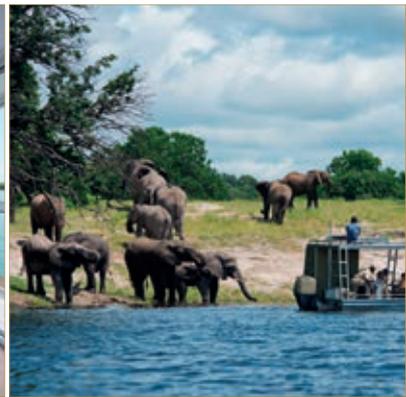


VOL 48 · NO 2 · 2018

TRAVELLER



£8.95



Experience the true magic of Africa

Moving languidly along Africa's Chobe River, *Zambezi Queen* is a 5-star, 42-metre-long luxury houseboat offering unparalleled sophistication in one of the remotest locations on the planet. Best of all, as a guest, you can enjoy a truly unique and adventurous river safari holiday.

Onboard, celebrated South African fashion designer Jenni Button has created a classic yet contemporary interior, utilising understated tones that make the landscapes and wildlife the stars of the show. And, just like at any contemporary hotel, you can expect first-class service at every turn. Whether you're enjoying a gin and tonic on the upper deck at dusk, or attempting to land your very first tiger fish, a highly experienced team will be on hand to meet your every need.

Each of the 14 suites on *Zambezi Queen* features air-conditioning and a private balcony, where you can enjoy unobstructed views of the

Chobe River and African landscape beyond. Wake up to the sight of elephants drinking and bathing, or watch a fish eagle take flight – all from the comfort of your luxurious bed.

What's more, unlike a land-based safari, a cruise aboard *Zambezi Queen* allows you to take in and explore different vantage points along the river, with a choice of two- and three-night itineraries that offer truly world-class game viewing tailored to the seasons. Indeed, Chobe National Park is home to one of the densest populations of elephant on the African continent – estimated at approximately 120,000 – as well as large buffalo and antelope herds, healthy populations of leopard, wild dog, jackal and lion, and an abundance of native birdlife; expect to see everything from saddle-billed storks to African skimmers. And, itineraries are completely flexible, so you can choose just how much you want to pack into your holiday, or how relaxed you want it to be.



Words of the world

'Darkness outside. Inside, the radio's prayer – Rockall. Malin. Dogger. Finisterre.'

These closing lines from *Prayer* by Carol Ann Duffy, our first female and Scottish Poet Laureate, have long been iconic. The places are, of course, ingrained in consciousness from *The Shipping Forecast*, yet being caught up in the soothing cadence of the radio, I'd never stopped to consider the obvious, that Finisterre literally means 'the end of the world'. The name was, I realize now, a fitting fullstop to a particularly moving poem, an end made more emphatic by using the place where the Romans thought there was nothing beyond, *finis terrae*.

This belated discovery was made whilst reading Kevin Pilley's piece on Galicia, an account of walking from lighthouse to lighthouse along that region's rewarding and demanding coast, pilgrimage style. His rendering of the route was peppered with Spanish colloquialisms and their translations. Pilley's profuse use of local phrases is one of the pleasures of his pieces. Steeped in local language they somehow seem to immerse readers deeper in that other place.

The 'other place' for Jamaica's Poet Laureate, Lorna Goodison, in this issue at least, is British Columbia. In her debut collection of essays, *Redemption Ground*, she travels between the deliciousness of feeling the 'sun-hot' of Jamaica, Parisian hairdressers, New York clubs and taking tea in London. For *Traveller* she sits beside the Salish Sea.

The contrasting blue hues of the Atlantic and the Pacific lap the Technicolor that is Costa Rica, in an article that is also immersive, but in a different way from the piece on Galicia. They speak Spanish here too, but in this case the language that comes into play is the country's physical nature, interpreted by Alexander Robinson in words as vividly expressive as his photographs.

In Costa Rica we have a country bordered by two seas. In our piece on Australia, we have the dividing range of the Blue Mountains, a natural barrier between urban sophistication and rural reality. It's a place where stark beauty and dark secrets edge the slopes, and home to writer Shaun Prescott, who delves into both in this issue.



Amy Sohanpaul
savours local sayings.



New York's Lower East Side also has its secrets. If you know where to look for them, and our writer Simon Urwin certainly does, you're awash with complex layers of history, the players and performers that made and continue to make this corner of America truly great, in a poetic, not political sense.

Naples is as energetic and as exciting as New York, and that electricity runs through our picture story. The images are as lively as the soundtrack of this Italian city, which is largely made up of impassioned exchanges, even if they're often about prosaic matters and menus.

If Spain is sometimes summed up by *sobremesa*, that slow and languid period of settling down and reflecting at leisure upon the world at large during and after a meal, then Italy is often interpreted by the idea of *bella figura*.

Sobremesa is about chilling out. The Italian ideal is almost the opposite, something to strive towards without for a second showing the striving part of it. The concept of *bella figura* is a considered one. Although seemingly casual, it can't be so in a country where the *carabinieri* are kitted out by Armani. Here, the holy ritual of an evening walk, as pleasant as it is, also revolves around cutting a dash. There might be *gelati* of the most flavoursome sort to enjoy during the evening stroll, but essentially the tradition of *passeggiata*, which promotes community and connection, is also about being seen.

Keeping up appearances is an even more serious affair in North Korea, where our honorary president Michael Palin celebrated his 75th birthday. The language is all but the same as it is on the south of the island, but incorporates phrases that have a more fervent flavour. We feature a selection of images that showcase the state in this issue.

There's also an article about a tigress in India called *Machali*, which made me think more than thrice, as that's an Indian word for fish, as far from Blake's fierce symmetry as it gets. Apparently this matriarch got the name from a distinctive fish-shaped mark behind her ear. She is no more, but her descendants live on, and as long as they do, we are not yet in that time where no tigers roar.

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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Michael Palin CBE FRGS is the world's favourite television traveller and a member of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

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Dr Christopher Roads MA PHD FRGS is an expert in the use and history of firearms and former Deputy Director of the Imperial War Museum.

Jonathan Scott is a leading wildlife photographer and presenter of the BBC's *Big Cat Diary*. He is patron of a number of wildlife conservation societies.

John Simpson CBE is the BBC's World Affairs Editor and has reported from 120 countries during his 40 years with the BBC.

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With thanks
this issue
Charlotte Greig

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

THE PEOPLE BEHIND OUR STORIES



SHAUN PRESCOTT

is an Australian writer based in the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. His debut novel is *The Town*.

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JUSTINE HARDY

is an acclaimed author and documentary-maker, a trauma psychotherapist and the founder of Healing Kashmir.

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LORNA GOODISON

is the Poet Laureate of Jamaica and an award-winning poet and writer. Her latest book is *Redemption Ground, Essays and Adventures*.

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CAROLINE EDEN

is a travel and food writer focusing on the former Soviet Union and South Asia. Her latest book is *Black Sea*.

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IAIN GATELY

is the author of several books. Raised in Hong Kong, he studied Law at Cambridge. His latest work is *The Secret Surfer*.

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FRANCESCO LASTRUCCI

is a freelance Italian photographer, born in Florence and working worldwide for major magazines.

SEE PAGE 30



FERGAL KEANE

is a BBC Special Correspondent famed for his compassionate coverage of conflict-affected countries, from Rwanda to Ulster.

SEE PAGE 28



ALEX ROBINSON

is an award winning writer and photographer and the author of *The Footprint guide to São Paulo*. He writes widely about South America.

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JONATHAN & ANGELA SCOTT

are wildlife photographers based in Kenya, famous for their BBC documentaries. Their latest children's book is *Tigers of Ranthambore*.

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SIMON URWIN

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

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OLIVER WAINWRIGHT

is the architecture and design critic for *The Guardian* and an internationally-exhibited photographer. His latest book is *Inside North Korea*.

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THOMAS LUMLEY

is best known for portraiture and figurative art, and won the Prince of Wales Drawing School Prize at the Royal Society of Portrait Painters.

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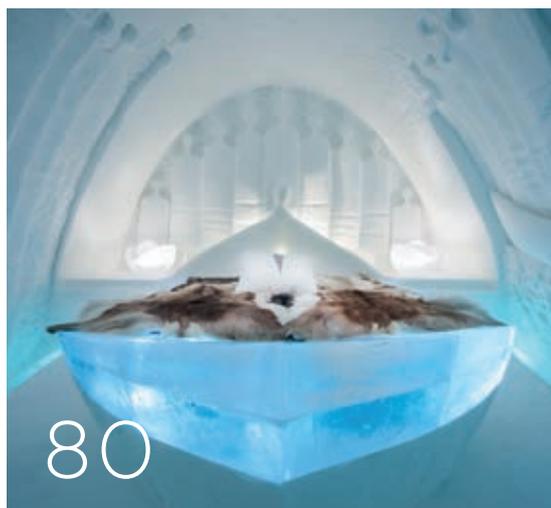
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On the cover:
Picture by Simon Urwin, graffiti by @Indie184

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A Palace in Paradise

APPROACHING LHASA ALONG THE NORTH BANK OF THE KYICHU RIVER, the Potala Palace rises slowly into view; a magnificent, snow-white fortress standing watchful guard over the city against a breathtaking backdrop of Himalayan peaks.

Once the winter residence of the Dalai Lamas, this “pearl on the roof of the world” is a building of quite majestic proportions. It towers thirteen storeys high, contains two separate palaces and one thousand rooms, all of which glitter with a wealth of ornate shrines and sacred statues.

Work began on the citadel, one of the wonders of world architecture, back in the mid 17th century, with 8,500 craftsmen toiling for fifty years to complete their imposing masterpiece; constructing the mighty walls from rammed earth, wood and stone, then filling them with molten copper to protect against the tremor of earthquakes.

A hallowed icon of the Tibetan capital for nearly four centuries, there has been much debate over the origins of the palace's name. Many concur it derives from a wondrous deity called Chenrezik, the very embodiment of Buddhist compassion, whose ‘place of pure land’ or ‘paradise’ was known by the name of ‘Potala’.





Georgia in mind

With its romantic plantation architecture, dreamy Golden Isles and the chic city buzz of Atlanta, the southern state of Georgia is always foremost in mind as one of the most seductive destinations in the United States.

The capital, Atlanta is an exhilarating blend of old and new, with cutting-edge art and historic homes, not least Margaret Mitchell House, where the author lived while writing *Gone With The Wind*. There's a lot of history here, the most significant of which is on display at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, the Center for Civil and Human Rights, and the Atlanta History Center, with its classic houses, gardens and exhibitions.

In the city, legendary Southern hospitality is everywhere, best enjoyed in some of the finest eateries in the country – and at the world's largest drive-in restaurant, The Varsity. There's high fashion in sophisticated Phipps Plaza, and huge open spaces including the Botanical Gardens and the Centennial Olympic Park to enjoy in between.

For more escapist outdoor adventures, the Golden Isles have the lot, from ancient palmetto forests, driftwood

beaches to salt marshes. These four barrier islands just off the coast of buzzing Brunswick city are havens of both history and natural wonders. It's hard to choose between them, but Jekyll Island is glorious, with sparkling beaches and serenity in every direction, best enjoyed on horseback or kayak tours.

Back on the mainland, the coastal city of Savannah simply exudes history and hospitality, which lie over it like the mantles of silvery Spanish moss draped over old oak trees. The city's squares are lined with grand mansions, forts and monuments dating back to the Revolutionary and Civil War eras, and a great deal of charm. In the evenings the cobblestoned streets of Savannah pulsate to the beat of theatre, festivals, concerts and bars and restaurants intent on serving up a good time and gourmet dishes. For some downtime, head to Tybee, a long and lovely beach studded with sand dunes to sunbathe or spot dolphins. Or, take a cruise along the river that made the city and see the ships that still sail in from around the world.

An 11-day Highlights of Georgia self-drive starts from £2,070 pp incl, flights, hotels & car hire. For a full itinerary, visit wexas.com/103246.

For more information, call 020 7838 5958 or visit wexas.com

EVENTS



© IMAGE COURTESY OF DEFARES COLLECTION/V&A

Jameel Prize 5

V&A, LONDON
TO 25 NOVEMBER

The international award for contemporary art and design inspired by Islamic tradition features eight exceptional contemporary artists working in fashion, architecture, multimedia installation and painting, whose sources of inspiration range from embroidered shawls to Arabic calligraphy.

vam.ac.uk

Oceania

ROYAL ACADEMY, LONDON
TO 10 DECEMBER

Marking 250 years since Cook's first voyage to the Pacific, a celebration of the dazzling and diverse art of the region. The exhibition brings together 200 exceptional works spanning almost a third of the world's surface: from Tahiti in Polynesia, to the scattered archipelagos and islands of Melanesia and Micronesia.

royalacademy.org.uk

Hayv Kahraman, *The Translator* from the series 'How Iraqi Are You?', 2015. Image courtesy of Defares Collection/V&A

Frederick Charles Cooper, *Discovery of Nimrud*, 1849–50 © The Trustees of the British Museum

London Literature Festival

SOUTHBANK CENTRE, LONDON
18 TO 28 OCTOBER

Playing host to literary greats, emerging talent and international writers, Southbank Centre's twelfth *London Literature Festival* explores the world in which we live and celebrates the power of books to reflect on the burning issues of our times. Featuring Sarah Churchwell, Mohsin Hamid, Chibundu Onuzo, Marilynne Robinson, Salman Rushdie and many more.

southbankcentre.co.uk

The Luxury Travel Fair

OLYMPIA LONDON
1 TO 4 NOVEMBER

Unique adventures or dramatic natural wonders, wherever on earth you want to go, spark your imagination at The Luxury Travel Fair. Meet with experts and hear exhilarating stories in the Traveller's Tales Theatre.

luxurytravelfair.com

I Am Ashurbanipal King Of The World, King Of Assyria

BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON
8 NOVEMBER TO 24 FEBRUARY

Warrior. Scholar. Empire builder. Lion hunter. The reign of King Ashurbanipal of Assyria (c. 669–631 BC) marked the high point of the Assyrian empire. Step into his world through the British Museum's unparalleled collection of treasures and rare loans with displays that evoke the splendour of his palace.

britishmuseum.org

Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War

BRITISH LIBRARY, LONDON
19 OCTOBER TO 19 FEBRUARY

Treasures from the library's own collection, including the beautifully illuminated Lindisfarne Gospels, sit alongside stunning finds from Sutton Hoo and the Staffordshire Hoard, revealing multicultural influences from distant lands on early England.

bl.uk



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Visit Venice in Style

San Clemente Palace Kempinski

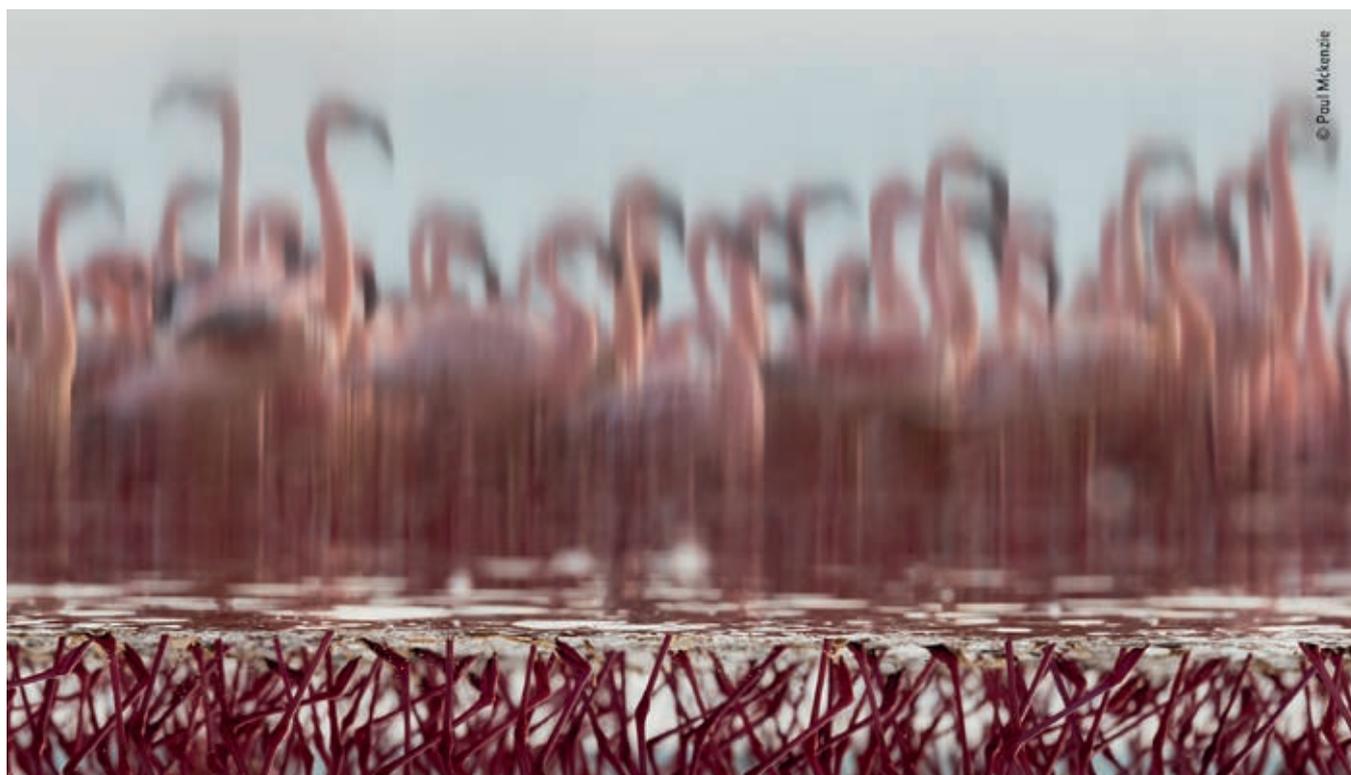
San Clemente Palace Kempinski is located on the private island of San Clemente, minutes away by complimentary boat from Piazza San Marco. This exclusive resort and retreat guarantees peace, tranquillity and privacy in Venice, one of Italy's most sacred and unique cities.

San Clemente is the perfect setting in which to experience true Venetian traditions and hospitality. The resort offers 190 rooms and suites overlooking the beautiful Venetian lagoon or the centuries-old park, divided into glorious gardens. Seven courtyards provide further serenity, as does the sumptuous

spa with its bespoke fragrances and indulgent treatments, a new addition. The Merchant of Venice SPA blends Kempinski's European flair and long-standing tradition of outstanding service. A heated outdoor pool, a golf area and a tennis court add to the recreational facilities.

All this, all right on the doorstep of Venice, makes the San Clemente Palace Kempinski the perfect place to relax in refined luxury after exploring the delights of Italy's most romantic city.





© Paul McKenzie

Wildlife Photographer of the Year

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, LONDON
TO 30 JUNE

Now in its fifty-fourth year, *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* showcases extraordinary animal behaviour and the breathtaking diversity of life on earth. Explore the world's best nature photography, exhibited on 100 exquisite light panels. Experience the changing face of nature and uncover the surprising, sometimes challenging stories behind the photographs. Chosen from over 45,000 entries by expert judges, the images were awarded for their creativity, originality and technical excellence.

nhm.ac.uk



The upside-down flamingos by Paul McKenzie, Ireland/Hong Kong. Highly commended, Creative Visions.

