

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2014





ANTARCTICA THE LAST UNKNOWN PLACE

p.104

FRANCE ONE INCREDIBLE ROAD TRIP MARRAKECH THROUGH THE EYES OF A LOCAL

p.49







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104

BEYOND BELIEF

Are we there yet? In Antarctica, it's hard to know.

by CHRIS JONES

112

FULL OF GRACE

Faith, charity, and gallons of holy water: A skeptic in search of a cure takes the plunge in Lourdes, France.

by EDWARD READICKER-**HENDERSON**

DESTINATION INDEX

ANDORRA 68 ANTARCTICA 104 ARIZONA 41 **AZERBAIJAN** 85 BRAZIL 78 CALIFORNIA 30, 56 **CANADA** 24, 42 CHINA 58, 82 COLORADO 40

CROATIA 78 **DENMARK** 74, 76 ECUADOR 80 **FIJI** 82 **FRANCE** 14, 27, 28, 112 **GERMANY** 56, 92 GREECE 10 HAWAII 84 INDIA 78

IRELAND 65 ISRAEL 10 ITALY 30, 60 MEXICO 58 MISSISSIPPI 74 MOROCCO 10, 49 NEW MEXICO 41, 84 NEW YORK CITY 56 NORWAY 10

OREGON 41 SINGAPORE 34 SWITZERLAND 84 TEXAS 56 TURKEY 58 **UTAH** 40 VIETNAM 56 WASHINGTON 40





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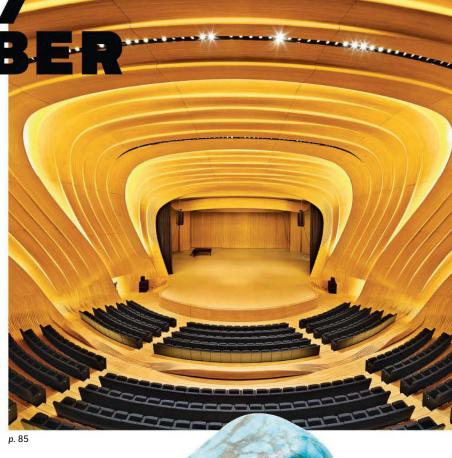
The world looks very different when you see it from the deck of a Cunard ship.





5TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE





In 1939, the jitterbug was just one way teens around the world rebelled. p. 30



p. 40

WANDER

28 ROADS LESS TRAVELED

The back roads east of Bordeaux are fringed with castles, chèvre, and foie gras worth a speeding ticket

30 NEAR & AFAR

Italian cameo jewelry, political prisoner Ai Weiwei's Alcatraz art show, and a documentary we can all relate to

32 MIX

Signed, sealed, delivered: mailboxes around the world

34 ONE GREAT BLOCK

Dip into street food, alley boutiques, and manga in this playful Singapore district

36 OUR PICKS

Passports and iPads and coins...now fly! Bags that suit every travel need

40 ZEITGEIST

Celebrating America's (original) spirit

42 WHERE I'M FROM

Toronto's coolest bartender on the city behind That Mayor

CONNECT

49 RESIDENT

Artist Hassan Hajjaj walks us through the art scene bubbling up in the Medina district in Marrakech

55 STAY

Eight hotels that keep our nomadic editors happy, rested, and inspired

60 VIEWS FROM AFAR

Beyond the acid wash: a flashback to 1980s street style in Italy

65 FEAST

Ireland's nutty brown bread is a hearty slice of history

68 SPIN THE GLOBE

Wild writer Cheryl Strayed hikes Andorra's peaks and tries not to get shot

SPECIAL SECTION

73 THE 2014 GUIDE TO EXCEPTIONAL TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

From saddling up in Ecuador to bedding down in a Swiss haystack, the cream of this year's experiential travel crop

14 @AFARMEDIA 18 FOUNDER'S NOTE 22 CONTRIBUTORS 24 FROM THE EDITOR 128 EXPERIENCE

ON THE COVER The train to Mittenwald, Germany, passe

Germany, passes the Karwendel range. To explore the town's musical roots, turn to page 92.

> Photograph by Christian Kerber

Lettering by Chelsea Petaja



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Big Island Film Festival

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May 31, 2014 Nicknamed "Honu" in honor of the Hawaiian green sea turtle. Kohala Coast

Events subject to change. Visit gohawaii.com/big-island/events.



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"The goal is simple: a

week of all-nighters

at the bars, punctuated

by hummus and catnaps

on Frishman Beach.'

−A.R.

MOROCCO "While the country's architecture was heavily influenced by the Ottoman Empire, there is still a unique style that I can't wait to see with my own eyes." -C.W.





THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES AT gohawaii.com/HawaiiIsland



SOUTH AFRICAN —odyssey—

oday's travelers to South Africa are discovering that there's more to the country than just the traditional "Big 5" animals. South Africa's new "Big 5" focuses on a variety of experiences: adventure, safari, entertainment, culture, and romance.

Actress and author Marilu Henner's personal list of highlights from her recent South African adventure includes zip-lining and the country's food: "organic, tasty, luscious." The experiences on her trip had an impact she continues to feel long after returning home.

thing about
South Africa
was its people.
No matter where I went
the people were warm
and welcoming; they
made it feel like home."
—Marilu Henner

"My favorite

The views from Table Mountain "took my breath away" while coming face-to-face with sharks on a cage dive let her confront, and overcome, her fears.

Visit southafrica.net to see more of Marilu's trip highlights plus discover all that awaits you in South Africa.





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THE EXPERIENTIAL TRAVEL GUIDE



OGLE LIKE A PHOTO EDITOR

Our photo editors sift through hundreds of images for each issueand too many wind up on the cutting-room floor. Above, we show an outtake from photographer Peter Bohler's shoot for "Full of Grace" (page 112) in Lourdes, France. See more images from his trip, plus shots from our all-time favorite stories, at AFAR.com/outtakes.



We asked our Twitter followers to share the travel hiccups that became incredible memories. Check #AFARstory for more.

I missed the only bus to Romania's Merry Cemetery and ended up hitchhiking in a car full of nuns listening to David Guetta. @LGandaB

Engine failure in Durban yields a forgotten beach, ruby sunburn, and two fingers of brandy with a local mechanic. @lwalkCash

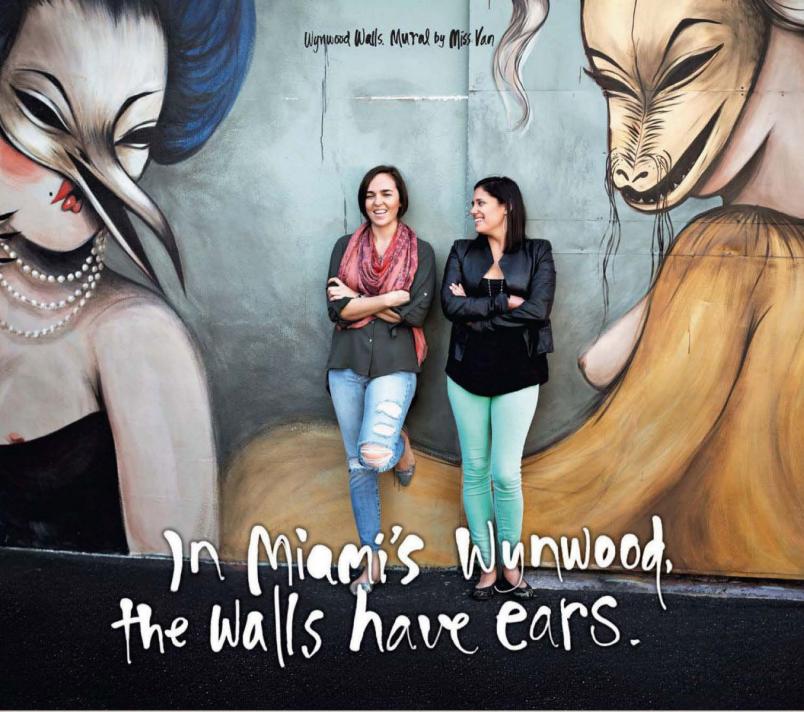
Missed bus + wrong train + sudden downpour = best trip to Stonehenge. @FrancescaAmott

OOPS! On page 89 of the May issue, we were referring to the Hen of the Wood location in Waterbury, Vermont, not Burlington, Vermont. Pistou restaurant closed in February 2014. We regret the errors.



Have Kids, Will Travel

OK, so maybe you've retired the backpack and Eurail pass, but there's no need to pack up your travel dreams once kids come along, or to succumb to the lures of the all-inclusive resort track. This month, AFAR correspondent Rainer Jenss rolls out guides to experience-rich family travel, from child-friendly road trips (try Alaska's Kenai Peninsula) to wildlife expeditions (yes, a safari in Tanzania is doable with kids). Bonus: The 10 essential questions to ask before taking off. Start planning at AFAR.com/familytravel.











In m the salo

In my neighborhood, art is everywhere and inspires everything. You can find it on the walls and doors. You can buy it in the galleries. You can taste it at our hip restaurants, coffee shops, and local breweries. You can even admire it at a hair salon. I'm Mali, check out my Wynwood video guide and learn about other cool neighborhoods at **ItSoMiami.com**

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FOUNDER'S NOTE



I DON'T KNOW how many countries I've visited. But I can readily list the places I want to go. As my coworkers here at AFAR can tell you, I bring a similar mindset to our business. I'm focused on the things we want to achieve, rather than where we've been. But every once in a while, even I need to take a look back—at least for a moment.

We opened the AFAR office in 2008. Many industries, including travel and media, were in dire straits. To launch a travel media business then was . . . audacious?

Five years ago this month, we published our first issue of AFAR magazine. We believed in our mission: to inspire, to guide, and to enable deeper, richer, and more authentic travel experiences. We thought this was a great thing to do with our lives. This kind of travel makes the world a better place. And we believed this was what many travelers were looking for.

Travelers want to get beneath the surface of the places they go. They want to connect with local people. They want to confront their fear and renew their hope. They want to celebrate what we all have in common and what makes us distinctive. We called it experiential travel, and we were determined to be its voice.

AFAR magazine is now the best travel magazine in the country. AFAR.com, our groundbreaking website for travel inspiration and planning, gets better every week. The AFAR mobile app gives experience seekers the information they need to travel deeper. AFAR Experiences brings together travelers and fascinating locals in destinations around the globe. We just launched the AFAR Collection, a group of hotels and resorts we've selected for their focus on experiential travel. And our Learning AFAR program has sent nearly 300 students on life-changing trips to Costa Rica, Peru, the Navajo nation, Mexico, Cambodia, and China.

All this wouldn't have been possible without our employees, our advertising partners, and the open-minded travelers who have supported us. We thank you all so much. Helping you to travel deeper is a commitment we renew in everything we do.

GOOD TRAVELS,



Greg Sullivan Cofounder & CEO



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"The first time I traveled to Hawaii as a teenager, I knew immediately that it was where I belonged. I'd come to do a school semester away from home in Los Angeles and pretty much everything else fell by the wayside once I started surfing. The ocean just called to me, I guess. Surfing was all I wanted to do."

LON KLEIN

For the past quarter century, professional woodworker and lifelong surfer Lon Klein has united his two passions with his line of custom-crafted hollow wooden Haleiwa Surfboards. Each board, which Klein shapes by hand from indigenous Hawaiian hardwoods in his Oahu workshop, can take up to 150 hours to complete; the finished products, which have been bought by surfers as far away as Australia, Europe, and Japan, are also collected as works of art.



"The feeling of riding a wave is something that no one ever quite gets right; it defies description. When you surf, you become aware that you're part of a larger energy, the energy of the wave, and of the whole ocean, really. Wooden boards have a very distinct feeling in the water. Each board actually has its own timbre, its own voice. When you're out paddling on one with the waves around you, you can actually hear it sing."

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"When I was 15, my parents brought me on a trip to Bermuda, and I took my first garden tour. I was the only one who'd signed up, so I wound up spending hours walking through incredible tropical plantings with the groundskeeper who maintained them. It was a seminal experience for me. Although I'd always gardened at home, I'd never met anyone who did it for a living."

KAREN DAUBMANN

For the past seven years, Karen Daubmann has overseen the planning, design, and installation of all horticultural and art exhibits at The New York Botanical Garden—one of the world's best-loved botanical institutions. Her finished shows, which take years of careful development, draw hundreds of thousands of delighted visitors, both local and international.



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"I spent three years in Oman when I was in the military, and the place just got under my skin. The emptiness and openness of it, how pristine it was...it really stayed with me somehow—especially bedding down at night under the stars, which are really exceptional in the remote desert, in just about complete silence."



SEAN NELSON

Former British Royal Marine Sean Nelson spent three years in Oman as a major in the country's Desert Regiment. Trekking through the country's open spaces struck a deep chord in him, one that he decided to share by launching his own luxury camping company, Hud Hud Travels, in 2006. Now, his multi-day caravan-style excursions allow guests from all over the world to explore some of Oman's cultural wonders—the dunes of Wahiba Sands, ancient forts and souks, and camping in Bedouin-style tents.

"Camping in the desert is particularly great with kids. Riding camels, exploring canyons, swimming in mountain streams...they get to feel like Lawrence of Arabia. I really enjoy seeing how excited this place makes them."



The most memorable travel experiences are ones that let us deeply explore our chosen destinations. At The Ritz-Carlton, we embrace the concept of experiential, immersive travel, even for our youngest guests. Ritz Kids provides lively games and handson activities allowing children to create lasting memories to bring home and share with family and friends.

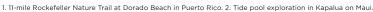
> partnership with Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ocean Futures Society. It engages kids with fascinating diversions that let them discover the beauty of the world around them-including oceans and sea life; terrestrial ecosystems such as forests and deserts; indigenous customs; and practices for helping

"To the kids, the activities are all just fun and games," says Bobbie Verdegaal, Manager of Ritz Kids and Jean-Michel Cousteau's Ambassadors of the Environment Programs. "But by focusing on four key pillars—water, land, culture, and environmental responsibility—we're allowing them to build a deeper knowledge about the places they're traveling to. That's something really valuable that they can bring back home with them."

Our re-envisioned Ritz Kids has been created in to protect the planet.

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^{3.} Learning with Ritz Kids in Tenerife, Spain.

FROM LEFT: CHELSEA PETAJA; REEVE JOLLIFFE

CONTRIBUTORS





p. 104



CHELSEA PETAJA

Beautiful handwriting is in Chelsea Petaja's blood. The Nashvillebased artist-whose custom hand lettering appears on this cover and the two previous covers of AFAR-grew up watching her father, a classically trained calligrapher, work. She now runs her own paper goods business (her studio is pictured above) and sells prints on her Etsy site, Oh My Deer Handmades. Recent trips abroad with her photographer husband have inspired Petaja to travel more, which "makes working with AFAR even more of a dream job," she says.



JESSICA COLLEY

Writer Jessica Colley, who slices up the history of Irish brown bread in Feast (page 65), first fell in love with Ireland during a backpacking trip through Europe. "There's something hard to define about the places I connect with," Colley says. "I like to say they have soul." When traveling, Colley pays particular attention to how locals break bread. "Breakfast says a lot about a culture," she says. "Why is it that everyone in the country eats this?" The New York-based Colley has also written for BonAppetit.com and the New York Times.



CHRISTIAN KERBER

Photographer Christian Kerber, who lives in Hamburg, Germany, didn't have to travel far to shoot Mittenwald, the famous Bavarian violin town and the birthplace of writer Emma John's own violin ("Bavarian Rhapsody," page 92). Kerber stayed on his toes, despite shooting on familiar turf. As a local, "you understand the language and all the cultural peculiarities," he says. "But you must also keep a certain distance to capture an interesting moment." Kerber's work has also appeared in Travel + Leisure and Condé Nast Traveler.



CHRIS JONES

National Magazine Award-winning writer Chris Jones isn't usually at a loss for words. But turning 40 on a cruise through the Drake Passage to Antarcticathe setting for "Beyond Belief" (page 104)—had a rather silencing effect on him. "I was right in the middle of a big midlife crisis," he says. "And I was seeing such beautiful stuff every day. I had to keep telling myself to take in what I was seeing and not just go, 'Another avalanche. Another 10,000 penguins." Jones is a writer-at-large for Esquire and a columnist for ESPN The Magazine.



CHERYL STRAYED

"It seems clichéd for me to say this," says Cheryl Strayed, author of the New York Times bestselling book Wild, "but my favorite thing to do is walk. Going on foot and seeing what you see is what reveals a place." That's exactly how Strayed explored Andorra for Spin the Globe (page 68). How was this solitary trip for a woman who famously walked the Pacific Crest Trail solo? "I love being alone," Strayed says. "It can be uncomfortable, which is so rewarding in the end." The movie adaptation of Wild, starring Reese Witherspoon, hits theaters in December.





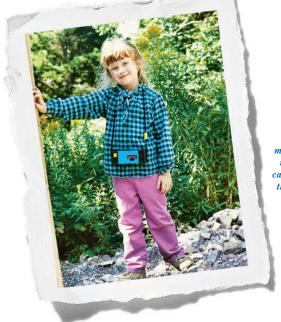
meet me in BELIZE

he best way to the heart of Belize and understanding the culture and spirit of the nation is through its people. The residents of Belize are eagerly waiting for you to arrive so they can introduce you to all the country has to offer: diving, kayaking, and sailing as well as ancient Mayan cities, pristine rainforests, and the western hemisphere's longest coral reef.

Make sure to check again here in October, when we will announce our "Meet me in Belize" Sweepstakes where you can enter for a chance to win a getaway to Belize. If you are ready to start planning your trip today, visit **travelbelize.org** now.



FROM THE EDITOR



The Canada trip was my first time chronicling my experiences with a camera—I wish I still had the Fisher-Price Kodak model shown here.

SMALL MOMENTS, BIG TRIPS

WHEN I WAS FIVE years old, my mom, dad, and I drove from our home in New York City to Canada, with camping gear strapped to the roof of our Mercury Monarch. It was our first big outdoor trip. It was also my first trip out of the country.

As soon as we got to the Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick, we set up camp. I remember the smell of our new tent, the reindeer pattern on the fabric that lined my tiny sleeping bag, and a night hike filled with the sounds of owls hooting in the trees. I also remember sitting wide-eyed in a canoe as we paddled past the dam of a beaver. This was completely different from life at home in the city.

At AFAR, we believe that travel can expand horizons. If we engage with a destination, every trip is full of incredible moments that will stick forever in our minds and change the way we see the world. After that walk with the owls, my five-year-old self never looked at hiking as a chore again.

For the 2014 Guide to Exceptional Travel Experiences on page 73, we tapped our editors and contributing writers to share stories from recent trips that somehow altered them in a fundamental way. It's not a coincidence that all of their experiences—ranging from a family-friendly hike in New Mexico to a meal at what might be the most paradisiacal restaurant on earth—were also extremely enjoyable.

After you've read this issue, I hope you're inspired to book a trip that just might change you.

TRAVEL WELL,

Julia

Julia Cosgrove Editor in Chief



Please share your own exceptional travel experiences with us on Twitter or Instagram with the hashtag #traveldeeper.



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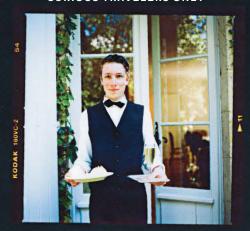
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WANDER





















In the fall in France, there's a quiet migration of Parisians to villages along the Dordogne River. Instead of hunkering down in one place as they do, make an adventure out of it.

On the next page, we show you how to navigate the region's roads,

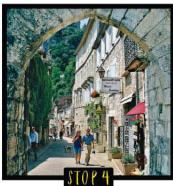
which at this time of year are blanketed in colorful foliage, and hop from small town to small town as you fill up on the sort of classic French cooking that doesn't taste quite as right anywhere else.



