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# TRAVELLER



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# Beyond the prairies

Wherever you travel in Saskatchewan, nature is never far away. Even at the centre of its major cities – Regina and Saskatoon – you're just minutes away from impressive landscapes and wide-open spaces. But life in the city also goes beyond Saskatchewan's incredible natural world, blending dynamic cosmopolitan energy with fantastic art, sumptuous food and drink, and activities showcasing both history and diversity.

## A CAPITAL DESTINATION

Named in honour of Queen Victoria, Regina is Saskatchewan's unassuming capital, whose highlights include the Saskatchewan Legislative Building. Completed in 1912, it's one of the grandest historical buildings in Western Canada, while its setting – Wascana Centre – is a 930-hectare green space that rivals Central Park in New York.

## HOME OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Academy, "Depot" Division, has been a fixture in Regina since 1885. It's where every member of Canada's iconic force is trained as a cadet. The colourful RCMP Sunset-Retreat Ceremony is a not-to-be-missed summer tradition, while the state-of-the-art RCMP Heritage Centre is open year round.

## PERFECTING THE CRAFT

Regina and Saskatoon have earned reputations for impressive craft beer and spirits. In Regina's Warehouse District, Bushwacker Brewpub and Rebellion Brewing Co. are attractions in their own right, while a short drive outside the city, award-winning Last Mountain Distillery produces its famous dill pickle vodka. In Saskatoon, enjoy a pint at 9 Mile Legacy Brewing Co., then stop by the Saskatoon Farmers' Market to sample the local produce. Just outside the city, Black Fox Farm & Distillery concocts gin and liqueurs from products grown on the working farm.

## FOR ART AND FOOD LOVERS

Saskatoon has made international headlines for the opening of the new Rемаi Modern art museum, which houses the world's largest collection of Picasso linocut prints (more than 400 pieces), along with almost two-dozen ceramic works by the Spanish master. Meanwhile, the city's vibrant food scene continues to attract attention, its innovative chefs having created appetising new tastes by combining prairie sensibilities with world-infused flavours.

## A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

More than 80 km of riverbank paths wind through Saskatoon along the tree-lined banks of the mighty South Saskatchewan River. See Saskatoon from the water aboard the top deck of The Prairie Lily riverboat, perhaps with a relaxing afternoon sightseeing tour or a classic dinner cruise. Evening sunset cruises showcase the colourful spectacle of Saskatchewan's "Living Skies".

## MORE THAN 6,000 YEARS OF HISTORY

Wanuskewin, on the northern edge of Saskatoon, has long been a spiritual gathering place for indigenous peoples. It's the longest, continuously operating archaeological dig site in Canada and has yielded evidence of human occupation dating back more than 6,000 years. In the summer, overnight tipi stays and traditional dance performances connect visitors to the past.

# Back to Front & In between

**To subvert the TS Eliot line, in my end is my beginning.**

So this editorial first page begins with our last page, which is a glorious ode to the hoopoe. Birds in general don't have borders, and this one is a migrant to Tuscany, where they see it as a sign of spring. When the colder months close in, they wing off to the Sahara. It's a gorgeous piece, as much for its illustrations as its prose. The hoopoe itself is a distinctive creature, with strange habits, but not quite as bonkers as the Blue Footed Boobie, found in the Galapagos, which to be fair is full of the most surreal creatures, photographed in these pages by Jonathan and Angela Scott in distinctive style.

As the Scotts are ardent conservationists and as we have a piece on Corfu in this issue, thoughts turned to Gerald Durrell whose books made the island famous and cared as passionately about animals. It's hard not to think about Durrell and birds without recalling his pet but certainly not tame magpies, infinitely more curious than hoopoes and Blue Footed Boobies. Durrell's birds became known as the Magenpies, as pronounced by his friend Spiro. Gerald's brother Lawrence, another champion for Corfu, is inevitably quoted in the article too. As a child I loved reading about the mayhem Gerry's magpies caused, especially on invading his literary brother's room:

'The type-writer stood stolidly on the table... its keys bespattered with droppings. The carpet, bed and table were a-glitter with a layer of paperclips like frost... the bed was decorated with a chain of footprints in red and green ink... almost as though each bird had overturned his favourite colour and walked in it.'

Putting *Traveller* together often feels just like this, eclectic magpie picking, choosing words that glitter and spreading colour, not across rooms but pages. In James Litston's piece on the Great Barrier Reef, the blues are breathtaking, the coral aflame and the fish fluorescent. There are flashes of neon in Simon Urwin's article on the always, endlessly, musical Nashville. In his photography from Porto, he shows us more delicate hues but as much cultural resonance in showcasing the ceramic white and light blue tiles that adorn many a façade in this delightful city. His short piece on the historic heart of Stockholm, Gamla Stan, takes



**Amy Sohanpaul**  
on taking flight



us away from the crowds along side streets and into an old, old place.

Two other articles also take us far from the madding crowds, in these instances into serene, spectacular landscapes at the end of the earth. Our guest this issue is Dave Brosha, a renowned photographer, who grew up in the Canadian High Arctic but is in Antarctica for this issue, from one extreme to the other. Alexander Robinson takes us almost all the way there too, to Cape Horn at the end of Patagonia, via a spectacular sojourn amidst the sheer spires of the Torres del Paine.

In contrast Guy Everton takes us to different sorts of heights and delights in Vietnam, where the emerald green of pandan leaves and paddy fields lends a different, hotter, hue, even through the mountain mists. The interior of the Seychelles Kevin Pilley takes a hike through is just as verdant, but with ancient giant tortoises along the way, a different sort of paradise. Ruth Cox, winner of the Bradt Travel Writers Prize, finds yet another paradise, of an emotional sort, in Nepal and during a trip back in time. It's a poignant piece, as is the ode to Venice by celebrated poet Colm Toibin in our Art of Travel feature.

There's just the slightest touch of poignancy in Asma Khan's recollections of cooking with her mother, but a lot more fun and plenty of spice. It's a delicious piece, inspirational, optimistic and thus high in the feel good factor. So too are our articles about taking to the waves with luxury cruise company Seaborn and rolling across South Africa with Rovos Rail, one of the most legendary train journeys in the world.

Expeditions, excursions, explorations, travel in short, require a spark of inspiration and a belief that all will be well, and all manner of things will be well. To go back to Gerald Durrell – as he said in *My Family and Other Animals*, his first book about Corfu:

'Gradually the magic of the island settled over us as gently and clingingly as pollen. Each day had a tranquillity, a timelessness, about it so you wished it would never end. But then the dark skin of night would peel off and there would be a fresh day waiting for us, glossy and colourful as a child's transfer and with the same tinge of unreality.'



# 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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**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



## DAVE BROSHA

is a photographer based on Prince Edward Island. In *Southern Light*, he documents the pristine beauty of Antarctica, South Georgia and the Falklands.

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## RUTH COX

is a freelance educational materials editor. Currently based in West Cornwall, she has lived in Colombia, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Australia and Nepal.

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## GUY EVERTON

is a talented linguist and English teacher who has just returned from Vietnam and is already planning his next adventure abroad.

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## ASMA KHAN

is the owner of Darjeeling Express, known for its classic Indian food and all-female team of South Asian home cooks. Her latest book is *Ammu*.

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## JAMES LITSTON

Australia is a favourite destination for freelance journalist James Litston, who writes about exploring the Great Barrier Reef for this issue.

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## MONISHA RAJESH

is an author and journalist. Her latest book with gestalten, *Epic Train Journeys*, was shortlisted for the 2022 Stanfords Photography Travel Book of the Year.

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## ALEXANDER ROBINSON

has won numerous photography and writing awards. He is an expert on Spanish and Portuguese-speaking countries and Southeast Asia.

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## MARK REYNOLDS

is a writer and editor and a founding editor of *Bookanista*. For *Traveller* he compiles Bookshelf and other features. In this issue he interviews Asma Khan.

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## JONATHAN & ANGELA SCOTT

are renowned wildlife photographers and documentary makers based in Kenya. In this issue they visit the Galapagos Islands.

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## COLM TÓIBÍN

is the author of ten novels including *The Master*, *Brooklyn*, and *The Magician*. *Vinegar Hill* is his first collection of poetry.

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## 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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## ROBIN WEST

is the Vice President of Expedition Operations at Seabourn, the luxury cruise company.

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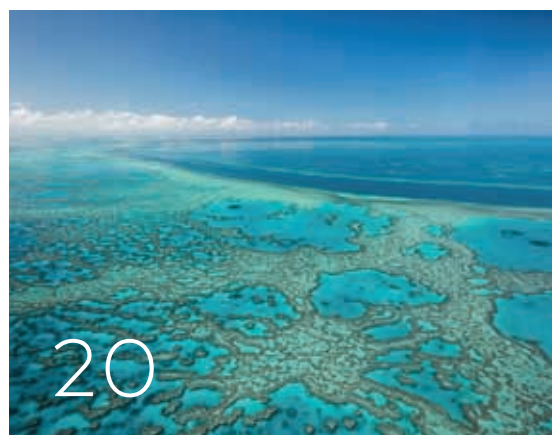
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From *Southern Light* by Dave Brosha.

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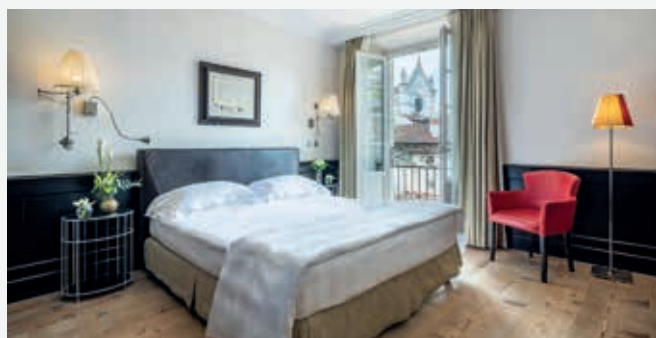


# Tuscany with Baglioni Resorts

The delights of Tuscany are myriad – fine food, world-class wine, a sparkling coastline and the treasures of the Renaissance. And, whether you're enthralled by the history of Florence, the vineyards of its bucolic interior or the glittering beaches of its idyllic coast, there are few better ways to take in Tuscany's highlights than with Baglioni Hotels & Resorts. Below, you'll find details of two standout properties, which can be enjoyed in their own right or as a pair, showcasing the region's culture and coast to perfection, and linked by a scenic road trip.

## Baglioni Hotel Cala del Porto

On the edge of the Mediterranean and in the heart of Maremma's wild cowboy territory, this outpost of the uber-luxe Baglioni hotel group is a joy. There are just 26 rooms, all impeccably decorated, airy and elegant, with views over lush gardens, the figure-of-eight swimming pool or the inky hues of the Mediterranean. The private beach club and golf course are a beat away, as are the many delights of Tuscany itself.



## Relais Santa Croce by Baglioni Hotels

With a three-star Michelin restaurant and just 24 rooms, the Relais Santa Croce has transformed one of Florence's most distinguished and historic townhouses into one of its most luxurious hotels. Stately home in style, it's packed full of original features and a riot of frescoes, with a location just seconds away from all of Florence's attractions, not least the grand, neo-Gothic façade of the beautiful Santa Croce church.



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## LATEST NEWS FROM OUR HONORARY PRESIDENTS

## OUT THERE



In his new book *Explorer* (Canongate, £18.99), **Benedict Allen** tells the story of his adventures in Papua New Guinea,

what he's learnt from the isolated communities he's spent so much of his life immersed in, and the importance of recognising that we are all explorers at heart.

"It's about the value of reaching out beyond our familiar, safe world to discover something new," says Benedict. "It tells the story of my often dangerous journeys through New Guinea and beyond – from my decision to undergo a male initiation ceremony in my early, idealistic years, to my return a generation later to seek out birds of paradise with BBC Defence Correspondent Frank Gardner. It was this last trip which led to my bid to find out the fate of Korsai, a gentle man who had once, thirty years before, shown great kindness to me, helping me navigate a way to safety over a mountain. Though he lived in one of the most isolated settlements on the planet, there was a possibility he was still alive."

"It was on this last, strenuous adventure – a trek into the forbidding Central Range of PNG – that I became cut off by communal fighting and then became ill with malaria and dengue fever. My disappearance made headline news around the world; in the end the *Daily Mail* kindly came to my aid."

"I hope you'll find *Explorer* absorbing – even uplifting. Beyond the drama-filled personal story, really the book is about the value of friendship – and also the importance of taking a risk at times, of disconnecting with ideas that are familiar and comforting. There's an incredibly exciting world out there."



## BIRDS OF A FEATHER

**Jonathan and Angie Scott** will be flying into the UK in time to attend the Global BirdFair at the Rutland Showground in Oakham from 15 to 17 July. This new event is the brainchild of Tim Appleton, who ran the UK BirdFair for many years prior to Covid and has devoted a long career to conservation. Find out more and book tickets at [globalbirdfair.org](http://globalbirdfair.org).



## ROVING ON



This year marks the 50th anniversary of the British Trans-Americas expedition, launched under the leadership of Scientific Exploration Society Founder and Honorary President **Colonel** (then Major) **John Blashford-Snell**. Using newly produced Range Rovers, a 100-strong team of servicemen from the Armed Forces of Britain, Colombia, Panama and the USA set out with scientists and specialists to navigate the formidable obstacle of the Darién Gap, comprising 250 miles of dense jungle, hills and swamps dividing the North and South American continents. This amazing journey will be commemorated by an anniversary dinner at the RAC Club in October, and at the time of writing the Colonel is planning a celebration event at the Royal Geographical Society in June. Look out for updates at [ses-explore.org](http://ses-explore.org) and [rgs.org](http://rgs.org).



# Gamla Stan: Stockholm's Historic Heart

*words & pictures*  
Simon Urwin

**At a communal table in a simple kitchen** made of wood and stone, a man dressed in britches clasps his hands in prayer while his wife serves the family from a bowl of gruel.

Delicately detailed in stained glass, the scene illuminates a row of pews in the ornate German Church of St. Gertrude, first established in the heart of Gamla Stan in the 16th century – a time when Stockholm enjoyed close ties to Germany through the Hanseatic League, an ancient confederation of merchant guilds and market towns that covered much of central and northern Europe.

The image of devout family life gives some indication of times past in Gamla Stan, (literally 'old town'), the historical and geographical heart of the Swedish capital – today considered one of the best-preserved medieval city centres anywhere in Europe. Located on the island of Stadsholmen, and first established in the 13th century, its tangle of alleyways lined with handsome buildings painted peach, yellow and burnt orange have become understandably popular with visitors, most of whom head straight for Stortorget, the oldest square in Stockholm, wielding their selfie sticks in front of the gabled merchants' houses at its western end, before drifting along Västerlånggatan, a bustling thoroughfare cursed with incongruous souvenir shops and fast-food eateries.

Yet, step away from the crowds, and Gamla Stan's narrow side streets retain a timeless and peaceful intimacy. And here, where even on the brightest

of summer days only splashes of sunlight can reach the cobblestones and it can feel wintry in the shade, a slow walk and a keen eye reward the visitor with traces of Gamla Stan's rich and varied past: street names such as Kindstugatan, or 'box on the ear street' hint at the sights the area has seen over the centuries – in this case, likely a single, infamous fight or a street with a notoriously rowdy reputation; elsewhere details such as mermaids' tails wrapped around a rooftop dome or the sculpture of a granite galleon held aloft by cherubs above a doorway reflect the city's great seafaring traditions. Within the walls of one building on Kåkbrinken Street there is even a rune stone, richly decorated with the body of a dragon, and thought to date back a thousand years to the Viking Age.

For the visitor to Stockholm, other neighbourhoods may boast a livelier, more contemporary food and drink scene, but certainly none can compete with Gamla Stan in terms of atmosphere. Take, for example, Den Gyldene Freden, or The Golden Peace, owned by the Swedish Academy that selects the Nobel Prize for literature. The restaurant has been in business since 1722, making it one of the oldest in the world, its traditional menu of goose, crayfish and meatballs served in cosy tavern surroundings that have changed little since it first opened its doors. Then there are the small corner bakeries and coffee shops that bring to mind the Parisian café scene; here though, fresh-faced locals gather to indulge in the much-loved Swedish tradition of 'fika', roughly translated as 'taking a break to share with friends'

– their conversation fuelled by cups of strong coffee and plump-as-a-pillow cinnamon buns.

To truly appreciate the compact and historic beauty of Gamla Stan though, it's necessary to leave the neighbourhood altogether and see it from a distance. There are two particularly fine viewpoints: the first accessible by taking a stroll over the Slussen – the lock that separates the sea from the fresh-water Lake Mälaren – before heading up to Monteliusvägen, a quarter-mile-long, cliff top lookout on Södermalm island, where the view is particularly beautiful before dawn and after dusk, when the twinkling lights of the old town can be seen from up on high.

The second is reached by following Stockholm's grand sweep of public buildings, beginning with Parliament House on the nearby island of Helgeandsholmen, then passing the 19th century Grand Hôtel and the National Museum of Fine Arts, before crossing the footbridge onto Skeppsholmen island and walking along Västra Brobänken, a narrow path that hugs the sparkling harbour waters. There, from a viewing pier, the perspective on Gamla Stan's easternmost side is majestic: the spires of the German church and the cathedral piercing the Stockholm skies, and below them, along Skeppsbrokajen, or 'Ship's Bridge's Quay', a row of elegant buildings rise up from the water's edge, resplendent on a sunny summer's day, but fortress-strong and ready to withstand the knifing Baltic winds and harsh Nordic winter that await them towards year's end.