Reflected on the still surface of Lake Bogoria, lesser flamingos move with synchronicity through the shallow waters of this alkaline-saline lake in Kenya's Great Rift Valley. For a photographer who enjoys creating photographs that challenge initial perceptions, Paul was drawn to the clear reflection of the birds and the pink shades of the flock – it was a scene ripe for some experimentation. Lying prone in a quagmire of thick mud on the lakeshore, he spent an hour slowly edging closer, while watching the orchestrated movement of the flamingos as they bowed their long necks to dip their bills upside down in the salty water to filter out their microscopic food – blue-green algae (cyanobacteria) – before lifting their heads in unison to move on a short distance for more filter-feeding. Focusing on the birds' red legs and framing the shot to include the reflection of the upright birds, Paul rotated the image 180 degrees in post-production to create a more abstract, reflective image.

Kitten combat by Julius Kramer, Germany. Highly commended, Behaviour: Mammals



Himalayan Heights

The Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan were once mysterious enclaves attracting only the most intrepid backpackers and budget travellers. Both countries now welcome travellers of all stripes with wondrous cultural experiences and breathtaking trekking and wildlife encounters.

Nepal is one of the most dramatic destinations in the world, where dramatic scenery and centuries of spirituality coalesce. The capital Kathmandu, a chaotic array of cows, bikes, cars, beggars, pilgrims and vendors, is a fascinating and friendly city replete with majestic riverside temples and statues.

But, Nepal is best known for its spectacular natural world. Take an elephant ride to spot tigers and rhino in the lowland jungles of Chitwan National Park or head to Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve for some exceptional birdwatching. Serious trekkers can sample the legendary Annapurna Circuit, a 300km track that climbs to 5,300m and touches the edge of the Tibetan plateau, while shorter but no less magnificent hikes are available at Jomsom, Langtang and the Everest region. But that's not all. Other thrilling activities include white-water rafting and kayaking down the rapids of the Bhoté Kosi River, as well as canyoning and mountain biking amidst amazing mountain landscapes.

Meanwhile, in Bhutan's pretty capital Thimphu, unmissable sights include Tashichho Dzong, a vast fortified monastery and government palace, the golden-spired Memorial Chorten stupa and the Great Buddha Dordenma – an enormous mountain statue that is home to 100,000 smaller gilded Buddhas.

To the east, Punakha sits among rolling green hills at the picturesque confluence of the Pho Chhu (father) and Mo Chhu (mother) rivers. Crossing the 3,000-metre-high Dochula pass, winding mountain roads stretch through forests of oak, rhododendron and bamboo to the Gangtey Gumpa, whose tiered roof and whitewashed pillars hover above the town and valley floor, the winter home of the black-necked crane. Beyond Gangtey more precious Buddhist monasteries, monuments and temples overlook dramatic valleys carved by ancient glaciers.

From Paro, an hour west of the capital, visit the Tiger's Nest monastery that clings to the mountains, and tackle the nearby Jhomolhari or Snowman Trek for particularly astounding views.

Combine both countries on our **16-day Nepal & Bhutan Discovery** tailor-made journey, from **£4,635 pp**. For a full itinerary, visit wexas.com/103864 or call **020 7838 5958**.



LATEST NEWS FROM OUR HONORARY PRESIDENTS

A new Arrival



Wexas are proud to announce record-breaking cyclist Mark Beaumont as a new honorary president. In 2017 Mark circumnavigated the globe on two wheels in just 78 days, 14 hours and 40 minutes, breaking the

world record by a staggering 44 days. Mark is our guest traveller in this issue.

BIG CAT LEGACY

Wildlife photographers, authors and TV presenters

Jonathan and Angela Scott are back on our screens with more intimate stories about the lives of Africa's most charismatic predators in their new series, 'Big Cat Legacy'. Filmed over 10 weeks from their base at Governor's Camp in the Masai Mara using the latest in HD technology, the Scotts are joined by fellow big cat expert and safari guide Jackson ole Looseyia. The 5-part series is due to air on Animal Planet at the end of October.

EPIC JOURNEYS

Journalist Rosie Goldsmith hosts a brand new episode in her

entertaining 'The Words On....' podcast series where she discusses derring-do at the extremes with Everest-conquering Chris Bonington, ultra-marathon runner Alice Morrison, journalist Jonathan Gornall and the world's greatest living sailor, Robin Knox-Johnston, who is celebrating the 50th anniversary of his epic, solo, non-stop navigation around the world. The 40-minute episode is available to stream now at: www.thewordspodcast.com

TRAVELLER'S TALES

**Legendary British explorer Sir Ranulph**

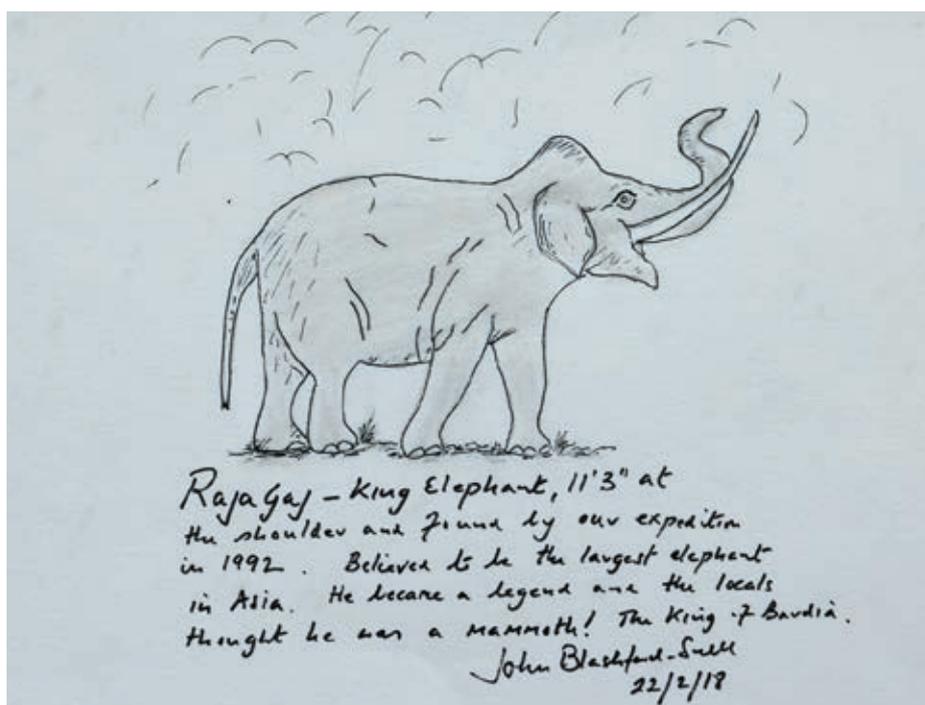
Fiennes hosts a special evening in aid of The Transglobe Expedition Trust entitled 'Four Tales of Travel, Adventure & Discovery'. Fiennes will be joined on stage by special guest speakers Levison Wood, Nigel Winsor, Benedict Allen and Kate Humble on Wednesday 28th November at the Royal Geographical Society, London. tickettailor.com/events/transglobeexpeditiontrust

DATE FOR THE DIARY

A special charity event to mark the 50th anniversary of the Scientific Exploration Society will feature guest speaker Sir Ranulph Fiennes at the Royal Geographical Society.

12 March 2019
ses-explore.org

SKETCH FOR SURVIVAL



An African elephant is poached in the wild for its tusks every 26 minutes. To raise awareness, UK-based charity Explorers Against Extinction asked professional wildlife artists and celebrity supporters alike to donate a 26-minute sketch. A special exhibition tour featuring artworks by the likes of Oscar winners Judi Dench and Helen Mirren, TV personalities Stephen Fry and Mary Berry, and explorers Sir Ranulph Fiennes and Col. John Blashford-Snell runs at various venues across the UK until the 25th November with proceeds from sales of the artwork going to fund vital frontline conservation initiatives. explorersagainstextinction.co.uk



The world you meet

AMY SOHANPAUL SPEAKS WITH **MARK BEAUMONT**, RECORD-BREAKING ADVENTURER, CHARITY AMBASSADOR AND OUR LATEST HONORARY PRESIDENT

Approximately this time last year, Mark Beaumont pedalled through the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, smashing the previous world record for cycling around the world by an extraordinary 45 days. Actually, approximately is not the word to use in the context of Mark's astonishing achievement, given that he had to be relentlessly disciplined and precise about spending 16 hours in the saddle each and every day, no matter what, through severe storms and all manner of aches.

So for the record, the exact day was Monday 18th September, 2017. The cycling circumnavigation took 78 days, 14 hours and 40 minutes. Mark covered more than 18,000 miles across Europe, Russia, Mongolia, China, then Australia, rode up through New Zealand and across North America, all

before the final 'sprint' via Portugal, Spain and France, at over 200 miles a day.

I heard him speak earlier in the year, at the Scientific Expedition Society's Explorer Awards. This is always an inspirational event, as you'd expect from an organisation founded by Colonel John Blashford-Snell, who tirelessly promotes the next generation of explorers and adventurers. Every speaker was passionate, but Mark Beaumont's keynote speech was especially galvanizing.

His ability to motivate and inspire is something he puts to use for charities and businesses. We met for this interview on a sun-drenched day in the groomed grounds of Stoke Park Hotel, where Mark was due to speak in

the evening. That morning he'd been in Edinburgh, working with sixth-formers at Lasswade High School, alongside his sister, an educational psychologist.

"I was at a conference with school leavers, talking about finding that sense of purpose, calling out some of the myths about the right mindsets to take on challenges by looking up to other people but then assuming they have something that you don't have. If as a young person you have a sense of 'them and us', it can be difficult to tell yourself 'that I can go out and take on really anything'.

"You can be inspired by someone else but it's important to know that when you're having a tough time in your journey, you're not always

going to feel inspired. A tough day feels tough. When you're at that age, looking at people who you deem successful, it might seem they've got a gift, or a run of luck you couldn't possibly have. I think it's so important for young people to break that down." It's something he's trying to encourage, through a blend of empathy and realism, not least in his role as a rector at the University of Dundee.

Dundee is where he went to school for the first time, aged 11. Before that he enjoyed what he calls a *Swallows and Amazons* existence and was home-schooled. "Now I've got my own children, I realise it wasn't 'normal', whatever normal is. We were brought up on a sixty-acre farm. Every morning we had 60 goats to milk, 200 laying hens to collect eggs from, 13 horses and ponies to muck out. I probably only spent a couple of hours a day around the kitchen table doing subjects. So by the time I went to school I had a good sense of independence and adventure, for sure.

"It was a wonderful freedom. My favourite book as a child was the *SAS Survival Guide* and I was living out of that. I think spending a lot of time on your own, being in the outdoors all the time, is hugely helpful when it comes to travelling for your job or taking on world records and world firsts."

It was an upbringing that led to extraordinary endeavours, but not to easy acceptance in the school playground. "I was terrible at rugby. I wasn't good at football, I couldn't keep up in the playground in so many ways because I was this home-schooled, slightly goofy kid." Which is why skiing and horse riding were such an offset and outlet. So much so that aged 12, Mark cycled from John O'Groats to Lands End.



The next cycling feat was Cairo to Cape Town, as significant for the encounters as the miles. "Travelling down the length of Africa, the people I met, the friendship of strangers, are my fondest memory of that journey. I think that was partly because I was on my own. I might not have been as open to meeting people if I'd had company on the road. Also, people meet you differently. There's the vulnerability of one person."

As well as Africa from top to toe, Beaumont has cycled the Americas from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego. It hasn't always been about records. In the lead up to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014, he visited every Commonwealth country, in tandem with a crew from BBC Scotland. He muses on the differences between solo, group, record-breaking, with camera and without camera travel, but in the end he's happy to have been almost everywhere.

"When we don't travel we might be more inclined to divide the

world into good and bad, buy into perceptions often painted by the media. Whereas the more you travel, the more you join places up, the more you see similarities. When you cycle there, when you travel a huge amount, you very much see the world by what connects it rather than by what divides it. Often the places that are the most different from what you expect them to be are the most rewarding. Iran and Sudan would be two of the favourite countries I've ever travelled through, because they're a million miles from what I expected them to be. Travelling through Iran, most nights I would sleep in mosques – the equivalent of cycling through England and knowing you could sleep in any church in any village, it's an extraordinarily welcoming place."

Next on the agenda is a series for CNN filming adventure sports in the Gulf, a region Beaumont is fond of, "beyond the shopping malls" he says smilingly. Whatever way he travels, he's open to all experiences. "I think the way you meet the world is as much a factor as the world you meet."





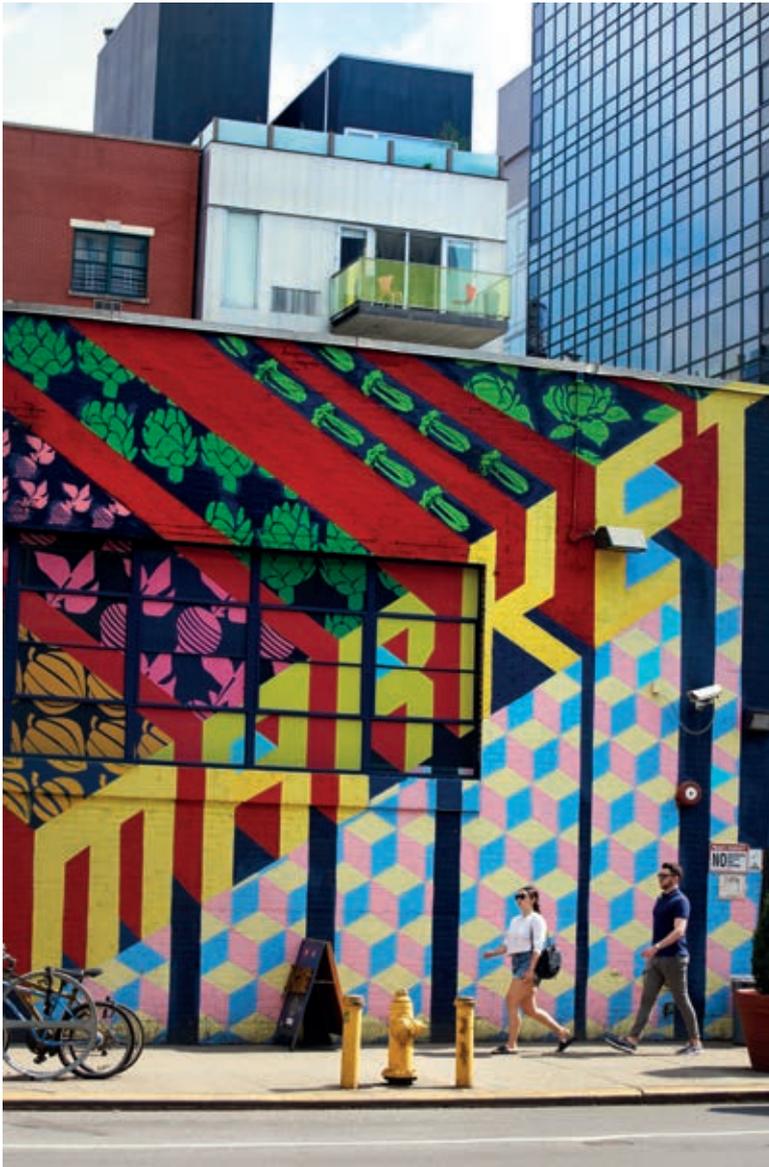
An American Story

words & pictures
Simon Urwin

I emerge from the subway station to see a hipster in a yellow fedora sauntering past, a skateboard cradled under a tattooed arm. Across the street an old Hasidic tailor is fashioning his side curls around a pencil, twirling away while he scours the streets for possible customers.

I've arrived in the Lower East Side where I'm spending the day exploring one of New York's most exciting and diverse neighbourhoods – a fast-gentrifying corner of the city that remains the very epitome of the American ethnic melting pot, a place where, despite rapid change, a rich heritage can be seen in vibrant detail on almost every street corner.

“In many ways, the story of modern America began here,” says local guide Maia Plantevin. “The ‘Great Migration’ into the Lower East Side was one of the formative moments in the history of the United States, marking the beginning of two centuries of people coming from all over the world to create new lives here.”



Opening Page: Historic tenement buildings of the Lower East Side.

Above: Essex Street Market, a fixture of the neighbourhood since the 1940s.

Opposite: Detail, Katz's Delicatessen, founded in 1888 beautiful.

Together we set out to wander the area once known as Klein Deutschland, or Little Germany, where Europeans arrived en masse. We stop outside 97 Orchard Street, a five-storey building dating back to 1863, which over the decades was called home by a total of 7,000 immigrants from 20 different nations.

“In the mid to late 1800s, New York became an exciting harbour city with growing construction and garment industries. It was a symbol of opportunity for the so-called huddled masses and many of them ended up here, living in tenement housing,” Plantevin explains.

Passing through the intricately restored rooms, now part of the Tenement Museum, the immigrant story is told in such atmospheric detail that you can almost sense the families close beside you in the cramped conditions, fresh off the boat and anxiously unpacking their suitcases full of precious possessions and hopeful dreams.

By 1910 the Lower East Side had transformed once more into the largest Jewish city in the world, the immigrants leaving an indelible footprint with their pickle shops and pastrami delis, which still grace the locality's streets alongside their glorious houses of worship.

The grand facade of the Eldridge Street Synagogue provides a suitably ornate prelude to the many treasures inside, where the midday sun floods through stained-glass windows, highlighting sparkling candelabras and splashing palettes of colour across pews carved in rich walnut.

As one of the earliest American purpose-built religious buildings, it's a breathtaking memorial to the early devout settlers from Eastern Europe, whose rocking during prayer services is forever commemorated in grooves marked deep in the antique floorboards.

Around the corner stands the equally magnificent Bialystoker, a former church where the original Methodist occupants hid runaway slaves as they passed along the 'underground railway' from the South, before the building was sold on to Jews from Poland in 1905.

The incumbent rabbi, Zvi Romm, welcomes me with a warm smile before giving a tour and sharing his thoughts on this unique neighbourhood. “Many people who came here as immigrants were taken in by relatives or complete strangers. When people take care of one another, it ensures a real, lasting sense of community,” he says. “Even now, you can see the full, beautiful mosaic of the human experience here. This area remains a melting pot, it's still a place for dreamers, a place to find acceptance.”





Above: Eldridge Street Synagogue, a National Historic Landmark, built in 1887.

Opposite: The Back Room speakeasy.

Come late afternoon, the ceaseless rush of the Lower East Side is spilling down Essex Street and into the indoor market where the colourful aisles ring with accents from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, many belonging to 1980s arrivals from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

Across exotic pyramids of soursops and custard apples, I chat with Sobeida De La Cruz, a 40-year-old Dominican transplant whose family have been selling tropical produce to locals for decades.

“Even though there’s a lot of change going on, this is a neighbourhood rooted in tradition,” she tells me while stacking a pile of waxy, brown *mapuey* roots, a key ingredient in *sancocho* – a hearty, starchy stew that is popular with Latinos right across the Americas.

“Food plays a big part in that tradition,” she says. “We Latinos like to gather to eat together. And rather than have pizza and burgers, it’s important for us to keep alive the old recipes and eat dishes from our homelands.”

Outside the sun begins to fall behind distant towers of glass and steel and the streets around the market fill with beautiful people enjoying the Lower East Side’s lively nightlife, which gained renewed vigour in the 1990s as retro clubs and stylish eateries began to pop up in the many vacant lots.

I head down a dimly lit alleyway and enter a historic drinking den, The Back Room. This is one of only two speakeasies in New York still going strong since it opened in the Roaring Twenties, when mobsters Lucky Luciano and Meyer Lansky ran their bootlegging business from one of the tables in the bar.

“This whole area was gangster turf,” manager Megan Bones tells me, pointing out the escape routes where revellers would run to evade arrest during police raids – up to the roof, or down into the potato peeling area of the adjoining kosher restaurant.

