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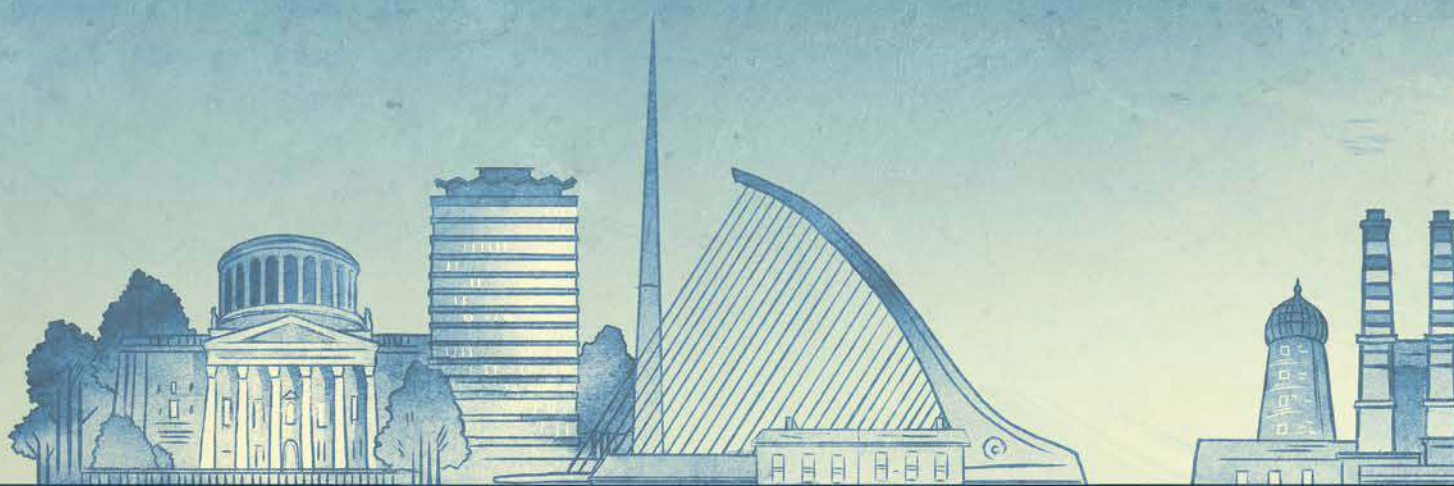
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April
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Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, Ballycastle, Co Antrim, Northern Ireland

IMAGE: Getty

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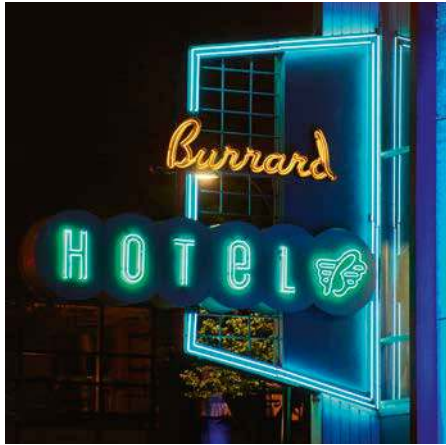
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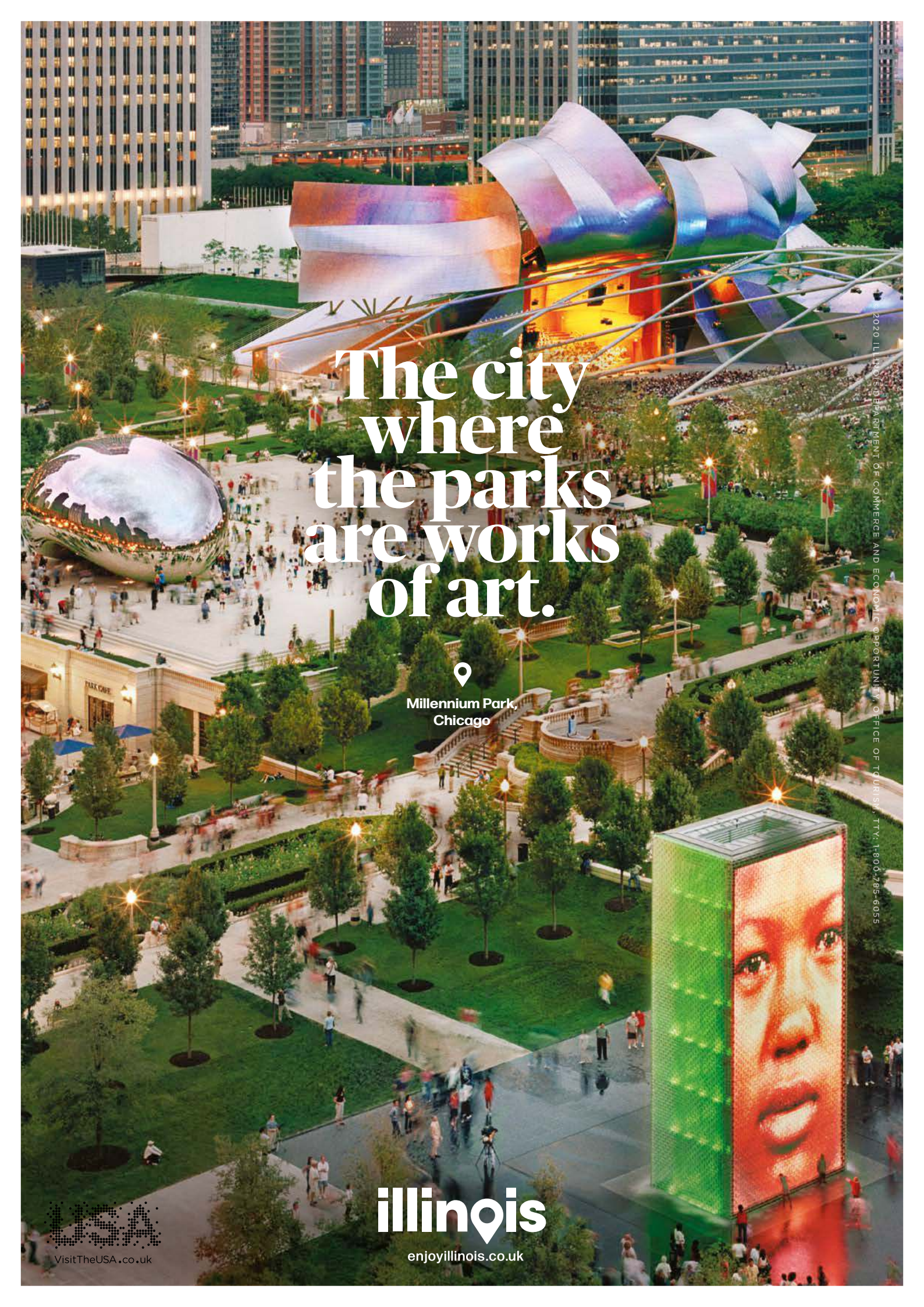
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Contributors



Pól Ó Conghaile

I've travelled all over the world, but home — Ireland — is where my heart is. I loved the challenge I was set: to look beyond the landscapes, history and tradition and get under the skin of life and culture across the island today. **IRELAND P.74**



Amelia Duggan

A road trip turned out to be the perfect way to track down monks, hippies and eco-warriors in remote corners of the New Mexico high desert — especially at dusk when the colours of the canyons deepen. **NEW MEXICO P.94**



Adrian Phillips

A forest slide, an ice-filled cave, a fairytale castle and legends of derring-do — the Salzburg region is a land of myth and adventure, where the hills are as alive with the cackle of witches as the strains of 'do-re-mi'. It's quite a ride. **AUSTRIA P.106**



Emma Gregg

Of all the African capitals I've visited, spotless, forward-thinking Kigali is one of the easiest to like. Travellers who breeze through on their way to Rwanda's superstar attraction — the mountain gorillas — are really missing out. **KIGALI P.138**



Julia Buckley

Bologna has escaped overtourism because it doesn't have any bucket-list attractions — unless you count the food. It's perfect for a weekend of sightseeing — wandering beneath the famous porticoes and enjoying memorable food and drink. **BOLOGNA P.148**

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Editor's letter

If you haven't been to Ireland for a while, you might be surprised to learn what you've been missing. It's a destination — both Northern and Republic — that's suffered from stereotypes and misconceptions for decades, yet is now embracing its future while at the same time celebrating its history and heritage. From craft spirits and murals to bands and design galleries, Ireland is more multifaceted and intriguing than ever before.

After more than a decade of record-breaking tourism growth, the island of Ireland now receives well over 11 million visitors a year, with around 40% of these from Great Britain. Not surprising, perhaps, given the proximity. But, according to the figures, over a third of those visiting in 2018 were doing so for the first time. And it's the travellers venturing beyond Dublin — to the likes of Belfast, Donegal, Kerry and Galway — who are driving new experiences and attractions.

With Dublin's new Museum of Literature Ireland honouring the island's storytellers; Galway's status as European Capital of Culture; and *Game of Thrones* continuing to draw visitors to County Antrim and beyond, Ireland is calling.

PAT RIDDELL, EDITOR

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HIGHLIGHTS



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SNAPSHOT

Houssain Boulkil, Morocco

I first met Houssain 'Action' Boulkil more than 10 years ago, and whenever I'm in Ait Benhaddou — a town near the city of Ouarzazate in southern Morocco — I either stay at his guesthouse, La Fibule D'Or, or go to the roof terrace of his home to photograph star trails. Many years ago, tour operator Intrepid Travel helped Houssain set up his guesthouse and business has been growing ever since. On the day I took this shot, he welcomed me onto his terrace with a tray of mint tea. Houssain assures me that pouring it from a height like this aerates the brew and makes it taste better, although I suspect he likes doing it because it looks good. **STEVE DAVEY // PHOTOGRAPHER**

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Editors' picks

We've picked out some of the latest highlights from the world of travel

Double Dutch

Following the launch of its direct London-Amsterdam route, Eurostar will begin its much-awaited direct return service from Amsterdam on 30 April, linking the two cities in little over four hours. Rotterdam will also see a direct service to the capital, launching on 18 May. eurostar.com **CONNOR MCGOVERN**



A HELPING HAND

The Australian government has announced changes to the Working Holiday Visa to encourage tourism. British passport-holders under the age of 31 will now be able to count volunteer work in areas affected by recent fires as credit towards a second- or third-year visa. Read more about where to visit in the wake of the fires on p.159.

australia.com **TAMSIN WRESSSELL**

IN NUMBERS

ARGENTINA'S YEAR OF FOOTBALL

2020

this year, the country co-hosts the Copa América tournament with Colombia

14

the number of times the national side has won the coveted Copa América, second only to Uruguay's 15 wins

115 years

since the formation of its most successful team, Boca Juniors, founded by European immigrants

80

years since the legendary stadium, La Bombonera, opened its gates

690 pesos

the price of a ticket to tour the stadium, including a visit the Museo de la Pasión Boquense (£8.60)

AMELIA DUGGAN

Suffrage celebrations

WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History is celebrating 100 years since the 19th Amendment (which recognised women's right to vote) with two exhibitions: one on women's suffrage and one on the history of girlhood. si.edu

MARYLAND

The Maryland Office of Tourism is also shining the spotlight on women, with a busy calendar of informative events and fun initiatives throughout the state, from exhibitions and talks to a limited-edition Suffragette Stout. visitmaryland.org

NASHVILLE

Find out more about women's history at the Tennessee State Museum, which is set to open an 8,000sq ft, two-gallery exhibition on the state's suffrage movement. tnmuseum.org

ANGELA LOCATELLI



**BIG PICTURE***Bogra District, Bangladesh*

The annual red chilli harvest sees the fields of Bogra District, in the rural north of the country, transformed into vast carpets of crimson. Between August and October, women collect and sort the fruit, later drying the crop in the hot sun to preserve it. There are nearly 100 factories in the region, employing more than 2,000 workers — most of whom are paid around 160 Bangladeshi taka (£1.50) for a day's work. The process has remained virtually unchanged for centuries and is one of Asia's greatest visual spectacles.

MD TANVEER HASSAN ROHAN // PHOTOGRAPHER

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Mayflower

MAKING WAVES

This year, both sides of the Atlantic are gearing up for major celebrations to mark the 400th anniversary of one momentous maiden voyage to the New World

Home shores

As the city where it all began, Plymouth is readying itself for a year's worth of events to mark the 400th anniversary. There's the **MAYFLOWER CEREMONY**, held exactly 400 years to the day since the ship set sail for the New World (16 September) — which will bring together a 1,000-strong choir to perform a specially composed piece of music telling the ship's story and legacy. A few days later, the **MAYFLOWER MUSTER** will signal a one-time-only gathering of military ships in Plymouth Sound. Central to the port's celebrations this year is the opening of the hotly anticipated cultural centre, **THE BOX**. Occupying the site of the former city museum and art gallery, the centre's grand opening will be marked with Mayflower 400: Legend and Legacy, the largest Mayflower exhibition in history and a look at the journey, those who took it and the settlement itself. visitplymouth.co.uk plymhearts.org

Across the pond

Meanwhile, behind the scenes in Massachusetts, craftsmen are finishing restoration of the **MAYFLOWER II** — a full-scale replica of the ship that was originally built in 1955 as a gift to the US following the Second World War. The faithful reproduction has been docked in Connecticut since 2016, but will sail into Boston Harbour alongside the historic *USS Constitution* this spring to great fanfare. It will dock in Charlestown Navy Yard for a six-day maritime festival from 14-19 May, so expect live music, ship tours and food trucks. There's also the **PLYMOUTH 400 COMMEMORATION OPENING CEREMONY** (24 April) at the city's Memorial Hall, with a programme of speakers, visual and performing arts, and the **OFFICIAL MARITIME SALUTE** (27-28 June) — a huge regatta of wooden ships, yachts and pleasure craft in the harbour. massholiday.co.uk mayflower400.org.uk **HELEN WARWICK**

DON'T MISS

The Embarkation Festival, which is dedicated to the traditions, cuisine and music of the original settlers and the native Wampanoag along the waterfront in Plymouth, Massachusetts. plymouth400inc.org

IN NUMBERS

THE MAYFLOWER

2

the number of dogs taken on board alongside goats, pigs and chickens

3

the number of women on board who were at least six months pregnant

53

the number of passengers who survived the journey (the ship launched with 102)

98ft

the estimated length of the Mayflower

128

the number of days spent at sea — a long journey hampered by poor weather

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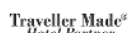


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VERSAILLES

French fancy

One of the world's most stately addresses will soon let guests live like royalty



From this spring, deep-pocketed visitors will be able to bed down in serious style as Airelles Château de Versailles, Le Grand Contrôle opens its doors.

This landmark opening is four years in the making and, set within the grounds of the palace, is the crowning glory to hotel brand Airelles' portfolio, which already counts outposts in Courchevel and Val d'Isère. Surrounds are suitably sumptuous — and authentic, too, thanks to renovations overseen by Parisian designer Christophe Tollemer, who's used the chateau's 1788 inventory to renovate the site as accurately as possible. Technology is cleverly concealed and kept to a minimum (no TVs, *merci*) to let the impressive ensemble of 18th-century furnishings and fittings take centre stage. But unlike the French monarchy of the day, the room count is modest: just 14 boudoirs make up Le Grand Contrôle, each finished off with decor regal enough to make even the

most discerning Marie Antoinette feel right at home.

But all that opulence comes at a cost — a cool €1,300 (£1,093) a night, B&B, to be exact — but what really makes this palatial pad a cut above the rest is the access it offers. This is a unique chance to be immersed in French history and discover the world's most spectacular palace once the day-trippers have scuttled back to Paris. Guests can enjoy direct access to the beautiful Orangerie garden, browse the restored library and set off on behind-the-scenes tours of sites such as the Petit Trianon, a villa surrounded by gardens that was a favourite spot of the ill-fated queen herself.

And as this is France, no grand hotel opening would be complete without a culinary offering to match. Food comes from master chef Alain Ducasse, who updates old French classics with his distinctive high-end touch. airelles.com **CONNOR MCGOVERN**

Picks from the palace



SHOW TIME

Perfect parterres and sweeping vistas are highlights of a stroll through Versailles's rambling grounds, but it's the elaborate fountains that truly dazzle. This month, the annual season of fountain displays kicks off, with daily shows synchronised to musical scores. The after-dark shows (June-September) light up the Mirror Pool and Colonnade Grove. en.chateauversailles.fr

THE ROYAL TREATMENT

For more than three years, the Queen's State Apartments have been closed for major renovations, but on 16 April, the gilded doors will reopen once again as the splendour of the Queen's Guard Room and Marie Antoinette's bedchamber is finally unveiled. The rooms are a feast for the eyes, adorned with floral tapestries and dripping in gold leaf. en.chateauversailles.fr

DANCING IN THE DARK

Versailles might not be the obvious place for an electro concert, but Versailles Electro will take over the grand terraces beside the Hall of Mirrors and transform them into the grandest dancefloor in France. Back for its second year, the night will see music-lovers get their groove on to a lineup that includes DJ sets by French acts L'Impératrice and Justice. 23 May. chateauversailles-spectacles.fr

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DESIGN FESTIVALS

Bright ideas

The future's bright, the future's... art? These five festivals seek to explore whether design might be the answer to the issues of today



MILAN

The Italian powerhouse stands as a rather stylish beacon in Europe's cultural landscape, and its aesthetic excellence is set to come to fore this spring as **MILANO ART WEEK** arrives (14-19 April). A dynamic calendar of discussions, shows, performances and exhibitions take place in venues across the city, with big names for 2020 including Olafur Eliasson — the Danish-Icelandic artist whose works explore the relationship between art and nature — who's been commissioned by the Nicola Trussardi Foundation. **VENTURA CENTRALE** (21-26 April) meanwhile, sees international artists telling stories through visually impressive installations, all housed in the vaulted warehouses beneath Milan Centrale station.

And then there's the venerable **SALONE DEL MOBILE** (21-26 April) — the influential furniture fair — which is turning its attention to 'smart homes' as a way of combining aesthetics and technology for the future. Sustainability is also on the agenda, with many of this year's designers recycling previous years' stands, or upcycling materials for their exhibits. venturaprojects.com salonemilano.it

LILLE

After Mexico City's stint in 2018, the French city is revelling in its spell as World Design Capital 2020. It's the first time France has claimed the title, and throughout the year, the Greater Lille region is awash with artistic celebrations: expect everything from exhibitions on how design affects our lives to summer camps with artists and architects. wdo.org

QUERÉTARO

Universities, museums, designers, galleries and government bodies are joining forces for Querétaro Design Week, a four-day celebration of style in the beautifully baroque Mexican city. A must for design gurus, it aims to show how innovative design — in all its guises, from fashion to furniture — offers savvy solutions for modern issues. 2-5 May. queretarodesignweek.com

LONDON

Now in its 11th year, Clerkenwell Design Week returns with a colourful calendar of art- and architecture-focused talks, walks and installations in streets and showrooms across the neighbourhood. It's a real local celebration of design, with many of the exhibitions exploring the quirky history of this corner of the capital. 19-21 May. clerkenwelldesignweek.com

EINDHOVEN

The Dutch city is well-known for its innovative ideas, thanks in no small part to the Dutch Design Week, which rolls around each autumn. The festival is a highlight of any creative calendar and is the largest such festival in northern Europe, with more than 350,000 visitors filling the city for exhibitions, debates and lectures on the future of design. 17-25 October. ddw.nl
CONNOR MCGOVERN



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ON THE TRAIL

New Zealand

Many of the North Island's natural wonders are woven into local Maori culture. Discover some of the best on a rural road trip. Words: Liz Dodd

1 WHAKAREWAREWA FOREST

In this labyrinth of soaring Douglas firs, 100-year-old redwoods and dense ferns, 100 miles of gnarly dirt tracks promise some of the best mountain biking in the world. The most spectacular views can be found on a treewalk through the canopy, where walkways and staircases weave through the treetops to offer tantalising glimpses of the mountains and lakes of Rotorua's volcanic landscape. treewalk.co.nz

2 PŌHUTU GEYSER

The Southern Hemisphere's largest active geyser is named after the Maori word for 'explosion' — a name it lives up to twice an hour when it bubbles to life and sends steamy water arcing above the treeline. Pōhutu sits within Te Puia, a centre for Maori cultural experiences and a park that's famous for its boiling mud pools and craggy lunar landscape. The Maori at Te Puia are the *kaitiaki* (guardians) of New Zealand's indigenous arts and crafts, such as bone carving.

3 TAMAKI MAORI VILLAGE

If you're keen to discover more about Maori culture, spend the night in a traditional Maori *whare moe* (carved sleeping house) within this lovingly preserved village in the shadow of Mount Tarawera. Traditional Maori legends are kept alive here by village storytellers who spin tales about the gods and monsters that shaped the North Island. tamakimaorivillage.co.nz

4 MOUNT TARAWERA

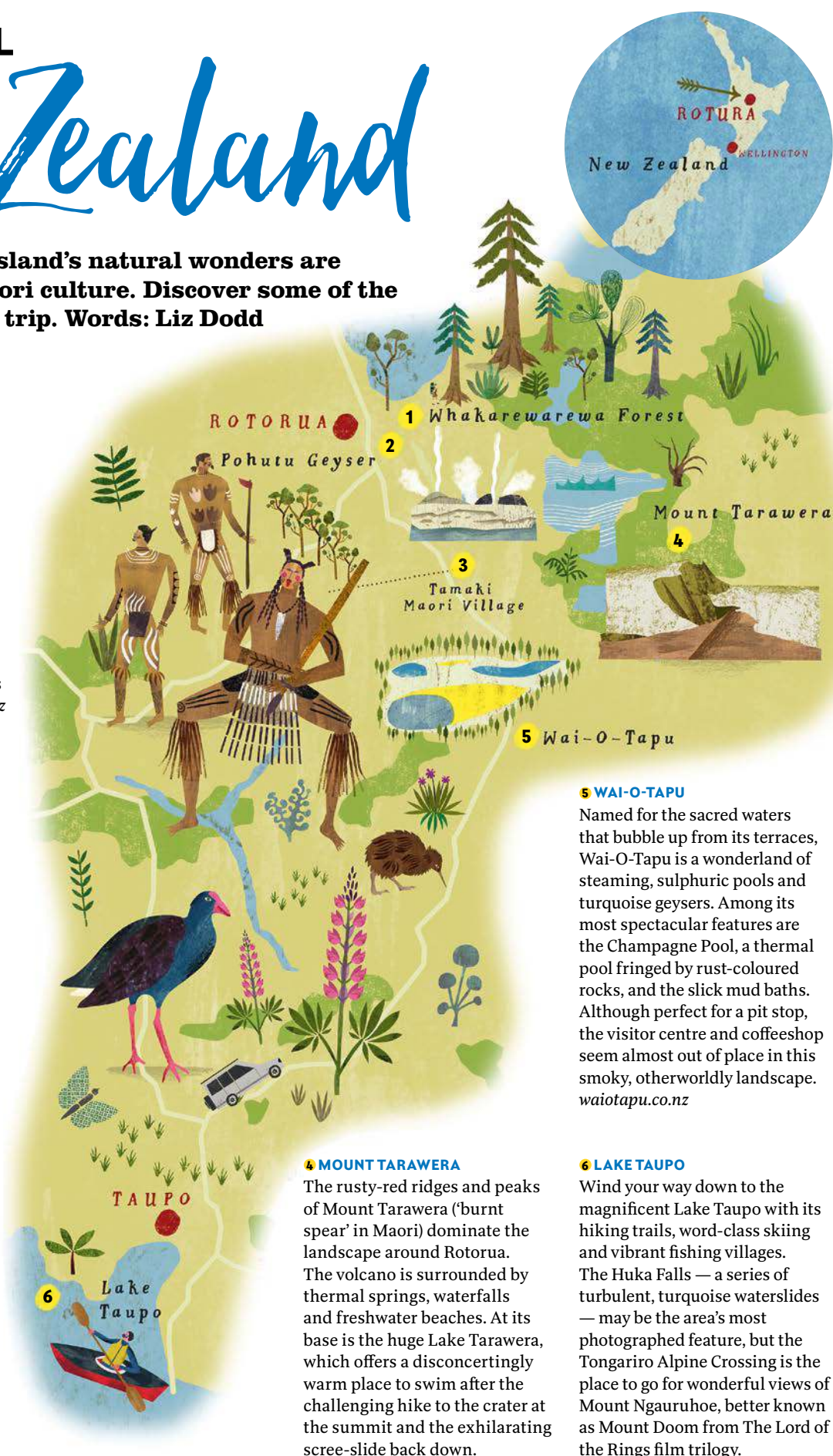
The rusty-red ridges and peaks of Mount Tarawera ('burnt spear' in Maori) dominate the landscape around Rotorua. The volcano is surrounded by thermal springs, waterfalls and freshwater beaches. At its base is the huge Lake Tarawera, which offers a disconcertingly warm place to swim after the challenging hike to the crater at the summit and the exhilarating scree-slide back down.

5 WAI-O-TAPU

Named for the sacred waters that bubble up from its terraces, Wai-O-Tapu is a wonderland of steaming, sulphuric pools and turquoise geysers. Among its most spectacular features are the Champagne Pool, a thermal pool fringed by rust-coloured rocks, and the slick mud baths. Although perfect for a pit stop, the visitor centre and coffeeshop seem almost out of place in this smoky, otherworldly landscape. waiotapu.co.nz

6 LAKE TAUPU

Wind your way down to the magnificent Lake Taupo with its hiking trails, word-class skiing and vibrant fishing villages. The Huka Falls — a series of turbulent, turquoise waterslides — may be the area's most photographed feature, but the Tongariro Alpine Crossing is the place to go for wonderful views of Mount Ngauruhoe, better known as Mount Doom from *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy.

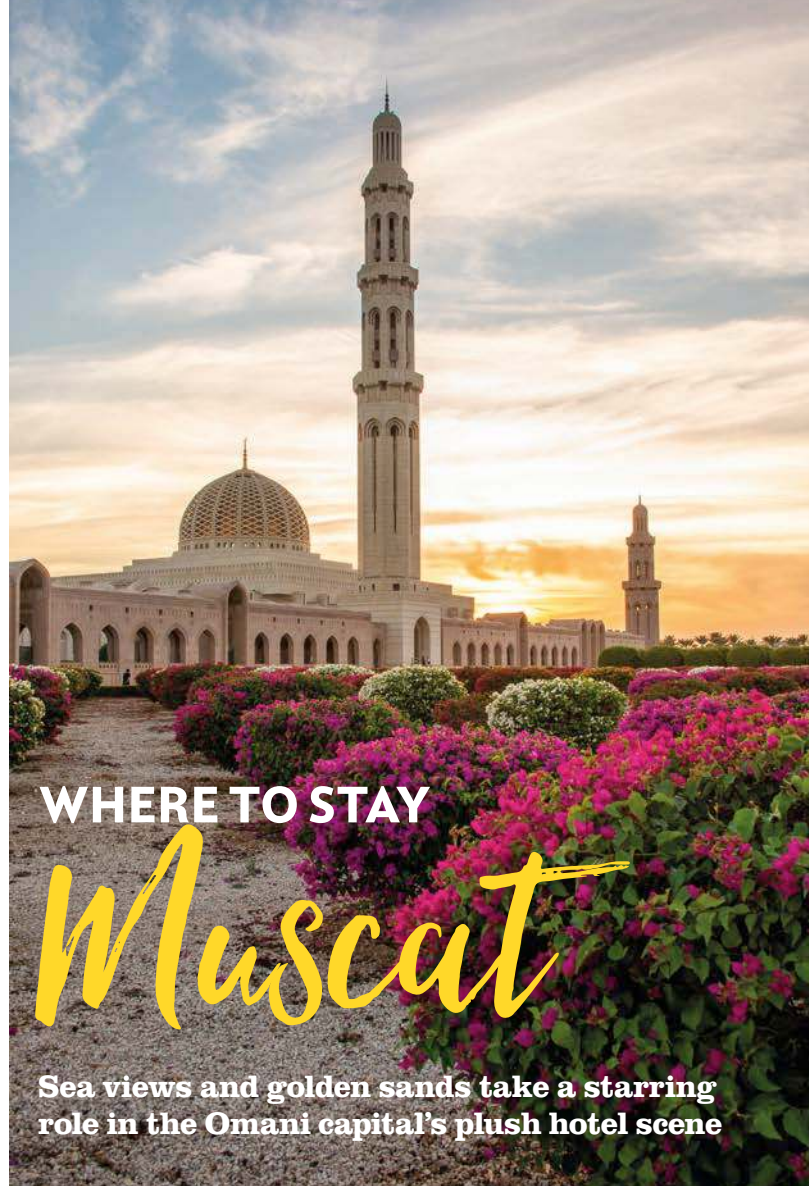


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1 W MUSCAT

When it comes to hotels, this swathe of the Middle East tends to be associated with sprawling luxury resorts, and Muscat is no exception. But Oman prefers its hotels a little more natural, which is why you'll see plenty of traditionally styled digs in this corner of the Arabian Peninsula.

Enter the W Muscat, which opened in September 2019 amid the bars and restaurants on the chic Shatti al-Qurum beachfront. The W brand is known as outré and outrageous, but here it toes a subtler line, with classic, Omani-inspired decor. Perhaps it's all toned down to keep the focus on the ever-blue Gulf of Oman, just beyond the balcony of each of the 279 rooms.

Not that the W underplays everything. The pool is accompanied by a mirrored bar, underwater loungers and florid cabanas, while the rooftop is home to the Siddharta Lounge by Buddha-Bar, which serves pan-Mediterranean food and drinks overlooking another pool and the sea beyond. This may not be as full-on as other Ws, but it still packs a punch: marble-lashed corridors, sassy fluorescent-coloured lighting and modern art everywhere, including a vast steel frankincense tree outside the entrance, and gold stools in the shape of camels in the bathroom. From £210. marriott.co.uk



2 MUSCAT HILLS RESORT

Life's a beach at these gorgeous mod con-equipped huts on the sands of the hotel's private bay. With a private outdoor terrace and al fresco bathroom, this is a rare chance to get back to nature in Oman — but you'll have air con, an Ibiza-style outdoor restaurant and sofas on the beach to keep it plush. There's also a diving school and a beach club with monthly international DJs. From £120, B&B. muscat hillsresort.com

3 WYNDHAM GARDEN MUSCAT AL KHUWAIR

This December 2019 opening is a business district bargain. Two pools, steam rooms and saunas, and a Brazilian steakhouse liven up the public areas, while the rooms stay just the right side of business chic, with bright feature walls of foliage photos and funky tiled-brick bathrooms. From £63. wyndhamhotels.com

4 KEMPINSKI HOTEL MUSCAT

With a four-mile strip of beach, this hotel doesn't need much else going for it; but actually, it's got plenty, from three pools to no fewer than seven bars, plus a bowling alley. Rooms are standard luxury rather than Oman-inspired, but families love the kids' club and the spa incorporates frankincense and rose into its treatments. From £170. kempinski.com **JULIA BUCKLEY**



FAMILY

Teen spirit

**Looking for travel inspiration for your teenagers?
Broaden their horizons with these inspiring trips**

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award has pulled together a list of 25 activities to help build confidence, independence and resilience among youngsters — and support positive mental health and physical wellbeing in the process. We pick four of our favourite and suggest an itinerary that fits the bill.

Set yourself a physical challenge

Learn survival skills at the Sani Resort on Greece's Halkidiki coast, courtesy of the new Bear Grylls Survival Academy. Lessons include camouflage, navigation, raft-building and foraging.

HOW TO DO IT: The BGSA Teen Club starts from €40 (£33.50) per day, per person. saniresort.gr

Spend time in nature

Head to Ecuador's Mashpi Lodge to experience 6,200 acres of cloud forest, soaring through the treetops on the Sky Bike and Dragonfly Canopy Gondola. Led by Mashpi's team of local naturalist guides, teens will learn how to safely navigate the forest on foot and observe the lodge's resident scientists at work in the lab.

HOW TO DO IT: \$1,340 (£1,030) per room per night, including shared transfers from Quito and all meals and guided activities and excursions within the reserve. Excludes international flights. mashpilodge.com

Travel somewhere new

It can be particularly rewarding for young people when they step out of their comfort zone, and there's nowhere better to do this than the wilds of South Africa. Scott Dunn's teen programme offers an African adventure with two unforgettable safari experiences, including a trip to Marakela National Park, before heading to the Leobo Private Reserve and concluding in buzzing Cape Town.

HOW TO DO IT: Prices from £6,000 a person, departing June. scottdunn.com

Experience a digital detox

Join Metropolitan Touring's island-hopping safari and bring biology to life with a trip to the Galápagos Islands. Twin it with a digital switch-off, and book day trips with expert guides, traversing the rim of the active Sierra Negra volcano and spotting whitetip reef sharks. Head to Santa Cruz Island for trips on the hotel's yacht, as well as snorkelling, surfing and kayaking.

HOW TO DO IT: From \$3,554 (£2,730) per person, double occupancy, including all accommodation, return inter-island flights, tours, excursions and meals. Excludes international flights. metropolitan-touring.com

MARIA PIERI

READ MORE
Check out the full list — ranging from learning about climate change to public speaking — at dofe.org/experience-list



DID YOU KNOW?

20% of 14-18-year-olds have never been for a walk or hike in the countryside, and 52% have never volunteered for their community

FROM TOP: Group hike to the Manto de la Novia waterfall in Banos, Ecuador; exploring the forest near Mashpi Lodge, Ecuador



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- sophisticated cultural life and heritage

visitjurmala.lv

JŪRMALA



INSIDE GUIDE

BRNO

Discover the youthful spirit of the Czech Republic's second city, with its quirky attractions and a surprising gastronomic scene

For a city of 400,000 — a significant chunk of whom are university students — there's a discernable buzz to Brno. Evenings are for dining out at the latest farm-to-table restaurant, and weekends are for shopping in the old market, checking out the newest speakeasy, or cycling out to South Moravia's patchwork of thriving vineyards. The city has serious historical and cultural credentials, too — its streets whisper of empires, occupations and a revolution (albeit the Velvet kind) — but it's the quality and lazy pace of local life and the infectious joie de vivre of the locals that's the real highlight of any visit.

Brno, you'll find, has a surprising penchant for odd monuments. A popular meeting spot is the **ASTRONOMICAL CLOCK** in Náměstí Svobody square — a futuristic, phallic sculpture out of which a glass marble pops each day at 11am. Another eye-catching flourish is the bronze **STATUE OF THE KNIGHT**, featuring Jobst of Moravia astride a 25ft tall giraffe-like steed in Moravian Square. Sights like these can be admired on a walking tour booked through the tourism office. ticbrno.cz/en

Below its charming array of ornate churches and towers, the historic centre has a secret, subterranean kingdom with a sinister history. Beneath the Zelný trh — or Cabbage Market — is a labyrinth of former torture chambers and dusty cellars, and even a pub, all of which can be toured with a costumed guide. Brno also has Europe's second-largest ossuary after Paris — visit the installation under **CHURCH OF ST JAMES** for a spooky display of bones. And at **10-7 BUNKER**, grab a map and start exploring the fascinating tunnels and anterooms of a former Cold War-era nuclear fallout shelter, which was classified as 'Top Secret' by the military until as recently as 1993. It also offers overnight rooms, tucked away in the depths of the bunker. 10-z.cz

For an equally outlandish but far more luxurious stay, check into the 10-room **ANYBODY HOTEL**, which also offers

immersive game play in rooms inspired by cult 1960 films like *La Dolce Vita* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. The concept has gone down a storm with locals, many of whom opt for multiple weekend staycations to sample different rooms. Rates start at €120 (£101) for two people, B&B. Pair a stay with a visit to cocktail bar extraordinaire **SUPER PANDA CIRCUS**. This Tokyo-inspired speakeasy has no drinks menu; instead, bartenders challenge guests to a game to determine their order. anybody.cz/superpandacircus.cz

To get a taste of the city's burgeoning gastronomic scene, start at the **CABBAGE MARKET**. Trading since the 13th century, its produce, food and flower stalls are open from spring to autumn, Monday to Saturday. Don't miss **BOZSKY KOPECEK** for vegan ice cream, and **DOBROKÁVA**, a coffee maker that will swap a flat white for a good deed.