# Ghar Ghosts

RUTH COX TAKES A JOYFUL DETOUR INTO THE PAST

**The house is empty.** I know even on the approach, footsteps beating a frosty rhythm on the track, the forest etched onto the steep slopes behind it like pressed flowers. I know because though sounds from the village – water slapping on the communal tap’s stone flags, a peal of laughter as a woman threshing rice hails a friend – carry on the crisp air, the *ghar* in front of me is as still and lifeless as the dawn’s steel-cut chill. And it was never silent.

*Ghar.* The Nepali word for home: in this case, a two-storey, terracotta earth farmhouse in the community of Godawari. In 2001, I lived here for a month with a host family and two other volunteers while training for a teaching post in the Himalayas. Nestled in a crease of the Kathmandu Valley, life here bridged the gap between the capital and more remote regions of the country, offering a crash course in local culture and language, plus opportunities to hone vital skills like outdoor washing and the use of long-drop toilets.

The days of hosting guests were long over when the earthquake of 2015 devastated the village. The blocky, Technicolor houses that mushroomed in the rebuild have rendered Godawari unrecognisable. But miracles happen. Somehow, this farm, with its crumbling mud walls, survived that day. While no longer inhabited, my host mother and father still use it as a crop store, though hopes they might be here on this impromptu visit – a bolt-on to a trek in Langtang – seem increasingly naïve as the seconds tick by.

All the same, I’m at the door before I know it. Everything: the creaky porch bench; the cat’s-cradle tangle of sunburst marigolds and morning glory in the side garden, the ammonia tang of the chicken coops, is exactly as I remember. Bar signs of life. Bending double I cross the tiny threshold, struts warped and stained by decades of monsoon rains. “*Hajur?*” I call out a traditional greeting. There’s no reply.

In the musty darkness of the main living quarters, memories pulse like strobe lights. Morning *dhal bats*, the national dish of lentils and rice, eaten by the stove with a sloppy right hand. A solo performance of *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, the family as gaping audience. A black goat trotting in one mealtime, then prancing out again, tail held high.

And the noise: from the first light’s whispers to gossip at nightfall, the *ghar* throbbed with life, presided over by *ama*: our hummingbird host mother. Endlessly patient, she spoke to us; her three foreign daughters, in slow Nepali that made no sense, until, as the weeks progressed, we began to extract meaning from her sentences. Rice. Forest. Water: the words finally came, each one a hard-earned, precious jewel.

There are no words now, only dust motes and a stand of sugarcane wilting in a corner. The stools we once crouched on, to chat or play with the chubby baby, lie abandoned on a mat. Still, in the far left of the room, a rickety ladder leads to what I recall in a lightning flash is a balcony; an afternoon suntrap where we patched together our new world in letters home. I decide to go up for old time’s sake. Perhaps the view will banish the disappointment of a phantom reunion.

The ancient ladder’s wooden struts groan beneath me, but when I breach the hatch, popping up like a mole onto the planked terrace, a surprise awaits. I recognise her instantly, hair streaked silver, the high forehead with its scarlet *tikka* now a map of wrinkles. She holds a bronze pot, thin trickle of dried corn spilling from the sack at her side. *Ama.* We both blink. A moment passes, then another; nothing but cold air and almost two decades swirling around the draughty platform.

“*Jethi chori!*” Finally, she speaks. Eldest daughter. My name for the four weeks I spent under her roof. Setting down the pot, she steps in my direction, talking now in a river-rush tumble. Panic rises. My Nepali, unused in the last twenty years, has all but vanished, but the need to respond triumphs. From somewhere long ago, the ultimate survival phrase bubbles up; the one we all learned immediately, the one we would say again and again over the following months.

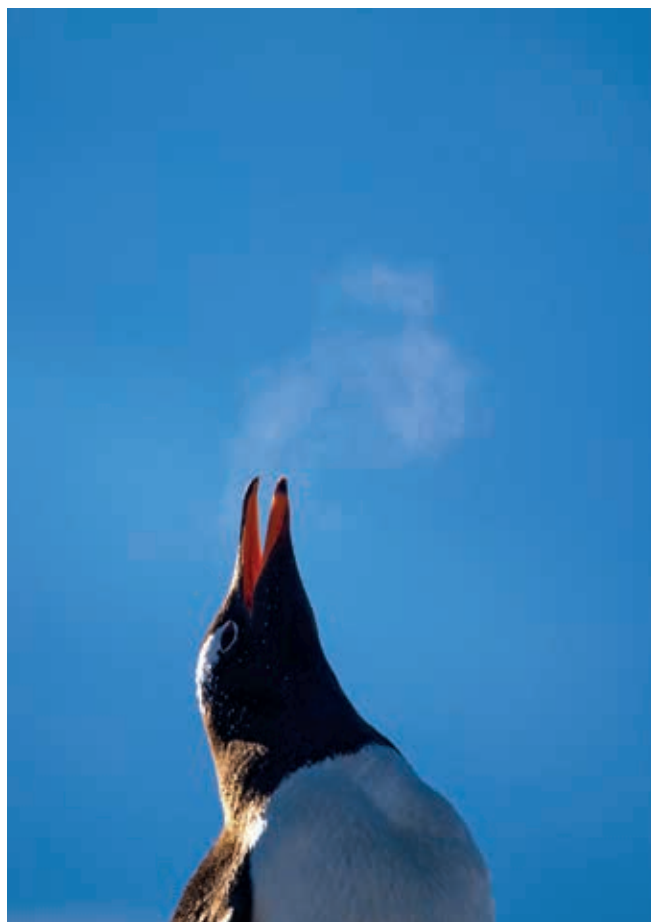
“*Maile buijhina, ama.*” It comes out creaky the first time, easier the second. “*Maile buijhina.*” I’m telling my host mother that I don’t understand, but when she wraps me in her arms, I do.





words & pictures  
Dave Brosha

# The End of the World



## Antarctica as a photographic

destination first entered my realm of thought as a young photographer. I was living and working in the 'other' polar extreme: up in the Canadian High Arctic on Cornwallis Island. The Canadian Arctic was that elusive spark I needed, the visual and life inspiration to push my need to create to the forefront, and the flame I needed to dedicate the time to learn an artistic craft. I found my camera and I found my voice. And in the weird and winding way in which life works its magic, the Arctic eventually led me to Antarctica.

In the year that led up to the first of my (eventually many) long air journeys from Canada to the southern tip of Argentina – to the beautiful port city of Ushuaia, the departure point for the ship I would sail across the Drake Passage on – I crammed as much information about that area of the world into

my daydreaming brain as I possibly could. I researched species of penguins and whales, read books from the polar explorers of ages past, and learned as much as I could about the protocols and ethics of being a visitor to one of the most pristine places on the planet. As my departure date approached, my excitement built. I don't think I really believed it was all happening until I was standing on the expedition ship – a 1980s Russian-built research vessel named the *Akademik Ioffe* – and we were ready to set sail.

On my initial voyage, my route was a photographer's dream, bringing me to the 'Holy Trinity' of that area of the world: the Falkland Islands, followed by South Georgia, followed by the Antarctic Peninsula. The day Antarctica was to come into sight, I set my alarm for the wee hours and climbed out of bed and bundled up to stand on deck, shivering in the wind.

Far off in the distance, in the pre-dawn light, I could see a mass of land. I smiled, and felt a profound peace, and went back down to grab myself a cup of coffee. I still had time.

As with many of my future moments in Antarctica, I wanted to spend as much time immersing myself in the experience of simply being there, and appreciating everything about the unique opportunity that was afforded me, rather than spending every waking moment with my face jammed up against a viewfinder. I wanted to be able to remember the sights around me, the sounds of the ship and the sea, the salty smell of the ocean and the feeling of being simply 'out in the world' as much as I wanted to look back upon photographs at some later date.

As I sipped on my coffee up on deck, the bulking mass of land loomed larger and larger both in sight and



**Clockwise from top left:** *Morning Song*. Gentoo penguin, Antarctica; *Bliss*. Cierva Cove, Antarctica; *In Magic Light*. Humpback whale, Antarctica.

long days assisting, 'catching Zodiacs', scrubbing gear and discussing photography with anyone who would listen. In the next several years I would return again, and then again. More trips across the Drake. More 'first sightings of Antarctica', more days spent drifting along the Falkland archipelago, more wanderings alongside massive penguin colonies, and more magical encounters with whales and seals and dolphins. More impossible-looking icebergs seemingly carved for a Hollywood set, and more endless light bouncing across a frozen land in a dizzyingly impossible array of colours and intensities.

This land at the end of the world had become part of me.



***Southern Light* by Dave Brosha**  
**Rocky Mountain Books, HBK,**  
**280pp, £42.99**

mind. Almost right on cue, the sun crawled up from the horizon beyond the sea and spilt warmth and joy across the glacier-covered mountains and the frosty deck of the *Ioffe*. There were a few other early birds out on deck with me, and all of us were quiet, simply taking it in – this gift. Joy was in abundance.

That first year I made three return trips from Ushuaia to Antarctica and

back. I sailed across the notorious Drake Passage numerous times, each with a different level of intensity. I've experienced the Drake at its calmest and I've seen it unleash its fury. I saw our massive vessel bob and roll and groan under Force Ten storms. I saw passengers cling to their stomachs and I felt my head hit the wall during feeble attempts for sleep during what felt like endless nights rocking and rolling in an endless seaquake. I spent impossibly

# Music City

*words & pictures*  
Simon Urwin

**“This is hallowed ground,” says Charlie Mattos as he points** to a six-foot circle on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry. “Stars could’ve had number one hits and won Grammys, but stepping into the circle to perform is when their dreams really come true.”

Mattos, a well-known DJ who is hosting the evening’s episode of the Grand Ole Opry – both a country music concert and the world’s longest-running weekly radio programme – then invites me on a quick backstage tour before the live broadcast begins. “Our show not only made country music famous, but also put Nashville on the map,” he says as we pass the in-house band warming up in the wings.

“The show began in 1925; there was no electronic interference back then, so the radio signal could travel across the country to more than 30 states. Millions of listeners – who would never otherwise get the chance to come to Nashville – could imagine the city in their mind’s eye. They’d hear country songs, songs about real lives, just like their own. And so the Opry became this shared, magical experience. It still is, almost 100 years later.”

Mattos pauses briefly to greet some of the night’s performers: eleven-time Grammy-nominee Connie White, and queen of bluegrass, Rhonda Vincent. “Since those early days, country music has exploded,” he says, as we head for the auditorium. “Nashville has too. It’s now full of hopefuls playing for tips but dreaming of one day stepping into the circle. All that hustle gives the city a special kind of energy.”

I take my seat in a row of country music fans dressed head-to-toe in tasselled suede, animal skin and plaid. A hush descends as Mattos opens the two-hour-long show that features songs about unrequited love and drowned sorrows. Two Southern belles sitting next to me are soon dabbing at their eyes with tissues. “Connie White rightly calls country music ‘the cry of the heart,’” says one, named Barb, a Tennessee native. “It reminds you that life doesn’t necessarily turn out the way you want, and you don’t necessarily end up with the person you’re meant to be with. It’s the truth. That’s why it moves us to tears.”

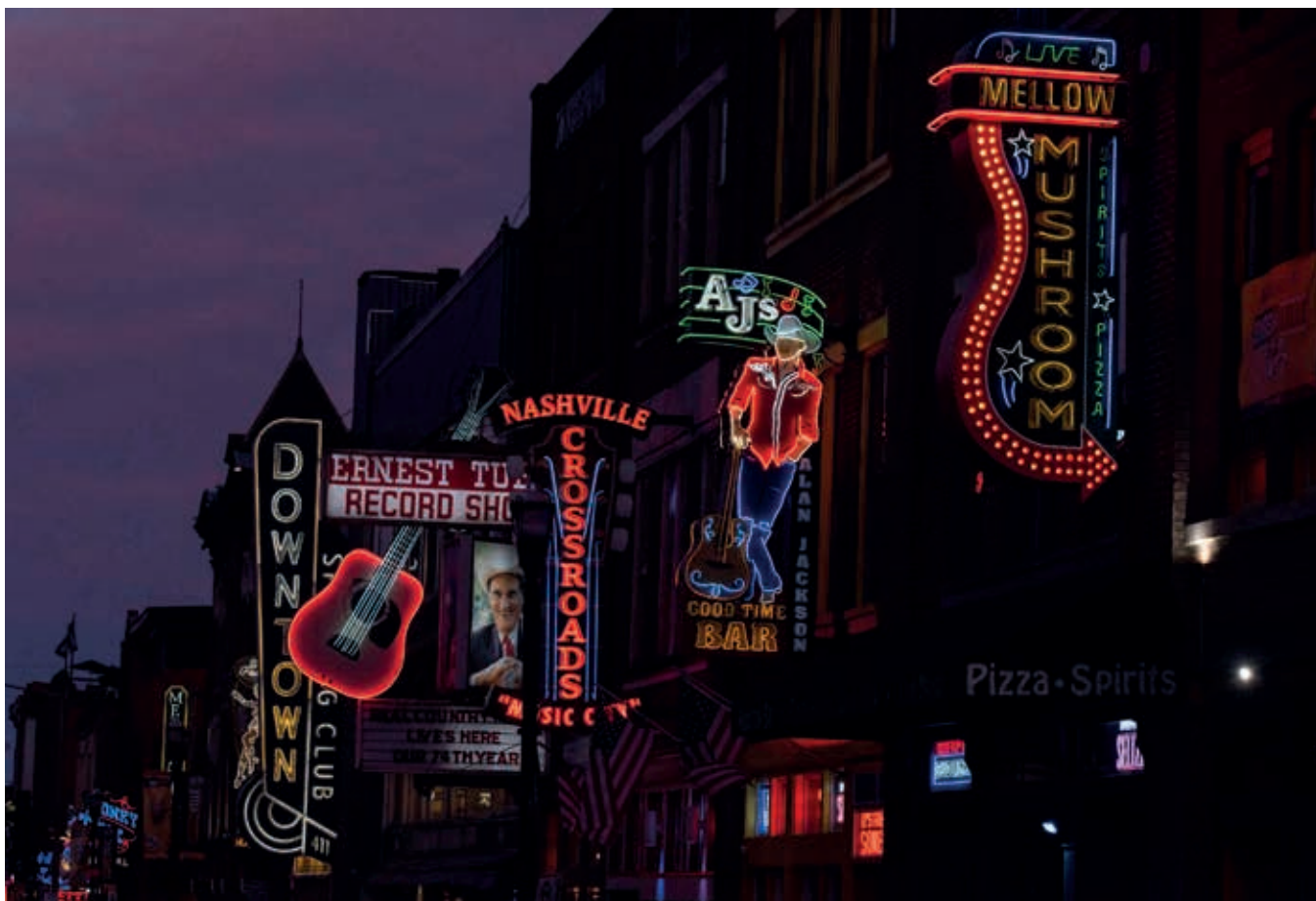
Next morning, I head downtown and walk the length of Nashville’s main strip, Broadway. Passing by each bar and honky-tonk venue is like flicking through the frequencies on a car radio: one spilling out live country; the next soft rock; then gospel-tinged soul and back to country. Music is everywhere: buskers strum outside grocery stores; bachelorettes warble power ballads en route to partying at the line-dancing saloon. Everyone I meet is somehow touched by, or involved in the business: while waiting in line at a fried chicken joint I get chatting with a musician who’s played with the singer Bonnie Raitt; later I chance upon a friend of Manuel Cuevas Sr., the ‘Rhinstone Rembrandt’, who made Elvis’s gold lamé suit and first dressed Johnny Cash in his signature black.

“You’re in a true industry city,” says Celene Aubry, a designer at the iconic Hatch Show Print, now housed within the Country Music Hall of Fame, two blocks over









from Broadway. “Just as Detroit was once all about motor cars, and LA is all about showbusiness, Nashville is Music City, USA – and Hatch played a key role in making it so.”

Established in 1879, Hatch Show Print was already a leading letterpress print shop when country music emerged. “It was there at the right time and in the right place, located directly behind the Ryman Auditorium, the mother church of country music, which hosted the Opry from 1943 to 1974,” says Aubry. “The Opry booked the biggest artists who all needed advertising. Hatch became the early equivalent of social media; our posters helped create the image of legends such as Patsy Cline, Willie Nelson and Dolly Parton. Nashville has grown like crazy ever since then. Now it’s an A to Z of everything and everyone to do with country music – from songwriters to music managers, recording studios and instrument makers.”

That afternoon I meet one of the city’s renowned music industry figures: Manuel Delgado, a third-generation luthier, whose family made instruments for the likes of Andrés Segovia – one of the most important classical guitarists of the early 20th century, and The Kingston Trio, who helped spark the folk music revival of the 1960s.

“I’m a romantic guitar-maker at heart,” says Delgado, who has a two-year waiting list for each of his bespoke





guitars. “I believe they can create a ripple effect, spreading joy to others. And when there’s a story behind the instrument, the effect becomes all the more special.”

He leads me to his backroom workshop, past towering cuts of black walnut and Osage orange. “The story really begins with the choice of wood,” he says. “I give it a great amount of thought; I’m very particular. When I work with Swiss spruce I insist it comes from a sheltered ravine where it’s been surrounded by cedars. Cedars are a dominant species, so if the spruce has survived and thrived, it means it’s a special tree. No wind means the trunk won’t be twisted and the grain will be straight as a dye. So it’s the perfect wood for making a beautifully clean, powerful sound.”

He shows me a guitar he’s recently restored, made with pieces of wooden fencing bought from Elvis Presley’s estate Graceland. “I’ve left the paint fading so it’s still imbued with the atmosphere of the place and the story of Elvis,” he says. “It’s a true heritage piece. For me it mirrors the circle of the Opry House, which is built from wood from the old stage of the Ryman Auditorium. There are 30 years of performances in that wood; 30 years of folks singing and playing their hearts out; of applause and standing ovations. That’s one reason why the circle is special. So much of the history of country music lies deep within its wood grain.”





