



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

THE UK'S #1 TRAVEL MAGAZINE

TRAVELLER

UK EDITION • NOVEMBER 2022 • £5.10

NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK/TRAVEL

COLOMBIA

CARIBBEAN ESCAPES • AMAZON SAFARIS • MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES
DYNAMIC CITIES • CULINARY TOURS



ATHENS

BELFAST

VALPARAÍSO

TANZANIA

CAMP OUT IN RUAHA, AFRICA'S NEXT BIG SAFARI DESTINATION

GREENLAND

TAKE THE PLUNGE ON A VOYAGE INTO THE WILD, FROZEN NORTH



9 772045 320054

0376237-996-40bc-b0db-564dff3ef604

ALSO: BUSAN • CALIFORNIA • DARTMOOR • JAMAICA • LISBON • SKIING • SOFIA • SLOVENIA • UTRECHT

Calling All Explorers



PARAVEL

c0376287-ae66-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

The ultimate travel companions for every journey.
Carbon-neutral and sustainably crafted,
with shipping to the UK starting this October.



Enjoy complimentary embroidery
on our Cabana Totes, Weekenders and Duffles at
[TOURPARAVEL.COM/EXPLOREUK](https://www.tourparavel.com/exploreuk)

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

REFINED ELEGANCE



OZEN


RESERVE
BOLIFUSHI






c0376237-ae66-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

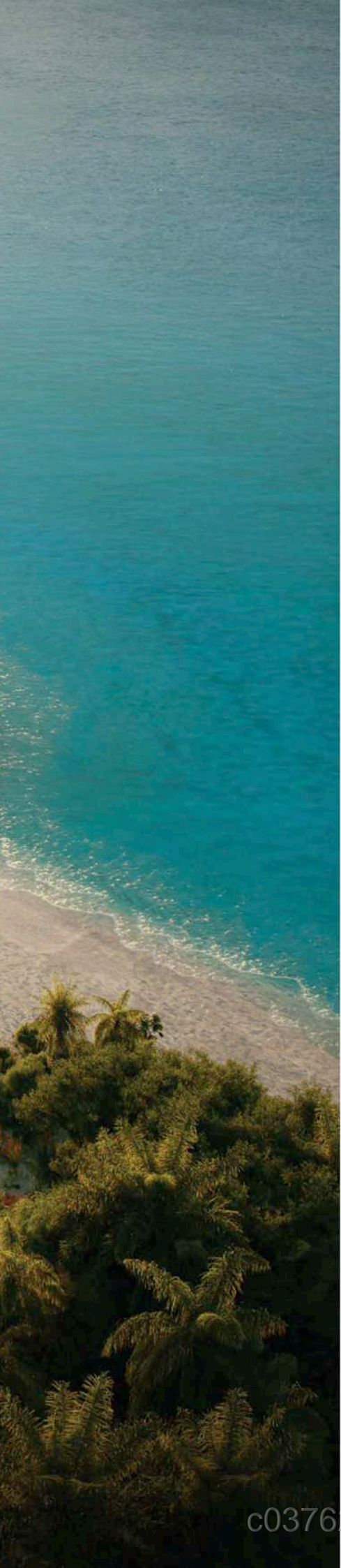
EXPERIENCE THE FUTURE OF TOURISM



 The Red Sea

 [visitredsea.com](https://www.visitredsea.com)   [visitredsea](https://www.visitredsea.com)

c0376237-ae66-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



Discover a year-round luxury destination on The Red Sea for those inspired by nature. Enjoy an array of unrivalled experiences and dining options set in breathtaking resorts. Explore the cultural crossroad of land and sea where an intriguing history is lived as much as it is learned.

All while celebrating and protecting the natural environment of one of the last hidden gems on the planet.



CULTHREAD



ethical / recycled / cruelty free

WWW.CULTHREAD.COM

c0376237-aea6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

CONTENTS

ISSUE 107, NOVEMBER 2022

72
COLOMBIA

Diverse and alluring, the country is a feast for the senses and playground for adventure

94
TANZANIA

A new conservation camp is putting little-known Ruaha National Park in the spotlight

106
GREENLAND

Join an expedition cruise past rugged cliffs, polished icebergs and otherworldly glacial formations

120
CALIFORNIA

Discover San Luis Obispo County, home to dramatic landscapes and enterprising artisans

134
ATHENS

In the Greek capital, age-old recipes are being reimaged for a new generation of diners

144
VALPARAÍSO

Once a scruffy harbour city, Chile's second city has grown into a bastion of creativity



134 ATHENS

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

CONTENTS

Smart traveller

19 | SNAPSHOT Dressing up for the Day of the Dead

20 | BIG PICTURE The green lung of Vietnam's Quang Ngai province

23 | SETTING THE SCENE Finding Middle-earth in New Zealand

25 | CULTURE FIX This year's most exciting new museums

27 | FOOD Cook Melissa Thompson on the flavours of Jamaica

29 | ON THE TRAIL A bar crawl through Lisbon's Bairro Alto

31 | WHERE TO STAY Affordable rooms in the Bulgarian capital

32 | FAMILY Celebrating 30 years of Disneyland Paris

34 | INSIDE GUIDE What to do in Busan, South Korea

37 | STAY AT HOME Gothic gems and historical museums in Lichfield

39 | BOOKS Five reads to get closer to nature this autumn

40 | KIT LIST The best protective gear for coasteering

43 | COMPETITION Win an overnight stay at The Landmark, London

45 | NOTES FROM AN AUTHOR Sophie Pavelle on Dartmoor

46 | MEET THE ADVENTURER Philip Henderson's high-altitude journeys

48 | ONLINE Highlights from nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel



On the cover



An aerial view of Playa Los Angeles, Magdalena, Colombia
Image: Ben Pipe

Insider

50 | WEEKENDER: UTRECHT Cycle along the Dutch city's pretty canals and past its historical treasures

56 | EAT: SLOVENIA The hearty flavours and sweet wine of the country's bucolic north

62 | SLEEP: BELFAST Northern Ireland's capital has upped its accommodation game, with a host of new hotels

Travel talk

152 | ASK THE EXPERTS Your travel questions answered

154 | THE INFO A tribute to Queen Elizabeth II, the most-travelled monarch in British history

155 | HOT TOPIC What returning the looted Benin Bronzes to Nigeria means for cultural restitution

174 | WINTER SPORTS What's the latest from the slopes?

Get involved

181 | EVENTS From the Food Festival to our Travel Geeks series

157 | SUBSCRIPTIONS Make a note of this month's best offer

185 | INBOX Tell us what you think of the magazine to win great prizes

186 | HOW I GOT THE SHOT Contributing photographer Richard James Taylor on capturing the drama of Devon's Red Cliffs

| NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELLER IS THE UK'S #1 TRAVEL MAGAZINE BY SUBSCRIPTIONS



YOU DON'T HAVE TO
GO FAR TO GET AWAY

AWAY

c0376237-ae66-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

awaytravel.com

CONTRIBUTORS

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

TRAVELLER

Editorial Director: Maria Pieri
Editor: Pat Riddell
Deputy Editor: Amelia Duggan
Commissioning Editor: Connor McGovern
Senior Editor: Sarah Barrell
Assistant Editor: Angela Locatelli
Executive Editor: Glen Mutel
Associate Editor: Nicola Trup
Digital Editor: Josephine Price
Deputy Digital Editor: Nora Wallaya

Art Director: Becky Redman
Art Editors: Lauren Atkinson-Smith (maternity leave), Lauren Gamp
Senior Designers: Kelly McKenna, Dean Reynolds
Designers: Rosie Klein, Jo Dovey
Picture Editor: Olly Puglisi

Branded Content Manager: Flora Neighbour
Project Editors: Jo Fletcher-Cross, Zane Henry, Megan Hughes, Farida Zeynalova, Becci Knowles, Sara-Jane Armstrong
Project Assistant: Sacha Scoging
Editorial Admin Assistant: Tabitha Grainge
Head of Sub Editors: Hannah Doherty (maternity leave)
Acting Head of Sub Editors: Olivia McLearn
Sub Editors: Chris Horton, Nick Mee, Ben Murray
Intern: Stephany Senanayake

Operations Manager: Seamus McDermott
Digital Marketing Manager: Prabhjot Chadha
Head of Events: Sabera Sattar

Marketing Manager – Events: Angelique Mannan
Production Manager: Daniel Gregory
Production Controller: Joe Mendonca

Commercial Director: Matthew Midworth
Head of Sales: Phil Castle
Head of Campaigns: William Allen
Campaigns Team: Jamie Barnish, James Bendien, Bob Jalaf, Kevin Killen, Gabriela Milkova, Mark Salmon, Oscar Williams
Head of National Geographic Traveller – The Collection: Danny Pegg



Chief Executive: Anthony Leyens
Managing Director: Matthew Jackson
Sales Director: Alex Vignali

Head of Commercial Strategy: Chris Debbinney-Wright
APL Business Development Team: Adam Fox, Cynthia Lawrence

Office Manager: Hayley Rabin

Head of Finance: Ryan McShaw
Credit Manager: Craig Chappell
Accounts Manager: Siobhan Grover
Accounts Assistants: Ramona McShaw

National Geographic Traveller (UK) is published by APL Media Limited, Unit 310, Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, London NW5 1TL nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel
Editorial T: 020 7253 9906. editorial@natgeotraveller.co.uk
Photography T: 020 7253 9906. photography@natgeotraveller.co.uk
Sales/Admin T: 020 7253 9909. F: 020 7253 9907. sales@natgeotraveller.co.uk
Subscriptions T: 01858 438787. natgeotraveller@subscription.co.uk

National Geographic Traveller (UK) is published by APL Media Ltd under license from National Geographic Partners, LLC. For more information contact natgeo.com/info. Their entire contents are protected by copyright 2022 and all rights are reserved. Reproduction without prior permission is forbidden. Every care is taken in compiling the contents of the magazine, but the publishers assume no responsibility in the event arising therefrom. Readers are advised to seek professional advice before acting on any information which is contained in the magazine. Neither APL Media Ltd or *National Geographic Traveller* magazine accept any liability for views expressed, pictures used or claims made by advertisers.

National Geographic Partners

Editor-in-Chief, NG Media: Nathan Lump
General Manager, NG Media: David Miller

International Editions

Editorial Director: Amy Kolczak
Deputy Editorial Director: Darren Smith
Editor: Leigh Mitnick
Translation Manager: Beata Nas

Editors: CHINA Sophie Huang; GERMANY Werner Siefer; GREECE Kyriakos Emmanouilidis; INDIA Lakshmi Sankaran; ITALY Marco Cattaneo; LATIN AMERICA Roberto Moran; NETHERLANDS Robbert Vermue; POLAND Agnieszka Franus; RUSSIA Ivan Vasin; SOUTH KOREA Bo-yeon Lim; SPAIN Josan Ruiz; TURKEY Zeynep Sipahi

International Publishing

Senior Vice President: Yulia P. Boyle
Senior Director: Ariel Deiacono-Lohr
Senior Manager: Rossana Stella

Headquarters

1145 17th St. NW, Washington, DC 20036-4688, USA

National Geographic Partners returns 27% of its proceeds to the nonprofit National Geographic Society to fund work in the areas of science, exploration, conservation and education.

Copyright © 2022 National Geographic Partners, LLC. All Rights Reserved. *National Geographic Traveller* and the Yellow Border Design are registered trademarks of National Geographic Society and used under license. Printed in the UK.



When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.



James March

Modern Slovenia is young, but its hills and yawning valleys hide recipes stretching back centuries. My journey across its ragged north was a window into how this small nation has evolved into a dynamic democracy while never forgetting its roots. **SLOVENIA P.56**



Hannah Summers

Food market, rainforest or beach, you won't hear music in Colombia without seeing some serious hip-swaying to go with it. It creates an infectious energy – one that will have even the most rhythmically challenged travellers toe-tapping to the beat. **COLOMBIA P.72**



Ben Lerwill

Spending time in Tanzania's Ruaha National Park was a joy. While the park is around 13 times larger than the better-known Maasai Mara, it draws just a fraction of the visitor numbers. The wildlife's superb, while seeing other vehicles is a rarity. **TANZANIA P.94**



Adrian Phillips

I took an expedition cruise through the lonely fjords of Southern Greenland, the least-populated spot on earth. You won't meet many people here, but when you do, you'll find they sing loudly – and play a mean game of football. **GREENLAND P.106**



Sarah Marshall

It's fun to find places on the fringes of society; pockets of rebellion where non-conformity is the norm. Valparaíso has become a place to play and experiment. You can't avoid getting swept away by big ideas in this historic city. **VALPARAÍSO P.144**



BEYOND EXPLORATION



Contact your travel agent or your Travel Concierge service on +33 4 91 26 62 20 - conciergerie@ponant.com For more information, visit uk.ponant.com ©PONANT/Julien Fabro. IM013120040

Summer 2023, reaching the North pole onboard *Le Commandant Charcot*
The World's Only Luxury Icebreaker

c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

Editor's letter

ISSUE 107, NOVEMBER 2022



Pristine rainforest and bountiful coffee regions, Pacific and Atlantic coastlines with untouched beaches, ancient ruins, captivating cities and a beguiling spirit... there are times when it seems like Colombia is one of the world's best-kept secrets.

Disney's *Encanto* film last year gave it a helpful push, but the country has been gaining steam on its own for a while. From under a million visitors a year in 2005, to almost five million in 2019 before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Colombia has, in just over a decade, emerged as one of the world's most alluring destinations.

Responsible and sustainable tourism have thankfully proved to be the cornerstone of this growth, with conservation and protection of its wildlife and heritage essential to this new-found popularity. And a new president, elected in June, who is focused on nature-, culture- and community-based tourism will only further benefit Colombia's rich biodiversity.

Our cover story this month brings you the best of South America's rising star, with a focus on wild river safaris in the Amazon jungle; the vibrant cities of Bogotá, Cartagena and Medellín; the innovative Indigenous communities; the stunning archipelago of the Rosario Islands; and the best of the Coffee Triangle.

Pat Riddell, editor



NATGEOTRAVELUK

AWARD-WINNING NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELLER

Best US Travel Destination Article – 2022 IPW Travel Writer Awards • Travel Content Award (Gold): VisitEngland Awards for Excellence 2022 • AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year 2021 • LATA Media Awards 2020: Online Consumer Feature of the Year Award • Travel Media Awards 2020: Consumer Writer of the Year • British Travel Awards 2019: Best Consumer Holiday Magazine • BGTW Awards 2019: Best Travel Writer • Travel Media Awards 2019: Young Writer of the Year • Travel Media Awards 2019: Specialist Travel Writer of the Year • AITO Travel Writer of the Year 2019 • AITO Young Travel Writer of the Year 2019 • BGTW Awards 2018: Best Travel Writer • Travel Media Awards 2018: Consumer Writer of the Year • BSME Talent Awards 2018: Best Designer • British Travel Awards 2017: Best Consumer Holiday Magazine • BGTW Awards 2017: Best Travel Writer • BGTW Awards 2016: Best Travel Writer • British Travel Awards 2015: Best Consumer Holiday Magazine

DON'T MISS



Travel Writing Competition

We whittled down hundreds of entries to just one winner and three runners-up. From discovering the secrets of French Polynesia to kayaking down Guatemala's Rio Dulce, be inspired by this year's best travel tales. **P.164**

Travel restrictions

The ongoing pandemic continues to affect travel. Please note, prices and travel advice are subject to change. Contact your travel provider for the most up-to-date information. For the latest news on safe travel and border restrictions, visit [gov.uk/fcdo](https://www.gov.uk/fcdo)

SUBSCRIBE TODAY



Get three issues for just £5!
subscriptions.natgeotraveller.co.uk
or call 01858 438787
and quote 'NGTS'

GO ONLINE VISIT [NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK/TRAVEL](https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel) FOR NEW TRAVEL FEATURES DAILY



ST. MORITZ | 2050

Refresh the world.



SAVE THE DUCK

Choose a Conscious Alternative.
Save The Duck is committed to face Climate Change.

www.savetheduck.com | [@save_the_duck](https://twitter.com/save_the_duck)
c0376237-ae66-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



Among the most coveted travel photography prizes in the country, the National Geographic Traveller Photography Competition is once again open for entries. Judged by a panel of industry-leading photographers and magazine editors, this is your chance to get your work noticed. Submit images in up to six categories to be in the running to win the incredible Grand Prize and for the chance to see your work in the pages of *National Geographic Traveller* (UK). Have you got what it takes to win?

c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

**ENTER
YOUR TRAVEL
PHOTOGRAPHY
NOW!**

CATEGORIES

FOOD & TRAVEL

This category calls for images that tell a story from any stage of the journey from field to fork. Think dynamic scenes of fishing, farming or harvest, rich shots of bustling street food markets and images of chefs in steamy kitchens.

PEOPLE

Travel portraiture means seeking out the human stories within a destination. It requires a compelling subject and an interesting backdrop in which to frame them. Plus, a little serendipity.

URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Your composition should capture something of the spirit of a city or town, be it figures moving amid striking architecture, moments of happenstance in a public square, or bold neon signs lighting up the night.

LANDSCAPE

From vast, panoramic vistas to drone shots that capture the patterns of a terrain, this category is all about offering unusual perspectives on the world around us. Shots should be executed with flair, creativity and technique.

WILDLIFE

Witnessing animals in the wild is one of the great joys of travel, but, as subjects, they certainly don't play by our rules. This category calls for outstanding shots of creatures great and small.

PORTFOLIO

Whether it's Holi Festival in Kerala or surf culture in Devon, your portfolio of up to 10 images of a single destination will tease out different facets of a narrative to create a nuanced and cohesive portrait of the place.

THE PRIZES

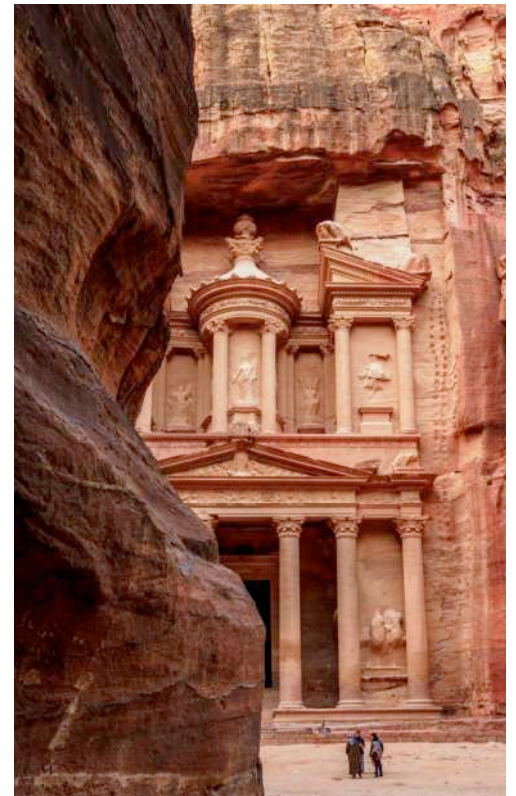
THE GRAND PRIZE

One Grand Prize winner will receive a week-long adventure for two on one of Exodus Travels' small-group trips to Jordan. Packed full of unforgettable highlights, the itinerary offers travellers unique experiences in the vast desert at Wadi Rum, camping like the Bedouin at an exclusive Exodus Travels camp; the opportunity to snorkel in the Red Sea; and guided tours of the ancient cities of Petra and Jerash. With 45 years' experience, Exodus Travels excels in curating extraordinary group trips and was voted winner of the *National Geographic Traveller* (UK) Reader Awards 2021 prize for Best Operator. exodus.co.uk



RUNNERS-UP

All category winners will receive a year-long subscription to *National Geographic Traveller* (UK) and tickets to a full suite of Masterclasses travel photography panel discussions in 2023.



Rajiv Joshi's *The Boatman*, runner-up in 2021's People category

Right: *The Treasury* in the ancient city of Petra, Jordan

ENTER NOW

NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK/COMPETITIONS

Competition closes on 27 November 2022 at 23:59 GMT. The winner must be a resident of the UK or Ireland and aged 18 or over. Judges to be announced. See full T&Cs online.



Le Brevet, France with
@jakebaggaley, photographer



ESCAPE AND EXPLORE



Stance Adventure Range
Collection online now

[STANCE.EU.COM](https://www.stance.eu.com) / [@STANCEEUROPE](https://www.instagram.com/stanceeurope)

STANCE 

c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

SMART TRAVELLER


WHAT'S NEW • FOOD • ON THE TRAIL • WHERE TO STAY • FAMILY • INSIDE GUIDE • STAY AT HOME • BOOKS

SNAPSHOT

Bertha Largher, Calimaya, Mexico

This is my wife dressed up as a La Catrina, an icon of the Day of the Dead, which takes place on 2 November each year. La Catrina juxtaposes the macabre with the elegant, representing how Mexicans perceive the afterlife. It's our favourite tradition, and we always look for new costumes and locations in which to shoot. Here, she's wearing a typical dress from the state of Chiapas in a field of *cempasúchil* (Mexican marigold), in the Central Mexican town of Calimaya. These flowers are traditionally used to decorate tombs, cemeteries and homes during the festival, and their scent was overwhelming.

SERGIO CARRASCO • PHOTOGRAPHER

 @sca3226



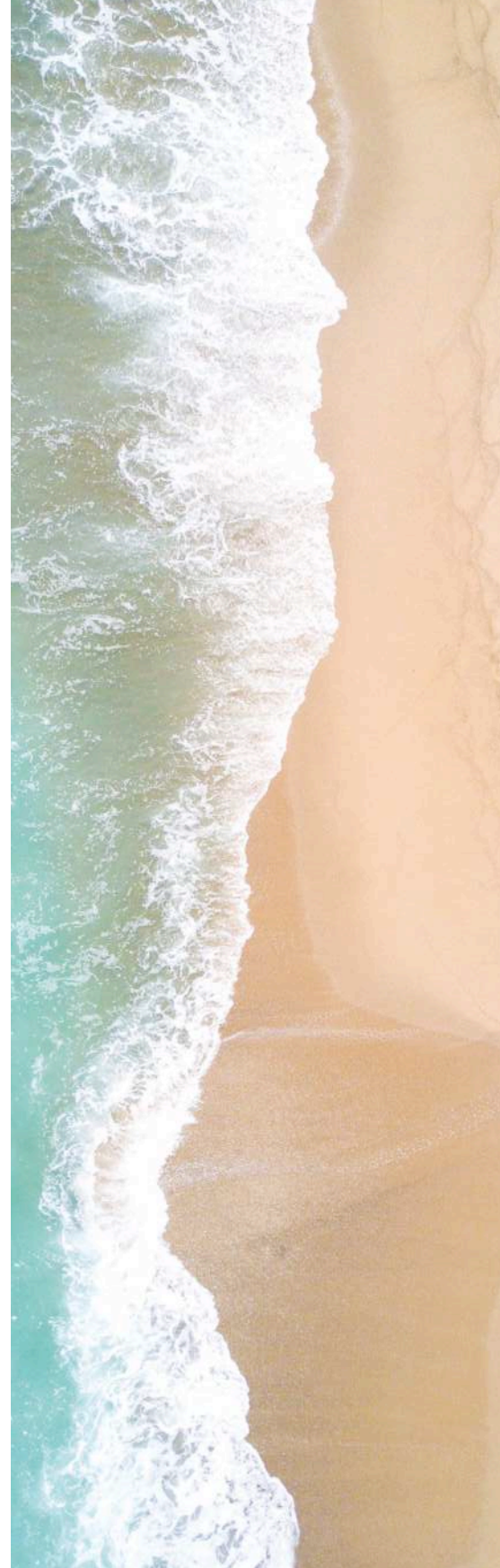


**BIG PICTURE****Tinh Khe, Quang Ngai, Vietnam**

The nipa palm forest is the green lung of Tinh Khe, a commune in the Quang Ngai province of Vietnam. Home to storks and brackish water species, the forest provides resources to local fisherfolk and farmers, who use nipa palm leaves to roof houses and create decorative items. Departing from the centre of Quang Ngai city, I travelled about nine miles to be here in the early morning, when the palm leaves shine in the sunlight. I used a Flycam device to get a bird's eye view of the beauty of this forest. The green scenery was entirely captivating.

CAO KY NHAN • PHOTOGRAPHER[caokynhanimages.com](https://www.caokynhanimages.com)[@caokynhanimages](https://www.instagram.com/caokynhanimages)

Part of a photo series that was highly commended in the Drone Photo Awards 2022, [droneawards.photo](#)



~~— Mallorca: seen it~~
~~— Côte d'Azur: done it~~
~~— Santorini: tried it~~
Paradise Island: *fancy it*

c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

ATLANTIS

PARADISE ISLAND BAHAMAS

AtlantisBahamas.com

NEW ZEALAND

Setting the scene

TOLKIEN'S MIDDLE-EARTH IS BACK ON OUR SCREENS – HERE'S HOW TO EXPLORE ITS AWE-INSPIRING LANDSCAPES

It's been 20 years since the release of Peter Jackson's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and with hit series *The Rings of Power* on Amazon Prime having launched in September, New Zealand's reputation as the real-life Middle-earth continues to have a profound effect on the country's tourism industry.

In the decade after *The Lord of the Rings* films premiered, *Variety* reported that international visits to capital city Wellington leapt by a staggering 87%. According to Tourism New Zealand, a third of all travellers visited a film location during their stay. Naturally, the best way to retrace Bilbo Baggins' unexpected journey is to start at Hobbiton. At this film set, which opened in 1999 in Waikato, visitors can amble through hobbit-size vegetable patches and sip a Southfarthing beer at the Green Dragon Inn. Keen movie buffs should also head to Wētā Workshop in Wellington, where you can dive into the weapons, costumes and practical effects behind the films, and get hands-on with a workshop in sculpting, leatherwork or gory make-up.

Although the sets may have been packed away long ago, there are still more than 150 film locations to explore elsewhere in the country, including some used for *The Rings of Power*. The cast can be seen making their way across the South Island's Fiordland and Kahurangi National Parks, and smaller towns have also played their part, with coastal Piha, outside Auckland, standing in for the Sundering Seas.

Keen to see more sites from the franchise? Nomad Safaris has half- and full-day tours from Queenstown and Glenorchy, used for the Misty Mountains, Isengard and Lothlórien; while Hassle-free Tours offers six-wheel-drive expeditions through the high-country used to recreate Edoras. Those who dare to enter the land of Mordor can book a guided hike through Tongariro National Park, where Mount Ruapehu doubled for Mount Doom, with Adrift Tongariro. hobbitontours.com wetaworkshop.com adriftnz.co.nz hasslefreetours.co.nz nomadsafaris.co.nz JUSTIN MENEGUZZI



Tongariro Volcano, which stood in for Mordor in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy

Below: Hobbiton film set, North Island



GO DEEPER INTO MIDDLE-EARTH

EAT LIKE A HOBBIT

Be among the first to visit Hobbiton in the morning with the new 'Second Breakfast' tour, which includes a guided walk through the 12-acre film set followed by a rustic breakfast banquet at the Millhouse. From NZ\$149 (£78). hobbitontours.com

ESCAPE FROM MIRKWOOD

Recreate Bilbo's thrilling 'barrel run' on a kayaking adventure on the Pelorus River with Pelorus Eco Adventures, paddling through the dramatic valley that brought the dark, mysterious Mirkwood to life. From NZ\$185 (£97). kayak-newzealand.com

RIDE THROUGH WIZARD COUNTRY

Saddle your noble steed and set off on a family-friendly horse trek through the glacial valleys of Glenorchy. Lighthouse Adventures offers half-day rides through the Wizard's Vale, with views of the Misty Mountains and the mighty Methedras. From NZ\$209 (£110). lighthouseadventures.com

Explore

THE CHICKASAW NATION



Chickasaw Cultural Center

Sulphur, OK

See centuries of prolific Chickasaw history and culture unfold. Connect with us through dance demonstrations, art exhibits, the Spirit Forest and traversing through one of the most extensive First American cultural centres in the United States.

Bedré Fine Chocolate®

Davis, OK

The Chickasaw Nation is the only modern First American tribe to produce gourmet chocolate for your culinary pleasure, sourcing solely through the Cocoa-Trace® program.

Chickasaw National Capitol

Tishomingo, OK

Tour the restored capitol and museum, which features the first Chickasaw Council House, history exhibits, art, artifacts and archives.



▶▶▶ CHICKASAWCULTURALCENTER.COM/EXPLORE ◀◀◀



the
Chickasaw
Nation

BILL ANOATUBBY, GOVERNOR

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



MUSEUMS

CULTURE FIX

A host of eclectic new museums have opened their doors across the world this year, from a celebration of Norwegian art to a study of queer British history

Clockwise from left: Queer Britain, London; Times Square, the heart of New York's world-renowned theatre scene



Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo

Norway has a new king in the world of curation and, fittingly, it comes bearing a crown. An illuminated exhibition hall adorns the roof of Oslo's National Museum, which became the largest museum in the Nordic region when it opened in June. A permanent collection comprising 6,500 objects chronicles the history of Norwegian art, from the near-millennium-old Baldishol Tapestry, discovered among the ruins of an old church, to works by Norway's favourite expressionist, Edvard Munch, including his earliest version of *The Scream*. nasjonalmuseet.no

Museum of Broadway, New York

This November, the curtain finally comes up on the eagerly anticipated New York venue, which enwraps visitors in the vibrant, glamorous world of Broadway theatre. After an overview of how a thoroughfare once lined with car garages became the heart of the US theatre scene, the museum leads visitors into a selection of sets from influential productions. Visitors are able to wander through the East Village from *Rent*, and 'ease on down' the fluorescent yellow LED staircase from *The Wiz*, a cult, *The Wizard of Oz*-inspired musical. themuseumofbroadway.com

Queer Britain, London

The UK opened its first national LGBTQ+ museum in London this summer, welcoming visitors ahead of the 50th anniversary of the country's first gay pride march. The free-to-enter venue, located at the canalside Granary Square complex in King's Cross, provides a crash course in British queer history through a thought-provoking collection. The feather-lined costumes of modern drag artists stand in stark contrast to the pale cell door that Irish playwright Oscar Wilde was imprisoned behind for 'indecent acts' of homosexuality in 1895. queerbritain.org.uk

Bob Dylan Center, Tulsa

In 1969, a fresh-faced Bob Dylan crooned that he 'threw it all away'. Thankfully for music fans the world over, the singer wasn't referring to his own belongings. Instead, more than 100,000 of Dylan's personal effects were bought by the George Kaiser Family Foundation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and used to stock this impressive museum, which opened in May. The breadth of the collection is staggering, with paintings, poems, songbooks, unreleased recordings and unseen video footage spanning every stage of the celebrated singer's life. bobdylancenter.com

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Atchugarry (MACA), Maldonado

Appearing like the bow of a galleon, MACA marks uncharted waters as the first contemporary art museum in Uruguay. Opened in January, it's the brainchild of artist Pablo Atchugarry, best known for his monolith-like sculptures. The new space — and surrounding 99-acre sculpture park — aims to showcase South American talent to the world, featuring artists including Julio Le Parc, whose plexiglass murals play with light, and Carmelo Arden Quin, who co-founded the Madi art movement. macamuseo.org

Museum of Hangovers, Shanghai

Most museums centre on events worthy of remembrance, but Shanghai's newest cultural offering chooses to focus on those mornings we'd rather forget. An outpost of Croatia's Museum of Hangovers, it aims to mimic the experience of having one too many, achieved with the help of hands-on exhibits and snippets of salacious stories shared by past visitors. Things get more sobering in the final room, which aims to educate visitors on the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption. museumofhangovers.com

JACK PALFREY

COCO

BODU HITHI
Maldives

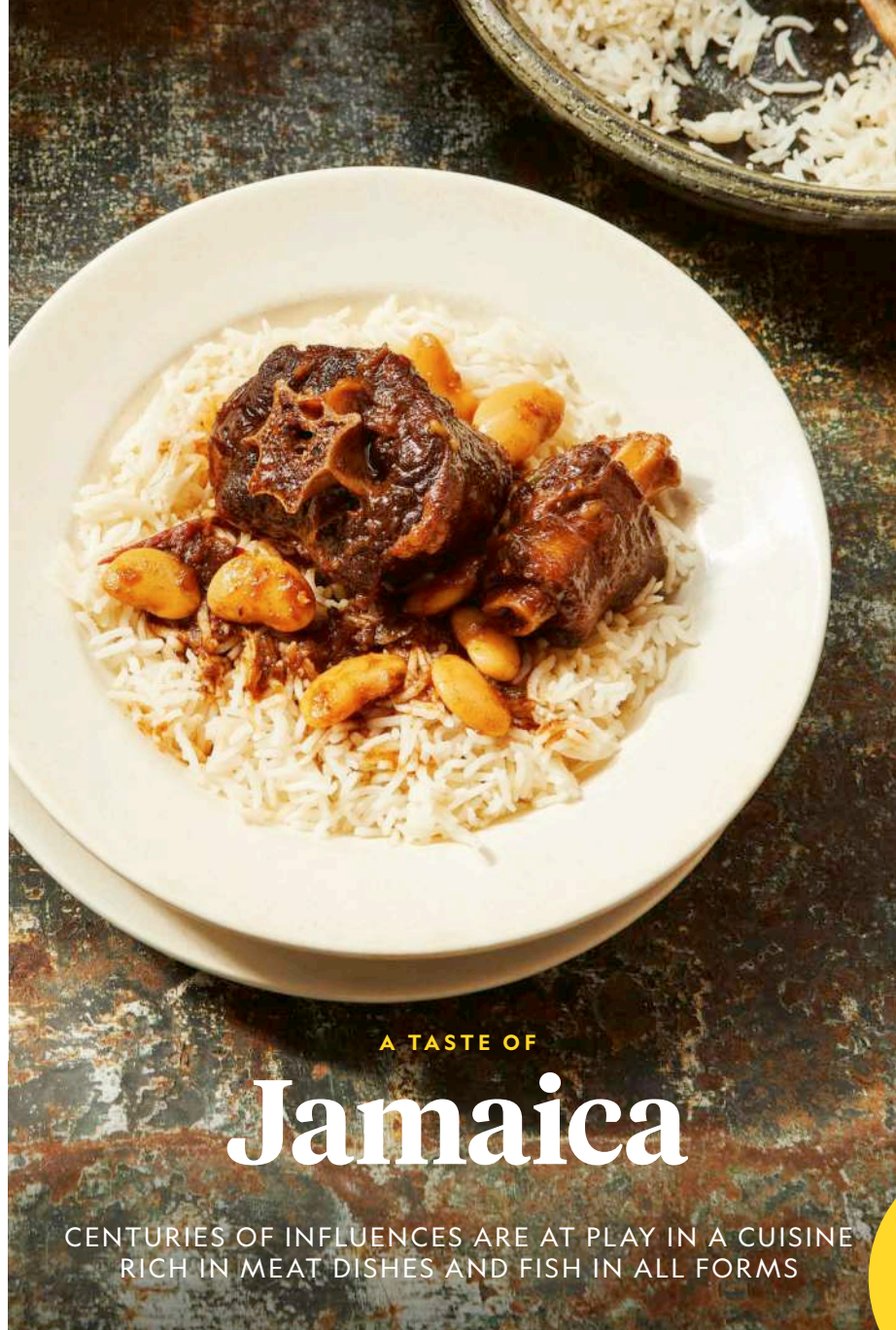
Rediscover life's beauty

WWW.COCOCOLLECTION.COM

For bookings: +960 664 6600 | reservations@cocollection.com



c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



A TASTE OF
Jamaica

CENTURIES OF INFLUENCES ARE AT PLAY IN A CUISINE RICH IN MEAT DISHES AND FISH IN ALL FORMS

Coronation Market in Kingston, Jamaica's capital, seems to go on forever, a winding sprawl of streets with vendors selling everything from roasted breadfruit to knock-off branded sports vests. Food is a big draw for people who shop here. Sellers sit under the shade of zinc roofs behind produce stacked high: scotch bonnets, thyme, yams, cling film-wrapped saltfish, pimento berries, ackee fruit — ingredients destined for classic dishes, whose influences spread well beyond the island's coastline.

Jamaica's cuisine is tightly interwoven with its history, with roots in both the Indigenous population and those who came here. From the Indigenous Taino to the Spanish who arrived in the 16th century, the British who landed in the 17th century and then the hundreds of thousands of West and Central Africans brought over, enslaved to labour in sugar production, everyone left their mark. To eat Jamaican food — ackee and saltfish, roasted yam, jerk chicken, stewed oxtail and much more — is to partake in its history.

Escovitch fish with a side of bammy reflects the Spanish influence — escovitch comes from the Spanish *escabeche*, meaning 'to pickle', while bammy (cassava bread) originates with the Taino, who were recorded making the dish as early as the 16th century.

Meanwhile, in Boston, on the north coast, jerk pork, chicken, goat and even lobster are slowly cooked on pimento branches suspended over a fire. Shaded from the sun, diners feast on the flavour-packed meat with a side of press plantain and pepper (scotch bonnet) sauce, washed down with a cold Red Stripe beer.

Jerk was created in the nearby mountains by Africans who'd escaped enslavement — known as Maroons — and the few Taino who'd survived the Spanish. They seasoned wild pigs to preserve and flavour the meat, cooking it underground so that smoke wouldn't give their position away. It's one of the island's most famous dishes, and with good reason.

Motherland by Melissa Thompson is published by Bloomsbury, £26.

MUST-TRY DISHES

STEWED PORK

All over the island, you'll find cook shops — eateries that look simple but serve brilliant food, like stewed pork. Dark and sticky, it's slow-cooked to perfection and seasoned with pimento, browning (a sauce made by burning sugar) and vegetables.

MACKEREL RUNDOWN

Salted mackerel was a vital source of protein during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. This dish is named after its sauce, made with coconut milk 'run down' over the heat until thick, and makes for a lovely breakfast.

SOUPS

Red peas (kidney beans), chicken foot and mannish water (made with goat meat and offal) are some favourites. In Castleton, *janga* (crayfish) soup is a must-try, gently spicy and packed with vegetables and dumplings.

MELISSA THOMPSON
is a food writer and cook, and author of new cookbook *Motherland*



The ingredient

With an aroma similar to cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg — hence its British name, allspice — pimento is used in everything, from jerk to stewed chicken and oxtail

From top: Stewed oxtail; Melissa with coconut and lime shellfish

Portugal, where wonder awaits



Get to know Portugal and discover soul-stirring culture, vibrant history and flamboyant architecture with our all-inclusive packages, carefully selected by our travel experts. Explore our full range of captivating trips to the world's most inspiring destinations.

Call **0204 579 2943** or visit **www.exoticca.com**

exoticcã



★ Trustpilot
Excellent ★★★★★

Image: Pena Palace, Sintra

c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



ON THE TRAIL

LISBON

Go on a bar crawl in the city's Bairro Alto, where local haunts are set in everything from a former gothic chapel to an ex-brothel

1 PARK

There's no better place to watch the sun set over the Tagus River and Ponte 25 de Abril suspension bridge than this hip rooftop bar. Park is set above an unassuming multistorey car park — to find the unmarked staircase to its entrance, simply follow the trail of people disappearing into the lot. Sink a cocktail or sangria in the foliage-draped terrace, as the city's lights go on to a soundtrack of jazz, hip hop and Afro beats. [instagram.com/parklisboaofficial](https://www.instagram.com/parklisboaofficial)

3 PENSÃO AMOR

A few minutes' walk downhill is this former brothel, now a happening bar. The decor here is riotously over-the-top, with lashings of velvet, gilt-framed mirrors, beaded chandeliers and paintings of nudes harking back to its past life. Set on the corner of Lisbon's 'Pink Street', once the haunt of sex workers, sailors and drunken rogues, it now lures punters with DJs, burlesque shows and punchy cocktails. [pensaoamor.pt](https://www.pensaoamor.pt)

2 BY THE WINE

Just a quick toddle down the hill, this wine bar is a corker, with a vaulted ceiling lined with backlit bottles, and a long wooden bar adding a shot of sophistication to the night. You'll find the entire range of Sogrape wines here, from big Douro and Dão reds to zingy Alentejo and Vinho Verde whites. *Vinhos*, starting at around €3 (£1.6) a glass, are paired with tapas-style dishes such as salmon ceviche and spicy *pica-pau* steak bites. [bythewine.pt](https://www.bythewine.pt)

4 O BOM O MAU E O VILÃO

Right next door, set in a revamped Pombaline town house, 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly' always has a great buzz, but go after midnight and you'll find it packed. Its rooms playfully juggle period features and backlighting, contemporary art and tables for conversing — a rare find in Bairro Alto's bars. DJs here spin a mix of jazz, funk, soul and electronica, while fresh-fruit cocktails are matched with Mexican appetisers. [obomomaueovilao.pt](https://www.obomomaueovilao.pt)

5 A CAPELA

Dive into the mazy lanes of Bairro Alto, a short walk north, and pray you'll be able to squeeze into A Capela. This former gothic chapel might just be party heaven, especially after 2am: cheap beer and mojitos flow freely, while flamboyant murals give you the chance to rub shoulders with a Renaissance nude. The DJ generally plays funky house and electronica but sometimes strays into more mainstream disco, too. [facebook.com/acapelabar](https://www.facebook.com/acapelabar)

6 O PURISTA BARBIÈRE

A few minutes' stroll east of A Capela, this bar set in a grand old barbershop combines razor-sharp decor with mellow DJ-spun tunes. Visit in the early evening to get a short back and sides with your beer, but O Purista is also a great place to end a late night. Bartenders with impressively groomed facial hair pour Belgian and Portuguese craft beers and mix excellent gin cocktails. [instagram.com/opuristabar](https://www.instagram.com/opuristabar)
KERRY WALKER



Turn the heat on. Do more exploring.

With superior technology designed in Canada and unparalleled heating power, you'll be wrapped in warmth and well equipped to embrace the great outdoors.



POWERFUL
HEATED
CLOTHING

ewool.com

c0376237-ae66-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



WHERE TO STAY

Sofia

BULGARIA'S STORIED CAPITAL HAS A WEALTH OF AFFORDABLE LUXURY HOTELS

Sense Hotel Sofia

In sharp contrast to much of the city's architecture, the Sense Hotel Sofia's glass facade offers clean, modern lines that are evident throughout the property. Situated on Sofia's main boulevard, the 71 rooms are complemented by an alluring rooftop bar overlooking St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. From €108 (£94). [sensehotel.com](https://www.sensehotel.com)

Grand Hotel Millennium

With 30 storeys, 400 rooms, 10 restaurants and bars, a spa and swimming pool, the Grand Hotel Millennium is about as big and bold as a hotel can be in Sofia. It's swish and stylish, with towering views over the city — it's one of the city's highest buildings. From €162 (£140). [grandhotelmillenniumsafia.bg](https://www.grandhotelmillenniumsafia.bg)

Hyatt Regency Sofia

Opened in 2020, the 183-room hotel on Vasil Levski Square is a stone's throw from St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral. As you'd expect for such a new property, the rooms are modern and smart — many with floor-to-ceiling views over the city or Vitosha mountain — and the ubiquitous rooftop bar, complete with fire pit, doesn't disappoint. From €113 (£98). [hyatt.com](https://www.hyatt.com)
PAT RIDDELL

Sofia Hotel Balkan

History wraps its arms around you in Sofia. Whether it's Roman remains in the subway, Ottoman heritage dotted around the city or the more prevalent communist-era architecture looming over you, there's no escaping the Bulgarian capital's eye-catching grandeur.