Brno didn't always have sensational restaurants: over the past decade, talent and investment have returned to the city. Today the very best eateries can be scouted out with the help of stylish pocket guide **GOURMET BRNO**, published annually and available in tourist information centres. Not sure where to start? **CASTELLANA TRATTORIA** is lauded for its hedonistic Italian fare and extensive wine list, while intimate courtyard bistro **ATELIER COCKTAIL BAR & BISTRO** is popular for its creative dishes and wine pairing. castellana.cz/atelierbar.cz

Look beyond the city, too. Brno sits at the heart of South Moravia's legendary winelands, which include the picturesque slopes and valleys around the Pálava Hills and the fairytale Lednice Castle. Drive or cycle into the countryside for tastings at the historic cellars of **NEPRAŠ**, the award-winning **SONBERK**, and the new kid on the block **OBELISK**, stopping for lunch at the rustic restaurant **PENZION PASTUŠKA**. Vineyard tours and tastings can be organised through local travel agency Holiday Moments. vinarstvinepras.cz sonberk.cz vinarstviobelisk.cz pastuska.cz holidaymoments.cz **AMELIA DUGGAN**

LIKE A LOCAL

Adam Vodička's guide to Brno's nightlife

Adam is the local entrepreneur behind some of Brno's best bars, including high-end cocktail venue The Bar That Doesn't Exist barkteryneexistuje.cz



CABARET DES PÉCHÉS

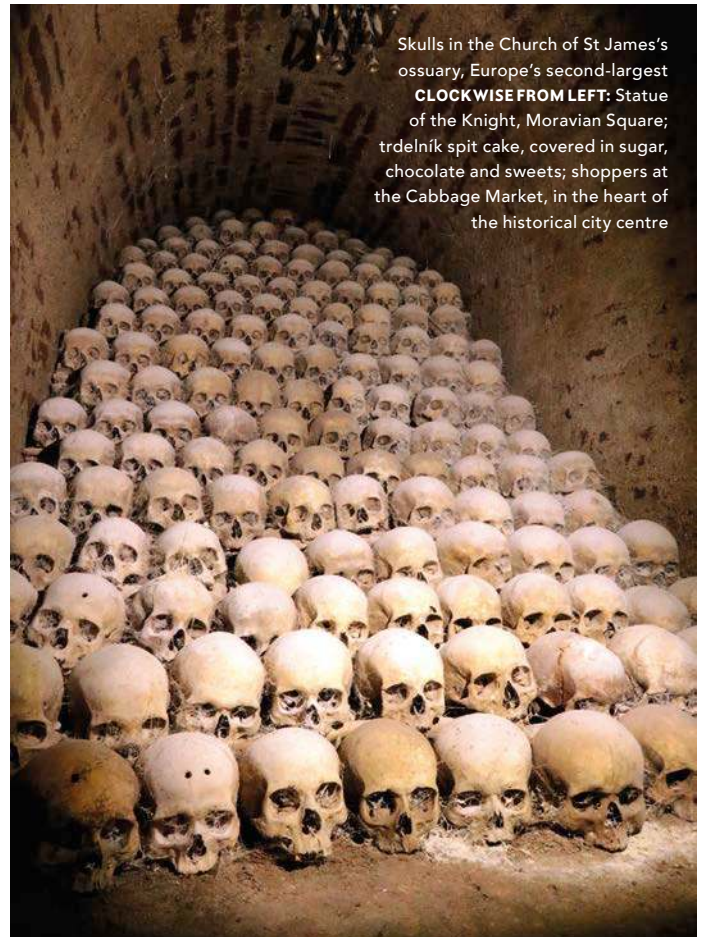
With a lavish, red velvet-clad interior, this new cabaret is a novel addition to the city's entertainment scene, hosting regular standup comedy nights. Unusually for Brno, you can even turn up here with a party of 10 or more. cabaretdespeches.com

4POKOJE (4ROOMS)

At this (almost) 24-hour bar, sip a cocktail made with homemade ingredients, or enjoy an eggs benedict breakfast washed down with Champagne. Staff are super helpful — if there's anything happening in the city, they'll know about it. miluju4pokoje.cz

LEMON MUSIC CLUB

In the Frisco/Castro district, check out the LGBTQ+-friendly Lemon Music Club. Later, greet the dawn in Denisovy sady, the gardens overlooking the twinkling city lights. facebook.com/lemonmusicclubbrno



Skulls in the Church of St James's ossuary, Europe's second-largest
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Statue of the Knight, Moravian Square; trdelník spit cake, covered in sugar, chocolate and sweets; shoppers at the Cabbage Market, in the heart of the historical city centre

ALTA BADIA

SOUTH TYROL'S HIDDEN GEM

Nowhere is the unique appeal of South Tyrol, Italy's northernmost region, distilled more potently than in Alta Badia.

THRILLING CYCLING

The winding curves of the Maratona dles Dolomites tour provide road cyclists with epic views of the Dolomites, while mountain bikers can experience the rush of the Sellaronda circuit's off-road trails.

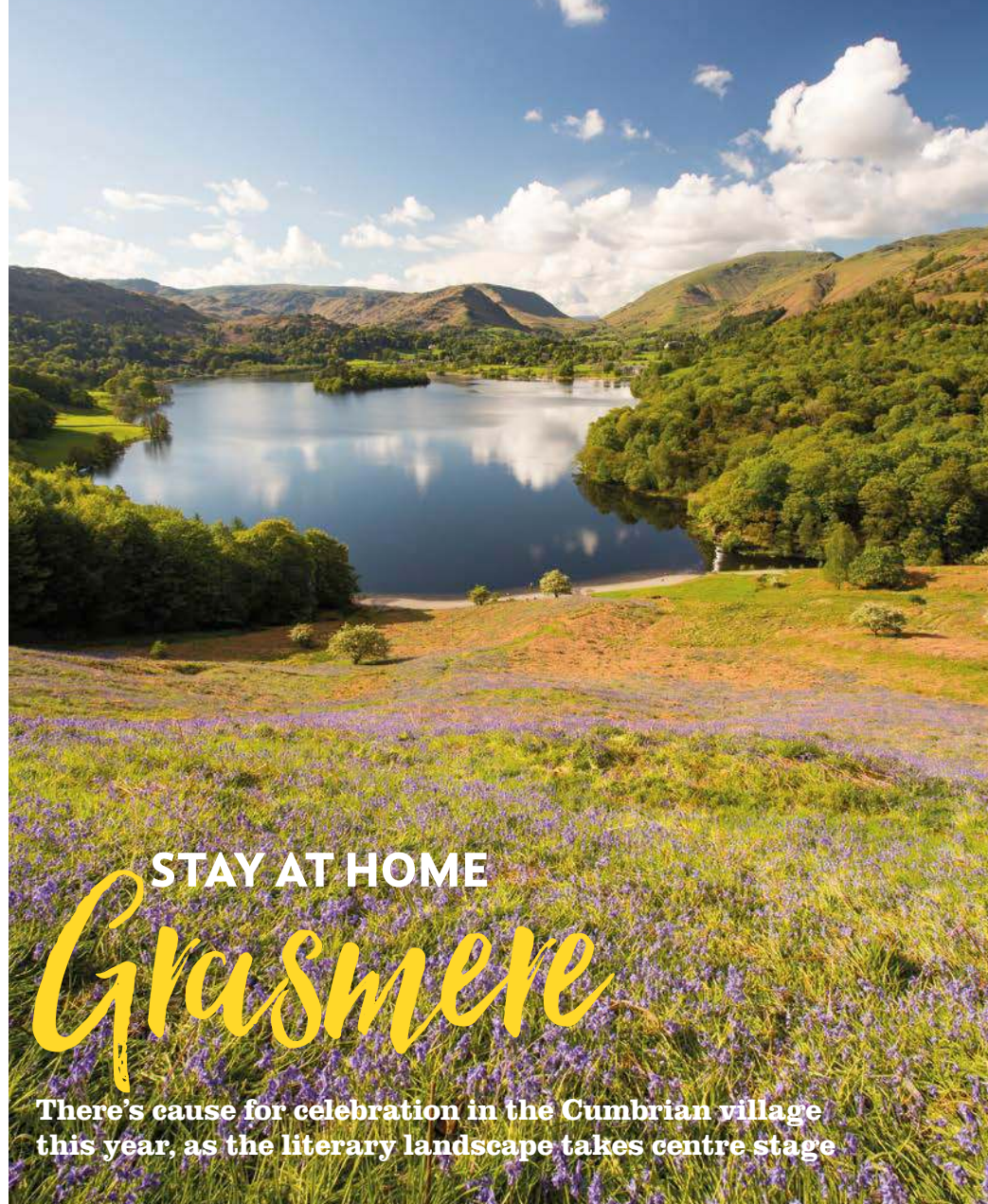
SPECTACULAR HIKES

Take leisurely walks through verdant pastures, or head off on multi-day treks through Puez-Odle and Fanes-Senes-Braies Nature Parks. Hiking and climbing enthusiasts can tackle summits and thrilling expeditions high up in the Dolomites amidst spectacular scenery.

AMAZING FOOD

Discover the thriving food culture of Alta Badia. The region is home to Michelin-starred restaurants, traditional farmhouse inns and cosy mountain huts showcasing local cuisine. altabadia.org/dolomites-unesco



**WHY GO**

This year marks 250 years since the birth of Romantic poet William Wordsworth, who spent most of his life in the Lake District. His home in the pretty village of Grasmere, hugging the lake of the same name, reopens to visitors this month following a £6.2m renovation. It's not all cultural, though, since the Lake District has plenty of natural attractions too. visitcumbria.com

WHAT TO DO

Dove Cottage, the former home of the Wordsworths, reopens on 7 April, with restored interiors, a recreation of the poet's orchard garden, new walking trails and a visitor centre. In the summer, the onsite museum also relaunches, with expanded exhibits of Wordsworth's manuscripts, books and fine art, new galleries exploring his life and a rooftop viewing deck where you can soak up the scenery. The landscape of the Lakes has inspired countless writers; experience the best of it on foot, whether it's a hike up Helvellyn or Scafell Pike or a stroll along the shore of Grasmere, Windermere or Thirlmere. wordsworth.org.uk

WE LIKE

Sam Read Bookseller has been a fixture on Grasmere's village green since 1887, and word has it novelist EM Forster would send letters home via the bookshop when he holidayed nearby. The store stocks plenty of volumes by and about the Romantics, as well as maps and guidebooks. samreadbooks.co.uk

DON'T MISS

Local brand Sarah Nelson's Grasmere Gingerbread has made this village the spiritual home of sweet-and-spicy biscuits. And the Grasmere Gingerbread Shop is the best place for buying some to take home. grasmeregingerbread.co.uk

WHERE TO EAT

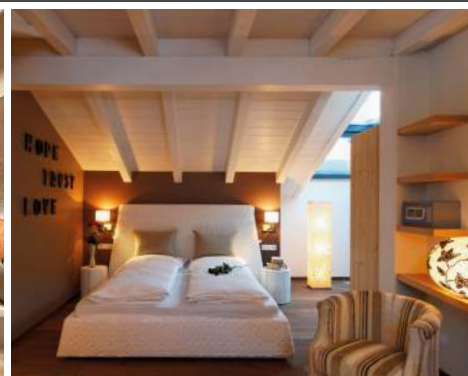
Michelin-starred restaurant with rooms The Forest Side sits on the edge of Grasmere in a converted Victorian mansion. The seasonally changing tasting menus feature ingredients that have been foraged, grown in the kitchen garden and fished or farmed locally. Expect the likes of homegrown carrots with preserved green walnut and cheese curds. theforestside.com **NICOLA TRUP**

WHERE TO STAY

Langdale Hotel's peaceful setting makes it well worth the 10-minute drive from Grasmere, especially if you check into one of the Waterside rooms, which come with terraces jutting out over a babbling brook. There's also a pool and sauna, plus a huge spa at Brimstone, Langdale's sister hotel, on the same estate. From £140, B&B. langdale.co.uk



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The Word

STEP OUTSIDE

We celebrate books that embrace the great outdoors, with all its buds and blooms

The England Coast Path is rumbling towards completion (it's scheduled to fully open in the latter half of this year) and to celebrate, we can expect a bevy of books exploring the new route, which will be the world's longest managed coastal path when finished. Journalist Stephen Neale worked as a path surveyor for the project in 2018, spending months seeking out more than 1,000 of the best places to wild swim, hunt for fossils and eat seafood in 16 coastal counties. The resultant guidebook, *The England Coast Path*, pairs practical information with a real passion for this section of Britain's coastline.

Heading north, hikers can now plot a route between Scotland's network of free-to-use cabins and shelters by referencing *Scottish Bothy Walks*. Author Geoff Allan expands on his bestselling *The Scottish Bothy Bible* by offering up day walks and weekend adventures in some of the country's most dramatic landscapes, with plenty of titbits on wildlife, geology and history en route.

In the country's most southwesterly corner, meanwhile, *Dark, Salt, Clear: Life in a Cornish Fishing Town* sees author Lamorna Ash return to the town of Newlyn, Britain's largest working fishing port. Here,

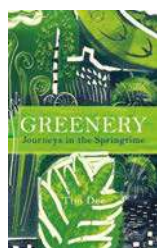
she explores the seascapes and beaches of her childhood summers, takes trips with trawlermen, learns how to gut fish and gets to grips with other aspects of a coastal lifestyle that's under threat.

The England Coast Path by Stephen Neale is published by Bloomsbury, in association with National Trails (£18.99).

Scottish Bothy Walks: 28 Walks to Scotland's Best Bothies by Geoff Allan is published by Wild Things Publishing (£16.99).

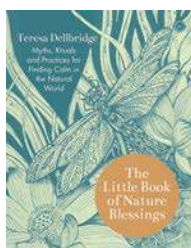
Dark, Salt, Clear: Life in a Cornish Fishing Town by Lamorna Ash is published by Bloomsbury (£16.99). **SARAH BARRELL**

SPRING READS



GREENERY: JOURNEYS IN SPRINGTIME

Tim Dee follows the season as it blooms, travelling from the Cape of Good Hope to Scandinavia, encountering swallows, storks and other wildlife along the way. (Jonathan Cape, £18.99)



THE LITTLE BOOK OF NATURE BLESSINGS

This guidebook by Teresa Dellbridge brings together wildlife legends, botanical facts and green-minded festivals. (Watkins Media Ltd, £10)



THE ACCIDENTAL COUNTRYSIDE: HIDDEN HAVENS FOR BRITAIN'S WILDLIFE

Stephen Moss seeks out Britain's hidden corners where wildlife survives against the odds. (Faber, £16.99)

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A SIX-NIGHT SAFARI FOR TWO IN BOTSWANA

National Geographic Traveller (UK) has teamed up with Natural Selection and Audley Travel to offer a six-night safari trip for two in Botswana

THE DESTINATION

One of Africa's most exciting destinations, Botswana offers a wealth of unforgettable experiences. The vast, shimmering white Makgadikgadi Pans sprawl across the Kalahari Desert, while the Boteti River is home to the San people and draws a variety of local wildlife, including huge herds of zebras, which migrate from the eastern side of the park in search of water. Another highlight is the Okavango Delta, which endures as one of Botswana's most iconic destinations: a fertile, ever-shifting waterscape of grasslands, forests and floodplains. The private Khwai Concession, meanwhile, offers world-class game viewing with none of the crowds.

THE PRIZE

Courtesy of Natural Selection and Audley Travel, the winner and a guest will travel to the Makgadikgadi Pans and Khwai Private Reserve, within the Khwai Concession in the Okavango Delta, for a six-night safari. Travelling from London, the winner and a guest will set off into the heart of this spectacular country to enjoy a mixture of activities, such as game drives, walks with Bushmen, *mokoro* (a traditional dugout canoe) trips and much more. Staying in three different luxury tented camps for the six nights, all logistics and transfers are taken care of. naturalselection.travel audleytravel.com



TO ENTER

Answer the following question online at nationalgeographic.co.uk/competitions:

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE TRADITIONAL DUGOUT CANOE?

Competition closes on 30 April 2020.

The winner must be a resident of the UK or Ireland, aged 18 or over. Full T&Cs at nationalgeographic.co.uk/competitions

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NOTES FROM AN AUTHOR // KIRAN MILLWOOD HARGRAVE

NORWAY

On a solo visit to the Norwegian island of Vardø — the scene of 17th-century witch-hunts — the writer finds peace at last, in more ways than one

Reaching Vardø is a protracted process. Especially when it is your first trip abroad, alone, after a decade of mental health crises. I did not want to be in my own company, but the island was the setting of my novel, and I owed it to the book, *The Mercies*, if not to myself.

Connecting through Oslo, I stopped for two nights in Tromsø, to meet an academic whose research had informed my story. Of course, in July in the Arctic Circle, there are not 'nights' as I had ever known them. Recovering from a bout of insomnia, it felt vindicating to have endless light, the sky as awake as me.

After dinner, I walked across the Tromsø Bridge to the Ishavskatedralen, the Arctic Cathedral. Built from concrete and glass, it speaks of water's life as ice and liquid, its splinter and flow. Closed for a midnight sun concert, the music filtered outside as I stood, breathing and listening, watching Tromsø across the water, in the endless half-light.

Another flight took me further north east to the town of Vadsø. From there, a drive to the island of Vardø. I'd read how a rowan tree planted at the fortress of Vardøhus Festning died almost immediately, and its replacement is swaddled like a newborn throughout winter. But the strangeness of a land without trees, its unbroken expanse, still came as a surprise. The sea, constantly to my right, was grey and, at various points across the bay, land materialised — Russia.

Until 1983, the crossing to Vardø was by boat. Now, a 3km undersea tunnel joins it to the mainland. Thus, arrival here is unremarkable — it spits you out onto a potholed stretch of road that splits like a wishbone around the harbour, angled north east towards Hornøya, an island uninhabited but for thousands of rare Arctic birds. Across the harbour was the hotel, a low-slung concrete block, guillemots wheeling overhead.

You do not come here for the food, which is limited but fine enough, or the hospitality, which is much the same. There are no quaint fisherman's huts, or traces of Sámi settlements. During the war, Vardø was occupied by the Germans, and all-but-raised by Allied Forces. Since 1995, the population has more than halved, and in 2017 the fishing industry here was declared obsolete.



For most visitors, it is simply the last stop on the Hurtigruten ferry's south-north route, or an access point for Hornøya. But what I came for is a 15-minute walk from the hotel, across a small hump of residential streets.

The Steilneset Memorial hugs a stretch of shore that faces a blank sea. Within sight of Vardøhus Fortress, it is one of the few places on the island that offers a piece of unconcreted land, upon which a world-class piece of art and architecture sits. Peter Zumthor's canvas-and-wood walkway groans and snaps in the wind, 91 lights flickering in the small windows. Because, for four years in the 1620s, Vardø and its castle became the site of Scandinavia's most vicious witch-hunts. Each of the lights represents a life lost, and is accompanied by the murdered men and women's testimonies, translated by Dr Liv Helene Willumsen, the academic I met in Tromsø.

Entering the memorial is a disorientating, emotionally draining experience. The fabric walls pulse and warp, and wind rushes through the gaps in the planks of the floor. A sea fret drifts in and fills the structure as though with smoke. Each testimony ends with the same phrase: 'burned at the stake'. At the end of the tunnel is a separate installation by Louise Bourgeois. A metal chair, flaming and sizzling, surrounded by hazy mirrors. It is a place of remembrance that brings the past within touching distance, and stings as much as it soothes.

The next day, I drove to Hamningberg, an abandoned fishing village. I saw wild reindeer running on shingle beaches, a sea hawk lifting and dropping a tern on the road until it opened like old fruit. I passed no one on the roads, there or back. For three days, I spoke only to order food and pay bills and say thank you. And yet, when I joined the road that would take me to the airport, I was not ready to go home. After years of hating my own company, this journey had brought peace. Part of me wanted to keep driving this road, the E75, which starts in Vardø, and does not end until it reaches Sitia, on the island of Crete. One day, I will. I might even go alone.

“*The fabric walls pulse and warp, and wind rushes through the gaps in the planks of the floor. A sea fret drifts in and fills the structure as though with smoke. Each testimony ends with the same phrase: 'burned at the stake'*”

The Mercies, by Kiran Millwood Hargrave, is published by Picador (£14.99).

🐦 @kiran_mh

MEET THE ADVENTURER

STEVE SMITH

With space tourism slowly becoming a reality, we speak to the astronaut about his experiences in space and how they've changed his outlook

**Tell us about your upbringing**

I grew up in California. We have redwood trees, mountains and the ocean, so we did a lot of camping and backpacking. And with Silicon Valley right there, I was surrounded by engineers, tech people and big thinkers — people who take risks. Space was my dream from a young age.

How did you become an astronaut?

I had a near-death experience at 14 that knocked me out of becoming an Air Force pilot, which is what I'd wanted to do in order to be an astronaut. I had to think of another way; I learned to fly planes as a civilian, and I started working at IBM, which was *the* tech company at the time. I applied to NASA four times over a 10-year period and was rejected four times. I was 31 when I was finally accepted.

What's the hardest thing about going to space?

They give you a crushing amount of information to get your head around. But saying goodbye to your children is the hardest thing. Once you're in space, you worry about something happening to them while you're away.

Tell us about the explorer's mindset

Explorers are people who set high goals, knowing that the path to reaching them is going to kick their ass and that there'll be setbacks and disappointments. But they take this path because they know that whatever shows up, they'll be able to solve the problem through creativity.

Do you think a return to the Moon is imminent?

We're on track to get back to the Moon in the next few years, but we won't be going by ourselves; it'll be an international effort. We're going there because we want to practise before we go to Mars, which is about 32 million miles away. And the next American to walk on the Moon will be a woman, almost certainly.

Why do we seem so keen to visit Mars?

There are 50 reasons for going to Mars — and more! Part of it is sort of spiritual, as we're born explorers who want to go do things like that, but we might also find something there that would make our lives here on Earth better.

What's the future of space tourism?

Wealthy entrepreneurs who love space — thank you Branson, Bezos and Musk — are building spaceships that launch from the Kennedy Space Center. It's not going to be financially accessible to most of us yet, but 100 years from now, it'll be just like taking a plane.

Tell us about your first spacewalk

It was with a veteran, Mark Lee, which helps, and I'd trained really hard. But it's more dangerous outside the spaceship; our life insurance multiplies by four or five if we're going outside. All that's connecting you to the ship is a wire. I remember coming up over the Namibian Coast — the contrast between the blue Atlantic waters and these giant orange sand dunes along the coast was beautiful.

Has being an astronaut changed how you feel about this planet?

When you see the Earth from overhead, it looks like an island in a vast ocean and it strikes you that we need to take care of the island. You also really see it as one community; you don't see borders. You realise we need to promote peace — and be nice to each other.

Who are your heroes?

Growing up, I was influenced by Jacques Cousteau. When I became an astronaut, I invited him to the Kennedy Space Center to watch a launch. We talked about the Earth; his real passion was clean water for everyone. We have to protect the Earth for future generations, he said. It was really this spiritual moment. We have to love the Earth and, as explorers, help the cause.

INTERVIEW: AMELIA DUGGAN

Steve Smith is one of America's most experienced astronauts, a veteran of four Space Shuttle missions between 1994 and 2002 on Endeavour, Discovery and Atlantis. kennedyspacecentre.com

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WHAT'S ONLINE

WHERE WE'RE TRAVELLING THIS YEAR

The National Geographic Traveller team is always dreaming about where to head next. Here are the destinations heading up our wishlists for 2020

From its literary greats — Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy — to fine art at the Hermitage, **ST PETERSBURG** has always held an allure for me. Peter the Great's 'window to Europe' has achieved UNESCO World Heritage Site status and its Venetian-style canals, grand architecture, heavyweight cultural institutions, numerous palaces and cathedrals, and White Nights Festival make it hard to resist. But there's a modern Russia to discover here too, in this former imperial capital. *Pat Riddell, editor*

Lebanon's arty capital, **BEIRUT**, with its hip enclaves and tasty Levantine restaurants, has charmed travellers for decades. But now that the Foreign & Commonwealth Office has lifted restrictions on travel to more of the country's interior — home to mountain trails, wineries and Roman ruins — I suspect the country is poised to hit the big time. A whole bunch of British tour operators are starting or relaunching tours for 2020, and I'm jumping on the first one I can. *Amelia Duggan, acting deputy editor*

SNOWDONIA is on my radar this year: I'd like to escape to a treehouse, cottage or campsite for a few nights and break up long hikes with stops for a local ale in cosy pubs. Scrambling up Mount Snowdon to see views out to Ireland from its peak is also on my list, as is a trip to Foragers Gin distillery and bouncing on trampolines in an underground cave system at Bounce Below — although possibly not in the same afternoon. *Tamsin Wressell, assistant editor*. **GO ONLINE TO READ MORE AT [NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK/TRAVEL](https://nationalgeographic.co.uk/travel)**

TOP STORIES

Here's what you've been enjoying on the website this month



COOL LIST

Celebrating travel in 2020

Our Cool List spans nations bouncing back, new city attractions and pioneering places



LEBANON

What they're eating in Beirut

Flatbreads, heritage grains and Armenian cuisine are on the menu in the Lebanese capital



REPORT

Meet travel's philanthropists

Conservation and community are increasingly at the heart of luxury travel

A GUIDE TO NIGHTLIFE IN CHUECA AND MALASAÑA, MADRID

In the March issue, we looked at Madrid's nightlife. Take a closer look at the city's after-dark scene with a guide to these dynamic neighbourhoods.

Words: Connor McGovern

Ask Madrilenians where to head of an evening, and you'll likely get a whole host of responses: some will rhapsodise over La Latina, which bristles with locals drifting between wine bars and *taperías*. There'll be votes for scruffy Lavapiés, too, a traditionally working class 'hood that offers a vibrant slice of multicultural Madrid. Others, meanwhile, will suggest Salamanca for well-heeled restaurants and strolls along leafy avenues. But most will demand you make a beeline for Chueca and Malasaña — the beating heart of the Spanish capital after dark.

Roughly divided by the Calle de Fuencarral, these neighbouring barrios truly come to life when the sun goes down, and

offer a taste of Madrid at its most magnetic — fun, frivolous and full of opportunity for a good time. Chueca has long been the core of the city's LGBTQ+ scene and it still wears its rainbow colours with pride, while Malasaña, with its slightly vintage feel, embodied the *movida madrileña* — the irreverent counterculture of 1980s that flourished in Madrid after the Franco dictatorship.

From cocktail bars to clubs, late-night eats to people-watching on lamp-lit plazas, you could spend plenty of time wondering what to discover first in this part of town, but you'd be wasting the precious night. Here are some tips to get you started.

READ THE FULL GUIDE ONLINE NOW

BEYOND THE TRAVEL SECTION



| SCIENCE |

Predicting the unpredictable: inside the nerve centre of the UK's weather forecasts

Accurate weather reports help to keep the country running. We take a look at how they happen — and why they could be about to change.

| HISTORY |

Can tourism save Italy's ancient 'Dying Town'?

Like many rural villages in Italy, this 300ft by 500ft town was at risk of disappearing — until the world's curiosity caught up to it.

| PHOTOGRAPHY |

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Braving hail, sandstorms and tornadoes, we photograph nature at its rawest — and most beautiful.



IMAGES: GETTY; BEN ROBERTS; ALAMY; LYMA RODRÍGUEZ; THOMAS DE CIAN



DRINK

Where to mark 100 years since Prohibition began

There are plenty of ways to commemorate the US booze ban



PHILIPPINES

Get to know Filipino cuisine

From spit-roasted *lechon* pork to *adobo* stew, the stars of Filipino food are starting to shine



PUERTO RICO

A baptism in Bomba

In the north east of Puerto Rico, the coastal city of Loíza is championing its African heritage

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Weekender

ANGERS

Warm days on the edge of France's Loire Valley are for getting outside — explore the city's mighty chateau, cycle along the waterfronts and experience live music at its distinctive riverside bars. Words: Carolyn Boyd

The city of Angers, in the heart of the Pays de la Loire in Western France, is home to a vibrant bar culture and medieval monuments. Most imposing of them all is its chateau: an unmissable local landmark that's home to the awe-inspiring Apocalypse Tapestry, as well as glorious views of the surrounding rivers and countryside. If your ideal city break involves shopping, restaurants and a slice of culture, that's all here, but prepare to spend some time outdoors too. Angers' setting on the Maine river (and being very close to the rivers Loire, Mayenne and Sarthe) means you

can get out along the riverside cycle paths, potter upstream in a self-drive electric boat or simply sink a glass of the local Anjou rosé wine in one of the many riverside bars. When dining out, try the local cuisine: specialities include river fish served in the Loire's famous *beurre blanc* sauce (made with butter and white wine) and unusual desserts such as the light-as-a-feather *cremet d'Anjou*.

Better known are its alcoholic exports: Angers is the home of two distilleries, Cointreau and Giffard, which offer visitors a chance to enjoy local cocktails with a snifter of history thrown in.



The medieval La Maison d'Adam, also known as the House of Artisans, which features elaborate carvings on its exterior
LEFT: Bikers on the picturesque Loire à Vélo cycle route on their way back to the city

TOP 5

City escapes

ÎLE BÉHUARD

Wander around this secluded island in the middle of the Loire about 30 minutes south of Angers to discover winding streets of rustic stone cottages, hollyhocks and hydrangeas, La Croisette riverside restaurant, and a tiny chapel built atop a rock in 1453 by King Louis XI after his boat capsized in the river. lacroisettebehuard.com

BOUCHEMAINE

Located at the confluence of the Maine and the Loire, the village of Bouchemaine's peaceful riverside paths are excellent for watching boats as they sail up and down the river. In early evening, pop into La Noé bar-restaurant for an apéritif. le-noe-restaurant-angers.fr

CHÂTEAU DU PLESSIS-BOURRÉ

With its quintessential moat and turreted fort, the 15th-century Château du Plessis-Bourré is the castle of fairytales. Take a tour to admire its exquisite painted ceiling, commissioned by the chateau's first owner Jean Bourré — a friend of Louis XI — and whose heart is buried in the castle chapel. plessis-bourre.com

TERRA BOTANICA

This family-friendly theme park celebrates the world of botany. Expect gentle rides, gardens abundant with tropical and exotic plants, a butterfly house and a tethered hot air balloon ride for views of the park and the surrounding countryside. terrabotanica.fr

GIFFARD DISTILLERY

Giffard's many fruit liqueurs are a staple of cocktail bars worldwide. Its distillery, in the suburb of Avrillé, has a small museum that explains how it began with local pharmacist Émile Giffard who invented Menthe-Pastille, a mint liqueur, during the 1885 heatwave. You can see the factory, learn how the liqueurs are produced and taste the various drinks the company produces. giffard.com

DAY ONE RAMPARTS & RIVERSIDE BARS

MORNING

The great walls of Angers' castle dominate the city. Once through the gates, climb the ramparts for stupendous views of the city and river below. The chateau was once the home of the dukes of Anjou, who were serious patrons of the arts. They held court here in the 14th and 15th centuries and the internal rooms tell their story. Also within the walls is the Tapestry of the Apocalypse, 328ft of exquisite embroidery produced over seven years in the late 14th century, telling the story of the Book of Revelations. Stop for lunch at the chateau's restaurant, serving hearty mains from €10 (£8.45).

AFTERNOON

An easy way to check out the city's other attractions is to follow the blue line painted on the pavement — it guides visitors around the best sights for more than a mile. From the chateau, it goes to the medieval Cathédrale Saint-Maurice. Just behind the cathedral is La Maison d'Adam, also known as the House of Artisans, a six-storey building dating from 1491; its half-timbered facade features carvings of bawdy figures. For more elegant historical decor, nip into the Galeries Lafayette, where the glass roof is an shining example of Angers' art deco architecture.

EVENING

The warmer evenings in Angers tempt visitors outside: cycle or walk along the river to one of the many guinguettes bars for great food and live music. The entertainment isn't limited to the bars: you can also check out one of the many festivals happening over the summer. Trelazé Music Festival is a series of free concerts in July and August, while riverside villages such as Écouflant, Loire-Authion and Savennières host numerous events. There's also a new cycling festival — Nature is Bike — at the end of June with road routes, off-road trails and night-time rides on offer.



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MANDARIN ORIENTAL
MARRAKECH

A scenic barge ride
down the Loire



DAY TWO BIKE RIDES & SUNDOWNERS

MORNING

The city's position gives you easy access to the excellent Loire à Vélo, a quiet, car-free cycling track that follows the Loire. Once you've collected your wheels from one of the many bike rentals in the city, pedal out to the village of Sainte-Gemmes-sur-Loire about 20-minutes' ride from the centre. The cycle track passes through bucolic parkland, then onto a small Mediterranean garden at Port-Thibault. Admire the views of the gently gliding Loire — the low tide reveals a number of sandbanks and islands. Stop for lunch at Le Guinguette de Port-Thibault, a bar and restaurant that offers activities such as boules and dance lessons.

AFTERNOON

Angers is the home of Cointreau, the liqueur that's maintained its glamorous image since it was invented in 1849. The Cointreau Distillery offers guided tours around the impressive copper stills and tells the history of how it was first concocted by brothers Edouard-Jean and Adolphe Cointreau. Explore the exhibition of the brand's striking advertising campaigns, which started with the clown Pierrot de Cointreau and moved on to modern stars such as burlesque legend Dita Von Teese. The highlight is the tasting room at the end of the tour where you can try classic cocktails such as the Cosmopolitan and the Sidecar. Reservations are essential.

EVENING

Easing gently through the landscape, a sunset cruise along the Loire offers the chance to admire the reflection of the sky striped with shades of orange, yellow and purple. Loire Odyssée offers a variety of different cruises to choose from depending on what kind of cruise takes your fancy; the sunset cruise takes in the remarkable flora and fauna along the river, while the aperitif cruise provides an idyllic setting for a sundowner. You can also learn about the region's excellent wines as you snack on canapes as day turns to dusk. Alternatively, board a dinner cruise, with the accompanying soundtrack provided by a live band.

THREE TO TRY

Best sweet treats



CREMETS D'ANJOU

This blend of egg whites, *fromage blanc* (similar to ricotta) and cream is said to be like eating a cloud and was invented by a local cook in 1890. Local restaurants often give it an extra zing with soft fruits for which the Loire is also known, or Cointreau, the city's famous orange liqueur.



BOTTEREAUX

These diamond-shaped, donut-style pastries are traditionally served at Mardi Gras and can be sweet or salty, though for something really indulgent, look for the ones stuffed with cream or chocolate. They might also go by the name *tourtisseaux*, *foutimassons*, *bugnes*, *crouchettes*, *merveille*, *rondiaux* or even *croquignoles* when you're buying them in bakeries.



LE PÂTE AUX PRUNES

This plum pie dessert is traditionally made with greengages, which have long been grown in the Loire Valley. Be careful when you bite into it — the greengages are often cooked whole with their stones left in. Look out for this delicious treat in the local *boulangeries*.



A busy evening at the popular Guinguette de Port-Thibault

NAME OF THE ROSÉ

The region around Angers is known as ‘the Anjou’ and has had historical significance from the Roman era through to the Middle Ages. Now the word is most often used to refer to the region’s wines, of which the rosé is best known

DAY THREE GINGUETTES

Guinguettes — the riverside bars that had their heyday in the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries — have made a comeback across France in recent years and, as Angers sits astride or near to four rivers, the city has more than its fair share of the fun. In the past, these outdoor hubs were scenes of revelry and cabaret, but their 21st-century incarnations offer this and much more. Many indulge a new-found love of street food (the French interpretation means ‘good food’, served fast and conveniently), while others are proper restaurants. All Angers’ guinguettes feature shows and activities — from Bollywood dancing to country music — throughout summer. To find out what’s on offer, check the individual guinguette’s website or Facebook page for activities.

LE HERON CARRE

Being close to the city centre, Le Heron Carre enjoys a superb

view of the chateau from the opposite riverbank. By day, it’s popular with families enjoying the surrounding park, and in the evenings the varied entertainment includes bongo drum troupes and salsa dancing lessons. facebook.com/heroncarre

LA CABANE DU CHAT QUI PÊCHE

This photogenic ‘hut of the fishing cat that’ is set on the banks of the Mayenne river and is a good place to head for if you’re cycling upstream from Angers. After a lunch of typical Loire dishes — perch with beurre blanc sauce or Cointreau creme brulee — kick back in the orange deckchairs and enjoy the sunshine. Sunday afternoons see DJs playing chill out tracks. lacabaneduchatquipeche.com

AU FIL DE L’EAU

The sleepy village of Écouflant used to be a much livelier place in the 19th century — back then it

was home to several guinguettes that welcomed revellers who’d come from Angers along the Sarthe river by boat. Follow the same course, cycling the towpath or on a cruise, then take a table outside the rustic hut that looks across the grassy banks towards the river. If you’re feeling peckish, there are charcuterie platters and tapas, plus live music at weekends. facebook.com/aufiledeleuecouflant

GINGUETTE DE PORT-THIBAUT

Of all the guinguettes that are dotted in and around the city, the idyllic location of Guinguette de Port-Thibault is hard to beat. Near the village of Saint-Gemmes-sur-Loire, it opened in July 2019 and overlooks the Loire. The menu is particularly good, with various dishes such as pâté and mushroom risotto as highlights. Summer nights see different bands take the stage, as well as activities like samba lessons. guinguetteportthibault.fr 📍

MORE INFO

Château d’Angers. chateau-angers.fr
Nature is Bike. natureisbike.com
Guinguette de Port-Thibault. guinguetteportthibault.fr
Cointreau Distillery. cointreau.com
Loire Odyssee river cruises. loire-odyssee.fr
tourisme.destination-angers.com

HOW TO DO IT

Fly to Nantes with EasyJet or Tours with Ryanair, then take the train to the city’s main station Angers Saint-Laud. Hotel 21 Foch offers doubles from €89 (£75), room only. For budget stays, the Angers City Kamp has self-catering cabins from €69 (£58) a night. easyjet.com ryanair.com sncf.com 21foch.fr citykamp.com



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Eat SHETLAND ISLANDS

The northernmost tip of the British Isles is an elemental place. And now, with a little innovative thinking, Shetland is producing exotic ingredients that are bringing new life to local dishes. Words: Audrey Gillan



Ripe ears of sweetcorn poke from their green leafy casing; grapes hang from vines. Here in Northmavine, a wild, beautiful parish in the northern Shetland Islands where the elements combine to make gardening something of an extreme sport, you wouldn't expect to reap such incredible bounty. But under the shelter of thick polycrubs (a polytunnel/greenhouse hybrid designed to withstand high winds) people are growing produce that would, in the past, have had to travel hundreds if not thousands of miles to get here.

