

JANUARY / MARCH 2018

travelife10th Anniversary

MAGAZINE

Parents Take
**BABY
STEPS**
On First 'Family'
Vacation

COME WITH US TO:

SWITZERLAND
ENGLAND,
HUNGARY,
BAHAMAS,
KAZAKHSTAN,
PATAGONIA,
TEXAS,
ROMANIA,
GERMANY,
CATALONIA,
THAILAND,
HONG KONG,
WALES,
SINGAPORE,
NEW ZEALAND
AND CURAÇAO



PLUS!
RANKING TRAVEL
REWARD CARDS

TOP TRAVEL
GADGETS
FOR 2018

FUNKY
EYEWEAR
FOR THE
BEACH

WIN
2 AIR TICKETS
TO VIETNAM

Details Inside

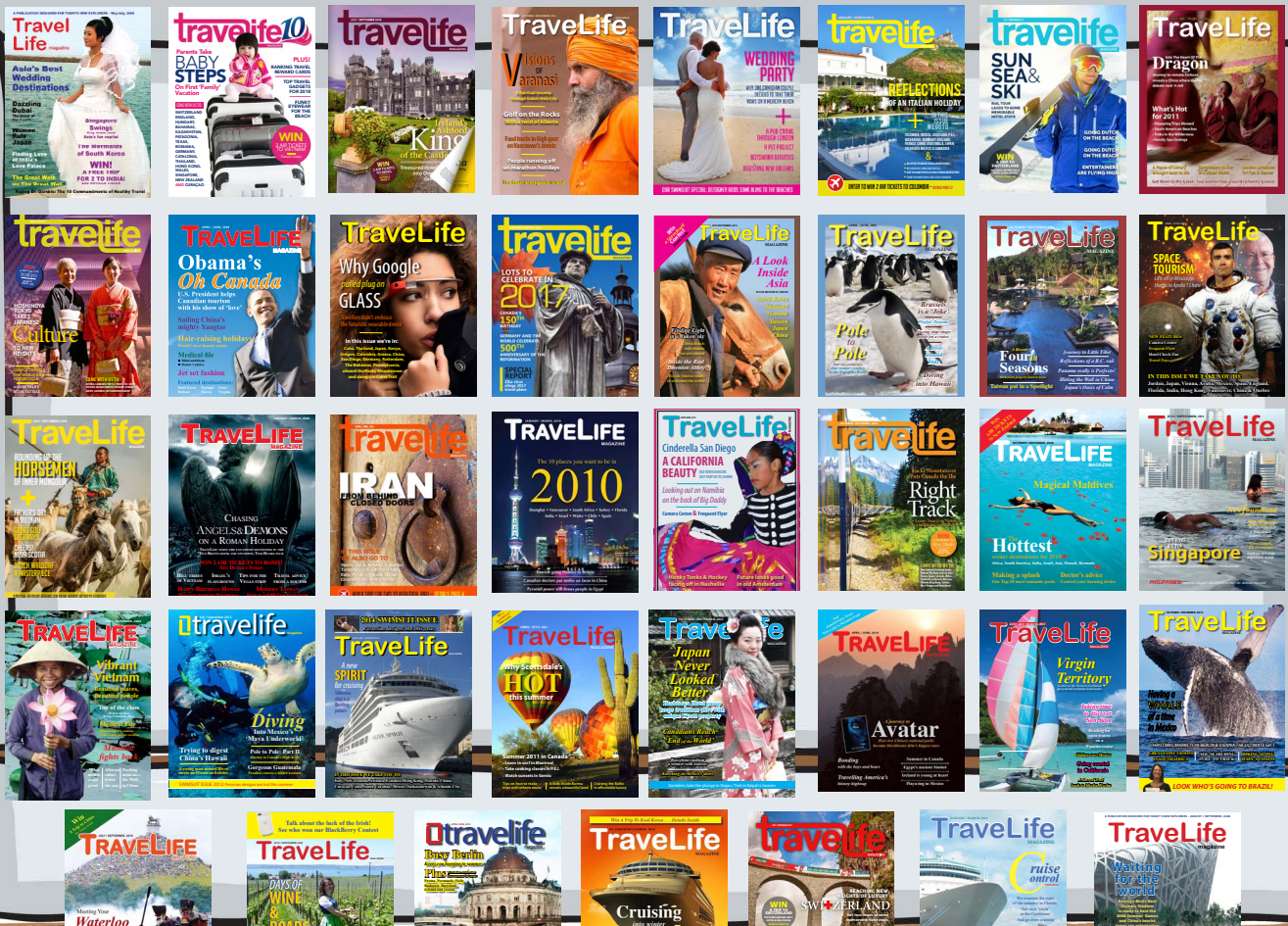
We're a Perfect travelife

MAGAZINE

10

Celebrating our 10th anniversary in 2018

Thanks For Your Support



Fly to the fun in Orlando, faster.



Get a Welcome Bonus¹ of
15,000 Aeroplan Miles.

With the TD® Aeroplan® Visa Infinite® Card, you
could make it to your next destination sooner.
So grab ahold of the Card that lets you fly, faster.
Conditions apply.

aeroplan

Apply now at a branch or at
td.com/aeroplan

TD

Banking can be
this comfortable.



¹ Welcome Bonus Aeroplan Miles ("Welcome Bonus Miles") will be awarded to the Aeroplan Member account associated with the TD Aeroplan Credit Card Account ("Account") only after the first Purchase is made on the Account. If you have opened an Account in the last 6 months, you will not be eligible for this offer. We reserve the right to limit the number of Accounts opened by, and the number of Welcome Bonus Miles awarded to, any one person. Please allow up to 8 weeks after your first Purchase is posted to the Account for the Welcome Bonus Miles to be credited to your Aeroplan Member account. Offer may be changed, withdrawn or extended at any time and cannot be combined with any other offer unless otherwise indicated. All trade-marks are property of their respective owners. ©The Air Canada maple leaf logo and Air Canada are registered trade-marks of Air Canada, used under license. ©The Aeroplan logo and Aeroplan are registered trade-marks of Aimia Canada Inc. ©The TD logo and other trade-marks are the property of The Toronto-Dominion Bank.



Travelling well liberates the mind.

Cathay Pacific Airways offers the most flights between Canada and Hong Kong, connecting you to over 80 destinations throughout Asia, including more than 20 cities in China. For details, contact your travel agent or visit cathaypacific.com/ca.



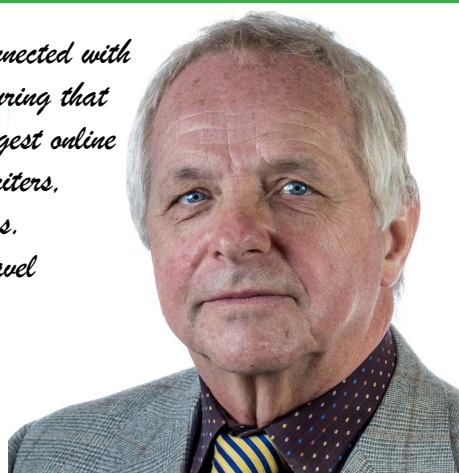
CATHAY DRAGON



CATHAY PACIFIC

Life Well Travelled

Just wanted to take a moment to thank all those connected with the success of TravelLife over the past 10 years. During that time, TravelLife has grown to become Canada's largest online travel publication and we owe our success to our writers, editors, photographers and especially you, our readers. So thank you for coming along on our decade of travel and remember: The Best Is Yet To Come!



CONTENT

JANUARY-MARCH, 2018

14 **What a sight**
Funky eyewear for 2018

18 **England**
Poetry in motion

22 **Hungary**
A feast for tourists

26 **Bahamas**
Canadian's agri-culture

30 **Kazakhstan**
Home of the Big Apple

34 **Ontario**
Provincial trail a 'killer'

38 **Patagonia**
It's picture-perfect

44 **Special Report**
Dealing rewards cards

46 **Texas**
Accent on hospitality

50 **Romania**
Taking the high road

52 **Germany**
Wine is fine in Mainz

58 **Camera Corner**
It's an Arctic blast



62 **Catalonia**
A trip back in time

70 **Family Travel**
European trip a baby bonus

76 **Special Report**
Train on the right track

82 **Thailand**
A trip of guilty pleasures

84 **Hong Kong**
Fishing for memories

90 **Wales**
Opening a new chapter

94 **Cruising**
Getting the river view

100 **Singapore**
A brief fling

102 **New Zealand**
Actor is starstruck

104 **Frequent Flyer**
Flight crew put to test

106 **Special Report**
Muscle beach vacation

108 **Curaçao**
A colourful retreat



CLICK & READ

Go to a story by clicking on a page number!



OUR COVER

Writer Chelsea Shim Sharma planned a trip well before baby Ari was born and while there was some teething pains along the way, the family enjoyed their European vacation. Chelsea shares the dos and don'ts of a 'first' family vacation and offers up some valuable advice to parents starting on [Page 60](#)

OUR STAFF

Publisher: Annie Tsu

Editor-in-Chief:
Marc Atchison
marc.atchison@travellife.ca

Assistant Editor:
Claudia Tsang

Designers:
Joey Tang / Angel Huang

Copy Editing:
Gale Beeby

CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew Cruickshank, Amy Laughinghouse, Ian Cruickshank, Heather Lea, Gilly Pickup, Rosalind Cummings Yeates, Cristina Hure, Dennis Chu, Waheeda Harris, Niece Regis, John Goddard, Neil Ever Osborne, Chelsea Shim Sharma, Garth Woolsey, Nancy Wigston, William Eccenbarger, Tom Wuckovich, Allison Smith, Bryce Dallas Howard, Karen Kwan

OUR ADDRESS

TravelLife, 15 Kern Road,
Toronto, Ont., M3B 1S9

www.travellife.ca

Save a bundle when you bundle.



See how much you can save by booking
flight and hotel together on Expedia.ca.



*Savings based on all vacation package bookings with Flight + Hotel on Expedia.ca from September 2013 through February 2014 as compared to price of the same components booked separately on Expedia.ca. Savings will vary based on origin/destination, length of trip, stay dates and selected travel supplier(s). Savings not available on all packages.
© 2014 Expedia, Inc. All rights reserved. Expedia, Expedia.ca, and the Airplane logos are registered trademarks, or trademarks, of Expedia, Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Ticket fulfillment services provided by Tour East Holidays (Canada) Inc., 15 Kern Road, Suite 9, Toronto, Ontario, M3B 1S9. TICO Registration No.: 50015827 and Tour East Holidays (Canada) Inc., 2000 Peel Street, Suite 735 Montreal, QC, H3A 2W5. Quebec Licence No. 702246.



Take flight to Asia.

Your clients can enjoy non-stop transpacific service between Montreal and the Asia-Pacific region. We offer convenient travel options to Beijing, Shanghai, and Tokyo-Haneda. Starting June 2018, your clients can take advantage of new non-stop flights from Montreal to Tokyo-Narita, year-round. Our vast international network, offers conveniently timed schedules for seamless connections through our Canadian hubs. Discover Asia with more direct flights to China and Japan.

For more information, visit aircanada.com or contact your travel agent.



AIR CANADA

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



**Voted Best Airline
in North America**

SWI+ZERLAND



Colourful Old Town



Grand Hotels

Time TO VISIT LUCERNE



Covered Bridges



Lion Monument

“Over 300,000 Chinese visit Lucerne annually and they spend over \$1 billion on watches”



The Kapellbrücke (Chapel Bridge) is the longest covered bridge in Europe and it has become a symbol of Lucerne. It was almost lost in a fire but has been recently restored.

STORY & PHOTOS BY MARC ATCHISON

Timeless wonder has much to offer visitors

LUCERNE, SWITZERLAND — The buses start arriving early. As many as 200 a day. The excited occupants — all Chinese — rush off into Schwanenplatz, this city’s main square, and dash towards the entrance of Bucherer, the legendary watchmaker that first opened its doors in 1888.

“This goes on all year long,” says Sonja, my tour guide. “In the summer months, I’ve seen 300 buses arrive here in one day.”

In a city with dozens of watch stores, Bucherer is the most popular — with the Chinese, at least.

“That’s because it opened in 1888 and the number 8 has great symbolism to the Chinese,” Sonja continues.

According to the Swiss-born Sonja, who speaks impeccable Mandarin, certain numbers — 0, 6, 8 and 9 — are auspicious to the Chinese because their names in Mandarin sound similar to words that have positive meanings.

“Last year over 300,000 Chinese visited Lucerne and they spent over \$1 billion (U.S.) buying watches at Bucherer. The store had to hire 35 Mandarin-speaking sales people just to handle the influx. I know some Chinese who come here strictly to buy a watch at Bucherer and leave,” the guide tells me.

That’s a pity because if they would stay, they’d find Lucerne to be one of the most fascinating and beautiful cities in Europe. And much of Lucerne’s best features are just a few steps away from Bucherer’s main entrance.

For instance, on one side of the handsome Schwanenplatz I see



Swiss watch companies draft top Chinese stars, like popular actress Liu Yifei, above, to push their products to the thousands of mainlanders who arrive in Lucerne to buy products at legendary stores like Bucherer, left.

10

THINGS TO DO IN LUCERNE

1 ATTEND A MUSIC FESTIVAL: Our top choice is the 75-year-old Lucerne Festival (summer edition), which sees the world's top orchestras, conductors and musicians arrive in the city for a month-long stay. Past guests have included the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and legendary pianist Martha Argerich.

2 VISIT MOUNT PILATUS: The landmark's snowy peaks loom over the city and offer great opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. And it's only 20 minutes away from the city. Visitors can take the world's steepest cogwheel railway to reach the top.

3 VISIT MUSEUM BELLPARK: Little-known museum focuses on the history of the region and its innovative exhibitions pair modern-day artifacts with antiques, and showcase the local arts scene.

4 ENJOY A LOCAL BEER: Lucerne's 17th-century Rathaus (town hall) comes with its very own brewery and pub, where visitors can enjoy the full-bodied, fragrant Rathaus Bock, a strong beer that is especially popular in winter and during Lent. Be sure to try some Weisswurst (spiced white sausage) or Luzerner Käsekuchen (a savory cheese tart).

5 EXPLORE THE OLD TOWN: The streets of Lucerne's Old Town are lined with elaborately decorated buildings, some dating back to the Middle Ages.

6 ENJOY THE COVERED BRIDGES: Walking across Chapel Bridge and neighbouring Spreuerbrücke is like walking through a museum. The ancient paintings above your head date back to the Middle Ages.

7 HAVE A DRINK AT THE HOTEL GÜTSCH: It's a tradition in Lucerne and the views of the Alps and lake from here are spectacular.

8 VISIT AN ART MUSEUM: The Rosengart has one of Switzerland's best collections of modern art, with big names like Picasso, Klee, Monet and Chagall all making an appearance.

9 TOUR A NUCLEAR BUNKER: Sonnenberg Bunker provided enough space for 20,000 Lucerne residents in the event of a nuclear attack.

10 ENJOY THE FOOD: Cheese is king in these parts and the stores near Löwenplatz offers a wide selection of international and Swiss cheeses.



beautiful Lake Lucerne and its breathtaking Alpine mountain backdrop. On the other side is the city's charming Altstadt (Old Town), with its labyrinth of narrow streets that lead visitors on an historical journey back to when this was a simple trading post.

"And a lot of that trade, even back in the 15th and 16th century, was with China," says Sonja, who says cargo unloaded off ships that came from Asia was moved across the lake and into nearby Italy — Milan is a two hour drive away.

"Lucerne has always had great relations with the Chinese and our favourite dessert (a cake called Läbchuechli) was first made with the ginger brought here from China. You can buy it everywhere in Lucerne," she tells me.

Proving once again that good things come in small packages, compact Lucerne features some of the best-preserved Medieval architecture in all of Europe and its stunning setting amid snowcapped mountains is simply breathtaking.

Lucerne's tranquil beauty even inspired England's Queen Victoria to pay a visit in 1868. Her three-week stay at the Villa Vallis Hotel, which still exists, prompted many of her British subjects to also visit Lucerne and that touched off a hotel construction boom the likes of which the Swiss had never seen.

"Most of the grand hotels standing along the lake promenade were constructed after Queen Victoria's visit," says Sonja, pointing to such legendary properties as the opulent Palace Luzern, the Grand Dame of Lucerne hotels, which looks like a fairytale castle standing along the shore. Interestingly, the



The covered bridges that cross the River Reuss date back to the Middle Ages and some display original artwork. The river divides Lucerne's spectacular Old Town.

Palace Luzern was recently purchased by a Chinese investor and is scheduled to undergo a major refurbishment.

At one time, there were over 9,000 hotel rooms in Lucerne, according to my guide, but now "we have about 4,000."

And most of the time those rooms are full.

I follow Sonja into the charming Old Town and we stop to have lunch at the historic Hotel des Balances, which sits on the banks of the River Reuss. The elegant 18th-century building in which the boutique property is housed features a beautiful black and yellow tiled roof and its facade, like many other buildings in the Old Town, showcases some lovely wall paintings.

"The paintings were a symbol of wealth back when Lucerne was becoming very rich in Medieval times," says Sonja.

The streets of the Old Town are always crowded.

"We have a population of 80,000 but we get nine million visitors a year," says Sonja,

UNPARALLELED SERVICE.

Enjoy a quiet cabin with an exceptional, personalized service at every step.

INTRODUCING DELTA ONE[®] SUITES.



KEEP CLIMBING



DELTA





The shores of Lake Lucerne are lined with grand hotels that were built after England's Queen Victoria visited the city in the 1800s. Now Chinese investors are buying up the palace-like properties.

who goes on to say “a third of our visitors come from Asia, a third from North America and the rest from Europe.”

As we walk, I can't help but notice an inordinate number of fountains.

“Oh, yes,” says Sonja, “we do have a lot of fountains — there are 165 in the Old Town, alone.”

Lucerne is also well known for its foot bridges, which span the Reuss and connect the east and west sides of the Old Town. At one time there were three main bridges but only two still exist, the most famous of which is the Kapellbrücke (Chapel Bridge), which dates back to the 16th century. But first, Sonja is anxious to show me Spreuerbrücke (Spreuer Bridge), a smaller version of Chapel Bridge that was built in 1408.

Spreuerbrücke was destroyed by a flood in 1566 but rebuilt shortly after. Its most striking feature is the original medieval paintings that hang in its rafters.

“They depict the plague, which devastated Lucerne, and the skeleton figures in the paintings resemble death,” says Sonja.

According to the guide, the Spreuerbrücke actually sat outside the Old Town and it was from where people would toss their garbage into the Reuss. So it was not revered as Chapel Bridge, which still remains as the symbol of Lucerne.

From the Spreuerbrücke, I see a castle-like property sitting atop a nearby mountain, which Sonja identifies it as the Hotel Gütsch.

“It's one of the most opulent hotels in Europe and it's owned by a Russian. I'll be visiting it later today because my daughter, who is now of legal drinking age, wants to have her first drink in the Gütsch,” smiles Sonja.

The views from the Gütsch's terrace are supposedly the most spectacular in the city. The much smaller Villa Vallis Hotel where Queen Victoria stayed sits right next to the imposing Gütsch.

Chapel Bridge is crowded with lots of tourists when we arrive. From it I see the Old Town City Hall, and on the opposite shore the main train station and concert hall, home to the world renowned classical music Lucerne Festival — it features three main events at different times of the year. Lovely restaurants and English-style pubs also line the river banks.

“On a clear summer day those restaurant terraces are packed with people soaking up the sun,” says Sonja. Not surprising for a place known as the “City of Light.”

Most of Chapel Bridge, the longest covered bridge in Europe, was destroyed by fire in 1993 but a small portion of the original still remains — you can identify the old part because it displays the same Medieval paintings as the Spreuerbrücke.

A third foot bridge — the Hofbrücke — was torn down to make room for the hotels that were constructed after Queen Victoria's visit.

As a matter of fact, Lucerne is currently experiencing a modern-day hotel construction boom, with many new properties being built

JUST THE FACTS



Architecture dating back to the Middle Ages dominates Lucerne's Old Town.

- The Lucerne Festival currently produces three festivals per year, attracting some 110,000 visitors annually. The largest festival is the Summer Festival which takes place in August and September.
- The best way to get around Switzerland is by train. The Swiss Travel System offers many different train packages which can be found on their new website: <http://www.myswitzerland.com/en-ca/transport-travel/transport-travel-passes.html>
- Air Canada offers direct flights to Zurich from Toronto and Swiss International Air Lines - <http://www.swiss.com> - runs daily service to Zurich from Montreal.
- Swiss Deluxe Hotels is a group representing 41 of Switzerland's best hotels, including Lucerne's Palace Luzern, and offers unique experiences in some of the most visited places in Switzerland. For information, go to <http://www.swissdeluxehotels.com/en>
- For information on Switzerland go to <http://www.MySwitzerland.com> and to order travel brochures about Switzerland, go to info.usa@switzerland.com

in the Alpine terrain directly across the lake from the Old Town. Apparently Middle East investors from Qatar are pouring billions into the new Bürgenstock Resorts resort, which is tucked away in the Alipine mountains across from the Old Town.

Another major tourist attraction in Lucerne is the Lion Monument, which is located just a short walk from the Old Town. The impressive statue of a mortally-wounded lion was carved into a mountain in 1810 to honour the Swiss Guards who were massacred in 1792 during the French Revolution.

So impressive is this statue, it prompted Mark Twain to comment: “This is the most mournful and moving piece of stone in the world.”

When we return to Schwanenplatz, I see a lot of smiling Chinese streaming out of Bucherer admiring the shiny new time pieces on their wrists.

Take it from the Chinese, the time is right to visit Lucerne. •

Fly Wherever You Love

Linking Toronto with Shanghai



中國東方航空
CHINA EASTERN



Visit: ca.ceair.com

Toronto - Shanghai Mu208 15:25 - 19:20+1 Shanghai - Toronto Mu207 12:05 - 14:25



eyewear makes a colourful fashion statement

THEY'RE COLOURFUL, stylish, have a European flair and are very much in demand. They even come with an funky name — IZIPIZI. In fact, the only thing that separates this line of fashionable eyewear from those offered by designer labels like Gucci, Tom Ford, Prada and Valentino is the affordability — about \$40 a pair.

So now, thanks to IZIPIZI, snowbirds can look cool when they patrol the beaches of their favourite all-inclusive resort this winter in trendy sunglasses designed by a troika of Parisians — Quentin Couturier, Xavier Aguera, and Charles Brunent — who have created the Swatch of eyewear.

Why the name IZIPIZI? According to a company spokesperson, it's a "fun name" that read as "easy peasy" in English — a palindrome which can be read in both ways.

Couturier, Aguera, and Brunent met while attending university in Paris and originally started their company as See-Concept in 2010 before rebranding in 2017 under the IZIPIZI label.

IZIPIZI eyewear comes in a rainbow of colours and are designed for all members of the family — from grandma to toddlers.

The IZIPIZI collection includes reading, screen and



IZIPIZI is trendy, colourful, affordable and appeals to every member of the family.

Get a taste of home and away!



Fly home to Sri Lanka via London or Dubai for some good old-fashioned family time, and take that one of a kind warmth and hospitality further to any Sri Lankan Airlines destination close by with unbelievably low fares.

It's an opportunity you can't miss!

For more details contact your favorite Travel Agent or SriLankan Airlines Canada.

SriLankan Airlines office, Canada,

☎ 416 227 9000, toll free: 888 431 9111

@ sales@srilankanca.com

*Conditions apply.

You're our world

 **SriLankan Airlines**





sunglasses for men, women and children and what reality makes them stand out on the beach is their bold, brash colours and eccentric patterns. Before heading out onto the beach, though, remember these key tips:

- Children need even more protection from the sun than adults. Because of their clearer corneas and lenses, children's eyes let in more UV light than the more fully developed eyes of adults and thus are at even higher risk of sun damage. Let your kids pick out whatever fun frames they'd like — IZIPIZI has many — but just make sure to choose a pair with UV protection.
- Our eyes need sun protection all year long, so don't wait for summer or winter vacation to shop for sunglasses. During the fall and winter, you may see the sun less often, but that doesn't mean its effects aren't felt by our eyes. Sea foam, beach sand and snow: they all reflect damaging UV light into our eyes. In fact, winter snow reflects much more UV light than dry sand.
- For the most part, the colour of lenses in sunglasses shouldn't make a difference in protection.



Colourful displays and ad campaigns, top of page, plus a collection that meets the needs of every member of the family, are key elements to IZIPIZI's success globally. They have become the Swatch of eyewear.

Shades with super-dark lenses may work for celebs wanting to go incognito, but dark lenses provide no extra sun safety.

- Spending more won't necessarily buy you superior protection. Lots of people shell out a bundle for designer shades, while others go cheap and hope for the best. Instead, just look for labels that say the lenses block out 99 per cent to 100 per cent of UV rays.

Due to IZIPIZI's reasonable price point and assorted selection, consumers are capable of purchasing many styles so they can mix-and-match frames with their entire wardrobe.

IZIPIZI is sold internationally at hundreds of major retailers, including big brand stores like Nordstrom's, Barney's and Bloomingdale's in North America, and internationally they are featured in famous retail outlets like Le Bon Marché and Merci in Paris, Harrods, Selfridges, MoMA and DSM in London, Isetan in Tokyo and everywhere online. •

- To see the full lineup of IZIPIZI glasses, go to <https://www.izipizi.com/en/>

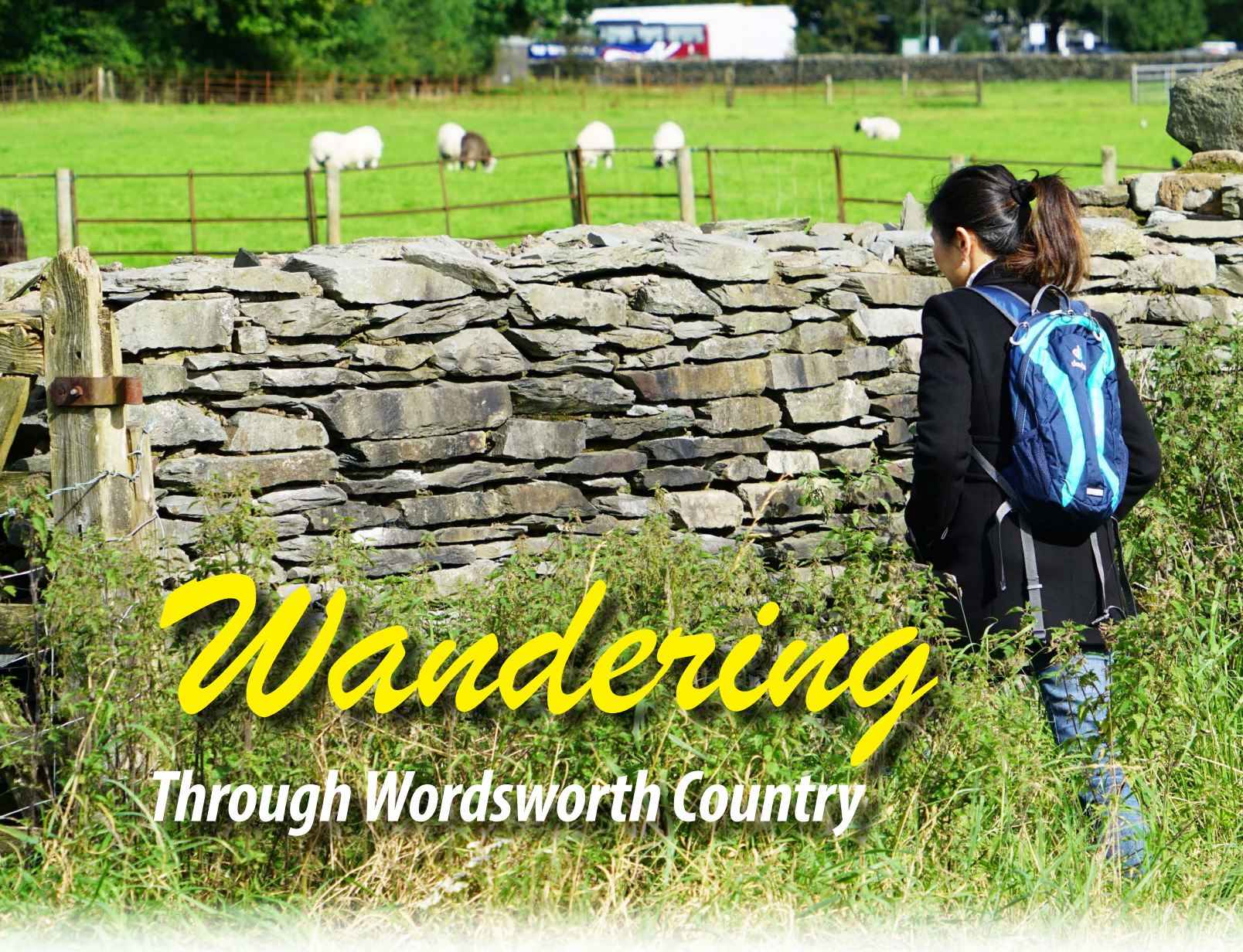
DATE NIGHT

EMIRATES ECONOMY

It might not be a dream date, but it comes pretty close. Enjoy a four-course dinner, with complimentary drinks and a choice of movies and box sets.

