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THE MAGAZINE



The New
Adventures

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Adventure On

Welcome to *Virtuoso*, *The Magazine's* May/June issue, your guide to the world's best travel experiences. In the pages that follow, we turn our attention to adventure travel, and expedition cruising, and how to explore the best of the great outdoors in comfort and style. Rise from Tahitian overwater bungalows to snorkel with humpback whales, go off-grid in Oman's Empty Quarter, and day-hike the Amalfi Coast – with plenty of breaks for espressos and limoncellos and nights at Virtuoso hotels.

These stories are just a snapshot of the type of enriching trips that Virtuoso travel advisors can provide. Their knowledge, experience, and personal connections to more than 2,000 of the world's top hotels, cruise lines, and tour operators help them create bespoke trips enhanced by exclusive access and complimentary VIP perks, be it on a long-weekend escape, a family vacation, or the trip of a lifetime. We hope this issue inspires your wanderlust and look forward to helping plan your next great adventure.

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THE KIMBERLEY

Discover the timeless Kimberley coast

Step into a remote region where time stopped

The Kimberley coast defies conventional descriptions of expedition travel, as ancient mangrove forests give way to horizontal waterfalls and archipelagos that actually change shape several times during the day. While sailing its waters, you might spot a mighty humpback whale, an enigmatic saltwater crocodile or Phrao flying fish. Discover all this and more in utmost comfort, as our insightful local experts introduce you to the distinctive character, geology, features and creatures of this wondrous region.



View over King George River Gorge and plateau.

Kimberley highlights

Explore an ancient coastland of adventure

No matter where you find yourself along Western Australia's Kimberley Coast, adventure is always just around the corner. With Silversea's broad range of unique tours and exceptional activities, you'll explore the most remote corners of this spectacular region and its most iconic attractions, on land and at sea.



MITCHELL FALLS

Splashing down across a long stretch of the Mitchell River in four separate tiers, these stunning falls descend over 80 meters. Carved in the Mitchell River National Park's beautiful sandstone over millions of years, they have created an impressive series of shimmering emerald water pools; a sight you will always remember.



HORIZONTAL FALLS

Located in the remote Buccaneer Archipelago and created over eons of time, this unique natural phenomenon produces incredible 'horizontal' waterfalls that seem to ebb and flow with the tide. Reefs and islands appear, only to disappear again right before your eyes, creating an ever-changing waterscape.



MONTGOMERY REEF

Covering 400 square kilometers and surrounding Yawajaba Island completely, Kimberley's magnificent Montgomery Reef is the world's largest inshore coral ecosystem. Extremely biologically diverse, its rare beauty is revealed at low tide as the entire reef emerges slowly from the sea, water cascading down from the top.



WANDJINA ROCK ART & BRADSHAW ART

Kimberley hosts a rare art collection, stored in the red sandstone caves lining its shores. At Raft Point, these reveal indigenous Wandjina paintings, said to depict ancient spirits who created the waterways, mountains and wildlife here. Nearby, the Bradshaw rock paintings grace the walls of other caves, created in another style.

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INSIDER INSIGHTS & ENRICHING DISCOVERIES

Our Expedition Team is comprised mainly of Australian-born experts with years of experience in this part of the world. They bring a wealth of highly localized knowledge to your journey, giving you the authentic take on all the wonders of the Kimberley coast. No two voyages are the same as their varied expertise yields spontaneous adventures that change from moment to moment.



DESTINATION IMMERSION

Only Silversea delves deepest into the hidden secrets of this vast uncharted land. You'll gaze in awe at extraordinary cliffs, float gently by sparkling waterfalls that seem to ebb and flow sideways, peer through light and dark to discover the ancient artworks of the region, some over 17,000 years old, and encounter unusual wildlife found nowhere else on the planet.

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Preflight

INSPIRATION FOR YOUR WANDERLIST



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Souvenir Cup

Grab a cocktail –
and artisan glassware
for home – at NYC’s
Guild Bar.

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Delicious, decadent,
and desirably
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for Italy's most
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New York City

Find calm in the heart
of Manhattan.

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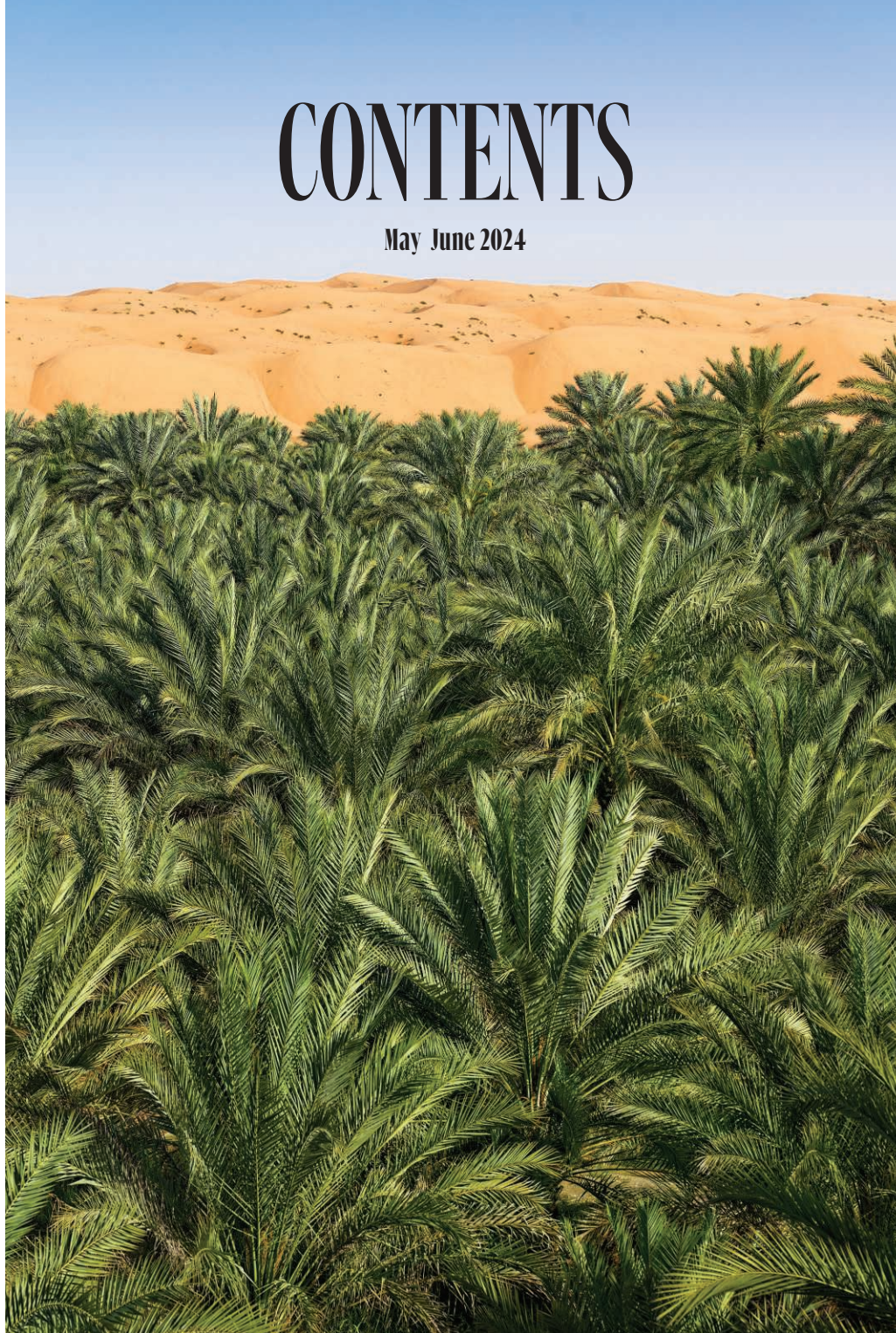
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A humpback whale encounter near Tahiti. Photography by Rachel Moore.

Hôtel du Couvent
Nice, France



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That moment
when life demands
further exploration.



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Big Feelings

IT'S ALL REAL: the humpback whale, the snorkeler, the light cutting through the water. This issue's double take of a cover image by Rachel Moore is even more impressive once you know it's not fake. The AI-free picture accompanies T.J. Olwig's story on French Polynesia, where swimming with whales is allowed within strict regulatory confines. "The first rule of swimming with humpback whales in French Polynesia is that you don't," Olwig writes. "If you're lucky, *they* swim with you."

Let's just say luck was on Olwig's side; his story gives me goose bumps, even after several reads. It captures the combination of kismet and careful planning that goes into making travel magic, a mélange we're leaning into throughout this adventure-focused issue. Whether we're really going for it (camping in Oman's Empty Quarter) or going big on the pampering (hopping an expedition cruise or hiking the Amalfi Coast with overnights at legendary hotels), we're bringing you equal parts inspiration and practical information – and a reminder that, while kismet is ethereal, the planning skills of a well-connected travel advisor are yours for the asking.

Snorkeling with 40-ton marine mammals, sailing through remote Papua New Guinea, sipping a post-hike spritz overlooking the Mediterranean: Here's to the real moments that move us, wherever we go.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Marika Cain".

MARIKA CAIN
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR



In the Presence of Greatness

Rachel Moore has spent the past five years photographing humpbacks in French Polynesia. "My first time diving with whales, I was alone with a mother and calf for nearly two hours. They were resting on the reef at my favorite dive site. That encounter changed my life forever," she says. "Whales are naturally curious animals and will often come to investigate. I respect their space and let them dictate the encounter."

(PORTRAIT) KORENA BOLDING, (WHALE) RACHEL MOORE



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“Send me to experience crocodiles, waterfalls, and warm weather in Australia’s Kimberley region, please.”

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— S.G.

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“What’s the travel gear you swear by?”



Writer
Jen Rose Smith

Vermont

“Empire State of Unwind,”
page 63

“I never leave home without a colorful pashmina, which does it all. It’s a bright accessory for my often all-black travel outfits, and it can also double as a cozy layer on an airplane or when the weather turns cool.”

THE REPORT: “My favorite journeys feel like lessons in savoring the good life, and every culture has its own secrets to impart. For this story about NYC, I watched locals find pockets of serenity and quiet in one of the world’s most energetic cities – then followed their lead.”

@jenrosesmithvt



Writer
Lauren Gallow

Seattle

“Shaping the Future,” page 56

“You can’t overestimate the value of a comfortable pair of shoes – my plastic Birkenstocks have taken me from Stockholm to Lisbon to the San Juan Islands and beyond. And I never regret packing my journal for moments of quiet reflection.”

THE REPORT: “Having worked in the design world for years, I kept hearing people mention Cerámica Suro. Either designers had already teamed up with them or they were vying for a way to collaborate with this mysterious ceramics studio in Guadalajara whose name seemed to be popping up everywhere. It was a thrill to interview owner José Noé Suro and hear all about Guadalajara’s burgeoning art scene.”

@desert.ren



Photographer
Anthony Lanneretonne

Nice

“Happy Trails,” page 92

“A good book, though I don’t always read it. This time I packed *A Really Big Lunch* by Jim Harrison.”

THE REPORT: “This was my second trip to the Amalfi Coast, and I was just as amazed as the first time. The light is so magical. After one long, warm day, I decided to reward myself with a quick café stop for an aperitivo *sulla piazza*. I had a limoncello spritz. It’s a moment I especially cherish.”

@anthonylanneretonne



Photographer
Rachel Moore

French Polynesia

Cover and “Big-Time Fun,”
page 74

“My camera! I’ve been shooting on a Canon EOS 5D Mark IV for the past seven years, but I’m now making the jump over to Sony’s Alpha 1. Additionally, I never leave home without my GoPro Hero12.”

THE REPORT: “The whale in the cover image is named Scratch due to the extensive scarring on his body, believed to be caused by a skin condition. I had the privilege of swimming with him several times over a three-week period, and on this occasion, he displayed increasing curiosity toward my group. He circled us for nearly an hour, drawing nearer with each pass. It was a remarkable encounter.”

@moore_rachel



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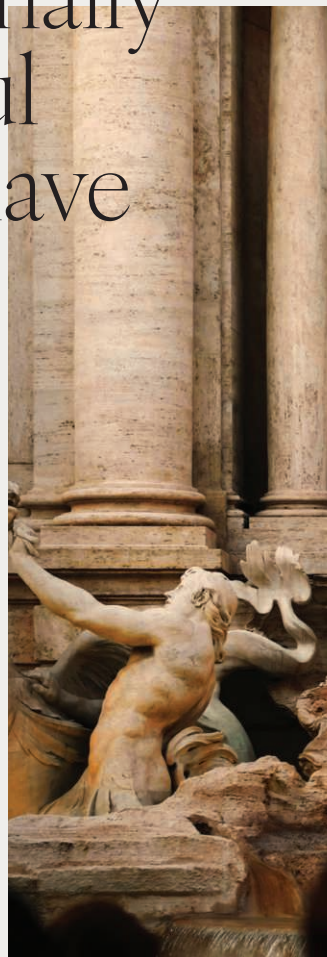
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The glamorous new train itineraries keep on rolling – cabarets on rails in the UK, Sicily via Orient Express' ultramodern La Dolce Vita, the Eastern & Oriental Express from Singapore to Malaysia – proof that travelers want to embrace the journey as much as the destination. Next stop: Portofino, the gem of the Italian Riviera, as Belmond's 108-passenger **Venice Simplon-Orient-Express** charts a new annual journey from Paris in June. As the vintage art deco train angles south, its soiree on steel starts with cocktails in the bar car before a wine-paired meal by chef Jean Imbert and digestifs with a jazz trio. The next day, after brunch and French Riviera views, the train crosses into Italy, where passengers disembark for a three-day stay at the 70-room Splendido hotel, including a five-course celebratory dinner and a little outdoor cinema in Portofino's principal piazza. *Departure: June 20; from \$10,380. – Elaine Glusac*

Now Packing: Evil-Eye Jewelry

The millennia-old talisman, with origins dating to ancient Mesopotamia, is an easy-to-find souvenir across Morocco, Egypt, Turkey, and Greece. Whether they're worn for adornment or protection (many believe the eye wards off bad energy and evil curses), these pieces are striking enough to steal a second glance. – Amy Cassell



Clockwise from above left: **Suzanne Kalan** evil-eye mini emerald ring, \$2,100, suzannekalan.com. **Marie Lichtenberg** Eye Will blue medium scapular, \$4,440, marielichtenberg.com. **Jennifer Meyer** inlay evil-eye drop earrings with diamonds, \$8,250, jennifermeyer.com.

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Serving Looks

A new crop of chefs and mixologists are giving as much thought to dishes and glassware as to what they're plating and pouring. At NYC's **Guild Bar**, a new outpost inside the Roman and Williams Guild home goods store, elaborate cocktails appear in artisan-made glasses from Japan, South Korea, and Vienna – they're all available for purchase on-site. Across the bridge in Brooklyn's Greenpoint neighborhood, soba master Shuichi Kotani opened noodle bar **Uzuki** last year and picked up a new hobby: pottery. His buckwheat soba soups and small-plate appetizers arrive at the table in his earthy ceramic bowls. And at Washington, D.C.'s Michelin-starred, vegetable-forward **Oyster Oyster**, chef Rob Rubba teamed up with local housewares maker Material Things and Ruinart to transform empty Champagne bottles into rough-chic plates made from ground-glass sand, which diners will soon be able to purchase. – *Devorah Lev-Tov*



A Guild Bar cocktail, served in a J. & L. Lobmeyr Viennese glass.



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BEYOND BLUEPRINTS

The *Beyond Blueprints* tours offer a rare and in-depth look behind the scenes at some of the world's most iconic architectural landmarks such as The Royal Library and The Blue Planet aquarium in Copenhagen, Denmark and La Villa Mediterranée and MUCEM in Marseille, France. All offer special, little-known stories and information from insightful guides about the inspiration, reasoning and genius that brought these marvels to life.

