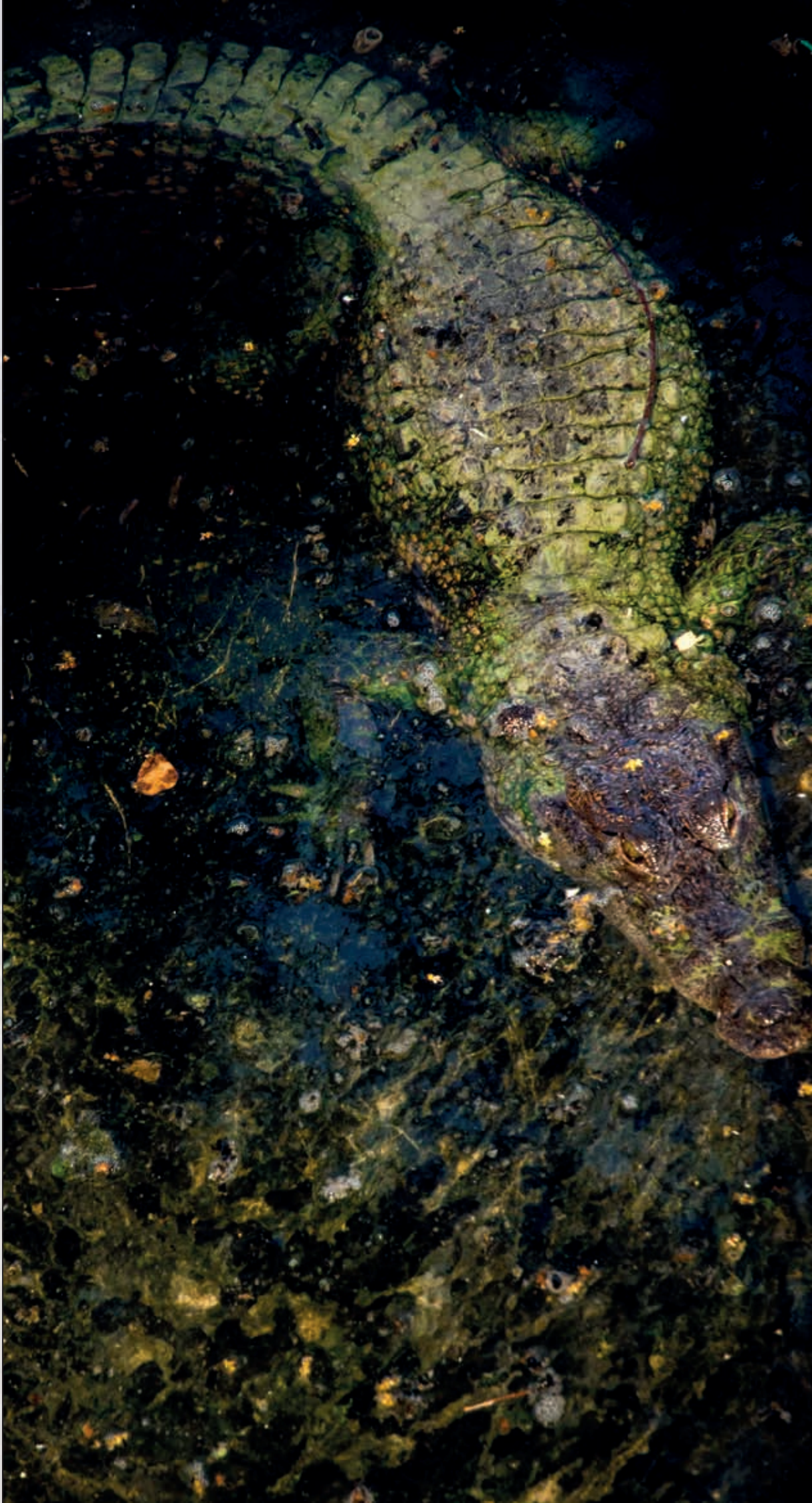
VOL 47 · NO 2 · 2017

TRAVELLER



9 770262 272033 02 4

£8.95

SWEDISH LAPLAND

Invariably, Swedish Lapland conjures images of husky sledding, dancing Northern Lights displays and idyllic snowy landscapes. But, each year, this winter severity thaws into a summertime playground. Pretty villages welcome with heartfelt cheer and snowshoeing routes melt into spectacular hiking trails. One particular highlight is the Kungsleden, a 270-mile stretch that brings you up into the Arctic Circle. And, whether you're exploring by foot or on a scenic road trip, it's all beautified by the presence of the Midnight Sun – a truly spectacular phenomenon. Given the region's northerly latitude, night never fully falls, casting an ethereal glow over already sublime landscapes.

This being Scandinavia, Swedish Lapland also welcomes with style and innovation. At the aptly named Treehotel you can stay among the canopy of an evergreen forest in art-installation treehouses that range from UFOs to mirrored cubes. You can even spend the night in the ICEHOTEL 365 where frozen rooms and intricate sculptures are cooled, ironically, by the solar power of the Midnight Sun. That's not to say, however, that the region has lost touch with its roots. Stay in a summer cottage or mountain log cabin, returning from country walks to evenings spent by the fire.

To book your escape to Swedish Lapland or for more information, call your Wexas specialist on **020 7838 5958** or visit **wexas.com**

Swedish Lapland®
SWEDEN'S NORTHERNMOST DESTINATION

EUROPEAN UNION
European Regional Development Fund

Here, there and back again

Amy Sohanpaul on untimely departures and meaningful returns

We are lucky in this issue to feature just a fraction of the words the late A A Gill wrote over the years. We've featured him before. Jonathan Lorie, *Traveller*'s editor before me, interviewed him on the phone a long time ago. I met him over breakfast for a longer interview a couple of years later. He was unrelentingly charming, unstintingly generous in his advice for want-to-be writers: always write facing a blank wall, he said; even a garden view will lead to endless daydreaming.

I didn't agree with all his words, but I admired most of them. I admired too, first thing in the morning, many mornings, the way he dressed, seeing him at the school gates. Almost anyone wearing anything co-ordinated stands out at that hour, but he was impeccable. Nicola Formby, 'the Blonde' in his many columns and his partner for many years, was pretty much the only person who, a long time ago, smiled and thanked me for various mundane matters when I did a stint of statutory work experience at a now defunct women's magazine. In the lead-up to this issue I was on the panel for the Dolman Travel Awards. The words 'defunct women's magazine' have just reminded me that one of the issues we debated back and forth was the lack of women writers in this year's shortlist. My interview in these pages with the sparky Sara Wheeler discusses this in more depth. It starts with a quote from Martha Gellhorn, who would have abhorred anyone referring to her as one of Hemingway's wives. She famously refused 'to become a footnote in someone else's life'.

Happily, we have, in these pages, as well as Sara Wheeler, writing by Justine Hardy, our regular correspondent, one of the few contemporary female writers that Wheeler named during our interview as a leading figure in the field. She has written about passports and what they meant once, what they mean now, in this world of migration and paranoia about it. She was in Boston when Trump was elected.

Two of the books that were on the shortlist for the aforementioned Dolman Awards made the result of the American presidential election in 2016 seem so inevitable. One book was *Deep South* by Paul Theroux, a looping, wonderful, poignant and nuanced account of several road trips through those sweaty States, delicately yet decisively discussing the legacy of racism that lingers still, but can't be debated honestly or by those of us who don't live there. The winning title, *Interstate*, by Juilian Sayarer, did America as incisively but quite differently.

Theroux meandered beautifully and meaningfully. Sayarer shot across the country like a rocket, even though he was hitchhiking. The pace of his words, his honesty, the people he met was nothing short of blistering. He has written the closing page for this issue, talking about places that changed his life. At the end of the awards ceremony he gave a closing speech that made us all think some more. In the spirit of John Berger, who donated 50 per cent of his Booker winnings to the Black Panthers in 1972, Sayarer pledged to give half his winnings to the American Civil Liberties Union. He did so in part because he felt that his trip across America was easier than it would have been had he looked properly foreign.

At the same ceremony, Michael Palin, one of our Honorary Presidents, was the recipient of an award for his outstanding contribution to travel writing, His speech was as uplifting as Sayarer's. The whole evening was made possible by Stanfords, who have long been, as Palin stated, 'one of the few truly indispensible shops in the world.' That's in the first world I suspect, but if travel matters – and it does – then what Stanfords continue to do is something to treasure.

Among the other prizes that evening was one for the best food and travel title of the year, won by Tessa Kiros for her delicious words that take the reader from Provence to Pondicherry and are featured in this issue. But some of the best words sent to me this time aren't in these pages, because the author, Kapka Kassabova sent me two pieces to choose from. Both were extraordinary, but one had more sense of place, and that's the one we went with. But she's going to be a name that will feature on prizes going forward, and Sara Wheeler would approve. Here's a few words from the one we couldn't use but can be read in her brilliant book about tango and Argentina:

> *'I see the leafy streets of Buenos Aires and all the disappeared youth of Argentina standing at corners, like poor ghosts in the rain, and I see the waters of Rio de la Plata rising with silent music and dirty secrets... I see the before and I see the after. I am everyone here tonight, with their heartbeats and heartaches, their breaths and blood, their hopes tonight and their departures tomorrow.'*

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.

TRAVELLER is produced by **FIFTH FLOOR PUBLISHING** for:
Wexas Travel, Dorset House,
Stamford Street, London, SE1 9NT, UK
WEB traveller.org.uk

EDITORIAL ENQUIRIES can be emailed to:
traveller@fifthfloorpublishing.com
TEL 020 7838 5998

Publisher and Chairman
Dr Ian M Wilson

Editor
Amy Sohanpaul

Contributing Editors
Jonathan Lorie
Mark Reynolds

Design
Kelly Al-Saleh

Fifth Floor PUBLISHING

WEXAS TRAVEL EST. 1970

WEXAS ENQUIRIES
TEL 020 7838 5958 **EMAIL** mail@wexas.com
WEB wexas.com

WEXAS BLUE MEMBERSHIP £85 per annum (£105 overseas)
WEXAS GOLD MEMBERSHIP £165 per annum (£172 overseas)
Membership includes other publications and benefits
TRAVELLER SUBSCRIPTION £20.85 per annum (£30 overseas)
ADVERTISING Dave Warne
TEL 020 7838 5818 **EMAIL** david.warne@wexas.com
PRINTING Linney Group

The views expressed in the editorial column are not necessarily those of anyone but the editor, and other editorial matter should only be ascribed to the authors concerned. The printing of an advertisement in *Traveller* does not necessarily mean that the publishers endorse the company, product or service advertised. The title *Traveller* is registered as a trademark in the UK. The title *Traveller* is registered as a trademark in the United States Patent Office, Washington DC, and *The Traveller* is registered as a trademark in Canada. All rights to editorial material are reserved throughout the world under the Universal International & Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Reproduction in any manner, in whole or in part, in English or in any other languages, is strictly and specifically prohibited without the express consent of the publishers. Copyright © 2017, Wexas Ltd. *Traveller (incorporating Expedition)*
VOL 47 NO 2, 2017, ISSN 0262-2726.

HONORARY EDITORIAL BOARD

Kate Adie OBE is a distinguished BBC foreign correspondent who has spent 30 years reporting from the world's frontlines.

Professor David Bellamy OBE FRGS PHD F IBIOL F LS is one of the world's leading conservationists, an icon of wildlife television, and founder of the Conservation Foundation.

Colonel John Blashford-Snell OBE FRSGS is Britain's best-known expedition leader and the founder of Operations Raleigh and Drake for young people.

Dr Jean-Michel Cousteau is a noted marine scientist and successor to the mantle of his father, the late Jacques Cousteau.

William Dalrymple MA FRAS FRGS FRSL is an award-winning travel writer and historian, an expert on India and the Muslim world.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes BT OBE DSC is a distinguished adventurer and expeditionary, leader of the world's first pole-to-pole journey.

Robin Hanbury-Tenison OBE DL MA FRGS is a pioneering champion of rainforests and tribal peoples, and the President of Survival International.

Dr Alasdair Harris is the founder of Blue Ventures, where he leads international marine conservation projects, and an advisor to the United Nations Environment Programme.

Fergal Keane OBE is a BBC special correspondent who reported from South Africa for many years, and an acclaimed author.

Sir Robin Knox-Johnston CBE FRINA is the first man to sail non-stop and single-handed around the world, and author of many books on sailing.

Sir Christopher Ondaatje CBE OC is chairman of the Ondaatje Foundation and author of ten books, including *Sindh Revisited* and *Journey to the Source of the Nile*.

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

Professor John Prebble BA LLB BCL JSD is an international barrister in tax law, and formerly Dean of Law at Victoria University, Wellington.

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.

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

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

Sir Hereward Wake BT MC DL is a baronet and retired major who has been involved in youth expeditions worldwide.

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

THE PEOPLE BEHIND OUR STORIES

AA GILL
was one our finest travel journalists, famed for his fearless and sometimes controversial writing on travel, food and TV.
SEE PAGE 28

SARA WHEELER
is an acclaimed travel writer whose journeys have ranged from the North to South Poles, including seven months on a polar research station.
SEE PAGE 14

FERGAL KEANE
is a BBC Special Correspondent famed for his compassionate coverage of conflict-affected countries, from Rwanda to Ulster.
SEE PAGE 26

JONATHAN SCOTT
is a celebrated wildlife photographer and presenter based in Kenya. He has just published a memoir, *The Big Cat Man*.
SEE PAGE 48

JULIAN SAYARER
wrote the 2017 Stanford Dolman Travel Book of the Year, *Interstate*. His first book, *Life Cycles*, described his world record ride around the world.
SEE PAGE 96

JUSTINE HARDY
is an acclaimed author and documentary-maker, a trauma psychotherapist and the founder of Healing Kashmir.
SEE PAGE 58

JASON GOODWIN
is an award-winning travel author and historian, who also writes the Yashim detective novels set in nineteenth-century Istanbul.
SEE PAGE 16

KAPKA KASSABOVA
is a Bulgarian-born travel writer and novelist. Her latest book is *Border*, a journey in the Balkan edgelands. She is also a widely published poet.
SEE PAGE 34

JONATHAN LORIE
is a former editor of *Traveller* and currently director of Travellers' Tales, the training agency for travel writers and photographers.
SEE PAGE 36

FRANCESCO LASTRUCCI
is an Italian photographer specialising in reportage and travel worldwide. He has long-term projects in Colombia and the Mediterranean.
SEE PAGE 40

SIMON URWIN
is a TV executive turned award-winning travel and portrait photographer. He has shot in over 75 countries, from Antarctica to Afghanistan.
SEE PAGE 52

TESSA KIROS
is half-Finnish, half-Greek and all foodie. She has written ten cookbooks from around the world, the latest winning an Edward Stanford book award.
SEE PAGE 76

FEATURES

8 Dream On: Norway
The Lofoten Islands are an Arctic haven, summer or winter

16 Florence Italy
Jason Godwin learns to be a local, with a little help from a long-dead poet

21 Florence USA
Freddie Reynolds blunders into Alabama's 'Renaissance City', home of the blues

28 Kangaroo Island
A last word from the late great A A Gill

34 Tango Fever
Kapka Kassabova finds her feet in Buenos Aires

36 Pintxos on Picasso Street
Jonathan Lorie savours the spirit of renewal in Bilbao and Gernika

40 Picture this: Mexico
Francesco Lastrucci photographs a forgotten Mayan region in Yucatán

48 Island Dream
Jonathan Scott chills out on the remote Kenyan island of Lamu

52 The Living Goddesses
Simon Urwin discovers the real-life deities of the Kathmandu Valley

GUESTS

14 Sara Wheeler
The prolific explorer talks to Amy Sohanpaul about women in the wilderness

96 Julian Sayarer
The winner of this year's Dolman Book Award recalls five places that have changed his life

NEWS & REVIEWS

10 Events
For the spring and summer seasons

13 Noticeboard
With the latest news from our Honorary Editorial Board

62 Art of Travel
Explorers' diaries revealed by Kari Herbert and Huw Lewis-Jones

68 Bookshelf
Featuring immigrant tales, touring with Shakespeare, vintage Paris and sumptuous cookbooks from Byzantium to Peckham

76 A Moveable Feast: India
Tessa Kiros finds French and Indian fusion cuisine in Pondicherry, while Kevin Pilley follows the wine trail through Maharashtra

On the cover: crocodile in a marsh near the town of Palizada. in an area rich of wildlife called 'entre rios' (between rivers), located in the middle of lush flood plains that overlook the Laguna de Términos in Mexico.

84 Hotels
Staying in the wild or the city in Canada

87 Cruises
Hopping aboard the world's most luxurious ship and a boutique boat on the Seine

92 Hotspots
Safety advice on today's most dangerous places

OPINION

26 Fergal Keane
A visit to the Central African Republic prompts thoughts of Africa's past and present

58 Justine Hardy
Pondering the meaning of passports

Arctic horizon

One hundred miles north of the Arctic Circle, the remote islands of Lofoten rise from the chill waters of the Arctic Ocean to form one of the remotest outposts of Europe. Lashed by snow and storms in winter, blessed by midnight sun in summer, they are one of the best places in the world to see the eerie ballet of the Northern Lights dancing across the night sky.

Here among jagged mountains, generations of hardy fishing folk have built a home. Their tiny red-wood cabins cluster in the valleys and by the shore, often steadied on stilts above the tumble of granite. Around them, even today, crowd hundreds of wooden drying racks for the rich cash-crop of the sea that first brought humans to these islands: cod.

Lofoten is one of the largest fisheries in the world for cod. Every spring, millions migrate past the islands to spawn just off the southern shores. And humans have been catching them here since at least the days of the Viking sagas, which mention ancient villages. They also tell of trolls in the mountains and a chief who changed into a werewolf.

Today you can visit a reconstructed Viking longhouse at Borg and try a Viking meal of meat broth and honey mead, served by a damsel in medieval dress while the winds whirl outside the hearth-hole above the roaring fire. Or you can come in summer and try surfing off beaches like this one, far away from tourist crowds, with nothing around you but eagles and puffins and the wide view to an Arctic horizon.

EVENTS

UK/India 2017
ALL YEAR
VENUES ACROSS THE UK
A wide-ranging celebration of Indian culture and the Anglo-Indian relationship has been launched by the British Council and the Indian government, taking place in both countries. It includes theatre, dance, photograpy, visual art and topical debates, and was launched with a projection onto Buckingham Palace of traditional Indian dancers. In London the British Film Institute on the South Bank is joining in with a festival of Indian films, including the oldest surviving footage of India on film from 1899, and the British Library will host the Jaipur Literature Festival in May.
britishcouncil.in

Adventure Travel Film Festival
11 TO 13 AUGUST
MILL HILL SCHOOL, LONDON
The London edition of this international festival returns, with a weekend of films, talks and workshops with film-makers and fellow adventurers. There's also a fringe of adventure-themed sessions on subjects like motorbike expeditions, woodland ways and yoga for travellers. The star guest is Benedict Allen.
From £76, adventuretravelfilmfestival.com

Hokusai: Beyond the Great Wave
25 MAY TO 13 AUGUST
BRITISH MUSEUM
A fascinating glimpse of classical Japan is offered in this blockbuster exhibition of Japan's greatest artist, creator of *The Great Wave* and other famous views of Mount Fuji. Looking at the final, fruitful 30 years of his life, it shows some of his finest works, including landscapes, domestic interiors and, surprisingly, a series of ghosts. Sponsored by Mitsubishi Corporation.
£12, children free, britishmuseum.org

© MUSÉE NATIONAL DES ARTS ASIATIQUES GUIMET, PARIS, GIVEN BY NOBERT LAGANE

Above: Katsushika Hokusai, *Dragon in Rain Clouds*. Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, 1849.

Right: Sophie Calle, *My Mother, My Cat, My Father, in That Order*, 2012.

Whales: Beneath the Surface
14 JULY TO OCTOBER
NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
As the grand staircase of the Natural History Museum swaps its iconic dinosaur skeleton for a blue whale, the museum launches an 18-month series of events examining man's impact on the seas. First up is this family exhibition on the biology and behavior of the planet's mightiest mammals.
nhm.ac.uk

Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize 2017
UNTIL 11 JUNE
PHOTOGRAPHERS' GALLERY
The twentieth annual showcase of this international photography prize is on show in London, featuring shortlisted snappers from France, Switzerland and Holland. Look out for the tantalising photo postcards of Sophie Calle, who has invited strangers to sleep in her bed, followed a man through the streets of Paris to Venice, hired a detective to spy on herself and asked blind people to tell her the final image they remember.
Free before noon, then £4, thephotographersgallery.org.uk

© SOPHIE CALLE, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND GALERIE PERROTIN

© MUSEUMSLANDSCHAFT HESSEN KASSEL, GEMÄLDEGALERIE ALTE MEISTER

Above: Senaka Senanayake, *Lotus*

Senaka Senanayake
JUNE 1 TO 18
GROSVENOR GALLERY, LONDON

Sri Lanka's leading painter, whose works grace the White House and the UN headquarters, has a rare one-man show in London this summer. Long concerned with environmental issues, his new show focuses on the beauty of rainforests in his native land, emphasising the quality of what is endangered. His work blends vibrant colours and vivid intensity, and has been shown at over 100 exhibitions worldwide.
grosvenorgallery.com

CURATOR'S COMMENT

Senaka has been described as nature's evangelist. His native Sri Lanka is his muse and his canvases capture the vibrancy of his environment – brightly coloured parrots, insects, frogs, in a jungle teeming with colour and movement. His work is as much a lament as a love song to a vanishing world. Senaka's painterly language speaks to us about tolerance, co-existence, beauty and balance, and warns us about what we are on the verge of losing – our priceless birthright, the wonders of the natural world, which comes to its most magnificent fruition in the world's rain forests.

CHARLIE MOORE, GROSVENOR GALLERY

Say hello to the Big Easy.

Fly direct with British Airways to the home of Mardis Gras, just one of hundreds of North American destinations offered by the British Airways and American Airlines partnership.

Choose between four, non-stop flights a week from London Heathrow Terminal 5 to New Orleans aboard the state-of-the-art Boeing 787 Dreamliner.

And, with a choice of three British Airways cabins – Club World, World Traveller Plus and World Traveller – there's never been a better way to join the party.

For more information, or to book, call a Wexas USA specialist on **020 7838 5958.**

American Airlines

BRITISH AIRWAYS
Specialist Partner

oneworld

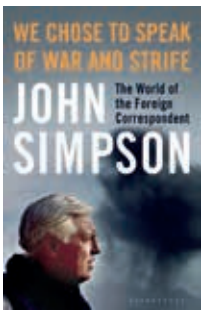
LATEST NEWS FROM OUR HONORARY PRESIDENTS

Award for Michael Palin

TV traveller extraordinaire
Michael Palin was honoured with a special award at this spring's Edward Stanford Travel Writing Awards. He was presented with the Award for Outstanding Contribution to Travel Writing by fellow adventurer Levison Wood, who said: "Michael Palin was one of my childhood heroes, a real inspiration that led me to want to explore the world with the same enthusiasm and curiosity. His adventures have no doubt encouraged millions to do the same." Palin replied: "To be given an Outstanding Contribution Award for Travel Writing is a great honour. To be presented with it by an outstanding writer-adventurer like Levison Wood is icing on the cake. The cake itself is that the award comes from Stanfords, the first port of call on all my travels, and one of the few truly indispensable shops in the world."

John Simpson in person

The nation's favourite foreign correspondent will be appearing live at the Bath Festival in May, talking about his new book. *We Chose to Speak of War and Strife* retells pivotal moments from British history through the eyes of the foreign correspondents who, like Simpson himself, risked life and limb to report them – from the Crimean War to the Vietnam War, the siege of Sarajevo to the fall of Baghdad. The book weaves tales of the giants of yesterday and today – Martha Gellhorn, Ernest Hemingway, Don McCullin and Marie Colvin – with powerful accounts of his own experiences on the frontlines. This is a deeply personal book from a master of the profession, the most distinguished foreign correspondent of our time and, increasingly, a national treasure.

