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AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND SPECIAL EDITION
SUMMER ISSUE 2018 / 2019



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VOYAGE LOG TASMANIA > DAY 5 > MAATSUYKER ISLAND

We all awoke early today and gathered on the bow of the *Coral Discoverer* to watch the sun rise over imposing Maatsuyker Island, home of Australia's most southerly lighthouse.

We were grateful for perfect weather conditions allowing us access to this harsh Southern Ocean coastline. We shared the moment with an endless parade of shearwaters skimming low over the waves. Fur seals frolicked on rocky outcrops and an occasional albatross soared above.

Over breakfast onboard, our expedition leader enthralled us with stories of the island, and of her childhood as the daughter of a Tasmanian lighthouse keeper. She fondly reminisced of her experience as a young girl being regularly rope-hoisted in a wicker basket up the sheer cliff face to her home atop the wild and windy hilltop. We felt transported to another world, another era.

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GALAPAGOS**

He has become a social media star thanks to the drawings he creates each day for his grandchildren and posts on Instagram. Now he embarks on the trip of a lifetime.

Words and illustrations
by Grandpa Chan

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Epic adventures. We dream about them, save for them, plan them for years in advance. And for good reason. For many of us (OK, for me, but I suspect for others reading this too), these are the experiences that give us a reason to get up every morning and take ourselves off to work.

Sometimes adventures take us into nature. Top of my travel wish list since I was a teenager has been the Galapagos Islands. In this issue, we get to see it from another perspective. Grandpa Chan, who draws his life and posts the images to his Instagram account for his grandchildren, had the chance to travel to Ecuador. He has painted the landscapes and the incredible creatures – seals, marine iguanas, tortoises – that live among them. His art has only made me want to jump on a flight there even more.

You don't always need creatures to have an incredible experience, though. If you have never been to Tokyo, you seriously need to think about heading there in 2019. It's hard to describe Japan's capital without reverting to the ol' 'it's got something for everyone' cliché. It is truly unique. One moment you'll be dodging crowds and shading your eyes from the neon lights, and just a few Metro stops away you'll be bowing your head at a temple and tying a wish to an ancient conifer. Join writer Mickey Rapkin as he spends 72 hours discovering the city's best.

Elsewhere in the issue, Alison O'Loughlin takes a trip to South Africa to find ancient art and amazing wildlife, and we leave modern life behind at two very different national parks – one in North Dakota and the other in Labrador. Plus, there are tonnes of other great holiday ideas and tips for planning your next trip. *Bon voyage!*

Carrie

CARRIE HUTCHINSON



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THE BIG PICTURE MOROCCO





MOROCCO

The thunder of hooves

PHOTOGRAPH BY
ELMANSOUR MOHAMMED / SHUTTERSTOCK

It seems like an act from another era, and it is. *Lab al baroud* (Arabic for 'gunpowder game'), a Moroccan tradition also known as fantasia, dates back to the eighth century. Horses and riders would gallop in unison before the riders, as one, fired rifles into the air. In a perfect fantasia charge, those watching hear just one sound of the guns going off. Enemy armies would be intimidated and kings and sultans would be impressed. These days, though, this war-like cavalry charge is performed at weddings and harvest festivals, as well as once a year at a national event in Rabat.

TRIP NOTES

LATEST FROM DALLAS



Made famous by a TV show, this city in the north of Texas is more than just oil and cowboys.

It was the first grand hotel to grace the streets of Dallas. Opened in 1912 by Adolphus Busch, founder of the Anheuser-Busch brewing company, **THE ADOLPHUS HOTEL** (*adolphus.com*) was, at 12 storeys, the tallest building in all of Texas. Now local design company Swoon Studio has completed a complete overhaul of the Beaux Arts building, taking a cinematic approach to the transformation. The rooms are classic and plush, but it's some of the new additions attracting attention from stylish travellers. On the seventh floor, thanks to a build out, is an outdoor pool with six private cabanas and bar, plus there's a barbershop in the lobby, upmarket eatery The French Room and Viennese-style café Otto's.

Owner Tristan Simon refers to **BILLY CAN CAN** (*billican.com*) as a saloon, but it is so much more than that. Certainly, there's an old-world charm to the dining room, with its herringbone parquet floors, hand-tooled leather chairs,

locally crafted furniture and framed vintage mirrors. But the menu, created by executive chef Matt Ford and his team, firmly doffs its hat to Texas and the food of the south. Devilled eggs, Texas venison tartare, hot fried quail, roasted Gulf snapper and whiskey-brined long-boned pork chop all make an appearance, as do plenty of Texan wines and beers.

There's no better place to sample cocktails, a locally brewed American pale ale or a few live tunes than Deep Ellum. Walk a few blocks and you'll discover places like Braindead Brewing, the speakeasy behind High & Tight Barbershop and dive bar Double Wide. But the area is also home to what some believe to be Dallas' best bar, **HIDE** (*hide.bar*). Here, the staff push flavour profiles to the max to create drinks like Notice Me Senpai (Japanese gin, Junmai Gingo saké, vermouth, sauternes and lavender tincture). Grab a spot at the bar to watch the mixing action.

Clockwise from above: Texan style at Billy Can Can; the updated lobby at the Adolphus Hotel; Hide's Bay the Hounds cocktail; mixing up a storm at Hide.



HISTORY REMEMBERED

Nearly every visitor to Dallas lines up for the Sixth Floor Museum, which commemorates the life of President John F Kennedy, but there's more presidential history at the **GEORGE W BUSH LIBRARY AND MUSEUM**. The state-of-the-art facility includes a replica of the Oval Office, a solemn remembrance of the events of 9/11, a Texas rose garden and interactive displays. bushcenter.org

OK, we confess it's not actually in Dallas, but **TEXAS LIVE!** (texas-live.com), located an easy Uber away in Arlington, is well worth a visit, especially if you're into sport. It's situated next door to AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys, and a new Loews hotel with 300-plus rooms. Check out games on 30-metre LED screen, choose from a selection of bars and restaurants, including Guy Fieri's Taco Joint, and watch a band at concert venue Arlington Backyard (above). But the icing on the cake will be the opening in 2020 of Globe Life Field, which becomes the home stadium of the Texas Rangers baseball team. – *Carrie Hutchinson*

COURTESY TEXAS LIVE! JACOB HASHIMOTO, NUVOLE, 2006-2018. SILK, PAPER, BAMBOO, AND COTTON STRING. DIMENSIONS VARIABLE. COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST. PHOTO BY CAN TURKYILMAZ.



NOW SEE THIS

View some of the best art in the world at Dallas' many galleries and museums.

CROW MUSEUM OF ASIAN ART

Walk beneath a sky of kites at *Jacob Hashimoto: Clouds and Chaos* (until 7 April), a solo exhibition that includes his site-specific installation called *Nuvole* (above). It consists of thousands of paper discs made of collage and bamboo that weaves through the museum's Grand Gallery. crowcollection.org

NASHER SCULPTURE CENTER

More than 80 sculptures, collages, drawings and textiles are on display during *The Nature of Arp* (until 6 January). The exhibition examines the experimentation, abstraction and fragmentation in the work of Jean Arp, who founded the Dada movement during World War I. nashersculpturecenter.org

DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART

Between the 1910s and World War II, Americans had a love affair with technology. *Cult of the Machine: Precisionism and American Art* (until 6 January) brings together the highly structured, geometric works of artists including Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Sheller and Charles Demuth. dma.org

MEADOWS MUSEUM

When the National Gallery of Art in Washington agreed to lend it Mariano Fortuny y Marsal's painting, *The Choice of a Model*, Meadows Museum drew from its own collection and others from across Texas to stage the upcoming *Fortuny: Friends and Followers* (3 February–2 June). meadowsmuseumdallas.org

An aerial photograph of a lush green tropical landscape. A wide river flows through the center, reflecting the sky. In the bottom right corner, a white boat with a teal stripe and a small white airplane are docked at a wooden pier. The sky is a vibrant blue with scattered white clouds. The text 'This is adventure' is written across the top in a white and orange script font.

This is adventure

TOP END THRILLS

Take your next holiday to the extreme and do the best of the Top End. There's everything the adventurer could want to see and do - from four-wheel driving to some of the country's most picturesque fishing spots. Jumping crocs keep the adrenaline levels up on the Adelaide River, as does the famous Cage of Death, Australia's only crocodile dive. The cage brings you face-to-snout with a 5m crocodile in an encounter that really has to be seen to be believed! Take on the spectacular coastline and really charge your senses with an open-door helicopter ride to cap it all off.

The Northern Territory screams adventure, and this is a holiday you won't forget.

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PLACES WE LOVE

RUB' AL KHALI

Abu Dhabi's Empty Quarter

Take to the dunes and leave the modern world behind in the desert of the United Arab Emirates.

By Justin Jamieson

Camel burgers!" yells Marco. "An absolute must when out in the desert." Marco is the real deal when it comes to desert experiences and by the looks of his decked-out 4WD it wouldn't be a surprise to see him take down a camel bare handed. We've just departed the town of Madinat Zayed and are heading deep into the solitude of Abu Dhabi's Rub' al Khali, the Empty Quarter. "We'll dig a fire pit. You'll love them," he says, laughing. His excitement is infectious.

There are plenty of operators running desert trips out of Abu Dhabi. After a short drive south of the rapidly developing city centre, you can be sitting in a Bedouin tent on the sand listening to tales of Lawrence of Arabia's conquests, sipping tea and lining up for your bain-marie mezze plate. But we've opted to channel Lawrence himself (other than the 4WD), avoid the masses and head deeper into the desert than most. There's no sign of the city lights and we're surrounded by silence.

Marco works for Desert Diva Adventures. The company's motto is "living life to the full in the Empty Quarter" and Marco has promised us just that. After an hour he signals to pull over. We deflate our tyres "to grip the sand" and are briefed on the do's and don'ts of desert driving: "Keep your revs up. Never spin the wheels, ever – you'll just dig yourself in."

Then we are off road, leaving the bitumen to snake its way north into Saudi Arabia. Within minutes we can see nothing but dunes. It is almost lunar and our Toyota floats over the soft sand. I've heard skiers rave about skiing first



tracks and this must be on par. There is absolutely no one else out here and it looks as though no one has been here for a long time. Marco leads the way in his desert machine, advising us over walkie-talkies on how to manoeuvre through the dunes. Revs are high going up and I take the foot off the pedal to let the Landcruiser glide down the front side of a dune almost eight metres high.

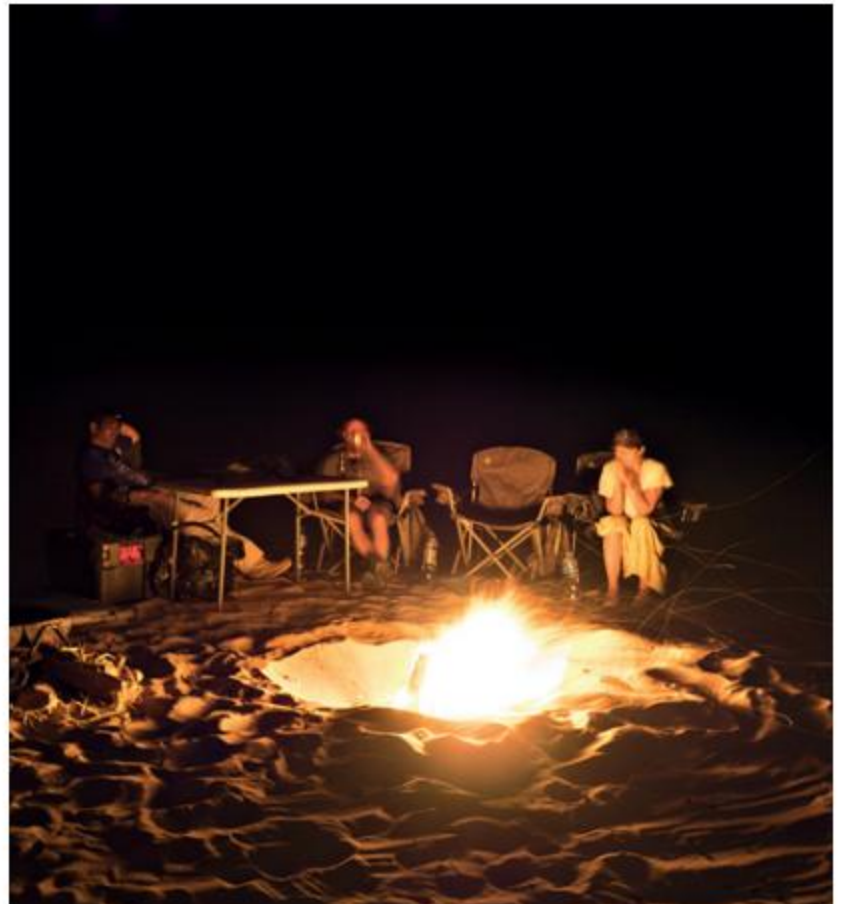
We take a break with some camel herders who share milky tea and make stilted conversation. I swallow a fly, much to their amusement, and am reminded of a quote from Lawrence himself: "Cling to your sense of humour. You will need it every day." The camel herders remind us of just how harsh the desert can be. Out here, in the heat and solitude of the

Empty Quarter, they'd definitely need one hell of a sense of humour.

That evening we park our petrol camels at the base of a mountainous dune. We set up camp and embarrass ourselves in front of Marco trying to dig a fire pit. The sun sets slowly, changing the desert colours from cream to orange to black as the last rays flicker. It's a prelude to the real show – the night sky. I sit back in my fold-out chair and stare for what must be an hour at the stars. This is a real desert experience – the silence, the stillness, the stars. None of us speaks; the entertainment is too captivating. The fire crackles and the odd spark ascends to the glittering heavens. This place should not be called the Empty Quarter. It isn't empty, it is full – full of adventures.



Nothing to see but sand and dunes. Clockwise from right: setting up camp in the Rub' Al Khali; around the fire at night; camel herders.



JUSTIN JAMIESON

LOCAL FLAVOUR STREET SMART



Egg tarts for all

They're the street eats feted by Michelin Guide critics and one of Macao's favourite sweet treats.

Hear the words 'Michelin Guide' and your mind might instantly imagine a dent in your credit card balance. Not in Macao, the former Portuguese territory on the south coast of China now known as the Las Vegas of Asia. Sure, it has 18 restaurants adorned with at least one star – Robuchon au Dôme and The Eight have three each – but it was also chosen for Michelin's first street-food guide. There are 12 selections in all, from Mok Yee Kei's durian pudding to Sun Ying Kei's pork chop buns, loved by Anthony Bourdain for their simplicity.

Popular among both locals and visitors is **LORD STOW'S BAKERY**. Englishman Andrew Stow opened the original store on Coloane Island in 1989, before it was franchised across Asia. His daughter and sister carry on his legacy, baking Stow's version of the egg tart that costs just MOP10 (A\$1.70) each. It looks like a traditional *pastéis de nata* from Lisbon, but bite into its flaky pastry case and caramelised egg custard and you might be a little surprised. To suit local tastes, Andrew's egg tarts, as they're known, are less sweet than their Portuguese counterparts. lordstow.com

CENTS AND SENSIBILITY

Three more places where top quality doesn't mean inflated prices.

AUSTRALIA

Hawker Chan

From his Singapore street-food stall, where customers can wait up to three hours to eat, chef Chan Hon Meng creates what has been labelled the world's cheapest Michelin-star meal. Now, he's brought his cuisine to Melbourne. There are 16 dishes on the menu, but don't go past the classic crisp-skinned soya sauce chicken with rice. facebook.com/hawkerchanmelb

BRAZIL

Mocotó Aqui

Chef Rodrigo Oliveira took over his father's Sao Paulo restaurant, Mocotó, in 2002 and it has since become one of South America's best eateries. You can enjoy some of its classic dishes, including the famous tapioca cheese cubes, at Mocotó Aqui, a food truck that can be found at locations around the city. facebook.com/MocotoAqui

UK

The Hand and Flowers

Jump on a train at London's Paddington station and you can be in Marlow in about an hour. And you'll want to, because this is the only pub in the UK with two Michelin stars. Chef Tom Kerridge creates modern British fare using the best seasonal ingredients. Book the budget-friendly set lunch (A\$45 for two courses). thehandandflowers.co.uk

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TOP STUFF

Let's be serious. The worst thing about camping is putting up the tent. Thankfully, New Zealand company Feldon Shelter has created the **CROW'S NEST**. This two-man tent attaches to the rooftop of any vehicle and comes with an in-built queen-sized mattress and storage space for pillows and sleeping bags. All you need do is stop at wherever you want to spend the night then simply pull down the retractable ladder. The tent pops up, ready for you to get a good night's kip. From \$1,899, adventuremerchants.com.au



LUGGAGE On brand

National Geographic has teamed with Australian company Courier Luggage to create travel accessories that are both practical and sustainable. Ninety per cent of the components of each piece in the Destination range – they come in three sizes, from carry-on to a 74-centimetre case – are made using recycled plastic bottles, transforming the single-use polluters into long-lasting, quality products. From \$240, nationalgeographic.com.au/store

NEW CAL'S NEW PARKS

It has spectacular biodiversity – beneath New Caledonia's gentle waves more than 9,300 marine species, from dugongs to catsharks, call the waters home. Now, to conserve some of the world's healthiest reefs, the New Caledonia government has voted to create 28,000 hectares of marine protected areas, safeguarding them for generations to come from commercial fishing and other exploitation. newcaledonia.travel



OFF THE SHELF

What we've been reading.

Splashing out

It's undeniable – most Australians are drawn to water. In their beautifully photographed book **Places We Swim**, Caroline Clements and Dillon Seitchik-Reardon have travelled the country. They've dipped into surf breaks, hot springs, waterfalls and pools to discover the coolest swimming spots from the Lightning Ridge Bore Bath to the Basin on Rottnest Island. Plus, they tell you how to get there, the best time of year to visit and what else you can see in the region. It's the kind of book you could use to plan holidays for years to come. Hardie Grant Travel, \$40, hardiegrant.com.au

Letters from the past

When Louisa Deasey received a Facebook message from a stranger she had no idea of its repercussions. A Frenchwoman called Coralie had found a box of letters in an attic, written by her grandmother many years previously about a man named Denison Deasey. "Are you related?" Coralie asked. In fact, Denison was Louisa's father, a man who'd died when she was a child. **A Letter from Paris** documents a life-changing journey to Paris, London, Canberra and beyond as Louisa joins the dots to discover a father she'd never known. Scribe Publications, \$33, scribepublications.com.au

A culinary journey

Ah, Italy... It's home to as many types of cuisine as there are regions in the country. In **Pasta Pane Vino**, Matt Goulding travels from Rome to Sicily and beyond to document the people behind the food we fly from around the world to experience. He discovers the history behind famous dishes, finds the best places to eat them and interviews the guardians of traditions, from wine-making to kneading perfect silky pasta. With more than 200 photographs and a foreword by Anthony Bourdain, this is the perfect Christmas gift for the hungry Italophile. Hardie Grant Books, \$40, hardiegrant.com.au

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THINGS WE LOVE

INSIDER'S SOUTH AFRICA

If South Africa is on your dream destination list, there's never been a better time to visit. With the country commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Nelson Mandela, Trafalgar has the insider knowledge – the company's founders, the Tollman family, have lived there for more than seven decades – to access the people and places at the heart of this vibrant country. Its exclusive 15-day **BEST OF SOUTH AFRICA** itinerary offers exclusive experiences, including the chance to stay at Umhlanga's five-star, royalty-hosting The Oyster Box Hotel. Of course, it's also the perfect opportunity to see the country's magnificent wildlife on a Kruger National Park safari and visit its diverse cities. trafalgar.com



GADGETS

Tough enough

The US Army wanted a tough, functional instrument; one that could get wet, be dropped and never break. Most of all, though, it needed a watch that was self-illuminating and had its own energy source. Enter **Traser Watches**, which are tough as and built to last. The P68 Pathfinder is self-winding and water resistant to 100 metres, plus it has an integrated compass ring. But with Triglighthouse self-powered illumination you'll always be able to tell the time, whether you're in the heart of a cave or the back row of the cinema. \$1,328, swisstimehq.com.au

ISLAND TIME

Switch off and get back to the simple life on Norfolk Island. This sub-tropical paradise is just a 2.5-hour flight from Australia and the kind of place where you'll rediscover the pleasures of the great outdoors. Stroll around the convict ruins in Kingston, snorkel at Emily Bay lagoon – often named on world's best beaches lists – take an electric bike on an island circuit, or check out the amazing coastline on a kayak tour. norfolkisland.com.au



TALKING TENNESSEE

We caught up with Nashville-based singer Margo Price on her recent Australian tour to get the lowdown on her hometown.

You've been in Nashville about 15 years now. How long did it take you to find your feet?

As far as getting my foot in the door of the music industry, it took about 13 years. Nashville is a small town in a way, but at the same time there are a lot of different little scenes going on there. After I realised I wasn't really fitting the mould of the Music Row, mainstream country thing, I moved to East Nashville and started playing a bunch of the clubs there. That kinda felt like I had a little bit more stability.

Where's your favourite place to play now? I'd have to say the Ryman. We were so lucky to be able to do three shows there – it's such a historic place.

For a first-time visitor to Nashville, what do you recommend? Definitely take a tour of the Ryman. Broadway is changing drastically and not necessarily for the better, but if you want to go there, go to Earnest Tubb Record Shop, Robert's Western World and Layla's Bluegrass Inn. I used to bartend there.

Where's your favourite place to eat? The Treehouse, over by The 5 Spot. The chef there, Jason [Zygmunt], is incredible. In the back, they have a large porch with a treehouse, and you can actually eat up there.

And drink? Dee's Country Cocktail Lounge has a real old-school vibe. It looks a little dodgy from the outside, but it has taxidermy, pool tables, a back porch with fires, live music and an incredible jukebox. They've got my record in there, along with a lot of great classic country records.

What's good during the day? There are waterfalls everywhere. My favourite thing to do is go check out a new park with a waterfall. Narrows of the Harpeth State Park is beautiful. Beaman Park Nature Center is one of my favourites. And Centennial Park, in downtown Nashville, has a replica Parthenon. Yeah, go see the Parthenon. *Margo Price's latest album All American Made is released by Third Man Records.*

Matera

European Capital of Culture 2019



The ancient city of Matera is located in the Southern Italian region of Basilicata.

The city is steeped in history and is home to the famous Sassi, a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site dating back over 7000 years.



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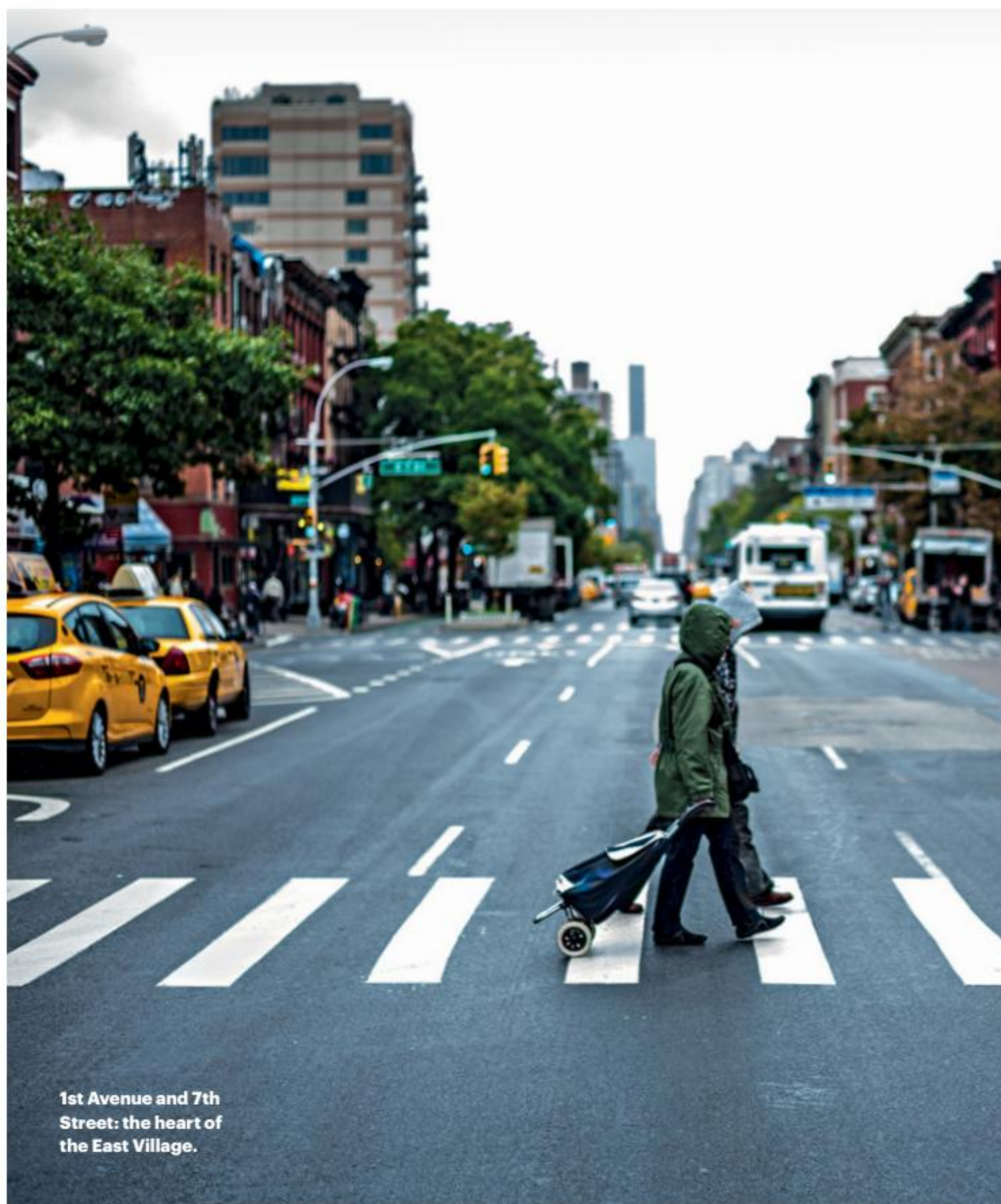
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I KNOW A PLACE NEW YORK CITY



1st Avenue and 7th Street: the heart of the East Village.

He's lived in these parts for most of his life, so we asked **ROBERTO SERRINI** to show us 7th Street in Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Brick Lane. Haarlemmerstraat. 7th Street. They might all sound wildly different, but at their root these streets all harbour the same eclectic soul. My particular 7th Street is located in the East Village in Manhattan, and I've called it home for most of my life. It is by no happenstance that I put up with five flights of stairs, impossible parking and a light dusting of addicts on my way home; I chose this address over any other in the city, if not the world, because nothing comes close to its character, anywhere.

McSorley's Old Ale House

Starting at the western end of 7th Street, experience living history. It is unfair to call McSorley's, established in 1854, a bar when, really, it's a museum that serves beer. The guts of this old beast are lined with ancient artefacts from a city long gone: an invitation to the Brooklyn Bridge opening, a letter from Teddy Roosevelt, even Houdini's handcuffs. As a local, I don't call McSorley's a hangout – it's frequently overrun by tourists, only serves two beers (light or dark), and the way they clean their glasses is reminiscent of an old cowboy film – but I wouldn't change it. mcsorleysoldalehouse.nyc

Moishe's Bake Shop

On the corner you'll find Moishe's. I have seen New York University students dare each other to eat something from this ancient Jewish bakery, and while it looks condemned, its chocolate cigars and raspberry *rugelach* (Jewish pastries) are the best in the city. I can hear old man Moishe, the owner, saying, "Who needs a fresh coat of paint when our confections are this delicious?" And he's right. 115 2nd Avenue



Photographer and videographer **ROBERTO SERRINI** travels the world with his drone, telling stories about the places he visits and the people he meets. He's directed talent including Dita Von Teese, LeBron James and Kanye West.

I KNOW A PLACE NEW YORK CITY



Abraço Espresso

Continue down the block to Abraço Espresso, which serves the finest coffee outside of Italy. Don't judge the flavour of the coffee by the size of the shop; I have seen people lined up around the corner, waiting for a taste of the caffeinated delights coming out of this closet. Personally, I only drink its lattes, which can only be described as liquid cake. A warning to Starbucks-goers: these are coffee purists. I have witnessed a young mother of two denied a 'red-eye' (drip-brew coffee with espresso) with a disgusted look and a "we don't do that sort of thing here" rebuke. abraconyc.com

Caracas Arepa Bar

At this point it's time to eat something serious, so I suggest the *arepa de pabellón* from Caracas Arepa Bar. Consider, if you will, gently fried cornmeal dough stuffed full of delicious slow-cooked beef, salty white cheese and sweet tender plantains that greets your tastebuds with a Latin lover's kiss. Don't waste your time with dessert here, my friends, because there's a much better choice almost next door. caracasarepabar.com

Big Gay Ice Cream Shop

If creamy delights are to your taste, venture into the closet with Big Gay Ice Cream. Greeted by a giant purple unicorn and more sparkles than a stripper's bed sheet, Big Gay serves up chocolate-dipped, salty cones – called the Salty Pimp – that will soon have you flying the rainbow flag. There's plenty else to choose from, too, including Gobblers, which are a bit like a pie and ice-cream in a sundae cup. biggayicecream.com

Niagara

Walk a block to Tomkins Square Park and watch dogs play and junkies squabble while you slip into a blissful sugar coma. When you are done, head across the street to Niagara, a real local bar, where you can still get a shot of Powers and a bottle of cold beer for US\$5. Let the night slip away as you watch the game, talk to an old-timer or eavesdrop as two drunken students passionately argue the plot points of their new short film. niagaranyc.com

Clockwise from top left: step back in time at Moishes'; Big Gay Ice Cream's Salty Pimp; Niagara.

THE ORIGINAL SEARCH ENGINE



Before the internet and mobile phones, all you needed was a sense of adventure, a camper and a map (optional). The destination was unknown, no bookings were required and local tips and recommendations came from the bloke at the pub.

We started making Pop Top Campers in 1974; since then generations of Australians have searched for and found adventures and made memories.

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TRAVEL TALES

NT ADVENTURE

Up croc creek

A heli-kayaking adventure in Australia's far north means facing your fears, even if they turn out to be unfounded.

By Craig Tansley

Tell people you're heading to the Northern Territory to kayak down a river and they're only going to say one thing: no one in their right mind kayaks down a river in the Northern Territory. So I say it again and again: "They're not stupid. No one's going to let me paddle down a river with crocodiles in it."

