

**WORLD'S BEST
CRUISES**



TRAVELER

EPIC JOURNEYS

**19 TRIPS TO
Change
Your Life**

Get Going Now!

CRUISE ARCTIC NORWAY

HIKE IN PATAGONIA

DISCOVER BRITTANY

EXPLORE MACHU PICCHU

Points *for* Curiosity

Earn 80,000 Bonus Points

after you spend \$3,000 in the first 3 months of account opening.

- 5X points at Marriott Rewards® and SPG® participating hotels
- 2X points for every \$1 spent on airline tickets purchased directly with the airline, car rentals and dining
- 1 Free Night Stay every year after your account anniversary



MarriottPremier.com

Accounts subject to credit approval. Restrictions and limitations apply. Marriott Rewards Premier credit cards are issued by Chase Bank USA, N.A. Offer subject to change. See MarriottPremier.com for pricing and rewards details. Marriott Rewards points needed for a standard reward free night range from 7,500 points for Category 1 hotels to 45,000 points for Category 9 hotels. Refer to MarriottRewards.com for all reward redemption values. © 2017 JPMorgan Chase & Co. All rights reserved.

EDITOR'S NOTE BY GEORGE!



Travel fuels curiosity. In this issue illustrator Christoph Niemann brings his imagination on a trip to the Arctic.

Epic journeys begin with a single step. In this issue we're celebrating the power of travel to inspire, inform, and transform us all, whether we're taking a small stride into the lavender fields of Provence or a giant leap to the glaciers and peaks of Torres del Paine in Chile's Patagonia. Adventure is all around us, and sometimes all it takes to appreciate it is the pluck to explore a new path and the daring to dream of faraway places. With this issue we're excited to launch **ARTISTS ON EXPEDITION**, a series of creative narratives that reveal how our geographic journeys are also odysseys of the imagination. In our debut edition, illustrator Christoph Niemann heads to Norway's Svalbard Islands, sketchbook in hand, to create a travelogue that captures the beauty and wonder of the Arctic Ocean. Another epic journey, this one south of the Equator, is featured on our cover. Machu Picchu rises high in the Peruvian Andes in an image shot by Michael Melford while on a National Geographic Expeditions trip. Our history with the Inca citadel dates back more than a century; the National Geographic Society funded Hiram Bingham's explorations of the 15th-century complex and first published images of his discoveries in 1913. The storied city continues to captivate travelers today.

Now we'd love to hear from you. Tell us what you'd like to see in *Traveler* and which destinations appeal to you most by emailing natgeotravel@natgeo.com. And don't forget to dream of epic journeys! —George W. Stone, Editor in Chief

Nat Geo Highlights

ALL ABOUT EINSTEIN

Directed by Ron Howard, the first season of *Genius* tracks the brainy path of Albert Einstein on his way to discovering the theory of relativity. The Nat Geo show debuts April 25.

LITERARY TRAVELS

Let Mark Twain, Jane Austen, and Jack Kerouac be your guides. Nat Geo's second edition of *Novel Destinations*, out in May, will have you booking it to more than 500 literary sites, from Kafka's museum in Prague to Hemingway's home in Key West. Buy a copy at shopnatgeo.com.

100 BEST DESTINATIONS

Explore Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way in the spring, Botswana's Okavango Delta in the summer, China's panda sanctuaries in the fall, and Quebec's carnivals in the winter in our vibrant new newsstand publication *100 Best Destinations*, an amazing journey around the world in four seasons.

SUBSCRIBE NOW

Our goal is to inspire our readers to explore the world. For ideas about where to go next, subscribe to *National Geographic Traveler* at natgeotravel.com.

WHAT TRIP HAS CHANGED YOUR LIFE?

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

TRAVEL WITH PASSION AND PURPOSE

EDITOR IN CHIEF, TRAVEL MEDIA
George W. Stone

PUBLISHER & VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL MEDIA
Kimberly Connagham

DIGITAL DIRECTOR Andrea Leitch
DESIGN DIRECTOR Marianne Seregi
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY **Anne Farrar**
EDITORIAL PROJECTS DIRECTOR Andrew Nelson
SENIOR EDITOR Jayne Wise
FEATURES EDITOR Amy Alipio
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Hannah Sheinberg
EDITOR/PRODUCER Christine Blau
PRODUCERS Marie McGrory, Lindsay Smith
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER Caity Garvey
EDITOR, ADVENTURE Mary Anne Potts
DEPUTY ART DIRECTOR Leigh V. Borghesani
SENIOR PHOTO PRODUCER Sarah Polger
ASSOCIATE PHOTO PRODUCERS Jeff Heimsath, Jess Mandia
ASSOCIATE PHOTO EDITOR Laura Emmons
CHIEF RESEARCHER **Marilyn Terrell**
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Kathie Gartrell
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT Alexandra E. Petri
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT Gulnaz Khan
COPY EDITORS Preeti Aroon, Cindy Leitner, Mary Beth Oelkers-Keegan, Ann Marie Pelish
EDITORS AT LARGE AND TRAVEL ADVISORY BOARD Costas Christ, Annie Fitzsimmons, Don George, Andrew McCarthy, Norie Quintos, Robert Reid

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Heather Greenwood Davis, Maryellen Kennedy Duckett, Katie Knorovsky, Margaret Loftus
CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS Aaron Huey, Catherine Karnow, Jim Richardson, Susan Seubert
CONTRIBUTING PHOTO EDITOR **Hope Brimelow**

PRODUCTION & MANUFACTURING
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT Phillip L. Schlosser
DIRECTOR Gregory Storer
ADVERTISING PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Kristin Semeniuk
ADVERTISING PRODUCTION SPECIALIST Julie A. Ibinson
IMAGING TECHNICIAN Andrew Jaacks
MARKET RESEARCH MANAGER Tracy Hamilton Stone

COMMUNICATIONS
VICE PRESIDENT **Heather Wyatt**
Heather.Wyatt@natgeo.com; 212-822-7093
DIRECTOR Meg Calnan
Meg.Calnan@natgeo.com; 202-912-6703

ADVERTISING NORTH AMERICA SALES OFFICES
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL MEDIA John Campbell
11211 Sixth Ave., 20th Fl., New York, N.Y. 10036;
212-822-7432; **EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CLIENT SOLUTIONS & CUSTOM STUDIO** Claudia Malley

NATIONAL BRAND MANAGERS
Tammy Abraham *Tammy.Abraham@natgeo.com*; Robert Amberg *Robert.Amberg@natgeo.com*; **Hilary Halstead** *Hilary.Halstead@natgeo.com* **NEW YORK BRAND MANAGERS**
Danny Bellish *Danny.Bellish@natgeo.com*; Danielle Nagy *Danielle.Nagy@natgeo.com* **TRAVEL DIRECTORY**
Alex Sobrino *Alex.Sobrino@natgeo.com* **SOUTHEAST CARIBBEAN BRAND MANAGER** Maria Coyne *mecoyne@mecoyneinc.com* **MIDWEST BRAND MANAGER** Bill Graff *Bill.Graff@natgeo.com* **DETROIT BRAND MANAGER** Karen Sarris *Karen.Sarris@natgeo.com* **ROCKY MOUNTAIN STATES** Scribner Media Services, Tanya Scribner *tanya@scribmedia.com* **WEST COAST BRAND MANAGER** Eric Josten *Eric.Josten@natgeo.com* **HAWAII DESTINATION MARKETING** Debbie Anderson *debbieanderson@dmhawaii.com*
CANADA PUBLICITAS APR
Françoise Chalifour *francoise.chalifour@publicitas.com*
MEXICO & CENTRAL AMERICA Adelina Carpenter *acarpent@prodigy.net.mx*

MAGAZINE PUBLISHING ADMINISTRATION
1145 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-4688

BUSINESS & FINANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHING
VICE PRESIDENT Margaret Schmidt

SENIOR BUDGET MANAGER Jeannette Swain
BUSINESS SPECIALIST Allison Bradshaw
RIGHTS CLEARANCE SPECIALIST **Brad Engborg**

ADVERTISING RESEARCH DIRECTOR Carrie Campbell
CONTRACTS MANAGER JoAnne Schultz

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, CONSUMER & MEMBER MARKETING
Elizabeth M. Safford
VICE PRESIDENT, RETAIL SALES John MacKethan
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR Mark Viola
DIRECTOR, MARKETING & EVENTS **Pandora Todd**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL MEDIA
Yulia P. Boyle
DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE PUBLISHING
Ariel Deiaco-Lohr

HEADQUARTERS

1145 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036-4688
Offices in Washington, D.C. • Mexico City • Amsterdam • Barcelona • Budapest • Hamburg • London • Milan
Paris • Bucharest • Moscow • Warsaw • Tel Aviv • Beijing • Jakarta • Mumbai • Sydney

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Published six times a year. U.S., \$19.95 a year; Canada, \$24.95 (U.S. funds); elsewhere, \$32.95 (U.S. funds).
For subscription questions, visit www.ngtservice.com or call 1-800-NGS-LINE (647-5463).
To subscribe online, visit www.nationalgeographic.com.

SUBMISSIONS

Submissions of photographs, articles, or other materials are done at the risk of the sender;
Traveler cannot accept liability for loss or damage.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

PRESIDENT AND CEO Gary E. Knell **BOARD OF TRUSTEES CHAIRMAN** Jean N. Case **VICE CHAIRMAN** Tracy R. Wolstencroft
EXPLORERS-IN-RESIDENCE Robert Ballard, Lee R. Berger, James Cameron, Sylvia Earle, J. Michael Fay,
Beverly Joubert, Dereck Joubert, Louise Leakey, Meave Leakey, Enric Sala

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS

CEO Declan Moore **EDITORIAL DIRECTOR** Susan Goldberg
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER Marcela Martin **CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER** Laura Nichols
CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER Jill Cress **STRATEGIC PLANNING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT** Whit Higgins
CONSUMER PRODUCTS AND EXPERIENCES Rosa Zeegers **DIGITAL PRODUCT** Rachel Webber
GLOBAL NETWORKS CEO Courtney Monroe **LEGAL AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS** Jeff Schneider
BOARD OF DIRECTORS CHAIRMAN Gary E. Knell

Living in Kenya for six months with three amazing families whetted my appetite for exploring different cultures.
—H.H.

I spent a month in Finland, learning about the Suomi people, seeing reindeer, and jumping into a hole cut in an iced-over lake after a Finnish sauna.
—B.E.

There's nothing like witnessing the majesty of the annual humpback whale migration in Maui.
—P.T.

What trip changed your life? Tweet us at #NatGeoTravelChat

Touching my first glacier at Glacier National Park, in Montana, launched my passion for climbing.
—A.F.

Hanging by my fingertips on a ledge in Grindelwald, Switzerland, taught me the importance of hiking with a buddy.
—M.T.

My friend and I drove all around New Zealand in a yellow VW bus.
—H.B.

I backpacked through Europe for three months after I graduated from college. I came home with an insatiable desire for more travel—and with a mountain of credit card debt!
—H.W.



TRAVELTEXAS.COM > THINGS TO DO > OUTDOOR



SEE WHERE
THE WEST
IS STILL
PLENTY
Wild



THE TEXAS GREAT OUTDOORS
EXPLORE IT AND OTHER WONDERS
AT TRAVELTEXAS.COM/OUTDOOR



It's like a
WHOLE OTHER COUNTRY

CONTENTS

APRIL/MAY

VOLUME 34, NUMBER 2

In This Issue

NORTH

In the debut of our new Artists on Expedition series, illustrator Christoph Niemann takes his sketchbook on a cruise to Svalbard, Norway. p. 42

WORTH EVERY STEP

From Peru's Huayna Picchu to Tibet's Potala Palace, we spotlight 15 iconic treks to take in stride. p. 55

ENDS OF THE EARTH

Venture to Chile's Patagonia, where shimmering glacial lakes and jagged peaks seem out of this world. p. 60

FINDING LAND'S END

Take a trip back in time to Brittany, in westernmost France, where age-old traditions are celebrated. p. 68

HAPPILY EVER ASHEVILLE

Artisans mesh with Appalachian heritage in North Carolina's creative cultural hub of Asheville. p. 80

Follow Us

@NATGEOTRAVEL

Take a daily journey around the world through our social media platforms.



Provence, France, is one of the walkable sites featured in Worth Every Step (page 55).

COVER: PERU'S MACHU PICCHU, PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHAEL Melford

ALBERT DROS

OUR BEER BEGINS BENEATH WINTER'S BLANKET
THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS TO GOOSE IPA



Even while the hop fields lie dormant, we're preparing for the next crop that will become Goose IPA. Our brewers and the farmers at Elk Mountain Farm in Northern Idaho work together to carefully plan the planting of an entire year's worth of great hops that make great IPA.



FURTHER

MOUNT KILIMANJARO • KAUAI ROAD TRIP • BANGKOK • SLOVENIA • BASEBALL STADIUMS • SYDNEY • BEST CRUISES

Conquering the Currents

PHOTOGRAPH BY
KARIM ILIYA

Look closely and you can make out two brave kayakers pausing in the wild rapids of Washington's Little White Salmon River. To capture the paddlers, towering treetops, and raging waters in one image, National Geographic Your Shot member Iliya used a drone. His photo, shot at twilight, showcases the power of nature in the Pacific Northwest from a lofty perspective.

NATGEOTRAVEL.COM





TOP 10 *Arkansas Adventures*

Looking for family fun? One-of-a-kind art and culture? Wilderness inspiration? Take your pick! Arkansas lets you plan a great getaway with something to excite everyone. Mix and match these top experiences to build your own amazing trip to The Natural State.

1 HIT THE TRAIL

Everything from leisurely loop trails to challenging wilderness treks await on the Ouachita National Recreation Trail, in Petit Jean State Park, and at Upper Buffalo Wilderness Area.

2 DISCOVER THE PAST

Travel through history on the Arkansas Heritage Trails: Butterfield, Civil War, Southwest, and Trail of Tears. You can access all four of these driving routes in Little Rock where you can also visit the Clinton Presidential Center and Little Rock Central High School—pivotal in public school integration.

3 WATCH FOR WILDLIFE

Vast natural areas are home to more than 300 bird and 70 mammal species. Spot black bears and bald eagles at Cane Creek and Lake Chicot state parks, find elk in Boxley Valley, and see rescued big cats at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge.

4 FIND YOUR PERFECT PARK

Sample 52 state parks and seven national parks to fish, camp, rock climb, golf, horseback ride, dig for diamonds, and soak in thermal waters.

5 EXPERIENCE ART AND CULTURE

See craft artisans at Ozark Folk Center State Park and visit world-class Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, set on 120 forested acres that include Frank Lloyd Wright's Bachman-Wilson House.

6 JUST ADD WATER

More than 600,000 acres of lakes, 9,700 miles of streams, and 300 miles of Arkansas River brim with places to float, fish, paddle, raft, kayak, paddleboard, ski boat, barge, and canoe.

7 RIDE A BIKE

Pedal Big Dam Bridge, North America's longest bridge built specifically for bikers and walkers. Mountain bike Slaughter Pen trail system, take tamer routes in Delta Heritage Trail State Park, and cross the nation's longest cycling bridge at Big River Crossing.

8 CELEBRATE THE SOUNDS

Tap your toes to bluegrass, blues, gospel, and country at down-home venues across the state, visit the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, and take in the Johnny Cash Heritage Festival.

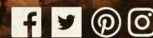
9 GO UNDERGROUND

Limestone caves, underground lakes, and surreal rock formations abound underground. Follow paved trails (some perfect for strollers and wheelchairs) or wild cave. Go below at Blanchard Springs Caverns, Cosmic Cavern, Mystic Caverns, and Crystal Dome.

10 TAKE A SCENIC DRIVE

Grab your camera and set your GPS for the Great River Road, Crowley's Ridge Parkway National Scenic Byway, Scenic 7 Byway, and Talimena Scenic Drive.

Get details and tips to plan your trip at arkansas.com



ADVENTURES

Naturally Made



WHETHER YOU PREFER TO EXPERIENCE WORLD-CLASS ART, IMMERSE YOURSELF IN HISTORY OR EXPLORE AN ARRAY OF OUTDOOR ESCAPES, THE NATURAL STATE DELIVERS. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WHAT ARKANSAS HAS TO OFFER AND TO START PLANNING YOUR ADVENTURE, VISIT ARKANSAS.COM. WHAT WILL YOU MAKE IN ARKANSAS?



ARKANSAS.COM

EXPLORER'S GUIDE

MOUNT KILIMANJARO

Climb Like an Expert

In 2015 Nat Geo Emerging Explorer Wasfia Nazreen finished a four-year quest to climb the Seven Summits, the highest peaks on each continent. Mount Kilimanjaro, in Tanzania, is one of the more accessible summits, as it doesn't require technical skills or training. Try these tips for a successful Kilimanjaro hike.

—Alexandra E. Petri

1

Photo Ready

Cold weather means a frozen phone battery. Pack a small camera that can handle frigid temps (and warm a backup battery in an interior pocket) so you don't miss any Instagram-worthy sunrises.

2

Must-Haves

Trekking poles will help support your weight, and they're essential for descending from the summit without slipping and sliding all the way down. Also, use water purification tablets to stay hydrated with fresh water along the way.

3

Get Some Air

Sleeping with your tent slightly unzipped, in both the front and back, allows for good cross-ventilation, which keeps your body's oxygen levels up and helps you feel better when you awake.

4

Pace Yourself

Keep in mind the phrase “*pole, pole,*” the mountain mantra for “slowly, slowly” in Swahili. “The summit will always be there, but your life may not,” Nazreen says. “Always remain mindful that reaching the summit is only half of the journey.”

Giant groundsel plants line the path up Mount Kilimanjaro.

Starts off as a trail through monuments of different faiths and philosophies. Ends up becoming the journey within.

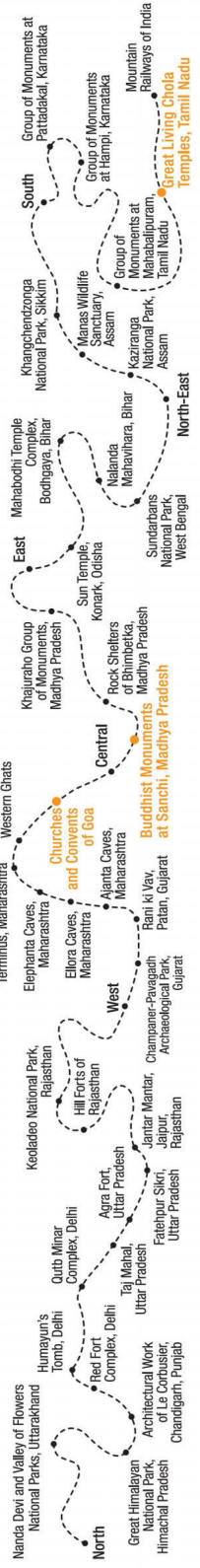
India has long been synonymous with spirituality, irrespective of faiths, beliefs or philosophies. The next time you come and visit them, allow yourself to not only get closer to God, but closer to yourself as well.