She pours me a Prohibition-era Mary Pickford cocktail into a white teacup – a tradition of the era of temperance to disguise the consumption of alcohol. “It was also the dawn of the cocktail era,” she continues, “with fruit and bitters added to mask the flavour of hooch which had been made in New York bathtubs.”

Passionate about the neighbourhood, which she claims is “like another character in your life, a part of your being,” Megan is equally enthusiastic about the bar’s long history. “It’s important to preserve what’s gone before, in order to understand who we are now,” she says. “Places like this bar help us remember our short but incredible history – and remind us where America really came from.”





Machali

Queen of the Jungle

words & pictures
Jonathan and Angela Scott

Of all the places to see tigers in India,

Ranthambore National Park in the desert state of Rajasthan is our favourite. The park is a wonderland of ancient ruined palaces set among shimmering lakes resplendent with birdlife.

Tiger season begins in October, some months after the monsoon has finished and the jungle pathways have dried out. This is wintertime. There is a chill in the air, with villagers huddled around roadside fires, blankets and scarves pulled tight around their necks and shoulders, a battered kettle brewing *masala chai* to warm the blood. Mist hangs low in the valleys as jeeps packed with visitors race towards the park entrance. February and March are our favourite times to visit, when the vegetation is less dense, though sightings of tigers at the water's edge are most common during April, May and early June, when temperatures soar into the 40s.

Heading out on a jungle safari, the tiger's mighty visage is imprinted on your mind as you scan the hillsides and meadows, desperate to match your imagination with the reality of this god-like creature. The tiger is a striped denizen of the sunlight and shadows, the merest hint of black and gold merging with long, dry grass. Somewhere close by, a tiger pads carefully on plate-sized paws along a soft sandy track, pausing to spray its pungent message against prominent tree trunks or clumps of bushes for other tigers to read. The collective voice of the forest echoes from the wooded valleys and hilltops. The alarm cry of a spotted deer beckons, competing with the mewling trumpeting of peacocks and the guttural bark of a common langur. Fresh pug marks crisscross the tracks ahead, adding to anticipation. The aura of the tiger – largest and most powerful of all the big cats – holds you in its spell.

Our mission was to find a tigress named Machali, the Queen of Ranthambore, Lady of the Lakes. Machali had been our first tiger, glimpsed in the company of the legendary conservationists Valmik Thapar and Fateh Rathore Singh, as she ghosted past our vehicle while filming in 1997. The young female was destined to become the most visible and photographed of all the 45 tigers living in the park. Now, 17 years later, we were gifted one last Machali moment. Our guide Yardvendra raised one finger to his lips as a sambar barked in alarm. We hurried along the descending track, burying ourselves back among the forests. And there she was – making her way straight towards us, picking her way carefully through the thicket of trees like a skier negotiating a slalom course, her massive forepaws rising and falling in weary fashion. She crossed the track in front of us, the light picking out the reddish-brown colours of her coat. As she reached the track, she paused to mark her passage and we marvelled at the beauty of her patterned coat and the distinctive markings on her massive head.

She gave a cavernous yawn, affirming that despite her robust physical presence she was surely nearing the end of her life. In fact, for the past two years, forest guards had subsidised her kills. Machali would cling to life for a further three years, until one day in August 2016 she died. But her legacy continues. Among her 11 surviving offspring (7 females and 4 males), some of her daughters still roam her old haunts in India's most beautiful and alluring tiger reserve.

The four-yearly nationwide tiger survey, conducted inside and outside India's reserves in 2018, is expected to yield a figure of 3,000 tigers. This compares with 2016, when there were thought to be just 3,890 tigers remaining worldwide. The trade in tiger bone and skins has accelerated to the point that a tiger is worth more than US\$ 50–60,000, with every part of the animal coveted as a cure-all: tiger penis soup taken as an aphrodisiac, tiger bone wine to fortify the body and as a status symbol among the elite, tiger skin worn as a status symbol in Tibet and China.

Charismatic creatures such as Machali help remind the world what we stand to lose when the last tiger roars. The tiger is the playmaker, the pivotal reason for protecting India's forest reserves. Without tigers, these last wild landscapes will be stripped of their grass and trees, quarried for their stone and sand by a human tidal wave that threatens to reduce these sanctuaries to little more than islands surrounded by a sea of people. Step outside the boundary of most Forest Reserves and you will find the land denuded of vegetation, the bare earth scorched by a sun so hot that it scorches your eyes too. India's tourist industry needs the tiger as the iconic big cat to draw the crowds, along with protected corridors linking far-flung tiger reserves, to ensure the genetic viability of the population.



Mountain High

Words by Fergal Keane

I last climbed that way when I was maybe 12 years old. So I had lost the memory of how to reach the mountain. There had been too many roads and paths in between.

I knew it lay east of my village in the middle of the Comeraghs, a range that straddles the border of Waterford and Tipperary. These mountains belong to what is left of the so-called ‘hidden Ireland’, the places as yet untouched by mass tourism. To me they are the most beautiful mountains in the country.

If you ever drive from Cork city to the ferry port at Rosslare, you will crest the motorway about halfway along and see them in the distance, beyond the great bay of Dungarvan: mountains and the shadows of mountains, a place of melancholy and mystery where outlaws and rebels lurked up until the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923.

The name Comeragh comes from the Irish word *cumarach*, which means ‘abounding in rivers and hollows’. They are one of the great sights of

Ireland. What am I saying? One of the great sights of the world!

What remains of that first trip on the cusp of adolescence is the memory of low cloud and damp earth underfoot, the way in which the grey of rock and sky blended, and sheep clinging to the sides of the mountains. We swam in the freezing lake at the top of the mountain and fell asleep in the car on the way home. Our driver, our guide, our friend, our father in the absence of my own father, was John Ryan, whose black Rover carried us across the lanes of west Waterford to beaches, rivers, mountains, all the places that might delight a child’s mind. He had three children of his own, two boys and a girl, and they were our great summer friends.

Now I was back with my daughter and her cousins and friends, and with a few old friends of my own, men and women in middle age among whom I felt at home, what they would describe around here as “my own people”, as in “he’s gone back to his own people” – relationships that involve not just family, but a community of

acceptance based on long association and the ties of place.

My first cousin Gavin led the way. He has the sprightliness of a mountain goat and his fourteen-year-old son Josh even more. My daughter Holly was with them in the vanguard, launching herself up the face of Coumshingaun while her father puffed and panted on the lower slopes. The mountain is 2,569 feet at its peak (roughly half the height of Ben Nevis), with views that stretch across rich green pastureland and out to the Celtic Sea. At the summit is a lake formed in the last ice age where, if you are hardy enough, the climber can refresh in bone-chilling water.

The day was as fine as you will get in Ireland. There was not a cloud on the ascent and no wind. I could smell heather and dry grass, for we had not had rain in weeks. I lay back and listened to the bees working the slopes. All the stress and anguish – and there was much of it this past year – ebbed out of my bones. It was temporary, of course, but for that brief peace I felt an immense gratitude. I forgot who I was and where I had been. There was only the



mountain and the company of people I loved.

My pal Dervilla Keating – we’ve been friends since we were small children – brought up the rearguard. I believe it was out of sympathy for me, in my less than optimally fit state. “By God,” she said, “it would take a lot of this to kill you.”

The children were already in the water by the time we reached the summit. I sat on a rock, content to watch youth have its day. There were shrieks and cheers. Nobody had ever felt water so cold. Up here there was no mobile signal. In this one place the children experienced the world exactly as their parents had known it. We ate sandwiches and

regaled the kids with stories of the past. Some true. Most invented. They knew our stories of outlaws and princesses and buried treasures were imaginary, but went along with us in a mood of delicious complicity.

Coming back down the mountain, we passed the remains of a sheep that had fallen a few days before. “Mind your step. Don’t let that happen to ye,” called Dervilla.

By the time we reached the carpark, the children were exhausted, ready for home and hot food. I turned the car out and back in the direction of Ardmore. For a few minutes they talked about the mountain. And

then there was quiet. Behind me my daughter and her cousins had fallen asleep. I wondered whether Holly would remember this day, years hence, when I am gone over the last mountain to the far valley from which none return?

I like to think that she will – and that my stories will become her stories, with additions and amendments and exaggerations, to be told to another generation blessed to know this place.

The writer is a Special Correspondent with BBC News. His memoir *Wounds* is published in paperback by Harper Collins this autumn.

Illustration by Luke Walwyn.

In Napoli...

pictures

Francesco Lastrucci

In a corner tobacco shop, an old lady hurriedly flicks through a copy of *'La Smorfia'*, the directory of dreams which superstitious Neapolitans regularly refer to when choosing their Lotto numbers.

A vision of the Madonna in her slumbers corresponds to the number 8. Fleas – an 87. A dead man who speaks – 48. Her selection complete, she hurries off to watch the lottery draw in the local town hall where a blindfolded army officer picks numbered balls from an antique tombola, egged on by a noisy rabble who relish their cigarettes and red wine as much as they do a gamble.

It's a snapshot in time. Boisterous and utterly filmic. Full of humour and extraordinary vitality. In Naples though, moments like these are far from unique. Scenes of raw life play out hourly, daily, right across the city of ragged, rough edges, where the locals are full of the fire of nearby Vesuvius and the theatre of the streets is by far its greatest spectacle.

In the historic centre, where classical glories vie for attention amongst the rubbish and the graffiti, a priceless chiaroscuro Caravaggio graces the walls of a distinctly modest Pio Monte della Misericordia church. The painting, *'The Seven Acts of Mercy'*, is itself emblematic of Naples, a canvas of operatic drama; the master painter's interplay of intense light and dark the perfect metaphor for a city of such extremes.





Previous page: Street art work, titled 'Luce' in Piazza Sanità by street artist Tono Cruz. Street art is very popular in Naples, and you can find many huge murals around town particularly here in Sanità neighbourhood, a troubled, gritty yet very charming and real part of Naples.

Left: Fish shop in the historic market of Pignasecca, between the historic centre and Quartieri Spagnoli.

Centre: Sandwiches, fried food and street food in a shop in the historic centre. The owner is a big Napoli football fan (hence the blue colour of the wall and the many scarves, jerseys and even a little altar to "saint" Maradona).





Bottom: Food stall serving octopus broth, a classic of Neapolitan street food. Street food in Naples is excellent and very cheap.





Opposite page: Graffiti in Vomero neighbourhood.

Top: One of the most popular cafes in Naples: Gambrinus, in Via Chiaia, just a few steps from Piazza Plebiscito. Coffee is an institution in Naples and Gambrinus is often named one of the best 10 cafes in Italy. It opened in 1860 and features *Belle Époque/Art Nouveau* style decor.

Bottom: Cityscape at sunset in the upscale neighborhood of Vomero, perched on top of the Vomero hill.



Top: Street scene in Via San Gregorio Armeno, in the heart of the historic centre and famous for its nativity scenes artists and shops. Via San Gregorio Armeno is one of the attractions of Naples. Here people can admire numerous shops with creative nativity scenes and figurines in all variations. Besides the Jesus and Madonna figurines there are also fine detailed copies of pizzerias, fruit markets and even caricatured politicians and football players.

Bottom: Portrait of a gentleman in the historic centre.



Opposite page: One of the countless little street altars in Naples. They are found in every neighbourhood on every other corner, pictured here in the historic working class neighborhood of Quartieri Spagnoli.







The Great

words
Shaun Prescott

Dividing Range

Opening page: Three Sisters and the majestic Blue Mountains.

Right: The Katoomba Falls in the Blue Mountains.

The Blue Mountains lie at the westerly edge

of Sydney, forming a barrier between urban and rural New South Wales. It's a region of broad, oceanic valleys and vertiginous cliffs. The land belongs to the Gundungurra and Dharug people, who have known this region for thousands of years.

In the colonial period, the British sent countless expeditions to the easterly foot of these mountains before a group finally made it through in June 1813. Before that date, many had speculated about what lay on the other side of this barrier. Among convicts, rumours spread that a familiar kind of civilisation might be hidden there. Some reportedly believed it was China. Whatever their beliefs, many escapees perished in their attempts to find it.

Since 1813, more than a dozen towns have sprouted in the Blue Mountains. I live in Katoomba: it's the largest and attracts the most tourists. If it weren't for tourists, it's imaginable that Katoomba might no longer exist. As with many towns in New South Wales, Katoomba was founded for its proximity to coal deposits, but by the early 1900s these had been depleted and the town turned into a retreat for wealthy Sydneysiders. Thanks in part to the rise of motorcars, its appeal for rich urbanites receded by the mid-twentieth century. But even today there is no 'main' industry here, aside from tourism, though it's a two-hour commute from Sydney's central business district, where many residents travel for work.

As a result, Katoomba is an unusual town for New South Wales. Wandering the main street, evidence of its waning opulence is everywhere. Peeling art deco facades prevail, occasionally interrupted by hastily built, squat brick storefronts. There may be similar streets in nearby Sydney, but they would pale in comparison, because everything in Sydney is so rigorously maintained that it loses its connection with the past. In Katoomba the past is omnipresent, time has been permitted to leave its fade. And no matter how busy with tourists it becomes at the weekend, Katoomba carries the mood of a ballroom after hours.

This mood mixes with another: Katoomba feels at times as if it's happily stuck in the 1990s. The cafes have yet to inherit the globalised, bohemian minimalism you find in so-called alternative neighbourhoods of cities. Teenagers sit on the steps to the Cultural Centre, riding skateboards and barking at each other. In Katoomba cafes, you're more likely to be served by a stoned elderly than a coffeepreneur. It's a place that attracts those who prefer a so-called alternative lifestyle, but who don't have hundreds of dollars of disposable income to flaunt it. Geographically, it's seated on a ridge over the Megalong Valley; demographically, it's on a precipice between regional and urban.

It has its problems. In the Nineties, Katoomba was rife with heroin; nowadays, to a lesser degree, it's crystal meth. One of its most popular cafes, especially with unaware tourists, is run by a notorious brainwashing cult. Visitors will likely sense that Katoomba has a complicated side, evidenced by its lack of polish. This lack of polish helps me to feel at home, but for most Sydneysiders looking to move in, a lingering stigma forbids them.

I moved to Katoomba in 2016. I did so reluctantly. I grew up in rural New South Wales, moved to Sydney as soon as I could, but eventually found it too expensive. For a while, I quietly regretted moving to Katoomba. The main street is interesting, the people are varied and friendly, but I wanted to live in the middle of a swathe of concrete. Natural beauty is often lost on me, I long for cities under perpetual twilight. But another factor in my reluctance was the lingering feeling that the Blue Mountains was no place to rest. It was an attraction, a highway, a threshold, not a place one should settle for long. When I travelled this highway as a child, in the back seat of my parents' Commodore, scaling the first steep climb wasn't a sign that we'd reached the Blue Mountains: it was a sign that we'd nearly reached the western edge of the city.

But I'm here now, and likely will be forever. Having grown up in a calm countryside apportioned and fenced and farmed, and then a city more meticulously organised than most, it's frightening to remember that I live in a town surrounded by 3,000 square kilometres

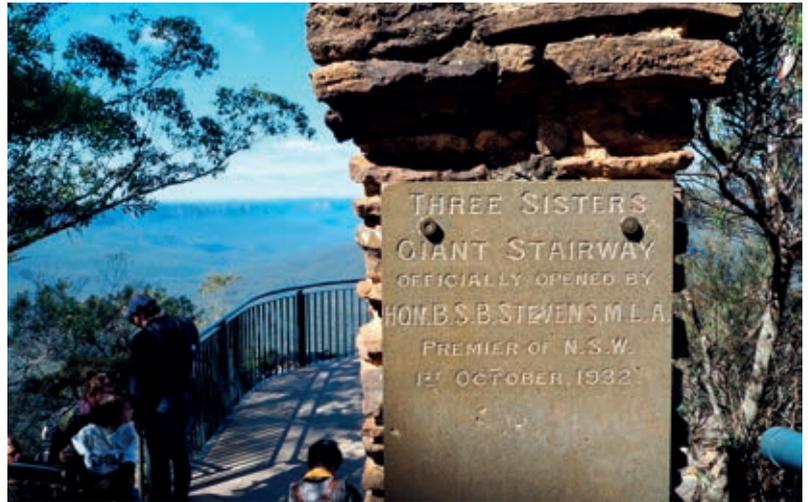




of bushfire-prone national park, much of it untouched by roads or tracks. Katoomba's south is a sheer cliff into the endless Jamison Valley, a fogged expanse of cragged sandstone mountains and thick eucalyptus forest. While Mount Solitary is clearly visible from the lookouts along the Katoomba and Leura cliffs, those who have reached this landmark are often shaken by the fact that, from Mount Solitary, no sign of settlement is visible in the north.

The Blue Mountains is more than a threshold, then, more than a natural barrier. It's possible to imagine it as an earthly void through which two highways course. Settler Australians romanticise the coast and outback laboriously, but there's little in the country's literature about this forbidding expanse. If there exists a buried awareness among settler Australians that they don't belong, residents of the Blue Mountains must surely feel it more strongly than most. In 2013, a state of emergency was declared in New South Wales due to bushfires originating in the Blue Mountains - nearly 200 homes were lost to flames. One of my earliest memories of the area was in the backseat of the Commodore in 1994, along the Bell's Line of road. We travelled on a highway between oceans of charred stump. Ash still lingered thick in the air.

Millions are spent on bushfire mitigation in New South Wales, but it pushes against a force stronger than could ever realistically be contained. The sap of eucalyptus propagates flame. This continent belongs to fire. The towns of the Blue Mountains are skewered on a spit above valleys of kindling. The dozen-or-so towns that do exist in the Blue Mountains hug closely to the highway, a highway built along roughly the same route the British took in 1813. Seen from above, or seen from a map, the highways look like varicose veins: thick and black, with thinner lines trailing off to nowhere on either side. It's a reluctant path, but one that nevertheless provides access to some of the most beautiful outlooks I've seen, views that take in rainforest, canyon and waterfall. The Pool of Siloam, reached via a steep descent at the south of Leura, is a rockpool at the bottom of a waterfall so picturesque that it feels staged. I've experienced this uncanny sensation



several times in the national parks. I've often stopped to check if the sights were real, used as I am to dry plains and cities.

Although boot-worn paths run deep into the gorges and valleys, many of the most popular Blue Mountains trails, particularly those in Katoomba, wend safely along the edges of cliffs. Some are cemented, others are sturdy boardwalks. Signage and plaques are abundant, so that it's possible to experience the Blue Mountains as a museum. Along these popular paths deviation is often impossible, thanks to the sheer drops. But where it's possible, it's unwise: it's rare for a year to pass without someone disappearing into the monotonous world of branches and scrub. So unfamiliar is its disorder that it's far too easy to underestimate the Blue Mountains. How could one become lost forever, an hour-and-a-half by train from central Sydney? In some ways, it's a relief to me that in the modern world, there are still zones of disorder so thick that it's possible to disappear forever inside them.

***The Town* by Shaun Prescott is out now, published by Faber & Faber, £12.99**

Top Right: The sign of Three Sisters Giant Stairway in Blue Mountains, Katoomba, Australia.

Left: A signpost marks the historic National Pass walking track in Blue Mountains National Park near Sydney.

Redemption Sound

words
Lorna Goodison

There is this seal who comes and splashes in the shallows whenever I sit by the sea to write.

I am somehow convinced that it is always the same seal that first appeared when I was working on my memoir about my mother and her people who lived by a river in Western Jamaica.

One of my aunts who emigrated to Canada in the 1930's married a man named Geoffrey Seal, and I like to think that this seal who keeps me company as I write is a token, a sign that my people are here with me by the Salish Sea, which is the name for the bodies of water straddling the Canada-U.S. border on the Pacific Coast.