Part of the vast President's Palace complex, the Sofia Hotel Balkan sits pretty right in the centre of the city — on one side of the 1956 palace a luxury hotel, on the other the president himself and the hourly changing of the guard.

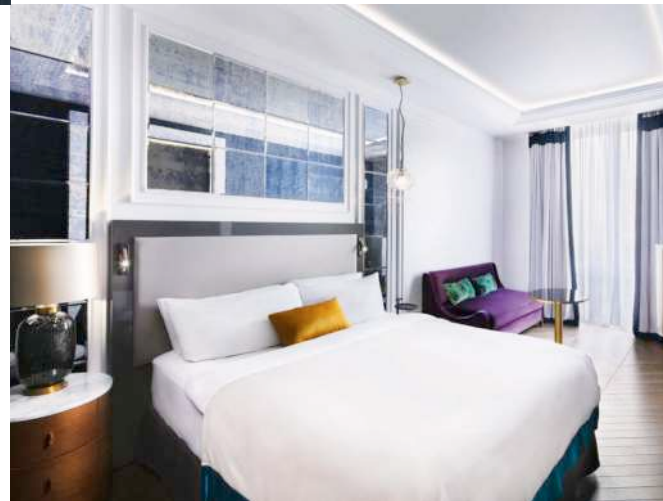
The oldest-preserved building in Sofia, the fourth-century Rotunda Church of St George, sits in the courtyard; while excavations of the Sveta Nedelya Square in front of the hotel have revealed further layers of ancient Serdica.

The classical exterior is equally matched by the interior — the lobby home to a vast chandelier, grand staircase and intricate marble flooring while the bar and restaurant offer grand pillars and slick art deco stylings.

Rooms are a mixture of the traditional decor you might expect as well as some more sleek modern offerings. And the central location — still just a 20-minute car journey to the airport — means you have all of Sofia's modern and historical attractions within easy walking distance.

But the real bonus in Sofia is the fact that it's difficult to spend much north of £100 a night in whichever property you choose to stay in, making the destination easy to pick but the hotel more of a challenge. From €82 (£71). [marriott.co.uk](https://www.marriott.co.uk)

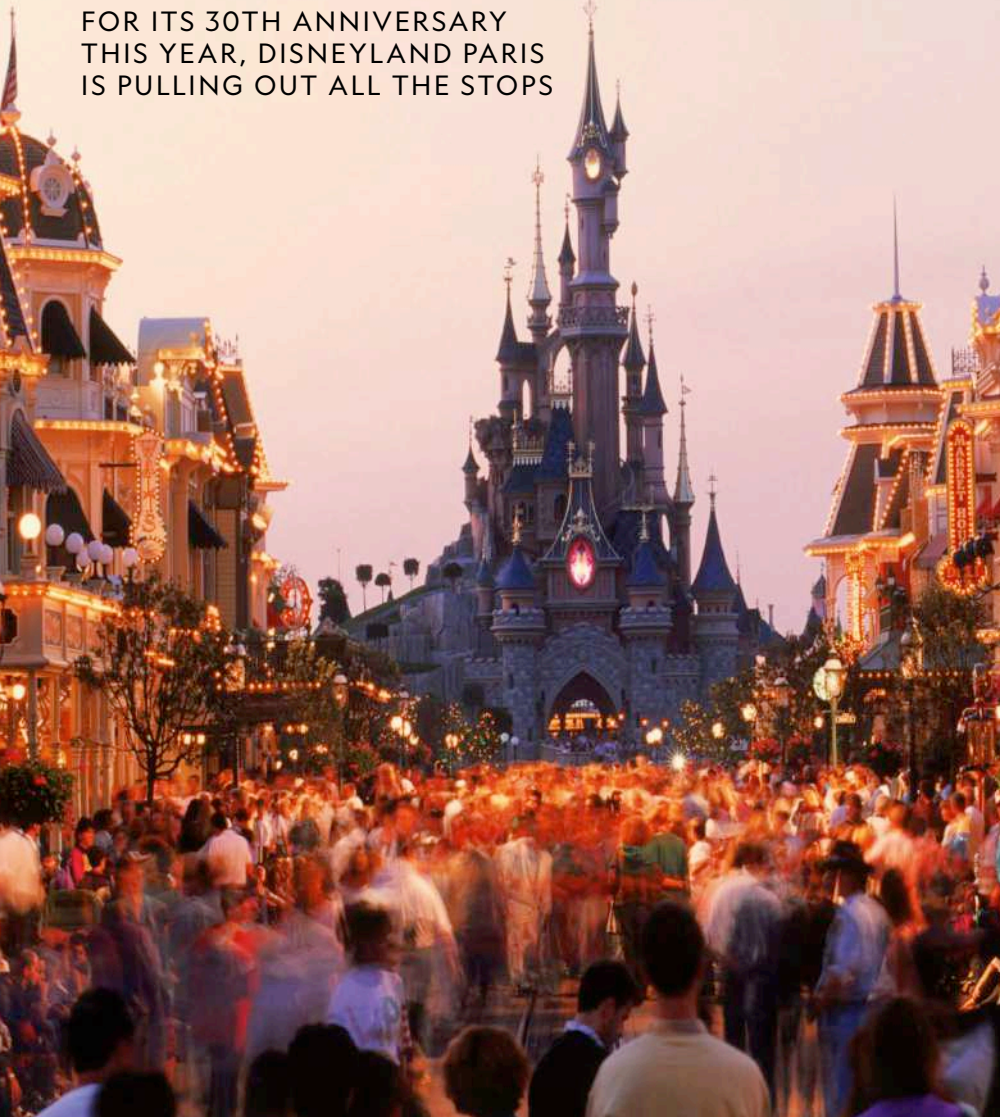
From top: St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral; a king deluxe guest room at the Sofia Hotel Balkan; the ninth-floor Gastro Bar at the Sense Hotel



FAMILY

Magic moments

FOR ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR, DISNEYLAND PARIS IS PULLING OUT ALL THE STOPS



While the familiar faces of Mickey, Minnie, Donald and Daisy will don sparkly new celebratory outfits for the park's 30th-birthday festivities — and new themed treats will appear in the restaurants and cafes — the biggest news at Disneyland Paris this year is the launch of the Avengers Campus, which opened in July. Part of Walt Disney Studios Park, this new area offers two experiences for Marvel fans: Avengers Assemble: Flight Force (a thrill ride for those over 4ft tall) and Spider-Man WEB Adventures, a fast-paced family mission for all heights.

You can even immerse fully in the Marvel world by checking into the new on-site, Manhattan-style Disney Hotel New York – The Art of Marvel, which has the world's largest collection of original Marvel artworks; indoor, outdoor and kids' pools; and a Hero Training Zone outdoor gym.

Other on-site hotels include the flagship, Victorian-style Disneyland Hotel (currently being renovated), and the cowboy/frontier-town-themed Disney Hotel Cheyenne — where the decor is inspired by Woody from *Toy Story* — which offers pony rides at an extra charge. The Disney Davy Crockett Ranch is also popular thanks to its woodland cabins, while Les Villages Nature Paris (a joint venture with Center Parcs) has stylish apartments and nature activities.

One of the other major attractions of Europe's most popular theme park is that it's so easy to get to. Eurostar runs direct services from London St Pancras International to Disneyland Paris or with a change in Lille or Paris. [disneylandparis.com](https://www.disneylandparis.com)

[eurostar.com](https://www.eurostar.com)

RHONDA CARRIER

From left: View of Sleeping Beauty's Castle from Main Street, Disneyland Paris; a roller coaster at Liseberg



ALTERNATIVE THEME PARKS

1 Tivoli Gardens, Denmark

Set in the heart of Copenhagen since 1843, the world's third-oldest theme park has rides and attractions for all ages, including the Villa Vendetta haunted house. The Alley, based on an old Danish market town, has old-fashioned shops. It's particularly beautiful at Christmas but is open year-round. [tivoli.dk](https://www.tivoli.dk)

2 Liseberg, Sweden

This classic theme park in Gothenburg celebrates its 100th birthday in 2023. This year has already seen the opening of a retro-theme area, Luna Park; next year it'll be joined by new coaster, Luna. Schedule your visit for 2023 to stay at the new on-site Grand Curiosa Hotel, booking from this autumn, with stylish, fantasy-inspired decor. [liseberg.com](https://www.liseberg.com)

3 Europa-Park Resort, Germany

The country's largest theme park has it all: the Rulantica water park, YULLBE with its unique VR experiences, six themed hotels, campsites and a spa. There'll be a new big-dipper roller coaster from next year, but don't miss the areas inspired by various European countries, including Iceland, Spain and Switzerland. [europapark.de](https://www.europapark.de)

PUITALM

Natur Apart Hotel

Winter's magic in Tyrol

Take a winter break above it all and discover a mountain retreat nestled in pristine nature. The new Natur Apart Hotel Puitalm combines heavenly freedom with earthly warmth. It's run with exceptional consideration for our future and preserving the pure mountain soul. Experience the peace of snowy forests, the joy of countless ski slopes, and cocooning in 25 stunning panorama apartments. Savour your very own personal gourmet moments at the hotel's restaurant, which serves delicious produce from its own farm, and let go at the spa, where both the stars and sparkling snow crystals are within reach.



HIDEAWAYS
HOTELS

Plattenrain 1 · 6471 Arzl im Pitztal · AUSTRIA · +43 5412 22242 · office@puitalm.at

WWW.PUITALM.AT

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

BUSAN

SOUTH KOREA'S SECOND CITY IS NOW FIRMLY ON THE TRAVEL MAP, THANKS TO ITS GOLDEN BEACHES, GREAT CUISINE AND CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS

South Koreans flock to Busan in the summer to sunbathe on the wide sands of **Haeundae Beach**, but seaside splendour isn't all this city of historic, gastronomic and cultural treasures has to offer.

Begin your visit in **Seomyeon**, Busan's hopping downtown and central business district. Grab a bowl of *kalguksu* (knife-cut noodles) and soak up the atmosphere at Gijang Home-Made Noodle in **Seomyeon Market**, before exploring the vibrant alleys en route to nearby **Jeonpo Cafe Street**. This district of former workshops has been transformed into a hip area with coffee houses, intimate bars and speciality restaurants. Watch the afternoon slide by over a cappuccino at **U:Dally**, or stop by **Beer Shop** for a craft pint before getting your Korean barbecue fix at **Yoonam Ju**, a cosy eatery famous for its thick cuts of fresh pork and quality sides. facebook.com/beershop.kr instagram.com/yoonaam_ju

If it's seafood you're after, look no further than **Jagalchi Market**. Serving up the ocean's bounty for over 600 years, Jagalchi is a feast for both the eyes and the stomach, and is considered to be Busan's living, beating heart. Sample some serious sashimi at the massive **Raw Fish Pavilion**, where you can point to your lunch and have it served on the spot. Wash it down with a little green bottle of the Korean spirit *soju* to round off this quintessential Busan culinary experience. If you're still feeling peckish, saunter next door to the cavernous **Bupyeong Kkangtong Market**, where you can graze on Korean street-stall favourites, such as *bindaetteok* (mung bean pancakes).

Once you've had your fill of market food, take a taxi to nearby **Songdo Beach** and ride the cable car over the water to **Amnam Park**. Or head to **Yeongdo Island** and walk off the afternoon's indulgences at the **Huinnyeoul Culture Village**. Perched above a seaside cliff, this picturesque hamlet of alabaster abodes offers sweeping ocean views that might conjure up images of the Greek isles.

When it comes to nightlife, **Gwangalli Beach** is the place to be, where stretches of sand are bordered by a small city of cafes and bars. Swing by the funky **HQ Bar** for a cocktail while taking in the million-dollar view of the **Gwangang Diamond Bridge**. For craft beer, head to **Gorilla Brewing Company**, which has a warehouse-like taproom offering locally produced ales, lagers and more. If it's something more intimate you're after, **Bar Di Lan** offers an array of top-shelf whiskies and sophisticated, European-inspired plates. [@bar_di.lan](https://facebook.com/hq.bar.5) gorillabrewingcompany.com

Although Busan is a thrumming, modern metropolis, it also offers plenty of natural splendour, not least at **Igidae**, a rugged seaside park where hiking trails offer stellar vistas of city and sea. After trekking this impressive coastal path, pay your respects to the fallen at the nearby **UN Memorial Cemetery**, where soldiers from 11 of the countries that served in the Korean War are buried. unmck.or.kr

Also worth exploring is **Beomeosa temple**, on the other side of town. Hidden in the foothills of **Geumjeong Mountain**, this historic complex is a working place of worship and important centre of Buddhist thought. From here it's a short hike up to the North Gate of the **Geumjeongsan Fortress**. Take in the view of the city as you make your way along the ancient ridge to **Sanseong Village**, where you can feast in one of the restaurants serving grilled duck or *baeksuk* (steamed chicken and ginseng) and bowls of *makgeolli* — a milky rice wine, brewed in the village.

After a busy day walking and eating, take the shuttle bus to the Oncheonjang neighbourhood and soak in one of the myriad pools at **Heosimcheong Spa**, one of Asia's largest natural hot springs. Don't leave without catching a Lotte Giants baseball game at nearby **Sajik Stadium**. You don't have to be a fan of the sport — grab a beer and a box of chicken and soak up the atmosphere for the ultimate Busan experience. giantsclub.com visitbusan.net **CHRIS THARP**

LIKE A LOCAL

Kat Bang's top-three Busan experiences

Kat Bang is the host of radio show *Morning Wave* on Busan eFM, the city's English-language radio station. bfm.or.kr



AHOPSAN FOREST, GIJANG

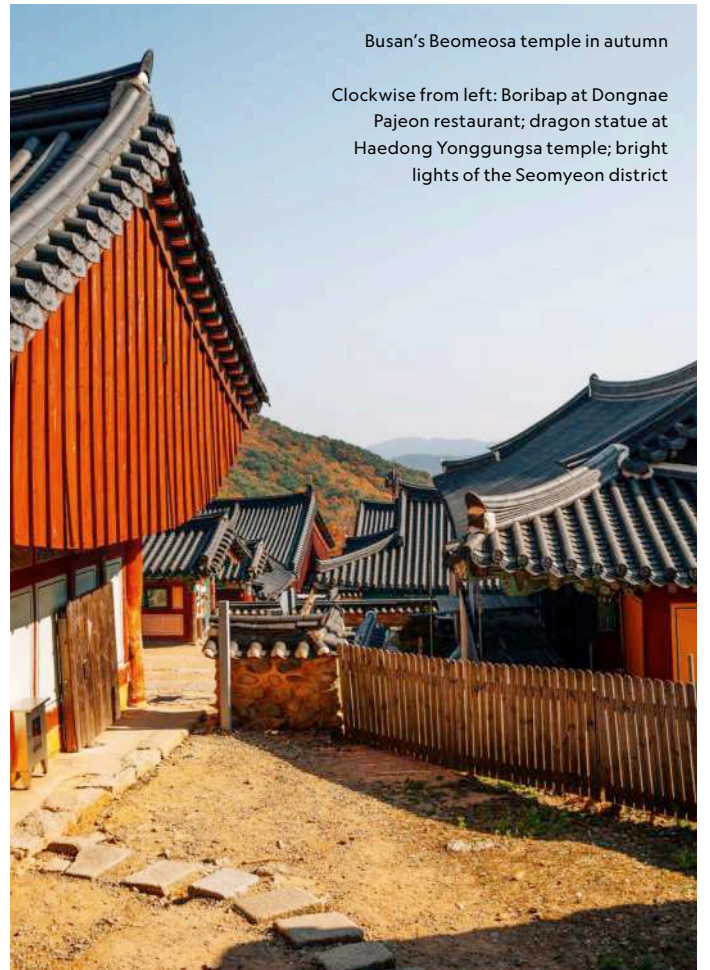
Off the beaten path and only opened to the public a few years ago, the forest is home to many different species of trees, but the bamboo habitat here is definitely the gem.

MUSEUM DAH, CENTUM CITY

This is an experience you won't forget. Think beautiful explosions of art and light in a multi-floor, interactive extravaganza that blends augmented reality with art.

HUINNYEOL CULTURE VILLAGE, YEONGDO ISLAND

Home to refugees during the Korean War, this historic village juxtaposes quaint homes and historic alleyways with craft shops, cafes and vibrant murals.



Busan's Beomeosa temple in autumn
 Clockwise from left: Boribap at Dongnae
 Pajeon restaurant; dragon statue at
 Haedong Yonggungsa temple; bright
 lights of the Seomyeong district

SANCTUARY

CAP CANA

A LUXURY COLLECTION
ADULT ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORT

Unlimited Access
to Endless Luxury



Go There With
MARRIOTT BONVOY



[SANCTUARYCAPCANA.COM](https://www.sanctuarycapcana.com)

©2022 Playa Hotels & Resorts is the operator of Sanctuary Cap Cana. All rights reserved. FLA010010822

CU376237-accc-40bc-b00b-564d113e1604



STAY AT HOME

LICHFIELD

History is writ large across the Staffordshire city, with medieval treasures and intriguing museums to discover

Why go

Around 13 miles north of Birmingham, Lichfield is a city that wears its history on its sleeve. You'll see it in the mismatch of architectural styles, from black-and-white Tudor timbers to grand Georgian and Victorian facades. The city has been home to a number of significant historical figures, from the Anglo-Saxon St Chad to 18th-century writer Samuel Johnson. Perhaps most impressive of all Lichfield's historical treasures, however, is the three-spired cathedral, which watches over the compact, historic centre. There's plenty to discover besides, from museums to beautiful countryside; right on its doorstep are the hills and woodland of Cannock Chase, host venue for the mountain biking at the 2022 Commonwealth Games. enjoystaffordshire.com

What to do

Towering over the city, Lichfield Cathedral has a past stretching back 1,300 years. The gothic masterpiece is best explored on one of the guide-led Highlights Tours (£5 per person); the 45-minute visits offer intriguing insights, showing how archaeological investigations uncovered the remains of the original building from 700AD. As well as stained glass and ornate tombs, don't miss important artefacts such as the St Chad Gospels, an eighth-century book housed in the cathedral's Chapter House. lichfield-cathedral.org

Where to eat

A short drive outside the city, the elegant Boat Inn offers a six-course tasting menu of modern British cuisine — the roasted artichoke with Lichfield asparagus, salsa verde, black garlic and mushroom, and the chocolate parfait, are particularly delicious. In the city centre, Pom's is a popular spot for brunch — expect punchy bloody marys, eggs benedict and milkshakes. theboatinnlichfield.co.uk pomskitchen.uk

Where to stay

Dating back to the 1600s, St Johns House is a characterful Regency property only a couple of minutes' walk from the city bustle, but inside is relaxed and luxurious, with 12 individually designed bedrooms. Breakfast is cooked to order each morning and includes Staffordshire oatcakes, a local delicacy. There's free parking onsite, too. From £110, B&B. stjohnshouse.co.uk

Don't miss

Be sure to visit Erasmus Darwin House, former home of the leading 18th-century doctor, scientist and grandfather of Charles Darwin. Learn more about the polymath's incredible life and pioneering work, get hands-on in the Inventions Room and try out his creations like The Speaking Machine, which aimed to mimic human speech. There's also a beautiful garden to explore, brimming with herbs and flowers. erasmusdarwin.org **CAROLINE BUTTERWICK**



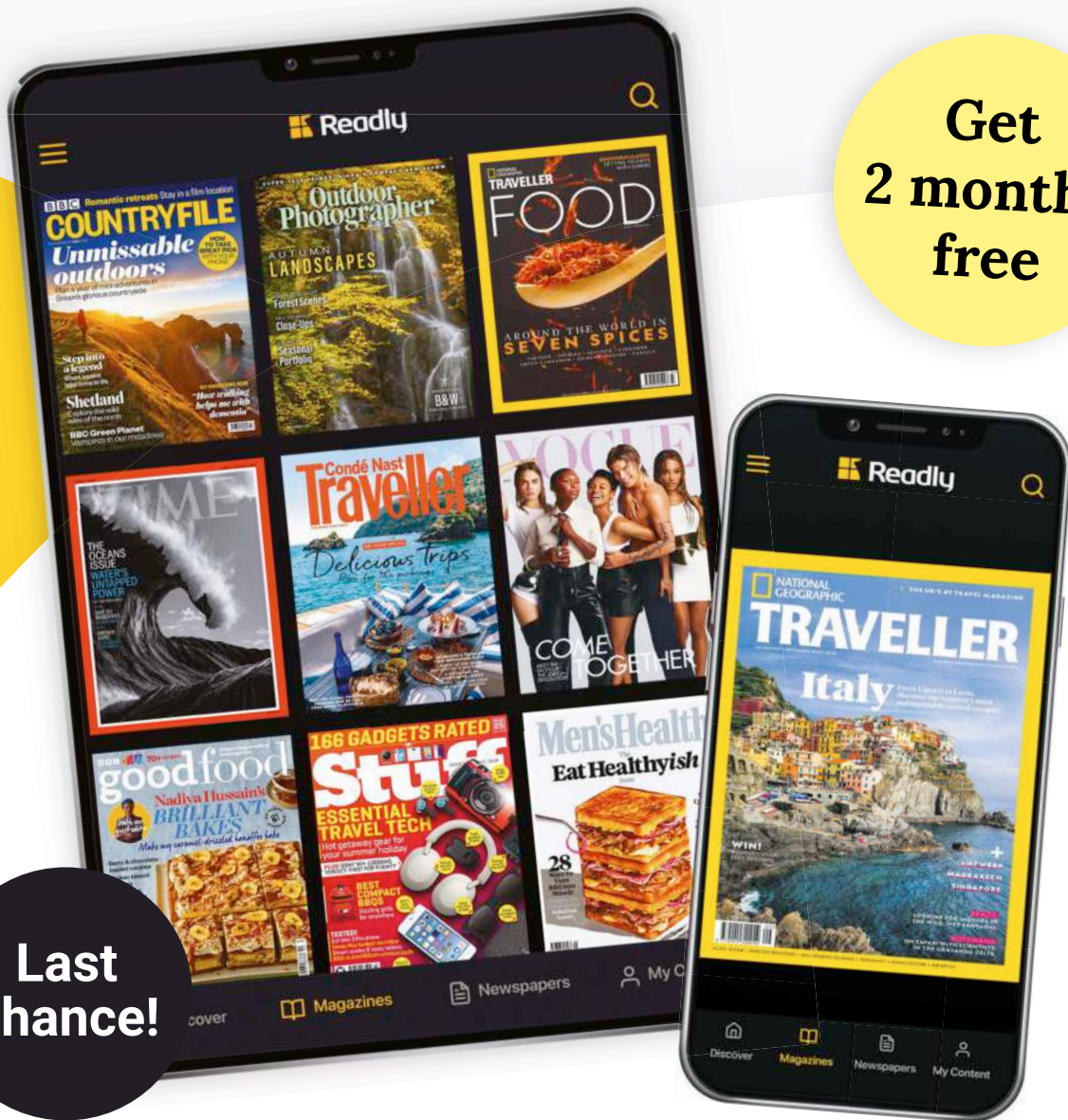
WE LIKE

Laid out in 1859, Beacon Park is a beautiful place for a wander. Spring sees the 70-acre space bursting with blooms, while the trees dazzle in autumn. Stop for tea at the bistro, play a round of golf and let the children run riot in the large play area. Look out for the statue of Staffordshire local Edward John Smith, captain of the ill-fated *Titanic*, erected in 1914.

From top: Lichfield Cathedral and Stowe Pool with boathouse; the fountain in Beacon Park

Take **unlimited** magazines and newspapers on holiday.

Get
2 months
free



Last
chance!

Find the latest issues of **National Geographic Traveller (UK)** alongside an entire library of over 6,000 magazines and newspapers accessible offline and on-the-go. Planning an escape overseas or venturing to the countryside by train? All you need is your phone, tablet or laptop to catch up on your favourite reads with the Readly app.



Get started!

Scan the QR code
or visit gb.readly.com/ngt2

c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

 **Readly**

BOOKS

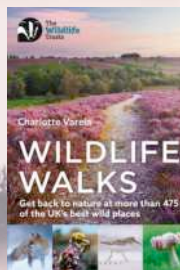
Wild autumn escapes

GOLDEN DAYS, FORAGING FARE AND THAT COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS FEELING: THERE'S NO TIME LIKE AUTUMN TO BE INSPIRED TO PLAN WILD, OUTDOOR ADVENTURES



Return to My Trees: Notes from the Welsh Woodland

As our forests begin their fiery, seasonal display — and our awareness of deforestation becomes ever sharper — Matthew Yeomans' reflective travelogue exploring our vital relationship with trees is a timely release. Join Yeomans on his 300-mile walk through Welsh woodlands and forests, ancient and newly planted, uncovering their fertile history and folklore, tales of industrial progress and decay, and places once sacred to ancient Druids and early Celtic saints. Calon, £18.99.



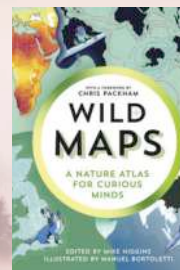
Wildlife Walks: Get back to nature at more than 475 of the UK's best wild places

Lancashire-based nature writer and naturalist Charlotte Varela finds beautiful UK escapes exploring the Wildlife Trusts' nature reserves nationwide. Taking in the wildlife and landscapes of forests, heaths, moors and woodland, the guide offers practical information on how to get there, facilities available on each route and walking time along with some inspirational photography and tips on how to engage with the natural world. Bloomsbury, £16.99.



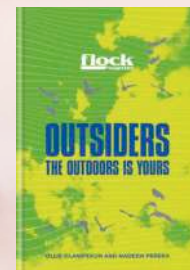
The Secret Life of Fungi: Discoveries from a Hidden World

Pick up the just-released paperback of this celebrated wildlife handbook and learn how entire ecosystems rely on these species that remains as mysterious as they do diverse. Novelist and nature writer Aliya Whiteley reveals how fungi can appear anywhere: living inside, outside and on our bodies, found everywhere from desert dunes to frozen tundra, ranging from single-cell spores to the largest living organism on the planet. Elliott & Thompson, £9.99.



Wild Maps for the Curious Mind: 100 New Ways to See the Natural World

Journalist Mike Higgins curates a selection of mind-expanding maps focusing on the wonders of the natural world. With illustrations by Manuel Bortoletti that include lively infographics, topographical and geographical maps and more, this atlas reveals the answers to questions such as: which migrating birds fly the furthest? And, where could you find the largest gatherings of cockroaches? Fun and thought-provoking. Granta, £20.



Flock Together: Outsiders: Connecting People of Colour to Nature

Sports coach, activist and self-taught birdwatcher, Nadeem Perera aims to inspire inclusive adventures in nature. 'Nature is a universal resource. For too long, people of colour have felt unwelcome and marginalised in spaces that should be for everyone,' writes Perera. This book wants to change that, offering tips, stories and insight into being a mentor for inclusive exploration of the natural world. Octopus Publishing, £16.99.

KIT LIST

COASTEERING

A craggy coastline makes for an intrepid adventure playground. Explore every cave, cove and rock face safely with the help of this protective kit

1 MONTANE POWER STRETCH PRO GRIPPY GLOVES

You'll want to keep your hands and nails protected from cuts and scrapes when gripping onto rocks, while also maintaining flexibility and dexterity. This pair of thin, stretchy and lightweight gloves fits the bill, notable for the enhanced silicone grip on the palm. They're fast to dry and touchscreen compatible, too. £30. montane.com



2 MERRELL MOAB 3

Durability, grip and flexibility are essential qualities in coasteering footwear as climbers will often be navigating steep and slippery surfaces. These hiking shoes will see you through — they're great all-rounders and have enhanced features for use in watersports. £120. merrell.com



3 FINISTERRE TEGO ROBE

Impressively lightweight and packable compared to other bulkier models on the market, the Tego allows plenty of room for privacy while changing, has a high level of warmth in its moisture-wicking fleece inner and has a water-repellent outer to protect against the unpredictable British weather. Made with 100% recycled materials. £125. finisterre.com



4 YETI ROADIE 24 COOL BOX

Energy intensive coastal activities require regular refuelling. The new, hard-shell Yeti Roadie 24 cool box is sturdy and has ample room to store a bumper lunch for four or five people. It's lightweight for its size, and a soft, strong shoulder strap makes it comfortable to transport. £200. uk.yeti.com



5 OLAIAN 4/3MM NEOPRENE SURF 100 WETSUIT

This lightweight, fast-drying wetsuit offers excellent mobility and skin protection for coasteers and is one of the best value options around — perfect for beginners or shorter expeditions. Tip: to keep your wetsuit from snagging, wear with an old pair of shorts over the top. £89.99. decaathlon.co.uk



6 PALM AP4000 HELMET

Made for adventurous watersports, this half-cut helmet is crafted from high impact polypropylene and features a water-resistant foam lining as well as vents for fast water drainage. The soft chin strap and inner cradle are comfortable and easy to adjust while you're on the move, and it's lightweight, too. £40. palmequipmenteurope.com



7 SALTY KIT WATERPROOF PHONE CASE

Whether you spot a curious seal or a fossil embedded in a cliff face, you'll want to capture it quickly, safely and easily. Instead of taking a clunky underwater camera, take an ultra-waterproof IPX8-rated phone case such as this Cornwall-crafted slip, which can easily be stowed away in the pocket of your buoyancy aid. £10. saltykit.com



8 TRIBORD BUOYANCY AID 500 BA 50N

Stay afloat and conserve energy when in the water with a buoyancy aid, essential kit for any safe coasteering trip. This model has a snug ergonomic fit and comes with a wide front pocket — great for packing away small essentials. £39.99. decaathlon.co.uk



NORA WALLAYA

ALTITUDE:
2453m
ENJOYMENT:
100%



Sunweb

**Your
ski holiday
made perfect**

Lift pass always
included

[Sunweb.co.uk](https://www.sunweb.co.uk)



c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

**100% ELECTRIC.
ZERO EMISSIONS.**



WIN

A LUXURY STAY FOR TWO IN LONDON

National Geographic Traveller (UK) has teamed up with The Landmark London to offer a five-star stay in the heart of the capital

THE DESTINATION

With its grand facades and long, storied past, this is one of the capital's most iconic hotels, offering an oasis of elegance amid the buzz of central London since 1899. As well as the spa and 300 luxurious rooms, one of the highlights is dining in the Winter Garden Restaurant, where art deco surrounds and towering palms capture the glamour of a bygone age. The hotel is perfectly placed for exploring the very best of the capital, too, with Regent's Park, Wigmore Hall and the boutiques of Marylebone High Street just a short walk away.

THE PRIZE

Courtesy of The Landmark London, the winner and a guest will enjoy an overnight stay in a Marylebone Studio Suite on a B&B basis. During their stay, the winner and guest will be able to enjoy a three-course dinner and drinks, or a classic afternoon tea with Champagne for two in the hotel's Winter Garden Restaurant. They will also be able to visit the spa for a complimentary 60-minute treatment each, followed by a dip in the 15-metre pool. Blackout dates apply. landmarklondon.co.uk



From top: The Winter Garden at The Landmark London; the hotel's classic afternoon tea experience

TO ENTER

Answer the following question online at nationalgeographic.co.uk/competitions

HOW LONG IS THE POOL AT THE LANDMARK, LONDON?

Competition closes 30 November 2022. The winner must be a resident of the UK and aged 18 or over. Full T&Cs at nationalgeographic.co.uk/competitions

The
Landmark
LONDON

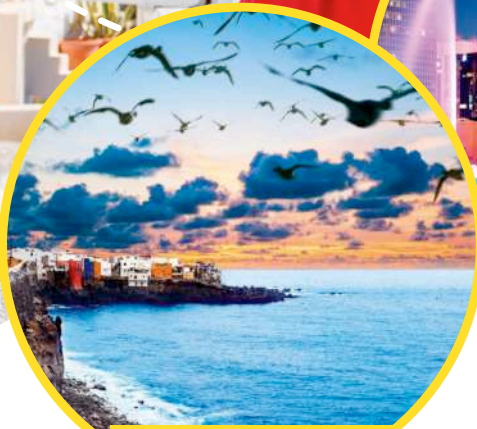
USA



ASIA



EUROPE



PACKAGES INCLUDE

- ✓ 7-12 cruise sailing
- ✓ Pre or Post hotel stay
- ✓ Private port to hotel transfers
- ✓ Exclusive travel savings online
- ✓ 10% off shore excursions
- ✓ 10% off travel insurance
- ✓ Worldwide destinations

FROM **Book Now**
£799
Per Person

SCAN TO SEE OFFERS



OR VISIT WWW.TRAVELMEGASTORE.UK/NCL

NOTES FROM AN AUTHOR

DARTMOOR

Sophie Pavelle journeys around Britain in search of species threatened by climate change and finds magic in Dartmoor's fierceness and fragility

Dartmoor has always been my landscape of firsts. Of the UK's 15 national parks, it was my debut moorland at four years old, freshly landed from the humidity of Augusta, Georgia in the US, where my brother and I were born. Our parents, both naval officers at the time, were keen for this chapter on British soil to take a more outdoors approach. The types of adventures we'd assumed were fiction were suddenly possible on our doorstep. Living just nine miles from the edge of the national park — and even closer to Devon's famous South West Coast Path — altered our understanding of what it meant to 'explore'. We had footpaths to find, hills to climb, hidden corners to bookmark. We'd arrive home, breathless and chapped; we were invigorated by this blend of habitats and found a new breed of exhaustion.

Southern Britain's largest area of open upland, Dartmoor's 370 square miles are generously peppered with more than 160 granite rocky outcrops, known as tors. A love of hiking here came as naturally as adolescence. We could be on Dartmoor for an entire day without seeing another soul. As an introvert with a penchant for adventure, this continues to hold great appeal.

Dartmoor was the first place I wild camped; it's one of the few places in the UK to allow it under the Countryside Code. During the British Army's infamous Ten Tors physical challenge for under 20s, my school friends and I discovered, for the first time, that 17-year-olds had tangible limits that could be stretched in new directions, rounding corners and finding flow in a river of physical and mental muscle. Soon after, Dartmoor staged the scene of my first meeting with a boy who loved and hated the same things as me. And I like to imagine it as the glue that's held us together for over a decade. These moors are the first place I run when life tackles me to the ground. I've yelled answerless questions into howling winds and at vast horizons, finding parts of myself that would have remained hidden. How different life would be, were it not for this mysterious, windswept corner of Britain. Which conversations unspoken? What relationships undiscovered?

All landscapes answer to time. And yet Dartmoor has finessed the shape-shift: not just over the past 280 million years, but in the minutes that come and go, as contrasting as fingerprints. Like many people, I accept



change reluctantly, and yet I relish Dartmoor's multiplicity of conditions: the abruptness of a hailstorm, the glare of winter sun, fog as thick as night. It's the only scenario where I'm at peace with the fact that I both can and can't read the next move.

Dartmoor nourishes more than 2.4 million other people who visit the national park every year. Its rushing waterfalls, ancient woodlands, wild ponies and peculiar wildlife could quickly be taken for granted, were it not for its interwoven tapestry of globally renowned Bronze Age archaeology, folklore, farming, landscape restoration and military activity. These vistas are anything but bare.

There was no question that Dartmoor would conclude my debut book, *Forget Me Not: Finding the Forgotten Species of Climate-Change Britain*. After all, it's only right to finish where it all started. Nonetheless, after 22 years of walking its ways, I should have known that Dartmoor continues to gift the unexpected. May 2021: another first. A springtime bike ride to a disused tin mine in North Bovey became the backdrop of my encounter with Britain's endangered bilberry bumblebee. Like every one of the 10 species I chose in *Forget Me Not*, I was unaware of what was surviving right under my nose.

An upland invertebrate whose existence has surrendered to land-use changes, urbanisation, pollution and habitat loss, this striking bumblebee has declined dramatically in numbers since the 1990s. Its life on Dartmoor reveals an ugly truth: rising temperatures are making life for pollinators and other key species increasingly turbulent. Seeing this bee grip so tightly onto Dartmoor was a reminder that no future is guaranteed in the face of climate change. As with people, fragility persists, no matter how rugged the exterior.

Still, like the bilberry bee, we forge on. During autumn, Dartmoor calls me the loudest with an affirmation of fresher air, quieter trails, colours I can't paint and rivers urgent with life. For those of us lucky enough to spend time 'on the moors', I needn't elaborate. This landscape's truth is both known and unknown. Dartmoor's magic is its ambiguity.

“I relish Dartmoor's multiplicity of conditions: the abruptness of a hailstorm, the glare of winter sun, fog as thick (and as quick) as night. It's the only scenario where I'm at peace with the fact that I both can and can't read the next move

Sophie Pavelle is the author of *Forget Me Not: Finding the Forgotten Species of Climate-Change Britain*, published by Bloomsbury Wildlife, £16.99.

[@sophiepavs](https://twitter.com/sophiepavs)

MEET THE ADVENTURER

Philip Henderson

THE EXPEDITION LEADER TALKS ABOUT A RECENT TRIP THAT NEARLY DOUBLED THE NUMBER OF BLACK CLIMBERS TO HAVE SUMMITED EVEREST



When did you become inspired by the outdoors?

Growing up, my family didn't go camping and neither did my friends. It wasn't something that happened in my community. I loved playing baseball and basketball, and I met people that way who introduced me to climbing and skiing. I jumped straight in — nobody explained anything to me, so I had to seek out people within the community who were willing to let me in. It wasn't until I was 27 that I got a summer job guiding whitewater [rafting]. From there, I jumped at the chance to be a ski instructor over the winter. I just said I wanted to help, and here I am.

What was the process of getting the Full Circle Everest team together?

The team grew naturally, from just myself to a team of 11. For example, I met one guy through an ice-climbing trip and a woman through word of mouth. They're all experienced individuals in the outdoors and mountaineering space; we just needed to meet each other to join forces. We didn't train together regularly because we were spread all over the world, but we had two trips together: one to Mount Rainier [Washington state] in July 2021, and then to Nepal in January 2022. We had twice-weekly Zoom calls for over a year.

The timing of the expedition was important and responsible for its success. We started this process back in 2019, before the pandemic and before George Floyd was murdered. There has been a lot going on around the world, coming out of a pandemic, and people are paying attention

to social justice. Everest is an icon, so people always pay attention to it. The message was amplified by many people who, 10 years ago, we wouldn't have been able to connect with. We have social media to thank for that.

There must be a lot of pressure on you as the team's leader. What qualities are required?

A leader has to be unselfish. A leader has to be willing to take a step back, but know when to step forward. You have to be unafraid of conflict, capable of reading people and willing to put in more time than everyone else — you need to be two or three steps ahead of your team. There are so many hats that you wear when it comes to outdoor leadership, be it guiding people or evaluating risk.

We spent 50 days together on the mountain. You don't get to take time out. That's intense. So you need to practice self-care and taking care of others' wellbeing, too.

What do you hope this achievement communicates to the Black community?

You should have no barriers in life. Sure, there are financial constraints, but don't let society tell you that you can't do something because of who you are. You can find a way.

The benefit of getting closer to nature isn't just physical — it offers emotional healing. A lot of people in the Black and Brown community have been pulled away from nature, into the cities and so on, and they don't realise how important that connection is until they get there. We want to encourage them to feel the power of that healing.

How important is representation in the outdoors scene?

Hugely. If you don't see people who look like you doing something, the majority of us won't do it. We're now seeing the outcome of increased representation. There are many groups doing great things in the US — Outdoor Afro, Latino Outdoors, Brown Girls Climb and more. There's a great climbing gym called Memphis Rox, which has one of the strongest climbing communities in the US. It's right there in the city and invites kids in, whether they can pay or not.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

I can honestly say that I've been solo throughout my life and I've had to figure things out on my own. There weren't many people looking out for me. That's part of the appeal of Full Circle Everest for me — I can be in a position where I can give advice to people who want to climb mountains.

INTERVIEW: NORA WALLAYA

Philip Henderson became one of the few African-Americans to summit Denali in Alaska in 2013, led an all African-American ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro in 2018 and was the recipient of the Outdoor Afro Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020.

👉 fullcircleeverest.com

📍 [@phil_henderson](https://www.instagram.com/phil_henderson)

READ THE FULL INTERVIEW ONLINE AT [NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC. CO.UK/TRAVEL](https://www.nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel)

STORIES WORTH

collecting



**WORLD
OF
HYATT™**

From historic gems to modern marvels, the hotels in The Unbound Collection by Hyatt are defined by their rich stories. Uncover their tales when you stay at these extraordinary hotels in Europe.

HÔTEL DU LOUVRE / HÔTEL DU PALAIS BIARRITZ / HÔTEL MARTINEZ
MAGMA RESORT SANTORINI / PÁRISI UDVAR HOTEL BUDAPEST
THE WELLEM / IL TORNABUONI HOTEL / HOTEL SOFIA BARCELONA
HÔTEL REISEN / GREAT SCOTLAND YARD HOTEL / LA ZAMBRA

THEUNBOUNDCOLLECTIONBYHYATT.COM



WHAT'S ONLINE

AN INSIDE GUIDE TO COCKNEY LONDON

London's cockney scene has a long history and an interesting future, thanks to a new museum — and proud custodians looking to safeguard its reputation. Words: Zoey Goto

Cockney culture has long been a part of London's storied landscape, with its own pitter-patter dialect of rhyming slang, a cuisine of eels, pie and liquor, and even an alternative royal family in the very dapper pearly kings and queens. And while it's undeniable that the gentrification of London has seen markers of cockney communities evaporate or migrate, there are still resilient pockets to discover.

With the unveiling of a new museum dedicated to cockney traditions, enterprising pie and mash shops jumping on the home delivery bandwagon, plus a pub singalong introducing music hall songs to a new generation, various aspects of cockney culture are still alive and kicking in and around the capital.

"Step right up to see the cockney crown jewels!" declares the pearly king of Peckham, George Major, standing before his prized collection of 30 pearly costumes. Housed in a dinky outhouse in Stoneleigh, about half an hour by train from central London, his recently opened Cockney Museum is on a mission to preserve his rich cockney heritage.

Exhibits include a replica of the bustling Victorian street markets that birthed cockney culture, alongside a dazzling collection of outfits embellished with mother of pearl buttons. The jewel in this quirky museum's crown is a 170-year-old suit worn by the original pearly king himself, Henry Croft, a

street cleaner with a flair for street theatre. George is also on hand to take visitors on a walk through his cockney life story in Lambeth, while a canary-yellow three-wheeler van at the front of the museum is a cheeky nod to the rumour that George inspired Del Boy's character in the TV series *Only Fools and Horses*. And there's even a rhyming slang cheat-sheet at the onsite cafe, if ordering a cup of Rosie Lee (tea) gets confusing.

Back in the ancient City of London, head to Cheapside, where you'll find St Mary-le-Bow church. Folklore has it that to qualify as a true cockney, one must be 'born within the sound of the Bow Bells', a reference to this historic church. [READ MORE ONLINE](#)

TOP STORIES

Here's what you've been enjoying on the website this month



USA

On the trail of true barbecue
North Carolina's pitmasters have two distinct styles of cooking, and sauce is a matter of hot debate



EUROPE

Five of the spookiest ghost tours
From a guided Dracula-themed experience to overnight stays in haunted castles



REPORT

How to travel sustainably
Lower your footprint while ensuring destinations see long-term benefits from tourism

HOW TO VISIT THE UK'S BEACHES RESPONSIBLY

THERE'S PLENTY YOU CAN DO TO HELP THE COASTLINE RECOVER AFTER A SUMMER OF HIGH VISITOR NUMBERS. WORDS: TAMSIN WRESSELL

There are countless beach clean-ups run by conservation charities and community groups throughout the UK. Each focuses on socialising, connecting with nature and making a real difference to the local environment. Research the area you're in to see if there's a clean-up or programme in place to get involved with.

