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Page 107

TRAVELER

ALL TRAVEL, ALL THE TIME | May-June 2010

50 Tours OF A LIFETIME

5th Annual

Great Guided Travel: FROM CULTURE TO CUTTING EDGE

Page 86

D.C. Rising

A new energy has swept away the capital's cliché image to reveal a city of style and surprise

Page 62

KENYA PASSAGE

Adventure at nightfall

Page 78

Thousand Islands of Summer

Escape to a place ruled by echoes of a simpler time

Page 96

Smart Traveler

- ALL-AMERICAN HIDEAWAYS
- PARIS COOKING CLASSES
- WINE & BODEGAS IN ARGENTINA
- WALKING SANTA MONICA
- IN PORT: BERMUDA

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MAY-JUNE 2010, VOLUME 27, NUMBER 4

CONTENTS

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

78 | Kenya Passage

When a trip through the Great Rift Valley takes an unexpected turn, our writer learns a valuable lesson in survival—and kindness.

Story by CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS

86 | Tours of a Lifetime: The Year of Adventure

Our fifth annual roundup of guided expeditions focuses on innovative and cross-cultural tours. Plus: wild adventures, volunteer tours, and expedition cruises.

Story by MARGARET LOFTUS

96 | A Thousand Islands of Summer

Some 1,800 islands dot the St. Lawrence River between Canada and the U.S.—home to castles, resorts, and a famous salad dressing.

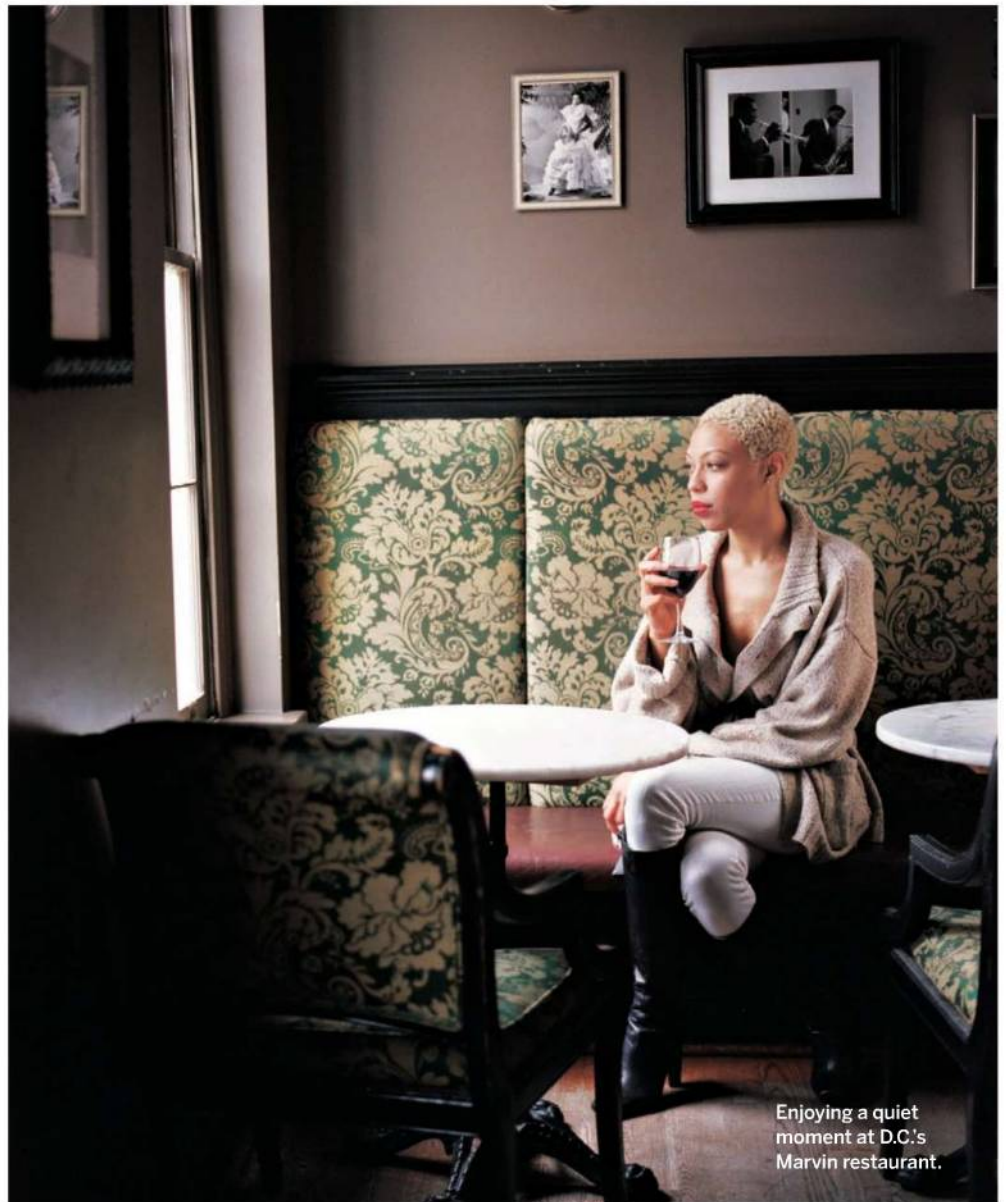
Story by PATRICK J. KELLY

Photographs by WILL VAN OVERBEEK



On the Cover:

Scotland's Isle of Skye—with the Eilean Donan Castle—is featured in our "Tours of a Lifetime." Photograph by Bruce MacRae



62 | Washington, D.C.'s New Groove

A wave of creative energy is transforming Washington's image from staid to dynamic.

Story by JOEL ACHENBACH Photographs by SUSAN SEUBERT

MAPS IN THIS ISSUE: Santa Monica, California page 34 Washington, D.C. 70 Middleburg, Virginia 52 Thousand Islands, New York/Ontario 102



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THE COLUMNS

- 10 REAL TRAVEL** Daisann McLane contemplates the emotions of leaving places that have touched her heart.
- 14 ONE ON ONE** Philanthropist Gregory Carr talks about the challenges of saving an endangered African park.
- 18 THE INSIDER** Christopher Elliott looks at whether air-travel security restrictions really protect travelers.
- 20 UNBOUND** Boyd Matson rappels the slot canyons of Zion National Park—and takes an unexpected plunge.

“With our truck stuck in the mud, things aren’t going according to plan. . . . Tempers are flaring; men gesture angrily with their machetes.” —Kenya Passage, page 78



BACKSTORY

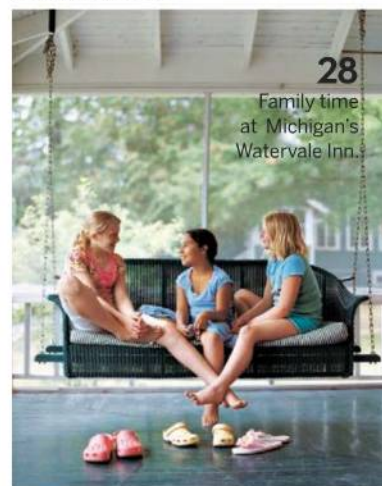
Rediscovering Washington

Rarely do *Traveler* staffers and photographers go out in the field together, but when shooter Susan Seubert’s assignment was Washington, D.C. (“D.C.’s New Groove,” page 62), site of National Geographic Society headquarters, photo editor Carol Enquist couldn’t pass up the opportunity to accompany her. “I scouted places ahead of time and helped interview people she photographed,” says Enquist, who is pictured here on a Potomac River boat ride she took with Seubert. “It gave me the chance to revisit parts of Washington that I haven’t seen in a long time. I fell in love with the city all over again.” Among her discoveries: shrimp and grits at Marvin. “We ate there twice during the shoot.”



Traveler 20: Watermelon seeds fly in Texas; *Dr. Zhivago* turns 45; sheep invade the streets of Provence; Finns celebrate the longest day; Dickens fans unite in England. Page 106

DEPARTMENTS

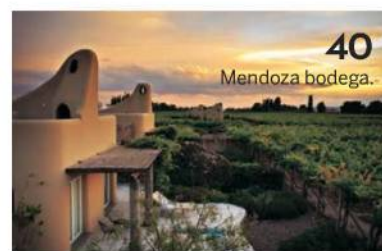


- 6 Our World** Nat Geo news
- 8 Inbox** What our readers are saying

28 Smart Traveler

Spend a summer vacation at one of ten classic **North American family resorts...** Modern **libraries** in Salt Lake City, Brisbane, Tenerife, and Norwich, England, redefine the traditional idea of a reading room... Try a Soviet-style **spa experience** with a dip in the healing muds of Crimea... New **bodegas** in Argentina’s scenic Mendoza Valley offer guests a countryside retreat.

- 60 Tipping Point** The Way Forward
- 106 The Traveler 20** Globe at a Glance
- 116 Your Shot/Travel** A Reader’s View



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SEA-DOO



EDITOR'S NOTE

Learning to Love Tours

When I first became editor of *Traveler* more than a decade ago, I regarded organized group tours as little more than excursions for timid tourists unwilling to embrace the unpredictability and exoticism of foreign lands.

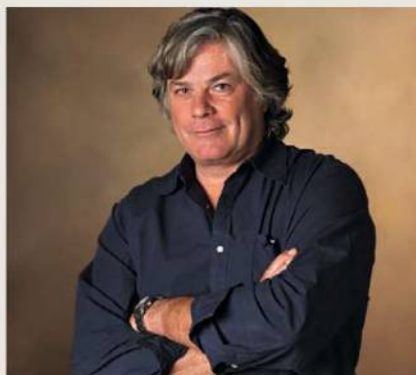
No longer. Tour operators—and travelers—have upped their game. In fact, in the five years since we launched our annual “Tours of a Lifetime” roundup, the tours landscape has transformed itself. “Years ago luxury prevailed, and champagne at the end of the trail was what you got,” notes senior editor Norie Quintos, who oversees our tours feature. “Now it’s yak milk from a woman who takes you into her home.” Ostentation has been replaced by the experience of something more valuable than money—connection.

“When we started featuring tours, operators were just beginning to think about sustainability and cultural immersion,” says Quintos. “Now, everybody tries to build that in. The market has matured. The trip is no longer the end game; it’s the beginning of a bigger journey. The education, the excitement, the relationships formed during a trip continue long after the travel ends, particularly with the advent of social media.”

The magazine staff has watched this change firsthand—and gained insights from National Geographic Expeditions, which operates 300 trips annually, many candidates for inclusion in this issue. We work with them closely on various projects, such as their “Places of a Lifetime by Private Jet” trip, which was inspired by special issues of *Traveler*. Occasionally they build trips around stories that have appeared in the magazine. (Full disclosure: We share a roof and the Society’s mission, but we show Expeditions no favoritism; our picks are based on objective reporting and a tour’s promotion of cultural richness, sense of place, sustainability, and authenticity.)

As proof that I really have changed my mind about tour-traveling: I’ll be one of three National Geographic lecturers on the next “Places of a Lifetime” excursion.

—Keith Bellows, Editor



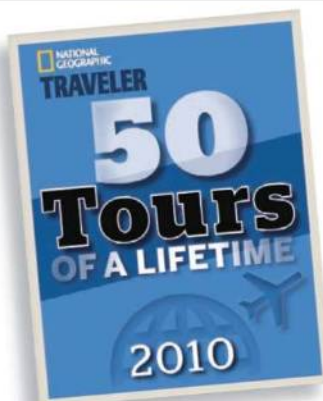
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WorldWise Quiz Beyond Bermuda’s....How well do you know these famous triangles?

Our Mission: National Geographic *Traveler* reports on destinations of distinction and character, and supports efforts to keep them that way, believing that enhancing an authentic “sense of place” benefits both travelers and the locations they visit. For information on sustainable practices: <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/sustainable>.



NAT GEO TRAVEL HIGHLIGHTS

STUDENT SUMMIT

VISIT OUR HEADQUARTERS

Explore D.C. with the help of the National Geographic Society during the new week-long Student Summit program beginning this May. Middle and high school students and teachers will set out on daily expeditions with National Geographic experts, learning mapmaking from our cartographers, setting up animal TripCams, meeting with magazine staff, and exploring the city’s iconic museums.

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NEW BOOK

Like many of our readers, managing editor Scott Stuckey wondered how *Traveler* photographers got their gorgeous pictures. So he asked 14 of them for their tips, insights, and anecdotes. These are featured in his new book, *Ultimate Field Guide to Travel Photography*, now available from National Geographic Books.

› www.nationalgeographic.com/books



THE LAST QUEEN

EXHIBIT OPENING

“Cleopatra: The Search for the Last Queen of Egypt,” a new National Geographic exhibition opening this June at Philadelphia’s Franklin Institute, documents the efforts to uncover more than 150 artifacts—from gold coins to 15-foot-high statues that adorned Cleopatra’s palace—by National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence Zahi Hawass and underwater archaeologist Franck Goddio. Together they are getting closer to solving the riddles left behind by the mysterious Egyptian queen.

› www.fi.edu/cleopatra



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Maui: Still Magical?

MANY READERS told us they shared Andrew McCarthy's sentiments about Maui ("Maui: Is There Anything Left to Discover?" March 2010) and have wondered whether the island's magic has withstood the test of time. Barbara Schneider of Discovery Bay, California, writes that when she first moved to Maui in 1968, "Kaanapali Beach had one hotel, we could get reservations for the three cabins in Haleakala Crater on a day's notice, and we camped for days at Makena Beach without seeing anyone."



Local Flavor: A village fisherman harvests sea urchin on Kahakuloa Beach.

Returning four decades later, she was disappointed to find that the island had changed drastically. "Makena was nothing but one long resort, and I almost didn't recognize the beach. I'm glad that McCarthy went to Kula and found a few peaceful places. For me, that was a way of life."

Tragedy in Haiti

Reader **Andrew W. Shackelford** of Phoenix, Arizona, was correct in noting the unfortunate timing of our story, "Open for Business" (March 2010), which highlighted Haiti

among several countries hoping to transcend their negative reputations and find new economic development opportunities through tourism. "In light of the human tragedy," Shackelford writes, "you owe your readers and the people of Haiti an apology." Editor Keith Bellows responded: "Unfortunately we were overcome by events, and our issue was already on press when the earthquake struck. But it is important to remember that responsible tourism can be a way to help fund the ongoing recovery effort."

LETTER OF THE MONTH

"Kudos to Carl Hoffman for taking the not so easy route. His writing makes our world smaller and gives us all citizens-of-the-world status."

—Polly Peters of Evanston, Illinois, on "A Sea of Possibilities" (March 2010)

Biking Minneapolis

Tom Misa of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was miffed that we didn't mention his city among the country's top cycling spots ("Great Bike-Friendly Cities," March 2010), which included Chicago (right). "In Minneapolis, in addition to automobile civility, there are serious bicycle commuting routes that are separate, purpose-built paths (comparing favorably to the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany)," he writes. "From my home, I



commute three seasons of the year. The Midtown Greenway gets plowed all winter, and over 3,000 hardy souls bike through the very worst snowstorms. And this summer, the city is introducing a Paris-style bike-sharing program."

THE ONLINE CHATTER

When the blog *BoingBoing.net* featured Bob Krist's photo (below) of the *Librería El Ateneo Grand Splendid*, from our March issue ("Buenos Aires: A City of Style—and Sizzle"), its readers went wild with literary love. Here are a few of our favorite comments:

"I've been to this bookstore and had coffee in the little café in the back behind the stage curtains. I was just blissed-out the whole time. If you are a book worshipper, it's worth a trip to Buenos Aires just to go here."

"Now you're speaking my language. I'll bet there's still some leftover tango in those book aisles."



"Of all the architecture that meets the wrecking ball, the one that pains me the most is the old movie house. These were palaces built for the common man. This theater cum library gives me much hope."

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Parting is Such Sweet Sorrow

Letting go of a place may be the most emotionally intense thing travelers do.

I AM STAYING IN A SEASIDE TOWN in southern India that is practically a textbook definition of bliss. Yoga on the beach—check. Fuchsia- and tangerine-tinted sunrises—check. Bungalow with thatched roof—you’ve got it. ¶ I’ve just spent two hours lying on my back on a wooden table, breathing slowly, while two women poured a thin stream of warm oil in careful spirals over the “third eye” on my forehead. My sarong, freshly laundered, sports a lingering fragrance of sandalwood. ¶ But as I sit at a nearby café sipping the

juice from a green coconut, I’m not feeling blissful at all. Actually, I’m having a minor meltdown.

The ticket in my hand states that I have a reserved lower berth, “Second class, A/C,” on a train leaving Friday for Madurai, one of my favorite Indian cities. I know the details of my reservation well, since it took some work to arrange—a two-hour taxi ride into a nearby city followed by a chaotic press through a sweaty crowd of other would-be train travelers at the station. I’m lucky: I got the last berth reservation available this week.

It’s time to go, I know. I’ve hung out in the sun long enough here that wonder has faded into routine. The first morning after I arrived, I meandered down the dirt road of a nearby village, pausing to look at everything along the way. I poked into shops, bought neem oil soap and bags of chickpeas toasted with cumin, and chatted for hours with the shopkeepers. But the villagers are no longer novel to me and I’m no longer a novelty to them. Dogs that used to bark and snarl when I passed now run up to me, tails wagging. All the signs are telling me: Move on.

Still, the idea of packing up, leaving behind the dogs, the yoga on the beach, the chatty shopkeepers, and the spectacular sunrises puts my stomach in a knot. Even after thousands of miles and hundreds of trips, there is one thing that completely fazes me whenever I travel to a place: the leaving of it.

Arrival, not departure, is the dominant theme of travel. We travelers are supposed to go forth, and forward—exploring, discovering, having marvelous adventures along the way. This is the narrative that runs through hundreds of years of travel literature, from *The Canterbury Tales* to *The Great Railway Bazaar*.

Yet as my own real-life travels unfold, I find myself thinking



The long farewell: A final glimpse of a favorite place folds it into your heart.

Arrival, not departure, is the dominant theme of travel. Yet as my own travels unfold, I find myself thinking more about my partings.

less about my comings and more about my partings. Arriving somewhere is easy. Separating from a place you have settled into, a place whose culture and people you have gotten to know, a place you’ve grown attached to—that’s complicated. How do you decide when to depart? What do you take with you, and what, if anything, do you leave behind?

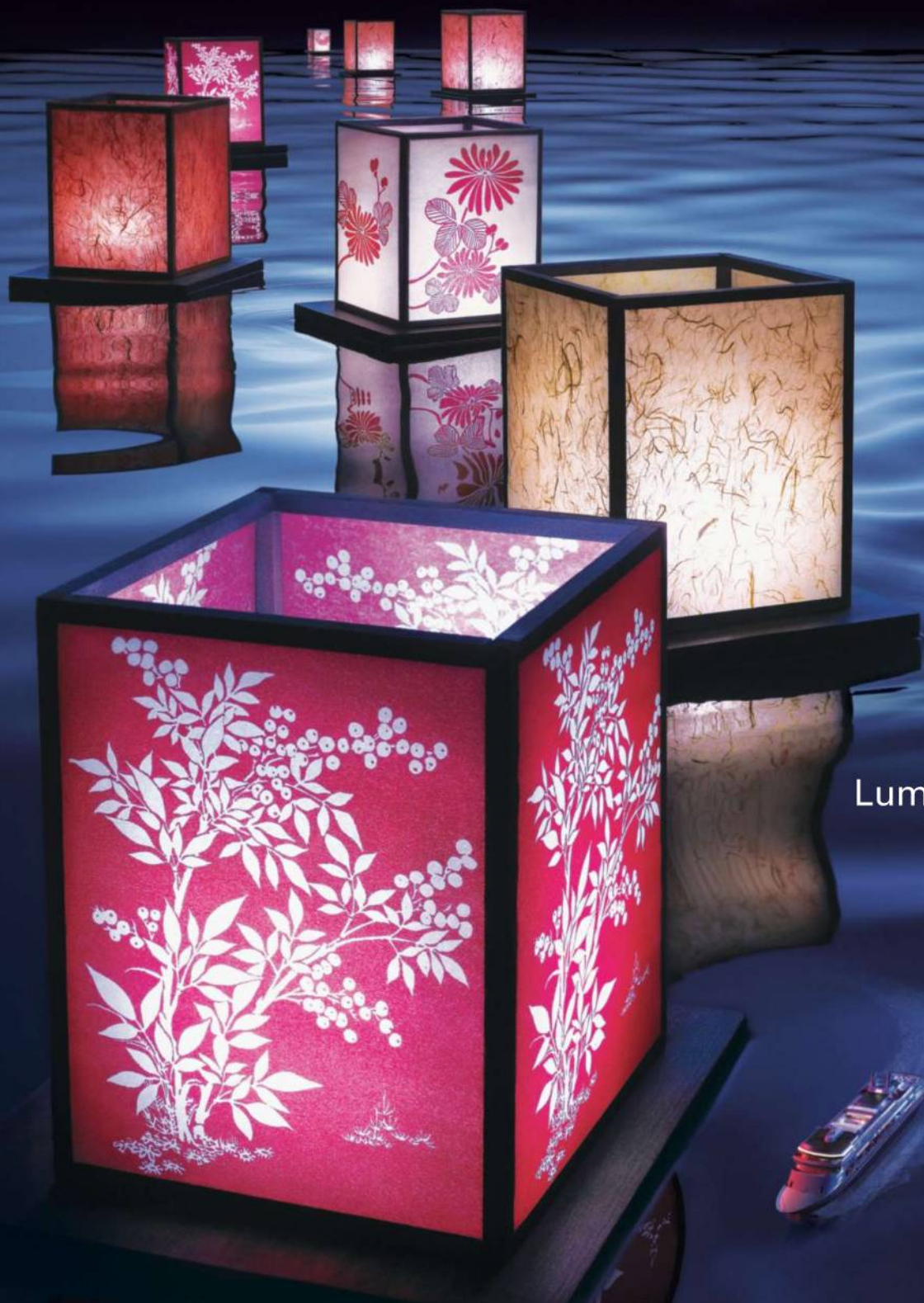
I have searched in vain for a literature of leaving. These traveler’s feelings of mine seem to find their most beautiful expression in songs that, interestingly, are all by Canadians (does Canada have a cultural edge on farewells?). Joni Mitchell’s “Urge for Going,” Kate McGarrigle’s achingly lovely “Talk to Me of Mendocino,” Ian and Sylvia’s “Four Strong Winds.” Each of these expressions of parting is pretty much guaranteed to make me weep; the letting go of a place may well be the most emotionally intense thing I do when I travel.

Leaving a place gradually, thoughtfully, and with time to let the mixed emotions settle in your heart is a luxury, I know. It can only happen when you’re traveling without (too much) time pressure and on an open-ended schedule—and how often does that happen these days? The slow, emotionally laden departure really belongs to a bygone era when travel was difficult and less certain and travelers had to set aside weeks, even years, for their journeys.

Nowadays we don’t have to fret about when and how to leave a place because departures are no longer very open to negotiation. Once you buy your tickets, the decision has been made: You have to go. The flight leaves at 9:25 p.m. sharp; check-in is at least two hours earlier. And if you want to change your reservation, you will have to pay a \$300 fee. Modern travel gives us certainty and well-defined timetables—and sucks all

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

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Saving the Wild Kingdom

Gregory Carr has applied his ingenuity—and cash—to reinventing a wilderness park in Africa.

WHEN PHILANTHROPIST Gregory Carr first visited Mozambique's Gorongosa National Park in 2004, he found devastation. Some 30 years of war in this former Portuguese colony in southeast Africa—followed by virtually unrestricted poaching—had all but eliminated populations of elephants, lions, rhinos, zebras, and other native fauna. Those animals once made Gorongosa, encompassing 1,544 square miles, a popular safari park. Carr decided to devote much of his personal fortune—amassed during his years as an entrepreneur—to rebuilding the park's ecosystem and fostering local economic growth through ecotourism.

Tell us more about Gorongosa The park was one of the world's great ecosystems but was destroyed and forgotten. Even the Mozambicans had given up on it. So we had to convince them to believe in their own national park. The first time I went, I was just traveling as a tourist. But I was overwhelmed by the beauty of the country and the kindness of the people, so I started looking for a project. I asked myself, "What can Mozambique do to build its economy?" The country's overlooked assets include more than 1,500 miles of Indian Ocean coastline with some of the best beaches in Africa, and also the rain forest and savannas inside the Great Rift Valley. It occurred to me that the country really should be capitalizing on this beauty. Ecotourism should be a multibillion-dollar industry, and it's practically nonexistent. So I e-mailed the Mozambican ambassador to the United Nations. I met with World Bank, U.S. government, and Mozambican advisors. We toured the country, selecting six promising areas, with Gorongosa coming out on top. We said: "This is magnificent. Let's restore it."

You've poured millions into the park, beefed up security, and imported animals. What is your goal? Gorongosa should be run by the people of Mozambique. Frankly, it shouldn't be run by a private individual. Once the park gets healthy—with a financial structure, an infrastructure, and a thriving tourism industry in place—I hand it back to the government. Someday there could be 100,000 or 200,000 visitors a year coming to Gorongosa, with their park fees covering the park budget.

You're also investing in the local community. Yes. My background actually was not in conservation but

BIO

REINVENTOR

Greg Carr earned a fortune selling digital voice mail systems to telecoms and later served as chairman of Prodigy, an Internet service provider. Switching to philanthropic goals, he created the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University and the Gregory C. Carr Foundation. He founded a museum in Idaho and a theater in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

in human development, economic development, social issues, and human rights issues. Oddly, that's how the project started—with wanting to alleviate poverty. Poverty is a big threat to an ecosystem. People resort to catching wild animals, doing illegal mining, setting fires. To prevent that, nearby communities need to prosper. This park can create thousands of jobs in tourism. Now we're working with 15 traditional communities that surround the park. We help them with their farming and land planning, and, obviously, we hire them for jobs inside the park. In an ideal world, 20 years from now, the park would be surrounded by a nice middle-class—by African standards—community that loves the park and understands that the park is helping them. We have to create that culture through conservation education. Mozambican kids are smart, and I've been delighted with how quickly they learn. We have them coming out of a three-day workshop really understanding what the

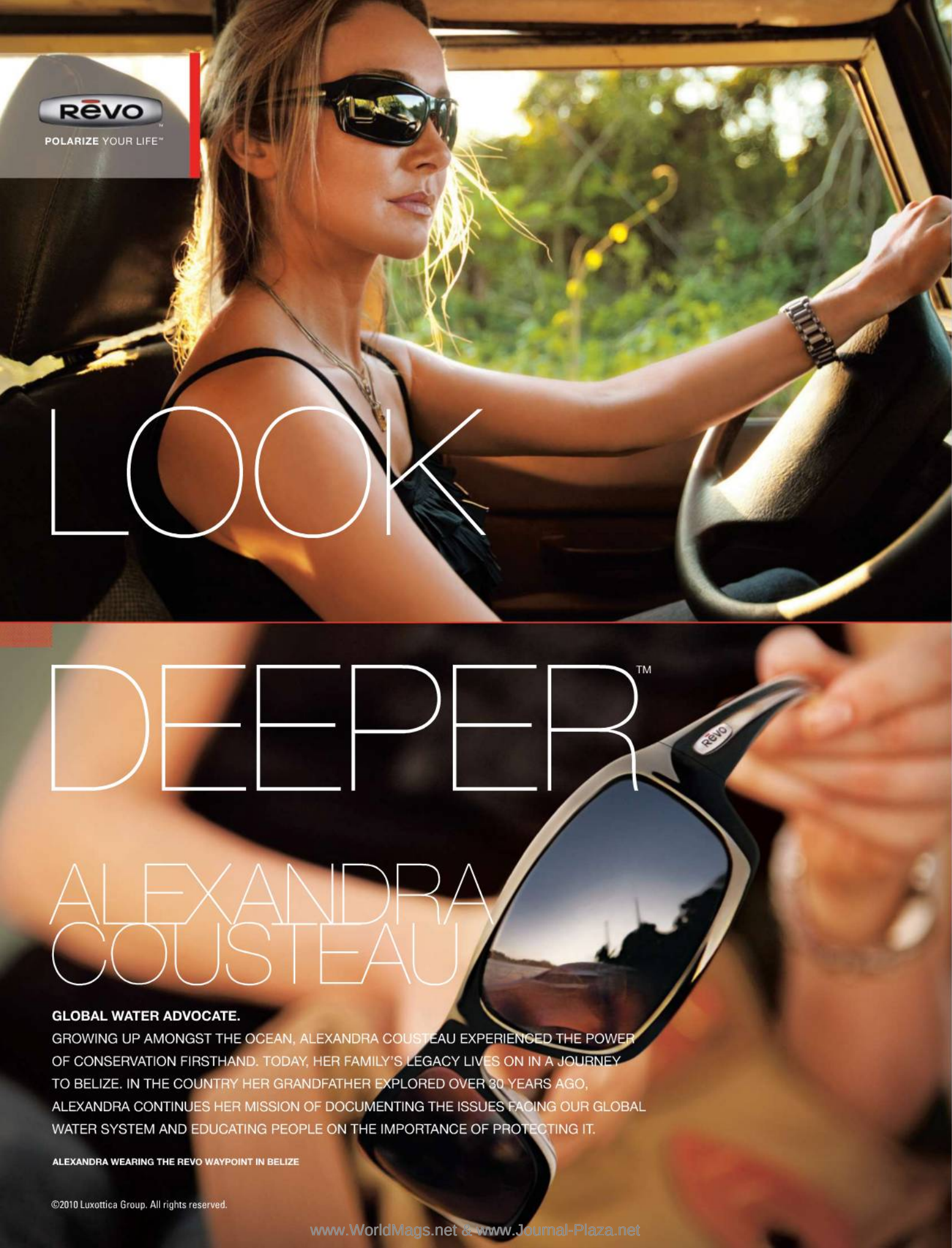
national park is and what it can mean to their future.

What would you do differently if you were starting out again? I didn't fully appreciate five years ago, when I jumped in full speed ahead, all the regional politics involved. I had read my Mozambican history books, but I didn't completely understand the political tensions with Zimbabwe and South Africa. I made some unwise hiring decisions, bringing in folks from other countries in Africa



Eyeing opportunity: Greg Carr saw a chance to help Mozambique through ecotourism.

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ALEXANDRA WEARING THE REVO WAYPOINT IN BELIZE

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that the Mozambicans were wary of. I also had to replace the management team. It's a Catch-22, because of course the local people probably are not going to have all the experience needed to work in a national park. But people you bring in are seen as outsiders, and there is no easy way around that. The broader point that I'm making is this: Politics matter a lot in conservation. In fact, conservation *is* politics. It is convincing vast numbers of people with very different interests—landowners, ranchers, recreationists, loggers, miners, tourists, and regional politicians—that they should want a national park. It takes a massive public education campaign.