Sanchi Stupa, Madhya Pradesh,
3rd Century BC

Se' Cathedral, Goa,
16th Century AD

Brihadeeswarar Temple,
Tamil Nadu, 11th Century AD

Take a tour of World Heritage Sites in India



THE INDIAN
HERITAGE
TRAIL

For more information, visit:
www.incredibleindia.org

Follow us on:
f /incredibleindia @incredibleindia

ROAD TRIP

KAUAI'S RING ROAD



➤ **Miles:** 79 • **Days on the Road:** 3 • **Best Snack Stop:** Waimea Canyon Lookout fruit stand • **Best Indoor Attraction:** Kokee Museum



Lush Kauai, known as the Garden Isle, is the oldest of the main Hawaiian Islands. This verdant gem packs a ton of tropical punch into its 552 square miles. Beyond the resorts, you'll find a massive inland canyon, ancient Hawaiian sites, waterfalls that trickle down neon green mountains, sleepy former plantation towns, golden sand beaches, and more

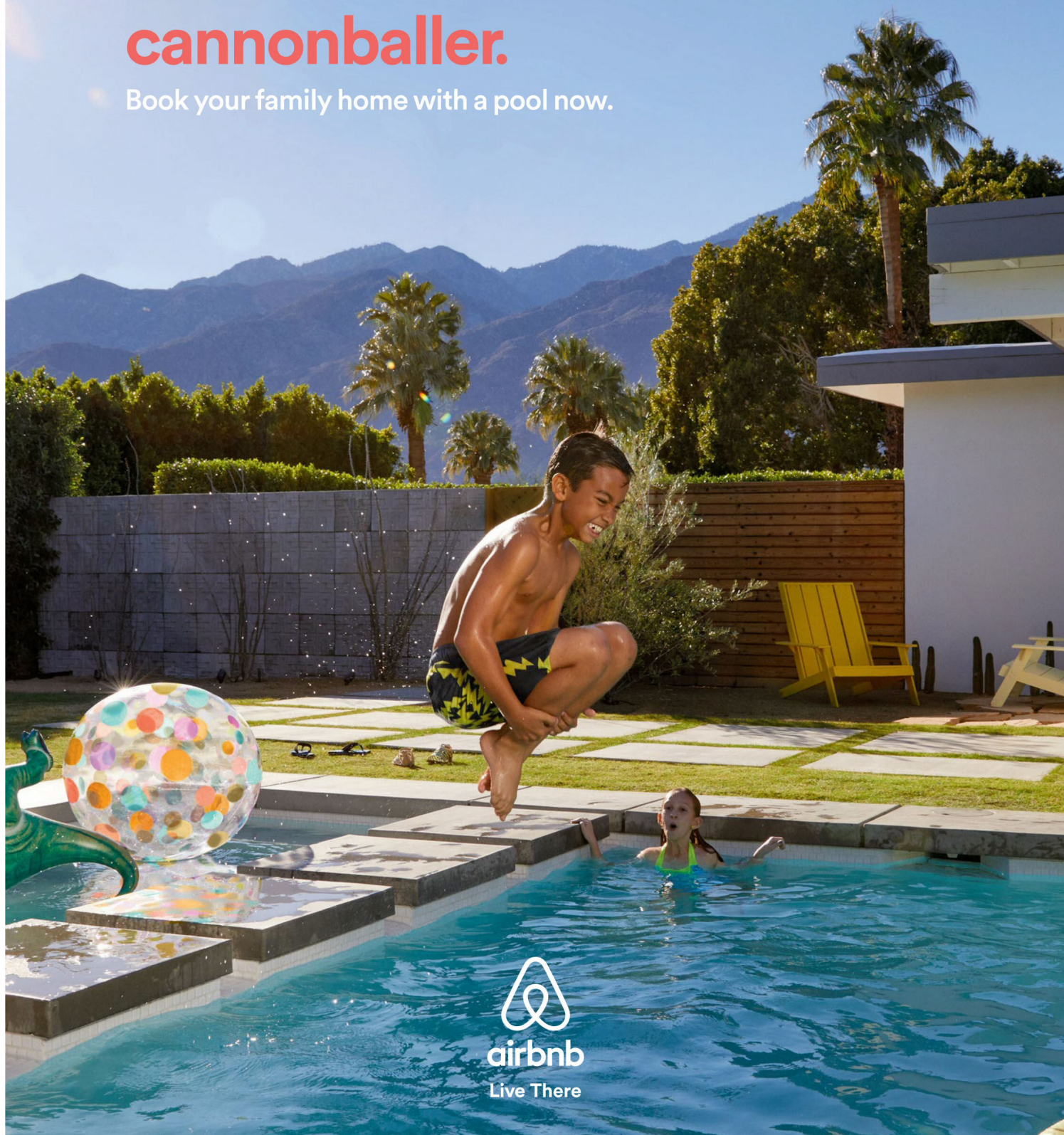
than a few wild chickens, which act as the island's unofficial mascots. Many of the local attractions are family-friendly. Kauai's horseshoe-shaped route (a gap on the west side accommodates the wild Napali coast) can be tackled in a day but is best when stretched out over a long weekend.

—Meghan Miner Murray

Kauai's Wailua Falls, in Wailua River State Park, makes for a serene break on a road trip.

We arrived
with a **toe-dipper**
and left with a
cannonballer.

Book your family home with a pool now.



ROAD TRIP KAUAI



STOP 1

Nature First

Head straight for the hills early in the morning: The **Kalalau Lookout**, above a northwestern valley along the undulating Napali coast, is best before the afternoon fogs settle in. After exploring the coast's 17 miles of jungle green sea cliffs, savor a hearty local-style meal at the **Kokee Lodge Restaurant**. Order the loco moco, a fried-egg-topped hamburger smothered in gravy over rice, to fuel up for the **Waimea Canyon**, the wild, red chasm dubbed the "Grand Canyon of the Pacific."

STOP 2

Check In to a Sweet Suite

The islands' sugar plantation heyday from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s is credited with sparking Hawaii's modern cultural mix. At **Waimea Plantation Cottages**, on the former seaside grounds of a sugar mill, restored workers' homes—some more than a century old—serve as bungalow-style accommodations, with lounge-worthy lanais and period details such as claw-foot tubs and rattan furniture.

STOP 3

Sacred Snack

Early Polynesians brought kalo (taro) to the islands, where it attained mythical status. Hawaiian legend holds that the daughter of Papahānaumoku (earth mother) and Wakea (sky father) had a stillborn baby from whose grave grew a taro plant—the older brother of man. More kalo is grown on Kauai than on any other Hawaiian island, and its roots are still used to produce gummy poi, a starch that sustained islanders for centuries. Dale Nagamine, owner of Taro Ko Farm, fashions the roots into an even more palatable snack—thin, salty chips fried in soybean oil. You'll find him cooking his creations almost every day at **Taro Ko Chips Factory**, a tiny, green house located in Hanapepe.

STOP 4

Kayak With Kids

The palm-lined **Wailua River State Park** is popular with kayakers and stand-up paddle boarders, and its waters are calm enough for families to navigate. The river runs past a fern grotto, lava rock ruins, and hidden waterfalls. Outfitter **Kayak Kauai** offers tours and rentals for paddlers.

STOP 5

Birds of Paradise

Kilauea Point's lighthouse guided ships during the 1900s, but boobies, frigatebirds, and albatrosses have flocked to this rugged peninsula for eons. It's possible to spot ocean wildlife here: dolphins, humpback whales, and endangered Hawaiian monk seals.

STOP 6

Back to the Beach

The mountain-backed beach town of **Hanalei** boasts cute surf boutiques and casual eateries (check out the **Wishing Well Shave Ice** food truck for an organic take on the frozen local confection). This North Shore community's iconic pier on Hanalei Bay has been a visitor staple since the late 1800s, when it was first constructed to transport Kauai's sugar to points beyond. Now it serves as a scenic photo op. Complete your road trip at **Tunnels Beach**, located near the very end of Kauai's road, where you can relax on the two-mile stretch of sand, snorkel along the shore, and explore a few of the lava-formed caves carved into the rock formations across the street.

THE DESERT IS WILD

Absolutely
spontaneous.



SCOTTSDALE
ARIZONA

AbsolutelyScottsdale.com

Mini GUIDE

BANGKOK



“Bangkok straddles like no other metropolis the boundary between acrid and sweet, soft and hard, sacred and profane.” —Tom Robbins, *Villa Incognito*



Bangkok is two-faced. At once serene and spicy, frenzied yet romantic, Thailand's capital is the best of both worlds. The golden tiles of the temples wink eternal, the steam from Chinatown hawkers' woks carry the peppery scents of fragrant herbs, and down alleys the twisted arms of aged banyan trees wrap the gates of rickety wooden homes. At the same time, baristas hand over lattes made with Thai coffee beans. Bitters and Bénédictine line the

back bar at cocktail joints. And when the faded teak doors of the shophouses roll open in the early morning, you'll find tables stocked by independent, young designers. Bangkok is unlike any other city on Earth. —Jenny Adams

The Wat Arun temple sparkles on the Chao Phraya River.



THIS IS *Alabama*

And from our Gulf Coast
to the top of Cheaha Mountain,
you can take it all in.

Sweet Home
Alabama
www.Alabama.Travel



Watch

the skies change from
true blue to light blue



Smell

the salty breeze
off the Gulf



Listen

to the waves crash
on the shore



Feel

the fine, sugar-white
sand underneath





Lap up Bangkok's skyline in the Okura Prestige's infinity pool.

The majority of the rooms in **SIAMOTIF** (●), a 70-year-old wooden canal house turned bohemian boutique hotel, were hand-painted by a local artist. Amenities here include balconies overlooking the canal, bikes for exploring neighboring temples, and rotating Thai breakfast offerings. At the colonial-chic **RIVA ARUN** (●), opened in 2016, the view steals the show, whether you're dining on larb ped salad with foie gras on the rooftop or parting the gauzy curtains of your suite's floor-to-ceiling windows. The

backdrop is Wat Arun, meaning Temple of Dawn, even though it's ironically best at sunset when silhouetted against a bright pink sky. To feel like you've fallen into a James Bond flick, head to **OKURA PRESTIGE** (●). Each of the 240 rooms features a Japanese bidet, rain shower, and touch pad that controls the room's lighting. But the infinity pool is what you'll likely remember most. With views of the city's skyscrapers, it's 82 feet long and cantilevered off the 25th floor, hanging high above the busy streets of Bangkok.

Hotel Chic: Thai Rooms With a View

- CLASSIC
- NEW
- TRENDY

Go With Nat Geo

Let National Geographic Expeditions be your guide to southern and northern Thailand. natgeojourneys.com/explore; 800-281-2354



FOR THE BEACH LOVER

Snorkel around sandy island shores, kayak along the coast, and discover watery caves aboard an iconic long-tail boat on the eight-day National Geographic Journeys with G Adventures' "Explore Southern Thailand" trip.



FOR THE HISTORY BUFF

Listen to Buddhist monks chant at a traditional temple, visit World War II spots, and dine in a UNESCO World Heritage city on National Geographic Journeys with G Adventures' eight-day "Thailand Journey" trip.

SEE IT BANGKOK

Four Ways to Do Bangkok Like a Local

Cruise through the capital by bike, then take a stroll through a vintage night market



Spas

1 For a quick recharge, head to Soi Rambuttri street in Old Town, where curbside chaise-longue foot massages are \$5 for half an hour. At Ruen-Nuad Massage Studio, inside an 80-year-old house with gardens, fountains, and lemongrass-scented rooms, request its herbal compress massage, where tamarind, makrut lime, and salt are designed to relieve inflammation at \$15 for an hour. A pampering session at the Siam hotel's Opium Spa is more of an expensive indulgence, but includes free transport to the spa via private boat.

Art Galleries

2 The Bangkok Art and Culture Centre is home to a revolving array of contemporary arts, from design to music, film to theater. After the expansive, opt for the intimate: At Dialogue, the eclectic coffeehouse and gallery on Phra Sumen Road, you can enjoy the attic exhibitions and also snag an art map of Old Town Bangkok. It lists nearby gems like the Foto United Gallery, with work for sale by local photographers, and the new Pipit Banglamphu Museum, a former printing facility now dedicated to the neighborhood's history.

Bike Tours

3 Many hotels in the city provide bikes for solo exploration, but guided bike tour options abound. Follow Me Bike Tours has a four-and-a-half-hour tour of Old Town along the Chao Phraya River, which threads through back streets and includes temple stops and ferry rides. You also get a link to photos of your day. If you crave greenery, Bangkok Bike Adventure will take you to Bang Krachao, nicknamed Bangkok's Green Lung. This thick swath of jungle is filled with towering palms, tropical birds, reptiles, and ancient canals.

Markets

4 Start with the sunrise at Pak Khlong Talad, the city's premier flower market, where locals purchase *phueng malai*, or garlands for good luck. During the day, 27-acre Chatuchak market sells everything from spa products to knockoff Ray-Bans. After 5 p.m. venture just outside the city to Talad Rot Fai, a sprawling, outdoor night market that focuses on the nostalgic, such as antique lamps, vintage clothing, and '57 Chevys. You can also get a 10 p.m. shave in the garage barbershop or sip a beer in a converted VW-bus bar.





Thai Faves, With a Twist

Go beyond Thai staples and sample Bangkok's best savory bites

IF YOU LIKE

Pad Thai

THEN TRY ▼

Pad Thai Omelet

At the famous Thipsamai restaurant, Thailand's most recognizable dish is nearly unrecognizable to overseas visitors. A true pad thai in Bangkok is actually an omelet with dried shrimp, tamarind-dressed noodles, and soft tofu nestled inside an egg wrapper.



IF YOU LIKE

Papaya Salad

THEN TRY ▼

Pomelo Salad

This salad originally hails from Nakhon Pathom Province, but to have Bangkok's best, make a reservation at Issaya Siamese Club. Its modern adaptation arrives with fresh pomelo wedges, hard-boiled eggs, and wok-fried shrimp in a chili-lime dressing.



IF YOU LIKE

Tom Yum Soup

THEN TRY ▼

Kuay Teow Neau

Kuay teow neau is Thailand's rich beef noodle soup. Join the communal tables at Kuay Teow Neau Nai Soi on Phra Athit Road, and dig into the braised beef and gooey glass noodles in a lightly spiced broth with hints of vinegar, cinnamon, and star anise.



IF YOU LIKE

Chicken Satay

THEN TRY ▼

Pork Satay

Even though chicken satay is common in the U.S., the pork version is the norm in Bangkok. Try the skewers, served upside down in a plastic sack with spicy dipping sauce splashed inside, at the prime place for street food: Chinatown's vibrant Yaowarat Road.



Skewers of satay grilled on the street (above); beef larb salad (left) at the Cabochon Hotel

Three Drinks to Sip in Bangkok



Toast the capital city at The Speakeasy, a rooftop bar at the Hotel Muse, where the **WASABI MARTINI** (a mix of green tea-infused gin, wasabi, elderflower, and lime juice) comes accompanied by a small plate of wasabi and grilled salmon. At the Thai shophouse Smalls, you may fall for **LOVE IS IN THE AIR**, a frothy, hard-shaken blend of strawberry-infused vodka, sauvignon blanc, lemon, elderflower, bitters, and an egg

white. This three-story spot has an around-the-world menu of boutique spirits, a penchant for absinthe, and a menagerie of French antiques on display. Quince is a warm and casual space full of brick, dark wood, candlelight, and opportunities to try the locally produced Iron Balls gin. It's the perfect ingredient to the **SPITCOCK** cocktail, which mixes gin with coconut palm sugar, lime, celery leaves, and fresh mint.

Pointing the Way to Fun, Sun, and Relaxation

FLORIDA

When it comes to treating visitors well, Florida knows what it's doing. One highlight of this vacation heaven is Key Largo. Kick off your shoes and experience the best of Florida's laid-back island lifestyle. Snorkeling and diving are big-time adventures here. Over on the Gulf, the lovely beaches and wildlife sanctuaries of Fort Myers and Sanibel are well worth a week or two of your vacation. A bit farther west, small-town Mexico Beach has everything you could want in the way of sugar-soft sand, blue-green water, and delightful ecotourism. Fine dining, lodging, and beaching await you in Northwest Florida's tony South Walton. And family fun is key in Martin County. Come on down to Florida.

VISITFLORIDA.COM

Song in the Key of Paradise: Key Largo



Photos credit: Key Largo

Drive across the bridge from the Florida mainland and you're already feeling the easygoing pace of Key Largo. Ever since Bogey and Bacall holed up here in the 1948 classic *Key Largo*, the first and longest island in the Keys chain has been a top destination. Get out and breathe the gentle sea air. The perfect attire in this tropical paradise is bare feet and a bathing suit.

When you're ready for fun in the crystal clear water, Key Largo is ready for you. It's not called the Diving Capital of the World for nothing. The nation's most dazzling underwater parks and reefs lie awaiting your exploration.

John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park is an undersea playground featuring a wealth of opportunities for snorkeling and diving among a variety

of multicolored corals and tropical fish. Or you can take it easy (and still see a lot) on a glass-bottomed boat tour. And don't neglect the botanical wonders of the backcountry—there are miles of mangrove wilderness trails, which you can explore via kayak, canoe, or paddleboard. The more adventurous can dive to underwater caves or to the Spiegel Grove, a 510-foot-long U.S. Navy ship scuttled in 2002.

John Pennekamp State Park is part of the **National Marine Sanctuary**, which protects 2,900 square nautical miles surrounding the Keys. And tip your hat to the late newspaper editor and conservationist John D. Pennekamp, who helped establish the nearby **Everglades National Park**.

Another Key Largo specialty is the great fishing. Take a charter boat into Florida Bay for redfish and tarpon, or go for bonefish in

the Atlantic shallows or game fish farther out.

Families will feel right at home at **Harry Harris State Park**, with its protected beach and tidal pool. Another popular must-do, the dolphin encounter programs at Dolphins Plus or Dolphin Cove let you swim with these intelligent marine mammals.

Eco-tours take you into the heart of Key Largo's spectacular plant and animal life. Manatees, crocodiles, alligators, sea turtles, bottlenose dolphins, and wading birds are some of the animals you might encounter. Photography lovers take note.

A great way to learn about the area's wondrous variety of birds is to visit the five-acre **Florida Keys Wild Bird Center**, where injured birds—both native and migratory—are being rehabilitated. Many cannot be released, but they serve as living educational displays. And check out the locals' natural response to a proposed condo development: They decided instead to save one of the largest tracts of West Indian hardwood hammock in the U.S. and created **Dagny Johnson Key Largo Hammock Botanical State Park**.

Welcome to the Forever Glades.



