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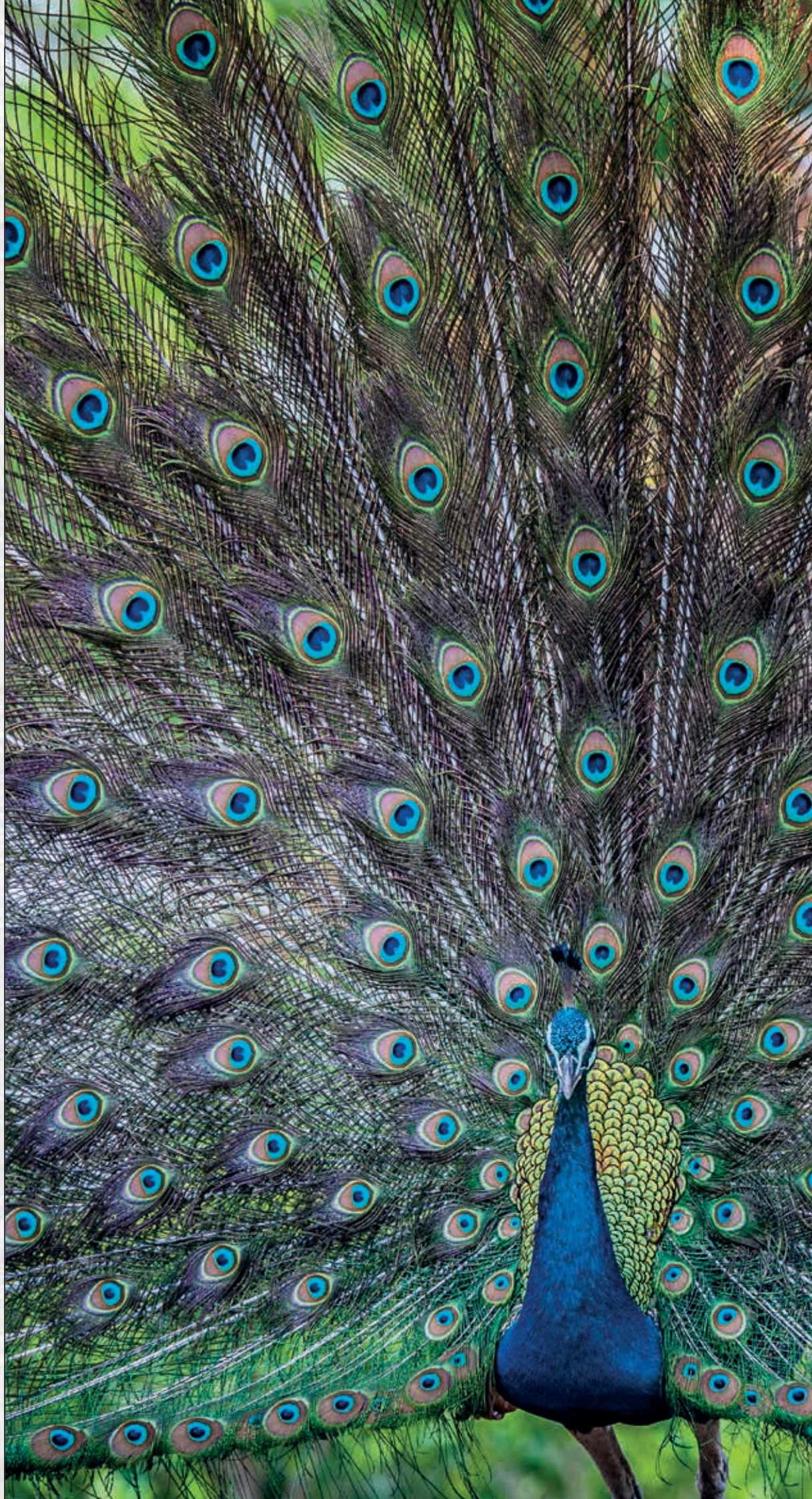
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THE YUKON'S TOP 8 TRAVEL MOMENTS

Canada's Yukon is a showcase for nature on its grandest scale. From bucket-list-worthy flightseeing adventures to the ethereal beauty of the Northern Lights, these are the province's ultimate travel experiences.



1. Go flightseeing over Kluane National Park

One of the Yukon's greatest treasures, UNESCO-listed Kluane is best experienced with a flightseeing tour to take in its dramatic plains, home to icefields, glacial lakes, wild rivers and pristine forests.

2. Mush a team of huskies

Guiding a team of sled dogs through snow-covered landscapes is a quintessential Yukon experience. Enjoy a day on the trails, learning the art of mushing, or book a multi-day trip for a truly authentic adventure.

3. Visit the Tombstone Territorial Park

With its rugged peaks and abundant wildlife, this park – a legacy of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in land claim agreement – is the ideal introduction to the Yukon's First Nations heritage.

4. See the Northern Lights

With a season that runs from August to April, the Yukon is one of the world's best places to spot the Northern Lights. Settle in for a near-private front-row seat to what is nature's ultimate light show.

5. Strike gold in Dawson City

Once the base for the 19th-century Klondike Gold Rush, Dawson City is now known for everything from festivals and cultural events to unique contests, such as gold panning competitions and outhouse races.

6. Discover Whitehorse

Far more than a gateway to some of Canada's most epic wilderness, the Yukon's capital is a destination in its own right. Expect river boat trips, endless urban trails and a wonderfully vibrant arts scene.

7. Road trip the Klondike and Dempster Highways

These highways are the stuff of road-trip legend. Explore postcard-perfect scenery and cultural landmarks with a thrilling self-drive before embarking on outdoor adventures under the Midnight Sun.

8. Travel on the White Pass and Yukon Route railway

An exhilarating journey on this historic railroad is a must on any Yukon holiday. Climbing almost 3,000ft, expect cliff-hanging turns and steep mountain passes that twist and turn among the bridges and tunnels.

Spoilt for choice

Choosing the cover for each issue of *Traveller* is always a somewhat fraught affair, which is not to say it isn't satisfying and fun. As far as serious stresses go, it's low down the scale. However, it always feels important to get it just so, and therefore the debate goes on and on and on. This time I felt like Dorothy, and the Tin Man and the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*, repeating 'Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!' over and over again.

The cover image was almost that of a lion, a magnificent one, silhouetted against a sunset picking out his mane, his head an outline of some poignancy. But as we know, it was a peacock in the end. Hard call, but because the lion would have made for a literally dark cover albeit one signifying endurance, in the end the thought process was, it is dark enough out there in these getting to winter months, and we've all endured for a while. So what better than to unfurl a bit of spring-like optimism than the resplendence of a peacock? They really are ridiculous, ludicrous, in their flamboyant look-at-me beauty. Who could imagine such a creature if it didn't exist other than an author or artist with a penchant for fantastical beasts?

Jonathan and Angela Scott provided us with that cover shot, and as photographers with a penchant for all beasts, have provided us with some spectacular images for this issue. We could have run many more pages and not come close to capturing the diversity and importance of their work. We're lucky to work with them, and to have Jonathan as an Honorary President.

We're lucky in all our Presidents of course, and I was reminded of this yet again on catching up with Colonel John Blashford-Snell recently. In his Eighties now, he remains a source of inspiration, and during our chat he was full of unwavering enthusiasm, as ever—he'd just been test driving the latest Range Rover and is all set for more challenging expeditions next year, which we'll cover in the next issue. In the meantime I was prompted to look up his always extraordinary, often full of derring-do adventures in far away places on YouTube—they're well worth a watch.

Another Honorary President, Colin Thubron, is made of similar resilient, eccentric stuff. He decided to explore the course of the Amur River, which runs between Russia and China, as he approached his



Amy Sohanpaul
on difficult
decisions and
dream destinations



80th birthday. It's not a journey for the faint hearted, and his involved horseback and other adventures and, in the style of all his travels, revealed profound political and cultural mores, so brilliantly captured in his interview with Mark Reynolds in this issue.

There's a sliding scale when it comes to adventures, and we have plenty slightly more accessible than a many months long expedition along the Amur. Simon Urwin takes us into the heat and dust of Arizona helped along the way by retro-stylish signage, and in another piece, along the streets of New York. There's a romantic train ride across some of Canada's most spectacular landscapes, culminating in the annual rodeo fiesta that is the Calgary Stampede, a riotous affair of bareback riding and fireworks. Kevin Pilley enjoys a different sort of carnival atmosphere while spending time on Cat Island in the Bahamas, as all around him bands and dancers burst into song and rhythm and a very good time.

Back in Europe, Francesco Lastrucci presents an enticing look at Procida, an island chosen to be the Italian Capital of Culture next year. It has so much desired from an Italian trip, a gorgeous island with its traditions intact, while looking forward and celebrating the idea of others discovering the vibrant architecture and stunning bays. Frederick Crowe covers Madeira from tranquil mountaintop to the bustle of Funchal to secluded swimming spots. Adam Turner returns to Seville after a longish absence and shares the delights of rediscovery with us. Fergal Keane sends in a piece from France full of gentle yet strongly evocative images, an impressionist painting in words.

We feature two outstanding chefs as well. Ben Tish tells us how much Sicily has inspired his much-acclaimed cooking style, while Ollie Dabbous shares the places that have influenced his life and his journey towards becoming a Michelin starred chef.

There are other indulgences too, lots of them, because it feels needed. We've selected some very special hideaways in Scandinavia, all remote, all surrounded by snow-dusted landscapes and on the doorstep of every Arctic adventure available. Warmer escapades include a look at the alluring islands that make up the Maldives; and splashing about in some of the world's best infinity pools. It's time to plunge in again.

TRAVELLER

Traveller is Britain's original magazine for intelligent travel. Since 1970 it has reported on the real experience of travelling the world, and many of today's leading explorers and adventurers are on the Editorial Board.

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Colin Thubron CBE FRGS FRSL is Britain's most distinguished travel writer, author of award-winning books on Asia and Russia.

Sir Crispin Tickell CCMG KCVO is an eminent environmentalist, leader of the Climate Institute of Washington and Green College Centre.

Every issue we seek out today's most distinguished and interesting travellers to contribute to the magazine

THE PEOPLE BEHIND OUR STORIES



COLIN THUBRON

is a travel writer and novelist, and an Honorary President of Wexas. His latest book is *The Amur River: Between Russia and China*.

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FERGAL KEANE

is a senior on air Editor with BBC News. He is famous for his compassionate coverage of conflict-affected communities, from Rwanda to Ulster.

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BEN TISH

is Culinary Director of Norma and The Stafford London. A renowned food writer and cookery teacher, his latest books are *Moorish* and *Sicilia*.

SEE PAGE 71



OLLIE DABBOUS

has twice been awarded a Michelin star and runs Hide on London's Piccadilly. *Essential* is his first cookbook for home cooks.

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JONATHAN & ANGELA SCOTT

are renowned wildlife photographers and documentary makers based in Kenya. In this issue they write about the importance of nature.

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ADAM TURNER

is a freelance travel writer. Originally from Middlesbrough, he now flits between London, Newcastle, Devon and Seville.

SEE PAGE 14



SIMON URWIN

is a TV executive turned travel photographer and writer, who has shot in over 75 countries from Antarctica to Afghanistan.

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FRANCESCO LASTRUCCI

is a freelance photographer born and living in Florence, who travels worldwide on assignments for major magazines.

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KEVIN PILLEY

is a former professional cricketer and chief staff writer at Punch magazine whose travel writing is published around the world.

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LUKE WALWYN

has been an illustrator for over 30 years, expertly translating words into singular, dramatic images. He sees his art as a way to travel when he can't.

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MARK REYNOLDS

is a founding editor of *Bookanista*. For *Traveller* Mark edits Bookshelf and other features. In this issue he interviews Colin Thubron and Ben Tish.

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FREDERICK CROWE

has recently graduated from the University of Southampton, and is aiming for a career in the world of aviation.

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Peacock by
Jonathan and
Angela Scott

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left): Crowned
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A collection of gems

Scattered amongst sea-tones shading from turquoise to sapphire to amethyst, the thousand plus islands that make up the Maldives bring to mind jewels, rings of platinum beaches and emerald interiors. These were once mountains – millennia ago – now the summits that dot the Indian Ocean are some of the most romantic island escapes in the world.

However you get here – by boat or seaplane transfer from the airport on Hulhulé island, the anticipation is almost as enjoyable as the ridiculously clichéd beauty of your chosen island on arrival. Landing with a splash in a seaplane is perhaps the best way to get here, with the added bonus of seeing the panorama of all the postcard perfect islands from above, giving a sense of their vulnerable and exquisite nature, better viewing than any in-flight film.

The islands vary in size from dots to big but never very big, but each will have those swaying palms, silky silvery beaches sloping down towards gently lapping waves. They change colour from hour to hour and according to distance – almost transparent at the shore, shading between all the blues on the sea spectrum further out.

Almost all Maldivian resorts are dedicated to the ultimate in luxurious escapism. Some have bungalow-sized rooms with outdoor bathrooms set in lush gardens and private plunge pools. Some feature dramatic infinity pools, others offer both. There are spas on the beach or set on jetties over the ocean. Many resorts have rooms also set over the water, with steps directly down into the warm and gentle waves.

It's possible to enjoy the sea-life with just a simple snorkel – gloriously hued fish flutter all about, small basking sharks sometimes swim into sight, a Manta Ray or two might glide by. But many resorts are devoted to deep-sea diving for closer exploration of the surrounding reefs, or offer excursions to spot dolphins, or to spend a day on a sandbank or isolated island, complete with picnic, or sailing at sunset when the sea turns from gilded gold and then dark velvet streaked with the light of the moon and glitters from the thousands of diamond stars above.





