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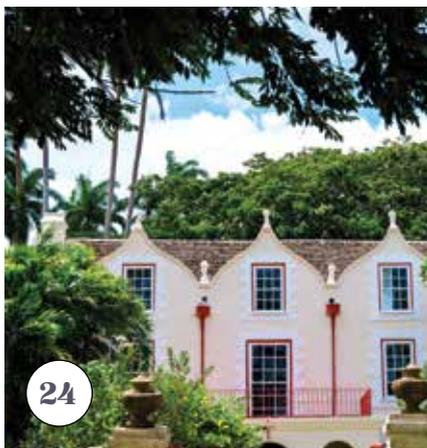




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YOURS TO DISCOVER



TRAVEL: A PASSION THAT BREEDS LONGING

A thirst for travel is an ardent one, not easily shook and, oftentimes, insufficiently quenched by travel itself. Even while abroad, I find myself scanning the horizon, knowing that a brand-new adventure is just one border away. It is a passion that breeds longing.

Travel inspiration flows unfairly from every direction: a new bucket-list destination or experience stacks atop my lengthy list with flippant regard for budget, time and commitments. Simply watching a movie, sampling a new cuisine, chatting with a stranger or scrolling social media has the power to evoke yearning for a faraway place. It can be hard – if not impossible – to scratch the travel itch.

For those of us who live to travel, it can be disheartening, even heartbreaking to resign yourself to armchair travel. I travel a good deal in my professional life but

personally, for the time being, I've broken up with travel. For my small family of three, the last two years have been a season of staycations and cabin visits. (Kudos to the parents globetrotting with their babies in tow!) For my aging relatives, waning mobility and the prohibitive costs of travel insurance keep them grounded. Canadian passports open doors to many places, but discrimination and profiling still exists for many in our cultural mosaic. Disability, chronic illness and mortgage payments are all some of the reasons to stick close to home.

It's for all the reasons above that *Canadian Traveller* curates the Experience the World subscription box. Four times a year, our members "pack their bags" and "travel" to a new destination. Our members have no idea where they've landed until they peek inside the package. Inside each box are five to seven items that evoke the culture, traditions, flavours and stylings of

that destination. The Experience the World Club brings the world to your doorstep while uniting a community of wonderful, like-minded people who are hungry for new experiences and just love travel. We connect our community in a private Facebook group, through which we share travel ambitions, swap tips and advice, recommend inspiring books and movies, and participate in challenges with fabulous wanderlust-themed prizes. (Flip to page 42 to peruse some of the items from our past boxes.)

Whether you've retired from travel or want to "travel between trips," we'd love for you to join us. To date, we've "visited" Italy, Morocco, New Zealand, France, Mexico, Bali, Greece and Jamaica. The question remains, "Where next?"

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INSTAGRAM

Visit #QuebecCity in winter? You bet! There's a saying that goes, "There's no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes." So pack your puffer jacket and wander Quebec City's charming streets during its most magical season: [instagram.com/p/B7tfnjLgn0j](https://www.instagram.com/p/B7tfnjLgn0j)

FACEBOOK

In December, *Canadian Traveller* visited La Paz, Mexico to swim with whale sharks in the Sea of Cortez. Fun fact: whale sharks are neither whales nor sharks – they're fish. Keep an eye out for this story in an upcoming issue but for now, check out this short video clip: bit.ly/38ykzes.

PINTEREST

We're adding road tripping #MontereyCounty's 159-km stretch of scenic coastline to our #2020TravelGoals: bit.ly/39sY775

EXPERIENCE THE WORLD CLUB

"The Experience the World box is one of my favourite subscription boxes!" says Vicki Duong. "The box is well curated with a sampling of products inspired by each destination, letting you experience the world without the jet lag!"

Editor's note: Join Canadian Traveller's Experience the World Club by visiting canadiantraveller.com/etw.

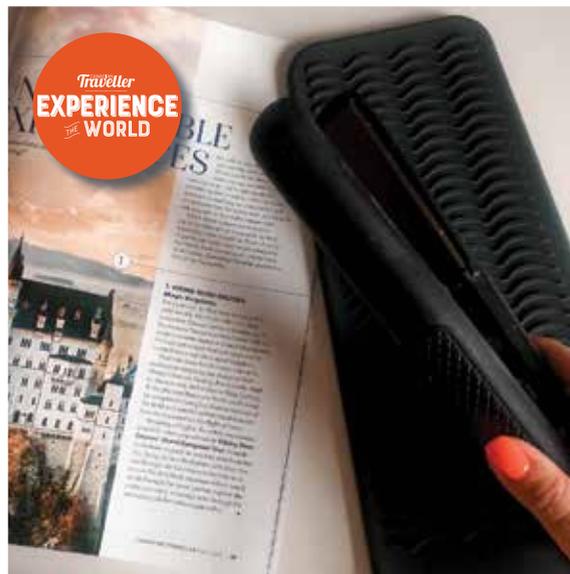
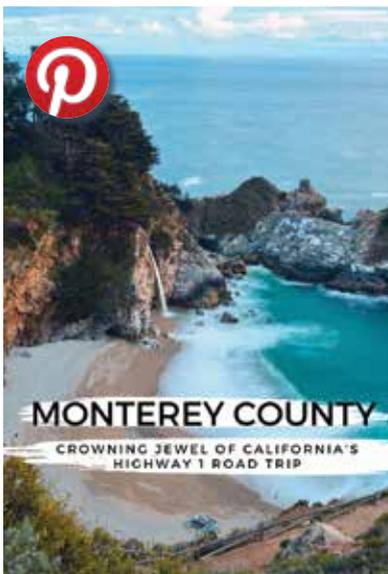
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Travel news, events and trends from around the world



SNAPSHOTS

What's the latest & greatest going on in travel? *Canadian Traveller* looks at what's new, what's hot and what's trending, in hopes of inspiring your wanderlust. Where next?



TRENDS

What's your Nature Score?

How connected to nature are you? You can find out what your relationship with the natural world says about you by discovering your Nature Score through the **Nature Conservancy of Canada**. From your ideal vacation spot to your overall link to nature, this fun, six-question online activity is meant to help you better understand your relationship with the outside world. Then, once you've got your Nature Score, you can sign up to connect with a virtual Nature Coach and follow a personalized journey to a happier, healthier life that is more connected to the outdoors. Get your Nature Score today at [NatureQuiz.ca](https://www.naturequiz.ca).



TRENDS

The travel forecast calls for...

KAYAK has released its annual 2020 Travel Hack Guide, a trend forecast revealing where Canadians are travelling this year. It reports some interesting insights, like the fact that Vancouverites are all over the map as Japan, South Africa, Turkey, Vietnam, Netherlands, Indonesia and Fiji all made their top 10 list. Meanwhile, Torontonians are looking to take in European culture and

history as Milan (up 35 per cent), Rome (up 26 per cent) and Athens (up 26 per cent) trended high for 2020. In Montreal, it's all about the sun with Martinique, Saint Maarten, Aruba, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Brazil and Colombia leading their trending destinations list. Across the country, Osaka, Japan took top spot with search interest increasing 145 per cent for 2020.

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ATTRACTIONS

New U.S. national park

Southern New Mexico's **White Sands** National Monument has now been re-designated a U.S. national park, making it the country's 62nd national park. Established in 1933 by U.S. President Herbert Hoover to preserve "the white sands and additional features of scenic, scientific and educational interest," White Sands contains the world's largest gypsum dunefield, including gypsum hearthmounds found nowhere else, as well as the planet's largest collection of Ice Age fossilized footprints. The re-designation is a big win for locals as efforts to have White Sands classified as national park have been ongoing for more than a century to protect the iconic dunes from commercial interests.

HOTELS

Bathing in the views

North Vancouver, home to Capilano Suspension Bridge, Lonsdale Quay Market and a trio of spectacular alpine parks has, generally speaking, been a place to visit, not to stay. But things are changing. The revitalization of the historic Shipyards District has transformed Lower Lonsdale into a very happenin' hood and these days, visitors are finding plenty of reasons to stay: cafés, artisan specialty shops, an art gallery, live music, an outdoor skating rink and now, a newly-opened luxury hotel, **Seaside Hotel Vancouver**. The boutique, 71-room accommodation spans two storeys and is located just steps from the SeaBus terminal. The new hotel also boasts a spa and **Seaside Provisions**, a lobby restaurant stewarded by Chef Sandro Oliveri that serves up fresh seafood and coastal tapas. *Canadian Traveller* recently spent a few nights in a 650-square-foot ocean view corner suite and we have to say, the bathtub views of Vancouver's skyline just can't be beat. Room rates start at \$148 per night. Read more about our visit: bit.ly/39tbXHz.

A young girl in a pink knight costume holding a sword. The background is a bright yellow and orange gradient. The text "THE PINK KNIGHT" is prominently displayed in large, bold letters. The "visit Anaheim UNCOMMON CHARACTER" logo is in the bottom left. The text "WHO SHALL RULE THE KINGDOM OF FAMILY FUN? Whether you fancy feasting among jousting knights or chasing thrills at historic theme parks, Anaheim has you covered—royally. visitanaheim.org" is in the bottom right. The text "Medieval Times ~ Buena Park" is in the bottom left of the image area.

THE PINK KNIGHT

visit Anaheim UNCOMMON CHARACTER

WHO SHALL RULE THE KINGDOM OF FAMILY FUN? Whether you fancy feasting among jousting knights or chasing thrills at historic theme parks, Anaheim has you covered—royally. visitanaheim.org

Medieval Times ~ Buena Park



EVENTS

Shell we travel to Belize?

Belize it or not, during the months of June and July, hungry travellers from around the world get their fill of spiny lobster as several crustacean-themed festivals take place across the Central American country. And you can forget the white glove table service. Skewers, tacos and lobsters fresh out of the shell are served against a backdrop of music, dancing, lively block parties, cocktails and more. The laid-back and picturesque town of San Pedro on Ambergris Caye kickstarts lobster festival season in mid-June with Lobsterfest. Visitors can devour all the lobster they can handle before comfortably retiring to the conveniently located **SunBreeze Hotel**, a vacation getaway located just a short stroll from the town centre. It offers clean, spacious accommodations and excellent amenities such as an on-site dive centre, restaurant, bar, massage studio, pool, sun deck and gazebo. Or choose **SunBreeze Suites** for its 21 oceanfront rooms and suites ideally positioned on the southern edge of picturesque San Pedro.



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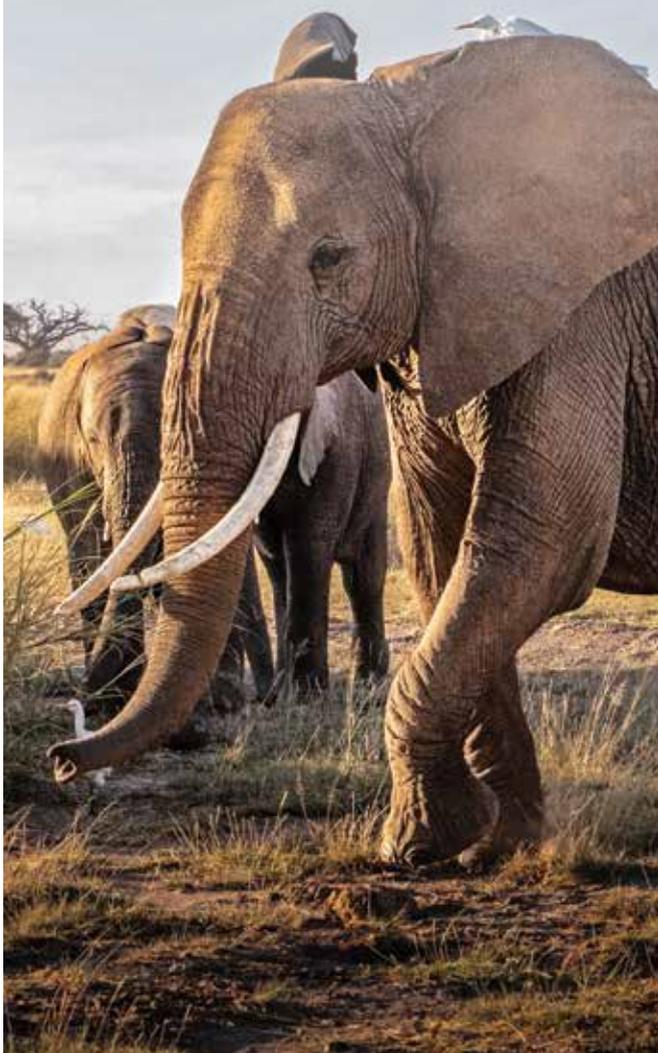
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TOURS

Goway turns 50

Goway Travel hits a milestone in 2020 that few travel companies reach, celebrating its 50th year in business. Still family-owned and operated after half a century, Goway enters the year with more than 350 expert staff, offices in Toronto, Vancouver, Los Angeles, Sydney and Manila, and big plans for celebrating its five decades in business. Started by Australian Bruce Hodge in a small Toronto office in 1970, Goway promoted its earliest trips as “fun holidays for the under 30s.” These were often epic overland journeys that spanned entire continents, from Alaska to Panama, London to Nairobi, and the popular “hippie trail” through to Kathmandu. Since then, Goway has grown and evolved to become an industry leader in long haul travel to destinations across the world, from Iceland to the Islands of Tahiti.



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TRENDS

A new kind of traveller

According to **Hotels.com**, there's a new type of millennial traveller. Identified in its recent global "Generation Travel" study, Hotels.com says the "Intrepid Improver" shuns sun, sea and all-inclusive vacations that promise to deliver better versions of themselves. Instead, they would rather spend their time attending things like laughter camps, music therapy, forest bathing and language classes. These self-improvement-seeking people now make up 81 per cent of Canadian millennial explorers and are willing to spend more on a vacation that enriches or improves them. They are willing to give up things like the internet, makeup, social media and alcohol on their self-help quests, while exercising more and rebuilding friendships along the way.

