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The Greater Caucasus Mountains, Kazbegi, Georgia.

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If you can dream it, Virtuoso travel advisors can plan it. This issue of *Virtuoso, The Magazine* spotlights trips of a lifetime: a classic bush-plane safari in Kenya, a Caribbean yacht charter, dining through London's best restaurants, exploring Japan's art islands, and more.

These stories are just a taste of the type of enriching trips that Virtuoso advisors excel at creating. Their knowledge, experience, and personal connections to more than 2,800 of the world's top hotels, cruise lines, tour operators, and destinations help them create bespoke itineraries enhanced by exclusive access and complimentary VIP perks, be they long-weekend escapes, family vacations, or once-in-a-lifetime adventures. We hope this issue inspires your wanderlust and look forward to helping you plan your next great journey.

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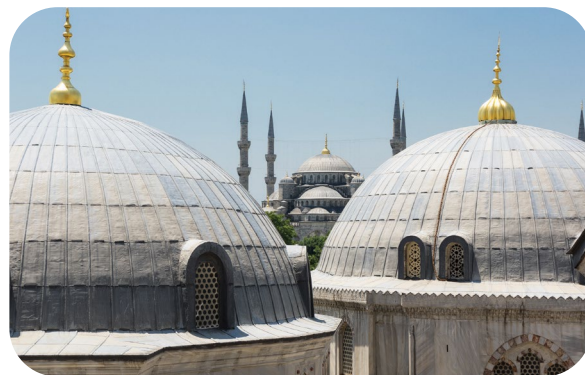
DESTINATION HIGHLIGHTS

A journey of quiet wonder in autumn's golden light



ITALY AND THE ADRIATIC

Between Italy and the Balkans lies a sapphire pathway through time. From the hills of the Dalmatian Coast to the plazas of northern Italy, you'll find local tables overflowing with ancient recipes passed down through generations.



GREEK ISLES AND TURKEY

Across whitewashed villages, discover the rhythms of daily life. Feel the authentic pulse of local life from the quaint islands of Milos and Crete to the vibrant quarters of Istanbul. Discover a world where the simple art of living well has been perfected and preserved.



WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Explore picturesque seaside villages, historical cities, and vibrant markets. From the beaches of the French Riviera to hidden ports like Trapani and Bonifacio, the Western Mediterranean reveals her true character through the deep immersion of a Silversea voyage.



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The Iberian Peninsula is a place where time stands still. Embrace a slower pace in medieval Spanish villages and sun-kissed Portuguese towns. In a land where hospitality flows as freely as the wine, the soul of Iberia comes alive when you surrender to the present.

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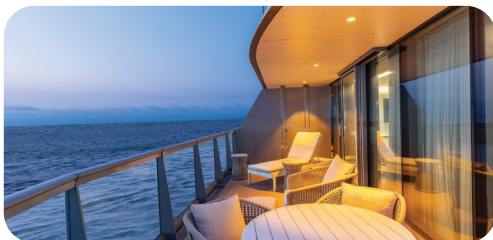
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Explore *Charleston*

Preflight

INSPIRATION FOR YOUR TRAVELS

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Rome

Secret gardens and
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6 September - October 2026

(ROME) SOPHIE DELAUNY / (GEORGIA) MATT OUTILE



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Georgia

Caucasus
mountain highs.



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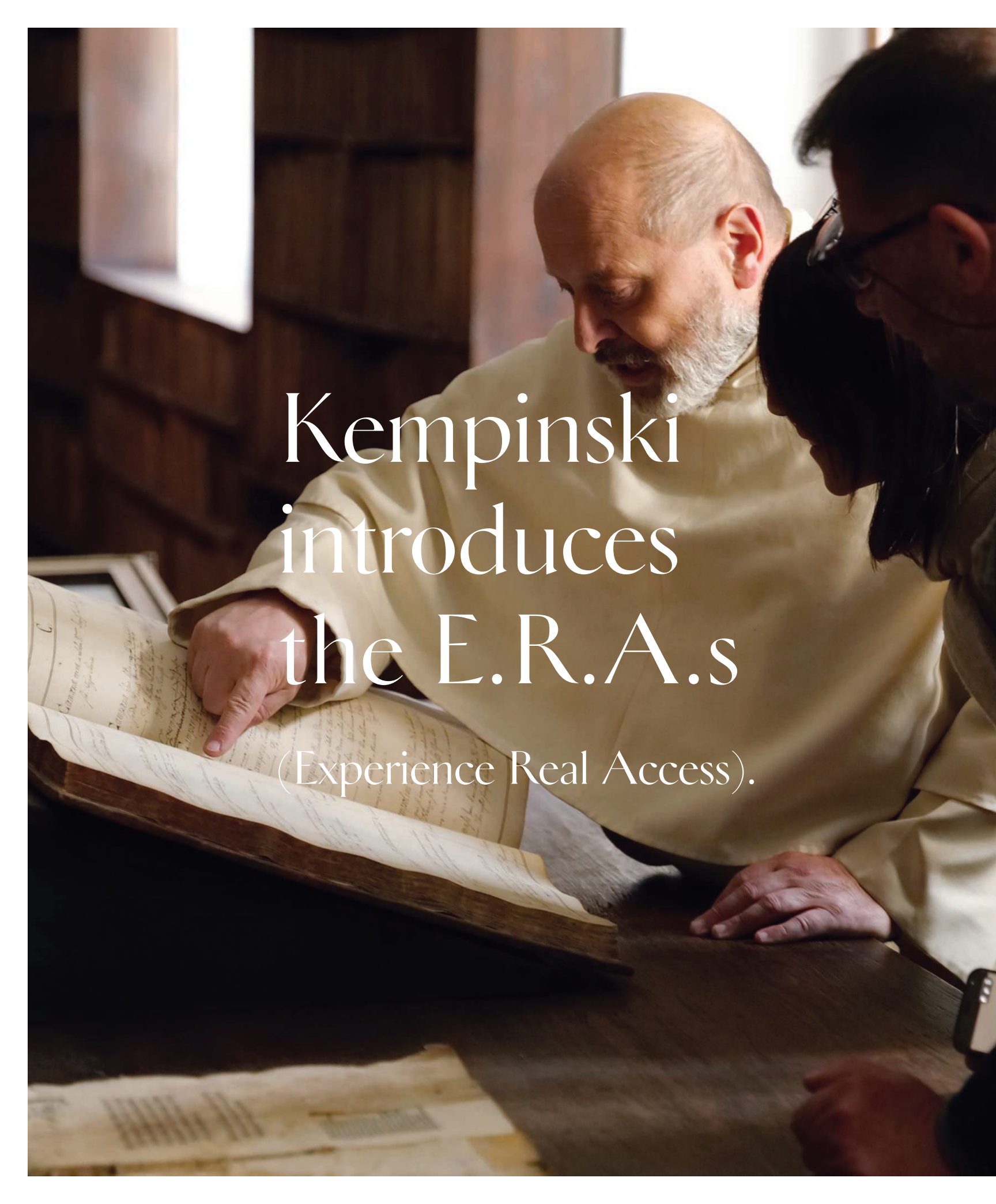
Madrid
Club life in
the city.

8 September October 2026

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Kenya

The classic safari.

A photograph of a man with a grey beard, wearing a white clerical robe, pointing at a large, open manuscript with cursive handwriting. He is in a library setting with wooden bookshelves in the background. Another person with glasses is partially visible on the right, looking at the manuscript. The text is overlaid in white serif font.

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In 1858, King Maximilian II built Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten on the boulevard that still bears his name, so that Munich could welcome the world as no other German city could.

Granting access to the city has been its purpose ever since. The Kempinski Munich E.R.A.s are your chance to live it like never before.

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The Craftsmanship ERA. An afternoon in Kathrin Heubeck's leather atelier hand-stitching a unique piece, then brewing your own beer at BrewsLi, the city's most rebellious microbrewery.

The Regenerative ERA. A cold plunge into the Eisbach canal, guided by a Wim-Hof expert, and a morning run beside Lothar Matthäus, the man who led Germany to the football World Cup.

Each E.R.A. is composed by our Resident Curator, Bastian Zimmerman and his connections to the local insiders who define Munich's cultural identity.

The only question now is: What E.R.A. are you in?



Welcome to the Good Life.
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ON THE COVER

On safari with Micato: A Maasai woman, wearing her own handmade beadwork, at the Chui Mamas Centre on Kenya's Loisaba Conservancy. Photography by Korena Bolding.

AMAN

AT SEA



The Ocean's Invitation

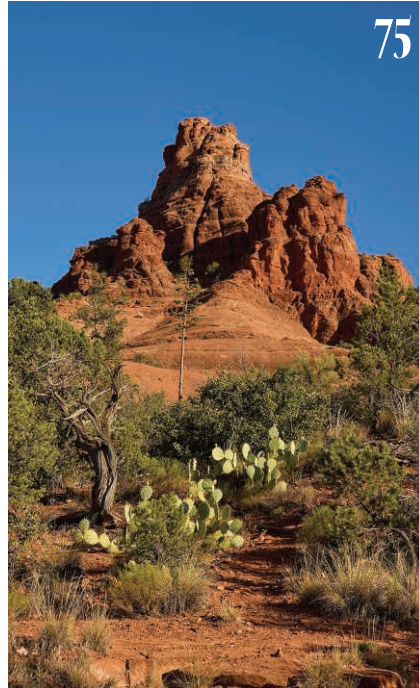
In Spring 2027, Amangati's inaugural season commences in the Mediterranean, revealing storied coastlines with bespoke experiences shaped by privacy, serenity and freedom. A Caribbean season follows as the luxury motor yacht navigates quiet anchorages and tropical island hideaways.

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Dreamy by Definition

IF YOU GRAB YOUR MERRIAM-WEBSTER (which I'm sure you have handy) and turn to the entry for "dream trip" (which is *surely* an entry in the dictionary), you'll find a photo from a classic Kenyan safari: zebras and giraffes grazing the acacia-dotted savanna, Land Cruiser on the periphery, the vast African sky above. OK, maybe I'm embellishing, but we could hardly imagine a more quintessentially big-deal trip than a safari for the cover of this year's Trips of a Lifetime issue.

And our story isn't about just any Kenyan safari – it's a *Micato* safari. The family-run outfit, founded by Jane and Felix Pinto in 1966, epitomizes the true Virtuoso experience, from pre-departure gifts and a dedicated safari director to the long-running practice of funding a child's education for every safari they sell. (They're in good company with other Virtuoso safari operators, like andBeyond, Wilderness, Singita, and African Travel, Inc., that pour resources back into local communities.)

Photographing this story and cover was our art director, Korena Bolding, who's earned the patina on her Rimowa with trips across six continents for this magazine. But after a surprise helicopter trip for a mountaintop coffee break and flamingo-viewing, she messaged us from the bush: "You guys, I finally understand what 'trip of a lifetime' really means."

At the risk of gilding the lily, we're throwing a few other undisputed heavyweights into the mix: a rigorously curated immersion into the Yayoi Kusama-verse of Japan's art islands, a compelling case for London as the world's best restaurant city, a private Caribbean yacht charter, and cooking lessons in Rome – with a detour to meet the pope's chickens.

But I'm no Merriam (or Webster, for that matter). Defining your dreams is up to you. It can't hurt to have some beautiful reference material, though, right? That's where we come in. I hope we take you on a trip you won't forget.



MARIKA CAIN
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR





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THE MAGAZINE

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“Hiking to Bhutan’s
Tiger’s Nest Monastery
with Six Senses guides
carrying a picnic lunch.”

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“Dinner at a
Scottish castle
accompanied by
bagpipes.”

“Sleeping
under the
stars in
Botswana’s
Kalahari
Desert.”
— P.F.

“Locking
eyes with a
silverback
gorilla in
Rwanda.”
— L.B.

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“Which trip most surprised you?”



Writer
Sarah Greaves-Gabbadon
Miami

“First-Time Caller,” page 100

“In Antarctica, I’d expected to be charmed by penguins. But instead, I left completely obsessed with icebergs. Their gargantuan size is impossible to appreciate unless you’re close to them.”

THE REPORT: “As a writer, I really geeked out on the collective nouns for animals that I learned on this safari. Who knew that a group of wildebeests is a ‘confusion’ and a bunch of hippos is a ‘bloat’? My favorites are giraffes: When they’re moving, they’re called a ‘journey,’ but when they’re standing together, they’re a ‘tower.’ ”

@ JetSetSarah



Writer
Adam Erace
Philadelphia

“Easy Breezy,” page 61, and
“Check, Mate,” page 112

“A quick jaunt to Ireland around 2016, for just four nights in Dublin and Connemara. The country wasn’t really on my radar before that, and I found myself completely enchanted with the hospitality, the quality of ingredients and cooking, and the scenery, of course.”

THE REPORT: “While sailing with The Moorings, we anchored off Cooper Island. As the sky and water were getting dark, an empty can of LaCroix accidentally went overboard. People on nearby boats stared like we were polluting monsters, so I dove in and swam 50 yards to grab the trash, not stopping to think, *Is this my best idea?* Everyone clapped like I was Michael Phelps.”

@ adamerace



Senior Editor, Digital
Emma Franke
Seattle

“Bacchanalian Boot Camp,”
page 67

“A random detour on the way to Vancouver, British Columbia, that gave me one of the best breakfasts I’ve ever had – commemorated forever in the photo above. Shout-out to the Pulled Bacon Hash at Palms Beach House in Surrey, B.C.”

THE REPORT: “More on-the-ground food reporting: Don’t let your next Rome visit go by without a *porchetta* sandwich from Esattolo in the Testaccio Market, preferably paired with a bottle of Sardinian Ichnusa beer. My boyfriend and I agree it’s a contender for the trip’s top meal.”



Photographer
Lisa Linder
London

“Check, Mate,” page 112

“It might sound predictable, but Yosemite National Park. It had been on my list since seeing an Ansel Adams exhibition in London as a kid. The Tunnel View completely took my breath away, framing El Capitan, Half Dome, and Bridalveil Fall in one sweep. Ironically, my camera broke on my second day, only to be saved by the staff at The Ansel Adams Gallery.”

THE REPORT: “I photographed the story during this year’s June heat wave. Shooting London city scenes was a bit surreal – those bright-blue skies weren’t photoshopped!”

lisalinder.com

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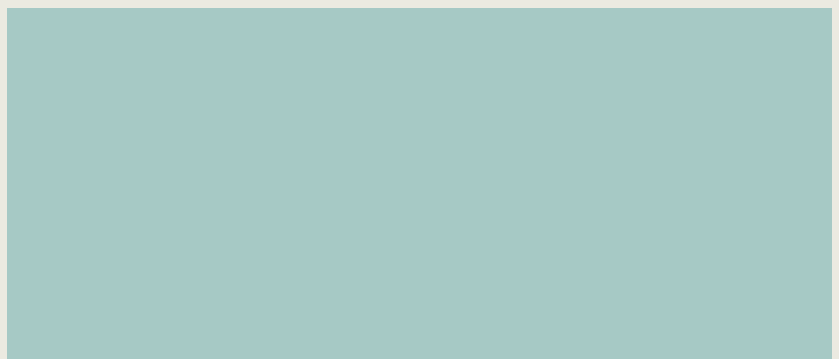
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A Star Is Born

Filmmaker Baz Luhrmann and production designer Catherine Martin named their new dining, bar, and lounge carriage on Belmond's **British Pullman** train for a fictional 1930s West End actress, Celia, that the duo imagined as their muse. To outfit their whimsical fever dream – with its velvet banquettes, marquetry walls, and jewel-box glass ceiling – Martin commissioned local artisans to create everything inside, including custom cutlery, fine bone china, ornate glassware, and embroidered textiles. Monica Berg of London's acclaimed Tayer + Elementary crafted a menu of cocktails, which exclusive-use groups of up to 12 sip during daylong itineraries round-trip from London to 21 UK destinations. Travelers embark on staff-designed excursions before returning to Celia for a private brunch, lunch, or dinner.

– Katie Kelly Bell

Now Packing: A Touch of Gold

These revived classics and faithful reissues prove the best timepieces only get better with age.



1. Patek Philippe Golden Ellipse, \$68,017, patek.com. 2. Piaget Polo 79, \$85,000, piaget.com. 3. Cartier Roadster, \$51,500, cartier.com. 4. Vacheron Constantin Historiques 222, \$86,500, vacheron-constantin.com. 5. Rolex Perpetual 1908, \$40,900, rolex.com.

— Jenny Hartman

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The Florida Keys & Key West are unlike anywhere else. Across five distinct destinations, some travelers come for world-class fishing and diving. Some for the food, music and art. Others simply come to fulfill a lifelong dream in a judgment-free zone where everyone is welcome.





Treasures from Florence

Ever since young Brits descended on Florence during their Grand Tours, Tuscany's capital city and genteel British traditions have gone together like butter and jam. Today, a handful of the city's best hotels honor that legacy through afternoon tea rituals that rival London's, with a distinctly Tuscan twist: artisanal ceramics from the region.

At **The St. Regis Florence**, year-round afternoon tea runs daily in the 99-room hotel's flagship Café Ginori (pictured above), named for the porcelain manufacturer founded in the eighteenth century in nearby Doccia. Against a backdrop of bookshelves lined with Ginori 1735 trays and teacups, guests drink from the company's hand-painted cups – which are also available for purchase at the Ginori 1735 boutique downtown. Above the city in the serene Le Cure district, Auberge's **Collegio alla Querce** recently partnered with Aquazzura Casa for its own teatime, offered in the cooler months inside the 83-room hotel's Conservatorio. Florence-inspired tea blends pair with dishes such as salmon sandwiches and savory, chickpea-filled cannoli, served on bespoke ceramics that, if the mood strikes, can be custom-ordered. – *Mary Gray*

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A Long Time Ago in a Gallery Not So Far Away ...

The decade-in-the-making, 300,000-square-foot shrine to George Lucas and Mellody Hobson's massive art and artifact collection (including, yes, plenty of *Star Wars* memorabilia) is finally ready to premiere. The \$1.5 billion **Lucas Museum of Narrative Art** (pictured below) opens in Los Angeles' Exposition Park in September, occupying a futuristic, Ma Yansong-designed building that would feel right at home on Coruscant. Inside, more than 30 galleries display stormtrooper costumes and comic-book art, plus works by Jack Kirby, Frida Kahlo, Norman Rockwell, and more. Head to the fourth floor, recommends senior curator Ryan Linkof, to look down through an oculus to a life-size starfighter from *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace*. "Because of the way the light shines through," he says, "it feels almost holy."



MORE NOTABLE OPENINGS

Kanal-Centre Pompidou will open in November as Brussels' first modern-art and architecture museum, featuring a library, a rooftop bar, and 350 works on loan from Paris' Centre Pompidou.

Debuting later this year, the **Powerhouse Parramatta** is Sydney's largest cultural build since its Opera House. Exhibits will champion human innovation, including the aerospace-centric *Task Eternal*, which culminates with a James Turrell installation.

Washington, D.C.'s revamped **National Geographic Museum of Exploration** returned over the summer with stunning photography, interactive kid-friendly exhibits, and The Ballard Bar, named after the explorer who discovered the *Titanic* shipwreck.

– Laneé Lee



luxe
BY TRAVEL IMPRESSIONS.

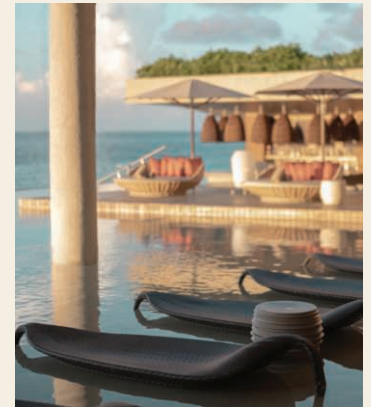
Boutique Luxury Meets the Soul of Mexico

Hidden along Riviera Maya's turquoise coast, La Casa de la Playa is an adults-only sanctuary where luxury feels entirely personal. With just 63 suites, personalized butler service, and AAA Five Diamond distinction, the boutique resort offers an intimate take on Riviera Maya indulgence.

Guests enjoy Michelin-starred dining, rooftop lounging above the Caribbean Sea, and exclusive access to Grupo Xcaret Parks & Tours, plus full access to the dining, entertainment, and amenities at nearby Hotel Xcaret Mexico and Hotel Xcaret Arte.