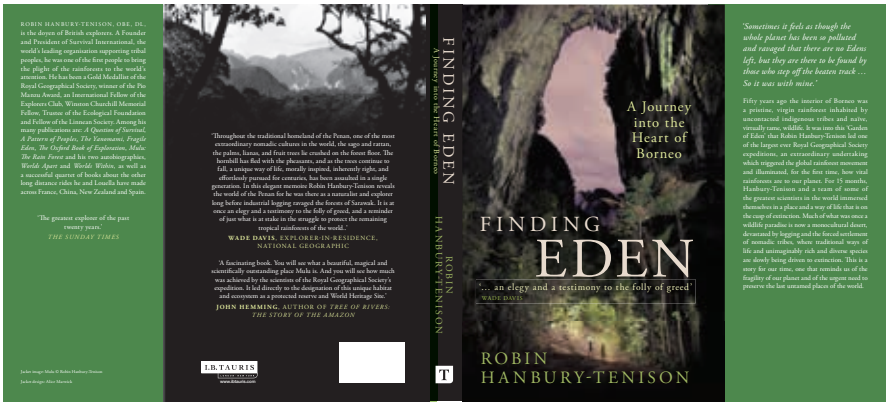


27 May, Bath Festival, £9/10, bathfestivals.org.uk

To the heart of Borneo

Fifty years ago the interior of Borneo was a pristine rainforest inhabited by uncontacted tribes and virtually tame wildlife. It was into this 'Garden of Eden' that Robin Hanbury-Tenison led one of the largest ever Royal Geographical Society expeditions, an extraordinary undertaking which triggered the global rainforest movement and illuminated, for the first time, how vital rainforests are to our planet. For 15 months, Hanbury-Tenison and a team of some of the world's top scientists immersed themselves in a place and a way of life that is now on the cusp of extinction. Today much of what was once a wildlife paradise is a monocultural desert, devastated by logging and the forced settlement of nomadic tribes, where traditional ways of life and unimaginably rich and diverse species are slowly being driven to extinction. In this new book, Hanbury-Tenison retells a story for our time, one that reminds us of the fragility of our planet and the urgent need to preserve its last untamed places for the future.

Finding Eden: A Journey into the Heart of Borneo, by Robin Hanbury-Tenison, will be published by I B Tauris in September, price £17.99



Freewheeling females

PROLIFIC ADVENTURER SARA WHEELER SPEAKS TO AMY SOHANPAUL ABOUT WOMEN IN THE WILDERNESS

'"I do not wish to be good," she wrote of life on the road. 'I wish to be hell on wheels or dead."' This is Sara Wheeler quoting Martha Gellhorn. It's a sentiment that almost sums up Wheeler. I want to talk about this wholly admirable quote while in conversation with Wheeler, but we're preoccupied, casting our collective minds desperately back and forth to find an iconic female travel writer that is not Gellhorn.

Even here in Wheeler's extensive library, its shelves heavy with examples of seminal travelogues past and present, we have to go almost centuries back to find a woman who went away around the world and wrote about it in a manner that made the kind of impact that Theroux or Thubron have. 'Freya Stark!' 'Mary Kingsley!' 'Getrude Bell!' She finds and we exclaim. But they're so long ago.

It's fun spending time with Sara Wheeler. In her books she's vivid and funny, and she is those things off the page too, words as sharp as whips, but in action and unstated deed she has a capacity for expansive empathy. One of her sons comes in at the end of our interview afternoon, all satchel and politeness, happy to be home, I don't meet the 47-year-old Zimbabwean refugee who is staying, but suspect he too feels a sense of belonging, in this place festooned with things from far and wide.

Her house, sprawling endlessly up behind a butcher's frontage in a leafy north London street, has that sort of welcoming warmth to it. There's that library with a fireplace and smoking allowed, but also an office lined with reference material for a current project – a forthcoming book on Russia – and old-fashioned ice skating shoes in the fireplace, an Eland with an eyepatch hanging above, an ice hammer to the side, all nicely set off by a fractured sculpture of a penguin signed by friends made in the far south, Antarctica.

Wheeler's time there, the basis for her bestselling and acclaimed book *Terra Incognita*, took her further, in terms of current travel writing, than most women have been recently. We've both done recent service on the last Dolman Travel Book Award, Sara as Chair steering all of us on the panel expertly.

To her great dismay, only a quarter of the books sent in were by women. I wasn't overly worried to begin with – after all the first year of this particular award was won by Alice Albinia, another year saw Kathleen Jamie share the prize with Robert Macfarlane, and Rachel Polonsky won it years ago with *Molotov's Magic Lantern*. But after the Dolman awards, and Sara's piece for the *Guardian* in which she explored the imbalance further, it was something to speak and think more about.

Wheeler admires many of her contemporaries, including Dea Birkett (who wrote *Serpent in Paradise*), Justine Hardy (who has written acclaimed books about India and is a *Traveller* columnist) but is perturbed by the fact that there aren't more women excelling in this particular genre. 'Television is partly to blame,' she says, 'endless programmes with blokes with beards yomping through the jungle not really seeing anything but proving something.'

She 'deeply admires' Dervla Murphy for her freewheeling far-flung sojourns and undaunted attitude; but we're circling wildly to find another name. Part of it, I think, is a publishing trend, and Sara agrees, to an extent: 'There were two great booms in the travel writing world in the 20th century – the Thirties, and a lot of my heroes, and a few though not enough heroines were from that period; and then the Seventies, which was started off by Paul Theroux really. But every publishing phase like that comes to an end.'

Publishing phases do come and go, but it doesn't quite explain the ratio of books out there about 'out there', more than most written by men. According to Sara, who has written acclaimed biographies about the most impressive male and female travellers, explorers and eccentrics, there's no reason why this should be the case. 'Women don't have to stay at home and have babies and be domestic, it's not as simple as that and anyway you can do what I did and take your children with you.'

'It's not about danger either. That's just a load of old rubbish if you know how to look after yourself, and as a single woman, you're not a threat to anybody. I've had some of the most illuminating experiences of my travelling life sitting at a kitchen table in the high Andes with a woman going about her work and the kids running in and out, and most of the time they wouldn't have invited a bloke in.'

Wheeler has been there and done that and looks set to go forth some more. *Access All Areas*, a collection of her travel writing from South to North Pole, her many and various books, most recently, *O My America*, an account of women who reinvented themselves in nineteenth-century America, are a testament for travel for all but especially for women.

Encouraging, optimistic about the future of the genre, Wheeler sees no reason for women not to be as prolific or bold as Mary Kingsley or Martha Gellhorn. The latter wrote about wars and places in between those, the former, as Wheeler says, 'hacked through those countries now known as Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equitorial Guinea and Gabon... she waded through swamps for two hours at a time, up to her neck in fetid water with leeches around her neck like a frill. After falling 15 feet into a game pit laid with 12-inch ebony spikes, she noted, "It is at these times you realise the blessings of a good thick skirt."'

Florence

ITALY

words
Jason Goodwin

We were too busy moving into our flat to notice the square of white marble, with its leaded lettering blistering to green, fixed with trefoil clamps to the wall across the street. I suppose I saw it, but only as streetscape, out there with the stucco, the pantiles, the shutters, material foretastes of the *dolce vita* – Ice creams! Art! – that bring Anglo-Saxons to Italy with the February sun. Never for a moment did I suspect it would reveal what, in retrospect, I seem to have gone to Florence for.

We'd chosen a flat in Oltrano: the name means 'across the Arno' – Putney to Chelsea, say, a homely district of butchers and bakers instead of shops selling exquisite marbled paper and Prada. The flat wasn't facing into one of the major Florentine squares, or sequestered in the shadowed chasm of a medieval street. You don't want to be too obvious, not when you have a week to pretend to be a Florentine.

We spent the first day taking possession of our new home: an attempt to slide into other lives, tracking down the closest supermarket and the freshest greengrocer, and guessing who baked the best bread. From one perspective, we were actually living in Florence. From another, we were tourists, here to admire the astonishing burst of creative energy that, in the fourteenth century, redefined the course of civilisation.

One Renaissance event I like to think about happened in 1425, when the Florentine polymath Filippo Brunelleschi made a peephole in a piece of card and set it up on the steps of the Cathedral in Florence. On the back of the card he drew the Baptistery and the Piazza, and further away he placed an angled mirror. When you looked through the hole, you saw the drawn Baptistery reflected in the mirror, at a scale of 1:75. When he took the mirror away, the view through the peephole of the real Baptistery remained the same.

This is a city that still, up its elegant Gucci sleeve, has tricks of the mirror, games of reflection and refraction. Mediaeval theologians (and Florence had plenty) wondered if the eyes sent out rays: as if, by some Feng Shui of the soul, our glances move in straight lines, bouncing and rebounding in a lattice across time and space. You walk down a narrow street and, looking up, you see the extraordinary cathedral dome, looming overhead like a space ship. You trace the circular reflections of the arches of the Ponte Vecchio in the placid waters of the Arno. Most astonishingly, you notice that the woman coming towards you down the street has a face you recognise as the face you saw, moments earlier, painted in fresco on a church wall: Madonna, Magdalene, looker-on, a genetic refraction down the centuries.

Left: Mural of a Renaissance wine shop by Domenico Ghirlandaio.

Those frescoes – you could spend all your time in Florence with them – are Florence looking at itself. At its moral self, of course: but also its fabric, its citizens. Whether illustrating Bible stories or the lives of the saints, the frescoes depict local scenes. The beggars beseeching St Peter are Florentine cripples on a nearby street; Christ labours under his cross on a Tuscan hillside; the Palazzo Vecchio intrudes into a backdrop, while the figures attending a Biblical event, down to Ghirlandaio's black servant, are recognisable characters dressed in medieval gallimaufry, occasionally turning their heads to look at us.

The frescos are, by their nature, attached to the very places for which they were designed, inhabiting the volumes they first occupied seven centuries ago. Shown one of the new-fangled Flemish oil paintings, one famous son of the city, Michelangelo, supposedly called it good enough for children and old women. Florence listened to him. Fresco made from egg, size and pigment, applied fresh to a newly plastered section of a wall, wasn't to be moved about like canvas. The Venetians and Titian embraced oils. Florence admired its own reflection on church walls.

On my way to pick up the morning bread, I stopped for my espresso at a café counter, standing like everyone else. Later we leaned at our window to watch the morning unfold, as it might if we really lived here, every day. Parents walked their children to a school gate like the entrance to a Renaissance palace. Gales of playtime shouting and laughter wafted down the street. A small nun, rickety with shopping bags, trudged up to Santa Spirito; a woman with good hair held in place with sunglasses slid into an Audi; a lean guy in a fedora smoked without touching his cigarette, glancing up now and then at a window from which came the sound of hammering.

Over the window opposite was the plaque, dedicated to a man who died in the house behind it – *si spense*, faded away – at the age of 87.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR
EPICO CUORE
POETA PROSATORE EMINENTE
CELEBRATOR DI FIRENZE
QUI
OTTANTASETTENE SI SPENSE
IL 17 SETTEMBRE 1864

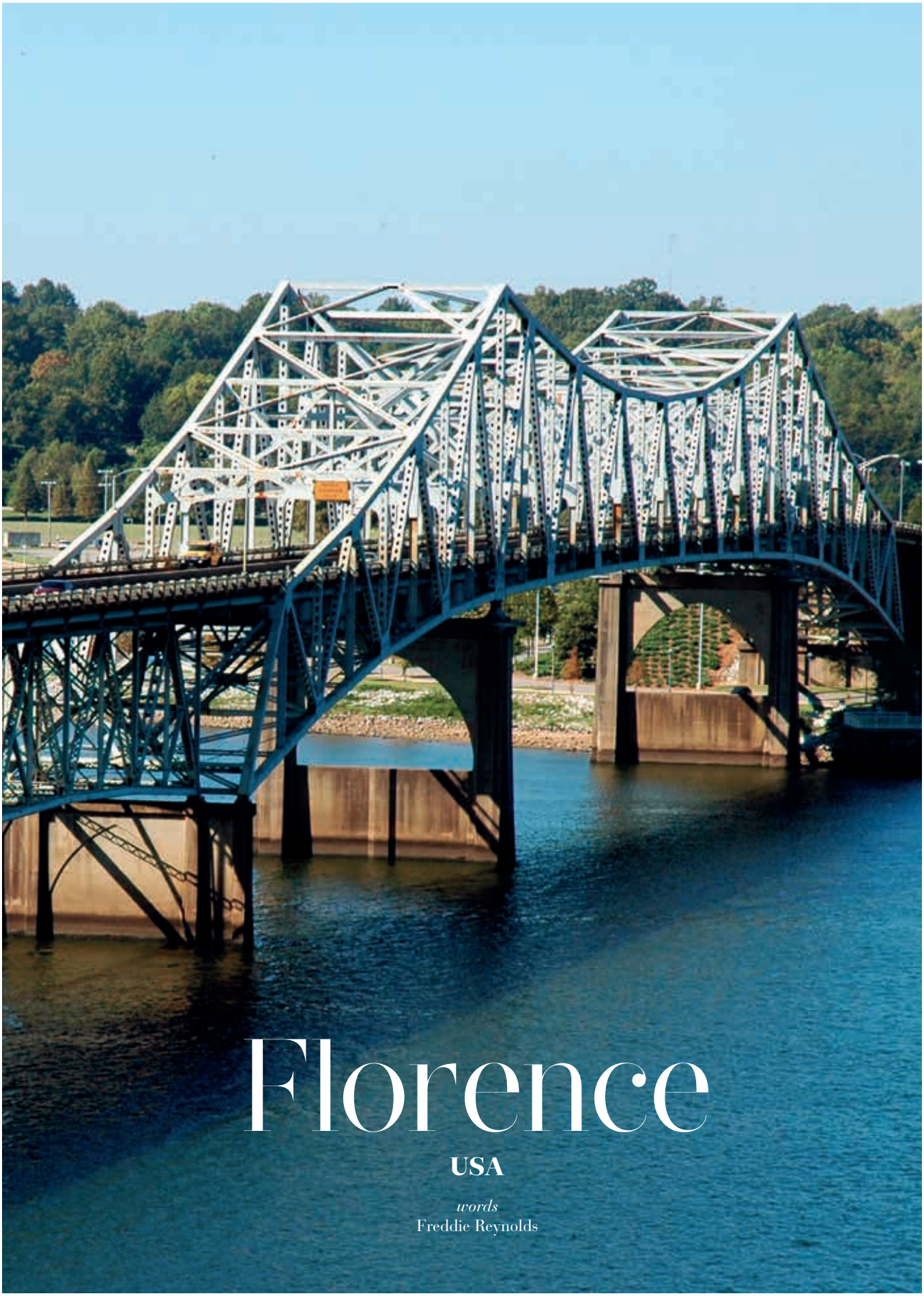
Opposite and above: Inside the Bargello, Forence's premier museum of sculpture.

Above right: The Victorian poet Walter Savage Landor.

Overleaf: The Ponte Vecchio across the River Arno.

Nobody reads Landor now: they didn't read him much in his lifetime. 'Rose Aylmer' triggers the lightest memory. Landor was always a poet's poet, generous, impulsive and furiously litigious. He gave things away so easily that you were afraid of admiring anything he had. He tried to tear his Turners from their mounts for a lady who showed an interest in them. He offered his royalties to a younger acolyte. But, like a Renaissance Florentine, he also dealt in furious, ruinous feuds. In England, he libelled people in Latin verse, which was exquisitely written and not actionable: in Italy, to his surprise, Latin was no defence when he vilified his enemies. Much litigation ensued. He adored his family but spent his later years trying to escape. One time he threw his cook out of the window, another time the tablecloth – with everything on it. When he entered on his self-imposed exile, he took an apartment in the Medici Palace. Years later he died, opposite our flat, in genteel poverty.

Epico Cuore! Great heart! I had forgotten him; but the inscription brought him back, Google supplied the gaps and Florence did the rest. He shared our street, shadowed our trips to the Uffizi and the ice cream shop. Not unlike a fresco, Walter Savage Landor has been immortalised on a wall in the place where he lived. It's like seeing the young Ghirlandaio staring back from the church wall, discovering ourselves sharing the same space: us with selfie-sticks and guide books and sore feet; Landor with his poverty and Victorian poetry; rubbing along with the other crowd in gartered hose and hats, all of us witnesses, participants, on each side of the painted surface.



Florence

USA

words
Freddie Reynolds

Opposite: Postage stamp celebrating the father of the blues, W C Handy.

Right: Typical vernacular wooden architecture of the nineteenth-century in Florence.

Below: W C Handy's family home, now a museum to the famous musician.

On my first morning in Alabama, I ate breakfast in a restaurant 300 feet up.

Not that it meant much at the time. Three hundred feet is nothing in thick fog. Not only could I not see Florence, the nearest town, a mile or so away, I couldn't even make out the ground beneath me, let alone the Tennessee River supposedly flowing somewhere below. To my fellow diners and I, spinning in the air through identical panes of grey, the river lived only in our imaginations.

The last time I'd been in a restaurant like this was in Tirana, the Albanian capital. That city was full of the most wonderfully ugly architecture, so a tall, white tower (this time revolving), entirely devoted to dining, fitted right in. I loved it. It was part of the aesthetic, posing unanswerable questions about a post-dictatorship society.

Florence was somewhat different.

When the waitress came over to refill my coffee mug, I asked her what I should do while in town. "Florence is Alabama's Renaissance City," she told me. And I must have raised my eyebrows, looked at my surroundings. "It's true," she snapped, "You'll find it." She spun on her heels and walked off.

I was in northern Alabama to visit Muscle Shoals, which lies a few miles south. Etta James, Aretha, the Staple Sisters and Dylan have all spent time there, making hit records in the fabled Muscle Shoals Studio. It's an unlikely hotbed of wildly popular music: the town itself exudes a general plainness. It's an unremarkable-looking place with a remarkable musical legacy.

Florence appeared equally uninspiring. But I'd been to the studio, and the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in nearby Tuscumbia, and I had a day to kill. So I got in my car and drove around for a while. What I saw was everyday America – detached houses and wide lawns, suburbia, a gun shop, a liquor store, zero pedestrians and a million flags.

Opposite: The muddy waters of the Little River Canyon, east of Florence in northern Alabama.

In the centre there was a boutique restaurant full of old couples, the men in gold-button blazers and trainers.

It seemed milder than the towns I had passed on the journey south from Nashville the previous day, towns of one-storey buildings made of metal and arranged at odd angles, as if hurled from the window of a passing car. Towns full of things with which you could kill yourself – and just as many options in which to be saved, from whitewashed wooden churches to bars with the curtains drawn.

The fog had lifted by now and the river began to glint, slithering past mud banks. A cool breeze whipped along the quiet, tree-lined streets that led to the centre of town. There, along a wide, once-Wild-West boulevard, people in shorts and t-shirts walked out of indoor markets and parlours. I picked up a leaflet advertising a small museum across town and drove that way.

'W C HANDY BIRTHPLACE. William Christopher Handy, widely honored as the Father of the Blues, was born in this house on November 16, 1873,' read the sign outside.

I walked up the path towards the museum and through the door. In front of me hung polished musical instruments, black and white photographs and scribbled notebooks in glass display cases. A back-straight bust of Handy sat on a plinth. At the piano across the room the sheet music for St Louis Blues, the Handy opus, lay open on the stand, as though waiting for the bust to wake, take a seat and play.

The next room was the first of the original two rooms that made up the Handy family home, a cabin built by W C's grandfather sometime before his grandson was born – the grandson who would popularise the blues, bring it to Beale Street and then Broadway, who would die in New York in 1953, by then accustomed to a life far beyond the reach of his grandfather, a minister freed from slavery.

The bed was made, furniture arranged as if the family were away, expected home soon.
I stood and talked to one of the curators. She admitted that Florence wasn't too well known, despite the legacy of Handy, who once said that the town "generated the motif for my blues". And as I drove back through the town, I tried to imagine what takes a kid from Florence, upstream to Memphis, upcountry to New York and right up to the top of the charts.

I also thought about the town's nickname: 'the Renaissance city'. If you agree with the journalist Alistair Cooke that the 12-bar blues is the greatest American invention, and you believe Handy when he talked about the influence that Florence had on his music, then Florence really is that Renaissance city, birthplace of a musician who has influenced everyone, whether they're aware of it or not.

That waitress was right. I had found it. A room of the Uffizi, tucked around a suburban street deep in the American South.

All the life of Africa

Words by Fergal Keane

It is hot and angry in this place. We are sealed in a five-star hotel, surrounded by the dealmakers from wealthier, more powerful lands. The Chinese, the new lords of Africa, are here in some numbers and, of course, the French, whose history here is of venality and exploitation, varnished of late by humanitarian action.

A few moments ago the head of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, swept by, surrounded by an entourage of handsomely besuited bureaucrats, their perfume and after-shave the incense of the powerful, wafting through the benighted streets of Bangui. There are projects to visit where smiling Africans will thank the powerful foreigners for their largesse. It will not be the time to speak of the deeper moral debt owed by Europeans to the continent of Africa.

The Central African Republic is the place where the nineteenth-century European imperial adventure in Africa screams its obscenity most vividly to me. After covering Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and other ill-used places, I realise it is saying a lot. Even the French admitted that CAR was the colony they had prepared least for independence.

Again, that is saying something. It means worse than the French-ruled territories of Mali, Guinea, Congo Brazzaville and Ivory Coast, among others – or the Uganda of Idi Amin and Milton Obote, the Kenya of Daniel Arap Moi or the Zimbabwe of Ian Smith and Robert Mugabe, lest you think I was letting the British out of the loop of colonial responsibility.

Before the French came in the 1890s, the territory of CAR was ravaged by Arab slave traders from the east, depopulating vast swathes of country and instituting a regime of fear. Under colonial rule, the slave traders were replaced by French companies who rounded up the able-bodied and put them to work on rubber and cotton plantations. It wasn't strictly speaking slavery. They were paid. But it wasn't voluntary and conditions were grim. Communities that failed to meet the quotas set by the big corporations were punished. The photographer and political activist, Germaine Krull, witnessed the agonies that were still being endured as late as 1940 when the Free French forces of De Gaulle ruled equatorial Africa.

'They are given half or a third in cash,' she wrote, 'and for the rest they are given merchandise they never asked for... storm lights, shovels, spoons, all sorts of things which are completely useless to them, but which are a way of profitably liquidating stocks in various hangars. The women leave much as they came: resigned and silent. In 15 days time the region's commander will once again send militiamen to tell the local people how many kilos of rubber they must bring to the next market. The expression of sadness and resignation of these people moves me very deeply. There is a *je ne sais quoi* that wounds me.'

Next to our hotel is a colonial-era administrative compound. The small villas were once used to house the more junior officials. Now they are dilapidated and mildewed. There is little else to remind one of the colonial past, save for the continuing traditions of poverty and corruption. The concessionary corporations of the old days have been replaced by warlords who exact forced labour and plunder the nation's resources, without even the pretence of care for the wellbeing of the people.

Recently the CAR was declared the least happy country in the world, in a UN-sponsored report. It is in anger that this unhappiness is most frequently

expressed: at the airport a minor dispute between porters over the use of a trolley explodes into violence in a matter of seconds; filming in Bangui, a taxi driver launches into a fierce tirade when he is asked to move his car a few yards to allow another vehicle to pass by; in the tiny police office, the man handcuffed to a table has a battered arm and looks at us dazed and hopeless while the officer explains that he is 'just a thief'.

I doubt many of you will have reason to visit the CAR. Right now it is a country without a tourist industry. The roads outside the capital are mostly too dangerous to travel. Roadblocks manned by thieving militia abound. Yet there is immense beauty here. I will not indulge the 'dignity in the face of poverty' trope. That is for the people themselves to decide, if they are ever so inclined. But I can speak of the wonder of the Ubangui river at dusk as the pirogues glide across the silver surface towards the Congo shore, and all the life of Africa – the old essential life of small trade and ingenious strategies, the life that has survived the impositions of colonialism and despotism, and which echoes now in the voices calling from boat to boat. I see the fishermen wading into the shallows and forming a semi-circle as they work their nets forward and back. I am standing on an outcrop, too far away to see what they catch, but they keep working as the dark comes on. They will be there tomorrow too, always working the swift warm waters.

Fergal Keane is a BBC special correspondent.
Illustration by Luke Walwyn.

Kangaroo Island

words
A A Gill

The first thing to love about Kangaroo Island is that there is no mistaking where it is. An island called Kangaroo could only be down under, while the rest of Australia is named with a cringing, doffed-cap infatuation with the old country – Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne, named after forgotten toffs or for homesickness. Who on earth would want another Perth or a new South Wales? Kangaroo Island is what it says on the label: an island replete with kangaroos.

It was named by Matthew Flinders, who bumped into it off the coast of Adelaide, while making his voyage to discover if Australia was really two islands with a possible inland sea, as it appeared to be far too big to be one place. It still seems to be far too big. Flinders' crew was starving. The kangaroos on the island had never seen humans before, so hopped naively into the pot. There may have been aboriginals here once, but not for a few thousand years. The wildlife is still remarkably sanguine about that human contact; the kangaroos still regard us with a forgiving curiosity.

I've come here on the ferry with a chef and an abalone diver. Jock Zonfrillo is a cook at Orana in Adelaide, by way of Glasgow, and before that of Italian extraction. Paul is a second-generation diver; his father started in the warmer seas off Trieste.

We've come to forage, and before you roll your eyes and sigh, 'Oh no, not another rambling encomium for hippie gardening, for picking twigs and scraping mould and drying moss, as a sort of back-to-Eden alternative to the tyranny of supermarkets and Quavers,' let me tell you that foraging in Australia is really not like blackberrying in Kent. For a start, everything wants to kill you, and most things can.