# Reef encounters

**JAMES LITSTON** RELISHES A BREATHTAKING TOUR OF THE WHITSUNDAY ISLANDS







**It's a bit of a slog to reach Passage Peak, but the view**

from the top is a jaw-dropper. For as far as the eye can see, the vista – all turquoise sea and castaway isles – is unspoiled, wild and devoid of development. From here on Hamilton Island's highest point, I'm looking down on the tropical forest through which I've just hiked, accompanied all the way by cockatoos flapping through the treetops. It's a truly magical place: but it's not as pristine as it seems.

Though the forest canopy is thick and exuberant, it doesn't take long to start noticing shattered tree trunks poking through, each one a skeleton with stories to tell. That's because Hamilton's vegetation is still recovering from Cyclone Debbie: a ferocious Category 4 storm that swept through in April 2017. It battered the Whitsunday Islands with winds in excess of 260kph, leaving forests flattened and a trail of wreckage across the archipelago.

But disasters often herald a wave of fresh opportunity – and so it proved throughout the Whitsundays. Here on Hamilton, Qualia (the most luxurious of the island's resorts) took the cue to refurbish its guest pavilions and refresh their landscaping. Even more dramatic was the rebirth of nearby Hayman Island: its single resort was so storm-damaged, it took two full years to renovate; but has since reclaimed its position as one of the region's best hotels.

Hamilton may have lost the majority of its taller trees, but it very much retains a sense of wildness. Though it's home to a built-up resort with an airport, marina and multiple hotels, in fact just a third of the island is developed. The remainder is disturbed by nothing more than hiking trails such as this one I'm following. Descending from Passage Peak, I watch a wallaby bounce through the undergrowth and hear currawongs call out their onomatopoeic name. It's a fantastic connection with nature that's all the better for being so accessible.

While Hayman and Hamilton's vegetation will take years to grow back fully, not all of the 74-strong Whitsundays saw serious Debbie damage. Indeed, on a trip next day to what's perhaps the archipelago's most famous spot, I struggle to spy any evidence that a cyclone even passed through. I'm heading to neighbouring Whitsunday Island, the largest in the group, on the far side of which lies the Instagram sensation of Whitehaven Beach.

It's an easy (and very popular) day trip from Hamilton Island's marina; and one made all the more enjoyable by an upbeat crew. "If you fall overboard, I'll toss you a life ring and turn the boat around," announces the skipper as part of the safety briefing. "Hopefully," he adds, "before the sharks get you." And with that, we're on our way.



We sail past uninhabited shores that were long ago logged for their valuable timber. These regenerating forests are now part of the Whitsunday Islands National Park, which itself falls under the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. We soon pull into Tongue Bay and head ashore, following a well-trodden trail through the bush until the canopy opens up and we step onto Tongue Point Lookout.

The sensational view that stretches below is an influencer's dream. We're looking directly down on Hill Inlet, whose hinterland is deeply cut by a slash of





turquoise sea. Colourful swirls and arabesques are the work of powerful currents that endlessly shift and deposit the sand with every tidal movement. Beyond, Whitehaven Beach stretches into the distance, its 7km of silica-rich sands gleaming in the sunshine.

While others around me pose and pout for their social media selfies, I pause to take in every detail, keen to burn the scene to my memory. After all, an icon such as this deserves to be properly admired: so much so, in fact, that I opt to return for an even more elevated experience.

This next excursion begins a few days later with a helicopter flight to tick off three local icons at once. First comes Whitehaven Beach and Hill Inlet, looking even more splendid from above: and all the more dazzling with low tide exposing extra sandy swirls. We loop around in order to soak up the scene from every angle, then push on out to sea towards the wonders further out.

Before long, the ocean becomes shallower and the blues below us start to brighten. We've reached the Great Barrier Reef. Running parallel with the Queensland coast for some 2,300km, this vast, living structure marks the edge of continental Australia. From the air, it looks otherworldly.







Its coral lagoons and gardens are a patchwork of sapphire and emerald shades, all flanked by darker cobalt blues where the reef plunges into the depths. I've never seen anything like it.

As if this weren't enough, the pilot takes us in a steep descent to eyeball Heart Reef, the day's third icon. Sitting alone in a turquoise lagoon, this heart-shaped patch of coral is emblematic of the region: but our experience of it is only just beginning. Circling one last time, we complete our descent and come to rest on a floating pontoon from where we'll spend the next few hours snorkelling, swimming and discovering the lagoon from a glass-bottomed boat. It's surely the most immersive of Great Barrier Reef experiences.

Launched in 2019, it's also an example of how the Whitsundays have rebounded post-Debbie. The cyclone may have left extreme destruction in its wake, but by now – after five full years of recovery – these islands are better than ever. With the Barrier Reef, a world-famous beach and that hilltop hike to Passage Peak, it's precisely the sort of experience that makes Australian holidays so memorable. And with the borders once again open to international travellers, transformative trips to the Whitsundays are thankfully back within our reach.









# City of Polished Stones

words & pictures  
Simon Urwin

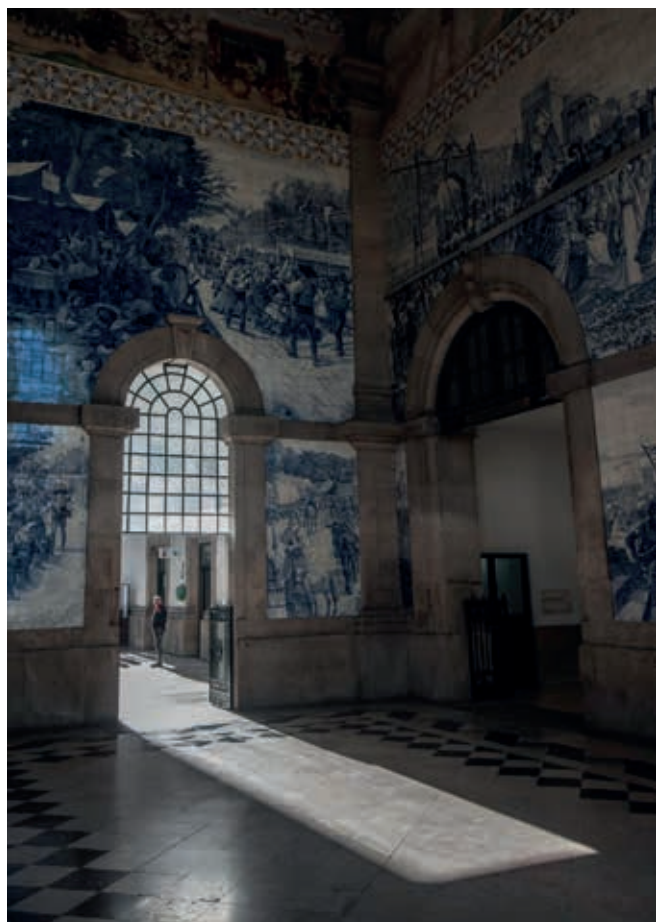
**Decorative ceramic *azulejo* tiles** – from the Arabic word *al-zulayj* meaning ‘small polished stone’ – were first introduced to Portugal by the Moors in the 13th century. Come the early 1500s, *azulejos* received the royal stamp of approval, when King Manuel I opted to decorate his palace at Sintra with their complex, recurring geometric patterns. Then, after the Moors were forced out of southern Europe by the Christian kings and their armies, *azulejo* designs became more ornate: painted human figures appeared for the first time in the 1600s, and soon thereafter mythological scenes as well as florid depictions of the Bible were gracing stone-and-plaster walls all over the country.

By the 19th century, elegantly painted ceramic façades had become all the rage, and this historic white-and-blue tilework – as brilliant as a summer sky – can still be seen embellishing buildings across Porto, Portugal’s second city: at the Romanesque, hilltop Sé Cathedral, the cool, dark cloisters are illuminated with illustrations of the life of the Virgin Mary, as well as the narrative poem ‘Metamorphoses’ by the poet Ovid; while on the Rua de Santa Catarina, one of Porto’s busiest shopping streets, the Capela das Almas is replete in startling cobalt-coloured designs that commemorate the life and martyrdom of St. Catherine of Alexandria and the death St. Francis of Assisi. One of the most imposing of the city’s tiled churches is the baroque, twin-towered Church of Saint Ildefonso, completed in 1793. It features a now-weatherworn 1930s façade made up of over 11,000 *azulejos* depicting allegories from the Gospels by Jorge Colaço, one of Portugal’s foremost tile painters.

Colaço’s masterpiece can be found close by – inside the grand, Beaux Arts-style São Bento railway station, considered one of the most beautiful in the world. Built on the site of a former Benedictine monastery and opened to the public in 1916, its main hall is decorated with elaborate panels that incorporate more than 20,000 tiles and took eleven years to complete. Here, under a blue-and-gold ceiling of stylized flowers, commuters queue for tickets, then race for their trains past intricate scenes of rural life and dramatically-illustrated milestones from the country’s past: from Prince Henry the Navigator standing triumphant at the Battle of Ceuta, to King John I and English-born Philippa of Lancaster entering Porto on horseback, their marriage of 1387 securing the Treaty of Windsor, their offspring becoming known as Portugal’s “Illustrious Generation.”









# Away from it all

**ALEXANDER ROBINSON** SOAKS UP THE EXTREMES AT THE  
SOUTHERNMOST TIP OF THE POPULATED WORLD









**For days I'd been praying for rain. Seeing Cape Horn on** a glass-flat sea, under the sunny skies that had been with me since I'd arrived in Patagonia, wouldn't cut it. It had to be roiling seas, oilskins and sou'westers. But now that I was clinging to the side of a dinghy, icy rain stinging my face, I was regretting my prayers. I felt so precariously balanced on the peaks of a vast, heaving, iron-grey ocean. The bow of our cruise ship, the *Stella Australis* was diminishing in the distance behind us and the island still looked so far away – across a mountain range of waves.

Yes, Cape Horn – the end of Patagonia at the tip of America's tail – is an island. And slowly, ever so slowly, we were reaching it, crashing into the troughs, riding the rollers. Albatrosses played around us, sprinting with the gusts that buffeted and bullied and eventually abandoned us on a black-boulder beach, under cliffs and a lowering sky.

We clambered out, and Carlos our guide pointed to a series of steps cut into the side of the island itself. We climbed, dizzying wind swirling around us and emerged, wind-battered on Cape Horn.

I'd been in Patagonia for ten days, and until I'd got on board the *Australis* it had been blue skies all the way. A transfer in Santiago and a flight south brought me to Torres del Paine



National Park and a spectacular beginning to my Patagonia journey. The hotel, The Tierra looked like a still from a Denis Villeneuve movie – merging into a stunning landscape of steppes and mountains like a space-age Frank Lloyd Wright building. At the foot of my bed through a glass wall was a view of a serrated black sierra capped with snow, under a sky so clean that foothills tens of miles away were as distinct as the vase on the table next to me. Distance itself seemed distorted.

A group of us left early the next morning under the pink and peacock-blue pre-dawn to search for condors. We walked up a low bluff that looked out over a sea of waving grassland





cut by a river which snaked towards rolling hills and jagged mountains. I was lost in the view for minutes before a huge condor coasted past just metres away, out over the expanse, before spiralling into the sky on the rising morning thermals.

The trail back down to the bluff was littered with corpses – mangled masses of bones and light brown fur desiccated by the dry Patagonian air.

“*Guanacos*,” said the guide, “a kind of llama.” They’d been slaughtered by pumas, he explained, whose populations thrive in Torres del Paine. “The BBC from London and Discovery Channel, they all come to this ridge to film,” he said proudly.

I took a long, exhausting day hike to the towers of granite that give Torres del Paine its name. A rough path snaked up from the vast Patagonian steppe into scree-covered hills and then climbed over a ridge and dropped into a valley cut by a rushing clear-water river. I followed the watercourse towards the mountains themselves, walking through lichen-covered lenga beach forest that was eerily still. Chilean firebush flowers speckled the lush green areas around the riverbank with vivid bursts of red, and as the forest thinned I saw little Darwin’s Slipper flowers, wind-bobbing over dry grey rocks – like busy Edwardian ladies in brightly-coloured bustles.









The path climbed steeply over a bare ridge and I emerged at the top breathily to another extraordinary view: of an emerald tarn set in a bowl of rugged, broken rocks at the feet of three vast, sheer-sided jagged mountains; the Torres del Paine themselves stood like sentinels in a crumbling landscape of granite and dripping glaciers.

That night I soothed my aching muscles with a swim in the Tierra's steaming swimming pool, a sauna and cocktails in the bar – with the jag of the sierra ever present through the walls of plate glass, now silhouetted under a sky of glittering stars.

I met the *Australis* in Punta Arenas – a huddle of weatherboard bungalows spread along a road next to the Magellan Straits a couple of hours' drive south of Torres del Paine. Climbing on board I could see the distant grey line of Tierra del Fuego – a huge fjord-cut island set in an ice-blue ocean sprinkled with rocky islets. I was expecting cold, but it was T-shirt warm and the sea was glassy, yet with a sturdy double-steel hull, doors which battened down and plate glass portholes as thick as a 19th-century novel, the *Australis* was clearly made for heavier weather. On the way out of harbour our in-cabin brief told us to dress in thick woollens and waterproofs every time we went out on deck. But for the first day the sun was bright. We made a stop on an island which was football-crowd busy with monochrome, Magellanic

penguins, and that night our steak dinner – served with Chilean Malbec on crisp linen, was undisturbed by ocean swells and spilt glasses.

It was a different story when I woke and headed straight for the deck, still dressed in a T-shirt, and met a roaring wind blowing straight off hulking mountains swathed in snow that sent me rushing back for warmer clothes. The sky was leaden and the wave-crested sea had turned from sky-blue to turbid green.

The ship rose and plunged over the water into Alberto de Agostini – one of the world's remotest national parks, where glaciers cut through huge mounds of snow-covered rock and crumbled into inlets of the Southern Ocean. We anchored and sped in dinghies to see Águila, one of the most spectacular, close-to. Framed by the high snowy ridges of the Darwin Range it sat huge and blue on a smooth-sculpted rock ridge, its melt oozing into a melt lake, boulders and rocks strewn over a beach the colour of volcanic ash.

And the following morning we climbed that cliff onto an expanse of flat moorland and reached Cape Horn itself. Only Antarctica lay beyond, and looking out towards it was a lonely lighthouse: a pin of light in dark wind-swirling cloud standing sentinel at the end of the inhabited Earth.







# Clouds of wonder

GUY EVERTON HITS THE REMOTE HEIGHTS OF PÙ LUÔNG NATURE RESERVE

**Water is everywhere. Here, high up, it curls in clouds** of muffling mist, and plumes from my lungs in the morning. It pitter-patters on palm-thatch rooftops and clings dewily to banana fronds; it seeps and soaks into sticky clay, trickling and gurgling down to the valley floor. Much of it never makes it even that far, for the rills and streams have been tapped, flooding each contour behind neat earthen banks bursting with weeds and wildflowers. I gaze down and see the sky and the mountaintops reflected in a fragmented mirror. Welcome to winter in Pù Luông.

Winter is a strange word in Vietnam, meaning nothing at all to southerners. Up north in Hanoi, where the December average is fifteen degrees, flea markets peddle puffer jackets and beanies, and snug, bulky locals stroll around Hoàn Kiếm lake under a banyan and poinciana canopy as if it were the most normal thing in the world. “That’s not winter!” I scoff in my shirtsleeves, but six hours later the Pù Luông mountainside exposes my hubris. There’s nothing like a hike to get the blood pumping...

I turn downhill off the mountain road and onto a track. There are many of these weaving around





the landscape, hoof-punctured and motorbike-furrowed, connecting gully-hidden hamlets with the paddy fields. A tree rustles to my right. Thud, thunk. Tangerines hit the ground, and looking up, I see a woman's face framed in the waxy leaves. I smile and nod. "Chào chị!"

"Chào em!" she replies, beaming back, all teeth, crows feet and sparkle, and carefully lobes some fruit into my waiting hands. Boosted, I journey on.

Down in the paddies, more women are working, barefooted and stooped. The rice, a lurid lemon in the autumn, has long since been harvested; now is time for sowing seeds in the underwater slop. I watch a woman straighten up wearily, sling a creel over her back and begin to pick her way gracefully out of the fields. She wears a long black skirt held up by a sash coloured in warm-toned rainbow bands, which catches my eye – this pattern is typical of the Thái ethnicity, and I see it again on beautiful scarves stacked up in a shack where I stop for refreshments towards the end of my hike. That evening watching fog rise up the slopes, I grip a mug of cinnamon tea tightly, my neck swaddled in my toasty new purchase.



Summer returns to Pù Luông in the middle of the day. The mist and dew burn off under tropical sunshine, rivers on the valley floor gleam invitingly and dogs bask on hot asphalt, indifferent to the traffic slaloming around them. Journeying down by motorbike, I enter a smaller valley, and then another one, limestone peaks soaring above, the flat floodplains quilted with paddies, bamboo fences giving way to bamboo bridges leading to bamboo and timber homesteads; even irrigation is achieved by bamboo waterwheels that creak and splash





away eternally. Few places in Vietnam have withstood colonisation by concrete, but as I turn into an even smaller dell, now bouncing up a hard-baked ochre track, all that is drab, dusty and grey is a distant memory. A river, crisp and clear, gushes to the left; lush cornfields terrace up ahead; jungled mountains tower around.

At the head of this secret bowl is Thác Hiêu, the best kind of waterfall, for in karst country the water tends to tumble in a staircase of turquoise pools, heaven for swimming, scrambling and clambering, and a feast for the eyes too. Overcome with envy at the Frenchman who has built his home at the foot of the falls, I retreat to the shade with an iced sugarcane juice, plucked pentatonic scales and wistful croons from a tinny speaker lulling me into a midday stupor.