Pier2Pier is a supergroup of women that's established a recurring beach clean in Brighton, and its members collaborate to help save the city's beaches and oceans from harmful waste. Each month, up to 200 people join a silent disco beach clean on a Saturday morning, complete with fancy dress. More widespread is the Marine Conservation Society, which lists cleans around the country and offers support to help you set up your own.

Another way to lower your footprint on our shores is to opt for low-impact watersports. Water-skiing and jet-skiing, for example, rely on fuel-powered engines that lead to emissions, and also contain oil, which can lead to leaks. Instead, think about switching to canoeing, kayaking, standup paddleboarding or surfing.

Materials are an important consideration, too. If you're taking up a surfing, avoid breakable polystyrene boards that can cause plastic pollution in the sea. This year, Dick Pearce Bellyboards teamed up with the charity Surfers Against Sewage to provide free wooden surf hire in 30 locations around the UK to encourage more sustainable seaside activities.

brightonpier2pier.com mcsuk.org sas.org.uk

READ MORE ONLINE



BEYOND THE TRAVEL SECTION



I SPACE I

The most iconic images in space history have been 'remastered'.

A new book reveals what happened when a British imaging specialist turned his hand to humanity's ultimate adventure.

I ANIMALS I

Inside the controversial plan to reintroduce cheetahs to India

Imported African cheetahs are the first to roam India in decades, but can the big cats survive without ongoing human intervention? Critics of the project have their doubts.

I SCIENCE I

Can you really tell if someone is lying? Here's what the experts say

No growing noses – but physical signs of untruths aren't unheard of. Here's what those who specialise in detecting dishonesty look for.

GO ONLINE VISIT NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK/TRAVEL FOR NEW TRAVEL FEATURES DAILY

IMAGES: CHRIS SCHWAGGA; BRASSERIE DE LA SENNE; GETTY; ALAMY; JOHN DAVIDSON; NASA/ANDY SAUNDERS



EUROPE

Seven of the best beer cities

From beautiful Bamberg to cool Copenhagen, these cities are home to strong brewing traditions



THE PIONEER

Meet the chef championing Rwanda's diverse cuisine

Dieuveil Malonga aims to put African fine dining on the culinary map



UK

Which destinations inspired these gothic literature greats?

Soak up Halloween season with these haunting literary locales

SEARCH FOR NATGEO TRAVEL UK

- FACEBOOK
- INSTAGRAM
- TWITTER



WEEKENDER

UTRECHT

This year, as the bike-friendly Dutch city celebrates its 900th anniversary in style, explore its canal-side bars, farm-to-table restaurants and historical sites, some dating back to the Roman Empire. Words: Angela Locatelli

Utrecht is a city comfortable in its own skin. Despite celebrating its 900th anniversary as a city this year, the fourth-biggest Dutch centre hasn't turned its back on its small-town ways, rooted in its past as a Roman outpost. Daily activities still revolve around the medieval centre, where bikes rattle on cobblestones and the gentle flow of ancient canals sets the rhythm for an unhurried pace of life.

The city has been hard at work in the lead up to its birthday, and there's much to celebrate. In 2020, it completed the high-profile restoration of a major canal — a project almost two decades

in the making. Last year, two sites in the wider Utrecht province were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. And in June, the city-centre ruins of the imperial palace, which burnt down in the 13th century, were made accessible to the public for the first time in decades.

But it's not all about the past. One of the country's major university cities, Utrecht buzzes with a youthful spirit thanks to its healthy student population. And while a visit here is likely to start at a cultural landmark, it could end with an art-themed treasure hunt or jazz show in a futuristic concert hall.



TOP THREE Historical attractions

LOFEN PALACE

The imperial palace, where Utrecht was formally granted city status, burnt down in 1253. To mark the 900th anniversary of the city's founding, a new archaeological site lets visitors explore its ruins for the first time in decades. After the tour – right behind the Domplein – spend time ducking in and out of the nearby cafes and shops: some of the palace's ancient pillars and walls are shared by these buildings. paleislofen.nl

CASTELLUM HOGE WOERD

A new UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Lower German Limes were a system of fortresses and roads that ran through Utrecht for almost four centuries, marking the northern frontier of the Roman Empire. Castellum Hoge Woerd is a reconstruction of one such fort and serves as a cultural centre with an archaeological museum, theatre and city farm. castellumhogewoerd.nl

MUSEUM

CATHARIJNECONVENT

The history of Utrecht is intertwined with that of Christianity. Housed in a former convent, Museum Catharijneconvent traces this story through one of the country's finest permanent collections of religious art and artefacts, as well as temporary exhibits exploring the role of religion in Dutch society. catharijneconvent.nl

DAY ONE MARKETS & MEDIEVAL GEMS

Morning

Be up before the city wakes to have the Oudegracht to yourself. The oldest of Utrecht's two inner-city canals is its main social artery, but in the morning you can cycle along the waterside streets uninterrupted, admiring the gabled houses and pausing to fuel up at retro coffee shop Cafca. Afterwards, peruse some of the Saturday markets. The country's largest and oldest gathering of fabric vendors, Lapjesmarkt has been a weekly fixture for over 400 years. Only a few streets away, you'll find more colour at the Flower Market on Janskerkhof Square. Stop for lunch at nearby Ruby Rose, a restaurant set in a former flower shop, or try Streetfood Club, next door, which serves bites from around the world. rubyrose-utrecht.nl

Afternoon

Walk off lunch on your way to Domplein, a city square at the heart of the city's medieval centre. To find it, look up and head for the Domtoren: at 368ft, the country's highest church tower has served as an urban compass for almost 700 years. Make your way up its 495 steps for sprawling views all the way to Amsterdam, if the sky is clear. Then, descend underground for DOMunder, an immersive archaeological site that takes you through Domplein's tumultuous 2,000-year history. The other must-see in this square is gothic St Martin's Cathedral, which used to be joined to the Domtoren until a storm destroyed its nave in 1674 – don't leave without taking a stroll around its 15th-century courtyard. domtoren.nl domunder.nl

Evening

While it's only a 15-minute bike ride from the centre, getting to Stadsjochies feels like an escape to the countryside. When this urban farm opened a restaurant in 2021, it designed a menu where the cress, edible flowers and herbs grown on site take centre stage. Arrive for 6pm for the full evening experience: a tour of the grounds, from the permafrost plot to the vertical garden, followed by a multi-course dinner in the greenhouse. If you're not ready to call it a night, head back to the city centre to catch a performance at TivoliVredenburg. Built around the 1970s Symphony Hall, this huge arts venue has five halls, each designed for a different music genre, and looks striking when lit up after dark. stadsjochies.nl tivolivredenburg.nl

From left: The Oudegracht canal; a greenhouse at Stadsjochies, an urban farm with a restaurant



STANLEY[®]
S I N C E 1 9 1 3



Stanley products are Built for Life and have been since 1913. Our food and beverage gear has become an essential part of work days, legendary road trips and outdoor excursions. With each passing year we continue to push ourselves to bring timeless, yet modern, solutions to today's adventures.



**SCAN TO FIND THE PERFECT STANLEY
FOR YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE.**

Use code 'TRAVELFREE1' for free shipping. | uk.stanley1913.com
Code expires 31-12-2022. Ts&Cs apply.

c0376237-ace6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

TOP FIVE Canal-side spots

WATERSIDE TERRACE

Canal-side Roost aan de Singel restaurant and bar has one of the largest terraces in the city, as well as a heated patio for colder weather. Feeling peckish? Order a portion of *bitterballen* – small meatballs best enjoyed dipped in mustard.

roostaandesingel.nl

GREEN SPACES

Once the site of medieval city walls, the Stadsbuitengracht canal is now hugged by a series of gardens. Zocherpark, a green corridor that borders the waterway for three miles, is a highlight. Meanwhile, Park Lepelenburg, in the shadow of the city's Sonnenborgh Observatory, is a great spot to relax.

VINTAGE FASHION

Utrecht is a retro shopping hotspot, and the area around the canals is a particularly good place for scouring secondhand gems. Episode is well stocked with '90s pieces, with an upper- and lower-ground level on the Oudegracht, while Secondsas is housed in a wharf cellar. episode.eu secondsas.nl

UNUSUAL SIGHTS

On a walk around the Stadsbuitengracht, look out for a UFO balancing on the Dutch Railways headquarters, or a giant teapot on the Hoog Catharijne shopping centre. Pieces left behind from past open-air exhibitions, they're proof the city doesn't take itself too seriously.

NIGHT TIPPLES

Catering to students, nightlife in Utrecht tends to be an informal affair. 't Oude Pothuys is the place to go for live music, having given a stage to local artists for five decades. Elsewhere, Rum Club serves tropical-themed cocktails in a colourful bar space. pothuys.nl rum-club.nl

DAY TWO ART & CANALS

Morning

A highlight of Utrecht's art scene is the work of local designer and architect Gerrit Rietveld, a luminary of 20th-century art movement De Stijl (neoplasticism). The world's largest collection of his work is on display at the Centraal Museum in the old town, but a 15-minute bike ride east will take art-lovers to Rietveld Schröder House. The first private home he designed, it remains his magnum opus – an elemental vision of straight lines, geometric shapes and primary colours, where space is optimised by visual illusions and sliding walls. After the tour, cycle on to Griftpark, a green oasis just outside the city centre, and refuel with a Mediterranean-inspired brunch at nearby Karibu cafe.

centraalmuseum.nl karibueat.nl

Afternoon

For all the charm of Utrecht's canal-side promenades, it's below street level that you'll find its defining feature: a system of cellars carved into water-level quays. These spaces now serve as workshops, businesses and restaurants – and are best discovered from the water. From spring to autumn, the canals host a parade of standup paddleboards and kayaks, but to learn more about these storied waterways, opt for a private boat tour with Sloepdelen. After being concreted over in the 70s, the Catherinesingel section of the Stadsbuitengracht canal – which wraps around the city centre – was re-filled with water in 2020. Today, it's possible to cruise along the entire four-mile loop for the first time in four decades.

sloepdelen.nl

Evening

Enjoy small bites at Bunk Hotel Utrecht, a hotel housed inside a deconsecrated church in the medieval centre. The restaurant is modern and its vibe convivial, but reminding guests of the building's previous life is a 19th-century organ, which still entertains diners during special evening concerts. After dinner, search the streets for Utrecht Lumen, a series of light installations in and around the centre. Set up as part of the city's bid to become the 2018 European Capital of Culture, it lived on as a lure for day-trippers. From a glowing halo above the modest St Willibrord's Church to pulsating lights inside Paushuizen palace, it's further proof of the city's knack for reinvention. bunkhotels.com



Repurposed wharfs lining Oudegracht canal



De Haar Castle and rose garden, an hour's cycle from Utrecht

Utrecht is the birthplace of Miffy, the famous, cross-mouthed cartoon rabbit that's become a Netherlands icon. Figurines are on sale in every souvenir shop and there's even a dedicated museum for small children. nijntjemuseum.nl

THREE TO TRY CYCLING TOURS

In 2019, Utrecht opened the world's largest bicycle park, a three-level garage with over 12,500 slots. It's part of one of Europe's best cycling infrastructure — testament to the city's love for two-wheeled adventures

History on a grand scale

It takes around an hour to cycle from Utrecht to De Haar Castle, the largest in the Netherlands and arguably the most extravagant. It was built in the 19th century with all the medieval flair of the mansion it replaced, which burned down in 1482. Today, De Haar is an arresting sight: a blaze of spires, turrets and drawbridges, all reflected in a large moat and surrounded by a 55-acre park. Book a guided tour to be let in on the secrets of its most notable guests; it was once the holiday retreat of the aristocratic Van Zuylen family, and it has also hosted a glamorous roll call of A-listers over the years, from fashion designer Coco Chanel to opera singer Maria Callas and actors Gregory Peck and Roger Moore. kasteeldehaar.nl

Follow the De Stijl trail

Venture beyond the city for more attractions centred on the De Stijl art movement. From Utrecht, follow the 12-mile Mondrian Meets Rietveld cycling trail to Amersfoort, the picturesque heart of the Utrecht province and where painter Piet Mondrian was born in 1872. Created to mark the centennial of De Stijl in 2017, the route is part open-air gallery, part treasure hunt, and is signposted with 10 sculptures by artist Boris Tellegen — all riffing on Mondrian's trademark abstract forms and monochromatic blocks. This year marks the 150th anniversary of his birth — a fitting time to visit The Mondriaan House; set in his childhood home, the museum has a full-scale replica of his Parisian studio plus exhibits delving into his life. mondriaanhuis.nl

Head north

The local tourist office organises private cycling tours of the city, which take in its history, architecture and lesser-known attractions. These itineraries can be tailored to specific interests, but if you don't have special requests, let your guide take you to the northern parts of the city centre. Residential and peaceful, these areas are often overlooked in favour of the livelier south, but can provide a welcome respite from the weekend buzz. Cycle along the Nieuwegracht canal, admire the beautiful houses — among the most expensive in the city — and explore the winding alleys, keeping an eye out for their inner courtyards. One of Utrecht's quaintest sights, these green corners open their gates to the public in the daytime. □

MORE INFO

discover-utrecht.com
visitutrechtregion.com

HOW TO DO IT

The Eurostar from London St Pancras International reaches Rotterdam in around four hours. From there, it takes around 40 minutes to get to Utrecht on a regional train. eurostar.com ns.nl

The Anthony Hotel is housed in a former monastery in Lombok, a lively, multicultural neighbourhood next to the old town, and offers bike rentals. From €125 (£109), room only. theanthony.nl

IF TRAVEL BROADENS THE MIND, THEN THIS IS A MIND-EXPANDING BIKE.

LIGHT, COMFORTABLE, NIMBLE AND RUGGED, WE'VE KITTED OUT THE TRAVEL WITH RACK, GUARDS AND LIGHTS SO THAT YOU CAN FEED YOUR CURIOSITY. LIVE MORE ADVENTUROUSLY, RIDE MORE FREQUENTLY – AND ADD A CUBE TRAVEL TO YOUR LIFE.



 [CUBE-BIKES.CO.UK](https://www.cube-bikes.co.uk)

  [CUBEBIKESUK](https://www.facebook.com/cubebikesuk)



c0376237-aea6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

EAT

SLOVENIA

From Maribor in the east to the chocolate-loving town of Radovljica in the west, a trip across northern Slovenia reveals a bucolic landscape, hearty, traditional dishes and world-class sweet wine

WORDS: JAMES MARCH

“Is there anyone from Sweden here?” asks chef David Vračko, sending a wave of nervous laughter and puzzled looks across the dining room. A few minutes later, he returns carrying a single speaker and places it on a small table in the middle of the room. The thumping piano and chanting vocals of Abba’s ‘Chiquitita’ soon fills the room as silky banana sorbets are dutifully served by waiters, who file in to the beat of the music.

This culinary spectacle is taking place at Vračko’s restaurant, Mak, located on an unassuming, low-lit street corner in Maribor in northeastern Slovenia. We’re three hours into the meal and only now is dessert being served.

Bearded, with long, brown, tied-back hair and a faded blue towel over his shoulder at all times, Vračko cuts something of a dishevelled figure. After spending 10 years learning his trade abroad, he returned to Maribor in 2011 to open Mak, which has since won several awards, including the Michelin plate.

“Don’t be afraid, I’ll explain everything,” he’d said earlier with a grin when I was presented with a fiery chunk of salami

balanced precariously on a skinny, foot-high breadstick. Shortly afterwards, he returned wielding a blowtorch before charring the meat with a satisfying blast.

Vračko’s theatrical and undeniably entertaining take on fine dining is a capricious finale to my 100-mile journey east across Slovenia’s north, a compact yet cinematic landscape of wide plateaus, swaying wheat fields, yawning green valleys and densely forested mountains.

Having gained independence in 1992, this small country of two million people, blanketed by around 60% forest, has established itself as a world leader when it comes to sustainability. It’s also a key destination for outdoor pursuits, with hiking and kayaking popular in the summer, and skiing and snowboarding taking place in the mountains of Triglav National Park in the country’s north during winter. And it’s in Slovenia’s soaring northwest, some 2,130ft up St Jošt hill, that I take in my first vistas of its bucolic landscape.

Run by the Kristan family, Pr’Končovc is a farm and restaurant perched high in the hills

Clockwise from top: The famous heart-shaped road among the vineyards near Maribor; chef David Vračko; the Main Square in Maribor

IMAGES: GETTY; RESTAVRACIJA MAK; SHUTTERSTOCK



See Slovenia up close

Discover Slovenia from a different perspective, at your own pace,
on a self-guided touring holiday by rail.

*“A really great holiday which has a mixture of mountains,
city sightseeing and relaxing by the sea.”*

Ms George, The Best of Slovenia



Platinum ★★★★★
Trusted Service Award
For consistently delivering excellence 2022 feefo

- ✓ insider tips on where to visit and places to eat
- ✓ detailed information on local history and culture
- ✓ notes for self-guided walking tour of Ljubljana
- ✓ tailor the itinerary to suit you
- ✓ range of travel options
- ✓ hand-picked hotels



00376237-ae66-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

Inntravel

The *Slow Holiday* people

inntravel.co.uk/slovenia

01653 617096



Charcuterie and wine at Pr'Končovec

Right: Kloštrska kremšnita, a traditional Slovenian cream cake, served at Repnik

amid a web of dense beech woodlands and snaking trails. It's a humid June afternoon and I'm shown to a large carved wooden table at the lip of a perilous drop, with the nearby town of Kranj unfolding below and a small white train gliding by in the hazy distance. Only the chatter of birds pierces the lingering silence as I'm presented with a brothy veal stew served alongside a bowl of thick buckwheat groats.

"This really is something people here would have been eating, say, 200 years ago," explains local guide Jure Ausec as I gaze out across the landscape. The hearty soup and occasional sweet hits of onion are as evocative as the landscape of unspoiled rural scenery fanning out beneath the farm.

"In fact, my grandma still makes this," he says, smiling. I wonder whether the same is true of the succulent cuts of roe venison I'm served later, followed by a traditional *potica* nut roll stuffed with tangy figs and walnuts.

Pockmarked by small towns and hillside villages, this region has held onto its culture, including its traditional cuisine, despite centuries under the yoke of powerful states to the north, most notably the Habsburgs and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

"Everything tastes better in the mountains," announces Jure as we leave and I can only agree — although the incoming grey clouds and a distant low rumble of thunder give me pause for thought.

It's a short, 30-minute ride to the small medieval town of Radovljica at the foothills of the Julian Alps and a stone's throw from the seductive shores of Lake Bled. Aside from its picturesque location, Radovljica also claims to be 'the sweetest town in the world' — a claim that draws on both its historic tradition of beekeeping and honey production, and its obsession with chocolate.

And nobody epitomises the town's sweet tooth more than Nataša Mikelj. A former director of the local tourist board, Nataša re-evaluated her life during the pandemic and subsequently decided to open a chocolate shop, Radol'ca Chocolate, with her husband Gregor.

"We aren't young anymore, but our motto is 'it's never too late'," she tells me as I browse row after row of swirling pralines and shining liqueurs. It turns out her inspiring story is just as compelling as the treats on show.

"It wasn't an easy decision because we had to quit our jobs and we have children, too," she explains. "And before, I was with the



A TASTE OF Northern Slovenia

PR'KONČOVC

Take in sweeping views from a wooden booth high up in the Jošt hills while enjoying traditional Slovenian fare like hearty *juha* soup and a sweet *potica* nut roll. It's a family-run restaurant, so expect a warm welcome and a humble explanation of each dish (especially for those unfamiliar with Slovenian cuisine). If you're lucky, you'll also be visited by the family's sociable white cat. Tasting menu from €35 (£30). koncovec.si

REPNIK INN

In a picturesque setting near the foothills of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, the rustic Repnik Inn is a great place to end a day of activity in Kamnik. While goulash is the speciality here, don't miss the succulent roast veal shanks served with delicate cheese dumplings. There's a full tasting menu, too, as well as sweet and mellow Slovenian mead. Tasting menus from €60 (£51). gostilna-repnik.si

KIPERTZ CAFÉ

The Kipertz Café at the Mitra Hotel is a Ptuj institution and its 300-year history emanates from the elegant stone interior. Formerly a shop, it was transformed by local coffee roaster Jožef Kipertz who bought the hotel building in 1785. The evocative setting and aromatic coffee make this a great spot in which to enjoy breakfast. If you have time, be sure to return to the hotel's ornate Osterberger wine cellar in the evening for a tasting session. Mains from €5 (£4). hotel-mitra.si



A cobble street in the medieval town of Radovljica

local tourist board, and now the locals see me outside cleaning windows and they think ‘didn’t you used to be a director?’ And I say that if I’d known this life was so good, I’d have made the change much earlier.”

In true Slovenian fashion, I’m presented with a delicate chestnut honey and pollen truffle and it’s just as syrupy-smooth as the town’s *schmaltzy* nickname. Radovljica also hosts an annual chocolate festival, while the decorative 18th-century facade of Radovljica Manor hides a museum dedicated entirely to beekeeping, a practice deeply woven into the Slovenians’ national consciousness.

Northern Slovenia’s sweet tooth is also reflected in its wines and, under stormy skies, I hit the road east towards the Podravska wine region and Ptuj, Slovenia’s oldest recorded city. Explosions of lightning illuminate the charcoal clouds above, while slanting rain patters against the windscreen.

Sitting alongside the broad banks of the Drava River, Ptuj is easily recognisable by its imposing hilltop castle, though it’s underground where you’ll get more of a sense of the region’s produce. The city is home to one of Slovenia’s oldest wine cellars and I get a clear sense of its age as I descend crooked stone steps into a murky darkness filled with lines of tall, intricately carved barrels.

“We have more than 780 years’ experience of trading wine in this region. Our wine was

exported all over Europe in the 1300s,” says Ksenja Arbeiter, tour guide at Ptuj Wine Cellar. White grapes dominate the Podravska region, and down here lie dusty, ageing stacks of Sauvignon Blancs and Rieslings. The samples I’m given slip down easily, expressing floral and fruity notes on the nose with a light body. They’re delicious, though rarely seen on wine lists outside Slovenia.

“Around 80% is sold here and the remaining 20% is exported to the US and China,” explains Ksenja. “China is just getting into wine culture and they like to buy our 20-year-old and 30-year-old vintages. It’s something new and interesting for them.”

Emerging from the cellar, as golden rays of sunlight burst through the dispersing clouds, I ponder that last statement. Slovenia has achieved much during its 30 years of independence, but here in its rugged northern hills, the food remains rich, historic and timeless. Listening to Abba while eating is optional, however. □

HOW TO DO IT

EasyJet flies direct from Gatwick to Ljubljana from £58 return. [easyjet.com](https://www.easyjet.com)

Double rooms at Dom Kulture MuziKafe in Ptuj start from £68. [muzikafe.si](https://www.muzikafe.si)

MORE INFO

[slovenia.info](https://www.slovenia.info)

FOUR FOOD FINDS

1

AJDOVI ŽGANCJI

Buckwheat is a traditional part of Slovenian rural life, and this dense, nutty-tasting porridge made from it is perfect warming winter fare.

2

POTICA

Look out for this type of nut roll, which can be made from a variety of sweet or savoury fillings, including walnut, tarragon, chocolate or leek.

3

HONEY

Beekeeping has long been part of Slovenian culture and honey is widely used as a sweetener in desserts such as *medenjaki* (ginger biscuits) and *potica*.

4

PODRAVJE WHITE WINE

The north-eastern Podravje region produces whites of exceptional quality (and value) – the Sauvignon Blancs and Rieslings are both reliable options.



**Outside
makes
us happy
inside.**



Kathmandu[®]

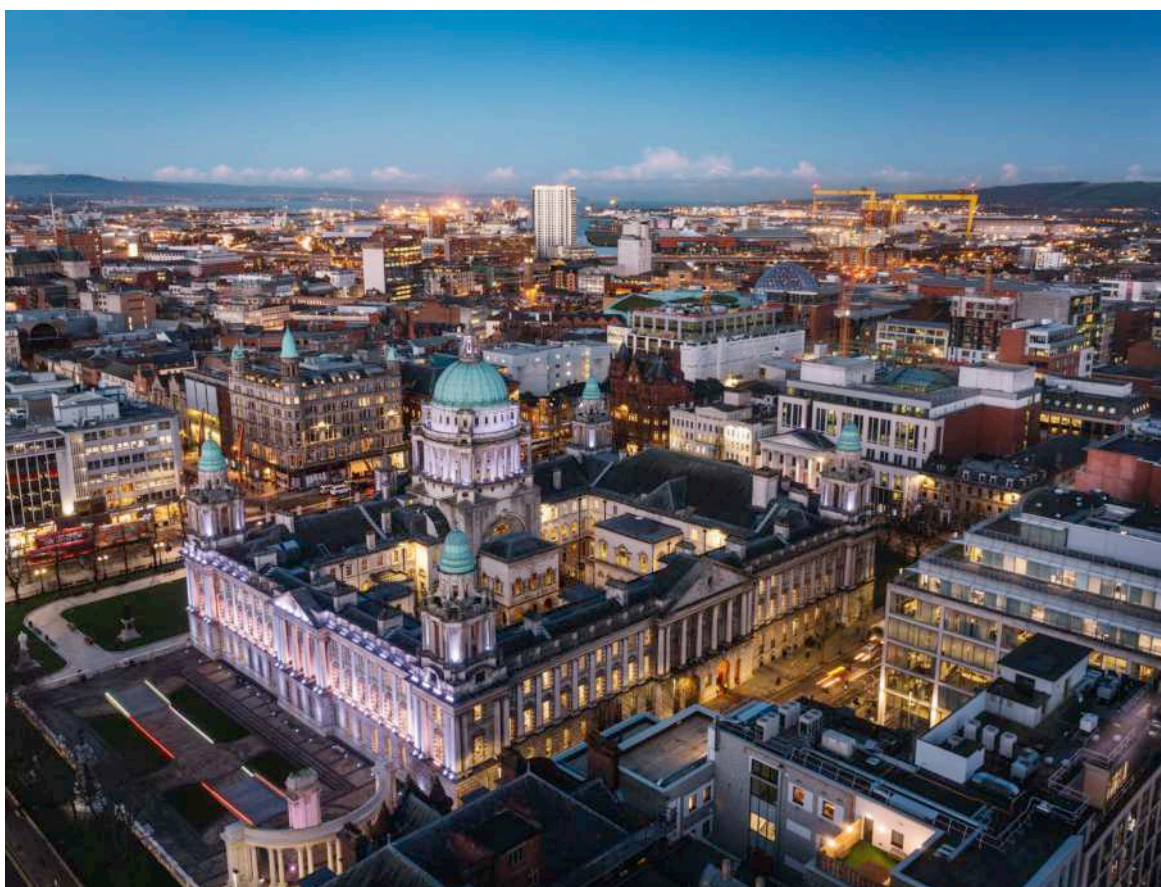
We're out there

www.kathmandu.co.uk

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3cf604

SLEEP

BELFAST



Gone are the days when Belfast was a place to mull over political murals before beating a swift retreat to the fabled sights of the Antrim Coast. Northern Ireland's capital is now a draw in itself thanks to a slow-but-sure blossoming of locally grown restaurants, innovative bars and downright fun places to sleep after indulging. Many hotels are dining destinations in their own right, but if yours is light on services — as is the concept at many of the city's newer high-design, low budget offerings — in this lively student-populated city, you'll be toddling distance from a comfy coffee spot or restaurant where local ingredients drive inventive menus.

WORDS: SARAH BARRELL

IMAGES: HASTINGS HOTELS; CHRISTOPHER HEANEY; JACK HARDY.
RATES QUOTED ARE FOR STANDARD DOUBLES. B&B, UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED



Best for country living

£££ CULLODEN ESTATE & SPA

This 92-room landmark in the Holywood hills grew out of a Baronial-style 19th-century bishop's palace. The setting, just 10 minutes' drive from the city, remains palatial: contemporary sculptures from Ireland's Gormleys art dealers punctuate 12-acre gardens sloping towards Belfast Lough and the estate's own pub; oil paintings, tapestries and chandeliers define interior decor. A hotel since the 1960s, rolling renovations continue to update, adding wings, enlarging guest rooms (all with King Coil Cloud beds), and revamping the sizeable spa and modest pool. The original creaky-floor building around reception is most atmospheric, while newer waterfront suites offer VIP lough views. The country estate setting is Culloden's main draw, though, plus top-notch tasting menus loaded with local produce served in its opulent dining room.

ROOMS: From £200.

cullodenestateandspa.com





Best for panoramic views

££ GRAND CENTRAL

A £30m makeover conjured this 300-room five-star out of an office block, towering 23 storeys over central Belfast. Opened in 2018, it stands head and shoulders above anything else in County Antrim, picture windows framing views out to sea and over the border to Ireland's Mourne Mountains. The guest rooms, restaurants and lobby remain business-like, albeit in a plush palate of muted browns, creams and golds, with luxe trimmings such as ESPA bath products. But it's the view you're here for, seen from the top-floor Observatory, which serves cocktails and afternoon tea, including sandwiches made with Irish farm and fishing fare, plus teas blended by venerable Belfast purveyor, Thompson's.

ROOMS: From £130.

grandcentralhotelbelfast.com

Best for gilded glamour

£££ THE MERCHANT HOTEL

A 2006 remodelling of Belfast's 19th-century Ulster Bank, this 62-room Italianate sandstone confection crowning the Cathedral quarter remains the city's most stylish place to stay. Rooms in the art deco-inspired wing glow with roll-top tubs in baby blue-accented bathrooms, and light bulb-framed dressers hide inside wardrobes. Four-poster beds and damask silk-panelled walls define the original Victorian wing, whose heady opulence is topped by the Great Room, the domed central banking hall that's a Belfast highlight for afternoon tea, tasting menus and cocktails. There's private dining in the bank's underground vault and a spa adding to the subterranean treasures, while above ground, The Cloth Ear offers the Irish pub experience and jazz sessions at Bert's Jazz Bar conjure Manhattan-style magic.

ROOMS: From £200. themerchanthotel.com

Best for water babies

£££ GALGORM RESORT

This classic-meets-modern country house retreat offers as much fun as you can have with your bathing clothes on, with an indoor-outdoor thermal spa surrounded by 163 acres of gardens. Bordered by the River Maine, outside Ballymena, this 125-room rural idyll feels more remote from Belfast than half an hour's drive. Gnarly trees and fragrant gardens back hot tubs and heated loungers where you can snooze to the sound of a tumbling waterfall. Inside, there are more pools, a snow cave and climate rooms, along with a skin clinic and fitness room. Check into classic Victorian manor house rooms, estate cottages or luxe shepherd's huts, and indulge in the cocktail bar, McKendry's whiskey lounge and a choice of four restaurants, including an upscale grill and a sophisticated Italian.

ROOMS: From £215. galgorm.com



A barman garnishes a cocktail in the Observatory at Grand Central

Clockwise from bottom left: The Palm House at the Galgorm Resort; Bert's Jazz Bar at The Merchant Hotel; The Grand Café at Grand Central

Full on Belfast



Commercial Court



Glass of Thrones & Titanic Belfast



EDO Restaurant

Ready for a city break with a difference? Plan your full on Belfast adventure.

Uncover Titanic attractions, museums and galleries or enjoy culinary delights at artisan markets and award-winning restaurants. Experience fun-filled days of music, culture and arts. We're ready. Are you?



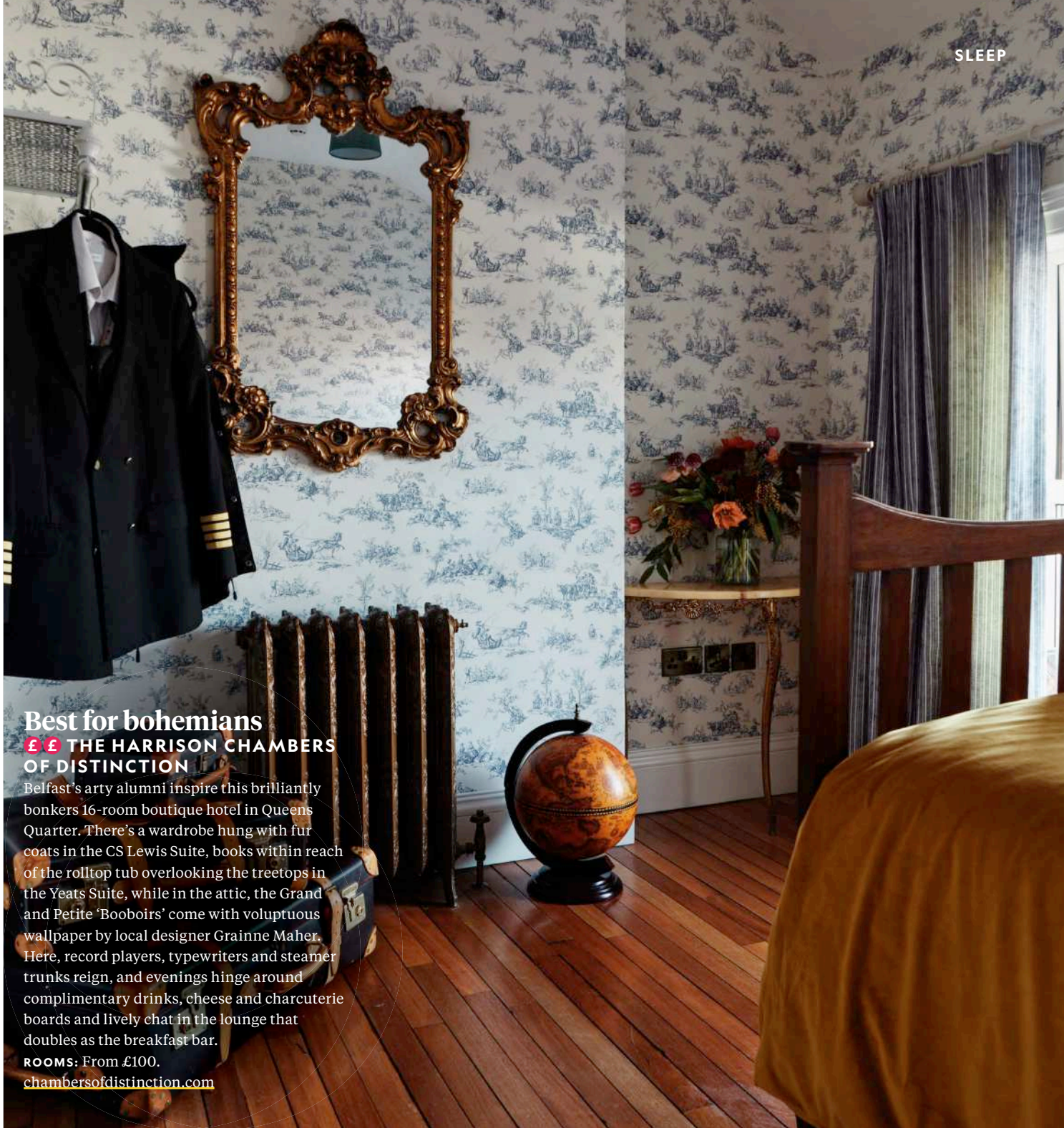
CS Lewis Square



Find inspiration for your next adventure at

[visitBelfast.com](https://www.visitBelfast.com)

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



Best for bohemians

£ £ THE HARRISON CHAMBERS OF DISTINCTION

Belfast's arty alumni inspire this brilliantly bonkers 16-room boutique hotel in Queens Quarter. There's a wardrobe hung with fur coats in the CS Lewis Suite, books within reach of the rolltop tub overlooking the treetops in the Yeats Suite, while in the attic, the Grand and Petite 'Booboors' come with voluptuous wallpaper by local designer Grainne Maher. Here, record players, typewriters and steamer trunks reign, and evenings hinge around complimentary drinks, cheese and charcuterie boards and lively chat in the lounge that doubles as the breakfast bar.

ROOMS: From £100.

chambersofdistinction.com

Best for a bargain

£ THE WARREN

This tastefully converted Victorian end-terrace is the newest addition to Queens Quarter's growing hotel scene. There's no restaurant, reception or staff on site (a code is supplied for check-in) but, set just a few blocks from the district's titular university, you'll find plenty of places to wine, dine and party nearby, and the sizeable ground-floor kitchen with basic breakfast supplies (included in the room rate) adds home comforts. High ceilings, wooden floors, partially exposed brick walls and gilded mirrors raise this budget offering to something more boutique, and while the 10 guest rooms vary in size, all are en suite. The Maid's Suite has a kitchenette and living room.

ROOMS: From £49. thewarrenbelfast.co.uk

Best for simple chic

£ THE FLINT

Original 1920s parquet floors, dark-hued industrial decor and sleek kitchenettes makes this minimalist 55-room offering far fancier than room rates might suggest. Set in the residential quarters of the former Presbyterian War Memorial building, this seven-storey hotel feels akin to a serviced apartment; there's no restaurant, room service or other trimmings, but with fast wi-fi and a central Linen Quarter location, you'll want for nothing. There are plans for a rooftop bar but in the meantime, you can drink and dine in distinctive Flint style at new sister hotel 1852 in the Botanic district and its annex Town Square Café.

ROOMS: From £65, room only. theflintbelfast.com

Best for local vibes

£ BULLITT

After a refurb following a rooftop fire in March 2022, Bullitt is back. The concept remains the same: a hip, fun hangout hotel where the lifts are voiced by local comedian Joe Lindsay, and the indoor-outdoor ground floor space multitasks as a breakfast meeting spot, a leafy cafe or DJ-accompanied hangout. Taylor & Clay offers Irish seafood, meat and veggie grills and house-brewed beer, while Rattlebag speakeasy is the annex for out-there cocktails. The rooftop restaurant and outdoor bar is slated to open this November. The 74 industrial chic rooms range from Dinky (sleeping two) to Roomy (sleeping six), come with minibars stocked from the foyer merch shop.

ROOMS: From £79, room only. bullitthotel.com



Drawing Office Two bar, Titanic Hotel

Below from top: Salmon and potatoes at Europa; junior suite at Europa

Best for maritime heritage

££ TITANIC HOTEL

Booting Belfast's hotel scene into the international spotlight upon its launch in 2017, Titanic Hotel sits dockside next to the sail-like structure of its sister museum. Set in the 19th-century redbrick headquarters of Harland & Wolff, its 117 rooms have an industrial aesthetic, tempered by decorative architectural line drawings of historic ships, while the public areas shine with ocean liner elegance. The building's original entrance is home to the telephone exchange where *Titanic's* first distress call came in, while the old offices of the ship's designer are now a meeting space.

ROOMS: From £119, room only.

titanichotelbelfast.com



Best for history buffs

££ EUROPA

In its 52-year history, the Europa has seen a lot. As the 'most bombed hotel in Europe' at the height of the Troubles, it's hosted eminent correspondents and countless heads of state since. Hastings Hotels took over in 1992 and subsequent refurbishments have aimed to keep this embattled 272-room grande dame up to date, and while an excellent exhibition in the foyer details the hotel's high-stakes past, this is otherwise a straightforward, centrally located four-star hotel catering to businesspeople and tourists alike with friendly service and compact but decent-value rooms. The Causerie bistro is somewhere between retro and dated, but Saturday jazz sessions in the lobby bar are a 27-year-old institution.

ROOMS: From £110. europahotelbelfast.com





Extra
10% off
with code
TRAVELS10

From the once-in-a-lifetime, to the last-minute “let’s go”

Create your best travel stories
with a photo book from £15.99

PH*TOBOX

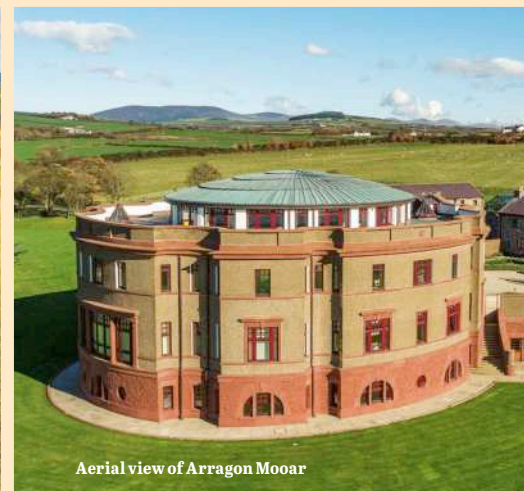
LET'S GO MAKE STORIES®



c0376237_aee6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604
This exclusive offer entitles you to an extra 10% off your order and can only be used once per order. Discount does not apply to Delivery Charges and Gift Vouchers. Any monetary credits will be applied after promotional discounts. All standard terms & conditions apply. Code expires at 11.59pm on 02/11/22



5,000 year -old stone circle and views on Arragon Mooar Estate



Aerial view of Arragon Mooar

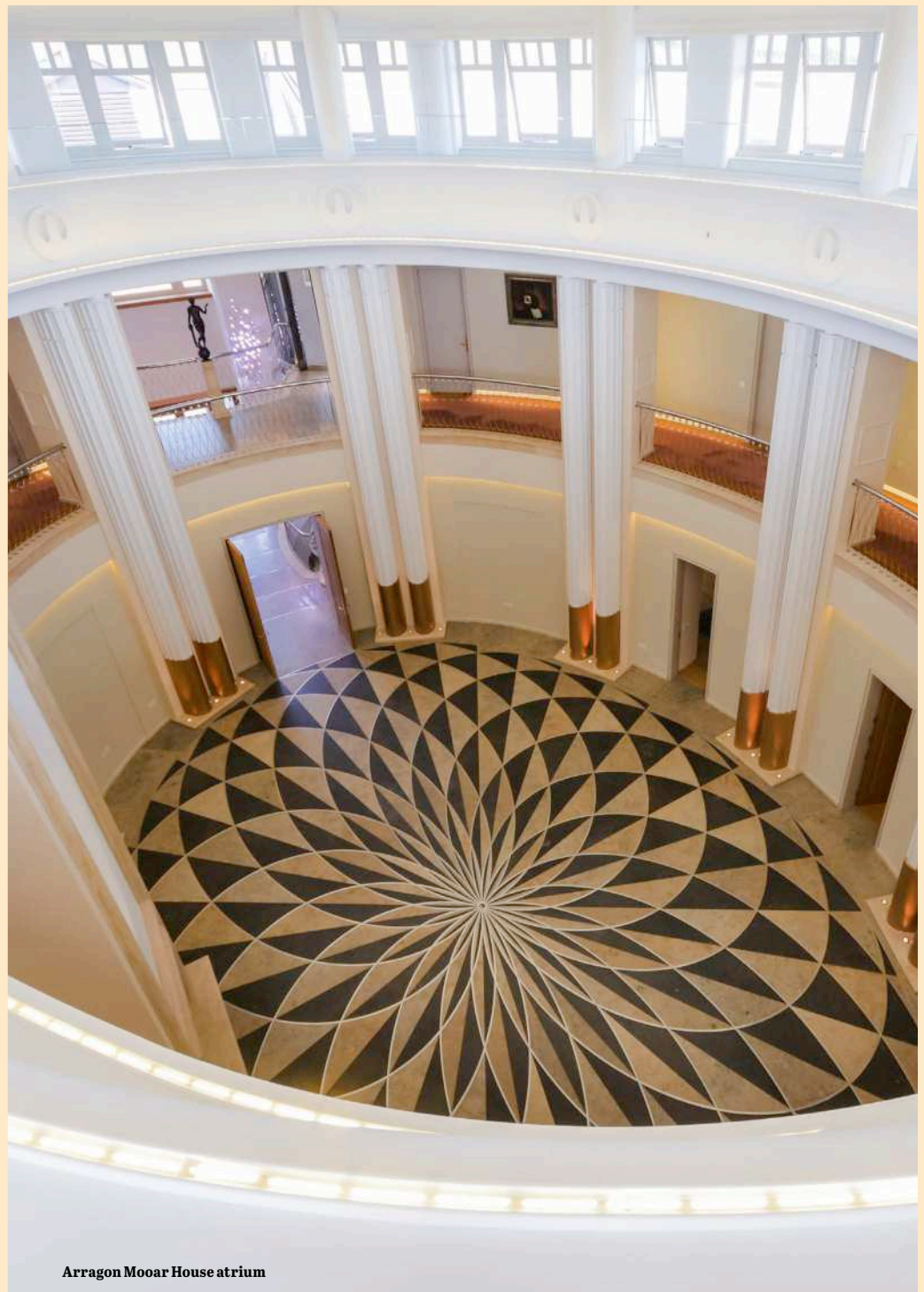
ARRAGON MOOAR ESTATE

ISLE OF MAN
WITH 280 ACRES OF VERDANT PASTURE

THE ARRAGON MOOAR ESTATE IS FOR SALE THROUGH COWLEY GROVES
Please contact David Creane on +44 (0) 7624 493 028, email: DCreane@cowleygroves.com

Further information:

locate.im-visitisleofman.com
c0376237-ae6b-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



Arragon Mooar House atrium

ARRAGON MOOAR ESTATE

The spectacular Arragon Mooar Estate, in the Isle of Man, is home to the world-renowned inventor Dr John C Taylor OBE. It encompasses 280 acres of lush farmland, over half a mile of coastline, an orangery, cottages and, at its centre, the magnificent elliptical Arragon Mooar House.