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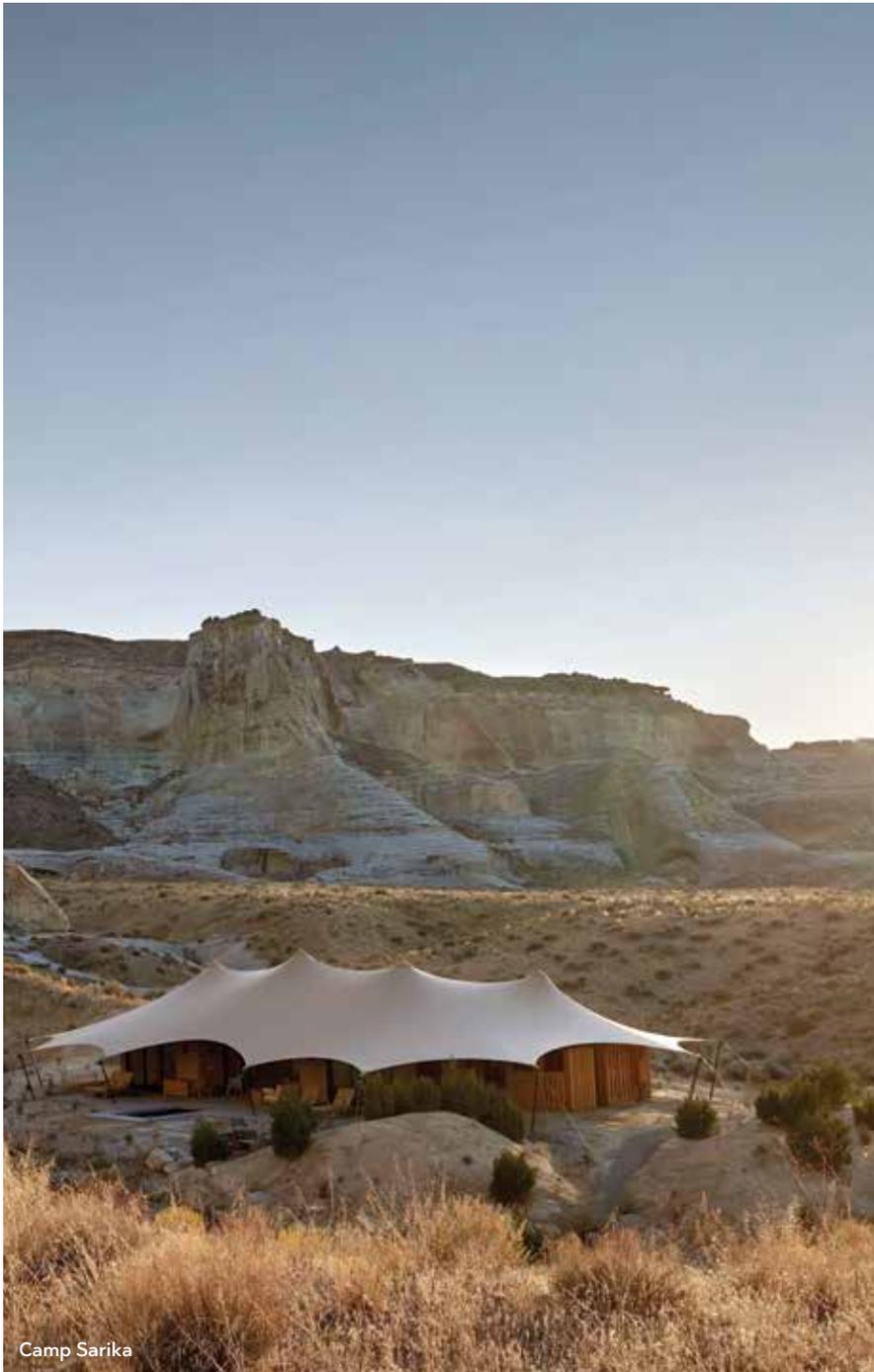
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Camp Sarika

HOTELS

Luxe desert glamping

To herald its 10th anniversary, **Amangiri** will open Camp Sarika in April 2020. The southern Utah resort's new camp will offer 10 tented-pavilions on a luxury encampment surrounded by raw wilderness in the heart of the desert, located a 30-minute hike or five-minute drive from Amangiri. Each

tent will include one or two bedrooms, a living area, dining space, bar, private terrace with fire pit and a heated plunge pool. The camp will offer its own main pavilion and restaurant, two spa suites, swimming pool and Jacuzzi. Guests still enjoy full access to the resort's facilities.

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The Seagate Beach Club



Nashville

BY WHITNEY CLAY

For generations, Nashville's claim to fame has been country music. Images of balladeers in cowboy hats singing about cold beer and love lost come to mind. While that heritage is still honoured throughout the city's fibre, visitors are flocking to the Tennessee capital these days for much more than the music. Areas like 12th South, The Gulch and Germantown have been redeveloped and reimagined, highlighted by upscale boutiques and buzzed-about restaurants. The television show, *Nashville*, starring Connie Britton and Hayden Panettiere, ended in 2018 after six seasons but helped to cement Nashville's "It City" status.

STAY & SLEEP



The **Thompson Nashville** in **The Gulch** is within walking distance of shops and restaurants and a five-minute drive from downtown. The 12-storey, 224-room luxury boutique hotel has one of the best rooftop bars in the city, the **L.A. Jackson**. Listen to DJs spin, enjoy craft cocktails and take in the city lights.

Another of the city's most popular boutique hotels, **Noelle**, is located downtown, on the edge of historic **Printer's Alley**. The 1930s Art Deco building has been completely rehabbed and renovated. In a nod to the area's illustrious past, there's even a speakeasy, aptly named **Hidden Bar**. It too has an impressive rooftop bar, named **Rare Bird**. Sit by the fire to enjoy a drink and the spectacular view.

The elegant, five-star **Hermitage Hotel**, which opened in 1910, is a Nashville landmark that has welcomed presidents and musical legends alike. Walk down hallowed halls to well-appointed rooms, just steps away from the heart of the city.



East Nashville's Folk

EAT & DRINK



Right across the Cumberland River from downtown is **East Nashville**, home to many of the city's most respected artists and indie musicians. While the area, particularly its commercial hub **Five Points**, has been known for its restaurant scene for years, some of the city's best new eateries are renovating long-vacant buildings and historic old homes in its farthest corners. One such example is **Folk** in East Nashville's **McFerrin Park**. Owner and celebrated Chef Philip Krajek pursues his passion for pizza (made with regional, organic, non-GMO wheat) and seasonal offerings. For brunch served all day, stop by **Marché Artisan Foods** and try the smoked trout crêpes with shrimp sauce or the fresh baked breads served with house-made jam and *gianduja*. For a sandwich worth writing home about, go by **Mitchell Delicatessen**. Try the turkey brie with jalapeño cranberry relish, honey mustard, brie and apples on a hoagie roll.

In **Germantown**, the popular **Henrietta Red**, opened by Chef Julia Sullivan and her business partner, Sommelier Allie Poindexter, offers an extensive raw bar, natural wines and craft cocktails and entrées such as seared scallops with *pepita salsa macha*, served with butternut squash. **City House**, helmed by the James Beard Award-winning Chef Tandy Wilson, has an Italian influence with a Southern flair. Try the catfish with cornmeal crust, served with grits and cabbage ragù or the belly ham pizza.

SEE & DO



One of the areas favoured by tourists and locals alike is pedestrian-friendly **12th South**. One highlight is **Draper James**, actress and hometown girl Reese Witherspoon's popular and unashamedly preppy boutique. In addition to women's clothing, there are canvas bags with the sayings "Totes Y'all" and "What Would Dolly Do?"

Another must-see is **White's Mercantile**, owned by Holly Williams, a singer-songwriter, entrepreneur and the granddaughter of country music legend Hank Williams. Fashioned as a modern-day general store, it carries soaps, candles, clothing, cowboy hats and a nearly endless array of gift items. Be sure to stop by **imogene + willie** for custom-tailored, made in the U.S.A. jeans; **Emerson Grace** for the latest from women's contemporary clothing lines including L'Agence, Ganni and Mother; and **Ceri Hoover**, named after the designer herself, featuring women's bags as pretty as they are practical. Want a little break from shopping? Satisfy your sweet tooth at the locally-owned **Five Daughters Bakery**, known for its croissant-style donuts, large enough to share; **Las Paletas** for homemade Mexican popsicles in flavours such as pistachio, coffee and banana cream; and **Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams**. Be sure to try the brambleberry crisp or the brown butter almond brittle.

Don't miss **Two Old Hippiess** in **The Gulch**, one of the neighbourhood's early anchors. The boutique features men's and women's clothing, jewelry, books, gift items and an expansive selection of guitars. And of course, there's live music five nights a week. After all, this is Nashville. Want to grab a bite? Nearby is an equally apropos eatery, open for breakfast and lunch and fittingly called **Biscuit Love**. Try the Southern specialty with thick-cut bacon or jam.

When it comes to Southern specialties, **Hattie B's Hot Chicken** in nearby midtown is a Nashville institution. Order the spicy fried chicken on the mild side, on fire or somewhere in-between. Add greens and pimento mac and cheese for the full effect. If you're now craving down-home cooking and don't mind a little drive, **Loveless Café**, about a half hour from downtown, serves up biscuits, barbeque and plenty of charm.

Next stop, **Lower Broadway** downtown (or Lower Broad as the locals say). Probably the heartbeat of Nashville, it is lined with honky-tonks and boot shops. Even on a weekday, the street is bustling with pedal taverns and horse-drawn carriages while music blares from bars and restaurants.

Celebrating its 60th birthday this year, **Tootsies Orchid Lounge** is the most iconic of the honky-tonks. In recent years, numerous country stars have opened bars and restaurants on Broadway, complete with rooftops

offering great views. There's Blake Shelton's **Ole Red**, **Jason Aldean's Kitchen + Rooftop Bar** and **Dierks Bentley's Whiskey Row**, just to name a few. It's party central, so it's no surprise that Music City has the distinction of being one of the best destinations in the U.S. for the ultimate bachelorette bash. Brides-to-be and their gal pals can be spotted in matching T-shirts all around town.

A stone's throw away is the fabled **Ryman Auditorium**, a former home of the Grand Ole Opry. Explore its storied past during one of the daily tours and check the schedule for evening concerts. Don't miss the **Country Music Hall of Fame**, just around the corner on Fifth Avenue South. Current exhibits include *Kacey Musgraves: All of the Colors*, on display through June 7, 2020. The exhibit details how the outspoken singer-songwriter challenged country's culture and became one of its biggest stars. Serious music lovers who want to try and spot a star-in-the-making might want to check out **The Bluebird Cafe**, in the residential Green Hills neighbourhood. Established singer-songwriters as well as up-and-comers perform at the legendary listening room. 🎧



Lower Broadway



What happens when you **LEAVE THE RESORT?**

From sinkholes to a wild beach and a serendipitous local encounter, **LEBAWIT LILY GIRMA** discovers what it takes to experience the real Dominican Republic.



THE QUICK, FAMILIAR BEAT OF Merengue percussion fills the air, nearly drowning out the whir of the wind pushing through the bus' half-cracked windows. We're bumping our way down the two-lane highway on the Dominican Republic's Atlantic-facing north coast. I've heard talk of a nature preserve two hours east of Puerto Plata where you can spend the day surrounded by a verdant forest and a network of iridescent blue, freshwater sinkholes; a place the Taíno people once inhabited, centuries later turned into a recreational space, while maintaining its natural state.

The adventure begins as soon as I step inside the *guagua* (public bus) I wave down from the main boulevard outside my hotel. “Laguna Dudú?” I ask. The driver’s assistant, hanging halfway out the door, nods and shifts his body sideways, inviting me along for the ride. After zipping past vast fields of coconut trees and pastel-coloured homes on the way to the town of Cabrera, I hop off near a big sign indicating Laguna Dudú’s location. A short walk down a dirt road from the highway takes me to the park’s entrance. I can’t see much past the ticket office, a pink wooden building reminiscent of a countryside home, but I can feel the start of an experience that’s a far cry from Puerto Plata’s resorts.

Arrows guide me as I walk past the office and enter a garden dotted with hammocks. Left: *Pozo de los caballos*. Right: *Laguna Dudú*. Left I go, down a series of steps leading into the forest. Limestone rocks tower over me, a sign of the park’s extensive cave system. Turning the corner, a wooden platform appears on the edge of a deep turquoise and emerald lagoon. I drop my backpack, strip to my swimsuit and slide into the water. After an initial shudder, my muscles relax and I simply float on my back, staring up at the surrounding foliage.

Thousands of years ago, the Dominican Republic was divided into five *cacicazgos* or Taíno chiefdoms. The Maguá chiefdom stretched from Puerto Plata all the way to Samaná and present-day Nagua.

“My wife’s father acquired the land in the 1950s,” explains Reynaldo Grullón, co-owner of Laguna Dudú. “It wasn’t until the 1946 earthquake struck the north coast that a depression happened – the land fell in and the cenotes at Dudú opened up.”

I hike back towards the main park area to visit the main lagoon and the crown jewel of this natural recreational space; Laguna Dudú.

This turquoise body of water spans nearly 2,000 square-metres with a depth of 7.6 metres – 90 per cent freshwater and 10 per cent saltwater – and lies at the foot of limestone cliffs. Locals and tourists are gathered around a zipline platform on the lagoon’s edge. Watching people attempt the “Dudú drop” is a big part of the fun here. Applause and laughter echo as the crowd cheers on the brave souls who dare to zipline halfway over the lagoon, before releasing and free falling 10 metres down into the water. Claps and whistles follow each big splash. I chicken out and walk down to the lagoon’s entrance ladder to swim in safety.

Heading back to the main road to return to Puerto Plata, I wave at the first bus I see. It doesn’t stop, nor does the next one. For the next 40 minutes, buses speed past me. Were they full? Realizing I could get stranded if I stick to my methods, I decide to seek help. I spot an elderly man stepping out of his home, a two-minute walk away.

“¡Señor, por favor!”

He stops and watches me scurry towards him.

He listens to my bus dilemma and promises he’ll help me catch one. I ask him what he was doing before I showed up. “We were in the kitchen making cheese from scratch. Do you want to see?”

Inside a zinc-walled outdoor shack, another man stands over a boiling pot on an open coal fire. He’s stirring a large, floating mound of *queso de hoja*, or traditional Dominican cow’s milk cheese. The elderly man hands me a small piece to taste; it’s thick and moist, like mozzarella, but salty.

“Don’t worry; I’ll wait on the highway with you for the bus. You should stop at Playa Diamante first; it’s on the way.”

We’re standing roadside together when a *guagua* reappears and the driver hits the brakes at my new friend’s hand signal. I hop on after bidding him farewell and overhear his instructions to the driver: “Take good care of her and let her off at Playa Diamante.”

Ten minutes away, Playa Diamante is another natural wonder; a diamond-white sand beach with waters so shallow you can walk almost a kilometre out. Locals are gathered with drinks in the sea much the same as if they were relaxing in a swimming pool.

On the way back to my hotel – the bus stops this time – I reflect on my day of healing waters and serendipitous encounters. It turns out, experiencing the real Dominican Republic takes little effort; it begins right outside the resort. **ti**

When You Go

WHAT TO DO: Aside from Playa Diamante, head south of Dudú to **Playa Arroyo Salado**, a stunning 1.6 kilometre-long golden beach where the river meets the sea, offering both freshwater and ocean swims. The village you’ll cross on the way there, **La Entrada**, also makes for a scenic drive.

WHERE TO DINE: The restaurant at Laguna Dudú serves Dominican dishes as well as burgers and sandwiches. Sample a traditional beachside meal of fried mahi mahi or creole shrimp with **tostones** at **Playa Arroyo Salado**.