Jock is the Mad Max of foraging. He has travelled the length and breadth of this continent, searching out the shy, forgotten and neglected edible bits, staying in remote native communities, learning the vanishingly husbanded knowledge; he makes Bear Grylls look like an autograph-hunting boy scout. There is nothing New Age or goopy about his commitment to the raw taste of his adopted country.

At dawn on a chilly spring morning, we go down to the jetty, where a gimpy and worryingly small inflatable boat is being guarded by a posse of beady pelicans. On land they always look cartoonishly ungainly, but with the silent ta-da of prestidigitation, they are transformed into the most elegant, balletic birds when airborne.

'Can you swim?' asks Paul, as he sorts his kit.

'No, I do "briefly postponed drowning".'

'Oh right, well, I've only got one life jacket and it's covered in guts and grease. It'll probably mess up your coat.'

'Well, I'll drown then.'

We chug out into the long, curving bay. Black swans and piebald cormorants bob in the choppy waves. Above, pelicans pirouette and oystercatchers peep plaintively. Paul attaches himself to the airline and puts on his weight belt and picks up a shopping basket and jumps over the side. Abalone-diving is a dangerous job. Overfishing has concentrated the great white sharks into areas where smaller breeds of fish run. Here, tuna come to breed, and there are seal colonies. Two divers have already been killed; others have left the sea in fear. Paul has had 15 close encounters with great whites, but diving is what he does and the Chinese pay a great deal for the greenlip abalone. It's still foraging, even if it's underwater.

Today, he's after king scallops that Jock says are the best he's ever eaten. Paul returns with a bagful of St Jacques shells. He sits on the side of the boat, dripping and panting, takes out a knife and opens one, cleans it and cuts the muscle from its hard bed. He hands it to me. It has that marvellous shy smell of ozone and iodine, a sweetness that is cool and meaty, a taste of the ocean and outdoors that starts as one thing, then subtly changes as it slides down your tongue. It is insistent and utterly memorable.

We sit on the rocking boat while the sun comes up and the shoreline glows lustrous, and stands of gum trees flicker in the sunshine, and the patches of light creep across the hilltops. Altogether it is the most perfectly appointed mouthful of the year.

Paul has also caught us an abalone, a big muscle that moves ungainly across my hand like a lovelorn, disembodied tongue. Abalone need to be beaten in order to tenderise them. Their flavour is complicated and not as richly long as the scallop, but it has an almost embarrassing lascivious taste, an intimate, female eroticism. Some people react with an instant embarrassed exclamation, putting their hands to their mouths.

We chug back to the jetty for a questing walk along the shore. Jock forages as if he were shopping, walking down the dune aisle of a supermarket, fracking and picking and handing me leaves and sprigs and damp shards of stuff with a terse 'taste this', followed by a Latin and then a common garden name: sea blite; neptune's pearls, which are little kelp buds; samphire, more intensely salty and medicinal than the stuff we get in England; sea purslane; gracilaria, saltbush. At the same time, he's teaching my little boy how to throw a boomerang: 'You don't want it to come back,' he says. 'You're trying to break a kangaroo's leg or bring down a bird. If it comes back, you have no dinner.' The stick whirls through the brined air, never to return.

Here's the odd pigface fruit, a grounded succulent that looks more like a livid trotter, and a Moreton Bay fig. Each of these has an intense and surprising flavour, all underlined with the fresh saltiness of the shore. Jock is very serious, almost messianic about these ingredients. This is not a preprandial stroll to find a trendy garnish for a girl's lunch salad. It's not an accent to a healthy, green, politically correct dinner. Nor is it about edible anthropology, a way back to precolonial campfires. There is no guilty prelapsarian nostalgia here: this is a quest to root Australian cuisine in its native landscape.

The country already has one of the best food cultures in the world. To eat in Sydney or Melbourne is to be offered a range of restaurants that are as good as any place on any continent anywhere, and far better than most. There are specialist producers breeding and growing impeccable ingredients, though very few that originate here. There are exclamatory wines and a cosmopolitan urban middle class disposed to eat well. And while they can eat the world, it's not

easy to identify or eat Australian cuisine. They have always looked abroad for inspiration. For years it was mostly old English; then there was the addition of neighbouring Asian ingredients and methods, and with immigration, more regional food from all over. But if you try to think of specifically Australian things to eat, you come up with barbies, Vegemite, meat pies and a lot of odd biscuits. It doesn't come together to make a coherent cuisine. And then there's bush tucker: bet-and-dare reality-TV food, witchetty grubs, which, incidentally, are not at all bad, tasting a bit like veal crème brûlée.

Some Australian chefs see this as a freedom that allows them to cook everything from everywhere, without parochial let or hindrance; but Jock and a growing number of other cooks think that this is part of Australia's long-term cultural cringe, and that there is a need for the country's food to grow from the country.

Kangaroo Island is good farmland. Mild, with fields of grazing sheep and cattle, it's famous for honey, the quality of its meat and a pristine environment. It avoided a lot of the imported plagues of the mainland. There are no rabbits here; pets are guarded and regulated, though there are black pigs of a domesticated variety extinct everywhere else, left here by a French explorer. Other native Australian species have been brought into protected capsule communities. There are delicate koalas who, close up, are nothing like as charming as they appear. Koalas were once omnivores, but have regressed to eating only certain eucalypts, which have very little protein, so they are forced to sleep for 22 hours a day. And they have managed to develop sexless chlamydia, and due to their delicate digestions they can't be given antibiotics, so they die of it – except in this little community.

The kangaroos, though, are still very good to eat. The island has its own subspecies with a particularly fine fur. The tail meat is best. Apparently, hopping is the most ergonomically economic of all the muscular propulsion methods. You get more distance per calorie if you're a kangaroo than any other runner, slitherer, loper or waddler. There are also thousands of wallabies that come out in the evening. Trapping wallabies was the prime source of meat for the early farmers as they cleared the land for imported animals. The land here was cleared of the spiky grass bushes that they call black-boy, or yakka, whose resin could be used for making fireworks and explosives. 'Hard yakka' is still Australian slang for hard work.

The bush was given to soldiers after the war, on the understanding that they would clear it. Their simple, prefabricated bungalows still dot the landscape. You realise that even this benignly fertile place was tarred and lonely. Australia's relationship with its land has always been an affair of grit and attrition, backbreaking and all too often heartbreaking.

There are a number of edible plants: there's anise myrtle and lemon myrtle and the amazing Dorrigo pepper, a seed that has a hot chilli flavour and numbs your mouth like Szechuan pepper. There are quandongs and ginger limes and little green ants that taste of lemon. And the wild-bee honey, which is thin and dark and has a flavour unlike any other.

We cooked a long barbie lunch for everyone and their kids, roasted a pig and a young kangaroo, and ate the scallops and the abalone and the freshwater crayfish from dams, and made salads and veg and ice cream and pies and damper bread, and there was a lot to drink. Everything was spiked and accompanied and bathed and rubbed with the distinctive flavours of this hard, tough and lucky land.

Early botanists who came out from Kew, avid to collect, press and name the glory of this new continent, unanimously agreed that while some of it was edible, none of it was to be eaten for pleasure, or with manners. A new generation of Australians is looking finally to make peace with this humid place; to admit that culturally, emotionally, you are what you eat.

This is an extract from the late A A Gill's last book *Lines In The Sand*, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, £20

Tango fever

KAPKA KASSABOVA FINDS HER FEET IN BUENOS AIRES

In the neighbourhood of San Telmo, there is graffiti on the walls: BAJOFONDOS, LOS TOXICOS, LOS NEUROTICOS ANONIMOS. Some of these are the names of bands; others sound like unhealthy states of mind.

I walk the streets in a daze, drunk on the city's brash energy. How I've missed it, like an old friend who knows the most important things about me. I love everything about it – the lived-in faces, the footballish walk of the men, the sensuality of the women, the sing-a-song Italianate accent, the old cafes vast like beer gardens, the steaks larger than your plate, the traffic, the noise, the *bronca*.

The writer Andrew Graham-Yooll once described Buenos Aires as being 'filled with lust' and for the first time, perhaps because of my own state of mind, its dark side gets to me. At dusk, something menacing creeps down the streets, like a stench from the port, like a filthy shadow. In my light dress, I walk down Corrientes avenue ('Corrientes, tres-quatro-ocho,' as the tango song goes). Men leer at me and mutter things I'm glad I don't understand. Invisible hands are reaching out from all sides, and I'm not sure if I'm disturbed or excited. The city bleeds its lurid colours, and tango music spills out of every doorway on Corrientes. I look at a street name and realise I've been walking in the wrong direction for ages, looking for the *milonga* The Kiss. What am I doing anyway, going to tango without shoes?

It's only my second day, and I'm already losing the plot. I tell this to Andrew over killer coffee. His beard has gone white. He looks like a prophet.

'Yes,' he grins. 'You should already know that Buenos Aires is an invitation to be unfaithful to every love declared. To break every rule made, and go back on the very few principles held...'

'Except tango,' I say.

'Except tango. So you have something to be loyal to. Where are you staying?'

I'm staying in a grungy tango hotel called The Dawn of San Telmo. The rooms in The Dawn are permanently dark and filled with the smell of damp shoes and the furniture of another century. The water is off because of a burst pipe, and the place is chockful of long-term visitors who are too busy with tango to notice anything else. Here, it begins to dawn on me how severe and far-reaching Tango Fever has become.

The curvacious *porteño* girl who runs the place is called Zoraida and she's a tango nut. In the communal kitchen where she likes to recline moodily on a bench and snack on sweets like a concubine in some run-down harem, I ask her how often she goes dancing.

'Five, six, seven nights a week,' she yawns. 'I'm a tango zombie. Tango is the only place where I can express my personality fully.'

Zoraida moves from room to room

as they get vacated by guests every few weeks or months. She gives private lessons in the dance room. Horizontal on the bench, she is a blob. Vertical on the dancefloor, she is a nymph.

'I expect the man to express his personality too,' she goes on. 'When two dancing personalities connect deeply, that's magic. And when they don't connect at all, it's hell. That's why you can never get bored with tango. Because you never know what you're gonna get. Pure gold or rubbish.'

In the kitchen, the guests from Turkey, Switzerland, Holland, Australia and Canada come and go, make cups of tea, and talk tango steps and *milonga* schedules. They all look under-slept and over-danced, with fever in their eyes. In fact, there is a bug going around, everyone is coughing, and before I find out what the bug is, I've got it.

I spend the next week shivering under a thin blanket in my single bed. My monastic room is perched atop an iron ladder with a sheer drop into a lane below. My view consists of peeling walls and the shifting sky of an Indian summer. Languages float past my room. I drift in and out of fever. I forget where I am. The only thing that reminds me is the muffled music that wafts out of the studio at all times of the day and night. 'Soñar y nada mas' plays regularly – someone is practicing their waltz – and it reminds me that to wake up is to break the spell, to tread, deep in the shadow, over bitter truth.

When I crawl out of my dark room, I'm weak and half-blind, and inside my chest there is a torn *bandoneon* wheezing as it opens and closes. In the kitchen, I peer at the other in-mates, all of them in various stages of tango influenza.

Wim is Swiss and a classic case of a tango bore. He is researching his PhD on tango and economics and he speaks a methodical, flat Spanish, like an electronic voice-dictionary. He has been here three months.

'How much longer will you stay?' I ask him.

'As long as it is necessary, maybe four months, maybe more.' His English is like his Spanish. 'I want to become a good dancer. The length of my sojourn depends on whether something will happen.'

'Like what, falling in love at a *milonga*?' I say, a bit meanly.

'No," the voice dictionary says, 'I do not think that this will occur.'

I do not think so either. But Wim has a temporary dance partner who also lives in our hotel. Dana is from Amsterdam and has a face like breakfast cereal and a blunt, cheerful personality.

'I don't understand,' she comments on my lack of tango shoes, 'how you come to Buenos Aires and do not bring shoes. How many pairs will you buy?'

'One,' I say, embarrassed. 'I can't afford any more.'

Dana looks at me and can't decide whether to feel contempt or pity. In her room, she has accumulated two dozen pairs of tango sandals for her no-nonsense Dutch feet.

In her sandals, Dana practises from morning till night in the dance room. Sometimes she does it with Wim, sometimes alone, in sickness and in health. Then she goes out dancing into the small hours, coughing all the way to The Kiss.

Extracted from *Twelve Minutes of Love: A Tango Story* by Kapka Kassabova, Portobello, £8.99.

Pintxos on Picasso Street

words
Jonathan Lorie

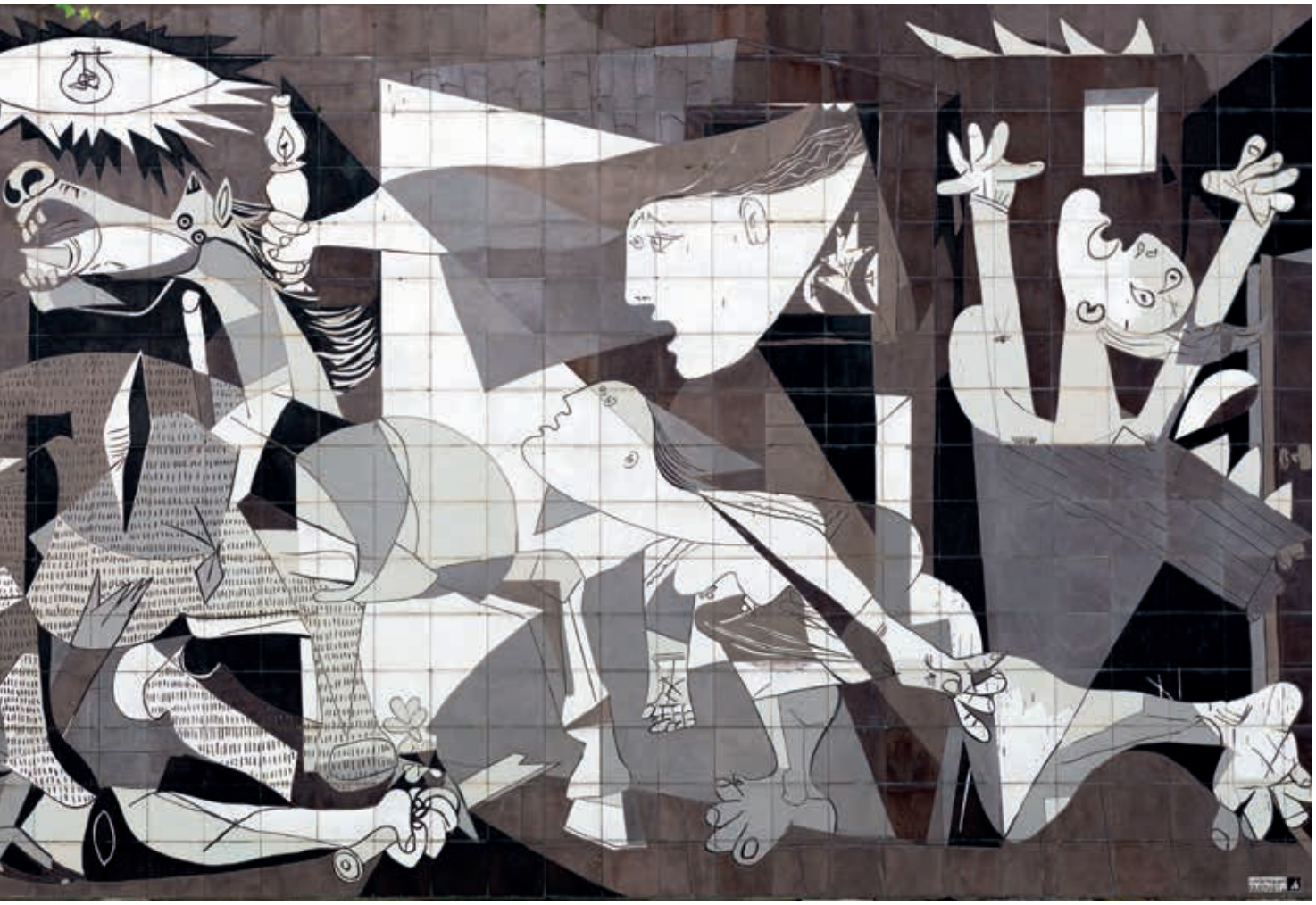
Michelin-starred chef Josean Alija leans across the kitchen counter and points at a plate of cod skins fried in oil. 'This food is our culture,' he beams, 'our identity, our place.' I smile and try one. It's a Basque version of a prawn cracker, fresh off the boats and sharp with the sea. Then he shows me to a table in his minimalist, modernist dining room and I begin an astonishing supper of reinvented Basque cuisine, from oysters in lemongrass sauce to hake with chrysanthemum leaves, ending with an ice cream made from sheep's milk curd. Over a final glass of Rioja Alta, I gaze out of the window at a sci-fi scene beyond – the riverfront of Bilbao, lined with modern apartments and high-arched bridges, curving away into a future of white concrete and mirror glass.

Josean's restaurant, Nerua, is tucked inside the titanium folds of the Guggenheim Museum, and it's part of the vision that has transformed this decaying industrial port into a tourist destination. Twenty years ago Bilbao adopted a masterplan for renewal, based around its river. So next morning I take a stroll by the water with a Bilbaíno called Santiago. He shows me the old shipbuilding yards, now a ship-shaped convention centre, the birds-wing bridge by Calatrava and the 40-storey tower of Spain's largest energy company. A jetski whizzes past a giant iron spider outside the museum, where tourists pose for selfies.

'Twenty years ago,' says Santiago, 'you didn't come to Bilboa unless you were lost. Where we are walking was iron foundries and factories. Then they brought in architects: Cesar Pelli for the waterfront, Norman Foster for the metro and Frank Gehry for the museum. Now everyone knows Bilbao.'

But it's not all hi-tech in this ancient capital of the Basque country. Round a bend of the river is the old town, a crumbling grid of gothic alleys lined with cafes and boutiques. At one end is the revamped food market, where stalls are stacked with fish and fungi and plates of tempting snacks. In a pretty square of parasolled cafes is the cathedral of Saint James, named in the days when pilgrims to Compostella stopped off here.

In a back alley we pause outside a scruffy bar. 'This used to be an ETA place,' warns Santiago, referring to the violent Basque separatist group which only announced a ceasefire in 2011. 'This bar posted photos of ETA activists on its walls,' he murmurs. 'Six or seven years ago, you would not go in.' I go in. It's a grubby place with beer



barrels along one wall and wilting sandwiches on the zinc. But pasted on a pillar I find a photo of a man in khaki uniform and balaclava, and among the tattered posters for nightclubs is one about Basque prisoners tortured by police. Clearly the past is still present here.

Back out in the sunshine we head for the old town square, called of course the Plaza Nueva. It's one of the loveliest in Spain, its neo-classical arcades packed with handsome shops and vibrant bars. We step inside the Cafe Bar Bilbao to try another kind of Basque cuisine: *pinxtos*. They're the local answer to the *tapas* of southern Spain, with a baguette base on which layers of flavours are piled up. Plates of them cover the counter in the pretty blue-tiled bar. We try slices of salt cod under *pil-pil* sauce, blood sausage topped with caramelised onions, then anchovies heaped on green peppers known locally as 'Gernikas'. The owner plonks down a bottle of cool Txakolina wine unasked, and we retreat to a table outside. Above us on a wall of the square I spot an ironwork sign for The Royal Academy of the Basque Language.

The Basques have been semi-independent throughout recorded history. Centuries of conquerors have swept across their mountain lands but never stayed long enough or fought hard enough to subdue them. Even today, Basques pay taxes to their own regional government not to Madrid, and Spanish kings swear a special oath to respect their autonomy. In 1981 King Juan Carlos,

Top: Ceramic replica of Picasso's *Guernica*, on a wall in the rebuilt town.

Above: Luis Iriondo Aurtenetxea, 94, survivor of the infamous air-raid on Gernika.

like his predecessors, swore this oath beneath an ancient oak in the nearby town that has come to symbolise Basque identity, suffering and renewal: Gernika.

I drive there the next day. The road curves through green hills dotted with the big square farmhouses favoured by the Basques. Many Basque surnames contain their word for a house – *eche* or *etxea* – echoing their roots in this rural world. I reach Gernika and park. It's a trim modern town, bustling with the Monday market where burly men in berets hawk cheeses, hams and fruit trees. But 80 years ago this month, it was set ablaze in the first aerial annihilation of a civilian target in history.

On April 26, 1937, airplanes lent by the Nazis to the rebel General Franco in the Spanish civil war attacked this sleepy town. It had no military value. The air-raid was Hitler's experiment in the new science of aerial warfare, a precursor to the Blitz and Dresden and Hiroshima. Eighty per cent of Gernika's houses were destroyed. Between 200 and 1,200 people were killed, many strafed by the planes as they ran away. One man who was there is Luis Iriondo Aurtenetxea, and I am going to see him.

'When the bombs starting falling, I was halfway up the market square,' he recalls when we meet in the town's evocative Peace Museum. 'People pushed me inside a shelter. I was terrified of being buried alive. I was just 14.'

His blue eyes narrow as he recalls that day. 'The bombing lasted more than three hours. The planes released their bombs, then returned to base to load up more. They crossed each other as they came and went. I started hundreds of times to say a prayer but I could never finish.'

He walks me through a corner of town that survived, the old market square where he sheltered in a tunnel. The shelter is still there. We step inside its bare white arch. 'I couldn't breathe in here,' he says, 'it was so packed. The walls were running with humidity. The floor was wet with mud. The whole town was burning.'

It's a terrifying vision, and one that Luis has spent decades recounting to the world. 'The young people now,' he sighs, 'this is just history to them. We survivors will disappear. But nowadays Gernika is called the Peace Town, and we have an office devoted to spreading reconciliation techniques. We want people to carry on with our message of peace.'

Above: Stained glass window of the hisrtoric oak tree of Gernika, in the 1826 Assembly Hall where regional leaders still meet to agree their annual budgets.

Opposite: Anish Kapoor sculpture outside the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

I thank him profusely and wander the rebuilt back streets alone. On a wall by the church is a tiled replica of Picasso's painting, *Guernica*, which alerted the world to the atrocity here. It became the most famous artwork of the twentieth century and a copy still hangs outside the UN Security Council as a warning. Before the fateful debate on the invasion of Iraq, in a bid to spare embarrassment to pro-war US diplomats, a curtain was hung across it.

Two blocks down is Picasso Street, named in thanks. It's lively with cafes and I sit down for a moment. At the next table a family are eating lunch, the children giggling over fizzy drinks. I watch them messing about and realise that these are the joys of peace. There's a future as well as a past. Places can be reborn. I catch the eye of a waiter and order one final *pinxtos*.

Mayan remains

pictures
Francesco Lastrucci

Opening spread and above: Houses, church and street scenes in the colonial walled town centre.

Right: Late afternoon on the Malecon seafront road.

Campeche state is the hidden face of Mayan Mexico. It was colonised by the Spanish *conquistadores* as far back as 1540, but today a quarter of its population are still classified as indigenous people – and 15% speak Mayan as their first language.

Photographer Francesco Lastrucci focuses on the fusion between Spanish and Maya cultures, and between ancient and modern Maya. He explains: 'Campeche is a state and a state of mind. In this southern Mexican location, things are different, because they're the way things used to be – and perhaps should still be.'

