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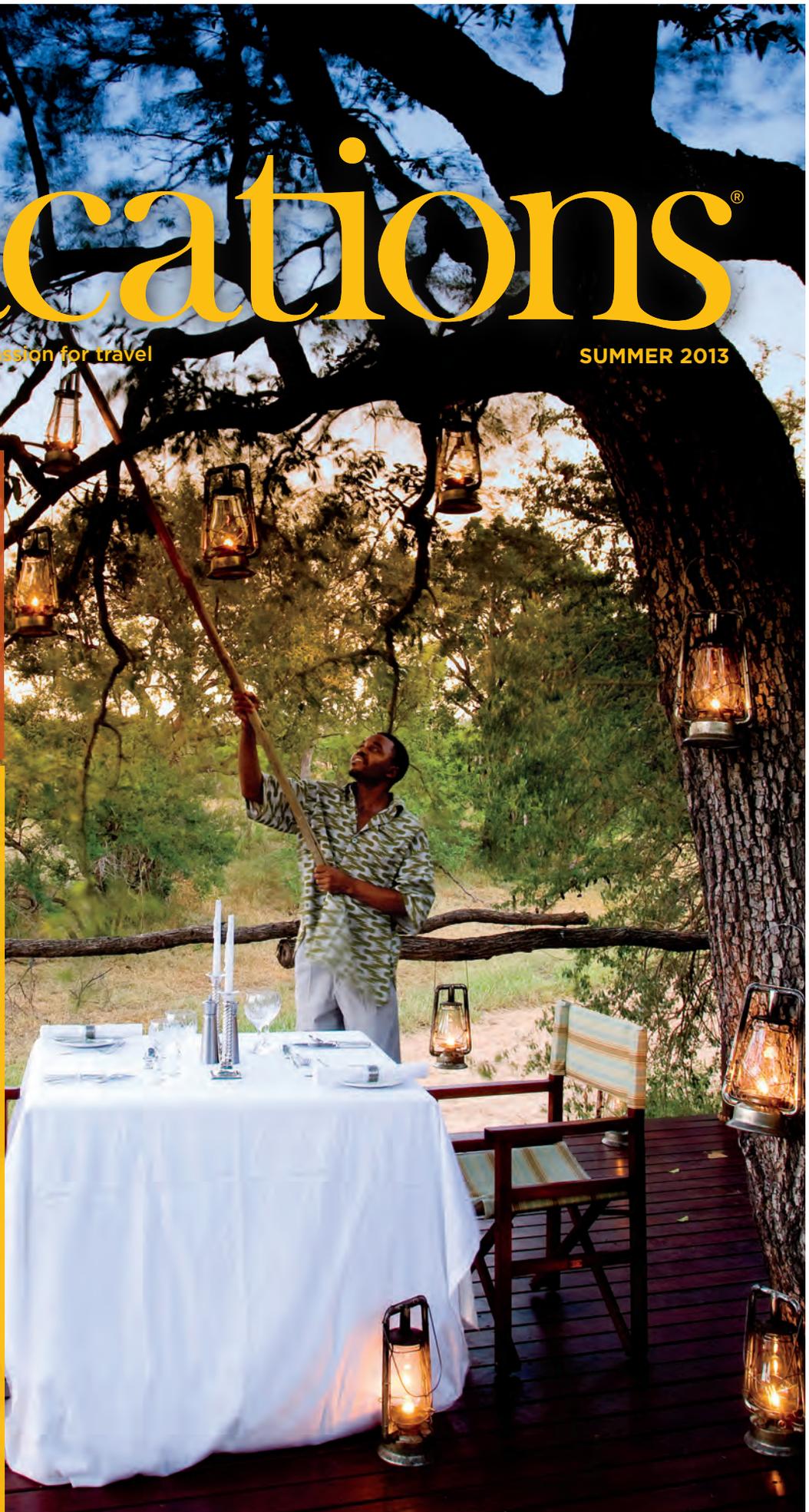
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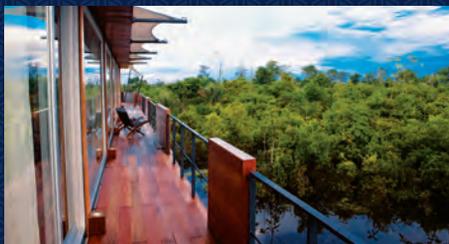
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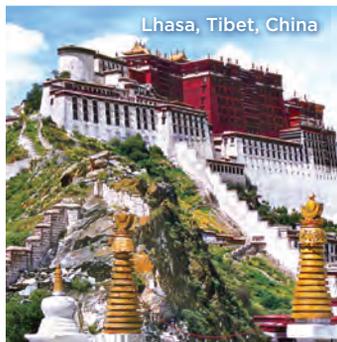
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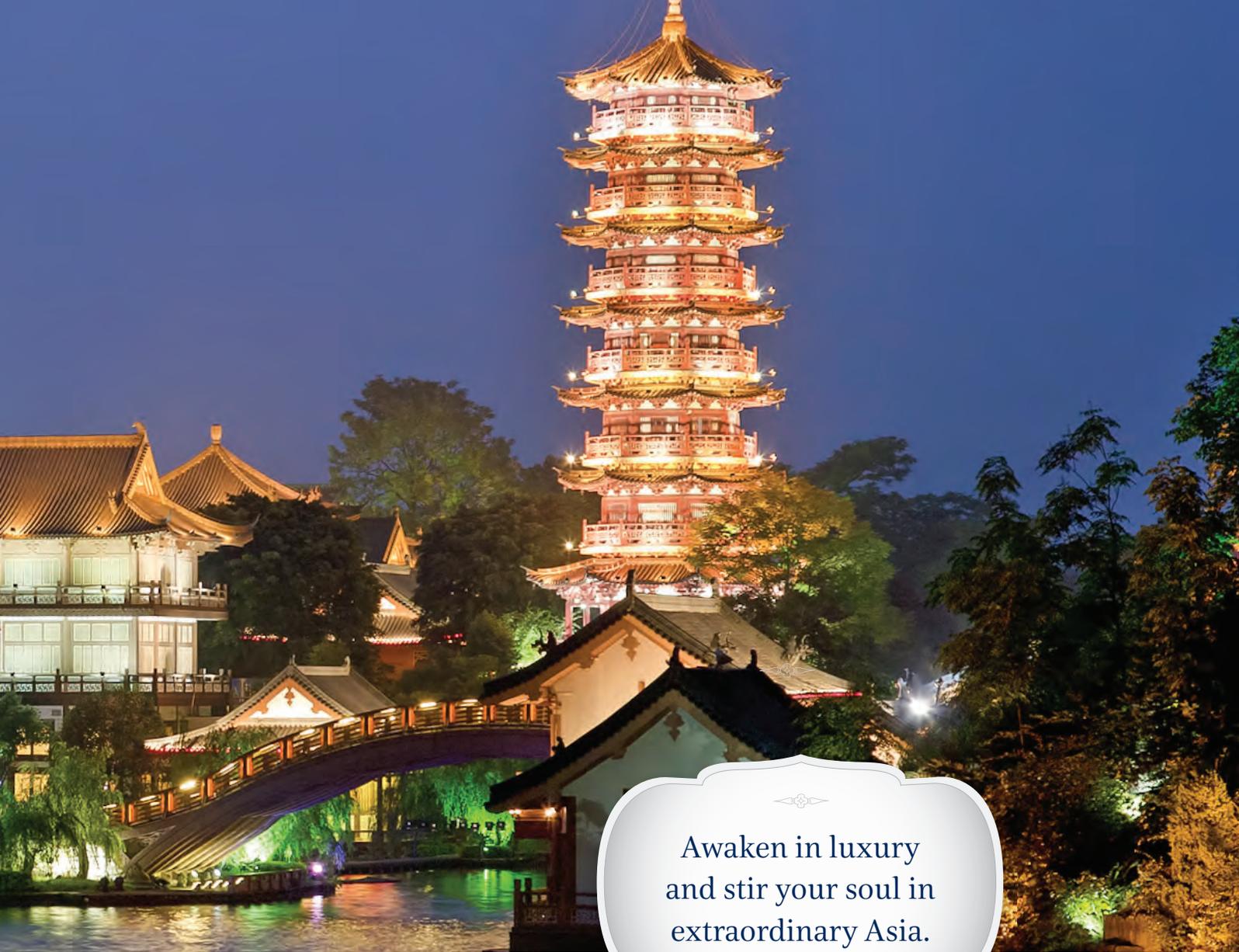
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48 ROOMS WITH A VIEW



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40 GRAND VOYAGES



36 MALAWI'S GOT GAME



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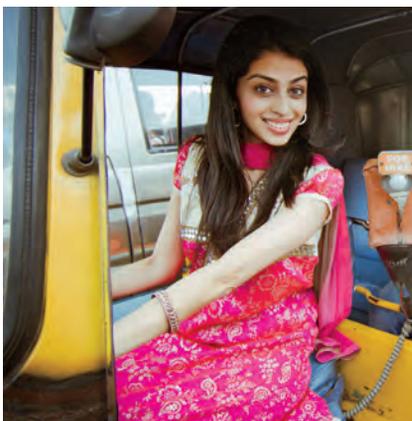


L.J. Williamson feels that graffiti – or the lack of it – can be a window onto a culture. In Zagreb, Croatia, there was street art on nearly every surface, whereas in South Korea, “spray paint seemed virtually non-existent,” she says, “and what was there was fairly restrained.” Koreans have a deep appreciation of order, but that doesn’t mean they don’t have fun. “In a downtown park in Seoul, where young and old alike strolled, the piped-in sound system played ultra-hip electronic dance music – surprising for such a setting.” When L.J. isn’t globetrotting, she works closer to home as a regular contributor to the *Los Angeles Times* and *LA Weekly*, where she writes about food, art, pop music, video games, the Internet and other things that aren’t terribly important but are terribly fun.

Katharine Fletcher and her photographer husband Eric have a penchant for long-term expeditions. The couple backpacked around the world for 14 months in the eighties. And in 2010, they found farmsitters to look after their horses, cats and organic garden, and then departed for a year – exploring Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, the U.K. and Australia. They loved Oz so much they returned in 2012 for six weeks. Katharine and Eric are happiest when snorkelling, horseback riding, hiking, paddling – and inspiring others to discover the world’s true nature. Katharine is an award-winning freelance writer, columnist and author of five guidebooks to the National Capital Region and Québec.



Sarah Khan was brought up in four countries and was looking for a fifth, so it worked out perfectly for her when, after almost five years as an editor at *Travel + Leisure* magazine in New York, she visited South Africa on a whim and fell in love with Cape Town... and with a Capetonian. Sarah has covered travel, fashion, lifestyle, arts and food for *The New York Times*, *Vogue India*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Atlantic* and many other publications, and is now freelancing from Cape Town where, for this issue, she reports on some of that coastal city’s best drives.



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CALL OF THE WILD

When, a couple of years ago, I was lucky enough to be invited on a safari to Kenya, I didn't hesitate to reply with a resounding 'yes.' After all, it's not every day you get the opportunity to cross the world and experience a destination so dramatically different, unique and exotic as Africa. Not that it's really anything to go by, but I have never forgotten my childhood trip to African Lion Safari and being excited, albeit in a mildly frightened way, when the monkeys jumped on the car, their faces mere inches away.

Things came full circle years later when I would once again have a close encounter with a monkey, this time in Africa – with no window to separate us – but all's well that ends well, as they say. What remains are the indelible memories of a landscape so beautiful it's impossible to take a bad picture, people so warm and generous it squeezes your heart and, of course, what everyone comes to see: the glorious game. By our third excursion our small group was able to distinguish between antelopes, gazelles and impalas. We had seen elephants, wildebeest, rhinos (both black and white), giraffes and zebras. But the highlight came on an early morning drive in the Maasai Mara when, after an excited message was relayed to our guide over shortwave radio, we came upon a lion tucking into a fresh kill

while the lionesses and their cubs waited patiently for their turn.

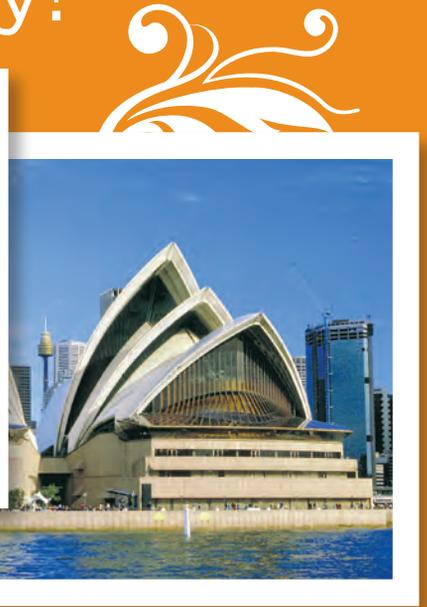
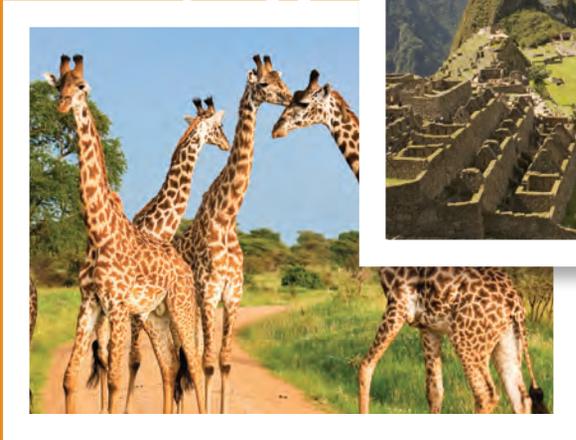
And yet this is only one of the many faces of Africa. To the northwest, Morocco seduces with its kaleidoscope of colours, sounds, tastes and scents, blending distinctly African culture with European influences. And in South Africa, miles of stunning beaches, rolling vineyards and flowering parklands form the backdrop to this cosmopolitan country.

In this exotics-filled issue, we turn our eye on Africa, including Malawi, an emerging tourism destination that still offers a slice of authenticity (page 36), take you on some of Cape Town's most scenic drives (page 26) and help you navigate the *souks* of Morocco (page 30). In addition, we cover eight eco-adventures in Australia (page 44), highlight some of the best grand voyage cruises for 2013/14 and, as always, serve some tasty trends in food and drink from around the world.

Whether you're dreaming of a first-time safari – perhaps for a milestone birthday – or a return visit to this alluring part of the world, we hope this issue inspires you to just say 'yes'!

Federica Maraboli, Editor-in-Chief
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PERISCOPE

Diversions



DINE AND DASH: BEST NEW AIRPORT EATERIES

Until recently, the food offerings at airport restaurants tended to give travellers a choice between fast food and, well, fast food. Thankfully, a fresh batch of eateries is mixing things up with more gourmet options.