Enclosed in another hidden bowl to the north is Kho Mường village, which can only be reached by a steep path wrapped around the mountainside, a sheer drop below. Again, the karst affords not only secrecy and security, but also, miraculously in such jagged territory, a completely flat bottom, perfect for agriculture. And if ever raiders or

invaders did find their way into the village, there is one more bolthole concealed in the cliffs.

Impressive but not spectacular from the entrance, Kho Mường cave really rewards those who brave the slippery path down through its mossy, warty stalagmites. I venture into this vast natural cathedral as far as my eyes allow, and turn around for a glorious study of light and shade, form and texture, watching the Sun's tentacles reaching desperately into Earth's most private crevices. There are thousands of caves in this country, including the world's biggest, but many echo deafeningly with excited tourist chatter; here, nothing can be heard but the flap of a batwing, and neither is there a crippling entrance fee.

Out in the open air again the flooded paddies are glowing gold, mist is rising from the forests and the temperature is beginning to plummet. Over a thousand metres above me, past the terraces and the cloud forest, the peak of Pù Luông mountain sits exposed in thin, haze-free air, looking as indifferent to it all as the dogs on the road. I'm told that one can hike there and camp at the top, but it must be planned and guided. Next time. Please, let there be a next time.

# The Galapagos: A World Like No Other

*words & pictures*  
Jonathan and Angela Scott







**Angie was born in Alexandria in Egypt and grew up in**

Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, so the liquid blue of the ocean runs deep in her blood. Many of our favourite travel destinations are island paradises: Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius and Galapagos, all highly dependent on tourism revenues to sustain people and protect natural resources. Before COVID-19 bludgeoned its way into our consciousness, travel and tourism had become one of the most important sectors in the world economy. Then the pandemic struck.

It isn't just the impact on people's livelihoods. Some of the world's poorest people live in areas with the most diverse plant and animal populations. It has long been argued that the richer nations should help meet the cost of maintaining biodiversity hot spots – such as the Galapagos islands and Madagascar. Local communities would be half a trillion dollars a year better off if the services they provide to the rest of the planet indirectly – through conserving natural habitats – was given an economic value. Fledgling schemes such as Redd (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation), uses carbon trading to generate cash to preserve trees. But much more needs to be done in valuing 'natural capital' – ecosystem services – that provide the essentials of life from food, medicines and clean water to absorbing carbon dioxide from the air. The inherent value is triple the costs of conserving such areas.

Ecosystems located in high-biodiversity wilderness areas also provide a vital safety net for people living in poverty by providing sustenance and at times jobs. Half the Galapagos population of around 25,000 live in poverty and were among the most affected by the pandemic given the highly tourism-dependent economy. In 2019 they received 270,000 visitors, ensuring jobs for 80 per cent of its population and revenues in excess of US\$100 million with 50 per cent going towards policing and protecting this unique biosphere. But in 2020 revenue dropped by half heightening concerns over both the threat posed by illegal fishing and the pressure to allow longline fishing in certain areas. Despite being banned since 2008, in 2017, as part of a trade-off deal for the declaration of a no-take sanctuary in the northern third of the marine reserve, a new experimental longline fishery was authorized. The first phase was completed but discontinued, due to lack of funding. Now, under the need to reactivate the economy, a small but vocal group of fishermen has



convinced the Galapagos authorities to request that the next phase be implemented. And according to a 2020 report, Chinese vessels just off the Galápagos Islands logged an astounding 73,000 hours of fishing during just one month as it pulled up thousands of tonnes of squid and fish. Beijing says its 'distant water' fishing fleet numbers around 2,500 ships, but it could have as many as 17,000 boats trawling the world's oceans.

For visitors the Galapagos remain an enchanted land, a destination like no other. Since August 2020 international travel to Ecuador and the Galápagos has resumed with 99 per cent of the population vaccinated and no reported cases in more than two months. Walking in Charles Darwin's footsteps in this cradle of evolutionary theory, you feel the wonder and excitement he felt when he stepped ashore from *HMS Beagle* in 1835, marooned amidst such diversity, abundance and rarity: hammerhead sharks, Galapagos penguins and blue-footed boobies among them. Imagine if you will, that all life that ever existed evolved from a single-celled organism that came into being roughly 3.5 billion years ago, a fact first alluded to in Darwin's ground-breaking book *On the Origin of Species*. It stunned the world of science and delivered a body blow to formal religion by offering the world a new creation story: evolution through natural selection with only the fittest among species surviving.

One of the greatest pleasures in exploring the Galapagos is in being able to enjoy the many spectacular sights on foot or underwater – the snorkelling and diving are superb – very different to bumping around in a 4x4 in search of big cats where your vehicle acts as a mobile hide masking the human presence. Here, due to the absence of predators on the islands, the animals are not afraid of humans. It is one of the largest World Heritage Sites on the planet with the majority of local species endemics – found nowhere else in the world. An astonishing 97 per cent of the landmass is designated a national park protecting more than 3,000 square miles of islands and islets, while the Galapagos Marine Reserve is the world's largest marine biosphere reserve. In January 2022, Ecuador President Guillermo Lasso signed a decree creating a massive new marine reserve north of the Galapagos Islands in the Pacific. The new reserve, named *Hermidadad* (Brotherhood), expands the protected waters by 60,000 square kilometres (23,166 square miles) to 198,000 square kilometres (76,448 square miles) to protect the migration routes of rare species. The order bans commercial fishing in half of the area and severely limits fishing activity in the other half. With its crystal clear beaches, green highlands, and magnificent underwater seascapes, little wonder the Galapagos is considered by the travel cognoscenti as among the best places to travel in 2022.













# Island of Dreams

AMY SOHANPAUL CONSIDERS CORFU

**‘Before us lay the island, the mountains as** though sleeping beneath a crumpled blanket of brown, the folds stained with the green of olive groves. Along the shore curved beaches as white as tusks among the tottering cities of brilliant gold, red and white rocks.’ This is one of the observations that Gerald Durrell made about Corfu, an island he and his brother Lawrence made famous in Britain through their legendary books about their time there.

Lawrence Durrell marvelled at a mysterious spring bubbling up from beneath the sand on a (then) secluded beach. ‘It is the sweetest of island waters, because it tastes of nothing but warm afternoons, the breath of cicadas, the idle winds crisping as little corners of the inert sea, which stretches away towards Africa, death-blue and timeless.’

Lawrence’s seminal book about Corfu was titled *Prospero’s Cell*, in reference to the theory that the island might well have been the magical island Shakespeare based his fantastical play *The Tempest* on. Corfu does have something of the dreamlike about it. It’s partly due to the many Greek myths associated with the island, providing refuge for the Argonauts from an avenging fleet after seizing the Golden Fleece; and in Homer’s *Odyssey* considered to be the place where Odysseus disembarked during the story.

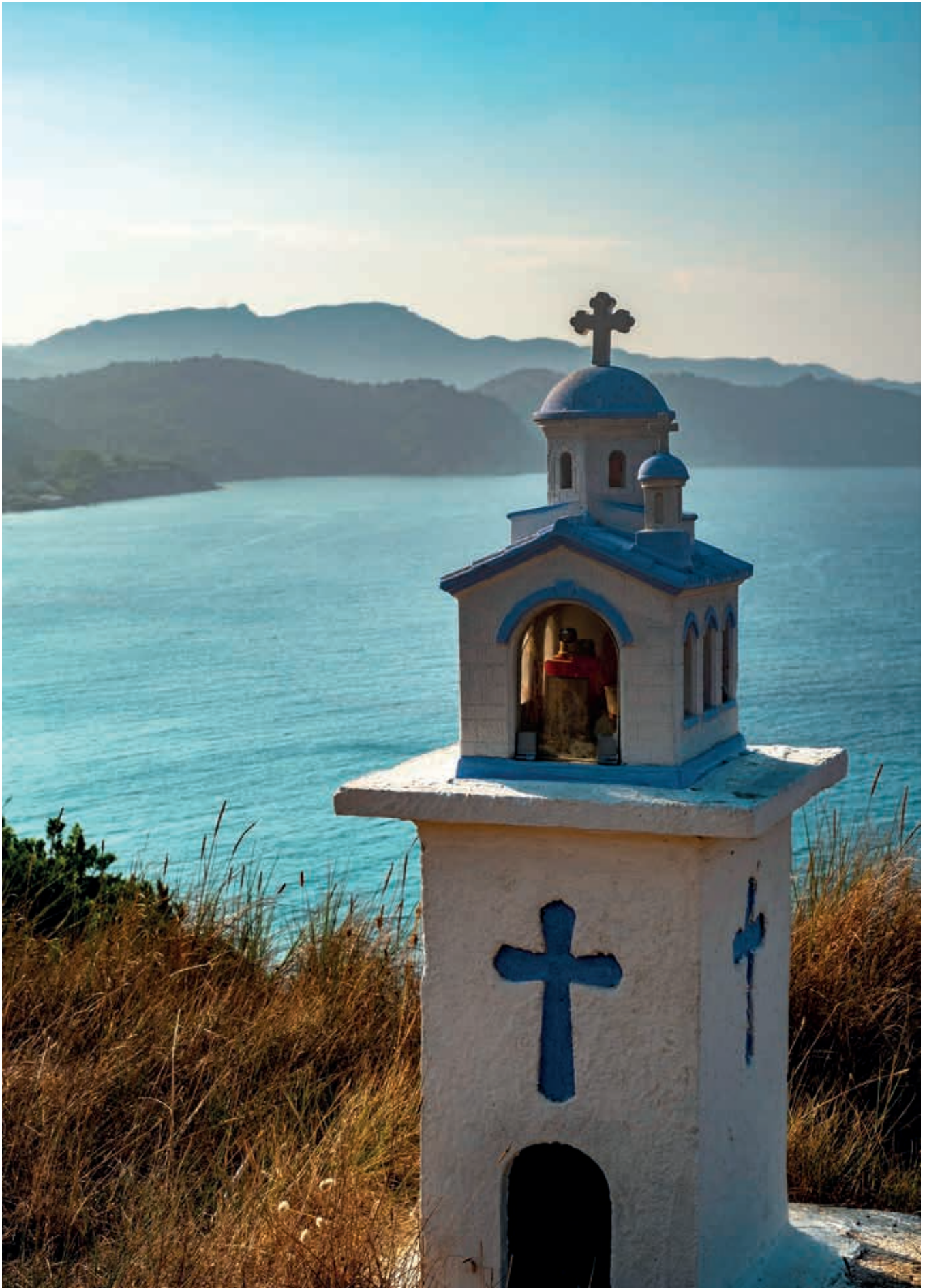
The island’s verified history is almost as extraordinary as the legends. Armies fought to possess it, including the Romans, Venetians and Ottomans, such was its allure. That allure is still strong, a combination of layers of history, physical beauty in the form of olive groves, cypress crested hills, beach after bay after cove of seductive beauty, blue and jade waves lapping all of them. The food and friendliness are as spoiling as the almost constant sunshine. Much of the architecture is as significant as it is stunning, especially in Corfu Old Town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There’s an extra magic dust too, and many ascribe it to the steeped in spirituality atmosphere that comes from Corfu’s devotion to Saint Spyridon. As Lawrence wrote, ‘The island is really the Saint, and the Saint is the island. Nearly all the male children are named after him.’ There’s also a strong heroic tradition – one of the most striking sculptures on Corfu is of Achilles.

Edward Lear, on leaving Corfu, was heartbroken. In 1863 he wrote: ‘The farther I go from Corfu – the more I look back to the delight its beautiful quiet has so long given me.’























# ITALY WITH BELMOND HOTELS

From millennium-old castles to a monastery with a façade attributed to Michelangelo himself, Belmond – the people behind the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express – offer some of the world's most iconic hotels. Painters are employed full time to touch up whitewash, sprawling vineyards produce their own signature wines and former guests include the likes of Elizabeth Taylor and Humphrey Bogart. Over these pages you'll find four classic options, showcasing the best of two Italian gems – Tuscany and Sicily.

## Castello di Casole, a Belmond Hotel

Located in the heart of rural Tuscany, this 10th-century castle on one of the largest private estates in Italy. Approached along a winding road lined with statuesque cypress trees, the restored castle and medieval village offer a true taste of rural Tuscany. Guests are invited to slow down and reconnect with nature within 4,200 lush acres, enjoying wildlife safaris, vineyard strolls and cycle rides. Enchanting rooms and suites boast exposed brickwork and open fireplaces. A serene infinity pool affords spellbinding vistas of the undulating hills. The magnificent vaulted spa, set in the former wine cellar, offers grape-inspired treatments. Restaurants serve enticing Italian cuisine with specialities incorporating the Castello's own wine, olive oil and honey.



## Villa San Michele, a Belmond Hotel

With unparalleled views of Florence's Fiesole hills, coupled with a façade attributed to Michelangelo and lush Italian gardens, this hotel is a destination in itself. Sumptuous accommodation is arranged across the former medieval monastery and gardens. Framed by ancient arches, the restaurant, La Loggia, offers reinterpreted Tuscan classics and spellbinding Florentine vistas. An intimate wine cellar hosts tastings and romantic dinners. Wood-fired pizza is served beside the heated panoramic pool. Private picnics, alfresco massages and yoga classes can all be enjoyed in the lemon-scented gardens.



### **Grand Hotel Timeo, a Belmond Hotel**

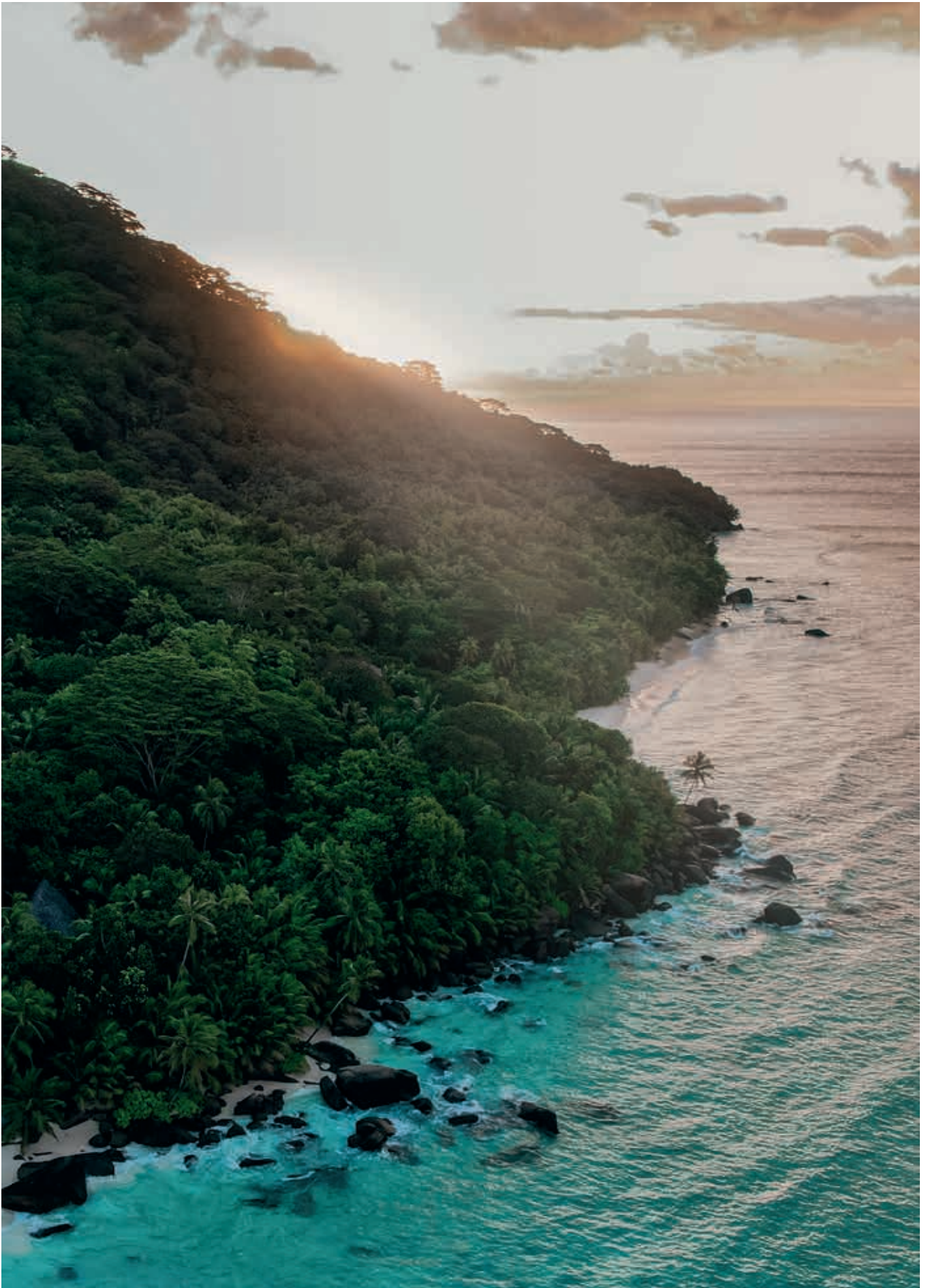
Storied and spectacular, this hotel occupies a prime spot in the rugged cliffs next to the Greek Theatre, its views spanning majestic Mount Etna and Naxos Bay. Since the mid-1800s, this tranquil enclave has proved irresistible to celebrated writers, such as DH Lawrence, and Hollywood icons alike. Within six acres of parkland, its rooms and suites are furnished in true Sicilian style, many boasting sea views. Guests can cool off in the pool, enjoy alfresco massages and gourmet picnics. At Otto Geleng, Michelin-starred cuisine meets enthralling panoramas – an exclusive experience for just 16 guests. A complimentary shuttle winds down to the private beach at sister hotel, Villa Sant'Andrea.



