



THAT SHIP IS SAILING

Fall cruises transport you to dreamy destinations without the crowds. These options still have cabins available.

1

THE MEDITERRANEAN

For sunsets and vintage wine, opt for **SeaDream's** 112-person voyage (Oct. 23 to Nov. 1) from Rome to Malaga, hosted by a champagne pro from France's Bollinger vineyard. From \$4,950, seadream.com

2

KENYA'S WILDLIFE

Book any of **Celebrity's** Iberian cruises and you can tack on five days to explore Kenya's greatest national parks, including Lake Nakuru, home to giraffes, rhinos, and flamingos. From \$8,000, celebritycruises.com

3

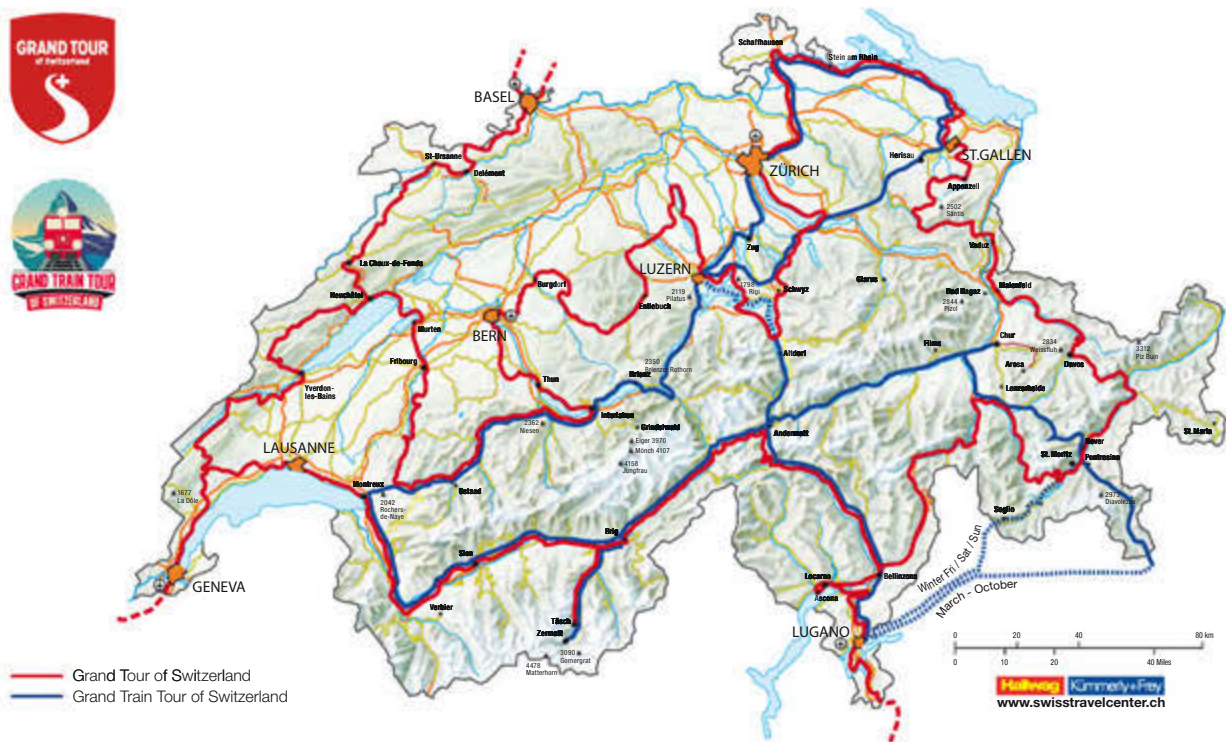
THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Instead of doing the drive up Oregon's coast, try a steamboat ride along the Columbia River. **American Queen's** itineraries offer views of snow-capped mountains. From \$3,780, americanqueen.com

THE DOORS ARE OPEN

WHERE TO STAY NOW The Bahamas The beauty of the just-opened **Island House** in Nassau is that it feels like a small community of creative local minds. The 48-seat cinema screens films made in the Caribbean. Bahamian musicians perform live sets. Even the pottery throughout the 30 rooms was made by ceramicists in town. There are plenty of ways to stay active, too: The hotel has a squash court and an anti-gravity yoga studio, and, of course, the beach is mere steps away. From \$550. the-island-house.com —JEN MURPHY





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Facts & Figures

- 4 different languages and cultural areas
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PRECIOUS CARGO

GO DEEP

There's no more classic gift for Father's Day than a watch. (But we've got other ideas for you, too.) The most impressive timepieces this season are **high-tech divers** that are just as fit for the office as they are for the ocean. In fact, one could survive a trip to the bottom of the Pacific.

by ROBERTA NAAS

It glows in the dark, and still works 1,000 meters under the sea.

1

THE SPORTY TRAVELER



Omega's self-winding **Seamaster Planet Ocean 600M** has an athletic pop of color and displays up to three time zones. (\$8,100)

THE ALTERNATIVE

Orlebar Brown's *Mad Men*-esque Amalfi polo shirt (\$120)

2

THE RUGGED SAILOR



Girard-Perregaux's **Sea Hawk Mission of Mermaids** has an easy-to-grip bezel and rubber straps that are perfect for long days on the water. (\$11,750)

THE ALTERNATIVE

Tod's Marlin moccasins, a fancier version of the boat shoe (\$525)

The Rolex's nitrogen-alloyed steel case can withstand three tons of water pressure.

3

THE SCUBA DIVER



In 2012, a watch similar to **Rolex's Deepsea** strapped to the robotic arm of a submersible kept ticking even at the bottom of the Mariana Trench. (\$12,350)

THE ALTERNATIVE

Author James Nestor's compelling free-diving travelogue, *Deep* (\$20)

4

THE SOPHISTICATE



The **IWC Aquatimer Chronograph Expedition Jacques-Yves Cousteau** is eye candy for wrists: simple and clean with a midnight blue face. (\$7,200)

THE ALTERNATIVE

Glenmorangie Pride 1981, an ultrarare, 28-year-aged whiskey (\$4,200)

IWC Aquatimer Chronographs have 44 hours of reserve power.

5

THE THRILL SEEKER



Ball's Engineer Master II Diver FreeFall has tiny tubes filled with super-luminescent tritium so you can read the time while fully submerged. (\$3,500)

THE ALTERNATIVE

Bianchi's Volpe bicycle, made for joyrides on pavement and gravel (\$1,300)



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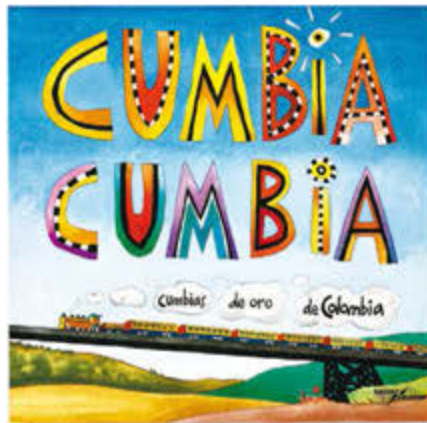
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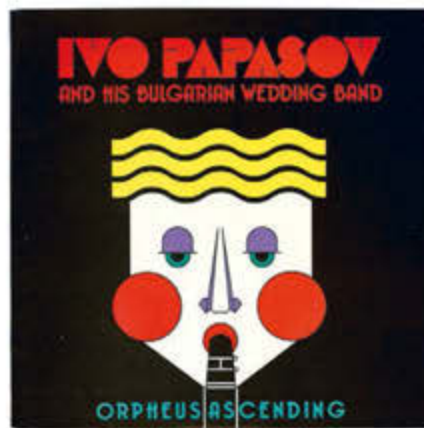
TAHITI



POLAND

WAX ON

One of our favorite ways to bring a place home? We like to raid local record stores wherever we go. **Long live vinyl** and these throwback souvenirs from our travels.



BULGARIA



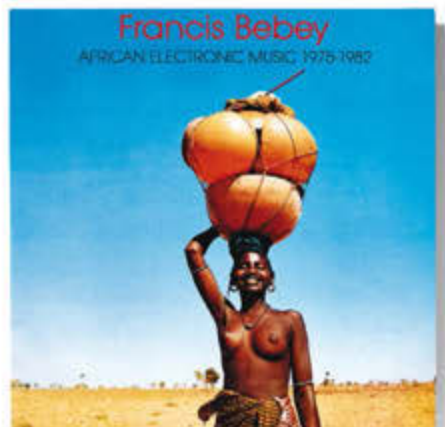
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ZIMBABWE



UK



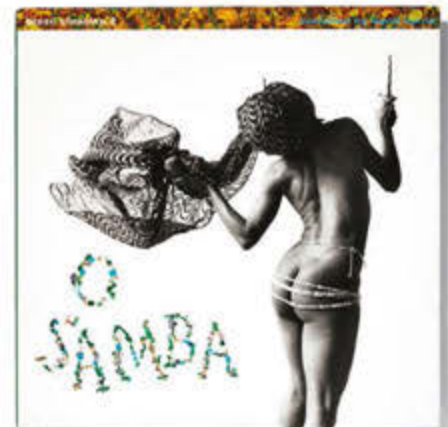
CHINA



JAMAICA



YEMEN



BRAZIL

PROMOTION

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AFAR Journeys combines the expertise and insider access of AFAR's Travel Advisory Council with our commitment to experiential travel. The result is easy-to-book custom itineraries to the world's most fascinating destinations. We're kicking off with Switzerland trips that include highlights of one of our favorite countries, from its alpine peaks to cultural treasures.

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photography by **THE VOORHES**

20 *the* **TRAVEL VANGUARD** 15

**FIVE BIG IDEAS THAT JUST MIGHT CHANGE THE WAY YOU
PLAN, PACK, FLY, MINGLE, CHECK IN, AND CHECK OUT***

**and we don't mean from your hotel.*



Upgrades Get an Upgrade

THE 2015 TRAVEL VANGUARD



THE DISPATCHER OF THE SKIES

JetSmarter founder **SERGEY PETROSSOV** says a scrum of startups are vying to get you—yes, you—onto a private jet.

HOW DOES IT WORK? “Jet charters have been around for a while, but the technology to book an aircraft from the palm of your hand, in real time, is new. JetSmarter has a network of 3,000 private aircraft around the world, 2,500 of which might be flying empty—say, when returning from a chartered trip. Members pay an \$8,000 annual fee for access to as many of these empty-leg trips as they can book.”

IS FLYING PRIVATE REALLY BECOMING MORE AFFORDABLE?

“Yes, if you imagine the annual fee as a monthly payment (about \$700). Normally, chartering a top-tier jet from New York City to Miami would cost between \$16,000 and \$30,000—get that flight with your annual fee and it’s a pretty amazing deal. Get six friends to join you and chip in, and it becomes so affordable, it’s absurd.”

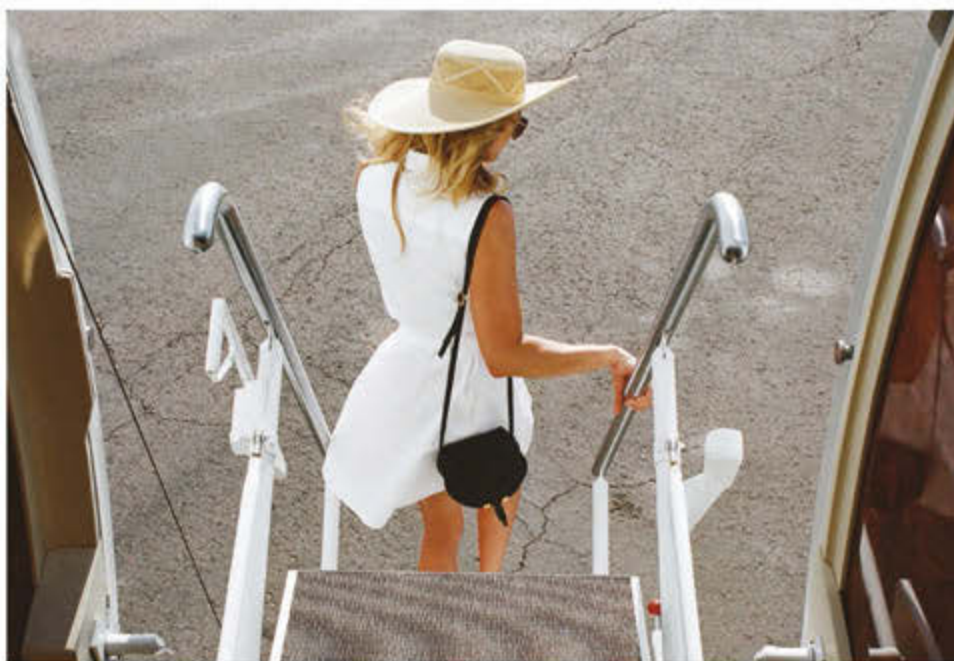
WHO’S FLYING? “Our goal is to democratize private air travel. Even many wealthy people don’t fly private because they think it’s too expensive. But startups like ours are changing that. One college kid broke up his membership fee onto two different credit cards and took eight empty-leg flights. His mind was blown. We’re bringing in people who could never have imagined flying private.”



A JET WITH YOUR NAME ON IT

Since BlackJet kicked off the **Uber-of-the-sky** trend in 2012, a half dozen startups, including these three, have joined the effort to get you on board.

	CLIPPERJET	VICTOR	SURF AIR
THE BIG IDEA	What if we created a country club 30,000 feet in the air?	Let's hop the pond and get in on this jet boom in the United States.	What if we gave NorCal-SoCal commuters a civilized, efficient flight?
YOU GET	Flights between L.A. and NYC (more soon) on Gulfstream jets , plus exclusivity; the limit is 90 members per hub city.	One of the U.K. company's 7,000-plus chartered aircrafts where you want it, when you want it, booked from your phone.	Flights from Oakland to L.A. in 120 minutes, with no pass through security. Your ride: a plush, eight-seat Pilatus PC-12 jet.
PRICE OF ENTRY	\$9,700 per month for unlimited standby flights, four one-way trips, and access to special events.	No membership fee. Book an empty-leg trip (from \$1,500) or charter a flight (from \$25,000).	\$1,000 initiation fee + \$1,750 a month + three-month commitment = unlimited free flights.



Not Ready for Private? Eight Upgrades to Catch

ECONOMY ... PLUS

Little things can salvage a long flight, say the new **Smart Trays** on **Asia Atlantic** that prop up your iPad. Or the **SkyCouch**—found on **Air New Zealand**, **Air China**, and **Air Astana**—which lets a family snuggle together, and eat from a shared tray.

TIPTOE OUT OF COACH

Premium economy, that now ubiquitous **half-step up from coach**, gets you more space and priority boarding. **Singapore Airlines** gets points for free noise-canceling headphones; **Lufthansa**, a nod for serving meals on real plates.

THE NEW BIZ CLASS

La Compagnie gives every passenger a **lie-flat seat**, a **tablet**, and **Michelin-star food**. For a monthly fee, the new **Take Air** offers **unlimited flights** (only Antwerp-Zurich for now) that skip check-in, security, and boarding lines.

BEYOND FIRST CLASS

Etihad's three-room residence is larger than some city apartments and outfitted with a butler, Christian Lacroix pj's, and a champagne fridge. **Emirates** has been hush-hush about its **new suites**, but expect a big reveal soon.



Dive deeper into the 2015 trends at afar.com/travelvanguard.

Surprise Is the New Luxury

THE 2015 TRAVEL VANGUARD



THE DREAM WEAVER

PHILIPPE BROWN, founder of outfitter Brown + Hudson, argues that where you travel isn't really the point.

HOW ARE YOU SHAKING UP TRAVEL? "We plan trips starting with the *why* you are choosing to travel rather than the destination. Where you go might be a surprise; some people don't want to find out until the day before takeoff." **AND HOW DO YOU DO THAT?** "We start with an in-depth interview that reveals your passions and motivations. People tend to travel because they want something

that isn't present where they are. We discover what that is, then find a destination that can fulfill it. We tap our global network of locals, experts, and dignitaries to concoct behind-the-scenes experiences and meetings with interesting characters. [See the Iceland itinerary on page 54.] Then, we reveal the trip in an unusual way: maybe a hardcover book delivered by courier or a

soliloquy performed during a play's intermission."