LE GOURMAND GETAWAY

The first time I rented a car in France and explored **roads east of Bordeaux**, I was a little jetlagged. Then I looked out the window of my Renault, saw a castle, and whoa. This region's draw is more than aesthetic, though. The towns are pin-drop quiet, and it's duck country (that is, the best place on earth for foie gras). Having taken many circuitous paths across this countryside, let me offer some guidance. —BILL SLOANE





GORGE YOURSELF SOME MORE...

... this time in **Rocamadour**, a medieval city built into the face of an actual gorge. The town is famous for its chèvre cheese, and every little shop on **Rue Roland le Preux** will be eager to sell you some. Heads up! This is the territory of locals and Parisians on vacation, so you'll want to be proficient in pointing if you don't speak the mother tongue.

Book the Upgrade

The driving can be bumpy, so get a rental with stronger shocks than a Smart car's.



BLAZE YOUR OWN TRAIL

allons-y

Grab a map and draw your own path, starting in the town of **Bordeaux**. See that area to the right, between the parallel Dordogne and Lot rivers? Stay within the borders of this area where authentic food reigns.



GO THROUGH THE MILL

Every village has its own B&B, but I'd suggest routing your trip through Villeneuve-sur-Lot for a stay at Le Moulin de Madame, a remarkably fashionable hotel considering the age of the building that houses it: a riverside mill built 235 years ago. Order the four-course meal at L'Écluse, the hotel's restaurant, for an edible tour of the surrounding pastures.



The scenery is dreamy, but watch your speed. After my last trip, I received not one but three (!) tickets, courtesy of French highway cameras.

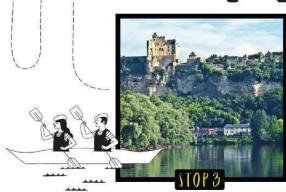


COME SAIL AWAY

Trade the car for a **kayak**in **Souillac** and float down
the Dordogne. Then get
ready to eat. I still fantasize
about the foie gras from
Château de la Treyne a

Château de la Treyne, a

Michelin-starred castle where, if you get too buzzed on regional Cabernet, you can rent a room for the night.



Another case of a Subaru going places others don't.



The all-new 2015 Legacy® doesn't follow. With industry-leading safety, it features available EyeSight® driver assist technology.* Combine that with the confidence of Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive at 36 mpg† and the most spacious interior in its class,** and you'll find yourself feeling something very new. **Love. It's what makes a Subaru, a Subaru.**



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THE FIND **ITALY MAKES A CAMEO**

Designer Anna Porcu transforms old-world riches into modern classics

Don't let the very Victorian materials that jeweler Anna Porcu uses throw you off: She's future-thinking—so much so that she has found a way to make cameos, those pendants with carved silhouettes your grandmother may have worn, fresh again. The daughter of two antique dealers, Porcu unearths her cameos throughout Italy, especially in Naples, where the most coveted ones were produced in the late 1800s. Rather than choosing traditional white-shell reliefs of fancy society women, she buys pieces with cupids or scenes of war that have been etched into amber, coral, or even lava. Back at her studio in the tiny village of Pienza, near Siena, she sets them in silver casings, then affixes the pieces to Tuscan leather bracelets. The last surprising touch? The cameos are detachable from the cuff, because pieces this unique can't be worn every day, annaporcu.com -ONDINE COHANE

THE DOORS ARE OPEN



AI WEIWEI TAKES ON ALCATRAZ

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, the most famous political prisoner alive, found a wildly fitting venue for @Large, his latest meditation on human rights: Alcatraz, the former jail on an island in the middle of San Francisco Bay. Ai, whose work has ranged from heavy-metal albums to nude protests, worked remotely with the prison on installations that will be showcased in a defunct psych ward and other areas that have, until now, been off-limits to visitors. The exhibition is free, but reserve a ferry ticket well in advance because it's a fair bet they'll sell out. - JEN MURPHY Open from Sept. 27, 2014, to April 26, 2015. alcatrazcruises.com

FOR THE FLIGHT

Watching Teenage (now available to download on iTunes) feels like opening lost scrapbooks from the first half of the 20th century. In the film, director Matt Wolf explores how two world wars affected teens in Europe and America. He wanted youths to tell

their own stories, so he recovered home videos and narrated them with lines lifted from the diaries of flappers, free-spirited German idealists, and crossdressing British aristocrats who came of age as everything around them fell apart. -ANDREW RICHDALE



For more than two decades, the Subaru Legacy has been helping drivers scratch destinations off of their bucket lists. Symmetrical All-Wheel Drive, upgraded roomier interior, and fuel economy at the top of its class take care of some of your excuses for not hitting the road. Not motivation enough? **We're sending one lucky winner on a bucket-list adventure**.

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- 4. OREGON'S COAST
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- 5. BIG BEND IN TEXAS
 - Rafting on the Rio Grande through the remote and majestic park
- 6. FLORIDA'S OVERSEAS HIGHWAY
 - Fishing and sea kayaking along an engineering wonder

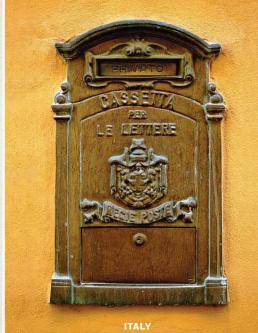
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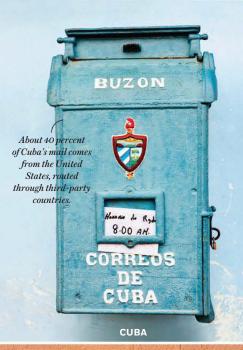




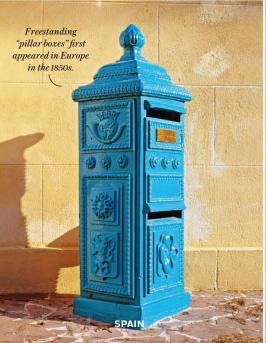


















SINGAPORE'S BRIGHTEST SPOT

In supermodern Singapore, the neighborhood of **Tiong Bahru** offers a surprising mix of fresh (the first men-only salon) and classic (a noodle scene worth a trip). -CHERYL LU-LIEN TAN



The scruffy GQ types loitering outside are a clear tip-off: We Need a Hero, a salon that looks like a set from X-Men, is the place to go for the sculpted moustaches and haircuts you'll see around town. 57 Eng Hoon St., weneedahero.sg



Head down the alley, past a spiral staircase. There sits Nana & Bird, where you can browse handbags from Meli Melo (below), minidresses by Singaporean designers, and trippy necklaces made of thin strips of recycled bike tubes.

79 Chay Yan St., nanaandbird.com



"I grew up in Singapore, and among the breakfasts of my youth, chwee kueh is the one that tugs at my heart most. It's a steamed rice cake topped with an umami-bomb of crunchy preserved radishes that have been stir-fried with soy sauce, shallots, and garlic. Try the dish at the legendary Jian Bo Shui Kueh stall in Tiong Bahru Market. It's like Singapore in one bite." -C.L.T. Stall No. 02-05, 30 Seng Poh Rd.



EAT, DRINK and BE MERRY

The funny rooster portraits and front-andcenter foosball table inside Coq & Balls are as cheeky as its name. But the restaurant's beer list-look for anything by Hitachinoand classic dishes, such as the prawn paste chicken wings, are no joking matter. 6 Kim Tian Rd., cognballs.com



WHERE to FUEL UP

Café Hua Bee, which has served the same fishball mee pok (noodles) for 70 years, was recently saved from demolition by locals. The developer's compromise? At night, the café shuts down to make way for Bincho, a modern yakitori-ya serving grilled meats. 78 Moh Guan Terr., bincho.com.sg



Manga is big in Singapore, where even the government writes PSAs in comic form. Find the best at Woods in the Books, an all-ages bookstore with classic children's tales and such graphic novels as Guy Delisle's political Pyongyang: A Journey into North Korea. 3 Yong Siak St., woodsinthebooks.sg







UPGRADE TO THE MOST UPGRADES.

Sometimes the best destination you're looking for is on the flight itself. Fortunately, Delta offers the most seat upgrade opportunities of any airline, so you can move on up more often. Which means more chances to enjoy the extra inches, added amenities, and Priority Boarding. If it's a bump to First Class you're looking for, you'll find more of it. In fact, you'll find the most of it.

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and opening a world of opportunities to students and their communities. Learning AFAR and its sponsors have sent almost 300 low-income high school students on international trips to discover the value of leadership and global citizenship.

THE STUDENTS' JOURNEY

Preparing to Travel

- Learn about the destinations they will visit
- Participate in workshops on cross-cultural awareness
- Explore travel writing and photography with AFAR Media staff

9 Seeing the World

- Perform hands-on community service projects
- Learn to adapt to new environments and situations
- Experience a part of the world they might otherwise never see

3 Discovering New Possibilities

- Share their eye-opening experiences with their community
- Design service projects to make an impact at home
- Pursue further opportunities to grow and learn

"The expedition has not just benefited the 20 students who went to Costa Rica: it has redefined what is possible for the entire school community. Our students are starting to see past the boundaries of East Oakland to all the places they may go."

-Amy, group leader





"Growing up as an inner-city child, I was exposed to a poverty that deteriorates a person's mind, body, and potential. Going abroad allowed me to understand issues of inequality as problems in society. It was a wake-up call, which told me the world's fate is in my hands."

-Edgar, student









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of Learning AFAR students graduate from high school are accepted to colleges and universities

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AMERICA'S SPIRIT

The United States is home to a total of 566 American Indian tribes, and every last one of them has its own distinct traditions—crafts. arts, and foods that are having a nationwide revival right now. A great way to experience them? Book a trip to the Southwest. Until you get there, we offer some context so you can appreciate them (almost) as deeply.

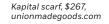


Folk belt, \$82. folk clothing.com

DIAMONDS ARE A WEAVER'S BEST FRIEND

The diamond, terrace, and triangle motifs are staples of Navajo weaving. The modern take: using them in everything from beaded bracelets and belts to upholstery.







ovadiaandsons.com

you can find pine nuts in the wild on piñon trees in Zion National Park

ANOTHER NATURAL WONDER

The piñon pine was once vital to tribes, including the Shoshone, in Utah. Pine nuts were a snack, the pitch was a medicine, and the bark was an aromatic fuel. Today, stores such as Pilgrim in Brooklyn burn Incienso de Santa Fe (\$10), which is made from this bark, all day long. pilgrimsurfsupply.com

TOTALLY FRIED

Frybread—a flat, fried round of dough made with flour, sugar, salt, and lardwas created by the Navajo in 1864. Contemporary plays on it range from traditional (honey-drizzled at Denver's Tocabe) to experimental, like this BBQ pork taco from Seattle's Off the Rez food truck, below.

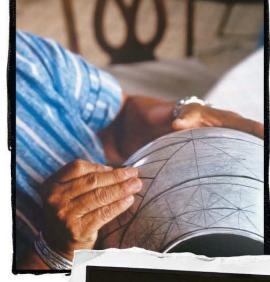


ROMANCING THE STONE

Turquoise comes from mineral-veined rock, and the Southwest is one of the richest sources of the semiprecious gem. Navajo tribes believe it to have protective and healing powers—so much so that, at birth, babies receive their first turquoise beads.



Look for untage pieces from Native artists at thrift shops or Ralph Lauren's KRL Stores.





Acoma potters use the Spine of a yuccaplant to paint their intricate geometric designs.

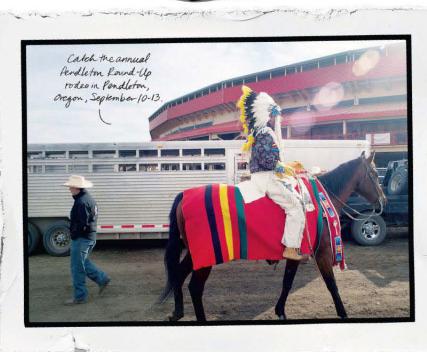


ALL FIRED UP

Pottery on the **Acoma Pueblo in New Mexico** is often made the way it was back in 1880: by daylight (no electricity), by women (it's a matriarchal society), and by outdoor fire (no kilns). The result? The Southwest's most prized earthenware. Tour the pueblo or, for a vase such as the one at left (\$385), shop heard museumshop.com.









THE WILD, WOOLEN WEST

In 1909, Pendleton Woolen Mills founder Thomas Kay created blankets that riffed on Native designs to trade with members of the Nez Perce nation. Pendleton still sells the iconic pieces today, along with fresh, bold designs for a new generation. pendleton-usa.com



A DRINK WITH...

TORONTO'S COOLEST BARTENDER

Before you judge a whole town on the basis of a single person—Mayor Rob Ford meet a second one: The Drake Hotel bartender

Sandy de Almeida sheds light on what Toronto is really like. - ANDREW RICHDALE

So how long have you called Toronto your home?

About 17 years, and I've been bartending for 15 of those.

Where do you grab a drink after work if you want to unwind?

Midfield, a low-key wine bar with wonderful terrines and ceviche. The bar specializes in underappreciated wines from such places as Hungary.

You serve a lot of locals. What are they drinking right now?

I've never seen so many people so thirsty for Dark and Stormies. It's as if they just discovered Gosling's and dark rum!

Is that true of bartenders, too?

No, right now we're obsessed with cedar infusions. At least five bars here are serving cocktails with them, and one of the city's best restaurants, The Grove, is making desserts with spruce trimmings.



"I love to drink at Ursa. On Mondays, they hire guest bartenders and DJs, and it feels so intimate—like a party in someone's living room."

How are bars here different from ones in other cities?

Sexuality is more fluid here. Locals really loathe labels of any kind, so it's difficult to say "Oh, that's a gay bar" these days. Those lines have blurred, more so than in other places.

What else is changing?

The neighborhood of Bloordale. A decade ago, you would see prostitutes and crack deals on the streets there. Now it's the place everyone is talking about. I love Holy Oak Cafe's provocative coffeehouse events. Then there's Bike Pirates, a DIY bike shop where they don't repair your gears; they teach you how to fix them instead.

On the topic of crack, Mayor Ford: What is your read?

[sigh] He's just been a total embarrassment. You couldn't throw a stone in the city and hit someone who is voting for him in October's election, so don't let Ford influence your opinion of us! It really is quite nice here.



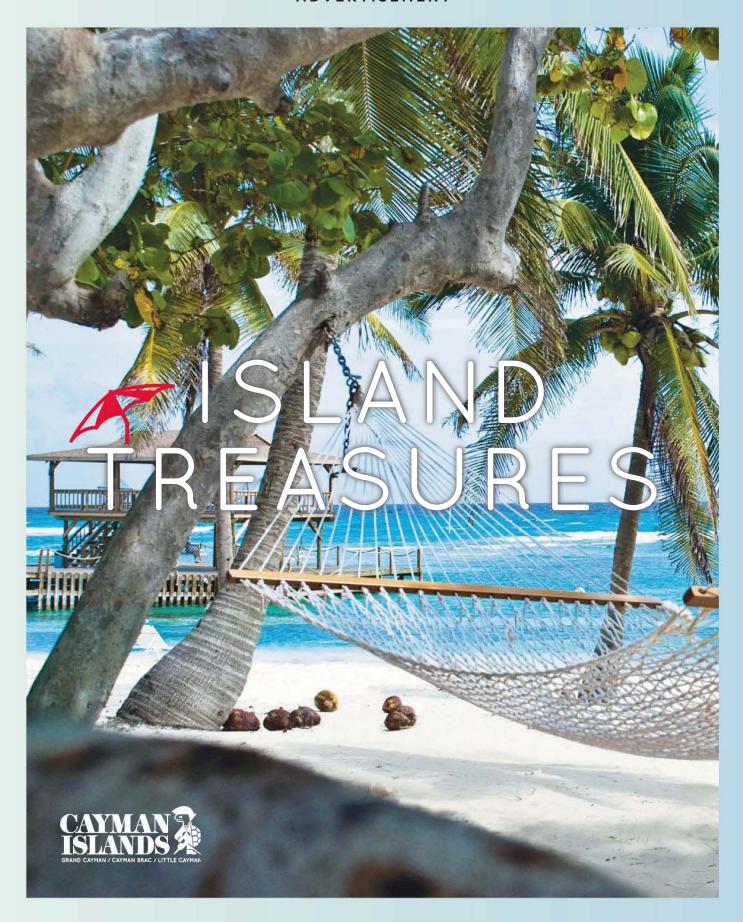
Cheat Sheet SANDY'S FAVORITE LOCAL SPOTS

1 MIDFIELD 1434 Dundas St. W, (647) 345-7005. midfieldwinebar.com

2 URSA 924 Queen St. W, (416) 536-8963. ursarestaurant.com **3 THE GROVE** 1214 Dundas St. W, (416) 588-2299. thegroveto.com

4 HOLY OAK CAFE 1241 Bloor St. W, no phone, holyoakcafe.com

5 BIKE PIRATES 1292 Bloor St. W, no phone, bikepirates.com



THE BEST OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS, FROM POPULAR FAVORITES TO INSIDERS' SECRETS

FLOATING IN THE DEEP end of the

Caribbean are the Cayman Islands, three blissful specks of land that offer three distinct tropical experiences. This British overseas territory may be famous as a major offshore financial hub, but for travelers, the draws are its vibrant landscape, trendy restaurants, a diverse cultural heritage, a long list of options for adventure and thrill seekers, and, of course, some of the Caribbean's most stunning beaches.

Your first stop will likely be Grand Cayman. The 22-mile-long island is the largest of the three, and it's where most of the action takes place. You'll find pulsating nightlife, water sports galore, and restaurants helmed by some of the Caribbean's top chefs. For a more low-key take on island life, hop to the smaller sister islands of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

Each of the islands tells a different story as you visit popular attractions or step off the beaten path. Mingle with the locals and in no time you'll be saying "Who you fa?"—a Caymanian conversation opener inquiring about your family background. Whether you are hitting the bars of Seven Mile Beach, examining the wreck of a Russian frigate through the lenses of your diving mask, or basking in the sunshine like a blue iguana, the Cayman Islands won't fail to impress.

ON THE WATER

GRAND CAYMAN

Seven Mile Beach has the largest concentration of beachfront resorts. You can wander the entire stretch along the white-powdered sandy bay, signing up for water sports and sipping fluorescent cocktails en route. Grab a mask and snorkel or opt

for a wreck dive through the *Kittiwake*. The US Navy submarine rescue ship was sunk just off the beach in 2011 as a dive site and attraction. You can also set sail for the day aboard a catamaran with a private charter or pick up the pace with Jet Ski and wakeboard rentals.

Beyond Seven Mile Beach, the island has many undeveloped stretches and hidden coves for those in search of solitude, such as the quiet oasis of **Old Man Bay**. For a drinks-in-hand, toes-in-sand session, head to **Coe Wood Beach**, or grab a spot under a palm tree at the locals' favorite, the serene **Spotts Beach**. A stellar family spot with sand that is ideal for making castles, **Cayman Kai Beach** has shallow and calm waters.

There are a multitude of places where you can get up close and personal with the underwater world.



Beginners can explore a protected reef popping with vibrant fish at **Cemetery Beach**. For one of the most memorable diving experiences in the world, explore the **North Wall**. This fascinating site buzzes with marine life such as turtles, rays, and neon-colored fish that live amongst masses of red coral. Kids can mingle with turtles at the **Cayman Turtle Farm** or swim with the ocean's sweetest mammals at **Dolphin Discovery**.

For many, the most memorable excursion is to **Stingray City** to swim eye-to-eye with the rays, which rule a sandbar 30 minutes off the coast. They'll allow you to pet them as they eat squid from the palm of your hand.

CAYMAN BRAC

The main draw at Cayman Brac is its reefs that are home to an incredible array of marine life and a series of wrecks—of particular interest is the *Captain Keith Tibbetts*, a 330-foot-long Russian frigate where you might see one of the giant resident groupers at the helm. **Charlie's Reef** is another popular site, a magnificent coral canyon along the Cayman wall where turtles, rays, and lobsters keep you company on your dive.