WHERE TO STAY: Enjoy breakfast with a rooftop ocean view at **El Malecón B&B Hotel** in nearby Cabrera, a 15-minute drive from Dudú. Stroll along the waterfront in this small town and take in the tranquil atmosphere. In Nagua, the family-owned **Hotel Sinai** is an affordable option in town, a 30-minute drive from Laguna Dudú and surrounding beaches.



Playa Diamante



THE ONLY LANGUAGE YOU NEED

A Canadian traveller walks into a Japanese izakaya bar. She can't speak the language, nor read the menu, and the food is a complete mystery. As **KATHERINE BRODSKY** discovers, what might initially appear to be an isolating, intimidating experience often turns into convivial conversations with complete strangers that uniquely occur at the intersection of culture and curiosity.

IT'S GETTING DARK AND I HEAR MY STOMACH making demanding noises. I've been walking the cobblestone streets of Nara since arriving by train this morning and the only food my stomach has sampled today is deer cookies – which are not entirely meant to be eaten by humans. Admittedly, I did attempt to sneak a bite off a bun I was sharing with a deer but ended up being chased across the city's famous Deer Park instead. People pointed and laughed, but the hunger remained.

I have a plan, with the perfect izakaya spot picked out in advance, though it turns out to no longer exist. Plan B, based on a recommendation, is full and waiting is not allowed.

Thanks to a quick Google search, I locate a well-reviewed izakaya restaurant with a Japanese name I can't read, let alone pronounce (晴朗邸 勝手口 or Seiroutei Katteguchi, in English, as I later discover). Though, finding it isn't entirely a simple task. It takes a solid half hour only to discover I have been standing right next to it the entire time.

On the second floor of a nondescript plaza, I awkwardly walk into the tiny izakaya and I can't help but feel like a foreign interloper. There are people gathered around the bar. I prepare for a language barrier. I sit shyly at the table as one of the owners, a petite woman, warmly greets me. She motions to one of the diners at the bar: "They can translate."

For a moment, I'm relieved, believing that these patrons speak both English and Japanese. As it turns out, they don't speak much more English than the owner. But they've got an app on their phone to help translate and they are willing to help.

I wait for the menu, but soon discover that there is no menu to be found here. Instead, all of the dishes are displayed in bowls that sit on the bar. I need only point at the items I'd like to consume. But I have no idea what any of it is. The patrons around the bar collectively pitch in with what English they can muster to explain what the dishes are. I order a few, still not exactly sure what I'm about to eat. One is a marinated medley of peppers and other vegetables, another resembles sardines. Another dish is completely unknown to me. What can go wrong?

Looking around, there's a sense that I'm not in a pub or a restaurant. If it weren't for the well-stocked bar and décor, I'd easily mistake this little mom-and-pop place for the interior of someone's home where a group of old friends have gathered to enjoy the host's cooking and conversation. ▶

Tasting the food sends my taste buds spiralling. As we savour our dishes, the co-owner who so warmly greeted me sits down at the table and begins to ask me questions. Soon, a conversation is underway. It doesn't take much English or Japanese to break the language barrier if both parties are willing and eager. And, we are. Yes, I've made it to the inside; to the inner circle.

By the end of the meal I've nicknamed our kind host and her husband, with whom she runs this izakaya, my "Japanese grandparents." Acting faux offended, with a chuckle, she asks, "Grandparents? Not parents?" And in true grandparent form, they won't let me leave without some parting gifts – namely candy and a few other Japanese sweets. They also insist on taking photos with me.

A pang of sadness falls over me as I say my goodbyes.

ALTHOUGH NO TWO ARE ALIKE, izakayas are extremely popular in Japan. Many people live in tiny apartments, so socializing at home can be less common. At an izakaya, patrons can enjoy a variety of casual foods like Japanese tapas, fried dishes, *gyoza* (dumplings), *yakisoba* (fried noodles), *yakitori* (skewers) or even elevated dishes – the idea being that the food is meant to be an accompaniment with drinks and is often designed to be shared.

Once seated, you'll be given an *oshibori*, which is a hot or cold towel to wipe your hands. Unlike the place I found myself in, most do have menus and with pictures to help you decide. Often, though not always, there's a cover charge called *otoshi* where you're given a small appetizer like edamame or a salad. Depending on the izakaya, customers either sit at the bar, at tables or on *tatami* mats and dine at low tables. There are even standing-only izakayas.

An izakaya is a communal experience, whether you come alone or with friends. And in a culture that can often be reserved and formal, at an izakaya, Japanese people find that they can really unwind and blow off steam after work. ▶

*...at an izakaya,
Japanese people find
that they can really
unwind and blow off
steam after work*





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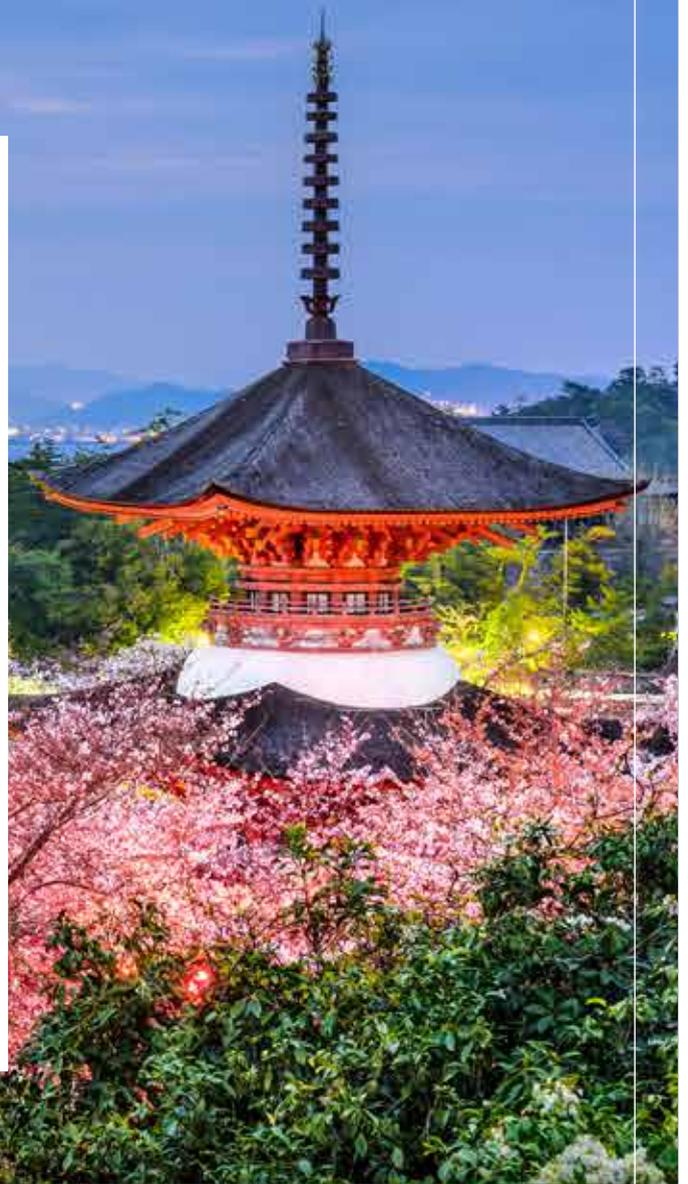
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Izakaya origins go all the way back to the Edo period (between 1603 and 1868). The original idea was to have places where one could purchase a bottle of sake and sit down to drink it. Eventually, food also became part of the equation, along with additional types of alcohol. In the 70s and 80s, salarymen (office workers) were the dominant patrons, but these days izakayas are popular with just about everyone, of any age or gender. They can also vary in size, from postage stamp to several floors.

At an izakaya, the guest and chef or owner/host are in close proximity. Often, the food is even prepared right in front of them. They draw in regulars from the neighbourhood and it all contributes to building a sense of community and communal dining.

Frequenting an izakaya is part of a cultural tradition in Japan. It's how colleagues bond after work and thanks to a drink or two (or three), they are able to let go of formality. The reserved facade falls, and instead, there's lively chatter and laughter.

ON ANOTHER EVENING, half-asleep already, I'm convinced to grab some *okonomiyaki* (a delicious savoury pancake) at Hot Shot in Kyoto. The vibe here is considerably different than the family-run izakaya I visited in Nara – and there are menus in both Japanese and English. Everyone sits around the bar, chatting and laughing loudly – clearly more than a few drinks into the evening already.

The woman next to me warns me about the hot sauce I'm pouring all over my pancake. I brush her off; she's severely underestimating my tolerance. And although initially I feel like I am interrupting a reunion between friends, it doesn't take much time for everyone around the bar to become part of the conversation, yelling across the table.

I don't speak a lick of Japanese, so I have to make do with Google Translate; or rather, Sensei Google, as it becomes known throughout the evening. We even bow down to it. The Japanese people around me enthusiastically throw in as much broken English as they know. Hand gestures help, too. We discuss animal cafés, Japanese and Hollywood actors, young Japanese pop stars and Bill Murray. Soon, I discover that it's nearly 3 a.m. and we are still conversing. And then the whiskey sodas start arriving.

My new friends teach me a word in Japanese: *yopparai*. They point at a man at the bar who's been drinking so long he's barely able to string two words together – in either language. "Yopparai," they repeat. It means "drunkard." Then they begin to point playfully to themselves, "Yopparai!" That's right, they are all joyful drunkards, at least by night.

I'm sad to leave, but there's a big day ahead tomorrow. No doubt, my friends will be drinking long after I drift off to slumberland. Many izakayas in Japan can stay open until 5 a.m., so there's plenty of time to eat, drink and talk. The latter strikes me as being particularly unique to Japan.

When I walked in, I never expected to engage in conversation with the *entire* bar. But here I was, chatting long into the night like I'd just met some people at a friend's house party.

In North America, I'm used to going to bars with friends. Sometimes, we'll even do a happy hour. If we're feeling particularly bold, we'll talk to the bartender, but it's unusual for all the patrons to start conversing amongst each other.

But at Japan's izakayas, at least for an evening, I'm amongst local pals. It's the closest to *Cheers* you're going to get, even if we won't remember each other's names in the morning. 



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A HOT, HELLISH LIQUOR

(Or is it?)

BY JENNIFER HUBBERT

WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY to join a trip dubbed “The Ultimate Rum Run” presented itself, this bourbon-drinking traveller thought “probably not for me.” Sure, I enjoy poolside mojitos and the odd piña colada well enough, but when was the last time I reached for a bottle of the sailor spirit? Sometimes spiced, frequently mixed and often disguised in cocktails, it occurred to me that I didn’t even know whether I liked rum or not. I hoped a visit to Barbados and Bermuda would introduce me to a rum worth drinking unadulterated by syrups, sweeteners and soda. Travelling by private jet didn’t hurt either.

“IT’S QUITE IMPOSSIBLE TO TALK ABOUT rum without talking about Barbados,” says Chester Browne, Mount Gay Rum’s affable global brand ambassador. “Because Barbados is the birthplace of rum.” ▶



A rum tasting at St. Nicholas Abbey with Larry Warren



A private Goslings-paired dinner at the Waterlot Inn, Bermuda

“We import pretty much everything in Bermuda. Rum and babies are the only thing we make here.”



The Great House at St. Nicholas Abbey

Recognized as the world’s oldest commercial rum distiller, Mount Gay Rum in beautiful Barbados is an appropriate place to kick off the ultimate rum run.

Seated in the distiller’s handsomely appointed Great House, Browne deconstructs the spirit for us. Rum is made from molasses, a by-product of the sugarcane industry; gold rum gets its colour from the barrel-aging process (typically in a once-used American bourbon barrel) and white rum is young and unoaked. In the early days of distillation, rum went by many names, including Kill-Devil (for its sometimes-toxic levels of ethanol) and “a hot hellish liquor.”

“But it was also called ‘rumbullion’ because of the rumpus way one behaved after consuming it,” Browne says with a mischievous grin.

To understand the origins of rum and its significance to the region, one must look to the ocean. For centuries, the British Royal Navy sourced rum from the British West Indies, transporting it back to London and then resupplying colony-bound ships. Sailors received a daily “tot,” a noon time, spirits-raising rum ration – a tradition I’m shocked to learn was only retired in 1970. Following the months-long ocean transits, navy men noticed the barrel-transported rum that arrived in England no longer tasted like a hot hellish liquor. Tempered by the barrel, it was smooth, complex and flavourful.

“It was a total mistake that we benefit from today,” Browne says.

He leads us outside, across a sliver of the 129-hectare property laden with “lush, big, fat, gorgeous sugarcane” (the sexiest crop description I’ve ever heard) to the true source of Mount Gay Rum: a 91-metre well.

“This is what makes Mount Gay Rum so precious,” Browne expounds with dramatic flair. “You are standing at the very first drop of Mount Gay Rum... Every drop comes from this source, which started over 300 years ago. It’s coral-filtered Bajan water entirely free from impurities.”

All that preciousness just to mix it with Coca-Cola, I think to myself.

OUR NEXT STOP ON THE RUM RUN BRINGS US TO

St. Nicholas Abbey plantation and distillery. We drive through a tunnel of mahogany trees to reach its historic Great House, one of three remaining Jacobian mansions in the Western Hemisphere. Inside, the rooms are decorated with period furniture, curio, taxidermy and portraits of men in gold frames. The House is nothing short of a picture into the privileged life of plantation owners, circa 1658. History is reason enough to visit but the rum is a tasty garnish.

In the tasting room, we meet the Abbey’s current owner, Barbadian Larry Warren. Fearing that the Abbey would “end up as a condominium project if we didn’t intervene,” the Warren family acquired the property in 2006. A rum distillery was installed to financially substantiate the property as a multi-attraction heritage destination. Rum isn’t the main attraction, but it’s a whole-hearted endeavour.

“We will not increase our production beyond our capacity to do it in a traditional way, hand-produced and hand-bottled,” Warren explains.

Production is limited, indeed. Warren tells me the Abbey produces just 600 or so 10-bottle cases in a year. It’s such a limited supply that he estimates 98 per cent is sold through their front doors. ▶

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Andrew Holmes leads a private Goslings Rum distillery tour

Warren starts our five-glass tasting with a sip of sugarcane syrup, then young white rum. As I tip the glass to my lips, I half-anticipate it to conjure memories of rum-induced college hangovers. Instead, it's smooth, with notes of marshmallow and buttery overripe banana. I don't feel compelled to drink it neat – clear spirits are best suited for mixing, anyway – but I learn that the softness of this white rum is due in thanks to the 37-square-metres of copper compacted into the Abbey's still, through which vapour is forced.

When we arrive at the 12- and 15-year vintages, I do something I've never done in my adult life: I invite rum to *linger* on my palate. Notes of cinnamon, pine and tobacco mix on the nose and I carefully tease apart currant and orange. I'm in no rush to let it go but a medley of nutmeg and fruity brown sugar greets me on the finish.