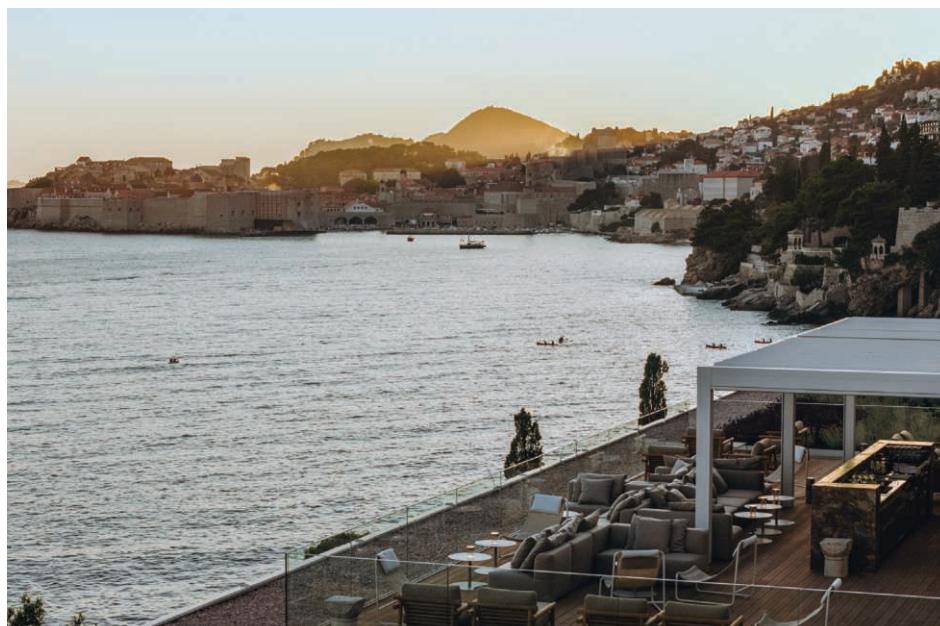
As part of the Luxe by Travel Impressions collection, La Casa de la Playa blends elevated service, cultural discovery, and extraordinary detail into a journey designed for travelers seeking something truly rare.

Contact your virtuoso travel advisor to see yourself there.



Croatia's Gin Boom

An abundance of native botanicals has helped Croatia's emerging craft gin scene make a name for itself. "We have access to ingredients that give our gins a naturally herbaceous, floral, and maritime character – everything from wild sage, rosemary, and immortelle growing along the Adriatic coast to herbs cultivated on family farms," says master distiller Vlaho Carevic, who founded Dubrovnik's **Habitat Distillery** in 2022. At Habitat's Gruz Harbor tasting room, guests can try Carevic's gins, bottle their own blends, and learn more about Dalmatia's long tradition of botanical harvesting. When it's time for round two in the heart of Dubrovnik, Carevic is sending us to these spots.



Galanto: At Dubrovnik's only rooftop bar, atop the 55-room Villa Dubrovnik, bar manager Milan Canic infuses local character into classic cocktails such as the Villa Kolin, a mix of gin, lemon juice, and lavender syrup. Downstairs, sister bar Libero is just as great.

Nautika Restaurant: Come to this upscale spot next to Old Town's Pile Gate for Adriatic-landscape-inspired drinks made with handcrafted bitters and syrups. Try the Creamy Sipak: gin, citrus, fresh pineapple, and a touch of wild pomegranate (*sipak*) syrup.

M'arden: Siblings Ana and Pero Bitanga transformed a hidden terrace with views across Dubrovnik's centuries-old rooftops into one of the city's best wine bars. An ambitious cocktail program includes several collaborations with Habitat and, says Carevic, the best Negroni in town.

Spice Lounge: Foraged wild ingredients star in sophisticated cocktails here. The Mare Nostrum (Our Sea) features Habitat gin infused with cardamom seeds, botanical liqueurs, and homemade rosemary syrup, and tastes like the Mediterranean in a glass.

– Kristin Vukovic



Clockwise from top:
Galanto's rooftop perch,
Habitat ingredients, and
the finished product.

Explore the Kimberley

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Tucked along the northwest corner of Australia, the Kimberley is one of the world's last wild frontiers, with rugged sandstone peaks and rushing waterfalls to mangrove forests. In 2027, Seabourn Pursuit beckons you to forge authentic connections with the beautiful setting, rich history and local cultures on 9- or 10-day expeditions.

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Field Notes

Natural Habitat Adventures' new series of group trips will give travelers a rare opportunity to study wild nature up close: Launching early next year, **Earthwatch Expeditions by Nat Hab** pairs travelers with scientists in a dozen destinations. "Guests will explore some of the world's most remote and extraordinary places, and they won't observe at a distance – they'll be active participants in actual field-based scientific research," says Earthwatch Expeditions managing director Renata Haas. An eight-day riverboat journey along the Peruvian Amazon (pictured above) sends participants up narrow waterways rarely seen by outsiders, surveying pink dolphins, tracking animals through the rainforest, and meeting members of an Indigenous Cocama community.

In Kenya, a nine-day Maasai Mara safari finds travelers planting native species, reviewing camera-trap footage, and coordinating with traditional landowners and researchers who are combining data and knowledge to restore land. Game drives through the Mara's predator-haunted plains underscore the stakes. "Every moment has a purpose," Haas says. "The data travelers help collect, the observations recorded, and the work done in the field all directly support conservation efforts that are more urgent than ever." *Departures: Multiple dates, January 14, 2027, through December 9, 2028.* – Jen Rose Smith

SAINT LUCIA. WHERE ISLAND LUXURY COMES AS STANDARD.

When it comes to luxury, set your sights firmly on Saint Lucia. This island paradise feels straight from the pages of a glossy magazine, with iconic Piton views, world-class hotels and experiences that captivate visitors of all ages. From the moment you arrive to the day you bid farewell, every day brings something new to discover. Whether it's retreating to a suite with sunset views, unwinding in a spectacular spa, or savouring the sweet and spicy flavours of fabulous island fare, Saint Lucia has it all. Luxury and romance abound with couples' activities waterfall hikes, chocolate-making and catamaran cruises, while diving, ziplining and jungle biking offer adventure for those looking to explore more of the island.

To start planning a Saint Lucia escape, speak to your Virtuoso travel advisor.



SAINT LUCIA
LET HER INSPIRE YOU



Julien Alfred, Sprinter and Olympic Gold Medalist

Julien Alfred won Saint Lucia's first-ever Olympic medal when she took home gold in the 100m at the 2024 Summer Olympics. When she's not leaving competitors in her dust at track events around the globe, Alfred returns to her Caribbean home and **BodyHoliday**, the 155-room wellness resort where she leads an annual WellFit training retreat (October 4 through 11 this year). Guests can join her for beach workouts, talks about discipline and mindset, and spa recovery sessions – though we don't recommend challenging her to a race.

Can reluctant runners join your WellFit retreat? (Asking for a friend.) Yes! I love connecting with people through fitness and showing them that movement can be both challenging and enjoyable. There will be a mix of sprint-inspired drills, bodyweight exercises, and teamwork, all designed for different fitness levels while making sure everyone has fun.

What's your own off-season, vacation-day fitness routine? I like to stay active even when I'm not training at full intensity. Light workouts, mobility work, walks, or swimming help me stay healthy while giving my body and mind a chance to recover.

Where on Saint Lucia do you send guests for a perfect day off? Sulphur Springs – the Caribbean's only drive-in volcano – should definitely be the first stop. Then enjoy some local food, spend time at the beach, and take in the island's natural beauty.

The best post-race Saint Lucian dish? You can never go wrong with a good local meal! Green fig and saltfish is always a favorite – I look forward to it whenever I'm back on the island.

What's a fitness mantra you support? "Trust the process." Success doesn't happen overnight, and there will be challenges along the way, but consistency, patience, and belief in yourself make all the difference. – Amy Cassell



ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

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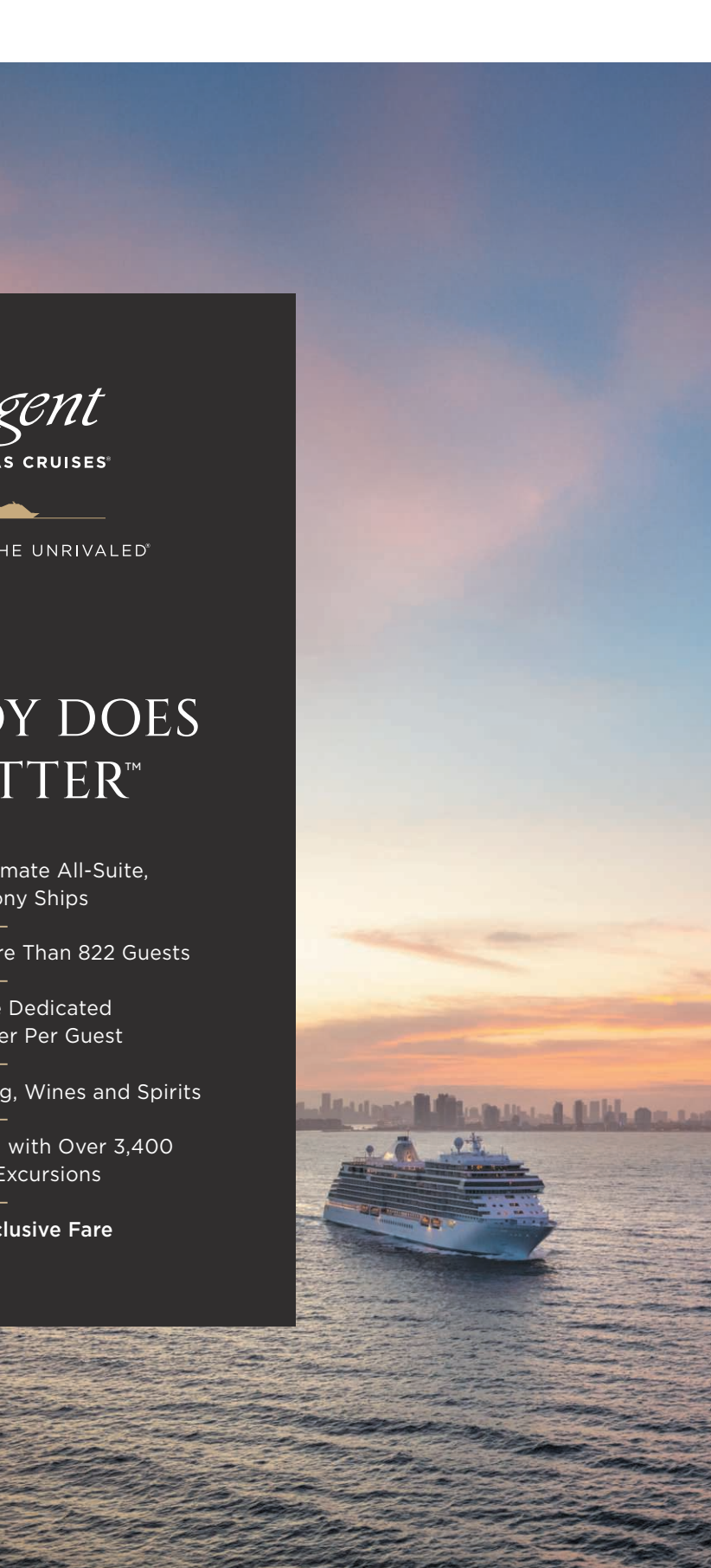
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Image © Nat Hab Expedition Leader Fernando Romo

We Could Get Used to This

These new and soon-to-launch cruise ships are home to four of the most tricked-out suites at sea.

THE PARTY SPOT

Debuting in December, the Skyview Regent Suite on **Regent Seven Seas Cruises'** 822-passenger *Seven Seas Prestige* takes the cruise ship penthouse to an almost absurd scale: nearly 8,800 square feet (roughly a fifth of a football field) across two levels connected by a floating natural stone staircase, with two bedrooms. Entertaining areas command much of the footprint, with a formal dining room, a glass-walled bar overlooking the sea, and a 3,700-square-foot wraparound terrace – a dream birthday bash venue or bachelorette party pad. On a 12-night sailing between Los Angeles and Panama City, a stop in

Cabo San Lucas lets partiers take to the beach clubs. *Departure: February 10, 2027.*

CRUISE COUTURE

Patricia Urquiola, an architect whose portfolio includes Six Senses Rome and London's The Emory, designed *Explora III's* two-bedroom Owner's Residence to feel like a coastal pied-à-terre. **Explora Journeys'** nearly 3,000-square-foot suite swaps the navy-and-gold palette common at sea for earthy neutrals and contemporary furnishings from Milan's Cassina (where Urquiola is the art director). The suite, on the aft of the 922-passenger ship, opens onto a terrace with a whirlpool and

uninterrupted wake views. Luxury extends to the Cipollino marble-clad bathroom, where a soaking tub, rain shower, and steam room create a spa circuit. This winter, *Explora III* sails between Miami and San Juan, Puerto Rico over seven nights, calling on Saint Bart's for boutiques and cafés, and Turks and Caicos for white-sand beaches. *Departure: November 8.*

VIEW FINDER

The most coveted perch aboard the 222-passenger *Four Seasons I* isn't at the bow or stern – it's inside the "funnel." **Four Seasons Yachts'** massive three-bedroom, four-bath Funnel Suite spans four levels



A rendering of *Four Seasons I's* Funnel Suite.

Cruising

and nearly 10,000 square feet, ascending above the top deck. A central chrome spiral staircase connects a wraparound terrace, outdoor gym, sauna and steam room, and splash pool. At sea, the brand's legendary service looks like a personalized minibar and a dedicated butler who can unpack luggage, arrange spa appointments, book after-hours Acropolis access and other private tours, and set up in-suite sushi picnics. The suite's most striking feature, though, is its floor-to-ceiling window with 280-degree views of the sea. On a 14-night round-trip voyage from Athens, it's a prime vantage point for admiring the *gulets* plying Turkey's Turquoise Coast, and the fifteenth-century Citadel of Qaitbay in Alexandria, Egypt – a

rare stop on Mediterranean itineraries.
Departure: April 18, 2027.

FAMILY HQ

An in-suite slide sets the tone in **Royal Caribbean's** Ultimate Family Townhouse. Perhaps best described as a luxury treehouse, the suite spans two bedrooms on the 5,610-passenger *Icon of the Seas*, *Star of the Seas*, and the just-launched *Legend of the Seas*. The three-level, 2,347-square-foot space packs in a shark-themed private cinema and karaoke room, a digital gaming table, a dedicated kids' bedroom with bunk beds, and a "backyard" with a Ping-Pong table and direct access to splash zones and casual dining in the ship's family-focused

"neighborhood," Surfside. The theme park energy carries over to land when the ships call at Perfect Day CocoCay for water slides, white-sand beaches, and one of the Caribbean's largest freshwater pools. *Departures: Multiple dates, November 1, 2026, through July 31, 2027. – Bailey Berg*

Clockwise from top left:
Explora III's Owner's Residence and the ship at sea, the Skyview Regent Suite, and *Icon of the Seas'* Ultimate Family Townhouse.



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From left: The Metrópolis Building and all-day dining spot La Galería.

Capital Venture

In the century-plus since Madrid's Metrópolis Building landed downtown as insurance company La Unión y el Fénix Español's headquarters, its Beaux-Arts halls primarily hosted businesspeople. Its latest incarnation, **Metrópolis Hotel & Club Madrid**, ups the glam factor. This year, after a nearly six-year transformation by Sandro Silva and Marta Seco – the husband-and-wife team behind Madrileño restaurants El Paraguas and

Amazónico – members of a new private club and guests of a 19-room hotel finally stepped inside.

Interiors by Lázaro Rosa-Violán (who also designed The Barcelona Edition and The Bazaar by José Andrés in New York and Las Vegas) lean decadent: Spa de Langostas serves chargrilled lobster and other seafood beneath porthole-style windows; the Circular Suites' abundant natural light illuminates marble, brass,

velvet, and warm wood details. A day might start on the rooftop for yoga with club members, followed by a concierge-customized route through the Museo del Prado and an in-room, sommelier-led Spanish-wine tasting, and end with live music and sautéed squid at emerald-green-draped restaurant La Galería. *Virtuoso travelers receive private round-trip transfers and breakfast daily.*

– Emma Franke

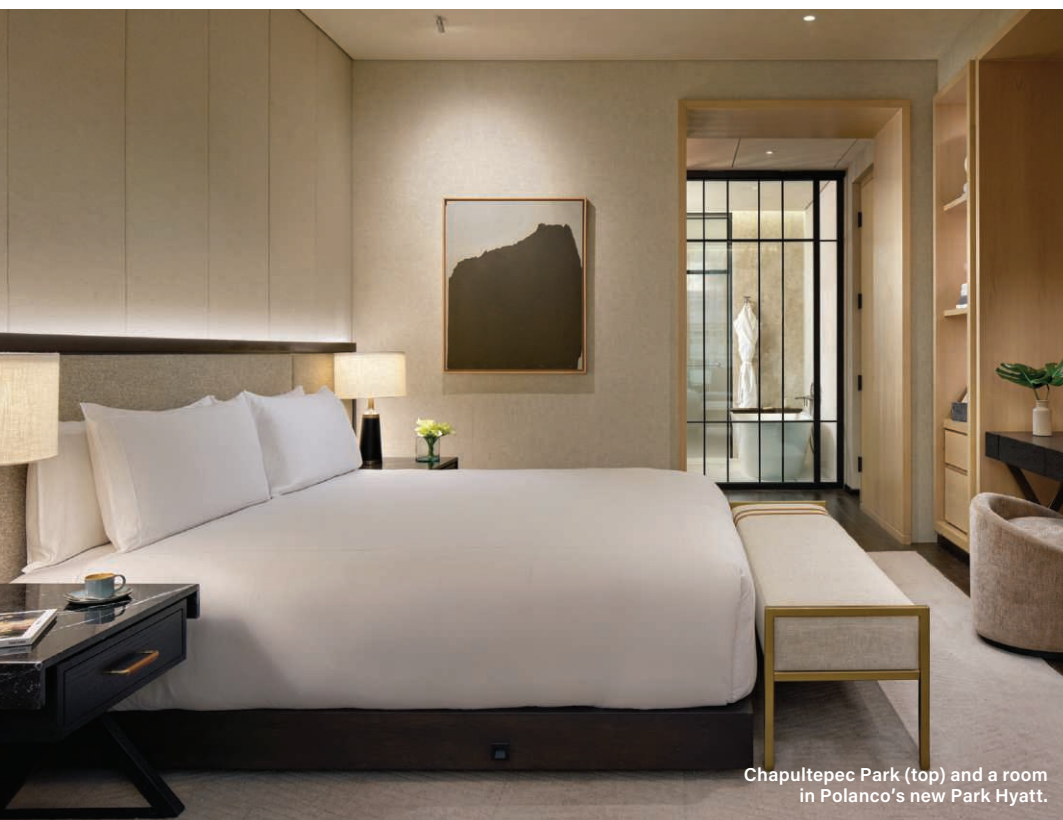
(EXTERIOR) ANIBAL TREJO



Greening Mexico City

On the edge of one of Latin America's largest urban green spaces and a short *paseo* to a portfolio of design destinations, including the modern Tamayo Museum, the new **Park Hyatt Mexico City Polanco** is taking shape. The 155-room hotel is expected to open next April on Chapultepec Park's north end in the polished Polanco district, filled with high-end homes, designer shops, and international embassies. The glass high-rise – inspired by CDMX's 1970s modernist towers – frames floor-to-ceiling views of the park and city lights from rooms trimmed in warm neutrals with separate rain showers and soaking tubs, while the hydrotherapy-focused spa invites further unwinding. An oasis-like pool terrace and trellised plants in hotel restaurant Kuchil showcase the property's green side. Three more on-site restaurants and bars also let Mexican ingredients shine, from Baja seafood to agave spirits, and two-Michelin-starred Pujol is two blocks away. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit.*

– Elaine Glusac



Chapultepec Park (top) and a room in Polanco's new Park Hyatt.

(PARK) ZVVISUAL/GETTY IMAGES



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José Andrés' Barcelona

The humanitarian and chef takes us on a tapas crawl through the Catalan capital.

INTERVIEW BY JENNIFER BRADLEY FRANKLIN PHOTOGRAPHY BY GINA SPINELLI



JOSÉ ANDRÉS HAS A SOFT SPOT for Barcelona. “I grew up in a small town outside the city, but spent many days exploring it,” he says. “I went to culinary school and worked in kitchens there for a few years as a teenager.” Andrés – who owns 40 restaurants and founded the global disaster relief nonprofit World Central Kitchen – still taps into those formative Catalan years, most recently in his new book, *Spain My Way: Eat, Drink, and Cook Like a Spaniard*, a collection of his stories and favorite recipes from his homeland.

One great example within: the bikini sandwich, “a grilled ham-and-cheese named after the famous Sala Bikini nightclub,” says Andrés, who loves the creative license Barcelona chefs take when making time-honored dishes like this one their own. The Bethesda, Maryland-based chef, who jumps from his restaurants to World Central’s mobile convoy kitchens like a culinary superhero, returns as often as he can to the Catalan capital, where you might find him admiring the finished-for-now Sagrada Família (your own photo of the basilica is an essential souvenir, he says) or catching up with friends over tapas-filled tables.



Barcelona in three words:
“Eat. More. Tapas.”

EAT At **Santa Magdalena**, my friend Quim Marqués and his daughter, Paula, serve incredible classic and rustic Catalan food. Try the *croquetas*, the *ensaladilla* (chilled potato salad), and the *fricandó*, a traditional Catalan beef-and-mushroom stew. They’re so smart about using ingredients straight from the market and creating fresh, new plates.