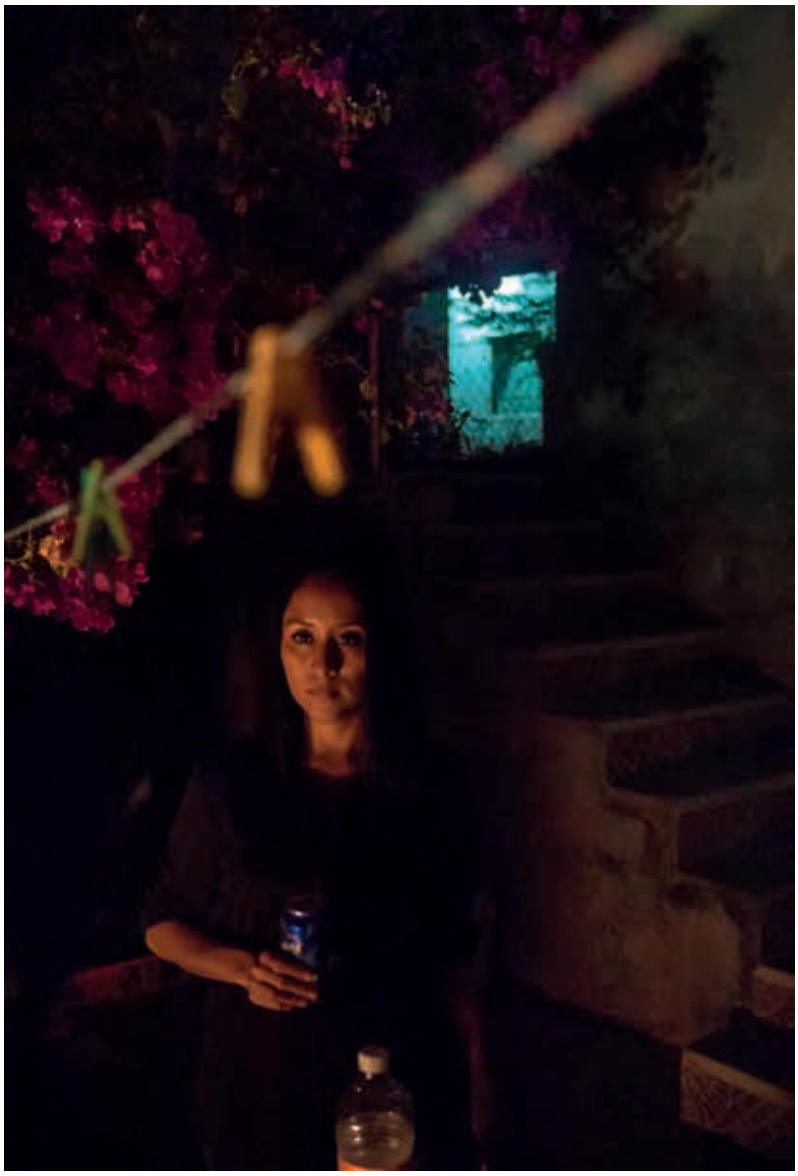
Here he pictures the city of San Franciso de Campeche, which has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1999. It retains many of the old colonial city walls and fortifications, built in the seventeenth century to fend off attacks by pirates. These days the mood is rather more relaxed, and in fact the word *campechano* in Mexican means 'laid-back and friendly'.

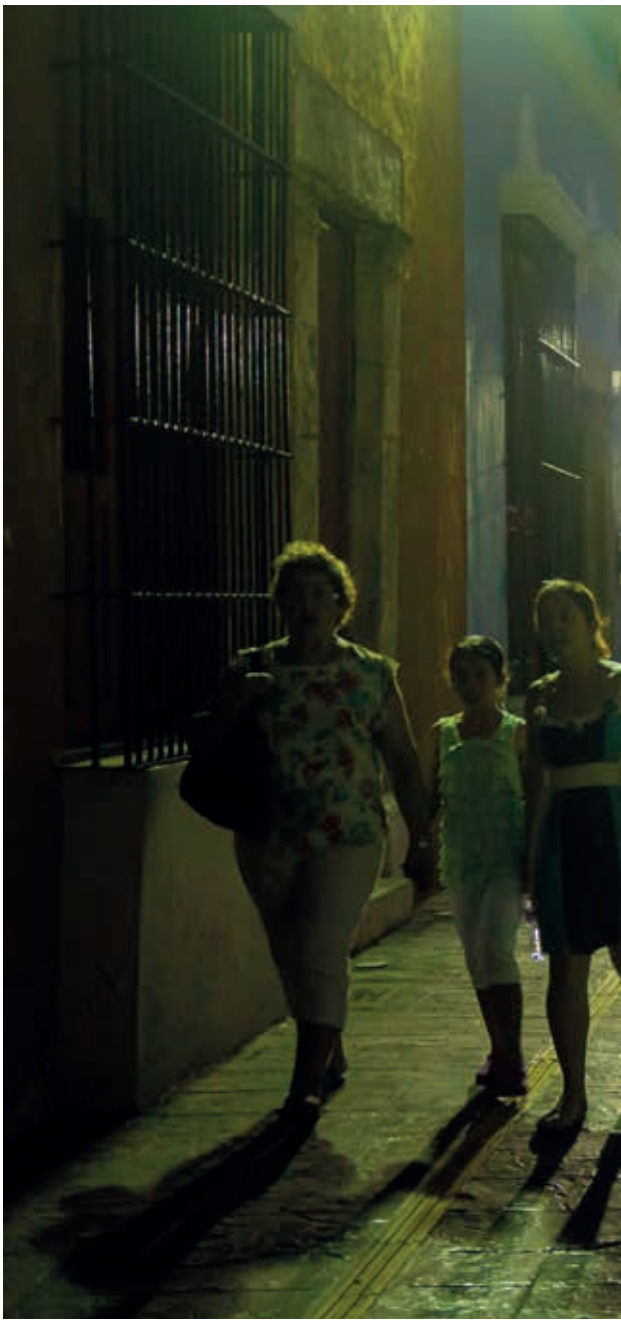
The hinterland has important Mayan and colonial sites, too, but they are less visited than most in the Yucatán. Catch it before it changes.

Calle 57
Pirata
cafetería

TERRAZA DEL PESCADOR
17
MAYO

Clockwise from above: *Boleros* (shoe shiners) at work just outside the Mercado Principal, and scenes from within the market.





Clockwise from above left: House party in Samula, one of the barrios climbing the city's hills. Night scenes on Calle 59. Dusk falls at Plaza de la Independencia.

Island Dream

words
Jonathan Scott

pictures
Jonathan & Angela Scott

Opposite: The tropical beaches of the Lamu archipelago teem with crabs and other seafood, the basis of Swahili cuisine.

There was a lightness in the air, the colours a touch more intense, a heady sense of well-being: even Nairobi traffic seemed a little less congested. We could almost feel the end-of-term experience of getting away: the childlike wonder of being free from the normal routine of life. We were going on holiday.

As a youngster, summer hols meant scampering along a dung-coloured beach at Bognor Regis in England with the sticky-toothed promise of toffee apples and candy floss, and thoughts of an icy welcome from the Atlantic. For my wife Angie, life was far more exotic: raised along the golden beaches of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, her love of the ocean has never dimmed, a bone-deep longing. Mine was forged by a sense of the exotic as my family graduated from English hols to the Costa Brava. Now, whenever we can, we gather our flippers and goggles, wet suits and *kikois* and head for the Kenyan coast, to feast on breaded crab claws, fresh fish cooked Swahili-style in coconut and spice, prawns in garlic and lobster with lashings of butter.

You can hire a house on the beach at Watamu to explore the coral reefs along the north coast, or stay at a five-star hotel like Serena Beach in Mombasa: each has its merit. But if you want to savour the best

of the Indian Ocean, with a touch of history, then Lamu is the perfect setting. There you can sign up for a yoga holiday, spend a day on a *dhow* – a week if you want – and eat as much fresh seafood as you like. If you love exploring, then you can step back in time on a wander through the streets of Lamu's Stone Town, Kenya's oldest city.

We love Lamu, but this was to be our first visit to Manda Bay, a blind date if you will. It's a boutique lodge on the island of Manda island, in the Lamu archipelago. We had no idea what to expect, besides the fact that Fuzz and Bimbi Dyer and Andy and Caragh Roberts had invested their hearts and souls to make Manda the place to stay in this part of the world. As we left the narrow confines of Manda creek and entered open water, we found ourselves headed for a tropical paradise, an island of golden beaches fringed with palm trees and thatched cottages so perfectly camouflaged that they became one with the landscape.

Such places are typical of the drive and élan of the Dyer and Roberts clans, settler families of legend who have made crafting beautiful getaways their signature. Whenever you come across a corner of Eden out here – a campsite among a patch of yellow-barked acacia trees in the Kenya Highlands, or a 'blue lagoon' like Manda Bay – you wonder how on earth anyone first discovered them. Then you remember that flying was something that the children of these pioneering Kenya folks grew up with, in the same way that they were bundled into the back of a safari vehicle heading for the bush before they could even walk. Such freedom to travel promised access to every corner of the land. Like the dazzling eagle, they soared on outspread wings, rising high into the sky to savour the big picture before swooping low to take a closer look and explore by foot or car.

We came to Manda looking for a place of peace and quiet, longing to rediscover solitude after months on the road promoting our books and TV programmes. And that is what we found. Here the sea view stretched wide in front of the bar and dining area, past 22 thatched cottages open to the sea breeze in the way that Angie loves: she's always the first to fling wide the shutters, wherever in the world we are.

Each morning we roused ourselves before sunrise, left the thermos of tea as a treat to be savoured on our return, and wandered along the gentle curve of the beach, pausing to watch sandpipers and ruffs whistling and piping away from us. A mosaic of brushstrokes engraved in the sand traced the nocturnal wanderings of crabs and centipedes. A set of tiny pug marks betrayed the passage of a foraging mongoose earlier that morning. As we goggled through the shallows, a little egret with black legs and yellow feet stood motionless just a metre away.

It was mango season, and what better breakfast fare than thick slices of mango, pineapple and pawpaw with a squeeze of fresh lime, glasses of chilled fruit juice, then crispy toast smothered with scrambled eggs, bacon and sausage? One last cup of tea or freshly brewed Kenya coffee, then it was back to the ocean. At Manda you can water-ski, kite-surf, snorkel out on the reef or go deep-sea fishing. But what we wanted more than anything was to be still.

People seek retreats for themselves in nature, and that is what we found at Manda Bay. The Zen meditation teacher Jon Kabat-Zinn counsels: 'Wherever you go, there you are.' It's a reminder that the answers we seek in life always lie within. On our final evening, we stepped into the night ready for yet another mouth-watering seafood dinner beach-side, then paused for a moment to absorb the wonder of a fulsome moon casting its silvery glow across the rippling water. On the deck outside our cottage, a hammock slung from a beam beckoned. We lay there, arm in arm, as the hammock gently swayed. It felt as if we had been cast adrift on the ocean, freed from all sense of time and space, suspended in a world without words.

The Foreign Office has lifted its travel warning from Lamu Island and Manda Bay, but recommends travelling there by air not by road. Lamu County on the mainland remains off limits.

Opposite: Traditional craft on these creeks and shores include simple canoes dug out of palm trunks and sophisticated *dhows* able to sail as far as Arabia.

The Living Goddesses

words & pictures
Simon Urwin

'Please remove your belt,' the old man insists as he ushers me towards a darkened room. 'Nothing made from dead animals can be allowed in this sacred space.'

He closes the door behind me and I stand expectantly in the candlelit gloom. I can just make out a red velvet curtain and behind it the guarded whispers of two female voices as they go about their secretive business.

The room suddenly falls silent. With a theatrical flourish, the drape is drawn back to reveal an 8- year-old girl, sitting bolt upright in a palanquin, eyes blackened with kohl like a young Cleopatra, flickering butter lamps at her feet throwing a sinister light across the red-brick room.

She is Unika Bajracharya, the Kumari or Living Goddess of Patan – one of a dozen or so young girls of the Kathmandu Valley who have been declared living incarnations of the deity Talleju. They are revered across Nepal for their divine powers of prescience and magic.

Her mother beckons me to kneel and pay my respects. I rest a bundle of rupee notes on a bronze tray full of poinsettias, and beside it lay a small teddy bear and a stationery set emblazoned with Union Jacks. In response, the Kumari reaches out and brushes my forehead with her fingertips, bestowing on me all kinds of unknown blessings. As I stand, her stare is focused on the distance, she does not smile and her eyes avoid all contact with mine. It is more than unnerving.

Outside I ask the old man how I should interpret my solemn but fleeting audience with the goddess. 'Oh, this means you are safe,' he reassures me. 'If she were to smile at you, it would indicate an invitation to Heaven, and that would be a sign of your impending death. No-one wants to see the Kumari smile.'

Previous page: The Kumari of Patan, Unika Bajracharya, aged 8.

Below: Worshippers bring money and food for the Kumaris

Opposite: Kumari Jibika Bajachraya of Bhaktapur, aged 11.

PATAN CITY

The hallowed tradition of the Kumaris is a relic of the Middle Ages, and in the city of Patan the process of finding a girl who embodies the divine spirit of the goddess Talleju still feels medieval.

Families present their daughters, aged between 3 and 5, to the local elders who check them for

the presence of 32 auspicious physical signs – including, I am told, 'a neck like a conch shell, a body like a banyan tree, eyelashes like a cow's, thighs like a deer and a voice as clear as a duck.' Additionally, their skin must be without scar, flaw or blemish.

Three potential candidates are then selected to spend the night in the hall of the local temple where, surrounded by severed buffalo heads, they must endure the terrifying antics of men dressed as demons. The girl who remains unshaken by this nightmarish rite of passage is the chosen one and is invited to occupy the Kumari throne.

Unika was just 5 years old when she emerged unscathed from the initiation ceremony to become one of Nepal's most celebrated figureheads – for the Kumaris are considered guardians of this Himalayan nation, with the capacity to protect the Nepalese people from the evils of natural disasters, disease and civil war.

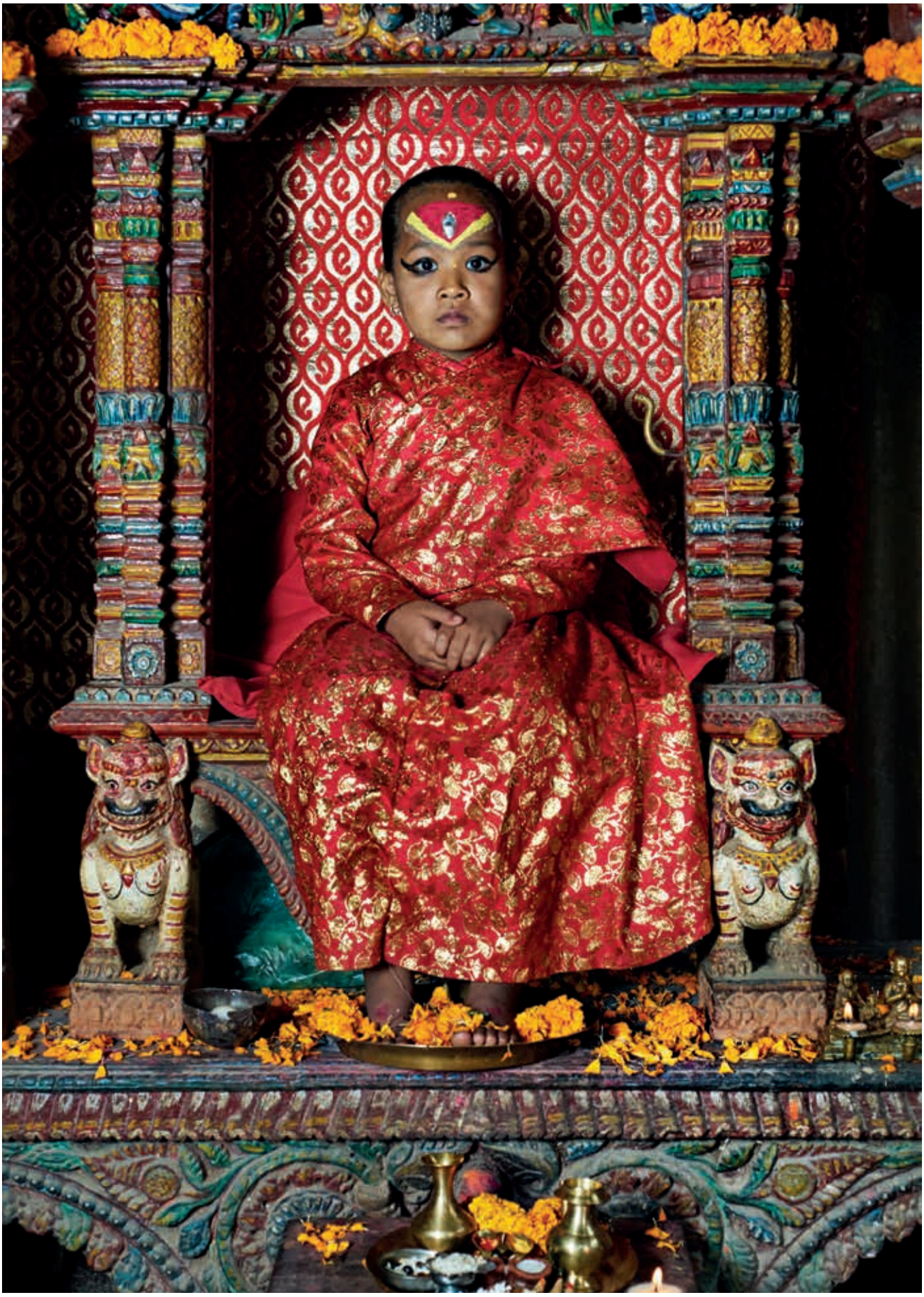
For reasons of ritual purity, Unika must remain indoors save for festival days, when she is released from her gilded cage and paraded by throne-bearers along streets full of clamouring crowds. She is not allowed to communicate with strangers nor attend school (she is home tutored), and will live this rarefied existence until the day she reaches puberty or sheds blood from a wound, at which point the female spirit is believed to exit her body and she must face up to life as a mere mortal.

BHAKTAPUR CITY

The creak of a weathered staircase heralds the arrival of Jibika Bajachraya, the Kumari of Bakhtapur. Her guardian, Lukamani, carries the 7-year-old in her arms, keeping her feet far from the dirt floor out of respect for the goddess within.

Once seated, Lukamani fusses around her charge like a one-woman entourage around a starlet, fixing a lock of stray hair here, smoothing the scarlet gown there. She positions the girl's feet in a tray full of saffron-coloured petals, then steps aside so Jibika can ready herself to bless a line of visitors.

Lukamani Shakya, 52, has been responsible for discovering Kumaris in Bakhtapur for two decades, a role inherited from her grandparents. Led through the meandering alleyways of the ancient former capital by heavenly guidance, Lukamani carries long-stemmed marigolds as a form of goddess divining rod. She carefully places flowers in the hair of any young girl she crosses paths with. Whoever remains untroubled by their presence for the longest proves themselves to be the rightful vessel for Talleju.



Below: Saffron flowers and rich robes adorn the young divines of the Kathmandu Valley.

Opposite: Kinjal Bajracharya, 6, the Kumari of Bungamati.

While some girls chosen to be Kumaris go on to live a cloistered existence, Jibika in Bhaktapur is allowed to attend school – though she must always follow very strict codes of behaviour. 'As long as she is a Kumari, she must not leave Bhaktapur nor see another Kumari, or it will bring very bad luck to our city,' Lukamani announces ominously.

Jibika will bear this weight of responsibility until

the age of 11, when according to local custom she must marry a fruit – a Bengal quince to be precise – a union that marks the end of her reign.

Jibika remains unperturbed by the thought of retirement. 'I love my throne, and saying prayers with and for the people is an important thing for me to do, but I don't want to do this forever. When I'm older I want to be a maths teacher.'

BUNGAMATI TOWN

'We normal people have just two eyes to see, but the Kumaris are different. They have an extra sense, a heightened feeling for people and the world around them,' explains Shanta Bajracharya, lost in concentration as she fixes the family heirloom, a third eye, to her daughter's forehead.

Kinjal, aged six, is being primped and preened in preparation for her once-a-month convocation in the town square of Bungamati. Like all the towns of the Kathmandu Valley that boast a Living Goddess, this farming community of 45,000 people has its own specific set of divine traditions (In this case, Kinjal inherited her title and she will reign until she looses her first adult tooth). What they all have in common, however, is an unshakeable belief in the power of their Kumari.

Outside in the bright Himalayan sunshine, Kinjals's attendants are performing a smoke *puja* (cleansing ceremony) on the spot where her throne will sit, just yards from the ruins of the sixteenth-century Rato Machendranath Temple, devastated during the 2015 earthquake. 'When the temple fell down it was because we were "between Kumaris",' says her father sadly. 'The previous one's tooth was broken and she was retired, my daughter was not yet appointed, so we were very vulnerable.'

A crowd of worshippers begin to gather, clutching offerings of fruit, incense and crumpled rupees, patiently waiting in line in return for blessings of prosperity and protection.

One Bungamati resident explains to me, full of gratitude and wonder, that Kinjal has miraculously cured her terminally ill mother, while a crafts-woman from the neighbouring village of Khokana tells me she travels every month just to be touched by the Kumari's benevolent hand.

Under her breath, she recounts the tale of a local man who questioned the Kumari's abilities and has been sick ever since. 'If we respect the Kumari, she will keep us safe and happy. But if you speak badly of her, be warned – your reward will be misfortune, illness or death.'

Words by Justine Hardy

Safe Passage

What does it mean to hold a passport?

'That he be let to pass in safety through your lands...'

'To allow the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance...'

The lines above are from two passports. They are simple requests for safe passage, asking for the same thing on behalf of the bearer, using similar language. But they are separated by almost two and a half thousand years. The first dates from around 445 BC, the second from the inside page of my current UK passport.

The first is translated from the Hebrew Bible. It is in the Book of Nehemiah, chapter 2, verses 7-9. Nehemiah was a member of the court of King Artaxerxes I of Persia. As well as being perhaps the first bearer of a passport, he is described as a cup-bearer and possibly a eunuch. He was a man of many roles, and neither the lowly-sounding nature of his court post, nor the lack of some particular parts, seems to have got in the way of Nehemiah's rapid rise.

When he received the news that his home, the Kingdom of Judah, had been battered, and that the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down, he asked the king if he might return to Judah so that he could rebuild his city. Ataxerxes elevated his loyal cup-bearer to Governor of Judah, and furnished him with a letter asking the governors of Trans-Euphrates to grant safe passage to his loyal servant.

So many of the characters in the world's scriptures are conflations of people, myths and actual events. But Nehemiah is recorded as a real figure. As well as leaping from court servant to governor, he was the highly energetic rebuilder of the walls of Jerusalem, restoring them from the Sheep Gate in the north to the Dung Gate in the south. His vigorous governorship coincided with the end of a 70-year exile of the Jewish people – the period of the Babylonian Captivity, as prophesied by Jeremiah and brought about by Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian cohorts. It is an early recording of an exile that severed a people from their land.

In a more hum-drum vein, the second passport line that I quoted is from the inside of my own passport, issued in London in 2016. The front cover is dark red, as they have been since 1988, and the title line reads 'European Union'.

The next passport I hold may be a reversion to the old dark blue version, The Old Bluey as it was known. It will be a change that symbolises much for our little islands.

Between these two – Nehemiah's letter from the King of Persia and the document that I hold – the passport has come to symbolise something rather different to its original purpose.

The earliest records of 'documents of safe conduct' in this country are from the reign of Henry V. The king granted them to assure the security of his emissaries as they sought defensive and economic alliances. In 1794 the Secretary of State and the Home Office took over the task, though fairly free passage without travel documentation was possible until the First World War. A creeping change began with the passing of the British Nationality and Status Aliens Act in 1914, an act created in response to what Hansard described as 'interracial and ethnicity concerns' – a political paraphrase for reactions to an increasing flow of immigrants.

Perhaps it was in a climate of nascent racial tension that the symbolic meaning

of the passport began to shift. Previously it had been a powerful piece of paper in the hands of the holder, ensuring certain rights. The incremental change from 1914 meant that the passport began to be a form of identity paper as well as a document of safe passage. What had previously granted freedom of travel began to be a restrictor of movement, as the world powers drew up a new order of borders and nations, many based on mythical or poorly-interpreted power structures and only partially proven economic alliances.

Eearlier I mentioned the Babylonian sacking of Jerusalem and the long exile of that time not just for flowery Biblical and Torah effect. It was to illustrate a vast movement of undocumented people at about the same time as the issue of the first recorded passport.

Now, at a distance of two and a half millennia from Nehemiah, and a century on from the British Nationality and Status Aliens Act, a refugee or 'stateless person' is granted a 'travel document'. This is a booklet issued under the auspices of the 145 states that signed up to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. It looks like a passport, except it is not. While it does grant a level of visa-free travel through the 145 signatory states, it does not guarantee safe passage to the holder, nor does it prove that they have residential status in the country providing the document.

Many people have a tendency to assume that refugees want to stay in the countries they have reached. They believe that refugees must surely want to make new lives off the fat of the land into which they have escaped, that they want to take jobs from those who call themselves maybe English, German, French, or perhaps American.

When a refugee enters a refugee camp their passport is taken from them. There is then a long and very slow process of applying for new documentation of identity. Many, so many of them, do not want to get a new passport, nor to have to start a new life. They just want safe passage back to their old life, to the world that they were forced to leave, a world that may never again be as it once was.

The passport marks where we have come from, and where we are travelling towards. It is a deceptively light document that bears a lot of weight on our sense of who are and where we belong.

JUSTINE HARDY is an author, journalist, trauma psychotherapist and the founder of Healing Kashmir.

Illustration by LUKE WALWYN.

EXPERIENCE UTAH

A visit to Utah offers the chance to explore one of America's most rugged and fiercely beautiful states. Here, cities, mountains and cultures meet with a stunning contrast of landscapes that range from towering red rock cliffs and lush green valleys to bucket-list national parks and immense national forests. It's all easily explored with no fewer than 27 scenic byways and miles upon miles of hiking and biking trails. However, wherever you go, you'll be treated to endless wide-open spaces, broken only by mountain ranges and hidden state parks.