WHY ARE PEOPLE RESPONDING TO THIS? "Many travelers are now craving authenticity, not packaged tours. The success of Airbnb demonstrates this. People also want a trusted voice to help guide them: There are a gazillion sources of travel inspiration, but standards may be vastly different. Our trips match the traveler."



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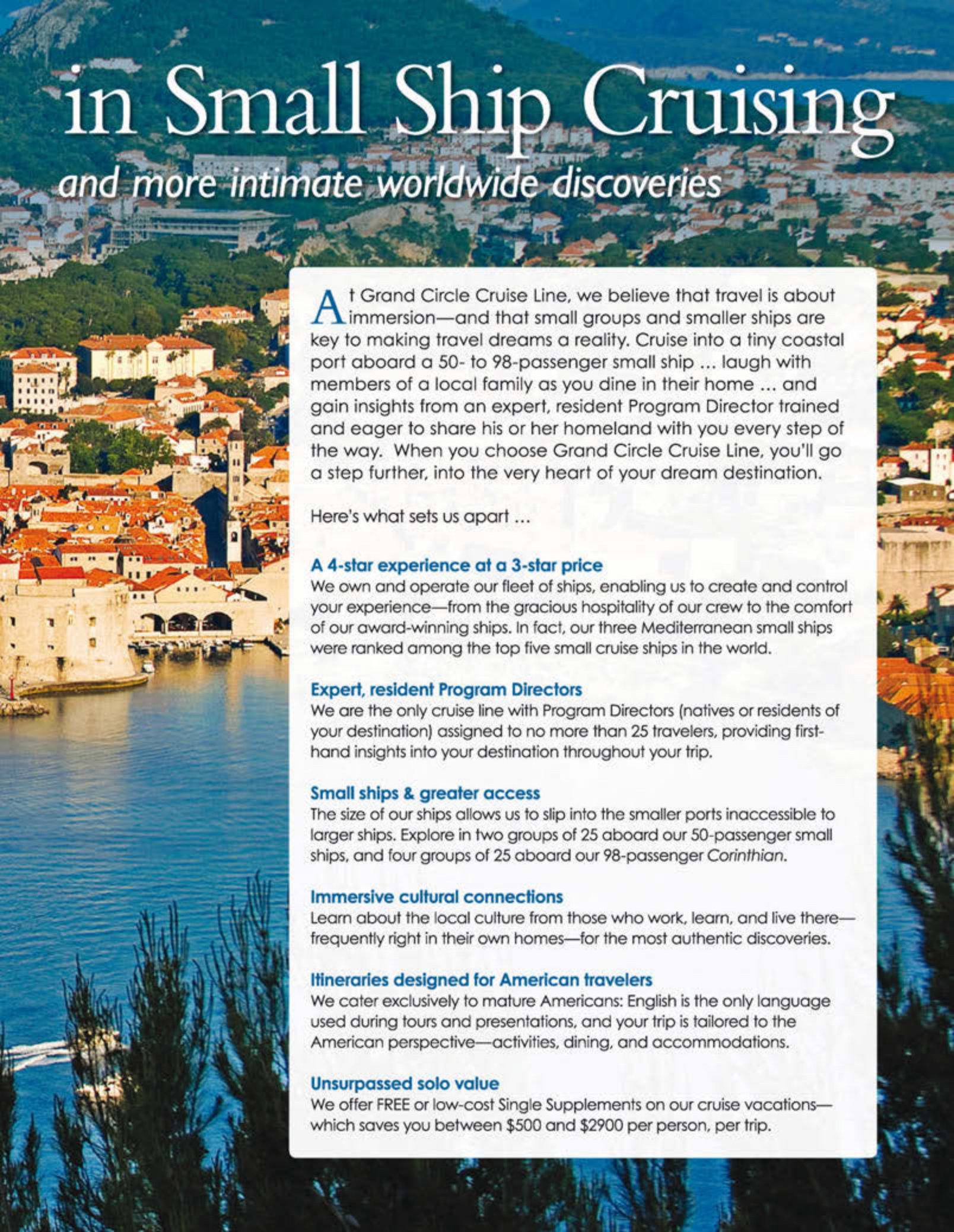
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At Grand Circle Cruise Line, we believe that travel is about immersion—and that small groups and smaller ships are key to making travel dreams a reality. Cruise into a tiny coastal port aboard a 50- to 98-passenger small ship ... laugh with members of a local family as you dine in their home ... and gain insights from an expert, resident Program Director trained and eager to share his or her homeland with you every step of the way. When you choose Grand Circle Cruise Line, you'll go a step further, into the very heart of your dream destination.

Here's what sets us apart ...

A 4-star experience at a 3-star price

We own and operate our fleet of ships, enabling us to create and control your experience—from the gracious hospitality of our crew to the comfort of our award-winning ships. In fact, our three Mediterranean small ships were ranked among the top five small cruise ships in the world.

Expert, resident Program Directors

We are the only cruise line with Program Directors (natives or residents of your destination) assigned to no more than 25 travelers, providing first-hand insights into your destination throughout your trip.

Small ships & greater access

The size of our ships allows us to slip into the smaller ports inaccessible to larger ships. Explore in two groups of 25 aboard our 50-passenger small ships, and four groups of 25 aboard our 98-passenger *Corinthian*.

Immersive cultural connections

Learn about the local culture from those who work, learn, and live there—frequently right in their own homes—for the most authentic discoveries.

Itineraries designed for American travelers

We cater exclusively to mature Americans: English is the only language used during tours and presentations, and your trip is tailored to the American perspective—activities, dining, and accommodations.

Unsurpassed solo value

We offer FREE or low-cost Single Supplements on our cruise vacations—which saves you between \$500 and \$2900 per person, per trip.



AN ANNOTATED GUIDE TO AN AWE-INSPIRING TRIP

The challenge: She needed rest, he wanted adventure, they both craved culture. Philippe Brown shares how he tailored a surprising Iceland trip to a couple's quirks.

DAY 1

Meet guide Ingolfur Brunn, a former policeman who climbs mountains and flies an ultralight

THE IDEA

"Holly needs a slower pace, yet she's married to Zac, who leaps tall buildings in a single bound. It's a balancing act, to be sure."

THE PAYOFF

"Brunn took Zac ice-climbing on the Vatnajökull glacier, while Holly soaked in healing waters near lava fields."

DAY 2

Coffee with producer Leifur Dagfinnsson, who shot the Icelandic scenes in *Die Another Day*

THE IDEA

"When we learned Holly and Zac were James Bond diehards, someone remembered *Die Another Day* was filmed here."

THE PAYOFF

"We persuaded Dagfinnsson to meet Zac and Holly, who spent a morning getting the lowdown on how he pulled off the scenes."

DAY 3

Arrive at a majestic 1,800-seat concert hall known for its incredible acoustics

THE IDEA

"Holly loves to play the piano, so we arranged for her to perform at the iconic Harpa Concert Hall in Reykjavik."

THE PAYOFF

"Holly had no idea. She was ushered onstage to the piano, where she played to an audience of one: Zac."

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Four ways hotels, outfitters, and even Disney are stepping up the spontaneity.

1

UNPACK A NEW LOOK

St. Regis will load up your room's closet with a **Neiman Marcus wardrobe assembled** just for you. Keep the Alexander McQueens you love, leave the rest.

2

DIGITAL FAIRY GODMOTHER

Disney's MagicBand e-bracelet alerts staff to your arrival, works as a credit card, and soon, could **zap you a free ice cream voucher** if you've waited too long in line.

3

CHILEAN SURPRISE PARTY

Every room at the **Awasi Patagonia** resort comes with a guide who can arrange surprises like, say, a hike in Torres del Paine National Park **capped by a spontaneous lunch**.

4

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

You may find a **book by a favorite author or a box of pastries** left on your nightstand by the attentive staff at the new **Grand Amore Hotel** in Florence.

Selfies No More

El Camino is here to capture your vacation bliss.

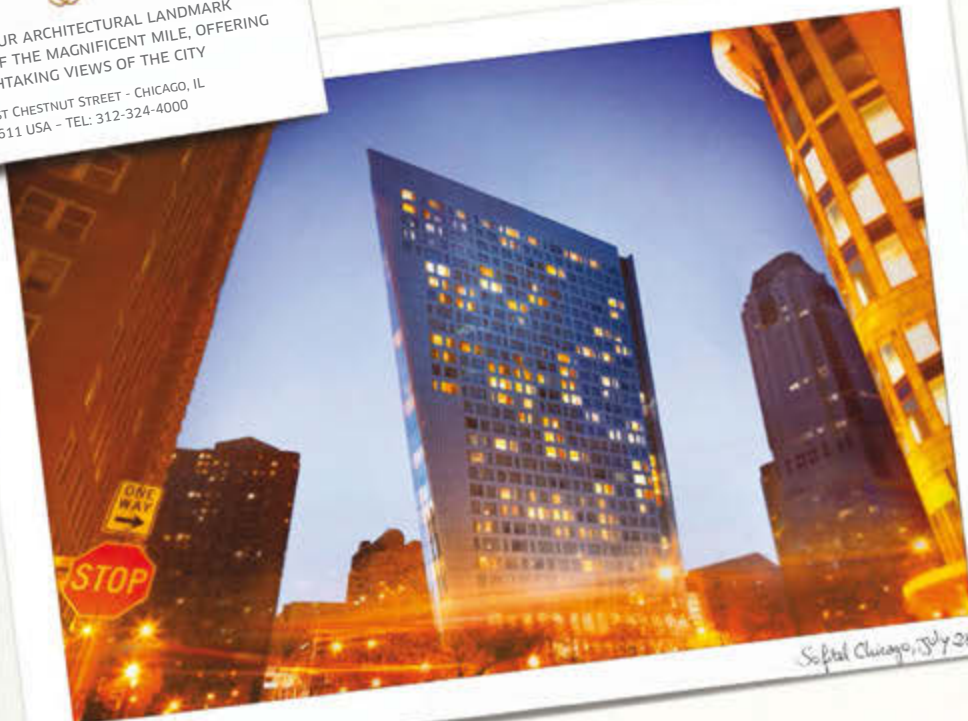
»» Imagine you're on vacation in Nicaragua. You leave all devices (phone, camera, GoPro) in your room and spend the days surfing, shopping the craft markets, and feasting on shrimp tacos. Yet every morning, you wake up to photos from the day before. You catching a wave. You on the prow of a catamaran. The whirl of colors that is a Nicaraguan craft market. That's the idea behind **El Camino**, a new outfitter that sends a photographer on its group trips so you can revel, unplugged, yet still post a dynamite #humblebrag to Instagram. "Every morning, we sit around the breakfast table and relive the past day," says cofounder Katalina Mayorga. "You get these beautiful images of yourself actually enjoying your vacation." Picky about what goes in your feed? "Some people are uncertain at first, but after seeing how well the first images come out, even they say, 'Oh, I really don't need to take my own photos.'"

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MY MAGNIFIQUE VOYAGE
N° 19



Sofitel Chicago, July 28

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SOFITEL
LUXURY HOTELS

Hotels Become Creative Hubs

THE 2015 TRAVEL VANGUARD



MEET YOUR NEW FAVORITE HOTEL

The hotel of the moment is a **superwired salon** where, whether you're a deal maker, tech geek, or part of the culturati, you can mingle, get inspired—and maybe sleep a little, too.

1

FOR THE LEAN-IN SET

A next-gen brand for business travelers, **Virgin Hotels Chicago** pays special attention to women road warriors. Wi-Fi is fast and free, rooms have savvy closets, there are **weekly TED-like talks**, and the Funny Library is stocked by Second City improv stars. Coming soon: Nashville and New York City.

2

FOR THE CULTURE MAVENS

Opening this summer in New York, the **Tommie Hudson Square** models efficiency-chic (rooms include a pegboard for hanging clothes and a flip-down desk). But who wants to be in their room when the lobby-cum-lounge **screens indie films and hosts art exhibits and emerging bands?**

3

FOR THE SOCIALLY AWARE

From Barry Sternlicht, founder of Starwood Hotels, comes the new **1 Hotels** (now open in Miami) where, when you're not sunbathing or celebrating at a full-moon fete, you can join **a volunteer expedition to clean a beach** or shop the occasional mini farmers' market in the lobby. New York City is next.

4

FOR THE ALWAYS-ON

Marriott's **Moxy** brand, which got its start in Milan and will soon expand to Berlin and London, revolves around **24-hour communal areas**: In high-style spaces, screens show photos tagged #atthemoxy in real time, and premixed drinks and board games like Connect 4 round out the offline fun.

5

FOR THE MILLENNIAL BACKPACKER

An events coordinator at each **Generator** hostel—Paris is the latest—brings in a steady stream of **shows with designers, artists, and musicians**. In keeping with backpacking's let's-hang vibe, there's always a place to gather, such as Barcelona's splashy bar (above) or the rooftop terrace in Paris.

6

FOR THE WES ANDERSON BUFFS

The new **Proper** brand—from the team behind Viceroy hotels—aims for spaces that feel like techy meet-ups. The first to open will be in San Francisco's Mid-Market startup hub. Expect **a glamorous playground with live music**, four restaurants, a rooftop lounge, and free yoga.



Find out what's next for Ace Hotels, Hilton, Hyatt, and more at afar.com/creativehubs.

COURTESY OF GENERATOR HOSTELS



THE PARTY MAKER

• The design icon behind the soon-to-launch Proper brand, **KELLY WEARSTLER** sees hotels as the new town square.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR LATEST PROJECT. “Proper Hotels are a nod to the grand hotels of the 19th century. We aren’t talking grand lobbies and bellboy hats but that those hotels were the cultural centers of their communities. Our San Francisco hotel will be fully wired, a hub for local personalities, and well designed—think vintage furniture you can actually sit on.”

HOW DOES THE COMMUNITY FIT IN? “Each hotel will be a showcase for what’s happening in its neighborhood. We’re partnering with people, brands, and institutions in each of the cities, including San Francisco and Austin so far, who can use public areas to create and share art, music, and technology.”

HOW WILL THAT MAKE HOTELS FEEL DIFFERENT? “In the early 2000s, the boutique hotel world was focused on design. Creating a beautiful space is still crucial, but now we’re more concerned with how that space can play multiple roles. The rooftop on our San Francisco hotel will transition from a place for morning coffee to a bar, with film screenings, concerts, yoga classes, and food events in between. Food is also much more significant. Each of the Avalon Hotels, which I worked on in the early 2000s, only has one restaurant. But the first Proper will have four.”

Your Phone Is All You Need

THE 2015 TRAVEL VANGUARD



THE FUTURIST

Hilton's global head of digital, **GERALDINE CALPIN** wants your **smartphone** to be your key, front desk, porter—and pocket psychic.

HOW ARE HOTELS EMBRACING

MOBILE? "Not long ago, the idea of hospitality and technology coming together seemed foreign. But they complement each other: You can use our new app to book your trip, view previous stays, check in, and choose your room. For example, a family might choose a room that opens to the pool. You can even use it to make sure a burger and fries will be there to greet you."

WHAT SHOULD TRAVELERS WATCH

FOR? "This year, Hilton is turning your phone into your room key. Soon, the app could allow you to pin your favorite room or curate local information. Another idea I'd love to see: Once guests have arrived in their room, we could check in with them via the app. We want our app to become one part psychic, one part magician."

WHAT'S STILL MISSING? "We see opportunities in mobile payments. I know I'm not the only one who loves not having to fuss with my wallet. We're also looking into wearables. For example, guests could use an Apple Watch as their room key and get timely information about hotel happenings and room updates."

Jeeves Meets R2-D2

The robot-staffed hotel: Genius? Or totally creepy?