Margaret Roberts lives in a lovely quirky old house here in Shetland, a cluster of small, inhabited rocky islands lying roughly halfway between Scotland and Norway. It's her polycrub I've come to see: it's where the magic happens. Cherries, fire-red tomatoes and fat cucumbers are all flourishing under a

roof held up by recycled feed pipes from the salmon fishing industry, a concept pioneered by Northmavine Community Development Company in a bid to get people growing their own, despite the elements.

"We get a lot of goodwill from folk because the product is fantastic and all the profits go back into the community," says Margaret. "I'm really keen on growing food. I come from a middle-class crofting environment, so I've been used to really good-quality, home-produced food all my life."

We step outside, over a wall and onto the rest of Margaret's land where she digs me up the famed Shetland blacks, heritage potatoes that are actually tinged with blue. I'm with Tom Morton, an old pal from our days working at *The Scotsman*, and we're collecting things to cook in the kitchen of the manse (parsonage) at Hillswick he shares



Line-caught mackerel being cooked on an open fire on the beach at West Ayre, Hillswick
LEFT: The village of Voe on the Shetland Mainland





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with his wife, Susan Bowie, the local doctor. Together with his son, James, Tom wrote the book *Shetland: Cooking on the Edge of the World*. At the beach at the back of house we gather seaweed to wrap around a leg of lamb, which will be baked in the oven until tender.

“Shetland has always had some phenomenal natural resources when it comes to food — pristine seas teeming with the best fish and shellfish; great native breed lamb, mutton and beef; gloriously floury Shetland black potatoes. But the advent of polytunnels and polycrubs has unleashed a whole range of hitherto unavailable crops like tomatoes, corn, cherries, strawberries and more. Even stuck on a rock at 60 degrees north,” says Tom. In his book, the family explores ‘foy’, a celebration in Shetland that usually involves a feast and large amounts of alcohol. “This was once a marginal, seasonally impoverished place, and every meal had to count for both sustenance and joyful hospitality. It was foy that drew me here in the first place and is one of the things that keeps me here.”

In Shetland, you’re never far from the sea, its rhythms and — of course — its catch. Aboard the *Sceptre*, Ross Robertson at the helm, we travel out to sea from the twin Burra islands. This is the smaller of his family’s boats, the other, the *Mizpah*, is a large trawler. “We’re as many as 12 days at sea with the big boat, landing our catch two

to three times. There are seven of us in the crew and we keep a man ashore,” he explains. Today, we’re trying to catch mackerel, running long lines out from the back of the deck. It’s a crystal-clear day and there’s not too big a swell, but the fish are scarce. “You need a lot of patience for it,” says Ross. “It just takes a good shoal of fish when the hooks are going up and down, and you can fill a fish box in minutes.”

Ross turns his attention to his 150 creels (wicker baskets) and starts to reel some in. We’re hoping for lobsters and velvet crabs, but again there’s not much doing. In total we land five mackerel and a few crabs — enough for us to return to Ross’s house for lunch. Later, at Frankie’s Fish & Chips in Brae, I dine on catch landed by the *Mizpah*: a ‘muckle’ (large) haddock fried in batter, served with chips and mushy peas — it’s glorious.

At Shetland Seafood Auctions, in Lerwick, I get more of an understanding of just how important the fishing industry is here. There are large boxes of megrim, haddock, hake and whiting, all on ice and ready to be shipped out after being sold.

Across the water from Lerwick is the little island of Bressay and as I alight the ferry, Chris Dyer is waiting to take me to Garths Croft, the home and smallholding he shares with his wife Afra. Like many other people in Shetland, Chris has a number of jobs — he’s an archaeologist working

A TASTE OF

Shetland Islands



THE STRING

Dishes here include pan-fried Shetland halibut with roasted cherry tomatoes and sautéed local greens, and pulled, rolled Shetland lamb with greens and lamb bone gravy risotto. There are also changing specials created by chef Akshay Borges, who grew up in Goa and combines his passion for Indian street food culture and Scottish cuisine. Three courses without wine from around £25 per person. thestringshetland.co.uk

THE SCALLOWAY HOTEL

On the waterfront in Scalloway, Shetland’s ancient capital just six miles from Lerwick, the seafood is the highlight. Shetland lobster is simply grilled with butter and served with homemade chips. Starters include twice-cooked Cullen skink soufflé, crispy potato and smoked haddock sauce, and pan-seared scallops, confit onion with a hazelnut and Mull cheddar crust. Three courses without wine from around £32 per person. scallowayhotel.com

FJARA CAFE BAR

Set on the peninsula jutting over Breiwick bay, just outside Lerwick, Fjara is an all-day cafe with a great view. The mussels — cooked with garlic butter, shallots, Pinot Grigio, parsley and cream — are fabulous, served with homemade bread and chips. Dinner choices include starters such as Thai-style seafood broth, and a ‘sassermeat’ main along with apricots and pistachios as a stuffing for lamb. Three courses without wine from around £25 per person. fjaracoffee.com



Fisherman Ross Robertson with his catch of lobster onboard the *Sceptre*
RIGHT: Local lamb with a herb crust at The String

Five food finds



1

REESTIT MUTTON

Mutton first salted in brine and then hung in the rafters (reest), smoked above a peat fire and left to dry for 10-15 days.

2

SASSERMEAT/SAUCERMEAT

Spellings vary for what's essentially spiced minced beef beloved by Shetlanders, often fried and served on a morning roll.

3

BANNOCKS

Light and fluffy with a sour taste, bannocks are no-yeast breads that inspire much debate in Shetland as to how best to make them.

4

SEAFOOD

Fish and shellfish as fresh as possible, harvested from some of the cleanest waters in the world.

5

REESTIT MUTTON AND TATTIE SOUP

A soup made from reestit mutton, Shetland black potatoes, turnip, carrots and onion.



Sheep grazing on the West Mainland, Shetland

LEFT: Freshly cooked hand-picked 'wild' Shetland mussels

on the incredible Viking digs in Shetland, and a part-time member of both the fire service and the coastguard, but his biggest passion is this craft. Here, he breeds heritage Tamworth pigs and British saddleback boars — selling the meat to local chefs and cooks — and sheep he rears for the colour of their fleeces: “There are 60 markings of colour for Shetland sheep; we’re trying to bring back the old colours.”

The town of Lerwick is a lovely wee place, with grand sandstone buildings, streets bedecked with bunting and cute seafront houses called the Lodberries. There’s a cluster of rather chic restaurants and cocktail bars, cafes, galleries and shops. It’s a ‘capital’ steeped in tradition, but with a thoroughly modern side — you’ll find heart-warming Shetland food such as bannocks and soups of reestit mutton, while the local mussels — fat, orange and juicy — are some of the best you’ll eat anywhere in the world. Then, for international dishes that use the best of the islands’ produce, there’s The String, where chef Akshay Borges serves Goan fare, and C’est La Vie, a French restaurant with chef Didier Piquet overseeing the kitchen.

It’s in Lerwick that I notice how many ‘incomers’ have settled here, attracted by the remoteness and back-to-basics lifestyle. In summer, the long bright nights are glorious, while in winter your chances of seeing the

Northern Lights are high. The local name for the Aurora Borealis has been adopted by Dave Williams, who runs Mirrie Dancers Chocolatier with his partner, Cathy. A former army chef, he moved here four years ago and began making confections flavoured with local ingredients — sea salt, heather, honey, whisky, gin and mead. The Raspberry Mirrie Dancer is tinged with the sparkling green lustre of the Northern Lights, the Clifftop Bar is flavoured with Arctic thyme and walnut.

As we walk along the cliff edge at Eshaness, the ocean thrashing below us, Tom explains how cooking here has evolved to suit the conditions. “Reestit mutton soup has to be Shetland’s great ‘national’ dish, the staple of winter dances and events like Up Helly Aa, the annual Viking fire festival held every January,” he explains. “It’s basically a tattie soup, with other vegetables, using reestit mutton as stock.”

The dish is a winter staple, and on my early autumn journey across the islands I don’t get to try it. I lament this miss to Tom. “Ach well, you’ll have to come back,” he laughs. “For reestit mutton and a foy.” □

📍 Hayhoul B&B in Bigton has double rooms from £80 per night. bedandbreakfastshetland.co.uk

Loganair flies to Sumburgh in Shetland from London Southend via Aberdeen from £65, and direct from several UK regional airports. loganair.co.uk

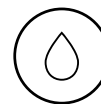
More information: visitscotland.com shetland.org



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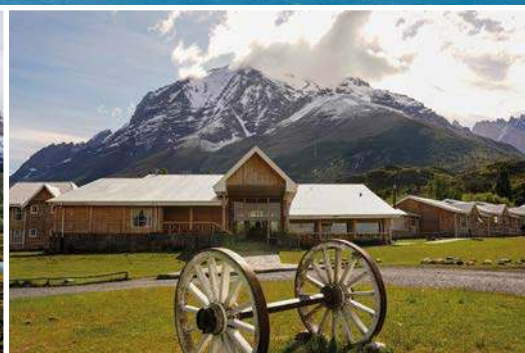
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Neighbourhood SINGAPORE

Neat-and-tidy Singapore may be small, but it packs a cultural punch. Its neighbourhoods are where centuries of pan-Asian immigration mixes with some of the region's best places to eat. Words & photographs: Shaney Hudson



The island-city state is a modest metropolis by Asian standards — compact, largely low-rise and threaded with green spaces. However, Singapore's small size belies its cultural richness; centuries of immigration from Malaysia, China and India have added layers of character to its neighbourhoods. Nowhere is this more evident than in its cuisine, as Singapore has emerged as one of the world's best foodie destinations — whether its hawker stalls or high-end dining, it's almost impossible to have a bad meal here. When it comes to landmarks, however, many will tick off the likes of Raffles, Gardens by the Bay and the sparkling new Jewel Changi, but it's in exploring the city's distinct districts that Singapore's true charm really begins to reveal itself.





Chinatown

Polished and primed for visitors and lined with stores selling same-same souvenirs, at first glance Singapore's Chinatown is a meticulously restored part of town, if lacking a little character. However, it deserves a closer look. While the tourist district around Kreta Ayer Road is Chinatown's most popular spot, Telok Ayer Street, across South Bridge Road, is one of the city's best dining and nightlife areas for locals and visitors alike. Home to a string of fashionable rooftop bars and Michelin-starred restaurants, a worthwhile stop-off here is My Awesome Café, for its health-conscious tonics and meals.

Where Kreta Ayer is home to a landmark mosque and Hindu temple, Telok Ayer hosts Thian Hock Keng Temple, Singapore's oldest Chinese place of worship where those who survived the journey from China would give thanks. Originally located on the shore, the waterline is now obscured by two dozen skyscrapers on reclaimed land. Located on the temple's back wall is a 144ft mural, commissioned by the Hokkien society that depicts the shoreline as it was when Han Chinese migrants first made the journey here. It was created by Yip Yew Chong, whose prolific street art provides a nostalgic window to the local neighbourhood that existed before vast swathes of shophouses

in Kreta Ayer were given a makeover in the 1980s. Despite only painting since 2015, his work is so abundant that an entire wall is dedicated to him in the highly recommended Chinese Heritage Centre.

"Chinatown in the 1970s when I grew up wasn't like this at all," says Chong. "It was quite dilapidated, the houses were more run-down, not so colourful, and they were all occupied by local residents."

As we move through the neighbourhood (avoiding the path of Instagrammers, who repeatedly shoo us out of shot), Chong points out the people in his murals; the neighbourhood sweet seller, his grandmother sewing, the local letter writer.

Chong is keen to point out that Chinatown, despite its reputation as tourist centre, is worth visiting. He pauses to point out a store selling paper effigies of clothes, jewellery and even mobile phones that are burned during the Taoist Buddhist Hungry Ghost Festival, held on the seventh month of the Chinese calendar. Further along, we pass a traditional Chinese medicine store where an assortment of ingredients are stacked on the footpath, then a bakery selling mooncakes made to the same recipe for decades — albeit now from a shiny, refurbished shopfront. "There are still pockets of authenticity," smiles Chong.

FROM LEFT: The famous green and yellow facade of the People's Park Complex in Chinatown dominates the streetscape; interior of My Awesome Café, a former shophouse in Chinatown; buying garlands at a stall on Buffalo Road in Little India; Bukit Timah Railway Bridge

PREVIOUS PAGE: Tourists on Temple Street in Chinatown take in a mural of a Chinese opera by artist Yip Yew Chong

Little India

Step out of the MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) station and turn down Buffalo Road, and you could be mistaken for thinking you're in a small Indian city. Shopfronts filled with gold chains are displayed behind meticulously polished glass counters, the sweet scent of cardamom dominates the air, and hand-tied floral garlands hang from outdoor stalls. The only giveaway that this is Singapore is the addition of the country's signature orchids to the brightly coloured piles of petals being sold and shoved into bags to take away.

Despite Singapore's social policies deliberately trying to avoid the establishment of ethnic enclaves, Little India remains the commercial and cultural hub for the local Indian community. The first migrants drifted into this area as it had a better water source for the cattle they tended, and the community grew from there. It's late afternoon when I arrive, and I take a seat at Ananda Bhavan, one of the city's oldest Indian restaurants, snacking on *puri* (deep-fried bread) prepared fresh to order and watching the suburb come to life.

Women in saris rush past with heavy shopping bags having stocked up at the 24-hour Mustafa Centre shopping mall, and across the road, a shopkeeper rings

an auspicious bell, while his assistant burns incense in a bid for good fortune. The Indian Heritage Centre, an angular chrome and glass confection opened in 2015, offers an insight into the area's history with everything from augmented reality exhibits to classical portraiture. Afterwards, I wander with the crowd towards the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple, one of the area's biggest landmarks.

Kicking off my shoes and leaving them by the door of this Hindu temple, I'm invited in to mix with an overflowing crowd who have come here for worship after their working day. Some light candles set in terracotta pinch pots, others leave offerings of food and flowers for the goddess Kali, kids run and squeal, and some simply settle against a wall, scrolling through their mobile phones.

A small queue of men and women wait politely for a free meal to be dished out from a large communal pot. Funded by the well-dressed woman ladling out dhal, this food is as an important staple for the numerous foreign workers who originate from the Indian subcontinent and are employed mainly in construction.

Many live in dormitories in other parts of the island, but come to Little India to worship, eat and experience a welcome echo of their homeland.

When in Singapore...



1

GREEN CORRIDORS

While international visitors flock to Gardens by the Bay, locals recommend the Botanic Gardens. Keen hikers should head to Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. *nparks.gov.sg gardensbythebay.com.sg*

2

ISLAND-HOPPING

Of all Singapore's 63 islands, Pulau Ubin is a favourite for its traditional village feel; get there by boat from Changi Point Ferry Terminal and hire a bike to explore. *visitsingapore.com*

3

THE LITTLE RED DOT

Context Travel's excellent socio-political tour covers the history, sociology and politics that shaped the country. *contexttravel.com*

4

SINGAPORE CITY GALLERY

This museum offers a fascinating look into how the city has developed and the challenges it faces in the future. *ura.gov.sg*

5

RAFFLES

Reopened after an extensive renovation, this hotel still retains its old-world charm. While the tourists line up for a Singapore sling at the iconic Long Bar, locals dine at BBR by Alain Ducasse, which has a sophisticated, casual Mediterranean menu. *rafflessingapore.com*

6

SKY HIGH

For high-end dining with incredible views, head to Skai, located on the 70th floor of the Swissotel building overlooking St Andrews. *skai.sg*





Plain Vanilla Bakery in Tiong Bahru, the city's hipster enclave

Tiong Bahru

While Little India provides visitors with a hit of traditional culture, Tiong Bahru delivers everything about Singapore that is slick and cool. The area has emerged as the expat enclave of choice thanks to its village feel and unique architecture. The low-rise pre-Second World War buildings here are representative of a style of art deco known as 'streamline moderne', with heavy design accents such as port-shaped windows, influenced by the aeroplanes and cruise ships in service at the time.

"Since this was the city's first public housing neighbourhood, the buildings aren't tall and imposing," says artist and children's book author Joanna Wong, who operates a private gallery in Tiong Bahru. For the better part of a decade, Joanna has painted the shopfronts of businesses who have set up — and shut up — shop in a district where high rents see big turnover.

Still, a number of small, independent retailers and shopkeepers manage to operate and thrive here, free from the chain-store formula that dominates most of Singapore's retail areas. Along with record stores, cupcake bakeries and quirky boutiques, this includes BooksActually. Complete with

mystery book vending machines located out front (where tomes are shrouded in repurposed pages from a jotter book, their serial number your only way of identifying your purchase), this iconic bookstore comes complete with a sister shop focusing on children's books; Tiann's, a gluten-free bakery known for its hand-crafted but pricey savoury waffles; and Nimble/Knead, a day-spa offering treatments in shipping containers. While it's awash with hipsters, expats and even soon-to-be-married couples posing for their bridal portraits, Tiong Bahru also has a traditional authenticity thanks to the local restaurants and hawker stalls.

"It mostly attracts foodies, heritage lovers and yuppies, as the eateries there are of a pretty good standard," says Wong. "Some are handed down from generation to generation".

Case in point is Jian Bo Shui Kueh stall, on the second floor of the Tiong Bahru market. Here, locals line up for paper squares of small rice cakes served with pickled radish and chilli for as little as S\$2.50 (£1.39). It's a similar story at landmark restaurants like Loo's Hainanese Curry Rice, a Singapore institution — like the stall, they've all got a long queue of people waiting to order, just as they have for decades. □

MORE INFO

visitsingapore.com
 Thian Hock Keng Temple.
thianhockkeng.com.sg
 My Awesome Cafe.
myawesomecafe.com
 YC Mural Gallery. yipyc.com
 Chinatown Heritage Centre.
chinatownheritagecentre.com.sg
 Ananda Bhavan Vegetarian.
anandabhavan.com
 Mustafa Centre. mustafa.com.sg
 Indian Heritage Centre.
indianheritage.org.sg/en
 Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple.
srivkt.org
 Joanna Wong Gallery.
jowonggallery.com
 Books Actually. booksactuallyshop.com
 Tiong Bahru Market. tiongbahru.market

✈ Expedia offers flights and hotel packages including a four-night stay at Oasia Hotel Downtown in a superior room, plus flights from Heathrow with Qantas from £948 per person. expedia.co.uk



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Sleep VANCOUVER

With its mountains, forested coastline and buzzing arts scene, it's no surprise the Canadian city is home to a crop of eco-minded and nature-themed hotels — with the odd rock 'n' roll flourish thrown in. Words: Ben Lerwill



Enjoying Vancouver is about easing yourself into the outdoorsy vibe and making the most of its easy-going vitality. Beneath that big-city skyline, bike lanes spool out and floatplanes buzz across the harbour. Most hotels are found within Downtown's patchwork of easily explored neighbourhoods. The city's harbour location means there are several swish, large-scale properties near the cruise ship terminal. However, if you're after somewhere with more colour and individuality, as well as budget options, the best advice is to look elsewhere on the Downtown map. And if you're planning to visit during the peak summer period, book well ahead — and expect to pay more, too.





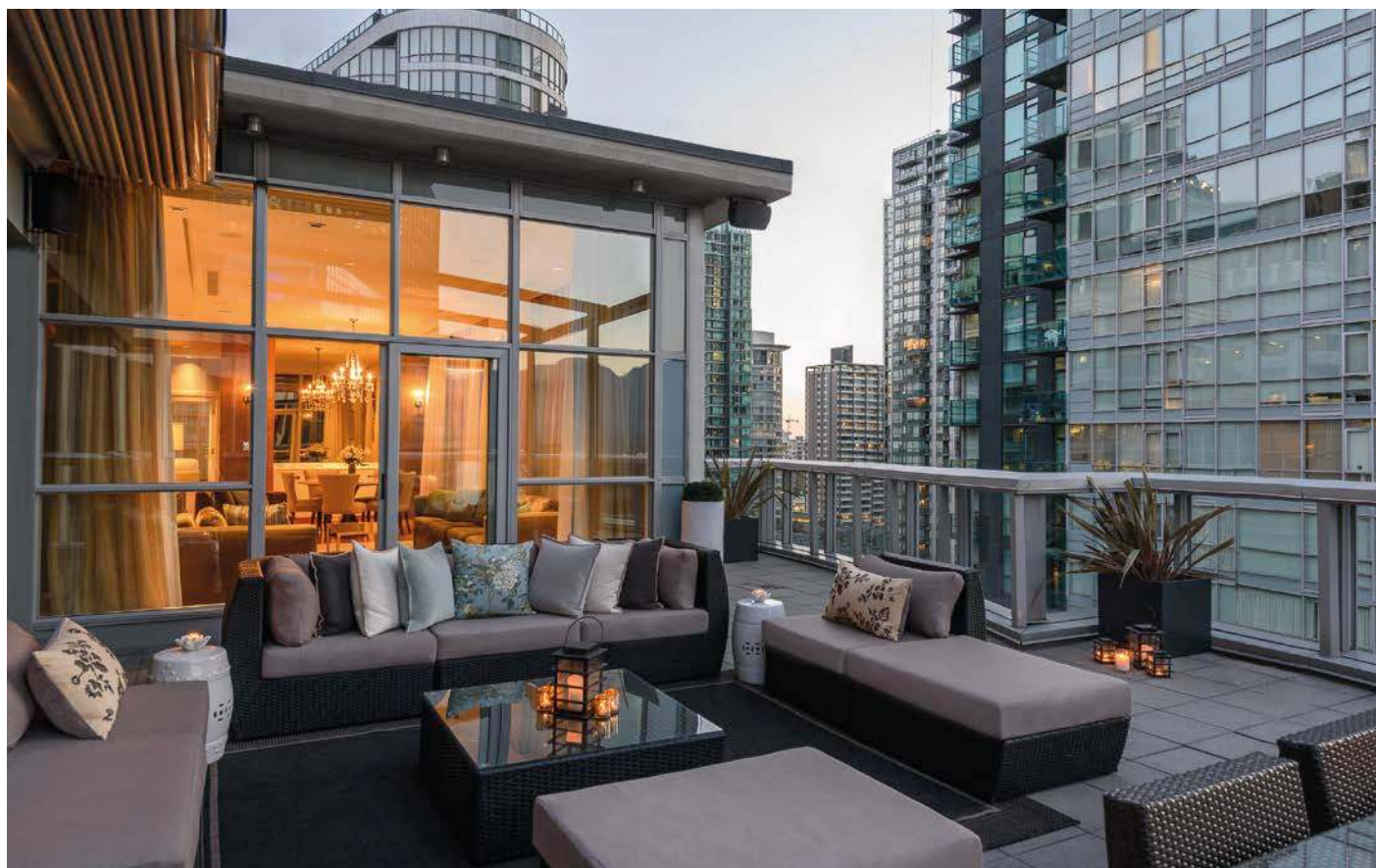
For 1950s nostalgia

THE BURRARD

Originally built as a motel in 1956, this hotel retains a fabulously authentic vintage feel. Rooms are retro — think silver pouffes, cork flooring and plastic-moulded chairs — and set around a large garden courtyard of palms and patios, where everything from the pastel-colour paintwork to the planters gives a nod to the past. Modern touches include cult conceptual artworks and in-room Nespresso machines, but the overall vibe is fixed firmly in another age. Guests have free access to bikes (with no time limit) and its location on Burrard Street means it's close to Davie Village, Vancouver's gay heartland.

ROOMS: From CA\$128 (£74), room only.
theburrard.com





For serious style

\$\$\$ THE LODEN HOTEL

Set on a quiet road close to the harbourside, this 70-room hotel looks nondescript from the street, its branded, free-to-use London-style cabs the only hint of its hidden character. This changes once you step inside and encounter Balearic beats, scatter cushions and smoked mirrors. It's full of pleasing details — the bathtubs are super-deep and the second-floor garden has hummingbird feeders — while free bikes are great for exploring nearby Stanley Park Seawall.

ROOMS: From CA\$410 (£237), room only.
theloden.com

For old meets new

\$\$\$ THE EXCHANGE HOTEL

This 201-room hotel in the Financial District occupies the grand, marbled building that once served as Vancouver's stock exchange. It's a class act, offering 1920s glam and glitz alongside bona fide eco-credentials, including recycled flooring and LED lighting throughout. The rooms are all clean lines and arty touches, with L'Occitane en Provence toiletries and whole-wall prints, while the communal spaces include a courtyard with table football, and Greek restaurant Hydra.

ROOMS: From CA\$246 (£142), room only.
exchangehotelvan.com



For ethical travellers

££ SKWACHAYS LODGE

A 12-metre cedar totem pole stands sentry on the roof of Skwachays Lodge, a boutique hotel that ploughs all its profit into supporting local indigenous artists. All 18 suites are designed by First Nations artists according to natural themes, ranging from forest spirits to spawning salmon, and there's extensive studio space onsite. The hotel takes its name from its location, once a spiritually important area of springs and marshes. The ground floor houses a gallery displaying artworks for sale, and unusually for the city, room rates also include a Continental breakfast.

ROOMS: Suites from CA\$199 (£115), B&B. skwachays.com

Healing Power of Nature



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ensanahotels.com



For modern comforts

\$\$\$ THE DOUGLAS

Taking its name from iconic local tree the Douglas fir, this upmarket, 188-room hotel takes the arboreal theme and runs with it. The lobby desk sits on a giant tree trunk; warm, woody tones are everywhere and even the drinks list has fir-infused tipples. The hotel shares a building (and a parent brand) with the adjacent JW Marriott hotel, meaning eight bars and restaurants to choose from, plus a spa. It's also near two key sports and concert venues: BC Place and the Rogers Arena.

ROOMS: From CA\$434 (£250), room only.
marriott.com

For arty types

\$\$\$ THE LISTEL HOTEL

This hotel recycles, composts or converts all its waste to electricity. Solar panels and a sustainability-focused restaurant are among its other green initiatives. It also has a creative streak, with artworks displayed throughout. The 129-room hotel sits on Robson Street, whose ramen joints and boutique stores make it one of the buzziest strips in the city.

ROOMS: From CA\$210 (£121), room only.
thelistelhotel.com

For bay views

\$\$\$ THE SYLVIA HOTEL

Ivy clad and gazing out over English Bay, the 120-room Sylvia Hotel is home to the city's oldest cocktail bar. Visitors can sip former guest Errol Flynn's favourite tipple, a Vancouver (gin, vermouth and orange bitters), while watching the sun set over the beach. There's a time-warp feel throughout, from the old-school dial above the lift to the wooden cubbyholes at reception.

ROOMS: From CA\$194 (£112), room only.
sylviahotel.com

For budget travellers

\$\$\$ SAMESUN VANCOUVER

This 288-bed hostel is situated on the neon-lit entertainment hub that is Granville Street, setting the tone for what is one of the city's liveliest budget options. The lobby bar, The Beaver Taphouse, offers a changing roster of 20 local craft beers, while organised activities range from hikes and beach clean-ups to music bingo and Mario Kart tournaments. As well as dorms, there are 11 private doubles, three with en suites.

ROOMS: Doubles from CA\$106 (£61), B&B. samesun.com



For the selfie set

📍 HOTEL BELMONT

Should you be looking for somewhere to shout about on Instagram, then look no further than this hip young guitar-slinger of a hotel. The 82-room Belmont sets out its stall from the moment you enter, with framed rock-star photos in the lobby alongside the sort of mod-ish decor that wouldn't feel out of place in a fashion shoot. Other highlights include boozy popsicles and a bowling alley. Guests also get free entry to onsite party spot The Basement.

ROOMS: From CA\$169 (£98), room only.
hotelbelmont.ca

For history buffs

📍📍📍 FAIRMONT HOTEL VANCOUVER

The Fairmont Hotel Vancouver's illustrious who's-who of past guests includes Liberace and Zsa Zsa Gabor. When it was first opened in 1939 — by King George VI, no less — it was said to be visible from 50 miles away. It may no longer be the lone beacon on the horizon, but its copper-roofed, gargoyle-topped bulk still makes it a landmark. It's equally grand on the inside, with hushed lobbies, thick carpets and glittering chandeliers. Expect big-chain comfort in each of its 557 rooms, as well as a plum location next to Vancouver Art Gallery.

ROOMS: From CA\$351 (£203), room only.
fairmont.com/hotel-vancouver 📍



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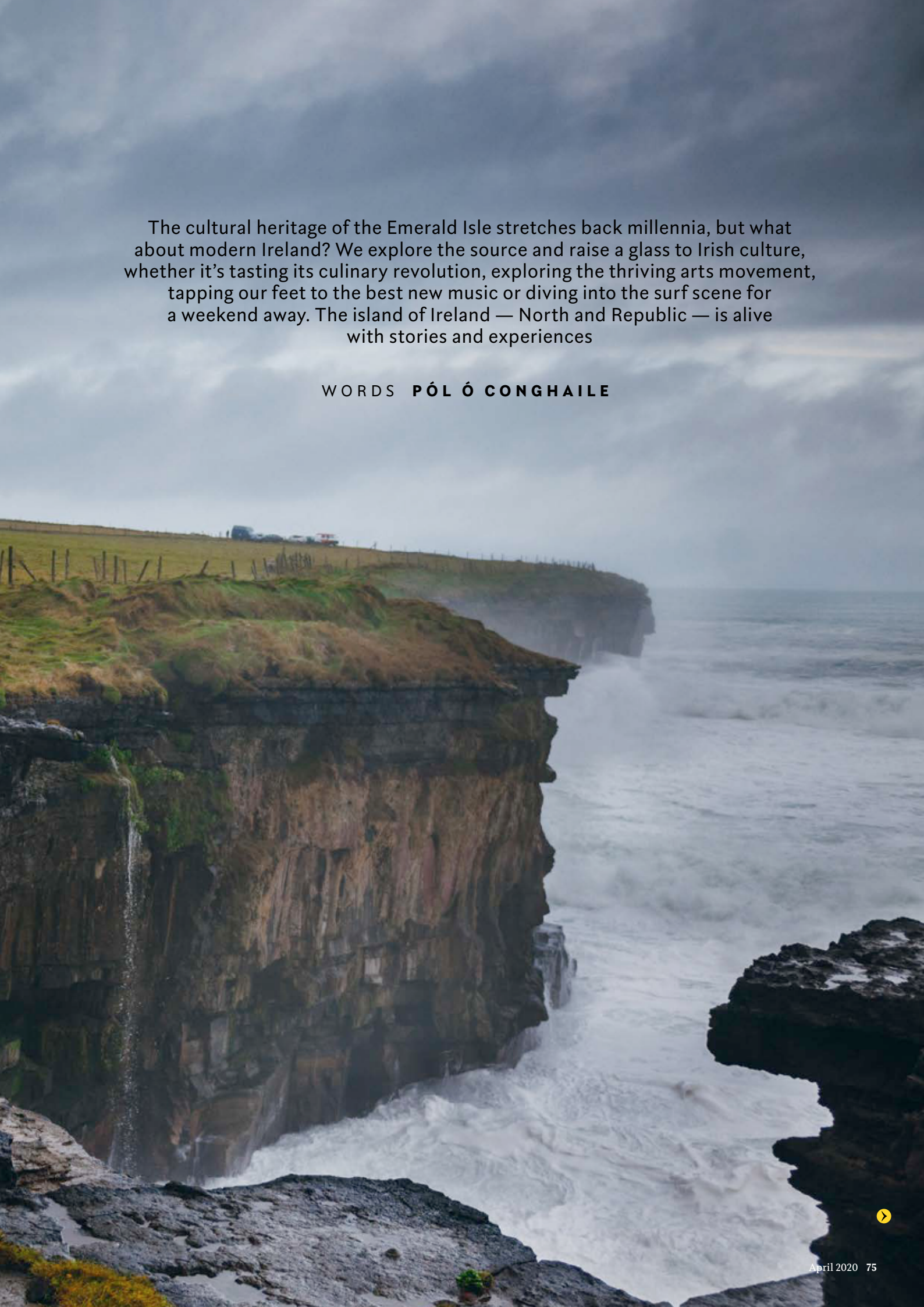


**Ireland's Hidden
HEARTLANDS**

THE NEW IRELAND



IMAGE: DAVID SCIORA



The cultural heritage of the Emerald Isle stretches back millennia, but what about modern Ireland? We explore the source and raise a glass to Irish culture, whether it's tasting its culinary revolution, exploring the thriving arts movement, tapping our feet to the best new music or diving into the surf scene for a weekend away. The island of Ireland — North and Republic — is alive with stories and experiences

WORDS **PÓL Ó CONGHAILE**

CULINARY REVOLUTION

LIMERICK

GO TO MARKET

Limerick's storied food scene is informed by its setting, sandwiched between the River Shannon and pastureland — and now its historic market is the focus of a new food tour

At Limerick's Milk Market, I've eaten a sausage roll, and muesli sourdough bread slathered in homemade marmalade, followed by paprika-battered monkfish fritters, and then somehow made room for some 'spiralaytos' — crisps whizzed from potatoes with a hand drill device. I'm glad I skipped breakfast.

"Growing up, this was somewhere we always came on a Saturday morning," says my guide, Siobhán O'Neill. "For the bit of shopping, or the turkeys for Christmas; there was a little more blood and guts in the market back then. I remember I'd kick and scream about things I couldn't have."

Well now, she can have her fill, and then some. Last summer, Siobhán and her partner, Tom Downes, set up food tour company Teacht Linn Tours. Having travelled abroad, tasting their way across the world, the couple realised Limerick's historic market was crying out for curated tours. 'Teacht linn' is Irish for 'come with us' — and that's just what I do, following the pair through what's both a storied local crossroads and the cutting edge of the city's evolving food scene.

The Milk Market runs Friday to Sunday, but Saturday morning is when it reaches "boiling point", as Siobhán puts it. Sausages sizzle, fresh fish is slapped down on ice, hundreds of baps are sold. Produce ranges from farmhouse cheeses to stallholder Sefik Dikyar's baklava, made to his Turkish granny's recipe.

Beyond the market's walls sprawls Ireland's third-largest city. It's also the hardest to define; Limerick lacks the touristy glow of places like Galway and Cork. It's found it tough to shake gritty stereotypes and the aura of *Angela's Ashes*, but things

are changing. There are festivals like Pigtown Culture & Food Series, an autumn programme of food-related events. There are also casual stops, such as La Cucina Centro (Italian) and Canteen (Asian) serving up zingy eats, while a tasting platter I order at No. 1 Pery Square, a chic Georgian townhouse hotel, is a hymn to local ingredients like Ispíní charcuterie and Castleconnell honey. By King John's Castle, a bold new mural of local hero Dolores O'Riordan, the late lead singer of The Cranberries, feels like a splash of intent.

"There's a subculture in Limerick," says Stephen Cunneen during a chatty tour of his new Treaty City Brewery, on Nicholas Street, just steps from the castle. "This city is a place for the smallholders, and we're saying: this is who we are and this is what we do, and this is how we're going to do it."

Stephen tells me he's the first new brewer in Limerick in over a century. "Ten years ago, King's Island in central Limerick would've been considered one of toughest areas in southwest Ireland," he says. "Now there's a real resurgence. I feel very excited about where this city can be; we haven't even started yet."

Back at the Milk Market, Siobhán and Tom are laying out tasters of farmhouse cheese. Limerick may be late to Ireland's food party, Tom acknowledges, but, he says, it's catching up quickly. "If you put heart and soul into your food the word will spread and people will come," he says. "It will happen."

MORE INFO: Teacht Linn Tours' tours of Limerick's Milk Market from €30 (£25) per person. teachtlinntours.com milkmarketlimerick.ie

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The Milk Market, one of Ireland's oldest markets, which now sells a wide variety of foodstuffs, much of which is produced locally; cheese for sale at the Milk Market; Sarsfield Swivel Bridge, one of the three main bridges in Limerick that cross the Shannon River
PREVIOUS PAGE: Surfers walking along a cliff in stormy weather, Co Mayo



RISING STARS

Since opening in May 2019 at Cliff at Lyons hotel, County Kildare, Aimsir restaurant has already picked up two Michelin stars. Husband and wife owners Jordan Bailey and Majken Bech-Bailey say their 15-course menu aims to 'put Ireland on a plate'. Local produce ranges from lamb, seafood and cheeses to oysters, garlic and even rare Irish nashi pears

JORDAN: "We spent months on the road before we opened, travelling around Ireland looking for suppliers, craftsmen, fishermen, foragers and whatever else. We started with what we thought was a very extensive list, but once we spoke to one farmer, they'd refer us to another down the road, and it just went crazy after that."

MAJKEN: "We live in a world where it's very easy to get everything year-round — you can buy strawberries in Tesco in December. But Jordan, as a chef, gets more creative when he focuses on pure ingredients, instead of having the whole world at his fingertips. It's also about sustainability; there's no reason to buy from across the world when you have everything here."

JORDAN: "One of the main reasons we came here was because it's so untouched — that excited me. But you saw with last year's Michelin Guide [18 restaurants on the island have one or two stars] that Irish restaurants are kind of taking over. We have amazing potential; it's just about getting the right people to do the right thing and put it on a world stage."

MAJKEN: "Jordan and I looked at over 100 different restaurant names and narrowed it down to three. The first thing about 'aimsir' [pronounced am-sheer] was that it looked and sounded beautiful. It means 'weather' and 'time' in Irish, which chimed with our idea of using seasonal Irish produce."

