

TravelLife

WINTER 2022

Delicious Detours

OUR CULINARY TRAVEL COLLECTION

SPECIAL FEATURE

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CONTRIBUTORS

We asked some of our contributors about a meal (or meals) they've had in their travels they feel is well worth going back for.



PARM PARMAR

FROM BEAN TO BAR, PAGE 36

While I've had many memorable meals in my travels, the dishes I've enjoyed in the Veneto region have all been particularly exceptional, including radicchio in a creamy sauce with crumbled pancetta, risotto simmered in well-seasoned chicken broth and lamb-filled agnolotti. In any place you visit in Veneto (capital of Venice), a glass of Prosecco is poured before the conversation begins. It doesn't get more civilized than this and I'm ready to visit all over again.



NICOLE SERVINIS

THE MANY FLAVOURS OF BAJA SUR, PAGE 28;
FALLING IN LOVE WITH LORETO, PAGE 40

In my recent travels, the most delicious and memorable meal I had was in Loreto—trigger fish and scallops we enjoyed minutes after we caught them. Aside from the obvious freshness, the way our guides prepared and cooked them over an open fire on the beach, combined with the fresh tomatoes, onions and herbs, made for a unique, tasty and unforgettable experience.



MARK STEVENS

SUN, SAND, SEA-AND SONG, PAGE 56

After searching for Louisiana's best gumbo on a recent New Orleans trip, I found it at the Gumbo Shop in the French Quarter. Consistently rated NOLA's best by locals, this delectable concoction with a side of jambalaya proved them to be spot-on. I shall return.

TravelLife



COVER PHOTO:

Courtesy of Chef Edgar Núñez at María Dolores Restaurant where the motto of transmitting an authentic love for Mexico offers a new appreciation of the Mexican cuisine evolution and the secrets from its ancestral techniques.

ATELIER Playa Mujeres Resort

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Take your taste buds on a journey through the Eastern Colombian Andes by cooking up Colombian Ajiaco

The historic Andes, where colonization began and the liberation took place. Land of peaks, moors and valleys that are home to impressive national parks. From the capital of Bogotá with its skyscrapers, museums, gastronomy, and rich cultural offerings, the region extends to the north transporting the visitor to incredible colonial towns and a time of legends.

Ajiaco

INGREDIENTS

- 3 chicken breasts skin removed
- 12 cups water
- 3 ears fresh corn cut into 2 pieces
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 chicken bouillon cubes
- 3 scallions
- 2 garlic cloves minced
- 3 tablespoon chopped cilantro
- 2 cups papa criolla Andean Potato
- 3 medium white potatoes peeled and sliced
- 3 medium red potatoes peeled and sliced
- 1/3 cup guascas
- 1 cup heavy cream for serving
- 1 cup capers for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

In a large pot, place the chicken, corn, chicken bouillon, cilantro, scallions, garlic, salt and pepper. Add the water and bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium and cook for about 30 to 35 minutes, until chicken is cooked and tender. Remove the chicken and set aside. Continue cooking the corn for about 15 more minutes. Discard green onion and add red potatoes, white potatoes, and the guascas. Cook for 15 more minutes. Uncover and add the frozen papa criolla and simmer for 15 minutes, season with salt and pepper. Shred the chicken breast and return to the pot. Serve the Ajiaco hot with capers and heavy cream on the side.

NOTES

You can find dried guascas on Amazon. In the USA and Canada you can find frozen papa criolla in Latin markets. I like to serve Ajiaco with avocado on the side.

TASTY TRAVELS



It goes without saying that food is an integral part of why many of us travel—and an important gateway into destinations we grow to love. In honour of that sentiment, we've dedicated a part of this issue to food as it relates to travel and how eating abroad changes us, our palates and our impressions of where we've been. I know I'm not alone in the fact that some of my most memorable meals have happened during my travels.

From Europe to Florida to Mexico and beyond, I've had the chance to experience dishes that have—and likely always will—stay with me.

This issue features ***Delicious Detours***, our culinary travel collection highlighting the importance of food as a meaningful part of how we experience each new destination. To that end, we have some seriously delicious culinary content—from the origins of Ketchup and the history of Prosecco, to chocolate tourism in St. Lucia, the stellar (and authentic) Asian fare available in Richmond, B.C., and the eclectic (and epic) food scene in L.A. (hint: do not miss the San Pedro Fish Market).

Aside from amazing eats, we also have one regular contributor covering a memorable experience at Mountain Trek Fitness Retreat & Health Spa in the forests of B.C. where she had a chance to recharge physically, mentally and emotionally. Another writer delves into everything she loved about Loreto on a first time visit, which not only includes a plethora of natural and historic attractions, but also local charm and fantastic food.

We also put the focus on Florida with our ***Let's Go Florida!*** special feature, a destination whose recent hardship cannot be denied. Hurricane Ian may have wreaked havoc, but there is no denying Florida's tenacity and will to rebuild. One of our writers spent time in Fort Myers just before the storm hit and shares some of the ways the region is already opening back up to visitors.

We also have a writer looking into the most luxurious vacation homes in Florida, as well as a piece spotlighting some of the best glamping spots in the Sunshine State. If that weren't enough, I spend an exciting 48 hours in Miami—a city that offers something new no matter how many times you visit, and another writer goes deep in Cassadaga, Florida, where he discovers an abundance of charm alongside many options for spiritual guidance.

No matter where your travels take you this winter, we hope you can take advantage of the unique culinary offerings along the way—as well as all of the other small but impactful moments travel brings our way.

Here's to a deliciously sweet (or savoury) season ahead!

Tammy Cecco

TAMMY CECCO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Follow along with all of our travels



@travellifemag

ATELIER Playa Mujeres Resort

Chef Edgar Núñez's Amaranth, Sweet Potato and Cactus Salad

Delicacy and freshness blend to create a fabulous salad of intricate flavors. The mix of purslane, spinach and cured opuntia pads is showered in a generous drizzle of chili pepper and lime vinaigrette. Colorful slices of sweet potato and flower petals are carefully incorporated into the mix and topped with delicious "tlayuda" powder, citrus honey and amaranth. There's nothing quite like uncovering the different flavors, textures and aromatic notes with each bite!

This is just one taste of what can be enjoyed at María Dolores at ATELIER Playa Mujeres Resort where the motto of transmitting an authentic love for Mexico, offers a new appreciation of the Mexican cuisine evolution and the secrets from its ancestral techniques.



About Celebrity Chef Edgar Núñez

Chef Edgar Núñez conveys his profound love for Mexico through culinary arts. His mission is to display the country's rich history and vibrant identity with a delightful contemporary vegetable-focused cuisine of unique techniques, ingredients, origin and temporality. In his recipes, each element shines without renouncing its essence, providing an incomparable flavour to the dishes.

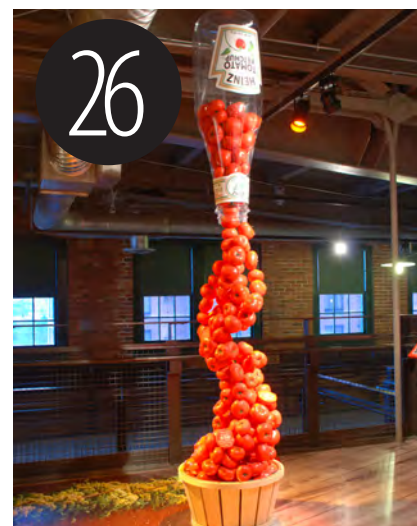
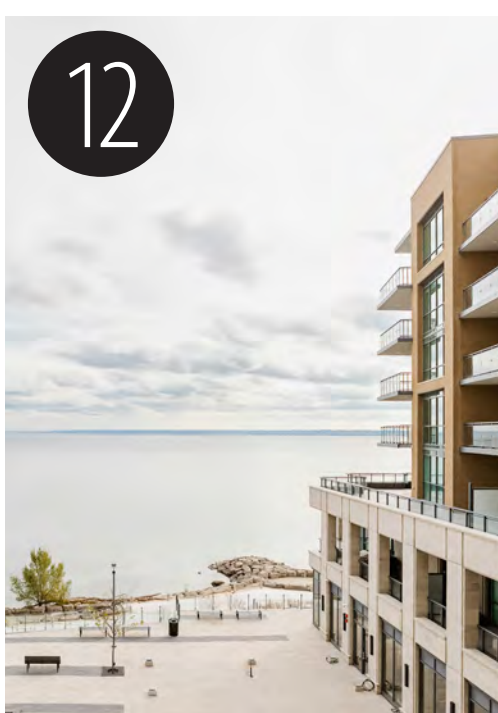
"I am in love with vegetable cuisine because each ingredient is different. Their complexity combined with detail, precision, and visual analysis form a simply unique gastronomic experience."

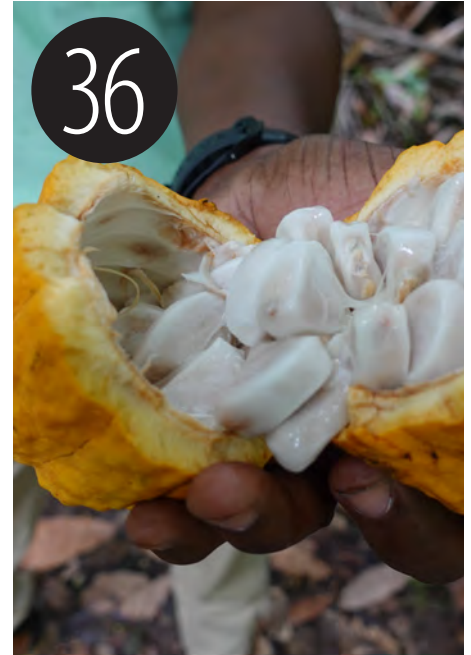
- Chef Edgar Nuñez.



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EDITOR'S PICKS: SEASONAL MUST-HAVES

Travel-inspired gift picks for everyone on your list

Whether shopping for friends, family—or yourself—this curated list of covetable items features travel-inspired finds and seasonal gift ideas, from food to fun to fashion.

PLAID PJS

Cozy up for Christmas (and the rest of the winter) in an ultra-luxe pair of pajamas from This Is J. The bold red plaid print is perfect for the season and if you happen to be travelling over the holidays, these make it easy to bring the spirit of comfort with you.

[Thisisj.com](https://thisisj.com), \$172



LOW-TECH MINDFULNESS

Trade screen time for self care with the Buddha Board, which allows you to 'paint' on the board's surface with water, making for a low-tech way to unwind. As the water evaporates, your art will simply disappear leaving a clean slate ready for your next masterpiece—minus paint, cleanup, or chemicals.

buddhaboard.ca, \$ 37.95



CLASSIC LINEN SHIRT

A must for any traveller, the Whitney Classic Shirt is crafted from a soft linen that provides flexibility, comfort and style. Easily dressed up or down, the shirt is available for both men and women. Whitney Linen also carries linen pants, kaftans and dresses perfect for travel.

whitneylinen.com, \$265

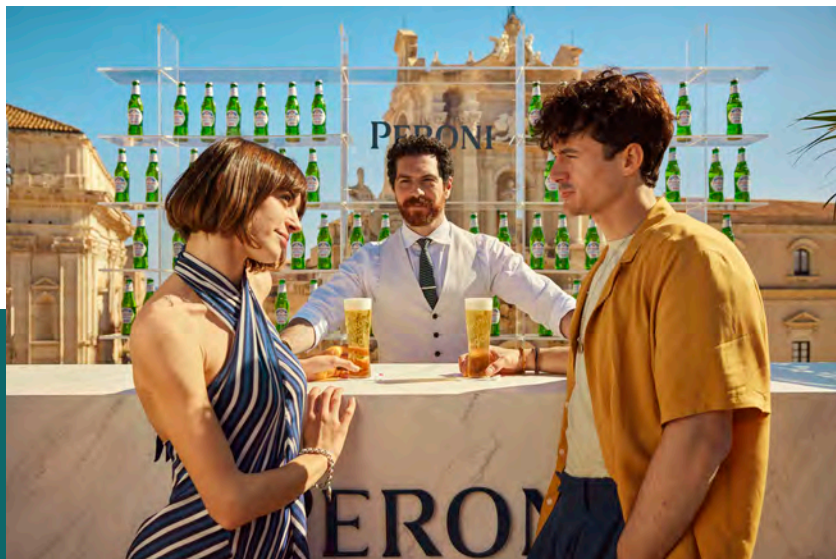


DINNER PARTY IN A BOX

This three-course meal kit—ideal for gifting foodie friends (or anyone dreaming of Italy), contains everything you need for an epic antipasti spread, parmesan pomodoro, and mascarpone cannoli cheesecake. It all comes courtesy of Giadzy, the online pantry of Italian must-haves handpicked by Giada de Laurentiis.

giadzy.com, USD \$172





A SIP OF SUMMERS IN EUROPE

Anyone nostalgic for summer travels to Europe (or dreaming of a future visit), can easily incorporate a little something from Italy (or gift any beer fans) with some Peroni Nastro Azzurro. Brewed in Italy to the original recipe from 1963, the official beer of TIFF 2022 is effervescent, refreshing and crisp—a perfect sip for any time of day.