If the writing is urgent, I'm down by the seaside come first light. A few fishing boats are heading out towards sheltered fishing grounds near here, and a tough little tug boat is pulling a log boom down to the sawmills on the lower mainland.

Invariably, some of the logs which have been corralled together in a shifting pallet hemmed round by wire rope will break free from the boom, often ending up on the rocky beach just outside our yard which faces the sea.

I look across at the Merry Island Lighthouse, where the lighthouse keeper will keep your dog for you if you are away travelling; and speaking of travelling, sometimes I've seen pods of orcas travelling together one behind the other almost in a straight line, along the whale road, which is one of the many names for the sea. Last year I saw a powerhouse of a humpback whale about fifty feet from our deck.

There is an eagle, who often comes to a fir tree right next to our house. Sometimes it will stand still for half an hour on the topmost branch of the tree and look out over the sea, its body

unmoving, just that snow white head that rhymes with the snowcapped mountains in the far distance moving around almost three sixty degrees.

The eagle stands still on that branch even if it is dive-bombed by loud cawing annoying ravens, until it spots breakfast, lunch, dinner or a snack swimming there in the sea and then with stealth bomber precision it lifts off and dives. I have never seen it fail to lift up from the water without some wriggling form of food in its beak.

I'd love to know how eagles do that. I wish I could do that. I never really thought much about what eagles do before life brought me to this part of the world.

My friend the seal probably lives in a colony or what is called locally a seal haul-out, a group of small islands just offshore a few miles up the coast. My husband Ted has taken us in his canoe to visit the sheltered cove where the seal mothers calve. As we enter the narrow passage into what I think of as the seal nursery what at first look like big slate grey and dark brown rocks all around began to move... but they are seals, heaving themselves up and sliding into the water. Hundreds of seals. Suddenly the water all around us was churning with mothers and baby seals. I burst into tears, adding salt to the water, at the sight of this, and then a chill runs through me as I half-turn in the canoe to glance back at some mothers who look as though they are teaching babies to swim, because right behind our canoe is a sea lion with an enormous head and stiff angry-looking whiskers. Ted says very softly "He's been following the canoe since we entered the cove". Watching our every move. This venerable old protector followed us all the time we were there, and escorted us half way across open water, or what Jamaicans call "Big Sea"... in this case Big Salish Sea, and only when we were almost back to our place in Halfmoon Bay did he dive deep.





Costas Ricas

words & pictures
Alex Robinson

As we leave the lodge the rain sweeps in, washing over the forest, clattering on the roof of the boat. The river surface disappears – merging as mist with the rain, which dances across the water to the rhythm of the wind. There’s a heavy rumble and the sky cracks with lightning – strobe-flashing scenes from the rainforest – a languid crocodile shuffling off a beach, a dripping tiger heron, a local family huddled together under cheap plastic sheeting in a tiny fishing skiff.

Costa Rica electrifies the senses. I struggle to take it all in – a flash of blue and white from a kingfisher breast, the musk of damp trees, the rat-a-tat rain and the warm river when I trail my fingers out of the boat, the energised air thick enough to drink.

On the map this sliver of Central America looks Scotland-small, but it’s a TARDIS – a continent crumpled into a country: corrugated into forest-filled folds, with landscapes big enough for an epic. Soaring spurs are swathed with dense labyrinths of trees. Waterfalls drop from a central cordillera of smoking volcano-cones into ribbons of rivers. These run to twin coastlines washed by the blue Pacific and the bottle-green Atlantic. Offshore, reefs teem with life. Hammerhead sharks gather in vast shivers. Whales gather in a gam. And the ocean bed drops kilometres.

The Atlantic is parallel to our boat, separated from the river by a long, broad finger of sand. To our other side is a wall of thick, low jungle. For twenty minutes we course between, the rain gradually thinning. By the time we stop, it’s faded to drizzle. The sky brightens. Cicadas sing. Tree frogs chirrup. Terns caw above us.



I slip out of the boat and barefoot-it onto warm sand – black as squid ink, coal-dust-clinging to my toes, pocked with the holes of a million raindrops.

There's movement. Baby turtles. Thousands of them, rippling across the dark beach to dark waves. They're impossibly vulnerable – tiny as a toddler's palm, a gull-swoop-snack, feeble flotsam for a roaring ocean they rush to, lemming-like.

Then the sun parts the clouds. And I feel primordial in a shaft of light – just me and my guide Isidro on miles of beach. We're specks in the vastness, nano-seconds in a shoal of time, witnessing an annual scene played-out since the dinosaurs. And Costa Rica turns from continental to cosmic.

The next day I'm feeling small once again – on a plane the size of a London bus, bumping towards Golfito, on Costa Rica's other ocean, the Pacific. The wind buffets us above the mountains. Then we're in smooth air above a brown river on a carpet of forest green. Patches of abandoned maize fields. Then more forest, dropping into a fjord and indigo-deep sea. We're low now and there's still no sign of human life until a cluster of iron roofs appears from nowhere below our wheels and we skid onto a dirt runway that looks like a red gash in the green of the jungle.

Two fit-looking guides welcome me in khaki and a jeep. A drive to a jetty. Onto a speedboat and we're whisking out from a harbour settlement smaller than a Devon hamlet into that fjord I'd seen from above. I see a dorsal fin. And

another. Dolphins. A flock of scarlet macaws is a splash of red against the trees. And then after twenty minutes, there's my destination, Nicuesa Lodge appearing as if from nowhere around a spur – tucked into a black-sand bay.

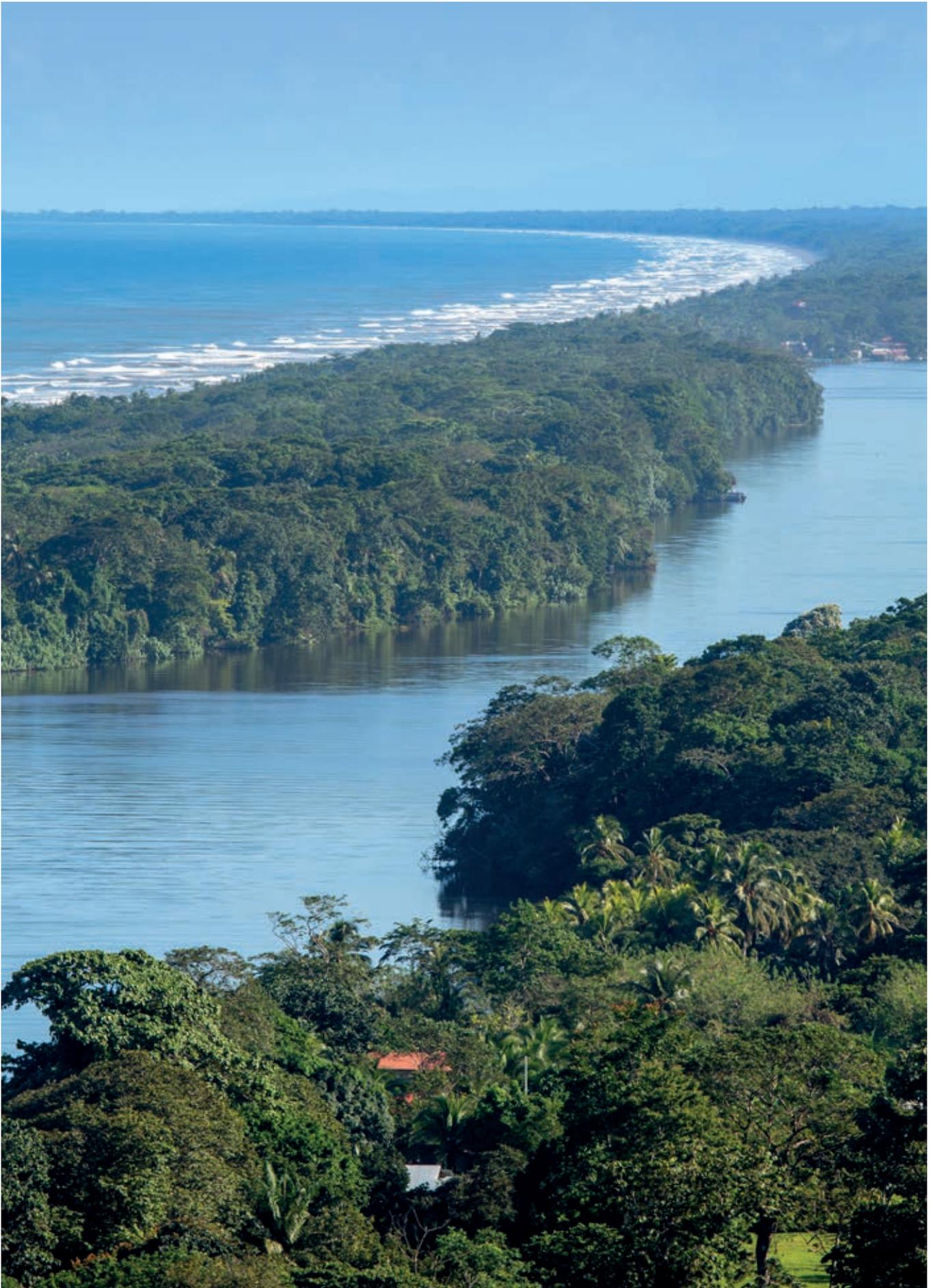
It's lunchtime, and the guide Veronica leads me off the boat through a hummingbird and heliconia-filled garden to the veranda check-in and a glass of ice-cool coconut juice. A shower and then a table with a forest-view in the al fresco restaurant, where I lunch on red snapper and ginger sautéed vegetables.

After lunch I'm in shorts and a T-shirt and on a trail in the forest behind the lodge, walking past towering tropical cedars. The air is heavy and humid. Little light reaches to the forest floor. And it's as quiet as a falling leaf.

As I'm wondering where the animals are, there's a chitter and rustle and Veronica points to capuchin monkeys high above us in the trees. An iridescent, electric blue Morpho butterfly, wings as wide as an open paperback floats along the path ahead of us.

"It's wing-edges are sharp," she tells me, "to cut through spider webs spanning the trees." I imagine them thick, yellow, gummy as honey.

The forest thins, the path steepens and reaches a rocky river bed where we clamber over boulders, up a water-cut valley and eventually into a stream. We wade through mossy pools and scramble over rocky banks and reach a beautiful mineral water cascade





which drops 50 metres into a cool pool. It's as fresh and clean as Evian.

I spend three more days at Nicuesa – kayaking with dolphins, snorkelling and catching Spanish mackerel in the Golfofito fjord. Then I yearn for golden sand.

Santa Teresa is a low-key legend – a tiny surf town where Matt Damon, Chris Hemsworth and Giselle Bündchen don't care if they're seen.

They take a helicopter. I take a short flight to Liberia, hire a four-wheel drive and brave the dirt roads that run to Santa Teresa. I spend three hours winding round some of the roughest, steepest roads I've ever driven. Then just as the sun is low in the evening sky I drop down the last hillside and Santa Teresa is spread

before me. There are no visible houses – they must be hidden beneath the trees which drop to miles and miles of empty sand, broken by headlands of pristine rainforest, cut by weather-worn rocks, and washed by huge, rolling Pacific waves.

I take a room at the Latitude 10 resort, where Indonesian-inspired cabins sit right on the shore and a sea breeze blows through the shutters in place of a/c. After a mojito and a spectacular sunset I head for the beach and lie on the soft sand watching the daylight end and the night begin. Soon the sky is a shimmering bowl of stars, so bright and immense I feel a kind of vertigo, a sense of falling into space. The sound of the sea lulls me into half-sleep. I'm trance-like. And for a moment in all that vastness I become part of the panorama, part of the chorus of life.



words
Kevin Pilley

Lighthouse Way

The end of the world is not far away. Once you get to northern Spain and find the fabled cafe in the lighthouse.

Pepe stood aside to let me admire his optics. He stocks all the usual Spanish suspects. Most of his optics are one litre. But one stood out in the middle of the bar, not behind it. It was three metres tall and one wide. And it didn't contain any alcohol, only prisms.

Pepe is the barman of the world's only lighthouse bar, at Cap Vilan in Galicia. It is housed inside Spain's first electric lighthouse, which was built in 1896 and is now part of north-west Spain's new Lighthouse Way.

There are seven lighthouses on the Camino Dos Faros, including Cap Vilan, Naringa (the newest, from 1997), the 1920 Ronando named after the word for angry-sounding waves, the 1920 Laxe, Muxia and Cap Tourinan (the most westerly point of Spain).

The Lighthouse Way joins villages like Pontesco, Malpica, Ninons, Muxia, Arou and Nemina. Near Vila is the English Cemetery. One hundred and seventy-five sailors from *HMS Serpent*, mostly naval cadets out of Plymouth, were drowned in 1890 in the *Mare Tenebrosum* ('dark sea') and lie buried by the beach at Camarinas. Beside them are with victims of the Iris Hull disaster of 1883. Passing ships still fire off salutes over what is now called The Serpent's Shallows.

Since the fifteenth century, there have been more than 800 shipwrecks, one major spill (the 2002 *Prestige* disaster) and several thousand deaths in the waters around the north-west coast of Spain. British, Russian and French mariners, and Barbary pirates, together shipping everything from coal, cement and sunflower seeds to slaves. Galicians too. There are

simple standing stone homages to the *percebeiros*, scavengers who lost their lives fishing for gooseneck barnacles among the granite outcrops and swirling currents of the outlying islands. In Galicia, fishermen's wives are still called *viuvas dos vivos* – 'widows of the living'. Gooseneck barnacles fetch 200-300 euros per kilo. Four fishermen die each year feeding their families.

Along the beaches and clifftops around the scenic shoulder of Spain, are gravestones and memorial statues. Some are little piles of round, Atlantic-flattened pebbles. Others are high crosses. There are cliff carvings too, their inscriptions worn away by the deadly winds.

These *crucerios* all commemorate ships dashed against the rocks of Punta Boi and sailors washed up on the beaches of Reira and Trece, along Galicia's notorious *Costa da Muerte* ('Coast of Death') and its treacherous *Ruta dos Naufraxos* ('Route of Shipwrecks').

The 200-kilometre Lighthouse Way will take you to the end of the world. Or, very nearly. On it, you are always close to death. It takes you, your sturdy boots and Trek-rite hiking poles around an infamously dangerous and famously scenic coastline, around headlands, past wind and turbot farms, through dunes, over white-sand beaches like Mar de Fora, past fishing boats, pre-Christian ritual places, oscillating stones and shaking logans, outdoor ovens, rye-straw huts, haylofts, tombs of Celtic crone goddesses and fields filled with cows, horses, flowers, furze and gorse, to *rias* – firth-like inlets and drowned valleys.

Seeing crosses all the time. *Treskillions* or *triskele* abound in Galicia, the three interlocked spirals reminding you of the Iberian Peninsula's Celtic and pre-Celtic roots. They are found not only on clifftops, in churches and in cemeteries, but also

above the region's iconic *horroes* and *cabaceiros* (staddle-stone granary houses raised on pillars).

Galicia's claim to Celtic status rests on such ancient motifs and petroglyphs, the facial features and short stature of the people, fortified settlements called *castros* – such as Santa Tecla in A Guarda, the burial chambers of Dombate, menhirs like the Lapa de Gargnans. As well as bagpipes and Y-chromozones.

Galicians, although they have no Celtic language, consider their region the seventh Celtic country after Scotland, Wales, Brittany, Ireland, Cornwall and the Isle of Man. The rose compass set into the earth near A Coruna's 57-metre Torre de Hercules depicts all Celtic nations – Galicia included.

The world's oldest Roman lighthouse may have been one of Hercules' labours after he slew a giant and named Coruna after a lover, Curia. It may also have been built by King Breogan, ruler of Galicia, when Coruna was known as Brigantium. His statue guards the ancient lighthouse.

Galicia is justly famous for its restaurants. Like Alberto Prieto's El de Alberto, in A Coruna, and the waterfront Alborada at A Guarda, with specialities like lobster and rice, scallops and piquillo peppers with cod. Elsewhere it's *lubina con navajas* (sea bass with razor clams), *mariscades* (shellfish medley), *tarta de Santiago* (almond cake), pig's ears, and *lacon con grelos* (ham and turnip heads).

Perhaps the best restaurant is Sefa and Francisco Insua's O Fragon, at San Martino de Arriba, Finisterre. This offers a seven-course tasting menu with accompanying Galician wines and rare *puco feito* dishes (meaning the pinnacle of homely, ill-favoured and rare), like *alina de escarapote fritida* (fried scorpion fish wings). All for 50 Euros per person.

Walkers stay in family-run guesthouses like Playa de Laxe or Pension Rural As Eiras in Lires. If you are not on an organised tour, the best places to be based are the Serotel Blue in A Coruna, the Parador Turismo in Pontevedra, or the Parador in Baiona – a manor house set in a medieval walled fortress on the Monterreal peninsula, looking out over the Cies Islands, where Columbus's ship *Pinta* arrived in 1493 with news of the New World. There is a replica in the port.

Every July, there is a popular pilgrimage to the Near Death Festival at the tiny L'Iglesia de San Jose church in As Neves, near the Portuguese border. Three thousand people attended the last one, to give praise to the patron saint of resurrection, Santa Marta de Ribarteme, sister of Lazarus.

Those who have survived death in the last year – whether illness or accidents – are paraded in open coffins. Thanks are given for surviving death. Vigil candles and votive offerings of yellow wax in the shape of body parts – hands, heads, hearts and even feet – are sold from stalls, as well as bobbin lace shrouds, and octopus cooked with sea salt, olive oil and cherry peppers. The wine flows after mass. It is a festival celebrating life in a region of death.

The Near Death Festival probably began in the twelfth century. Some think it was an attempt by the Catholic Church to adapt to deeply ingrained pagan rites. There are always empty coffins standing in the church. Those who take part in the procession donate them to the local community. They are for people who can't afford to be buried. So they can 'die well'.

Everyone visiting Galicia ends up in Finisterre, which the Romans considered the end of the world (*finis-terrae*). Though in fact, the most westerly point of continental Europe is Cabo da Roca in Portugal. Overlooking the Robeira Islands, Finisterre's lighthouse was built in 1853. It overlooks the spot where, in 1596, 25 Spanish galleons went down in a storm leaving 1,706 dead. Now it has a fog siren called *Vala Fisterra* ('the cow of Fisterra'). It is the final destination of the Way of St James, a 90-kilometre walk inland from Santiago de Compostela. In acts of purification, pilgrims burn their boots on the headland.

Walkers of the Lighthouse Way tend to have a beer overlooking *Gentulo*, the Devil's Rock. Celt nor not, it's hard to celebrate completing the best and toughest coastal walk in Europe. Your quasi-Celtic *muineira* jig may not be as sprightly as you may wish. Because it's hard to River Dance when your feet have lost it and death has nearly got the better of you. So forget the acts of fertility too.

Over a beer – he does not serve Eddystone Rocks cocktails yet – Pepe the lighthouse barman told me how lighthouse keepers had to wear linen so as not to scratch or fog the lights. And that lanterns were once lit by whale oil, olive oil, lard and even *colza* – wild cabbage oil. He beamed at me. "If you could not hear land, you could smell it!"

It was some party. I asked Pepe if he had many regulars. He looked around and nodded. "Yes. We have many lens here." My eyes began to rotate and shutter and my cheek began to emit bright light. I started to experience chromatic distortions, visual aberrations and image stabilisation issues.

Pepe beamed again. His teeth lit up the way and pointed me in the right direction. The gents aren't too hard to find in a lighthouse. You soon find safe haven even if you go the wrong way. So soon my eyes were focussing on the same convergence point and I made room for more of Pepe's optical system.