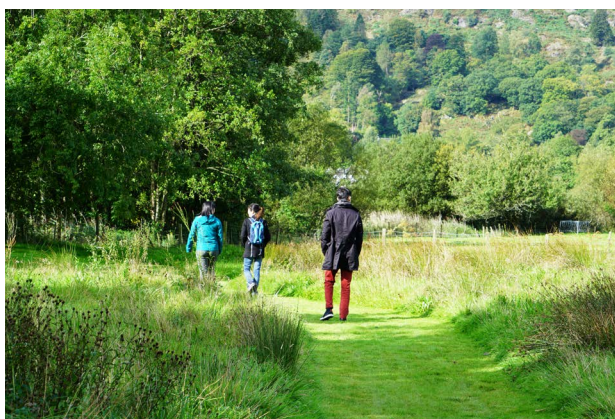
Hello Tomorrow


Emirates®



Wandering Through Wordsworth Country

STORY & PHOTOS BY DENNIS CHU



The lovely meadows and fields that surround Grasmere, left, are perfect to wander. The entrance to the Wordsworth Museum is surrounded by old stone homes.

*I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils:
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

- Opening verse from William Wordsworth's poem "I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud"



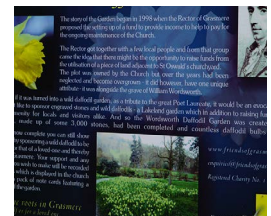
Trip to England's Lake Country is poetry in motion

GRASMERE, ENGLAND — As the train we boarded at London's Euston Station encroaches on England's enchanting Lake District, we realize the scenery framed in our carriage window is what inspired local hero William Wordsworth to write his *Lyrical Ballads* — a book of poems which launched the Romantic Age of English literature.

Wordsworth, who was England's Poet Laureate from 1843 until his death in 1850, is why many people — my family included — make the three-hour train journey from London to see the place he lived — Grasmere — and the places he featured in legendary poems like "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", his most famous work.

After the Virgin train deposits us in Oxenholme, we catch a local train to Windermere — the gateway to the Lake Country — and then take a 20-minute taxi ride before arriving in Grasmere, where the great poet lived. Along the way, I press my nose against the cab window and admire the passing meadows, streams, pastoral scenes — sheep and cows dot the landscape for as far the eye can see — and quaint English villages, which pass by in a blink of an eye.

The Lake Country is a favourite with hikers — the idyllic rolling landscape is easy to navigate on foot — and we meet a couple from Vancouver who committed to a 10-day walk; a local tour company transfers their luggage to their next destination while



Wandering through the idyllic old villages and lakes dotted with swans that so inspired Wordsworth, is a treat for visitors. His gravesite and the gardens surrounding Grasmere are an added treat.

they "wander lonely as a cloud."

Grasmere looks like it jumped off the pages of a Victorian novel — stone cottages and narrow lane ways keep this pretty place frozen in time.

Dove Cottage is where the wordsmith lived from 1799 to 1808 and it's where he composed some of his most memora-

ble works. The milky white lime-washed home, where Wordsworth entertained noted friends like Walter Scott, Thomas De Quincey, Charles and Mary Lamb, Robert Southey and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, now serves as the Wordsworth Museum.

We walk in Wordsworth's footsteps, admiring the newspaper covered walls — his-



tory is clearly written on the wallpaper of Dove Cottage — and wander through the living room and kitchen before a guide leads us upstairs to Wordsworth's study and the bedrooms.

The 20-minute guided tour gives visitors great insight into the poet's life and the Wordsworth Trust — founded in 1891 — keeps the 17th-century cottage and its fairytale garden, which inspired Wordsworth so much, in impeccable condition.

The Wordsworth Library, next door, houses one of the greatest collections of manuscripts, books and paintings relating to British Romanticism.

We spend our two days in the Lake Country wandering the flower-filled meadows and lush pastures that are guarded by unique slate fences. We especially like poking our noses into quaint shops selling freshly-made English baked goods.

The quaint Daffodil Hotel and Spa, nestled in the bosom of the rolling Lake Country terrain, is our home during our stay and its well-appointed rooms look out on Wordsworth country.

Leaving Grasmere is hard — literally. The local train we needed to get back to Windermere was cancelled without prior notice — a usual occurrence, we're told — and the bus that was supposed to shuttle us never showed up. So we hired a local taxi for the ride to Oxenholme where we caught the Virgin train back to London. Along the way our chatty cabby, who was probably inspired by the hefty fare we gladly paid him, gave us a colourful guided tour of the local scenery so we ended up with a lot of local knowledge.

Logistics aside, the Lake District is a natural beauty and its enchanting towns, Michelin-star restaurants, world class accommodation and especially its friendly people are a treat, especially for Wordsworth fans like my family.

This tour was truly poetry in motion and wandering Wordsworth Lake Country lonely as a cloud is something you must put on your bucket list. 🍷

• Virgin offers daily train service to the Lake Country from London. The trip takes about three hours. Go to <https://www.virgintrains.co.uk> for details

• The charming Daffodil Hotel and Spa is the perfect place to base yourself in Grasmere. For rates, go to <http://www.daffodilhotel.co.uk/>



Canadian geese, top photo, along with lots of Canadian tourists visit the places that famed poet William Wordsworth wrote about. The home he lived in — he used newspaper as wallpaper — and the towns and grand homes surrounding them are worth a visit on their own.

YOUR GATEWAY TO ITALY

DISCOVER THE BEAUTY OF ITALY THANKS TO OUR DIRECT FLIGHTS TO ROME
AND CONVENIENT CONNECTIONS TO THE MOST ENCHANTING ITALIAN CITIES.



Fly in pure Italian style in one of our classes of service: newly-redesigned cabins and renowned hospitality in our Economy Class; an enhanced travel experience and the comfort of a reserved cabin in our Premium Economy Class; the exclusivity of priority services at the airport, the luxurious lie-flat seats and the finest Italian cuisine in our Magnifica Business Class. Enjoy a taste of Italy on every flight.

ALITALIA.COM

Alitalia 
VIVI, AMA, VOLA.



Hungry for Hungary

STORY BY WAHEEDA HARRIS

Visitors overindulge on treats at Budapest's Great Market Hall

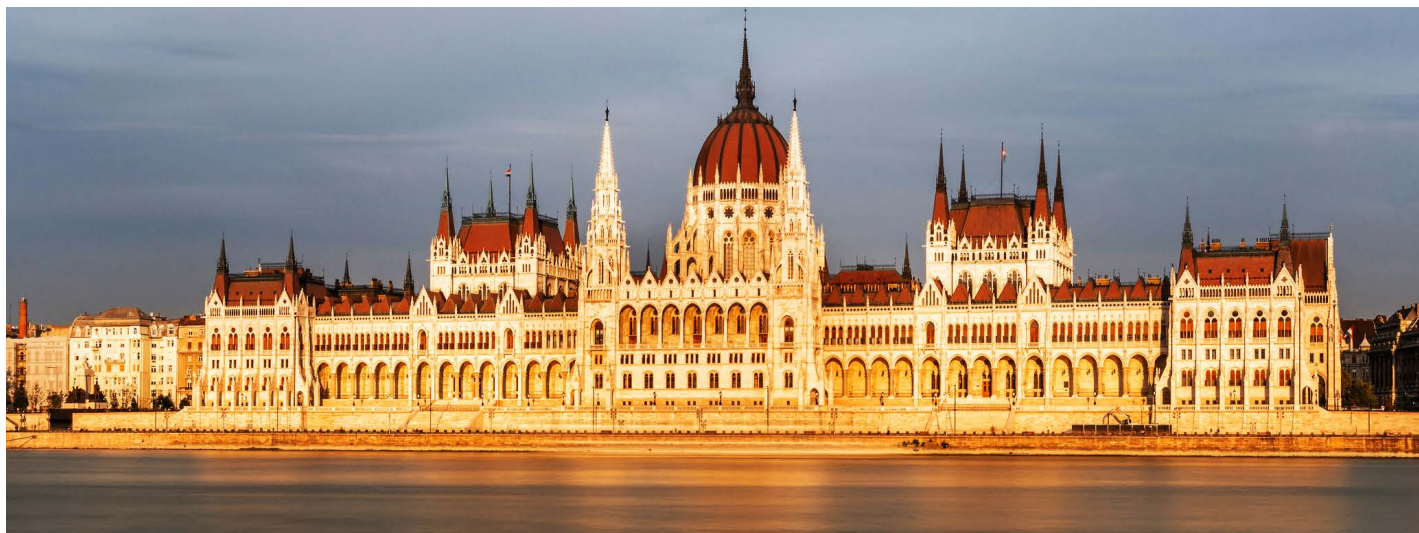
BUDAPEST — Walking into the three-storey Great Market Hall, the first thing I notice is the abundance of red, white and green. Like the Hungarian tricolour flag, Budapest's central market is happily filled with the red of chilis and paprika, the white from long clusters of garlic bulbs and the green from the wide variety of vegetables, including piles of green peppers, a popular choice for *toltott paprika* (stuffed peppers).



The Great Market Hall is one of Budapest's most visited tourist attractions. Along with traditional dolls, tourists can indulge on local treats like these wonderful strudel, left, and freshly picked fruit that comes in a variety of colours. The market actually opened in the late 1800s and it's only getting better with age.

* Losing your suitcase, the best thing that can happen to you





Along with its wonderful local cuisine, like the yummy sausages below, Budapest offers many visual treats, like Hungary's historic Parliament, one of Europe's most beautiful buildings.

First opened in 1897 in the Pest district, the Great Market Hall was rebuilt in the 1990s and the light-filled wrought iron building attracts just as many locals as visitors for its fresh and preserved pantry staples as well as being a perfect place to indulge in Hungarian cuisine.

Shoppers can taste offerings of kolbasz, traditional Hungarian sausage, savanyusag (pickled vegetables) or langos, a deep-fried flat bread topped with sour cream and cheese. Consider foodie souvenirs such as sweet or spicy piros arany (paprika paste, used in a wide variety of Hungarian dishes), salty caviar or jars of floral honey — Hungary is one of the European Union's top producers of the natural sweetener.

Like many of its Eastern European neighbours, Hungarians prefer to start their day with a strong cup of coffee. Visitors can plan to sip java in the cozy Baroque surroundings of Ruszwurm, which first opened in 1827.

Located in the Buda Castle District, the café's pastries were the obsession of Austrian Empress Sisi, who regularly requested the sweet treats to be delivered to the castle. Aspiring writers can get their caffeine fix and soak in the literary atmosphere at Central Kavehaz for piping hot espresso and a slice of retes (strudel) while planning their exploration of the city.

The backbone of Hungarian cuisine is thanks to its largest ethnic group the Magyars, who migrated west from the Ural Mountains to the area now known as Hungary. Slow-cooked meat and fish, seasonal vegetables, fresh bread, dairy products and fruit — especially sour cherry, plum and apricot — are typical ingredients. Benefitting from its European neighbours, Germanic, Italian and Slavic flavours are easily seen in traditional dishes.

For diners who want to indulge in a traditional Hungarian cuisine midday after wandering around Pest, head to Muzem. Operating since 1885, this historic café/restaurant offering traditional flavours comes with a soundtrack of classical piano. An order of libamajpástetom, rich goose liver parfait, with a glass of Tokaji, a sweet Hungarian white wine, is a more than enough for lunch, or consider sharing a hearty plate of slow-cooked goose leg and cabbage.

For a quick option, choose palacsinta. The local crepe is thicker than a French crepe, and often served stuffed with ground meat,

fried onion and topped with sour cream or filled with ground walnuts, raisins and served with dark chocolate sauce.

Thanks to the Romans, Hungary has a long history of wine production, with white varieties originally planted in 5AD. In the 16th century, after regular incursions by Turkish Sultan Sulaiman the Magnificent's army, displaced Serbians planted red wine varieties in Hungary. Although better known for its white wines, Hungarians are proud of their fortifying red wines such as popular blend Evri Bikaver, loosely translated as Bull's Blood.

Discover vintages at Borbirosag, a wine bar offering modern Hungarian cuisine or at Doblo, with over 200 vintages. Found in the city's Jewish Quarter, oenophiles can benefit from the regularly-scheduled tasting sessions or

choose from wines representing the country's 22 regions paired with a ham and cheese plate.

The ultimate taste in Budapest, however, has to be gulyas (goulash). The classic Hungarian stew of beef, potato and carrot flavoured with paprika and served over csipetke (pinched noodles) makes for a memorable dinner, easily found in any restaurant in town. A close second is paprikas csirke (chicken paprikash), a tasty combination of paprika-spiced

chicken in a cream sauce, served with a side of dumplings. And for those who want a tasty side try turos csusza, a creamy combination of cottage cheese, sour cream and egg noodles, topped with crispy bacon.

And then there is dessert. A year-round favourite, but especially during the Christmas market season, is kurtoskalacs aka chimney cake. Baked on a rotisserie, the cake is served warm coated in sugar, cinnamon, cocoa, nuts or coconut, and is easily pulled apart to eat while shopping.

Other classics include dobostorta (dobos cake), a sponge cake layered with chocolate and caramel and arany galuska, sweet dumplings rolled in butter, sugar and nuts and layered with custard to make a cake.

But whatever savoury or sweet Hungarian indulgence is chosen, remember the rules of dining: portions will be large, never say no to palinka (homemade wine usually served in shot glasses) and no matter how much you eat, someone will try to convince you to eat more. *Egeszsegedre!* (To your health!) •



A WARM SOUTH AFRICAN "SAWUBONA"

SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS



In South Africa, sawubona means welcome. We warmly welcome you onboard our Premium Business Class, where you will experience fully-flat seats, gourmet cuisine, award-winning South African wines and a wide selection of entertainment. Together with our partners, we connect you from over 100 North American cities to 75 destinations in Africa. We are Africa's most awarded airline, which includes earning a 4-star rating from Skytrax for 15 consecutive years.



SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



Organic Holiday

Former Winnipegger helping revive Bahamian agriculture

STORY & PHOTOS BY NECÉE REGIS



ELEUTHERA, BAHAMAS — The sweet scent of basil permeates the balmy late afternoon trade winds on Clyde Bethel's organic farm on Eleuthera. The sky is a shocking cerulean blue, a not unusual phenomenon on this Bahamian outer island, though one that continually delights.

I'm traipsing along behind Bethel, stepping carefully through rows of vegetables, fresh herbs and fruit trees on his 10-acre farm. Trim and fit, wearing a black tee shirt and dusty jeans, Bethel explains that he spent several teenage years at school in Winnipeg before returning to his native home. Ten years ago, he recognized a need in the community for locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

"I grew up in the restaurant business. I got married, had kids and opened a restaurant. Everything came to the island by boat. It took two weeks to get here. I decided to start a farm," said Bethel.

Farming is not an easy task on this scruffy 180-kilometre-long narrow island that is often celebrated for its pink sand beaches and rocky formations of ancient coral reefs. Located 80 kilometres east of Nassau, the island resembles an elongated comma floating serenely at the outer northeastern edge of Great Bahamas Bank. Most visitors arrive to experience Eleuthera's low-key pleasures of sun and crystalline turquoise waters; I did, and was surprised to learn that though there are 60 to 70 independent farms on Eleuthera, all produce is packed and shipped to Nassau, where it is then reshipped back to island grocery



Tranquil beaches and an azure sea are what lure visitors to the Bahamas and few ever stray into the organic farmland created by Clyde Bathel, top photo inset left. Bathel's farm produces some amazing crops that are enjoyed in local markets and the hotels where tourists stay.

stores — where it is very expensive and less-than-fresh.

“We’re an island that doesn’t have a lot of soil so we have to make our own soil; we do lots of composting,” said Bethel.

Looking around the farm, it is difficult to imagine its landscape as anything other than verdant and plentiful. In one area, unruly tomatoes and beans, broccoli, tomatoes, bok choy and Chinese cabbage striate the fields in multi-tones of green. Irrigated plots contain neatly planted rows of kale, lettuces, mustard greens, beets, carrots, cilantro, oregano, parsley, scallions, arugula, mint, garlic and the ever-fragrant basil. Spinach grows vertically, covering a trellis that spans the width of the roadside farm stand where Bethel and his family sell their produce, as well as barbecue sauces, jams, jellies, chutneys, honey, fresh herb dipping oils, pesto, fish seasonings and dry rubs, all made from homegrown ingredients.

“We are more of a farmer’s market,” said Rea Bethel, Clyde’s daughter, a marketing and art history major at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. “We don’t use any pesticides. The farm is completely organic and I don’t use any chemicals because this is what I eat,” added Clyde.

Bethel leads me to the far end of the cultivated land, where compost is piled high, as are rocks removed from the fields. Approximately seven and one half acres of his property is cultivated, and he continues to clear out brush and stones and compost new soil to expand the number and variety of crops he can grow.

The rainy season begins in April, and the growing season spans from October through May. For water, Bethel tried to tap into the aquifer by sinking eight wells. These all turned out to be brackish but Bethel, undeterred, hopes to squeeze more crops out through July.

Taller crops and fruit trees frame the edges of the cultivated fields. Bethel shades his eyes from the sun’s strong glare and points to each variety as we circle back to the humble farm stand, situated near the mid-point of the island on the Queen’s Highway.

“Over there are pomegranate, tangerine and passion fruit trees. Also Key lime, Persian lime, wild lemons, bananas and coconuts. We plant banana trees between coconuts. It causes the coconuts to grow taller to reach the sun,” said Bethel.

Bethel also plants pineapples, a crop that grows well in the island’s rocky soil. Once a bustling industry on the island in the mid-18th century, the prickly fruit’s boom years turned to bust by the end of the century when the United States began developing the crop on its newly-acquired Hawaiian islands. As a nod to the fruit’s important agricultural heritage, a Pineapple Festival



Bethel's farm produces the organic ingredients that are sold to the locals or used to make some of the jerk sauces that tourists like to bring home.

is celebrated in June each year in Gregory Town, located 50 kilometres from Bethel’s farm.

The weekend-long festivities, equally enjoyed by island residents and visitors, include pineapple-themed activities such as a pineapple eating contest, cooking contest, and Little Miss Pineapple Pageant.

A self-taught farmer, Bethel continually

experiments with what he can grow. This entrepreneurial and adventurous spirit led him to plant macadamias. “They thrived. They went nuts,” he said.

Bethel smiles at me as if he has just invented farming. Which, in a way, he has.

“I learned as I went along. I have to keep it fun. I can’t wait to wake up in the morning.” •

JUST THE FACTS

Getting there: Located approximately 240 miles from the coast of Southern Florida and about 60 miles from Nassau, Eleuthera is easily accessed by daily scheduled flights from Fort Lauderdale, Miami and Nassau. Three airports serve the island: North Eleuthera International Airport (ELH), Governor’s Harbour International Airport (GHB) and Rock Sound International Airport (RSD).

Where to stay: The French Leave Resort is a tranquil 270-acre escape overlooking the crystalline waters of Governors Harbour. A premier offering of the Marriott Autograph Collection, the resort features 12 one- and two-bedroom luxury Bahamian villas with beachfront views, spacious living areas, covered verandas and a personal golf cart to ferry guests to the nearby pink sands of French Leave Beach. <https://frenchleaveresort.com/>

For more info: <https://www.bahamas.com/>





Within this flag we have the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, along with a 'European Green Capital' winner, Vitoria – Gasteiz, and one of the most beautiful cities in the world, San Sebastian. We also have superb cuisine, and the oldest language and traditions in Europe. It's the Basque's flag, and for us it's a pleasure to welcome you to the Basque Country, a small country with a strong identity.

**BASQUE
COUNTRY**

basquecountrytourism.eus



STORY & PHOTOS BY GILLY PICKUP

Lovely Almaty
is Kazakhstan's

Big Apple

Oil rich nation spends
its billions on odd-shaped
buildings for its cities

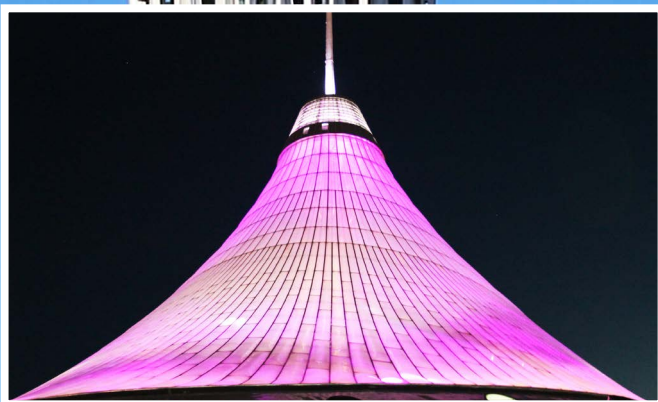
ALMATY, KAZAKHISTAN — The land where apples and garlic originated is abundant in wildlife — red bears, snow leopards and antelopes all call this home. It is a wealthy oil state, safe and tourist friendly, with the highest ice skating rink on the planet. Its shiny, ultra-modern capital brims with futuristic buildings.

Welcome to Kazakhstan!

First things first, and for those who are not quite sure where Kazakhstan is located, it is bordered by Russia and China as well as some other “stans” — Krygyzstan, Uzbekistan and a bit of Turkmenistan.

My visit begins in the country's former capital and biggest city, Almaty — the name means “place of apples.”

No expense has been spared to dress up Kazakhstan's cities with some creative architecture. The oil rich nation has spent billions on lots of new infrastructure that makes it one of the most progressive states in the region. Famed British architect Norman Foster designed many of them.



Direct 3X weekly to Addis. 53+ Africa destinations.



EthiopianAirlinesCanada

@ EthiopianAirlinesCanada

@ EthiopianAirlinesCanada

@ FlyEthiopianCAN



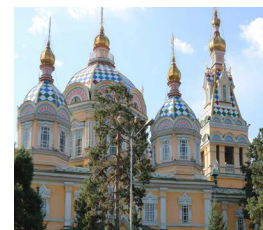
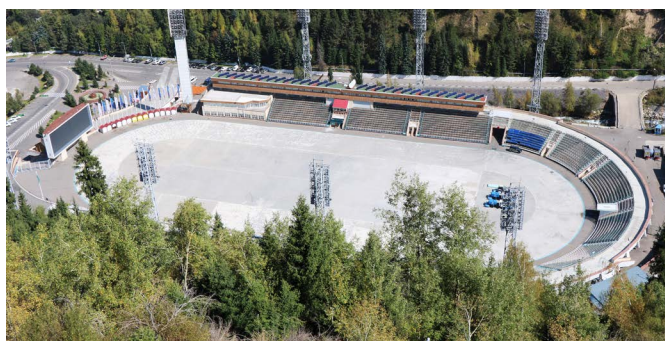
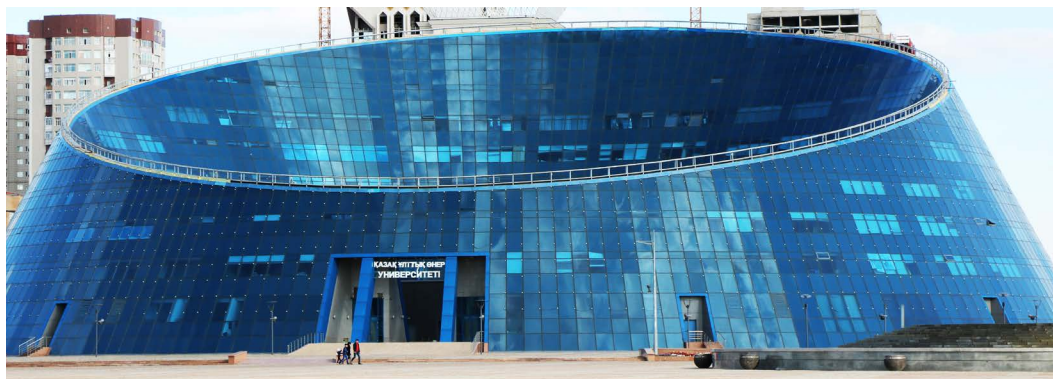
A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER
www.ethiopianairlines.com/CA/EN



Ethiopian
የኢትዮጵያ

Framed by jagged, snow-capped peaks of the Zailiysky Alatau mountains, this is the country's cultural and financial hub. The historic centre, crammed with merchant houses and a glut of old churches, is home to the Green Bazaar indoor market, a bustling hive of activity. Stalls are piled high with a dizzying array of food stuffs — aromatic spices, nuts and dried fruits jostle for space beside yellow, orange and white cheeses, medicinal herbs and glossy, slightly honey-flavoured wild apples. Friendly vendors offer generous samples for visitors to taste but when I try to take photos, I am met with stern looks. Photography inside is forbidden, I am told. A legacy from the days of Soviet rule.

It's a different story, though,



The world's highest hockey rink, left, and the "Dog Bowl", top photo, stick out from traditional buildings.

HAINAN AIRLINES

Calgary
Seattle
Toronto
Chicago
Boston
San Jose
Los Angeles

A beautiful flight, now serving more gateways across North America

Hainan Airlines today offers you more nonstop choices to China from more North American cities than ever!



Hainan Airlines proudly spreads its wings across the United States and Canada using Boeing 787 Dreamliner. Fly from Boston or Seattle to both Beijing and Shanghai, or from Toronto, Calgary since Jun 30 2016, Chicago and San Jose/Silicon Valley to Beijing. Save time and enjoy comfort and convenience — nonstop.



Like us on Facebook



Download APP



海航多伦多

HAINAN

www.hainanairlines.com | 1-888-688-8813 | Hainan Airlines Global

when I venture inside the all-wooden Russian Orthodox Zenkov Cathedral with its ornate jewel box-like interior and I click away to my heart's content. Nearby is another wooden building, the Museum of Folk Music Instruments, surely every musician's dream with its fine collection of traditional Kazakh instruments.

I see everything from harps to bag pipes and horns and plenty more besides. Those who want to do more than just look can sign up for classes to learn how to play the instruments.

One day, I venture out of town to Medeo — the name comes from an ancient nomadic tribe, Almaty's early settlers. This winter sports complex is famed for its ice-skating rink — the world's highest, brushing the clouds at over 1,670 metres above sea level. From here gondolas trundle gently up the fir tree clad slopes to Shymbulak ski resort, though if you don't like heights, it's probably wise not to look down during the 20-minute ride. It buzzes with souvenir shops and restaurants and I choose a restaurant called Chalet for lunch. With friendly staff and mountain vistas, it proves the ideal place to mellow out al fresco in the thin sunlight while enjoying thick, creamy lentil soup, freshly baked bread and a huge Caesar salad. Woolly blankets are provided to wrap yourself in if you feel a chill in the air.