Mr Toobelong and the Black Dragon

THE OCTOGENARIAN TRAVEL WRITER TALKS TO MARK REYNOLDS ABOUT HIS RECENT ADVENTURES ALONG THE COURSE OF THE AMUR RIVER, ITS SOURCE AND TRIBUTARIES

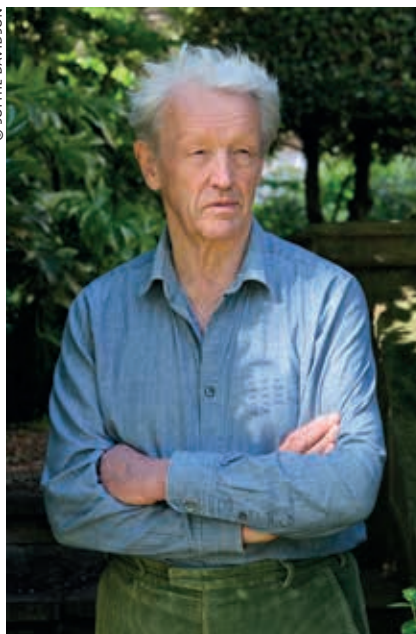
Wexas Honorary President

Colin Thubron has a long-held fascination with China and Russia, first lifting the curtain on the two great Communist regimes in his 1980s books *Among the Russians* and *Behind the Wall*, and expanding his travels across those vast regions ever since. So there is a reasonableness about his wish to explore the river that delineates a 1,100-mile border between Russia and China – even as he approached his 80th birthday.

“Most of my working life has been devoted in some way to Asia,” he tells me, “and this is where these two ex-Communist giants find their limit and collide. And of course it’s appealing to be following a river, it seems quite a natural and exciting thing to be doing.”

His journey began on horseback through the Mongolian marshlands where the Amur’s most distant

© SOPHIE DAVIDSON



tributary, the Onon, rises against the majestic backdrop of Burkhan Khaldun, the mountain sacred to Genghis Khan. And he almost came a cropper there, falling from his horse and breaking two ribs and an ankle. “They were of course

very painful,” he admits, “and the challenge was to grit one’s teeth and go on. But if I had gone back to Ulaanbaatar then back to London I’d have been told to rest, and I’d have lost a year of life, which at my age is rather a lot. So I thought I’d just try to persuade myself that the ribs were only bruised and the ankle was only sprained. I was rather foolish in a way, and rather stubborn.”

He had little option but to undertake this part of the journey with trusted guides. “I prefer to travel ad hoc if I can, but it was impossible to get into this Strictly Protected Area without a guide and horsemen. After that, I was really on my own and ‘ad hoc-ing’ until getting onto the Chinese shore.”

At the Mongol Empire’s peak in the late thirteenth century – a period of peace after Ghengis



Khan's death known as the Pax Mongolica – it was said that a virgin with a dish of gold could walk alone unmolested from China to Turkey. "That immense empire, stretching from the Pacific to the borders of Hungary, facilitated the trade in ideas and in goods and people. So it was quite fortunate for a great mixture of people who could move about in the Mongol Empire at that time. For all the devastation that was caused by Ghengis Khan, it enabled that vast and peaceful transition."

Mongolian independence from the Soviet Union in 1990 saw a huge popular rise in the cult of Ghengis Khan, which is just as apparent today. "They were looking back to somebody pre-Soviet who would encapsulate the dignity of their nation, and of course Ghengis Khan was the obvious candidate. He's absolutely in the Mongolian pride and consciousness now. They know too that the Mongol Empire subdued both the Russians and the Chinese, and that's very satisfying to them because these are the two countries that occupied their own territory."

In Dadal, in Khenti Province, Colin befriended an old Buryat man named Chiment, who, reflecting on atrocities in Soviet times, told him, 'it is people, not regimes or doctrines, that do these things. Half of all that happened was not political at all. It was about personal feelings: jealousies and anger, old feuds.'

"The official line is always a political one, as to why somebody has been arraigned or imprisoned or executed," Colin agrees, "but on the ground, as he could see, a whole lot of personal feelings and grudges came into play. He wasn't a bitter man, he was rather remarkable, but that was his primary insight, that's the thing he really wanted to tell me."

Colin writes that during his travels in 1890 Anton Chekhov 'lost his unsentimental heart to the Amur river' in Siberia, where he saw 'a million gorgeous landscapes' and delighted in the frankness of the people who 'so far from European Russia... spoke their minds out loud.'

"In Chekhov's day it was very untouched," he adds, "the immigration into Siberia with the Trans-Siberian Railway hadn't begun, so he was seeing a rather different Siberia and Russia than the one that exists today. But the land itself, the Amur river itself that he so admired is still beautiful, particularly in the lower stretches, which are enormously impressive and wild, and very little inhabited as in his day."

He writes with dry comedy of his interrogation by an irate Russian police officer in the desolate town of Sretensk, where he was deemed to have overstayed his welcome: 'Something is baffling him: the enigma of an old man who perhaps is only pretending to limp and speak poor Russian, but who is not equipped for spying – no hidden camera, no parabolic microphone (they have surely searched my room by now) – and who is travelling like a gypsy.'

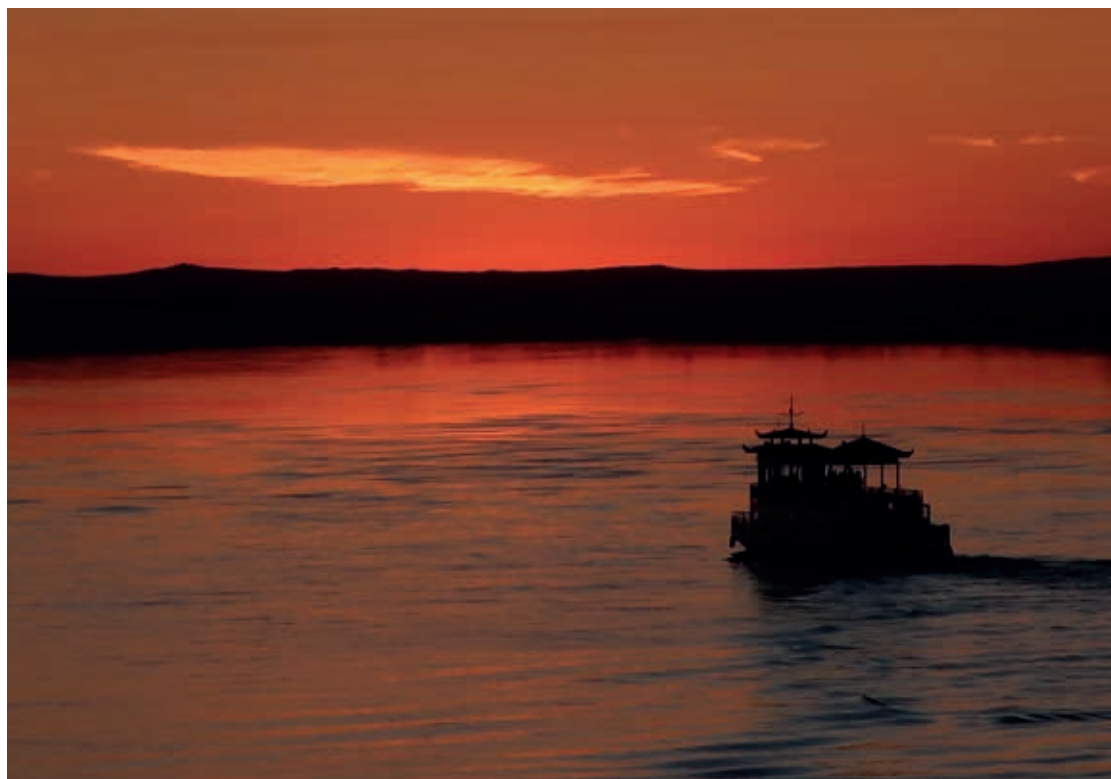
One of the most striking sights along the length of the Amur is the town of Blagoveshchensk, which is confronted by its Chinese counterpart Heihe on the opposite bank. It's an old melting-pot, but the prevailing mood is mistrust between the locals and Chinese traders. "It's just the Russian fear that the Chinese are going to absorb them in that part of the world," Colin explains. "They know there's a huge, burgeoning Chinese population on the other side of the

river, they know too that the rouble is in freefall, and they tend to feel that Moscow has abandoned them in some way, that any moment the Chinese may start to infiltrate. Even the T-shirts emblazoned 'Russia' have been made in China, and so there's a sort of resentment. On the Chinese part, they always feel that the Russians are a bit uncouth: 'the hairy ones', as they sometimes call them, who are big, and take up too much space. There's also the feeling among some Chinese, those who are more canny about the history, that the Russians seized all their lands north of the Amur in the late-1850s, and they haven't all forgotten that.

"The Chinese are also busy felling the Russian forests, their entrepreneurs and illegal sawmills are in league with Russians, but the Russians feel profoundly about their woods, and that the Chinese are coming and taking them away is another source of anger. And of course much of their oil and gas is being piped away into China, and that makes those that are perhaps more nationalistic very angry, that all their raw materials are being dredged away by the Chinese."

Among the many colourful companions Colin hooks up with along the way is unemployed former printer, carpenter and city guide Liang from Heihe, who enthusiastically relates his exploits to anybody within earshot: 'Mr Toobelong is a writer from England... He fell off a horse in Mongolia... Yes, his eyes are deep-set and his hair sticks up... He is very old, but he can use chopsticks.'

On the Chinese side, the Amur is called Heilongjiang, which means Black Dragon River. Its tributary the Songhua 'has become so crowded by industry that it is the Amur's

**Previous page:**

The Onon-Amur river, close to its source in Mongolia; Entering the Mongolian marshlands.

Left: The Amur river: the Chinese shore.

© Colin Thubron

prime contaminant. On the Russian shore downriver they say the fish taste of chemicals.'

The Chinese farm the giant Amur sturgeon, which is endangered in the wild. It has been a protected species for over thirty years and yet is still quite widely poached – which Colin witnessed on a small scale on the Russian side: "The villagers I was with do poach, but the problem lies with the large fishing fleets in the Amur mouth. They sell their stuff on the international market and they exceed their quotas by an enormous amount. It's hard to tell quite whether that great fish is literally about to be extinct, I think not, just from the chat I heard from fishermen. It's still about, but it's endangered."

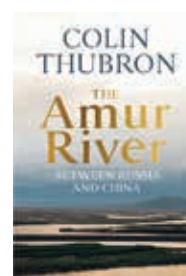
As for the warming climate, he says, "it's hard to tell how much the Amur river has been affected

by climate change because its recorded history has been one of floods, but in 2013 there was a particularly disastrous flooding. I was not conscious of the great forest fires that have been raging in northern Siberia. Down in this part one didn't encounter them, and nor do people talk about climate change very much, they're too busy getting on with their lives and their struggles. Climate change is there of course, and it would be idiotic not to say it's a vastly important, absolutely crucial phenomenon even in this part of the world, but it hasn't yet, I'd say, affected the river exponentially."

Colin recently told the *FT*, "I'm increasingly less proud of the West. That's what travelling and politics have done." Advocating that travel can only expand a person's worldview, he ruminates that mindful immersion in foreign lands

might cause world leaders to pause before invading, carving up or aiming to change another country's culture. So what does he make of Britain's standing in the world since most of the pink bits have been erased from the atlas? "That's very hard to answer," he reflects. "The world's so different, and different countries regard us differently. In eastern Russia and northern China, England doesn't feature very much at all really. They think of America as the West, and in a way adulate its culture. As an English person they tend to sort of like you on the whole, and even if they didn't like England they'd

pretty quickly come to like you as a person and divorce you from the politics."



Chatto & Windus, HBK, 304pp, £20

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

ADAM TURNER TAKES A HISTORICAL STROLL ALONG SEVILLE'S GREAT RIVER

When I first arrived in Seville, embarrassing though it is to admit now, I was surprised the city had a river at all. I hadn't done my research before coming, not through ignorance, but because I didn't want to muddy my first impressions with preconceived expectations. I had no real reason for visiting and no intention of being there for more than a few days but was so charmed by the Andalusian capital that I stayed for three years.

I remember my first day in Seville vividly. Arriving at Plaza de Armas bus station, I set off on foot to where I thought the city centre was, using only the river as my guide. The first thing I noticed was the light, which painted the cobbled path gold and cast an otherworldly hue over buildings and the river in a way I'd never seen before.

As I wandered further along, with the wide emerald river on my right, healthy-looking folk in lycra breezed along in rowing boats, bypassing wobbly tourists paddleboarding under the spring sun. The odd river boat occasionally cruising by with tourists pointing cameras at anything that moved.

I passed blossoming purple flowers and families eating baguettes on unkempt grass under pretty, sweet-smelling orange trees. Chatty young couples slurped litre bottles of Cruzcampo, and veterans in sharp suits, perched on benches reading newspapers, barely noticed me.

My first stop was at Lonja del Barranco market – a 19th Century construction, which looks like a glassy, contemporary railway station. It was previously a fish and wholesale market but now housed fancy food and drink stalls peddling everything from paella and tortilla to burritos and sushi, as well as wine, cocktails and beer.

I perched myself at Sojo – a modern bar in front of the market – overlooking the river with a *caña* (small beer) and a slice of tortilla. Beside me were handsome Sevillanos with slicked-back hair, well-groomed beards, cream chinos and Oxford shirts, showing off their tanned ankles and sparkling loafers. Beautiful Sevillanas in colourful dresses and red lipstick sat sipping gin and tonics in glasses the size of fishbowls under a pale blue sky nearby – with not a bead of sweat or a hair out of place between them.

After finishing up, I dawdled under the iconic Puente de Isabell II, or Triana bridge, that connects Sevilla to the more industrial, lesser-visited Triana neighbourhood. Built around 1845 and inaugurated in 1852, it was the first solid bridge in Sevilla. There'd been a temporary bridge known as Puente de Barcas – formed by thirteen wooden boats bound by chains and connected by wooden planks – dating back to the 12th Century before that, which was introduced by the Almohads, a movement that created an Islamic empire in North Africa and Spain.