Presenting Pyongyang

Pyongyang is a playground kind of place, not in terms of fun of course, but designed as a distraction from the free education for all that is a daily backdrop to life in North Korea. The showcase capital was rebuilt from scratch after being bombed to oblivion during the Korean War. The city is as theatrical as the regular marches and synchronised displays of military might that parade its grand axial boulevards. The nation's founder, Kim Il Sung conceived of it as something of a stage set, designed to impress and subliminally, to oppress.

Those wide avenues are flanked by the most grandiose, gargantuan and stately in every sense of the word monuments. *Guardian* journalist and photographer Oliver Wainwright got a rare chance to picture scenes not often seen by outsiders. Under Kim Jong Un, construction in the capital has been speeded up with the aim of turning the whole country into a 'socialist fairylane' firmly in mind and directive. The flim flam of fantasy against the very real power of the architecture makes this a city like no other.



Left: View from the top of the Tower of the Juche Idea in Pyongyang. The North Korean capital stretches out beneath you as a pastel-coloured panorama, a rolling field of tower blocks painted in terracotta and yellow ochre, turquoise and baby blue – a distinctive colour palette that recurs throughout the country's architecture and interiors. © Oliver Wainwright



Above: Changgwang Health and Recreation Complex
© Oliver Wainwright

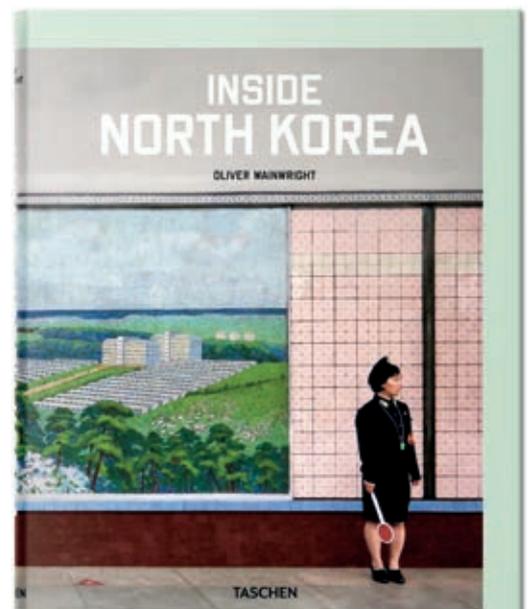


Above: Changgwang
Health and Recreation
Complex
© Oliver Wainwright



Below: The Changgwang Health and Recreation Complex was the city's flagship health centre when it opened in 1980. Covering an area of almost 40,000 square metres, it contains a sauna, bathhouse, swimming pools and hair salons – where customers can choose from a range of officially sanctioned haircuts. In a futuristic touch, the diving boards are reached by a mechanical elevator in a shaft faced with smoked glass.

© Oliver Wainwright



Inside North Korea, by Oliver Wainwright, Julius Wiedemann.
 Taschen нвк (with ribbon bookmarks), 240pp, £40.

Brain Bathing

The brain is not a good holiday-taker.

Words by Justine Hardy

The brain does not necessarily get the point of a holiday. The whole thing can become an internal clash, a stand-off between the overwhelming sense of needing a break and the busy brain that just goes on thinking.

There is an equation: $H + A = E$
(Holiday + Anticipation = Exhaustion).

It is not just a quirky line, but one sweated over by the earnest denizens of academia. It is also something that gets bandied around a lot, though in a different form, particularly in September and January, after the long summer break, and then again around the high jinks and jingle of the festive season. How many times have you listened to someone describing all the wonderment of their holiday and then finishing with a variation of – ‘And now I really need a holiday,’ followed by a slightly embarrassed laugh. You may laugh too, because you know the feeling.

Harvard Medical School were tasked with researching this. They turned to a survey conducted in San Francisco in 2015 that came up with the juicy figure of 62% of respondents saying that their sense of stress felt hugely heightened by the holidays.

Now, of course, none of the above are staggering conclusions that will make you change your whole view on holidays, but there are some other aspects that may be less obvious.

This busy brain of ours has a system that those earnest denizens have dubbed ‘the shifting set’. This is a mix of our ability to manage time, pay attention, plan, remember details and switch focus from one thing to another. On the last point (the ability to switch focus), anyone who believes they can multi-task is mistaken. It is simply the brain switching from one task to another very quickly, which is why it is so exhausting and ultimately anxiety inducing. It is also why digital life is so tiring, with that constant flicking of attention.

This very specific set of skills is controlled by the pre-frontal cortex, the so-called executive part of the brain. In short, it is the part of the brain that creates the complex dance between our thoughts and actions. In the daily round of life, these frontal brain skills work well, based on the routines and rhythms that most of us have. We navigate through our days, shunting from one skill to other, and on the show goes. When this set of skills is presented with an entirely new setting, the pre-frontal cortex goes

into overdrive. In another, non-holiday scenario, say something like starting a new job or moving house, there is an anticipation and indeed understanding of the potential stress involved. The mind and body are highly effective at adjusting and compensating. A holiday is different because of its very particular dissonance – the joy of being on holiday set against the stress of that good old shifting set becoming overloaded with a whole new set of tasks to deal with.

Then, along comes the next little neuro-charmer. Once that part of the brain is in overdrive, our survival mechanisms often kick in, flooding the system with adrenaline. This ‘fight, flight or freeze’ hormone boost is often the jet-engine that enables people to get through to the end of those holidays that turn tricky. It is also why there is such a sense of exhaustion afterwards.

The brain has had to bunny hop around things such as too many fractious relatives at the table, all wanting different kinds of milk; or mediating vegans versus meat-eaters whilst trying to remember whether accidentally you mixed the nut stuffing in with the sausage version; or it has been planning military campaigns to get to the museum, the mambo festival



and the restaurant for lunch that you heard about months ago, and all while wondering whether you are getting varicose veins or are your legs just tired.

There is that witching hour, when the day is done, and the home, rental, or hotel room is finally quiet, and for a moment all seems well in the world. In the bliss of this, as you tiptoe across a darkened, quiet room in bare feet, you tread on a toy car or dropped fork. Now your brain soars into threat response overdrive.

On that happy note, the pre-frontal cortex is also the part of the brain that is exerting more control over the rest of the brain when people become depressed and over-anxious, which is one of the many and varied reasons to want to give it a chance to relax.

This is not slyly delivered a neuroscientific version of Scrooge's personal jottings. They are simply 'notes to self' for the next holiday. Where it is a bit sly is that it is a roundabout way of pondering what might really be a holiday for the brain. If your standard holiday, home or away, is something that can stretch the brain to the point of exhaustion, then what is the brain's equivalent of a hammock and a straw hat?

The brain thinks, and that is its nature. It also has a wild resistance to being in the present moment, which is, of course, the most restful place for it to be. Nudging it to a single focus allows that busy shifting set to calm down a little, like giving it a gentle massage or a reset. It can be done on most,

though perhaps not all, holidays. It is the trick of doing each thing with complete immersion. Perhaps there is a holiday habit of making a quiet daily swim a time to make lists for the day, or to churn through whatever might have been keeping you awake. Instead, just swim, with the feel of your body in the water, watching the movement of light on the surface around. This is the kind of quiet attention that finally allows the brain to take a rest.

JUSTINE HARDY is a writer, trauma therapist and the founder of Healing Kashmir.

Illustration by LUKE WALWYN.



Absolute Abu Dhabi

With its awe-inspiring culture, miles of sugar-white beaches, unexpected natural wonders and world-class luxury, Abu Dhabi has come of age. Its glittering skyline, marble-domed mosques and extravagant beachfront resorts bathed in year-round sunshine mean it's a destination for all, whether honeymooners, adventure-seekers or families. And with Etihad offering daily flights from London Heathrow and Manchester in under eight hours, and the weather at its most appealing during our winter, there's never been a better time to book.

Abu Dhabi City's public and private beaches are heralded as the best in the Gulf, with many outstanding beachfront hotels offering high-grade seclusion and privacy. Among our favourites is the resplendent **Shangri-La**, nestled between a pristine stretch of white sand, lush gardens and a network of canals on the shores of the Khor Al Maqta River, where five-night breaks including flights and transfers start from **£1,230 pp**. Find out more at wexas.com/102940.

The city is also a beacon of the region's unique cultural heritage

– most notably in the form of the resplendent Sheikh Zayed Mosque. The third largest in the world, its collection of dazzling white domes frame intricately painted ceilings, glittering crystal chandeliers, pristine marble flooring, a sprawling, hand-woven Persian carpet and space for up to 40,000 worshippers. It's, perhaps unsurprisingly, Abu Dhabi's most recognisable landmark.



Etihad Airways

Etihad Airways offers three daily flights from London Heathrow, a twice-daily service from Manchester to Abu Dhabi and onwards to over 90 destinations in more than 50 countries. Onboard each state-of-the-art aircraft, you'll experience the latest entertainment with hundreds of hours of TV and films including live channels with sport and news. Upgrade to Business Class for a Dine Anytime service with dedicated Food & Beverage Manager to guide you through the range of dining options. When it's time to relax, seats convert to comfortable flat beds, all with aisle access. On arrival in Abu Dhabi, you'll enjoy a luxury chauffeur service to your final destination in the UAE. Furthermore, the airline's 'Extraordinary Abu Dhabi Pass' offers their flyers exclusive discounts on some of the region's top attractions, from shopping offers to rounds of golf and indulgent spa days.



الإتihad
ETIHAD
AIRWAYS
ABU DHABI

There are some 200 islands just off the coast, many of which are leisure destinations in their own right. Saadiyat Island is home to some of the region's best beachfront properties as well as a world-class shopping and commercial hub. Here you'll find the **Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi Hotel & Villas**, offering opulent rooms and suites, a palm tree-fringed swimming pool and manicured gardens with wonderful views of Saadiyat Beach.

Yas Island is a vibrant mélange of exquisite beaches, luxury shopping, live music venues and family-friendly entertainments including Waterworld and Warner Bros. World. The Yas Marina Circuit has hosted

the Formula One Abu Dhabi Grand Prix since 2009, and petrol heads can also drop in at Ferrari World and test their mettle on the world's fastest rollercoaster.

Further afield, the undulating dunes of the surrounding desert are the backdrop for evocative camel rides and adventurous days spent sandboarding and quad biking. Or you can explore the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Bida Bint Saud – home to a collection of 5,000-year-old stone tombs – and the Bronze Age fort ruins of Hili Archaeological Park.

The finest desert stay is to be had at the palatial, fortress-style **Anantara Qasr Al Sarab**, which dazzles with

sweeping ochre views, a gorgeous swimming pool, pretty gardens and an indulgent spa.

Nature's delights continue in surprising abundance on Sir Bani Yas Island, a dedicated wildlife reserve and bird sanctuary where gazelle, giraffe, oryx, cheetah and over 100 species of birds share 4,000 hectares of pristine wilderness. Further delights can be found in Abu Dhabi's Mangrove National Park, a perfect spot for kayak paddling and viewing flocks of greater flamingo and western reef heron.

Sample the contrasts on an **8-day Desert & Beach Break** from **£1,615 pp.** See wexas.com/153251 for more info.





Fur & feathers

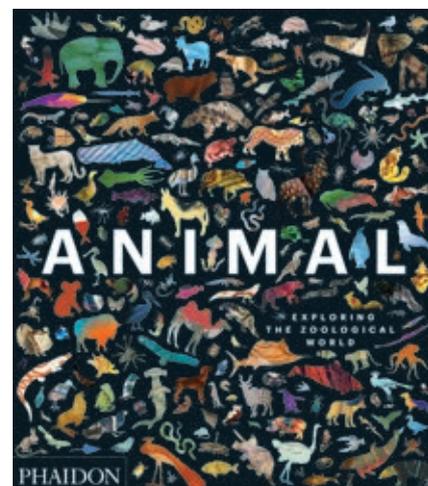
From the first cave paintings, humans have had a compulsion to depict and celebrate animals. Every country, every tribe, has a tradition that pays homage one artistic way or another. Medieval bestiaries, exquisitely detailed scientific illustrations, striking photography – have all – in their very different ways, attempted to capture the beauty and variety of our furry, feathered, scaly, spiky, friends and foes.



Left: *Birds of America*, 1837, John James Audubon, Iceland, or Jer Falcon (*Falco islandicus*), plate 366, hand-coloured engraving and aquatint on Whatman wove paper, 100.3 x 64.8 cm / 39 1/2 x 25 1/2 in, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. Picture credit: National Audubon Society (page 224)

Top: *Hare Spirits*, 1960, Kenojuak Ashevak, sealskin stencil, 48.2 x 60.9 cm / 19 x 24 in, private collection (page 263)

***Animal; Exploring the Zoological World* by Phaidon press, НВК, 352 pp, £39.95**



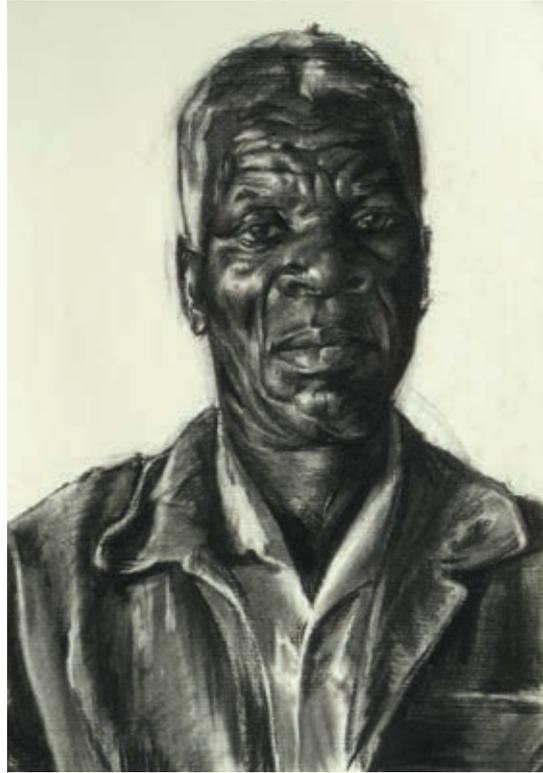
Art of Africa

Paintings by
Thomas Lumley

These are faces sculpted by the vicissitudes of Africa, powerfully depicted by distinguished artist Thomas Lumley. He met and spent time with many people on a farm near Harare in 2005, some of whom inspired these portraits. Chipos, top left, and Dyson next to him on the right, worked on one of the last white-owned farms in Zimbabwe. The stately woman in this spread lived in what was known as a 'squatters' camp', and alongside her is a builder who had lived on the farm for as long as anyone could remember.

Lumley has captured a seminal time in African history, and every face tells a complex, hard and wise story. In the artist's experience, very few people sit absolutely still for an extended amount of time, but here, on the edges of the farm, under welcome shade against a demanding sun, everyone did. Their stoicism distils the spirit of Africa, weathered but not always worn.

Thomas Lumley's latest exhibition, The Evidence That Something Happened: Studies in Wood opens on 23 November until 8 December at The Muse Gallery, 269 Portobello Road, London W11 1LR





© RENE BURRI/MAGNUM PHOTOS

From Mao to now

pictures
Magnum photographers

Magnum China is a panoramic portrait of China and its people by the agency's legendary photographers. Spanning the pre-revolutionary years to China's rise as a global superpower, it is both an extraordinary photobook and an engaging social history of this enigmatic, influential country.



© MARC RIBOUD/MAGNUM PHOTOS

Top Left: Dead lotus flowers on Kunming Lake, Summer Palace, Beijing, 1964.

Bottom Left: One of the last aristocrats, Wangfujing, Beijing, 1957.



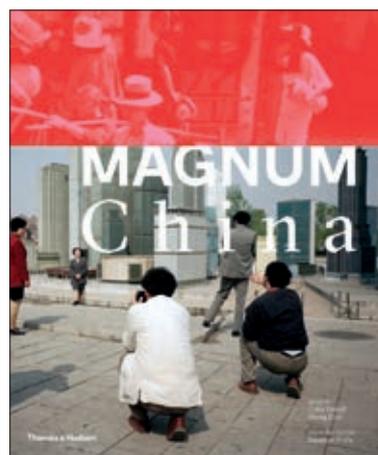
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Top Right: Boy soldier, Hankou, March 1938.

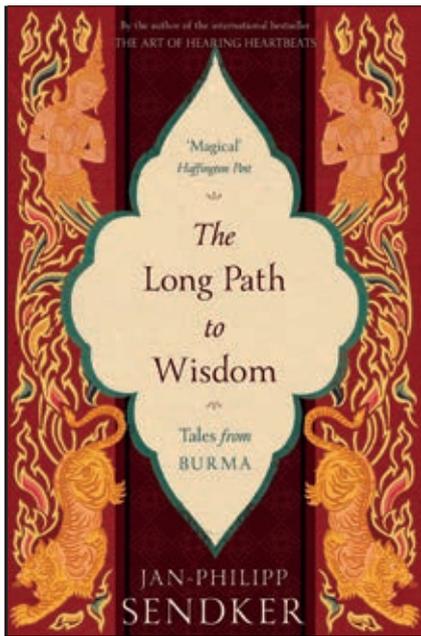
Bottom Right: A group of Chinese watching 'the Long Nose', a term that refers to all Westerners, including the photographer, 1982.



© EVE ARNOLD/MAGNUM PHOTOS



MAGNUM CHINA
 edited by Colin Pantall and Zheng Ziyu,
 with additional texts by Jonathan Fenby.
 Thames & Hudson, Hbk, 376pp, £48



Into Burma

by Jan-Philipp Sendker

The flight from Bangkok to Yangon took only about an hour, but almost as soon as we landed I realised that I had travelled at least fifty years back in time. Ours was the only plane on the runway. The single-storey terminal was about the size of a small supermarket. The bus that was supposed to take us from the plane to the arrivals area stood derelict beside the airstrip, one door hanging askew. It wasn't going anywhere.

Neither was the luggage belt.

A dozen or so taxi drivers waited by the exit for the few passengers. Every one of them wore a white shirt, a longyi (the Burmese variant on a sarong), and a friendly smile. One driver reached for my bag, which I reluctantly relinquished. He led me to his vehicle, a dented old Toyota with no dashboard. The engine turned over on the third try.

We drove slowly into the city. There were almost no cars or traffic lights. People were on foot, children played in the streets, cooking fires burned in courtyards and alleys. There were no advertisements, no neon lights, no skyscrapers, precious few shops. Our route took us past old teak villas, monasteries, and pagodas. No sign of the world I had left behind just an hour's flight away. At some point I felt so disoriented that I asked the driver whether there was a McDonald's in the city.

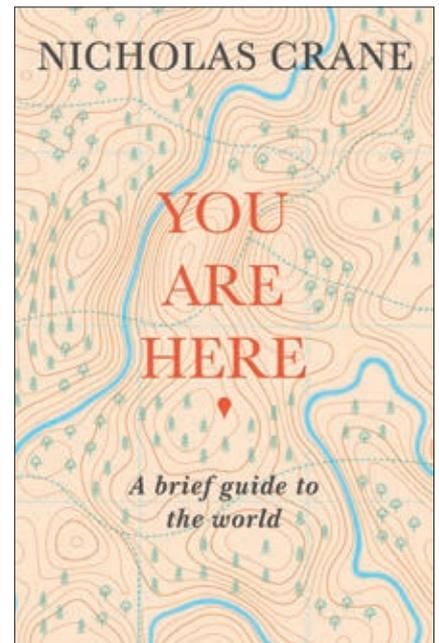
He considered this for a long time. Eventually he turned to me and asked: "Might he perhaps be Scottish?"