### **Villa Sant'Andrea, a Belmond Hotel**

Balconies of jewel-like geraniums. Subtropical gardens bordering an exclusive Sicilian beach. This is Villa Sant'Andrea, a Belmond Hotel in Taormina Mare that feels like a beautiful private home. Guests can relax in the heated infinity pool, enjoy open-air wellness treatments or hire a stylish cabana for a day of indulgence on the pebble beach. At the acclaimed restaurant, freshly caught fish and decadent Sicilian desserts are enhanced by shimmering sea views. The bar provides an enchanting spot for daytime granita or scenic sundowners. A courtesy shuttle takes guests to sister property Grand Hotel Timeo and the attractions of Taormina.







# Endless beauty

KEVIN PILLEY TAKES A HIKE THROUGH PRISTINE NATURE

**“Watch out for falling coconuts. Or you’ll stay in Paradise for good,”** smiled the lady who works as an escort in the garden of the gods.

The Garden of Eden has been variously located in Iran, Kuwait, Jackson, Missouri (according to Mormons), Armenia and Florida.

But, despite the lack of serpents, fig leaves, apples and cherubims, the Seychelles has all the requisite exotic credentials when it comes to flora, fauna and unspoilt beauty to support its claim to be terrestrial heaven.

The inter-tropical archipelago of coral and granite islands three hundred miles from the equator and one thousand from anywhere has enough succulents, agave plants, white trumpet flowers, bougainvillea, guayacan and bead trees, parasol pandans, stilt and thief palms and silk

tree canopy to satisfy any location manager looking for a place to film a Bounty or coconut-milk shampoo ad.

The islands and raised atolls on the eastern edge of the Somali sea section of the Indian Ocean are one of the world’s twenty-five designated ecologically wondrous biodiversity hotspots, boasting some of the most photographed biotopes and sea colours in the world.

But, for those who prefer their holidays to be active and vertical rather than languid and horizontal, the Seychelles also offers fifteen hiking trails on four islands – nine on Mahé, two on Silhouette, one on La Digue (named after the ship that discovered it) and three on Praslin.

The 50-acre UNESCO World Heritage site at Vallée de Maie has one- to three-hour boardwalk trails through a 63 million-year-old primeval forest famous for its coco de mers bearing their 25kg nuts.

From black parrots, bulbuls, dancing snails which vibrate when touched, tiny leaf frogs including the world’s smallest (the Gardiner’s), skinks, chameleons which look as though they are wearing lipstick, there is much to take in. You quickly perfect an impersonation of a native gecko with independently moving eyes.

Less popular but no less unforgettable walks on Praslin include Fond Ferdinand and Salazie Pasquiere across the Plaine Hollandaise which will test your threshold for lemon trees, French plums, bitter oranges and tailless tenrecs.



On the 0.8-mile but still vertiginous and gruelling Nid d'Aigle walk you may see a rare palm grasshopper but can't miss views of Félicité, Grand Soeur and Petit Soeur. La Veuve Reserve is home to the Seychelles paradise flycatcher.

Ninety-three per cent of the 20 sq km Silhouette island is a national park. It's encircled by a protected marine reserve and home to the 117-villa Hilton Seychelles Labriz Resort & Spa which has its own pure-waterfall spring water and recycling plants as well as a resident team of conservationists and energy-saving engineers.

Labriz must be one of the few luxury hotels in the world which encourages its guests to shower less, and the only one where arriving guests' resort familiarisation and orientation tour involves a food-waste grinder.

"We used to burn all food waste in an incinerator," says Keralan chief engineer Ravi Thundil. "Now we grind all food waste in a semi-solid form and compost it. We compost an average of 4800 kg of food waste every month, representing total diesel savings for a year of approximately 48,000 litres."

The tour takes in the hotel's organic nursery in which 10 kg of produce is grown aquaponically each month, its energy-saving wind and hydro turbines and solar heaters.

"Our villas are automatically controlled. The lights and air-conditioning switch off when doors remain open for more than 30 minutes, saving 2,500 kilowatts per hour. The showers are set to seven litres a minute."

Guests drink through biodegradable pasta straws, eliminating over 40,000 environment-degrading plastic straws since 2018.

At Grande Barbe, a four-hour hike across the island, local elderly couple Abdul Jumaye and Elvira Dubois look after eight octogenarian and nonagenarian giant tortoises as well as mangrove forests and the largest natural marsh in the Seychelles.

The Aldabra giant tortoise is the longest-lived animal on Earth. The most famous, Adwaita,



was brought back as a gift for Robert Clive of the British India Company. She died in Kolkata Zoo in 2006 at the grand old age of 255. A captive-breeding programme was initiated on Silhouette in 1997. The hotel now looks after eight adolescents.

The five-peaked Silhouette is named after Louis xv's finance minister (the island was first annexed by France in 1771 having been discovered by the English boat, *The Ascension* in 1609). Vasco da Gama called the Seychelles the Admiralty Islands.

The old Gran Kaz cinnamon and coconut plantation house by the jetty and harbour at La Passe is now a museum. The first hotel was built in 1983 and there is still a small community called Jamaica which has a store which one visitor once described as making a Soviet-era supermarket look like Harrods Food Halls.





Castaways are now on a half-board or full-board basis.

The island is home to threatened plant and animal species like the critically endangered Seychelles sheathed-tailed bat and *Impatiens gordonii*, a white-flowered relative of the Bizzie Lizzie.

To reach Anse Mondon, you can climb through cocoplums, tamarind and jackfruit trees, see 'flying fox' fruit bats and tri-coloured blue pigeons or blue fruit doves. You may hear the rustle of a forest scorpion or giant millipede as you brush your way through trapdoor spider webs and bishop ferns – so called because their stalks look like episcopal croziers. You might see a 'wooden horse' (as the locals call stick insects).

On Mahé, it is similarly easy to get similarly blasé about sea almonds, mahogany groves,

silk wood canopies and panoramic views.

The Salazie Nature Trail is through the habitat of the scops owl, while the 1.8-mile, 556-metre ascent Route Dans Galle takes you past orchids, royal poinciana, cardamoms, cerelan flax lily and the fragrant *bois de joli coeur*, to a view of the island's west and east shorelines.

From the Bel Ombre trailhead, the one-mile, one-hour (depending on your body mass index), one-way Anse Mondon coastal footpath in the Morne National Park leads you to a deserted beach and happiness.

It is the name of the local water taxi service which will take you back to Beau Vallon beach and Happy Hour at the fabulous Hilton Northolme.

The best way to find the best beaches is to hike to them (the other way is to be shipwrecked and washed up on them).

# *Introducing Explora Journeys*

*Featuring vibrant, modern and relaxed European design, the all-new cruise line Explora Journeys pairs immersive itineraries visiting worldwide locations on and off the beaten track, with a luxurious, boutique home at sea. Launching in 2023, they aim to restore the balance between adventure and relaxation with a focus on wellbeing and wellness on board, while slowing down the journey, giving you ample time to explore each destination in detail. While at sea expect all-inclusive gourmet dining, fine wines, premium spirits, generous outdoor spaces and all-ocean-front suites, helping you discover your ocean state of mind.*



## **YOUR HOME AT SEA**

Inspired by rich European heritage, Explora Journeys aims to create a refined and effortless experience, taking elements from only the most luxurious hotels, spas and restaurants in Europe. On board, you'll find a seamless combination of boutique-style suites with modern amenities focusing on a reconnection to the natural elements of each curated journey. Inviting spaces with elegantly designed interiors, natural tones, soothing accents and unique pieces adorn the halls and lounge areas

throughout. No detail has been spared, as hosts tend to every need, meaning guests can focus on the journey ahead.

## **ALL OCEAN-FRONT SUITES**

While exploring the far corners of the globe, you'll experience stunning landscapes, storied ports and ever-changing horizons without compromise, sailing between destinations in your ocean-front suite. Designed with refined elegance in mind, each suite, penthouse and residence offers floor-to-ceiling windows and private terraces –

meaning you'll never miss a moment at sea. Expect plenty of space, privacy and a welcome bottle of perfectly chilled French Champagne.

## **ALL-INCLUSIVE DINING**

Explora's all-inclusive dining experience will be tailored and sophisticated, bringing with it a dash of soul and personality. With multiple restaurants on board, you'll discover myriad options from pan-Asian to steakhouse to crisp, Mediterranean flavours, all made with fresh, seasonal ingredients sourced from local partners and





drawing on regional influences and healthy choices. Alongside the restaurants, you'll also find a coffee lounge, poolside dining, culinary school and in-suite dining available on each and every journey.

### LOUNGES & BARS

Aside from the suites and restaurants, indoor and outdoor lounge areas will offer a sanctuary to relax and reflect on the adventures of the day. And, with included fine wines and premium spirits throughout, guests will be able to enjoy wines from the world's renowned vineyards, sip on an aged Scotch whisky or enjoy a refreshing gin and tonic out on deck, without having to worry about the bar bill.

### HEALTH & WELLBEING

During each journey, guests will enjoy plenty of free time at sea to rejuvenate body and mind. Indeed, with a focus on health and wellbeing, each ship will offer a state-of-the-art fitness centre with tailored programmes as

well as bespoke wellness experiences at each destination. That's alongside a panoramic running track and the option of group classes so you don't have to go it alone. For those looking to relax and unwind, there will also be a choice of refreshing pools on board, including one with a retractable roof, so you can enjoy a swim no matter the weather. And, each ship will have a generous indoor and outdoor holistic centre complete with specialised treatments and thermal pools.

### SUSTAINABILITY

With new ships and a new philosophy, Explora Journeys strives to create a sustainable and environmentally friendly experience both on board and during port visits, from ancient heritage sites to delicate marine habitats. With no single-use plastics on board and ships that will use a combination of hybrid-ready energy, waste management, water treatment, energy-saving systems and smart technology, they'll set new environmental standards

for the wider cruise industry. All that alongside carefully selected partner programmes to further enhance in-port sustainability and environmental awareness.

### UNIQUE JOURNEYS

A collection of Inaugural Journeys perfectly mix old favourites with far off-the-beaten track destinations. Whether you want to explore the rugged coasts of Iceland, Greenland and Canada or stay closer to home with a cruise around the north coast of Scotland, their curated programmes are designed to showcase the very best of each destination, in depth and in the company of expert guides. To help inspire, you'll find one of their journeys detailed below.



## Iceland, Greenland & Canada

*Cruise from Reykjavik to New York aboard the all-new Explora I. Discover Iceland, Greenland and Canada's hidden gems as you visit remote coastal communities and majestic Arctic fjords. Prices from £5,065 per person.*



© JURRIAN TEULINGS

# From the Highveld to the Dragon's Back

words

Monisha Rajesh

**Once upon a time, a railfan named** Rohan Vos turned up at auction to buy a couple of coaches. His plan was to restore them and hitch them to an engine to be used as a family caravan, so he also sourced a 1938 locomotive from a scrapyard in Johannesburg. But it was not long before his hobby transformed into a business idea, and after hunting down more carriages, negotiating with South African Railways – and heaping pressure on his family life – Vos launched Rovos Rail in 1989.

Even today, every aspect of the luxury railroad has the warmth of a family-run venture, from the engines named after his children, to the way in which Vos welcomes passengers onto the platform at Pretoria – the origin of all six services. And what services they are: climbing aboard, passengers will smell the polished mahogany panelling and pressed linen. Excitement is tangible as guests wander the corridors, champagne in hand, peeking into bathrooms with

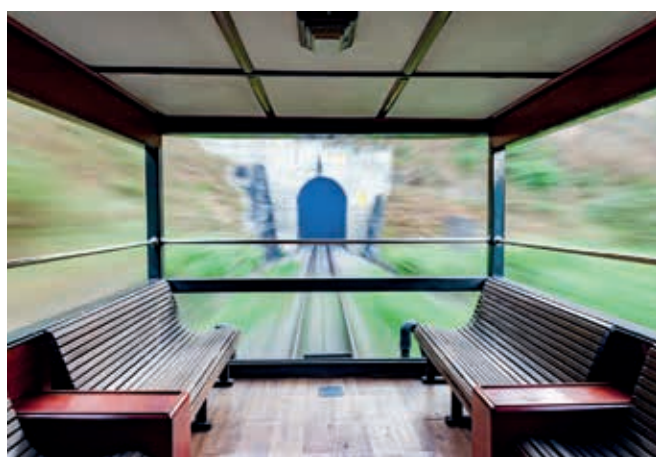
standalone tubs, and leaning from wide-open windows. Reminiscent of Edwardian-era travel, the train's button-leather sofas, natty bedspreads, and etched-glass lampshades are more than pleasing to the eye, but that is just the start.

One of the most popular routes is the journey from Pretoria to Durban on the coast. Departing at 10am, the train promptly sails out of the private station and bends southeast across the Highveld. With the skies burning blue and wisped with cloud, there is nothing more delicious than topping up your glass, turning your armchair to the window, and watching the grassy plateau fly by. Travelling on past goldfields and the province of Mpumalanga, the train gets into its stride, and belts along at a steady pace. Now is the time to wash up, look smart, and head to the observation car, which has an open-air balcony that is perfect for





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© JURRIANTEUNINGS



© ROVOS RAIL

pre-lunch drinks, the warm wind whipping through your hair.

As you might guess, the onboard chefs serve up some of the most elegant dishes you will find on a train. From grilled scallops and rock lobster tails to ostrich fillet and traditional spicy beef bobotie, catering to all preferences. Needless to say, the wine pairings are sublime. After hot chocolate fondant or cumin-speckled cheese, push back the tasselled curtains and you should see the chain of Drakensberg mountains, whose prickly-looking peaks resemble a dragon's back – hence their name.

The rest of the day is fairly casual, with no pressure to be anywhere fast, so retire to your cabin and put your feet up. In keeping with the train's ethos, there are no radios or televisions on board, and passengers are encouraged not to use noisy

devices anywhere that might annoy others. So stick to reading a good book or having a snooze.

Dinner is a formal affair, so make the most of the occasion and do not be afraid to glam up – but be mindful that the following morning is set to be an early one, so a good night's sleep is not a bad idea. As is normal with most safaris, it is wise to set off at dawn when the air is chilled and the animals are not hiding in the shade, so expect a wake-up call at around 5:30am.

Today, passengers embark on a game drive around the Nambiti Reserve at KwaZulu-Natal. Driving around 23,000 acres (9,308 hectares) of private land, you have every chance of spotting the big five safari animals, along with cheetahs, giraffes, and plenty of birdlife. Fully committed to conservation and investing in the local community, Nambiti is also malaria-free, which means that passengers

do not have to take medication before visiting.

The final day's journey begins with a more palatable breakfast time followed by a visit to the Ardmore ceramic art studio, where more than 60 Zulu and Zimbabwean artists create sculptures based on Zulu folklore and traditions, the sales of which support the Ardmore community and their families. Back on board, passengers can enjoy a long and leisurely lunch as the train barrels across the mind-blowing terrain of the Valley of a Thousand Hills, which looks much like it sounds, before arriving at Durban, the end of an incredible journey – but the start of a new one.



**Extracted from**  
***Epic Train Journeys***  
**by gestalten &**  
**Monisha Rajesh**  
**gestalten, HBK,**  
**288pp, £35**



# *The Florida Keys: Come as you are*



At the southernmost tip of Florida lies an idyllic set of islands known as The Florida Keys and Key West – 126 miles of pristine coastline, with water as clear and as vibrant as an aquamarine. Visitors to the islands can easily board a direct flight to Miami from the UK, pick up a hire car – or perhaps even a retro convertible – sling their bags in the back and set off on a self-drive holiday to remember.

Indeed, this is a region tailor-made for driving. The Overseas Highway links all the islands and makes not only travelling between them incredibly easy, but part of the adventure. Nothing feels more freeing than a warm glow on your skin, and a breeze through your hair while you watch the sunlight glitter off the ocean, headed towards a golden horizon, suspended somewhere between the sea and sky.

In the Florida Keys you are a world away from the theme parks of central Florida, in a place that envelops you with its warmth and beauty and grants you permission to shed the worries of the real world you just left behind. Here you can embrace wide open spaces and relax in a culture that welcomes everyone, just as they are.

The turquoise blue waters that surround Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, Big Pine Key and Key West are a treasure trove both above and below. Divers and snorkeller's splash down into the only living coral reef in North America to discover nature's idea of an aquarium, while fishermen anticipate the challenge of catching their dinner and kite surfers await the caress of the light trade winds.

On land discover the art galleries, independently owned cafes, varied







museums or just sit and relax in the abundant sunshine and recharge your batteries. Then celebrate the setting of the sun each night, at any time of year, by enjoying a cocktail or two, the local live music, authentic diverse cuisine and lively atmosphere.

The Florida Keys are a wonderful conservation and education destination as well, there are always projects for volunteers to get involved in. Organisations such as the Key Deer

Refuge, The Dolphin Research Centre, Turtle Hospital, Aquarium Encounters and the Great White Heron National Refuge are all places in the Keys that seek to engage and educate visitors in the conservation of these incredible islands, so that locals and visitors alike can all continue to enjoy this pristine oasis for many years to come.

The Florida Keys and Key West have welcomed travellers for hundreds of years, giving safe harbour to

explorers, pirates, rum runners and now tourists. Whichever category you fall into we invite you to discover the Conch Republic and, perhaps most importantly, 'Come As You Are'!