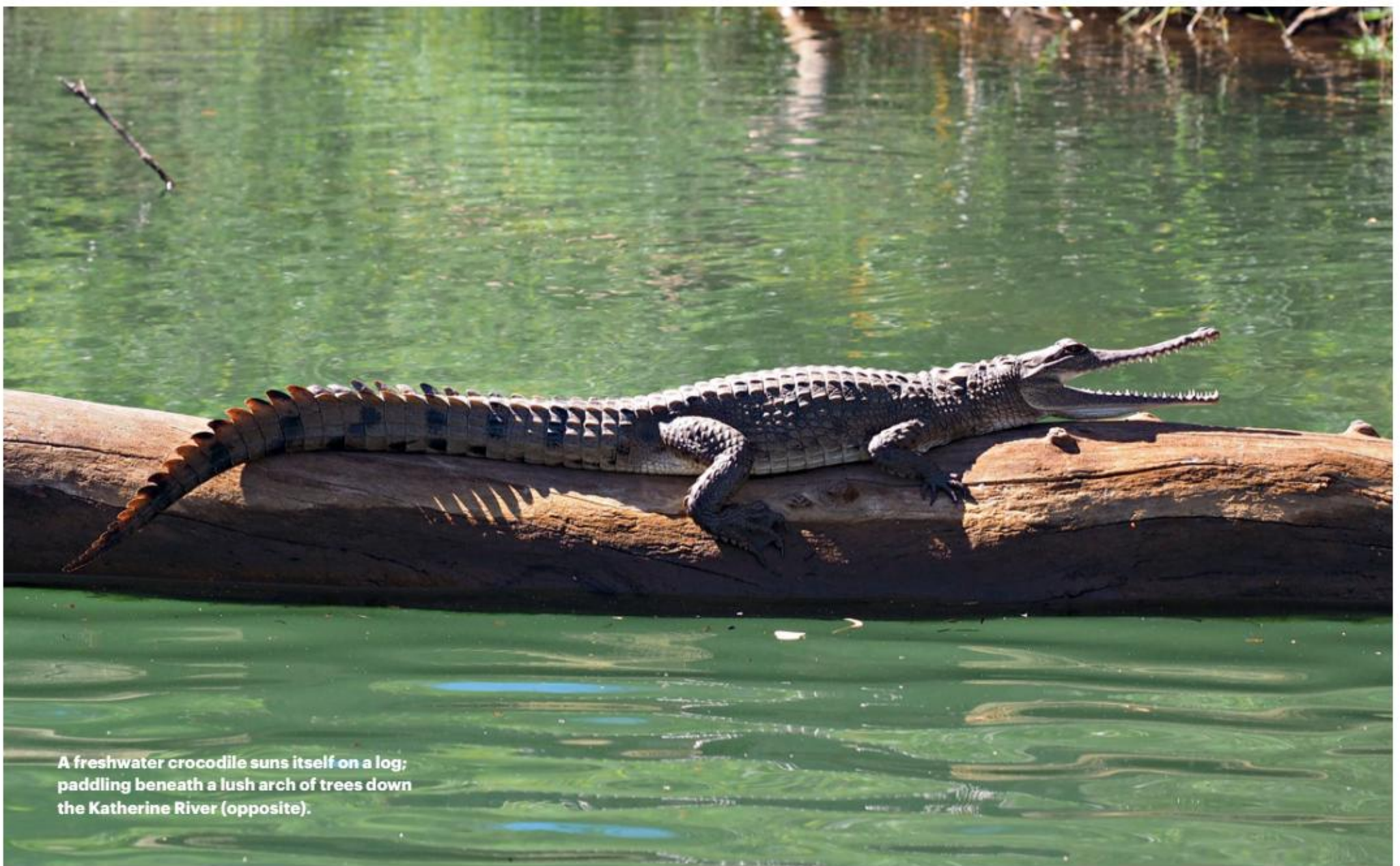
Turns out I was wrong. They are going to make me paddle down a river with crocodiles in it. Saltwater crocodiles. The kind that grow bigger than, well, a kayak. I discover this about 300 metres above the Katherine River on my incoming helicopter ride. When the river's done funnelling its way through nine famous gorges, which we've just flown over, it winds its way downstream through the outback, southwest of the township of Katherine.

"How come there are no saltwater crocs where we're going?" I ask the helicopter pilot. I'm sitting beside him, so while his voice comes to me as a noise through my headset, his eyes stare right at me. "What do ya mean?" he asks.

"I just would've figured that a river so far north would have saltwater crocs in it." I'm still looking at him. "There are saltwater crocs where you're going, mate," he says slowly, like he's unsure whether I'm messing with him or just thick. "About a week ago, they pulled a four-metre saltie



CRAIG TANSLEY



A freshwater crocodile suns itself on a log; paddling beneath a lush arch of trees down the Katherine River (opposite).

“My neighbour’s dog was taken there by a saltie. She reckons there wasn’t even a yelp. One minute it was there, next it was gone.”

from a croc trap right where you’ll end up. See there,” he’s pointing at a riverbed. “My neighbour’s dog was taken there by a saltie two weeks back. She reckons there wasn’t even a yelp. One minute it was there, next it was gone.”

At this point in the conversation we spot a man in a kayak below us, waiting beside a tear-shaped sandbank in the river. We come in low and fast.

My feet sink ankle-deep into coarse orange sand as I meet the bloke I pray knows the location of every last crocodile on this stretch of the Katherine. The river’s still, creating a mirror on the surface reflecting the lush trees that line both banks. On a hot day like this, it looks like the kind of river you’d leap right into if you didn’t know better.

“I wouldn’t,” Gecko Canoeing guide Matt Leigh says casually. Leigh’s not the type to waste much breath on talking, so it’ll be these two words that guide me through the coming days – if Leigh says he wouldn’t, I don’t.

“There could be salties here,” he says. “You never can tell. You’re better off soaking than swimming round here. Don’t swim where you can’t see the drop-off.”

Before I even so much as dip a paddle in the Katherine, I fire every croc question I’ve ever thought of, and then some, at Leigh. From that round of interrogation, let’s dispel a few myths before we go further – it’s only fair and, believe me, it helps.

Saltwater crocodiles are not always killers. An average saltie eats once a month, so they’re hardly out trawling for fresh meat every day. At five metres long, our kayaks are at least a metre longer than the local crocs, so rather than seeing us as easy prey in plastic take-out trays, we’re simply the dominant species.

The crocs that inhabit this part of the river aren’t generally aggressive anyway – that’s why they’re here. They’re the non-dominant males who elected against fighting for women and food. Instead they swam upriver to enjoy the quiet life, far from the testosterone of the coastal estuaries. There’s plenty more Leigh can tell you too, but it’s this image – of a river full of shy, retiring crocs seeking a bit of peace – that gives me the greatest comfort.

Paperbarks grow right out over the water offering shade from the fierce afternoon sun. Blue-winged kookaburras fly between them as I pass by. Higher on the banks where gums grow, whistling kites and white-bellied sea eagles fly. Above them, high in the thermals, wedge-tailed eagles and black-breasted buzzards, so big they block out the sun when they pass in front of it, patrol the ground for food.

Coming in to land near the Katherine River; a blue-winged kookaburra (right).



The river flows steadily so I ride the current downstream. Each bend brings with it a completely different scene – around some corners the river looks wide and peaceful; past others it narrows into tight, fast-moving avenues racing through sandstone, where I have to carefully negotiate my passage.

When the sun starts to lose its sting, Leigh leads us to a sandbank near a knee-deep section of the river. “This’ll be camp,” he says. “Shallow water should keep the crocs away.” I stop to soak in the slow-moving water. By the time I dry off, Leigh has a fire going, and a pewter mug of whiskey with ice cubes is waiting on the camp table. All around, ghost gums and river reds are lit gold by the last rays of afternoon sunlight, while agile wallabies spy us through the trees.

Leigh cooks roast beef and vegetables in an old pot on the fire and, when we’re done, I pick out a soft spot on the rolling dunes. From my swag beneath the moonless sky, I watch stars shoot across the infinite black, while listening to the steady hoot-hoot of southern boobooks and tawny frogmouths.

At dawn, Leigh kicks the fire back to life and cooks bacon and eggs. Then it’s back to the water. Over the next couple of days, the surroundings change by the second, as overhanging trees and green foliage give way to the kind of dusty setting you’d expect in this part of the country. Then we paddle around a corner and it changes all over again. Underneath me in the clear, warm water black bream, mullet, catfish, barramundi, snapping turtles and

whip rays dart about. Sometimes I float over freshwater crocodiles hiding beside sunken logs. Above me in the trees, I see branches, tree trunks and other debris hanging precariously, swept there by summer floods, when the river rises up to 20 metres.

The more I paddle the more I feel as though I’m floating through some sort of real-life Hans Heysen landscape, travelling back a century or more to a country I figured disappeared with the rise of modernity. Out here, I can’t post a single shot on Instagram, instead relying on my own eyes, rather than a hundred likes, to legitimise the beauty of all I see. There are no humans either. Often we paddle for hours without speaking a single word. It’s like I can hear the outback slowly breathing in and out around me, keeping time with the wallabies that bounce along the sandbanks and the cooling nor’-wester that huffs through the paperbarks.

When the tour’s almost done, I spot a clunky contraption on the bank. It’s only now I remember a four-metre croc was pulled from here a fortnight ago – from that very trap. Rolling down the Katherine with the breeze at my back, I’d forgotten about the man-eating creatures below. But, as I squeeze my way slowly through the only lush parts in one of the world’s most rugged landscapes, I’m mesmerised by all I see, smell and hear around me. In this blissful state of being, I feel like throwing myself into the river one last time before I leave her for the big smoke. “I wouldn’t,” Leigh says. I don’t.

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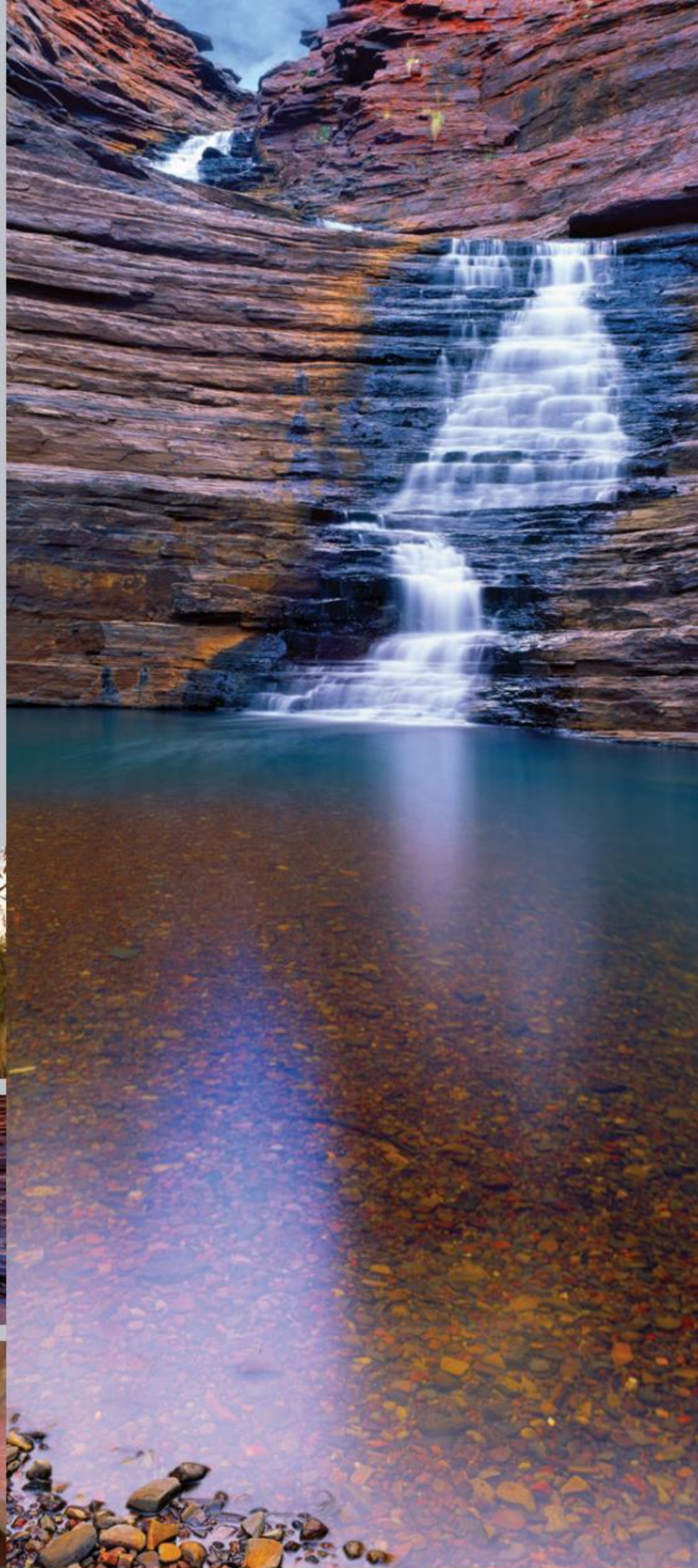
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10 REASONS TO VISIT MATERA



Named as a European Capital of Culture for 2019, the Italian cave town of Matera, recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1993, is undergoing a renaissance.

The High Streets

1 Follow your nose through the old **sassi district** – and when we say old we mean dating back to Paleolithic times when people first began to live in the natural caves that they eventually turned into rough-hewn homes. It wasn't exactly chichi living, though, and by the 1950s the area was so downtrodden it was known as Italy's shame. Today this ancient settlement on the slope of a ravine is a burgeoning area of businesses, boutique hotels, cafes and restaurants. Thanks to the butter-coloured limestone and old buildings piled on top of one another there's an almost biblical quality to the area. It comes as no surprise that Mel Gibson shot much of his epic movie *The Passion of the Christ* here.

Closer to God

2 The sassi area sits on one side of a steep and rocky ravine known locally as *la gravina*. The opposite cliff face is part of the **Murgia National Park** where there are more than 150 rock-cut churches carved into the landscape. Murgia is also known as Parco Regionale Archeologico Storico Naturale delle Chiese Rupestri del Materano, a mouthful that translates as Natural Historic Archaeological Regional Park of the Rock Churches of the Matera region. Book a tour with Guide Around Matera (guidearoundmaterait.com) or you'll never find the best churches and frescoes.

A Taste of the Town

3 Matera isn't exactly a 24-hour party town, but this is Italy so there's no shortage of places to eat and drink. Alison Pike, an ex-patriate Englishwoman who runs bespoke travel business Southern Visions Travel, recommends **Osteria al Casale** (osterialcasale.it) for a casual dining experience and **Dimora Ulmo** (dimoraulmo.it) for more formal occasions. Both are beautifully situated in the sassi district and serve traditional Materan/Basilican cuisine.

Matera bathed in dawn light. It is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities.

10 REASONS TO VISIT MATERA

Underground Living

4 You can't go all that way and not stay in one of the stunning cave hotels that have taken over the old rough-hewn dwellings and been turned into sumptuous places to lay your head. One such is the amazing **Sextantio Le Grotte della Civita** (designhotels.com), which sits on the edge of *la gravina*. This 18-room hotel follows the lines of the caves that peasants carved out of the rock, but while the original essence remains, it's also been updated to five-star standards – rooms set within caves have a dining area, king-size bed and a subterranean bathroom with stone bathtub. The cave complex's former church – the Cripta della Civita – is now the breakfast room.

Holy Vision

5 Pretty much anywhere you go in Matera you can see the 52-metre-tall bell tower of the **Cattedrale di Santa Maria della Bruna e di Sant'Eustachio** – that's Matera Cathedral (diocesimaterairsina.it) to most of us. Started in 1203 and finished in 1270, it was built in the Apulian Romanesque style on the highest point in the city. There's a rose window on the main facade, the interior is mainly eighteenth-century Baroque and there's a Byzantine-style fourteenth-century fresco. The view across the town from the wide piazza outside is exquisite.

Water Works

6 The old Materans came up with ingenious ways to collect, save and store precious and much-needed water in this dry region, building elaborate systems of cisterns and water channels. The best known is the amazing **Palombaro Lungo** (infosassitour.com), a giant cistern 15 metres high carved out of the rock under the city's main square. With its soaring, vaulted heights and rock pillars it has been compared to a subterranean cathedral. There are regular tours, but book in advance as it's popular in summer months.



Step Back in Time

7 For a fascinating insight into what it was like live in the slum caves before they were turned into luxury hotels pop along to the **Casa Grotta di Vico Solitario** (casagrotta.it). This re-creation of a typical cave home is filled with period furnishings, tools and artefacts. Here's where the baby slept in the top drawer of the dresser and not far from that is the donkey's bed.

Top of the Town

8 The **Madonna dell'Idris** church sits on the top of *Monterrone*, a large limestone outcrop that sticks out of the middle of the *sassi* district. Well, perhaps not *on top* – this small church, dating back to the fourteenth century, is partly built on to and mostly carved out of said outcrop. The views from here are splendid. The church is connected via tunnel to the crypt of San Giovanni where there are numerous ancient frescoes.

Tiny Township

9 For a bit of fun that also gives a great overview of Matera and puts the geography in perspective visit **Sassi in Miniatura** (materasassiinminiatura.it) at the souvenir shop on *Via Fiorentini*. The scale model of the town was carved by Materan native Eustachio Rizzi from the local *tufa* stone. It's free to enter, but give a small donation of you want to take photographs.

Embrace History

10 For a more modern perspective on the amazing history of Matera head to **Casa Noha** (fondoambiente.it/casa-noha-eng), a sixteenth-century family residence now home to a multimedia exhibition and video that tells the history of the town from a range of perspectives. – *Keith Austin*

Clockwise from top: inside Matera Cathedral; churches cut into the landscape in Murgia National Park; a rock-hewn room at Sextantio Le Grotte della Civita; climbing stairs in the old town.



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WILD ADVENTURES

SHELL OF A TRIP



Take a walk with a turtle and find a new pace in Costa Rica.

By Anna Kantilaftas

My feet are covered in blisters, every inch of my body aches and I'm excreting so much sweat I can no longer tell if my clothes are wet from rain, sea spray or bodily fluids. And yet not a single part of me wants to see the end of this eight-day Biosphere Expeditions jaunt. We're pacing a stretch of sand at Pacuare beach in the Costa Rican province of Limón, working with a team of scientists, research assistants and volunteers from Latin American Sea Turtles (LAST).

Our accommodation is a small science station only accessible by boat. To get here, we travelled along the canals of Tortuguero, framed by lush, green rainforests. Drifting towards the place we would call home for the coming week, we kept a keen eye to spot caiman, spider, howler and capuchin monkeys, green macaws, sloths and jaguars.

On reaching the station, we're immediately welcomed by the crashing sounds of the Caribbean Sea. It's this seven-kilometre stretch we will walk each night in four-hour shifts to find leatherback, green and hawksbill turtles before poachers do. This season, poachers have killed 22 turtles.

Sea turtle eggs, believed to be an aphrodisiac, are collected and sold on the black market, while

green and hawksbill turtles are also traded for their meat and shells. The result is a diminishing population, with almost all species of sea turtles appearing on the endangered species list. Climate change, habitat damage, pollution, sand erosion, light pollution and fishing also play a part.

On our second day, a nest hatches and, as the sun sets, seven baby turtles are released as we stand by and watch them drag their tiny bodies into the ocean. More than 180 turtles have laid their 80-egg nests on the beach this season (May to November), and 7,570 hatchlings have been released, yet only one in 1,000 will reach sexual maturity. Despite the insurmountable odds, the experience is hopeful and the excitement infectious.

It's two more hot, drizzly nights before I come face to tail with a leatherback. It's approximately 9pm when our group leader knocks on the door whisper-shouting, "Ladies, come quick! There's a turtle out front!" I sprint out to the beach. Standing in the moonlight I'm overcome with emotion. The leatherback gracefully goes about her duty and, as her flippers sprinkle sand across her nest, camouflaging it to protect her babies, I try to recall a time where I have experienced more beauty. I struggle to find one. And in that moment, with the sound of the waves crashing and her shell lit by the moon, every step of the week becomes entirely worth it.

biosphere-expeditions.org

HELPING HANDS

Three more ways to get your voluntourism on.

Whale shark week

They're the biggest fish in the sea and considered vulnerable, but you can spend time in the Maldives helping with whale shark research. The **Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme** takes eight volunteers at a time, who collect data at sea, learn about marine conservation and find out about Maldivian culture. maldiveswhalesharkresearch.org



Big cat camp

During a two-week trip to South Africa with **African Conservation Experience** and Global White Lion Protection Trust you'll track and monitor white and tawny lions, remove snares from the bush and spend time with locals learning about their relationship with lions and other wild animals. conservationafrica.net

Koala comfort

In the Lismore area of NSW, spend a day with **Conservation Volunteers Australia** helping to plant 3,500 gum trees by the end of next August with an aim to link koala habitats through farmland. Koalas are vulnerable in this area and these wildlife corridors will help protect them in the years to come. conservationvolunteers.org



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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

ASK AN EXPERT

AUSSIE ADVENTURES

Award-winning travel writer and photographer **LEE ATKINSON** has made a career of exploring the natural beauty of our own backyard. Here, five of her favourite places.

When it's time to take some of that precious annual leave, many of us start scouting travel websites for bargain flights overseas. But for Lee Atkinson, there's nothing better than checking out Australia's best breaks. She's even travelled 40,000 kilometres on a 10-month road trip that took her to places few other travellers roam.

For her latest book, *Australia's Best Nature Escapes*, she left (most of) the dust behind to find a hundred of our best nature-based holidays, whether you're travelling with a family or looking for a luxe beachside bolthole.

"Getting back to nature doesn't have to mean roughing it," says Lee. "Sure, you can camp in a remote campground deep inside a national park if you want to, carrying all your food and a tent in with a backpack, but there are also lots of very luxurious ways you can get back to nature as well. Think expedition cruising in the Kimberley, glamping at Uluru and six-star luxury lodges like Wolgan Valley in the Blue Mountains."

And with the limp Aussie dollar and some parts of the world enduring political unrest, there's never been a better time to stick close to home. Here, Lee dishes up five favourite destinations to suit all types of travellers.



Australia's Best Nature Escapes by Lee Atkinson is published by Hardie Grant Travel, \$40.

Left: Lee Atkinson at the summit of Bishop and Clerk on Tasmania's Maria Island.

1 BEST FOR ADVENTURE
You need a sense of adventure and a good 4WD to explore **Mount Elizabeth Station**, a working cattle station halfway along the Gibb River Road. It's home to one of the best, and toughest, 4WD tracks in the Kimberley, the Munja Track. But it is the extraordinary rock art that makes it so special.

2 BEST FOR WILDLIFE
It's a long haul to get there, but there's absolutely nowhere else like **Christmas Island**. It's the place to go if you want to see rare seabirds found only on the island, extraordinary diving – the island is surrounded by coral reefs and you can snorkel over coral gardens straight from the beach – and the annual red crab migration. Sir David Attenborough called it one of the "10 greatest natural wonders on Earth".

3 BEST FOR A DIGITAL DETOX
Lord Howe Island offers the rare chance to really switch off from the outside world. There's no mobile phone coverage because the locals voted against it. But it's also the relaxed attitude that makes it feel like a detox from modern life. Proudly crime-free, the resorts have a no-key policy, and surfboard, wetsuit and snorkel hire – even drinks at the island's best sunset bar – is by honesty box.

4 BEST FOR LUXURY
Wild Bush Luxury's **Arkaba Station** has redefined the idea of swagging out forever with its bush camps in the heart of South Australia's Flinders Ranges. Forget notions of unfurling a scratchy canvas bed roll in the dust with all the bugs. At these luxury camps, part of a four-day walking safari, you sleep on a raised timber deck, between crisp cotton sheets and under a canopy of stars, with a private chef preparing dinner.

5 BEST FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS
I'm fascinated by the outback, and love photographing the changing colours early in the morning and late in the afternoon, when the landscape glows. The red rocky gorges, cascading creeks and golden spinifex plains of **Karijini National Park** in the Pilbara are a photographer's playground, with bold saturated colours, weathered mountains, deep-sided caverns of multicoloured rock, and steeply stepped waterfalls perfect for long exposures.

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who managed to bring water

and strength where once

there was only sand.

Abu Dhabi 

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LOCAL TREASURES

FRASER ISLAND

Bay of Wonder

For a few months each year, there's a chance to get close to one of the ocean's largest creatures.

By Michele Sternberg

They sneak up on me. I can't explain how it happens, but it does. And quickly. One minute I am desperately trying to catch my breath in the cold water and the next I hear shouts: "Turn around. *Behind you!*"

When I spin around I am eyeball to eyeball with a whale. Then a second giant head pops up a few metres away. The curious pair had been swimming deep below us, back and forth underneath the *Quick Cat II*. I'd had good vision of them through the scuba mask until the massive humpbacks disappeared from sight.

The next thing I knew they had both surfaced behind me. It seems incredible that an animal 15 metres long and weighing 30,000 tonnes can arrive in your midst without you even noticing.

The whales' curiosity is amazing, yet they are incredibly gentle around the five swimmers tethered to a whale-watching boat off the coast of Fraser Island. No tail slaps, no breaches, no pec slaps and no sound.

There they hang, vertically, with just their heads out of the water, staring at us. It's a behaviour known as spyhopping. Their skin, pock-marked with barnacles, shines in the morning sun.

One member of our party begins swimming towards them and I wonder if that's a good idea. The sheer size of them is overwhelming. Yet these massive and beautiful creatures don't react. It feels as

though they've just popped up to say hi. What are they thinking? Do our mask-clad faces and ungainly swimming style amuse them?

We'd left the jetty at Fraser Island's Kingfisher Bay Resort at 7.30am for what Hervey Bay Whale Watch has dubbed "the ultimate whale encounter". Between late July and late October each year, Southern Ocean humpback whales travel up the east coast of Australia heading north to warmer climes. Some enter the calm waters of Platypus Bay, on the western side of Fraser Island, on their journey. As a swimmer, the temperature of the ocean is rather cool – just 17°C – but it's perfect for these gentle giants.

Once only valued for its oil and baleen, or 'whalebone', the Southern Ocean humpback was declared a protected species in 1963 by the International Whaling Commission at a point when as few as a hundred remained in the Eastern Australian population. During the 30 years from 1962 to 1992, the population was estimated to have recovered to 1,900. Today that figure is thought to have reached 27,000.

The recovery of the humpback population has contributed to the rapid growth of Australia's whale-watching industry and these waters are a popular location for both whales and visitors due to the shallow water – it's only about 18 metres deep – and the protection offered by Fraser Island.



Since 1987, the Pacific Whale Foundation has spent more than \$3 million on whale research in Hervey Bay, and its researchers have identified and collected data on more than 6,000 whales during that time.

Whales' brains are much larger than ours and the researchers believe they are also more complex, with sound being a more dominant sense for them than sight. Pacific Whale Foundation senior research biologist Stephanie Stack tells me whales have ears but not an external ear structure, just tiny openings, while the inner ear is similar to that of terrestrial mammals.

"Heavy wax inside the ear canal keeps water out and researchers can count dark and light rings in this plug of ear wax, like a tree trunk, to estimate how old a whale was when it died," she says, going on to explain that the whales also have very different sleeping patterns to our own.

"Whales are conscious breathers, which means they have to think about going to the surface to take a breath," she says. "If they completely fell asleep, they wouldn't be able to surface and breathe.

"It's a process called unihemispheric slow-wave sleep. That means they 'rest' one half of their brain while the other half remains alert.

"It's thought they have relatively short periods of rest, but have numerous periods of rest throughout the day and night, rather than one large chunk of time like we humans do."

One of the initiatives the Pacific Whale Foundation has established is the first humpback whale photo-identification project in the South Pacific. Called the Southern Hemisphere Humpback Whale Catalog, it is a non-invasive way to gather information on individual whales. Using photographs taken by researchers – both scientists and 'citizen researchers', or the people who go on whale-watching tours – whales are identified using unique features of the fluke (tail), including overall shape, trailing edges, acquired scars and natural pigmentation. These are then analysed by a team on the Hawaiian island of Maui to build a picture of the individual's history, including their migratory movements, breeding patterns and ages.

My own interaction with the massive duo is over all too soon. For just a moment I look deep into one of the whale's eyes. The emotion is overwhelming and I am close to tears. Then, without a sound, the two of them descend as quickly as they appeared, plunging to the bottom of the bay and swimming far below us again.

Back on the deck of the boat, I discover the whole encounter has lasted only a few minutes – I had no sense of time passing – but it's something I will remember and treasure for a long time to come. After all, how many people can say they've encountered a whale in its own environment, on its terms, and had such an amazing experience?

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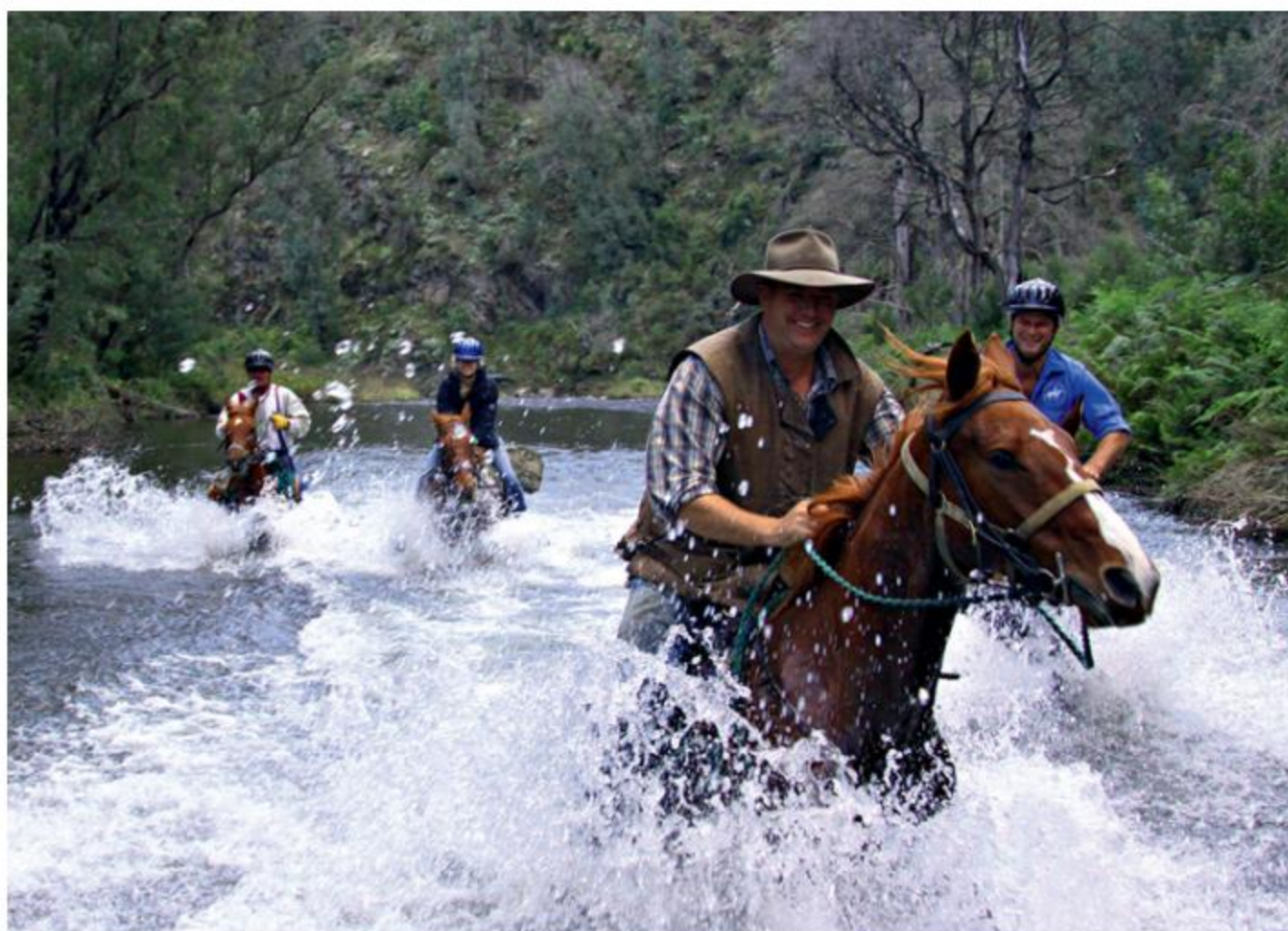
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ARGENTINA

Take the ice challenge

The Perito Moreno Glacier, measuring a whopping 250 square kilometres and 15 storeys high, looks impenetrable from Lake Argentino. Jagged peaks jut from a seemingly endless wall of ice and colossal chunks crumble into the water. But as your boat takes you closer, you'll see hikers moving across the ice. Strap on your crampons and take on Argentina's most famous glacier. You'll discover lagoons, streams, caves and incredible ice formations during a 11-hour tour from El Calafate in the country's south. argentina4u.com



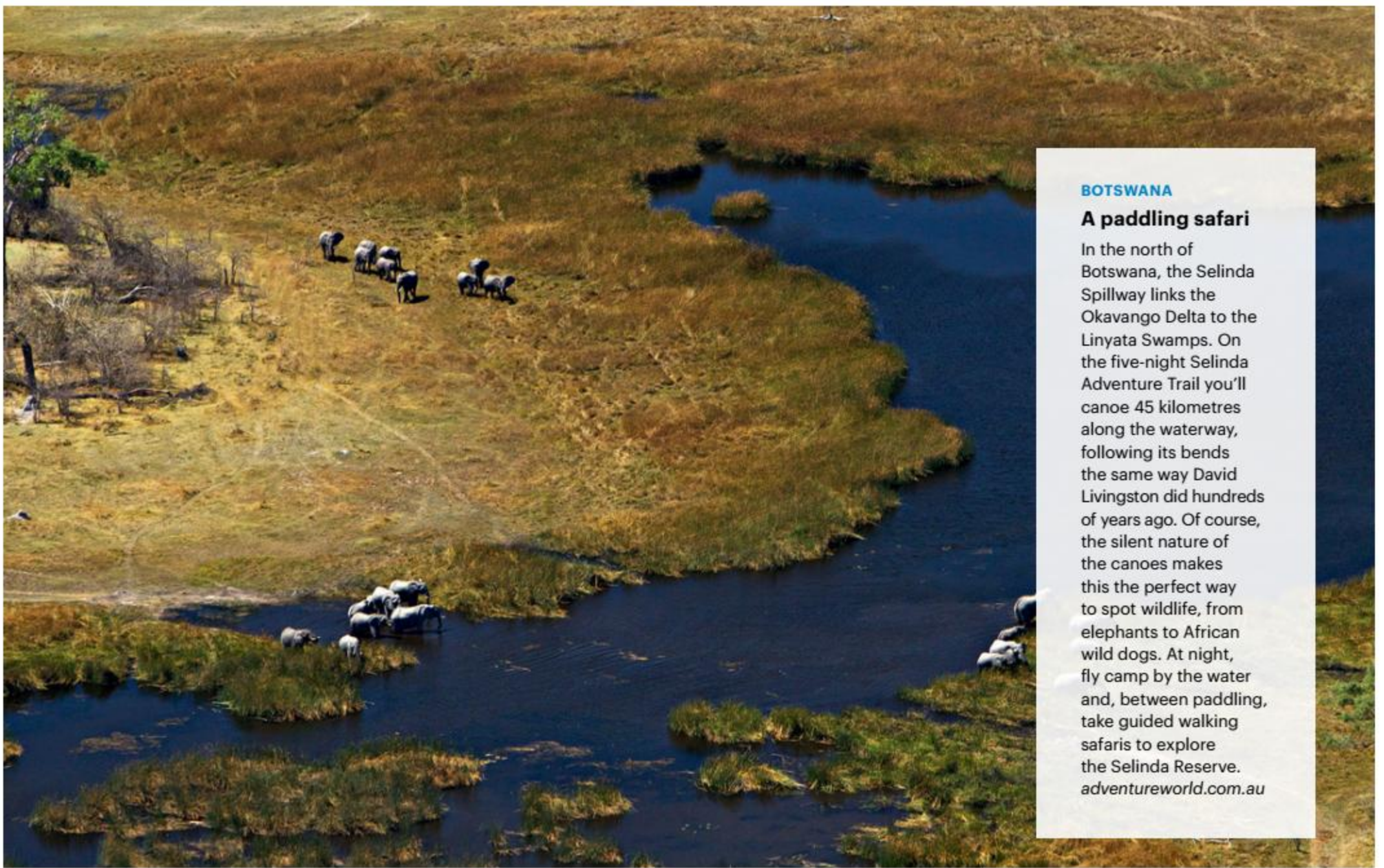
AUSTRALIA

Ride the wild mountains

Saddle up for an adventure in Victoria's High Country. The five-day Howqua River Ride with Globetrotting takes riders to the home of Australia's mountain horseman. You'll trek through the national park at the heart of the Howqua Valley, spotting the abundant wildlife and enjoying magnificent views. Stay in beautiful country houses, enjoy gourmet food and ride the finest horses. There's a rest day in the middle, with time to explore the Chinese gold diggings and historic huts in the Howqua Hills. Of course, there are plenty of river crossings along the way. globetrotting.com.au

Hikers on the Perito Moreno Glacier (above); making a splash in the Howqua River (left); elephants on the Selinda Spillway (opposite, top); fresh powder at Banff National Park (opposite, below).