And you need to educate the park visitors as well, I suppose. We need to get tourists to appreciate a larger scope of things when they go on a safari. You want to get beyond saying, "I want to see an elephant in the first hour, a lion in the second hour, and

**AFRICA'S
LOST EDEN,**
a film about
Gorongosa
park, will air
several times
until mid-June
on the new TV
network, Nat
Geo WILD.

agents always have their safe choices, but perhaps they can push some of their more adventurous clients, saying, "I want to send you to this place you have never heard of; it's a little rough; everything is not perfect; but you will see real wild Africa and have a true adventure, not a homogenized experience. The place is called Gorongosa." [Editor's note: For a Gorongosa tour listing, see page 95.] ■

KEITH BELLOWES is the editor of *Traveler*.

tonight I better see a rhino." We need ecotourists who will appreciate the beauty and the complexity of an ecosystem, who will see that the baobab tree is amazing. They should stay long enough to broaden their understanding beyond a few charismatic mammals to include birds and smaller animals, for example. They end up having much more fun.

Could the travel industry itself do a better job of helping you and others like you? Travel

SOMETIMES I AM A NO-GOODBYE (and even a "thank goodness I'm outta here!") traveler. Though what usually happens when I'm forced to cut and run is that I go through my departure discombobulation when I've arrived back home.

REAL TRAVEL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

of the sentiment out of our departures. Maybe that's a good thing, for if we went through a fraught, protracted farewell each time we traveled, we probably would not have the fortitude to travel at all. A friend of mine says she is almost relieved when, after a packed ten days of exploring every backstreet in Berlin, Paris, or Rome, it is time to head to the airport. "By that point I'm depleted," she says. "As for saying goodbye...I guess I don't."

Sometimes I too am a no-goodbye (and even a "thank goodness I'm outta here!") traveler. Although what usually happens when I'm forced to cut and run is that I go through my departure discombobulation when I've arrived back home. For almost a week after returning to New York from my first trip to Bali I felt depressed, didn't want to leave my apartment, and couldn't sleep. Jet lag, I thought. But now I wonder

if jet lag really is our inner traveler trying to process the renegade emotions that don't know where to go when we don't get to experience that long, measured leave-taking.

In India I allow the restless, disturbing urge to bolt flow over me then ebb back again, like the soft waves on the beach. The following two days I skip through the village with the now-devoted dogs, buy more cumin-spiced chickpeas from the chatty shopkeeper, inhale the sandalwood scent of the laundered sarongs, change my plans several times. Gradually, gradually my inner sea calms, and what comes next is easy. A few hours before another fuchsia-hued sunrise, while the shops are still shut and the dogs still sleep, I fold this lovely place into my heart and catch the train to Madurai. ■

Contributing editor DAISANN MCLANE sheds light on local ways in distant lands on her blog, www.therealtimetravelblog.com.

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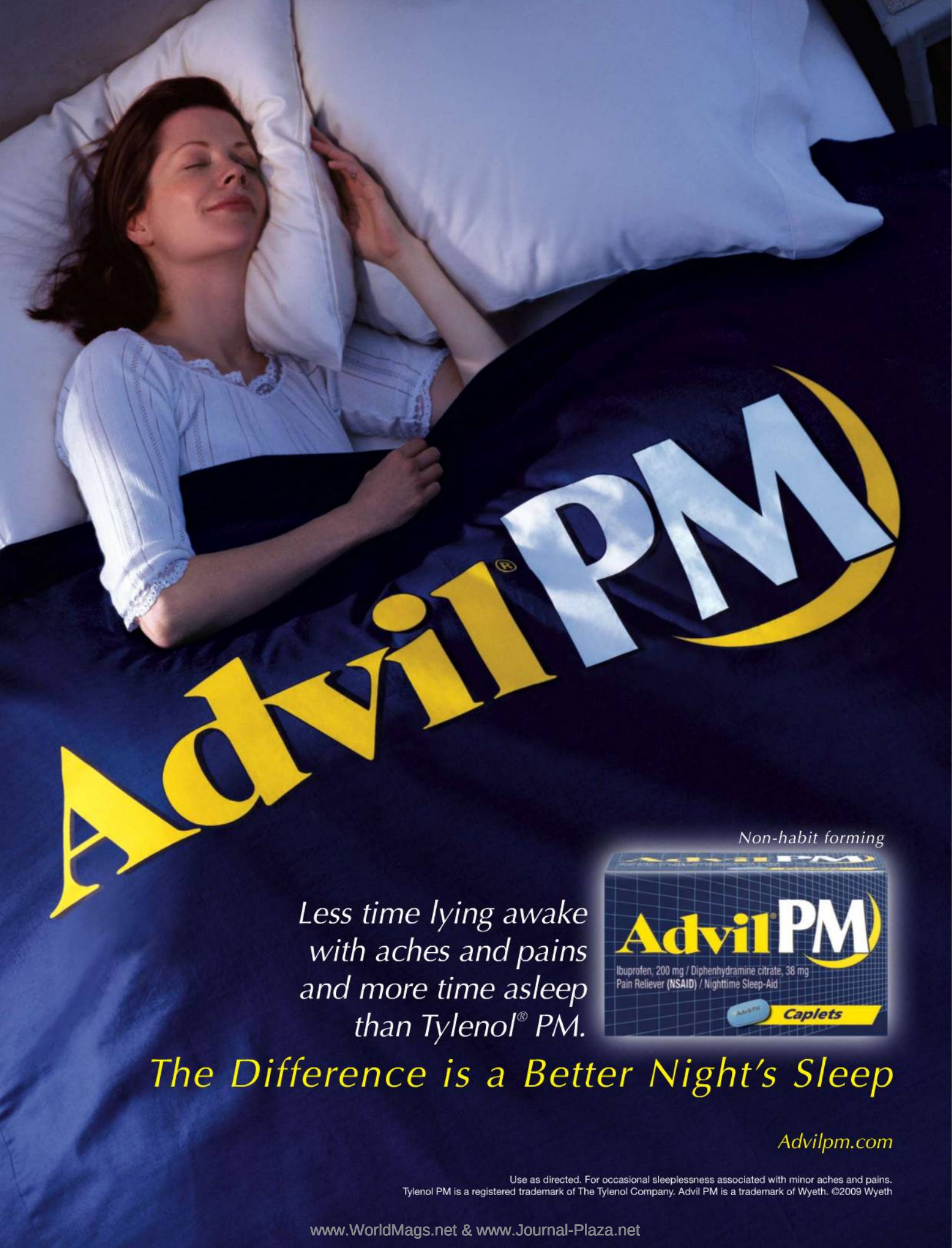
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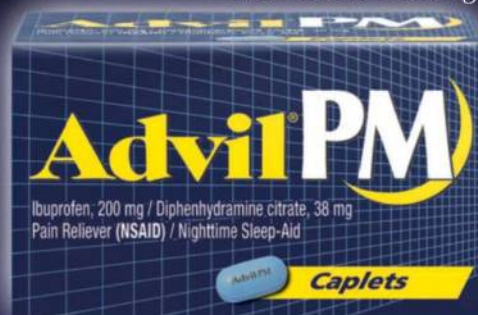
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Airport Security 2.0

What the TSA needs to do to protect air travelers. And what we can do to help.

NOW PLAYING at an airport near you: Stern-faced agents. Snaking lines. Screeching magnetometers. Put them together, and it makes for compelling theater. But just how safe are we, really? ¶ Almost a decade after 9/11—years of liquid bans, problem underwire bras, no-fly lists, armed air marshals, and reinforced cockpit doors—the state of airline security is mixed. On the one hand, there's been no 9/11 sequel; on the other, air travel is forever changed, and not necessarily for the better. Civil liberties and privacy have been eroded and

air travel has become such a hassle that many travelers have grounded themselves. According to the U.S. Travel Association, 84 percent of travelers compared the security process with their not always efficient motor vehicle departments.

The United States last year funded the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), a federal agency responsible for protecting the nation's transportation infrastructure—all of it, not just air travel—to the tune of nearly \$8 billion. The TSA spent most of the money on aviation security, with about \$4 billion going to screening operations, close to \$3 billion to salaries and compensation, and the balance for training and new technology. The agency allocated only \$84 million for non-aviation security, although it had access to another half a billion dollars in grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for that purpose.

The TSA likes its tech toys. The shiniest new one is the full-body scanner, also known by its street name, the strip-search machine—because it reveals your body's contours to officers (located apart from the checkpoint to ensure some privacy). About 150 new devices were ordered last year for \$25 million as part of the President's stimulus package. The agency plans to deploy 450 units this year, each one costing between \$130,000 and \$170,000. In late 2009, after the so-called Christmas Day underwear bomber smuggled explosives through security, the government called for more of these controversial devices. The funding has been approved.

While the U.S. favors technology and policy protocols, Israel, perhaps the planet's most security-conscious country, focuses on trained staff and intelligence gathering designed to detect suspicious behavior. Before boarding a flight, passengers submit to a lengthy, non-routine question-and-answer session with a security



Virtual strip search: Among the TSA's new tools is the full-body scanner.

agent plus a thorough search of all their personal belongings. Israeli security dispenses with many of the shoe removals, water bottle confiscations, and intimidating machines that are a staple at U.S. airports.

We spend money on technology and theater; Israel spends it on people and intelligence. But if the U.S. decided to match Israel's security spending per passenger, a Bloomberg News estimate suggests it would cost eight to ten times more. "The Israeli airport security model doesn't scale," says security expert Bruce Schneier.

We spend money on technology and theater; Israel spends it on people and intelligence.

In other words, it wouldn't fly in the United States. Among other things, Israel's model would require every airport to be retrofitted with expensive blast walls, and vehicular traffic would have to be rerouted for added security. Then there is the additional training for TSA officers. Initially, the cost might exceed that of the Israeli model, and it would almost certainly crank up the hassle factor. Even so, it's an option favored by some American experts, including Robert Harding, a recent nominee to head the TSA (since withdrawn for unrelated reasons).

Indeed, there are elements in Israel's security precautions that we should adopt, including less emphasis on shoe removal and liquid checks and more emphasis on commonsense, behavior-based profiling of airline passengers by trained professionals. If a passenger is acting oddly, that person gets pulled for extra screening, whether a young man from the Middle East or a granny from the Midwest. Let's also dispense with resource-wasting TSA theatrics such as harassing law-abiding bloggers—like me—with subpoenas (details at <http://bit.ly/6YCRla>).

The TSA also has its limits. Beyond our borders, the agency relies on a force of only 21 agency represen-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



Crown Point and Vista House overlooking the Columbia River Gorge

THE CENTRAL CASCADES OF OREGON & WASHINGTON: PRESERVING THE POWER OF AN EXTRAORDINARY PLACE.



I grew up with a view of Mount Rainier from my backyard; trips to my grandparents near Mt. Hood; and countless hours spent hiking, skiing, and camping through the Central Cascades—so this entire region is very special to me. Now, every year, I bring my own family back to see the amazing old growth forests and wildflowers at the same campsite I loved as a boy.

Being involved with National Geographic's geotourism mapguide of the Central Cascades made me appreciate again the remarkable vistas, pioneer spirit, distinct culture, and connection to nature that are still so strong here.

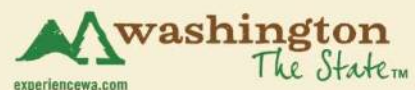
It's living proof of what can happen when a region is dedicated to careful destination stewardship.

But tourism that sustains and enhances the true character of a place also depends on travelers. If we support and protect the businesses and environments that make a locale unique, then its authentic culture and unspoiled lands will flourish. Travelers have more power than they realize to help special places preserve their distinctive flavor and one-of-a-kind homegrown treasures. The choices we make today really do shape the destinations of tomorrow. Explore Washington and Oregon's Central Cascades and you'll know it's true."

Dr. John Francis is Vice President for Research, Conservation, and Exploration at National Geographic and oversees the creation of geotourism mapguides. Now living far across the continent from his native Pacific Northwest, John makes an annual "pilgrimage" back to the mountains, forests, and communities that define this vibrant region.



National Geographic partnered with organizations in Oregon and Washington to create a geotourism mapguide of the Central Cascades celebrating the preservation of the natural wonders and the authentic character of this region. To learn more, visit thecentralcascades.com.



Playing the Slots

Stepping over the edge is always a gamble, but in Zion National Park, the payoff is worth it.

AS THE STENCH of burning flesh fills my nostrils, I think, “This is supposed to be a vacation, not a back-country version of *Apocalypse Now*.” Unlike the Robert Duvall character in that Vietnam War flick who delighted in the smell of napalm in the morning, I don’t fancy this particular odor—especially since it’s my own flesh that is burning. It smells not like victory, but like, at minimum, a dozen broken bones, or, at worst, a premature encounter with my own obituary. I’m on a rope, rappelling down a hundred-foot cliff. Correction: I *was*

rappelling for the first 20 feet. Now, I’m plummeting. Granted, there’s no napalm, just friction, enough to melt the skin on my hands. My futile attempt to arrest my fall by squeezing harder on the rope is giving an ironic meaning to the term death grip. I wonder why I can’t stop—and how I got into this mess.

The how part is easy. Eight friends—four couples—and I have gathered in southwestern Utah for a canyoneering vacation in Zion National Park. This increasingly popular adventure sport combines hiking, climbing, boulder scrambling, rappelling, swimming—really, whatever it takes—to navigate into, through, and out of deep, roadless, narrow canyons referred to as slots. The Zion area, a massive sandstone labyrinth where you can canyoneer for two weeks without repeating a route, is ideal.

Seven in our group have never canyoneered nor even strapped themselves into a climbing harness, so they spend a day with Zion Rock & Mountain Guides learning to rappel. I, Mr. Expert, Mr. I’ve-Done-This-Many-Times-and-Know-What-I’m-Doing, skip the training session and head out for a day of serious technical canyoneering with Mike Watters.

Watters is the short answer to the question of how I got into this mess. He’s the one in our group who planned the trip, enticing us with photos and saying, “I can take you to the most spectacular place in all of Zion.” Only after we were in the canyon did he tell us: “There’s only one way out—the long, hard way.”

Why I, and the others, would take adventure advice from a retired software executive relates to our mutual disdain for seeing the world only from a golf cart. Six years ago we met on a large group tour and bonded instantly, realizing we all shared a taste for adventure. Two or three times every year since, the four couples



Underworld: Nature carves masterpieces inside Zion’s slot canyons.

Colors shift, and walls unexpectedly widen and narrow, sometimes squeezing to less than a shoulders’ width apart.

travel together for a bit of exotic sightseeing and a little kayaking, hiking, water skiing, snow skiing, or gorilla trekking. They take turns picking the destination and sometimes they invite me along. This trip was Watters’s choice.

That is why he and I are now standing on the canyon rim at Birch Hollow, and I’m asking, “Is a hundred feet of rope enough?” The last thing you want when you rappel is to run out of rope before you reach the ground. Almost a dozen major rappels are ahead of us today, and on most of them we won’t see the bottom from the top. In those cases, the all-important question of “How far could I fall?” can only be answered by a detailed map or an experienced guide. Our guide, Greg Istock, assures us that we have plenty of rope for what’s coming.

Over millions of years, wind and water have carved the various types of red and yellow sandstone around Zion into natural sculptures that would put Michelangelo to shame. Around every twist and turn, another surprise awaits as the walls bend and curve into geometric patterns, colors subtly shift, and canyon walls unexpectedly widen or narrow, sometimes squeezing down to less than a shoulders’ width apart. In a rainstorm, a deadly flash flood can instantly explode through the serene setting, sweeping away trees, rocks, and people like so much helpless flotsam.

Even in dry weather, pools of freezing water get trapped in rocky basins in the slot canyons. The water can vary from ankle deep to over your head. Wearing a wet suit is recommended to combat the chilly water. Mike and I opt for an even warmer dry suit. What’s not recommended is getting your photo taken in a dry suit. The outfit is bulky, big enough to pull on over your clothes, with tight rubber seals at the ankles, wrists, and neck. The suit

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Glacier Express on the Landwasserviaduct, Graubünden



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From nature in its purest form to superb infrastructure, this corner of Switzerland continues to be a magnet for outdoor enthusiasts who want a taste of the good life.



Lake Geneva & Matterhorn Region

From Geneva's famous water fountain to the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Lavaux Vineyard Terraces and the eternal ice on top of the Matterhorn, this Switzerland-in-a-nutshell area invites discovery and exploration.

With its lakes and mountains, vineyards and valleys, the Lake Geneva & Matterhorn Region rewards the senses - even before you try the local fare and unrivaled wines. No less than 26 Michelin-star restaurants position the Lake Geneva & Matterhorn Region as the very best "gastronomic destination" in all of Switzerland. The region also has one of the world's highest concentration of museums, including Geneva's Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, the Olympic Museum in Lausanne and the Gianada Foundation in Martigny.



Lucerne/Lake Lucerne Region

The gateway to Central Switzerland, the city of Lucerne lies on the shores of Lake of Lucerne, amid an impressive mountain panorama.

Thanks to its central location, attractions, beautiful lakeside setting, and proximity to other fine destinations, Lucerne is an excellent starting point for journeys and excursions throughout Switzerland.

Whatever you expect from a unique city, Lucerne offers an outstanding diversity. The museums, theaters, and festivals make Lucerne a city of culture that elegantly maintains a careful mix of traditions and trends. Lucerne is home to some of Switzerland's most famous landmarks, such as the world-renowned Chapel Bridge and adjacent water tower. Yet, tradition and modernity stand side-by-side with ease in Lucerne, a city that has earned a reputation for innovative design.

How to get around.

The Swiss Travel System

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traps air inside, helping you float in deep water. Completing the ensemble, our dry suits are also school-crossing-guard yellow. Over 12 hours, after surviving Birch Hollow, we work our way through Orderville Canyon into the Zion Narrows. We emerge from the river near the shuttle stop in Zion National Park. We board the shuttle with other tourists, who are in tank tops and flip-flops. Still wearing our dry suits, we must look to them like something from another planet.

On day three of our canyoneering adventure, our group assembles at the Wildcat Canyon trailhead with the goal of descending into Russell Gulch and proceeding along the Left Fork of North Creek to arrive at what I consider one of the most beautiful spots in the park, if not the world: a sort of tunnel formation known as the Subway. Frankly, I'm a bit surprised we're all still here and game for the challenge. We'll have no guides. We know it will be a long day, at least 12 hours. We'll have to climb down some very steep walls, swim in cold water in our uncomfortable dry suits, and, perhaps most ominously, do some big rappels. Thus far no one but me, Mr. I-Don't-Need-a-Training-Session, has had a

problem on the rope, but everyone is fully aware of what could go wrong—all were present on the three-hour practice hike the previous day, when I took my fall.

We still don't know why I fell, but there is no doubt about how I stopped. Istock, our guide, who was already at the bottom, realized I was in serious trouble and pulled hard on the end of the rappel rope, bringing me to a complete stop before I buried myself in the canyon floor. The group saw the fall—and the scorching of my fingers and palms as I slid along the rope—and yet here they are, seemingly undeterred, ready to take on this more serious challenge of the Subway.

Luckily, on this final day of canyoneering, there are no mishaps, only rewards. Even with my hands taped and gloved, I'm finding this one of the best days I've ever spent in a national park. It is time shared with friends committed to never settling for the ordinary or taking the easy route when they can go deeper into a travel experience. Maybe friendships, like steel, are stronger when forged by fire. ■

Contributing editor **BOYD MATSON** hosts *National Geographic Weekend* on radio.

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THERE IS ANOTHER SOLUTION that doesn't cost money, infringe on civil rights, or require new technology. We could help. That's right, we, the people.

THE INSIDER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

tatives and just over 50 inspectors to coordinate and conduct security assessments at more than 300 international airports and repair stations in more than a hundred nations. The agency claims to successfully vet all airports with direct flights into the United States by working with foreign airport security officials on everything from behavior detection to air cargo screening. Perhaps, but that works out to maybe one representative per country, at best.

The U.S. Travel Association, which represents the American travel industry, thinks it can do better. It just announced a blue-ribbon panel for "frictionless" security (its words) that will create a vision for the world's most secure, efficient, and customer-friendly security screening process. Experts include former Secretary of Homeland Security Tom Ridge, American Airlines' former CEO Robert Crandall, and Dave Bronzek, president of FedEx. Look for its findings later this summer.

There is another solution that doesn't

cost big money, infringe on civil rights, or require new technology. We could help. That's right, we, the people. Sounds a little odd, given that we're used to having everything done for us—we're screened, swabbed, wanded, patted down. Somewhere along the way we've forgotten that security is a shared responsibility.

Most of the known attempted terrorist attacks have been foiled by fellow travelers, not TSA agents. Richard Reid? He was tackled by passengers and crew members before he could bring down the plane with his incendiary footwear. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab? He was subdued by travelers after trying to blow up his undies. And, of course, there were the brave passengers on United Airlines Flight 93 from Newark to San Francisco, who stopped the attempted 9/11 attack on Washington. At the end of the day, security is not something that can be outsourced. ■

Join the conversation or tell us your trip troubles. E-mail contributing editor **CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT** at celliott@ngs.org.



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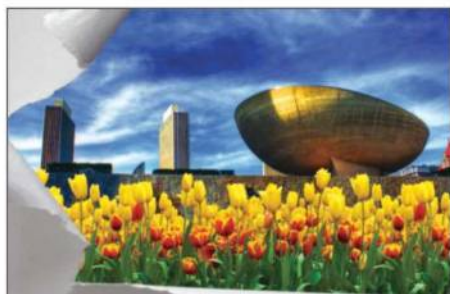


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2010 Toyota RAV4 4x2

MPG: 28 – EPA est hwy

Hwy Driving Range: 445 miles

Five-Star Crash Safety Rating: no*

Powertrain Warranty: 5 years/60,000 miles**

A Consumers Digest Best Buy: no

Automatic Crash Response: not available

Link to Emergency Services: not available

*Government star ratings are part of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA's) New Car Assessment Program (www.safercar.gov). **Whichever comes first. See dealer for limited warranty details. †Visit onstar.com for details and system limitations.



2010 Chevy Equinox FWD

MPG: 32 – EPA est hwy

Hwy Driving Range: 600 miles

Five-Star Crash Safety Rating: yes*

Powertrain Warranty: 5 years/100,000 miles**

A Consumers Digest Best Buy: yes

Automatic Crash Response: OnStar®/1 year standard†

Link to Emergency Services: OnStar/1 year standard



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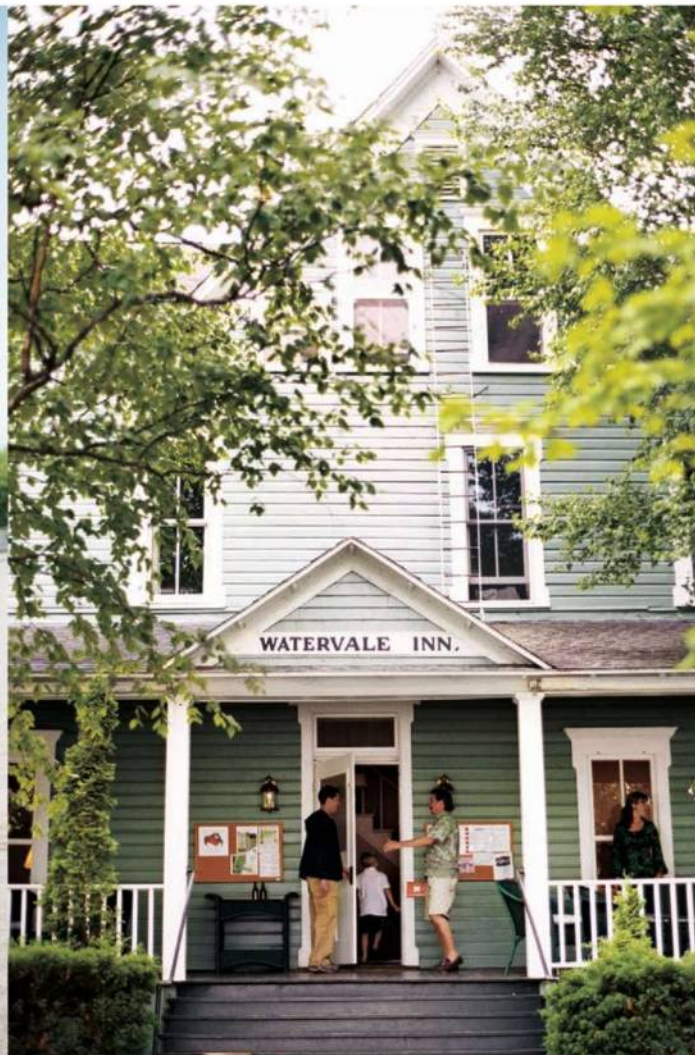
L.A. Beach Stroll 34 / Paris Cooking Schools 36 / Bermuda Break 56 /
Radar: NYC Bees 38 / Virginia Horse Country 50 / Kilt Primer 54

SMART TRAVELER

[TRAVEL AT ITS BEST]

Simple pleasures:

There are no TVs at Watervale Inn, but plenty of activities, including sailing.



Classic Summer Lodges

Ten North American family resorts made for reconnecting. | By MARGARET LOFTUS

MANY FAMILIES have reordered priorities in recent years. And when it comes to the annual rite of summer vacation, they're not necessarily spending less, but they are eschewing ostentatious luxuries and opting for simpler pleasures such as lakeside cabins, family-style dining, and impromptu games of flashlight tag. We found ten old-school resorts (at a range of price points) that fit the bill, where lazy days and quiet nights are spent reconnecting face-to-face, rather than through Facebook status reports.

NORTHWOODS GEM

Alpine Resort Set in far northern Wisconsin on a pristine lake amid towering white pines, this down-home resort, with its collection of circa 1920s log cabins complete with knotty pine interiors, is a real throwback. These days, owners Kim and Tim Bowler and their ten-year-old daughter, Cameil, host angling lessons off the dock and stargazing around the campfire (look for the northern lights). It can be quiet in the North Woods. "The only sounds you hear in the morning are the loons," notes Kim. For some, that's

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Barefoot days, starlit nights: At Minnesota's Fair Hills Resort, families participate in the popular "Hootenanny" talent show (above). Maine's Migis Lodge offers waterside chaise lounges for reading and napping (right).

exactly the type of alarm clock they yearn for. Located in Presque Isle, Wisconsin; from \$1,703 weekly for a family of four, including two daily meals and activities; www.alpine-resort.com.

OUT OF LAKE WOBEGON

Fair Hills Resort With sandcastle contests, smorgasbord night, and family bingo, this classic northern Minnesota lodge is right out of Garrison Keillor's fictitious Lake Wobegon. Families can choose from a slew of activities—volleyball, tennis, sailing, swimming—laze by the lake, or



rehearse for their star turn at the weekly "Hootenanny" talent show. The family-run resort prides itself on its myriad "lifers," guests who've been vacationing here since they were tots. This year, ten of them will celebrate their 50th visit, gratis. Located in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota; from \$2,862, including meals and activities; www.fairhillsresort.com.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, UNPLUGGED

Gray Eagle Lodge Once they find Gray Eagle Lodge off a two-lane road, most guests have little use for their cars. Days here are spent on foot, hiking to alpine lakes in the Sierras (cabins come equipped with day packs) or going for a dip in the swimming hole fed by a 15-foot waterfall. "There are no planned activities," explains Tracy

PERRY HANSON (LEFT), SARA GRAY (RIGHT)

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FROM THE BEST LAND

*Wine Advocate 12-31-08, 2007 Vintner's Reserve Chardonnay. Claim based on

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Morris, who has taken her children here for years, “unless you count the evening marshmallow toasts around the fire pit or the games of flashlight tag planned by kids who have never met before but have become fast friends.” *Located in Lakes Basin, California; from \$2,450, including two daily meals; www.grayeaglelodge.com.*

AUTHENTIC ADIRONDACKS

The Hedges This summer escape has traded hands just a few times since the 1880s.

Along the way improvements have been made—including upgrading the plumbing—to accommodate guests, many of whom have been returning for decades. The current owners have restored the camp to its original Adirondack-style glory, earning it a spot on the National Register of Historic Places. *Located in Blue Mountain Lake, New York; from \$1,960, including two daily meals and activities; www.thehedges.com.*

CLASSIC NEW ENGLAND

Highland Lodge Some of the 11 cottages at this lodge run by third-generation innkeepers are made of tidy white clapboards

and boast clawfoot tubs and porches. Others are miniature versions of the summer homes hidden on winding, leafy drive-ways in these parts. Most cottages overlook Caspian Lake, where a private beach beckons kids to swim, canoe, and kayak. The menu reflects the region’s strong locavore movement with dishes such as the Vermont beefalo burger with Cabot cheddar. *Located in Greensboro, Vermont; from \$3,500, including activities and two daily meals; www.highlandlodge.com.*

What Does It Cost?

Pricing structures vary greatly among resorts. Rates quoted here are for a family of four for seven nights in the summer. Check individual websites for specifics.

GREAT LAKE LODGE

Watervale Inn Built as a boarding house for loggers in 1892, this lodge became a summer retreat for Chicago ophthalmologist Oscar Kraft in 1917. Today, the main house and

17 cottages tucked among sand dunes along the Lake Michigan shoreline and Lower Herring Lake are run by Kraft’s great-grand niece Dori Turner, who proudly promotes the resort’s lack of TV, landlines, Wi-Fi, and decent cell phone coverage. Instead of poring over their smartphones, families hike the 300-foot-high Old Baldy dune, comb the beach for fossils, and savor the lakeside sunsets.

Located in Arcadia, Michigan; from \$2,502, including two daily meals; www.watervaleinn.com.

SUMMERING IN MAINE

Migis Lodge Founded in 1916, this lodge on Sebago Lake inspires cult-like loyalty among families who’ve been summering here for generations (many book next year’s vacation when they check out). Scattered on 125 acres of pine forest, the lodge and its 35 wood-and-stone cottages are full of homey touches, like hand-sewn quilts, fieldstone fireplaces, and private porches. Hobnob with other guests lake-side over blueberry pancakes and maple syrup in the morning, the weekly lobster bake, or on a spin aboard the resort’s classic Chris-Craft. *Located in South Casco, Maine; from \$6,500, including meals and activities; www.migis.com.*

PICK BERRIES, FISH FOR MINNOWS

Milford House For the better part of its century-old existence, Milford House was a hunting and fishing camp, thanks to its proximity to nature (preserved in the massive Tobeatic Wilderness Area). These days, the resort lures families whose idea of fun is swimming in the

Loved Chardonnay

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The Sweet Life in Paris

BY DAVID LEBOVITZ

Lebovitz, a pastry chef (formerly of Chez Panisse) and cookbook author from San Francisco, spent years in Paris studying the secrets of French cooking and local living; he shares both here with passion and humor. His glimpses into Parisian life explain a range of idiosyncrasies—from the indifference of many salesclerks to customers, to the locals' penchant for cutting into line—and how to foil them. ("Unless you're standing genitals-to-backside to the person in front of you, you may as well put up a sign that says, 'Please, step ahead of me.'") He also serves up a feast of food tips, includ-

ing where to find the best croissants, chocolates, and cheeses; how to order coffee the proper Parisian way; and when not to use a knife and fork. Lebovitz complements his accounts with 50 tantalizing recipes, from plum and raspberry clafoutis to fromage blanc soufflé. A final treat: He offers a directory of his favorite food shops, perfect for creating your own edible adventures.