ARRAGON MOOAR HOUSE

The superb 23,000sq ft house is immaculately designed and built to the highest specification. The roof is surrounded by a 360-degree terrace with panoramic views of the island and the coast. The home includes six bedrooms, all with far-reaching views and luxurious en-suite bathrooms. There's a drawing room, dining room, library with a secret staircase, two kitchens and a breakfast room plus a spectacular atrium, perfect for entertaining.

COLOM



BIA



Diverse as it is dazzling, Colombia is where vast regions of rainforest sit at the foot of some of the highest mountains in the world, where hundreds of miles of Pacific and Caribbean coastlines promise countless, untouched beaches. But this isn't just a place to marvel at the scenery, it's a place for adventure: ride out with cowboys in the lowlands; scuba dive off remote islands; taste Colombian-grown coffee right at the source; spend time with Indigenous communities in the Amazon; and lose yourself in some of Latin America's most captivating cities

WORDS: HANNAH SUMMERS



THE AMAZON

WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE

Arrive in Leticia, the humid 'capital' of the Colombian Amazon, and you'll already feel far from home; but journey a further 30 miles by boat upriver for wild river safaris and memorable encounters with Indigenous communities

His watery eyes urging me to listen, 75-year-old Victor Angel Pereira stares at me intently. "This," he says, while pointing to a tree next to him, "is what I give people for head and stomach issues. But not much," he says, stopping to make sure I appreciate the gravity that comes with his role as village healer, "because too much and you'll die."

Here in the depths of the Colombian Amazon, right at the very southern tip of the country, deadly plants are remarkably low down on my list of concerns. One day here has gifted me sightings of a multicoloured dart frog the size of a thumbnail, yet one of the most poisonous creatures on the planet; a furry tarantula suspended in a web at eye-height; and a trail of bullet ants, which can cause 24 hours of intense pain with one bite of their tiny jaws. I also learnt that the presence of a snake on the breakfast table has the capacity to wake one up more efficiently than a cup of coffee.

There's perhaps a reason the jungle was referred to as the 'green hell' by the Conquistadors. But not to visit would be to miss one of the most fascinating and varied ecosystems in all existence. Colombia is the most biodiverse country per square mile in the world, with the Amazon occupying a region within it as large as California. While some travellers come specifically for the birdlife (750 of Colombia's 1,900 avian species are found here) or even the palm trees (Victor tells me there are some 40 varieties where we're standing), I already sense that my most meaningful encounters will be with the people that call the Amazon home.

Gifted some sugarcane for my onward journey, I say goodbye to the healer and his village of San Martín de Amacayacu and return to my base by wooden boat. Calanoa Amazonas is a lodge-style hotel home to a number of treehouses that look out over the tree canopy towards Peru, just two miles away, across the dark waters of the Amazon.

And while the hotel prides itself on its dedication to the arts, hosting workshops and artist residencies, most travellers make the journey here — around 30 miles by boat from Leticia, the Colombian Amazon's 'capital' city — for the wildlife. On our first night, we join the lodge team, staffed from the neighbouring village, on a humid, night-time walk through the forest. Within seconds of setting off, head guide Sergio León spots a neon-green manakin bird, no bigger than a hen's egg, sitting statue-still on a low branch. We press onwards, torch beams guiding us. When a downpour comes, as it regularly does in these parts, Sergio shows us how to wrap up our cameras and phones in banana leaves to keep them dry.

The next day, we're in search of Amazonian 'pink' river dolphins, known here as *boto*. Specially adapted to navigate the web of tree roots that spread out underwater, this vulnerable freshwater species can grow up to nine feet in length, and when they breathe, they barely breach the surface, making them notoriously hard to spot. The river stretches for miles on either side, but somehow Sergio has found them: we spy one, then another as they surface, rosy-hued against the murky tide. But they're far from the only attraction; on a branch, Sergio spots a four-foot-long green iguana, while, further down the riverbank, we see a pair of pygmy marmosets, the smallest monkeys in the world. They launch themselves between the branches of a tree and scratch at its bark to release a sap they find delicious.

On our way home, Sergio steers us to the dock at Mocagua, a sleepy village belonging to the Ticuna, one of the Indigenous tribes that live along the water. Here, cats, dogs and chickens live in harmony, snoozing beneath the shaded wooden houses built on stilts, while people come and go. On the outside of each house are huge, multicoloured murals of Amazonian creatures, each representing a different ancestral group in the community.

In the 1960s and 1970s, living here was neither easy nor safe; many Indigenous communities left during a brutal border conflict between Colombia and Peru. But in subsequent decades, thanks to government interventions — such as providing schools and electricity — some families have returned. And with them, many traditions have been maintained, too, from fishing to artisanal crafts.

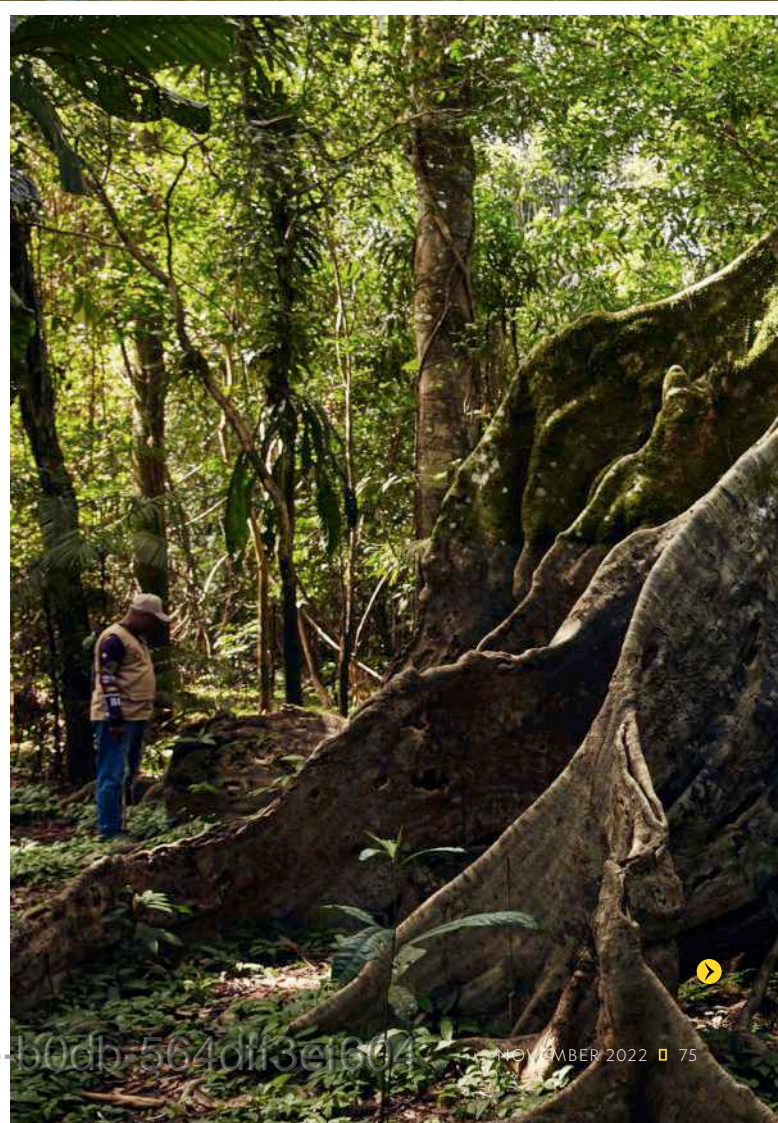
In a large workshop filled with clay pots and palm leaves, I meet Matilde, who's teaching her eight-year-old granddaughter how to weave baskets out of dried palm leaves. Outside, surrounded by their pets and livestock (a flock of chicks have settled atop a sleeping dog's belly), they expertly crisscross and fold the fronds, talking as they go. "We're very proud of our traditions," Matilde says as she surveys the final flourishes of her work. "It's important to us, and it makes me happy to see how much people admire it."

Her granddaughter hands me the basket she's made, cautiously surveying my reaction. I love it, I tell her. Delighted, she skips off to start another.

How to do it: A five-day stay in Calanoa Amazonas lodge starts from £1,075 per person, including return flights from Bogotá, transfers to and from Leticia airport, guided excursions and full board but excluding international flights. journeylatinamerica.com calanoaamazonas.com

Clockwise from top: Park rangers from the Indigenous Borikada community patrol parts of the Amazon designated for conservation and protection of the isolated tribes; the ceiba tree is central to Amazonian folklore surrounding the origins of life; a Central American squirrel monkey spotted on the Isla de los Micos, near Leticia

Previous pages: Tayrona National Park in Colombia's north, known for its rustic campsites and Caribbean beaches





Simple accommodation at Cabo de la Vela, a coastal town in the La Guajira Desert famous for windsurfing

Clockwise from above: An islet near San Andrés, part of an archipelago some 480 miles northwest of mainland Colombia; daybreak at Ciudad Perdida (the Lost City); a fruit vendor in Cabo de la Vela



TOP 10

ULTIMATE ADVENTURES

The perfect playground for sports and adventure enthusiasts, Colombia offers incredible ways to experience its landscapes, from treks to 'lost' ruins and beach camping

1 HIKE TO THE 'LOST CITY'
Peru's Inca Trail tends to hog the headlines when it comes to hikes to ancient sacred settlements in South America, but don't make the mistake of missing out on the journey through the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta jungle in Colombia's north to the Ciudad Perdida or 'Lost City'. It'll take you around four days of walking in a guided group to get to these millennia-old city ruins of the Tairona people, with a lot of ascents, cooling river crossings and nights sleeping in hammocks. Only 160 people a day are allowed to visit to protect the site, giving you the rare feeling of seeing an archaeological wonder without the crowds. Book a tour with G Adventures. gadventures.com

2 RAFT THE CHICAMOCHA CANYON
Rafting for two days along the Chicamocha River, with the canyon walls rising up beside you, is an adrenaline-packed experience. The trip combines vigorous paddling, swimming in fast-moving water and, of course, rafting through rapids, along with one night of camping at the water's edge — all in one of the largest canyons in the world. Some 30 miles later, you'll be transferred back to San Gil, Colombia's self-styled 'adventure capital', home to a growing collection of extreme sports and adventure tour outfits. expeditioncolombia.com

3 WINDSURF AT CABO DE LA VELA
The small fishing village of Cabo de la Vela happens to be one of the best kitesurfing and windsurfing spots in all of South America, right at the continent's northernmost tip. Some travellers are drawn to the area's desert dunes, which slope down to meet the Caribbean Sea and are home to lagoons full of flamingos and ultra-rustic accommodation that can involve sleeping in cabins or a hammock under the stars. But most are here for the year-round winds of 25-30 knots and clear, warm coastal waters. Make your own way there or book a trip through a specialist kitesurfing and windsurfing company, such as Colombia Kite, that provide all the gear you need. colombiakite.com ➤

4 STARGAZE IN THE TATACOA DESERT

You have several choices when it comes to stargazing here, a five-hour drive southwest from Bogotá. One is to visit the government's observatory; another is to check out Tatacoa Astronomia, run by Javier Fernando Rua Restrepo, who built his own observatory. With the help of Javier and his telescopes, you can see up to 88 constellations on a clear night. tatacoa-astronomia.com

5 SCUBA DIVING AT SAN ANDRÉS & PROVIDENCIA

The Caribbean isles of San Andrés and Providencia are home to the third-largest barrier reef in the world. Take in sites like the Blue Wall or the easier reef dive at Nirvana Point, which has a maximum depth of 50ft. Base yourself at San Andres Divers, a relaxed PADI Dive Resort. travel.padi.com

6 HIKE IN SANTUARIO OTÚN QUIMBAYA

This reserve in the central cordillera is home to some of the most spectacular flora and fauna in Colombia. Yarumo Blanco, a community-based ecotourism organisation, arranges guided trips of the Otún River Valley, with accommodation at a lodge nearby. Alternatively, join multiday treks to Laguna del Otún in Los Nevados National Park. yarumoblanco.co

7 CAMP IN TAYRONA NATIONAL PARK

A trip to Tayrona is as rewarding as it is wild, with Caribbean beaches, coconut palms and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. Hitch a lift by bus or arranged transfer to the park's entrance at either El Zaino or Calabazo and make your way to one of the six campsites. Opt for one by Playa Brava or try the Ecohabs, wooden bungalows overlooking the water. ecohabsantamarta.com

8 GO WHALE-WATCHING IN CHOCÓ

Visit this Pacific region between June and October for the chance to spot humpback whales. Boat trips around Nuquí and Bahía Solano might also throw up sightings of dolphins and sea turtles. Alternatively, if hiking in the jungle is more your thing, try a guided walk in Utría National Natural Park. Stay at El Almejal, which runs excellent nature-based activities. almejal.com.co

9 JOIN THE COWBOYS ON THE PLAINS OF LOS LLANOS

Los Llanos is a vast expanse of prairies and wetlands set between the peaks of the Andes and the humid lowlands of the Amazon. Accommodation here is on cattle farms and reserves like El Encanto de Guanapalo, where you can spend time learning the culture of the *llaneros*, the cowboys of the savannahs. elencantodeguanapalo.com

10 TREK THE COCORA VALLEY COFFEE REGION

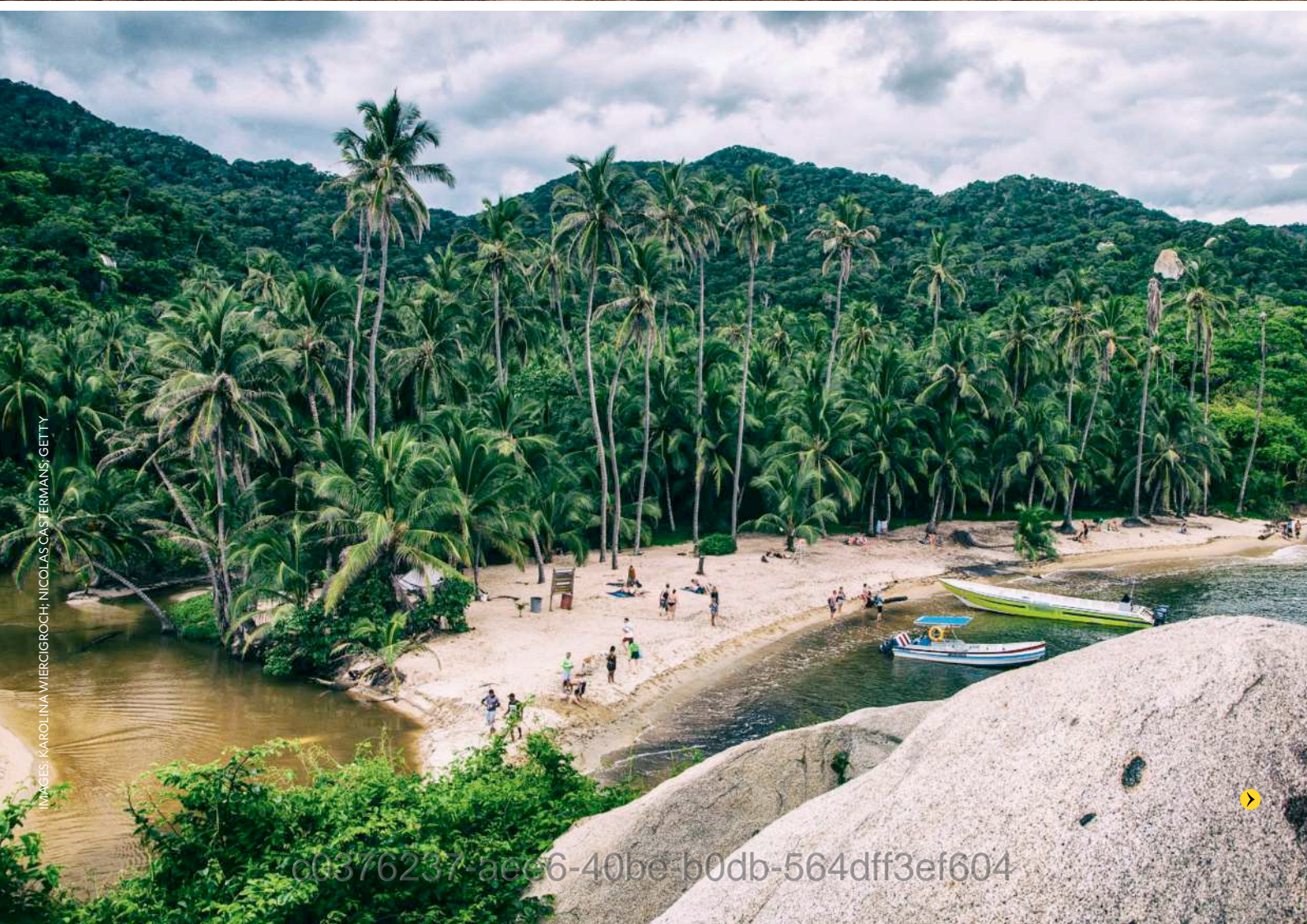
Head out on a self-guided trek through the Cocora Valley, part of Los Nevados National Park, deep in Colombia's coffee-producing region. From the town of Salento, stroll across meadows dotted with palm trees, then go on a two-hour trek along a scenic bridle path before reaching the hummingbird reserve of Acaime. Make pit stops in one of the rest huts along the way for *chocolate completo*, hot chocolate with indulgent chunks of melting cheese.





Sunrise over the Tatacoa Desert, home to numerous observatories

Clockwise from below: The Caribbean shoreline of Tayrona National Park, backed by coconut palms and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta; a wild chicken on the jungle trail to Ciudad Perdida (the Lost City); the trunks of some wax palms, which can grow up to 200ft high and are a distinctive feature of the Cocora Valley



IMAGES: KAROLINA WIERCIGROCH; NICOLAS CASTERMANS; GETTY

00376237 acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



BOGOTÁ

PAINTING THE TOWN

The streets of the Colombian capital are awash with eye-catching art. But this is far more than just decoration, with designs rooted in identity and offering an all-important chance for political self-expression

“Policemen in Bogotá are art curators,” my tour guide, Luis Lamprea, tells me, as we wander through the Candelaria neighbourhood in the capital’s centre. “If they catch you but they like the art you’re making, they may turn a blind eye.”

Around me, bright painted shapes cover virtually every wall. Passers-by walk on seemingly nonplussed, but I stand transfixed. “Today, graffiti is not legal, but it’s tolerated. Police could fine you,” he continues. “So the best policy is to impress them, or not get caught.”

Things haven’t always been so lenient here. In 2011, the death of 16-year-old Diego Becerra started a dramatic shift in Bogotá’s relationship with street art. Becerra was illegally out spraying with friends, and was caught. Scared, he ran from the police, and was shot and killed. Police cover ups followed, and soon there was an outcry from the population.

“Bogotá residents didn’t want any more people killed. Becerra’s death moved people to have an opinion about graffiti and to start speaking publicly about it,” says Luis. As a result, graffiti was decriminalized in 2013. But the story didn’t end there.

The same year, while in town for a concert, pop star Justin Bieber saw the graffiti along the highway on the way to the airport and decided he fancied trying his hand at it. “It was a terrible piece of work,” Luis tells me, shaking his head. “But Bieber was allowed to do it.” Uproar followed: how could Bieber be allowed to graffiti a prohibited area with police protection, while locals had been so brutally punished? “People here felt everyone should be able to do it,” Luis says. “It led to a second decree. Not just that the government should allow it — but that they should promote it. Now part of the government budget goes on commissioning street art.”

The result of this turbulent period is one of the most varied, layered and complex graffiti scenes in the world. Years back, graffiti artists used to work quickly and at night. But today, Candelaria, along with huge chunks of the rest of the city, is an open-air art gallery of pieces that have taken hours if not days to complete. Here, commissioned murals (you can tell from the size and technique — roller brushes and paint brushes require much more time than spray cans, signalling a paid project) sit alongside small, stencilled works from Colombia’s answer to Banksy, DJ Lu. But you don’t just come here to appreciate the talent — you come here to learn about what makes Colombia tick.

My tour with Luis is thanks to Capital Graffiti Tours, a donations-only walking tour guided by artists that runs twice a day in the city, every day. What he instils

in visitors isn’t just an appreciation of art, but one of the most interesting and vital introductions to Colombia — its triumphs, its history and its struggles, from civil war to the ongoing fight for indigenous rights. “One of the best ways to protest now and remain anonymous is street art,” Luis says. “With this type of art, everyone can contribute, and everyone can have their work — and their thoughts — seen.”

In the three hours we have together, we see a fraction of what the city has to show. My favourite work is a collaboration between Bastardilla and her boyfriend, Wosnan, a piece that Luis describes as “both decorative and political”. To the initiated, this mural speaks of government failure and political protests — events plucked from Colombia’s recent past. The ‘PRIMERA LINEA’ etched in capitals on the back of a green bug signifies a protest group of the same name; the insect speaking of youth and pluckiness. “This mural is a homage to them,” Luis finishes. “Lots of people saw them as heroes, while others saw them as bandits.”

Nearby we see a powerful work by DJ Lu: a stencilled outline of an amputee with a rifle as a leg. “This can take months to design on Photoshop, and seconds to spray paint,” Luis tells me. Elsewhere is a mural of three stencilled faces: these represent three real-life men of the Indigenous Páez people, who struggled for their land in the 1960s. Around the corner is the work of Guache, one of the country’s most famous artists. His name means ‘warrior’ in the language of the indigenous Muisca people, his work easily identifiable by the block shapes and straight lines.

Not far away, a huge piece in bright mauves and magentas covers the entire side of a hostel. It was commissioned by the owner to celebrate the most beloved icons of Bogotá: the Gold Museum, housing pre-Columbian treasure; hummingbirds, the types you see flying through the pretty gardens of San Francisco de Sales church; and the face of Salavarieta Ríos, also known as ‘La Pola’, a woman who fiercely fought against Spanish rule in the 1800s.

Steps away, another mural covers the side of a small building. “It’s an illustration of a páramo ecosystem, again by Bastardilla,” Luis says. Patches of purples, teals and blues merge to form mountains and lakes. “It’s a symbol of Colombia,” he continues. “She makes it look like a living organism, a place full of life. These artists, they hold up a mirror to our whole country.”

How to do it: Book free tours with Capital Graffiti Tours, which currently meets at 10am and 2pm outside the Gold Museum. capitalgraffititours.com



IMAGE: JUAN ARREDONDO

Walking tours of Bogotá's Candelaria neighbourhood focus on the area's street art, which features world-class murals by local artists Guache, Rodez and DJ Lu, relating to social and political struggles in the capital



THE CHANGEMAKER

ESILDA RODRÍGUEZ OF DAMARTES

Esilda took a government course to learn how to run a business and, today, runs Damartes, a women's co-operative that sells handicrafts and holds craft workshops for travellers

I run my workshops in my fishing village of La Boquilla, a 30-minute drive from Cartagena. Our products, like jewellery and belts, are made from recycled coconut shells that restaurants would normally throw in the bin.

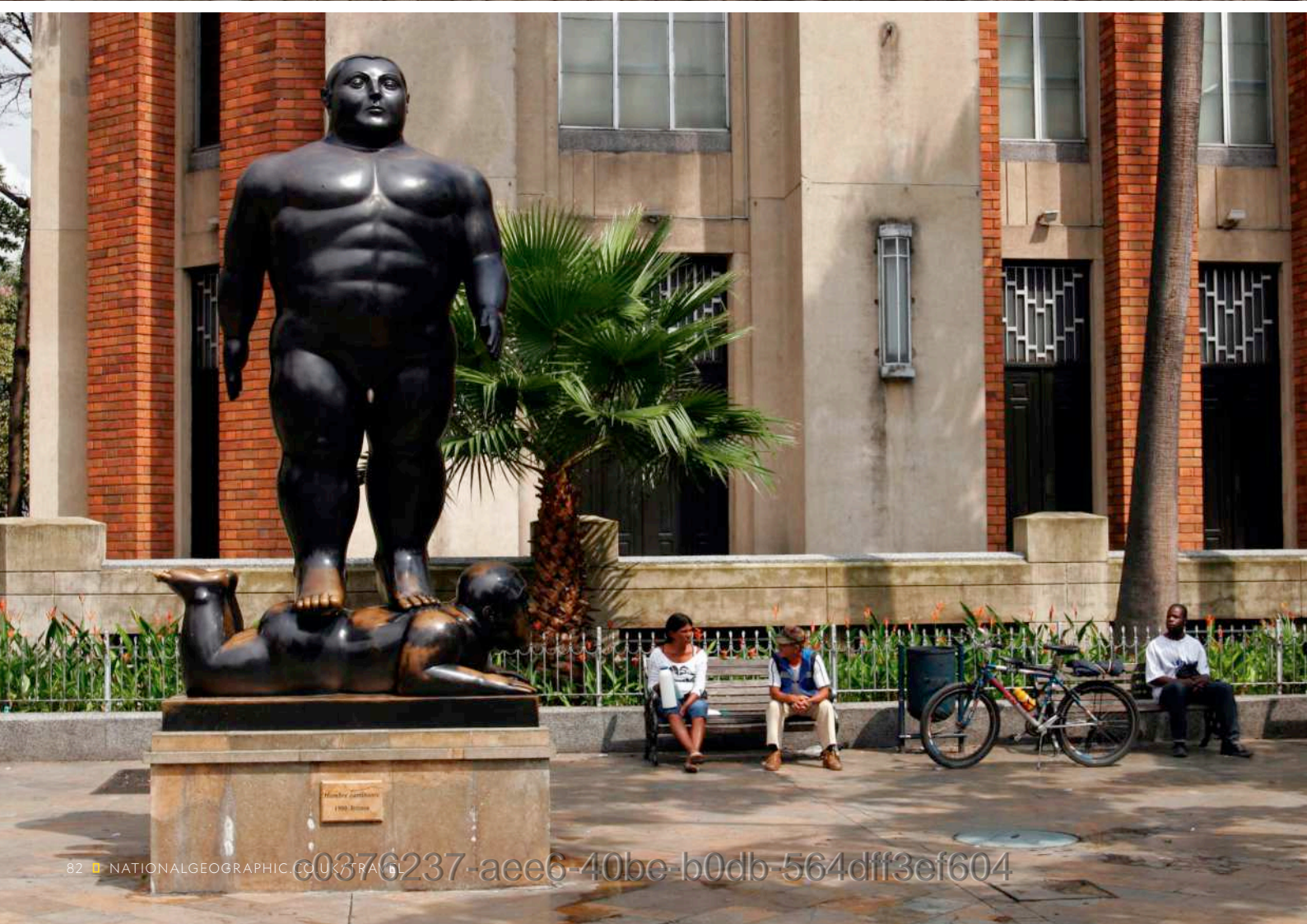
My aim is to empower local women and help them be independent by making their own money. During our workshops we have the chance to speak to travellers; for the women in the village, it's a chance to see that in many other cultures, women have more independence than we grew up expecting for ourselves.

The biggest challenge we've faced since starting 13 years ago has been from the men in the village. They were angry and didn't want their wives leaving the home; they didn't believe in us. But after we counted the earnings from the second project – and the wives were able to pay for roof repairs, new TVs and washing machines – they changed their minds.

My ambition is to have a full-time workshop, a shop and an online business where we can show everything we make. We want to create more opportunities for women to work, instead of the ambition being to find a man who will pay for you.

When we teach women they can earn an income themselves, they get another perspective on life. We are a big example of independence in a poor community. The women are so happy to see that something they've made can produce money. They never thought they could do it – but they can.

How to do it: Four-hour coconut workshops in La Boquilla can be booked through Alternative Travel Cartagena. [alternativetravelcartagena.com](https://www.alternativetravelcartagena.com)



MEDELLÍN

LIVE LIKE A LOCAL

From hip coffee spots to locally run boutiques, designer and artist Maria José Ramírez shares some of her favourite spots in Colombia's second-biggest city

Medellín is a city that's changing. When I was born in the early 1990s, drug lord Pablo Escobar had just died, but I know how my parents lived before that. Parts of the city were off-limits — you couldn't drive to certain places as you may be carjacked, you couldn't go out past 6pm. People were scared and it was an incredibly hard time.

But today, Medellín is a really cool city. People of Medellín (Los Medellinenses) love their city — we think it's better than any other place we visit, every time. It's full of entrepreneurs and people keen to run their own businesses, whether that's restaurants, shops or design studios. As a city, we promote and buy local produce as much as we can.

I used to work in fashion, but today I teach pottery and make ceramics at my studio, in a fairly quiet neighbourhood called San Lucas, and I love it. Go to **Pergamino** a brilliant coffee shop with the best almond croissants. Try *guandolo*, a traditional and refreshing Colombian drink made with *panela* (unrefined whole cane sugar) and lemon. To eat, I love **Olivia**. Their turkey salad is excellent and the pizza is some of the best in the city; it's super crunchy and made with almond flour instead of wheat. [instagram.com/pergamino](https://www.instagram.com/pergamino) [instagram.com/olivia_restaurante](https://www.instagram.com/olivia_restaurante)

In other parts of the city, like Provenza, I'd head to **El Botánico** for a luxe burger, or **Moshi** for excellent Japanese food. Go for the *temaki* and a crab bowl and don't miss the desserts — my pick is the dark chocolate popsicle. [instagram.com/elbotanicomedellin](https://www.instagram.com/elbotanicomedellin) [moshimedellin.co](https://www.instagram.com/moshimedellin)

If I'm going out drinking I love **Siete Pulgadas**. It's a really small bar for music lovers where the walls are lined with vinyl and you can hear everything from rock to reggaeton. Try one of the local beers — Bipolar or Laguna.

If you're feeling hungry, grab a pizza across the road at **El Zorro y La Gitana** — the potato pizza is excellent. [instagram.com/sietepulgadasbar](https://www.instagram.com/sietepulgadasbar) [elzorroylagitana.com](https://www.instagram.com/elzorroylagitana.com)

Medellín is a fashionable city and we have a lot of designers and independent stores here. **El Tesoro** is a mall with lots of Colombian-owned brands. Inside, **Casa Trece** has everything from candles to diaries. Visit **One Half** for swimwear, sportswear and more. For bikinis and beachwear, I also love **Maaji** and **Agua Bendita** where everything is handmade by Colombian artisans. If you love jewellery, don't miss **Pájarolimón** — the founders are two Colombian sisters, and everything is handmade in Colombia and really great quality. [eltesorocom.co](https://www.eltesorocom.co) [casatrece.com](https://www.casatrece.com) [onehalf.com.co](https://www.onehalf.com.co) [maaji.co](https://www.maaaji.co) [aguabendita.com.co](https://www.aguabendita.com.co) [int.pajarolimom.com](https://www.int.pajarolimom.com)

During your time in Medellín, I recommend skipping hotels and opting for a rental in Manila instead. It's a leafy, local neighbourhood and is home to **Negro**, which is one of my favourite bars, and great breakfast and brunch spots like **Hija Mía**, where you can also get your Colombian coffee fix. If after all that eating, drinking and shopping you need to relax, try **108 Yoga**, my favourite studio. [instagram.com/negromdehijamiacoffee.com](https://www.instagram.com/negromdehijamiacoffee.com) [108yogacolombia.com](https://www.108yogacolombia.com)

Maria José Ramírez is a designer, ceramist and founder of SERÁ CERÁ, a ceramics studio and workshop in Medellín. [instagram.com/sera_cera](https://www.instagram.com/sera_cera)

How to do it: Jacada Travel offers the nine-day Colombia Art, Culture and Cuisine tour, including two nights in Medellín as well as nights in Bogotá and Cartagena, from £4,251. Includes tours, accommodation and internal flights. Excludes international flights. [jacadatravel.com](https://www.jacadatravel.com)

From top: Cable cars are a relatively new addition to Medellín's infrastructure, connecting more lofty neighbourhoods to the city centre; sculptures by Colombian artist Fernando Botero can be seen across Medellín, including here at Plaza Botero, home to 23 voluptuous bronzes

CARTAGENA

TASTE TEST

Sizzling fish, fragrant mangoes and super-sour star fruits – Cartagena’s humble Bazurto Market is a feast for the senses, where passionate vendors serve unforgettable flavours

Andrea Carolina De La Hoz Gaviria stops mid-stride and issues me a warning. “This is a very messy place,” she says. “Are you ready?”

It’s the smell that hits me first. Hundreds of chunky fish, lined up neatly on ice, threaten to collapse the table beneath them. Next, the heat: a metre away, a man chucks wood beneath a huge cauldron of bubbling oil. Then the noise: *champeta* music, only ever blasted at full volume in these parts of the world, means I don’t quite catch Andrea’s next sentence. “In we go!” she repeats with a grin.

Here, just a 15-minute drive from the new hotels, restaurants and bars springing up in the centre of the Cartagena, is what feels like a different, secret world. That unforgettable ceviche in Cartagena’s best restaurant? The fish was carefully selected here at 4am by the chef. The mango that you snack on between museum hopping? It was bought here hours earlier, at a tenth of the price.

Admittedly, Bazurto Market is not for everyone. “Some people refuse to get out of the car,” Andrea, who’s a chef as well as a guide, tells me. Those that do are in good company, however: Anthony Bourdain visited here for his show, *No Reservations*, in 2008 — something stall holders will proudly tell you at every turn.

We dive deeper into the warren-like market, where shoppers jostle for space and the sun shines through the rips of the tarpaulin shade. Andrea leads me through a vast tangle of passageways, some half-heartedly paved with concrete, others slippery with mud. As she goes, she points out the vegetables that draw people here in their thousands — metre-long green beans coiled up like cables, knobbly potatoes (too imperfect for supermarket shelves) and plump tomatoes that aren’t quite the desired shades of red or green. “Ugly but organic,” she declares. “Straight from the farms outside the city.”

Nearby is a stall piled high with tropical fruits. The owner reluctantly turns her music down a notch at Andrea’s request. “We have to listen to music when we do

something,” she explains. “It’s cultural — we dance when we listen.” I bite into *zapote*, a mild and sweet orange fruit that’s prone to splodging down my front, along with *guama*, which is shaped like a boomerang. Andrea snaps it over her leg and offers up the inside — hard black beans surrounded by a cotton wool-like white fibres, a natural candyfloss. Next is a star fruit so sour it makes my eyes water, and the juiciest mango I’ve ever tasted.

But the market isn’t just for fruit and veg. It’s for meals. True Colombian meals. We press on and meet Enelfi at her stall, Doña Ene where, in her purple bandana and apron, she remains unfazed by the heat of the pots in front of her. “She’s been here every day for 38 years,” Andrea tells us. Unsurprising, then, that her signature fish is perfect. She seasons a chunk of sierra fish with lime, garlic and salt, fries it, then tips it onto a plate with a strip of yuca. We eat with our hands, huge chunks of soft fish falling apart on our paper plates.

Next, we take a seat within the purple walls of a tiny restaurant called Cecilia, before the nation’s unlikeliest hangover soother is placed in front of us: fish soup. “Hot soup on a hot day doesn’t bother us,” Andrea says. “And this is a cheap way to eat.” It’s also delicious, with a delicate, fragrant broth and small flakes of fish so moreish that Bourdain referred to it as “the promised land”.

Chunks of cheese with squidges of quince, bowls of rice and two servings of fish soup later, we reach the most popular spot in the market: the bar. We order *costeñitas* — refreshing local beers so miniature they’re consumed in three gulps. In the heat and chaos of the market, sitting at a table with an ice-cold beer feels almost meditative. “Everything moves so fast in this city,” Andrea says. “New hotels, new restaurants, new visitors. But this market? It’s frozen in time.”

How to do it: The Bazurto Market Experience costs £36, including several meals and drinks.

airbnb.co.uk/experiences

Clockwise from top left: Colonial-era architecture in the UNESCO-listed Old Town, Cartagena; a vendor removes fish scales in Bazurto Market; a busy alleyway in Bazurto Market; a vendor sells fried fish and plantain in the buzzy Nuevo Paraguay neighbourhood of Cartagena



PRESS
PLAY ▶



RCR
MSRP: £3,782

CTY2
MSRP: £3,096

**NOW SHIPPING
TO THE
UNITED KINGDOM!**



c0376237-acc6-40bc-b0db-564dff3ef604

Built in Los Angeles, California

www.onyxmotorbikes.com



@onyxmotorbikes



The colourful streets of Getsemani, Cartagena's trendiest neighbourhood

CARTAGENA

WHAT TO DO IN GETSEMANI

The neighbourhood has become one of Cartagena's most exciting corners, full of bars, restaurants and boutiques tucked away in colourful streets. Here's what not to miss

Ten years ago, the only tourists venturing from Cartagena's UNESCO-listed Old Town and into Getsemani, the adjacent neighbourhood, were backpackers looking for super-cheap hostels, and those lured to the red-light district. But over the past decade, government investment in the area has been a remarkable success: what exists today is a district that's — whisper it — more fun to explore than the traditional tourist sights. Streets awash with bright, vivid colours are now home to boutique hotels, rooftop bars lit with festooned lights and pint-sized cafes for whiling away the afternoon.

CELELE

Stylish locals flock to this 30-cover restaurant, which opened in 2018 and has since made it into the Latin America section of the World's 50 Best restaurants. The 10-course tasting menu will take you on a journey through Colombian cuisine, with plates that might include smoked fish fritters with kimchi and prawns with coconut milk and water apple. celelerestaurante.com

LA COCINA DE PEPINA

Book ahead for this excellent little restaurant, set up by chef María Josefina Yances to lovingly showcase the best of Colombia's diverse food scene, which differs from coast to mountains and beyond. After she died in 2014, her nephew took over, doing an equally impressive job. Signature dishes include the *mote de queso* (yam and cheese soup topped with grilled aubergine). facebook.com/la-cocina-de-pepina

PLAZA DE LA TRINIDAD

When the Aguila beers catch up with you, do as the locals do and head to this church square. In the shadow of the buttercup-yellow Iglesia de la Santísima Trinidad church, street vendors sell loaded hotdogs and burgers until gone midnight — the Colombian equivalent of a late-night kebab. Love people-watching? This is the spot.

CAFE DEL MURAL

Step inside this cafe and you'll feel like you've entered owner David Arzayus' laboratory,

where shelves and counters are stacked with coffee machines and grinders from across the decades. It's a great place to try some of Colombia's best produce if you can't make it to the coffee region. instagram.com/cafedelmural

EL CORONCORO

This fuss-free, family-run restaurant, with its yellow plastic chairs and tiled floors, is one of the best places for inexpensive Colombian classics like *arroz con pollo* (chicken rice) or *lengua en salsa* (beef tongue in rich tomato sauce). Alternatively, take the chefs' cue and try the changing menu of the day. [39-22 Calle 10](https://www.instagram.com/elcoroncoro)

CASA MAMÁ WALDY

You'll have your pick of rooftop bars in Getsemani, but this one, located above a hostel and named after the family's grandma, Waldy, has a lovely, relaxed vibe and is seconds away from the graffiti murals of Calle de la Sierpe. [91 Calle 29](https://www.instagram.com/casamamawaldy)



COFFEE REGION

WHERE TO STAY

Colombia's verdant 'coffee triangle' and neighbouring Cocora Valley are home to some of the country's most memorable vistas – and notable places to stay

1 HACIENDA VENECIA
BEST FOR COFFEE FIENDS
Set on a working coffee plantation, this is the perfect place for those seeking peace and quiet, while wanting to be well-placed for local excursions. The mountainous setting is just a 30-minute drive from Manizales, one of the three main cities in Colombia's coffee triangle. It's full of character: all red-and-white spaces with huge original shutters and statement tiled floors. Head out to the wraparound balcony for a drink, or laze by the pool to watch peacocks roam the lawns. Don't miss the Coffee Lodge, where you can taste freshly made local brew. From £110. haciendavenecia.com

2 HACIENDA BAMBUSA
BEST FOR NATURE LOVERS
This former farmhouse outside Armenia offers ample opportunity for hikes among the lush, green slopes of the Cocora Valley. It was restored about a decade ago, keeping the bamboo and clay exterior, while beautifully designed bedrooms inside feature dazzling white linen, velvet cushions and colourful artwork. You could spend your time simply lounging by the pool, but there's a lot to do, including jeep tours or bird-watching, the highlights of which include the spectacled parrotlet and the rufous-tailed hummingbird. From £165. haciendabambusa.com

3 HOTEL SAZAGUA
BEST FOR SPA SEEKERS
This beauty of a boutique hotel has everything you'd expect from a luxury stay, including one of the best restaurants in the region, a refreshing pool and individually styled rooms, many with high, sloping ceilings, outdoor hot tubs and hammocks. But the real draw, especially after a day of hiking in the region, is the little spa, where you can bask in the jungle setting and try treatments such as the Guazalak ritual, involving fire therapy and volcanic stone massage for a physical and mental reboot. From £78. sazagua.com

4 TERASU HOTEL SALENTO
BEST FOR ADVENTURERS
Located in the heart of Salento town, this new-build boutique hotel wouldn't look out of place in Scandinavia thanks to the pale wooden exterior of the main cabin, and fresh interior in the rooms. Aside from the lovely laid-back vibe this creates, the main draw here is the location, minutes away from the cafes and coffee shops of Salento, and close to the Cocora Valley. The team will happily book you coffee tours, bike trips and hikes, or there are plenty of companies on the doorstep if you prefer to arrange things independently. From £70, room only. hotelterasu.com

5 KAWA MOUNTAIN RETREAT
BEST FOR EPICURES
Revel in the mountain scenery while only a five-minute stroll from Salento at Kawa Mountain Retreat, an eco-conscious hotel with large lodges, treehouse-style cabins and, in The Colonial House, colourful rooms, many with outdoor tubs for soaking up the views. The team are known for going the extra mile to make your stay special, from booking tours to the Cocora Valley, which you can see from the retreat, to the lovingly prepared breakfast of freshly squeezed juices, fluffy pancakes and plenty of coffee. Be sure to fuss over the resident dog. Doubles from £62. hotelkawa.com

6 EL MIRADOR DEL COCORA HOTEL
BEST FOR VIEWS
The name says it all. 'Mirador' means 'viewpoint', and the stunning valley and mountain vistas certainly take centre stage at this lofty hotel. Enjoy them over breakfast from the huge open-air terrace; swinging in a hammock while parrots chatter nearby; or from one of the bedrooms with floor-to-ceiling windows and views from the bed (some also have outdoor whirlpool baths). Interiors at this mid-range hotel are simple yet homely. From £105. elmiradordelcocora.co

Clockwise from top: The main house at Hacienda Venecia, surrounded by lush coffee plantations; coffee tours, run by Hacienda Venecia, include an extensive introduction into coffee production, from seed to cup; a bird's-eye view of one of Hotel Sazagua's stylish spa buildings

Sustainably Exploring Planet Earth

GoKo Travels recognises that there is only one Planet Earth, which is why they design escapes allowing you to explore the world with conscious curiosity. From expertly curated adventure experiences and bespoke tailor-made itineraries, to handpicked luxury getaways and five-star villas, hotels and homes, you can relax knowing that a holiday with GoKo Travels is carbon neutral as standard and aids in preserving biodiversity, conserving wildlife and supporting local communities around the world.