» This summer, Henn-na Hotel opens in Japan's Nagasaki Prefecture with a staff of 10. Ten robots that is, including porters, housekeepers, and three of the humanish quadrilingual actroids at the front desk. Your face will be your room key; your phone, your concierge. Is this our future? We asked Siddhartha Srinivasa, head of Carnegie Mellon's Personal Robotics Laboratory: "Robots are effective in places specifically constructed for them, like factories: A team of robots can build a car faster than a team of humans. But, they struggle with the clutter and uncertainty of human environments. Hotels are an interesting middle ground. I would've expected the first hotel robots to be boxes on wheels that transport trays or dirty linens, not service staff. This might appeal to travelers who look for efficiency, but when I go on a trip, I want to be pampered, not feel like I'm in a factory."

PROMOTION

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NOW BOARDING: A NO-FUSS TRIP THROUGH THE AIRPORT

Flight alerts via text? Pshaw. In the not-so-distant future, your phone (or watch) will be the Swiss Army tool that eases your way from the departures curb through customs when you land.

DEPART



NEVER MISS A FLIGHT AGAIN

One reason to get an **Apple Watch**: New apps from airlines (American, British Airways) will **give you a buzz when it's time to leave** for the airport, then alert you to delays or gate changes. Once in the air, your watch will track flight time and update connection and baggage info.



FOLLOW YOUR BAGS

If you're a frequent flyer on **KLM**, starting this August, you can get an **Eviata eTag** that will allow you to **track your luggage via smartphone**. It'll even send an alert if the bag is opened. Airports such as London Gatwick will have DIY bag drops where you can just tag and go.



AVOID THE AIRPORT WANDER

Airports from Copenhagen to Miami have added tiny **iBeacons** that can **give directions to your connecting gate, alert you when you pass a power outlet**, or ping your phone with personalized deals (say, a discount on your favorite duty-free booze).

ARRIVE



BYPASS THE CUSTOMS SNARL

In lieu of filling out a landing card in some cities, you can file your U.S. Customs details in the new **Mobile Passport App**—and skip to an express line. Soon, you may be able to **bypass immigration officers entirely**: Melbourne Airport and others are testing biometric gates to screen travelers.



LEAVE YOUR WALLET ALONE

In February, JetBlue became the first U.S. airline to accept **Apple Pay**, meaning anyone with an iPhone 6 can **pay for drinks, food, movies, and even seat upgrades** with a wave of their phone. Next up: United Airlines.



Your Travel Toolbox

The luggage, gear, and apps that are smoothing the bumps in the road.

1

THE SUITCASE, REBOOTED

Three bags to watch: The hard-case **Trunkster** is GPS enabled, gadget charging, and even self weighing; **Bluesmart**, designed by a Silicon Valley startup, has 3G connectivity and a remote locking system; and the chic new Holger suitcase (pictured) includes built-in chargers.

2

EVERYONE'S AN ATM

The **Tab** app lets you pay participating businesses in your own currency and—even better—withdraw money from them (you choose an amount in the app, then show a bar code). The 4 percent fee is less than an overseas ATM charge. Use it in Guatemala and, soon, 20 more countries.

3

SWIPE RIGHT FOR A BUDDY

Trip is basically Tinder for travelers. The app uses Facebook to connect friends, friends of friends, and even strangers traveling to the same place. But, while it mimics Tinder's swipe-right-for-yes feature, the travel hookups are all (supposedly) platonic.

4

STAY PLUGGED IN

Skirt the international roaming dilemma with a portable hot spot from **Tep Wireless**. For the price of two lattes (\$7/day), you can rent a tiny 3G wireless device that allows you to connect up to five devices at once nearly anywhere in the world.

Meet our Motu



Spend a day on our private islet, Motu Mahana. This exclusive retreat is just one of the many all-inclusive features we offer, including 50% off cruise fares plus airfare from Los Angeles. Embrace the magic of the South Pacific with the world's best.

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Pot Country Is the New Wine Country

THE 2015 TRAVEL VANGUARD



THE PIED PIPER OF POT

CHASE NOBLES, cofounder of Seattle-based Kush Tourism, says interest in marijuana travel is smokin' hot.

SO WEED TOURISM IS A THING NOW? "Yep. We're a 100 percent legal cannabis tourism company. We run tours—our Kush Tour may include stops at a cultivation facility, a testing lab, and a bakery—and provide travel resources (where to buy, partake, and stay). We just launched a tourism map—an app is next."

WHAT'S NEXT? "As with alcohol, it's still illegal to imbibe in public, so I think we'll see cannabis-friendly lounges, similar to coffee shops in Amsterdam. We're seeing development in other states. Cannabis is now legal in Alaska. There aren't any shops open there yet, but we're working with a few B&Bs to provide places to get a taste of the pot culture. I'd like to see the industry become comparable to the wine industry."

WHO'S SMOKING? "Our clients are generally in their 40s or older and are doctors, lawyers—very prominent people. Most are from out of state and it takes them a day to realize, 'Wow, I can have this in my pocket and not worry.' When you buy cannabis here, it's from a licensed store, you pay taxes, and no one can bust you for it."



Check out our guide to Seattle's green scene from the writers behind weed blog *Four Mary Janes* at afar.com/maryjane.



FRESHLY BAKED IN SEATTLE

The **Goodship Company**, a new line of **THC-infused edibles** from Jody Hall—the force behind Seattle's Cupcake Royale empire—puts the *high* into high-style snacks.

A CREDIBLE EDIBLE
“The packaging is meant to be fun but also to give people a sense of trust. It's not a Ziploc with a sticker on it. We wanted it to look like it could go on a Whole Foods shelf.”

WHAT'S INSIDE
“We worked with a pastry chef to build a cookie (like **sea salt chocolate chip**) that's soft, stable for 60 days, and still true to our commitment to local ingredients. It's way different than cupcakes: It's hard to make sure the THC is evenly mixed without making the cookie feel like a brick.”

DON'T GO DOWN WITH THE SHIP
“Ten milligrams of THC—a cookie's standard serving—is like **four strong cocktails**. I only eat half in one sitting. A quarter is a great place to start. We want you to curl up with a good book, not curl up on the floor wondering what's happening.”

+

IT'S HIGH TIME FOR COLORADO

Since it became the first state to legalize recreational marijuana, Colorado has seen its budding pot industry—and pot tourism—take off. **Here's how to do a weedcation right.**

1

THE SOURCE

Aspen's gallery-like **Silverpeak Apothecary** (below) turns the notion of a headshop on its, well, head. No tie-dye here, just smart staffers who can steer you to a strain—grown on Silverpeak's very own Colorado farm—to match your mood. (Jilly Bean uplifts, while Querkle soothes.)

2

THE EXPERIENCE

Through **My 420 Tours**, you can tour Denver dispensaries or take a class to learn to cook with cannabis oils—yes, you'll walk away with goodies. Or try **Primal Wellness**, a day spa that uses oils infused with cannabis, a natural anti-inflammatory that won't get you high, for massages.

3

THE HANGOUT

It's still illegal to smoke in public, but companies like **Edible Events** host semi-regular shindigs. While hotels work out their weed policies, a new crop of B&Bs has emerged: The **Adagio Bud & Breakfast** includes a wake-and-bake brunch (think pancakes and a smoke) and a 4:20 happy hour.



+

The New Global Pot Spots

ALASKA

What's new: Since February, the state is OK with you growing, possessing, and sharing pot. By 2016, it will be as easy to buy as gum.

BARCELONA

What's new: The lively cannabis club scene got an official stamp of approval in January—and more clubs continue to pop up.

Check out: The Dragon Cannabis Club, known for its top-notch product. Word to the wise: In order to hang out at any of the city's 100-plus cannabis clubs, you'll need to register a few weeks ahead of your trip.

JAMAICA

What's new: You may be surprised to hear that the spiritual home of ganja legalized possession only this year.

Check out: Even before the new law, tours of pot plantations were a nudge-nudge, wink-wink part of a trip. Some cruise lines offer excursions to Bob Marley's former home (smoke at your own risk), or you can head to the hills with Jamaica Plantation Tours.

A woman with blonde hair, seen from the back and side, is leaning against a white wall on a balcony. She is wearing a blue and green patterned tank top and blue athletic shorts with green trim. Her shadow is cast onto the wall to her left. In the background, there is a dark metal railing, a valley with greenery, and snow-capped mountains under a clear blue sky.

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Emily Silver, Olympic silver medalist and
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CONNECT

SPIN THE GLOBE p.66

FEAST p.70

STAY p.73

Paddle deeper into the wild on Leigh Lake, just north of **Jenny Lake Lodge**, in Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park (Stay, page 73).

TAYLOR GLENN



Round and Round We Go

AFAR chose a destination at random and sent CNN political commentator **Sally Kohn** on 24 hours' notice to a city renowned for its "coffee shops" but where tolerance has its limits.

illustrations by **JULENE HARRISON**

DID YOU KNOW THE COFFEE shops are technically illegal?" I'm in Amsterdam sitting in a café—not a coffee shop, a very important difference, one quickly learns—having lunch with a friend of a friend. She points at a *coffee shop* across the street.

"Technically they can't sell marijuana, but they're allowed to anyway." She shrugs. "It's tolerated."

The Dutch, I will be told repeatedly throughout my five days in Amsterdam,

take great pride in being tolerant. Five minutes later, my very liberal and enlightened coffee date is verbally bashing Muslims.

When I first found out I was going to Amsterdam, I thought I had been there before, even though I hadn't, because I'm not very good at geography, and I thought Amsterdam was in Belgium. It's not. It's in the Netherlands and, according to some hasty Internet research before my departure, is mostly known for two things—bicycles and cheese.

"There's a whole town in the Netherlands

called Gouda," I told friends the evening before I left. "Maybe I'll go there." I read the Dutch pronounce it more like *HOW-duh*. I wondered how they pronounced it in Belgium.

A friend who had just visited Amsterdam offered a string of museum and restaurant recommendations, and then wrote, "Also, be ready to see lots of blackface, because Black Pete is one of their Christmas characters and he is everywhere. It's very uncomfortable." Come again?

I should say here that one of the reasons I was excited to be going to Amsterdam was that I remembered going to Brussels—in Belgium!—in college, during the same pre-Christmas window, and drowning in the awesomeness of the city's Christmas market. OK, so Amsterdam isn't in Belgium, but it must still have a Christmas market, right? Fried dough and hot beverages, here I come! Or not. The week before Christmas, flailing

through Amsterdam on two wheels, I was the Jewish schmuck riding around waving and saying “Merry Christmas” to quizzical-looking Dutch folk. According to my guidebook, 60 percent of Amsterdam’s citizenry identifies as nonreligious, and apparently practitioners of Islam outnumber those of other faiths. In other words, no Christmas market.

This makes *Zwarte Piet* all the more shocking. In this Dutch tradition, a few weeks before Christmas, a Santa character visits kids all over the country, accompanied by a group of Black Petes—helpers portrayed by white people in blackface with kinky black wigs and bright red lips. *Zwarte Piet* has been around for more than a century but has become more and more controversial in recent years, inspiring protests and chants of “*Zwarte Piet is racism*.” Yet this supposedly very liberal and nonreligious country, with a deeply troubled history on race, continues to cling with a viselike grip to a holiday tradition of blackface minstrels. Why?

Back home, the United States was embroiled in a deep and sadly divisive debate about racial justice—prompted specifically by the multiple killings of unarmed young black men by police officers, and, more broadly, highlighting disparities of opportunity and basic dignity. I left my home in New York as the death of Eric Garner, and the subsequent failure to indict the officer whose choke hold caused his demise, sparked mass protests and demonstrations all over the city. What a relief, a white friend half guiltily suggested, to go to über-tolerant Amsterdam, where they’ve already solved “that stuff.”

Except for the blackface part.

IN THE MISTY RAIN that fell during most of my December trip, I pedaled to Noorderkerk, a stunning, 17th-century octagonal church that I imagine now sees more congregants for its Saturday organic market and classical music concerts than for its Protestant worship services. I attached my bike to a guardrail along the Prinsengracht and, my hands slippery from the rain, almost lost my bike keys to the canal. I wondered if it was this rainy in Belgium.

At the market, I met up with another friend of a friend, a white Franco-American expat named Olivier. He bought me a glass of buttermilk, which was just as lumpy and sour as buttermilk always is, insisting that Dutch people drink it like soda pop. I find this very hard to believe. I choked down as much as I could manage before returning my glass

either half full or half empty, depending on your perspective, to the less-than-impressed-looking farm woman working the dairy stand. In between bites of the fried herring and pea soup that I was also talked into, the expat tried to explain *Zwarte Piet* to me.

“Of course it’s racist to us,” Olivier said, since we were both Americans, “but it’s hard to label the Dutch racist, because they don’t have

though you become a different person on vacation. Inevitably, the good and bad parts of your core identity travel right along with you, like an invisible extra piece of luggage. In my case, I could not escape my identity as a columnist who views the world through a political lens. I got on social media and started reaching out to political activists in Amsterdam.

Conveniently, one of the country’s leading

I was the Jewish schmuck riding around waving and saying “Merry Christmas” to quizzical-looking Dutch folk.

the same understanding of race.” In fact, he explained, many Dutch people think of racism as an American invention. During my trip, I did meet a few Amsterdammers who, when they were students, had learned about their country’s significant role in the slave trade—as the primary country shipping human beings from West Africa to Brazil, Suriname, Guyana, and several Spanish colonies—during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. In all, this tiny country was responsible for an estimated 5 to 7 percent of the entire Atlantic slave trade. Yet some Dutch told me that this history is just not taught in the schools.

A few blocks away, Olivier showed me a playground where someone had spray-painted *ZWARTE PIET IS RACISME*; someone else had crossed out the word *racisme* and written *nice*. As though niceness, the desire to be tolerant, could wash away history—or hurt—like so much rain.

EXPLORING AMSTERDAM, I did a bunch of touristy things I figured I *should* do. I went to the sleek and modern Stedelijk Museum and found a stand that sold *oliebollen*, the Dutch version of fried dough balls dusted with powdered sugar, which tasted great even without a surrounding Christmas market. Still, while travel inherently offers an opportunity to step out of your usual routine and look at your life and home country differently, it’s not as

Muslim political figures, Tofik Dibi, was already following me on Twitter. I messaged him, and we arranged to meet for dinner.

I pedaled again in the drizzle to a massive parking garage, a tower of concrete perched on the edge of another canal, which struck me, not unlike the Noorderkerk, as a church for another religion not really practiced here. I locked my bike, carefully keeping the keys facing away from the canal this time, and slipped behind the parking deck ramp to Waterkant, a popular Surinamese restaurant, reportedly home to an especially bustling nightlife in the summertime. Inside, the decor was dangling strands of bright lights, tiny table tents with beer advertisements, and the kind of wooden crisscross siding you find on a deck—exactly what I imagined a beachside bar might be like on the northern coast of South America. Except, at least on the night I was there, the restaurant didn’t seem to have any waitstaff actually from Suriname, the former colony and hub of the Dutch slavery industry. The roti was scrumptious, nonetheless.

“Tolerance is the Netherlands’ main export,” Tofik told me, “but it’s an illusion. Or a delusion. The Netherlands is not actually that tolerant.” Tofik gave an example close to his experience—the rise of Islamophobia. In the Netherlands, it should be noted, Muslim fundamentalists are a small minority of the Muslim population—as they are, ahem, in most

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places. But after September 11th and the 2004 murder of Theo van Gogh—a provocateur filmmaker whose anti-Islam film, *Submission*, made him infamous—all the country’s Muslims were under scrutiny, Tofik said. “Before September 11th, I wasn’t seen as Muslim, you know? But since then, I feel it’s all I’m seen as; as if I constantly need to prove I’m not plotting something.”

Tofik described feeling like a dark cloud of suspicion was always hovering above his head. No doubt the atrocious attacks in Paris, which happened after my trip, further darkened that cloud.

The day after my dinner with Tofik, I rode my adorably civilized-looking Dutch bicycle about 30 minutes south of the center of town to a farm-to-table restaurant called De Kas, situated within a giant shimmering glass greenhouse in a field of tall, undulating grasses. It was a great bike ride, with the wind at my back. (Later, pedaling in the opposite direction with three courses and a glass of wine under my belt, it wasn’t so great.)