Kazakh food is traditionally meat heavy, and though veggies like me are still regarded as slightly odd, I find that I am able to find appealing, though sometimes limited, menu choices.

But time flies and after a few nights in Almaty it's back to the airport for the one-and-a-half-hour flight to Astana, Kazakhstan's other significant city. Since 1997, it has been the country's purpose-built capital.

It wasn't hard to name it — in the local language, Astana means "capital."

Peering from the Air Astana plane window, all I can see after Almaty disappears from view is a flat, dry nothingness, stretching into who-knows-where. Then as I begin to think I'll never see civilization again, Astana rises from the barren steppe, making a brazen appearance with wide, traffic-filled highways and oddly shaped buildings, some poking the sky.

British architect Norman Foster is responsible for some amazing structures here, including Khan Shatyr shopping mall and entertainment centre, a huge, transparent tent-shaped structure containing a merry hub of shopping opportunities, theatres, a monorail and restaurants. On the top floor, there is even a beach resort with swathes of sand imported from Dubai. Unsurprisingly it is popular in this, the world's biggest land-locked country.

Another of Foster's works is the pyramid shaped Palace of Peace and Reconciliation, home to conference and exhibition spaces and an underground opera house. The 130 doves painted on the stained glass apex represent the 130 nationalities living in Kazakhstan. Some of the crazier buildings have nicknames; a towering yellow office block is "The Banana", while a circular blue building is "The Dog Bowl." The Baiterek Tower, designed by the country's president, resembles a 90-metre-high football trophy. Only in Astana!

This unique, welcoming country is so vast that several visits are necessary to cover even part of it. During my short stay, I only skim the surface, which of course provides me with another reason to return. •

• Air Astana offers direct flights from London, Paris and Frankfurt to Astana. Air Astana Holidays can add stopover transfers and hotel accommodation to make up a complete package. For more information go to <http://www.airastana.com/uk/en-US>

TOUR
EAST
HOLIDAYS

THE 2018-2019 JOURNEYS BROCHURE IS NOW AVAILABLE!

Request for your free copy of the brochure and let us walk alongside you in creating the perfect journey.





On The *Trail* Of a Canadian killer

STORY & PHOTOS BY JOHN GODDARD

Cyclists who follow Ontario's lovely Elora Cataract Trailway literally end up in 'Poor House'

CATARACT, ON. — I am following the escape route of a deranged killer. Don't worry, it's now a cycling trail — one of the most scenic in Ontario — with the spectacular Elora Gorge at one end and the stunning Forks of the Credit Provincial Park at the other. Between them lie expansive cornfields and horse pastures, punctuated by rural towns and such sights as the Shand Dam across the Grand River, and the former 19th-century County Poor House, last refuge for the down and out.

While the trail makes an idyllic weekend diversion, it also retains a connection to one of the most disturbing crimes in early Canadian history. In 1894, a vagabond named Amédée Châtellet, originally from Saint-Hyacinthe, Que., met 13-year-old Jessie Keith on the railway tracks outside of Listowel, north of Stratford. In a burst of

horror never properly explained, he killed her, violated her body, and butchered her in a way that recalled the Jack-the-Ripper murders six years earlier in London.

After the attack, the tramp hitched buggy rides north to Palmerston, then headed east by foot along the tracks toward Elora. He bypassed the town but three kilometres farther on connected to a rail line leading to the village of Cataract, where part-time police constable and bus driver William Wilson slapped handcuffs on him. Seven months later, Châtellet was hanged in the courtyard at Stratford Jail. In 1992, the final stretch of his escape route reopened as the 47-kilometre Elora Cataract Trailway.

On arrival, I take a leisurely tour of the sights. Elora calls itself "Ontario's most beautiful village," partly for its picturesque setting on the Grand River leading to a 22-metre-deep gorge, and partly



People who follow the Forks of the Credit Provincial Park trail walk in the footsteps of killer Amédée Châtellet, who terrorized the entire province of Ontario when he killed Jessie Keith and made his escape through the area now the park. Many of the buildings and landmarks, like the Elora Gorge, top photo, still exist.

for its 19th-century buildings now functioning as restaurants, galleries and art studios. William Gilkison's former gristmill, dating to the mid-1800s, remains the local heritage showpiece, currently under restoration. It is scheduled to reopen in 2018 as a restaurant, hotel, spa and wedding centre.

I visit the lushly wooded Victoria Park, high on the riverbank, to watch kayakers bob and plunge far below through whitewater rapids. In the parking lot, signs mark out a "horse and buggy only" section for Mennonites visiting from surrounding farms.

My primary destination at the start of this overnight trip, however, is the former County Poor House, or House of Industry and Refuge, now a museum and national historic site. To find it, I ride the railway out of town but there are no signs to point the way. I get lost. I end up in Fergus, double back, then on another trail stop

two people to ask directions. I'm in luck. They turn out to be Gail Brown and Barry McCarthy, artists connected to both the railway and the museum.

"Make sure you see the railway exhibit," Barry says. "Gail put it together."

"Not just me — I only helped," Gail says. "Barry did the oil painting of the Elora Mill that takes up almost an entire wall."

I tell them I'm riding the railway tomorrow in the footsteps of Amédée Châtellet.

"We don't know that story," Gail says. "Send it and I'll share it with the association (volunteers that maintain the route)."

Soon I am peddling hard uphill to an imposing limestone edifice. Built in 1877, the House of Industry and Refuge served for 70 years as the shelter of last resort for the "deserving poor" —



I AM CHASING MOMENTS

D7500 | f/4 | 17 mm | 1/5000s | ISO 200



I AM THE NEW NIKON D7500. Don't let a great moment escape you. Equipped with a 20.9MP DX-CMOS sensor, 51-point AF and ISO 100 to 51200, the new Nikon D7500 can achieve stunning images in low light and has a continuous shooting speed of 8 fps. Wherever you move, an intuitive, tilting touch screen and slim body with deep grip offer added agility, and you can share your images in an instant to your smart device*. Alternatively, capture movies in incredibly sharp 4K UHD to relive again and again. Go chase. Visit [Nikon.ca](https://www.nikon.ca)

*This camera's built-in Bluetooth® capability can only be used with compatible smart devices. The Nikon SnapBridge application must be installed on the device before it can be used with this camera. For compatibility and to download the SnapBridge application, please visit Google Play® and App Store. The BLUETOOTH® word mark and logos are registered trademarks owned by Bluetooth SIG, Inc. and Google Play® is a trademark of Google Inc.





Priority parking in Elora means “horse and buggy only,” for Mennonite visitors from surrounding farms.

people destitute through mental or physical disability, the death of a spouse, or simple bad luck.

I see the temporary railway show, which includes Gail’s watercolours and information panels. I can’t miss Barry’s giant oil painting, beautifully rendered. I also spend time with the main permanent exhibition, spread throughout the building.

Life was hard in 19th-century Ontario. People fell through the cracks and the museum tells their heart-wrenching stories. Included is the surprising one of Jane Lewis, last surviving member of the Brooks Bush Gang that preyed on travellers in Toronto’s Don Valley. Accepted into the Poor House in 1878, she quickly became attached to an abandoned baby.

“(Although she is) without the slightest trace of the milk of human kindness in her coarsely cut features,” a newspaper article said at the time, “it is a marvel to us that she takes such an interest in a helpless orphan.”

I spend the night in Elora at the Village Inn, a cyclist-friendly place that lets me park my bike in the room. The next morning, I officially start my ride. After 3.5 kilometres, I leave the trail for the St. David Street Bridge in downtown Fergus, where in 1894 townsfolk David Mennie and a Miss Forrester saw a man matching the wanted killer’s description. They gave witness statements to John Wilson Murray, the real-life detective who inspired Toronto novelist Maureen Jennings to create Detective William Murdoch, of the long-running *Murdoch Mysteries* TV series.

From the bridge, Chattelle would have seen the 1876 Beatty Brothers Farm Implement Manufacturing stone building, now Fergus Marketplace on the River, and the

1883 Marshall Block at the bridge’s north corner, now under restoration.

Back on the railway, I settle into the ride. Counties throughout southern Ontario are creating recreational trails from old rail lines, and the Elora-Cataract route stands out as a model. The track is of smooth, crushed gravel. Each kilometre is marked. Gates keep out cars and warn of road crossings.

Soon I am peddling over the roaring Shand Dam, built in 1942 to create the Belwood Lake reservoir, now a conservation area. At Belwood village in 1894, grain dealer James Goodall saw the suspected killer loitering at the train station. Farther down the line, James Collins saw him at Hillsburg station. No trace of either post remains, although at Hillsburg the trail crosses “Station Street.”

The air is warm and fresh. A double line of trees sometimes curls over itself into a tunnel. I am enjoying the ride but also trying to imagine Chattelle’s emotional torment as he walked bundled against late-October cold. Three days after the killing, at 15 minutes to noon, he walked into Erin station, eyed by station agent J.D. Leitch and baggage handler William Travis.

“That’s a pretty hard-looking seed,” Travis said. “I’ll bet you a quarter that’s the murderer of Jessie Keith.”

At first they let him pass. Then they rounded up a posse that arrested Chattelle at Cataract, now the railway terminus.

Most of the killer’s known travel route along railway tracks three weeks before and after the murder has reverted to farmland. Thanks to the Elora Cataract Trailway, however, the final stretch remains accessible for recreation and reflection. •

10

TOP HIKING TRAILS IN ONTARIO

1 Bruce Trail: This is the premier trail in Ontario and follows the lovely Niagara Escarpment from Niagara to the tip of the Bruce Peninsula.

2 Bon Echo Provincial Trail: This trail features some stiff challenges so beware and be prepared. Mazinaw Rock is the big attraction on this trail and once you get to it, you’ll see why it’s so popular.

3 Point Pelee National Park: This is a soft adventure park that’s perfect for family outings. The boardwalk trail over the park’s world-famous marshes is something the smallest members of your family will really appreciate.

4 Coastal Trail: Follows the Lake Superior shoreline and cuts through some rugged Canadian Shield landscape, but offers some breathtaking scenery.

5 Nokomis Trail: Another Lake Superior beauty where you can explore myriad of trails and experience the moods of mighty Lake Superior.

6 Kabeyun Trail: Lake Superior is never far from sight on this wonderful escape that offers beaches, coves and plenty of rugged terrain.

7 Bluff Trail, Awenda Provincial Park: Just a two-hour drive from Toronto, this park near Penetanguishene on Georgian Bay is well worth the drive north – it offers 29 kilometres of trails.

8 The Ganaraska Trail: This connects Port Hope with the Bruce Trail near Glen Huron and offers over 400 kilometres of trails. You could spend a month walking and never see it all.

9 La Cloche-Silhouette Trail: It takes almost two weeks to complete this trail but with its Group of Seven scenery, no one complains about walking this beauty.

10 Casque Iles Trail: This award-winning trail in northwestern Ontario is divided into five parts, each one equally beautiful and challenging. There’s lots of cobble beaches on this trail.



‘Picture Perfect’ Patagonia

STORY & PHOTOS BY HEATHER LEA

A poster comes to life with
a visit to the natural beauty

CHACABUCO VALLEY, CHILE — I remember my first glimpse of Patagonia. My parents had given me a calendar of mountain images one Christmas and the photo for November — Patagonia — was so alarmingly beautiful, I thought it was fake.

After the calendar year passed, I carefully tore that picture out and pasted it inside the canopy of my truck before a climbing road trip. I would lay



Patagonia has to be seen to be totally appreciated. Photos, even these beautiful images, just don't do it justice. Looking out on the wall of mountains that frames Patagonia is a breathtaking experience that so few people get the chance to do.

Fall in love with
Switzerland.

Before you even
arrive there.

Book now on
[swiss.com](https://www.swiss.com)



on top of my sleeping bag staring at the photo's charcoal walls of perfect, unscarred rock that stood like a fortress above a precious lake coloured like the waters of the Caribbean. Lining its shores and stretching out to cover the vast landscape was a carpet of short, sturdy brush with purple flowers. The contrast of the stark rock walls and the delicate purple petals made my heart melt.

Being a 20-something avid hiker and rock climber at the time, I wanted to go there to see for myself if this "picture" perfect place at the end of the Earth truly exists.

Twenty years later, that picture comes alive when my boyfriend and I reach Patagonia on our whirlwind round the world trip. Tears roll down my cheeks when the three granite towers of Torres del Paine come into view.

Later, while on a day hike, I'm literally left breathless when I see Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre, whose jagged peaks rise like fingers into a low-hanging sky.

During our travels, Dave and I visited many world-famous places that had captured our hearts through photos. While most were truly impressive to see in person, some were sadly disappointing. The crowds of tourists would take away from the experience, or, worse, we would find these sacred places littered with garbage or otherwise unkempt.

Patagonia was the exception.

A photograph, no matter how beautiful, just does not do this spe-



Patagonia's snow-capped peaks jut into the low-hanging sky and are reflected in the crystal-clear lakes that sit at the base of the jagged mountains. Fall colours only enhance the beauty of the granite behemoths.

World's 5-star airline.

5-star journeys to East Asia.

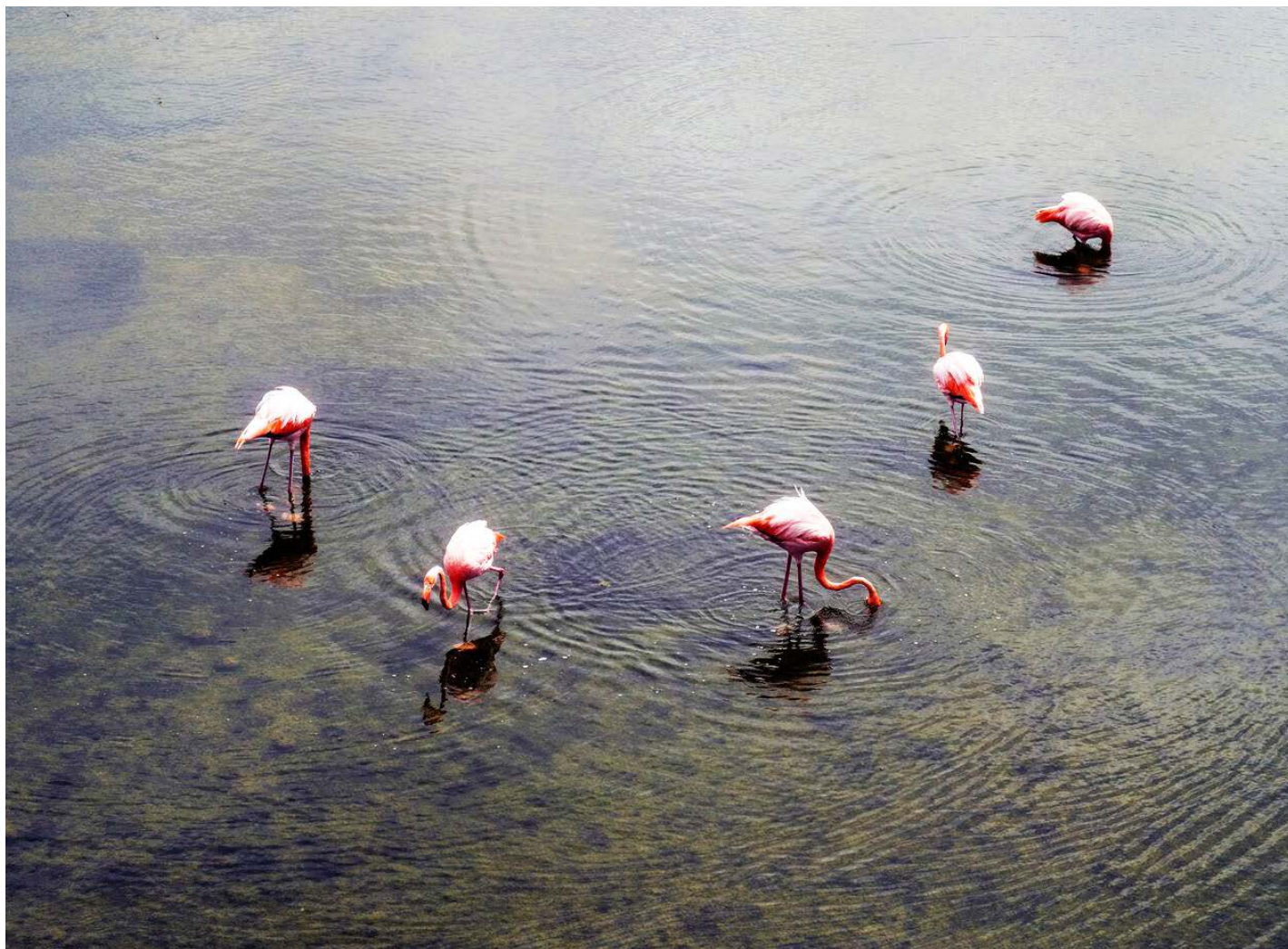
A colourful blend of culture and places.

From idyllic countryside to bustling cities, East Asia exudes a charming appeal that's hard to resist. Whether it's mouth-watering local cuisine or remains of ancient magnificent monuments, East Asia offers plenty to discover. So fly to East Asia with us on our growing network of over 125 destinations. Getting there is easy, but deciding what to do isn't.

Bali • Bangkok • Beijing • Chongqing • Guangzhou • Hanoi • Ho Chi Minh City
Hong Kong • Jakarta • Kuala Lumpur • Manila • Osaka • Phnom Penh • Phuket
Seoul • Shanghai • Singapore • Tokyo • Yangon

Launching soon Chengdu

For more information, please visit qatarairways.com



A flock of flamingos look for their dinner in a clear mountain lake. The Patagonia region is a safe haven for many bird species.

cial place justice. The adjective has not yet been written that can best describe Patagonia's beauty.

We arrived in April, which is autumn in the southern-hemisphere. Unquestionably this is the best time of year to be in Patagonia. From June to August, many amenities are closed and from December to March, peak rates apply. During the fall, though, Patagonia sees far less travellers, reservations are seldom needed and tourist services are often discounted.

As I read more about this region that covers 258,000 acres and is shared by Chile and Argentina, I learned all about its sometimes gruelling and inhospitable climate.

The reason the monolithic peaks looked so smooth and unblemished during the summer was because of winds travelling upwards of 120 km/h blast across their faces, creating a power-washing type of exfoliation.

In winter, these same peaks wear a prickly coat of impenetrable hoar frost while their tops are covered in thick clouds stretched like snagged cotton balls on their spiky points. Each year, climbers attempt to summit Patagonia's famous monoliths, like Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre, and are beaten into submission from storms that frequently blow in with little warning.

Exploring during the months of March to May means the winds are far less intense, storms have settled down and colour is at its best for photography.

While hiking along a colourful 20-km loop that started in the sweet little Argentinean town of El Chaltén, the scenery looked like an artist had taken red, yellow and orange paints and created

the jaw dropping scene.

Even when it wasn't sunny, the colours seemed to stand out more. For example, a certain shade of turquoise is much more prevalent when it's cloudy in the depth of the glaciers, which during the past several years are actually advancing in some areas of Patagonia.

We were hoping to arrive early enough in the fall to taste the calafate berries, an indigenous blueberry look-alike that flourishes under trees and shrubs in the lower hills. Local folklore suggests, "anyone who eats a calafate berry will return to Patagonia's captivating landscape."

While Dave and I didn't get to taste the berries, there remains a deep urge to return regardless.

Patagonia remains a place highly protected by activists and visitors to the region. A new national park is underway in Chile's Chacabuco Valley, encircling 650,000 acres for public access. Torres Del Paine is already a National Park of 448,283 acres, which was first established in 1959 and designated a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 1978.

In Patagonia, you'll find everything from grasslands, pampas and even deserts to beaches, lakes and forests. It's not just a place for hardcore mountaineers or hard-brained geologists. Day hikes and multi-day treks are among the more popular activities, but many people come for fly fishing, horseback riding and photography tours as well.

It is a highly rewarding place that requires some effort to get to, but you'll never regret going and Patagonia will become a picture in your mind. •

AIRFRANCE KLM

You are the heart of our service

You are sure to have a pleasant flight. KLM's staff are always happy to help. Experience what good service feels like.
klm.ca

Royal Dutch Airlines





Travel is in the *Cards*

For those with the right rewards program

SPECIAL REPORT BY IAN CRUICKSHANK

TRAVEL IS A UNIQUE BUSINESS. Part of it is an industrial juggernaut, dependent upon big-shouldered cruise ships, fleets of airplanes and skyscraper high hotels. But at its core, travel is an emotional experience, a way to create lifelong memories and to recharge batteries in an increasingly frenetic world. And that's why earning and redeeming travel reward points and miles is so important. With some smart planning, travel reward credit cards can pay for your next vacation. The problem, of course, is where do you start. Currently, Canadians can choose from more than 100 credit card loyalty programs, each featuring slightly different tweaks. Magnifying the fine print is Patrick Sojka, the guru of travel rewards. In 2001, the Calgary-based Sojka launched www.rewardscanada.ca, which is now the definitive source for information on the industry and includes an annual ranking of travel reward credit cards, a weekly



roundup podcast and reports on the latest deals on dozens of programs.

"When we started, there was a growing buzz around reward points but no one was covering the space in Canada," says Sojka. "Today, interest in rewards programs has exploded and Canadians are now considered some of the most active and engaged collectors in the world."

Rewarding Facts

The Canadian Bankers Association (CBA) reveals stunning stats on credit cards:

- According to the CBA, there are now more than 68.5 million MasterCard and VISA cards in circulation in Canada. These cards were used in \$452 billion worth of annual purchases, with the average purchase coming in around \$100.

- The CBA also reports that 58 per cent of Canadians pay their credit card balance in full every month and that credit cards account for approximately 5 per cent of household debt.

- Seventy-two per cent of Canadians carry at least one credit card that has a rewards program and for 82 per cent of Canadians, rewards are a priority when selecting a credit card. (In fact, 92 per cent of Canadians believe that consumers have a responsibility to shop around for a credit card that best meets their needs.)

- Credit cards are the engine driving the e-commerce boom. Last year, Canadians used their credit cards for \$30 billion worth of online transactions.

Travel trends

- The best rewards cards let you use your points to cover almost any sort of travel or perk. A poll released by TripAdvisor shows just what consumers are looking for when they plan their vacations.

- The Travel Barometer revealed that free amenities are big influencers on where we book. At the top of the list were no-cost WiFi in the room, free breakfasts, free parking, free shuttle and taxi service and free pillow menu. The poll also concluded that female travellers care more about the free shuttle services while males were more concerned about the quality of the bar.

of coverage periods and types of activities and illnesses that are excluded from coverage. For instance, if you are travelling nine weeks prior to or after giving birth, some cards will not cover you if any medical issues arise that are related to the pregnancy. Also, if you are young (or young at heart) and go to a party say in Cancun during Spring Break, many of the cards will not cover you for medical emergencies that happen while you are intoxicated. •

Over the past 16 years, Sojka has compiled a list of tips which help consumers pick and then use a credit card profitably — everything on how to use your loyalty program to double and even triple-dip with purchases to gain extra miles, to revealing which cards are worth the annual fee. Do they offer the freedom to use points on any airline or any kind of travel, with no blackout dates? And can you use points to cover all the costs of travel, including taxes and fees?

He also recommends joining a variety of travel related rewards programs such as those offered by hotels and car rental agencies. "That way, you get into their databases and when they start offering deals on room rates and rentals, you will be the first to know."

Lately, Sojka has noticed an uptick in questions about credit cards and their emergency travel medical insurance coverage. "I've received a number of emails, asking me about what kind of things are covered in the fine print. It is a real concern for people when they are selecting a card."

Sojka has put together a summary of cards and their medical insurance coverage on his website and stresses that before picking a card primarily for the travel medical insurance coverage, be sure to read the policy closely to see what is and isn't covered, length

TOUR
EAST
HOLIDAYS

IMAGES OF VIETNAM & CAMBODIA GROUP TOUR

13 DAYS | 12 NIGHTS

Travel to Indochina on this group tour of Vietnam & Cambodia seeing the highlights while also immersing yourself in the regional cultures to further enrich your journey. Walk the maze of streets in Hanoi's Old Quarter before hopping on a pedalled rickshaw, cruise the stunning scenery of Halong Bay on an overnight boat trip, travel to Central Vietnam to explore the cities of Hue & Hoi An, take walking tours, dine on traditional cuisine and meet the people who call this place home. Travel to Cambodia and explore the fascinating temples of Angkor.

2018 Departures:

Feb.26, Mar.18, Apr.16, Sep.21,
Oct.15, Nov.6, Dec.5

\$2495
per person

WWW.TOUREAST.COM



There are over 30 boutique wineries scattered throughout the Texas Hill Country just outside charming Fredericksburg.

Texas wine town *Accents* the good times

STORY & PHOTOS BY MARC ATCHISON

‘Happy’ Fredericksburg the gateway to wine country

FREDERICKSBURG, TX — In a room filled with Texas twang, Richard Beaupre’s lyrical French accent stands out like a ballerina at a rodeo. “Mon dieu, it’s so good to speak French with someone,” says Beaupre, the former Montréalais who, along with his partner Jordan Muraclia own Vaudeville, an avant guard establishment that’s part hip bistro/part art gallery/part retail shop and one of the main tourist attractions in this tidy West Texas town.

“Jordan and I came here a few years ago from Denver and fell in love with Fredericksburg,” says the Québécois native of his adopted city that was first settled by German immigrants 160 years ago.

“We bought this building (a three-storey dollhouse design that dates back to Fredericksburg’s earleast days) and want-



The vineyards in the West Texas Hill Country attract an abundance of butterflies, maybe because each of the properties features some lovely gardens.



Switzerland.
by train, bus and boat.

The most delightful way to experience Switzerland.



On the move with Swiss Travel System. Experience steep mountain railways, breath-taking bus rides and unforgettable boat tours. All you need is the Swiss Travel Pass. [MySwitzerland.com/rail](https://www.myswitzerland.com/rail)

Our partner

RAIL EUROPE

ed to create something unique,” Beaupre tells us as our server delivers entrees from a kitchen located in the lower floor of the popular Vaudeville.

“They like my French accent here,” smiles the charming Beaupre, who says the people of Fredericksburg speak “a German dialect that’s unique to this area.”

As unique as Beaupre is to Fredericksburg, so too is Vaudeville, which stands out from the shops along Main Street that sell mostly American kitsch. On the main floor of Vaudeville, Beaupre, a former model, showcases sophisticated and elegant items that he and Muraclia have purchased on their many trips abroad. The top floor of Vaudeville is where you’ll find fine art.

“We have a passion for home furnishings and decor and our café offers Texans a special brand of cuisine not normally offered in these parts,” says Breaupre, whose café also features specialty meats and cheeses and a wide variety of wine, much of it produced in the rolling Texas Hill Country surrounding Fredericksburg.

The unusually wide Main Street of Fredericksburg is normally crowded with cars — the city has become a favoured weekend getaway for people from San Antonio and Austin — and was originally constructed that way to accommodate the large ox carts the early settlers used to haul their farm products to the weekly market.

Billed as the “Happiest Town in Texas” — what else would you call a city where it’s legal to walk around with an open bottle of beer — Fredericksburg is home to over 300 festivals annually and its three-day Oktoberfest draws people from around the world — even Germany.

The town’s population of 11,000 swells to double and triple that on weekends and during large festivals, the 150 boutiques assembled along the six blocks that make up Main Street offer some locally-made handcrafts for the tourists to take home.

The one item that most people leave with is wine — Texans are proud of their wine industry and there’s over 30 boutique wineries scattered throughout the Hill Country.

“The wine here is really quite good and this region is well suited for wine making,” says Beaupre, who compares West Texas wine to what is produced in the Burgundy region of France. High praise indeed.

“The wine we feature in our restaurant is mostly from this region and I really encourage you to visit some of the vineyards and enjoy the samplings.”