A Long, Long Time Ago & Essentially True

BY BRIGID PASULKA

This novel, now in paperback, masterfully braids two star-crossed stories. The first is set in a mountain hamlet on the eve of World War II and centers on a resolute young man and the beautiful woman he loves; the second follows their granddaughter in Krakow in the 1990s. With a passion that suffuses each page, Pasulka transports us through layers of history, culture, tradition, and belief straight into the heart of Poland, poignantly portraying the evolution of the country's character through the decades.

Galen Rowell's Inner Game of Outdoor Photography

BY GALEN ROWELL

Available for the first time in paperback, this classic work by a world-renowned master of outdoor and adventure photography—and contributor to *National Geographic* from 1972 until his death in 2002—offers a spectrum of field-tested tips for taking better photographs, including the importance of pre-visualizing a shot, how to utilize fill and smart flash, and efficient gear-packing; 160 color photographs illustrate the heights that Rowell attained in his art.

Walking Home

BY LYNN SCHOOLER

The author recounts a journey into the Alaska wilderness, an adventure that was fraught with danger, including raging rivers and aggressive grizzlies. Of two cranes, he writes, "The rusty yodeling sounded like the musical instruments of an ancient civilization being played to celebrate a migration that has continued without interruption for millions of years."



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[MEDIA]

See Chicago, Earn a Badge

Visiting the Art Institute of Chicago or Millennium Park (right) can now earn you a badge. Part scavenger hunt, part guidebook, the social mapping tool **Foursquare** enables GPS-enabled mobile-device users to check in at different sites throughout the country and get locals' suggestions on attractions and dining. The city has partnered with the site and created games (www.explorechicago.org/games) involving famous local movie locations, hotdog stands, and blues halls. —Janelle Nanos



Floats and flags: Not far from the Watervale Inn, residents and visitors come out for the annual Fourth of July parade in Frankfort, Michigan.

property's two lakes, catching minnows with nets, and picking berries. The lodge puts on workshops by local artists. The 27 lakeshore cabins have working, hand-built fireplaces. *Located in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia; from \$1,680, including two meals daily; www.milfordhouse.ca.*

CANADIAN COTTAGE COUNTRY

Pow-Wow Point Lodge Set in the lake country known for its fresh air and restorative powers north of Toronto, the 90-year-old resort features a sandy lakeshore. Canoes, pedal boats, kayaks, and mountain bikes are at guests' disposal. Too much sun and fun? Recover in your lakeview cabin's whirlpool. *Located in Muskoka, Ontario; from \$3,239, including meals and activities; www.powwowpointlodge.com.*

NO-FRILLS LAKE WINNIPESAUKEE

Three Mile Island Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) members first camped here after the rocky spit of wilderness was donated to the club in 1900. Since then, 47 rustic cabins—off the grid and without indoor plumbing—and a handful of wood-framed tents have sprung up. The pleasures are simple: Guests awake to reveille played on a bugle, congregate at a central lodge for meals, and swim, canoe, and hike. Highlights? The daily visit from the mail/ice cream boat and a weekly square dance. *Located at Lake Winnepesaukee, New Hampshire; from \$1,712 for AMC members (\$2,072 for non-members), including meals; www.3mile.org.* ■



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On the waterfront: Visitors amble through old-fashioned Pacific Park.

ON FOOT

The Beachy Side of Los Angeles

A stroll through Santa Monica and Venice. | *By* JOHN ROSENTHAL

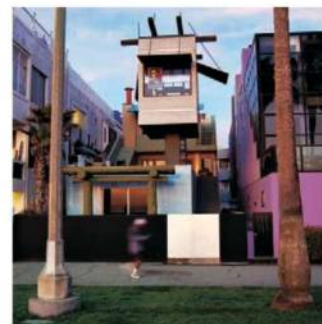
FORGET Hollywood. The best parts of Los Angeles are on the waterfront. Venice, an L.A. neighborhood, and Santa Monica, a separately incorporated city, are popular beach escapes by day and hum with activity at clubs and restaurants following glorious Pacific sunsets. Premier attractions are no more than a short detour from the oceanfront recreation path that segregates walkers and strollers from zooming bikers and skaters.



Kids' fare at Figtree's Café.

CROWD PLEASERS With its legendary sunny clime, southern California prefers its malls outdoors. The **Third Street Promenade** (1), renowned for its topiary dinosaur water-spitting fountains, is the de facto center of Santa Monica's downtown. On Wednesdays and Saturdays, chefs like Wolfgang Puck or Mario Batali join locals in search of the freshest cherries, cherry tomatoes, and cherrystone clams at one of the world's finest farmers markets. In November 2009, the **Santa Monica Pier** (2) was officially declared the end of Route 66, the iconic road that brought so many Midwesterners to California. It's home to a charmingly old-fashioned amusement park featuring fried-clam stands, Skee-Ball machines, a romantic 1922 carousel, and a solar-powered Ferris wheel that perfectly suits Santa Monica's environmentally friendly nature.

PHYSICAL GRAFFITI You won't see any "gun shows" (gratuitous display of biceps) at the original **Muscle Beach** (3); the weight-lifters' pen has moved south to Venice (you'll pass it later). This collection of ropes and swings and gymnasts' rings looks like Jack LaLanne's backyard. The adjacent lawn is where yogis, acrobats, contortionists, and Cirque du Soleil wannabes come to perfect their latest balancing acts,



Design within reach: This odd-looking construction? It's by Frank Gehry.

Brazilian capoeira (a blend of martial arts and dance), and other gravity-defying stunts. **Coast** (4) is an upscale lunch spot peeping out from the hotel Shuttles on the Beach. For a more casual meal, try **Figtree's Café** (5), or for an on-the-go snack, any of the numerous hot-dog-on-a-stick stands along the way. Although most of Venice has gentrified, **Venice Ocean Front Walk** (6) remains a scruffy corridor of T-shirt shops, tattoo parlors, incense vendors, starving artists, and street performers. At the new **Muscle Beach** (7), you can gawk at the weight lifters who try to impress onlookers. Or, for the price of a \$10 day pass, join them. The birthplace of skateboarding finally has a world-class park for its current acolytes to show off their skills. Completed last October, the 16,000-square-foot **Venice Beach Skate Plaza** (8) is dude central for the Tony Hawks of the future. Just south of the plaza are the **Venice Art Walls** (9), where on weekends graffiti artists peaceably spray-paint over each other's work.

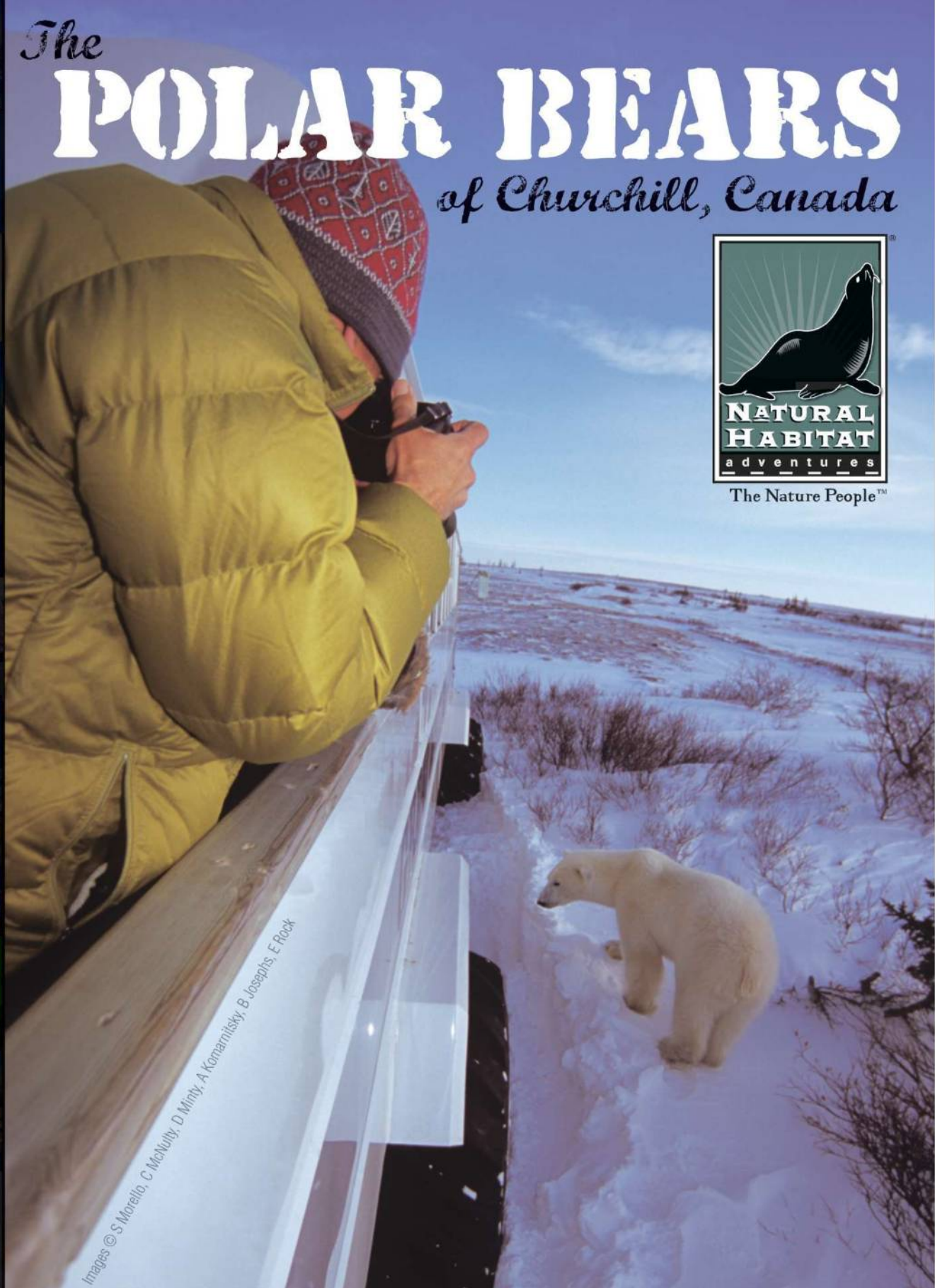
CONTINUED ON PAGE 38



The

POLAR BEARS

of Churchill, Canada



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Cooking with class: At La Cocotte, students peel apples and share tea.

TASTE OF TRAVEL

A Taste for Parisian Cooking

The French capital opens its kitchen doors to cooking enthusiasts, who glean insider techniques. | By **AMY M. THOMAS**

PARSNIP SOUP, sole meunière, plum clafouti—as souvenirs go, these are more original than an Eiffel Tower tchotchke. Tastier, too. As several accessible and affordable cooking classes join the ranks of formal schools like Le Cordon Bleu and Alain Ducasse, a growing number of travelers are taking keepsake recipes and memories of preparing them home from the French capital.

ART SPACE SOIREE Last summer, the **Palais de Tokyo** art museum launched cooking workshops (from 27 euros; www.art-home-electrolux.com) sponsored by appliance giant Electrolux in a beautifully outfitted, modern kitchen called “Art Home.” Small groups of students whip up Provence-

inspired menus that may include coriander-crusted sardines, ratatouille, and plum clafouti. Once the courses are plated, students sit together in a sunlit space to enjoy the fruits of their lesson.

PASTRIES POUR VOUS L'Atelier des Sens offers the opportunity to don a more creative cooking chapeau. Every day except Sundays, at locations in the Bastille and Beaubourg, there are one- to four-hour courses (from 34 euros; www.atelier-des-sens.com) built around themes like sushi and foie gras. Under the tutelage of a pastry chef, participants in the pâtisserie class will create a variety of French desserts, such as rhubarb-raspberry crème brûlée and fragrant lavender-peach trifle.

BAKERS AND BOOKS **La Cocotte**, a charming 11th arrondissement salon and bookstore, is a sweet spot that offers small, 90-minute classes (from 35 euros; www.lacocotte.net) with a rotating cast of instructors. The American pie-themed class, led by British pastry chef Rachel Khoo, who also leads the “Pimp My Cupcake” class, features American classics: lemon meringue, apple cheddar, and pumpkin. At the end of the session, guests take home pastry boxes filled with an assortment of mini-pies.

SHARPEN YOUR SKILLS While Paris's amateur classes offer plenty of fun, they're not without their serious side; you will go home with new skills. At Chef Olivier Berté's **Les Coulisses du Chef**, where cooking classes are offered Wednesday through Saturday (three hours, 100 euros; www.coulisseduchef.com), participants may attempt sole meunière—the fish dish that made Julia Child fall in love with French cuisine. But it's not for the faint of heart. At a large kitchen island dotted with fragrant ingredients like fresh basil and dried curry, Chef Olivier teaches the class how to skin, scale, gut, clean, sauté, and fillet the big fish. He also corrects knife skills, advises on shopping for spices, and pours chilled wine during the three-course feast served at the end of the lesson.

MARKET DAY In-home classes allow you to really immerse yourself in a local kitchen. Last summer, two American transplants—caterer and cookbook author Charlotte Puckette and tour leader Richard Nathem—paired up to offer **Eye Prefer Paris Tours** in Puckette's town house in the 7th arrondissement. The intimate gatherings, offered Wednesday through Sunday (four hours, 185 euros; www.eyepreferparistours.com), begin with Nathem guiding you through a neighborhood market, pointing out such details as how the local butcher defeathers chickens with a special blowtorch. Then it's back to Puckette's professional kitchen, where she demonstrates such culinary skills as perfectly roasting a duck breast and whipping up crème anglaise. ■

FRENCH FINDS FOR THE GOURMAND

Where to pick up top culinary gadgets in Paris.

Passionate foodies shouldn't miss Paris's Quartier Montorgueil, a charming pedestrian neighborhood that is home to several historic cooking stores. Start at **E. Dehillerin** (18 & 20

rue Coquillière; 01 42 36 53 13), where every imaginable cooking item—from copper casserole dishes to cast-iron pans to dough-cutting contraptions—is stacked floor to ceiling in rustic

charm. Expect a more refined atmosphere at nearby **A. Simon** (48 & 52 rue Montmartre; 01 42 33 71 65). Pillivuyt porcelain flanks the entire entry wall, and other top-notch finds include Cristel cookware and Peugeot pepper grinders. If pâtisserie is your thing, get lost inside **Mora** (13

rue Montmartre; 01 45 08 19 24), whose specialty is professional pastry equipment. You'll find crêpe pans and thermic gloves alongside Eiffel Tower cake molds.—A.T.



A copper pan for the cook.



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SMART TRAVELER

WEB. SOCIAL MEDIA. TECH.

RADAR

By MARILYN TERRELL



At the **Backwards Beekeepers** blog, I first found out that New York City was taking steps to legalize beekeeping, which had been outlawed in 1999 along with keeping lions, crocodiles, and pit vipers (the fine is \$2,000). Bees are on view to the public at Wave Hill; the public garden in the Bronx overlooking the Hudson River has hives that are maintained by volunteer beekeepers and periodically offers programs where you can don hat, veil, and gloves to meet the bees. <http://bit.ly/dqquq1>

From my “quirky and random” files: A travel agency in Prague is marketing a new service—mail your favorite stuffed animal to the Czech Republic to have photos taken of it in front of famous landmarks. **Toy Traveling** promises to show your fuzzy friend a wonderful time and adds an eco-conscious note that “95 percent of all trips are done on foot or by public transport.” <http://bit.ly/a6ieRD>

In Miami, a **Cuban-themed walking tour** stops at the oldest Cuban cigar factory in Little Havana; there, see master cigar rollers at work and enjoy tastings of Cuban coffee and snacks. The tour also includes demonstrations of folkloric Afro-Cuban dance and the Double-9 style of Cuban domino playing. www.bordercrossmiami.com

The **Popular Mechanics** website includes Canada's 370-mile-long Tumbler to Contwoyto Winter Road in its list of “The World's 18 Strangest Roadways.” In summer, the route is an interconnected series of lakes. But it freezes solid in winter, and tractor trailers use it to haul freight to Canada's diamond mines. <http://bit.ly/7nCs7>



Traveler chief researcher Marilyn Terrell is on Twitter: @Marilyn_Res.

ON FOOT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

BUILDING BLOCKS Long before his Walt Disney Concert Hall became an icon of the L.A. skyline, Frank Gehry was just an unheralded local architect who erected the bizarre-looking **Venice Beach House** (10). The detached, Popsicle-shaped playhouse in front evokes a lifeguard tower.

A few blocks inland are **The Venice canals** (11). Developer Abbot Kinney built 16 miles of waterways in 1905, hoping to replicate the Italian city of the same name. He even imported gondolas and gondoliers from the old country. Mocked as “Kinney's Folly” during construction, the canals quickly became a success. But after Kinney's death, Venice was annexed by the city of Los Angeles, which filled in all of his canals. The six canals you see before you were built between 1904 and 1905 by the Short Line Railroad. Restoration of these waterways began in the 1970s and was completed in 1993.

Today, the canals and their Venetian-style bridges grace one of the quirkiest, and priciest, neighborhoods in Los Angeles. The waterways are lined with homes exhibiting every architectural style, from beach shack to saltbox, modernist cube to McMansion.

Don't want to walk back (4.2 miles) to the Promenade? Exit the canals at Venice Boulevard, where you can flag a taxi. Or walk half a mile east on Venice Boulevard to **Abbot Kinney Boulevard** (12), a strip lined with trendy restaurants and haute boutiques, where you can catch the #2 Big Blue Bus back to the starting point. If you need to refuel, stop in for freshly made organic gelati and sorbets at **N'ice Cream** (13) or sample pastries almost too gorgeous to eat at **Jin Patisserie** (14). For a full meal, you can't go wrong at **Hal's Bar and Grill** (15), which has seen the neighborhood go from gritty to pretty in the 23 years since it opened in 1987. ■



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Palmy days: Friends enjoy Venice on a skateboard.

J. EMILIO FLORES/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REXUS (LOWER), JOEL SARFONE/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC IMAGE COLLECTION



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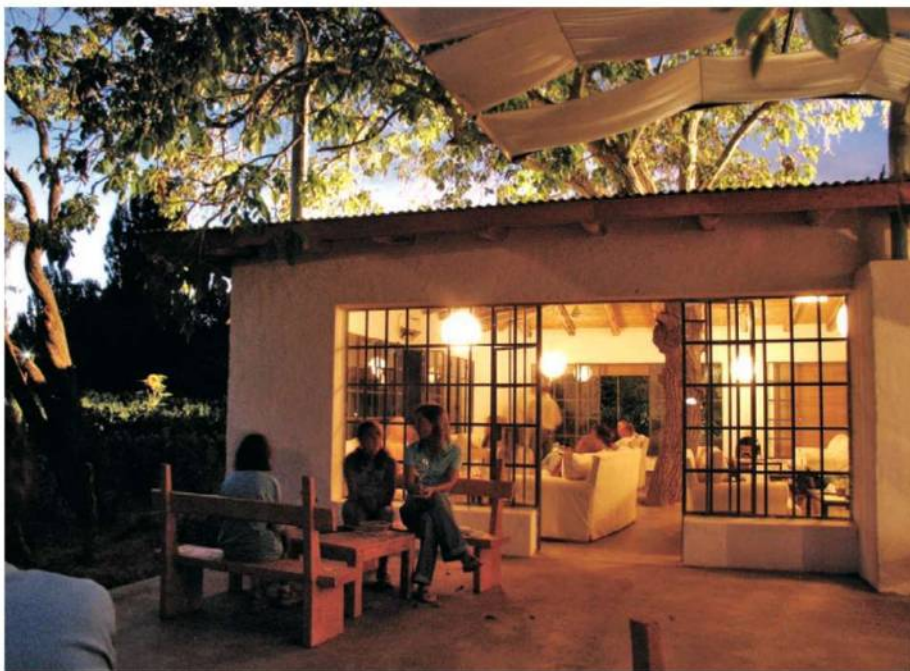
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Happy hour: Guests enjoy a glass of wine at the homey Finca Adalgisa.

HOTEL CENTRAL

Bodegas Open Their Doors

Argentina's Mendoza Valley vineyards welcome travelers to enjoy the countryside with new guesthouses. | **By EMILY KING**

THE HUSTLE and bustle of downtown Mendoza, Argentina, is contagious: Snack on empanadas at Mercado Central or take a jog in the Parque General San Martín. With its plazas and cafés, Mendoza is full of life and charm. But to capture the essence of the region, head to the outlying vineyards, where guesthouses (“bodegas”) welcome oenophiles with a glass of Malbec and a comfortable bed. “The city is lovely, but the countryside takes your breath away,” says Jeff Mausbach, an American who has lived in the region for 13 years, working as the wine education director for the Catena Zapata winery. “When you stay out here, you’re surrounded by vineyards, orchards, and views of the Andes.”

To get a country feel and retain city convenience, book a room in the village-like suburb of Chacras de Coria, 20 minutes south of Mendoza’s city center by car. At **Finca Adalgisa** (from \$235; www.fincaadalgisa.com.ar), owner Gabriela Furlotti has transformed her grandmother’s home into an 11-room bodega and winery. Finca’s renovations are replete with rock fireplaces, king-size beds covered with handmade wool blankets, and lush gardens. Upon arrival, guests are given a bottle of Finca’s vintage Malbec, one of only 5,000 produced annually.

DOWN THE ROAD IN THE SAME LEAFY VILLAGE IS **Lares de Chacras** (from \$185; www.laresdechacras.com/en), an intimate, ten-room guesthouse

built by four brothers in 2005. Lares feels more like home than hotel with its Andean stone, local desert wood, and Argentine textiles. Spacious rooms open to a courtyard and pool. A few miles east of Chacras, you’ll find the small town of Maipú and Lares de Chacras’s sister property, **Finca Terrada** (from \$150; www.fincaterrada.com). Opened in September 2009, the five-room colonial bodega is similar to Lares but sits deep within a vineyard, where grapes are grown for the family’s Terrada label of Malbecs, Merlots, and Torrontés.

Also in Maipú is the 11-room **Club Tapiz** (from \$190; www.tapiz.com.ar), two renovated homes (with original pine floors from the 1890s) surrounded by 25 acres of vines and olive trees. Guests are invited to work the land, pruning, planting, or harvesting alongside the winery’s workers. Thirty llamas provide wool for local artisans, who then sell their colorful sweaters and shawls in the hotel gift shop.

Another 20 miles southwest from Maipú you’ll find Luján de Cuyo, home to **Cavas Wine Lodge** (from \$500; www.cavaswinelodge.com), Mendoza’s only Relais & Châteaux property. Not surprisingly, everything, from the spa’s crushed Malbec body scrub to the 2,500 unlabeled bottles of Bonarda wine—available only to guests—suggests luxury. Guests stay in private adobe bungalows, each with its own plunge pool, fireplace, and terrace. Set on 35 acres, Cavas is within walking distance of Catena Zapata winery, where



Vineyard views: Cavas’s rooms overlook the vines.

WHERE THE GRAPE GROWS

Mendoza’s varietals include fruity reds and light whites.

For wine lovers, Mendoza is synonymous with Malbec. This velvety red varietal is easy to drink, full of fruity flavors—most say blueberry—and inexpensive: You can pick up a good bottle for

under \$10. Mendoza’s dry climate, high altitude, abundance of sun, and less than nine inches of annual rainfall offer perfect conditions for growing wine grapes, particularly the country’s famed

purple grape. And while Malbecs have brought the region its fame, oenophiles are now raving about Argentina’s lesser known white wine, Torrontés. Highly acidic and aromatic (tropical fruit and honeysuckle flavors), Torrontés dates to the country’s colonization: It’s speculated that the vines came

with Spanish missionaries in the 1600s. Today, Torrontés represents 35 percent of all the white wine sold in Argentina. This refreshing wine is best served chilled and young (you’re fine to uncork a bottle of 2010 tonight), and pairs well with seafood. —E.K.



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CHECKING IN

How Green is Your City?

Winner of the 2010 European Green Capital Award, Stockholm walks the talk with its eco-friendly hotels. | **By LOLA AKINMADE**

Scandic Hotels

THROUGHOUT STOCKHOLM

Leading the city's green charge is the Scandic Hotel chain. Its sustainable programs began in the 1990s, and today all 18 properties in Stockholm have received the Nordic Swan Eco Label—the official certification awarded to products and services with a proven record of green initiatives. From low-energy lightbulbs to organic cuisine at all their locations, hotels displaying “the Swan” label have been vetted to meet certain environmental, health, and quality criteria. Rising next to Humlegården Park, the contemporary Scandic Anglais Hotel (www.scandichotels.com; from \$206) features IKEA-style monochrome interiors. For warmer decor, opt for the Scandic Continental (www.scandichotels.com; from \$116) just a block away



Cozy dining at Djuret.

from the central station (T-Centralen) and the imposing Klara Church. Both hotels compost organic waste, which is converted into biogas fuel and later reused at Scandic hotels.

Nordic Sea Hotel

VASAPLAN

In central Stockholm across from T-Centralen, both the Nordic Sea Hotel (www.nordichotels.se; from \$130) and its sister property next door, Nordic Light Hotel, became Swan-certified

in 2007. After a day of sightseeing, don a thermal suit and head into Nordic Sea's Absolut Ice Bar to sit on stools sculpted from Torne River ice. Among the eco-credits: hotel laundry is done on-site using biodegradable detergent, which eliminates the need for transportation and reduces carbon emissions by 50 tons annually.

Langholmen Hotel

LÅNGHOLMEN ISLAND

Check into a former cell at the Langholmen Hotel (www.langholmen.com/en; from \$206), once a 19th-century prison called Kronohuset. The 102 rooms boast original cell doors. Visit the museum, From Crime to Chains, which chronicles the hotel's transformation from a prison. Explore Langholmen Island on foot, then cross Langholm Bridge to Södermalm, Stockholm's bohemian district.

Victory Hotel

GAMLA STAN

Hearty Swedish cuisine remains the main draw for the Victory Hotel (www.victoryhotel.se; from \$260), situated in historic Gamla Stan. While the hotel's Swan certification is underway, its Michelin-starred restaurant, Leijon-tornet (built around a 14th-century tower) and its bistro, Djuret, are organic-certified and share one kitchen headed by Chef Gustav Otterberg. Dishes include braised wild boar and cloudberry desserts.



Cell time: The Langholmen retains vestiges from its prison days.



Mod digs at the Hotel Re!

[DEALS]

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“All-inclusive” doesn't have to mean over-the-top. The Quincy Hotel is a perfect example of affordable inclusivity in the heart of a city. Rates for this boutique 108-room property, just steps from Orchard Road's posh shopping center, factor in three meals a day and a free happy hour, plus two laundered clothing items per night and a limo pickup from the airport. Sleek, modern design permeates the hotel, particularly in the case of the glass-enclosed pool, which juts out from the 12th story of the building and offers a gorgeous view of the Singapore skyline.

From \$190 > www.quincy.com.sg.

EMILY HILL > HANGOUT@MT. EMILY HOTEL

Tucked in the quiet Emily Hill garden district in Singapore's city center, the hangout @ mt. emily hotel is a vibrant, fresh alternative to the traditional hostel. The color-themed, spartan guest rooms offer twin or double beds but can sleep up to five people, making them ideal for groups traveling together. On-site laundry, Internet, complimentary coffee and tea, and a roof deck are added perks, as is the proximity to the MRT metro station and the lively Little India neighborhood.

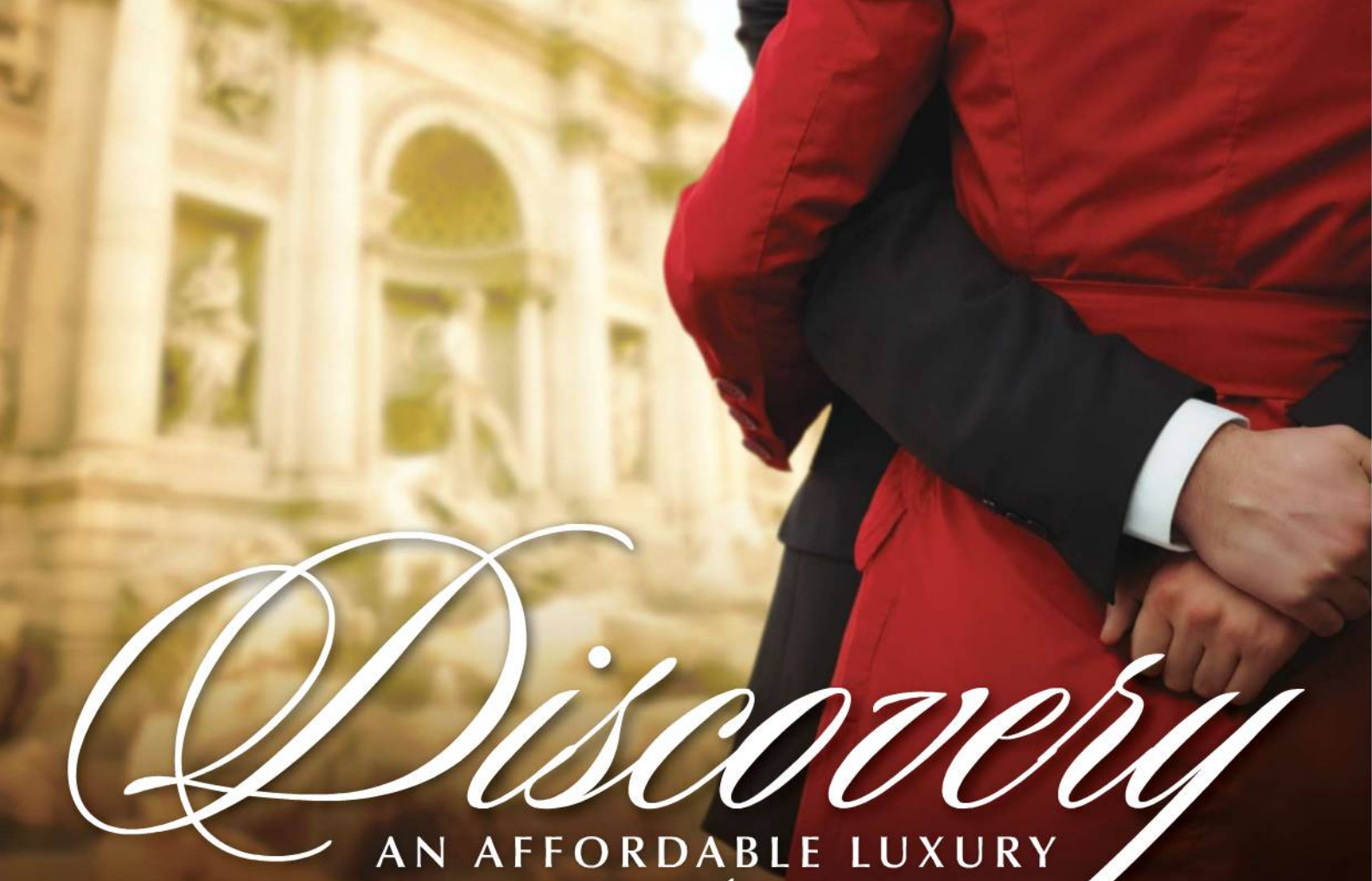
From \$58 > www.hangouthotels.com.

PEARL HILL > HOTEL RE!