Now seated on ancient flagstones gawping across at the ornate, pastel-coloured houses of Calle Betis, a woman in her mid-twenties with thick black hair, olive skin and eyes as green as the river in front of me, struck up a conversation.

"You know, you need a passport to get into Triana, right?" she said.

Rosa, a local flamenco guitarist and singer, spoke with a subtle North Yorkshire accent from her time living in Whitby. She explained that Triana and Seville are two very different cities.

"Triana used to be full of potters, gipsies, sailors, flamenco singers and bullfighters, but now it is a pretty normal, working-class neighbourhood. It's not as pretty as the rest of Seville but has a lot of heart. Trianeros [people from Triana] are fiercely proud of their heritage and have their own identity, so don't make the mistake of getting them confused with Sevillanos," she said with a laugh.

I headed across the bridge to Triana next and passed through Plaza de Abastos, or Triana Market, where locals buy their meat, fish and fresh fruit and vegetables. Beneath the market is the remains of the Castle of San Jorge – a fortress where the Spanish inquisition, infamous for its persecution and torture of Jews and Muslims, had its headquarters from 1481 to 1785.





Seville also has a rich maritime history. *Escuela de Mareantes*, the School of Navigation, played a significant part in many famous voyages from Seville. It's thought that many of the sailors who trained there would later travel to the Americas with the controversial historical figure Christopher Columbus — whose body is said to be stored in Seville's Cathedral.

Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan also set sail from Seville in 1519 on what is disputably known as the first circumnavigation of the world. He set sail with five ships, passing across the Atlantic Ocean, via South America, discovering what's now known as the Strait of Magellan, and went on to the Philippines, where a poison arrow killed him in a clash with natives. One ship returned to Seville three years later without Magellan and with only eighteen of the original crew but with a cargo of spices.

What's often omitted from guidebooks, however, is the city's links to the slave trade. Like many victims of this barbaric practice, the Taino (indigenous people from the Caribbean) were taken against their will, likely with no idea where they were going or what would happen to them. Many — mothers, daughters, brothers, fathers, uncles, aunts — tragically died at sea before arriving in Europe and were mercilessly thrown overboard. Others were said to have been marched through the streets of Seville and sold outside the cathedral. By the mid-16th Century, it is thought that over 7.4 per cent of Seville's population were slaves.

Back on the other side of the river, I'd spotted a castle-like structure as the light began to fade. Dodging local folk running, scooting and cycling along the long snaking path, I headed towards it. The *Torre del Oro* or the Gold Tower is an ancient

watchtower that has sat beside the Guadalquivir since the Almohads built it over 800 years ago. The Moors are thought to have ruled Spain from 711 to 1492 and signs of their time here can be seen from the *azulejos* (colourful tiles) that cover the buildings and the minaret La Giralda in the cathedral to the Mudejar-style palace — The Alcázar — in the heart of the city.

Before I set off to my hotel, I heard a man - a short chap with a fuzzy beard, warm smile and dark curly hair sprinkled with grey - finishing off a guided tour. For a final time, I'm reminded of the significance of the Great River to the city and its people.

"One theory is that it's called the Gold Tower because it's where all the gold, brought from the New World, was stored. Another is that it used to be covered in gold tiles, although we don't have any proof for either, so you can pick the story you like best."





To Infinity



and Beyond



Holidays and pools are a fabulous

combination of course. However, too long poolside while in a dream destination can lead to a sense of guilt when there's so much else to see and absorb.

Not so with this selection of infinity pools. All have been designed to provide a properly immersive experience. Doing laps in these lead to views that lend an extra, often extraordinary dimension and act as constant reminder of exactly where you are.

It could be overlooking the highrise intensity of Panama City in Panama, as in our opening picture, or indulging in Singapore's urban sophistication, or marvelling at the surrounding mountains in Switzerland. In Africa they are often placed so guests can watch waterholes from their own while cooling down between safaris. Even when the sea is right there, and opting for a pool feels like ignoring it, plenty will be placed in exactly the right spot to make the most of both worlds.

Previous page: Panaviera, Panama City, Panama

Above: Marina Bay Sands, Singapore

Opposite: Hotel Villa Honegg, Switzerland

Overleaf (clockwise from top left): Four Seasons Safari Lodge, Serengeti, Tanzania; One & Only Reethi Rah, Maldives; Alila Ubud, Bali; Amankila, Bali







A Shining Beacon

words & pictures
Simon Urwin

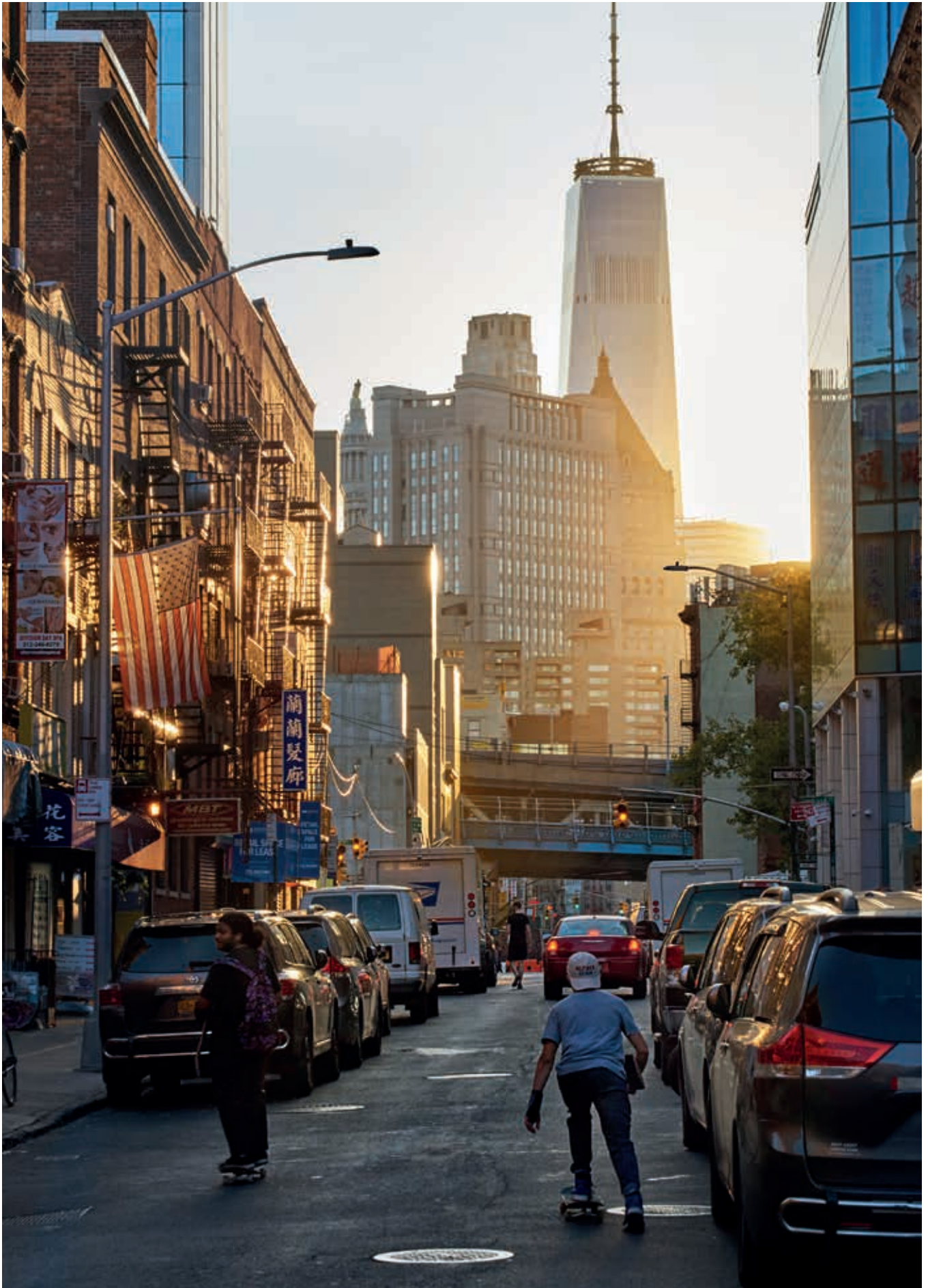
An iconic landmark of the New York City skyline since 2014, One World Trade Center is the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere; its 104 storeys of shimmering steel and prismatic glass soaring high above the streets of lower Manhattan.

From ground level to parapet it reaches the significant height of 1,776 feet – reflecting the year of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Near its base lie two memorial pools that contain the largest man-made waterfalls in North America: each nearly an acre in size; each marking the footprints of the former North and South Towers of the World Trade Center.

According to their architect, Michael Arad, the pools represent “absence made visible” – the water first cascading 30 feet into a square basin, then dropping a further 20 feet before disappearing into a central symbolic void; a void that can never be filled.

The pools are surrounded by a glade of swamp white oak trees, alongside a single Callery pear tree. In October 2001, it was discovered amongst the ruins of Ground Zero – its roots and branches snapped; its trunk charred by the smouldering rubble. It was placed in the care of the New York City Parks and Recreation Department, who removed it from the site and nursed it back to health.

In their care, it grew from eight feet tall to more than thirty. It became known as the Survivor Tree and was returned to the World Trade Center site in 2010. It now blooms every year in mid-March, its thousands of snow-white petals a powerful symbol of the resilience, perseverance and rebirth of America’s greatest city.





The Promise of Procida

words & pictures
Francesco Lastrucci



The tiny island of Procida has recently

been declared Italian Capital of Culture 2022. This is the first time an island has attained this status, thanks to a cultural project which aspires to make it a model of sustainable development within the reality of the small Mediterranean islands, but also as a reflection of its timeless charm.

Procida has all the allure of a perfect seaside village, with characteristic coloured architecture and the old fishing hamlet of Corricella, dominated by the Sanctuary of Santa Maria delle Grazie, an iconic representation of the island. The boats, the fishing nets and the closely clustered vibrant houses reflected on the sea, have formed the set for numerous films such as *Il Postino* and *The Talented Mr Ripley*.

Next year Procida will enjoy 44 cultural projects, 330 days of programming, 240 artists, 40 original works, 8 regenerated cultural spaces, in its role as a cultural capital. The theme is strong and evocative – ‘culture does not isolate’.

Procida is located in the Gulf of Naples and together with Ischia, Vivara (with which it is connected by a bridge) and Nisida, is part of the Flegrean Islands. These pearls of the Tyrrhenian Sea, together with Capri, which is about 30 kilometres away, make up the Campania (or Neapolitan) Archipelago.

Reachable by ferry, Procida is a riotous palette of colours, with bright houses overlooking Chiaia Bay. It invites visitors

to get lost among its cobbled alleys, where the scent of prickly pears is intoxicating, between the coves and the narrow streets dotted with orchards.

The beating heart of Procida is Marina Grande, the landing point, an area of restaurants and shops. Behind the Marina, there is the Lighthouse, a panoramic point par excellence. The medieval village of Torre Murata stands on the highest point of the island and is a place rich in history. Stroll through the cobbled streets leading to buildings of interest and importance, such as the Abbey of San Michele Arcangelo and the Palazzo d'Avalos, a former prison overlooking the sea.

The most authentic Procida is revealed in Marina della Corricella, the fishing village with colourful houses and the balconies of Arab origin covered with arches.

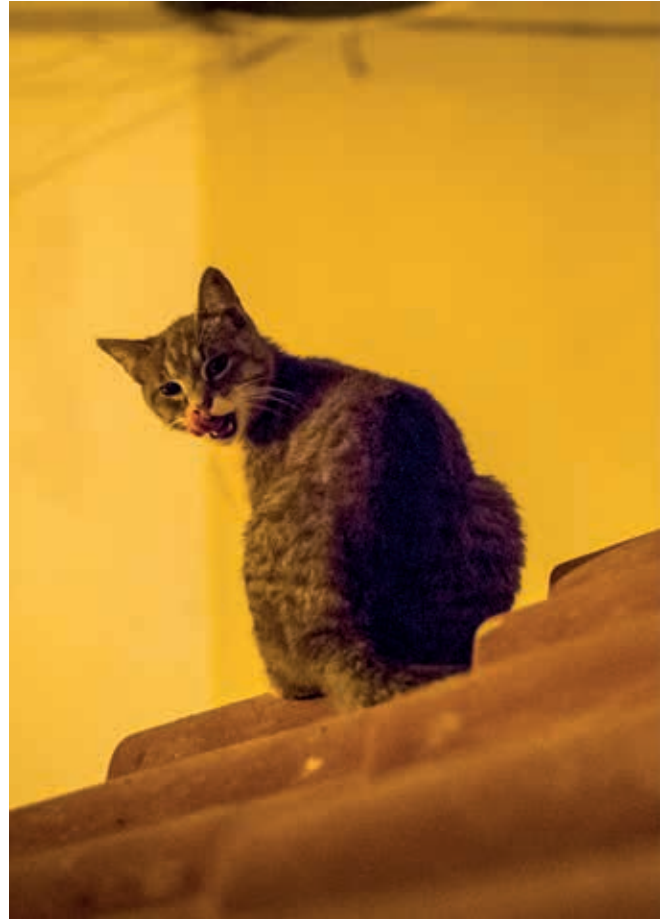
The high and jagged coast guards silent coves sheltered by cliffs, small secluded beaches, breathtaking inlets, sandy or pebble slopes immersed in the scents and colours of the Mediterranean scrub.