It would take an eternity to explore every corner of the Florida Everglades. But it's worth a try. This 1.5 million acre ecosystem is home to everything from crocodiles and manatees to wading birds and the elusive Florida Panther. And it's all just a few paddle strokes from Key Largo.

fla-keys.com/keylargo 1.800.822.1088



The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel for Natural Beauty

Come here once and you'll want to return again and again. If you're looking for gorgeous, peaceful beaches; thrilling maritime wildlife; Gulf-coast sunsets; and enough pampering to feel relaxed and happy, look no further than The Beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel.

Let's start with beaches. Fort Myers and Sanibel claim more than 50 miles of sun-kissed shoreline, complete

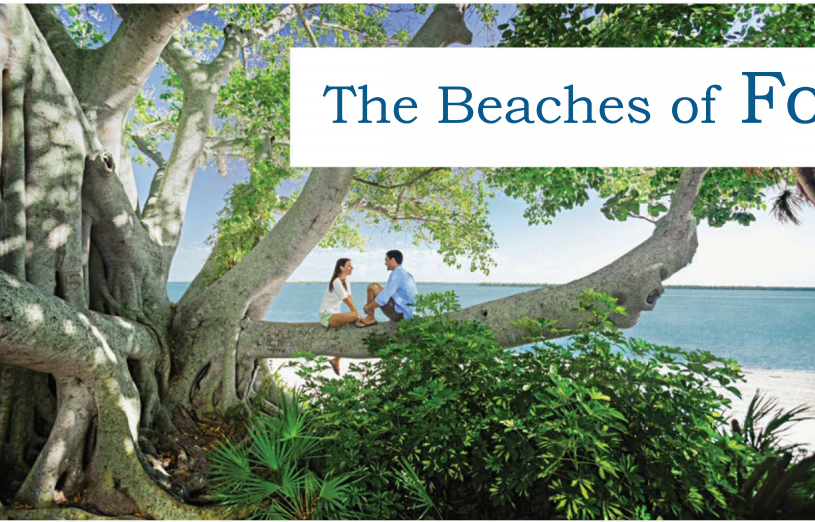
with white sand and the continent's best shells. That's right, grab a bucket and head over to **Sanibel** and **Captiva Islands** and fill it up; **Bowman's Beach** on Sanibel is a good place to start. On the island's tip, **Lighthouse Beach** features a 32-acre park, lighthouse, and picnic area. Then there's **Fort Myers Beach**, which, because of its shallow waters and lack of undertow, is a super safe place to swim and paddle-board. A little farther south, **Lovers Key State Park** claims another fine stretch of sand, edged by breeze-bent sea oats.

One must-see, the **J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge** is home to manatees, alligators, and a variety of wading birds such as roseate spoonbills. Plan to spend a whole morning here exploring the trails and waterways by foot, bike, or kayak. Paddle through mangrove tunnels, while watching for snowy egrets and great blue herons.

Another essential stop for nature lovers is the **Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary**. Take your time on the 2.5-mile boardwalk and you'll see some amazing things, like herons stalking frogs, and long-legged birds flapping to their roosts high above. This 13,000-acre safe haven protects the largest old-growth bald cypress forest in North America and the nation's largest nesting colony of endangered wood storks. It's a hauntingly beautiful place. Another inland haunt, the **Six Mile Cypress Slough Preserve** lies just south of Fort Myers. This 3,500-acre mix of wetland and upland ecosystem harbors turtles, otters, gators, and numerous species of wading birds.

Ready for some island hopping? You're in the right place. The Beaches of Fort Myers and Sanibel have more than 100 islands, and you can visit them by chartering a boat. Along the way, look for dolphins following your wake. If you go by seaplane, you'll enjoy sweeping views of land, sea, and sky. Tours to **Cayo Costa State Park** allow you a day for exploring the island and its jungle-dense trails and shell-rich beach. Or boat over to tiny **Cabbage Key**, an isle draped with strangler figs and sea grapes, and have lunch in a funky 1938 inn.

For more island-hopping adventure, kayak or canoe along the **Great Calusa Blueway**, an old Indian corridor through pristine mangrove habitats. Expect to see manatees and other friendly locals.



Photos credit: Fort Myers & Sanibel

NO 36

For a slower pace,
add water.

That's ISLANDOLOGY



GREAT CALUSA BLUEWAY, SANIBEL ISLAND, FL




**THE BEACHES OF
FORT MYERS
AND SANIBEL**
FORTMYERS-SANIBEL.COM

Islandology is our way of life. It's finding Great Egrets wading along shaded water trails. It's gliding through back bays like a quiet breeze. It's slowing down to enjoy the beauty around us.

Plan your trip at FortMyers-Sanibel.com



The Sunny Shores of South Walton

Situated in Northwest Florida, South Walton spreads along 26 stunning miles of Gulf beachfront. With turquoise water overlapping an apron of sugar-white sand, this area is known for its 16 attractive beachside neighborhoods, each of them distinct in personality and style. Visitors flock here for the outdoor activities, unique galleries and shops, and award-winning restaurants.

Birdwatchers and nature lovers gravitate to South Walton's 200-plus-mile trail system, including the 19-mile **Timpoochee Trail**, which runs out along several coastal dune lakes. The area boasts 15 of these rare salt-and-freshwater lakes, and these unique bodies of water are only found

in a handful of places around the world. You can skim the water on a stand-up paddleboard, or cast a line if fishing is your thing.

With 40 percent of South Walton protected from development, you'll be pleasantly surprised by the lack of cars here—biking and walking are the way to go! This is life on a human scale, with carefully designed neighborhoods that cater to pedestrians. Independent shops and restaurants are the rule, big-box stores the rare exception.

Looking for a lively art scene? The **Seaside** beach neighborhood, birthplace of New Urbanism design, showcases the best of thoughtful beach living and architecture. South Walton tends to attract nationally recognized artists and musicians alike, and is home to the

digital art show, **Digital Graffiti**, which draws digital production artists from around the world to **Alys Beach**.

Want to unwind with some golf? Challenge yourself with more than 10 acclaimed courses to test your skills, including **Camp Creek Golf Club**, which was designed by award-winning golf course architect Tom Fazio.

Here restaurants, boutiques, and galleries range from the chic to the sophisticated. Indulge in some retail therapy at one of the nation's largest designer outlets and then browse unique locally owned shops.

If taste is the name of the game, take to South Walton's fusion of fresh-from-the-Gulf seafood and locally sourced ingredients created by award-winning chefs. For accommodations, you can't go wrong with the area's low-key beach bungalows and high-rise resorts with brilliant views.

Refined yet casual, **South Walton** beckons travelers to a place of rejuvenation, dreamy beaches, and lasting memories.



Photos credit: South Walton



SOUTH WALTON FLORIDA

HOME OF SCENIC GULF DRIVE & 30A

MIRAMAR BEACH

SEASCAPE

SANDESTIN

DUNE ALLEN

GULF PLACE

SANTA ROSA BEACH

BLUE MOUNTAIN

GRAYTON BEACH

WATERCOLOR

SEASIDE

SEAGROVE

WATERSOUND

SEACREST

ALYS BEACH

ROSEMARY BEACH

INLET BEACH

SOUTH WALTON
IS NOT JUST A DESTINATION.
IT'S A DEPARTURE.

FROM FULL-SERVICE RESORTS TO LUXURIOUS SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES AND BEACH COTTAGES,
THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF PLACES TO STAY ALONG THE SUGAR-WHITE SAND AND
TURQUOISE GULF WATER OF SOUTH WALTON. VISITSOUTHWALTON.COM AND FIND YOURS.

VISITSOUTHWALTON.COM   



Enjoy the top rated resort
on Florida's Gulf Coast.

sandestin.com/natgeo | 855-270-5109



hotel • dining • spa

Luxury hotel at 63 Main Street,
Rosemary Beach, FL.

thepearlrb.com | 888-656-6463



Largest provider of
vacation rentals in Seaside, FL.

cottage rentalagency.com | 866-976-0533

Secrets of Mexico Beach

Hidden on the Gulf shore of Northwest Florida, little Mexico Beach offers a big menu of things to see and do, and places to eat and sleep. This fun, uncrowded beach town is one secret you might want to keep to yourself.

Sparkling white-sand beaches roll out to the clean emerald waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The sugary sand comes from quartz, and its reflective property keeps the beach from getting hot—even during the summer! Mexico Beach has a five-mile front yard of this lovely powdery sand, all open to the public. Four parks and numerous walk-overs provide easy access to the beach.

The area's brackish tidal marshes, extensive savannas, and crystalline springs present a wonderful array of ecotourism possibilities. Get out into the wild by foot, kayak, or paddleboard and come face-to-face with nature. Anglers also have reason to celebrate. Grab your cooler and bait; gas up at the marina; and head out for a memorable day of charter fishing. Or just cast a line from the pier (for mackerel) or the shore (for pompano).



Photo credit: Mexico Beach

When the day is done you'll be happy to know that Mexico Beach offers a wide variety of dining options. Fresh seafood, cool cocktails, and scrumptious desserts are served up with a smile. Check out the restaurant scene at mexicobeach.com/things-to-do/dining.

Spend the night in a quaint seaside cottage or a luxurious Gulf-front hotel room. There are also rental vacation homes and RV parks.

REMEMBER THAT TIME WE BUILT
THE PERFECT SANDCASTLE?



MexicoBeach
— FLORIDA —
The Unforgettable Coast®

**MAKE YOUR PERFECT
VACATION MEMORIES IN
MEXICO BEACH, FLORIDA.**

Discover more at
MexicoBeach.com



Planning Your trip



Florida is served by numerous major airports. Or you can travel by rail to and within the state—most of the major cities have Amtrak stations. If you're staying in one location, you might want to rent a car to avoid constantly paying cab fares. Airfare and hotel packages often are cheaper than buying each separately.

Photos credit: Key Largo, Mexico Beach, and South Walton

TRAVEL RESOURCES

1. **Key Largo:** fla-keys.com/keylargo
2. **Fort Myers and Sanibel:** fortmyers-sanibel.com
3. **South Walton:** VisitSouthWalton.com
4. **Mexico Beach:** MexicoBeach.com
5. **Martin County:** DiscoverMartin.com

BEST TIME TO VISIT

The most comfortable season for travelers to South Florida is October to February. Central Florida stays relatively warm year-round but temperatures can drop to the low 50s during the winter. Summer brings high humidity to most of the state, but this is a great season for deals on hotels and plane fare. The water of the Atlantic and the Gulf stays reasonably warm year-round.

For more information on Florida:
VISITFLORIDA.com
facebook.com/VISITFLORIDA/ @VISITFLORIDA
twitter.com/VISITFLORIDA/ @VISITFLORIDA
instagram.com/visitflorida/ @visitflorida

VISITFLORIDA.COM

This year, take time to create memories.

MARTIN COUNTY
Florida

You remember it, don't you? The family beach vacation: miles of blue water, sand castles at your feet, a sea breeze blowing your hair back, and not a cell phone or a skyscraper in sight. This summer, plan a family trip to a place where memories come naturally, and time isn't the only thing that's preserved. [Plan your trip at discovermartin.com](http://discovermartin.com)

PLACES WE LOVE SLOVENIA

World Legacy Awards

As the United Nations marks the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, one nation rises above the rest: Slovenia. Last year this Adriatic enclave was declared the world's most sustainable country and its largest city, Ljubljana, was anointed Europe's greenest capital. Nearly 60 percent of Slovenia is covered in forests, and more than 40 parks and reserves are home to some 20,000 plant and animal species.

Country roads link pristine lakes to cobblestone towns, where local cafés serve up traditional fare like *štruklji* (savory veggie and meat pockets), enjoyed with some of Europe's least known, yet tastiest, vintages. All in a nation smaller than New Jersey, with a population of just over two million.

Celebrating success in sustainability is our passion at National Geographic. We launched the World Legacy Awards to honor the travel visionaries who preserve cultural heritage, protect the environment, and advocate for the well-being of locals. In this effort we're proud

to work alongside our partners and sponsors, including ITB Berlin, the Botswana Tourism Organisation, Adventure World, and the TreadRight Foundation.

Last year more than one billion travelers set out to see the world's wonders, up from about 25 million international tourists in 1950. The growth in tourism drives our efforts to safeguard destinations for future generations. Read about all of our World Legacy Award nominees and winners at natgeotravel.com.

—Costas Christ

ERMEJIN/ISTOCK/CEVIC



More than 700 years old, the Church of St. John the Baptist rises over Lake Bohinj in the hamlet of Ribčev Laz, an hour's drive from Ljubljana.

GO WITH NAT GEO SOUTH AFRICA



Grootbos Private Nature Reserve sits atop blooming hillsides.

Springing for the Floral Kingdom

Beyond Cape Town, wildflowers and ancient trees lure visitors to the Western Cape region

By Costas Christ

The city of Cape Town, sun drenched at the tip of Africa, attracts globe-trotters galore. But shimmy a little farther east—about a two-hour drive (think dramatic peaks and emerald valleys)—for a place less visited. Here the smallest of the world’s six floral kingdoms unfolds like a dazzling protea bloom in spring. And that is exactly the season, from mid-August to mid-October, to book a stay at Grootbos Private Nature Reserve.

Grootbos owner Michael Lutzeyer, a Cape Town native, took a Sunday road trip up the coast in 1991 and came upon a flowering Garden of Eden. He bought an old farm on a hillside “where a continent ends, and two oceans collide,” and brought it back to life. From his back porch Lutzeyer could see southern right whales breaching in the blue waters of Gansbaai.

Today Grootbos guests enjoy the same experience from the private terraces of their hillside suites. Experts lead nature walks through 6,177 acres of wildflowers and wilderness, including forests of ancient milkwood trees, which can live for more than 500 years. Guests sip top vintages on outings to nearby wine estates such as Bouchard Finlayson. Horseback riding, whale-watching, mountain biking, and beach picnics round out the daily menu.

LODGE ESSENTIALS

Grootbos, a National Geographic Unique Lodge, offers 28 suites in two settings: Garden Lodge, amid flowering fynbos, and Forest Lodge, within a grove of milkwood trees. The Grootbos Green Futures Program trains local youth in organic horticulture to improve local livelihoods and help conserve the area’s unique ecosystem.

BOOK IT

To reserve your stay, call 888-701-5486 or visit natgeolodges.com/explore.

DISCOVER EXTRAORDINARY
LANDSCAPES IN LOUISIANA.

LOUISIANA
Pick your Passion®
LouisianaTravel.com



...where
Cajun
began



For More Info
CAJUNCOUNTRY.ORG
f y p

**Year-round
Joie de Vivre**

World Famous Cafés & Seafood Restaurants | B&Bs | Hotels
Campgrounds & RV Parks | Houseboats | Historic Districts
Artists | Antiques | Boutiques | Swamp Tours | Bird Watching
Cajun & Zydeco Music, Jams & Festivals | Dinosaur Park
Kayak & Canoe Rentals | Boating | Fishing | Biking
Nature Conservancy Visitor Center
Bayou Teche | Lake Martin
Atchafalaya Swamp

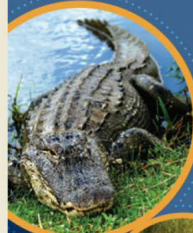
St. Martin's
Parish
LOUISIANA

ARNAUDVILLE | BREAUX BRIDGE | BUTTE LA ROSE | CATAHOULA | HENDERSON | ST. MARTINVILLE



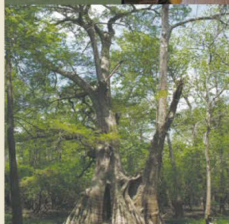
Get out & about!

Wildlife Refuges • Eco Tours
Gulf Beaches • Fishing & Hunting
Birding • Crabbing • Shelling



Watch our New Video at
VisitLakeCharles.org/Venture
#VisitLakeCharles • 800.456.SWLA

BIKING • HIKING • GOLFING • SHOPPING • DINING



EXPLORING • PLAYING • STAYING • RELAXING

Find Your...
St. Francisville
LOUISIANA

*Shop, Dine, Stay, Play
or Just Unwind*

LOUISIANA
Pick your Passion®
LouisianaTravel.com



www.stfrancisville.us • (800) 789-4221

**"YOU DON'T NEED
A SILVER FORK
TO eat
GOOD FOOD"**

– Chef Paul Prudhomme
ST. LANDRY PARISH NATIVE



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEUN 105.5 FM

- Louisiana Orphan Train Museum
- Spice House Tours – Great for Foodies!
- Bayou Teche Brewing – Nationally Acclaimed Craft Beer
- Shop 700+ antique vendors
- Only documented miracle site in the United States

Call today and let us plan your trip!
877.948.8004 | f t
CAJUNTRAVEL.COM/NGT

ST. LANDRY
P.A.R.I.S.H
SOUTH CENTRAL LOUISIANA

St. Landry Parish is located 2 hours west of New Orleans

ARNAUDVILLE | EUNICE | GRAND COTEAU | OPELOUSAS | SUNSET | WASHINGTON

OBSESSIONS BALLPARKS

Field of Dreams

On a quest for the most fan-friendly stadiums and the downtowns they helped revitalize

By Tim Wendel

I have always been enthralled by buildings that combine cathedral-like form with my love of sports. When I'm on the road, I check out the local ballpark or stadium, and even if there isn't a game scheduled, I wander by for a glimpse inside. In recent decades the national pastime has enjoyed an architectural renaissance, and it began with two very different venues: Toronto's SkyDome and Baltimore's Camden Yards.

SkyDome, since renamed the Rogers Centre, features a retractable dome and stands 31 stories high, 64 feet higher than the Houston Astrodome, the world's first domed stadium. With its plethora of restaurants, wide concourse, and a hotel with rooms overlooking the field, SkyDome became a landmark in downtown Toronto and fostered such imitators as Phoenix's Chase Field and Seattle's Safeco Field.



Opened in 1992, Baltimore's Camden Yards is a throwback to classic ballparks.

More cities might have followed Toronto's lead, if it hadn't been for Camden Yards. The Baltimore Orioles' owners decided that bigger wasn't necessarily better when it came to ballpark design. "They built the eighth wonder of the world," said Larry Lucchino, then Orioles president, when he first set foot in SkyDome. "We're just building a nice little ballpark."

This "nice little ballpark" would change the way people think about sporting venues. The Orioles decided to embrace the game's past and emulate such old-time venues as Ebbets Field in Brooklyn (which was demolished in 1960), Fenway Park in Boston's Back Bay, and Wrigley Field on the north side of Chicago. The last two are must-visits for any traveler to those cities, baseball fan or not.

At the Orioles' new ballpark, an asymmetrical outfield was constructed and the bull pen areas were visible, so fans could see who was warming up. After much debate, the B&O Warehouse, which stands eight stories tall and more than a thousand feet long, became part of the overall design. It's amazing to think it was slated to be demolished for parking lots.