LITTLE CAYMAN

From the more off-the-grid Little Cayman, you can study the underwater walls that attract divers from all over the world to sites with colorful names such as **Bloody Bay Wall** and **Nancy's Cup of Tea**.

Escape the crowds and soak up the sun at **Point** of **Sand**, an ideal setting for a romantic beach picnic. Alternatively, rent a kayak and paddle to **Owen Island**, a lush little gem with nothing on it but some palms and sandy beaches.



ON DRY LAND

GRAND CAYMAN

Beyond the orange reefs and curious stingrays, more experiences await on land. At **Queen Elizabeth II Botanic Park** you'll see the beautiful flora from the islands in nurseries of herbs, tropical flowers, and medicinal plants, as well as the endemic wild banana orchid, the country's national flower.

Grand Cayman's markets buzz with activity; stroll through the aisles to take in live music and handicraft demonstrations that will make you want to fill your bag with handmade straw hats, Caribbean pepper jellies, and Cayman sea salt. The market in **Camana Bay** outside George Town is the largest, but you will also find exquisite produce at the **Grounds Market** in the town of Lower Valley.

CAYMAN BRAC

A destination for the adventurous, Cayman Brac holds countless trails, mysterious caves, and bluffs to be conquered. Visit **Nani Cave**, with its stunning rock formations that catch the rays of sunlight, and don't miss **Bat Cave**, with vines climbing its walls.

The most popular onshore excursion is to **Christopher Columbus Gardens**. After a walk through the park, spend a moment under a gazebo before setting out on a kayak tour through the mangrove wetlands, a colorful ecosystem where agave, jasmine, and wild banana orchids thrive.

ON THE PALATE

The Cayman Islands are a paradise for foodies, with an abundance of tropical fruits, vegetables, and seafood that brings Caribbean gastronomy to a whole different level. Cayman cuisine emphasizes fresh seafood and spices in its jerk sauces and curries, all represented in the unique national dish: sea turtle stew. Other ingredients that are central to Cayman cuisine include lobster, conch, and goat, paired with coconut, cassava, and colorful island fruits such as green guava and naseberries. Carnivorous travelers can savor killer meat rubs with Jamaican jerk spices, hot peppers, thyme, and cinnamon.

WHERE TO EAT

Grand Cayman's restaurant options range from lively beach shacks to upscale restaurants with culinary stars in the kitchen.





Naturally, many restaurants in the Cayman Islands have a seafood focus. You'll know you've found a good spot by how often it updates its menu—some have more than one catch of the day, as what is freshest may change from lunch to dinner. Hemingway's on Seven Mile Beach has been one of Grand Cayman's signature seafood restaurants for years. Food lovers also swarm to Michael's Genuine Food & Drink in Camana Bay to try the wood-roasted catch of the day and homemade desserts. For prized Cayman lobsters, head to the Lobster Pot in George Town. And for good old comfort food, nibble on fried barracuda at Captain Herman's Eastside Fish Fry.

If you are looking for a break from Caribbean fare, Grand Cayman also has (perhaps surprisingly) several top-notch Italian restaurants, such as the family-friendly **Ristorante Pappagallo** located in a 14-acre bird sanctuary. Or grab a table at either **The Lighthouse** or **Casanova's by the Sea**, both with oceanfront settings. For wine connoisseurs, the Italian-influenced **Luca** is a top choice, offering delicious yeal Bolognese paired with one of the 3,000 wines on its list.

Between meals, the islands' juice bars, tearooms, and gelato shops will keep your energy levels even. A local favorite, **Jessie's Juice Bar** has a simple philosophy: Let the food be your medicine. The bar blends sumptuous liquid concoctions and showcase an ever-changing vegetarian menu. Continue on to the nearby **Gelato & Co** for fresh ice creams, then discover a local's secret: **Every**

ASK A LOCAL

What's your insider tip for visitors to the islands?

"Spend a weekend getting a feel for the different vibes. Spend the morning at the Market at the Grounds in Lower Valley, and then take a tour of Plantation House. Go to Calico Jack's at night and sink your feet in the sand as you drink a beer. Then let loose at Cayman Cabana on Saturday evenings for the lively Soca Session."

—Thomas Tennant, chef at Michael's Genuine Food & Drink

What one thing should every visitor make sure to do?

"A helicopter tour. You see Grand Cayman from a totally different perspective, be it the 20-minute Stingray City Tour or the 50-minute Island Tour. You see things like the *Kittiwake* from above as well as the natural

drop-off of the wall, the barrier reef, and you can even go turtle-spotting. I've done it 11 times, and each time has been different. The pilots are half the fun!"

—Leroy Jordan, concierge at The Ritz-Carlton Grand Cayman

What's the best way to enjoy a fine rum from the Cayman Islands?

"Many people will insist you drink it straight, but the truth is, many people just do not enjoy a straight spirit, regardless of how nuanced and complex it may be. Don't be afraid to mix your rum, but focus on simple, fresh ingredients that compliment the profile of the spirit. With Seven Fathoms, we usually feature orange rind, chocolate, and ginger."

—Walker Romanica, cofounder of Seven Fathoms Rum

Bloomin' Thing in George Town. Tucked away in the back of a garden center, it serves to-die-for sandwiches accompanied by cream tea.

WHERE TO DRINK

The world-famous Mudslide—a decadent blend of ice cream, vodka, Kahlúa, and Bailey's—is said to have been invented at **The Wreck Bar & Grill** at Rum Point. For a true Cayman-inspired potion, kick back at **Macabuca** with their famous punch in hand; it's a blend of five rums, ginger ale, and passion fruit. At **Tiki Beach**, you can soak up the seaside vibe with a Batida de Maracujá, their signature drink, made with passion fruit liqueur and pulp, cachaça sugarcane, and condensed milk.

The islands' much-loved spiced rum will put you in the island, well, spirit. In George Town, you

can tour the **Cayman Spirits Co. Distillery** to see the way the Seven Fathoms rum is lovingly produced in small batches. The rum is aged in barrels 42 feet (or seven fathoms) under the sea, where the ocean tides have the same effect as a distiller rotating the barrels.

THREE ISLANDS, ENDLESS EXPERIENCES

Keep asking the locals "Who you fa?" and you'll get an authentic insight into the Caymanian culture amidst your island discoveries. The Cayman Islands offer a heap of experiences for the curious traveler with a vibrant underwater world, a trendy culinary scene, and adventurous onshore excursions.



CONNECT

RESIDENT p.49

STAY p.55

VIEWS FROM AFAR p.60

FEAST p.65

SPIN THE GLOBE p.68

Moroccan mint tea is poured with a flourish at artist Hassan Hajjaj's Riad Yima gallery in Marrakech (Resident, page 49).

photograph by MICHAEL HANSON

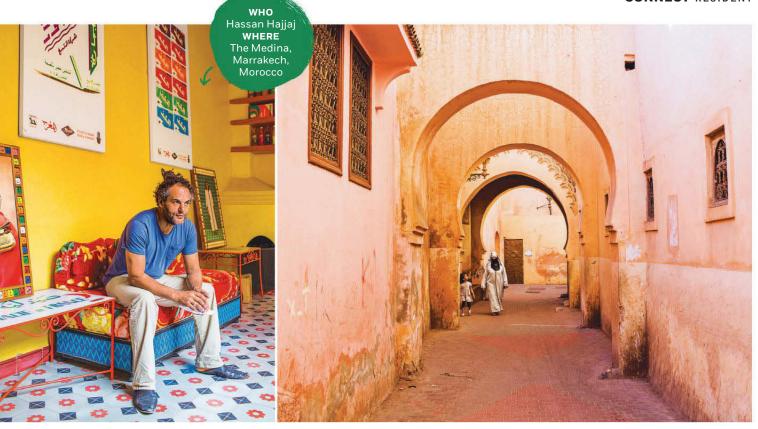
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Hassan Hajjaj, left, and his Riad Yima gallery add a modern edge to Marrakech's Medina.

The New Wave of the Medina

A Moroccan artist helps us navigate the inspiring maze of shops, galleries, and restaurants in the heart of Marrakech.

as told to GISELA WILLIAMS photographs by MICHAEL HANSON

ROWING UP IN Morocco in the '70s, we recycled everything. We could pay the rent, but we weren't rich. My mom used to empty out condensed milk cans, add a handle, and turn them into coffee cups. My sisters and I would create our own games. When we had plums, we'd use the pits and some Coke bottle tops to play gambling games. Or we'd find bamboo cloth and make kites. Or we'd collect seashells and try to sell them to tourists. We were always creating something with friends.

When I was 13, I left my home in Larache, Morocco, and my mom and my two sisters and I moved in with my dad in London. By the age of 15, I had left school and entered the real world. I worked at Woolworths and at timber yards. In my early 20s, I opened a shop on Neil Street in London's West End and

started selling clothes made by friends and by labels from New York. I was also running underground clubs with DJs and painters and filmmakers. I was always around people who made or produced fashion, music, and art.

I didn't return to Morocco until the early '90s. Visiting Marrakech after being away for years was like falling in love. All of a sudden, I was staying there for three months at a time. It offered me something both very traditional and very modern. I bought a *riad* [a Moroccan house built around a courtyard] in the Medina with some friends and started living there.

The art pieces I made after I moved back were inspired by my earlier trips. When I went to visit my aunt in Tangier, I started picking up rubbish like I used to do as a kid. I'd pick up tomato cans or shampoo bottles. I lined shelves with soda cans and turned them into frames

for the photo portraits I took of people from different subcultures in Morocco. I also made furniture from found objects. I took an old plastic Moroccan Coca-Cola crate and turned it into a seat with a Louis Vuitton cushion. Soon I was creating entire installations from found objects. It was all very pop and fresh.

In 2000, I showed my work at Ministero del Gusto, a showroom and gallery in the Medina. At that time I still wasn't sure if art was my career. It was just a body of work that I wanted to show friends. But I sold quite a few pieces. A musician from Italy bought a piece and asked if he could use it for his album cover. Two years later, I bought a place where I could live and work. I now have a shop on the ground floor for people to visit and have tea. It's called Yima, which means mum [mom].

In the last five years, the art scene here has gone into overdrive. People are coming to Marrakech, sniffing around, looking for that gem hidden amongst the stones. Many international people from the art, fashion, and music worlds now live in the Medina, but it's still the heart of Marrakech. It's a certain way of living. Life as an artist isn't always easy, but it's definitely exciting if you live in the Medina.

CONNECT RESIDENT









1. RIAD YIMA

The ground floor of Hassan Hajjaj's courtyard home showcases his work, including shoes, furniture, and his portraits of Marrakech residents. His staff always welcomes visitors with a cup of mint tea. 52 Derb Aarjane Rahba Lakdima Medina, 212/(0) 667-230-995, riadyima.com



2. PALAIS EL BADI

"This is the temporary home of the Marrakech Museum for Photography and Visual Arts, which will eventually move into a new building designed by David Chipperfield. It is worth a visit here just to see a historic palace." palais-el-badi.com, mmpva.org









3. CAFÉ DES ÉPICES

"A Medina institution, Café des Épices is all about the ambience on the square. It's a great place to meet people and to grab a sandwich. I like their vegetarian sandwich, made with avocado and tomato, and a nous nous, which is like a Moroccan cappuccino." 75 Rahba Lakdima, 212/(0) 524-391-770, cafedesepices.net





"The Medina is like Brooklyn in that there are all sorts of neighborhoods within it. The Old Jewish Quarter is still a very local place. It feels like Marrakech 30 years ago—a bit rugged and run-down, but it's cool to wander around in. There are a bunch of shops selling herbs and spices and crafts such as jewelry." →



CONNECT RESIDENT









5. DAR CHERIFA

"A beautiful riad that must be 500 years old, Dar Cherifa is owned by Marrakech Riads, an organization that renovates riads properly. I have had shows in its gallery. The riad also hosts cultural events." 8 Derb Chorfa Lakbir, Mouassine, 212/(0) 524-426-463, dar-cherifa.com



6. LE JARDIN

"Kamal Laftimi, a pioneer in the Medina who also owns Café des Épices, owns Le Jardin. The enclosed green-tiled courtyard is loaded with plants. It's beautiful and calm during the day. I tend to go in the evening for an intimate dinner or drinks." 32 Souk el Jeld, 212/(0) 524-378-295, lejardin.ma







7. CAFÉ DE FRANCE AND CAFÉ RESTAURANT L'ETOILE

"Both of these spots are great for a coffee and people-watching near the Djemaa el Fna square. Moroccans like to people-watch, even more than the tourists do. It's in the blood, I think." Café de France, Djemaa el Fna. Café Restaurant l'Etoile, Avenue Prince Moulay Rachid, 212/(0) 524-391-942



8. STREET FOOD STALLS ON DJEMAA EL FNA

"The Medina has loads of food stalls. My favorites are Fish and Chips #14 and Orange Juice #13. These two places aren't next to each other. There is always a queue at the fish and chips place, which is a tip-off that they use fresh fish. They also serve a special eggplant paste with the fish and chips."





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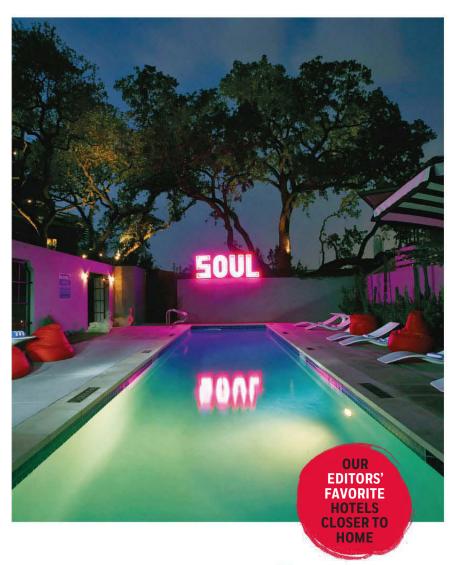


Our Kind of Place

What makes a great hotel? AFAR's staff looks for local treats in the minibars, spas with traditional therapies, restaurants where we can try authentic cuisine, and in-the-know concierges who can send us off on experiential adventures. Here, we share our favorite places to stay.







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MICHELBERGER HOTEL

Berlin, Germany Berlin and its residents have an effortlessly edgy style. "Staying at the Michelberger is one way to feel like you fit in and mix with the cool kids," says deputy editor Jen Murphy. Housed in an old factory in the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg borough on the east side of town, Michelberger offers simple yet homey roomssome with loft beds-at an affordable price. The lobby has a bohemian feel; the chairs are mismatched, and the lamps are made from books. It often turns into a party space in the evenings with live music and cheap cocktails. From \$76. michel bergerhotel.com



LA RÉSIDENCE HÔTEL & SPA

Hue, Vietnam A governor's mansion before the Vietnam War, La Résidence sits near the city center of Hue, overlooking the river. A refurbishment in 2005 added two new wings and maintained the original art deco design and furnishings. The hotel's travel desk can organize cycling trips to Gia Long Tomb and excursions to the

garden houses of Hue and to Phong Nha Cave. "It also has one of the best breakfast buffets of Asian and Western food I've experienced," says senior editor Derk Richardson. And it's hard to beat the price tag. "It's a splurge in Vietnam but a great bargain anywhere else in the world." From \$152. la-residence-hue.com

HOTEL SAINT CECILIA

Austin, Texas
"With the clientele that this hotel
attracts," says senior editor
Andrew Richdale, "you might take a
midnight swim with a rock star."
From \$295. hotelsaintcecilia.com

THE SAGUARO

Palm Springs, California
"The bold color palette of the
re-imagined motel reflects
the hues of 14 desert wildflowers,"
says art director Jason Seldon.
From \$99.
thesaguaropalmsprings.com

THE QUIN

New York, New York

"The service is unobtrusive, and all
of the electronics in the room are
controlled by a tablet," says director
of digital content Davina Baum.
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LAS ALCOBAS

Mexico City, Mexico "Polanco is one of Mexico City's most beautiful and energetic neighborhoods, and at its heart is Las Alcobas, a hotel that offers a respite from the bustling metropolis," says AFAR cofounder Joe Diaz. "The hotel brings to life the notion of modern Mexico." The 35 rooms have a sophisticated palette of black, white, and gray, and each has a minibar stocked with tamarind sticks and other local snacks. Guests can try an authentic Mexican healing ritual in the hotel's cozy spa or taste cuisine such as traditional Veracruz red snapper at Dulce Patria, a cantina-style restaurant from chef Martha Ortiz. From \$285. lasalcobas.com



THE PENINSULA **HONG KONG**

Hong Kong, China "The Peninsula has long been the classic place to stay in Hong Kong, with its historic lobby, great views, and staff who pay close attention to detail," says AFAR cofounder Greg Sullivan. The hotel, built in the 1920s and nicknamed the Grand Dame of the East, completed a multimilliondollar upgrade in May 2013 that added beautiful

furnishings and the latest in-room technology. Peninsula Academy programs allow foodies to learn to make dim sum with chef Henry Fong, and art lovers can visit the studios of some of Hong Kong's top artists. Be sure to seek out the Salon de Ning Lounge, hidden behind an unmarked door in the basement. From \$754, hong kong.peninsula.com



KELEBEK HOTEL

Göreme, Turkey When you travel to the Cappadocia region of Turkey, make a point of staying in a cave hotel. "Sleeping in a room carved out of the area's 'fairy chimney' rock formations is inherently cool," says executive editor Jeremy Saum. "When you realize that your room is also literally cool-even in the midday heat-you gain a better

understanding of the clever ways people managed to live in a challenging environment for centuries." The hotel's best feature just might be the terrace, where guests relax on pillows and eat Turkish breakfasts of apricots and yogurt while watching dozens of hot air balloons rise from the valley below. From \$76. kelebek hotel.com



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Dress the Part

American photographer **Charles H. Traub** captures Italian street style of a certain vintage.

GLOBALLY, STYLE IN the 1980s wasn't only about stonewashed denim and leg warmers. The photographer Charles H. Traub shows readers a very different aesthetic in his new book, *Dolce Via: Vibrant Colorful Photos of Italy in the 1980s.* Traub, who heads up the photography department at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, spent much of that decade documenting people in such cities as Rome, Naples, and Florence.