Be sure to get a reservation at **Disfrutar** or **Enigma** – both are places to taste the legacy of chef Ferran Adrià’s three-Michelin-starred El Bulli, which closed in 2011 but was one of the best restaurants of all time. At Enigma, Ferran’s brother Albert Adrià runs the show; at Disfrutar, three former El Bulli head chefs are in charge. Trust them to serve you a mind-blowing meal.

To get a taste of Barcelona’s tapas culture, check out **Tapas24** from one of my old friends, Carles Abellán. You’ll find all kinds of classic and innovative tapas, from *buñuelos de bacalao* (salt cod fritters) to whole grilled shrimp. It makes for a complete tapas crawl all in one place.

DRINK The wine and vermouth selection at **Quimet & Quimet** is great. I drink the house vermouth, no matter what. Order *montaditos* – bite-size, open-face sandwiches made with some of the amazing *litas* (tins of fish) that are stacked along the walls.

The name **El Xampanyet** (the “x” in Catalan sounds like “ch,” so it’s pronounced “cham-pan-yet”) comes from the bar’s own cava, so getting at least one glass should be your top priority. Luckily, there are lots of tapas to try with your drinks – anything with anchovies pairs perfectly.

SHOP When I was younger, going to **La Boqueria**, Barcelona’s most famous *mercado*, felt like exploring the outer reaches of the galaxy. I’d walk to Las Ramblas instead of taking the bus, to save a little extra money so I could try everything I saw: pastries, cheeses, *jamones*, new produce. Talking to the vendors really was its own education. It’s not the same as when I was a kid, but it’s still great. Speak with some of the vendors, and you’ll find treasures you’ve never dreamed of.



La Sagrada Família and (opposite) La Boqueria snacks.

Bon Appétit



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City Guide



Clockwise from top left:
Tapas24, El Xampanyet bubbles,
and art nouveau in Eixample.

Post-Tapas Retreats

Mandarin Oriental Barcelona's 120 rooms – some with expansive terraces – offer respite from the crowd-favorite Passeig de Gràcia outside. Book a table at Moments, the Michelin-starred, contemporary Catalan restaurant led by chef Carme Ruscalleda and her son, Raül Balam. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

In a 1919 building in the heart of the upscale Eixample neighborhood, El Palace Barcelona greets guests in 114 rooms and suites with marble fireplaces, high ceilings, and Louis XVI-style furniture. Head to the Rooftop Garden for sangria and views of La Sagrada Família. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.* 📍

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📍 AMAZON RIVER, LORETO

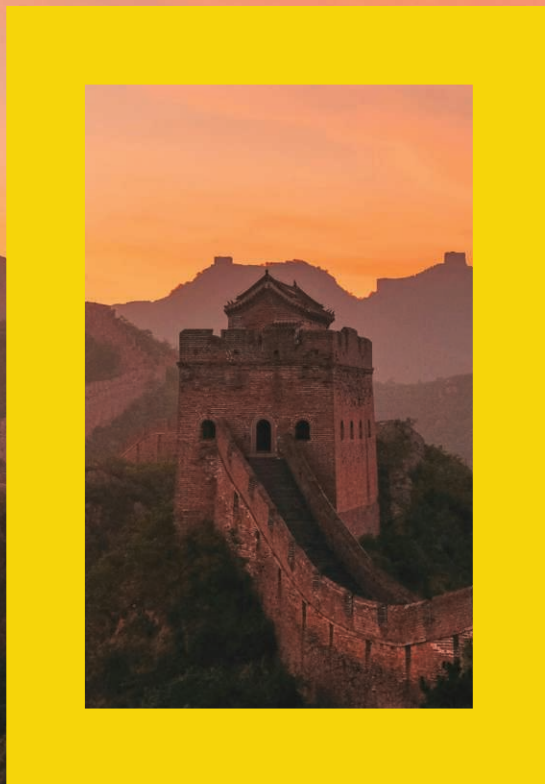
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EASY BREEZY

Set sail for charter-yacht bliss
in the British Virgin Islands.

BY ADAM ERACE

Catamaraning around the
Caribbean with The Moorings.

OF ALL THE THINGS you might not want to hear on a boat, “the engine is dead” is not the worst, but it’s not great.

Ships & Giggles – a 58-foot, six-cabin catamaran and my floating home for four nights in the British Virgin Islands – sits anchored off the west coast of Cooper Island, one of the BVI’s “Little Sisters.” My wife and I, along with my brother-in-law and his girlfriend, have spent the last three days sailing around the tropical archipelago without issue. Or rather, *being* sailed around, by Karlo Rosic, our captain, and Sara Zaknic, our chef and his first mate in both yachting and life.

Karlo pops his buzz-cut head out of the starboard hatch containing a 100-horsepower Yanmar engine and delivers the news. It’s our penultimate day, and this afternoon, we’re due to cruise from Cooper to Virgin Gorda. But for the moment, we’ll be staying put. I take off my shirt, dive into the turquoise Caribbean, and swim a few yards out to the huge round raft tethered to the aft of the yacht. My wife has a seltzer waiting for me. The sun is warm; the seltzer is cold. *Engine, shmengine.* Gazing at Cooper’s shoreline, where a little bubblegum-pink shack is tucked into the shaggy green hills, I figure there are worse places to be stuck.

Three days prior, *Giggles* had arrived promptly at three in the afternoon to collect my family and me from the east end of Virgin Gorda. Travelers can charter the catamaran through The Moorings, an industry stalwart that manages vessels from Antigua to Tahiti. I’d been corresponding with Karlo for a month over email, planning the itinerary, and with Sara, planning the menus. Their messages were so polished and professional that I was surprised when a couple in their twenties welcomed us aboard. But charter regulars and *Below Deck* watchers, of which I am neither, know yacht crewing is a young person’s game, and Sara and Karlo took such excellent care of us, by day two we were jokingly calling them Mom and Dad.

“SNACKS ARE BEHIND YOU,” Sara said, the second-most-important infor-



Clear winner: Snorkeling in The Baths on Virgin Gorda.

mation after our safety briefing around the U-shaped table in the saloon, the catamaran’s central living space. She indicated the ledge behind us, covered in mangoes, pineapples, and oranges; Ruffles, Doritos, and Milanos. “Drinks are in the coolers on the decks,” she added, alluding to seven ice chests stacked full of Diet Cokes and ginger beers and LaCroixes in an orchard of flavors. “If you want something in the fridge,” she continued, opening the door to display our painstakingly Tetrised provisions, “ask me.” Despite the word “ask,” this was not a request.

Sara cooked, while “Mister Karlo,” as she called him (though it was quickly evident who wore the miniskort in this relationship), steered our course. His cockpit was on the top deck, adjacent to the lounge, with its wet bar and stingray-gray sofas, where I watched us sail out toward Saba Rock. The apostrophe-shaped atoll between Virgin Gorda and Prickly Pear Island is a popular overnight anchor, and within an hour of parking in the North Sound’s flat, sapphire waters, a flotilla of old-money sailboats, crypto-windfall yachts, and Moorings-flagged brethren had joined us.

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Sara radioed to *BVI Rum Runner*, a boat bar with on-demand delivery, and Jonathan Gaffney and the company mascot, a sweet white-and-brown “coconut retriever” named Sandy, appeared in a little speedboat to take our order. He returned in a few minutes with a tangy mango colada and a Bushwacker (a rum-spiked mocha frappé), and we got to talking/petting Sandy. A New Hampshire native, Jonathan had just joined this season after pausing college. Why study international business, I supposed, when you can work in international business?

The last peach-hued rays of winter sunlight slipped behind Virgin Gorda. The ridge-backed landscapes of the surrounding islands darkened into silhouettes, curling around us like two slumbering dragons protecting their eggs. The sea was black, and dozens of boats glittered with yellow lights, fragments of topaz scattered across jeweler’s felt. Sara called us for dinner. Even from the topside deck, in the salty air, I could smell truffles.

I’ve heard horror stories of people who’ve been stuck on boats with crappy chefs. We didn’t have that problem on *Giggles*: Sara cooked like a Balkan grandmother trapped in a Gen Z body. The pasta came lavished with silky black-truffle butter, a specialty of her and Karlo’s home country of Croatia, and she set up a build-your-own-crepe bar for dessert. Chia pudding pots, fresh fruit, and poached eggs on toast with prosciutto greeted us for breakfast. She made waffles. She made monkfish risotto. She baked a golden focaccia dimpled with green olives and cherry tomatoes. On a boat. After each meal, Sara asked us, “Are you happy?” in her signature deadpan. We were effusively happy, and invariably, a satisfied little smirk would tug at the corner of her mouth.

When we weren’t eating, we sunbathed and swam, absorbing all that makes the BVI such an ideal boating destination. We explored Saba Rock, Peter and Cooper islands, Virgin Gorda, and finally, Tortola, the commercial air



The ridge-backed landscapes of the surrounding islands darkened into silhouettes, curling around us like two slumbering dragons protecting their eggs.

gateway to the British archipelago. The Caribbean was gin-clear and the ideal temperature: warm enough to dive right in, cool enough to feel refreshing under a blazing sun that melted the days like candle wax. We passed them snorkeling among parrotfish and barracuda, reading, playing cards, stretching out on the bow’s cargo net, chatting with the neighbors. During a day at Cooper, a North Carolinian on the polished sailboat next

door asked if we were bareboating (I’ve now learned that means captaining the ship ourselves, which, LOL). I asked if he’d chartered with The Moorings as well, and he replied with a chuckle, “No, this is my boat.”

YOU CAN’T REALLY dive into this 60-island region without a yacht. Most landbound BVI visitors drop and flop at one of its many luxury resorts, but that’s



like experiencing only one side of the destination. Living on the water, even temporarily, unlocks a whole other feeling and rhythm, which I quickly took to.

In each location where it operates, The Moorings employs a chase team committed to arriving within four hours of the captain's call. This strictly business clique of mechanics pulls up alongside *Giggles* less than 30 minutes after Karlo determines he needs assistance with the engine. Sara sears tuna for lunch, and after the plates are cleared, we're zooming toward The Baths, a national park on Virgin Gorda's southern tip.

Karlo anchors in Devil's Bay and brings us about 50 yards from the beach on the dinghy, as close as any boat is permitted to get. Phones and towels secured in dry bags, we hop overboard for the easy swim, the squishy white sand sucking our feet as we clamber ashore. Signs point through the scrub to the trailhead for The Baths, where we wade, squeeze, and crab-walk through the 50-million-year-old maze of granite boulders and tidal grottoes. It feels mystical, especially in the grotto known as The Cathedral, where sunlight enters a thigh-high lagoon through a triangular keyhole and makes the whole chamber shimmer.

Later, back on board *Giggles* with a sunset Dark 'n Stormy, I watch the lights of our next port, Spanish Town, grow closer, when suddenly, about five miles

out, we freeze. The engine quit again, Karlo informs me, and without both engines to navigate into the marina, we'll have to anchor here overnight and rendezvous with the chase team in the morning. A fine plan, with one caveat: How are we getting to our dinner destination, Rosewood Little Dix Bay, a former Rockefeller estate turned resort?

All dressed for our meal, the four of us pile into the dinghy, and Karlo takes off through the darkness. We grip the sides and each other as it skips across the chop, spraying us with sea mist, ruining mascara, drenching underwear. Screeches of surprise careen into diaphragm-straining laughs, and in the captain's seat, quiet, reserved Mister Karlo is grinning.

It's not the jerk lobster with rum-raisin sauce, the lemongrass snapper steamed in banana leaves, or the half dozen other creative expressions of island terroir from chef Andy Gaskin's dinner that I'll remember most from this night. It's the ten thrilling, hysterical minutes on the dinghy, the moment no one planned for.

The next morning, Sara makes avocado toast and Greek-yogurt bowls, and we're sailing to the airport. She tells us that the chase team came through before we woke up and fixed the engine. Not without regret, I ask her, "Were they sure?"

Yachts Rock

GO The Moorings operates power yachts and catamaran and monohull sailboats on four continents, with more than 50 years' experience in both crewed and bareboat charters. Cabin counts range from three to six, and crewed charters include meals, fuel, and mooring ball fees.

The 448-passenger *Ilma*, part of **The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection**, visits Virgin Gorda on three-, four-, and seven-night Caribbean itineraries round-trip from San Juan, Puerto Rico. *Departures: Multiple dates, November 27, 2026, through December 14, 2027.*

Four Seasons Yachts' new *Four Seasons I* will call at Peter Island and Virgin Gorda on an eight-night Lesser Antilles cruise from Saint Lucia's capital of Castries to Saint John's, Antigua. The ship's 14-night, round-trip-from-Miami itinerary stops at Jost Van Dyke on a voyage that takes in a large swath of the Caribbean. *Departures: December 19, 2027, and December 20, 2026.*

STAY On Virgin Gorda, 81-room **Rosewood Little Dix Bay** sprawls across the crescent-shaped beach and interior gardens of a 500-acre former Rockefeller estate. The beachfront Reef House features produce from the hotel's farm, while the Rum Room stocks more than 100 labels of the Caribbean spirit. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.* 9

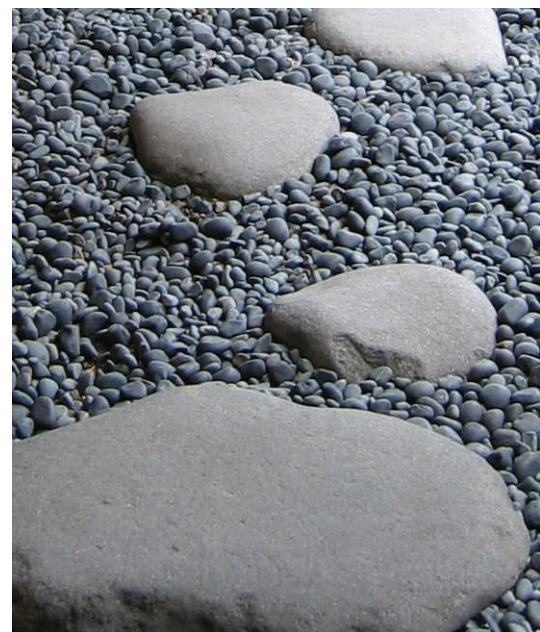


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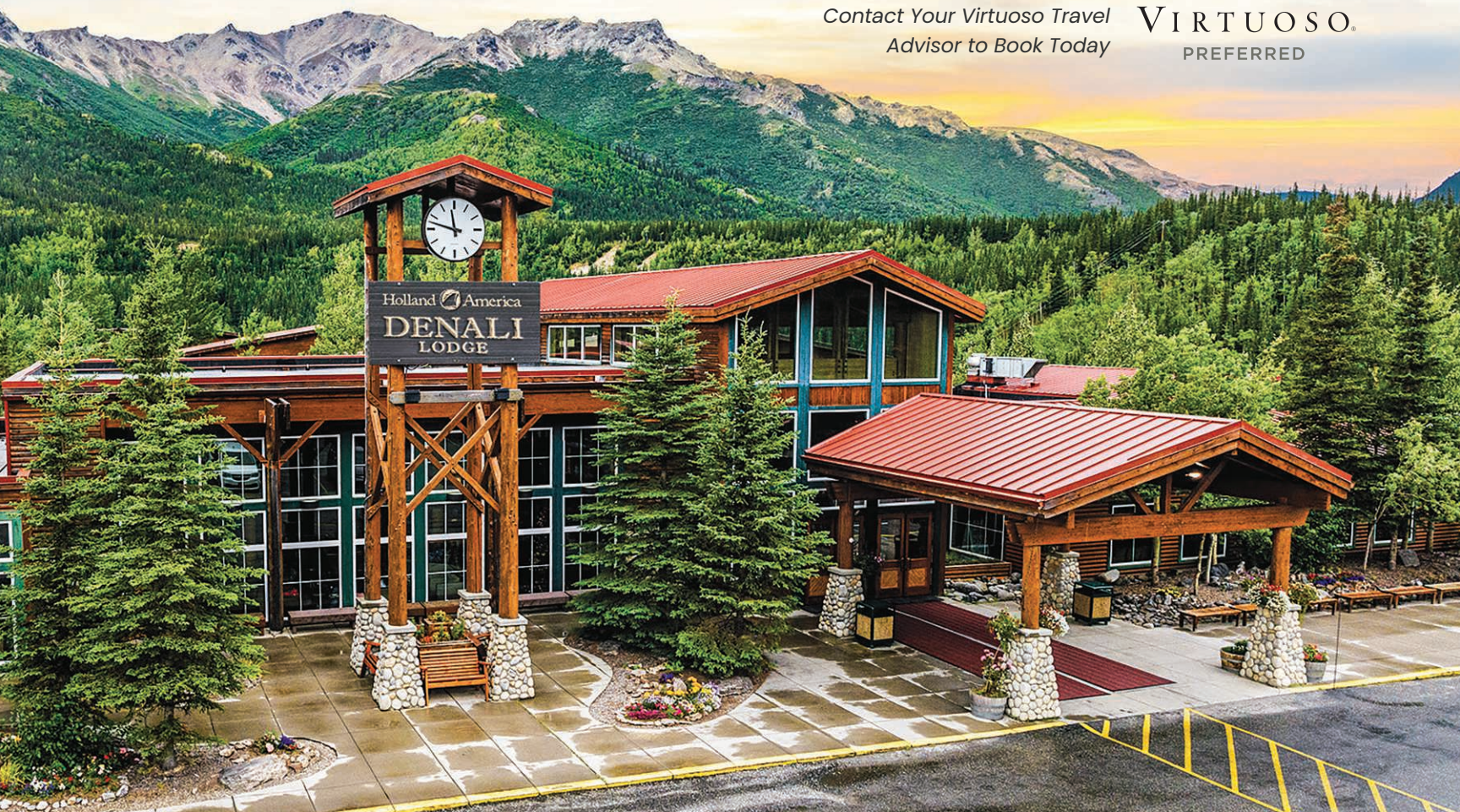
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A week in Rome with a mission
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BY EMMA FRANKE PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE DELAUW

Dining

In the kitchen with
chef Cristiana Caccamo.



Castel Gandolfo's papal gardens and (opposite) the Barberis in their Rome kitchen and orecchiette con le cime di rapa.

Dining



LIFE IS GOOD for Pope Leo XIV's chickens. Their coops, a stone's throw from the first-century ruins of Emperor Domitian's summer palace, are Roman villas in miniature, with fluted roofs and mosaics winking over each entrance. Life was good for me too, the day I met the chickens inside the papal gardens in Castel Gandolfo, the commuter town 40 minutes from Rome where the pope's summer palace crowns volcanic Lake Albano. Past the latticed parterre, the herb garden, and the sumptuous chicken coops, I had a date with some fresh eggs, flour, and a pasta machine.

Over the last few years, culinary school grads armed with stainless steel

pans and Cambro storage containers have overrun my TikTok feed, teaching me to keep my Microplane at the ready and Maldon sea salt in the cupboard for the days I feed friends and family. But left to my own devices, I'm a lazy cook. Opting for the microwave most weeknights has left my knifework shoddy, my heat control unpredictable. So recently, I called on Virtuoso on-site tour connection Italy with Class to design a custom culinary boot camp for my weeklong trip to Rome. Rather than waiting for retirement to finally buckle down and learn some technique, I'd turn to local chefs to invest in a new skill while lingering in the Eternal City for the first time in a decade.

And so, four days into my trip, I found myself on an excursion to Castel Gandolfo alongside Salvatore Barberi, who cofounded Italy with Class with his sister, Marilena. He rattled off papal trivia and greeted each museum guard like an old family friend before the big reveal: cavernous kitchens tucked inside the gardens, where a chef would guide me through preparing perfect brown-butter-and-sage *cappellacci* (ravioli-like stuffed fresh pasta). Barberi was the ultimate suave Italian when I asked how he and his sister secured exclusive rights to the space: "I knew a guy here and made it happen."

The rest of the Barberis' origin story is more straightforward. They grew up





Delicious rewards,
clockwise from top left:
cappellacci, gnocchi,
and meatballs.

in their parents' restaurant in central Rome and decided to pay their family legacy forward. "It's important when people come to Italy that, apart from going to the must-dos like the Colosseum, they try to get closer to our culture in a different way – to the food, the wine, the fun," Marilena told me later. It's this ethos of slowing down that drew me to the local-chef-taught private lessons that the siblings arrange in Castel Gandolfo and at their other teaching kitchen back in Rome, in

a seventeenth-century palazzo just blocks from the original site of their parents' Piazza Navona restaurant.

MY EDUCATION began in that palazzo's industrial kitchen, where, after showing off pictures of her grandson, chef Teresa Troisi (formerly of the Barberi family restaurant) set me to work soaking bread in milk to act as a meatball binding agent. I offered to chop parsley, which quickly led to a mincing lesson – using two hands to

**"It's important
when people come
to Italy that they try
to get closer to our
culture in a different
way – to the food, the
wine, the fun."**



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Container16's wares and
(opposite) Piazza Navona.

rock the knife back and forth would, Troisi promised, lead to more consistent results. Slowly, the room filled with a surprisingly strong aroma for such a simple dish: olive oil simmered with whole garlic cloves and basil, then flooded with fresh tomato *passata* (puree), and finally spooned over puffs of gnocchi and parsley-flecked meatballs. As I sat down at last to a large plateful, it became clear why meals take longer in Italy.