Disco dancer silhouettes and mod furniture that could have been lifted from an Austin Powers set are among the retro details in the 140-room Hotel Re!, but that's all part of the fun. Located in Singapore's Pearl Hill neighborhood, a few steps from Chinatown's Chin Swee Road, the modern, 12-story property includes a “Veg Out” lounge that screens classic and international films nightly and a family suite with two separate bedrooms and complimentary breakfast for four. For every overnight stay, the hotel donates one dollar to local youth charities.

From \$110 > www.hotelre.com.sg. —Janelle Nanos

VICTORY HOTEL (UPPER LEFT), HOTEL RE! (UPPER RIGHT), DIRK KRUELL/ALAMY (LOWER)



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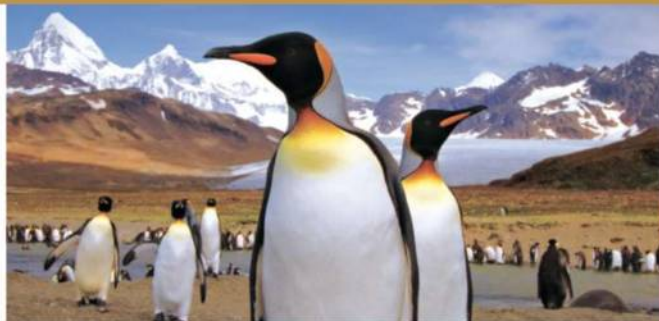


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Life after death: Three decades after its top blew, Mount St. Helens has a changed but vibrant landscape.

ESCAPE

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DIANE COOK AND LEN JENSEN

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Wade in the water: Bathers flock to the Crimean city of Saki for its health resorts.

EXPERIENCE

Back in the U.S.S.R.

Black Sea mud, Iron Curtain culture: a Soviet-style spa experience at a Ukrainian sanatorium. | By **CATHY NEWMAN**

TO THE LIST of Things That Are Good For You, such as broccoli, treadmills, and fiber, let me add another: Crimean mud. Or so I am led to believe by Alexey Popov, director of the Saki Sanatorium, a Black Sea health resort on the Crimean peninsula (once part of the Soviet Union, now part of Ukraine). To hear Popov tell it, there is nothing to set our cells to celebrating and our corpuscles to dancing like being mummified in a viscous slurry of mineral-rich mud.

He insists I give it a try and extols its virtues as the crème de la crème of emollients. After all, the list of ailments said to benefit from its ministrations—arthritis, rheumatism, psoriasis, neuralgia, et al—is longer than a Tolstoy novel.

Crimean mud is “soft, like the most delicate chemist’s ointment,” a 19th-century Russian doctor wrote; it is organic and full of minerals. Popov is a walking advertisement of its virtues. Literally. “Ten years ago I could hardly walk,” he tells me. “Now I hardly think about it.”

The sanatorium—with its bilious green-tiled mudbath room—is a throwback to the era of a nanny-like socialist state: It’s one of about 600 health resorts in Crimea. “In Soviet times,” Popov explains, “every

citizen had the right to health care and rest.” He sounds wistful. Balmy, beautiful Crimea, the “Russian Riviera,” was where Politburo fat cats thawed out from Moscow winters and lesser proletariats took subsidized health vacations. With the dissolution of the Soviet empire in 1991, the number of guests dwindled.

When testing the waters of a Crimean sanatorium such as Saki, it helps to think “period piece.” I am, as the Beatles song says, back in the U.S.S.R. The architecture tends toward Early Concrete Bunker. A statue of Lenin stands in the adjacent park. (“I didn’t put it there,” says Popov. “So I won’t be taking it down.”) While capitalism gets its footing, catering to tourists is a work in progress. Service is Soviet style—everything comes with a side dish of sour mien. Clearly, you can take Crimea out of the Soviet Union, but to take the Soviet Union out of Crimea is another matter. Even so, the experience is not without its strange, singular charm.

Saki, like most Crimean health resorts, has been privatized. Happily, I don’t have to be a former comrade to pay the equivalent of 15 dollars a day for a room (the current price has at least doubled, though meals are included). Think

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SMART TRAVELER

summer camp—huge hall, communal tables, sullen waitresses who ladle kasha into heavy ceramic bowls and pour tea from iron kettles.)

But kasha and tea aren't the point of a stay. Though Popov extols the virtues of the seaside resort's air ("saturated with iodine ions!") and a litany of therapies, including acupuncture, aromatherapy, purgative treatments (of which the less said, the better), the pinnacle experience is a mud bath. At nine dollars, it's also the most expensive. The mud—3,000 tons are harvested annually—is dredged from a lake visible from the glass-enclosed fountain room where patients take the waters.

The centerpiece of the mudbath room is a huge, white enamel tub tended—no, let me say, commanded—by a short, sturdy woman in a plastic apron and rubber boots with legs like pillars and the fortitude of a bulldozer. She pulls down a black hose hanging from the ceiling, fills the tub with 77 pounds of heated mud, tops it off with brine and a beaker of diluted hydrogen sulfide (to improve circulation, I'm told). The mud burps like a primordial stew. She orders me in and places an hourglass on the tub to clock the 20-minute soak.

How does it feel? Slippery as eels. Warm. It tingles and, yes, soothes. The boot-wearing Mistress of the Mud Bath periodically pops in to reprimand me for floating. I am, you see, supposed to keep my body submerged. The brine, however, makes the bath a virtual salt lake. Buoyancy has the upper hand. Appendages keep bobbing to the surface. Twenty minutes elapse. I emerge from the black water feeling a bit murky myself. Despite a shower scrub-down, mud will linger under my nails for days.

Time for a massage. After waiting on a wood bench, I am summoned into a small room with a massage table by a man with a short-cropped beard and strong hands who expertly digs into my knotted muscles. I sigh in gratitude. Afterwards, I try to tip him. "I couldn't possibly," he protests, retreating from the proffered bill. "You are a guest from America."

And then, like the sudden gleam of a lantern at dusk, he smiles. After the scowling waitresses, the leaden meals, and the dour doyenne of the bath, that smile feels good. No, it feels great. More therapeutic than treadmills, broccoli, or fiber. Better even than Crimean mud. ■

T There are many health resorts in Saki, though to book one you'll need the help of an experienced travel agent. A helpful website in English is www.travel-to-ukraine.info.



NATIONAL PARKS

NEWS & TIPS

TEXAS RAPTORS Keep your eyes and ears alert for peregrine falcons in **Big Bend** this summer. According to Raymond Skiles, a wildlife expert for the park, spotting peregrines in the late nesting season—May to June—is extremely likely in the canyons of the Rio Grande. "If you're on a river trip, your chances are excellent," he says. "The adult falcons are calling as they drop food, and when the young fledge, they're out making a lot of noise squawking at each other." Paved roads lead to the Santa Elena and Boquillas Canyons, where outfitters offer daytrips and overnight camping outings by canoe or raft.

PEOPLE PLEASER Great Smoky Mountain National Park earned its rank as the most visited park in 2009 with more than nine million visitors. Grand Canyon ranked second, followed by Yosemite.

TRAIL MIX Interpretive specialist Chuck Milliken was assigned by the National Park Service (NPS) to develop auto tour guides for the **Oregon Trail**. Since 2004, Milliken and a cultural resources specialist have reached out to locals and nearby museums while studying the trail. The available guides (www.nps.gov/oreg) offer historical context and car directions to the trail in each state it passes through.

CITY BREAKS Two recreation areas managed by the NPS offer retreats near large cities. Within Greater Boston, visit any of the 34 **Boston Harbor Islands** for the day or camp overnight. Along with fishing and swimming, there are tide pools to explore and trails and salt marshes for hiking. **Governors Island** in New York has two forts from the early 1800s staffed with reenactors. Visitors can picnic or bike along a promenade. The island opens for the season on June 5. —Kelly Corrigan

IAN SHIVE/AURORA PHOTOS/CORBIS

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Fig. 1
Red Fox



Fig. 2 Black-Tailed Jackrabbit



Fig. 3
American Bison



Fig. 4
Porcupine



Fig. 5 Bighorn Sheep



Fig. 6 Black Bear



Fig. 7 Bobcat

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Tallyho: A pack of frenzied foxhounds prepares for a hunt in Winchester, Virginia.

ROAD TRIP

Retreat to Hunt Country

Virginia's historic horse region boasts Civil War landmarks, walkable villages, and local cuisine. | **By KATIE KNOROVSKY**

THE OLD GUARD of Washington, D.C., has long retreated to the hills of rural northern Virginia—horses and hounds in tow. But long before it became a playground to the well-heeled likes of Jackie O., horse and hunt country was the embattled site of a string of Civil War clashes led by rebel John Mosby.

Next year officially kicks off the five-year-long Civil War sesquicentennial. Travelers who come to poke around historic battlefields and cemeteries might be in for a surprising twist: The area has never felt more alive, with a sparkling array of lively hamlets, postcard-perfect wineries, chic boutiques, upscale eateries, and world-class museums.

"We like to say that if Mosby and his Rangers came back to Middleburg or Upperville, they would know exactly where they were," says Childs Burden, a longtime local and board member of the Mosby Heritage Area Association. "Many of the old roads and most of the stone walls are exactly the same; the landmarks are recognizable through time."

The area makes a convenient day or weekend trip from Washington, D.C.,

but a more charming route zigzags from Winchester—which is about 70 miles northwest of D.C. at the tip-top of the Shenandoah Valley—east through Middleburg and on to Leesburg. As you meander along the drive's bucolic country roads, listen carefully for the whispers of ghosts—as well as the buzz of new life.

ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS Get your bearings in Winchester, famous as Patsy Cline's birthplace and for its Civil War significance.

"Winchester was a huge crossroads during the war: It changed hands 72 times," explains local historian Ben Ritter. More area history is on display at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley (www.shenandoahmuseum.org), a polished trove

of regional lore, antiques, fine art, and ornately detailed and furnished miniature houses. The contemporary brick museum, which was designed by star architect Michael Graves, sits on the manicured grounds of the historic Glen Burnie House. The complex is surrounded by six acres of elegant gardens that are set ablaze with Siberian irises each May and 350 rose bushes by late June.



TAKE A HIKE Head southeast from Winchester on Rte. 50, once a buffalo trail and surveyed by George Washington in the 1760s to become the country's first incorporated turnpike. After 17 miles, take Winchester Road south one-and-a-half-miles to 1,862-acre Sky Meadows State Park (www.dcr.virginia.gov), where you can stretch your legs on 14 hiking trails—or your horse's legs on two bridle loops—and access the Appalachian Trail. Watch for red-headed woodpeckers that roost in a deadwood grove near the visitors center.

SEE A HORSE SHOW Back on Rte. 50, continue east to tiny Upperville. It is home to Trinity Episcopal Church, known for its cobblestone courtyard and pint-size standalone lending library (said to be the nation's smallest). Locals congregate at Hunter's Head Tavern, a farm-to-table pub serving organic shepherd's pie. Check out the jowly (and faux) foxhunter's head mounted on the wall—the animal-loving proprietor's wry reply to the area's sporting tradition. A mile past town are the private grounds of the Upperville Colt & Horse Show (www.upperville.com), which dates to 1853 (and set for June 7-13 in 2010). Held on the manicured grass ring on Salem Farm, the show's marquee event is Sunday afternoon's grand finale Jumper Classic (\$100,000 prize), which you can watch from the surrounding hillsides.

BRIDGE CROSSING As troops headed toward Gettysburg in 1863, a minor Civil War battle broke out around Goose Creek Bridge,



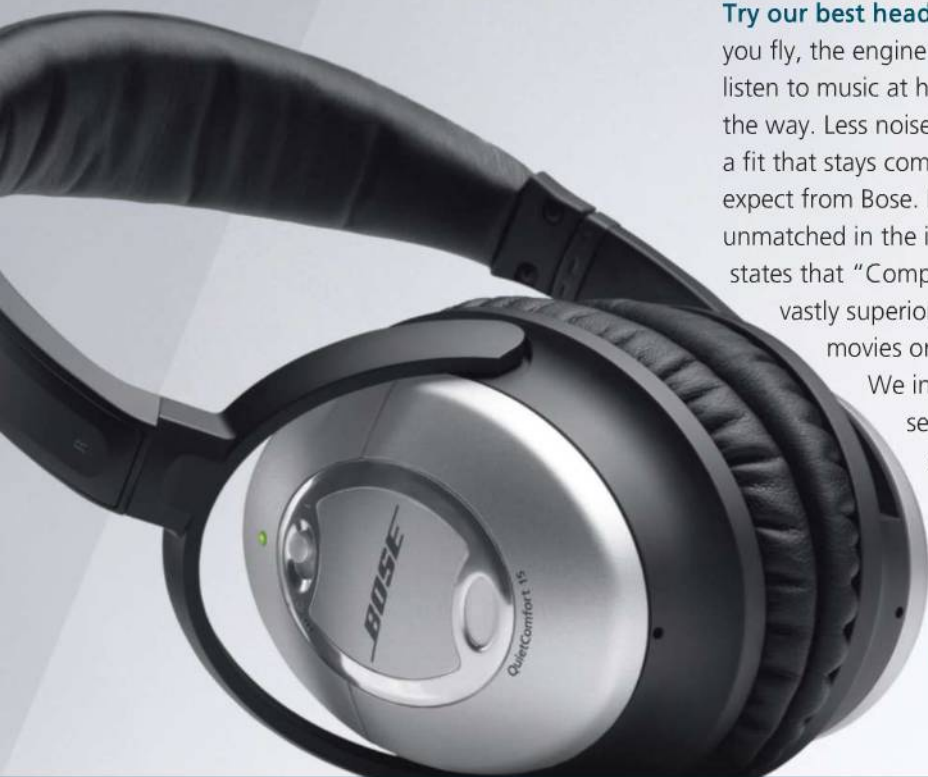
Divine diversions: Stop along the way for a self-guided tour of the formal gardens at Glen Burnie and classic crème brûlée (left) at Magnolias.

KEITH BARBA/CLOUGH (UPPER), SCOTT GABRIEL (LOWER LEFT), DANGER SPENCE (LOWER RIGHT)

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an early 19th-century four-arch bridge that endures as one of Virginia's last standing stone turnpike bridges. Peek at this modest bridge from Rte. 50 or pull off the road and walk across the historic overpass.

MEANDER MIDDLEBURG Once you reach Middleburg, Rte. 50 slows to become Washington Street, a boutique- and café-lined main artery. Considered the official capital of horse and hunt country, tourist-friendly Middleburg welcomes visitors with a small-town—but decidedly upper-crust—embrace. Grab a bowl of creamy peanut soup at the cozy, stone-walled Red Fox Inn (www.redfox.com), America's oldest established inn and a favorite dining spot of the First Lady during John F. Kennedy's presidency. The building's core dates to 1728; during the Civil War, the restaurant's bar served as a makeshift surgery table.

Stroll up and down Washington Street to browse a range of regional artifacts, from Staffordshire porcelains and elegant colonial-era silver at the Middleburg Antique Emporium (www.middleburgantiqueemporium.com) to vintage couture cocktail dresses at Timmie Jane (www.timmiejane.com). Try on a pair of consignment riding boots at the Middleburg Tack Exchange (www.middleburgtack.com); outfit your hound with a smart tartan fleece from Wylie Wagg (www.wyliewagg.com); and sip local and European wines at the Tasting Room (www.thetastingroomvinebar.com), a sleek self-serve wine bar owned by nearby Boxwood Winery. Its high-tech chrome

“The building's core dates to 1728; during the Civil War, the restaurant's bar served as a makeshift surgeon's table.”

dispensers let oenophiles sample one-, three-, or five-ounce pours at their leisure.

HORSES AND FARMS Back on Rte. 50, drive five miles east to the restored Aldie Mill (www.nwrpa.org/parks/aldiemill), which supplied grain to Civil War troops and is Virginia's only remaining gristmill powered by tandem waterwheels. Open only on weekend afternoons April–November, the mill offers tours and grinding demos. Double back one mile on Rte. 50 to the Snickersville Turnpike (Rte. 734), an old-timey road that bounces northwest past a steady stream of barns and colonial estate farms, each flanked by

hand-painted signs denoting their name. Admire thoroughbreds grazing behind stone walls. Roughly eight miles along Rte. 734, make a pit stop at the 1913 Philomont General Store, a shop from a bygone era, where locals pick up wine made in nearby vineyards and gab at the post office cached in back.

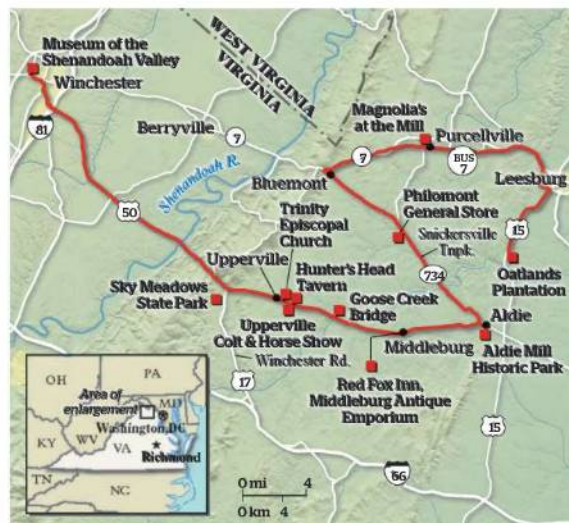
DINE IN A MILL Just past Bluemont, Snickersville Turnpike meets Rte. 7. Turn right onto Rte. 7 and head east toward Leesburg. As you approach Purcellville, swing off on business Rte. 7 then turn left at 21st Street to find Magnolias at the Mill (www.magnoliasmill.com), a rustic-chic restaurant

Verdant valley: Sunset Hills Vineyard (left) in Purcellville allows picnicking on its pastoral grounds, or you can dine on Virginia country ham and grits at the Red Fox Inn (below) in Middleburg.



housed in a refurbished grain mill and offering stone-fired pizza, fried green tomatoes, buttermilk onion rings, and local wines. It marks the end of the 45-mile, bicyclist-heavy Washington & Old Dominion rail trail, so don't be surprised to dine among cyclists refueling on the patio.

STROLL THE GARDEN Continue on Rte. 7 east roughly ten miles, then turn south on Rte. 15 for six miles, where you'll see a sign for the gracious grounds of the Oatlands Plantation (www.oatlands.org), a sprawling former wheat plantation founded in 1804. Just before the Civil War broke out, Oatlands owned 128 slaves, the most in the county. History came full circle a few years ago: John Buchanan, Jr., a descendant of an Oatlands slave, tied the knot at the National Historic Landmark, now a popular wedding spot with its cheery yellow Greek Revival mansion and formal, four-acre terraced garden. Visitors without nuptials on the agenda can walk the tree-canopied grounds or join a half-hour guided tour of the antiques-filled mansion. ■



VISIT LOGSDON (BOTH); INTERNATIONAL MAPPING



Mountain high: Salt Lake City's library includes a rooftop garden and views of the Wasatch Range.

CITY LIFE

Libraries Come Alive

New mixed-use, multimedia libraries offer a direct route into the life of a city—off the tourist track. | **By JONATHAN LERNER**

PERHAPS YOU still have that last-century idea of libraries, whisper-quiet and offering little beyond books. But libraries are changing. And many new ones, especially central branches in places like Vancouver, Salt Lake City, and Brisbane, Australia, are intended to be hives of activity. They incorporate galleries, performance spaces, and stylish cafés. Often designed to stimulate downtown regeneration, they can be impressive works of architecture, too. According to Maija Berndtson, library director in Helsinki, Finland, where a new library is planned, today's library is a "cultural meeting point where city dwellers can spend their free time, feel at home, and meet others right in the center of town." Even better for travelers, these new-generation libraries offer an entrée right into a city's life.

CHECK IT OUT The **Millennium Library**, in Norwich, a historic English city northeast of London, is a prime example. Located across a city-center plaza from a magnificent 15th-century church, it is part of a soaring, glassy mixed-use building called **The Forum**. Your first stop in the Forum

might logically be the Norwich Tourist Information Centre. There, besides finding area maps and restaurant tips, you can reserve space on one of 12 themed and guided city walks. At the library itself, consult local-history experts at the Heritage Centre or give the kids a break from sightseeing with a romp in the colorful children's area. If your interest is military history, visit the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library, which honors the nearly 7,000 U.S. airmen who died during World War II while stationed in this part of England.

There is much more to do before you leave the Forum. Explore Fusion, a digital screen gallery with a series of screens that display a changing program of films, videos, and electronic art. Also housed here are the BBC's regional television and radio studios, where you can sign on for a

behind-the-scenes tour and try operating a camera or reading the news yourself at the Open Studio. The Forum is also a venue for shows and exhibitions, nearly all free, including one (running from May 29 to June 4, 2010), of winning works from the U.K. Landscape Photographer of the Year Awards. The Forum also is a regular stop for the stand-up funny guys from London's Comedy Store.

STACKED WITH ART Not every new library has a wide range of offerings. But many bring their own unique elements to the mix. At Santa Cruz, Tenerife, in Spain's Canary Islands, the library is part of a striking new building, by famed Swiss architects Herzog & de Meuron, called **Tenerife Espacio de las Artes** (Tenerife Art



Book it: New tomes mix with artwork at the Tenerife Espacio de las Artes.



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SMART TRAVELER



Make music: Visitors can tickle the ivories of a grand piano at the library in Cardiff, Wales.

Space). It includes a contemporary art museum—where the works of Spanish surrealist Óscar Domínguez, who was born in Tenerife, are permanently on display. You can dine and shop here as well as check out the Tenerife Island Photography Centre, which mounts rotating shows and hosts Fotonoviembre, a biennial international photography festival (being held in 2011). The **State Library of Queensland** in Brisbane, Australia, part of the city's South Bank Cultural Centre, features exhibitions on Australian art and history and has an Indigenous Knowledge Centre with interactive displays about that continent's native people and their history. A permanent exhibition details the period in Queensland's history when Aboriginal people were sometimes paid for their labor in opium, with tragic results; another exhibit shows how the library cares for its collections and lets you watch the conservators at work.

NOTEWORTHY The new **central branch in Cardiff, Wales**, is part of a redevelopment of the downtown commercial center that includes shopping, apartments, and pedestrian-only streets. Inside the library is a sleek grand piano that patrons can register to play; the music will waft up through the airy building's atrium. The **main library in Salt Lake City**, designed by architect Moshe Safdie, includes a glassed-in atrium and unobstructed views of the nearby Wasatch Mountains. Shops here range from a florist to a bookstore specializing in comics and graphic novels, to a local cooperative artists' boutique. The local NPR affiliate's studios are here, too. Ask for an informal tour.

Libraries with such kaleidoscopic offerings are also planned for Philadelphia and Turin, Italy, where the library's seven-story building will feature an open-air theater, an Internet café, and a rooftop observation deck from which to view the Alps. "Shhh! This is a library!" is definitely a thing of the past. ■

[AUTHENTIC GOODS]

THE REAL McCOY

Scotland's traditional kilts change it up with new colors and fabrics.

BACKSTORY If you're looking for the definitive Scottish souvenir, it's probably best to forgo the unwieldy bagpipe for an authentic kilt. In fact, Scottish history and culture are literally wrapped up in the kilt. "No one really knows how far back the tradition goes," says kiltmaker Howie Nicholsby, "but it probably dates to the Viking invasions of Scotland. It started as one piece of cloth the wearer would sleep in and then pleat each morning by hand." Though the kilt is now predominantly relegated to formal occasions such as weddings and national rugby matches, new Scottish patriots are increasingly seeing it as a daily alternative to the predictable trousers. "Why not?" asks Nicholsby, who grew up in the trade at his parents' Edinburgh kilt shop, **Geoffrey Kiltmakers and Weavers** (www.geoffreykilts.co.uk), and who helped turn the kilt into something positively hip at his own **21st Century Kilts** (www.21stcenturykilts.com) in the same city. There he offers kilts in denim, leather, pinstripe, and the more classic tartan.

CLAN COLORS Purists looking for the traditional Scottish kilt need to follow three rules: It should be made of pure wool; it should be made in Scotland; and it should be hand-sewn. Buyers seeking a family history connection should look for a tartan pattern representing their clan, though the history of most patterns is surprisingly shallow. It was only in Victorian times that most Highland tartans became associated with specific clans. That may be enough history for some. But today, kiltmakers are offering unique tartan patterns that resonate with clients' interests. The Sustainability tartan, for example, balances blue, green, and yellow to represent ocean, land, and sunlight, respectively. "I prefer the weathered, more muted colors," says Nicholsby, probably because they echo the soft, haunting palette of the Highlands themselves. —*Raphael Kadushin*



Skirt it: Kilts come in a variety of patterns.

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PORT OF CALL

Off the Ship in Bermuda

What to do on this semitropical British isle. | By EVERETT POTTER

Most cruise ships devote seven days to a round-trip Bermuda voyage, leaving passengers anywhere from two to four full days in port. So you'll have plenty of time to look beyond the manicured golf greens, kneesocks, and honeymooners on motor scooters for the island that inspired Mark Twain's remark, "You can go to heaven if you want. I'd rather stay in Bermuda."

Paddle and Snorkel

EXPLORE THE REEF

Rent a kayak at **Blue Hole Water Sports** (\$20 for the first hour; snorkel gear is \$8 an hour; www.blueholewater.bm). Put in at the hotel beach and head off for the reefs of Whalebone Bay or the mangroves of Walsingham Cove.

Museum Hopping

ART AND ARTIFACTS

The island's newest museum, the **Masterworks Museum of Bermuda Art** (\$5, www.bermudamasterworks.com) opened in 2008 in a renovated 1900s building in Paget. Every artwork is either created by Bermudians or inspired by Bermuda, hence a collection with extraordinary paintings by Winslow Homer, Marsden Hartley,

and Georgia O'Keeffe. In the Royal Naval Dockyard, you'll find **Bermuda's Maritime Museum** (www.bmm.bm); treasures include artifacts from centuries of shipwrecks and a Bermuda fitted dinghy, the island's signature sailing craft.

Go for a Gallop

BOOK A GUIDED RIDE

Even novice riders can saddle up for a group ride at **Spicelands Riding Centre** in Warwick (\$80, www.bermudahorseriding.com).

Ride a Bike

ALONG THE RAILWAY TRAIL

Rent a mountain bike from **Smatt's** (\$35, www.smatts.cyclelivery.com). Then pedal along the **Bermuda Railway Trail**, a former railway line that offers 21 noncontinuous miles of

car-free bike path from St. George to Somerset.

Stroll Back in Time

A DAY IN ST. GEORGE

Hamilton is Bermuda's current capital, but St. George, founded in 1612, was its first. Spend a day wandering the lanes of this UNESCO World Heritage site, with its preserved pastel cottages in salmon, lemon, and lime. Visit St. Peter's, believed to be the hemisphere's oldest continuously used Anglican church. For lunch, make it a bowl of Bermuda fish chowder, traditionally eaten with a dash of Gosling's Black Seal rum and Outerbridge's Original Sherry Pepper sauce, at the **White Horse Pub** (www.whitehorsebermuda.com), overlooking the water.



CRUISE NEWS

| from SHIP TO SHORE |

KEEP CHARLESTON CHARMING Following the decision of **Carnival Cruise Lines** to make Charleston a home port (sailing to the Bahamas and the Caribbean), the city is limiting the number of cruise ships in port to one at a time. Locals worry the massive liners will detract from the city's famed southern charm. Says the mayor, "It is important that the cruise ship business, like other things in Charleston, be at the right scale."

SAILING SOLO Good news for solo travelers. **Norwegian Cruise Line's** new *Norwegian Epic* is dropping the single-traveler surcharge (known as the single supplement, it's a fee imposed on those who don't book double occupancy). Occupants in one of the 128 "Studio" staterooms will pay the same amount as a double-occupancy traveler.

JAZZ IT UP Luxury liner **Cunard** has partnered with New York City's famed Juilliard School to enrich onboard entertainment on eastbound transatlantic crossings aboard the *Queen Mary 2*. Entertainers will include students and faculty from the music school's jazz program, who will perform in the ship's Royal Court Theatre through the 2010 transatlantic season.

MAKING SCENTS Celebrities aren't the only ones marketing perfumes these days. **MSC Cruises** has developed its own fragrance for the *Splendida*, which sails the Mediterranean. MED by MSC, which has notes of fig, jasmine, almond, and vetiver, will be infused in linens and select public areas. **Silversea** has also created a line of three fragrances that passengers can request to be infused into their rooms aboard the *Silver Spirit*, and soon, all ships, gratis. —Jeannette Kimmel



Riders on the strand: Horseback riders trot along a beach on Bermuda's South Shore.

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SMART TRAVELER

[TOP 5]

WORLD WAR II SITES

These are the best places to mark the 65th anniversary of WWII's end.

1. CAEN MEMORIAL

NORMANDY, FRANCE

The memorial at Normandy-Caen has reopened with a new wing devoted to one of the war's most harrowing battles, with films about D-Day and the Normandy landing. To see the site itself, sign up for a one- or two-day guided tour that includes the cemeteries and Omaha Beach.

2. PEARL HARBOR MEMORIAL

HONOLULU, HAWAII

A state-of-the-art visitors complex re-opens this December. New exhibits incorporate the cultural relevance of the harbor to native Hawaiians and include perspectives from both the Japanese and American sides.

3. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MEMORIAL

OSWIECIM, POLAND

The collection of human hair that is slowly turning to dust, and the theft of the notorious *Arbeit macht frei* (Work Makes You Free) sign last year illustrated the need for more protection and preservation for this memorial, which remains one of the most visited sites in Europe.

4. CABINET WAR ROOMS

LONDON, ENGLAND

As bombs rained down, Prime Minister Winston Churchill orchestrated the war effort from a warren of secret and fortified basement bunkers in the heart of the city. Today the rooms are a fascinating museum on the war and the man.

5. NATIONAL WORLD WAR II MUSEUM

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

A \$60-million expansion includes a performance space for '40s-style music hall acts and the 4-D Victory Theater, screening a Tom Hanks-produced interactive documentary film, *Beyond All Boundaries*, depicting sacrifices made on the front lines and the home front. —Janelle Nanos



KRISTA ROSSOW



The dish: Breakfast is one meal served at Canteen, where diners can eat outdoors.

GO NOW

Advantage South Africa

Johannesburg sports a new arts scene. | By DAVID KAUFMAN

Sports fans will descend upon **South Africa** in June for the World Cup soccer championship headquartered in Johannesburg. While the city will certainly be soccer-mad, hosting both the opening and closing ceremonies, its growing contemporary arts scene will provide plenty of diversions for visitors after the games.

GALLERY-HOP ▶ Begin your "Joburg" culture crawl at **Arts on Main** (artsonmain.co.za), the city's newest arts complex. Set just beyond the central business district, Arts on Main is made up of renovated hundred-year-old warehouses displaying the work of artists and fashion designers. For art by local up-and-comers, visit Project Space, the satellite of the **Goodman** (www.goodmangallery.com), which represents the interdisciplinary artist and national icon William Kentridge. A few doors away, the bookshop of the **David Krut Projects** (www.davidkrutpublishing.com) stocks art titles from its own publishing imprint. The **Baileys African History Archive** (www.baha.co.za) has photographs from Jim Bailey's Apartheid-era magazine, *Drum*, that chronicled postcolonial African life.