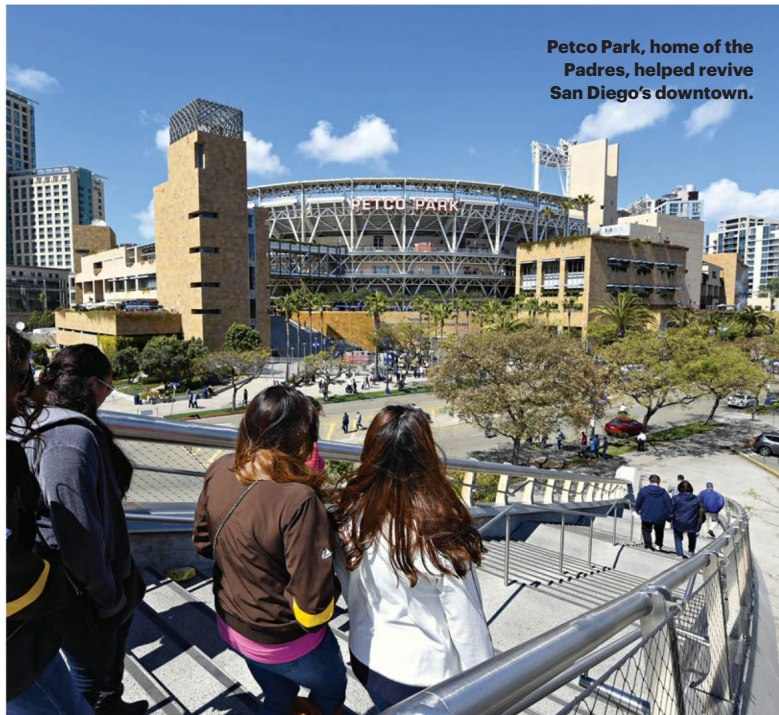
"We wanted our ballpark to be old-shoe comfortable, even if it was brand new," said Janet Marie Smith, the Orioles' then VP of planning and development.

Oriole Park at Camden Yards opened in April 1992, the hometown team edging the Cleveland Indians, 2-0. I was there, and most in the new ballpark were delighted with the new digs. Little did we realize that Camden Yards would usher in a new era, making many more baseball stadiums destination sites for travelers.

Two years later, another "retro ballpark" opened, in Cleveland, not far from the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. The next season Coors Field in Denver opened and was soon called "the most extreme hitter's park that has ever served as a permanent home to a major-league team," by baseball historian Eric Enders. You want home runs? Go to Colorado.

The parade of new stadiums continued with three more ballpark gems: Comerica Park in Detroit and AT&T Park in San Francisco in 2000, and PNC Park in Pittsburgh a year later. All of them revitalized sections of downtown and stood within easy walking distance of nearby hotels. In fact, the Sixth Street Bridge in Pittsburgh was renamed for Pirate great Roberto Clemente and is closed to vehicle traffic a few hours before first pitch, making it easier for pedestrians to get to the park.

Houston, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, St. Louis, New York, San Diego, Minneapolis, and



Petco Park, home of the Padres, helped revive San Diego's downtown.

Major Eats at Minor-League Stadiums

CHARLOTTE, NC

Baseball America rated BB&T Ballpark the best of the bush leagues. Home to the Charlotte Knights, this ballpark opened in 2014 and offers an impressive view of the city skyline and such culinary delights as the Chicken & Waffle Cone.

MEMPHIS, TN

Fans at AutoZone Park can chow down on barbecue while watching some baseball, thanks to the BBQ Shack, located down the right-field line. Vegetarians need not go hungry: The concession also offers salads and veggie wraps.

BUFFALO, NY

Though showing its age, Coca-Cola Field remains one of the most popular venues in the minor leagues. The Anchor Bar, where Buffalo chicken wings were first served, is two miles away, on Main Street.

Washington, D.C., all have inaugurated more fan-friendly sports venues in recent years.

"If you look at three-quarters of the ballparks built since Camden Yards, they have been built in a downtown setting," said Smith, who has also worked for the Atlanta Braves and Los Angeles Dodgers. "We don't have any need for a central banking center or central anything anymore. But we're still social animals, and it's good to have cities alive and vibrant, especially at night. Sports has helped this process with its newer ballparks by bringing year-round and evening activity to cities."

Many minor-league stadiums at the grassroots level have also become jewels for visiting fans. Movie buffs will especially enjoy a trip to McCormick Field in Asheville, North Carolina. This is where many of the baseball scenes for *Bull Durham* were filmed. Built into the side of a hill, home to a ball club named the Tourists, this ballpark has a scoreboard in right field as tall as Fenway Park's famed Green Monster.

"The ball field itself is a mystic creation," author Roger Kahn once wrote, "the Stonehenge of America." Perhaps that's why I found myself stopping at McCormick Field on a recent trip to North Carolina. The baseball season may have ended several weeks before, but when it comes to ballparks, I'm always happy to be a tourist.

Virginia-based **TIM WENDEL** is the author of several baseball books, including *Summer of '68*, *High Heat*, and *Castro's Curveball*.

WHERE IN THE WORLD PHOTO ARK

Monkeying Around With a Camera

The best zoos help conserve endangered species. Photographer Joel Sartore wants to visit them all

By Alexandra E. Petri

National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore has traveled the globe since 2006 in an effort to document an estimated 12,000 species of animals currently in captivity—particularly those that are endangered—for his Photo Ark series. The quest has become Sartore's life's work; so far, he's chronicled more than 6,000 animals. Some of these studio-style portraits can be seen in his new book, *The Photo Ark*, published in March by National Geographic. Sartore says that he won't stop until he's photographed every last one, from naked mole rats in Nebraska to Himalayan wolves in India.

Sartore hopes the images instill a sense of action and responsibility in people. "That's the goal of Photo Ark: To get people to look these animals in the eye, fall in love with them, and ask, What can I do to save them?" Sartore says. "We need to be inspired to help others see the importance of nature in all of its forms."

Protecting these creatures is a long-haul effort, but it's still worth trying. And there's plenty that travelers can do too, including visiting and supporting zoos, aquariums, and wildlife reserves and sanctuaries. Because in order for conservation to work, it takes all of us.

1. Curious golden snub-nosed monkeys in Hong Kong





1. **Golden snub-nosed monkey** ● (native to China) pictured at Ocean Park Hong Kong 2. **Blue-eyed black lemur** ● (native to Madagascar) photographed at the Duke Lemur Center in North Carolina 3. **African white-backed vulture** ● (native to Africa) photographed at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo in Ohio 4. **Catalina Island fox** ● (native only to Santa Catalina Island off the coast of California) photographed at the Catalina Island Conservancy 5. **Asian elephant** ● (native to Asia) seen at Buffalo Zoo in New York 6. **Australian sea lion** ● (native to Australia) pictured at Taronga Zoo in Sydney 7. **Sunda pangolin** ● (native to Southeast Asia) pictured at the Carnivore and Pangolin Conservation Program in Vietnam

STATUS IN THE NATURAL WORLD

- Critically endangered
- Endangered
- Vulnerable

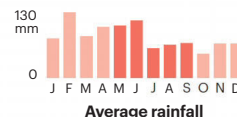
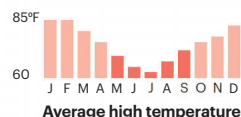
PHOTO ARK LIVE

Check out the outdoor Photo Ark exhibits opening up at zoos across the United States this spring. Visit natgeophotoark.org to learn more.

8. **Loggerhead turtle** ● (native to every ocean outside the polar regions) photographed at Riverbanks Zoo in South Carolina 9. **Okapi** ● (native only to the Democratic Republic of the Congo) photographed at White Oak Conservation in Florida 10. **Schaus swallowtail** ● (now exists only in the Florida Keys) pictured at the McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity in Florida 11. **Spectacled bear** ● (native to South America) seen here at Rolling Hills Wildlife Adventure in Kansas 12. **Mandrill** ● (native to West Africa) photographed at Rolling Hills Wildlife Adventure in Kansas 13. **Snow leopard** ● (native to Central Asia) seen here at Miller Park Zoo in Illinois

OFF-SEASON STRATEGIST SYDNEY

MAY TO SEPTEMBER: While many of Sydney's sights are outdoors, Australia's winter can still be a fabulous time to visit, thanks to generally mild weather and that always warm Aussie hospitality. Plus, the strong U.S. dollar makes the land down under more doable.



Sydney's emblematic Harbour Bridge, as seen from the water

ACTIVITY

See Sydney in a New Light

Part outdoor art exhibit, part music festival, and part symposium, Vivid Sydney is an annual 23-day event in May and June that draws innovators from all over the globe. During that time designers and artists transform Sydney's urban landscapes into massive light installations. An extensive program of musical performances takes place in venues across the city, ranging from the Opera House to neighborhood bars. Visitors can also purchase tickets to public discussions among some of the world's top creative thinkers (previous speakers include *Orange Is the New Black* creator Jenji Kohan and *Monocle* founder Tyler Brûlé).

DINING

Theatrical Treats

Inside the Sydney Opera House, seasonal, local ingredients have the leading role at Bennelong. "Seafood is best during winter because it's plump and sweet from the cold water," says executive chef Peter Gilmore. Frequently changing winter tasting menus can include dishes like roasted John Dory fish with orache, turnips, native greens, and umami butter; or quail with plum jam and macadamia "rubble."

LODGING

Starry Nights

At the Langham Sydney, which reopened in 2015 following a \$30-million makeover, each of the 98 rooms blends antique touches, such as original wooden doors, with contemporary amenities like ultraluxe Dux beds. Be sure to take a dip in the hotel's subterranean pool—its famous ceiling depicts the Southern Hemisphere's night sky with twinkling fiber-optic lights for constellations.

FLIGHTS

Aussie Alliances

American, Delta, and United operate nonstop from Los Angeles, while United flies nonstop from San Francisco as well. You can also redeem American miles on its partner, Qantas, which flies from L.A., San Francisco, and Dallas. United's partner, Air New Zealand, flies to Auckland from L.A. and San Francisco. Delta fliers can use miles on Virgin Australia, featuring a new award-winning business class.

BEST LIST

21 HOT CRUISES



► Our picks for the perfect river and ocean sailings to the world's most popular destinations

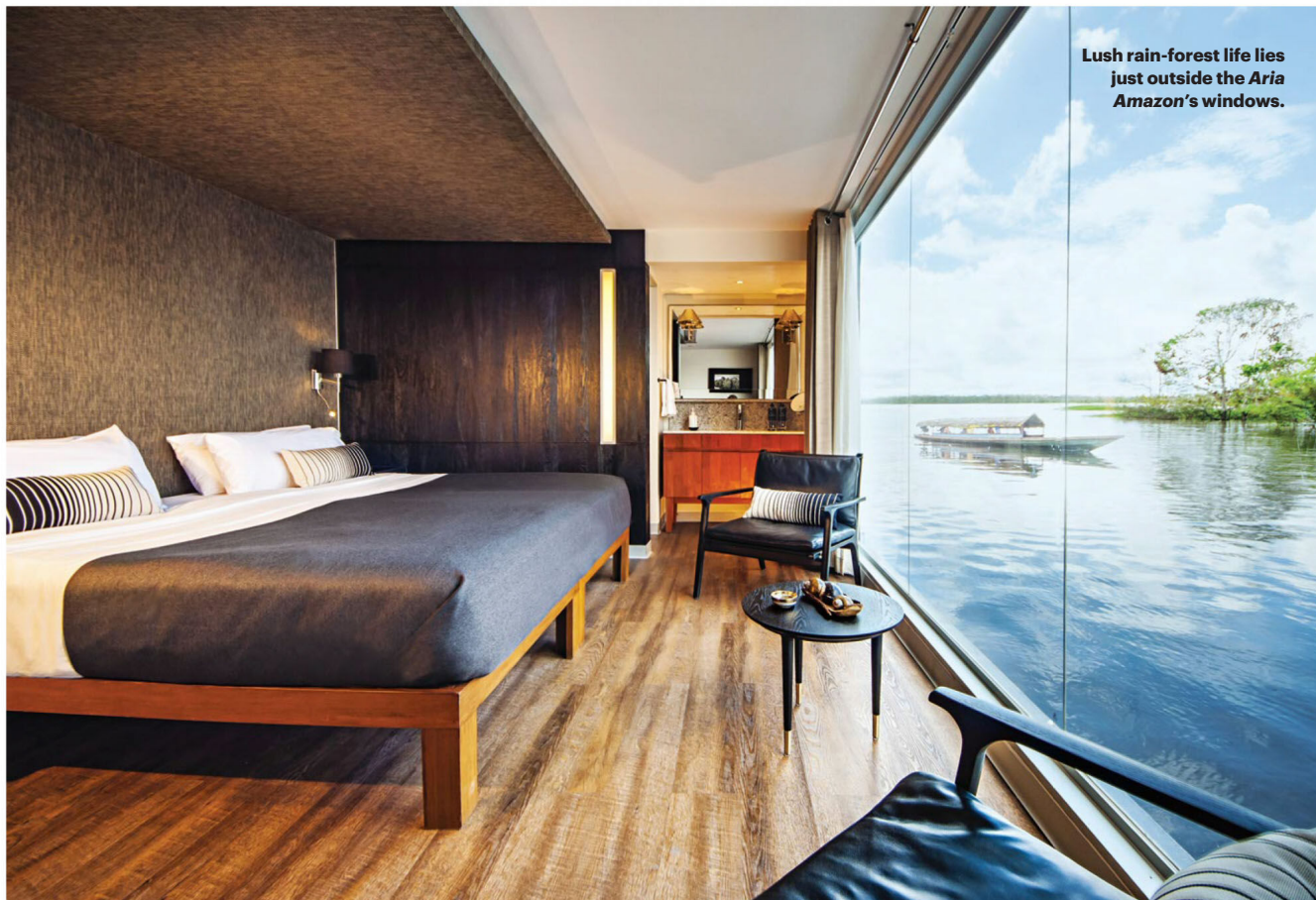


You may think of cruises as floating resorts, but plenty of ships help you get more intimately acquainted with ports of call. They focus on specific regions, employ experts to add local insight, and can transport you to places that are otherwise hard to reach. For example, Nour El

Nil's 16-passenger *Melouka* and 20-passenger *Meroë* skim Egypt's Nile River in an elegantly updated version of the classic dahabeah, crowned by candy-striped sails. Read on for more of our favorite cruises.

—Sherri Eisenberg

BEST LIST RIVER CRUISES



Lush rain-forest life lies just outside the *Aria Amazon's* windows.

Danube

1 Tauck's 130-passenger M.S. *Joy* is smaller than most of the vessels on this waltz-inspiring river, making it easier to execute the line's famous level of detail. Everything is covered on these trips, including the euros (or Hungarian forints or Czech korunas, as the case may be) needed to use the bathroom in port. Tauck also arranges exclusive access, such as dinner at the private Akademia Club in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and tours of the Hungarian State Opera House, both in Budapest, and an intimate look at Engelszell Abbey, Austria's only Trappist monastery.

Amazon

2 Aqua Expeditions' *Aria Amazon* sails through the Peruvian rain forest, with visits to indigenous villages and a chance to fish for piranha. Onboard, menus celebrate local fare with ceviche, river fish, and hearts of palm salad.

Chobe

3 The *Zambezi Queen* sails the Chobe River, which borders Botswana and Namibia, year-round. You'll see a menagerie of animals along the banks of Chobe National Park, home to the highest density of elephants in Africa.

Burgundy Canal

4 Like all of French Country Waterways' canal cruises, the 12-passenger *Nenuphar* stops for sojourns at markets, cafés, and bakeries as it leisurely sails a northern Burgundy route past small French villages and Burgundy's acclaimed vineyards. The two-deck luxury barge has bicycles available for when you want to head off down a tree-shaded rural lane. One itinerary highlight: the visit to the Forges de Buffon, where guests are invited into the owner's home (circa 1768) for a glass of wine, stories of local legends, and a stroll in the vegetable garden.

Nile

5 Lounging on pillows stuffed with Egyptian cotton on the top deck of Nour El Nil's *Meroë*, you'll feel like a modern-day pharaoh as you journey past date palms, ibis, and the temples at Edfu and Kom Ombo.

Mississippi

6 As the 436-passenger iconic paddle-wheeler *American Queen* sails up the river, take in the view from the rocking chairs before heading to a meal of proper southern fare (biscuits, fried chicken, shrimp and grits, beignets).

Mekong

7 The 68-passenger *Scenic Spirit* launched last year with every cabin a one-bedroom balcony suite and orchids everywhere. On land, tour the monastery in the old Cambodian capital of Oudong and receive a monk's blessing.

Irrawaddy

8 The 36-passenger *Avalon Myanmar* is the only ship that sails to Myanmar's northern border all year. Take part in sing-alongs with Burmese schoolkids, visit the home of a fisherman, and give alms to monks.

BEST LIST OCEAN CRUISES

Marquesas

9 Half cruise ship, half freighter, the *Aranui 5* spotlights its friendly local crew on its 14-day voyage to this remote South Pacific archipelago. They share family stories while leading trips to ancient tiki sites and tropical gardens.

Galápagos

10 The *National Geographic Endeavour* carries not just wet suits, kayaks, and Zodiacs but also a glass-bottom boat. Admire the blue-footed boobies, sea lions, and frigate bird colonies, then go for a snorkel.

Caribbean

11 Since most of the crew of Island Windjammer's 26-passenger *Vela* are from the islands, you'll get superlocal suggestions for bars and shops. One St. Lucia favorite: the Fish Friday street party in Rodney Bay.

Transatlantic

12 The Cunard Line's flagship, *Queen Mary 2*—built with a special hull for greater speed—immerses you in British culture. As you "cross the pond," hit the Golden Lion Pub for trivia night, pints, and fish-and-chips.

Seychelles

13 The 62-passenger *Crystal Esprit*, the first yacht from this famed luxury line, spends winters at these Indian Ocean islands. Release baby turtles into the surf, and admire the giant coco-de-mer palms.

Antarctica

14 The *National Geographic Explorer* carries underwater video equipment that lets you see what's going on below the surface. Kayak between icebergs, and keep your camera handy for gentoo penguin sightings.

French Polynesia

15 The *Paul Gauguin* was built with a shallow draft for navigating Polynesian lagoons. The line invites local singers and dancers to perform and offers spa treatments that use *monoi* oil, made from local tiare flowers.

Baltic

16 After a day touring Tallinn or seeing a private performance at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm, you can head to the *Viking Sky*'s onboard Scandinavian-style spa for a steamy sauna followed by a visit to the snow room.

Norwegian Fjords

17 Hurtigruten launched to deliver mail to the northern fjords, and today the line continues that tradition. Onboard its M.S. *Finnmarken*, eat locally caught salmon and watch for the northern lights from the sauna window.

Greek Islands

18 Voyages to Antiquity's *Aegean Odyssey* specializes in ancient Greece, taking in Olympia and the ruins of Pylos in Messinia. Daily lectures by professors, historians, and former ambassadors deepen your knowledge.

Alaska

19 Get away from the throngs of Alaska cruisers on Un-Cruise Adventures' *Safari Quest*. Kayak in Endicott Arm, watch calving glaciers, and bushwhack through the wilderness on Chichagof and Baranof Islands.