I don’t need much convincing and soon I find myself driving along Hwy. 290, a.k.a. the “Texas Wine Route,” which begins just outside Fredericksburg. The fertile landscape in this part of Hill Country is flush with vines at this time of year (early Oc-



Fredericksburg’s main street is full of neat antique shops and is dominated by a bronze statue of WWII hero Admiral Chester Nimitz, who was from this Texas town. Wine tastings at nearby vineyards attract a lot of visitors.



JUST THE FACTS

- Vaudeville is located at 230 E Main St. Fredericksburg. For more information, go to <http://www.vaudeville-living.com>
- If you’d like information on the Becker Winery, go to <http://www.beckervineyards.com/>
- The best way to get to Fredericksburg is through San Antonio. Air Canada offers direct flights to San Antonio from Toronto.
- For information on San Antonio, go to <http://www.visitsanantonio.com>

tober) and heavy with fruit — Mourvedre grapes are what vintners here prefer using. The highway snakes past neatly-kept fields crowned with handsome homes where local winemakers live. Soon I arrive at the entrance of the Becker Winery — “the best producers in Hill Country,” I remember Beaupre telling me.

Becker is one of 15 vineyards that border the Wine Route and its parking lot is full when I arrive. Not surprising since Becker’s wines are celebrated as being among the best — it was even nominated as “Best Winery in America” by *Wine Enthusiast* magazine in 2015.

The tasting room at Becker is overflowing with people — the vineyard’s Cabernet Sauvignon is in high demand — and one of the servers tells me Richard and Bunny Becker are the inspiration behind the winery.

“The Beckers bought the land we are sanding on in 1990 and found some Mustang grapes, which the early German settlers had planted. From that the Becker winery grew — the first plantings went into the ground in 1992 and we had our first harvest in 1995,” she tells me while pouring a sample of a Cabernet-Syrah blend — not as good as the Cabernet Sauvignon.

The Becker winery now produces over 100,000 cases a year and its wine has even made its way inside the White House — served at state dinners — and the legendary James Bear House.

The Becker farm is lovingly cared for by about 50 people and also features peach orchards and lots of native wildflowers, which attract an impressive variety of butterflies.

They say everything is bigger and better in Texas and Fredericksburg and the state’s wine industry are proof of that. ●



ROYAL *Laurel*

Endless Passion for Service



Best Leading Actress of
Golden Bell Awards 楊采妮

Inviting Relaxation
Feel as though you're resting on a cloud. Relax, release your stress, let your thoughts wander and fly with the wind.



Taking The *High Road* In Romania



The Transfagarasan Mountain Highway in Transylvania cuts through some dramatic mountain scenery in Romania and leads travellers on a journey of discovery in this oft-overlooked destination.

STORY & PHOTOS BY CRISTINA HURÉ

Transfagarasan highway puts visitors on the right track

CURTEA DE ARGEŞ , ROMANIA — Often times, the place you call home is the one least explored. Romania is actually a second home for me, where I was born but not raised, where I spent my summers as a child and where I feel most connected.

While Romania gets a bad rap globally because of some internal issues, overall, the country is one of the most beautiful in Europe and has so much to offer visitors. Its remarkable Black Sea coastline, its awesome Carpathian Mountains, Dracula's

world-renowned castle in Bran, idyllic countryside and, of course, bustling Bucharest, all add up to one terrific holiday.

Oh, I almost forgot to mention the Transfagarasan Mountain Highway in Transylvania — one of the most spectacular roads in the world.

Year-after-year, when I go back to Romania and visit my family, I tell myself: "This year I'm going to do it — experience the Transfagarasan and make it all the way to the end of the road. This past year (2017), I finally did it."

You have to go at the right time, of course —

not too early in the spring because snow may still block the road until late June, maybe even into early July. But weather is always a factor on a mountain road that rises 2,134 metres into the clouds.

The Transfagarasan Highway runs approximately 114km through the Făgăraș Mountains, also known as the Transylvanian Alps. It starts in Cârțișoara, in the picturesque Olt Valley, and ends in Curtea de Argeș, a lovely city located on the right bank of the Argeș River.

The road is narrow and serpentine-like in many spots and can be quite dangerous — all part of the wonderful experience.

There are tunnels along the route and when you emerge you come face-to-face with some fascinating natural wonders, like picturesque Lake Vidrau. Considering the manmade lake consists of around 465 million cubic metres of water, its magnificence is hard to appreciate without seeing it in person — you would never know it's artificial.

There are many picture-perfect pit stops along the way and getting out of your car and looking back from a mountain-high position on the route you've just completed is all part of the fun and thrill of driving the Transfagarasan Highway.

A note from the wise: keep an eye out for the “street food” you'll encounter along the way. Roadside vendors will offer you local favourites like wild boar sausages, smoked deer meat, hand mixed cheeses, natural fruit syrup and water collected from fresh springs — all very good. One of my favourite things about travelling through rural Romania is the food, because it's so different from what we find in Canada. When's the last time you ate raw green onions for breakfast? Oh, so good!

I stuffed my face with the wild boar sausages and kurtos — spiral tubes of dough topped with cinnamon and walnuts that are found all over Romania.

At the peak of the Făgăraș Mountains, we stop for lunch at Bâlea Lake and admire a herd of sheep gathered in a valley below running together, like one giant white cloud, from the dog trying to herd them. Awesome!

Three hours later, we reach the end of the road in Curtea de Argeș and fight the temptation to get back in the car and retrace our steps along one of the world's great highways.

Maybe next year. •



The Transfagarasan Highway features some interesting mountain tunnels.



Roadside vendors offer travellers some local cuisine, like wild boar sausages.



Vidrau Lake, above, is so spectacular it's hard to believe it's artificial.



Watching sheep form like a cloud in the highway's valleys is a wonderful sight.



Getting to taste some of the local cuisine is all part of the fun.

10

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT ROMANIA

1 Romanian is a Latin/romance language, with Slavic influence and it's the only one of its kind in Eastern Europe. If you speak French, Spanish and especially Italian, Romanians will typically understand you. Don't assume you will understand Romanian though, the Slavic influence will make it sound more like Russian.

2 The legend of Dracula stems from Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia, also known as Vlad the Impaler. His nickname is a testament to the Prince's preferred method of dispensing his enemies.

3 Bucharest's old town is the most charming part of the city. For those who like to party, this is your spot.

4 Ciorba is a traditional Romanian soup that uses a sour liquid named bors as its base. Ciorba comes in many different variations, but it will always be sour and delicious! Fun fact: Romanians make one kind of ciorba with lettuce.

5 If you travel along the Danube River, you'll see a face carved into the river's rocky bank — it's a statue of the Dacian king, Decebal, and it's the tallest rock sculpture in Europe at almost 400 metres high.

6 The People's House, or the Palace of the Parliament, located in the centre of Bucharest, is considered the second largest building in the world, next to the Pentagon in Washington.

7 In the city of Brașov, you can find the largest Gothic church between Vienna, Austria and Istanbul.

8 In “The Valley of the Fairies” (Valea Zanelor in Romanian), sits a castle made of clay (Castelul de Lut), that looks exactly like a fairytale castle.

9 Romania has seven UNESCO World Heritage sites.

10 Although part of the European Union, Romania still uses its own currency — the leu — and not the euro. Directly translated to English, the word “leu” means “lion” and is worth approximately 30 per cent less than the Canadian dollar, another reason why Romania is such a great value for Canadian tourists.



STORY & PHOTOS BY AMY LAUGHINGHOUSE

German city on the Rhine a treasure chest of history, great food and fabulous wine

MAINZ, GERMANY — If you think Germany is all about beer and bratwurst, think again. In Mainz, the Wine Capital of Germany, vino flows as freely as the Rhine, which rushes to meet the Main River on the banks of this civilized city 40 kilometres southwest of Frankfurt.

Mainz, pronounced “Mines” (as in this wine is all mines), lies in the middle of Germany’s largest wine-growing region. Flanked by the vineyards of the Rheingau to the north and the Rheinhessen to the south, it’s a great destination for guzzlers of the grape.

You’ll find Riesling, of course, as well as Silvaner, another white varietal, and Dornfelder, a dark-skinned red grape. There are also bubblelicious Sekt sparklers from Goldhand (whose very name implies a hangover that could fell even the martini-swigging 007) and Kupferberg, which has a Sekt museum and the deepest-reaching cellars on earth.

It’s unwise, of course, to dive to the bottom of a bottle on an empty stomach. Fortunately, I have a reservation at Favorite Restaurant, located within the Favorite Parkhotel, about two kilometres southeast of the city’s historic centre. The kitchen is run by Philipp Stein, who became the youngest Michelin-starred chef in Germany when he joined that culinary firmament in 2014 at the age of 24.

As the sixth generation of a gourmet dynasty, Stein got an early start in the kitchen, helping his parents at their 111-year-old Steinstraube Restaurant from the age of 10. While that establishment focuses primarily on French and



The Old Town of Mainz, pronounced Mines, is filled with buildings dating back centuries. A short walk away, modern cuisine is presented by Michelin-star Chef Philipp Stein, left, at the fashionable Favorite Restaurant in the posh Favorite Parkhotel.

Your Gateway to Central & Eastern Europe

- state-of-the-art Dreamliner aircraft featuring 3 spacious cabins, cleaner air & smoother ride technology
- excellent connections
- awarded Best Eastern European Airline

Experience LOT Premium Class featuring:

- priority check-in
- 2 pieces of free checked baggage
- complimentary advance seat selection
- spacious seating with video screens, power & USB ports
- premium meals with complimentary wines and spirits

Get to know the
most delicious cities,
one dish at a time.





The Market Square in Mainz, left, is a beehive of activity on the days the market is in operation. Lots of regional treats are on display and afterwards visitors like to visit the city's historic landmarks like the Mainzer Dom, above, a 12th century Romanesque cathedral that dominates Old Town.

German cuisine, Stein frequently looks further afield for inspiration, having honed his flair for exotic international flavours while cooking on cruise ships.

Indeed, as I sit down to lunch, there's not a schnitzel in sight. Instead, I'm met with perfectly sculpted portions of inspired delicacies from around the globe, including a fish curry lollipop, delicate dollops of creamy burrata cheese with tomatoes, a decadent gateau of duck liver and Scottish salmon with shrimp served with mandarin orange juice and a hint of chili pepper. I nurse a glass of 2016 Rheinhessen Riesling from Keller as dessert arrives: salted caramel ice cream with amarena cherries, followed by a whimsical display of petit-fours in a miniature "forest" with little grazing deer. When I finally throw in the napkin, I'm pleasantly satiated, but not groaning at my gluttony, which is exactly as Stein would have it. "In my grandfather's day, they always asked their customers, 'Is it enough?'" he says. "Now, the question is, 'How tasty is it?'" One look at the empty plates my waiter has ferried away should be all the answer Stein needs.

For more typical local fare, I head to the market square outside the Mainzer Dom, the 12th-century Romanesque cathedral that dominates Old Town. On market days — Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, from around 7 a.m. until 2 p.m. — this place is buzzing. I rub shoulders with parents with prams, old folks, young folks and tourists toting suitcases as they weave through throngs browsing the outdoor stands. Tables and counters are stacked high with baked goods, cheese, olives and colourful floral bouquets. One vendor is selling what

JUST THE FACTS

Getting there: Mainz Hauptbahnhof train station is less than 30 minutes from Frankfurt Airport. Train info: <https://www.bahn.com/en/view/index.shtml>

Where to stay: The 4-star Favorite Parkhotel is aptly named, flanked by the Volkspark and the Stadtpark, near the banks of the Rhine River. While it's outside the historic city centre, it's worth the walk (or the bus ride), with a swimming pool, sauna, and heated loungers to ease your aching bones after a long day of sightseeing. On the weekend, many families pop into the hotel just to marvel at the aquarium in the lobby. <http://www.favorite-mainz.de/en/#>

Where to eat: At the Favorite Parkhotel, Favorite Restaurant serves Michelin-starred cuisine in an airy dining room overlooking the Rhine. From May through September, the hotel opens its beer garden, and there's a year-round wine bar, as well. <http://www.favorite-mainz.de/en/#>

Heiliggeist in central Mainz is a wonderfully atmospheric restaurant which looks like a Medieval church, with vaulted ceilings and antique carved statues. In fact, from the 13th to the 19th centuries, it served as a hospital/shelter/hostel and was converted into its present incarnation nearly 20 years ago. Try the excellent wild boar sausage, washed down with an affordably-priced selection of primarily local wines. <http://www.heiliggeist-mainz.de>

Tourism info: <http://www.germany.travel/en/index.html>;
<http://www.mainz.de/en/index.php>;
<http://www.historicgermany.travel>

must be at least a dozen types of potatoes. My favourite, though, is the egg stand, presided over by an extremely large — and

fortunately, fairly tame — rooster, who is so amenable to photos that I suspect he has his own Instagram account.

There are stalls hawking hot food, as well, from fried potato cakes to sausages and even pig cheeks.

"Those are very tender and delicious," says my guide, Annelies Paige. "You don't find so many of them because each pig has just two little cheeks."

So then, I assume we're talking about the ones on their face.

"We meet our friends at the market and we eat a little something," Paige says, gesturing to the crowds juggling handfuls of food and a glass of beer or wine. A casual breakfast at the market is so common that there's even a word for it, *marktfruhstuck*, which sounds like something I might say when I stub my toe.

With the post-lunch drowsy doldrums setting in, I fight off the urge to nap by exploring some of Mainz's other main attractions. Although 85 per cent of the city was damaged in World War II, you wouldn't know it today. Beautifully restored Baroque buildings surround the market square, and on Augustinerstrasse, lined with boutiques, cafés and restaurants, I admire an assortment of half-timbered buildings that look like life-sized gingerbread houses.

Augustinerstrasse presumably gets its name from the 18th-century St. Augustine's Church, with its elaborate ceiling frescoes, carved statues and marble columns accented with gold. This blingy, Baroque confection is a blinding contrast to the Mainzer Dom, where the chief adornments are murals depicting the life of Christ, nestled between the mighty stone columns of the

soaring nave. About a 10-minute walk southwest lies another famous church, St. Stephens. Founded in the 10th century, it has been added onto through the ages, most recently after heavy damage in World War II. The big story here is the stained glass, with nine windows designed by Marc Chagall. As a Jew, Chagall had fled France during the war, and his willingness to contribute to the church was viewed as a step toward a Jewish-German reconciliation. His windows feature scenes from the Old Testament, celebrating the stories shared by the Christian and Jewish faiths. Sunlight filters through the blue glass panes, filling the church with a melancholy, marine twilight.

Beyond intriguing ecclesiastical architecture and cuisine, Mainz has a few other aces up its sleeve, as well. Chief among them is the Gutenberg Museum, dedicated to Mainz's most famous native son and "the man of the millennium", Johannes Gutenberg. (Sorry, Steve Jobs).

Gutenberg introduced movable typeface to Europe in the mid 15th century, helping to usher in the Age of Enlightenment. His Gutenberg Bibles, only 49 of which still exist, are today among the world's most valuable books. Three of his volumes, amounting to one and a half Bibles, are on display at the museum, along with scores of other centuries-old tomes, including a Luther Bible from 1550.

Even at the time Gutenberg Bibles were printed, each would have cost the equivalent of one year's salary. But that wasn't enough to save Gutenberg from debt. In the end, he had to surrender his Bible business to his lender.

"Inventors are not always great business people," explains Paige, "but he did not die because of poverty. He just didn't become rich." In fact, Gutenberg lived for 68 years, which was pretty good innings in those days.

The museum also houses a replica of Gutenberg's press, which Paige demonstrates, explaining that one key component of the process was an ink pad covered with dog skin. "Why dog skin?" you might ask in horror, as I do. Because the unfortunate animals perspire through their mouths, rather than their skin. Since they have no pores, their hides are perfect for distributing ink.

If you pity the poor, poreless pups, then spare a thought for goats, as well, because the Bibles were originally printed on parchment made from their skin. I must admit, however, that I feel decidedly less sorry for lice, which were used to make red ink. Fortunately, in the 15th century, there was never any shortage of them.

Delving further back in time, I tour the Museum of Ancient Shipping, which features the remains — as well as glorious, life-sized replicas — of several wooden ships from the Romans' 4th-century Rhine fleet. As the second oldest city in Germany after Trier, Mainz was founded by the Romans in 13BC, and their ruins do tend to turn up in the most unlikely places, including the basement of a shopping mall.

Yes, nestled below the accessories stores and coffee shops of the Romerpasseage, there lies a shrine to the goddesses of Isis and Mater Magna, discovered during the mall's construction in 1999.

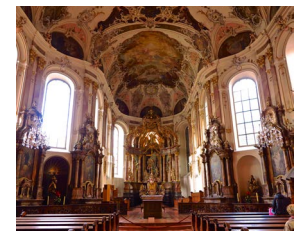
Today, its dimly lit foundations are surrounded by display cases filled with small statues and animal bones, offerings to the deities nearly 2,000 years ago.

Among these cases I also find the shrouded figure of a woman (a statu I hope), surrounded by bits of pottery from an even earlier Iron Age burial site that lay beneath the shrine. It's a ghostly, sobering vision, I must say.

But fortunately, in Mainz, the cure for sobriety is never far away. ☀



At the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz, visitors get to see some of the earliest printing presses.



The egg stand in the Old Town market is presided over by a preening rooster, who is so amenable to photos that one suspects he has his own Instagram account. The interior of St. Augustine's Church is stunning.



Mainz is known for its superior wines. But it also has a long history, dating back to Roman times. In fact, several Roman ships were unearthed in the city. The Museum of Ancient Shipping houses both the original remains and replicas, right.



A studio instead of a seat.
It's not business as usual.



Discover the difference of a Business Studio on our A380 and 787 Dreamliner. Eat when you want with menu guidance from our Food & Beverage Manager. Sleep on a large, flat bed, relax with noise-cancelling headsets or work using in-seat connection ports and mobile or Wi-Fi connectivity. The ideal space for work, rest and play.

Our A380 flies daily from Abu Dhabi to New York, Sydney and soon to Mumbai and Melbourne.

الإتihad
ETIHAD
AIRWAYS
ABU DHABI

Flying Reimagined



#Reimagined | etihad.com |



ARCTIC BLAST



Neil Ever Osborne

**Nikon Canada Ambassador
Neil Ever Osborne describes his
first trip to the Canadian Arctic
with fellow Nikon Ambassador
Michelle Valberg, a veteran
of the North**

IT WAS MY FIRST visit to the Canadian Arctic and the land welcomed me just like Michelle Valberg — my fellow Nikon Ambassador, *TravelLife* contributor and avid Arctic photographer — said it would. We were there for seven days on behalf of First Air and Nunavut Tourism, creating imagery for the two organizations. Michelle was focused on taking pictures of the serene beauty and any close encounters we had with wildlife. I was looking through my lens to create images that connected people and planet.

I was just beginning to observe this part of the world and realize how fortunate I was to step foot here, so I could not have asked for a better travelling companion than Michelle. She told me that she'd been coming to this place for more than a decade and that this year she would complete her 50th visit.

"It's more than flat, white and cold," she said. "The Arctic has so much to offer."

On the occasion of meeting our guide for the first time, he introduced himself as Jimmy. I noticed his missing thumb first, then his smile. He was a gentle man, understated but you could tell he had some good stories. We first chatted about logistics — it seems you can never be too prepared for an Arctic excursion. But, it didn't take long for our 63-year-old guide to tell me he was born in an igloo and many more tales followed.

This was the coldest I had ever been. During the trip I couldn't expose any skin. My Nikon cameras frosted over, though they kept on working.

Nunavut's Arctic landscape quickly reminds you of how well-prepared you need to be. But for those who come equipped, an adventure into the true wilderness awaits.

After an eight-hour snow machine ride south from Cambridge Bay toward the horizon, I explored the area where we camped with endless curiosity. To stay on the safe side, I remained within sight



Arctic Photo Tips

Plan for the Cold

1

Power up

Bring extra batteries and expect your equipment to frost over.

2

Use resources around you

The snow machine engine can warm up your mittens!

3

Don't lose your mittens

Make sure you tie them together with a piece of string.

4

Bring some foot warmers

Drop these packets of warmth into your boots and extend your day.

5

Remember to stay hydrated

Even in the Arctic, you have to drink water!

of my guides but later that day, Michelle told me I may have wandered a little too far. I couldn't help it, I was drawn by the texture of the snow, intoxicated by the possibility of seeing my first wolf or muskox.

Michelle often says: "I wish every Canadian could experience the Arctic." Now that I am here, I wholeheartedly understand.

In this frozen environment, any sort of comfort becomes your safety blanket, so when Jimmy lit the lantern in his hunting cabin on the mainland, across from the frozen Northwest Passage, we found refuge in the simple things, and a place to call home. On the road, I'm constantly grateful for these little moments of comfort.

We camped for two nights on the tundra before a blizzard forced us back to Jimmy's cabin again. My sleeping bag was good to -40C and, I must admit, I wasn't cold. In fact, I unzipped the side to poke my toe out during the night. Inside Jimmy's cabin, I watched the cold air come in the door each time one of us went out. When we weren't out exploring, we were inside listening to Jimmy's stories of wolverines, grizzly bears and caribou. The Arctic does indeed inspire.

My first visit to the Canadian Arctic gave me a first-hand look at Nunavut's beautifully rugged landscape and inspired countless incredible photos. It's a trip I'll never forget. •



Guide James "Jimmy" Haniliak steps outside his cabin, above, on the frozen mainland — a day-long journey south of Cambridge Bay. Left, a typical Arctic scene outside Cambridge Bay. Below, left, Jimmy lights a lantern inside his cabin and below is the outside view from inside Jimmy's cabin.



NIKON AMBASSADOR
C A N A D A

Neil Ever Osborne is a Toronto based visual storyteller who uses his photography and filmmaking to express the relationship between people and planet. Neil is recognized as a Nikon Ambassador, an Associate Fellow of the International League of Conservation Photographers, a Fellow with the Royal Canadian Geographic Society, and as an inaugural member of Canadian Geographic's Photographer-In-Residence program.

Learn more about the Nikon Canada Ambassadors at <http://www.nikon.ca/ambassadors>

Find Nikon Canada at: <http://nikon.ca>

I AM A STORYTELLER



100
million
NIKKOR

Do you have a story to tell? Whatever it is, you can tell it even better with the AF-S DX NIKKOR 35mm f/1.8G. It's designed to capture stunning portraits in all their glory. So you never miss that perfect moment. And for sharp, beautiful, extreme close-ups, try the AF-S DX Micro NIKKOR 85mm f/3.5G ED VR. nikon.ca

Nikon th100
anniversary



A photograph taken from inside a building, looking out through a large, arched wooden door. The door is made of dark, weathered wood and has several metal hinges and a latch visible. The view outside is a lush green valley. In the foreground, there is a small cemetery with several stone grave markers, some of which are decorated with flowers. In the middle ground, a prominent stone church with a tall, pointed steeple stands on a hill. The background is filled with dense green forests covering rolling hills.

Trip Back To
10th Century
Catalonia

Unlocks

Region's
Romanesque
Treasures



Churches built in the Romanesque style during the 10th and 11th centuries have stood the test of time and offer insight into ancient Catalonia.

STORY & PHOTOS BY MARC ATCHISON

SANT CUGAT, CATALONIA — The narrow, corkscrew highway I'm nervously navigating is known as the Via Romanesque (Road) and it zigzags through the Pyrenees, dipping dramatically into the bosom of the great mountain range before rising again as high as the pointed peaks.

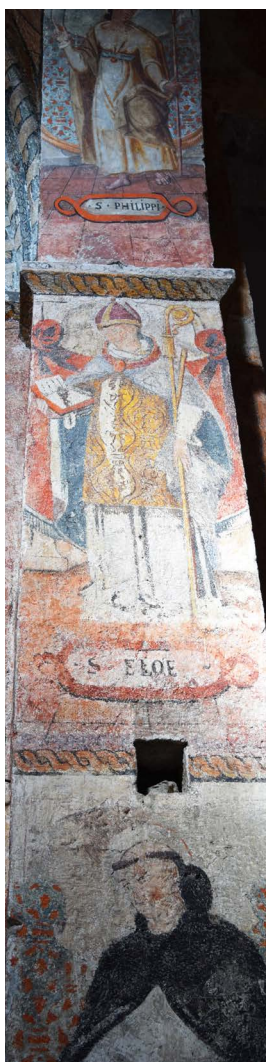
My pulse quickens every time my little rental dives into one of the many hairpin turns — this must be the road where Spain's two-time Formula 1 world auto racing champion Fernando Alonso perfected his driving skills.

Every so often, a yawning mountain tunnel swallows my little car and spits me out into Medieval Catalonia where the parched landscape has changed little over time and remains punctuated by the ancient Romanesque architecture I've come to admire — churches, castles and villages dating back to the 10th century.

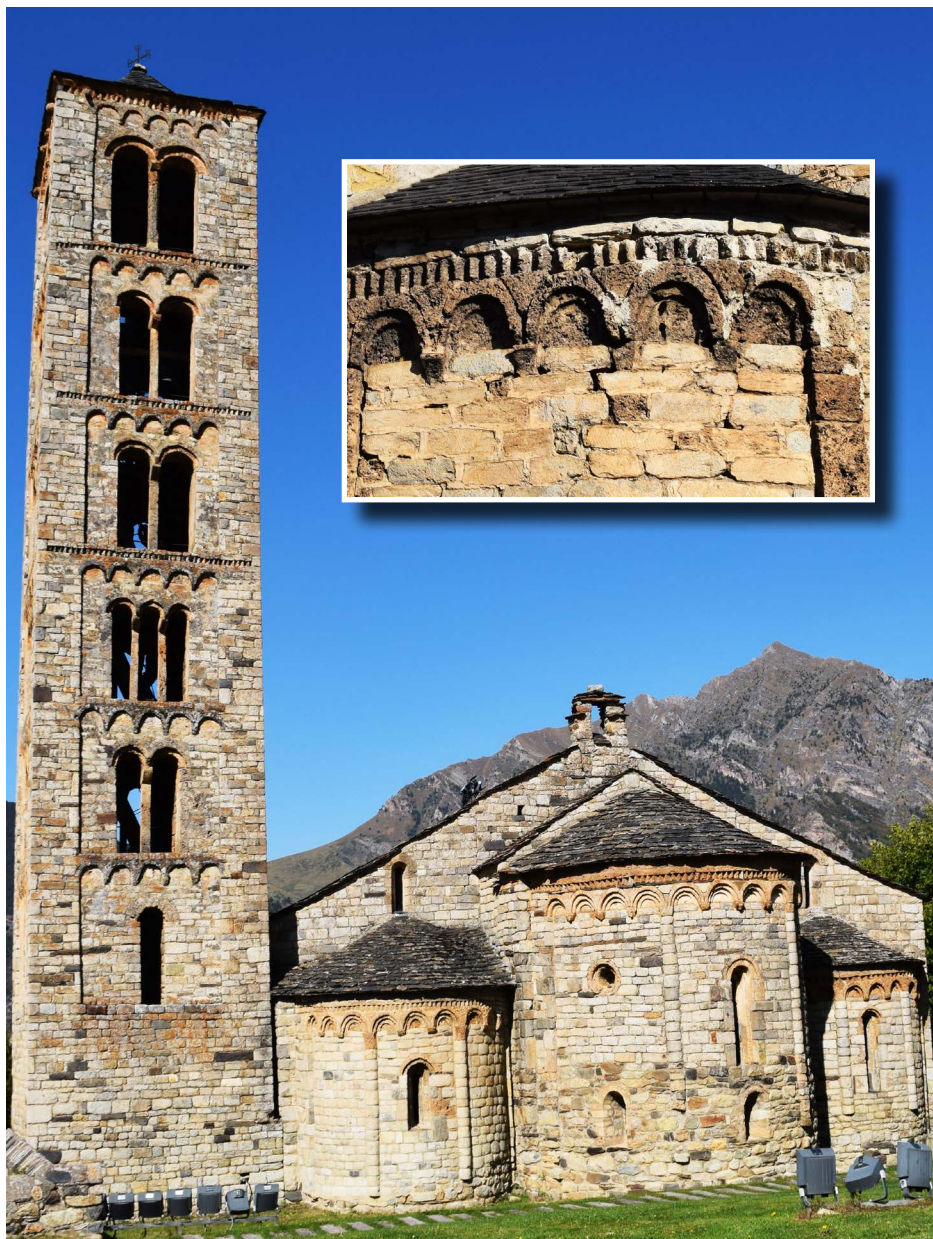
Stone towers — they pop up like pins on a map — are my guide on this five day, 854-kilometre journey back in time. I follow them to the entrances of Catalonia's treasured Romanic relics, some of which are recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The thrilling back roads don't just connect the dots, though. They also introduce me to Catalonia's small rural towns that look frozen in time, the region's unique culture, its pre-historic treasures — dinosaur footprints everywhere — its remarkable food (the tapas, croquettes, Iberian ham and cheeses from here are so good) and it's fiercely proud, independently-minded people who make strangers feel so welcome.