Among the most famous and evocative of the beaches are beautiful Chiaia, welcoming at the end of a long succession of steps; the sandy beach of Chiaiolella overlooking Ischia; and the Pozzo Vecchio beach, with the memorable horseshoe-shaped bay that provided the glorious backdrop for *Il Postino*.











Reconnecting People to Our Planet

JONATHAN AND ANGELA SCOTT SHARE THEIR HOPES
FOR THE SACRED NATURE INITIATIVE

In 2016 award winning photographers and conservationists Jonathan and Angela Scott published *Sacred Nature: Life's Eternal Dance*. It was an exquisite celebration of the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem in East Africa, the last place on earth where you can still glimpse a world filled with a rich variety and abundance of wild animals, a Pleistocene vision evoking the time when man was still an integral part of nature.

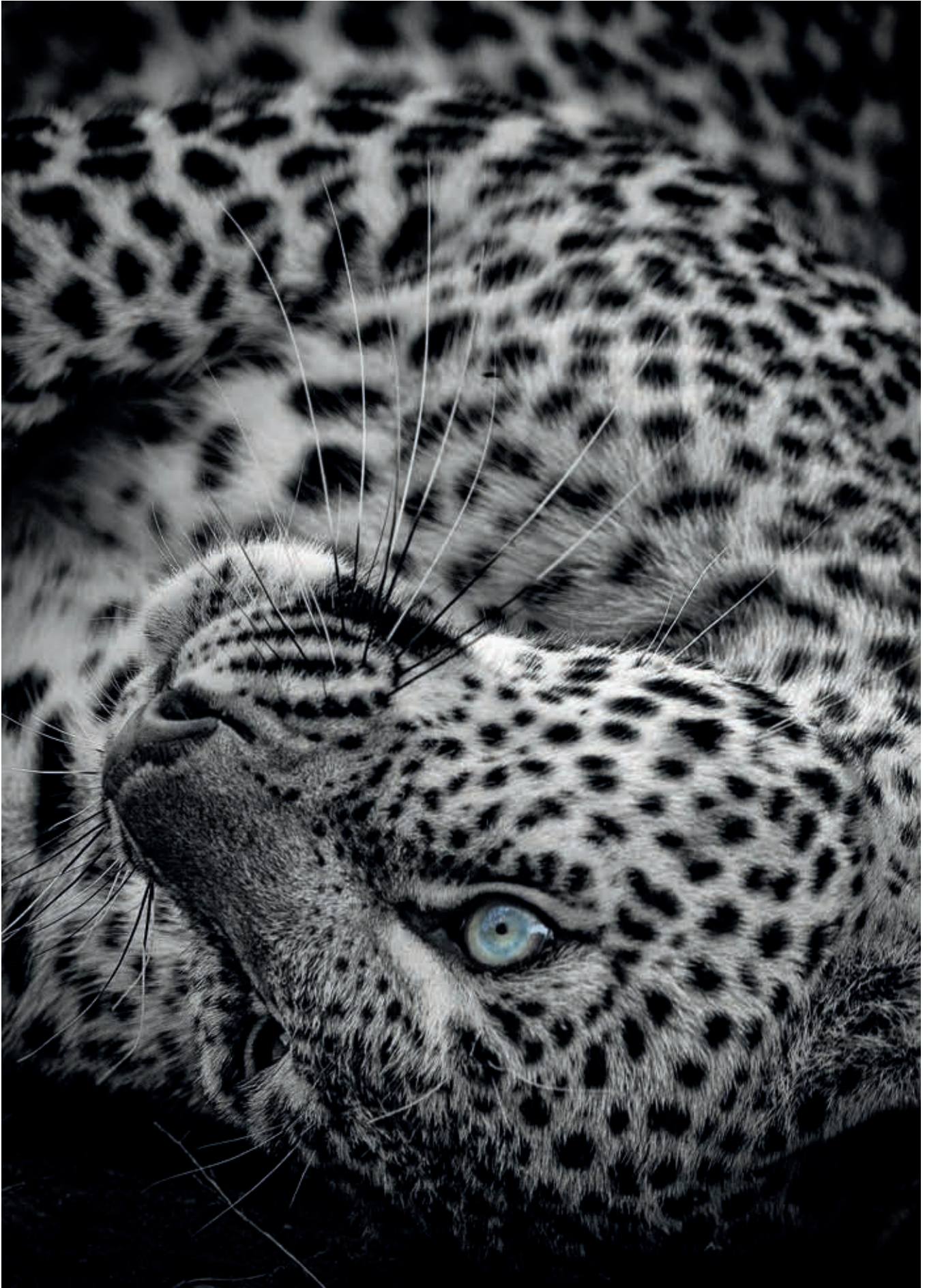
Now, five years later, they have published *Sacred Nature 2: Reconnecting People to Our Planet*, taking the ethos of the first volume and applying it to the whole planet. The two books are the flagships for the non-profit *Sacred Nature Initiative (sni)* that is based on three pillars: Inspire, Educate and Conserve. As Angela says, "Raising awareness about charismatic species such as lions and tigers, elephants and whales, catches people's attention. But if these same creatures have nowhere to live how can they survive? If we protect the habitat the animals will prosper." *sni2* is divided into six chapters: savannas, forests, deserts, mountains, oceans and the polar regions that together comprise the web of life that we call the biosphere, reminding us of what we have to lose if we do not act now.

The *sni* is an urgent mission, amplified by the climate crisis and brought into sharp focus by the Covid-19 pandemic. Jonathan explains: "An intact global ecosystem – what we call 'nature' – is essential for human wellbeing and survival. But a catastrophic loss of biodiversity is staring us in the face. Since 1970, we have lost nearly 70 percent of all the animals, birds, reptiles and marine life across the planet. According to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, 'On our current trajectory, biodiversity, and the services it provides, will continue to decline, jeopardizing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals'. The reasons for this decline

are complex. Professor E.O. Wilson in his 2016 book *Half-Earth* refers to the acronym HIPPO: Habitat Destruction, Invasive Species, Pollution, Population Growth, Overhunting and fishing, all exacerbated by climate change itself.

"These challenges have common cause in the tendency of human beings and their governments to judge everything only in human terms – without sufficient consideration of the wider environment in which we all live. While many people intuitively value nature, it is clear that many decision makers do not prioritise a sustainable nature in their quest for development. There is insufficient action at global, national and local levels, and current models are not succeeding in reversing environmental degradation. No single intervention can tackle everything that needs to be done, but changing people's attitudes and long-term thinking is a fundamental requirement."

"*The Sacred Nature Initiative* employs a unique brand of advocacy to influence people – leaders and citizens – to prioritise nature and wildlife conservation. We must stop regarding land as an inexhaustible resource to be exploited. We must devise new models of conservation, since those relying, for example, on tourist revenues, have been shown to be insufficiently robust in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic. There is good reason for optimism: while deforestation and the loss of grasslands, peatlands and wetlands contribute directly to global warming alongside greenhouse gas emissions, their conservation and restoration is considered to be one of the most effective ways to mitigate climate change. E.O. Wilson sums it up: 'Do no further harm to the biosphere. We are playing a global endgame. The biosphere does not belong to us – we belong to it. Nor were we intended by Providence to rule that world.'



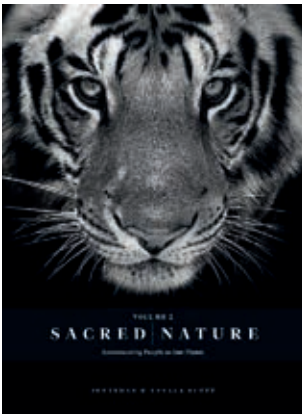












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From the peaks to Poncha

words & pictures
by Frederick Crowe

As we plunged through the thick cloud, the island suddenly came into view and we were at once at eye level with local houses after a steep descent. Then making a tight turn, on track for one of the most challenging landings a commercial pilot can make, the short runway upon stilts stretched out in front of us. After being buffeted by Atlantic crosswinds, we landed safely. It's a thrilling touchdown and no matter how many times I've done it, I never tire of it. I've done it over and over again, visiting family who have lived in Madeira throughout my life. Each time I go, I find new wonders from the high peaks to the fishermen's Poncha, a traditional drink based on local honey. Madeira is an island to be enjoyed, not least the sunrise from Pico do Arieiro, a breathtaking way to start a morning.

We set out before dawn for the drive to the mountains, a chill in the air due to the early hour. Despite the island's relatively small size, its steep volcanic sides steer us quickly above sea level out of the busy capital of Funchal, ribbons of tarmac lacing up mountains still plunged in darkness. En route, it's evident where Madeira – the Portuguese word for wood – gets its name, as we venture through beautiful protected Laurel forests. They lend an enchanted feel, with the fresh smell of Eucalyptus filling our senses all the way.

Reaching the lookout point, we marvel at the stars turning into streaks of pink and purple across the sky, the developing colours, the intensity with which they appear, epic. The temperature is not far above zero degrees. Groups waiting in anticipation for sunrise huddle together. Everyone chatting, but in whispers, respecting

the occasion. At nearly 6,000 ft, we're above the clouds and at this time in the morning they appear like a thick blanket, covering all but the highest peaks. Dawn approached, bathing the island in a heavenly ceremony.

Day breaks and we set out to another high altitude lookout point in the mountains, Eira do Serrado. This overlooks Curral das Freiras, a small isolated parish on the interior of the island surrounded by jagged peaks. The translation means 'Nuns Valley' – in 1566, nuns from the Santa Clara convent fled pirates attacking Funchal and settled in the protected valley. Approaching the edge of the lookout, with some 3,000 ft directly below us, we sense the scale of the backdrop to our view. Witnessing the remoteness of the settlements and Madeira's prehistoric-esque mountain ranges, we stay for a while, absorbing the scene. Then we press back to the capital, the streets now buzzing with mopeds in the rush hour traffic. Hungry from adventure, we walk down Funchal's mosaic pavements, brighter for being bathed in sunshine, to Mercado dos Lavradores for the freshest local food.

Friday is market day, busy with both locals and tourists. As we walk, we are greeted by flower-sellers in classical Madeiran dress, their stalls laden with tropical plants and beautiful scents. The variety of local plants is spectacular, Frangipani trees and Bird of Paradise flowers as common as weeds on this island. Walking into the main courtyard the mosaic floors continue, leading us to rainbow stalls of native fruit and vegetables, such as the Pitanga cherry and Anona fruit. Delving in the back of the market, we reach fishermen just

back from days at sea. I recognise their faces from my childhood while buying the local delicacy 'Espada' or Black Scabbard fish. It looks like a monster of the deep, but is extremely delicious and a Madeiran staple. Heading upstairs to the rooftop café, I find the sweet breakfast I've been looking for, Pastel de Nata. Still warm from the oven, the puff pastry is crisp, the custard rich.

In the afternoon, the heat kicks in, so we head to a secluded swim spot, a village called *Jardim do Mar*, or Garden of Sea. It perfectly describes the majesty of the spot, situated at the foot of some of Europe's tallest cliffs. From the village centre, we walk down twisting streets to the promenade. All we hear is the lapping of the waves on the shore, so tranquil we feel far away from the frenzy of Funchal. Making our way to the sea front, we watch divers collecting limpets or *lapas* for a nearby seafood restaurant. A little further on, a concrete pier extends out into the topaz ocean, the perfect place to dive in. Swimming here feels close to the edge of the Earth, no land for thousands of miles, nothing in sight but the Atlantic Ocean. The sea is temperate enough to stay in for hours, while watching the fish dance below. Later, we lunch at the rustic Café Portinho nestled at the base of the cliffs, enjoying the savoury *lapas* caught earlier.

After time out at this ocean paradise, we head back to Funchal and prepare for an evening in search of Poncha to fuel the night. It's made from sugar cane rum, laced with lemon for acidity and honey for sweetness; originally used to keep fishermen warm on long cold nights at sea. It is wickedly strong. To find the most authentic, we head down Rua Santa Maria, through the Old Town. It winds into a delightful walk, dotted with 18th century doorways painted or supporting sculptures by Madeiran artists. The atmosphere is electric, overflowing bars and Madeira's nightlife reverberating loud and clear.



The Diving Lady

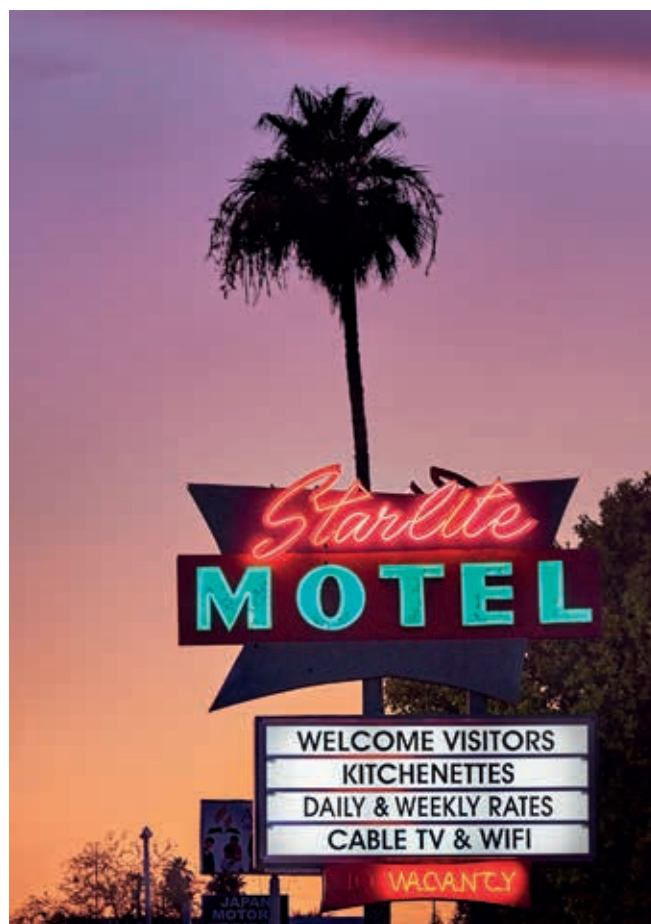
words & pictures
Simon Urwin

When the automobile began to replace the horse and buggy as the transport *du jour* of 1920's America, a network of paved roads started springing up across the country, linking 'sea to shining sea'.