[lcbo.com](https://www.lcbo.com), \$16.05 (for six)

STYLISH SLIDES

Made in Italy, these gorgeous Gucci slides make an instant style statement thanks to the ornate Flora motif from the 1960s designed by artist Vittorio Accornero. Day or night, these can easily take you from the pool to aperitivo hour.

[gucci.com/ca](https://www.gucci.com/ca), \$905



THE PERFECT TRAVEL PANT

Meant to replace jeans, khakis and outdoor pants, LIVSN's Ecotrek Trail Pants for men and women make it easy to save space in your suitcase. Ideal for everything from outdoor adventure to casual sightseeing, the pants are durable, lightweight, comfortable and breathable.

[livsndesigns.com](https://www.livsndesigns.com), USD \$ 176



CARRY-ON CLOSET

Packing has never been easier with the Carry-On Closet, an award-winning suitcase with a convenient built-in shelving system that ensures you stay organized on the go. Choose from a variety of colours, including from the vibrant Capri Collection, inspired by the Mediterranean island (we love the Limoncello Yellow).

[solgaard.co](https://www.solgaard.co), USD \$295



TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

EDITOR'S PICK



MULTITASKING MAKEUP TOOLS

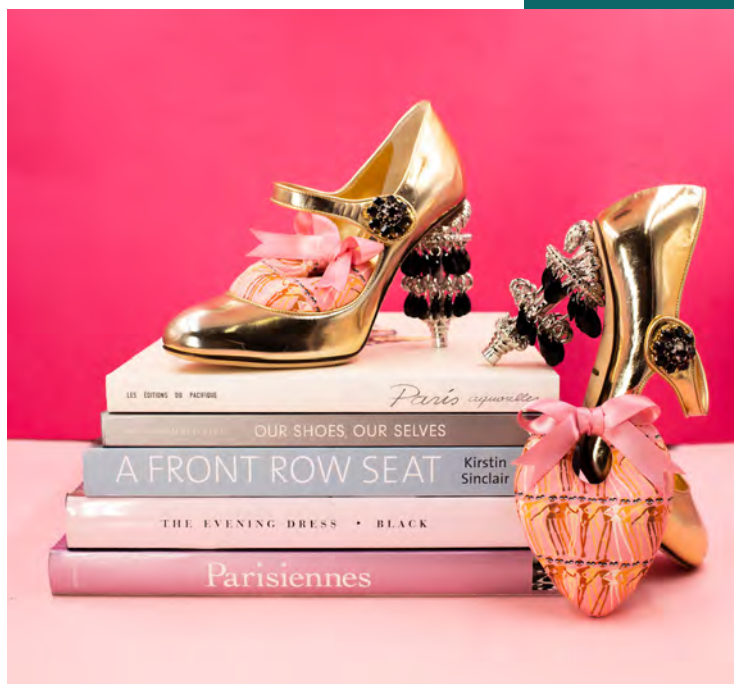
Save space in your makeup bag at home and on the go with the help of the alleyoop multitasker, a 4-in-1 beauty tool that combines a concealer sponge and blush, brow and eyeshadow brush. We also love the pen pal: an eyeliner, lip liner, brow pencil and highlighter in one easy-to-use click pen.

meetalleyoop.com, USD \$19.60 (multitasker), \$17.50 (pen pal)

PRE-EVENT PAMPERING

Gift the woman in your life who has everything with a blow out or updo courtesy of the Blow Dry Lounge, with three locations in Toronto (and mobile service). In addition to their signature blow dry, they also offer a variety of other hair care services.

blowdrylounge.com, \$45 (for signature blow dry)



STYLISH SHOE PROTECTION

Whether at home or while you travel, My Perfect Shoe creates sustainable shoe stuffers that are not only functional, but ultra-pretty as well. Handmade in a range of colourful patterns, these easily slip into a variety of shoe styles, protecting them in closets, gym bags and suitcases. A percentage of each purchase goes directly to the American Cancer Society. They also offer all-natural fragrance mists in three lovely scents, leaving shoes smelling fresh.

protectmyshoes.com, USD \$14.95

INSPIRING TRAVEL MEMOIR

New York Times bestseller and now a hit Netflix adaptation, *From Scratch: A Memoir of Love, Sicily, and Finding Home* by Tembi Locke is a moving story set in the sumptuous Sicilian countryside. The memoir beautifully depicts the power of acceptance and moving forward in the face of loss.

chapters.indigo.ca, \$ 25



HUNTER

TRAVEL ESSENTIALS
HUNTER

Travel Essentials

Accessory Picks for Any Trip

From coast to coast and peak to peak, Hunter's wide range of durable and stylish accessories can truly go anywhere

Ready for anything boots

Whether hiking, biking, or racing across terminals to your next flight, the Explorer Insulated Lace-Up Commando Boot is lightweight enough for daily wear yet sturdy enough to confidently accompany you on longer treks. Water-resistant and certified vegan, these boots were made for adventure.



Go-anywhere jacket

Stay warm on winter walks, apres-ski, or anywhere in between with the Intrepid Insulated Mid Puffer Jacket. The oversized cocoon shape drapes perfectly over any travel outfit and soft padded insulation keeps you cozy in temperatures as low as -25°C.



Versatile comfort

Designed to be worn both indoors and out, the aptly named In/Out Slipper offers luxe comfort on the coldest days and on the longest flights; around the house or in a hotel room. Easily packable, these slippers make it easy to feel cozy any time, anywhere.



Crossbody Bag

Ideal for both shorter trips and longer getaways, the water-resistant Explorer Multiway Crossbody is ready for anything. Constructed from 100 per cent recycled material, the sturdy yet stylish bag features daisy chain webbing loops on the front perfect for hanging carabiners for water bottles. Clever design also allows the bag to easily be worn as a crossbody or a belt bag.



Playful meets practical

Available in multiple hues—from wild mint to azalea pink, the ultra-comfortable Play Short Rain Boot sits just above the ankle and pairs well with any casual-leaning outfit. Whether puddle-hopping in Paris, Positano—or closer to home—these boots will keep you dry in style.



Perfect carry-on

Just the right size for all of your in-flight (or on-the-go) essentials, this roomy, water-resistant tote is crafted from repurposed nylon. The detachable, adjustable strap means comfort and versatility and multiple pockets provide ample storage.





POSTCARDS FROM THE PEARLE

Head just outside the city to find a low-key yet luxurious spa retreat with everything you need to unwind and recharge

BY TAMMY CECCO

Contemporary lake house meets urban hotel, The Pearle Hotel & Spa is located on Burlington's vibrant waterfront. This ideal location lends itself well to a stroll along the boardwalk, soaking in the beauty of the lake. The inspiration for the fresh, elegant style and first-class hospitality comes from the family's matriarch, Grandmother Pearle. Everything here embodies the spirit of the lake house summers of Grandma Pearle's past.

I would love to see this place in the summer, but the tranquil views of Lake Ontario fit any season—now a stunning Christmas tree and majestic spiral staircase provide a wonderful welcome. The elegant and modern décor carry throughout the hotel and into the 151 guest rooms, all featuring beautiful white oak panelling and signature design elements throughout.

Each room is fresh and airy with luxurious bedding and plush bathrobes. Options for a lake view or an oversized balcony are plentiful. Although the décor is contemporary, there is an attention to detail that creates a welcoming place to lie your head. You'll also find postcards in your room and throughout the hotel as Grandma Pearle loved to write, and as a celebration of her legacy the hotel covers postage for anyone who wants to share their experience with friends and loved ones.

Stay-worthy spa services

As an experienced spa goer, my tastes tend to be on the discerning side. My expectations were exceeded at The Pearle Spa with not only the ambiance and facilities, but also the long

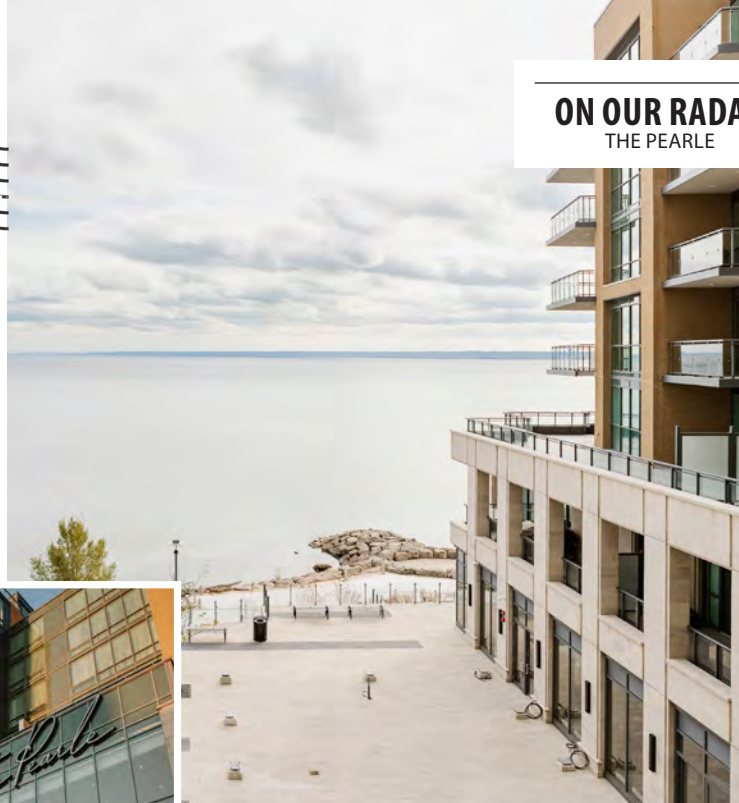


list of curated spa experiences incorporating high quality products. I had booked a facial upon my arrival at the hotel and thought I would regret not having time to slow down before my appointment, but with the indulgent pampering I received with my facial, I was relaxed in no time. I would recommend the Rose Quartz Restorative Facial300, designed to smooth, sculpt and soothe with a signature massage technique that benefits the mind and the skin. Top off your spa experience with the Hammam steam room and heated indoor infinity pool with lake views. The hotel also offers a state of the art fitness centre open 24/7.