S: SHUTTERSTOCK (PERITO); COURTESY GLOBETROTTERS (HOWQUA); ADVENTURE WORLD (SELINDA); REUBEN KRABBE (BANFF)



BOTSWANA

A paddling safari

In the north of Botswana, the Selinda Spillway links the Okavango Delta to the Linyata Swamps. On the five-night Selinda Adventure Trail you'll canoe 45 kilometres along the waterway, following its bends the same way David Livingston did hundreds of years ago. Of course, the silent nature of the canoes makes this the perfect way to spot wildlife, from elephants to African wild dogs. At night, fly camp by the water and, between paddling, take guided walking safaris to explore the Selinda Reserve. adventureworld.com.au

CANADA

Away from the crowds

Plenty of people head to the slopes of Lake Louise, Banff Sunshine and Mt Norquay in Banff National Park each year to ski some of the best powder in North America. But when you've mastered all the runs, team up with Ski Big 3 for guided adventures that unlock some of the mountains' secrets. Find the best powder and incredible untracked steeps away from the crowds. Join a three-day adventure to get the resort trifecta or, if you're short on time, book for a single day of thrilling skiing. skibig3.com



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The northwest of Vietnam is a region to which few travellers venture, but its spectacular mountain ranges make it the perfect destination for serious cyclists. Starting in Hanoi with an overnight train ride to Lao Cai, Spice Roads' 10-day Mountain Biking Vietnam's Northwest Mountains tour tracks through rice paddies and tea plantations, takes you over the highest road pass in the country, and passes through villages inhabited by hill tribes. You'll ride a total of 510 kilometres through some of the most beautiful mountain scenery in all of Asia. The uphill parts won't be easy, but the rewards, including some cool descents and a final three-hour boat ride, are many. spiceroads.com

NEW ZEALAND

Get hooked

Anglers come from all over the world to try their luck with a lure on the Tongariro River, part of the North Island's Central Plateau. Each year about 50,000 trout – both rainbow and brown species – migrate up the river from Lake Taupo, providing a year-round anglers' dream.

This isn't 'hook a worm, hurl a line, crack a tinny' fishing, though. There's an art to fly fishing, so if you want to mix it with the best, hook up with the folks at Tongariro Lodge. You'll bypass the "cheats" at the mouth of the river and head upstream to where it is just you, your guide and the trout. If you're lucky you'll be teamed up with someone like Tim McCarthy, who's been fishing this river for more than 30 years and seems to know every trout by name.

There's certainly an art to fly fishing – it's all in the wrist Tim will tell you – but it won't take you long to pick up the basics. With a backdrop of Mt Ruapehu's snow-capped peak, you'll wade waist deep into the running river and cast your fly out in front of waiting trout. It isn't as easy as it looks – it takes a cool character and patience to not only hook one but land a trout as well. After taking a pic of your catch and sending it on its way, you'll understand why so many anglers say this is some of the best river fishing you'll find anywhere around the globe. tongarirolodge.co.nz

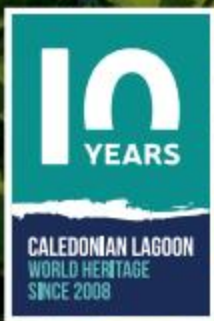


JUSTIN JAMIESON; COURTESY SPICE ROADS

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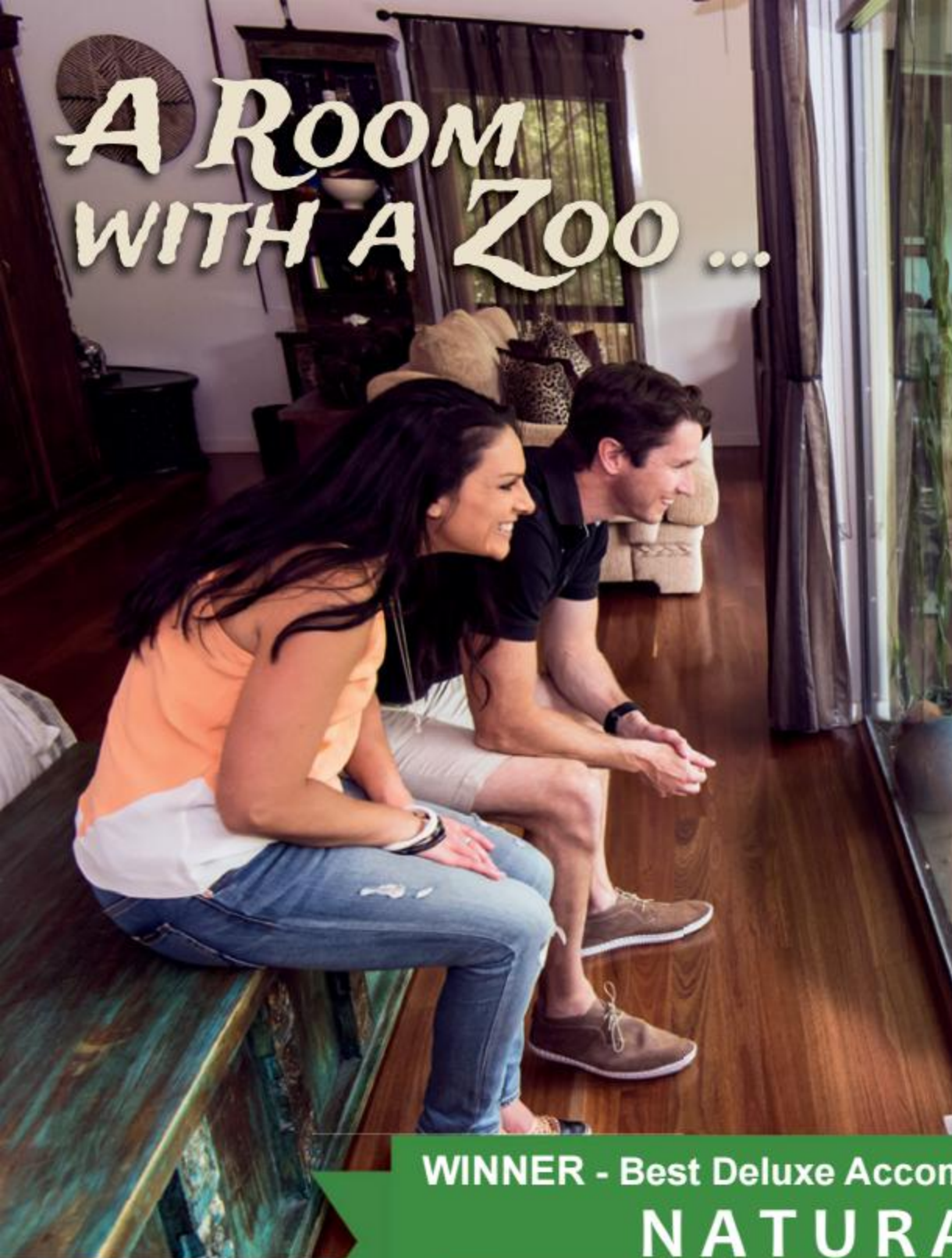
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Wet and wild

It might be Taiwan's second largest city, but you don't need to venture far from Hualien to find a natural thrill. On a river tracing tour with Round Taiwan Round you'll buckle up your life vest and dive right in. Follow a crystal clear stream, swimming, floating and navigating waterfalls, all under the watchful eye of your guide. This is the perfect way to not just see the sights, but be part of them, too, as you follow the natural flow of the river. rtaiwanr.com

THAILAND AND LAOS

Sailing the Mekong

Travel from Thailand to Laos in absolute luxury on Anantara's Mekong Kingdoms cruise. The three-day journey takes place on the *Gypsy*, a fully refurbished rice barge. There are only two cabins, so it's a private affair voyaging from Chiang Khong in the Golden Triangle to the World Heritage Site of Luang Prabang. Each day there are onshore activities including visits to an elephant camp, silk-weaving villages and the famous Pak Ou caves filled with Buddha statues. Mornings begin with either meditation or yoga on the deck, as the beauty of the heart of Southeast Asia drifts by, and the days end with cocktails and canapes as the sun goes down. anantara.com



CHILE

Rolling through vineyards

Combine two of life's great pleasures – slow travel and wine – on Upscape Travel's cycling tours of Colchagua Valley. Spend a couple of days, or even longer, pedalling between the peaks of the Andes and the Pacific coastline. This particular valley, at the southern end of Rapel Valley and 2.5 hours' drive from Santiago, produces superb reds including cabernet sauvignon, Syrah and Carménère. Visit cellar doors, stay in boutique hotels and haciendas, and ride at your own pace. Want a really special experience? Visit during harvest, held each year between February and April. upscapetravel.com



SWITZERLAND

Flying high

Want to see the Swiss Alps from a completely different angle? Strap yourself in and take a leap of faith on a paragliding adventure. The Valais region of Switzerland is a mecca for paragliders, with the valleys creating a perfect storm of thermals and winds. Of course, you don't have to go it alone – you'll be strapped to an instructor before taking flight. Once the initial fear of flying passes, you can marvel at the Aletsch Glacier below and the peaks of Jungfrau, the Eiger and Matterhorn surrounding you. flug-taxi.ch



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GOING PLACES TOGETHER



ARTISTS ON EXPEDITION

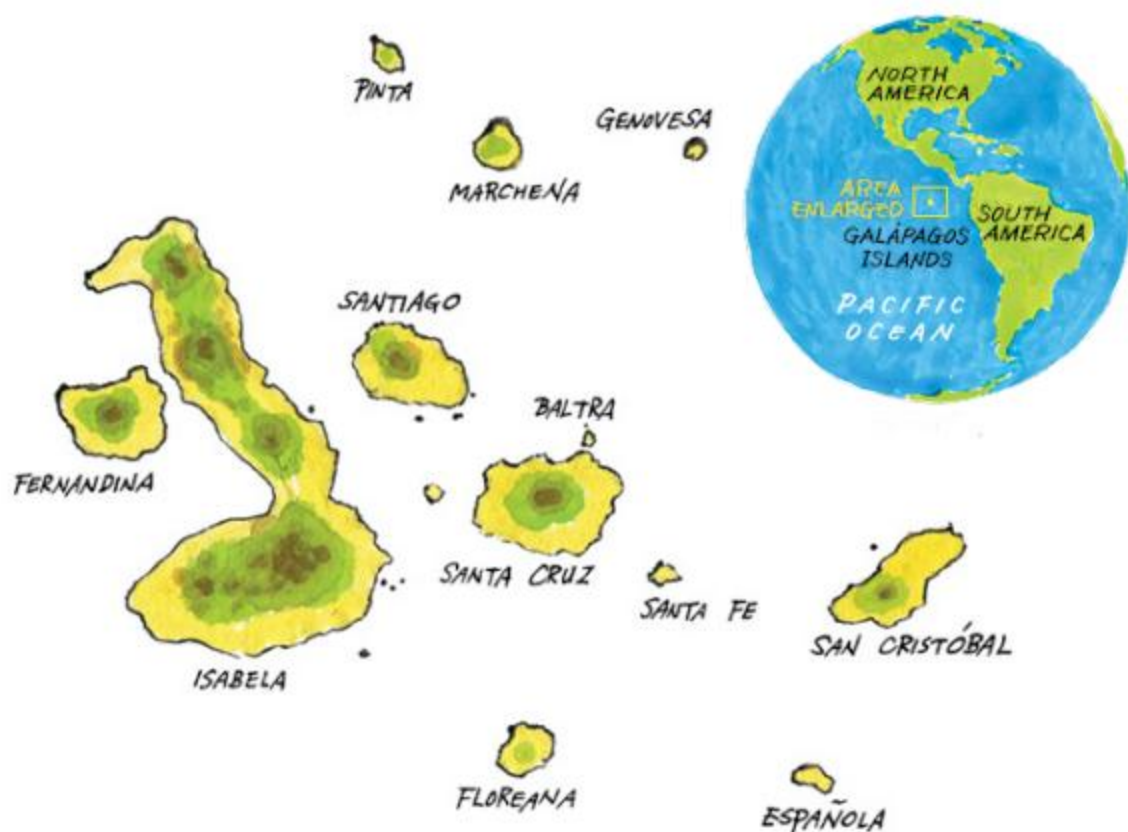
Grandpa Chan's daily Instagram drawings for his young grandchildren have made him a social media star. Now he embarks on his trip of a lifetime.

The Galápagos archipelago includes 13 major islands and more than 100 smaller islands, islets and rock formations such as León Dormido (Kicker Rock).



Galapagos

By Grandpa Chan



Dear Arthur, Allan, and Astro,

Believe it or not, Grandpa is on an expedition! Because of the daily drawings I share with you on Instagram, National Geographic invited me and Uncle Ji aboard the *National Geographic Islander* so that I can explore the Galápagos and share them with you.

The Galápagos are an archipelago in the Pacific Ocean, more than 800 kilometres west of Ecuador in South America. These islands are famous for the large number of endemic species that British naturalist Charles Darwin studied on the second voyage of HMS *Beagle* from 1831 to 1836. Darwin explored the land, discovered fossils and collected specimens. Later these observations served as a foundation for his theory of evolution by natural selection, which changed the world forever. Darwin said that when plants and animals adapt to their environments, they are more likely to survive and reproduce. I was excited to see this place for myself.

Our first excursion took us to North Seymour, a small rocky island near Baltra. On a walk guided by naturalists, we caught sight of a young sea lion resting on the beach. All of us gathered around the pup and started to take photos. We were told we can't be closer than a metre from any animals. I had never seen such a wild animal so closely, and I was surprised that the sea lion didn't show signs of fear. I thought about you, Astro, because you love sea lions. You're only two years old now, but later I hope you'll read this and know my thoughts were with you in this moment.

We observed a fleet of frigatebirds. The males made loud rattling sounds, and each had a large red gular sac that expanded like a giant balloon to attract females. It reminded me of when I was a university student in South Korea and I used to dress sharply and sing American pop songs in public. This technique works; your grandma noticed me, and we fell in love.



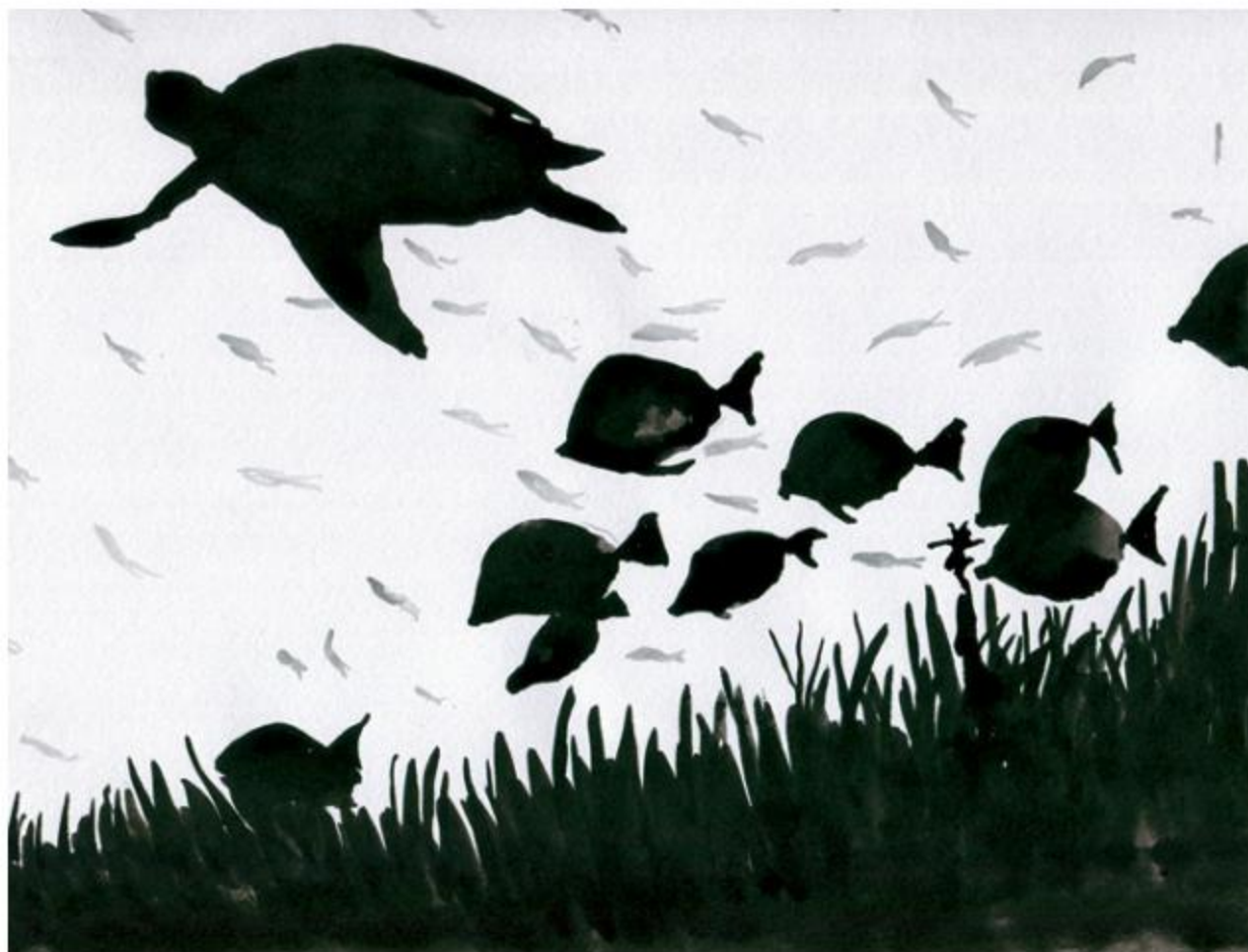


"My favourite animal was the sea lion," says Grandpa Chan. "They spend their day swimming, fishing and napping a lot. They have a variety of facial expressions, and I tried to capture them in my drawings."





"I thought the Galápagos would be hot - they're on the Equator after all," says Grandpa Chan. "But it's precisely because of cold water that rich marine life flourishes here, although climate change and commercial fishing are the two biggest threats."



Kids, today I tried something new.

We rose early on board the ship, and after breakfast we had two options for water activities on Isla Isabela: snorkelling deep-sea or near the beach. I had to confess I had never snorkelled in my life, and it had been a long time since I'd gone swimming. So Uncle Ji and I chose the beach.

We put on our wet suits, took our snorkelling gear, and headed out. Giant volcanic rocks looked like modern sculptures, and the water was crystal clear. Uncle Ji patiently taught me how to snorkel, but it wasn't as easy as I thought. Standing up on the ground with the fins was even harder. Maybe it's because I'm 75 and have a hard time with balance. Or maybe it's because fins are made for water! After our excursion, I felt exhausted, so I just sat on the beach and admired the landscape. I was a bit envious of the other people on the trip who seemed so at ease in the water. I wished I could snorkel better, but as an immigrant to Brazil I was busy working to raise your parents. I mentioned this to Ji, who seemed to appreciate my sentiments.

On another day I went kayaking for the first time in my life. This was much easier than snorkelling. Later we went to a coffee plantation, sampled artisanal rum, and headed to a local centre where hundreds of giant tortoises roamed around freely. It was inspiring to be near these majestic creatures. They moved slowly and seemed old and wise. I think they were wondering why humans are always doing things so fast.

While snorkelling, Grandpa Chan glimpsed a turtle and a school of fish (far left): "At least I can say I tried snorkelling, and I have a drawing to prove it!"



"On San Cristóbal, I especially loved seeing the many frigatebird chicks on the ground," says Grandpa Chan. "It was like being in a zoo but without any fences."







Marine iguanas are scary-looking beasts from afar.

We saw thousands of them sunbathing atop black lava rocks. But when you look at them closely, their faces are docile and cute. Marine iguanas eat algae, while land iguanas eat plants, and because I visited in the cooler, drier season (June to November), food was scarcer than in the warmer, wetter season (January to April). We came across one big iguana hanging on a tree branch

while trying to reach the last leaves of an otherwise barren tree.

Iguanas are very slow, so it took him forever to get to those leaves. We all thought there was no way he could get there without falling, but to our amazement he did indeed manage to reach them and gobbled them up happily. Life is hard for these animals. They struggle every day for food and survival.



I know what it is to feel hungry. When I was a young boy, the Korean War broke out and everything was destroyed. There was no food at all. Once I went three days without eating anything. It was one of the hardest experiences of my life, so I felt sorry for this iguana. At least he had his meal that day.

Birds are important animals in the Galápagos. On his visit Darwin identified several species of finches that varied from island to island, which helped him develop his theory of natural selection. He observed that different finches had different beaks depending on their habitats. The sizes and the shapes of their beaks adapted to their need to find and eat their food. This finding helped Darwin realise that animals evolve over time.

Before Darwin, Europeans believed God created humans and animals and they never changed. So what Darwin was saying at that time was controversial. Thanks to him and these tiny finches, now most people know about evolution and the idea that everything, and everyone, is constantly changing.

My favourite bird was the blue-footed booby. Their feet have a glorious turquoise color thanks to their fish diet. The bluer their feet are, the healthier they are, so female boobies are looking for males with the brightest blue feet. When you grow up, boys, make sure you wear colourful shoes too!

Clockwise from top left: frigatebird, baby Galápagos sea lion, Galápagos marine iguanas, blue-footed boobies, Galápagos land iguana.

Zodiac boats take passengers to Punta Vicente Roca, a promontory on Isla Isabela where brown noddies nest.





One of my favorite things during this trip was to sit on the deck of the ship.

In the evenings Uncle Ji and I would relax there. This is the first father-son trip that just the two of us have taken, and I was happy to share this time with him. We would feel the wind on our faces, admire the passing islands, and watch the frigatebirds that would fly above us following the ship. Sometimes we would sip a glass of whiskey and watch the sun set, surrounded by the immense ocean. Everything was so quiet and peaceful, and I felt far away from everyday life. I'm not used to this because São Paulo is always so loud and packed with cars and people.

At night on the ship, we would look up at the sky and see billions of stars and the Milky Way. It had been a long time since I had seen such a bright sky. It made me realise again how small we are. Earth is as tiny as one grain of sand in the entire beach of the universe.

Did you know Grandpa was an earth science teacher in Korea? I hope one day we can look up at a brilliant sky like this together so I can tell you everything I know about the stars and the universe.

Sometimes I think that we humans don't know much about our own planet, but then I remember that we learn more with every generation. We each have a role to play in discovering new things and sharing our knowledge.

On the next-to-last day of the trip, we went to Isla Santa Cruz, where we visited the Charles Darwin Research Station, founded in 1964 to preserve several species of tortoises in danger of extinction. They're magnificent and gentle animals that can live more than a hundred years. But they are threatened, partly because pirates and conquistadores would eat them as food. We were told that tortoises were a convenient food source that could survive months without nourishment. Sailors stacked them in their ships and gradually ate them. Thousands of Galápagos tortoises were killed throughout the years.

Back on our ship it was time to say goodbye to the crew and all our fellow passengers. For the past week we'd gotten to know one another, and we grew closer as we did everything together. Several passengers, who learned that Uncle Ji and I were there as guests to document my journey for this magazine, asked us if we could share some of my drawings. So we made a short presentation, and people seemed to enjoy it.

After the last dinner, as I sat on the deck of the ship to look at the bright stars for one final time before heading back home, I thought about you – Arthur, Allan and Astro – and I remembered when I was about your age. Back then I used to look at the night sky all the time, and I would count all the stars and learn about constellations from my own grandparents.

At a certain point in my life, for reasons I don't understand, I stopped looking at the sky. Maybe because I lived so many years in a big city with tall buildings and polluted air. Maybe because I was too busy working. But tonight, on this ship, I felt alive and awake as I found myself looking again at my old friends.

I hope you too will come to the Galápagos one day and experience this place for yourself. I hope you'll sail the same waters, walk the same trails, hold the same grains of sand and let them run through your hand. I hope you'll watch the same birds, sea lions and tortoises and see for yourself all the splendour and fragility of nature. One night, after a day of activities, you will come out to the deck of your ship. Maybe you'll be alone; maybe you'll be with loved ones. Then you'll look up to the sky and be in awe of its immensity brightened by the infinite number of stars. I hope you'll remember that your grandpa was looking at the same stars in the same place. At that moment, my gaze, travelling past galaxies right now, would have touched the stars, travelled back through the universe and will be reaching your eyes. And we'll be connected in the beautiful mystery of life and the universe.

GRANDPA CHAN (📷 @drawings_for_my_grandchildren), aka Chan Jae Lee, recently moved back to South Korea with his wife after having lived in Brazil for 36 years.



Travel Wise: Galápagos

WHEN TO GO

The climate is unusually dry for the tropics. June to November is the cooler, drier season. January to April is the warmer, wetter season. November/December and May/June are transition months. But the Galápagos are a year-round destination with much of interest, no matter the month.

WHAT TO PACK

The atmosphere on board Nat Geo ships in the Galápagos is casual, so leave the formal wear at home. Do pack Teva or similar water sandals/shoes for wet landings, as well as closed shoes with good soles for hiking over rugged lava and uneven terrain. Bring a pair of knee-high socks to wear with the provided rubber boots for tortoise viewing on Isla Santa Cruz. Good binoculars add immeasurably to enjoying wildlife.

GETTING THERE

International flights arrive at Guayaquil, Ecuador, where guests spend a night before

flying to the Galápagos. Australian and New Zealand citizens do not require a visa.

MUST-SEE ANIMALS

Galápagos giant tortoises are an iconic species for all visitors. You can see them reliably in the highlands of Isla Santa Cruz. The nesting blue-footed booby, Nazca booby, red-footed booby, frigatebird and several species of Darwin's finches are widely distributed among the islands. The waved albatross nests exclusively on Isla Española, and the flightless cormorant is found only on Isla Isabela and Isla Fernandina. Galápagos sea lions, Galápagos fur seals and Sally Lightfoot crabs are consistently seen, as are the Galápagos penguin, green sea turtles, and marine and land iguanas.

GO WITH NAT GEO

Nat Geo Expeditions and Adventure World Travel often have special offers for certain departure dates to the Galápagos: adventureworld.com.au; 1300 295 049.

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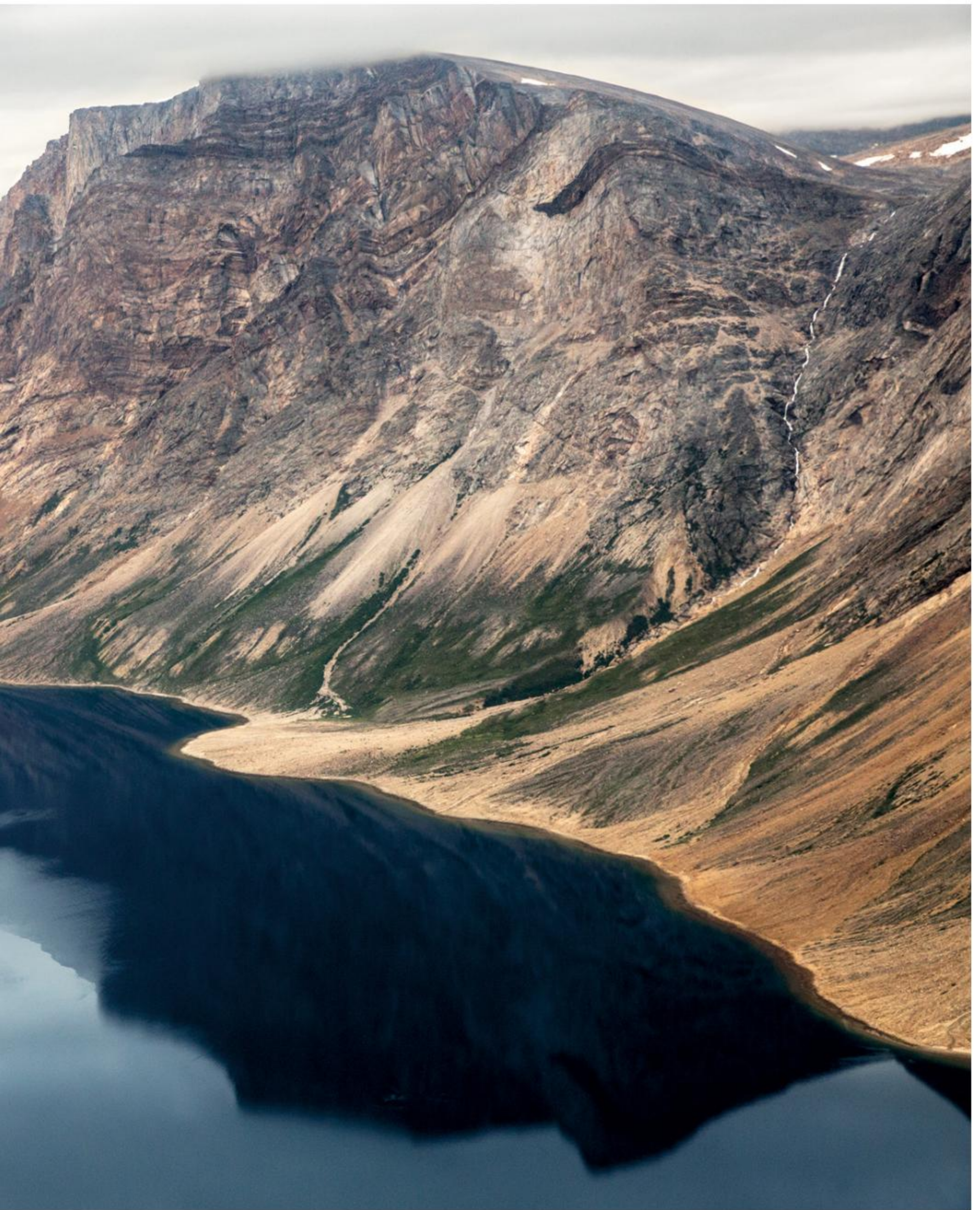
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NORFOLK ISLAND

Northern Exposure

Embark on the ultimate unplugged adventure to Labrador's remote Torngat Mountains National Park, which lives up to its Inuktitut name as a "place of spirits".