Love Jozi fashions.



SHOP ON ▶ Tap into South Africa's rising fashion scene with a visit to the local line **Love Jozi** (www.lovejozi.co.za). The Johannesburg-influenced hoodies and T-shirts—made locally by Bradley Kirshenbaum—colorfully interpret Joburg's skyline. Next door, **Black Coffee** (www.blackcoffee.co.za) displays clothing (check out their fall jackets) by Jacques van der Watt and Danica Lepen.

DINE ALFRESCO ▶ Revive yourself at **Canteen**, whose locally sourced menu is served in Arts on Main's grassy courtyard, shaded by lemon and olive trees. Signature dishes include beer-battered hake and hearty lamb stew with dumplings. Canteen's affordable wine list includes Chenin Blancs produced in the Western Cape.

ART WATCH ▶ Venture to Joburg's posh northern district of Rosebank to experience another newcomer—the **Circa** (www.circagallery.co.za). Located near Jan Smuts Avenue, this mixed-use space takes its name from its futuristic, circular shape, sheathed in vertical aluminum poles illuminated at night. Inside, look for large-scale contemporary works and million-year-old fossils from the nearby UNESCO-lauded Cradle of Humankind.



washington
The State

Sol Duc Falls, Olympic National Park

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HAWAII

Honolulu gladly sinks to new depths

A major tourism destination looks to the ocean for its chill factor.

Is tourism-fueled Honolulu poised to become a city of the future? That's the idea as this favorite destination for generations of visitors embarks on a cool—and cooling—energy makeover. The basic vision: Pump frigid deep-sea water to the surface then circulate it to air-condition city buildings, including the tallest skyscraper in Hawaii. By 2013, 40 buildings in downtown Honolulu will be cooled by this deep-sea air-conditioning network, which features underwater pipes extending four miles into the Pacific Ocean. The anticipated environmental benefits are huge for a place almost entirely dependent on imported fossil fuel to keep its 30,000-plus hotel rooms comfortable. Using the abundant and readily accessible ocean water will reduce oil consumption by 178,000 barrels a year, cut electricity use for air-conditioning—a big energy gobbler—by 75 percent, and eliminate the equivalent



Ocean air: Honolulu will cycle sea water to cool buildings.

of some 84,000 tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually. A bonus: The project is homegrown. The Hawaii Natural Energy Laboratory began experimenting with sea-water technology 30 years ago at Keahole Point. Much has been learned since, and both Toronto and Stockholm have used the technology to cool buildings during their summer months. This will be the first time, however, that deep-ocean waters are used to air-condition a major tropical city, where keeping indoor spaces cool is a year-round challenge. —Costas Christ

[TRAVEL INNOVATORS]

TRIBALISM ON A GLOBAL SCALE?

Muster a tribe of like-minded souls on the Web, select an exotic beach to visit, add a learning experience that is more Club Ed than Club Med—and you just may change the world. That is the premise of the newest project of Tribewanted, a paradigm-shifting venture by Brit Ben Keene that assembles a cyber travel community for a real-life “cross-cultural community tourism project.” Their first mission was on Vorovoro, Fiji, where the “tribe” created a community that blended traditional island ways with Western sustainability ideas and innovations. This year the venture expands to Sierra Leone, Africa, which, with the ending of its civil war, needs tourism. Tribewanted’s plan: Bring its “social tourists” to a village on an idyllic local beach, then test-drive ideas generated by the online community. The first “pioneers” arrive in June to build infrastructure using eco-friendly earth-filled bags. Locals will be fully engaged, and a third of the profits will go to the village; the rest funds other projects in Sierra Leone. The bigger plan: “A global network of tribes,” says Keene, “changemakers connected by ideas and beautiful places.” —Charles Kulander



Going tribal in the Fiji Islands.



Sailing into the Future

What to do with a flawed Ferris wheel? Recast it as a power-producing windmill. That's one tantalizing proposal for the ill-fated Southern Star Observation Wheel in Melbourne, Australia. Opened in 2008 as a tourist attraction, it soon closed because of structural faults. A Melbourne design firm, Büro North, is suggesting outfitting the wheel's rim with solar sails to capture energy from both wind and sun.



Bornholm: test lab for innovation.

[THE LEADING EDGE]

A BRIGHT GREEN ISLAND

Bornholm, Denmark, a pastoral island in the Baltic Sea, is already one of northern Europe's top eco destinations thanks to white-sand beaches, seaside villages, forests, and a traditionally sustainable lifestyle. Yet this sunniest spot in Denmark is aiming higher. It intends to notch up its green factor by becoming “bright green” through an ambitious environmental campaign. The idea is to propose the 230-square-mile island as a field laboratory for environmental innovation. “Think of it as a test island,” says program official Lene Gronning. “Entrepreneurs, researchers, and organizations can come here to benefit from Bornholm's unique feature as a ‘controlled environment,’ ideal for testing new products and technologies.” The goal is to reduce net carbon emissions to zero over 15 years—an ambitious target Bornholm is well on its way to achieving. Already, wind turbines generate a third of the electricity, and more than 140 miles of bike and foot paths connect many major sights. Travelers exploring this environmentally friendly holiday destination can also check out its power plant, part of which runs on straw, wood chips, and other waste. Next up: electric cars to scoot you to Bornholm's attractions, including its four famous round-walled medieval churches. —Jay Walljasper

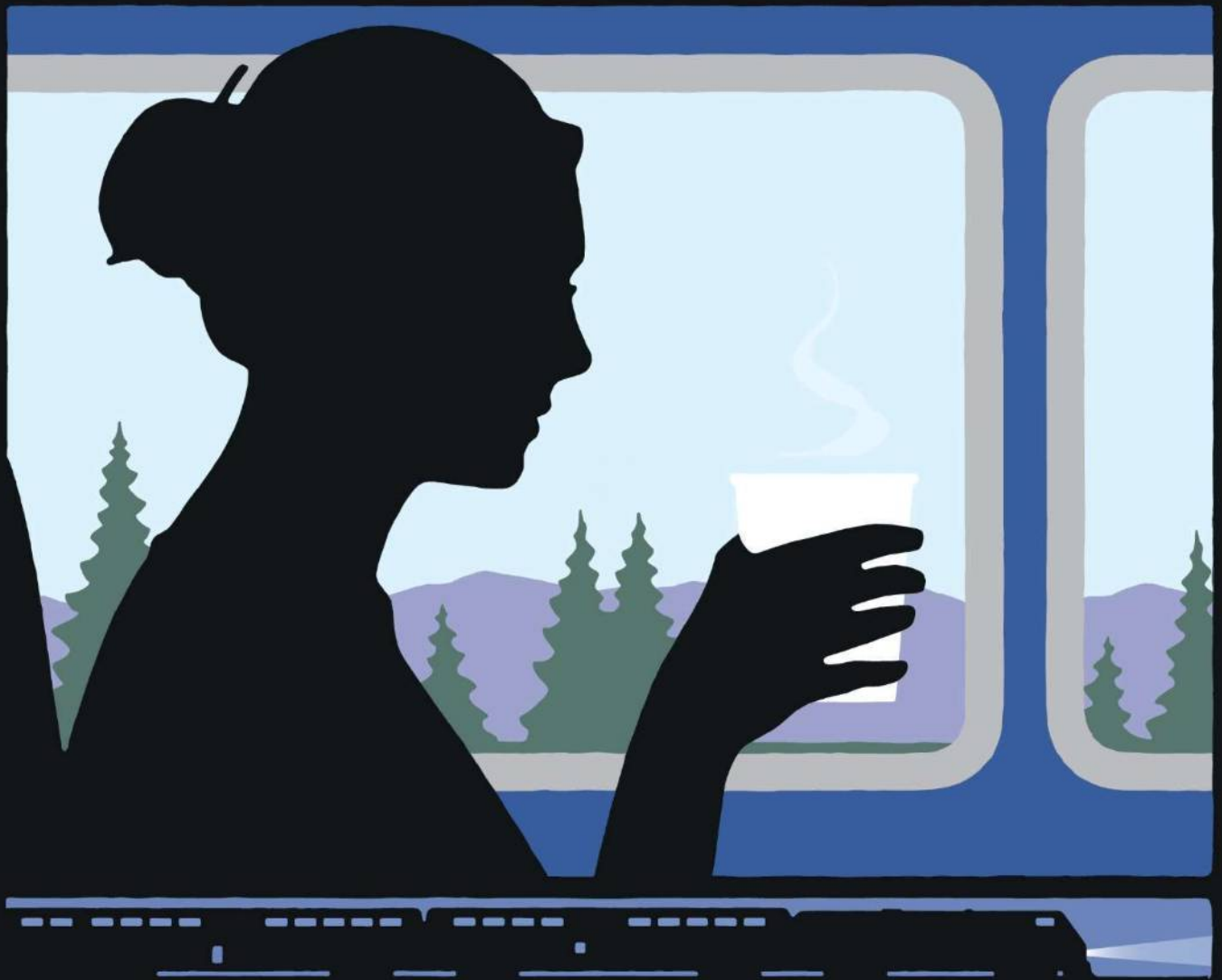
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: HAWAII: DRESSLER/GETTY IMAGES; BÜRO NORTH; PETER BENNETTS; FOOCH; NIEMKE KROOK; JASON/GETTY IMAGES

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By JOEL ACHENBACH
Photographs by SUSAN SEUBERT

A surge of creative energy has electrified the nation's capital as fun new venues like the rooftop bar at the designer W Hotel thrive in the shadow of such classic icons as the Washington Monument.



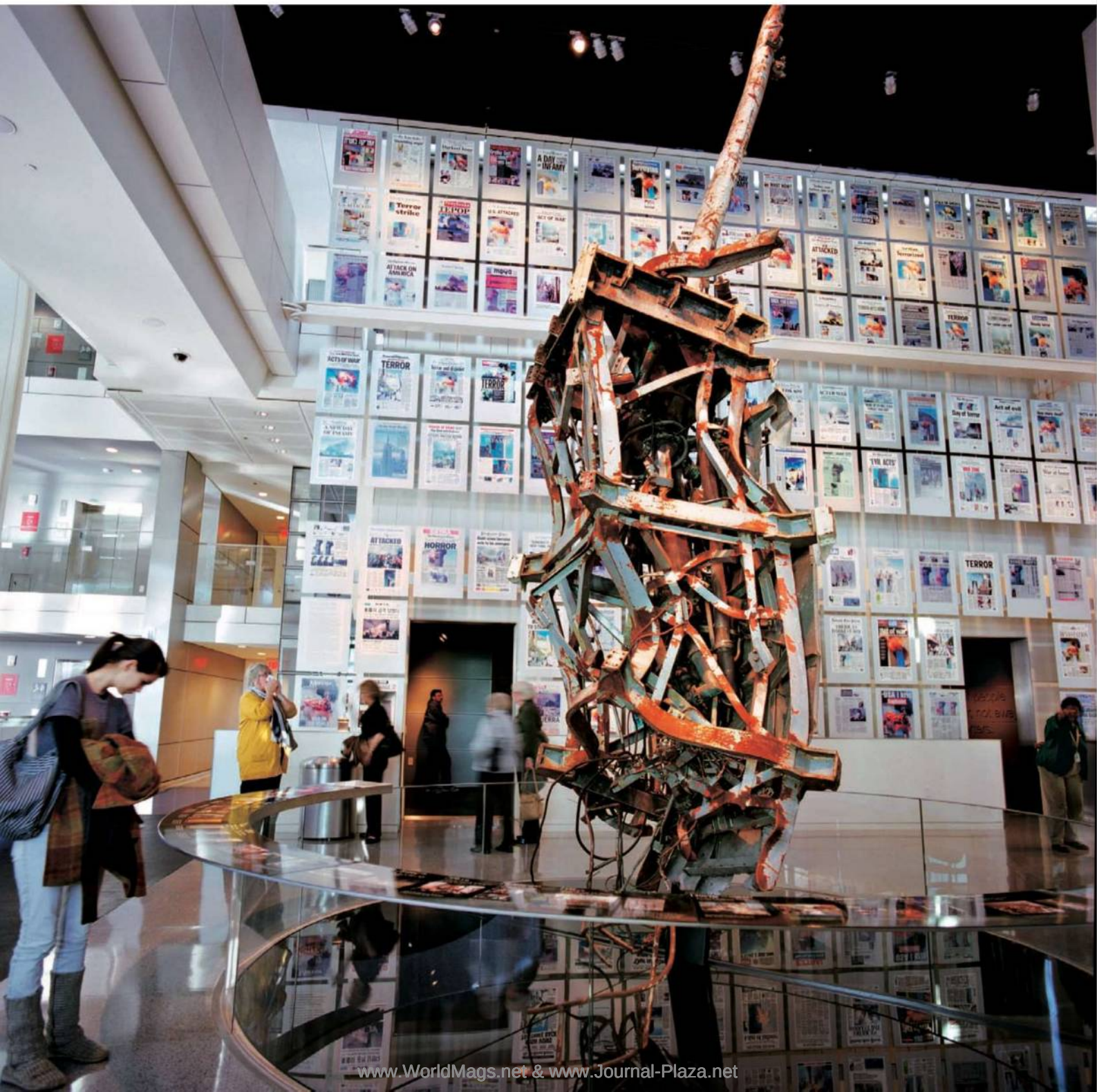


DC's NEW GROOVE

Maybe it's the shift of power from Manhattan, maybe it's a new optimism, but the city inside the Beltway has jettisoned its staid image for a wholesale revival of wide swaths of the cityscape.

Washington today

is Rome at year zero: the most important place on Earth," says David Von Drehle, who spent many years as a reporter and editor for the *Washington Post*. "We're talking money and power. As always, this combination attracts the brainy, the bold, the conniving, and the glamorous." ¶ The nation's capital has been shedding its reputation as a dozing, one-dimensional city of policy wonks and lawyers with the advent of a new generation of artists, tech barons, and a younger set that hungers for edgier fare than a stroll on the Mall. ¶ Recent history has laid some of the groundwork for the change: Terrorism and wars have concentrated authority in the capital, and financial decision-making has shifted dramatically from Wall Street to the White House and the Federal Reserve.



And while there aren't scads of fabulously rich people here, battalions of well-heeled lawyers, lobbyists, contractors, and consultants have made metropolitan Washington one of the top five cities for per capita income.

Often we see changes more quickly in other places than in our own backyards. It was high time for me, a 20-year resident of D.C., to get out of my own daily circuit and check out this ballyhooed transformation. It is, I discovered, everywhere.

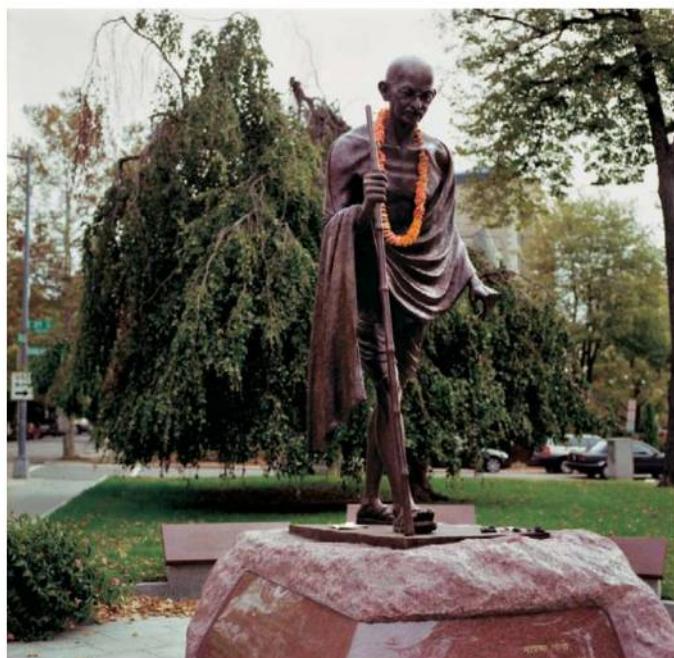
THE CITY'S NAMESAKE, the first President of the United States, envisioned a great urban area arising on a providential river. George Washington believed this new federal town, built in the fields, woods, and marshes near the fall line of the Potomac, had the makings of an economic powerhouse. It's been a long haul, but D.C. can now claim its place among the world's great cities.

One of its assets, which it shares with other alpha cities, is that there are many Washingtons, nesting within each other like Russian dolls. The core remains what George Washington commissioned, the "federal" area dominated by hulking government buildings, later interspersed with monuments and museums. Around it cluster leafy parks lined with gorgeous Victorian row houses. This downtown area has great bones, as architects might put it. The spaciousness of the boulevards and the low profiles of the buildings, enforced by strict zoning laws (in general, no building can be higher than 130 feet), give D.C. an unusually European skyline, one closer to that of Paris than that of Manhattan. The city is remarkably bright and airy, given its size and importance. Around this nucleus orbits Greater Washington, one of the most highly educated, traffic-snarled metropolitan regions in America, whose sprawl stretches from the Chesapeake Bay to the Blue Ridge Mountains and is home to more than five million people.

In a big, complex city you build a mental map of where you might find something new and interesting. That map changes over time. As I made my way through the new D.C., it became clear that I had to throw away my old map—and the preconceptions that came with it.

Washington in 2010 is almost unrecognizable from the place I began calling home in 1990, when the city was notorious for its ranking as the nation's "murder capital" and for the mayor who got busted smoking crack. Walking around town, I see streets once lined with boarded-up buildings and weedy abandoned lots now erupting with new life and energy. You can't swing a briefing paper without hitting a swank club or bistro that opened in the last five minutes. Indeed, a generation of local and international chefs—including Eric Ziebold, Ris Lacoste, Michel Richard, and José Andrés (*GQ*'s 2009 Chef of the Year)—have transformed the city into a top-tier dining town, says D.C. restaurant critic Tom Sietsema. That, in turn, has prompted the opening of D.C. eateries by such global food luminaries as Alain Ducasse and Wolfgang Puck.

This just in: News makes the nation's capital go round—a truism broadcast at the glossy Newseum (*left*), where exhibits focus on major news events like 9/11. Another capital hallmark: D.C.'s large international community, celebrated in scores of statues of world figures, including one of noted Indian leader Mohandas Gandhi (*right, top*). An international esprit extends to the city's Euro-inspired watering holes, like Café Saint-Ex (*right, bottom*).





The tourist map has also become more dense. A decade ago there was no National Museum of the American Indian, no Spy Museum, no World War II Memorial. The Newseum hadn't yet inaugurated its palatial new residence on Pennsylvania Avenue. The Marian Koshland Science Museum, a branch of the National Academy of Sciences, was still just an idea. And the U.S. Capitol lacked a visitors center.

When friends come to town, there are certain places to which I happily drag them. No one ever comes away feeling cheated by the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress, with its Gutenberg Bible (one of three complete vellum copies that still exist) and sumptuously adorned Great Hall. From there I shepherd them through a basement tunnel into the 1980 James Madison Memorial Building (the second of three buildings that make up the Library of Congress) for a \$5 lunch in the 6th-floor cafeteria—and a million-dollar view of Washington falling away from Capitol Hill. Another expansive vista of the city is found at the new W Hotel—minted from the capital's venerable Washington Hotel—which features a rooftop bar that enables you to watch the President's helicopter land on the south lawn of the White House.

History is powerful stuff here; D.C. abounds with pivotal American moments. But the city has always refreshed itself automatically:

By statute, new blood is continually coursing into town. Presidents are term-limited, so at least once every eight years the top tier of the executive branch of government, including several thousand political appointees, turns over. Thousands of government workers come from around the country to do stints at agency headquarters. Diplomats sweep in for postings at embassies. Journalists vie for a turn at the Washington bureaus of national and international publications. Flocks of interns storm the capital every summer.

Surely compelled by D.C.'s new groove, the Obamas and their entourage are out and about in the city, visiting schools and patronizing restaurants. The First Couple regularly motorcades to such area locales as Restaurant Nora (known for its early adherence to organic foods) for a "date night," and the President and Vice President have made burger runs to Ray's Hell Burger and Five Guys. Obama's much televised visit to the landmark eatery Ben's Chili Bowl has made it a required stop on Obamacentric tours of the city. But the Obamas are not the reason that Ben's has an upscale offshoot (Ben's Next Door) and valet parking. Such urbane upgrades predate the new President by at least a decade, as inner neighborhoods have gone from edgy frontiers for entrepreneurs to scorching-hot zones of retail shopping and nightlife.

A word about D.C.'s neighborhoods: Many have spent the past four decades in a time warp. The city was devastated in 1968 by riots that followed the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Hundreds of businesses were destroyed on 14th Street alone, causing it to recede into a red-light district. Now, suddenly, it is where the action is. On a recent visit I came across an



Armchairs here, a chef's table there, a book nook in the corner—D.C.'s buzziest multitasking hangout has to be Busboys and Poets (right), a café, bookstore, fair-trade market, and event space. Part of the revamped U Street Corridor, it sits three blocks from the high-concept "lifestyle" shop Mulé (left, lower), purveyor of furnishings and fashions. Also in the hood is the Studio Theatre (left, upper), known for its contemporary plays.

KRISTA ROSSOW/NGS (TOP)



Busboys and Poets, a progressive bookstore-café, is named for African-American poet Langston Hughes, who worked as a busboy in a Washington hotel.

immaculately appointed restaurant, replete with beautiful people dressed in black, where I knew for an absolute fact nothing had been in business just a few days earlier. The place had materialized from the ether.

It calls itself Masa 14 and serves Latin-Asian fusion cuisine. “This is our second night,” the greeter told me. He identified himself as Louis Pappas and said he’d been an Obama volunteer in Ohio. When Obama won, he came to town and signed on for a volunteer gig in the administration. “We got him elected; we should follow up.”

Local entrepreneur Greg Link has one of the archetypal D.C.-renewal stories. In the late 1990s Link wanted a place in which to open an upscale housewares and kitchen store. Scouting 14th Street, he found and bought a machine shop a few doors down from what’s now Masa 14, a building that, since 1969, had been vacant but for vermin. Thus was born the store he named Home Rule. Things didn’t go smoothly at first. An impoundment lot opened nearby, and towed cars began appearing by the score, some parked on the sidewalk. “Auto parts were falling off,” Link says. “Oil was leaking onto the street. Homeless people were sleeping



The truth is, Washington's constant turnover means that those of us who start to feel like locals will always be a bit startled by the new, hot place.

in the cars. It was a mess." But the impoundment lot eventually closed, and Home Rule was joined by other new ventures, such as the award-winning Cork Wine Bar and Market. Almost overnight any building with four walls and a roof went condo.

This surge of renewal is evident throughout the federal town that architect Pierre L'Enfant sketched in 1791 (with President Washington looking over his shoulder). It's as though the old bricks, baked between the presidencies of Abraham Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt, collectively decided they must now gaze upon an excellent wine list. Exhibit A: the tony historic neighborhood

of Georgetown, where an aging redbrick incinerator has been repurposed as a boutique Ritz-Carlton hotel (speaking of rising from the ashes). A few blocks to the west, a once gritty alleyway has turned into a European-feeling promenade—Cady's Alley—for furniture and design stores. Another nearby transformation: A muddy industrial site by Georgetown Harbor now showcases the gleaming House of Sweden, an ultramodern embassy structure that features a permanent exhibit on sustainable living. And where there once was a place churning out photocopies, an airy coffee shop named Baked & Wired today churns out specialty cupcakes.

The surprise in this case: Same owners. Washington has moved far beyond just copying documents and shuffling papers. It has attracted visionaries, like the innovative San Francisco-based Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants Group, which chose the D.C. area as the home for not one, not two, but seven of its boutique hotel-and-restaurant pairings. These are Washington's version of swords into plowshares.

"It's no longer just about Georgetown and Adams Morgan," says my friend Geoff Dawson, a Washington native, of D.C.'s nightlife, naming those two "destination" neighborhoods. "Now we have Penn Quarter and Chinatown over by the Verizon Center arena; 7th Street there is absolutely on steroids. Not only has it become a new residential area with 5,000 people, but you see bright lights all over. The area is the closest thing D.C. has to New York City, and it feels it."

He's right: No area has changed more dramatically than Chinatown, which isn't really Chinatown anymore, but—along with the surrounding Penn Quarter—a jazzy restaurant, nightclub, and sports district. The Verizon Center arena (originally called MCI Center) opened in the 1990s, a gift of the late sports-team owner Abe Pollin, and is still sending out waves of gentrification as it hosts D.C.'s popular Wizards (basketball) and Capitals (hockey) teams.

Dawson himself is opening a new bar called Lost and Found in a onetime book warehouse on nearby 9th Street. On a recent night the first floor was transformed into a temporary art gallery. Two doors down, hundreds of people crammed into Long View Gallery, a spanking new art locale in a space that had been used for storage of vending carts. The alley behind the building is still the occasional haunt of winos and prostitutes, but on this night the art crowd flowed out into it to take turns lounging on a canopy bed set up for the occasion. Yeah, that's different.

More reinvention: Formerly ravaged H Street, in the city's northeast district, has converted itself into a live-music destination with such new venues as the Rock and Roll Hotel and a bar called The Red and the Black. The man behind these ventures, tavern magnate Joe Englert, said he began looking for cheap properties on the strip in 2004. He counted 158 empty or underutilized buildings. Now, as if someone has thrown a switch, the strip is jumping with energy even as it's being polished up. "This area is D.C.'s answer to New Orleans," Englert says. "It's funky and it's local."

ONE UNIVERSAL RULE in the new Washington seems to be that all establishments must retain at least one brick wall dating to the late 1800s. And someone in town is making a fortune selling stamped-tin ceilings.

The goal of many local leaders has been the retention of that history in the busy swirl of gentrification. Busboys and Poets, a progressive bookstore-café that was opened by Iraqi-American Andy Shallal, is named for African-American poet Langston Hughes, who worked as a busboy in a Washington hotel. A political and emotional center of the 14th Street neighborhood



Clockwise from left: Town house to Bauhaus, Project 4 gallery blends modern art spaces with a traditional brick facade along the U Street Corridor, once known as "Black Broadway" for its African-American clubs and now undergoing a reinvention. Shoppers browse a Freshfarm Market inaugurated by First Lady Michelle Obama. Marvin, a retro bistro along 14th Street, serves up Southern-Belgian dishes like fried chicken on waffles.



where it joins U Street—a gritty five-block area that has become the nexus of the action—Busboys sits across the street from mural-splashed Eatonville, a sister restaurant honoring a fellow member of the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston (hometown: Eatonville, Florida).

A few steps on the other side of Busboys is a newer joint called the Gibson, which opened precisely a week after Obama's election. Manager Tiffany Short told me, "D.C. was really ready for a bar dedicated to classic cocktails." Is that actually true? Or is it simply pretentious? The Gibson fashions itself as a speakeasy, invisible from the street. If you don't have a reservation, you put your name on a list and hope they call you on your cell phone to let you in. The cocktails have names like Relapse, Double Standard, and Boomerang. The menus are confusing (there seemed to be at least three different menus at my outdoor table). And the Gibson demands patience: "We invite you to enjoy the most gracious of

drinks, but it doesn't come quickly," one menu intones with what turns out to be great accuracy.

I'm not entirely sold on this new cosmopolitanism. For one, it's been disruptive for longtime residents, who have seen their rents and property taxes skyrocket. Washington has had an African-American majority for decades, and the gentrification has incited political tension and concerns about what will happen to, as columnist Colby King put it, the city's soul. It also can skew silly. And you have to dress better. One night, friends and I went for a pub crawl in Georgetown (we're at the age where "crawl" is very close to capturing our velocity and gait). We wound up at a private club on Cady's Alley called L2, a supertrendy place that, I was informed, draws a dressy, international crowd. I looked over our party: jeans. Way too casual. One guy in our group even overheard an employee say, upon seeing us, "Oh, no." The thing about an "Oh, no" is that, once it is uttered, it buzzes around for hours, like a wasp.

The truth is, Washington's constant turnover means that those of us who start to feel like locals will always be a bit startled by the new, hot place.

"Different groups come in and superimpose their own identity," says Katty Kay, a Brit who should know. She came in 1996 as a journalist with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and is still here.

I thought of the scene back at the intersection of 14th and U Streets, where one of the nifty jazz joints, Cafe Nema, doubles as a sports bar. Jazz meets football. And not just American football, which is shown upstairs. Downstairs it's international soccer. Cafe Nema co-owner Harbi Dualeh, who is from Somalia, has been forced to adapt to a new, more affluent clientele as the neighborhood has changed over the past 15 years. "The crowd is more demanding," he said. "They want more on the menu. You have to serve better food."

"People migrating to D.C. don't look alike," says Raj Multani, co-owner of Policy (perfect name for a Washington bistro!), which opened on 14th Street just below U Street in March 2009. "They come from everywhere in the world."

I'M SITTING ON the banks of the Potomac River where it carves a dramatic gorge just a block from my house in the leafy, close-to-downtown neighborhood of Palisades. Geese honk overhead; cormorants dive into the churning waters. Back in the 1960s the Potomac was so polluted that people were advised to get a tetanus shot if they happened to fall in. The city had turned its back on the river.

But years of tough environmental regulations and savvy management by the National Park Service have changed the picture dramatically. The river now is cleaner. People fish pretty much everywhere along the Potomac Gorge, a 12-mile section extending west from Georgetown that has been called the



Vintage is the new "new" in Georgetown, a historic neighborhood where the century-old Washington Canoe Club (right) attracts the next generation of boating enthusiasts eager to experience a cleaned-up Potomac River. Inspiring comment at the other end of Georgetown is the sleek House of Sweden (left, top), which houses the embassies of Sweden and Iceland in a state-of-the-art "green" building.



Within sight of the Washington Monument paddlers enter one of the most underappreciated strips of national parkland in the country.

wildest urban river in America. World-class kayakers practice slaloms in tricky stretches of white water. Sculls slice the currents at dawn and dusk. Upstream from Georgetown's Key Bridge, within sight of the Washington Monument, paddlers enter what is surely one of the most underappreciated strips of national parkland in the country, along the banks of the C&O Canal National Park. The shoreline is undeveloped and lush with greenery, the realm of bald eagles, ospreys, great blue herons, deer, beavers, and foxes—not five miles from the White House.

Nature is resilient. So, too, is the nation's capital.

Just as the sycamore and maple and ash trees survive, so do old buildings once left in ruins. More than surviving, they are thriving with new purpose. Washington's cultural metabolism is running at an all-time high. The place has become something that would astonish the man who first scouted the fields and marshes here.

It took a while, but the old general's dreams have come true.

JOEL ACHENBACH is a writer and blogger for the *Washington Post*. He wrote *The Grand Idea: George Washington's Potomac and the Race to the West*. SUSAN SEUBERT photographed Portland for the Nov.-Dec. 2009 issue.