Traub says the theater of the street provided him a lens into the Italian psyche. "You saw the *dolce vita*, the leisure played out on the streets during that time," Traub says. His photographs savor the uncomplicated pleasures of Italian life and underscore the culture's enduring allure. Images of kids eating gelato on a dock in Venice and nuns window-shopping in Rome have a quiet innocence, while others have sensual, Fellini-esque undertones, such as this dark-haired woman taking a drag from a cigarette on a street in Naples. —JEN MURPHY &

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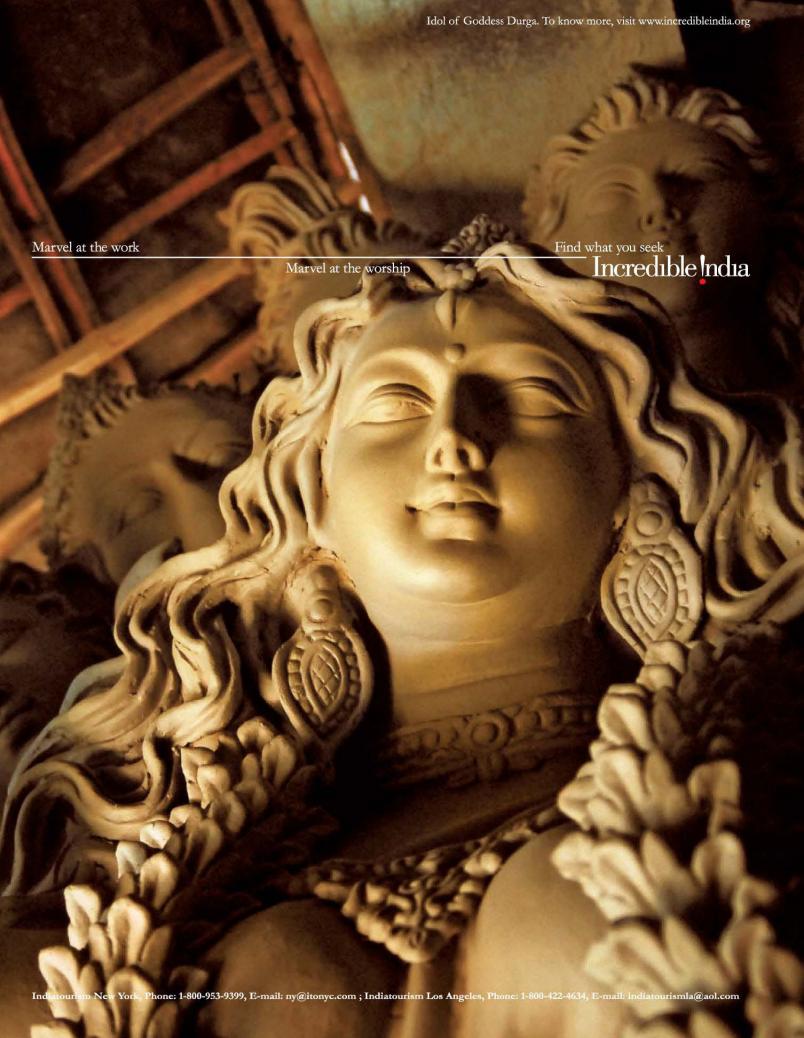
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Slice of Life

In Ireland, brown bread is at the heart of any meal.

by JESSICA COLLEY photographs by HELEN CATHCART

with that," said Delia Behan, head cook at the boutique guesthouse Number 31 in Dublin. "Too dry. Needs more buttermilk." While the other guests slumbered in the predawn hours, the kitchen filled with the aromas of baking. Without measuring, Behan tossed whole wheat flour, wheat germ, and a touch of brown sugar into a bowl—some of the dry ingredients for a loaf of brown bread. "I don't even own a scale," she said, as she poured a splash of thick buttermilk over the dough, re-creating the recipe she learned from her

mother growing up in County Offaly in central Ireland. A mother of three, with blue eyes darting out beneath red bangs (that's *fringe*, in Dublin), Behan stirred the mix softly and explained, "You need to be gentle with food."

After watching Behan slide her loaves into the oven, as she has every morning for 16 years, I took my seat at the farmhouse-style table in the conservatory, which was filled with bright October sunshine. Before long, out came a basket of hot brown bread and a pot of tea.

In Dublin, the traditional Irish breakfast is a strategy for warding off a Guinness-induced headache and an excuse for lingering over the day's first cup of milky tea. Brown bread is at the heart of the ritual. Fresh from the oven, thickly sliced, slathered in salted Irish butter, brown bread soothes you with its unfussy nourishment. Yeast-free soda bread appeared in Ireland in the mid-19th century, when bicarbonate of soda was first used as a raising agent. The bread could be baked in a lidded cast iron pot, which meant it was possible to cook over a fire rather than in an oven, and every Irish family could make bread at home. There are white varieties of soda bread, but, as I learned during my wanders through Dublin, it is wholemeal brown bread, with its crumbly texture and nutty flavor, that you'll find at breakfast or alongside a bowl of midday chowder.

"Classic brown, with a little butter, some good quality smoked salmon, a twist of ground black pepper, and a squirt of lemon juice—that's my ideal bite," said executive chef Leylie Hayes when I visited her at Avoca, an iconic

CONNECT FEAST









Irish department store with cafés in Dublin and elsewhere. When Hayes started at Avoca 25 years ago, she would start baking her brown bread at 7 a.m. Now, in the Dublin center branch, the bakers begin around 3 a.m., making 15 types of bread and six varieties of scones.

From Avoca, near Trinity College, I proceeded to the Chop House, a popular gastropub on the south side of Dublin. Chef-owner Kevin Arundel has adapted his grandmother's brown bread recipe, modernizing it with such ingredients as Guinness and treacle (molasses). Mixing the dough doesn't require any special finesse (actually, the less you handle it, the better), but finishing the perfect loaf is an art. It will tell you when it's done, Arundel explained, if only you listen. Literally listen. "Once the bread is hollow to a tap of your hand Jon the bottom crust], it is done," he said. That sound signals that the interior of the loaf is cooked but not dried out. When I took my first bite of a slice of his dense, not too dry (nor too wet) bread, draped with the components of a "fish board"-mackerel, crab, and smoked salmon-I sympathized immediately with the Irish all over the globe who left the island and still long for this taste of home.



NUMBER 31

0

Located down a lane in Dublin's city center, this boutique hotel provides breakfast each morning in the carriage house or the conservatory. Delia Behan bakes fresh brown bread daily to accompany such cooked-to-order options as a full Irish breakfast or smoked salmon and scrambled eggs. 31 Leeson Close, 353/(0) 1-676-5011, number31.ie

THE CHOP HOUSE

In the district known as Dublin 4 (south of the River Liffey), the Chop House is famous for dry-aged beef dishes, including a hearty porterhouse for two. Chef Kevin Arundel's brown bread is on offer with both lunch and dinner. Classic cocktails and a varied wine list expand on the typical gastropub format. 2 Shelbourne Rd., 353/(0) 1-660-2390, thechophouse.ie



AVOCA FOODHALL

After browsing Avoca's store full of Irish-made gifts, housewares, and clothes, follow locals

down the stairs into the food hall. Order a pot of tea and a scone with cream and jam, or buy a loaf of brown bread for a picnic in nearby St. Stephen's Green. 11-13 Suffolk St., 353/(0) 1-677-4215, avoca.ie



FOODGAME

For weekend brunch at Foodgame (in Dublin 4), try the homemade soda bread with tomato soup or a ham and cheese omelet. Other daily baked goods include scones, cakes, and pies. In a land of tea, this small, quirky café is a favorite for its quality coffee service. 10 S. Lotts Rd., 353/(0) 1-281-5002, foodgame.ie



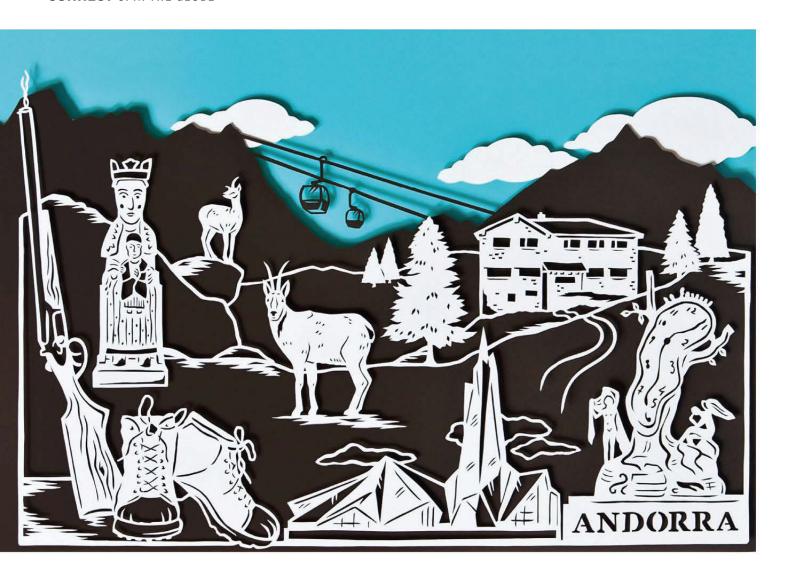
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Take a Hike

AFAR chose a destination at random and sent *Wild* author **Cheryl Strayed**, with 24 hours' notice, on a summer trip to a tiny country known for fabulous . . . skiing.

illustration by JULENE HARRISON

ANY HIKES!" the man at the tourist office in Andorra la Vella boomed, setting a map before me—only to whisk it away a moment later, proclaiming that it was impossible to hike now. "You could be shot," he stated, his voice almost elegant in its certainty. In a mix of Catalan, Spanish, English, and pantomime, we worked out that I had arrived during the single week in the entire year that was hunting season in Andorra, a tiny, landlocked country sandwiched between

Spain and France in the eastern Pyrenees. The quarry in question was the Pyrenean chamois, a goatlike antelope commonly referred to by Andorrans as the *isard*.

"You wait a week and then you hike," he said. When I explained that was impossible, he shrugged. "You only live once. Why risk?"

Disheartened, starving, and smelling like a goatlike antelope myself beneath the clothes I'd been wearing since I had left home twentysome hours before, I dragged my suitcase out of the tourist office and across

the way, past a statue by Salvador Dalí called *Nobility of Time*. I hadn't slept since I'd been in my own bed in Portland, Oregon. I was nearly hallucinating from exhaustion, and the melting clock seemed a perfect reflection of how distorted and faded I felt.

"Do you think I'll be shot if I go hiking?" I asked the woman at the front desk of the nearby Hotel Hesperia a few minutes later, as she checked me in.

"Do you think I'll be shot if I go hiking?" I asked the waiter at the nearby café where I had dinner that evening, sitting at a sidewalk table overlooking the Gran Valira, the concrete-lined river that runs through the city.

Everyone agreed I might be shot.

I sipped a glass of wine and stared at the river and wondered what I'd do now. Shortly after I learned I would be traveling here, I had typed the word *Andorra* into Amazon's search engine in hopes of finding a guidebook.

The first result that came up was a bra. The pickings are slim when it comes to information about Andorra. The few guidebooks that mention it write primarily of its stellar ski slopes and abundant tax-free shopping—the latter of no interest to me, and the former irrelevant because it was September. The books summed up the capital city, Andorra la Vella, where I now sat, as a hub of consumerism worth a stop only if you wanted cheap cigarettes. I had pinned my hopes on hiking the trails that traversed one of the most beautiful mountain ranges in the world, and now I was denied even that, for fear I might be mistaken for an antelope.

What else is there ever in our lives to do but make the best of it? If I could not walk in the wilderness, I would walk in the city. The next morning I set out rambling up and down the streets, marveling at the sheer number of stores. They sold just about everything imaginable: shoes, perfume, china, fancy scarves, knives, cell phones, leather jackets, and, everywhere, plastic statuettes of Our Lady of Meritxell, the patron saint of Andorra. Throughout the day, I buttoned and unbuttoned my sweater as the late summer sun duked it out with the cool edge of mountain air that is ever present in the city, 3,356 feet above sea level, the highest capital in Europe. As far as places to shop go, Andorra la Vella is a rather pleasant one-better than any U.S. mall-and the historic district is downright lovely, full of cobbled streets and enchanting old buildings, some of which date to the 9th century.

That evening, I worked my way through the sort of unexpectedly bizarre salad one gets from time to time in a foreign country—this one had white asparagus that appeared to be pickled—and a pizza served with a bottle of oil, because god knows if there's one thing pizza needs, it's more fat. I watched children toting knapsacks and women carrying grocery bags and couples holding hands pass by my concrete-riverside sidewalk table in the magic light the sun made as it sank behind the mountains that surrounded us, and I realized the guidebooks had it wrong.

I was charmed by Andorra la Vella.

The following day I found my way to the enormous Caldea Thermal Spa, which sits like a space-age glass church just outside the city. After I handed over my credit card, I was led to a section of the building called Inuu—the fancier, inner sanctum sister spa of Caldea, it turned out—where I stripped off my clothes, donned a robe, and immediately

got lost among a maze of futuristic doors and bewildering hallways. Fearing at every turn that I'd either wander into the men's dressing room or be abducted by health-conscious Martians, I finally happened into a sauna of sorts, where I found an older German couple making out like teenagers. They were kind enough to overcome our mutual mortification and direct me to a member of the staff, who guided me to a room where I was slathered in mud and scrubbed with sugar, then massaged to within an inch of my life while wearing an atrociously unflattering one-size-fits-all disposable thong.

mountains that surrounded me. I walked for more than an hour, away from the hotel and back, listening for gunshots. I heard none.

I set out the next morning shortly after dawn for Comapedrosa, again walking straight from my hotel along the road to the hiking trail. Within a half hour I had entered Comapedrosa Valleys Nature Park. Its alpine landscape of trees and meadows and lakes against the endless blue sky was so beautiful I couldn't help but stop to look around every 15 minutes—never mind I also needed to catch my breath. Up and up and up the trail went without mercy, at times rocky and steep, at others

When I asked her if she thought I'd be shot, she just chuckled.

Afterward, I sat on a bench at a playground near the spa, feeling tense and lonely rather than relaxed and blissed out. Watching the children on the swings and monkey bars made me miss my own kids. As I listened to the incomprehensible chatter of the parents and the universally recognizable laughter of the children, I got the feeling I sometimes get when traveling alone. Like I didn't know where I was or why I was there or what I'd been thinking to ever leave home. Like the only thing that would set me right was to keep moving. Like I really truly needed to go for a hike. Even if the country was teeming with people set on shooting isards.

So by midafternoon the next day I was in the village of Arinsal, seven miles and a world away from the capital city. I'd been drawn to Arinsal for its vast array of hiking possibilities, but especially for its proximity to Andorra's highest peak, Pic de Comapedrosa, a pyramid-shaped mountain that tops out at 9,652 feet. I got a room at the Hotel Montané, situated opposite the gondola lift in the center of town, and chatted with Fiona Dean, an expat who manages the place while also serving as the British Honorary Consul.

When I asked her if she thought I'd be shot, she just chuckled. So an hour later, I started out on a stony lane that ascended behind the hotel, leading to a grassy footpath that soon became a trail known as the Camí de Percanela. I followed it without a map but with a deep sense of wonder as I climbed above the village, watching the sun slant toward the high

winding beneath shady forest canopies and over bubbling streams. An hour into the hike, my half-hearted and overly optimistic goal of reaching the top and returning before sunset faded into the pleasant challenge of hiking to the Refugi de Comapedrosa, a rustic stone lodge that sits midway up the mountain near the picturesque Trout Lake and offers simple meals and beds for hikers.

When I limped into it, weary but elated, the lodge was buzzing with a group of perhaps 20 hikers speaking French, each of them devouring slices of cured meat and thick slabs of bread slathered in olive oil. In the Catalan-Spanish-English-pantomime that had become my own personal Andorran dialect, I asked the gray-haired woman who worked at the hut to bring me the same, along with a lemon Fanta.

There's really no better meal than one earned after hiking a hard trail. I sat alone, eating in a mild ecstasy while eavesdropping on the French hikers. Though I hardly understood a word they were saying, we exchanged smiles and nods, all of us happy to be in this place together doing the same glorious thing as summer turned to autumn. After lunch, I retraced my steps, making the long hike back to town, arriving tired and hungry and weather-beaten, grateful I had not been shot, and even more grateful that I had risked the chance that I might've been.

As the man in the tourist office had told me, you only live once, after all. **(A)**

Writer Cheryl Strayed is profiled on page 22.



EXTEND YOUR STAY IN MEXICO

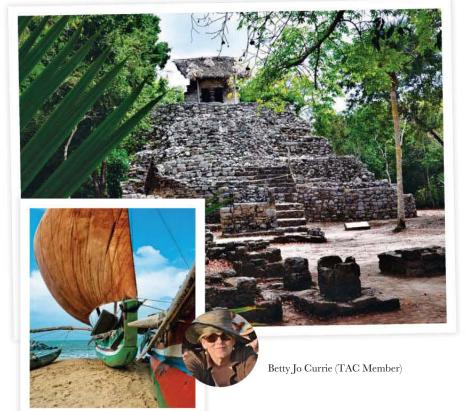
Check out these itineraries from the experts at AFAR's Travel Advisory Council (TAC) and find more at **afar.com/tacmexico**



The Best of Oaxaca

At the point where three different valleys meet, Oaxaca is one of Mexico's most atmospheric cities. Its historic center is dotted with colonial mansions, churches, and plazas, including its own zócalo. Travel Advisor Lauren Maggard has created an itinerary that will introduce you to the thriving indigenous cultures as well as the markets offering a bounty of unique handicrafts. Book this trip and you'll be there in the days leading up to the Day of the Dead, when ofrendas (small altars) decorated with marigolds and sugar skulls can be found throughout the city.

\$2,990 price includes three nights at the Casa Oaxaca (double occupancy), tours, airport transfers, and a farewell dinner.



Luxury on the Riviera Maya

Once you drive down the small road under a lush canopy that leads to the Belmond Maroma resort, you'll feel like you are arriving at your own secret resort. While you may be reluctant to leave your oceanfront room, Travel Advisor Betty Jo Currie's itinerary includes the highlights of the area: private visits to the Maya ruins at Coba and Tulum, a trip through the Sian Ka'an Biosphere, and a half-day sailing in a catamaran.

\$4,900 price includes four nights at the Belmond Maroma Resort & Spa in a Deluxe Ocean View room (double occupancy) with daily breakfast and many extras.

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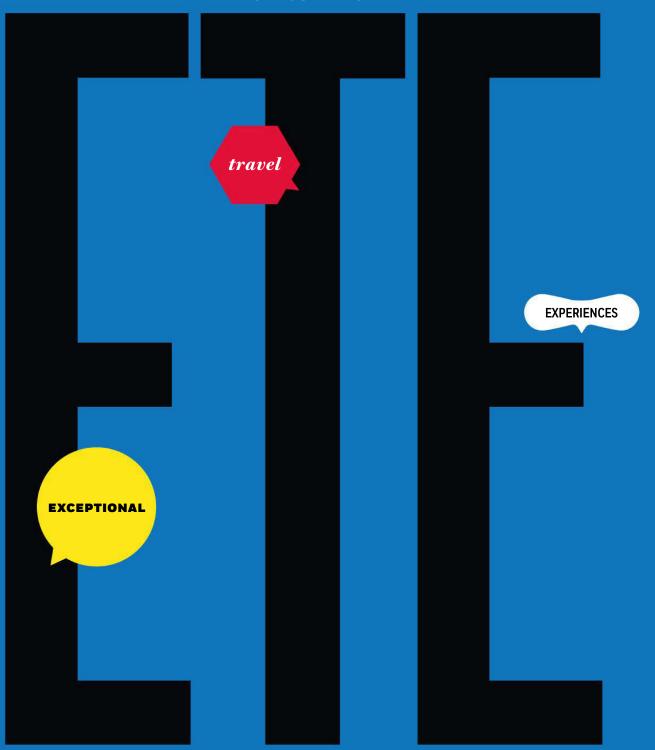






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I could listen to the Thacker **Mountain Radio** show from my house in Oxford, Mississippi, but when I'm in Off Square Books-shelves pushed aside. folding chairs unfolded-and the house band launches into its rockabilly theme song, something in me is harmonized with the world. Maybe it's the gospel singer getting the audience to clap along, or the store cat sashaying down the aisle, or the goodwill engendered by the free admission, but a family feeling is created. And then the lights come up, and we do what family does-help put away the chairs. thacker mountain.com -BETH ANN FENNELLY



EVERY JUNE 23. the Danes celebrate the summer solstice (they call it St. Hans Eve) pagan style, carousing and lighting bonfires along their beaches. When my fiancé and I visited Copenhagen, we biked through the festivities, logging 56 miles along Strandvejen, the scenic coast road studded with baroque and rococo villas, white-washed cottages, harbors, and Victorian-era wooden jetties. We cycled through the silvery light, stopping as we pleased. In the town of Skovshoved we passed the distinctive oval canopy of the Uno-X gas station, a

functionalist masterpiece designed by Arne Jacobsen in the 1930s (above). We paused to rest at Rungstedlund, the home, now a museum, where Karen Blixen (under the pen name Isak Dinesen) wrote Out of Africa. Reaching the Louisiana Modern Art Museum, we detoured to the beach to get a glimpse of works by Calder and Miró in the sculpture garden, as well as a shoreline view of bonfires being ignited. Back on our bikes, we passed the thatched-roof cottages of a succession of fishing villages that served in 1943 as departure points for Danish Jews

being ferried by fishermen across the Øresund, the sound separating Denmark from neutral Sweden. Then came a curve in the road, and the verdiaris spires of Kronbora Castle in the town of Elsinore loomed into view. At Brostræde Is, an old-fashioned ice cream parlor, we scarfed down cones of vanilla ice cream topped with strawberry jam and a chocolate-covered marshmallow. Excessive, you say? We needed sustenance for the ride back. A train could've taken us (and our bikes). But the haunting solstice sky still beckoned. -LINDA DYETT

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True relaxation in your own private paradise. The British Virgin Islands, with our turquoise seas and secluded white-sand beaches, are an idyllic escape waiting to be discovered. Experience world-class sailing, pristine coral reefs, award-winning spas and luxurious accommodations from private villas to private island resorts. The tranquil shores of our 60 islands and cays beckon with complete relaxation or exhilarating island-hopping prime for your ultimate Caribbean vacation.