STORY AND
PHOTOGRAPHS
BY ANNE FARRAR







There's rhythm in the wilderness. My boat makes a slap slap slap sound as it tugs through the silky black water of Saglek Bay.

A polar bear huffs while swimming the scattered islets off the coast in search of her next meal. The wind sighs, a feathery touch on my cheek. I've ditched the daily tapping of my computer and the confines of my windowless office to travel to one of Canada's wildest places, Torngat Mountains National Park, at the northern tip of Labrador. This spare landscape in the nation's most easterly province (and its soothing natural sounds) are blessings at the end of a 24-hour journey from my home in Washington, DC. The trip involved three planes and a boat before I reached base camp, where I was invited to stay as a guest to experience the profound calm of a place open to travellers a mere two months a year. Just north of the Arctic

tree line, the 9,500-square-kilometre park is an ancestral home of the Inuit, whose word *tongait* means "place of spirits".

Their semi-nomadic ancestors held a deep connection with the environment, and this land whispers of generations past, thousands of years reflected in the ebb and flow of migration.

Inuit cultural guides share stories from their childhood – of caribou hunts, polar bear encounters and dogsledding across open snow-covered land. John Jararuse, an Inuit elder, remembers hunting with husky dogs. He says even in the dark or in white-out conditions, the dogs would always know the way home. "They're better than GPS," he says.

THE CLOUDS HANG LOW, heavy with rain. As we zip through the water on Zodiac boats, I spot a glimmer of white in the distance that flashes like a tooth jutting out of the sea. It doesn't look like much at first, but as we move closer, it dwarfs our boat. The iceberg was calved long ago from western Greenland or the Canadian Arctic and travelled down the coast to dwindle in the summer sun.

We unload the boat onto Saglek Bay's sandy North Arm beach and build a fire as

Established in 1831 by Moravian missionaries, the Inuit community of Hebron (above) was abandoned in 1959. On Sallikuluk (Rose Island), Evie Mark and Akinisie Sivuarapik (opposite) pay tribute at a burial cairn with throat singing and drum dancing. Previous pages: Saglek Fjord marks the southern end of remoted Torngat Mountains National Park.



a soft rain falls. We learn that this beach has been used for millennia as a summer retreat, a place for Inuit to commune with family and friends, a place to hunt and fish and gather food for the cold winter to come.

After a short hike to view archaeological sites, some of us set about casting lines at the mouth of a river that empties into the Arm, where Arctic char amass, for an afternoon feast. Our efforts bring in large, silvery char, a member of the salmon family. These fish migrate between lakes and salt water to spawn, and their eyes are a prized delicacy for the Inuit, providing needed vitamin C. We pull out our knives and savour deep-red sashimi right there on the rocks, the freshest dining experience I've had in years.

THE NEXT MORNING, after an aerial tour of the park and its majestic fjords, our helicopter returns to Saglek Bay and lands on Sallikuluk (Rose Island). The island is quiet, but the past echoes loudly here.

Archaeological sites on the island stretch back 5,000 years. We walk through tufted grass and over small rocks and come across a hill partly carved away. Years ago this was a site of homes shared by multiple families. Lying scattered about are whale bones and shards of Ramah chert, a fine-grained, glass-like stone found only in this region and used by the Inuit for tool-making.

We continue on until we reach a mound of large rough rocks, carefully heaped over a sacred burial ground. Underneath lie the bones of more than



Visitors arrive at Saglek Fjord's North Arm by boat and fish for Arctic char. This site has been used for thousands of years as a summertime camping ground for the Inuit.





In Hebron, a national historic site, descendants of the original inhabitants have been returning to rebuild community structures, such as the 1830s Moravian church (large white building).





Northern highlights (clockwise from top left): platform tents provide shelter at base camp; the park is one of the best places in the world to see polar bears; freshly caught Arctic char cooks with onions; park finds include antlers from caribou, a traditional source of food for the Inuit.





a hundred people; all had been removed from Sallikuluk at one point. Their remains have now been returned and their spirits remembered in words and song by a new generation.

Back on the mainland, in the abandoned Inuit community of Hebron, outside the park, German and Inuit names lie side by side in the cemetery. The community was relocated in 1959, leaving homes and the 1830s Moravian mission church to fall into disrepair. Craftsmen from the families who once called Hebron home have returned and, for more than a decade, have been rebuilding the church – a national historic site since 1976 – brick by brick, board by board.

I FEEL LIKE AN ASTRONAUT. Decked out in orange safety suits that will keep us warm and buoyant in the event of falling overboard, we cruise from island to island off the coast to catch a glimpse of polar bears. Always curious, the bears stop, look us up and down, try to figure out if we are foe or potentially their next meal. Then they go about their business. They dot the landscape of one islet, making it look

like a polar bear lounge. Most of them spend the afternoon dozing in the sun.

But the most populous living creatures in the area are the mosquitoes, vicious beasts that attack with vigour. After three days slathering repellent across every exposed piece of skin, feeling defeated and crazed, I walk into the small camp store and offer every dollar I have to obtain a net jacket complete with full head protection.

In the middle of summer, the warm sun makes us sweat, but nights are cold, compelling us to don layers of clothing and inch closer to the campfire. The sky sinks from blue to black as we gravitate to the mess hall. Coffee and brownies are plentiful. We while away the evening, swapping stories, encircled by the camp's two-metre-high electrified fence that keeps us safe from bears. If we're lucky, the northern lights will dance across the sky and remind us of the spirits that travel these mountains.

Traveller *director of photography* **ANNE FARRAR** ([@afarrar](#)) is an avid trail runner, alpine climber and coffee fiend.

A woman dressed as a *chondara*, a traditional clown from the Japanese island of Okinawa, participates in one of Tokyo's many street festivals.





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THE GETAWAY GAME
In search of secret sushi,
sumo masters and a
robot uprising during
72 hours in Japan's
crazy cool capital.

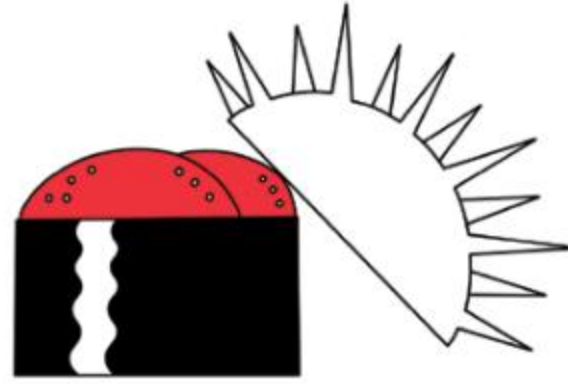
BY MICKEY RAPKIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
JAMES WHITLOW DELANO
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ANDREW JOYCE





Fantastic prismatic: in Harajuku, along a road that leads to the Meiji Shrine, shoppers now pay their respects at Tokyu Plaza mall.

Too Much Tuna



4.03am Before September, Tsukiji Fish Market was the destination of choice for the jet-lagged. Its high-stakes tuna auction began at 5.30am, and only 120 visitors were allowed to watch. The most expensive tuna ever sold – a \$1.9 million bluefin – was auctioned there in 2013. Now, a couple of years behind schedule, Toyosu Fish Market has finally opened. It's much bigger and less chaotic than its predecessor, with fewer areas accessible to visitors. From mid-January at the earliest, the famous tuna auctions will again be open to the public. The good news is that you won't need to sign up beforehand – just be sure to be there at 4.30am. The bad news? Visitors will no longer be on the floor with the men shouting numbers and barking into cell phones. They'll be a floor up on a viewing platform.

6.12am
Raw Bar

Unlike at Tsukiji, where about 400 restaurants and shops surrounded the market, the offering at Toyosu is a bit lightweight. For a start, sushi counters are divided across different parts of the market, and there aren't as many. Thankfully, old favourites have relocated, including Sushi Dai. There are still massive queues, but patrons are now provided with stools so they can perch while they wait. Don't be late, though – service often stops by about 11am.

7.53am
Take a Bath

Full and happy, I check in to Hoshinoya, a modern ryokan, or Japanese inn, in the centre of Tokyo. I change into a kimono, then make my way to the hot spring-fed baths on the seventeenth floor. This is a retreat like no other – a dimly lit pool with an open-air skylight, where you can get naked and soak to the soundtrack of the city.



Q: Why is tough guy Tommy Lee Jones crying in that Japanese advertisement for Boss coffee? *Answer on page 90*

11.32am
#Purrfect

The Tokyo train system is a marvel of efficiency and affordability in a city where taxicabs are stupid-expensive. I take the Chiyoda line to the Meiji-jingumae stop – admiring a businessman with his Samsonite luggage and Hello Kitty mobile phone case on the way – and walk over to the Harajuku neighbourhood, once the epicentre of forward-thinking fashion co-opted by Gwen Stefani and others, now the best place for people-watching. Teenagers eat rainbow-coloured clouds of fairy floss, and women carry umbrellas to avoid getting a tan. Harajuku's newish trend: cat cafés. For about a \$10 entrance fee, you get a cup of coffee and 30 minutes playing with adorable kittens that tussle with each other and nap on your lap.



SHUTTERSTOCK



With living space cramped and pets often forbidden, Tokyoites head to places like Bengal Cat's Forest café for feline frolics.

3.13pm

Wrestlemania

It's off-season for sumo wrestling, but I luck out: there's an all-day exhibition tournament of the *yokozuna* – the grand champions – in an arena in the centre of the city, including an appearance by Hakuho Sho, a 33-year-old Mongolian superhero who holds the record for most career wins. When Hakuho first arrived in Tokyo, at age 15, he was so small no sumo 'stable', or training facility, would take him in; now he's the Greatest of All Time. The main rule of sumo seems to be: push your competitor out of the ring. The men square off, pulling the tassels around their waists to the side, then slap their thighs. Actually I have no idea what's going on. The last match of the day is a nail-biter: as his winning move, Hakuho somehow lifts up his 132-kilogram opponent and drops him outside the ring like a rag doll.



10.30pm

Kampai!

That's Japanese for "cheers!" Here's another phrase I learned: *nomikai*. Which is a uniquely Japanese phrase that basically translates to "forced fun". Or team drinking. If the boss takes the office out for drinks, you can't go home until he does. For *nomikai*, there's no better experience than the Golden Gai, a series of six snug Shinjuku alleyways packed with more than 200 Barbie-size bars – four-stool watering holes, including maybe the world's smallest karaoke bar. From an architectural standpoint, it's a time capsule view of old Tokyo. It's also bonkers fun. At a locals-only place called Oku Tei, the bartender charges me a \$10 cover. I don't blame her. Everyone is trying to keep the Golden Gai real.

5.23pm

Quitting Time

I follow the Japanese salarymen to Omoide Yokocho, nicknamed Piss Alley, a series of narrow, winding alleyways lined with yakitori joints beside the train tracks in Shinjuku. I pick a spot that looks the most fun, sliding open a glass door to Ucchan, which has 15 seats and as many people smoking. The bartender flips the menu over to the English side, which promises – for 1,650 yen (or about \$20) – "6 kinds of Japanese skewered pork and beer set", featuring "giblets, innards & organ meat etc". I'm alarmed by the use of "etc". But each stick is spiced to perfection.







A pebble-lined bath soothes feet at Ooedo-Onsen Monogatari, a spa/theme park with carnival games and snack bars.

Real Talk

8.23am As I'm exiting the train station, an elderly Japanese man carrying a large satchel shuffles by, smiles at me, and says loudly, "I love you." He lets out a belly laugh and shuffles away. I have to pause to catch my breath. I flew to Tokyo from my home in Los Angeles on the one-year anniversary of my father's death. On paper my dad and I didn't have much in common. He was a gym teacher who liked routine; he ate pasta practically every night for dinner; he hated travelling. I'm a gay travel writer who just ate raw fish for breakfast, again. Whenever I was away on assignment, I'd call to tell him about some surprising thing I'd seen. All I wanted this morning – every morning – was to be able to call him. I'm not saying this old Japanese guy was some celestial incarnation of my dad or anything. Probably he spotted a hopeless white guy and decided to practice the only three words he knew in English. But still.



9.55am
Ready Player One

The Japanese word *otaku* means 'fanatic', or rather 'obsession', to the point that you can't see how it's ruining your social skills. Everyone in Tokyo seems to be video game-otaku. In Akihabara, or Electric Town – with its seven-storey arcades and used-electronics stores – I visit Club Sega to play a virtual reality game called *Mortal Blitz*, which is the best \$15 I've ever spent. You put on a backpack and VR gloves and walk to your starting position on the arcade floor. Pick up your rifle, put on the VR goggles and – bam! – you're standing on a spaceship battling winged aliens. How real does it feel? At one point, staring down into a digital abyss, I had to take the glasses off so I didn't puke.



11.12am
Toy Story

When I was 12, we had a garage sale where – against my father's wishes – I sold my favourite toy for \$15. It was a hefty metal robot called Voltron that starred in a Japanese cartoon I watched dubbed in English. I spend an hour roaming Akihabara's manga toy stores looking for my Voltron in his birthplace. "Very rare," one shopkeeper tells me, directing me to vintage-toy shop Mandarake, where, between rows of ancient Godzilla toys and Hot Wheels, I find an original Voltron set from the '80s, still sealed in its box, for \$400. My dad was pissed that I'd sold Voltron, but he'd turn over in his grave if I paid \$400 to get it back. Not when I could meet a real robot at...

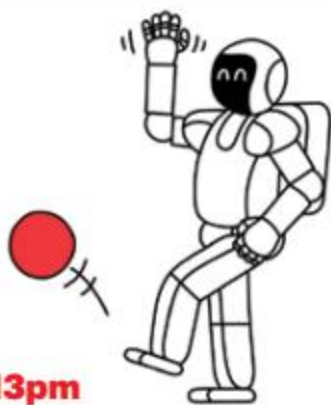
10.46am Beneath every building seems to be a shopping mall and food court.



Figurine shops and 'maid cafés' – where servers dress up as housemaids – abound in Akihabara.



Indie shops fill Takeshita Street, in Harajuku, ground zero for youthful kawaii (cute) fashion.



3.13pm Robots Rising

...Tokyo's National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation, where Honda's ASIMO demonstrates its talents four times daily. The 130-centimetre robot runs into the pavilion at full speed. He waves to the crowd, which is frankly the creepiest thing I've ever seen – until he flat-out kicks a soccer ball. "Robots may change your life," says the announcer. Which is what I'm afraid of. I ask one of the museum's resident nerds, Dr Matt Escobar: "When will the robots take over?" He doesn't laugh. "Hopefully never. But I think in 20 or 30 years they will be very smart."

6.32pm Cocktail Culture

Star Bar and High Five are both killer temples of mixology, but I'm partial to Gen Yamamoto – which is the name for both the bartender and his eight-seat, one-room space, where he mixes up sake and soju cocktails with seasonal ingredients picked daily at the market. For one drink, muddled fresh tomatoes mix with Japanese Nikka Coffey gin, local citrus and peppercorns. It's maybe the most delightful summer sip I've ever had.

Midnight Yes, That Bar

Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* is a perfect movie about a special kind of loneliness one experiences in Tokyo, a gorgeous anonymity in a city where people are stacked on top of each other. In the film, Scarlett Johansson follows her photographer husband to Tokyo, and while he's busy working, she wanders around town, ultimately meeting Bill Murray at the New York Bar on the 52nd floor of the Park Hyatt hotel, which is where I go tonight. Looking out the window at the insane views of Tokyo's endless skyscape, I also spy a dozen tourists glued to their iPhones – which makes the film even more of a perfect time capsule. Would Scarlett's character have met Bill if she'd soothed her loneliness with an iPhone?







熱中症にご注意

At a one-day sumo exhibition, top-ranked wrestlers dressed in ceremonial *keshomawashi* (aprons) start each bout with formalised rituals.

DAY THREE

Use Your Noodle



10.30am Brian MacDuckston left his San Francisco tech job to teach English in Tokyo. But 10 years later his one-year adventure threatens to become something more permanent now that his blog, *Ramen Adventures*, has turned into a local institution. “Real ramen nerds eat 600 bowls a year,” he tells me. He eats 300. But the dude’s legit. He once hosted his own local TV show where he and the women of AKB48 (basically Japan’s Spice Girls) would go around town tasting ramen. The concierge at the Palace Hotel (a contemporary retreat with impressive views of the Imperial Palace gardens) arranges a tour for me with Brian, and we set out to hunt ramen. We hit Ginza Noodles for the triple ramen (which refers to three broths – dashi, chicken and clam, plus some aromatic oils). With good ramen, Brian explains, you should experience “salt right off the bat, then a smooth, umami aftertaste”. At Kikanbo (recommended by Noma chef René Redzepi), droplets of pork back fat float in a spicy broth. A woman next to me orders the Devil Spice ramen – made with Trinidadian scorpion peppers and served in a black bowl – but barely breaks a sweat.

12.58pm Charmed

Entering Meiji Shrine is like walking into Tokyo’s natural air-conditioning; the city is steamy in the summer, but a canopy of camphor trees covers the park-like entrance, offering cool shade. A girl sells prayer charms, and they’re very specific. “A charm for traffic safety.” “A charm for passing an entrance examination,” which would have made my dad laugh. I may have run away from memories, but I see him everywhere.



4.11pm Retreat

Overstimulation can be a problem in Tokyo. So I spend most of today being quiet, trying to listen to my own heartbeat. Tokyo may be a concrete jungle, but there’s still some tropical scenery – if you know where to look. Next to Meiji Shrine is Yoyogi Park. Even more peaceful is the garden at the Nezu Museum, designed by Kengo Kuma, the architect behind Tokyo’s new Olympic stadium. Nezu Museum houses premodern Japanese and East Asian art (including priceless Buddhist statues), but the garden’s the thing. It’s like you fell asleep next to a bonsai tree and woke up in an enchanted forest. I inhale deeply and smell something sweet. “A mosquito coil,” my guide says, laughing. “To kill bugs.” Everything is beautiful.



Weekends bring a wave of weddings to the Meiji Shrine.



Kikanbo is famous for its spicy ramen, which includes ingredients like Trinidadian scorpion peppers and Sichuan peppercorns.

6.13pm

Language Lessons

English isn't widely spoken in Tokyo, and I don't speak Japanese, so I've made do with a lot of sign language – which connects you to people in a deeper, often hilarious way. I'm dripping in sweat while riding the train back to the hotel when I notice a woman, probably in her mid-50s, wiping her brow with a handkerchief before handing the rag to her daughter. The mother and I make eye contact, and I mime dabbing my forehead, as if to say, "Me next?" She laughs.

8.29pm

The Secret Sauce

For a decade, chef Harutaka Takahashi apprenticed under famed sushi chef Jiro Ono (of the acclaimed documentary film *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*) before opening his own Michelin-starred spot, Harutaka, in Ginza. Like so many of the best things in Tokyo, you have to know where to look.

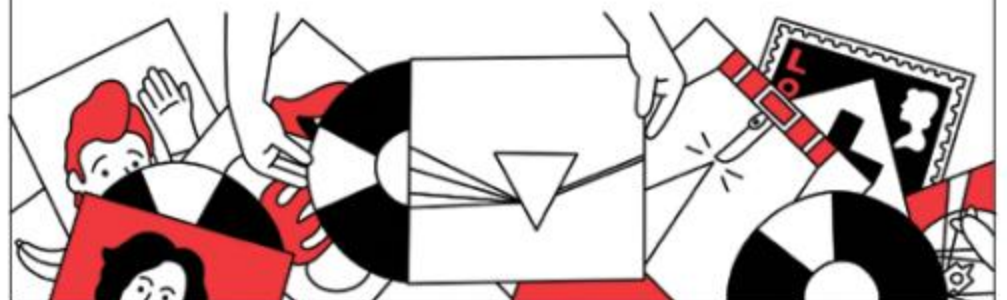
Harutaka hides on the sixth floor of a nondescript office building. The lift doors open on a brightly lit sushi bar with 10 seats. Guests are instructed not to wear perfume. Plates start arriving almost immediately after diners are seated: conger eel, *otora* (super-fatty tuna), *tobiko* (roe). We watch the chef's number two slice a delicate fish with a sword. I ask chef Takahashi what the secret is to his sushi. He hunts for the fish himself, he explains, emphasising the need for the highest quality from the market. But the real secret, he says, is the "vinegar in the rice".



11.32pm

Heart of Vinyl

Running out of steam but not wanting to go to bed, I hop a cab to hip Ebisu. As the streetlights pass by, I think of Haruki Murakami's novel *After Dark* and this great line about Tokyo at night: "Time moves in its own special way in the middle of the night. You can't fight it." I visit a different kind of shrine, Bar Martha, one of a string of vinyl-record music bars popping up in Tokyo. The joint is easy to miss; a blank cinder block wall and a sign marked BAR are the only indications something is happening here. But step inside and you'll find thousands of LPs beautifully shelved and a chill DJ spinning records on a serious stereo system. No photos, no requests. And no worries. Just top-shelf Japanese whiskey and Joni Mitchell reminding me that, yes, "California, I'm coming home." We can escape from the everyday for only so long.



Travel Wise: Tokyo

NOT-TO-MISS SPOTS

Ultimate View

At 634 metres, **Tokyo Skytree** is the tallest freestanding tower in the world, and – on a clear day – you can see all the way to Mount Fuji from the observation deck on the 350th floor. (A high-speed lift climbs a staggering 320 metres in just 50 seconds.) Feeling more daring? Take a second lift up to the Tembo Galleria on the 450th floor. When you're back at ground level, hop on the Japan Rail train one stop to the renowned Asakusa

Shrine, where you can thank God – or rather, its three Shinto gods – for your safe return.

Cool-Kid Neighbourhood

Shimokitazawa is a quick train ride from Shibuya and a much needed respite from the madness of central Tokyo. You'll notice the narrow streets and alleyways here are lined with dogwood trees; in 1912 the mayor of Tokyo gave Washington DC a gift of cherry blossom trees, and DC sent dogwoods in return. Here you'll browse an eclectic mix

of vintage stores, shop for tea at Shimokita Chaen Oyama, and enjoy a cake doughnut made with soy milk at Ikkyu Donut before sipping a cocktail at Flower Bar Gardena (a flower shop that doubles as a watering hole).

Best Bespoke Goods

At **Kakimori** – a chic, local stationery store that's walking distance from Asakusa Station – customers queue at opening to make their own bespoke notebooks. Choose the cover,

the paper insert and binding, and watch a master craftsman put it all together before your eyes. **K.Itoya**, a branch of Tokyo's more-than-100-year-old stationery store Itoya, offers a similar service in Ginza.

Most Beautiful Bookstore

At **Daikanyama T-site**, in Shibuya, shop a deep selection of Japanese car magazines and t-shirts from Tacoma Fuji Records then browse a vintage-magazine library upstairs while enjoying an adult beverage.

A: In Boss coffee's long-running series of ads, the *Men in Black* star portrays an alien who comes to Earth and is curious about all things humanoid. When he tries Boss coffee for the first time, the taste is so good he starts to cry. I tried it myself. I didn't cry. But it was pretty good!



Although Shibuya Crossing is said to be the busiest in the world, with, at peak hours, more than 2,000 people crossing the street in all directions at once, the crowd flows harmoniously.

MICKEY RAPKIN (@mickeyrapkin) is a writer and the author of the book *Pitch Perfect*, which inspired the film franchise. He lives in Los Angeles and last wrote for *Traveller* about Barcelona. This is the first *Traveller* feature for **JAMES WHITLOW DELANO** (@jameswhitlowdelano), an award-winning photographer based in Tokyo for more than two decades.



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The chef's father was an art director, which makes sense – each dish is Instagram ready.



WHERE TO DINE

Ichirin

Shibuya Crossing at sundown is a juiced-up, neon party. But nearby, on the second floor of a residential building in Jingumae, lies Ichirin, a *kaiseki ryori* (or Japanese fine dining) restaurant, where chef Mikizo Hashimoto changes the seasonal menu every 10 days. Chef Hashimoto was raised in Kyoto, the birthplace of *kaiseki*. The meal involves a parade of nine or 10 small plates, which always include a simmered fish, a sashimi dish, *hassun* (an expression of the season), and a grilled course. Here at Ichirin, the chef follows tradition but also breaks the rules. Yuzu shrimp is followed by a zucchini spiral, then squid and edible shiso

flower and eel soup and a plate of bite-size morsels (eggplant, crab, fish eggs, jellyfish, squash), all chased with the most delicious mochi dessert (a gelatinous rice cake). The chef's father was an art director, which makes sense – each dish is Instagram ready. The chef also hand-paints the drinks menu on a washi paper scroll, which you should take home and frame. mikizo.com

DEN

Zaiyu Hasegawa is the Michelin-starred chef behind the modern *kaiseki* fusion spot DEN, which was named number two in the coveted Asia's 50 Best Restaurants list, thanks to stand-out dishes like whole freshwater smelt deep-fried in tempura batter and balanced on its back fins so it looks like it's walking across the plate. When I asked chef Hasegawa where he likes to eat in Tokyo, he doesn't hesitate: "Shake Shack in Aoyama, as it is close to our restaurant.

I order a triple burger, and I can go with my dog, Puchi Jr, as he can eat his dog biscuits too!" He isn't joking. In 2017 he collaborated with Shake Shack in New York's Madison Square Park on a one-day-only signature burger, the DEN Shack, which featured miso Shack sauce, sansho peppers and house-pickled cucumbers. jimbochoden.com/en

Tsuta

There are a whopping 227 Michelin-starred restaurants in Tokyo alone. But Tsuta was the first ever ramen shop to earn that honour. Up early? Head over and take a number. In response to five-hour wait times and an avalanche of foot traffic (upsetting the previously discreet "love hotel" operating across the street), Tsuta now hands out tickets beginning at 7am. Simply return at the appointed time for the best \$10 lunch you'll ever have. www.tsuta.com

AT HOME ON THE RANGE

FIND YOUR CORNER OF WILD IN NORTH DAKOTA'S
THEODORE ROOSEVELT NATIONAL PARK

By Robert Earle Howells

Clouds roll in above the Little Missouri River, in a national park named after a president who fell in love with and worked to protect this landscape.





Dollar bills and cowboy hats fill the rafters of the Little Missouri Saloon and Dining Room in Medora; a bucking bronco adorns the Ghost Riders belt buckle of Lyle Glass, a Medora actor and wildlife photographer (opposite).



I OWN a prairie dog colony in North Dakota. Not that its residents are impressed with me at the moment. The trail I'm walking bisects their turf, and they've come out in force to scold me for the intrusion.

My prairie dog town is in the 28,000-hectare Theodore Roosevelt National Park, which is mine too, as are the granite walls of El Capitan in California's Yosemite National Park, the lakes of Michigan's Isle Royale National Park, and the stalactites and stalagmites of Kentucky's Mammoth Cave National Park. Simply by being an American, I hold collective title to these and other profoundly beautiful places – an inventory that is the envy of the world – thanks to the establishment of the National Park Service a century ago.

Just beyond my prairie dog colony, a movement, something large, catches my eye. Bison? Bighorn sheep? I veer off-trail and spot four mustangs grazing near a copse of junipers. As I edge toward them, they warily edge away. Then one prances and the others follow, inscribing an arc around me.

Then it strikes me: what could be more fun, more free, than to be a mustang with thousands of hectares of grassland to roam?

I'M DRAWN TO US NATIONAL PARKS for many reasons, none unusual, all deeply meaningful. In a world where wildlife is disappearing, where open space is scarce, where noise is ubiquitous and natural beauty and tranquillity are hard to come by, places like Theodore Roosevelt National Park represent respite and refuge, a balm for modern life.

The 24-year-old Theodore Roosevelt came to this area in 1883 for similar reasons, though with his own predilections. A privileged Easterner, Harvard graduate, book author, member of the New York State Assembly and avid naturalist, he shared with many of the time a fascination with the West and a concern that it was changing forever. The Transcontinental Railroad now stretched across the country, towns were popping up and what would be the final great bison hunt had just taken place.

This iconic animal of the American West, once up to 60 million strong, had been reduced to a few straggling herds roaming the badlands of the Dakota Territory. And the man who would become a towering figure in American conservation – helping preserve millions of hectares and crusading to save game animals from extinction – was determined to hunt and kill one of those few remaining bison and mount its head on his wall.

So in September 1883, Roosevelt made the multiday journey by train to the hamlet of Little Missouri, in the Dakota Territory, secured the services of crack guide Joe Ferris, and within days shot a big bull bison. It would be the last bison Ferris saw on the Dakota range.

In the course of his hunting trip, Roosevelt became infatuated with the Dakota landscape, just as I am 135 years later. He extolled its immense, silent space, describing it as “a high, nearly treeless region of light rainfall, crossed by streams which are sometimes rapid torrents and sometimes merely strings of shallow pools. In places it stretches out ... into nearly level prairies of short grass, extending for many miles without a break; elsewhere there are rolling hills, sometimes of considerable height; and in other places the ground is rent and broken into the most fantastic shapes, partly by volcanic action and partly by the action of water in a dry climate.”

For me the vastness of the Dakota horizons, the green of the grass in June, the emptiness of the landscape are utterly thrilling, heart-expanding. Driving scenic byways in the park’s two big sections, the South and North Units (about 110 kilometres apart), hiking their trails, gazing out at smooth prairies yielding to barren escarpments and striking sandstone formations, I exult in the park’s wild grandeur.