For once, rum is not hot, nor hellish.

FLYING BETWEEN BARBADOS AND BERMUDA

is, frankly, a buzzkill for the travelling public. It takes 14 hours and requires a layover in Miami. My direct AirSprint flight gets me there in three. It's an over-the-top luxurious experience that I'll remember every time I buckle into a cramped economy class seat on a commercial flight.

When I arrive at Fairmont Southampton, I am confronted by a sight that makes my eyes widen: male knee cleavage, everywhere. Executive men are outfitted in pressed shirts, blazers and dress shoes, *shorts* and socks pulled high up their calves. I can't get over it. Whose rum-soaked fashion idea was this?

Later that night, I take a seat next to Andrew Holmes, brand director for Gosling's Rum. It's here in the cellar of the 330-year-old Waterlot Inn where our band of thirsty rum seekers will enjoy a five-course dinner paired with Bermuda's favourite homegrown brand of rum.

It's an enlightening meal – and not just because Holmes helps me see the Bermuda short uniform not as a socks-forward styling but as a suit, hemmed at the knees. "You know, for ventilation."

An exquisite parade of dishes marches forth from Chef Gerardo Say Colmenares' kitchen. First, a stuffed morel mushroom atop a smoked polenta cake with duck *rilette* is paired with Gosling's Gold Seal Rum. Next, I explore a *mâche* salad of prosciutto, brie, figs and black truffles alongside Gosling's Amber Rum, which is only sold on-island.

Between bites, I learn that, absent fresh groundwater, Bermuda relies entirely on rainfall for its drinking water. Homes here have a unique, stepped limestone roof (imagine a white step pyramid) that funnels rainwater down a gutter into an underground tank.

"Rainwater is critical to our survival on the island," Holmes emphasizes. "We import pretty much everything in Bermuda. Rum and babies are the only thing we make here – everything else comes in 20-foot shipping containers."

I chuckle, thinking of the sanctity of Mount Gay's coral-filtered artisanal water. Meanwhile, in Bermuda, rum's primary ingredient unceremoniously dumps from the sky.

Over my shoulder, a Waterlot server produces a wooden case. From it, I select a knife. I melt for the 21-day dry aged steak with trumpet mushrooms and blackberry *jus* that's set in front of me, but it's while sipping on the Gosling's 15-year, single-barrel Papa Seal rum that time slows. It's served neat; no ice, no mix, no superfluous distractions.

I let each sip flood my palate, draining each drop in a reluctant trickle down the back of my throat.

And to think, four days ago I didn't even know if I liked rum.

But this is no ordinary rum. Papa Seal would be considered top shelf liquor – if it had had the chance to hit the shelf. In 2018, just 12 barrels of Papa Seal were released, 11 of which were sold directly to private customers in the United States. One barrel was reserved for sale in Bermuda. It sold out in 45 minutes on a Tuesday morning. Islanders who showed up to claim theirs at noon were, understandably, a little salty.

With no Papa Seal left in stock, I ask Holmes where this evening's vintage comes from. In the low light of the Waterlot cellar, Holmes squints while inspecting the bottle's label before reading aloud: "EMBG personal barrel."

We're drinking a bottle pinched from the private stash of CEO Edmund Malcolm Burns Gosling.

I take another sip of the pirated nectar with what can only be described as the rumpus satisfaction of a modern-day rum runner. **T**

When You Go

The Ultimate Rum Running package is an exclusive trip offered by **Fairmont** and Calgary-based **AirSprint Private Aviation**. An eight-guest package starts at \$185,000 and includes private round-trip jet travel from any North American gateway to Bermuda and Barbados, luxury accommodations at **Fairmont Royal Pavilion** and **Fairmont Southampton**, behind-the-scenes rum tastings at **Gosling's**, **Mount Gay** and **St. Nicholas Abbey**, rum-inspired spa treatments, exclusive rum-paired dinners, charter sailing excursions and more. And yes, Papa Seal is included.



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Costa Rica:

SUPERFOOD FOR THE SOUL

Wellness is on the uptick, but what is *it*? Is it a habit, a collection of rituals, a diet, an achievement to be unlocked? We sent **BRITTANY TIPLADY** to Costa Rica, a place where Blue Zone residents regularly live to be centenarians, to find out what lessons can be learned about wellness as a *state of living*.

IN NORTH AMERICA, WE ARE BARRAGED WITH the many options and opinions of what constitutes living a healthy, well-rounded life. We take bizarre workout classes, follow online wellness influencers and jump on every trend from Keto to cannabis. So, when the opportunity to visit Costa Rica and immerse myself in a wellness adventure came across my desk, naturally, I accepted.

In Costa Rica, I'd learn wellness is about immersing yourself in nature – no Goop guide necessary. The approach is different than North American, marketable wellness; it's about relationships, eating from the land and authentic spirituality.

Yes, there were juice bars. And while yoga studios, vegan food trucks and smoothie shops have a purpose and a place in the evolution of its cultural landscape, my mission was to understand the people native to Costa Rica, how they thrive and what makes them some of the healthiest, happiest people in the world. ▶



This page,
left to right,
Recibidor Suite,
Chayote Lodge
View from
the patio,
Chayote Lodge
Nosara's
electric sunsets

HERE'S SOME INTERESTING TRIVIA about Costa Rica that might help you understand just how peaceful this country is at its core; Costa Rica has not had an army since 1948; 30 per cent of Costa Rica is made up of protected natural land; and the Nicoya Peninsula hosts the largest Blue Zone in the world.

WHAT IS A BLUE ZONE? A Blue Zone is a region in which the inhabitants commonly live past the age of 100. There are only five of them in the world. In addition to the Nicoya Peninsula there is also Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Icaria, Greece; and the Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda, California.

I ARRIVED IN SAN JOSE by way of Mexico City and was instantly greeted with an I-can't-believe-I'm-already-sweating humidity hug. I wasn't complaining; my trip was scheduled smack in the middle of the rainy season. Lucky for me, I got to spend my first hour in Costa Rica taking in the sunshine and marveling at the lush greenery enveloping the highway out of Alajuela and into the city of Naranjo.

A hairpin turn off the highway and up a steep driveway, I arrived at Chayote Lodge, perched on what felt like the top of the clouds. The lodge sits on a coffee plantation, overlooking a sprawling farm, framed by a far-off city skyline. I was led to my accommodations, one of 12 little cabins punctuated by large windows and a private deck overlooking the property's acreage.

For dinner, the lodge's restaurant served classic and comforting Costa Rican fare in beautiful, generous portions; *arroz con pollo*, heaping scoops of beans, rice and, of course, fried plantains. It should be noted for the modern traveller that the traditional Costa Rican meal isn't much to look at. Instagrammability isn't a cause for concern; the key here is balance.

ON MY FIRST FULL DAY in Costa Rica, post-yoga and coffee farm tour, I visited Doña Elida's house: a sweet old woman who opens her door to tourists who are interested in learning how to bring local cuisine back home.

In her kitchen, I shuffled around the wood-burning stove, learning how to make a traditional Costa Rican lunch in broken Spanglish, taking turns making rice, frying plantains and prepping the salad. The simple afternoon was a perfect manifestation of the values of Costa Rica's generous people: time spent together, working with your hands and sharing a nourishing, balanced meal.



NEXT, I SAID GOODBYE TO Chayote Lodge and loaded into a van headed for Nosara, Costa Rica's beach, surf and yoga epicentre, perhaps best known for coining the famous *Pura Vida* catchphrase.

Something to digest before travelling to Nosara is that *Pura Vida* should not be confused with a marketing slogan. Translating directly to "the simple life," *Pura Vida* is also a greeting. It's a thank-you; it's a gesture; it's a mindset that drives a way of life so beautifully different from North America. It's no wonder so many tourists visit and then stay. When visiting Nosara, let *Pura Vida* roll off your tongue every chance you get; you'll be better for it.

After a five-hour drive from Naranjo to Nosara (a highlight is crossing the Tempisque River, surrounded by Palo Verde National Park), I arrived at Lagarta Lodge, greeted with a eucalyptus steam towel and, of course, a soothing "*Pura Vida*."

Lagarta Lodge is one of those places I thought I'd only ever see on my Instagram explore page. From the hotel's restaurant overlook, I drink in a view of the sweeping ocean at Playa Guiones and, just a few steps below the property, a nature reserve owned by

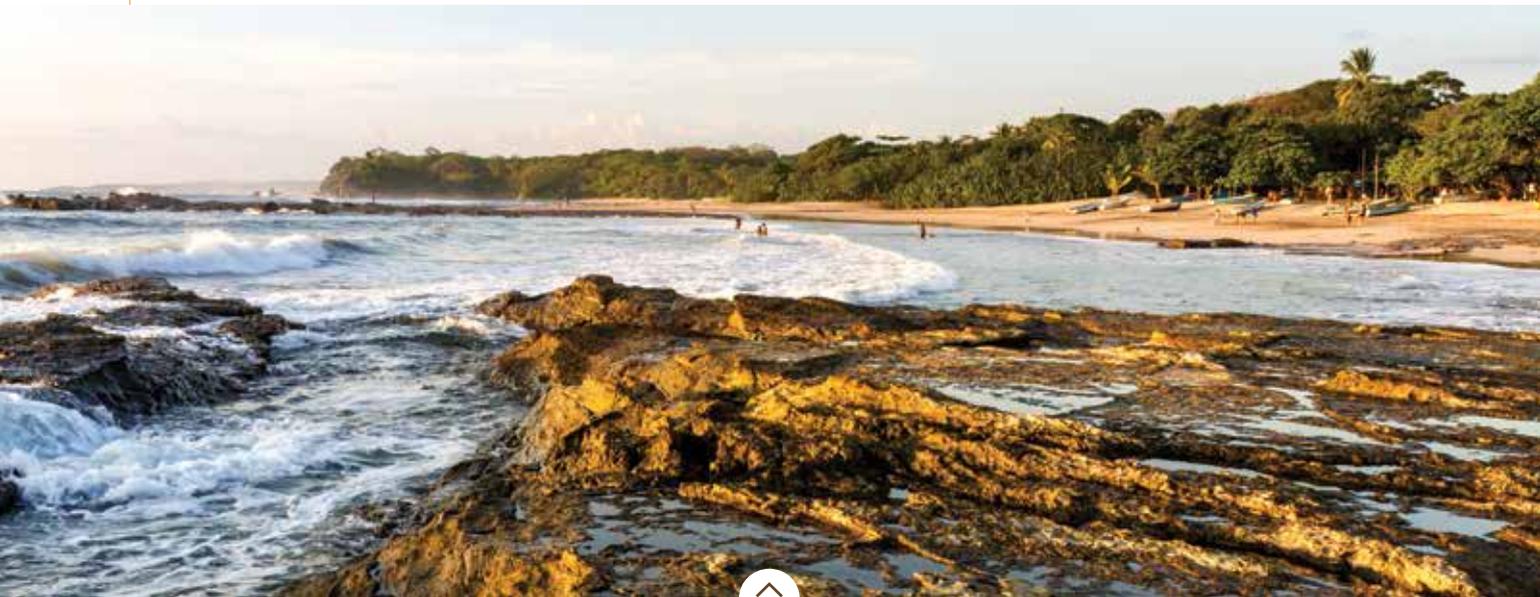


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Playa Pelada

the folks at Lagarta Lodge. In the centre of the property are two glorious infinity pools, best enjoyed with a side of Nosara's electric sunsets. The soundtrack at Lagarta Lodge comes courtesy of the resident monkeys – they're cheeky things, I discovered. Be sure to lock the doors to your suite or you might wake up to a monkey trying to invite himself in like I did.

At Lagarta, I got serious about wellness. I practiced forest bathing with my guide, Manuela Siegfred, took morning yoga classes and, led by one of Lagarta's wilderness guides, floated gently down a river in a kayak.

In Nosara's quaint beach town, travellers can take a stroll through artisanal boutiques, grab a bite at a café or raw vegan food truck, pop into a yoga class at one of the world-renowned studios (my Yin class at the Harmony Hotel was a divine experience) or snag a pint of craft beer – at a surf shop, no less. I dined at La Luna for gorgeous Mediterranean fare, a welcome break from *gallo pinto*. Steps from the La Luna patio is the beautiful Playa Pelada; in the evening, the crashing waves are the only music the restaurant needs.

Wandering the main strip made for a nice afternoon, though I couldn't ignore that Nosara, quite obviously, is a melting pot of locals and expats. As a visitor working consciously to decolonize my travel, I was conflicted in seeing just how much obvious *whiteness* had weaved into Nosara's culture. There's a pizza place next to a boutique selling \$200 bikinis, an artisanal store run by locals next to a pricey surf shop. It was an arresting experience that I hadn't witnessed at such volume in any other Latin American country. I wondered whether Costa Rica's irresistible prescription for Blue Zone vitality carried with it a side effect: appropriation.

But what I learned from my brief window of observation is that in Costa Rica, in contrast to the other Latin American countries I have visited and lived in – Peru, Argentina and Chile, to name a few – is that the residents and the newcomers share a mutual respect

like nowhere else: a deep care for the environment and a commitment to keeping *Pura Vida* just that.