By the 1930s, the first roadside lodgings, or motels, appeared on the hard shoulder - alongside diners, gas stations and trailer parks specially designed for the road-weary traveller.

To attract the attention, and dollars, of drivers zipping along the interstates, eye-popping neon signs proliferated, notably in Mesa, Arizona, a desert town humming with tourist traffic thanks to its unique location at the convergence of Highways 60, 70 and 80.

In 1958, the owners of the Starlite Motel commissioned a towering 70-foot-high neon sign to advertise the delights of their new outdoor swimming pool, and called upon master sign-maker Paul Millett to execute the ambitious design featuring 6-foot-high letters spelling M.O.T.E.L, and three, swimming suit-clad female figures performing an animated dive into a pool of cool, blue, neon water.



Affectionately known as 'The Diving Lady', the sign premiered in 1960 and the blonde-in-the-bathing-suit went on to perform her nightly aquatics for fifty years until a violent storm struck in 2010, toppling the pole, and sending her plummeting into the nearby parking lot.

Virtually destroyed, this much-loved icon of neon art was nearly consigned to the scrapheap until the Mesa Preservation Foundation stepped in to restore her, raising over \$120,000 of public funds in the process. Almost three years later, and retaining more than 85 per cent of her original materials, the Diving Lady was raised once more above Main Street in Mesa, where, at the flick of a switch, she continues to illuminate the darkening desert skies with her magnificent, glowing, three-part plunge and splash.







Rake and Scrape

KEVIN PILLEY SOAKS UP THE VIBES ON CAT ISLAND

We busted a frug and did 'Da Hog In Da Mud'.

Next to us a couple did 'The Emma'. Others performed 'Mr Fisher' and similar uninhibited, shameless, semi-sensuous gyrations.

Some sat out 'Sugar', refuelling on flour cake, crab and rice, steamed goat and pigeon peas, while indulging in some sip sip gossip over Kalik or Bucanero beer.

Elders talked to youngsters, slash and burn farmers with cascarilla bark growers. PADI instructors partied with their snorkelling buddies, outer islanders danced with fellow family islanders, Floridians with Long Islanders. All of us by Arthur's Town airport, enjoying the central Caribbean vibe, digging the papaya quill maestros and the bands on stage giving down home, good time goat skin.

The gut buckets jammed on and the hardware store carpenters' saws bent and wobbled well into the buggy, muggy night.

Every Caribbean island has his own music. Antigua and Barbuda have ditti or bnna. Soca, ska, calypso and picong are everywhere. Barbados has spouge, fling and tuk. Dominica boasts jing ping, bouyon and zouk. While the Dominican Republic has gaga and Haitian merengue. On Guadeloupe it's gwo ka and balakadri. Trinidad and Tobago has steelpan. Jamaica, chutney. Guyana, snahto.

On Cat Island it's ripsaw.

Or rake 'n' scrape.

The birthplace of actor Sidney Poitier, producing the bark that goes into Campari, named after pirate Sir Arthur Catt or its feral cat colony, the 50 mile long island 140 miles south east of Nassau, hosts a rake and scrape festival on Labour Day weekend every June.

Cat island has its own Bat Cave, Mermaid Hole and places like Man O' War Bluff, Industrious Hill, Tea Bay, Devil's Point and Dumfries as well as conch shell houses, driftwood, sea grape, mahogany trees, domino sessions





under tamarinds, spindles on roofs to ward off evil, rock ovens to bake tea cakes, crumbled cotton and sisal plantation mansions, goat paths, blue holes or 'bolling points', mutton souse hole in the wall restaurants, Hazel's offering 'the coldest beer in the Bahamas' and Port Howe, Columbus's alleged 1491 New World landfall on San Salvador or Guanahani.

The background music is the surf and the wind soughing through palmettos.

And goombay.

Rake 'n' Scrape's roots are goombay – the marriage of African instruments like dry animal skin stretched over a hollowed log and a gimbe (a piece of hardwood with teeth) with European instruments like the accordion or squeezebox. It probably arrived on the Exuma Trough with immigrants from Turks and Caicos in the 1920s.

The exact origin of name is unclear. It may come from gibe (peace or war dance). Or, maybe, from the Bantu word for rhythm. The phrase was certainly popularized in the seventies by Bahamian music historian, Sir Charles Carter, when working as a DJ on the national radio station ZNS.

Traditionally, rake and scrape is accompanied by or accompanies Bahamian quadrille, jigs, mazurkas, triple time polish steps and schottische. Saws played with screwdrivers or long nails imitate the chekere (gourd drum with cowrie shells). African slaves brought by Loyalist colonists used to mimic sounds associated with home, like Nigerian wood block guiro and cabasi.

Classic songs include Mama, Lend Me Ya Pigeon, Goodnight Irene, Times Table, The Watermelon Is Spoiling on the Vine, Rake n Scrape Mam by Lassie Doh nd Da Boys, and Ancient Man's I Ain't Askin Much.

Well known players and bands include Bo Hog and Da Rooters, Blind Blake, Tingum Dem, Ed Moxley, George Symonette, Berkley 'Peanuts' Taylor, Ronnie Butler, Puzzle (Preston Wallace Jnr) who sung the song of Barefoot Bandit, a us fugitive captured in the Bahamas. Rake is a story telling medium. Like calypso. Musician Tommy McKay (Exuma) was born on Cat.



He's just as famous as Father Jerome. The son of a British lawyer and grandson of a brewer, John Hawes was born in Paradise Road, Richmond, Surrey. Educated in Brighton and Canterbury, he studied to become an Anglican priest in Lincoln. He worked as a missionary in the Bahamas in 1910, building the first of ten churches, four on Cat island. At thirty-five, he converted to Roman Catholicism and was posted to Geraldton, western Australia. Travelling by camel wagon, he worked as a goldrush bush priest for twenty-four years, building many churches including The Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Mullewa. A trained artist, his first building was in Bognor Regis.

He also worked as a mule skinner on the Canadian Pacific railroad and in New York. He spent some time on Caldý island, Wales



too. He returned to the Bahamas to rebuild houses destroyed by a hurricane. He wrote poetry and sculpted and spent the last seventeen years of his life on Cat Island, dying in 1956.

In 1939 the remarkable Fra Jerome built his grey limestone one-man monastery, rockface Calgary Path and Chapel of Spirit, on Como Hill, overlooking Pigeon Bay. Mount Alvernia is modelled after La Verna, the medieval retreat in Tuscany where St Francis of Assisi is meant to have received the Wounds of the Cross. He is buried somewhere here, near his cell, chapel, Celtic cross and 12 ft high bell tower. All hewn from the coral rock.

At 63 metres above sea level, Mount Alvernia is the highest point in the Bahamas. Until the Rake

and Scrape festival comes around. Ignoring the chiggers and no-show-ern sandflies, blissed-out backpackers in harem pants did the 'Da Gaulin'. Cat people danced the 'Round and Round da Room' to Quipid, The Village Boys and the Queen of Rake, Veronica Bishop.

The Lasside Boys gave the squeeze. The tubs and pails were played. The dreads danced with the ponytails. A girl from Bimin danced 'Da River' with a Brit.

A voice came through the darkness telling me that the pineapple fields of Hawaii and the Philippines began with Cat islands seeds. Shortly afterwards, between sets, a beer was put in my hand and another voice said through the Caribbean night, "Blessed are the dead. Blessed are the alive. Maybe live. Surely die."

Dreaming in the Drôme

Words by Fergal Keane

The village sits in the southern part

of the Drôme. It is beautiful but not the prettiest hamlet of the region. The competition in these parts is tough: settlements that defy geometry, perched on high hilltops overlooking expanses of vineyards, olive groves, truffle orchards and the bright vermillion of lavender fields, a picture of drowsy beauty that stretches from below my feet to Mont Ventoux 63 kilometres in the distance and - if travelled far enough - through the Luberon and down to the Mediterranean. But I have no need of the tourist-haunted towns and crowded shores when there is this backcountry to fill my days with walking and reading, swimming in the River Lez and long lunches and longer dinners.

Taulignan is the shy daughter of the Drôme, sitting in the Tricastin Plain with only a modest hill up which we stroll to Sunday mass at Église Saint Vincent before rambling back homewards with a stop for coffee in front of the plane trees that line the sidewalk opposite Patrick's café.

The true treasures of this village are known only to those who live here or choose to linger: there is the 18th century washing house – a shallow stone pool enclosed on three sides – where the

women scrubbed their laundry and debated the events of the day, from the fall of Kings to the rise of Emperors and other, more important, local matters.

There are the 14th century walls – 700 metres of them - with their round towers, that protectively encircle the town, and small lanes that seem to go nowhere but lead always to some quiet place of enchantment where you need to be.

There are moments in Taulignan where I am intoxicated by beauty. By the cool air of the vineyards before the sun rises in July, the way the light plays on a cobbled street in the late summer dusk, the leaves falling on the water below the monastery of La Clarté Notre Dame (with a bell tolling as the sisters gather for prayer) and a walk homewards with the dog bounding through the lavender, his senses rioting with the scents of the south.

Let it be said that we have taken care to make sure he is not introduced to the scent of truffle, whose famed local variety can sell for up to £700.00 per kilo. The locals here guard their crop zealously and truffle-hunting dogs are highly valued. A man suspected of stealing truffles was shot dead by a local farmer a decade ago. Our hound has instead been

taught to adore the aroma of fresh bread, a chunk of which is his reward when we stop at the boulangerie at the end of the morning walk through the vineyards.

The poet Philippe Jaccottet lived in the Drôme for most of his adult life. He was a Swiss living in Paris when he came to visit in the 1950s and, being captivated by its beauty, never went back to the city. He wrote, married, and brought up his children in Grignan, the nearest big town to Taulignan.

In a poem entitled 'August 1970' Jaccottet wrote:

*...watching,
Listening
(and the butterflies are like lost flames,
The mountains like smoke)-
An instant, embracing the whole circle
of heaven
around me...*

Jaccottet was praised by President Macron when he died as someone who "sang of the beauty of the world and the fragility of words." He was also a gifted translator, learning Ancient Greek to produce a new translation of the Odyssey, German for the works of Rainier Maria Rilke, Russian for Osip Mandelstam.



His adopted town of Grignan hosts a literary festival each year devoted entirely to letters and inspired by the memory of the 17th century aristocrat, Madame de Sévigné, whose long letters to her daughter, wife of the Count of Grignan, were an eclectic blend of her thoughts on love, the natural world and much else, and which earned her fame when they were circulated and read aloud in the literary salons of Paris.

There is so much culture and history around here and so many quiet roads along which to travel and find it. My favourite day trip is to the village of Deulfit with its steep winding

lanes and wonderful museum to the courageous locals who hid Jews from Nazi persecution in World War Two. Eleven inhabitants of the village were named 'Righteous Among The Nations' – the honour bestowed by Israel upon non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.

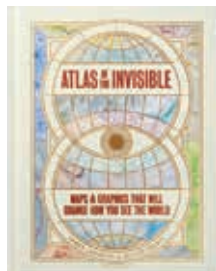
My favourite places to be are those which tolerate eccentricity, where people are free to be whatever version of themselves they wish. In that sense, contrary to the stereotypes of small rural settlements, a village like Taulignan, or my beloved Ardmore in southeast Ireland, can be as generously open

as the most liberal city borough. It is something that comes from the people here and which I cannot, thankfully, define. Let us call it a sweet mystery. Within the walls of Taulignan, after singing and laughter, waiting for sleep to come, I am conscious of something I have not felt since I was young and on holidays by the coast. The wish that sleep will pass quickly so that I can seek the pleasures of the new day in this place within 'the circle of heaven.'

Fergal Keane is a Special Correspondent with BBC News

Illustration by Luke Walwyn

Now you see it



***Atlas of the Invisible* by James Cheshire and Oliver Uberti**
Particular Books, Hbk, 224pp, £20
reviewed by Mark Reynolds

“For centuries, atlases depicted what people could see: roads, rivers, mountains,” writes ucl’s Professor of Geographic

Information and Cartography James Cheshire in his preface. “Today we need graphics to reveal the invisible patterns that shape our lives.” Together with former *National Geographic* design editor Oliver Uberti, he sets out to explain and visualise a world of information that can’t be conveyed through text and numbers alone.



In an endlessly fascinating array of insight and analysis, they sift through and draw on datasets that challenge stories about how humans have moved across the earth, the effects of wars and borders that divide us and the information systems that connect us; they examine inequalities measured in health, wealth and happiness, gender-based violence, unseen pollutants and unexploded ordnance; and demonstrate how climate change is affecting everything from hurricanes to the hajj.

A call to action for policymakers, governments and everyday civilians, *Atlas of the Invisible* presents a comprehensive and clarifying survey of life on our planet and the traces we leave behind, illuminating how high-tech solutions can help us monitor change and respond to problems on the ground.

Try this at home



***Hotel to Home* by Sophie Bush**
Warehouse Home, Hbk, 320pp £30
reviewed by Mark Reynolds

The founder of Warehouse Home takes a sweeping tour of over 40 of the world’s most exciting and striking industrial-chic hotels – including Hoxton Williamsburg

(New York City), The Old Clare (Sydney), Yangshou Sugar House (Guilin, China), The Krane (Copenhagen) and the Warehouse Hotel (Singapore) – and shows you how to create the same look at home. You’ll definitely want to add the featured hotels to your bucket list, while Sophie’s knowledgeable tips will surely lead you to the perfect, just-so coffee table on which to place the book.