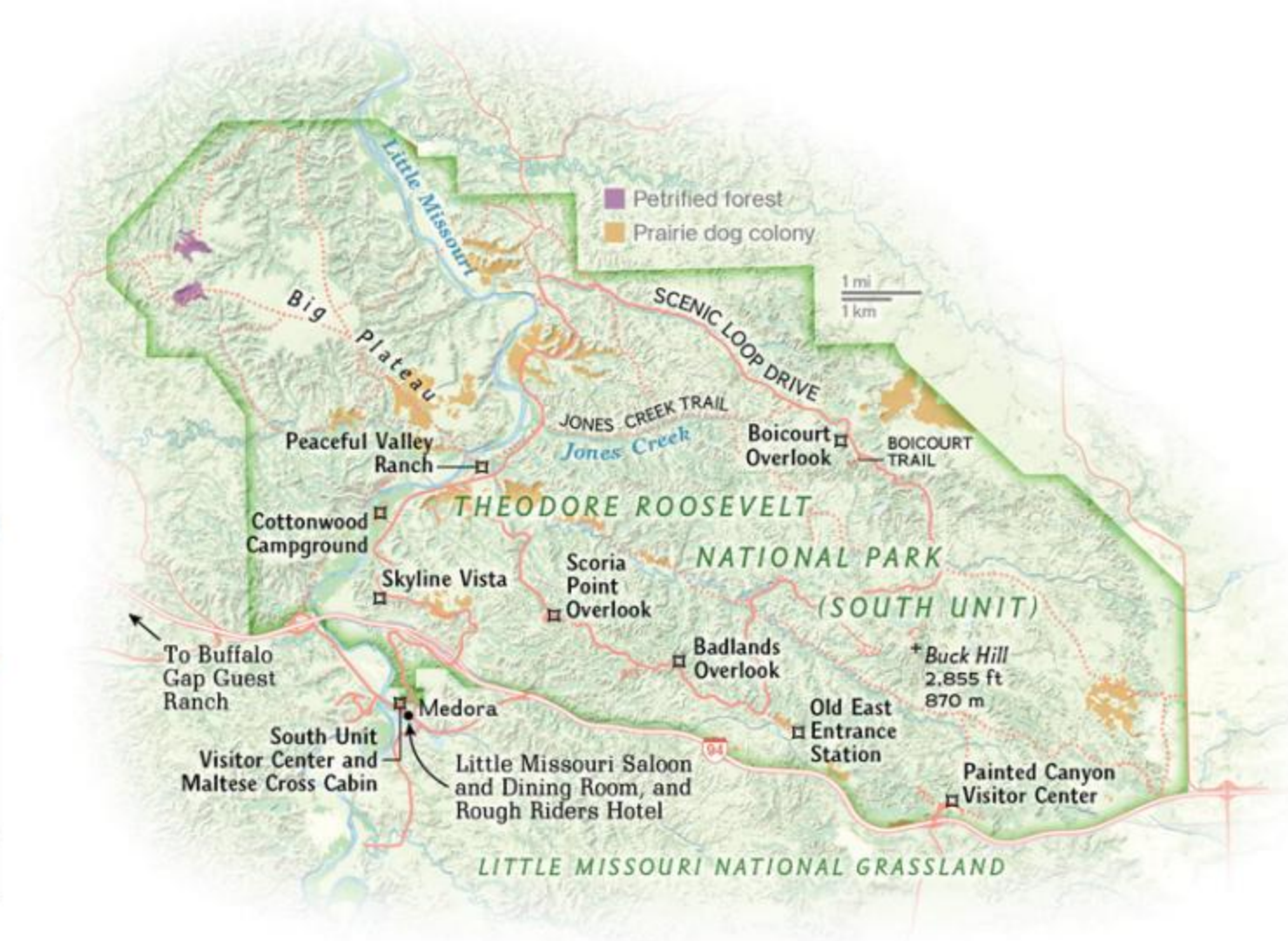
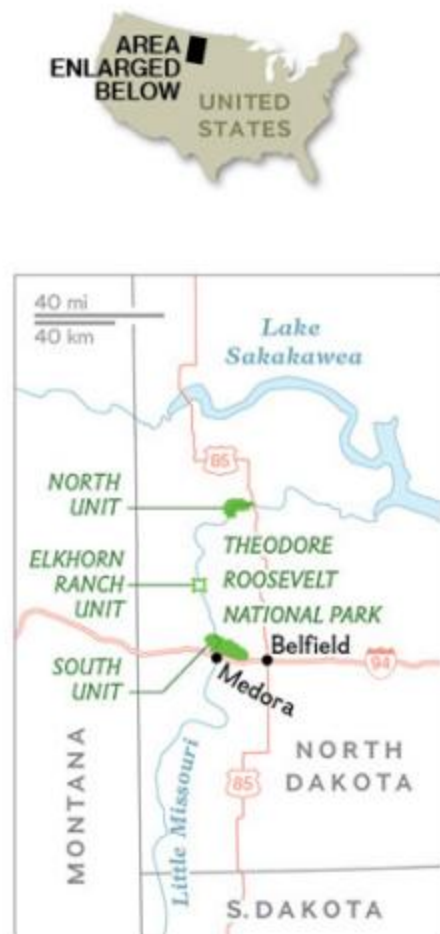
T. R. did too. By the midpoint of his hunting trip, he was so captivated by this part of the Dakota Territory that he decided

to become a Dakota cattleman. One night, after a miserably rainy day of hunting and slogging through mud, the irrepressible Easterner dashed off a check for \$14,000 to two cowboys who’d agreed to purchase several hundred cattle in his name. It was a considerable chunk of change, but as biographer Edmund Morris has written, “a small price to pay for so much freedom”. That winter Roosevelt had a cabin built, forever cementing his connection to this land.

CAUTION: FREQUENT STOPS

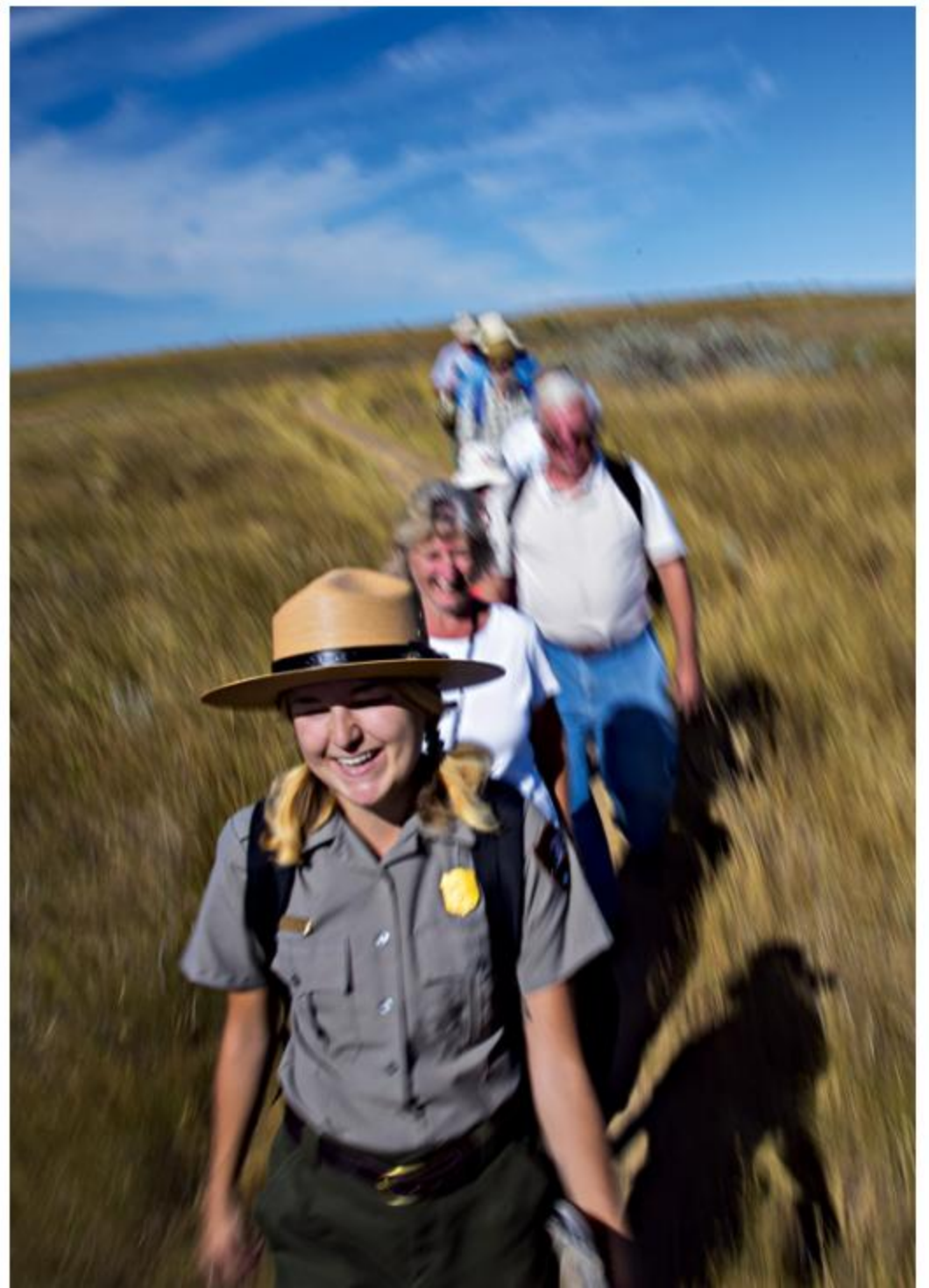
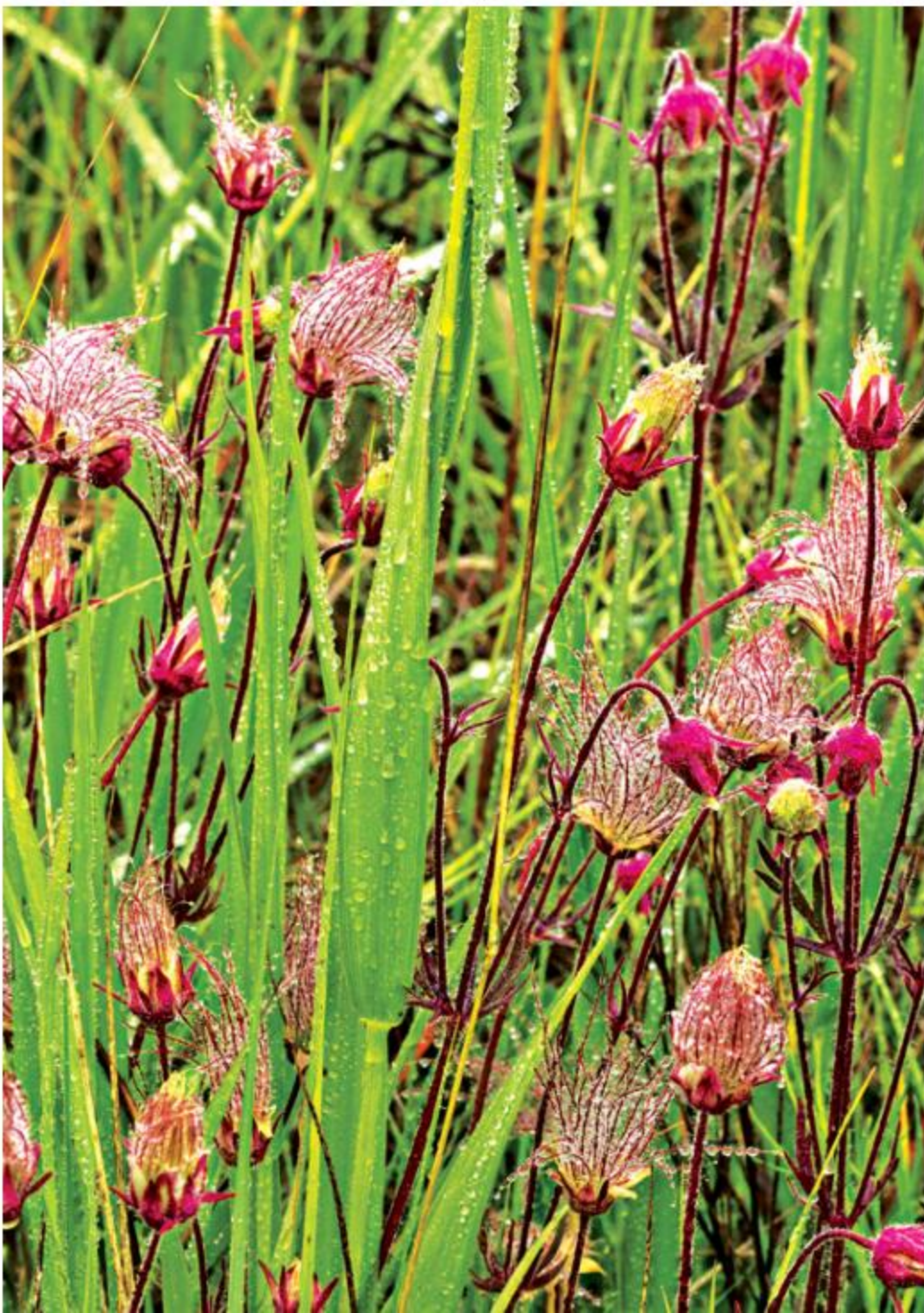
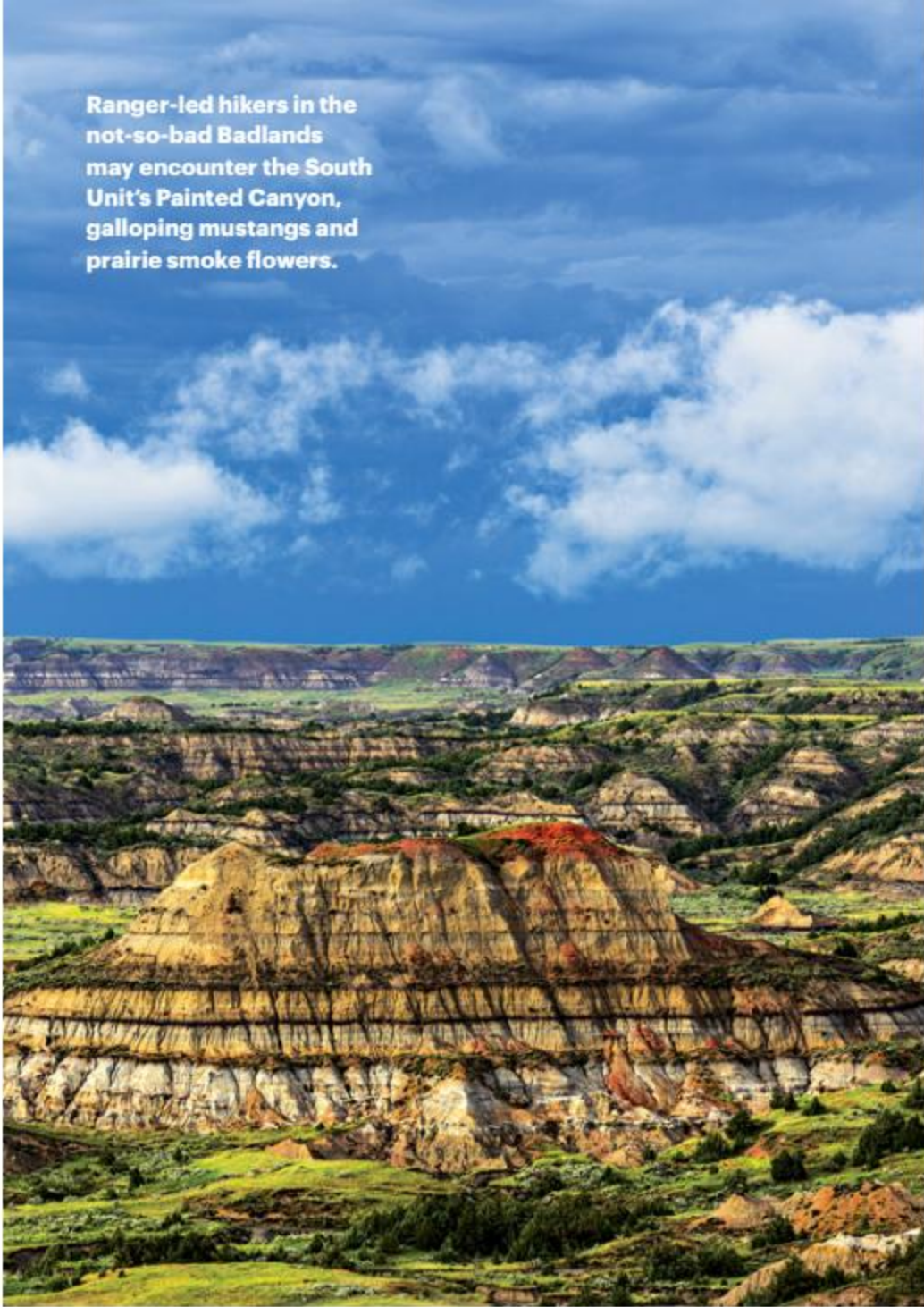
It’s possible to make the 58-kilometre Scenic Loop Drive through the South Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park in less than a couple of hours, take in the views, and move on. But the route, the land, the views, all beg for a slow pace, akin to that of the languidly flowing Little Missouri River, which meanders through the park and its small gateway town of Medora.

My first morning stop: the South Unit Visitor Center, where ranger Michael Irving circles park highlights on my map. When I press him to recommend some hikes, he demurs. “Take all the short nature trails,” he says. “They’ll give you a sense of the park and its habitats. After that, you choose.” He also affirms what I’ve learned from decades of visiting national parks: if there’s a sign for a scenic viewpoint, it’s there for a reason. The National Park Service always points to the best of the best. Just as important, I’ve also learned, is to improvise and venture down



CHUCK HANEY (CANYON, FLOWERS), MICHAEL MELFORD (MUSTANG, HIKERS); NG MAPS/PARK DATA; NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Ranger-led hikers in the not-so-bad Badlands may encounter the South Unit's Painted Canyon, galloping mustangs and prairie smoke flowers.





Once nearly extinct, bison in the hundreds now roam throughout the park but are best viewed from afar.



a trail not knowing what to expect – except that your curiosity will be rewarded.

Right behind the visitors centre I find Roosevelt’s cabin, called the Maltese Cross Cabin, relocated from its original site south of here. I’m moved when I see the small writing desk where Roosevelt wrote several of his books during his Dakota time and a trunk marked with his initials, “T. R.”

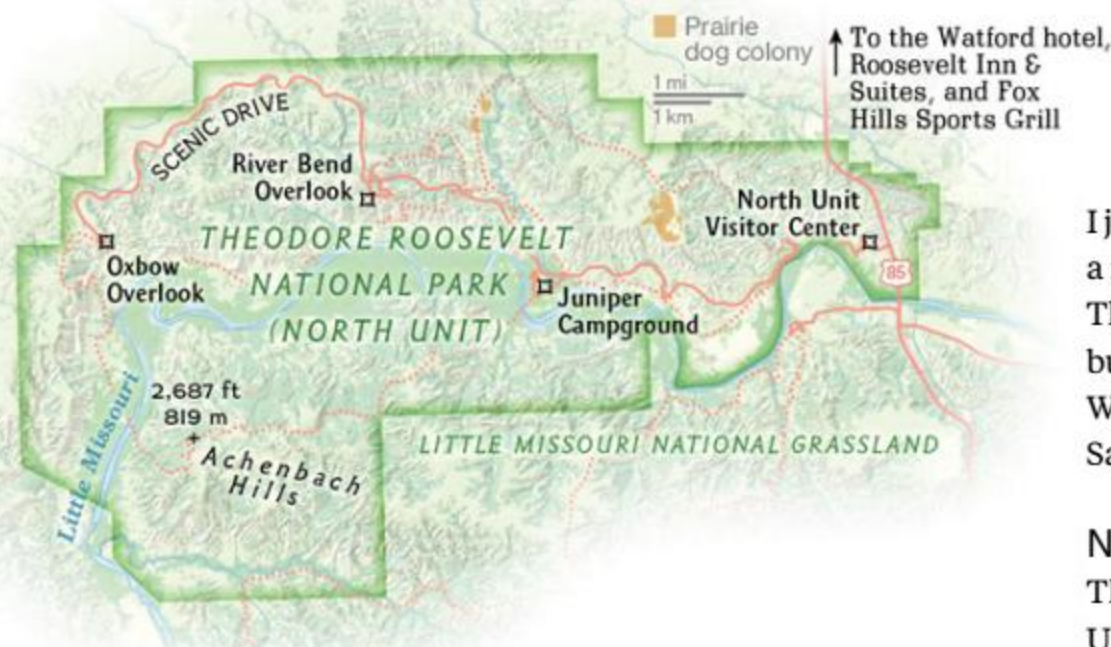
I then set out on the park’s scenic drive but within minutes brake at a sign that reads, “Do Not Feed the Prairie Dogs.” I have no prairie dog food but scan the ground for the large rodents. Ranger Irving had told me they’re gaining recognition from biologists as ecological movers and shakers. The way they mow the vegetation around their burrows, scientists are learning, encourages the growth of particularly nutritious prairie grasses that make prairie dog towns attractive to elk. “If you want to see elk,” Irving told me, “visit a dog town around dusk.”

Back on the road, I motor through Cottonwood Campground, a space shaded by cottonwood trees bordering the Little Missouri River, known hereabouts as the Little Mo. Families are emerging from tents, some to commence breakfast rituals on portable stoves, bringing back memories of such mornings on my childhood camping trips to national parks, when my mother would serve corned beef hash and pancakes to three hungry fledglings and our hurry-up-the-fish-are-biting dad.

I pause at Scoria Point Overlook to observe some literally scorched earth. Scoria is a red-rock striation that occurs when coal beds in the badlands are torched by a lightning strike, causing them to burn, often for years; the sediment that tops the coal turns red from the oxidation of iron. Farther along, I set off on the Boicourt Overlook Trail and soon reach a promontory that casts out over the park’s rolling-hills-and-badlands terrain before quickly narrowing to a ridge, then to a skinny path that drops steeply down three sides. Barely a 400-metre round-trip but very, very cool. I continue my exploration along the Jones Creek Trail. Like me, this trail has no particular destination; it will be as much meditation as hike. Meadowlarks flit around me, frogs blurt from still pools in the creek, and dark-eyed juncos trill from clusters of junipers – perfect examples of the rewards of whimsical travel.

Next stop is the trailhead for an 800-metre hike to the Old East Entrance Station, a small stone hut built by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) workers in the mid-1930s. Structures commissioned under this jobs program created by President Franklin Roosevelt dot the national parks. The CCC built, among other things, park trails, roads and fire-lookout towers. Here its work shows in superb stone craftsmanship, with huge sandstone blocks, quarried by CCC men, neatly fitted into walls.

Back on the road, I come upon my first bison. Several hundred roam the open range in both the South and North Units of the park, showing up where they please and holding up traffic at will. I think I ultimately encounter all of them. More than half a million bison (including a number that reflect crossbreeding



with cattle) now live on North American ranges, thanks in large measure to the early conservation efforts of bison hunter Teddy Roosevelt. The bulls weigh a ton, can run as fast as some horses, and are known to charge unpredictably. The Park Service has posted signs noting, “Buffalo Are Dangerous,” sage advice that we view the continent’s largest mammal from afar or from the comfort of our cars. Don’t have to persuade me.

RANGERS AT HOME ON THE RANGE

When many of us think of national parks, we think of rangers leading nature hikes and campfire talks. I’m happy to report that these traditions endure at Theodore Roosevelt National Park, even in these cash-strapped times. One morning I join ranger Erik Jensen and a group of about 20 visitors for a hike through what is believed to be the third largest aggregation of petrified wood in the United States. Joe and Vicki Loren, from Michigan, are on a national parks tour with their spunky daughters, ages 10 and six. The kids are intensely curious and responsive to ranger Jensen’s every question. As we walk among the stony stumps of 60-million-year-old bald cypress trees, Joe shares the family’s affection for parks. “We love that they’re as natural as you can get and that they’re respected. Yellowstone is crowded, but hey – it’s for everybody.” Both girls, he notes, are keen wild-life spotters. “Seven different herds of feral horses yesterday! Ah, to have young eyes.”

Another visitor in our group, Marlene Young, of Minneapolis, is such a parks fan she hosted a viewing party the night Ken Burns’ National Parks documentary series debuted.

“I know this is the same sky as other places, but it’s just so big here. That’s what I love. That’s what I came for.” Young is on her first solo camping trip, a post-divorce journey that she is finding both uplifting and healing.

The petrified forest – really the fossilised remains of fallen tree trunks – lies in rugged badlands in the western part of the South Unit. Accessible by dirt road, the petrified forest itself is roadless. At one point, ranger Jensen invites us to sit and listen. To nothing. A breeze, a swish of prairie grasses, our heartbeats.

When the long summer day finally yields to a moonless night, I join another group of campers and telescope-toting docents for a ranger-guided, no-flashlights-allowed walk “to see the sky as Theodore Roosevelt saw it”. Forks of lightning stab the horizon, but the overhead sky remains jet-black clear. We watch the Milky Way appear, and gaze through the park telescopes at a showy Saturn, a half Venus (it has phases), and distant nebulae.

NORTH COUNTRY

The park’s North Unit is 110 kilometres north of the South Unit and quite a bit smaller. Lacking a folksy gateway town like Medora, it also is less visited, which means I have the 23-kilometre Scenic Drive almost to myself. The route laces together viewpoints, hiking trails and one of the most famous picnic sites in the National Park System: the River Bend Overlook Shelter, another example of skilled stone craftsmanship by the CCC, in 1937, and now a backdrop for many a wedding. Far below the shelter snakes a great bend of the Little Missouri River, lined by a thick ribbon of cottonwood trees. An escarpment of sandstone Badlands parallels the river in the distance.

At one point the Scenic Drive narrows to a single unpaved lane because of a washout, reminding me of something ranger Eileen Andes said: “The same geological processes that give us beautiful scenery also give us challenges. In seven years here, I’ve seen the North Unit road stay open all summer only once.” This challenge applies to the entire National Park System as it tries to maintain safe roads and visitor-friendly amenities in wild, often remote backcountry with a maintenance backlog of US\$11.9 billion.

Another challenge: industries, such as North Dakota’s Bakken oil fields, that sit just beyond the borders of many national parks.

As I drive U.S. Highway 85 through the Little Missouri National Grassland near the park’s eastern outskirts, I see countless oil wells, along with camps for workers. Park rangers share with me their concerns about the former oil boom, including traffic, dust, poor air quality, night-time light pollution, contamination from fracking fluids – and the effects of all these on animal populations and their migratory routes. On the other hand, “quite a few of our visitors are from the oil fields,” ranger Andes tells me. “We’re a refuge for them. More than ever, there’s a desperate need for a place like this.”

CRADLE OF CONSERVATION

Theodore Roosevelt originally travelled west to hunt, but he would return for the kind of solace only wild places offer. Five months after his first Dakota trip, his young wife, Alice, died on Valentine’s Day, 1884, of an illness shortly after giving birth to their daughter. Only a few hours earlier, Roosevelt’s mother, Martha, had succumbed to typhoid.

Heartbroken, Roosevelt retreated to the North Dakota prairie and poured himself into ranch life. He bought more cattle and established a second spread, which he named Elkhorn Ranch. Working the range, he would ride saddle for 18 hours at a time rounding up cattle. He also indulged his passion for hunting

by organising big game expeditions. Ranch life and his hunts – “the free, self-reliant, adventurous life,” he called it – would become the subjects of two books he penned in solitude here.

My strongest communion with Roosevelt comes during a full day I spend alone at what remains of Elkhorn Ranch, which is about an hour’s drive north, mostly on good dirt roads, from the South Unit Visitor Center. Only a few foundation stones indicate the outline of the ranch house, but the setting looks much as the future American president described it.

“Just in front of the ranch veranda is a line of old cottonwoods that shade it during the fierce heats of summer, rendering it always cool and pleasant. But a few feet beyond these trees comes the cut-off bank of the river, through whose broad, sandy bed the shallow stream winds as if lost.”

No one else ventures up to Elkhorn Ranch during the day I spend there. I sit a few hours under Roosevelt’s cottonwoods,

reading, writing and musing on a summer morning. I hear the sounds of crickets, the pat of raindrops, and the hoarse squawk of a ring-necked pheasant. And I consider how these Dakota prairies profoundly affected the man who would go on to extend federal protection to 93 million hectares of America’s public lands.

In Roosevelt’s day, I could have ridden the region “for a month without striking a furrow or a fence”, a far cry from today’s reality of drilling and fracking. Yet in Theodore Roosevelt National Park I still can draw inspiration from its boundless spaces, stare into its starry skies, sit for hours, and hear only the rustle of its prairie grasses. May this park inspire all of us to appreciate what we have, and motivate us to do what we must do: love our parks, fund them, and preserve them forever.

ROBERT EARLE HOWELLS (@bobhowells) is a contributing writer to *National Geographic’s* Guide to National Parks.



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the CALL of the CAPE

Two South African lodges offer very different experiences. At one, feel the thrill of seeking out the Big Five. The other provides a glimpse into an ancient culture.

WORDS BY ALISON O'LOUGHLIN

Within the rugged landscape of the Cederberg Mountains, rocky ledges and small caves hide the ancient art of the Bushman tribes.

AS THE SUN

peeks over the mountain range, turning the landscape a magnificent burnt amber shade and warming the air, our 4WD pulls to a stop on a rocky platform overlooking the unexpectedly lush green of the homestead in the distance. Our early morning walk begins gently, descending gradually through the fynbos that grows abundantly on either side of the path. We stop before a small sandstone overhang. "There are some old Cape leopard prints here," says our guide Duane, pointing out the imprints in the dirt. Sure enough, we can still make out the faint outline of a paw in the sandy ground where an endangered leopard sheltered in the lee of a small rock ledge.

This geographic feature, with its red, green and pale yellow layers of rock, reveals a fascinating timeline of this region. There's even a visible seam of pebbles indicating fast-flowing streams once cut through here and carved out the landscape we see today. We continue on and, as we clamber from rock to rock beneath the escarpment, the fynbos and boulders close in. Protected from

the elements by a huge natural stone entrance is what we've come to see: ancient Bushman rock art.

Duane stands back to let us take it all in. It is spectacular. Vibrant scarlet figures drawn in delicate lines contrast against a crude row of thumbprints. Stark black stick humans intermingle with the recognisable shape of an elephant. Some paintings are superimposed and jumbled together, while others are given clear space to be interpreted. "There are distinctive male and female figures here, denoted by the shapes of their bodies," explains Duane. "The men with big calves and a strong-looking shape, which shows their prowess as hunters. And the women with more voluptuous figures, showing that they are well fed and cared for by their menfolk."

This spectacular open-air art gallery is located in South Africa's Cederberg Wilderness Area, a three-hour drive from Cape Town. This region has been home to the Khoisan and their ancestors for 120,000 years. There are more than 130 rock art sites here, some of which date







Guided walking tours (above), which allow guests to get close to nature, are a huge part of the offering at Bushman's Kloof; stick figures and animals (opposite) appear in the rock art created by the Khoisan people hundreds, sometimes thousands, of years ago.

back 10,000 years. It's a cultural legacy being preserved by Bushman's Kloof Wilderness Reserve, one of National Geographic's Unique Lodges of the World.

The Khoisan, or Bushman, tribes used oxide pigments to record their culture and way of life. These days, the archaeological masterpieces, which have been named a South African Natural Heritage Site, give visitors a fascinating insight into the traditions of one of the world's most ancient human nations. Since it opened in 1996, Bushman's Kloof has been dedicated to the conservation and study of these unique canvases. The particular site we are visiting would most likely have been used as a shelter or a place of ritual – somewhere to perform ceremonies or initiations protected from the weather. It's for this reason we're

still able to witness these fascinating depictions of the ancient culture that once prospered in this region.

It is a privilege to spend time in this most ancient of galleries and, after viewing the paintings accompanied by stories and insights from Duane, we emerge from the cave into dappled sunlight. It's easy to see why the Khoisan would have chosen this place and why it has survived for centuries, hidden almost completely from the elements and enshrouded in a protective mantle of sandstone.

The 100-kilometre-long Cederberg mountain range is formed from the same sandstone as Cape Town's ubiquitous landmark, Table Mountain. Following a period of severe drought that seriously affected the Western Cape region, we

had been expecting brilliant blue skies and a clear view of the mountain when we arrived in the city days earlier. The weather gods, however, had other plans. When we'd landed, the mountain was completely obscured by an orographic cloud formation the locals call 'the tablecloth' and, despite teasing us with glimpses over the following two days, the mountain remained hidden throughout our stay.

Signs of Cape Town's commitment to sustainable and responsible water usage are in evidence everywhere, and we can't begrudge Capetonians the much needed rain. In typically resilient and laconic South African fashion they have adapted to the water restrictions, meaning the city is still very much open for business and welcoming visitors with open arms.