Destination dining

Although the charming and historic downtown Burlington is loaded with boutique dining experiences, a meal at the hotel's onsite restaurant, Isabelle, should be included in your stay. The menu is a vibrant blend of Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Californian

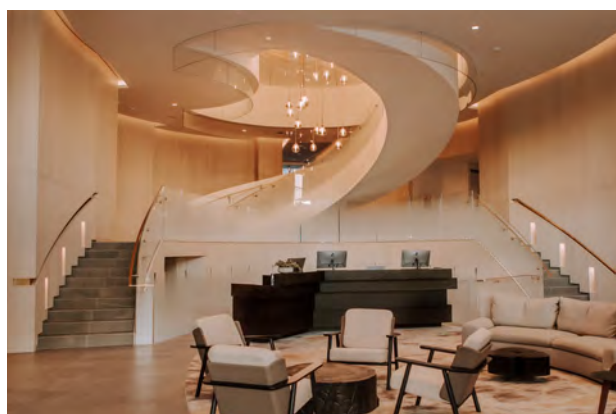
ON OUR RADAR
THE PEARLE



flavours which incorporate the bounty of Pearle's own organic farm. Though the food, service and décor here are all impeccable, the vibe is relaxed and never hurried—warm, welcoming and very much like a family home (or Grandma's kitchen) would be. Dishes are meant to be shared, further cultivating an atmosphere of informal togetherness.

I shared the whipped feta dip with salsa macha (a unique salsa originating from Veracruz made with dried peppers, nuts and oil) served with homemade pita bread, followed by a perfectly seared dry aged tomahawk steak topped with scallion chermoula butter. The result was a dining experience I would return for even if I was not a guest of the hotel. For lighter fare throughout the day, the onsite Bread Bar offers a delicious café menu focusing on baked goods made from local ingredients, pizzas and salads. They also provide the in-room dining menu for the hotel. I indulged with breakfast in bed that included a decadent skillet with roasted sweet potato, fried eggs, guacamole, queso fresco, lime, cilantro and jalapeno crema.

My one-night getaway at this extraordinary waterfront escape left me feeling sated and rejuvenated. The genuine and thoughtful hospitality I experienced in just 24 hours are well worth writing home about.





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Culinary Treasures to Discover on a Christmas Market River Cruise

Nothing says 'holiday spirit' like Europe's Christmas markets—and the best way to experience their magic is by river cruise



BY LYNN ELMHIRST,
HOST OF WORLD'S GREATEST
CRUISES ON PBS

Cruising Into Christmas

'Tis the season for Christmas markets. Heart-warming and charming, they spring up in town squares and castle yards throughout Europe from the end of November. The easiest, most relaxing way to visit several different Christmas markets in one festive trip is on a river cruise. You unpack once and sail into another town every day, meaning you can get a 'taste' for several Christmas markets on a single week-long vacation.

River cruise lines make arrangements to drop guests at the entrance of markets (much better than having to find parking if you're travelling on your own) and their group booking often allows guests to skip the line-up for some of the bigger markets.

If it's your first Christmas market river cruise, Rhine and Danube itineraries that sail through Germany are two of my top picks. Many of our favourite Christmas traditions hail from Germany, where they still do Christmas the old-fashioned way: flaming torches and twinkling candlelight, genuine fir boughs and Christmas trees, wooden huts with curlicues, artisanal tree decorations, nutcrackers and hand-made children's toys and mouth-watering, traditional culinary treats that make their appearance just once a year.

The magic of Christmas markets ignites all the senses: the sights of winter celebration, sounds of live carol singing and bells, the feel of wood toys, glass ornaments and warm felt hats, the scent of wood fires and delicious aromas of Christmas market fare. When it comes to taste—those traditional holiday treats are an unforgettable part of any market visit.



Festive decorations onboard Uniworld



Pretzels and **Wurst** are mainstays of traditional German fare year round and perfect comfort food in chilly winter weather at a Christmas market, especially washed down with Gluhwein.

Gluhwein: Even a Grinch starts smiling after one glass of Gluhwein. The warm, mulled wine with sugar, citrus and spices epitomizes traditional holiday flavours. While typically made with red wine, if the local wine is predominantly white or even a fruit wine like cherry, that should be your top choice.

Seasonal Shipboard Treats

River cruise lines get into the spirit of the season, too, with Christmas decorations as well as special local holiday dishes, dinners, surprise treats and food-focused activities that will pique your festive tastebuds.

Avalon Waterways offers tasting tours of Christmas markets, onboard cookie demonstrations and a holiday menu including lebkuchen parfaits and pumpkin strudel. Emerald Cruises' lebkuchen baking shore excursion takes you to Nuremburg, the "gingerbread capital of the world." Uniworld's festive dinner menu includes chestnuts and plum stuffing, and even a 'vegetarian haggis' with a Gluhwein sauce. Tauck's shore excursion to a family-owned restaurant in Rudesheim is where guests can make traditional German Christmas cookies—then back onboard, try the cruise line's stollen cooking demo. AmaWaterways' 'Shoes for St. Nick' tradition sees guests leaving a slipper provided by the cruise line outside their door one night of the cruise, awakening to find it filled with edible Christmas treats. And Viking offers onboard gingerbread house building and Christmas cookie decorating activities.

You'll disembark a Christmas market river cruise overflowing with Christmas spirit—and full of the most authentic and traditional flavours of the holiday season.

Christmas Market Delicacies

Marzipan: In Germany, sweetened ground almond paste is chewy and irresistible. I dream of fresh German marzipan year round and I find it in Christmas markets, moulded into countless festive shapes. Perhaps the ultimate yuletide marzipan delicacies are marzipankartoffeln (marzipan potatoes). Small marzipan balls are rolled in cocoa, resembling baby potatoes. They may be the best sweet walking-around snack in the world.

Lebkuchen: If you're a fan of gingerbread, embark on a river cruise that includes Nuremburg's Christmas market, the biggest in Germany and one of the most famous in the world. Nuremburg is renowned as the "gingerbread capital of the world." The local recipe includes cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and even a bit of spicy white pepper. Show your loved ones at home how much you care with a suitcase full of Lebkuchenherzen—large gingerbread hearts festooned with curlicues of white and red icing with sweet messages.

Stollen: This German version of a holiday yeasted fruit bread dates—like other German Christmas traditions—back to the Crusades, when returning knights brought home precious new ingredients from the East. It's said the hump shape of the loaves represents the camels who carried the Three Wise Men to the first Christmas in Bethlehem, and the candied citrus and dried fruit in the bread represent their gifts for Baby Jesus.





Doing a Reset in the Dense Forests of B.C.

Mountain Trek Fitness Retreat & Health Spa offers the chance to fully recharge—physically, mentally and emotionally

Words & photos by Diana Ballon

When I first booked a week-long wellness retreat at Mountain Trek Fitness Retreat & Health Spa in B.C.'s Selkirk Mountains, I was excited about the idea of vigorous woodland hikes and evening massages, and then rotating between Nordic hot and cold pools. But I wasn't thinking so much about the other elements I read on the calendar: the 6 a.m. wake-up, the 1,200-calories we would be allocated per day and a diet free of all coffee, sugar and alcohol.

As the date got closer, my nervousness increased. I love a coffee to kickstart my mornings, wine to bridge that time between work and dinner, and as for desserts? Well, they are there to create a proper ending to my evening meal. However would I cope?

As it turned out, I would cope—and even more so, it would be the reset I needed. As someone prone to bouts of depression and anxiety and mercurial mood shifts, I had approached this retreat as a kind of controlled experiment. I wanted to see if this anti-inflammatory diet with meals and snacks carefully portioned throughout the day, regular exercise and time in nature would stabilize my moods and make me feel less stressed, without the need for any “chemical” boosters.” I definitely achieved that, along with some better eating and exercise habits

for back at home.

But it was challenging—like implosive therapy for someone with a phobia. Instead of having a sip of wine or a piece of chocolate cake to make myself feel better, I would find other forms of “self-care” and be more compassionate and kind to myself. (Apparently I had missed the self-love memo that many kids get in childhood.)

The orthodoxy of Mountain Trek's approach to health and fitness means that it may not be the right choice for everyone. But for people looking for a regimented program to reduce stress, lose weight, improve fitness, decrease depression and anxiety or simply regain vitality, then this is the place. With a high ratio of staff to a maximum of 16 guests, you are also guaranteed personalized support—along with science-based talks on what they describe as the five pillars of health: fitness, sleep, nutrition, stress management and detoxification.

Although this all-inclusive wellness retreat is described as “luxurious,” it is not luxurious in the way we usually think of luxury. Most of the guest rooms are outfitted with twin beds and the most minimal of adornments. But their modern timber-frame lodge overlooking Kootenay Lake and the stunning mountain

range surrounding it is the setting for a week when you have the luxury of focusing solely on your own health and wellness—with access to ample fitness equipment, mountains as your “gym” and expert instructors to help you reach your goals. These goals or intentions can vary widely. Although mine was more about my mental health, for others it's weight loss and learning better portion control, dealing with depression, or grieving a recent loss.





The day

The schedule for each day is intense. You move up to seven hours a day with yoga in the morning, several hours of fast-paced Nordic fitness trekking mid-day (with a thermos of soup for lunch and fruit and/or veggies and dip for snacks) and a fitness class at night. You receive three evening massages over the course of the week. You have daily talks on everything from nutrition to sleep to boosting your metabolism and detoxifying toxins from the body. And your chemical-free diet includes morning ginger water and a smoothie upon first rising, as well as nutritious and mostly organic food six times per day.

On the first morning, program manager and fitness director Katya Campbell stands at a white board in the lodge's living room with a marker in hand, as we sit around on sofas taking notes.

"We're taking a break from all things inflammatory," she tells the group, as she writes a list on the board of all the diseases it's said can stem from too much inflammation: cancer, dementia and diabetes being just a few. For those wanting to lose weight, that means moving at a good clip on our Nordic hikes. For as Katya explains, fat burn requires using 65% to 85% of our perceived rate of exertion, so working hard enough to not speak in three to four word sentences. (People wanting to just reduce stress or connect with nature can go in a slower hiking group.)

On the Wednesday, mid-week on our retreat, we have the option of forest bathing, otherwise known as a "shinrin experience." Developed in Japan in the 1980s, forest bathing—contrary to what I expected—is about far more than simply walking through a forest. As our guide Natasha Hall told us, "it's about reconnecting with the self and nature through the senses." We did five exercises and broke after each to speak about what came up for us, while holding a singing

bowl that we passed around the group. The five exercises involved exploring the "pleasures of presence," including what is in motion, the joy of tiny things, conversation with a tree and finally, drinking fireweed tea. I was surprised at how much emotion these experiences evoked—for all of us.



Now returned from Mountain Trek, I am working on the goals I set on the last day. Part of intention setting, we are told, is not to be overly ambitious or perfectionistic, as then we are more likely to fail. So I decide, rather than trying to eliminate coffee and sugar and alcohol, to cut my intake of each roughly in half. I am going off screens for at least two hours before bed. I exercise about five hours each week as well as walk regularly. And I start each morning with a smoothie within a half hour of waking up. So far so good. I feel thankful to the staff at Mountain Trek, who aren't simply workers. I think of them as kind-hearted agents of change.

"It's about reconnecting with the self and nature through the senses."

If you go

To get to Mountain Trek, you can take the retreat's complimentary 75-minute shuttle from the airport in Castlegar, B.C. (via the funky town of Nelson), or their 4.5-hour shuttle from the airport in Spokane, Washington.