More moreish Moorish

Ben Tish talks to Mark Reynolds about his Sicilian restaurant and cookbook

Pasta alla Norma, in a tangy tomato and aubergine sauce, is Sicily's unofficial signature dish, so when Ben Tish came to naming his Sicilian restaurant, which opened in September 2019 on Charlotte Street in Fitzrovia, it had to be Norma.

"It was perfect for the restaurant because of the dish," says Ben, "and also Norma is just a great name, it's very much a kind of a cool, New York-style name for a restaurant, I think, it just tied in nicely." It also helps that *Chista e na vera Norma* ('This is a real Norma') is a traditional Sicilian compliment, a nod to Vincenzo Bellini's popular romantic opera, after which the dish was probably named.

Now Ben has followed up his previous book *Moorish* with a book of recipes inspired by the flavours of Sicily. "I've been going to Sicily and the Mediterranean for years, on holidays and research trips," he explains, "so it's always been on the radar. But my previous book about Moorish cuisine across the Mediterranean touched on Sicily, and when I looked at my notes and had a chat with my publisher, we thought there was scope to expand on that, so *Sicilia* was a natural progression."

The book contains a sprinkling of Sicilian classics – pasta alla Norma for one, of course – but on the whole the recipes are interpretations of home-style cooking from across the island, easily reproduced with UK-sourced ingredients. So which of the dishes would he serve up if planning an autumn dinner party? "Certainly the pumpkin conchiglione



(above) as the main course," he replies without pause, "and to finish I might go for a selection of cannoli and buccialetti – almond and cinnamon biscuits with black fig through them – served with plenty of coffee and some marsala. As a starter maybe something fried, the panelle, chickpea fritters."

And what about at the height of summer? "Probably a selection of the crudos to start – mackerel crudo and sea bass crudo are brilliant for summer – then maybe grilled squid with peas, mint, tomatoes and sweet vinegar, then as a dessert I'd have watermelon jelly with jasmine, chocolate and pistachios."

We play another game: if he could take only five ingredients to a desert island, what would they be? "It would have to be sea salt, preferably Maldon," he says. "Some great Amalfi or Sicilian lemons, and there's got to be some really fruity extra virgin olive oil. I'd be near the sea, so I'd probably

manage to get fish, so maybe some Mangalitsa pork, a selection of cuts I could barbecue on the beach – I don't know where I'd store them, but that's something I'd certainly miss. And I think I'd want some nice full-fat yoghurt."

Back in the real world, Ben created a Sicilian vibe in a London townhouse with the help of award-winning design studio Rosendale. "They got the brief straightaway in terms of Moorish influence. It needed to be charming and quite luxurious, but at the same time have that North African feel."

So which sights in Sicily would he recommend to a first-time visitor? "Fly into Catania, which is great, and from there go to Taormina, that side of the island is the most westernised in terms of how they operate, the big hotels, great restaurants, and it's a very civilised part of the island. And from there Palermo, the main city, is a crazy place, kind of like Rome and Marrakesh all mixed up. The markets there are insane, it's like being in a souk in Marrakesh or Fez. Then go to the west side of the island, to Trapani, a port where there's amazing seafood and it's very North African. The Aeolian islands are wonderful, very serene and beautiful, and there are great places to stay. Then there's Etna, and Noto is a fantastic place to go as well, a real

happening scene in terms of food and wine. So many places."



Bloomsbury Absolute
HBK, 304pp, £26

IN THE PICTURE



UPTURNED TAXIDERMY OX HIDE USED TO CONCEAL A CAMERA, 1892
from *Into the Wild: The Story of the World's Greatest Wildlife Photography* by Gemma Padley
Laurence King, Hbk, 256pp, £40



When brothers Richard and Cherry Kearton (1862–1928 and 1871–1940 respectively) burst on to the emergent wildlife photography stage in the 1890s, few could have predicted the lasting impact they would have. The pair, who grew up in North Yorkshire, were interested in wildlife from a young age, and became famous for their pioneering and sometimes bizarre methods of capturing images of birds in their nests, which involved standing on ladders up trees and hanging off cliffs. Richard, a trailblazer in the creation of portable photographic hides, was the mad mind behind the infamous taxidermy ox hide (the camera lens was positioned so that it poked through a hole in the creature's head), which on one occasion toppled over after he fainted while inside.

Flights of fiction



Elif Shafak's *The Island of Missing Trees* (Viking) – narrated in part by a fig tree imported from Nicosia and transplanted to a north London garden – is a magical and tender meditation on star-crossed love, migrations and the interconnectedness of the natural world, spanning three generations of a Cypriot family undone by civil war

and internecine suspicion. *Chronicles from the Land of the Happiest People on Earth* by Wole Soyinka (Bloomsbury Circus) takes a powerful swipe at corruption in the corridors of power and in the soul, in a story of a cunning entrepreneur who steals body parts from a Nigerian hospital for use in ritualistic practices. *The Woman from Uruguay* by Pedro Mairal (Bloomsbury) is a convention-defying story of a single day in which an unemployed writer travels from Buenos Aires to Montevideo to collect the advance on his next book, while fantasising about catching up with a would-be lover. *Where You Come From* by Saša Stanišić (Jonathan Cape) is an inventive autofiction-cum-

fable about identity and belonging, tracing his own shattered family's exile from former Yugoslavia to make a new life in Germany. *Around the World in 80 Books* by David Damrosch (Pelican) presents a treasure trove of recommended reading for every imaginable journey, following a literary itinerary embracing everything from classics by Woolf and Dante to Wole Soyinka and fellow Nobel Prize winners Orhan Pamuk, Mo Yan and Olga Tokarczuk. *The Echo Chamber* by John Boyne (Doubleday) is a biting satire on social media obsession and cancel culture in which a beloved TV chat show host's career and family implode when he makes a



series of public gaffes that offend and enrage LGBTQ+ campaigners and Woke folk of all stripes. It has hardly anything to do with travel (except for an aborted trip to an Indonesian leper colony), but it's a fine reminder that wherever you might go in the world, you can never fully escape your own or society's baggage.

You might also like...



TRUFFLE HOUND

by Rowan Jacobsen

Bloomsbury, Hbk, 304pp, £20

A captivating personal odyssey into the secretive

and sensuous world of truffles, the elusive food that has captured hearts, imaginations and palates from Italy and Istria to North America.



THE BOOK OF HOPE

by Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams

Viking, Hbk, 240pp, £14.99

The world-renowned naturalist and

conservationist draws on the wisdom of a lifetime dedicated to nature to teach us how to find strength and optimism in the face of the climate crisis.



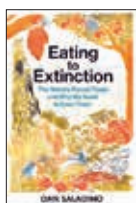
OSEBOL

by Marit Kapla

Allen Lane, Hbk, 800pp, £20

In this engrossing surprise bestseller, the voices of

the residents of a shrinking outpost of the Swedish lumber industry are brought to life in a chronicle of social metamorphosis, told from the inside.



EATING TO EXTINCTION

by Dan Saladino

Jonathan Cape, Hbk, 464pp, £25

Thousands of foods are at risk

of being lost forever. This urgent book interrogates the pioneering food producers, scientists, cooks and indigenous communities who are preserving traditions.



NEVER GIVE UP

by Bear Grylls

Bantam Press, Hbk, 336pp, £20

In the follow-up to *Mud, Sweat*

and *Tears*, the adventurer and presenter opens up about his most personal challenges, embodying the enduring power of courage, kindness and a never-say-die spirit.



NOTES FROM AN ISLAND

by Tove Jansson and Tuulikki Pietilä

Sort of Books, Hbk, 112pp, £12.99

An elegy to the Finnish island to

which the creator of the Moomins and her life partner retreated for twenty-six summers, combining extracts from Tove's notebooks and Tooti's subtle wash drawings.



FAREWELL MR PUFFIN

by Paul Heiney

Adlard Coles, Pbk, 256pp, £12.99

The writer and

broadcaster sets sail towards the Arctic in pursuit of the 'joker of the seas' in an inspiring mix of travel writing, maritime history and insightful reflections on being adrift.



EUROPE'S 100 BEST CATHEDRALS

by Simon Jenkins

Viking, Hbk, 360pp, £30

From Chartres to

York, Cologne to Florence and Moscow to Seville, this joyous historical exploration tells the stories behind the cathedral's central role in the European imagination.



THE NEW NOMADS

by Felix Marquardt

Simon & Schuster, Hbk, 288pp, £20

Part memoir, part

generational manifesto,

The New Nomads is a compelling chronicle of a global revolution in human movement and a call to embrace the wave of nomadism and migration.



THE NILE

by Terje Tvedt

I.B. Tauris, Hbk, 400pp, £30

An exhaustive travelogue through 5,000 years and 11 countries from

Central Africa to the Mediterranean, telling the story of the immense economic, political and mythical significance of the great river.



THE GREEK REVOLUTION

by Mark Mazower

Allen Lane, Hbk, 608pp, £30

A compelling examination of one

of the most significant events in the story of modern Europe as the people of the villages, valleys and islands of Greece rose up against the might of the Ottoman Empire.



THE LAST WINTER

by Porter Fox

Wildfire, Hbk, 320pp, £20

As the planet warms, winter is shrinking.

In this deeply

researched, beautifully written, adventure-filled book, the author journeys along the Northern Hemisphere's snow line to track the scope of change.



YUKON

Wild and remote, the Yukon is home to Canada's five tallest mountains and the world's largest sub-Arctic ice field. It's also a province steeped in history, with a past that speaks of aboriginal longevity and the ephemeral nature of the Klondike Gold Rush. The glaciers and ice fields of the Kluane National Park support all manner of native wildlife, from herds of moose to Dall sheep and grizzly bear.



SASKATCHEWAN

From century-old architecture and first-nations traditions to craft breweries and vibrant cities, this lesser-visited Canadian province hides an abundance of treasures among its vast prairies. And, away from its urban and cultural intrigue, you'll find a pristine wilderness of rolling hills, rushing rivers and prairies, home to roaming bears and bison, ripe for hiking, canoeing and horseback rides.



BRITISH COLUMBIA

Straddling Canada's Pacific coast, British Columbia is a province of unmatched natural beauty. Escape to one of its many islands to watch bears roaming in ancient forests, or head to Vancouver Island to try your hand at fishing on the Campbell River. The province's mild weather also makes its national parks prime for year-round exploration. And, on the sun-kissed Gulf Islands, the beaches are not to be missed.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES & NUNAVUT

Flung far north in the vast Canadian Arctic, the sparsely populated provinces of Northwest Territories and Nunavut comprise seemingly endless swathes of wild tundra and pristine boreal forest. This is a region of epic proportions, where a unique culture is set against a backdrop of four national parks, host beluga whales, polar bears and the shimmering blue of North America's deepest lake.



MANITOBA

Equally enticing in both summer and winter, Manitoba is a land of forests, mountains, farmlands and prairie stretching north from the US border, past Winnipeg's big-city sophistication to the desolate western shores of Hudson Bay. Here, amid the Arctic tundra, polar bears and beluga whales come to feed and, in winter, the technicolour swirls of the Northern Lights can be seen dancing in dark skies overhead.



ALBERTA

A land of soaring mountains, deep turquoise lakes, wildlife-rich forests and majestic glaciers, Alberta is home to two of the world's oldest national parks – Jasper and Banff. Connecting it all is the Icefields Parkway, a 232-kilometre highway that traces the line of the Rocky Mountains, linking Jasper and Banff with the vast expanse of the Columbia Icefield and the deep blue-green of iconic Lake Louise.



CANADA* DISCOVER CANADA

From vast painterly landscapes to exciting winter adventures; from multicultural cities to thrilling, dirt-lined rodeos; the world's second-largest country is as dazzling as it is hard to define. Culturally, Canada combines indigenous traditions with a mix of European, Asian and other immigrant influences, a rich diversity showcased across all of its ten provinces and three territories.

Cities are exciting and varied, each with a distinct character and charm, from the delightful, eighteenth-century architecture of Montréal and Québec to the Wild-West sensibilities of Calgary. Multicultural Toronto – gateway to Niagara Falls and the Great Lakes – is all about food, theatre and music, while on the west-coast, Vancouver is a vibrant stepping stone to an endless array of mountain and coastal pursuits. Perhaps Canada's greatest star, however, is its natural world. Coastlines – all craggy cliffs and secluded bays – shelter whales, seals and dolphins, while turquoise lakes, snowy mountain ranges and vast forests host everything from bears and bison. Listen carefully and you might even hear grey wolves howling in the distance.

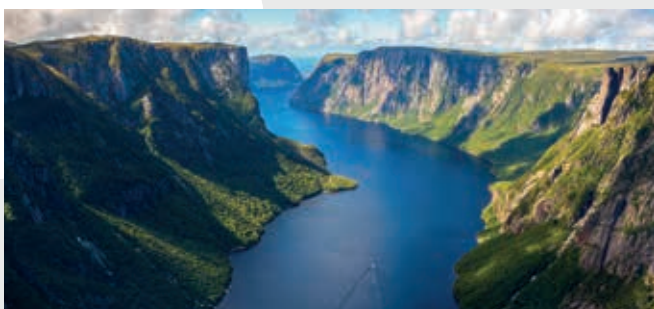


QUÉBEC

This French-speaking eastern province is the ultimate year-round destination. In winter, head to local slopes for world-class skiing and dog sledding, or spend the night in North America's only ice hotel. Then, when the thaw sets in, huge swathes of protected wilderness and a delightful coastline set the scene for summer festivals and strolls through the surrounding mountain trails and parks.

ONTARIO

Whether it's the architectural splendour of trendy Toronto, the vast forests of Algonquin Provincial Park, or the plunging torrents of Niagara Falls, everything in Ontario is on a grand scale. Indeed, this vast central province covers an area larger than that of France and Spain combined, while its lakes – all 250,000 of them – contain a staggering one fifth of the planet's fresh water.