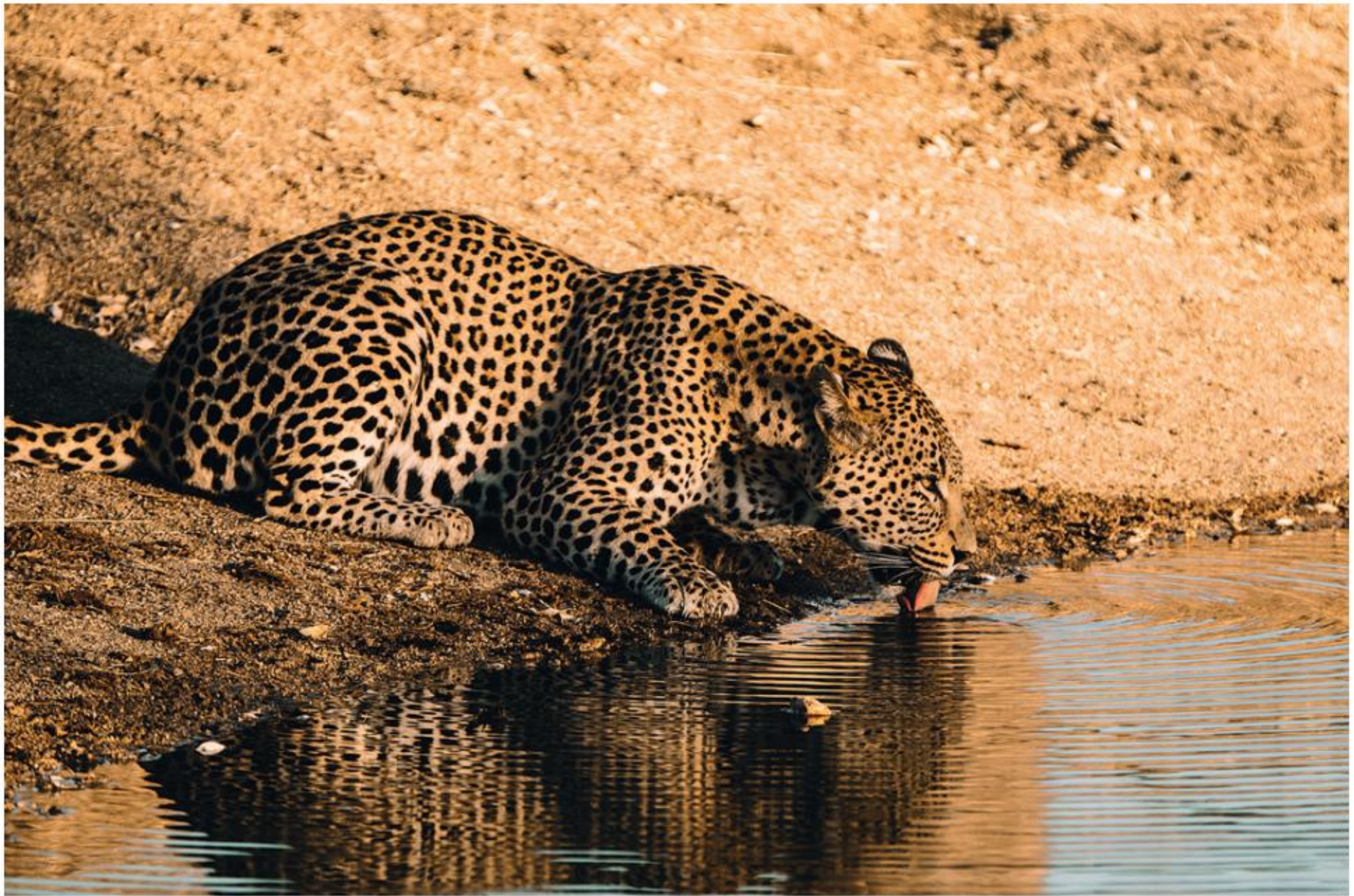
The 170-year-old homestead at Bushman's Kloof is a lush oasis overlooking the Cederberg Mountains.





Crossing a natural rock bridge near
Bushman's Kloof; a leopard (opposite)
drinks from a waterhole.





SAM EVANS (LEOPARD); COURTESY BUSHMAN'S KLOOF (ROCK BRIDGE)

HEAD NORTH OUT of Cape Town and the landscape begins to change. Along the side of the road, groves of orange trees dot the countryside and, as we begin to wind our way through the mountains, the fauna changes to the low, scrubby fynbos for which this region is famous. The Cederberg Wilderness Area is a protected region and part of the Cape Floristic Kingdom, which has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to the diversity and uniqueness of the plants, as well as the animal life they support.

“In the spring, this area is carpeted with flowers,” Duane says as we return to the safari vehicle after viewing the rock art. The sun has crept further above the horizon, and we’re treated to the sight of a herd of springbok grazing nearby. Despite natural predators being scarce, the animals are skittish and begin their trademark ‘proinking’ or jumping, covering great distances as they disappear into the distance. While there are no

lions in the area, the rare Cape leopard, a vulnerable sub-species of cat that ranges the mountainous regions of the Cederberg Wilderness Area, can be found here. With an exceptionally large home range of up to 1,000 square kilometres for males, the leopard has been threatened through loss of habitat and retaliation from local farmers due to livestock losses.

As part of its commitment to conservation and sustainability, Bushman’s Kloof helps to fund the Cape Leopard Trust, a non-profit organisation dedicated to researching these magnificent animals and providing solutions to human-wildlife conflict. Camera traps have been set up on the reserve to capture the elusive cats’ movements and provide an insight into their behaviour. The Cape Leopard Trust project is one of the 50-plus conservation, wildlife and heritage projects championed worldwide by the TreadRight Foundation, an initiative of The Travel Corporation’s family of brands.

Back at the homestead we’re ready to tuck into a hearty breakfast, which stretches into mid-morning. Some of the group are feeling energetic and head off on bicycles to explore, leaving the rest of us to linger over another cup of rooibos, a local red bush tea common in South Africa. The property is a part of the Relais & Chateaux collection, which is evident in every dish we’re served throughout the day, from the amazing spread of freshly baked cakes, scones and pastries at afternoon tea to the spectacular meal we enjoyed the day we arrived at Bushman’s Kloof. Accompanied by a camp fire and the light of what seemed like a thousand candles, the Kadoro, an old shepherd’s hut set on a hilltop a short drive from the main homestead, had been transformed into a truly special dining experience. “We don’t often eat inside, particularly in the summer months when the weather is warmer,” says general manager Rory. “Our chef, Charles, loves to showcase the fresh, local ingredients we grow

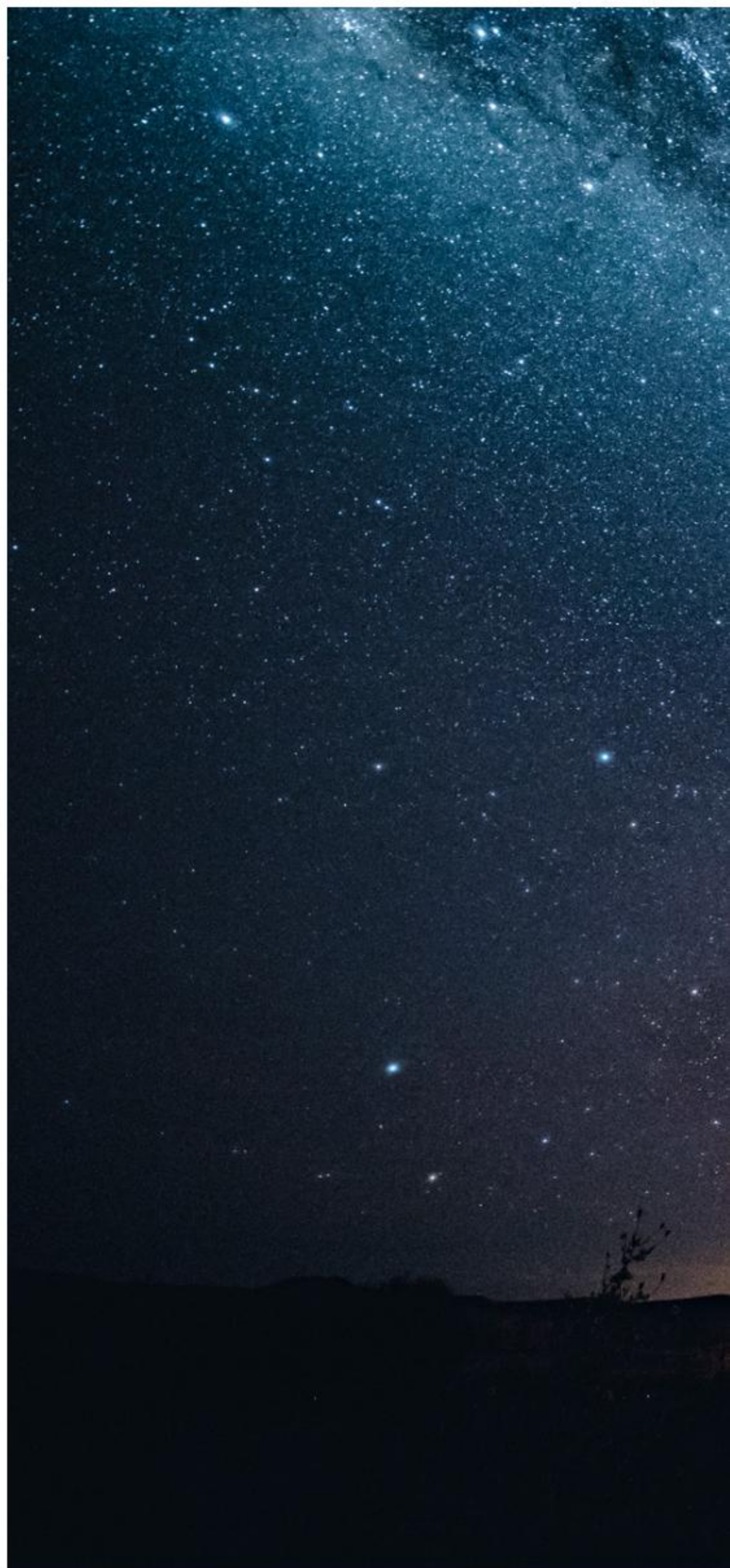
here in our walled vegetable garden, and absolutely loves to braai." As we relax by the fire with a glass of locally produced Pinotage, Charles wields the tongs over a makeshift grill set into an old chimney and fireplace.

After dinner, there's a chance to stop and simply look at the stars. The Milky Way blankets the night sky overhead, and we're treated to the ultimate in spectacular light shows, one that those of us living in the city rarely get to see. It's a chance to connect with an ancient landscape and imagine life as it was long ago, when the Khoisan called this region home and may have camped out here under the very same stars. And while this seems idyllic in our technology-driven, busy world, I'm pleased to be heading back to our homestead for the night, where every modern convenience awaits.

AN EARLY MORNING START is made less painful by the extensive breakfast boxes full of homemade treats. After the contrast of modern Cape Town and the ancient Cederberg Mountains, it's time to experience what most visitors come to South Africa to do – safari.

Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve, adjacent to the vast wild expanses of Kruger National Park, was originally declared a wildlife sanctuary 120 years ago. The first tourists visited in the early 1920s following the introduction of tours along the Selati railway line – built to access goldfields in North Transvaal – and through the then Sabie Game Reserve. With no camps or roads to the reserve, these railway tours included an overnight stop at Sabi Bridge and a game walk, escorted by armed rangers. The popularity of the tours, known as Round in Nine, helped highlight the need for conservation and preservation of the natural heritage of the area. The railway line continued to operate until the early 1970s, with 14 trains a day running through the game reserve at the height of its popularity. Today Kruger National Park forms part of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, a wilderness region

Don't forget to look up. With little light pollution, the skies above Western Cape are a magical sight for stargazers.







It's a rare treat to see a baby rhinoceros in the wild; the plains zebra (below) is the most common across the African continent.





Sabi Sabi Bush Lodge infuses luxury and local charm. Watch the waterhole from the safari deck.

The baby gambols around its mother, skittishly and nervously coming closer to the 4WD before running to hide behind her enormous girth again.

that spans 35,000 square kilometres and crosses borders into Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Visitors are spoiled for choice with a number of places to stay, all easily accessed by air and road.

Shortly after entering Sabi Sabi, our vehicle slows to a stop. As if on cue, a leopard wanders out of the bush and casually strolls along the dirt road alongside us before disappearing again into a thicket of trees. We enter the gates of Sabi Sabi Bush Lodge only minutes later, excited at having already seen one of the fabled Big Five.

Just after sunrise the next morning, we set out. Our open vehicle makes easy work of some challenging terrain,

skilfully handled by our ranger, IP. He is ably assisted by Heaviness, our ever-smiling tracker. “I was a very big baby,” he says when introducing himself. It’s not long before Heaviness’ smile widens even more. He has spotted a rhino mother and calf in a dry river bed. The baby gambols around its mother, skittishly and nervously coming closer to the 4WD before running to hide behind her enormous girth again. Soon, the mother is on the move. She shows surprising pace for an animal that can tip the scales at more than 2,000 kilograms. Her baby darts here and there to keep up.

We don’t have to wait long to be rewarded with the sight of another

leopard. We head through scrubby bush, Heaviness pointing here and there to guide IP as he follows it to a nearby waterhole to drink. It feels like we’ve been granted an audience with royalty. As we sit in our box seats and watch, birds squawk warnings to animals nearby letting them know there’s a predator in the vicinity. Later during the drive, we encounter elephants, buffalo, impala and zebra.

The pace, as we’ve found all over South Africa, is relaxed here. Early morning game drives, leisurely breakfasts, a chance to sit by the waterhole with a book, lunch, a guided walk and finally an afternoon game drive, complete with sundowners. For the uninitiated, sundowners – drinks and snacks served out in the bush – are an essential part of the safari experience. After the sun has turned the landscape golden and dipped below the horizon, IP and Heaviness pack away the drinks and we set off in search of the only species of the Big Five we’re yet to see.



EXPLORE THE WESTERN CAPE

Five more ways to discover the best of the region

1 The region inland from Cape Town known as **Winelands** includes two beautiful towns, the Dutch settlement of Stellenbosch and Franschhoek, which was built by French Huguenots. In both, and in between, you'll discover vineyards growing many grape varieties, but especially cabernet sauvignon, merlot, Pinotage and shiraz. Take a tour or explore yourself, but be sure to try the food as well – this area is known for having the most innovative cuisine in South Africa.

2 Running for 200 kilometres along the coast from Mossel Bay to Storms River is the **Garden Route**, one of the attractions at the top of many visitors' must-do lists when they come to South Africa. Sure, you could easily drive it in a few hours, but then you wouldn't be stopping to take in the spectacular landscape that includes beaches, lakes, sea cliffs, mountains and forests.

3 From June to October each year, southern right whales arrive in numbers on the **Whale Coast** to mate and calve in the shallow water. It has some of the best land-based whale watching in the world. At Hermanus, the world's only whale caller, Theminkosi Sobazile, known as Bravo, blows his kelp horn when whales are sighted.

4 If the weather is kind, be sure to take in one of Cape Town's major attractions: catching the cable car to the peak of **Table Mountain National Park**. But there's another treat at the park's base. Boulders Penguin Colony in Simons Town is home to a unique land-based colony of African penguins.

5 Be transported back in time at **Matjiesfontein**, a town founded by Scotsman James Douglas Logan in 1884. Its Victorian features have been completely retained and visitors can dine at the Lord Milner Hotel, see the village sights on an old London bus, and sink a pint at the Laird's Arms, which retains the atmosphere of a bygone era.

We're watching the enormous bulk of a hippo, silhouetted in the spotlight Heaviness uses to slowly scan the bush, when there is a call over the radio. We set off, racing through the night along the dirt road close to the fence line and the entrance to the reserve. We can hear them before we see them. Heaviness swings his light and its beam catches the reflection of dozens of eyes – a herd of buffalo are grazing their way through the thicket, lowing mournfully into the still night air. We see a lone buffalo, a little way from the rest of the herd, and the light picks up more eyes, gleaming with intent in the darkness. Eight lions slink forward, slowly stalking the herd, as we watch the scene play out as if in a movie. In an instant, the lions explode into action, launching on to the back of the solitary beast. Three juvenile lions cling on for dear life, but the buffalo shrugs them off and, with a kick, disappears into the darkness to join the rest of the herd.

It's all over in a matter of seconds, and the lions return to the rest of their pride. "Did anyone get that?" says an excited IP turning to face us. "It's unlikely they'll hunt again tonight." Sure enough, when we see lions in the spotlight again, they are resting and nuzzling up against one another.

The following morning, a guided bush walk offers the chance to spot animals and their tracks at ground level. Unfortunately, we haven't heard news of the hungry lions since our encounter and don't see them by the water. Perhaps they've either eaten or moved on to search for prey elsewhere – this is the ebb and flow of nature and we may never find out what happens to the young pride.

As we're leaving Sabi Sabi, our vehicle slows to a stop. The driver points to a ridge slightly above the road, and there, behind the fence, is our pride of lions staring hungrily at a herd of cows behind us.

*When she's not working her magic as a digital director, **ALISON O'LOUGHLIN** (@ali010) finds adventure on safari, a trail or the high sea.*

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DESTINATIONS

122	SOUTH AFRICA
128	GALAPAGOS ISLANDS
134	NEW ENGLAND
136	MALAYSIA
140	PATAGONIA
142	UTAH
144	JAPAN
150	GREENLAND & CANADA
156	PERU
158	ETHIOPIA



2 OF THE BEST

In the northeast of the United States you'll find **NEW ENGLAND**, a region made up of six states of unending beauty. To get a taste of adventure and their other charms, head to Maine and New Hampshire.

NEW HAMPSHIRE TOP 3

1 It has more tourist railways than any other state in the world. In fact, there are 274 kilometres of track in New Hampshire. Take a ride on the mountain-climbing Mount Washington Cog Railway, which boasts the world's steepest trestles. Enjoy a multicourse meal as you watch the Pemigewasset River out the window on the Café Lafayette Dinner Train. There's also the chance to follow the tracks of the Conway Scenic Railroad, which used to take wealthy New Englanders to grand summer resorts and the US's first ski resorts in winter.

2 New Hampshire has the United States' first and oldest hiking trail, the Crawford Path. Hikers will find half-buried train tracks that disappear along hiking trails and into the woods. Nature is reclaiming many of these old tracks, but they can still be found as evidence of how the White Mountain National Forest came to be.

3 New Hampshire's towns famously preserve their centuries-old character. You can enjoy the spectrum of landscape experiences, from the ocean to the mountains, and the towns perfectly epitomise their settings. Do a walking tour and boat cruise in the seaside town of Portsmouth. Tour a bean-to-bar maker at Peterborough's Vicuña Chocolate. Ready to kick back? Head to Schillings Beer Co in Littleton.



MAINE TOP 3

1 Whether you're looking to step out for a few hours or conquer a mountain, Maine is the place to be. Breathe in the salt air as you trek Acadia National Park or join the famous Appalachian Trail for a stretch. If you're looking for a challenge, hit one of the rock-climbing trails. One of the most photogenic is Acadia's Otter Cliffs, where climbs start on the surf line.

2 The Maine coastline is a dream for adventurers. Travel slowly on a windjammer cruise, where you'll help the crew raise the sails and pull the anchor from the sea floor. Take to the water on a sea kayak and paddle among shipwrecks or watch the lobstermen setting traps. There are also inland lakes like Moosehead and Sebago, where you can launch a canoe or drop in a line in an attempt to catch lunch.

3 The brewers in Maine – and there are plenty of them – take great pride in the beers they produce, and many of them contain the pure water of Lake Sebago. Check out D L Geary Brewing Company, New Hampshire's first craft brewery, and Allagash Brewing Company, which specialises in Belgian-style beers. And if you've got plenty of stamina, check out the Maine Brewing Trail, connecting more than 80 craft brewers across the state.



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DAY 1

JOHANNESBURG

On arrival, transfer to the Maslow Hotel, located in the heart of Johannesburg's most vibrant neighbourhood, Sandton. In the afternoon explore the township of Soweto and pass landmarks such as Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital, Nelson Mandela's old house, Desmond Tutu's house and the Hector Pieterse Memorial. Afterwards uncover the history of twentieth-century South Africa at the Apartheid Museum.

DAY 2

JOHANNESBURG

After breakfast, join a walking tour through the heart of the City of Gold. Visit a craft brewery to experience the tastes of this newly established industry. Walk past Chancellor House, from where Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo ran the first black legal practice in the country during the 1950s. The walking tour gives you an

opportunity to experience Johannesburg's unique history on foot. (B)

DAY 3

JOHANNESBURG - SUN CITY RESORT

Transfer to the world-renowned Sun City Resort, where you will spend three nights at the five-star Palace of the Lost City. The Palace, so legend has it, was built for a king by an ancient civilisation from North Africa. Now restored to its former glory, each of the 335 luxurious rooms offers royal hospitality. Murmuring streams, gushing waterfalls and sculpture-lined walkways weave through the hotel gardens and to its golf course and the Valley of the Waves. Enjoy the day at leisure. Activities include game drives in Pilanesberg National Park, swimming at the Valley of the Waves, playing two world-class golf courses, riding the world's longest zip-line or enjoying numerous shopping and dining opportunities. (B)



**DAY 4****SUN CITY RESORT**

Join a morning game drive through the Pilanesberg National Park, looking for a variety of animals, including lions, leopards, buffalo, elephants, rhino and wild dog. The park is set within the crater of an ancient volcano, formed 1.2 billion years ago by overflowing magma. The landscape and rock formations seen today provide a scenic backdrop while you search for wildlife. (B)

DAY 5**SUN CITY RESORT - THE BLUE TRAIN**

Transfer to Pretoria to board five-star The Blue Train, which offers an all-inclusive experience in unsurpassed luxury – it's the perfect way to see South Africa. Enjoy tantalising cuisine and take in stunning scenery from elegant lounges as the train travels to Cape Town. (B)(D)

DAY 6**THE BLUE TRAIN**

On board you will be indulged with fine cuisine accompanied by some of the best wines South Africa has to offer. Personal butlers see to your every need, be it in the comfort of your private suites or at any one of the exquisite lounges. Today you travel across South Africa's unique and varied landscape. With a stop at Kimberley. (B)(L)(D)

DAY 7**THE BLUE TRAIN - CAPE TOWN**

Join a full-day Cape Peninsula tour. You'll pass steep mountains, secluded coves, sweeping beaches and enjoy some of South Africa's most spectacular views. A particular highlight of today is visiting a colony of African penguins at Boulders Beach. (B)

DAY 9**CAPE TOWN**

Spend the morning at leisure. Check in to the magnificent Table Bay Hotel, opened by Nelson Mandela, and explore the vibrant V&A waterfront, where you can sample some of the best food at the markets and stalls. Or perhaps you want to do a food-foraging tour with the hotel's head chef – just ask the Table Bay staff. Later, expand your culinary experience with a tour to the Winelands town of Stellenbosch. You'll sample beautiful wines and carefully chosen food pairings. (B)

DAY 10**CAPE TOWN - SABU SABU PRIVATE GAME RESERVE**

Fly to Skukuza where you will be transferred to your chosen lodge. Sabu Sabu Game Reserve is a 65,000-hectare wildlife oasis. For nearly 40 years the world has been drawn to its wilderness with the promise of the safari experience of a lifetime. Sabu Sabu offers four completely separate luxurious, award-winning lodges – Selati Camp, Bush Lodge, Little Bush Camp and Earth Lodge – with distinct characters and atmospheres. (L)(D)

DAYS 11-12**SABU SABU PRIVATE GAME RESERVE**

Enjoy morning and afternoon game drives amid pristine African wilderness. Sabu Sabu's diverse habitat is home to spectacular wildlife including the Big Five – lion, leopard, rhino, buffalo and elephant – as well as cheetah, wild dog and some 200 other animal species indigenous to the area. (B)(L)(D)

DAY 13**SABU SABU PRIVATE GAME RESERVE**

This morning enjoy your last game drive before transferring to Skukuza for onwards arrangements. (B)

AT A GLANCE**13 DAYS / 12 NIGHTS****DEPARTS** Daily**TRAVEL STYLE** Tailor-made**HIGHLIGHTS**

- A luxurious journey on the Blue Train
- Luxury safari experience at Sabu Sabu Private Game Reserve
- Explore Cape Town and Johannesburg

INCLUSIONS

12 nights' accommodation, meals, activities and transfers as specified, flight from Cape Town to Skukuza.

FROM AU\$8,829* / NZ\$9,629*

*Prices are per person, twin share, based on low-season travel. Terms and conditions apply.



YUKON'S ADVENTURE HIGHWAYS

Discover year-round beauty when you take to the roads in Canada's wild northwest province.



Take your time exploring the epic landscapes and rich living history of the Yukon when you hire a car and take to the highways. This huge region is home to just 40,000 people and 30,000 of them live in the capital, Whitehorse. You might drive for hours and not see anyone else, but chances are you will spy creatures of the wild, like caribou, moose and muskox. Here are four road-trip suggestions to inspire the trip of a lifetime.

DEMPSTER HIGHWAY AND ARCTIC CIRCLE

8–15 DAYS

From Whitehorse to Inuvik
(or in reverse)

The Dempster is Canada's only all-season road, so you can choose to drive it at any time of year. While isolated, this is the kind of drive that spirits you through amazing landscapes and past abundant wildlife. Head north to the gold rush town of Dawson City, through Klondike country and on to the hauntingly beautiful Tombstone Park. Depending on whether the Peel and Mackenzie Rivers are frozen, you'll drive across them to Inuvik or catch the ferry. Along the way, stop for a photo as you cross into the Arctic Circle. This is a journey you'll need to be well prepared for since there are limited services along the way. When you arrive at your destination, book a flight back to the start or stock your car for the return journey.





YUKON ADVENTURE

3–4 days

Start and finish in Whitehorse

During summer and autumn, make the city of Whitehorse your base. Jump in the car to get to the starting points for canoeing on the Yukon River, hiking in the wilderness, or mountain biking through rugged peaks. Visit Carcross, a tiny village of just 300 people, with a history that dates back thousands of years when it was used as a fishing and hunting camp by the local First Nations people. There's now a small retail precinct, where you can view totem poles inspired by the local Tlingit people, visit a carving shed, browse art galleries and eat locally sourced foods. On another day, go to Haines Junction, the gateway to Kluane National Park.

GOLDEN CIRCUIT

4–5 days

Start and finish in Whitehorse

See glorious alpine passes, incredible lakes, unique towns and the South-East Alaska coastline on this route that follows the historic White Pass and Yukon Route. At Skagway, you'll take the ferry to Haines, Alaska. You'll also have a chance to explore the mountains and glaciers of Kluane National Park. Summer is the best season to take on this route, since the extended daylight hours will give you plenty of time for outdoors adventure.

WHITEHORSE TO TOMBSTONE PARK

5–7 days

Start and finish in Whitehorse

This route, best tackled in the autumn or summer months, explores the land of the legendary Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. You'll pass through Dawson City, an authentic gold rush town with only 1,300 residents but a number of historic sites and attractions. See the can-can dancers at Diamond Tooth Gertie's, Canada's oldest legal casino, or take a tour of the mines where gold is still sought today. Further north is Tombstone Territorial Park, with its jagged peaks and coloured hills. Hike off the road and watch for wildlife.

FOOTSTEPS OF THE YUKON PIONEERS

14 DAYS / 13 NIGHTS



DEPARTS Daily, 12 May–24 Aug

TRAVEL STYLE Tailor-made

HIGHLIGHTS

- Cross the Arctic Circle and visit the remote town of Inuvik
- Explore spectacular Kluane National Park
- Drive the legendary Dempster Highway

INCLUSIONS

13 nights' accommodation, selected sightseeing and activities, 14 days' car rental.

FROM AU\$2,689*/NZ\$3,055*

**Prices are person, twin share, based on low-season travel. Terms and conditions apply.*





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DISCOVER
CANADA
 WITH VIA RAIL



TRANS CANADA WINTER

11 DAY PACKAGE

Witness the majesty of Niagara Falls before travelling on VIA Rail's cross-country service, from Toronto to Vancouver on the 'Canadian'. Enjoy stunning winter scenery from the prairies to the Pacific.

FROM **AU\$2,895*/NZ\$3,295*** PP TWIN SHARE

DEPARTS THURSDAYS
 29 NOV '18 - 28 MAR '19



WINTER NIGHTS AND DANCING LIGHTS

12 DAY PACKAGE

The ultimate Canadian winter experience, enjoy a magical rail journey from the festive lights of Vancouver to the snow-covered peaks of the Rockies before witnessing the Northern Lights in the Yukon.

FROM **AU\$2,859*/NZ\$3,229*** PP TWIN SHARE

DEPARTS MONDAYS & THURSDAYS
 28 NOV '18 - 14 APR '19



SNOW TRAIN TO THE ROCKIES

7 DAY PACKAGE

Experience a spectacular rail journey through the snow covered Rockies before visiting the charming mountain towns of Banff, Lake Louise and Jasper.

FROM **AU\$1,605*/NZ\$1,825*** PP TWIN SHARE

DEPARTS TUESDAYS & FRIDAYS
 29 NOV '18 - 25 APR '19



To book, contact your local travel agent or visit adventureworld.com



***TERMS AND CONDITIONS:** Prices are per person (pp) twin share based on lead in season. All care is taken to promote correct pricing at time of publication but is dependent upon availability and will be confirmed at time of reservation. Airfares not included unless specified. Offers are subject to availability and can change without notification due to fluctuations in charges and currency. Credit card surcharges apply. For full terms and conditions please view adventureworld.com/terms-and-conditions/



Galápagos

with Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic

This is the trip of a lifetime. Spend a week aboard our expedition vessel discovering the majesty and mystery of these strange and beautiful islands.

Snorkel, hike, paddleboard, cruise by zodiac and encounter animals who are remarkably undisturbed by the company of humans. Since the first international tourist expedition cruise to the Galápagos Islands in July 1967 with Lars-Eric Lindblad, we've introduced generations of guests to these strange and wonderful islands, the world's first UNESCO World Heritage Site.

DAY 1

GUAYAQUIL

Your Galapagos adventure begins in the mainland city of Guayaquil, where you'll stay overnight before flying to the islands the next morning.

DAY 2

GUAYAQUIL - GALAPAGOS

This morning, fly to the Galapagos and board the ship. The exact route will be



determined by the National Park Service, but be prepared for stunning scenery and magical wildlife encounters.

DAY 3-8

GALAPAGOS

Each week of exploring is crafted to offer you a panoramic experience of the archipelago and each day will deliver a new island to discover and explore. Flexibility is a hallmark of our expedition style, so the exact itinerary will be determined day by day. Here is a sample of some of the islands you may visit.

BARTOLOMÉ This is an enchanting landscape where lava, mangroves and golden sand converge. Great walks and views abound, and there's a chance to snorkel with rare Galápagos penguins.

SANTIAGO Santiago offers close encounters with Galápagos fur seals, along with an opportunity to study the inhabitants of the island's countless tide pools.

SANTA CRUZ This island is home to the Charles Darwin Research Station. Learn what the scientists do here and visit the neighbouring captive breeding program for endangered Galápagos giant tortoises, run by the Galápagos National Park Service.

ISABELA A small black-sand beach offers wonderful morning swimming. Enjoy a more challenging hike over rugged shoreline and a shorter walk within an iguana colony. Kayaking and deep water snorkelling opportunities are on offer.

FERNANDINA This is the youngest island in the Galápagos and one of the most pristine tropical islands left on earth. Look forward to hikes over relatively recent lava flows and spot marine

iguanas, flightless cormorants and bright orange Sally Lightfoot crabs.

FLOREANA Snorkel among sea lions in the clear waters off Champion Islet. We may also find flamingos, pintail ducks and various shorebirds. Hike to a pristine white-sand beach, a favourite nesting site for sea turtles.

ESPAÑOLA The exclusive home to waved albatross (seasonal) and particularly colourful marine iguanas, Española is also a paradise for Darwin's finches, sea lions and the famous blue-footed boobies. Snorkel and stroll along the island's lovely beaches. (B)(L)(D)

DAY 9

GALAPAGOS - GUAYAQUIL

Disembark from the ship and fly to Guayaquil. Upon arrival the rest of the day is at leisure.

DAY 10

GUAYAQUIL

Check out of the hotel and begin your journey home.

AT A GLANCE

10 DAYS / 9 NIGHTS



DEPARTS Fridays and Saturdays year round

TRAVEL STYLE Expedition cruise

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sail with a certified photo instructor and expert naturalist guides
- Enjoy close encounters with unique wildlife
- Snorkel with penguins, marine iguanas, sea lions and more

INCLUSIONS

Seven nights' cruise and two nights' hotel accommodation, selected meals, Galapagos Transit Control Card, fuel surcharge, guided excursions, Galapagos National Park Fee, Galapagos transfers.

FROM AU\$9,350/NZ\$10,565

*Prices are per person, twin share, based on low-season travel. Terms and conditions apply.



From bear cubs in the springtime to wolf tracks in the snow, British Columbia, on Canada's Pacific coast, is the place for wildlife encounters any time of year.