Carry-On Companions

THE SONS OF EL REY

BY ALEX ESPINOZA (*Simon & Schuster*)

In present-day L.A., Ernesto Vega – a once-famous *luchador* known as El Rey Coyote – is dying in hospice. Through the perspectives of a multigenerational cast of characters, including his son Freddy (aka El Rey Coyote Jr.) and queer grandson Julian, this family of *luchadores* unravels their untold history.

A NORTHERN LIGHT IN PROVENCE

BY ELIZABETH BIRKELUND (*Ballantine Books*)

Thirty-five-year-old Ilse Erlund is a French translator who's never left her native Greenland, exploring France via the internet in her spare time. When she impulsively asks her publisher for two

weeks in Provence to translate the poet Geoffrey Labaye, her life catapults into motion. Birkelund transports readers from Greenland's towering glaciers to the winding vineyards of the French countryside, crafting a love letter to language itself along the way.

EXHIBIT

BY R. O. KWON (*Riverhead Books*)

Photographer Jin Han is at an impasse in her marriage and career when, at a party in San Francisco, she meets Lidija Jung, a professional ballerina on leave due to injury. Instant connection and mutual intrigue lead to an all-night conversation, with Jin divulging a family secret that she's never shared with anyone, not

even her husband. In poetic, incisive prose, Kwon explores the magnetic draw between two women with shared artistic drives, while deftly intertwining their own unrealized desires.

SWIFT RIVER

BY ESSIE CHAMBERS (*Simon & Schuster*)

When Diamond was in third grade, her Pa went missing, leaving her the only Black person in Swift River, a fictional old Massachusetts mill town. Now it's 1987, Diamond is 16, and Ma is determined they will move on. But when Diamond receives a letter from an Auntie Lena, she uncovers clues to her past and connections to a family she never knew.

– Melissa L. Amstutz

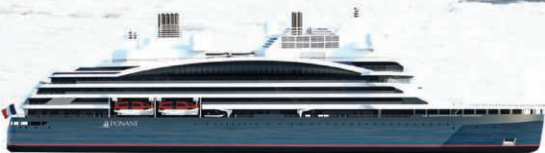




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Steve Fisher

Helicopter Pilot

The former British Army pilot spends five months a year on board **Quark Expeditions'** 199-passenger *Ultramarine*, whisking guests to ice sheets on Greenland, remote Antarctic outposts, and other hard-to-reach, snowy sites.

Years as a helicopter pilot: 27

Average hours logged annually: 300

Ultramarine has two eight-passenger Airbus H145 helicopters – what kind of luxury vehicle would you compare them to? A Mercedes G-Class – they're quite utilitarian, but super well-built and very reliable. They're too much of working machines to be called Rolls-Royces.

Your favorite helicopter excursion on *Ultramarine*? I love the flightseeing tours. Every time you get out there, it's a different view, and the passengers are blown away. I've had people crying in the aircraft because they're so overwhelmed by the experience.

If you could flight-see anywhere, where would you go? I'd want to fly over and land on both poles – that would be an achievement.

How tough is it landing in the middle of Antarctica? It's very technical. You never know when snow may start to whip up or recirculate as you get close to the ground, but we have lots of procedures and techniques in place. The first landing of the day is always tough, but we go out with only the guides first to drop them off and secure a safe site.

Do you see lots of nervous passengers?

We have the odd few, but I always ask if anyone's nervous before we take off, and I talk passengers through everything. If I know there's going to be turbulence, I'll give them a heads-up. I say, "If you feel nervous and you look at me and I look nervous, then it's OK to be nervous."

Your polar-packing pro tip: Electric hand warmers. You can get little rechargeable ones, and they're great for slipping inside your gloves. Feet tend to be all right, the body seems fine, but everybody complains about having cold hands. – A.C.

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Papua New Guinea
& Solomon Islands
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Ganges landmark: Varanasi. Opposite: Cuzco, and the temples of Qudong, Cambodia.

Binoculars Up

These river cruises zoom in on ancient civilizations and rare species.

EXPLORE INDIA FROM THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE TO THE GANGES

India's cultural hub, West Bengal, and its most sacred river take center stage on a 12-night tour with **Uniworld Boutique River Cruises**. After five nights of highlights in Delhi, Jaipur, and Agra, including sunset and sunrise at the Taj Mahal, the 56-passenger *Ganges Voyager II* launches from Kolkata for seven nights northbound, with a professional yogi on board. The journey passes small villages en route to the temple complex of Kalna; Matiari, home of ornamental-brass artisans; and the Vedic temple pilgrimage site for the Hare Krishna movement in

Mayapur – keep eyes peeled for endangered Ganges river dolphins along the way. Wrap up in Kolkata, the city linked to the legacies of Mother Teresa, the colonial-era British Raj, and India's independence. *Departures: Multiple dates, September 16, 2024, through December 1, 2025; from \$5,699.*

SPY AFRICAN WILDLIFE ALONG THE CHOBE RIVER

The Chobe River defines the border between Botswana and Namibia before it merges with the Zambezi. Flanked by marshland, it's thick with bird life, hippos, crocodiles, and thousands of elephants. Spend three nights pre-cruise in Cape

Town flirting with penguins and sampling South Africa's wine scene, then fly to Chobe for four nights aboard the 28-passenger *Zambezi Queen*. Days revolve around wildlife, viewed during morning and sunset safaris, with a stop in Chobe National Park to quest for lions, buffalo, giraffes, and more. Finish in Zimbabwe, minutes away from Victoria Falls. **AmaWaterways'** nine-night itinerary can be extended for two nights in Johannesburg or four nights at Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park. *Departures: Multiple dates, May 3, 2024, through November 7, 2025; from \$11,099.*

NAVIGATE THE PERUVIAN AMAZON

Encompassing a third of the South American continent, the rain forests of the Amazon Basin contain one in five of the planet's bird species and, to date, more than 40,000

known plant species. **Avalon Waterways'** ten-night exploration of the Peruvian Amazon begins in Lima and heads for the Andes, pausing at the Sacred Valley, the fifteenth-century temple of Sacsayhuamán, and Machu Picchu. Two nights in Cuzco further illuminate Inca culture, and then it's on to the riverside village of Nauta to meet the 44-passenger *Delfin III* for a three-night cruise. The ship's naturalist guide reveals the Amazon's animal kingdom, including monkeys, iguanas, sloths, and endangered pink river dolphins. Rounding out the agenda: night safaris in search of nocturnal caimans, frogs, bats, and snakes; village visits and encounters with locals; and a stop at a manatee rescue center after disembarkation in Iquitos. *Departures: Multiple dates, June 9, 2024, through November 9, 2025; from \$5,980.*

TEMPLES AND TUK-TUKS ON THE MEKONG

Access the sights lining Southeast Asia's longest river from *Aqua Mekong*, the 40-passenger ship from **Aqua Expeditions** that sails with a fleet of kayaks, bicycles, and skiffs. The seven-night trip starts in Saigon, gliding up the Mekong through Vietnam's paddy-lined "rice basket" delta. At the Cambodian border, visit Chau Doc and its floating market, and Sam Mountain, where trails lead to temples and pagodas with views for miles. Farther upriver, explore Cambodia's lively capital, Phnom Penh, by tuk-tuk. Tours during high-water season (September through November) cross Tonle Sap and stop by wetland bird sanctuary Prek Toal before setting off for Siem Reap, where Angkor Wat awaits. *Departures: Multiple dates, September 6, 2024, through November 21, 2025; from \$4,560. – David Swanson*



Get Thee to Nice

A seventeenth-century convent is the setting for the Côte d'Azur's hottest new boutique hotel. Resurrected by hotelier Valéry Grégo, **Hôtel du Couvent** stands behind monastic walls in Nice's Old Town, a stroll away from La Colline du Château (Castle Hill) and the glitzy shores of the Mediterranean. A hushed air still lingers on the premises: The 88 guest rooms have vaulted ceilings, bespoke furniture, and views of the property's two and a half acres of terraced gardens, designed by celebrated English landscape architect Tom Stuart-Smith and planted with herbs, apricot orchards, and citrus and olive groves. In lieu of standard-issue Riviera beach clubs and bottle service, there's a complex of Roman-style baths, four pools, and a resident herbalist. *Doubles from \$495, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.* – Siobhan Reid



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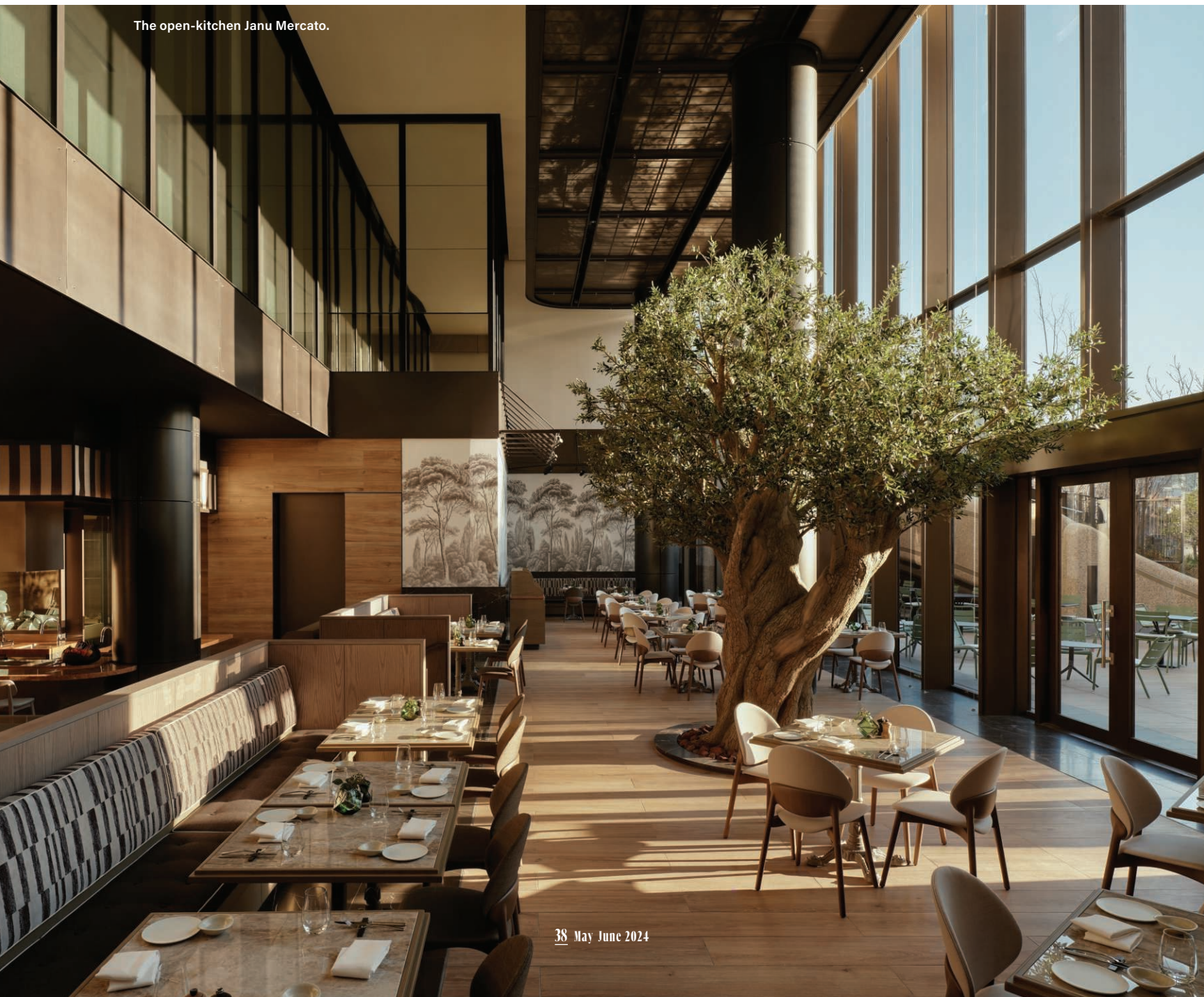


Special offers and inclusions are capacity controlled and may be changed or withdrawn from any expedition at any time without notice.
Additional restrictions may apply. For full terms and conditions, contact your Virtuoso Travel Advisor. © 2024 Atlas Ocean Voyages. Ships' Registry: Portugal 3203 03.20.24

New Kid on the Block

The long-awaited opening of **Janu Tokyo** marks a new chapter for global hospitality group Aman. As the flagship of the company's new sibling brand and the only hotel in Tokyo's Azabudai Hills district, the 122-room property delivers minimalist design and a deep sense of place while exuding youthful energy that's sure to win over a new generation of Aman fans. Guests are on the doorstep of the capital's most futuristic neighborhood, encompassing nearly 20 acres of green space, Japan's tallest skyscraper, a temple complex, and a contemporary art gallery. There's a 43,000-square-foot wellness center on-site, with a boxing ring and hyperbaric oxygen chamber, as well as eight restaurants catering to a range of global tastes – from homestyle Italian cooking and French patisserie to Cantonese cuisine and Japan's Edomae sushi. The soothing rooms and suites counteract all the buzz, with soaking tubs and private balconies looking out over the city's most recognizable landmarks. *Doubles from \$944, including breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit. – S.R.*

The open-kitchen Janu Mercato.





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MO Bar, where the Singapore sling comes with a house-made lollipop composed of all the drink's ingredients.

Center of Attention

Marina Bay views and a soaring atrium (designed by neo-futurist architect John C. Portman Jr.) make showstopping first impressions at **Mandarin Oriental, Singapore**, which recently reopened after a six-month remodel. But it was the snapshots of the seafood buffet piled with lobster, shrimp, crayfish, and crab at new all-day dining spot Embu that blew up my group chats with friends back home. Elsewhere in the 510-room hotel, tables heave with Cantonese, Japanese, and Italian specialties at reimagined restaurants, and a Singapore sling remix stars on MO Bar's menu – which I enjoyed flicking through via an old-school View-Master.

The hotel's prime location along the bay sets guests up for classic Singapore pursuits: The famous Merlion statue, lotus-shaped

ArtScience Museum, and F1 racetrack are just steps away, and post-redesign, they're visible from more rooms too. Suite guests also get access to the new crystal- and orchid-bedecked business lounge, Haus 65, and Mandala Club, an art-filled private social club in the historic Bukit Pasoh neighborhood. Singaporeans turn out for the club's dining, gym, and cultural events such as fireside chats and winetastings. The hotel can also arrange perfume-creation classes at Maison 21G's nearby atelier, *tingkat* (stacked lunchbox) painting lessons with a local artist, Vespa-sidecar city tours, and guided hikes at Bukit Brown Cemetery. *Doubles from \$556, including breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.* – Emma Franke



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Common Threads

Designer Carla Fernández weaves Mexico's Indigenous traditions into her work.

INTERVIEW BY SALLIE LEWIS

CARLA FERNÁNDEZ'S father served as the director of museums and exhibits at Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History. His work informed her worldview. "I grew up feeling completely confident that Mexico was a culturally powerful country – not only for art, but also for textiles and craft," the Mexico City-based designer and cultural historian says. In her eponymous line of ethically made clothing, Fernández celebrates the rich heritage of her country's Indigenous and mestizo communities, collaborating with artisans to incorporate elements of traditional weaving, embroidery, and more.



(PORTRAIT) LILIANA JEMAL, (MUSEUM) JOHN WARBURTON-LEE PHOTOGRAPHY/ALAMY



Her travels have taken her throughout Mexico and farther afield to Turkey, Guatemala, and Japan. "I love places that have respect and recognition for Indigenous communities, their knowledge and their craft," she says. "I just came back from Morocco, and it always surprises me how alive the craft traditions are there. It's like a giant handmade laboratory."