My journey starts in Barcelona, Catalonia's



Faded frescoes draw a lot of attention in the ancient Romanesque churches as does altar decorations, like the wooden one of the Crucifixion, top photo. Stone towers dominate each church and the National Museum in Barcelona, above, now houses many of the ancient Romanesque relics.



Builders of Catalonia's Romanesque churches favoured the Lombard style — smooth walls subdivided by pilasters and decorated with blind arches and doors with mouldings — as displayed in the inset photo. Climbing the bell towers of the churches affords you some spectacular views and some still feature the original bells from the 11th century.

brehtaking capital, where I visit my first Romanesque treasure — an ancient burial slab dedicated to a former count of Barcelona, Guifré II, who died in 911AD. The burial slab rests inside the Sant Pau del Camp monastery, the city's oldest church which is located in Barcelona's vibrant Gothic Quarter, off the famous tourist walking street La Rambla.

My visit to Sant Pau del Camp only whets my appetite for more Romanesque architecture, which emerged around the 10th century throughout Europe and eventually evolved into the Gothic style in the 12th century. The best examples of original Romanesque architecture can be found in rural Catalonia, which was a collection of counties in Medieval times. The counts back then wanted to show Rome their commitment to Catholicism, so they erected some impressive churches and monasteries in the more artistic Lombard Romanesque design — smooth walls subdivided by pilasters and decorated with blind arches and doors with mouldings.

So, the next day I set out in the direction of Vic, a handsome city first settled by the Romans around 300AD that's sandwiched between Barcelona and Girona, where a museum dedicated to Catalonia's Romanesque architecture and art is located.

The landscape outside Barcelona features lots of cacti and palms and the well-marked divided highway I'm driving is canopied by plane trees. The Pyrenees are silhouetted on the horizon in my windscreen and I'm being lulled into a false sense that the entire five-day drive will be this easy — wrong!

The Episcopal Museum located in Vic's Old Town dates back to 1891 but moved to its present modern location in 2002. The Old Town is also where I find the city's perfectly-preserved Roman temple.

The museum houses over 6,000 pieces of rare Romanesque art — a wooden depiction of the Crucifixion featuring five individual figures is its most eye-catching exhibition. Alter pieces, paintings and statues, all dating back to the 10th to 12th centuries, which once decorated Romanesque churches throughout Catalonia, now have been moved here or to Barcelona's magnificent National Museum of Art for safekeeping.

Vic's Romanesque cathedral sits right next to the museum so I'm invited to make the dizzying climb up a narrow spiral staircase to reach the top of its bell tower. I'm glad I do because the view I get from the lofty height — the tower is the highest of its kind in Catalonia — is truly breathtaking. The city and countryside spread out below the tower and from it I see Vic's dynamic main square that's surrounded by candy-coloured buildings.

Three of the tower's original 11th century



The capitals designed for the churches and monasteries told the story of the bible.



The 11th-century Benedictine church sits on a stone mountain overlooking lovely Tremp.

bells remain in working order and as much as I'd like to spend more time in this inviting city, another Romanesque treasure — the Monastery of St. Peter de Casserres — awaits 30 minutes down the road in Carretera.

The highway outside Vic suddenly turns challenging — more twists and turns as I drive into the foothills of the Pyrenees. And the scenery here is much more imposing — lots of rocky outcrops and deep gorges.

After parking the car, I trek along a narrow ledge overlooking a reservoir — it feeds Barcelona — to reach the entrance of the former Benedictine monastery that was once home to 12 monks back in 1053 when it opened. While most Romanic churches are long and narrow, St. Peter, because of its confined space atop the rocky cliff, is wider than it is long. It took 100 years to complete but was left to decay after being abandoned in the 15th century. A restoration project between 1994 and 1995 has restored its glory — the cloister, priory chamber, dormitory, kitchen, storage vault and scriptorium where the monks illustrated precious books look as good as new.

While Catalonia's Romanesque churches and cathedrals look much the same, each, I discover, has its own identity and some interesting stories and characters connected to them. Take St. Peter de Casserres, for example.

"The church was built on the orders of a count, whose son, just three days after being born, apparently spoke and told his father he would live only 30 days," Silvia, my guide, tells me.

"The son instructed that after his death his body should be placed on a mule and wherever the beast stopped, then a monastery dedicated to St. Peter should be built. The mule stopped here and the father obviously complied with the boy's wishes. The boy's remains were actually kept in the altar by the monks for decades," says Silvia.

I didn't have the heart to tell Silvia that had the mule not stopped,

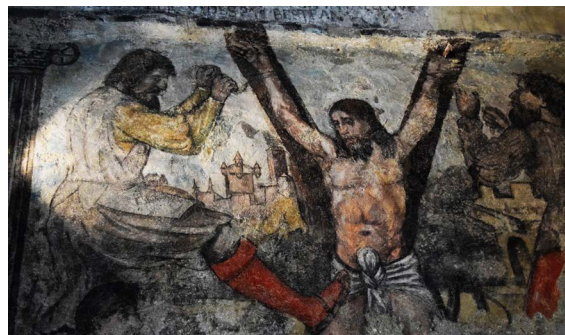
it would have plunged into the deep gorge.

Afterwards, I enjoy a delightful lunch at the Parador Vic-Sau, a charming boutique hotel that sits at the base of the mountain where the monastery is located. The view of the surrounding milky-white cliffs and reservoir from the elevated main dining room is truly spectacular.

The rest of my stops along my Romanesque journey are just as interesting:

- In Ripoll, a handsome town on the banks of the River Ter, I visit the tomb of Count Wilfred the Hairy — he apparently had a lot of hair — in the beautiful Monastery of Santa Maria, which he founded in 888. The count is revered because he gave Catalonia its flag; as Wilfred the Hairy lie dying after a battle, he dabbed four fingers in his own blood and ran them down a mustard coloured cloth, which Catalonia's flag is based on today. More than 100 monks lived in the monastery during its glory days and produced important manuscripts from the 10th to 12th century — many were stolen during the Napoleonic Wars and have never been seen again. The monastery's ornately decorated portal is its most stunning feature — delicate carvings tell the story of the Bible. The cloister showcases three original columns and one of its original bell towers is still functioning

- In La Seu d'Urgell, a lovely town in the heart of the Pyrenees, I'm impressed by the Cathedral Santa Maria d'Urgell, which dominates the Old Town square. The stately structure stands on the same land where the Romans erected a temple. The present day version has a lot of Gothic design incorporated into its walls and showcases lots of 12th-century paintings. While just a hint of the amazing frescos remain, a guide tells me that at one time the entire interior and exterior of these Romanesque churches would have been painted. The town is



The Peak of Perfection

A journey onboard Rocky Mountaineer is much more than just a train ride through the Canadian Rockies. It's the key to unlocking a hidden world of shifting landscapes and unparalleled beauty. Indulge all of your senses as you wind through awe-inspiring scenery, complemented by gourmet cuisine, vibrant storytelling, and impeccable service. Journey to a place that's truly above and beyond the extraordinary.



Choose your route, pick your package, and book today.

Three ways to book: ① RockyMountaineer.com ② Toll-free 1.800.665.7245 ③ Contact your Travel Agent



ROCKY MOUNTAINEER®

All aboard amazing



You have to follow some zig-zag highways through the Pyrenees to reach the remarkable churches left from the 11th century. The wooden doors of some of those churches are ornate.

also famous for producing three saints — St. Ot (the patron saint of rain), St. Ernengol (the patriot saint of droughts) and St. Emigdi (the engineering saint who produced bridges and canals). This outdoor paradise also hosted the white water canoeing and kayaking events at the 1982 Barcelona Summer Olympics and remains a training centre for many national teams, including Canada's. The massive cathedral stays true to the Holy Trinity — it features three entrances, three naves and its bell tower stands 23 metres high. Next to Santa Maria stands the palace of the Bishop of Aragon, an autonomous state that resides inside Catalonia.

- In Sort, I stop for lunch at a charming restaurant called Pessets and enjoy a meal highlighted by the area's delicious traditional sausages. A group of elderly Catalan tourists entertain me with patriotic folk songs and I salute them with a glass of Catalonia's excellent wine. There are many examples of Romanesque architecture in this forested area known as Pallars Sobirà, and the best is the Church of Santa Maria de Ribera de Cardós — its bell tower, rose window and main apse were all built in the Romanesque style.

- In Son, I leave the main highway and climb to the top of another winding road to reach the Romanic site of Son del Pi. From here I get jaw-dropping views of the Pyrenees and its lush valleys. The small temple was built between the 11th and 12th centuries and consists of a single nave. Its apse also features arches decorated in the Lombard style. Its most striking feature, though, is a slender square belfry with an interior staircase. Inside, there's a 15th-century Gothic altarpiece depicting 23 different biblical scenes.

- In Arties, I discover I'm no longer in Catalonia but in Aran, the tiny but affluent principality — much like Monaco — tucked away

in the Pyrenees bordering France to the north and Aragon to the west. Known as the Vall d'Aran, this is where some of Europe's best ski resorts are located. It's also where I find some great examples of Romanesque architecture in the form of Santa Maria d'Arries and Sant Andreu de Saladú i Santa Eulàlia d'Unha (St. Andrew for short). What makes these two churches so important is they still feature lots of original wall art. "There are many others hidden under the plaster but retrieving them takes time and lots of money," Lola, my guide, tells me. Some of the paintings remain vibrant. "They ground rare minerals that are only found in the Pyrenees and mixed them with water to produce paint," says Lola. At one time there were many of these Romanesque churches scattered throughout the Vall d'Aran and "their towers were used to warn of invasions," says the guide.

- In the beautiful Vall de Boi, I discover the motherlode of Romanesque architecture — nine churches that sit in a picturesque Pyrenees valley outside the small town of Barruero. I spend the day exploring four of the most famous with a Romanic expert named Anna Monsó.

First stop: Santa Eulàlia d'Arriu la Vall church, which sits beside an information centre. Using interactive exhibits, it tells visitors why so many Romanesque churches were built here and how the counts stole land from their subjects to increase their own wealth and power. Inside Santa Eulàlia, I find the original stone altar and baptismal font and a replica of the wooden crucifixion scene that impressed me in Vic. The church's bell tower stands 24 metres high and was used mainly for communication and defensive purposes.

Next, Sant Joan de Boi, where Anna points out the irregular shapes of animals in the faded frescos. "The artists only knew of these animals from the stories they were told, so that's why the elephant has horns on top of its heads," she smiles. This, like the other 10th-century temples I visit, was also used as a community meeting hall and "they even stored grain here in the winter," Anna tells me. A lovely village has grown up around San Joan de Boi and it's a nice place to wander before walking to Sant Climent church, the most revered of all the Romanesque relics.

At St. Climent we encounter a large group of Japanese tourists. "A famous Japanese photographer once visited our valley and published a book on the Romanesque churches he photographed. The Japanese have been coming ever since," Anna says. Sant Climent, which was consecrated in 1123, features its original altar and a 13th century bench reserved for the church's hierarchy. An audio-visual

system shows how the church once looked when its walls were completely decorated with frescos. Awesome!

A short walk away from Sant Climent, Anna introduces me to Santa Maria de Taüll, a unique church in that it sits in the middle of a stone village. “Most villages were built before the churches but this town was built around Santa Maria,” says Anna. The columns inside the church are bent like an old man’s legs — “they had to wrap the entire church with special supports to ensure it does not fall.”

- On the way to Tremp, where the Romanesque Castell d’en Mur sits, I drive through a semi-arid region of Catalonia that looks like the Arizona desert — large red rocks shaped into animal forms by the elements dominate the landscape.

The ruins of the 11th-century Castell d’en Mur and the Benedictine church that sits beside it, stand atop a remote mountain overlooking a vast valley. Both the castle and church were built from the same massive slab of rock that separates the two Romanesque ruins. While the roofless castle fell in on itself after being abandoned in the 15th-century, the church remains pretty much intact. Only 20 people ever lived in the castle and just a few monks manned the church, whose priceless frescos were sold off in 1919 for the equivalent of 42 euros (less the \$100 Cdn.) in today’s money, and eventually found their way to a Boston museum, where they still reside today.

- My last stop before returning to Barcelona is the massive Sant Cugat monastery in the town of the same name — just 17 kilometres from Catalonia’s capital. The beautiful monastery, which sits in the city’s historic area, was started in the 11th-century and completed in the 13th. The Benedictine monks who built it actually arrived here in 985AD but records show the Romans occupied this area as early as the 3rd-century. The structure was partially destroyed in the Spanish Civil War but its beautiful cloister still features 144 original capitals. Some carvings tell the story of the bible, some warn monks of the evil waiting outside the monastery walls, others refer to mythological figures and one honours the man who created them — he worked on them for 20 years.

Finally back in Barcelona, I visit the castle-like Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya, a treasure chest of Romanesque relics that was built as a pavilion for the city’s 1929 World’s Fair. It occupies a spectacular vantage point atop a hill overlooking one of Europe’s most fascinating cities. The frescos and wall art removed from the churches are now displayed in the National Museum’s 16-gallery Romanesque section.

Lia, a museum guide, says Italian experts were hired to painstakingly remove the frescos and wall art from their original places and reassembled here.

“The movement to research, reclaim and preserve Catalonia’s art, poetry, literature and especially our architecture was started in 1833 by Barcelona’s elite and wealthy,” says Lia.

Walls in the exhibition areas are painted a muted grey to resemble the interiors of the ancient churches and monasteries.

Looking at the remarkable works, one can see how art in Medieval times evolved — crude animal and human features depicted in art from the 10th and 11th centuries become more life-like and softer in paintings from the 13th century.

The museum showcases more than 4,000 Catalan treasures, but the Romanesque exhibits are by far the most popular.

A lover of Romanesque architecture could easily visit the National Museum and be thoroughly fulfilled. However, by doing that, they’d miss the thrill of driving back in time along Catalonia’s thrilling Via Romanesque.

I can assure you, it’s a trip of a lifetime. •



Old stone coffins, interior columns that bend like an old man’s knee, churches that sit in the middle of small villages and small rooms were monks spent their lives are all part of the tour.



JUST THE FACTS



Romanesque Cathedral of Santa Maria d’Urgell.

PLACES WE STAYED:

Barcelona:

Hotel Balmes: Excellent location.
<http://www.hotelbalmes.com/en>

Hotel Catalonia: Next to Barcelona Plaza and in walking distance of the national museum.
www.cataloniahotels.com

Ripoll: Hotel Bressol

Vielha: Hotel Parador d’Arties

Vall de Boi: Caldes de Boi Thermal Spa
<http://www.caldesdeboi.com/en/>

Cellers: Hotel Terradets
<http://www.hotelterrads.com/en>

Getting There: Air Canada (Rouge) offers direct flights from Toronto to Barcelona.

The Ultimate America's Cup Experience

Fierce competition. Contagious excitement. Timeless tradition. It all ties together at the America's Cup. As an official charter yacht supplier of the 35th America's Cup in Bermuda, The Moorings welcomes you aboard this summer for a one of a kind spectator experience on your own all-inclusive Crewed Sail catamaran with expert captain and gourmet chef. Reserve your yacht today to claim the best view for the biggest sailing event of the year.



UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS
on the water

Call 800.669.6529 or visit moorings.com/americas-cup



OFFICIAL CHARTER YACHT SUPPLIER

Baby Bonus

First family trip with an infant has its challenges, but rewards far outweigh any of the little inconveniences



Even before she was born, little Ari's mom Chelsea made plans for her first holiday — a European vacation. Ari seemed well prepared for the trip and drew a lot of attention.

“Our daughter decided the Louvre was her favourite place to drop her No. 2s”

PARIS — Seven shots of espresso down and three boarding passes to Paris in hand, I step onto the plane with my 16-pound daughter strapped to my body. I shuffle down the narrow aisles, bumping my carry-on side to side with one hand and restraining my daughter's flailing limbs with the other. She is trying to get her slobbery little hands on the faces of everyone we pass. Her spit-up has caked my hair into clumps and my entire shirt is soaked from her drool. “Keep your chin up, only eight hours to go.”

In my childless days, I remember seeing mothers struggling as they made their way through the airport. They juggled luggage, children and a dozen other items. I used to think “That poor woman. Thank God that isn't me.”

As I plop down into my seat, it hits me: *“I am now that woman!”*

When my pregnancy was confirmed last year, the overwhelming excitement faded and anxiety took over. Will having a baby halt my global travel plans? Are road trips and repeated vacations to theme parks all that is in store for me?

These thoughts consumed me for the next week. There was only one solution to put my concerns to rest. At less than two months pregnant, I jumped the gun and booked a European vacation to Paris and Venice for three: Me, my husband, Dee, and our unborn child. With no known gender, nameless and without a passport, this little fetus had a big adventure ahead of it.

More than one year later with my now 6-month-old daughter, Ari in tow, here goes:

Day 1: YYZ to CDG

Three large suitcases, three carry on bags, a stroller, car seat and playpen — 80 per cent of our baggage is exclusively for the baby.

Ari was our VIP badge for bypassing lines at security and customs. Thanks to our little peanut, we were entitled access to the separate, and much shorter, family and disability line. This is the first perk of travelling with a baby.

The time gained bypassing crowded lines was lost at security. The travelling process was too smooth so far, I knew it had to catch up to us. We declared the liquids in the diaper bag needed for Ari. Every bottle of water and package of baby food — and we had many — was individually inspected and tested. This was a slow and tedious process that left both the security agent and myself visibly irritated.

The evening flight coincided with Ari's bedtime. She slept for five hours on the plane. As everyone and their mother recommends, I fed her a bottle during takeoff. The sucking motion allows ears to pop and provides relief from the air pressure changes.

At the halfway point to Paris, Dee and I passed the 24-hour mark without sleep. Our brains stopped working. Our patience was running thin. During the three hours Ari was awake, she squirmed, fussed and showcased her vocal skills to the fellow passengers trying to sleep. Buyer's remorse was kicking in.



Writer Chelsea Shim Sharma with husband Dee and little Ari, enjoying the delights of Venice. The couple's European adventure presented challenges but cool heads prevailed.



Trip with infant has its hiccups but rewards for parents and child outweigh the challenges

WHEN IS THE BEST time to travel with a baby? I spoke to fellow parents and scoured the internet. I have concluded: There is no best time. Each stage is an entirely different experience and comes with its unique set of benefits and challenges. Whether your child is a dormant newborn, squirmy infant or a toddler walking with confidence, if you want to travel, GO!

Was my daughter the travel anchor I thought she would be?
Absolutely.

With that said, we adapted and had an amazing vacation. Travelling with hiccups along the way is better than avoiding it altogether. It can be taxing, but every time Ari flashed her gummy, little smile, all frustrations faded. No matter how much you prepare and plan, children are unpredictable. As parents, we have to roll with the punches.

We have two family vacations planned for next year and I intend to add more.
Stay tuned.

Day 2: First Day in Paris

Day 2 was an extension of a never-ending Day 1. Thanks to the time change, we were technically on a not-so-fresh, new day.

The deadly combination of micro-sized European rooms and the excessive baggage needed for a baby meant every square inch of our hotel room was covered in Ari's baby gear.

We took a much needed nap and woke up at 9 p.m. with a ravenous appetite. Ari's baby food was tasting great for the first time — I was in survival mode. Ari was finally in a deep sleep. This was the long-awaited break I prayed for all day. Plans for fine dining were thrown out and we fell back on UberEats. Thirty minutes later, I was sitting in bed with a sleepy baby and a paper bag filled with falafel. Decisions like this is how I maintained my sanity. We planned to rest up and get an early morning start.

Day 3: The Louvre and a Fondue Fail

Everyone slept in.

We cancelled our 11 a.m. lunch reservation and opted for quick street crepes instead — I quickly regretted this.

Our Uber arrived and we struggled to install the car seat base. The driver was unimpressed with the five-minute delay and our passenger rating took a hit.

We arrived at the Louvre and orchestrated a mini photo shoot in front of the famed pyramid. The crowds and lineups were daunting. We avoided the long ticket queue by purchasing our passes in advance online. I am so grateful we did.

We saw the Mona Lisa. We saw the Venus de Milo. That was enough museum excitement for the day.

Our daughter decided the Louvre was her favourite place to drop her No. 2s. Needless to say, we spent more time in the bathroom than the exhibits themselves. The changing stations were well stocked with supplies — this is something only a parent can appreciate.

We had a few hours to kill before dinner. Going back to the hotel midday is always a bad idea — it guarantees a nap and no dinner. Sounds tempting, but avert.

We strolled through the 1st Arrondissement and the Tuileries Gardens — little did we know, this would be the last moment of relaxation in Paris.

Next stop: Fondue Restaurant

Our Uber arrived to take us to dinner and the car seat base was installed in less than two minutes — we were getting better at it. The improvement was meaningless; our passenger score lowered for the second time that day. Ari is really killing our formerly stellar rating.

Rumour has it the fondue restaurant seats locals on the main floor and tourists in the basement. I assumed having a baby, car seat, stroller and diaper bag would grant us access to the main floor. I was wrong. We were immediately led down a narrow staircase to the dungeon — baby gear and all. If you desire delicious fondue in an underground sweat lodge, with open flames and no ventilation, this is the place to be. Ari's temperature rose quickly and her face was completely flushed. The discomfort was getting to her and her fussiness was peaking. We dashed out of the restaurant while the cheese was still bubbling. Had it been just the two of us, we would have stuck it out until the fondue pot was scraped clean.

Day 4: Lunch at the Eiffel Tower

"I want this day to end. I want to go home."



The Eiffel Tower never looked better thanks to Ari's bright smile. Her parents booked a meal in the Tower's Michelin star restaurant and Ari let the chef know she was not a big fan of the food or the view.

I said this to my husband while I sipped champagne and took in the most breathtaking views of the city. We were mid-lunch at the Michelin star restaurant, Le Jules Verne, inside the Eiffel Tower. We booked three months in advance and were seated by a window overlooking Paris. There is no better way to capture romance in the city of lights, right? Wrong.

There was no romance — just stress, slight hysteria and a little too much wine.

My normally angelic daughter turned into a squirmy, screaming beast. I was self-conscious about Ari's behaviour and spent the duration of lunch attempting to soothe her. My beautiful little monster wanted to take the stage and I wasn't going to let her do it, for the sake of the other diners.

Babies and fine dining do not mix — I understand why. Four hundred euros well spent.

Dee and I felt helpless as parents. We left the Eiffel Tower, looked at each other and laughed hysterically at the highly anticipated but disastrous meal. We were losing the little sanity we had left.

We each gulped down double shots of espresso to keep us going and went back to the hotel.

Ari rolled off of the bed and hit her head on the hardwood floor. This day just kept getting better. We had travel medical insurance but concluded she was A-okay and moved on.

Using Ari's afternoon outburst and recent fall as an indicator for the rest of the evening, dinner plans were cancelled. Instead, we

Saying "Happy Birthday"
in the sky!



"SWEETEN YOU UP" brings you surprises in the air



Wanna have a special birthday celebration?
Scan QR Code Now!

www.hkairlines.com





Chelsea's bundle of joy gets in a few winks between sightseeing stops and mom gets to enjoy some sweet treats along the way. Mom mastered the art of walking while eating various foods over Ari's head and only dropped gelato on her once.

picked up fresh ingredients to make a cheese and charcuterie board. Eating dinner in bed became a common occurrence. Welcome to parenthood.

Day 5: Laundry, Formula Hunting and The Champs-Élysées

Rise and shine, it's laundry day. Both of us sacrificed suitcase space to accommodate Ari's items. With another leg left on our trip, doing laundry was a necessity. We packed a laundry bag and ensured our hotel was within walking distance to a laundromat.

Ari's formula supply was dwindling. I thought I had her food plan down pat — minimize our luggage weight and replenish her food stock in Europe. I checked online to ensure the brand was carried at multiple retailers in Paris. What I did not do was call ahead and ensure it was in stock. Five supermarkets, four pharmacies and three hours later, we finally find it. Dirty, dented and the last tin available, I hold it close to my body and breathe a sigh of relief. "I'm never letting you go, little miracle can."

Lunch was good ol' L'as Du Fallafel, our favourite spot for cheap eats in Paris. Messy, delicious and more enjoyable than yesterday's meal. Seating inside was limited so Ari and her carseat had a prime spot on the floor, shoved underneath our table. Bon Appétit, Ari!

Back-to-back Uber cars arrived without safety anchors or tethers. We give up trying to locate an up-to-date car model, do a second rate installation and hope for the best.

Next stop: The Avenue des Champs-Élysées

Forget about the Arc de Triomphe. This baby is a ticking time bomb and I'm using my valuable minutes at Louis Vuitton. I prioritized retail therapy over monument appreciation and have no regrets.

We make our way down the avenue and are surrounded by high-end shops, clouds of second-hand smoke and nutty drivers who disregard pedestrian safety. The last two were a common theme throughout Paris. I felt like I was flirting with death each time I crossed a busy intersection or was boxed in by smokers.

Our visit to the Champs-Élysées ended after a much needed diaper change and no accessible restroom. We had no choice but to clean our daughter's dirty diaper on what many call the world's most beautiful avenue.

10

TIPS & PRODUCTS FOR TRAVEL PARENTS

- 1 Select departure times that coincide with your baby's sleep schedule. A sleeping baby is always better than an awakened baby on the plane.
- 2 Request a bassinet seat as soon as you book your ticket. They are located in the exit row, have more leg-room and are suitable for babies up to 20 pounds. You will have to ask the flight attendant to fasten the bassinet to the wall after takeoff.
- 3 Feed your baby or give them a pacifier during take-off and landing. The sucking motion relieves ear discomfort from the air pressure changes.
- 4 Pack an extra outfit in the carry-on for both you and your baby. Sitting in a soiled outfit will be a nightmare for you, your baby and everyone around you.
- 5 Keep changing pads on hand. Locating changing stations in public bathrooms is rare. We had to change one too many diapers outdoors, in our lap or on any accessible flat surface. If the diaper is a messy one, you will be grateful for the changing pad.
- 6 Use a diaper backpack instead of a shoulder tote. Carrying a tote bag on one shoulder while holding your baby at the same time is a balancing act. The backpack is more organized, versatile and best of all, out of the way. I was hesitant to switch to a backpack but after one day of use, I'm never going back.
- 7 Keep the itinerary to one major activity per day and give yourself extra time. If possible, add another day. Whether it's a temper tantrum or bout of sickness, there will be unexpected circumstances to account for. Allot time to make up for cancellations.

Favourite Travel Products

- 1 Lillebaby Complete Airflow Baby Carrier: Wear your baby. I used my carrier all day, every day. It is easier to get around and leaves both hands free. The carrier I used has great back support — I wore it for up to 10 hours a day and experienced minimal discomfort compared to other brands.
- 2 Playtex Baby Nurser Bottles with Drop-In Liners: If your baby bottle feeds, you know how tedious hand washing all of the parts can be. Transition them to a bottle that uses disposable liners and eliminate half of the work when washing.
- 3 Dr. Brown's Microwave Steam Sterilizer Bags: Dirty bottle parts sat in our diaper bag for up to 12 hours at room temperature. Sometimes I felt soap and water were not enough to do the job. I wanted the extra security of sterilization. The microwaveable steam bags are compact, easy to use and perfect for travelling.