A few days later, morning found me across the road from Circus Maximus, where stained-glass windows painted green and yellow shadows over the chattering proceedings at the Campagna Amica farmers' market. Chef Cristiana Caccamo, my tutor for the day and an alum of two-Michelin-starred Seta in Milan, wound between stalls, introducing me to vendors and slipping me samples of fresh provolone. Troisi tagged along for part of the morning to do her own shopping and joined the debate about our Sunday lunch menu, which Caccamo won by pairing my chicken *cacciatore* lesson request with *orecchiette con le cime di rapa* (broccoli rabe greens), a classic in her Puglian hometown.

Back in the kitchen, Caccamo showed me how to roll out *orecchiette* with a butter knife, which felt natural after a few passes. But I was even more excited when my chopped garlic looked uniform instead of like a cross section of the Roman Forum ruins. The bitter, slightly spicy greens, tangled in "little ears" of *orecchiette* and softened by chicken and bright olives, were my reward. I got another thrill later that evening at my hotel, Villa Agrippina

Gran Meliá, when food-and-beverage manager Sergio Frasca walked me through tasting a handful of Italian wines from the hotel's cellar until I really, actually smelled the plum note in a Ligurian vermentino.

Slowly, Rome rewarded my patience too. After a few shopping dead ends, Via della Scrofa finally yielded the perfect souvenirs: a geometric cruet from Container16 and textured sauce bowls from Furia Living. On a

lesson-free evening spent at Retrobottega's community table, punchy local dishes spoke to lighter Roman fare: shaved eye of round roast with strawberries and balsamic vinegar, crisp spring peas on a cloud of herb butter, plump pork rib *tortelli* showered in spring onions. Outside, seagulls winged their evening waltz through softening light. Dinner stretched on. I poured another glass of fiano and sat back to watch the dance.





Get Schooled

GO The brother-sister duo behind **Italy with Class** work with Virtuoso travel advisors to arrange custom Italy trips, including time in their kitchens in Rome and Castel Gandolfo. Travelers can request lessons on specific dishes or build a repertoire of Italian classics to take home: gnocchi, meatballs, Roman pastas, and desserts for days. *Departures: Any day through 2027.*

STAY A few blocks from Italy with Class' Piazza Navona kitchen, the city's buzz vanishes in **Six Senses Rome's** first-floor Roman baths and rooftop bar and garden. Chef Fabio Sangiovanni's seasonal menus at Bivium anchor the brand's 96-room property. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

In a city bursting with priceless artifacts, the 106-room **Bulgari Hotel Roma's** dreamscape bathrooms done in creamy marble and glittering mosaics belong in their own category. Past a few diamond necklaces on display in the halls, Il Ristorante – Niko Romito plates Italian classics on the fifth floor, while caviar comes with a view at rooftop La Terrazza. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit.*

With its landscaped perch just outside Vatican City, 110-room **Villa Agrippina Gran Meliá** feels like a countryside retreat, complete with a rare urban pool and private whirlpools attached to select suites. Don't skip the sommelier-led Italian winetasting lesson. *Virtuoso travelers receive a private one-way airport transfer and breakfast daily.*

Eternal City standby J.K. Place Roma has a new sister property as of May: **Casa J.K. Place Roma**, a collection of 12 residences staffed by butlers and concierges in an eighteenth-century palazzo. Groups of up to seven can take over art deco-inspired spaces with full kitchens and city views. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

Hotel Hassler Roma reopened in March after its first-ever closure for refurbishments. The 82-room hotel's updates include a 7,535-square-foot spa carved underneath the Spanish Steps, in addition to Michelin-starred Imàgo's newly open kitchen. Its pre-renovation 22,000-bottle wine cellar remains. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.* ♡



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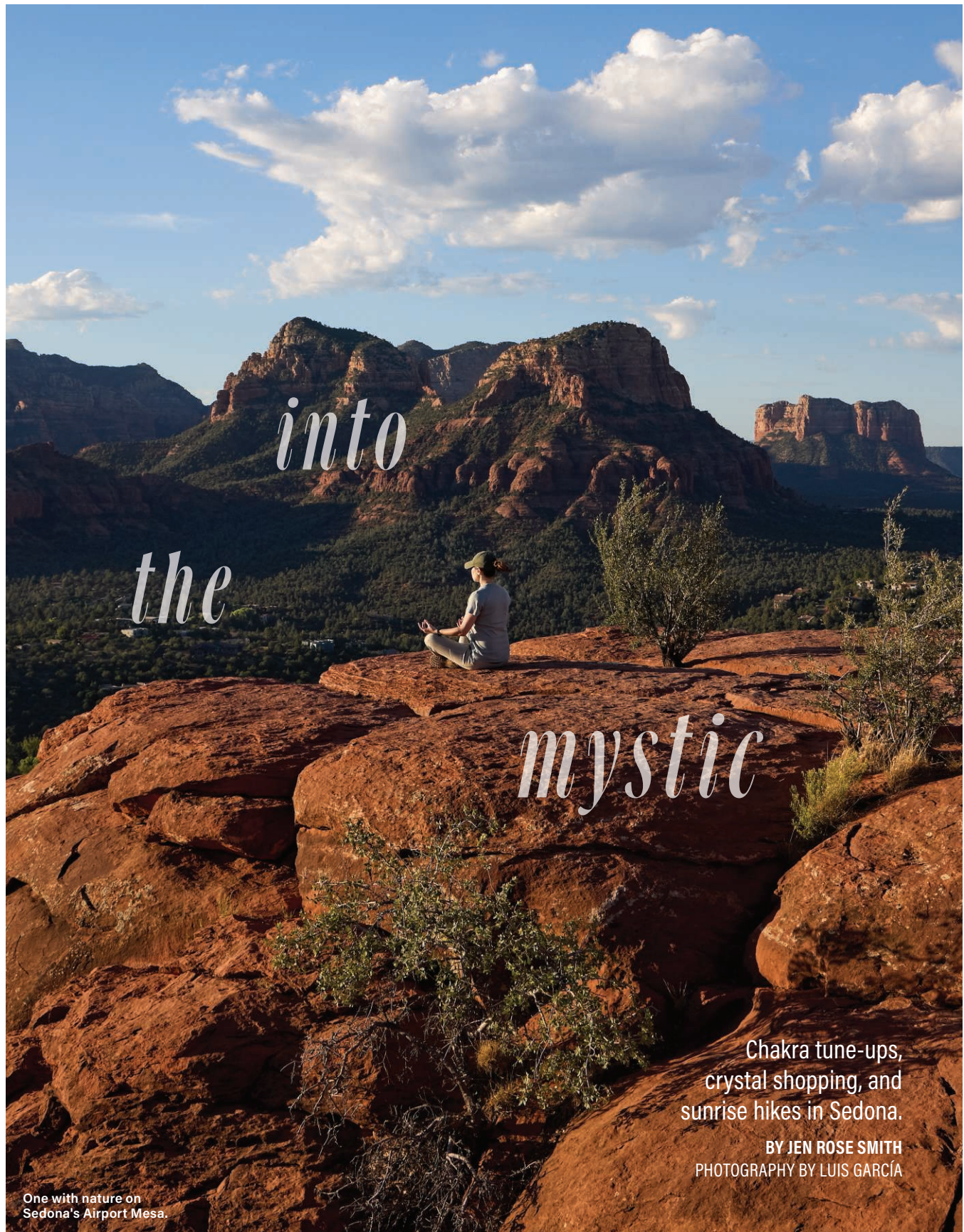


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One with nature on
Sedona's Airport Mesa.

Chakra tune-ups,
crystal shopping, and
sunrise hikes in Sedona.

BY JEN ROSE SMITH
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUIS GARCÍA



IT WAS AN HOUR before sunrise when I reached the trailhead, with just a waning gibbous moon to light the sandstone spires of Cathedral Rock. The path up the butte was invisible, but a constellation of headlamps winked steadily toward the summit – early risers hiking up one of Sedona, Arizona’s four major “vortexes.” They were said to be swirling with the earth’s energy, sites where visitors could channel an unspecified, yet elemental, force.

Though I’d come to Sedona mostly for its hiking trails and natural beauty, I’m also a perpetual dabbler – always game to suspend a default skepticism and dive deep. And besides, what

middle-aged traveler couldn’t use a little top-up? I waited for the heightened energy – or at least my morning’s hastily gulped coffee – to kick in. Mostly, I was sleepy. Shifting my pack, I kept walking, breathing harder as I rose through the dark and deeper into the vortex’s heart.

With its layer-cake peaks teetering skyward from aromatic evergreens, Sedona’s red-rock landscape is, at first glance, the stuff of gunsmoke westerns and unironic tumbleweed. Black-and-white photos of John Wayne adorn the folksy Cowboy Club bar and grill uptown. But for decades, the Sonoran Desert city has drawn visitors more keen on its New Age reputation

than its Old West roots. Before leaving home, I bought a popular Sedona guidebook and found tips on spotting aliens and spirit beings among its sinuous canyons. Crystal stores line its shopping district, alongside sundry signs advertising aura photography, psychics, and sound healing. When in Rome, you get the *cacio e pepe*; visit Sedona if you want step-by-step instructions on squeegeeing bad vibes from a cloudy aura.

Ambiente Sedona. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Bell Rock, a Navajo dream catcher, L’Auberge de Sedona’s Luis Angel Colon, and Sedona Crystal Vortex stones.



“Sedona has a way of bringing to the surface things that are hidden,” said Luis Angel Colon, a holistic wellness practitioner and intuitive energy healer at L’Auberge de Sedona. I met him at the resort on the sycamore-shaded banks of Oak Creek for an astrology and “human design” reading, a practice merging esoteric traditions spanning the *I Ching* and kabbalah. On

a scientific-looking printout, he traced what he saw in my stars: a little solitude (yes), the yearning to explore (same), and a hint of stubbornness (news to me). At the end of the session, Colon handed me the packet of symbols and signs. “Take what’s useful,” he said. “Leave the rest.”

It’s an ethos with generous elbow room, in a place where far-flung beliefs

make common cause. On a sunset stroll through Amitabha Stupa and Peace Park, I found prayer flags flickering through blue-green junipers. The stupa itself, filled with handwritten prayers and built by a Tibetan lama, stretches a golden disk skyward, its stepped base the precise terra-cotta hue of nearby Thunder Mountain. But just uphill is a large Native American medicine wheel – a quartered circle symbolizing life’s cycles – laid out within a ring of stones. The Yavapai–Apache Nation, whose ancestral territory includes the Verde Valley where Sedona is located, know this area as a sacred geography, a landscape whose rocks and canyons are infused with stories.

Primed by a clockwise stroll around the medicine wheel, I headed uptown to find my own stone. When I selected a green-flecked lozenge of prehnite – a stone of memories and dreams – at Sedona Crystal Vortex, the smiling shop assistant gave me instructions for zhuzhing up its powers on the trails. (Tip: Put your crystal directly on the ground.) Nearby, in the Tlaquepaque Arts & Shopping Village, a stuccoed maze of galleries and boutiques, I wandered into Honshin Fine Art, drawn by the fractal glaze on sculptures by Arizona ceramicist Duly Mitchell. As we talked about Buddhist artwork that was also on display, the woman behind the counter recalled how a visiting monk revealed she was a celestial being before coming to Earth. “Where else but Sedona would you learn a thing like that?” she said, touching the heavy silver dragon that hung at her sternum.

Several businesses promised the chance to learn secrets of my own past lives (celestial or otherwise), but I headed instead to Ambiente Sedona, more interested in targeting my current-life energy. At the resort’s Velvet Spa, reiki practitioner Karen Pasquini sensed my chakras needed a tune-up.

“Your chakras should swirl like galaxies,” she said. “Your second and fifth chakras are ... Well, they’re *not* doing that.” It felt true as soon as I heard it; I pictured my errant chakras burbling



Amitabha Stupa
and Peace Park.

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Wellness

like blocked drains. After settling a series of gemstones along my centerline, she placed her fingertips gently above my collarbones. As she worked, we talked quietly about the travelers who find their way here, and the town's curious and persistent magnetism. "The reality is that all of Sedona is a vortex," she said. Maybe she was right.

BY THE TIME I REACHED the top of Cathedral Rock, daylight was breaking, its first rays spotlighting eroded layers formed beneath ancient seas. Swallows wove swirling lines at the top of the cliff; a peregrine falcon keened just out

of sight. Hikers chatted quietly. A few were seated with their legs pulled into a half lotus, open palms on knees.

Sitting on a sandstone platform that was still cool to the touch, I closed my eyes, inhaling air rich with juniper and iron. Not for too long, though. Before the heat of the day arrived, I hoped to reach Bell Rock – another Sedona vortex – about a three-mile hike to the southeast. As I left the summit, I caught sight of a small sign affixed to the edge of the walkway, where minute desert plants were taking root in a patch of arid soil. *Healing in progress, it read. Please stay on trail.*

Southwest Sanctuaries

At the adults-only, 23-room **Mii Amo** and kid-friendly, 218-room **Enchantment Resort** – sister properties tucked into a peaceful canyon outside town – guests can take sunset walks to the Boynton Canyon vortex via a route from Enchantment's Trail House. At the resort's recently updated Artist Cottage, workshops include spirit-animal painting and prayer-arrow making. *Virtuoso travelers at Mii Amo receive breakfast daily and a \$100 spa credit. At Enchantment Resort, Virtuoso travelers receive a \$45 daily breakfast credit and a \$100 experience credit.*

Though it's a short walk from uptown shops and dining, 153-room **L'Auberge de Sedona's** creek-side perch and mature tree canopy lend it a sanctuary feel. Its spa caters to spiritual dabbling or all-in awakening with an array of holistic treatments, from psychic readings to drum reiki. *Virtuoso travelers receive a \$45 daily breakfast credit and a \$100 resort credit.*

Modernist cubes set amid native vegetation beside a trickling waterway let mountain views shine at the 40-room, adults-only **Ambiente Sedona**. Guests lounge poolside (or lay on floating mats amid the soothing tones of Tibetan bowls during in-pool sound baths), hike the Adobe Jack Trail from an on-site trailhead, or ascend to their private rooftops for astronomer-led stargazing sessions. *Virtuoso travelers receive a \$45 daily breakfast credit and a \$100 resort credit.* ♡

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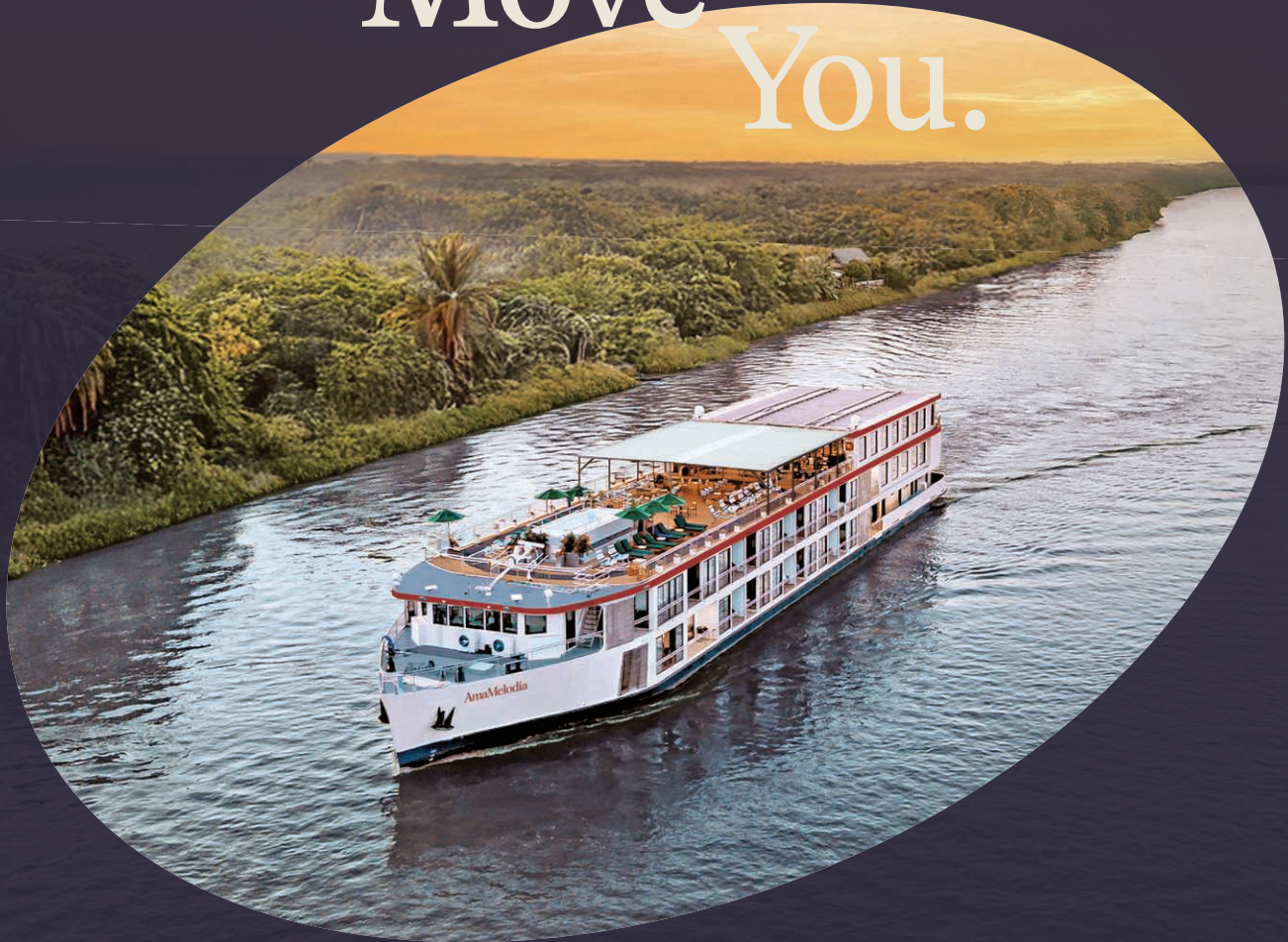


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In a river-cruising first, new sister ships *AmaMagdalena* and *AmaMelodia* introduce travelers to Colombia's Magdalena River, the 950-mile waterway connecting the Andes and the Caribbean. Designed for just 60 and 64 passengers, respectively, the ships cruise a pair of seven-night itineraries between Barranquilla and Cartagena, stopping at small towns and villages so travelers can meet local artisans in Sitionuevo, catch an open-air **jazz performance** in Mompo, and visit Palenque, the first free African town in the Americas. *Departures: Multiple dates, September 2, 2026, through December 25, 2027.*

An Elevated Classic

When *AmaMagna* set sail on the Danube in 2019, AmaWaterways became the first river-cruise line with a double-width ship in Europe. Next year, the 196-passenger *AmaRudi* follows suit, cruising the Danube with **spacious state-rooms and suites** (from 200 to 710 square feet) and public areas, including a top-deck pickleball court. Travelers can join a seven-night passage between Budapest and Vilshofen, Germany, that calls on Vienna, Austria's Wachau Valley, and more. *Departures: Multiple dates, April 18 through December 26, 2027.*

Time Travel

AmaWaterways continues to grow in Africa, where it operates the 28-passenger *Zambezi Queen* on Botswana's Chobe River and is about to debut its third ship on the Nile River, the 76-passenger *AmaNubia*. When it sets sail in November, cruisers can expect two restaurants and sleek staterooms adorned with Egyptian artwork. On an 11-night itinerary round-trip from Cairo, travelers pair visits to Giza's Grand Egyptian Museum and **legendary pyramids** with temple tours, felucca jaunts, and an exclusive visit to a Nubian village. *Departures: Multiple dates, November 7, 2026, through December 25, 2027.*

Cultural Immersion

Launching in 2027, the 120-passenger *AmaMaya* will become the second AmaWaterways ship on the Mekong River, sailing between Ho Chi Minh City and Kampong Cham, Cambodia, on seven-night journeys. After travelers explore Cai Be's markets and temples, bird-watch in the Tra Su Cajuput Forest, and receive a **Buddhist blessing** in Oudong, they'll return to *AmaMaya* for regionally inspired dining, sundeck yoga, and overnights in suites with teakwood floors and private balconies. *Departures: Multiple dates, January 4, 2027, through April 10, 2028.*

From top: A Colombian Carnival-inspired celebration in Barranquilla, a rendering of the Danube's forthcoming *AmaRudi*, and a peaceful moment on the Mekong.



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\$100 dining credit per stay.



La Sultana Oualidia

Oualidia, Morocco

This intimate coastal haven overlooks a protected lagoon between the Atlantic Ocean and verdant countryside.