Mediterranean

20 The three-masted *Le Ponant* visits a variety of small western Mediterranean ports and along the Corsican coast. Onboard, toast new friends with flutes of Veuve Clicquot paired with Ladurée macarons.

New England

21 The 40-passenger *Arabella* summers in Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. Excursions take you to lighthouses, blueberry bush-lined trails, and the Whaling Museum. The highlight: a beachfront clam and "lob-stah" bake.



Paddle boarders from the *Paul Gauguin* skim Polynesian waters.


ARTISTS ON EXPEDITION

*A celebrated illustrator discovers
wild beauty and epic solitude on a cruise to
Norway's Arctic Svalbard Islands*

NORTH

BY CHRISTOPH NIEMANN



A watercolor illustration depicting a scene from inside a cave looking out. The cave walls are dark, textured, and layered with shades of brown and black. The opening of the cave frames a bright, white sky. Numerous small, light-colored birds are scattered across the sky, some in flight. In the distance, on the water, two small boats are visible. The boat on the right is larger and contains several figures, while the one on the left is smaller. The water is represented by broad, expressive strokes of blue and white. The overall style is painterly and atmospheric.

Cruise passengers
board Zodiacs to explore
coves on Bear Island,
a sanctuary for some
of the largest seabird
colonies in the Arctic.



Before I boarded my first cruise ever, I knew precious little about Svalbard, an Arctic Ocean archipelago located between mainland Norway and the North Pole—except that it has more polar bears than humans, and no trees. An irresistible artistic challenge. So in July I packed my warmest winter clothing and joined the National Geographic Orion in Tromsø en route north to Svalbard. During the next eight days we cruised past icebergs, hiked through (surprisingly bouncy) tundra, rode inflatable boats into grottoes, had close encounters with Arctic wildlife—reindeer, polar bears, walruses, blue whales—and saw brave, beautiful little plants thriving in ruggedly adverse conditions. Back in my stateroom I set up a small studio and eagerly captured my many impressions on paper with colored inks.

In the Arctic summer's
24-hour daylight, the
National Geographic Orion
navigates polar ice.





I made a routine of going to the ship's lounge before breakfast. Starting the day with an Americano while cruising by a glacier is unforgettable. I'll always remember my first sighting of Bear Island, uninhabited except for tens of thousands of birds. On hikes I found myself charmed by nibbling reindeer and entranced by moss in preppy colors of pink and green.



Hiking the mossy flats of Svalbard. Opposite, clockwise from top left: reindeer, photographing plant life, guillemots on Bear Island, the ship's lounge.

The ground in Svalbard is frozen all year. Only the top layer defrosts for a few summer months, allowing the largest plants to grow just a few inches tall. Being in an environment so hostile to life, but experiencing it in such comfort, offers quite the contrast. Sometimes it would hit me: I'm close to the North Pole and for breakfast I'm having pineapple!





*Walrus*es crowd a
Svalbard beach—a few tons
of cuddly relaxation
(and sharp tusks).
Sometimes you need
to be a bystander to see
how poetic a moment is.






The ultimate sighting in Svalbard is a polar bear. One night during dinner, a loudspeaker boomed that a bear had been spotted. I rushed with other passengers to the ship's bow, scanned the horizon for several minutes, and finally snapped a blurry picture of a white thing with my 600mm lens. It looked roughly like this:



The most exciting part, however, wasn't the bear. It was the genuine thrill felt by a whole ship of grown-ups who bolted from their dinner tables to stare giddily at a distant mountain hoping to spot white fur, like five-year-olds on Christmas Eve hoping to see Santa Claus.

The journey's most profound moment had nothing to do with polar bears. It came when the Orion reached the end of the open sea and headed straight into ice for a few miles, crashing and slicing through white floes.





Everywhere I had ever been there always was a "next" place. From Paris I can go to London, to New York, to L.A. The Arctic is different. Behind was the entire world. In front stretched nothing but an endless frozen sea.

Go With Nat Geo

National Geographic Expeditions offers two itineraries to Svalbard in 2017. Christoph Niemann joined the 17-day “Norway’s Fjords and Arctic Svalbard” trip on the *National Geographic Orion*. The itinerary includes five days in Svalbard and stops in Tromsø, the former Hanseatic town of Bergen, and the fjords of central Norway. The ship is able to probe the ice in search of wildlife, and the exact day-to-day itinerary in Svalbard remains flexible.



What to Pack

A valid passport. A heavy jacket. A waterproof rain jacket. For wet landings, waterproof pants loose enough to wear over a regular pair of trousers and waterproof knee-high rubber boots. Comfortable walking shoes. Wool socks. Thermal underwear. Sweaters. Workout clothing, for the ship's fitness center. Bathing suit for the onboard sauna. Sunglasses. Seasickness medications, if needed.



What to Read

Bradt provides a good all-around guidebook to Svalbard. Also pack Bradt's indispensable *The Arctic: A Guide to Coastal Wildlife*. Ian Stirling's *Polar Bears* pays tribute to Svalbard's apex predator. Barry Lopez's *Arctic Dreams* is a wide-ranging meditation on the Arctic. Jo Nesbø writes a popular series of Oslo-set thrillers starring detective Harry Hole. The latest, out in May 2017, is *The Thirst*.

Christoph Niemann's Trip Highlights

VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

The bridge of the *Orion* is always open. At any time, day or night, you can join the crew, see how they steer the ship, or just stare into the horizon.

BEAR ESSENTIALS

Eventually we saw many polar bears, and they came very close to the ship. The young ones especially put on quite a show: rolling around on the ice in a goofy way one minute, then jumping between sheets of ice the next.

EXPERT WITNESS

The onboard naturalists make this trip stand out. Their enthusiasm for exploring, teaching, and protecting the wildlife and landscape we visited was the most inspiring experience of the cruise.

Photo Tips

Photographer Susan Seubert will join the May 29 Svalbard trip. Here are her tips for taking great pictures in the Arctic.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Bring that new DSLR camera or iPhone out for a walk around your neighborhood and practice taking wide-angle and telephoto shots, portraits, and details.

MUST-HAVE FILTER

A useful tool in marine environments is a polarizing filter for shooting water critters (whales!) and taking the glare off the surface of the water for landscapes.

PROTECT YOUR GEAR

Waterproof camera-phone cases and dry bags are essential.

TRAVEL LIGHT

Any brand of mirror-less SLR camera will make a difference in weight and performance.

How to Book

For more information, visit natgeoexpeditions.com/explore; 888-966-8687.

WORTH EVERY STEP

15 EPIC ADVENTURES ON FOOT

By Maryellen Kennedy Duckett



Perched on an Andean mountaintop, Machu Picchu served as a royal retreat for the Inca.

When asked why he wanted to climb Mount Everest, English mountaineer George Mallory famously replied, “Because it’s there.” For those of us who need a little more motivation, we’ve chosen 15 celebrated places—including Machu Picchu, Pisa, and Provence—worth the trek or climb. Whether you’re a Sunday stroller or a Sherpa, you’ll find an adventure to match your stamina. The ultimate reward waiting at the end? An inspiring perspective on the world.



Inclined to climb
Pisa's leaning tower?
Prebook online, or
prepare to line up.

ANCIENT TRACKS

Discover past glory as you follow age-old footsteps.

PERU

Machu Picchu

● Get a reverse angle on Machu Picchu from the 8,920-foot summit of Huayna Picchu, the looming peak in all those memorable images of the Inca site. Only 200 hikers a day are permitted to make the two-hour round-trip trek. Go slow while descending the notoriously steep “stairs of death” near the top.

JORDAN

Petra

● Sculpted from soaring sandstone cliff walls more than two millennia ago, the ancient Nabataean city is one of the world’s most famous archaeological sites. Hike about 800 steps up to Petra’s massive monastery for top-of-the-rock vistas of the Wadi Arabah desert.

INDONESIA

Borobudur

● On the island of Java, Mahayana Buddhist pilgrims climb the 95-foot-high, multitiered structure (the single largest Buddhist temple on Earth) as a symbolic journey to enlightenment. Apex views of surrounding volcanoes are breathtaking, but the nearly 3,000 bas-reliefs deserve a closer look.

GREECE

Acropolis

● Crowned by the fifth-century B.C. Parthenon, Athens’s hilltop citadel is the most complete ancient Greek monumental complex still in existence. Walking up takes 15 to 20 minutes. For a less steep climb, enter on the southeast side near the Acropolis Metro stop.

CHINA

Great Wall

● Built over a period of 2,000 years, the mother of all border walls (made up of multiple segments) is a tangible link to imperial China. Walk in the footsteps of emperors, and see well-preserved Ming dynasty-era watchtowers on the six-mile Jinshanling section, 2.5 hours northeast of Beijing. Start at Zhuanduokou Pass for hikes that can last 1.5 to three hours.

STEP-O-METER

- An epic journey
- A formidable feat
- A scenic stroll

Wooden boardwalks
scroll through Plitvice
Lakes, Croatia's oldest and
largest national park.



Ruins of the fifth-century
citadel of Sigiriya, in Sri
Lanka, lie at the top of
granite Lion's Rock.



Provence's Lavender Route is at its most fragrant and colorful from July to August.



A walkway spirals up the dome of the Reichstag, Germany's parliament building, in Berlin.



FEATS OF NATURE

Explore Earth's wonders one mindful step at a time.

SRI LANKA

Sigiriya

● Towering 590 feet over the surrounding countryside in central Sri Lanka, the granite monolith known as Lion's Rock (colossal stone paws still flank the staircase) is capped by the ruins of a fifth-century royal palace. Don't look down on the vertigo-inducing climb (about 1,200 steps) to the summit.

CROATIA

Plitvice Lakes National Park

● An emerald Eden and UNESCO World Heritage site, Plitvice has 16 terraced lakes linked by boardwalks, streams, and tumbling cascades. Hike through a canyon and a cave to the base of the national park's tallest (256-foot-drop) waterfall on the six-to-eight-hour north entrance walking tour.

KENTUCKY

Mammoth Cave National Park

● Snaking beneath central Kentucky's hills is the world's longest known cave system. So far, more than 400 miles have been explored. On the two-hour Domes and Dripstones Tour you'll go deep—about 280 steps down—into a mammoth underworld of stalactites and stalagmites.

FRANCE

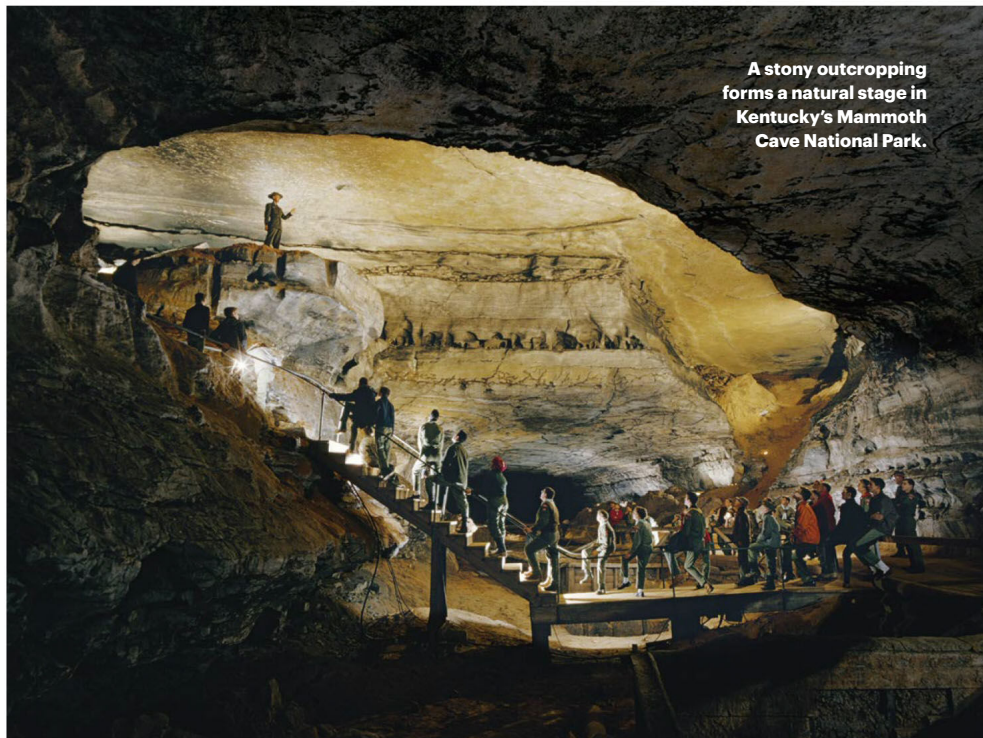
Provence's Lavender Route

● Lavender fields fill a summer walk in Provence's Lubéron region with color and fragrance. Several hiking routes (called *sentiers*) wind through the area. Our favorite fields are at Sénanque Abbey, where the monks' photogenic rows of lavender draw crowds. Go early or late to avoid the tour buses.

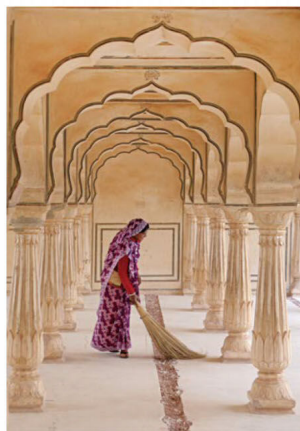
MADAGASCAR

Avenue of the Baobabs

● Some two dozen behemoth baobab trees, many towering almost a hundred feet, line this earthen road near the west coast of the island nation of Madagascar. The scene looks straight out of the movie *Land of the Lost*—and, in fact, these gentle giants, protected since 2007, are 800-year-old survivors of a primordial forest.



A stony outcropping forms a natural stage in Kentucky's Mammoth Cave National Park.



Once home to Indian maharajas, Jaipur's hilltop Amber Fort is a marvel in marble.

ASCENTS IN THE CITY

Summit spectacular spots that dominate the urban landscape.

LHASA, TIBET

Potala Palace

● Perched at over 12,000 feet above sea level, the Tibetan architectural masterpiece and former residence of the Dalai Lama is considered the world's highest altitude ancient palace. Acclimate yourself to the thin air before attempting the more than 400 steps to the top.

JAIPUR, INDIA

Amber Fort

● The imposing 16th-century complex of palaces and temples sits high atop the "hill of eagles" in Rajasthan. A strenuous (there's an ambulance at the top) 10-minute climb leads up to the fort's jewel-like mosaics, elaborate courtyards and halls, and the Pink City panorama below.

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Sydney Harbour Bridge

● Unleash your inner Spider-Man on the 1,332-step BridgeClimb, which clambers up ladders and

traverses catwalks on Sydney's signature bridge to reach the upper arch, 440 feet above sea level. Short on time or courage? Go just halfway to the top on the 90-minute BridgeClimb Sampler.

PISA, ITALY

Leaning Tower

● Buy time-stamped tickets online to climb 251 steps to the observation deck of Pisa's gravity-defying bell tower. Completed in 1399, the tower leans imperceptibly less since a 2001 restoration project helped stabilize the building.

BERLIN, GERMANY

Reichstag

● From the spiraling ramp inside the glass dome of Germany's old-is-new parliament building—about 300 steps up and down, meant to represent the rise of the people over their representatives—peer out on such city landmarks as the Brandenburg Gate. Entry is free, but reservations are required.

Tennessee-based **MARYELLEN KENNEDY DUCKETT** (@mekd) has a 37-step commute from her bedroom to her office.

ENDS of the





EARTH

A hike into the heart of Patagonia's
Torres del Paine National Park reveals a
fantastical and fragile wonderland

**STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY MICHAEL GEORGE**

An early visitor to
Chile's Torres del Paine
called it "one of the
most...spectacular
sights that human
imagination can
conceive."

THE MOUNTAINS of Torres del Paine emerge on the horizon like jagged teeth. A stormy sky looms behind us as we pull off the road after a five-hour drive north from Punta Arenas, the capital city of Chile's southernmost region. Bones are everywhere. First a skull, then vertebrae with hardened skin attached, and suddenly an entire carcass. I hear a deep rumbling, then spot a white cloud of snow cascading from mountains in the distance. Torres del Paine, or "towers of *paine*"—an indigenous word for blue—is an avalanche behind you, a condor in the sky, bones in the grass, and pumas somewhere, everywhere, watching from afar.

"It is puma hour," guide Geraldinne Retamal says. "I don't like puma hour." She has been untangling the area's gnarled terrain for the group I've joined, describing the vast habitat that stretches from granite peaks to hill country populated by horse-mounted ranchers, flamingos, guanacos (wild llama relatives), and ostrich-like rheas, to a forest of living and petrified wood, bent, twisted, hinting at the unforgiving seasons. Now she recalls that a man

was killed here by one of the large cats 10 years ago. "Where?" I ask, expecting her to describe a place far away. "Over there," she says, pointing to a rock about a hundred feet from where we stand.


I'M A TINY BLUE DOT on Google Maps, pulsating on the tip of South America, farther south than Cape Town and Sydney—and closer to Antarctica's icy tail than I ever imagined I'd be. Though it covers some 877 square miles, Torres del Paine National Park (pronounced PIE-nay) receives just 115,000 visitors a year. This may be in part because, from the United States, it can take two planes and a five-hour drive to reach the park, also a designated UNESCO biosphere reserve. By the time I drop my bags at my hotel, Las Torres Patagonia, I've traveled for more than a day.

Retamal, 28, carries herself with a warmth that seems a natural by-product of living in this landscape of wonders. A native of Patagonia, she spends her weeks running horses through the valley and hiking 20 miles as if it were a walk in the park. And what a park: hundreds of square miles of glaciers, lakes, peaks,

Chilean cowboys known as *baqueanos* (below) "demonstrate a deep connection to nature," says the author/photographer, "and they treat their horses with a parental tenderness." Opposite: The three "blue towers," for which Torres del Paine National Park is named, glow orange in early morning light.





A full-page photograph showing a young woman with dark hair and a pink headband, wearing a blue and light blue jacket and dark pants. She is standing on a rocky shore, leaning her head against a massive, textured glacier wall. The glacier is a pale blue-grey color with visible sediment and cracks. The scene is set in a high-altitude, mountainous region.

Awestruck by its size and presence, an American student gives this glacier a gentle hug. Opposite, clockwise from top left: A cook prepares local lamb specialty *cordero al palo*; a suspension bridge allows visitors to cross a swift-flowing river; the distinctive “horns” of the Cuernos del Paine formation rise beyond a lakeside picnic area.





Torres del Paine is a landscape of snowy peaks, shrinking glaciers, and numerous lagoons, such as Laguna Azul, where a visitor teeters across piles.

rivers, valleys—and the granitic Cuernos (“horns”) del Paine.