Ari uses the courtyard in the Louvre as her playpen. She became the newest attraction as strangers photographed Ari next to the museum's most popular treasures. All the excitement of travel finally wore Ari down, though.



Day 6 : CDG to VCE

En route to Venice. It was 9 a.m. and daddy already had Ari's poop on his pants — this made me smile. Baby girl was a dream and slept for the entire flight.

Water taxis are the most convenient option to get to Venice from the airport. Considering the eight pieces of baggage in tow, taking a private water taxi to our hotel was a justified splurge. Boarding the boat with Ari in the baby carrier was nerve-racking — if I go down, she's coming with me.

Venice consists of more than 100 islands connected by bridges and separated by canals. Transportation on foot or by boat are the only options.

I decided against using the stroller. It would be a continuous wrestling match with Venice's stairs, bridges and narrow, windy streets. I cringed as I watched parents with strollers attempt to tackle these obstacles. Keyword: attempt.

The baby carrier was my saviour. I wore it all day, every day.

We asked the hotel to store the stroller and car seat for the duration of the trip. It was important to save the limited floor space in our room.

The rest of the day was spent tending to Ari. Following a non-baby centred itinerary was a dream I abandoned last week.

We walked to a 24-hour pasta takeaway near midnight and ate in bed for the fourth time this trip.

Day 7: The Rialto Bridge and Murano

We walked to the Rialto Bridge, the oldest bridge crossing the Grand Canal. It was crowded and people were shoving — mind the baby! I stumbled and almost fell down the steps twice. I needed to get out of there. We escaped to a nearby patio and shared a mediocre lunch — I was too hungry and tired from walking to care.

Next stop: Murano

The commuter shoving was strong on the water bus to Murano. We pushed our way off the boat, admired the Murano glass sculptures and trinkets and enjoyed a semi-relaxing dinner on the water. Without a stroller to hold her, we spent the entirety of our meals in Venice constraining Ari from clawing at the plates and glassware.

After the formula hunt in Paris, I developed an obsession with

finding the specific brand and was compelled to search every shop we passed. We hit a gold mine at a small pharmacy in Murano, of all places. We leave the island with three boxes of baby formula and zero Murano glass souvenirs. Even though we don't need the formula, I am very pleased with my find.

Days 8-10: Venice On Repeat

The next three days were a blur. The remaining time in Venice was easy going and the days faded into each other. After the fast pace in Paris, low key was exactly what we needed.

I wandered Venice with what felt like a sack of potatoes weighing me down. I mastered the art of walking while eating various foods over my daughter's head. I only dropped gelato on her once.

Pizza. Pasta. Gelato. Espresso. Repeat.

We ended our trip with an obligatory gondola ride. Pedestrians got a kick out of seeing the little bambino float beneath the bridges. The constant waving and smiles for Ari made us feel like the main attraction.

Day 11: VCE to YYZ

For the first time in my life, I was excited to go home while on vacation. I was itching to get Ari back to a familiar environment and back into her routine.

When travelling through the airport, I learned to accept the many people who approached us to give Ari attention, although I winced every time a stranger felt obliged to touch her face or insisted to give her objects that ultimately ended up in her mouth.

The 10-hour flight home was rough. We called the airline in advance to secure an inflight bassinet seat. I had one hour of hands-free time while Ari slept. Although we didn't use the bassinet for its intended purpose, it was helpful to use for storage.

Ari was awake for most of the afternoon flight home. She required constant attention and smiled at every stranger who walked by hoping to initiate a game of peek-a-boo.

The few times I successfully soothed Ari to sleep, passengers came by and couldn't help themselves from squeezing her hands and feet or pinching her cheeks. This drove me insane. Squeeze me. Pinch me. Hit me. I don't care, just don't dare wake the baby!

The three of us arrive in Toronto — sleep-deprived but we're already planning for our next family adventure. •

Right Track

Amtrak's legendary Empire Builder train showcases a magical part of the United States

STORY BY GARTH WOOLSEY / PHOTOS BY GARTH WOOLSEY & AMTRAK

WE'RE SOMEWHERE in the High Plains of Montana, high-balling west toward the Rockies though a prairie vastness, all tones of yellows and greys below a vault of pale blue sky.

There's no telling for sure but the top speed of our rocket on rails, Amtrak's Empire Builder, is in the range of 130 km/h and we're definitely topping out, making time.

Up front, where the twin GE Genesis P42 locomotives are churning out thousands of horsepower, the whistle sounds, in bursts of long and short that may be codes known to the railroad insiders. To the rest of us they say: "Coming through!" Even if there's no one in earshot out here. It's like yelling into the wind for the sheer joy of it.

We sail by a level crossing, a pickup truck stopped at a flashing barrier that is blocking a gravel road. The driver leans out the window, waving. Why do people do that, wave to passing trains, is it an innocent gesture of good luck, would they like to be on board? I wave back, even though there is no way he can see me. It's the thought that counts.

Twenty-four hours into our 3,358-kilome-



Rose, an energetic member of the Empire Builder crew, welcomes passengers with open arms.

tre journey from Chicago to Seattle, we are only halfway there. As a general rule, you don't take a long-distance train if you are in a hurry. You don't take a long-distance train if you are not patient, ready and willing to suspend time, relish the moments, wave to strangers and watch the clouds.

The Empire Builder is Amtrak's most popular long-distance route, among several with names that evoke romance, nostalgia and adventure, such as the California Zephyr, the City of New Orleans and the Texas Eagle. The route angles up from the Illinois shores of Lake Michigan, northwest through the lakes and trees of Wisconsin and Minnesota and across the flats and ravines and rocking oil wells of North Dakota and Montana, into a short, high stretch of Idaho, before splitting into two trains at Spokane and finishing down the Pacific side in either Seattle or Portland.

The Empire Builder is popular with Canadians as much of the route runs close to the U.S. border, making it easily accessible. Plus, Seattle and Chicago are especially attractive travel destinations for all the right reasons. I spent a few days in both places as I rode the rails both ways and could easily

AIRFRANCE



FRANCE IS IN THE AIR



A PEACEFUL HAVEN

Discover the intimacy of our Premium Economy cabin.

have spent longer in both without running out of things to do and see.

But why take the train, when I could fly the route in barely four hours rather than investing two full days each way?

Well, as mentioned, I wouldn't have done it if haste was a high priority, obviously. For me, the experience was highly anticipated. Several friends commented, for what it was worth, something like: "I've always wanted to do a trip like that," while one said: "It sounds like being on a subway forever."

To each his or her own. For me, the experience was highly rewarding.

I had a roomette to myself, an upper room on a Superliner double-decker car. It came with a lockable door and curtains for privacy, two facing recliner seats, very comfortable, which can be converted into a reasonably comfy bed. If there are two passengers, one can sleep in an upper berth that folds down from the ceiling for night-time use. Of my four nights in total, I spent one in the upper, and would suggest it be assigned to the smaller of any two travellers, or if contested, be assigned to the loser of a coin-flip.

The roomette had various lighting options and there was ample room for my bags (there are separate areas for any excess baggage, no problem). I had access to a nearby shared washroom and shower facilities and never found myself lined up for their use. Showering while rocking and rolling on an uneven rail bed can be quite an adventure, but it is worth a try, at least once. Or, wait until the train makes one of its several stops en route, although few of those are lengthy. You can disembark to stretch your legs but there have been recorded instances, I am told, of passengers who wandered off and did not heed in time the uniformed conductor's cry of "All aboard!"

The roomette's best feature, of course, is its windows, my private big-screen view of the never-ending panorama. For wider, all-around views, there's a sightseeing car equipped with seats that rotate, and with a café on the floor below, open to everyone including coach passengers. It can get crowded but is worth the wait. I brought along books to read but rarely indulged them; instead spending hours on end watching the world go by. There's no WiFi to distract, either, and many stretches with no cellphone service. To my way of thinking, that is a blessing, if only for a change of pace. Oh, and no seat belts, even though the ride can be downright rocky at times. Passing others in the narrow corridors, opening doors between cars while battling for balance can require elbow pads and the fancy footwork of an Irish jigger.

There are other choices of accommodation. Coach seats are the least expensive and



The Empire Builder rumbles through a lonely American outpost as it makes its way to the West Coast.



Canadian-born James J. Hill, who was instrumental in building the western rail link, is honoured with a statue along the route.

obviously attractive to those doing only a portion of the Empire Builder's route. There are also bedrooms and bedroom suites, with their own washrooms and showers, able to sleep up to four people. They are more spacious and considerably more expensive. My off-season, round-trip fare came in at about \$2,400 Cdn. (thank you Amtrak) but prices vary widely depending on various criteria. If you have flexibility, be sure to discuss options with an agent.

Importantly, all but coach fares include all meals while on board, three per day, served in the dining car. All my meals were very good, if not gourmet great, certainly

far above the average level of airline fare.

The Amtrak Signature Steak was priced, for coach travellers, at \$25 (U.S.) with trimmings, and arrived as ordered, medium rare. All strong beverages are extra and a half bottle of very agreeable red wine, at \$16 (U.S.), was worth the balance it gave to the steak and the head start it provided to ensuing slumbers.

If I'd preferred, I could have dined alone in my room, with meals brought to me by an attendant. On the way west that would have been Rose, an effervescent young Seattle-based woman originally from Jamaica. On the way back east it would have been Erika, an equally upbeat Seattle-based woman originally from Hungary. Their jobs also involved making up the beds for use in the evenings, breaking them down in the mornings, supplying bottled water, towels, blankets, whatever, answering any and all questions ("Was that really a coyote? Are we still in Montana?") and generally making sure that passengers feel safe and sound.

Montana is more than 1,000 kilometres across, the fourth largest state by area in the U.S. The state has a population of just over 1 million people and 2.5 million cattle. Moo-ve over.

We stopped long enough both ways to get off in Havre, Mt., a town of about 10,000 an hour's drive south of the border with Canada, where Saskatchewan and Alberta meet, and halfway between Minneapolis-St. Paul and Seattle. The location was crucial in the building of the Great Northern Railway, connecting the American Midwest with the Pacific coast, completed in 1893. It ran south of the Canadian Pacific Railway, completed in 1885, and north of the rival Northern Pacific Railway, completed in 1883.

This was the era of industrial barons, guys with money, vision and limitless gusto, like the man behind the Great Northern, one James J. Hill. For this and more, during his heyday Hill became known as the Empire Builder, leading eventually and through



JAL SKY SUITE 777

It's more than a flight, it's an in-flight experience that you'll relish every moment you're aboard. The new seats in all four classes have been designed to evoke a "one-class higher" feel for a more pleasant journey. Now available on Japan Airlines' flights between Tokyo and London. Gradual introduction from May 7, 2013* on flights between Tokyo and New York. For details, visit www.jal.co.jp/en/newsky.

*Subject to change. Look for announcements of future new JAL SKY SUITE 777 routes including Tokyo=Los Angeles and Tokyo=Chicago.



JAL SKY Wi-Fi Fee based.



For reservations and information, visit www.ar.jal.com



JAPAN AIRLINES

various amalgamations and transformations to the naming of the route and the trains that travel it. I visited the statue of Hill outside the station in Havre. He looked appropriately impressive.

Hill was born in 1838 near Guelph in what was then Upper Canada, now Ontario. His bio tells us as a child he was blinded in one eye in a bow-and-arrow accident, which obviously did not prevent him from venturing to Minnesota and rising to the status of tycoon, alongside the Morgans and Rockefellers.

Hill employed a surveyor and engineer, John Frank Stevens, who charted a new route through the Northern Cascades Mountains, one that required minimal blasting, although still colossal work.

The scenery along the mountain route is spectacular if not the stuff of dreams we have come to expect in the days of swooping camera-carrying helicopters, drones and GoPros. The Great Northern skirts around the south end of Glacier National Park — passengers may get off and stay there at some great old inns — but provides only glimpses of the wonders therein.

The gorgeous scenery for the several hours entering and exiting Seattle — valleys filled with rushing rivers and apple orchards, giant trees and sheer cliffs - includes a blackout east of Everett, Wa., caused by transit through the Cascade Tunnel — at 12.6 kilometres the longest railroad tunnel in the U.S. At an elevation of 800 metres above sea level it bores through the rock more than 300 metres below the Stevens Pass. One can only marvel at how these feats of engineering were accomplished and realize how they must have seemed impossible back in the day.

The Empire Builder still gets fairly heavy use; it had a ridership of nearly 500,000 in 2016, with revenues of \$52 million (U.S.).

The Empire Builder's equipment is showing signs of wear and tear. Depending upon one's mindset it can appear rundown and tawdry or simply well-used and maybe shabby chic. Do not get on board expecting glittering 21st-century appointments.

Richard Anderson, a senior executive with Amtrak and former Delta Airlines president, told CBS This Morning recently that he is seeking a major infrastructure investment. "We've got to clean up our trains, run our trains on time, fix the interiors of our trains."

Both planes and trains contend with delays. We arrived late in Seattle by about half an hour, which was no problem for me. There have been major issues with late passenger arrivals on long-distance trains as freight gets priority on the shared rail lines. But we were right on time on arrival back in Chicago and it is worth noting that the experience at both terminals was pleasantly painless. We left on time and there was none of the song-and-dance that has made air travel so nerve-racking of late.

Union Station in Chicago, an architectural classic, is undergoing refurbishment and King Street Station in Seattle is a granite 1906 pearl situated right next door to the stadium where the NFL Seahawks play. The Empire Builder pulled out that Sunday afternoon just as the Seahawks game ended. They won.

What doesn't need fixing, in my experience, is the attitude and dedication of the on-board personnel. Rose and Erika were terrific, but so was everyone else, creating a sort of cozy, even family, atmosphere.

Passengers, especially those aboard for the long haul, have a "we are in this together" esprit de corps. Everyone is encouraged to mingle at meal time, and why eat alone when I could sit in the dining car in the company of fellow travellers, here today and gone, if not tomorrow, the next day?

I never sat with the same companions twice.

At dinner the 40ish woman seated across the table with her husband tells me she is too nervous to eat much as she is preparing herself for an emotional experience later that night. She is going to get off the train when it stops briefly in Wenatchee, Wa. There, she says, she will meet her brother, who she has seen only twice before in her life. "Same father," she says. "Different mother."



Passengers gather in the Empire Builder's observation car to take in the scenery as the legendary train cuts through the northern United States en route to Seattle. The eye candy they see through their window is a sweet treat and is only surpassed by the onboard service provided by experienced train crew like Erika, left.

I get off to stretch my legs once there and see her at the centre of a little knot of people with her husband and her brother and his wife and kids. They are all hugging and laughing, maybe crying. They have only five or 10 minutes and when I bump into her the next day I ask how it went.

"He's teaching me," she says, "what our father was really like."

At another lunch, a Seattle woman tells the table she chooses trains over planes because she had both knees replaced 16 years ago ("I need to be able to stretch out"). Upon learning I am Canadian, she says, "Can't we force you to take him back?"

Who?

"Ted Cruz, of course," she says of the Calgary-born politician whose citizenship became an issue in the last U.S. Presidential election.

"They're all crazy down there in Texas and he's the craziest of them all," she says.

Looking out the window, I think there are crazy people everywhere but I tell her I'll see what I can do and head back to my room.

I don't want to miss anything. •

• For information on schedules and fares for Amtrak's Empire Builder, go to <https://www.amtrak.com/empire-builder-train>



YOUR JOURNEY STARTS BENEATH SOUTHERN SKIES

It's here you'll experience things you never thought possible. For in a land where you can blaze a trail through blades of gold, and where wizards turn water into wine, magical things are bound to happen. One thing is certain; once you've been to New Zealand, you'll be forever kept under its spell. Your journey awaits, start planning today.

100% MIDDLE-EARTH
100% PURE NEW ZEALAND

newzealand.com/ca

Guilty Pleasures

STORY BY ANDREW CRUICKSHANK / PHOTOS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

Trying to be a 'responsible' tourist in Thailand during a Christmas holiday break



A fleet of longtail boats sits waiting to ferry tourists between Koh Lipe and some of the other paradise islands in this part of Thailand.

KOH LIPE, THAILAND — Looking back at the island, from the turquoise waters of the South Andaman Sea, you could make out a thin trail of smoke, black as night, filtering through the canopy of Koh Lipe's interior. And on the trade winds, combing through the island, was the faint waft of burnt plastic. Were these the early smoke signals of a paradise lost?

This was back in December of 2014, after the impending chill of a Canadian winter had sent my pal Mike and I packing. We quit our jobs and hopped a flight east to Asia in search of a warmer climate. Once there, we yo-yoed between China, Japan and Vietnam, before landing in Thailand for Christmas. Surprisingly, the absence of the cold, white stuff had us reeling with nostalgia, so we searched out the next best thing, the white sand beaches of Koh Lipe.

Koh Lipe, meaning Paper Island in the native Chao Ley, is a pinprick paradise in the great blue of the South Andaman Sea, bordering Malaysia. Supposedly one of Thailand's best kept secrets, we couldn't think of a better place to spend the holidays. It came as a surprise then, when our ferry arced into the electric blue waters of Pattaya Beach and we were met by an Iliadic legion of longtail boats. Their wooden hulls bobbed in the surf as extended silver motors dipped in and out of the water like the beaks of hummingbirds, each boat busy picking up and dropping off tourists along the kilometre-wide stretch of beach. Apparently we weren't the only ones privy to Thailand's secrets.

We disembarked, following the crowds along Walking Street — the island's main drag. The blue cement corridor, infused with the smells of grilled fish and incense, was hemmed in by restaurants, bars, dive shops, massage parlours and mini marts. The steady babble of sales transactions filled the corridor as tourists pecked at glinting souvenirs like ravens. There was no need for shopkeepers to heckle for business today. The tourism boom had arrived on Koh Lipe.

During our stay, Mike and I roomed in a bamboo hut facing Sunrise Beach on the island's eastern shore. The crystal-clear water provided superb views for snorkelling and there was no need for a towel as we stretched out on the fluffy white sand. The beach looked out to neighbouring Ko Adang, the second largest island within the Tarutao National Marine Park. A short boat ride away, Ko Adang offered great snorkelling and hiking trails leading to a waterfall once used by pirates.

Not far from Sunrise Beach was the Chao Ley village, home to the descendants of the island's first settlers. The Chao Ley people settled on the island in the early 1900s, however, developers had caught scent of the island's unspoiled land in the ear-

ly '90s and began sinking their teeth into the pristine beach front property. Lacking adequate property laws and proof of ownership, the Chao Ley were pushed inland to a small section of the island. Many of the Chao Ley have adapted, holding jobs at local restaurants and resorts, others taxiing tourists between islands in longtail boats. But the island's prosperity has transformed Koh Lipe from the virgin land first spied by the Chao Ley.

On Christmas Eve, we watched young families splash in the surf and couples stroll along the beach. But as the sun took its final plunge into the sea, I was left cold with a case of the homesick blues. For both Mike and I this was our first time away from family and friends over the Christmas holidays. In the gaping absence of family traditions, we

went searching for some filler. All across the island we encountered tourists, drinks in hand, looking for a good time. At OMG Sports Bar and Restaurant, not far from Sunrise Beach, was a Christmas party, where festive Europeans shouldered up to the bar wearing Santa hats and downing pints of beer. "Jingle Bells" played in the background while the bartender, a shirtless Thai man with black hair down to his waist and an intricate pattern of tattoos on his right arm, passed out drinks.

It was late when we left OMG and the tourists had thinned out along Walking Street, but signs of them remained. Stray dogs nuzzled through

overflowing trash cans and plastic bottles hung from bushes like Christmas decorations. With its influx of revenue, Koh Lipe's tourism boom has also brought unmanageable sanitation issues to the small island. For a while, inhabitants relied on burning the trash, but this has become rarer, primarily happening during the off season.

Many restaurants on the island now offer free potable water to tourists with reusable bottles in order to reduce the number of discarded plastic bottles. A group called Trash Hero meets Mondays at 10 a.m. on Pattaya Beach with the aim of picking up garbage from across the island and educating people on sustainability. Tourists are encouraged to join. But the trash issue continues to persist.

As Christmas Eve night bled into Christmas morning, Mike and I sat on Sunrise Beach sipping cans of Chang beer and watching the waves swell and break into frothy white foam. As I rested my can on the sand next to me, its lip glinted in the pale light of the moon. Along the beach, I could see similar glints half buried in the sand. The sight caused a revelation of guilt, bringing my night of hedonism to a hasty end. Was I to blame for the compromise of Koh Lipe's paradise? Was I an irresponsible tourist? •



A simple hut provides shelter on a beach for two Canadian tourists.



Tai Oh!

STORY & PHOTOS BY MARC ATCHISON

Colourful old stilted fishing village reminds us what Hong Kong used to be

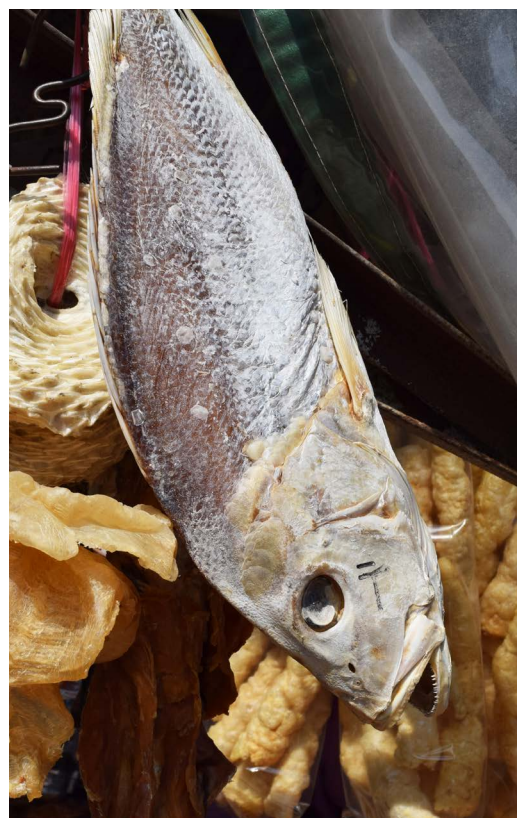
TAI O, HONG KONG — As the ferry to Lantau Island glides across Hong Kong Harbour's choppy surf, I look out from my seat at the city's congested vertical skyline and try to imagine what this Goliath of modern cities would have looked like back when it was just a humble fishing village.

I'm about to find out in Tai O, apparently.

That's because historians believe the ancient fishing village, which sits on the western side of lovely Lantau Island, offers the best example of what Hong Kong would have looked like when it was first settled. Tai O's famous stilted homes, which sit precariously perched on wooden legs over its rivers (Tai O Creek and Tai O River) and man-made canals, are some of the most photographed houses in the world.

So, after leaving the ferry terminal, I jump on the No. 1 bus, which cuts through Lantau Island's mountainous tropical landscape and reach Tai O about 50 minutes later.

Lantau Island is best known as the home of Hong Kong Disneyland and legendary Tian Tan Buddha — a.k.a. The Big Buddha — and is an environmental oasis for Hong Kong residents thanks to a series of hiking trails and its tranquil sandy beaches, which drift off into the South China Sea.



The ancient fishing village of Tai O, whose stilted homes have become a major tourist draw, is still an active port and offers the best example of what Hong Kong probably looked like in its earliest days.

COLOMBIA

IS MAGICAL REALISM

Guatapé, Antioquia.

Photo: Viceministerio de Turismo.

Visit [COLOMBIA.TRAVEL](https://colombia.travel)
#COLOMBIAISMAGICALREALISM

EXPERIENCE THE ADRENALINE RUSH FROM GROUP
NAUTICAL ACTIVITIES WHILE ENJOYING
BREATHTAKING LANDSCAPES.

Created by the Colombian Government through ProColombia.





Tai O's active fishing fleet is blessed with an abundant harvest in the South China Sea.

When I reach Tai O, the place is crawling with tourists from every corner of the world. The local Tanka people, whose ancestors arrived here 300 years ago, still fish the abundant waters of the South China Sea just offshore but tourism has become the community's most important business now.

The narrow streets of Tai O's fish market are lined with some nice restaurants, souvenir shops and stalls where fish are left to dry before being sold. A backdrop of jagged mountains and the unique homes make Tai O one of the loveliest villages in all Asia.

Street vendors try to get me to buy some of the locals treats — salted egg yolks, salted dry fish, traditional Chinese snacks and something called husband cake. Lots of tourists pose with some giant squids that were just caught.

The Venice of Hong Kong, as picturesque Tai O is often called, is connected by a series of draw bridges and while it features some lovely little temples, it's the interconnected homes that people come to see. And the best place to see them is from the water.

I'm lured into a long boat with several other tourists by a skipper who promis-



A tourist is impressed with the size of this freshly-caught squid, left, while right, an elderly woman avoids the visitors.



There's lots of pretty pictures waiting to be snapped in this old fishing village.



Some of the town's stilts look like they are about to collapse into the local river.



flashstock®

A unique point of view

FlashStock connects talented photographers with the world's best brands



Marketing Partner

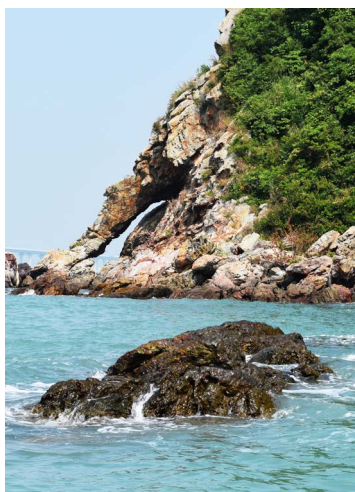
www.flashstock.com



Tai O is still a working port and while the tourists are there to take pretty pictures, there are daily chores still to be done.



Once the bountiful fish harvest has been collected from the South China Sea, locals sell the catch dockside from their boats.



There's lots of animal-shaped rock formations in a South China Sea bay just outside Tai O.



The locals let lime leaves dry in the sun before grinding them up to be used in Chinese medicine.



A new generation of villagers welcomes visitors from around the globe with open arms.

es “very good views of homes for just 20 Hong Kong dollars,” — about \$4 Cdn.

Who can resist?

The 30-minute journey is like a trip back in time, because from my vantage point it appears little has changed in Tai O over the centuries.

I see fishermen cleaning their small boats before heading back out to sea and local women selling the freshly-caught bounty dockside. The market is abuzz with activity — just don't try to snap a photo of the female vendors or they'll berate you publicly and one even shows me her long knife. Yikes!

The masterfully designed stilted homes have been tested in many typhoons over the years but amazingly have withstood all that nature has thrown at them. Remarkable when you see their flimsy construction.

The skipper revs the engine and we head out into the South China Sea to see the animal-shaped rocks that line the shore just outside the village. Schools of fish jump out of the water and put on a show for the tourists.

I also marvel at the new bridge and tunnel system I see hovering above the sea just offshore from Tai O. It will soon connect Hong Kong and the gambling mecca of Macau — the 55-kilometre-long sea crossing project, which will end up costing about \$60 billion U.S. is due to open to traffic in 2018. The modern bridge, just like the ancient homes of Tai O, are both engineering marvels.

- There are several ways to get to Tai O from Hong Kong but may I suggest hopping aboard the Lantau Ferry (a sleek catamaran) at Central District pier because then you get great views of Hong Kong and Kowloon before reaching the fishing village.

- Air Canada and Cathay Pacific Airways both offer daily service to Hong Kong from Toronto and Vancouver.