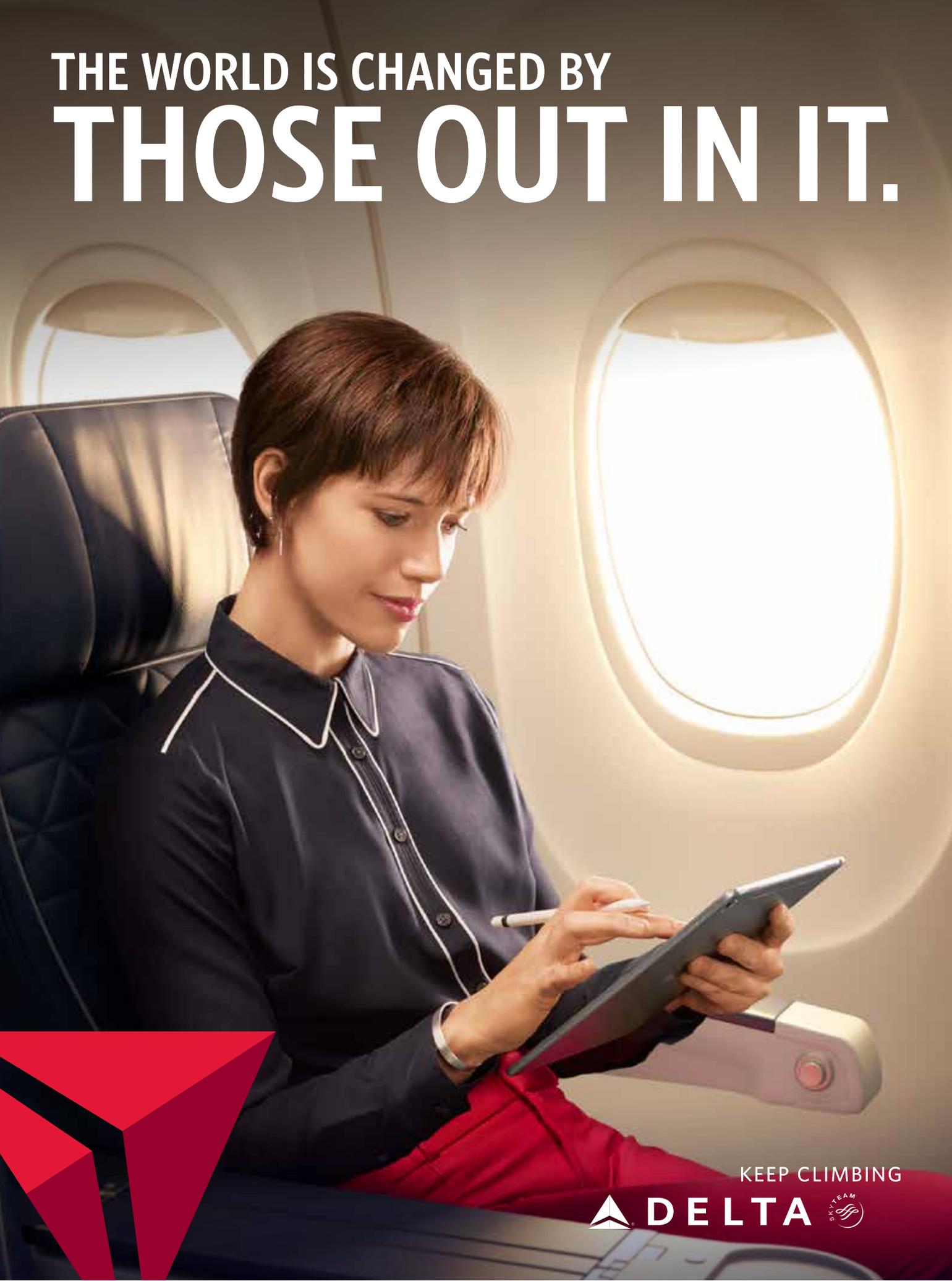
Throughout my trip, I felt a nurturing sense of safety in this country. Everywhere from the *sodas* (small, traditional restaurants) to the dance floor at a local haunt, the people were warm, gentle and eager to show me what it means to enjoy life.

On my last night, back in Alajuela, I unplugged and reflected on the week. Wellness in Costa Rica, as it occurred to me, is about taking care of Mother Earth and all her inhabitants; the simple life, indeed. If you're looking to refuel, reset and get in touch with the natural world, Costa Rica and the *Pura Vida* are waiting for you. **CT**

When You Go

1. Add your reusable cup, metal straw and bamboo cutlery to your packing list; Costa Rica is committed to reducing waste and as a visitor, you should be too.
2. Insect repellent is your best friend. Pack generously.
3. Costa Rica's dry season runs from late November to late April and coincides with its visitor high season. Travelling between May and mid-November means fielding tropical showers, but the landscape radiates in hues of emerald green.
4. If you're flying home out of San Jose, treat yourself to one last night of serenity at the **Asclepios Wellness & Healing Retreat** in Alajuela. The Mediterranean theme at Asclepios is unique from most other places you will visit in Costa Rica. The goal here is relaxation, sans cell phones. Rooms don't have Wi-Fi for that very reason, so unplug and indulge in a Turkish steam bath.

THE WORLD IS CHANGED BY
THOSE OUT IN IT.



KEEP CLIMBING



DELTA



6 PLAYERS

*in the travel industry
working to lessen their
environmental impact*

It can be a struggle to balance environmental guilt with a desire to globetrot. We want to see the Great Barrier Reef – *before* it's bleached – but what if our international adventure inadvertently harms the destination we yearn to explore? When booking travel, choosing responsible operators, hotels and transportation is a great place to start. Here are six travel companies working to reduce their global footprint.

BY ALISON KARLENE HODGINS

1. DELTA

One of the United States' major airlines, Delta has a long-term goal of reducing carbon emissions by 50 per cent by 2050. One step in that journey was a recent \$2 million investment in a feasibility study to explore a biofuel production facility in Washington state. If it proves viable, sustainable aviation fuel could be sourced from wood residue deposits and wood slash. The study is expected to be complete by mid-2020 and the first fuel delivery could arrive as early as the end of 2023. In the meantime, Airbus initiated the delivery of 20 new aircraft to Delta. In partnership with Air BP, the planes flew from the assembly line in Mobile, Alabama to Kansas City. Powered by biofuel and with additional offsetting, the delivery flights were entirely carbon neutral. This is great news for travellers who aren't ready to give up flying.

2. INTREPID

Being carbon neutral is a big achievement – one that travel company Intrepid has hit every year for the past decade. But the tour operator's founders aren't satisfied – they have more environmental initiatives planned. In 2020, they've pledged to offset flights with customers who book directly with the company. Renewable energy will power Intrepid offices by 2025 and trips by 2030. Itineraries already make quick use of public transport on trips around the world. The overarching goal: instead of becoming simply

the best travel company in the world, Intrepid wants to be the best travel company *for* the world. Travellers can feel good about booking with this exceptional small-group tour operator that travels to places like Africa, the Middle East and the Arctic on epic adventures.

3. VIA RAIL

Travellers concerned with the environmental impact of flying should look beyond carbon-offsetting towards alternatives, like train travel. In 2022, Via Rail will release a new fleet with more fuel-efficient engines and the ability to operate on electrified rail infrastructure. From an accessibility standpoint, ease of use for all types of disabilities will be one of the main innovations. Improved locomotives have helped Via Rail achieve a 32 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions per passenger-kilometre since 2005. When passengers leave their cars at home and choose to ride alongside other travellers, they are also reducing their individual carbon footprint. Enabling cleaner energy alternatives, bettering air quality and decreasing fuel consumption are just a few of the benefits of riding by rail. (The scenery, service and overall experience are pretty good bonuses!) Via Rail's sustainability priorities include reducing impact on the environment by adapting to climate change, improving eco-efficiency and promoting the environmental benefits of rail. ▶

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THE
**GOOD
LIFE**

CIAO, PLASTICS!

Eco-conscious travellers can choose to spend their dollars with brands, companies and destinations that limit or ban unnecessary single-use plastics. California passed legislation eliminating small-format toiletries by 2023. The European Union has passed a measure that will disallow single-use plastic cutlery and straws by 2021. Canada isn't far behind, with plastic bags being rapidly removed in grocery stores across the country. Don't forget to pack your own reusable bags, cutlery and straws when travelling!



4. TRAFALGAR

On World Tourism Day in September 2019, Trafalgar's parent company, The Travel Corporation, and its not-for-profit, The TreadRight Foundation, announced the #MakeTravelMatter pledge. This pledge serves as the next step in a long journey to broaden sustainable tourism and deepen conscious travel. Trafalgar was one of 42 sister companies under TTC's umbrella to make the commitment to share TreadRight's ethos to help protect people, planet and wildlife. The pledge includes refusing to use single-use plastics when possible and committing to recycle what can't be avoided; supporting local businesses and paying a fair price and avoiding animal cruelty. Now, Trafalgar is encouraging travellers to join the initiative. By signing the pledge, you can be part of a global mission to make travel

matter. Visit treadright.org/pledge to learn more about this important cause.

5. NATURAL HABITAT ADVENTURES

As the world's first carbon-neutral tour operator, Natural Habitat Adventures (NHA) has offset over 17,000 tons of carbon dioxide in the last 12 years. Last year, NHA announced it will offset guest air travel, too. That means all guests' trips will now be 100 per cent carbon-neutral

from the moment they depart their home airport. This ambitious program reflects NHA's commitment to global leadership and extraordinary efforts to make travel more sustainable. In addition, NHA partnered with South Pole, a sustainability company that works on projects around the world to reduce carbon impacts and offset greenhouse gases, and continued to work with World Wildlife Fund, the world's leading environmental organization that protects animals and their threatened habitats. Since 2003, travellers with NHA have contributed over \$12 million to WWF's international efforts to save endangered animals and conserve spectacular places.

6. MARRIOTT (& MORE)

Expanding on their 2018 initiative, Marriott International is replacing the small, single-use bottles that have been used in hotel rooms for shampoo, conditioner and lotion. Bathrooms in more than 7,000 properties around the world will feature larger, reusable plastic pump bottles that hold the same liquid amenities in eco-friendly, refillable containers. When complete, the new program will reduce the company's plastic usage by 30 per cent. Hotels that have joined the cause include Sheraton, Westin and Ritz-Carlton. InterContinental Hotels was one of the first mega-hotel brands to become single-use plastic-free; IHG brands include Holiday Inn, Regent and Crowne Plaza. **CT**





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ANIMALS ABROAD

How to navigate ethical animal tourism
(or is there such a thing?)

BY ALISON KARLENE HODGINS

AROUND THE WORLD, ANIMALS ARE abused and exploited to entertain tourists. Elephants are trained to paint, tigers are drugged to snap selfies with and bears are chained, tortured and forced to dance. Most globetrotters don't aspire to injure the animals they interact with while travelling.

Unfortunately, not every business is transparent or ethical when dealing with animals. According to World Animal Protection, over 500,000 animals are trapped, ill-treated and made to perform at tourist entertainment venues every year. From booking with travel companies that support animal welfare to pledging to do your part as an animal-friendly tourist, you can choose to avoid cruel attractions in favour of alternative activities.



**INSTEAD OF TAKING
A PICTURE WITH A LION CUB...
VIEW ALL OF AFRICA'S BIG 5 (AND MORE)
IN THEIR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

World Animal Protection reports that lion cubs, often less than a month old, are taken from their mothers so tourists can pet and hold them for a photo-op. Grown lions are sometimes slaughtered; others are retrained for “walk with lions” experiences or sent to zoos.

However, in southern Africa, rangers in enclosed areas track lions, elephants, rhinos, zebras, giraffes and more at game reserves.

At first, I was conflicted about fenced-in game reserves and collared lions. My friend from Johannesburg, South Africa told me that the country has a massive problem with poaching, and most of the wildlife would be killed without the protection of the reserve. During our four-day stay at Dinokeng, we ventured on several game drives, but couldn't find elephants. I was disappointed but also impressed that the area was expansive enough to hide a herd of elephants.

Whether lions, elephants or cetaceans, try to see animals in their natural habitat while travelling.

**INSTEAD OF SWIMMING
IN A POOL WITH DOLPHINS...
TAKE TO THE SEA WITH WHALE SHARKS**

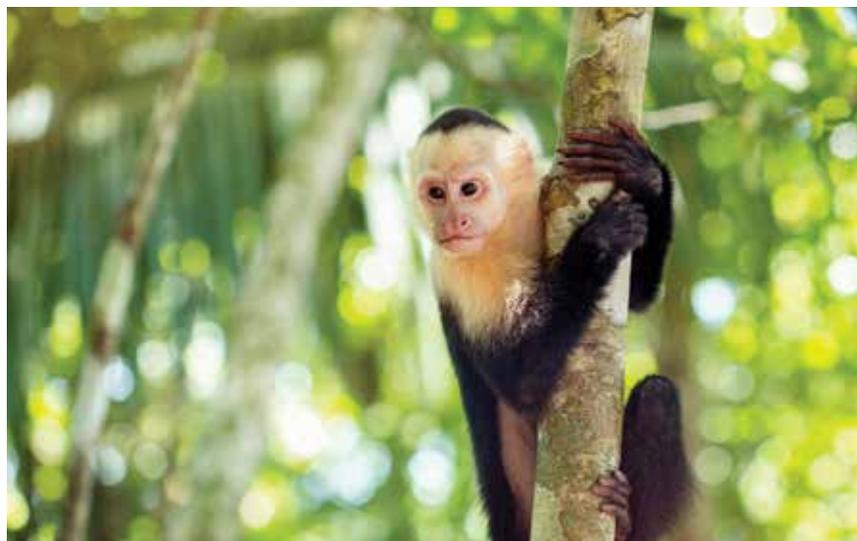
While on vacation, it might be tempting to swim with dolphins at your hotel or at an aquarium, but dolphins living in captivity can face heart-wrenching conditions. These highly social animals are often placed in unfamiliar groupings with limited space. Dolphin performances have been banned in some countries but still flourish in others. Many bottlenose dolphins die immediately after capture from the wild or during transport to entertainment facilities.

If you want to experience marine life on holiday, head to Mexico's Baja California Sur. Not only will you have the chance to encounter wild dolphins in the Sea of Cortez, but you can swim alongside whale sharks. In La Paz, extensive government regulations mean that a limited number of licenses are issued. Permitted boats are outfitted with a GPS to track how many operators are in the designated whale shark zone at a given time and to enforce a 7.2-knot speed limit.

Canadian Traveller editor Jennifer Hubbert reported, “I only wanted to [swim alongside whale sharks] if I knew it was going to be done in a responsible way. I was really impressed by the people involved and their love of the wildlife and respect of its management. I learned that an unintended outcome of the program is that the area is attracting greater numbers of whale sharks each year because it has become a protected marine environment.”

**INSTEAD OF RIDING AN ELEPHANT...
VISIT A SANCTUARY**

Feeding, riding and bathing elephants are controversial activities. Young elephants are often traumatically “broken” and forced to interact with a rotating line of tourists all day, every day. When not giving rides or performing, they are often chained with less than three



metres to roam. World Animal Protection's “Taken For A Ride” study found that captive elephants are still primarily captured from the wild. It also uncovered harsh training techniques including the use of bullhooks to manipulate the animals into submission.

Travel operators like G Adventures have enforced animal welfare policies that focus on appreciating animals from afar. Many countries have rehabilitation centres for injured and rescued animals; sometimes, they accept foreign visitors and volunteers. Unfortunately, not all of them are legitimate. *National Geographic* published an exposé revealing a well-known “sanctuary” in Thailand was a complete fraud. The owners transported the same elephants between riding camps and a fake sanctuary to meet growing demand. Wildlife rescues and reputable sanctuaries tend to allow animals to act the way they would in the wild, while spectators watch from a distance. If you're going to volunteer, be willing to clean up dung, chop food and help with unglamorous chores.

THE BOTTOM LINE

You're allowed to decide that *none* of these options are ethical and refuse to participate in them. The important thing is to think about it. Do your research – a simple Google search with the name of the company and the word “ethical” may be enough. Be inquisitive and walk away if anything feels uncomfortable. If in doubt, turn to reputable animal welfare agencies for their insight and guidance. 📌

**WHEN NAVIGATING THE COMPLICATED WORLD
OF ETHICAL ANIMAL TOURISM, BE WARY OF:**

- ▶ Wild animals being touched, hand-fed or ridden
- ▶ Any species displaying physical symptoms of harm
- ▶ Animals being baited or abused to perform
- ▶ Any activity in which the main purpose is for animals to entertain tourists



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1. FRANCE:

Linen apron

When you say "France," we think "food." In fact, French cuisine is on UNESCO's list of "world intangible heritage." Prepare your own culinary creations in great style with this high-quality, beautiful linen apron. Impress your friends and family not only with your cooking, but with your *haute* (kitchen) *couture*, too; \$35.