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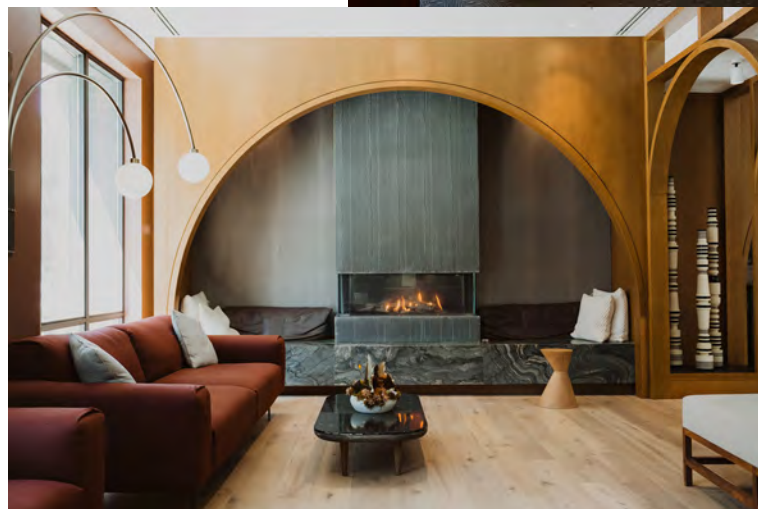
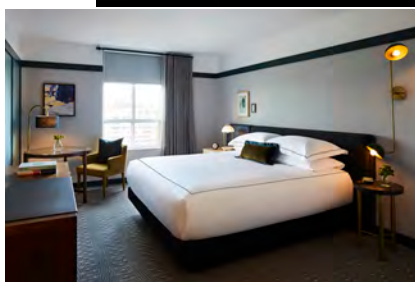
Laid Back, Clever and Cozy

Kimpton Saint George perfectly captures all that is unique and special about Toronto

BY TAMMY CECCO

and if you want something slightly less casual, the flat iron Steak Frites is worthy of a second visit.

Kimpton St. George was a welcome alternative to a large hotel in the centre of the hustle and bustle. The location is perfect, but the size and style of the hotel was anything but ordinary—cultivating a totally unique vibe reflective of the city itself and offering a one-of-a-kind experience in Toronto.



Toronto may home to an endless list of luxury hotels, each with their own vibe and many with their own claim to fame, be it a world class spa or covetable location. But on a recent staycation, I discovered the Kimpton Saint George, an unexpected gem that until this visit had not been on my hotel radar.

The hotel's own description of their design inspiration turned out to be right on the mark—the intent being to convey the untold story of Toronto and all of its eclectic eccentricities. The Toronto-based firm behind the hotel's interior, Mason Studio, wanted the space to evoke and embody the heart and soul of the Annex while shining a light on the more intimate details of Toronto, which residents hold close to their hearts. Their communication of this is perfect and from the moment I arrived, I felt like I was being welcomed into someone's home. The intimate reception and lobby area is outfitted with comfortable seating and a cozy fireplace adds to the overall warmth.

Rooms here are uniquely decorated in warm tones with a blend of modern and retro touches. My room had a vintage turntable with a varied selection of LPs, perfect for unwinding at the end of the night.

The onsite Fortunate Fox restaurant, has a relaxing yet upscale ambiance featuring elevated pub fare.

The service is excellent and the intimate experience of the hotel is echoed here making it seem like you're heading into some kind of speakeasy or an exclusive spot only locals would know about. The range of cocktails is as impressive as their list of premium spirits. The smash burger is heaven

Cool Perks and Quirks

Kimpton Saint George also goes above and beyond where amenities are concerned.

- Morning coffee and tea are provided in the lobby credenza and you can enjoy a glass of wine during social hour from 5 to 6 p.m. in the lobby.
- The fitness centre is small but functional and has a newly added Peloton.
- Yoga mats are provided in every guest room to ensure you maintain your Zen during your stay and complimentary PUBLIC bikes are available for guests.
- Open your closet and you can't help but smile when you spot the White Squirrel, a nod to Toronto's infamous albino white squirrels found specifically in Trinity Bellwoods Park.
- Bottled cocktails made specifically for Kimpton Saint George are available for purchase at the front desk.
- The huge mirror in the elevator lobby is the perfect place for a quick pic while you wait and is an extension of the art tastefully placed throughout the hotel, including one-of-a-kind hand-dipped metal wall pieces by artist and designer Laura Langford in every guest room.
- The property's 1,500-square-foot pre-function lounge and meeting room each provide a welcoming and flexible place for work and play, specifically catering to intimate gatherings.



Award-Winning Toronto Eats

Toronto finally enters
the Michelin-starred
restaurant world

BY NICOLA BROWN

It's been a long time coming. For many years Torontonians have been well aware of just how great their city's food scene is. Diversity, skill, passion and creativity have fuelled many of the best dining experiences I've had anywhere in the world, right on my doorstep.

Now the world has new insight into the culinary excellence of Toronto: 13 Michelin Stars and 17 Bib Gourmands, the latter recognizing high-quality food at good-value, were awarded in September 2022, the first time the Michelin Guide set foot on Canadian soil.

Showcasing the best of Toronto's culinary diversity, here are my top picks for the Michelin Bib Gourmands you should make a reservation at right now.



LA BARTOLA MEXICAN, VEGETARIAN \$\$

At this dimly-lit, cozy date night spot, chef Iván Castro's vegan Mexican cooking finds sumptuous flavour in ancient Aztec and Mayan staples like plants, seeds and grains, without you noticing there's no meat. Order the: white mole with parsnips and maitake mushrooms.



ENOTECA SOCIALE ITALIAN \$\$

Request the chef's tasting menu and a seat at the bar to watch the tiny, busy kitchen compose your dishes—refined Italian comfort food with well-studied flavours at once familiar, yet also pleasantly distinct. Order the: Bitter Nonna cocktail.



WYNONA ITALIAN, MEDITERRANEAN \$\$

Warm woods and breezy minimalism are the perfect backdrop for a weekly-changing menu of seafood crudos, fresh scratch-made pastas, heavily seasonal ingredients and interesting wines. Order the: tonnarelli pasta with octopus, olives, paprika oil and dandelion.



R&D ASIAN \$\$\$

Alvin Leung and Eric Chong of *MasterChef Canada* fame run the unconventional R&D. Dishes combining French, Chinese and Korean flavours are unexpected and very satisfying. Order the: “@wok_lobster” with charred corn and vermicelli, or the foie gras dim sum.



FAT PASHA MIDDLE EASTERN \$\$

Renowned Toronto chef Anthony Rose brought the salatim platter to a crescendo at Fat Pasha. Garlic labneh, fattoush, fried halloumi, shakshuka, tahini brownies. Share everything. Drink wine. Fight about which is the best. Order the: fat salatim platter.



THE ACE GASTROPUB \$\$

1950s diner meets Toronto brunch at this unassuming local favourite amid the dog-and-stroller crowd on Roncesvalles. Order the: seasonal brioche French toast with rhubarb and strawberry compote, topped with vanilla bean whipped ricotta.



GREY GARDENS CONTEMPORARY, SEAFOOD \$\$\$

Jen Agg's restaurants are a symphony where food, service, design, music and atmosphere are orchestrated perfectly. Order the: fluke with shellfish oil, saffron and chervil; the scallop with green strawberry and cucumber, a wine pairing, a Manhattan and everything else.

Los Angeles is Delicious, Period!

NOW IS THE TIME TO DIVE INTO LA'S
DIVERSE AND EXCITING FOOD SCENE

WORDS & PHOTOS BY JIM BAMBOULIS

If there's one city that exemplifies an American mosaic, it's undoubtedly Los Angeles. A seductress at heart, its idyllic beaches and endless sunshine exude west coast chill. Home to an eccentric history and eclectic people, adrenaline-filled adventures and adrenaline-fuelled dreams, Los Angeles also features an incredible food scene few cities can rival, and one that Angelinos, albeit nonchalantly, are eager to brag about. From sea salt to soul food, seafood to salsa, a tapestry of flavours await to tickle your taste buds.

The World Famous Shrimp Tray in San Pedro

At the San Pedro Fish Market, you could eat your weight in seafood—if you wanted to. This famous, 3000+ seat eatery overlooking Los Angeles Harbor has become such a worldwide phenomenon, visitors are happy to wait between two to three hours for a table on peak days. Opened in 1956, the Fish Market remains family owned and operated, and offers the largest selection of high-quality, fresh seafood daily. That's where it gets interesting. Here, you're in the driver's seat, deciding not only what you want to eat, but how much. Three pounds of shrimp, two pounds of scallops and another pound of snow crab? An entire wild snapper, one pound of clams and one more of shrimp? Done and done—all made fresh to order with signature seasonings and served on a giant, now infamous shrimp tray that feels like a workout when carrying it to your table. The San Pedro Fish Market serves 30,000 of those trays weekly, and incredibly even ships them to your door, packed for freshness and never frozen.



You Mexi-CAN make your own

Part museum, part cooking space, La Plaza Cocina is the city's first museum dedicated to Mexican food, which opened in February in Downtown LA. Through photos, tools and artifacts, visitors can explore exhibitions that honour not only Mexican culinary traditions and practices, but the people who continue to live by them. Cookbooks, utensils and ingredients are available for those eager to prepare traditional dishes at home, but for an interactive experience, there are a wide range of cooking classes on offer in the onsite kitchen. Perfect for a night out or even team building, cooking



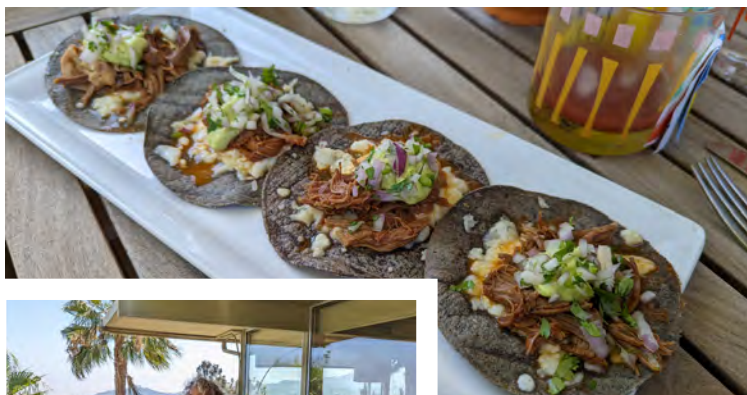
classes reflect specific food events on the Mexican calendar. Bring your sense of adventure and an empty stomach—everything else is provided.



Feniger and Milliken - Sustainable to the bone

In a traditionally male-dominated industry, celebrity chefs Susan Feniger and Mary Sue Milliken continue to break barriers and revolutionize LA's food scene. In 1985, the two chef/owners teamed up to open Border Grill, a small taco restaurant on Melrose that has since expanded to include a food truck, a catering company and a location at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas. Both have also introduced quick service spin-offs in Vegas including BBQ Mexicana, which offers everything from brisket burritos to chopped kale salad; and Pacha Mamas, where ceviche and seared skewers are ready to be devoured.

For both Feniger and Milliken, mixing Mexican flavours with Californian ingredients has always been a passionate, conscious endeavour. Their latest is Socalo, a California canteen/ Mexican pub in Santa Monica opened in 2019. The eatery has received several accolades for its tenacious commitment to both seasonal, local ingredients and sustainability, including the use of organic rice, beans and corn tortillas, as well as the use of antibiotic/ hormone-free meats, poultry and seafood.