Set within serene surroundings, you'll find a rare sense of seclusion. Days unfold with boat rides through hidden coves, bird-watching among flamingos, and quiet moments by the pool. Freshly harvested oysters and ocean-inspired spa rituals complete an experience defined by stillness, privacy, and coastal beauty.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:
\$100 resort credit per stay.



ENJOY EXCLUSIVE VIRTUOSO AMENITIES AT MORE THAN 1,900 TOP HOTELS AND RESORTS WORLDWIDE.

Room upgrade, when available • Breakfast for two daily • Early check-in and late checkout, when available • Complimentary Wi-Fi • Virtuoso amenity

SPOTLIGHT ON: TCS WORLD TRAVEL

THE WORLD, EFFORTLESSLY

On these all-inclusive private-jet journeys, nothing is left to chance.

THE APPEAL OF A PRIVATE-JET expedition extends well beyond the luxury aircraft. For more than three decades, TCS World Travel's itineraries have strung together the world's most fascinating and remote destinations with ease, freeing travelers from the stress that often accompanies long-distance travel and leaving more time for the memorable experiences that await on the ground. Here, the perks of globe-trotting at 30,000 feet.

Seamless Connections

Some destinations remain elusive because reaching them requires a maze of lengthy and confusing air connections. TCS World Travel removes that dependence on commercial-air schedules, making it possible to **connect destinations** that are rarely experienced together in a single journey. On a 16-day journey that traces the Silk Road, that simplicity translates to wandering Itchan Kala – an ancient walled city in the heart of Khiva, Uzbekistan – one afternoon, then stargazing in Mongolia's Gobi just days later.

Deeper Discovery

TCS World Travel is just as thoughtful about its on-land experiences as it is about the journey in flight. Drawing on decades of **trusted local relationships**, TCS creates opportunities to engage deeply in each landmark stop along the way. Expert lecturers accompany travelers on every trip, bringing context and texture to visits everywhere from Easter Island's towering *moai* to Egypt's ancient temples, tombs, and monuments. Multi-night stays in luxury hotels provide ample time to settle into each place, while private, personalized, and small-group excursions allow guests to follow their curiosity wherever it leads them.

Peace of Mind

A private-jet expedition's greatest luxury is the freedom from logistics – and the confidence of knowing that a monumental journey is being handled with **quiet, seamless precision**. TCS World Travel makes complex itineraries look like a breeze. One example: A three-week trip that fully immerses travelers in nine iconic African destinations (including Rwanda, Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa) appears to come together effortlessly, so guests can focus on the landscapes, wildlife, and cultures unfolding around them, rather than the arrangements that connect one place to the next. A dedicated expedition team manages all aspects of each outing, and a physician accompanies the group. On travel this epic, the ability to remain present is priceless.



From top: Itchan Kala, onboard comfort, and gemsbok in the Namib Desert.

VIRTUOSO BEST OF THE BEST

This extraordinary collection of Virtuoso Preferred Hotels & Resorts offers once-in-a-lifetime experiences and exclusive amenities you'll only receive through your Virtuoso travel advisor.

Alila Mayakoba

Riviera Maya, Mexico

Discover serenity in this wellness sanctuary surrounded by peaceful lagoons and sun-drenched coastline.



Ocean breezes wash over you as you embrace the art of slow living, with healing therapies inspired by Maya traditions that bridge past and present. Woven together through storytelling and ritual, these transformative experiences become more than fleeting moments – they become a permanent part of who you are.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:
\$150 resort credit per stay.

Alila
MAYAKOBA

The Dylan Amsterdam

Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Dine on refined cuisine and experience personalized service at this boutique hotel contained within a historic building.



The menu of two-Michelin-starred Restaurant Vinkeles blends tradition with modern French fare and suited wine pairings. Informal Bar Brasserie OCCO is open all day and famous for its daily High Wine experience. Your stay can be tailored with activities ranging from private art gallery visits to a tour of a local tulip farm.

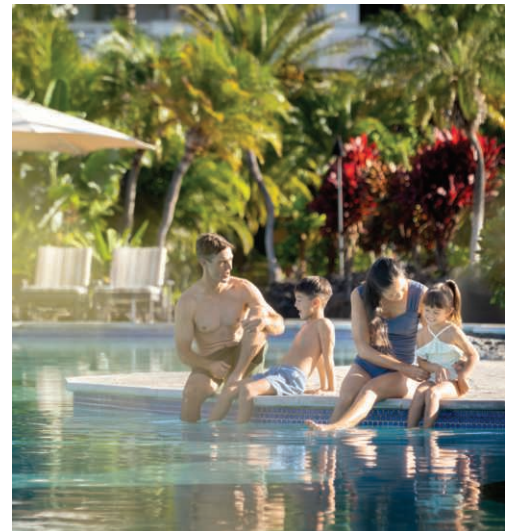
VIRTUOSO AMENITY:
\$100 dining credit per stay.



Fairmont Orchid

Kohala Coast, Hawaii

Savor thrilling adventures and rich cultural experiences when you visit this oceanfront oasis on the Big Island.



Snorkel in the private lagoon, welcome the sunrise in an outrigger canoe, unwind at Spa Without Walls, explore the island's natural wonders, and learn the art of hula and lei-making. Enjoy a complimentary fourth night, breakfast daily for two at Orchid Court, and exclusive resort amenities when you stay by December 19, 2026.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:
\$100 dining credit per stay.

Fairmont
ORCHID

ENJOY EXCLUSIVE VIRTUOSO AMENITIES AT MORE THAN 1,900 TOP HOTELS AND RESORTS WORLDWIDE.

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SPOTLIGHT ON: CANADA

GENUINE CONNECTIONS

Experience Canada's beauty through the people who know it best.

CANADA'S DRAMATIC LANDSCAPES deliver love at first sight, but it's the locals travelers meet who leave the real lasting impression. Every chef, guide, and Indigenous knowledge keeper has their own story to tell, and from British Columbia's wilderness to the Atlantic coast's fishing villages, they turn sightseeing into something way more meaningful. To see Canada through the eyes of its proudest stewards, seek out these people on your next trip.

The Storytellers

Canada is home to more than 1.8 million Indigenous people, and across the country, Indigenous guides, storytellers, and cultural interpreters offer perspectives rooted in generations of connection to the land. In northern Canada's Yukon, for example, travelers can go dogsledding with an Inuit guide in the cooler months or attend an array of cultural festivals in the summer. In the Northwest Territories, travelers can join a Dene First Nations guide for an aurora-hunting adventure; in this remote stretch of Canada, the **northern lights** are visible for an average of 240 nights per year. Travelers learn that for the Dene, the aurora is more than just a light show – it's a sacred connection to ancestral spirits.

The Culinary Artisans

One of the best ways to get to know a place is through its food, and that's especially true in Canada, where myriad ingredients and traditions shape the country's diverse culinary culture. Across Ontario, travelers can visit tasting rooms and meet vintners who produce the region's famous ice wine. In Québec, traditional sugar shacks come alive every spring as passionate maple syrup producers host special meals and lead demonstrations celebrating one of the province's most enduring traditions. And across Atlantic Canada, there's always a **lobster fisher** or restaurant owner ready to tell you more about the day's best catch.

The Wildlife Whisperers

Local guides help travelers witness Canada's wildlife responsibly, whether it's searching for bison in the Prairie Provinces' grasslands, waving hello to puffins in Newfoundland and Labrador, or spying elusive polar bears in Manitoba. In British Columbia's **Great Bear Rainforest**, skilled guides lead bear-viewing expeditions in one of the world's largest remaining temperate rainforests. Farther south, marine naturalists who have called B.C. home their entire lives take travelers out onto the Salish Sea to spot orcas and humpbacks, while sharing stories about their beloved ecosystem in a way that leaves travelers feeling empowered to protect its future.



From top: The aurora borealis above the Northwest Territories, Nova Scotia's famous lobster rolls, and a wild encounter in British Columbia.

SPOTLIGHT ON: HILTON LUXURY BRANDS

GOLDEN AGE COMEBACK

The landmark Waldorf Astoria New York shines again on Park Avenue.



SHARP-DRESSED PORTERS FIRST opened the Waldorf Astoria New York's grand Park Avenue doors in 1931, heralding an era that would define luxury hospitality in the city. Over the decades, discerning travelers, heads of state, and cultural icons checked in for opulent residencies and evenings in Peacock Alley. In 2017, the landmark closed for an eight-year, \$2 billion transformation that revived its most significant architectural elements. Today, the hotel has returned with fresh amenities that stay true to its art deco heritage.

Surrounded by History

Nearly every sitting U.S. president passed through the Waldorf Astoria New York's mosaic-floored lobby, among other distinguished guests. Composer Cole Porter made the Waldorf Astoria his home for three decades until his death in 1964; the **Steinway piano** presented to him by hotel staff now anchors the lobby as a lasting tribute. Nearby, the hotel's nine-foot-tall Victorian clock – crafted for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair – remains a timeless meeting point as it has for generations.

Enduring Splendor

Guests can arrive via a discreet porte cochere on 49th Street – an increasingly rare luxury in Manhattan – before stepping into **Peacock Alley**, the celebrated promenade synonymous with the city's style and social ritual. The hotel's restoration took its room count from over 1,400 to just 375, reemerging with accommodations among the most spacious in the city. Throughout the hotel, designer Pierre-Yves Rochon selected a textile palette of soft neutrals to amplify the building's original materials: Portoro marble reappears in the Basildon Room's fireplace, restored gold and silver leaf on corridor walls catches the light, and custom furniture in guest rooms sits alongside salvaged decorative metalwork.

A Dining Destination

The hotel that introduced the world to the Waldorf salad and eggs Benedict continues to shape the city's culinary scene. Lex Yard, a two-story American brasserie from chef Michael Anthony, honors this legacy in dishes such as beef-fat fries and a modern take on the hotel's namesake salad. Across the lobby, East meets West at Yoshoku, where chef Ry Nitzkowski's kaiseki-inspired menu showcases an American Wagyu striploin with charred maitake mushrooms and shiso pesto. And at the Peacock Alley Bar, the **Waldorf cocktail** (rye, vermouth, and absinthe) anchors a classic drink menu while live music fills the lounge most evenings – exactly as it has for the better part of a century. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

From top: Waldorf Astoria New York's gilded Park Avenue entrance, the Chrysler Room private dining space, and dinner at Lex Yard.



WALDORF ASTORIA®
LOS CABOS • PEDREGAL

AN UNFORGETTABLE ELEVATED CLIFFSIDE PARADISE

Carved into the cliffs of Mexico's Baja California Peninsula, Waldorf Astoria Los Cabos Pedregal offers a journey for the senses. Reimagined rooms reflect a contemporary take on Mexico's artisanal soul, while the Waldorf Astoria Spa channels that same spirit through traditional Mexican folk healing and treatments inspired by the lunar cycle.

Receive a fourth night complimentary on minimum four-night stays for travel from October 1, 2026 - December 16, 2026. Contact your Virtuoso Travel Advisor to reserve your stay.

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Waldorf Astoria Riviera Maya

Riviera Maya, Mexico

Tucked among lush mangroves, this restorative retreat offers a treasure trove of curated daily activities to enjoy.



Start your day with a sunrise yoga session, then relax by two oceanfront infinity-edge pools. Then, tee off on scenic golf courses or kayak through coastal waters. Later, sample mezcal and tequila, or join a hands-on cooking session. Travel by January 31, 2027, to enjoy a complimentary third night.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:
\$100 resort credit per stay.



Waldorf Astoria Monarch Beach

Dana Point, California

A sophisticated beach house that celebrates the iconic culture of the Southern California coast.



Bask in the warm glow of the sunshine at this AAA Five Diamond retreat. Lounge at your choice of two sparkling pools or revel in surf and sand at the private beach club. Golf on the pristine greens of the award-winning course, featuring panoramic Pacific views. Dine oceanside on fresh-caught seafood and classic cocktails.

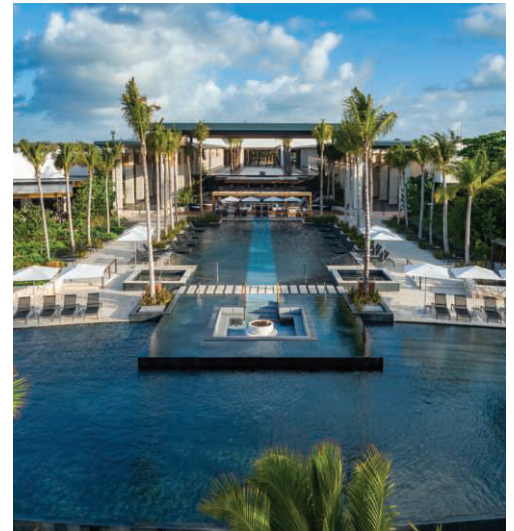
VIRTUOSO AMENITY:
\$100 resort credit per stay.



Conrad Tulum Riviera Maya

Tulum, Mexico

On the dazzling shores of the Riviera Maya, this tranquil resort is an ideal escape for history lovers and eco-conscious travelers.



Designed with sustainability at its core, this elegant hideaway enhances comfort while preserving local biodiversity. Contemporary luxury melds with deep respect for Maya culture, enriching every aspect of your stay. Reserve the Ceiba Club for private check-in, elevated beach experiences, and dedicated service throughout your visit.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:
\$100 resort credit per stay.



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Room upgrade, when available • Breakfast for two daily • Early check-in and late checkout, when available • Complimentary Wi-Fi • Virtuoso amenity

SPOTLIGHT ON: OCEANIA CRUISES

PEAK-SEASON PREP

Get excited now for next summer in Alaska.

SUMMER IS PRIME TIME in Alaska: The wildlife is active, quiet coastal towns come alive, and daylight stretches late into the evening. In 2027, Oceania Cruises' 1,250-passenger *Oceania Riviera* will sail a series of 7- to 20-night Alaskan itineraries, introducing travelers to the state's wilderness, history, and Indigenous cultures. The line's Culinary Discovery Tours bring Alaska's flavors to life, while its Luxury of Choice program lets cruisers tailor their at-sea experience with either complimentary onboard wine or beer, or an additional shore excursion credit. Here are three ways Oceania Cruises shines in the Land of the Midnight Sun.

Intimate Perspectives

Departing from Seattle, Whittier, or Vancouver, B.C., *Oceania Riviera* calls on a collection of both iconic and lesser-known Alaskan destinations, from Kodiak to Ketchikan. Shore excursions lean into the novel and niche: Cruisers can meet a **Tlingit totem-pole carver** in the Indigenous-owned port of Klawock, tour a peony farm in Homer, and, in the tucked-away town of Wrangell, follow a naturalist along Anan Creek to watch brown bears fish for salmon. But the line doesn't skip the classics – in Skagway, for example, passengers venture into the surrounding rainforest to visit a dog musher's camp, while in Juneau, helicopter rides alight on Mendenhall Glacier for treks with mountaineering experts.

Onboard Enrichment

Cruisers also take in Alaska's majesty from their suites – nearly 70 percent of which have private verandas – as *Oceania Riviera* sails past glacial fjords and along wild coastlines. At-sea activities include painting lessons with the ship's artist-in-residence, marine detox wraps in the holistic spa, and hands-on cooking courses in The Culinary Center. Four specialty restaurants let passengers choose from French fare at Jacques (named after legendary Oceania Cruises executive culinary advisor Jacques Pépin), Italian at Toscana, Polo Grill steaks, or fresh **Alaskan king salmon** and reindeer summer sausage during nightly chef's market dinners in the Terrace Café.

A Taste of Alaska

With its culinary-focused shore excursions, Oceania Cruises is made for food lovers. In Ketchikan, cruisers head to Hump Island Oyster Company to sample **briny bivalves** and tour the farm with one of the line's chef-instructors before returning to the ship for a seafood-centric cooking class. It's one of dozens of Culinary Discovery Tours, intimate outings (capped at 18 passengers) that also feature market visits, garden tours, and memorable meals.



Oceania Riviera en route to Skagway.

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La Casa de la Playa

Playa del Carmen, Mexico

This adults-only boutique hotel offering 63 suites captures the essence of contemporary Mexico.



This renowned hotel has been recognized by *Forbes Travel Guide* with Five-Star ratings for both the hotel and Muluk Spa for three consecutive years. Enjoy tailor-made experiences through the Exclusively Your Way concept, featuring personalized butler service, signature menus created by celebrated chefs and privileged access to Xcaret's parks and hotels.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:

Up to a \$150 spa and dining or yacht rental credit per stay.



Six Senses Rome

Rome, Italy

Retreat to this urban oasis in the historic heart of the Eternal City, and enjoy beautiful courtyard or cityscape views.



During your stay, sink into tranquility at Six Senses Spa. Embrace wellness with personalized facials, signature body massages, biohacking, sound therapy, and more. Stay in one of 96 elegantly designed rooms and suites that celebrate the city's rich heritage. Relax on the rooftop terrace with 360-degree views of the iconic skyline.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:

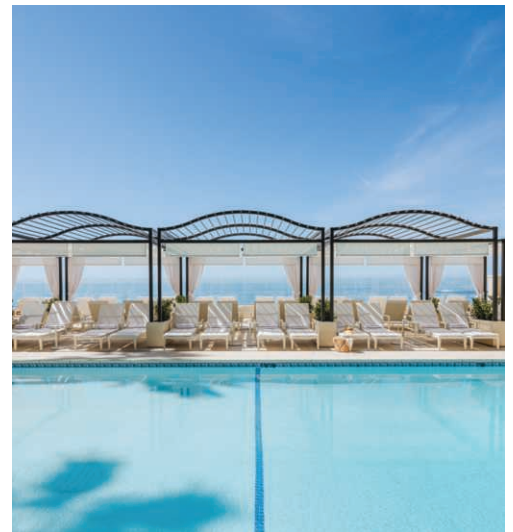
Up to a \$300 dining credit per stay.



Surf & Sand Laguna Beach

Laguna Beach, California

Reinvigorate your senses at a haven shaped by the rhythm of the ocean's waves.



At the edge of land and sea, fall asleep to the soothing sounds of the Pacific and wake as first light moves across sea and sky. Lavish rooms and suites balance coastal ease with contemporary design, inviting natural light, ocean views, and Laguna's quiet serenity into the heart of your stay.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:

\$100 resort credit per stay.



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SPOTLIGHT ON: TAHITI

SOUTH PACIFIC SPLENDOR

Find romance, adventure, culture, and so much more in The Islands of Tahiti.

PRISTINE BEACHES, turquoise lagoons, overwater bungalows — those familiar, idyllic features only scratch the surface of what awaits in The Islands of Tahiti. Across 118 islands in five archipelagoes, there are verdant mountains to climb, archaeological sites to see, and traditional barbecues to savor, all surrounded by the world's largest marine protected area, a sanctuary for snorkeling, diving, whale-watching, and surfing. Whether you're seeking romance, family bonding, or adventure, it's easy to access paradise: An eight-hour overnight flight from Los Angeles means it's sandals on the ground in time for a swim before lunch.

Tahiti for Two

Sunsets that melt into the ocean, picnics on deserted motu (islets), bungalows that hover over calm lagoons — it makes sense that Tahiti is synonymous with honeymoons. But many more of the islands' experiences touch the soul to leave a lasting impression. Aquatic farms offer opportunities to see how pearl farmers forage the ocean in search of the **precious black gems** (couples can even dive for one as a keepsake). Tahitian dance shows cultivate a sacred tradition through drum-driven spectacle. And food tours across Moorea showcase the island's bright flavors, from coconut-marinated *poisson cru* to pork steamed in an *'ahima'a* (underground oven).

Family-Friendly Island Time

Former Bora Bora honeymooners have been known to return years later to share the magic with their children. By sea or by land, outfitters braid adventure with education, focusing on natural wonder and conservation. Within the waters of Tainui Atea, families can swim between motu over shallow corals, take a **lagoon safari** by glass-bottomed boat, or cruise near humpback whales. On land, four-wheel-drive vehicles climb volcanic peaks, and ropes courses thread the tree canopy, both offering tropic bird's-eye views of the isles.

Adventure Everywhere

The islands of Tahiti definitely have a wild side, best seen on the less-traveled archipelagoes. In the Austral Islands, some 30 caves bore into oceanfront cliffs on Rurutu, offering treks among stalactites and stalagmites backdropped by the surging ocean. The Tuamotu Islands' Fakarava Atoll draws divers to swim alongside manta rays or witness its famed "wall" of gray reef sharks. And hikers and divers can check into family-run guesthouses in the Gambier Islands to **summit Mount Auorotini** and explore vibrant coral reefs seen by few others.

From top: Tahiti's version of honeymoon suites, a family snorkeling moment, and Bora Bora's iconic Mount Otemanu.



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Presidente InterContinental Cozumel Resort & Spa

Cozumel, Mexico

Explore the underwater world, just outside this resort located beside one of the world's largest coral reef systems.



Experience scuba diving and snorkeling adventures led by PADI-certified instructors who guide you into the ocean to discover coral formations, shipwrecks, and thriving marine life. Receive a complimentary fifth night when you travel by December 20, 2026. Plus, receive a double upgrade when you stay seven or more nights in select rooms.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:

Up to a \$200 resort credit per stay.