Our group sets out on a hike to Lake Sarmiento, happy for chocolate that Retamal hands us as a sweet distraction. The trail we choose curves downward, and every five minutes we seem to fall into a new biome. I marvel at a cerulean lake, realizing the photographs I’ve seen were not oversaturated. The visual drama is concentrated here; part of the park’s enchantment is how untouched it feels. We see no traces of human civilization. When the wind picks up, one of our chocolate wrappers takes off across the grass. The gasp is comical as the group runs after the fleeing trash.

Being a photographer, I’m used to racing the sun, knowing there are pivotal hours to capture the soul of a place. Yet I’d never been anywhere like this, where the light is always beautiful. Even as the sun sets, long after I’d normally hope to make an image, there are moments of light and clarity—a visual poetry, and a gift.

“WELCOME TO PATAGONIA, the land of obvious names,” Retamal says as she launches us into our second day of touring with a litany of the sights we’ll behold, including the Blue, Long,

Flamingos, and Swans Lagoons. Our tour will entail 12 hours of driving, hiking, and boating. A highlight: seeing our first glacier, Grey Glacier, though stalking the giant isn’t easy. To reach it requires a hike through a forest, crossing a hanging 140-foot-long bridge, and another hike along a black-sand beach buffeted by 50-mile-an-hour gusts of wind. Coping with these trials, we spot pale blue bergs that have detached from Grey Glacier and drifted into Grey Lake. The mother river of Grey ice looms in the distance, ribboning through a valley and into the horizon.

Approaching a glacier feels like tiptoeing around a sleeping dragon. The chill of the blue ice hitchhikes on the wind, dropping the temperature and making my eyes water, as if the glacier were repelling me. Glaciers have tremendous size and presence. You can feel their age, the way an old tree fills the air with wisdom. I learn that Grey Glacier is thinning at double the rate it did one decade ago. Some scientists estimate that it is retreating about 200 feet each year.

At nearby French Glacier, I spot a waterfall spilling out of a towering ice wall. This is not a benign sign. Retamal, who has been visiting this glacier since her early 20s, fears it will be

gone in three years. “We will miss it,” she says, with a tone of resignation that breaks my heart.

WAKING UP IN TORRES DEL PAINE is an extension of that groggy headspace between dreams and reality. To my right from my hotel I see a rainbow in the fog. To my left two horses run up as if to say good morning. My pre-coffee brain tries to catch up as I think: Is it too early to faint in the face of nature?

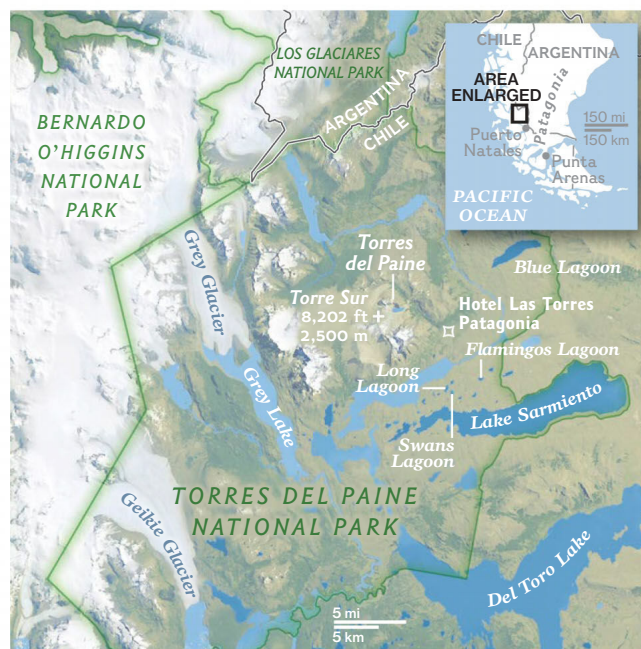
Retamal is waiting for me in the lobby with what will prove wise words. “Welcome to Patagonia: four seasons, one day.” She has organized a group exploration of the park on horseback, guided by gauchos—known here as *baqueanos*—from a nearby stable. Little do I know that Retamal’s slogan is about to come true. I mount my horse, Piojo, and we amble off. As we enter a forest of lenga trees, snow begins to fall through the blue. The next hour brings drizzle, more snow, then sunlight. A wind blows powerfully enough to tilt my helmet backward. In Patagonia, I’ve heard, wind is a spirit. It arrives at night, howls and spooks, haunting you with sounds of the afterlife.

From atop Piojo, I soon understand why Torres del Paine is described in mystical language. The mountains are sharper, the lakes bluer, the winds stronger, and the weather stranger.

IF PATAGONIA HAS FOUR SEASONS in one day, the base of the three iconic Paine *torres* has four seasons in 10 minutes. On my final morning we hike to the base area, setting out at 2:30 a.m. We hope to complete the six-mile trek before sunrise. Halfway along I gaze up at a zigzag of other headlamp lights; it seems as if we’re hiking to the stars. With Retamal’s encouragement and the huffing silence of the group, I finish the hike with 15 minutes to spare—and just in time for nature’s finale. Across the lake we see wind coming, a wall of mist as mini-tornadoes spin into the water and kick up dust in nearby valleys. Spray and grit lash our faces. Between waves of wind we gather our now scattered belongings and search for shelter from the next blow. At one point I huddle into a ball and scream into my knees, “Why am I here?”

Toward the end of the excursion, I’m collecting my thoughts. Travel makes the world feel smaller. You look at a map, and suddenly the large, complex places that appeared far away seem familiar. At the same time, travel can also give immediacy to some of the world’s biggest problems. My visit to the ice realm of Torres del Paine has helped me appreciate the growing impacts of climate change. I’ve seen waterfalls, rivers, and endless streams pouring from glaciers where normally, at this time, the season is turning toward winter—and water to ice. Touching a melting glacier is one way of grasping, but not holding on to, the beauty that we may all one day lose.

Photojournalist **MICHAEL GEORGE** (@migeophoto) trekked the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route for his National Geographic story “Walking the Way” (May 2015).



Torres del Paine Playbook

WHEN TO GO

Torres del Paine National Park enjoys its warmest weather from October into April, though temperatures rarely rise above 68°F. Be prepared for changeable and very windy conditions.

WHAT TO KNOW

Puerto Natales is the closest big town; buses travel the four-hour route to and from the park (quicker if by car). Accommodations range from design-forward upscale lodges to campsites and dormlike *refugio* rooms. Torres del Paine National Park charges an entrance fee: for adults in high season, 18,000 Chilean pesos (\$28); low season, 10,000 CLP (\$16). parquetorresdelpaine.cl

EXPLORING THE PARK

First-time visitors should consider hiring an outfitter that specializes in Patagonia. **Chile Nativo:** This local excursion operator offers a number of Torres del Paine options, including outings for multisport, kayaking, and independent travelers. www.chilenativo.travel

REI Adventures: U.S.-based REI organizes five- to 13-day Torres del Paine hiking, multisport, and volunteer vacations (participants work on trail maintenance and restoration projects). rei.com

Andes Mountain

Expediciones: Choose from a range of kayaking, horseback, trekking, and mountain-biking expeditions; most begin and end in Puerto Natales. andesmountain.cl

AdventureSmith

Explorations: A seven-day “Patagonia Wildlife Safari” focuses on sightings of guanacos, condors, rheas, and other fauna. adventuresmithexplorations.com

GO WITH NAT GEO

National Geographic Expeditions offers several trips to this Chilean national park, from the 13-day “Patagonia Hiking Adventure” to a 20-day small-ship cruise, “Rounding the Cape: Chilean Patagonia & Argentina’s Staten Island.” natgeoexpeditions.com/explore; 888-966-8687. Or stay put at the architecturally striking Tierra Patagonia Hotel & Spa, a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World. natgeolodges.com/explore; 888-701-5486.

FINDING LAND'S END

Life in Brittany, on the far western edge of France, centers around tradition—and some great parties

BY CHRISTOPHER HALL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENDAN HOFFMAN

In the village of Loc Ildut, a *pardon*, a typically Breton religious festival, is a chance for locals to get closer.



WALKING A COASTAL PATH AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD CAN BE DAUNTING— BUT WHAT A SHOW.

Pummeled by gusting winds, I nervously skirt the brink of a precipice at Pointe du Raz in Finistère, France. Some 200 feet below, the Atlantic Ocean churns and heaves against cliffs, whipping the sea into mountains of creamy froth.

This is Land's End. *Finis Terrae*, in Latin. The literal ends of the Earth for the ancients and, for me, the subject of a peculiar passion. The world is dotted with capes, points, and other geographic features named Land's End, or an equivalent like Finistère, and I collect them the way other travelers compile lists of countries visited. Their names alone I find irresistible, tantalizing echoes of a primordial age when knowledge of the world largely ceased where open sea began. Poised between the familiarity of terrestrial life and the incomprehensible vastness of the ocean, these spots held a mystical power for our forebears, provoking in them a contemplation of creation and humankind's place in it. Though satellites have now mapped every square mile of Earth—and I am deeply grateful at times for GPS navigation—for me these meetings of land and ocean still wield a vestige of that ancient power. Perhaps this best explains why I've visited Land's Ends in England and California; Verdens Ende in Norway; Finisterre in Spain. And, now, Finistère.

An isolated, Delaware-size lobe of land with 904,000 inhabitants, Finistère is the westernmost department of France and its Brittany region. Though located only 330 miles from Paris, it is a physical land apart, jutting so far into the Atlantic that Finistère belongs as much to that body of water as to the





Fireworks light up the night sky at a *fest noz*, a music-and-dance soiree, in Le Conquet, the westernmost town in mainland France.



European continent. Sublime encounters with the ocean lie around virtually every bend of coastal road here.

But to my surprise and delight, I am also discovering that Finistère captivates for reasons beyond geography. Here, in its historic heartland on the far edge of France, Brittany's authentic Celtic culture is showing signs of an exciting renaissance. It's hard to miss, even for a short-term visitor like myself. I hear it in the Breton language programs that pour from my car radio. I see it in the crowds that gather for a parade of traditional costumes or a *fest noz*, a Breton music-and-dance soiree. And, most of all, I sense it in the deep Breton identity of those I'm encountering along the way, proud residents of a cherished land's end.

MEET HERVÉ LAVANANT AT HIS HOME outside Plougonven, near Finistère's eastern edge. His outfit includes a black flat-brimmed hat and billowing pants tucked into calf-high boots. In response to my quizzical stare, the retired machinist, my Airbnb host for two nights, explains that it's a traditional Breton costume and that his Breton dance group is leaving in an hour to perform *à l'étranger*—abroad. I am confused. Does he mean England? "No," he laughs. "Here the expression can mean any place outside Finistère. We'll be in the next department over, about 20 minutes from here."

I arrive at Lavanant's restored farmhouse after four days exploring Finistère's back roads, driving past black-and-white

cows, churchyards brimming with fantastical stone statuary, and cottage gardens where pink and blue hydrangea shrubs grow as big as a bus. The days are filled with only-in-Finistère experiences. I visit the Cairn of Barnenez, far older than the pyramids of Egypt and the largest Neolithic mausoleum in Europe. I also explore the Arrée Mountains in Finistère's interior, hiking the bracken- and heather-covered summit of 1,250-foot Montagne Saint-Michel.

The morning after my arrival, Lavanant boils me a fresh egg from one of his hens and demonstrates a dance step or two. "What I love about Breton dance," he tells me, "is that it's a communal experience. Rich, poor. Young, old. Handsome, not so handsome. You're all dancing together." Lavanant also speaks passionately of Finistère's historic role as a guardian of Brittany's Celtic heritage. "The farther west you travel in Brittany, away from the center of France, the stronger Breton culture is," he says. "And you can't get any farther west than Finistère." For centuries, he adds, Brittany resisted French efforts to suppress its traditions and especially its language, a close cousin of Welsh and Cornish. But the culture's best defense was its isolation, with Finistère—or Penn ar Bed in Breton, meaning either "head or end of the world"—its strongest redoubt. "Finistère," he says, "has never been the kind of place where people just pass through."

That is especially true of Île d'Ouessant, called Enez Eusa in Breton, a six-square-mile, north Finistère island of 800 full-time residents and five lighthouses that is part of a UNESCO



Great Breton: The owners of Manoir de Kerdanet (above) transformed a 590-year-old manor house into a beguiling bed-and-breakfast in Poullan-sur-Mer. Amid mossy stones and rife with tales of King Arthur, the town of Huelgoat (opposite) provides a convenient base for hikes into the Parc d'Armorique forest.

biosphere reserve. I head by ferry to Ouessant on a bright, warm day. After an hour's crossing from the mainland aboard a boat packed with other day-trippers, I rent a car and drive around. Dirt paths and bumpy, narrow roads bisect rocky, violet-tinged heath, connecting scattered hamlets whose houses huddle against the ferocious winter gales and dense fog that can shut down all transport to and from the island for days. At Pointe de Pern, the westernmost speck of land in European France, I stand on a cobblestone beach, staring out to sea and contemplating the astonishing fact that the next landfall is Canada.

Later, after a lunch of freshly caught John Dory, I fall into conversation with Mickaël Grunweiser, a ruddy-cheeked, 32-year-old fisherman whose ancestors arrived on Ouessant around 1880. Grunweiser is taking a break from cleaning the catch he hauled in that day on his 31-foot boat, *Labous Mor* (Sea Bird), which bobs in the harbor just below. He works with his brother, and theirs is among the last fishing families on the island.

"I took my first boat trip at the age of four days," he tells me, "when my parents brought me back to Ouessant from the

mainland hospital where I was born. After finishing school, and up to about four years ago, I worked on large fishing boats out of south Finistère. That was fine but it's better now that I get to stay on Ouessant. I wouldn't call this easy work, but I'm happy."

I ask Grunweiser whether he considers himself first and foremost French, Breton, or Finistérien. He smiles broadly. "Finistère before Brittany, and Brittany before France. But in truth I'm one hundred percent Ouessantin."

A FEST NOZ HAS REACHED FEVER PITCH on Place Saint-Corentin, the cathedral square in Quimper, the capital of Finistère. On stage, the popular band Digresk blasts fusion rock incorporating Celtic folk tunes and the banshee wails of an oboe-like *bombarde* and a bagpipe called a *biniou*. The rollicking music propels a thousand people around the dance floor. Hands joined to form closed circles and long, snaking lines, they've been swinging arms and shuffle-stepping in traditional style for hours. From where I stand at their edge, the dancers blur into a single, pulsing mass of rapt and flushed faces.

This tribal gathering—for that is how it feels—marks the close of the annual Festival de Cornouaille Quimper, a weeklong July outpouring of Breton culture. At the festival's marquee parade that morning, I find myself standing next to a 64-year-old nun and Quimper native, Sister Yvette, as 2,000 Bretons troop by, all dressed in the traditional garb of their hometowns and villages. "I saw my first festival parade when I was four, and I still



**Boldly wedged
between boulders, a
17th-century cottage
maintains its coastal
watch in Ménéham.**



remember it,” Sister Yvette tells me. “My father put me on top of the car so I could see.” Sister Yvette points toward a group of women in black dresses, intricately embroidered white aprons, and the starched, lace headdresses called *coiffes*. “This isn’t about folklore,” she says. “It’s our living culture.”

That culture continues to evolve in surprising ways, and not just in the music of bands such as Digresk. On a sunny day outside Quimper, at Tronoën beach, I see scores of surfers. Impulsively I sign up for a surf lesson, my first ever, and the next morning finds me and a gaggle of wiggly, school-age kids on nearby La Torche beach with Béranger Fontaine, a 29-year-old surf instructor whose right forearm sports a small “BZH” tattoo, short for Breizh, the Breton name for Brittany. For more than an hour, clad in full wet suit, I splash through the 63°F water, paddle furiously to catch breakers, and finally manage to stand on my board for all of two seconds—a real triumph.

I head back onto the beach and join Fontaine as he surveys the kids’ progress. He describes Finistère’s tight-knit, fanatic surfing community. “We’re like a brotherhood. We usually surf in groups, and we surf all year long.” Fontaine reflects on Finistère’s ancient connection with the sea, and how its surfers are another, more modern example of it. And just like the fishermen and sailors, surfers recently began to participate in the tradition of *pardons*, the religious processions that have taken place throughout Brittany for centuries. During the pardon of Notre Dame de Tronoën, in September, surfers now bring boards to be blessed.

ONE EVENING, IN A DIRT-FLOORED, corrugated metal barn outside Ploumoguer, I stumble onto a *fest noz*. Not a big, important one drawing top musical acts, but a homey, Tuesday night gathering in the country. And still 400 people have shown up.

I linger at the perimeter of the crowd, just like I did at the *fest noz* in Quimper, before two guys, ignoring my protestations, sweep me onto the dance floor. They place me between two severe-looking older women, who immediately adjust the incorrect way I hold their hands. The music begins and hundreds of us start moving in circles, swinging and pumping our arms. At first, I bumble. But then, slowly, I start to feel the rhythm rather than thinking about it. The music takes hold of me, my movements become smoother, and I exchange tiny smiles with the women to either side of me. I am, just briefly, part of the tribe.

Here, in this welcoming country barn, is where I find Finistère’s Celtic heart beating strongest. We may be at the end of the Earth, but that doesn’t mean we can’t spiritedly dance our way to morning.

San Francisco journalist **CHRISTOPHER HALL** (@HallWriter) last wrote for us about France’s Drôme Provençale. This is the first Traveler feature for photographer **BRENDAN HOFFMAN** (@hoffmanbrendan), who is based in Kiev, Ukraine.





The annual Festival de Cornouaille, in Quimper, celebrates all things Breton, from music and dance to clothing and food.



Once a sleepy fishing port, Morgat is now a popular beach resort town, with boardwalk-style attractions.

FINISTÈRE'S FINEST

The best time to visit is during spring and summer. You're bound to find a traditional *fest noz*, *pardon*, or other type of festival taking place somewhere.



Where to Stay

BY THE SEA

Grand Hôtel des Bains

This classic early 20th-century resort in Locquirec has been beautifully renovated, with most rooms providing views of the ocean. From \$135. grand-hotel-des-bains.com

ESTATE OF GRACE

Manoir de Kerdanet

This B&B in a nearly 600-year-old manor house near Pointe du Raz offers two doubles and one suite in a setting that's more historic than luxe. From \$130. manoirkerdanet.com

Where to Eat

OCEAN BOUNTY

Le Bar Iodé

Husband-wife owners Claude and Gaëlle Lecuziat buy directly from Breton fishermen, making this airy, modern dining room and

large outdoor terrace, next to Quimper's central food hall, a top spot for local seafood.