Seasonal tasting menu €135 (£112).
aimsir.ie



LEFT FROM TOP: Majken picking sea beet on a coastal foraging trip; Jordan prepping for service at Aimsir; Jordan Bailey and Majken Bech-Bailey, co-owners of Aimsir restaurant, foraging in a wood in Enniskerry

RIGHT: Dish of oyster and cucumber and arrow grass at Aniar, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Galway



TOP 4: FOOD EXPERIENCES

BREAD SCHOOL, FIREHOUSE BAKERY, CO CORK

'Where bread is king'. That's the motto of this bread school on Heir Island, in Roaringwater Bay. Full-day classes include lunch with wine. €125 (£104) per person. thefirehouse.ie

ARMAGH FOOD & CIDER FESTIVAL, CO ARMAGH

Armagh is Northern Ireland's apple country. This event is the perfect excuse to explore, with showcases, markets, orchard tours and special dinners. 24-27 September. visitarmagh.com

BLACKSTAIRS ECO TRAILS, CO CARLOW

Mary White runs foraging tours from her home outside Borris. You'll be making wild garlic pesto and gorse ice cream in no time, and there are cosy shepherd huts for overnight stays. blackstairsecotrails.ie

ENGLISH MARKET, CORK, CO CORK

A historic covered market in the city centre selling everything from artisan chocolates to drisheen (a type of blood pudding). Don't forget Kay Harte's excellent Farmgate Café, too. englishmarket.ie

GALWAY

14 HOURS IN...

From gastro stops to great museums and theatre, the European Capital of Culture 2020 is ripe for exploring — and is arguably Ireland's most delicious city

8AM SNACK AND STROLL

Grab a warm cinnamon bun and locally roasted Red Eye Coffee from Marmalade Bakery on Middle Street, before walking along the River Corrib and the Long Walk promenade. Or do as Galwegians do and walk the Salthill Prom, kicking your foot against the wall at the end, as tradition dictates. marmaladegalway.com

10AM A DELA-CIOUS BRUNCH

Dela is a colourful cafe that sources much of its produce from an organic farm near the city. From a Dela Fry, with sizzling Herterich's sausages, and Kelly's black pudding to buttermilk pancakes and veggie options, there's plenty to choose from. dela.ie

12PM TOUR THE LATIN QUARTER

The beauty of Galway is its ability to squeeze big city buzz into small streets. Soak it up by strolling from the Spanish Arch up Quay Street towards Shop Street, stopping at Hazel Mountain Chocolate (bean-to-bar chocolate made in the Burren region of County Clare) and Charlie Byrne's Bookshop along the way. If you'd prefer a guide, Brian Nolan's Galway's Horrible History tour leaves from Eyre Square at 10.30 and noon. galwaywalks.com

2PM A KILLER LUNCH AT KAI

Peckish? Plot a course for the city's Westend, where New Zealand-born chef Jess Murphy is doing magical things with seasonal, Irish ingredients at Kai (the Maori word for 'food'). Think Clare crab and Irish fine beans served with local leaves and a hen's egg, or chickpea and goat's curd filo pies. kairestaurant.ie

4PM GALWAY CITY MUSEUM

Exhibits at this small museum range from a Galway hooker (a type of sailing boat) to prehistoric finds and a collection of local author Pádraic Ó Conaire's books and belongings. There's a super view of the River Corrib and Atlantic Ocean from the top of the building, too. galwaycitymuseum.ie

5PM PEOPLE-WATCH AT TIGH NEACHTAIN

The corner perches at this cosy pub, bang in the middle of the medieval quarter, are the best places in the city to watch the world go by. Sample a local Soulwater IPA or oatmilk stout while you're at it. tighneachtain.com

7PM MICHELIN STAR MAGIC

Galway has two restaurants taking local ingredients to Michelin-starred heights: Aniar and Loam. "We've the best ingredients; we just need to present them in the best possible way, and that's often the simplest way," says J P McMahon, chef-patron at Aniar, where simple descriptions like 'brill, sea beet' and 'potato, lovage' belie the sophistication of the creations they refer to. From €89 (£74) per person. aniarrestaurant.ie

11PM ROCK ON AT RÓISÍN DUBH'S

A gig at this music/comedy venue on Dominic Street could throw up Irish indie acts like Delorentos or La Galaxie, or emerging local acts. Strange Brew is a classic indie night on Thursdays. roisindubh.net

MORE INFO: Food tours available from galwayfoodtours.com galway2020.ie galwaytourism.ie

OUT ON THE TOWN

BELFAST

NORTHERN SOUL

Belfast-based DJ, broadcaster and radio producer David O'Reilly discusses the city's barnstorming live music scene, where to catch the best gigs and which local bands to watch



calls me that”), O'Reilly is an Irish radio personality and presenter of BBC Radio Ulster's *Across the Line*, a show focusing on new Irish music.

“There's absolutely a creative energy happening,” he enthuses. That's down to several factors, from success stories such as Snow Patrol and Two Door Cinema Club to summer festivals like Belsonic and AVA. Belfast is an encouraging environment for young bands and musicians, he tells me — and a great destination for travellers who like their tunes.

So where can visitors go for a taste of the music scene? First up, says Rigsy, a little homework is required.

“The HQ for new bands is probably Voodoo in the city centre,” he explains. “It's the best place to go — you'll meet musicians, it's run by musicians, and there are musicians behind the bar.”

“The weird thing about Belfast, and all of Northern Ireland, is that there are more bands than there should be,” says David. Better known as Rigsy (“even my mother

Limelight, meanwhile, is “the absolute heritage venue”. Touring acts have ranged from Oasis to Jeff Buckley and The Strokes. The Belfast Empire Music Hall is another solid stop for concerts, according to Rigsy, while the ‘Sounds of NI’ night at The Pavilion Bar is the place to catch up-and-coming acts.

Belfast's rock and alternative scenes didn't appear overnight, of course. This is a city whose alumni include Van Morrison, Ruby Murray and David Holmes. Led Zeppelin first played *Stairway to Heaven* live at the Ulster Hall in 1971 and, according to the guide of a music bus tour I went on some years ago, “The music was so loud, they couldn't hear a gun battle taking place around the corner.”

I ask Rigsy what acts are breaking through right now. “We're talking about bands based in Belfast rather than *from* Belfast,” he says, going on to describe Ryan McMullan, from Portaferry, as “absolutely massive”. New Pagans, The Wood Burning Savages and Careerist are rock bands to watch, he adds, while solo artists Jealous of the Birds, Roe and Kitt Philippa are all thrilling listens. “Look, I could go on all day.”

MORE INFO: visitbelfast.com. Follow Rigsy on Twitter @Rigsy

ROCKIN' PUBS

Four of the best spots to catch some live music

SPIRIT STORE, DUNDALK, CO LOUTH

Snugs, sash windows, candles and craft beers. This quayside treasure features Sunday trad sessions downstairs, while upstairs is a lovingly curated venue that has drawn local legends like Just Mustard and Jinx Lennon, as well as touring acts like Snow Patrol and The Handsome Family. It's a gorgeous space, and offers an authentic taste of the Irish music scene. spiritstore.ie

TEACH HIÚDAÍ BEAG, BUNBEG, CO DONEGAL

Here's where to combine good music and Gaeilge (the Irish language). Set in Ireland's largest Gaeltacht area, the northwest pub features the best of local trad in Monday night *seisiúns*, with up to a dozen musicians on the go at times. More good news: it's also a B&B. tradcentre.com/hiudaubeag

DE BARRA'S FOLK CLUB, CLONAKILTY, CO CORK

Serving up everything from trad and rock 'n' roll to comedy and blues, this gregarious, genre-bending pub is a West Cork legend. Don't miss it. debarra.ie

ANNESLEY HOUSE, NORTH STRAND, DUBLIN

Pubs like Pipers Corner, The Cobblestone and Whelan are better known for live music, but ‘The House Presents’ sessions at Annesley House are one of the Northside's sweetest surprises. A salon-style setup features an eclectic mix of live rock, blues, acoustic and spoken word. facebook.com/thehousepresents

EMPIRE MUSIC HALL

IRELAND

BELFAST



A traditional Irish music session at Belfast's The John Hewitt pub.

ABOVE: Lydia Slagel and Laura Rogers, of singing and songwriting duo The Secret Sisters, perform at Belfast's Empire Music Hall



DUBLIN

DRINK TO THAT

After a lost century, Dublin's Golden Triangle glows again, with new distilleries riding high on Ireland's craft spirits boom

ALL-IRELAND FINALS

If Gaelic football and hurling are the country's religions, Croke Park is the cathedral — an epic Dublin stadium where inter-county sporting rivalries peak on All-Ireland final days. The summertime season-enders see 80,000 fans gather to watch world-class sportsmanship in an event as indescribably Irish as they come. Don't have a ticket? Simply pitch up in a nearby pub. gaa.ie

FROM TOP: A tasting tour at Roe & Co Distillery, in the historic The Liberties neighbourhood; the Jameson Distillery Bow Street in Dublin's Smithfield area

The smell makes me smile. It's faint, but as I walk down James Street, it gains strength. Ghosting over the black gates, swilling around old steeples and 21st-century cranes, its toasty, porridge-like pungency nests in my nostrils. Some Dubliners love it; some hate it. But we all know it instantly: it's the smell of barley roasting in Guinness' St James's Gate Brewery.

"That's how The Liberties neighbourhood smells a couple of hours a day, my friends," says tour guide Shane McCann on a tour of the newly opened Roe & Co Distillery. "Tourists wonder what's going on."

The Liberties is home to the Guinness Storehouse, Ireland's most-visited tourist attraction, but the Black Stuff is far from the only drink on offer round these parts — Ireland's craft spirits boom has seen several new whiskey distilleries open up in recent years. A couple of minutes' walk from Roe & Co is Pearse Lyons Distillery in the former St James' Church; copper stills sit in its nave and a glass spire lights up seductively at night. Nearby Newmarket is home to the Teeling Whiskey Distillery, whose bottles can be found in every pub in Dublin.

Dublin has form with whiskey. In the 1800s, a small area of the city known as the 'Golden Triangle' was a global powerhouse, with brands like Jameson, Powers and George Roe (for which Roe & Co is named) known all over the world. But a failure to modernise, the rise of Scottish whisky, war at home and Prohibition abroad combined to create what's often referred to as 'a lost century'.

However, tides are turning. In 1980, just two working distilleries remained on the island; today, there are 30.

Continuing the tour, Shane leads us to a flavour workshop. The aim is to "demystify cocktails a little," he says, encouraging us to blend whiskey and ice with sweet, sour and salty additions. "Bar menus can be confusing. Some guys light their drinks on fire, others throw orange peel all over the place — and it all makes you just want to run out the door."

What's remarkable is the neighbourhood in which this story is unfolding. "The Liberties is a living, breathing village," says Liz Gillis, a historian who takes me on a walking tour of the area. Turning one corner, we see a chunk of medieval city wall. Turning another, we pass Variety Jones, a hip new restaurant with one Michelin star. Meath Street, with its street vendors, feels like a small town where everyone knows one another ("they know your secrets as well!" Liz laughs). But there are new hotels and apartment complexes, too. Cranes hover over a skyline once dominated by church steeples; debates about gentrification are in full swing. I ask Liz how she feels about the development in the area. "There's nothing wrong with change," she muses. "They just don't have to go knocking everything down. It's about an interaction of both."

Back at Roe & Co Distillery, Shane invites us to open a wooden box. It's filled with jars of clove drops and toffee, whose notes we seek out in whiffs of whiskey. Momentarily, the smell of barley slips my mind.

MORE INFO: Distillery tours in The Liberties can be taken at Roe & Co, Pearse Lyons and Teeling. roeandcowhiskey.com pearselyonsdistillery.com teelingdistillery.com visitdublin.com

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THE NEW ARTS SCENE

DERRY

PAINT THE TOWN

For years, Derry's art scene was defined by the Bogside murals, famous for their depictions of The Troubles. But now a new, creative vibe is sweeping the city, ushering in a fresh array of murals, festivals and attractions

I'm staring at a giant mural of a boy in a gas mask holding a petrol bomb. He appears to stare back. Painted onto the gable end of a house on Rossville Street, The Petrol Bomber is one of a dozen murals in what's known as 'the People's Gallery' in Derry's Bogside. Around me, local residents go about their lives as tourists photograph their homes.

I'm torn. The murals bring visitors, but they feel divisive in 21st-century Derry. The Bogside Artists — the men who created the gallery — don't align themselves with any political group, but their portrayals of events like Bloody Sunday are jolting. Do they keep community history alive, or old wounds open? Should Derry have new poster boys?

One thing's for sure: while the murals remain, the city around them is changing. In the past decade, it has had a stint as UK Capital of Culture; welcomed the new Peace Bridge; and seen carnivals like Derry Halloween go from strength to strength. Walking around, you'll see recent arrivals like Bishop's Gate Hotel, the Walled City Brewery and a new mural — a joyful, cheeky celebration of *Derry Girls* on Orchard Street.

"That's the most photographed thing in the whole city!" laughs Karl Porter, who painted the mural with Donal O'Doherty. Together,

they run UV Arts, a street art social media enterprise in the city. The piece is testament to the Channel 4 comedy that transformed perceptions of a place locals call Stroke City (as in, Derry-stroke-Londonderry).

"We're not taking away from political art," Karl tells me. "We want to remember the past, but we also want to move on." UV Arts does that by helping young people and disenfranchised groups to cross political divides by painting in places that feel mired in political or social baggage. "It's about changing perceptions of space, educating people about the use of space and showing how a bit of colour can go a long way to revitalising something," he says.

"There's a lot going on that tourists don't tend to see," says Mary Cremin, director of contemporary art space Void. She describes Derry as a place people are moving back to, somewhere smaller and more affordable than Dublin or Belfast. "It's kind of coming into its own now," she says. "We're very interested in making new histories around contemporary Derry — what is it now, rather than constantly looking to the past."

MORE INFO: uv-arts.co derryvoid.com visitderry.com



DESIGN FOCUS

IRISH DESIGN SHOP, DUBLIN

Established by jewellers Clare Grennan and Laura Caffrey, this shop features handpicked Irish craft and design gems, from cashmere shawls to gorgeous prints (you can watch jewellery being made upstairs, too). irishdesignshop.com

NATIONAL DESIGN & CRAFT GALLERY, KILKENNY

Set in Kilkenny Castle's former stable yard, this is a small suite of galleries and studios where you can watch crafts being made by the likes of JMK Goldsmiths or Ray Power's Castle Arch Pottery. ndcg.ie kilkennydesign.com

BURREN PERFUMERY, CO CLARE

The journey to this scent sanctuary, where Irish perfumes and cosmetics are made and sold, is half the fun — it takes you through the lunar landscape of Burren National Park. burrenperfumery.com

For more on Irish craft, design and classes, see designireland.ie.



THE NEXT CHAPTER

A look inside MoLI, Dublin's new Museum of Literature Ireland

Passing through the warren of galleries straddling three Georgian buildings on St Stephen's Green, my guide and I come to a halt at a doorstopper of a tome in a glass case. "This is probably the most valuable modern literary artefact in the world," says curator, Simon O'Connor, beaming.

It's a copy of *Ulysses* — the first edition handed to Joyce after its printing almost a century ago. The name of the museum itself, pronounced 'Molly', is of course a nod to Molly Bloom, the novel's heroine and the character who speaks its final words.

But MoLI isn't just about Joyce, or even the male mega-stars of the last century like WB Yeats and Seamus Heaney. There's also an overdue focus on female writers and young adult fiction, as well as immersive displays and the odd analogue surprise — such as the stack of blank pages on which visitors are urged to write the first sentence of their own novel. Tickets €8/€6 (£6.60/£5). moli.ie

Q&A: JAMES EARLEY

The Dublin-based street art sensation speaks about the momentum and breadth of Ireland's art scene, and recommends the city's best galleries

IRISH STREET ART IS HAVING A MOMENT. WHY?

There are a few reasons. On a visual level, the large scale of the work helps, and the images can be quickly disseminated through social media, most notably Instagram. But I think the main driving force in Ireland has been the use of street art to promote awareness of political and social issues, such as marriage equality and the abortion referendum. Dublin, Belfast and Waterford all have a great variety of large-scale mural works.

YOU CURATED THE ART AT THE HENDRICK SMITHFIELD HOTEL IN DUBLIN, DESCRIBED AS 'IRELAND'S FIRST STREET ART HOTEL'. TELL US ABOUT THAT.

The project took place over a 10-month period, which is reflected in the 300-plus artworks adorning the hotel's walls. This is a living gallery showcasing the history of urban art (graffiti and street art) right up to the present day, with pieces by the most avant-garde artists working within the field.

HOW DOES YOUR OWN HISTORY RESONATE IN YOUR WORK?

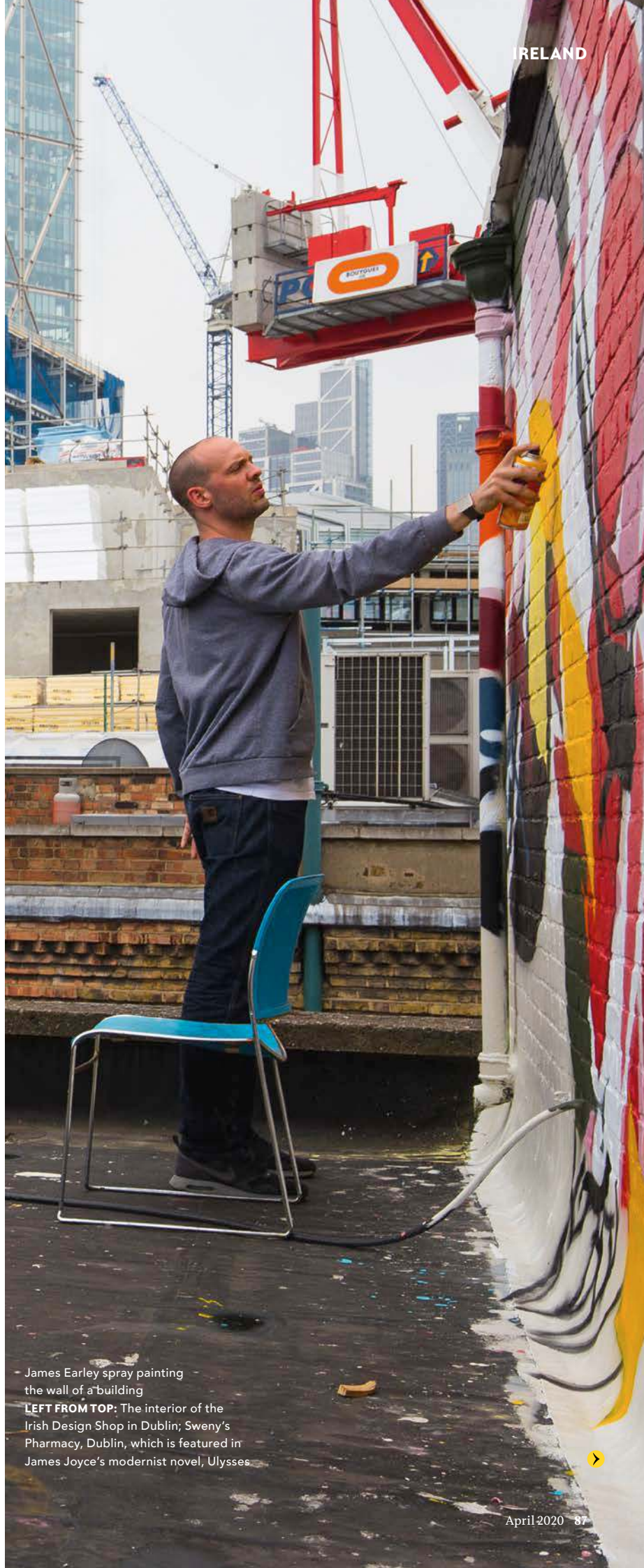
My family ran a famous stained glass studio, Earley & Co., for more than 100 years in Dublin. I'm very proud and honoured to have this artistic heritage. The visual aesthetic of stained glass, as well as the structural fabric of the craft, permeates all the projects I work on — be it fine art prints, canvases or large-scale murals taking over the entire sides of buildings. It's a constant.

WHERE ARE YOUR FAVOURITE PLACES TO SEE AND ENGAGE WITH ART IN IRELAND?

I really like the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin — it's a beautiful space and it's very central. It always has well-curated shows and champions a wide variety of Irish artists. Its Coppa Café on the ground floor is excellent too. The permanent collection at the National Gallery is a sight to behold — Irish painter Mainie Jellett's artworks steal the show for me every time. My last recommendation is a selection of independent art galleries in Dublin: The Kerlin, SO Fine Art, Hang Tough Gallery, Atelier Maser, Stoney Road Press and the Graphic Print Gallery. Look them up on Google and decide which to visit.

jamese.ie. Follow James on Instagram @james_earley.

IMAGES: PÓL Ó CONGHAILE, GETTY



James Earley spray painting the wall of a building

LEFT FROM TOP: The interior of the Irish Design Shop in Dublin; Sweny's Pharmacy, Dublin, which is featured in James Joyce's modernist novel, *Ulysses*

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Looking down onto Strandhill Beach as a surfer catches a wave

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

CO SLIGO

THE PULL OF THE OCEAN

Ireland has woken up to its world-class waves and in Strandhill, County Sligo, locals and blow-ins have both found an antidote to city living. The town is making a name for itself not only for surfing, but for outdoor adventures and its seaweed spa, too. A National Surf Centre is set to open this autumn, putting this welcoming town on the map

It's a crisp afternoon in Strandhill. Two surfers are walking towards the water, wrapped head to toe in black neoprene, silhouetted by a low winter sun. I feel cold just looking at them. The onlooker beside me agrees. "They're literally addicted to it. It's like the priesthood or something."

I'm a fair-weather surfer, happy with the odd summer outing. Sometimes I stand; mostly I tumble into the great Atlantic washing machine. But these two are on a whole other level, zipping along the breaks, oblivious to the chill.

"I feel nourished here," says Melanie White, one of the surfers, emerging from the water with her long hair dripping. She gestures around Sligo Bay. "There's just something about the place. I love it."

Melanie runs Rebelle Surf, one of several surf schools in the village. Some of her classes and camps are specifically for women. "It's a different style of surf lesson; it's more about what's stopping you catching the wave. Is it self-doubt? Is it fear?" A generation ago, surfers trickled through,

staying in vans and B&Bs. Today, the sport is sexy, equipment affordable, and Ireland has woken up to its world-class waves. Strandhill is home to just a few thousand souls, but summer days see its car park packed out, and a National Surf Centre is set to open this autumn. At the nearby Strand pub, the Guinness toucan has an adapted slogan: 'Surfing is good for you'.

Adventure tourism companies have sprung up throughout County Sligo, offering everything from kayaking on inland lakes to hiking, biking, sailing and even 'adventure yoga' in this outdoorsy oasis.

Then there's 'the mountain', as everyone calls it. Knocknarea is a 1,072ft-high limestone lump that lords it over Strandhill like a souvenir-sized Table Mountain. To get a sense of the hold it has over locals, I join a short hike to the summit led by Barry Hannigan of Northwest Adventure Tours.

"As far as archaeology goes, I think Ireland's probably one of the biggest unopened boxes on the planet," he says, taking us past deserted villages, pointing

out distant drumlins (low oval mounds) and passage tombs (covered burial chambers), as the incline begins to steepen. I hear the story of Queen Meadhbh, the legendary Irish warrior said to be buried standing up in a hilltop cairn, the better to face her enemies. Sligo was also WB Yeats' 'Land of Heart's Desire', and we can see 'bare Ben Bulbin's head' to the northeast, beneath which the poet lies buried in Drumcliff.

"You can see the specks of surfers from the mountain, and the specks of hikers from the surf," says Barry, smiling at the notion.

Back in Strandhill, we gather for warming cups of coffee in Shells Cafe. The sun drops over the dunes, and we bask in the glow of good exercise under unexpected blue skies.

MORE INFO: Rebelle Surf runs a women's surf camp this summer, from 19-21 June 2020. Prices start at €250 (£210) and includes lessons, lunches and yoga. rebellesurf.com sligosurfexperience.com northwestadventuretours.ie gostrandhill.com sligotourism.ie

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The Dark Hedges, an avenue of beech trees along Bregagh Road between Armoy and Stranocum in County Antrim

CO ANTRIM

THE TREES HAVE EYES

Northern Ireland's dramatic Causeway Coast provided the backdrop to *Game of Thrones*. Walk in Arya Stark's footsteps and sample 'mini dragon's eggs' in a local hotel — it's the best way to relive the fantasy series until the new studio tour opens

I'm walking beneath a tangle of beech trees near Ballymoney, County Antrim. It's sunset, and the branches of the trees — planted in the 18th century — seem to beckon me forward, not just down the old estate avenue but into a whole world of fantasy.

They did the same to Arya Stark, when she trundled off down the Kingsroad in HBO's *Game of Thrones*. The Dark Hedges, as this avenue is known, is just one of dozens of filming locations from the show in Northern Ireland. I'm on a driving tour of the Causeway Coast; I've already stopped off at obvious attractions like the Giant's Causeway, but there have also been detours to tiny Ballintoy Harbour (gateway to the Iron Islands), Downhill Beach, where Stannis Baratheon and Melisandre burned their effigies, and to Binevenagh Mountain (Dothraki Grasslands).

"*Game of Thrones* was filmed behind the trees over there," says Paula Canning, when

I stop at Waterfall Caves, a self-catering set-up at the Duncrun Fishing Lakes, beneath Binevenagh. At the reception hut, she keeps a map guests can use as a walking trail.

The appeal of the show is such that visitors have a host of *GoT* experiences to choose from, including bus tours, and medieval banquets and archery at Castle Ward (Winterfell); there's also a location touring app, and later this year, HBO and Linen Mill Studios are set to unveil an official studio tour in Banbridge. Whatever next? Dothraki trifle with mini dragon's eggs? Well, yes. In fact, it's already on the menu at Ballygally Castle hotel.

MORE INFO: A Causeway Coast road trip can be started in Derry or Belfast. Stay at Waterfall Caves from £110 a night. visitcausewaycoastandglens.com waterfallcaves.com discovernorthernireland.com

TOP 5: CULTURE ITINERARIES

WILD DINING

Vagabond Tours' six-day Epic Ireland Food Tour loops from Dublin to the south west and back. It includes seaweed harvesting and oyster shucking, and there are hiking and kayaking options too. From €1,766 (£1,472) per person. vagabondtoursofireland.com

TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

Get your boots on for a seven-day guided itinerary exploring the likes of the Wicklow Mountains, Killarney National Park and Carrauntoohil (Ireland's highest peak). From €1,695 (£1,412) per person. wildernessireland.com

HIGH CULTURE

Many of Ireland's great houses were built in the Georgian era, and some are now visitor attractions. Culture & Heritage Tours Ireland's seven-day Wonderful World of Georgian Living takes in everything from the splendour of Florence Court to the faded grandeur of Dublin's Henrietta Street. From around €2,600 (£2,166) per person cultureheritagetours.ie

GO WEST

Wild Atlantic Music Tours specialises in luxury coach tours of County Clare and the west coast, accompanied by musicians like Grammy Award-winning fiddle-player Eileen Ivers. A six-night summer tour, including private concerts and sightseeing costs €1,869 (£1,556) per person. wildatlanticmusic.com

BESPOKE ADVENTURES

Crafted Ireland offers bespoke itineraries — a keen hiker with a penchant for history might be paired with an archaeologist or historian for an off-radar excursion, for instance. Prices from around €600 (£500) per person per day. craftedireland.com



Fanad Head Lighthouse,
County Donegal

TOP 4: WILD WEEKEND BOLTHOLES

CLARE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE, CO MAYO

Perched high on craggy cliffs overlooking Clew Bay, Clare Island Lighthouse and its former keepers' quarters are today a boutique accommodation option. Pick of the rooms is the Tower House — located in the original lighthouse tower — with its circular bedroom and a winding staircase. Another option is the Sauna Suite, an outhouse building with — you guessed it — a sauna. From €250 (£208) per person, including B&B, dinner and ferry collection. clareislandlighthouse.com

FINN LOUGH, CO FERMANAGH

The 'Bubble Domes' at Finn Lough have a transparent roof and walls, allowing you to gaze out at the woods, stars (or, ahem, clouds) from the comfort of a four-poster bed. Space is tight — with just enough room for two people — but decor is chic, with telescopes, Nespresso machines and fluffy robes all provided. From £275, sleeping two people. finnlough.com

LEGAN CASTLE FARMHOUSE, THOMASTOWN, CO KILKENNY

Caroline Sweeney previously worked at London's Grosvenor House, and she brings a gorgeous eye for detail to her cosy set-up in the Kilkenny countryside. Set next to a small ruined castle and a 200-year-old farmhouse, accommodation options include a cottage guesthouse and luxury bell tents; there's also a super cafe that uses homemade, homegrown and locally sourced produce. From €79 (£66) per person per night. legancastle.ie

BREAC.HOUSE, DUNFANAGHY, CO DONEGAL

This sleek hideaway on the remote Horn Head peninsula blurs the boundary between inside and out. Expect locally crafted furniture, native Irish materials like Donegal tweed, a wood-fired garden sauna, craft cocktails served at 5pm and locally-sourced breakfasts to boot. Rooms from €275 (£229). breac.house

IRISH-SPEAKING REGIONS

Irish is taught in schools, appears on signs and is sprinkled into conversation throughout Ireland (*sláinte*, meaning 'cheers', is the word every visitor learns), but full-blown Irish conversations are trickier to find. To immerse yourself in the local lingo, plan a trip to one of the country's *Gaeltachtaí* (Irish-speaking regions) — mainly found on the west coast. ▣

A man and a woman are cycling on a gravel path through a lush forest. The man is wearing a red jacket and a black helmet, looking up and to the left. The woman is wearing a yellow jacket and a blue helmet, looking down at her bike. Both bikes are equipped with panniers. The forest is dense with tall trees and green ferns.

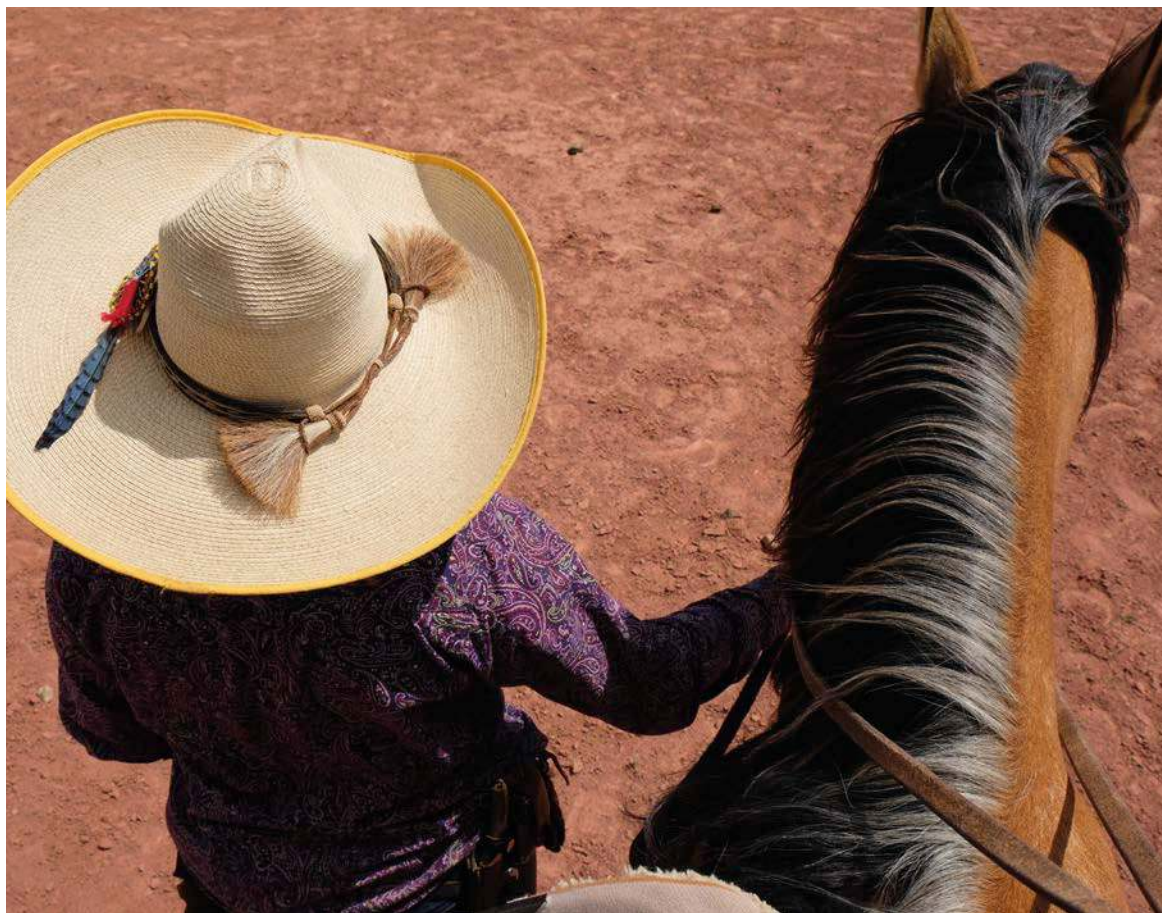
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ONCE UPON A TIME IN **NEW** **MEXICO**

The soaring canyons and sagebrush plains of northern New Mexico have attracted artists, spiritual seekers and free thinkers for over a century. A road trip through the high desert — encountering a hippy commune, artists' studios, futuristic eco-homes and a Benedictine monastery — uncovers the weird, wild and wonderful soul of the American Southwest

WORDS **AMELIA DUGGAN**

IMAGES: AMELIA DUGGAN; JEN JUDGE



IT'S POSSIBLE TO GO YEARS — OR A WHOLE
LIFETIME — WITHOUT CONSIDERING
OUR INFINITESIMAL PLACE IN THE

VASTNESS

But in the desert of New Mexico, existential revelations seem to come thick and fast. It's dusk in the Chama River Canyon. I've padded uphill from my guest quarters, through a meditation garden decorated with the Stations of the Cross, to join my hosts in their chapel. Soft light streams in through the patchwork of windowpanes, entombing a gory carving of Christ in a grid of radiance and shade. Black-robed Benedictine monks — some wizened, some fresh-faced, many occupying the years in between — chant psalms from the shadowy transepts. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." One monk wafts a thurible around the central altar, taking steady steps. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters." Finials of sweet-scented smoke wind languorously through the beams of light.

Outside the tall windows, a sliver of a moon rises over the canyon in a wan, cornflower-blue sky — the last vestiges of a blistering summer's day. The colours of the landscape slowly intensify, emphasising russet veins in the rockface — sediment laid down by a powerful river millennia ago. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil," the monks sing. I've now completely lost my place in the hymn book. All I can think about is the improbability of my being here.

I don't just mean this in the metaphysical sense. Staying at the Monastery of Christ in the Desert, the most remote in the Western Hemisphere, is one of the more outlandish travel experiences of my life. It's a hard journey to reach the monks — their off-grid home sits at the end of a 13-mile red dirt track outside the pit-stop town of Abiqui, which is a two-hour drive from the state capital, Santa Fe. Despite my firm agnosticism, I've come to sample the solitude and beauty of the monastery; the monks welcome people of all faiths and no faith.

I'm invited to dine with them, to labour in the gardens alongside them during the morning work period, and to attend — if I wish — their nine daily church services. The welcome literature also encourages me to join them in a commitment to contemplative silence.

The local crickets, however, have agreed to no such terms; as I return down the hill to bed, their deafening chorus adds texture to the still, black night and, later, seeps into my dreams.

When the steady clang of a bell rings out for 4am vigils and I shuffle blearily back towards the chapel, the darkness of the valley has deepened. Overhead, the entire cosmos is lit up: layer upon layer of distant galaxies and burning suns — a ceiling that puts the Sistine Chapel's to shame. I reach the steps but, instead of slipping into a pew, I sit outside to watch the stars. Yellow candlelight glows through the cracks in the door behind me; the monks' ethereal Gregorian chanting spills out into the empty canyon. It feels divine.

"They say the deeper you go into the desert, the more you'll be sought out. There's a lure, a fascination," Abbot Christian tells me on the morning of my departure. It's the first and only conversation of my stay; one I requested in low whispers from the monk on hospitality duty. The abbot, who joins me on a garden bench, surprises me by being both charming and gregarious — not at all severe or solemn, as I'd imagined. He repeatedly steers the conversation towards '80s movies and The Beatles; I repeatedly steer it back to the desert. "It's a strong tradition in monasticism, of course," he says. "The earliest monks went out into the Egyptian desert. For the solitude, the quiet, the beauty." Abbot Christian pauses and looks out over the flowerbeds and modest graveyard to the amphitheatre of grasslands and rock spires beyond. "This was created

RIGHT: Monastery of Christ in the Desert

PREVIOUS PAGES FROM

LEFT: Cowgirl leading a horse ahead of trail ride at Ghost Ranch; Highway 76, known as the High Road, en route to Taos

OF CREATION.