YYZ (Toronto) Thirteen restaurants are slated to open this year. Travellers can nibble on tasty offerings like a pork belly BLT panini at **Fetta Panini Bar**, backed by star chef Mark McEwan, or indulge in gluten-free brownies from the new **Heirloom Bakery Café**.

LAX (Los Angeles) Celebrities ranging from Aretha Franklin to Tom Hanks have lined up for the chili dogs at **Pink's**, the legendary Hollywood eatery that's been dishing out wicked hot dogs and burgers since 1939.

YYJ (Victoria) Spinnakers, Canada's oldest licensed brewpub and local favourite, with upscale dining and unique home brews, will offer sit-down service and grab-and-go options as of this summer.

LHR (London Heathrow) Foul-mouthed chef Gordon Ramsay has received rave reviews for his airport eatery, **Plane Food**. Dine on-site or grab one of the three-course gourmet picnics-to-go for your flight.



HEALTHY APPS: WELLNESS ON THE GO

As much as we love travelling, it can sometimes present challenges for maintaining a good diet and healthy lifestyle. To the rescue come these indispensable apps:

iCanEat OnTheGo Gluten Free & Allergen Free (\$2.99). Dining out for those with food allergies or a gluten intolerance becomes less complicated with this app that allows users to key in their allergy concerns into the fast-food menu database to get suitable recommendations.

Sleep Cycle (\$0.99). This handy app helps you combat jet lag by monitoring your sleep patterns and can wake you during the lightest part of your sleep phase – the easiest time to get up and at 'em! It doubles as a travel clock, too.

MyFitnessPal (free). Watch what you eat with this easy app, which serves as a food diary and calorie tracker. Set a goal for weight loss (okay, maintenance) so you can avoid that post-vacation belly bulge.

COCKTAIL HOUR: SEXY SKYBARS

These hotel bars deliver everything you'd want from a rooftop patio: great views, an exotic vibe, a happening crowd and, of course, delicious drinks.

Reflections, Rosewood Hotel Georgia, Vancouver It's worth the effort finding the elevator tucked at the back of the building. Breezy cabanas, shimmering waterfalls and billowy curtains create a sexy space – perfect for sipping hand-crafted cocktails.

Vista, The Trafalgar, London Dine al fresco or sip a glass of Pommery at this sophisticated oasis decorated in black, white and a splash of pink, while checking out the views of bustling Trafalgar Square below. Now open for the spring/summer season – subject to Brit weather, natch.

OZONE, The Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong Located on the 118th floor, this chic and ultra-modern bar, which claims the status of highest bar in the world, will make you feel as though you were in the ozone yourself. Sit indoors or venture on the outdoor terrace to enjoy cocktail hour and the magical views of Victoria Harbour below.



LITERARY ESCAPES

Required Reading

**1 BEAUTIFUL BASTARD
BEAUTIFUL STRANGER**
Christina Lauren
(Simon & Schuster Canada,
\$17.00 each)

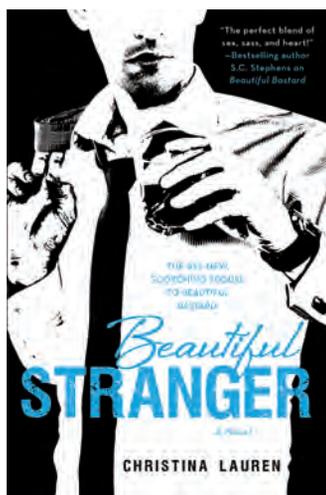
Love it or hate it, the *Twilight* saga spawned a deluge of 'fan fiction' – riffs on the characters and stories inspired by the original material, but published online. This led to the 'mommy porn' phenom known as the *50 Shades* trilogy and now, two savvy fanfic writers who go by the moniker Christina Lauren have brought Chloe Mills and Bennett Ryan to life in *Beautiful Bastard* (already a *New York Times* Bestseller). The companion novel, *Beautiful Stranger*, focuses on one of Chloe's best friends, Sara Dillon, and her new British bad boy paramour. You'll find plenty of sizzling scenarios with just a hint of Edward and Christian to keep all the lady fanfic fans swooning. It's erotica 2.0 and it's the hottest category in the publishing world since, well, *Twilight*.

2 AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED
Khaled Hosseini
(Penguin, on sale May 21)

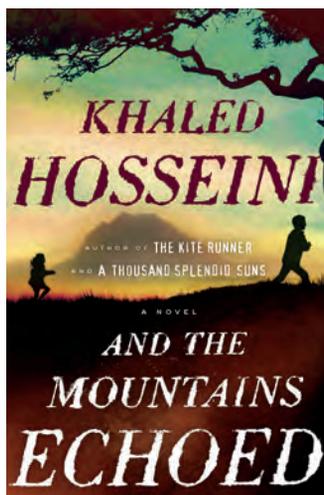
Hosseini's first two books – *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* – focused on the emotions surrounding fatherhood and motherhood. His first new book in six years shifts to the complex connections between siblings and extended family and the ripple effects of one person's actions on others. Betrayal, honour and sacrifice are key themes as the characters move around the globe, from Kabul to Paris, San Francisco and the Greek island of Tinos in search of the meaning in their lives. Hosseini clearly tapped into parts of his own life for his latest novel. He was born in Kabul and moved to Paris when he was 11 years old, and in 1980, he and his family moved to San Jose, California. Hosseini has said that it is his job as a writer to ask tough questions. He does that here with ambiguous queries about the role of family and individual morality, and then leaves it up to the reader to answer.

**3 LIFE AT THE MARMONT:
THE INSIDE STORY OF
HOLLYWOOD'S LEGENDARY
HOTEL OF THE STARS –
CHATEAU MARMONT**
Raymond Sarlot and Fred E. Basten
(Penguin Group Canada, \$17.00)

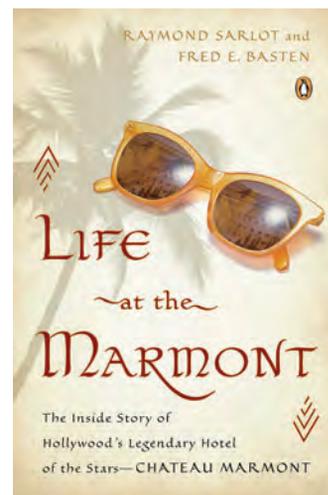
Since the Chateau Marmont opened in 1929, Hollywood's biggest stars have passed through its doors. Clark Gable and Jean Harlow hooked up here. John Belushi's substance abuse and subsequent death gave the hotel notoriety, as did the bad behaviour of Jim Morrison, Dennis Hopper and members of Led Zeppelin. Over the years the Marmont has served as an insulated cocoon for its guests, many of whom lived there for extended periods of time. Staff became more like family members; they were the keepers of the stars' secrets and remained loyal to them in an age before the celebrity obsession of the Internet. Seems the legendary status of the Marmont not only makes good book fodder – stay tuned for the miniseries under development by HBO, produced by Aaron Sorkin (*The West Wing*, *Newsroom*) and John Krasinski (*The Office*).



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STYLE NOTES

Trends

1 MAD ABOUT PLAID

Nantucket reds, white bucks (buckskin shoes with red soles) and madras: like spring florals for women, preppy summertime classics are perennials for men. **Gant Rugger** is thinking pink and plaid with bold linen checks, citrus plaids and abbreviated swim trunks seemingly plucked out of the Fifties. If Rugger is going full retro, **Diesel** is taking the same cue, but its swim shorts are in up-to-date modern finishes like faux denim and trendy camo.

2 THINK ATTICUS FINCH

In the early 1900s, authentic tortoiseshell was a popular material for those strictly practical devices known as eyeglasses. By the 1930s, however, corrective lenses had evolved beyond the purely functional into fashion accesso-

ries like sunglasses. Yet brainy horn-rimmed specs and mottled patterns still endure more than a century later, and tortoise acetate reproduces the flattering marbled amber effect in daring shapes from **Matsuda**, **Thierry Lasry's Therapy** style or **RockOptika's Antibes** frame by British designer **Tom Herrington**, who transforms traditional eyeglass shapes into statement frames (at Karir Eyewear, karireyewear.com).

3 TRAVELLING LIGHT

Wind- and waterproof jackets may be the signature look of the Paris-born **K-Way** brand, but its best-kept secret is the ultra-light, compact carry-all. The mini side bag is a perfect daypack with punch (in zesty lime), and when vacation shopping proves irresistible, we pack the foldable duffel bag in case our

suitcase runneth over (\$55 and \$95 at its seasonal pop-ups at Holt Renfrew stores across Canada, through the end of June).

4 THAT'S A WRAP

The Chrysalis, the Canadian-made, eight-in-one cardigan is the creation of **Encircled** founder Kristi Raamat, an entrepreneur who travels more than 70,000 miles a year. Inspired by Grecian draping, Raamat designed the Chrysalis in soft grey or go-with-everything black for easy multifunctionality: as a tunic, a poncho, a cardigan, a one-shoulder cocktail dress or a wrap scarf. Bonus: Eight percent of sales proceeds go to Plan Canada's 'Because I am a Girl' project (\$138 at getencircled.com).



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STYLE NOTES

Trends



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1 CITY SLICKERS

Stormy weather calls for a slicker with a twist: not too sporty, not too dressy, just waterproof – but chic. The new Canadian luxury label **Trout Rainwear** offers three thoughtfully designed day-to-evening styles in Italian doubleface cotton with a cut that combines a favourite trench with a ski jacket. While Trout's jackets (designed in Toronto, made in Vancouver) are 100% waterproof, they're also breathable and have useful hidden interior pockets and hoods. A glimpse inside reveals contrasting seam tape for a cheery bit of colour on a gloomy day (\$535 to \$620, exclusively at select Holt Renfrew stores and online troutrainwear.com).

2 EXHIBITIONS

Along with Zelda Fitzgerald, **Coco Chanel** was among the first women to popularize tanning. Chanel's **Les Beiges** collection offers the glow of a subtly sun-kissed look without the harmful rays. The extensive **N° 5: Culture Chanel** retrospective (at the Palais de Tokyo until June 5, 5-culturechanel.com) explores the cultural context of Coco's indelible creation. And speaking of artists who made their mark, much like Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol, American artist **Keith Haring**, who died in 1990 at age 31, commented on the political, social and cultural climate of his era, using symbols of commerce (Coca-Cola and currency) and graffiti ("crack is wack"). **The Political Line**, the Haring retrospective at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, exhibits these, his chalk drawings, photographs, ephemera and more (through August 18, 2013, mam.paris.fr).

3 STRETCH AND TONE

We swear by **Yoga Jeans**, Second Denim of Montreal's line of stretchy jeans, because they live up to their name: they're flexible enough to do sun salutations in, plus they're more flattering than yoga pants on long overseas flights. That's especially true of the season's latest pastel shades, now available in two fit options. The classic (and favourite) is still mid-rise skinny, but they are also available in a high-rise cropped cut that skims the top of the ankle and are especially flattering with flats. So Audrey! (\$110 to \$120 at Jean Machine, Shopgirls and other retailers, secondclothing.com). To look worthy of a first-class upgrade, we'll be pairing them with a lace peplum tee (\$188) and Smythe one-button blazer (\$525, both from eluxe.ca).

TRAVEL COMPANIONS

Packing List

1 SOCIALLY NETWORKED CAMERA

Polaroid's slick **Ustream** digital camera looks like a smartphone but does double duty as a video camcorder that has the capability of uploading straight to social media sites like YouTube and Facebook. The WiFi enhanced, 16-mega-pixel 1080p HD pocket camera also allows you to view your handiwork on a 3-inch full-touch screen. Capture still photographs or video of your fave vacation moments and use your iPad, iPhone or Android device to view video and even control the camera. Talk about making it easy to be snap-happy! \$189.99, polaroidstore.com

2 CRYSTAL CLEAR SOUND

Whether sunbathing on the beach, dining al fresco at your rented villa or on a picnic in the rolling countryside, the **Crystal Fauvette Bird Speaker** sweetly chirps out your favourite tunes. Small enough to fit in the palm of your hand but with a 2-watt amplified speaker that gives you loud and clear volume, you get four hours of musical fun out of every charge. A built-in, rechargeable

battery means that all you have to do is plug it into your computer and your crystal bird will trill away as long as you want it to. \$14.99, available online at chicbuds.com.

3 THE TRACKING TAG

Not just any name tag, the **Victorinox Deluxe Tracking ID Tag** in red or black is activated upon registering the tag's unique number online. If someone finds your lost luggage, he or she can then call the number on the tag anywhere in the world and, voilà, a Victorinox rep will arrange for your bag to be delivered to you free of charge. \$20 each. To find a retail store, visit swissarmy.com/ca.

4 DRINK TO THAT!

Lightweight, portable and as easy as stirring your cuppa, the **SteriPen Freedom** uses LED technology to purify water on the go. Charge your SteriPen using the USB port on your computer, an AC outlet or compatible solar charger to give you 16 ounces of sterilized water in 48 seconds. The powerful UV light effectively kills more than 99.9%

of bacteria, viruses and waterborne protozoa. Simply immerse the quartz-encased UV lamp, stir until the light timer goes off and drink with confidence. \$119.95 each, available online at steripen.com/freedom.

5 ELECTRONICS LIFE SAVER

Let's just say you accidentally drop your smartphone, camera, watch or iPad in the pool, the toilet or your mega margarita. What's a klutz to do? Dry off your gadget and then drop it into the **Bheestie Bag** and seal it up. Leave it there for one to four days and you'll be amazed at how the water-absorbing beads remove electronics-damaging moisture to bring your beloved contraption back to life. Bags start at 28 g (for \$20) and go up to 56 g. For more details, visit bheestie.com.



EXCLUSIVE ACCESS & ALL-INCLUSIVE LUXURY

Cruise News



NEW LEVELS OF LOYALTY

Princess Cruises has introduced a new membership tier to its **Captain's Circle** loyalty program, allowing passengers to more quickly gain access to benefits and perks. The **Medallion** category fits between the current Gold and Platinum levels, created for passengers on their fourth or fifth cruise, or between 31 and 50 cruise days. In addition to Gold level perks, Medallion members will enjoy various rewards, including a complimentary upgrade to Platinum Princess Vacation Protection, a 10% discount on the Reflections Cruise DVD and access to an exclusive shore-side help desk phone line.

Following a four-year hiatus, Princess will also resume sailing the Caribbean in 2014. For the May to September season, a total of 25 departures on **Caribbean Princess** will sail the Eastern and Western Caribbean, offering three-, four-, five- and seven-day cruises, round-trip from **Fort Lauderdale**.