The famous Shwedagon Pagoda glinted in the evening sun as we drove past. The driver took his hands briefly off the wheel and bowed his head.

It was hot and humid. With temperatures topping a hundred degrees, May is the hottest month in Burma. Sweat ran down my brow and neck; my shirt clung to my body. I asked whether the taxi had a fan or even an air conditioner. Of course it did! Could he perhaps turn it on? No. Regretfully, it was broken.

Eventually we stopped in front of a hotel from the British colonial era where George Orwell once purportedly spent the night. It was early evening; the streets were full of people. Men and women sat in front of houses perched on stools and little benches, drinking tea, fanning themselves, chatting, laughing. I brought my bag straight to my room and could hardly wait to explore this strange, remarkable city.

From The Long Path to Wisdom: Tales From Burma (Polygon Hbk, 288pp, £8.99)



OUR COMMON HOME

Travel writer, broadcaster and cartographic expert Nicholas Crane issues a paean to geographers and a call to action for us all in this slim, engrossing collection of six personal, universal essays about key issues facing humanity and the planet – also available as a backpack-friendly audiobook or download narrated by the author. He begins by regarding the latest satellite imagery to contemplate the complex systems on our blue sphere that were generated by a galactic inferno and the subsequent effects of aeons of gravitational activity. Next he examines the water cycle that has shaped the physical world, nourished organic life through numberless evolutions and extinctions, and is now battling multiple malfunctions from deforestation and fossil fuel dependence to livestock waste and overfishing.

Tracking humanity's journey from hunter-gatherer to urban commuter, he speculates on the rise of megacities and mega-regions as agricultural communities continue to up sticks in search of a more prosperous lifestyle, and examines the establishment of sustainable models of urban living from Copenhagen to Medellín.

He then considers the origins of spatial awareness and cognitive mapping around the globe, and the rediscovery of his own 'inner geographer' back in the 1990s as he embarked on an 18-month journey walking alone and sleeping under the stars on a 10,000-km hike across Europe from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea.

But personal knowledge is only the start of it. Mapmaking as an aid to others has its roots in Mesopotamia and ancient Greece – and Crane show how today's GPS systems have many surprising connections to centuries-old geographical expression. Maps were also drawn to establish conquest and rule, as evidenced by Chinese mapmakers three centuries before Ptolemy.

The final chapter addresses the challenges of keeping our planet alive and sustainable. Disruptions to the natural world by mankind have accelerated at pace since the Industrial Revolution, and the ramifications of our lifestyle choices in the Anthropocene era are placing unprecedented pressures on ecological systems.

"Never has geography been so important," he concludes. "On this finite orb, with its battered habitat, sustained in dark space by its intricate swirl of interconnected systems, we have reached a point in our collective journey where knowledge is the best guarantor of the future. Geography will keep us human."

Reviewed by Mark Reynolds

***You Are Here: A Brief Guide to the World* by Nicholas Crane Weidenfeld & Nicolson, HBK, 160pp, £12.99**

The Quest

by Finuala Dowling

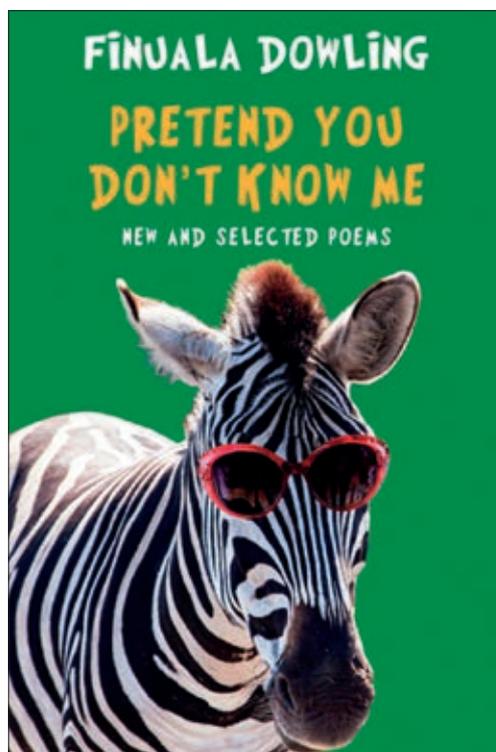
My friend travelled the world
in search of an answer.

In cherry-blossom season
he walked from Kyoto to Tokyo,
ate the fish that kills and lived.

In Kolkata he slept beside his swami
and recited at dawn
the one-thousand-and-four names of Lord Ram.

But it was in a Sandton car-tomb,
on a Johannesburg parking machine,
that the message he needed flashed through:

Change is possible, it said.



***From Pretend You Don't Know Me: New and Selected Poems*, Bloodaxe Books, PBK, 136pp, £12**

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 wilderness land of mountains and wildlife-filled forests rich in First-Nations 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 motoring. 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.

Lodge escapes

There's perhaps nothing more iconic of a Canadian getaway than a log-cabin stay. And, British Columbia offers some of the finest options. Perhaps get away to Quadra Island

where you'll return from kayaking, wildlife spotting and thousand-year-old petroglyphs to some hot-tub indulgence. Otherwise, escape to Bear Claw Lodge - a slice of timber-clad luxury set among 700,000 acres of natural beauty.

Wildlife

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.

Heritage intrigue

Along with its natural beauty, there's plenty of human intrigue to BC. It all begins with a fascinating First-Nations past that lives on in Port Hardy's colourful totems and the Indian Reserves 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.

A 17-day self-drive in British Columbia is available from **£3,430 PP**

incl. flights, car hire, accommodation and more.
Visit [wexas.com/153456](https://www.wexas.com/153456) for more information.

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

SUPER.
NATURAL
BRITISH
COLUMBIA
CANADA

You might also like...

POSTCARDS FROM THE TRENCHES: A GERMAN SOLDIER'S TESTIMONY OF THE GREAT WAR by Irene Guenther Bloomsbury, Hbk, 256pp, £30

An intimate view of WWI told through a series of hand-painted postcards sent from the frontline to his wife-to-be by rising artist Otto Schubert, whose work was later labelled 'degenerate' by the Nazis. A vivid depiction of the daily realities and tragedies of war and an illuminating diary of love and longing, brilliantly contextualised by University of Houston art historian Guenther.



15 Dec, 1915
Small village in France
Dear Irma, many thousands of greetings, your Otto. Please write me often. Have not had a letter from you in a long time. I also sent a card to your brother. I am quite tired of life...



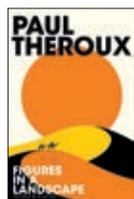
THE BEST MOMENT OF YOUR LIFE by Lonely Planet Lonely Planet, Hbk, 272pp, £16.99

A collection of 100 inspiring stories in which Benedict Allen, Charley Boorman, Suzanne Joinson, Andrew McCarthy, Sarah Outen and many others reflect on singular experiences and transformative travels.



EPIC HIKES OF THE WORLD by Lonely Planet Lonely Planet, Hbk, 328pp, £24.99

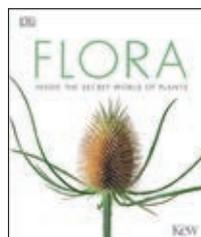
Fifty incredible hiking routes in 30 countries from New Zealand to Peru, plus 150 further suggestions to inspire a lifetime of adventure from urban trails to cultural rambles and mountain expeditions.



FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE by Paul Theroux Hamish Hamilton, Hbk, 416pp, £16.99

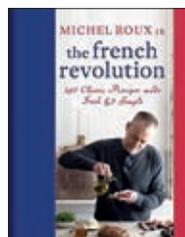
A dazzling collection that draws together classic articles and essays from the past 14

years, ranging from thrilling adventures in Africa to unhurried reflections on the author's expansive personal reading.



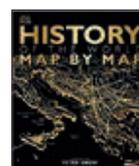
FLORA by DK and Royal Botanic Gardens Kew Dorling Kindersley, Hbk, 360pp, £30

A sumptuous exploration of the plant kingdom from root to leaf tip, featuring specially commissioned macro photography and meticulous drawings and artworks celebrating everything from tiny mosses to majestic trees.



THE FRENCH REVOLUTION by Michel Roux Jr Seven Dials, Hbk, 304pp, £25

Classic dishes revisited for the modern home cook, as cream-laden sauces, heavy meat dishes and complex cooking methods are usurped by recipes that delight the palate without threatening the waistline.



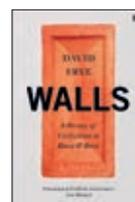
A HISTORY OF THE WORLD MAP BY MAP by DK and Peter Snow Dorling Kindersley, Hbk, 360pp, £25

A collection of 140 specially commissioned graphic-rich maps that illuminate pivotal episodes in world history, revealing the ups and downs of empires, cultures and wars that have shaped our planet.



KINGS OF THE YUKON by Adam Weymouth Particular Books, Hbk, 288pp, £16.99

A captivating account of an epic canoe voyage down the Yukon River; a four-month odyssey through untrammelled wilderness, offering a searing glimpse of its people and landscapes.



WALLS by David Frye Faber & Faber, Hbk, 304pp, £20

The professor and historian presents a bold new theory of civilisation that examines how the building and battering down of walls have changed history and shaped the human psyche.

Come to Life in Colorado

With huge horizons and mountains high against blindingly blue skies, Colorado is the escapist stuff of American dreams, made for adventure.

Seemingly endless prairies roll out to meet the rugged Rocky Mountains in Estes – the Rocky Mountain National Park. Wildlife roams this pristine landscape, with elk and bears marking out their territory between the glitter of lakes and deep green forests.

Grand Lake is the most glittering of them all – and getting to it, via the iconic Trail Ridge Road, is almost as satisfying. Grand Lake and Glenwood Springs are made for paddle boarding, kayaking, boat trips or picnics on the edge of panoramic vistas. Glenwood is the world's largest natural mineral pool, with gorgeous spots to soak in while watching sunsets. For more adrenalin, dip into the excitement of traversing Glenwood Canyon with its rapids and spectacular falls.

Colorado sums up America's great diversity. Not too far away from the white water rafting of Glenwood lie the dramatic vistas of plunging canyons and bleached deserts, and at Grand Junction, the largest flattop mountain of them all – Grand Mesa. Take in some of the extraordinary archaeological sites at Mesa Verde

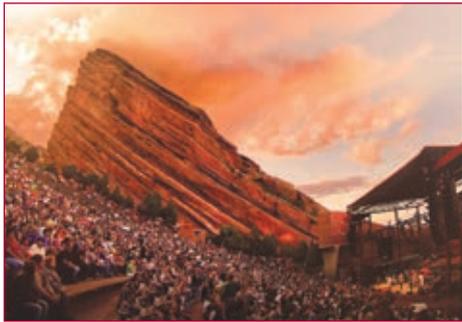
National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There are hundreds of ancient cliff dwellings here, all perched high and as extraordinary within as the views from their historic doorsteps.

Taking the historic steam train from Durango to the mining town of Silverton adds to the romance, with heritage-trail views of rock formations from a long time ago and waterfalls that plunge into storybook valleys. This is a land of highs and lows – in the vast surrounds of the Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Buena Vista, snow surfaced slopes, steep inclines and deep valleys are watched over by the soaring golden eagles above. Within their flight path lies Colorado Springs, where the glacier-carved Pikes Peak, also known as the Garden of the Gods rises sky high in rugged red crags hugged by dense forests. This is a state of extreme natural beauty, and home to spoiling spas, fine dining and luxurious hotels designed to absorb the soaring and glorious surrounds. Perfectly poised against this cinematic backdrop is Denver, Colorado's Mile High City, detailed opposite.

A Colorado highlights itinerary from Wexas covers all of these destinations. For more information and to book, call their **USA specialists on **020 7838 5958**, or visit wexas.com/152970 for a full itinerary.**



Denver, Colorado's capital, affectionately known as The Mile High City, is an exhilarating destination all year round. The sun shines almost every day from a technicolour blue sky, gilding the imposing mountain peaks that surround the city. It's easy to get here, as a direct train from the airport whisks into the heart of the city, which is a perfect base to sample the all-American adventures all around.



RED ROCKS PARK & AMPHITHEATRE

Surrounded by ancient rock formations, Red Rocks Park has several hiking trails that wind through a striking landscape. By way of contrast, the Performer's Hall of Fame pays homage to the legendary bands that have performed here through the decades, from The Beatles to U2. The Amphitheatre still hosts the best in the business from May to October, with jazz, pop, rock and bluegrass musicians striking their chords under star-spangled skies.



DENVER UNION STATION AND LARIMER SQUARE

Denver is a deliciously decadent destination for sophisticates. There's a notable farm-to-table dining ethos, served up in style at restaurants in buzzing Larimer Square, while old-school elegance rubs stylish shoulders with innovative cuisine in historic Denver Union Station.



DENVER BEER TRAIL

The craft beer scene in Denver is as thrilling and creative as the cuisine. Take a self-guided tour along the Denver Beer Trail, an atmospheric stroll through the city's downtown. Stop for a spot of stout, linger over a pint or two of lager, and enjoy every variation in between.



GOLDEN TRIANGLE CREATIVE DISTRICT

Denver Art Museum displays some of the finest and most famous Western and American Indian art exhibitions in the land. More modern masterpieces, including international design and works by Colorado's finest artists are showcased at the Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art. To complete the artistic circle or triangle, immerse yourself in the Rocky Mountain West interactive exhibits at the History Colorado Center.

UNIQUE NEIGHBOURHOODS

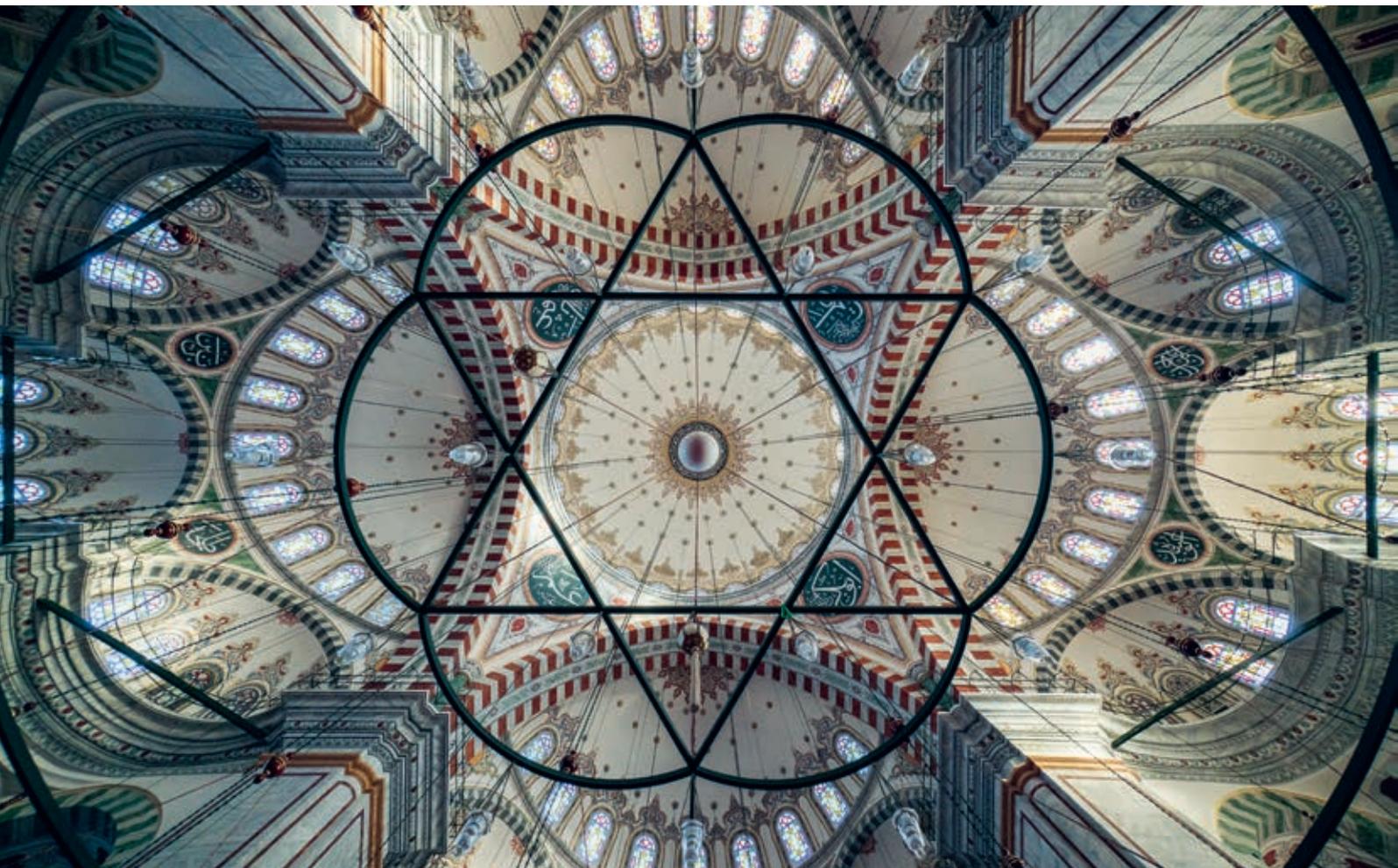
Denver enjoys a diversity of distinctive neighbourhoods, and the easiest way to enjoy them all is to use B-cycle, a pioneering bike-sharing scheme. Ride into River North, or RiNo, to discover its art district, where designers, chefs and creatives have cooked up an artistic hotspot against an industrial background. There are dozens of galleries and cafes, bistros and brewpubs and some stunning street art to revel in. Then cycle along to Cherry Creek, Denver's premier shopping and dining neighbourhood for a fashion fix.

AMERICA'S MILE HIGH CITY



The soul of Istanbul

Caroline Eden navigates the myths, legends and delicacies of the Bosphorus



Ship-spotting is a habit and art form in Istanbul. To join in, all you have to do is take a pair of binoculars and position yourself at a decent vantage point on the Bosphorus. Connecting the Black Sea to the Aegean, Mediterranean, the Balkans and beyond, the Bosphorus is a 20-mile strait and sea channel upon which

a never-ending parade of warships, containers and destroyers navigate.

Watching the Bosphorus is a bit like turning the pages of a newspaper. A snapshot would include: rainbow-coloured goods containers carrying refrigerated lorries of Ukrainian and

Georgian produce – cheese, herbs and butter – their captains using the Bosphorus and the Black Sea to get around Russia's closed land borders since the annexation of Crimea. Ferries of Turkish tomato truckers, crossing the Black Sea from Turkey to Ukraine now that Russia has banned their

import. Russian ships travelling to Syria from Sevastopol – home to the Kremlin’s Black Sea Fleet since Grigory Potemkin, favourite of Catherine the Great, founded it there in 1783 – and northbound Russian Navy fleets returning from the war. This is where Putin exhibits Moscow’s naval might, grating the nerves of some Istanbulians, with his missile cruisers and landing ships moving right through the heart of the city. Once a routine sight, during the Cold War era and the Balkans conflict, these hulking war ships are a steady presence once again as the Kremlin reasserts its influence in the Middle East. Istanbul’s strategic position, crucial for trade and diplomacy, is as important as it is long. With such drama and unfolding politics, the Bosphorus can make other waterways – even great historic rivers – seem flat and uneventful in comparison.

But this is not to say that it’s all war, trade and industry. The Bosphorus is also Istanbul’s soul, a vital source ingrained in the life and minds of its residents. Serving as a getaway from the traffic, and the noise and chaos that a city of 15 million or more shelters. It is a constant lifeline and in the height of summer; breathing in cooling salty breezes from a commuter ferry when the city sweats and swelters can be nothing short of sanity-saving. It is somewhere to escape to and gaze upon. So much so, that it is almost impossible to think of Istanbul without picturing it.