ATLANTIC CANADA

The beauty and hospitality of Canada is perhaps best encapsulated in its four Atlantic provinces – Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland & Labrador. Wonderful to explore on a road trip, you can expect winding trails hugging verdant national parks, seafood eateries lining cliff-framed beaches, and traditional houses bringing a splash of colour to already-picturesque towns.



HOTELS

Arctic Bath

Sweden



A new direct flight to Lulea, launching in December, is going to make Arctic Bath super easy to get to. Which will only add to the extreme pleasures offered by this spa hotel with many differences. It's in pole position to take in the surreal grandeur of the Northern Lights, from a hot tub, or the outdoor plunge pool, from cabins that float on the water or high on stilts amidst fairy tale forest. In the depths of winter, the water cabins are frozen in place on ice. In warmer weeks, guests have the option of diving into the river from their private decks. Whatever the season, this is a magical place. The emphasis is on the spa year round, as this

is a resort dedicated to wellness and comfort. It was conceived as a floating sauna, but has become a sophisticated destination for pampering with top of the range treatments including facials and massages to offset the leaping from the sauna into the purest but coldest water. There are just twelve rooms, including three suites, so solitude in the snow is the default setting. The décor in the timbered cabins is subtle, soft shades and understated Scandi furnishings. Food is seasonal, local and delicious. There are reindeers on site, and huskies that pull sleds through the wondrous wintry landscape.



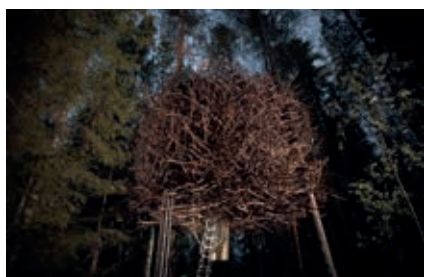
Treehotel

Sweden



Seven extraordinary rooms are strung out on tall pine trees in this out of the ordinary forest hideaway beside the Lule River. Each is a work of art. There's a mirrored cube, reflecting the forest so it seems not there at all; another shaped like a UFO that might have landed just like that, a bird's nest affair, a dragonfly suite – it's an enchanted wood. The views from each are arresting, and all are both stylish and supremely comfortable, with underfloor heating, air-con for the summer months, WiFi all year round. There's a treetop sauna, a sauna in one of the shower blocks, and a sauna and

whirlpool plunge bath in another (the Dragonfly Suite and the 7th Room have private showers). An outdoor hot tub is perfect for luxuriating surrounded by snow as the Northern Lights unfurl above. Food is just as notable, with Swedish delicacies from game to local berries – menus can be personalised – attention to detail is the ethos of this at one with nature property. There are experts on hand for private tours, to chase the Aurora or sled journeys further into the wilderness. Guests often combine a stay here with a stop at the Arctic Bath.



Beana Laponia

Finland



This adult only boutique hotel north of the Arctic Circle guarantees peaceful and pristine surroundings. There are just 11 rooms, so service is personalised and excursions into the wintry wild can be tailor-made. Snowy safaris with huskies (Beana is a sámi word for dog, and Laponia a Latin word for Lapland) are a highlight, with small teams taking turns driving the dogs through forest trails. Looking for the Aurora, toboggan and snowmobile adventures are just some of the diversions on offer. It's also possible to visit a reindeer farm and a handicraft studio creating artefacts

from reindeer antlers (guests get the chance to make a personal souvenir). Back at base, each room is individually decorated, super warm and soothing, all named after one of the hotel's sled dogs. There's a sauna on site, complete with Jacuzzi. A terrace café offers a lovely spot for breaks between adventures, while the restaurant Sulokuono excels in dishes based on fish from a local lake, reindeer meat from a neighbouring village and other local delicacies. The ingredients might be ultra-local, but the nearest town is 60km away – this is isolation in style.



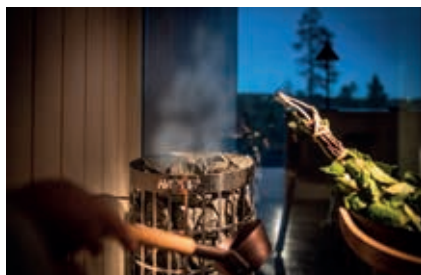
Arctic Treehouse Hotel

Finland



Sitting very pretty on the Arctic Circle in Rovaniemi, the capital of Lapland, this hotel is almost as stunning as the surroundings. With floor to ceiling windows in each room, those surroundings are omnipresent. A mix of TreeHouse suites, Glass Houses (with private saunas) and Arctic Executive Suites are spaced out on a forested hill slope. The views – from sunrise to starry night skies are enough to make this an exceptionally scenic place to stay, and should the Northern Lights roll in, the joy of watching them without leaving your bed is something special.

There's additional magic not far away – for children in the party, the Santa Claus Secret Forest and its elves are sure to enchant, as is a visit to Ranua wildlife park, while grown ups can opt for Ice Floating, husky or reindeer rides and a typical Lappish sauna experience. The hotel happily organises bespoke excursions to explore the remote beauty of the Arctic Circle. The Finnish fare at their excellent Rakas restaurant is another highlight, a gourmet experience beside a fireplace and pine cone lamps. Private dinners offer the same high quality of food, but served at a campfire shelter. Either way, it's all delicious.



Iso-Syöte

Finland



A boutique hotel perched on a hilltop beside a national park,

Iso-Syöte is one of Finland's most charming hideaways. Iso-Syöte is the southernmost fell in Finland, but is just 150km from the Arctic Circle, and possibly the snowiest part of the country, with splendid ski runs. The national park is palpably peaceful and rich in Scandinavian flora and fauna, and the hotel provides safaris by snowmobile, reindeer and husky sleds to explore far and wide. Ice fishing, campfire lunches and Northern Lights safaris are on offer too. Cottages, cabins and suites are enticing to return to – beautifully appointed,

with all creature comforts and wonderful views – the Eagle View Suite in particular is stunning, with glass walls and a roof to make the most of the surroundings and the changing skies. The Spa has a succession of saunas and pools, most overlooking the beautiful surroundings, and an assortment of hydrotherapy and beauty treatments to ease any aches after days spent skiing or cycling or exploring. The Hilltop restaurant is just as restorative, with equally splendid views and a robust but refined menu combining international flavours and local ingredients.



Celebrity spotting in the wilds of Alaska

Sailing to 300 destinations and taking in all seven continents, Celebrity Cruises® have the world covered, in style. Their fleet of award-winning, mid-sized ships offers the perfect blend of space, sophisticated design and first-class facilities to ensure a truly unforgettable time at sea. Meanwhile, on land, their destination enrichment programme guarantees countless special moments at every place you visit. Here, we take a look at one of their most exciting and enduring destinations – Alaska. And, with no Alaska cruises possible for the past two years, 2022 is set to be more popular than ever.



EXPLORE ALASKA WITH CELEBRITY CRUISES®

With four route options uniquely designed to suit every discerning traveller, and a wide range of departure dates between May and September 2022, all you have to do is decide which suits you best. Rest assured, all three award-winning and mid-sized vessels offer the perfect blend of space, sophisticated design and first-class

facilities, as well as the very latest Covid health & safety protocols. 7-day cruises start from £1,560 pp incl. flights.

The first route, on *Celebrity Solstice*®, embarks from the mountain-lined city of Seattle, and calls in at Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway – three of Alaska's most fascinating and historic Gold Rush-era cities. Celebrity's destination enrichment programme will ensure

countless special moments at each and every place you visit, from glacier walks and bear-watching cruises to vineyard visits in Seattle's wine country.

Alternatively, the awe-inspiring surrounds and world-famous dining scene of Vancouver await when you opt for a voyage on the newly revolutionised *Celebrity Millennium*. As well as taking in all of Alaska's



icons, including the Hubbard Glacier, guests have a choice to start the cruise in Vancouver or Seward, the latter home to the world-renowned Kenai Fjords National Park, home to whales, bears and eagles. Prefer a round trip? Look to an eight-day sailing aboard *Celebrity Eclipse*®, perhaps adding on a luxury stay in Vancouver, where you'll explore with a programme of expert-led tours.

For those with more time, a 12-day itinerary, also on *Celebrity Eclipse*® departing 11 September 2022, offers a truly in-depth appreciation of the state. As well as anchoring at many of Alaska's most beautiful destinations, you'll also sail to Sitka to discover wildlife-rich islands and fjords explored

on 4WD and kayak adventures. It's a wonderful contrast to the 19th-century architecture of beautiful Victoria in British Columbia, where distillery visits and whale watching tours are among the myriad delights on offer.

THE RETREAT®

Currently available on Alaska cruises aboard *Celebrity Millennium*® – and coming soon to both *Celebrity Eclipse*® and *Celebrity Solstice*® – The Retreat® is an exclusive enclave all of its own, featuring stunning suites, along with private lounges and dining venues, and sundeck to rival the world's most sophisticated resorts. Guests are also treated to the services of a dedicated team of attendants, concierges and a Personal Retreat Host, on hand to cater

to any whim. And, let's not forget the numerous extra amenities, which range from complimentary premium drinks and streaming WiFi to included tips and an onboard and shore excursion credit to use during your cruise.

But that's not all. Throughout The Retreat®, cleverly thought-out spaces will help you make the most of your time on board – think al fresco coffees at the stylish Lawn Club as you pass breaching whales and giant glaciers, and expertly made sundowners at the Sunset Bar after action-packed days exploring your latest port of call.

Celebrity X Cruises®



Celebrity Cruises® & Rocky Mountaineer

Wexas Travel's Rocky Mountaineer and Celebrity Cruises® journey combines the beauty of the Canadian Rockies with Alaska's wildest remotes. Take in the Rockies' snow-capped peaks from the comfort of Canada's most luxurious train, then head over the border to explore Alaska aboard Celebrity Eclipse, spotting rare wildlife and discovering wild national parks and Native American history amid a glacier-carved wilderness. Prices start from £4,435 pp incl. flights.



Ride, rest, repeat

The sleeper carriage is too often the bane of luxury train travel. No matter how ornately decorated and plushly furnished it might be – and many are stunning – you’re constrained by an inevitably confined space, and never know quite what you’re missing out on as you doze off and your bed journeys on through the night. On board the *Rocky Mountaineer*, you get spectacular daytime panoramic views from custom-built glass-dome coaches before transferring to beautiful hotels to stay over – and look around – at every destination along the way.

Four distinct rail routes between Vancouver and Banff or Jasper, or over the border from Moab, Utah to Denver, Colorado can be broken up, combined or mixed and matched for short journeys or extended adventures.

Two levels of service: SilverLeaf and GoldLeaf each come with friendly hosts, gourmet breakfasts and lunches, luggage transfer – and endlessly amazing views. GoldLeaf passengers enjoy extras including a bi-level dome coach with seating above and dining below, plus a large and exclusive outdoor viewing platform. And you get to properly stretch your legs at both ends of the day, and plenty of time to pause and explore the local attractions.

Here’s a snapshot of two of our favourite itineraries, built around two days aboard the *Rocky Mountaineer*:

CANADIAN ROCKIES HIGHLIGHTS

Enjoy the majesty of the Rockies along with a range of off-train excursions, from guided tours of Banff and Yoho

National Parks to a scenic cable-car ride and thrilling helicopter flight, while taking in Vancouver’s waterfront charm, a stay on Lake Louise and Calgary’s famous Wild West attractions.

Day 1: Vancouver

We strongly recommend arriving in Vancouver a few days early to make the most of its pretty waterfront walks, historic cobbled streets and trips out into the wilderness to the picturesque North Shore and Grouse Mountain, or a cruise on Howe Sound to look out for orcas and humpback whales.

Day 2: Kamloops

Boarding the train, with the Coast and Cascade mountains as your backdrop, wind along river canyons, carve through dense forests and sweep over the lush green fields of the Fraser Valley before striking into the desert-like British Columbia interior, and end





by skirting Kamloops Lake to arrive in the eponymous town.

Day 3: Kamloops to Lake Louise

Continue east across wild ranchlands, alongside cragged lakeshores and over high mountain passes, taking in the Kicking Horse Canyon and the glaciers and snow-capped peaks of the Rockies. Departing the train, you'll end today with a stay at the superb Fairmont Château Lake Louise, right on the lake's postcard-perfect waters.

Day 4: Lake Louise to Banff

Enjoy pine-fringed walks on the lakeshore, take a kayak out onto the waters or explore the backcountry by mountain bike or horseback. After lunch, you'll be treated to a tour of Yoho National Park's Emerald Lake, Kicking Horse River and the Spiral Tunnels – a criss-crossing network of road and rail that sweeps through old-growth forest, before making a short road transfer to Banff.

Day 5: Banff to Calgary

Today's tour will bring you between Banff National Park's spindling hoodoo rock formations, the ranging cascades of Bow Falls and Lake Minnewanka's snow-capped frame. You'll take the Banff Gondola cable car up to spectacular valley views, and a helicopter ride over the Rockies will really get the heart racing as you soar 2,300 metres above sea level over glaciers, waterfalls and mountain vistas. You'll end the day in Calgary, staying in your choice of luxury hotel.

Days 6–7 Calgary and depart for UK

After taking the time you need to explore the Wild West delights of Calgary, a private transfer will deliver you to your overnight flight home.