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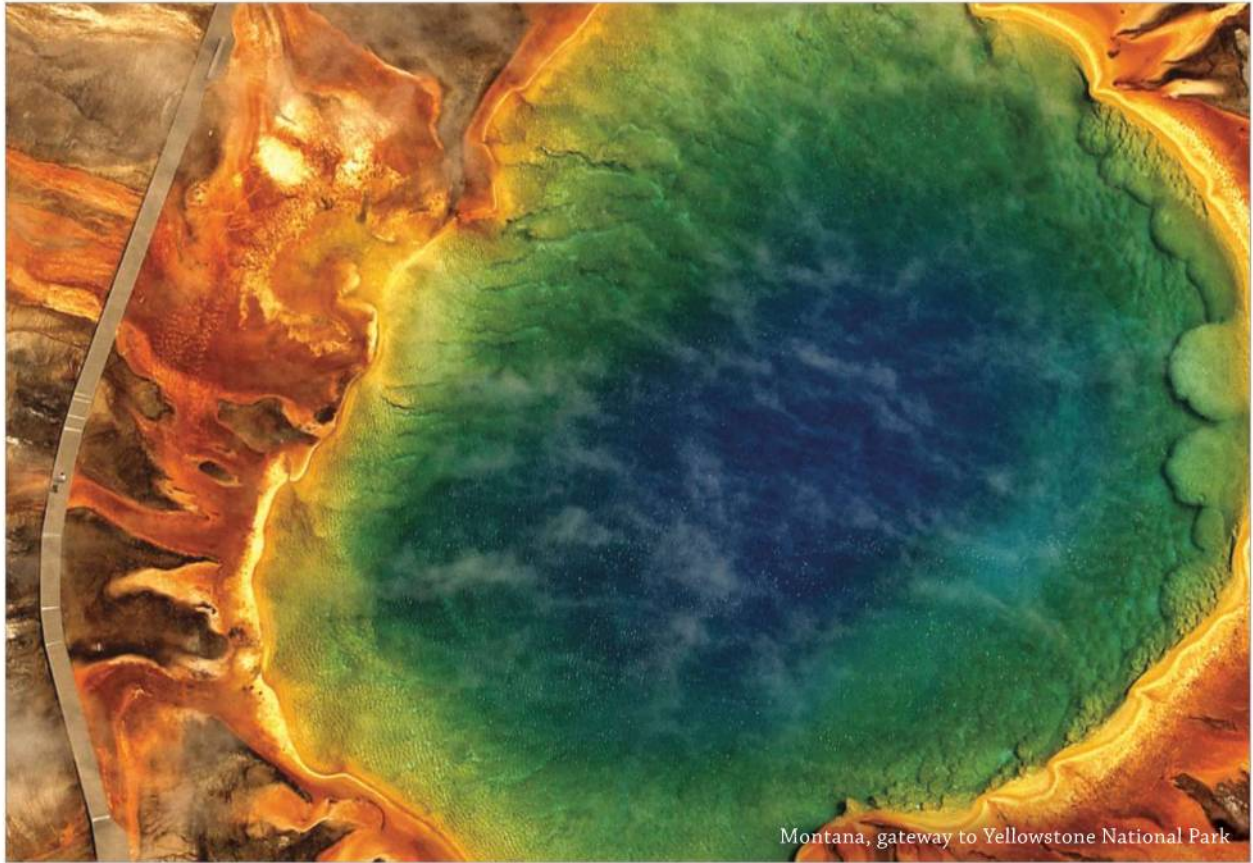


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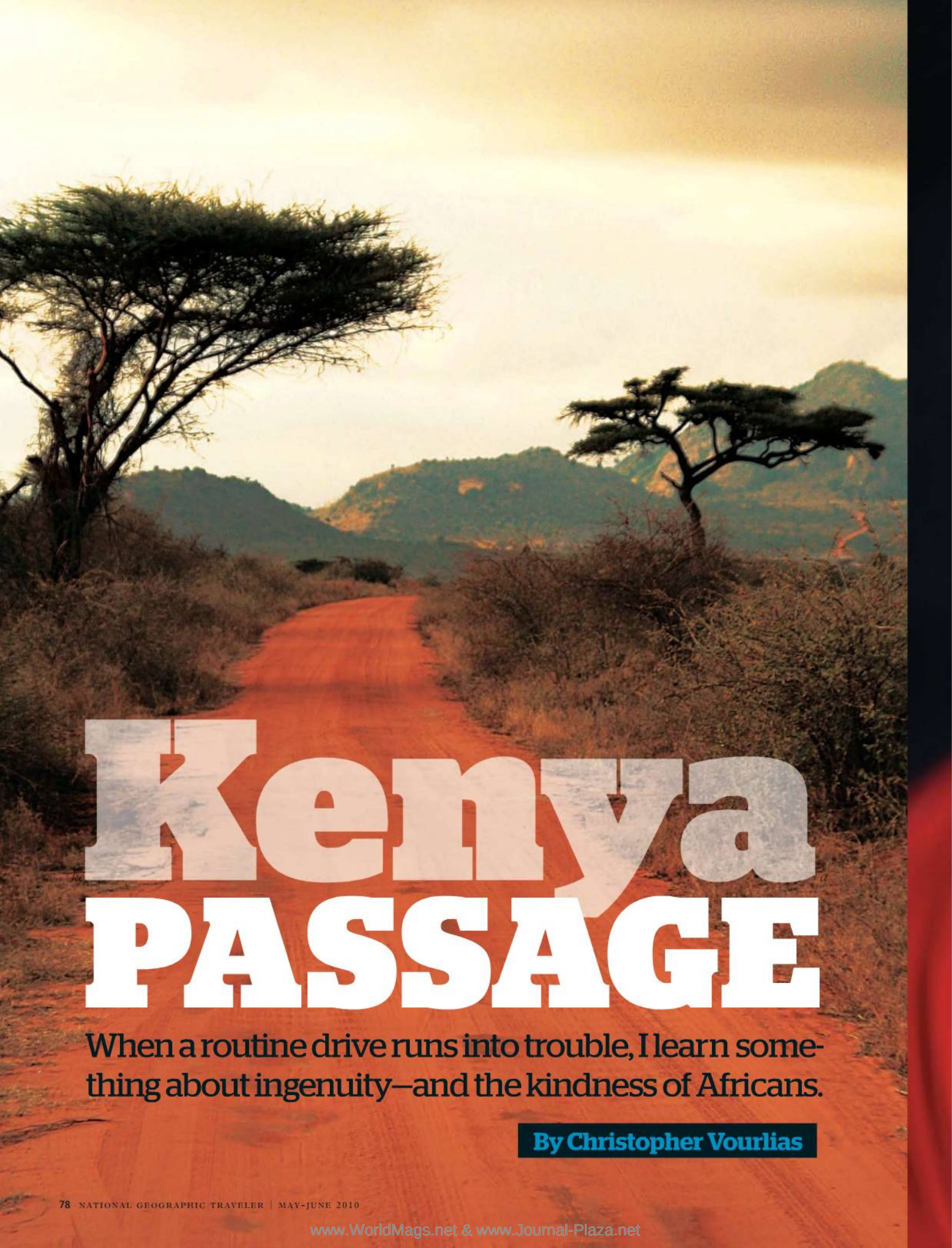
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Kenya PASSAGE

When a routine drive runs into trouble, I learn something about ingenuity—and the kindness of Africans.

By Christopher Vourlias



On the road in the Rift Valley of Kenya, you find dusty landscapes (*left*) and the semi-nomadic Samburu people, a livestock-herding ethnic group related to the Maasai.



THE COUNCILLOR HOPS DOWN from the truck, scrambles through the mud, and stands there with his hands on his hips. His collar is turned up; he shakes his head and puffs into his fists and gives me a sour look. Night has begun to fall, and all the grunts and chirps and lusty calls of twilight in the African bush surround us. A few of the Samburu men unsheathe their machetes and start hacking at the brush, tossing branches and leaves under the truck's wheels. Somewhere a child wails—a high, keen cry as urgent as the faces squinting into the dusk's half-light.

This part of Kenya's Great Rift Valley is dangerous country, a place haunted by lions and elephants and testy Pokot cattle raiders. Even these brave *morans*—Samburu warriors—get prickly at nightfall. The driver guns the engine, and the wheels whirl and spit mud, but after rocking to the side and surging briefly from the rut, the truck sinks back in. The councillor turns and stares off to the horizon; the men begin to argue. We're stuck 40 miles from the middle of nowhere, the sunlight has vanished below the hills, and none of us has even noticed the guys holding the guns.

I've picked a bad time to head north. A week of brutal storms have battered the Laikipia and Samburu Districts, turning much of the dirt road to Maralal into a muddy canal. I'm on my way to the Maralal International Camel Derby, a raucous annual affair held in August that's entering its 18th year. For the impoverished Samburu of Maralal, it's the one time of year that tourists pour—or, at least, stream—into their dusty, remote town. It's a big weekend for everyone, especially the men chasing after the

Kenyans tramp toward us. Their *matatu* (taxi-bus) has just been robbed at gunpoint; it was the bandits' flashlights that we saw flickering in the distance. They took everything, one woman explains, even their shoes. She wiggles her toes for emphasis.

Suddenly we're all working harder, 40 of us struggling in mud that reaches our kneecaps. The councillor, rolling up the sleeves of his white fleece, grabs at the rope and gives a half-hearted pull.

"These are my people," he explains, citing upcoming elections. "I have to let them know I'm here for them."

He grimaces and strains, the effort written across the lines of his face. Then he drops the rope and scrambles to the side of the road, relieving himself on a bush.

Distance and time are different quantities in Africa; I am

grand prize—60,000 Kenya shillings, which, at close to 800 U.S. dollars, is more than most will make in a year. But the road won't cooperate.

Neither, it turns out, will the bandits. As we push and strain against the mud, tossing more branches beneath the wheels, a few pinpricks of light dance in the darkness down the road. Minutes later, a dozen beleaguered, barefoot

Amboseli National Park, a refuge for wildebeest (*above*) and elephants, supports a tourist economy in southern Kenya. Samburu women (*opposite*) wear bright clothes and multiple necklaces, a sign of wealth.

learning this the hard way. Before setting off from Nyahururu, a cool highland town on the edge of the Great Rift Valley, I'd measured the distance to Maralal with my hand. It was little more than a thumb's width on my map; a hundred miles, at most. We were heading off at noon, under a bright auspicious sky, in a truck packed with grain sacks, spare tires, and boxes of Kenya Special Brandy in plastic flasks. There was a good-humored commotion as I clambered in: a *mzungu*, a white man, getting a real taste of the African bush. I laughed along as they teased me in Swahili and offered me greasy chunks of charred meat wrapped in that morning's *Daily Nation*. Our spirits were high. We watched gazelles loping along on the side of the road, elephants sending up clouds of dust. A hundred miles. I looked up at the sky and did the math and figured we'd get there in time for an early dinner.

Eight hours later, our truck mired in the mud, things aren't going according to plan. We have exhausted most of our food and water—and, it seems, our patience. Tempers are flaring on the side of the road; men gesture angrily with their machetes. Behind us more than two dozen trucks are stuck in single file—looking, at this point, like gun-toting gangsters or a buffet line for hungry jungle cats. A couple of SUVs have tried to power through the brush flanking the road. Their drivers stand slouched against their vehicles, weary in their distress, making calls to embassies and NGOs and hoping that someone will arrive to save the day.

In Swahili, the word safari means “journey,” though in the West we’ve appropriated it to mean something different. Just a few weeks before, I’d flown from the comforts of my Nairobi hotel to the tree-speckled plains of the Masai Mara National Reserve. The flight took just over an hour. Two tall, regal Maasai were waiting at the landing strip; from there a line of Range Rovers bumped us along toward the lodge. Tourists in crisp khakis crowded the bar, swirling their gin and tonics. On the savanna, hapless wildlife were getting ganged up on like a chubby kid in a schoolyard. It was a smooth, seamless transition from nights on the couch watching the Animal Planet channel, popping the top off a can of Pringles and ordering take-out from Rock the Wok. It was marvelous and majestic and more than a bit absurd.

It was also, I have to admit, reassuring. Stuck in the mud, cocking my ear for the sound of gunshots in the dark, I’m starting to suspect that thrills and adventure are really overrated. The men are outside bickering, and I’ve climbed back into the truck, content to wait this one out with the women and children. A few tired mothers lean against bags of grain, braiding their daughters’ hair. One looks at me and sighs and shakes her head.

“I feel sorry for you,” she says. “We are Africans. We are used to hardship.”

We share a few cookies that I dig from the bottom of my bag.

The woman’s eyes are soft, sorrowful, resigned, but it’s my own fleeting misfortune that troubles her. Of all the things you expect to find in Africa, sympathy isn’t one of them. Earlier I’d watched a parade of women trudging on the side of the road, infants bundled on their backs, firewood balanced on their heads. I imagined that every day brought with it some fresh hardship; but maybe all those trials didn’t harden the spirit so much as soften the heart. They made you more eloquent in the language of sorrow.

Outside, stooped beneath the glare of the headlights, men pile rocks below the tires. Tall, lean morans hack at the brush, tossing bundles of branches onto the road. Everyone is covered in mud, struggling, pulling, falling. It feels hopeless, but no one is ready to give up. Again the engine roars to life, and suddenly the truck surges onto solid ground. We slap backs and shake hands and offer our weary thanks in a motley chorus of tongues. Then we climb into the back of the truck, anxious for this safari to be over with.

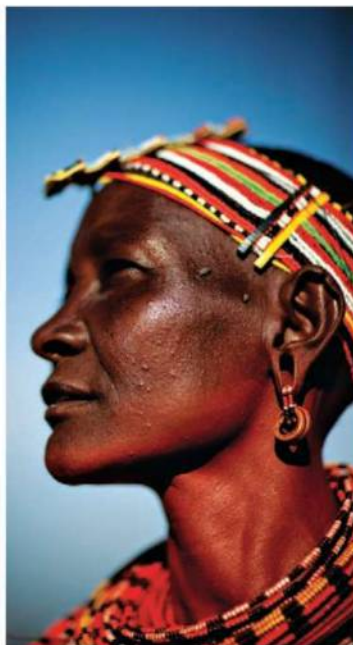
In the end I make it to Maralal for the derby, placing a respectable tenth in the amateur race and earning plenty of good-hearted laughs along the way. The grand prize in the professional race goes to a tall, lanky Samburu who finishes in the money for the third year running. And the weekend isn’t without its drama. In the waning moments of the semiprofessional derby, two jockeys come galloping down the home-stretch, neck and neck. One pulls ahead as they approach the finish line, but suddenly his camel slows, bats its big eyelashes, and decides to take a breather. The other camel bears down on them. Cheers ripple through the crowd. Looking nervously behind him, fearing he’s snatched defeat from the jaws of victory, the jockey hops down from the saddle, lowers his shoulder, and pushes his winning steed across the finish line.

This is the sort of ingenuity I’ve grown accustomed to in Africa, where, even in the face of the impossible, people struggle, persist, and pull through. Life here rarely goes according to plan and certainly not according to schedule. But in spite of it all, everyone lowers their shoulders and plows ahead, realizing that we’re in this together.

On the road to Maralal, when we finally pulled out of the mud, we stopped after just a few feet. I groaned at our apparent bad luck: Had we managed to get stuck again?

I asked if there was something wrong, but the councillor shook his head and pointed to the other trucks being dug out behind us. Bodies bent and scrambled in the headlights; engines rumbled. He said we wouldn’t leave yet.

We couldn’t leave anyone behind.



**We are stuck
40 miles from
the middle of
nowhere, the
sunlight has
vanished below
the hills, and
none of us has
even noticed
the guys hold-
ing the guns.**

CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS, living out of a suitcase in central Africa, is working on his first book, *Even the White Man Has Found God*, a collection of stories about his African travels.



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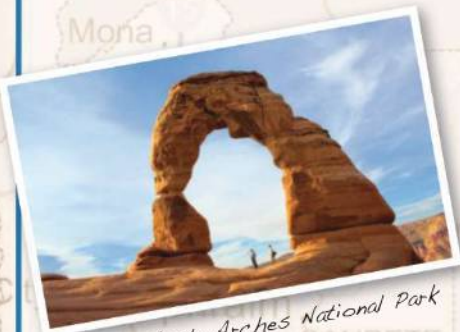
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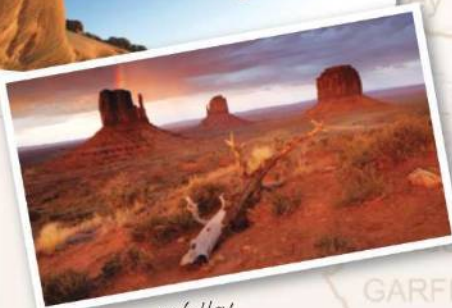
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Delicate Arch, Arches National Park

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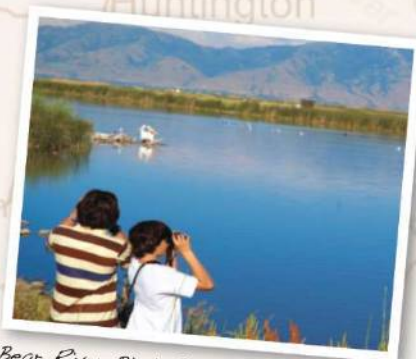
Slickrock Trail, Moab



Monument Valley

In southern Utah, you'll find five of our seven national monuments and five breathtaking national parks—Zion, Bryce, Capitol Reef, Canyonlands, and Arches—as well as the wonderland of buttes and mesas that make Monument Valley world famous. You can spend the

day hiking through canyons scoured by time, explore red-rock country by mountain bike or four-wheel drive, or watch wildlife as you float our white-water rivers. St. George is known for its Red Rock Golf Trail. No matter how you travel, a new heart-stopping vista opens up around every turn.



Bear River Bird Refuge, Brigham City

And at night, the charming town of Moab is waiting to welcome your family with open arms, offering good food and down-home hospitality.

In the north, history runs deep and wide. Go back in time to the era kids love most—the time when the dinosaurs roamed. Drive along the Dinosaur Diamond National Scenic Byway and you'll discover some of the planet's richest dinosaur fossil quarries and museums that seem to bring these amazing creatures to life. Walk the fossil trail at Dinosaur National Monument and you'll see remnants of the prehistoric animals that once inhabited this region. At the Utah Field House of Natural History State Park Museum, your kids will marvel at life-size replicas of some of their favorite dinosaurs.



Heber Valley Railroad, Provo Canyon

Make sure you have time to savor Utah's link with more recent history at the Golden Spike National Historic Site, where the Union and Central Pacific Railroads were finally joined in 1869, making the transcontinental railroad system a reality at last. As you discover the state, you'll find that many of Utah's towns have train-themed museums or historic depots. You'll also find plenty of theme parks and family-fun centers like Ogden's Salomon Center, where you can literally fly down a wind tunnel or boogie board on an indoor river, or Farmington's Lagoon, where the roller coasters and rapids promise plenty of thrills.

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Museum of Ancient History, Thanksgiving Point

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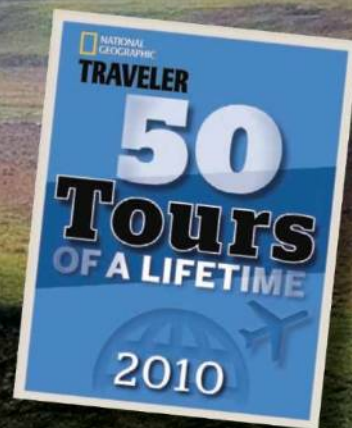
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W

E'RE TRAVELING AGAIN. Tour operators are reporting big spikes in inquiries and bookings. But an uncertain economy, ongoing wars, and the fragile health of the planet have, perhaps permanently, reordered priorities. Travelers now seek more perspective, meaning, and challenge. They want to see the unvarnished reality of a place, not just the fantasy. Outfitters have responded

by dialing down the luxury and refocusing on core offerings. Their itineraries are more innovative and experiential—aimed at developing lasting connections between people. They're also flexible, leaving space to soak it all in, to explore, and to fully understand a place. Greasing the wheels of this evolution is social media. Tour companies and travelers are building community through blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, posting on-the-ground reports, connecting tripmates before and after travel, sponsoring contests, and raising funds for volunteer trips. All of this adds up to great news for those who crave fresh, more intimate, and sustainable ways to experience the world. —*The Editors*



HAWAII, U.S.

The Sacred Big Island

Lured by idyllic beaches, killer surf, and a laid-back vibe, most visitors to Hawaii barely scratch the surface of its rich indigenous culture and history. This Native American specialty operator crafted a tour of the Big Island that delves into what Hawaiians hold sacred, including the volcano Kilauea, home of fire goddess Pele; Mookini Heiau, birthplace of King Kamehameha the Great; and the islands' preeminent hula festival. **Go Native America:** "Native Hawaiian Paradise," 10 days, \$3,197; www.GoNativeAmerica.com.

ETHIOPIA

Beginnings of Time

With the mysterious stone-carved churches of Lalibela, fairy-tale castles of Gondar, and UNESCO World Heritage site of Axum—

thought by some to house the Ark of the Covenant—northern Ethiopia has developed a nascent tourism infrastructure. Travel in the south, however, is more challenging but worth it to rub shoulders with tribal groups that have maintained many of their traditions. This custom trip takes in both regions, with an emphasis on sustainable actions that could stem the country's deforestation.

Africa Adventure Consultants: "Ethiopian Epic—Northern Ethiopia & the Lower Omo," 12 days, \$2,998 (plus internal airfare of \$548 per person); www.adventuresinafrica.com.

VENEZUELA

Andes Rush

Fueled by adrenaline and arepas—Venezuela's tasty corn-cakes—this multisport romp in the Andes has participants trekking along high Andean switchbacks, hurtling through misty

cloud forests on mountain bikes, blasting down Class 3 white water on rafts, and riding horses in tropical grasslands that harbor 300 species of birds, howler monkeys, and the elusive jaguar. **Bike-Hike Adventures:** "Viva Venezuela—Mountain Biking, Hiking, Rafting, and Horseback Riding," 9 days, from \$2,099; www.bikehike.com.

INDIA

Channeling Mowgli

The tigers of Kanha National Park—the setting for English writer Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*—are best viewed astride an Asian elephant, but this wildlife-focused excursion through northern India also has you riding camels, rickshaws, rafts, and jeeps to observe leopards, rhinos, monkeys, mongoose, and more at five national parks and wildlife refuges. A highlight is a visit to a sloth bear rescue

center in Agra that works to abolish the practice of dancing bears on the streets of India. **Wild Planet Adventures:** "India Ultimate Wildlife Multi-Safari—Leopards, Tigers, and Palaces," 19 days, \$7,198; www.wildplanetadventures.com.

CANADA

To the Yukon

Prospectors who wanted to try their luck during the Klondike Gold Rush had to build their own rafts for the daunting journey down the Yukon River to the goldfields in Dawson. Now, a geo-tourism venture is retracing their route through this pristine wilderness via riverboat, floatplanes, and private outposts on traditional lands of the outfitter's First Nations partners. **Great River Journey:** "Yukon River Geotour," 7 days, \$6,495; www.greatriverjourney.com.

COSTA RICA

Natural Coast

One of the founding fathers of ecotourism, Michael Kaye first traveled to Costa Rica in the 1970s for the white water but ended up launching a tour company that put this small Central American country on the map for the adventure set. Kaye emphasizes rigorous guide training and safety. From a hike in the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve to a boat ride through the rain forest creeks of remote Tortuguero, this itinerary gives you a taste of what all the fuss is about. **Costa Rica Expeditions:** "Costa Rica Connoisseur," 9 days, from \$2,008; www.costaricaexpeditions.com.

TUNISIA

Sahara Adventure

Who knew Tunisia was a veritable wonderland for kids? Wander the troglodyte caves of Matmata—used as a backdrop for the first *Star Wars* movie—and float in the Chott El Djerid Salt Lake. Ride camels and dune buggies in the Sahara and spend a night camping in the desert. Special departures are available for families with teenagers. **Exodus:** "Tunisia Desert Explorer—Family Holiday," 8 days, \$1,040; www.exodus.co.uk.

NEW ZEALAND

Kiwi Sisterhood

Every February, Cheryl Fleet, founder of the company, leads a small group of women to her native New Zealand for two weeks of active fun. There's sailing in the Bay of Islands, horseback riding on Pakiri Beach, hiking the



Clockwise: Spot rare rhinos in India, kayak rivers in New Zealand, and meet children from Ethiopia's Omo Valley.

TIP

Joining a group departure? Find out the maximum number of people allowed and also the minimum needed for a trip to run.

Tongariro Crossing, rafting on the Rangitaiki River, and plenty of opportunities to mingle with Kiwis. Guests are welcomed in the homes of Fleet's friends for several meals and an overnight at a Maori *marae*, or meeting place.

Canyon Calling: "New Zealand—The Best," 15 days, \$4,495; www.canyoncalling.com. **V**

BOLIVIA **Carnaval and More**

Kicking off with Carnaval de Oruro, Bolivia's most spectacular festival, this journey immerses you in local rituals that are still part of everyday life, such as baking bread in a traditional adobe oven at a working hacienda and shopping at the Tarabuco Market, where even the younger generation don traditional ponchos, sandals, and headgear. There's action too: Explore the salt desert and cap your trip with

a climb up the 16,500-foot volcano Tunupa. **Adventure Life:** "Bolivia Backroads and Oruro Festival," 13 days, \$2,790; www.adventure-life.com. **V**

U.S. SOUTHWEST **Southwest Treasures**

Ken Burns's 2009 television documentary on the history of America's national parks was a reminder that some of the world's most spectacular landscapes are in our own backyard. From the freestanding stone arches of Zion to the eerie hoodoos of Bryce Canyon to the cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde to the magnificent Grand Canyon, this ambitious trip explores six southwestern national parks, guiding travelers to the sweet spots in each.

Discovery Adventures: "Historic Parks of the American Southwest," 12 days, \$2,599; www.discoveryadventures.com. **V**



Sail into a Snug Harbor

IN CONTRAST TO the 3,000-plus-passenger behemoths that dominate the seas, expeditionary vessels carry only a few hundred passengers. Excursions off the boat are typically included in the price. And while the quarters are comfortable, you'll have to do without rock-climbing walls, casinos, or 24-hour dining. These nimble boats can navigate waterways that larger ships can't access, opening up new destinations while treading gently on ports.

ARGENTINA & CHILE

To the End of the Earth

The treacherous passage around Cape Horn has long struck fear in the hearts of the saltiest sailors. The expeditionary ships *Via Australis*, *Mare Australis*, and the *Stella Australis* (launching later this year) take between 130 and 210 passengers there in style—with picture windows in each cabin and a full complement of South American wines (included in the price). Ships sail from Ushuaia, Argentina, to Punta Arenas, Chile. You'll listen to talks by staff lecturers as you sail close to blue-hued glaciers and cruise through the Beagle Channel, famously visited by Charles Darwin before he headed to the Galápagos Islands. At Magdalena Island gregarious Magellanic penguins—the largest colony in southern Patagonia—will greet

you. **Cruceros Australis:** "Ushuaia to Punta Arenas," 3 days, from \$840; www.australis.com. **V**

ICELAND

Ethereal Iceland

As *Le Boreal* plies Iceland's coastal waters, you'll discover the eerie rocks that rise from the ocean at Djúpálónssandur, visit Lake Myvatn with its nearby geothermal fields full of bubbling mud pots, boiling springs and fumaroles; and explore remote Surtsey Island, formed by an underwater eruption in the 1960s. Launched this May, the 264-passenger vessel was built using "clean-ship" standards that include an advanced positioning system that keeps it in the same offshore location without having to drop anchor, preventing damage to seabeds. **Tauk:** "Iceland: Land of Fire and Ice," 8 days, \$5,790; www.tauk.com. **N**

SCOTLAND

Scotland by Sea

Join National Geographic experts aboard the 48-passenger *M.V. Lord of the Glens* as it sails around the islands and through the lochs and inland waterways of the Highlands. Explore Culloden battlefield, where the French-supported Jacobite forces were brutally defeated by the British in 1746, crushing Bonnie Prince Charlie's bid for the throne. Kayak the murky waters of Loch Ness, alleged lair of the world's most storied sea monster. And walk among the haunting Cuillin peaks in the Isle of Skye. Expert commentary and local delights await back at the ship each evening, including whisky tastings and live Scottish music. **National Geographic Expeditions/Lindblad:** "Scotland's Highlands and Islands," 9 days, from \$5,990; www.nationalgeographicexpeditions.com.

INDIA

Meet the People

Connecting with the local people is a key component of this cultural odyssey through South India's Deccan Plateau and Malabar Coast. Join a Kodava family in a visit to their ancestral home in the coffee country of Coorg; meet with some of the 10,000 Tibetans in the Buddhist enclave of Bylakuppe; and stay in a private home in Tellicherry, where you'll sample Moplah delicacies whipped up by the host. **Geographic Expeditions:** "Secrets of the Deccan and Malabar—Karnataka to Kerala, India," 14 days, from \$7,295; www.geoex.com.

ECUADOR

Galápagos and Beyond

With its colonial capital of Quito, the Amazon region, the Galápagos islands, and indigenous villages, Ecuador is worthy of several trips, but this one is a great start. You'll cruise down the Napo River, a tributary of the mighty Amazon, aboard the 30-passenger *Manatee Explorer*; head up the Pan-American Highway to bargain at the textile market of Otavalo; explore the Galápagos from your base at the Finch Bay Eco Hotel on Santa Cruz Island. Wind up with a stint in historic Quito, the first city in the world to be declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO. **Adventure Associates:** "Family Encounters in the Middle of the World: Galápagos Islands, Amazon Rainforest and Quito City," 12 days, \$2,588 (\$1,942 for children); www.adventure-associates.com. **N F V**

CUBA

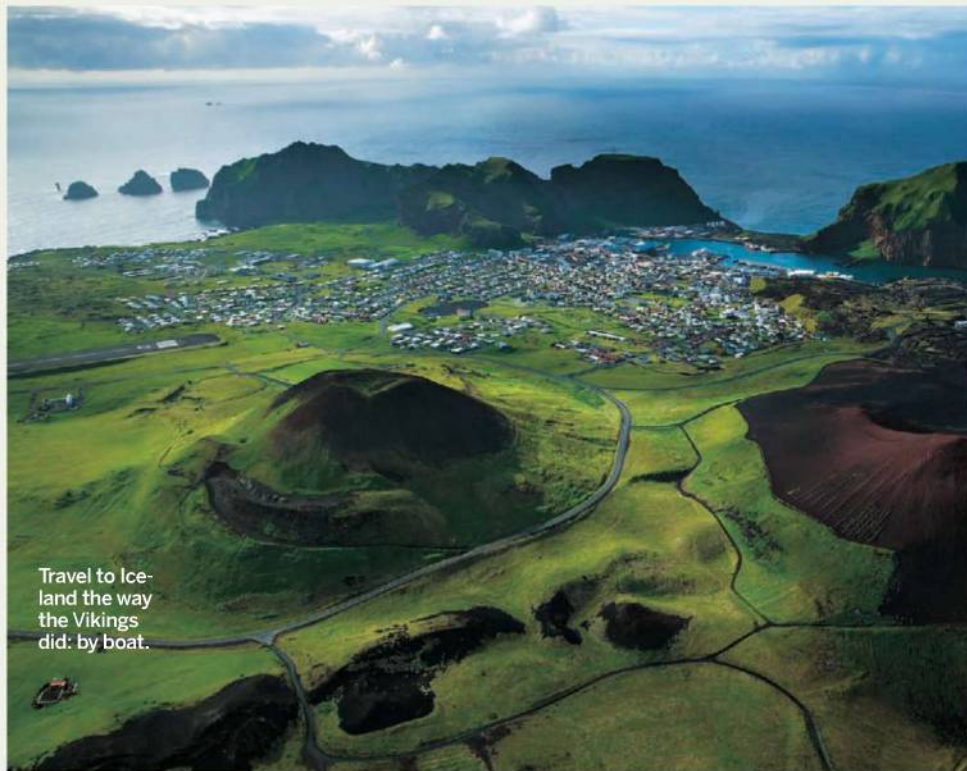
Time Warp

It may become a whole lot easier to travel to Cuba in the future, but here's a chance to experience the island in all of its time-warped glory. The travel arm of this nonprofit human rights organization has been leading educational tours here for more than 20 years. Find out how the country became a model for sustainability and celebrate New Year's Eve in Havana. **Global Exchange Reality Tours:** "Sustainable Cuba," 10 days, \$2,550, including roundtrip airfare from Cancún, Mexico; www.globalexchange.org. **V**

LAOS

Remote Rivers

It's only a matter of time before Laos's Champasak Province—think dramatic waterfalls, temple ruins that predate Angkor Wat, welcoming hill tribes, and a handful of new chic hotels—is hyped as the next travel hot spot in Asia. For now, the only Amer-



Travel to Iceland the way the Vikings did: by boat.