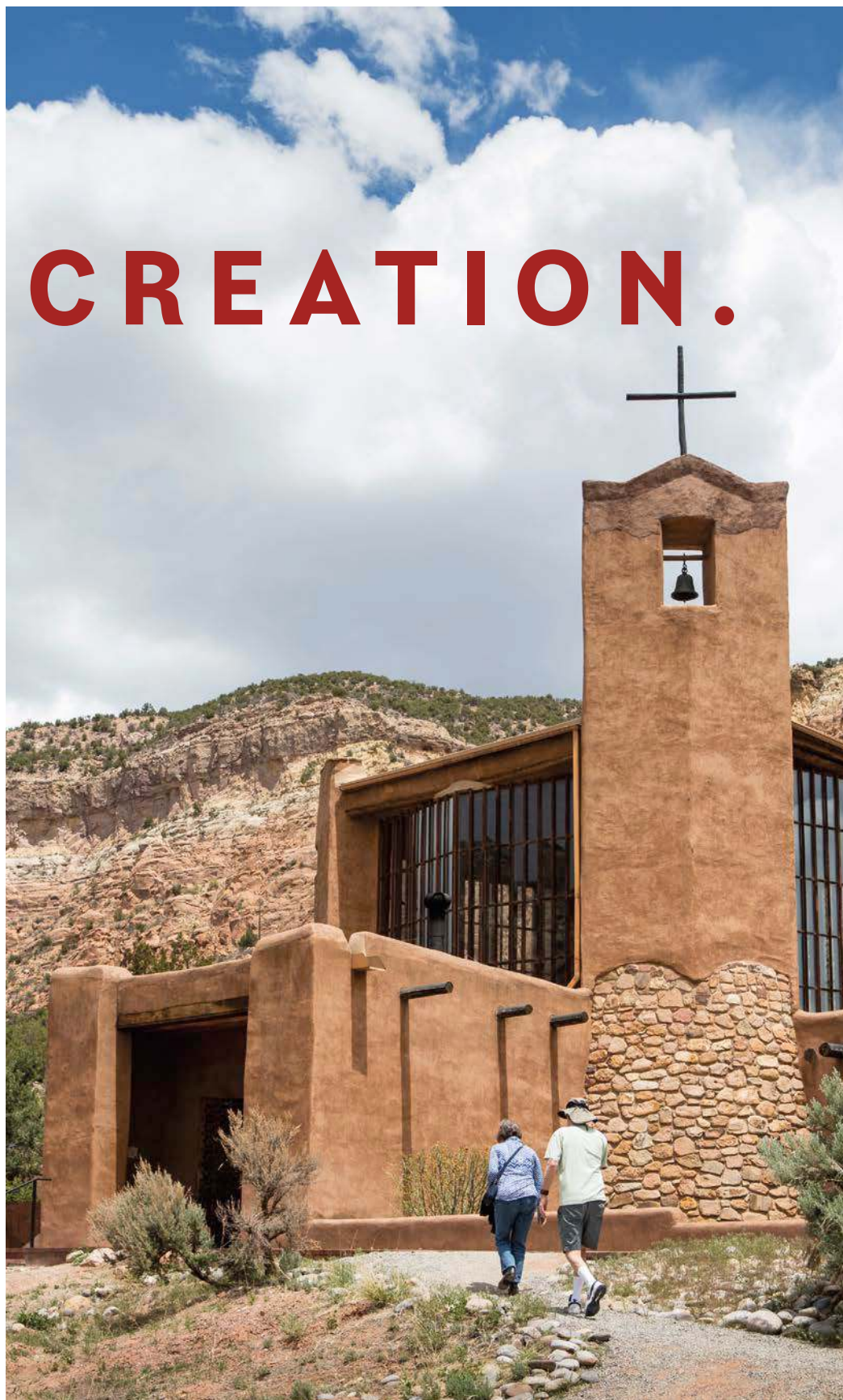


IMAGE: JEN JUDGE





**“IT’S SOMETHING
THAT’S IN THE
AIR, IT’S JUST
DIFFERENT. THE
SKY IS DIFFERENT,
THE STARS ARE
DIFFERENT, THE
WIND IS DIFFERENT”**

— GEORGIA
O’KEEFFE

over aeons of time,” he says pensively, echoing my own thoughts. “Man can hardly fathom it.”

The Benedictines aren’t the only ones to find inspiration and solace in this ancient landscape. When I arrive at my rustic cottage at Ghost Ranch, the legendary retreat and education centre an hour’s drive east of the monastery, the smattering of people I encounter around the main compound seems to have been plucked from a circus. A bare-chested man juggles beanbags; a troupe of blindfolded women are attempting to circle a cottonwood tree; and tiny children dressed in tie-dye rough-and-tumble on the scrubby lawn. “We attract a lot of artists. A lot of solo travellers too. Most people are on their own private journeys,” Karen Butts, the tours and education manager, explains. “This remote corner has always attracted interesting characters.”

One of the best known of these characters was 20th-century American painter Georgia O’Keeffe, who fled the patriarchal confines of New York in the ’40s and made this 21,000-acre estate her home and her muse. Perdenal, a narrow mesa nine miles to the south, was her favourite subject. “It’s my private mountain. God told me if I painted it enough I could have it,” O’Keeffe once joked. As with the monks, people made long pilgrimages to seek out O’Keeffe in the desert; guests at her humble cottage included artists Frida Kahlo and Andy Warhol, and the psychiatrist Carl Jung.

I head out to explore more of the ranch on horseback, a set of watercolour paints tucked into my saddlebag in case inspiration strikes. Three tough-as-nails Texan cowgirls run the ranch stables (one vice-like handshake cracks all my knuckles), and they lead our small party with the flair and swagger of rodeo pros. It’s wild, wild country. Red dust streams from our horses’ hooves as we navigate dried riverbeds, passing trees mangled by lightning; I feel like we’ve left the planet, not just the homestead. Threatening clouds roll in, darkening the land. Around us, large ravens croak murderously.

Our guides lean into the atmosphere, telling spooky tales of slaughtered cattle poachers and buried treasure, and the legend of Vivaron, a giant mythical rattlesnake that was said to curl around the base of nearby Orphan Mesa. The tour segues into palaeontology (some of the most significant Triassic dinosaur finds continue to be made beneath the ground here), touches on movies (it was a location in *Indiana Jones And The*

Kingdom Of The Crystal Skull, as well as a number of Westerns) and concludes with some showstopping geology. “See those two mesas in the distance,” Rachel says as we dismount to rest our horses. “Five million years ago, they made up the sides of a super volcano, maybe 20,000ft high, until it exploded with the force of three nuclear bombs.” It’s a chilling metric to choose, an allusion to the state’s role in the birth of the atomic age: the first ever A-bomb was developed in nearby Los Alamos and detonated in an area south of here. It’s a reminder that the desert doesn’t only bring out the best in mankind.

A sudden clap of thunder makes the horses buck and whinny, and a burst of rain soaks us all to the skin, releasing the rich scents of juniper bushes, mineral dust and the horses’ sweat. On the canyon walls, pastel yellows and mauves transform into the colour of angry bruises. But then, as quickly as it started, the storm abates; the clouds part and the light returns.

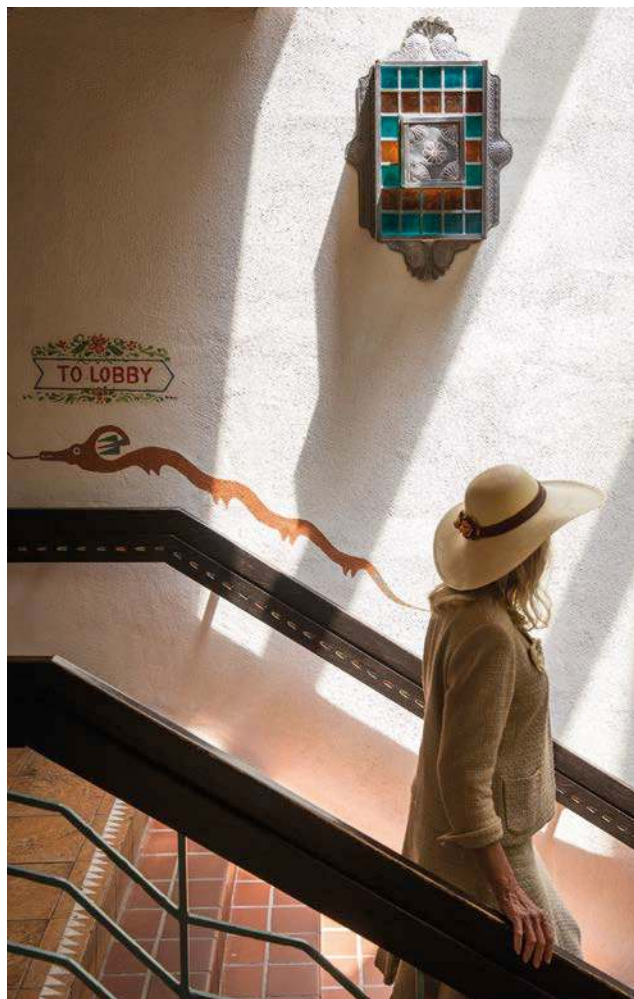
OUT OF THIS WORLD

In northern New Mexico, all roads lead to Santa Fe. It’s always been that way. Since its founding as a Spanish colony in 1610, the city has been a crossroads for major trade routes — it was one of the northern termini of the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro from Mexico City and the start of the Santa Fe Trail, a wagon route that stretched across the Great Plains to Missouri. The result, perhaps unsurprisingly, is that the city — the second oldest in the US — is a melting pot of cultures, producing food, architecture and art unlike that found anywhere else in the country. It’s the latter that Santa Fe particularly prides itself on; it’s said there’s a greater concentration of artists here than in any other US city. I lose count of the number of galleries and museums I pass as I wander through the Canyon Road arts district, ending up in the heart of the low-rise, adobe-style historic centre.

On first impression, Santa Fe strikes me as unnervingly polished: the leafy streets, with their uniform heritage aesthetic and eye-wateringly expensive boutiques, jar with the authenticity and rawness of life in the desert. But it doesn’t take long to get a taste for it. At one corner of the main plaza, a fajita cart wafts tempting scents my way; on the other side, under the rickety eaves of the Palace of the Governors, Native American artists from some of the state’s 23 tribes are exhibiting shimmery micaceous clay pottery

CLOCKWISE FROM

TOP: Stables at Ghost Ranch; baker at Santa Fe Farmers’ Market; vintage cowboy boots on sale at Kowboyz, Santa Fe



and handcrafted turquoise jewellery. Down at the market in the Railyard district, I pick up punnets of plump rainier cherries, chilli jam and bundles of dried sage, and after encouragement from the proprietor, John, buy a pair of vintage cowboy boots from the legendary Kowboyz shop. In the crisp heat of midday, I eat and shop and eat some more until it's time to hail a taxi to the city's newest — and weirdest — attraction.

Across town in a disused bowling alley donated by local arts patron and *Game of Thrones* creator George R R Martin, a renegade collective of artists called Meow Wolf has built an art experience that simulates the concept of the multiverse. I'm ushered into a full-size family home with one instruction: to riffle through the house to find clues as to what befell its inhabitants. It's not a mystery that's easily solved. The house, I discover, is riddled with wormholes. In the kitchen, I open the fridge and discover a white tunnel that twists into a 'frozen' lair. Lost somewhere else in the house's trippy hinterland, I gleefully bash out a tune on the xylophone rib cage of a dinosaur skeleton; and some hours later, I end up navigating a maze of aerial gangways and treehouses in a glowing, mutated garden. Whatever

happened here is clearly out of this world. I wonder if House of Eternal Return could've been dreamed up anywhere other than New Mexico — a state renowned for alleged extra-terrestrial sightings and the covert government ops of Roswell and Area 51, where nature itself often seems to flaunt the limits of possibility.

Each sunset here is a unique masterpiece, I find; a free light show that pulls new colours from the world like a magician drawing handkerchiefs from a hat. All one has to do is get in place. That evening, I head to the bell tower bar at the La Fonda on the Plaza, a century-old hotel that stands on the site of the city's very first inn. These days, it's decked out with a \$2m art collection. I wince my way through a super-strength margarita and watch the sky blush pink then deep red as the plump, tangerine orb of the sun drops behind the shadowy Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

TAKING THE HIGH ROAD

I drive towards these peaks the next day, taking a slow, scenic route known as the High Road, en route to the Taos art colony. Were I to live in these parts, it's the sort of road trip I imagine I'd take just for the hell

FROM LEFT: La Fonda on the Plaza hotel, Santa Fe; tacos served at La Plazuela at La Fonda restaurant; doorway to El Santuario de Chimayó, a popular pilgrimage site during Holy Week





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of it on lazy Sundays: the tarmac bends and soars through piñon pine forests and villages overlooking badlands pierced by rock spires.

Settlements along the High Road wear their Spanish heritage proudly, and none more so than Chimayó. Here, at Trujillo's Weaving Shop, I get chatting to the owner, Carlos. "My family has been in this business for eight generations; we trace our ancestry in the Chimayó Valley to settlers in the 1700s. Times are changing; I don't know if the next generation will want to weave, like I did," he tells me, pausing work at a large wooden loom. Geometric tapestries and rugs hang on the walls; many patterns date back to the first Spanish communities to settle here, often reflecting Navajo influences. "Some are very complicated," Carlos says, stroking one of his creations. "I try to make one a year, to preserve the style — to preserve the tradition."

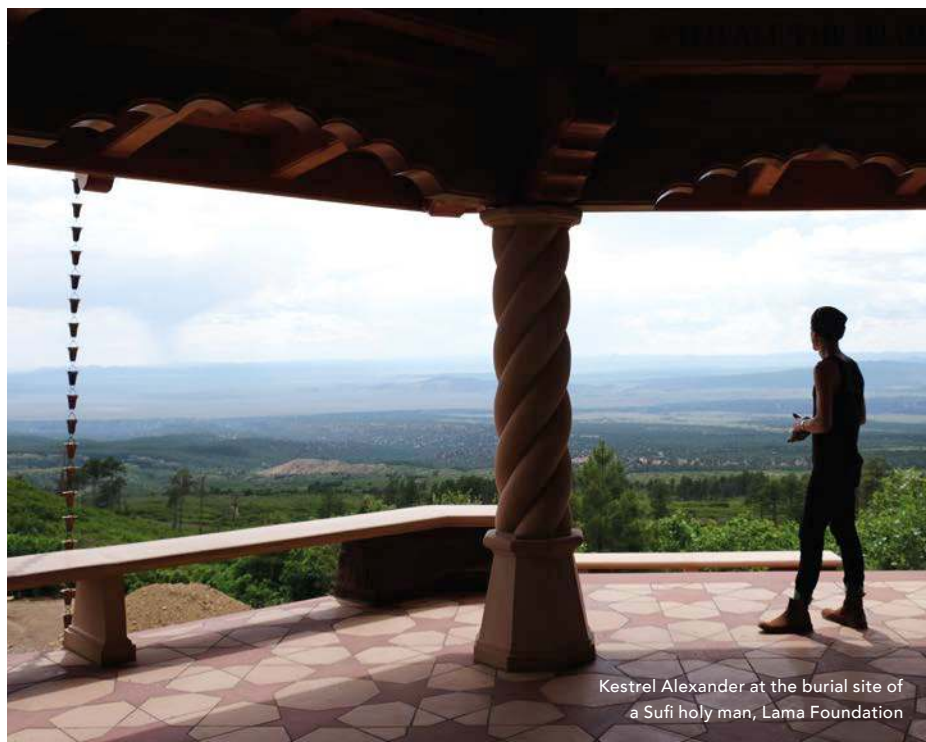
Down the road is another Carlos: an artist, and grower of heirloom Chimayó chillies. His open studio, Medina's Gallery, is stuffed with Catholic tchotchkes, paintings and bags of ground chilli. He breaks open a pistachio nut and uses a half shell to scoop up a fiery powder for me to try. "You're tasting the past," he says, "Little has changed in the way this is made in centuries. We honour our roots." Across the road is the adobe chapel his grandfather built to Santo Niño de

Atocha. It sits next door to the more famous Santuario de Chimayó, a church with a pit of 'healing dirt' — the focus of a vast pilgrimage each Holy Week. "Forty thousand people!," Carlos exclaims, throwing his hands up. But it's his family's little, less-visited chapel that truly captures my imagination. Shelves, pews and even the rafters are filled with children's shoes — petitions to this manifestation of Christ as a child, who's thought to be in constant need of new footwear because he tirelessly wanders the Earth looking for people to help. It's a haunting sight, looking like a ramshackle nursery with no wards.

For my last days in northern New Mexico, I'm staying in a vintage Airstream trailer in the barren sagebrush plains outside of Taos town centre. It's another taste of desert life: in the mornings, I drink stove-brewed coffee on my wooden deck, stoke the embers of my fire pit, and watch the sun spill over the spine of Taos Mountain.

The area is fascinating, a mecca for the stridently individual and left-field communities that seem to flourish in this desert. Just to the north west, across the dramatic Rio Grande Gorge, lies a village of around 70 Earthships — gorgeous, Gaudí-esque eco-homes built from upcycled materials like glass bottles that flash like exotic insects in the midday sun.

FROM LEFT: Roasted chillies; Navajo rugs and tapestries at Santa Fe Farmers' Market



Kestrel Alexander at the burial site of a Sufi holy man, Lama Foundation

To the east is Taos Pueblo, the only living Native American community designated as both a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a National Historic Landmark. The multistorey adobe structure at its heart, on the banks of Red Willow Creek, dates back a thousand years. Unlike in other parts of the country, the people of Taos Pueblo weren't forced onto reserves, and in 1970 they even won back 48,000 acres of their ancestral territory from the government.

And further north, on a remote hillside carpeted with ponderosa pine, is the region's last surviving hippy commune from the 1960s. "We don't really say 'commune' anymore; Lama Foundation is a conscious community," Kestrel Alexander, a resident of four years, advises me. "We're committed to inter-spirituality, as opposed to an ashram where there's one teacher, one philosophy. And there's no alcohol and no drugs here; I think that's why Lama survived so long and ultimately the others didn't."

I'm at the retreat to take part in a contact improvisation workshop, which turns out to be an hour of free movement involving leaning upon one another and entangling limbs in a slow, ecstatic dance. It's perhaps the least British thing I've ever done, and one of the most liberating. Afterwards, we hike to a lookout point and watch misty rain showers roll across the plains. I ask Kestrel what draws people here. "I think they're looking for something that's missing," he replies quietly.

Everyone I meet waxes lyrical about this land — the way it gifts you back a part of

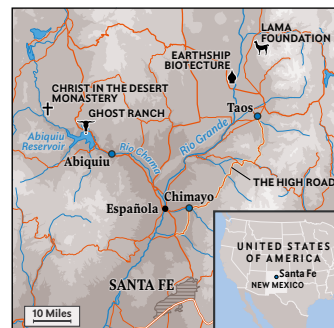
yourself you thought was lost, or gives you space to worship or create. I'm struck by the spirited individualism of the people here, and the different ways of life kindled into being across the high desert. As many communities across the US become increasingly homogenous, it seems that New Mexicans steadfastly insist on standing out.

Rich Nichols, a local artist I'm introduced to on an evening artisans tour, insists that it's here, around Taos, that the magic is at its strongest. "Back in Chicago, where I grew up, it was cold, it was industrial. Out here I get to use a whole other side of my palette. For artists, Taos is your mecca, your basilica, a sanctuary, all your chakras aligned, all your ley lines converged. I can't explain it; you have to try it to know it's real."

We're in his studio surrounded by a forest of easels that prop up his students' work: luminous, vibrant depictions of flowering deserts, the ancient adobe village of Taos Pueblo, and wild horses with billowing manes. "There's a saying in Taos: 'the mountain will either love you, caress you and hold you — or it'll spit you out,'" he says.

Outside, the sun is setting; another fiery ode to the boldness of life in the high desert. I'm anxious to go and soak it up, to watch the landscape bloom and darken one last time before I head home. It seems to me that life's secrets might be written across New Mexico's canyons, if I only knew how to read them. Rich tilts his head to look at me and smiles broadly, as if gifted a vision. "I see it's embraced you." ▢

ESSENTIALS



Getting there & around

American Airlines flies from Heathrow to Santa Fe via Dallas; United Airlines flies via Denver.

americanairlines.co.uk united.com
Average flight time: 15hrs.

When to go

New Mexico gets sunshine year-round. Average temperatures range from 6C in January to 30C in July. July–August often sees rain, so dirt roads like the one to Christ in the Desert can be challenging.

Places mentioned

Monastery of Christ in the Desert. christdesert.org
Ghost Ranch. ghost ranch.org
Santa Fe Farmers' Market. santafefarmersmarket.com
Meow Wolf. meowwolf.com
Earthship Biotechture. earthshipglobal.com
Taos Pueblo. taospueblo.com
Lama Foundation. lamafoundation.org

Where to stay

La Fonda on the Plaza, Santa Fe. lafondasantafe.com
El Farolito, Santa Fe. farolito.com
Casa Gallina, Taos. casagallina.net
Hotel Luna Mystica, Taos. hotellunamystica.com
The Blake, Taos Ski Valley. skitaos.com

More information

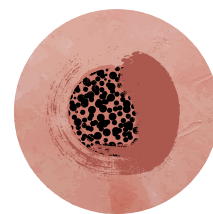
taos.org
visitsantafe.com
visittheusa.co.uk

How to do it

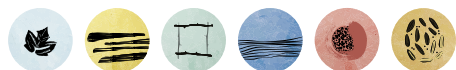
HERITAGE INSPIRATIONS offers bespoke guided tours of northern New Mexico, including cultural and artisan tours of Santa Fe, Chimayó, Taos and Taos Pueblo, excursions around Rio Grande Gorge and Ghost Ranch, and glamping retreats in the Chaco Canyon and Taos region. A four-day tour starts from \$1,200 (£918) per person (with a group minimum of two people), including transport and some meals but not flights. heritageinspirations.com

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Mountains, myths & monsters

The folklore of Austria's dramatic Hochkönig region fires the imagination: legends are woven through its subterranean ice kingdoms, treacherous fissures and turreted fortresses. Here, adventures can be adrenalin-fuelled or intimate — after hiking, biking, sliding or caving, relax in Alpine villages, where herbalists and brewers share their elixirs

WORDS **ADRIAN PHILLIPS**
PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD JAMES TAYLOR**



The iron door swings slowly open and from inside comes an angry wind, rushing at and around us like a malevolent spirit let loose. The flames of our paraffin lamps go out as one, and the stray end of my scarf flies over my shoulder, straining desperately to escape. “Hold on to your hats and small children!” shouts Martin, our guide, his words faint as they’re whipped from his lips. The wind charges and buffets, doing all it can to turn us back, but we lower our heads and push on into the cavern. Martin heaves the door closed and all is suddenly still — the spirit silenced.

“Ah, that reminded me of a lovely spring day back home,” says an Irishman in our group, with the wry humour of Indiana Jones after he’s overcome some fiendish obstacle. As Martin relights our lanterns, and shadows shift and flicker, I decide that there is indeed something Indiana Jones-ish about all this.

We’d followed a gloomy tunnel with dripping walls, ridden a cable-car that shuddered up the mountain, its thin cable drooping away into nothingness, and made a final ascent on a track that zigzagged above the treeline towards this gaping mouth in the rock. The temperature had plummeted as we’d approached, black birds with blood-red feet making ominous churring calls of alarm.

I’d expected something tamer from a summertime trip to the Austrian Alps — more yodelling and cowbells, perhaps. But here I am, 5,500ft up Hochkogel mountain, in Eisriesenwelt, the world’s largest ice cave, and it’s no place for yodellers. Indeed, for centuries, no one at all set foot inside Eisriesenwelt because it was thought to be a gateway to hell. Then, in 1879, Anton Posselt, a plucky scientist from nearby Salzburg, took the plunge. He managed to traverse only a few hundred feet of the cave’s 26 miles before turning back. A cross scratched into the rock marks the point he reached — an everlasting reminder of his achievement, and of his failure, too. As we pass the cross, I imagine stepping over the skeleton of his dead dream, the nail used to scrape its epitaph still clutched by bony fingers.

Posselt had battled the climb and bettered the wind, but was beaten by the cave’s fiercest guardian — its ice. Our lamps give

blinkered glimpses of it — dancing circles of blueish-white that shine wetly back at us — but these are pin pricks on something vast lurking in the blackness beyond. The air seems frozen stiff. Martin ignites a flare, holding it aloft like a wizard’s wand, and, for a moment, the beast is on show. It fills much of the cave below and alongside us; a gargantuan dragon of ice — steep and wide and deadly slippery — spreads through the bowels of the mountain.

The ice exists, Martin tells us, because somewhere higher up is another opening, and the flow of wintry air from one entrance to the other cools the limestone, freezing the water that drains into the cave. But we all know that’s an explanation for the unbelievers. Eisriesenwelt means ‘world of the ice giants’, and no earthly science should apply here, because this is a parallel world for knights and adventurers. It’s a place for flights of fancy. As we climb the 700 wooden steps attached to the walls, the icy dragon shapeshifts unseen beside us. In the glare of a second flare, the frosty head of a dog seems to rear from the dragon’s back, barking a soundless warning; a third flare reveals a horn spiralling to the roof; in the light of a fourth flare, a cage with icicle bars appears. There’s a gasp from behind me as a lady slips and bounces down a few steps on her backside, but it’s too late to turn back.

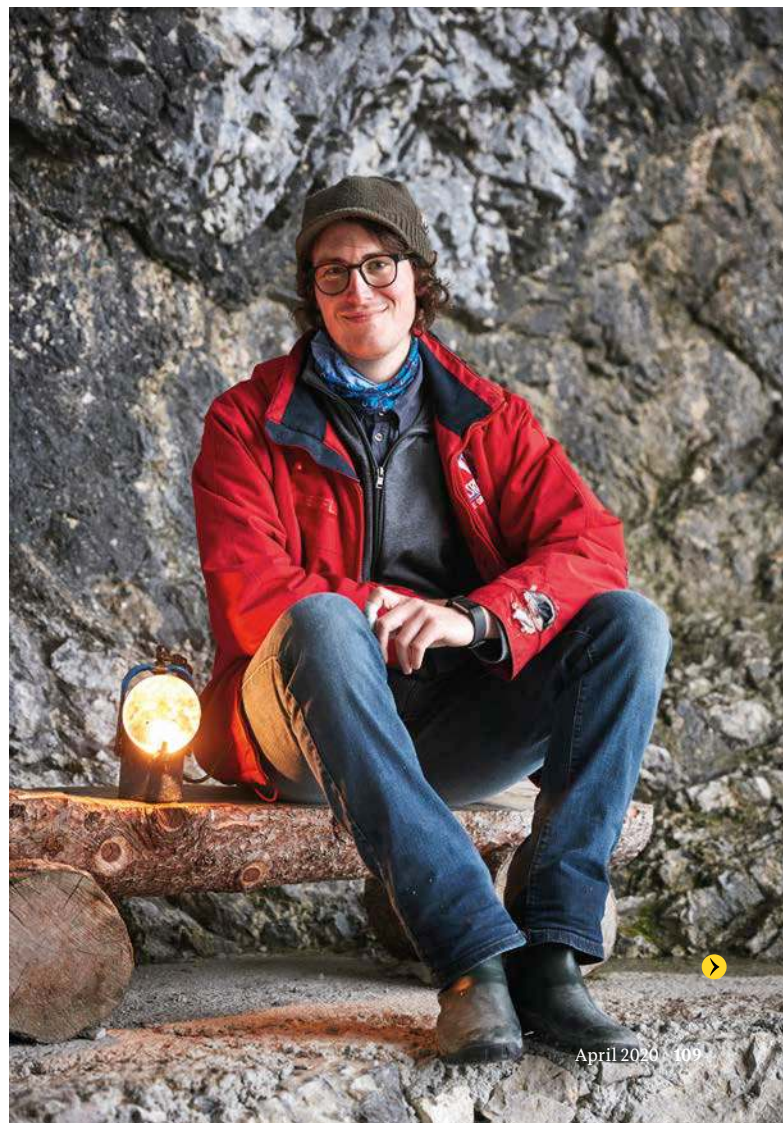
In 1913, a speleologist called Alexander von Mörk finally succeeded in scaling the dragon’s back and making his way to the heart of the cave. The following year, he was dead — the dragon-slayer slain in the trenches of the First World War — but his legacy as the champion of Eisriesenwelt was secure. Not for him an anonymous scratch in the rock: a huge urn containing his ashes sits in a niche carved in the wall of the cave’s largest chamber, the ultimate trophy of a quest fulfilled.

After nearly a mile, we come to an underground lake surrounded by an arcade of icy columns and arches. “This is as far as the ice reaches,” Martin announces. “It’s called the Ice Palace.” And, with a practised pause and a flourish of his flare, he steps out onto the lake and tiptoes theatrically across the surface. It’s a trick easily explained, of course: a thin film of water covers ice several metres thick and thousands of years old.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Touring the Eisriesenwelt ice cave within Hochkogel mountain; professional climber and mountain guide Josef Hiebel; icicles in Eisriesenwelt, once believed to be a gateway to hell

PREVIOUS PAGES: The village of Maria Alm, Hochköning region





Kitzloch Gorge,
Hochkönig region
RIGHT: Hohenwerfen
Castle in the
Salzach valley



In search of the supernatural

Back outside, the August air is motionless and warm. All around, bare and craggy peaks give way to ridges of dark-green forest beneath. Far in the distance, among the torrents of rock and pine, are occasional postage stamps of grass, each with a tiny house at its edge and the suggestion of a white picket fence. I wonder at the lives lived out there. The scene could be an illustration for a Hans Christian Andersen fairytale. Here, on the mountainside, I can believe that extraordinary things might happen — that the fence between the real and the imagined has been shaken slightly loose.

And I'm not alone; the locals believe it, too. Outside my hotel in Alpendorf, a gondola carries visitors up Geisterberg (Ghost Mountain), where a forest trail leads off in search of the supernatural. There's a snoring gnome in a stump and a mischievous spirit that hides under a bridge and startles people by blowing gusts of air at their legs as they pass overhead. Witches cackle from cabins and a goatish bogeyman called Krampus snarls through his whiskers. Be good, parents warn their children, or Krampus will come to get you. Although it's a family attraction, adding interest to an afternoon's hike, these imps and demons are anchored in centuries of folklore, and their stories must seem all too real when night falls on the mountains.

Elsewhere, legends are more muscular still. Locals will tell you that the nearby Liechtenstein Gorge was cleaved by the Devil after his plans were thwarted and he flew into a foul rage. The Kitzloch Gorge in Taxenbach has viewpoints called Devil's Canyon and Mary's Rest, names heavy with the struggle between good and bad. I tackle that ravine, hiking upwards on wooden walkways, wearing an oversized helmet that makes me look like a mushroom. Alongside me, the water surges from fissures and cascades down the rock faces. This is nature possessed, as mad as the wind at Eisriesenwelt. The river below sets upon fallen trees, thrashing them pale and bulldozing them against boulders into ragged nests. Among them, the odd dropped helmet gleams white like a killer's trophy.

But as I get higher, the mood changes, the water rippling over stones smooth as sucked toffees. Good has gained the upper hand.

A mischievous spirit hides under a bridge, witches cackle from cabins and a goatish bogeyman called Krampus snarls through his whiskers



Near the top of the gorge is a tunnel cut into the rock, where a hermit called Andreas Pirnbacher lived a solitary existence in the early 1900s, shepherding the occasional traveller and keeping a godly watch over the gorge. A rough-hewn wooden statuette of him now stands inside, a reminder of his battle won, like the urn of Alexander von Mörk.

That afternoon I visit Hohenwerfen Castle. No self-respecting fairytale is without its fortress, and few are as impressive as 11th-century Hohenwerfen, perched on a hulking rock 2,000ft above the Salzach valley. The weather has turned sinister; rain lashes down and mist gathers around the coned turrets. Inside, hard stone steps lead to cold dungeons where aristocrats and peasants alike were incarcerated over the centuries. I read of one prisoner who avoided making a confession by pretending to be mute for six years. These walls must have countless other stories to tell.

Among them would be tales of Hollywood hell-raising, because Richard Burton was here in 1968 for the filming of *Where Eagles Dare*, that very 20th-century fairytale about Second World War commandos on a quest to rescue a captured General from the tower. Former members of the SS were recruited to advise the actors, and they even appeared as extras in the movie wearing their own wartime uniforms. As for Burton, it's said he worked his way through four bottles of vodka a day

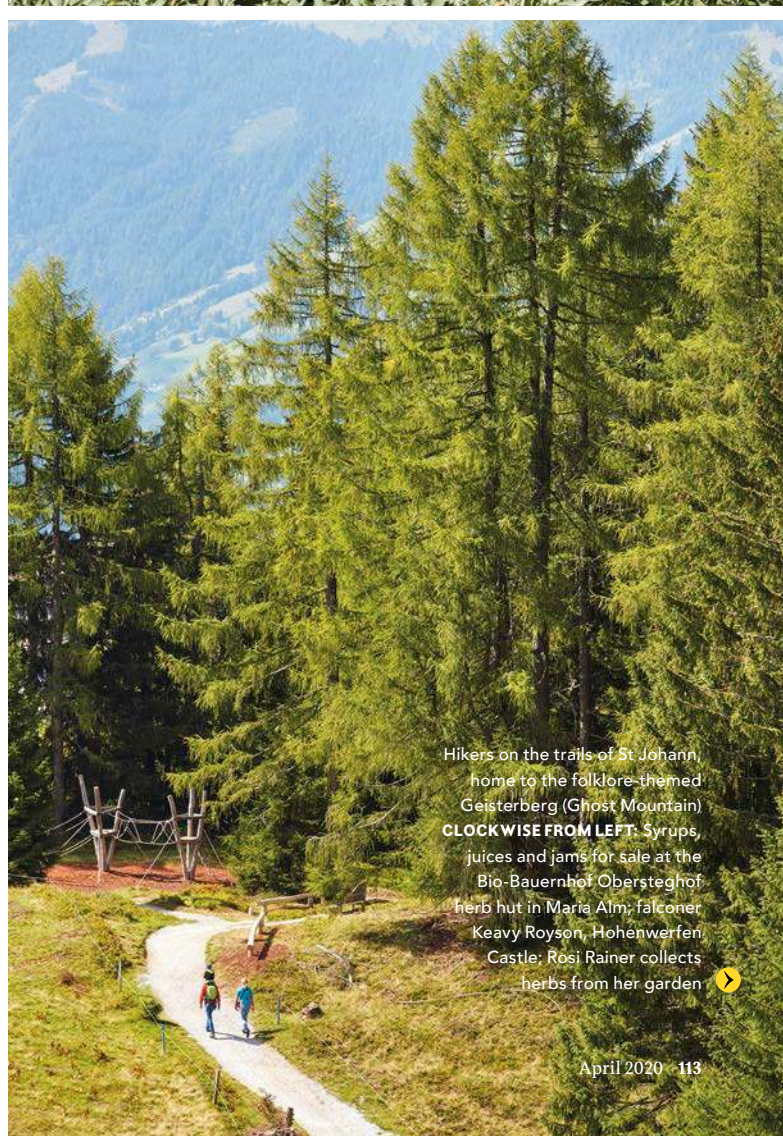
As we're distracted by the falcon, an enormous fish eagle cruises in from behind, intimidating and majestic like a bomber on a raid

during filming, with Clint Eastwood having to take the handlebars during a motorcycle chase because Burton was too drunk to steer.

On a grassed terrace outside the dungeons, a falconer with a feathered hat is putting on a show in the rain. A gyrfalcon plunges past, zipping up into the grey of the sky before swinging back down. As we're distracted by the falcon, an enormous fish eagle cruises in low from behind, intimidating and majestic like a bomber on a raid. After sending us ducking, it perches on a turret and rocks its head back in a mewing declaration of defiance. Eagles still dare here, it seems to cry.

Lotions and potions

The next day breaks bright and clear as I head a few miles west to the village of Maria Alm, where geraniums bloom pink and red from the Alpine houses' window boxes. Silhouetted against the mountains is a limestone church with towering steeple. A family gathers



Hikers on the trails of St. Johann, home to the folklore-themed Geisterberg (Ghost Mountain) **CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Syrups, juices and jams for sale at the Bio-Bauernhof Obersteghof herb hut in Maria Alm; falconer Keavy Royson, Hohenwerfen Castle; Rösli Rainer collects herbs from her garden ➔

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Master gin- and schnaps-maker Johannes Rainer tastes his award-winning schnaps

outside, the women in embroidered skirts and blouses that billow at the shoulder, and the men wearing traditional hats of green felt.

At the edge of this picture-perfect village is a dainty farmhouse with a wind chime, and a wooden balcony whose balusters are as flat and neatly shaped as pieces of cut gingerbread. The prettiest garden you'll ever see wraps around the farmhouse, fragrant and busy with insects. But what catches my attention are the jars. Dozens of them sit in the sun on a raised patio, each carefully labelled and filled with a different coloured concoction. I bend to pick one up. "Marjoram!" comes a call from nowhere, and I straighten up guiltily. "It's good for sore noses."

Rosi, the owner of the farmhouse, materialises from behind a planter spilling over with herbs. "Do you have a sore nose?" she asks, and seems a touch disappointed when I shake my head. "The flu?" She points to a jar filled with an orange-red mush of nasturtium leaves. "That will make a litre of drops to cure you from flu aches." I shake my head again. "Ah, well," she sighs lightly, before brightening as a thought strikes her. "How about this one? It helps if you've lost your voice."

Introductions made, Rosi invites me into a cabin containing a pine dresser, a basket of drying herbs and shelf upon shelf of her potions. There are bottles tall and squat, cakes of soap that soften the skin, tubs with

balms for noses and creams for hands, and phials of oils and powders every colour of the rainbow. It's like a witch's workshop.

This is Obersteghof, one of 16 so-called 'herb huts' along a special hiking route for summer tourists. Hikers receive a sticker when they visit a hut, and if they collect eight stickers they are awarded cloth bags of herbal products. A local lady has even written a fable about each hut; the story of Rosi's farm is pasted to the wall, illustrated with cartoons of a wolf licking his lips hungrily at a wide-eyed deer.