On the way to De Kas, I stopped in Oosterpark, near the heart of one of the city’s main immigrant neighborhoods, to see the nation’s slavery memorial. Bronze statues of tiny hunched and shackled figures seem to lean, with equal parts ache and yearning, forward—ultimately passing through a winged arch, with the bronze figures on the other side of the passage not only unshackled and upright but visibly, markedly taller and lankier. I couldn’t help but wonder if this was a conscious choice, to represent the freed slaves not only as “standing tall” but also as more Dutch-like, approximating the supermodel-y blond men and women who all have perfect posture on their bikes and perfect legs to match.

On my way out of the park, I passed another monument. This one is a memorial to Theo van Gogh, the anti-Islam filmmaker. The proximity is jarring. A monument against discrimination and the subjugation of African people just yards from a memorial to a man whose propaganda many Muslims accuse of helping fuel their subjugation. Tolerance a few yards from its opposite. The contradictions of Amsterdam, captured in a few turns of the wheels on my bike.

Back in my room at the Dylan hotel, a beautiful refurbished canal house, I was packing to go home—trying to figure out what to do with all my souvenirs as well as my white liberal guilt. There was a knock at the door. It was the porter, Daniel, coming to see if I needed my

minibar refilled. He trudged up the stairs of my loftlike room, ducking to avoid the broad ancient beams at the doorway. I hesitated a second and then asked, while he knelt by the tiny fridge, if he thought there’s discrimination in the Netherlands.

Originally from Suriname, Daniel said no, not a bit of discrimination here. He has every opportunity in Holland. Sure, the voice in my head snapped cynically, every opportunity to be a porter.

In five days flitting around Amsterdam’s posh restaurants and shops and museums, Daniel was actually the only nonwhite employee I had encountered. People of non-Western origin make up about a third of Amsterdam’s

cheese everywhere. Walls of wheels of cheese. And I couldn’t tell what set them apart other than color. I bought some light yellow and some dark yellow, both of which tasted lovely, though I’d be hard pressed to pinpoint the difference. Back on the street, I marveled at the subtle shades all around me—the gay couple I passed kissing on the street, the memorial to the gay people killed in the Holocaust and persecuted throughout history, the legalized prostitution on the blocks in between, the fact that everyone around me was white. Shades of tolerance.

In the United States, I’d come to think of tolerance as a linear progression. I envision those brimming with animus based on race,



There were wheels of cheese everywhere. Walls of wheels of cheese. And I couldn’t tell what set them apart.

population, but unemployment among “ethnic youngsters” is more than three times that of white youth nationwide. Still, I wanted to take Daniel at his word.

Having found a few inches of my suitcase that could still be filled, and with a few hours until my flight home, I decided to find some hunks of *HOW-duh* to bring home as stocking stuffers. I went to one of the city’s most famous cheese shops, De Kaaskamer, which was just a few blocks from my hotel. I walked, figuring that since I had already written in my notes that I had managed not to have an accident in five days on a bicycle, I might have thus jinxed myself and should quit while I was ahead.

In De Kaaskamer, there were wheels of

gender, or sexuality bunched together at one end of the spectrum. Hopefully, I see everyone else haltingly, imperfectly, but progressively moving toward enlightenment at the other end. Here in Amsterdam, things were spun around. Or maybe just round. Openly gay politicians were rabidly anti-Muslim. Defenders of blackface were enthusiastically smoking pot. Amsterdam was neither enlightened nor close-minded but constantly shifting, not progressing along a line but simultaneously occupying multiple points on a circle. Like a wheel of cheese. Or maybe spokes on a bike. Constantly turning. **A**

Writer Sally Kohn is profiled on page 18.



At Pat's King of Steaks, you can order a cheesesteak "whiz wit" (with Cheese Whiz and onions) anytime, day or night.

Confessions of a Cheesesteak

The tale of **Philadelphia's greatest sandwich** starts with a hot dog.

by ARIEL RAMCHANDANI photographs by JASON VARNEY

I'M SITTING WITH Frankie Olivieri Jr. outside his restaurant, Pat's King of Steaks, a South Philadelphia institution that pumps out the city's famously messy sandwich 24 hours a day. It's 10 a.m. and the cherry-red picnic tables are mostly empty; I'm here during the lull between workers coming off the night shift and the crush of afternoon tour buses that precedes late-night revelers.

The cheesesteak I smell frying is nearly the same as the original born here 85 years ago: An Italian hoagie roll packed with thinly sliced rib eye and Spanish onions, both sautéed on a flat-top grill, sometimes with peppers and mushrooms. Cheese, whether you opt for provolone or the iconic Cheez Whiz—just "Whiz" in local parlance—holds the whole thing together.

But ask anyone what really makes a cheesesteak and they'll tell you it's the roll. A descendant of an old-world Italian bread, the chewy, slightly crusty hoagie roll (Olivieri swears by New Jersey-based Aversa's Bakery) is the perfect vehicle for dripping meat.

An informal Yelp census puts the number of cheesesteak spots in the city at 96, but the sandwich is served everywhere, from delis to high-end restaurants. And, while the basics (meat, onions, roll) don't vary much from place to place, arguing about which is best—and whether sliced beef is better than chopped—is a pastime on par with running the Rocky steps or dissecting the latest Eagles game.

"You're always hearing about how one particular cheesesteak place is the best, even though I probably make more in one day than

they sell in a year," says Olivieri. "But cheesesteak joints are like opinions. They're everywhere, and all valid."

Only Pat's can claim to be the original. The cheesesteak, Olivieri tells me, was invented in 1930 on this very corner by his grandfather Harry and his great-uncle Pat Olivieri. The duo worked as hot dog vendors in an open-air Italian market, and when times were good they would buy beef and fry it up with onions for their lunch. One day, a taxi driver asked if he could buy the sandwich instead of a hot dog. Pat offered to split it. The driver, smitten, advised the pair to sell them.

It wasn't until World War II, however, that the cheesesteak became a Philly emblem. A true showman, Pat started a rumor in the days of WWII rationing that his sandwiches



Pat's is famous for its Whiz-topped cheesesteaks—and for making an appearance in the original *Rocky*.



contained horse meat, then, in mock outrage, offered a \$10,000 reward for someone to prove it. Business boomed and competitors followed.

While places like Pat's continue to churn out the classics, the current cheesesteak scene reflects the city's changing dining landscape. HipCityVeg makes a respectable vegan version. The cheesesteak even gets an haute touch at Barclay Prime, a swanky steak house, where Wagyu beef is tucked into a sesame roll and piled with foie gras and truffled cheese. Paired with a half bottle of Perrier-Jouët Grand Brut, it'll set you back a cool \$120.

"Why mess with tradition?" I ask Mark Twersky, Barclay's executive chef, later that day. "Cheesesteaks are fun to play with," he replies. Though purists may quibble with his methods, he grew up with the sandwich—he's partial to Geno's, a Pat's rival, or Jim's, an old-school spot—and understands its vital role.

"After dinner at a great new restaurant—even if it's ours—you're still going to go out and get a cheesesteak at two in the morning," he says. "Because that's what you do in Philadelphia." **A**

There's a Philly cheesesteak for every taste

1

FOR THE MEATLESS

Get a taste of Philadelphia's booming vegan dining scene at **HipCityVeg**. This fast food spot is a leader in ecodining: It delivers by bicycle, and it composts food scraps and all packaging. Fans swear by the Philly Steak (which subs in a grain-soy blend for the steak and vegan mayo for the cheese) paired with the Groothie, a kale-packed smoothie. 127 S. 18th St. hipcityveg.com

2

FOR THE PURISTS

Pat's King of Steaks is the original and worth a visit for its setting in the Italian market, the famously gruff staff, and the celebrity photos that line the walls. Be prepared to wait in line and be ready with your order. 1237 E. Passyunk Ave. patskingofsteaks.com

3

HEY, HIGH ROLLERS

Contemporary decor sets the stage at **Barclay Prime** where chef Mark Twersky, a Per Se alum, turns out refined renditions of steak house classics. Splash out on such items as the

Australian Wagyu and whipped potatoes, and, of course, the over-the-top cheesesteak. 237 S. 18th St. barclayprime.com

4

LOVE A TIME CAPSULE?

Joe's Steaks + Soda Shop opened in 1949, and its diner stools and wooden booths haven't changed since. The steaks are fried up to order, often by Joe's son; pair one with an egg cream for a true time-warrior lunch. Don't miss Joe's new outpost in the Fishtown neighborhood. 6030 Torresdale Ave. joessteaks.com

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by JEN MURPHY



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great souvenirs. When the dinner bell rings, guests gather to share tales of wilderness adventures over local trout, grilled lamb chops, and salads made from the on-site garden's vegetables. The inn doesn't serve alcohol, but you are welcome to bring your own. *From \$495. theswag.com*

2
BELTON CHALET
West Glacier, Montana
Situated a quarter mile from the west entrance to **Glacier National Park**, this recently renovated landmark was built by the Great Northern Railway Company in 1910—the year the park was dedicated to President Taft—to host wealthy passengers from the East Coast. Rooms in the arts and crafts-style lodge are simple yet comfortable. During

their stay, guests explore the region's network of more than 700 trails by horseback, foot, or bike. To experience this pristine area as visitors have been doing since the 1930s, hop in a *jammer*, a red touring coach with a canvas top that rolls back to reveal wide-open vistas of the surrounding forests and peaks. *From \$160. beltonchalet.com*



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3
KENAI FJORDS GLACIER LODGE
Seward, Alaska
Reaching the remote Kenai Fjords Glacier Lodge is part of the fun. The four-hour boat journey from Seward to the only lodge within the 700,000-acre **Kenai Fjords National Park** is a prime opportunity to spot porpoises, puffins, and whales. On arrival, guests disembark and make their way to the lodge, where they're briefed on

bear safety: No food allowed in the 16 cabins. Calving tidewater glaciers provide the wake-up call for days filled with sea kayaking, canoeing, and hiking. Come evening, relax in the main lodge with a cocktail or with a book from the lodge's natural history library. *From \$725, all-inclusive. kenai fjords glacier lodge.com*



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Handmade quilts top pine beds in the 37 cabins of this 1920 lodge in **Grand Teton National Park**. Horseback rides, cycling excursions, and epic views of the Teton Range are all part of the experience; lucky travelers might spot elk, bald eagles, and osprey. A hearty breakfast spread and a decadent

five-course dinner (mushroom tarts, grilled haloumi cheese, cumin-dusted lamb) are also included in the price. For an additional cost, guests can raft 10 miles down the Snake River or take a multiday wildlife photo workshop. *From \$689, all-inclusive. gtlc.com*

5

WEST STREET HOTEL

Bar Harbor, Maine

Opened in 2012, the West Street Hotel wholeheartedly embraces its waterfront location. All 85 rooms have views of Frenchman Bay and are decorated in nautical Americana (think navy, red, and cream color schemes and lots of sailboat patterns on the upholstery). The hotel can arrange a lobstering trip on a real-deal commercial boat or an

excursion to nearby **Acadia National Park**. There are more than 120 hiking trails that range from low-key to strenuous: Advanced climbers can summit Cadillac Mountain, the tallest peak on the U.S. Atlantic Coast. For a guided tour of the park with less effort, board Oli's Trolley, which picks up riders across the street from the hotel. *From \$225. theweststreethotel.com*



PEAK FLAVOR

BY LISA ABEND PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTOPH HAIDERER



**IS THIS WHAT THE WORLD'S NEXT GREAT
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T

HE ROAD TO NEBESA, A RESORT IN WESTERN SLOVENIA, was cratered for miles with the kind of potholes that could take down an armored vehicle. By the time I had navigated them all, my knuckles felt permanently clenched to the wheel. Through the fog and drizzle, I could make out a few cottages that had the silvery, weathered look of abandoned lobster shacks, and glimpsed a pair of hulking beasts that could have been bears. Upon closer inspection, after I parked my rental car, the beasts turned out to be two docile Newfoundlands and the cottages convivially inhabited. Stepping inside the largest one, I found myself in a cozy room illuminated by firelight. Ana Ros

was behind the stove, her blonde ringlets moving in time as she vigorously stirred a cheese sauce. She spooned it over platefuls of polenta, poured a small estuary of fried pork fat over that, then sprinkled more cheese over the top. It was the kind of dish that makes your arteries flinch just to look at it.

The next morning, I would awake to a surprise: Nebesa was not the damp, gray enclosure I had taken it to be but, rather, the most breathtaking mountain perch I had ever seen. Bright yellow light poured in through a window that framed snowcapped alpine peaks straight out of *The Sound of Music*. That shock did not compare to the one the night before, when I ate a spoonful of Ros's corn-and-buckwheat polenta: The greasy, gloppy-looking mush turned out to be rich and tangy, creamy

and crunchy, sweet from the corn and smoky from the pork fat. It was plate-clearingly delicious, which, I would learn, is pretty much the norm in the Republic of Slovenia.

When one thinks about traveling for food, Slovenia does not leap to mind, and before I went, I could not name a single Slovenian dish. I'd heard rumors of a culinary revolution stirring in this Central European country wedged between Italy, Austria, Croatia, and Hungary. But how would I recognize it? I presumed, somewhat accurately, as it turns out, that the cuisine was heavy on meat, cabbage, and mush. What I didn't know is how delicious it would be, especially when chefs, including Ros, began riffing on those traditional Slovenian themes.

"We didn't have an aristocracy in Slovenia—



Previous pages: Squash blossoms adorn a dish at Vander Urbani in Ljubljana, and stone arcades around the Church of St. Anthony of Padua are part of the ossuary that pays homage to Italian soldiers killed in Slovenia during World War I.

no nobles, no kings. Our history is the history of peasants,” explained food-and-wine educator and magazine writer Tomaz Srsen over cold-extracted coffee in the modern Café Cokl in Ljubljana, Slovenia’s capital. “There have been other influences—Austrian, Italian, Hungarian, Adriatic—but our traditional cuisine is peasant cuisine.” The problem, he continued, was a divide between urban and rural cultures that had cut off Slovenians from their culinary roots. In the city, diners went in for (mostly mediocre) versions of pizza, Chinese food, and other imports, while in the countryside, the traditional cuisine remained static.

Now,” Srsen said, “there are a few places that are crossing the divide and upgrading the old dishes with modern techniques. You’ll see.”



At one mile above sea level in the Julian Alps, the Vrsic Pass, shown here, is the highest road in Slovenia.

A PERFECT PRAWN

Chandeliers, lace doilies, and a waiter who insisted on calling me madame made me fear the food at JB Restavracija would be dated. "I hope you are not in a hurry," said the server at the sedate establishment in downtown Ljubljana. "Here, we go slow." Yet chef Janez Bratovz's cooking was vibrant, even zippy, warranting JB's appearance on the 2010 list of the World's 100 Best Restaurants. A dish called "shrimp scampi" bore zero relationship to the oil- and garlic-heavy plate of Italian-American renown; it was instead a single, intensely fresh prawn, caught that morning in the Adriatic and served with little more than a sauce made from an essence of its own shells. A polenta and

cheese dish came topped with acerbic Gorizia radicchio, the bitter tang cutting beautifully through the richness. There was venison with dumplings, but there was also foie gras with black garlic. How—and why—did this all fit together? The question popped up at other places in Ljubljana, too, such as Na Gradu, located in the capital's medieval castle, where I ate juicy octopus fried to a perfect crunch and served with, of all things, strawberries and an herbaceous pea puree. Was this modern? Traditional? I couldn't figure it out.

GLOBAL TABLE

Driving in the Soca Valley, about 40 miles northwest of Ljubljana, I was contemplating the

nature of borders, both the physical ones that divide countries and the metaphysical ones that define styles. I passed an opaquely turquoise river and spotted cows so white and fluffy it took me a minute to register that they weren't sheep. I saw tiny churches with soaring steeples that competed for sky space with the Alps behind them, and barns from which long braids of corn had been left hanging to dry. In a small, silent town, I followed handpainted signs to the local cheese maker, only to find him butchering a pig in his garage. At times, it felt like I was driving through a 19th-century landscape instead of a 21st-century one.

But then I had my second dinner with Ana Ros, in the countryside town of Kobarid. Eating her polenta at Nebesa (which is owned by her



A delicately arranged plate of smoked trout is one of chef Ana Ros's specialties at Hisa Franko in Kobarid.