A DESTINATION FOR THOSE WHO DON'T FOLLOW THE FLOCK

THINK OF THE MOST dramatic landscape you've ever seen. Now, heighten the peaks, so that they cut into a stormy sky. Make the cliffs sharper, and cover their sides in the greenest grass. Dot them with the fluffiest of sheep, and make the sea below as mercurial as the sky above. Imagine all this, and even then, you'll find yourself gawping at the awesome beauty of the Faroe Islands.

During the five days I spent on the islands, clustered in the North Atlantic halfway between Scotland and Iceland, my jaw grew sore from dropping. Travelers come here to fish the pristine fjords or hike paths that cut up the gentler side of those jutting cliffs. But, however spectacular the scenery, it's the local culture—hardscrabble and only a few steps removed from survivalist—that truly fascinates.

Shepherding lies at its heart. At the shop Guðrun & Guðrun (gudrungudrun.com), in **Tórshavn**, the pretty Faroese capital, a saleswoman told me that just as the Inuit have dozens of words for snow, the Faroese have hundreds of ways to describe sheep's wool. They spin it into thick yarn, then knit it into the islands' distinct sweaters, worn

so famously by the Detective Lund character in the Danish television series *The Killing*. The Faroese eat mainly mutton. Faced with so restricted a diet, they expand the range of flavors by air-curing sheep's meat to different degrees of fermentation. They also carefully tend the skins, which they make into clothing and rugs.

On **Stóra Dímun**, a windswept island inhabited by a single family that dates back eight generations, I get to see all of this. Jógvan Jón Petersen and his wife, Eva úr Dímun, welcome the few visitors who arrive by boat or helicopter.

When I visit, Jógvan Jon takes me to a slatted shed where sheep leas hang from the ceiling, and explains that the prohibitively high cost of salt meant that the Faroese learned to cure meats using air alone. Later, Eva will serve some of the fermented mutton at lunch. It is pungent to the point of tasting, well, rotten, but in its powerful flavor I can sense the harsh seas and weather that have shaped these islands over centuries. North-West Adventures offers seven-night walking tours of the Faroe Islands. nwfrontiers.com -LISA ABEND

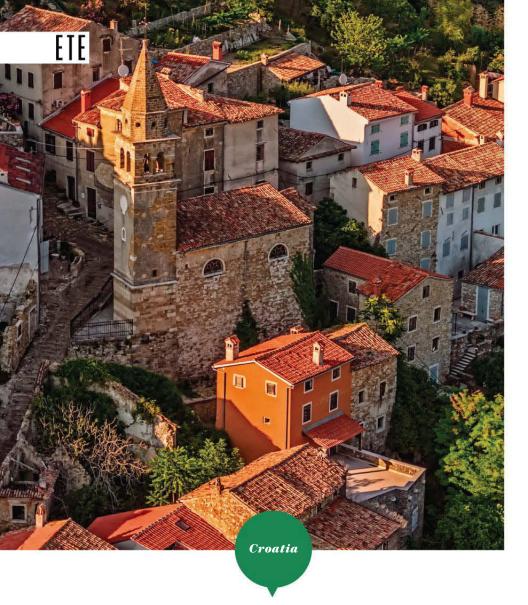


THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A FLEETING MOMENT AND A LASTING MEMORY.









GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY

ON THE STEEP HILLS above the truffleobsessed town of Livade in central Istria, Croatia, a man named Vlado Tomažič makes olive oil on his family's farm. When my husband and I rented the apartment, Casa Maršić (casamarsic.com), adjacent to the farmhouse, we found it the perfect base for exploring the nearby medieval hill towns. We visited Motovun-Montona and Oprtalj-Portole, where we ate fuži, traditional Istrian pasta, with fresh mushrooms and grilled lamb chops at the fantastic **Tončić agritourism** (agroturizam-toncic.com). We happened to be at the farm during the October harvest and helped Vlado's friendly crew rake the olives from the trees, taking frequent breaks for *gemišt*—white wine and sparkling water. Classic Journeys offers seven-night tours of Istria. classicjourneys.com—DAVINA BAUM





Paradise Found

The dirt road that leads from the hip beach town of Trancoso, Brazil, to Silvinha's could be a luge run but for the potholes and the stream we had to ford. We arrived queasy and left with the deep calm that often follows deep pleasure. Silvinha's cottage is on Praia do Espelho, which some call the prettiest beach in Brazil. There's no menu, but Silvinha, a longtime resident, knows best. She makes homey food: whitefish, plantains, and, of course, caipirinhas. After lunch, some of us canoed in the mangroves; some repaired to hammocks. And now, all of us want to go back, even if it means another luge run. Lunch only, reservations essential. 55/(0) 73-9985-4157 -BETH ANN FENNELLY



GO FOR TWO DAYS, STAY FOR TWO WEEKS



I came to **Ladakh**, in northern India, to explore the 20,000-foot peaks and ancient monasteries the area is known for. A two-day detour to volunteer at the **Jamyang School**, which the Dalai Lama founded to provide free education to local children, turned into a couple of weeks. What I took away from my interactions with the Ladakhi people—from the small moments teaching students computer skills to the monks dangling a white scarf around my neck in a simple blessing of gratitude my final day—left a far greater impression on me than any peak I climbed. *taraforchildren.com/jamayag.html*—κπτ ρουςεττε



GOOD NIGHT. TODAY WILL BE HARD TO BEAT. UNTIL TOMORROW.

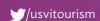
Quite a day, wasn't it? Beginning at Point Udall where you were the first person in the United States to see the sun rise. Followed by diving through the underwater wrecks of sunken vessels. And then touring a working rum distillery before, finally, having a romantic dinner overlooking a pristine beach. Amazing day.

Tomorrow can't come soon enough. So you can take on your next adventure.

You, unscripted.

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ST. CROIX







EVER SINCE I WAS five years old, I've dreamed of being a cowgirl. Now, years later, I find myself living my childhood fantasy—in Ecuador. As part of a three-day *repunte*, or roundup, organized by adventure outfitter **Tierra del Volcán**, I ride alongside 20 local cowboys known as *chagras*, driving a herd of bravo cattle, the Spanish breed of fighting bulls that graze freely throughout the Andes, to the corrals of the **Hacienda El Tambo ranch**. I'm in no hurry to keep pace as my horse and I take in the views of the Cotopaxi volcano, and when we reach the corrals I'm little help as the chagras brand the cattle. But come evening, I still have a cowboy's appetite when we gather around a fire to eat traditional Andean dishes such as *locro de papas* (a potato and cheese soup) and tamale-like *humitas*. The more *aguardiente* we drink, the louder we sing. And "Home on the Range" sounds just as good in Spanish. *Three-day repunte* \$700. *tierradelvolcan.com —JEN MURPHY*





A FEW YEARS before my wife was my wife, she was a long-distance girlfriend who had met another guy. Heidi dropped that news the night before we had planned to meet in Fiji, where we'd booked a sailing trip aboard the Tui Tai, a 140-foot, three-masted ship. We had nonrefundable airline tickets, we had taken time off and lined up a screaming deal, so against all reason, Heidi and I went anyway. Fiji is so beautiful, we figured, it would be impossible to be miserable there. Before sailing, we killed a few days on a remote, roadless corner of

Vanua Levu, Fiji's second-largest island, swimming, scuba diving, and snorkeling around lollipop purple coral at a retreat run by two German speakers who lived so removed from reality they had their own made-up time zone called "dolphin time." It wasn't enough. Heidi wanted to skip the *Tui Tai*, go home, and start a new life.

Or so she thought. As we played like porpoises, with no Internet, no phone, we had no way of knowing that a gathering storm had forced the *Tui Tai* to leave its harbor in nearby Savusavu earlier than planned. By sheer

luck, we happened to spot the ship's magnificent crimson sails as it cruised north along the coast and right by our diving retreat. The owners put us on a skiff and maneuvered alongside the bucking ship. I leapt aboard, turned to Heidi and held out my hand to effect a dramatic "Are you sure?" moment of truth. Before she could protest, someone grabbed her bag with her passport and tossed it aboard.

It was the best decision we never made. We spent five nights on the three-deck ship, sipping cocktails on daybeds and working

in our cushy stateroom. We, along with a dozen other guests, sailed along the island of Taveuni and out to islands where local chiefs allowed the Tui Tai exclusive access to harbor. The crew Zodiac'd us off to lonely beaches with a picnic basket and a radio to call for a pickup. We named new dive sites, kayaked, leaped from waterfalls, and snuggled as the crew sang breathy songs about the sunset. By the end of the trip, there was no other guy in the picture. Five-night cruises from \$1,794. tuitai.com -TIM NEVILLE





The Surprising Sounds of Xi'an

IN A COURTYARD OF **THE GUANZHONG FOLK ART MUSEUM**, THREE MEN SAW AWAY ON FIDDLES, ANOTHER ROCKS OUT ON A BANJO-LIKE INSTRUMENT CALLED A *SANXIAN*. TURNS OUT *LAO QIANG*, THE FOLK MUSIC OF CHINA'S SHAANXI PROVINCE, SOUNDS LIKE A RIFF ON AMERICAN BLUEGRASS. I DON'T UNDERSTAND A WORD. BUT WITHIN MINUTES I'M UP AND DANCING. —JEN MURPHY



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COMPASS from our partners: your guide to the best the world has to offer



Left: Chef Reto Mathis Right: Bryan Kinkade (Associate Publisher, AFAR Media), Ashley Castle (AFAR Ambassador), Whitney Tressel (Photographer), and Ethan Gelber (AFAR Ambassador)







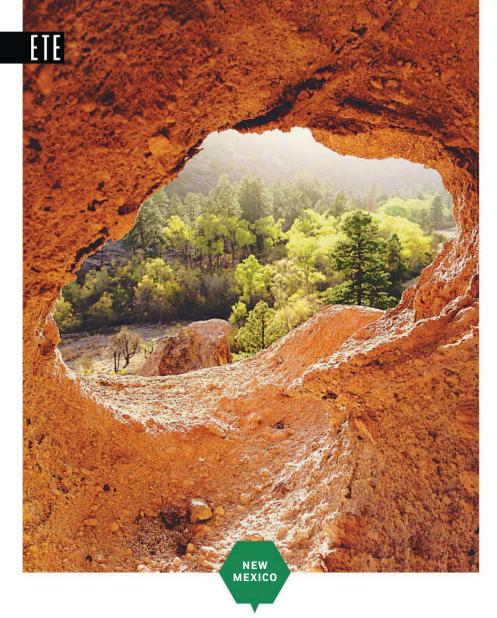


A TASTE OF SWITZERLAND

On May 1, AFAR and Swiss International Air Lines celebrated the hospitality and cuisine of Switzerland at the Tasting Table Test Kitchen in New York City. Tasting Table readers and media insiders enjoyed a Swiss-inspired menu created and prepared by Chef Reto Mathis, one of Switzerland's best-known native chefs, who was also featured in the airline's onboard culinary program, SWISS Taste of Switzerland. The menu featured canapés and Swiss wines, and everyone took home a little bit of Swiss hospitality: chocolates distributed by SWISS flight attendants.

swiss.com





SEND YOUR CHILD ON A SCAVENGER HUNT

I'M NOT SURE at what age humans develop the skill to stand still and appreciate scenery, but based on a scientific survey of kids who live in my house, it's not age seven. On a trip to the Canadian Rockies, as my wife and I snapped photos of the relentlessly picturesque mountains, my son, Luke, investigated how quickly he could break his toy helicopter. Luke expects Mother Nature to be his playmate. At Bandelier National Monument, about an hour's drive from Santa Fe. New Mexico, she is.

The visitor center offers kids a booklet of activities that, when completed, earn them a

Junior Ranger patch. (You could call it a bribe. We prefer the term incentive.) The scavenger hunt sent us off on the Main Loop Trail in search of birds, trees, and bugs, as well as the feature that sets Bandelier apart and makes it perfect for kids: cave dwellings.

Ladders of salvaged wood lead to rooms that the Pueblo people carved out of the cliffs here over 800 years ago. "I don't want to go up, Daddy," Luke said. "It's too steep."

You've got this, buddy," I said. "Just take it slow."

There were no lines of impatient parents pushing their children to race up the ladder. (We saw no more than 20 people on the trail.) Luke could climb the rungs at his own pace. He paused in triumph at the top, then set off to wander the caves. While Mom and Dad squatted-"Watch out for your bald head, Daddy"-Luke could explore without even hunching.

After about 45 minutes, we were walking back toward the visitor center. We crossed a nearly dry creek by hopping hand in hand from one downed log to another and were back in time for lunch, before hunger, fatigue, or boredom could set in. It was a parent's-and child's-dream hike. nps.gov/band -JEREMY SAUM



AT HOME IN A **HAYSTACK**

High in the Emmental Alps, off the Glaubenbielen Pass, Rita and Wisi Enz run a small summer farm called Egghüttä. It's a modest affair surrounded by clichés: towering peaks and lazy cows. I wandered in and Rita fed me a cheesy noodle dish called älplermagronen. As they do with all guests, that night, they led me to a loft where I slept swaddled in wool blankets on a bed of hay. I awoke to cowbells, relaxed and grateful. I could have stayed somewhere with a real bed, but why? schlaf-im-stroh.ch -TIM NEVILLE

Hawaii

Get on Island Time

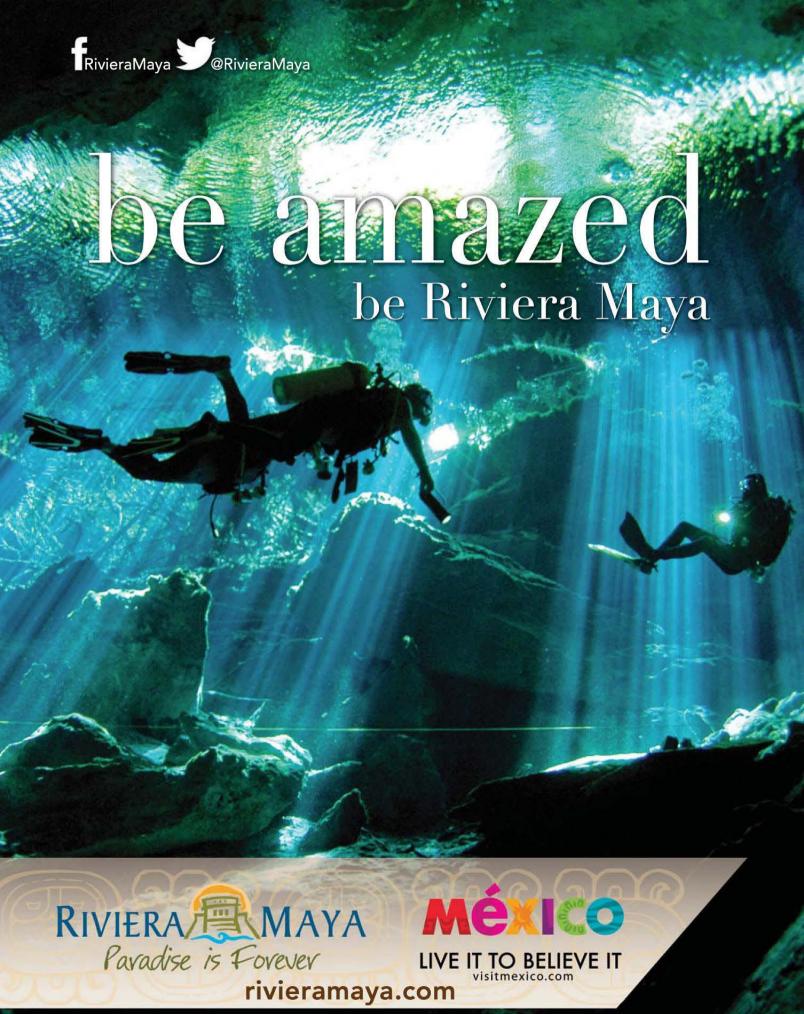
DARCI TEACHES US TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE "O" SOUNDS THAT FLOAT UNDER EVERY WORD OF THE LYRICS. MY MOUTH FEELS TOO **FULL WHEN I TRY TO** SING. BUT BY THE END OF THE KAHUMOKU **'OHANA MUSIC WORK-SHOP.** I'VE LOOSENED THE GRIP ON THE NECK OF MY UKULELE AND THE WORDS FINALLY HAVE SPACE. KONAWEB.COM/KEOKI -PAM MANDEL



BLOWN AWAY BY BAKU







SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION



hile it is famously the home of ancient pyramids and atmospheric colonial towns, there's a wind of stylish change blowing through the Riviera Maya. If you already know the region well, there's reason to return and see what's new. If you haven't been, a short introduction: Located in Quintana Roo, the youngest state of Mexico, the Riviera Maya starts some 20 miles south of Cancún's airport, includes a number of towns on the edges of the Caribbean, and ends at the Sian Ka'an Biosphere.

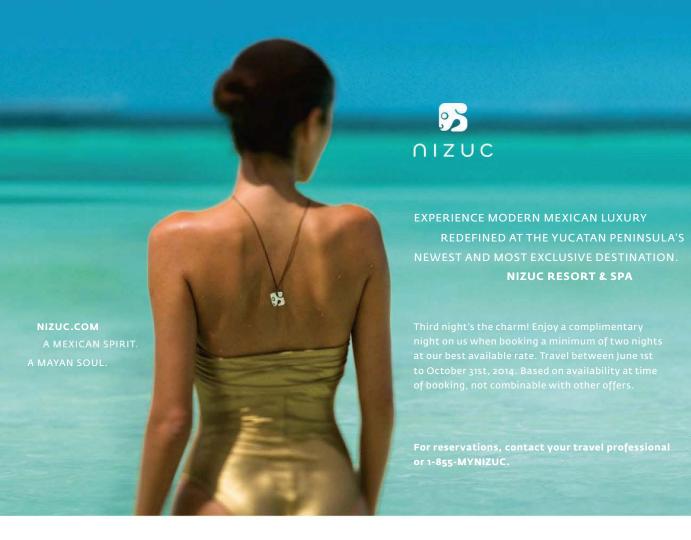
You can check out the new Riviera Maya with a walk along Quinta Avenida (Fifth Avenue) in Playa del Carmen, where the party lasts into the morning at open-air bars that attract an international crowd. Farther south, in Tulum, the look is eco-chic bohemian at the small hotels on one of Mexico's most beautiful beaches.

Located at Punta Nizuc, just 10 minutes from the Cancún airport,

the NIZUC Resort and Spa has captured the region's essence of luxury since it opened in 2013. The contemporary resort was designed by architect Alejandro Escudero and the rooms have a cool, streamlined look. The suites, which start at nearly 1,000 square feet, have luxurious touches like freestanding tubs and floor-to-ceiling windows with ocean views.

The all-inclusive Hard Rock resorts go for a—not surprisingly—edgier vibe. In Cancún, the resort announces its rocker ethos starting with its guitar-shaped driveway. Its five restaurants and five bars and lounges let guests live out the Welcome to the Jungle theme, bringing glitz to the beach. The group's latest addition, the all-inclusive Hard Rock Riviera Maya, celebrated its grand opening this year with Jon Bon Jovi and the Kings of Suburbia headlining the party. The hotel caters to rocker moms and dads with family-friendly offerings, but there is also an adults-only section, Heaven. Among its unique features are a grotto pool that becomes a nightclub after dark.