A QUANTUM LEAP

Royal Caribbean has safely established itself as an innovator in the cruise industry, raising the bar for guest entertainment and delivering many firsts at sea, including rock-climbing walls and surf simulators. With

the introduction of **Quantum of the Seas**, which sets sail next year, Royal Caribbean is bringing yet another 'game changer' to the cruise world.

Those with an appetite for adventure and entertainment can look forward to several new and exclusive onboard attractions, including **North StarSM**, a glass capsule that accommodates up to 14 guests at a time and lifts them 300 feet over the ocean for 360° views, a skydiving simulator, an indoor active space dubbed **SeaPlex** with bumper cars and roller skating, as well as **Two70^{oSM}**, a grand room with floor-to-ceiling windows (nearly three decks high) offering 270° views of the ocean, where you can hang out by day – and which doubles as an entertainment complex at night.

Innovation is also reflected in the unique accommodations, which have been designed to provide new room types and customizable layouts. Modular staterooms can be connected through interior doors, allowing for separate bedrooms and bathrooms that cater to groups or multi-generational families, and large residential-style lofts that accommodate differing needs. *Quantum* will sail the **Caribbean** and **Bahamas** starting November 2014.



TRAVEL FILE

Ensemble® Hotel & Resort Collection



A TIMELESS CLASSIC – THE CARLYLE

New York's elegant 35-storey **Carlyle**, with its enviable address at 76th Street and Madison Avenue, is truly a timeless icon. Opened in 1930 in the midst of the Great Depression as one of Manhattan's most luxurious addresses, it has long been home to a who's who of the world's most famous personalities, heads of state and monarchs.

If you think a hotel with such a prestigious history is pretentious, you'd be wrong. On the contrary, The Carlyle is a welcoming beacon of tranquility, offering gracious personal service and a little *Madeline* magic. It is a sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of New York City, where elevator attendants, many of them older gentlemen who have been at the hotel for many years, are still the keepers of untold secrets and intriguing stories.

The stately marble lobby, originally designed by the legendary Dorothy Draper and restored in 2002, exudes an aura of comfortable elegance. Bold, geometric mar-

ble floors contrast with classical pieces – a style that Draper introduced to the design world and which would become known as Modern Baroque.

Rooms at The Carlyle are continuously updated to reflect a contemporary take on Draper's style. The **Classic Rooms** highlight the hotel's original hardwood floors, custom fabrics and original artwork, and with more than 350 square feet of space, double closets and large marble bathrooms (featuring Kiehl's toiletries) are larger than the average New York hotel room. If you're splurging, opt for the **Central Park View** or **Central Park Tower Suites** with picture windows that offer spectacular vistas of Central Park and the **Manhattan** skyline.

It's easy to imagine the boozy days of *Mad Men* in the famed **Bemelmans Bar**, which serves delicious cocktails (try some of their own concoctions) to a mix of tourists, well-heeled locals and businessmen flexing expense accounts. Named after Ludwig Bemelmens, the author and illustrator of the *Madeline* storybook series, the bar is the

only place his work can still be seen. A series of whimsical murals depicting New York scenes adorn the walls that surround the bar and give the darkly lit room a magical atmosphere. Top-notch waiters are friendly and attentive. Come 9:00 p.m. Sunday and Monday (9:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday) there is a cover charge when the music starts but it's worth it – get your seats early as reservations are not accepted.

BRAND NEW LUXURY – ROSEWOOD ABU DHABI

Located on **Al Maryah Island**, surrounded by **Abu Dhabi's** new central business district and the up-and-coming new cultural district on **Saadiyat Island**, the latest addition to the Rosewood portfolio is ultra-luxurious; its 189 guest rooms offer a sophisticated, warm ambience and stunning views of the **Arabian Gulf** and Abu Dhabi skyline. You'll find all the amenities you'd expect, including round-the-clock butler service, a galleria featuring designer boutiques and nine distinctive restaurants and bars, including an exclusive wine cellar/humidor. Opens May 2013.

BANGKOK

City Snap Guide

Sarah Treleaven

Bangkok is a city of contrasts on every level: fast and slow, new and old, sophisticated and seedy. But life is enriched by a little bit of spice, and there is an overwhelming number of delights – and vices – to be found in this Asian ‘city of angels.’

ARTS & CRAFTS

For a dose of culture, hit both the **Temple of Dawn** and the **Temple of the Reclining Buddha** to get a taste of Thai worship. Pay homage to the mysterious and much-revered American silk magnate at **Jim Thompson House** (6 Soi Kasemsan 2, Rama 1 Road). Stop in at the gift shop after your tour to stock up on brightly patterned silk napkins and scarves. And if you're up for a detour to the outskirts of the city, **Chatuchak Weekend Market** sells anything and everything, from sugar gliders (squirrel-like opossums) and handmade skirts to kitchenware. But it's best to go early, before the sun reaches its full strength and the air starts to feel like hot soup.

CONSUMER FRENZY

Bangkok is a place where people consume constantly, whether it's shopping for costume jewellery while waiting for the Skytrain or eating mango slices while watching amateur breakdancers in a public square. The flower market in **Pak Klong Talad** is a great place for a stroll and some street food: spicy soups, fried chicken, cilantro-heavy ground meat salads and Thai coconut sweets. For shopping, wander through the closely packed lanes at Siam Square for local versions of fast fashion. For higher-end goods, including some lovely Thai designs, try the nearby **Siam Paragon Mall** (Rama 1 Road).

GET OUTSIDE

Early risers can head to **Lumphini Park** and join groups of Thais engaging in Tai Chi, yoga or ballroom dancing. Traffic tends to be a nightmare, so whenever possible take a **Klong River** water taxi: it's a fun, cheap, very fast, no-frills and sometimes high-thrills way to get around. Try **Chao Phraya River Cruise** to check out the Buddhist monuments and the city's winding canal system. Stop by Wat Pho Traditional Medical School (watpomassage.com) for an outdoor massage. Take an evening stroll through bustling Chinatown, where you can dodge and weave around *tuk-tuks* and shark-fin soup stalls, or head to Khaosan Road for live music.

NIGHTS ON THE TOWN

Plenty of sophisticated bars and restaurants can be found in the **Chidlom – Ploenchit** area, or down by the riverside. Enjoy reasonably priced cocktails and stunning views at **Balco Bar** (Charoen Krung Soi 30), and well-crafted vintage cocktails at the Prohibition-style **The Speakeasy** (55/555 Langsuan Road). For dinner, head to lovely **Sra Bua Restaurant** at the **Siam Kempinski Hotel** for deliciously cutting-edge Thai cuisine, or discover the charming **Issaya Siamese Club**, located in a 100-year-old heritage house (4 Soi Sri Aksorn, Chua Ploeng Road). **Vertigo** at the modern **Banyan Tree Bangkok**, with its remarkable 360-degree views, is the perfect place for a nightcap (21/100 South Sathon Road).





EV HOTLIST



1

1 GORILLAS IN THE MIDST

For most of us, an African safari would be considered a once-in-a-lifetime experience – let alone an opportunity to encounter the rare and endangered mountain gorilla. On **Kensington Tours' Gorillas Sky Safari in Uganda**, you'll head into one of the world's most ancient and ecologically diverse rainforests as you journey through the **Bwindi Impenetrable National Park** to track the elusive mountain gorilla. On guided treks, learn about the flora and fauna as well as the lifestyle of the gorilla. Gazing into the expressive brown eyes of these gentle giants is surely one of the most exciting and poignant wildlife encounters life has to offer. **From \$2,495 per person.**



2

2 ENRICHING EXPERIENCES

We love **Big Five Tours & Expeditions' Enrichment** series of tours for its carefully chosen, extraordinary experiences. On the 10-day **South Africa Enrichment Tour**, you'll track big game on a private reserve, have the opportunity to cage dive among the Great White sharks at **Gansbaai**, cross ancient dunes on guided 4x4 drives at **Grootbos Nature Reserve** and enjoy a private **Winelands** tour of several vineyards. Spot lions, elephants, cheetahs, leopards, rhinos and more at **Phinda Game Reserve** or visit the freshwater lakes of **Kosi Bay Nature Reserve**, or dive offshore to find spectacular coral formations and magnificent reefs teeming with tropical fish. **From US\$6,850 per person.**



3

3 MYSTERIOUS MARQUESAS

It is said that a little bit of mystery goes a long way, and we couldn't agree more. The remote **Marquesas in French Polynesia**, also known as the 'mysterious islands,' are captivating for their isolation, unspoiled landscapes and natural wonders. Discover their secrets – and unique culture – on **Paul Gauguin Cruises' Marquesas, Tuamotus & Society Islands** cruise. Coral reefs, wild jungles, spectacular gorges and waterfalls, verdant forests and archaeological treasures are just some of the fascinating wonders to see. When you're not relaxing onboard the *m/s Paul Gauguin*, unwind on the pink sand beaches of **Tuamotu**, a sanctuary for rare birds, plants and crustaceans. Snorkel in the coral reef off **Tahuata**. Swim with more than 450 species of fish in **Huahine's** crystalline lagoon. Dive among sea turtles, barracudas and rays in **Moorea**. Paradise found? We think so. **Special promotional prices start at \$6,445 per person (at time of printing).**

ENSEMBLE EXPERT

What Our Travel Advisors Recommend

Isabella Beane

Ensemble Travel Agent, Port Moody, B.C.

A large African elephant is the central focus of the image, standing in a savanna landscape. The elephant's trunk is thick and textured, hanging down towards the ground. Its ears are large and fan-shaped, and its skin is a reddish-brown color with deep wrinkles. The background shows a vast, open landscape with green bushes and a clear sky.

Any trip to **South Africa** should include a couple of nights in **Johannesburg**, and a trip to **Soweto** and the **Apartheid Museum** to help visitors understand the complex nature of this country and its wonderful people. From Johannesburg, fly into **Port Elizabeth** and transfer to **Kariega River Lodge**, a private game reserve located at the far end of the beautiful **Garden Route**. One of four lodges at Kariega Game Reserve, River Lodge is a fully inclusive property. The game viewing is some of the best I have seen in my many visits to Africa; every drive provides an exciting new adventure. Rise early to be on the truck by 5:30 a.m. for a glimpse of lions, leopards or elephants – the adrenalin rush wakes you up quickly enough – and have your camera at the ready.

After a wonderful safari, transfer to **Knysna**, a beautiful gem on the Garden Route and my favourite stop en route to **Cape Town**. If time permits, a stop at **Addo Elephant National Park** is an added bonus. Two nights in Knysna is a must in order to experience all it has to offer: **Knysna Heads**, **Featherbed Nature Reserve** and the waterfront.

From there continue on the Garden Route, visiting **Tsitsikamma National Park**, **Plettenberg Bay** and then over to visit the **Cango Caves** or, if you're really adventurous, ride an ostrich at **Oudtshoorn**.

Continue on to **Stellenbosch**, a beautiful university town outside Cape Town, stopping en route to visit the oldest 'post office' in South Africa at **Mossel Bay**, where Portuguese sailors would leave their letters in a tree for the next traveller to pick up and take back to Portugal. A couple of nights at **Klein Zalze** vineyard just outside Stellenbosch is a nice treat, or for some history stay in Stellenbosch at the **Oude Werf Hotel**, the oldest hotel in South Africa, with some beautiful artifacts of the country.

Move on to Cape Town, staying close to the **V&A Waterfront** to enjoy the sights and sounds of this vibrant part of the city. Take the ferry over to **Robben Island**, where Nelson Mandela spent many years as a prisoner. The Waterfront boasts wonderful shopping, great dining and entertainment everywhere; it's a great place to spend a few hours wandering. Of course, **Table Mountain** is a must on a fine day, as is the drive to **Chapman's Peak** and out to **Cape Point**. And before you depart Cape Town, make sure you visit the **Africa Café** for a wonderful evening of African cuisine – a treat not to be missed.

Sarah Khan maps out four of the best drives along South Africa's Cape Town coast



The Best of Cape Town Cruising

©LOUIS HIEMSTRA/ISTOCKPHOTO



Pristine swaths of Atlantic Ocean beaches in the shadow of looming Table Mountain; historic enclaves with colourful architecture; cuisine that blends African, Dutch, Indian, English, Malaysian and Indonesian influences – Cape Town is one of the world’s most beautiful and diverse cities. But its pleasures aren’t confined to the city limits alone: head north, south or east and you’re destined to stumble on a trove of delights. Perfect as an add-on to your pre- or post-cruise/tour, these four itineraries will help you make the most of a road trip, whether you’re seeking wines, whales or wildflowers.

CAPE POINT DRIVE



Your first excursion from Cape Town – after you’ve adequately explored Table Mountain, the V&A Waterfront, Robben Island and all the charming neighbourhoods that make the Mother City (as it’s known) unique – should be venturing down the Cape Peninsula toward the southwesternmost point of the African continent. Head south from the city, passing popular Clifton and Camps Bay beaches, en route to Chapman’s Peak Drive. You’ll want to pause to take in the staggering natural beauty that surrounds you – the road clings to the edge of a mountain, teetering over the turquoise ocean far below – but don’t stop for too long, as lunch awaits you nearby in the tiny beach town of Scarborough. Cape Town celebrity chef Bruce Robertson has opened up his home, The Boat House (chefbrucerobertson.com), for two exclusive five-course lunch seatings a

day; call early for a reservation and you’ll be rewarded with a seafood-focused menu of gnocchi in prawn chowder and green fish with mashed potatoes, served with helpings of anecdotes that really must be heard to be believed (think of Robertson as that entertaining friend of yours who hosts the ultimate party). Once sated, you can continue your journey southward with a stop at Boulders Beach, where you’ll get up close and personal with scores of adorable African penguins frolicking along the shore. But now it’s a race against time as you rush to reach Cape Point before sunset, when The Flying Dutchman funicular that takes you to the historic lighthouse stops running and you must depart this far reach of Table Mountain National Park. End your trek at the Cape of Good Hope, the edge of the continent, before starting your trip back from the end of the world.