Award-Winning Luxury Holidays,
Group Adventures and Bespoke Itineraries





ROSARIO ISLANDS

PARTY IN PARADISE

A peaceful escape to the shores of the Rosario Islands can be exactly that, although you don't have to stray too far to encounter the Colombians' famous love of a good time

Belkin Chico Martinez eases the throttle on the speedboat and drops the anchor. I take my cue from the guide and plunge into the jade water. The cool immediately soothes my sun-reddened skin as I float on my back, eyes closed, absorbing the sound of silence. "Beer?" asks Belkin, pulling me back on board ahead of our next swim spot.

Despite its 1,993 miles of coastline — split between the Pacific to the northwest and the Caribbean to the northeast — Colombia isn't Latin America's most well-known beach destination. Here on the Rosario Islands, an archipelago of 27 isles less than two hours by boat from Cartagena, there are no mass resorts, no roads and barely any people. But those people have a way of making themselves heard.

It's barely 11am and, as we drop anchor at Isla Cholón, dozens of shiny speedboats are moored up around us, fitted

with 10 times more speakers than they really need. They all blast out reggaeton music, each competing to be heard. Beneath a bright-blue sky, hundreds of day-trippers from Cartagena in tiny bikinis sip icy limonadas — a thick rum, coconut and lemon cocktail — and dance 'the babymaker' (the clue's in the name). "Eighty per cent of the country may be Catholic, but 79% are fake Catholics," says Belkin with a grin. "And the music? If it's loud, it's good. People here need music and other people. It makes us happy."

Nearby at Playa Blanca, one of the best-known beaches in the islands, a long string of bars serves chilled Aguila beers to backpackers and Colombians who've made the trip from Bogotá for guaranteed sunshine. From the speakers comes the voice of Shakira, one of Colombia's most famous exports. "She's overtaken Escobar as the most famous name

Above: The Rosario Islands, a chain of small coral islets, some offering hotels, are easily accessed by boat from the coastal city of Cartagena

IMAGE: ALAMY



GETTING THERE & AROUND

Avianca, Colombia’s national carrier, has daily direct flights from Heathrow to Bogotá, and KLM also offers flights via Amsterdam. avianca.com klm.com
Average flight time: 10h45m.

Long-distance buses are a cheaper alternative to internal flights, but if flying, try Avianca, LATAM or budget airline Wingo. Taxis are available with cash payment in all major cities; Uber is also an affordable and popular way to travel. latamairlines.com wingo.com

WHEN TO GO

Temperatures vary across Colombia. The coastlines have tropical climates, offering clear skies between November and March, and scattered showers at other times of the year. Cartagena, on the Caribbean coast, hovers at 29C year-round. As a general rule, where the altitude is higher, the country tends to be cooler; Bogotá maintains a steady temperature averaging 15C, with the heaviest rainfall between April and July. The Amazon, meanwhile, is humid and often rainy year-round, with temperatures firmly between the mid- to high 20s.

MORE INFO

Colombia Travel. colombia.travel

HOW TO DO IT

Intrepid Travel offers a 17-day Best of Colombia trip that takes in Salento and the coffee region, Medellín, Cartagena, Bogotá and Tayrona National Park, from £2,644 per person, excluding international flights. intrepidtravel.com

Flash Pack offers a nine-day Vibrant Colombia tour with salsa lessons and rum tasting in Cartagena, graffiti lessons in Bogotá, molecular gastronomy in Medellín and a trip to the Rosario Islands, from £2,270pp, excluding international flights. flashpack.com

in Colombia,” muses Belkin, “which is special, as we try and make drugs a thing of the past.”

Most visitors come to party, but there are stretches of sand far from the blare of speakers, too. Several hours and snorkelling spots later, Belkin and I arrive at Isla Grande, home to San Pedro de Majagua, a rustic hotel right on the beach. Its regular guests — the island’s resident dogs — are always keen to share a shady sunlounger, if you’ll let them.

I spend two days at the island’s sleepy pace, squinting to see the skyscrapers of Cartagena and the glitzy high-rises of its Bocagrande district in the distance. There are dips in the sea and slow, sun-baked walks across the island, where elderly gents in cowboy hats watch the handful of passers-by from their front doors. I kayak around the island, too, admiring the mangroves that stretch like skeletal fingers into the water. A full moon shines high that night. It’s too bright for the bioluminescence that these waters are famous for, but it’s no bother; the gentle sound of lapping waves is a welcome soundtrack to an evening of quiet paddling.

On the last night, as the sun turns the sky a dusty pink, a dog hops up onto my sunlounger for a snooze. He gazes out at the orange sun, setting on the horizon, before letting out a deep, contented sigh. Without saying a word, he’s summed up how I’m feeling pretty well.

How to do it: Journey Latin America offers an 11-day Signature Colombia: Culture and Coffee tour, including two nights in Bogotá and three nights in Cartagena, as well as an excursion to the Rosario Islands, from £2,070. The price includes accommodation and in-destination air and road transfers, but excludes international flights. journeylatinamerica.com □

Above: Kayakers explore the waters around Isla Grande, part of the Rosario Islands

IMAGE: ALAMY; ILLUSTRATION: JOHN PLUMER

THE EPIC JOURNEY INTO THE SUBLIME

Take a lifetime trip with Arnawa to the most remote areas of AIUla, where the rock formations have made extraordinary panoramic views. Discover the ancient tombs in the world's largest living museum, which remain a legacy of 7,000 years of human civilisation. Arnawa trips are the ultimate way to indulge in the beauty of nature.

AIUla

أرنوى
ARNAWA



info@arnawa.co



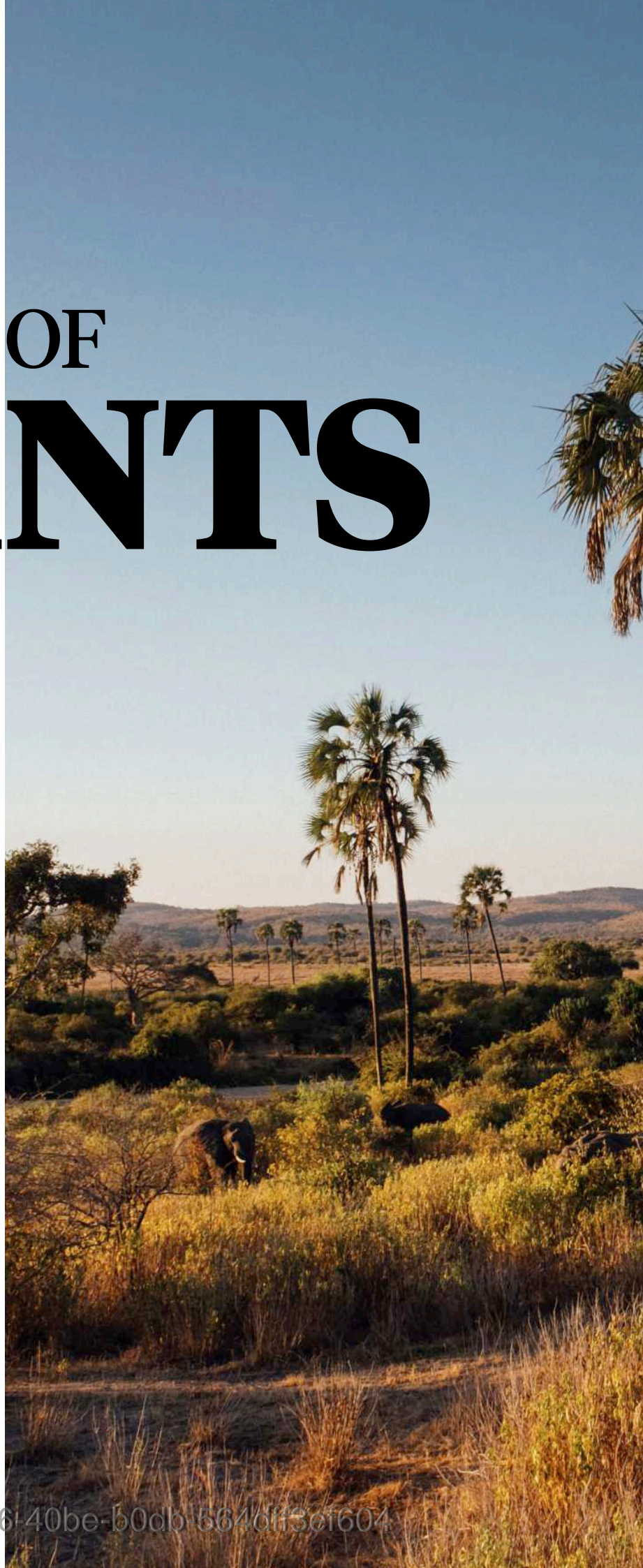
www.arnawa.co

c0376237-ae66-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

LAND OF GIANTS

From bulbous baobab trees and towering goliath herons to stalking prides of big cats, Ruaha National Park is a land of astonishing sights – and statistics. This is the largest protected wildlife area in Tanzania, and one of the most biodiverse in East Africa, yet it receives just a tenth of the visitor numbers of the country's more famous Serengeti. A new 'citizen science experience' aims to change that, offering hands-on conservation experiences in the heart of the park's wild Usangu Wetlands

WORDS: BEN LERWILL
PHOTOGRAPHS: GREG FUNNELL







Msembe Airstrip is no high-tech air hub. It's a stripe of red earth in the depths of the Tanzanian outback, with bushwillow shrubs and baboons in place of a departure lounge. Hawk-eagles perch just off the runway and colourful lizards scuttle in the dust. It has an unassuming, middle-of-nowhere feel — but don't be fooled. The airstrip is a portal to a land of giants. Minutes away from where my little Cessna has buzzed down to land, I stare half-dazed as a large herd of elephants plods past a baobab tree.

There's a rare beauty to a mature baobab tree. It towers over the grasslands like some sort of biological error, its trunk vast and lumpy and its branches fat and twisted. In its sheer girth, it's a miracle. "We call them lifetime trees," says guide Gerald Minja, cutting the engine of his Land Cruiser. The baobab stands stoic in the hot July sun. "Every three feet of circumference represents 100 years of growth," says Gerald. It makes the specimen in front of us at least a millennium old. The elephants file past, accustomed to this sort of thing, silent save for their steady progress through the brushwood.

Here in little-visited Ruaha National Park — the largest protected wildlife area in Tanzania, and one of the most biodiverse in East Africa — the sights and statistics are often improbably sized. My two-part trip is

taking me to a new conservation camp in the park's remote southern wetlands, but I'm starting in the more traditional safari confines of Jabali Ridge. The lodge is set on a rocky outcrop above the savannah and showcases two contrasting types of luxury. There's the cultivated kind — wide balconies, four-poster beds, a breeze-cooled spa — and the more organic kind, where the surroundings serve up widescreen drama for fun.

On my first morning, I wake at first light to see three giraffes browsing acacia leaves outside my balcony, the plains behind them tinted with a tangerine glow. Half an hour later, on a dawn drive, we round a corner in the bush to find the way blocked by a 200-strong herd of buffalo. We stop. They stare, nostrils glistening. "They always look at humans like we owe them money," laughs Gerald. As he talks, oxpeckers perch on some of the bigger males, snaffling ticks from their flanks. "Buffalos are dangerous animals, but they're so good for the land. They're always eating, pooping and stomping. They keep things fertile."

To judge from the terrain around Jabali Ridge, these landscape gardeners have an environment in which they can thrive. Fan palms and euphorbia share the grasslands with sausage trees and baobabs; the latter's jelly-belly silhouettes are a surreal counterpoint to the dainty dik-diks that totter

Clockwise from top left: A juvenile giraffe crosses jeep tracks on the savannah; Maji Moto hot springs, surrounded by borassus palms; Anderson Pakomyus Mesilla, a guide at Asilia Africa's Usangu Expedition Camp; elephant sighting in the north of Ruaha National Park, the largest protected wildlife area in Tanzania

Previous pages: A game drive in Ruaha National Park







beneath them on featherlight legs. On a drive, winding between thickets of wild lavender as sunbirds flit overhead, it's easy to lose all sense of which way is north, south, east or west. The tropical vegetation is all-enfolding.

This is unsurprising, given that Ruaha National Park covers an area of around 7,800 sq miles. For context, that's about thirteen times the size of the Maasai Mara or (to cite somewhere with rather less megafauna) three times the size of Devon. Yet the park remains relatively unknown, drawing fewer than 10% of the annual visitor numbers enjoyed by the smaller but hugely popular Serengeti, elsewhere in the country. Exactly why isn't fully clear. The infrastructure here is far less developed, but those who do come calling can expect serious wildlife rewards.

At sunset, our Land Cruiser parks by a dry riverbed and I'm handed a cold beer. I step onto the sand. The heat of the day is still strong and the sky's turning scarlet. Soon there's a kerfuffle on the opposite bank, as a troop of vervet monkeys sound warning calls. Hopping back in the vehicle, we find the cause: a well-sated leopard sauntering through the grass. As we edge closer it stops and rests, belly on the ground, eyes alive. But as the light dims, so too does the view of the cat, until there's nothing left but insect-buzz and an indistinct shape, and the knowledge that the leopard, just feet away, can see far more of the dark than we can.

There's a further big-cat highlight on my final evening before we move on to the wetlands. We come across a pride of six lions reclining in the grass, a mass of honey-hued muscle that takes the breath away. They're lying in the shade of a broad-leaved shepherd tree, licking their giant paws and slumbering on each other like house cats. The adult males have no real mane to speak of — an evolutionary quirk to cope with the Ruaha heat — but every yawn reveals teeth as deadly as daggers.

We watch them at length, until Land Cruiser and lion pride go their separate ways. We return to the comfort of the camp, where button-nosed hyraxes bumble up and down the rocks and Bloody Marys are mixed at the bar. The predators head into the dark, in search of sustenance of their own. Somewhere out there, an antelope or two are about to have a really bad night.

A new paradise

The giantess is coming. She steps along the riverbank, panning her gaze left and right. Her bill is a bayonet, her eyes are beads of amber, her neck forms a perfect S-shape. She's a 5ft-tall goliath heron, and the river is hers. Without warning, she unfurls into flight, her vast wings outspread like sails as she slow-beats along the watercourse. She's a titan in bird form, a vision of grace soaring above

Clockwise from top left: Evening drinks in Ruaha National Park; a walkway at Jabali Ridge, a sophisticated lodge built among granite boulders; a pride of lions spotted in the north of Ruaha National Park





A herd of topi, a highly social and fast antelope found in the savannas of Ruaha National Park

flatulent pods of hippos, and any fish she might spy is not long for this world.

Fadhili Saning'o looks on with interest. "There haven't been formal wildlife observations in these wetlands until recently," he whispers, gesturing at the acacia groves and the seasonal, straw-coloured grasslands around us. "But nearly 500 species have been spotted now." Fadhili is guiding me on an early-morning walk in the Usangu Wetlands. Bush thorns snag our trousers as we wander. Rippling banks of cumulus clouds fill the sky, but there's life wherever we turn — swallows gusting above the treetops, crocodiles at the water's edge, herds of impala on the flatlands.

Fadhili is the manager of the newly opened Usangu Expedition Camp, a self-styled 'citizen science experience' in the heart of the wetlands. It has an adventurous-sounding name for a reason: the site has just four guest tents, runs largely on solar power and is the sole camp in the wetlands (its nearest neighbour sits some 40 miles away, beyond thick miombo woodland). Its isolation, and its focus on conservation, means the camp plays an important role in current efforts to understand the diversity and behaviour of the local ecosystem, with guests actively encouraged to log what they see.

This is significant. When Ruaha was granted National Park status in the 1960s, the Usangu Wetlands lay outside its borders. Only in 2008 was the park expanded to include this colossal spread of riparian land, which spent a century as an unprotected hunting reserve that also suffered from the effects of cattle-ranching, poaching, illegal fishing and mismanaged irrigation. This in turn means there has only ever been a loose understanding of exactly what lives here, and how best it can be protected. When I arrive at the canvas-covered camp HQ, I'm shown two old poachers' bicycles hung from silver cluster-leaf trunks. The decoration has a simple message: things in the wetlands are moving on.

The region's ongoing recovery is vital. The Great Ruaha River, the mighty freshwater artery that has its beginnings here in the wetlands, is the lifeblood of both the park itself and much of south-eastern Tanzania. "There are 15 staff at the camp, and we all grew up locally," young guide Anderson Pakomyus Mesilla tells me, as we watch lilac-breasted rollers swooping from tree to tree. "We understand why this place is so important."

Predators roam nearby — one morning we find the chewed-clean skull of an unfortunate reedbuck — but safari guests are a novel proposition here, and vehicles are a far from customary sight, so the wildlife is more prone to keeping its distance. This doesn't stop the long grass around the tents being full of unexplained rustles, of course, nor does it stop ready sightings of everything from zebras and jackals to frogs and fish eagles.

One&Only

NYUNGWE HOUSE

Rwanda



BE AMAZED BY RWANDA

Discover an enchanting rainforest retreat in the heart of Rwanda.

Let the A&K experts create your unforgettable travel experience.

03301 739 695 | abercrombiekent.co.uk



Abercrombie & Kent



c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



Usangu Expedition Camp — which, like Jabali Ridge, is run by responsible safari specialist Asilia Africa — is open from June to November every year, when lower water levels mean the wetlands become grassy plains. It's a special area by day, and magical by night, with all cooking at the camp done over an open fire.

A study by the African Leadership University's School of Wildlife Conservation showed that some 623,000 people were employed in Tanzanian tourism pre-pandemic, a figure that was projected to have fallen by more than 475,000 during the Covid-19 outbreak. The recovery will be far from instant, but there are heartening stories from this far-flung corner of the national map.

"My grandparents lived here before it was a reserve," Anderson tells me. "My grandpa is almost 97 now, but he still tells me tales of life here, so when Asilia was looking for staff three years ago, I applied as a casual worker."

Twelve recruits spent three months making a track through the woodland for vehicles to reach the new camp. In this time, Anderson began learning English by downloading Barack Obama speeches from the internet. "Birdlife is one of my passions," he continues. "My dream was to become a guide, and now it's happened."

It's only in the vicinity of the camp the true scale of the wetlands becomes clear. In the mornings, pale greens and sun-bleached yellows stretch out in an infinite prairie, with massed herds of kudus and waterbucks

roaming the land like troops across a war map. As a safari destination, it feels different to the norm. This is partly because the wildlife, as I've seen, is more skittish than in areas with more visitors. But if you want time in the wilderness, where the nightjars chirr and the chances of seeing another vehicle are virtually zero, you need to take it on its own terms.

Campfires and conservation

Night has fallen, and the glow-in-the-dark impalas move through the trees like ghosts. The herd is less than 100ft away, but I'm watching their progress on an iPad showing live imagery from a thermal monocular camera. Anything with body warmth — bushbabies, impalas, big cats on the prowl — glows white-hot on the screen. There's no disturbance to the animals, no lights being shone in their direction, just a private viewing of the plains at night. It's also an effective way of formally recording the movements of whatever happens to be out and about.

This approach to conservation is no token gesture. Supported by investment from billionaire businessman Jim Ratcliffe, the camp plays a key role in a three-way partnership between Asilia, the Tanzania National Parks Authority and the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute, which are collectively conducting a biodiversity audit of the wetlands. Everyone who stays at the camp is given a motion-sensitive camera trap on arrival, a device that's placed out in the bush.

Above: Guide Anderson Pakomyus Mesilla places camera traps with the writer in the Usangu Wetlands of Ruaha National Park



Chef Ally Mang'undaa cooks dinner on an open fire at Usangu Expedition Camp

It's then monitored when the guest departs. The results form part of the wider data set; rare species such as pangolins and wild dogs have already been spotted on camera.

"The goal of the whole project is to get a better understanding of what lives here and the threats they face," explains one of the coordinators, Leena Lulandala, when I meet her in the Douglas Bell Eco-Research Station, housed in a tent on the camp outskirts. "We've captured 45,000 images over the past 11 months." She then talks me through the iNaturalist app, which guests are encouraged to download to record any unusual sightings. Visitors can even pay to assist in the darting and collaring of a lion or leopard, a measure that helps safeguard the cats' future.

In line with the conservation ethos, the two safari vehicles used by the camp are upcycled old Land Rovers, rebuilt from the wheels up. They've been modified to run on ethanol, a fuel made from molasses from a nearby sugar plantation. "We call this one 'gongo'," says Anderson, as he hops up behind one of the steering wheels. "It's a local word for moonshine."

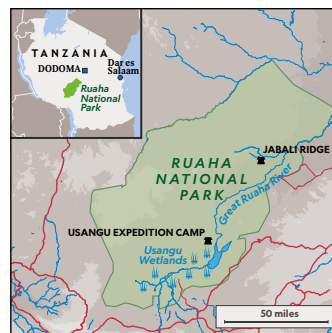
The lack of any other camps in the region gives the whole area the feel of somewhere unsullied. Guests can try walking safaris and water safaris, as well more standard exploratory drives. All of them feel like trips into a private outback. One evening we drive out to a bend in the river for a drink. We're surrounded by birdsong and darkening woods. Hippos stir the river's surface, hornbills fly overhead, warthogs

and ostriches appear from stage right. And there's not another traveller in sight.

Back at camp, as stews bubble on the fire and constellations dot the night, the conversation turns to large antelopes. The floodplains are full of them, each one a precision-engineered herbivore with tall shoulders, delicate markings and don't-hassle-me horns. One species in particular is here in high volumes. "We'll find topis tomorrow," says Fadhili. "Lots of them."

He's true to his word. Early the next morning, we head off to reach some of the wide-open grasslands further from camp. As the land begins to lighten, zebras and cattle egrets appear in numbers. We pass through rolling scrubland and clusters of trees covered in the dangling baubles of weaverbird nests. After an hour, chocolate-brown specks start to busy the horizon.

By the time we cut the engine, these specks have multiplied. Each one is a topi with banded thighs, pink ears and legs built to run. A vast herd is passing across the land, slowly at first until, on some unseen signal, it stirs to life as though called to a pressing appointment on the other side of the plains. The spectacle of hundreds of cantering antelopes is hypnotic. The herd's behaviour will go down in the log — another piece of data to help build a picture of life on the wetlands — but for now the animals flow like water across this remote pocket of East Africa, travelling south as the savannah billows out around them. □



GETTING THERE & AROUND

No airlines fly direct from the UK to Tanzania. Carriers with one-stop options between London and Dar es Salaam's Julius Nyerere International Airport include Emirates (via Dubai), Kenya Airways (via Nairobi) and Turkish Airlines (via Istanbul). [emirates.com](https://www.emirates.com) [kenya-airways.com](https://www.kenya-airways.com) [turkishairlines.com](https://www.turkishairlines.com)

Average flight time: 14h.

From Dar es Salaam, internal flights on small Auric Air planes land at various airstrips in Ruaha National Park.

[auricair.com](https://www.auricair.com)

Getting from Jabali Ridge to Usangu Expedition Camp is done either by 4x4 (5-6 hours with stops) or via helicopter.

WHEN TO GO

Ruaha is best visited during the long dry season between June and October. Unlike some of the busier parks in the north of the country, it's unlikely to feel crowded, even in peak season.

WHERE TO STAY

Usangu Expedition Camp. From US\$700 (£610) per person per night, with minimum three-night stay and a compulsory conservation donation of US\$250 (£220) per person per day. [asiliaafrica.com](https://www.asiliaafrica.com)

Jabali Ridge. From US\$875 (£775) per person per night. [asiliaafrica.com](https://www.asiliaafrica.com)

MORE INFO

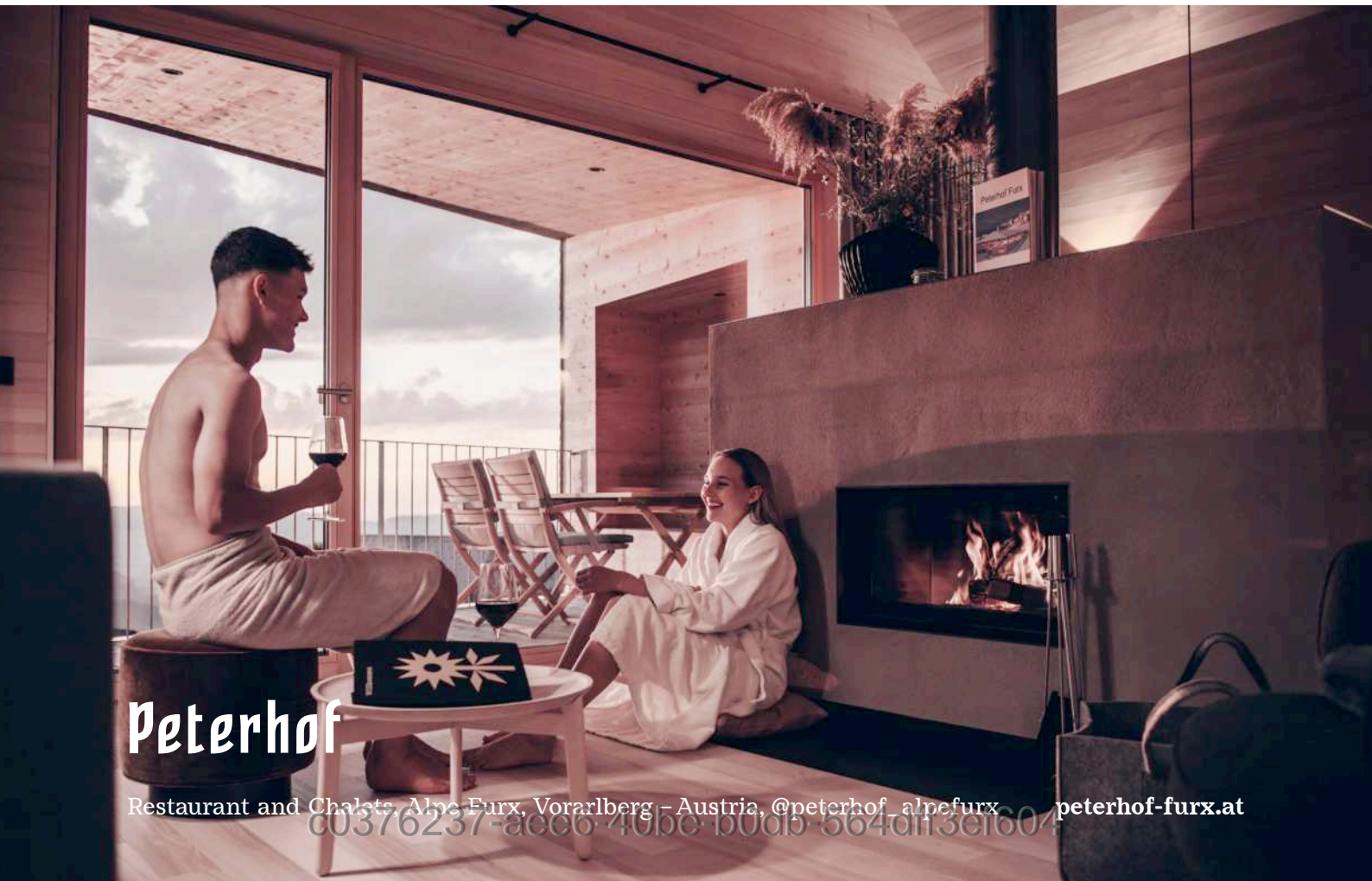
Tanzania Safari Guide by Philip Briggs and Chris McIntyre (Bradt). RRP: £17.99

HOW TO DO IT

Asilia offers a seven-night safari with three nights at Usangu Expedition Camp, three nights at Jabali Ridge and a night at the Dar es Salaam Serena Hotel, from US\$8,020 (£7,025) per person, based on two people sharing. This rate includes all internal flights from Dar es Salaam, safari activities, all meals and house drinks, as well as a US\$750 (£655) conservation donation to the Usangu project. [asiliaafrica.com](https://www.asiliaafrica.com)



Nestled gently between heaven and earth



Peterhof

Restaurant and Chalets, Alpe Furr, Vorarlberg - Austria, @peterhof_alpefurr peterhof-furr.at

0376237-acc6-40bc-b0db-564d113e1604



INTO THE DEEP

IMAGE: AWL IMAGES



DOTTED WITH ICEBERGS, ABANDONED VIKING SETTLEMENTS AND HARDY HUNTING COMMUNITIES, THE FAR-FLUNG FJORDS OF SOUTH GREENLAND MAKE FOR AN UNPARALLELED POLAR CRUISE. SAILING DURING HIGH SUMMER, A NEW, STATE-OF-THE-ART SHIP OFFERS FRESH PERSPECTIVES ON THE DRAMATIC COASTLINE, WHILE ON-SHORE EXCURSIONS REVEAL THE ELEMENTAL FORCES SHAPING LOCAL LIFE

WORDS: ADRIAN PHILLIPS. PHOTOGRAPHS: MIKE UNWIN





A Zodiac boat heads to shore, part of Quark Expeditions' voyage to south Greenland

Previous pages: Sunrise over the southeastern fjords, Greenland

IMAGE: ACACIA JOHNSON



Well, at least I'm not in my underpants. "I forgot to pack my swimming trunks," says the man behind me with a nervous laugh, crossing his hands awkwardly in front of an off-white pair of Y-fronts. I smile sympathetically and assure him nobody will notice, which is a lie but not a big one, because most people in this queue are too preoccupied with what's coming next to notice a middle-aged man in his undies.

They know it's going to hurt. Ahead, there's a squeal and a splash, and a raucous cheer from the onlookers, and the line moves forward again. Another squeal, another roar, another step closer to the end. My turn comes far too soon. I'm led to the platform at the back of the ship, a thin lattice of metal above a sea that's black, deep and very, very cold. Someone attaches a line around my waist, which the crew will use to haul me back with if I go into shock. What am I doing?! There's an iceberg over there, for heaven's sake. I hesitate like a child on a high board. Another second, and I definitely won't do it. But my body unlocks and I make the leap, and then I'm gasping and cursing in the water, and scrabbling back aboard with my skin on fire, while Captain Underpants is ushered forward for his own moment of reckoning.

The Polar Plunge has become a rite of passage on trips like these, a reinvented walking of the plank that concludes with fluffy dressing gowns, shots of vodka and triumphant high-fives between those who dare to jump. And, of course, the symbolism is unmistakable:

'immersive' experiences are what a week-long journey into the fjords of South Greenland is all about.

That's not to say this is a trip for Bear Grylls types, though. The *Ultramarine* is the newest ship in Quark Expeditions' fleet and has no shortage of comforts, from a spa offering seaweed treatments to a Panorama Lounge, where you can sip martinis while admiring views through an arc of floor-to-ceiling glass. But such luxuries are a sideshow; topping the bill for passengers on the *Ultramarine* are forays into the wilderness that other ships can't reach.

Setting the stage

"Prepare to be taken to the beating heart of Greenland," urges expedition leader Alison Gordon, during one of our first morning briefings. She has an ear for the theatrical, and her statement is met with a chorus of whoops from the Americans among the 130 passengers. The Brits clap politely. There follows a flurry of information and advice: dress in layers, wear your allocated Muck Boots, use the forearm-to-forearm sailor's grip when being helped into the rigid inflatable Zodiac boats. Respect local communities, don't take photos through their windows, do have an open mind, don't pet arctic dogs, do remember your waterproof trousers, don't rearrange stacks of stones if you see them — they might be signposts of some sort.

Most importantly, be flexible. "You've seen the trip itinerary? Well, go and tear it up!" says Alison with relish. "We're at the mercy of the elements, so we must grab opportunities where they come." Prowling the stage of the ship's Ambassador Theatre, she sweeps the audience



Expedition guide Lilliana Schönberger leads travellers along the shoreline of Tasermiut Fjord

Clockwise from above: a statue of Norse explorer Leif Erikson stands among harebells overlooking the settlement of Qassiarsuk; a Lapland bunting, one of only a handful of songbirds to breed on the Greenland tundra; hikers tackle the icecap near Kangerlussuaq



IMAGE: MANDY CREIGHTON



with her eyes. “Ladies and gentlemen, we’re scrapping the Zodiac activities this afternoon” — pause for groans of disappointment — “because the charts show a window of clear weather” — pause for puzzled looks. “Instead” — an agonising, pregnant pause — “we’re going to get you up in the sky!” And with a final flourish, Alison raises her fist as the room dissolves into prolonged whooping and slightly more vigorous polite clapping.

Among the *Ultramarine*’s bells and whistles are two H145 twin-engine helicopters. I join six other passengers on the top deck to be weighed before boarding. “It’s for our fuel calculations,” explains a crew member apologetically as we take turns at the scales. “Don’t worry, we won’t post the figures on social media.”

Our pilot, Jonny Mutch, is ex-military and has a steady, straight-backed air of confidence that’s reassuring when you’re strapped in for take-off from a floating helipad in the back of beyond. “I like to imagine you’re all holding gin and tonics when I take off,” Jonny reveals soothingly through our earphones, striking a patricianly tone that’s more ‘top hat’ than *Top Gun*. The engine whines louder, the thud of the rotor blades hammering through my chest, and we lift from the ship — up, up, up — before banking away to our left with silky smoothness. “Not a drop spilt,” Jonny declares with satisfaction, his voice a cocktail of cut glass and honey.

The ship has moored in a fjord called Prince Christian Sound, which cuts inland from the south-eastern edge of Greenland. Now, from 4,500ft, we get a sense of the

sheer scale of what’s around us. Leaving the sea behind, we follow the path of a glacier through steep valleys and vast, dark peaks. For all its beauty, this isn’t the nature of love poems; the glacier is scratched and gashed as though fresh from a cat fight. Boulders are strewn about like the rubble of destroyed buildings. The mountains are hard and jagged, with nothing of the pastoral to soften them. This is nature battle-hardened by a long war between rock and ice — a grinding, gouging, gnawing struggle over thousands of years that’s scraped the flesh from the landscape.

Next morning, we’re hitting the water again but, this time, we’re shrink-wrapped in dry suits and safely packed into kayaks. There are 10 of us in the group, and I’m paired with an indomitable septuagenarian from Bristol called Jo. I like her instantly. “Are you sure you’re paddling back there?” she calls over her shoulder, her own paddle lying unused across her lap as she takes photos of the shoreline. “We don’t seem to be getting anywhere!”

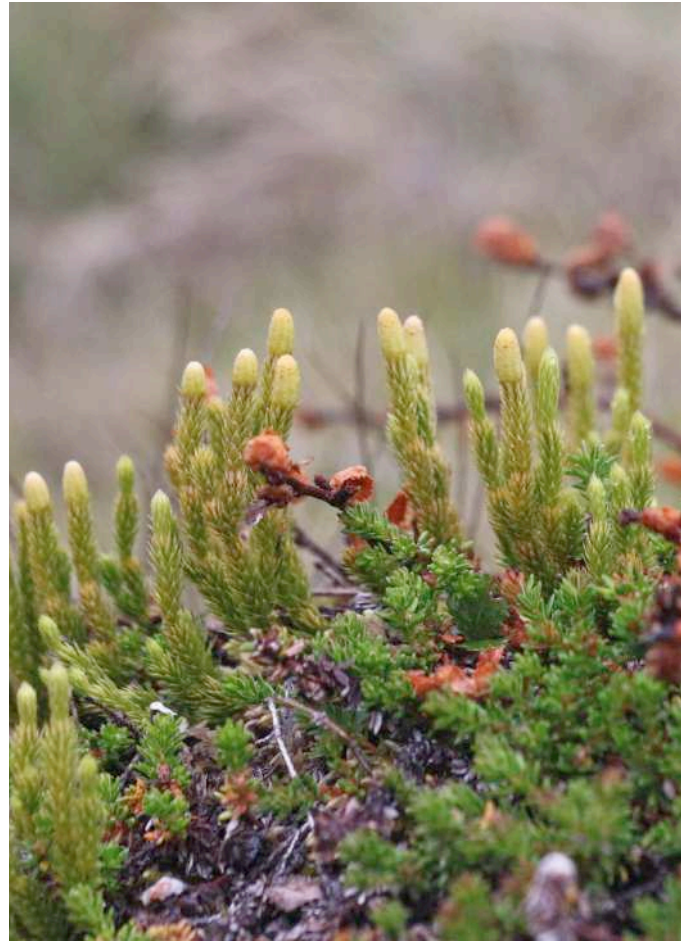
An expedition is as much about the people as the places. There’s a wide range on this trip, from pensioners and young couples to families with teenage children. Jo is travelling solo on her fifth polar expedition, and she certainly knows how to squeeze the best from an excursion. On her instructions, I paddle us to the base of a photogenic waterfall, and then along the edge of the fjord in energetic pursuit of a northern wheatear, tail flashing white as it flits ahead. All the while, my arms stinging with lactic acid, Jo entertains me with glimpses of the world through her eyes. “In Scotland, they call that bird a ‘white arse’,”



she says as she sits back and enjoys the chase. “A much better name, don’t you think?” And then, perhaps prompted by the swirl of an Arctic char in the water, she continues: “Do you like sushi? I’ve never quite seen the point of it.”

Down here, the mountainsides seem no less forbidding than they had from the helicopter, but I now see that the lower slopes pop with the vivid colours of life. Blue harebells nod in patches above the shoreline and Arctic fireweed flares red. From this angle, nature seems more creative than destructive. We paddle past an iceberg that looks like a Henry Moore sculpture, a perfect hole through its centre, shaped and sanded by the sea. When we reach the end of the fjord’s cul-de-sac, we’re met by a gaggle of rocky cones stretching back from the water’s edge. These are drumlins, our guide, Callum Findley, tells us, formed when dirt and stones funnel to the bottom of a glacier through sinkholes in the ice. The glacier has long retreated, but the drumlins remain, some barely waist high, others the size of hills, but all so neat they seem crafted by an artist’s hand.

The tentacles of the Greenlandic Ice Sheet fall short of these southern fjords, and life prospers in the summer months. The following day, having been dropped off by helicopter at Tasermiut Fjord in the west, we discover the ground beneath our Muck Boots is covered with a springy mat of miniature trees, shrubs and grasses. They include



Aappilatoq, a settlement of 100 people beside Prince Christian Sound

Clockwise from above: One-cone club-moss, a common species in the Arctic tundra; viewpoint overlooking the Greenland ice sheet, reached by helicopter tour; an Aappilatoq resident entertains visitors on the accordion



dwarf birch, arctic willow and evergreen crowberry bushes, covered in purple berries that are used to make wines and liqueurs. The ankle-height trees could have been lifted from a model village, the permafrost preventing them from digging deep and growing tall. Elsewhere, the land has the look of a seabed, mint-green balls of lichen lying like anemones among the rocks. “Reindeer absolutely love those,” says our Icelandic guide, Dagny Ívarsdóttir.

The guides carry guns in case of polar bears, but the animals are rarely seen this far south. In fact, few animals of any sort inhabit this region. We find the hoof print of a sheep belonging to a distant farm and the droppings of an arctic hare. Dagny shows us a dense quenelle of matted hair, the regurgitated remains of a white-tailed eagle’s meal. But nothing moves now. Nothing except the mosquitoes — mosquito larvae thrive in the shallow ponds of the tundra. Each time we alight from a rigid inflatable or helicopter, we hastily drag mosquito nets over our heads before trooping into the wilderness like beekeepers on a team-building day out. Dagny tries to make the mosquitoes interesting rather than irritating, as they form clouds around our nets. Only the females bite, she tells us, and they’re attracted to the carbon dioxide in our breath. “So, if you want them to leave you alone,” adds Jo, “all you have to do is stop breathing.”

Into the village

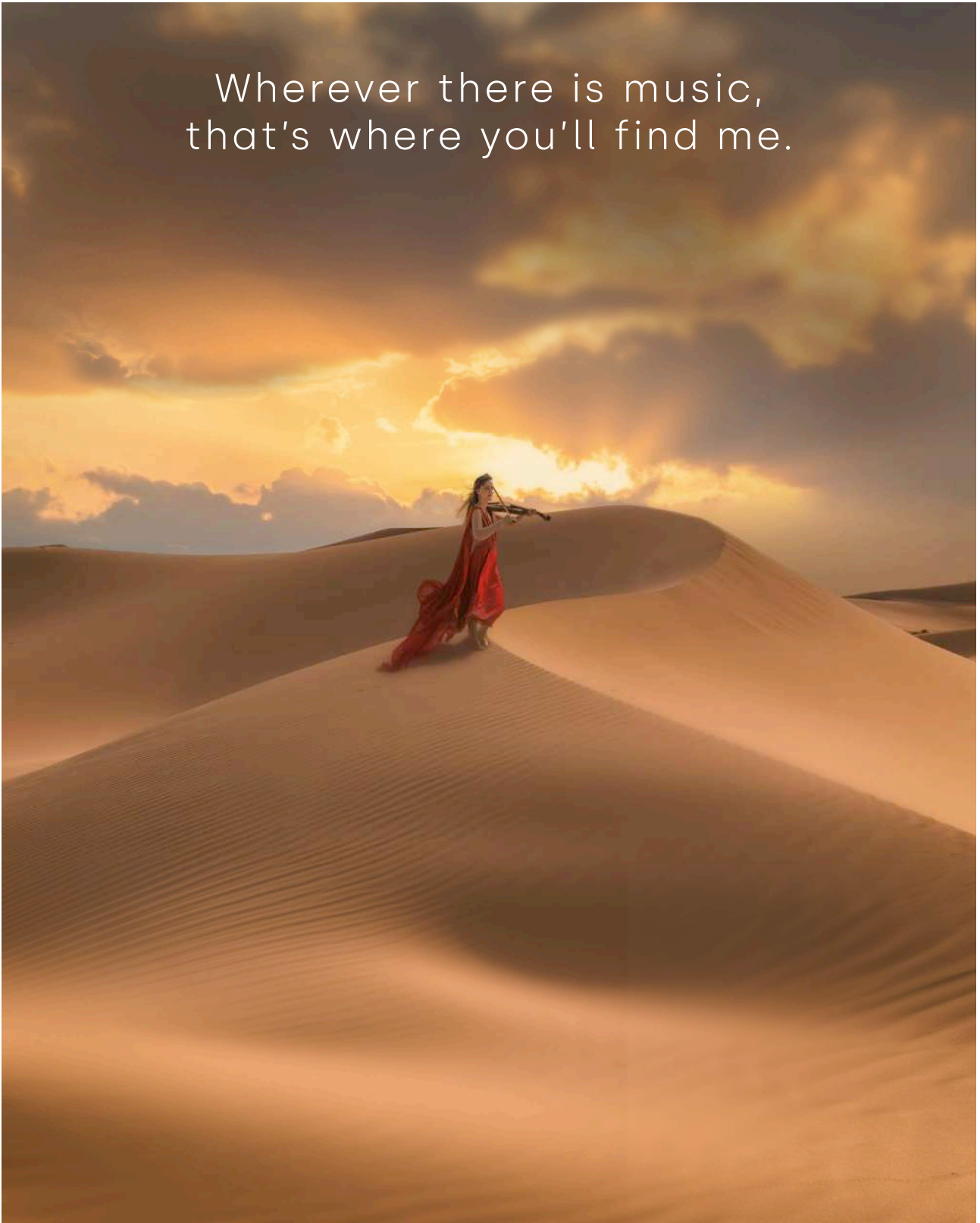
Back on board, mealtimes are hefty spreads — but the real feast is alongside us. As the ship glides onward, its windows become screens for a monumental work of natural cinematography. Cliffs loom close, purple-grey



qobuz

REDISCOVER MUSIC

Wherever there is music,
that's where you'll find me.