PANCAKE PASSION

Auberge de la Crêpe

Located in Brittany's highest village, La Feuillée, this 17th-century stone house turned restaurant serves a great selection of local ciders and crepes, including a buckwheat crepe filled with ham, leeks, and mushroom sauce. auberge-delacrepe.fr

Insider Tip

SPARKLING SIPS

Cider Tastings

Naturally effervescent and with a deep golden color, cider from the Cornouaille region is made from heirloom apples. Sample it at the area's many cideries. Outside Cornouaille, Domaine de Kervéguen, in Guimaëc, has tastings and self-guided cellar tours. kerveguen.fr

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

NEXTSTOP»

SIGNATURE EVENTS AND PROMOTIONS



Hampi, India

India's Stunning Heritage Sites

Add a handful of UNESCO World Heritage sites to your life list when you visit India. The Monuments at Hampi, last capital of a great 14th century Hindu kingdom. The marble Taj Mahal built by emperor Shah Jahan. The Ellora Caves' cliffside monasteries and temples. Kaziranga National Park, with its elephants, tigers, and rhinos. Flung like jewels across the country, 35 heritage sites showcase the best of India's cultural and natural beauty. Learn more at incredibleindia.org

Incredible India



Enter the Journey to Jordan Sweepstakes!

You could win a spectacular trip for two to Jordan! Discover a country overflowing with culture, adventure, and heritage. And uncover why it's a must-see for people all over the world. Don't miss out; the final day to enter is April 15, 2017!

For more information and to enter for a chance to win, visit nationalgeographic.com/journeytojordan



Visit the 1st Town in Florida Awarded the Happiest Seaside Towns in America!

The natural beauty and attractions here offer up a treasure trove of activities—minus the crowds. Come make memories that last longer than tan lines with beautiful beaches, nature preserves and year-round near perfect temperatures. Plan your trip at discovermartin.com today!



Smart Cities: Newcastle, Australia

Cities are centers of innovation, beehives of social activity, hotbeds of creativity, and among the world's most fascinating places to visit. Discover how cities like Newcastle, Australia, are confronting challenges with creativity to become places that are well worth a visit. Learn more at nationalgeographic.com/smart-cities





Spirits soar in the “beer & sake garden” at Ben’s Tune Up, a festive space in a former garage. Biltmore House (opposite), erected by George Vanderbilt in the 1890s, remains the largest private home in the country.

HAPPILY EVER ASHEVILLE

Artists, musicians, and makers brew up urban magic
in North Carolina's highlands

A WITCH, AN HERBALIST, and a ghost buster walk into a bar...

The sentence could jump-start a joke anywhere in the U.S. In Asheville, North Carolina, it's just another happy hour. I'm at Sovereign Remedies, an elegantly high-windowed lounge on North Market Street, where I find myself in a conversation with witch Byron Ballard, herbalist Maia Toll, and haunted-tours guide Joshua P. Warren, who are downing cocktails mixed with sarsaparilla, milk thistle, and evening primrose. The after-work crowd around us is convivial and the conversation hardly supernatural; more like gossip about Asheville's hordes of visitors and the 14 new hotels a-building to shelter them. The heady beverage I've been served gives me the nerve to compose a personal question for Ballard. She answers before I open my mouth.

"I'm not a good or bad witch," she says, with a gleam in her eye. "I am an excellent witch." How did she read my mind?

Drive-by magic, I soon learn, is a thing in Asheville. Blithe spirits (drinkable and thinkable) thrive in this nontraditional city of 88,512 that spoons with the southern Appalachian Mountains in ancient

Cherokee lands drained by the French Broad River. Asheville already is high on the list of smart cities, with walkable neighborhoods, business start-ups, and a welcoming, friendly vibe that, on Fridays at dusk, is audible to all: Downtown reverberates with the drumming of its citizenry who gather at Pritchard Park to welcome the weekend with a rhythmic pound and stomp.



By **ANDREW NELSON** Photographs by **KRISTA ROSSOW**

The drums herald a city that is melding new energies with hallowed traditions. Asheville embraces solar power and potter's wheels, new age crystals and Roycroft rocking chairs, zip-lining and contra dancing. The air is scented with hops, roasting coffee, barbecued pork, and ambition, depending on what artisans are firing up along the South Slope, a reviving neighborhood of old brick warehouses. Asheville supports an equally spirited music scene, pumping out tunes by funk practitioners, bluegrass fiddlers, and Moog synthesizers (Moog Music's corporate HQ is on Broadway Street).

This maker mystique and reverence for craft began with the Cherokee and grew with the Scotch-Irish, who arrived in the 18th century and handcrafted most of their goods. By 1901 that legacy became the basis for a flowering arts and crafts movement spearheaded by a wealthy newcomer, Edith Vanderbilt. Married to the moneyed heir George Vanderbilt, Edith would employ Ashevilleans to make furniture and weave woolens at a crafts program she created, Biltmore Estate Industries. Some years later, the program would be moved across town, to the Grove Park Inn. Now a new generation of artisans display their works—pottery, textiles, furniture—in the nearby Grovewood Gallery.

But it was George Vanderbilt who would commission what has become Asheville's grandest attraction. The New York millionaire (billionaire in today's dollars) imported master craftsmen from Europe to erect Biltmore House, a 250-room (43 bathrooms) palace on an 8,644-acre estate landscaped by Frederick Law Olmsted.

Biltmore House was, and remains, the largest private home in America and is still owned by the Vanderbilt family. It ranks among the most visited sites in North Carolina; in 2015 it welcomed 1.4 million visitors. On the grounds are stables, paths, gardens, three lodging options, and come weekends, a bevy of brides: Nine weddings were held simultaneously days before I arrived—and Biltmore promises no bride will spot another. The estate is one part Disneyland and two parts *Downton Abbey*.

The morning I visit, entrance lines snake past Biltmore's heavy oaken doors. I've selected one of the more imaginative tours, up through the mansion's attic and onto the roof. Because of the crush, our guide, Mary Ruth ("call me 'M.R.'"), employs a no-nonsense form of crowd control with frequent reminders to stay with the group. We follow her up a winding marble staircase,

through a living room, and onto a walkway bordering the steeply pitched slate roof.

Mary Ruth narrates many facts about the house's history but, busy counting its chimneys, I ignore her.

I'm up to 16 when I sense eyes turning to me as M.R. says, "What did I just say?"

I feel like an eighth grader caught texting in history class. Mary Ruth is not going to permit any of her charges to depart Biltmore unmoved by the work it took to build the place.

"Ummm...", is all I can muster.

Called out, I meekly follow Mary Ruth into a garret to see how the roof tiles were laid. Then we step out onto a porch, an aerie where the Vanderbilts must have surveyed their kingdom, and it strikes me that much of Asheville's magic is as free as these expansive views.

And as close as the downtown sidewalk where I now stand,

staring up at what looks to be a Jazz Age Hogwarts: the 13-story Jackson Building, built in 1924 and topped with decorative gargoyles. It is just one of the architectural pearls I'm discovering on a walking tour with Asheville historian Kevan Frazier as we work off the biscuits with bacon gravy we devoured at Early Girl, a local restaurant.

"We Ashevilleans love our nooks, corners, and crannies," Frazier says. And stories, I think, as he tells me how the town went from a way-stop for 18th-century hog drivers to a playground for the one percent by the 1900s, sprouting ornate hotels,

such as the majestic Grove Park Inn, where the novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald flirted with pretty young women, and where pretty people still travel today to take in the mountain vistas and luxuriate in the inn's waterfall-themed spa. A boom in the 1920s further transformed the sleepy town. By 1929 Asheville had added many significant structures, most of them in art deco style. It was quite the party.

The Depression ended the fun; Asheville awoke owing creditors \$56 million. It would take 47 years for the city to pay that sum off. The silver lining: Too poor to fund urban renewal, Asheville has preserved terrific examples of early 20th-century architecture, including a shopping mall, the 1920s Grove Arcade, with its Parisian-style book stands outside the Battery Park Book Exchange. Frazier points out other highlights, such as the home of native son Thomas Wolfe, who penned *Look Homeward, Angel*,

ASHEVILLE
embraces solar power
and potter's wheels,
new age crystals and
Roycroft rocking chairs,
zip-lining and
contra dancing.

Clockwise from top left: "Farm-to-glass" cocktails and plates such as chickpea fries please palates at Sovereign Remedies. Ceramist Laura Cooke crafts porcelain pieces in her studio at ClaySpace, a cooperative of ceramic artists in the River Arts District. Locals chat over coffee and hot doughnuts at Hole café. Foraged foods, including wild mushrooms and cherries, blanket the kitchen table of Asheville "mushroom man" Alan Muskat.





and a building once used by a “colonel” named Harland Sanders. Would it have been NCFC, I muse, if he’d stayed?

Asheville was a town of dreamers, builders, and doers. Still is.

“Something’s going on here seven days a week,” Scott Woody asserts while touring me through the Isis Music Hall, a former movie theater built in the 1930s on Haywood Street in West Asheville and named for the Egyptian goddess. He and his family turned the place into a music venue. Right now two local acts—one on the patio and one upstairs—are playing to a heel-tapping crowd. Other Asheville performance venues such as the Orange Peel and the Grey Eagle are equally popular with patrons.

Nashville may not feel nervous just yet, but that could change soon: Asheville’s cultural energy now is extending to the visual and material arts. Sometimes dubbed “Santa Fe East,” the town teems with painters, ceramists, textile artists, jewelers, and graphic designers. Work by that last group is on display at the Center for Craft, Creativity and Design, and at Horse + Hero, where posters by local artists hang for sale.

“Community is Asheville’s true magic,” says music producer Jessica Tomasin, who is sharing my table at Isis with Woody. “We really support one another here.”

Painter Tony Corbitt, Jr.’s keenly observed portraits and dreamy plein air landscapes attract me when I see him painting at Asheville’s Grand Bohemian Hotel. He in turn encourages me to go explore the River Arts District, a reviving industrial area of artists and craftspeople flanking the French Broad River.

“Asheville is fertile ground for creatives,” he says. “The energy here is devoted to the future. You can see it in the artists who are working in the refurbished textile and cotton mills.”

The afternoon I visit, the district’s studios, kilns, and forges are busy. Everyone looks like an artist, but the tourists are the ones with the shopping bags. There’s not a chain store to be seen. Asheville wouldn’t have it any other way.

“Ninety percent of the Christmas presents I buy are made here,” Tomasin says. “We’re the poster kids for ‘go local.’”

Local also is the clarion call for Asheville’s foodies. The city prizes both Southern comfort—OWL Bakery’s cardamom buns with lemon glaze, Buxton Hall Barbecue’s buttermilk fried

chicken sandwiches—and international flair: “salt & pepper” tofu at Gan Shan Station, Bollywood-y tandoori dishes at the exuberant Indian restaurant Chai Pani. It also likes foods found in the wild. My dinner at Nightbell, four-star chef Katie Button’s restaurant, begins with an appetizer of “chicken of the woods,” a type of mushroom foraged in the surrounding forests—a realm of the senses all its own and a world away from Asheville’s shamanic men’s circles, golf resorts, and yoga studios.

One morning I hike up a mountain trail just 30 minutes from downtown via the Blue Ridge Parkway, fingering the waxy, jade-hued leaves of rhododendrons as they flap against my hands. Soon I am drawn to the murmur-roar of a coursing stream swollen with recent rain. When I reach it, mud-spattered and breathless, I can taste the cold tang of the waterfall’s spray as it shoots over the smooth rocks into crystalline pools.

It’s a transcendent moment. And that may be Asheville’s entire point. Witches and herbalists can concoct all they want, but spirits here don’t need conjuring. They’ve already materialized. Creative, natural, or communal, Asheville’s energy is as present as the white water rushing below my feet.

Nearing the end of my trip, I join Corbitt and some of his friends at the Guitar Bar, a music venue in an 1880s brick cotton mill along the French Broad River, where a five-man band is energizing the room with old-school rock-and-roll tunes. I watch the crowd dance and swing

as I quaff an excellent locally brewed India pale ale. A middle-age couple sits, unobtrusively, at the bar, sharing secret smiles with each other. I strike up a conversation. Terry and Deborah Firman tell me that they relocated to Asheville from Hampton, Virginia, earlier in the month.

“Sold everything we owned and moved here,” Deborah says.

“Asheville feels like family,” Terry adds. “It’s never like this anywhere else.”

“There’s a let-it-be vibe here that I just adore,” Deborah adds.

“Life is too damn short not to go for it. Asheville is...”

Somehow, I just knew what she would say next.

“...our magical adventure.”



“COMMUNITY
is Asheville’s true magic,”
Jessica Tomasin tells me.
“We really support one
another here.”

Asheville Hot Air Balloons takes passengers up at dawn over the Blue Ridge Mountains southwest of Asheville. “If I could start every morning with a sunrise hot-air balloon ride, I would,” says photographer Krista Rossow. “The landscape just glows in the golden morning light.”

ANDREW NELSON (🐦 @andrewnelson) is Traveler’s editorial projects director. **KRISTA ROSSOW** (📷 @kristarossow) is a photo expert on many National Geographic Expeditions. This story was produced in partnership with ExploreAsheville.com.

FOLLOW YOUR CURIOSITY

TRAVEL WITH NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



Call 1-888-966-8687 or visit natgeoexpeditions.com

 NATIONAL
GEOGRAPHIC
EXPEDITIONS

CULTURAL & WILDLIFE EXPEDITIONS | SMALL-SHIP VOYAGES | PHOTOGRAPHY TRIPS & WORKSHOPS | PRIVATE EXPEDITIONS
FAMILY EXPEDITIONS | PRIVATE JET TRIPS | ACTIVE ADVENTURES | TRAIN TRIPS | UNIQUE LODGES OF THE WORLD
STUDENT EXPEDITIONS AND MORE!

Photo: Footprints riddle the sand as gemsboks trot across Namibia's Namib Desert.

© 2017 National Geographic Partners, LLC. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPEDITIONS and the Yellow Border Design are trademarks of the National Geographic Society, used under license.

FREE TRAVEL INFORMATION

A listing of advertisers who would like to offer you additional information about their products and services



Circle the number on the attached card and mail or fax to 888-847-6035

Travel the U.S.A.

(circle 500 or text TRAPR 500 to 41411)

1. **Alabama's Coastal Connection**
Sugar-white sand beaches, charming downtowns, wildlife preserves, historic sites and fresh Gulf seafood await on Alabama's Coastal Connection.
2. **Asheville Area CVB**
Get away to stunning vistas, unexpected rhythms and surprising flavors. Book a trip today and see what Asheville, NC, is all about.
3. **Eden House Key West**
305-296-6868
4. **Experience Scottsdale**
Scottsdale offers an escape that leaves you feeling effortlessly revitalized. Come get away, and see what blooms in the desert.
5. **Helena, Montana**
With endless outdoor activities in the scenic Rocky Mts., a rich Montana history and energetic downtown, your perfect vacation awaits in Helena, MT.
6. **South County Tourism Council**
Share our good nature...beaches, forests, wildlife preserves, conservation areas. Free South County Vacation Guide. 800-548-4662.
7. **The Alaska Railroad**
Travel with the Alaska Railroad and enjoy the journey as much as the destination.
8. **The Great State of Texas**
Texas... It's like a whole other country that's miles away from ordinary. Explore like a local with our #TexasToDo Films and #TexasToDo Gallery.
9. **Visit Arkansas**
Make plans to create moments, memories and more — with our free Vacation Planning Kit. What will you make in Arkansas?

Arizona

(circle 135 or text TRAPR 135 to 41411)

10. **Arizona Office of Tourism**
AZ's less traveled destinations make ideal getaways. In a few hours, you can be anywhere in AZ. Get out on the open road & get ready for adventure.
11. **Flagstaff, Arizona**
Located a scenic 80-mile drive from the Grand Canyon National Park, Flagstaff is the hub for northern Arizona activities and offers four seasons.
12. **Page Lake Powell Tourism**
Page, AZ - Named "one of Travel's Best Road Trips", your home base for hiking, biking, boating, fishing, and off-road adventure. 888-261-PAGE (7243)
13. **Grand Canyon West**
Since 1988, the Hualapai have welcomed visitors to their tourist destinations, including Hualapai Lodge, Hualapai River Runners, & Grand Canyon West.
14. **Navajo Tourism Department**
YA'AT'EEH - WELCOME. Explore the Navajo Nation's wide array of ancient ruins, the dozen national monuments, tribal parks & historical sites.

Hot Spot Travel: Best of California

(circle 134 or text TRAPR 134 to 41411)

15. **Catalina Island** — one hour off SoCal Coast. 866-449-5807
16. **Oceanside** — San Diego's North Shore. 800-350-7873
17. **Redding** — 6 National / 9 State parks. 800-874-7562
18. **Ventura/Channel Islands** — One hour from LA. 800-483-6204



Text TRAPR followed by the category # to 41411

Hot Spot Travel: Best of the Pacific Northwest

(circle 133 or text TRAPR 133 to 41411)

19. **Cascade Loop, WA** — Washington's Ultimate Road Trip. 509-662-3888
20. **Leavenworth, WA** — Bavarian getaway in "The Alps" of WA. 509-548-5807
21. **Sea Lion Caves, OR** — America's largest sea cave, full of Steller sea lions. 541-547-3111
22. **Tualatin Valley, OR** — "Wine Region of the Year," in Portland's backyard. 800-537-3149

Louisiana

(circle 132 or text TRAPR 132 to 41411)

23. **Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana CVB**
Alligators, walking trails, Gulf beaches — reconnect with nature along the Creole Nature Trail near Lake Charles, LA. 800-456-7952
24. **St. Francisville**
Find your St. Francisville, step into our historic homes & gardens, outdoor adventures, historic downtown, shops, restaurants & unique lodging.
25. **St. Landry Parish Tourist Commission**
In St. Landry Parish, accordions are cool and boudin is hot. Our events and festivals celebrate everything from art and Cajun music to food & spices.
26. **St. Martin Parish, Louisiana**
St. Martin Parish is the perfect place to taste, explore, and discover the flavor, art, and nature of Cajun and Creole culture in South Louisiana.

Visit Florida

(circle 131 or text TRAPR 131 to 41411)

27. **Cottage Rental Agency - Seaside, Florida**
Premier provider of beach cottages and luxury homes in Seaside, Florida, with amazing amenities and on-site services.
28. **Martin County of Tourism**
Easy-to-get-to-area, unique communities, beautiful beaches, 77+ parks & the most bio-diverse lagoon ecosystem in the Northern Hemisphere. 877-585-0085.
29. **Mexico Beach, Florida**
A well-guarded "secret" vacation spot of families for generations, Mexico Beach, FL, is a time capsule of memories that harken back to the way it used to be.
30. **Sandestin Golf and Beach Resort**
Experience the top-rated resort on Florida's Gulf Coast with beach, tennis, golf, the Village of Baytowne Wharf and so much more.
31. **The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel**
Receive a free Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel Lonely Planet guidebook packed full of vacation tips!
32. **The Pearl Hotel**
Forbes Four-Star & AAA Four-Diamond Beach Hotel with destination-worthy cuisine and alluring spa in Rosemary Beach, FL.
33. **Visit South Walton**
In NW Florida, South Walton's sugar-white sand beaches and turquoise water complement the 16 individual beach neighborhoods that invite you to find your perfect beach.

Wyoming

(circle 130 or text TRAPR 130 to 41411)

34. **Cody/Yellowstone Country**
Countless outdoor adventures await you in Cody, Wyoming. Come experience the wildest way into Yellowstone. Plan your trip today.