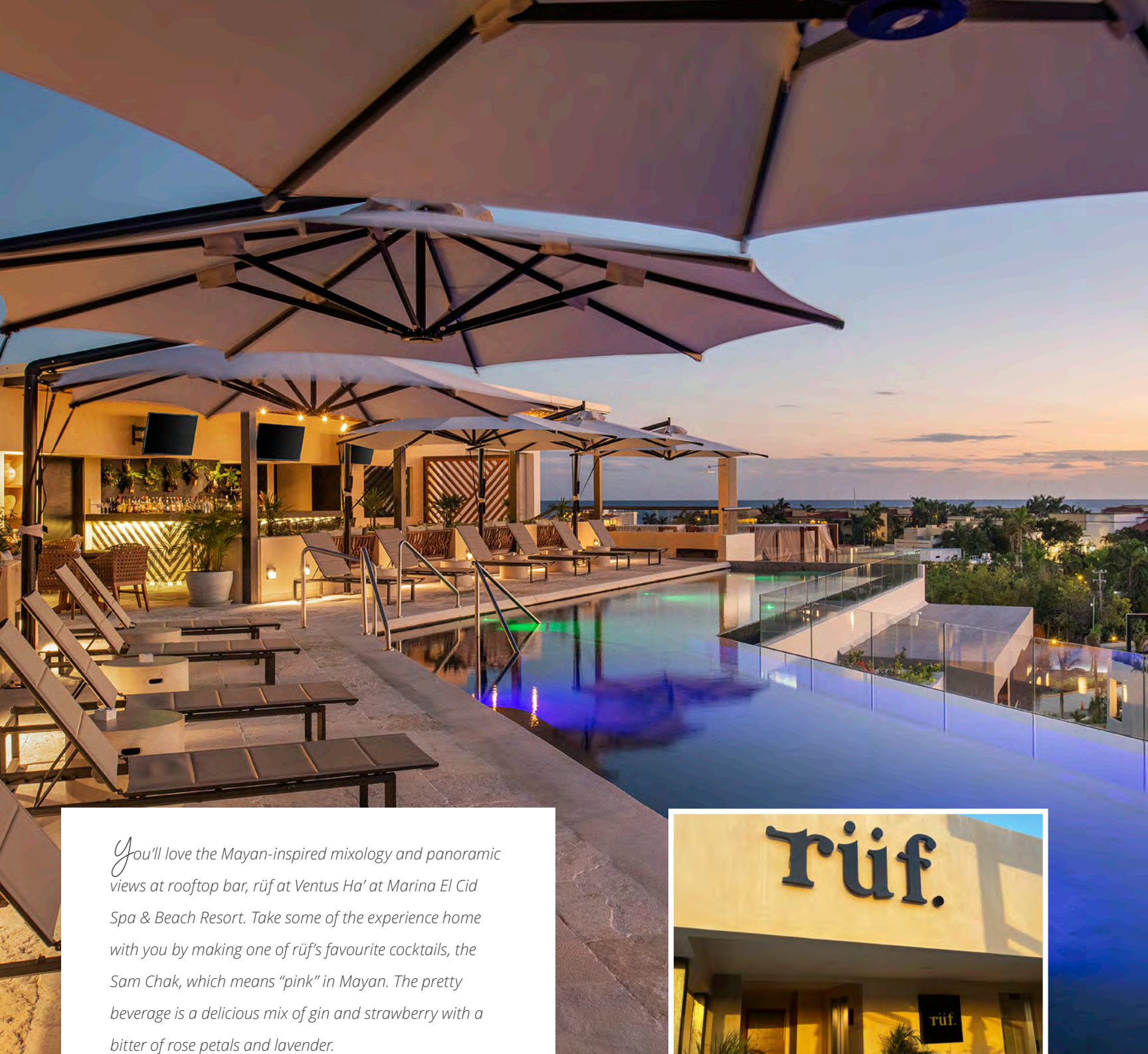


Culinary Bliss at Terranea Resort

Nearly 90 cities are located within Los Angeles County alone, including Rancho Palos Verdes, an affluent coastal community home to not only majestic Pacific views, but LA's Mediterranean-inspired, eco-friendly designed oceanside resort. Opened in 2009, Terranea Resort offers 102 acres of luxurious amenities, including nine distinct culinary experiences ranging from casual fare to elegant flair, and one that has ingeniously harnessed the ocean and its bounty. It was 2015 when then executive chef, Bernard Ibarra, inspired by his farm-to-table youth in Basque Country, established the resort's Sea Salt Conservatory, harvesting

and producing its signature sea salt. Ibarra would gather high quality local seawater off the shores of Terranea's cove and transfer it to his natural evaporation greenhouse (aka, conservatory) which over a course of three to five weeks would produce high quality sea salt, thus making the resort "sea salt sustainable." These days, Terranea's award-winning chefs offer sea salt and kelp tastings paired with farm-fresh produce, crafted bites and sparkling wine, making for a deliciously unique and unforgettable experience!





You'll love the Mayan-inspired mixology and panoramic views at rooftop bar, rüf at Ventus Ha' at Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort. Take some of the experience home with you by making one of rüf's favourite cocktails, the Sam Chak, which means "pink" in Mayan. The pretty beverage is a delicious mix of gin and strawberry with a bitter of rose petals and lavender.



Sam Chak

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ½ oz Ginebra Diega Rosa
- ½ oz lemon juice
- ½ oz mashed fresh strawberries
- ¼ oz simple syrup
- 1 egg white

PREPARATION:

- Add all the ingredients to a shaker
- Shake for 15 seconds
- Add ice, shake again for 10 seconds and pour

VENTUS HA' 
AT MARINA EL CID

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SIMPLE AS 1,2,3

The popular meal delivery service provides ingredients and instructions that make it easy to get a great meal on the table without ever setting foot in a grocery store. Straightforward recipes provide a clear path from ingredient to finished product—minus the hassle of second guessing your culinary prowess.

QUICK & GREAT FOR EVERYONE

Most HelloFresh recipes take less than 40 minutes to complete (some as little as 25) and many dietary concerns are covered, from vegetarian options to carb and calorie-conscious meals. In addition, there are quick-prep, family friendly and one-pot dishes among the numerous choices offered.

ENDLESS VARIETY

Even seasoned home chefs need a break now and again and to that end, there are lots of creative options to choose from so mealtime boredom is never a risk. Recipes rotate regularly, but run the gamut from Greek-style lemon chicken to African-inspired peanut soup to veggie burrito bowls (and include creative sides). With over 30 items on the menu, there are always exciting new foods and flavours to discover!

HEALTHY & SUSTAINABLE

It's also worth noting that sustainability is top of mind for HelloFresh. Ingredients are sourced directly from the producer and delivered without any detours, meaning carbon emissions are minimized. Ingredients are also purchased based on your order and pre-portioned to the gram—so food waste is cut by up to 36 per cent with every meal.

No matter who you're shopping for—a friend, family member, or even yourself—a box of meals from HelloFresh is a thoughtful, sustainable and delicious choice.



HOLIDAY HOSTING *Made Easy*

Anyone who has ever hosted a holiday dinner knows that it's not always an easy undertaking. Mitigate any potential stress (and instead enjoy the seasonal festivities) with the help of the HelloFresh Holiday Box (hellofresh.ca/holiday), which comes with everything you need to cook up a memorable feast. Choose from a classic turkey dinner or a gourmet beef striploin roast dinner, which each come with four sides, gravy and dessert. The deadline to order is Wednesday, December 14th and your box will be delivered on December 22—just in time for all the festive fun.

Pass the Ketchup!

Catching up with ketchup's origins

By Diane Slawych

Who could turn down a free bottle of ketchup? Especially one with your photo on the label! That's what visitors to the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in Toronto got a few years back.

Not that Heinz, the company behind the novel promotion, needed to increase brand awareness. After all, they're one of the top sellers of the popular condiment. In fact, the company has such a long and storied history there's an entire exhibit devoted to it at the Senator John Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh (look for the building topped with a giant ketchup bottle).

A big surprise here, at least for me, was learning that the precursor to ketchup actually contained no tomatoes! It seems ketchup (sometimes spelled catsup) was likely introduced to North America in the 1700s as a variation on the fermented fish sauces the British found in Asia. Early versions of ketchup included ingredients such as—brace yourself—mushrooms, walnuts, mussels, oysters, liver and fruits like lemons, grapes, raspberries and peaches!

In the U.S., the first recipe for a ketchup made with tomatoes was published in Philadelphia in the early 1800s. But the man who arguably did more than anyone to popularize the tomato-based condiment was Henry John Heinz.

The young Heinz spent his childhood selling produce from his mother's garden in Sharpsburg, Pennsylvania, before going on to develop his first ketchup in 1876 with a recipe that is still used today. It combines ripe tomatoes, vinegar, sugar and a secret blend of spices. By 1900 Heinz was making more ketchup than any other manufacturer in the world.

Today the company has 5,700 products sold in 200 countries. Although the first product was horseradish, ketchup is perhaps their best known,



and as such, is a major focus in the exhibit.

For example, there's a tomato waterfall sculpture and a larger-than-life, 11-foot ketchup bottle comprised of more than 400 individual bottles, plus video loops of vintage Heinz TV ads and lots of trivia and fun facts.

Did you know that Swedes often put ketchup in pasta sauce; that a 40-ounce bottle of Heinz ketchup contains roughly 25 tomatoes; or that Heinz ketchup bottles were first sealed with a cork?

There's also a recreated Heinz Luncheonette on display. Long before the arrival of fast food chains in the 1960s, busy office workers looking for a quick and affordable meal often ate at luncheonettes. It was an ideal place for Heinz to sell its products, whether it was beans and soup, or condiments such as ketchup, mustard and pickles that accompanied burgers and sandwiches.

You might think that the quality of fruit may not matter as much when it's being turned into a paste. But the tomatoes used for Heinz ketchup seem to be better quality than the tomatoes often found in the produce section of many grocery stores. The company uses non-GMO fruit that are ripened on the vine, and washed and processed within four hours of harvesting.

Heinz had a lot of philosophical beliefs about running a business. His best known quote is: "To do a common thing uncommonly well brings success." That seems to have come to fruition with his brand of ketchup.

By focusing on one item—the tomato—and adding a few complimentary ingredients, he came up with a winner. More than 600 million bottles of Heinz ketchup sold worldwide every year are proof of that.

Burgers, hot dogs and fries just wouldn't be the same without ketchup.

"To do a common thing uncommonly well brings success."

-John Henry Heinz



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The Many Flavours of Baja Sur

Exploring the multitude of memorable culinary offerings in Baja California Sur

Words & photos by Nicole Servinis

I've been to Mexico dozens of times, but only to 'touristy' resorts. Never have I had the chance to taste real, authentic, homemade Mexican dishes—but after indulging in the local flavours of Loreto, there's no going back. My boyfriend and I ate our way through the region, sampling some of the most incredible dishes we've ever had! So here are some things we learned (and tasted) along the way.

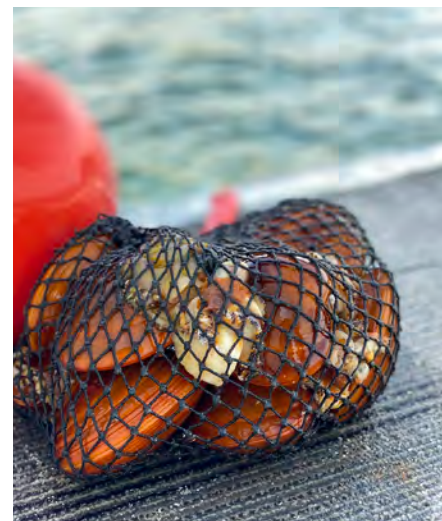
Seafood Delights

Our first evening in Mexico we visited Hotel Oasis, which has one of the most incredible views of the Sea of Cortez. Live music, festive décor and the aroma of fresh seafood filled the air. As we followed our noses, we arrived at the beach where a gentleman was cooking clams under fine gravel. He was making Tatemada chocolate clams. I know what you're thinking: chocolate? No, they don't taste like chocolate, rather they get their name from the colour of their shell, but boy oh boy are they tasty! Every Saturday at 6 p.m. the hotel is the only spot that does a show of the grilled clams on the terrace—a tradition believed to date back almost 900 years.

Another experience we enjoyed was with El Burro Tours—Nixon and Juan Carlo took us on a little boat from Coyote Bay where we (or rather "I") caught our lunch! I caught a triggerfish, while Nixon worked a little harder and dove to get us fresh scallops. They cleaned the scallops, pulled out some of the best hot sauces I've ever tried and cooked the fish right in front of us on the beach. This was some of the freshest seafood I've ever had.

Lastly, we explored La Purisima, a little underrated town with so much beauty—and

authentic homemade food. Where we stayed, at Las Cabanas La Purisima, the owners, Lilia Peralta and Lalo Higuera, cooked up shrimp and freshwater lobster they had caught that morning. Cooked on an open flame with some butter and fresh oregano harvested from their garden—it doesn't get any better than that.