The Piedmont region of Italy features small towns such as Barolo. In Laos's Luang Prabang (below), founded in the seventh century, Buddhist monks collect alms.



icans you're likely to encounter are the ones in your own party on this private trip through the country. Stays include Sala Phae, a compound of six floating bungalows on the Mekong River, and Kingfisher Eco-lodge, a small family-run nature retreat that donates a percentage of its revenue to a local primary school, where travelers are encouraged to help the schoolchildren practice their English. **Remote Lands:** "Undiscovered Southern Laos," 7 days, \$3,500; www.remotelands.com. **N**

JAPAN

Where the Wild Things Are Japan usually conjures up images of the frenzy of Tokyo or the Zen of Kyoto, but there's a wilder side to the Land of the Rising Sun that few travelers ever experience. From the thousands of hooded and white-naped cranes that flock to the island of Kyushu to the playful Japanese macaques, or snow monkeys, in the mountains of Nagano, the country is full of natural splendor—best seen in the quiet of winter. **Natural Habitat Adventures:** "Wild Japan," 13 days, \$8,495; www.nathab.com.

ITALY

Piedmont Pleasures

Bookended by October's annual truffle market in Alba and the Salone del Gusto in Turin, a bi-annual fair put on by Slow Food

(the global movement founded in nearby Bra to preserve cultural cuisine), this food and wine tour through Italy's Piedmont showcases the region's bounty—Barolo and Barbaresco wine, truffles, hazelnuts, and mountain cheeses—and introduces you to the artisans behind it. The tour is led by company co-founder and Piedmont native Claudio Bisio. **La Dolce Vita Wine Tours:** "Slow Food Festa," 6 days, \$2,995; www.dolcetours.com.

SOUTH AFRICA

Bike the Vineyards

With its rolling farmland, coastal vistas, and soaring mountains, South Africa's Western Cape is

choice cycling country. On this loop from Cape Town through wine country you'll pedal some 20 miles a day, stopping to sample the region's much-lauded Semillon and Pinotage. Recover each night at elegant lodgings such as Le Quartier Français in the Franschoek Valley, where one of the country's top chefs, Margot Janse, presides over the kitchen. In the township of Zwelitshe, local students (to whom the outfitter lends bikes to use and maintain) will lead you on an insider tour to meet residents of this poor but vibrant area. **Butterfield & Robinson:** "South Africa Biking," 8 days, \$6,995; www.butterfield.com.

ISRAEL

Nexus of History

Though much tourism to Israel remains dominated by religious pilgrims, more travelers are exploring the country's numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites, varied geography, and culture-packed cities. Here is the consummate private itinerary that brings it all together, from Jerusalem's ancient Western Wall to the



Consider buying trip insurance on the non-refundable portions of your trip. Also find out what your health insurance covers abroad. You may need a policy to cover any gaps.





A woman and child stroll the streets of the historic desert town of Khiva, Uzbekistan.

therapeutic waters of the Dead Sea to the Bauhaus architecture of Tel Aviv. **Artisans of Leisure:** "Essence of Israel," 9 days, \$7,700; www.artisansofleisure.com.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Maya, Then and Now

From Big Falls, Belize, to Copán, Honduras, this unique itinerary traces the trade route of the ancient Maya's most precious commodity—jade. Along the way you're invited into the communities of the Mopan, Q'eqchi', and Chorti Maya, with stops at little-visited archaeological sites, as well as kayaking, snorkeling, cave-swimming, and hiking. **Mesoamerican Ecotourism Alliance:** "Jade Route of the Ancient Maya," 9 days, \$2,850; www.travelwithmea.org.

RWANDA & UGANDA

Track Mountain Gorillas

View some of the remaining 700 mountain gorillas on this safari to three different parks: Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda, and Mgahinga and

Bwindi in Uganda. The outfitter worked closely with governments here to develop responsible tourism in the aftermath of regional conflicts, including training locals to become guides. **Volcanoes Safaris:** "Gorillas in the Virungas and Bwindi—Rwanda and Uganda," 8 days, \$4,926; www.volcanoessafaris.com.

THAILAND

Asia on Two Wheels

More than motorized modes of transportation, bikes allow travelers to participate in the everyday life of a place, especially in Thailand, where biking is popular and the people welcoming. Cyclists on this circuit in the countryside around Chiang Mai are sometimes invited into schools to give impromptu English lessons, attend weddings and funerals, and learn to prepare traditional Thai fare. **Pedalers Pub & Grille:** "Thailand Bike Tours—Northern Highlights," 7 days, \$1,495, plus \$130 for bike rental; www.pedalerspubandgrille.com. **V**

CENTRAL ASIA

Meet the Stans

Guided by veteran Asia explorer Roger Williams, this epic journey wends from Urumqi, China,

TIP

When comparing two similar itineraries, look at inclusions, exclusions, and value-added services.

to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, along the legendary Silk Road. Travel amid the towering peaks of the Karakorum Mountains, stopping at far-flung outposts, such as Pakistan's isolated Hunza Valley. Portions of the old road here jut out from cliffs on cantilevered logs wedged into the cracks of rock. At the desert oasis of Kashgar, famous for its Sunday market, traders still haggle over everything from spices to rugs to camels. **Wilderness Travel:** "The Great Game—The Silk Road through the Pamirs & Karakorum

Mountains," 26 days, from \$10,995; www.wildernesstravel.com. **N**

EGYPT

Into the Western Desert

You've seen the Pyramids and cruised the Nile; now check out the other Egypt on this overland expedition into the Western Desert. Led by veteran desert guide Dina Shawki Michail, you'll camp in mobile tents, exploring the striking scenery of this harsh environment, such as rock carvings that are thousands of years old and Daliesque white chalk formations that rise out of the desert sand like huge mushrooms. **Abercrombie & Kent:** "Egypt—Traces of Lost Civilizations," 11 days, \$5,975; www.abercrombiekent.com.

ITALY

Pompeii Revealed

You don't have to be an archaeology buff to be fascinated by the stories of Pompeii. In the most popular of this specialty operator's offerings, archaeologist guides provide access to the ruins away from the crowds and frame them in the context of the year A.D. 79, when Vesuvius erupted and all life in the area came to an abrupt halt. The trip culminates

V Visit our website for photo galleries, booking strategies, a list of deals, and links to the outfitters. traveler.nationalgeographic.com

Make the World a Better Place

SOME SO-CALLED voluntours are no more than feel-good forays for privileged Westerners, whose very presence may tax already strained resources. Below are five that get it right. These outfitters have created a more sustainable model by keeping teams small and task-oriented while considering the impact of do-gooders on the communities and environment.

RUSSIA

Quest for the Snow Leopard

Adapted to live in the frigid climes of the Central Asian mountain ranges, snow leopards have long, thick fur prized by poachers. As a result, their numbers have dwindled to some 6,000. Track the elusive species and its prey: the argali (a mountain sheep) and the Altai ibex. The data collected will help the conservation of the endangered cat. Base camp is at 7,500 feet amid the steep, snowy peaks of Central Asia's Altai Mountains. **Biosphere Expeditions:** "Mountain Ghosts," 13 days, \$2,690; www.biosphere-expeditions.org. **V**

TANZANIA

Gonzo Philanthropy

In his fresh take on voluntourism, company founder Paul von Zielbauer (a former *New York Times* war correspondent) pairs rugged adventure with good works. Itineraries are intentionally flexible, and participants, aka "roadmonkeys," raise money from their own social networks to fund the proj-

ects. The next expedition leaves for Tanzania this summer. You'll climb Mount Kilimanjaro via the Lemosho route—the least traveled—and lend a hand building a fishpond at a school in Babati, Tanzania. **Roadmonkey Adventure Philanthropy:** "Tanzanian Kilimanjaro Expedition," 15 days, \$4,595; www.roadmonkey.net.

NEPAL

Trek for Charity

This nonprofit organizes one or more treks to raise funds for a needy local orphanage. Participants commit to raising a pre-set contribution for each kilometer they hike, not unlike charity walks. This fall's trek—Everest Base Camp—is especially ambitious. The end of the trip coincides with the Festival of Lights and a party at the orphanage. **Trekking for Kids:** "Nepal Trek 2010—Everest Base Camp," 20 days; from \$2,400; www.trekkingforkids.org. **V**

MALAYSIA

Rain Forest Warriors

The survival of Borneo's diverse life-forms depends on its

tropical rain forests, which are threatened by unsustainable logging practices, the pressure to convert to farmland, and severe droughts caused by climate change. Help the team at the Royal Society South East Asia Rainforest Research Programme record plant and animal specimens, including 2,500 species of orchids, orangutans, pygmy elephants, and rhinos. **Earthwatch Institute:** "Climate Change and Landscape in Borneo's Rainforest," 10 days; \$1,850; www.earthwatch.org. **V**

CHINA

Giant Panda-thon

Starting in Shanghai, travel by train to Sichuan Province and the Ya'an Bifengxia Center for the Giant Panda (the largest reserve of its kind in the world). Gather bamboo for the pandas' meals (they eat 10 to 20 pounds a day), clean their enclosures, and gather behavioral data. There's also time for sightseeing. **Planeterra Foundation:** "Project China," 14 days, \$1,899; www.planeterra.org. **N V**

with an ascent of the volcano itself. **Andante Travels:** "Pompeii, Herculaneum, and Classical Campania," 8 days, \$2,090; www.andante-travels.co.uk. **V**

BOTSWANA

On a Horse, of Course

When longtime Botswana residents PJ and Barney Bestelink brought horses to the Okavango Delta for safaris more than 20 years ago, few believed their business plan would succeed. Today, equestrians from far and wide come to the world's largest inland delta to ride Arabians and thoroughbreds through grassy floodplains and primeval mopane forests and to canter alongside zebras, giraffes, and wildebeest. Riders must have the basics down and be able to "gallop out of trouble," should the need arise. **Okavango Horse Safaris:** "Ten-Night Itinerary," 11 days, from \$6,400; www.okavangohorse.com.

SPAIN

The Whole Camino

Once trod by religious pilgrims, the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, where the remains of the apostle St. James are said to be buried, now mainly draws the



Bike Spain's Camino de Santiago.

culturally curious. Owned by two sisters who grew up in the bike-touring business, the outfitter is one of the few that covers nearly the entire route—558 miles from Roncesvalles, in the Pyrenees of northeastern Spain, to Santiago de Compostela in the northwest. Riders must be in top form to handle up to 70 miles a day in the saddle. **Experience Plus:** "Cycling the Camino de Santiago—Roncesvalles to Santiago," 15 days, \$5,350; www.experienceplus.com.

KENYA

Insider Tour

Meet Kenyans who are making a difference in wildlife conservation in this behind-the-scenes custom safari from Nairobi to the Laikipia region. Catch feeding time at the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, where the legendary Dame Daphne Sheldrick discusses her efforts to rescue and rear abandoned baby elephants.



Help save the endangered snow leopard by collecting data on the species in Central Asia.

Push Beyond Your Boundaries

FOR A DECADE, our sister publication *National Geographic Adventure* stoked a seemingly insatiable appetite for adventure with its hair-raising tales, like trekking to the North Pole during 24-hour darkness, learning to fly in the Australian Outback, and experiencing shamanistic healing in the Amazonian jungle. The magazine's print edition folded last fall, but the demand for hard-core thrills lives on (as does the website, www.nationalgeographic.com/adventure). Here are five adventures that capture that spirit.

RUSSIA

Pack Your Parka

Spend a day learning about all things reindeer—herding, driving, even riding. Then man your own reindeer sled for a brisk odyssey through the heart of Siberia to the Northern Hemisphere's "Pole of Cold" in Oymyakon, the coldest inhabited place on Earth. Rest up along the route in the homes of the indigenous Evens and in camps, where local guides share their ancestral tricks for sleeping in the open without getting frostbite. **Arctic Odysseys:** "Siberia—Even Reindeer Sledding Expedition," 14 days, from \$5,210; www.arcticodysseys.com.

CENTRAL ASIA

One Epic Ride

After introducing a cycling tour from Cairo to Cape Town in 2003 to promote bikes as a means of sustainable transportation in Africa, this Canadian start-up has set its sights on history's most storied route. Ride to explore or race to compete on this 2,572-mile expedition on the Silk Road, from Istanbul to Samarkand, Uzbekistan. In 2011 the operator hopes to undertake the full

6,200 miles to Xi'an, China. Accommodations echo the ancient caravanning experience: yurts, homestays, bush camps, desert camps, and caravanserais. **Tour d'Afrique:** "Silk Route Bicycle Tour," 44 days, \$5,485; www.tourdafrique.com. 

ALASKA, U.S.

Off the Grid

Smack in the middle of the four-million-acre Lake Clark National Park—one of the least visited parks in the U.S. with 5,000 visitors a year—Twin Lakes is accessible only by floatplane. Kayak, hike, and camp in this backcountry best known for its famous inhabitant, Dick Proenneke, the subject of the PBS series *Alone in the Wilderness* that depicted his Thoreau-like existence here from 1968 to 1999. **Alaska Alpine Adventures:** "Twin Lakes Paddle," 7 days, \$3,150; www.alaskaalpineadventures.com.

BHUTAN

First Commercial Descent

The culmination of years of negotiation with the Bhutan government, this rafting expedition down the Drangme Chu—

the last unexplored river system in the country—promises world-class white water in the shadow of soaring Himalayan peaks. Off the river, thrill-seekers are welcomed for a feast and overnight at the family home of guide Ugyen Dorji and at Enduchholing, the palace of the first hereditary monarch of Bhutan. **Bio Bio Expeditions:** "Drangme Chu River First Commercial Descent," 17 days, \$6,800; www.bbxrafting.com. 

ARIZONA, U.S.

From Rim to Shining Rim

Most people take in the Grand Canyon from a vantage point somewhere along its rim, but nothing can come close to the challenging and exhilarating experience of hiking the gorge rim to rim, staying in lodges. Strike out on the North Kaibab Trail toward the historic (and barebones) Phantom Ranch on the canyon floor, where you'll rest up for the last hoorah—a nearly ten-mile trek some 4,400 feet up Bright Angel Trail. This tour debuts in May 2011. **Arizona Outback Adventures:** "Rim to Rim Hiker," 5 days, \$1,995; www.aoa-adventures.com. 



Kayak Alaska's Twin Lakes, accessible only by floatplane.

Chat with Maasai elder Rakita Ole Nkere about how his culture is adapting to modern life. And meet the team at the Ol Pejeta Research Centre, which is pioneering methods for locals and wildlife to coexist peacefully. Opportunities to see the Big Five (lion, leopard, rhino, elephant, Cape buffalo) abound, including an overnight in a blind to view the nocturnal visitors of a popular watering hole through night-vision goggles. **Micato Safaris:** “Kenya Conservation Safari,” 9 days, from \$5,995; www.micato.com. **N**

INDONESIA Coral Central

Snorkel among more than 500 species of coral and 1,300 species of fish in the waters surrounding the Raja Ampat Archipelago in Indonesia’s West Papua province—the heart of the so-called Coral Triangle and one of the most biologically diverse areas on the planet. Accommodations are aboard a 12-passenger traditional Indonesian schooner.

Oceanic Society: “Snorkeling in Raja Ampat Archipelago, Indonesia,” 11 days, \$6,590 (including airfare from Jakarta); www.oceanicsociety.org.

CANADA High Arctic Adventure

Winding its way through the tundra-covered hills of Canada’s Baffin Island, the Soper River supports a lush array of Arctic wildflowers and willow forests and a dense concentration of wildlife, including caribou, foxes, wolves, and rough-legged hawks. Hike, canoe, and raft on this tributary, designated a Canadian Heritage River, in 24-hour daylight, winding up in the former Hudson Bay Company trading post of Kimmirut for an overnight with villagers, many of whom are still fluent in Inuktitut. **Canadian River Expeditions:** “Soper River, Baffin Island,” 10 days, \$6,210 (including round-trip airfare from Iqaluit); www.nahanni.com.

ARGENTINA & BRAZIL South America Overland

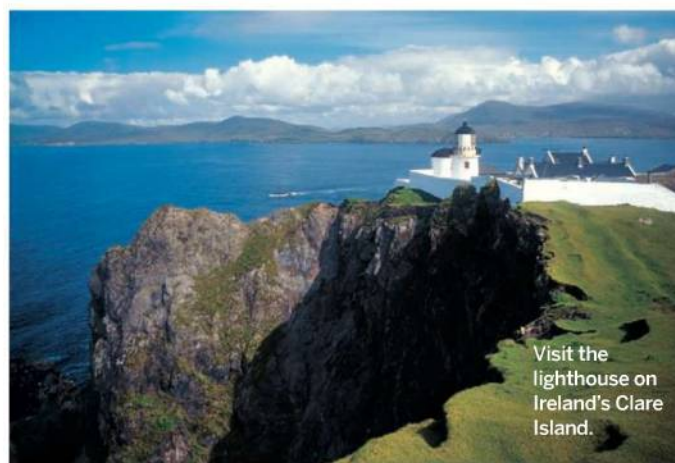
The route between two of South America’s party capitals is paved with adventure on this no-frills offbeat road trip from Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro, with stops on both sides of the magnificent Iguazu Falls and the fauna-rich floodplains of the Pantanal. You’ll thread your way up Brazil’s Emerald Coast, hitting the laid-back islands off Parati with your mostly youthful compadres. The fun doesn’t end if you time your trip to make it to Carnival’s kickoff in Rio. **Dragoman:** “Buenos Aires,

Iguazu, Pantanal, and Rio Adventure Overland,” 19 days, \$1,110; www.dragoman.com. **V**

SOUTHERN AFRICA Winging It

The stylish way to cover five nations (South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia), 11 ecosystems, and 3,200 miles in three weeks is on a retrofitted DC-3. The access is unbeatable, though pricey. Fly directly between UNESCO World Heritage sites, remote safari camps, and secluded lodges while enjoying a bird’s-eye view of the continent’s most spectacular scenery, including Table Mountain, the wild coast of Transkei, and Victoria Falls. On the ground you’ll meet locals from all walks of life, including a South African ostrich farmer and the king of the Zulu.

Travcoa: “Once in a Lifetime Africa,” 20 days, \$34,900; www.travcoa.com.



PERU Hikes and Bikes

Machu Picchu is undoubtedly the pièce de résistance of any trip to Peru, including this one, which features several hikes around the Inca ruins. However, the itinerary packs in other thrills as well. Bike to the salt pans of Maras, raft the rushing Urubamba River, and kayak Lake Titicaca at 12,500 feet to Isla Taquile, where overnights are in guesthouses operated by local families. **Aventouras:** “Discover Peru,” 10 days, \$2,698; www.aventouras.com. **V**

TURKEY Stroll through History

The country’s dazzling coastline and Greek, Roman, and Lycian ruins are most often explored by sea, from a cruise ship, or via traditional gulet. But here’s a novel approach: Journey on foot through the Antalya Peninsula, Lycia, the ancient Greek city of Ephesus, and Istanbul. High-

TIP
Get on the outfitter's social media list to learn about promotions. Ask if the tour you want is close to full. If not, there may be room to negotiate an upgrade or a price break.

lights include the Pisidian stronghold of Termessos, site of the eternal flames of the Chimaera as described in Homer’s *Iliad*; Myra with its rock-cut cliff tombs dating to 500 B.C.; and a traditional lunch in the mountain village of Bezirgan, where you’ll break *katmer*—a savory flatbread—with locals. **Country Walkers:** “Turkey: The Lycian Way & Ephesus,” 9 days, \$4,698; www.countrywalkers.com. **N**

IRELAND Bonny Islands

Isolated from the mainland and ravaged by the harsh Atlantic winters, the windswept islands off Ireland’s west coast are home to a hardy lot—and some say the last vestiges of Irish culture. The geology—barren countryside, rugged cliffs, stark mountains that rise from the sea—is best seen on foot. This amble hits all the high notes from Achill Island with its deserted famine village, to Clare

Island—where the castle of Grace O’Malley, the plucky 16th-century “Pirate Queen,” still stands—to the Aran Islands, strewn with miles of stone walls built by early inhabitants. **Boundless Journeys:** “Walking the Western Islands,” \$3,295, 8 days; www.boundlessjourneys.com. **N F**

CHINA Into the Land of the Dragon

Perform tai chi alongside locals in a Beijing park; bike through villages and rice farms on the banks of the Dragon River; spend a day at EXPO 2010 Shanghai. This private odyssey through the Middle Kingdom caters to families who crave action. Digs include a village guesthouse in the Yao minority village of Dazhai and the Li River lodge, a mountainside retreat in a traditional wooden Longsheng building north of Yangshuo. **Kensington Tours:** “Spirit of China Family Action Adventure,” 14 days, \$4,050; www.kensingtontours.com. **F**

JORDAN Desert Oasis

From Amman to the Dead Sea, this cultural foray through Jordan opens doors normally closed to most travelers, including a private visit to the Royal Stables outside the capital, a meeting with a shaman in Petra, a Bedouin-guided off-road excursion through the desert landscape of Wadi Rum; and a lesson in weaving cattail-reed-and-banana-leaf baskets by local women in Wadi Raggayan. **Cultural Crossroads:** “The Wonders of Jordan—A Cultural Experience,” 11 days, \$3,424; www.culturalcrossroads.com.

MOZAMBIQUE Africa’s Secret

After years of civil war and neglect, Gorongosa National Park (see story, page 18)—once home to a denser population of game than the Serengeti Plains—is making a comeback thanks to a public-private partnership. Get a behind-the-scenes look at this ongoing restoration project, as well as the now-thriving wildlife, including the famed Gorongosa lions and endemic green-headed oriole. You’ll take in the capital, Maputo; seaside Tofo, for a marine safari and chance to snorkel with whale sharks; and the UNESCO World Heritage site of Ilha de Moçambique. **Reefs to Rockies:** “Mozambique—By Land and By Sea,” 11 days, from \$5,500; www.reefstorockies.com. **N**

Contributing editor MARGARET LOFTUS resides in Boston.

A Thousand of Summer

Escape to a place that is foreign, even mythical,



Kids dive in at Thousand Island Park, a historic community on New York's Wellesley Island. The community was built more than a century ago, during the area's heyday as a gilded summer retreat.

Islands

yet right on America's doorstep.



by **Patrick J. Kelly**
photographs by **Will Van Overbeek**

M

y know-it-all neighbor across the street from my home in Texas assured me that there was no such place as the Thousand Islands. "It's a salad dressing," Gary said, nodding toward the salmon-hued condiment I'd brought to his barbecue.

"Does anybody know where the Thousand Islands is?" I'd asked the group assembled in the backyard, asserting that it sounded like a mysterious wonderland worth checking out.

"You can't go there," Gary insisted, as if he were speaking to a five-year-old. I ran home, went online, and returned five minutes later holding up a printout. "Renowned as the freshwater-boating capital of the world," I read to the group, "the Thousand Islands is an archipelago that straddles the U.S.-Canada border in the St. Lawrence Seaway. And," I took a breath, "Thousand Island dressing is the only salad dressing that is named for a geographic location in North America." I waved my bottle of dressing for dramatic effect.

"Great," Gary said. "Maybe you should move there."

I'M THINKING OF a suitable souvenir for Gary as my flight lands in Syracuse, New York, where I rent a car to begin my trip to the Thousand Islands. I've been wanting to get away to somewhere foreign but not too distant and a place where, ideally, English is widely spoken. The Thousand Islands, like Atlantis or Shangri-La, seems foreign enough, even mythical, and right at America's doorstep. From Syracuse, I'll head north 98 miles to the Canadian border, ending up about 30 miles from where Lake Ontario empties into the St. Lawrence River, which flows east toward the Atlantic Ocean.

The international border zigzags through the Thousand Islands, never touching land, with New York state on one side and the Canadian province of Ontario on the other. Here, where a branch of the Canadian Shield runs south to meet the Adirondacks, lies the "Thousand Islands-Frontenac Arch" region, which was designated a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve in 2002.

The islands range from about 50 square miles to the size of a carport and, to be counted in the group, must stay above water 365 days a year and support at least one living tree. Considering that some 1,800 islands have made the cut, I've decided to limit my exploration to only the principal islands and riverside towns.

I'll start in Alexandria Bay, New York, and work my way west (upriver) to the bayside village of Clayton, continuing west along the U.S. shoreline to Cape Vincent, overlooking the lake. Then I'll hop a ferry across the bay to Kingston, Ontario, push east along the Canadian shoreline to Gananoque, Ontario, then hook up

with the Thousand Islands International Bridge to cross back to the U.S. mainland, completing a whirlwind, clockwise tour of this 50-mile stretch of the St. Lawrence. Along the way I'll take in Wellesley and Grindstone (the two largest U.S. islands), Wolfe Island (in Canadian waters), and a dozen or so smaller isles. I'll try to cram in what a week off from work will allow and, I hope, not get lost any more than necessary.

CRYSTAL CLEAR WATER, vivid green forests, 90-degree sunshine, and streets swarming with pirates greet me at my first stop, Alexandria Bay, situated on the south bank of the St. Lawrence. The village (year-round population: 1,800) is in the throes of its annual, ten-day summer bacchanalia dedicated to legendary pirate Bill Johnston. In 1838, Johnston notoriously boarded, robbed, then sank a British riverboat within musket range of what's now a modern town known for its dive shops, upscale rod-and-tackle stores, and handsome, tree-lined neighborhoods. I have time before the pirate parade to board a sight-seeing boat departing for a scenic tour of Millionaire's Row.

During the late 19th century, movers and shakers of the Gilded Age flocked to the Thousand Islands, building grand hotels and summer vacation homes complete with docks for their hundred-foot steam yachts. Among this early group were George Pullman of railroad sleeping car fame; Henry Marcus Quackenbush, inventor of the double-hinged nutcracker and the Daisy Red Ryder BB gun; the Kellogg family, who brought us Frosted Flakes; and George Charles Boldt, proprietor of New York City's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. He commissioned a six-story, 120-room, Rhineland-style castle on Heart Island for his wife, Louise.

Five-acre Heart Island, not far from Alexandria Bay, got its name after Boldt spent a king's ransom fashioning the island and docking facilities into the shape of a heart. We stop to tour Boldt Castle. Picture a medieval European castle upgraded with plate glass windows, wrap-around verandas, an indoor pool, an elevator, and a steam power station. Wistful Enya music emanating from the ballroom drifts out to the Italian gardens and children's playhouse. I'm reminded of the Taj Mahal, impressive yet tinged with sadness. Louise died unexpectedly in 1904 while the castle was under construction, putting hundreds of stonemasons and craftsmen out of work. George Boldt never stepped foot on Heart Island again. The tale brings a tear to my eye, which I hide behind a pair of sunglasses bought in the gift shop.

Back in Alexandria Bay for the parade, I see tractors towing wooden skiffs tarted up to resemble pirate ships, sea wenches singing bawdy sea chanteys, classic and not so classic cars, and the ubiquitous weekend Harley riders in love with the sound of



Clockwise from above: Tibbetts Point lighthouse overlooks Lake Ontario. Forays into Canada are easy across the international bridge. Simple pleasures, such as this ice cream stop in Brownville, are supreme in the Thousand Islands.



The international border **zigzags through the Thousand Islands** with New York State on one side and the province of Ontario on the other. The islands range from 50 square miles to the size of a carport.





A fishing guide explained to me that most folks pick a favorite spot—be it vacation home, summer rental, or campsite—that **they return to year after year**, and that this can go on for generations.



their own motors. The highlight, for me, is the Brockville Infantry Company, a crack drill team decked out in 1860s-period uniforms, hailing from Brockville, Ontario, about 18 miles east of here, across the bay. The Canadians halt, load, then fire their muskets in unison, prompting involuntary screams from spectators. I'd like to help the revelers close down the pubs, but I've booked an early morning fishing trip in Clayton, New York, about 12 miles upriver. "Head down main street and turn when you see the kayaks," Captain Clay Ferguson tells me over the phone.

Next morning I'm aboard Ferguson's vintage 1951 Chris-Craft Day Cruiser *Hard Top*, 27 feet of polished mahogany powered by a 440-cubic-inch Chrysler V-8 engine. We're motoring through a sport fishing paradise, home to black bass, northern pike, wall-eye, and the muskellunge, or muskie, a prehistoric-looking creature weighing up to 70 pounds, with a mouthful of needlelike teeth.

"You don't fish for muskies," Ferguson says. "You hunt them."

Ferguson is a second-generation fishing guide with 44 years of experience. Back in the day, he tells me, wealthy families would arrive in the Thousand Islands by steam train with mounds of luggage that would be loaded into skiffs and rowed to their respective summer homes. In 1938, a new bridge connected the two countries, and more and more tourists began arriving by car. Ferguson's hometown of Clayton, the geographic center of the region, gradually switched from lumber and shipbuilding to tourism. "Anglers would come to Rock Bass Corner in Clayton and find 50 or more fishing guides waiting for work," he says. In the decades since, the fishing business has tapered off, and recreational tourism—diving, kayaking, waveboarding, sailing, skiing, and riding motorized personal watercraft—has increased.

We're drifting between Grindstone and Wellesley Islands on the U.S. side. "Some of my childhood buddies, farm boys, used to live on these islands," the captain says, but today, the dairy farms are long gone. Some 39 percent of eight-square-mile Grindstone Island is protected by the Thousand Islands Land Trust. Visitors can hike and camp at the two state parks—Canoe Point and Picnic Point—on the northeast corner of the island, accessible only by boat. Wellesley Island, covering 15 square miles, has two parks and three golf-course country clubs—and is accessible by rental car.

Maybe I should've booked a tee time instead of gone fishing. The highlight of our chartered trip is the shore dinner, a guide-prepared meal that's supposed to feature the client's catch of the day, which, in my case, poses a problem. So far, fishing neophyte that I am, I've caught nothing, despite several instances in which the captain hooked me a whopper and handed me the line.