For instant access, visit us online at ngt-travelinfo.com

35. **Wyoming Office of Tourism**
The most freeing and fulfilling adventures can't be explained. Only experienced. 307-777-7777.

Yellowstone Country

(circle 129 or text TRAPR 129 to 41411)

36. **Visit Bozeman**
Located 80 miles from Yellowstone, and situated between two ski areas, Bozeman is an outdoor mecca with amazing fly fishing and Montana hospitality.
37. **West Yellowstone Chamber/CVB**
West Yellowstone, the West entrance to Yellowstone National Park, surrounded by mountains & public lands is a year-round, family-friendly destination.
38. **Yellowstone Country, Montana**
MT's gateway to Yellowstone with mountains, hot springs, rivers, powder, cuisine and trails. Discover the Yellowstone you haven't seen yet. 800-736-5276.

Travel the World

(circle 503 or text TRAPR 503 to 41411)

39. **Aurora Expeditions**
Small-ship cruises to Antarctica, Arctic, Scotland, Alaska & the Kimberley Coast. Antarctica 2017-18 Earlybird Discounts Out Now.
40. **MoaTrek New Zealand Small Group Tours**
Relax, make friends and see the very best of New Zealand in comfort — we're proud Kiwis and love showing off all our favourite holiday spots.
41. **New Zealand Trails "World Heritage Walking Tour"**
The best of the best in New Zealand on a friendly small group tour with expert guides, comfortable accommodation and great cuisine.

Cruising

(circle 505 or text TRAPR 505 to 41411)

42. **Delfin Amazon Cruises**
Enjoy a Luxury Expedition Amazon Cruise in the Peruvian rain forest. Indulge yourself in a private experience on board our 4-cabin cruise ship.

Traveler Getaways

(circle 507 or text TRAPR 507 to 41411)

43. **Active Adventures Europe**
Offering outstanding, all-inclusive small group adventure vacations in the Mont Blanc region, the Dolomites and the Italian Lakes District.
44. **African Safari Company** 800-414-3090
45. **Frontiers North Adventures** 800-663-9832
46. **Greensboro Area Convention & Visitors Bureau**
Play in the Center of it all — Greensboro, NC. Immerse yourself in Greensboro's family oriented attractions & explore over 200 years of rich history!
47. **MIR Corporation** 800-424-7289
48. **Mountain Lodges of Peru**
Offering first-class lodge-to-lodge adventures to Machu Picchu, with the choice of trekking the Salkantay Trail or the multi-activity Lares Adventure.
49. **Pacific Delight Tours** 800-221-7179
50. **Wilderness Travel** 800-368-2794
51. **World Spree**
Asia Travel Specialist. Small groups, great guides, nice hotels, good meals, once-in-a-lifetime experience for discerning travelers. Dare to Compare!
52. **YMT Vacations**
Experts in travel offering value priced, fully-escorted land and cruise tours to dream destinations. Call 877-214-4755.


TRAVELER

GETAWAYS

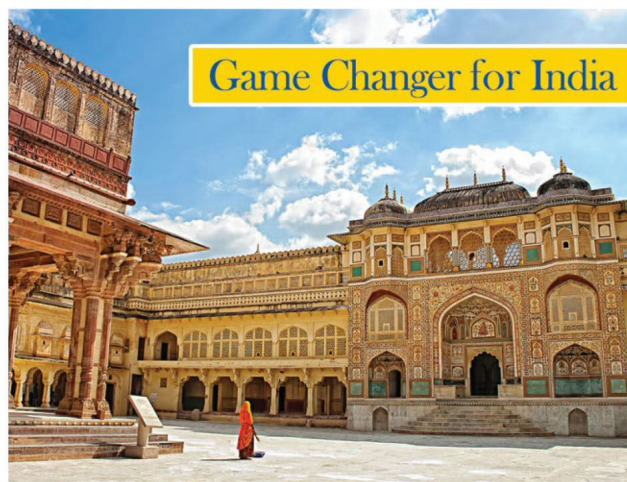
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR PLANNING YOUR NEXT JOURNEY



Sacred Valley & Lares Adventure

Explore the most iconic Inca sites in the Sacred Valley and travel among traditional weavers' mountain villages on your way to Machu Picchu, with views of snowcapped peaks and remote valleys. Mountain Lodges of Peru offers accommodations in first-class lodges, with gourmet cuisine and full amenities (even Jacuzzis!). Throughout the trip you will be escorted by our experienced local guides, with daily à-la-carte activities including cultural and hiking experiences. Five-and seven-day all-inclusive programs from Cusco to Cusco. Explore your own sense of adventure.

sacredvalleylaresadventure.com 877.491.5261



First-Class Travel at Bargain Prices

12-Day Incredible India with Tiger Reserve from \$1699 air inclusive
23-Day India Panorama from \$3,999 air inclusive

Dream itineraries, deluxe hotels, great guides, local cuisine, people-to-people experiences. We invite you to search and compare, defying anyone to do it better!

With great passion, we design our itineraries, select our hotels, train our tour guides, arrange our meals of local flavors, and provide an up-close look at locals and their daily lives—just as a first-time traveler would do it for themselves, if they knew how.

Knowing our destinations inside out, we challenge ourselves to create life-changing journeys at a very affordable price.

worldspree.com 866.652.5656



Not Your Average Folk

America's longest-running FREE celebration of heritage and culture, Greensboro hosts the prestigious National Folk Festival, September 8-10, 2017. With over 300 world-class artists on seven stages, this three-day event is an outdoor multicultural celebration.

nationalfolkfestival.com 336.373.7523



Experience the Incredible Emerald Isle

Historic towns and spectacular landscapes await in Ireland. Discover Dublin, Waterford, Cobh, Killarney, the Ring of Kerry, Galway, the Cliffs of Moher, Sligo, the Giant's Causeway, Belfast and more. Departs July–September 2017. 12 days from \$1,499 per person.

ymtvacations.com 877.413.3851



New Adventures in Europe, Active Style!

If you're keen to hike the Mont Blanc circuit, experience the charm of the Italian Lakes District actively, or get into the back country grandeur of the Italian Dolomites, then we'll take you there on an authentic active adventure that digs a little deeper than other adventure tours in Europe. We mix cultural exploration with our signature blend of hiking, sea kayaking and biking to get to the heart of Europe's most spectacular scenery. We've put these trips through the ultimate test, with the first season full of Active's VIP travellers—those who've been all around the world with us. They're our greatest critics and we thank them for that. Now it's your turn!

ActiveAdventures.com/Europe 800.661.9073



Unplug in Natural South County, Rhode Island

South County encompasses 449 square miles of the southern-most region of Rhode Island. A hundred miles of beautiful, pristine coastline featuring secret, sandy beaches. There are miles of hiking and biking trails through lush forests and wildlife preserves that spill into peaceful inlet waterways perfect for kayaking, canoeing and stand-up paddle boarding. Tour museums, breweries, distilleries and more, or enjoy farm-to-table and sea-to-table cuisine at our restaurants. No matter the season, South County offers a scenic place to relax, unplug and connect with nature.

SouthCountyRI.com 800.548.4662



Discover Helena, Montana

Nestled against the Rocky Mountains in a scenic valley, Helena is a lively arts and culture town with boundless recreational opportunities. Follow in Lewis and Clark's footsteps and see wildlife and native cliff drawings at Gates of the Mountains. Or hit the water for boating and sailing by visiting one of Helena's three reservoirs. Just outside Helena also lies one of the best stretches of river for fishing in the nation. With over 75 miles of trails for hiking and mountain biking at the edge of town on Mount Helena, there's limitless adventure waiting to be discovered.

helenamt.com 800.743.5362



Connect with the Traditions of Coastal Alabama

Sugar-white sand beaches, charming downtowns, wildlife preserves, historic sites, and fresh seafood, connect to the culture of the Gulf Coast on Alabama's Coastal Connection scenic byway. This nationally designated scenic byway is a great way to learn more about the waters, ways, and wildlife on the Alabama Gulf Coast. Visitors have the opportunity to experience the connection between the South's deeply rooted traditions all while enjoying the laid-back coastal lifestyle. From museums and historic sites to birding sanctuaries and nature trails, Alabama's Coastal Connection has attractions for everyone to enjoy and explore life along the Alabama Gulf Coast.

AlabamasCoastalConnection.com 888.666.9252



Go Expedition Cruising in the Peruvian Amazon

Deep in the Peruvian Amazon, Delfin Amazon Cruises will take you into the world's largest protected flooded forests, the Pacaya Samiria National Reserve. Experienced guides will show you the immense biodiversity of the area. In this bird-watching haven, be ready to encounter howler monkeys, white caymans, sloths, iguanas, and many more. Voyages include visits to native villages, kayaking, opportunities to swim near pink river dolphins, fishing, daytime hiking, stand-up paddle boarding, and night safaris. On board, guests can enjoy exquisite Amazonian cuisine in an authentic, intimate setting with the right amount of elegance and comfort. The largest luxury fleet in the Amazon awaits you.

delfinamazoncruises.com 844.4.DELFIN



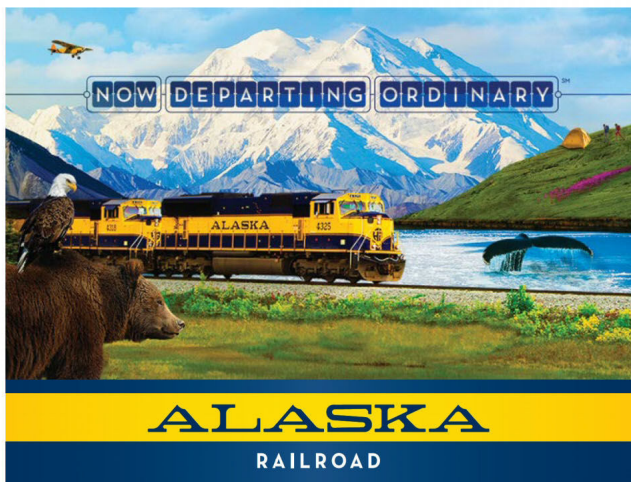
Visiting New Zealand on Your Bucket List?

Hi, we're MoaTrek and since the 1970s we've been sharing our favourite spots on our small group tours. We're proud Kiwis and grew up exploring New Zealand—now we've bottled a lifetime of holiday memories just for you.

From North to South, you won't miss a thing—Milford Sound, Queenstown, Abel Tasman, Rotorua, the West Coast, Mt Cook—plus a few more secret spots we loved as kids! Small friendly groups, all the comforts of home and your very own 'Kiwi Guide'.

Get in touch now, we'd love to chat about YOUR 'Dream Trip' to New Zealand!

moatrek.com 877.796.0415



Climb Aboard the Alaska Railroad

From the wild beauty of the Kenai Fjords to the towering majesty of Denali National Park, Alaska is home to spectacular sights—and when you travel with the Alaska Railroad, you'll enjoy the journey as much as the destinations. The Alaska Railroad offers daily summer service to Anchorage, Seward, Fairbanks, Denali Park, and more. With onboard dining, knowledgeable Alaskan tour guides, comfortable seating, and stunning views of back-country Alaska, we think you'll agree that the best way to see Alaska is on the Railroad.

AlaskaRailroad.com 800.544.0552



Explore the Real New Zealand with the Kiwis

Enjoy authentic experiences in our backyard with the best local guides. We are a team of travel industry veterans who came home to share New Zealand with visitors in a physically active and uniquely Kiwi way.

Keen to explore in comfort? Come walking in UNESCO World Heritage areas then relax in first class lodging with fine dining and wines after sunset on our popular World Heritage Walking Tour. Or if you'd rather go hard and earn the views, sample new experiences or squeeze it all into a week, we have an NZ trip to suit your travel style.

newzealandtrails.com/traveler 877.796.0416

Photo: Peter Guttman



The Silk Route: Central Asia, Caucasus & Beyond

Venture to unconventional destinations at the crossroads of Europe and Asia with MIR, specializing in handcrafted small group and private journeys since 1986. Experience the cultures of Central Asia's Five 'Stans, the South Caucasus, Siberia & beyond.

mircorp.com/ngt 800.424.7289



Join Frontiers North's Big Five Safari

Discover Manitoba's Big Five on a safari that takes you from the bold boreal forests of central Manitoba to the vast northern tundra. Seek out moose, black bear and bison in Riding Mountain National Park and belugas and polar bears in Churchill.

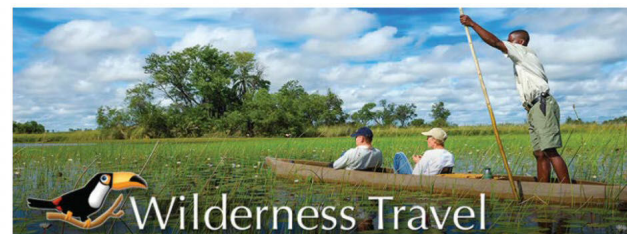
frontiersnorth.com 800.663.9832



Explore Africa and Beyond

We're your experts. For over 15 years, our family-owned company has designed custom African safaris for discerning travelers. We take pride in our first-hand knowledge of destinations, lodges, and insider experiences. Now you can also explore Latin America with us!

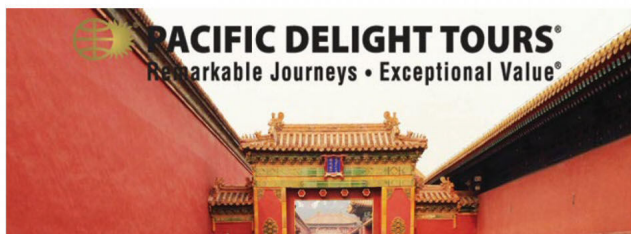
Africansafarico.com 800.414.3090



Experience the Best of Botswana

Our thrilling safari gets you far from the crowds and close to the action! We combine private mobile camps with welcoming lodges, and the game viewing is phenomenal: lion, cheetah, and massive herds of elephant. Special seasonal departures available.

wildernesstravel.com 800.368.2794



SAVE on Luxury: 12-Day China & Yangtze River

Enjoy our Imperial China & Yangtze River Gold Experience tour. Highlights: historic Beijing, ancient Xi'an, a scenic Yangtze River Cruise, cosmopolitan Shanghai, FiveStarPlus® hotels and luxurious amenities on board Victoria Cruises. Call for new brochure.

pacificdelighttours.com/T7YX12VD.aspx 800.221.7179



Custom Mountain Gorilla Trekking

The world's last mountain gorillas roam the Virunga Mountains between Uganda and Rwanda. Trekking with us ensures success as we match your ability to the right gorilla family. Trek with the Top Safari Outfitter in *Travel + Leisure's* 2016 World's Best Awards.

deeperafrica.com 888.658.7102



A Tranquil Setting With All of the Amenities

With two great locations in Asheville NC and Key West Florida, both hotels offer all of the highest amenities and are right in town! Mention this ad and get 15% off or enter the promotional code **natgeo** when booking online.

edenhouse.com 800.533.KEYS or 305.296.6868



Antarctica Small Ship Expeditions

Our ship-based expeditions take small groups of passengers to experience the best of Antarctica! With over 20 years' experience, we push the boundaries with flexible, innovative itineraries, daily shore excursions, up-close wildlife encounters, and an expert team.

aurora-expeditions.com info@aurora-expeditions.com

NICE SHOT! WEST BENGAL



Mythical Moves

Photographing the
Chhau dance, a masked
musical tradition in
West Bengal, India

By Hannah Sheinberg

The folk art in Purulia, a district located in the West Bengal state of East India, is pretty hard to miss thanks to its kaleidoscopic costumes, peacock-style headdresses, and hand-painted masks. This photograph, taken by National Geographic Your Shot member Sarmistha Bera, captures the colorful elements of the Chhau dance, usually performed during the area's religious festivals.

Passed down through generations of male family members, the dance illustrates stories from Hindu epics, with martial arts-type moves, props of swords and shields, and rhythmic drumbeats. But not all of the Chhau choreography is combative—dancers also mimic movements of birds and animals or daily household chores.

As a popular artform throughout East India, Chhau has earned a spot on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list. Purulia is one of only two places that don the expressive masks, such as the one of Lord Ganesh above.



PRO TIP

"Play with opposite colors on the color wheel to give your subject some separation," says *Traveler* photo director Anne Farrar.

Join our international
photo community at [yourshot
.nationalgeographic.com](https://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com).

SARMISTHA BERA

COPYRIGHT © 2017 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PARTNERS, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER: REGISTERED TRADEMARK © MARCA REGISTRADA. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.
WEBSITE: natgeotravel.com EMAIL: natgeotravel@natgeo.com LETTERS: National Geographic Traveler, 1145 17th St. N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Please include address, email, or daytime telephone number. MASTHEAD: natgeotravel.com/masthead. SUBSCRIBER SERVICES: ngtservice.com, 1-800-NGS-LINE (647-5463). *Traveler* also is available for the iPad through iTunes.
Find *Traveler* at magfinder.magnetdata.net. Follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Pinterest.

Volume XXXIV, Number 2. *National Geographic Traveler* (ISSN 0747-0932) is published six times a year (February/March, April/May, June/July, August/September, October/November, December/January) by National Geographic Partners, LLC, 1145 17th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. \$19.95 a year, \$5.99 a copy. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIBER: If the Postal Service alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within two years. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *National Geographic Traveler*, P.O. Box 62134, Tampa, FL 33662-2134. In Canada, agreement number 40063643, return undeliverable Canadian addresses to *National Geographic Traveler*, P.O. Box 4412 STA A, Toronto, Ontario M5W 3W2. We occasionally make subscriber names available to companies whose products or services may be of interest to you. You may request that your name be removed from promotional lists by calling 800-NGS-LINE (647-5463). To prevent your name from being made available to all direct mail companies, contact: Mail Preference Service, c/o Direct Marketing Association, P.O. Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008. Printed in the U.S.A.

Did you know a group of sea turtles is called a *bale*?

Did you also know a group of National Geographic members who insure their car with GEICO are called Savers? That's right, as a member and subscriber of Nat Geo, you could save even more on your car insurance with a **special discount**. Join your fellow members who already insure their car with GEICO, and you could end up saving a bale of money, too.

geico.com/natgeo | 1-866-496-3576

GEICO®



Some discounts, coverages, payment plans and features are not available in all states or all GEICO companies. Discount amount varies in some states. One group discount applicable per policy. Coverage is individual. In New York a premium reduction may be available. GEICO is a registered service mark of Government Employees Insurance Company, Washington, D.C. 20076; a Berkshire Hathaway Inc. subsidiary. © 2014 GEICO

APEX FLEX

Engineered with



**THE
NORTH
FACE**

S E E K

N O

S H E L T E R



Bring on the rain. Drizzling, pouring, driving, misting. With the right gear, there's no need to hide. Introducing the new ultra-soft, impossibly dry Apex Flex GTX Jacket.

NEVER STOP EXPLORING™