Ljubljana Castle provides an aerial view of the Slovenian capital.

parents) had been a special event; her regular gig is at Hisa Franko, a small inn that she and her husband, Valter Kramar, inherited from his parents a little over a decade ago. At the time, Ros had never worked as a chef. “I hadn’t even set foot in a professional kitchen. And I was pregnant,” she recalls. “But I learned.”

She certainly did. Dinner at Hisa Franko that night was so good that it was hard to believe she hadn’t spent her early 20s slaving away in a Michelin-starred galley somewhere. There were bright dandelion greens, just emerged in the springtime sun, that had been picked that day and battered; ramps emulsified into an electric green sauce to coat the sweet Slovenian mussels with an oniony earthiness; cod fried with a coating of ash, the pitch-black exterior contrasting sharply with the pearly white interior; deer heart served with uni as well as roe from marble trout raised a few kilometers downstream. It was innovative and elegant and utterly delicious.

After dinner, I mentioned to Ros that, in Slovenia, I was having a hard time distinguishing between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern. She herself had served tangerine sauce with the marble trout, and black garlic with the pork neck. “Look,” she said. “I keep my feet on the ground with my cooking. The base is local, seasonal, Slovenian. But cooking is always about personality, and personality isn’t just where you grow up. It’s also where you travel, the people who influence you, the experiences you have. I went to Tanzania when I was 14 and encountered spices for the first time—cloves, cinnamon, cumin. That’s a part of me, too.”

Ros’s lack of dogma about what is authentically of a time and place was refreshing. As I set off the next morning, I thought about something she had said just before heading upstairs to bed: “You can be creative only after you’ve put in a lot of kilometers.”

LAKESIDE IDYLL

Driving east from Kobarid through mountain passages, I came to Lake Bled, one of Slovenia’s most instantly recognizable spots. The lake—deeply blue and surrounded by more of those snowcapped peaks—is dominated by the church that sits on an island in its center. To get to the town, you must take a wooden boat called a *pletna*, navigated by oarsmen whose right to ferry passengers there was first granted by Empress Maria Theresa in the 18th century and has been passed on, generation to generation, ever since. It’s ridiculously picturesque, as long as you keep your eyes on the lake and mountains and away from the tacky souvenir shops, mini-golf courses, and Soviet-style hotels along the perimeter.

Most of the restaurant menus I perused in Bled were heavy on game meats and dumplings, but at Garden Village—a new eco-resort with luxury tree houses and tents, a self-cleaning swimming pool, and electric car-charging stations—something else was afoot. The restaurant’s tables were topped with plush squares of living grass, and its room dividers were planters of herbs, creating a greenhouse feel. The fare was Slovenian standards given novel twists. Smoked trout, a typical appetizer, came prepared three ways: in a creamy pâté; layered in thin, glistening slices; and rolled in nori, sushi style. Thick, homemade ravioli were stuffed not with the cottage cheese so familiar elsewhere in Slovenia but with a smoky white bean puree, and were served in a kicky sauce with vegetables that retained their pleasing crunch. Meeting chef Dusan Jovanovic, I learned that he had joined the kitchen a mere week before I arrived, his previous position that of private chef for a government official. I asked him if his food was Slovenian. He was shy and clearly preferred to let his cooking do the talking. Finally, he simply smiled and said, “Think globally, act locally.”

BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

I ate my last meal in Slovenia at Vila Podvin, an elegant restaurant on the grounds of a former castle on the outskirts of Lake Bled. Chef Uros Stefelin holds a weekly farmers’ market and is working to recover heirloom varieties such as the powerfully sweet and seedy tepka pear. In his dining room, he brings tradition forward with his food, as well: sturgeon served with wild garlic and hops and



Chef Uros Stefelin serves stewed onions, egg, potato, truffle foam, and pumpkin oil with mushrooms and bacon at Vila Podvin.



A magical plate of vegetables and broth by chef Benjamin Launay at Vander Urbani in Ljubljana.

WHERE TO BED DOWN + EAT WELL IN SLOVENIA

JB Restavracija

Chef Janez Bratovz applies modern techniques to farm-fresh ingredients and riffs on Slovenian culinary traditions. The formal setting is balanced by the warm hospitality of a family operation (Bratovz's wife is the manager, his daughter the

sommelier, his son a chef). Cesta Miklosiceva 17, Ljubljana, 386/(0)1-430-7070, jb-slo.com

Nebesa

Chef Ana Ros's parents run this simple but elegant resort that comprises four wood-sided cabins with fireplaces and alpine views. The hills are alive with opportunities for exploring the Soca Valley. Livek 39, Kobarid, 386/(0)

5-384-4620, nebesa.si

Hisa Franko

While Ana Ros masterminds multicourse tasting menus that might include local beef tartare, pasta filled with sheep's milk cottage cheese, and black cod fried in vegetable ashes, her husband, Valter Kramar, maintains a world-class wine cellar, favoring biodynamic and Slovenian varietals. Stays

at the inn's 13 guest rooms include breakfast.

Staro selo 1, Kobarid, 386/(0) 5-389-4120, hisafranko.com

Garden Village Resort

Designed with eco-conscious guests in mind, accommodations range from tents and tree houses to apartments with Jacuzzis and kitchenettes. Chef Dusan Jovanovic's poolside restaurant serves a menu

that changes daily and features vegetables and herbs from the garden used in novel preparations of local trout, stuffed pastas, and more.

Cesta Gorenjskega Odreda 16, Bled, 386/(0) 8-389-9220, gardenvillagebled.com

 For more places to eat in Slovenia, go to afar.com/slovfood.

Not-so-simple gnocchi from chef Dusan Jovanovic's kitchen at Garden Village Resort in Bled.



At Gostilna Pri Lojzetu in Zemono, chef Tomaz Kavcic turns lamb, vegetables, and polenta into abstract art.





In Radovljica, about 15 miles southwest of Lake Bled, a monument honors benefactress Josepina Hocevar, who supported Slovenian schools and hospitals .



Sheep graze in the Trenta Valley below the Vrsic Pass in the Julian Alps. The valley is the source of the Soca River, which runs through Slovenia to the Adriatic Sea.

a gingery foam; dandelion soup drizzled with pumpkin oil. “My dishes must taste like they would have a hundred years ago,” Stefelin told me. “I don’t want to change the flavor of our ingredients. But the combination—how you put them together—that’s where the creativity lies.”

The proof was in the polenta. Lunch at Vila Podvin started with a small bowl of raw polenta topped by a centimeter-high disk that was brown on the outside, white on the inside. For a moment, I wasn’t sure how to eat it. Did I pick up the disk and take a bite? Cut it into smaller pieces? Surely I wasn’t meant to roll it in the uncooked grain? Fortunately, the waiter intervened. “Is Slovenian breakfast!” he beamed, and I realized that what I was looking at was an egg, the top third shaved off, the rest

buried in the polenta. I dipped my spoon into it and tasted sweet cornmeal, rich egg, and crisp, bacony bits of fried pork fat. I had savored that particular combination before during my travels through Slovenia, but this version was more refined, more delicate. The thrill of discovery ran through me.

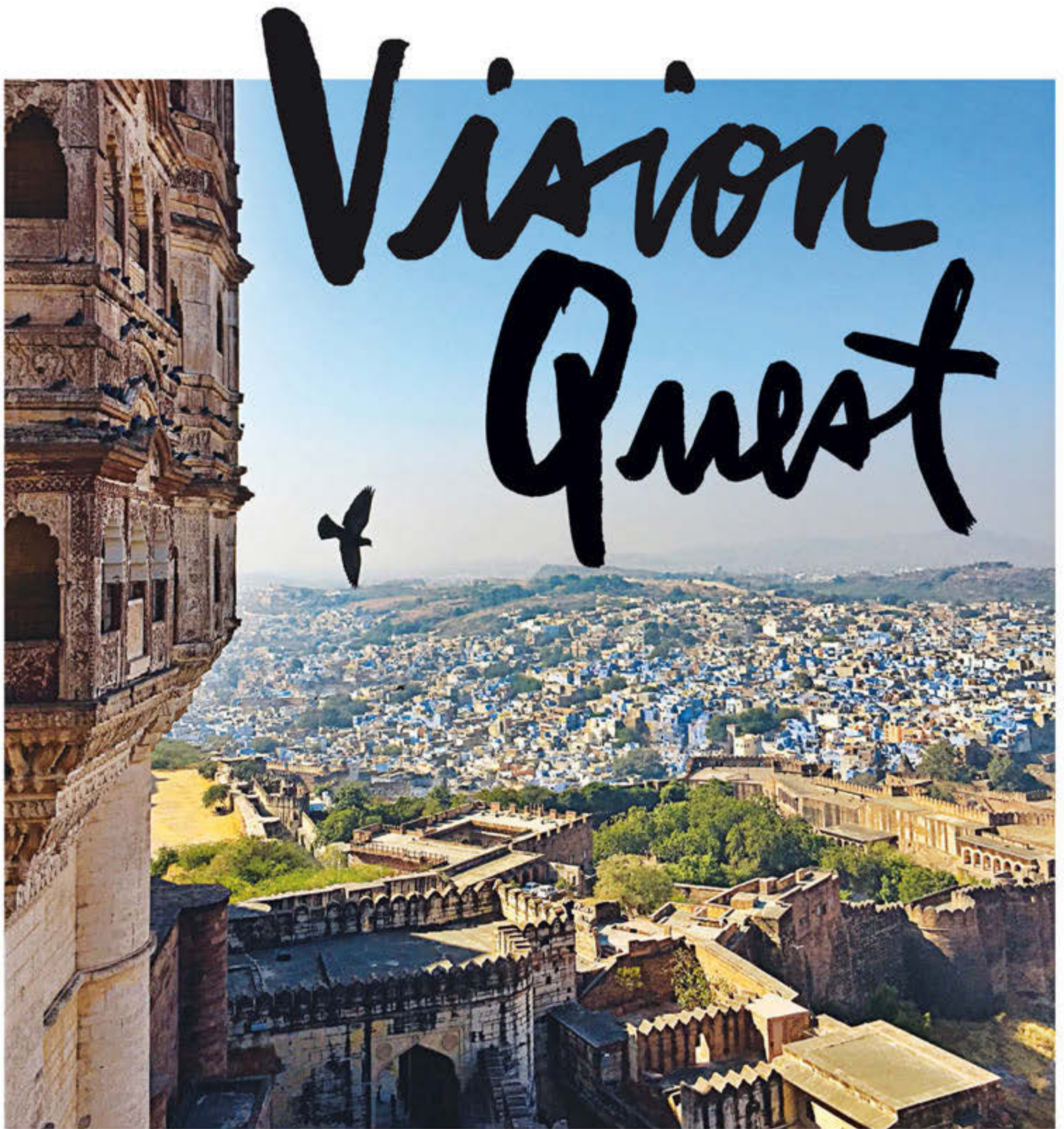
“If you want a revolution, you have to lay the groundwork,” Ros had told me at Hisa Franko. “In Denmark, they had that by the time René Redzepi came along,” she said, referring to the chef at Noma, currently ranked best restaurant in the world. “We don’t have it yet.” Ros and food writer Tomaz Srsen played down the notion of their country becoming the next big culinary destination. But I had to wonder, is visiting Slovenia now like that time you went to Copenhagen

hoping for a decent smørrebrød and discovered Noma’s fried reindeer lichen and musk ox tartare? Or when you went to Spain expecting to eat gazpacho and paella but found yourself at elBulli on the Catalan coast being served spherified olives and liquid-nitrogenized cotton candy? If a food revolution comes, doesn’t it look like a few inspired individuals, sparsely scattered around the country, doing very delicious things? **A**

AFAR contributing writer Lisa Abend wrote about bicycling in Copenhagen in the March/April issue. Photographer Christoph Haiderer shot Abend’s feature about Scandinavia’s Åland archipelago in the November/December 2014 issue of AFAR.



A pletna, or traditional wooden boat, provides the only transportation across Slovenia’s famous Lake Bled.



PIERA GELARDI, COFOUNDER *and* CREATIVE DIRECTOR of FASHION *and* LIFESTYLE WEBSITE REFINERY 29, BROUGHT AN EYE for COLOR *and* STYLE to HER TRAVELS THROUGH RAJASTHAN, INDIA'S MOST KALEIDOSCOPIC REGION. SHE DOCUMENTED THE JOURNEY on INSTAGRAM.



A FAMILY SHARES A MOTORBIKE in SAMODE. ↗
OPPOSITE PAGE: GET A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW of JODHPUR from MEHRANGARH FORT.



**India was
my COLOR-JUNKIE
Dream Come True:**

RED SARIS, GOLDEN MARIGOLD PETAL DISPLAYS,
and THEN BLUE, WHICH SEEMED TO
FOLLOW ME THROUGHOUT MY TRIP.

OF COURSE, THERE'S JODHPUR,
THE BLUE CITY, WHICH WAS ONE OF MY
FAVORITE PLACES TO WANDER. EVERYWHERE
WE WENT, WE'D SEE BLUE BUILDINGS
STRUNG WITH COLORFUL LAUNDRY.



WE FLEW INTO MUMBAI on our way to RAJASTHAN,
and I HAD A MEMORABLE BLUE MOMENT
THERE, TOO. AT THE HAJI ALI MOSQUE,
I NOTICED THIS FAMILY SHEEPISHLY SMILING and
STARING at ME and MY FRIENDS. I WAVED BACK.

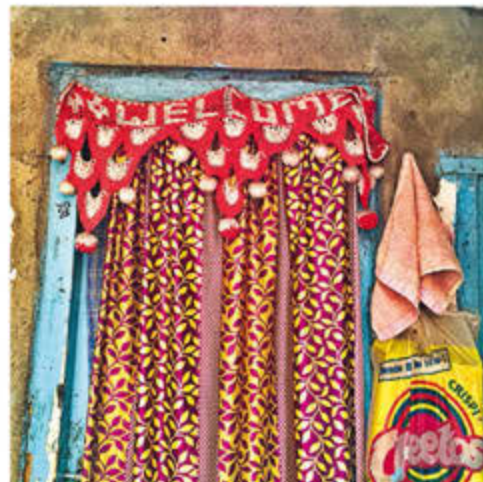
THEY ASKED IF THEY COULD TAKE OUR PICTURE, and
AFTERWARDS I ASKED to TAKE A PHOTO of THEM
and THEIR DAUGHTER. SHE HAD THE MOST

GORGEOUS COBALT BLUE DRESS,

WHICH MATCHED A COBALT BLUE BARREL NEARBY.



THE TRAIN IS AN ESSENTIAL PART
of THE INDIA EXPERIENCE,
BUT DRIVING IN RAJASTHAN IS
INCREDIBLE, too. THERE WERE THESE
LONG STRETCHES of DRY EARTH
PUNCTUATED by LITTLE MOMENTS:
THE POP of a FLUORESCENT
TURBAN, A GOATHERD and HIS
FLOCK, OR A WILDLY CUSTOMIZED
BUS PILED to TWICE
ITS HEIGHT WITH CARGO.



I THINK THAT RAJASTHAN IS THE
STYLE CAPITAL of THE WORLD.

I LOVED THE WAY PEOPLE MIXED PRINTS.
THEY TOOK GREAT PRIDE in THEIR APPEARANCE, too.

← ONE GUY HAD A BIG COOL MUSTACHE
to GO ALONG WITH HIS LARGER-THAN-LIFE PERSONALITY.
ALL OVER, YOU'D SEE WOMEN WEARING JEWEL-
COLORED SARIS and SILVER BANGLES WHILE DOING ROADWORK.