Local Spirit

Las Casitas in Mulege is just outside of Loreto and a must-visit destination where you will find fresh farm-to-table food, along with the best margarita in all of Baja California Sur. Javier, the owner of the hotel and restaurant, prides himself on sourcing all of his food locally, from the meat and tortillas, to vegetables and seafood.

Look up and you'll see palm trees, but they aren't just any palm trees, they are date palms! The dates are picked and laid out to dry for five to six days in the sun—resulting in natural sweetness at its finest. We were also fortunate to sample other local sweets like bunuelos, fried pieces of dough dipped in syrup and dusted with sugar.



New Flavours

I wouldn't consider myself the most adventurous eater, but I do believe you can't say you don't like something unless you try it. I stepped outside my comfort zone and tried grasshoppers; a common snack enjoyed in Loreto. They fry them up and serve them with a little salt, lime and if needed, a shot of tequila. Honestly, it wasn't bad! They don't have much flavour, just an interesting, rubbery texture.

In addition, cactus fruit can be found on the rounded edges of the nopal cactus. They have a pear-like shape and range in colour from green to orange and red, with each colour indicating a different taste. The sweetest fruit is the red one, while the orange and green prickly pears are less sweet but still taste refreshingly good.



Familiar Flavours

I'm no stranger to Taco Tuesdays, but at Super Burro, you'll want tacos every day of the week! Seriously, the best I've ever tasted. It's run by three generations of women who make all of the tortillas from scratch and serve up the best arrachera steak!

If you want even more traditional food and a breathtaking view, check out TPC Danzante Bay Golf Resort. It sits on top of the rolling hills of the Sierra de la Giganta Mountains overlooking the resort and Sea of Cortez. The club house has an incredible taco salad and is an awesome spot to relax, unwind and enjoy the views of Loreto.



For more information: www.visitbajasur.travel

Knives Out

Now's the time to sharpen your culinary skills

By Alison Kent

If attending culinary school is on your bucket list, the time is now to chase that dream. No longer do prospective students need to commit to multiyear full-time studies. Nowadays, cooking classes available nation-wide and internationally offer flexibility to suit most anyone's needs. Whether looking to sharpen your skills in the kitchen or plot your next career trajectory, upgrade your cocktail-making abilities or launch the next big food product, there is, quite literally, a program for that. Here are five to whet your appetite.

Where: SAIT (The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology), Calgary, Alberta

Program: Butchery and Charcuterie Management

Length: 1 year; Full-time

Credential: Certificate

Status: On-campus

Learn to procure, cure and curate the ultimate charcuterie board, including production and creation methods for salami, prosciutto, sausages and smoked products. Touted as a one-of-a-kind program in Canada, this comprehensive in-person course covers hands-on and theoretical training, experience in meat science, sustainability and processing, as well as business management and extensive knife and butchery skills.

Where: RRC (Red River College Polytechnic) – Paterson GlobalFoods Institute, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Program: Culinary Arts – Workshops

Length: Varies; Part-time

Credential: N/A

Status: Flexible delivery options – on-campus or online

Nurture your inner chef with a wide-reaching variety of culinary workshops, all under the tutelage of top-notch chefs. From learning knife skills basics to flexing your Mediterranean menu-creating muscles, there's something of interest for every culinary enthusiast.



Where: CIC (The Culinary Institute of Canada), Charlottetown, PEI

Program: Pastry Arts

Length: 1 year; Full-time

Credential: Certificate

Status: On-campus

If learning the basics of pastries, pies and custards is your jam, this is the program for you. Under the guidance of knowledgeable chef instructors, course fundamentals covered include theory and science of pastry arts, working with couverture chocolate, bread-making techniques and special occasion cake creations.

Where: Stratford Chefs School, Stratford, Ontario

Program: Cooking Fundamentals

Length: 12, 4-hour workshops

Credential: N/A

Status: On-campus

Located in the picturesque town of Stratford, Ontario, Stratford Chefs School, of which this writer is an alumna, offers an intensive 12-class Cooking Fundamentals program. Here, students hone their skills while working their way through various cooking techniques—a different one each session—including boiling, braising, steaming, grilling, pickling and poaching.

Where: Auguste Escoffier School of Culinary Arts

Program: Culinary Arts and Operations

Length: 60 weeks

Credential: Diploma

Status: Online

Combining the latest in on-trend culinary techniques and methodologies, Escoffier is the largest accredited provider of online—as well as campus-based—culinary training and education in the U.S. How does one graduate with a diploma in Culinary Arts through an online program? Through in-depth content, hands-on learning and in-person externships, under the tutelage of five-star chef instructors. Though campus locations include Colorado and Texas, Escoffier's online programs do not require entry to the United States, while allowing for international students to still have the opportunity to earn a diploma from this renowned educational institution.

There's a Knife for That

Knives are just about the most important tools in the kitchen. Choosing the right one for the job can cut down on preparation time and provide more control and overall comfort, which, in turn, helps greatly in decreasing the chance of injuries.



Chef's Knife is the workhorse of the kitchen and the go-to knife for everyday tasks. The broad, sturdy blade and comfortable, balanced size makes it the tool of choice for chopping, slicing and dicing everything from vegetables to meats and fruits to cheese.



Paring Knife is like a sturdy, mini chef's knife. Its diminutive size offers greater precision and versatility, making this one ideal for peeling, cleaning and cutting fruits and most vegetables.



Bread Knife is best for foods that are tender inside with a firmer crust, such as bread, baguettes, bagels and rolls. Its serrated, sharp teeth means it's also excellent for slicing tomatoes, pineapple, melon and for chopping chocolate.



Santoku Knife with its characteristic flat cutting edge lends itself to a chopping motion rather than the rocking cutting movement of more traditional chef's knives—though it can and is often used as an alternative to the chef's knife.



Cleaver has a heavy, strong and wide rectangular blade that's designed for breaking down tendons and bones, but can also take on heavy vegetables like squash and root vegetables with more force than a chef's knife or santoku knife. Cleavers can also be used for pounding, mincing, dicing and slicing an array of other foods.



Utility Knife is a mix between slicing and paring knives. Often featuring scalloped edges and blades that are slightly longer than standard paring knives, this one is perfect for slicing foods with a tough exterior and soft interior like tomatoes, sausage and cheese.



Boning Knife has a long, thin blade with a sharp, pointy tip that's meant to allow more precise and safer removal of meat from the bone.

Signature Cocktail: NineNinety9

Our signature cocktail, NineNinety9 will transport you to a sunny day at the beach with its refreshing flavour combining exotic passion fruit and refreshing mint. Let's toast!

Ingredients:

1.5 oz Mezcal
10 gr. Peppermint
3 oz passion fruit pulp
1 oz simple syrup
1 oz lemon juice
5 oz sparkling water

Pour over ice and garnish with a slice of sundried lemon



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5 YUCATECAN DISHES NOT TO MISS

Not only home to vibrant colours, rich culture and warm, friendly people, Yucatan is also a mecca for memorable flavours. The food is justifiably considered some of the best of what Mexico has to offer. In fact, Yucatecan cuisine has been recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO since 2013.

Here are some of the region's most popular dishes. If you're wondering where to start...

1 COCHINITA PIBIL

Trade Tex-Mex tacos for this traditional Mexican pulled pork, marinated in tart citrus juice and earthy achiote paste. The meat is wrapped in banana leaves and cooked underground until fall-off-the-bone tender.

2 PAPADZULES

What you might call a cousin to enchiladas, this dish sees corn tortillas dipped in a rich sauce made from pumpkin seeds. Filled with hardboiled egg, the tortillas are finished with a tomato and chile topping.

3 PANUCHOS AND SALBUTES

Though they both use crunchy fried masa dough as a base, from here panuchos and salbutes differ, being that the former are stuffed with refried beans before being fried. Both get topped with varying combinations of tomato, lettuce, ground meat and pickled onions.



Papadzules



Cochinita Pibil

4 SOPA DE LIMA

This simple, comforting soup typically consists of a chicken or turkey broth, lime juice and seasonings such as oregano, cloves and cumin. The fragrant bowl then gets topped with crunchy fried tortilla strips and smoky habaneros.

5 PULPO MAYA IN POC CHUC


This flavourful, traditionally Yucatecan dish takes full advantage of one of the best species of octopus found in the region, available from August to December. Mayan octopus (sometimes referred to as Yucatecan octopus) is marinated in sour orange, roasted over charcoal and accompanied by grilled purple onion and tomato sauce.



Mayan octopus

HOW TO GET THERE?

November through April, WestJet offers direct service from Toronto every Tuesday with connecting flights across Canada.

 **Toronto-Merida**



yucatan.travel

    @yucatanTurismo



Dig Into Richmond, B.C.'s Stellar Asian Food Sæne

From dumplings to desserts, there are many reasons to add Richmond to any food-focused travel itinerary

BY DIANA BALLON

Heading to Richmond, B.C. to catch a plane from Vancouver's international airport? If you're an Asian food lover like me, then it's well worth arriving early for your flight to sample some of the most authentic dumplings, skewers and Asian desserts you can find in North America. This can be done at the Richmond Night Market (purportedly the largest night market in North America), at one of the many unassuming Richmond eateries at strip malls and food courts, or from the city's higher end restaurants.

Unbeknownst to many, more than half of Richmond's 230,000 population

are Asian—most from Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China. And more than a million people flock to Richmond's Night Market each year, including a team and film crew from *Amazing Race Canada* last spring.

Thanks to local Asian food expert Joyce Chiang, we were able to get a curated sampling chosen from among the more than 100 food stalls at the Richmond Night Market, from eateries at the Richmond Public Market, as well as from the food court at the Aberdeen Centre.

Here are some particularly flavourful highlights.



FROM THE RICHMOND NIGHT MARKET

Try the cumin lamb buns and noodles from chef James the Xin Jiang Man (or James Chen) who, as well as working weekdays as a chef at downtown Vancouver's Fairmont Waterfront, has also run a stall at the market since 2007 featuring dishes from his home province of Xinjiang, China.



CUMIN PORK BUNS

Taiwanese deep fried stinky tofu, available from the market's Taiwan Kitchen, is a classic night market item in Taiwan, says Chiang. It is a type of fermented tofu that doesn't smell great—a bit like dirty wet socks—and while some say it tastes a bit like that too, others like it for its cabbage, garlic and hot sauce filling.

Mochi donuts are trending, Chiang says, and available here at Mochido. Mochi are made from a glutinous rice flour and have a chewy texture and substantially less calories than a regular doughnut. Try their exclusive matcha (green tea) and dragon fruit lychee flavours.

Originally launched out of a tiny beach stand in White Rock, BC, Thai Affair Rolled Gelato now has a stall at the market. Watch the gelato being spread out thinly onto a flat pan and then rolled into spirals before being served to you in a cup. Their many flavours include cookies 'n cream and tiramisu.

FROM THE RICHMOND PUBLIC MARKET

Try the delicious hand-pulled noodles and spicy won tons with chili oil and garlic from Xi'an Cuisine. You can see the hand-pulled noodles being made fresh in front of you, and enjoy the unique texture of the noodles, which are silkier and slightly chewier than the shorter knife-cut version.

Another must-try stop at the market should be Hei Hei Rice Roll. The popular stall is known for their steamed rice rolls (try the beef, pork and shrimp variety), as well as for their dough sticks (or Chinese donuts). The dough sticks are a less sweet version of a doughnut, which are eaten with hot soy milk for breakfast in parts of China.



SPICY WONTONS



MATCHA AND BLACK SESAME DANGO



FROM THE FOOD COURT AT THE ABERDEEN CENTRE

The fried chicken wings at Wu Fung Dessert (which, despite its name does not specialize in dessert) are lightly floured and then deep-fried golden brown without coming out greasy. They are definitely worth the sometimes long wait to try them.