2. MEXICO:

Woven blanket

Whether relaxing on a *playa* in Riviera Nayarit or cozying up in the highlands of San Miguel de Allende, blankets are a staple Mexican textile. We skipped a ubiquitous Mexican print, opting instead for a pattern inspired by our visit to Acre Baja, a rustic-luxe abode in San José del Cabo. The neutral colour choice is reflective of the desert landscape of Baja California Sur and should complement any home; \$60.

3. GREECE:

Traditional coffee

In our fall 2019 box, members received Loumidis Papagalos coffee beans, a full body, flavourful roast that is identical to the type you'd drink in Greece. The best method of brewing it involves an inexpensive specialized pot called a *briki* (for maximum foam), but the method can also be hacked on the stove top. Sip it in the morning to feel the warmth of the Mediterranean radiate through your body; \$15.

4. BALI:

Fashion mala

For an activity that is so motionless, meditation reminds us how rapidly our thoughts move. Tracing your fingers over the beads of a mala necklace is one way to bring focus to the mind's eye. We love that this fashion mala has lava beads. Apply a few drops of your favourite essential oil to enjoy some on-the-go aromatherapy; \$30.

5. JAMAICA:

Shell bracelet

Wear a little bit of the beach everywhere you go. This cowrie shell bangle is a good reminder that everything's *irie* (and if it isn't, Jamaica awaits your arrival!). We especially love the look of this bracelet when paired with a watch or stacked with gemstone bead stretch bracelets; \$25.

EDITOR'S CHOICE

6. TRAVEL ACCESSORY:

Silicone sleeve

You might be wondering what this item is, but trust us, you'll never travel without it again. Unplug your curling iron or hair straightener and slip it into this silicone sleeve. No more waiting for your styling tool to cool before tossing it into your suitcase! Plus, it protects countertops while in use; \$24.

*Valid on all store times while inventory lasts.



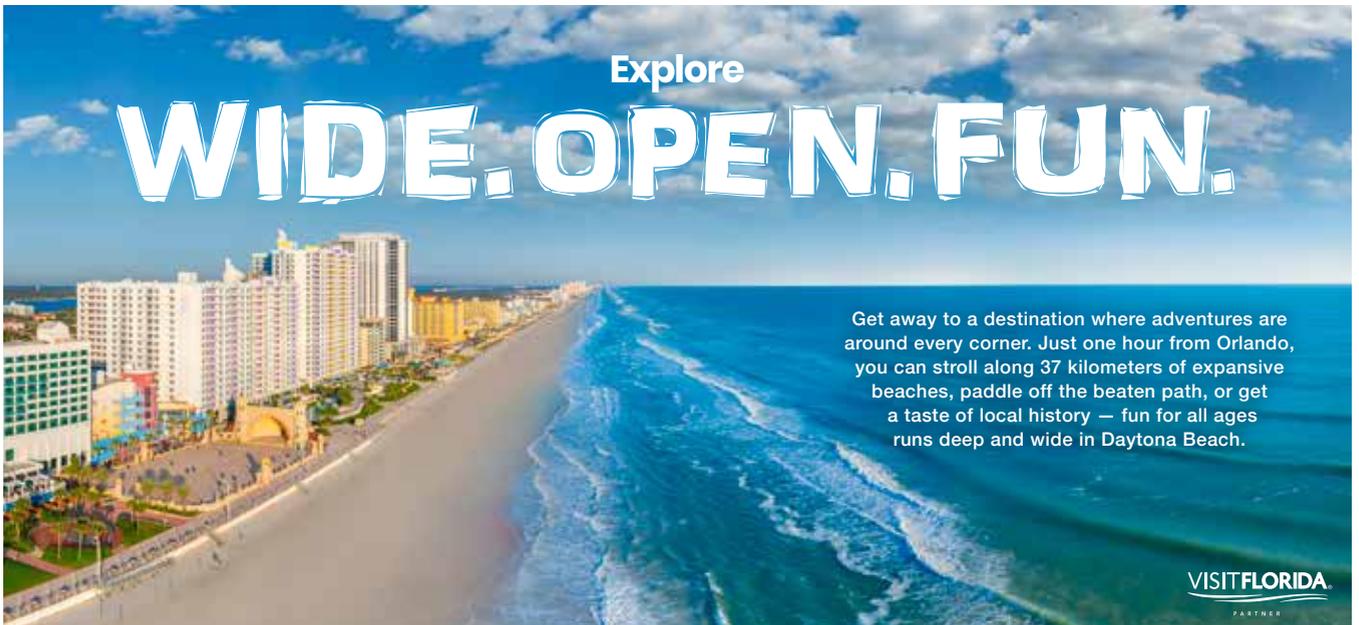
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Pretty in pink

The things they don't tell you about an expedition cruise to Antarctica

BY ALICIA-RAE OLAFSSON

STEP OFF THE M/V SEA SPIRIT AND ONTO a Zodiac which speeds towards Cuverville Island, the largest Gento penguin rookery on the Antarctic Peninsula, home to 6,500 breeding pairs.

I expected many things travelling to Antarctica with Chimu Adventures: wildlife, glaciers and polar temperatures. But there are a few things they don't tell you to expect: the deafening silence when you find yourself atop a mountain overlooking the Southern Ocean, camping overnight in a self-dug hole in the snow only to be awakened by a calving glacier, or the moment when you stop paddling your kayak and are overcome by the nothingness.

As we approach the rookery, I'm again taken aback by something less pleasant. Most surprising aren't the astonishingly brash sounds penguins use to communicate, rather the revolting smell of their *guano* – that's science speak for a mix of penguin feces and regurgitated krill. A better description? A mix of fermented seafood and vinegar that pierces your nasal cavities like ammonia.

At the rookery, guano is on the ground and on the penguins, especially chicks, who easily topple over into puddles of it. They track it through penguin "highways" leading from the ocean to the nesting sites, sliding head-first on their bellies. It creates a slippery film on the rocks when mixed with rain.

I WATCH AS A PENGUIN warms her egg months after the rest have hatched, still hopeful. Another shelters a chick from a hungry predatory seabird called a skua. I lose track of time; all the passengers have returned to the ship. The guides let me take it all in while they clean up the landing site.

In Antarctica, you can't wear your own shoes – you're given a pair of giant, hard-to-walk-in boots with no tread. Walking back to the Zodiac, I'm startled as a skua squawks and dives towards a chick. I attempt to snap a photo when suddenly I'm flat on my back, legs in the air with the wind knocked out of my chest. My slippery misstep has me painted head-to-toe in putrid pink guano.



I need a full-body hose down, stat. Each passenger's gear is stored in their cabin and my roommates surely won't appreciate my reeking gear permeating our tiny space.

Back on the ship, the guides instruct me to rinse off, using a little soap to battle the funk. I beeline it for the hose, furiously watering myself down as the smell tests my gag reflex. My kayak instructor yells, "Stop!" from across the room. Laughing it off, I announce, "I'm good, I need to get this stuff out of the fabric so our whole room doesn't stink."

He doesn't smile back.

"No, seriously, you need to stop *right now*," he warns. "You're still wearing your lifejacket, remember?"

With the hose streaming water down my suit, I process his words: our lifejackets activate upon contact with water.

As if the humiliation of being covered in pink poop like a clumsy penguin chick wasn't enough, my PDF is poised to inflate at any given moment.

Just in the nick of time, I am saved from the further embarrassment of aggressively blowing up my lifejacket – while not actually being submerged in water.

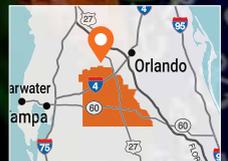
I learned that day that penguin rookeries are equally no place for quiet conversations or for sudden movements in treadless boots. **OT**

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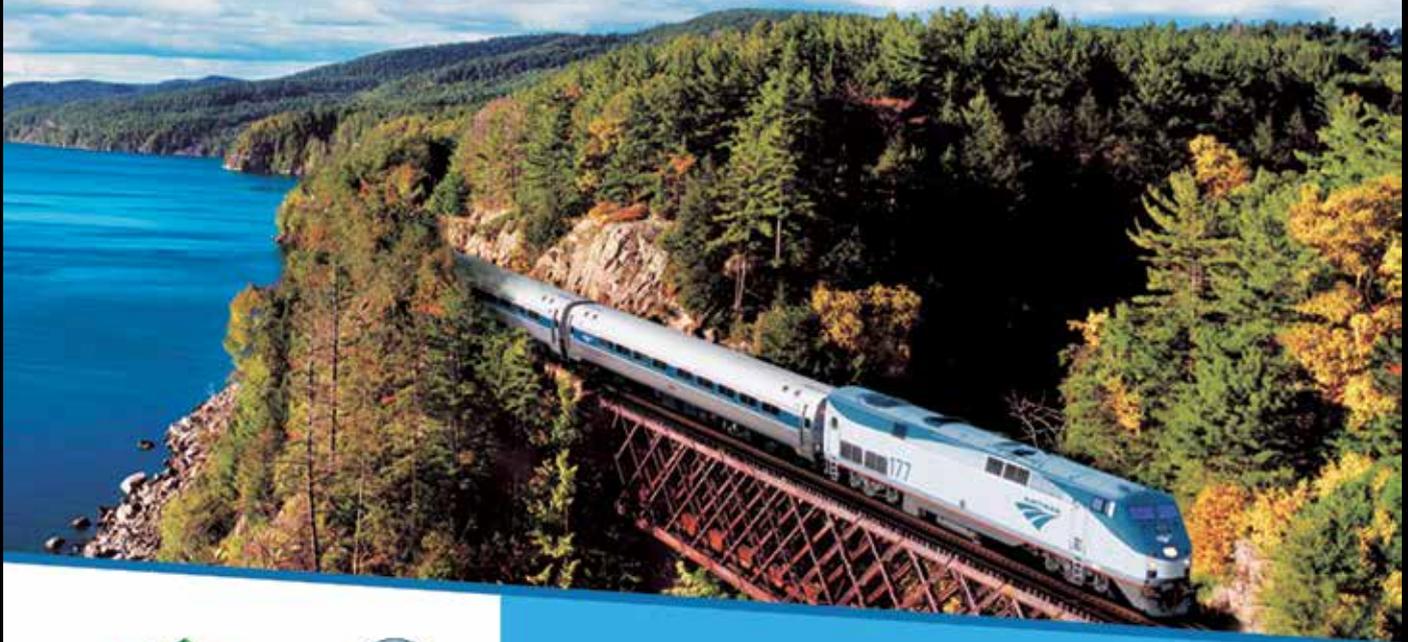
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NEW YORK

YOURS TO DISCOVER

IN THIS ISSUE

*From the
wilderness to Wall Street,
waves to wine county,
these are Canadian Traveller's
favourite New York state
experiences*



New York City & Its Boroughs

Most visitors to New York City flock to Manhattan, and with good reason: the tiny island is home to Broadway, Rockefeller Center and much, much more. But the truth is, the city consists of five incredible boroughs, each packed with wonders to see, treats to eat and once-in-a-lifetime experiences to enjoy.

Discover Secret Manhattan

Whether it's your first visit or your 50th, Manhattan always has so much to see. In Midtown, you won't want to miss the world's largest chess board, which plays out famous games on the side of an office building (a cherry picker moves the pieces), nor the multi-storey atrium inside the **Ford Foundation**, complete with a touch-and-smell garden. In SoHo, there's the **Earth Room**, an art installation by Walter De Maria featuring 197 cubic metres of soil, and street artists from around the world flock to the walls of the Lower East Side. Then grab a drink at the **Secret Speakeasy** for a night of conversation and antiques held monthly and sponsored by the **Museum of Interesting Things**.

DIY in Brooklyn

Creativity reigns in Brooklyn. **Brooklyn Academy of Music** showcases avant-garde performances, while **Union Hall** hosts karaoke, comedy shows and unique experiences like a staged reading of *Moonstruck*. Head to the **Brooklyn Superhero Supply Store** to stock up on your mask and cape needs (and to support 826NYC, which helps kids learn to love the written word), and onward to the **Kings County Distillery** for the borough's best moonshine. The multi-Michelin starred **Aska** does wonders with foraged ingredients like nettles and lichens.

Boogie in the Bronx

In 1973, a young man used two turntables to extend songs' musical interludes during his sister's back-to-school party and an entire musical genre was born. **Hush Hip Hop Tours** take visitors to significant sites in the history of this art form, from **1520 Sedgwick Avenue**, where that party took place, to **Casa Amadeo**, the city's oldest Latinx music store. The **Bronx Music Heritage Center** puts on an array of programs and lectures designed to showcase and preserve the borough's contributions.

Sail Over to Staten Island

We won't sugarcoat it: Staten Island gets a bad rap. But forgoing the most suburban of NYC's five boroughs means missing spots like **Snug Harbor**, a former retirement community for sailors transformed into a cultural centre, museum and botanical garden; **Fort Wadsworth**, a decommissioned military installation with awesome views of New York Harbor; and the **National Lighthouse Museum**, devoted to those maritime beacons. It also means skipping out on pies from two institutions: **Denino's Pizzeria** and **Joe & Pat's Pizzeria**. And, of course, getting to Staten Island is half the fun: take the free ferry from Manhattan and enjoy an up-close view of Lady Liberty herself.

Chow Down in Queens

The city's most diverse borough boasts its most diverse restaurant scene. In Flushing you'll find Cantonese dim sum at **Asian Jewels**, chili oil wontons at **White Bear**, Taiwanese shaved ice at **Crystal Ice**, soup dumplings at **Shanghai You Garden** and bubble tea at **Chun Yang**. Head to Jackson Heights for Tibetan momos at **Phayul**, dosas at **Dosa Delight** and gulab jamun at **Rajbhog**. On nights and weekends, vendors line Roosevelt Avenue in Jackson Heights, Elmhurst and Corona, selling *pupusas*, beef heart skewers, blood sausage tacos, churros and *arepas* – just follow the crowds from cart to bodega to restaurant.



RIVERWORKS,
BUFFALO

Upstate Urban Getaways

To experience the best of New York state's urban getaways, consider Amtrak's Adirondack or Empire Service routes. Not only will you hit all the city highlights, but you'll pass through some glorious scenery as you crisscross the state. May we recommend booking a window seat?

Riveting Rochester

Learn about the life of the famed suffragist and abolitionist at **Susan B. Anthony Museum & House**, where she lived and entertained friends like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frederick Douglass from 1845 until her death in 1906. Another famous Rochesterian's house worth a visit is the **Eastman Mansion**. The home is an elegant example of the Colonial Revival style, as well as the world's oldest photography museum. And bring your inner child (and your real ones) to **The Strong National Museum of Play**, named for the Rochester native Margaret Woodbury Strong, whose toy collection kick-started the museum's 75,000-plus yo-yos, construction sets, airplanes, dolls and more.