# Venturing Forth

**Robin West** tells *Traveller* about Seabourn's exciting new expeditions



**SEABOURN HAS LONG HAD A REPUTATION FOR LUXURY CRUISES, WHAT PROMPTED THE MOVE INTO SMALLER EXPEDITION CRUISING?**

Demand for expedition travel by luxury travellers has been and continues to grow in recent years. We saw it firsthand when we launched our voyages to Antarctica back in 2013. The success

of that season led to the decision to return every year since and the sailings have been a great success. In fact, that success led us to develop the Ventures by Seabourn programme of optional, expedition-style shore experiences using Zodiacs and kayaks, which have grown to operate in a number of global destinations such as Alaska/British

Columbia, Northern Europe, and Australia/New Zealand. Our two new purpose-built expedition ships build upon the success of our Ventures by Seabourn programme, which has given thousands of guests the opportunity to explore destinations in a more meaningful way.

**HOW WILL THESE SHIPS AND CRUISES CONTRAST WITH YOUR CLASSIC FLEET?**

*Seabourn Venture* and her sister ship have been designed specifically for the ultra-luxury expedition traveller by leading travel experts with deep levels of knowledge in expedition, fine dining, and luxury cruising. We are aiming to create a unique experience that follows in the traditions of expedition travel, with a highly social, inquisitive environment where the guests feel as though they become one in a shared experience of a lifetime.

Ultimately, the expedition ships will offer many of the experiences that can be found on our oceangoing fleet: a luxury travel experience with personalised service by







a gracious onboard team, voyages to destinations around the world with authentic experiences like no other, exceptional dining and spacious accommodations, and more.

#### **WHAT SETS YOUR EXPEDITION SHIPS APART FROM OTHER OPERATORS, AND ARE THERE ANY SPECIAL FEATURES THAT ARE UNIQUE TO THEM?**

With our new expedition ships, Seabourn will offer a true ultra-luxury expedition product with no compromise. It is easy to offer elements of luxury, but an authentic ultra-luxury product is one that extends throughout everything a ship does. I believe that no one else does it better than Seabourn. Seabourn is entering this new market with a compelling ultra-luxury expedition ship and extensive operational experience that will appeal to adventurous travellers, especially those who may typically choose a land-based experience.

Some remote destinations are best seen or only accessible by ship. Features unique to the expedition ships include a 4K (Gyro Stabilized System gss) Cineflex mast camera, capable of zooming in on wildlife, like a polar bear from 4 nautical miles away and in real time relaying that image to all tv's onboard the ship, for a truly incredible wildlife sighting. The expedition ships also have a new public space for Seabourn, the Bow lounge. The Bow lounge

serves as a virtual bridge, with identical monitors as on the bridge, displaying in real time the navigational charts, radar screen, bridge wing screen and external cameras. The bow lounge allows our guests a much greater interaction into the overall nautical operation. Of course, if this is not enough, we also have an open bridge policy!

#### **HOW MANY SHIPS WILL BE INVOLVED AND WHAT WILL THEIR CAPACITY BE?**

We are constructing two purpose-built expedition ships, *Seabourn Venture* and *Seabourn Pursuit*, with each ship carrying 264 guests based on double occupancy. Both ships are designed and built for diverse environments to pc6 Polar Class standards and include modern hardware and technology that will extend the ships' global deployment and capabilities. Each will carry two custom-built submarines, 24 Zodiacs, kayaks, and a 26-person expert expedition team whose role is to engage guests throughout each voyage.

#### **WHEN WILL THE NEW SHIPS BE LAUNCHED, AND WHAT ITINERARIES ARE PLANNED?**

*Seabourn Venture* is scheduled to launch in summer of 2022 with a 12-day inaugural voyage from Greenwich to Tromsø, Norway, departing July 15, 2022, and exploring the beautiful outer British Isles and the majestic Norwegian fjords. The ship will spend its maiden season in Northern Europe and the Arctic, where guests can explore the seasonal extravagance in the northern polar region, visit Viking ruins, view whales, walrus and seals up close, and trek to waterfalls and shining blue-white glaciers. The ship will sail to many far-flung locations in Svalbard, the North Cape and other locations in Norway, as well as Iceland; Greenland, and the Canadian Arctic Archipelago in Nunavut, the most remote and least-populated destinations explored during *Seabourn Venture's* Arctic season. Following *Seabourn Venture's* expedition voyages in the Arctic, the ship will make its way south in October 2022, stopping at various exotic locales in Bermuda, the Caribbean, Panama Canal, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile.

Between November 2022 and April 2023, *Seabourn Venture* will sail the west coast of South America, cross the Drake Passage to Antarctica, and also visit the remote South Georgia and Falkland Islands. Following the Antarctic season, the ship will head north and explore deep into the Amazon River all the way to Peru, with untouched destinations for guests to experience throughout.

Our second expedition ship, *Seabourn Pursuit*, is scheduled to launch on March 2023. The ship will explore the Arctic, Greenland, Iceland & the Canadian Arctic during its maiden season, starting with a 12-day Wild & Ancient Scotland



# Seabourn's Newest Venture

*Seabourn Venture* will represent a new era in expedition cruising – a ship designed for those whose appetite for unique experiences is matched by a taste for the ultra-luxury. Whether it's cruising by Zodiac under teeming bird cliffs, kayaking among uninhabited coral islands or spotting rare wildlife amid vast polar landscapes, Seabourn Expeditions are voyages curated by Mother Nature.

## Unparalleled destinations

Taking in 160 ports across five continents, Seabourn Expeditions offer spectacular voyages to the farthest-flung regions on Earth. From the wilds of Antarctica to remote Asian and Caribbean islands and the distant Northwest Passage, you'll explore hidden ports far off the beaten track. Guided by experts and sailing in pure luxury, these are genuine journeys of a lifetime.



## Immersive Experiences

Seabourn Expeditions take luxury cruising to the next level, pairing all the onboard sophistication of Seabourn's newest ships with a wealth of immersive experiences, from guided hikes to scuba diving and trips out in custom-built submarines. What's more, you'll be joined by a 26-strong expedition team, including scientists, naturalists and historians, who'll be on hand to bring each destination to life.

## State-of-the-art ships

Seabourn's ultra-luxury ship *Seabourn Venture* launches this year, with sister ship *Seabourn Pursuit* slated for 2023. Both ships will be built specifically for sailing the world's remotest waters, featuring PC6 Polar Class standards alongside a host of modern hardware. Of course, all that technology will slot seamlessly alongside the likes of gourmet restaurants, stylish lounges and all veranda, all ocean-front suites.



To book your Seabourn Expedition, visit [wexas.com](https://www.wexas.com) or call 020 7838 5958.

  
SEABOURN®



& Iceland pre-inaugural voyage departing on March 23, 2023 from Amsterdam to Reykjavik, Iceland. The ship will then operate a 14-day Lands of Fire & Ice inaugural voyage departing April 4, 2023 roundtrip from Reykjavik. The ship will wind its way along the coast of Greenland and Iceland, where it be filled with snow swept landscapes – the “Ice” – and have a late night in Akureyri, a wonderland providing access to magnificent waterfalls (Goðafoss), hot springs and the lava fields of Dimmuborgir and Leirhnjúkur – the “Fire.”

Following its launch and inaugural voyage, *Seabourn Pursuit* will offer a series of explorations of the Arctic Circle from Norway, most with Seabourn’s popular Svalbard Experience in the mix, including a 14-day Norway & Iceland Polar Bears & Puffins. A series of 14- and 15-day voyages between Greenland and Iceland will follow, as well as a 12-Day Bering Sea & Inside Passage Cruise visiting destinations along the coasts of Alaska and British Columbia, Canada.

In 2023, the ships will operate two unique itineraries – a Northeast Passage voyage and a Northwest Passage voyage. *Seabourn Venture* will depart July 29, 2023, for a 26-day journey across the Northeast Passage from Tromsø, Norway to Nome, Alaska. Its sister ship, *Seabourn Pursuit* will offer a 21-day adventure to the infamous Northwest Passage departing August 27, 2023, from Kangerlussuaq, Greenland to Nome.

Our Northeast Passage and Northwest Passage itineraries are life-changing trips. Guests on these voyages will discover two of the most remote and fascinating regions in the world, coming away with stories that will make their family and friends quite envious. These are the ultimate trips for travellers seeking to explore destinations less travelled, who want to take in unique landscapes, and discover wildlife they never thought they would see. These itineraries will trace the footsteps of great explorers and deliver many authentic, engaging experiences that travellers will never forget.

#### **WHICH OF THE ITINERARIES ARE YOU ESPECIALLY EXCITED ABOUT?**

We have two itineraries that will visit Scoresby Sound. Scoresby Sound is the world’s largest fjord system, on the east coast of Greenland and truly quite spectacular to explore. It has the most dramatic fjord scenery, with the Greenland ice cap pouring into the fjord through numerous glaciers. Whales, Musk Ox and Polar bears frequent the area. Two other incredibly exciting itineraries are the Northwest Passage and Northeast Passage. For me these really are the epitome of expedition travel, steeped in rich history, early explorations, considerable remoteness and isolation. Visiting Wrangell Island, which is home to the highest number of denning polar bears, will be a remarkable once in a lifetime experience.

#### **WILL YOU HAVE SPECIALIST EXPEDITION GUIDES?**

Yes, *Seabourn Venture* and *Pursuit* will each have a team of 26 Expedition Staff, a world class team of experts, scholars and naturalists, specialising in (to name a few) ornithology, marine biology, historians, archaeologists, climatologists, Kayak guides, Bear guides and Submarine Pilots.

#### **WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE AS VICE PRESIDENT OF EXPEDITION OPERATIONS INVOLVE?**

The full oversight and management of the expedition product, globally, starting with extensive involvement in the design and operations of the two new expedition ships. I also help develop itineraries, build expedition product, proof marketing, sales, webinars, nautical operations and representing Seabourn at iaato & aeco. In addition, I have oversight of our Ventures by Seabourn programme on our five ocean going vessels, while looking for opportunities to expand. I have an incredible team that supports me every step of the way, which has contributed to the great success Seabourn has had with Seabourn Quest in Antarctica and Ventures by Seabourn.

#### **WHAT WILL A TYPICAL DAY ONBOARD INVOLVE FOR GUESTS?**

A typical day when operating in remote areas would involve two operations a day. This could be two landings or a landing and a Zodiac tour. There will be lectures on board while guests are ashore to be repeated later. In addition, there will be multiple kayaking departures each day along with multiple submarine dives. Once back on board, the evening consists of Recap and Briefing sessions and scenic cruising before or after dinner, depending on our location.

A sea day will consist of multiple lectures from our expedition team on relevant topics based on the destinations we will visit. Expedition staff will be out on deck with Swarovski binoculars, iPads and electronic charts looking for and pointing out wildlife. In addition, we will have microscope presented lectures, looking at the world in a very different way. We have an open bridge policy where guests are more than welcome to visit.

Both sea and operational days are busy with a focus on exploring, education and learning.

#### **WHAT WOULD YOU HOPE YOUR GUESTS TAKE AWAY FROM SAILING WITH SEABOURN EXPEDITIONS?**

A true expedition experience that has no compromise between ultra-luxury onboard and true expedition experiences off the ship. A greater appreciation and understanding of wildlife, culture and the world we live in. An experience that not only enriches the lives of our guests, but also the places and people we visit.

“AT THE BIRTH OF  
OUR PLANET, THE  
MOST BEAUTIFUL  
ENCOUNTER  
BETWEEN LAND  
AND SEA HAPPENED  
ON THE COAST OF  
MONTENEGRO”  
LORD BYRON



**Where the open waters of the Adriatic Sea meet Montenegro's black mountains, the calm, sheltered haven of Boka Bay provides an exquisite setting. One&Only Portonovi, the only resort of its kind on the Adriatic, opens a window to a dramatic coastline and the preserved medieval towns of Herceg Novi, Perast and Kotor.**

Step out of One&Only Portonovi and you'll discover a bright and vibrant neighbourhood. At its heart is Portonovi Marina, where glistening yachts rest at anchor, a landscape of sculptural trees and fragrant shrubs, dotted with calm fountains and hidden alcoves, evokes an atmosphere of charming serenity.

Designed for contemporary living with hints of its historic Montenegrin setting, the chic rooms, suites and villas provide an ideal observation deck for life at sea. The atmosphere breathes welcome and warmth – all enhanced by the legendary One&Only service.

With its private beach, fine white sands meeting aquamarine waters on the shore of Boka Bay, the laid-back days at the informal beach club are perfect for sunseekers and families looking for a refined yet relaxing holiday. Everywhere you rest your gaze there is a beautiful pool, creating a different mood for every setting. This is relaxed poolside living at its absolute best, effortlessly enhancing the resort's understated glamour.

*One&Only*

To find out more about One&Only Portonovi, call a Wexas specialist on 020 7838 5958.



## HOTELS

# One&Only Le Saint Géran

## Mauritius



**Situated at the tip of one of the most celebrated coastlines in the world – the Belle Mare – Le Saint Geran is worth a stay for the location alone.** Platinum beaches are edged on one side by palm trees, and on the other by limpid waters full of flamboyant fish flitting through equally flamboyant coral. In addition to the joys of swimming and snorkelling in the warm Indian Ocean, the hotel offers pools to suit all moods – a serene adult only Spa pool for unwinding before or after pampering treatments, a restaurant side pool with amazing ocean views, and the family friendly Palm Grove pool with lifeguards, swim-up bars and canopied cabanas.

Dining options offer similar spoilt-for-choice indulgences. La Terrasse serves a blend of Mauritian culinary cultures, including French, Creole, Chinese and Italian. For world class and cutting edge fusion sushi and other dishes, Tapasake takes the best of Japanese and Peruvian traditions, all enjoyed with lagoon and mountain views from over-water seating under a thatched canopy. The elegant steakhouse Prime, with an outdoor terrace, dishes up the finest Wagyu and Angus beef, as well as exceptional fresh seafood.



At the end of sunny days delighting in the island's lush interior, swimming, sunbathing, spa time and delectable dining, the rooms and suites provide equally enjoyable time out. All are airy and sleekly stylish, with every creature comfort and balconies or private terraces to make the most of the beach or mountain views. For the ultimate of indulgences amongst all this ultimate indulgence, check into the secluded standalone, two-bedroom villa, which has a gorgeous private terrace and infinity pool.

# EXPERIENCE EMIRATES ONE&ONLY WOLGAN VALLEY



**Home to dramatic sandstone cliffs, dense eucalyptus forest, magnificent waterfalls and an abundance of native wildlife, the Blue Mountains are one of Australia's most spectacular locations. And, there's no better base to explore them from than the world-renowned luxury lodge – Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley.**

Just a two-and-a-half hour drive from Sydney, in the shadow of the Blue Mountains' dramatic sandstone cliffs, Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley vaunts a setting that is truly unmatched. Freestanding villas feature sprawling wooden decks with warming fireplaces and private pools while foodies can expect everything from six-course menus to farm-to-table dining and private bush picnics. And, with the lodge occupying just 1% of its 7,000-acre conservancy surrounds, guests will find a whole network of wildlife-rich nature trails, ready to be explored. Then, of course, there are the indulgently relaxing treatments on offer at the stylish spa. But, what really sets Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley apart is its myriad signature and private experiences.

## **Included Experiences**

During your stay, you'll be treated to a whole range of included activities, designed to make the most of the lodge's magnificent location. Indeed, this is an ideal place for a hike, and a nature walk through Carne Creek is an adventure not to be missed. Accompanied by a Field Guide, you'll learn about the valley's plant and animal life, alongside excellent opportunities for bird spotting. Or, perhaps venture out with

the conservation team to learn of the area's ecology, making a true hands-on contribution to the protection of the region with activities such as tree planting, water-quality testing, habitat assessments and wombat surveys. Otherwise, choose from the likes of colonial heritage tours, stargazing talks and even a Wolgan Rangers programme for kids.

## **Signature Experiences**

For a true Wolgan Valley adventure, the lodge's signature experiences are well worth the upgrade. Perhaps you'll enjoy a horse ride through the undulating landscape, or the chance to head out, sundowner in hand, to spot native wildlife from the comfort of a 4WD at sunset. That's alongside the signature archery experience and, giving a nod to the resort's conservation efforts, a nocturnal wildlife tour – a unique chance to search for possums, wombats and owls, wallabies and kangaroos at night, with proceeds given directly to the wombat research programme at Western Sydney University.

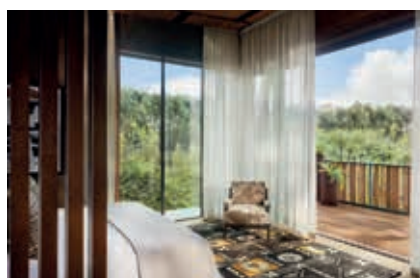
*One&Only*

To find out more about Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley, call a Wexas specialist on 020 7838 5958.



# One&Only Gorilla's Nest

## Rwanda



**A chic collection of lodges and suites perch amidst towering eucalyptus trees and dramatic volcanic surroundings at Gorilla's Nest in Rwanda.** The surroundings may be rustic; the accommodation here is anything but, adorned with local art, featuring terraces, viewing decks, al-fresco showers or baths, and, in the case of the Silverback Suite, an outdoor lounge with fireplace and private pool.

The greatest attraction however, lies outside. This is the closest resort to Volcanoes National Park, a place of ancient rainforest and home to golden monkeys, hundreds of bird species, and of course mountain gorillas. More than 340 of

these endangered and majestic creatures live here, in the emerald jungles that carpet the steep sleeping volcanoes. The permit to view them ensures limited numbers and expert guides, to make sure each encounter is a respectful, ecologically sound one.

The ethos of ecological conservation is a founding principle at Gorilla's Nest, from their pesticide free gardens to seasonal dishes based on the most local ingredients. The menus vary daily, depending on what has been harvested that day from the chef's garden, but are reliably delicious, and served in The Nest, a cosy, sociable retreat after days spent exploring.

# TOP 10 EXPERIENCES IN *Alberta*

From world-leading festivals to incredible wildlife and landscapes, here are the great reasons why Alberta should be at the top of your travel wish-list.