Between international exhibitions, research projects, and her work on the International Advisory Board of the Prince Claus Fund in the Netherlands, Fernández continues to seek out cultural connections. From sleeping beneath the stars in southern Mexico's ancient Mayan cities of Palenque and Chichén Itzá to staying in Renzo Piano's apartment while working as artist-in-residence at Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, her life is woven with worldly inspiration.

CARLA FERNÁNDEZ'S GUIDE TO MEXICO CITY

In a place as vast as Mexico City, it's important to divide your days by the areas you

want to visit. **Coyoacán** is beautiful, and it's worth walking around **Plaza Hidalgo** and **Avenida Francisco Sosa**, which is one of the country's prettiest streets. From there you can go to the **Frida Kahlo Museum** and the **Leon Trotsky House Museum**, which are close by. Don't miss the **Anahuacalli Museum**, which Diego Rivera designed to share his pre-Hispanic art collections.

In my opinion, **Colonia Juárez** is the new **Roma**, but you can easily move between the two neighborhoods. We've had our **Carla Fernández** store at Calle Marsella 72 for several years now, and many new designers are moving in; you have **Pay's**, which makes nice, funky ponchos using *tejido de punto*. **LagoAlgo** in Bosque de Chapultepec is a new gallery and exhibition space – my husband, Pedro Reyes, is participating in their current exhibition, *Chapter V: Heat, Artists Against the Bomb*, on view until July. The designer of **1/8 Takamura** is one-eighth Japanese and mixes Japanese and Mexican

patterns very well. **Casa Caballeria** is a great men's store, and **Marika Vera** does interesting undergarments and clothing with a twist. Mariana Villarreal is the jeweler at **Sangre de mi Sangre** in Roma, and **Varon Official** is another top jewelry destination here. **Vintage Hoe** is my favorite vintage store – the owner travels the world and has a beautiful selection.

When it comes to food, we're lucky to have **Masala y Maíz** in our building. The chefs, Norma and Saqib, combine the flavors and cooking techniques of Mexico, East Africa, and India. I also love **El Tigre Silencioso**, which serves delicious food inspired by the Baja Peninsula. Chef Enrique Olvera's **Ticuchi** in Polanco has great vegan tacos, and I love eating at markets such as **Mercados sobre Ruedas** (Markets on Wheels). The markets in Mexico have the best food. Finally, a don't-miss is the **National Museum of Anthropology**. You can't come to Mexico City and not see it. 9

LET US GUIDE YOU ON

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THE EMPEROR PENGUINS OF SNOW HILL

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Emperor Penguin Quest: Expedition to Snow Hill
November 15-28, 2025



Hike to penguin colony



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City Guide

Take a Shine to Dubai

The city's allure reaches new heights.

BY SARAH KHAN PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL THUYSSAERT





Standing tall in the UAE and Burj Al Arab's cocktail bar, Gilt. Opposite: Heirloom carrots with smoked labneh and house sourdough at Jun's.

THE SECRET to why Dubai beckons visitors back for repeat visits lies in the charm beneath its flashy and headline-grabbing attractions, such as architect Shaun Killa's **Museum of the Future**, a booming art scene, and innovative dining that reflects the diverse palates of the many expats from far-flung nations who now call it home. For Dubai's creatives, all roads lead to **Alserkal Avenue**, a vibrant district etched out of the industrial Al Quoz area. Make a day of it: Visit galleries such as the Ishara Art Foundation, specializing in contemporary South Asian artists, and Mestaria, which highlights Arabian and African talents, then pop by artist El Seed's studio to see if you can glimpse the French Tunisian calligrapher in action. Refuel with a croissant at Pekoe and a cold brew from Nightjar before browsing belts and briefcases from Indian leather brand Nappa Dori and vintage home accessories at The Odd Piece. End your outing with an avant-garde mocktail (za'atar colada, anyone?) at The Fridge. From indie shops to beach clubs, here's how to get the most from the city.

EAT When chef Kelvin Cheung stops by your table at **Jun's** to wax on about the inspiration behind his Wagyu beef

potstickers or his Baked Alaska with sesame mochi, it becomes abundantly obvious how personal each dish is. The flavors are rooted in classic Asian American comfort food, with twists that follow Cheung's winding journey from North America to Europe, India, and now Dubai.

The eponymous siblings behind **Orfali Bros** have fun with food, as evidenced by playful dishes such as the Ooh La La (foie gras, quince vinegar, and hazelnut miso) and the Umami Éclair, with porcini emulsion, Marmite, cacao nibs, and beef prosciutto.

DRINK Dubai's glamorous beach clubs run the gamut from hedonistic to family friendly. It's hard to pick one, but **Be Beach** made quite a splash when it opened in Dubai Harbour last December. Crocheted umbrellas shading the sun beds and cane furniture by the tables channel a rustic Mediterranean escape, all against the backdrop of the glittering Dubai Marina skyline.

From its sky-high perch on the Burj Al Arab hotel's 27th floor, cocktail bar **Gilt** serves dizzying views and dazzling drinks. Cozy



up to its namesake gilded bar or sink into a plush velvet banquette to sip the floral Sakura, with shochu, shiso leaf, and tea, or a tart Masala Chai Sour (rye, lemon, coconut syrup, and absinthe).

SHOP The city's best-loved concept store is **That**, where sartorially savvy Emiratis browse cult-favorite labels such as Vetements and Khaite alongside standout regional powerhouses Bil Arabi, Reemami, and more – as well as stylish homewares,

City Guide

including carafes and cups by celebrated Lebanese furniture maven Nada Debs.

Dubai's **Montroi** label has earned a major following for its travel accessories, housewares, and candles, which channel the UAE's global spirit. Pop into the brand's downtown emporium for camel-leather bags and handpainted passport covers, or for a whiff of its White Qasbah perfume oil or Mughal Incense room scent.

STAY Everything about **Atlantis The Royal**, which opened with a bang on Palm Jumeirah last year, defies the imagination: the scale, with 795 rooms across 43 stories; the 17 restaurants and bars from a constellation of celebrity chefs (Nobu Matsuhisa and Heston Blumenthal among them); the 90-plus pools. But for all its audacity, the resort has plenty of intimate details (bath amenities from jewelry brand Graff; the Royal Club Lounge, accessible to suite guests) that make for a relaxing escape amid the action. *Doubles from \$650, including a bottle of wine on arrival, breakfast daily, and a \$100 resort credit.*

Nearly 25 years after it debuted, the **Burj Al Arab Jumeirah** continues to wow with its distinctive sail-shaped facade that's now an iconic fixture on Dubai's skyline. Each of its 202 rooms is a duplex suite awash in gold and marble accents, and those wishing to start their stay with some flash can reserve the helicopter transfer that drops off guests on the hotel's rooftop helipad. *Doubles from \$1,200, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit per night.*

One&Only One Za'abeel splashed down this February with performances by J.Lo, Mark Ronson, and Idris Elba at its grand opening bash. Now, guests can channel glamour at one of Dubai's newest resorts, where entry-level rooms clock in at nearly 540 square feet – among the city's largest. Inside The Link, a cantilever connecting the 229-room hotel's two towers, find the UAE's longest infinity pool, plus dining from chef Anne-Sophie Pic and Andalusian chef Paco Morales. *Doubles from \$836, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.* 📍



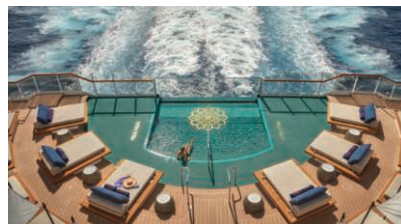
Contemporary artist El Seed's Alserkal Avenue studio and Montroi's boutique.





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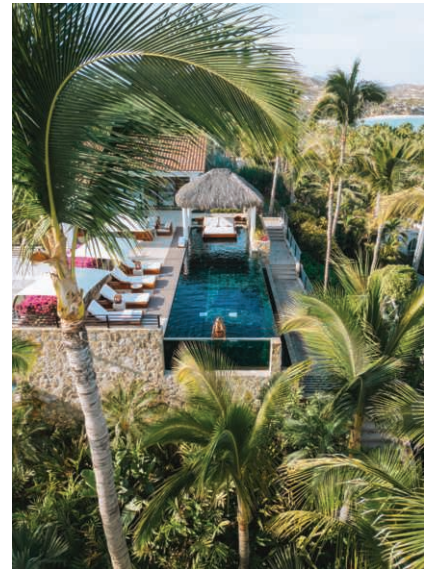
Indulge in a signature L'Ermitage Martini and savor exceptional in-room dining in your suite. Prefer to dine alfresco? Step onto your private balcony and take in the enchanting views. Work out with a personal trainer, and revitalize with customized spa treatments.

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SPOTLIGHT ON: ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

SLOW-TRAVEL GOALS

All aboard for a memorable train adventure through the Colorado Rockies.

AFTER EARNING A PRESTIGIOUS reputation for its luxury rail journeys through western Canada and the Canadian Rockies, Rocky Mountaineer launched its first U.S. trip in 2021. The Rockies to the Red Rocks route rolls through rugged terrain in Colorado and Utah, treating passengers to local insight, culinary delights, and panoramic views through glass-domed train cars.

Itinerary Basics

Rocky Mountaineer's daytime-only train runs westbound or eastbound on a 354-mile stretch between Denver, Colorado, and Moab, Utah. The trip is divided into two segments, with a midroute overnight stay in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Travelers spend around five to nine hours on the train each day, snaking through **wild and remote landscapes**, some of which are only accessible by train or on foot. While the classic Rockies to the Red Rocks route is two days, travelers can work with their Virtuoso travel advisor to extend the itinerary, which might include overnights in Moab and Denver or longer jaunts to nearby Salt Lake City or Las Vegas.

Train Perks

Travelers choose between SilverLeaf Service or SilverLeaf Plus – the latter provides access to lounge cars with bars serving premium cocktails. From comfortable reclining seats, passengers savor incredible views and locally inspired multicourse meals – think delicious parfaits, braised short ribs with New Mexican green chili demi-glace, and local wine pairings. Onboard hosts double as storytellers, sharing local history as the train crosses the Continental Divide and cuts through the six-mile Moffat Tunnel, wildlife-spotting intel as steep canyons and Colorado River vistas pass by, and entertaining commentary as the train approaches Utah's spectacular **red-rock country** and the surrounding Arches National Park.

Western Immersion

The journey itself may be the trip's centerpiece, but travelers spend ample time on the ground too, soaking up live music and acclaimed dining in Denver and, in Glenwood Springs, relaxing in one of the 139-year-old resort town's **hot springs pools**. Adventure-friendly Moab is the gateway to Utah's "Mighty 5" national parks – Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, and Zion – and a popular base camp for wilderness-centric activities. Rocky Mountaineer teams up with local outfitters so travelers can customize their journeys with add-ons that include hikes, mountain-biking and river-rafting excursions, and off-road safaris.

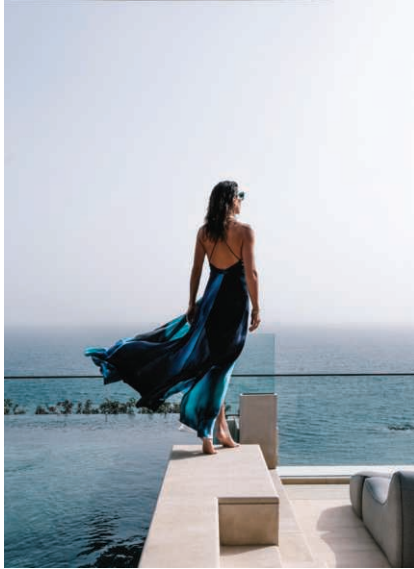


Red-rock views and fine dining on board Rocky Mountaineer.

VIRTUOSO BEST OF THE BEST

LIMASSOL, CYPRUS

AMARA



Escape to this Cyprus retreat, where every room offers a clear 180-degree panorama of the Mediterranean Sea.

Dine among five restaurants offering cuisine crafted by renowned Michelin-starred chefs. Savor wine or classic cocktails in four venues, including a rooftop bar and beside the infinity-edge pool. Try spa therapies with local olive oil, crushed carob seeds, and warmed citrus fruits.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY: \$100 food and beverage credit per stay.

COZUMEL, MEXICO

Presidente InterContinental Cozumel Resort & Spa



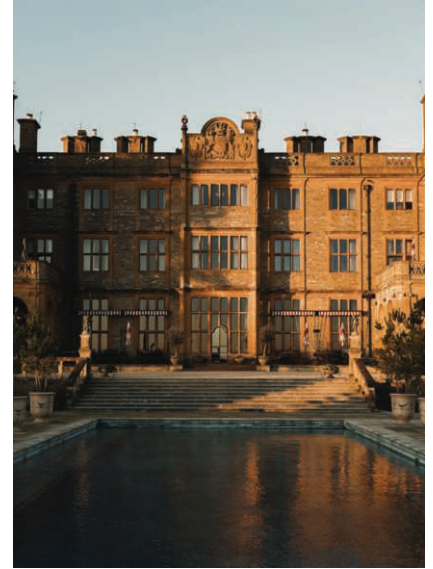
Soak up panoramas of the Caribbean at this oasis of tranquility, offering the largest private beach on Cozumel.

Explore the island's gorgeous coral reefs on a dive trip, rejuvenate with traditional Mayan wellness treatments, or float in the infinity pool while kids discover an array of activities at Planet Trekkers. Experience ocean-inspired flavors as well as Italian and Mediterranean dishes in four venues.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY: \$100 resort credit per stay.

EYNESHAM, ENGLAND

Estelle Manor



Retreat to the Grade II-listed landmark manor nestled in 3,000 acres of beautiful parkland and gardens.

With three exceptional restaurants, activities for all the family, an outdoor pool, a 250-square-meter gym, the newly opened Eynsham Baths, and a selection of private houses, there's something for every occasion at this historic estate. Discover a rural retreat in the heart of the English countryside.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY: \$100 food and beverage credit per stay.



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The Ambitious Escape

Trendy cities, Himalayan monasteries, seductive Mediterranean shores – this 21-day, Japan-to-Greece **seven-country expedition** revels in contrasts. Meet sumo wrestlers in Tokyo before flying to Vietnam to cycle between seaside villages. After a beach respite in Thailand, venture to Sri Lanka and then embark on a tiger safari in India's Ranthambore National Park before continuing on to Uzbekistan. A final stop in Greece provides options to delve into ancient civilizations or beachcomb secluded strands from the Peloponnese's 50-room Amanzoe resort. *Departure: April 19, 2025; from \$188,888.*

Spirited Away

Commence 15 days of mindfulness-oriented adventure in Nepal, Bhutan, India, and Sri Lanka with a dash of adrenaline: Travelers take a helicopter to Mount Everest base camp before a high-altitude Champagne breakfast. Hike Bhutan's Himalayas, then visit the Taj Mahal in India with a private guide before jetting to Sri Lanka's 30-room Amanwella, surrounded by Indian Ocean beaches and national parks on the country's south coast. Throughout the trip, guests travel with a **Buddhist Zen master** who introduces them to the heart of spiritual Asia. *Departure: October 19, 2025; from \$118,888.*

Buddha and the Beach

The 14-day Vietnam-to-Thailand tour begins at the 35-room Amanoi, where guests survey Vietnam's lush coast by sailboat or mountaintop trek. From Luang Prabang, Laos, options include waterfall swims and a **Mekong River cruise** to a cave filled with thousands of Buddha statues. Appreciate Cambodia's Angkor Wat by helicopter as the sun's first rays illuminate its intricately carved temples, before spending a final few days diving or cruising around Thailand's Phang Nga Bay from the 80-room Amanpuri. The journey ends at the soon-to-open Aman Nai Lert Bangkok. *Departure: November 2, 2025; from \$98,888.*



From top: Ultra-luxury at 30,000 feet, Tiger's Nest in Bhutan, and Vietnam's Amanoi.