"It's always been my hobby to create things from plants in the garden — and now it's my job," smiles Rosi, who sells her remedies and leads wild herb tours. "I make cordials, too. Try this," she adds, passing me a glass of her latest work-in-progress. "I extracted it from that feathery plant out there, which I call 'Coke cabbage.'" The liquid is yellow and tastes like nothing I've ever drunk before, combining flavours of lavender, lemon and, yes, a hint of cola. It's deliciously refreshing.

However, the true master of magical drinks is to be found further along the herb hut hiking route, in the forest above the village of Dienten. Grünegg Alm is another impossibly quaint farmhouse, built 500 years ago, with a turning waterwheel and hens clucking about the yard. Inside, Johannes — who lives here with his parents — stands beside a still; it's a beautiful thing made of polished copper that glows golden on his cheek. Two cylinders rise





Mountain biking,
Natrun Prince Mountain

10ft tall, flanking a vat topped with a bulbous cap the shape of a hot-air balloon. Brushed steel pipes chart courses between the three copper containers, and there's an elegant clutter of dials, taps and tubes.

He seems young to be a distiller — 21 years old, I learn — but he could pass for even younger with his side parting and Harry Potter glasses. He demonstrates where the fruit goes, how it's heated and where the alcohol flows, then dutifully runs me through volumes and percentages. But, like the science of the Ice Cave, I know it's an explanation for the unbelievers, because Johannes has a gift. His pine liqueur won the Goldene Stamplerl award when he was just 15, the youngest-ever winner.

"I started distilling when I was eight," he reveals, eyes suddenly alight. "But I only sniffed what I made!" he adds hurriedly, reading my expression, and a picture floats before me of Harry Potter nursing a butter beer while all around him grizzled wizards hit the hard stuff. He points to the beginner's still his father gave him, displayed on a ledge. "It was fun. I caused an explosion once, trying to make beer in it."

We move to a low-lit room lined with hundreds of bottles, their contents radiating all the colours of autumn, and Johannes hands me glass after glass. His father and grandfather made schnaps from blueberries or rowanberries — nothing else — but he has never been scared to experiment. There's a

raspberry schnaps, a hazelnut liqueur and a gin laced with lime and local herbs. One schnaps is made from hay, scythe-cut nearby, and has something of the barnyard about it. "This year I'm going to see what I can do with carrots," Johannes confides, as he pours a liqueur that tastes of the woods.

At the same time the following day, I'm careering feet-first down a 200ft chute. It's one of a series of slides buried deep in the forest on Natrun Prince Mountain that visitors can use to travel back down to Maria Alm after they've hiked or biked to the summit. And it's another experience to confound my expectations of the Austrian Alps in summer.

I'd anticipated gentle trails, rolling pastures and picnic spots dotted with long-horned cattle, and they're all here; if you want the sound of music you can hear it loud and clear. But you'll hear too the sounds of witches and sprites, of potions bubbling (and sometimes exploding), of eagles lording and nature rampaging. You'll hear legends, fables and stories of derring-do, because this is a landscape of imagination and adventure as suited to a questing Indiana Jones or a boozing Richard Burton as a melodious Maria von Trapp. And, yes, you'll hear my wails as I slide faster and faster, hoping my stomach will catch up. When the chute levels out and I slow to a halt, all is suddenly still. The tourist silenced. I catch my breath and shake my head: an Alpine summer is a hell of a ride. ▢

ESSENTIALS



Getting there & around

Salzburg is 40 miles north of St Johann im Pongau (the nearest town to Alpendorf) and the Hochkönig region. British Airways, EasyJet and Ryanair are among the airlines that offer summer flights to Salzburg from Gatwick and Stansted. ba.com easyjet.com ryanair.com
Average flight time: 2h.

When to go

In summer, temperatures average in the low 20Cs, although mountain weather can be unpredictable. April-May and September-October are cooler.

Where to stay

Hotel AlpenSchlössl in Alpendorf. hotel-alpenschoessl.at
Hotel Gasthof Niederreiter in Maria Alm. niederreiter.com

Places mentioned

Eisriesenwelt. eisriesenwelt.at
Kitzloch Gorge. kitzlochklamm.at
Hohenwerfen Castle. salzburg-burgen.at
Obersteghof. obersteghof.members.cablelink.at
Grünegg Alm. gruenegg.at

How to do it

ZENITH HOLIDAYS offers a six-day hiking trip in the Salzburg region on a B&B basis from £445, excluding flights. Package itineraries can be booked via the St Johann im Pongau and Hochkönig tourist offices from £220 for between three and seven nights. zenithholidays.co.uk josalzburg.com hochkoenig.at



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Amazement is an emotion that is induced when you experience the unexpected. To astonish people, to surprise them with the unfamiliar, was exactly the intention that Franz Wallack pursued with the construction of the Grossglockner High Alpine Road: Behind every corner, a new, overwhelming view. With every climb, your feeling of happiness increases. Every meter of the road is gently nestled into the mountain. And all around almost near enough to touch are flourishing alpine meadows, thunderous waterfalls and dizzying three thousand meter peaks. All the way up to the highest of them all at 3,798 meters: the Grossglockner, the King of the Austrian mountains.

Franz Wallack would be amazed how well his plan has succeeded. If he only knew that "his" Grossglockner High Alpine Road would one day be among the three most visited destinations in Austria ...



Kefalonia



Traditions cling to this Ionian island like the gnarled olive trees that hang from its limestone cliffs and frame its legendary beaches. Shepherds, cheesemakers and olive oil artisans ply their ancient trades in the countryside while, in sleepy harbour towns, fishermen sell their catch on the water's edge. Kefalonia is an enchanted island, married to the past — and offers a glimpse of real island life

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS **JEREMY FLINT**





On the slopes of southern Kefalonia, agricultural practices remain largely unchanged over the centuries. Here, two shepherds — Dionisis Siliverdis (above) and Panagiotis Toulatos (right) — lead their flocks to forage and graze. Both have grown up in this tradition, following in their ancestors' footsteps to become experts in animal husbandry — and producing meat, milk and cheese. The Pantazatos family has been making goat's cheese in age-old wooden barrels for generations and today they combine tradition with innovation to make this island delicacy.







The gnarled olive groves that sweep through the interior and meet the coast are the lifeblood of the island's rural economy — more than a million trees carpet the island. Olive oil production dates back millennia in Greece — it was described by Homer as 'liquid gold'. Life on the island is slow, especially outside the summer season. To soak up local life, take a seaside stroll along the promenade of Argostoli, the island's biggest harbour town, pausing in local restaurants to sample ouzo, wines from the island and catch-of-the-day dishes.





Melissani Cave is one of Kefalonia's most magical sights. Its ethereal beauty is unleashed at midday when the sun filters through the cavern's roof, framed by green trees, to make the crystal-clear turquoise pool shimmer. Hike down and hire a gondolier to get up close to the stalactites and flora. As the light overhead shifts, the water's hues are transfigured.





Following an early start, the fishermen draw in their nets and return to the picturesque fishing port of Argostoli to unload their catch. As they untangle their lines and prepare the fish for sale, there's excitement in the air — locals gather to buy the produce fresh off the docks. This is a daily ritual, common to towns throughout Kefalonia. Seagulls circle expectantly overhead and the harbour bustles with activity in the morning sunshine.





Myrtos Beach is widely considered to be the most beautiful on the island. Scooped out of the rugged northwest coast, it's certainly the most dramatic: here, sheer limestone cliffs swoop down to meet clear Ionian waters, and a zigzag road of hairpin bends provides the only access to the pale pebbles and coarse sand. Goats graze freely on upper ledges — join them at the lofty lookout to take in views of the ocean stretching towards a cloudless sky. ▣



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SARAWAK

MALAYSIA'S MOST MUSICAL STATE

Dramatic rainforest, pristine beaches and rare wildlife are just some of the reasons to visit Sarawak — it's also hosting the Rainforest World Music this July, where infectious jungle beats will play long into the night

Blanketed in dense rainforest, with 45 national parks, five wildlife sanctuaries and 15 nature reserves, there's ample opportunity to get out into nature, both inland and on the coast. Kayak down the Semadang River, hike up Mount Murud to spot proboscis monkeys, or don a wetsuit and dive beneath the waves for myriad marine life.

Culturally and linguistically diverse, Sarawak is home to 27 ethnic groups, including the Iban tribe, which has long since ceased headhunting but still maintains many of its traditional customs and ways of life. Orangutans are sacred to the Iban, and their jungle home of Batang Ai is the

best place to spot the great ape. In the east, meanwhile, the temperate highlands are home to the Kelabit people, and intrepid travellers can hike from longhouse to longhouse throughout the region. The capital, Kuching, is not only a gateway to the country's tropical interior but a standout stop in its own right, its busy streets full of markets, museums and restaurants.

One of the best times to visit is in July, when the tropical climate is drier and it's possible to coincide a trip with the Rainforest World Music Festival. Set in thick jungle in the Sarawak Cultural Village, just 20 miles from Kuching, the event now hosts more than 23,000 festival goers.



THE RAINFOREST WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL

Launched over 20 years ago, this event plays host to eclectic artists from across the globe. This year, it's being held from 10-12 July, and whether you want to stay by the beach or in the capital, be sure to book your ticket and hotel early — and extend your stay to explore the rest of this diverse, culturally rich country

SEE & DO

Drum Circles @ RWMF: The audience can participate in these popular daily sessions, which are led by 1Drum.org.

DJ late night parties: The adrenalin rush from the evening shows continues into the early hours with world music DJ sets from a range of different personalities playing music from Latin America, Africa, the Caribbean and India.

Rainforest World Crafts Bazaar @ RWMF: Browse a myriad of arts and crafts on sale from furniture to paintings and wander through art installations. There's

also the opportunity to try everything from Batik painting to bead stringing.

Cultural snippets @ RWMF: Insights and glimpses into what lies behind the music, arts, crafts and stories of Sarawak and other cultures with film screenings and demonstrations by some of Borneo's indigenous artists.

Sarawak Biodiversity Centre @ RWMF: Exhibitions and demos on the many uses of the flora from the rainforests of Borneo by Sarawak's indigenous people, with products including perfume and medicine.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Guinean singer Djeli Moussa Condé (left) and his band performing at the Rainforest World Music Festival 2018; batik painting workshop; Malay dancers, Kuching



SIT BACK & LISTEN

At Adau (Sarawak): This popular experimental band is known for playing pop rock ethnic fusion, mixing ancient melodies and rhythms using the *sape* and the *perutong*, (a bamboo zither) before blending them with contemporary beats and tribal drums.

Elephant Sessions (Scotland): An award-winning progressive indie-folk band from the Scottish Highlands, Elephant Sessions combines traditional, funk and electronica. Band members include Euan Smillie on the fiddle, Alasdair Taylor playing the mandolin, Mark Bruce and Seth Tinsley on guitar and Greg Barry on drums.

Mariana Baraj (Argentina): Having played in various jazz, folk and rock music groups since her childhood, Mariana now performs solo combining singing and percussion, adding new elements to Argentine folkloric music.

Monsieur Doumani (Cyprus): This multi-award-winning three-piece Cypriot band blends traditional Cypriot music with modern genres. Monsieur Doumani is made up of Antonis Antoniou on the *tzouras* (a Greek stringed instrument), Angelos Ionas on the guitar and Demetris Yiasemides on a variety of wind instruments.

Seth Lakeman (England): Seth is a folk singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, playing fiddle, tenor guitar, viola and banjo. He released his first solo album back in 2002, and spends much of his time touring the globe.

FOOD & DRINK

Awah Cafe Local dishes include laksa, a spicy chicken- or shrimp-based broth containing rice vermicelli, shredded omelette and laksa paste (made with shallots, garlic, lemongrass, dried chillies, coriander seeds, cumin, star anise, cardamom, clove and nutmeg).

Nasi Lemak Rasta: This stall serves up the national dish of Malaysia, *nasi lemak*, rice cooked in coconut milk and pandan leaf, and a meal typically eaten at breakfast.

Suukee The Original Hainanese Chicken and Rice: This Chinese restaurant based in Kuching serves up whole roast chickens and sides, as well as typical Malaysian meals like chicken porridge.

SLEEP

£££ Cove 55

This boutique hotel has just 15 rooms, and is a five-minute drive from Mount Santubong and the festival. Facilities include an infinity pool, fitness centre, and library. cove55.com

££ Damai Beach Resort

Just five minutes' walk from Sarawak Cultural Village, this 242-room resort overlooks the beach. Facilities include restaurants, a gym and spa. damaibeachresort.com

£ Culvert

Nestled in a jungle setting in Santubong, 1.6 miles from Damai Beach, cosy eco-style rooms are actually pods made from sections of concrete pipe. theculvert.com





MEET THE BANDS

It's the local talent that makes the Rainforest World Music Festival unique. Meet three of the musical acts bringing their traditional dance, chanting and array of inimitable instruments to the stage this summer at the Sarawak Cultural Village

LEO MUA MOKO Leader, Suku Menoa

If there's one thing that will truly bond the members of a band, it's shared ancestry. Leo Mua Moko and his four bandmates in Suku Menoa are connected through Sarawak's Iban tribe, also known as Sea Dayaks or the headhunting tribe of Borneo. It's this shared heritage they want to continue through their music, and the Rainforest World Music Festival presents the ultimate opportunity to meet with other indigenous peoples over great music. The best thing about it, he says, is "the gathering of tribes, no matter where on the planet they're from, to share, tell, preserve, dance, play, bless and unite."

The band formed in 2019 with a focus on traditional ritual music, dancing and chanting about their tribe and the land. Their name combines two words: *suku* meaning 'native' or 'indigenous' and *menoa* meaning 'land' or 'island.' Between them they play a mixture of instruments from small and large gongs to traditional drums, lute string, jaw harp and brass percussion. Suku Menoa may not have been together long, but they have big dreams and hopes for the future: "We want to preserve our culture and carry on tradition," says Menoa. He hopes to visit other places that have their own tribal festivals someday, such as New Zealand or any South Pacific Island.



MELDRICK BOB

Drummer, percussionist and band leader of At Adau

When in Sarawak, Meldrick Bob says, it's essential to get a tattoo — namely, the '*bunga terung*,' a distinctive coming-of-age symbol that's seen on the skin of locals and visitors alike. It's not just about marking the self with ink, but connecting cultures. "When people come here, they always want to get a tattoo. Afterwards, they celebrate it and that's where friendships begin." Those with the urge will find Sarawak's most gifted tattoo artists at the Rainforest World Music Festival, where Bob will play together with tattooed *sape* player Ezra Tekola and their four bandmates.

Bob and the other members of At Adau all hail from different tribes, including Iban, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu. They bonded over music and a shared mission. "We want to involve more traditional elements in our band and make it cool again." They fuse instruments such as *sape* with drums, electric guitar and bass, and are playing at the festival for the fourth time. "Two years ago, we were so excited to introduce everyone to the sound of At Adau. People started to realise that traditional music can mix with modern sounds, something that's more accepted nowadays. We're honoured to perform again this year." While at RWMF, he says music lovers shouldn't miss out on the local rice wine, Sarawak laksa, kolo mee noodles and a dish of chicken cooked in bamboo called *ayam pansub*.

FROM LEFT: Suku Menoa;
At Adau; Saufi Aiman Yahya

Q&A

SAUFI AIMAN YAHYA

Performer, Sape'star

What is the sape?

The *sape* (pronounced SA-peh) is a traditional musical instrument of the Orang Ulu community that's been used for more than 400 years. It was originally designed for use during healing rituals and went on to be popular for traditional dance.

What activities can travellers do at RWMF?

There are lots of music and dance workshops. I'll be there teaching the *sape*, but you can learn other instruments or dances. Everything is taught by rainforest performers. It's a great place to learn about global cultures.

How do you make the music more current?

From 2000 onwards, we started to develop a new musical style called 'contemporary *sape*', where we tune the instrument differently. It can then be played with other modern instruments.

What else should travellers in Sarawak?

The most memorable thing about Sarawak is the food. If you love olives, you should try the *dabai*, which are very sour. We tend to eat them with salt or soy sauce — they have an interesting flavour.

What does music mean to you?

I'm a classical guitarist, so I love how music can conjure up emotions. The *sape* is one of the most soothing instruments I've ever heard. We use modern technology to add ambience, then place new melodies on top.

Any festival tips?

I hope *sape* music will inspire people — not just entertain them, but also make them fall in love with the cultural music of Sarawak. At the festival, people should get involved and try to learn everything, because it makes for one great experience.





SEE KUCHING LIKE A LOCAL

The Sarawak capital offers everything from music festivals to museums. To experience it like a local, be sure to navigate the city centre streets by foot, and the river by sampan boat

On the culture trail

Kuching means ‘cat’ in Malay — a fact clearly not lost on the locals. Start by exploring the quirky **Cat Museum**, with over 4,000 items on show, including a mummified Egyptian cat and a cat cave. Later, look out for feline statues in the centre. Next, head towards the river to visit the **Sarawak Museum**, the oldest on the island of Borneo, offering a real insight into local history, with one of the best collections in Southeast Asia. The ethnology section is set to reopen in 2020 with state-of-the-art facilities.

Nearby, visit Kuching’s oldest temple, the ornate and colourful **Tua Pek Kong**. Dating back to 1843, this Buddhist temple has a vibrant red and blue colour scheme and is an important place of worship for the Chinese community.

Finally, on the north side of the river, visit **Fort Margherita** to learn about the ‘White Rajahs’ a dynastic monarchy of the British Brooke family who founded the Raj of Sarawak. The site is also home to the Brooke Gallery, which tells the story of adventurer James Brooke, the first White Rajah.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Kuching city; market stall; man painting a lantern at Tua Pek Kong temple

Exotic eats

To truly experience Kuching culture is to taste its cuisine, and there's no better way to begin than with a Sarawak laksa. **Chong Choon Cafe** serves the best version of this prawn-based noodle soup. Arrive by noon before it sells out. *Abell Road, 93100*

Stomach satisfied, it's time to quench your thirst with a bright green, antioxidant-packed tropical kedondong juice. Try it at **Lau Ya Keng Food Court**, near Kuching waterfront while gazing at the food stalls. *19 Carpenter St, 93000*

Now for dessert. Kek lapis is a brightly coloured Sarawak layer cake that make an appearance on special occasions. Try it fresh from the oven with a coffee at **Dayang Salhah**. *40, Kampung Gersik*

For a little market culture, **Medan Niaga Satok Market** is an essential stop for its colourful fruit and veg stalls and snacks of all descriptions. *Kuching North City Hall*

Spend a good while meandering through the well-preserved narrow streets of the city centre before working up your appetite for kolo mee, a local favourite of egg noodles and barbecued char siew pork. Try it at the popular **Noodle Descendents**, but be prepared to wait. *188 Padungan Road*

Head outside of Kuching to **Siniawan Night Market** from Friday to Sunday for pitcher plant rice and other traditional Chinese, Malay and Dayak treats. With Chinese lanterns everywhere and streets lined with old wooden townhouses, it's a lively and beautiful place to while the night away. *Siniawan, 94000 Bau*

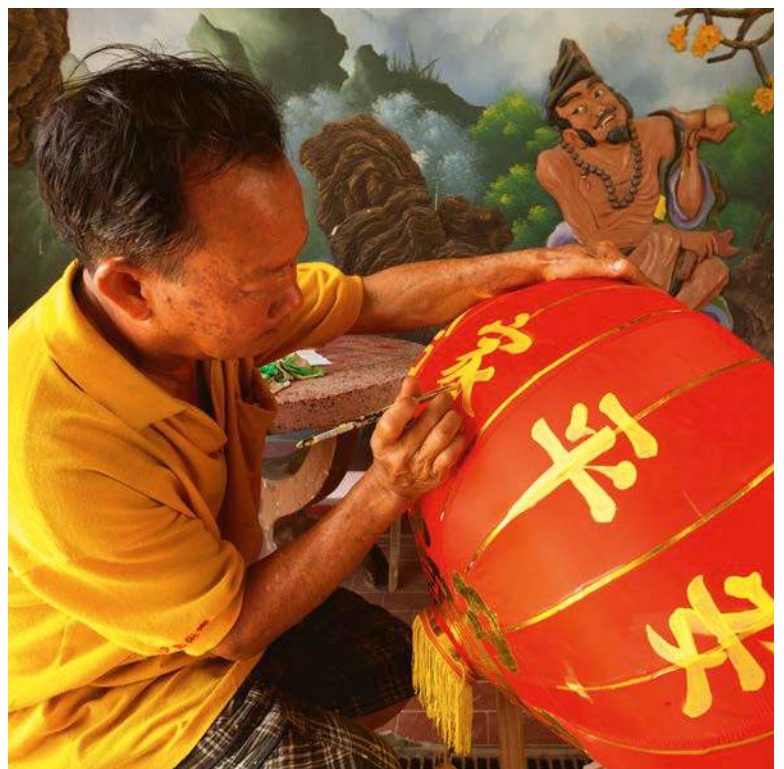


INSIDER TIP

In the lead up to the **Rainforest World Music Festival**, on 4 July Kuching will host an evening of culture, food, eclectic music and jungle vibes at the RWMF City Stage at the Kuching Amphitheatre. A local DJ, meanwhile, will show off his skills at DJ in the City at Junk on 9 July.

Essentials

Coincide a visit with the Rainforest World Music Festival, which takes place from 10-12 July 2020. It's held in the grounds of Sarawak Cultural Village, a living museum less than an hour's drive north of Kuching. For tickets go to rwmf.net





City life

KIGALI

Rwanda is renowned for its gorillas, but the progressive capital has an allure of its own. Thanks to innovative artists and entrepreneurs, the city is finally emerging from the embers of its past. **WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS:** Emma Gregg

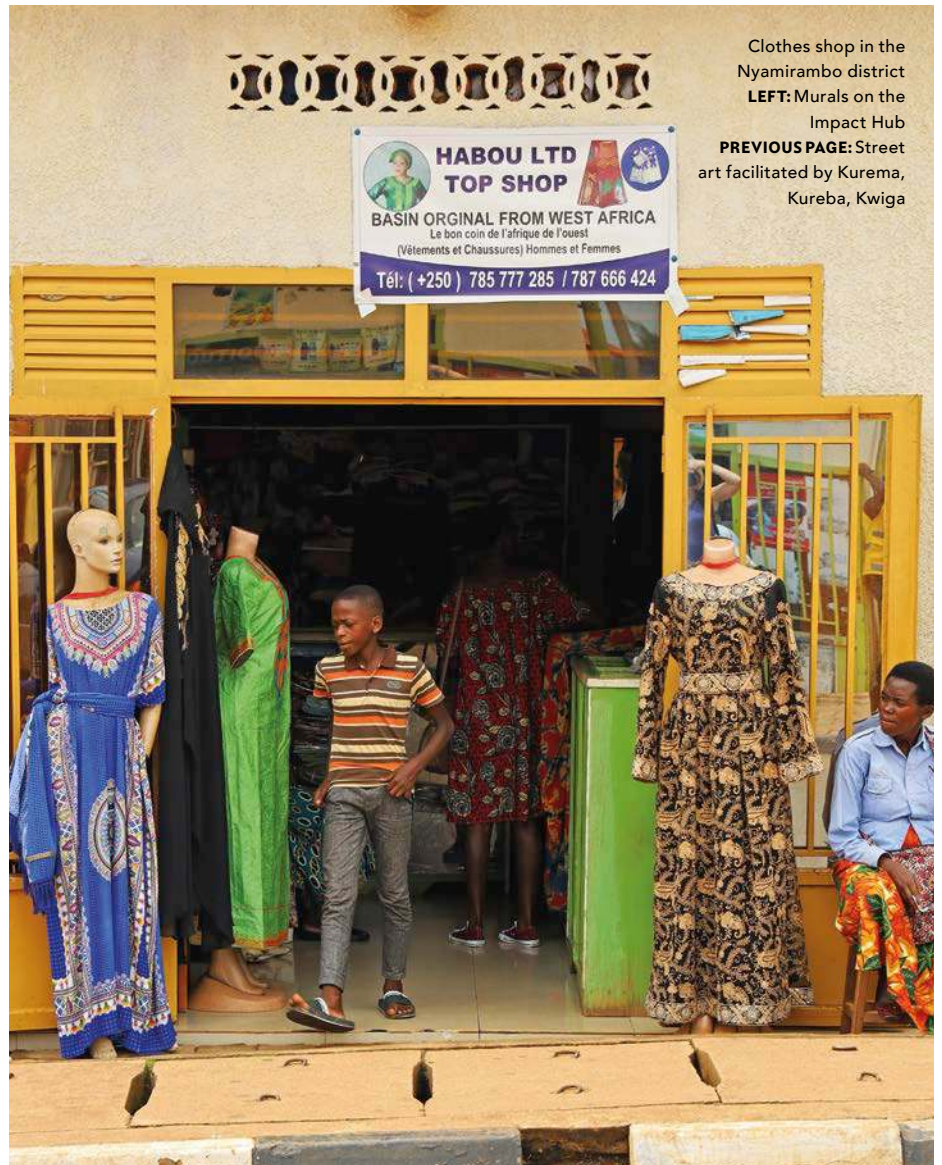


Just downhill from President Paul Kagame's residence in leafy Kiyovu, an earnest assortment of regulars and visitors has gathered at Heaven to discuss the day's news over passion fruit cocktails, cold Mützig beers and scoops of what the proprietors like to call the best guacamole in Africa. If you've ever tasted a Rwandan avocado — huge, glossy and creamy as butter — you'll understand why they make that claim. And if you've spent time in any African city where volunteers, development consultants and entrepreneurs converge, you'll recognise Heaven. It's one of those restaurants-with-rooms that attract movers and shakers, from visiting doctors, engineers and renewable energy experts to local crop scientists. Rumour has it that, come the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2020 in June, Prince Charles will be checking in.

With a landmark convention centre (domed like a traditional Rwandan palace, but lit like a sci-fi space station), Kigali does a brisk trade in such high-profile events. During my visit, an international conference on AIDS and STIs is in full swing, and I catch snippets of conversations about treatment strategies and recovery rates as I make my way through Heaven's bar to the open-sided restaurant. Here, local couples on dinner dates talk softly, silhouetted against distant city lights, while tables of tourists chat excitedly about their recent adventures (in the Serengeti and the Maasai Mara) and what the coming days have in store (mountain gorillas). For most visitors to Rwanda, gorillas are the star attraction.

"We know everyone wants to see them," says Heaven's founder, Alissa Ruxin, a San Francisco native who's passionate about primates. Her modern, solar-powered, boutique-style guest rooms are set among lush greenery and have mosquito nets slung over bamboo frames, a subtle reference to the gorillas' forest home. "But if you're simply whisked in and out of Kigali on a wildlife safari, you miss so much. We encourage you to go deeper, by making time for a cultural experience. There are some fantastic artisans and designers in Kigali, each with their own story. We're always hearing how much guests appreciate meeting them."





Clothes shop in the Nyamirambo district
LEFT: Murals on the Impact Hub
PREVIOUS PAGE: Street art facilitated by Kurema, Kureba, Kwiga

Heaven's likeable staff go out of their way to make such encounters happen. Impeccably trained, many come from disadvantaged backgrounds; Alissa, who moved to Kigali with her public health expert husband in the mid-2000s and volunteered at an orphanage for survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis, has a talent for spotting potential.

"When we first arrived, Rwanda was still recovering — not just from the trauma of genocide and civil war, but also from famine," explains Alissa. "People thought we were crazy to leave the States and raise our family here in Kiyovu." Hundreds of thousands died between April and June 1994, and it took time for enemies to reconcile and exiles to return. But after spending much of the last quarter-century finding its feet, Rwanda has now blossomed into one of Africa's most dynamic, forward-facing nations, and Kigali into one of its most liveable cities.

Spread over a cluster of hills, Kigali divides naturally into neighbourhoods. The avenues and boulevards of Kacyiru and Kimihurura, in the centre, are dotted with embassies, offices and independent galleries. The working-class district of Nyamirambo, in the southwest, has steep cobbled streets, kitenge (colourful fabric) merchants, traditional barbers and tailors, lively bars and a proud history — this was where resistance to the genocide was strongest. Kiyovu, west of Kimihurura, has international hotels, smart restaurants, fashion studios and affluent allure. Uniting these and the other neighbourhoods are the cheerful buzz of motorbike taxis, the fastest way to get around, and an abiding tidiness: Rwanda, one of the first nations in the world to ban plastic bags, requires its citizens to come together on the last Saturday morning of each month for a three-hour stint of public service called *Umuganda*, typically involving street-sweeping, tree-planting or verge-trimming. ➤



Q&A with Abraham Konga, jewellery designer

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT KIGALI?

It's a green city. I think at the end of the day, either you keep the place where you live clean, or that place messes you up.

WHAT INFLUENCE DO KIGALI'S GREEN CREDENTIALS HAVE ON YOUR CREATIVE LIFE?

I like to explore ideas of sustainability in my designs, by upcycling discarded objects and materials, and evoking natural forms such as leaves and sun rays. When I see something that's been thrown away, such as a cow horn or an old brass padlock, I think to myself: can I make something beautiful out of that?

WHAT MAKES KIGALI DIFFERENT FROM OTHER AFRICAN CITIES?

It's not chaotic — in fact, it feels really safe. We have good roads, good pavements and plenty of lights on both public and private buildings at night. It's easy to walk around, even in the dark.
abrahamkonga.com



THE ROAD TO RECONCILIATION

Unifying customs such as *Umuganda* and the city's bimonthly Car Free Day, when certain streets are closed to traffic to allow people to run, cycle and exercise instead, have been key to the city's healing process. As has a determination not to forget the past — the Kigali Genocide Memorial on the west side of town is far more than a museum: it's a mass burial ground to which locals regularly return to remember lost relatives and friends.

Visitors to Rwanda are sometimes advised against asking their hosts about ethnicity and genocide, but James Kamugisha, my guide, assures me that, on the contrary, questions are welcome. "What we want, more than anything, is to ensure that history doesn't repeat itself," he says. "There are people who try deny the genocide happened. We have to tell the truth."

Essential as it is to getting a good understanding of present-day Kigali, a visit to the Genocide Memorial is harrowing. Video testimonies, snatches of racist propaganda and photos of some of the many children who were murdered throw the harshest realities into focus. Staff hover near the exit, ready to steer any visitors who appear particularly distressed into a quiet room where they can process what they've learned as best they can.

"I was in there for ages. In pieces," says Carla Mrotzek, a young legal trainee from Germany who's in Kigali on a short-term placement. We meet at a table laden with fresh produce, having both enrolled in a three-hour cooking class in Nyamirambo. Our classmates are French pharmacists taking time out from conference sessions, and an American tourist travelling solo.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Teta Isibo of Inzuki Designs; Inzuki Designs boutique; shop selling a range of kitenge fabrics

With patient gestures and gentle nudges, our tutor, Aminatha Murekatete, teaches us how to prepare a Rwandan-style lunch of bean and cassava stew, *matooke* (a starchy variety of banana) with fried tomatoes and spinach-like dodo leaves with garlic and peanut sauce. Our kitchen is the concrete courtyard Aminatha shares with her neighbours. Women wander to and fro to clean windows or hang washing as we slice, chop, mix and stir. Soon, an array of delicious aromas are wafting up to the sky. It's the best kind of therapy after the Genocide Memorial.

The class is one of several urban tours and experiences organised by Nyamirambo Women's Center (NWC), a craft cooperative that's helped lift local families out of poverty. "We realised that one of the best ways to promote our products and generate income for our community was to invite tourists to share a little of our culture," explains co-founder Marie Aimée Umugeni when, after lunch, we visit NWC's sewing studio and craft shop. The handmade purses, toys and baby clothes on display are so irresistible that everyone from my course buys something.

For more feel-good shopping, I drop into Kigalifaam, the monthly farmers' and artisans' market at Kigali Serena, one of the city's plush hotels. Many of the goodies on offer have a backstory: adorable needle-felted gorilla ornaments are created by Handspun Hope, which employs genocide widows; social enterprise Beautiful Creations sells jars of locally harvested honey; and there are smart kitenge-trimmed bags by Itara, a project that benefits vulnerable children.

In her stylish Kiyovu boutique, Inzuki Designs, I chat to jeweller Teta Isibo about the city's flourishing creative scene. "Kigali feels like a new city," she says. "Thanks to the work my parents' generation did to rebuild Rwanda, we now have the freedom to be whimsical. Almost all of us designers and artists are self-taught, and there's nothing really to stop us experimenting."



“Compared to other African countries, this is a great place for women to start a business. President Paul Kagame is a self-described feminist — women make up an incredible 62% of Rwanda’s national legislature — we have a successful Made In Rwanda programme and our Minister of Trade and Industry, Soraya Hakuziyaremye, is a businesswoman with a track record in female empowerment. Many of the young people I speak to want to launch their own creative start-up.”

Ready to acquire a new creative skill of my own, I visit Azizi Life Studio — near the Kigali Convention Centre — for a crash course in *imigongo* making. Few African art forms are as distinctive as *imigongo*, Rwandan graphic panels created from a cow dung putty pressed onto wood. Once dried, sanded and painted, they’re like lightweight geometric carvings. You can pick them up at craft stalls all over town, and Azizi’s team loves teaching people how to make them.

Master *imigongo* maker Alexis Nsengiyumva shows me the ropes. The aroma of the putty — actually a mixture of cow dung

and cooking fire ash — is challenging, but the technique is strangely satisfying. By the end of the session, I’m hooked.

With so much energy simmering away, it’s only a matter of time before Kigali gets its own creative academy. “Things happen fast here,” street art enthusiast Judith Kaine tells me. Her community-based art foundation Kurema, Kureba, Kwiga (To Create, To See, To Learn) matchmakes muralists with patrons, and organises ad hoc tours. “When I moved to Rwanda from the US about seven years ago, Kigali only had a couple of proper galleries. Now it has 10.”

In the brightly painted yard at Inema, one of Kigali’s leading art spaces, local kids are throwing everything they’ve got into a drumming and dance show. By the looks on their faces, they’d be dancing whether anyone was watching or not. “Art, music, dance, the visual story of our environment — they’re all interlinked,” says artist and co-founder Emmanuel Nkuranga. “How cool is it to have kids come here and learn about their culture, where they’ve come from — and where they’re going?”

INSIDER TIPS

The Map — Kigali is a brilliant visual reference, annotated with useful suggestions from the editors of livinginkigali.com as well as crowd-sourced tips from a range of Kigali residents. africaguidemaps.com/maps (RRP: £12.99).

Buying a local SIM for your mobile phone involves a lengthy procedure that includes presenting your passport. If you prefer using wi-fi, you’re in luck: most hotels provide it and in central Kigali, you’re never far from a hotspot. To pinpoint them, use the WiFi Map app. wifimap.io

Yego cabs and motos (motorbike taxis) offer metered rides without the hassle of haggling and are bookable via an Android app or by dialling 9191. yegomoto.com





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:

Street art facilitated by Kurema, Kureba, Kwiga; craft tutor Jean-Pierre Mbarubukeye, Azizi Life Studio; a buffet lunch of matoke, dodo, rice and beans, Tamu Tamu, Nyamirambo

14 hours in KIGALI

7AM

BREAKFAST AT A MILK BAR

Cows and their milk are so precious to Rwandans that dairy-related references feature in their favourite chat-up lines. If someone says, “You walk like a beautiful calf” or “I’ll treat you like my one and only cow”, you can get your coat — you’ve pulled. Since city dwellers don’t have easy access to their own herd, they visit milk bars instead. Sipping a glass of fresh milk or creamy *ikivugoto* (drinking yogurt) in Nyamirambo is a quintessential local experience.

8AM

MOUNT KIGALI

One of the best ways to get a lungful of fresh air on a bright morning is to head up from Nyamirambo to Mount Kigali, a hill that, at almost a mile above sea level (5,141ft), is the city’s highest viewpoint. Locals come here for a little peace and quiet or a bracing stroll through the pines and chance encounters with wild vervet monkeys. If the weather’s clear, you can expect fine views of the capital and the rolling farmland beyond.

9.30AM

EXPLORE NYAMIRAMBO

It’s well worth spending some time in the working-class district of Nyamirambo, perhaps by booking a walking tour with Go Further Tours or the Nyamirambo Women’s Center. In contrast to Kigali’s sleek, modern centre, this is an atmospheric, traditional neighbourhood, with a buzzing covered market, a landmark mosque, thriving small businesses and several striking murals by Kurema, Kureba, Kwiga. gofurther.tours nwc-umutima.org

MIDDAY

LOCAL LUNCH

Urban Rwandans love a buffet: it’s a chance to enjoy hearty dishes such as *ugali* (polenta), beef and goat brochettes (grilled skewers), *matoke*, dodo leaves and rich bean stews, which take hours to prepare at home. Tuck in at Tamu Tamu on KN 2 Avenue in Nyamirambo, join the queues at Fantastic Restaurant on KN 2 Avenue near the KN 1 Roundabout, or pile your plate at Chez John on KN 50 Street, just south of Kiyovu.