ROCKY MOUNTAINEER AND CALGARY STAMPEDE

For ten days a year – the 2022 dates are 8 to 17 July – Alberta saddles up

for its annual rodeo jamboree the Calgary Stampede. Visitors descend from far and wide as cowboys and cowgirls compete in jaw-dropping daily tournaments from bareback riding to steer wrestling, bull riding and barrel racing. Every win builds towards Showdown Sunday, offering the chance for competitors to scoop big-money prizes. As well as the rodeo, there are agricultural shows, mouthwatering food and drink offerings, fireworks and even motocross racing. It all kicks off with the Stampede Parade featuring floats, marching bands and mounted riders, and there are all-day and nightly music shows running the full gamut from Country to Western (with occasional diversions in between). Our 10-day itinerary begins with a flight into Calgary and two days at the Stampede, before boarding the *Rocky Mountaineer* for a reverse run of the Rockies Highlights journey, including all the associated stops and tours.





INSIDE SOUTH KOREA



Long overshadowed by its headline-grabbing neighbours, South Korea is unfairly overlooked. But, those that do make the journey are richly rewarded with neon megacities, mountain-top temples and a truly unique cuisine that's only just getting the attention it deserves. And, let's not forget the 'Korean Wave' of pop culture – from film to music – that's been taking the world by storm. It's all brought to life in a host of unforgettable experiences, including temple stays, wellness retreats and a nightlife that's among Asia's most vibrant.

Seoul & surrounds

Introductions are invariably made in Seoul, the country's capital. This is where Korea pulled itself out of wartime collapse and into G20 prosperity in just 50 short years – an economic phenomenon termed the “Miracle on the Han River”. Having leapfrogged the likes of Russia and Australia, Seoul wears its riches on its sleeve, with great skyscrapers, glitzy neon streets and fine-dining restaurants all competing for your attention. It's hard to imagine that the Demilitarized Zone with North Korea is just a day trip away.

A unique culture and cuisine

Yet, Korea hasn't lost its roots. Even in the centre of Seoul, you'll quickly stumble across bustling markets, Confucianist shrines and great palaces, all intricate carvings and beautiful colours. However, it's perhaps Korean cuisine where tradition has lingered longest. Simply, there's nowhere else in the world that does food like Korea, whether that's the spicy tang of fermented kimchi, the impossible fluffy delight of seafood

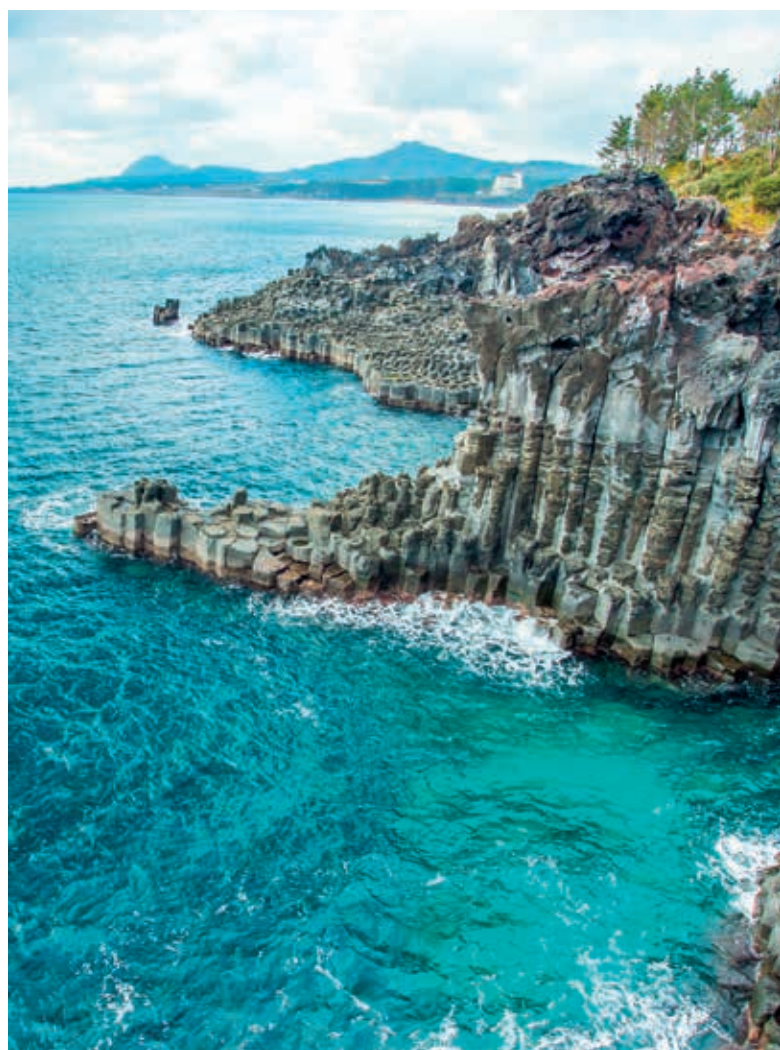
pancakes or the convivial joy of a night at a barbecue joint. It's all washed down with gallons of soju liquor – the world's most popular brand of booze. Koreans really do like to drink.

From countryside to coast

You would, however, be doing yourself a disservice if you limited yourself to Seoul. Second-city Busan impresses with golden beaches and waterside temples, Gyeongju is world-famous for its cherry blossom and ancient palace complex, and the country's interior is ripe for hikes to forgotten mountain temples. However, for the true Korean holiday experience, get yourself to Jeju – a volcanic island where pristine beaches front gorgeous countryside and seafood is caught by haenyeo free divers.

Asian connections

With direct flights from the UK, South Korea is perfectly placed as a destination in its own right. But, if you want to combine it with other countries in the region, you'll find it extremely well connected. Speak to our specialists who'll help you design a South Korea holiday based on your individual requirements, whether that's a country-spanning two-week stay or a short stopover en route to Japan or a host of other Asian destinations.



Essential South Korea

Get to grips with the best of South Korea's highlights both ancient and cutting-edge modern on this independent tour. Everything from Seoul's castle-palaces and Busan's beach-city neon to water temples and thousand-year-old royal capitals will be brought to life by the services of a private guide throughout. For extra flavour, you'll also enjoy a range of included extras, such as stage performances, seafood-market tastings and even a trip to the North Korea border. Along the way, you'll travel in style, and speed, with private transfers included throughout as well as trips on the KTX – South Korea's answer to the Japanese bullet train.

Prices start from £3,250 pp incl. Return international flights from London to Seoul, UK airport lounge access, 7 nights accommodation staying in 4-star hotels & Private transfers and two days of private touring with an English-speaking guide. For a full itinerary and all inclusions, visit [wexas.com/103725](https://www.wexas.com/103725).

Hard yards and fond memories

Michelin-starred chef **Ollie Dabbous** evokes the cities, regions and countries that are never far from his mind

FLORENCE

I went to Florence for the first time as a 15-year-old boy for a holiday job in my very first professional kitchen. My uncle worked at Trattoria Cammillo, the archetypal Italian restaurant that only exists on those shores; the sort of place that you dream of finding when on holiday. It is still there today, located by the Arno river just a few minutes walk from the Ponte Vecchio. It is so popular it doesn't even have a website, and could be filled multiple times over every night. This was my first real taste of independence and was further elevated by the city's beautiful surroundings and the affirmation that cooking was something I was in love with and would pursue as a career rather than just a hobby. The chefs I worked with then are still there now. I can't wait to go back. There is something otherworldly about Florence.

OXFORDSHIRE

The beautiful Oxfordshire countryside was the location and backdrop for what were some of the hardest years of my life. Entering the best kitchens at the bottom of the food chain will always be tough, but surviving and then thriving in such brutal and unforgiving meritocracy forged both my personality and my confidence. I didn't have much time to really appreciate the expansive landscape because I was largely driving to work as fast as I could whilst running over my prep list in my head, but I have fond memories of my time there with my fellow chefs. There was nothing but empathy and goodwill between us. I owned nothing then, just a battered car, which was utterly liberating. I rented a room on a farm and got up most days early enough to see some amazing sunrises.

INDIA

I met up with some friends who were playing cricket in Mumbai, and so began an eight-week backpacking tour of a country like no other.



© JOAKIM BLOCKSTRÖM



Ollie Dabbous has been awarded a Michelin star for both his eponymous restaurant Dabbous (2012–17), and Hide on London's Piccadilly, which he runs with Hedonism Wines. *Essential* is his first cookbook for home cooks. Published by Bloomsbury Absolute (Hbk, 320pp, £30).

We covered all the west coast from Kerala to Goa, then travelled up to Rajasthan, then Agra, before a stint in Nepal. It was utterly memorable and provided a much needed jolt of discovery and time out. The places we slept at cost pennies: pretty much just a hammock and a shower. It was also the first time I had seen such extreme poverty first-hand, which made me appreciate all the things I had taken for granted growing up.

BASQUE COUNTRY

I lived and worked here for about eight months in my mid-twenties. It is a beautiful part of Spain and largely unspoilt. Very lush with dense woodland, which lends itself to plenty of agriculture, cider factories and paper mills. Where I was working we only had one day off a week, but that meant we made the most of it. All the chefs would organise barbecues, games of football, trips to Biarritz or Saint-Jean-de-Luz. I also used to love to drive along the coastal road from San Sebastian past Zarautz and Getaria. Though people may go to San Sebastian to gorge in Michelin restaurants, the surrounding countryside is the real star.

WEST END

I lived in central London for the best part of 10 years. Our first son went to nursery in Soho. Though to most people it is somewhere they go for the weekend, for sightseeing or for a holiday, central London was home to me. For three years, my walk to work involved crossing Trafalgar Square then walking through St James's or along The Mall. I loved being able to get food or a drink at any time and not needing a taxi to stagger home from a club in the early hours. Cities get better with time. I can understand why some people want to leave London for more space or for peace and quiet, but there is nowhere I would rather be right now.



EXPERIENCE

Alberta

It's hard to imagine a place more beautiful than Alberta. A land of soaring mountains, deep turquoise lakes, wildlife-rich forests and majestic glaciers, it's home to two of the world's oldest national parks – Jasper and Banff.

World-renowned national parks

It's Alberta's spectacular swathes of wilderness that form many visitors' first impressions of this uniquely beautiful province. Framed by the giant peaks of the Rocky Mountains, huge forested valleys and glittering lakes set the tone for some of North America's wildest and most beautiful landscapes. Connecting it all is the Icefields Parkway, a 232-kilometre highway that traces the line of the Continental Divide, cutting through broad, sweeping valleys as it links Jasper and Banff with the vast expanse of the Columbia Icefield and the deep blue-green of iconic Lake Louise.

A province for all seasons

Summer in Alberta brings with it the chance to explore on scenic hikes, bike rides, kayak paddles and white water rafting adventures, while wildlife tours might introduce you to the likes of black bears, grizzlies, wolves and coyotes. For an altogether different summer experience, journey

east across the prairie to the barren, rock-strewn landscapes of the Alberta Badlands. Perhaps take time to visit Drumheller and the UNESCO-listed Dinosaur Provincial Park, explore the remarkable Red Deer River Valley, or journey to Alberta's southern borders for a closer look at the province's unique aboriginal culture. Then, as winter sets in, the deep snows arrive in the mountainous west, with Banff, especially, host to some of the world's best alpine skiing and snowboarding.

Alberta's urban intrigue

Lastly there are Alberta's cities – the provincial capital, Edmonton, and Calgary, host to the self-proclaimed 'greatest outdoor show on earth'. Each July, the Calgary Stampede brings together the world's finest and most famous cowboys to battle it out in chuckwagon races and one of the richest rodeos on earth. It's a fun-packed festival set against a backdrop of fairground rides and the best of Calgary's cuisine.

wild at heart

While each of Atlantic Canada's four provinces has its own distinct charm, there's also plenty that they share, not least a wild and spectacular natural world. Think glorious national parks, stunning coastlines and abundant wildlife that make the region nothing short of an outdoor paradise. Best of all? It's just a six-hour direct flight away from the UK.



New Brunswick is all about a rich, natural world – an unspoiled wilderness host to world-renowned salmon rivers, spectacular coastlines, and an array of charming islands. The Fundy Trail Parkway, connected to Fundy National Park, represents arguably the most pristine coastline along the entire eastern seaboard, where 120 km of hiking and biking trails link forest-clad streams and plunging waterfalls. Also situated on the shores of the whale-dotted Bay of Fundy is Hopewell Rocks Provincial Park, with great sandstone formations chiselled out by the world's highest tides.

As Canada's easternmost province, **Newfoundland & Labrador** showcases some of the region's mightiest natural features – plunging fjords, drifting icebergs and rocky islands among them. In Gros Morne National Park, mountains roll down into spectacular fjords in a series of green-dappled contours, ideal for waterfall hikes and boat tours, while the Baccalieu Trail traces Newfoundland's north-western peninsula. However, if you'd like something extra special, Fogo Island offers the Scandinavian chic of one of the world's finest luxury lodges, wrapped up in a truly wild setting.



Nova Scotia, considered to be the birthplace of New Scotland, features 13,300 km of wild coastline, with spectacular scenic views around every corner. Postcard-perfect villages and grand old colonial forts serve only to dot the windswept grandeur of this great peninsula. For many it's Nova Scotia's Cabot Trail that stands out most. Considered to be one of the top ten scenic drives in the world, it winds for 300 km around the coast of Cape Breton Island. It's an absolute treat, where you'll discover stunning ocean vistas, glacier-scarred coastline and colourful, rugged highlands.



Although just 60 km at its widest point, Canada's smallest province packs a lot in. Termed the "Garden Province", **Prince Edward Island** impresses with its sublime rural spectacle, green hills, pretty farmland and a gorgeous, kayak-worthy coastline. Move back from the idyllic, red-sand beaches to discover a rolling interior of dense forests, tailor-made for hiking and cycling. It all informs a rich culinary scene. While Prince Edward potatoes are famous the world over, anywhere that you can pick your lobster right out of a fishing boat is worth a visit.



To begin your Atlantic Canada adventure, call a Wexas specialist on 020 7838 5958 or visit wexas.com


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CANADA