SPOTLIGHT ON: LA PAZ

COME SAIL AWAY

Fresh seafood, secret beaches, and snorkeling near sea lions highlight a multiday yacht charter in the Sea of Cortés.

B RILLIANTLY BLUE AGAINST a desert backdrop, the Sea of Cortés off Mexico's Baja California Peninsula lures travelers to destinations such as La Paz, where chartered yachts embark for immersive excursions into the Bay of La Paz and beyond. Days at sea promise stand-up paddleboard sessions, coral-reef adventures, and some of the region's most beautiful sunsets.

Hello, La Paz

Most of the area's yacht charters depart from La Paz, where travelers can spend a pre-sailing day getting to know the best of the city. The waterfront, palm-lined *malecón* (promenade) is La Paz's gathering place: Bikers, local families, and travelers all come to cruise this three-mile-long stretch. Amid the sea-inspired sculptures and bright street-art murals, visitors find some of **La Paz's best restaurants** – ideal perches for sipping *damiana* (a local herb-based liqueur) cocktails and snacking on lime-drenched shrimp tacos while watching boats bob in the bay. After lunch, 18 holes await those looking to tee off on cliffside fairways with some of the area's best sea views.

Meet Your Yacht

Travelers can work with their Virtuoso advisor to choose from a selection of luxe catamarans and yachts that typically can be chartered by up to eight passengers for overnight journeys and offer customizable accommodation styles and water-sports activities. While three- to five-day trips provide an ideal amount of time to explore, trips can range anywhere from two days to a week. From fresh ceviche on remote beaches to **gourmet sunset dinners** on deck, bespoke menus from an onboard chef highlight the area's local bounty.

Life at Sea

Setting sail on the waters Jacques Cousteau once deemed “the world's aquarium” reveals a neon galaxy of aquatic life for snorkelers and divers. Days pair **relaxation and adventure**; island-hopping can include a stop on Isla Espíritu Santo, an off-the-grid oasis where, from September through May, travelers can splash in the surf alongside sea lions. And between October and April, giant whale sharks make surprisingly gentle swimming companions. On Isla San Francisco, trek across red cliffs to reach panoramic views overlooking soft, white-sand beaches before following up with a late-afternoon kayak in tranquil Crescent Bay.

A floating adventure base camp in the Sea of Cortés.



SPOTLIGHT ON: FINLAND

'TIS EVERY SEASON

Don't let the northerly coordinates fool you – Finland's diverse regions offer up a sensational range of year-round activities.

Urban Spring Flings

Helsinki may be home to the country's coolest shopping and modern architecture, but the Finnish capital's heart belongs to nature. In the seaside city, outdoor enjoyment is deeply ingrained, from bustling waterside promenades to lush, grassy knolls perfect for lounging. At the first sign of melting snow and spring blossoms (usually in March), locals waste no time picnicking on verdant stretches such as Esplanade and Sibelius parks. Outdoor saunas and restaurant terraces take on party vibes, but the spring fever peaks on Vappu (April 30 to May 1), when locals celebrate winter's end with **open-air fetes**, sparkling wine, and traditional treats.

Summertime Island-Hopping

Finland's southern coast claims one of northern Europe's sunniest and mildest climates, and summer comes alive in energetic fashion, with boat rides, wild swimming, and festivals where live music, seafood feasts, and harbor traditions abound. In Turku, the country's maritime capital, progressive restaurants fuel an exciting culinary scene highlighted by waterside vistas and island-sourced produce. Turku's port is also the gateway to exploring the world's largest archipelago, with some **40,000 islands**. Excellent ferry infrastructure whisks travelers to spots such as Kaunissaari and Åland, where they can hike, cycle, bird-watch, and more.

Autumn's Northern Allure

Farewell to mosquitoes and the midnight sun, hello to gorgeous natural scenery, pleasant temperatures, and local culture. In Arctic Lapland, Finland's northernmost region, shoulder season is a joyous time to visit before the freezing days and winter crowds descend. Autumn is prime time for berry and **mushroom foraging** near the surrounding *ruska* (fall foliage), as well as witnessing some of the Indigenous Sámi people's cold-weather traditions, such as reindeer herding. Travelers might even catch the region's first snowfall or usher in the northern lights with milder viewing conditions and smaller sightseeing groups.

Winter Wonderland

Lakeland – an eastern region home to more than 187,000 of its eponymous bodies of water – offers a serene yet authentic rendition of true northern winter with a more under-the-radar atmosphere than Lapland. Cottage life takes on a lovely character thanks to ice fishing, skating, and skiing adventures. The country's **sauna culture** reigns here too: It doesn't get more Finnish than icy lake plunges and sipping beer in those beloved heated spaces.



From top: Helsinki picnics, archipelago jewels, and Lakeland sauna breaks.



SHAPING THE FUTURE

IN GUADALAJARA, A FORWARD-THINKING
CERAMICS STUDIO IS HELPING TO SCULPT
THE ART AND DESIGN SCENE.

BY LAUREN GALLOW
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KORENA BOLDING



International artists work
at Cerámica Suro and
(opposite) José Noé Suro.



IT ALL STARTED with an invitation. In the 1990s, when José Noé Suro was working at Cerámica Suro, the ceramics studio founded by his father in the 1950s, he surprised his dad by announcing he wanted to invite artists to come work in the factory. At that time, the studio, based in Tlaquepaque on the outskirts of Guadalajara, was finding success producing things such as dinnerware and decorative ceramics for local Mexican hospitality projects, but Suro was itching for something more artistic. “The stimulation of working around artists and creative people has always made the most sense for me,” he says. “I want to witness their projects, and I want

to have conversations with them.” As Guadalajara’s art scene blossomed, so did Cerámica Suro, with artists from around the world accepting Suro’s invitation to come to the city and join the creative exchange.

Since then, Cerámica Suro has welcomed close to 600 artists and expanded to two more locations, in Guadalajara proper and in Calle 5 just south of the Centro Histórico, where visitors are invited to take a peek into the Cerámica Suro world. In addition to projects with internationally renowned artists such as Jorge Pardo, Alex Proba, and Sarah Crowner, the studio has also completed public works for institutions abroad, including NYC’s Guggenheim Museum, L.A.’s Hammer Museum, The Chinati Foundation in Marfa, and countless others. And Suro and his mighty team have worked with architects and interior designers on projects for hospitals, airports, and hotels, including two massive new ceramic murals currently in progress at Guadalajara’s airport with artists Jose Dávila and Jorge Méndez Blake.

Through it all, Suro has stayed focused on Guadalajara and the welcoming creative community he’s helped build there, in Mexico’s third-largest metropolitan area, which has seen a new influx of artists, designers, and art-curious travelers who want to explore the region’s budding arts scene. “Artists learning from artists – that’s what happens in Guadalajara,” he explains. “There’s an amazing generation of artists, architects, chefs, and designers making work here, and if you’re curious, opening one door will take you to another and another and another.”

The Museo de Arte de Zapopan and (opposite) the Guadalajara Cathedral.



At Cerámica Suro's Calle 5 location in the Colón Industrial *colonia* (neighborhood), Suro's door is always open to guests, both planned and not. They might catch a glimpse of a visiting artist at work on a project, watch artisans handcrafting ceramics in all shapes and colors, or even stumble upon an international art fair – in recent years Cerámica Suro has hosted Estación Material, the traveling edition of Mexico City's Material Art Fair. It's part and parcel of the trade and the personal philosophy Suro learned from his father: "Ceramics is like life: Every day it's different, and every day it's a surprise." Here, Suro offers his personal guide to the best of Guadalajara, where art and culture take singular form.

GALLERY STOP

The best way to discover what artists are doing in Guadalajara is through its gallery scene, which has welcomed several new additions of late, including a gallery spearheaded by Suro himself called Plataforma, opened earlier this year. One of Suro's current favorite galleries is Gaga, which recently opened a Guadalajara outpost in Colonia Santa Teresita to complement its Mexico City and Los Angeles locales. Featuring a rotating cast of local and international artists working across mediums, this is the place to get a finger on the pulse of the city's contemporary art scene.

ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

While its design scene is currently experiencing a reawakening, Guadalajara and the larger state of Jalisco have a long track record of generating creative

visionaries. Luis Barragán, one of Mexico's most recognizable modern architects, hailed from Guadalajara and translated his austere yet colorful Jalisco aesthetic to Mexico City when he moved there in the 1930s. "Some of the best artists in Mexico were born here," Suro says. "A beautiful thing to do here is walk in the city and discover the early Barragán houses." One such structure, Casa Franco in Colonia Americana, close to the Centro Histórico, was designed in 1929 and is open to the public; it now houses Madrid-based contemporary art gallery Travesía Cuatro.

ART ON THE EDGE

"Of course you must visit the museums when you come to Guadalajara," Suro says, with Museo de Arte de Zapopan (MAZ) topping his list. Situated within a building designed by local architects María Emilia Orendain and Enrique Toussaint in downtown Zapopan, MAZ is the only public institution in Jalisco devoted entirely to contemporary art and often features site-specific installations and artworks. The museum has hosted temporary exhibits with works by renowned Mexican artists, including Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, but many of the exhibits featuring contemporary artists are interactive, with the museum hosting a range of cultural activities such as lectures, workshops, and film screenings.

Get Into Guadalajara

Virtuoso advisors can work with on-site tour connection **Journey Mexico** to craft custom, private art- and design-focused itineraries in Guadalajara that hit all of José Noé Suro's highlights and more, complete with a driver and guide. *Prices vary.*

El Gallo Altanero and (opposite)
Café PalReal bites.





MADE IN MX

For those who want to take home a piece of Guadalajara's art and design scene, Suro recommends Albergue Transitorio in Colonia Americana. "They feature the finest design from Mexico inside a beautifully curated store," he says. Operated by sisters Julia and Renata Franco – the duo behind Julia y Renata, which Suro lauds as one of Mexico's best fashion lines – the atelier has become a favorite Guadalajara design shop and stocks exclusively Mexican makers and objects ranging from handmade jewelry and candles to hammered-copper vases and turned-wood candlesticks.

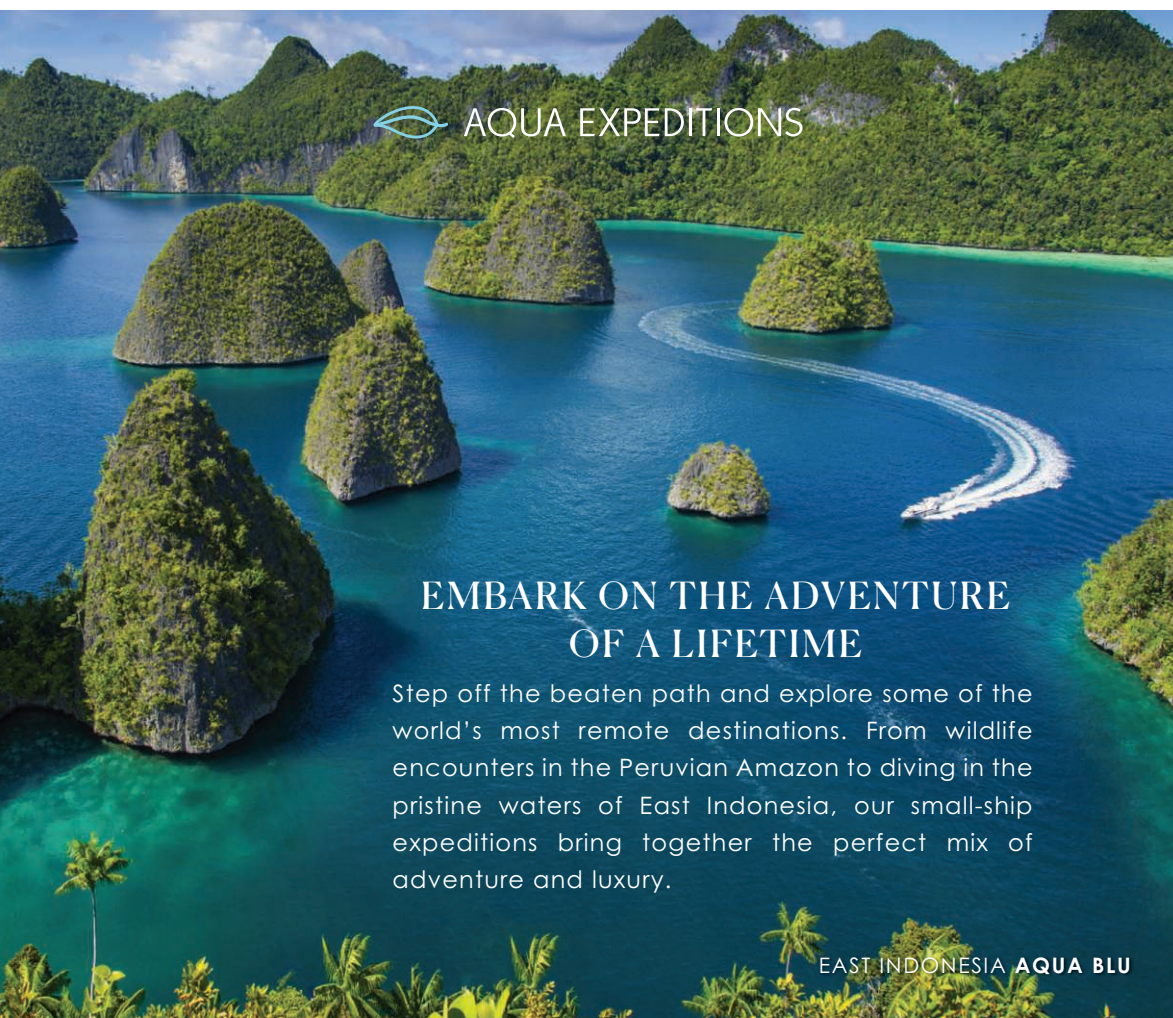
SNACK CENTRAL

To fuel a day of gallery hopping and design shopping, start at local institution Café PalReal in Arcos Vallarta. "PalReal has the best coffee in the country, in my opinion," Suro says. Founders Fabián Delgado, Fabrizio Sención, Isaac "Redman" Padilla, and Jorge Sotomayor have

made a name for themselves with their sustainably harvested specialty coffee from around Mexico. It pairs perfectly with *lonche de pancita* sandwiches, chilaquiles, and plenty of vegan options. On Fridays and Saturdays, stick around after the sun sets, when PalReal transforms into Bar de Aquí, offering late-night snacks and drinks.

AGAVE TIME

Many know Jalisco as the birthplace of tequila, and the spirit is still distilled there from local agave plants. "Guadalajara has the greatest tequila," Suro says. "It makes for a very happy trip." Have a taste at El Gallo Altanero in Colonia Lafayette, a bar dedicated to Jalisco's agave spirits: tequila, raicilla, and mezcal. With just 15 seats downstairs and 30 upstairs, it's perhaps the city's coziest place to experience local spirits, especially since the menu has a robust selection from small, independent producers. 📍



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EMPIRE STATE OF UNWIND

HOW MANHATTAN BECAME A RESTFUL HAVEN FOR WELLNESS-SEEKING TRAVELERS.

BY JEN ROSE SMITH

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BALL & ALBANESE



A moment of zen at the
Museum of Modern Art.

A TRAVELER ARRIVING at Aman New York will find, in its doorway, a subtle retort to the gilded glare of nearby Fifth Avenue. The Manhattan hotel radiates calm, and street noise stills in its slate-dark entry. As an urban outpost of a brand best known for superlative nature retreats, the hotel seems to draw on some deep reserve of tranquility pooled far beneath the city's charged streets.