Not one to be left behind, the Moon Palace Golf & Spa Resort embarked on a \$100 million enhancement program in 2012. Among the popular additions are a new nightclub, Noir, designed by Francois Frossard, responsible for the South Beach clubs Arkadia and The Forge. The resort now also has 19 Palace Wellness Suites, where guests can sign up for aqua spinning classes in their private pool, minibars are stocked with natural juices, and there's a gluten-free menu available 24 hours a day. The surf is always up at the resort,

thanks to the new FlowRider. The double-wave stimulator lets you practice getting up on a board even when the Caribbean is as calm as a swimming pool. The Moon Palace will also get you up on your feet at its concert series— Shakira, Usher, and Ricky Martin are among the stars to have performed recently.

Whether you want to rock out, play it cool, or keep it old-school, there's a Mexico beach vacation that will fit the bill.

PANAMA MEGAPOLIS. PATTAYA. PENANG. PUNTA CANA. RIVIERA MAYA. SAN DIEGO. SINGAPORE. TAMPA. VALLARTA **COMING SOON HAIKOU. SHENZHEN**

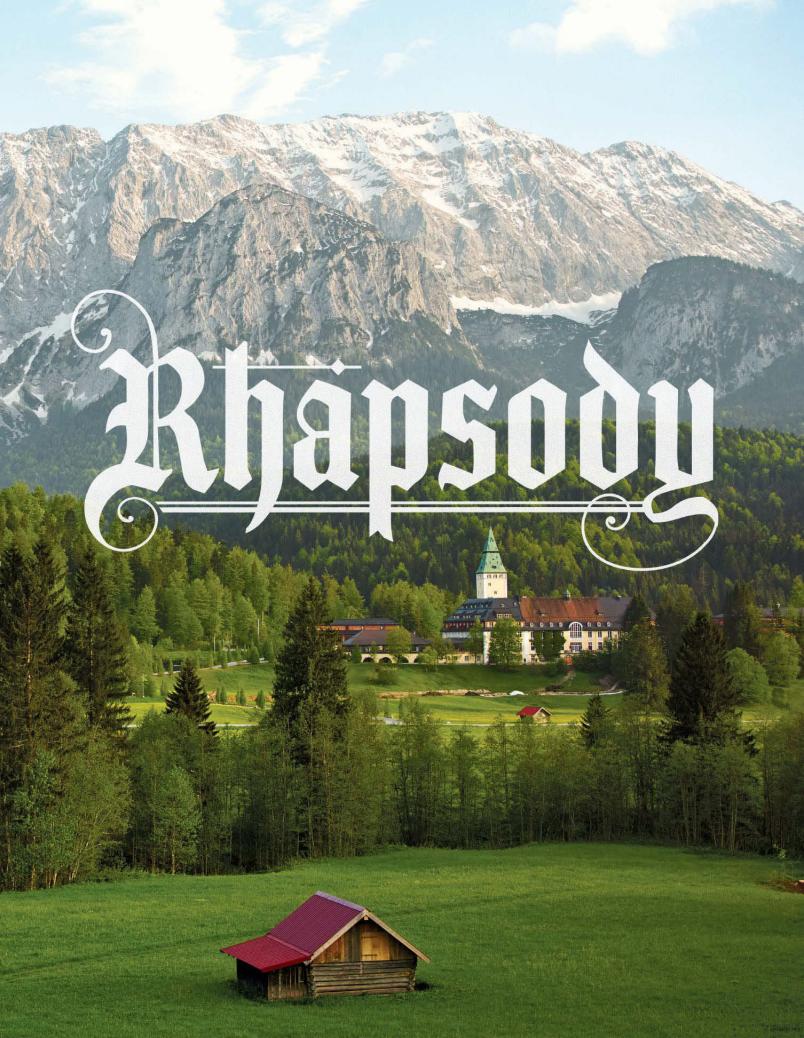
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AUAUA WRITER EMMA JOHN TAKES HER VIOLIN TO ITS BIRTHPLACE IN SOUTHERN GERMANY AND CONFRONTS A MUSICAL MYSTERY PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTIAN KERBER 92 AFAR AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2014





AMILY ASIDE, my longest-lasting relationship has been with a piece of wood. My violin. My parents let me pick her out at a shop in London when I was 12, and we've now been together for more than two decades. Sure, we've had our musical differences-we've spent long months apart, and I even once abandoned her on a train-but ultimately, we've always been reunited.

She's outlasted most of my school friends and become my most constant travel companion. We've taken road trips

from the East Coast to Colorado. We've summered in the south of France. And while she doesn't pay her way-our busking history is a penurious one-she makes up for it in other ways. When I travel with her, I'm never lonely. She's gotten me invited to more dinners, parties, and jam sessions than I'd ever have managed by relying on my personality.

The more we traveled together, the more people asked me about her. They wanted to know where she was from, how old she was, stuff any decent friend ought to know. But all I could offer, in reply, was a peek through the curved f-holes on her front and into her belly. There, when the light's angled correctly, you can make out a rectangular, slightly soiled label that says, in a cursive script, MATHIAS KLOTZ, LAUTENMACHER, MITTENVVALDT, IN ANNO 1732. Lautenmacher means "luthier;" Mittenwald is in southeast Germany. The year is actually uncertain; the label is printed, but the last two numbers are written in pen and are hard to decipher. People who knew something about violins would nod approvingly at the name, and gradually I discovered that the Klotz family had been pioneers of German violin making. Mathias had left Mittenwald to study his craft in Italy, where some believe his tutor was Nicolò Amati, the man who also inspired the world's most famous violin maker, Antonio Stradivari. Mathias took his newfound skills home to the Bavarian alps, married twice, and passed on his knowledge to his progeny, including son Sebastian and grandson Aegidius, whose instruments far outshone their father's. A violin-making dynasty was born.





These bits of historical information piqued my own curiosity. Feeling slightly smug that my violin had such an interesting provenance, I decided to travel to her birthplace. After years of taking her for granted, it seemed only right to take her back home for a visit. Perhaps, I figured, we would even get to meet some of her more glamorous relations.

From Munich, it is a train journey of 65 miles to the Karwendel, the mountain range beneath which Mittenwald is hidden. It didn't take long for the city to yield to dandelion-covered meadows that stretched to the horizon. By the time the blue haze of the Alps took on solid form, the fields were dotted with barns and tiny chapels and cows with bells around their necks.

The train passed through the fringes of forests that have provided generations of violin makers with their greatest asset: centuries-old spruce and maple. These are the wood types that, when fashioned into scrolls, ribs, and curved, arching bodies, give violins their unique resonance.

Violins were everywhere. Their graceful silhouettes adorned shop signs and restaurant menus and the bottles of schnapps in the liquor store. Several murals indicated that buildings had been violin workshops or, in some cases, still were. On the edge of town stood the modern facilities of the Geigenbauschule, a worldrenowned instrument-making school. Klotz had inspired an entire industry that continues to this day.

At the far end of the Obermarkt was the town's 18th-century church, lavishly decorated with trompe l'oeil paintings, and in the shadow of its pink tower, on a large marble pedestal, sat a statue of a man. A profusion of curly hair escaped from the edges of a cap, and he was working on the violin that rested on his left knee. Underneath was the legend M. KLOTZ. My heart beat fast with pride. My very own violin maker was the most popular guy in town.

In the restaurant of the Hotel Alpenrose, the ancient dining room smelled so strongly of in the 1400s. It's probably the only German festival where you can't buy a beer.

It was exciting to feel part of something centuries old and to try to imagine my violin's earliest years in this place. At Alpenrose, I ordered a beer. The coaster said it came from Mittenwald's own brewery, and it arrived with a large forehead of froth and a plate of bread and drippings. Dinner was a skillet of melted cheese and noodles. The only vegetable content was a crispy scattering of fried onion that served as garnish.

Later that night, as I waddled up to my hotel room, even my hair smelling of smoked gouda, I heard two men yodeling somewhere in the building. The music had a melancholic and surprisingly tuneful air, and I drifted to sleep to its soothing sounds. Mittenwald was clearly a musical place. Two hours later I was awakened by the rumpus of a brass band marching past my window, playing off-key.

Perhaps that's why it took a while to find my



Once every five years, the town re-creates its medieval market. It's probably the only German festival where you can't buy a beer.



Klotz and his descendants knew that the best material came from high altitudes, which produce wood with the tightest grain. But as we arrived, the Karwendel was hidden in clouds, its treasure undisclosed.

The town of Mittenwald, by contrast, couldn't have been more inviting. It is a quiet retreat of some 7,000 inhabitants, its residences and businesses clustered around a handful of streets. The predominant thoroughfare is the Obermarkt, a wide pedestrian avenue between facing rows of 17th- and 18th-century houses, their roofs running together in a sequence of wooden gables. Brightly painted murals illuminate their exterior walls. They depict Biblical and historical scenes or describe the building's former occupation; several represent the legendary Bolzano market, which was held here in the Middle Ages. The entrances to many of the houses remain large enough to accommodate horses, carts, and their goods.

A short stroll before dinner was enough to reveal the impact Mathias Klotz had made.

sausage and cheese that the air itself seemed smoked. In a booth, a whiskered man picked at a zither, his whirligig tunes adding to the festive atmosphere. All the staff wore traditional Bavarian costume, as did several of the guests. My waiter explained that lederhosen and dirndls—the apron skirts worn by the women—are the Sunday outfit of choice for many locals. "This is a town where the old customs still matter," he told me proudly.

Few places in Bavaria, I discovered, can claim as strong a grip on local tradition as Mittenwald. Its carnival, several weeks of masquerades leading up to Shrove Tuesday (40 days before Easter) and held to "drive out" the winter, has no equal in the region. The Alpine costume—with its expensively embroidered suspenders and its inimitable combination of leather shorts and knitted leg warmers—is worn on any and every occasion. Once every five years, the town even re-creates its medieval Bolzano market, shutting off the electricity and refusing to serve anything that wasn't available

stride the next morning. I mistook the large sign saying GRÜSS GOTT for the name of the hotel restaurant, because the concierge kept saying it to guests as they emerged from their rooms looking for breakfast. (It's actually the standard Bavarian greeting. "Guten tag" might do for the rest of Germany, but here in the south you wish your fellow folk "God bless you.") Nor were my menu choices improving. Breakfast was an arsenal of bread and cold meats. Unprepared for salami so early in the day, I found some soft cheese instead. Only after biting into a liberal application of it on my bread did I realize how much garlic it contained.

And so, rather more pungently than I would have chosen, I headed into town, discovering more Mathias Klotz legacies along the way, including a street sign declaring MATHIASKLOTZ-STRASSE. Close by I found a music shop, home to Anton Maller, a master violin maker who has been pursuing his craft for 40 years. He had gray hair and a mischievous smile, and was happy to tell me the history of violin making in the town.

Klotz had shared his craft widely, and by the 19th century, when the violin's popularity was at its peak in Europe, the industry consumed the town. There was barely a family in Mittenwald, Maller explained, that wasn't involved in the violin-making business.

Whole production lines emerged, with some families making the fingerboards, some the necks, others the scrolls. A small cartel worked as dealers, marketing and selling Mittenwald's chief product across the whole of Europe. "In the 1800s," said Maller, "London was full of Mittenwald instruments." Perhaps that's when mine came to be there? "Perhaps."

I took the violin out of its case and handed her over carefully; Maller looked her over, scrunched up his face, and brought her to the window for better light. Then he put her down on his desk and measured, scrutinized, and stroked her. The master craftsman took out a dentist's mirror and inserted it carefully plate alongside a boiled potato and some pickled cabbage, all doused in an intense gravy. My waitress plucked my sleeve and tried to encourage me up to the counter, where dozens of cold dishes awaited, none containing a single vegetable. It was the kind of meal that in any other circumstances would have made me carnivorously happy. But my appetite had vanished.

I had asked Maller how he could tell my violin wasn't a Klotz, and he had pointed out a few details: she was a half-centimeter too short in the body, her scroll a little too flared, her f-holes a touch too wide. But really, he said, he could tell just from looking. It was as plain to him as seeing that a Fiat was not a Ferrari.

I forced down some veal and asked the waitress if I could have the bill. "First, ice cream!" she exclaimed, and a few minutes later the host paraded a giant meringue-covered dessert into the room on a silver platter, dosed it with

He was so warm and jovial that I was tempted to ask him for a hug.

Instead, I asked if he played violin himself. (Surprisingly few makers do.) He told me he played in a band, and we discovered a shared love of bluegrass music. Anton (we were now on a first-name basis) and I played a few tunes together. One thing led to another, and that night I found myself in a barely lit mountainclimbing shop surrounded by ropes and carabiners, jamming with Anton's bandmates.

The shop belonged to Stefan, a guitar player. Peter, who played banjo, owned the digital printing business across the street. They got together once a week to play old-timey music, sitting around a wooden table at the back of the shop. But they were happy to share a classic Bavarian tune with me too, a sentimental ballad infused with love of their Alpine home. It was the kind of tune you might hear at family gatherings, where small groups

ALPINE HOLIDAY

Where to geek out on violin history, spy lederhosen, and drink like a local in Mittenwald.

Real-Deal Bavarian

The antique furniture is as sturdy as the plates of sausage and cheese served by lederhosenclad waiters at **Hotel Alpenrose**, a frescoed inn on the main Obermarkt plaza. hotel-alpenrose -mittenwald.de

String Theory
Immerse yourself
in Mittenwald's

violin history at the **Geigenbaumuseum**. On-site luthiers demonstrate violin carving. *geigenbaumuseum* -*mittenwald.de*

So Long, Be Well

It's easy to see Sound of Music parallels at the **Schloss Elmau**, a sprawling temple of wellness and culture (Turkish baths! Piano concerts! Grassy hills made for yodeling!) surrounded by mountain peaks. schloss-elmau.de

Marinara Magic

Trade the wurst for Italian specialities such as salami-flecked calabrese at **Osteria Viola**, a local favorite. osteria-viola.de

Prost!

Explore German beer past and present at the **Brewery Mittenwald**, which has made its lagers since 1808. brauerei-mittenwald.de

Schnapp 'Em Up

At the kitschy **Schnappmuseum**, you'll find a flavor of the fruity spirit for everyone on your list. *Obermarkt 37*

through the f-holes, following it in with a tiny flashlight. His grin was succeeded by a frown, then reappeared, only a little chastened.

"No, this is not a Mathias Klotz," he said. "It's not made by any of the Klotz family. I can't even say it's from Mittenwald."

If I am ever forced at gunpoint to appear on a soap opera, at least I now have the emotional experience for the role. I was the betrayed housewife, the illegitimate child, and the woman who discovers she has been unwittingly dating an evil twin, all at once. After my 20 years of taking it on trust that this violin was a 300-year-old German, she turned out to be a fraud. When people had praised her tone and her provenance, I'd been taking vicarious pride in a fake. I felt oddly ashamed.

A few hours later, I sat in front of the Alpenrose's traditional Bavarian buffet. Four types of roast meat crouched on my liquor and set it ablaze. I went to bed with my belly groaning and my heart aching. My violin case sat in the corner of my room, unopened. I couldn't face seeing her.

I didn't particularly want to meet Anton Sprenger the next day. He was a violin maker whose shop overlooked the oldest part of town, known as Im Gries. I'd arranged to visit him because he could claim a line of descent from Mathias Klotz, 10 generations on. Now, walking into a showroom of beautiful handcrafted instruments, I felt mortally embarrassed. What had I to do with Klotz anymore?

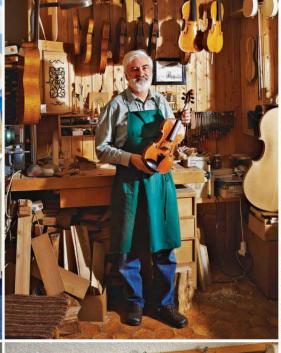
Sprenger invited me upstairs to his workshop, which smelled sweetly of resin and alcohol. Tools of baffling shapes and variety hung from the walls; bottles of various liquids sat on the shelves. He explained that he made his varnish from amber and that wood needed to be dried out for decades if it was to make a quality violin.

of musicians played *stubenmusik*, literally "room music"—in the corner of a pub (or, say, a mountain-climbing shop). The zither playing at the restaurant and the yodeling I'd heard at the hotel would both have been stubenmusik; the brass band outside my window, however, was *volksmusik*, a more formal kind of folk music played at dances and the like.

"Did the band seem drunk?" Peter asked. I replied that it would certainly have accounted for the dodgy notes. Then, said Peter, they were probably staggering home from a dance.

We chose a song to play, and I reached for my violin. In Anton's workshop, he and I had swapped instruments, and it had been a relief not having to play my faux Klotz. Now as she came out of her case, I regarded her with a skeptical eye. If I played with a little less enthusiasm than usual, and a trace of sulk, it was surely only natural.

























But gradually the music took over. It's hard to focus on resentment when a trio of Bavarians is charming you with a serenade about the Snow Wind, the harbinger of the Alpine winter. And I couldn't help but notice that the melody sounded rather pretty on my violin.

Over the next couple of days I found ways to take my mind off my violin-shaped disappointment. At Stefan's encouragement, I walked up to the Lautersee, a mountain lake where the water is clear and green, and tiny flowers of pink, white, and mauve stud its banks with subtle color. I invested a lot of time in the town's secondary industry, bakeries, of which there were almost as many as there were violin makers. With Peter's advice, I even discovered a rare restaurant with vegetables on the menu—Osteria Viola, where I fell on a plate of tomatoes like Lawrence of Arabia reaching Aqaba.

But there was one place I had still to visit, a destination I'd been avoiding. The violin-making museum, situated in one of the charming old

up, then told me that Wolfgang Zunterer, the leading Klotz expert in Germany, would like to see my violin. He lived 40 minutes away, but was driving here now. Would I wait?

Zunterer was a businesslike man in his 50s who did not toy with my hopes: The violin, he explained in German, had indeed come from an inferior workshop, now impossible to identify. But it was made in the 18th century. And he could tell from the wood that at least the bottom of the violin had come from Mittenwald. A rush of relief flooded me. I hadn't traveled halfway across Europe for nothing.

There was, Zunterer added, something far more exciting. The label itself—that was a genuine Klotz. It turns out that putting fake labels in violins is a centuries-old tradition. Not, apparently, to deceive customers, but to indicate the style of violin the instrument was modeled from. In the early days of the Mittenwald violin trade, some of the Klotz family even marked their own instruments

were cheerfully bedecked with fresh flowers.

Near the front door of the church was a plaque saying that Mathias Klotz, who had lived to the frankly miraculous age of 90, was buried somewhere on this ground. But that wasn't what Peter had brought me to see. Inside, a modest collection of pews faced a large, ornate altarpiece. Peter hopped over the rope in front of it, and I, feeling scandalously sacrilegious, followed him. The back of the altarpiece was curtained with a sheet and he pulled it back to reveal its secret. Someone had carved a message into its wood in a large scrawl:

M K 16~4 GEIGENMACHER IN ZO JUHR

I recognized *geigenmacher* as "violin maker" and *juhr* as "year." Whose the initials were, I could guess. "How did you know this was here?" I asked. "Everyone learned about Klotz in school," said Peter. According to folklore, Mathias had come to the little church of Saint Nikolaus when he



It's hard to focus on resentment when a trio of Bavarians is charming you with a Serenade about the Snow Wind, the harbinger of the Alpine winter.



residences behind the town church, houses an impressive collection of instruments.

The more I'd learned about Mittenwald's history, the more I'd longed to feel part of its fraternity. But the very first exhibit was an original Mathias Klotz. And however hard I squinted, it was clear that my own violin did not share a family resemblance. The chocolaty color of her varnish was far darker than this one's, the grain of her wood more pronounced. From the curve of the f-holes to the arch of the body, the Klotz's features were so markedly different, it was like staring into a stranger's face.