WHALE WATCHING IN HERMANUS



You could head straight down the **Cape Whale Route** and start whale-spotting in about 90 minutes, but where's the fun in that? Begin your day bright and early by taking the M3 south to **Muizenberg**, a colourful beach town. If you start early enough, you might even be able to fit in a quick surfing session. After hitting the waves, hop back in your car and hug the coastline as it curves east around **False Bay**. Pause for a photo op in **Gordons Bay**, a posh seaside village that marks the beginning of the picturesque **Clarence Drive** stretch of the route, a stunning road etched into the mountains, lined by crashing waves. You'll cut through the **Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve**, **Pringle Bay** and **Betty's Bay** before arriving in **Hermanus**, a historic former fishing village. Now it's time for the main event: walk carefully along the edge of the cliffs and peer far into the distance – binoculars in hand – to spot the majestic southern right whales that have lured you here. You can even keep your eyes peeled while you dine on grilled prawns and snoek with apricot glaze at **Bientang's Cave** (bientangscave.com), a restaurant perched on the rock above **Walker Bay**, offering prime views over the water's edge. Spend the night in the luxe **Birkenhead House** (birkenhead-house.com), a cliffside mansion with 11 opulent suites outfitted with ostrich-feather lampshades and zebra-print upholstery.

WINELANDS



Cape Town's lush vegetation is an oenophile's dream – bottles produced in the **Cape Winelands** are among the world's finest. And where there are vineyards, there are also chic hotels, celebrated chefs and spectacular vistas. **The Winelands** delivers on all fronts. A leisurely 40-minute drive east of Cape Town on the N1 takes you to **Stellenbosch**, a hilly town with a Mediterranean climate that's ideal for grape growing. Pay a visit to the 10-acre **Delaire Graff Lodges & Spa** (delaire.co.za), a sleek winery that boasts alluring Sauvignon Blancs, rosés and more, along with the private contemporary art collection of jeweller Laurence Graff. After the buzz wears off, get back in your car and head to the historic town of **Franschhoek**, settled in the late 1600s by Huguenot refugees. Today the charming town is home to classic examples of the region's iconic Cape Dutch architecture; book a suite at the eclectic **La Résidence** (laresidence.co.za), which incorporates touches of Tuscany and Louis XV style. On your way back to Cape Town the next day, plan a detour to see **Babylonstoren** (babylonstoren.com), a 200-hectare working farm dating back to 1690 that offers farmhouse chic in the form of 12 stylish suites. Revel in the culinary innovation dished up at **Babel**, the property's gloriously fresh farm-to-table restaurant.

THE FLOWER ROUTE: NAMAQUALAND



Every August and September, the austere landscape of **Namaqualand**, which extends from just north of Cape Town to the Namibian border, explodes in a kaleidoscope of wildflowers. To witness the phenomenon for yourself, begin driving north from Cape Town along the N7, and after 90 minutes of semi-arid fields, the first surge of flora will come into view. A bit further north, near **Clanwilliam**, check into the **Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve & Wellness Retreat** (bushmanskloof.co.za) in the foothills of the **Cederberg Mountains**, a sumptuous home base for your flower-spotting excursions; the 16-room **Relais & Chateaux** spread is home to herds of zebra and ostriches, and unusual rock formations and prehistoric cave art. If you can entice yourself away from the three infinity pools and the award-winning spa, head back out to take in the seemingly endless fields of *Wahlenbergia*, *Gazania*, *Felicia*, *Watsonia* and more. The truly dedicated – and ambitious – can detour through **Namaqua National Park** and head all the way north to **Springbok**, the region's hub, four hours from Clanwilliam, where the carpets of wildflowers in myriad hues roll on for miles in each direction.

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Cobras, Camels & Couscous

MARK STEVENS



Past the medieval gates of Marrakech's medina, down a broad lane bordered by a procession of horse-drawn *calèches*, a vast plaza called **Jemaa el-Fnaa** holds court in the torrid North African sun.

One translation of the name means 'Assembly of the Dead,' testament to the fact that it was once the site of public executions as long ago as the 12th century, only one of many reasons Jemaa el-Fnaa is today a UNESCO-designated cultural site.

Great paving stones stretch into the distance, beneath the feet of men wearing bur-nooses and kaftans, women clad in Western dresses and matrons in black hijabs, and the wheels of Vespas that buzz past you before disappearing down serpentine alleys where Jewish delicatessens stand next to Berber rug shops, where cafés populated by men sprouting shrub-like moustaches sip ubiquitous mint tea, and the entrances to mosques, where row upon row of shoes signals the gathering of the faithful inside.

The sounds are Babelian: hawkers haggling hoarsely, horse hooves clopping, the insistent exhortations of muezzins in stereophonic cacophony, buzzing mopeds, the clatter of a water-seller's finger cymbals, the thunderous surf of the voices of the multitude that daily populates this historic plaza.

In the far distance I see the minarets of six mosques. The **Koutoubia Mosque**, completed in 1199, looms over my shoulder. In the middle distance stalls are set up like a caravan encampment. Goats' heads decorate some counters while fresh clams are piled high on others.

Beyond the stalls a concatenation of awnings and corrugated tin roofs forms the boundary of the *souk*, an ancient market that defines Marrakech – and all of **Morocco** – as a trade crossroads, a meeting place for all of Africa, a *mélange* of pan-continental Arabic culture with a European garnish. Witness the French signs, the vendors who call me '*monsieur*,' the words of a former king who said that "Morocco's roots are in **Africa** and her branches are European."

Jemaa el-Fnaa screams 'Africa.' **Europe** is a mere whisper.

That's why it should be no surprise that one of the first views to register in my brain is a series of viscous black coils scattered haphazardly across the cobblestones mere steps away.

I'm already overwhelmed by my morning's excursions: the 16th-century **Saadian Tombs**;





the **Ben Youssef Madrasa**, a seat of learning since the 14th century, and the **Yves Saint-Laurent Garden**.

And now Youssef Khalfoui, our guide for the past six days, points down at these coils. Men in flowing kaftans squat on the pavement, oboes resting in their laps. One coil moves, a mere metre from my feet. I gasp, lurching backward. I'm staring into the eyes of a cobra. Two cobras. Three, four. I am transfixed. Youssef passes the reptiles unconcerned. He grins at me. "They're defanged." His grin broadens. "Probably."

Europe might be a few hundred kilometres away but yesterday, in the **High Atlas Mountains**, I felt as though I were on a different planet. Over the course of two days we'd hiked a mountain pass towering over Berber villages, clinging like mountain goats to the walls of steep, barren valleys. Youssef and I traced the course of the **Ourika River**, grasping rock outcroppings high above the water and scrambling across river stones to cross the rushing torrent. My wife climbed skyward with more adventurous hikers. At

the pinnacle of one peak she encountered a lone and contemplative Barbary ape.

On our last day in the mountains we trudged cross-country to a mountain market, accompanied by a donkey.

We were on an escorted week-long tour of Morocco – the walled seaside town of **Essaouira**, Marrakech, this traditional Berber mountain village – thematically linked by a sequence of cooking lessons with cultural significance thrown in for good measure.

My wife loves cooking. We would learn to prepare *tagine* and *chermoula*, chicken pastille and *salade Marocaine*. And couscous – a Berber staple since the 13th century. Part of this gustatory pilgrimage entailed the acquisition of produce. Hence the donkey.

After traversing a steep but scenic trail through olive groves and rudimentary villages, we crossed a bridge and entered the market. Tents and makeshift canvas stalls were scattered helter-skelter on the riverbank. Mounds of fresh onions, yellow peppers and cornucopias of cucumbers were



Odds are you'll get lost in the Marrakech souk...but not to worry. Choose one direction, stick to it and, sooner or later, you'll see the light of day.

piled high. We turned a corner and came across a goat auction and a parking lot for donkeys. We saw a collection of barbers and a 'doctor' apparently treating headaches by periodically tightening a headband like a sort of migraine tourniquet. We strolled past a food court – stalls stacked with steaming tagines (a sort of Moroccan crock-pot) shrouded in blue smoke.

A tall man wearing characteristic blue Tuareg robes caught my wife's eye, displaying a ransom of jewellery in a leather pouch. One bracelet appealed to her so they haggled over the price.

She walked away. He followed. She stopped. I went for a cup of mint tea.

She found me afterwards, smiling and showing off the bracelet. The man patted me on the shoulder. "You have a Berber wife," he joked. "I will give you fifty thousand camels for her."

I seriously considered the offer. Two days ago I'd bonded with a camel.

Riding a camel had long been on my bucket list and **Essaouira**, our first waypoint, mere kilometres from the **Sahara Desert**, seemed like the perfect spot to do it. Considered the best harbour on the **Barbary Coast**, it once sheltered pirates and slave-traders. At one time it was also the official 'port' of **Timbuktu**, so picturesque and historic it has played backdrop to both *Game of Thrones* and Orson Welles' *Otello*.

Until I saw the camel, I had faithfully sliced the requisite peppers and onions, and prepared fish *tagine* despite the distraction of a perfect sunset from the rooftop terrace of **Riad Mimouna** and the views of the sea crashing into the base of the crenellated walls sheltering both this hotel and the walled fortress of the town itself.

But now it was my turn.

Atop the camel, when it stands up I feel as though I'm at the crest of a black diamond ski run – with a precipitous and vertigo-inducing view of the sand. But then we're up and it's a sort of soporific stroll, a rocking motion much like boating in moderate waves as opposed to the rhythmic jolts of horseback riding.

It is, to be honest, less than adrenaline-charged.

But the feeling and the vistas are both bucket-list-worthy. Undulating dunes saunter southeast toward the Sahara. A pair of rugged islands – once populated by Roman villas – lurks just offshore and a gorgeous beach arcs north to the town itself, a UNESCO-designated example of a European fortified town with a North African flavour.

And now I can say I've done it – even if my inner thighs don't share my enthusiasm.

Besides, I think to myself on our last night here, dining on almond beef and couscous with fellow sojourners in a courtyard beside a fountain inside Marrakech's ancient walls, though both are perfect Moroccan metaphors, riding a camel sure beats a close encounter with a cobra.

SUSSING OUT THE SOUKS

Souks are a Berber tradition and navigating their labyrinthine corridors and alleys is no easy task for the uninitiated, but to miss them is akin to going to Paris and ignoring the Eiffel Tower. Odds are you'll get lost in the Marrakech *souk*, Morocco's biggest, but not to worry. Choose one direction, stick to it and, sooner or later, you'll see the light of day.

In the High Atlas Mountains the *souks* are downright mobile.

One village's name translates to Monday because that's the day the market is held in that venue.

These more traditional markets may not be for the faint of heart – the butchers' stalls are right out of a Quentin Tarantino movie.

SOUK SURVIVAL TIPS

Though you might get better deals from roaming hawkers who don't have stalls, you're taking a chance. Someone in our group bought a 'Rolex' from an Essaouira entrepreneur. Since he paid roughly \$40 for it, there's more than an outside chance the watch wasn't genuine.



Walk away if you don't like the price. When we did, in every single instance the vendor accepted our last offer.



'Looking is free,' is a common mantra but you usually end up buying. If you're not sure, don't let anyone put the item in question in your hands. That's considered almost a guaranteed sale.



Both quality and prices seem better at the Essaouira and mountain markets than in Marrakech.



Be prepared to stock up on spices in Marrakech – the selection and quality are the best I've ever seen.



ONCE OVERLOOKED, THIS COMPACT COUNTRY IS FAST
BECOMING A HOT GLOBAL DESTINATION, OFFERING
UP-CLOSE ADVENTURES IN THE REAL AFRICA

TIM JOHNSON

It was a rather refined affair – for a little while, at least. There we were, perched on our camp chairs under the bright African sun, nibbling on delicate little slices of freshly baked quiche and tasty pigs-in-a-blanket, sipping some good South African wine and very much enjoying our riverside brunch next to the brown, languid flow of the mighty **Shire River**.

And then a big bull elephant decided to crash the party. Conversation stopped. Wine glasses were halted midway to mouth. The rest of the quiche was forgotten. We all looked up at our uninvited guest as it burst out of the surrounding bush, snapping big branches like twigs, white tusks flashing in the sun – and there we were, blocking its easiest path to the water.

Fortunately, we had Retief with us. The gregarious park ranger was packing heat – a weathered .458 rifle – and had been standing sentry, attentively scanning the bush around us. He chambered a round with a *chuck-chuck!* sound that I knew only from action movies and then made a big, swooping gesture to the elephant – the kind of motion a distressed driver might give to other motorists if his stalled vehicle were blocking rush-hour traffic, telling everyone behind to *just go around!*

And to our surprise, it did. The elephant hesitated a moment, fixed Retief with an unblinking stare and then made a distinct right turn, climbing up a small hill past our parked safari vehicle and then proceeding down the unpaved road toward a bend in the river on the other side. We watched in wonder, sipping our wine, and soon returned to our brunch. For most people, what had just occurred would be an experience of a lifetime. For us, it was just another day in **Malawi**.

I was travelling through what was once one of Africa's most overlooked nations, a small country with a very big lake that has only recently opened up to tourists. With warm,

welcoming people, a stable, democratic government and sights that are at times beyond belief, Malawi is emerging as a hot destination, and was recently named to *National Geographic's* 2013 shortlist of Best Trips (calling it "Africa's best-kept secret"). I would learn that coming to a country unaccustomed to mass tourism is a beautiful thing – the people are more authentic, the sites uncrowded, the experiences up-close, real and hard to forget.

I began my adventure in Malawi's south, at the recently revitalized **Majete Wildlife Reserve**. Although established as a national park in the 1950s, the 700-square-kilometre reserve has faced some very difficult times, including a period in the 1990s when poachers all but eradicated the wide array of exotic animals that had made Majete their home. But those days are now a distant memory. Managed by a nonprofit called **African Parks**, the organization's partnership with the Malawian government has seen more than 2,500 animals reintroduced to the park, including all of the Big Five.

Settling in at **Mkulumadzi**, a lovely lodge on the banks of the Shire, I dove into the wild heart of the park, exploring it on both land and water. Zipping along in a motorboat, I looked into the eyes of hippos, poking just above the surface of the river, and passed very close to menacing crocs sunning themselves on rocks. On game drives, I followed giant herds of Cape buffalo and beautiful kudu before watching the sun set atop a rocky knoll, gin and tonic in hand. And accompanied by Retief, I sat in the safety of a wooden 'blind,' furtively watching warthogs, baboons and a family of elephants (which included three adorable babies) share the same watering hole.

As we took in the action, I asked Retief about his background. He told me that he has worked at Majete for five years, and in that time, has witnessed a real transformation. He said that he was pleased to be playing an active role in patrolling for poachers



*Mkulumadzi,
Majete Wildlife Reserve*

COURTESY, ROBIN POPE SAFARIS



MALAWI'S GOT GAME



and protecting guests. Noting that the park is now fully enclosed by an electric fence, Retief observed that staff have access to good, new equipment, and are now well trained. Elephants are no longer killed for their tusks, lions and leopards once again stalk for prey, and visitors have returned. “I’m proud that conservation is back!” he said, flashing me a toothy smile.