INTO THE WILD

British Columbia's ancient forests, fjord-cut coastline and untouched islands are home to a wealth of wildlife – and a host of adventurous ways to see them. Imagine sailing with whales, watching grizzly bears from a kayak, or tracking lynx and moose by snowshoe. For an experience to remember, start with these top seasonal picks.

SPRING AWAKENING

The year starts with mammals emerging from hibernation – many accompanied by new babies. At Whistler, a mountain resort just two hours' drive from Vancouver, you can see some of the 60 or so resident black bears foraging along valley trails. In the Rockies, big horn sheep, elk and deer graze along mountain paths and even by the roadside. During spring, one of the world's largest migrations happens just off the west coast of Vancouver Island, when roughly 20,000 Pacific grey whales travel near the shore on their way to summer feeding grounds.

A WHALE OF A SUMMER

Johnstone Strait, a salmon-rich waterway off Vancouver Island's east coast, is one of the best places in the world to see orcas, as well as humpback whales, sea lions, bald eagles, dolphins and porpoises. You can take a day trip from northern Vancouver Island or camp out on an island in the strait, sleeping within earshot of breaching humpbacks and kayaking among pods of orcas by day. New to the outdoors? No problem. The sheltered waters are fine for beginners and the campsites are far from rustic.

Further north, wildlife encounters meet cultural insights on Haida Gwaii, a little-visited archipelago of more than a hundred islands off BC's north coast. Dubbed the Galápagos of the North, Haida Gwaii's old-growth forests and untouched beaches shelter a wealth of unique flora and fauna, including the largest species of black bear in the world. The islands are also the ancestral home of the Haida people, whose historic



villages and modern culture are an essential part of any visit here.

Explore Haida Gwaii's roadless southern reaches by sailboat, visiting ancient villages (including a UNESCO World Heritage Site), while spotting eagles, humpback whales, sea lions and orcas. Alternatively, stay at a floating eco-lodge on the island's northwest coast. You'll arrive by helicopter and learn about local flora, fauna and cultural traditions with a Haida guide.

AUTUMN ENCOUNTERS

The Great Bear Rainforest, a wildlife-rich tract of wilderness along BC's rugged central and northern coast, is one of the most pristine places on the planet. Accessible only by sea or air, the islands, woods and shoreline here support a thriving population of bears. The best time to see them is from late summer to early autumn, when black bears, grizzly bears and even rare white Kermode (or spirit) bears head to the beaches for a pre-hibernation salmon feast. Arrive by boat or seaplane at a comfortable floating lodge and spend the days watching bears, whales, dolphins and eagles from the safety of a kayak, zodiac or gently floating drift boat. Another option is to travel by yacht and anchor at a different cove each night.

WINTER WONDERLAND

If you're heading to BC in winter you've probably packed your skis, but the colder months are also a magical time for wildlife watching. For a deep snow adventure, head north to the remote Cariboo Mountains and travel by snowshoe to watch for lynx, wolves, moose and cougars in their natural

habitat. Overhead, you'll see eagles, hawks and possibly even the unforgettable drama of the northern lights. Another unmissable winter sight happens between November and March, when hundreds of bald eagles gather at Brackendale Eagles Provincial Park, just minutes from Vancouver on the way to Whistler.

**SUPER,
NATURAL
BRITISH
COLUMBIA
CANADA**

ISLAND WILDLIFE & ADVENTURE

11 DAYS / 10 NIGHTS



DEPARTS Daily, 08 Jun-24 Sep

TRAVEL STYLE Tailor-made

HIGHLIGHTS

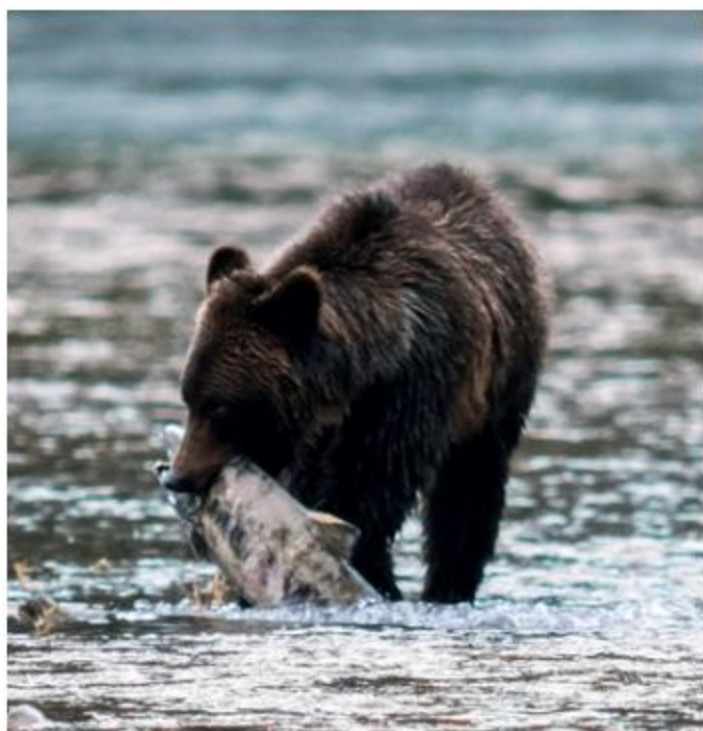
- Spot grizzly bears in the wild
- Go on a cruise to see orcas, humpback whales, Dall's porpoises and Pacific white-sided dolphins at Port Hardy
- Explore the dense rainforests and windswept beaches of Pacific Rim National Park

INCLUSIONS

10 nights' accommodation, 11 days' car rental, selected meals, sightseeing and ferry fares as specified.

FROM AU\$3,665* / NZ\$4,025*

*Prices are per person, twin share. Terms and conditions apply.





WINTER WONDERLAND

With the lights of the aurora on display, polar bears making an appearance and action aplenty, there's no better time to visit **CANADA** than the winter season. Start planning now for your 2020 adventure.

Want to see some of the world's most spectacular landscapes crowned by snow and ice? Head to Canada and get ready to be amazed. Explore regions like the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, the Yukon and the high Arctic for a once-in-a-lifetime adventure you won't ever forget. There's the chance to drive the famous ice roads, stay on the tundra, search for wildlife, go dogsledding and see the northern lights.

But it's not only about the wilderness. Check out some of the cities – from cosmopolitan capitals like Québec to outposts like Dawson City – for a combination of history and culture.

Winter is like no other time of year in this vast and diverse country. Here are just some of the uniquely Canadian adventures you can embark upon.

WINTER PHENOMENA: ICE BUBBLES TO AURORA

Observe the spectacular natural phenomena of the Canadian winter, snowshoe through wilderness, enjoy a sleigh ride, search for wildlife and fly via helicopter to the famous ice bubbles trapped under Abraham Lake. Then fly to the Northwest Territories where you will have three days to seek out the northern lights and explore Yellowknife.

INCLUSIONS Eight nights' accommodation, helicopter tour, selected sightseeing, aurora viewing, winter clothing rental in Yellowknife, flight from Calgary to Yellowknife.

9 DAYS / 8 NIGHTS
TRAVEL DATES Daily 14 Dec–26 Mar
FROM AU\$3,149/NZ\$3,559*

NORTHERN LIGHTS AND WINTER NIGHTS

Combine fine dining with the spectacular northern lights for the ultimate Manitoba winter experience. View the aurora from the comfort of the tundra buggy and attend RAW: churchill (select departure dates only) where you will dine in a 300-year-old fort on meals prepared by Canada's best chefs.

INCLUSIONS Seven nights' accommodation, most meals, domestic flights, 4 tundra buggy excursions, dogsledding, local touring.

8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS
TRAVEL DATES 17 & 24 Feb;
01 & 05 Mar
FROM AU\$7,229/NZ\$8,219*



**WINTER EXPLORER:
ICE ROAD TO THE ARCTIC SEA**

Experience the vast wilderness of Canada's far north on an epic journey along the famed ice road on the edge of the Arctic Ocean. Starting in Yukon's capital, Whitehorse, head north through the jagged peaks of the Tombstone Mountains to the tundra before arriving in Tuktoyaktuk, a unique and remote community in the high Arctic.

INCLUSIONS Seven nights' accommodation, flight between Inuvik/Whitehorse, city tours in Whitehorse and Dawson City, Historic First Nations city tour in Tuktoyaktuk.

8 DAYS / 7 NIGHTS
TRAVEL DATES 01, 08, 22 & 29 Mar
FROM AU\$4,509/NZ\$5,129*

YUKON DOGSLEDDING ADVENTURE

Take a once-in-a-lifetime journey to Canada's Yukon wilderness for a multiday dogsled adventure. Spend two nights at Southern Lakes Resort before dogsledding your way to Tagish Wilderness Lodge where you will spend the next three nights. Enjoy a range of dog mushing experiences, including full-day excursions and lessons on how to care for these amazing animals.

INCLUSIONS Five nights' cabin accommodation, some meals, dogsledding, return transfers from Whitehorse.

6 DAYS / 5 NIGHTS
TRAVEL DATES Selected dates
05 Feb - 09 Apr
FROM AU\$5,625/NZ\$6,395*

WINTER IN QUEBEC

Framed by the Laurentian Mountains, Auberge Lac-a-l'Eau Claire is the ideal location for outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy winter activities such as ice-fishing and snowshoeing. After you've had your fill of outdoor adventure return to Montreal for a day to explore this cultured city. You'll then travel by rail to Québec City where you'll have plenty of time to explore the city and spend the night in the world-famous Hôtel de Glace.

INCLUSIONS Eight nights' accommodation, including one night at the ice hotel, selected meals, VIA Rail between Montreal and Québec, selected winter activities, transfers.

9 DAYS/ 8 NIGHTS
TRAVEL DATES Daily 29 Dec - 11 Mar
FROM AU\$3,685/NZ\$4,189*

TUNDRA BUGGY LODGE

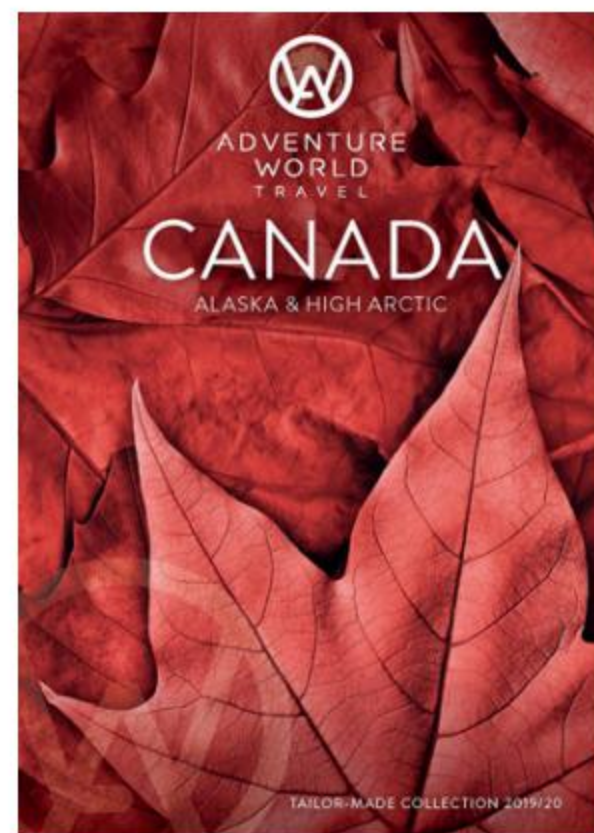
Stay in the world-famous Tundra Buggy Lodge, a unique property located near Churchill. Parked out on the open tundra during polar bear season, you'll be able to watch for bears day and night - you may even spot the northern lights.

INCLUSIONS Six nights' accommodation, including three at Tundra Buggy Lodge, some meals, sightseeing, domestic flights.

7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS
TRAVEL DATES Selected dates
Oct-Nov
FROM AU\$10,785/NZ\$12,255*

*Prices are per person, twin share.
Terms and conditions apply.

CANADA 
KEEP EXPLORING



2019-20 brochure collection available now



BEST OF New England

Take a tour of the east coast of the USA, home to stunning beaches, breathtaking landscapes and quaint fishing villages.

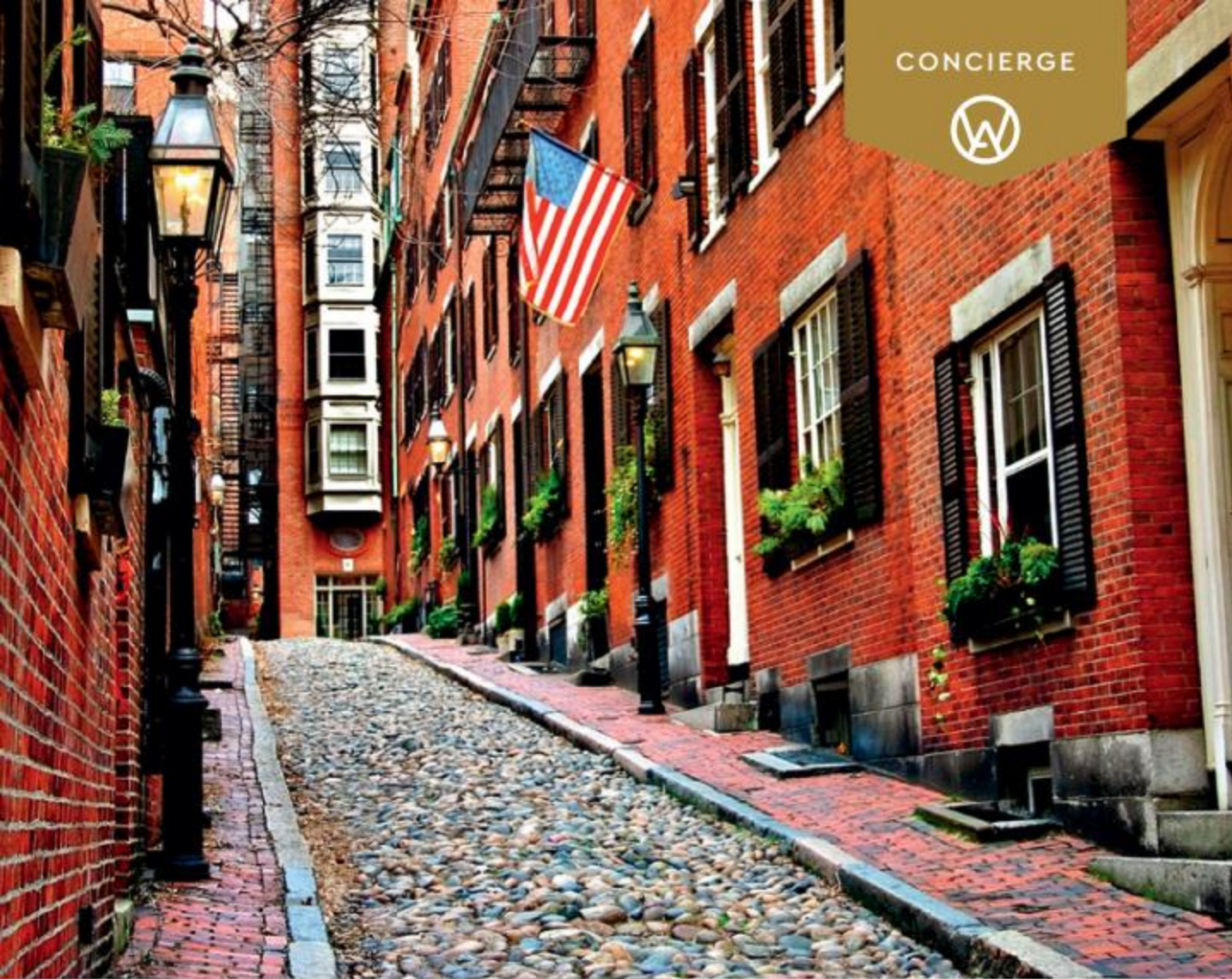
Discover New England at your own pace on a 12-day self-drive itinerary, taking in all of the regional highlights. History buffs will love Boston and Newport, while nature lovers will be at home in Maine's Acadia National Park and the White Mountains of New Hampshire. There is also plenty of time to unwind in beautiful Cape Cod and indulge in the freshest seafood around.

DAYS 1-2

BOSTON

Arrive in Boston and explore this vibrant and historic city. Stroll the Freedom Trail, a four-kilometre walk that takes in some of the key sites and reveals the fascinating history of the American Revolution. You'll also have two evenings to indulge in delicious seafood. Don't miss the clam chowder and try some of the East Coast's best craft brews.



**DAY 3****BOSTON - KENNEBUNKPORT**

Leave behind the bustle of Boston then stop at Salem to visit the Salem Witch Museum and discover the history of the trials of 20 people accused of witchcraft in the late seventeenth century. Your final destination is Kennebunkport, a small coastal town in southern Maine and a long-time haven for writers and artists.

DAY 4**KENNEBUNKPORT - BAR HARBOR**

Enjoy a leisurely journey through quaint fishing villages as you head north along the beautiful Maine Coast. You may want to stop to see the famous Portland Head Lighthouse before arriving in Bar Harbor, gateway to Acadia National Park.

DAY 5**ACADIA NATIONAL PARK**

Take a full day to discover soaring peaks, dramatic glacier-carved valleys, clear lakes and the rugged shoreline of Acadia National Park. The area is home to large populations of seabirds, as well as bears and moose, and features the only true fjord on the east coast of the United States.

DAY 6**BAR HARBOR - WHITE MOUNTAINS**

Travel inland to the White Mountains, New Hampshire's outdoor playground. Enjoy a scenic drive through historic villages and enchanting covered bridges.

DAY 7**WHITE MOUNTAINS - STOWE**

Traverse the White Mountains and cross into the state of Vermont. Your destination is Stowe, a quintessential New England village and home to Mount Mansfield, Vermont's highest peak.

DAY 8**STOWE - THE BERKSHIRES**

Head south and pass through the scenic Green Mountains, home to bears, moose, deer and wild turkey. Cross back into Massachusetts and stay overnight in The Berkshires, a rural region dotted with quaint villages and known for its thriving arts scene and farm-to-table cuisine.

DAY 9**THE BERKSHIRES - NEWPORT**

Pass through a series of wonderful villages before reaching the seaside town of Newport, Rhode Island. There's the chance to visit some of Newport's famous Gilded Age mansions, many of which are now museums.

DAY 10**NEWPORT - CAPE COD**

Explore Cape Cod with its high cliffs, rolling dunes, broad beaches, kilometres of walking trails, picturesque villages and delicious seafood.

DAY 11**CAPE COD**

Enjoy a whole day exploring this stunning peninsula. Visit one of the its 14 lighthouses, browse boutiques and antique shops and treat yourself to some delicious local fare from a seafood shack.

DAY 12**CAPE COD - BOSTON**

Depart Cape Cod this morning and return to Boston where your New England adventure comes to an end.

AT A GLANCE**12 DAYS / 11 NIGHTS****DEPARTS** Daily, 01 Apr– 31 Oct**TRAVEL STYLE** Tailor-made**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Explore Acadia National Park
- Take in the rolling dunes and picturesque villages of Cape Cod
- Get lost in the beautiful White Mountains

INCLUSIONS

11 nights' accommodation, 11 days' car rental, maps, driving directions, information package.

FROM AU\$3,059*/NZ\$3,325*

**Prices are per person, twin share, based on low-season travel. Terms and conditions apply.*



It's a tropical haven thriving with eco-treasures from high in the mountains to far beneath the surface of the ocean. The diverse cultural heritage and breathtaking landscape of Sabah, located at the northern tip of Borneo, creates the perfect cocktail for a fun-filled getaway.

The mystical Mount Kinabalu, at more than 4,000 metres tall, is the highest peak between the Himalayas and New Guinea. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2000, Mount Kinabalu is a hot spot for biodiversity. It has a wide array of habitats, from rich tropical lowlands to subalpine forest, and is home to the world's largest flower – *Rafflesia arnoldii*, also known as the stinking corpse lily, has a bloom up to a metre in diameter. Half of Borneo's bird, mammal and amphibian species, as well as two-thirds of its reptiles, live in this region, making it a spectacular destination for nature lovers.

Climbing Mount Kinabalu is a popular activity for visitors. Advance booking is required, as there's a limit of 132 climbers each day to help preserve the delicate nature of the park. Extreme adventure seekers can opt for the via ferrata – the highest in the world at 3,776 metres – at Mount Kinabalu. It is one of the region's latest attractions and also its most rewarding. The spectacular view of the sunrise from the mountain and nearby villages is an unforgettable one.

For those looking for serious competition, the annual Climbathon is usually held in October. The Adventure Series sees participants race halfway up the mountain and down to nearby villages that overlook the highlands.

Of course, there are milder activities, too. Sabah is an emerging bird-watching destination. Of the 623 resident and migratory species that flock to Sabah, 32 are endemic to Borneo.

THE JEWEL OF BORNEO

From islands surrounded by pristine coral reef to abundant forests teeming with wildlife, there's an adventure for everyone in **SABAH**.



The Bornean Bristlehead is just one of the rare species found only in Borneo's lowland forest. The fiery red and bright yellow feathers of its head make it highly recognisable, but it is still difficult to spot in the wild. Every year in October, at the Borneo Bird Festival, many international researchers and local birders fly to Sandakan, on Sabah's east coast, just to give themselves a chance to sight this elusive bird.

Sandakan is the wildlife capital of Sabah. Besides rare birds, the familiar orangutan is at the top of most visitors' must-see lists. As the leading centre of excellence for orangutans in Borneo, Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Sanctuary offers visitors a chance to view rescued orangutans who have been nursed to health and released back into the wild. Nearby, the Rainforest Discovery Centre, managed by the Sabah Forestry Department, features a 300-metre-long canopy where visitors can watch for some of the 250 species of birds that live here, as well as the giant red flying squirrel.

There's also the chance to stay in the world-famous Danum Valley Conservation Area. Borneo Rainforest Lodge is a high-end resort located by the Danum River and surrounded by pristine tropical, lowland rainforest. On guided walks or from the treetop canopy walk, you can see different species of monkeys and birds, sambar deer, elephants and, if you're lucky, orangutan.

Sabah is blessed with a long coastline of white sandy beaches and turquoise waters. There are also islands offering the opportunity for relaxed adventure – diving, water sports, snorkelling – as well as luxury getaways. One of the newest properties is Gaya Island Resort, which features modern elegance surrounded by nature. As well as fine facilities, a spa and excellent cuisine, the resort offers guided nature walks, diving within the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, the chance to visit a turtle rescue facility or join a class to create local handicrafts.





Manitoba

10 Ways

Observe the shimmering lights of the aurora borealis, see the king of the tundra, sample prairie life and more in **MANITOBA**, Canada's beating heart.

In the central province of Manitoba, Canada's rich history is reflected in its cultural landmarks, museums, national parks and dynamic neighbourhoods. It's here you'll encounter polar bears, the aurora borealis, and welcoming, unpretentious locals. Read on for 10 unmissable Manitoba adventures.

WALK WITH POLAR BEARS

King of the arctic kingdom, the majestic polar bear, can be viewed in Churchill – and there's more than one way to do it. Take a ride in a tundra vehicle or greet the world's largest carnivore from the comfort of a fenced wilderness lodge. See them from on high during a helicopter tour or, best of all, walk among them in their natural habitat.

CRACK THE CODE

Step inside the Manitoba Legislature Building in the capital of Winnipeg and join the Hermetic Code Tour, led by author and historian Frank Albo. Uncover secrets of the building's architecture, so well hidden they eluded experts for a century. Unearth hieroglyphic inscriptions, numerical codes and secret teachings inscribed in a Masonic language. Immerse yourself in mysterious icons and symbols then decide if the Legislature is a re-creation of Solomon's Temple.



SWIM WITH BELUGAS

Your first time hearing the beluga whales sing their sweet chirps and whistles is a moment you'll never forget. Thousands of these white whales congregate each summer in Hudson Bay. Jump right in! Swimming with belugas will give you lifetime bragging rights back home. There's nothing to fear – they are among the friendliest of whales and are just as curious about people as you are about them.

THE LIGHTS FANTASTIC

Located directly beneath the aurora oval, Churchill is considered one of the top three places on Earth to view the aurora borealis, with peak season from January to March. There are many ways to witness the spectacular light show, but if you head south to cottage country at The Pas, you may be lucky enough to witness the northern lights year round. Alternatively, head to Flin Flon for a stay at a lakeside lodge that offers fishing, hiking and snowshoeing between nightly viewings.

ALL THE ICE MOVES

Performing a downward dog on a frozen lake is something you'll never do in the southern hemisphere, and it's the ultimate Instagram moment! Held in Winnipeg during February's Fire & Ice Festival, the hour-long yoga class is followed by roasted marshmallows and tea.

EXPLORE HUMANITY

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg is the first museum in the world solely dedicated to the evolution, celebration and future of human rights. Join the more than 250,000 annual

visitors from around the world for an experience that will stir your heart as you become immersed in multimedia technology that makes this an authentic experiential encounter.

CROKI-WHAT?!

Head to The Forks and try your hand at a quintessentially Winnipeg pastime, crokicurl. The game was invented there in January 2017 as a life-sized version of the board game Crokinole, where players flick small discs across a circular board aiming to land them in the high-scoring zones. This cross between Crokinole and curling is the perfect way to warm up and make friends with the locals. Warning: 'Peggery' are a competitive bunch!

STEP INTO PRAIRIE LIFE

A short drive from downtown Winnipeg, at FortWhyte Alive, you'll get up close and personal with a herd of grunting bison, the largest animal to roam the North American landscape. Discover how aboriginals and pioneers lived alongside bison at Plains Cree Tipi, where you can hold artefacts made from bison, practise tossing a hunting spear and paddle canoes, once used for fur trading, on the lake.

DINE UNDER THE AURORA

At 58° north near Churchill, dinner is served by leading Canadian chef Mandel Hitzer inside the walls of a 300-year-old fort under the dancing northern lights. This once-in-a-lifetime experience is called RAW:churchill. Hitzer founded both this event and RAW:almond, an annual pop-up restaurant in Winnipeg, where guests feast on multicourse menus prepared by some of Canada's finest chefs

and served in an elaborate tent perched on the fork of the frozen Assiniboine and Red rivers.

CANADA'S GREAT MIGRATION

Witnessing a caribou migration is the stuff of dreams. As the winter begins, Manitoba's three types of caribou embark on an epic journey across the tundra. You'll be mesmerised by this powerful wildlife spectacle and the wild beauty of these creatures, resplendent with antlers and huge, kind eyes.

BELUGAS, BEARS & BLOOMS

6 DAYS / 5 NIGHTS



DEPARTS 18 Jul, 08 & 21 Aug '19

TRAVEL STYLE Small group trip

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy close encounters with belugas on the Churchill River
- Search for wildlife, including polar bears on the tundra
- Tour historic Churchill

INCLUSIONS

Five nights' accommodation, return flights Winnipeg–Churchill, select meals and activities.

FROM AU\$5,949* / NZ\$6,519*

*Prices are per person, twin share. Terms and conditions apply.

Manitoba
CANADA'S HEART BEATS



EXPLORE PATAGONIA

At the base of **SOUTH AMERICA**, spanning the Chilean and Argentinian borders, is a wild land of exquisite beauty. Vanessa Glavan unleashes her inner adventurer.

The barren, ragged landscapes of Patagonia create the perfect backdrop for hikers and their adventures at the end of the earth. While I know plenty of explorers have already conquered this part of the world, trekking across Lago Grey or tackling the renowned W trek in Torres Del Paine, I'm not sure I'm in good enough shape to get the best from the experience. Turns out I have no need to worry, since guests at Explora Patagonia, a lodge within the Torres del Paine National Park, can be as active or relaxed as they choose. Daily activities last either a half or full day, and, as long as they keep their guide in view, hikers can set their own pace.

That becomes a moot point on day one, with the weather too bad for hiking. Instead we take to the water to view Glaciar Grey, the world's third largest ice mass after Antarctica and Iceland. Having crossed Lake Grey beach being buffeted by sleet, we board our boat. A ferocious wind is pounding us and, thankfully, it's not long before we see the towering walls of the glacier come into view. I feel as though we've been transported to an episode of *Game of Thrones* and have just arrived at the Wall.

Standing more than 30 metres high, Glaciar Grey is both awe-inspiring and terrifying.

The weather forecast for our second day proves to be better, so I decide to tackle a challenging nine-kilometre hike called Pingo Chorrillo Los Salmenes. The jaw-dropping views of the Pingo River, the changing aspect of the mountain ranges and the serenity of the native forest make it incredibly rewarding. A couple of hours in, I realise we have only passed a couple of other hikers. With only about 300,000 visitors each year, human impact here is minimal.

Back at Explora, there is plenty more to discover, including the Ona Bathhouse, with a heated pool, massages and outdoor hot tubs overlooking the Paine river. As the sun sets, guests sip on pisco sours while looking out over Pehoé Lake. Each meal includes delicious freshly baked bread and a choice of dishes for entree, main and dessert. There's king crab, lamb shoulder, prawns and even an interesting algae risotto.

On our final morning, the clouds part and the sun shines through. Our guide tells us we're experiencing a perfect, sunny Patagonian day. There's not a

cloud in the sky. As we arrive at the lake Nordenskjöld, with panoramic views of the water and Paine massif, I sit down to take it all in. The sound of the wind, the turquoise lake and the jagged peaks of the snow-covered mountains have me mesmerised. I realise Torres Del Paine has made a hiker out of me and I'd do it all over again tomorrow, sore legs and all.

EXPLORA PATAGONIA

5 DAYS / 4 NIGHTS



DEPARTS Daily

HIGHLIGHTS

- Stay at the only lodge in Torres del Paine National Park
- Choose from 40 different guided excursions in the park
- Relax in luxury at day's end

INCLUSIONS

Four nights' accommodation in a Salto Chico room, all meals, beverages, daily explorations and transfers.

FROM AU\$5,299* / NZ\$5,795*

*Prices are per person, twin share, based on low-season travel. Terms and conditions apply.



ADVENTURE
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Another Side of UTAH

The stunning national parks of Utah take on a completely different complexion during the northern hemisphere winter. Start planning now for the 2019/2020 season.

Imagine ruggedly beautiful, red desert landscape coated with a layer of snow. Utah's big three national parks – Zion, Bryce Canyon and Capitol Reef – are year-round destinations, but for the adventurous traveller the colder months offer the chance to get away from the crowds of the high season. Plus, hotels' rates during these quiet times are much lower, which means you can explore for longer. Rug up and take a different view of these natural wonders.



ZION NATIONAL PARK

Of Utah's national parks, Zion has the lowest elevation, and a light dusting of snow on its upper rims is pure eye candy. Plus, trails such as Angels Landing, Observation Point and the Narrows are open all year round and devoid of the crowds that arrive in spring. There's also the opportunity to try canyoneering, mountain biking, and helicopter and jeep tours. These operate during all seasons, and avoiding peak tourist season means your experience is likely to be more personalised.

The Narrows, especially, is a truly magical experience during winter. If you're lucky enough to experience it during a snow flurry listen closely – you just might hear the snow fall. Just be sure to rent some gear from any of the

outfitters in Springdale to stay warm and dry while you hike its watery paths, where the walls of Zion Canyon come together and soar hundreds of metres into the air above your head.

The town of Springdale is the perfect base for visiting Zion and the surrounding area. This eclectic town is loaded with amazing hotel properties, restaurants, art galleries and shops.

BRYCE CANYON NATIONAL PARK

Imagine the orange hoodoos of Bryce Canyon topped with a fresh blanket of white snow. It's like some sort of Wild West Christmas card come to life.

During winter, the air is crisp and it seems as though you can see forever. Leave the car behind and elevate your

Bryce Canyon experience by trying your hand at cross country skiing or snowshoeing. You can rent equipment for both at places like Ruby's Inn, where there's also an ice-skating rink. For a memory that will last forever, take a sleigh ride or go horseback riding in the snow-covered environs. Ruby's Inn hosts a Winter Festival in mid-February, with tours, ski clinics, the chance to try riding a fat bike over snow, kids' activities and so much more.

Another highlight of a trip here is traversing one of America's most scenic routes, National Scenic Byway 12, also known as Utah's All-American Road. Enjoy incredible views of sandstone rock formations, forests and state parks, and stop at towns like Escalante, the gateway to the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument.