Still, I scoured the cases in the next rooms. Could my violin have been made by one of Mathias's grandsons? A nephew? A distant, distant relation?

The curator of the museum, Constanze, had heard I was coming, and asked me to bring my violin. When I told her the bad news, she wanted to see it anyway. She spent some time studying its insides, then made a phone call. "Ja, das ist, das ist..." were the only words I understood. She hung

with the name of Germany's preeminent maker, Jacob Stainer, whose violins were more sought-after at that time than Stradivari's. But to have a genuine label from Mathias Klotz's own workshop—that was a rarity.

Zunterer himself currently had possession of a Mathias Klotz violin that didn't carry a label. "There are only six other Klotz labels in existence that he knows of," Constanze translated, "and yours is the seventh." Zunterer added something in German, and Constanze giggled. "He says he would rather have your label than your violin."

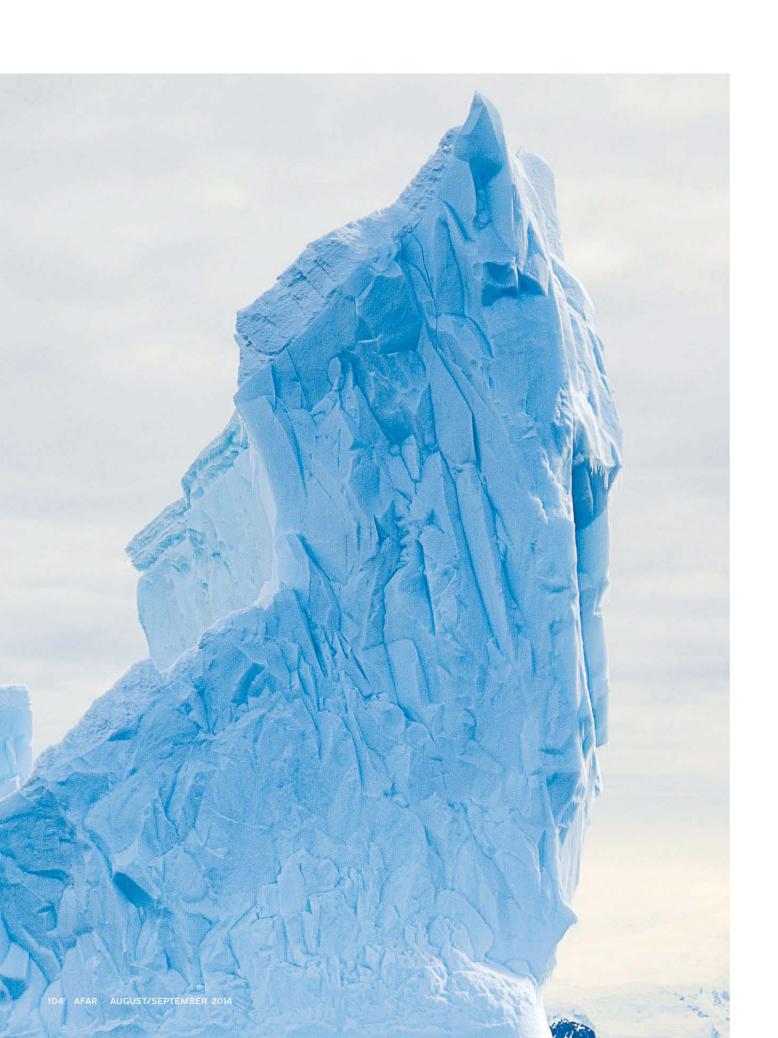
On my final day in Mittenwald, my new banjo-playing friend, Peter, took me to a lunch of pretzel and weisswurst, warning me to first take the skin off the sausage if I didn't want to look like a complete tourist. Then we walked to a tiny church on the edge of town, surrounded by an immaculate graveyard. It was, Peter explained, where every resident of Mittenwald eventually ended up, which was why the family gravestones, even those from decades ago,

returned to Mittenwald and asked God to bless his new violin-making venture; when it succeeded, he left this ancient graffiti as a thank-you.

I looked at the marking, not so different from the label in my violin. The same man had created them both, and here I was, on the spot where he'd prayed for success. He may not have fashioned my own instrument, but he was still the reason for her existence. Without his dedication to his art, and to the town he lived in, she would never have been made.

My violin hadn't changed. She was the same instrument I had chosen, when I was 12, for her warm, vibrant tone and rich, dark features. Did it matter that she wasn't who she had claimed to be? No. I'd spent 20 years learning her secrets, and now I'd discovered the biggest one of all. I figured she probably knew worse about me.

Contributing writer Emma John wrote about bluegrass in North Carolina in the July/August 2012 issue of AFAR. Photographer Christian Kerber is profiled on page 22.



BEYOND BELIEF A JOURNEY TO ANTARCTICA





Drake Passage and was now upon our decks, another one of the vest-pocket storms that kept rising out of nowhere and returning there just as quickly. Alvarez-Munoz checked his paper charts and compasses and plotted our course with a thick pencil line, finding his way by hand because these waters defy even the most advanced of our machines. Then he nodded: Antarctica was in our immediate range. He was doubtless, even though the only instrument able to find any sign of it was his heart.

After such a long journey, and in the absence of more tangible evidence, it was hard to accept his assurances that we were almost there. My 140 fellow passengers had funneled to this featureless patch of ocean from across the better-known world, every last one of us having originated somewhere due north: flights first to Buenos Aires, and then a Lindblad Expeditions charter to Ushuaia, a small, colorful town at the bottom of Argentina that lays claim to the southernmost civilized everything. Then we had boarded the *Explorer* and nosed through the shimmering Beagle Channel, to our left the mountains of Argentina, to our right the slightly more dramatic mountains of Chile. We passed a lifeboat drill quietly deciding who among us looked the most delicious before we escaped the last grip of land and slipped into the Drake Passage sometime around midnight. The seas grew rougher where the Atlantic and Pacific met, joined in their union the next day by several of our half-digested breakfasts and lunches. Nearly 40 hours after we had pushed



away from safe harbor, and four days since most of us had left home, there stood Alvarez-Munoz with his pencil, insisting that, any moment now, Antarctica would appear before us.

When it did not, he unrolled another one of his charts to justify his belief in paranormal landmasses. The ocean, now the Southern one—its fluid boundaries another of our perhaps mythic inventions, a function solely of a steep drop in water temperature—was as much as 5,500 meters deep here. But nearby, underwater peaks rose within 200 meters of the surface. Beneath us were entire ranges that dwarfed the Andes. No one had ever climbed or even seen these mile-high monuments, but that didn't mean they were not there. It might seem impossible that there are destinations on this planet that we haven't visited, even remotely, but in many ways Antarctica is an article of faith more than a hard physical fact; its ranking among the continents will last only so long as we believe that it does.

"All the best mountains are hidden," Alvarez-Munoz said—and he said it with finality—before he turned his binoculars back to the uniform gray in front of us.

Not long after, the wall of mist and snow opened up, and on the horizon to our right was our first glimpse of a semisolid object, if not land: a single, lonely iceberg, shaped like a triangle. It was what a child would draw if you asked her to draw an iceberg, some implausible idea of an iceberg, calved into miraculous existence. Then came another, larger and to the left. Then another, the way seagulls foretell arrival at more conventional shores. And then, at last, there was a small knob of gray rock in the distance, the first of the South Shetland Islands, the ambassadors of genuine Antarctica, the Antarctica that isn't defined by hunches or Fahrenheit, the Antarctica that can be seen and touched and visited, the Antarctica that is everything we've come to associate with what it means to be a place. It felt, at that delirious moment on the bridge, as though we had finally arrived. Alvarez-Munoz looked down and ran his fingers across his chart and extended his pencil line, and by the time he looked back up, the rock and everything that it represented had disappeared.

MONTHS LATER, my memories of that

trip aren't like my memories of other trips. They aren't even like my other memories. There are no colors, no tall buildings, no roads or signs or music, no snapshots of indigenous faces, none of the usual time stamps given us by day and night. There was always light, the sun setting spectacularly before changing its mind at the last moment and rising again, true darkness just one more of Antarctica's vast repertoire of apparitions. When I close my eyes, there are only shadows and blurs, a hundred shades of blue and white, snow and ice, sleeplessness and awe. I don't really remember specific locations, and I can't say I fully remember moments, even. I remember the gooseflesh and lumps in my throat.

One afternoon during our voyage, the itinerary was vague: "Expedition Day in the Weddell Sea!" the daily briefing read. "Please listen for announcements regarding our plans, which will depend on weather and ice conditions." The Weddell Sea is among the more daunting bodies of water on Earth, a whirlpool trapped between the Antarctic Peninsula and Cape Norvegia in Queen Maud Land. Thanks to the peninsula's grand design, the Weddell Sea gathers ice in all its transient forms: enormous tabular bergs, like elevated football fields; floes, white and sheetlike; bergy bits, icebergs now on their way to becoming ocean; and growlers, blue boulders somehow floating like corks. One survey of the area found 30,000 icebergs in just 1,500 square miles of ocean. It's hard to explain what that looks like from the bow of a ship, but it looks like a different planet, one where ice is not only a living thing but occupies the top of the food chain. It snaps and howls and groans; it lifts and rolls and crashes. In the middle of all that, back up on the bridge, a brave decision was made: We would push south through that ghoulish course as far as we could, because at the end of it there just might be Emperor penguins.

Virtually all of us stood on the bridge or the bow, looking out across the water and ice, as though the force of our collective will could make everything fall into place. Soon, six killer whales popped up beside us, their dorsal fins cutting through the chop, and then one dived under the ship, from starboard to port, turning upside down to show off the white



of its undercarriage through a few inches of sea. Today, when I remember that killer whale, I remember my own stomach flip, the vertigo that came from looking down at the belly of a beast.

Then fog and snow rolled in. On we went, driven by our now steadfast faith in banshee rocks and pencils. Icebergs loomed out from behind the drapes that had been pulled around us; the Explorer passed over a bergy bit that shuddered down the hull of the ship. Everything was silver and spooky until the storm blew out and we found open water again; now we were really steaming toward Snow Hill Island and the fast ice that surrounded it. A clean edge appeared in the distance-an unbroken sheet of ice as wide as a plain, white against the black of the sea in front of it-and through binoculars we could see some small dots on it. A murmur went up. The crew let the currents catch the ship and draw us toward the leading edge of the ice. Our hull dug into it just hard enough to anchor us, and there they were: eight Emperor penguins that had just leapt out of the water, taking the opening steps of their miles-long march back home, somewhere beyond our scope. Ten minutes earlier, ten minutes later, and we would have missed them. Instead, they were right there, waiting. Then Antarctica did what it does, and they were gone.

We turned around and retreated north, lest we disappear with the penguins, lost in the ice. Celebrating in the ship's lounge with high fives and raised glasses, we felt as though we had really arrived now, as though we had finally completed each of our private unspoken quests. The Explorer's passengers were mostly older, some of life's veteran navigators crossing off their seventh continent, and many of them possessed that particular brand of gratitude that comes only with time and travel. I don't think I was the only one who had trouble holding it together. We had come all this way and cashed in so much good fortune for the outside chance that we might see those eight Emperor penguins pick their way across the ice. And we did. In a world that can seem purpose-built and calculated for us, engineered for our safety and convenience, every part of that longshot day, the entire lunatic trip, felt as fleeting as luck itself. That feeling is what I remember, and that's why Antarctica remains impervious to memories and maps and the mental thumbtacks we might stick in them.

All of its settlements are temporary. Its borders migrate. Its landmarks are seasonal. Its ports are killer whales, and its capital cities are penguins.

THROUGHOUT six days in Antarctica, each one gorgeous and spectacular, that overwhelming feeling of impermanence became almost sinister, like a looming shadow. At first it crept up in odd ways: penguin eggs cracked open by predators; more pods of killer whales prospecting for seals; piles of bleached whale bones stacked up on a beach. We could fool ourselves that we were invulnerable, given our comforts, our bowls of Argentine ice cream and our hot chocolates spiked with whiskey, and we could sleep soundly in our beds knowing that the right eyes watched over us. But there remained constant reminders that we were in parts that did not welcome us as warmly as our waiters did. It wasn't just the foreboding labels on Piers Alvarez-Munoz's precious charts-Erebus and Terror Gulf didn't sound like the most promising picnic spot—or the sepia portraits of Ernest Shackleton's starving men that lined the Explorer's bistro bar. Ephemerality was a presence we could feel, a literal shiver that ran down us whenever we were alone enough to register it for what it was.

It happened to me twice. The first time, it was inside a beautiful socket called Orne Harbor, a tight crescent of a cove ringed by mountains and glaciers. The water was blue and flat, with lots of ice. We took a Zodiac ride to shore and then climbed a long switchback through the snow to the top of a ridge. It was the most perfect day, skies as blue as the water, the sun shining, warm enough to strip off our jackets and sweaters. The ridge gave us a view across more mountains and more glaciers through air that was so clean and clear I could feel my lungs turning pink again.

We hiked and reveled and ass-tobogganed down some icy slopes, laughing and taking pictures. Some lesser penguins called chinstraps, an initially ridiculous sight now made routine (we had already stopped at one rookery that boasted 40,000 of another penguin species, tiny Adélies), stopped and stared and shrugged at us. It was a magical few hours, and I joked with one of our guides that I wouldn't be getting back on the ship.



He wished me luck, and he smiled, but the way he said it had an edge to it. He knew I wouldn't stand a chance. It was sobering to remember that the topography that had buoyed me could just as easily reduce me to despair, and eventually to more bleached bones on the beach.

So I'm not sure why I soon did maybe the dumbest best thing I've done. We were in the calm of an inlet at Port Lockroy, an old British research station that's now a museum, complete with wall paintings of buxom movie stars limned by men desperate for warmer company. Our crew decided it was time for the polar dip that had been whispered about from the start of our voyage like a midnight raid, when those passengers who dared could strip down to our shorts and drop into some of the coldest, darkest water on Earth. Before we took the plunge, the guides asked whether anyone wanted to do more than the standard leap-in-leap-out. Did anyone think they could stand that water for more than a dip? How about for more than a minute? It would be for science, some sadist said. Four of us said yes. We were younger and stupider, and two of us were more Canadian, than everyone else on board.

Our vital signs would be monitored, even though I was fairly sure they would indicate that I was an idiot. Worse, I decided to wear a snorkeling mask, because I harbored some delusion that I'd have the physical wherewithal to sightsee. We trembled our way out of the ship, our bare feet curved around the edge of a Zodiac turned into a makeshift diving platform, and then we jumped.

It was, to put it gently, a very long minute. Water that cold does something almost primeval to human anatomy. It trips some invisible biological switch. Within seconds, my legs and arms went numb. My breathing became shallow, and my heart began to claw out of my chest like a cat from a bag. Nearly every drop of my blood rushed to my core, my body now its own lifeboat, organs and circulatory system first. Luckily, the salt made me buoyant, because death was now more likely than swimming. Once or twice, I remembered to table my suffering and put my face into the water for a few seconds. I could see the red hull of the ship beside me, but between my translucent, paralyzed feet, all I could see was a bottomless down. After more than a week without darkness, that water reminded me what night looked like, and it both thrilled and scared the shit out of me.

Finally the minute was up. We clambered out and tied ourselves in knots trying to warm up. Our bodies were crimson. We said some very bad things a little too loudly, and I went straight to the dining room, ravenous, and ate about 7,000 slices of pizza. I couldn't help noticing that I couldn't really feel the crusts. I knew they were there. I could see them and taste them. But my fingers refused to register their heat.

Slowly the feeling came back to my digits, except for the middle finger of my right hand. All these months later, it still has a small circle of numbness in it, right at the tip. I suspect that it will be some kind of numb for the rest of my life. I hope it will. It's become my constant reminder of 60 seconds and a trip that I can't really remember but for so many reasons want never to forget. Even after everything I saw in Antarctica has vanished, wiped away by winter and time and carbon dioxide, it will still haunt me. My dead fingertip is the one rock in the water that will never disappear.

THE ICE WAS particularly thick last winter;

it had socked in five staffers from Palmer Station, the small U.S. research outpost, for months beyond their scheduled finishes. The *Explorer* has an ice-strengthened hull, and word had come that those five Palmerites

would really like a ride home. So it was decided that we should begin our voyage's second big quest, this time in pursuit of people rather than Emperor penguins.

To get to them, we cruised through some unfathomable country—the Gerlache Strait, the Neumayer Channel—breaking up floes that were thick enough to carry seals. They dived out of our way as the powder steam of avalanches rose off the mountains around us and the ice made its usual creepy noises and crackled like power lines. We turned down the Bismarck Strait, leaving a trail of open water in our wake, a river that would soon disappear. Bergy bits thudded against our hull. And then Palmer Station came into view, a tenuous collection of blue metal-sided buildings, oil barrels, and shipping containers perched on gray rock.

The bridge and the bow were packed with spectators for the excitement, and maybe 40 station residents were standing along the shore, cheering back at us. One of them had a beard down to his belly, and someone joked that he must have been one of the five overdue. Then we saw another man, tall with long hair, pumping his fists like a concertgoer. He was one of them, and now we could pick out the others just from their joy.

The *Explorer* was too big to dock. A rope was thrown across, and a kayak was dragged back and forth, first with loads of baggage. The kayak didn't seem especially sturdy, and the rope kept getting snagged on the ice. Eventually the water cleared out enough for the crew to drop a Zodiac, and the retrieval operation went more quickly. The Palmerites—scientists and support staff—broke from embraces, were ferried across, and clambered through the hatch in the hull that had let us out for our plunge. It proved the opening for more than one kind of escape.

Watching them duck on board, I thought they must have been feeling as though they were leaving the moon. In truth they felt as though they had landed on it. The most desperate of them, the tall man pumping his fists, had spent seven months at Palmer Station, through the relentless winter and into the non-thaw of spring. He went straight to the ship's bar, and the look on his face when he took his first sip of draught beer made us want to know what he knew. A crush of curious passengers surrounded him and the others. They soon looked almost alarmed by their peculiar celebrity. In their months away, they had lost all their calluses. They had become shadows of their former selves. They had forgotten the sensation of endless hot showers and the smell of oranges, but they had also forgotten how to survive life among the living.

When we finally returned to the shelter of the Beagle Channel, Chile now to our left and Argentina to our right, the Palmer Station Five stood in a group at the top of the ship. They stared across those last few hundred meters of water to Ushuaia, and they looked at it the way we had looked at the South Shetland Islands all those days earlier, before we had learned to believe. Spend enough time in Antarctica, and it's no longer a specter. It becomes real, and the rest of world, the rest of us, become the ghosts. For the first time in months, those five men and women saw grass. They saw trees with leaves in them. They saw cars, and they saw colors. They saw neon, and dogs, and smooth asphalt with yellow lines on it, and stores with full shelves. A plane took off from the airport, and the tall man shook his head. "I kind of forgot we could do that," he said, laughing at himself a little, and he watched the shining plane lift into the sky until it disappeared into the sun.

All the best mountains are hidden. All the best mountains are right in front of our eyes.

Chris Jones is profiled on page 22.











I fly to Lourdes, France. I figure I have a better chance with a miracle cure than with lawyers.

And really, shouldn't I have gone to bathe in the waters of Lourdes years ago? When I first started having all those conversations with Doctors With Serious Faces? Certainly by the time they became Doctors With Very Serious Faces saying I wouldn't have much use for calendars.

Because if you need a miracle cure, Lourdes, set in a deeply inconvenient corner of southwest France, is where you go. Since 1858, when Bernadette Soubirous saw an apparition of the Virgin Mary—actually, she saw a whole bunch of apparitions over several weeks—Lourdes has been the place to be when nothing else works, when medical science has failed and faith is all you have left.

Never mind that I don't have faith. Never mind how easy it is, without faith, to be cynical in a place guidebooks describe as "a religious theme park."