Beautiful Buffalo-Niagara

Buffalo's revitalized waterfront is a stroller's paradise. Whichever direction you walk, you'll find something worth seeing or doing or exploring, not the least of which is the Buffalo River itself, where you can canoe and kayak. The **Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park** is the largest inland naval park in the U.S. and includes a WWII submarine, guided missile cruiser and a destroyer. At **Buffalo RiverWorks**, grain silos have been transformed into a brewery, a restaurant and a sports and entertainment complex.

Sensational Syracuse

Syracuse is perhaps best known for two things: snow and basketball. But there's more to this Central New York city than sports and weather, even if both are rather remarkable. It's home to the original **Dinosaur Bar-B-Que**, considered by many to be the best barbecue in the U.S., as well as **Armory Square**, a pedestrian plaza featuring eateries (try **Modern Malt**, an upscale diner, and **Cathy's Cookie Kitchen** for sweet treats), boutiques and nightlife. The **Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science and Technology** has a one-of-a-kind domed IMAX, making the big screen even better to watch.

Amazing Albany

Start your explorations of the state capital at the **Empire State Plaza**. Completed in 1978, the complex includes several government buildings as well as the **Erastus Corning Tower** (the tallest building in the state outside of NYC), the **Cultural Education Center** (which encompasses the **New York State Museum** and **Archives**, dedicated to preserving the state's history and heritage), and **The Egg Center for Performing Arts** – each a striking structure made of steel and concrete. Around the plaza, and available for viewing inside its buildings, are several noteworthy works by artists like Isamu Noguchi and Jackson Pollock.

Pretty Poughkeepsie

Known as "the Queen City of the Hudson," Poughkeepsie might be smaller than some of the other cities on this list, but it makes for a mighty weekend trip. Spanning two kilometres, the **Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge** is known as the world's longest elevated pedestrian bridge and gives you a sense of what Henry Hudson might have seen some 400 years ago. You'll further feel as if you've stepped back in time by walking through **Highland Hamlet**, with preserved homes from the early 1900s. A quick taxi ride takes you to **Hyde Park**, home to the **Culinary Institute of America**, where four restaurants and a brewery are staffed by tomorrow's Michelin-starred chefs.



Freshwater Forays

“Water, water everywhere,” wrote Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Although he was describing life as a thirsty sailor, he may just as well have been referring to New York state. With its abundant lakes and trickling creeks, powerful rivers and tumbling waterfalls, the state has hundreds of spots for restorative relaxation or adventurous activities.

Exploring the Adirondack Coast

Scotland might have the Loch Ness monster, but upstate New York has its own mythical being: Champ, said to inhabit the waters of Lake Champlain. Search for Champ as you explore the Adirondack Coast, where the lake laps against Clinton County. The coast’s best beaches – with ample opportunity for windsurfing, kite flying, sunbathing, picnicking and sand-castle building – include **Plattsburgh City Beach**, **Cumberland Bay State Park** and **Point Au Roche State Park**.

Get to Know the Great Lakes

Pretty much anywhere you stop along the **Great Lakes Seaway Trail**, you’ll find an extraordinary vista, vintage lighthouse or quaint town with a thriving arts scene or farmers’ market. Extending for more than 800 kilometres and stretching through New York and into Canada, this national scenic byway closely follows the shores of **Lake Erie**, the **Niagara River**, **Lake Ontario** and the **St. Lawrence River**. Hop on the “Blueway” by taking a boat tour, renting a kayak or paddleboard, jumping in for a swim or simply uncovering the urban delights of **Rochester** (on the shore of Lake Ontario) and **Buffalo** (on the shore of Lake Erie).

Sightseeing in the Thousand Islands

Located in the St. Lawrence River between the U.S. and Canada, the **Thousand Islands** are actually an archipelago of more than 1,800 islands, including the world’s smallest inhabited island. Estimated to be 280-square-metres (one-thirteenth of an acre), **Just Room Enough Island** contains a single house and a single tree. Nearby is **Boldt Castle**, a millionaire’s 1900-era summer getaway that looks as if it fell out of a Disney movie and is open to the public. Thousand Islands’ sightseeing extends below the water, too. Thanks to several old shipwrecks and excellent visibility, the area has become something of a scuba diving destination.

Angling in St. Lawrence County

Folks fish throughout **St. Lawrence County**, year-round. In winter, they bait their hooks for northern pike and yellow perch at **Chippewa Bay** and **Cranberry Lake**; in the spring and summer, they search for trout on **Trout Lake**, rainbows at **Star Lake** and muskellunge in **Deer River**. In the fall, they fly-fish among the multicoloured foliage for brown trout and pumpkinseeds on the **St. Regis River**. And any anglers worth their tackle will spend time at **Black Lake**, widely considered to be among the best spots for largemouth and smallmouth bass fishing in the entire U.S. Note that in most cases, fishing in New York is catch-and-release.

Waterfalling in the Finger Lakes

“Waterfalling” is a thing and it’s at its best in the **Finger Lakes** region. Basically waterfalling means exploring, photographing and/or hiking near waterfalls. Well-known for its wines, the Finger Lakes has tons of glorious specimens, including **Buttermilk Falls**, **Shequaga Falls** and **Taughannock Falls**. Waterfalling enthusiasts will also want to tackle the three-kilometre **Gorge Trail in Watkins Glen State Park**, in Schuyler County. This scenic trail winds over, under and around 19 waterfalls, and is surrounded in parts by cliffs rising 61 metres high. Another great option is the **Keuka Outlet Trail** in Yates County, linking the **Keuka** and **Seneca Lakes** via several lively waterfalls.



FIRE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

Coastal Pursuits

New York might be known for its lakes, but it's got miles and miles of glorious beaches, too. Some offer additional attractions like destination-worthy food or historic amusement parks, while others encourage surfing (yes, really). Each one makes for an ideal saltwater getaway but these are our favourites.

Get Your Thrills at Coney Island

The most famous beach in New York hardly needs an introduction. Its name evokes hot dogs, boardwalks and sideshow silliness. After sunning yourself along the Brooklyn shore, you'll want to wander over to **Coney Island's** amusement parks, home to the **Cyclone**, a wooden roller coaster that's been thrilling riders since 1927, as well as **Deno's Wonder Wheel**, an antique 45-metre tall Ferris wheel. For maximum adrenaline, sit in one of the swinging cars so you can rock as you go up, up, up, where you'll find views of much of Brooklyn and, on clear days, a glimpse of the Freedom Tower.

Rocking Out at Rockaway Beach

"It's not hard, not far to reach, we can hitch a ride to **Rockaway Beach**," sang the Ramones in 1977, reminding listeners that there's more than one beach in NYC. Extensive development in recent years has brought awesome eats – think curry, kebabs, *arepas* and oysters – to its 8.8-kilometre boardwalk. Work up an appetite by taking a surf lesson with **New York Surf School**. The fun doesn't stop when night falls: the Queens neighbourhood has a ton of bars open late. Don't leave without trying the frozen piña colada from **Connolly's**.

Exploring Fire Island

Located off the shore of Long Island, Fire Island is home to 51 kilometres of beaches (including one known as Ho Hum that's anything but), **Robert Moses State Park** and a historic lighthouse decked out in distinctive black-and-white stripes. The prize for climbing the **Fire Island Lighthouse's** 182 steps? The breathtaking sight of the NYC skyline. Beach community **Cherry Grove** is often credited as being one of the first places in the United States that allowed individuals to be open about their sexuality, and both it and **the Pines** maintain strong LGBTQ2+ communities.

Get a Gander at Cooper's Beach

Each summer people flock to the Hamptons to enjoy the area's gorgeous beaches. Generally considered to be the best beach in the Hamptons – and among the best in the world – **Cooper's Beach** offers plenty of sand and surf. But it also has opportunities for ogling the so-called Gold Coast mansions. In the late 19th century, wealthy industrialists began constructing mega-estates on the North Shore of Long Island (some of which likely served as the inspiration for *The Great Gatsby*). The trend continues today, with multimillion-dollar properties stretching almost as far as the eye can see.

Find Fun at Jones Beach State Park

What makes **Jones Beach** so popular? It's open year-round, for one, with festive holiday lights in the winter and incredible activities throughout the summer. In addition to the ocean, kids can cool off in the splash pad's sprinklers, while children of all ages can test their hand-eye coordination at **WildPlay Elements Park**, featuring a 213-metre-long zipline above the sand, aerial obstacle courses and a jump line that lets you plummet (safely) four storeys. Last but not least, there's the **Jones Beach Theater** which attracts performers like Jimmy Buffett and Alanis Morissette.

How to Enjoy New York's Canals

The United States owes much to New York's vast canal system. When it opened in 1825, the Erie Canal connected New York Harbor to the Great Lakes and helped usher in an era of industrialization and development across the Northeast and the Midwest. Today, the state maintains hundreds of trails along both active and historic canals, and encourages visitors to explore them year-round.

Wander the Empire State Trail

When it's completed in late 2020, the **Empire State Trail (EST)** will make it possible to walk from Battery Park, at the very edge of Lower Manhattan, all the way to Canada; in fact, the EST will be longest multi-use trail in the U.S. The hard-surfaced, ADA-accessible trail – some 1,207 kilometres in all – will be well-marked, which means you won't need to have a PhD in orienteering to enjoy the route. Nor will you need to tote a sleeping bag or backpack since much of the EST navigates its way through towns.

Camp the Erie Canalway Trail

Connecting Buffalo to Albany, the **Erie Canalway Trail** welcomes boaters, hikers, runners, cyclists, equestrians, birders, geocachers, walkers, snow-shoers and cross-country skiers, too. When you get tired, you can stop for the night at one of the trail's many campsites. Some sites include toilets and potable water but all are BYOT, or bring-your-own-tent. Some lock operators may also let you camp in non-designated sites on a case-by-case basis.

Imbibe Along the Cayuga-Seneca Canal

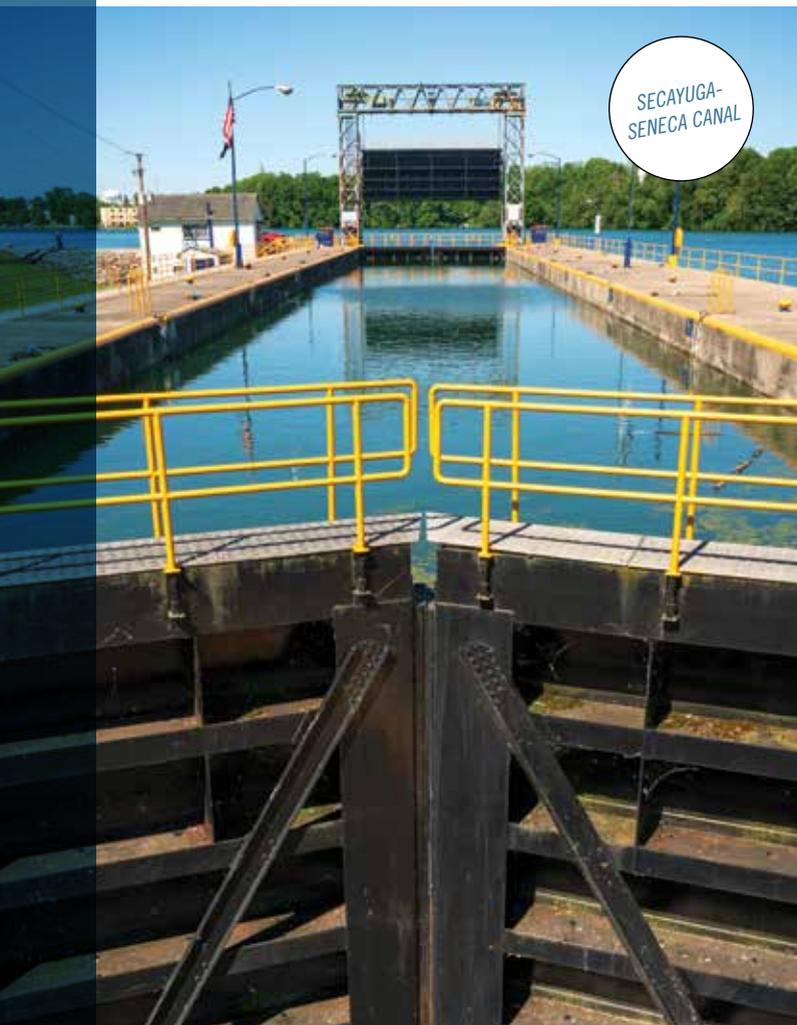
Oenophiles should check out the **Cayuga-Seneca Canal**, connecting Watkins Glen and Seneca Lake to Cayuga Lake and Ithaca. The area's wineries which are accessible by water include **Miles Wine Cellars**, **Long Point Winery** and **Sheldrake Point Winery**. But don't drink and boat. Book a room at **Belhurst Castle**, a boutique hotel with an on-site winery, brewery and spa that's been named one of the world's best wine hotels by *Wine Enthusiast*.

Float n'Boat

The NY Canal Corporation maintains various launch points and boat docks throughout the canal system's 804-plus kilometres of waterways, connecting Lake Erie, the Finger Lakes, the Niagara River, Lake Champlain, Lake Ontario and the Hudson River. If don't own your own watercraft, consider renting. **Waterbike Adventures** in Tonawanda rents boats and hydrobikes (bikes attached to floating pontoons which you pedal atop the water), while **Canalside Experiences** in Waterloo not only rents canoes, kayaks and paddleboards, but also offers houseboats and waterfront yurts.

Sit Back & Enjoy the Ride

Prefer to let someone else do the navigating? The **Lockport Locks & Erie Canal Cruise** takes you on a two-hour ride through five original 19th-century locks, including a pair on the Erie Canal and beneath the widest bridge in the U.S. It operates during the spring, summer and fall – when the leaves are at their most glorious. **Classic Adventures** and **Erie Canal Bike Tours** lead groups on guided bike rides where you'll pedal through lovely canal towns, state parks and farms with plenty of time to explore museums and cultural centres that showcase the area's Indigenous heritage and connections to the women's rights movement.