Sofitel Frankfurt Opera

Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Stay at this haven of exquisite design and extraordinary service, just steps from premier shops and boutiques.



Designed to delight and soothe, ultra-spacious rooms and suites exude understated opulence. Sumptuous jewel-toned fabrics, airy views, and large marble bathrooms invite total relaxation. From carefully curated artworks to Diptyque bath products, this chic retreat is the ideal place to rejuvenate. Receive your third night free on stays starting October 5, 2026.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:

\$100 hotel credit per stay.



The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman

Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

Immerse yourself in elegance at the Caribbean's only *Forbes Travel Guide* Triple Five-Star hotel.



Indulge in the culinary artistry of six restaurants, including Blue by Eric Ripert. Discover personalized wellness rituals at the reimagined Ritz-Carlton Spa, play a round of golf, and savor spectacular sunsets from oceanfront residential suites overlooking Seven Mile Beach. Stay four or more nights by March 31, 2027, to enjoy up to 25 percent off.

VIRTUOSO AMENITY:

\$100 resort credit per stay.



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SPOTLIGHT ON: ZAGREB

CREATIVE ENDEAVORS

To tap into the contagious energy of Croatia's artsy capital city, start with these local-approved adventures.

Culture Fix

Zagreb's 50-plus museums range from quietly canonical to delightfully quirky. Virtuoso travel advisors can arrange private guided tours at many of the city's major institutions, including Mestrovic Atelier – the baroque Upper Town former home of famed modern sculptor and architect Ivan Mestrovic – and Klovicevi Dvori Gallery, which showcases international masters such as Pablo Picasso alongside **contemporary Croatian artists**. Between stops, stroll through the city center to explore its many street murals and sculptures, then stick around after dark for DJ sets and film screenings.

Coffee Time

Every Saturday morning, locals dress up and settle into cafés around town for *spica*, an iconic coffee ritual and unhurried catch-up with friends. Steps from Cvjetni Square, Cogito's baristas brew **terroir-driven coffees** with beans roasted in-house. The lush terrace at Kavana Palainovka, one of the city's oldest cafés, is the perfect place for an espresso in a charming atmosphere.

Signature Style

In Zagreb, boutiques spotlight the city's laid-back fashion and time-honored wares. At Garderoba on Marticeva Street in the design district, travelers can browse minimalist, sophisticated pieces for women with sparkling wine in hand; next door, A Shoo sells handcrafted leather shoes, belts, and bags to order. Among the homegrown and international brands lining popular **Illica Street**, travelers can find local treasures, such as hand-embroidered contemporary fashion inspired by Croatian heritage made by Vesna Milkovic and her family at Etno Mara.

One-of-a-Kind Dining

Croatian cuisine pulls from two distinct worlds: the Dalmatian Coast's fresh seafood and sun-drenched produce, and central Europe's hearty meat dishes and rich cheeses. Zagreb's best restaurants seamlessly marry the two influences with **innovative flair**. At Michelin-starred Dubravkin Put, for example, an island of langoustine carpaccio blankets inky-black cuttlefish risotto. And at Torero, a dessert of cheesecake that's served in an edible sugar-glass orb is a proper grand finale to a dinner of beef tartare, Adriatic anchovies, and mushrooms from Medvednica.



Twilight in Zagreb's Gric Park.

SPOTLIGHT ON: SEA CLOUD CRUISES

FAIR WINDS

Life's a breeze on these classic yacht voyages.



DAYS AT SEA UNFOLD BEAUTIFULLY aboard Sea Cloud Cruises' fleet of tall-masted sailing yachts, as travelers dive into the Mediterranean for a late-morning swim, relax on teak chaises under the afternoon sun, and watch crew members climb the rigging to unfurl billowing white sails. From Costa Rica's Pacific coast to Spain's Canary Islands, hidden harbors and intimate ports await, as do singular experiences ashore. Travelers can see what the golden age of yachting is all about on these new-for-2027 itineraries.

Boutique British Isles

The 136-passenger *Sea Cloud Spirit* seeks out the stuff of legend on an eight-night, Edinburgh-to-Dublin sailing. Skillful navigation along Scotland's rugged coastlines leads to on-land explorations of medieval castle ruins in the Orkney Islands and the Outer Hebrides' **Neolithic stone circles**. Ensuing excursions in Ireland visit Belfast's *Titanic* museum and the towering basalt columns of Giant's Causeway. At sea, this special music-themed Cultivated Journey features daily performances of British pop songs and Irish ballads – the perfect prelude for a Dublin pub crawl – played on the ship's Steinway piano. *Departure: June 28, 2027.*

Insider's Adriatic

An exclusive yachting-harbor passage past La Serenissima's Piazza San Marco sets the tone for *Sea Cloud II*'s seven-night journey destined for Dubrovnik. South of Venice, the 94-passenger ship fits right in at **summer yachting hot spots** along Croatia's Dalmatian Coast, including secluded Sibenik to explore waterfall-lush Krka National Park. *Sea Cloud II* also moors near the islands of Korcula, Hvar, and Vis for opportunities to visit family-owned vineyards, swim in secluded coves, and meander through medieval Old Towns. One full day at sea calls for a session in the ship's sauna and meals showcasing fresh Adriatic Sea catches paired with Istrian wines. *Departure: August 30, 2027.*

Hidden Caribbean

Sea Cloud II slips by the megaships en route to the Caribbean's secret beaches, sheltered bays, and seldom-seen ports during a seven-night cruise round-trip from Bridgetown, Barbados. Immersive shore experiences have travelers snorkeling through kaleidoscopic Horseshoe Reef in uninhabited Tobago Cays, bird-watching along Dominica's mangrove-rich Indian River, crossing treetop bridges at Martinique's Jardin de Balata, and trekking **rainforest trails** beneath Saint Lucia's twin Piton spires. At-sea stretches call for sipping local rums, kicking back at exclusive beach barbecues, and soaking up the Caribbean's saturated sunsets. *Departure: December 7, 2027.*

From top: An Outer Hebrides excursion, sunset at sea, and *Sea Cloud II* in Saint Lucia.

SPOTLIGHT ON: ISTRIA

TURN UP THE CHARM

Croatia's Istrian peninsula is a case study in slow travel.

CROATIA'S NORTHWESTERN PENINSULA of Istria is compact enough to drive across in only a couple of hours, but a laid-back pace is the best way to explore its storybook villages, rolling vineyards, and dreamy beach coves. A three-day stay is ample time for a proper introduction to Istria's idyllic scenery and hyperlocal cuisine. Here's how to make the most of it.

Check In, Get Inspired

Perched among olive groves and cypress trees near the town of Buje, the San Canzian Hotel & Residences has the feel of a private Istrian estate, with its clusters of terra-cotta-roofed stone buildings dotting the **peaceful countryside**. After settling into one of its 26 rustic yet modern rooms, head to the on-site farm-to-table restaurant, Luciano, for Istrian cheese platters and bowls of black truffle pasta. A ten-minute drive west leads to the medieval hilltop town and artists' colony of Groznjan, home to galleries and ateliers tucked into narrow stone alleys.

All Roads Lead to Wine

Nicknamed the Tuscany of Croatia, the Istrian peninsula is blessed with mineral-rich terroir that yields distinctive, aromatic wines across dozens of boutique and family-owned vineyards. Winery-hopping is a breeze: From San Canzian, drive 20 minutes south to the Fakin family's winery for pours of malvazija Istarska on a panoramic terrace overlooking the Mirna River Valley. A 20-minute drive southeast, the Benvenuti brothers' new hillside cellar hugs the slopes of Santa Elisabetta, where their **signature teran grapes** have grown for decades. On the way back to the hotel, the family-run Ponte Porton restaurant puts Istria's culinary staples on beautiful display: plates full of hand-rolled *fuzi* pasta and game ragù, slow-braised beef cheek topped with dried plum sauce, and pistachio lava cake with vanilla ice cream.

Picturesque Pedaling

Stretching from Istria to Trieste, Italy (and threading through Slovenia), the 76-mile-long Parenzana cycling trail follows the ghost of a narrow-gauge Austro-Hungarian railway. Virtuoso travel advisors can arrange **guided bike excursions** along some of the path's 48 Croatian miles, winding over rolling hills and cutting through olive groves before arriving in the quaint village of Livade, Istria's truffle heartland. Travelers can try some of the local delicacy — shaved over tagliolini or folded into scrambled eggs — during lunch at Zigante Tartufi, a restaurant named for the hunter whose dog unearthed the world's largest white truffle near the village in 1999.

From top: Golden hour at the San Canzian Hotel & Residences, Mirna River Valley's terraced vineyards, and a scenic pit stop on the Parenzana trail.



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Nobu Hotel Marrakech

Marrakech, Morocco

Stay at this sophisticated city escape where Moroccan heritage meets the iconic Nobu lifestyle.



Step into a contemporary sanctuary where Japanese minimalism meets the vibrant soul of Marrakech. Retreat to serene, spacious suites, indulge in chef Nobu Matsuhisa's award-winning cuisine, and toast the sunset with handcrafted cocktails at the Rooftop Garden overlooking the Atlas Mountains.

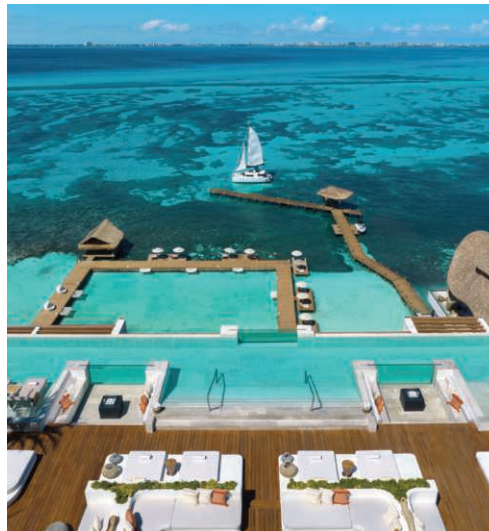
VIRTUOSO AMENITY:
\$100 hotel credit per stay.

NOBU HOTEL
MARRAKECH

Impression Isla Mujeres

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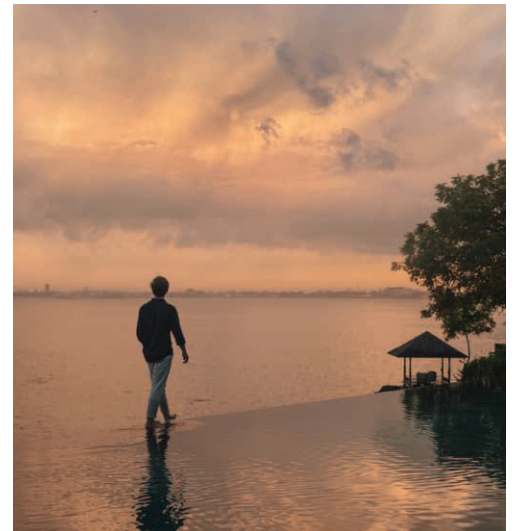
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IMPRESSION
ISLA MUJERES

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FIRST-TIME CALLER

Dialing into Kenya's safari scene delivers a savanna's worth of surprises.

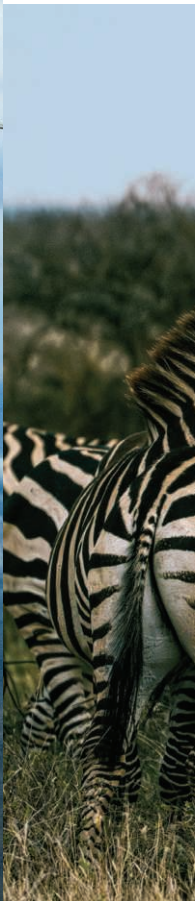
BY SARAH GREAVES-GABBADON

Photography by Korena Bolding



A flamboyance of flamingos
and (opposite) Elewana guide
Raphael "Rapha" Gahaile.







FROM OUR BUSH PLANE,

Kenya's Tsavo West National Park presents as a massive expanse of sheared wild grass, punctuated with muddy brown water holes like beads of spilled chocolate milk. But on the ground, trundling along a dusty path in a Land Cruiser, things feel much more ... arid. Black volcanic rocks,

scrubby acacia trees, and tangles of brown bushes line the road, their spiky limbs promising instant pain should a rogue elbow out the window brush against them.

"Simama!" Our safari director, Peter Githaka, shouts the Swahili word for "stop" to the driver.

At first, I don't see a thing. And then a zebra emerges from the bush, its soot-black hooves delicately navigating the stone-riddled turf. More of them follow, trotting across the road in a black-and-white, camouflaged dazzle (the term for a group of zebras, inspired by the optical illusion their stripes create), their tails swishing behind them. I hear someone let out a joyful, childlike squeal, and I realize that person is me.

CONFESSON: I CAN APPRECIATE the animal kingdom, but seeing the "big five" has never ranked high on my list. I like my hotels less "rustic camp," more "aggressively air-conditioned." I love art and fashion and could easily lean into Lagos shopping or Dakar gallery-hopping, meeting the West African people from whom (via the Caribbean) I'm descended. So no one's more surprised than me that, on my second day in Kenya, I'm snapping an irrational number of photos of a Masai giraffe walking toward our four-wheel drive, graceful yet ungainly, its knobbed head bobbling above the tree line like a twin-masted ship.

If there's an ideal first-timer's safari, it's this one – a ten-day Micato Safaris tour across Kenya, the country where the concept of a trip to observe animals in their natural habitat first originated in the early 1900s. Our itinerary, which will take us from Tsavo West north to the high-altitude Laikipia, then southwest to the Maasai Mara, is designed to capitalize on the country's diverse ecosystems (lush forests, dry scrublands, windswept savannas), giving us the best chance of spotting some of

From far left: Micato safari
director Peter Githaka,
Tsavo from above, and a
Maasai Mara dazzle.



the 25,000 animal species that live here. And if there's any operator fit to turn a tentative safari-goer into a total convert, it's Micato. The family-run, Nairobi-founded outfitter (which leads safaris across East and southern Africa) took its first group of guests – a family of five – to the Maasai Mara in 1966. It was the first safari company to hire local guides, and today it's the only one that provides each of its small-group or private tours with a dedicated safari director throughout the entire journey.

During the month before my departure, Micato's team dispatched a steady stream of pre-trip swag to my Miami home: packing lists, Kenyan coffee, reading materials, a wheeled duffel. And even though I arrived in Nairobi after midnight, Peter picked me up at the airport. He ordered a late-night dinner to my room at Hemingways Nairobi, where a safari hat, jacket, and prestamped postcards were waiting for me. The next morning, Jane Pinto, who founded Micato Safaris with her late husband, Felix, was waiting for me in the lobby. "We're delighted to have you here," she said, hugging me. She greets every Nairobi-originating guest when she can. It's a tally that's somewhere in the tens of thousands.

ON THE LAIKIPIA PLATEAU, a sprawling, 6,500-foot-high wilderness in the Mount Kenya foothills, a group of about 20 Maasai women and warriors join us during a dinner at the Ol Jogi Wildlife Conservancy. The women dance in formation, rocking back and forth, making the large, beaded collars around their necks bounce and jingle in sync. The young male warriors jump in place, springing effortlessly upward, as if their heads are attached to invisible bungee cords anchored in the night sky. They're all trying to leap the highest – a centuries-old demonstration of fitness and masculinity designed to impress unmarried Maasai women. A warrior steps forward to offer a benediction, and we chant "A-yee! A-yee! A-yee!" in response, folding our outstretched fingers into our palms and drawing our hands toward our bodies to catch the Maasai blessings.

We're the only guests at Ol Jogi, an over-the-top, former family home surrounded by a 58,000-acre exclusive-use conservancy. To call this any kind of a game camp is a stretch: Handmade wood furniture fills my peaked-roof suite; Hermès toiletries rest on the bathroom counter near ornate stained-glass windows. Just outside is a water hole, where zebras, giraffes, and elephants often swing by for a drink.

Amos Tininah, a Maasai elder, leads our twice-daily game drives around the reserve, an expanse that's home to lions, rhinos, and 20 percent of the continent's 3,000 endangered Grévy's zebras, among other marquee species. He shares facts about the nomadic Maasai people (they believe God lives in nature, not church), dispenses wise words liberally ("You're never alone with a fire"), and offers up uses for dried elephant dung (if you soak it in water, you can use the resulting liquid to soothe a sunburn – I'll pass). When my companions tease me about my early

bedtime, he reassures me that time is understood through natural rhythms. His wisdom and wit make him the "funckle" everyone wants to be around.

My West African DNA is traceable to the countries enslaved people were taken from to labor on Caribbean sugar plantations. On two previous visits to West Africa, though, I hadn't felt the kinship I'd expected. But here, in Ol Jogi's hammam, as the kind, silver-haired Miss Alice scrubs, buffs, and anoints my skin until it looks like polished mahogany, I reveal worries I'd share only with a close friend, and



At Ol Jogi, a suite with a view
and Maasai moves.





Clockwise from top left:
Members of the Chui Mamas, a
women-led conservation group
in Loisaba; a Maasai Mara cross-
ing; Ol Jogi guide Amos Tininah;
a cheetah in the Mara; junior
Maasai warriors near Tsavo
West; Loisaba calves;
the Maasai's traditional beaded
crown; and a southern masked
weaver. Opposite: A coffee break
on Mount Silali.



I've spent six nights
of my life in a tent
and always swore there wouldn't
be a seventh, but I make
an exception for this.



I start to wonder if Ancestry.com got it wrong. The next day when we say goodbye, I hug her as tightly as I would my own mother. Tears stream down my cheeks as we drive away, and I want to believe that it's some rogue genetic strand of connection that makes me feel so at home here.

PETER PROVES HIMSELF to be the ultimate fixer: a trove of knowledge, a master of surprising and delighting. A proud Kenyan with a penchant for dad jokes, he's been with Micato for 13 years, and when he's not explaining the mating habits of impalas during a game drive (one male can have a harem of up to 50 females), he's on the phone with Micato's "mission control" in Nairobi, fine-tuning logistics, coordinating sundowners and dinners, and having the sneakers I'd forgotten back in the city waiting for me at our second stop. Every ask is met with a confident and cheerful "100 percent!" or "Sawa sawa!" – the Swahili phrase for "All good." One morning at Elewana Loisaba Tent-ed Camp, we wake to word of a helicopter waiting. The surprise excursion takes us over the East African Rift Valley, above a swooping flamboyance of flamingos in flight and crocodiles swimming below – all before touching down for coffee served on the edge of a caldera at Mount Silali.

Laikipia's 90-square-mile Loisaba Conservancy sits in the middle of a critical elephant migration corridor, some 20 miles north of the equator. Staff operate a black rhino sanctuary and regularly dispatch anti-poaching units. Loisaba employs more than half of the area's Indigenous communities, including the semi-nomadic Samburu herders, who are closely related to the Maasai people. Inside my canvas tent, with its polished hardwood floors, my queen-size bed's headboard is made of artfully arranged stripped branches. The shower is bigger than my entire bathroom at home. I've spent six nights of my life in a tent and always swore there wouldn't be a seventh, but I can make an exception for this.

Our lanky, twentysomething Samburu guide, Raphael "Rapha" Gahaile, inspires my envy with his scarlet-and-black-checkered *shuka* (wrap); stacks of intricate, colorful beaded strands around his neck, chest, waist, and wrists; and headpiece made of glass beads, chicken feathers, and multicolored faux roses. Over a sundowner on our first evening, Rapha helps me tie my own *shuka* like his. "We're twins," I pronounce. He laughs.

The feathers on Rapha's headpiece flap furiously in the breeze as he navigates our Land Rover across the green, hilly landscape. Impala harems and zebra dazzles



Loisaba royalty and (opposite)
the acacia-dotted Kenyan bush.





dot the savanna around us. Rapha sees something the rest of us don't and accelerates. We bounce along to a mound of ocher earth; a male lion lies on top, less than 30 feet away. Nobody says a word. "Soon he'll start calling to other lions to join him," Peter whispers, as we stare, slack-jawed. Right now, though, he seems bored: He yawns and then, like a giant housecat, settles his chin on his crossed front paws. For about ten minutes (which feel like an eternity), I don't move, my body tense, barely daring to breathe. And, then, just as we collectively decide to head back to the lodge, the lion gives us what we've been waiting for.

He turns his jaw to the sky and, his rib cage contracting and expanding, lets loose a series of roars that vibrate in my chest. Goosebumps blossom on my forearms. If he wanted to, this beast could make supper of me before I gather enough sense to flee. Even though Peter tells us that lions are lazy, opportunistic hunters, *this* is why they're the undisputed kings of the savanna. As we head back to camp, a blurry moon rises in the darkening sky. I reach for my *shuka* and snuggle into it, overcome and overwhelmed. *Sawa sawa*.



An Ol Jogi sundowner.