CAPITOL REEF NATIONAL PARK

The end point of Highway 12 is Capitol Reef National Park, which is the just the beginning of another incredible Utah adventure. Even during the depths of winter, it's low elevation desert areas remain almost snow free and the temperatures are mild. All the amazing scenery – Capitol Dome, a white sandstone formation named after the Capitol Building, Chimney Rock, and the natural arch of Hickman Bridge – are accessible during the winter months and you'll sometimes seemingly have them all to yourself.

If you want to take to the heights of the park, tackle some of the famous hiking trails. At Red Rock Paradise, there are many tracks suitable for day-long adventures and all of them have spectacular views.

There are a number of big towns, like Loa, Torrey and Hanksville, offering lodging and dining, while the latter two centres also have outfitters who can set you up with all the equipment you'll need to get out and about.

LIFE
UTAH
ELEVATED



handpicked

J A P A N

Travel across this enigmatic country, discovering its history-laced streets and contemporary charms, from Tokyo to Kyoto and beyond.

Experience the best of Japan. Start in the ultra-modern metropolis of Tokyo before heading to snow-capped Mount Fuji. Get a taste of old Japan in charming Takayama before visiting the sobering memorials in Hiroshima. Finish with a few days to explore Japan's former imperial capital of Kyoto.

DAY 1

TOKYO

Welcome to Tokyo, Japan's buzzing capital, with its more than 38 million residents in the metropolitan area.

DAY 2

TOKYO

Get acquainted with Tokyo on a guided sightseeing tour. You'll hop on the subway to Asakusa, part of Tokyo's old town and the city's oldest geisha district. Stop at Meiji Jingu, Tokyo's most famous Shinto shrine, before immersing yourself in the pop and youth culture mecca of Harajuku, including a visit to Yoyogi Park. Then it's time to head to neighbouring Omotesando with its luxe shopping. (B)

DAY 3

TOKYO - NIKKO - TOKYO

Use your Japan Rail Pass to travel to the small city of Nikko, just two hours north of Tokyo. Spend the day exploring the World Heritage-listed temples and shrines that reflect the glory of the Edo Period (1600–1868). Nikko is set in hilly woodlands, making it feel a million miles away from the hubbub of the capital. (B)

DAY 4

TOKYO - HAKONE

Board a bullet train and make your way south to the iconic snow-capped Mount Fuji. Enjoy a relaxing soak in an outdoor hot spring, stay in traditional ryokan accommodation and sleep on a futon. In the evening, relax in your yukata (lightweight kimono) and dine on a kaiseki (multicourse) meal. (B)(D)

DAY 5

HAKONE

Today you are free to discover Hakone at your own pace using your transport pass. You may want to visit Owakudani, take a cruise on Lake Ashinoko or trek along the preserved old Takaido walking trail. (B)

**DAY 6****HAKONE - TAKAYAMA**

Explore the idyllic town of Takayama, famed for its narrow streets, well-preserved seventeenth-century merchant houses and traditional wooden homes, at your own pace. (B)

DAY 7**TAKAYAMA**

Today you may wish to visit the Miyagawa morning market bursting with local produce and farm products or visit the traditional *gassho-zukuri* farmhouses in Shirakawago. (B)(D)

DAY 8**TAKAYAMA - KANAZAWA**

Using your rail pass, travel to Kanazawa, one of Japan's cultural gems. Kanazawa boasts a wealth of museums and is home to two of the best preserved geisha and samurai districts in all of Japan. (B)

DAYS 9-10**KANAZAWA - HIROSHIMA**

Best known as the site where the first atomic bomb was dropped at the end of the Second World War, Hiroshima has a tragic and confronting history. A guided tour offers insight into the city – it includes a walk through the Peace Park in the city centre and a visit to Miyajima, a small sacred island off the shore from Hiroshima. (B)

DAY 11**HIROSHIMA - KYOTO**

Today you are bound for Kyoto, Japan's imperial crown jewel and home to the country's most treasured remnants of imperial life. It boasts more than 2,000 temples, shrines and gardens, so you will have no trouble filling your time. (B)

DAY 12**KYOTO**

Today visit Nijo Castle. As you walk through it listen to the creaking sounds of the floorboards. Known as 'nightingale floors', they were intentionally built to be noisy when walked upon so that would-be assassins lurking in the castle could be detected. Your guided tour will also include stops at the Zen gardens of Ryoan-ji and the Silver Pavilion. In the afternoon, stroll around Gion to catch a glimpse of a geisha going from teahouse to teahouse, and learn how to prepare typical dishes served in an izakaya during a traditional cooking experience. (B)(D)

DAY 13**KYOTO**

Your Japan adventure has come to an end. Extend your stay or transfer to the airport for onward arrangements. (B)

AT A GLANCE**13 DAYS / 12 NIGHTS**

★★★★

DEPARTS Daily**TRAVEL STYLE** Tailor-made**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Stay in a traditional ryokan in Hakone
- Glimpse geishas in Kyoto's Gion district
- Explore kawaii culture in Harajuku

INCLUSIONS

12 nights' accommodation, selected meals, Japan Rail Pass, services of local English-speaking guides on guided sightseeing days.

FROM AU\$6,569* / NZ\$7,245*

*Prices are per person, twin share, based on low-season travel. Terms and conditions apply.

CONCIERGE



ROCKY MOUNTAINEER RAIL EXPERIENCE

There's never been a better time to hop on board, with the luxurious train offering four new journeys for 2019.





New year, more excitement. For almost three decades, Rocky Mountaineer has been offering travellers to Canada the chance to roll through beautiful countryside, inhale mountain air and enjoy the best things in life. The all-domed fleet offers historic storytelling, world-class cuisine and the chance to view the vast and untouched wilderness of western Canada and the Pacific Northwest. Now there are four new journeys to book for your holiday of a lifetime in 2019. Here, we offer a taste of what to expect.

JOURNEY THROUGH THE CLOUDS MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE

10 DAYS / 9 NIGHTS

You'll travel between Vancouver and Calgary, in either direction, taking in Canada from great heights. This journey combines the best of Canadian Mountain Holidays and Rocky Mountaineer itineraries to offer a holiday that combines luxury, activity and once-in-a-lifetime experiences. You'll travel by road through Banff and along the Icefields Parkway – watch out for glaciers, cascading waterfalls, rock spires and lakes – to Cariboos. Here, you'll experience two days of guided hiking through the landscape laced with glaciers. Take a panoramic helicopter ride to the starting point then spend the day roaming in the mountains with your guide – there are distances and levels of difficulty for all types of hikers. As well as nine nights in hotel accommodation, you'll travel on Rocky Mountaineer for two days, between Vancouver, Kamloops and Jasper, taking in the dramatic scenery of the Canadian Rockies from the comfort of your premium carriage.

FIRST PASSAGE TO THE WEST CANMORE SELF-DRIVE

7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS

Combine the thrill of two days on board Rocky Mountaineer, from Vancouver to Canmore, with the flexibility of travelling by car as you continue on to Lake Louise and Calgary. Be inspired by the glistening waters, soaring mountains and majestic Victoria Glacier during your stop at Lake Louise, where you can explore by hiking, canoeing or horseback riding. Travel through the ranching regions of Alberta before arriving in Calgary, where, despite massive growth thanks to mining riches, the city retains some of its Cowtown culture.

FIRST PASSAGE TO THE WEST KANANASKIS SELF-DRIVE

7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS

Much like the Canmore experience, this journey begins with two days on Rocky Mountaineer travelling from Vancouver to Kananaskis via Kamloops. Kananaskis Country offers more than 4,000 square kilometres of mountain parks and foothills, and is a year-round playground for those

who love the great outdoors. In the warmer months, go hiking, mountain biking and fishing to breathe in that fresh mountain air. Then it's time to drive yourself onwards to Lake Louise and Calgary.

FIRST PASSAGE TO THE WEST SUNSHINE VILLAGE SELF-DRIVE

7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS

When you leave Kamloops on the second day of your Rocky Mountaineer adventure, you'll pass Craigellachie, where the final spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway was driven, climb over Rogers Pass, travel past Kicking Horse Canyon and experience the Spiral Tunnels, an amazing feat of engineering that opened in 1909. You'll arrive in Banff, then take a short 15-minute drive to Sunshine Village. Located at 2,200 metres in the Canadian Rockies, this town is surrounded by some of the country's highest peaks and is known as Canada's number one day hiking spot. You might also like to visit Banff's famous hot springs or ride the gondola to the summit of Sulphur Mountain. In the coming days, you'll drive your rental car to Lake Louise and Calgary.

AT A GLANCE

JOURNEY THROUGH THE CLOUDS MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES (EASTBOUND)

10 DAYS / 9 NIGHTS



DEPARTS 15 and 18 Jul; 05 and 08 Aug

HIGHLIGHTS

- Two full days of guided hiking in the Cariboo Mountains
- Rocky Mountaineer rail journey
- Icefields Parkway tour

INCLUSIONS

Nine nights' hotel accommodation, two days of Rocky Mountaineer SilverLeaf Service, selected meals and sightseeing.

FROM AU\$8,139* / NZ\$8,914*



*Prices are per person, twin share.
Terms and conditions apply.



THE CAPITAL OF COOL



In the northwest of the USA, there's one place that's ahead of everywhere else. Head to **PORTLAND** for craft beer, third-wave coffee and a seriously good time.

It's the largest city in Oregon and one with a uniquely creative and gloriously kooky vibe. In Portland, you can check out a celebrated food and drink scene, enjoy live music every night of the week, and explore a packed calendar of events, from film festivals to naked bike rides. But there's also plenty to do beyond the city, from hiking, camping and cycling to skiing Mt Hood.

A hub for creators and designers, Portland's retail scene is all about one-of-a-kind handmade creations, vintage fashion boutiques sitting alongside





big-name brands, and new and used bookstores, all of which is helped along nicely by its tax-free status (Oregon is one of just five tax-free US states). From March to December, shopping enthusiasts will love Portland's Saturday Market, the largest continuously operating arts and crafts fair in the US.

Portland's renowned food carts, of which there are now more than 600, are grouped in pods. Start in the city centre, at SW 9th and Alder, where 60 carts serving food from right across the globe cover an entire block. There are a few must-tries: *jian bing*, a type of Chinese pancake, at Bing Mi; Hainanese chicken at Nong's Khao Man Gai; and the Frying Scotman's fish and chips.

If you're looking for an experience that's not quite so casual, explore Portland's restaurant scene. The focus is definitely on the farm-to-fork movement, with chefs championing the region's outstanding produce. Book a table at Middle Eastern-influenced Tusk or the restaurant that put the city on the culinary map, Le Pigeon.

Craft beer lovers will find something to their taste at the 70-plus breweries, beer fests, tasting experiences and beer labs. For those who prefer grapes to hops, there are guided wine tours in the nearby Willamette Valley, with harvest and farm-to-table tours, and nearly a dozen urban wineries within the city itself. The local

passion for craft and fine ingredients extends to coffee as well, with a swag of independent roasters and small cafes brewing up espressos, Americanos and lattes. And if you're not sure where to start, join one of the many tours led by knowledgeable and fun local guides, who show visitors the best and brightest.

Portland's creativity is evident across its accommodation with elegantly styled traditional hotels, home to art galleries and award-winning bars and restaurants, as well as eclectic designed 'anti-hotels' that fully embrace the creative spirit of the city.

Leaving the city, visitors can choose from mountains or coast. Just 90 minutes east of Portland is Mt Hood, perfect for travellers looking to extend their ski season. Mt Hood Meadows offers some of the northwest's best terrain, accessible to all levels of skiers and boarders, with 11 lifts, terrain parks and the double black diamond-heavy Super Bowl. Mt Hood is also home to the historic Timberline Lodge. Built in 1937 and known for its cameo in the cult horror flick *The Shining*, this beautiful National Historic Landmark remains a magnificent ski lodge and mountain retreat.

travel
PORTLAND



Greenland and Wild Labrador

The best way to explore the stunning coastlines and fascinating cultures of Greenland and northern Canada? By expedition ship, of course.

Follow the route of Leif Erikson, the Icelandic explorer who discovered continental North America hundreds of years before Christopher Columbus. Travel from Kangerlussuaq in Greenland to St John's in Newfoundland, via coastal Labrador, stopping at incredible Canadian national parks along the way.

DAY 1

KANGERLUSSUAQ

Sondre Stromfjord is one of the longest fjords in the world and boasts 168 kilometres of superb scenery. We begin our adventure by sailing down this dramatic fjord, crossing the Arctic Circle as we go.

DAY 2

QEQQATA KOMMUNIA

The west Greenland coastline is a rich mixture of fishing communities, islands and complex coastal waterways. The waters are relatively warm here due to the West Greenland Current and its sub-Arctic location. As we enter the Arctic autumn, the tundra foliage will be turning beautiful colours.



**DAY 3****NUUK**

Welcome to Nuuk, the capital of Greenland. The old harbour region of town includes many buildings dating from Danish colonial days. The Greenland National Museum is home to the famous Greenland mummies and exhibits offer in-depth information about colonial, Norse and Inuit history in Greenland.

DAY 4**AT SEA - DAVIS STRAIT**

Sailing westward, like the Vikings, we cross the Davis Strait at the mouth of the Northwest Passage. Narrower and shallower than Baffin Bay to the north, Davis Strait is a haven for marine mammals and seabirds.

DAY 5**KANGIQSUALUJJUAQ**

We make landfall on the Arctic coast of Québec's Inuit region, Nunavik. Twenty-five kilometres upstream from Ungava Bay on the George River lies the Inuit community of Kangiqsualujjuaq. The tides here are nearly a match for those of the Bay of Fundy. The George River caribou herd, which is in critical decline, has its calving grounds nearby. A community welcome here gives us a chance to mingle with local people and explore the hamlet.

**DAYS 6-8****TORNGAT MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK**

Canada's highest peaks east of the Rockies are found in Torngat Mountains National Park. Here, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut will be our guides in their spiritual homeland. Polar bears, caribou, falcons and eagles are among the species we hope to spot on land.

DAY 9**HEBRON**

This haunting site preserves a Moravian mission station dating from the 1830s. The mission was abandoned in 1959, forcing the relocation of the Inuit who resided there. In 2005, Newfoundland and Labrador issued an apology to people affected by the relocations. Former Hebron residents and their kin continue to visit the site, and to hunt and fish nearby.

DAY 10**NAIN**

The administrative capital of Nunatsiavut, Nain is the most northerly community in Labrador and features a bustling harbour in a gorgeous location.

DAYS 11-12**THE LABRADOR COAST**

Labrador's coast in this region is much more varied than you might expect. Here we find coastal barrens, high sub-Arctic tundra, high boreal forest, mid-boreal forest and string bog, as well as the Akami-Uapishku-KakKasuak-Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve.

DAY 13**L'ANSE AUX MEADOWS**

L'Anse aux Meadows, a UNESCO World Heritage site and National Historic site, is the only authenticated Norse settlement in North America. The archaeological remains found here in 1960 date to approximately 1000 CE. Amazingly, the location of the ruins was first established by a close reading of the Viking sagas. Today, a superb interpretive centre and reconstructions of several Norse-style sod buildings make L'Anse aux Meadows a must-see for any visitor to Newfoundland.

DAY 14**TERRA NOVA NATIONAL PARK**

Terra Nova Provincial Park's amazing natural resources and location have attracted people for at least 5,000 years prior to its establishment as a park in 1957.

DAY 15**ST JOHN'S**

Sailing into the port of St John's has to be experienced to be believed. Signal Hill keeps watch as we take on our pilot and enter the world-famous Narrows and pass the charming houses of The Battery. High on the hill sits The Rooms, a cultural museum dedicated to more than 500 years of history surrounding St John's harbour.

AT A GLANCE**15 DAYS / 14 NIGHTS****DEPARTS** 18 Sep '19 & 23 Sep '20**TRAVEL STYLE** Expedition cruise**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Visit the Norse settlement at L'Anse Aux Meadows
- Sail the mighty Sondre Stromfjord
- Spot wildlife in Torngat Mountains National Park

INCLUSIONS

14 nights' cruise accommodation, meals on-board, sightseeing, charter flight from Toronto to Kangerlussuaq.

FROM AU\$14,595* / NZ\$16,079*

*Prices are per person, twin share.
Terms and conditions apply.





Japan's Tantalising Tastes

The diversity and quality of Japan's cuisine will blow your mind. Here's just a taste of what you'll find during a visit.





When you visit Japan, prepare for culinary indulgence. There's a new food experience around every corner, whether you're seeking traditional dishes or Michelin stars. With an abundance of fresh produce and a diverse range of regional specialties, you'll never be bored. So prepare your appetite, grab your camera and get ready for a tasty adventure.

Of course, sushi is Japan's most famous dish and it's thought to date back to the second century CE, when raw fish was encased in rice and salt for preservation. We often see it as a luxury food, but you'll find people eating it throughout Japan. When you get there, remember the word *sushi* refers to the vinegared rice, while *nigiri* is the common version, where a slice of fish or seafood sits on top of hand-pressed rice.

But if you're travelling all the way to Japan, you should seek out some of the

more unique dishes and experiences. Many visitors think of noodles as something that goes into a bowl of ramen (yet another food group you shouldn't miss during a visit), but the locals treat it as the main event. Seek out a restaurant where *soba* (buckwheat) noodles are made by hand, then order them as a main course and eat them dipped in a soy-based dipping sauce and garnished with grated wasabi root.

Even when you're travelling at 300 kilometres an hour on the *shinkansen* (bullet train) that links Japanese cities, you're in for some good food. Before you board, buy one of the legendary *ekiben* (station bento boxes) – there are hundreds of vendors at Tokyo Station alone dishing out these excellent value meals in their many variations. Inside you'll find a combination of rice, fish, prawns, meat, egg, pickled ginger, tofu and more – in other words, more than enough to see off your journey.

Perhaps some of the best food experiences in all of Japan are the simplest. A night out at an *izakaya* (Japanese-style pub), drinking beers or sake and snacking on *gyoza* (pork dumplings), *karaage* (deep-fried chicken) and *okonomiyaki* (savoury pancakes). Pulling up a stool and ordering *yakitori* at the stalls beneath Yurakucho station in Tokyo. Lining up at restaurants like *Narikura* or *Marugo* for irresistible *tonkatsu* (deep-fried breaded pork cutlets).

To explore more of Japan's delicious bounty, visit *Enjoy my Japan*, where you'll find videos and stories showcasing the country's deep traditions, its kaleidoscope of cuisines, the energy of its cities, a surprising range of outdoor adventures, and much more. enjoymyjapan.jp

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my
Japan



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Adventure World Travel, in partnership with World Animal Protection, encourages our travellers to enjoy responsible and humane animal encounters. We support the work of people who, like us, seek to protect the places we explore and who are creating initiatives that are driving positive change.

5 STEPS TO BEING AN ANIMAL FRIENDLY TRAVELLER

- 1** Avoid aquariums or marine parks where large mammals like dolphins or whales are kept in captivity. These environments are very unnatural and cause stress to these intelligent and far-ranging animals.
- 2** Do not purchase souvenirs made from wild animals such as fur, ivory, shells, seahorses, teeth, rhino horns and turtle shells.
- 3** Do not attend festivals or attractions that subject animals to cruelty for entertainment such as animal circuses, dancing bears, dog or cockerel fights, running of the bulls or any festival that causes suffering to animals.

4 Don't take a wildlife selfie if the animal is being held, hugged, or restrained, if you are baiting the animal with food or if the animal could harm you.

5 Only visit and support animal sanctuaries and shelters involving wild animals in captivity if the objectives of the organisation are in the animals' best interests (e.g. re-homing, rehabilitation or release into the wild).





CHILE'S HIGH PLAINS



The rugged landscapes and ancient culture of the **ATACAMA DESERT** prove a beguiling mix for Andrea Morgan.

Flanked between the Andes and Chile's coastal mountain range, the Atacama Desert attracts those who crave varied wilderness, artistic inspiration, Incan history, cultural engagement and stargazing.

San Pedro de Atacama is the sunny, blue-skied village at the heart of Atacama, and from where travellers will generally be based during their stay. Caracoles Street is the main pathway through San Pedro, with a variety of restaurants, local craft vendors selling pieces made of wool, volcanic soil and cactus wood, and outdoor gear shops for those who need to pick up last-minute equipment for excursions. Intricate mosaic work and beautiful wood carvings are all part of the town's architecture. In keeping with the natural environment, all buildings, including hotels, are made using wood and other natural materials. Most are only one storey high, allowing for full panoramas of the desert and Andean surrounds.

Running through Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru is the Andean Volcanic Belt. There are about 500 volcanoes in Northern Chile alone and seven of them are situated in the

Atacama region. They create dramatic photographic opportunities at sunrise and sunset, when a kaleidoscope of colours highlights the desert.

If it feels a world away, that's because it is. Atacama Desert is the driest non-polar desert on Earth, and one of the most important environments for researchers who need to approximate the conditions of Mars. In fact, Mars Rover vehicles are trialled here. But there's not just a lunar-like landscape to view. There's also the chance to hike volcanoes, visit salt lakes with resident flamingos, and explore Inca ruins and petroglyphs. And when darkness falls, the elevation and lack of light and atmospheric pollution means it's one of the world's foremost stargazing locations.

While there's plenty for adventurers here, travellers can explore at a relaxed pace, too. From Alto Atacama Desert Lodge & Spa, a stunning, environmentally sustainable property with strong connections to the local culture, guests can enjoy more than 30 different excursions. Go walking, hiking or biking led by highly trained local guides. If culture is on the itinerary, don't miss the Church of San Pedro de Atacama.

There is much spoken of the magic and the spell cast by the Atacama Desert, and it is absolutely true.

ALTO ATACAMA DESERT LODGE & SPA

4 DAYS / 3 NIGHTS



DEPARTS Daily

TRAVEL STYLE Tailor-made

HIGHLIGHTS

- Stunning scenery of the Atacama
- Enjoy local excursions with indigenous guides
- Luxury accommodation designed to blend with the natural surroundings

INCLUSIONS

Three nights' accommodation, all meals, open bar, more than 30 excursions led by local guides, return transfers.

FROM AU\$2,159* / NZ\$2,419*

*Prices are per person, twin share, based on low-season travel. Terms and conditions apply.



In the footsteps of Incas

No one is immune to the ancient beauty of Peru's most famous ruins. But, as Alison O'Loughlin discovers, there's more than one way to explore **MACHU PICCHU**.

Untouched for centuries, this is a mountain shrouded in mystery. Machu Picchu is one of the world's most recognisable landmarks – the remnants of a lost civilisation – and it's certainly towards the top of most people's travel bucket lists.

It's difficult to miss the Inca legacy when you're visiting Peru. From bright yellow Inca Cola, the Peruvian soft drink of choice, to the ancient agricultural terraces and huge stone structures carved into the side of lush mountains, this civilisation left behind a lasting impression. None of its remnants, however, is as distinctive as Machu Picchu. To this day, archaeologists and historians are still uncovering much of the detail of the rituals and day-to-day existence of the Incas, but this mountain citadel is far more accessible than you might have imagined.

I knew you could trek the Inca Trail and spend four days crossing mountain passes, traipsing through the Sacred Valley of the Incas, and camping by the Urubamba River, which winds its way through the valley. It sounds idyllic – like

a rite of passage for anyone possessed of an intrepid spirit. But my journey to Machu Picchu wouldn't be retracing the footsteps of the Incas. Instead it would begin in the quaint town of Ollantaytambo, where we would board a train to transport us on a picturesque 90-minute rail journey.

Located within the embrace of the Sacred Valley, Ollantaytambo is not only a gateway to travellers on their way to Machu Picchu, but also has its own Inca legacy. Originally a royal estate, the town has some of the oldest continuously occupied dwellings in South America. Tumbling terraces, elaborate waterworks and impressive storehouses cling to the side of the steep hills, which were used as a defence against Spanish attacks from Cusco.

The town seems to doze in the late afternoon sun. Long shadows are cast across vast stone structures running up the mountainside. From the top of the terraces, the vista is amazing, with the modern town stretching out across the valley floor. The railway line to Machu Picchu snakes alongside the Urubamba River, disappearing into the mountains in the distance.

At sunrise the next day, the train station looks as though it would be more at home at Disneyland than here in the valley. We join a small crowd milling about the platform and gathering proof of their journey as they pose for smartphone photos in front of the blue and gold livery of the Vistadome trains. The journey, when



we begin, is smooth, the only interruption coming from the smiling Peru Rail attendants who deliver a morning snack of sandwiches and coca tea to our seats.

In no time we arrive in Aguas Calientes. Souvenir vendors selling alpaca wool beanies and beautiful silver jewellery uncover their wares and chat among themselves as we cross the footbridge over a bubbling stream. As a coach takes us the final kilometres up the mountain to Machu Picchu, I try to catch a glimpse of the mountain hiding the citadel.

Inside the entrance gate, we follow our guide Celina along a stone path, pausing when she stops to chat about the history of the Incas and their legacy. "I first came here in 1979 with my father, who was an historian," she says with great pride. "Since then I have been here more than 40 times, and each time it has been different."

We finally round the bend of the path that brings us face to face with the main attraction, and it is breathtaking. Terraces stretch up into low cloud hovering around the mountain peak behind us. In the distance, we spy the Sun Gate, where weary travellers emerge from their four-day trek. It seems astonishing these ruins were only rediscovered by Hiram Bingham in 1911. Until then they'd been surrounded by thick cloud forest and were known to only a handful of locals living in a nearby valley. In the years since, restoration work has attempted to return the site to its original condition.

As we sit and take in the vista, people the size of ants scale the ancient stone stairs of Huayna Picchu, which means

'young peak' in the Quechua language. Only 400 people each day are allowed to ascend the towering peak, but we decide the view from where we sit is spectacular anyway. As we stare, llamas wander in and out of people's photographs.

We explore the vast ruins, from the artisan workshops to the Temples of the Sun and Moon, as the shadows lengthen. As the area surrounding Machu Picchu is within a protected park, there's only one hotel on the site itself, the luxurious Sanctuary Lodge, which offers rooms with a view over the ruins and the chance to explore after the last bus has gone. All too soon, though, we have to begin the return journey to Ollantaytambo. Maybe next time.

DISCOVER MACHU PICCHU BY RAIL

6 DAYS / 5 NIGHTS



DEPARTS Daily

TRAVEL STYLE Tailor-made

HIGHLIGHTS

- Take in the scenery of the Sacred Valley from the comfort of a train
- Explore spectacular Machu Picchu
- Discover the colonial city of Cusco

INCLUSIONS

Five nights' accommodation, selected meals, return Vistadome rail journey, English-speaking guides.

FROM AU\$1,979*/NZ\$2,179*

**Prices are per person, twin share, based on low-season travel. Terms and conditions apply.*



WILD ETHIOPIA:

THE ROOF OF AFRICA

Discover another side of this African nation, when you explore the rugged landscapes and historic sites of the Simien Mountains, Lalibela and beyond.

Atop the Ethiopian Highlands, you are standing on the very roof of Africa. This vast high-altitude plateau, marked with volcanic peaks and rent with deep gorges, is one of the world's most dramatic landscapes. Far below, ancient monuments and ruins stand as testament to Ethiopia's rich human history. On this singular nature and culture odyssey, explore a side of Africa that few travellers experience.

DAY 1

ADDIS ABABA

Located in the centre of the country, Addis Ababa is Ethiopia's geographic, political and cultural hub. Addis is distinct from many other African capitals because it was not founded or developed under colonial rule. One of its best-known sites is the National Museum of Ethiopia, which houses the remains of Lucy, a bipedal hominid who lived 3.2 million years ago and was discovered in 1974.

DAY 2

GONDAR - SIMIEN MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

After an early flight to Gondar, drive to Simien Mountains National Park. This wild high country, known as the Roof of Africa, is home to some of the continent's most dramatic scenery. Here we seek out the geladas, a gregarious species of monkey found only in the Ethiopian Highlands. Geladas are the only primates that are exclusively grazers, living on the grasses of the central plateau. They are highly social, rambunctious and comfortable enough to allow us to approach at close range.

DAYS 3-4

SIMIEN MOUNTAINS

Reaching Chennek, walk among giant lobelia trees in a landscape that feels otherworldly. This is the best place to spot the walia ibex, a national symbol of Ethiopia and one of the world's most endangered mammals, found only in this isolated



region. Habitat loss and pressure from cultivation have driven their numbers down to just a few hundred, which live on the escarpment's steep slopes and grassy ledges. The region is also home to the very rare Ethiopian wolf, also called Simien fox, and Africa's most endangered predator. Fewer than 400 remain, living in the alpine zone of the plateau.

DAY 5**GONDAR**

Depart early this morning for the drive back to Gondar. This city in northern Ethiopia is famed for its seventeenth-century stone castles and fortresses. Founded in 1636 by the great Emperor Fassilidas, this UNESCO World Heritage site was once the royal capital of Ethiopia and enjoys a striking setting atop tree-studded hills.

DAY 6**LALIBELA**

Today we fly to Lalibela, Ethiopia's cultural crown jewel. A cradle of Ethiopian Christianity, Lalibela is renowned for its magnificent ancient rock-hewn churches and is the scene of many major religious ceremonies. Christianity in Ethiopia dates to the first century CE – it is the only pre-colonial Christian presence in sub-Saharan Africa and one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. Today, about 60 per cent of Ethiopia's people are Christian, with most part of the Orthodox tradition.

DAY 7**LALIBELA - ASHETON MARYAM MONASTERY**

After a leisurely breakfast, we make an excursion to a little-visited, thirteenth-century, rock-hewn monastery near Lalibela, at an altitude of nearly 4,000 metres. Carved out of a cleft in a vertical cliff face on the side of Abuna Yoseph Mountain, the monastery's setting is spectacular.

DAY 8**BALE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK**

Fly back to Addis this morning, head into the city for lunch, then continue by chartered plane to Bale Mountains National Park. Ethiopia's second-highest



mountain range contains one of the richest habitats in the country's alpine heights. It is the best place for viewing a broad cross-section of Ethiopia's unique wildlife, including Ethiopian wolf, rare mountain nyala, giant forest hog, cape hyrax, colobus and vervet monkeys, and 16 endemic bird species.

DAYS 9-10**SANETTI PLATEAU AND HARENNA FOREST**

Spend two days exploring the wild wonders of the Sanetti Plateau and Harenna Forest. This vast highland region is the world's largest expanse of Afro-alpine moorland, a montane habitat with an average elevation of nearly 4,000 metres. The plateau is renowned for supporting the largest remaining population of Ethiopian wolf, which we hope to spot.

DAY 11**ADDIS ABABA**

Via a scenic three-hour drive, we reach the regional airport for our chartered flight back to Addis.

AT A GLANCE**11 DAYS / 10 NIGHTS****DEPARTS** 08 Feb, 05 Mar, 04 Oct, 01 Nov and 06 Dec**TRAVEL STYLE** Small group trip**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Spot the rare and endangered walia ibex and Ethiopian wolf
- Explore the little-visited Bale Mountains National Park
- Be amazed by the mystical rock-hewn churches of Lalibela

INCLUSIONS

Airport transfers, internal flights, 10 nights' accommodation, most meals, services of a Natural Habitat Adventures Expedition Leader, some gratuities, all permits, entrance fees, taxes.

FROM AU\$16,710* / NZ\$18,400*

*Prices are per person, twin share.
Terms and conditions apply.



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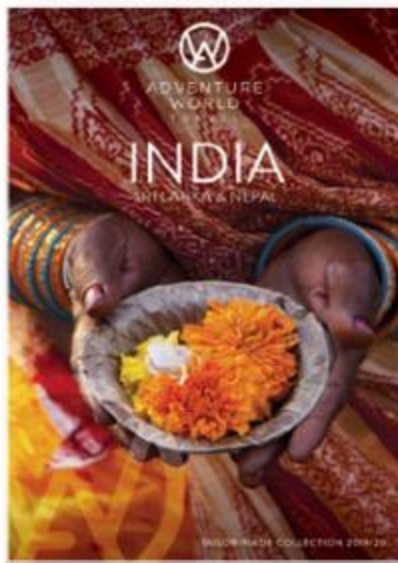
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