"Don't stop reeling!" the captain booms. "Jeez, that was another 18- or 20-inch pike you just lost."

He pulls out his secret weapon, a red-and-white-striped, daredevil spoon lure. (Evidently, if you can't land a northern pike with this lure, you may as well take up knitting.) An agonizing hour later I say, "Can't we just eat the fish you caught?" In short order the captain is standing before a blazing wood fire at Picnic Point preparing a made-from-scratch meal unlike any I've ever had.

"Here ya go," he says, handing me the appetizer, a hot, deep-fried fatback and onion sandwich on white bread. "More cholesterol than ten sticks of butter, and I only use raw Vidalia onions from Georgia," he boasts, as he throws our specially breaded northern pike into an iron skillet of flaming fatback grease.

The main course includes boiled salt potatoes, steamed corn on the cob, local curd cheese, thick slices of Italian bread, and a freshly

tossed garden salad with, you guessed it, Thousand Island dressing, original recipe, as in *the* original recipe, the one Sophia LaLonde dreamed up in Clayton back in the early 1900s. LaLonde was the wife of a local fishing guide who, according to legend, first served the dressing to clients during their shore dinner. Eventually, George Boldt got a taste, added the dressing to the menu at the Waldorf, and the rest, as they say, is salad bar history. (Talk to someone in Alexandria Bay, however, and you get a different version of the legend.)

Dessert today is French toast with cream and thick maple syrup, washed down with flame-brewed cowboy coffee fortified with raw eggs, crushed shells and all. The feast is capped off by a double shot of Jack Daniels to aid digestion and to allow our arteries to function long enough to haul the leftovers and solid iron cookware back down to the boat. I give it five stars.

With Captain Ferguson playing harmonica and singing along with CD music, we enjoy a leisurely cruise



Clockwise from above: French toast fried in fatback lard highlights a traditional shore dinner during a fishing trip. The tidy Willowbank Motor Court outside Gananoque, Ontario, dates to 1956. In the collection at the Antique Boat Museum in Clayton is the *Zipper*, a classic 41-footer that was designed in the 1930s.

to the spacious dock of the Antique Boat Museum in Clayton. The museum's waterfront campus covers 4.5 acres of public program space; extensive archival holdings; and most impressive, a collection of more than 320 antique and classic pleasure boats ranging from eight-foot St. Lawrence skiffs to the 106-foot *La Duchesse*, the fully restored, Gilded-Age houseboat built for hotelier George Boldt.

The museum's "Quest For Speed" exhibit chronicles the 80-plus-year history of powerboat racing, a sport defined by high horsepower and

near-suicidal speeds. I'd no idea that race boats built around here were approaching speeds of a hundred miles an hour in 1929. At the main exhibit hall, I meet Robyn Lewis, membership coordinator. She shows me the *Survancee*, a 1909, custom-built racing launch more than 31 feet long and only four feet wide, crafted in swooping lines with a white cedar hull and mahogany decks and ribbed with red elm. It reminds me of a war canoe, with motor.

"Man, I'd like to have known the daredevil who bombed around in this thing," I say.

"Let's call him," Lewis says.

TALL, SLIM BOB COX, 92, bought *Survancee* from its original owner in 1955 and donated it to the museum in 1996. At the moment, he's working the throttle of the *Split*, his current 28-foot race boat (another classic), as we power away from the museum's dock for a sunny afternoon tour of the islands.

"I used to race this thing from Fort Lauderdale to Nassau in the Bahamas," Cox shouts over the roar of the engine. "But my doctors put a stop to that silliness."

I ask Cox to take me to Zavikon Island, actually a pair of tiny islands connected by a footbridge touted by tour guides as the shortest international bridge in the world.

"That's a big fat lie they've been telling tourists since the 1880s," Cox says, pulling out his laminated charts to show me that both islands are clearly in Canadian waters. I glance at the map then look up at the gigantic lake freighter that's at twelve o'clock and closing. The pilothouse on this monster looks to be about 15 stories above the water when Cox nudges the wheel a few degrees to starboard, and the freighter glides past for what seems like a full minute. Cox drops me back on the dock of the Antique Boat Museum and points *Split* toward open water. I watch as his rooster tail disappears into the sunset.

Back in the rental car, I head west along the scenic Great Lakes Seaway Trail, which parallels the shoreline, to Cape Vincent, where the St. Lawrence River meets the open waters of Lake Ontario. The historical district in this picturesque village has some outstanding examples of colonial architecture, including my ideal of the dream home. The front yards alone take my breath away.

From Cape Vincent I take Horne's ferry into Canadian waters to Wolfe Island, which, at 48 square miles, is the largest of the Thousand Islands. The border checkpoint resembles a whitewashed bait shack with the Canadian flag snapping proudly in the wind. I answer a few perfunctory questions ("Are you carrying any weapons, firearms, ammunition?") and am on my way. But as I pull out of customs, I miss the turn for the ferry to Kingston and embark on an unintended tour of the island, until I run out of road at the water's edge on the easternmost point of land. That's when I know I'm lost on Wolfe Island (sounds like a Hardy Boys adventure). No matter. I like it here. The 1,400 or so island residents enjoy

rolling farmland and meadows, plenty of acreage between homes, the occasional jogger or cyclist, and a blissful air of remoteness. For visitors, there are B&Bs, inns, and nature tours. Besides, I'm not lost. I can see mainland Canada just across the bay.

I get directions from a kid on a mountain bike and drive to Marysville, on the north side of the island, where I catch the next ferry to Kingston. Canada's first capital and now part of Ontario's only UNESCO World Heritage site, Kingston was originally a naval port strategically located at the convergence of the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario. Fort Henry, a 19th-century British fortress, overlooks Kingston's busy downtown waterfront. I beat a classic Studebaker to the last available parking space and join the cosmopolitan crowd gathering among the flowers and fountains of Confederation Park as a live band sets up on stage. I catch snippets of conversation in a dozen languages, including some guy speaking Brooklynese as he jaywalks across four lanes of traffic: "Hey, can't yooz sees I'm walkin' over he-yeah!"

Judging by the number of art galleries and restaurants in the downtown area, the nightlife in Kingston warrants further study. But I've grown accustomed to the smaller river villages, where the focus is on the water. Kingston, population 117,000, is just too, well, sophisticated. I feel like a river rat out of its element here. I surrender my prime parking space, head east toward the 1,000 Islands Scenic Parkway (the Canadian version of the Seaway Trail), and follow the road signs to Gananoque, which proclaim that it's "a destination that's safe, friendly, and good." That's a reasonable characterization of the Thousand Islands in general, though the Canadian side seems slightly more relaxed and less commercial, with less traffic, than its U.S. counterpart.

Saturday night action in "G-Town" (I mispronounced "gan-an-ock-way" so badly the locals offered an abbreviation) is centered around Stonewater Irish Eatery and Pub. I order Guinness and poutine—jumbo French fries buried in white cheese curd, topped with beef gravy, and served molten hot in a casserole dish with a side of vinegar. "Heart attack on a plate," the waitress says. I have to raise my fork several feet above my head to get the cheese to behave, but the dish is delicious. Now I'm ready to go shovel snow or fall on the couch to watch some hockey.

I know why the well-heeled of yesteryear picked the Thousand Islands for their exclusive playground: They couldn't find a more ideal place to spend their summer vacation. Fortunately, you no longer have to be rich to have the Thousand Islands experience. The brochures of things to do and sights to see overflowing from my rental car are proof of that. My whirlwind tour of multiple islands, it turns out, was highly unusual. A fishing guide explained that most folks pick a favorite spot—be it vacation home, summer rental, or campsite—that they return to year after year, and that this can go on for generations. Eventually, I did find mine. I won't say where, but it involves my idea of a dream home overlooking a tranquil stretch of water.

So far, I'd managed to avoid buying souvenirs. That changed the following morning when I entered Island Memories Restaurant and found myself surrounded by an acre of tchotchkes. The place had it all, including the perfect souvenir for my geographically challenged neighbor, Gary—a Thousand Islands-themed cookout gift set: tablecloth, place mats, chef's apron, and matching grill mitt. I can't wait to crash Gary's next BBQ and present him with this thoughtful souvenir from the islands that don't exist. And I hope I have an audience.

Contributing editor PATRICK J. KELLY and photographer WILL VAN OVERBEEK also collaborated on "Nashville Cat" in our March issue.



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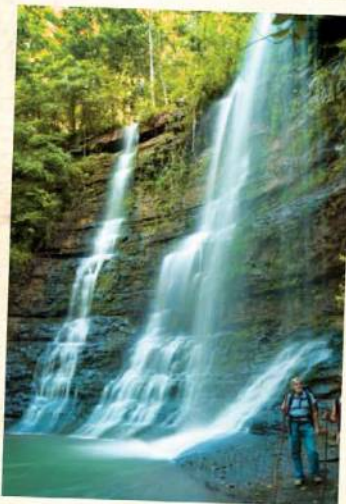
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JUNE 24-27 LULING, TEXAS

Seed Spitters Unite! One of summer's most refreshing treats takes the spotlight at the annual Watermelon Thump (since 1954). Think county fair—with kiddie rides, crafts, music, dancing, magicians, jugglers, melon judging

(weight is key), a melon-eating competition, and the World Champion Seed Spitting Contest. The "spitway" lies between two buildings in downtown Luling (population: 5,458), which sits between San Antonio and Houston. **MORE:** www.watermelonthump.com

TRAVELER20

[WHAT'S NEW: THE GLOBE AT A GLANCE]

MAY 1-9

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Action-Packed Asia Seoul, designated the World Design Capital for 2010, holds the eighth Hi Seoul Festival, one of the city's biggest annual events. Attend opening and closing ceremonies, a martial arts demonstration, and fireworks at Banpo Hangang Park. At Ttukseom Park, there'll be mountain biking and off-road motorcycling competitions. Enjoy interactive street performances and lots of food. **MORE:** www.hiseoulfest.org/2010_eng.htm

MAY 4

RUSSIA ON THE SMALL SCREEN

Lara's Theme Never Sounded This Good The movie *Dr. Zhivago* (1965), set during the Russian Revolution, was a transporting flick that made you want to go there yourself. Never had Russia—even with snow and revolution—been more seductive. (Who cares if much of the epic was filmed in Spain and Finland?) To mark the film's 45th anniversary, it will be re-released on DVD and will come out on Blu-ray disc. Extras include interviews with stars Omar Sharif and Julie Christie. **MORE:** www.imdb.com/news/n11399507

MAY 6-8

GINOSAR, ISRAEL

Acoustic Alchemy On the edge of the Sea of Galilee, singers and musicians perform at the Jacob's Ladder Folk Festival, offering a wealth of traditional and modern styles, from bluegrass to Irish jigs. Attendees are encouraged to join in, polishing their riffs at harmonica, banjo, and guitar workshops. Home base is the Nof Ginosar Hotel, just south of Kibbutz Ginosar and six miles north of the city of Tiberias (known for its hot springs). **MORE:** www.jlfestival.com

MAY 8-9

SCHWETZINGEN, GERMANY

Stalking a Taste Sensation Green asparagus is tasty, but the ivory-colored variety is sublime. At Schwetzingen, the self-proclaimed asparagus capital of the world, the pale veggie thrives in ideal growing conditions, including soil that is light and sandy. During the town's annual Asparagus Festival, vendors sell the tender stalks in the market square, near the castle gates. Restaurants try to outdo each other with their asparagus inventions. An asparagus king and queen are

crowned amid music, parades, and asparagus-peeling contests (a must for the white variety). **MORE:** www.schwetzingen.de

MAY 12-JUNE 4

PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

A Classical Spring Performances for the 65th Prague Spring International Music Festival take place in the city's grandest spaces, including the State Opera and Municipal House. Classical-music luminaries, from Anne-Sophie Mutter to Murray Perahia, are joined by musical/theatrical surprises like Anoushka Shankar (sitar player and daughter of Ravi) and Dianne Reeves (pure jazz). The long-running festival has seen many firsts, such as conductor Leonard Bernstein's international debut in 1946. **MORE:** www.prague-spring.net

MAY 21-24

MELK, AUSTRIA

Going Baroque on the Danube The renowned Benedictine abbey in Melk, stunningly situated above the Danube River, is an ideal venue for baroque music. As it has for more than 30 years, the International Baroque Days event at Melk

Abbey combines the known and loved (Bach's *Art of the Fugue*) with rare treats (Scarlatti's cantatas and arias). Indeed, on May 24, American soprano Andrea Lauren Brown performs vocal pieces by Scarlatti, born in May—350 years ago. **MORE:** www.kultur-melk.at/index.php

MAY 24

SAINT-RÉMY-DE-PROVENCE, FRANCE

Running of the Sheep The woolly ones winter in Provence but head to the southern Alps for the warmer months. Years ago, shepherds and flocks walked the route. Today, they go by truck, but only after a symbolic reenactment of the old ways. On the day of the Transhumance Festival, more than a thousand sheep crowd the historic streets of Saint-Rémy for a parade, led by shepherds in traditional garb. After the procession, sheepdog-training demonstrations are held. **MORE:** www.saint-remy-de-provence.com/anglais/ssomm.htm

MAY 25-29

LONDON, ENGLAND

Flower Show Extraordinaire At the Royal Horticultural Society's annual Chelsea Flower Show, held on the grounds of the Royal Hospital, top garden designers flaunt their stuff and landscape trends take root. But this year brings a superlative—the largest garden installment ever shown at Chelsea. The Eden Project garden, entitled "Places of Change," showcases the work of a team of professionals and novices, including amateur designers from U.K. homeless shelters. The flower show dates to 1862. **MORE:** www.rhs.org.uk/shows-events/chelsea

JUNE 4-6

ROCHESTER, ENGLAND

Dickens in the Streets What better place to stage a Dickens Festival than the town the author called home in his youth (1817-22) and old age (1856-70)? With parades, street theater, dramatic presentations (some in local pubs), and dance performances, the festival effectively takes attendees back



Stroke! Stroke! Dragon boats in Hong Kong's festival are typically manned by 20 paddlers, a drummer, and a sweep.

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Bonus: Award-winning images will be featured in the January/February 2011 edition of *National Geographic Traveler* and displayed at the World in Focus Gallery Exhibit at the PDN PhotoPlus Expo in New York October 28-30, 2010. All winning images will also be featured on the World in Focus Contest and *Traveler* websites. Additionally, winners will receive a one-year subscription to *National Geographic Traveler* magazine.

Entry Fee: \$12 per entry.

Deadline: August 23, 2010. Additional \$10 per entry for an extended deadline of September 7, 2010.

Submit Digital Entries Online: At www.worldinfocuscontest.com. Also here: entry forms, contest rules and regulations, and more information. **Note:** Print entries are no longer accepted.



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PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Grand Prize: 8-day/7-night hotel and train journey for two through the Canadian Rockies with Rocky Mountaineer. Prize contributed by Rocky Mountaineer (www.rockymountaineer.com). Additional prizes: One Nikon D-90 Digital SLR Kit with lens (or equivalent), a PDN PhotoServe portfolio for one year (www.photoserve.com), and a \$250 certificate for Canson Infinity media.

Second Prize: A two-day lighting clinic with Photo Quest Adventures (www.photoquestadventures.com) taught by Tom Bol (www.tombolphoto.com) in the city of your choice.

Each Category Winner: One Nikon D5000 DSLR kit (with lens), a PDN PhotoPlus Expo Gold Pass, and a \$100 certificate for Canson Infinity media.

All Winners will receive: A \$100 B&H Gift Card.

Bonus Award: Winning images will be featured in a special winner's gallery in PDN's February 2011 issue and online at www.pdnonline.com. Select winners will be displayed at the World in Focus Gallery exhibit at the PDN PhotoPlus Expo in New York October 28-30, 2010. Additionally, winners will receive a one-year subscription to *Photo District News* (PDN) magazine.

Entry Fee: \$35 per entry.

Deadline: August 23, 2010. Additional \$10 per entry for an extended deadline of September 7, 2010.

Submit Digital Entries Online: At www.worldinfocuscontest.com. Also here: entry forms, contest rules and regulations, and more information.



ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

To obtain Official Rules, go to www.worldinfocuscontest.com. Residents of Arizona, New Jersey, and Vermont are ineligible. Employees of the National Geographic Society, Photo District News, and their affiliates, subsidiaries, and agents, and their immediate families or persons living in the same household of such individuals, are ineligible. Contest begins April 20, 2010, at 12:01 a.m. PDT and ends September 7, 2010, at 11:59 p.m. PDT. Entry fee of \$12 for amateurs and \$35 for professionals applies to each entry received on or before 11:59 p.m. PDT on August 23, 2010. An additional \$10 fee is required for each entry received between 12:00 a.m. PDT August 24 and 11:59 p.m. PDT September 7, 2010. CONTEST IS VOID WHERE PROHIBITED. See Official Rules for details.

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Sweetgrass creations:
Baskets represent
Gullah Geechee culture
in South Carolina.

to the 19th century, thanks largely to the scores of perfectly costumed Dickensian characters who populate the streets and establishments. MORE: www.historic-uk.com/DestinationsUK/Rochester.htm

JUNE 5

MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA

A Basketful of History The Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival safeguards the traditions of the Gullah Geechee culture (forged by captive, then free, African Americans in the 1800s) and its sweetgrass-basket-making art. On tap at this year's festival, in addition to baskets and how-to demonstrations, are other handmade goods, song and dance, storytelling, Gullah cuisine (barbecue fish and chicken), plus fare from more than a dozen area restaurants. Admission is free. MORE: www.sweetgrassfestival.org

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in point: the annual Zurich Festival, which celebrates art, dance, theater, opera, and music. Part of the pleasure is the impressive selection of venues, from the Opera House (built in 1891; the interior is all gilt and lush red fabrics) to the Schauspielhaus (constructed in 1892 for vaudeville performances). Several art exhibits are in the Kunsthaus (a show of works by Van Gogh, Cézanne, and Monet is on view through May 16). MORE: www.zuercher-festspiele.ch

JUNE 16-20

BOZO BEACH, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Catch a Kiteboard The beach town of Cabarete is a year-round destination for novice and expert practitioners of the water sport called kiteboarding. A casual north coast playground, it offers ideal conditions—still waters and ample trade

winds—for this variant of windsurfing that uses a large kite as a sail. Added attraction: Dancing the night away on a picture-perfect crescent beach. Kiteboarders from near and far will gather here in June for the Cabarete World Cup 2010, which will feature \$40,000 in prize money. MORE: www.prokitetour.com/event.php?id=86

JUNE 19-20

LOUDOUN COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Artists' Natural Habitat Consider the fifth annual Western Loudoun Artists Studio Tour a two-birds-with-one-stone road trip. You drive through lush countryside and historic villages, stopping at the studios of more than two dozen participants: potters, jewelers, photographers, and more. See their works in their natural context and ask questions of the artists. Western Loudoun County is

40 miles northwest of Washington, D.C. MORE: www.wlast.org

JUNE 20-26

AROUND FINLAND

A Midnight Feast The summer solstice, known here as Midsummer's Eve, is celebrated throughout Scandinavia, but Finland elevates the longest day of the year to a big national event. Dining tables are laden with pickled herring, smoked fish, grilled sausages, and the first strawberries of the year. As day turns to twilight night, bonfires are built along rivers and lakes, a tradition of cleansing and keeping away evil spirits. MORE: www.finnguide.com/calendar/calendarevents.asp?month=6&p=50

JUNE 25-28

ESSAOUIRA, MOROCCO

Rhythms of the Berbers For most of the year, the prevailing sound in the somewhat sleepy coastal town of Essaouira is the tapping of hammers as artisans work with wood. That all changes when the Gnaoua World Music Festival tunes up, with its strains of pop, rock, jazz, and world music. From day one, in 1998, the festival has been a popular event, and has always included local drummers and *garagab* players. A TASTE: www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jlaC7_7Vzc

JUNE 25-28

SAN DANIELE DEL FRIULI, ITALY

Hamming it Up Imagine eating prosciutto all afternoon, then again the next day—and the next, with strolls and shopping in between. That sums up the Aria di Festa. Here, in northeastern Italy, you'll get your fill of San Daniele prosciutto—with a flavor and texture superior to Parma ham, according to experts. Long tables fill the town's piazzas. Stalls show off the wares. Enjoy music, visits to *prosciuttifici* (curing houses, where the hams mellow for up to 18 months), and fruity vino. MORE: www.ariadifesta.it

JUNE 25-JULY 10

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

Gilbert and Sullivan Down Under As part of its 75th season, Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Victoria is staging the little-known *The Arcadians*, a 1909 musical comedy that an early critic called "a very riot of drollery." It's about a nasty London restaurant owner whose plane crashes in the fictitious Arcadia, where he's transformed into a youth named Simplicitas. Fourteen performances are scheduled at the Malvern Theatre. MORE: www.gilbertandsullivan.org.au/

JUNE 30-JULY 4

WESTERN GREENLAND

Race Around the Arctic Round-the-clock daylight enables competitors in the Arctic Midnight Orienteering event to navigate with map and compass from Point A to Point B in a footrace across Arctic terrain. Smaller orienteering events lead up to and follow the great race. Also an attraction: a Greenland-themed gala (indoors). The events take place not far from the UNESCO World Heritage site of Ilulissat. MORE: http://log.9net.dk/amo_2010_uk.asp

JULY 23-25

SHA TIN, HONG KONG

Dragon vs. Dragon Once a polluted waterway, the Shing Mun River now supports fish, invertebrates, and—during the annual Hong Kong Dragon Boat Festival—more than a hundred long, narrow boats. The crafts, each propelled by 20 rowers, race during this festival crowned by fireworks. MORE: www.hkdba.com.hk/eng/boat_01.htm

Send timely ideas for the "Traveler 20" to Amy Alipio, aalipio@ngs.org.

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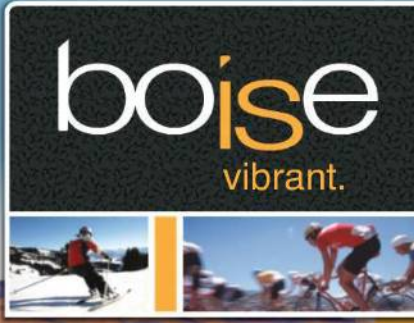
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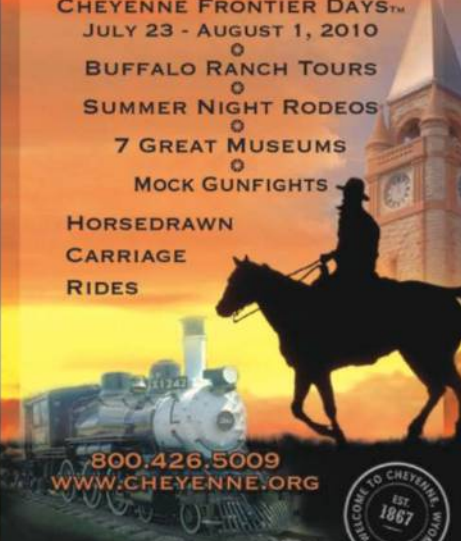
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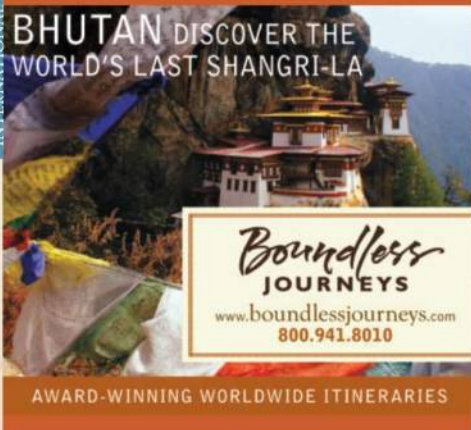
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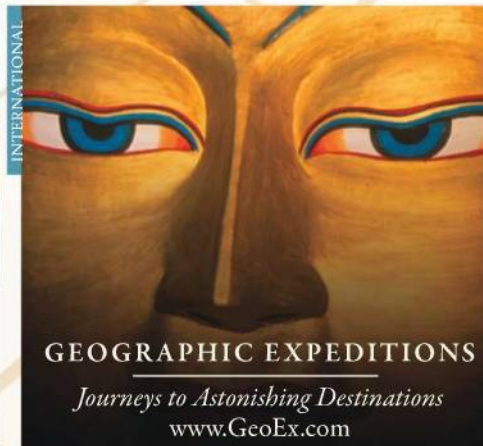
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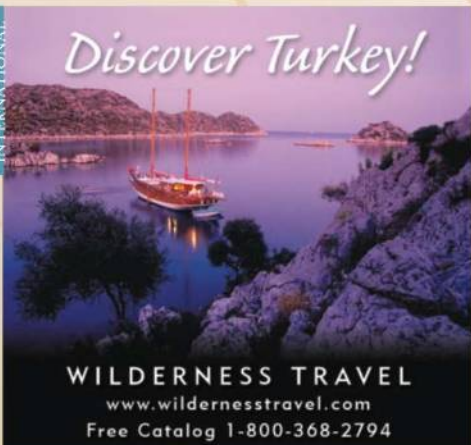
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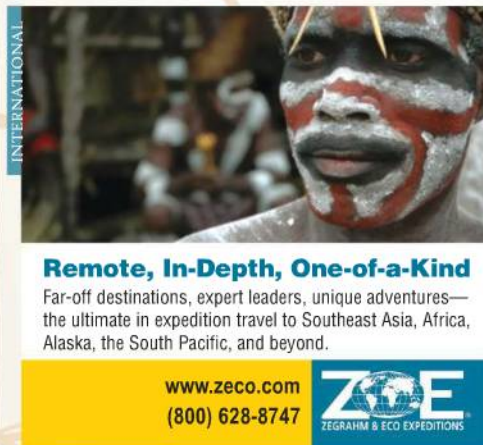
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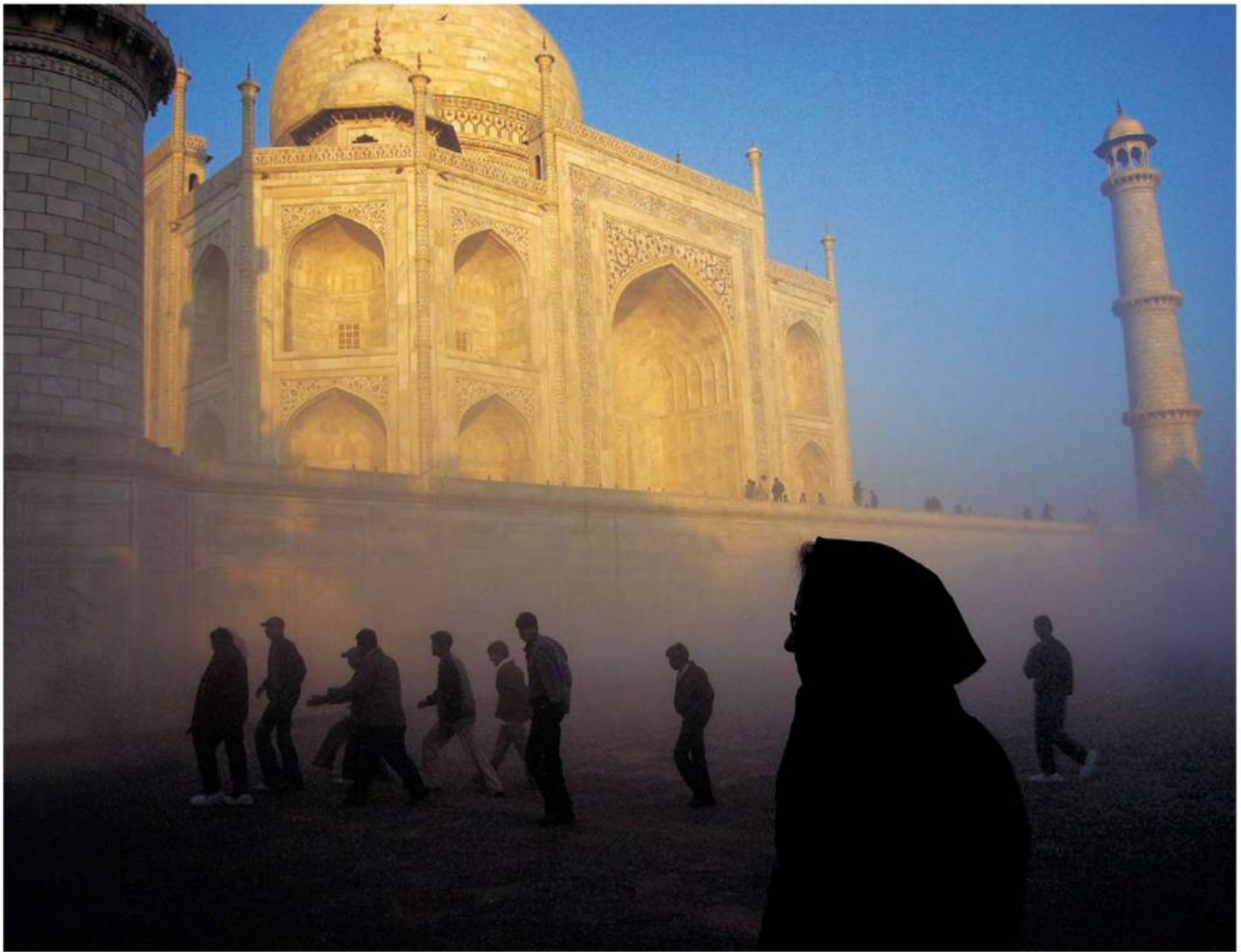
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Morning Magic at the Taj Mahal

Photograph by **KIRADEE KETAKINTA**

Agra, India

IT WAS ABOUT 9 a.m. on a December morning in 2008 when this vision of the Taj Mahal materialized in front of me. I was on a “New Year” trip to India with three friends, and this was my second visit to this most famous of mausoleums. When we arrived at the Taj Mahal, the river behind the marble memorial was blanketed with fog. As we admired the building’s beauty, waves of the heavy mist suddenly swept in from the river. Knowing that this experience would last just a few minutes—and that my camera was tucked away in my bag—I grabbed my friend’s camera, adjusted the mode, and pressed the shutter. I’m glad I did: The fog subsided within five minutes. I love how this picture shows the Taj Mahal’s lower reaches wreathed in the foggy mist, with the dome emerging above. I have since visited the Taj Mahal again, and each visit has inspired different emotions. I suspect these stem from the amazing variety of ways that the memorial’s white marble both blends in with and accentuates the surrounding areas, creating a different effect depending on the season and time of day.

We want your photographs.

Send your favorite travel pictures to Your Shot/Travel at ngm.com/yourshot. Tag all submissions with the keyword “travel.” We will run one photo we love in each issue.

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Subaru is a proud partner of Leave No Trace and a proud supporter of National River Cleanup. *EPA fuel estimates for 2010 Subaru Outback 2.5i with CVT up to 29 hwy. Actual mileage may vary. ¹MSRP excludes destination and delivery charges, tax, title and registration fees. Dealer sets actual price. Outback 2.5i Premium pictured with optional moonroof has an MSRP of \$25,290.

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