Salt Lake City is Utah's vibrant urban centre, with a growing foodie scene and welcoming charm. Historic Temple Square sits at its heart, home to the impressive Mormon headquarters - The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This sacred site is full of intriguing structures and is surrounded by beautiful gardens, which are free to visit. It's all just an easy journey from the UK, with Delta operating new non-stop flights from London Heathrow - weekly in summer and up to four times a week in winter - and a wide variety of indirect routes from the rest of the UK. Salt Lake City is also ringed by the almighty Wasatch Mountain Range, creating a unique cityscape and offering plenty of opportunity for some alpine exploration. Antelope Island State Park is a popular day trip from the city; it's the largest island within the famous Great Salt Lake and is teaming with wildlife. Discover herds of antelope, free-roaming bison and over 250 different species of bird, which are particularly spectacular during their annual migration to warmer climes.

Indeed, Utah is packed full of natural beauty. The Rocky Mountains and green forests of the state's north slowly give way to the skyscraping red spires and cliffs of the southern wilds. Taken together, the state features some of the most extraordinary landforms on the planet. It's best appreciated at one of Utah's truly unique Mighty Five® national parks: Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef and Zion.

Located in the state's southeastern quarter, Arches and Canyonlands national parks are within easy reach of each other and make a great combination. Arches' landscape is dominated by over 2,000 natural, sandstone arches, framing a spectscular backdrop of vast desert and distant, snow-capped mountain ranges. In stark contrast to the towering rock structures of its neighbouring park, Canyonlands is home to dramatic valleys and chasms, carved out over thousands of years by the Colorado River. As Canyonlands is the largest of the national parks, the best way to cover ground is to take an exhilarating 4WD tour from nearby Moab.

To add in some human intrigue to the geographic drama, head to Capitol Reef National Park, a Martian-like landscape complete with staggering rock cathedrals and dome-shaped peaks. However, visitors making a closer inspection will find that the rock faces reveal their ancient stories through carvings made thousands of years ago by the Fremont and Ancestral Puebloan people.

LIFE
UTAH
ELEVATED

Turning to Utah's southwest, the Bryce and Zion national parks are linked by one of the state's many beautiful scenic byways, Highway 89. Zion is a sight to behold, with gigantic sandstone cliffs and tumbling waterfalls dwarfing the forests that line its Virgin River. Hiking the Narrows is perfect for any adventurer, with travellers coming from around the world to wade through the waters and reach slot canyons that soar up to 1,000 feet tall. Then, Bryce Canyon National Park is just over an hour's drive away. Here, forested plateaus are overlooked by thousands of crimson spires best known as 'hoodoos'. Hiking down into the natural amphitheatre and through the hoodoos is a treat and feels completely detached from civilisation. Sunsets and sunrises are spectacular, with great rock formations casting long shadows across the landscape.

But Utah's spectacular scenery also continues into its 43 smaller state parks, each every bit as impressive as their headline-grabbing national park cousins. Scattered across the Beehive State, you'll find a multitude of hidden gems, including Goblin Valley with its troll-like stone monoliths, Snow Canyon with its historic, solidified lava flows and caves, and Dead Horse Point State Park where vast canyons are surrounded by vertiginous cliffs. The latter not only showcases some amazing rock formations, but is also one of Utah's seven International Dark Sky Parks (IDSPs). Recognised for their low levels of light pollution, they offer some of the world's best stargazing opportunities. The night skies expose staggering views of the moon and can even reveal the Milky Way – a sight that has to be seen to be believed.

Unsurprisingly, with its plethora of distinctive and contrasting landscapes, Utah has long been a popular choice with Hollywood filmmakers; more than 800 movies have been shot here. Monument Valley played a starring role in five John Wayne films and saw Forrest Gump make his memorable cross-country run while it was in Dead Horse Point State Park that Thelma and Louise took their final leap and in Arches National Park that a young Indiana Jones discovered the Cross of Cortez.

To find out more, call a Wexas USA specialist on **020 7838 5958** or visit **wexas.com/utah**

Once upon a time in Brazil

words
Huw lewis-Jones & Kari Herbert

watercolours & sketches
Karl Bodmer

IN PICTURES
Maximilian explored south-eastern Brazil in 1815-17, returning with a wealth of information about the Puri and Botocudo peoples. This was carefully recorded in his field notebooks, often in sketches by expedition artist Karl Bodmer, shown here.

Opposite:
A shrunken head.

Overleaf (clockwise from top left):
A hunter stalks a flock of macaws on the banks of the Rio Grande de Bellmonte; shooting rapids on the river; a dance of the Camacan tribe; Botocudo people swim in the river.

This is an extract from *Explorers' Sketchbooks: the Art of Discovery and Adventure*, by Huw Lewis-Jones and Kari Herbert, Thames & Hudson, £29.95.

Out of the dark thicket the warriors emerged. Aboard his river boat, Prince Alexander Philipp Maximilian of Wied-Neuweid waited anxiously for the strangers to make their intentions known. These 23 armed men dressed in white buffalo robes were Yanktonans, with a reputation as the most dangerous of all the Sioux. Indicating they came in peace, Chief Tatanka-Kta shared a pipe with Maximilian and his companions, and asked if they would negotiate a reconciliation with their warring neighbours. Two days later, the party were received by 600 'remarkably tall and handsome' Mandans, their painted warriors riding on panther skins and carrying whips of elk's horn. It was, Maximilian noted, 'a novel and highly interesting scene'.

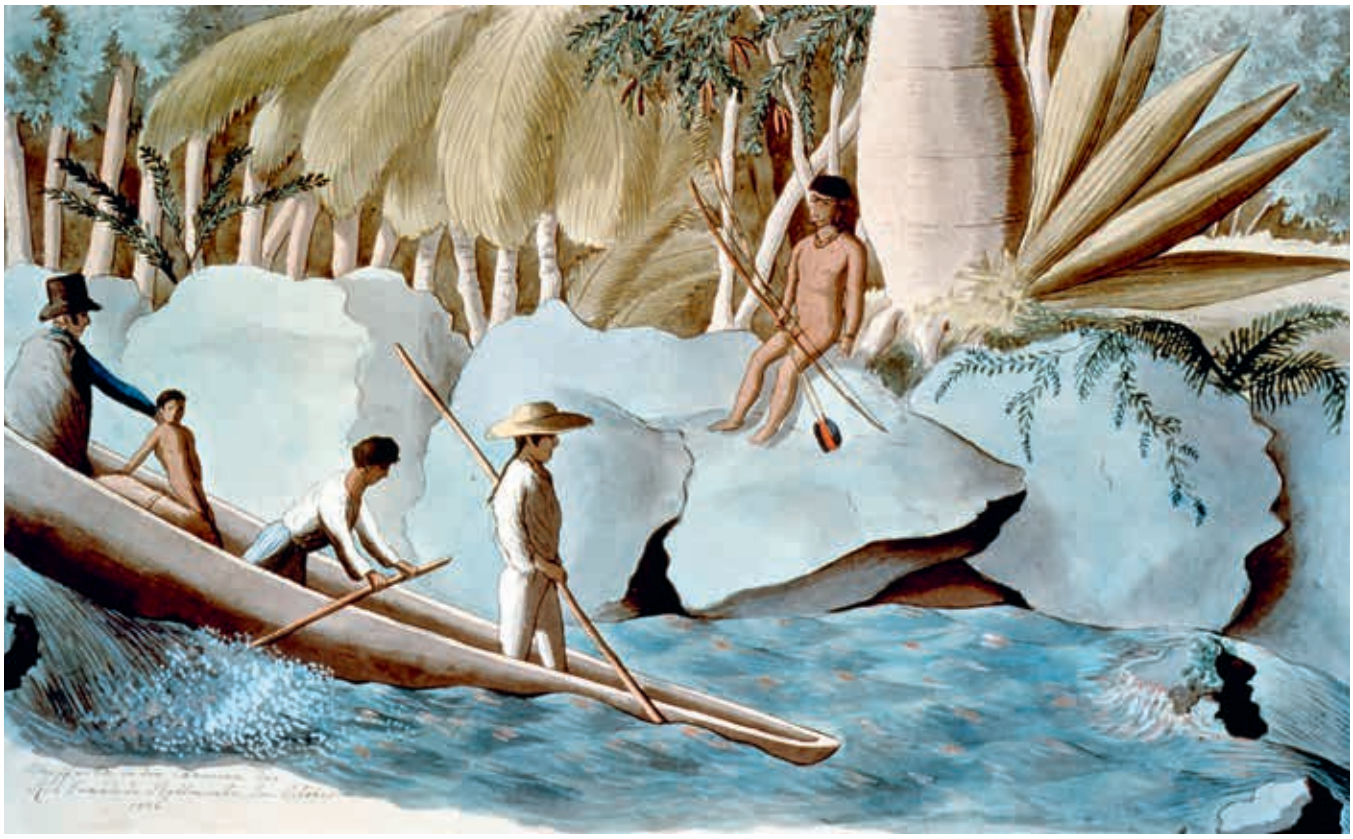
By the time of this encounter in north-west America, 50-year-old German aristocrat Maximilian had experienced a great many adventures. He had participated in 12 battles as a major in the Prussian army, and had been a prisoner of war and awarded the Order of the Iron Cross for bravery. In 1814, at the end of the Napoleonic War, Maximilian had met Alexander von Humboldt in Paris, who had just returned from his five-year exploration of South America. The venerable explorer had a profound influence on the prince, becoming his friend and mentor. Passionately interested in ethnology and zoology, Maximilian resolved to leave the army and embark on his own expedition to South America.

Throughout 1815-17, Maximilian devoted himself to the exploration and scientific observation of the primeval forests of eastern Brazil. Despite battling constant rain and fever, he collected and catalogued thousands of specimens, and meticulously recorded every encounter with the indigenous people in his journals. On his return to Europe, Maximilian wrote up his findings, including *Reise nach Brasilien* – a monograph on the language and customs of the Botocudo people – now recognised as one of the great contributions to our knowledge of Brazil at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Maximilian then set out for the 'desolate' prairies and mountain regions of north-west America in 1832, with the aim of providing a faithful record of the flora, fauna and indigenous peoples of the region before they were overtaken or extirpated by the tide of emigration from the Old World. From Boston he headed west with two men under his employ: artist Karl Bodmer and his brother's huntsman, David Dreidoppel. For the next two years they crossed the United States, navigating the Missouri River on steamships belonging to the American Fur Company. At Fort McKenzie they witnessed a bloody attack on an encampment of Blackfeet by Assiniboin and Cree Indians; in North Dakota, suffering from near starvation and scurvy, Maximilian spent five months studying the cultures of the Arikara, Hidatsa and Mandan Indians. At times, the temperatures plummeted so low that Bodmer's paints froze while he was trying to complete his portraits.

Although his huge collection of specimens was lost in a fire on his ship, Maximilian eventually returned home with more than 400 paintings by Bodmer, two live grizzly bear cubs, vocabularies of over 20 Indian languages and journals that ran into hundreds of thousands of words. His work provides one of the most complete and accurate records of the traditions and customs of many vibrant Indian nations before smallpox devastated the indigenous people of the Great Plains.

Brasilianer



The Real America
Montana • North Dakota • South Dakota • Wyoming

USA
VisitTheUSA.co.uk

THE REAL AMERICA

Channel your inner cowboy, or cowgirl, in the Real American Wild West – Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. There's everything from national parks, soaring mountains, waterfall-fed lakes and expansive prairies to authentic Western flavour provided by iconic monuments, real-life cowboys and a wildlife population that outnumbers its people.

Bucket list icons

Much of the region has been carefully preserved by America's famous network of national parks and monuments, allowing you to experience the same pristine natural beauty that greeted the first pioneers. Marvel at the thermal wonders and abundant wildlife in America's original national park – Yellowstone. Take an unforgettable journey across the Continental Divide in Montana's spectacular Glacier National Park. Visit North Dakota's Theodore Roosevelt National Park – the rugged region that solidified the young president's convictions, inspiring him to serve as the 26th leader of the United States and create a legacy often defined by his conservation efforts. Or, explore the chiselled spires, deep canyons and jagged buttes of Badlands National Park, a dramatic landscape created by millions of years of exposure to rushing water and mighty winds.

But, no trip to the Real America is complete without a visit to the country's shrine to democracy – Mount Rushmore National Memorial. Here, the faces of four US Presidents tower 60 feet high over South Dakota's rolling Black Hills. Then, head to southeastern Montana to discover another site crucial to America's national identity. Here, you'll be able to visit the site of the Battle of Little Bighorn that took place in 1867 between the U.S. Army's Seventh Cavalry Regiment and the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes. It's now better known as Custer's Last Stand, marking the native Indians' last armed effort to preserve their way of life.

Scenic drives

Seeing the American West on a road trip is an adventure in itself. Take to the open road on over 60 scenic byways and countless backways to explore by car, motorbike or motorhome.

En route to Yellowstone National Park, perhaps test your nerve on the Beartooth Highway between Red Lodge and the park's northeast entrance. It's 68 miles of steep zigzags and hairpin bends, featuring breathtaking views of the Absaroka and Beartooth mountains along with giant panoramas of high alpine plateaus dotted with glacial lakes, forested valleys, waterfalls and wildlife.

In the Black Hills of South Dakota, Needles Highway, Iron Mountain Road and the Wildlife Loop of Custer State Park join together to create a spectacular drive through forests, granite mountains, one-lane tunnels and round wooden structures affectionately termed 'pigtail bends'. As you enter Custer State Park, keep and eye out for bison, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, deer, elk, coyote and prairie dog that animate the region

An engineering masterpiece, Glacier National Park's Going-to-the-Sun Road spans the width of the park. And, at 6,646 feet high, its Logan Pass crosses the Continental Divide and boasts spectacular views of glacial lakes, cedar forests and alpine tundra. Drive it yourself, hop on and off the free shuttle, or take a guided Red Jammer bus interpretive tour.

Lastly, North Dakota's Enchanted Highway features a series of the world's largest scrap metal sculptures including Geese in Flight, the Tin Family and Deer Crossing. You're so off the beaten track in this remote region, you could well find yourself as the only vehicle on the road.

Cowboys & Indians

Dating back to the prosperous days of the Gold Rush, Western culture is still very much alive here. You'll find the perfect blend of small-town charm and cultural history, celebrated by festivals and events that span the calendar year.

Cheyenne, the state capital of Wyoming, showcases its Old West roots each July with Frontier Days. The centrepiece of this Western celebration is the world's largest outdoor rodeo, which draws top professionals who compete for more than $1 million in cash and prizes. The event also includes an air show, top-name entertainment, Native American Village, Old West town, chuck wagon cook-off and free pancake breakfasts.

In turn, the United Tribes Powwow is held in Bismarck and has become one of North Dakota's premier cultural events. Some 20,000 spectators turn out to watch over 1,500 dancers and drummers from over 70 tribes perform in what ranks among the world's most impressive festivals of tribal culture.

For further celebration, make the short but scenic drive from Mount Rushmore to the rock carving of Crazy Horse. It's a work in progress but, when complete, will stand as the world's largest mountain carving at 641 feet long and 5,463 feet high. It's an inspiring monument to American Indian culture.

In the Real America, your Western dreams are just a gallop away.

For more information, call a Wexas USA specialist on 020 7838 5958 or visit wexas.com

NO UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

Immigrant Tales

With the news agenda continually dominated by stories of migration and asylum, it's no surprise that novelists are assimilating the immigrant experience to explore deep truths about human existence.

Imbolo Mbue, a native of Limbe, Cameroon who moved to the US as a teenager almost twenty years ago, made headlines in 2014 when it was announced that her debut novel had been snapped up by Random House for an eye-popping $1 million. In the editing process her manuscript *The Longings of Jende Jonga* adopted the more robust title *Behold the Dreamers* and was shaped into a worldwide bestseller. It tells the story of Jende and Neni, a Cameroonian couple newly arrived in Harlem, who glimpse a world of power and privilege when he gets a job as chauffeur to a high-flying Lehman Brothers executive. When the bank collapses, their prospects become tenuous. Set at a time when Barack Obama's imminent embodiment of the American Dream is undercut by the financial crisis, it's a subtle, wise and tender satire on the hope, greed and built-in failings that can put paid to personal and political ambition.

Another striking debut, Laura McVeigh's *Under the Almond Tree*, is narrated by fifteen-year-old Samar as she travels back and forth on the Trans-Siberian Express, having fled with her family and memories from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. As she exchanges stories with fellow travellers, pieces together her past through entries in her journal, and buries her head in *Anna Karenina*, we learn all is not as it seems in a moving examination of the transformative power of storytelling and the imagination.

Mohsin Hamid is known for his inventive, mould-breaking fictions, from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* to *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia*. His latest, *Exit West*, imagines that refugees and migrants are able to pass through mysterious black portals that serve as wormholes to richer countries. Thus enabled, the likely human migrations of the next century or so are compressed into a single year, and slums and shanty towns multiply at an astounding rate on the cramped island of Mykonos, in the parks and mansions of Kensington and Chelsea, and on the teeming hillsides of Marin Country. A young couple, Saeed and Nadia, fleeing an unnamed Islamic state, drift between continents meeting fellow migrants from other lands and confronting new challenges, expectations and freedoms. As Saeed clings to the familiar and Nadia reaches out to embrace an alternative life, Hamid deftly captures the dislocations of relentlessly shifting borders.

***Behold the Dreamers* by Imbolo Mbue. Fourth Estate HBK, 400pp, £12,99**
***Under the Almond Tree* by Laura McVeigh. Two Roads HBK, 320pp, £17.99**
***Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid. Hamish Hamilton HBK, 240pp, £14.99**

WRAPAROUND JACKET ARTWORK FOR *UNDER THE ALMOND TREE* © JESUS SOTES

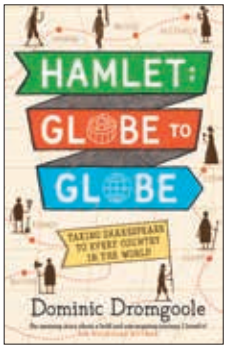
Mark Reynolds is inspired by three mindful novels about modern-day migration and two lively accounts of gallivanting with Shakespeare

All the world a stage

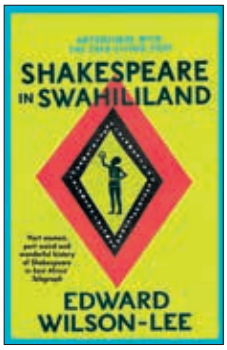
From 23 April 2014, 450 years after Shakespeare's birth, twelve actors and four stage managers from the Globe set out to perform *Hamlet* in 190 countries in the space of two years. Fittingly, they completed the tour at Kronborg Castle in Elsinore (Helsingør), the model for Hamlet's palace, followed by farewell performances back home at the Globe. Their journey took in national theatres and makeshift sets in sweltering deserts, grand palaces, bustling bars, marketplaces, roundabouts, studios and stadia as the embattled troop saw off Montezuma's revenge in Mexico, the threat of ambush in Somaliland, an Ebola epidemic in West Africa and twitchy secret-service men in Ukraine. In *Hamlet: Globe to Globe*, Dominic Dromgoole, artistic director at the Globe for over a decade, examines how the tribulations of the Danish prince touched the lives of everyone from restless students in a vast echo chamber in Phnom Penh to displaced Syrians in a tin shed at one of the country's ramshackle refugee camps. Although he personally witnessed only a fraction of the tour – twenty venues – Dromgoole's passion for the play and its power to transcend borders and inform our understanding of human foibles shine through as he pays tribute to the heroic efforts of the players who were in it for the long haul.

> “Shakespeare was an essential piece of safari kit for explorers in East Africa”

Shakespeare as a poet for all humanity is also captured in Edward Wilson-Lee's *Shakespeare in Swahililand*. This engaging and entertaining account, beginning with Shakespeare as an essential piece of safari kit among first-contact 19th-century British explorers in East Africa, examines how decadent expatriates, railway labourers, Indian settlers, African intellectuals and rebels have all co-opted the bard to their own ends – and to benefit the masses – on travels from Zanzibar to Sudan.



***Hamlet: Globe to Globe* by Dominic Dromgoole. Canongate HBK, 400pp, £16.99**



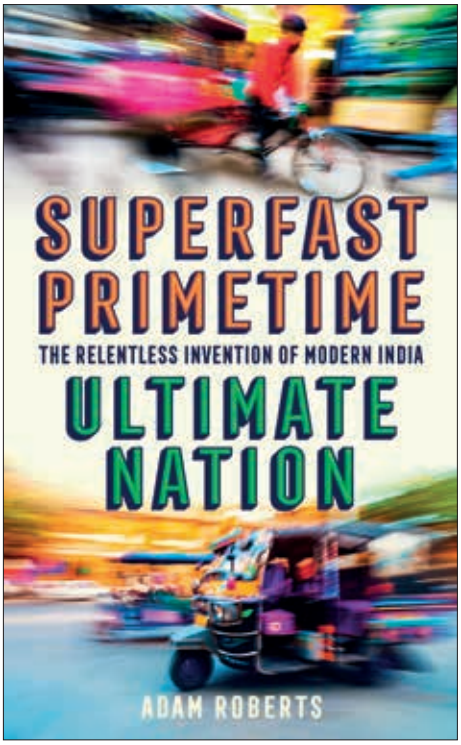
***Shakespeare in Swahililand* by Edward Wilson-Lee. William Collins PBK, 320pp, £9.99**

© BRITISH LIBRARY

***Russian Revolution: Hope, Tragedy, Myths* ed. Ekaterina Rogatchevskaia British Library PBK, 224pp, £25**

Accompanying a major exhibition at the British Library from 28 April to 29 August, an examination of the experiences of the Russian Revolution's principal players as well as ordinary citizens living through extraordinary times. Artefacts include a first edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, anti-Bolshevik propaganda, Red Army recruitment posters (below) and a letter from Vladimir Lenin requesting use of the Reading Room at the British Museum (above). The signature 'Jacob Richter' was the pseudonym he used to throw the Tsarist police off his trail.

© BRITISH LIBRARY



SAY IT LOUD

by Adam Roberts

Understatement gets you nowhere in crowded, noisy, easily distracted India. Even overstatement often falls short. In India, a land of bombastic claims, you must be bold. It is not enough, for example, to promise to build a shiny new electricity plant. Instead you should brag about your forthcoming 'Ultra Mega Power Project'. Want to advertise a hospital? Then call it a 'Max clinic' or 'Max Super Speciality' and slap up the name in neon lights. If your daughter is to marry, then spend a fortune on a lavish week-long party for thousands, including strangers, so you can brag about your grand status. And if you ride a long-distance train, take a Shatabdi Superfast Express – or, better still, wait for India's super-duper bullet train, which is due to run on a Diamond Quadrilateral route.

On television, even on the dullest day, channels – 'India's Best! India's Favourite! The Super Primetime Show!' – offer a guaranteed stream of Breaking News in flashing red-and-white block letters. More Latest Breaking News is scheduled for after the commercial break. It might concern 'India's First 24x7 Primetime Prime Minister', or a Supercop, a Superduper Hit Hindi song, perhaps gossip about a Bollywood Megastar and her SuperHit film. News will break in a MegaCity about a Mega Factory or a politician's Mega Rally. A journalist who has chatted to someone interesting will naturally brag of her World Exclusive. And as private universities blossom, outfits vie for attention with superlative names. My favourite: 'The Lovely Professional University' in Punjab, India's 'Largest Best Private University', offers those who enroll a 'mammoth ultra-modern high-tech campus sprawling over high-tech gigantic campus on the National Highway No. 1'. No self-respecting student would settle for less.

India similarly sells itself as an 'Incredible' tourist destination. Individual states brag, too. Bihar calls itself 'Blissful', Gujarat is 'Vibrant', and Kerala lays claim to being 'God's own country'. A hard sell is not always worse than a soft one: a mineral-rich but mostly poor state in central India for a time tried luring outsiders with the underwhelming slogan of 'Credible Chhattisgarh'. Others failed to follow its modest example, though I yearned to find more states playing safe, dreaming up 'Average Assam', 'OK Odisha', or 'Less-Backward-than-Before Bengal'. But such caution is rare: bold and boastful are more often India's style.

From *Superfast Primetime Ultimate Nation: The Relentless Invention of Modern India*. Profile Books, HBK, 338pp, £16.99

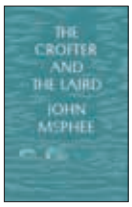
You might also like…

BORDER: A JOURNEY TO THE EDGE OF EUROPE
by Kapka Kassabova
Granta Books PBK, 400pp, £14.99
A lyrical, acutely observed portrait of the densely forested border zone between Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece, a historical and present-day crossing point for waves of refugees from distant lands.