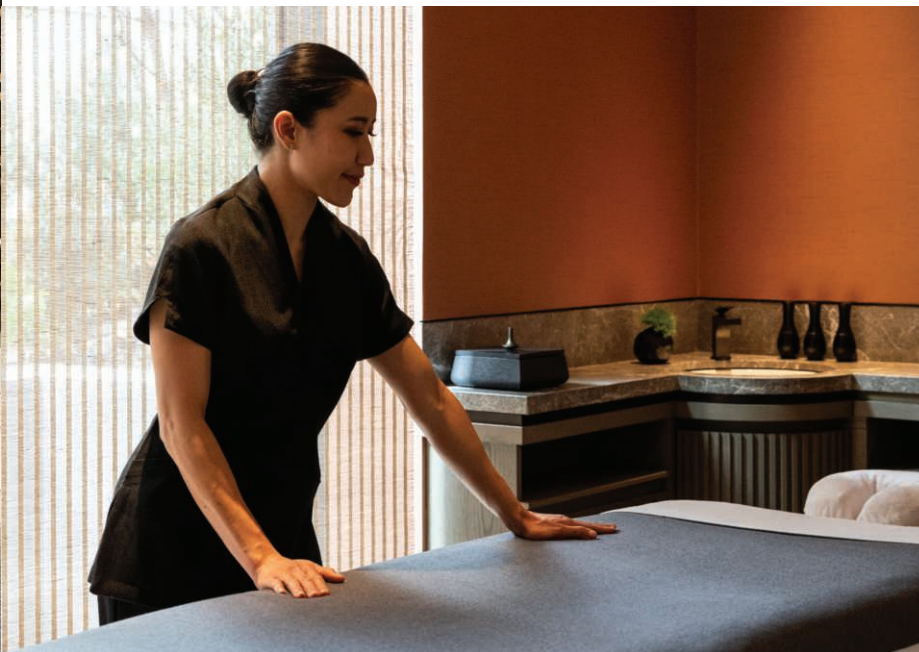
Who comes to NYC for tranquility? Manhattan's knack for revelry and buzz needs no preamble, of course – its after-parties have after-parties. The city's kinetic culture is riveting. But in recent years, however improbably, Manhattan has also built a following among travelers seeking to offset, not abet, that frenzied whirl. Wellness weaves through new plant-based fine-dining concepts and zero-proof cocktail menus, while health-themed social clubs build vibrant communities open to travelers. New hotel programs that marry tradition and tech range from fitness-and-sleep tune-ups at the Equinox Hotel New York to the Aman's East-meets-West healing. Yearning for a brief escape myself, and with just a few days to spare from midlife's pressing obligations, I joined an old friend, Kerri-Ann, to see what respite a famously sleepless city could offer.

Aman's sprawling, 25,000-square-foot spa is secreted away on the 9th through 11th floors of the Crown Building – the original home of the Museum of Modern Art – so slipper-shod guests can pad between their Japanese-inflected suites and the spa's wood-clad saunas or treatment rooms. Personalized, multiday retreats bring together wellness teams that might include integrative medicine physicians and a Buddhist monk mindfulness coach. New York attracts leading-edge practitioners across a vast range of fields, says the hotel's marketing manager, Elle Sacerdote. "Because we're in the city and have so much access to that expertise, we can really be pioneers in the wellness space," she explains. "Some





At Aman New York, the Lounge Bar and inside Hammam Spa House.



people choose not to step outside for their full retreat – it is really an immersive experience.”

Preferring wellness in discrete little sips, I instead followed a spa-pool swim with a stroll through nearby Central Park. Looping lost through coiled trails with Kerri-Ann, I scanned treetops where hundreds of species of birds and butterflies alight each year. From tangerine-bright monarch butterflies to the sweet-voiced hermit thrush, many are travelers, like us, and find in the park a fleeting haven. But many New Yorkers seek in the city’s most iconic green space a more lasting kind of urban sanctuary: a nature escape that doesn’t go farther upstate than the north side of 110th Street.

“Folks who build a life here have to figure out ways to ground themselves,” says Rebecca Parekh, a New Yorker and the CEO of health-minded community The Well. While The Well has far-flung outposts from the Hacienda AltaGracia

in the Costa Rican mountains to Connecticut’s Mayflower Inn & Spa, in 2019 Parekh chose to open the brand’s flagship location not in distant forests, but in Manhattan’s Flatiron District, where a wellness seeker can try everything from customized IV vitamin therapy to sound baths and acupuncture. “I wanted to create that oasis reset experience in New York that you often travel abroad to get,” she says.

In recent years, other such oases have blossomed, each serving its own version of reset. With outdoor pools commanding views of passing ferries and Lower Manhattan’s glass-and-steel upswing, QC New York opened in 2022 on Governors Island, accessible via a five-minute boat ride from the Battery Maritime Building. Its fluffy robes and wine spritzers are a Manhattan islander’s island escape. Also in 2022, social wellness club Remedy Place debuted its first East Coast outpost, bringing ice baths, immune-system-strengthening

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Wellness

hyperbaric oxygen chambers, and cryotherapy to a Flatiron location that's become a hub for the sort of sculpted clientele who can reel off their glucose numbers by memory.

But New Yorkers are skilled at discovering eddies of quiet in less conspicuous places too. The city nurtures a talent for found stillness. "When I lived in New York, I loved to just spend the afternoon by myself at the movies," said Kerri-Ann, as we weaved through Midtown's pedestrian maelstrom. Solo matinees, a gallery morning – shadow a local for a day or two for a master class in urban repose.

Leaving the silver screen for another day, Kerri-Ann and I walked south toward the Museum of Modern Art, where we planned to explore the collections with help from a series of guided mindfulness meditations the museum created, along with monthly quiet mornings and drop-in meditation spaces. (It's not the only NYC museum offering art as wellness: You can take a meditation workshop in the presence of modernist masterworks at the Museum of Arts and Design.) Standing before Georgia O'Keeffe's 1927 *Abstraction Blue*, its oils billowing in iris hues across two sides of a divided canvas, we listened to a mindful art practice by psychologist Anita Johnston.

"As you gaze at the painting, relax into your breath," Johnston intoned. "See what is revealed to you." We'd already lingered by Monet's blousy water lilies and giggled through Germaine Dulac's surrealist film *The Seashell and the Clergyman*. But it was O'Keeffe's nearly century-old brushstrokes that cemented me in the moment, her colors an urgent assertion of life in a sea of gallery white.

We lingered in silence with the painting and its twinned meditation. After a few minutes, we walked on at a city clip. Stomachs growled, and the museum café beckoned – even for wellness seekers, New York won't wait.



Restful remove at QC New York on Governors Island.



Zen in the City

STAY An Eastern-inspired sanctuary with fully customized wellness experiences, the 83-suite **Aman New York** offers urban retreats for travelers seeking renewal. Signature treatments at the Aman Spa range from ancient Tibetan Ku-Nye massage to purifying face rituals combining lymphatic drainage and nerve-point therapy. *Doubles from \$2,350, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.*

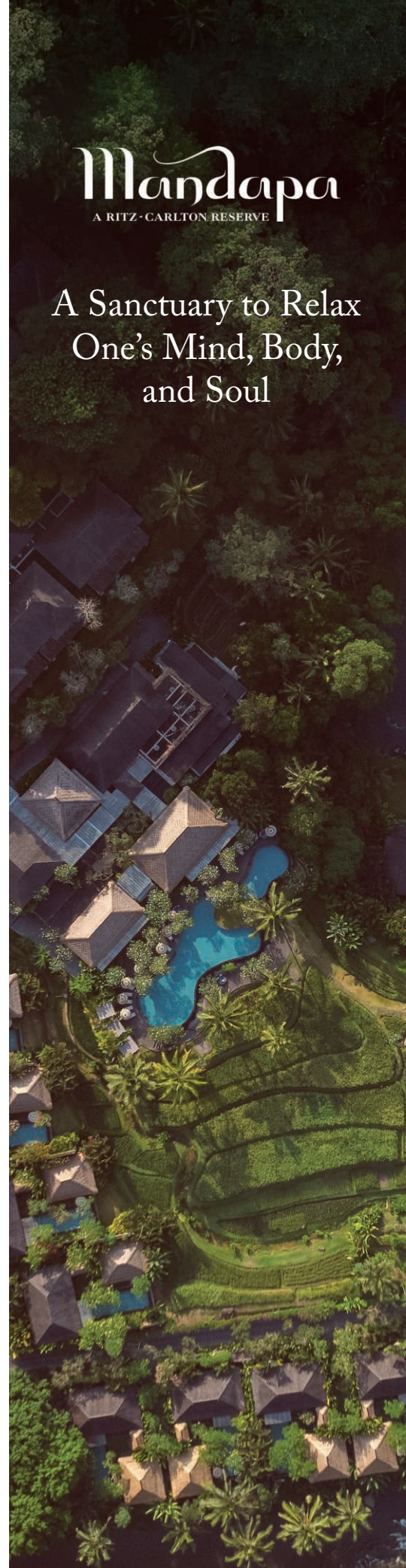
Amid the sleek, high-performance hum of Hudson Yards, the 212-room **Equinox Hotel New York** provides unmatched fitness amenities alongside rooms designed by sleep scientists. A 60,000-square-foot fitness club features metabolic-conditioning classes, a saltwater lap pool, and personal training. *Doubles from \$895, including a daily \$90 breakfast credit for two and a \$100 resort credit; Junior Suites and above include cryotherapy sessions for two (with a two-night minimum stay).*

EAT AND DRINK Stylish vegetarian cuisine at Jean-Georges Vongerichten's Flatiron District **abcV** proves that eating for wellness doesn't equal going without; shared plates such as dates filled with coconut yogurt, tahini, and Sicilian olive oil are downright luxe.

Growing options for zero- and low-proof drinks mean going out won't dim next-day shine. Craft cocktail institution **Dead Rabbit** in the Financial District tempts temperate palates with tart refreshers: the nonalcoholic TLC, featuring a passion-fruit-and-verbena shrub, for instance. ♡

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GIRL MEETS DELHI

MAKING NEW MEMORIES
TOGETHER IN INDIA'S
FAMILIAR CITY.

BY KRISTIN VUKOVIĆ
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ATUL PRATAP CHAUHAN

“AO,” THE KABOOTARBAAZ (pigeon handler) cried, throwing a handful of feed onto the rooftop and calling his birds to come. Above our heads, the pigeons made a U-turn, landing and clustering around the food. As they walked, their stacked identification bangles clinked like chimes, and a symphony of wings beat the air amid a cacophony of coos. Scattering fistfuls of feed, our 5-year-old daughter, Uma, was enthralled. As we descended the stairs into the chaotic streets of Old Delhi, she asked, “When can we come back?”

It was Uma’s first trip to India, but not mine: I’d visited a dozen times before, and my Sikh husband and I were married in New Delhi’s Vasant Vihar *gurdwara* (a Sikh place of worship). Jaidev, who grew up in India, had regaled me with tales of adolescent adventures in Delhi, from getting coiffed at an opulent hotel salon to sneaking into nightclubs. Everywhere we went, he had a story to share, and over many trips with him I had come to see the city through his eyes. But we were flummoxed about what to do with a young traveler during a three-day stopover in the country’s sprawling capital city. The usual suspects – the Lodhi Garden, Humayun’s Tomb, and the Red Fort – were fine options, but we wanted to immerse ourselves in Delhi’s culturally rich history in a way Uma would appreciate too.

To create an experience that could be altered depending on Uma’s energy levels, we enlisted tour company Micato India to guide us. We’d told them about

Uma’s love for animals, so learning about *kabootarbaazi* – the traditional winter sport of pigeon racing – topped the list. On a terrace atop an Old Delhi building, we met Anil Sood, a third-generation *kabootarbaaz* who takes care of some 2,000 pigeons of various breeds, including a pink-plumed one that was new to us. Uma delighted in

seeing her favorite color on a feathered friend, even as we reminded her that this didn’t mean she could start petting the pigeons back home in New York City. Old Delhi’s relationship with pigeon racing dates back hundreds of years – it was believed to have been brought to the capital by emperor and Taj Mahal builder Shah Jahan – and it’s





still a cherished part and celebration of the local culture.

Later that day on a bumpy cycle rickshaw ride, Uma clutched my arm as we were whisked down Old Delhi's narrow, twisting streets, past stalls full of saris, jewelry, spices, and strings of flowers, to another rooftop – this time for a kite-flying demonstration. Atop a restored *haveli* (a traditional Indian grand residence), we watched an expert flyer coax his kite upward until it became a tiny speck in the sky. Uma held the string and navigated the kite with help from Jaidev. Afterward, we sat down to a medley of street-food-style snacks. We loved the one-bite *dahi puri*: thin, crunchy, sphere-shaped shells filled with savory-sweet tamarind, yogurt, mint sauce, and potato, served with mint and tamarind water. The *palak patta chaat* – deep-fried chickpea-flour-crusted spinach leaves with yogurt, mint, tamarind, and sprinkles of pomegranate seeds – was an umami explosion. To a soundtrack of live flute music, we watched a family of rhesus monkeys jump from rooftop to rooftop under the hazy December sun.



DELHI'S LOCAL MARKETS are an obligatory stop when visiting the city. Surprisingly, my husband had never been to Dilli Haat, one of the country's largest permanent crafts markets. Spread over six acres in the center of the city, its 60-some stalls showcase a blend of crafts, food, and regional cultural activities; an entrance fee keeps the crowds smaller, making it more child friendly. I picked up a pair of camel-leather *juttis*, traditional loafer-esque footwear worn by men and women throughout India, while Uma coveted a purple Rajasthani toy horse and a mirrored Barbie-pink nesting box set. Incense filled our nostrils as we moved from stall to stall. We bought sets of bangles for Uma's kindergarten friends,

Kabootarbaaz Anil Sood's rooftop showcase, Dilli Haat souvenirs, and (opposite) Humayun's Tomb.

watched women braid hair with colored strings, and stood entranced as men painted Indian miniature figurines with tiny brushes – the art form flourished during the Mughal era between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, when artists typically illustrated characters from fables and religious texts.

In between excursions, we returned to the jasmine-scented Imperial hotel, the site of our 2009 wedding reception. I was happy to discover the addition of a subterranean spa, a bright marble sanctuary with strategically placed skylights. While Jaidev and Uma napped off jet lag, I snuck away for a hot-candle-wax massage. The hotel knew how to keep us all happy: One morning, staff arranged a *rangoli* art session with a resident expert, where Uma used colored rice and fresh flower petals to create an elaborate Indian design on paper nearly half her height that would invite Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good fortune. “Can we take this whole thing home?” Uma asked. I told her we’d figure out how to make an NYC-friendly version.

We wanted Uma to have fun learning about her father’s culture, but also felt it was important to introduce her to Sikhism in its birthplace. So we went to Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, one of the most prominent Sikh *gurdwaras* in Delhi. People from all castes and religions are welcome to visit. Uma wasn’t thrilled to remove her shoes and socks and walk on the cold marble floors, so my husband ended up carrying her part of the way, but it was worth it to hear the soulful *kirtan* (singing of hymns) and witness *langar*, a free community kitchen for visitors of all religions, which serves around 30,000 people daily. After making a small donation of uncooked rice and lentils, we watched as dozens of people sat in long rows and waited to receive food. It was humbling to see a room full of strangers breaking roti together on the floor as equals. I silently prayed that my daughter would keep this image – and trip – in her memory.





India for Everyone

GO Virtuoso travel advisors can work with on-site tour connection **Micato India** to customize itineraries throughout the country, including all the kid-friendly moments mentioned in this story, plus other experiences such as dinners with prominent local families, private Indian outfitting appointments, and exclusive music performances.