WARR

IN AUSTRALIA'S NORTHERN TERRITORY, WRITER [EMMA JOHN](#) DISCOVERS THE SURPRISING
SENSE OF ADVENTURE THAT RUNS IN HER FAMILY. PHOTOGRAPHS BY ÉRIVER HIJANO

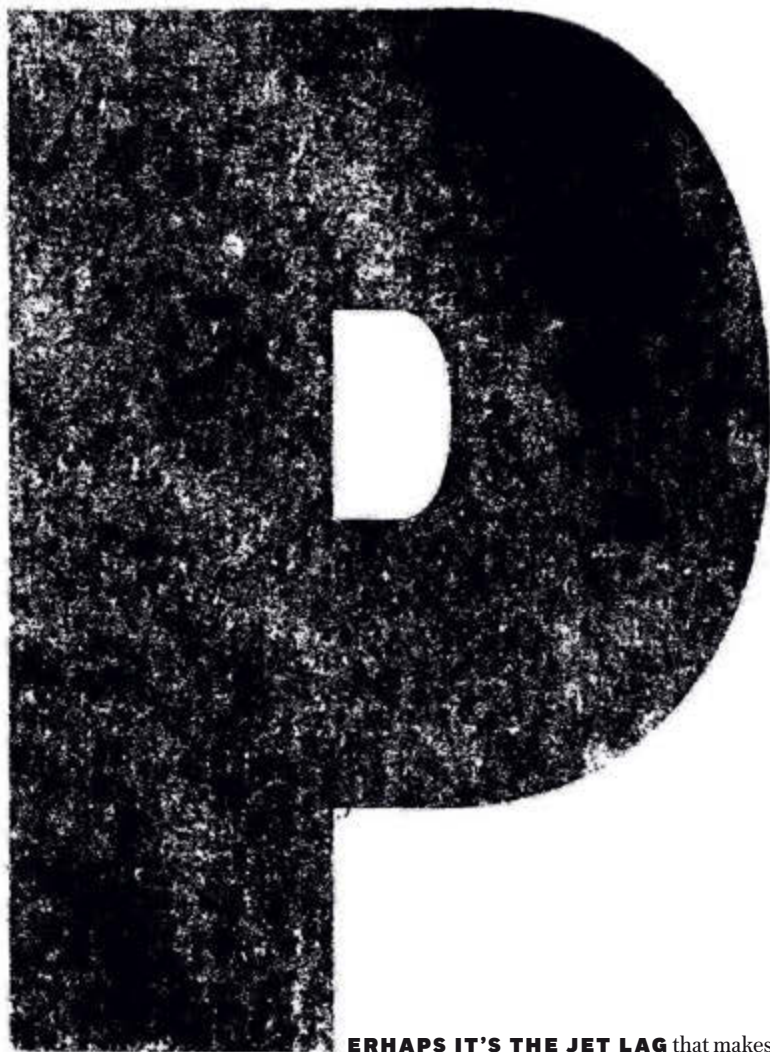
RI







**A hike into Kakadu National Park can take you to Jim Jim Falls, this page.
But you need only wade in from the beach to experience Darwin's Wave Lagoon, previous page.**



PERHAPS IT'S THE JET LAG that makes the birds sound so monstrous. All afternoon, as I try to nap, they have been infiltrating my sleep. Birds that hoot, birds that bark, birds that cough, birds that squeak, screech, groan, and sigh. Birds that howl like wolves or scream like babies. A bird that sounds like a dial-up modem connection. A bird that seems to be calling for someone named Marie. When I next wake, it's the middle of the night, and the birds have fallen silent. I hear a noisy rustling—rat or possum, I imagine—and brace myself, then turn on the light. The biggest insect I've ever seen flashes blackly over the book at my bedside. I love my grandparents, but sometimes their home really freaks me out.

In the tropical climate of Australia's Top End, everything teems. Bugs. Spiders. Ants of several different colors. Huge horseflies that perch on your head like miniature crows and administer a nasty nip 10 seconds later. Snakes in the trees, snakes in the bushes, snakes in the grass. My grandparents Elizabeth and Dennis—or Nan and Granpy, as my family calls them—have lived here, in the northernmost part of the Northern Territory, for 35 years. Nan, my father's mother, was widowed long before I was born and met Granpy when she came from Britain to visit Australian relatives. When I was two years old, she married him and emigrated. Today they live in a two-story house that they built on five acres of bush land about an hour outside Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory and its only true city.

The most popular time to visit the Top End is the dry season, from May to September, when the temperature is a fairly constant 86 degrees Fahrenheit and the sky is unvaryingly cloudless. But I'm visiting in the middle of a late-arriving wet season, before the onset of the drenching monsoons. The atmosphere is clogged with unreleased rain. An earthy, vegetal humidity smothers you like an overused dishrag on your face. You can't cool off in the sea, because it is also a time when the ocean is swarming with box jellyfish, whose poisonous sting can paralyze you faster than a shot of Botox to the heart, and the watering holes are hosting the seasonal invasion of killer crocodiles.

I've never really known what brought my grandparents to this animal kingdom, so tenuously tied to civilization. My Granpy grew up in rural Queensland. And my grandmother—a delicate-boned, smartly dressed English lady with immaculate waves of auburn and white hair, who likes good china and a certain decorum—has now stuck it out for 35 years in a place where dressing for dinner means wearing socks with your sandals.

They cope with the oppressive wet season by spending much of their time in their living room, where they've recently had a new air-conditioning unit installed. Persuading them to leave that room is not easy. Their life out here in the bush used to be active and sociable; they hosted lunch parties, played indoor lawn bowling at the local club, and traveled short distances to visit friends. "We don't see those friends anymore," Nan tells me, with a shrug. "Well, a lot of them have died."

And then there's my grandparents' wariness of Darwin itself. In the past few years, the big city and its rapidly inflating suburbs have become a no-go zone, and even the couple's once regular trips to the local shopping mall have been curtailed for fear of "ruffians in the car park." Their suspicion of the city has always baffled me, considering the myriad dangers that live, quite literally, on their own rural doorstep. Nan can point out the place where the local park ranger was standing one minute and swept to his death the next when a cliff collapsed. A friend of theirs down the road lost half his hand to a crocodile; another narrowly survived after being bitten by a deadly snake. But if I find the prospect of lethal reptiles off-putting, it's nothing compared with what my grandparents imagine awaits them on the mean streets of Darwin, which they presume are infested by roving gangs of drunken bikers.

In the first week of my visit, when I suggest I make an afternoon trip to the cinema, Nan looks horrified. The movie theater is on Mitchell Street, the liveliest road in Darwin. "I'm not sure we want you going to a 4:30 screening," says my grandmother. "It won't be over until 6 p.m. That's just too late to be coming home alone." I plead that I can handle myself, and that the local population holds no menace for a longtime resident of a city as historically murderous as London, but this argument does not soothe her. Since thirtysomethings shouldn't throw teenage tantrums, I head sulkily to the lunchtime film, then leave the cinema past a queue of little kids with curfews later than mine.

The drive out of town reveals just how far



Darwinites picnic on the green near Cullen Bay Marina—a “fancy part of town,” according to writer Emma John’s grandfather, Dennis. He and Emma’s grandmother used to hang out at the marina when they were first dating.

Darwin has advanced since I used to visit as a kid, when the airport itself was little more than a corrugated iron shed. There are freshly laid roads and glassy high-rise apartments. Entire suburbs have mushroomed into being: The population now tops 130,000. My grandparents are as suspicious of the new parts of town as they were of the old. One of the places they have been avoiding is the Darwin Waterfront, a recent redevelopment of the old mudflats, which cost the city \$1 billion and represents Darwin’s boldest attempt yet at 21st-century living. I tell Nan and Granpy I’d like to take them there for lunch. Reluctantly, they agree.

The Waterfront is a half dozen modestly modern blocks, shouldering an artificial beach where “stinger nets” keep the seawater free of jellyfish and allow you to swim in the bathwater-hot sea. A little farther along the promenade there’s a wave lagoon where kids are riding the

gentle, mechanical surf on bodyboards. We walk past a chain-brand coffee shop, a tapas bar, an upmarket spa. Above them all gleams the Vibe Hotel. We sit in its partially open-air café and order the lunch deal, and Nan flicks through a copy of the city’s daily paper, the *NT News*. Its front-page headline reads GIANT ROACH FOUND IN MAN’S EAR. In other news, an elderly woman’s bag was snatched by boys in the North Lakes shopping center. “It’s not worth going out if that’s what’s going to happen,” sighs Nan. Then the food comes, and the generous portion sizes stir a ripple of approval. I smile inwardly at my tiny first victory.

Granpy points out to sea. The old port, where he once worked as an electrician on cattle boats, is still visible. It is also, he explains, where the bombing of Darwin took place in 1942. “There was more tonnage destroyed here than in Honolulu,” he says. “The irony was, they

sold it all back to the Japanese for scrap after the war.” He tells me that the oil storage tunnels, built during the war to protect fuel tanks from Japan’s air raids, are open to the public, and I can visit them if I like.

MY FIRST TRIP to the Northern Territory, as a two-year-old flower girl at my grandparents’ wedding, I don’t remember at all. But my parents brought me back as an eight year old, and then, when I was 12 and my sister was 10, we were sent as unaccompanied minors on the 24-hour flight from Britain. Those trips embedded memories of a small, flat town, its two-story businesses selling fishing tackle or pearls. The few activities for kids all involved crocodiles. These enormous, vicious creatures were the Top End’s prime tourism commodities. We would go to ogle them on a river cruise where guides lured them out of the water with dead



When Emma visited Darwin as a child, most activities had something to do with crocodiles; this one lurks in the Yellow Water Billabong, one of the extensive wetlands in Kakadu National Park.

chickens, or we'd visit the crocodile farm, where they were bred for handbags. We finished our outings eating crocodile and chips in the café.

Originally a port on trade routes from Asia, Darwin has been ethnically diverse far longer than the rest of Australia. The city has a large Southeast Asian population, and in the vast wildernesses beyond, indigenous communities live on protected Aboriginal lands. It still has the flavor of pioneer territory—a macho place with a mining history, where people drive utility vehicles and go pig hunting with knives and dogs.

My visits to date have been about spending time with my grandparents, at their home and in their beloved garden. They love feeding the birds on their veranda and watching the wildlife that has colored the landscape outside their window: a resident goanna (monitor lizard), a few itinerant wallabies, the odd frill-necked

lizard. I've always found it hard to look past the hostile otherworldliness of their surroundings. Even the flowers look threatening, stretching eagerly upward on impossibly long stems, their trumpets neon yellow or unnaturally bright cerise. There are clumps of white lilies in my grandparents' garden that look like the advance guard of an alien invasion.

The impression of an inhospitable environment is only reinforced by a day trip, later in the week, to the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. I manage to persuade my grandparents to come along, because my Nan, who used to be a potter, gave classes at the Craft Council here two decades ago, before her withdrawal from public life.

They settle in at the café while I browse the Aboriginal paintings. The abstract dotted swirls and circles seem appropriately hallucinatory in the oppressive heat. Another room stocks native

biological specimens in glass cabinets, the most poisonous species gathered thoughtfully on one wall. The exhibit works its way from the very toxic sponge to spiders the size of a child's face, and a sea snake that could star in its own *Godzilla versus Whatever* movie.

Set back in a gallery by itself is a permanent exhibition on Cyclone Tracy. Cyclones come and go here during the wet season, but Tracy was unforgettable. She arrived on Christmas Eve 1974 and flattened the city, tearing corrugated iron roofs off buildings and then using them to batter what remained. There's a booth where you can stand, in pitch darkness, and listen to a sound recording of the storm; the inhuman shriek of winds and flying metal is impossible to bear for more than a couple of minutes.

This happened five years before Nan arrived, but I know Granpy was caught in the

middle of Tracy. When I rejoin them in the café, I ask what he thinks of the exhibition. He shakes his head and says he hasn't spent any time in there: "I don't need to go through it again." And out comes the story—of a young electrician living in a caravan park. The storm caused the trailers to go tumbling across the grounds, and he and six of his neighbors were forced to hunker down in a car that was slowly filling with water. "The first wave of the storm wasn't so bad," he remembers. "Then there was a calm, the eye of the cyclone. But when the wind came back, it picked up all the metal and hurled it about. The next morning there were huge iron girders driven through trees. Only one or two houses were still standing."

Granpy has always looked like the kind of man who can handle tough situations. He's muscular, with a head of hair that merges into his beard in a koala-bearish manner. At home that evening, we open a bottle of wine and he tells me about the time he got knocked out on boozy coconut *feni* in Goa, a tale he clearly never thought I was old enough to hear before. He doesn't drink much anymore, though. "After Tracy, I'd come home and I'd drink so much I couldn't go out," he says. "Then I met your grandmother. She was my saving grace."



WHILE I'M TRYING

to persuade Nan and Granpy to explore their own city, they are adamant that I should

go "out bush" and see some of the natural wonders that sit on their doorstep. I've never been a hiker, I'm no great nature lover, and I hate camping. But since they seem increasingly game—I have now booked us dinner at the best restaurant in Darwin, and they have agreed we should stay overnight at a nearby hotel—I decide it's only right that I test myself, too.

Kakadu, which begins just under two hours by car east of Darwin, is one of the larger national parks in the world, bigger than Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Everglades combined. There's no such thing as a day trip to Kakadu, and even my modest two-day guided tour requires a trip to a camping store—which nearly puts me off the whole idea when the woman selling me insect repellent warns me about "all the disgusting, bitey, infected creepies we've got here."

The morning I meet up with the four-wheel-drive tour bus there is a cyclone warning, and we set off in gray, squally conditions. A dozen or so backpackers doze in their seats, so I sit

up front next to our guide, Nathan, and watch the landscape thicken, its straggly eucalyptus joined by pygmy palms and tall speargrass—terrain for hunting and hiding and ambushing. Occasionally, Nathan yelps the name of a bird or animal and points at the branches or the side of the road, but all I can see is a zoetrope of trunks. I wonder if he's just making it up.

Two and a half hours from Darwin is South Alligator River, where a gas-station-cum-tavern serves as the de facto community; beyond it lie Kakadu's great floodplains. The sun has broken through, and a flock of waders (magpie geese, says Nathan, which are neither magpies nor geese) shoots suddenly out of the grasses, as if they've just been released from under the earth itself.

The wetlands are only one of the myriad ecosystems contained within Kakadu's boundaries. We drive on through savannah woodlands—noisily alive with rainbow lorikeets and oriental cuckoos and cockatoos brandishing their yellow mohawks with punk attitude—and arrive in stone country, where the sandstone cliffs have sheltered indigenous communities for tens of thousands of years. A walk along the escarpment reveals the centuries-old rock art depicting cultural traditions, historical events, and the rich animal life that surrounded the Aboriginal communities.

The Aboriginals who inhabit the land call the wet season *gudjewe*. The climate may be enervating and inconvenient for humans, but out in the bush it's the time to breed and feed. On an evening boat trip along the Yellow Waters, the activity is so intense it seems as if nature is staging a documentary just for us. Flying foxes swarm above mangrove trees, and tarpon splash about. A kingfisher dives for a shrimp, bashes it against a branch, and chugs it down. Even the tiniest puddle is swarming with tadpoles. My eyes slowly acclimate to the rich hidden world surrounding us, and I realize I've never seen so many different types of butterflies in one day.

We sleep on camp beds in fairly basic permanent tents. These keep out the snakes but not all of the ubiquitous mozzies. It is not an entirely comfortable night, and the next morning we wake to a kind of apocalyptic flooding. Water is tipping out of the sky as if God himself is operating the dump truck. At the first thunderclap I look up, terrified, expecting to see an airplane coming down.