But what if I forget all the questions of belief or disbelief and simply go with the same open trust I feel on every trip? At the most fundamental level, surely whenever we leave home we do so in hope of transformation. To see ourselves differently in a different place and to be reminded of how amazingly common beauty is, if only we bother to look.

Besides, it's not as though I have anything more to lose.

The taxi driver drops me off, I check into the hotel, and before I've even set down my pack, I hear singing.

The sound leads me through the warm night air to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes. And there, several thousand people—the line of wheelchairs alone is eight abreast and maybe

200 yards long—are carrying candles and raising their voices in a hymn. The front of the shrine is lit by gold mosaic tiles reflecting each individual flame, and the only sound besides the singing is marchers weeping in joy.

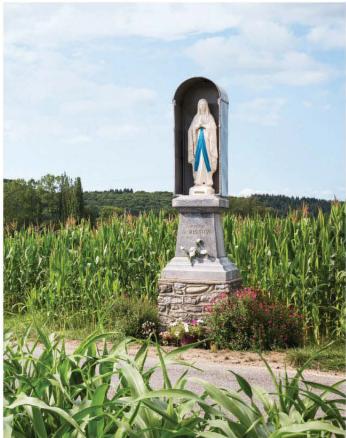
Try being cynical in the face of that.

IF IT WEREN'T FOR BERNADETTE and a

few thousand claimed miracles, Lourdes would barely be a wide spot on the road. Away from the sanctuary, about the most interesting thing is the way the ducks float sideways in the swift current of the Gave de Pau, letting themselves be carried down the river for a couple hundred yards before flying back up to their starting point, as if it is a game.

But then there's the sanctuary, built in three layers of chapels, spires pointing to the sky, walkways leading off the sides like wings, all balanced on sheer rock above the grotto where





In the grotto where Bernadette first saw apparitions, pilgrims to Lourdes reverently touch the rock walls. Outside of town, a shrine houses one of the ubiquitous images of the Virgin Mary.

Bernadette saw the apparitions.

Bernadette was only 14 years old when she beheld the first apparition, a lady smiling at her from the grotto. Her family, over the previous several years, had fallen from quite a prosperous position, running the best mill in town, to utter destitution, living in a converted prison cell in a condemned building.

On the day of the first apparition, Bernadette had gone out to gather firewood, something to warm the home in the cold February weather. With luck, maybe she'd find something the family could sell for a few cents to get some food. And then, by the side of this river where I'm now watching sideways ducks, she suddenly felt a gust of wind, and Mary appeared.

Because of my academic background—I have an MA in religious studies—it's all too easy to fit this Bernadette story into standard tropes: the adolescent girl undergoing a crisis; the inevitable element of water, when the apparition tells Bernadette to dig and she strikes a spring; and on it goes. No different from the origin stories of thousands of other sacred sites. Even the gusting wind is as predictable as halftime commercials.

Back when I started my MA, a friend in his first year of law school explained his career path: "I can take being disillusioned with the law," he said. "I can't take being disillusioned with God." Me, I was already disillusioned with God, but I desperately didn't want to be. "Free your ass and your mind will follow," the liner notes on an old Shriekback album had said, but that hadn't worked. So I was hoping school would free my mind and my ass would follow. Which didn't happen either. My friend is now a very successful lawyer. I'm wandering around Lourdes, wishing as always that I could make that jump away from disillusionment and into faith and belief and comfort.

The first cure at Lourdes happened while Bernadette was still seeing the apparitions. A woman with a dislocated arm regained its use when she washed it in the new spring. And the spot where Bernadette struck that spring in a dry cave is still pouring out healing water into a bathhouse and to a long line of taps where pilgrims today fill five-gallon jugs with faith.

People save for years to come here, travel past endless horizons for these waters. I see groups from Sri Lanka and from African countries I'm not entirely sure I can find on the map. Each morning, at the baths, at the taps, at the grotto itself, the lines begin to form, a testament to the hope that—what? Miracles happen? Belief is worth any effort, and that effort in itself is to be honored?

That when you're sick enough, you'll grab at any straw?

Simple truth: When people get to that point of sick, most turn to God. Or god. Or they turn away, profess atheism, which is nothing more than a different belief. Either way, they're thinking about what's next.

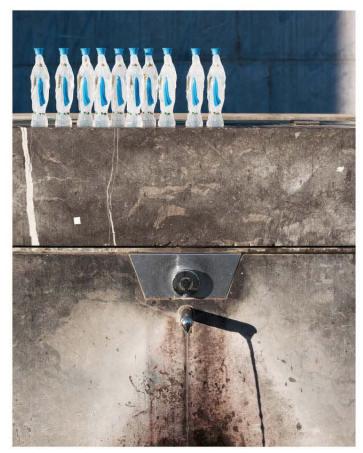
Personally, I wish I could believe nothing came next, because I am very, very tired.

Yet I can't quite believe that either, and by the time I know, it'll be too late to do anything about it. So meanwhile, I suppose, the only true worry is what's going to happen in the final moment

A gasp, a sigh, a thank-you?

Or only shaking fear?

But what if what we feel is the comfort of a welcome? "She talked to me like a person talking to a person," Bernadette later said of her time with the Lady.





A tap yields water from the holy spring to fill bottles shaped in the likeness of the Virgin Mary. Volunteers, such as this woman from France, care for the sick at Lourdes.

I WAIT IN LINE for nearly an hour to see the grotto up close. From a distance, it's not all that impressive: a niche in the rock, the church towering above it, a cliff of carefully laid stone. The grotto itself isn't even big enough for a Boy Scout troop to camp in, yet so many people are coming through, leaving candles—some so large it takes two people to carry them—that scraping old wax off the tree-size candelabra seems to be a full-time job.

Tiny flowers grow on the walls of the grotto, 15, 20 feet up, an unread Morse code of red and blue and purple. Maybe they were planted there, or maybe they just grow there because life looks for places to be. Who knows.

As soon as we near the entrance to the grotto, people reach out to touch the walls; a dark stain shows where hands have gone for the past 150 years. Grandmothers touch children's T-shirts to the grotto stone, fathers bow their babies' heads to it. Everybody who was whispering goes suddenly silent.

Plexiglass and a rope keep you from getting too close to the spring—the source of all the water for the taps and the baths, the source of all the miracles—which is about the size of a

kitchen sink and covered in flowers.

But the grotto offers water elsewhere, oozy wet spots on the wall, and since I'm tall, I reach one that's far over the heads of the others, where it can be nobody's prayer but mine. I feel the water, think about it, put my wet fingers over my heart. Above me, the statue of Mary, carved while Bernadette was still alive (when Bernadette saw it, she said, "That isn't her"), gazes down and seems completely beside the point.

The candelabra is so full it's like walking past a fireplace.

And that's it. That's what you come to Lourdes for. To touch the point that the sacred once touched.

I stand, looking back for a minute, then cross the bridge to watch the sideways ducks again.

I KNOW I SHOULD BE talking to pilgrims, finding out why they're here, what they're hoping will happen, how they made their own leap of faith, but I just can't bring myself to interrupt anybody's reverie. Not that I'd be the only distraction. Using methods absolutely no statistician would accept, I work out a formula

for separating the pilgrims from the tourists: Cut-off shorts, bad English T-shirts (there goes one depicting a *Penthouse* magazine cover), and talking about soccer (always in Italian) during hymns and prayers = tourist.

Intent expression, kneeling in one of the many, many chapels—there's the plain one at the top of the sanctuary, with the bright windows; or the ornate one at grotto level where they got seriously carried away with gold paint; or one of the dozens stuffed in the nooks and crannies of the grounds—not saying a word, frequently making the sign of the cross = pilgrim.

I figure the ratio of tourists to pilgrims works out pretty close to 50-50. Both stand in queues at the mile of religious kitsch stores that line the road to the shrine. The shops have very possibly the ugliest souvenirs I have ever seen, anywhere in the world. I start to buy a rosary for a friend, but the wood feels so greasy I just put it back and return to the sanctuary itself, where the air smells like candles and nothing is for sale.

I'm also going to admit that I don't know which side of the tourist-pilgrim line I fall on. I know I would rather be a pilgrim, but I have done the pilgrimage rodeo so many times









At the underground Basilica of St. Pius X, a boy from Nice joins the mass for the French National Pilgrimage. A volunteer from Italy spends two weeks every year caring for ailing pilgrims.

before, I don't know that my preference alone is enough to qualify.

My master's thesis was on pilgrimage; I wrote a book about pilgrimage in Japan. I've been to Canterbury and to Santiago de Compostela, where so many people have pressed their hands on a pillar at the entrance to the cathedral that the marble looks like melted wax. I have stood where Buddha preached, and I've been to Mount Nebo, where Moses looked on the promised land he'd never set foot in. Each time, I had hoped the site would enable me to believe in something.

But even if I've come away empty again and again, I already know what story the pilgrims at Lourdes will tell me, because besides having talked to a thousand pilgrims around the world already, here's the thing I know beyond any doubt, the thing I wish I didn't know, the simple truth of why you go to a site of healing: At a fundamental level, pain, at least your own, is incredibly boring. And if you know it's not going to stop, what you want most is a day off. Just a single day when you can forget about it all. If you are making a pilgrimage because you are in pain, that is what you pray for.

If it's the pain of someone you love that's made you take a pilgrimage, then all you want to do is take that pain on yourself. And that prayer is a lot more intense and serious than the prayers of the afflicted themselves.

But there's a third category of pilgrim, too, one I honestly hadn't thought much about until I find myself walking along with a group of eight older women who have come from Saskatoon, Canada.

I try not to make fun of the word Saskatoon as we move together through the standard Bernadette sites—the mill with its rough grinding wheel, the converted prison cell, which is blessedly cool on a blazing hot day—and it doesn't take them long to figure out I'm not Catholic, but I don't really fit into the tourist category either.

I tell them the quick version of my story. I tell them about Doctors With Very Serious Faces showing me pictures of the way the springs of my heart have broken like a cartoon clock.

And they, these eight hale and hearty women, tell me why they've come: "Is it OK if we pray for you?"

When they do, I cry.

THE NEXT DAY, I spend a couple of hours watching people at the grotto. And I find myself watching not the pilgrims, but the people taking care of the pilgrims. Lourdes is staffed by hundreds of volunteers—every single person in a wheelchair, every single person who needs any kind of help, has someone taking care of them, two or three helpers if that's what's necessary. The volunteers range in age from early teens to so old they can barely push the wheelchairs.

And the volunteers all have one thing in common: No matter whom they're helping, they're not treating that person like an illness or a condition.

They're treating them like a person.

Which, on the wish list of someone who's sick, is second only to getting a day off. Because here's another thing I hope the people I love never truly understand: Once you're in the medical machinery, you're not a person anymore. You're a set of symptoms, a number, a locus of statistical odds.

But not at Lourdes. Here, you're just a person. One who is treasured for the simple fact of being a person.



Water bottles bearing the iconography of Lourdes are among the most popular souvenirs. At an outdoor mass celebrating the Assumption of Mary (August 15), a priest offers a blessing.

When I realize that's what I'm seeing, I start crying again. Tears every time I see a volunteer smile, tell a joke, adjust a blanket just an inch to make someone else a little more comfortable. Tears of thanks for the million times I've been the recipient of such kindnesses from those in my life, tears of hope that I've not failed to offer the same.

In a world full of unexpected beauty, there is little as beautiful as this: simple care, thoughtless, because true care and compassion need no thought.

I fall into conversation with three volunteers who've staked out a spot in front of the bookstore for their lunch. Luc has volunteered at Lourdes every year for the past 26; Marco for the past 22. The third guy, whose language I can't figure out and whose name I never catch, is on his first year.

"Is being here what you were hoping for?" I ask the third guy. Marco and Luc run translation for me, but he answers in careful English: "Much more."

"Lourdes is a drug," Luc says. "The best kind of drug. Once you've had it, you just want more." And then he takes me back to the story of Bernadette. "When the Lady talked to her," he says, "Bernadette was amazed that she used *vous*," the formal address in French. "But Bernadette insisted she was the most ignorant, lowest girl on earth, not worthy of that kind of politeness."

Even the Lady—the Virgin Mary herself—treated this illiterate kid with respect and compassion. The Lady talked to her like a person. And that's Do Unto Others put to work in a way I've never seen anywhere in



the world before.

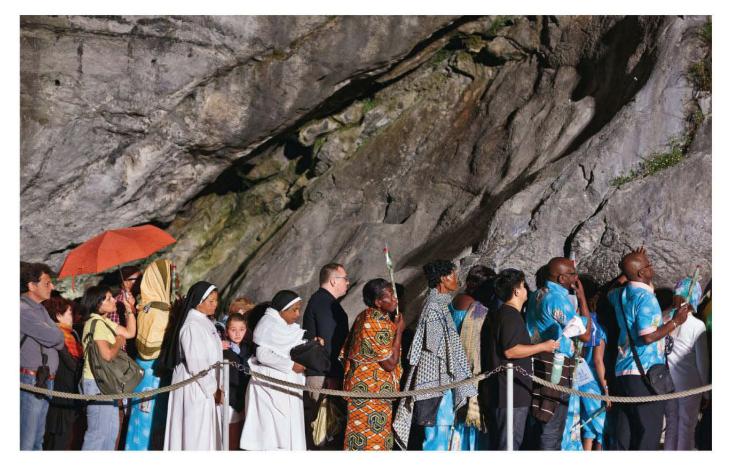
"It's the miracle of Lourdes," a volunteer named Ashley O'Connor told me when I had chatted with her earlier in my visit. She has worked as a guide for a month each of the past three years. "It's not about Bernadette anymore. It's about the 6 million people a year who come here."

In the evening after my lunch with Luc, as I watch the candlelight procession from a walkway in front of the highest level of the church, watch the wheelchairs stretched out like a river, the candles like starlight flowing on water, for the first time in my life I see how the world really could work. Should work. Faith, hope, and charity, the Bible says, "but the greatest of these is charity."

That I can believe.

THE NEXT MORNING, I decide I'm ready. To drop the weight of my history and doubts, to take the miracle bath, to light a candle of prayer.

It's Saturday. So many people are lighting candles, there's nowhere to put new ones. A very serious man offers a huge, burning taper; I light mine from his.



Pilgrims queue up for nighttime entry into the Lourdes grotto, above. Opposite page: Visitors to the sanctuary gather near the Gave de Pau river, as seen from the roof of the hospital nearby.

I pray for everyone I love and for people I've never met. I pray for memory—to remember this moment, to remember kindness, to remember the beauty of action. I pray to remember that maybe intent is not so far from belief.

I pray to whoever is listening that I can find a way to live up to this place.

I blow out my candle. The man carefully stacks it in a trolley to be relit later, so the light will be carried on.

The baths are right next to the candle area. The building housing them is concrete, low, and nondescript; it could probably be converted to nice horse stalls very quickly. Two lines stretch out front, one on the men's side, a much longer one on the women's. I get in line at 8:30, for the 9 a.m. opening. I reach the front of the line at 11:30, a half hour after the baths have technically closed for the morning, but no one's hurrying, no one's being turned away. Children and wheelchairs and stretchers get to cut in line; the volunteers look like they've never had a better day in their lives, and more than one person comes out from behind the curtains sobbing through a huge smile.

Hidden off in a corner somewhere, a man is praying and reciting scripture into a microphone, the verses looping around so often it takes me a very long time to realize it's not a recording, words chanting back around until I can recite them myself, until I'm almost sure I'm breaking through into understanding, even though I don't speak French. The intent is in the vibration, the devotion of sound.

At last, it's my turn. I'm led behind the main curtain, then behind a smaller striped blue-and-white curtain, where five guys sit in their underwear, waiting their time in the bath, and a group of volunteers, who must, among them, speak at least 20 languages, helps everybody get ready.

After a few minutes, I'm led behind yet another curtain. There's a narrow marble tub, two steps leading down into it, a statue of the Virgin, the Lady, at the tub's head. Three more volunteers—including Luc, coincidentally—wait to assist.

Nobody except my girlfriend and medical professionals have seen me with so much as my shirt off in years. There's just too much to explain. But here, nothing even merits a second glance. The volunteers can see the fresh scars, see the old ones, see my entire medical history.

They've seen worse.

Luc holds up a cloth behind me for privacy as I finish undressing. Very gently, he wraps the cloth around me, leads me to the first step of the bath. That tiny spring in the grotto has poured this water out, this and thousands of gallons more every day, enough to wash the world clean, even enough to wash away, at least right now, every bit of my own cynicism. "Cross yourself," Luc says, "and then say a Hail Mary."

I'm afraid I don't know the Hail Mary.

"Then simply pray however you want. Make your intention. And when you're ready, step into the bath."

The other two volunteers take my arms to help as I walk into the cold water.

And I take the plunge.

Edward Readicker-Henderson has written about cruises in Alaska, perfume in France, and honey in Morocco for AFAR. Photographer Peter Bohler is based in Los Angeles. His work has appeared in Monocle, Outside, Bloomberg Businessweek, Wired, and other publications.



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On April 21, AFAR celebrated the launch of May's "Food & Drink" issue—our largest to date—at Corkbuzz Wine Studio in NYC. AFAR staff, partners, and guests enjoyed an array of wines selected by Laura Maniec, Corkbuzz owner and master sommelier. AFAR Deputy Editor Jen Murphy shared her excitement over this milestone issue with a special toast and thanked those who came to say salud to AFAR!



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"If you try to be everything to everyone, you end up being nothing in particular to most people."

-Joost Ouendag

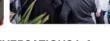
"Inspire people to go outside the ordinary."

-Mary Beech

"We surround the consumer with values, one of which is living in the moment."

-Matthias Schmid





AFAR CONVERSATIONS L.A.

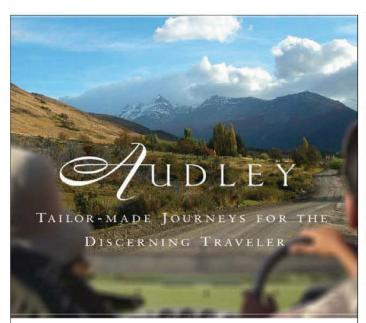
AFAR Conversations convened on May 1 at the Andaz West Hollywood for the latest in our signature event series. AFAR Cofounder Joe Diaz moderated 2014's most diverse panel yet, which brought together key decision makers using experiential travel to inspire innovation within their brands. Panelists included Mary Beech, CMO, kate spade new york; Joost Ouendag, VP Product Marketing, Viking River Cruises; and Matthias Schmid, VP Sales, Emirates. While sipping **Emirates**' signature cocktail of the evening-the Kir Royale Highness-attendees listened to a compelling conversation around topics including social media's impact on customer relations and the challenges of marketing to the mass consumer versus the discerning traveler.





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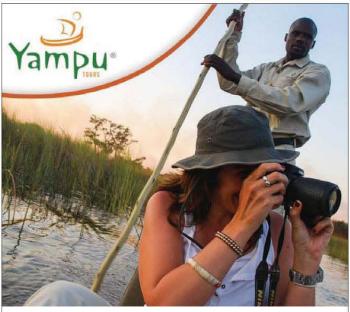
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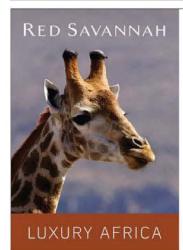
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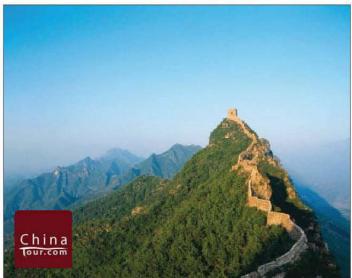
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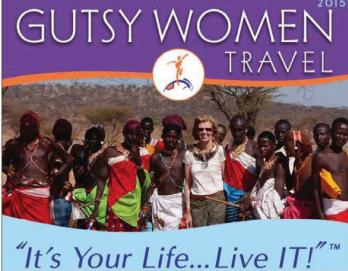


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