Ancient legends, myths and superstitions, spooking mariners and fishermen, abound around the Bosphorus, in particular where the strait meets the Black Sea. The most fantastical of all are the disorientating, ship-wrecking Symplegades, mythical clashing rocks that protect the sea from the Godless. These almost defeated Jason – who tricked the rocks by letting

a dove fly between them before rowing through – during his fabled Argonaut expedition in search of the magical ram’s fleece. Then, there is the giant 12-metre-long grave belonging to saint Yu a Tepesi, believed by some Muslims to be the tomb of Prophet Joshua, set high on a summit, acting as a haunting nautical landmark marking the mouth of the Bosphorus. Lastly, on the European side, is the Tower of Ovid, in Uskumrukoy (‘the village of the mackerel’), a reminder of where, doomed and exiled by Augustus, Ovid was imprisoned before departing for Constanta.

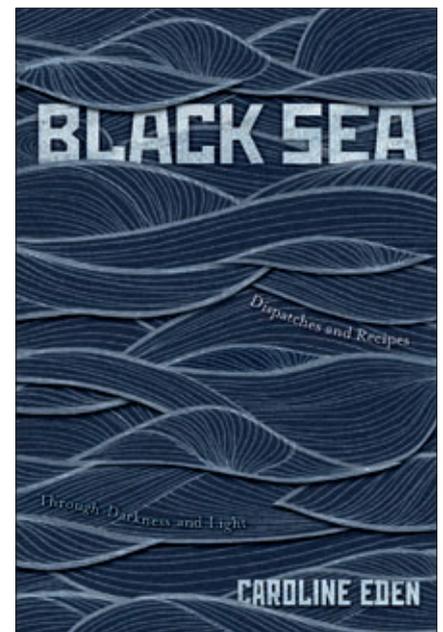
Lord Byron, after visiting in 1810, recognised the malign atmosphere surrounding the entrance of the Black Sea. A canto in *Don Juan* reads:

The wind swept down the Euxine,
and the wave
Broke foaming o’er the blue
Symplegades;
'Tis a grand sight from off the
Giant’s Grave
To watch the progress of those
rolling seas
Between the Bosphorus, as they lash
and lave.

Fishermen have always travelled from Istanbul north to the Black Sea and southwards to the Mediterranean, driven by the seasons, ever since the city’s earliest days when Greek fishing villages were scattered along its shores. But, closer to home, micro-trade has flourished, too, on local stretches of the Bosphorus. Wealthy families in the 17th and 18th centuries, especially Ottoman viziers and military pashas, built wooden ‘yalis’ – summer houses – along the leafy shores, where little boats would pull up to sell the residents fish, fruit and vegetables from baskets. Today, only a handful of the original yalis, with their red roofs, still stand, but as ever,

the seasons can be told by the fish for sale by the water.

Spring means sea bass and summer means mackerel, while autumn heralds the re-arrival of oily palamut (bonito) on their return migration. The bonito migration, as the historian Neal Ascherson points out in his brilliant book, *Black Sea*, was so important to trade that its image appeared on Byzantine coins. Winter means *hamsi* (anchovy), which brings out leagues of solo fishermen onto the city’s banks and bridges, throwing lines into the Bosphorus and filling their buckets. “Nowhere else does the sea come so home to a city,” wrote the English travel writer A.W. Kinglake in 1844, and as Istanbul, a megacity in the truest sense, relentlessly spreads further out forever stretching its limits, the Black Sea gradually eases closer.



Black Sea: Dispatches and Recipes – Through Darkness and Light
by Caroline Eden, Quadrille, HBK,
288pp, £25



Banker's Fish Soup

One freezing morning in January, I wandered into a tiny fish cafe in Karakoy. There, I met cousins Muhareen and Muhsin, a chef and waiter respectively, from the Black Sea city of Ardahan, near the Georgian border. They left their home city over a decade ago to serve the bankers around Bankalar Caddesi – Istanbul's answer to Wall Street and the financial centre of the Ottoman Empire – what they know best: fish. Their cafe is so popular, and the turnover so fast, that no ice is used for the little fish counter in the window. As it was winter, my soup came with scorpion fish but for this recipe any firm white-fleshed fish will do. Monkfish works well. Many of the banks have now relocated from here but this 'balik corbasi' remains the best fish soup I've ever eaten. It is very hearty and is somewhere between a stew and a soup. Served with warm white crusty bread it makes for a decent lunch.

INGREDIENTS

Serves 2

2 tablespoons olive oil
½ medium onion, roughly chopped
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
2 carrots, diced
250g/8¾ oz celeriac, peeled and diced
500ml/generous 2 cups fish stock
grated zest of ½ lemon
handful of ripe cherry tomatoes,
halved
250g/8¾ oz monkfish, chopped into
bite-sized pieces
salt

TO SERVE

2 tablespoons chopped parsley
white pepper (optional)
lemon wedges

METHOD

Heat the oil in a pan and gently fry the onion and garlic with a pinch of salt for a couple of minutes until softened. Add the carrots and celeriac and continue cooking for a further 8 minutes.

Pour in the fish stock and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down and simmer with the lid on for around 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are firm but nearly cooked through. Then add the lemon zest, cherry tomatoes and chunks of fish and cook until the fish is cooked through.

Stir in the chopped parsley, dust with a little white pepper, if you like, and serve with the lemon wedges.

“Mushing dogs is easy. It’s getting them to stop that’s the hard part,” our guide says with a laugh as he drives a team of eager huskies over a wide-open plain of virgin snow and on towards a frozen lake.

The treads of our sledge skitter across the ice at breakneck speed as dense forests of pine and birch whoosh by on a blurred horizon and our cheeks burn red from the avalanche of fresh, wintry air.

Suddenly a foot digs heavily into the sledge brake and the pack of hounds comes to an obedient, shuddering halt. We climb down, exhilarated and exhausted in equal measure, then head off to Reception to be welcomed by a Viking-blooded Swede, a towering blonde with a smile as broad as his ample shoulders.

We’ve arrived in the tiny village of Jukkasjärvi, some 200 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, for the Classic Ice Hotel Experience: spending a first night in one of their ‘cold rooms’ (a sort of glorious, designer igloo), before moving to a warm chalet room for a further two nights. Our waking hours, meanwhile, will be spent exploring the wild beauty of this remote corner of Swedish Lapland.

After a fireside nightcap, it’s already late and time for bed. We head to the end of a sparkling hallway and find our room to be a work of art, spectacularly sculpted from blocks of river ice in a spectrum of frozen whites and blues. Under a vaulted ceiling stands an ornate bed, topped with reindeer skins and a pair of downy sleeping bags, both remarkably snug in the frigid night air.



The ICEHOTEL

words
Simon Urwin

pictures
Asaf Kilger





Sleep is fitful with temperatures around the -5 degree mark, but it's a fun alternative to a hotel room for one night, and with the right mindset, a 2am run to the toilet adds an extra layer of adventure to this wilderness experience.

A cheerful voice wakes us the following morning, with a steaming mug of lingonberry juice, the perfect defroster before a breakfast of fluffy pancakes and honeyed porridge provide much-needed fuel for daytime activities in the bracing chill.

Kitted out in the hotel's snowsuits, boots and balaclavas, we embark on a long morning of Nordic skiing, first navigating up the frozen River Thorne to Rimisaari island with the help of a guide, before heading off with a map on a cross-country escapade of our own.

Not all pursuits are quite so strenuous, however. A book by the fireside while watching the snow fall outside is a wonderful, idle pleasure, as is a walk to the local seventeenth-century village church, said to be the oldest in Lapland and boasting a vivid altarpiece

trptych by Bror Hjorth, one of the country's best-known artists.

The highlight of our stay is undoubtedly a night-time snowmobile excursion in search of the oft-elusive aurora borealis. After speeding through forests and snowdrifts, we are rewarded with a brief but breathtaking glimpse as ribbons of green light perform their magical sky dance before fading to darkness. That evening, over a superb three-course dinner of reindeer, arctic char and cloudberries, each dish given a cosmopolitan twist by the





hotel's inventive kitchen, we vow to return sometime in the summer.

It's a crisp, warm day when the River Thorne comes into view once more, now in full flow under a bright July sun. Even at this time of year the Ice Hotel experience is still possible thanks to a new, permanent, turf-topped building, resembling a Viking long house, where the temperature is kept well below zero to host a special champagne ice-bar and an artistic selection of frozen suites, each with a sauna and bathroom of their own.

It could be said there is something even more magical about a stay here long after the thaw, since closing a door on the Swedish summer and entering a sudden world of winter is something akin to crossing the threshold into Narnia. Once again, we've opted for a three-night stay, one under ice, two in a warm room, and this time there's the added advantage of entirely new wilderness activities to partake in.

The rushing waters of the Thorne are now ideal for stand-up paddling, canoeing and rafting. We also fish for wild trout and grayling, while

refreshing river dips now follow a slow steam in the sauna. There are gentle trails close to the hotel for exploring Europe's northernmost pine moors, while further afield, near Kebnekaise (Sweden's highest peak), the difficulty of the hiking routes increases in direct correlation to the majesty of the landscapes.

Coupled with the generous all-year-round welcome of the staff and their friendly, faultless service, it leaves us in no doubt: the Ice Hotel merits a visit in both the heart of winter as well as under the summer's midnight sun.



DISCOVER THE SEYCHELLES WITH BRITISH AIRWAYS

The Seychelles is one of the world's true island paradises, a spectacular ocean archipelago of white-sand islands framed by kaleidoscopic coral reefs. To make the most of British Airways' new route, here's a selection of the most luxurious island getaways to help inspire your next Indian Ocean holiday.

Constance Ephélia Resort, Mahé

Experience fly-and-flop holidaying at its best with a stay at this elegant Mahé retreat. Suites mix the latest in-room technology with garden or ocean views, while the various villas add in private pools and bicycles. Elsewhere, the resort's restaurants showcase a globespanning mix of cuisines. The superb U Spa by Constance sets the scene for indulgent relaxation between the likes of zip-lining trips and island-hopping boat excursions.

PRICES START FROM £2,400 PP incl. British Airways flights, private transfers & 7 nights half-board accommodation in a Junior Suite. For more information, visit wexas.com/101778 or call **020 7838 5958**.



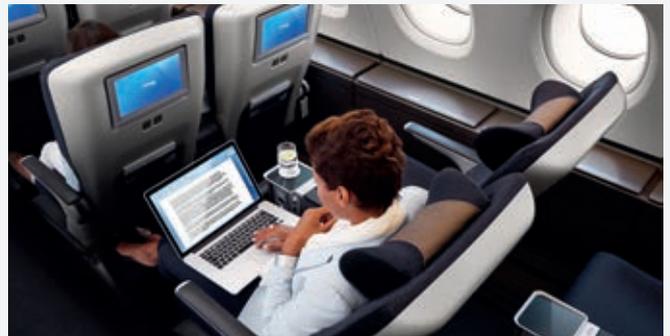
New Route to the Seychelles

Earlier this year, British Airways launched its new route between its London Heathrow home and the Seychelles, making it the only airline to offer a non-stop service from the UK. What's more, year-round departures mean it's ideal for a summer escape or a welcome dose of



World Traveller

A comfortable journey is assured in British Airways' economy cabin, World Traveller. Take advantage of online check-in, a 23kg checked baggage and two-piece hand baggage allowance, an ergonomically designed seat, complimentary three-course meals and bar service, and the latest on-demand entertainment.



World Traveller Plus

Stretch out in a separate cabin to World Traveller, with a maximum of just six rows. Enjoy a larger seat with adjustable headrest, lumbar support, more legroom and greater seat recline along with additional baggage allowance, enhanced dining choices and touchscreen entertainment on a screen 60% larger than before.



Four Seasons Resort, Mahé

This all-villa gem comprises 67 luxury treehouses, each complete with private plunge pool and perched either on a jungled hillside or by the resort's white-sand beach. Then, if you tire of the spa pavilions, infinity pool and sumptuous Creole dining, get active with complimentary yoga and a full range of watersports, including snorkelling and surfing. It's all perfectly accessible, with no need to connect on from your inbound flight.

PRICES START FROM £3,870 PP incl. British Airways flights, private transfers & 7 nights B&B accommodation in a Garden View Villa. For more information, visit wexas.com/102216 or call **020 7838 5958**.

Constance Lemuria Resort, Praslin

Offering something a touch more secluded, the Constance Lemuria is positioned right on the pristine beaches of Praslin Island. The spa is superb, the all-suite-and-villa accommodation is delightfully elegant and the restaurants are sommelier paired. And, if your luck's in, you'll enjoy mornings spent watching turtles hatch on the beach, followed by a round at the Seychelles' only 18-hole golf course.

PRICES START FROM £2,750 PP incl. British Airways flights, private transfers & 7 nights B&B accommodation in a Junior Suite. For more information, visit wexas.com/102172 or call **020 7838 5958**.



winter sun. And, as services depart from Terminal 5 on Wednesdays and Saturdays, the timetable is set up perfectly for an immersive 10-day trip. Joining routes to Mauritius and the Maldives, it's the last piece in the jigsaw of British Airways' Indian Ocean coverage.

With a choice of four cabins on board the airline's new Boeing Dreamliner 787-900 series – World Traveller, World Traveller Plus, Club World and First – there's a full spread of options offering the best in-flight comfort for a wide range of budgets.



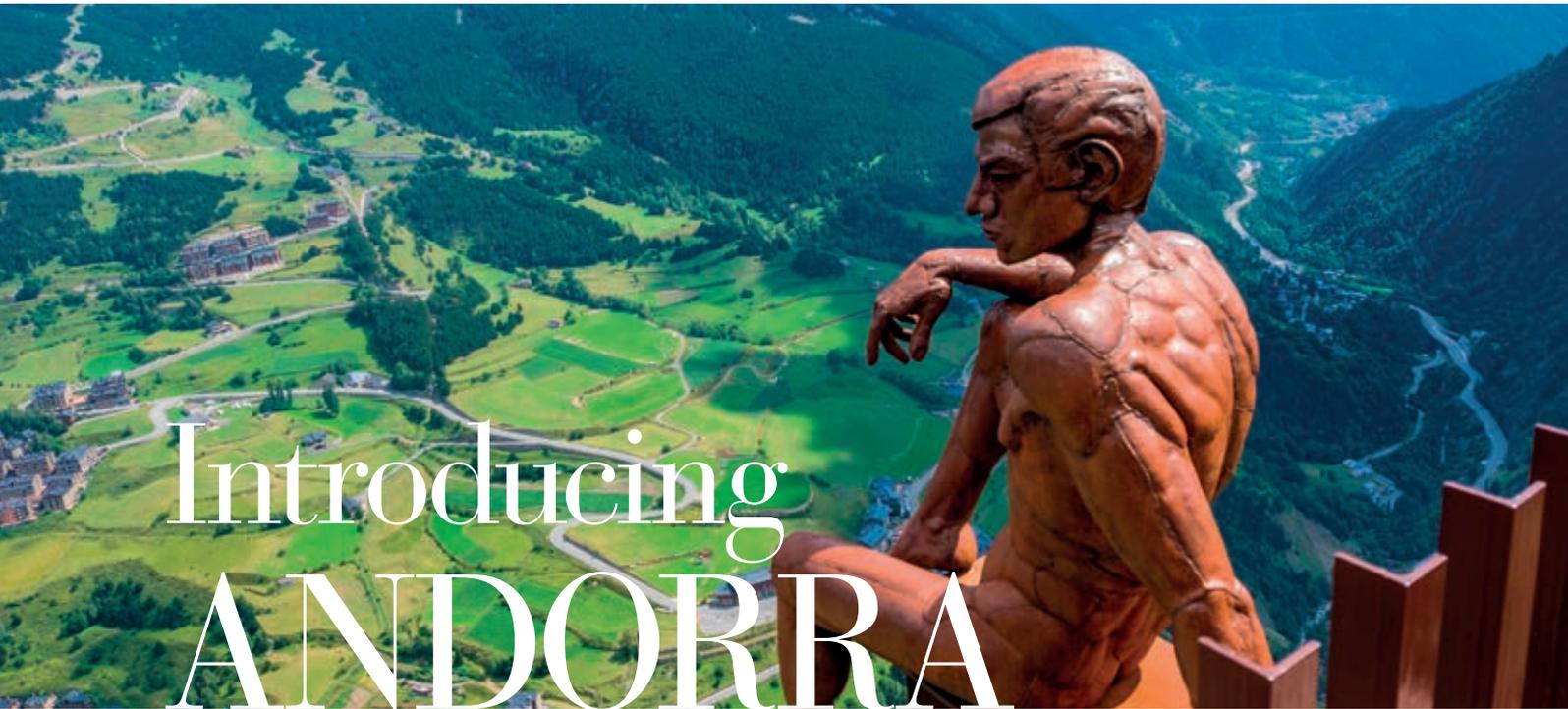
Club World

As well as dedicated check-in desks and access to exclusive lounges, Club World passengers are able to enjoy the comfort of an award-winning seat that converts into a fully flat 6' bed. Other in-flight extras include a touch-button privacy screen, a personal locker and menus designed by some of the world's top chefs.

First

Experience the height of refinement in First where services include access to more than 150 lounges around the world. On board, First flyers will find luxurious seats that recline to a bed at the touch of a button, Egyptian cotton bedding, an anytime turndown service, state-of-the-art entertainment and flexible à la carte dining.

To book your next Seychelles holiday, complete with British Airways direct flights, call a Wexas Indian Ocean specialist on **020 7838 5958**.



Introducing ANDORRA

Tucked between Spain and France, the Principality of Andorra, the 'Country of the Pyrenees', is an independent state, home to fewer than 80,000 people, but with a history that spans more than a thousand years. With 65 peaks over 2,000m high, the country is known for its ski resorts, yet the rugged landscape, mountain lakes, steep valleys, and sub-Mediterranean climate make Andorra a spectacular year-round destination.

It's a nature-lover's paradise with 90% of the country covered in forest incorporating three nature parks, including a UNESCO World Heritage glacial valley. Home to some of Europe's rarest and most colourful flora, as well as a variety of wildlife typical of alpine and sub-alpine regions, the three beautiful protected parks are also an excellent place to discover the rich biodiversity, including large birds of prey, marmots

and red frogs, and Pyrenean deer.

Andorra's majestic Pyrenean backdrop offers some of Europe's most beautiful walks, suitable for all levels. Gentle trails, such as those through the picturesque Ineles Valley, follow routes past wallflower displays, colourful mountain flora and lush meadows where cattle and horses graze. More demanding hikes can encompass rough terrain and, in many cases, lead to

mountain lakes and panoramic views into neighbouring France and Spain.

There's a rich cultural heritage, too, made evident through beautiful Romanesque architecture, ancient farmhouses, museums, a mix of contemporary and classical art, and agricultural traditions that have passed through generations.

Each of the country's seven parishes offers its own cultural circuit combining local history, nature and Andorran traditions. The most popular route follows the old iron route of Andorra in Ordino Valley and discovers the country's old iron mines and mills, offering a unique journey through Andorra's cultural and industrial history.





To the ends of the earth

For supreme comfort and thrilling excursions, *Silver Cloud* is unsurpassed. The ultra-luxury distinctions of a classic Silversea ship combine with the strength and manoeuvrability required for exceptional expedition cruising.

If you have a true passion for adventure, *Silver Cloud* will transport you to some of the most spectacular and unspoiled corners of the globe: to either pole, the West Coast of Africa, Canada, or Central and South America.