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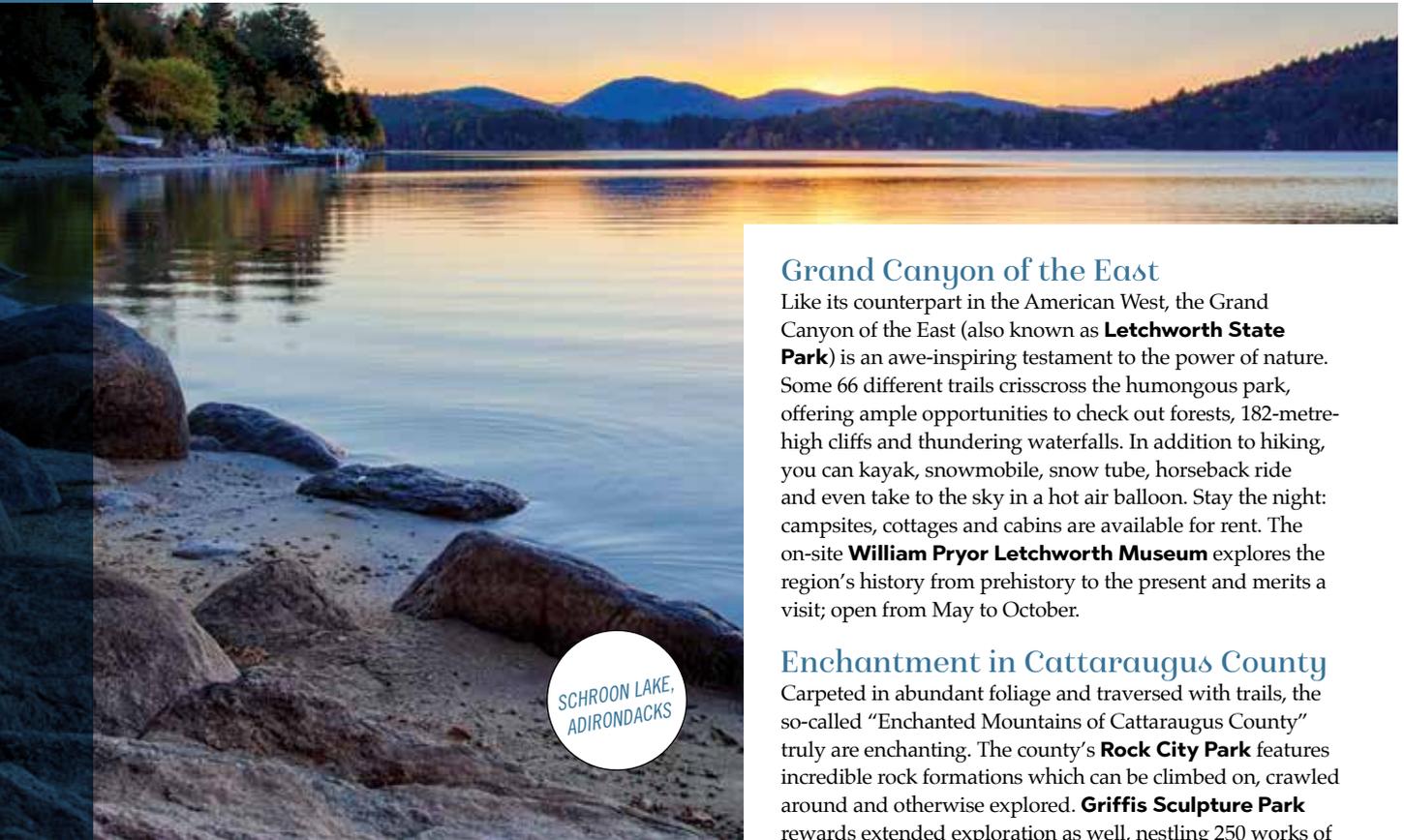
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Nature & Outdoors

Everything seems bigger, better and brighter in New York, and nature is no exception. The state continues to designate and protect natural resources, ensuring its wonders are enjoyed for generations to come.

Astonished by the Adirondacks

Stretching more than 2.4 million protected hectares, the **Adirondack Mountains** encompass a range of natural features, including mountains, canyons and lakes. In other words, name the outdoor activity and you can do it in the Adirondacks: camping, fishing, hiking, mountain biking, trail running, downhill and cross-country skiing, ice climbing, swimming, kayaking, canoeing, boating, tubing, white water rafting and leaf-peeping.

Visitors with lake life living on their mind need only look as far as the Adirondacks' southern gateway of Fulton County. Nestled in the foothills of these majestic mountains, the four-season county boasts 44 lakes swathed by 30,000 hectares of forest.

Grand Canyon of the East

Like its counterpart in the American West, the Grand Canyon of the East (also known as **Letchworth State Park**) is an awe-inspiring testament to the power of nature. Some 66 different trails crisscross the humongous park, offering ample opportunities to check out forests, 182-metre-high cliffs and thundering waterfalls. In addition to hiking, you can kayak, snowmobile, snow tube, horseback ride and even take to the sky in a hot air balloon. Stay the night: campsites, cottages and cabins are available for rent. The on-site **William Pryor Letchworth Museum** explores the region's history from prehistory to the present and merits a visit; open from May to October.

Enchantment in Cattaraugus County

Carpeted in abundant foliage and traversed with trails, the so-called "Enchanted Mountains of Cattaraugus County" truly are enchanting. The county's **Rock City Park** features incredible rock formations which can be climbed on, crawled around and otherwise explored. **Griffis Sculpture Park** rewards extended exploration as well, nestling 250 works of art among its trees, fields, ponds and meadows. And then there's **Allegany State Park**, the largest in the state (with some of the state's largest trees, to boot). Pack a flashlight to explore **Bear Caves** which were formed by cracks in the bedrock that date back more than 165 million years.

Wildlife Safari

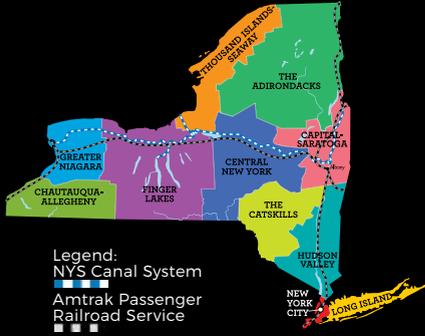
Bald eagles are among the most sought-after bird sightings at the **Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge**, but plenty of other two-winged and four-legged creatures make their home in the state's largest wildlife refuge, located halfway between Rochester and Buffalo. The park lies beneath the **Atlantic Flyway**, a north-south route for migratory birds like warblers, geese and hawks; over 250 bird species hang out here. On the ground you might spy foxes, beavers, woodland jumping mice, porcupines and coyotes - *oh my!*

Hike into History in Rockland County

All told, Rockland County boasts more than 1,254 hectares of parkland. For a dose of history along with your hike, check out **Haverstraw Beach State Park**, where Benedict Arnold - one of the most notorious traitors in American history - met with the British to hash out his plans to forfeit the fort at West Point during the Revolutionary War. Several decades later, in 1923, the first section of the **Appalachian Trail** (AT) opened, linking **Bear Mountain** to **Harriman State Park**. Highlights of the route include the **Lemon Squeezer**, in which hikers must squish between big boulders and the AT's lowest point, which happens to be directly in front of the bear den at Bear Mountain's **Trailside Museums & Zoo**.

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Food & Drink

When it comes to food in New York, bagels, hot dogs and pastrami on rye probably spring to mind. But the state offers so many more flavours to be sampled and savoured, among them 25 varieties of apples, prize-winning cheeses and champion wines. Prepare for your palate to be pleased.

Apples, Apples, Everywhere

New York City might be known as the “Big Apple,” but the state grows close to 30 million bushels per year. Spanning 600 acres, **Red Jacket Orchards** takes its apples and combines them with other fruits like plums and cherries to produce cold-pressed, unfiltered juice. Bottles are sold from the farm’s Geneva store as well as shops and greenmarkets throughout the Mid-Atlantic region. Looking for something stiffer? Don’t be put off by the name: **Angry Orchard**’s many varieties of hard cider, including *rosé* and crisp apple, will make you smile.

Moos and More

Home to more than 4,000 dairy farms, New York makes a mean butter, not to mention small batch ice cream and artisanal cheeses. Follow the Finger Lakes Cheese Alliance’s cheese trail to try organic beer-brined moocheego from **Engelbert Farms** or the aged goat cheese from **Lively Run Goat Dairy**, whose seasonal tour not only includes 10-plus tastings but also cuddle time with the goats. Speaking of farms, **Blue Hill at Stone Barns** changes its menu from month to month, celebrating what’s in season in the Hudson Valley. This restaurant helmed by Dan Barber pioneered farm-to-table dining, and recently received two Michelin stars.

Sip the Wine Trail

From Long Island to Niagara Falls, New York state truly is wine country. But the Finger Lakes region continues to be synonymous with notable rieslings, Cabernet Franc, merlots and more. Sip them all on the **Keuka Lake Wine Trail**, which stops at the fifth-generation **Steuer Hill Vineyards**, or follow the **Cayuga Lake Wine Trail**, the nation’s first such trail, founded in 1983, which features spots like **Thirsty Owl Wine Company** and **Goose Watch Winery**.

Famous Foods

- Pizza might have gotten its start in Italy, but it achieved perfection in New York. In 1905, Gennaro Lombardi opened the first pizzeria in NYC’s Little Italy neighbourhood. More than a century later, **Lombardi’s** continues to do terrific things with mozzarella, tomatoes, dough and a coal oven.
- An intrepid vendor conceived of frozen custard in Coney Island in 1919. Penn Yan’s **Spotted Duck** gave the tasty treat an update by swapping in duck eggs. The ice cream shop sources its milk, fruit, coffee and other mix-ins from area farms. Its Full-House Flight lets you try 12 different flavours, such as the lavender and blueberry-inflected “fleur bleu” or “grog nog,” which gets a kick from **Finger Lakes Distilling**’s bourbon and brandy.
- Buffalo wings – that staple of pubs the world over – were invented in 1964 when a hungry bartender asked his mom to whip up a snack to share with his friends. Teressa Bellissimo deep-fried some chicken wings, covered them in special sauce and served the result alongside celery sticks and blue cheese. Sample them at the very place where they first served – at Buffalo’s **Anchor Bar**.

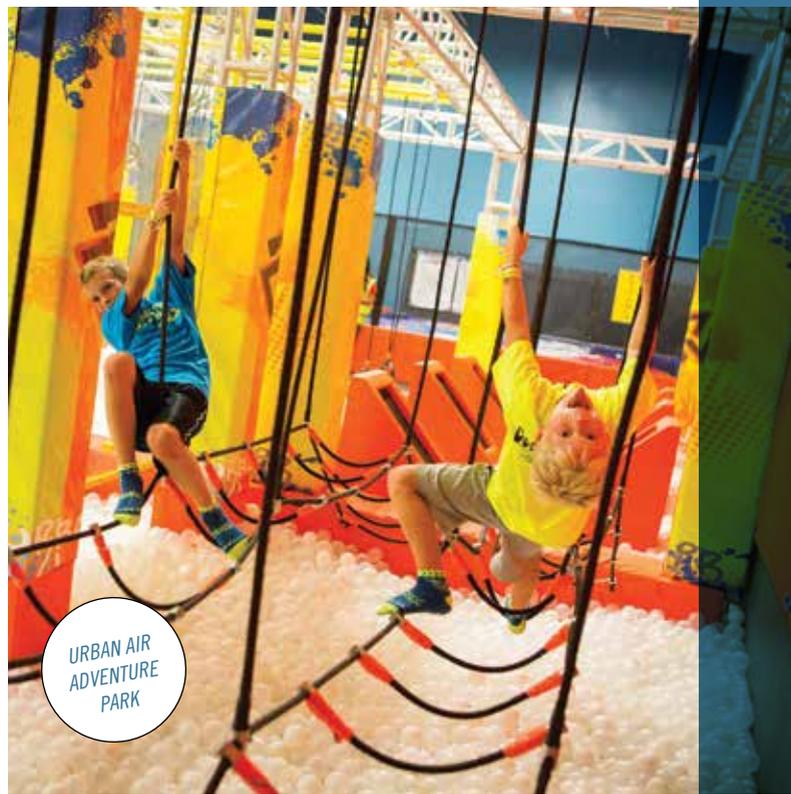
Shopping

New York breeds creativity, with designers and artisans in every corner of the state. And all that creativity makes for amazing shopping. Whether you're looking for a great deal on the hottest looks, seeking a one-of-a-kind item or hunting for a new-to-you treasure, there's sure to be a store for that.

Malls to the Max

It's been said that **Destiny USA** in Syracuse is so big, it should have its own zip code. Joking aside, this place is humongous – the largest mall in the state boasts more than 200 stores, from Coach to Kate Spade to Swarovski. When your wallet needs a break, take a ride on the vintage carousel.

Buffalo's **Walden Galleria** also offers shopping galore, including popular brands such as Microsoft and Michael Kors. To fuel up for your spree, you can sit down at one of its 11 full-service restaurants and breweries or grab a quick bite in the food court. And adrenaline junkies will want to put the pedal to the metal at **RPM Raceway** and test their skills at the soon-to-open **Urban Air Adventure Park's** 50,000-square-foot of trampolines and obstacle courses. ▶



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Hudson Valley Highlights

Cold Spring has become a must-visit hamlet for art lovers and vintage hounds who hang out at such spots as **Buster Levi Gallery** and **Once Upon a Time Antiques**. Stop by **Burkelman** for a bottle of T.H.V.F. (That Hudson Valley Fragrance), with hints of moss and tobacco, and find sustainable, handcrafted fashion for women and kids at **Swing**. Along its main street, nearby Beacon boasts **Hyperbole**, where you can shop jewellery, textiles and other goods made by local craftspeople; **Binnacle Books**, with its great selection of new and used titles; and **Vintage Beacon**, an eclectic consignment shop.

Made in New York

If you've ever taken a photo with a **Kodak** camera, eaten with an **Oneida** knife and fork or spritzed on some **CK One**, you've used a product by a company that was founded in New York. Technology from Corning protects our phones when we drop them. Clothing brands that got started here include powerhouses like **DKNY**, **Anna Sui** and **Diane von Furstenberg**, while bags by **Brooklyn Industries** and **Manhattan Portage** can be seen on shoulders and backs the world over.

Flea Market Finds

Since 2008, the year-round **Brooklyn Flea** has brought bargain hunters to the borough for furniture, clothes and collectibles, both newly made and lovingly refurbished. Its sister food market, **Smorgasburg**, attracts folks looking for unique creations like ramen burgers and Afghan dumplings. Over in Greenwich, the **Washington County Antique Fair and Flea Market** takes place over select summer weekends and welcomes hundreds of artists and vendors.

Take Home Some History

"Look to the cookie," Jerry tells Elaine in an episode of *Seinfeld*, sharing his secret for racial harmony as he nibbles a half-vanilla, half-chocolate confection. While the show helped rocket the cookie to popularity, **Hemstrought's Bakery** in Utica has been making its version, known as a "halfmoon," using the same recipe since 1920. At the **Jell-O Gallery Museum** in LeRoy, you can discover how one of the most famous desserts in the U.S. got its start as a laxative and cough medicine invented by a carpenter in 1897. Once you're full of fun facts, shop for T-shirts, stuffed animals and Jell-O molds for making your very own jiggy, wiggly treats.



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