And while I enjoyed my time at Majete, I learned first-hand that Malawi is a country that offers plenty of adventure beyond safari parks, allowing visitors to experience a real slice of life in the country. I travelled by road to **Pumulani**, a resort at the southern end of **Lake Malawi**, passing through bustling market towns along the way. Using the resort as a base and accompanied by staff, I explored a nearby village, interacting with the children at a local school, then touring the small, thatch-roofed shops along the dusty main street, nodding to the men using ancient, foot-powered sewing machines to make clothing in the open air. I visited a local artist named Lois, who showed me how she makes her own materials, recycling paper by hand and using elephant dung and

tea leaves to alter the texture. And I spent a lovely morning at the famed **Mua Mission**, strolling around the botanical gardens, visiting the excellent onsite museum, which displays an amazing selection of Malawian tribal masks, and then taking in a performance at the **Kungoni Centre of Culture & Art**, where local dancers performed traditional Chewa, Ngoni and Matengo numbers, each of which told a unique story.

Soon afterward, I flew in a small single-engine Cessna out into the middle of Malawi’s Great Lake to **Likoma Island**, a tiny, green, hilly spot surrounded by glittering miles of aquamarine. After visiting Lake Malawi in 1859, the great explorer and missionary David Livingstone nicknamed it the ‘lake of stars.’ He was referring to the dots of light created by lanterns carried on the small boats of nocturnal fishermen that speckled the blackness of the lake at night (they still do, and it’s truly a sight to behold), but he could have just as easily been talking about the sparkles of white that dance along the surface during the day from the sun reflected on the blue lake.

Lake Malawi is simply massive; an inland freshwater sea. The plane swooped down onto Likoma’s short runway, missing the trees that border it by what seemed like mere inches. I was met and transported to **Kaya Mawa**, my temporary home, by James Lightfoot, a British expat, a true character and the lodge’s owner.

Kaya Mawa, which means ‘maybe tomorrow’ in the local Chewa dialect, is like something out of a dream. Strung along a beach and tucked into the rocks along the shore, this windswept place looks like something built by castaways – if those castaways were somehow endowed with amazing construction skills. I had a villa on my own private island, accessed by a simple wooden footbridge, and spent my days wandering around in a happy daze. I enjoyed a massage in a little pagoda surrounded on four sides by lapping waves, wandered the beach and took an introductory Scuba course, where I dove 40 feet down and was completely engulfed in a cloud of beautiful cichlids (Lake Malawi, home to 1,300 species of fish, is said to be the source of 80 percent of the fish found in North America’s home aquariums).



*Mkulumadzi,
Majete Wildlife Reserve*



On my last day in Malawi, Lightfoot took me in a boat over to **Katundu**, a breezy workshop on Likoma that’s affiliated with Kaya Mawa and employs some 30 single mothers and orphans, who create lovely handmade textiles, wooden items and beadwork. I chatted with the people in the shop, trying my hand – rather unsuccessfully – at a little beadwork. As we motored back, Lightfoot shared with me his insights on Malawian tourism, confirming what I’d experienced along the way – that it’s a place where visitors can truly explore away from the usual tourist facilities. “Other places in Africa, that’s really not the case,” he said, as a smile spread across his contented, well-tanned face.

As day melted into evening, I found myself on a different little boat, this time with a small group of friends for a sundowner cruise. We watched the fiery red orb sink below the horizon into the lake, while sipping fine South African wine and smooth gin and tonics. Heading back to shore in the twilight, we stepped off the boat and onto the sand to the sounds of a local choir, which had assembled to sing and dance as we ate our dinner. Extraordinary, yes. But really, as I’d learned during my two weeks here, it was just another night in Malawi.



COURTESY SILVERSEA CRUISES

THE EVOLUTION OF DEMOGRAPHICS AND TECHNOLOGY HAS INSPIRED A SEA CHANGE IN THE WORLD OF CRUISING AND, ALONG WITH IT, A WAVE OF APPRECIATION FOR GRAND VOYAGES AND THE LEISURELY LIFE AFLOAT.

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a long, elegant blue halter-neck dress, stands on the wooden deck of a cruise ship. She is leaning against the ship's railing, which has a wooden handrail and white metal railings. She is looking out over the vast, blue ocean under a clear sky. The ship's wake is visible in the water.

Grand Voyages

TOBY SALTZMAN



Whether choosing a grand voyage or a world cruise, what matters to most people is finding an itinerary and length of cruise that fit their life and ability to maintain connections with those whom they hold dear. With those priorities in mind, both **Holland America** and **Seabourn** have structured itineraries that allow guests the option of embarking or disembarking at convenient ports. It's not uncommon for those on a world cruise who are celebrating a milestone anniversary or birthday to invite family to join them for a segment of the cruise to share an intergenerational experience. Couples – especially snowbirds who prefer to spend winters exploring the world by ship rather than staying at a resort – are occasionally joined by groups of friends for reunions. Meanwhile, for some passengers – dubbed 'port collectors' – the important factor is experiencing a new port that is on their bucket list.

Cruisers relish being able to explore exotic locations while enjoying the sanctuary of a lavish ship with a dotting staff who know their preferences in everything from hors d'oeuvres to duvets. They appreciate the security of being professionally guided to sites and restaurants, particularly in **India**, **Asia** and **Africa**. And they enjoy the lifestyle at sea: lectures given by international luminaries in the arts, politics and archaeology; the culinary finesse of chefs who add local flair to dishes in far-flung ports; sublime days at sea with ample time for exercising in the gym, enjoying massages or therapies in the spa or simply lounging on deck with the precious luxury of time to contemplate memorable experiences, write in a journal or mingle with new-found friends. Interestingly, many repeat guests include couples that have cultivated friendships on a previous world cruise, and return year after year to sail together again. For example, one couple I met sailed an annual grand voyage because they loved dancing to a live orchestra every night – their greatest pleasure at sea.

Though all this may sound indulgent, seasoned travellers bank on the cost-effectiveness of grand voyages and world cruises, particularly when amortizing costs and experiences over a number of days, which reduces the relative cost of flying compared to the actual vacation. Besides the savings in personal energy – such as no packing and unpacking or no flights along the way – savings can accumulate, particularly for itineraries that veer to and from North America.

Holland America

The 75-day Grand Pacific and Far East Voyage on the *ms Amsterdam* is attracting great interest from Canadians, partly because it avoids costly and lengthy trans-ocean flights. Departing from Vancouver on September 20, 2013, the cruise circles the Pacific Ocean, calling at ports in Hawaii, Japan, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and the Philippines before heading back via Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the lush French Polynesian islands en route to Los Angeles.

Seabourn ∞

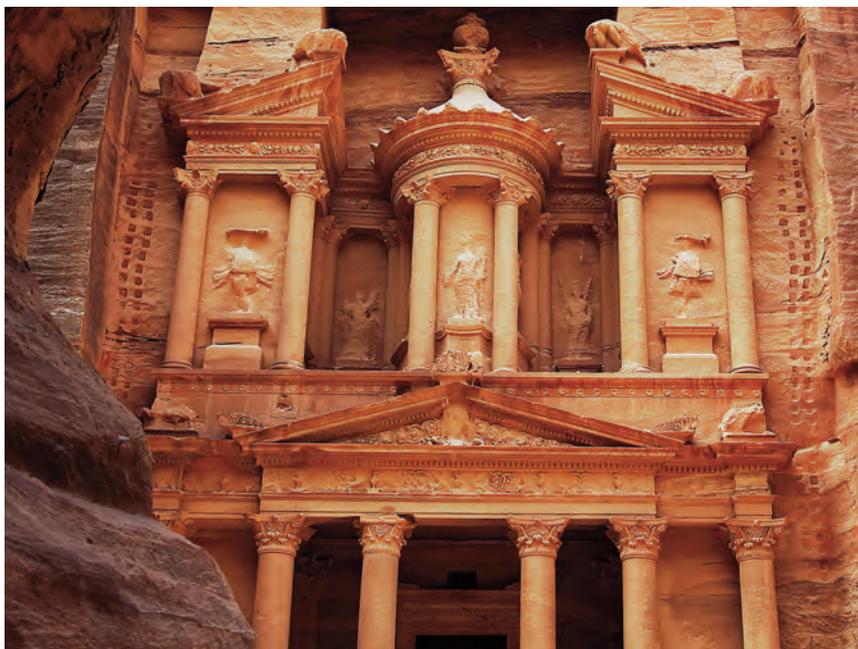
On one of the most exciting cruises, a 116-day itinerary on the *Seabourn Sojourn* departing January 4, 2014, you can truly experience the world. Stops include Hawaii, New Zealand, eastern and western Australian ports en route to Vietnam and Singapore; options to disembark in India for immersive, multi-night overland trips to Delhi, Agra, Jaipur and Mumbai; cruising the Red Sea to Egypt, to Jordan for a side trip to Petra, and then on to Ashdod for Jerusalem and Haifa for Tel Aviv. The ship continues to Corfu, Dubrovnik and then on to Venice. Choose from among 12 segments that last up to 94 days. For example, a 22-day segment from Mumbai to Venice; or shorter stages from Los Angeles to Bali, or Sydney to Mumbai.

Oceania ∞

Experiencing South America and the lush French Polynesian islands is the focus of Oceania *Marina's* 38-day cruise departing Rio de Janeiro on December 8, 2013 for Papeete, Tahiti. Along the way, get a taste of culture and adventure in São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Uruguay, Ushuaia, Argentina, the Chilean fjords and several ports in Chile, and Robinson Crusoe Island en route to Bora Bora before anchoring in Papeete.

Silversea ∞

For a truly luxurious experience, Kensington Tours offers an 'Around the World by Luxury' cruise on Silversea's *Silver Whisper*. Kensington adds enhancements such as privately guided pre- and post-cruise excursions as well as completely customized private shore excursions. The intensive, 113-day world voyage departs Los Angeles on January 6, 2014 en route to Barcelona, and visits 54 ports in 29 countries. Shorter segments are available and, along the way, you will experience Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga and six ports in New Zealand before crossing the Tasman Sea to Australia. Asian stops include Papua New Guinea, Palau, the Philippines, Shanghai, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and India. After cruising the Arabian Sea, the ship will visit Oman, Jordan and Egypt before transiting the Suez Canal en route to Israel, Turkey and a host of Mediterranean ports before arriving in Barcelona.



Cunard ∞

Among the highlights of Cunard Line's 170 years of cruising the seven seas is its pride in inaugurating the concept of the world cruise in 1922. *Queen Elizabeth's* 119-day world voyage, departing January 10, 2014 from Southampton, England, offers segments starting at eight days, with convenient embarkations in New York, Fort Lauderdale and San Francisco. The classic itinerary includes several South Pacific islands, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Dubai, the Suez Canal, Egypt and the Mediterranean. Of special interest to 'port collectors': the itinerary includes nine maiden calls, including Kochi, Yokohama, Kobe and Nagasaki in Japan; Busan,

South Korea; Shanghai and Xiamen, China; Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates and Aqaba, Jordan, allowing for a visit to Petra.

In response to the growing interest in long voyages, cruise-line decision-makers continually look for new, year-round itineraries, enticing excursions and convenient ports of call that facilitate the option of joining a segment. For example, on a cruise that circumnavigates South America, passengers may prefer to focus on Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires or Patagonia; or to disembark for a few days to overnight in Machu Picchu, with the option of returning to the ship at another port along the way.

If you crave a grand voyage, but can't find one that suits you, consider customizing a journey by linking several short itineraries on a ship that sails without repeating ports. For example, create a stunning itinerary that combines the Mediterranean coastline, the Iberian Peninsula and the Baltic States on the *Seabourn Sojourn* by boarding in Rome for a sailing to Lisbon; stay on for London via Bordeaux; take in the Norwegian fjords en route to Copenhagen; then finish the holiday with a cruise to Stockholm that includes a couple of days in St. Petersburg. Keep in mind that to facilitate a DIY journey and avoid having to change suites along the way, it's best to book well in advance and consult your Ensemble Travel agent, who can find the ship, itinerary or segment that suits you best.



Adventures in

Z

**EIGHT OF THE BEST
ECO-ADVENTURES DOWN UNDER**

STORY BY KATHARINE FLETCHER; IMAGES BY ERIC FLETCHER

Australian Aboriginals call the creation of the world the Dreamtime. For us, this word aptly describes our experience of Australia's varied eco-adventures. Here are eight super eco-adventures, well off the beaten path, to get you dreaming.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Ningaloo Reef

Snorkelling, diving

"The snorkelling here is like the **Great Barrier Reef**, 40 years ago," advised the ranger at **Ningaloo Reef's Cape Range National Park**. "Try **Coral Bay** – you'll be right!"

Ningaloo is an Aboriginal word for promontory and this finger of land juts north into the turquoise ocean; **Exmouth Gulf** is to the east, the **Indian Ocean** to the west. Located 1,200 kilometres north of Perth, this UNESCO World Heritage Biosphere is the continent's largest fringing coral reef, extending 260 kilometres north to south. Home to more than 500 species of fish and 300 types of coral – not to mention turtles, manatees and other all-too-rare marine animals – it's a snorkeller's and diver's dream.

The ranger was *so* right. Why? Accessibility. Literally, you wade from the beach to snorkel amid giant rose corals and schools of brilliant clownfish, damselfish and more.

Snorkelling and scuba diving off the boat introduced another thrill: snorkelling two metres above a male and female manta ray as they performed barrel rolls while dining on plankton. Motionless, floating on the surface with my husband Eric and six others, I wept into my mask. Not from fear but from admiration of the rays' synchronized ballet, where their three-metre wingspan lets them effortlessly somersault underwater.

En route home, we spied eight green sea turtles amid emerald-green sea grass, plus three manatees.

Getting there

Daily flights from Perth to Exmouth. **TIP:** Rent a car for easy access to Coral Bay and Cape Range National Park.

Karijini National Park

Hiking, swimming, Aboriginal interpretation centre

On a blue-sky day, descending into **Karijini's** rugged, red sandstone gorges presents hikers with groves of crinkly paperbark and fragrant peppermint trees, as well as waterfalls and pools. Float in **Circular Pool** while admiring a sky framed by a circle of towering cliffs.

Topside, desert species include dingoes and blue-tongue lizards. In the gorges, microhabitats of shallow pools create oases where herons pause, statue-like, fishing. **TIP:** Take your binoculars and bird identification book. Stay at the Aboriginal-owned **Karijini Eco Retreat**.

Getting there

Karijini is 1,400 kilometres northeast of Perth. The closest airport is Paraburdoo.

Rottneest Island

Biking, snorkelling, diving

Want to experience a family-friendly island 19 kilometres off Perth, where no cars are permitted, white-sand beaches beckon, biking is *de rigueur* and camping is fun? Look no further than **Rottneest** – spend a day, a week or more to enjoy laid-back holidaying, Aussie-style.