IF YOU GO

The Richmond Night Market is open on weekend evenings from May to October. Each item is about \$13, so it's best to come with a few friends to sample as many items as possible. The market also hosts dance, martial art and music performances on its main stage.

The market is located just 10 minutes by Skytrain from the airport on the Canada

Line, or about 25 minutes from downtown Vancouver, Waterfront Station. It is also only a few minutes' walk from River Rock Casino Resort.

For dumpling restaurant locations in Richmond, see dumplingtrail.com, which guides you to 15 worthwhile eateries featuring various types of dumplings—from won tons to gyoza.

From Bean to Bar

Chocolate tourism flourishes in Saint Lucia

BY PARM PARMAR

Cocoa beans at Emerald Farm Jade Resort

“Pound, pound, pound those nibs,” says our instructor Merle, from Hotel Chocolat’s Project Chocolat. Merle takes over my colleague’s chocolate pounding because he’s slow and we need to turn these cocoa nibs into liquid pronto. The mortar and pestle is hot and eventually even after switching hands, our arms hurt. Eventually liquid is achieved and we add cocoa butter and castor sugar (so it blends smoothly). How much sugar you add determines how sweet your chocolate is. The liquid is then poured into a mould for setting and creating a 60 per cent cocoa chocolate bar to take home.

Earlier we tasted our very first chocolate lunch in Project Chocolate’s cafeteria-style restaurant. You pick and choose from fish, chocolate chicken wings, hamburgers and much more. Every item incorporates some form of chocolate. My eyes kept wandering over to the dessert selections—ice creams, brownies, hot chocolate drinks laced with liquor. I settled for the rich ice cream sundae with caramel, chocolate swirls and cookie crumbs. If only licking dishes in public was acceptable!

On a tour of Project Chocolat farm (situated on the 250-year-old Rabot Estate cacao plantation), we see young cocoa trees, vegetables and plants grown on the property. We learn how cocoa beans are fermented, dried and turned into nibs for chocolate.

At the end we graft our very own cocoa plant, which we name “Merle Pound.”

Chocolate has been cultivated in Saint Lucia since the 1700’s but was pushed aside when more profitable sugar cane plantations sprung up fueling the economic coffers of European owners. Later, banana trees replaced sugar cane crop until the 1990’s, when this profitable trade collapsed. It was at this time farmers turned back to cocoa farming.

Saint Lucia’s volcanic soil and annual rainfall provided the ideal conditions for growing cacao. In the past, cocoa beans (cacao as the bean is called here) were shipped to Europe and the United States, specifically to the Hershey factory. Today, a good portion of the bean supply is kept back for local use. The cocoa industry is flourishing and has strong backing from the government.

Our second chocolate making experience occurs in Belvedere, Canaries. Cacao Sainte Lucie owner, Maria Jackson started chocolate making at her home and launched her business in 2011. Now expanded to a brick and mortar shop, she stocks chocolate-infused pastries, truffles, bars and other treats. Jackson establishes partnerships with small local farmers to source her beans while at the same time providing advice on what is needed to grow and harvest healthy beans.





Koko chocolate products by Yvonne



Merle, from Project Chocolat



Emerald Farm



Chef Allen



At the shop, Jackson conducts chocolate-making workshops. We start our session with a cup of cocoa tea, made from a shaved chocolate stick boiled in water with a variety of spices—nutmeg, cinnamon, vanilla—then milk is added.

In this class, liquid chocolate is prepared and it's our job to temper it on a clean marble table. By tempering with a pastry handle we bring the temperature down to 29 degrees Celsius. The mixture is then poured into moulds and we decorate with our toppings of choice. Holding on to our precious bar bundles we leave the shop with smiles.

I quickly came to realize that most pastry chefs at the island's luxury hotels are well

versed in the art of chocolate making. On return to our room at Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort, a tray of house made chocolates awaits.

Guests of Jade Mountain or Anse Chastanet can also book an excursion to visit Emerald Farm, where a thousand cocoa trees provide cocoa beans for Jade Mountain's chocolate production. We visit the chocolate lab to see how chocolate is used in desserts, gourmet chocolates and bars.

If you visit Saint Lucia without a chocolate making or tasting session, then you've missed one of the top tourism experiences on the Island.

PROSECCO: Italy's Bubbly Treat

This sparkling sipper is perfect for any party—but also for simply enjoying alongside a meal

By Martha Chapman

“ By the end of the week, you will be very picky about your Prosecco,” our gracious tour leader Vania assured us.

I thought I already knew pretty much all you needed to know about Prosecco—that it's the famous Italian sparkling wine and an affordable alternative to its expensive French cousin, Champagne. That Prosecco still lends a sense of occasion and is ideal for a toast, especially when served in a Champagne flute.

Well, I was partly right. Harvested in some 20,000 hilly hectares of the Veneto region an hour north of Venice, Prosecco is indeed an approachable wine—and, as our group learned, fine to drink throughout a meal and not just as a toast.

My vacation to this region was enhanced by the fact that we stayed in the charming town of Pieve de Soligo, just a half hour from the lovely small city of Treviso. Dating back to biblical times, Treviso features an achingly picturesque walled city centre and a smile-inducing claim to fame: It's where the rich dessert tiramisu was invented. Translated as “pick me up” tiramisu is reputed to have aphrodisiacal effects.





Our weeklong Walking the Prosecco Hills tour included two official (and numerous unofficial) tastings during which we learned that true Proseccos must comprise a minimum of 85 per cent Glera grapes, while the other 15 per cent can contain other wines such as Chardonnay or Pinot Grigio.

There are also two categories of Prosecco: the superior and costlier wine rated DOCG (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita*—controlled and guaranteed designation of origin); and DOC (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata*), the more affordable and plentiful version.

When it comes to those quintessential bubbles, there are two kinds: Spumante (sparkling) and the less-expensive Frizzante (semi-sparkling). The locals can be quite snooty about their bubbles: I heard more than one Italian call over-bubbly vino “Coca Cola wine!” There’s even a still Prosecco (Tranquilo), fairly rare. Plus there are levels of sweetness, from Dry—the sweetest —through Extra Dry, then to Brut, to the driest: Extra Brut.

At the tastings, my brain got a little cloudy not just with the wine but with Ven diagrams of types of Prosecco. Just as well that our group, mainly Brits, were congenial wine non-snobs interested in mixing fun with a bit of learning on their holiday.

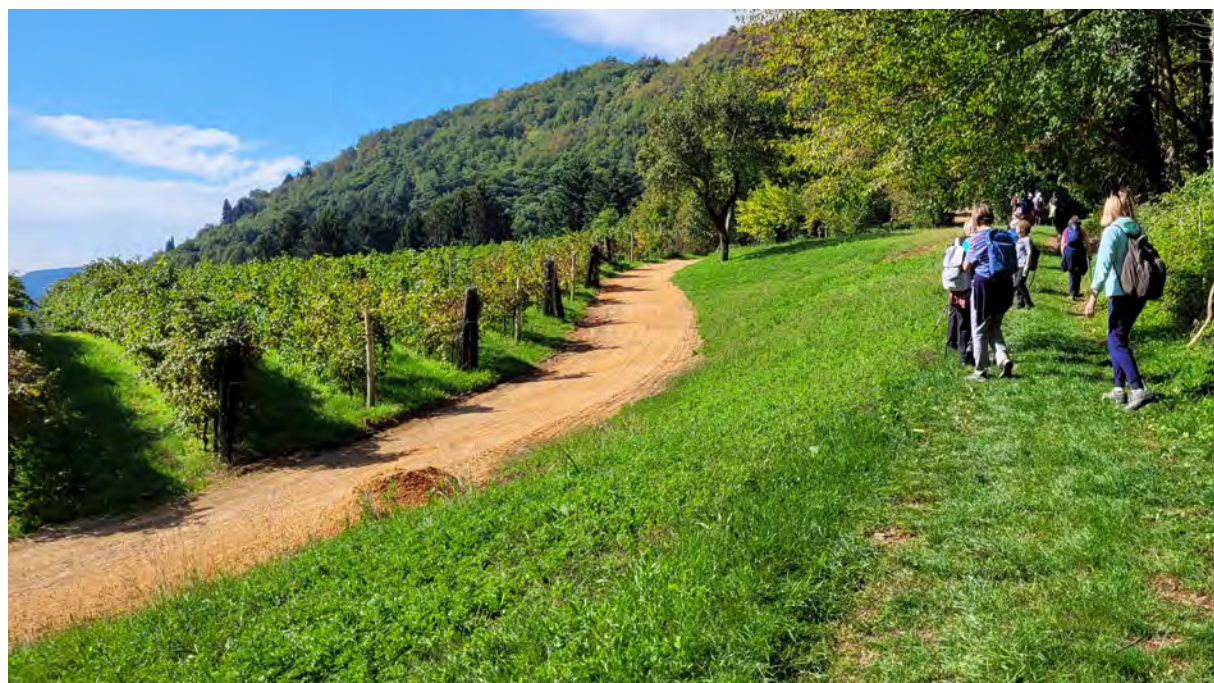
Also on the fun side, we learned that Prosecco is the base for some popular cocktails including Bellinis (add peach juice) and the ever-trendy Aperol spritz (the orange-hued aperitif of Aperol and club soda).

Most interesting of all, Italians don’t drink their Prosecco in Champagne flutes but in conventional wine glasses. “Better because you can perceive the aromas,” sommelier Lisa Montesel told us. Plus it’s popular to drink while dining, not just as an aperitif.

When I returned home to Canada, I checked out the prices of Prosecco at Ontario’s LCBO. The three DOCs available at my local liquor store (Zonin, La Marca and Il Fresco) cost around \$18. A Valdobbiadene DOCG will set you back just \$20. Meanwhile, a nearby bottle of French Veuve Clicquot Champagne was going for an eye-watering \$84.

Back in the town of Pieve di Soligo, where our walking and sipping tour was based, it was 10 a.m. on a Sunday morning. With the streets cordoned off for a bike race, the locals, along with kids and dogs, settled into sidewalk cafés to cheer on the athletes. Glasses of Prosecco glistened in the sun and conversation flowed. Just another occasion for enjoying Italy’s sparkling treasure.

Martha Chapman travelled with Exodustravels.com.



FALLING IN LOVE WITH

Loreto

A first time visit to this hidden gem on Mexico's Baja California Peninsula results in many reasons for a return visit

BY NICOLE SERVINIS



Nicole

**"THE EXPERIENCES,
ADVENTURES,
STORIES, PEOPLE
AND LANDSCAPE WE
ENCOUNTERED WILL
FOREVER BE
CHERISHED."**

My boyfriend Mat and I met when the world shut down, at the start of the pandemic back in 2020. Needless to say we haven't done much travelling together. Last year, we escaped to Cancun to an all-inclusive resort however, as adventure junkies, we wanted our next vacation together to encompass more exploration. We ventured to Loreto, Mexico of Baja California Sur, and can honestly say it

was one of the most memorable trips of our lives. If you're looking to discover a hidden gem, you'll want to put Loreto on your list. Here are a few highlights of the region.

▶ LOCAL CHARM IN *La Purisima*

Make time for a visit to the small and quaint town of La Purisima, founded in 1720 by a Jesuit Missionary. The current residents of La Purisima were born and raised there, so you're getting an authentic experience when you visit. If you're looking for cultural activities in town, you can learn from residents about how to dry dates, and how to make corn and flour tortillas, goat cheese and even wine.

▶ GREAT golf

Our absolute favourite and a must-visit when in Loreto is the award-winning Villa del Palmar Resort and Spa on Danzante Bay. Mat is a die-hard golfer and was absolutely blown away by the course. It is the only TPC course in Mexico, rated first in Latin America and is recognized for its panoramic views across 4,447 acres. Part of what makes this course so unique is that it runs over and through valleys, arroyos, dunes and foothills. Their signature 17th hole is the most challenging, with the greatest view of the Sea of Cortez.