TOUR
EAST
HOLIDAYS

Blossoms IN JAPAN

toureast.com

UNITED



Welsh

Rare Bits



Opening the book on north Wales introduces visitors to a land of mystery and breathtaking good looks

STORY BY NANCY WIGSTON / PHOTOS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES

BETWYS-Y-COED, WALES — Oops, I left the gate open. Sheep are looking in our farmhouse windows as we enjoy morning coffee and Welsh cakes. After scooting them out, we resume gazing at the stunning vistas of the Snowdonia mountains, where lambs are tumbling about, a scene from a storybook.

In fact, we're living in a story. It's rare to find that the house you've rented for the week-end, albeit a National Trust treasure, was the subject of a bestselling memoir.

Yet there's proof on the bookshelf: a well-thumbed copy of Thomas Firkbank's 1940 memoir, *I Bought a Mountain*, sits beside volumes of *Welsh Cookery*, *Best Welsh Short Stories* and a raft of board games. Outside our comfy faux-1950s kitchen, the rain slashes and the wind howls, the skies turning bright and dark within minutes. Gosh, is that hail? Seems like a morning to stay indoors by the wood fire in our stone farmhouse and explore Firkbank's love letter to the sheep farm he bought in 1931.

Dyffryn Mymbyr, as the farm is called, fuels a dramatic memoir about a newcomer's struggle to prosper on this mountainside farm — all 2,400 acres of it. Of Welsh and Canadian heritage, Firkbank departed Montreal as the Great Depression hit, a city boy ripe for adventure. "I had come from two years' imprisonment in a Canadian factory," Firkbank writes in his frank and florid style. He was 21 at the time and knew nothing about farming or sheep. "I first saw Dryffyn in a November gale," he begins, "horizontal rain poured in torrents, but left me dry."

It was love at first sight: "the rain was balm, the wind a caress, the wild Welsh mountains an elemental purge." Soon he was learning about tufted sheep — acclimated by generations in these mountains, they never wander from home.

In 1933, Firkbank meets the elfin-faced yet physically strong Esmé Cumming, a former actress and avid mountain walker. Within a week, they're engaged. Together they run the farm during the worst of the Depression, inventing ideas to increase revenue, scaling mountain paths in their spare time.

Absorbed by this tale of love and ambition, I snuggle into the fireside couch in the larger of the two sitting rooms, keeping one eye on the weather. Firkbank's pigs are a success, his chickens, not so much. Most intriguing is his scheme for sourcing electricity by harnessing



Fields dotted with sheep, opposite page, and countless waterfalls are what make Wales so magical. These daffodils and freshly baked Welsh cakes were waiting for our writer when she arrived at Dyffryn Mymbyr.



The awesome Snowdonia mountains, above, draws many international visitors to this part of Wales. Both Esme and Thomas Firbank were dedicated mountain walkers.

all that rainwater.

“Dryffyn has seven times the rainfall of London, and four times that of Betwys-y-Coed, six miles away,” notes Thomas. So the couple dig a hillside lake, channelling the water downhill, transforming it, with a local engineer’s help, via dynamo and turbine, into electricity.

I confess to feeling less like the intrepid Firbank and more like the bookish heroine of Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* (“There was no possibility of taking a walk that day.”) But Welsh weather being reliably unreliable, soon the sun is shining and the landscape tempting.

First stop is Betwys-y-Coed, a village (population 564) nine kilometres away. (A brief note on language: Welsh, the world’s oldest living language, poses interesting challenges for non-native speakers. It took a day before I stopped saying “Betsy-the-Co-ed.” Betsys-y-Coed, by the way, means Prayer House in the Woods.

In this impossibly picturesque village — a favourite with artists since the early 19th century — we discover a wealth of shops selling hiking gear, cafés, pubs and a 14th-century church. In a well-stocked deli, two chic French ladies discuss the merits of local cheeses. At the railway station, we find a miniature railway modelled on the steam trains that transported coal and slate from Wales to markets all over the United Kingdom. There’s even a small slate museum. Our National Trust farmhouse is made of stone, its roof of Welsh slate, a mining in-

JUST THE FACTS

- For information about Dyffryn Mymbyr go to <http://www.nationaltrustholidays.org.uk>
- Hikes like the one to Swallow Falls are listed at <http://www.betwys-y-coed.co.uk>
- More Wales adventures are found at <http://www.VisitWales.org>
- Teleri Bevan’s biography, *Esmé, Guardian of Snowdonia* (2014), recounts this woman’s passion for the land; she founded the Snowdonia National Park Society, championed conservation, defied developers, and willed Dryffn Mymbyr to the National Trust. She and Thomas divorced when war began; his service with the Airborne Forces in North Africa won him the Military Cross; he wrote more books, travelled extensively, and returned to Snowdonia to live out his days.

novation that like, sheep, was a gift from the occupying Romans (AD78-AD483).

Happily strolling along the riverbank path by the rushing waters of the Conwy River, we then set off for Bodnant and The Welsh Food Centre. The current incarnation of this 18th-century farm offers local fare, cookery courses, a raft of cheeses, Welsh honey, fresh veggies and a well-stocked wine cellar. This slice of gourmet heaven, reminds me of Thomas and Esmé, the original Snowdonia foodies. For years Esmé sold her home-baked treats and refreshments by the roadside to grateful summer

tourists.

A friendly onsite beekeeper explains Welsh beekeeping traditions and is interested to hear about Canadian bees and honeys — his own son lives on Ontario. In the tea room, we lunch on Welsh rarebit (melted cheese, mustard and buttered toast). For dessert, there’s warm bara-brith (fruit bread) and strong tea.

Thus fortified, we return to our farmhouse, laden with lamb, veggies, coffee and wine — fresh flowers and tea cakes are already supplied. Tomorrow we’ll tackle the very beautiful path to Swallow Falls, close to the farmhouse, and one of the prettiest sights around. Serious climbers may set their sights on the Welsh 3000s Challenge, — the 14 Snowdonia summits — which the Firbanks conquered in impressive time while still in their twenties.

That night the farmhouse is redolent with the aroma of roast lamb and feelings of contentment.

Is the house haunted?

Strictly speaking, no, but the spirits of Thomas and Esmé seem present, in a good way. (Esmé, who lived here until her death at 89, is buried on the grounds).

On our last morning, I run into her, as it were. Her photo graces a wall in the second sitting room; vigorous even in age, she smiles and grasps her hiking stick — the same stick hanging below her colour portrait. Tempted, I reach out and hold it in my hand, experiencing a rare moment of communion with the romance of the past. •



THE FAIRMONT VANCOUVER AIRPORT
THE FAIRMONT CHATEAU WHISTLER

An unforgettable journey starts here

From the perfect touch-down at The Fairmont Vancouver Airport to Whistler's landmark Fairmont Chateau Whistler resort, your memorable Vancouver to Whistler adventure will unfold into a seamless blend of inspiration, luxury and impeccable service. Experience Fairmont's timeless tradition of excellence delivered from start to finish.

To reserve your stay on British Columbia's west coast, contact your travel professional, visit fairmont.com or call 1 800 441 1414 and ask about Summer offers with savings up to 30%.

© Tourism Whistler / Mike Crane

The Fairmont Vancouver Airport



The Fairmont Vancouver Airport Jetside Bar



The Fairmont Chateau Whistler



The Fairmont Chateau Whistler Golf Course



River Views

Two journeys along Europe's watery highways leads to historic treasures a gangplank away

STORY BY WILLIAM ECENBARGER / PHOTOS BY SUSAN ECENBARGER

JOURNEY ONE

'Low-key' cruise through France

AVIGNON, FRANCE — Earnest young people are plastering the Medieval walls with playbills and posters. Street performers — magicians, fire-eaters, caricaturists, clowns, jugglers, comedians, mimes, drummers, belly dancers — vie for attention and hope for a few euros in appreciation for their efforts. In front of a dumpster, a chamber orchestra is sawing through Bach.

It's the festival of Avignon, a three-week theatre celebration that features more than 1,500 productions in every possible venue, plus countless spontaneous street performances. Literally, the entire city is a stage.

There are plays in theatres, opera houses, monasteries, convents, churches — and out in the streets on sidewalks and in parks and courtyards — any open space that offers the possibility of an audience.

It's fascinating and exciting, but after four hours, I am

Continued on Page 96



The Viking Delling, above, looks regal tied up at Viviers while its passengers explore the small Rhone River town. One of the joys of a European cruise is the wine tastings like this one, left, at Maison Bouachon, which produces the famed Châteauneuf-du-Pape.

1 Size matters: River cruise ships are much smaller than their ocean-going cousins and because of their size restrictions, you won't be able to bring a big wardrobe, and some people freak out when they see the compact size of their cabin.

2 Many stops: The one thing that attracts people to river cruises is the fact they dock in a new port just about every day and they anchor within walking distance to major landmarks and historic sights.

3 Food for thought: If you're expecting endless buffet-style meals like on ocean cruise ships, think again. Dining on river cruises is intimate and while most lines include meals, some even throw in wine and beer.

4 Dressing up: No need to bring your tuxedo – river cruises tend to be far more relaxed and laid-back and even if you dine with the captain, a sports jacket will do nicely.

5 A good walk spoiled: Because you'll be doing a lot of walking, make sure you pack some comfortable shoes, like sneakers. Those European cobblestones will test your foot fitness very quickly.

6 How entertaining: Unlike the big cruise ships where Broadway-like stage productions are presented, entertainment on river cruises is low key – the passing scenery is pretty entertaining, though.

7 Room to grow: River cruise cabins are generally smaller – even staterooms are cramped compared to their big ship cousins. Amenities are limited, but most include a TV and designer toiletries.

8 Calming affect: There's no big waves to worry about on rivers so if you have experienced sea sickness on the big ships, you'll probably be fine on the inland waterways.

9 Helping hand: Because most river cruise clients tend to be mature travellers fulfilling their bucket lists, the cruise lines are well equipped to handle wheelchair users and others with mobility issues.

10 Barging through Europe: Barge cruising and river cruising are very different – fewer people on the small barge ships make for a more intimate experience where you can get to know your fellow passengers on a one-to-one basis.

JOURNEY TWO

Cruising the romantic Danube

BUDAPEST — Moonbeams danced playfully on the surface of the Danube, competing with reflections from Budapest's myriad lights, as the Viking Egil cruised unhurriedly past stately 19th-century architecture and impressive monuments in Hungary's capital city, adorably called The Queen City of the Danube.

The cruise on the waterway was Viking River Cruises' notable way of introducing guests to the unadulterated beauty of Budapest and a prelude to the sights and events to come on this eight-day sail on one of Europe's most fabled rivers. The Viking Egil would take guests from Budapest to Nuremberg, Germany, with stops at storied places such as Vienna, Passau and Regensburg, Germany, before docking in Nuremberg, the second-largest city in Bavaria.

Budapest was an auspicious beginning to the journey, offering ship guests access to enchanting historic grand cafés, ornate baths, festive markets, stalwart castles and glittering palaces, as well as a thriving nightlife centered in the Jewish Quarter, known as District 7, which has fostered a bohemian drinking scene that developed around antiquated courtyards stylized with eclectic art and dilapidated buildings.

The river divides the city, with hilly Buda on the west portion and lowland Pest on the East. The two sides were united in 1873 and both offer something unique. A funicular carriage at Castle Hill climbs slowly to the pedestrian district of old Buda and leads to the Royal Palace, which today houses the Hungarian National Gallery. A stroll through cobbled streets leads to Matthias Church, the coronation church of Hungarian kings, and should include a stop at the Matthias fountain, a bronze installation that depicts a hunting expedition.

Down the hillside, several bridges cross the river to Pest, where sights such as St. Stephen's Basilica and the Hungarian State Opera await. Popular Városliget City Park opens on to Heroes' Square and its imposing monuments, and is a short ride on the city's metro line from most any station. The World Heritage site also is flanked by the Museum of Fine Arts. In this city of nearly 500 cafés, it's wise to visit one for a delightful pastry or sour cherry dessert before going back onboard in time for the ship's departure on Sunday morning. Viking offers a two-day pre-cruise option in Budapest that allows guests to more fully explore this grandiose city.



The Danube is lined with lots of churches and castles.



A carriage ride is always a good way to see historic cities.



The Jewish cemetery in Nuremberg is kept beautifully.

Continued on Page 99

weary. The bank thermometer says 37C. I am sheened with sweat. The heat is so intense I get personally angry with it. My feet drag like cannonballs across the cobblestones.

Working my elbows like oars to get through the crowd, I pass through the gate of the Medieval wall that rings the city and spot the Viking Delling docked magisterially on the Rhône. Within minutes I am in my air-conditioned state room taking a shower.

Avignon was the first stop on an eight-day, 276-kilometre Arles to Lyon cruise on the Rhône, and each day was a repeat — busy, all-day shore excursions in sauna-level heat followed by cool relaxing evenings with good food and good wine. The next morning I was refreshed and ready for another day in France.

This was my seventh river journey (previous voyages were on the Yangtze, the Nile, the Amazon, the Danube, the Mekong and Myanmar's Irrawaddy), and I already knew that the biggest difference between an ocean cruise and a river cruise is that the former takes you to countries, while the latter takes you through countries, making river travel a more intimate and immersing experience.

"With an ocean cruise, it's the ship itself," said Nikolas Rabogliatti, the Viking program director. "Casinos, entertainment and all that. River cruising is low-key. It's about the destinations. You could get to Avignon from an ocean cruise, but it would take a three-hour coach trip. Here we just walk into town."

River cruising is also a desirable alternative to driving in Europe, where old cities are challenging to navigate and parking is difficult at best. Thus it's not surprising that river trips are one of the fastest growing segments of the travel industry.

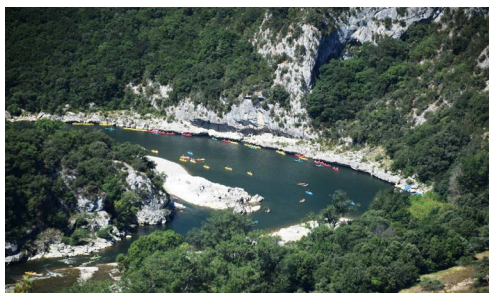
European civilizations developed along their rivers, and until the late 1800s, they were the highways of Europe. For today's river traveller, this means that history and culture are only a gangplank away.

Each day we docked at a different city, town or village, and immediately set out on guided walking tours

One day I was walking the same cobbled streets of Arles that Vincent Van Gogh trod more than a century earlier, seeing many of the places he painted in an extraordinary creative outburst that produced more than 300 masterpieces in only two years.

Another was spent among the vineyards of Chateauneuf-du-Pape, where I touched smooth, potato-size stones called "galets" that were deposited thousands of years ago by glaciers. Today the stones absorb heat from the sun by day and radiate it back to warm the vines at night.

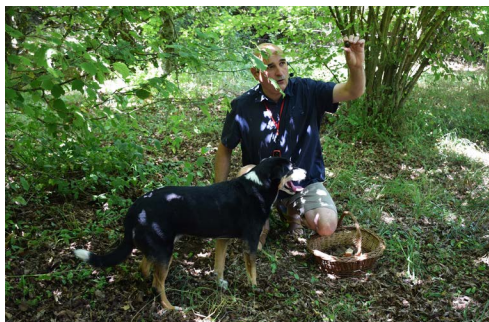
Then I was on the Train de l'Ardèche, a metre-gauge steam train that is listed as a French historic monument. We rode into the Doux Valley, an area inaccessible by road, hemmed in by timbered mountains and the beauty and magnificence of which bore



Ardèche Gorge is one of France's most spectacular natural wonders.



The Tournon Steam train traverses France's spectacular Doux Valley.



Farmer Olivier Devere and his dog Chinook unearthing truffles.

no trace of humanity. On a walking tour of Vienne, once one of Roman Gaul's greatest cities, I'm told that local residents still unearth Roman mosaics when they work in their gardens. I dropped out of the group and went to a café where I ordered a glass of dark red, full-bodied Syrah wine and a local goat cheese and watched the passersby passing by.

After a drive through purple-blue fields of lavender and a stop at the Ardèche Gorge, known as the "Grand Canyon of France," I lunched at Auberge du Pont d'Arc. I ordered trout, which arrived head and all. The staff presented a special Ardechois drink — Castagnou, which is made with white wine and chestnut syrup.

In a single day, I had a Beaujolais wine tasting in a Medieval cellar at the Château de Pierreclos, toured a chèvre (goat cheese) farm, and watched a farmer's dog, an Appenzeller Sennenhund named Chinook, dig for truffles, the highly prized fungus called "the diamond of the kitchen."

Chinook approached the group speculatively, sniffed, his tail shot up, and he began digging furiously with his front paws. Dirt and leaves flew by and then — voila! — a truffle.

The final port was Lyon, where I explored the interior of the Basilica of Notre Dame atop Fourvière Hill and then stepped outside for a panoramic view of the Rhône and Saône, the red roofs of Old Lyon, and to the west the foothills of the Alps.

At each stop our guides were informed, intelligent, intelligible, and passionate about French history, art, literature, architecture, food and wine. They also offered little gems, and we learned:

- That the baguette was born in 1920 when a French law prevented bakers from working before 4 a.m. They could not make the traditional round loaves in time for customers' breakfasts, but the long, thin loaf worked because it could be baked more rapidly.
- That the reason we saw several houses with fake windows painted on their walls was an 18th century property tax based on the number of windows in a house. Another tax dodge was to brick up real windows until the tax was repealed.
- That in Medieval France the infamous "water test" was used to determine if one was a witch. Suspected witches would be tossed into the Rhône. If they drowned, they were innocent. If they did not drown, they were deemed witches and burned at the stake.
- That "you know it is going to be a hot day if the cows and the sheep are under the trees in the shade"

For guided tours, we were given voice boxes with ear buds so the guides could be heard clearly, and street maps were provided for every guest so there was an opportunity to venture away on our own.

The Viking Delling had hotel-style staterooms with sweeping river views and a restaurant, bar, spa, library and sundeck. Every dinner featured at least one local dish, and wine and beer were complimentary at lunch and dinner. •

Year of Silk Road Tourism 2017

2017 丝绸之路旅游年



CHINA - BEYOND YOUR IMAGINATION



China National Tourist Office

www.tourismchina.org

Tel: 416-599-6636 • Toll Free: 1-866-599-6636

The ship leaves Budapest in the morning and early risers are treated to the incredible vistas of the fabled “Blue Danube” as the Egil wends its way through the Danube Bend, considered one of the most beautiful sections of the river. For the next 40 miles, it snakes through northern Hungary, past peaceful farmlands, an ancient castle and steep hills draped in an emerald tapestry. The passage between the Börzsöny and Pilis ranges features majestic church domes rising from inviting villages and historic cities — a stark contrast to the elegant and graceful architecture that is a signature characteristic of Vienna, Austria’s capital city, and the next stop on the voyage. Vienna was the center of arts and intellect during the reign of the Hapsburgs and beyond.

The City of Waltzes, as it is known, is the heart of Europe’s classical music scene. Mozart and Strauss composed many of their finest pieces here, and their compositions can be heard on an optional tour in a historic venue, where costumed singers and dancers take the stage to the strains of Strauss waltzes and selections from Mozart’s “The Magic Flute,” performed by the Vienna Residence Orchestra.

Vienna’s impressive musical history is matched by the splendidly styled architecture that lines the Ringstrasse, the wide boulevard encircling the inner city. Here, Baroque, Neo-Renaissance, Gothic-Romanesque and other stately structures — from the Hofburg Palace to the Vienna State Opera — dazzle visitors with their magnificent facades. The gracious boulevard was laid out on the site of the old city walls in the mid-19th century. Striking palaces, sophisticated public buildings and superb residences are situated along this wide avenue.

But Vienna has a more intimate side as well. Well-manicured footpaths lead through green parks and formal gardens while cozy and welcoming Viennese cafes and coffee houses sweeten the visit with coffee and the city’s famed delectable Sachertorte.

On the outskirts of Vienna at Neustift am Walde, wine flows freely while samples of delicious local dishes on the restaurant’s outdoor terrace or in the rustic dining room make for a memorable and festive optional outing to help celebrate the bottling of the season’s vintage crop. The drinking, live music and dancing are a fitting end to a Vienna visit before sailing on to Krems, Austria, a small university town at the eastern end of the Danube’s picturesque Wachau Valley.

Krems is surrounded by terraced vineyards that help create some of the best Riesling and Veltliner wines in the world. The



Europe’s inland waterways are lined with pretty little rural churches and some massive landmark buildings. Combined they make for a very special and relaxing holiday.

included tour is to Göttweig Abbey, a Benedictine monastery on a hilltop overlooking the city’s cobblestone streets, taverns, wine bars and coffeehouses. The monks produce a sparkling apricot wine in vineyards surrounding the monastery to help with the cost of upkeep. Tours and sales in the restaurant and gift shop also help to maintain the abbey, which is largely supported by the Viking tours.

Within its majestic walls are a number of antiques, rare coins, an impressive collection of books and manuscripts and an extensive art collection composed of French, Dutch and English masterpieces. Four imperial apartments at the monastery are decorated with paintings by Austrian artists Martin Johann Schmidt and Andreas Altomonte. At the conclusion of the visit, the ship sails on through the valley en route to Passau, one of Bavaria’s oldest cities.

Valley sights feature a panoply of terraced vineyards, sloping forests, quaint villages and castle ruins dotting the hillsides. The 29-kilometre cruise skirts past wine-producing areas dating back to Celtic and Roman times when more than 30 monasteries served as vineyards in Renaissance days. The Celts are credited with the establishment of Passau more than 2,000 years ago and it is here that two nations meet; the German-Austrian border begins.

Located at the confluence of the Inn, Ilz and Danube rivers, the strategic position enabled the city to grow to great econom-

ic and political power, thanks in part to the salt trade, or white gold as it was called. The prosperity is still evident in the graceful arcades, colourful houses and the magnificent St. Stephen’s Cathedral, home to one of Europe’s largest pipe organs. The organ, with more than 17,000 pipes, inspired Franz Liszt to write his “Hungarian Coronation Mass.”

For more down-to-earth music, opt to participate in a festive Oktoberfest-style celebration in a stunning rural setting among the rolling green hills of the Bavarian countryside. At Gut Aichtet, a sprawling riverside farm, ample amounts of home-brewed beer, old-style music and sumptuous Bavarian treats such as brazen (pretzels) along with assorted breads, spreads and locally cured ham help celebrate the spirit of Bavaria. Singing and dancing to Schlager music (traditional music combined with popular entertainment) round out the festivities.

After Passau, the sail is nearly complete with only Regensburg and Nuremberg left to explore. Regensburg is one of the best-preserved Medieval cities in Europe and the oldest city along the Danube. The Old Town’s Neupfarrplatz Square is a cross section of history — having served as an ancient Roman gathering place, a thriving Jewish quarter, a bustling marketplace and the site of Nazi book burnings. The 12th-century Old Stone Bridge is a masterpiece of Medieval engineering with its 16 arches and it still carries traffic today.

Nuremberg is the second-largest city in Bavaria and is filled with half-timbered houses and Gothic churches with imposing spires. Although nearly destroyed during World War II, the remaining Medieval city walls stretch some five kilometres and feature original gateways and 80 original watchtowers. It is infamous for its role in World War II, first as the site of Zeppelin Field’s Nazi rallies and later as the site of the war crimes trials at the Palace of Justice.

Things to see before the journey officially ends are the vendor stalls at the Market Square, one of Europe’s most celebrated markets, famous for its gingerbread and its Gothic Schöner Brunnen, or Beautiful Fountain, and the old Jewish cemetery, one of the last remaining vestiges of the Jewish presence there.

The Nazis were particularly zealous in their abuse of the city’s Jews and the infamous Nuremberg Laws were declared in Nuremberg during the Nazi party congress in 1935.

Despite its dark history, Nuremberg is still one of Germany’s most renowned cities. This is the last stop on this marvelous journey before disembarking, but is shouldn’t be the last river cruise — there are far too many more destinations to discover. •



Fox Harb'r Resort

— Nova Scotia —

Nova Scotia's Premier Oceanfront Resort



Championship Golf • Luxury Spa • Fine Dining
Hiking • Biking • Horseback Riding • Jr Olympic Pool

foxharbr.com • 1-866-257-1801





Singapore Fling

Brief stopover leads to colourful experiences



Singapore's world-renowned adult beverage, right, and its stunning skyline, top photo, make it one of Asia's greatest cities. But seeing it at street level is what really leaves an impression with visitors. Above, tourists walk down Haji Lane towards Piedra Negra, a Mexican restaurant.



STORY & PHOTOS BY ALLISON SMITH

SINGAPORE — Orange, red and fuchsia blossoms swirl above us, brilliant against the dark ceiling. We lie on our backs, laughing, our inhibitions gone as we take in the whimsical show.

Around us, adults and children alike lie on the floor of the Glass Rotunda at the National Museum of Singapore. For the “Story of the Forest” exhibition, the rotunda has been transformed into a digital art installation of flora and fauna native to the area. We watch as glowing sticks shoot up from the ground, forming a forest of blue trees. A silver doe emerges to drink from a shimmering pond that appears at its feet. A black and yellow bear sits on his haunches and rests against a glowing tree trunk as the tree sprouts yellow flowers.

The scene constantly changes. The trees' leaves turn purple, rings of orange and pink green form around their trunks. Animals I can't identify — they look like a cross between seals and otters — waddle amid the forest. Silver rain falls, looking like shooting stars. Does canter and frolic. The trees shrink and fade away, replaced by new trees a few moments later. Above us, the petals continue to swirl.

Reluctantly, I nudge my fiancé and we leave the rotunda to take in the rest of the museum. Gorgeous and ethereal as the exhibition is, we have only a day in Singapore and need to take in as much as we can.

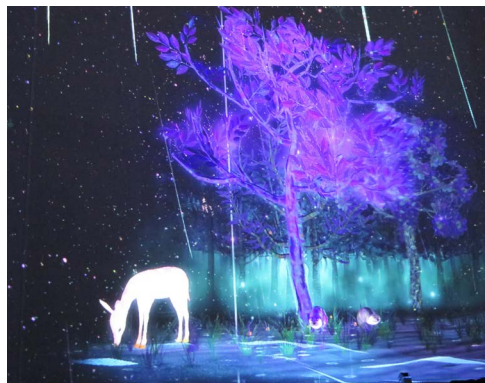
After a few months in Malaysia, we came to Singapore seeking a quick hit of art and culture. In only two hours, a bus took us from Johor Bahru, the Malaysian city across the river, to the heart of Singapore. I love the Arab Quarter from the moment we arrive; it is a heady mix of culture old and new. Boutiques, coffee shops, bars and restored shophouses line streets that orbit the 200-year-old Masjid Sultan Mosque at the centre of the neighbourhood. As the only neighbourhood in ultra-orderly Singapore where street art is allowed, it is vibrant and colourful. I deposit Michael at a tattoo parlour to chat with a local tattoo artist and befriend the parlour's cat as I walk the famous Haji Lane. The boutiques and restaurants are covered with murals, some black and white, others a riotous celebration of colour.

From Haji Lane we go to the National Museum, continuing our exploration of colour in the Story of the Forest exhibition. After leaving the glass rotunda, we make our way through the Singapore History Gallery, tracing the history of the city-state from its time as a colony of the British empire to its present as a republic. After a few months in Malaysia, I'm interested to learn Singapore was part of Malaysia from 1963 to 1965, before separating because of "political and economic disagreements" that the exhibition vaguely mentions but does not fully describe. Something to investigate further when I return home.

The entire museum expertly uses colour, sound and digital design to immerse us in Singapore's history. It also goes above and beyond to make visitors feel personally connected to Singapore; the final display before the exit is an interactive digital map, where visitors key in their home country to learn how it is connected to Singapore. Michael and I choose Canada and watch a line stretch across the world from the city-state to our home, with an accompanying fact: Justin Trudeau is a descendant of William Farquhar, the first British Resident and Commandant of Singapore. I have never before heard of Farquhar, but the exhibition does the trick; I feel a twinge of pride at the association of our prime minister with this city.

Outside the museum gift shop is a vending machine which dispenses mystery books wrapped in white paper. Though I love the idea, I decide against buying one; we have a few bookstores on our itinerary, so I'll have other opportunities to buy books.