Young boy dancing at Inema Arts Centre

2PM

TIME FOR COFFEE

Rwanda grows world-class coffee, but since locals tend to prefer tea (or milk), Kigali's coffee culture is still in its infancy. Question Coffee roastery and cafe, halfway between the airport and the centre, is one of the best places to try the local brew. Its mission is to transform the lives of low-income women coffee farmers in rural Rwanda through training and access to a healthy, sustainable national and international market. questioncoffee.com

3PM

KIGALI GENOCIDE MEMORIAL

This poignant memorial, museum, archive and study centre is the final resting place for more than 250,000 victims of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi people. As well as Tutsis, moderate Hutus and Twa were tortured and killed; hundreds are named on a wall near an expanse of mass graves. Inside, an exhibition documents the circumstances that led to the atrocities, from colonial divide-and-rule policies to contagious hate speech, and the subsequent healing process. Open daily 8am–5pm (last entrance 4pm), free. kgm.rw

5.30PM

SUNDOWNERS AND ART

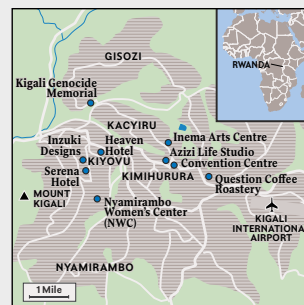
As evening approaches, head to one of the city's many cafe-bars with a view, preferably on a west-facing rooftop or hillside. Inzora is great for coffee and brownies, Pili Pili has a pool and a fun atmosphere while 1000 Hills Distillery creates refined cocktails from spirits concocted on the premises. If it's Thursday, the choice is easy: head to Inema for contemporary art and music from local bands or DJs. inzoracafe.com 1000hills.com inemaartcenter.com

7.30PM

DINNER

While Kigali isn't exactly a party city, its dining scene is on the rise. You could relax to live jazz over local-style brochettes and *misuzu* (fried sweet plantain) at Repub Lounge, try the city's best pan-Asian cuisine at Soy, or sample the mushroom risotto with white truffle oil at Poivre Noir, a Belgian-Rwandan bistro run by a brilliant young self-taught chef. Alternatively, treat yourself to an elegant evening at Fusion, Heaven's intimate, upscale sister restaurant. republounge.com soyasiantable.com poivrenoirkigali.com heavenrwanda.com 

ESSENTIALS



Getting there & around

RwandAir flies from Gatwick to Kigali three times a week via Brussels. Turkish Airlines offers a service via Istanbul, and Ethiopian Airlines flies via Addis Ababa. rwandair.com turkishairlines.com ethiopianairlines.com
Average flight time: 10h20m.

Private transfers to the city centre cost from £10. Taxis (car, motorbike and bicycle) and smartcard-operated buses cover the entire city.

Go Further Tours and Heaven Tours offer in-depth tours and creative experiences. gofurther.tours heavenrwanda.com

When to go

Close to the Equator, the temperature in Kigali is fairly steady, averaging in the high 20Cs. April is the rainiest month, while June to August is driest.

Places mentioned

Heaven. heavenrwanda.com
Kigali Genocide Memorial. kgm.rw
Nyamirambo Women's Center. nwc-umutima.org
Kigalifaam.
kigalifarmersandartisansmarket.com
Inzuki Designs. inzuki.com
Azizi Life Studio. azizilife.com
Kurema, Kureba, Kwigu. kuremarwanda.com
Inema. inemaartcenter.com

More info

Bradt Rwanda by Philip Briggs (Bradt Travel Guides, RRP: £17.99) visitrwanda.com

How to do it

ANOTHERAFRICA arranges bespoke itineraries to Kigali and throughout Rwanda from £600 per person sharing, including two nights on a B&B basis at Heaven The Retreat, and two half-day city experiences. Excludes international flights. anotherafrica.com

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City life

BOLOGNA



From lasagne to Lambrusco, this is the cradle of Italy's world-famous cuisine — an erudite, antique city of twisted streets, forgotten chapels filled with frescoes and imposing temples to scholarship

WORDS: Julia Buckley **PHOTOGRAPHS:** Diana Franceschin



La Dotta. La Grassa. La Rossa. The learned. The fat. The red. Stereotypes they may be, but Bologna's nicknames are on the money. To this day, it's Italy's left-wing bastion, held firm by Europe's oldest university. And it's not only Italy's food capital; Bologna is the world capital of what we call Italian food. This is a place where plates arrive heaving with pasta hand-rolled that morning, drowned in parmesan; where tagliatelle is fried and dusted with sugar for a wintry treat; where ham hocks dangle from shop ceilings, wheels of cheese are stacked by the till and frothy Lambrusco is quaffed by the litre as a palate-cleanser for all that grease. Tortellini, lasagne, tortelloni, ragu — Bologna is the epicentre of them all.

While they're widely used today, those nicknames are longstanding because within the ancient city walls, Bologna's present is also its past. The centre is a web of medieval streets, knitted together by 25 miles of porticoes (some frescoed, others mosaic-floored, all a respite from the humidity). Look up, and you'll see medieval beams propping up buildings and looming brick towers — the skyscrapers that made this a medieval Manhattan. Look inwards, and nondescript wooden doors will reveal themselves as the entrances to a florid church, a museum or a frescoed cafe. Go beneath the surface and you'll find Roman streets, early Christian crypts, even medieval bell towers swaddled by their later replacements.

Bologna's simplicity is its beauty, putting the focus on what the Bolognese do best: living. Even the history is alive: food-sellers hawk their wares in the tangled medieval market, artisans beaver away in the former Jewish quarter, and the art stays in quiet situ, instead of being floodlit in a museum.

In fact, Bologna's best museum is its open-air one: Piazza Maggiore, where a brace of castles (now council buildings) square off against the basilica of San Petronio, a church so enormous that the locals gave up on the marble cladding halfway through. Today, the Bolognese parade beneath the porticoes and students snog on the basilica steps, while an immense bronze Neptune fountain acts as ringmaster to it all.

**SEE & DO**

BENTIVOGLIO CHAPEL: On Saturday mornings, volunteers open this 15th-century, spectacularly frescoed chapel in the Basilica of San Giacomo Maggiore. The fresco, The Triumph of Death, has a scythe-wielding skeleton leaping from a tomb to join its oxen-riding mates, while on the other wall is a photo-like portrait of local dignitaries, the Bentivoglio family. This is also the time to see Cimabue's huge Virgin and tufty-haired child at Santa Maria dei Servi, a few streets over.

MUSEO CIVICO ARCHEOLOGICO: Bologna's archaeological museum reopened in December 2019 with an exhibition on the Etruscans (the pre-Roman Italians). Highlights include a leg-shaped perfume flask, elaborate gold and amber jewellery, and an urn featuring a human squaring off with mythical beasts en route to the afterlife. It's open until 24 May. etruschibologna.it

CATHEDRAL: Get to grips with Bologna's famous towers by climbing the cathedral bell tower, open on Saturday afternoons. You get two for the price of one here — a 13th-century square tower built around an earlier round one, with a ramp between the two whisking you 230ft to the top. You've also got a perfect view of the tower-pricked skyline, Piazza Maggiore and Bologna's signature twin medieval towers, leaning tipsily. After coming back down to earth, nip into the crypt to check out the early-Christian and Roman remains, including a brick with a Roman dog's paw print.

UNDERGROUND: Underneath the glass-floored Salaborsa (the former stock exchange, now a library) in Piazza Maggiore are remains from the ancient city of Bononia, with walkways cantilevered above the 2,000-year-old streets. A Sunday afternoon crypt tour with Succede solo a Bologna offers access to four normally closed crypts, from the frail arches of the fourth-century San Zama to San Agricola and Vitale, where the city's patron saints are said to have been martyred. succedesoloabologna.it

QUADRILATERO: Get stuck into the city's mythical food scene in this tangle of alleys east of Piazza Maggiore. Dating back to medieval times, the area has been home to delis, greengrocers and bars. Top picks are Simoni for ham and cheese and Atti for rice pudding. salumeriasimoni.it paoloatti.com

BASILICA DI SAN DOMENICO: Visit the pretty cloister and choir seats, deliciously carved with scenes of everyday Renaissance life; linger at the marble sarcophagus of St Dominic, sculpted by Nicola Pisano, with delicate saints around the top by Niccolò dell'Arca and a young Michelangelo.

SAN MICHELE IN BOSCO: In the hills behind San Domenico, this is a monastery-turned-hospital with jaw-dropping views over the city. The door to the right of the church altar whisks you into an otherworldly Renaissance corridor with a periscope-effect view of the 318ft Asinelli Tower; down the staircase are peaceful cloisters, including an octagonal one frescoed by the Carracci brothers.

***Navel gazing** // The neatly rounded shape of tortellini is said to be based on Venus's navel. The original recipe dates back to the Middle Ages and is kept in the city archives*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Strolling in the shade of the city's porticoes; tortellini in brodo at Da Nello; an exhibit at the MAMbo modern art museum; father and son owners at Formaggeria Barbieri in Mercato delle Erbe

PREVIOUS PAGES: Salumeria Simoni, a family-run meat and cheese shop in the Quadrilatero, an area famous for crafts and mercantile trading







CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: A bartender at Agricola e Vitale in the Piazza Santo Stefano; panoramic view of Bologna from the top of Torre Prendiparte; Paolo Atti & Figli bakery; Piazza Maggiore

Twin towers // Bologna's Asinelli and Garisenda towers dominate the skyline. Dante even mentioned the Garisenda in the *Divine Comedy* and you can climb the Asinelli, but with 498 steps, it's best attempted before a heavy meal



BUY

VIA DELL'INFERNO: Old-school artisans have settled in this cobbled street in the former Jewish quarter. Cosetta Corticelli and her father hand-make classic women's shoes while opposite, leather-worker Yanjia Chen crafts delicate earrings, bags and luggage tags from Italian leather at I XII Bo. corticellicosetta.it yanjiachen.blogspot.it

ALTROMERCATO: Stuffed with all things Fairtrade, from mafia-free Sicilian rice to cooperative-grown pulses, Bolivian alpaca scarves to headbands made from saris. Ceramics, jewellery, stationery and chocolate — it's all here. altromercato.it

LA SALUMERIA DI BRUNO E FRANCO: This is a one-stop shop for Bologna's best food: a counter of fresh pasta, hand-rolled that morning by Franco's daughter, plus the region's best prosciutto, salami, oils and condiments. la-salumeria.it

FORMAGGERIA BARBIERI: The Barbieri family have been selling cheese in the Mercato delle Erbe food market since 1968. Alberto lets you sample over 100 cheeses, including Tuscany's best pecorino and parmesan aged for 52 months. facebook.com/formaggeriabarbieri



LIKE A LOCAL

ORDER THE UNUSUAL: Forget *tagliatelle al ragu*. The two must-try dishes here are *tortellini in brodo* — tiny, hand-twisted pasta filled with parmesan and various pork meats, swimming in broth — and *cotoletta alla petroniana*, a breaded veal schnitzel wrapped in prosciutto and soused in melted parmesan. A tip: in Bologna, it's necessary to book the best restaurants a week ahead.

HIDDEN MASTERPIECES: In the Quadrilatero, pop into Santa Maria della Vita to see the harrowing, breathtakingly modern *Compianto* — lifesize terracotta sculptures of the Deposition by 15th-century Niccolò dell'Arca. Another striking work is in Santa Maria della Pietà: the *Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes* by 16th-century female painter Lavinia Fontana.

BACK TO SCHOOL: For a taste of Europe's oldest university (founded in 1088), follow the students to the Archiginnasio and pop into the all-wood Anatomical Theatre where two flayed-skin statues hold up the lecturer's chair. If that's not gruesome enough, the Palazzo Poggi Museum has wax casts of embryos and adults mid-dissection.



SLEEP

UNA HOTEL: Right opposite the train station, about a 20-minute walk from the centre, this trendy hotel has brightly coloured, travel-themed rooms and a pretty outdoor terrace that's open April to October. Doubles from £69, B&B. gruppouna.it

ART HOTEL COMMERCianti: You'll find everything from a display case of Renaissance pottery to medieval beams in the 38 rooms of this 12th-century building, a former guild premises round the side of the Basilica of San Petronio. Get a room overlooking the basilica — the chants on a Sunday morning float up through the window. Doubles from £130, B&B. art-hotel-commerciali.com

GRAND HOTEL MAJESTIC GIÀ BAGLIONI: Bologna's fanciest hotel has Luca Giordano artworks on the walls, a strip of Roman road by the breakfast room and a lobby of gleaming marble. The flouncy, fabric-smothered rooms are over the top and not five-star-sized, but it's worth it for the outré experience. Ask for a room high up overlooking the cathedral. Doubles from £266, room only. duetorrihotels.com



Bartenders at Osteria del Sole, a tavern dating back to 1465

EAT

🍴 SFOGLIA RINA: A pasta shop with a restaurant in the back, this serves local pasta dishes with swift service at decent prices, plus daily specials. Perfect for lunch, it's also good for seasonal specialties, like pumpkin tortelloni. sfogliarina.it

🍴 AL CAPPELLO ROSSO: It may look modern, but this casual bistro has been operating since 1375. It's tiny, with just six tables, but the pasta, made in the glass-fronted laboratory up the street, is superb. Try the lasagne on Sundays. alcappellorosso.it

🍴 OLTRE: Most restaurants in Bologna are traditional. Not so this hipster haven, which takes the classics in a completely new direction. Try the ramen-style tagliolini in parmesan-filled broth or go for the innovative five-course tasting menu. The entrance is unmarked — look for the glass panels covered in stickers. oltrebologna.it

AFTER HOURS

🍸 GAMBERINI: By day at *pasticceria* (pastry shop), Gamberini serves up the best aperitivo in town, along with a groaning buffet of superb finger food that's all yours if you only order a drink. Squeeze around the wooden counter or, if the weather is good, take a table under the porticoes. gamberini.eu
LESTANZE: Location is everything in this 16th-century chapel once belonging to the Bentivoglio family. The walls are still frescoed with black-and-white mythical scenes, and the odd bust watches you from the niches surrounding the bar. lestanze.cafe.it
OSTERIA DEL SOLE: Take your Quadrilatero-bought picnic to Osteria del Sole, an unpretentious bring-your-own-food bar in the middle of the action. Pair your food with a fizzy local Lambrusco, pull up a pew on the communal tables and watch the old gents playing cards in the corner. osteriadelsole.it 🍷

ESSENTIALS



Getting there & around

British Airways flies direct from Heathrow, EasyJet from Gatwick and Ryanair from Edinburgh, Luton, Stansted and Manchester. ba.com easyjet.com ryanair.com
 Average flight time: 2h5m.

The city centre is walkable — in fact, due to the one-way system in the centre, walking is usually the best way to get around. The bus system is decent, although you'll only really need to use it to get between the city centre and the train station. The airport is just five miles out of town: taxis cost around £20, there are regular buses, and a new monorail is due to open in 2020, connecting the airport to the train station in seven minutes.

When to go

Bologna has high humidity levels, so winters can be biting cold and summers suffocating. However, the porticoes protect you from the rain or snow, so mid-summer is really the only time to avoid when temperatures average 30C. Spring and autumn are usually mild, averaging around 18C. Winter is the best time to eat the food, too — the rich dishes are designed to warm you up when it's around 10C.

More info

bolognawelcome.com
 The Bradt Guide to Emilia Romagna.
 RRP: £16.99

How to do it

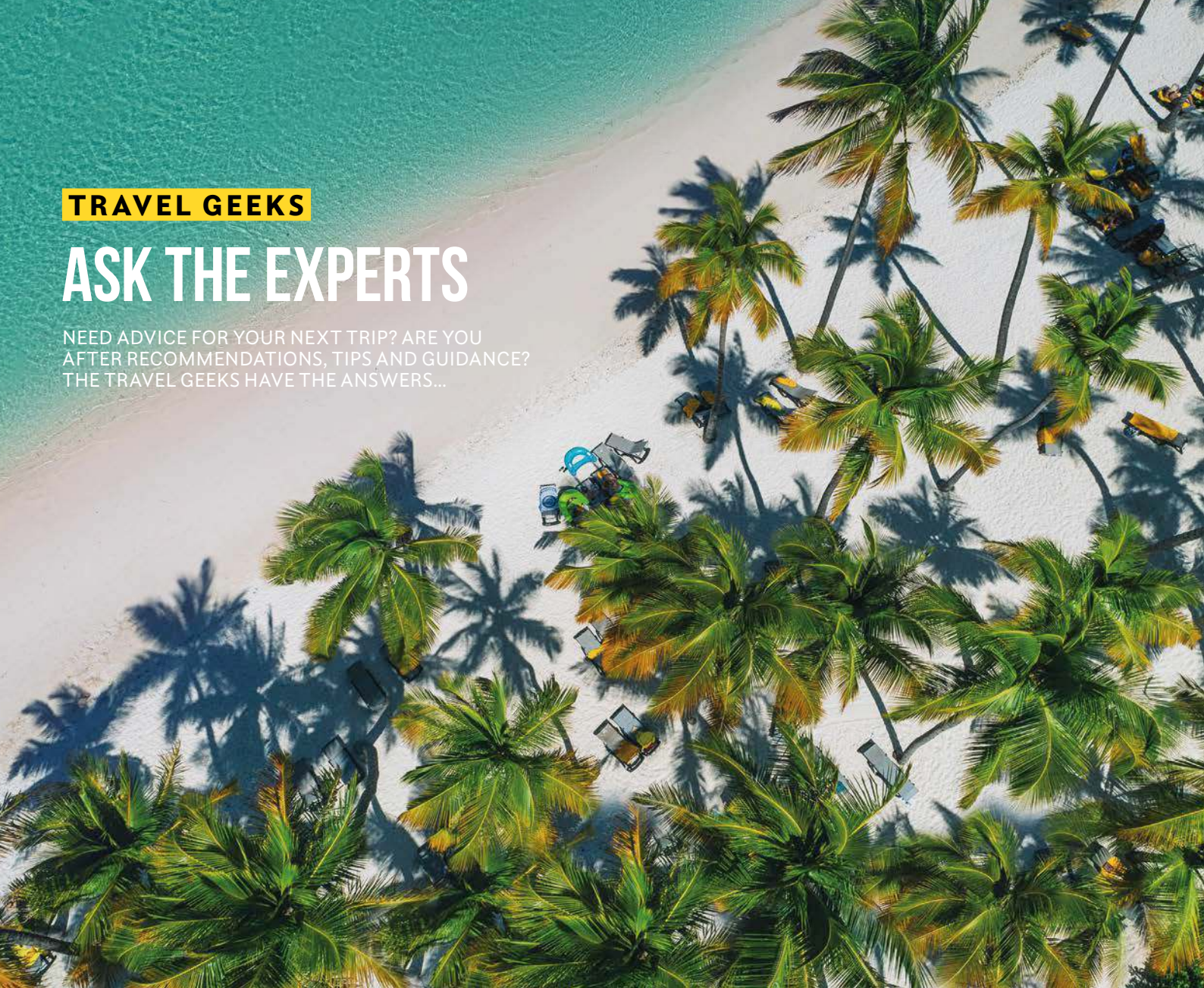
BRITISH AIRWAYS HOLIDAYS offers return flights and two nights at the Art Hotel Commercianti, B&B, from £220. britishairways.com



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TRAVEL GEEKS

ASK THE EXPERTS

NEED ADVICE FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP? ARE YOU AFTER RECOMMENDATIONS, TIPS AND GUIDANCE? THE TRAVEL GEEKS HAVE THE ANSWERS...

Q // I'd like to visit the Caribbean. Where would you recommend for more than a fly-and-flop holiday — something that combines cultural and natural attractions?

I'd say Dominican Republic — it's a large country by Caribbean standards and is steeped in culture, tradition and history. It has a great food scene and with such diverse landscapes, it's an adventurer's paradise.

You can go hiking in the mountains (the island has some of the tallest mountains in the Caribbean), be completely immersed in nature on an adventure trail, or take in canyons and coastlines in the north, which cater for mountain bikers, windsurfers and climbers.

Watersports are also popular on the island. You can try kitesurfing at Cabarete Bay, one of the world's most celebrated kitesurfing spots, through luxury hotel partner, Amanera. Tailor-made travel specialists Carrier can even arrange private lessons with a professional if you're really keen to try it out.

The capital Santo Domingo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a great place to step out and explore; it's beautiful, historic and bursting with character and culture. It has a great buzz and you can enjoy local rum and merengue music playing in the bars and sample food from traditional Dominican street vendors.

For a luxurious cultural stay on the island, you can't get better than Casas del XVI, a unique hotel in the city where some of the individual houses date back to the 16th century and retain authentic elements of their past.

Some of my favourite places to explore and take in dramatic scenery are the isolated Bahia dl las Aguilas (Eagle's Bay), the tropical rainforests inland and heading out to Samana Bay or Silver Bank to spot humpback whales. carrier.co.uk

JENNY BASHAM

FROM LEFT: Tropical beach in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; Gornergrat Railway with the Matterhorn in the background, Zermatt, Switzerland

IMAGES: GETTY

Q // Where's high enough for a late ski trip that will have availability?

Easter falls late this year — Easter Sunday is April 12 — and while this time of the year can often produce fantastic conditions (and quiet slopes), if you want to book more than a week ahead of time, it's best to aim high for guaranteed snow.

That means looking for ski resorts that are around 5,905ft above sea level with a ski area up to 9,850ft or so. Thankfully, these aren't hard to find in Europe.

In France, consider Val d'Isère and Tignes, which share the Espace Killy ski area and two glaciers or Les Arcs-La Plagne in the Paradiski area. In the Three

Valleys, Val Thorens is Europe's highest ski resort at 7,545ft, or try Les Menuires, which is a smaller, quieter village close by with access to the same ski area.

If you're looking for more chocolate-box charm, Zermatt and Saas-Fee in Switzerland both offer long seasons with reliable late snow thanks to their glaciers while in Austria, Obergurgl and Ischgl are great choices for April.

However, Cervinia in Italy would be top of my list for April. It shares a ski area with Zermatt (and access to its glacier), but offers much better value for money. **ABI BUTCHER**



Q // I'd like to try a house swap for a couple of weeks, but have no idea where to start. Can you help?

It sounds a complex process. You have a house. You want to swap it for someone else's — but only for a holiday. Would anyone really want to play ball?

The answer, in short, is yes. Even the briefest internet search will give you a long list of specialists in the field; there's HomeLink, Love Home Swap, HomeExchange and Home Base Holidays, to name but a few. The names are similar, and so is the concept — you pay a membership fee (this varies: Love Home Swap asks from £8 a month; HomeExchange charges \$150 [£116] per year), upload details of your property along with a wealth of attractive images that, you hope, will entice

fellow swap-seekers — and wait for the offers.

Of course, while it's possible another member will want to stay in your home at the exact time you temporarily want theirs, life is rarely that simple. So, HomeExchange allows subscribers to swap properties on different dates. And Love Home Swap has a currency system — you earn points by offering your house to one party, then you can spend them on 'renting' another listed on the site. The main principle is that the swap is largely cost-free. lovehomeswap.com homelink.org.uk homebase-hols.com homeexchange.com

CHRIS LEADBEATER

Q // If I've booked a trip and the FCO advise against travel because of a pandemic outbreak, what does my insurance cover?

The Foreign Office (FCO) changed its travel advice to China following the outbreak of a new strain of coronavirus, which has caused a number of fatalities in the country. Initially, the FCO advised against all but essential travel to the city of Wuhan and Huabei province, and then against all non-essential travel to all of mainland China.

When FCO advice changes, tour operators will do their best to get customers home swiftly, and for imminent departures, give customers the option to defer their date of travel, transfer to another destination or have a full refund. For later departures, this will be reviewed on a rolling basis for as long as the advice is in place. Independent travellers should speak to their airlines, which generally allow customers to amend their flight options and in some cases get a refund, though they have no obligation to do so.

Regarding insurance, it'll come into play if independent travellers suffer a cancellation fee for unused ground arrangements. A good quality policy should cover this under consequential loss. gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice abta.com **SEAN TIPTON**

THE EXPERTS



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CARIBBEAN PRODUCT
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SEAN TIPTON // ABTA



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ABI BUTCHER //
FREELANCE JOURNALIST

THE INFO

CLIMATE ACTION

22 APRIL MARKS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF EARTH DAY. WHAT'S HAPPENED IN THE HALF-CENTURY OF ITS EXISTENCE? WORDS: TAMSIN WRESSSELL

IN NUMBERS

1 billion

The number of individuals who take part each year

192

The estimated number of countries that participate in Earth Day

7.6 billion

Overall population of the world as recorded in 2018



20 million

The number of Americans who took part in the first Earth Day in 1970. The event was established by US Senator Gaylord Nelson after he witnessed the impact of a massive oil spill in Santa Barbara, California, in 1969.

WHAT IS IT?

It's a global movement demonstrating support for environmental protection and raising awareness of climate issues



HELP PROTECT WILDLIFE

Join National Geographic as it focuses on saving 50 of the planet's at-risk species. Find out how you can help, beginning 1 April at nationalgeographic.co.uk

#**natgeosavetogether**

TAKE THREE

green facts



Recycling one bottle can save enough energy to power a light bulb for four hours



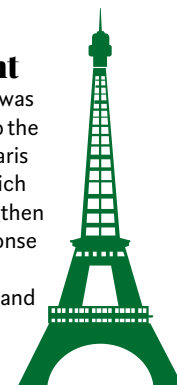
95% of energy used in making aluminium drink cans can be saved when recycled



Every ton of recycled paper could save 17 trees

Paris Agreement

Earth Day 2016 was the backdrop to the signing of the Paris Agreement, which aimed to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change and help countries deal with the impacts.



Timeline

1970

The first Earth Day draws attention to the need for environmental protections, and the US' National Environmental Policy Act takes effect.

1985

Scientists discover a hole in the ozone layer in the stratosphere above Antarctica. In 1987, world leaders agree to phase out ozone-depleting chemicals.

1990

Earth Day is marked in 141 countries. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) releases a global warming report.

2000

Digital media gives Earth Day a boost, reaching more than 180 countries; the main focus is on a global initiative to clean, renewable energy sources.

2010

The Earth Day Network launches A Billion Acts of Green, a campaign that rewards individuals and groups seeking to reduce carbon emissions and support sustainability.

2020

In its 50th year, Earth Day will again reach one billion people. The theme is climate action, representing the biggest challenge to the future of humanity.

SOURCES: EARTHDAY.ORG; GREENMATCH.CO.UK; INDEPENDENT.CO.UK; FOX GROUP; NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.COM

HOT TOPIC

SHOULD I TRAVEL TO AUSTRALIA?

THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA IS FEELING THE WEIGHT FOLLOWING THE CATASTROPHIC BUSHFIRES THAT STARTED LAST YEAR, BUT SHOULD TOURISTS BE VISITING THE COUNTRY RIGHT NOW? WORDS: DAVID WHITLEY



View from Echo Point
lookout, Blue Mountains,
New South Wales

IS AUSTRALIA ON FIRE?

Parts of it are, yes. And the 2019-2020 bush fire season has been the most catastrophic on record. At time of writing, 46 million acres of land had burned in the fires. For comparison, the entire UK covers just under 60 million acres. More than 30 lives had been lost, and in excess of 6,000 buildings destroyed. However, Sally Cope, Tourism Australia's regional general manager for the UK and northern Europe, said: "Fortunately, the majority of destinations popular with overseas tourists remain unaffected."

SO, WHICH BITS HAVE BEEN HIT?

There have been fires in all states, but southern New South Wales and eastern Victoria have been worst hit. This includes many beach and country towns that are popular with domestic tourists, but don't usually feature on the itineraries of visitors from the UK.

Key areas that have been affected include Kangaroo Island and the Adelaide Hills in South Australia, plus parts of the Blue Mountains in New South Wales. The capital, Canberra, has also been under threat.

However, lots of fire means lots of smoke, which has led

to key highways being closed, dangerously poor air quality in big cities and grey-black blankets replacing bright blue skies.

Heavy rain in January has helped curb the worst of December's horrors, but several fires are still cropping up.

WHY HAS THIS HAPPENED?

Professor Ian Wright from Macquarie University's Department of Biological Sciences, says: "For many millions of years, fire has been an important and regular feature of the environment in Australia, especially in areas dominated by eucalypts. Many species are highly adapted to fire.

"When dry, eucalypt forests produce substantial fuel loads that are easily ignited by lightning. The resulting fires, fanned by strong winds during hot weather, are very difficult to contain." And the perfect storm of extended drought, plus very warm spring and summer weather, has struck.

HOW CAN IT BE MANAGED?

Indigenous Australian groups have always used controlled burns to manage woods and forests, and staff in national and state parks do much the same thing.

Wright explains this can only go so far, though. "Hazard-reduction burning reduces fuel loads, particularly in the understory of forests. These burns may serve to reduce the spread and severity of low-intensity fires, but under extreme fire conditions — as experienced this summer — they make little difference."

WHAT ABOUT THE WILDLIFE?

There's no doubt the fires have had a devastating effect on the wildlife. The total toll will take a long time to work out, but ignore any hyperbolic nonsense about the fires making koalas extinct.

SHOULD I CANCEL MY TRIP?

In most of the drawcard destinations — Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Kakadu, the Red Centre, Queensland's beaches, Tasmania's mountain walks, the wine regions and the Great Barrier Reef — you're not going to be anywhere near a bushfire. Special fire management efforts have also been put in place to protect key attractions in the areas that have been affected.

Tourism Australia has created a helpful, frequently updated map of the affected areas: australia.com/en-gb/travel-alerts.html

KEY SITES: WHERE'S STILL OPEN?

KANGAROO ISLAND

Travel to and from Kangaroo Island is unrestricted, and the fires have largely been contained in the western half of the island, which includes Flinders Chase National Park. At the end of January, travel here wasn't recommended except for access. Some accommodation options in the west are closed until further notice, but the South Australian Tourism Commission says the east is open for business.

CANBERRA

It's the national and state parks around Canberra that have been worst hit. The city's airport was briefly closed, but most of the key attractions are in unaffected central areas.

BLUE MOUNTAINS

Though some alarmist assessments have said up to 80% of the Blue Mountains region has been lost to bushfires, the actual figure is more like 20%. Thankfully, natural regeneration will replenish most of the damaged sections. The most-visited area — Katoomba and the Jamison Valley — got off very lightly. The Scenic Railway into the valley was temporarily closed while firefighters used it, but reopened in December.

Kit list REEF SAFE

THE CORAL REEFS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE OCEAN'S BIODIVERSITY — HERE'S A FEW TIPS AND KIT TO HELP PROTECT THEM WHEN SWIMMING, SNORKELLING OR DIVING. WORDS: TAMSIN WRESSSELL

1 GOXTREME REEF UNDERWATER CAMERA

Photographing the reef can help document its health, and the images can be shared with experts on sites like Virtual Reef. Waterproof down to 10ft, it's also freeze-resistant to -10C and comes with a hand strap. RRP: £69.99. virtualreef.org.au argos.co.uk

2 RUBY MOON RASH VEST

The best way to protect the reef from oils in sunscreens is to cover up as much skin as possible, thus limiting sunscreen use. This rash vest in a tropical verve print is ideal for protecting arms and torso from the sun's rays and is made from recycled ocean plastic. RRP: £95. rubymoon.org.uk

3 RIZ OCEAN ABUNDANCE SWIM SHORTS

Part of Riz Boardshorts' new collection, made from 99.8% recycled materials. They're 100% recyclable and £1 from the sale of every pair of shorts is also donated to the Marine Conservation Society. RRP: £98. rizboardshorts.com



4 FOR THE REEF DEEP BLUE SEA HOODIE

Once you've dried off, warm up in a microplastic-free hoodie, made from bamboo and organic cotton. What's more, the manufacturer supports leading conservation organisation SECORE International. RRP: £50. forthereef.com



5 TRIBORD DINGHY BUOYANCY AID

Keeping horizontal and staying off the seabed when in the water is key to preserving the coral reef. This Tribord vest is designed in an ergonomic shape so it's comfortable to wear when sailing, is available in three colours and features a wide front pocket. RRP: £29.99. decathlon.co.uk



6 FOURTH ELEMENT OCEAN DEBRIS BAG

Help clean up the ocean on any swim, dive or snorkel by carrying a mesh bag to collect any rubbish you come across — this one by Fourth Element rolls up neatly to fit in a pocket or can be clipped to your swimwear. RRP: £12. fourthelement.com

Three to try: reef-safe sunscreens



SPF35 RAW LOVE SUNSCREEN 40Z

This mineral sunscreen is made from 100% plant-based ingredients and comes in a handy pocked-sized, eco-friendly tin. RRP: \$24.99 (£19). rawlovesunscreen.com



SPF30 STREAM2SEA SUNSCREEN 30ML

Water-resistant for 80 minutes of swimming, this sunscreen isn't harmful to humans, freshwater and saltwater fish and coral larvae. RRP: £6.49. fourthelement.com



SPF30 MAMA KULEANA WATERPROOF 20Z

Based on the Hawaiian island of Maui, mama KULEANA uses organic ingredients such as coconut oil, almond oil and shea butter. RRP: £21 (£16). mamakuleana.com

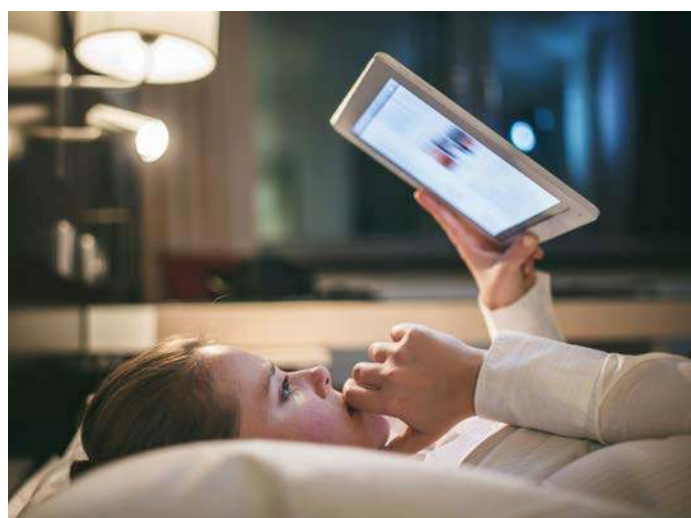


Tech traveller

TECHNOLOGY REPORTER FOR @BBCCLICK AND
AUTHOR OF *WORKING THE CLOUD*,
KATE RUSSELL PICKS THE LATEST INNOVATIONS

STREAMING TV ON THE GO

A FEW GADGETS AND TIPS CAN HELP YOU TAP INTO MANY STREAMING SERVICES WHEN YOU'RE AWAY



Unless you take content with you on your mobile phone or tablet, finding things to watch on your hotel TV can be a struggle. One of the easiest ways to feed this to the big screen TV is through a wireless casting app like Miracast on Android and Airplay Mirroring for iOS, which you'll find pre-installed in the lock-screen menu on Apple devices. These apps can search for nearby devices to cast to when asked.

Unfortunately, not all hotels allow wi-fi access to their TVs, so I always pack a wired cable for 'just in case'. These are easy to buy from Amazon or your preferred electronics outlet. Search for your connector type (such as lightning cable or USB3 to HDMI adaptor cable). That should connect you to most modern TVs, but if you want to be doubly sure, you can also grab a

'your connector type' to VGA adaptor, which should work with older style TVs.

Remember, you'll still need a reliable internet connection if you're streaming content from your phone. Many streaming services — like iPlayer, Netflix, Amazon Prime and YouTube Premium — let you download content to watch offline, which will give you the smoothest and most reliable results.

If the hotel you're visiting is modern, it might have smart TVs in the rooms, so you can simply log in with your streaming account and watch without faff. Be sure to log out of this device when you check out, though.

The gadget fiend's solution would be a portable streaming stick, like the ones available from Roku. These plug into the TV's HDMI port and provide streaming services without casting directly from your phone. Roku has a range of sticks from an HD player at £29.99 to 4K HDR at £49.99. roku.com

TOP TIPS FOR... *beating jet lag*



Consider these tech tips for beating jet lag.

TIMESHIFTER.COM

Developed by scientists, Timeshifter lets you create a personalised plan for adjusting to a new time zone. Visual prompts and notifications will tell you when to sleep, expose yourself to bright light and avoid sleep inhibiting habits.

JETLAGROOSTER.COM

Jet Lag Rooster is a simple web app that gives you a plan to reduce jet lag by suggesting hours for you to expose yourself to light and shift your sleeping pattern before a trip, which you can begin up to two days before you leave home.

AVOID BLUE LIGHT

Blue light sources can interfere with the production of the sleep hormone melatonin, so watching movies on a flight to a new time zone can be disastrous. Blue-light blocking reading glasses are a great solution — they're widely available online for under £20. amazon.com

GET THE GADGET

PocketTalk Translator

There are plenty of apps that offer real-time language translation, but it's not always a smart idea to get your expensive phone out and start waving it around. You might also find you have battery issues if you're using it to communicate with locals all the time too.

PocketTalk is a neat solution that provides two-way speech and text translation for 55 languages, with

a further 19 languages in text-only mode. The built-in data option can be used in 133 countries, making this independent little pocket communicator a great way to have real conversations when there's a language barrier. RRP: £219. pockettalk.net

[@katerussell](https://twitter.com/katerussell)
katerussell.co.uk



FREQUENT FLYER

IN-FLIGHT HEALTH

IS THERE A HUMAN COST TO BEING ABLE TO JET OFF AT WILL? ALAS, IT'S NOT EXACTLY THE HEALTHIEST THING YOU CAN DO — AND IT'S WORTH KNOWING THE TOLL IT TAKES ON THE HUMAN BODY. WORDS: DAVID WHITLEY

Flying really isn't good for you, right?