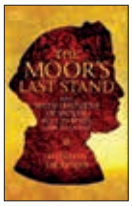
BIRDS ART LIFE DEATH
by Kyo Maclear
Fourth Estate HBK, 256pp, £12.99
An intricate and deeply personal memoir of grief and loss, and an insightful meditation on how we can gain perspective and creative inspiration from the wild spaces at the edges of urban existence.

ISTANBUL: A TALE OF THREE CITIES
by Bettany Hughes
Weidenfeld & Nicolson HBK, 832pp, £25
A dazzling biography of one of the world's greatest cities, exploring how Byzantium – Constantinople – Istanbul was shaped from its Neolithic beginnings through 8,000 years of human habitation.

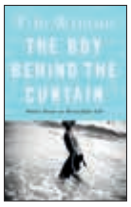
THE WRITER ABROAD
ed. Lucinda Hawksley
British Library PBK, 256pp, £12.99
A literary journey from the grand tour to the global village, combining notes and musings from novelists and poets from Heterodotus to Arthur Conan Doyle, Charles Dickens, Henry James, Mary Wollstonecraft and Aldous Huxley.



THE CROFTER AND THE LAIRD by John McPhee Daunt Books PBK, 400pp, £14.99
A welcome reissue of the author's evocative account of moving his family to the land of his forefathers on the wind-blown Hebridean island of Colonsay.



THE MOOR'S LAST STAND by Elizabeth Drayson Profile HBK, 224pp, £17.99
How Boabdil, the last Muslim king of Granada, was betrayed, ending seven centuries of peaceable living among Christians, Muslims and Jews.

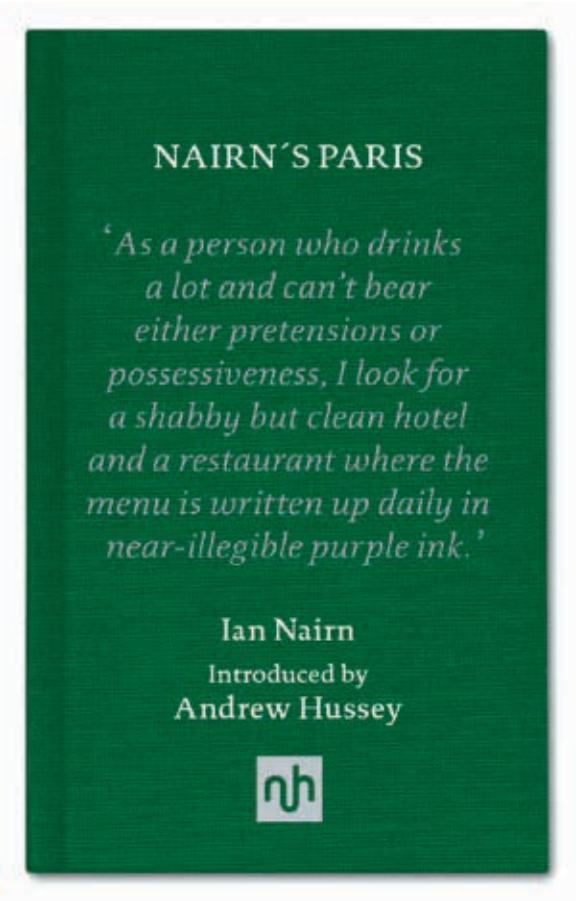


THE BOY BEHIND THE CURTAIN by Tim Winton Picador HBK, 320pp, £16.99
An exuberant collection of essays and memories capturing moments from Winton's Australian childhood that shaped his writing life.

KINGDOM OF OLIVES AND ASH ed. Michael Chabon and Ayelet Waldman Fourth Estate PBK, 448pp, £12.99 (1 June)
Writers including Geraldine Brooks, Dave Eggers, Eimear McBride, Colm Tóibín and Mario Vargas Llosa bear witness to the human cost of the Israeli Occupation of the West Bank.

THE MINISTRY OF UTMOST HAPPINESS by Arundhati Roy Hamish Hamilton, HBK, 464pp, £18.99 (6 June)
Roy's first novel since *The God of Small Things* is a wildly inventive, provocative examination of modern India featuring captivating characters in search of shelter, meaning and love.

{ VINTAGE WORDS }

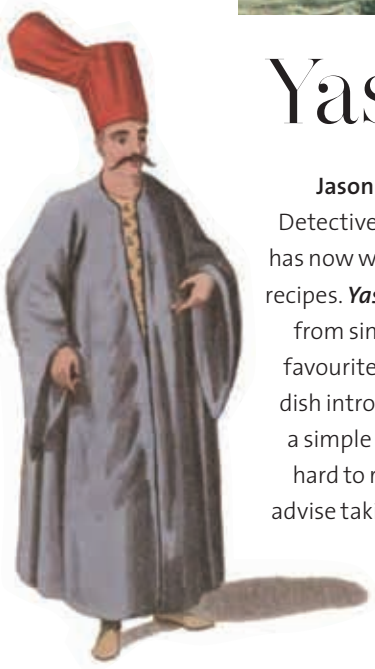


"It doesn't matter much which boulevard you choose, in this homogeneous city, cracked open by Hausmann to provide fields of fire in case of insurrection; the result was to so unite it that now a boulevard would be the natural centre of insurrection – the lion has eaten the trainer. The smartest boulevards have trees, and don't go anywhere; my favourite is an exception, the boulevard Sébastopol, which carves its way north like a Parisian Farringdon Street, but with much more elegance, and ends in the Gare de l'Est, beyond which are wild beasts in the *banlieue*. But every boulevard has its cafés, nests of insurgence: broad awnings, tables that rarely fill up completely, always a place to sit down and watch the world go by. The basic vacuity of the avenues turns out to be an entrance ticket to liberation. For the café-dweller, quietly sipping Slavia or Kronenbourg, it seems to be all freedom and no rules. The rules, in fact, have been forgotten, and now there are just people, enjoying the amplitude and oblivious of nineteenth-century military techniques. Hard luck, Baron H: game, set and match to the rabble."

Ian Nairn, *Nairn's Paris* (1968), now reissued by Notting Hill Editions HBK, 172pp, £14.99.

Flash in the pan

Inventive and inspiring recipes from Byzantium to Peckham (and spaces in between)



Yashim Cooks Istanbul

Jason Goodwin, author of the award-winning 'Yashim the Ottoman Detective' novels, which began with *The Janissary Tree* (Faber & Faber, 2007), has now written a cookbook featuring snippets from the novels alongside timeless recipes. ***Yashim Cooks Istanbul*** evokes the colours and flavours of the Ottoman world, from simple meze and vegetable dishes to meat, fish, and puddings. Among our favourites are Guinea Fowl with Pepper Sauce, a modern take on a noble Venetian dish introduced to Constantinople after the Venetians conquered the city in 1204; a simple Yoghurt Soup; and spice-laden Lamb and Tomato Flatbreads. It's also hard to resist instructions for an Assassin's Steak Tartare which cheerfully advise taking a sharp knife to the outer edges of your fillet to carve away 'the bacteria that may kill you'.

Argonaut Books HBK, 224pp, £25

© KIM LIGHTBODY

Sri Lanka: The Cookbook

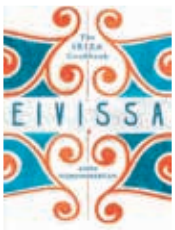
Husband and wife duo **Prakash K. Sivanathan and Niranjala M. Ellawalaran** ran the award-winning Sri Lankan restaurant Elephant Walk in West Hampstead for eight years and now run workshops and supper clubs under the name Coconut Kitchens. Here they present a definitive collection of Sri Lanka's most authentic and vibrant recipes. As well as absorbing influences from India, the Middle East, Far East Asia and various European invaders, the island has strong Singhalese and Tamil cooking traditions. Bread fruit, bitter gourd, snake gourd and jack fruit are among the more exotic ingredients to get the coconut, chilli and spice treatment, and infinite flavours infiltrate the humble prawn or chicken.

Frances Lincoln, FLEXIBOUND, 256pp, £20

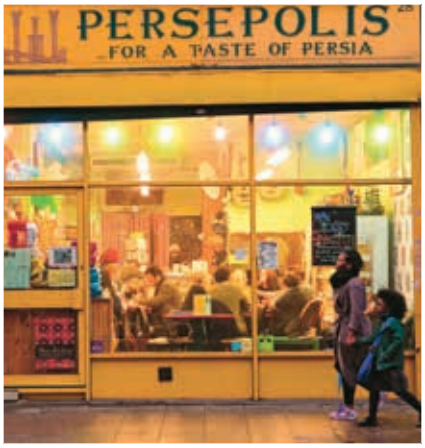
© DAVID MUNNS

Eivissa

Ibiza is on the cusp of a food revolution, the island's traditional farming and fishing culture supplemented by a wave of chefs and producers making artisan products and vibrant food. Divided into seasonal chapters, **Anne Sijmonsbergen's *Eivissa*** selects gorgeous recipes reflecting the heritage of the cuisine with contemporary twists, from Watermelon Gazpacho (left), Grilled Courgette Ribbons and Asparagus & Mint Tostada to Grapefruit & Juniper-Encrusted Pork Salad, Steamed Mussels with Samphire, Chicken with Roasted Figs and Ricotta Pine Nut Cake.

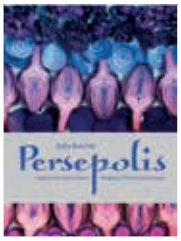


HarperCollins HBK, 304pp, £20



Persepolis

Sally Butcher is proprietress of the food store and cafe Persepolis in Peckham, which she runs with her Persian husband Jamshid. A prolific author and blogger, she has amassed a devoted following for her food-, shop- and Peckham-related musings. The foodie delights of the Middle East are her specialist subject, and here she collects tantalising veggie-only recipes showing innovative ways to brighten your broccoli and titillate your tomatillos.



Pavilion HBK, 256pp, £25

THE ULTIMATE AUSTRALIAN ROAD TRIP

New South Wales

Between gleaming cities, glittering beaches and a truly stunning natural world, all of Australia's icons are found in New South Wales. And, it's all linked by some of the world's most spectacular driving routes, bringing you out of Sydney's urbane sophistication, up into the mist-shrouded Blue Mountains and down into the Hunter Valley's winery indulgences. Then, hit the coast on roads that hug cragged cliffs to showcase giant views over dense rainforests and great stretches of white sands. In between, you'll be entertained by unique wildlife, world-class gastronomy and that famous Aussie love of the great outdoors, best experienced on bush walks and afternoons spent surfing in the sun. To help you plan your ultimate New South Wales road trip, we've picked out the state's must-see destinations.

Sydney

Blessed with the most recognisable waterfront, you'll know Australia's largest city for the sweeping curves of its twin icons – the Sydney Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge. But, look beyond its poster child good looks and you'll find plenty of substance. The cobblestone lanes of the historic Rocks district feature heritage cottages and convict-era pubs, while the Victorian terraces of Paddington are given over to a chic café culture and boutique markets. And, this being Australia, there's plenty of sunshine to enjoy, with Bondi's white sands, coastal walks and famous surf among the highlights.

The Blue Mountains

Moving out of Sydney, you'll quickly find yourself winding up into the green-dappled peaks of the Blue Mountains. A World Heritage Area, cascading waterfalls hide among eucalypt forests and sandstone cliffs look out over great swathes of bushland. Take it all in on meandering hiking trails that lead, through Aboriginal tribal lands, to stunning cave formations. It's all the picturesque setting to a delightful collection of luxury lodge retreats.

The Hunter Valley

After the Blue Mountains, the state's topography calms into

endlessly undulating green curves terraced into pretty rows of vineyards. This is Australia's oldest wine region – the Hunter Valley. Taste your way through more than 150 wineries, sampling everything from bold reds to refreshing whites. The region is also undergoing something of a foodie renaissance, with farm-to-table restaurants showcasing the best in local produce. Don't miss out on the artisan cheeses, hand-made chocolates and bakery delicacies.

Port Stephens

Turning back to the coast, you'll arrive at the 'Dolphin Capital of Australia'. Home to over 140 bottlenose dolphins, Port Stephens is one of the world's best places to spot these playful cetaceans. Embark on a scenic cruise or, for something truly unique, there's

even the opportunity to swim with the pod. It's all watched over by a collection of national parks, host to giant sand dunes and rainforest walks. And, for some relaxation, there's over two-dozen beaches to choose from.

Port Macquarie

Continuing north, you'll be welcomed to Port Macquarie with that famous Aussie cheer. Fissured into a network of canals and river tributaries, it makes for pretty river cruises that bring you away from its gorgeous beaches to its lush hinterlands. Here you'll find

the superb Billabong Zoo along with the aww-inducing Koala Hospital where you can walk right among these adorable creatures.

Coffs Harbour

Your next coastal stop should be Coffs Harbour for its watersports fun. There's everything from surfing and paddle boarding to diving and kayaking to keep you occupied along with those now-familiar golden sands. However, it's perhaps Coffs' wildlife that excites the most, with walks and snorkel dips bringing you up close to kangaroos, wallabies, koalas, turtles and dolphins.

Byron Bay

End your northbound journey along the Pacific Coast with gorgeous Byron

Bay. However, it's not the 18 miles of sandy beaches, the yoga getaways or the chic bars that have made this a long-time favourite; it's the barefoot joy of it all. Artists' studios abound, spa getaways open right onto the beach and the sunsets are long and colourful. This is boho-chic at its finest.

Jervis Bay & the South Coast

A drive south out of Sydney is equally rewarding, bringing you to deserted beaches and national park wildernesses. Head past waterfalls and coastal scenery to reach Jervis Bay where intertwining waterways make for excellent kayaking. Then, in between visits to historic gold-rush towns and fishing villages, watch the seasonal whale migration before scuba diving with fur seals at Montague Island Nature Reserve.

To book your New South Wales escape, contact a Wexas destination expert on 020 7838 5958 or visit wexas.com for more inspiration.

Pondering Pondicherry

Tessa Kiros savours the French and Indian fusion cuisine of a former colony

I was told you have to visit India three times – to let it all seep into your soul and brew properly, before you can fully appreciate it. I had been once before, to the north, and was intrigued to travel south now, to explore the palm-lined boulevards and kitchens of the old French colonial settlement of Pondicherry.

The French influence is noticeable here on the streets, in the way of life and culture, in the schools, the architecture. There is a dusty shine still, and the atmosphere of a time gone by. I can picture the French here. Under the shade of these beautiful trees drinking *chai*, showing the locals their favourite dishes. At first glance, it is hard to see any influence left by the French on the food of Pondicherry. After a while though, some distinctions are noticeable: a more subtle combination of spices and chilli, and the use of certain French cooking techniques that lean towards a more delicate plate – loosely labelled as Creole and based on the cooking of south India.

I am told that in the colonial days, the canal was stocked with crocodiles, as a safety measure to prevent anyone from the Tamil side crossing over to the French, with just one wooden drawbridge at the time linking the two. It is hardly surprising, then, that there was not much overt mingling between the *casseroles* and *kadais*. However, many Tamil servants were employed in the French quarter, and they would have learned to deliver a lighter hand to satisfy the appetites of their employers. I can imagine the scene. The French pleading for a little respite, longing for a chicken roasted with thyme and white wine. And the local cooks, basting with extra *masala* and sliding a few chillies and mustard seeds in where they felt necessary. Because I watched them in the kitchen, and I thought how these people must truly be the kings at this. No one can throw that amount of spice and chilli into a pot so naturally.

Many Tamil people who I asked whether they liked French food or not, told me they didn't mind it – but no more than once a week. They need their heat and spices. French food would probably have been bowled out in the first round by the cinnamons and cardamoms. A combination of cuisines might have been frustrating for the locals, like a lukewarm *lassi*. When the French came to dinner, the dishes were spiced down. Less hot, more aromatic. In the typical Pondicherry fish curry with tamarind, for example, I am told that the coconut milk was added for the French as it was just too spicy.

In many of the restaurants here, I found a dividing line on the menu, just like the canal. On one side were the southern Indian dishes, abundant in seafood and rich in spices. And on the other side were *soupe a l'oignon* and *tarte au citron*. As different as the French quarter is from the Tamil quarter.

Over time, as more mixed marriages came about, the food in the homes would have started blending into each other more. At dinner one night

JANANI
2513

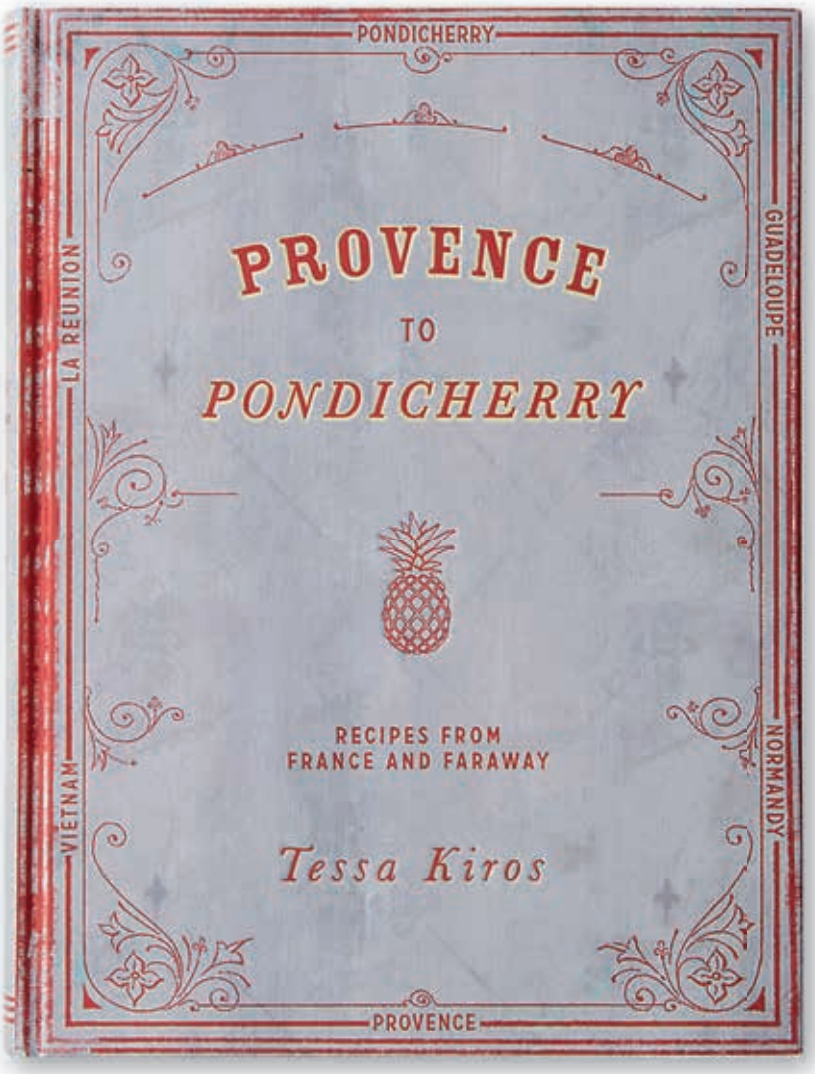
KINGFISHER
STRONG

I watched a family at the table next to me. French father, Tamil mother. Beautiful children – speaking French with papa and wiping the plates with their *dosas*, and scooping up the *sambar* and coconut chutney. What a lovely place to live – surrounded by their mother and father tongues and meals.

They say this is a milder corner of India. The French quarter – maybe. But the rest is a full, rounded version, heaving with life. Nowhere to stop and take a breath, no break from the sights and sounds and smells. It is hyperbole and surprise all the way. Everyone holding hands, pressing through tailors, animals and flowers to get on with routine things. Drivers announcing their arrival on every corner with the horn. Two women in saris on a building site, carrying bricks in baskets on their heads to the builders perched on fragile-looking bamboo scaffolding. Such a different set of rules.

The Indian women are incredible. It is as though a certain amount was allotted to the nation for decoration, and they collected all of the dockets and put them for the ladies. They are majestic, glittery and beautiful, with natural strong features and coconut-enriched hair. And wrapped in cottons and silks of every colour.

When you think of India, you imagine elephants, jewels and spices. In Pondicherry, you will find them all. But the elephant, Lakshmi, will be outside the temple, on the corner of Rue de Lauriston. And you can be blessed by the elephant giving you a good tap on your head.



> “The French influence is noticeable here on the streets, in the way of life and culture, in the schools, the architecture. There is a dusty shine still, and the atmosphere of a time gone by.”

Provence to Pondicherry **by Tessa Kiros (with photography by Manos Chatzikonstantis) is published by Quadrille, HBK, £25**

Mussels with Masala

I like to make this with just a drop of cream to add a subtle richness to the spices. I love it with lemon pickle and *chapati* on the side. And to follow, a small bowl of fresh curd with a sprinkling of salt, just to calm the mouth a little.

SERVES 3

1.5kg (31/4lb) mussels
2 tablespoons sesame oil
1/4 teaspoon black mustard seeds
1/4 teaspoon cumin seeds
2 teaspoons garlic and ginger paste
2 small green chillies, finely chopped
5 or 6 fresh curry leaves
2 teaspoons masala mix
200g (7oz) ripe tomatoes, peeled and chopped
1 tablespoon cream
2 tablespoons shredded coriander leaves

To serve: lemon pickle

De-beard the mussels, then scrub them with a brush under cold running water, discarding any that are open and don't close when tapped sharply on the work surface.

Keep them in a bowl of cold water until you are ready to cook, but don't leave it too long.

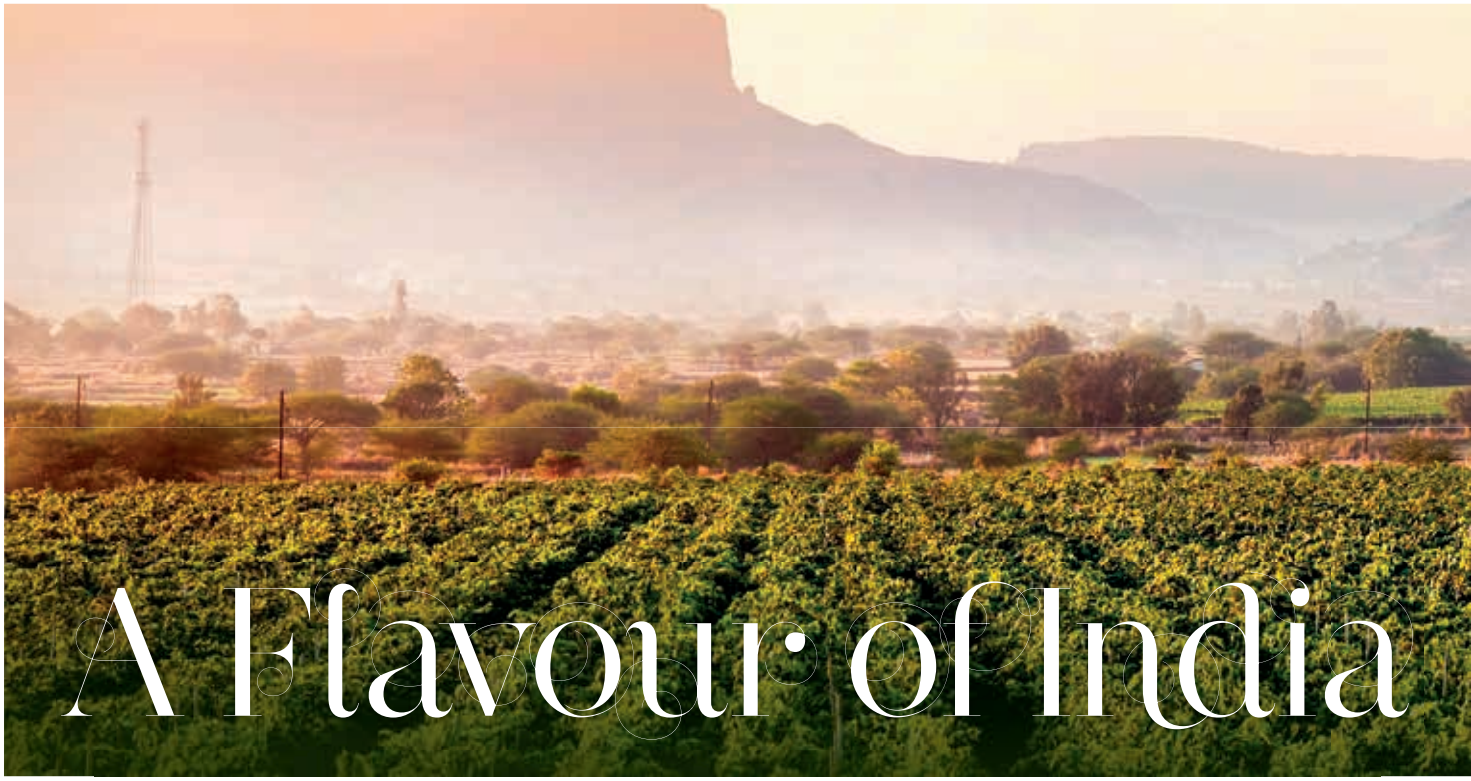
Heat the oil in a wide pan large enough to hold all the mussels. Add the mustard and cumin seeds and, when they start to splutter, stir in the garlic and ginger paste and the green chillies. Tear in the curry leaves and sauté for a couple of minutes until it smells good, taking care that nothing burns.