*Music streaming, downloads, and beyond.
The most authentic sound quality.
First-class original editorial.
A committed community of music lovers.*



c0376237-ae66-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



Ultramarine, the newest ship in Quark Expeditions' fleet

rock streaked with black lines like congealed blood. One evening, as we exit the mouth of a fjord, a trio of turreted icebergs are caught so perfectly in a strip of late sun through the cloud that I could have been watching a scene of divine revelation in a Biblical epic.

And occasionally, just occasionally, there's a sign of human habitation. We pass a clutch of four houses on a flat rock, and marvel at the resilience required to live in such isolation. We visit the remains of a Norse settlement called Herjolfsnes, where a chieftain called Herjolf Bardsson landed in AD 985, and I picture longships emerging among the icebergs from the mist at the horizon. By the 15th century, though, the Vikings had packed up and shipped out. No one knows why. They were hardly a delicate breed but I strongly suspect they couldn't hack the mosquitoes.

Today, around 56,000 people call Greenland home, mainly the descendants of Inuits from Alaska. But you don't just bump into a Greenlander. This is the world's largest island, more than 100 times bigger than Wales — indeed, so big that it officially lies north, east, south and west of Iceland, all at once. It's the least densely populated region anywhere on the planet. However, our programme was designed in discussion with local communities, and we've been invited to spend our penultimate day with the around 100 or so residents of Aappilattoq.

It's not until our rigid inflatable rounds a tongue of headland that we see the fishing village on its sheltered bay. In fact, we smell it before we see it, an odour of fish, seaweed and something oily that might be rendered blubber. A dead ring seal with blood on its snout floats next to a fishing boat at the jetty, tied to the stern with string. There's a bucket of glassy-eyed fish heads, and various

tangles of fishing nets and buoys. A wooden-shafted spear stands propped against a post.

Beyond the jetty are 20 houses, with slatted wooden walls and brick chimneys above steep-pitched roofs. Each is painted blue, or red or green, and in one of them lives Themo Benjaminssen, the owner of the wooden-shafted spear. He greets us outside, a shaggy arctic dog at his heel and the pelt of a polar bear draped across a table. "You'll get the chance to speak to the village hunter," Alison had told us at last night's briefing. "This might be confronting, but keep an open mind." Yellowed claws spiral from the flattened paws of the bear skin.

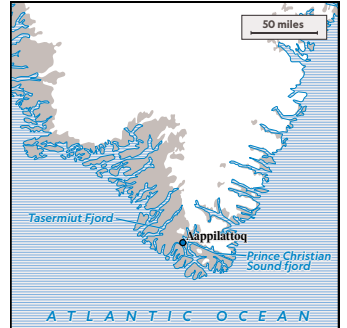
"I killed this polar bear last spring, six hours from here," says Themo, with a hint of defiance that suggests he expects disapproval from this gaggle of green tourists. There's an awkward silence, and then a question comes. What do you do with it? "Cook and eat the meat," Timu replies. "Everyone in the village shares the food. Sometimes other communities, too." We watch him, processing things, deciding what we think about that, and he returns our gaze unblinkingly, thumbs hooked in his jeans. "And my granddaughter sleeps on the fur," he adds finally, with a fond chuckle that breaks the ice.

Themo tells us his father was a hunter, and that his son will be one too. He explains hunting is strictly controlled, that he has a licence to kill a maximum of four bears and two minke whales each year, that this is hunting for subsistence, hunting done sustainably. He describes his fear while tracking a bear and his jubilation when the kill is made. We learn that polar bear tastes like lamb and that minke whales are very heavy, and that nothing — nothing — is ever wasted.





The wooden church of Aappilattoq, a settlement that dates back to 1922



GETTING THERE & AROUND

There are no direct flights from the UK to Greenland. Carriers including British Airways, EasyJet, Icelandair and Play offer services from London, Edinburgh and Manchester to Reykjavik in Iceland, where there are connecting flights to Narsarsuaq in southern Greenland, operated by Air Greenland. ba.com easyjet.com icelandair.com flyplay.com airgreenland.com
Average flight time: 6h.

WHEN TO GO

Expedition cruises take place between June and August, before the pack ice sets. Daytime temperatures in the south typically range between 5C and 15C, although it can feel colder in the wind. Conditions are very changeable in this region and local fogs and winds can impact on the timings of planned excursions from the ship.

WHERE TO STAY

The *Ultramarine* has en suite cabins accommodating up to five, many with private balconies. Park Inn by Radisson Reykjavik Keflavik Airport, Iceland. From £140, B&B. radissonhotels.com

HOW TO DO IT

Discover the World offers the eight-night South Greenland Expedition Voyage aboard Quark Expeditions' *Ultramarine* from £11,008 per person (next departing on 14 and 21 July 2023). Price includes charter flights between Reykjavik and Narsarsuaq; all meals on board; helicopter, boat and kayak excursions; presentations by the expedition team; and post-expedition hotel accommodation. Excludes international flights from the UK to Reykjavik. discover-the-world.com

Nearby, the choir is practising in the church, eight villagers in matching white shirts singing about the changing seasons. I take a seat at a red-painted pew while the choirmaster introduces the next hymn. "In winter, it is cold and there is wind," he explains, "but this song is about summer, which is a wonderful time for us." He pauses as a thought strikes him, adds a quick "Apart from the mosquitoes", and then launches into a gentle song that rises and falls like the breeze.

An hour later, as I'm clattered to the ground, I discover that the choirmaster sings rather more gently than he plays football. We've been challenged to a match, and it's clear that the villagers of Aappilattoq take the sport seriously. There are determined runs and flying tackles, long-range shots and a much-contested penalty decision. In between breaks to retrieve the ball from the harbour, the villagers score four times; and it could have been more but for some backs-to-the-wall heroics from the ship's doctor in goal. "Bad luck, Team Ultramarine!" calls Jo consolingly from the sideline, as I traipse off the pitch with no goals and two bruised shins.

The last day comes and it feels the trip has been building to this moment. Like any good dramatist, Alison saves the best for last. "The Greenlandic ice sheet reminds me of my small place in the ecosystem," she says, and as the throb of the helicopter fades and silence rings, I do find myself feeling quite little. The ice is two miles thick in places and spreads north from here for thousands of miles. Just a handful of people have set eyes on this gargantuan thing. And now, one of them is me.

I climb a hill of glacial scree. This isn't a landscape of virgin snow; below me the ice is grey with dirt and dust — squint, and it could be sun-baked desert rock. To my right, an ice floe drags inexorably downwards, its surface buckled in folds like charging waves. On the distant fjord, icebergs look like clouds. Greenland is a place where cold can seem hot and solid can seem liquid and where nature destroys or creates, depending on where you're sitting. "It gives you a different perspective on things, doesn't it?" says Jo, joining me on a boulder. I nod and we let time pass. "Who knows," she continues after a while. "If I stay here long enough, perhaps I'll see the point of sushi." □



Travel better. Home swap.

When you're travelling, your home often sits there empty. But what if your home could pay for great holidays? As a member of award-winning site Love Home Swap, everything's possible.

Let likeminded members stay in your place while you stay in theirs, and you could save thousands on accommodation costs.

lovehomeswap.com/travelbetter



**LOVE
HOME
SWAP**

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

CAMERA READY

Capture the majesty of Antarctica

The stunning landscapes of Antarctica make for a photographer's paradise. Take an expedition cruise to catch its ever-changing light. Words: Emma Gregg



Every year, in the frozen Antarctic summer, extraordinary spectacles unfold. Whales surge to gorge on krill; migratory birds fly in from afar; and the penguin colonies reach fever pitch. One of the best ways to explore the continent is with the expert guidance of an expedition cruise. No two trips to the Antarctic with the experts are alike — weather and sea conditions vary constantly, shaping itineraries and activity schedules on the fly. Luxury vessel operator Ponant, in partnership with one of the UK's leading polar expedition specialists, Polar Routes, offers a range of incredible experiences and exquisite adventures. Here are a few highlights.

DRAKE PASSAGE

Even on a luxury line, there's no escaping the rush. Crossing the ocean from Argentina or Chile can be a turbulent experience, but an exciting voyage.

BEST ACTIVITY: Pelagic birdwatching on deck. Wandering albatrosses, giant petrels and Antarctic prions appearing above.

BEST PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Albatross in flight over the open ocean.

PALMER ARCHIPELAGO

Just off the Antarctic Peninsula's northwest coast sits a cluster of majestic islands named the Palmer Archipelago. Cruise the area amid iceberg dotted water and stunning mountains streaked with snow.

BEST ACTIVITY: Setting foot amongst braying gentoos at Port Charcot or Port Lockroy.

BEST PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Catching a gentoo penguin feeding its chick.

ANTARCTIC PENINSULA

Cruising into mainland Antarctica's tranquil bays and channels is always a highlight.

BEST ACTIVITY: Cruising with mountains, glaciers, and icebergs reflected in the mirror-dark waters of Neko Harbour, Paradise Bay, and the Lemaire Channel.

BEST PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: A shot of a humpback whale breaking the surface against a spectacular backdrop.

SOUTH OF THE CIRCLE

In good weather, your ship may cross the Antarctic Circle, venturing south to Detaille Island, Pourquoi Pas Island and Marguerite

Bay. Marvel at the spectacular glaciers, icebergs, and catch glimpses of the wildlife: snow petrels, crabeater seals, brown skuas, and Adelie penguins.

BEST ACTIVITY: Kayaking.

BEST PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Your kayak hull in a dramatic seascape.

WEDDELL SEA

You can really feel the remoteness when you reach Paulet Island and Danger Islands. It was the last safe haven before Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* stuck fast in the ice. Ponant offers a route for travellers that focuses specifically on the Weddell Sea and its emperor penguin colonies. Keen-eyed travellers can hone their bird-spotting skills on 16-day cruise routes alongside this specialised polar expedition, learning about the continent's spectacular wildlife with the aid of experts.

BEST ACTIVITY: History, science lectures.

BEST PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: The huge tabular iceberg.

SOUTH SHETLAND ISLANDS

The bleakly volcanic Deception Island was once a former whaling station, and is now scattered with remnants of the brutal era. It is home to chinstrap penguins and elephant seals.

BEST ACTIVITY: Exploring the scattered abandoned buildings and machinery you can still find on Deception Island.

BEST PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Endurance rescue memorial on Elephant Island.

SOUTH GEORGIA

Visited on Ponant's longest routes, Salisbury Plain, Fortuna Bay, St Andrew's Bay and Gold Harbour, you'll see restless king penguins, mighty elephant seals and feisty fur seals.

BEST ACTIVITY: Zooming through the surf to land close to wildlife colonies.

BEST PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Panoramic shots of vast groups of king penguins and seals, and intimate close-ups of individuals.

PLAN YOUR TRIP

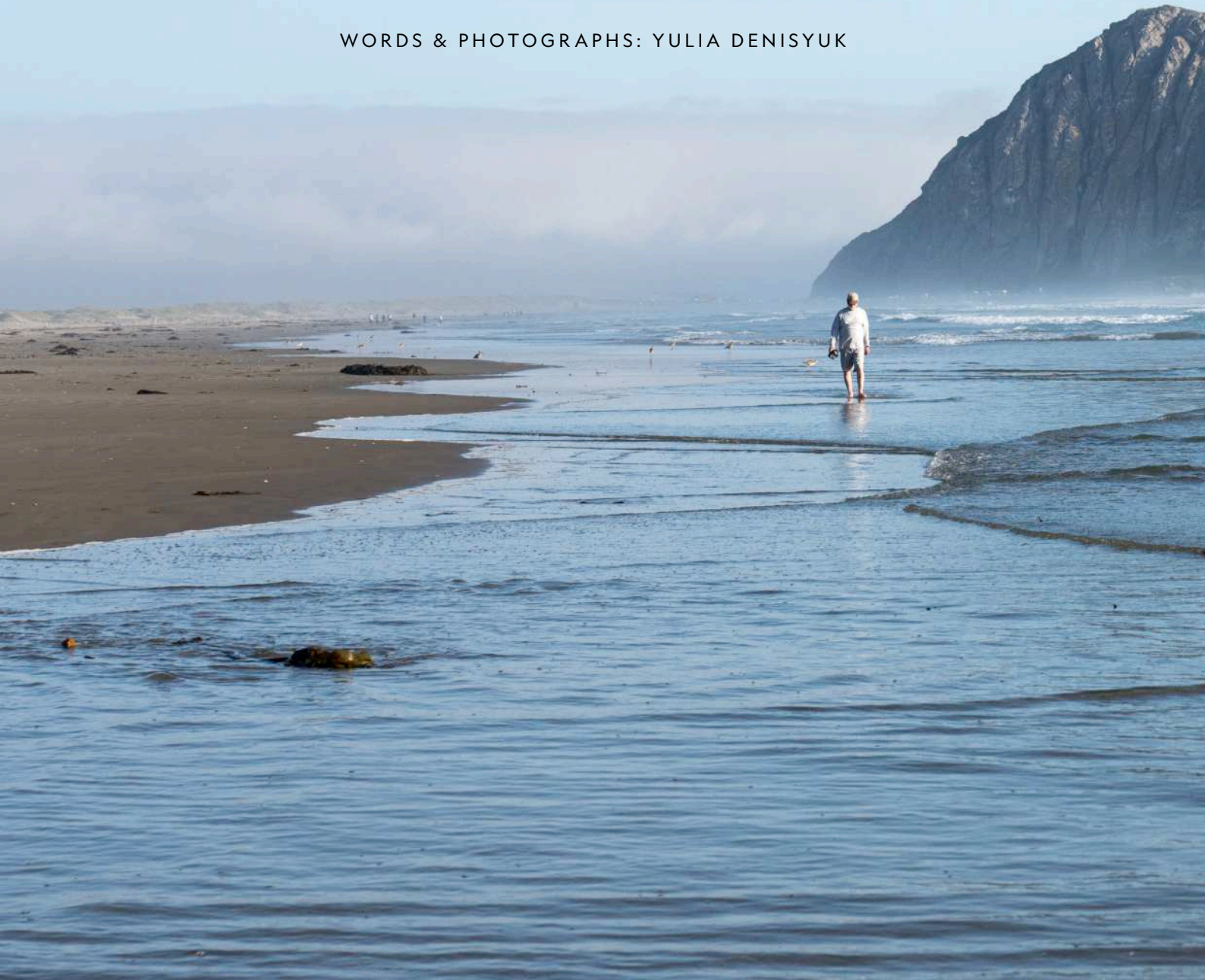
Ponant's luxury cruises can be booked through one of the UK's leading expedition cruise specialists, Polar Routes. For more information, visit polarroutes.co.uk



CALIFORNIA

IT MIGHT BE HALFWAY BETWEEN LOS ANGELES AND SAN FRANCISCO, BUT CENTRAL CALIFORNIA'S SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY IS A WORLD AWAY FROM THE FAST BUZZ OF THE CITY. IN THIS SLOW-PACED, RURAL REGION, ARTISAN COMMUNITIES ARE CONNECTED BOTH TO EACH OTHER AND THE NATURAL WORLD, WORKING AGAINST BACKDROPS OF OLIVE GROVES, COOL VALLEYS AND A COASTLINE BLANKETED IN EARLY-MORNING MIST

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS: YULIA DENISYUK

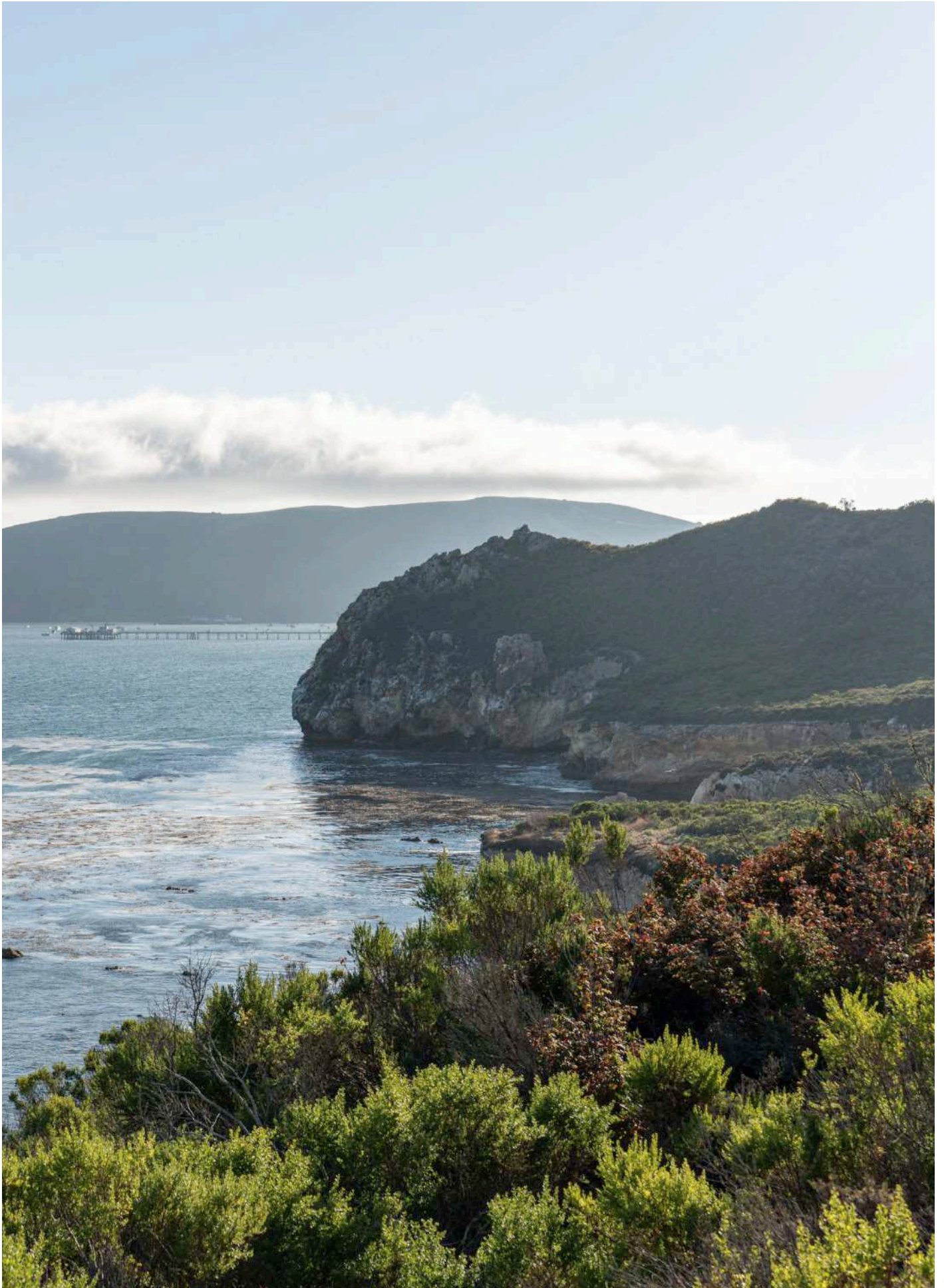






“Perhaps it’s the slower pace of life, but people here haven’t lost their connection to the land. Everybody I know forages,” muses Spencer Marley, founder of Marley Family Seaweeds, which runs foraging tours. Spencer has spent nearly two decades earning a living from the San Luis Obispo coast, first as a foreman at the Morro Bay Oyster Company, then as a commercial wild salmon fisherman. His latest marine operation focuses on procuring the best edible marine algae. In the early-morning tide pools of the Estero Bluffs State Park, Spencer delights in seaweeds most of us wouldn’t look twice at — laminaria, fucus, sea lettuce, wakame, nori and kombu — harvesting the fronds with painstaking care. He believes marine algae should play a bigger role in the push for a more sustainable living. His fun, immersive tours aim to benefit this cause.










A short drive inland from the coast, up a narrow country road in the oak-dotted hills of Cambria, lies a ranch with no wi-fi or phone signal — but plenty of goats. This is the home of Jack and Michelle Rudolph, who quit their lives in Silicon Valley in 2012 to start Stepladder Ranch & Creamery, teaching themselves the basics of dairy farming online. Today, it makes small batches of multi-award-winning artisanal cheeses, including Rocky Butte, a six-months-aged seasonal curd cheese made with milk from their herd of 40 Lamancha goats, a breed known for their affectionate disposition. Michelle says that thanks to the goats, she never has a bad day at work. Open for tours several times a year, the creamery also offers guided virtual tastings and posts updates on the goats on its YouTube channel. 





Early in the morning, before the coastal fog lifts, Neal Maloney, owner of Morro Bay Oyster Company, takes his motor boat out to Morro Bay, an expansive lagoon and saltwater marsh just outside Downtown San Luis Obispo. A tiny platform serves as the hub of the company's Pacific Gold oyster-farming operation. The prized bivalves thrive in the bay's cold waters, rich with nutrients from both the Pacific and the freshwater streams of nearby volcanic aquifers. Each oyster at Morro Bay Oyster Company is harvested, inspected and sorted by hand, with the smaller specimens returned to the water. Earthy and sweet, the oysters are rich with the flavour of the sea and the volcanic sand that's equally part of their habitat.





In a secluded valley half an hour south of breezy Morro Bay, oak and manzanita trees flourish, as do Tuscan olives — lots of them. With hot, dry summers and mild, cool winters, San Luis Obispo provides the perfect growing conditions. Tiber Canyon Ranch is one of the first artisanal olive growers in Central California. Chris Anderson and Will Carlton arrived at the ranch to open a glass-blowing studio in 1993 and, over the years, have planted leccino, frantoio, pendolino and coratina olives on the property's 50 acres. During harvest, friends and family gather at the ranch to hand pick the fruit and send it to a nearby mill to be pressed. Alongside extra virgin olive oil, Tiber Canyon Ranch also produces oils flavoured with yuzu, lemon and tangerine.





A dramatic backdrop to San Luis Obispo county, The Nine Sisters is a range of volcanic mountains stretching from Morro Bay to the town of San Luis Obispo. The peaks' mineral-rich soil goes some way in explaining why so many vineyards, ranches and farms dot the region's hills. Microclimates are also a factor: cold currents from Alaska keep air fresh on the coast, while inland the volcanoes block the breeze, keeping the areas behind the peaks hot and dry. It's this climate diversity that explains why such a variety of agricultural ventures can thrive in such a small territory. Sadly, most visitors only stop in San Luis Obispo briefly as they head along Highway 1, which hugs the coast between Los Angeles and San Francisco. But venture a little deeper into the local communities to discover a different California, one of artisans deeply connected to a remarkable landscape. ▣

THE SOUND OF
Entertainment



THE SOUND OF
Festivals



THE SOUND OF
The Unexpected



**VISIT
BAKERSFIELD**
.COM

THE SOUND OF *Something Better*



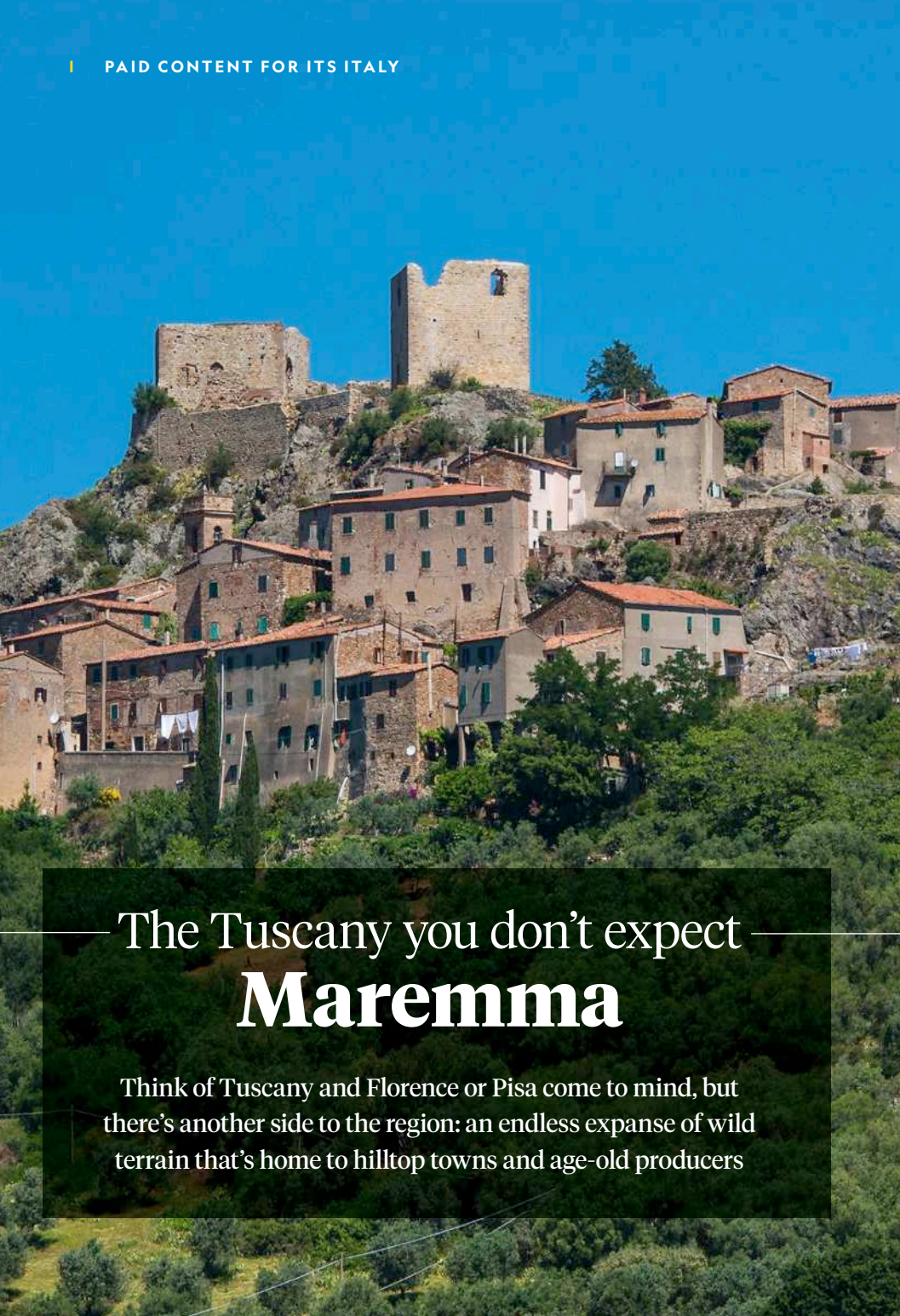
THE SOUND OF
Adventure



THE SOUND OF
Family Fun



THE SOUND OF
Thrills



The Tuscany you don't expect Maremma

Think of Tuscany and Florence or Pisa come to mind, but there's another side to the region: an endless expanse of wild terrain that's home to hilltop towns and age-old producers

Situated in western central Italy, the Maremma region is where Tuscany takes a wild turn. Caldana and Roccastrada are two hilltop towns still refreshingly off the tourist radar here, surveying fields, olive groves, corduroy-like vineyards and forested slopes from on high.

A vision in warm stone, Caldana takes you back to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance era, as you tread softly through narrow, shady alleys up to its 16th-century church, San Biagio. Days here are about slowing the pace and lingering over lazy lunches of homemade pasta and zesty vermentino white wine at an osteria. Strike out into the countryside some 30 minutes north, however, and you'll find

Roccastrada's more wooded surroundings. Standing 1,558ft above sea level in the park of the Colline Metallifere Grossetane, the area is full of paths and hiking routes to discover by foot, horse or mountain bike.

London-based ITS ITALY aims to simplify the process of buying and managing property abroad. Having signed a partnership with more than 60 municipalities across Italy, ITS also offers concrete opportunities to invest and integrate with local communities, while reinvigorating small towns and villages. Find out more at itsfor.it

ITS ITALY

TWO LOCAL PRODUCERS IN CALDANA, TUSCANY

FRANTOIO SAN LUGI

In the silver-green olive groves brushing the foot of Caldana's hills, this eco-conscious mill is the brainchild of Paolo Sabatini, who's passionate about the land and its outstanding extra-virgin olive oil. Olives harvested at groves within a 30-mile radius of the mill are processed within 48 hours to retain maximum flavour, and the oil is extracted using renewable energy. The mill also sells aromatic oils infused with truffle, red pepper, oregano and rosemary. Try them at an oil tasting, together with a glass of Tuscan wine and a platter of salumi, cheese and olives. frantioisanluigi.com

QUINTO CANTO

Naturopath, farmer and beekeeper Simone Bonucci is a great believer in nature's healing powers. Here you can stock up on lavender, honey, oils, beeswax candles, herb-laced liqueurs and organic cosmetics. A nod to Dante's fifth canto in the Inferno, Quinta Canto is so named in recognition of our need to stay rooted to nature in a world hell-bent on progress and innovation. Simone also runs workshops in soap making and naturopathy. quintocanto.net



**Bolsover
Cruise
Club**

The No.1 Cruise Specialist



**FREE
EXCLUSIVE
CRUISE CLUB
CASHBACK**



EXPLORE THE WORLD IN STYLE

OUR HANDPICKED COLLECTION OF 2023 SAILINGS



NORWEGIAN FJORDS

Queen Mary 2 (M315)
2 Jun 2023 | 7 Nights

YOUR ITINERARY

- FRI 2** Southampton
- SUN 4** Stavanger
- MON 5** Olden
- TUE 6** Andalsnes
- WED 7** Bergen
- FRI 9** Southampton



Fares from **£890** Per Person



ALASKA

Queen Elizabeth (Q325)
26 Jul 2023 | 13 Nights

YOUR ITINERARY

- WED 26** Fly from London* to Vancouver
- THU 27** Vancouver
- SAT 29** Cruising Glacier Bay
- SUN 30** Skagway
- MON 31** Sitka



*Flights based on London departure. Other airports may be available for a supplement

AUG 2023

- TUE 1** Cruising Tracy Arm Fjord
- WED 2** Juneau
- THU 3** Icy Strait Point
- FRI 4** Ketchikan
- SUN 6** Victoria
- MON 7** Vancouver, fly to London*

Fares from **£2,536** Per Person

Expert advice 7 days a week

01246 819 819

Mon-Fri: 9am-9pm, Sat: 9am-7pm, Sun: 10am-5pm

The Cruise Centre
6 Lindrick Way, Barlborough,
Chesterfield S43 4XE

www.bolsovercruiseclub.com

QUOTE: BCC REF 8137. ISSUED 15.09.22. The process of production/distribution takes several days and could therefore limit the availability of prices and accommodation as advertised, or they could not be available at all. Please see our website www.bolsovercruiseclub.com for the most up to date offers and availability. This offer applies to new bookings only and may be withdrawn by Cunard Line without notice. It is not combinable with any other promotion and is subject to the booking conditions of Cunard Line. A copy of Bolsover Cruise Club's Terms of Business is available on request or by visiting our website. This advert contains an outline description of the cruises featured, which are solely organised by Cunard Line. It should be read in conjunction with Cunard Lines current brochure which contains full information about the cruise itineraries, accommodation details, booking conditions that apply, passport and health requirements, what's included in the fare and other general information. Prices shown are per person, based on twin occupancy in the lowest available grade within the category type and already includes current fuel surcharges and Cruise Club Members Cashback at the time of going to print. Cunard Fare stateroom may be allocated on a guarantee basis and the staterooms number/deck will be allocated at the operators discretion prior to departure. Cunard Fares shown are per person in £ sterling (based) on two adults sharing the lowest grade of stateroom available (or single occupancy in a single stateroom), within the applicable stateroom type and are subject to availability. Fares for sole occupancy and supplementary fares are available on request. Choose from complimentary onboard credit, car parking or coach transfer. Further terms and conditions apply, please call for details. Travel insurance, visas and vaccinations are at an additional cost. £&O



FREE
Bi-Monthly
Cruise
Magazine

worth **£29.70** per
year when you join
the Cruise Club

www.bolsovercruiseclub.com/into-the-blue



CITY LIFE

ATHENS

For a taste of Greece, there's nowhere like the capital. Athens' food scene is being transformed with age-old producers running cutting-edge restaurants and hip bakeries adding fresh flavours to historic neighbourhoods

WORDS: LAURA HOLT. PHOTOGRAPHS: ANTONIS YIAMOURIS

Tasos Mantis greets me in his his family's organic garden, where plots of Jerusalem artichokes, sweet-smelling basil and brick-red bergamot slope some 2,500ft down towards the Corinthian Sea. This is the summer home of his parents: 72-year-old father, Babis, a former plumber, and mother, Maria, a welcoming Greek matriarch, whose tanned face breaks into a soft smile as I arrive.

We're around an hour's drive from Athens, in Alepochori village, but the scene feels a world away. Swallows swoop overhead. Chickens wallow in the dust. Gravel crunches underfoot as we browse raised beds, but overall the prevailing sound is of silence.

Tasos, scruffy in his earth-stained Airtex trainers, stands with secateurs ready to clip off a selection of the garden's 32 varieties of edible herbs and flowers for me to taste. His understated look belies his glamorous reputation — the chef is one of Greece's best, with a constellation of Michelin stars under his belt from stints at Belgium's gilded Hof Van Cleve, Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck and Hytra restaurant in Athens.

I'm here to find out about the produce behind Soil, Tasos's debut restaurant which he opened in a century-old house in November 2021 with co-owner Alex Mouridis, in the up-and-coming Pangrati neighbourhood in central Athens. Soil stands at the forefront of the city's evolving food scene, as an exciting, self-styled proponent of 'earthy gastronomy'. Like many of the new dining spots in Athens, its foundations are rooted in time-honoured agrarian traditions. Menus borrow from ancient Greek recipes handed down over generations, reimagined afresh for a new wave of well-dressed Athenian diners.

Seeking an elder's wisdom, Tasos derailed his father's retirement plans, drafting the keen amateur gardener to supply produce for Soil.

"My father is from the island of Lesbos. After he retired, he came to Alepochori to rest. But now..." Tasos smiles, casting his eyes across a garden bristling with lavender-like anise hyssop, edible marigolds and honey-scented sweet alison; all nurtured by the father to share with the son. "He doesn't admit it, but he loves it," says Tasos of his father's new role.





Clockwise from top: View from Areopagus Hill; Line co-owner Vasilis Kyritsis serving house-made pomegranate wine; cod with kombu beurre blanc at Soil restaurant

Previous pages: View of the Plaka district and Athens landmarks including Monastiraki square, Church of the Pantanassa, Tzistarakis Mosque and the Acropolis

“Even if he tells me he’s going fishing, so he can be alone — and escape me,” he laughs.

We tour the garden, trying heirloom and heritage herbs, many of which have fallen out of favour in modern Greek cooking, but are now being given new life under this father-and-son partnership. We move on past young, sour-tasting grapes, coiled around a vine. “We’ll make juice from this,” gestures Tasos, cutting some for me to try.

As the sun bathes the Greek countryside in a soft lemony light, we ride into the city to Soil, where all this prime produce is put to good use. Tasos, freshly spruced in chef whites, leads me through to the restaurant’s courtyard garden, a leafy spot that recalls the tranquillity of the Alepochori house. A cat lazes on a wall. Trees rustle in the breeze. We sample food that’s garden-fresh, traditional yet contemporary: mini eel burgers flavoured with lemongrass and sorrel, shrimp with fennel and scallop, and a lemon confit.

It’s not only fine-dining spots like Soil that are reaching back in time to break new ground. Grocers, fishermen and bakers are doing so, too. One such example is Thomas and George Douzis, two brothers now in their thirties whose grandfather worked a greengrocer in the northern city of Thessaloniki. The siblings tapped into their family history to create Ergon House — a boutique hotel in Athens with a focus on food that extends far beyond an on-site restaurant. The ground floor is

given over to bakers, butchers and producers from all over Greece, recalling the country’s ancient *agora* (marketplace) tradition. Its design is cool-contemporary, incorporating an ancient olive tree, a ‘vertical orchard’ and a full-wall graffiti mural by Greek artist INO, soaring up to an 80ft-high atrium. There are spaces to dine and drink, private chefs to hire and cooking classes to sign up to, while guest room mini-bars contain goodies that represent the market in microcosm. Crowning it all is a rooftop cocktail spot with drinks served by pioneering Athens bar The Clumsies, whose original downtown address ranked fourth in the 2021 list of The World’s 50 Best Bars.

Across town, in the Kato Petralona district, the co-owners of The Clumsies are busy with another new project. Sporting tattoos and a generous moustache, Vasilis Kyritsis greets me outside his new hole-in-the-wall bar, Line. In the entrance is a sturdy marble table, sculpted from a 1920s Athens fountain. To the right, cornflower-blue couches that wouldn’t be out of place in a boutique hotel. Having taken on the cocktail scene serving outré craft drinks at The Clumsies in 2014, Vasilis and Nikos Bakoulis, now teamed with fellow mixologist Dimitris Dafopoulos, are turning their hands to the ancient Greek winemaking tradition, but reimagining it with fruitier flavours. That means wine made from pomegranates, figs and apples, explains Vasilis, but not grapes.



Q&A with Antonis Kazakos of The Black Salami Microbakery

WHAT'S THE HISTORY OF THE EXARCHEIA NEIGHBOURHOOD?

It's where our microbakery is set and it's very vibrant and colourful. Today, you have immigrant families and students. But it used to be the heart of the punk movement and centre of resistance against the military junta in the 1970s. Everybody still tends to write on the walls. There are lots of bookshops, bars and places to eat. It's the artistic centre of Athens.

WHAT DOES YOUR BAKERY'S NAME MEAN?

Like the neighbourhood, The Black Salami is provocative. It denotes what we do, because we're not a straightforward bakery. Everyone who works here has had a 180-degree career change — I was in politics for 15 years. We don't belong in this industry. We're the punk bakers.

WHY BAKING?

Kneading dough became my refuge from the harsh political reality of Greece over the past 15 years. I had another place called Philo, which shut for two years during the pandemic. I wanted to create something more sustainable. Supermarkets and bakeries never close. This business belongs to everyone who works here. It's like a co-operative. Instead of keeping everything to ourselves, we share it. [instagram.com/the_black_salami](https://www.instagram.com/the_black_salami).

"We collaborate with seasonal fruit producers from all over Greece to create grape-less wines," says Vasilis, as his staff work away busily on metal-top counters in the prep room framed by warehouse windows, set back from the bar. "We then use the leftovers to make syrup for the cocktails, dust for the drinks. Nothing is wasted. Everything gets recycled. Even the sourdough includes recycled ingredients."

Accordingly, some of the wine bottle labels at Line feature images of ancient goddesses reinvented, updated with futuristic flair. And the flavour blends are just as innovative. Vasilis opens the pomegranate wine. "Its other ingredients are rose, smoke, walnut and tomato," he says. Despite the unconventional flavour combinations, it tastes great. "It's like making a cocktail. You add things until you get the result you want. It's still wine, but with added bartending fusion."

To create its wines and beers, Line collaborates with talents old and new, including master vintner Thanos Georgilas — of the T-oinos winery on the Cycladic island of Tinos — and the small Alea Brewing Co, a contemporary microbrewery in Athens' northern Metamorfoosi neighbourhood. The latter makes beers with Line to a strictly guarded, recipe, using rare hops. "We like working with them; they're open-minded about unusual ingredients," says Vasilis.

An open mind is also welcomed at Nolan, a buzzy, neon-lit Athens restaurant headed up by Sotiris Kontizas, a young chef who fuses the ingredients of his father's Greek heritage with the flavours of his mother's Japanese home cooking. He learnt his trade at Michelin-starred restaurants, including Geranium in Copenhagen.

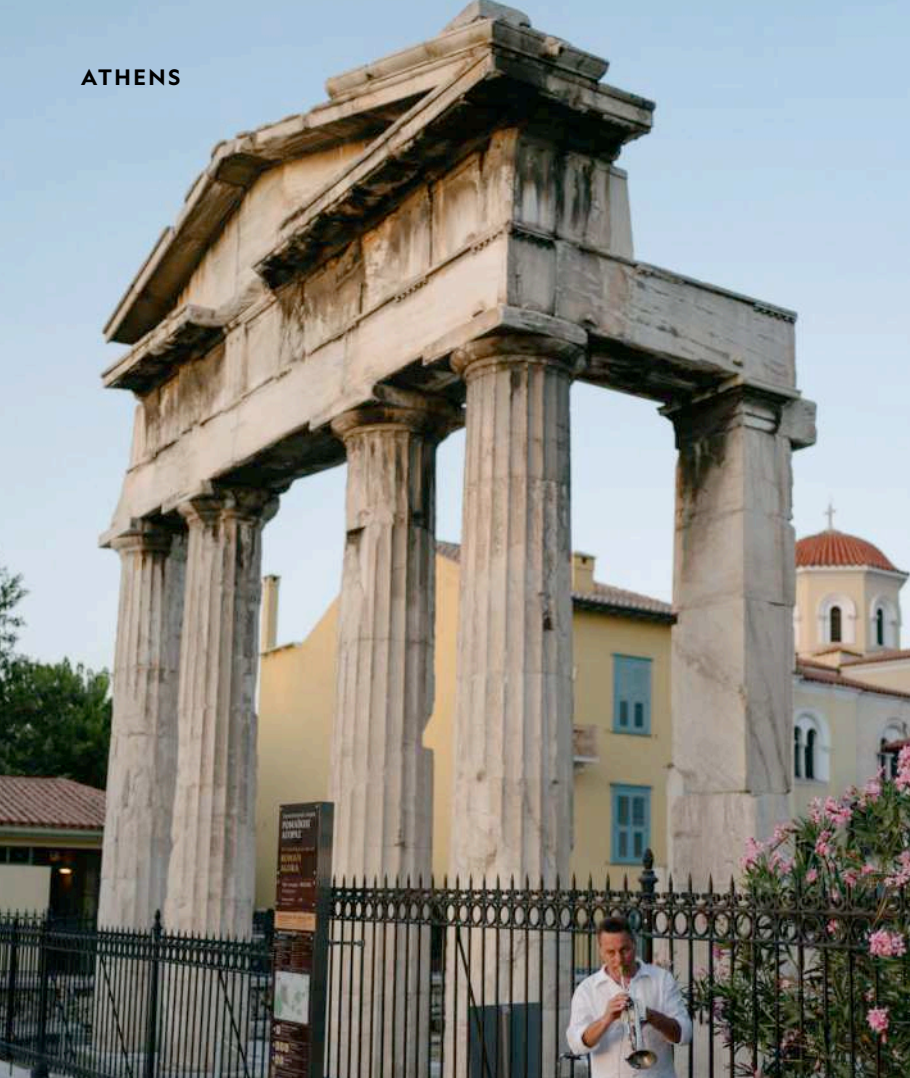
Sotiris also worked at 48 the Restaurant in Athens, learning from Christoforos Peskias, a renowned master of deconstructing Greek cuisine. Sotiris has amassed a cool 425,000 followers on Instagram, partly thanks to his role as a *MasterChef* judge, but he's also gathered a following for his approach to using local, in-season Greek ingredients and cooking them with Asian-accented flair at Nolan.