Quintessential Kenya

Micato Safaris showcases Kenya's diverse landscapes year-round on a series of small-group departures (capped at 12 people) or bespoke private itineraries like the one in this story, hopping between lodges, tented camps, and exclusive-use reserves via bush plane, a safari director in tow. On a 13-day, round-trip-from-Nairobi safari, for example, travelers spend time in Tsavo West, Laikipia, and the Maasai Mara. Every Nairobi-based trip includes a visit to meet local schoolkids at the Harambee Community Centre, run

by Micato's education-focused nonprofit, AmericaShare. *Departures: Any day through 2027.*

From Laikipia to the Maasai Mara, **African Travel, Inc.**'s eight-day, round-trip-from-Nairobi private safari complements game drives with visits to a local women's beading collective and a Samburu village. For a cinematic afternoon, guides can set up a picnic for two on a secluded kopje (rocky outcropping) made famous in the 1985 film *Out of Africa*. *Departures: Any day through 2027.*

A seven-day, round-trip-from-Nairobi private safari with **andBeyond** includes three nights each in the Maasai Mara and Laikipia. In the latter, travelers stay at the new 14-suite and Beyond Suyian Lodge, set within its own 44,000-acre conservancy, which is best explored via game drives, horseback safaris, and walks alongside camels with local herders. *Departures: Any day through 2027.*

Four days in the Maasai Mara's Mara Triangle at **Wilderness'** newest tented camp, Wilderness

Mara, lead to early-morning game drives along the Mara River, afternoon bird-watching excursions, and visits to a nearby Maasai village. The nine-day, Nairobi-to-Arusha, Tanzania, private safari – designed to keep travelers away from some of the area's more crowded corners – adds a few days at the company's mobile camp in Tanzania's Serengeti, searching for wildebeests, zebras, and gazelles across the plains on foot, by four-wheel drive, and in a hot-air balloon. *Departures: Any day through 2027.* ♡



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CHECK, MATE



London's thrilling
dining scene outplays its peers.

BY ADAM ERACE
Photography by Lisa Linder

Khao Bird's chef Luke Larsson
and (opposite) mountain tofu.

THE V&A

East Storehouse museum, a short walk from London's Hackney Wick train station, holds a commemorative menu from the 1951 Dickens Dinner. The evening was part of the Festival of Britain, a summerlong pick-me-up for postwar-weary Brits, who feasted that Tuesday night on Stilton, fruit jellies, roasted sirloin with potatoes and pickled walnuts, and the bacon-and-oyster snack known as angels on horseback.

I'd planned to inspect this historic culinary document through the museum's Order an Object program, which lets visitors privately view items from the collection. Unfortunately, there were no appointments left by the time I tried to book – I'd been too busy making dinner reservations in what I contend is the world's greatest restaurant city.

You read that correctly. The best restaurant city in the world is not New York. It's not Bangkok or Bologna, Mexico City or Montréal. It's not even Paris. Those are all fabulous places to eat, places that fill you physically and spiritually, and I've eaten my way through them all. Which is why I can tell you, with not a small amount of confidence: None of them are London.

We'll get into why, but for now, lunch. Rejected by the museum, I pivoted to a last-minute booking. It was Easter Sunday, and, like Jesus, the perky pink and purple hyacinths were risen, from garden beds in front of a just-hatched Hackney restaurant called Teal.





Rambutan's Jaffna-style grilled king prawns and sidewalk seating.

The Shaston Arms' salt cod and tomatoes and (opposite), its daily card.





Despite the calming blue-green drenches of the cottage-core interior, chef-owner Sally Abé didn't name the restaurant (her first) for the color, but for a breed of wild duck. Said fowl did not appear on the menu. Instead, printed on a saffron-gold card, I found Stilton, fruit jelly, roasted *venison* with potatoes and pickled walnuts, and the bacon-and-oyster snack known as angels on horseback.

Like a vintage tailor, Abé recuts heirloom recipes for modern silhouettes. Beyond the 1951 throwbacks (the Stilton appeared in the "Locket's savoury," melted on toast with pears and cress; the fruit jelly glimmered in a rhubarb fantasia), mussels and sea beans arrived from the Cornish coast, and garlicky snails surfed a canoe of bone marrow, a pairing documented in the 1723 *Cooks and Confectioners Dictionary*. Earl Grey custard streamed from a dainty flowered pitcher, covering a raspberry-marshmallow teacake. Last came the penny lick, a thimble-size chalice of fragrant vanilla

ice cream. Dating from the Victorian era, when street vendors sold them to children, it now costs a pound (which Teal donates to Hackney Foodbank), and unlike the urchins who contracted tuberculosis from the communally used glasses, each guest gets their own cup.

Elsewhere in London, heritage British recipes were afoot. In the mauve clam-shell banquettes at Rosi, The Beaumont Mayfair hotel's glamorous new art deco treat, everyone seemed to be eating the exquisitely constructed chicken Wellington. Another iteration of chicken and pastry appeared in a savory, tarragon-scented pie at Brasserie Angelica, a February debut in Fitzrovia, along with an outrageous cheese-and-smoked-onion tart. And notwithstanding last year's retirement of founding chef Fergus Henderson, St. John and its cold roasted Hereford beef with punchy horseradish dressing hadn't lost a step.

"I think when times get tough," Abé told me, "people look for things that make them feel a bit warm and fuzzy." As I was leaving Teal, my server dashed after me with a copy of the menu, marked in black Sharpie with a thank-you note from the chef.

IF YOU'D LIKE to debate that London is the world's best restaurant city, please come find me at The Shaston Arms, a Soho pub with lustrous burgundy drapes and bags of chips hanging by the Chartreuse. We'll share chef Sam Andrews' béchamel-cloaked *gnudi* with wild garlic and toasted hazelnuts and the roasted

poussin cacio e pepe – and wait, should we get the ethereal tallow-fried onion rings too? After lunch, I'll graciously accept your apology.

London preserves and remixes its own culinary traditions – and the spaces in which they happen – like nowhere else, whether it's Teal's postmodern penny lick or a pub like Shaston, a nightlife icon from a grittier, bygone Soho. "Pubs are part of the fabric of English culture," said Joe Grossman, Shaston's new owner. "In a time where there's so much volatility and unease in the world, the very nature of the pub and what it stands for – a place of community – is more important than ever."

I considered this over drinks, another thing London does particularly well, in the former MI5 and MI6 storage vault under the Raffles London hotel at Winston Churchill's Old War Office. The manager put a sticker over my phone's camera before ushering me into what is now The Spy Bar, where I sat in splendid view of the silver Aston Martin DB5 from *No Time to Die*. As a spy thriller and mystery nut, I was on board for 007 cosplay, but I couldn't bring myself to order a vesper when there was an elevated Miami Vice on the menu.

Later that night, after catching Cynthia Erivo's one-woman *Dracula* in the West End, I retreated underground like one of the count's minions to Nellie's Tavern. The louche lounge dwells beneath the main dining room of Simpson's in the Strand, a circa-1848 gustatory multiplex resurrected by restaurateur Jeremy King last winter.

A portrait of Dame Nellie Melba, a Royal Opera diva, guards the mirrored room, lit with brass sconces. The Cher of her era, Nellie's reputation for numerous farewell performances inspired my Farewell Without Bitterness cocktail, a nutty amber concoction of sherry, rum, pear brandy, and sesame honey. Charles Dickens and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle probably drank something very different here during Simpson's heyday, but a certain psychic tether still connects us. While the writers, politicians, and other characters who haunted these repositories of history and hedonism may be long gone, their preservation means we can still eat and drink in a London that exists in the past, in the stories we tell ourselves.

THE ACCORDION STOREFRONT windows at Rambutan unfold to the chaos of Borough Market. I sat at the bar nibbling a sizzling pork-neck skewer, ferocious with green sambal, and conjured a vision of Sri Lanka: the charcoal smoke and snapping fire in the open kitchen, the pools of shadow offering respite from the sun. Rambutan, however, could not exist anywhere but here.

Chef-owner Cynthia Shanmugalingam grew up just outside Birmingham, and her recipes are manifestations of her Sri Lankan English identity. The ocher coconut curry tingled with black-peppery Jaffna spice blend, but the hunks of ewe mutton and slouching half eggplant were British. *Kottu roti*, a saucy, chili-battered



Nellie's Tavern, at historic Theatre
District staple Simpson's in the Strand.



number of chopped and stir-fried flatbread, came packed with deposits of Devon crab.

This expression of faraway flavors through British-grown ingredients forms another pillar of distinction for London, where 40 percent of the population is foreign-born. Where else can you have a gorgeous Sri Lankan British curry one day, then an equally thrilling northern Thai British one (with hanger steak and magnolia petals, no less) the next? I found Khao Bird freshly transplanted from a residency above Borough Market's Globe Tavern to a permanent home in Soho. "British food has outgrown a lot of the old stereotypes of dry roasts and minced-beef pies," said chef-owner Luke Larsson, whose tangerine Mohawk flashed against the stainless steel of the open kitchen like a tropical butterfly. "If a salad is made entirely from British ingredients, it may be Thai-inspired, but in my eyes it's still British food."

His irresistible fusions include mutton fries – blocky chips smothered in braised Burmese-style mutton, sour cream, and frizzled Thai basil – and a crunchy chickpea tofu that dazzled with ginger flower and *mah kwean* chili crisp. Darkened with Indonesian sweet soy, the *khao soi* with barbecued chicken and thick, chewy egg noodles was the best version of that classic I've ever eaten.

I had my last dinner in London at Impala, about a week after the restaurant opened and before locals fully caught on to chef-owner Meedu Saad's white-crab kibbe bundled in minty shiso leaves, grilled squid salad raging with Tunisian harissa, and dagger of a date-and-pistachio tart. Impala is nominally an Egyptian restaurant, named for the red '64 sedan Saad used to kick around in during summers in his ancestral homeland. But its interests and predilections meander through the region like ancient prophets.

"London is a city that has benefited massively from immigrants sharing their culture and cuisine. As a mixed, second-generation immigrant, I feel that for a restaurant to feel like it's rooted in London, it should have these influences," he told me, while spooning fig sauce over my molasses-lacquered duck. "It's not necessarily British cuisine, but London cuisine."

When England throws its next jubilee, perhaps once the world is finally hungover from another war, the government should task Saad with the menu. Because Impala's will be the one held up as the standard-bearing example of this era's British cooking: audacious yet thoughtful, rooted in and reverential of land and heritage, but never at the cost of a broader worldview. If that sounds like a prescription for the planet in general, well, we should expect nothing less from the greatest restaurant city in the world.



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The Horse Guards Parade grounds in Saint James's Park.

London Calling

Once the domain of Winston Churchill, the Old War Office has been transformed into **Raffles London at The OWO**, with 120 luxe rooms, some of which are named for the women spies in the Old Lion's employ. Its robust dining options include the Bond-themed Spy Bar, espionage-themed afternoon tea, and a Mauro Colagreco restaurant. The colossal subterranean pool at its Guerlain Spa is one of a

kind in London. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

Conveniently positioned between Trafalgar Square and Saint James's Park, the brand-new **Waldorf Astoria London – Admiralty Arch** occupies a historic jewel constructed in 1912. Inside are 114 rooms, with restaurants from chefs Clare Smyth and Daniel Boulud. *Virtuoso travelers*

receive breakfast daily and a \$100 hotel credit.

The Chelsea city sister to Beaverbrook's country hotel in Surrey, **Beaverbrook Town House** exudes a splash of frivolity with its 14 suites, Japanese restaurant, and ebullient Sloane Street haunt, Sir Frank's Bar. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.*

In a posh district crowded with heritage showboats, the modernist art deco **Beaumont Mayfair** takes a quieter, almost residential approach with its 101 rooms (suites feel like full-on flats) and cozy lounges. Its recently opened Rosi features modern British cooking and, for dessert, a create-your-own-sundae card. *Virtuoso travelers receive breakfast daily and a \$100 dining credit.* 📍

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THE OTHER MED

Cruising Spain
in the off-season
reveals a local's view
of the coast.

BY DAVID SWANSON
Photography by Sofie Delauw





Plunging ahead on *Star Legend* and (opposite) Valencia Cathedral's Miguelete tower.

TRUTH

BE TOLD,

I mostly love the hot, festive – even circuslike – atmosphere of Europe’s big cities in summer, overrun as they may be. Everyone jostles for their slice of prime beach, their lick of prized gelato. But I’ve also grown fond of the quieter periods,

when I’m not competing for museum and restaurant reservations, and I can toss three coins in Rome’s Trevi Fountain without fear of smacking another traveler.

And so it was that I found myself cycling with a guide through Valencia’s Turia Garden in February. I wasn’t competing for a lane or dodging tourists. Instead, beaming sunshine got me off my ship and into shorts for a carefree pedal along this former riverbed, now a five-and-a-half-mile-long green corridor wending through the heart of the Spanish city. As our group of a dozen riders stopped to gawk at the City of Arts and Sciences’ organic, futuristic architecture, we peeled off sweaters and jackets.

It occurred to me then: With cities that average 300 sunny days a year, why *wouldn’t* you want to cruise the Spanish coast in winter? Cool-month Mediterranean cruise itineraries have traditionally been rare – every fall, the Med empties out and ships beeline to the Caribbean or head east to Asia. Until now.

WINDSTAR CRUISES didn’t set out to sail the Mediterranean in winter, the *Star Legend*’s captain, Mark Symonds, told me when I joined him on the bridge one gorgeously calm day during our nine-night journey round-trip from Barcelona, en route to Valencia. In October 2023, when the 312-passenger

ship was about to head from Europe to Israel for an inaugural season in the Middle East, war broke out. Cancellations poured in, and suddenly Windstar had empty berths to fill.

“We had quite an extensive program planned,” explained Symonds. “But with world events, it quickly became apparent that we couldn’t operate in the Middle East.” A costly gamble to redeploy the ship for a winter in the Med began with a schedule of pro forma seven-night voyages between Barcelona and Rome. But what might have been better than nothing for the cruise line turned out to be a boon for travelers. The bookings weren’t there at first, but as cruisers began extolling the pleasures of sailing to major ports in less busy months, the numbers grew – enough so that the line decided to base the *Star Legend* in Europe year-round. And since that 2023 season, the ship’s winter itineraries have diversified – now reaching as far west as Gibraltar and east to Dubrovnik.

With their relaxed ambience and sociable crews, the *Star Legend* and its svelte sister ships have been my happy homes in the Caribbean, the British Isles, and French Polynesia. I’d joined this sailing because my sights were trained on Spain, which I’d oddly overlooked for a long time. And although there’s nothing wrong with hopscotching through a region to visit multiple countries – that being one of the benefits of cruising – I rather like keeping my agenda immersed in one culture at a time. This itinerary offered a road trip by sea, as it were.

OUR FIRST PORT OF CALL, Cartagena, established an unexpected theme. When the *Star Legend* pulled into the small city’s snug natural harbor at midday, there was nary a cruise ship in sight. Cartagena seemed devoid of tourists beyond our group – instead, locals filled the bars and restaurants. I joined a walking tour that would call on five different tapas bars, with a quick detour through a narrow passage that suddenly opened onto a restored Roman theater dating back to 1 BC.

During our crawl, Cartagena’s tapas bars dished up their specialties: croquettes plumped with jamón Ibérico; a “Russian salad” of tuna, potato, and mayonnaise; ratatouille topped with a quail egg; and a *tortita de camarón* (shrimp fritter). Beer and sangria flowed at each stop, and at the last,

Pisto con huevo de codorniz
(ratatouille and quail egg)
with vermouth at Cartagena’s La Uva Jumillana.



Faro de Navidad in Cartagena
and (opposite) Granada's
Albaicín neighborhood.







El Soldadito de Plomo (The Tin Soldier), I was introduced to *café asiático* (Asian coffee), which our guide insisted could only be found in Cartagena. The drink melds Licor 43 – a local fruit-and-herb elixir – with coffee, brandy, condensed milk, lemon, and cinnamon. One sip convinced me to trade in Irish coffee forever.

In quiet Málaga, I detoured from Windstar's scheduled excursions and boarded the two-hour morning train to Granada. The town hummed at a gentle pace, hardly the hustle-bustle of a *turista* hot spot. At López-Mezquita, a wood-paneled *pastelería* founded in 1862, I ordered coffee and a *pionono*, Granada's traditional sweet: sponge cake with

A Spanish feast, clockwise from top left: A *café asiático*, Mallorcan olives, Café Sant Jaume's *Agua de Valencia*, and Pastelería López-Mezquita.

a dollop of custard and a splash of rum. I eyed ceramics, leather goods, and textiles at the Alcaicería bazaar before dashing to the Albaicín, the city's whitewashed Moorish quarter riven by a maze of cobblestoned streets and stairways. Sun-faded T-shirts and pashminas lined the shops, dark tearooms beckoned, and the scent of falafel and kebabs

A large, iconic statue of Christ the Redeemer stands with arms outstretched against a dark night sky. The statue is illuminated from below, casting a soft glow. Behind the statue, a massive display of fireworks bursts in the sky, with streaks of light in shades of yellow, orange, and green. The fireworks reflect on the water of the bay below. In the foreground, the city of Rio de Janeiro is visible, with its lights and buildings creating a vibrant backdrop. The overall scene is a celebration of the city's culture and heritage.

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wafted from small restaurants. My leisurely ascent through the warren was rewarded at the San Nicolás viewpoint, where the ocher Alhambra suddenly appeared, backdropped by the snowcapped Sierra Nevada. On the broad terrace, it was Spaniards, not gringos, who strolled arm in arm, and I wondered if there was even another American in Granada that day.

Approaching the Palacios Nazaríes – the Alhambra’s fourteenth-century jewels – after a taxi ride over, I discovered why tickets had been in short supply for a winter Wednesday: It seemed like half of Spain’s students were there on a field trip. Despite the din of teenage chatter and the selfie sessions underway, the Islamic art I’d come for gleamed: scalloped archways fronting vaulted ceilings, a courtyard fountain with a dozen spurting lions, and tilework suggesting celestial themes.

WHILE THE WINDSTAR name is most commonly associated with its trio of elegant sailing ships, the *Star Legend* belongs to the line’s sleek motor yacht class. The passengers on our crowd-free cruise seemed to be predominantly Windstar regulars, accustomed to the line’s easygoing atmosphere. On our one sea day, a galley tour, a massage, and a Beatles-themed trivia contest were fair diversions from sundeck lounging and lunching on the day’s smoked and rotisserie cuts at the breezy Star Grill. And I visited the bridge – open to guests – to scour the charts and chat with the young group of officers on duty.

Our last port was Mallorca, the largest of Spain’s Balearic Islands, which swells with European visitors in summer and cyclists in the shoulder seasons. In northern Palma, my taxi delivered me to the Ferrocarril de Sóller, a historic wooden railway that tunnels through the Serra de Tramuntana along the island’s northwest coast. While the Tramuntana’s peaks are tall enough to receive the occasional dusting of snow in winter, that day the train coursed a blue-sky journey north. Trees flush with ripe lemons brushed against the carriages as we entered the town of Sóller. From there, we transferred



Port de Sóller, Mallorca.

Even in February, the Port de Sóller beach shone, the restaurants bustled, and a few sturdy souls swam in the bay.

to another heritage tram for the short trip down to Port de Sóller, which took us – *slowly* – within mere inches of visitors lunching at outdoor cafés in the Plaça de la Constitució. Even in February, the Port de Sóller beach shone, the restaurants bustled, and a few sturdy souls swam in the bay.

I hadn’t brought my swimsuit from the ship, and I doubt I would have waded in. But back on board the *Star Legend*, I headed to my favorite place: the Jacuzzi at the bow. Many passengers seemed to miss it, so I sometimes had it to myself. Sailing out of Mallorca, I slipped into the hot tub and soaked in the view – the winter sun tucking in for the night on the port side, the island slinking away to starboard, and Barcelona somewhere out there on the horizon.