## *1. Explore the Alberta Badlands*

Step back to the time of the dinosaurs in one of Alberta's hidden wonders – the rugged and spectacular Badlands.

## *2. Experience winter in Banff*

Banff in the winter provides a whole new palette of activities including skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, ice skating, and so much more!

## *3. Discover incredible scenery in Waterton*

The prairies of Alberta meet the peaks of the Rocky Mountains at Waterton Lakes National Park. Hike to discover crystal-clear lakes, thundering waterfalls and rainbow-coloured streams.

## *4. Go in search of wildlife in Jasper*

From bear to elk, wildlife can be found in every corner of Jasper National Park. Indeed, this vast protected area is home to all the mountain species, including elusive wolverines and golden eagles.

## *5. Feed your inner foodie*

Bolstered by top chefs, superb produce and award-winning restaurants, Alberta has become a culinary destination in its own right.

## *6. Get lost in the dark sky*

Enjoy some of the best stargazing in the world with a trip to a Parks Canada Dark-Sky Preserve – a place dedicated to preserving the night sky

## *7. Visit the Calgary Stampede*

Home to one of the world's largest rodeos, this 10-day festival features everything from parades, stage shows and concerts to agricultural competitions, chuckwagon racing and First Nations exhibitions.

## *8. Uncover a rare gem in Canmore*

Worth stepping off the beaten track for, pretty Canmore offers hiking, fishing and wildlife in summer, while in winter attention turns to cross-country skiing and husky sledding.

## *9. Experience urban renewal in Edmonton*

Alberta's capital has come a long way in recent times. Find out what the fuss is about as you contrast its chic shopping with its world-class fringe festival.

## *10. Take a trip to Métis Crossing*

From art workshops to horse-drawn sleigh rides, don't miss the chance to delve into the rich heritage of the Alberta's indigenous Métis population.



# Arctic Wilderness Lodge

## Norway



### Strung along the banks of the river Alta, the Scandi-chic

suites and rooms of this wilderness lodge are, quite simply stunning. Each is designed to make the most of the magical views, with floor to ceiling windows, framing scenes as compelling in the summer as in the winter. For this is a year-round resort, as beguiling under the mid-year midnight sun as it is under the shimmering shades of the Northern Lights in the winter months.

Inside and outside the rooms, the emphasis is on the glorious outdoors. During the warmer months the resort organises river boat excursions, a tranquil way of absorbing the bird song that punctuates the fairytale forests alongside, and the dreamy experience of lounging in a hammock in the Nordic forest under the endless sunlight, as well as the opportunity to spend time with the Sami people and their reindeer. In winter, snowmobile and husky safaries swish guests over deep and pristine snow, and of course the chance of marvelling at the splendour of the dancing Northern Lights. At any time of year, there's a sauna and outdoor jacuzzi combination for relaxation after the day's adventures.



Attention to detail and comfort is superlatively high throughout the lodge, with a panoramic lounge and riverside restaurant. The culinary experiences on offer, which range from three to eight courses are all delectable, and based on local, seasonal produce, from sensational seafood to reindeer and intensely sweet berries. A stay here is to be immersed in Scandinavia, inside and out.

# Mum's the word

**Darjeeling Express chef, restaurateur and campaigner Asma Khan tells Mark Reynolds about her new cookbook-cum-memoir and her future plans**



**Ammu is an affectionate term for 'mother' in South Asian Muslim homes, and Asma Khan's latest book is a heartfelt celebration of the food handed down to her by her mother, interweaving mouthwatering recipes with stories from her own journey as a chef and as a parent.** "From the time I started learning how to cook, my mother's influence on how things are made, on how I look at life, was very strong," she tells me. "The book was like me calling out to her. It was only when I started writing that I realised just how much Ammu is the architect of my success."

Darjeeling Express, currently based on Garrick Street, famously has an all-women kitchen where all of the staff are home cooks, not trained chefs, many of whom have worked with Asma since she started a home-based supper club over a decade ago. "The original

Spice Girls are still there," she smiles, "all now in their fifties and sixties. But we've had four young women join our team, very articulate, very political young girls who understand the injustice of what has happened historically to women in my culture, where we are uncelebrated, unloved, unpaid and never considered professional, even though we feed families day in and day out on very limited resources. But in my lifetime, in my kitchen, I'm seeing the change: a more political, more aware generation of South Asian women, working alongside women who never saw themselves as skilled."

This is another way in which Asma is following in the steps of her Ammu, who back in India started a catering business that gave opportunities to women who had fallen on hard times. "She used to go into very tough neighbourhoods and tell everybody, 'Don't touch this woman, she's going to work for me tomorrow.' Her huge sense of equality and justice drove her to challenge patriarchy very, very gently but in such an effective way. No one, even if they disapproved of what my mother was doing – and I'm sure that many people in the family did – could throw stones at her, because she was just so kind and helpful to everybody."

Coming from a comfortable background, surrounded by cooks and housekeepers, Asma's mother also broke the mould

by taking an active role in the family kitchen – with Asma a constant observer. "My mother was very unusual, she's the only one out of five sisters who can cook, the others are terrible cooks or don't cook at all, and because she loved to cook I just sat around and watched her – and I ate."

"In my kitchen," she adds, "the women don't give instructions to each other, there's no shouting and screaming, there's no hierarchy. This is how women cook in our culture, there's a lot of singing, and a lot of gossiping and chatting, but no one's telling people what to do, you've got to work it out yourself. We don't weigh anything, it's intuitive. In the book I describe aromas, I describe colours. I'll say, 'When your onions look like this' or 'When the oil has come to the top of the edge of the masala', or 'When you can hear the sound of the popping mustard seeds...' I'm telling you how to cook in the way that someone standing in the kitchen would learn how to cook. It gives you all the instructions, but for someone who is cooking intuitively, instinctively, and wants to understand what's happening to that dish, I'm describing that to you as well."

Asma had to close the original Darjeeling Express during the first lockdown, reopening at the present site in December 2020, but she'll be on the move again from July, in order to



**Left:** Watching Ammu cook in Cambridge in the 1990s was a game-changer. I realised the aromas and flavours of my home in India could be transported to another land.

**Right (clockwise from top left):** Ammu's Chicken Biryani; Buttermilk Chicken Pakoras; Ma's Prawns; Sikandari Raan (spiced leg of lamb).

re-establish an open kitchen with the cooks in full view of diners. "I need to show my women again," she explains. "I had to move to Garrick Street to protect them. In a small space next to each other, the chances they would infect each other were very high, so we moved them to a huge kitchen space where we could separate them out into groups. Now that need has gone. They're all vaccinated, and we'll eventually be seeing the back of the pandemic, I hope, and I'm now ready to bring them back up."

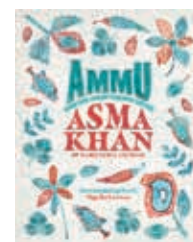
Asma is rightly proud of running "the only female-founded, all-female Indian kitchen in the world. Even in India and Pakistan, Bangladesh, no female founders could have run a business like this, and I love London for that." So could she see Darjeeling Express expanding? "I'd be very happy," she insists. "It's probably the next step for the women, becoming business owners, so why not? I could see a pared-down version of this expanding, and maybe even taking it to Paris or New York. And if I can do it, I hope I can inspire other women of different culinary traditions to do it – take the politics, take the conversation, to other lands where it's not happening."

The recipes in *Ammu* range from simple snacks to celebratory dinners. So what would Asma whip up from the larder when unexpected guests



drop by? "Pakoras, absolutely. Once you learn how to do the chickpea batter perfectly, you can deep-fry everything. So I would do that, and I would always make a chutney. I love the combination of something crispy and hot dipped into something cold and tangy and spicy. That's for me the best kind of food." And for a feast? "It has to be biryani. There's something so beautiful about very fragrant rice that has been sitting

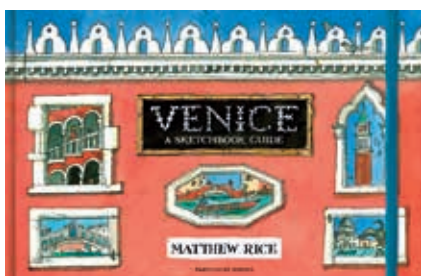
under steam absorbing all the aromas of the spices and meat. I come from Bengal, which is a rice-growing area, so for me a feast is where the rice is the star of the show."



**Ammu**  
by Asma Khan  
Ebury Press, Hbk,  
288pp, £26

# City of Sighs

*pictures* Matthew Rice



**Venice: A Sketchbook Guide**  
by Matthew Rice  
Particular Books, Hbk,  
224pp, £16.99

**Top:** The most famous bridge in the world: the white marble Ponte di Rialto, 1591, by Antonio da Ponte.  
**Above left:** The Colleoni monument in Campo Santi Giovanni e Paolo.  
**Opposite:** Dog-walkers on the Riva degli Schiavoni, Castello.



# Small Wonder

by Colm Tóibín

I am in Venice during the pandemic,  
Here to pay homage to aftermath,  
Afterthought, to what hardly matters.  
I shrug as I pass the Bridge of Sighs  
And will not go near Piazza San Marco  
Which is deserted anyway, unused.  
Gondoliers stand idle at minor bridges.  
No one is sailing up and down  
The Grand Canal or standing in the Frari  
Staring in awe at Titian's Assumption.

I am looking for a broken tile,  
A plaque that has become indecipherable,  
A piece of slight sculpture attached  
To a wall because no one knew where else  
To put it. I move through the empty city  
And forage for flaking paint on a door,  
The dead end, the tiny window, the gate,  
The mangy cat, the little yapping dog,  
The middle-aged shopper, the half-empty vista.  
The shop that sells ordinary electrical goods.

Titian, in his own time of plague, as he worked  
On his great Pietà, with his son close by,  
Made a little image of them both and placed  
It at the bottom right of the painting.  
It may be a modest token, a small sign,  
To be seen only by those who come  
With an eye for such defenceless gifts.  
But who can say that in a future when truth  
Is back in vogue, this will not stand alone  
As something true a man once made?

In his Annunciation, now cleaned up,  
Veronese put a glass bowl on a balustrade.  
In weak light, it is close to not being there,  
Unimportant against the breathless angel  
Arrived to surprise the cowering woman.  
The bowl breaks the brittle symmetry  
Of the architecture and the two figures,  
Its pale white smudge, its tear of light,  
Unspeaking, unnecessary, begins as whim  
And becomes what binds the image to the air.

The study of St Augustine by Carpaccio hangs  
In Venice in that room-like gallery, empty now,  
The woman at the door almost grateful  
There is a visitor. In the painting, I let my eye  
Stray from the saint facing the window  
As he imagines his own impending death  
To a discarded book on the pink floor,  
And then to the shadows, all dense, making clear  
That as light settles uneasily outside, and water  
Licks the stone, what prevails is solid and alone.



from the collection  
**Vinegar Hill**  
Carcanet Poetry, PBK,  
144pp, £12.99



# Going nowhere

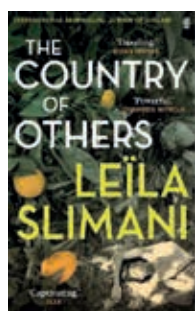


If your travel plans include dipping into wilderness areas, two contrasting books can take you there. ***Let's Get Lost*** by Finn Beales (White Lion Publishing) gathers together stunning images of glorious landscapes around the globe by Beales and 20 other renowned photographers. Divided between Mountains, Wilderness, Coast, Ice & Snow, Lakes & Rivers and Forests, and covering every continent, you'll quickly discover your next perfect getaway, and start planning for many more trips to come. ***Islands of Abandonment*** by Cal Flynn (William Collins) journeys to some of the eeriest places on earth to examine what happens when humans leave and nature is allowed to reclaim its space. There is both desolation and hope in places poisoned by oil spills, blasted by bombs, contaminated by nuclear fallout or stripped of natural resources, yet rehabilitated by ecological succession. A tantalising glimpse into a post-human future.

**Opposite:** Paddling at speed across Lake Louise, Alberta, from *Let's Get Lost* by Finn Beales.



## Finest fiction



***The Country of Others*** by Leïla Slimani (Faber & Faber, translated by Sam Taylor), winner of the 2022 Stanfords 'Fiction with Sense of Place' award, is the first in a planned trilogy of novels based around French-Moroccan Slimani's family history. It opens in 1944 with Mathilde, a passionate young Alsatian woman, falling in love with a Moroccan soldier called Amine, and setting out

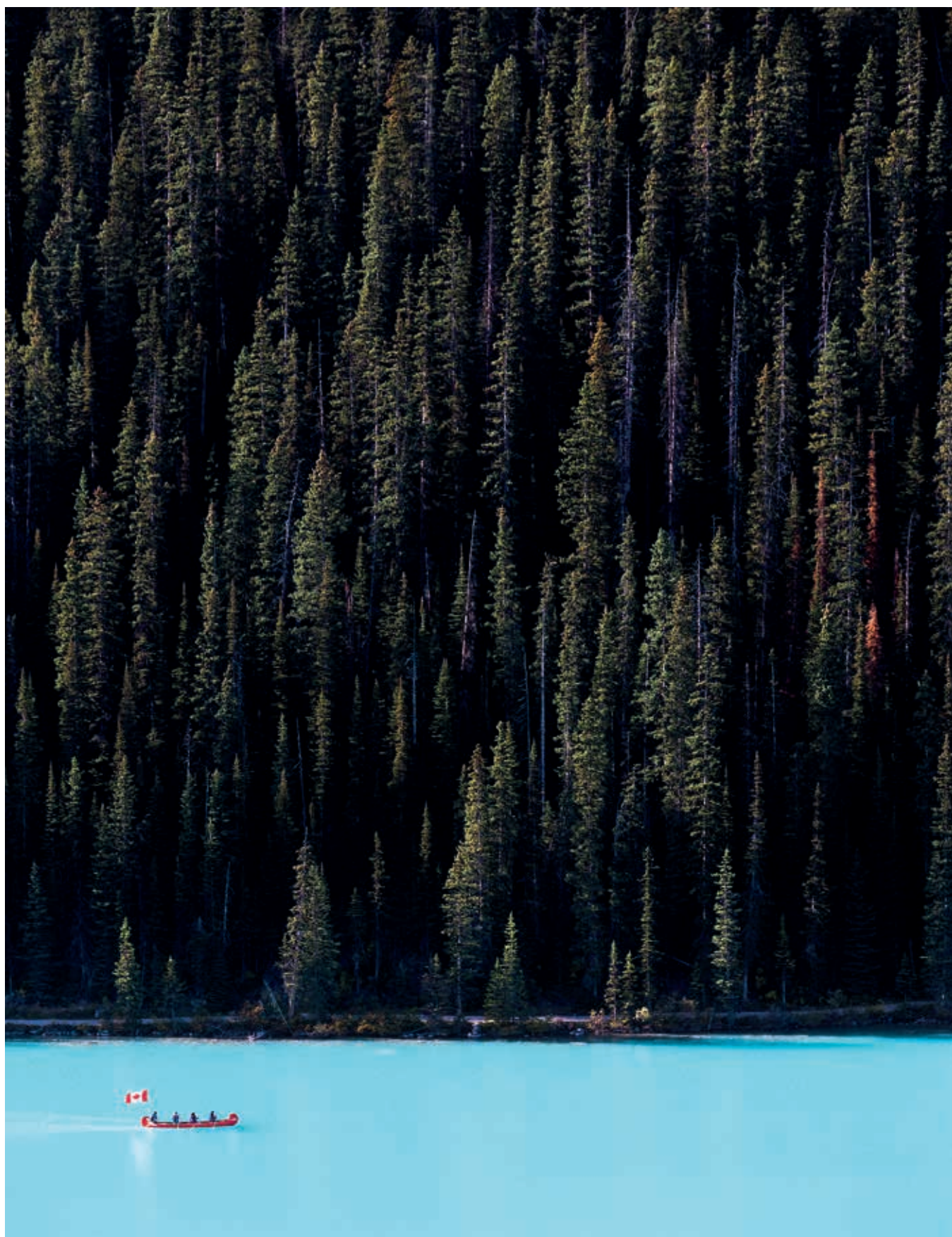
with him to the countryside outside Meknes to start a new life in a new land. But complications arise when Amine's sister falls pregnant to a dashing French airman, creating fractures between individuals and cultures as Morocco steams towards independence. ***Witches*** by Brenda Lozano (MacLehose Press, translated by Heather Cleary) weaves together the parallel narratives of two women from contrasting backgrounds in Mexico. Feliciano is an indigenous *curandera* or healer, and Zoe is a journalist investigating the murder of Feliciano's trans cousin. Their stories offer a beguiling examination of self-knowledge and feminine power. ***Bitter Orange Tree*** by Jokha Alharthi (Scribner, translated by Marilyn Booth) is a compelling portrait of a young Omani student at a British university taking stock of the roots she has grown from, and coming to terms with the recent death of the woman she believed was her grandmother. ***Booth*** by

Karen Joy Fowler (Serpent's Tail) is a wonderful evocation of the colourful family life of John Wilkes Booth, the infamous assassin of Abraham Lincoln. Deftly conjuring a 19th-century America riven by Civil War, it is a cautionary tale of divisive politics and rash impulses present-day world leaders should pay heed to. Closer to home, ***The Red Children*** by Maggie Gee (Telegram) is a playful near-future fable in which a new wave of immigrants in Ramsgate turn out to be survivors from a community of Neanderthals hitherto undiscovered within the sea caves of Gibraltar, whose natural wisdom and kindness eventually rubs off on their suspicious-minded hosts. ***The Odyssey*** by Lara Williams (Hamish Hamilton) is a biting satire about the gig economy which sees a troubled young woman join the crew of a gargantuan cruise liner and attempt to erase her past by immersing herself in an endless series of mind-numbing service roles. A perfect read for sitting on