Add the masala, stir through and then add the tomatoes with 125ml (1/2 cup) water. Bring to the boil then simmer over a low heat, covered, for about 5 minutes to break the tomatoes down. Stir in the cream (no seasoning needed) and let it bubble up for a moment before removing from the heat. Keep warm.

Drain the mussels and tip them into a large frying pan over a high heat. Put the lid on and steam until they open. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the opened ones to the sauce. Give any unopened ones a second chance over the heat, but if they still don't open, discard them.

Strain the mussel liquor in the frying pan into a jug, avoiding any sand or grit on the bottom. Add 185ml (3/4 cup) to the mussels and sauce, increase the heat to high and turn the mussels through quickly so they all catch some of the sauce.

Scatter in the coriander and serve immediately, with lemon pickle.



A Flavour of India

Kevin Pilley goes against the grain to discover Indian wines

'Swirl. Sniff. Sip. And enjoy the tastes and new aromas of India.'

I lifted my glass in front of the sun and rolled some Satori around my mouth. And experienced true enlightenment. Via the subdued tannins of Indian Merlot.

Another cork popped. This time from a bottle of premium Shiraz.

'Perfect with spicy food. And pizza!' said Meenal, my wine-tasting guru. I was being initiated into Indian viticulture.

The first time I invoked Varuni, the 18-armed Indian goddess of wine, was 20 years ago in Goa after opening a 25-rupee bottle of John Bir Blue. After regaining consciousness, I asked the deity to let me breathe.

The next time I sampled Indian wine was on a train. Some 'domestic house red' helped wash down a raw fish canape on the Golden Triangle's Palace on Wheels train. One mouthful made the train shudder despite being stationary.

These days, much has changed. Indian wines have improved enormously and are winning medals at prestigious international fairs. Mumbai wine bars like the Asilo – along with Hyderabad's Via Milano, Kolkata's Roxy and Bangalore's Library Bar – are doing a roaring trade.

Sommeliers are recommending Indian wines, offering pairing suggestions, and consulting tasting notes rather than insurance cover. India now consumes over three million bottles of wine a year. The annual market is worth over £5m.

Although there is no Hindi word for wine (the generic word for alcohol, *sharaab*, is used), an increasingly affluent middle class has seen the emergence of a new breed of wine connoisseurs and makers. Indians are being weaned from beer to wine.

India grows more grapes than Australia. Most are eaten fresh or sold as raisins. Out of a million tonnes of grapes, only 10,000 are made into wine. The UK market for Indian wine is worth £2m per year and growing at 50-60 per cent per year. Soul Tree is the biggest-selling Indian wine in the UK. It produces Akiya, the only Indian sparkling wine available outside of India. The Birmingham-based label hopes Akiya will be the new Prosecco or Cava.

In India there are vineyards as far south as Theni in Tamil Nadu and as far north as Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh. Wine tourism has started and India has opened its own tourist wine trails offering *degustations* and wine-appreciation breaks. You can stay in vineyard resorts like the Soma Vine Village in the Western Ghats, or Bankside Vallonne in the scenic Igatpuri countryside, 100 miles from Mumbai.

Maharashtra is the hub of India's new wine tourism, with the Nashik region its Napa Valley. Once India's largest marketplace and famous for its *wadas* (courtyard houses), the holy city of Nashik now has over 30 mainly boutique wineries.

Maharashtra's pioneer wine producer is Sula and its picturesque vineyards on the Godavari river, three hours west of Mumbai, are the main stop on the viticulture route. Every February it holds a major wine and arts festival. You can stomp grapes, listen to bands playing in the vineyard's amphitheatre, or have your feet massaged while eating chocolate in

the Bourneville Lounge. Two thousand people attended last year's event.

In the tasting-room with its panoramic balcony, you can learn from guide Meenal Kansa that wine-making in India may go back 5,000 years. Temple paintings depict ancient binge-drinking and toddy-tapping. Early wine made from rice, palm barley and saffron calmed Kashmiri soldiers before combat. Macedonians travelling with Alexander probably propagated vines. The Portuguese introduced port to Goa. Then the British established vineyards in the Baramati, Kashmir and Shirat regions.

Sula was founded in Nashik in 1997 by Stanford University graduate, former Silicon Valley software engineer and self-proclaimed 'wine evangelist', Rajeev Samant. The viniculture was initially overseen by a Californian master wine-maker, Kerry Damskey of Sonoma Valley. The first grapes from the red, iron-rich soil were crushed in 1999. Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel followed. The first Riesling came in 2008. Sula also produces Mosaic (blending Grenache and Syrah), a sparkling Brut and a dessert wine.

Sula's Soma Vine Village is India's first vineyard resort, an elegant ultra-modern complex like a spa, overlooking Gangapur Lake. It bills itself as 'the perfect antidote for stressed-out city folk'.

Yet another cork popped. Ajoy, the chief winemaker, nosed. Looking over the grape fields, we clinked glasses and tested the bouquet. We sampled rather than quaffed. Ajoy spoke, in wine language.

'Our Dindori Reserve Viognier is a wonderful blend of fruit and minerality. The off dry has intense aromas of ripe apricot, peaches and white fruit on the nose, complemented with a savoury medium mouth feel of tropical fruit and hints of stony minerality. It goes down exceedingly well with curry.'

Another must on the wine trail is Ranjut Dhuru's award-winning Chateau d'Ori vineyard at Nhera-Ori, 20 kms from Nashik. As well as a state-of-the-art winery, it has a four-bedroom farmhouse for rent, with jacuzzi and pool. Recommended wines, both inside the Tasting Room and out, are the Merlot and Reserve Shiraz.

Also near Nashik is the Lilo Gurnani York Winery, founded in 2006. The flagship tipple of the Gurnani family's glorious seven-acre vineyard is a Reserve Shiraz. The Rose and Sauvignon Blanc are also excellent. International winemakers have been involved in the project and now Kailash Gurnani, who has studied wine-making in Australia and Cyprus, is in charge of wine-making.

Akluj, 120 miles south-east of Pune in Maharashtra's sugar belt , boasts Fratelli wines. Weekend and weekday overnight stays and tastings are available, with a traditional Maharashtrian bonfire and cultural performance, and free use of the pool and ping-pong tables. Their signature red is Sette and best white is Vitae. Master Tuscan winemaker Piero Frasi oversees.

But for wine fans, it all starts and ends at Sula. We clinked glasses and said 'Jai Ho!' – an Indian variant for 'Cheers!'

My tasting session and wine-speak tutorial not quite over, I asked my guru what 'Sula' means. He said 'peaceful'. It was exactly how I felt. Amidst the piquant and robust aromas of western India and the vineyards of Maharashtra.

The wines of Occitanie

While Paris, the French Alps and the Cote d'Azur continue – and rightly so – to attract the world's attention, it's often between the headlines that you'll find France's true *joie de vivre*. And this is where the Occitanie region comes in. Tucked away in the country's southwest corner, brushing up against Spain, it's here that French traditions live on in the homely kitchens of quiet medieval villages, endlessly sweeping vineyards and the Michelin-starred delights of such big-city favourites as Toulouse and Montpellier. The result? Welcoming communities where the bread is still hand-delivered daily and the seafood caught that morning. It's all watched over by a collection of great 12th-century castles, built atop jagged hilltops by the Cathars in defence against Catholic crusades.

But it's perhaps Occitanie's natural world that really excites. Hiking trails criss-cross the Pyrenees' sky-tearing jags, the region's green interior rolls languidly on and fishing villages from Collioure to Banyuls preside over crescents of pristine sands and coastal crags alike. It's these fertile landscapes that have given rise to a deliciously diverse cuisine, washed down by

varietals from a series of world-class wineries.

And it's this award-wining viticulture that's most impressive. As the world's oldest and largest wine-growing area, Occitanie has a rich oenological tradition, beginning with its 6th-century Greek settlers – the first to plant vines in the region. Since then, everyone from Benedictine monks to the Roman Empire have left their mark. It became France's leading wine-producing region – a title Occitanie holds to this day – after a plague of near-microcscopic phylloxera devastated its competitors. Yet, starting in the 1980s, Occitanie returned to its small-yield, high-quality roots, swapping table wine for so-called 'noble varieties' that thrive in its sunny climes and perfect soils.

And, the result of this diverse influence

– and range of terroir – can be keenly felt across the region's wide spread of varietals. Whether it's full-bodied reds and rich dessert wines that pique your interests or aromatic rosés and sparkling whites that take your fancy, there's something for all tastes. In fact, nearly 60 types of grape have been approved for production in this protected region, split among three subdivisions – Occitanie's west, the Languedoc-Roussillon, and the southwest bank of the Rhône Valley.

Defined more by terroir and region than grape varietal, there's plenty to distinguish each area's offerings – the climatic variation alone is remarkable.

The Rhône wines are perhaps best defined by signature spicy reds. Highlights include aromatic syrah, with its blueberry and blackcurrant notes, carignan's matured balance and grenache's complex bouquet of plum fruit, accented with liquorice and black pepper. For white wine drinkers, the Languedoc offers a more recognisable collection of names. Chardonnays make the most of the relatively cool climate in the home of sparkling wine, Limoux, to produce something delightfully crisp, while grenache blancs are realised in a floral freshness – particularly good with seafood, and often mixed with other wines for a smooth blend.

Not to be outdone, Occitanie's west features a range of big-name reds, with some innovative, homegrown twists. The wines of Cahors, often produced with malbec grapes, are inky, almost black in the bottle, and showcase a rich, deep blackberry and coffee flavour. They're particularly well paired with the region's farmhouse cheeses. Whites, on the other hand, often exhibit recognisably fruity cadences. Colombard is a particular highlight, with everything from citrus accents to pineapple aromas represented. For a change of pace, consider sampling the mauzac. Thanks to its late ripening, it promotes indulgently sweet-yet-dry sparkling innovations.

HIGHLIGHTS OF LANGUEDOC & THE MIDI-PYRÉNÉES

8-day tailor-made self-drive from £1,135 incl. flights

For an introduction into the viticulture, heritage and gastronomy of Occitanie, this scenic road trip takes in the best of France's southwest. You'll move out from the grand mansions and stately boulevards of Montpellier to stay in such pretty villages as Assignan and Bélesta where sommelier-led tastings and gourmet dining showcase the best of the region's fresh produce. You'll also experience the medieval grandeur of Carcassonne whose castle, dating back to the Romans, looks out over the city walls with imposing battlements and giant turrets. You'll end at the coast with Collioure, a pretty seaside village whose pastel houses and shingle beach have inspired everyone from Matisse to Pablo Picasso. Its rich, artistic heritage lives on in an excellent collection of galleries and workshops. Along the way, you'll stay in historic chateaux, complete with spa indulgences, infinity pools and palm-tree-lined gardens all set among those rolling vineyards.

For more information or to book, call a Wexas specialist on 020 7838 5958 or visit wexas.com

HOTELS

Siwash Lake Ranch

British Columbia

Prepare to indulge your inner cowboy at this authentic ranch house in British Columbia. Regarded as one of the finest wilderness experiences in Canada, this family-owned spread comes highly recommended – it's one of National Geographic's Unique Lodges of the World. Lost between Vancouver and the Rocky Mountain resorts of Jasper or Banff, this remote place is best accessed by seaplane onto the tranquil lake, or more prosaically by a 4-hour drive from Whistler. The best rooms are actually canvas tents deep in the pine woods, with wood-burning stoves, private sundecks and outdoor showers. There's also a restored log barn loft called The Cariboo Suite, filled with olde worlde furniture, or more normal suites with names like The Frontier. Meals, of course, are grown, caught or foraged from the ranch, woods or water, featuring wild salmon, ranch beef and pumpkin cheesecake. Daytime activities are as close to nature as you'd think – fly-fishing, mountain biking, wilderness survival... But it's the horseriding that is famous here, recreating the frontier experience among steep hills and deep forests. Guides and instructors are available for beginners, while old hands can roam the range on their own all day long, hoping perhaps for a glimpse of local cougar, coyote, moose or beaver.

Nimmo Bay

Port Mc Neill

Set in the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest on Canada's spectacular west coast, this cluster of waterside cabins offers the best of ocean, woods and mountains. Wilderness activities include guided kayaking, forest hiking and boat tours, often in search of the rich local wildlife – whales, seals, dolphins and bears. But the special offering here is helicopter touring, taking you to 10,000-year-old glaciers, remote islands and isolated waterfalls. Back at base the food is 'coastal cuisine' – salmon, oysters, crab, fresh off the boats – preceded by cocktails on a floating deck on the water.

Clayoquot Wilderness Retreat
Tofino

Accessible only by river-boat or seaplane, then horse and cart, this scattering of luxury tents along a wild creek is almost as deep as you can get into the wild. Here you can ride the trail, surf remote beaches, walk on the wild side with a First Nations Guide, fish the rivers or watch the wildlife. Or you can just chill out in the waterside spa and let the world fall away. Evenings are enlivened by fine dining from local ingredients, cooked in 'contemporay coastal' style and served in the wonderfully atmospheric stone-walled, wood-floored Cookhouse, with its paraffin lamps and sides open to the mountains beyond.

Wickaninnish Inn
Tofino

Perched on the cliffs of the western edge of Vancouver Island, 'The Wick' as it is locally known is a foodie haven with a pamper spa and a fine sandy beach next door. For a taste of the wild in a high degree of comfort, it's a great choice. Whale-watching is the big draw here in the spring, set as it is in the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, while in winter storm-watching is a speciality, especially from the shelter of the your own fireside in one of the luxury suites. Year-round the food is outstanding, with top quality local seafood and game and a serious chef working with dedicated local suppliers.

The Opus
Yaletown

For the full urban vibe, try this funky boutique hotel in Vancouver's chic Yaletown district. Named as one of the 'Top Five Trendiest Hotels in the World' by TripAdvisor, the hotel sits beside a marina on the False Creek waterfront and its rooms are strikingly designed in bold splashes of scarlet, mustard or aubergine. The bar is uber-cool with curling metal furniture and a hipster crowd, while the award-winning restaurant specialises in rustic Italian cuisine. It's a world away from the wilderness retreats upcountry.

WINTER IN ALBERTA

Alberta, home of the Canadian Rockies, is a land defined by its outdoors. Majestic peaks sweep skywards, old-growth forests cover glacial valleys and glittering lakes hide among national-park mountains. And, each winter, this great topographical drama transforms into a snowy playground. Whether it's an ice-walk to the frozen waterfalls of Banff National Park, a 100km/hr Olympic bobsleigh experience or the chance to ice skate among the frozen sculptures of Lake Louise, there's no shortage of wintery fun alongside the usual skiing. You can even learn about the region's First Nation heritage by trying your hand at ice fishing, snowshoeing and dog sledding at one of the region's historic fur trading posts. However, it's perhaps the Northern Lights that impress the most. Through winter, the night's sky comes to life with dancing displays of technicolour magic. Alberta is one of the best destinations for catching a glimpse of this natural phenomenon, given that it features the world's two largest dark sky preserves – Wood Buffalo and Jasper national parks.

To match these once-in-a-lifetime experiences, there's also a range of unique accommodation options. Perhaps take yourself away to a cosy mountain lodge retreat or book a night in the UNESCO-listed Fairmont Banff Springs. Otherwise known as the 'Castle of the Rockies', its century-old turrets peak out above a giant evergreen forest, backdropped by snow-capped mountains. Lastly, to go with the rural charm, there's plenty of urbane sophistication. And, aside from hip eateries, thumping nightlife and plenty of shopping, Alberta's twin urban centres host a delightful collection of Christmas festivities. Calgary Zoo is brought to life with 1.5 million twinkling lights and whole ice castles are built in Edmonton's Hawrelak Park.

For more information, call a Wexas specialist on **020 7838 5958** or visit **wexas.com**

Alberta Canada

CRUISE

Seven Seas Explorer

This glamorous ship is superlative in almost every sense. It has the highest space ratios in the cruise industry and the largest suite balconies currently available. Add to this the generous staffing – almost one crew member to each guest – and you have a recipe for relaxation. The owners, Seven Seas Cruises, call it the most luxurious ship ever built.

Top-of-the-range facilities include fine dining at five restaurants. Pacific Rim offers Pan-Asian cuisine in a Zen-like ambience with muted lighting and windows designed in an abstract lotus shape. Here they serve dishes like grilled Korean barbecue lamb chops, wok-fried beans, and *eryngii* mushroom with *gochujang* dressing. Meanwhile Chartreuse is a step into the Parisian belle époque, with Art Nouveau inlaid wood and windows. It specialises in classic haute cuisine, such as foie gras with Sauternes and seared duck with candied cherries. Meatier fare is served at Prime 7, a steakhouse styled like a members club with leather wing-back

chairs and cocktails served in the intimate bar before dinner.

And for dedicated foodies, there's a cookery school at the Culinary Arts Kitchen. Its 18 work stations are fully equipped with top-of-the-line kit where guests can receive individualised hands-on instruction. Classes range across cuisines, from Mediterranean to Caribbean, Baltic to British home-baking. All are led by experienced chef instructors. There's even a special course on wine-and-food pairing, and a masterclass in fish cuisine.

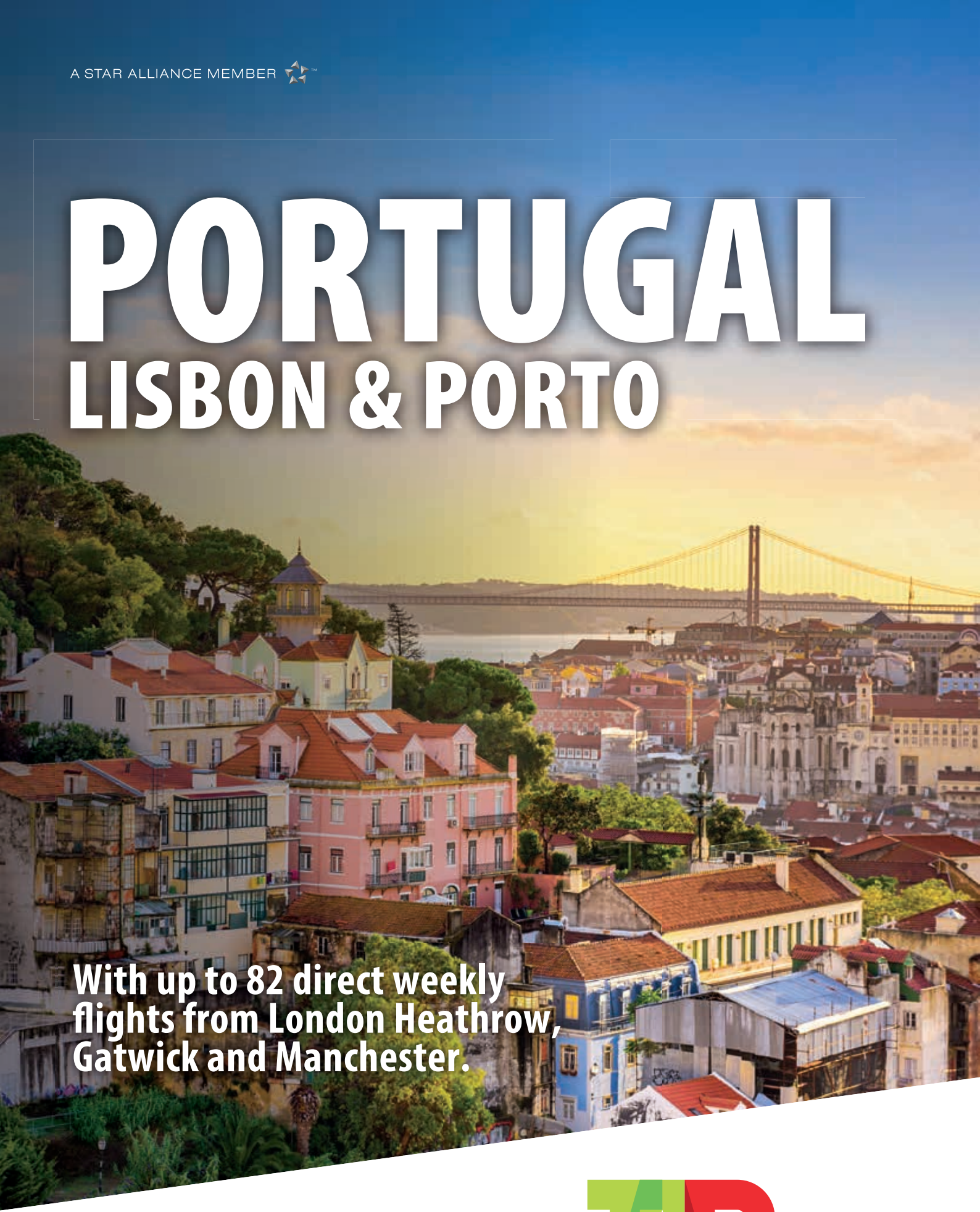
The most exclusive element is found on the top deck, where the Regency Suite is big enough and glamorous enough to have a baby grand Steinway piano in your Art Deco living room, next to a shimmering private cocktail bar. The personal spa has a mini-pool, sauna and solarium. VIP status includes dinner with the ship's captain and a complimentary cocktail party for eight, as well as daily canapés and your own butler.

Every other cabin is a suite and has its own balcony. And there are plenty of activities to vary the cruise, including Gourmet Explorer Tours that take you to local markets and restaurants at each stop, a well-stocked library and a lively card room, as well as the usual on-deck swimming pools. At night there's a full casino and a cabaret theatre.

If all that whets your appetite, the cruise routes for this ship are extensive. It sails from Miami to Barcelona, London to Reykjavik, Stockholm to Copenhagen, around Italy and more. And children sail for less than half price on some routes.

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

PORTUGAL
LISBON & PORTO



With up to 82 direct weekly flights from London Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester.

For further information or to book, call

Wexas Travel on 020 7838 5958

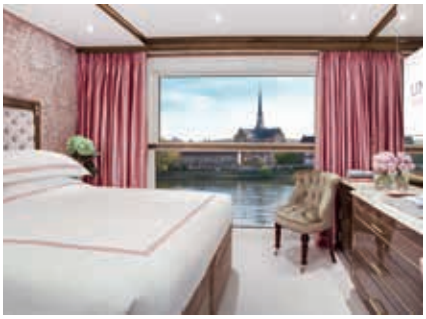
TAP PORTUGAL

CRUISE

S S Joie de Vivre

Billed as a 'super-yacht on the Seine', this boutique boat is the newest offering from Uniworld, specialists in river cruising. It has just two decks, making it small enough to dock in the heart of Paris and ensuring an intimate voyage down the rivers of France. Routes run from Paris to Normandy and back, pausing for Monet's garden at Giverny, the medieval city of Rouen or the Palace of Versailles. Possible excursions include Richard the Lionheart's Château Gaillard, the D-Day landing beaches and the historic Bayeux tapestry.

All this is done in fine French style, with on-board facilities designed to wrap you in Parisian chic. The lounge is filled with art and antiques and the decor has signature accents inspired by twentieth-century Gallic design, from the Golden Twenties to the free-spirited Sixties. Eating is in Le Bistro, where classic French cuisine is served in the style of a sidewalk cafe. Or there's Claude's Supper Club,



a glitzy diner hosting live music and iconic French films, or in the Restaurant Le Pigalle and the Salon Toulouse. All serve farm-to-table cuisine and local wines.

During the day you can recharge in the onboard spa and wellness centre, Club L'Esprit. As well as beauty and wellbeing treatments, there's yoga, a resistance pool and a fitness centre for workouts – to be followed by a healthy smoothie at L'Espirit Bar. And then perhaps a dip in the enclosed, heated swimming pool.

For a quieter moment, lovers of French food and wine can spend time in Le Cave des Vins, the show kitchen, watching and learning from the onboard chef. Under his guidance you can even prepare your own seven-course meal, then enjoy it with wine pairings prepared by the sommelier.

The 54 state rooms are bright with pretty fabrics and big windows. Also there are two Royal Suites and eight Junior Suites. All have made-to-order Savoir beds and marble-lined bathrooms. Meanwhile on the Deck de Montmartre there's a giant walk-on chess board and comfortable seating ideal for enjoying the ever-changing river views.

The *Joie de Vivre* was launched this year by Joan Collins, on a spring day in Paris among yellow tulips and white balloons. In the background was the Eiffel Tower. 'I am honoured to be the Godmother of the *Joie de Vivre*,' she said, 'and welcome guests from all over the world to fall in love with Paris just as I have.'