STAY Situated on a verdant eight-acre estate in the city center, the 235-room **Imperial New Delhi** has been a local landmark since 1936. Guests can relax in one of the city's largest pools or rejuvenate at the 44,000-square-foot Imperial Spa, home to a new yoga sanctum with a living green wall. *Doubles from \$400, including an upgrade (if available) at time of booking, breakfast daily, and a \$100 hotel credit.*

The Taj Mahal, New Delhi houses 213 guest rooms and suites in Lutyens' Delhi, one of the city's most exclusive neighborhoods. A new collection of one- and two-bedroom residences comes with living areas and full kitchens, making them ideal home bases for family travel. *Doubles from \$360, including round-trip private airport transfers and breakfast daily.* 📍

The Imperial New Delhi's spa and (opposite) Lodhi Garden.

collette



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BIG-TIME FUN



Snorkel up and dive in
with French Polynesia's gentle giants.

BY T.J. OLWIG
Photography by Rachel Moore

A curious baby humpback near Moorea.



STOUT SOUTH PACIFIC trade winds rocked our boat as we drifted out of Opunohu Bay, a tropical inlet flanked by lush jungle, volcanic leftovers, and *Jurassic Park* geology on Moorea's north shore. Off the port side, a pod of spinner dolphins did their thing, flipping and flopping in an impromptu aerial display. Not to be one-upped, a glide of flying fish took flight to starboard, defying the laws of accepted aerodynamics as our ten-passenger vessel broke for the open sea.

"We are lucky to see them," Captain Tama said while scanning the outer reef for the star attraction. Suddenly, he pointed to a distant parallel in the choppy blue waters: "Right there, right there – he popped up right in front of them!" A male humpback whale had breached at 11 o'clock, what I hoped would be but the opening act of our outing. Not that I was worried. This was French Polynesia after all, where mana, the ever-present spiritual force that connects all living things from the mountains to the valleys to the sea, reigned supreme. Kicking back in the stern, I trusted the sacred thread to sew us some aquatic magic.

It might have been just the fourth day of my inaugural visit to French Polynesia, a collection of 118 islands and atolls scattered across a nautical area more than half the size of Europe, but it was already living up to – and in many ways, exceeding – the idyllic vision



I'd had after first glimpsing it on a magazine cover many a year ago. It didn't hurt to begin the trip on sun-drenched Bora Bora, which felt like a mic drop by the island chain before the show had even started.

Moments after landing, my jet-lagged body underwent an about-face alongside a handful of other lei-wearing travelers en route to the Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora. From the bow of our mahogany-trimmed yacht, we cruised across the most ethereal lagoon I'd ever laid eyes on to a palm-dotted *motu* 15 minutes away. So impressive was the ocean's hue that one guest raised his sunglasses for a nonpolarized double take. "Don't know if I've seen water *this* blue," he said in disbelief. Behind him, I'd rerouted my gaze to Mount Otemanu, an extinct volcano topped with a green peak that had the look of a rock-ribbed church steeple stretching for the heavens. I'd soon come to learn that Bora Bora's ancient appellation was *pōra pōra mai te pōra*, which meant "created by the gods" in the Tahitian language, a fitting name tag if there ever was one.

In just 48 hours' time, I'd dived with manta rays and pufferfish and hawksbill turtles, grafted coral with a WiseOceans marine biologist, lounged beachside over a salt-worn French novel from the poolside library, and had a few long-haul knots ironed out of my back during a *taurumi*-style massage designed to align my body with the flow of the

From left: Moorea's Mount Mouaputa and a reef and manta rays off Bora Bora.



Moorea's sole port
and harbor, Vaïare.

ocean, or *moana*, as the Polynesians say. My greatest coup, inarguably, was the cannon-ball master class I put on for the neighbors from the deck of my overwater bungalow, launching Olympic-worthy splashes again and again into the balmy atmosphere. To the journalist who labeled French Polynesia's trademark thatched-roof abodes "cliché" and "annoying" (a quip I read while prepping for this trip, and one that, I admit, made me chuckle): I hereby sentence you to the aforesaid water pastime. – Sincerely, The Cannon-Balling Writer in Bungalow 423.

One night, in between sips of a bubbly rum sundowner and bites of red tuna *tataki* at the resort's Vaimiti restaurant, chatter from a nearby couple boarded the sunset breeze and landed on my table. "We saw 13 whales today!" the overjoyed woman told the waiter. "I swam with them too!" The spirited gossip was a timely setup that reconnected me to my forthcoming adventure off Moorea, where I was going to spend my next few days in the islands: humpback whales, the seasonal spectacle that had lured me to French Polynesia in the first place. While whales can be spotted throughout the archipelago, Moorea, the heart-shaped island ten nautical miles from Tahiti, churns out one of the highest success rates.

This wouldn't be my first waltz with cetaceans. In years past, I've watched sperm whales in Dominica, gray whales off California's Monterey Bay, belugas in the Saint Lawrence River, orcas on a bear-viewing excursion near Vancouver Island – and let's not forget the afternoon I spied a blue whale, the biggest animal to ever live, from the deck of my Hermosa Beach rental. Those moments etched indelible marks on my wildlife-loving soul – the mystery, the awe, the grandiosity – and yet, the closest I'd come to a humpback was through the words of poet Mary Oliver. "Carrying their tonnage of barnacles and joy," she wrote of the enigmatic mammals, "they leap through the water, they nuzzle back under it / like children / at play."

But I hadn't traveled 26 hours, some 5,000 miles, and four time zones to watch whales from a boat; like that Four Seasons' guest, I was here to play too. My tropical *raison d'être*? To become one of the snorkelers bobbing beside the 80,000-pound bachelor that Captain Tamu had spied.

THE FIRST RULE OF SWIMMING with humpback whales in French Polynesia, one of a small number of places in the world you can do so, is that you don't – *they* swim with you, if you're lucky. Protected by marine sanctuaries and strict government regulations, humpbacks travel thousands of miles over multiple months from their summer feeding grounds in Antarctica – where they fatten up on krill – to give birth, rest, and nurse their young in warmer waters between July and November. "They sing, too," Oliver penned in her ode to the gentle giants. "And not for any reason / you can't imagine."

Famous for their loud underwater ballads, which can last half an hour and include rhymelike melodies passed down from generation to generation, male humpbacks can be heard for miles beneath the sea. But the timing wasn't right for us to plunge in, what with another boat on the scene. Instead, Tamu hurled a hydrophone overboard to keep us entertained. Five seconds later, a collective hush fell over the boat, and I was head to toe in goose bumps, arm hair reaching for the sky. As if awaiting his vocal sheet, our guest of honor reverberated the in-boat radio with a thrum and sonic massage that will forever inhabit my bones. Sooner than I wished, the concert faded and we were on the move, buzzing across the bay.

More than
a hundred
feet below
me, a faint
white shadow
began to
twirl upward,
slow to reveal
its shape.



The Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora and (opposite) snorkeling with blacktip reef sharks nearby.

“If you want to swim, now is the time,” Tamu said as our boat slowed to a stop, no whale in sight. Per regulations, watercraft aren’t allowed to park within 100 yards of a humpback, nor can swimmers approach them. Call it excitement or selective listening, I forgot all about the lecture involving another local resident, the oceanic whitetip shark, which raised more than a few eyebrows during orientation. Goggles and mask on and a GoPro secured to my wrist, I was the first to jump in, happily splashing into the 3,000-foot-deep abyss sans lifejacket but filled with zest.

Head down and fins kicking sideways, I trailed Tuhea, our in-water guide, unfazed by the cooler-than-normal marine temperature and the yo-yoing surface that had already sent one panicked swimmer back to the boat. After a fervent ten-minute search, I pulled my head from the water for a snorkel break and a moment of gratitude for this one-shot opportunity, where, no matter the outcome, I already felt like I’d won. And then, unexpectedly, something jerked my arm, rerouting me to the task at hand. It was Tuhea, pointing down – like, *way, way* down.

More than a hundred feet below me, a faint white shadow began to twirl upward, slow to reveal its shape. Growing in size, the cloudy creature rose and rose like a Whitney Houston high note, but it wasn’t alone. It had company in tow: a calf, who trailed its school-bus-size mother. Together, the duo split the sunlit surface for a lungful of air – and another – spraying an audible spurt of mist less than 50 feet in front of me before vanishing into the deep. Heart pounding out of my chest and a *je ne sais quoi* tingling through my veins, I fist-bumped Tuhea, childlike smiles painted across our faces. Out of breath, a fellow passenger crashed our ocean celebration, exclaiming “My life is complete!” *Not mine*, I thought – my dance with mana had only just begun.

Whale of a Time

GO Virtuoso on-site tour connection **Tahiti Nui Travel** works with travel advisors to create custom itineraries throughout the island, including the chance to snorkel with humpbacks off Moorea, accompanied by a marine biologist, from hydrophone-equipped boats. *Departures: Any day, August through November; from \$144 per person on shared boats and from \$771 per boat for private charters of three to eight guests, including snorkeling equipment, drinks, and snacks.*

STAY Thatched-roof overwater bungalows are French Polynesia's calling card, and few hotels do them more grandly than the **Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora**. Guests arrive at the 115-suite property by private boat to fill days with Jet Skiing, snorkeling with reef sharks and stingrays, paddleboarding to a white-sand *motu*, and, yes, lazing on bungalow decks with views of Mount Otemanu. *Doubles from \$1,360, including breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

Tahitian royalty holidayed on Tetiaroa, a 12-islet atoll 20 minutes by prop plane from Tahiti that's now home to **The Brando**. The 35-villa, all-inclusive eco-resort prizes privacy

and provides a luxe springboard for deep-sea fishing, bird-watching, traditional Polynesian dance lessons, and snorkeling with whales (August through October). *Doubles from \$5,074 with a minimum two-night stay, including all meals, one 50-minute spa treatment per villa per day, and one excursion per person per day.*

Set on one of Moorea's most picturesque beaches, **Sofitel Kia Ora Moorea Beach Resort** features 110 bungalows either overwater or scattered amid lush tropical gardens facing Tahiti. The room-service must: breakfast, delivered to villa sundecks by outrigger canoe. *Doubles from \$630, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.*

With just three thatched-roof, coral-accented villas on a 75-acre private *motu* in a lagoon off Raiatea, **Motu Nao Nao** – and its six-guest limit – debuted in 2021 and has since bloomed into one of the South Pacific's most sought-after getaways. *Island buyouts from \$7,000 for two guests per night and from \$9,500 for six, including all meals, most activities, and one excursion per day. Three-night minimum stay.* 📍



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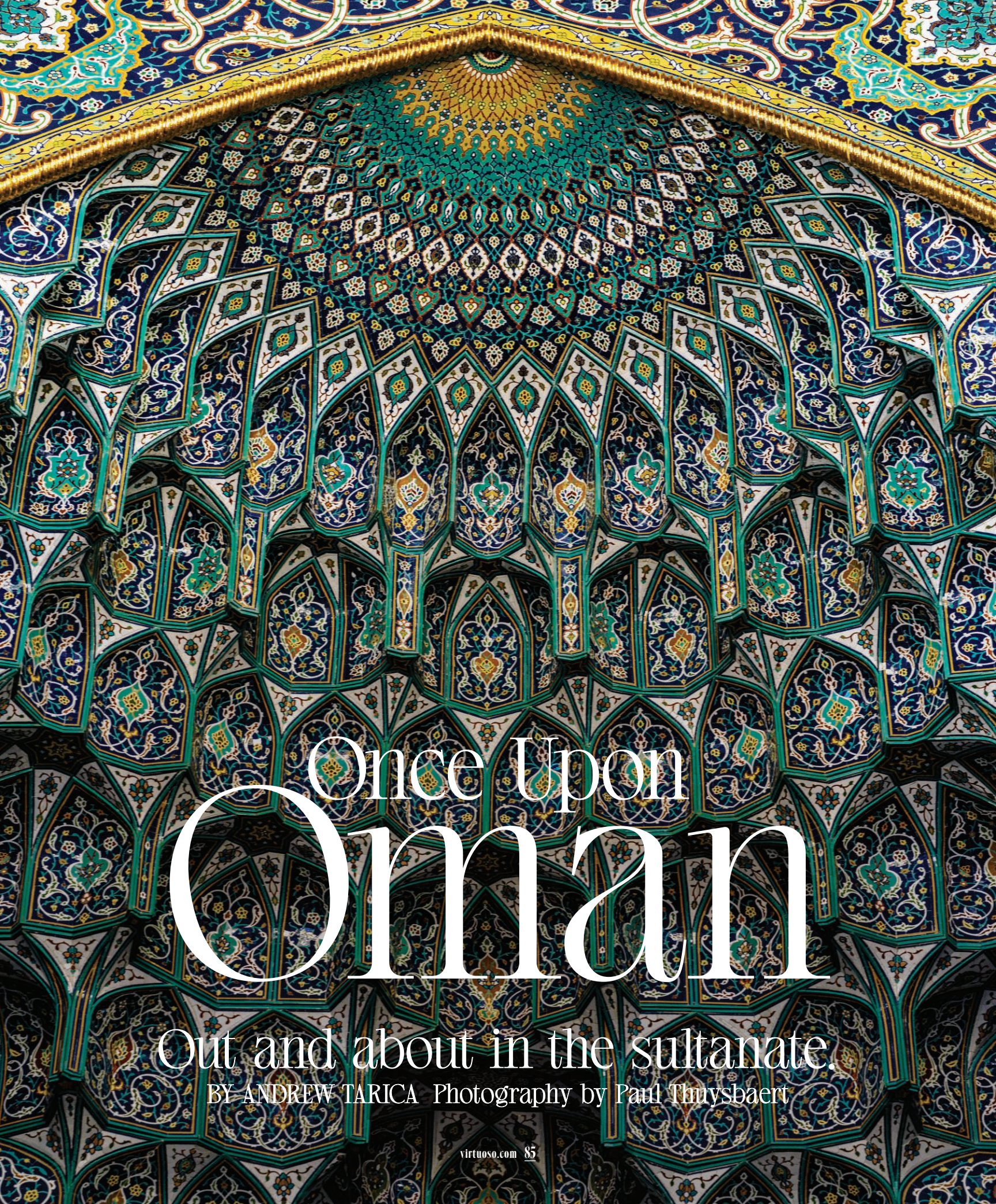
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Omani hospitality in Salalah and (opposite) inside Muscat's Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque.



Once Upon Oman

Out and about in the sultanate.

BY ANDREW TARICA Photography by Paul Thijsbaert

KHALIL GREETED ME

at Muscat airport with a warm smile, a firm handshake, and a bag stuffed with dates. “This is a little gift for you,” he said. Somehow, I’d never tried a date before, and my first taste made me wonder where they’d been all my life. “Welcome to Oman.”

For years, I’d dreamed of visiting Oman, lured by photos of its rugged desert landscapes, coastal sand dunes, and age-old forts. It looked like the kind of place that Indiana Jones would enjoy. Better yet, it struck me as a country that had yet to register with many travelers. Indeed, while nearby Dubai clocked more than 17 million tourists in 2023, only 4 million foreigners visited this country of 4.6 million bordering the UAE, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.

Based on the reactions of family and friends – the majority of whom fixed me with puzzled looks when I told them I was traveling to Oman – I wondered if not much had changed since the legendary Welsh writer Jan Morris penned *Sultan in Oman*. The book recounts the first crossing of the Omani desert by automobile in 1955, when Sultan Said bin Taimur was consolidating his power over the tribal hinterlands and allowed Morris to accompany him. Before embarking on the journey, she acknowledged being unfamiliar with Oman, “if only because that distant corner of the Arabian Peninsula remained the least known of all the Arab lands.”