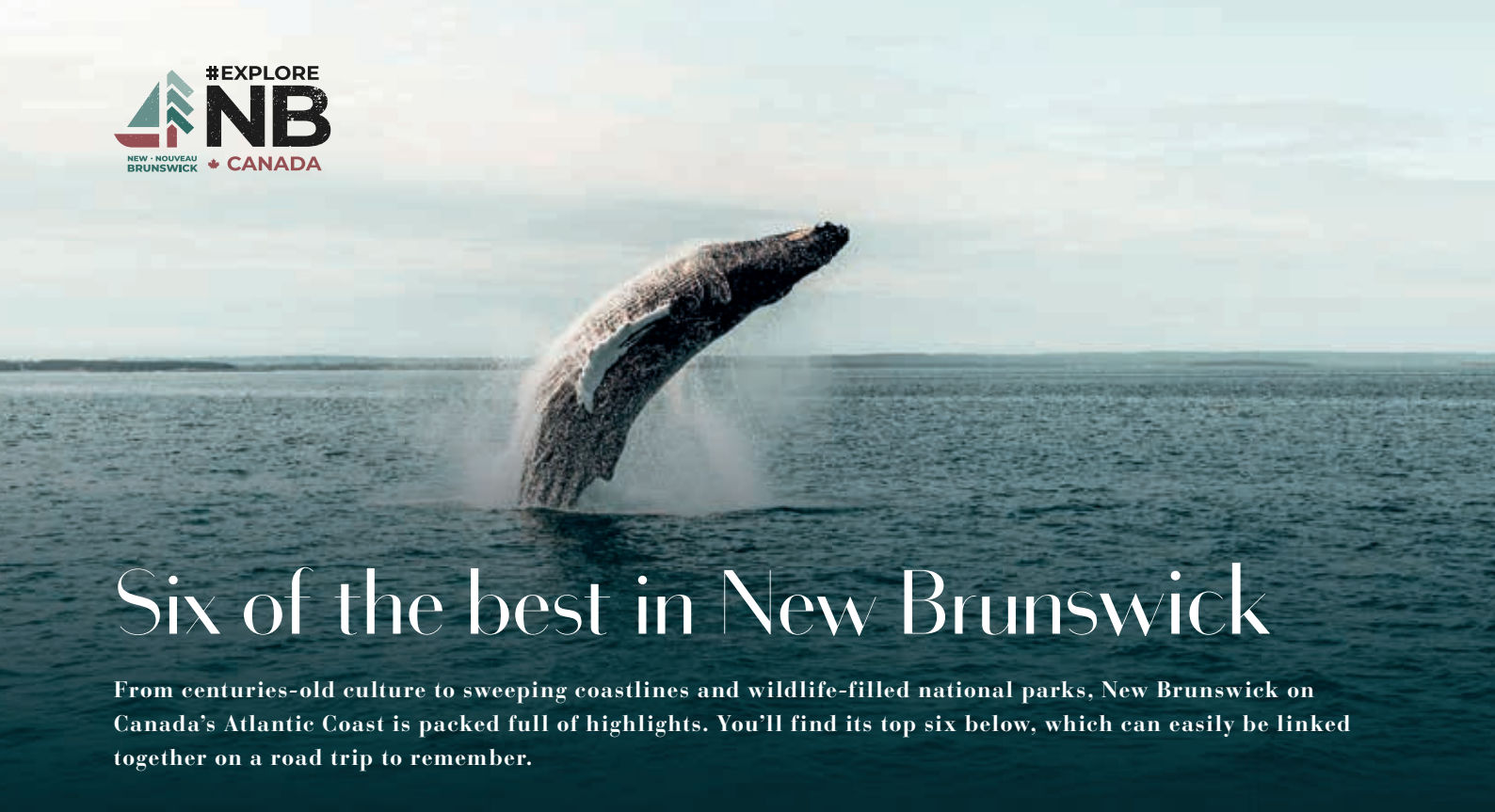


deck with an inclusive drink or three to set about imagining the messy interior lives of fellow passengers and crew. ***The Seaplane on Final Approach*** by Rebecca Rukeyser (Granta) similarly peels back the layers of the luxury holiday by peeking behind the scenes of a failing wilderness lodge in the Alaskan Kodiak Archipelago to illuminate the deep needs and naked desires that lurk beneath a carefully cultivated surface.









# Six of the best in New Brunswick

From centuries-old culture to sweeping coastlines and wildlife-filled national parks, New Brunswick on Canada's Atlantic Coast is packed full of highlights. You'll find its top six below, which can easily be linked together on a road trip to remember.

**1 Wildlife & open spaces**  
With its spectacular national and provincial parks dotted with rivers and waterfalls, alongside dramatic coastlines host to magnificent rock formations and the world's highest tides, there's no shortage of wide-open spaces in New Brunswick. And, whether you're on land or at sea, you'll discover a bountiful array of wildlife, from moose and black bears to arguably the province's most famous inhabitants – fin, humpback and northern right whales.

**2 Coastal living**  
With its emblematic lighthouses and quaint coastal communities, New Brunswick is defined by its coast. Get a taste of the province's maritime traditions in St Martins, Caraquet and the fishing village of Alma. Or, head for the beaches – some of the warmest in Canada – to relax and swim by day and go stargazing by night. Indeed, the beautiful Kouchibouguac National Park, along with its golden sands and seal colonies, is a designated Dark Sky Preserve.

**3 Acadian culture**  
Originally settled by the French during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, New Brunswick became a focal point for Acadians and their way of life – a joyful culture celebrated across the province. From living-history villages to festivals in modern-day Acadian communities such as those at Moncton and Dieppe, you're certain to experience the warm welcome and unmistakable joie de vivre of *l'Acadie*.

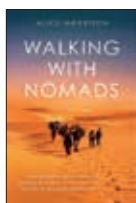
**4 Indigenous heritage**  
While Acadians have inhabited New Brunswick for some 400 years, the province's anthropological roots stretch back thousands. Indeed, with 15 First Nations communities still active today, the indigenous population is a key part of New Brunswick's unique history. Be sure to include visits to the likes of Wabanaki Spirit Tree and Red Bank Lodge to experience life from an altogether different time, showcasing everything from craft workshops to storytelling and dancing, and even sleeping in a traditional teepee.

**5 Food & drink**  
Whether it's freshly caught lobster from Shediac, oysters in Neguac or the chance to sample traditional Acadian cuisine, New Brunswick's food scene is as diverse as it is delicious. Of course, seafood leads the way, but look out for a host of other local favourites from fiddleheads to sweet maple treats. And, to wash it all down, there's a vast array of local beers showcased across taproom trails, bikes and brews tours and local seaside bars.

**6 City living**  
Naturally, New Brunswick is well noted for its wilderness. But, there are also a host of urban delights to enjoy. With microbreweries, world-class seafood restaurants and acclaimed art galleries seemingly around every corner, you'll soon experience the authentic charm of the province's towns and cities. Relax with locals over a craft beer on a lively patio, dive into history on a walking tour, catch a show at the theatre or stroll through gorgeous parks and along bustling waterfronts.



## You might also like...



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by Alice Morrison  
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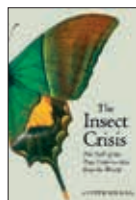
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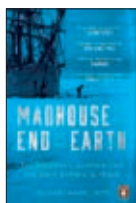
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A visceral love letter to losing oneself in physicality, whether climbing a mountain or bringing a child into the world, and a captivating celebration of womanhood in all its forms.

# Culinary Adventures

## in Atlantic Canada



From fresh lobster and freshly shucked oysters to craft breweries and boutique wineries, the four provinces of Atlantic Canada – New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island – are, in many ways, the unsung heroes of Canadian food and drink. Over these pages, you'll find a selection of the very best culinary experiences the region has to offer – the perfect inspiration to transform your Atlantic Canada holiday into a foodie's dream. Prepare to tuck in.

### *New Brunswick*

#### **Caviar tasting on the Saint John River**

Departing from Saint John on the shores of the Bay of Fundy, join local guides for a unique chance to participate in a commercial fishing trip, heading out in search of shoals of long Atlantic sturgeon – the source of New Brunswick favourite. Along the way, you'll learn about the company's aquaculture and the process that goes into producing caviar, which you'll have the chance to taste, washed down with a glass of champagne, of course.

#### **Take a cruise of Shediac Bay**

Cruise the warm waters of Shediac Bay and watch a demo of how to crack and eat a delicious, freshly cooked lobster. Then, sit back, relax and enjoy a fisherman's feast, washed down with a cooling drink, as you take in the scenery and experience the hospitality the Acadians are so famous for. After your meal, catch the balmy breezes on your ship's roomy upper deck and marvel at the scenic beauty of New Brunswick's East Coast soundtracked by traditional Acadian music.

### *Newfoundland and Labrador*

#### **Ferryland Lighthouse Picnics**

Venturing south from St. John's on the popular Irish Loop driving route, be sure to stop off at Ferryland Lighthouse – a place transformed by local Jill Curran, whose grandfather was once keeper. With a lunch basket including freshly squeezed lemonade, chutney-glazed ham, a brie sandwich served on bread baked in the lighthouse itself, and followed up with a delicious dessert – perhaps a cranberry scone with orange butter – this is a truly delicious way to take in some of Atlantic Canada's finest views. Breathe in the salty sea air and, with luck, watch on as whales pass by below.





### Sea to Plate in Twillingate

Travelling north, Twillingate offers far more than just a stopover en route to Gros Morne National Park. Our tip? Don't miss the extraordinary Sea to Plate dining experience, featuring wild and sustainable, high-quality seafood, cooked the traditional way in sea water over a roaring fire. Every course is prepared to represent a slice of Newfoundland and Labrador past, all the while embracing a tantalising culinary future. Relax by the sea, watch icebergs from the shore and enjoy a five-course meal to remember. Sheer perfection.

### *Nova Scotia*

### Culinary highlights in Halifax

Whether you're starting or finishing your journey in Halifax, make sure you join the team from Taste Halifax Food & Beer Tours to take in the best of the local dining scene. From private local charcuterie and spirit tasting to sampling local favourite donairs at the always'-lively Jonny K's, this is the ideal introduction to urban dining, Atlantic Canada-style. Along the way, expect the likes of Lobster mac & cheese washed down with locally inspired cocktails, and delicious seafood chowder and oysters served with Nova Scotian wine and craft beer.

### Good Cheer Trail

Canada's first winery, craft brewery, cidery and distillery trail is a toast to the craftsmanship and creativity of the many Nova Scotian producers. With 80 recommended stops, you'll have the chance to truly explore this burgeoning scene in depth, meeting award-winning brewmasters and sampling fresh ciders or single malt whiskies straight from the barrel.

### *Prince Edward Island*

### Traditional fare on Prince Edward Island

An experience brought to life by traditional teachers and storytellers, this is your chance to prepare and taste your own Bannock, cooked the old fashioned way in the sand. While your bread is baking to perfection, gather clams and simmer them over an open fire. Then, with the cooking underway, you'll be treated to tales of life on Lennox Island and maybe even learn a little of the region's indigenous Mi'kmaq language before tucking in.

### Oyster shucking in Cardigan

Prince Edward Island oysters are among the best in the world. Driving on the eastern coast, you'll stop off in the pretty seaside town of Cardigan to meet local fisherman Jim Conohan. Settle in to hear his tales of life on the sea, then learn to tong and size oysters, before Jim teaches you the age-old art of shucking.





# A stinking beauty

words  
Mike Unwin

pictures  
Ryuto Miyake



On a warm spring day in a Tuscan olive grove, a soft but persistent three-note melody punctuates the drone of the cicadas: *hoo-poo-poo, hoo-poo-poo, hoo-poo-poo...* You needn't be an ornithologist to identify the singer. After all, few birds have a more satisfyingly onomatopoeic name than the hoopoe. In Italy, where this colourful migrant has long been heralded as a harbinger of spring, it is *upupa* – essentially the same, but with a more Mediterranean flourish. Once spotted on its high perch, this thrush-sized songster is unmistakable. The combination of long, down-curved bill and folded crest gives its head a unique pickaxe profile.

Then, when it takes off in a floppy-winged, moth-like flight, it bursts into colour, the warm cinnamon body set off by vivid black-and-white stripes across wings and tail, and the crest flaring into an impressive fan as it alights. A real show-stopper.

In fact, this species has a wide habitat tolerance, occurring from farmland to steppes. And wherever it breeds, autumn sees it heading south to winter quarters along the southern fringe of the Sahara.

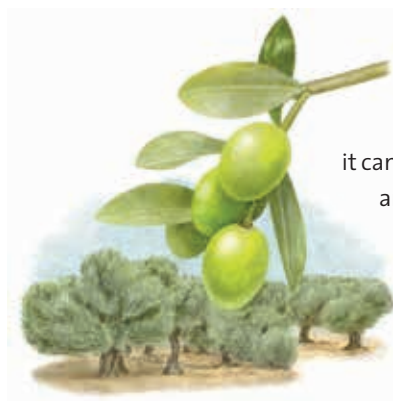
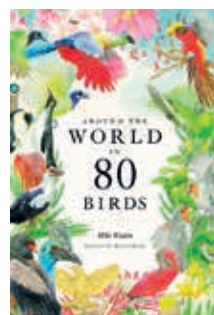


The hoopoe's breeding behaviour is perhaps less appealing than its appearance. A female lays her clutch of up to ten eggs deep in the nest cavity, and is fed by the male through a narrow entrance. To deter predators, both parents rub foul-smelling secretions from their uropygial gland – at the base of the tail – into their plumage and around the nest, creating a stink of rotting meat. Additionally, the nestlings hiss like snakes, and can squirt their droppings through the narrow nest hole forcefully and accurately into the face of an intruder. Best to keep your distance.

The combination of memorable call, gorgeous plumage and bizarre behaviour has ensured the hoopoe a prominence in Mediterranean cultures since ancient times. The bird appears in Egyptian hieroglyphics from around 2000 BC, and featured in the mythology of the Minoans and ancient Persians. In the

plays of Aristophanes, it was the King of Birds, and in the Torah, it led King Solomon to meet the Queen of Sheba. Indeed, in 2008 Israel honoured the hoopoe by voting it the national bird.

***Around the World in 80 Birds***  
by Mike Unwin and Ryuto Miyake  
Laurence King, HBK, 216pp, £22



An olive grove makes the ideal home for a hoopoe, providing both the open ground on which it can probe for worms, beetles and other tasty titbits, and plentiful cavities among the gnarled tree trunks and tumbledown stone walls in which to construct its nest.





## BRITISH COLUMBIA

# TAKE A DRIVE ON THE WILD SIDE

You'll know Canada's British Columbia for the alpine-village charm of Whistler, the English heritage of Victoria and, of course, that famed city - Vancouver. But, if you look between the headlines, there's plenty of off-the-beaten-track intrigue. Its vast interior is a land of snow-dusted mountains, sprawling vineyards and wildlife-filled forests rich in indigenous heritage, while around the coast explorers are rewarded with historic harbour towns, temperate rainforests and great river canyons.

### Ultra-scenic road trips

British Columbia seems custom-built for a self-drive holiday. Empty roads will see you map remote rivers, summit high mountain passes and plunge through old-growth forests to knit together delightfully traditional towns. It's all coupled with a fantastic car-ferry network that navigates island hops and coastal crags. Sailing along the famous Inside Passage is a special highlight; it's a route that leads all the way to Alaska, winding between remote islands and forested bays.

### Wildlife encounters

Even while simply driving through British Columbia's forested interior, you can expect to spot everything from deer to eagles and moose. However, it's the bears that are the stars of the show. With the region's rivers home to one of the world's

largest populations of salmon, British Columbia is one of *the* best places to spot those grizzly giants.

Elsewhere, BC's coastal waters are also rich with marine life. Tours are available from Vancouver, Victoria and Vancouver Island to spot orcas, humpback whales, grey whales and minke, seals, sea lions, porpoises, otters and more.

### Historic intrigue

Along with its natural beauty, there's plenty of human intrigue to BC. It all begins with a fascinating indigenous past that lives on in Port Hardy's colourful totems and the traditions and history of the local Lheidli T'enneh People of Prince George. Then, there's the gold rush. Although hitting fever pitch in the mid-19th century, you can still trace the pioneers' routes today, stopping

along the way at timber ranches and cowboy towns, including pretty Williams Lake. That's all without mentioning the colonial-city charm of Vancouver Island's Victoria.

### Unbridled adventure

British Columbia's 10 mountain ranges offer unparalleled opportunities for hiking and mountaineering, while world-class skiing takes precedence in the winter months. Throughout the year, thrill-seekers will find plenty of options for an adrenalin-fuelled escape, with options including the likes of ziplining, kite surfing, caving and paragliding. For a gentler but no less memorable experience, take a gentle cycle through BC's charming small towns or a relaxing cruise through pristine marine parks, host to remote archipelagos and jutting fjords.

INSPIRED? Contact a Wexas specialist on **020 7838 5958** to find out more about a holiday to British Columbia.

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# THE YUKON

## *Northern Lights or Midnight Sun?*

Between August and April, the skies above the Yukon wilderness come alive with the dancing ribbons of nature's greatest light show. The allure of the Northern Lights cannot be captured in words – you have to experience it for yourself. Fortunately, the Yukon is perfect for just that, with plenty of tranquil locations offering a near-private front-row seat. Alternatively, join a local guide to head off the beaten track, seeking out the remotest spots for the best displays while benefiting from fascinating expert insight.

Hoping to travel in summer? Flip the switch to experience the endless glow of the magical Midnight Sun. It's the natural wonder that will follow you wherever your Yukon adventure takes you. However and wherever you spend your time, whether on a cultural tour or a hike into nature, you'll enjoy extra-long summer days and a huge helping of warming sunshine.