The trail we're taken to hike is swamped with puddles that turn out, on entering them, to be knee high, but the conditions only stoke

STAY + EAT: DARWIN

STAY

[Mantra on the Esplanade](#)

The hotel's panoramic views of Darwin Harbor are hard to beat, and the Central Business District location is a convenient base for exploring the city. Stay in one of the guest rooms or live like a local in an apartment-style accommodation. Guest rooms from \$97; apartments from \$145. 88 The Esplanade, 61/(O) 7-5665-4333, [mantra.com.au](#)

[Vibe Hotel Darwin Waterfront](#)

The 121 modern-feeling guest rooms may be on the small side, but Vibe's location is wide open—

right along the waterfront, a short stroll from the restaurants, shops, and pubs lining the promenade. From \$80. 7 Kitchener Dr., 61/(O) 8-8982-9998, [tfehotels.com](#)

EAT

[Hanuman](#)

Chef Jimmy Shu's Thai-, Indian-, and Nyonya-inspired menu showcases indigenous ingredients in such dishes as barramundi fish tikka, Thai chili prawns, and lemongrass- and chili-spiked oysters. The spicy cuisine is complemented by a standout list of Australian wines. Doubletree Esplanade, 93 Mitchell St., 61/(O) 8-8941-3500, [hanuman.com.au](#)

[The Kitchen at the Darwin Ski Club](#)

This low-key beachside bistro's hearty menu includes grilled lamb chops, chicken schnitzel, and meze platters with grilled chorizo and Wagyu meatballs. 20 Conacher St., Fannie Bay, 61/(O) 8-8987-6630, [darwinskiclub.com.au](#)

[Pee Wee's at the Point](#)

Secluded coastal surroundings in a nature reserve set the stage for Pee Wee's tempura soft-shell mud crab, grain-fed eye fillets (beef tenderloin), and imported buffalo cheese. Alec Fong Lim Drive, East Point, 61/(O) 8-8987-6868, [peevees.com.au](#)

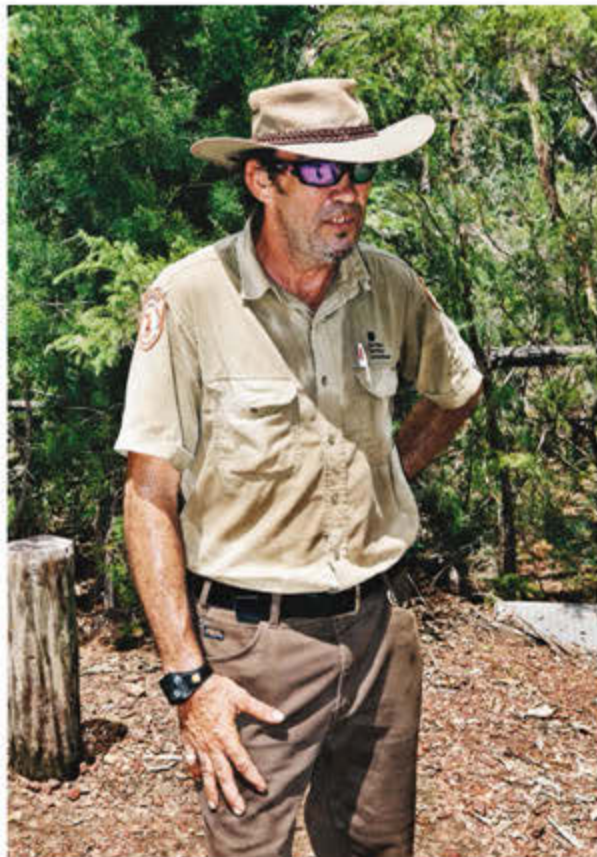


When the Northern Territory's heat is scorching, Dennis opts to watch birds in the garden from the air-conditioned sanctuary of his living room.



**THE
PLACE IS,
AS PROMISED,
UTTERLY
UNTOUCHED.
IT IS ALSO,
I REALIZE,
BEAUTIFUL.**





For Emma's grandmother, "Nan," opposite page, newspaper headlines like the one above epitomized her image of Darwin, despite the city's tranquil waterfront. Travelers in the Northern Territory might meet up with a ranger in Kakadu National Park, above right, take a cruise on the Yellow Water Billabong, below, or examine a termite mound in Lichtfield National Park, below right, west of Kakadu.



GET INTO THE WILD: KAKADU NATIONAL PARK

OUTFITTERS

Many travel companies offer tailor-made trips and itinerary extensions into Kakadu National Park from Darwin. **Abercrombie & Kent** (abercrombiekent.com), **Asia Transpacific Journeys** (asiatranspacific.com), **Cox & Kings** (coxandkingsusa.com), and **GeoEx** (geoex.com) book travelers into the finest lodges and pair them with the region's best guides.

LODGES

Bamurru Plains

A short distance from Kakadu, a three-hour drive east of Darwin, 10 airy bungalows on stilts have en suite showers and views of the wildlife-filled Mary River floodplains. *From \$420 per adult.* bamurruplains.com

Cicada Lodge

In Nitmiluk National Park, just south of Kakadu, Cicada

Lodge's 18 balconied suites are filled with Aboriginal art and face the otherworldly sandstone formations of the Katherine Gorge. *From \$530.* cicadalodge.com.au

Mercure Kakadu Crocodile Hotel

This crocodile-shaped retreat has all the creature comforts you'll need after a few days in the wild, including air-conditioning, Wi-Fi, and an outdoor

swimming pool. *From \$120.* accorhotels.com.au

Wildman Wilderness Lodge

Located halfway between Darwin and Kakadu National Park, ecofriendly Wildman has 10 modern, air-conditioned cabins and 15 fan-cooled, safari-style tents. *Cabins from \$365; tents from \$240.* wildmanwildernesslodge.com.au



Nathan's enthusiasm. Every so often he squats suddenly, or lunges into a bush, and comes back with hands cupped around a frog or a grasshopper.

As the rain lessens, I surprise myself by starting to spot things independently: a quail-like rainbow pitta rooting around the forest floor, a single native hyacinth, a caterpillar pretending to be a new shoot on a branch. If you had told me 24 hours earlier that I would walk two hours in sheeting rain, soaked to the skin, and feel moved by a glimpse of an insect, I would not have believed you. But something about the landscape is getting to me, and when Nathan drops me off back at my grandparents', he lets me in on a secret. "You know there's an incredible lagoon right near here?" he tells me. "*Girraween*, it's called. Hidden just behind these plots. I think you'd like it."

A day later, Granpy packs the car for our overnight trip to the city. There is a palpable sense of nervous anticipation, not to mention rather a lot of luggage for one night. "We'll have been out three times in one week!" exclaims Nan. "We shan't *know* ourselves." But it's me who is most apprehensive. The restaurant I've booked is on the dreaded Mitchell Street. What if it proves itself to be everything they fear? In conversation on the Kakadu trek, I had laughed off my grandparents' dread of the place, only for Nathan to tell me that Mitchell Street does, indeed, have a long-standing reputation for bar brawls (and the odd one that spills into the street). And now, driving into the city past taverns advertising XXXX beer, and companies that hire out heavy agri-machinery, I'm reminded just how masculine this place is.

The restaurant, called Hanuman, turns out to be full of smiling, smartly dressed clientele, but now I have new worries. Is the chic, low-level lighting too dark for Nan to read the menu? How spicy will the food be? I pray that we won't hear a curse word all evening. The last time my grandparents went to the movies, they left before the film even started because a group of bikers had walked in swearing. The food arrives: a big bowl of curry, an aromatic duck salad, some lamb. Nan and Granpy regard the chicken satay warily, then find it delicious. "It all has so much flavor, doesn't it?" says Nan approvingly. The waiter tells us the cuisine is called *nyonya* and is particular to the Chinese population of Malaysia and Singapore. We feel like the first Europeans to discover it.

Over drinks—mocktails, in Nan's case—Granpy opens up about his own travels. In his 20s he worked his way around the globe over the course of two and a half years, from

San Francisco to New York to Europe and overland to Asia, with nothing more than the electrician's license in his pocket. On his way home to Queensland he'd landed in Darwin, "thin as my little finger, and crooked as a dog," with just eight dollars to his name. Eventually, he'd worked up the money to get back to his family, but now he was a different person, full of experiences that the rural community he had left behind couldn't begin to understand. "My mates thought I was a skite, a joke," he says. "Even my parents weren't interested in where I'd been." That, he tells me, was why he moved back to Darwin, where he would come across people like the ones he'd met in Turkey or Indonesia or India. "It was the only place I didn't feel like a freak."



And then came Nan, a glamorous British traveler striking out solo after the death of her husband, visiting her relatives in Australia. With her green trouser suit and her long auburn hair and her smart accent, she was like a creature from another world. "I picked her up in an old Bongo van," he remembers, grinning. "She must have thought she'd come to the end of the earth." He asked her if she'd like to see some sights, and they spent six weeks traveling together to Adelaide, Ayers Rock, Alice Springs.

I watch them smiling nostalgically at each other, and a wave of sentiment blindsides me. Suddenly, my grandparents' lives appear so much more adventurous than I've ever conceived: my Granpy, who left the family farm to see the world on a dime, and my Nan, who moved to the other side of the world for love. And it doesn't surprise me as much as it should when, after we return to find our hotel lobby a party zone with dance music blaring from

the bar, my grandparents insist on having a nightcap. Shall I get it sent up to our suite, I ask? "No thank you," says Nan. "I like it down here." She has never seemed so giddy. Perhaps it's all the mocktails. I ask her what she'd like to drink next, and she gives me a mischievous smile. "What would happen if I asked the barman for an Ovaltine?"

I enjoy watching my grandparents charm the hotel staff and gossip with the partiers. Age may have brought a fondness for comfort and routine, but there's no doubt that underneath, their spirit of adventure remains. Nan and I go for a pedicure the next morning, and the city seems scattered with pleasant surprises—a little arcade of boutiques, an Asian café that serves tea and cakes on bone china. Nan even runs into an old acquaintance she hasn't seen in 10 years. "We don't come into town anymore," she tells her confidentially, "but my granddaughter's staying and, well, you have to have visitors to show you what was here all along."

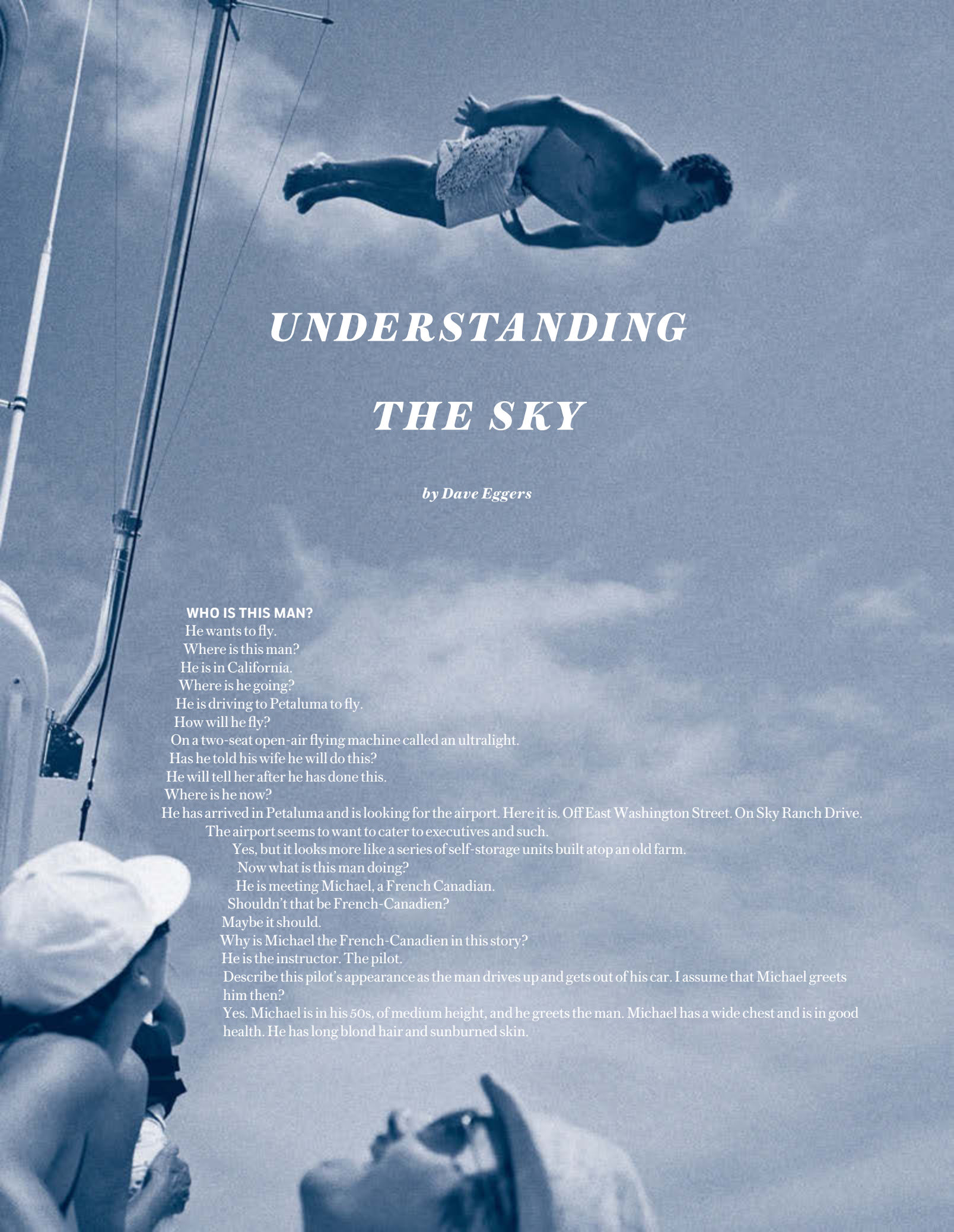
Once we're safely back home, I tell Granpy what Nathan has said about the Girraween lagoon—how wild it is, and how nearby. Granpy says he's never been, and he'll take me for a look, and we drive around until we uncover the unmarked road, pitted with puddles like small ponds. There are several forks in the track, and we guess which route to take, disappearing deeper into dense, anonymous bushland.

It's with some relief that we finally spot the edge of the water. Outside the car the waist-high grass is spotted with orange flowers so tiny they look like berries, being pollinated by enormous bees that drag their legs behind them. We stand in a clearing next to the shore, where two butterflies are courting. "I've been here 30 years," Granpy admits, "and this is the first time I've come down here."

There's a clamor of frogs, and a rush of ants pours over the rocks. An ibis rises elegantly from the water, the light flashing off its beak. The place is, as Nathan promised, utterly untouched. It is also, I realize, beautiful.

Neither Granpy nor I want to risk the drive farther into the wilderness to seek out the path around the water. We find our way back to the main road surprisingly quickly. "Seemed a lot farther coming in than going out," says Granpy. "Well, that's going into the unknown." We look back over our shoulders and agree that next time we'll push a bit farther. **A**

Contributing writer Emma John wrote about learning to sing in Vienna in the January/February issue of AFAR. Photographer Ériquer Hijano is profiled on page 18.



UNDERSTANDING THE SKY

by Dave Eggers

WHO IS THIS MAN?

He wants to fly.

Where is this man?

He is in California.

Where is he going?

He is driving to Petaluma to fly.

How will he fly?

On a two-seat open-air flying machine called an ultralight.

Has he told his wife he will do this?

He will tell her after he has done this.

Where is he now?

He has arrived in Petaluma and is looking for the airport. Here it is. Off East Washington Street. On Sky Ranch Drive.

The airport seems to want to cater to executives and such.

Yes, but it looks more like a series of self-storage units built atop an old farm.

Now what is this man doing?

He is meeting Michael, a French Canadian.

Shouldn't that be French-Canadian?

Maybe it should.

Why is Michael the French-Canadian in this story?

He is the instructor. The pilot.

Describe this pilot's appearance as the man drives up and gets out of his car. I assume that Michael greets him then?

Yes. Michael is in his 50s, of medium height, and he greets the man. Michael has a wide chest and is in good health. He has long blond hair and sunburned skin.

Does he look like a skier?

He does.

Does he look like a surfer?

More like a skier, but sure.

Is he wearing a yellow suede pullover, tied at the chest with suede laces, and thus looking much like one of the explorers who accompanied or emulated Lewis and Clark?

Yes. This is how Michael looks. Like a 19th-century fur trapper crossed with a 21st-century ski instructor.

What is his accent?

It is that of a French-Canadien. Wild and jagged and with a bit of the sing-song to it.

What does the man think of when he meets a French-Canadien?

He thinks of backpacking through Europe as a young man, and meeting a young woman from Québec who had come into the knowledge that she was doubly oppressed, by the Americans below her and the English-speaking Canadians all around her.

Where was this?

This was in Paris.

What did the man suggest to her?

That she stay in Paris. That she might feel more able to breathe in Paris. Among millions speaking her language.

What did she say?

She said some angry things.

And the man felt for her.