My 12-day overland journey would be highlighted by a few nights of “wild camping” in the country’s empty interior. On a whim before the trip, I’d reached out to a friend who used to live in Oman. She offered to connect me with Khalil Al Balushi, a language instructor at the Ministry of Education, during the free day I had in Muscat before my journey began. Our meeting turned out to be a firsthand lesson in Omani hospitality.

Before I could say “sultanate,” Khalil had messaged me on WhatsApp and offered to pick me up upon my arrival. After dropping me off at my hotel and waiting patiently while I checked in, he proposed a tour of his home city, Oman’s capital. Our first stop: the centrally located Mutrah Souk, which faces the harbor’s corniche and is believed to be one of the world’s oldest marketplaces.

As we meandered past stalls selling everything from silver to samosas, I mentioned that I collect hats when I travel. Khalil led me to a hat shop and helped me select an elegant black-and-white *kuma*, one of the ornately decorated, rounded caps traditionally worn by Omani men. Then, before I could reach for my wallet, he paid for it. When I protested, Khalil said, “Brother, you are a guest in my country. For three days, the custom is you don’t pay for a thing.”

Before the night was over, Khalil had also bought me a dishdasha, the long-sleeved, ankle-length robe worn by Arabs;

treated me to a seafood feast featuring the day’s catch, grilled with Arabic and Indian spices; and given me his buttery-soft *mussar*, or scarf, in case I got cold while camping in the desert. As a final token, he presented me with an Arabic language book, so I could learn a few words, and promised to check up on me every few days. “It’s an Omani thing,” he said. “I wish you a happy and safe trip in my country.” In the span of a few hours, I’d made a lifelong friend.

Following Khalil’s royal welcome, I spent the next fortnight crisscrossing my way from Muscat in the north to Salalah in the south, a distance of more than 2,100 miles. During our time together, he’d taught me the phrase “*jamil jiddan*,” which roughly translates to “very nice” or “very beautiful” and is one way to express gratitude. I said it often in the following days to show thanks for everything from Oman’s food and landscapes to its people’s warmth.

MY FIRST STOP WAS an easy three-hour drive by SUV into the Hajar Mountains to Oman’s highest point: Jebel Shams, a soaring 9,777-foot-high peak. It was pleasantly cooler than in Muscat, but I worked up a sweat while hiking with my guide, Nawaf Al Wahabi, into Wadi Ghul, also known as the Grand Canyon of Arabia. The roughly two-hour Balcony Walk trek led deep into a chasm of limestone and marble.

Our destination, the abandoned village of As Sab, was once home to about ten families of farmers and livestock herders, who left in the 1980s, mainly due to the logistical challenge of getting food and water into the canyon. The ruins of dilapidated homes made of stones, sticks, and mud were tucked neatly into an overhanging cliff and reminded me of the famed Ancestral Pueblo archaeological sites of Mesa Verde in southwest Colorado.

“My father and grandfather were born here,” local guide and sheep farmer Ali Al Khantiri said. “In the past, it was a safe place. Nobody could reach it easily, and you could defend it against troublemakers.” Now, they live in a modern home on the canyon rim. His father, who is in his 90s, still hikes to the village once a week to water the pomegranate trees.

Two hours south of Jebel Shams, the historic town of Nizwa stands on a river plain dotted with palm plantations in the shadow of red-rock mountains. Nizwa’s main draw – its cylindrical fort dating to the seventeenth century – is a testament to Omani architectural ingenuity. As I wandered past towering doors, once-secret passageways, and hidden alcoves, it was easy to imagine a time when this fortress served as a bastion against raiding forces that aimed to ransack Nizwa due to its strategic location at the crossroads of ancient caravan routes. “This was the last place where the imam was in control of the interior of Oman” before the coup of 1970, Nawaf explained. “The sultan controlled the coast, while the imam led by the religious way in the inland areas.”

A group of local schoolchildren trailed me as I climbed a narrow staircase and emerged onto a flat-roofed platform



Clockwise from top left:
Wahiba Sands, Nizwa Fort,
the view from the top of Jebel
Shams' Balcony Walk trek,
and desert contemplation.



erected on a bed of crushed stones. A ramp led up to the perimeter, where we peered through the musket holes at a height of more than 110 feet, enjoying one of Oman's best views. An oasis of palms stood in one direction and the town's souk in another. Distant mountains beckoned toward the horizon.

Part of the joy of travel is finding little treasures along the way. Along with the market in Muscat, the Nizwa souk is one of the best places in Oman to shop for souvenirs and is particularly celebrated for its heritage of local craftsmanship. "Here we have separate markets for spices, original crafts, silver and jewelry, vegetables and food, and fish," Nawaf said as he explained the lay of the land. "There's even a whole section dedicated to dates." My mouth watered.

I asked Nawaf – a self-proclaimed collector of rings – to help me buy one, and together we found a charming silver-and-turquoise piece made in Yemen. A stall near the souk's entrance sold large, colorful, round floor mats on which Omanis traditionally eat meals; my pick now hangs proudly in my living room. Finally, we headed to the date market, where Nawaf explained the various types and grades of the fruit, which can be packaged in airtight bags to take home as gifts. Best of all, he said, "You can try a sample," so I gobbled up a few for the road.

AFTER EXPLORING NIZWA and the mountainous interior, we departed for my most anticipated Omani destination: the dunes. Oman is home to two main dune complexes, the Wahiba Sands and the Empty Quarter, or Rub al Khali. Our first stop was the former, the easier of the two to access, located about two hours south of Muscat.

In the town of Al Ghabbi, at the edge of this wilderness, we stopped to deflate our tires for better traction before venturing off-road into the powdery red and gold dunes. A herd of camels strode across the landscape. "All of the camels in Oman are owned by someone," Nawaf said, "even though they are walking in the middle of nowhere. The

owner comes to check on them every few days – sometimes they are hard to find!" The sands shift constantly, he explained, which makes navigation a challenge. "There are four cars still stuck nearby," he said. "Nobody can get them out since the '90s. They're totally covered with sand now."

Driving over the dunes, past the isolated settlements of the seminomadic Bedouin people, it felt as if we were floating on an ocean of sand. After two hours, we pitched tents for the night, surrounded by dunes about 200 feet high a couple of miles from the sea. As I climbed one of them, my shadow stretched to superhero size. In my tent, I fell asleep to the faint sound of wind blowing westward from the nearby shore.

After another night of camping in the Wahiba and a day of rest, we crossed a ghost-white landscape as flat as a roti. A sign marked the midway point between Muscat and Salalah, roughly 300 miles to each city. With our tires once again deflated at a date-palm-fringed oasis town, we drove onward to the famed Empty Quarter. The vast desert covers more than 250,000 square miles of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Yemen, and Oman in southern Arabia.

Camels as dark as coffee loped across the landscape, a vision that called to mind *The Empire Strikes Back's* opening scene. Omanis prize the Empty Quarter's rare black camels for their physical traits as well as their symbolic and spiritual meanings, and Omani legends and songs often portray them as heroic creatures that embody the spirit of the desert.

Later, Nawaf drove up an ochre-colored dune to a terrace overlooking this roadless landscape and a distant Bedouin community. Around us, the dunes rose like mountains, some reaching heights of nearly 1,000 feet above the otherwise flat landscape. With the sun setting, I hiked barefoot to the top of a mound, which the winds had etched with zigzag ripples. The 360-degree view seemed to stretch all the way to Mecca. As night fell, millions of stars twinkled above us, and a slight chill crept into the air. I wrapped Khalil's *mussar* around my head to keep warm.

Wahiba Sands, 4,800 square miles of solitude.



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Boswellia trees at Wadi Dawkah and in search of a secret beach outside Salalah.



Omani Explorations

GO Artisans of Leisure's ten-day private journey through Oman takes travelers from Muscat to Salalah, with stops at Jebel Akhdar (Green Mountain) and Nizwa for shopping at the souk, and camping in Wahiba Sands. *Departures: Any day through July 5, 2025; from \$15,190, including accommodations, guides, and transportation.*

STAY Thirty minutes east of Muscat's city center, the clifftop, adults-only **Shangri-La Al Husn** features a private beach and cove, an infinity pool overlooking the Gulf of Oman, and 180 rooms and suites. The beach is one of the country's top five turtle nesting sites. *Doubles from \$336, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.*

The discreet, beachfront **Chedi Muscat** is set on 21 landscaped acres with six restaurants and 162 Omani-inflected guest rooms and villas. There's a spa specializing in Balinese therapies, three swimming pools, and excursions that include an overnight camping trip to Jebel Shams, Oman's highest peak. *Doubles from \$426, including breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

Jumeirah Muscat Bay draws inspiration from its location between desert and ocean. Works by local artisans fill its 195 contemporary rooms and suites, accented with Arab design details. A host of diversions, including scuba diving and hiking in the Hajar Mountains, tap into the adventurous setting. *Doubles from \$358, including breakfast daily and a \$100 resort credit.*

At **Six Senses Zighy Bay**, located on Oman's northern Musandam Peninsula, every one of the 82 villas and suites at the resort – set between craggy mountains and a long sandy beach – has a private pool. Six dining options, a spa, and a range of activities – including a cruise on the hotel's traditional Omani dhow, *Dhahab* – enhance the experience. *Villas from \$1,661, including breakfast daily and one 60-minute spa treatment for up to two guests.*

IN SPRAWLING SALALAH, a subtropical coastal city of about 450,000 in southern Oman and our last stop, we found miles of sandy beaches, stands selling tropical-fruit juices beneath towering palm trees, lush coconut plantations, Indian and Pakistani snack shops, and lavish entryways. Neighborhoods buzzed with motorcycles, and several luxe resorts dotted the coast. In the summer, when it's above 110 degrees in the rest of the country, the temperature can drop into the 70s in Salalah, making it a favorite holiday destination for Omanis. The city is also known as the land of frankincense (and, unrelatedly, as a hub for extraterrestrial activity).

At the Wadi Dawkah, a UNESCO World Heritage site, *Boswellia* trees dotted the plain. Their trunks are tapped several times a year for the frankincense resin that was carried around the world on ancient spice routes and that's still used to create incense and perfume, and for medicinal purposes.

But at The Museum of the Frankincense Land, what drew me in was more celestial: a display of meteorites that have landed in Oman. Nearly a fifth of the meteorites discovered on Earth – more than 7,000 meteorite pieces to date – have been recovered in the plains of central and south Oman in the last 25 years. The country's arid topography, it turns out, creates great conditions for retrieving these space rocks.

For our farewell dinner I wore the dishdasha and *kuma* that Khalil had bought for me in Muscat. A passerby in a car screeched to a halt, rolled down his window, and shouted, "You look like an Omani!" with his thumbs up. After parting ways with Nawaf, I decided to spend a few more days in Salalah, which is also the gateway to the country's wild Arabian Sea coast. I rented a car and headed west toward the Yemen border, where cliffs dropped hundreds of feet into the water, in search of a place called Al Fazayah Beach.

"We call this 'Secret Beach,'" a cab driver in Salalah had told me. Until a few years ago, he said, it was only accessible by boat. I found the turnoff, about an hour's drive from the city, but the dirt road looked rough, so I parked the car and walked a few miles down to the coast. Eventually, I reached a trio of crescent-shaped beaches, separated by slabs of black boulders and graced with soft white sands. It looked like heaven, completely natural and without any signs of development. It wasn't a total secret anymore – there were about 20 others enjoying this seaside Shangri-la – but I felt like I'd stumbled upon something special. I dove into the sapphire sea.

Now my only problem was getting back to my car: It was the hottest time of day, and trekking uphill would be treacherous. With the smell of salt in the air, I started my long walk, confident that someone would give me a lift. As I'd learned, kindness is an Omani thing. ♡



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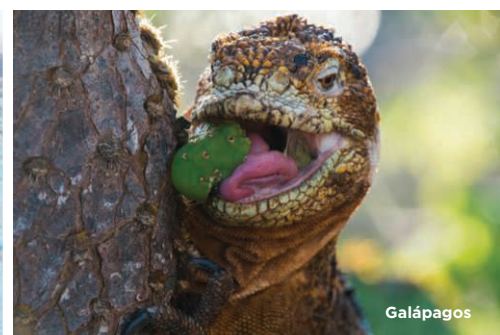
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HAPPY TRAILS

Clifftop hikes and soft landings on
Italy's Amalfi Coast.

BY J.R. PATTERSON
Photography by Anthony Lanneretonne



The fruits of Italian hiking
and (opposite) Ravello
from the trail.



On the Path of the Gods and (opposite) trail's-end rewards.

TIME IS RELATIVE, especially on Italy's Sorrentine Peninsula. On this wedge of land jutting from the country's western coast, any desire to capture it is met with resistance bordering on disbelief. Ask the grocer when she closes, and she shrugs and says, "A little later." Inquire when the next bus is due, and "soonish" is the most precision you can expect. Even habitual greetings blend time: Everyone *buongiorno*s from daybreak until some indiscernible point in midafternoon, when they switch to *buonasera* for the rest of the day.

Under such circumstances, I thought it best to have little to do and few commitments to keep during my six days on the peninsula, but I still wanted movement. The Amalfi Coast is best known as a place to let the day wash over you: beachy afternoons, opulent hotel gardens, maybe a post-lunch stroll along the seaside. It isn't known for long-distance walking, but a scraggle of paths wend into the hinterland, including the CAI-300, a 46-mile trail connecting Salerno to Sorrento, broken into 11 stages of varying length and difficulty. A few stages of the trail per day – punctuated by cafés, trattorias, and those aforementioned gardens – made for my ideal jaunt.

Like many of the country's trails, the CAI-300 is administered by the Italian Alpine Club and demarcated with red-and-white paint slashes on rocks, trees, and garden walls. Connecting famed coastal towns such as Amalfi and Positano via the quiet paths of the Lattari Mountains, the trail stretches along green scrub, dry riverbeds, and grottoes so shaded and dark that, at the peak of the noontime heat, their grass is still beaded with dew. I passed alongside vineyards and citrus groves with baskets of lemons left outside gates, and through villages set into the pale cliffs like swallows' nests. Every day brought new flowers to discover: morning glories, snapdragons, and snowdrops of pink and white.

Moving ever westward, the path led me into the high mountains, only to drop me again to the coast, landing softly in the comfort and pleasure of each village.







Trail directives in Praiano and
(opposite) Minori Beach.

When I was high above the coastal road, the revving of Lamborghinis and rumble of tour buses were replaced with birdsong and laughter echoing across the valleys. Atop Monte Falerio, looking down over the village of Maiori, a group of hiking Italians fussed like a flock of beautiful birds, roosting only for as long as it took for a group photo before taking wing again.

IF TIME IS NOT GODLY, the landscape is. “This is our little slice of heaven,” a lemon farmer from Minori told me. The trail passed by his hillside patch, which overlooked the town and contained a thousand trees on an acre and a half. Given its physical beauty, it’s not surprising the area is a wellspring of creative energy – eminent artists of the twentieth century often decamped here for inspiration, surrounding themselves with what the Italian writer Francesco D’Episcopo once called “architecture for the soul.”

The trail was only sometimes a dirt path; often it was staircases that cut straight through the villages, where I was passed by *nonnas* with ankles of steel. The stairs had the quality of an M.C. Escher painting, rising and falling in perpetual tessellating waves. Escher visited the coast as a young artist, and his geometrical work was influenced by the area’s Moorish architecture. On my second day on the trail, taking what felt like one of Escher’s never-ending flights up from Minori to Ravello, I settled into the grace of Caruso, a Belmond Hotel. The gardens were a profusion of green, and the air smelled of powdered sugar. D.H. Lawrence, who wrote *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* in Ravello, wandered these same hill paths and looked out over “that steep, muggy coast, with the crystalline mountains where the gods of today are abandoned and a lost, Mediterranean, anterior self is discovered again.”