ATLANTIC CANADA

Atlantic Canada
New Brunswick • Prince Edward Island
Newfoundland & Labrador • Nova Scotia

CANADA
KEEP EXPLORING

Spread over 43,000 kilometres of diverse coastline, the four provinces that make up Atlantic Canada showcase a shared appreciation of unique wildlife, fresher-than-fresh seafood, and, above all, the natural world. End days spent chasing whales, hiking mountain-framed cliffs and kayaking through forest-clad rivers with salmon delicacies and a year-round programme of festivals predicated on that famous Canadian cheer. Yet, although there's a culture shared, there's much to separate each province, whether it's the red-sand beaches of Prince Edward Island or the dramatic icebergs of Newfoundland & Labrador. What's more, as the closest North American destination to Europe, it's all just a 5–6 hour flight from the UK, with non-stop services departing from Gatwick, Heathrow, Glasgow and Dublin.

Hopewell Rocks, New Brunswick

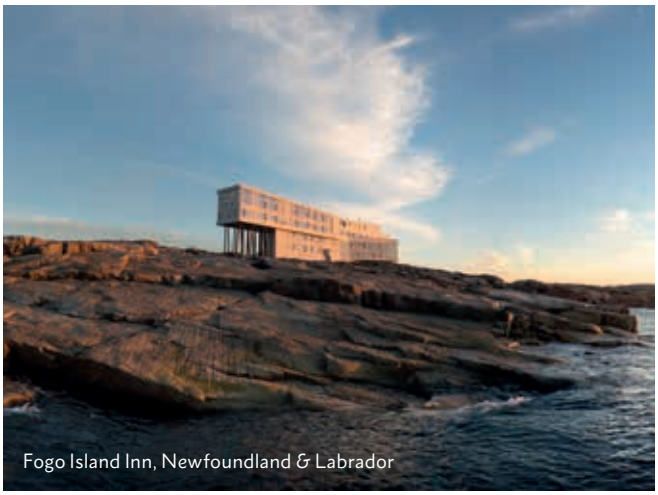
NEW BRUNSWICK

The power of Atlantic Canada's eponymous ocean is most keenly felt at New Brunswick's Hopewell Rocks. Here, you can walk among giant sandstone formations in the morning, and, in the afternoon, return to kayak among their peaks, 50 feet higher. If you head out further onto the Bay of Fundy, you'll be entering a fertile whale feeding ground, while the Fundy Isles are ideal for a day or two spent island hopping.

The bay is also lined by the Fundy National Park where hiking trails lead to waterfalls hidden among old-growth Acadian forests and low tide offers the chance to walk on a lunar sea floor. And, if you can tear yourself away from the province's 50-or-so beaches, head to Fredericton. It hosts the highest concentration of award-winning craft breweries in the Maritimes, the superb Harvest Jazz & Blues Festival and over 88 kilometres of walking routes, many leading along the scenic Saint John River.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Newfoundland & Labrador offers the chance to experience unique culture and nature on a grand scale. To combine the two, head to St. John's. Here you can watch the sun rise from Cape Spear National Historic Site, the most easterly point in North America, after exploring the colourful streets of its historic, weatherboard-clad harbourfront.


Fogo Island Inn, Newfoundland & Labrador

Then, meander the contours of Conception Bay to Trinity. The region offers the chance to get up close to humpback whales before you continue to a pair of national park favourites; there's Terra Nova's boreal-forest wilderness and the inimitable Gros Morne. As one of the province's four UNESCO World Heritage Sites, ancient glaciers and great continental shifts have rendered everything from giant fjords to towering mountains at the latter. The province also offers the chance to stay at some unique accommodation. Get away to your very own lighthouse on Ouirpon Island or escape to the hot tubs of Fogo Island Inn, the stilted contemporary masterpiece pictured above.

NOVA SCOTIA

Although Nova Scotia shares the Bay of Fundy's whales with New Brunswick, it enjoys an identity all of its own. It's a land of welcoming locals and rolling hills hidden behind towering sea cliffs – scenery exemplified by the Cape Breton Highlands National Park. Here, one of the world's most scenic drives – the Cabot Trail – showcases everything from eagle-plied mountains and cragged coastlines to river canyons and old-growth forests dotted with the iconic Canadian moose.

Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia is also home to Atlantic Canada's largest city – Halifax. A seaport at heart, it's where much of Canada's diverse population first made land, a struggle memorialised by the superb Canadian Museum of Immigration. Boardwalk strolls will also bring you between seafood restaurants, pretty Victorian gardens and Keith's Brewery, one of the oldest working breweries in North America. There's also the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, which tells the story of the city's seafaring heritage and fateful connection to the Titanic.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Daring to jut into the windswept Gulf of St. Lawrence, Prince Edward Island is fissured into a spectacular coastline, best taken in on scenic drives. Highlights include the island's homonymous national park, where sun-blessed beaches front a network of criss-crossing hiking trails. In turn, the south shore is marked by dramatic ochre cliffs – the island's distinctive icon – that crumble into bright-red

Kayaking, Prince Edward Island

sands. It's here that you'll also be treated to sheltered, warm waters, ideal for a summer swim or kayaking session.

However, it's perhaps the island's eastern tip that presents its most interesting proposition – 'singing sand'. So called for the squeaking sound made when you walk along them, it's a phenomenon caused by their uniquely high quartz content. But, Prince Edward Island is much more than its good looks. The Cavendish Beach Music Festival is one of Canada's largest country concerts while, across 30 top-rated courses, the island is also the country's premier golfing destination, attracting amateurs and professionals alike.

For more information, or to book your Atlantic Canada holiday, call a Wexas specialist on **020 7838 5958** or visit **wexas.com**

GLOBAL HOT SPOTS

1 EGYPT

Political and terrorist tensions continue to erupt into violence countrywide. In December, six police were killed by a bomb on Pyramid Road in Giza, and 25 people were killed in an attack on an orthodox cathedral in Abbaseya, Cairo. The Sinai peninsular remains highly volatile due to tribal and Islamicist clashes with security forces. Unexplained air incidents have included a passenger plane crashing in northern Sinai en route from Sharm el Sheikh to St Petersburg, and another disappearing over the Mediterranean en route from Paris to Cairo. There is a general threat of kidnapping, particularly in remote desert areas.

2 MALAYSIA

There is a high threat from terrorism. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places visited by foreigners.

There is a threat to foreigners of kidnapping and criminality on the eastern coast of Sabah and in particular the islands close to the Sulu Archipelago in the southern Philippines. There has been an increase in kidnapping by groups operating from the southern Philippines. The Abu Sayyaf Group, based in the Philippines, has kidnapped foreigners from the east coast of mainland Sabah, the islands and the surrounding waters. A number of hostages have been murdered by them. Some groups in the southern Philippines, including ASG, have pledged allegiance to ISIS and are likely to regard Westerners as legitimate targets. Commercial shipping companies have been advised to adopt heightened vigilance when navigating the Sulu and Celebes Seas.

3 MEXICO

There have been protests across Mexico following petrol price rises in January. These included road blocks and looting. Travellers should avoid demonstrations and isolated roads.

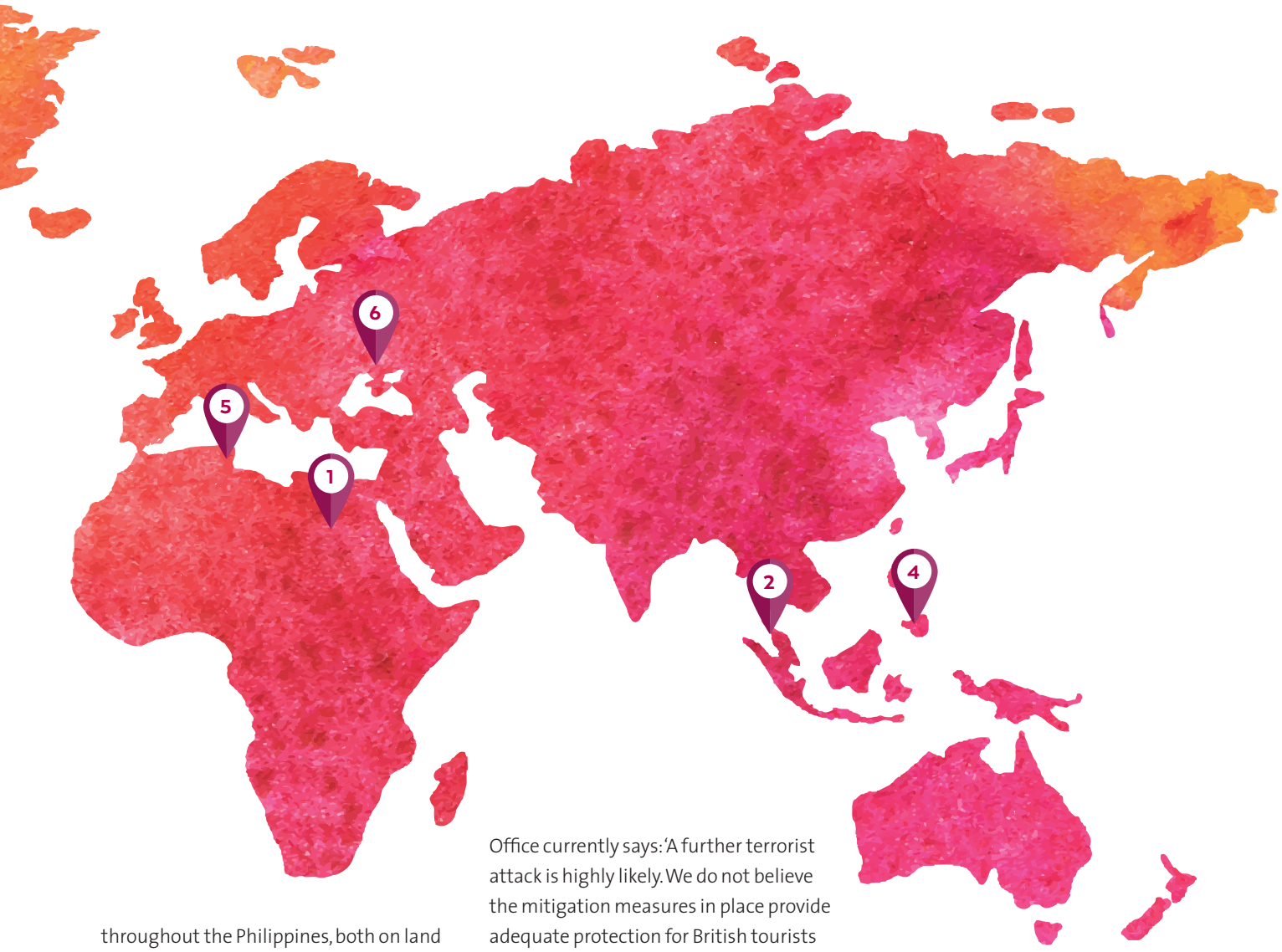
Drug-related violence is a problem in the northern states (Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Tamaulipas, Sinaloa and Durango) and also in Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacán and Nayarit. Armed clashes between security forces and drug groups can occur at any time without warning.

Elsewhere, crime and violence remain serious problems. Many local and foreign businesses hire private security. The government tries to protect major tourist destinations like Cancun, Playa del Carmen, Cozumel, Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta. But there have been armed crimes around tourist areas in Acapulco, six people were shot dead at a music festival in Playa del Carmen in January, and violent car-jackings affect the Pacific Highway. In Mexico City and elsewhere, passengers have been robbed and assaulted by unlicensed taxi drivers: travellers should use the regulated *sitio* taxis from authorised cab ranks.

4 PHILIPPINES

There is a high threat from terrorism throughout the country. A bomb attack on a market in Davao City, Mindanao, killed more than a dozen people in September 2016. Another at a boxing match in Hilongos, Leyte, injured over 30 people in December. A bomb was defused outside the US embassy in Manila in November. Attacks can be indiscriminate, including airports, shopping malls, public transport and places of worship.

There has been an increase in kidnapping of foreign nationals, including attacks targeting foreigners and tourists since late 2015. This threat extends



throughout the Philippines, both on land and at sea, but is particularly acute in the south. A number of hostages have been murdered.

The UK Foreign Office advises against all travel to western Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago, because of terrorist activity and clashes between the military and insurgent groups. It also advises against all but essential travel to the remainder of Mindanao and to the south of Cebu province, including Dalaguete and Badian.

5 TUNISIA

A state of emergency has been in place since 2015, when 38 tourists were killed on a beach in Sousse and 21 tourists were killed at a museum in Tunis. The Foreign Office currently says: 'A further terrorist attack is highly likely. We do not believe the mitigation measures in place provide adequate protection for British tourists in Tunisia at the present time.'

6 UKRAINE

The security situation in south-eastern parts of Donetsk and Luhansk remains highly unstable, with ongoing clashes between Ukrainian armed forces and Russian-backed armed separatists. The UN calculates this has resulted in some 10,000 deaths and the internal displacement of up to 1 million people.

Russian forces and pro-Russian groups control Crimea. Following an illegal referendum, Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014 and tensions remain high. The Crimean sea ports have been designated by the Ukrainian authorities as closed to international shipping.

7 USA

Entry requirements are under review as President Trump's controversial 'travel ban' is challenged in the US courts. At time of writing, a second version of the ban proposed to allow in foreign nationals with pre-existing valid permissions, but blocked new entries from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. British travellers who are dual nationals of these countries were not affected. British travellers who are dual nationals of Iraq should note the unchanged requirement to get a visa for entry to the USA. All travellers are advised to check latest developments.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH EXPLORE CHARLESTON

DARLING ESCAPES

WHERE TO TRAVEL FOR CHARM, CULTURE & CUISINE

There is something special, something alluring, about **Charleston, South Carolina**. Surrounded by pristine barrier islands and five distinctive beach towns, Charleston is a city & sea destination like no other. For a list of award-winning hotels & resorts, insider tips on where to dine, and a calendar of cultural events, visit **Wexas.com/Charleston** or call **020 7838 5958**.

@EXPLORECHARLESTON
@EXPLORECHS

Charleston
SOUTH CAROLINA

USA
VisitTheUSA.co.uk

Charleston, SOUTH CAROLINA

Spend a day wandering amid Charleston's colonial mansions and crepe myrtle trees to discover what inspired noted artist Alfred Hutty in 1920 to telegram his wife, *"Come quickly, have found heaven."*

THE PENINSULA

From the upbeat vibe of upper King Street to the rarefied scenery tucked south of Broad Street, Charleston's fascinating juxtaposition of new and old exudes a sense of *joie de vivre* that makes it a "must visit" destination. Award-winning boutique hotels and internationally acclaimed restaurants abound.

THE PLANTATIONS

Like the dazzling plumage of a peacock, sprawling 17th-century plantations surround the Charleston peninsula. The delicate scents of tea olive trees, Carolina Jessamine, climbing roses, and wisteria perfume the air throughout the year.

THE PICTURESQUE ISLANDS

With a rare combination of geography, latitude and attitude, the area's nearly 90 miles of coastline has considerable eco appeal. Five distinctive beach towns and acclaimed seaside resorts such as **Kiawah Island Golf Resort** and **Wild Dunes Resort** offer tennis, golf, and breezy relaxation.

BEGUILING BEAUTY

Old World Charm in the New World

Full of picturesque scenery, sunny weather, and cuisine that delights, **Charleston** offers something special to travellers. **And our favourite holiday spot has a secret:** It is really one beloved destination offering three different getaways. The famed **peninsula city** is surrounded by pristine barrier islands and **beach towns**, as well as sprawling **plantation estates**—say hello to your new favourite holiday spot.

FOR INSIDER TIPS ON WHERE TO STAY, EAT & PLAY: **WEXAS.COM/CHARLESTON**

Riding the world

Julian Sayarer, winner of this year's Stanford Dolman Travel Book Award, ponders his life-changing places

Julian Sayarer's *Interstate* is a searing and stylistically speedy account of hitch-hiking across the USA. En route he found an America familiar and friendly, frightening and frightened, flimsy and furious – a divided place that made Donald Trump's election seem both impossible and inevitable. These and other places on his roads have illuminated many ways ahead, as he recounts here.

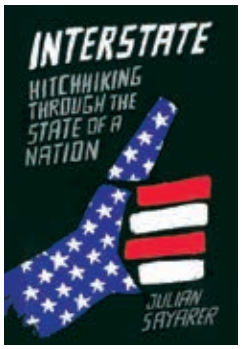
The Midlands

I grew up in a small town outside Leicester, the sort of place that doesn't have a lot going on and obliges you to work hard to find more interesting places. I got my interest in travel from riding a bicycle on the lanes of Leicestershire and Warwickshire, and it's a pretty flat, quite industrial, and often unremarkable countryside, but maybe that's good for the imagination – when you don't take oceans, mountains or even rural idylls for granted. I'm always grateful that my mum let me see if I, at the age of ten, could cycle the ten miles to my grandparents' house. I feel that sort of trust and independence really helped me become able to travel.

I generally feel we change, and happen to be in certain places at certain times. I resist the idea that those changes happen in some place of spectacular beauty. I also think it's part of being a decent writer of places, and culture, to be a little detached from them, and certainly from the idea that there's anything inherently spectacular about anything. Perhaps that sounds bleak, but it isn't meant to be... more an idea of seeing beauty in the ordinary.

London

I was born in Hackney and also spent the last ten years in London. I don't really go in for the 'tired of London, tired of life' school of thought, I'm probably ready to live elsewhere now, and it's a city that increasingly prices out creativity and quality of life. But it will always mean a lot to me. I've got my hidden corners of the city that I like – and then just watching a place change so much and so fast has its charms. I worked as a bicycle courier when I first moved back and for three years spent every day on the streets making deliveries for pittance pay, writing in a notepad when I could. It's satisfying now to ride the same streets, able to work on writing projects that mean something to me and hopefully to others. I feel lucky for that.



Julian Sayarer's latest book is *Interstate*, published by Arcadia, who also published *Messengers*, stories about his time as a bicycle courier in London.

Col du Lautaret, French Alps

After university I cycled to Istanbul, a second home to me. The day before, I'd cycled up Alpe d'Huez, a famous alp of the cycling world, and Lautaret was just on my road towards Italy. It's an empty slope, higher and above the tree line, and I remember the silence apart from the bells on the cattle, with snow on the peaks above, even in high summer. It probably confirmed my idea of what I wanted to be doing with my life, and that there were places and emotions out in the world that went beyond what I'd find in the life choices that were otherwise waiting for me.

Kazakhstan

Now is when I realise how central the bicycle is to all of this, but I think it's an amazing and very pure vehicle of travel. I cycled through Kazakhstan, with 200 miles between small villages in the steppe and occasionally a peasant family inviting you into their yurt for shade and food. It was so perfectly empty, unlike anywhere else I'd ever been, and it really drove home the vastness of the world. That sort of emptiness has a way of making you feel that being a human is both really fortunate and entirely insignificant.

Oregon, Pacific Coast

Similar to Kazakhstan really, but with an ocean – and again on a bicycle. With the Pacific in sapphire, dense forest over my shoulder, and the bright sun white and shining on the ocean.... There were enormous trunks of driftwood washed up on the beach, and the scale of the world just felt so vast and beautiful.

VisitTheUSA.co.uk

DISCOVER New England

Discover New England

Hugging the northeast corner of the USA, New England comprises Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont. Here, a rich colonial history plays out over fascinating cities and pretty villages while scenic roads bring you away from white-sand beaches and idyllic lighthouses to an interior defined by mountain panoramas, expansive lakes and brilliant autumn foliage.

THE PAST LIVES IN THE PRESENT

New England is the birthplace of America. It's where the Pilgrim Fathers first landed, where the first shots of the American Revolution rang out and where the Industrial Revolution began – its wealth evidenced to this day in the region's grand mansions. In between, you can visit charming villages with British names and architecture that all feels strangely familiar.

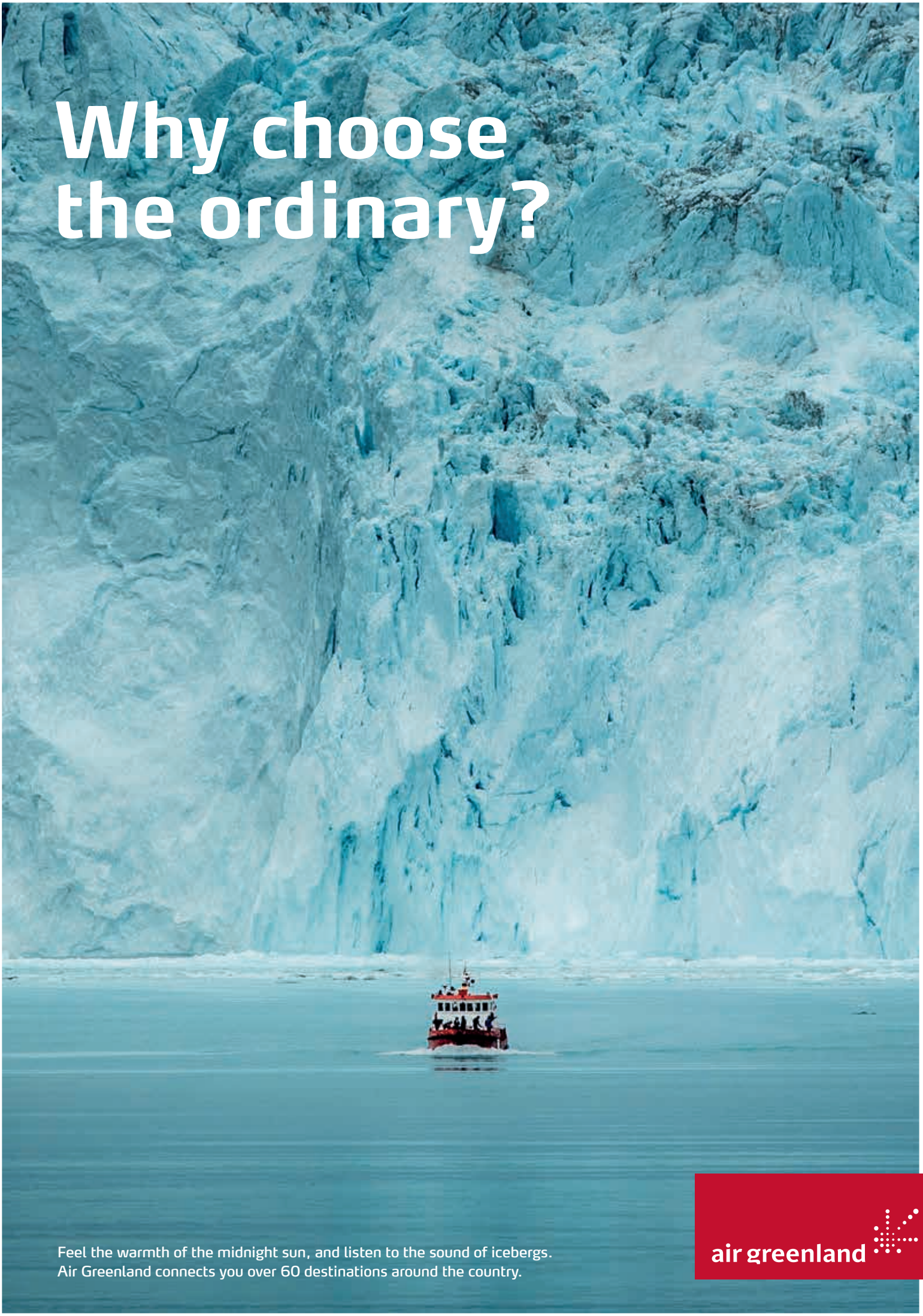
A SCENIC WONDER

From the dense and vibrant colours of autumn to the idyllic beaches of Cape Cod, Rhode Island and Connecticut, New England is full of natural beauty. Discover the expansive White Mountains of New Hampshire, the rugged coastline and iconic lighthouses of Maine and the romantic covered bridges of Vermont. Whether you're taking to the winter slopes or hiking, cycling and zip lining through the picturesque countryside, there's never a bad time to explore New England's outdoor playground.

ON THE CULINARY TRAIL

New England is a foodie's dream. The freshest oysters, lobsters, clams and fish are harvested along the coast while the region's agricultural heartlands are famous for everything from cranberries, apples and blueberries to maple syrup, ice cream and artisan cheeses. They're culinary delights showcased across sophisticated city restaurants and farm-to-table countryside dining. Wash it all down with award-winning beers from the region's microbrewery scene and wines from up-and-coming vineyards.

To book your New England holiday, contact a **Wexas** specialist on **020 7838 5958** or visit **WEXAS.COM**


Why choose
the ordinary?
Feel the warmth of the midnight sun, and listen to the sound of icebergs.
Air Greenland connects you over 60 destinations around the country.
air greenland