Fully converted to an Ice Class ship, she can navigate the ice floes and pack ice of Antarctica and the Arctic Circle in unprecedented safety, comfort and style. And with panoramic public rooms, broad decks and verandas in most suites, she is superbly equipped for you to capture the magnificent scenery and the awesome power of nature. There are 18 Zodiacs and a team of up to 19 expedition experts aboard, so all guests can go exploring in small groups wherever she drops anchor.

On other epic voyages, you can take in the untamed majesty of the vast

Canadian territories of Nunavut, Newfoundland and Labrador; the Panama Canal, Andean glaciers and Chilean fjords; Iberia, Normandy and the wildest coasts of Britain; or enjoy tropical birdwatching and sealife, and explore amazing desert scenery, jungles and fishing villages from Cape Town to Casablanca via Namibia, Sao Tome, Togo, Ghana, Gambia and Senegal.

The suites are the largest in expedition cruising, and include the ultimate in personalised service: a professional butler to see to your every need. Tantalising dining options range from hand-delivered meals in your suite to Le Champagne's Relais &

Châteaux specialities or the Hot Rocks poolside grill.

There's practically one staff member for every guest, and every comfort under the sun is at your beck and call. So whether you're having a soak in a hot tub as a ten-storey iceberg floats harmlessly by, watching from your veranda as orcas pursue sea lions, or readying yourself for a camel ride across the desert with a swift sundowner, you'll feel right at home – and out of this world.

To learn more about *Silver Cloud's* 2019-20 expeditions, call one of our cruise experts on 020 7590 0615 or visit wexas.com/cruise.



Made for Pleasure



South Carolina's coastal region seems to be specially created for pleasure, from the cobblestone streets in Charleston to the white sandy beaches of the Grand Strand and the island charms of Hilton Head.

There's so much to savour, not least the legendary cuisine – the Palmetto State is a gourmet's paradise. The seafood restaurants lining the coast are as famous as the Southern barbecues that lend the fragrant sea breezes an extra aroma of smoke and pulled pork. However, there is a culinary tradition very much South Carolina's own, and that's traditional Lowcountry cooking, not to be missed while here. Shrimp and grits, fried green tomatoes, chicken *pirloo* (a spicy and yet soothing version of a pilau) collard greens, okra... these are dishes as delectable as the fresh oysters served on the island of Hilton Head.





Each statistic applied to Hilton Head is an ode to having a good time. 12 miles of immaculate beaches, 250 restaurants, more than 30 exceptional golf courses. Golf is taken very seriously here, with Harbour Town and May River rated amongst the world's top courses by *Golf Magazine*. Charleston's courses have also earned world-class ratings for The Ocean Course at Kiawah Island and the Wild Dunes Links Course amongst many others.

Golf is just one of the attractions that make Charleston a dream destination. This historic harbour city is saturated in old-school sophisticated southern glamour, with a dizzying choice of dining options and lashings of culture. The atmosphere is redolent of romance and elegance, with fine architecture including pastel antebellum houses, horse-drawn carriages clip-clopping over the cobblestones, plantation mansions still steeped in the South of years long gone by.

This heady culture is made even more special by the enduring legacy of the Gullah Geechee people who have been bound up in the region's history for centuries. The descendants of West and Central Africans enslaved initially on the nearby barrier islands, they went on to have a lasting and integral impact on South Carolina's past and present. Their influence is there in the liveliness of Lowcountry cuisine, the soul songs that continue to chorus out in Charleston's bluesy bars and venues and in the arts and crafts that thrive even now, from hand-hewn sweetgrass baskets to the art on display in Charleston's heritage museums.

The South Carolina experience is a complete one, taking in sun, sapphire sea against silver sand, heart-stirring history alongside southern hospitality, and a whole lot of fun.



BELMOND LAS CASITAS

Tradition meets luxury in Peru's Colca Canyon

Colca Canyon – some 160 kilometres from Arequipa – is Peru at its traditional best. Village communities keep century old customs alive while pre-Inca ruins tell a more ancient story. But it's the unique collection of topography that really sets the valley apart. From craggy peaks and verdant fields to impossibly stepped terraces and gurgling rivers, this is a picturesque backdrop for criss-crossing hiking trails and the majestic Peruvian condor.



Close to this spectacular setting, Belmond Las Casitas seems to be as much a part of the environment as the valley's old growth forests. Here, luxurious bungalows have been constructed from locally sourced stones while terracotta tiled roofs and whitewashed chimneys add to the bucolic charm. Rustic-chic interiors continue the aesthetic with exposed timber beams and vintage furnishings while designer four-poster beds and chandeliers add a touch of class to proceedings. Private terraces – complete with heated pool and outdoor shower – along with Roman-style bathtubs set under glass roofs round off these indulgent offerings.

Take your meals al fresco on the restaurant's terrace for views out over the property's immaculate grounds and onto the valley beyond. Here, you'll be treated to traditional Peruvian cuisine made that bit more authentic by ingredients sourced from Las

Casitas' very own gardens. Start the day with freshly baked, homemade bread and end it with a lomo saltado stir fry or mushroom risotto washed down with a glass from the hotel's wine cellar – unsurprisingly Peruvian varietals feature heavily. Feeling inspired? Book onto a cooking course.

If your private pool wasn't enough, and you feel like your fireplace hasn't fully relaxed you, make use of the resort's spa. Here, massages – taken either individually or as a couple – showcase all natural products including herbs from Belmond Las Casitas's gardens. There's also a sauna, which is, of course, scented, with locally sourced eucalyptus leaves.

This hotel, along with others from Belmond, features in Wexas Travel's Luxury Peru by Rail itinerary. Visit wexas.com/146102 to find out more.





The year of the *Silver Moon*

A brand new ship. 191 voyages across 84 countries. Fantastic polar journeys. More European departures than ever before. Welcome to Silversea's exciting cruise schedule for 2020.

It's set to be a sensational year as *Silver Moon*'s maiden season sees her debut in the beautiful ports of the Eastern Mediterranean and visit some of the most historic places in Europe.

Built by cruise lovers, for cruise lovers, *Silver Muse*'s sister flagship will be the epitome of 21st-century luxury travel. With a capacity to accommodate 596 passengers, she will maintain the small-ship intimacy and spacious all-suite accommodation that are the hallmarks of the Silversea experience. Like her sister ship, *Silver Moon* is boutique in size, and can visit ports that larger ships simply cannot access, yet retains an intimate, cosy, home-away-from-home feeling.

From August to November, she embarks on ten sailings from Trieste, Rome, Barcelona, Lisbon, Athens and Venice, before a transoceanic journey to Fort Lauderdale.

Istanbul and the Canary Islands make a grand return in *Silver Shadow*

and *Silver Wind*'s summer schedules, meaning there is almost no port in the region left unvisited.

If the languages and lifestyle of Northern Europe take your fancy, look no further than the plethora of choice in the Baltics, the Norwegian fjords, Iceland and the British Isles – including exclusive departures from London's Tower Bridge.

Silver Muse begins the year in the South Pacific, Australia and New Zealand, before setting sail for Alaska and the Russian Far East, *Silver Spirit* ticks off Asia, Africa and the Indian Ocean, as well as the



Mediterranean and Northern Europe, and *Silver Whisper*'s epic 140-day World Cruise can be broken down into shorter journeys wherever you choose to be.

Silver Cloud and *Silver Explorer*'s Arctic programme is the best yet, and for the first time includes both the Northeast and Northwest Passages in the same year. Unprecedented voyages in the New Zealand Sub-Antarctic Islands bring alive the spectacular flora and fauna of the region, so if you have ever wanted set foot on earth's final frontier, now is the time to do it.

Alternatively, join one of the amazing year-round week-long wildlife wonders expeditions aboard *Silver Galapagos* between San Cristobal and Baltra.

With longer time in port and overnights on all sailings over seven days, we are taking you closer than ever before to the authentic beauty of the world.

For more information about *Silver Moon*'s maiden voyages, and Silversea's full 2020 itinerary, call one of our cruise experts on 020 7590 0615 or visit wexas.com/cruise.

THE ONLY WAY TO THE USA

American Airlines and British Airways have coordinated their flight schedules to offer customers a wider choice of destinations throughout the USA. As well as direct services to all the country's major hubs, guests have the pick of onward connections to hundreds more towns and cities across all 50 states.



AMERICAN AIRLINES

No detail has been spared for customers on American Airlines. Travellers in Flagship™ First or Flagship™ Business can relax in fully lie-flat seats with direct access to the aisle while dining on chef-inspired menus featuring specialty dishes and an award-winning wine menu.

On select aircraft, customers will even enjoy a walk-up bar fully stocked with an array of delicious refreshments. What's more, as well as a lie-flat bed, Flagship™ First travellers are also treated to a turn-down service and complimentary pyjamas designed in partnership with renowned sleep experts Casper.

And, with a variety of Flagship™ offerings, customers are equally well looked after on the ground. Between the Flagship™ First Check-in, Flagship™ Lounge and Flagship™ First Dining, customers travelling in American's Flagship™ cabins will experience an all-round exclusive service before they've even taken off.

BRITISH AIRWAYS

With exceptional service from check-in to landing, outstanding facilities across all cabin classes and daily direct flights to cities across the United States, British Airways continues to set the standard for trans-Atlantic travel, with revamped premium cabins, First and Club World. Expect restaurant-style dining, complete with display trolleys and stylish new table settings. It's all designed to complement the airline's award-winning Club World seat, which converts at the touch of a button to a fully flat six-foot bed.

The upgrades aren't just in the air, either. They include lounges in London and in the USA. At London Heathrow Terminal 5, First customers are welcomed to The First Wing – an exclusive check-in environment with direct access to the lounges, including the flagship Concorde Room. This unique space is the epitome of elegance, featuring chandeliers, curated artwork and waiter-served dining.





AMAZING ARIZONA

Deciding where to go in Arizona is part of the adventure. Whether you're planning a short weekend or a longer trip, it is packed with spectacular outdoor activities among awe-inspiring landscapes, and plunges into centuries of heritage and culture. So where to start?

Phoenix has never been more accessible from the UK. American Airlines opens up a non-stop daily service from 31 March 2019 between Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport and London Heathrow, complementing BA's continuing daily service, and the city is a perfect place to begin your adventure.

PHOENIX AND SCOTTSDALE

Phoenix started out as a farming town in the 1860s and is today America's fifth largest city, stretching across the stunning desert backdrop of the Salt River Valley. Downtown nightlife options run the gamut from sophisticated to gritty, historic to hipster, proudly unpretentious to fiercely independent, and include an impressive range of live music venues, rooftop lounges, museums, theatres and restaurants. Roosevelt Row is the creative heart, home to a variety of galleries, studios, restaurants, bars and boutique shops.

On the eastern border of Phoenix lies Scottsdale, whose Sonoran Desert setting offers visitors an indulgent getaway that promises relaxation, excitement and discovery. Indeed, it was in 1911 that the region's stirring beauty famously attracted visionary architect Frank Lloyd Wright to establish his winter studio Taliesin West in the foothills of the McDowell Mountains. Since then, Scottsdale has grown into one of the world's leading desert retreats, a city home to everything from boutique hideaways to hip, urban hotels and world-leading golf and spa resorts. There's plenty of urban intrigue too, not least in the walkable Old Town, which serves up a wide array of shops, restaurants, cafés, galleries and museums.

Nearby hiking and biking spots include the red rock buttes of Papago Park, just minutes from downtown, Camelback Mountain, and winding trails through 16,000 acres of the Sonoran Desert in South Mountain Park and Preserve.

THE GRAND CANYON

Phoenix is also the gateway to the Grand Canyon National Park, which celebrates its Centennial in 2019 with an exciting range of year-round events at the South Rim, North Rim, Desert View, Inner Canyon and surrounding communities.

More than a spectacular landscape, the Grand Canyon is a place of residence and worship for America's first people, a collection of geologic records and natural resources, and a place of learning and reflection. It is these attributes that encouraged Teddy Roosevelt to establish the National Park a hundred years ago, and protect it for generations to come.

You can get up close to nature on a guided hike or ride, or explore the geological wonder on a smooth-water rafting trip along the Colorado River as it winds between the sheer and rugged rocks.

For a range of holiday itineraries for Phoenix and beyond, contact one of our USA specialists on **020 7590 0636**, or visit wexas.com/arizona



A Sea Change

Writer and surfer **Iain Gately** tells us about the seas and places that have changed him:

REPULSE BAY, HONG KONG

I spent my childhood in Hong Kong, and for much of it we lived in a block of flats at Repulse Bay. The hills behind had been aerially seeded after WWII, and a jungle was developing on their flanks. After school we were free to run around the hills. There were porcupines and cobras in the undergrowth, and abandoned wartime pillboxes, which we used as dens.

In summer, I went to the beach every day. I learned to snorkel and chased fish with a spear twisted out of a wire coat hanger. At night, I fell asleep to the sound of the fishermen plunging poles into the sea to scare the fish towards their nets, dreaming of being able to breathe underwater. The fascination and affection that I felt for the sea are still with me, and I still travel through dream seas in my sleep.

AUSTRALIA

I spent six months in Australia in 1982. I'd never been to a big country before, and the great distances changed my perception of the world: it was so much grander and wilder than I'd imagined.

I drove up the Great Northern Highway with two friends. The highway wasn't surfaced, and was only distinguished from the surrounding desert by its corrugations, and the relative absence of vegetation. There was little traffic – a car once or twice each day.

We holed our petrol tank a hundred miles from anywhere, and I reflected on how far I was beyond the help of relatives or anyone I knew who might sweep us back to civilisation, fix the tank, and fill it up again. I was independent for the first time, and the experience taught me not to fear the unknown.

THE SARGASSO SEA

This was a place that I'd always wanted to visit as a child, inspired by pictures in books of ships with shears attached to their bows to snip a way through the eponymous weed.

I crossed its edge in 1993 while sailing from the Caribbean to Majorca - by accident rather than design; blown off course by a tropical storm.



The Sargasso was far less densely weeded than I'd imagined – a clump every few yards rather than an impenetrable mat with the wrecks of Spanish Galleons and their rusted shears entwined in its fronds. We were becalmed there for a day or two, and when the wind returned and we headed north to regain our course, a mega-pod of dolphins appeared that seemed to cover the ocean, leaping and spinning and whipping up white water.

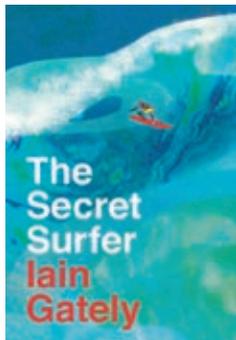
I kept a piece of Sargasso weed as a souvenir. It glowed in the dark for a month afterwards, as it dried in a Ziploc bag. Twenty-five years later, I still have a few shreds left.

TARIFA

Tarifa sits at the southernmost tip of Spain, at the point where the Atlantic and Mediterranean meet. When I moved there in 1999 it was still scruffy, with the air of a frontier town. The Levante, a fierce wind that blows through the straits of Gibraltar, sometimes howls around its walls for weeks on end, so it feels as though it's under siege. I learned how to surf on its long Atlantic beaches, where the sea was the most enigmatic colour, veering between emerald and indigo. I also started to speak Spanish there. The Andalusian culture was so pervasive and appealing that I learned a new way of thinking as well as a second language.

WINCHESTER

The Royal Hampshire Hospital, Winchester, where I saw my daughter born, changed my life completely. Hitherto, I'd associated hospitals with sickness and death rather than new life. Here I discovered a new kind of love, and a sense of responsibility: I'd added another link to the chain of being. Although I'd imagined what my daughter might look like before she appeared, in the event I was dumfounded – she was utterly different – a unique soul. When I was turned out of the ward after visiting hours ended, I wandered through Winchester in the rain, marvelling at how much my world had altered – and improved.



Atlantic Books
HBK Apr
368pp £14.99



Uniquely Yukon

Canada's last frontier, bordered by Alaska and the Northwest Territories, the Yukon offers an unbroken vista of white-capped mountains, meandering rivers, alpine-fed lakes and boreal forest. Mount Logan, the country's highest peak, dominates the vast Kluane National Park and Reserve, an extraordinary protected place that is home to the largest non-polar icefields in the world.

The region has been populated since the Ice Age, when the land supported vast herds of mammoth, bison, horse and caribou. The Yukon's best-known era was 1896-99, when the discovery of gold near Dawson City gave rise to the legendary Klondike Gold Rush. Tens of thousands descended, instantly making Dawson City one of the largest cities in the North West. By the end of the frenzied quest, prospectors had claimed more than 95 million dollars' worth of gold - though the vast majority left for home as broke as they'd arrived.

The Yukon boasts hundreds of kilometres of old mining roads and trails, and more and more of these once-

overgrown routes are now spectacular mountain biking routes. Four designated Canadian Heritage Rivers and their many tributaries offer unparalleled canoeing, kayaking and rafting experiences.

A summer self-drive delivers a journey of ceaseless beauty across these magnificent landscapes, winding from the Wilderness City of Whitehorse to the former Gold Rush hub of Dawson City. And from autumn through spring, the Yukon enjoys exceptional viewing of the aurora borealis. Low-light nights are perfect for observing the undulating ribbons of iridescent light that have inspired so many myths and legends.

Another eye-catching event is the Yukon Quest international dogsled race, which follows a 1,000-mile route each February between Whitehorse, Yukon, and neighbouring Fairbanks, Alaska. Around 30 teams race neck and neck across perilous terrain, and visitors gather in Dawson City at the halfway point and mandatory layover, to see and hear first-hand the rigours of the race.

*From trailblazing past to dazzling present,
your wilderness awaits*



Durban direct

From October 29 British Airways launches a new service to Durban, with three direct flights a week from Heathrow operated by the airline's brand-new fleet of aircraft – the Boeing 787-8. South Africa's surfer city boasts a glorious beachfront and a friendly, outdoorsy culture. What's more, it sits on the edge of the beautiful nature reserves of KwaZulu Natal, and is within striking distance of the astounding Drakensberg mountain range.

Durban's Golden Mile of beaches stretches as far as the eye can see, kissing the warm waters of the Indian Ocean where dolphins frequently frolic. The nearby resort town of buzzy Umhlanga Rocks makes the best of it all. Its stripy lighthouse makes its way into most people's holiday snaps and the curry buffet at The Oyster Box's Ocean Terrace Restaurant is not to be missed. Expect spicy treats and sweeping vistas.

If you turn inland from Durban, there are sprawling plains and vast landscapes. At Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift, a few humble white-rock cairns mark the sites of dramatic colonial battles. And, the Hluhluwe–Imfolozi Park, three hours up the coast, is home to the prized 'Big Five': lions, leopards, elephant, water buffalo and one of the key conservation areas for the southern white rhino.

Speaking of reserves, the Isimangaliso Wetland Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is a 280-km stretch of coastline featuring a diverse landscape of dune forests, beach, coral reef and savannah. The name comes from the Zulu word for 'miracle' – because of its wondrous appearance. Climb the towering dune at Maphelane to survey the land in all its glory, and look out for wandering giraffes, yawning hippos and flamingos in flight.

Then, as one of the most sublime mountain ranges in the world, the Drakensberg offers truly fantastic hiking. There are the trails around Champagne Castle, the ancient San rock art at Giant's Castle and Tugela Falls, whose mountains are as jagged as sound waves.

Lastly, just south of Durban is Aliwal Shoal, one of South Africa's finest scuba sites. Divers can explore a dramatic reef formation known as the Cathedral, where the church-like rock sculptures provide a sheltered sanctuary.

Sample it all on a spectacular 10-day tailor-made self-drive holiday from £2,540 pp incl. British Airways flights. Visit wexas.com/102019 for full details.