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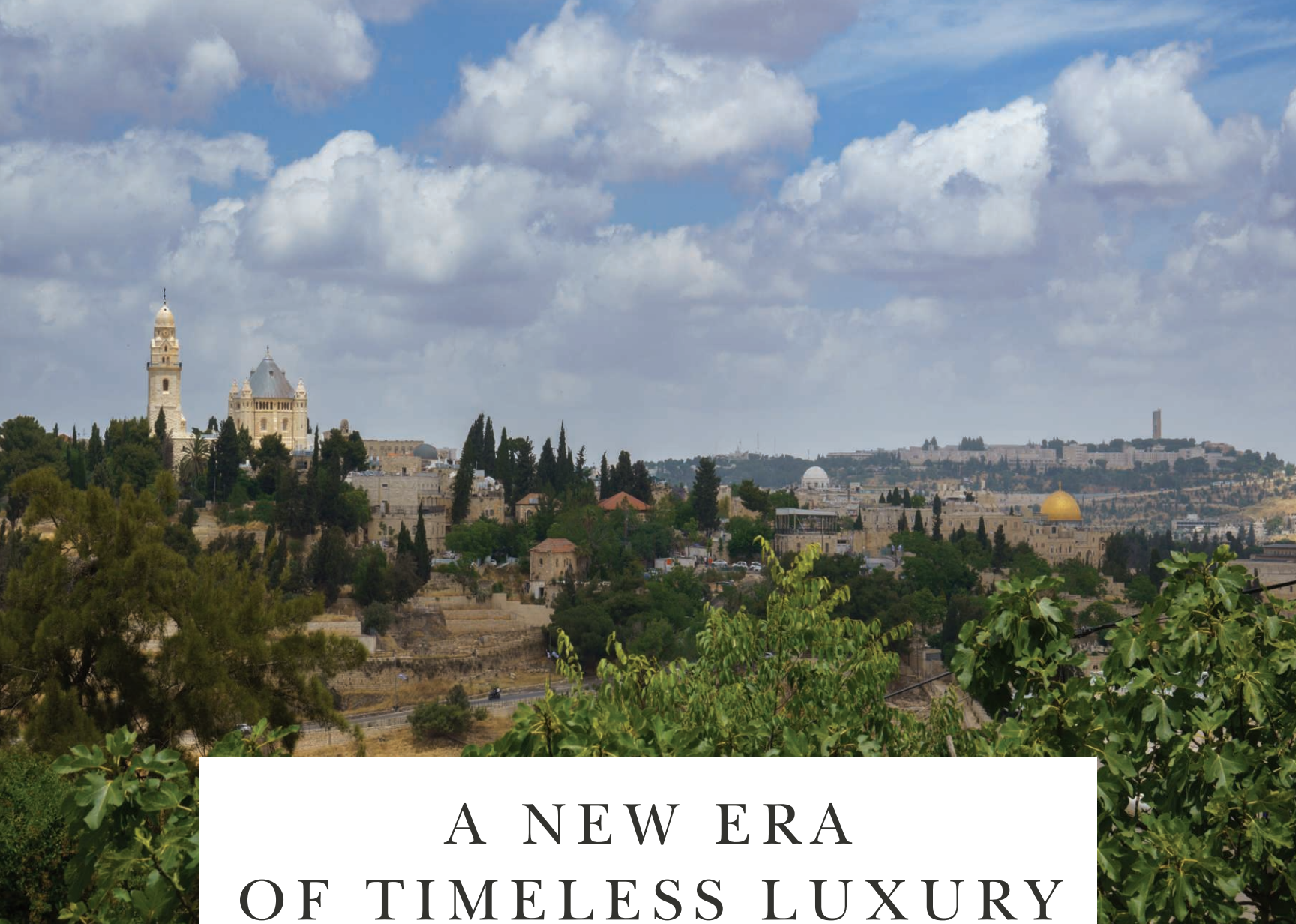
Spain for Snowbirds

This winter, **Windstar Cruises'** new 224-passenger *Star Explorer* sails nine-night Barcelona round-trip itineraries focused on Spain's Mediterranean coast. Additionally, travelers can opt for a pre-trip, four-night overland tour to Madrid and Segovia. *Departures: Multiple dates, December 28, 2026, through February 23, 2027.*

Traveling nine nights round-trip from Barcelona, **Silversea Cruises'** 728-passenger *Silver Ray* will call on four Spanish cities, including an overnight in Palma de Mallorca, along with the ports of Gibraltar and Marseille. *Departure: November 8.*

Azamara embarks on 10- and 11-night voyages between Barcelona and Lisbon aboard the 684-passenger *Azamara Onward* this winter. The sailings visit Málaga and Cartagena with an overnight in Seville, where travelers attend a private performance of Bizet's *Carmen* or a display of Andalusian horsemanship. *Departures: November 7 and 17 and December 29.*

Viking offers a seven-night itinerary between Barcelona and Lisbon, stopping in Mallorca, Cartagena, Granada, and Seville, aboard the 930-passenger *Viking Neptune* and 998-passenger *Viking Mira*. *Departures: Multiple dates, October 7, 2026, through February 19, 2027.* 📍



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ON JAPAN'S SETO INLAND SEA, TWO ART ISLANDS
AND TWO WAYS TO LOSE YOURSELF. BY DAVID HOCHMAN



HAVING THE PUMPKIN ALL TO YOURSELF

isn't as easy as it looks. The images of Yayoi Kusama's rotund yellow sculpture usually show it isolated on the edge of a narrow jetty extending into Japan's Seto Inland Sea – a plus-size kabocha squash contemplating the universe alone. Apparently, that's before the morning art crush arrives.

Our minivan is still slowing to a stop when our guide, Mari, slides open the door and practically leaps onto the beach. It's just shy of 9 AM, and there's not another pumpkin prospector in sight. "Oh, perfect. Let's go," she says, and we're on a sprint to commune with the polka-dotted veggie sensation of Naoshima, Japan's improbable little island of contemporary art.

My wife and I came to Naoshima expecting a slow exhale on an otherwise breathless two-week scurry around Japan. Mari has more ambitious plans for us, though, and she's clearly done the math. Her schedule, parsed to the :04 and the :22, reads like a one-day private Biennale, with Monet, Turrell, Murakami, Hockney, Holzer, Basquiat, and more on today's bill.

In the softly fogged archipelago between Honshu and Shikoku, Naoshima is the headliner of Japan's dozen-plus "art islands," alongside Teshima and Inujima. Once industrial backwaters – a smelter town here, a former dumping ground there – they began their reinvention in the 1990s under Benesse Corporation, the family-owned Japanese education and healthcare company run by billionaire Soichiro Fukutake, now in his 80s. Six million visitors have come since 2004 to see contemporary art in natural settings that are themselves part of the show. Last year brought a new act: the Naoshima New Museum of Art, the islands' first devoted to Asian art, and the tenth Benesse building by Pritzker laureate Tadao Ando. Mostly subterranean, capped by a sloped metal roof and ringed by the Inland Sea, it works like an iceberg, with the best of it tucked below the waterline.

Inside Japan arranged our privately guided day on the island. As the public-bus crowd descends on the pumpkin, we follow Mari up a wooded hillside to the quieter Valley Gallery, where Kusama has scattered 1,700 mirrored steel spheres across a ravine like a slow-motion silver landslide. Each ball catches a parcel of the visible world – your face, the cherry blossoms, a sliver of sky – and as the





Narcissus Garden by
Yayoi Kusama on the island
of Naoshima.

breeze rolls down the valley, the whole installation seems to shimmer with multiplied selves.

"Look inside a ball," Mari says. "What do you see?" Narcissus, of course. We take in the moment as a brown shape skitters across the path between spheres, low and quick. Even the rodents here are pedigreed: The enormous, ratlike nutria was introduced to the island in the 1930s for the fur trade. "Sorta cute, isn't it?" Mari says, giving it a wave. Then she turns toward the van. "Our next stop is incredible. Are you OK with dark spaces?"

ZIPPING ACROSS the island, we pass a small parade of arts pilgrims pedaling rented e-bikes in one direction and a clutch of bewildered walkers in the other, some squinting at maps, others queuing at bus shelters that may or may not get them where they need to go. It starts to dawn on us why an experienced guide is essential on Naoshima.

Although the island is only 5.5 square miles, its twisty narrow roads challenge anyone trying to navigate them solo. Buses run roughly hourly and fill faster than a Tokyo subway car. Taxis are in short supply. Exhibition hours shift, closures happen, and the major venues all require date- and time-stamped entry.

We arrive on the dot for our appointment at *Backside of the Moon*. James Turrell's study in light deprivation begins in a corridor so dark you must trail one hand along the wall. A docent seats you on a bench. You sit, eyes adjusting to what feels like absolute nothing. Then, slowly, like a Polaroid developing, a faint rectangle



**We have not napped. We have barely sat down. We are exhilarated
and sun-stunned and faintly delirious.**

of pale light begins to emerge at the far end of the room. The light has been there the whole time – it’s your eyes that need catching up. Turrell has spent a lifetime making art out of perception itself, and this is one of his most ascetic experiments: an entire small building designed by Ando expressly for this piece.

The next hour – literally to the minute – belongs to Honmura, the residential village where seven abandoned homes have been turned over to artists since 1998. Inside the darkened, centuries-old Kadoya house, 125 of Tatsuo Miyajima’s LED counters glow beneath the water of a shallow pool, each counting from nine to one at a speed chosen by a different Naoshima resident. Together, they suggest individual lives moving through time at different rhythms. At Go’o Shrine, Hiroshi Sugimoto has replaced the ancient wooden steps with a glass staircase that channels surface light into a stone chamber accessible beneath the altar. At Ishibashi,

Hiroshi Senju’s waterfall paintings tumble down lacquered walls into actual water on the floor below. Cherry petals collect on stone thresholds. Bamboo creaks at the edges of the lane. We smile at Mari because there’s still more to see, and we all know it.

You might think we’d be overloaded by one stunning art attraction after another, but Naoshima refuses to overwhelm. The collections are tightly tailored in ways most museums never

attempt. Monet's five late *Water Lilies* at Chichu Art Museum hang in a quiet sanctuary paved with countless small white marble cubes, lit only by daylight from hidden skylights overhead; light on the massive paintings shifts hour by hour as the sun rotates above. Another Sugimoto installation, *Time Exposed*, lines an open-air terrace at Benesse House with grayscale seascapes shot off coastlines a world apart – the Caribbean, the Norwegian coast, the Adriatic – each hung so its horizon meets the real one on the Seto Inland Sea beyond, while a single print fixed to the cliffs below is left to salt and sun until the passing of time consumes it.

Not that everything here whispers. In the New Museum's lowest gallery, 99 life-size wolves hurl themselves through the air in a single arc and smash into a wall of glass – a whole pack chasing the same impulse straight into a barrier not one of them can see. Cai Guo-Qiang's *Head On*, the loudest work on a famously serene island, is one I'll remember for a long time.

By five o'clock we've seen roughly 90 percent of what people come to Naoshima to see. We have not napped. We have barely sat down. We are exhilarated and sun-stunned and faintly delirious. The other ten percent will have to wait for a return trip: Lee Ufan's *Porte vers l'infini*, a half-circle steel arch dropped into a valley of waving reeds at the Lee Ufan Museum; Shinro Ohtake's *I Love Yu* (*yu* means "hot water" in Japanese), a working public bathhouse that doubles as the island's most immersive artwork; and Kusama's larger *Red Pumpkin* at Miyanoura Port, riddled with polka dot portholes that visitors are supposed to poke

their faces through for a photo. We don't have time for portholes; Mari races us to our ferry just as the gates are closing. Tomorrow morning, she'll do it all again – at 8:42 sharp.

FOR US, the next day is Naoshima's opposite. Teshima is twice the size and home to fewer than 800 residents, most of them farmers and fishers. The art-island project extends here, but the pace does not: There's one looping road, and that's the road you take. We rent bikes near the port and pedal in a lazy circle up and down coastal hills. We stop at Ichigoya, a roadside strawberry stand, where a woman in her 70s serves us smoothies the color of summer. Farther on, a wooden table holds crates of sumo oranges for sale

From left: *Porte vers l'infini* at the Lee Ufan Museum, (faux) fur flying in Cai Guo-Qiang's *Head On*, and Rei Naito's tranquil *Matrix*.



(WOLVES) ANTHONY SHAW/ALAMY, (MATRIX) DENIS KOVALEV, (PORTE VERS L'INFINI) SONIA BLOM/ALAMY



Ryue Nishizawa's Teshima Art Museum.

on the honor system. We drop 200 yen in a box and peel them as we ride. There's an art to that too.

Don't think this means Teshima is any less spectacular – it's just more low-key about it. Christian Boltanski's *Les Archives du Coeur* stores the recorded heartbeats of thousands of people from around the world in a cottage on a bluff overlooking the sea – you can listen to strangers' heartbeats or add your own to the archive. The French conceptual artist also created *La Forêt des Murmures*, part of his wider Animitas project, hanging countless wind chimes in a forest on nearby Mount Danyama. On each bell hang strips of transparent material with the name of a loved one, written by a past visitor. In the town center, Teshima Yokoo House transforms a traditional merchant's home into artist Tadanori Yokoo's and architect Yuko Nagayama's vivid, hallucinatory vision.

The Teshima Art Museum, designed by Ryue Nishizawa, houses only a single artwork – Rei Naito's *Matrix* – but what a work it is. We remove our shoes and duck through a low entrance into a vast white concrete shell shaped like a drop of water resting on the hillside. An attendant asks everyone to enjoy the space without phones and in silence. Two oval openings frame the ceiling. Wind passes through them. A dragonfly occasionally drifts in. From hundreds of nearly invisible perforations in the floor, water beads up, finds its own path, joins other beads, and eventually disappears into other unseen openings. There's no art on the walls – there are no actual walls. There is only the room, the water, the sky, and the soft hush of other visitors moving as if through a chapel.

We stay almost two hours.

Biking back to the port that evening, we pass rice paddies just beginning to

flood for spring planting, their surfaces catching the late sun in flecks of light. Inujima, the third main art island, will also stay on the list for next time – a shame, given that somewhere on it, the smokestacks of a copper refinery abandoned for a hundred years are now the lungs of an art museum built from its ruins.

My wife and I got what we came for: one day of structured wonder, one day of unstructured quiet; one guide who showed us nearly everything, one island that asks for almost nothing. Naoshima makes you grateful for direction. Teshima reminds you what you can do without it. Together, they make the case that the Seto Inland Sea is one of the most surprising art destinations on earth – provided you arrive with a sense of curiosity, sturdy walking shoes, and the willingness to switch tempos on command.

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Serenity now: Naoshima island.

Island Art-Hoppers

GETTING THERE Naoshima and Teshima sit close together in the Seto Inland Sea, but arriving requires a little choreography. The usual route is to take the Shinkansen bullet train from Tokyo or other major cities (Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe) to Okayama, taxi to Uno Port, then board a ferry for Naoshima. Teshima is about 20 minutes from Naoshima by high-speed boat, or roughly 25 to 40 minutes from Uno, depending on whether you take a passenger boat or ferry. Note that most exhibition spaces are closed on Mondays on Naoshima and Tuesdays on Teshima.

GO Virtuoso on-site connection **Inside Japan** crafts private journeys to Naoshima and Japan's other art islands, as well as tailor-made itineraries throughout the country, with accommodations, transportation, guides, and experiences arranged according to travelers' interests. *Departures: Any day through 2027.*

Remote Lands' customizable, privately guided, eight-day art-focused itinerary pairs Tokyo's leading galleries with four nights on Naoshima and ferry excursions to explore Inujima, Teshima, and Shodoshima. *Departures: Any day through 2027.*

Travel from Osaka to Shodoshima, Teshima, and Naoshima before continuing to Kurashiki and Kobe on **Ker & Downey's** ten-day private tour. Along the way, take in major contemporary-art sites and explore cultural traditions through hands-on workshops for Japanese knife-making and pottery. *Departures: Any day through 2027.* 📍



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Georgia *on My Mind*

A photograph of two horses in a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, a white horse with dark speckles stands facing right, its head resting on the back of a brown horse. Behind the white horse, the head and neck of a reddish-brown horse are visible. The background consists of steep, green mountains under a clear sky.

In the remote Tusheti region:
Mountain horses and (opposite)
dramatic curves.

INTO THE CAUCASUS
MOUNTAINS FOR
HOMEMADE DUMPLINGS
AND LEGENDARY WINE.

***Story and Photography
by Matt Dutille***

A peak Georgian pursuit:
Paragliding above Kazbegi.





I've traveled to more than 80 countries,

and I've seen some memorable peaks, from Bhutan's Himalaya to Peru's ice-capped ranges. But nothing prepared me for the beauty of Georgia's Caucasus Mountains and bucolic alpine valleys. Before I arrived in the small country (it's about half the size of the U.S. state of Georgia) that sits at the intersection of Europe and Asia, I didn't know too much about it, besides that I liked the Georgian food I'd sought out at restaurants at home in New York City. What I learned: For fans of big adventure, hearty food and wine, and lush, green gorges dotted with beautiful little churches, Georgia is dream-trip material.

Last year, I crisscrossed the Greater Caucasus range over ten days, logging more than 750 miles and reaching elevations of 9,000 feet to visit the watchtower-topped villages, centuries-old wine caves, and family-owned kitchens that made me fall for this under-the-radar country.

The mountain town of Kazbegi, a three-hour drive north of Tbilisi (Georgia's capital city), is a popular winter ski retreat. I was there in summer, though, so after watching paragliders fill the sky above the Aragvi River, I settled in with a glass of saperavi wine and a bowl of *chikhirtma* (chicken and herb soup) at a lodge overlooking the fourteenth-century Gergeti Trinity Church. After a couple of days getting acquainted with the Swiss-doppelgänger Juta Valley, I wound my way to the opposite side of Chaukhi Pass for a stay in Khevsureti, home of the medieval Khevsur warriors, whose stories still echo through the Shatili fortress complex.





Clockwise from opposite top left: Underground at Winery Khareba, en route to Kakheti, *khinkali* (soup dumpling) lessons and adornment in Tusheti, vineyards and a tasting at Okro's Wines, and a Tush shepherd and his flock.



A medieval *sadiatso* (traditional Khevsur women's dress) on display in Khevsureti.



Go for Georgia

On a private ten-day trip, **Remote Lands** skips the long drives in favor of helicopter transfers, whisking travelers round-trip from Tbilisi and over the country's postcard landscapes en route to Tusheti, Kakheti, Khevsureti, and beyond. The elevated vantage points pair with on-the-ground excursions, including private dinners in Georgian family homes, behind-the-scenes museum tours, and plenty of winetasting. *Departures: Any day through 2027.*

A week of private touring in Georgia with **Artisans of Leisure** hits the requisite highlights: Tbilisi's Old Town and top restaurants, Kakheti's wineries, and Kazbegi National Park's scenic passes. The company can customize all its itineraries, including an add-on extension to Tusheti via helicopter. *Departures: Any day through 2027.*

Travelers go deep on Georgia's wine history during **Ker & Downey's** seven-day private tour in Tbilisi and Kakheti. Local guides, sommeliers, and winemakers lead the way to wine-paired lunches, cellar tastings, and private museum visits. *Departures: Any day through 2027.*

Intrepid Travel packs its eight-day, food-focused group itinerary across Georgia with cooking classes, winetastings, and visits to local farms. Travelers learn how to make *churchkhela* (Georgian candy) and visit a cheesemaker in the Kakheti village of Telavi, watch their local hosts bake *shoti* bread in a stone oven, and hike to Kazbegi's Gergeti Trinity Church. The trip starts and ends in Tbilisi for bazaar tours and soaks in the city's famous thermal springs. *Departures: Multiple dates, October 4, 2026, through October 15, 2028.* 📍

While Georgia's landscapes and villages could have kept me on epic photography quests for weeks, its liquid assets intrigued me too. Archaeologists have found evidence of winemaking in a Neolithic village in the eastern Kakheti region that dates to 6000 BC, and the country wears this discovery with pride. Many winemakers still age their reds and ambers the old-school Georgian way: by fermenting skin-contact grapes underground in clay vessels called *qvevri*. Artisans hand-sculpt and fire these vessels, which can weigh nearly 2,000 pounds each and take a full week to fire. I sampled khikhvi and mtsvane varietals with winemaker Shota Lagazidze at the Lagazi Wine Cellar, dove into the wine cave at Winery Khareba, and sipped tsitska and rkatsiteli at Okro's Wines, with its views over the village of Signaghi. There, John and Jane Okruashvili produce some of the country's finest organic, biodynamic vintages, practicing winemaking traditions that date back millennia.

For my Georgian finale, I headed into Tusheti, a remote northeast-highland region reached via a precipitous, unpaved mountain-pass road that's accessible for only a sliver of the year. (Pro tip: Arrive by helicopter for a smoother ride, and saddle up to see its alpine villages on horseback.) In a country of secrets, it felt like the best kept. Most Tush people only live there during the summer, to graze their sheep or host visitors in solar-powered guesthouses. At one of them, just outside the village of Omalo, I learned to make the country's famous *khinkali*: aromatic, meat-filled soup dumplings. Creating the perfect dumpling-wrapper fold with my fat fingers still eludes me, but Georgia's allure does not.

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On the Road

Out for a drive through the U.S. with actor, director, and writer Andrew McCarthy.



For my most recent book, I took a six-week solo drive across America – 10,000 miles, all on back roads. I reconnected with old friends and reintroduced myself to a country I thought I knew (but didn't). Having no set itinerary was one of the main pleasures: I turned left or right on a whim, ate when I was hungry, and drank when I was dry. In Clarksdale, Mississippi, birthplace of the blues, I walked into a broken-down juke joint. I was one of three patrons – the band outnumbered us. But they poured their hearts out. It was the best night of music in my life. Every morning, I'd ask around and find the main diner in town, then settle in to watch the show: locals greeting each other, familiar jabs, regular orders, lots of laughing. It turns out breakfast is the most optimistic meal of the day out in America. *Andrew McCarthy's newest book, Who Needs Friends, is out now.*



(PORTRAIT) ARTHUR MOUNT; (ROAD) LUKAS ALEXANDER RODRIGUEZ/GETTY IMAGES

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