For dinner we go to Garibaldi, the nearest



Wall art abounds in Singapore. There's no better proof of that than the shophouses on Haji Lane, above, which serve as boutiques, restaurants, coffee shops and bars. Left, flora and fauna come to life at the digital Story of the Forest exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore.

Italian restaurant. Upon entering the restaurant, we're kindly told there is a dress code in the dining room which Michael, dressed in shorts, doesn't meet; do we mind sitting in the bar?

We do not, and we're treated to the best meal we've had in months. From the warm bread to the rich ravioli, everything is perfect. I order a Singapore Sling, considered the country's national drink. It is delicious. Our bartender assures me I won't get a better Singapore Sling at the Raffles Singapore, where the cocktail was famously created in 1915. Later, Michael and I learn Garibaldi has one Michelin star; we inadvertently wandered into Singapore's haute cuisine scene. No wonder Michael's shorts kept us from the dining room.

Our gluttony continues the next morning with brunch in Tiong Bahru, a hip neighbourhood of chic cafés and independent bookstores. Forty Hands serves up the best Eggs Benedict I've ever had, and Michael is as pleased with his French toast. Though we usually share our food with each other, we zealously guard our plates; the food is just too good to share. We order a second espresso, watching Singaporeans and for-

eigners pass through the café. Some are dressed in business attire, others have yoga mats strapped to their backs.

In addition to its great food and coffee, Forty Hands has the perk of being directly across the street from two independent bookstores. We start at Woods in the Books, a bookstore with a comprehensive collection of English-language children's books and young adult fiction. The picture books are gorgeous; we carefully flip through their pages with the reverence of holding works of art.

A few doors over is Books Actually, an independent bookstore with an impressive selection of fiction, non-fiction, poetry and vintage books. At its window front sits a vending machine dispensing mystery books, just like the one at the National Museum. Inside, we hungrily scoop up books. Together, our purchases at Woods in the Books and Books Actually total a third of the cost of our quick trip.

It's money well-spent. We came to Singapore for 24 hours of art, history and literature, and the city fulfilled and surpassed our expectations. We leave wanting more — the hallmark of a good fling. •

Hollywood **Star** *Struck* **By New Zealand**



*Golden Globe nominee
Bryce Dallas Howard,
the star of such films as
The Village, Lady in the Water,
As You Like It and The Help,
was recently in New Zealand
filming and offers five tips
on how to enjoy this
'magical' country with the
Hollywood good looks*



In top photo, Bill Matthews, Footprints Waipoua Tour Guide, welcomes Hollywood star Bryce Dallas Howard to New Zealand with a "hongi" — a traditional Maori welcome. Above, Bryce explores a chasm on the Dart River in New Zealand's Mount Aspiring National Park with guide Toby Washer.



Bryce, who calls New Zealand “mystical” and “magical,” stops to take in the view from a breathtaking ridgeline near Queenstown.

STORY BY BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD / PHOTOS BY JULIAN APSE

MY EARLY MEMORIES of New Zealand from when I was quite little was that it’s a magical, kind-of mystical place. I’ve been so fortunate to return, thanks to my career, and every time I come back the more I discover, and my love for this place just grows deeper.

To truly experience New Zealand, though, you have to get out: first, to meet the people and feel the vibe, then, to get off the beaten track and immerse yourself in the landscape. While it’s about the size of California, there’s this extraordinary variety in New Zealand from one place to another.

Here’s my essential elements for a transformative New Zealand holiday:

1 Meet the locals, especially Maori. It’s their spirit that infuses the nation. Learn about their culture at Te Papa (the museum in Wellington), or in Rotorua, or practically anywhere in New Zealand. They’re amazing storytellers and their culture enriches the lifestyle with a respect and love for the natural world. You can also sense that in everyday life, because Kiwis exhibit a warm, happy style and everyone seems genuinely grateful and hopeful here.

2 Take a walk in the New Zealand bush and breathe deeply to awaken the senses. If you want to escape deep into the wilderness, there are some great guided hiking trails that start near Queenstown, like the Routeburn Track in Mount Aspiring National Park. Or, take a short walk in the forest with a Maori guide to learn about the ancient kauri forests in Northland.

3 Enjoy the country’s amazing waterways because water is everywhere in New Zealand. You’ve got the Tasman Sea on the west coast and the Pacific Ocean on the east, and you can go to the place where the oceans meet on Cape Reinga at the tip of the North Island. You can also cruise down a beautiful river on a Funyak inflatable canoe with no one in sight except your guide. And then, you can soak in a naturally heated thermal spa in Rotorua.

4 Reach for the sky. Step outside at night and look up at the stars. In the Southern Alps, the International Dark Sky Reserve at Aoraki Mt. Cook is a famous star gazing destination



Bryce walks along Cape Reinga where the Tasman Sea meets the Pacific Ocean in top photo while above she relaxes in the Onsen Hot Pools near Queensland.

with some of the world’s clearest night skies. But just take yourself away from the lights anywhere in New Zealand and you see amazing skies. Queenstown has gorgeous Onsen Pools where you can luxuriate in glacial water in a private tub with the stars above.

5 And don’t forget, a holiday in New Zealand is an adventure in itself so don’t miss out on trying your own level of adventure. You can be extreme or go for a softer adventure. It’s the home of bungee, so if you want to throw yourself off a bridge, go ahead. But you may prefer to jump in a jet boat for a thrilling high speed journey down a rocky narrow river gorge. For something a little less challenging, a cycle your around New Zealand’s famous vineyards might suit you better. •

• To view or share the six-part video series, please visit: <http://www.natgeo.com/NZMustDo>



Before earning the right to wear the uniform of Singapore Airlines, candidates are put through a rigorous training program. Graduates get to wear the 'kebaya'— the distinct uniform that makes the airline's crew stand out from other flight attendants.

Sky's the limit

For Singapore flight attendants

STORY & PHOTOS BY MARC ATCHISON

But before recruits join award-winning airline they must complete rigorous training program

SINGAPORE — Retaining your title as Asia's Best Airline takes commitment, dedication and bravery. Just ask the young flight attendant standing in the open doorway of a Boeing 777 mockup who is about to take a two-storey plunge into a giant wave pool.

The young woman — in full uniform and wearing a bright yellow life vest — doesn't hesitate. She throws herself into the pool, then swims to a giant life raft, where she lifts her body into the oversized rubber dinky.

I applaud her herculean effort and she flashes me an exhausted smile.

She has completed one of the most gruelling tests required of recruits who hope to become one of the famed Singapore Girls — the most recognized and decorated flight crew in the industry thanks to their unique kebaya uniforms and commitment to service.

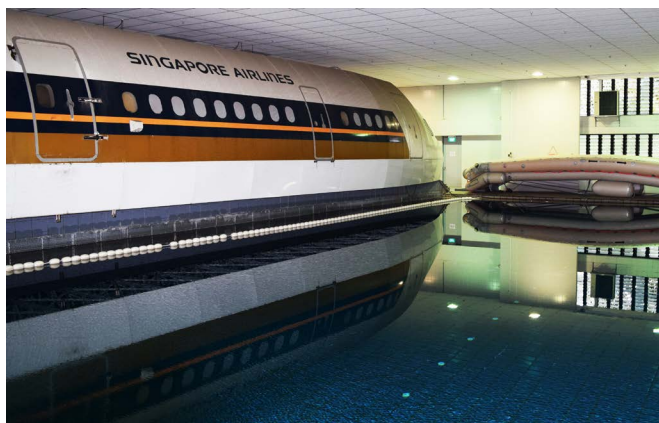
The path to a coveted career with Singapore Airlines starts at the company's multi-million dollar high-tech training centre located near this island nation's fabulous Changi International Airport, the carrier's home base.

Singapore Airlines' flight attendants — there are over 8,000 of them and the airline still refers to them as stewardesses — are put through a rigorous 14-week training course where they are taught every aspect of the job by qualified instructors, most of whom have spent decades in the sky with the airline.

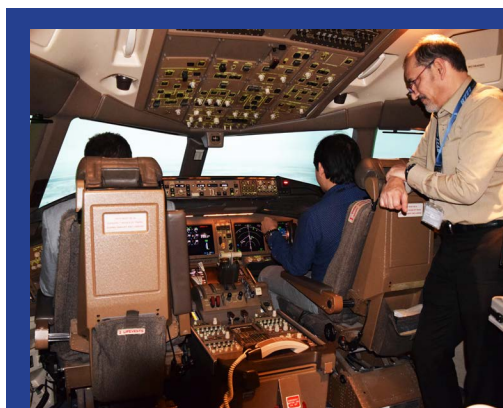
The reward for those who graduate is to be outfitted in the kebaya, a sarong-style garment worn by women in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and parts of the Philippines. The kebaya, which is used widely in the company's marketing campaigns, has served as the airline's uniform for female flight attendants since 1972. Males wear well-tailored suits.

During their training, recruits are taught the three "S's" of the job — service, security and safety. The company also puts a high priority on grooming, so both male and female recruits are taught how to style their hair and how to properly put on makeup — it takes the female flight attendants about 1.5 hours to get ready for a flight and they have to be in full uniform two hours before boarding.

The grooming instructor tells me male flight crew are limited to "gentleman's haircut" — no dreadlocks or rock star long hair allowed here — while the females usually wear their hair tied in a bun.



Safety is priority one at Singapore Airlines, so recruits are required to complete some daunting tasks before earning their wings. In the top two photos above, potential flight attendants must jump from a plane into a wave pool in full uniform. Above, they are also required to deploy and then slide down some long chutes.



A senior instructor hovers over pilots in one of Singapore Airline's two flight simulators. The new pilots are tested in every aspect of flying and even veteran pilots are required to take refresher courses from time to time.

Because water in the different locations the airline flies to can have an adverse affect on hair, the makeup artist even shows the recruits tricks so they can achieve the uniformed look set down by the airline.

The newest female flight attendants are outfitted in blue custom-made kebayas. Longer serving flight crew get green, red and purple uniforms — the latter is reserved for senior flight managers. Interestingly, the colour of the uniforms matches the colour of Singapore's money — i.e. \$5 note is green, \$10 red and \$50 purple.

Graduates sign a five-year contract with the airline, which operates a fleet of long-range aircraft — the youngest in the industry, by the way. The contracts are reviewed every five years and maintaining the high standards set down by the airline regarding personal appearance is one of the main requirements for rehiring.

Recruits are also shown how to properly serve meals to passengers — all classes in the aircraft are treated equally — and some take courses in the training centre's wine room, run by a certified sommelier, so they can help passengers select the vintage that pairs best with their gourmet meal.

On two recent flights with Singapore Airlines, I was struck by how engaging the flight attendants are and how quickly they respond to passenger requests.

What really tests the recruits' determination to become a Singapore Airlines flight attendant, though, is the safety requirements. Besides the water test, crew members have to jump down rubber chutes used in the Airbus 380 and Boeing 777 — the main aircraft employed by the carrier — and are taught how to take command in a crisis situation.

Once the recruits pass all the tests, they can start flying with an airline that is regularly recognized as the best in Asia — and frequently the world — by industry watchdogs.

The training centre is also outfitted with state-of-the-art flight simulators where new pilots are trained and senior pilots take refresher courses. Singapore Airlines also trains pilots for other airlines. Singapore Airlines invests millions each year training their staff and the end result is that passengers are treated to one of the most pleasant experiences in the sky. On my recent 10-hour flight from Singapore to Tokyo, for example, the service experience was so good I wished we could fly around for another few hours. •



During their 14-week training program, Singapore flight attendants are taught how to serve food, how to tie their hair and even learn about vintage wines.

Muscle Beach

A woman with long blonde hair is captured in a dynamic yoga pose, likely a Warrior II or a similar standing pose, on a blue mat on a sandy beach. She is wearing a black sports bra and black leggings with thin white vertical stripes. Her arms are raised high, and her legs are spread wide. The background features a dramatic sky with a mix of blue and orange hues, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. A faint rainbow is visible in the distance. The overall mood is active and serene.

STORY BY KAREN KWAN

TravelLife's guide to
creating your active
retreat in California

EVERY GOOP-OBSESSED woman is looking to savasana or bootcamp their tushes off on a fitcation, it seems. And while the ne plus ultra of these luxurious fitness-focused vacations might be a yoga retreat in Tahiti, for example, or cycling in Vietnam, there is a simpler and more budget-friendly way to do it: choose a destination and plan an itinerary around classes and lessons you're keen to try out.

I flew down to Southern California to try my first pick-your-own-fitness adventure, SoCal being, after all, the birthplace of many fitness style trends. You'll find more workouts to try here than you can reasonably fit into one trip, making it an ideal destination for you to tone up doing a variety of fitness (hello, cross-training) — not to mention having more healthy eateries and juice bars to try out than Beyoncé has hit songs. Pack your Lycra and sneakers, hop into your car rental and get set to sweat in SoCal.

Take your yoga practice into the air

While you can find aerial yoga in Canadian cities, it's unlikely you'll find an aerial yoga class set outside on a rooftop with a view of the ocean in the distance. At La Jolla's Trilogy Yoga, using the silks to support you through stretches and inversions, this yoga practice will call for a bit of trust both in yourself and the fabric, making it a practice that'll challenge you both physically and mentally. As someone who can occasionally get motion sickness, I used that as extra motivation to stay in control of the silks to minimize swaying.

Spin seaside

For those who love to spin but can do without the nightclub atmosphere, over-the-top dramatics and crowded sweaty rooms of most spin studios, you'll breathe a sigh of relief at the beach spin class at the historic Hotel del Coronado. With spin bikes set up by the sand and facing the ocean, participants each get a headphone so you can enjoy pop hits and hear the instructor's cues without disturbing the peace for beachcombers. Best part: I loved that instead of A/C, the salty Pacific Ocean breeze cools you off.

Soothe those muscles at the spa

Don't overlook recovery when planning your fit getaway. A visit or two to day spas over the course of your trip will help flush lactic acid from your muscles and better prepare you for your next workout. In San Diego, you'll find the newly renovated 40,000 square-foot AquaVie Spa Wellness Club, which offers a sports massage to help soothe your overworked muscles, and if your leg days have you feeling beat, make sure to add on the fatigued leg treatment to boost circulation. Post-spa, I ordered a light lunch to enjoy beside its

Olympic-size rooftop pool, which rounded out a recovery day perfectly. .

Ride the waves in Huntington Beach

Whether you're a novice or expert, Huntington Beach is the spot to try to catch a wave — it is the birthplace of surfing in America, after all. You can look forward to relatively consistent surf conditions, and with a sandy ocean floor, beginners can learn the basics from the surf instructors from who know how to break down the basic steps so that you may be up on that board and surfing to shore before you know it. Ryan, my instructor for my very first surf lesson a year ago and again for another lesson this visit, is so enthusiastic about his surf students getting up on that board, it's motivating — and it works!

Sun salutations in sunny California

The sunny beaches of California make for a stunning and appropriate spot to practice sun salutations, wouldn't you agree? That said, nailing your yoga poses may prove more difficult than you realize when you've got soft, shifting sand underneath your feet (I know I found tree pose next to impossible). In Huntington Beach, book a beach yoga class and they'll provide the mats and instructor. Keep in mind there's little shade on the beach so sunscreen is as essential to your practice as is your ujayi breathing.

Kayak in La Jolla

Presented by Everyday California with a helmet, I was confused. "For kayaking?" It and the life jacket are required, and if you go out on a rough day as we did, you'll understand why that helmet is needed. There are caves you can explore when the ocean is calm (hold onto your Go Pro tight, as many have been lost in the water here) and to come in from your excursion, you'll have to surf that kayak on a wave. Catch that wave the wrong way and you'll get tossed out of the kayak (and possibly hit on the noggin with it, as I was). If you're lucky, you'll spot a sea lion or two.

Sweat your way svelte in Santa Monica

California beauties complement their Spinning, Pilates, surfing and yoga with another sweaty endeavour at Shape House. Celebrities including Selena Gomez come to this urban sweat lodge, where you put on oversized cotton gear and tuck yourself into a padded infrared heated foil blanket. The temperature will reach 75C as you lay there and catch up on Hulu or YouTube for the next 55 minutes. If you're claustrophobic or heat up easily, you can bring your arms and/or legs out of the hot cocoon like I did. Each session is purported to burn up to 1,600 calories and lead to better sleep and weight loss. •

Colourful Curaçao

Caribbean beauty flies under the radar

STORY & PHOTOS BY ROSALIND CUMMINGS-YEATES

WILLEMSTAD — Gripping the railing lightly, I steady myself to walk across the gently swaying bridge. Stepping slowly over the floating platform, I'm oblivious to the crowds of passerbys as crayon-coloured, 17th-century buildings, perfectly framed by deep blue water, loom before me. I stop on the historic Queen Emma pontoon bridge and gaze at the spectacle, which resembles a scene from an old European fairytale.

Although it looks like Amsterdam with its colonial architecture and waterways, and feels like Miami with food trucks and trendy nightclubs, the island of Curaçao is actually located in the southern Caribbean. But much like it's distinctive blue liqueur namesake, there's nothing typical about Curaçao.

Strolling around Willemstad, the island's vibrant capital, it's immediately clear that this is not the "palm trees and umbrella cocktails" Caribbean stereotype that fills vacation brochures. A UNESCO World Heritage City, Willemstad bustles with activity, from the "floating market" of Venezuelan boats, to the cafés that line the harbour serving up sublime views of the colonial architecture. I actually experience my first "only in Curaçao" moment as I enter a café and



Curaçao's pastel-coloured homes, top photo, and its vibrant markets, above, make it one of the most refreshing destinations in the Caribbean. However, the shackles on display in the slave museum, left, reminds us of the island's terrible history under colonial rule.

THE SUN'S NOT GOING TO BED. WHY SHOULD YOU?

**Discover how the
Yukon can lighten
up your summer.**

Journey into the wild to spot grizzlies, moose and caribou, or hike ancient mountain trails blazing with wildflowers. Follow a scenic drive back to the days of the Klondike gold rush, or learn to dance to a beat of a culture as old as our land. When you realize it's midnight...you realize it doesn't matter.



EXPLORE

Visit travelyukon.com/midnightsun


YUKON
LARGER THAN LIFE

a nattily dressed senior smiles and calls “hey dushi!” — a popular vernacular phrase in Curaçao that translates as sweetheart. “Dushi” is the most famous word in the local Papiamentu language. Not that visitors are expected to speak multi-layered Papiamentu, which blends words from Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and several African dialects. With 50 nationalities represented on the island, the locals speak English, Dutch and Spanish.

Locals speaking Papiamentu phrases float through the historic district, as I continue through the narrow streets. Willemstad is divided into two parts; Punda which is the main shopping area and Otrobanda. I’m on the Punda side and the splashy hues of the colonial buildings make me feel like I’m wrapped in rainbows. The story goes that Willemstad buildings used to be painted stark white but a 19th-century governor complained that gazing at the white structures under the glaring tropical sun gave him migraines. So he ordered the citizens to paint their houses any colour but white. The city’s colour-drenched, coral stone and sand buildings quickly became its signature, helping Curaçao stand out from surrounding islands. It was later discovered that the headache-prone governor was also a stakeholder in the island’s only paint shop.

Nonetheless, there’s more to Curaçao’s charm than colour. The floating market is another standout, unfolding along the banks of the Waagat lagoon. The line-up of ships, many sporting the Venezuelan flag and emblazoned with names like Dona Filomena, form haphazard rows along the harbour. Although some are piled with fish sold directly from the boats, most are docked with the owners setting up stands on pathways in front of the ships. Piles of fresh plantains, cocoanuts and tomatoes lure many locals to the market, which technically isn’t really floating. Curaçao’s dry climate makes growing produce tough so the fruit and veggie-filled Venezuelan boats add another unconventional spin on Curaçao life.

Crossing the bridge into Otrobanda, literally meaning “the other side,” the streets are quieter but no less striking. Faded pastel buildings are accented with bold street art and women beneath umbrellas smile just as brightly. Up Breedestraat, the eclectic main street of Otrobanda, I make my way to Netto Bar, the legendary spot for rom berde, or green rum. It’s late afternoon but it doesn’t matter, the bar opens at 8 a.m. daily to supply admirers with cups of the homegrown, fluorescent green liquor.

Stepping past the red gates, I’m greeted with an explosion of signs, pictures, license plates and lights. The bar has been open since 1954 and the air is thick with history. The menu offers several green rum cocktails but I opt for the traditional version in a shot glass. It tastes medicinal and sweet, with a strong kick. Standing up from my stool, I’m a little woozy but that’s part of the appeal. With another “only in Curaçao” experience under my belt, I head to another Otrobanda landmark, Kura Hulanda.

Featuring sculpture gardens, landscaped courtyards and restored 17th-century buildings, Kura Hulanda is a lot of things — a luxury resort, an exclusive village and an urban renewal project. But I’ve come for Museum Kura Hulanda, one of the most extensive museums dedicated to slavery in the world. Located on the site of Willemstad’s original slave market, this sprawling anthropology museum delivers all the permutations of slavery in stunning detail. Shackles, sale papers and a recreation of the cramped hold of a slave ship cause me to choke on my emotions. The signs are in Dutch but no words are really needed. Following the map for the sprawling museum, I discover Ku Klux Klan robes, Buffalo Soldier papers, a profile on Marcus Garvey, a Black Panther exhibit and jaw-dropping displays of West African artifacts. The museum can easily soak up an entire day and I finish just as the attendants are locking the doors.

When evening hits, the trendy Pietermaai district is the place to be. I kick things off at Luke’s Bar, the place for handcrafted, well-designed cocktails. Sipping on a concoction called To-



Curaçao’s is a favourite spot for Venezuelan boats. The fishermen from the nearby South American nation are frequent visitors to Willemstad’s harbour. The pedestrian bridge above connects tourists to Otrobanda, the party area of Curaçao.

kyo Millionaire, filled with sake, lychee, elderflower and a fake \$10,000 yen note wrapped around the glass stem, I was primed for a night out in Curaçao. Blessing, a restaurant housed in a monastery, is another neighbourhood hot spot serving creative dishes like cauliflower pizza, sweet potato biscuits and veal with beans, bacon and beetroot.

The nightlife is just as quirky as everything else in Curaçao. I danced to a ’90s cover band at 27 Bar, dedicated to musicians that died at 27 (photos of Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison and Amy Winehouse peer out at visitors), shimmied to salsa in the sand and fog machine clouds at Cabana Beach Club and lounged on sleek white sofas as house music pounded at Club Zen. You can never call it a night on Curaçao without visiting a snek or truki pan. That is, you must check out one of the hundreds of casual eateries that serve quick bites through a fence or food trucks that roll out at night supplying popular staples. I sampled a pastechi, an empanada filled with cheese, while crowds of locals lined up behind me. BBQ Express is the most famous truki pan, and I stared as huge meat platters and sandwiches appeared from the window. Locals eat the food while it’s hot, (and covered in pika, a homemade hot sauce) at nearby tables or on car hoods.

I didn’t have room to eat anything else but as I watched the jovial scene with the bouncing melodies of ritmo kombina streaming out of the cars, I was convinced that there’s no other place like Curaçao. •



MEET THE B777* BUSINESS CLASS.

Every detail is designed to make your journey pleasant.

Good To Go

Innovative goTenna Mesh
tops TraveLife's 'must-have'
travel accessories for 2018

PICTURE THIS: You're on a hike in a remote mountain location and your smartphone loses its connection — and there's not a cell tower in site. Yikes! Millennials and grandparents break out into a cold sweat at the mere thought of not being able to communicate with friends and grandkids — or anyone!

Stay calm. Help has arrived in the form of “goTenna Mesh,” an off-grid mobile device that pairs with a cellphone to create your own network anywhere, with no service required.

Brooklyn-based goTenna was inspired to create its ingenious device after Hurricane Sandy (2012), when over a quarter of all cell towers in a 10-state area of America were damaged, leaving millions unable to communicate.

And goTenna Mesh is the latest addition to the company's lineup and is the “first 100 per cent off-grid, mobile, long-range consumer-ready mesh network.” It's easy to use: Just pair the device with a phone and you'll be able to send text messages and share GPS locations with another user — goTenna Mesh comes two to a box.

The GPS feature is well worth the \$250 (Cdn) price tag and can be used in remote locations, perfect for the outdoor traveller — goTenna Mesh is powered by networking protocols that automatically and privately hop messages between devices in one-to-one or group conversations. It can also be broadcast publicly to any other goTenna Mesh users in the area.

• **PRICE:** About \$250 (all prices Canadian) for a pair.

• The device is available at London Drugs, Sport Chek (Feb. 1, 2018) and on amazon.ca

• For more details or to buy directly online, go to <http://www.goTenna.com>



TIME IS RIGHT FOR THESE GADGETS



LEATHERMAN TREAD LT (29 Tools)

The Leatherman Tread gives you 29 different stainless steel tools to solve any problem that arises and can be worn on your wrist. Engineers designed multiple tools in each bracelet link, making usable tools like Allen wrenches, screwdrivers and box wrenches available at a moment's notice.

PRICE: steel - \$209.95 / black - \$230.95

LEATHERMAN TREAD TEMPO (30 Tools)

The Tread Tempo, right, is a durable, travel-friendly multi-tool timepiece that fuses utility and style for quick fixes at home or across the globe. The Tread Tempo timepiece features 20 links with 30 tools, such as 1/8" screwdriver, 10mm box wrench, safety cutter, flat screwdriver, file and carbide glass breaker.

PRICE: \$574.85 | Available in stainless steel and black



LEDLENSER – SEO Series (SEO 3 / SEO 5)

Great device for night joggers or cyclists. The SEO 5 is powerful and lightweight, featuring Smart Light Technology for switching quickly between high and low power. The SEO 5 also has a red light mode for preserving night vision. Features a swiveling head to direct light exactly where it's needed.



PRICE: SEO 3 - \$54 / SEO 5 - \$67.50

LEATHERMAN JUICE CS3 (4 tools)

This multi-tool Juice CS3 is TSA-approved and features a can opener, scissors, bottle opener and corkscrew in one compact device. However, because it does not have a blade, it's good to go. Comes with a 25-year warranty.



PRICE: \$37.95

ALL-DAY HYDRATION - Hydration Flasks (12 oz / 18 oz / 21oz / 32oz / 40 oz)

It's important to stay hydrated, especially with air travel and most airports have water fill stations for added convenience. From 12oz to 40oz there is the perfect size for everyone. The Hydration Collection is always ready to keep hot drinks hot and cold drinks cold. Features TempShield double-wall vacuum insulation and is durable — 18/8 pro-grade stainless steel construction. It's BPA-free and phthalate free. Beverages stay cold up to 24 hours and hot up to six hours. This is the perfect product for families traveling with small ones.

PRICE: Ranges from \$29.95 to \$49.95



LEDLENSER MT10 – 1000 Lumens

This stylish flashlight is compact and tough and clips to your pocket or handbag. It has a rechargeable battery plus a USB charger so you can charge it on the plane. It has a strobe light for personal safety and defence. Distance: 20M to 180M.

PRICE: \$108 – <http://www.Ledlenser.ca>

GOURMET ON THE GO - Food Flasks (12oz and 18oz)

This is great if you have young kids or hungry teens. These Food Flasks keep kids' favourite foods at the perfect temperature. Comes in two convenient sizes that make them backpack friendly, and the secure lid keeps them free of spills. TempShield insulation keeps cold foods cold and hot foods hot and it features 18/8 pro-grade stainless steel construction.

PRICE: \$35.95 12 oz / \$41.95 18 oz



travelife

MAGAZINE

10TH

ANNIVERSARY CONTEST

ENTER

FOR A CHANCE TO WIN 2 ECONOMY
CLASS AIR TICKETS TO FABULOUS
Vietnam WITH UNITED AIRLINES

OR

A NIKON KEYMISSION 170
ACTION CAMERA

[CLICK HERE TO ENTER](#)

travelife



UNITED