You'll almost certainly spy one of the 12,000 or so quokkas, unique island marsupials the size of a domestic cat. Snorkelling? Pop your gear in your daypack, explore by bike from cove to cove – and then wander off white-sand beaches into turquoise water and surrender yourself to beauty.

Getting there

From Fremantle take the Rottneest Express Ferry or fly from Perth.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Naracoorte Caves National Park

World Heritage Site reveals skeletons, fossils, stalagmites

Aboriginal Dreamtime stories feature tales of immense kangaroos, emus and snakes. Sound intriguing? Then don't miss **Naracoorte Caves**. We saw skeletons of megafauna that became extinct some 16,000 to 50,000 years ago – putting their existence well within the arrival of indigenous peoples 40,000 years ago. Paleontologists' findings put a new spin on the many so-called 'myths' of Australia's earliest inhabitants. **BONUS:** Explore the **Coonawarra** wine region.



VICTORIA

Grampians National Park

Hiking, wildlife spotting, exploring Aboriginal culture, rock art

Hiking and birding in **Grampians National Park** reveal waterfalls, exotic wildlife and the most extensive collection of Aboriginal rock art in southeastern Australia. Spot koalas, wallabies, kangaroos, echidnas, many parrots and lorikeets and fantastical-looking spider orchids. Visit **Brambuk**, the **Aboriginal Cultural Centre**; touring rock art with an indigenous guide provided us with insights into life here some 20,000 years ago, when our ancestors lived among these mountains, gorges and plains. Accommodations vary from park campgrounds to boutique hotels in **Hall's Gap**.

QUEENSLAND

Great Keppel Island

Hiking, snorkelling, diving

About 600 kilometres north of **Brisbane**, the **Keppels** archipelago is in the Great Barrier Reef – and **Great Keppel Island** is the largest. Immediately after check-in, we packed snorkelling gear into our daypacks and hiked to **Monkey Beach**, following an undulating trail that offered enticing views of the ocean. Scrambling down to its deserted cove, we swam out, getting glimpses of blue-spotted rays, butterflyfish and angelfish – and more. Organized boat snorkel and diving trips to the GBR allow greater (though

pricier) appreciation of the largest single living organism on Earth. Arrive by ferry; cars are not allowed. Enjoy pizza, beer and ambience on the **Esplanade** overlooking **Fisherman's Beach**. Dive or snorkel with **Keppel Reef Scuba Adventures**.

Magnetic Island

Hiking, snorkelling, WW II history

This tropical island paradise offers beautiful, often-empty coves and beaches, good snorkelling and excellent hikes including the **Forts Walk**, a self-guided tour of WW II Australian artillery batteries. Pack your snorkelling gear to view marine life at **Arthur, Florence and Horseshoe Bays**. At nightfall, drift asleep to the eerie cries of the bush stone-curlew.



NORTHERN TERRITORY

Barunga Aboriginal Sports and Culture Festival

Aboriginal weaving, spear-throwing, live music

This authentic Aboriginal festival takes place every June long weekend. Go for the outstanding opportunities for hands-on learning. Watch carvers create (and play) *didgeridoos*, participate in Q&A sessions with elders or listen to the storytelling.

Intrigued with textiles and weaving, I sat on the ground with other guests while an Aboriginal elder taught us how to weave reeds into bowls. Gaily painted, larger-than-life lanterns in animal and human forms swing from trees, providing a magical backdrop to spear-throwing competitions and, after nightfall, illuminating live music shows. **Nitmiluk National Park** features 13 gorges whose cliffs soar more than 70 metres, framing your swim or kayak. Swim at popular **Edith Falls**, take a cruise or go rock-climbing and hiking.

Getting there

Located in the **Arnhem** region, the community is roughly 400 kilometres southeast of Darwin, 80 kilometres southeast of Katherine, amid savannah grasslands.



ADVENTURE ALTERNATIVES

Adventure comes in different flavours for different folks. If you prefer a little more convenience, luxury and inclusions – while still experiencing the authentic, exciting adventures that Australia has to offer – here are a few alternatives to consider.

KENSINGTON TOURS

Renowned for its expertise, small groups, custom itineraries and enriching experiences, **Kensington Tours** features local experts who have the kind of intimate, insider knowledge about their destination that makes for truly breathtaking memories. Choose from value, premium or exclusive adventures.

BOOMERANG TOURS

Choose from existing itineraries or build your own based on how much time you have and where you want to go. Boomerang offers everything from self-drive itineraries to rail, cruise and motorhome options, and accommodations ranging from campsites to unique luxury properties. For the best of eco-sensitive luxury, check out the two-night stay at **Longitude 131°** in the **Red Centre, Uluru**, or try an ‘underground living’ experience at South Australia’s **Desert Cave Hotel**, where rooms are built right into the sandstone.

TRAFALGAR TOURS

There’s plenty of adventure to be had on a Trafalgar Tour – whether you choose a fully escorted or independent itinerary. Travel by comfortable motorcoaches, benefit from local guides and experts and enjoy special **Be My Guest** experiences – unique opportunities to dine with a local host in a private home, working farm or winery. Itineraries range from four-day mini-stays up to 21-day durations.

Rooms with a View

Signe Langford

By combining today's technology – and perhaps yesterday's geology – creative hoteliers and restaurateurs are offering unique, sometimes magical venues and views. From prehistoric caves to the ocean floor, we've rounded up a few of the most distinctive places on Earth (and in the sky) to dine and stay.

LIVING HISTORY – SEXTANTIO ALBERGO DIFFUSO LE GROTTE DELLA CIVITA, ITALY

A breakfast of local organic produce served in a 13th-century stone church. A night of sweet dreams under arches of millions-of-years-old rock. Outside each of the property's 18 rooms are fruit and flower gardens, and inside, the décor reflects the historic setting with artisanal furniture, handmade bed linens salvaged from dowry chests, and something less tangible: a rare opportunity to unplug. There are no TVs or minibars. Instead, enjoy the warmth of in-room candlelight and sub-floor radiant heating, local sweets, fruits, tipples and even aromatherapy. Near the **Mediterranean** town of **Matera**, this exquisite hotel is set in the **Sassi di Matera**, a complex of rocks, caverns and grottoes that was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993.

SURF AND SURF – ITTHA UNDERSEA RESTAURANT AT CONRAD MALDIVES, RANGALI ISLAND

One of the jewels in the Hilton crown, this 'barefoot luxury' resort and spa occupies two white-sand islands and features rare indulgences – lobster and Champagne on the beach and private beach dining, patio dining over the **Indian Ocean** and **Ittha** (that's 'mother of pearl,' in English), a stunning underwater, all-glass domed restaurant. Savour Maldivian-Western fusion specialties and 180° views of marine life and coral reefs from 16 feet under the sea.

SLEEP WITH THE FISHES – ATLANTIS, THE PALM, DUBAI

A perfect tonic for this hot, desert land: cool, calming underwater suites hidden within a thoroughly adult, aquatic playground. There are only two of these fascinating suites on the property – **Poseidon** and **Neptune** – both offering spectacular underwater views of the beautiful marine life native to the waters of the **Arabian Gulf**, as well as the imagined ruins of mythical Atlantis. With 20 restaurants and bars on site, as well as a marine park – yes, you can swim with the dolphins or feed a stingray – spas and fitness centres, beaches, a waterpark, concerts and boutiques, why venture beyond the perfectly manicured grounds?

STAR STRUCK – ATTRAP'RÊVES, FRANCE

We think the Zen 'bubbles' of **Attrap'Rêves** (that's 'dream catcher' in English) are a most modern take on camping, without the bugs and sleeping bags. It's just you – and perhaps a very good friend – at one with the pastoral French countryside. And at night, well, getting to sleep may prove challenging with stargazing this spectacular – a telescope and star chart are provided to enhance the experience. You can choose your bubble's location, from a vineyard, a Provençal pine forest or just outside an ancient coastal village. The bubbles come in several styles, too: **Zen** (pictured), **Nature**, **Glamour**, **1001 Nights**, and **Chic & Design**, and are constructed entirely of recycled materials. This family-run business offers everything you would expect in luxury travel: spa treatments, dining and catering, and of course Champagne! This might be the one time when a rainy night on holiday is a welcome thing.

WHERE LIFE IMITATES ART – CASA CALLEJA, SPAIN

Halfway between **Valencia** and **Alicante** on **Spain's Costa Blanca**, this artist's retreat was built into the rocky landscape at the foot of **Cueva de las Calaveras**. Incorporating the area's ancient limestone caves, in the 1970s artist Eladio Calleja built the main guesthouse in the shape of a Spanish guitar. His studio now serves as a quaint, one-of-a-kind and secluded B&B for two, but it's the cool, quiet cave dining room that will take your breath away. Approximately 135 million years old, the cave provides evidence that our Stone Age ancestors were also enticed inside to take shelter and feast on the spoils of the hunt. Today, such spoils include authentic tapas at breakfast and dinner – Serrano ham, Manchego cheese, tortilla, walnut ice cream and brandied mandarins from the nearby orange groves – and while you dine, sip Spanish wines and sherries and relax by the cave's own natural pool.

TAKE A SPIN – THE SINGAPORE FLYER

This ultra-modern, high-flying lovechild of a Ferris wheel and fine-dining restaurant is where grown-ups come to play. Dine, take high tea – quite literally – or even exchange vows, 165 metres (that's 42 storeys) above **Marina Bay**, **Singapore River**, the futuristic **Helix Bridge** and the bustling, glittering city skyline. Reserve a capsule for two, for a gathering of 10 or make some new friends while dining on Continental cuisine served by your own butler.

PHOTOS

1. Sextantio Grotta
2. Ittha Undersea Restaurant
3. Casa Calleja, cave dining
4. 'Zen' Bubble, Attrap'Rêves
5. The Singapore Flyer
6. Super Suite, The Palm



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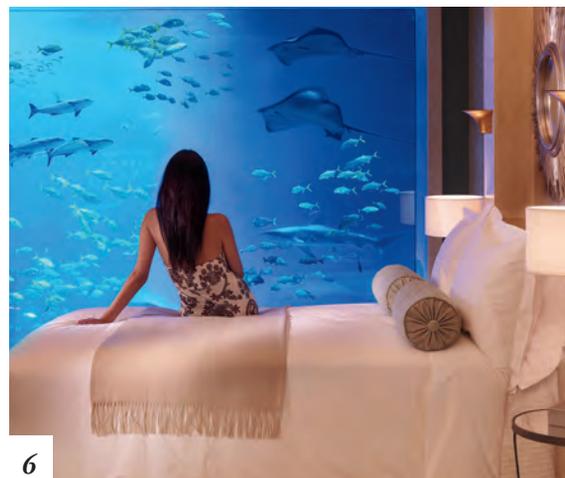
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DINING IS AN UNDENIABLE HIGHLIGHT OF ANY CRUISE and Holland America Line has raised the bar – by inviting celebrated chefs to enhance our menus, by creating new dining experiences inspired by global trends, and by sharing our passion with guests in recipes and ideas to live on after their cruise. Now more than ever, the table is set for delight.

Holland America Line has ushered in dining innovation by gathering renowned chefs onto an elite advisory Culinary Council®. They guide culinary direction, provide insight into the latest food trends and contribute signature recipes that are featured on all of our 15 cruise ships.

An Experience to Savour



CULINARY COUNCIL MEMBERS INCLUDE:

Council Chairman and Holland America Line's MASTER CHEF RUDI SODAMIN

An internationally respected food authority, Rudi is the most highly decorated chef working on the world's oceans. Considered one of the hospitality industry's most innovative chefs, his many accolades include Three Toques from the prestigious Gault-Millau Guide, the only such award ever presented to a restaurant at sea.

JONNIE BOER

Head chef at De Librije, recognized as one of the "50 best restaurants in the world" and only the second in the Netherlands to be awarded three Michelin stars.

DAVID BURKE

Blurring the lines between chef, artist, entrepreneur, and inventor, David Burke is a leading pioneer in American cooking today. He is the owner of the flagship David Burke Townhouse as well as renowned restaurants in New York, Las Vegas and Chicago.

JACQUES TORRES

One of the world's most respected pastry chefs, Jacques is the host of *Dessert Circus with Jacques Torres* and *Chocolate with Jacques Torres* on the Food Network.

CHARLIE TROTTER

Winner of James Beard Foundation awards for "Outstanding Restaurant" and "Outstanding Chef", Charlie Trotter is establishing new standards for fine dining. He is the master chef behind one of the finest restaurants in the world, Charlie Trotter's (Chicago).



Council members also consult on the **Culinary Arts Center Enrichment Program** to inspire new and creative learning experiences for guests. This groundbreaking program, presented by *Food & Wine*® magazine, integrates guests' love for fine food and wine with a unique and entertaining experience. Take market tours in selected ports of call, or enjoy cooking demonstrations and hands-on cooking classes by our own Master Chefs and their culinary staff. Join wine and cheese experts at special wine tastings and food pairing seminars, and meet special guest chefs, wine experts and leading cookbook authors who appear in the pages of *Food & Wine*® magazine.

We invite you to a delicious feast of the senses on your next Holland America Line cruise vacation. Bon appétit!