He felt for her.

Where is she now?

The man doesn't know.

WHERE IS THIS MAN NOW?

He is in Petaluma. He is talking to Michael. Michael is asking him what clothes he is wearing or has brought. The sky will be very cold, Michael is saying, so he had instructed the man to dress as if he were going skiing. The man, being a bad skier, a skier who learned how to ski wearing jeans and skiing down meager Wisconsin hills, is wearing jeans and has brought a borrowed snowboarding jacket.

What does Michael say?

He says You will freeze. So he lends the man a jacket, heavy as a dentist's lead bib, and snow pants and gloves and everything else.

How cold is it this day in Petaluma, California? When is this again?

This is February.

So it's cold.

You can't assume this. There are virtually no seasons in Petaluma, California. This day is clear and blue, and the air on the ground is about 60.

Wait. Who is that other man? The one coming now.

He is another pilot at the airport. He has a dog, some kind of poodle, but the sort of poodle a pilot would have. A handsome dog.

What is he saying?

He is telling Michael that it's too cold to fly this open-cockpit plane this day.

But you said it is 60 degrees.

But 2,000 feet up it will feel like 30. And there will be wind.

Will the wind be cold?

Very cold.

And you say that this machine has no protection against these elements.

None at all. A small windshield for the pilot, but the passenger sits behind the pilot, and a bit above him, so he receives little to none of the windshield's protections.

What does this plane look like?

It looks like a hang glider carrying a three-wheeled motorcycle.

One assumes it is red.

It is bright red, polished to a sheen. Everything in Michael's hangar is red and white and spotless.

One thinks of fire engines.

Yes. There are two of these flying machines, each of them built by French people and very clean. Very clean and sturdy and instilling of trust. In this hangar there is also a performance motorcycle.

Also red?

Also red. And a motorized skateboard. And weight-lifting equipment, and gravity boots.

What are gravity boots?

You attach them to your legs, and you hang upside down from a bar, and you do sit-ups and such while suspended

upside down.

You say this French-Canadian is in his 50s?

He is.

He is one of those people.

He is. He likes speed, and adventure, and machines. He is enthused about being alive. All over his hangar are posters and signs that offer encouragement. Signs that say AWESOME, WOW, and YOU CAN DO IT.

What is the name of his company?

It is called Spirits Up.

YOU MENTIONED ANOTHER MAN BEFORE, A MAN WITH A DOG, WHO IS WALKING BY.

He looks like Chuck Yeager, steely and lean, about 60. He walks by and says it's too cold to go up that day, and it seems that Michael has been wondering about this, too. Michael asks his guest how long he has driven to get there, and the man says one hour. It's as if Michael is gauging how disappointed the man will be if he cannot fly this day.

How disappointed would the man be?

Very disappointed.

Why?

Because he wants to fly this day.

Why?

Because he has wanted to fly on a machine like this for 20 years.

Why?

Because when he first saw these machines, in some photograph somewhere as a young man, he thought that here was the realization of man's dream to fly as birds fly. The ultralight seemed to offer the liberation humans had always sought—to be able to choose when and where we flew, and to fly alone, and to be able to swoop low and bank tightly around a copse of trees, or to hug the coast, looking below for dolphins or whales. To be untethered, to be able to see all obstacles below as abstractions, as shapes flown over without the possibility of them slowing the flyer down.

Does Michael ask the man about his motivations?

He does. He asks why flying this day is important to him, and the man gives a shorter version of the answer above. Then Michael asks how old the man is, and the man tells him he is 43.

Oh, that explains it, Michael says.

Explains what? the man asks.

Most of the people who come here are a certain age. Forty, 50, 60, 70. Men and women of this certain age, Michael says. He is putting on his heavy yellow suede gloves and is satisfied that the man is in the category of his usual customers. Men who think this machine is the closest thing to the flight of the hawks that dominate the sky of this part of the world—circling high, slow, in no particular rush.

But there are hang gliders. Are those not closer to the way of birds?

But they depend on wind, a capricious thing. You have no agency. And you are always falling. You rise only if you catch an updraft. You have little control over the duration of flight. Birds do better on all these fronts.

There are helicopters.

Yes, but they are loud and ungainly and enclosed. Same with small planes. Only an ultralight combines all the things that humans have said they want from flight: a feeling of real flight, alive to the wind and sun; control over one's course, the ability to go up and down and left and right at will; the ability to do all this alone, or with one other. This machine looks so much like all the drawings of lunatics and dreamers over the centuries, everyone who wanted to fly, that it would seem to have overtaken the world's imagination—that by now we would all be flying this way to visit friends, go to work, to explore near and far.

But it is not this way.

How strange is that? We have wanted jet packs, and we have wanted easy and inexpensive personal aircraft, and here it is, and virtually no one knows about it. Or if they do, they have not been drawn to it. The dream of millennia has been realized, and we ignore it.

But Michael's clients do not ignore it. The nearness of death creates urgency.

It does.

So they are ready to fly now?

They are ready.

THE MAN HAS HIS LEAD-HEAVY BIB, AND SNOW PANTS, AND SUEDE GLOVES, AND WHAT ELSE?

There is also a helmet with a visor for wind protection and a built-in microphone for in-flight communication. And sheepskin kneepads. Sheepskin kneepads?

Because the passenger's knees receive the brunt of the arctic wind.

And so they taxi to the runway.
They do.
The speed is minimal.
It is like driving a golf cart.
And then what?
They wait at a bend in the runway.
Waiting for what?
Waiting for something. It's unclear. Maybe for clearance from the air traffic control tower.
Is there an air traffic control tower at this airstrip?
Not that the man can see.
But soon they are taxiing down the runway.
They are.
It is very fast?
It is not. As far as you can tell, you reach about 20 or 30 miles an hour, and then, as you are settling in for a much longer takeoff, suddenly you are in the air. You are flying.
Will you describe the takeoff?
It is almost vertical.
How can it be almost vertical?
There is the airstrip. It is about 1,200 yards long. Michael positions the machine and begins taxiing. After about 100 yards, just as the plane is picking up speed, you are aloft.
When?
After a few hundred yards!
Just like that?
The liftoff is almost vertical. This is what we've been trying to communicate.
And then they are in the air. The man is in the air.
As if plucked upward by a passing cloud. As if pulled suddenly heavenward, like a yo-yo on a string.
The man is breathless.
Yes.
The man is scared.
No.
The man is surprised at the sudden elevation.
Very. It makes other planes feel conservative, lumbering.
This machine, though, is a bit like a kite. That would explain the sudden taking of wind.
Yes. The wing is made of Dacron and Mylar, and takes the wind like a kite would. There is a feeling of divine intervention, of being lifted. But the machinery of the plane is very real, and heavy, and there is a propeller spinning furiously behind you. There is a peculiar combination of the steady progress of the machine and the delicate harnessing of the wind.
Like a sailboat.
Much like a sailboat.
But in the sky.
Yes.
Is it loud?
It's hard to tell. The man and the pilot are wearing helmets, and they hear nothing but the music Michael is piping through.
What music is this?
The first song is by John Denver.
The men are flying and listening to John Denver?
Yes. It seems that Michael wants to provide an immersive experience, and has chosen to fill the man's helmet with music of his choosing.
And his choice is John Denver.
It seems so.
But did not John Denver die in a plane crash?
Yes, he did. But this song Michael has chosen seems to speak of the sweep of the land below you, green farms, and collapsed barns, and crisp shapes of cows, black and white, and now horses.
And?
And now you fly over a school, and can see dozens of kids in the courtyard, eating their lunch, a flock of hungry birds circling above, hoping for crumbs from careless children.
And?

A goalpost looking like a twisted paper clip. Sheep like mouse droppings. Neighborhoods like playing cards just dealt, neatly arranged in a semicircle.

YOU HAD SAID IT WAS COLD IN THE SKY.

It feels like it's 10 degrees.

But you are warm.

ALL THE PLACES OF THE MAN'S BODY THAT MICHAEL COVERED ARE WARM. MICHAEL HAS DONE A FINE JOB.

MICHAEL DOESN'T WANT THE MAN TO BE COLD.

And the sheepskin kneepads?

They are miraculous. But there is one part of the man's body, his chin, that is exposed to the wind, and his chin feels flayed. It feels like it's being pressed onto cold steel with great force.

But it is not so uncomfortable. It is bearable.

It is bearable.

Because of the beauty.

The beauty is extreme. There are rolling hills, and there is a copse of trees guarding a group of small homes, and there is a junkyard, all of the broken cars arranged in neat rows. There is a pair of farmers talking over an old gray wooden fence. They are swooping over them.

How high up are they as they swoop over the farmers?

They are perhaps 200 feet.

Do the farmers look up, startled?

No.

Do they hear the flying machine?

They don't seem to hear it. They fly low over them, no more than a hundred feet above, and they don't look up.

The machine is quiet.

The machine seems to be quiet, at least insofar as what those on the land can hear.

The animals, do they move or look up?

No one and nothing looks up. The men on the machine seem to be invisible. They are flying where they want to fly, as high as 3,000 feet and as low as 200, and no one seems to see them or hear them. They are ghosts, and they have fuel, and they have free will.

So where are they going?

They are going west, to the coast.

How far is the coast from Petaluma and its farms and homes and buildings?

It is 20 miles as the crow flies.

The men are flying as the crow flies.

They are flying as the crow flies, so they see the Pacific in no time.

Does it spread so wide the man can see, at the horizon's ends, the bend of the earth?

It does, and he does.

What is its color?

It is a bleached blue. The sun is strong.

What about the waves?

They come at the shore like waifs in white linen.

Do they see surfers?

They are not close enough yet. Wait. Now they are. And there they are. Two surfers, sitting on the surface, waiting like sentries.

Are the men flying over the ocean now?

No, the man asks Michael about that, but Michael says it's impossible to land on water in this machine, and if the engine stops working, he needs somewhere to land.

Is this the first time Michael has mentioned the engine failing?

Come to think of it, it is.

AND NOW?

They turn away from the coast, a high, slow, banking turn, a planetary turn, magisterial, and they face inland again. And now there is a beeping sound, followed by a woman's recorded voice informing the pilot and his guest that there is an aircraft somewhere nearby, that the pilot needs to beware of this craft in his airspace.

What exactly does the warning say?

"Traffic nearby."

That's it?

That's it.

But what does the radar say?

There is no radar.

What do the instruments say?

There are no instruments on this machine that track other aircraft.

So what can you do to avoid this aircraft?

You can look around and see if you see other aircraft.

You just look with your eyes?

Yes. The pilot begins to look left and right. And he encourages the man to look around, too.

And he sees anything?

They see nothing. But it seems possible that some rogue aircraft could come screaming into their airspace at any second.

Like a missile.

A missile is the corollary that comes to mind. And they are flying at a relatively slow speed, far slower than a jet or real airplane would fly. It feels a bit like being in a hot air balloon.

Has the man been in a hot air balloon?

No. But now the warning is coming again, the beep, the eerily calm recorded voice. "Traffic nearby." They are looking around again.

They see nothing?

They see nothing. They see the foothills ahead, they see the white and pink and gray of Petaluma's downtown, they see the rays of sun, they see the lime-green trees and parks below, the Sierra far to the east, they see the bay beyond, some tankers holding steady, they see the blue dome of the sky streaked by white clouds, but they see no one else up here at all.

Strange.

The warning comes a third time. "Traffic nearby." Michael is perplexed. He has no answers for why this warning comes repeatedly

without any other aircraft visible.

It is nerve-racking?

You know, it's actually exhilarating. The danger does not seem grave, even if another aircraft is nearby in the sky. There is so much of it, the sky, that they can avoid the pilot and his guest.

It is the same with water.

How do you mean?

There is so much ocean, so much river, so much bay, so much sea, and there is virtually no one there.

No one on the water.

No one on any water.

Right. Just like there is no one in this sky. Wait, now the warning is going off again, about others in the sky, but there is no one in the sky. They're all on land.

Everyone is on land.

Everyone says they want to be in the sky or in the sea but they're actually all on land. Humans are land creatures, like the cows and the sheep, and we rarely do anything we say we want to do. We say we want to fly the way a bird flies, but there are these machines that fly much like birds fly, and no one cares.

But they are there.

They are. Wait. Now they're heading back to the land.

The flight is over.

They're almost home. Approaching the airstrip. It's been an hour or so, and they are descending. All the things on the ground are getting bigger. The shoebox hangars are growing. They can see golfers looking down at their golf balls.

How long was the flight?

An hour. Maybe less.

Was an hour enough?

It was enough for now. It was enough to know that this is available. That Michael is there, that the coast is not far, that the farmers won't mind, the animals won't mind, that the machine is quiet and safe and will work next time, that this kind of cold liberation is close at hand.

So the man leaves and goes home?

He does. But before he does, Michael will tell him to read a book called *Understanding the Sky*. Some kind of manual for flight.

And?

It will be incomprehensible. 

Dave Eggers is the author of nine books, including *The Circle*, *A Hologram for the King*, *Zeitoun*, and *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. He is also the founder of *McSweeney's*, a San Francisco-based independent publishing company.

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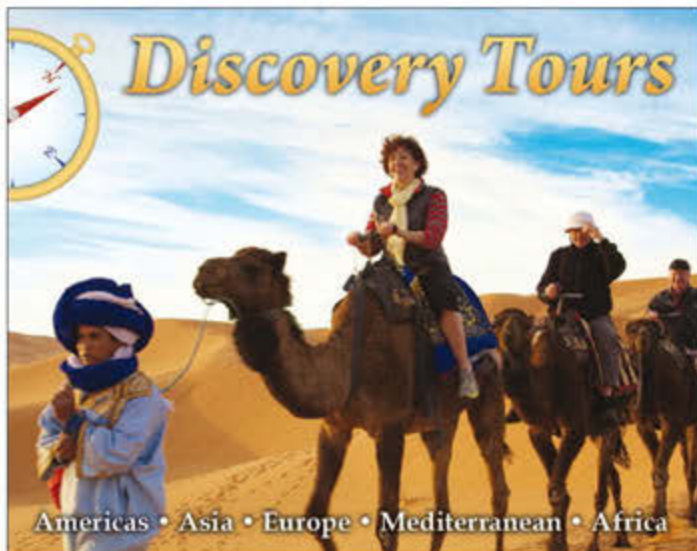
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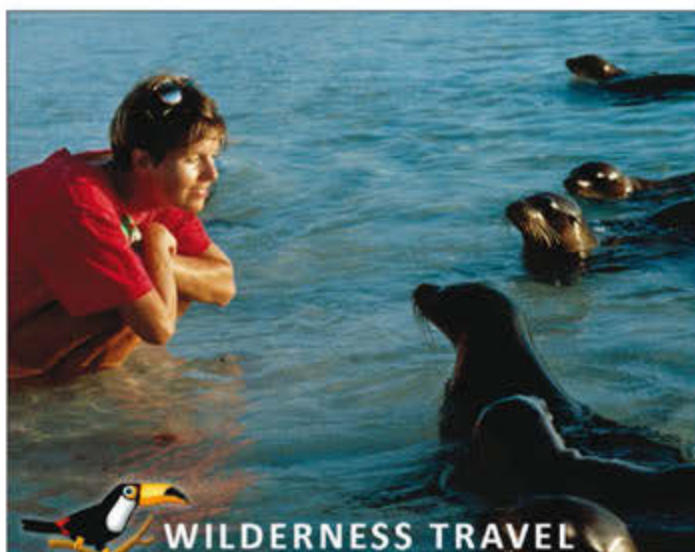
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In 2013, Hiroshi Sugimoto printed photos on Hermès scarves.

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At this **international photography festival** in France, van Gogh buffs make way for photo fans.

Founded in 1970, **Les Rencontres d'Arles** is to photography what Fashion Week is to couture. Every summer, shutterbugs and gallery owners from around the world converge on this Provençal town—where van Gogh painted some of his most famous works—to check out emerging talent and trends. Even folks whose interest in photography is limited to Instagram will get a charge from shows like the one pictured, held in the usually shuttered Church of St. Blaise. July 6–September 20, rencontres-arles.com —LISA TROTTIER

BURCU BASAR



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