"At home, my Greek father was the one who always went to the market," explains Sotiris. "My Japanese mother loved to cook, but she didn't mix the cuisines, she didn't do fusion. I wondered: what would happen if I mixed this up? What if I put *dashi* (Japanese stock) with *stamnagathi* (Cretan green)?" Nolan became the realisation of this mix that was natural to me."

The result is a light, fresh take on Greek food. "It's food that doesn't weigh you down," says Sotiris. Like many of the capital's new generation of creative chefs, rather than being weighed down by the past, Sotiris is enlightened by it.

Clockwise from top left: Soba noodles with smoked salmon and tahini at Nolan; Tasos Mantis with his team at Alepochori; olives and olive oil at a street market in Agios Stefanos neighbourhood; the 200-year-old olive tree at Ergon House





INSIDER TIPS

Looking for an immersive introduction to the city? Alternative Athens offers themed tours, run by locals, that tick off less-expected highlights, such as home-cooked food, local neighbourhood nightlife, hidden street art, LGBTQ+ culture and even a Greek mythology and storytelling walk. [alternativeathens.com](https://www.alternativeathens.com)

Coffee culture in Athens blends furious games of backgammon, played by weather-beaten men arguing about politics, and young Athenian hipsters sipping iced frappes and brews from bronze *briki* pots. Join them for debate beneath the draped vines at Kafeneion 111 on Ermou street. [instagram.com/kafeneion111](https://www.instagram.com/kafeneion111)

On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays throughout May, the Athens Street Food Festival gets underway with music, menus and street parties at the Old Depot (a former tram terminal) in the city centre. Outside, look for the murals by leading Greek street artist INO. [athensstreetfoodfestival.gr](https://www.athensstreetfoodfestival.gr)



Chill out Athens has plenty of cool sweet treats, such as iced frappe coffee, chilled water melon and honey-laced Greek yoghurt. Don't miss mastic ice-cream, made with distinctive aromatic resin from trees native to the island of Chios



TOP 8

Culinary hotspots

THE BLACK SALAMI

BEST FOR: BREAKFAST ON BREAD

These punk bakers in edgy Exarcheia combine ingredients from small Greek producers with flour from a family of millers in Turin, Italy. Its team, comprising DJs, art curators and even bodyguards who all switched to baking in the pandemic, are enlivening Greece's bread-making culture. Unlike other Greek bakeries, it uses wild yeast and a long fermentation process. "Three days goes into the making of every sandwich," says the owner, Antonis Kazakos. Try the poached eggs on the extra-special sourdough. theblacksalami.com

LUKUMADES

BEST FOR: SOMETHING SWEET

The victors of the first recorded Olympic Games, in 776 BC, were given *charisi-i plaki* (honey tokens) in honour of the baker who won the maiden race. Today, these treats are known as *lukumádes* (sweet dough balls), one of the world's oldest dessert recipes. They're typically served by Greek grandmothers at family gatherings on Sundays, but have been reinvented in this hip, neon-lit spot near bar-lined Agias Eirinis square. lukumades.com

LINOUSOUMPASIS

BEST FOR: SIMPLE CHIC

This neo-taverna in bohemian Psyrri was launched in early 2022 by friends George Soumpasis, the fashion designer behind the ME THEN label, chef Lukas Mailer and Myrsini Linou of artsy cocktail bar and cultural space Ypsilon in Thessaloniki. The team spend its time sourcing ingredients from tiny producers, and everything is made from scratch, from pickled veggies to kefir-spiked meatballs, all showcased in a minimalist white-walled taverna, stripped of all kitsch. [instagram.com/lсандσια](https://www.instagram.com/lсандσια)

MALOTIRA

BEST FOR: FOOD SHOPPING

This dinky deli in Plaka — Athens' oldest inhabited neighbourhood — delights in offering tastings of Greece's national obsession: olive oil. "Our grandmothers used to chase us with a spoon of olive oil, because they said it was like medicine," say owners Erika Chaidemenaki and Maria Zaka. You can also try matured graviera cheese, slices of *apaki* (smoked pork), splodges of olive tapenade and slugs of tsipouro liqueur. malotira.gr

Clockwise from top left: Street musician at the Gate of Athena Archegetis at the Roman Agora; Lukumades bakery which makes *lukumádes* one of Greece's oldest desserts; appetisers at Linou Soumpasis

Cocktail hour on the roof garden at Mosaikon, which offer rooftop views of the Acropolis



GETTING THERE & AROUND

British Airways, Aegean Airlines, EasyJet, Ryanair, Wizzair, Jet2.com and SkyExpress fly from various UK airports to Athens. ba.com aegeanair.com easyJet.com ryanair.com wizzair.com jet2.com skyexpress.gr

Average flight time: 3h30m.

For no-fly travel to Athens, take the Eurostar from London, changing in Paris for trains to Milan/Turin. Change again for trains to either Trieste or Bari and ferries to Patras, then take the train or bus to Athens. seat61.com/Greece

Average journey time: 48h.

Athens is easily explored by foot; most sights are a half-hour stroll away. There's also a comprehensive metro, train and bus network. oasa.gr/en An airport taxi to the city centre costs €40-50 (£35-43), but Uber or Greek ride-hailing app Beat are often cheaper. uber.com thebeat.co

WHEN TO GO

Athens swelters in summer with temperatures well over 30C. Spring and autumn enjoy a comfortable 20C, dropping to around 10C in winter.

WHERE TO STAY

Xenodocheio Milos. From £245.

xenodocheiomilos.com

Ergon House. From £170.

house.ergonfoods.com

PLACES MENTIONED

Soil. soilrestaurant.gr

Ergon House. house.ergonfoods.com

Line. lineathens.gr

Nolan. nolanverse.com

MORE INFO

visitgreece.gr

thisisathens.org

HOW TO DO IT

Original Travel offers three nights in Athens at the Xenodocheio Milos from £1,880 per person, including flights from London, transfers, tours and concierge services. originaltravel.co.uk

STOA FIX AT MOSAIKON

BEST FOR: SUNDOWNERS

Don't even think about going out for dinner early in Athens. But when it comes to drinks with a view of the Acropolis, step right this way... This contemporary rooftop bar and restaurant on the top of the boutique Mosaikon hostel blends cutting-edge cocktails — artfully iced negronis and margaritas with salted sumac rims — with showstopping views of the city's hilltop monument, bathed in the fading light. mosaikon.gr

ESTIATORIO MILOS

BEST FOR: A RESTAURANT WITH ROOMS

Book ahead for a stay at Xenodocheio Milos, the first hotel from the team behind celebrated Greek restaurant Estiatorio Milos. Chef Costas Spiliadis opened his maiden dining destination in Montreal in 1979, and now has starry outposts in New York, London, Miami and elsewhere. This new downtown hotel and restaurant, opposite the Old Parliament, offers Mediterranean fine dining in a modern, minimalist setting, allowing seasonal produce from fishermen and farmers to steal the limelight. xenodocheiomilos.com

THE CLUMSIES

BEST FOR: AWARD-WINNING COCKTAILS

You can grab coffee from 10am at all-day destination The Clumsies, tucked away on a downtown street. But it's at night that the fourth best bar in the world really comes to life. This late-night spot first united Vasilis Kyritsis and Nikos Bakoulis, now working together at Line. But this is the original venue — and it's one to set your sights on for vintage spirits and original cocktails that have made their way around the world into mini-bars and mixologist's lists. theclumsies.gr

OUZERI TOU LAKI

BEST FOR: MEZZE

Like most of Athens' best seafood restaurants, this one is nowhere near the water (it's a short walk from the National Archaeological Museum). No matter: the mezze here is packed with the freshest catch, as well as smoked fish. Soak up the sun in this cheery taverna setting, all Aegean white and blue, and try such dishes as potato salad with sardines, steamed ray with pink peppercorns, and black cuttlefish pasta. It's all best paired with ouzo or *tsipouro* (a grappa-like spirit). ouzeritoulaki.info □

Greece

Handcrafted holidays to lesser-known places

Beach holidays away from the crowds
Island hopping
Fly-drives
Walking and gastronomic breaks

Sunvil
find the real country

Contact the experts today

Tel: **020 8568 4499**

Web: **Sunvil.co.uk**

Email: **greece@sunvil.co.uk**

GREECE



c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

CITY LIFE

VALPARAÍSO

Long associated with poets and folk heroes, the free-spirited Chilean port city is today a canvas for the country's best street artists. Explore its steep lanes and find galleries, dive bars and restaurants marching to the beat of their own drums

WORDS: SARAH MARSHALL

Leaping from his car, Al Ramirez grabs a spray can from the boot and furiously gets to work.

"In the street, all you have is your reputation," says the incensed graffiti artist, as he retouches one of his murals, recently defaced with dripping scrawl. "When someone paints over your work, it's like spitting in your face."

Al, who's on a mission to create the first guild of urban artists, is one of more than 400 artists in the Chilean port city of Valparaíso, where the authorities now accept graffiti as part of the city's culture and appeal. Almost every shop front, house and pavement has been decorated to create one of the world's largest unofficial open-air museums of street art. No wonder, then, graffitiists are running out of space.

Valpo, as it's affectionately known, is wide open to interpretation. To some, it's nothing more than a scruffy, rundown town, where stray dogs howl long into the night; for others, it's a bastion of liberation, freedom of speech and unfettered creativity, where lost, abandoned souls can find a happy home.

Acceptance, equality and opportunity were building blocks for Valpo's foundation. A port of call for commercial ships crossing the Atlantic and Pacific via the Strait of Magellan, it attracted thousands of immigrants in the late 1800s. But following the construction of the Panama Canal in 1914, its sparkle disappeared as traders switched to a more convenient route.

Abandoned mansions and brightly coloured houses still cover Valpo's 45 hills. Towards

the port, palm trees gifted from Brazil, an archway built by the British and what was Latin America's first stock exchange all stand as vestiges of a time when money flowed as easily as the spray paint does today.

This unplanned city has always embraced chaos. A warren of alleys propped precariously on steep slopes, homes were built haphazardly with whatever materials could be stolen from the port. Connecting neighbourhoods, steep stairwells transformed Valpo into a labyrinth of ladders. But take the wrong turn and — just like players of the board game — you could end up slithering down a serpentine alleyway back to square one.

Wherever you are, however, there's always a view of the Pacific. When the fog lifts, it's even possible to see the towering Argentine peak of Aconcagua. "I love walking to a viewpoint and just looking at the ocean," says Sammy Espinosa (who works under the name Jeksy), one half of graffiti duo Un Kolor Distinto. "It gives me a sense of freedom."

Along with his partner, Cynthia (known as Cines), Sammy has painted several multistorey buildings in the city. But he appreciates graffiti will always be a transient art form. "If you want something to last forever, you should put it on a canvas," he tells me, aptly summing up the spirit of Valpo.

Although defined by its past, this unconventional city thrives in the moment. And a legacy of independence lives on.





“Valparaíso, how absurd you are... You haven’t combed your hair, you’ve never had time to get dressed, life has always surprised you.” **Pablo Neruda, Nobel Prize-winning Chilean poet**

Clockwise from left: La Sebastiana, the nautical-themed former home of Nobel laureate, poet Pablo Neruda; Valparaíso’s brightly coloured buildings; Sammy Espinoza, of street art duo Un Kolor Distinto; Paseo Gervasoni, a vibrant walkway in the Historic Quarter

Previous pages: One of the many murals decorating Cerro Alegre in Valparaíso’s Historic Quarter, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2003

SEE & DO

LA SEBASTIANA: Self-styled ‘captain of the land’, Nobel Prize-winning poet Pablo Neruda converted this house into a ship-shaped home in the 1960s, complete with eccentric paraphernalia acquired on foreign adventures. A French carousel horse, a stuffed emperor penguin chick and an Italian ceramic cow have all been playfully arranged here, reflecting the artist’s wry sense of humour. An audio guide weaves anecdotes with biographical details to paint a picture of one of South America’s most colourful characters. fundacionneruda.org

MUSEO UNIVERSITARIO DEL GRABADO (MUG): In the 1930s, Chile’s first school of engraving opened in the Valparaíso Province, pioneering a new art form. Featuring over 9,500 pieces by artists including Mapuche printmaker and painter Santos Chávez, this new museum is run by the University of Grabado. Having taken over 10 years to restore, the former 19th-century home is an equally impressive work of art. upla.cl/museodelgrabado

VALPARAÍSO CULTURAL PARK:

Find artists sketching and dance troupes energetically rehearsing on the lawns of a former prison that’s been transformed into a buzzing arts centre. Hosting exhibitions and workshops, a gallery set in former cells has become a place for freedom of expression. Grab lunch in the laid-back theatre cafe or sit on the terrace walls to watch the sun go down. parquecultural.cl

STREET ART TOURS: A sommelier and local graffiti artist Al Ramirez lead tours through the city’s ever-evolving street art gallery. Learn about the gritty style wars and the ethics of overwriting pieces never designed to last forever. There’s also a chance to tag walls and visit artists, such as world-renowned duo Un Kolor Distinto, in their homes. valpostreetart.com

HISTORICAL CEMETERIES: Over the centuries, South Americans have built some of the world’s most beautiful final resting places. Doric columns flank the entrance of hilltop Cementerio Number 1, where tombs

were intentionally given the best views of the city. Visit Cementerio Number 3 to see the grave of the ‘Chilean Robin Hood’, serial killer/folk hero Émile Dubois, which has been a virtual shrine ever since his death in 1907. cmvalparaiso.cl

RIDING THE FUNICULARS: Built from the late 1800s to ease the strain of navigating near-vertical hills, around half of the city’s original 31 *acensores* still trundle up and down the slopes. Two of the most popular and easily accessible are Reina Victoria and El Peral, both on Cerro Alegre hill.

WATCHING FISHERFOLK: Given its coastline stretches for almost 2,500 miles, it’s hardly surprising one of Chile’s main industries is fishing. Arrive early in the morning to witness small boats unload their hauls at Caleta Portales cove, where some of the strongest guilds operate. Wander along the pier to find fisherfolk preparing nets, and queue up with gulls and pelicans for ceviche served from wooden shacks.





Clockwise from top left: CasaBlu Hotel is located in the heart of Cerro Alegre, famous for its street art; honey-flavoured sponge dessert with vanilla and miso ice cream, La Caperucita y el Lobo; hand-crafted dolls at CasaBlu, a hotel known for its eclectic decor; terrace bar of Hotel WineBoxValparaíso, built from shipping containers

From left to far right Twentieth-century Chilean presidents Salvador Allende and Augusto Pinochet were both born in Valparaíso – testimony, perhaps, to the city’s fiery, outspoken spirit



BUY

LA DULCERÍA: You won’t need a golden ticket to enter Valparaíso’s very own Willy Wonka factory — just follow a trail of white ants painted along San Enrique. Boiled sweets, fruit jellies and chocolate moustache-shaped lollipops are among the creations handmade on site. Watch artisans rapidly mould and slice a soft, caramelised paste before it solidifies into hard candy.

[instagram.com/ladulceriavalpo](https://www.instagram.com/ladulceriavalpo)

LA VIDA PORTEÑA: Tucked behind the groaning wooden cogs of the El Peral funicular, this upmarket souvenir shop specialises in gifts nostalgically inspired by Valpo’s rich past. Leather toiletry bags hark back to the days when steam ships would carry travellers to the dock, while local food products include neatly labelled jars of Chilean smoked chilli pepper condiment *merkén*. [lavidaportena.cl](https://www.lavidaportena.cl)

GALERÍA ESPACIO ROJO: Lured by the ocean, gallerist Cristián Vega-Rojo spent 10 years transforming a 19th-century, sea-view manor house into one of the best places to view works by Chile’s emerging artists. Find pretty paintings hanging alongside bold street art canvases, all sold for negotiable prices. Not just a shop, this is a place to learn about Valpo’s past and ponder its future. [galeriaespaciorojo.com](https://www.galeriaespaciorojo.com)

SLEEP

£ HOTEL WINEBOXVALPARAÍSO:

Kiwi winemaker Grant Phelps and his Chilean architect girlfriend Camila Ulloa are proud of the fact that only one truck-load of waste was produced in the building of this sustainable hotel, constructed from shipping containers. Determined to take the snobbery out of wine drinking, the pair plan to offer tastings in their trendy terrace bar, where bathtubs have been converted into benches.

[winebox.valparaiso-hotels.com/en](https://www.winebox.valparaiso-hotels.com/en)

££ **CASABLU:** A mix of cultural styles reflects the colourful past of this historic family home, a short walk from art gallery Palacio Baburizza. Baroque cherubs and Buddha statues decorate rooms adorned with *azulejo* tiles and carved wooden doors imported from England. Healthy breakfasts use ingredients sourced locally and herbs from an on-site garden fed by a drip-irrigation system. [casablu.cl](https://www.casablu.cl)

£££ **CASA HIGUERAS:** Be transported back to Valpo’s heyday in this 1920s mansion house, where an air of sophistication still swirls through wood-panelled corridors. Switch between an elegant drawing room, bedroom balcony or infinity pool for superb views of the port and bay — but save sunsets for the rooftop bar. A discreet doorway leads into Cerro Alegre, one of the prettiest neighbourhoods. [casahigueras.cl](https://www.casahigueras.cl)

EAT

£ **DELICIAS EXPRESS:** Empanadas are a fast food staple. Around 90 different varieties are available at this small shop near the port, with prices starting at less than £1. Pull up a stool at the counter, where wi-fi is freely available, or ‘grab and go’ for a stroll around the streets of Cerro Alegre. [empanadasdeliciasexpress.com](https://www.empanadasdeliciasexpress.com)

££ **TRES PECES:** Co-founder Meyling Tang has taught local fishermen to use social media to sell their daily catch to local restaurants and businesses. Without the middlemen, the team behind this informal seafood restaurant keeps prices remarkably low. Open from Wednesday to Sunday for lunch, the nine-person terrace fills quickly. Try slithers of pickled bull kelp, an endemic seaweed championed as a superfood. [instagram.com/trespecesvalparaiso](https://www.instagram.com/trespecesvalparaiso)

£££ **LA CAPERUCITA Y EL LOBO:** After setting up shop at her grandmother’s charming higgledy-piggledy house, Carolina Gatica and her partner Leonardo de la Iglesia soon earned a place on the ‘World’s 50 Best’ list with their whimsical restaurant, whose name translates as ‘little Red Riding Hood and the wolf’. Traditional family recipes — upscaled here with considerable gastronomic flair — are served inside cosy rooms and on an outdoor terrace overlooking the city. [lacaperucitayellobo.cl](https://www.lacaperucitayellobo.cl)



Left: Staircase at Pasaje Galvez painted with the lyrics to the song Latinoamerica by Puerto Rican band Calle 13



GETTING THERE & AROUND

British Airways flies direct between the UK and Santiago four times a week from Heathrow. ba.com

Average flight time: 15h.

European carriers such as Iberia and Air France offer one-stop flights via their respective European hubs. iberia.com airfrance.co.uk

Most hotels offer free transfers from the international airport in Santiago. The journey takes around an hour. It's possible to explore most of the city's attractions on foot, although be careful carrying valuables such as cameras in dark alleys in either the early or late hours. For guided tours, Gary James runs excellent tailor-made half- or full-day tours through andBeyond. andbeyond.com

WHEN TO GO

Spring (September to October) and autumn (March to April) are the most pleasant periods to visit Valparaíso, although the climate is mild throughout the year. The longest days are at the height of summer in January, with highs of a comfortable 21C, although sea fog can roll in at any time.

MORE INFO

chile.travel/en

Rough Guide to Chile. RRP: £16.99

Canto General, by Pablo Neruda.

RRP: £21

Neruda (2016). Dir: Pablo Larraín

HOW TO DO IT

Booking.com offers four nights B&B in Valparaíso at Hotel Casa Higuera, from £1,842 per person based on two sharing. Includes hotel transfers and flights from Heathrow to Santiago. booking.com

AFTER HOURS

BAR DEL TÍO: A cut above its grungy, boho neighbours, this downtown cocktail bar attracts grown-ups who still want to have fun. Sip a pisco sprinkled with smoky Chilean condiment *merkén* and nibble on tapas in a cool, clandestine space straight out of Brooklyn or Berlin. [facebook.com/bardeltio](https://www.facebook.com/bardeltio)

BAR DE PISCO: Chile's first ever pisco bar reputedly opened on this site in the 1800s, and the latest incarnation doesn't disappoint with its jaw-dropping selection of alcoholic, amber-hued nectars. The cocktail menu ranges from classics to more curious creations to be enjoyed on a sun-splashed patio or at gigs at the adjoining Café Vinilo. [facebook.com/barpedrojimenez](https://www.facebook.com/barpedrojimenez) cafevinilo.cl

CERVECERA ALTAMIRA: Take a break from rocket-fuel piscos by sampling ales and IPAs concocted by one of Chile's top independent microbreweries. Working stills and metal kegs sit behind glass panels in this rough-and-ready gastropub beneath the Ascensor Reina Victoria, inspired by the first brewers who set up shop here in 1825. cerveceraaltamira.cl

LIKE A LOCAL

STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN: Multi-floored arcades provide shortcuts between neighbourhoods on different elevations. Famously snapped by Magnum photographer Sergio Larrain in the 1950s, Pasaje Bavestrello, on Alvaro Besa, is an Instagram staple. Pop into La Verbena Deco Almacén, a tiny shop here that sells coffees and retro home decor.

IRREGULAR DINING: Nothing in Valpo happens early, so breakfast is always after 8am. A cheaper option to a late lunch, meanwhile, is afternoon tea, known as *once*, served from 5-7pm. Meaning '11' in Spanish, it refers to the number of letters in 'aguardiente', the fire water that accompanies light snacks here. Try finger sandwiches on the terrace of Restaurant La Concepción. restaurantlaconcepcion.cl

HEAD FOR THE HILLS: While Cerro Alegre and Restaurant La Concepción are popular tourist stops, Bellavista and Florida are the hills where Valpo's residents prefer to hang out. Head to the rooftop bar of Verso Hotel, on Bellavista, or venture further afield to Barón Bar, on Barón Hill, for more sky-high music and dancing. versohotel.cl baronbar.cl □

EXCLUSIVE
LIMITED TIME ONLY

coop holidays 

EXPERIENCE MORE 

ICELAND

3 nights
from only
£385
per person

Includes
Northern
Lights cruise

CALL 01922 896534

QUOTE: COOPICELAND



**BOOK WITH FULL
FLEXIBILITY &
GUARANTEED REFUND**

All prices are in GBP per person and include direct return flights with 15kg Hold Luggage included. Departure from Gatwick, other departures are available including Luton, Manchester & Bristol. Stay at a 4* Central hotel in Reykjavik, this holiday includes a Northern Lights cruise. Price based on departing 29 November 2022. Prices start from only £385pp for 3 nights based on 2 adults sharing. Prices correct as of 09/09/2022, subject to change and availability. The Northern Lights are a natural phenomenon so we cannot guarantee they will be visible due to changing weather conditions. Co-operative Holidays are ATOL protected (ATOL 11121) part of Midcounties Co-operative. For full terms and conditions speak to your Co-op Travel Expert. Subject to change and availability.

ASK THE EXPERTS

NEED ADVICE FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP? ARE YOU AFTER RECOMMENDATIONS, TIPS AND GUIDANCE? OUR EXPERTS HAVE THE ANSWERS...

THE EXPERTS



Bella Falk
travel writer and
photographer



Liz Connor
wellness and travel writer



Sam Lewis
travel writer



Natalie Paris
travel writer

From left: The stairs leading down to the ruins of Machu Picchu, Peru; man packing for a trip with his dog; fish swimming around a section of coral reef, Seychelles



I'm a solo female traveller looking to spend two weeks backpacking in South America, my first time on the continent. Where should I go?

Travelling solo in South America may sound daunting to some, but the backpacker trail is well-established, with plenty of friendly hostels and English-speaking tours. Of course, it's a huge continent and two weeks isn't long, so it's best to focus on just one or two countries.

Peru is a great starting point, bursting with historic cities and diverse landscapes. From Lima, head to Puerto Maldonado, gateway to the Amazon. Stay at the budget Tambopata Hostel and from there book an overnight jungle trip, sleeping in an off-grid eco-lodge and visiting one of the famous macaw clay licks. Next, head to vibrant Cusco where SAM Travel Peru offers a range of Sacred

Valley and Machu Picchu hikes. Eight hours by bus brings you to Puno, gateway to Lake Titicaca, where All Ways Travel will take you to the famous floating islands and spend the night with an Indigenous community before you travel back to Lima. samtravelperu.com titicacaperu.com

Another option could be Bolivia and North Chile, starting in La Paz, capital of the former. Check out Tours by Locals for an insider's perspective on this high-altitude city, before bussing to Copacabana to visit Lake Titicaca. Then, return to La Paz before continuing south to Uyuni. Base yourself at La Magia de Uyuni Hostel, and take trips with Andes Salt Expeditions to visit the gleaming salt flats at Salar de Uyuni, and the flamingo-packed Laguna Colorada. Next cross into Chile to spend a few days based in

the town of San Pedro de Atacama. Hostal Campo Base is one of many backpacker-friendly places from which to enjoy the Atacama Desert's dramatic geysers, sand flats and hot springs. Finally, take a flight to one of the continent's most cosmopolitan capitals – Santiago in Chile or Buenos Aires in Argentina – before heading home. toursbylocals.com andes-salt-uyuni.com.bo

If doing all this solo sounds too daunting, why not try a tour agency? Local company Peru Trip Advisors can organise your itinerary and pair you with groups or other solos, or try G Adventures' 15-day La Paz to Buenos Aires trip for all the highlights with none of the hassle, from £1,439. Includes local (but excludes international) flights. peru-tripadvisors.com gadventures.com **BELLA FALK**

I'm looking for a digital detox retreat in the UK countryside. Where would you suggest?

Committing to a tech-free trip can be tricky if you struggle with willpower. At slow living retreat Unplugged, your phone is padlocked away in a lockbox on arrival, so you have no choice but to spend three days switching off from the temptation to scroll.

The 11 peaceful, Scandi-inspired cabins are in various remote, natural locations across the South East, most within an hour of London.

There's a replacement Nokia 3210 for emergencies (yes, it has Snake) and various analogue pursuits to keep you entertained: a Polaroid camera, cassette tapes, stacks of books and an old-fashioned paper map for local hikes. From £390 for three nights. unplugged.rest

Unyoked is another eco-friendly, back-to-basics start-up with chic off-grid huts scattered across Norfolk, the South Downs and Wales's Black Mountains. There's no wi-fi here, so in lieu of Netflix, you

can spend your days exploring the countryside, going for wild swims and curling up in front of a fire pit listening to the evening birdsong. From £154. unyoked.co

If you struggle to relax without structure to your days, try Off Grid Yoga Retreats; a long weekend in wild Scotland that includes activities such as sunrise yoga sessions, paddleboarding and meditation workshops to keep you mindfully busy. From £555. offgridyogaretreats.org

LIZ CONNOR

I want to take my dog to France. What documentation do I need?

Taking your dog to France is a little more expensive and complicated since Brexit, but can still be worth the effort for trips of two weeks or more.

The main change since January 2021 is that pet passports issued in Great Britain are no longer valid for travel to EU countries. UK pet owners now need an Animal Health Certificate (AHC) issued from a vet no more than 10 days before travel.

An AHC typically costs from £100 to £250 depending on the vet and the vet can only issue it if your dog has been microchipped (around £15-18) and vaccinated against rabies (around £50). You must wait at least 21 days after the primary vaccination before you travel.

While you can use pet passports multiple times, the AHC is only valid for a single trip into the EU. Entry procedure is relatively easy: when you arrive, your pet's AHC, microchip and vaccinations are checked and

will be valid for four months of travel. Before returning, dogs must typically receive treatment for tapeworm one to five days before your departure, so you must make an appointment with a vet in France who'll provide the paperwork to prove this has been done. If you choose to return to France, use the same vet for the AHC as some give you a discount. Up to five animals can be added to an AHC if you decide to get another four-legged friend.

SAM LEWIS



How can I get involved with reef conservation on my upcoming trip to the Seychelles?

Coral bleaching has a devastating effect on marine life, so many resorts in the Seychelles have introduced conservation initiatives to revive their reefs. Visitors who lend a hand find it's a great way to learn about the delicate balance of life in these turquoise shallows.

Adopting coral is an option at the Hilton Seychelles Northolme Resort, which is now growing 195 coral fragments. The resort also runs educational snorkelling trips that introduce you to different types of coral, while teaching about reef preservation and safe snorkelling. From £3,390 for seven nights. hilton.com

Splashing out? At The Four Seasons on Mahé, you might like to plant your own baby coral. As part of the Love Grows Beautiful Things project, you're shown how to attach a rescued fragment of coral to a solid base before you swim out to the resort's underwater coral nursery and attach it. You'll continue to receive updates about how your sponsored coral is doing once you're home, too. From £10,350 for seven nights. fourseasons.com

In the remote Outer Islands, Alphonse has been less affected by coral bleaching. Here, ecotourism expert Blue Safari leads walking expeditions along the reef flats. You can conduct biodiversity surveys, reporting back on species such as juvenile turtles, eagle rays and eels. Further out, scuba divers can help by gathering data for ongoing monitoring projects. From £10,840 for seven nights. bluesafari.com **NATALIE PARIS**



THE INFO

The million-mile Queen

DURING HER 70-YEAR REIGN, QUEEN ELIZABETH II BECAME THE MOST-TRAVELLED MONARCH IN BRITISH HISTORY. WE LOOK AT HER EXTRAORDINARY, GLOBETROTTING LIFE

IN NUMBERS

117

The number of countries Queen Elizabeth II travelled to, including every country in the Commonwealth and many more beyond

290

The number of state visits the Queen conducted, ending with a 2015 trip to Malta, where she lived briefly with Prince Philip

1,032,513

The estimated miles the Queen covered during her reign – the equivalent of 42 journeys around the circumference of the Earth



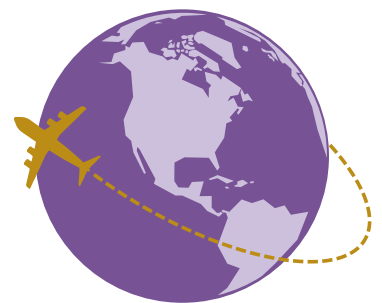
1926-2022

Fittingly for such a well-travelled monarch, Her Majesty's reign began on foreign soil. She arrived in Kenya on 1 February 1952 as Princess Elizabeth and flew home six days later as Queen, after hearing about her father's death. Her coronation took place on 2 June the following year

OFFICIALLY THE QUEEN OF CANADA, QUEEN ELIZABETH VISITED THE COUNTRY ON STATE VISITS MORE OFTEN THAN ANY OTHER NATION – AN IMPRESSIVE 22 TIMES BETWEEN 1957 AND 2010



HER FIRST TOUR OF THE COMMONWEALTH REMAINS THE LONGEST TO DATE – A MAMMOTH, SIX-MONTH JOURNEY, VISITING NATIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN, AUSTRALASIA, ASIA AND AFRICA



The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh's eight-week royal tour of Australia between 1953-54, which saw the couple visit 57 towns in 58 days, was the single biggest event the country had ever planned at that time.

Five monarch milestones

1961

VATICAN CITY

The Queen was the first British monarch to make a state visit to the Vatican. She went three times

1968

BRAZIL

Following a stay in Brazil, she went to Chile, making her the first reigning British monarch to do so

1979

SAUDI ARABIA

In another royal record, the Queen became the first female head of state to visit the country

1986

CHINA

On the first state visit to the country by a British monarch, the Queen took in the Great Wall of China

2011

IRELAND

A trip to Dublin was the first from a British monarch to the Irish Republic since 1922

SOURCES: cbc.ca edition.cnn.com sl.nsw.gov.au tatler.com telegraph.co.uk

HOT TOPIC

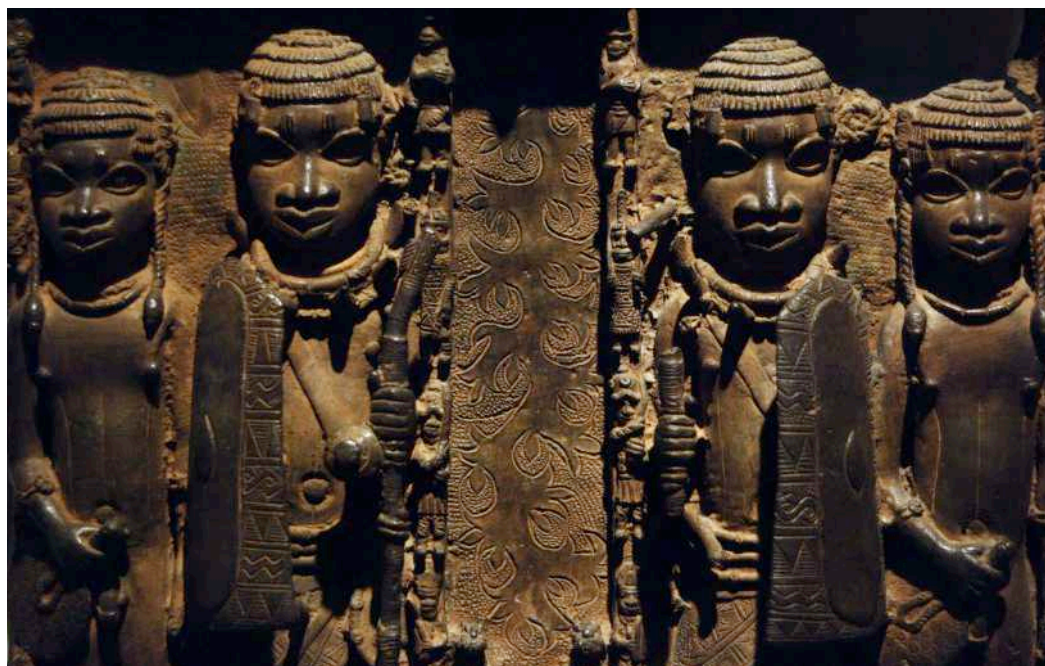
WHY THE BENIN BRONZES ARE BEING RETURNED

London's Horniman Museum plans to return its collection of looted bronzes to Nigeria. Could this be a turning point for cultural restitution?

Originally cast in what's now southwest Nigeria, the Benin Bronzes have been languishing in around 150 museums in Europe and the US for almost 125 years.

Increasingly, however, heritage experts are calling for them to be returned. With London's Horniman Museum having announced in August that it will return its 72 bronzes to Nigeria, calls for further repatriations are set to grow.

Come 2026, these treasures will have a permanent home in Benin City's new Edo Museum of West African Art (EMOWAA). It will house the most comprehensive display of Benin Bronzes ever assembled. In the meantime, some of the Horniman bronzes will be transferred to Benin City National Museum, allowing local people to see them for the first time.



What are the Benin Bronzes and why are they in London?

The 5,000 or so artefacts known as the Benin Bronzes, which were mostly created between the 13th and 16th centuries, didn't originate from present-day Benin but the former Kingdom of Benin, nearby. They were looted by British troops during an invasion of Benin City, the kingdom's capital, in 1897. They stripped Benin City of thousands of antiquities, with many ending up in museums around the world, including the Horniman.

What's prompted their return?

Nigeria's mission to reclaim the bronzes began in the 1930s. It took hold with independence in 1960 and gathered pace in 2007 with the formation of the Benin Dialogue Group, a party of representatives from Nigerian and European cultural institutions focused on reuniting the artefacts. In January 2022, it contacted the Horniman, prompting it to research the provenance of the artefacts in their care.

"It's clear that these objects were acquired through force, and external consultation supported our view that it's both moral and appropriate to return their ownership to Nigeria," said Eve Salomon, chair of the Trustees of the Horniman Museum. Some items may remain on loan for display, research and education.

Why does repatriation matter?

The looting of artefacts such as the Benin Bronzes has come to symbolise the evils of colonialism. Keith Merrin, director of the Great North Museum: Hancock, in Newcastle upon Tyne, which has pledged to return the single bronze in its collection, said: "Repatriation can be a powerful cultural, spiritual and symbolic act, which recognises the wrongs of the past and restores some sense of justice."

Why has it taken so long?

For much of the 20th century, it was argued that not all items of

foreign origin were stolen or acquired violently – some were given willingly or traded. Some curators also felt that the Benin Bronzes should be considered part of a global heritage rather than the property of a single nation. They believed the job of protecting such artefacts should go to those best placed to handle this responsibility. However, the world has since reassessed the effects of colonialism and the arguments against repatriating such items have gradually worn thin.

But dissenting voices remain. The Restitution Study Group, a US-based nonprofit organisation concerned with slavery justice, says that southwest Nigerians shouldn't benefit from the bronzes since its people are descended from slave traders. Executive director Deadria Farmer-Paellmann says the Kingdom of Benin made the artefacts "with the manilla currency they were paid to sell

people into the transatlantic slave trade, and sometimes kill in ritual sacrifices".

What about the other bronzes?

Museums around the world have vowed to release most or all of the bronzes in their possession into Nigerian ownership.

Controversially, the British Museum, which cares for more than 900 bronzes, is legally prevented from returning them under the British Museum (1963) and Heritage (1983) acts. The British Museum is actively invested in EMOWAA, however, via its African Histories and Heritage Programme. "This includes a five-year archaeological partnership that's currently investigating Benin City," said a British Museum spokesperson. "Deepening public access and understanding, and forging connections between the present and the past remain at the core of what the British Museum seeks to achieve." **EMMA GREGG**



AN AURORA EXPEDITION TO ANTARCTICA IS LITERALLY LIFE. CHANGING.

For more than 30 years our Expedition Team have been about sharing their knowledge and understanding of some of the most remote and unspoiled destinations including Antarctica and the Arctic. Our specialist small ships have an average of 132 passengers and are geared for adventure – from polar snorkelling, diving, to kayaking and skiing.

For us, it's all about connecting you with the natural environment because when you disembark we want you to be richer in your knowledge and understanding of our planet than when you stepped aboard. Join us for an expedition of a lifetime.



CHRISTMAS GIFT SUBSCRIPTION



+



FREE
HYDRO
FLASK!



Why not start your Christmas shopping off with our special gift subscription? For **£25**, our special six-month subscription includes five issues of *National Geographic Traveller* (UK), two issues of *Food by National Geographic Traveller* (UK) PLUS a Hydro Flask from the Limited Edition Horizon Collection. Made with TempShield insulation, the 21oz (621ml) flask keeps drinks cold for up to 24 hours, and hot for up to 12.

SUBSCRIBE FOR YOURSELF OR A LOVED ONE & RECEIVE:

- Five issues of *National Geographic Traveller* (UK)
- Two issues of *Food by National Geographic Traveller* (UK)
- A complimentary 21oz Hydro Flask bottle from the Limited Edition Horizon Collection

SUBSCRIBE VIA **SUBSCRIPTIONS.NATGEOTRAVELLER.CO.UK**
OR CALL 01858 438787 AND QUOTE CODE **DNOVX22**

T&Cs: Closing date for orders is 3 November 2022. The price shown is a UK Direct Debit offer. If paying by credit card the price is £35, including the Hydro Flask. Your subscription will begin with the next available issue or, if a gift subscription is selected, the subscription will begin with the first issue after Christmas. If you do not cancel at the end of that period, the subscription will auto renew as follows by Direct Debit; five issues at £25 renewing at £30 thereafter. The Hydro Flasks are subject to availability and for UK subscribers only. Please allow up to four weeks for delivery of the Hydro Flask. This is a limited offer and may be withdrawn at any time. Please note: by subscribing, you agree that we may contact you about your subscription from time to time.

c037629-abce-408c-b04b-b04b04b04b04

IN THE NEXT ISSUE



If you're seeking inspiration for your next great adventure, our next issue shines a light on 35 of the most exciting destinations for 2023, from thrilling outdoor escapes to cultural celebrations and sustainably minded getaways

PLUS // ARGYLL, GUATEMALA, HANOI, IRELAND, ISTANBUL, REYKJAVIK, ROMANIA, SAN JOSE, TENNESSEE, ZAMBIA, ZARAGOZA & MORE

DECEMBER ISSUE ON SALE 3 NOVEMBER 2022

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR SUBSCRIPTION OFFERS,
SEE PAGE 157

IMPRESSIVE POWER DOESN'T ALWAYS HAVE TO BE MAMMOTH

SCAN TO SHOP



600W
PURE SINE INVERTER



268Wh
LIFEPO₄ BATTERY



0-80% RECHARGED IN
45MINUTES



SMART CITIES

The future of travel

Initiatives like the European Capital of Smart Tourism and European Destination of Excellence celebrate forward-thinking practices in cities across Europe. We take a look at the 2022 winners. Words: Laura Price





What do Bordeaux, Valencia and Middelfart have in common? These French, Spanish and Danish cities are pioneers in the travel sector, envisioning a new way of welcoming all visitors — one that's kinder to the planet and spotlights local culture, often through digital innovation and increased accessibility. Bordeaux and Valencia are the joint 2022 European Capitals of Smart Tourism, an annual honour supported by the European Commission, which promotes cutting-edge approaches to tourism across Europe. Middelfart, meanwhile, has won a separate accolade as the European Destination of Excellence 2022 — an award that celebrates sustainable innovation in smaller destinations.

BORDEAUX

Bordeaux has long been a leading destination in France, with its world-class food, the world's oldest wine-growing area and monumental architecture. But its progressive outlook and sustainable credentials are now making it innovative for visitors, too.

With big-hit attractions including the cathedral, Place de la Bourse and Water Mirror all within walking distance, the city is straightforward to navigate. This extends to its world-famous wineries, part of the planet's largest wine-producing region, with 5,500 chateaux spread across 430sq miles. Not only are some of these wineries located within the city walls, but other vineyards are also easily reachable either via bicycle or a network of accessible trams, trains and buses. What's more, two thirds of the total surface area of the wineries have received environmental certification, with €1.2m (£1m) invested in related research every year.

There are ample facilities for the green tourist, too, from water-bottle-filling stations to eco-hotels such as Eklo and Le Domaine de Raba, which visitors can find through wegogreenr.com. Any visit must include a trip to the Darwin Experience, a former military barracks turned hub for skating, street art, electro music and biodiversity; come for a mosey and Sunday brunch and leave well-educated in everything from composting to climate change.