NEW AND NOTABLE

Worldly Delights

Mary Luz Mejia

CALIFORNIAN REDUX

LA-based Michelin-star awarded chef/restaurateur David Myers recently opened **Hinoki & the Bird**, a new dining concept that pushes modern Californian cooking to a vibrant new level – drawing from his Silk Road travels in both ambience and flavour profiles. The restaurant is located on the ground floor of the luxury condominium tower The Century, where diners can savour creations like scallops with grapefruit and lime leaf, or chili crab toast with spicy cucumber and coriander, all expertly prepared by executive chef Kuniko Yagi. And no doubt this hot spot will become a celeb-watching outpost, where A-listers will gather for fried oysters with black garlic aioli, perhaps paired with a Gordon's spiked with Szechuan pepper. hinokiandthebird.com

SUGAR RUSH

Janice Wong, the brilliant Willy Wonka behind her Singaporean **2am:dessertbar** restaurant, is this year's winner of the new Asia's Best Pastry Chef Award, which goes "to the pastry chef that balances creative brilliance with technical excellence, tempting the diner with show-stopping desserts that reflect the restaurant's culinary philosophy." Following a hairpin-curve career change, she decided to learn pastry from some of the world's best, including Thomas Keller and Pierre Hermé. Her creations straddle sweet and savoury, always carefully balancing flavours with high-tech flair. Here, you'll find fanciful creations, like Mango Pearls, that evoke Matisse's water-colour-infused beauty. 2amdessertbar.com

BIG IN JAPAN AND BEYOND

Yoshihiro Narisawa's minimalist, elegant restaurant in **Tokyo** has topped this year's San Pellegrino Asia's 50 Best Restaurant Awards. Nature conservancy is near and dear to this chef's heart as he presents dishes through his 'Sustainability and Gastronomy' lens. **Narisawa** features seasonal delights that elicit all the senses, prepared with French technique. A 'moss covered stone,' for example, that smells of rich earth, might actually be an herb-encrusted ball of pristine butter to pair with your stone-pot table-cooked bread rolls scented with oak and yuzu. It's the chef's attention to detail and creativity that won the man – and his namesake restaurant – this coveted award. narisawa-yoshihiro.com

THE DIVA DOG

Taking its cue from **Vancouver's** flourishing food truck scene, the city's Metropolitan Hotel's high-end restaurant, **Diva at the Met**, is now offering its upscale, whimsical take on a humble street food – the corn dog. Executive chef Hamid Salimian's version, however, is a house-made gourmet sausage of sweetbread, bone marrow, truffle and foie gras bathed in buttermilk and cornmeal, battered before being deep fried. The \$17 Diva Corn Dog is now a lunch menu staple that's served with truffle mayo, grainy mustard and homemade sauerkraut. It seems every dog does indeed have its day. divamet.com

ASIA'S BEST FEMALE CHEF

Chef Duongporn 'Bo' Songvisava, one half of the culinary duo behind **Bangkok's** much lauded **Bo.lan** restaurant, is this year's recipient of the Veuve Clicquot Asia's Best Female Chef Award. A graduate of the Masters in Thai Gastronomy program at the University of Adelaide, Bo trained at the Michelin-starred **Nahm** restaurant in London and with Amanda Cyr at **The Metropolitan Bangkok**. Her passion for her homeland's culinary traditions and vibrant fresh fare led her to open Bo.lan with her husband, American chef Dylan Jones, where they take advantage of the country's regional specialties and time-honoured kitchen rituals. bolan.co.th/wordpress



BEYOND SUSHI: THE IZAKAYA CRAZE PEAKS IN VANCOUVER

Worldly Delights

Remy Scalza

On a recent Friday night inside **Guu Otokomae** in Vancouver's historic **Gastown** neighbourhood, pitchers of Sapporo are flowing. Servers race by with deep-fried halibut bites, bacon-wrapped mushrooms and octopus fritters – the Japanese equivalent of comfort food. Inside booths and at packed tables, groups out for a big night toast with litre-sized beer mugs and devour tapas-style plates of Japanese delicacies. Every time someone walks in, the entire restaurant staff erupts in a chorus of *Irasshaimase!* – Japanese for 'Come on in.'

Welcome to the wild world of izakayas. These Japanese-style pubs – which have been around for centuries in Japan – started popping up in the 1990s in Vancouver, primarily to serve the city's large population of foreign students craving a taste of home. But they quickly found a larger following among Vancouverites hungry for more than California rolls and the usual sushi staples.

"The reason it's caught on is because the food is good and it's non-threatening," says Carolyn Ali, food and travel editor for the city's leading alternative newspaper, *The Georgia Straight*. She goes on to rattle off a list of izakaya crowd-pleasers, from chicken *karaage* (deep-fried and spicy) to barbecued *kalbi* (garlic-ginger marinated beef short ribs) and bacon-wrapped enoki mushrooms. "And it's more of a fun, late, after-work type atmosphere than sushi."

The antithesis of your typical sushi joint, izakayas are lively affairs, with the atmosphere ranging from festive to downright frenetic on weekend nights. And while sushi enjoys a reputation as a healthy food, izakaya cuisine can be anything but. Most menus highlight a cornucopia of deep-fried delights – squid, shrimp and octopus, chicken, tofu, potatoes and more – alongside bacon-wrapped morsels like scallops and mushrooms and barbecued fish and meats.



"In the past five years, izakayas have really taken off," Ali says. "I think frankly we're almost at the saturation point." As izakayas have proliferated in Vancouver, new twists on the concept have sprouted up, with restaurants specializing in everything from raw fish seared tableside with a blowtorch to creative cocktails made with sake, plum wine, lychee and fresh herbs. Some offer a sleek, lounge-style atmosphere with club music, while others are truer to the boisterous, beer-soaked original.

The common denominator is authentic and exquisite – if not always calorie-conscious – cuisine, served in a high-energy setting where sharing is encouraged. For culinary globetrotters fed up with watered-down and Westernized sushi, tempura and yakitori, Vancouver's izakayas promise a slice of the real Japan, a few thousand miles northeast of Tokyo.

EXPLORING VANCOUVER'S IZAKAYA SCENE

Izakayas have proliferated in Vancouver, with styles to suit every taste. Here's a cross-section of what's on tap:

Traditional – Kingyo One of the granddaddies of the scene, Kingyo remains among the most authentic of Vancouver izakayas. Dark and conspiratorial inside, with live bamboo and rustic wooden tables and chairs, the restaurant is nearly always crowded with regulars who come for izakaya standards. Start with the raw takowasabi (chopped octopus and pickles in wasabi), then dig into the classic ebi-mayo (tempura-battered tiger prawns with chili mayo) and the irresistible sweet miso-marinated black cod. Frosty mugs of Sapporo and a good selection of sake and *shochu* (a Korean spirit popular in Japan) keep the atmosphere upbeat but not overly loud. **871 Denman Street; 604-608-1677; kingyo-izakaya.ca**

IZAKAYAS ARE LIVELY AFFAIRS, WITH THE ATMOSPHERE RANGING FROM FESTIVE TO DOWNRIGHT FRENETIC



Trendsetting – Hapa Izakaya For a sleek, clubby aesthetic and a gourmet take on izakaya cuisine, head to Hapa. Its four locations in Vancouver (and one in Toronto) are dark, elegant and often filled with trendy twentysomethings on their way to – or returning from – bars. Against a soundscape of thumping chill music, comely servers bring out exquisite plates prepared with a lighter touch than in many izakayas, from gently seared beef *tataki* to sliced tuna carpaccio with yuzu dressing and pork belly lettuce wraps. Hapa is also justly famous for its *aburi saba* – marinated Norwegian mackerel filet, seared right at the table with a blowtorch. **Multiple locations; hapaizakaya.com**

Crowd Pleasing – Guu Among Vancouver's first izakayas, Guu now has a half-dozen locations around the city, ranging from stylishly minimalist restaurants to lively pubs. For diners seeking a high-energy izakaya experience, head to Guu Otokomae in Gastown. Climb to this second-floor loft space and you'll discover a party in full swing; servers sprint to tables with brimming pitchers of Sapporo and plates are loaded with the deep-fried goodies that izakayas are best known for, from *takoyaki* (octopus fritters) to cabbage and squid cakes and tempura-battered shrimp. **Multiple locations; guu-izakaya.com**

The Upstart – Gyu-Kaku While not technically an izakaya, this new, Japanese-style barbecue joint (or *yakiniku*) in the heart of downtown offers the same energy and tapas-style plates, with a twist: diners grill their own marinated meats and fish at barbecues built into the tables. Packed most nights with Japanese students and ex-pats, Gyu-Kaku features an extensive menu of familiar and exotic cuts (from miso-marinated short ribs to beef tongue with lemon), plus izakaya-inspired bites like chicken *karaage*, fried *gyozas* and hot stone bowls. A great place for sharing with friends, Gyu is an exceptional bargain during its daily happy hours (before 6 p.m. and after 9 p.m.). **888 Nelson Street; 604-558-3885; gyu-kaku.com/cn**



SEOUL FOOD

Worldly Delights

Alison Kent



©ALISON KENT

A bustling urban metropolis, **Seoul** is a modern city that proudly celebrates its rich heritage and values by embracing both international and traditional flavours at eateries throughout the city. With a seemingly endless array of street food vendors, markets and restaurants, Seoul is a veritable paradise for food lovers, offering a tremendous variety of dining options, matched only by its equally extensive selection of fashion boutiques, fabric markets and electronics stores.

Home to more than 10 million residents, Seoul is known for its dynamic nightlife and restaurant scene, and you'd be hard-pressed to find identical answers when inquiring where to dine in the city. The possibilities are virtually endless.

Korean-Canadian restaurateur Sang Kim is the owner of the acclaimed **Yakitori Bar and Seoul Food Co.** in **Toronto**, where diners can choose from Korean-inspired offerings such as *jap chae* (sweet potato noodles stir-

fried with meat and vegetables), *bibimbap* (rice mixed with vegetables and egg) and the ever-popular *bulgogi* cheeseburger, where ribeye meets caramelized kimchi. Kim is also the orchestrator of **Battle Kimchi**, a lively local culinary competition (his own fiery and smoky version of this Korean staple is sensational).

This seasoned gourmand has his preferred places to dine in Seoul. "There's nothing like the madness and chaos that occurs at **Myeongdong**," says Kim. "You can get any street food your heart desires, from *duk bok ki* (spicy rice cakes) to *ojinguh* (dried squid). I love to go shopping and grab snacks while doing so." A vibrant shopping hub indeed, with department stores and designer brands galore, plus dozens upon dozens of edible options and Korean specialties, including *donkas* (fried pork cutlets), *tteok-bokki* (rice cake rolls in spicy-sweet sauce with fish cakes and vegetables) and *kalguksu* (handmade and knife-cut noodles in broth).



©ALISON KENT

For the ultimate in fresh seafood – even at 4 a.m. – **Noryangjin** is a unique and not-to-be-missed destination. “**Noryangjin Fisheries Market** is an amazing place to shop that’s open 24 hours a day, and features everything you could possibly imagine from the sea,” says Kim. The largest wholesale and retail seafood market in the city, it offers visitors and shoppers hundreds of seafood items, including just-plucked-from-the-sea blue crab, shrimp, flounder, sea cucumber and octopus, which can then be roasted, fried, sliced into sashimi or transformed into *maeutang*, a spicy fish stew. Kim adds, “What’s incredible about this market is that you simply pick your fresh seafood and then take it to any of the many restaurants located in the building and have it cooked any way you desire.”

But Korean cuisine isn’t the only type of food on offer after sunset in Seoul – far from it. “**Itaewon** is full of some of the best foreign street food Seoul has to offer,” says Kim. “From amazing Egyptian fare to Vietnamese *banh mi* sandwiches...at night this area offers everything.” Known as the ‘global village’ in Seoul for its diverse representation of international foods and fashions, Itaewon is also renowned for its *pojangmacha* – pop-up restaurants or outdoor tented stalls – selling a variety of popular street foods, including *jjigae* (stews typically made with meats and vegetables), *bulgogi* (thinly-sliced marinated and barbecued meats) and *odeng* (fish cakes). And if you’re a fan of fried foods on a stick, you’ve come to the right place, as South Koreans have taken this Western fast-food concept to a whole new level, in part, with their innovative take on deep-fried hot dogs. At street carts everywhere, you’ll find wieners on a stick dipped in batter, then rolled in chopped French fries and fried until golden and crisp. With a squirt of obligatory ketchup, it’s a late-night and post-libation snack that’s sure to seem like a great idea at the time.

Daniel Gray, a restaurant critic and Korean culture blogger at seouleats.com, knows a thing or two about dining around Seoul. He is also Chief Marketing Officer at **O’ngo Food Communications** – a culinary tourism company dedicated to sharing the



finer points of Korean food culture through popular cooking classes and lively food tour options.

It can be tricky and time-consuming to locate some of the hard-to-find eateries throughout Seoul’s maze of food markets without prior knowledge of their whereabouts or culinary reputation, and the guided **Korean Night Dining Tour** from O’ngo is the ultimate way to experience a diverse array of authentically Korean restaurants in one evening. “The tour is modelled after a typical Korean night out that regular Koreans might enjoy,” explains Gray. The tour weaves through the historic area of **Jongno**, making four stops along the way at local restaurants and drinking places, including a Korean barbecue eatery, a spicy rice cake restaurant and a rice wine house, before capping the night with a tour through **Gwangjang Market**, with its countless culinary options as far as the eye can see.

Bring your appetite on this educational walking tour, and get ready to taste outstanding barbecue and a variety of *banchan* (side dishes and accompaniments) starting at, perhaps, **Garmaeggisal Chun-**

mun BBQ restaurant, eventually moving on to, say, **Dubu Chon** for spicy rice cakes, tofu and kimchi. Then on to **Pakgane Bindaetteok** – a lively spot, to say the least – to sip beer, *soju* (Korea’s favourite distilled rice beverage) and *makgeolli* (unfiltered and lightly effervescent rice wine), while munching on *anju* (snacks consumed with alcohol), including *haemul pajeon* – a crisp, savoury seafood and green onion pancake. And all while making new friends at nearby tables and deciding if you’re up for whatever drinking game is bound to be underway. At the market, there are plenty of opportunities to sample delicacies, ask questions and snap pictures.

“We want guests to experience Korean culture through the cuisine, and have a whole lot of fun while doing it,” explains Gray. “Our guides teach Korean culture using the dining table as a forum to explain about the family, society and more.” From Chinese, *o’ngo* translates as ‘revitalizing traditions through modernization’ – what an admirable and enticing concept to embrace, especially in regards to exquisite and unsurpassable Korean cuisine.

CALIFORNIA FRESH

Worldly Delights

—
Tim Johnson

From the flavours of Mexico, to the spice of the Southwest, to the exotic pleasures of the Pacific Rim, everything comes together in San Diego



While it made sense to me that the food in such a sun-kissed place would be fresh, I wasn't sure that I had ever tasted anything quite *this* fresh, save for the few times that I've picked fruit off the vine and popped it straight into my mouth. Settled in for a nice Saturday brunch at **Prepkitchen**, a hip, second-floor restaurant that attracts all the cool kids on the weekend, I sipped my cocktail, looked out over the bustle of the farmers' market outside and chatted with Brad Luckinbill, the executive chef. He had just brought out a flatbread pizza smothered in escarole and Gruyère cheese, explaining that all the breads – and pretty much everything else on the menu – are made right there, in-house, and the other ingredients of the pizza, including the escarole (which he, drawing on his chef's lexicon, called the 'driving force' of the meal) were purchased just outside, this morning, at the farmers' market. "First thing every Saturday morning, I take a cook from the kitchen with me, to help carry, and we walk through the stalls to see what's good, and then I create things based on what's available," he says. "It really doesn't get any more local than that." Taking a bite, I tasted exactly what he was talking about.

I was in **San Diego**, a city that basks in more than 300 days of sunshine every year and a place where, consequently, farm-to-table, nose-to-tail cuisine is the rule rather than the exception. The city is positioned at a culinary crossroads – perched on the edge of the **Pacific Rim**, with the **American Southwest** at its back and **Mexico** just a 15-minute drive away – and I was here to explore what happens when all these elements are combined together, with plenty of that freshness thrown into the mix.