Of course not. But perhaps the most remarkable thing is how little damage being sealed in a pressurised cabin with hundreds of other people and their germs does to you. Flying does expose you to higher levels of radiation, but not dangerously so. You'll get more from a chest X-ray, for example, than a transatlantic flight, though this mounts up a little for frequent flyers. But even airline crew aren't exposed to nearly enough each year for it to tip into the danger zone — where there's an increased risk of getting cancer.

What about dehydration?

Dry air circulates around cabins, which can have a dehydrating effect. For those who are otherwise fit and well, this doesn't cause much of a problem — sometimes dry skin, a dry mouth and/or a mild headache. But the dehydrating effects of being at high altitude and low humidity for hours can exacerbate existing illnesses.

Going easy on alcoholic or caffeinated drinks can help, and switching contact lenses for spectacles is a wise idea to avoid eye irritation.

And deep vein thrombosis?

It's a common misconception that deep vein thrombosis (DVT) is something that only happens on flights — it's more about being immobile than being up in the air. Risks are similar if you're on a long bus journey, for example. Lack of movement can slow blood flow in the veins, leading to blood clots — usually in the legs — which can potentially break off and cause a life-threatening pulmonary embolism. The NHS Fit For Travel site says those who have had recent surgery, are pregnant or obese, or suffer from varicose veins are among the groups at most risk from DVT.

What can be done to prevent it?

Anti-embolism stockings, if worn correctly, are a good bet, but most of the best preventative measures are behavioural. Advice includes

choosing an aisle seat, as this extra room acts as an incentive to move around more, carrying out muscle exercises, avoiding excessive alcohol consumption and staying well hydrated — if only because it'll make you get up to go to the toilet more often.

Anything else to fret over?

The main aspect of in-flight health that most of us will encounter is tiredness and changes to circadian rhythms. Flying often involves getting up at unsociable hours, inadequate sleep and messing up the body clock — all of which leave us more susceptible to being hit nastily by any bugs that may be floating about. Jet lag, alas, is something there's no easy cure for. However, there are a number of things that can be done to minimise it. They include — get whatever sleep you can on the plane, try to adjust meal times to the destination, don't plan much for the first day or take a stopover. And — this should be something of a mantra — try to avoid going the whole hog on the free wine and spirits.

IN-FLIGHT EXERCISES

Try to do these every hour



GO FOR A WALK: A simple one — try to make a point of getting up to pace up and down the aisle a few times.



FOOT PUMPING: Keep your heels on the floor, and raise your toes upwards as far as possible. Switch directions. Repeat both 10 times.



ANKLE CIRCLING: Lift your legs and circle your feet clockwise from the ankle. Then anticlockwise. Do both 10 times for each foot.



NECK ROLLING: Relax your shoulders, then lean your head towards one, before rolling it towards the other. Repeat 10 times.



KNEE HUGGING: Clasp your knee so your leg lifts. Hold for around 10 seconds, then repeat with the other leg. Repeat 10 times.

For those of you not prepared to make the trip across the Shannon to King John's Castle on a wakeboard, may we suggest the bridge?

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE



Steaming onsens, sacred mountains carpeted in forest, blossom-strewn gardens and over 6,000 islands — Japan shines with a wealth of natural treasures. In our next issue, we embrace the natural wonders of the Land of the Rising Sun

Plus // Aberdeenshire, Amsterdam, Cyprus, Denver, Guatemala, Israel, Lima, Prague, Switzerland, Zambia

MAY ISSUE
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*For more information on our subscription offers,
see page 182*

IMAGE: AVL IMAGES

Sleep in the trees

Discover a woodland escape in the heart of Germany



Robins Nest is a place for those looking to get back in tune with nature. A warm and cosy feeling all round, thanks to the beautiful wooden interior.

Wake up surrounded by nothing but large trees and an oasis of serenity.

The treehouses are nestled five to seven metres up into the trees and are reached by a series of hanging walkways.

The Waldbar Restaurant offers breakfast, lunch and dinner, all made using local produce, with plenty of choice for vegetarians and vegans.



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www.robins-nest.de

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01/03/2020 #GwladGwlad

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This is a celebration. This is Wales.

St David's Day

01/03/2020 #ThisisWales

 @FoodDrinkWales

WYNNE EVANS

The Welsh tenor, broadcaster and face of GoCompare tells us about the food of his childhood growing up in West Wales, cooking with his son and discovering new producers.



Cockles remind me of my childhood. I grew up in Carmarthen and a lot of cockling took place just down the estuary in Llansteffan, where I now have a house. I used to go to the market with my dad and get a pint of cockles. He fried them up with some onions and bacon, which is how I still cook them today. Cockles are pure nostalgia for me.

Gower Salt Marsh Lamb is the best in the world. Born and bred on the salt marshes of the Gower Peninsula, salt marsh lamb is truly something special. I actually delivered two salt marsh lambs as part of a TV programme I worked on a few years ago. I was learning how to be a sheep shearer and one thing led to another and I ended up delivering two little lambs.

My grandmother made an incredible Bara Brith. One of my biggest regrets is that I don't have the recipe. She used to slice it really thinly and smother it with butter. Nothing better. Having said that I recently discovered a woman called Melanie Constantinou of 'Baked by Mel' in the Vale of Glamorgan, who makes an impressive Bara Brith right up there with my grandmother's.

Warm Welsh cakes straight off the bakestone are what dreams are made of. You'll find some of the best around at Swansea Market. I've been going there for decades to pick up ingredients from the butchers, greengrocers and fishmongers.

Legend has it that the Italians stole Parma ham from Carmarthen. Carmarthen ham is

dry salt-cured, then air-dried, and the result literally melts in your mouth! It's said that when the Romans settled in Carmarthen, they stole the recipe for Carmarthen ham and returned to Italy and called it Parma ham! Whether or not this actually happened is anyone's guess, but I will say that Carmarthen ham is better than any Parma ham I have ever had in my life.

I have a bar at home. It's always well-stocked with Welsh whisky. I can't live without Penderyn.

I love to cook with my son. He's 15 and we cook a lot together. He's brilliant and fearless when it comes to tackling recipes, like oxtail or a game pie. We like to get steak from the local butchers, or we do a big roast, or curry. We've even tackled sushi together.

My mother was half Belgian, half Welsh. So there was always a lot of Belgian influence in her cooking. We ate a lot of steak frites. And she would cook local cockles the way the Belgians would cook mussels.

I used to be away from home up to nine months a year. When I was singing internationally I was constantly on the road. I also lived in London for ten years, but I always knew I would return to Wales. The older I get the pull back west becomes stronger. The Welsh have a term for it – Hiraeth – which means a deep longing for home. It's why I bought a house where I grew up. When I am in Llansteffan, among the memories of my childhood, many of which revolve around food, among friendship and community, I feel like I am truly at peace.



CARBON COPY

LOOKING FOR WAYS TO CUT YOUR TRAVEL CARBON FOOTPRINT THIS YEAR? SET YOUR SIGHTS ON COPENHAGEN. THE DANISH CAPITAL IS ON TRACK TO BECOME THE WORLD'S FIRST CARBON-NEUTRAL CITY BY 2025 AND IS SETTING A GREEN STANDARD FOR URBAN CENTRES WORLDWIDE. WORDS: MARK STRATTON

I'm boarding a train from London for a 16-hour rail journey to a city that is, to paraphrase Greta Thunberg, 'listening to the scientists'. My Eurostar rolls out of St Pancras International on schedule at 06.40. Ahead lies a tight change in Brussels, a quick stop in Cologne and an overnight train ferry to Denmark, all covered by my Interrail Pass. I could've flown to Singapore in the time this journey will take me, but with Copenhagen on course to become the world's first carbon-neutral city by 2025, travelling there by train seems appropriate.

The Danish capital first made a commitment to go carbon-neutral in 2010 — five years before the Paris Agreement, which saw global leaders agree to combat climate change and intensify efforts towards a sustainable, low-carbon future. Going carbon-neutral means the city will produce no more carbon emissions than it can offset elsewhere; essentially, there will be no net release of carbon dioxide. The move is significant as most scientists agree there's a link between the rising CO₂ levels and Earth's rising temperatures.

What's clear is that the travel industry generates a hefty carbon footprint, not least through aviation. A 2018 study published in *Nature Climate Change* found travel accounted for 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions

between 2009 and 2013, with the number of international travellers growing at a rate of 3-5% per year. I myself possess a Sasquatch-sized carbon footprint, but I mitigate it somewhat by sticking to public transport, avoiding the energy-intensive production associated with eating meat and offsetting my air travel carbon emissions.

Yet individual action feels like a drop in an overheating ocean, so it's up to countries and cities to create a collective framework of sustainability and carbon-free options that help residents and travellers negate their carbon footprint. And Copenhagen is leading the way.

Half a decade on from the Paris Agreement, as countries and politicians across the globe renege on CO₂-reduction targets — or, in President Trump's case, withdraw from the agreement entirely — Copenhagen is making impressive strides towards carbon-neutrality. In 2017, it produced around 1.37 million tonnes of harmful climate gases, down 42% from 2005, explains Jørgen Abildgaard, the city's executive climate program director. He's confident the 2025 goal will be met.

"We've 20% to go to reach the target," he says, adding that tackling private road emissions remains Copenhagen's biggest challenge. "Many cities, like Washington, Amsterdam and

Helsinki, are following our lead — even if their targets aren't as ambitious. We can learn from others — even London," he adds, perhaps generously. "We're looking at your congestion charge to deter car journeys."

Copenhagen's own methods, however, are exemplary. Having pledged to cut down on the use of fossil fuels, the city increasingly generates renewable energy from offshore wind turbines and its largest power plant has replaced coal with wood pellets. Around 98% of the city is heated by waste heat from electricity production, 49% of all journeys are made by bike, and all diesel buses are being replaced by electric substitutes.

"But carbon-neutral isn't just about environmental targets. It's about creating healthier cities for people to live in," explains Jørgen.

And so, with a little thought and planning, I've identified four key sectors in which to lessen the carbon impact of my journey: travel, activities, accommodation and food. Taking the train from London produces far less in the way of CO₂ than flying. However, for travellers short on time, these emissions are straightforward enough to offset. Had I flown, the 0.2 tons of CO₂ my journey would have produced could have been offset at sites like myclimate.org at a cost of just £5 — a donation that would then go on to fund carbon-ameliorating projects such as reforestation in Nicaragua.





IMAGE: ALAMY

WHAT IS CARBON-NEUTRAL?

One approach to mitigating the harmful impact of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in our atmosphere is to embrace being carbon neutral. This could involve replacing CO₂-producing fossil fuels with clean green energy sources, or it could mean carbon offsetting — that is, paying to support schemes that focus on sequestering (trapping) CO₂ via the likes of reforestation. Alternatively, countries and companies can take part in carbon trading, allowing them to essentially cut their emissions by paying for the development of carbon-lowering schemes.

Cycling along the waterfront, with the Copenhagen Opera House in the distance



CALIFORNIA COAST

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San Francisco is a multifaceted city with megawatt appeal. Feast on tasty food in Chinatown, explore Golden Gate Park on two wheels, and watch sea lions frolic on Pier 39. Spend the day exploring San Francisco Bay, hopping across to Alcatraz Island for a tour of the former prison and crossing the Golden Gate Bridge.

Head over to Pismo Beach, home to some of California's most spectacular sunsets, kayak among the waves or just soak up the sun on the winding beach.

If wildlife is what you're after, visit the seaside town of Monterey, which is home to seals, pelicans and otters. From there, Santa Cruz is an easy day trip for those who fancy trying their hand at surfing.

If you prefer the finer things in life, soak up the genteel atmosphere in well-heeled Santa

Barbara. The city is known for its fine wines, excellent food and incredible weather. Be sure to check out the Old Mission Santa Barbara, an 1820s church that's been turned into a museum.

Finally, roam the streets of Los Angeles, home of movie stars, a diverse creative arts industry and the iconic Hollywood sign. The city's food scene is world renowned, with some of the best offerings in neighbourhoods such as Chinatown and Koreatown. Head out on a tour of Hollywood, catching glimpses of the homes of celebrities past and present, and checking out the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Flight Centre's California Coast itinerary will enable you to experience all of these wondrous attractions and many others. Their expert travel consultants will accommodate any needs to tailor-make the perfect California trip.

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Monterey: Relax at this seaside town and meet its adorable resident seals, pelicans and otters.

DAY 4

Pismo Beach: Admire the sunset from the pier, try sea kayaking or explore the local museums and galleries.

DAY 5

Santa Barbara: Indulge in the region's fine wines, beautiful sunshine and fresh local produce.

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Tivoli Gardens, the world's second-oldest funfair, which is implementing new sustainability measures

CARBON-FREE MOVEMENT

AMAGER-BAKKE

As well as being one of the world's most efficient waste-to-energy power plants, its rooftop offers a ski-slope with hiking trail and climbing wall. copenhill.dk

DISTRICT ENERGY COOLING GRID

Linking homes and businesses, this setup involves naturally chilled seawater being pumped through pipes, reducing the carbon dioxide that would be produced by air-con. hofor.dk

MUNICIPAL WIND FARMS

Middelgrunden wind cooperative, which numbers 20 offshore turbines, lies just outside Copenhagen at Øresund. middelgrunden.dk

ENERGYLAB NORDHAVN

The ambitious Nordhavn development will house new businesses and over 40,000 residents in a carbon-zero district. energylabnordhavn.com

Green on the ground

In Copenhagen, I travel everywhere by bicycle, finding myself amid pelotons of suited businesspeople and parents taking children to school. Here, cycle lanes are safe, segregated from the road by a curb, and green-wave traffic lights allow a faster flow of cyclists. The city's cycle network is the envy of the world.

"Copenhageners own 6.6 times more bikes than cars," says Josefine Wulffeld, a climate change student who leads GreenBikeTours of Copenhagen's carbon-reducing highlights; the three-hour cycling trip is saving me 1.1kg of CO₂ compared to a bus tour.

After admiring uber-stylish cycle bridges and roof gardens designed to insulate homes and sequester carbon, we visit Tivoli Gardens, constructed in 1843. The world's second-oldest funfair is doing its bit to promote sustainability, with measures including replacing 85,000 lightbulbs with LED alternatives and charging visitors extra for reusable drinking cups, a move that has saved 10 tons of waste per year.

The next day, I avoid adding a further 2.4kg to my carbon

footprint by cruising Copenhagen's Venetian-like canals via a solar-powered electric GoBoat vessel rather than a conventional-engine boat. Chugging along at three knots per hour, it's a sedate way to explore the city's handsome mercantile architecture.

"We're not 100% carbon-neutral as this would require big investment and we're a start-up," says GoBoat co-founder Kasper Eich-Romme. "But our boats are usually packed with the maximum eight people, whereas conventional canal tours run CO₂-costly boats that could fit 100-plus people, sometimes with only 5-10 people on board."

Finding hotels that are tackling carbon use is becoming ever easier, too, particularly in Copenhagen, where 70% are eco-certified. Hotel Kong Arthur, a stately dame facing Copenhagen's lakes, is among those leading the charge. It has been carbon-neutral since 2007 and employs simple, subtle touches to help guests play their part: low-pressure showers encourage minimal water wastage, and there's no air-con installed — instead, rooms are cooled simply by opening the windows.

Design for life

I'm transfixed by the aesthetics and trail-blazing brilliance of Copenhagen's efforts — and particularly taken with the Amager-Bakke waste-to-energy plant, dazzling like an aluminium-finished wedge of cheese on the city's outskirts. Its sloped roof doubles as a year-round artificial ski slope, hiking trail and climbing wall and, from the summit, there are panoramic views over the city and towards the colossal Øresund Bridge, which connects Copenhagen to Malmö.

Danish architect Bjarke Ingels, whose Bjarke Ingels Group designed Amager Bakke, describes it as "hedonistic sustainability". He tells me that around 600,000 Danes would drive overseas to ski each winter, but having this facility on their doorstep lowers the carbon footprint of those journeys.

"Normally, power stations are marginalised, but Amager-Bakke is part of our social life," he adds. "Denmark has no mountains — but we do have mountains of trash."

As well as functioning as a recreational facility, Amager-Bakke is a state-of-the-art incinerator, burning non-recyclable waste from homes

Amager Bakke energy plant on the outskirts of Copenhagen



DO THE MATHS: CALCULATING YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

Calculating a carbon-footprint isn't straightforward. There are multiple apps available for calculating personal carbon use, but I couldn't find one covering all aspects of my journey. Theoretically, staying at a carbon-neutral hotel meant my footprint was minimal. I ate at organic restaurants and only had vegan dishes. According to Greeneatz.com, a vegan diet has the lowest carbon footprint; it suggests your 'foodprint' could be slashed by a quarter by cutting out red meat. I cycled everywhere, so the only carbon used was in manufacturing the bike. Travelling by train was also a huge saving. The comparison with flying can be easily calculated at sites like Carbonfootprint.com. I can't definitively say my trip was carbon-neutral, but it would have been close.

and businesses. In 2018, more than 400,00 tons of waste passed through the facility, producing enough electricity to power 30,000 homes.

The building is located on the island of Refshaleøen, an industrial wasteland now transformed into Copenhagen's hippest neighbourhood. The shrill winds of the North Sea cut through the former ship-building yard as I meet Refshaleøen's communications manager, Kasper Hyllested. As he shows me around, he tells me the island's ethos is sustainable innovation based around reuse. It's evident all around: in the student accommodation fashioned from old shipping containers; in Broaden & Build brewery, where food waste flavours artisan beers; and in the fact that all of Refshaleøen's 200 businesses are startups.

"It's a creative hub for artists and architects — edgy and world-class in creative output," Kasper says. "It's now one of Copenhagen's most sustainable and greenest districts."

Refshaleøen attracts foodies from across the globe to world-class restaurants, including the acclaimed Noma. Food is, of

course, integral to the carbon-neutral equation, with locally sourced, organic and meat-free diets having the potential to help reduce road transportation carbon emissions, minimise the use of artificial fertilisers and lessen the heavy toll on land caused by animal agriculture. Here, it's easy to eat your way to a better planet, with many of the city's best restaurants entirely vegan or totally organic — not considered a luxury, but the norm.

At Refshaleøen's Reffen street food market, I wander between outlets housed in repurposed shipping containers, sampling Japanese sushi and vegan tacos. It's inexpensive: plates go for 85-90DKr (£10). The brainchild of restaurateur Jesper Møller, Reffen encourages new talent; startups pay nothing for the first month, then a percentage thereafter. It's also working towards a zero-waste output, with a composting machine transforming all food leftovers, biodegradable plates and cutlery into organic waste compost.

Nearby Amass restaurant, launched by former Noma head chef, Matt Orlando, is set in a

formerly derelict warehouse and offers an eight-course tasting menu for around 695DKr (£80). Its radical dishes incorporate ingredients that would otherwise have gone to waste: the miso, for instance, features lemon peel, while the chocolate mousse uses grains from the restaurant's own stout beer.

"Our mission is to prove to the industry you can operate at a very high level without compromising quality," says Matt. "In fact, you can greatly enhance your guests experience, both physically and morally."

On my last morning before the return rail journey home, I cycle to Nordhavn to meet Jørgen again. Northern Europe's largest metropolitan development, this new residential and commercial district is set to be 100% powered by green energy when its completed in 2050.

"Cities produce 70% of global carbon emissions, but Copenhagen is showing transformation is possible," Jørgen tells me. "Global trends show people are moving to cities — and if investment isn't made towards sustainability, we can forget everything about solving climate change." ▢

MORE INFO

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visitcopenhagen.com
 Interrail Pass (from €185/£155)
interrail.eu
 Hotel Kong Arthur
arthurhotels.dk
 Amass amassrestaurant.com
 Reffen food court reffen.dk
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Not only did I win a trip to Thailand in the National Geographic Traveller Travel Writing Competition, but doors also opened for me in the travel writing world. Since winning the competition, I've had pieces published by Bradt Travel Guides and *The Guardian*, and I spoke at Destinations: The Holiday & Travel Show in Manchester and London as part of the Stanfords Travel Writers Festival. The competition paved the way for all that. **Dom Tulett, 2018 winner**

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Entries close at 23:59 on 31 May 2020. Terms and conditions apply.
See more and enter online at nationalgeographic.co.uk/competitions



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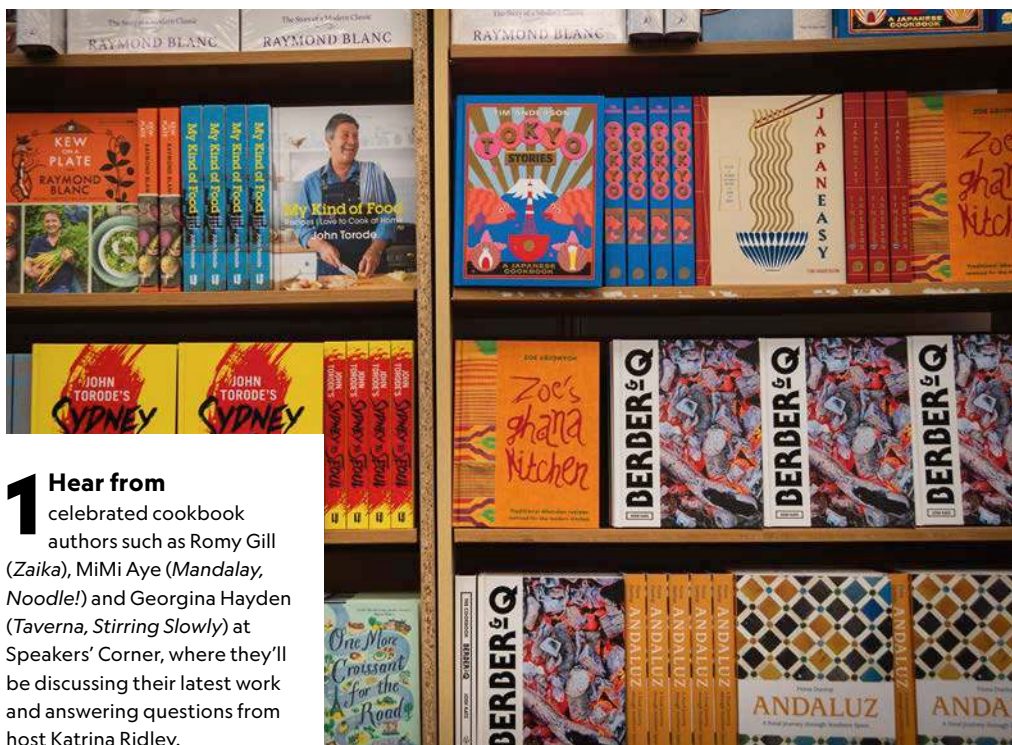
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Here are just some of the highlights you'll be able to see — and taste — at the festival

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1 Hear from celebrated cookbook authors such as Romy Gill (*Zaika*), MiMi Aye (*Mandalay, Noodle!*) and Georgina Hayden (*Taverna, Stirring Slowly*) at Speakers' Corner, where they'll be discussing their latest work and answering questions from host Katrina Ridley.

2 Be inspired to plan your next trip as by meeting some of our exhibitors. From Grenada to Guatemala, England to Italy and Georgia to Montenegro, you'll find plenty of motivation to plot your next adventure and sample food and drink from around the globe.

5 Learn how to make some of the world's most exciting dishes at our masterclass venues, the Tarragon and Cinnamon Theatres. Discover top tips and tricks from professionals and come away inspired to make your own versions at home.

3 Get involved in the experience area: take part in food and drink workshops and make the most of the chance to learn new culinary skills. Book sessions with experts in the field to find out all about the latest food trends and techniques.

6 Take part in a fully immersive Welsh food experience inside an interactive dome, showcasing delicious local products and the stories behind them. Go on a journey through Wales, with 360-degree technology that stimulates all the senses.

4 Head to the Main Stage to tour the globe with top food personalities. The lineup includes a taste of Spain with José Pizarro; Fuchsia Dunlop's Chinese cuisine; India with Asma Khan; Vanessa Bolosier's Caribbean classics; and Claude Bosi's classic French fare.

7 Discover drinks from around the world, from sophisticated gins to the latest grown-up soft drinks. Refresh yourself with the festival's very own cocktail, taste a range of artisanal liqueurs, try a non-alcoholic spritzer or join a wine-tasting session.

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 NATIONAL
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I TRAVEL GEEKS

12

MARCH

NATURAL JAPAN

A country of islands, mountains and diverse climates, Japan offers a wealth of natural wonders. Join us as we discuss where to go and how to do it

Japan's heady juxtaposition of high-tech metropolises and natural wonders makes it one of the world's top travel destinations. The current exhibition at London's Japan House, **WOW: City Lights and Woodland Shade**, explores the striking contrasts of the nation's futuristic cityscapes against the quiet beauty of its landscapes. On Tuesday 12 March, join our event at Japan House as we discuss the incredible spots to visit in Japan, from the best natural parks in Tokyo to the spectacular misty lakes of Tohoku.

The panel will include **NATSUKI KIKUYA**, director of the Museum of Sake, an intangible museum that provides education and promotion on the craft of sake. Natsuki works to connect Japan to the UK and mainland Europe through a range of special events and courses, and has been selected a 'Sake Samurai' by the Japanese government. **SIMON WRIGHT**, director of programming at Japan House, and **MATTHEW JOSLIN**, from

the Japan National Tourism Organization will also be on the panel, along with award-winning travel writer **OLIVER SMITH**, who frequently writes about Japan.

Come along for top tips, technical know-how, photo ideas — and a glass of something cheery. Our series of informal chats are tailored to fit in with your busy lives. Travel Geeks is just an hour long and gives you the chance to hear from our experts, have a drink and join in the lively debate. Tickets to our Travel Geeks event at Japan House also include an exclusive after-hours private viewing of the **WOW: City Lights and Woodland Shade** exhibition.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



JAPAN HOUSE

LONDON
WHEN: Thursday

12 March, 18.00-20.30

WHERE: Japan House,
101-111 Kensington High Street,
London W8 5SA**TICKETS:** £10 — includes drinks
and nibbles, plus an exclusive
private viewing of the **WOW:
City Lights and Woodland
Shade** exhibition.FOR MORE INFO & TICKETS, HEAD TO [NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK/EVENTS](https://nationalgeographic.co.uk/events)



THE SYNTOPIA

Slow down into the island pace of life at The Syntopia

A top hotel offers a whole lot more than just a place to rest your head at night, which is why The Syntopia has turned so many heads since it opened earlier this year. Located on the north coast of Crete close to the city of Rethymno, the adult-only property channels bohemian vibes in its decor and as such, relaxation is the order of the day. There are two pools ready for a leisurely dip, as well as fresh buffets and street food-style snacks in the restaurant. After getting your fill, you can find your zen in the wellness centre with indulgent spa treatments. Come the evenings, there's an array of events to enjoy, from live concerts and wine-tasting sessions, to an open-air cinema showing classic films underneath the Cretan sky. However you decide to spend your stay here, you won't fail to be won over by The Syntopia's luxurious and contemporary charm.

thesyntopiahotel.gr

FODELE BEACH

Wet and wild thrills meet laid-back relaxation at Fodele Beach

They may be the polar opposite of holidays, but if you want to be able to choose between a pampering or enjoying an activity-packed itinerary, check yourself into Crete's Fodele Beach & Water Park Resort. Just 25km west of Heraklion Airport, the site is carved into the cliffside overlooking the Sea of Crete. Those who prefer a horizontal holiday can relax with a full-body massage or spa treatment, or simply chill with a cocktail in hand on the Balinese beach beds. More energetic guests can take advantage of the slides, rides and 950m² of dazzling pools, or strut their stuff on the basketball and tennis courts. Add in a collection of restaurants that take inspiration from the world's culinary capitals and you've got a resort to write home about.

fodelebeach.gr



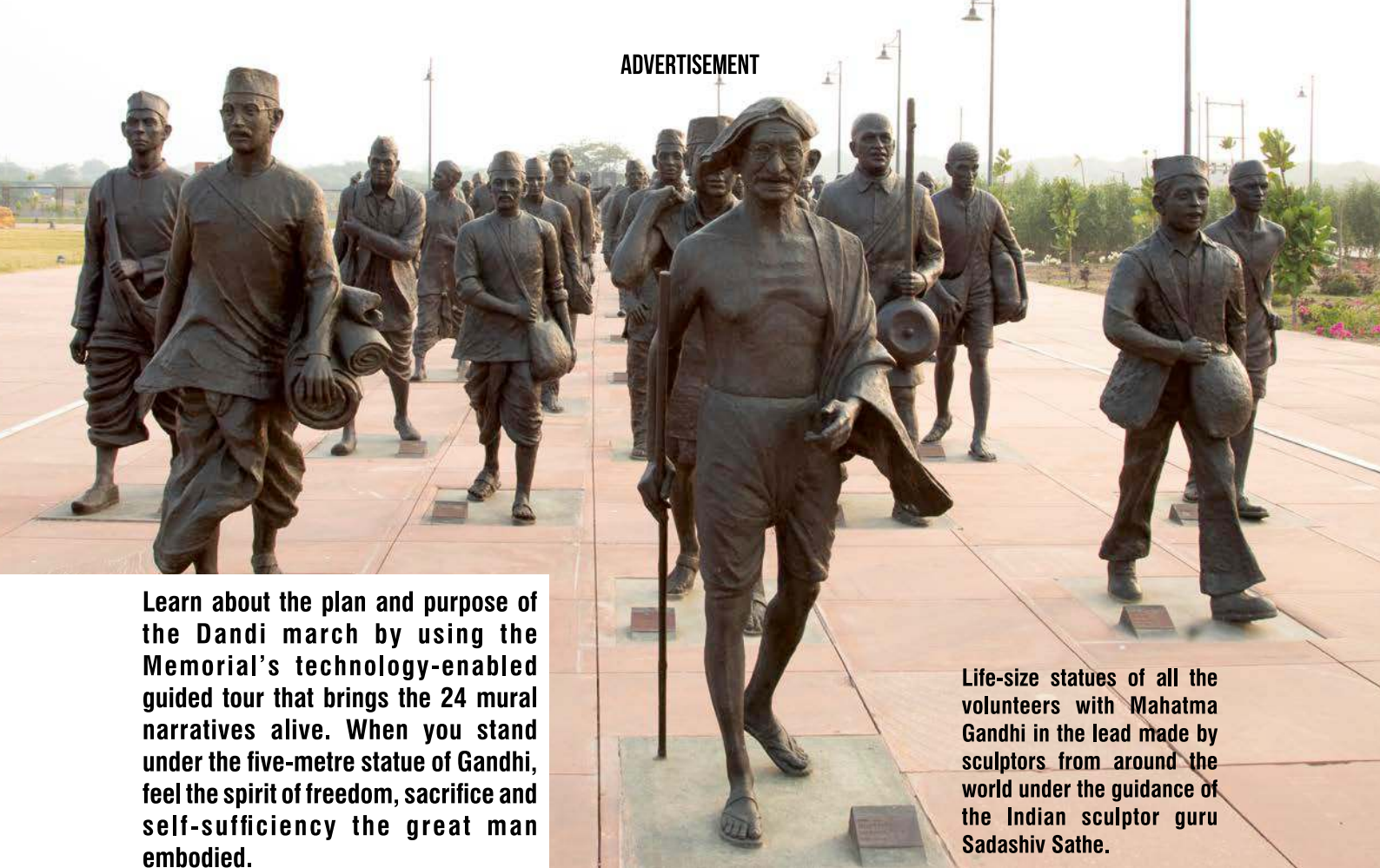
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A GREAT MARCH FOR FREEDOM NOW RECREATED FOR YOU TO SEE AND EXPERIENCE



“Next to air and water, salt is perhaps the greatest necessity of life,” said Mahatma Gandhi, in reference to the Salt Tax imposed by British rulers on India. Millions of common people in India were unable to access this primary necessity because of the exorbitant tax. In 1930, Gandhi decided to revolt against the authoritarian tactics.

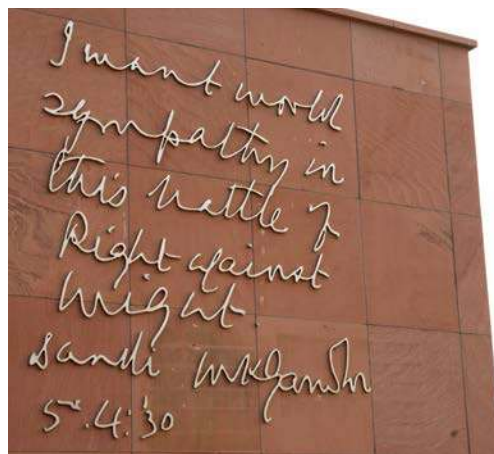




Learn about the plan and purpose of the Dandi march by using the Memorial's technology-enabled guided tour that brings the 24 mural narratives alive. When you stand under the five-metre statue of Gandhi, feel the spirit of freedom, sacrifice and self-sufficiency the great man embodied.

Life-size statues of all the volunteers with Mahatma Gandhi in the lead made by sculptors from around the world under the guidance of the Indian sculptor guru Sadashiv Sathe.

National Salt Satyagraha Memorial, Dandi, Gujarat, India



Gandhi conceptualised a march from his ashram at Sabarmati in Ahmedabad to Dandi, 241 miles away on the coast, where he intended to make salt and break the Salt Law. 80 volunteers accompanied Gandhi in this arduous trek over 25 days including two rest days. The epoch-making march ended at Dandi by achieving its goal, with its reverberations shaking the foundations of colonial rule in India. This glorious chapter in the history of India's freedom struggle is recreated experientially at the National Salt Satyagraha Memorial (NSSM) at Dandi. Every year, many people undertake the march to Dandi through the same path that Gandhi and his volunteers took, trying to retrace the pivotal movement. They walk through the same towns, stopping at the night at the same places that Gandhi chose and reach Dandi to symbolically make salt on the coast.

Others can simply drive to NSSM at Dandi to experience an immersive recreation of this historic march. The memorial is designed to give visitors an up-close-and-personal view of what happened around nine decades ago. The life-size statues of all the volunteers, with Gandhi in the lead, evoke unexpected insights of the long march. The statues were made by sculptors from around the world under the guidance of the Indian sculptor guru Sadashiv Sathe. You can also make a pinch of salt as a souvenir using specially made modern salt pans to memorialise the historic moment. Learn about the plan and purpose of the Dandi march by using the Memorial's technology-enabled guided tour that brings the 24 mural narratives alive. When you stand under the five-metre statue of Gandhi, feel the spirit of freedom, sacrifice and self-sufficiency the great man embodied. Nowhere else can you touch the heart of India's famed freedom struggle as if you were actually there when it all happened.



www.gujarattourism.com

National Salt Satyagraha Memorial,
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IMAGE: GETTY



★ STAR LETTER

Kindred spirits

I read Ingrid Persaud's article on Trinidad (Author series, March 2020), and so similar were her experiences to my family's that I felt compelled to write in. Like the author, my mother grew up in the town of San Fernando and emigrated at 18 to embark on a new life. I was astounded further to read that her ancestors were indentured Indians from the state of Uttar Pradesh, again just like my mother's family. I'll be travelling solo to India next month to fulfil a lifelong dream of tracing the roots of my great grandparents. Ingrid's descriptions of mangoes and spicy doubles from street-side vendors and flocks of scarlet ibis at dusk so beautifully resonated with my own memories of this special island. **LYDIA EALES**

Beasts of the East

The Sri Lanka feature (March 2020) was an illuminating read on a country I didn't know a huge amount about. As it followed locals' efforts to protect and manage the island's beguiling and beautiful elephants, I got to know more about the character of Sri Lanka and the role these beasts play there. And, to read about the complex, ever-changing relationship between man and beast was eye-opening. Perhaps it's time to book a trip and discover it for myself.

KEITH MACDONALD

A capital idea

Barcelona often steals the show with its beaches, architecture and balmy climes, but for me, Madrid is the Spanish city I keep going back to. Whether in summer or winter, it's always got such a fun, buzzing energy and spirit about it that's so unique and defiantly Spanish. So, it was with real joy I read Connor McGovern's feature on the city's nightlife (March 2020). It was packed full of ideas, anecdotes and beautiful, colourful images that really reflected that vibrant spirit. After dark is when the city really comes into its own, as people flood the many bars and cafes. There's so much choice when it comes to eating and drinking, but a personal recommendation of mine is Lamucca de Pez — their *croquetas* are delicious!

LARA HEATON



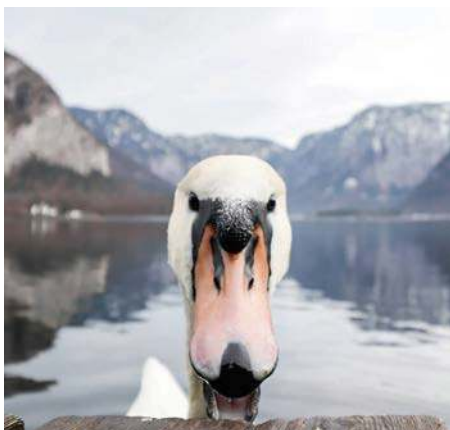
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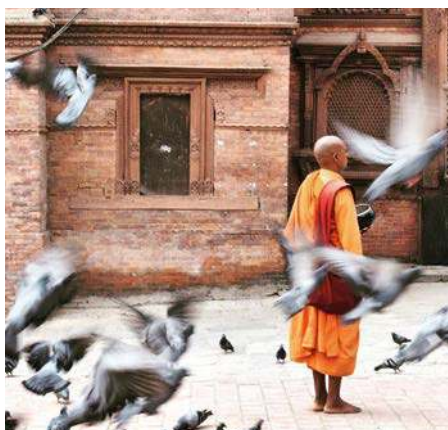
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