What to Lawrence was crystalline seemed to me fuzzed. The air, diffused with light, made it difficult to tell time. There was a perpetual feeling of late afternoon,

the aperitivo hour. There was, too, the sensation of the world tilted on its axis, such that I was never sure if I was looking down to the water or up into the air. The horizon dissolved behind a band of haze, and the sea and sky were so equally blue it was impossible to tell one from the other. Skiffs, fishing boats, yachts, speeders, ferries, and cruise ships left contrails in the sky; distant planes cut patterns through the gauzy Mediterranean.

The next day, I reached the Hotel Santa Caterina in Amalfi. I dove into the Mediterranean from its private crag of seafront, the water a rolling duvet that swept me along. The breeze carried the smell of almond and wafer from the earth out over the darkening water. Later, fortified with prosecco and *scialatielli ai frutti di mare*, I watched the night draw in. The cool air cleared as the light slipped away.

Each evening was different, like a phase of the moon. With the next day's sweat of eight miles washed from me, I watched from a terrace at Casa Angelina as the fading light turned Positano from a pastel zigurat into a vein of gold in the dark ore of the mountainside. The sea was calm and, under the moonlight, flashed like a sheet of ice, reflecting white into the blackness where the aura of the city did not reach. In the morning, I ascended to the Sentiero degli Dei, the Path of the Gods. Winding from Bomerano to Positano, its five miles are the path's most well-trodden. Near rosettes of honeybush on the wayside, I drank from fountains of cool water under a cliff scalloped by a waterfall and covered with a fur of moss.

Beyond Positano, the peninsula becomes more rustic toward its western point. It was a reminder that this storied coast is not just about the high life. It's also made of parents waiting in hot cars to pick their children up from school, ancient Fiats shuddering up steep hills, and farmers scrabbling through the heat and dust of their orchards. Here, the path was sometimes rough and exposed, courting a drop into the sea. Rocks half buried in the ground were worn smooth by footfalls and looked like exposed dinosaur bones. At this point, I had the best views of the Li Galli archipelago, also known as Le Sirenuse, the mythical home of the sirens from *The Odyssey*.

A major stop for Grand Tour travelers, who traipsed across Europe in search of culture and inspiration, Sorrento was the end of my trip. At the Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, I raised a martini to my completed journey. Each day had been a small gift, free of constraint or obligation – and above all, beyond the reach of the gods of time.



The Amalfi Coast, as seen from the Path of the Gods.



POST-HIKE RETREATS

GO The best time to hike the CAI-300 is in late spring or early fall, when temperatures are cooler and most of the Amalfi Coast's seasonal hotels are open. The trail's 11 legs range from 1.9 to 13 miles each, and from moderate to difficult (expect steep hills and lots of stairs). Tour operator **Backroads** guides travelers along parts of the trail during a six-day, round-trip-from-Naples hiking trip. *Departures: Multiple dates, May 5 through October 6; from \$9,149.*

STAY Once the eleventh-century palace of a noble family, Ravello's **Caruso, a Belmond Hotel** is now home to 52 rooms, suites, and villas with some of the Amalfi Coast's best views. Guests spend downtime at the beloved hideaway lounging by the showstopper infinity pool, ducking into the garden for a massage in a gazebo, or watching the sunset from their private terrace. *Doubles from \$1,580, including breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

Clinging to the edge of a cliff just outside the village of Amalfi, the 67-room **Hotel Santa Caterina** captivates guests, from its Michelin-starred restaurant to its seaside beach club, the latter reached via a glass elevator directly from the hotel. Behind the bougainvillea and orange groves, whitewashed guest rooms and suites with tile floors, arched ceilings, and balconies make settling in easy. *Doubles from \$1,120, including breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

The 37-room, adults-only **Casa Angelina** overlooks the Med from the village of Praiano, but its modern, whitewashed facade could easily fit in somewhere in the Greek Isles. That said, guests know they're squarely in the heart of Italy at the fourth-floor Piano nel Cielo restaurant, where well-dressed staff deliver limoncello-infused cocktails and plates of *tagliolini* pasta with prawns and Amalfi lemons. *Doubles from \$985,*

including breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit.

The new kid on the cliff is **Borgo Santandrea** in Amalfi, which became the first hotel to debut on the storied coast in 15 years when it opened in 2021. Its 49 rooms and suites merge Mediterranean and midcentury flair – eight have their own pools – while terraced gardens cascade down to the hotel's private beach, a rarity on this stretch. *Doubles from \$1,927, including breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

Sorrento's most coveted address since 1834, the **Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria** occupies a trio of buildings overlooking the Bay of Naples. Its 81 rooms showcase classic Grand Tour glamour (frescoed ceilings and brocade wallpaper), and the terrace is the best place to sip a spritz and watch yachts pull into the marina below. *Doubles from \$1,088, including breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit.* 📍



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CRUISES GONE WILD

Board adventure-ready ships and linger at tropical islands, untamed coastlines, and wildlife-packed waters.

BY DAVID SWANSON

While increasing numbers of travelers are packing their polar-expedition base layers, many of the same ships that tout penguin and polar bear encounters during peak months also spend a good slice of each year in waters with friendlier temps. Here, in action-primed small ports around the globe, the Zodiacs, kayaks, and onboard naturalists come out to play, and travelers can stretch their sea legs in pursuit of new species sightings.

Papua New Guinea's Dobu Island.

HX's *Spitsbergen* in the Hebrides and (opposite) a young Trobriand Islands girl models her beadwork.



Puffins and Pints in the British Isles

Come to take in the rugged coastal scenery, stay for the world-class bird-watching. From the Channel Islands off France to the uninhabited Saint Kilda archipelago northwest of Scotland, the British Isles scatter in a succession of wild green hills, deserted beaches, and craggy cliffs dotted with nesting seabirds – plus photogenic castles, lighthouses, and atmospheric pubs.

Silversea's 220-passenger *Silver Endeavour* embarks on a British Isles survey from Portsmouth, home to much of the British Royal Navy, including Lord Nelson's warship *Victory* and other historic ships stationed at

dockyard museums. On Guernsey in the Channel Islands, cobbled streets lead to the home of Victor Hugo and the commanding Castle Cornet. And on Tresco, perhaps the loveliest of the 140 Isles of Scilly, the subtropical Abbey Garden blooms with Mediterranean foliage. Cut off from the mainland, the village of Inverie (population 120) on Scotland's Knoydart Peninsula is reachable only by sea or a 17-mile hike, with a pint at community-owned Old Forge – Great Britain's most remote pub – as reward. Secluded, volcanic Saint Kilda, home to nearly 1 million seabirds,

was abandoned in 1930 but bears UNESCO-listed remains of human habitation dating back 2,000 years. Dally at barely inhabited Fair Isle, Lindisfarne, and the Farne Islands – the latter is Sir David Attenborough's favorite UK wildlife-watching site.

In tiny Hebrides islets, travelers can seek out Manx shearwaters, guillemots, puffins, and golden eagles. HX's (Hurtigruten Expeditions') Hebrides sailings also stop at Islay, known as Whiskey Island for its single-malts; Gigha, which is collectively owned by its 163 residents; and Stornoway, home to Scotland's Stonehenge.

60 Silversea Cruises' ultra-spacious *Silver Endeavour* operates ten-night sailings from Portsmouth to Edinburgh. Departures: April 23 and May 3, 2025; from \$11,100.

HX's 220-passenger *Spitsbergen* circles the Hebrides in ten nights, round-trip from Glasgow, with a professional landscape and wildlife photographer on board to assist travelers. Departures: April 8, 18, and 28, 2025; from \$5,253.



Deep History in Papua New Guinea

Limited air service to and road access within Papua New Guinea make it challenging to explore by land, but small cruise ships easily navigate to coastal highlights on the world's largest tropical island. Ponant visits Tufi, a town at the head of a peninsula dimpled with fjords and a launching point for divers looking to explore wrecks dating to WWII in waters with the world's highest-known level of marine biological diversity. On volcanic Fergusson Island, Dei Dei Hot Springs bubbles with mud pots and geysers, and colorful eclectus parrots and olive-backed sunbirds flash through rain forests. Scattered to the east in the Solomon Sea, choice outposts Njari Island, Ghizo Island, and the Florida Islands' Roderick Bay attract snorkelers, underwater photographers, and divers (an instructor is aboard Ponant's sailings for certified divers).

In the Trobriand Islands, Seabourn's expeditions encounter locals such as the Kitavan people, who may settle disputes by cricket match, and who speak some of the hundreds of distinct languages kept alive by the many Papua New Guinea tribes. Dramatic Rabaul is defined by its volcanic peaks, one of which still trembles on occasion, while reef-ringed Garove in the Vitu Islands is another volcanic hot spot, its rich soil nurturing cacao trees and coconut palms.

GO Ponant's 184-passenger *Le Lapérouse* hopscoches for 11 nights from the Solomon Islands' capital, Honiara, to Papua New Guinea before stopping in Cairns, Australia. *Departure: October 29; from \$10,440.*

Next year, the line's 184-passenger *Le Jacques-Cartier* traces a similar Cairns-to-Honiara route over 13 nights, adding a stop at PNG's coastal village Morobe. *Departure: February 16, 2025; from \$10,350.*

Also starting in Honiara, **Seabourn's** 13-night itinerary aboard the new 264-passenger *Pursuit* sails to Papua New Guinea and the Trobriands, on to Rabaul and Garove, then through Micronesia, concluding in Guam. *Departure: August 24; from \$10,999.*

Keeping watch in Door County, Wisconsin, and (opposite) scarlet macaws preen in Costa Rica.



Great Lakes Grandeur

Expedition cruises usually pop up in far-flung locales thick with wildlife and hard-to-reach scenery, so when Viking announced it would station its two polar-class ships in the Great Lakes for the summer months, eyebrows were raised. But the line has good reason: The five lakes' 10,000 miles of coastline offer a chance to soak up the beauty in our own backyard.

Highlights include hiking along Lake Michigan's slender, limestone-formed Door Peninsula and kayaking amid the thousands of islands in Lake Huron and UNESCO-listed Georgian Bay, thought to be the world's largest freshwater archipelago. Submarine excursions in Fathom Five National Marine Park, between Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, visit the shipwrecks of the region's past. In Ontario's tranquil Killarney Provincial Park, blue lakes and old-growth forests extend from pink granite coastlines and white quartzite mountains.

Americana gets stage time too, with visits to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, bike rides through Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and a stop at the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation near Detroit. Car-free Mackinac Island means travel on foot, by bike, or with horse and carriage, encouraging leisurely outings to landmarks such as the island's famed fudge shops. Crossing via the Welland Canal, which bypasses Niagara Falls, and transiting the gravity-powered Soo Locks, nicknamed the "Linchpin of the Great Lakes," puts travelers in the center of the lakes' great engineering achievements.

GO Viking offers 14-night sailings from Toronto to Duluth, Minnesota, aboard the 378-passenger *Viking Octantis* and *Viking Polaris*. Departures: Multiple dates, May 23, 2024, through August 24, 2026; from \$14,995.

(LIGHTHOUSE) KEVIN J. MIYAZAKI, (MACAWS) CAVAN IMAGES/ALAMY



Animal Crossings in Costa Rica and Panama

National parks, wildlife refuges, and nature reserves occupy more than a quarter of Costa Rica's total land area, and one of the largest and wildest of these, Corcovado National Park on the Osa Peninsula, contains cloud forests, marshes, and mangrove stands. Lindblad Expeditions and Aurora Expeditions cruise along the rugged Pacific coast and through the Golfo Dulce to reveal Osa's pristine lowland rain forest – home to all four of the country's monkey species (including the rare squirrel

monkey) and the breadth of Costa Rica's wildlife.

To the southeast, Panama shares many of Costa Rica's natural attributes and has recently adopted its neighbor's sustainability-focused tourism ethos. The isolated marine preserve at Isla Coiba, for instance, is a refuge for endemic species such as the Coiban agouti and the mantled howler monkey. But the star of Panama's show is undoubtedly a human-made one: its 51-mile canal. Aurora Expeditions transits the canal by day,

moving from the Pacific to the Atlantic in ten hours. Before the crossing, the *Greg Mortimer* idles in Costa Rica to spot two- and three-toed sloths in Manuel Antonio National Park, and scarlet macaws, armadillos, and capuchin, spider, and howler monkeys at the 3,700-acre Curú National Wildlife Refuge. Following two days at Osa Peninsula and Golfo Dulce, the sailing continues to Panama's Pearl Islands, an archipelago of white-sand beaches and healthy coral reefs, for diving, snorkeling, and kayaking.

GO Lindblad Expeditions' seven-night trips, starting from San José, Costa Rica, on the 100-passenger *National Geographic Quest*, traverse the canal to disembark on the Caribbean side in Panama's Colón. Departures: Multiple dates, November 23, 2024, through March 21, 2026; from \$7,173.

A ten-night itinerary aboard Aurora Expeditions' 132-passenger *Greg Mortimer* departs from San José, hugging the Costa Rican coast and hitting Panamanian islands before crossing the canal and ending in Colón. Departure: April 19, 2025; from \$11,595.

Montgomery Reef rises from the sea with tidal changes.



Australia's Ancient Kimberley

Only recently on North American travelers' radars, the Kimberley is one of Australia's earliest settled areas. Evidence of humans reaches back as far as 65,000 years, and, geologically, its rock landscapes are among Earth's oldest. This region is also Australia's last frontier: Its 800-mile coastline is mostly uninhabited and inaccessible by road, with a fierce monsoon season that lasts for half the year.

Small ships are the best way to see the Kimberley as it has existed for millennia, its ancient red sandstone formations rising from blue seas. At Horizontal Falls – aka “the Horries,” known as Garaanngaddim by the local Aboriginal people – board a Zodiac to ride the surge of one of the world's highest tidal ranges through a narrow gorge; the same phenomenon causes Montgomery Reef to surface out of the Indian Ocean. On the beaches and in the lagoons of the Lacepede Islands, brown boobies, roseate terns, and endangered green turtles give a wide berth to saltwater crocodiles, the region's fierce apex predators, which ply inland waterways. The King George River's deep red gorges lead to thundering twin falls. In Swift Bay, rock-art galleries hold ancient depictions of Wandjina and Gwion Gwion figures.

GO Coral Expeditions' ships have been sailing the Kimberley region for more than three decades, with nine-night voyages between Broome and Darwin. From April to September, the tour runs at least twice a week on the 72-passenger *Coral Discoverer* or the newer, 120-passenger ships *Coral Adventurer* and *Coral Geographer*. Departures: Multiple dates, May 3, 2024, through September 2, 2025; from \$9,000. 📍



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Rock Star's Holiday

Professional climber Natalia Grossman takes a break in Los Cabos.



"I spend a week away from training every year at the end of the season, and last December, I took my parents to Cabo San Lucas. It was easy to relax because there are no climbing gyms there, and it was beautiful. My vacation style is lay on a beach, read a book or journal, and just hang out, so we were at the pool or beach all day. I loved that the resort brought our meals right to us – there was lots of chips and guac, fish tacos, and fajitas. I've been doing the Climbing World Cup circuit since 2021, and it feels necessary to take time off every year to go somewhere without my climbing bag. Up next, I'd love to go to the Bahamas." *Natalia Grossman will compete for Team USA at this summer's Olympic Games in Paris.*

(CABO SAN LUCAS) RAISEBECK PHOTO/GETTY IMAGES.
(PORTRAIT) ARTHUR MOUNT

A man and a woman are shown from the chest up, sitting on a ship's deck. The woman, on the left, has long brown hair, wears large dark sunglasses, a gold chain-link earring, and a light green sleeveless top. She is resting her chin on her hand. The man, on the right, has grey hair and a beard, wears sunglasses, a light blue polo shirt, and a white blazer. He is holding a glass of white wine. The background shows the ship's wooden railing and the blue sea under a clear sky.

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