After brunch, Luckinbill agreed to retrace for me his steps from earlier that day. We walked out into the sun and into the bustle of the **Little Italy Mercato**, which filled several blocks of a sloping street that ended down at a blue harbour filled with white sails. While located in Little Italy, the merchant and food stalls spanned a wide spectrum of themes and traditions, from places selling homemade vegan salsa, to a variety of artisanal cheeses, organic meats



and freshly caught fish. Luckinbill walked me up a few blocks to the space operated by **Suzie's Farm**, introducing me to Melissa James, who was doing a brisk business there, busily bagging organic bibb lettuce and radishes and all sorts of other vibrant, fresh vegetables.

She explains to me that her work at Suzie's is related to her PhD in ethics – she just feels that it's the right thing to do. "I believe that it matters; everything is interconnected," James observes. "But even if you don't care about things like that, the quality here makes a huge difference. Instead of trucking things for hundreds of miles, we put that energy into growing a wide variety of crops, which are picked from good quality soil, by people who are treated well."

Over the next few days, I would taste that bounty in various compelling combinations. I had Asian spiced with a dash of Mexican at **Roppongi**, where chef Stephen Window brought me a duck quesadilla (the sweet meat offset by sashimi spice, fish sauce and guacamole made from fresh avocados), Japanese hot rock (where New York



strip was cooked before my eyes on a small slab heated to 500 degrees) and a crab stack, the signature dish, which combines the mild taste of crab meat with locally grown red onion, cucumber, tomato, avocado and mango. I enjoyed a big ribeye (which chef Simon Dolinsky assured me was raised on a nearby farm, on organic alfalfa) at **Salt-box**, a trendy spot on the edge of the city's **Gas Lamp District**, and dined on great pasta at **Amaya**, part of **The Grand Del Mar**, a Mediterranean-style five-star hotel that, between its two restaurants, Amaya and **Addison** (an award-winning restaurant with a James Beard-nominated chef), has become a culinary destination in itself.

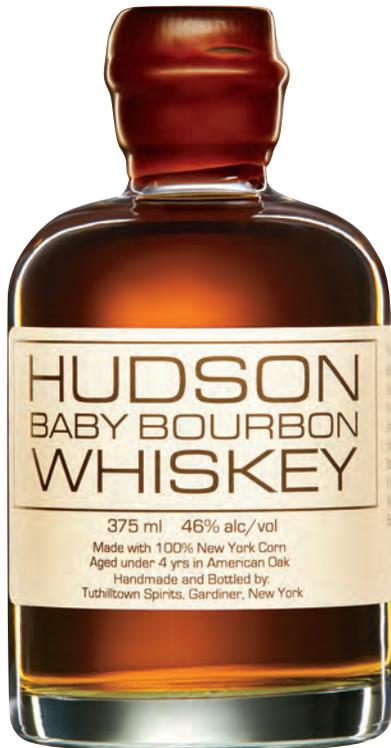
And I took Luckinbill's recommendation and visited chef Trey Foshee, one of the key people who drove the culinary movement forward in San Diego. Foshee is executive chef of **George's at the Cove**, which occupies a scenic spot overlooking the Pacific in **La Jolla**, an old resort town that's now one of San Diego's wealthiest neighbourhoods. Back in the late '90s, Foshee set about liberating the menu from its traditional Continental trappings.

Now, he said, George's offers a menu that's constantly in flux, changing according to what's ripe and in season. He has solid personal relationships with the farmers who supply his meat and greens, as well as with the fishermen who bring in the catch of the day. My favourite dish also happened to be his cornerstone meal, one that almost never leaves the menu – an upscale fish taco. Inspired by a trip to **Cabo San Lucas**, Foshee told me that he decided to remix the basic elements in a more elegant way, taking fresh yellowfin, wrapping it around tuna tartare, tossing it with jalapeño and then presenting it with an earthy garnish of corn nuts. It seemed to bring together everything that I'd experienced here in San Diego over the past few days. Wandering back to my hotel afterward, I felt ebullient, as though I'd tasted just a little bit of that lifestyle Foshee had spoken about – with a wonderful sampling of the city in my belly, the palms rustling overhead and the soft breeze of the Pacific on my face.

BOURBON BONANZA

Worldly Delights

Mary Luz Mejia



Artisanal quality. Small-batch distilled. Single-barrel aged. Descriptions that were once the mainstay of top-shelf imported whiskeys are now also firmly entrenched in the lexicon of that other venerable brown-hued libation, bourbon.

But let's get something straight for any bourbon neophytes – although considered a type of whiskey, it differs from the stuff from **Scotland** and **Ireland**. (The spelling differs, too. Americans and the Irish spell whiskey with an 'e'; everyone else spells it without.) It's not the same as rye, either. Ralph Erenzo, a partner and distiller at **Tuthilltown Spirits Farm Distillery** in **Gardiner, New York**, describes it this way: "The term 'whiskey' refers to a class of spirit beverage defined as 'the distilled spirit of a fermented mash of grain.' Bourbon is a type within that class along with rye whiskey, wheat whiskey, etc." He adds that, "In order to call a whiskey 'bourbon whiskey,' it must be made in the USA, must contain at least 51% corn and it *must* be stored in a new charred oak barrel. There is no minimum time it must spend in the oak barrel and it can be any oak. But it must spend time in a NEW charred oak barrel, which is the distinction between American whiskey and Scotch whisky or Irish whiskey, which may be stored in a used oak barrel and must be in the barrel for a minimum of three years." Got that?

The American part of the equation in bourbon's history isn't just a flag-waving, nationalistic gesture either, although that's a given if you ask any bourbon-in-the-blood distiller. In 1964, Congress decreed that "bourbon whiskey is a distinctive product of the United States." As alluded to by Erenzo, the three main elements that make it uniquely American are American corn, pure limestone water and new, charred oak barrels.

Which is why, as Reggie Amos, CEO of **Homestead American Whiskey** explains, "Bourbon is sweeter than rye, due to its corn content. Tennessee whiskey (i.e., Jack Daniels) is charcoal filtered, typically imparting a smokier flavour than bourbon." It's these flavour distinctions and nuances that, according to Amos and Erenzo, have made American bourbon an international sensation.

We asked cocktail authority and author of *Apothecary Cocktails: Restorative Drinks from Yesterday and Today*, **Warren Bobrow**, to pick his top three bourbons with a few tasting notes:

• I •

MAKER'S MARK "Lightly toasted sweet oak gives way to deeper flavours of smoke and char. This may not be a beginner's bourbon, yet many drinkers new to the charms of bourbon find Maker's Mark a nice introduction to the intricate flavours inherent in bourbon whiskey. It's delicious with a lemon zest and a dollop of honey syrup, or neat in the glass."

• II •

TUTHILLTOWN, LOCATED IN THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY IN NEW YORK STATE "Offers a taste of what bourbon exemplified before Prohibition took all the fun out of distilling and eventually drinking. Deeply cooked grains give way to sweet aromas of vanilla and toasted, then caramelized nuts. There is some heat in there too from the brooding alcohol woven carefully into every sip. I like my Tuthilltown bourbon neat or sometimes mixed with a splash of branch water straight from the spring. It's also delicious with a bit of cane sugar ginger beer."

• III •

KNOB CREEK "This is bourbon that tastes better than it needs to be. Aged for nine years in charred oak barrels, Knob Creek is magnificent in a mint julep (crushed ice, mint and bourbon with cane sugar) or alone in a glass sprinkled with a bit of spring water. There is history in every sip of this old-fashioned bourbon with a very modern label, and Knob Creek has been known to sell out rather quickly, creating shortages for thirsty consumers around the world."

Over the past decade, production has catapulted by more than 150%, with exports exceeding the \$1 billion mark. If bourbon once wore a blue-collar uniform, it has quickly shed those duds in favour of the latest designer jeans and, in some cases, a bespoke suit. A drink that some say was mainly a spirit of the American South has gained a dedicated following in countries as far away as Japan, a market that has long held a special reverence for whisky culture.

In a *Canadian Business* article entitled "Why is bourbon so crazy hot now?" writer Jay Somerset points to the 1980s as a pivotal time in the 'meteoric' rise of bourbon. He writes, "Japan's growing middle class was building its own whisky culture, and the market was thirsty for something new to match its love of all things western. They wanted something as American as Levi's and Madonna." It seems bourbon fit the bill in all its star-spangled glory.

According to the article, the Japanese also wanted something approximating aged, single-malt Scotch. In this version of the story, the rise of the micro-distiller met this demand. But according to experts I spoke with, the reasons behind this increased interest are more varied. Amos says it's the spirit's complex flavour profile, its ability to pair with various kinds of foods and the fact that bourbon drinkers enjoy different bourbons for different occasions that's at the root of this bar rail celebritydom. Amy Preske, PR Manager at **Buffalo Trace Distillery** in **Frankfort, Kentucky**, believes "the idea of craftsmanship, taking your time and passing it along from generation to generation – which is what bourbon is all about – is appealing to consumers right now. Maybe it's because consumers are trending back into homemade, locally made items and the 'farm to table' trend." Erenzo suggests bourbon is more approachable than Scotch whisky or Irish whiskey, sweeter and richer, with added character imparted by the new charred oak, which is why people are drawn to it.

He goes on to say that the **United States** is currently home to the greatest concentration of craft distilleries in the world, with consumers in **North America** and abroad on the lookout for the new and different. He adds, "Distilleries are becoming a tourist attraction as visitors now can see local working distilleries for the first time since Prohibition."



In Kentucky, bourbon's original home, there's a dedicated **Bourbon Trail** that winds through bluegrass byways connecting must-sip stops including **Louisville, Bardstown** and **Frankfort**. Highlights include **Waddie Boone's** (a relative of Daniel's) ode to bourbon: **Knob Creek** distillery, one of the very first in Kentucky. Apart from its boutique appeal, the distillery also has a little lore working in its favour. Around 1811, a farmer named Thomas Lincoln and his family moved into a log cabin on Knob Creek, close to the distillery – the cabin where, legend has it, his son Abraham grew up.

A whiskey museum, centuries-old taverns, **Jim Beam, Maker's Mark, Buffalo Trace Distillery** and other distilleries are all on offer en route to bourbon nirvana. Along the way, you'll likely spot majestic thoroughbreds galloping past your car window and, if you detect the refreshing aroma of mint in the air, well, that's probably the local variety growing wild in nearby fields. Kind of has the makings of a picture-perfect mint julep, enjoyed on a terrace on a hot summer's day, doesn't it?

Here we have the Lamy Rustler cocktail, named after the town of **Lamy in New Mexico**, by cocktail creator and author Warren Bobrow. He writes, "It's the High Desert fit to match a Deep Down-South Barbeque! A twist of Meyer lemon and a few drops of Bitter End Memphis Barbeque Bitters give this drink so much more depth than your usual 'Manhattan' cocktail." The star of the show? Bourbon, of course!

THE LAMY RUSTLER

BY WARREN BOBROW

Makes two cocktails

Ingredients

3 oz. Pappy Van Winkle bourbon

1.5 oz. Carpano Antica Formula sweet vermouth

8 drops Bitter End Memphis Barbeque Bitters

Ice from a filtered water source, frozen into a 2 x 2 inch square cube (silicon ice cube trays preferred)

Meyer lemon peel

Preparation

Chill two rocks glasses with ice and water and rub the inside of the glasses with Meyer lemon peel.

Then fill a glass beaker with ice up to the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark. Add the bourbon and vermouth. Then add the bitters and stir for 15 seconds. Empty glasses of the ice and water and add two filtered water ice cubes (filtered water will make the ice crystal clear). Strain the bourbon and vermouth over the ice. Garnish with a Meyer lemon rind.

BUSAN, SOUTH KOREA

Cultural Close-up

L.J. Williamson



©MARK EDWARD HARRIS

All the trappings of city life are within arm's reach in **Busan**: both high- and low-end shopping at **Nampodong** (Busan lays claim to the world's largest department store, **Shinsegae Centum City**), K-pop concerts at **Haeundae Beach**, and **Seomyeon Medical Street**, a district comprising 160 cosmetic and medical clinics, where one can pop in for Botox and teeth whitening in one swoop. It even has its own **BIFF** – the **Busan International Film Festival**. But in keeping with the values of nature-loving Koreans, Busan also provides ample opportunity to escape the hustle and bustle and spend time among nature. There are plenty of places to make you forget you're in **South Korea's** second-largest city, and unlike landlocked **Seoul**, visitors to Busan can enjoy infinite ocean views from breathtaking cliffs, from beaches, from boats or, for the adventurous, as a dangling parasailer.

In an amalgam of new and old, sleek, modern high-rise buildings are juxtaposed against ancient temples in a rugged, natural setting. **Nurimaru House**, where the 2005

APEC summit was held, is a prime example of modern Korean architecture. The domed building, whose nighttime-lit windows make it look something like a lantern perched over the sea, is located in **Dongbaekseom Park**, where pine, camellia and maple trees lead to inviting forested paths and hidden pagodas.

An expansive view of Busan's coastline can be found at **Taejongdae Park**, where on a clear day you can see the islands of Japan. Follow the cliffside trails to the observatory or to the park's towering white lighthouse, or just gaze over the edge at **Sinseondae Rock**, which is also known as '**Suicide Rock**' for obvious reasons – a few steps in the wrong direction could spell your end. For a park with a more mid-city feel head to **Mt. Yongdusan**. While hiking is immensely popular in Korea, Mt. Yongdusan has a thoughtfully placed escalator running through its steep middle section for the less physically fit among us. Ascend to the observation tower (120 metres tall), or ride the escalator to the bottom, where a short distance away, the women of **Jalachi Fish Market** tend stalls

selling every imaginable manner of edible sea life, most of it alive and wriggling in buckets and bins. Order fish sliced up on the spot, where it will be plated along with rice and traditional Korean small-dish accompaniments such as seaweed salad and kimchi, and tote it to a nearby dining area. Couple the meal with *soju*, Korea's answer to sake, which makes a perfect counterpart to the spicier Korean dipping sauces.

During the summer, stroll the boardwalk on Haeundae Beach and enjoy watersports or a therapeutic dip in the mineral hot springs. Or duck into a Korean spa in the city, such as the lovely **Spaland**. Spacious and bathed in natural light, this public bath features Roman and Finnish spas, yet remains quint-essentially Korean.

Perhaps one of the best introductions to Busan is via a cruise – lines such as Royal Caribbean International and Princess Cruises offer several itineraries with shore excursions that call on South Korea's largest port.



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