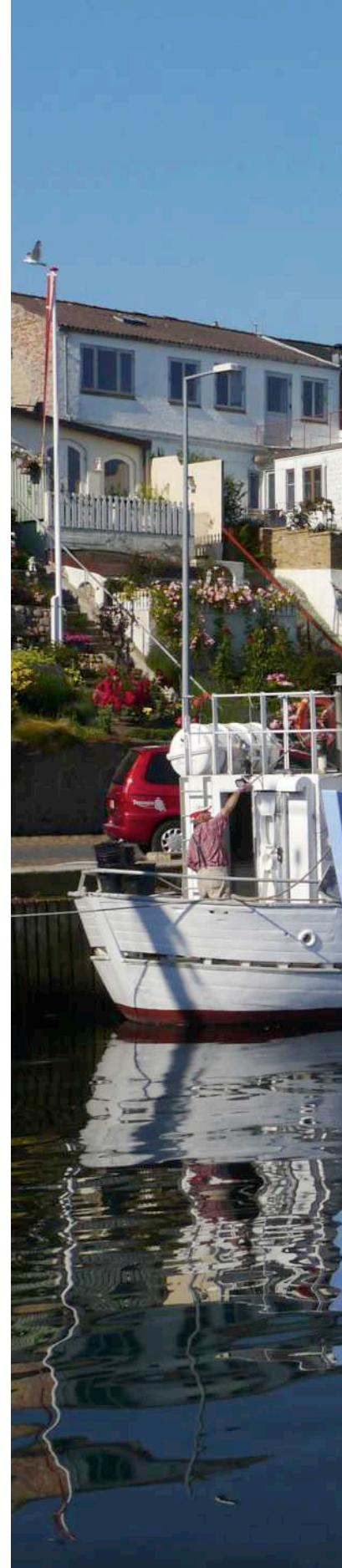
VALENCIA, SPAIN

Home to not one but three UNESCO World Heritage sites, Spain's third-largest city provides the best of both modern and traditional for every visitor. Aiming to become carbon neutral by 2030, Valencia has ample cycle lanes by the coast, as well as fountains for refilling water bottles and a fine selection of restaurants focused on local, homegrown food. There's no wasted paper, as all the city's maps and guides are provided in digital form and tourist resources usable via a QR code. Perhaps even more impressive, this is the first city to measure and certify the carbon and water footprint of tourism, ensuring that every visit has minimal impact on the planet.

Any trip here is sure to encompass the region's magnificent natural draws, including the Turia Gardens — a green lung

in the heart of the city — and La Albufera Natural Park, an ecosystem of paddy fields with a large freshwater lagoon. The lake itself is an important part of history, as it's said to be the birthplace of paella, an international favourite that can still be enjoyed as part of a boat trip taking in the wetlands and surrounding vegetable gardens.

The list of positives goes on. Valencia's buses are equipped with technology for the visually impaired, its beaches are accessible to the disabled and there are plans to host the Gay Games XII in 2026. Best of all, the city's innovative practices enhance its cultural offerings, as historic sites like the Gothic Lonja silk exchange are accessible and sustainable. All the more reason for the European Commission to promote the city as the second 2022 European Capital of Smart Tourism.





IMAGES: VISIT VALENCIA; ALAMY

MIDDELFART, DENMARK

Located on the banks of the Little Belt strait, this market town in central Denmark is making its name on the European travel scene thanks to its ambitious spirit. In fact, with a commitment to sustainability that far outweighs its small size and population of 15,000, Middelfart is the 2022 European Destination of Excellence (EDEN) — a worthy winner on many levels, with eco-credentials to rival bigger cities in Europe and match its busy calendar of events and plentiful nature-tourism opportunities.

Preserving the area’s flora, fauna and good water quality is a priority for the town, and evidence of the city’s commitment to sustainability comes in the People’s Climate Meeting (Klimafolkemødet), a national event held in Middelfart every September. Increasingly popular, it brings together politicians, stakeholders and citizens to find solutions to climate challenges.

No matter the time of your visit, one of the biggest local draws is the nearby Little Belt Nature Park. The biggest marine nature park in the country, it’s densely populated with porpoises, which can be spotted along the 71 miles of coastline or on a whale safari. For uninterrupted views of this marine landscape, opt instead for a tour of the 213ft-high Old Little Belt Bridge, a physical and cultural link between the islands of Jutland and Funen.

Back in the old town, between the historic churches and the castle, visitors can browse various independent stores, which receive support from the local government on their path to sustainable entrepreneurship. Then, at the end of the day, bed down in one of many certified eco-friendly hotels.

For more information about the European Capital of Smart Tourism and the European Destination of Excellence initiatives, visit: smarttourismcapital.eu and ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/eden_en

From left: The port in Middelfart, Denmark; Valencia offers ample cycling lanes

Previous page: Rue Saint-James in Bordeaux. The city is one of two 2022 European Capitals of Smart Tourism





NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

TRAVELLER

TRAVEL WRITING COMPETITION 2022

Every year, the editors of *National Geographic Traveller* (UK) judge hundreds of entries in their search for the next big travel-writing talent. The competition asks for 500 words on an inspiring, authentic experience that conveys a strong sense of the destination and the local people. Here are 2022's prize-winning entry and runners-up

Lagon Bleu, Rangiroa,
French Polynesia

c0376237-ace6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



THE WINNER

THE BLUE LAGOON

IN A SECLUDED CORNER OF FRENCH POLYNESIA, RANGIROA OFFERS EXTRAVAGANT BEAUTY AND WILDLIFE. WORDS: JAMES BREGMAN

“Limon! Limon!”

Captain Hiro’s cry isn’t an offer of refreshments. He’s excitedly alerting his passengers to something.

On his instruction, we’ve left the safety of the moored boat and are wading towards shore. The waist-deep water is calm, clear, bathtub-warm. The only obstacles are the sharks.

They dart about in their hundreds, weaving at torpedo speed around our nervous steps and butting the occasional ankle. Most are modest-sized reef dwellers, as skittish as they are kinetic. The lemon shark now joining them is twice the size and much less timid.

Navigating this welcome party feels a fair price for entry to a beauty spot whose inaccessibility keeps crowds mercifully away.

The Lagon Bleu is a lagoon within a lagoon, one geological quirk inside another. This secluded corner of Polynesia hides in the fringes of the much larger Rangiroa atoll, a remarkable location in itself — a narrow ring of fragmented land with an expanse of ocean in the middle. Its 120-mile perimeter traces the shape of an ancient fringing reef that once encircled a towering volcano. Millennia after its peaks sank into the Pacific, today’s Rangiroa sits just feet above sea level. Its 360-degree horizon and sleepy pace make for a distinct edge-of-the-earth vibe.

On the giant atoll’s western reach, where stretches of continuous land give way to a patchwork of motus — small coral sand islets — the fauna of the Blue Lagoon lives its quiet life.

Hiro offers ironic applause as we make it to the lagoon’s outer beach, where the next guardian awaits: an albatross floats over the boiling sand, keeping a close eye on the visitors. Just beyond the seafaring bird’s outsize shadow lies our destination.

Photogenic scenes aren’t rare in Polynesia, but this one merits a gasp. Marked out by a border of coconut palms, the lagoon’s centrepiece is an immense pool where legions of coloured fish and yet more sharks cruise around in glassy clarity.

As we marvel, Hiro joins us on the beach for an impromptu lesson in Polynesian heritage. Using his own arm as field guide, he proudly points back and forth between his tattoos and the sea life. Revered turtles, rays and eels depicted in ink are matched by real-world examples, though none are quite as sacrosanct as the abundant *mano* (sharks), venerated across the Pacific as embodiments of ancient strength and divinity.

We wade across the lagoon to explore the far shore, where the reception is chilly. Emerging from the foliage comes a clan of nesting white terns, which look angelic, but prove formidable as dive bombers.

When the sun sets over our homeward journey, the boat is buzzed by what looks like another squadron of seabirds. On closer inspection they’re flying fish, skipping across the wave crests for remarkable distances. They fall gradually back as Rangiroa’s harbour comes into view. It’s as if they’d been escorting us back; the wildlife of the hidden lagoon, it seems, tolerated our presence for the day but is still making very sure to see us out.

WHAT THE JUDGES SAID

James’s entry stood out for its clear, concise sentences and effective structure. The opening quote draws the reader in and cleverly steers us into the experience, setting the scene and introducing the destination. All in all, it’s an excellent piece and impressed all the judges.

IMAGES: GETTY; LAURENCE FISCHER / STUDIOPONANT



The grand prize

James and a guest will join National Geographic Expeditions for the opportunity to discover the spectacular east coast of Greenland on board *Le Commandant Charcot*, Ponant’s luxury expedition ship. The 11-day voyage through fjords, icebergs and glaciers offers the chance to spot seals, Arctic foxes and even polar bears. Travellers can also learn about the traditions of the Greenlandic Inuit, whose lives follow the rhythm of the changing seasons. nationalgeographicexpeditions.co.uk



EXPEDITIONS



RUNNER-UP

THE BRIDGE OF THE WORLD

EGYPT'S SOUTH SINAI DESERT REVEALS A WORLD APART.
WORDS: HENRY WORSLEY

Saint Catherine's Monastery stood alone in the centre of the South Sinai desert, hunched and quiet like an aged Madonna in the shadow of the peaks.

Hidden inside this layer cake of brick and mosaic walls lay the very bush which had burned before Moses, so they told me, although the sacred shrubbery itself was firmly hidden from sight, cordoned-off by local policemen wary of Islamic State remnants that lingered in the area.

Our ascent was made at midnight, our path guided by the light of the full moon. I was hiking with a small group of Alexandrian teenagers. We stopped briefly at corrugated huts that straddled the route up the silvery mountainside, drinking mint tea and looking out over the black gully beneath us.

The landscape was the most alien I'd ever seen. When I looked for shapes and forms hospitable to a human being, I saw only something like an image of a mushroom under a microscope. Each rocky feature was bulbous, only the vague outlines of the mountains visible in the grainy light, rising like melted candle wax from the penumbrous abyss below. Beyond our breathing and footsteps, only silence.

Approaching the summit of the mountain, the temperature began to drop. This was the coldest place in Egypt; the coldest place in all of North Africa from here to the distant spine of the Atlas, 3,000 miles away.

We passed a small mosque, its door open, abandoned to the gnawing cold. Dawn remained hours away, but as we began to freeze in the north wind, something dim was spotted glimmering above us: an Orthodox chapel, built originally in the time of the emperor Justinian, smashed and resurrected after storms had shattered its fragile frame.

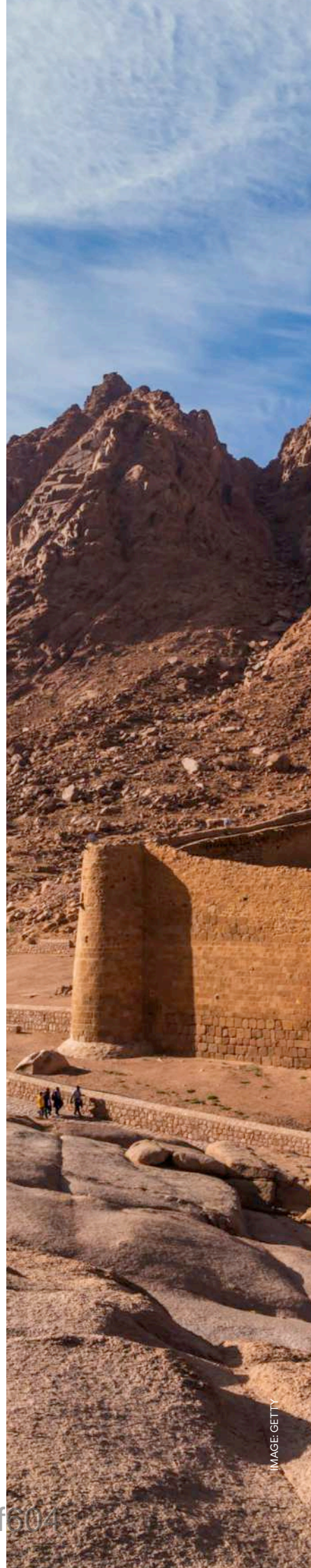
Inside, several nuns warmed themselves around a fire-filled bowl. They cast long shadows, chanting hymns in Russian, while behind the screen a long-bearded priest prepared a sacrament for the pilgrims. The sound of their Slavic lament swirled in echoes through clouds of incense. Eventually, we shuffled into the half-light outside.

When the sun rose, the group of boys I was with stared dumbfounded for an instant, enchanted by the celestial beauty of the fireball rising into the sky. This was Ra, the Ancient Egyptian god, heralding warmth and a new day.


"*Allahu akbar*," they said, pulling off their shirts and posing for selfies, while to my back the nuns continued their mournful chant, now tinged with major chords of hope and rebirth.

I realised I was standing on the bridge of the world — not just the land of Abraham's God, but the crossroads of a timeless spiritual yearning, a place of singing and fasting, of hermits and grace.

Suddenly, it all seemed so obvious why they called this place 'holy'. As clear as the sun.





Saint Catherine's Monastery,
Mount Sinai, Egypt 

c0376237-acc6-40bc-b0db-564dff3cf604



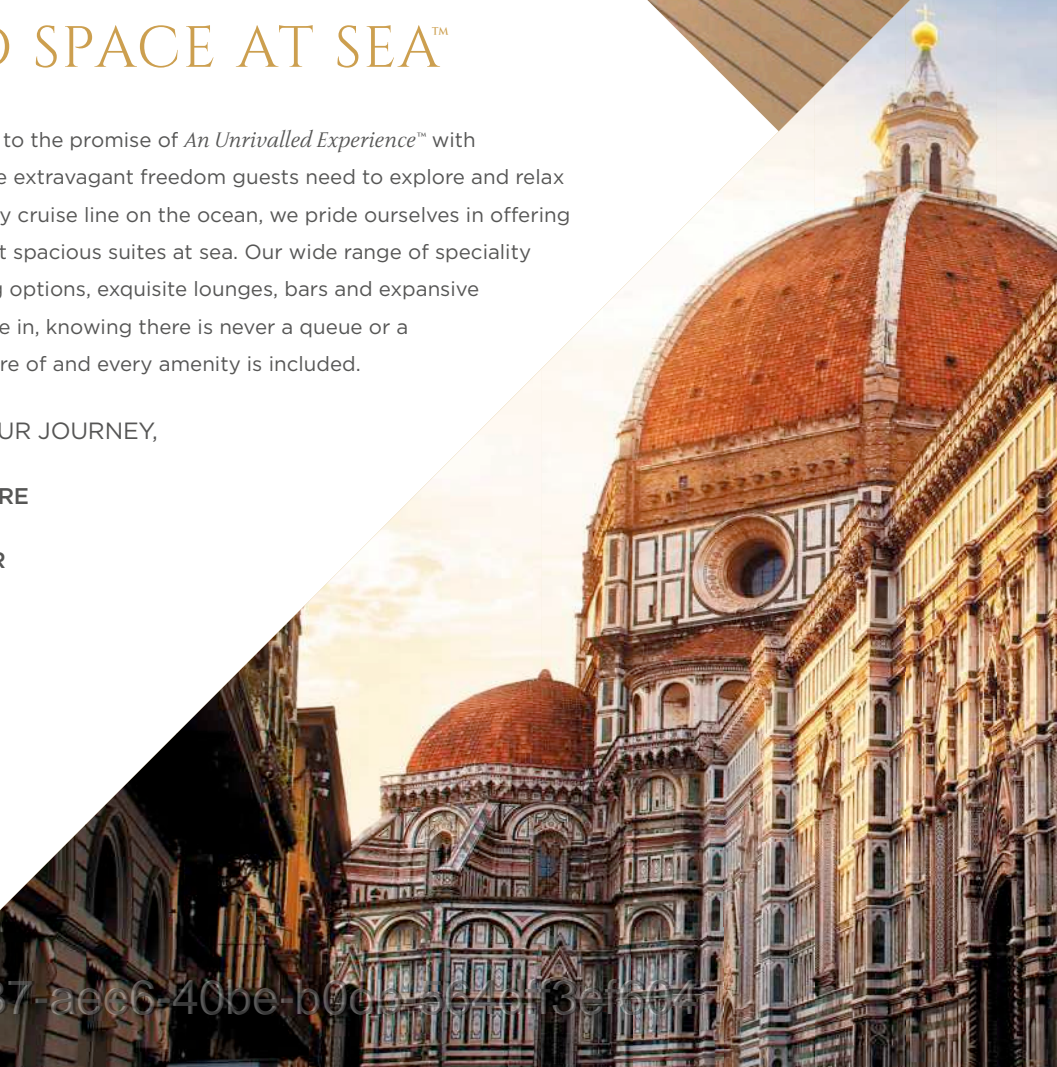
Regent
SEVEN SEAS CRUISES®

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS
OF UNRIVALLED EXPERIENCES

UNRIVALLED SPACE AT SEA™

The luxury of personal space is central to the promise of *An Unrivalled Experience™* with *Regent Seven Seas Cruises®*. It provides the extravagant freedom guests need to explore and relax to the fullest. As the pre-eminent luxury cruise line on the ocean, we pride ourselves in offering some of the largest balconies and most spacious suites at sea. Our wide range of speciality restaurants, *alfresco* and in-suite dining options, exquisite lounges, bars and expansive spaces are perfect to rest and celebrate in, knowing there is never a queue or a crowd and that every detail is taken care of and every amenity is included.

TO LEARN MORE AND START YOUR JOURNEY,
SCAN THE QR CODE
VISIT [RSSC.COM/ORDER-BROCHURE](https://rssc.com/order-brochure)
CALL 023 8082 1360 OR
CONTACT YOUR TRAVEL ADVISOR





Rio Dulce, Guatemala

RUNNER-UP

ALONE ON A SLOW RIVER

A KAYAK TRIP DOWN RIO DULCE UNCOVERS A SIDE OF GUATEMALA UNTOUCHED BY VISITORS OR TIME. WORDS: FINNUALA BRETT

For an hour, I'm alone in the canyon. Steep cliffs of vegetation have risen around me; the river slows into viscous, glassy green. The prow of my kayak makes little noise as it parts the water's surface, interjected by the occasional howler monkey and drowned out by the cries of swooping birds. A shaft of afternoon light settles on their flurried wings, catching the haze of the late day.

Few seem to reach these stretches of river, where Lago de Izabal narrows, and the Rio Dulce winds through the jungle of north-eastern Guatemala. There's little engine noise up here. The yachts and *lanchas* sit moored in the town of Fronteras, and the daily boat bus to Livingston has already passed. People are replaced by birdlife, great grey pelicans and flitting egrets; the roads turn into waterways that bend around tangles of tree roots. Since leaving my riverside hostel, with my belongings squashed into a dry bag and a friendly "Adios!" waved to the young

host, the straw-roofed cabanas and their rickety docksides have petered out. Any fellow tourists have long vanished.

Beads of sweat are washed down my arms by the trickle of water from my kayak's paddles. From under the brim of my cap, I squint across to the far side of the canyon. As I hold still, floating gently downstream, a new noise breaks the stirrings of wildlife.

Two *cayucos* (small canoes) emerge from the shadow of a creek I hadn't yet noticed, slipping across towards the middle of the river with a figure standing poised at each prow. Their boats are longer than mine, elegant and curved up from the surface, and laden with plastic bait-jugs. As I drift closer, I wave and call across the water in greeting. The sound echoes against the limestone cliffs.

The late sun is bright behind the two young men, and as one of them dives gracefully from his *cayuco*, it catches and holds the splashes in glittering amber. The seconds lengthen,

and the other fisherman and I watch the water's surface as it stills and throws the bouncing light back into our eyes. It seems like an age before the diver eventually bursts back up from the water surface, startling the birds from nearby branches. He clutches a snake-like shape in his hand, triumphant. It's an *anguilla*, still used in Indigenous Mayan fishing as a bait for tarpon.

The river has already carried me far downstream; the divers busy themselves with their catch. I realise that without the quiet slowness of my kayak, I might not have encountered this way of life. Modern life, skimming past in motorboats, has not seemed to settle here.

The sun has passed this corner of the river now, the canyon walls casting me back into shade. As my paddles return to the water, the noise of wildlife rises to meet the settling dusk. Rio Dulce falls into slumber, and I'm alone in the canyon once more.



RUNNER-UP

GOING ON A BEAR HUNT

A HIKE IN JAPAN'S HOKKAIDO ISLAND LEADS TO A FACE-TO-FACE ENCOUNTER WITH ELUSIVE CREATURES. WORDS: ELIZABETH WAINWRIGHT

"You need a bell for your bag," the woman says, handing me a ticket for the cable car that will take me to the start of the trail.

"A bell?"

"So the bears hear you coming." She picks up a bell, and it tinkles a high-pitched greeting as she hands it to me. I clip it onto my rucksack, now ready for my six-day hike through Daisetsuzan National Park in Japan's northern island, Hokkaido. I walk outside, fearing and hoping to see a bear.

The next few days bring blizzards that blow through ice and rock, dripping-wet green forests, mountains that emerge from clouds, and vast views. In Japanese, 'Daisetsuzan' means 'great snowy mountains'. The Indigenous Ainu people of Hokkaido call the area Kamui Mintara — 'playground of the gods'. I meet few gods, or people, or bears, though they are all here.

I'm inhabiting a landscape that feels familiar, at times reminding me of Scotland and the Alps, but also strange. When the clouds close in, I feel I'm at the end of the world. I think of the Japanese Studio Ghibli films that conjure mythical creatures and magic realities, hidden but for those who have eyes to see. I have stepped into the looking glass, and I see rocks and plants differently, hear peculiar animal noises. I begin to doubt I'll see a bear though, the regular tinkle of the bell on my bag starting to annoy me. I reach for it, ready to remove it, but something stops me.

Most working Japanese people have a day off each week when city dwellers head to the hills. My bell and I have company. For part of the day I walk with a man from Sapporo, the island's largest city, and we talk about the tsunami of the year before. The previous week I'd been on the main island's east coast meeting affected

communities — people were living piled on top of each other in flats, their homes still flattened rubble. "People struggle with the lack of privacy," he says. "We are very private. But still, the tsunami brought us together." We arrange to meet for food in Sapporo the following week.

On my own again the next day, my bell incessantly talking, I feel I'm being watched. I stop, lift my eyes from the trail, look down to the valley below and to the hills the other side. She is standing there, looking at me — a mother bear with her cub behind. I'm too far away to be a threat and so is she. Studio Ghibli still in my mind, I half expect her to speak to me. She doesn't. My bell doesn't either. Now, only mountain silence resounds. I'm not sure how long we look at each other, but eventually the air shifts and the bear and her cub carry on their path, and I carry on mine, each in our own private but shared wonder of a world.

Experiencing Icebergs cannot be described with one word

It is Experienced through All Senses



SoMe: ExploreNorthGreenland / #Ilulissat
explore@avannaata.gl

Photo by: Bendt Kristiansen

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564d1f3ef604

STARGAZING IN THE North York Moors

Astronomer and stargazing aficionado Richard Darn on dark skies in the North York Moors and what to look out for this winter. Interview: Helen Warwick



WHAT MAKES THE NORTH YORK MOORS GREAT FOR STARGAZING?

It all comes down to light pollution. In today's world, the view of the heavens has almost nearly gone but on the North York Moors, thick darkness reigns and you can find skies of thousands of stars, which just isn't possible in the city. Some people visiting have never seen the Milky Way and it comes as a bit of an epiphany when they gaze at it. They stare at this river of light beaming overhead and for those who have never seen anything like it, it's a jaw-dropping moment.

WHERE ARE THE TOP PLACES IN THE NORTH YORK MOORS FOR STARS?

Now that the North York Moors is an International Dark Sky Reserve and the subject of many surveys, we have a very good idea of the darkest areas. There's Ravenscar on the coast where the skies are beautiful and you can stare at the heavens. Further inland, Dalby Forest is a spectacular spot with its dark sky, observatories and events. In the west, there's a huge escarpment, Sutton Bank, hugging the ridge with fantastic views over the Dales. Stargazers can sit on reclining benches and see shooting stars at The Star Hub.

WHY DO YOU LOVE STARGAZING?

There's something incredibly peaceful about catching Saturn on a good night.

I stand there with a pair of binoculars in the forest or on the moorland, and it's difficult to feel stressed. You don't need to go far — spectacular night skies can be found right here in the UK.

WHAT SHOULD WE LOOK OUT FOR THIS AUTUMN/WINTER?

Saturn, Jupiter and Mars will all be putting on a good show. All you need is binoculars and a star guide. You also might see other galaxies, like the Andromeda Galaxy. There are great winter constellations around Christmas, like Orion, and on 13-14 December, the Geminid meteor show will be visible.

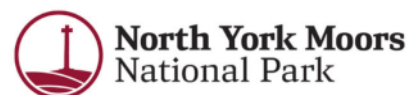
For more information on York and the North York Moors, head to visityork.org/northyorkmoors

PLAN YOUR TRIP

Stay at York's only five-star hotel for a Dark Skies stargazing experience with Richard, inclusive of dinner, breakfast the next day and treats to take stargazing. thegrandyork.co.uk



Clockwise from left: the Milky Way over Skelton Tower near Levisham; a double room at The Grand; exterior of The Grand; astronomer Richard Darn



Visit York

THE GRAND
YORK

CONRAD®

NEW YORK
MIDTOWN



ROOM TO RELAX

Stay in a luxurious suite while taking in panoramic views of New York City.

151 West 54th Street, New York, NY 10019 || 212.307.5000 || www.conradnewyorkmidtown.com

c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

WINTER SPORTS

RETURN TO THE SLOPES

AFTER TWO YEARS OF TURMOIL, SKIING IS BACK IN BUSINESS, WITH TRAVEL COMPANIES REPORTING SALES AT PRE-COVID LEVELS AND AN AVALANCHE OF EARLY BOOKINGS FOR A BUSY SEASON. WORDS: NICK DALTON

WHAT'S THE STATE OF PLAY?

Although there are many factors that can still affect the skiing industry, the season looks bright, according to Simon McIntyre, general manager – ski at Iglu, Britain's largest independent ski-travel agency. In the six weeks to mid-July, business was up 50% on last year, although cost-of-living fears were steering people towards less-expensive deals.

"There are emerging trends, likely driven by the economy, with customers looking to Austria and Italy for better value," says Simon. "Over three months, Italy, Austria and Bulgaria's share of enquiries rose 15% compared with 2019. Average prices for Italy are 10% less than in France.

"The cost of living hasn't affected demand, but skiers are looking for extra value, be that half-board hotels or all-inclusive holidays with lift passes."

Iglu sells a large proportion of all UK ski holidays — including last-minute deals — and McIntyre foresees a "strong late market" due to economic factors. But he predicts greater availability given that spring ski trips were hard to come by last season due to rebookings from previous seasons. "By virtue of this not

happening again there are more holidays on the market," he says.

Scott Britton, head of commercial at Crystal Ski Holidays, agrees with the positive outlook. "We've been seeing record bookings," he says. "With chalet availability harder to come by or more expensive, there's an appetite for good hotels and larger self-catering apartments.

"Italy was a little more relaxed on entry requirements last season, and this led to a larger share of bookings then, and demand has continued."

With economic problems yet to hit bookings and Brexit only affecting company logistics so far, the industry is in a good position to recover from two seasons of lost bookings.

"We're 10% up on 2019/20, our last proper year, across all resorts," says John Mansell, chief operating officer at Inghams, which includes family brand Esprit Ski. "Canada, one of our higher-end destinations, is up 100%."

And there's good news for last-minute bookers. "We've the ability to increase capacity, tapping into more flights and accommodation," says John.

SKI CHALETs

Despite the upturn in bookings, chalet availability isn't what it was. Some tour companies still have reduced offerings in the wake of Covid-19 and Brexit.

The latter has hit the popular chalet-hotels run by British companies, which were largely staffed by young Brits taking a year out. EU legislation, which means UK citizens can now only visit for 90 days in every 180, has knocked this work on the head. Employing EU workers has also proved an expense that pushes up the cost of the holiday.

Also, post-Covid-19, some chalet owners have been reticent in releasing properties, meaning fewer options — and not quite as many late chalet deals as people might expect.

Nick Morgan, managing director of Le Ski, runs more than 30 chalets. He says that over half of Le Ski's holidays were sold by mid-July. "Last season, many skiers were badly bitten by Covid-19 cancellations if they weren't travelling with ATOL-bonded operators," he explains. "This has led to a rush to secure a package, including flights and transfers, with the few remaining reputable chalet operators."

LUXURY MARKET

The top end of the market is also bouncing back. Luxury specialist Oxford Ski Company reports average spend up almost 20% on pre-Covid-19 years. Although much of this might be due to increasing costs, Oxford's founder and CEO, Rupert Longsdon, says people are still spending more. "When they came back from lockdown they'd forgotten just how much they enjoyed skiing and it's now an investment in lifestyle."

More people are also booking two holidays. "They're doing their main trip with friends, maybe Christmas, then making time for a long weekend, perhaps without the children," says Rupert.

Oxford has had no problems finding upmarket chalets, due to cancelled bookings by Russians in France and Switzerland.

Meriski has been offering luxury chalets in France's Méribel resort since 1984. Chairman Colin Mathews has noticed a changing market. "If people are spending several million on [buying] a chalet they don't necessarily need to rent it out, but they want to balance the figures," he says. As a result, Meriski now works with owners who only want to release their chalet for a few weeks.



ALPINE
RESIDENCES

Your unforgettable mountain getaway

PRESTIGIOUS APARTMENTS FOR RENT WITH HOTEL SERVICES

COURCHEVEL | LES GETS | VAL D'ISÈRE

www.alpine-residences.fr

+33 (0)4 80 94 95 96 - booking@alpine-residences.fr

c0376237-aceb-40be-b0db-564d113ef604

Five forward-thinking ski resorts

LAAX, SWITZERLAND

Powered by CO₂-neutral hydropower and with its own wind and solar plants, Laax aims to be carbon neutral by 2030. flimslaax.com

AVORIAZ, FRANCE

Long a green pioneer, relying on horse-drawn taxi sleighs since its 1960s inception, Avoriaz is powering forward. Since 2011, a wood/electric fuel system heats the modern accommodation and water park. avoriaz.com

ISCHGL, AUSTRIA

Since 2021, all lifts, mountain restaurants and snow systems in Ischgl have been powered by eco-electricity from Silvrettaseilbahn. The company's practices save 18,000 gallons of oil a year. ischgl.com

LECH ZÜRS, AUSTRIA

St Anton's neighbouring resort is hot on sustainability. Its biomass heating plant services households and businesses, and there's a smart electric bus system. lechzeurs.com

SKIWELT WILDER KAISER-BRIXENTAL, AUSTRIA

The resort's Sonnenlift drag-lift, near the link with Kitzbühel, is 100% solar powered. And the SkiWelt's many snow reservoirs are replenished naturally in summer by snowmelt or rain. SkiWelt also utilises 100% renewable hydropower. skiwelt.at

Above: Lech Zürs, Austria has a biomass heating plant servicing local businesses

Previous page: The Méribel-Mottaret resort in Savoie's Les Trois Vallées, France



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

Inghams — which has reported more people turning to higher, more snow-sure resorts at either end of the season — announced a sustainability programme in March 2022, offsetting flights and ground operations with carbon credits, and teaming up with Protect Our Winters UK to commit to a more sustainable future while supporting rewilding projects.

Several resorts are becoming carbon neutral or launching other schemes, but this largely generates goodwill, not bookings.

The most noticeable switch is from plane to train. Last season, French company Travelski Express took over the long-standing Eurostar Ski Train exclusively for its holidays. It carried more than 5,000 skiers last winter, and this season it has added three more resorts to its roster, including Courchevel and Val Thorens. An early Saturday departure from London St Pancras International and late Saturday return enables seven full days of skiing.

The price is a big draw — seven nights from £569 with lift pass,

transfers and accommodation — but travellers also love the adventure of rail travel and the environmental benefit of a train carrying more than 600 skiers. “Each journey emits less than a quarter of the CO₂ of a flight, and you're straight into the heart of the Alps,” says Guillaume de Marcillac, Travelski's CEO. “Every train can carry the equivalent of three plane loads and there's no charge for skis or extra luggage.”

A DIY train holiday using regular services, however, with changes and individual transfers, can be a costly headache. But ski-train champion Snowcarbon is working with small operators to create bespoke packages.

Pierre et Vacances, the French apartment-rental giant, says its car-park bookings have risen, suggesting a switch to road travel. It's also offering some Sunday changeovers to take advantage of cheaper flights.

But climate change continues to have an impact on the mountains themselves. The summer heatwave forced French

resort Tignes to end glacier skiing 14 days into its six-week run. The resort used to open year-round, but now the future of all summer skiing is in question.

Elsewhere, the Marmolada glacier in Italy's Dolomites partially collapsed due to the summer heat, killing a number of climbers. Late-season skiing is increasingly less reliable in lower resorts and operators are often now ending their season earlier.

Portes du Soleil, the French-Swiss ski region with over 400 miles of runs, is looking to the future. “Some resorts are having to adapt their opening and closing times,” says a spokesperson. Avoriaz, the highest Portes du Soleil resort, at 5,900ft, opens before and closes after the other 12 resorts. “We've had to accelerate the diversification of activities. If there's no snow in December, resorts open their bike parks.

“People want high-altitude resorts, but there'll be limits and a saturation of ski areas of altitude. There'll be no more room on the slopes and prices will increase.”



Left: Back country snowboarding on Berthoud Pass, Winter Park Colorado

DESTINATION OVERVIEW

Ski resorts are confident of bouncing back from the more immediate problems of Covid-19. “During the second half of last season, we welcomed almost the same number of British skiers as before Covid,” says Alex Herrmann, director of Switzerland Tourism UK & Ireland. “Based on what we hear from tour operators, we expect this season to be even better.”

Martina Jamnig, of the Austrian National Tourist Office, agrees. “We’re optimistic and hope there won’t be any major restrictions,” she says. “According to tour operators the outlook is positive. There will also be more flights, including Ryanair from Stansted to Klagenfurt.”

Florent Hazucka at Courchevel, the chic French resort in the Trois Vallées — the world’s biggest ski area — is looking forward to welcoming the British again.

“Last winter they were the resort’s leading clientele — despite the Christmas closure for them — far ahead of other nationalities,” he says. “That’s been the case for years, so no doubt they will come in great numbers this winter.”

The US, once a big draw for British skiers, came adrift as flight prices rose a few years back, but still attracts a devoted audience and woos transatlantic skiers.

Alterra Mountain Company, which runs 15 US and Canadian resorts, including Colorado’s Steamboat and Winter Park, and Utah’s Deer Valley, is working hard to bring back Brits. “The UK has always been a priority and bookings are set to reach pre-pandemic levels,” says Nicolas Barrancos, vice-president of international sales at Alterra. “We’ve extended our multi-resort Ikon Pass early-bird offers to give British travellers more time

to book through travel agencies and ski specialists, including HolidayWorld, Ski Safari, Ski Solutions and Ski Independence.”

Ski Independence was one of the first British companies to focus on North America and still arranges tailor-made holidays to more than 20 resorts in the US and Canada. Managing director Michael Bennett says: “This is shaping up to be a build-back season for Colorado. Daily British Airways flights to Denver are joined by a daily United Airlines service, making fares pretty affordable. The latter also has linked flights to other Colorado airports such as Aspen, Hayden (for Steamboat) and Gunnison-Crested Butte,” he adds. “Although the US is still a long way behind Canada, travel restrictions have eased and business is starting to return. For us, Breckenridge, Vail and Aspen are dominating [bookings].” □

MORE INFO

Iglu. iglu.com
 Oxford Ski Company. oxfordski.com
 Le Ski. leski.com
 Meriski. meriski.co.uk
 Crystal. crystalski.co.uk
 Inghams. ingham.co.uk
 Esprit. espritski.co.uk
 Travelski Express. travelski.com
 Snowcarbon. snowcarbon.co.uk
 Pierre et Vacances. pierreetvacances.com
 Portes du Soleil. en.portesdusoleil.com
 My Switzerland. myswitzerland.com
 Holidays in Austria. austria.info
 Les Trois Vallées. les3vallees.com
 Alterra Mountain Company. alterramtnco.com
 Ski Independence. ski-i.com



WWW.OBERTAUERN.COM

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

UBCO



Extend Your Adventure

2 x 2 ELECTRIC ADVENTURE MOTORBIKES

[UBCO.COM](https://ubco.com)

c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

ALL WHEEL DRIVE

UPTO 120KM RANGE

45KM/H TOP SPEED

150KG PAYLOAD

ROAD READY

 NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC

TRAVELLER

| TRAVEL GEEKS

1 NOVEMBER 2022 | LIVE

EUROPE BY ROAD, RAIL & SEA

Join our panel of experts for a lively discussion about the best ways to plan a no-fly adventure across the continent, curating a journey that's as memorable as the destinations



WHERE: LONDON • **TIME:** 19.00-20.00 • **PRICE:** £10

TICKETS ON SALE NOW AT
NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK/EVENTS

c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



**NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC
TRAVELLER**

FOOD FESTIVAL

15-16 JULY 2023

FOODFESTIVAL.NATGEOTRAVELLER.CO.UK



c0376237 ace6-40be-b0db-564d1f3cf604



chapman freeborn
The Global Aircraft Charter Specialists

Start your holiday before takeoff

Discover why families have trusted us to help them make precious memories for almost half a century.

chapmanfreeborn.aero

Time flies. This is especially true when travelling with your family; the days feel short and you have people of all ages and attention spans to please. Private air travel omits busy terminals, queues and delays for the grown-ups, and is guaranteed to delight even the wriggliest fidgeters and pickiest eaters. **Fly private and make every second count.**



c0376237-acc6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604



The Heartland of **FARM-TO-FORK DINING**



VisitFresnoCounty.org
f i j @VisitFresnoCounty



Download our free app to plan your next adventure!

c0376237-ae6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

INBOX

DID YOU LOVE ONE OF OUR FEATURES? HAS A STORY INSPIRED AN ADVENTURE? LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF THE MAGAZINE AND THE STAR LETTER WILL WIN THE INCREDIBLE PRIZE BELOW.

Get in touch

✉ inbox@natgeotraveller.co.uk

Have a query about subscriptions?

Get in touch at
natgeotraveller@subscription.co.uk
or call 01858 438787



Conservation volunteers on Bryn Arw, a hill north of Abergavenny, Wales

WIN



A Chrome Hondo backpack worth £95!

With a minimalist and functional design, this bag will see you through all your adventures. Internal pockets, including a padded laptop sleeve, and reflective panels for visibility make it a smart option for everyday commuting. A water- and abrasion-resistant nylon shell, comfortable shoulder harness and removable sternum strap mean it's a great outdoors companion, too. chromeindustries.com

STAR LETTER

Adventure on your doorstep

Having just returned from a 'back-to-basics' camping trip on the Pembrokeshire Coast, it was wonderful to see your Wales feature (In Pictures, September 2022), reminding us all what exceptional landscapes and environments we have in the UK. As someone who's recently been put off flying, both for environmental and airport stress reasons, it was such an affirmative reminder that 'staycations' are just as valid travel experiences as those destinations further afield. I'm now looking into more walking and wild camping destinations, just a train ride away, since adventure is out there, no matter how close to home. **ISABELLA BARRAND**



California dreaming

Your article on Loch Lomond (Stay at Home, October 2022) was a reminder of the beauty on our doorstep here in the UK. I studied Travel and Tourism in Glasgow, where I grew up, and dreamed of the sights I'd experience overseas. I worked in Switzerland and the Maldives before backpacking around Australia, and high on my bucket list has always been the giant redwood trees in California. Little did I know that less than two hours' drive from hometown, at Benmore Botanical Garden, are the redwoods I've longed to see. **LYNNE MCCONWAY**

On track

I was delighted to read your two recent articles on train travel (Operation Restoration and The Age of the Train, October 2022). Many years ago, I travelled by ferry and train from North Shields via Esbjerg, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki, Moscow and Ulaanbaatar, arriving in Beijing 10 days later. I finished the trip with a real understanding of the distance we'd travelled. Next year, I'm planning a tour on regional railways along the original Orient Express route, then returning by the Simplon route. These trips remind us the journey is as important as the destination. **ANNETTE HAMES**

DEVON

HOW I GOT THE SHOT



PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD JAMES TAYLOR EXPLAINS HOW HE ACHIEVED A SENSE OF DRAMA IN THIS LANDSCAPE OF DEVON'S RED CLIFFS, FEATURED IN THE JAN/FEB 2022 ISSUE OF THE MAGAZINE



Tell us about this image.

This photo was taken along the Jurassic Coast at Sidmouth, Devon. I was working on a feature alongside writer Ben Lerwill, who'd arranged to interview a local in the town's Connaught Gardens, a good portrait backdrop. It also turned out to be the perfect spot for shooting the famous red cliffs that tower above Sidmouth seafront. It was a gloomy day, but as the scene had such good potential, I decided to hang around to see if things would improve.

How did you achieve the shot?

The image was shot on a Canon 5D with a 70-200mm 2.8 lens. I love shooting landscapes on the 200mm because of the way it compresses the scene and pulls the background right into the frame. I also used a LEE Filters 0.9 neutral-density graduated filter to retain detail in the sky

and add to the sense of drama. All of this was mounted on a Manfrotto tripod. I frequently set up this way and wait for something interesting to happen, such as a character walking through or a burst of sunlight through the clouds.

What were the challenges you faced?

This was one of those occasions where anticipation and patience paid off. Initially, it was a bit of a moody scene, windy and overcast, but I generally like this kind of weather for landscapes – I find it much more interesting than blue skies. I was encouraged by the odd break in the cloud, lighting up the cliffs in the background. The other element I look for is the human touch, somebody in the frame to bring it alive and add a sense of scale. I was lucky that a paddleboarder decided to brave the elements, coming into the foreground and providing

the shot with a focal point. Everything fell into place, and the photograph ended up making for a great opening image for the feature.

What advice would you give someone starting out in travel photography?

To be trusted with an assignment, set yourself tasks and shoot them as if they were real. Try to work in a visually consistent way and to develop your own eye. Then, consider how the images you took could work in a layout – even put one together yourself. In time, the thought processes needed to produce a good feature will become second nature to you.

View the full shoot and interview online at nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel

[richardjamestaylor.com](https://www.richardjamestaylor.com)

[@richardjamestaylor](https://www.instagram.com/richardjamestaylor)

|| SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY FOR CONSIDERATION AT PHOTOGRAPHY@NATGEOTRAVELLER.CO.UK



MARVEL

AVENGERS CAMPUS



AN EPIC NEW LAND WHERE YOU BECOME PART OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE AT DISNEYLAND® PARIS

Calling all heroes! Prepare to assemble for Marvel Avengers Campus, an epic new land now open at Disneyland® Paris. And as a new recruit, you'll team up with the likes of Spider-Man and Iron Man and take on the mightiest MARVEL missions. This is your chance to use your powers to conquer two thrilling new attractions, learn super new skills from Black Widow and Thor, power up on size-defying food made with Pym Particles and much more. Welcome to the MARVEL Universe with you in the heart of the action.

To play your part in the new MARVEL Universe, go to DisneylandParis.com

c0376237-ace6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604

Disneyland
PARIS 30

RIMOWA

BORN IN GERMANY.
ENGINEERED FOR THE WORLD.



INGENIEURSKUNST
SEIT 1898*



*THE ART OF ENGINEERING SINCE 1898

c0376237-ace6-40be-b0db-564dff3ef604