And if you're not a golfer, trust me when I say you will enjoy riding in the golf cart for the scenery alone. If you're looking to get some steps in, you can go hiking on a trail that runs through the mountains overlooking the golf course. Be sure to enjoy a delicious meal and drinks at their clubhouse, which comes with stunning views of the course, ocean and resort.
tpcdanzantebay.com



Also in La Purisima are aqueducts, built to access fresh water hundreds of years ago and still intact and operational today. The ducts flow to a fresh body of water where we went kayaking. The morning was cool but after about a 30-minute paddle, we warmed up and discovered a scenic waterfall. Along our journey we were also able to park our kayaks and do some hiking

where we saw some baby goats and turkey vultures.

► UNSURPASSED *nature*

Bird watching was definitely a first for both of us! We had a fantastic guide named Rodolfo from ToursByLocals, who not only pointed out over 20 different bird species, but shared so much of his knowledge about the area and its vegetation. We were able to see species that are endemic, residents and migratory birds. By far my favourite bird was the Spotted Sand Piper—if you haven't seen it, it basically twerks when it moves.

In addition, Coronados Island possesses a diverse marine environment and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On our visit we spotted Blue-Footed Boobies, crabs and had a close-up experience watching sea lions (the puppies of the ocean). This unforgettable experience was topped off when Mat and I saw not one or two dolphins, but approximately 100. It was as if our boat was swimming with them. Truly one of the most magical experiences. toursbylocals.com



► STELLAR *stays*

From simple casitas to luxury villas, there are an abundance of accommodation options in and around Loreto. We stayed at La Mision, one of the biggest hotels in Loreto that also happens to be oceanfront and a five-minute walk into town where you'll find many shops and restaurants. It was clean, comfortable and had a contemporary, European-Mexican Hacienda flair to it. Another hotel we visited was Hotel Santa Fe. This boutique property has family suites complete with kitchenettes for people who are looking to stay for a longer period and a restaurant that serves one amazing and hearty breakfast! lamisionloreto.com - hotelsantafeloreto.com



► HISTORY & HEARTWARMING *hospitality*

Loreto was the first Spanish settlement on the Baja California Peninsula (founded in 1697) and the first capital of California, meaning there's history everywhere you turn. This untapped, authentic Mexican paradise has a population of under 15,000 which gives it the feeling of a small town, and it's this feeling of warmth that extends to the locals. For example, we visited Mulege where we met Javier. He was born and raised in the city and is the owner of the fifty-year-old hotel, Las Casitas. The vibrant property embodies the charm of old Mexico, which is exactly what we felt from Javier—his hospitality, pride, generosity and stories were the best part of the visit for us.

Even though Mexico continues to be a very well-travelled country, Loreto is one of those rare finds, still unspoiled, making this a trip of a lifetime for us. The experiences, adventures, stories, people and landscape we encountered will forever be cherished. The more we saw and experienced, the more we wanted to do, and the more we can't wait to return. facebook.com/mulege



► SCENIC *sailing*

Just south of Loreto is the protected bay of Puerto Escondido where we took a world-class catamaran ride with ABT Sailing. The boat isn't your average sailboat, as it has four bedrooms, four bathrooms and a mini kitchen where the crew made us a delicious breakfast and lunch with bottomless refreshing drinks. Our highlight of the adventure was stopping at Honeymoon Cove where the water was so clear we could see the bottom of the ocean. We took the dingy to shore and were able to explore and hike on the island. abt-sailing.com

► **Learn more about Baja Sur:**
visitbajasur.travel

► **How to get there?**

WestJet offers direct service Calgary to Loreto every Saturday from November to April with connecting flights across Canada



Tokyo Aerial View

Tokyo:

Scenic autumn views at Lake Okutama

A Seamless Blend of Old and New

Discovering the two distinct sides of
this fascinating city

BY MELANIE CHAMBERS

When I think of futuristic cities, I think of the fast bullet trains, robot cafes and cool techie gadgets in Tokyo. In the same breath, when I ponder an ancient city with wondrous mountains, 2,000 year old shrines and nature, I also think of Tokyo.

I love Tokyo because it appeals to two worlds—ultra modern technology alongside unsurpassed nature and hiking trails just a train ride away. I can hop on a bullet train, passing through sky scrapers and neon lights and then be outside hiking beside century old shrines and moss covered rocks.

Only an hour outside of downtown Tokyo, **Mount Takao** has eight different routes. Located in Hachioji, in the Meiji no Mori Takao Quasi-National Park, it feels more like an amusement park than an isolated forest. Almost 2.5 million tourists visit this place annually.

But the people fade away somewhat once you begin hiking the mountain; popular for its enshrined mountain gods and crow-beaked *tengu*. The hike also includes a monkey park and flower garden. Many cultures appreciate the après-hike drink, but after you've hiked all day, I looked forward to soaking in a hot spring, which are located throughout the country. Japan has over **3,000 hot spring resorts** and near Takao-san, you can relax and refresh at Keio Takao-san Onsen Gokurakuyu.

One of the Takao trails leads to the Head Temple Takao-san Yakuo-in; built in 744 by Emperor Shomu, it was the base for Buddhism in the eastern part of Japan at the time. With tons of steps and glorious colours,

visitors can also participate in a *shugendo*, or mountain asceticism, a seventh century Buddhist practice which involves vigorous activities such as standing under mountain streams in pursuit of spiritual transcendence. Guides are available for this unique experience.





Yakuo-in Temple



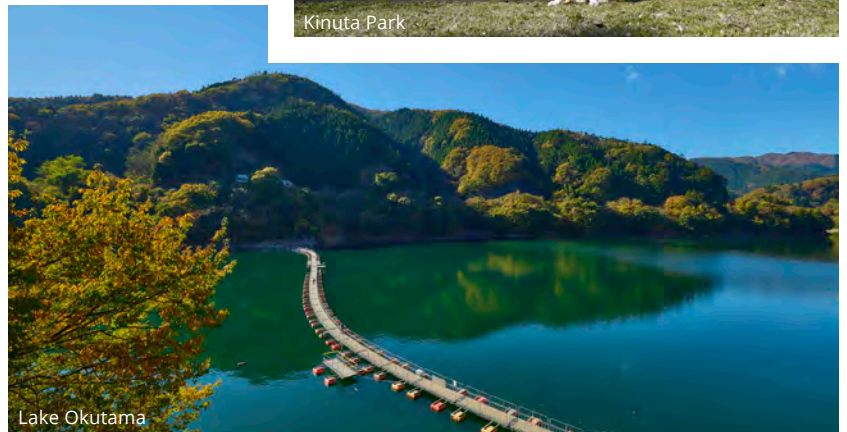
Odaiba Seaside Park



Kinuta Park



Mitake Gorge



Lake Okutama

At the foothills of Takao, the **Ukai Toriyama** is a famous charbroiled chicken restaurant—guests can sit on a traditional tatami mat with shoji paper screens. The menu is also traditional and embodies the simplicity of Japan: chrysanthemum soaked in seasoned dashi stock, charcoal grilled chicken marinated in their secret sauce, ayu trout, or grilled walnut tofu.

If you're searching for something even more secluded, **Mount Mitake** is two hours from downtown Tokyo and is less touristy. Located on the western edge of the city in Okutama, it is part of the **Chichibu-Tama-Kai National Park**.

Japanese have been hiking to the Musashi Mitake Shrine for over 2,000 years. The shrine hike is the easiest and only takes about an hour from the JR Mitake rail line. And for my hikes, I always brought along two essentials: onigiri (triangled rice wrapped in seaweed) and daifuku mochi (gelatinous rice pastry filled with sweet bean paste). They travel well and you can find them at convenience stores.

It's about another 70 minute hike to the rock garden, which includes a stream and moss covered rocks. Visitors can sooth their muscles in the Yosawa River, a long time tradition called *shinrin yoku* (forest bathing).

For seasoned hikers, the hike to **Mount Otake**, which sits at about 1,266 meters and overlooks the forested valley, is a bit more challenging and typically takes about six hours to complete. If you hike this option, you can also extend your stay and sleep in a *minshuku*, a family style bed and breakfast in one of the many rural villages on the trek. It's the best way to meet locals, many of whom are farmers who serve local produce and meals during your stay.

For the flip side of all that tranquility, Tokyo is the epicentre of technology.

On June 22, 2021, Tokyo's latest café run by robots officially opened in Nihonbashi. At the Avatar Robot Cafe DAWN ver.β real humanoid robots serve customers. The restaurant brings new meaning to the phrase working-remotely as the robots

have an altruist purpose. Many of the people operating the robots are unable to work outside of their homes due to physical disabilities. The white plastic robots, OriHime and ORiHime-D, move smoothly along the floor serving your meals; some are even barista robots who make your coffee.

Have you ever had a robot check you into a hotel? Or your door open just by recognizing your face? If you answered no, then you will have to check out the **Henn na Hotel Tokyo Ginza** in the ultra-modern and funky neighbourhood of Ginza. Feel like you've stepped into the future of hotel service with electromagnetic waves that heat your room, or a robot trolley who sends your bags to your room.



Ginza 4-chome intersection

But the truly coolest techie place in the city is the Odaiba area. Taking the elevated Yurikamome line to the artificially made island feels like you're speeding into the future onto another planet!

This is an entertainment hub of the city with amusement arcades and the island has many technology centres, including **The Panasonic Center Tokyo** where you can play Nintendo on giant screens.

If you're interested in how robots work, **TEPIA** Advanced Technology Gallery in Kita-Aoyama has a speech simulator, smile estimator, and even an air-powered glove (for those with restricted hand mobility). It also reveals the latest in green technology for a more sustainable world. The Robot lab will take you through how it all works; and even though the exhibits are in Japanese, the English speaking hosts can guide you through.

One of the highlights of this area is **Miraikan**, the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation. Visitors can sit in a robot chair and navigate how it feels to be robotic. Or imagine what it's like in space sitting inside the giant amphitheatre dome looking at the stars with 3D glasses.

The centre is also an interactive science wonder house—you can enter a cloud

chamber to see where radiation floats through the air—these particles reveal much about our universe. Japan has won two Nobel Prizes in physics, first in 2002 and again in 2015.

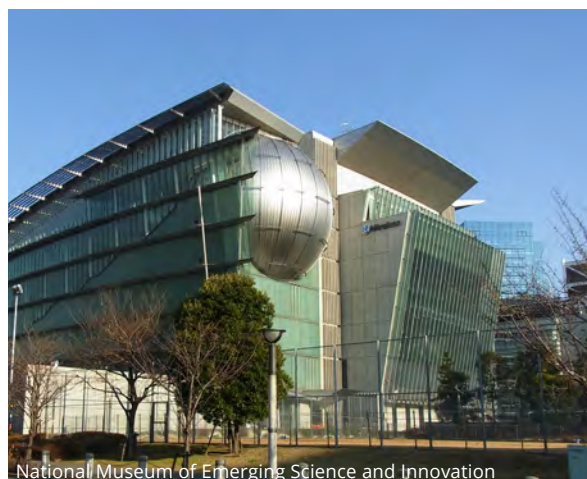
Because you're surrounded by water, it only makes sense to have fresh-from-the-sea sushi. **Yoshimaru Suisan Aqua City Odaiba** serves sushi on the classic Japanese conveyor belts. Choosing from the pictures on a touch screen only increases the cool factor. My stack of plates at the end of the meal was pretty high!

Leaving the island and reopening in 2023 in Toranomon-Azabudai, a new urban neighbourhood in central Tokyo, is the incredible teamLab Borderless, a one-of-a-kind digital museum for the senses. While we don't yet know what this location has in store, if the Odaiba location is any indication, we can expect an array of truly unique and immersive high-tech exhibits that are equal parts thought-provoking and playful.

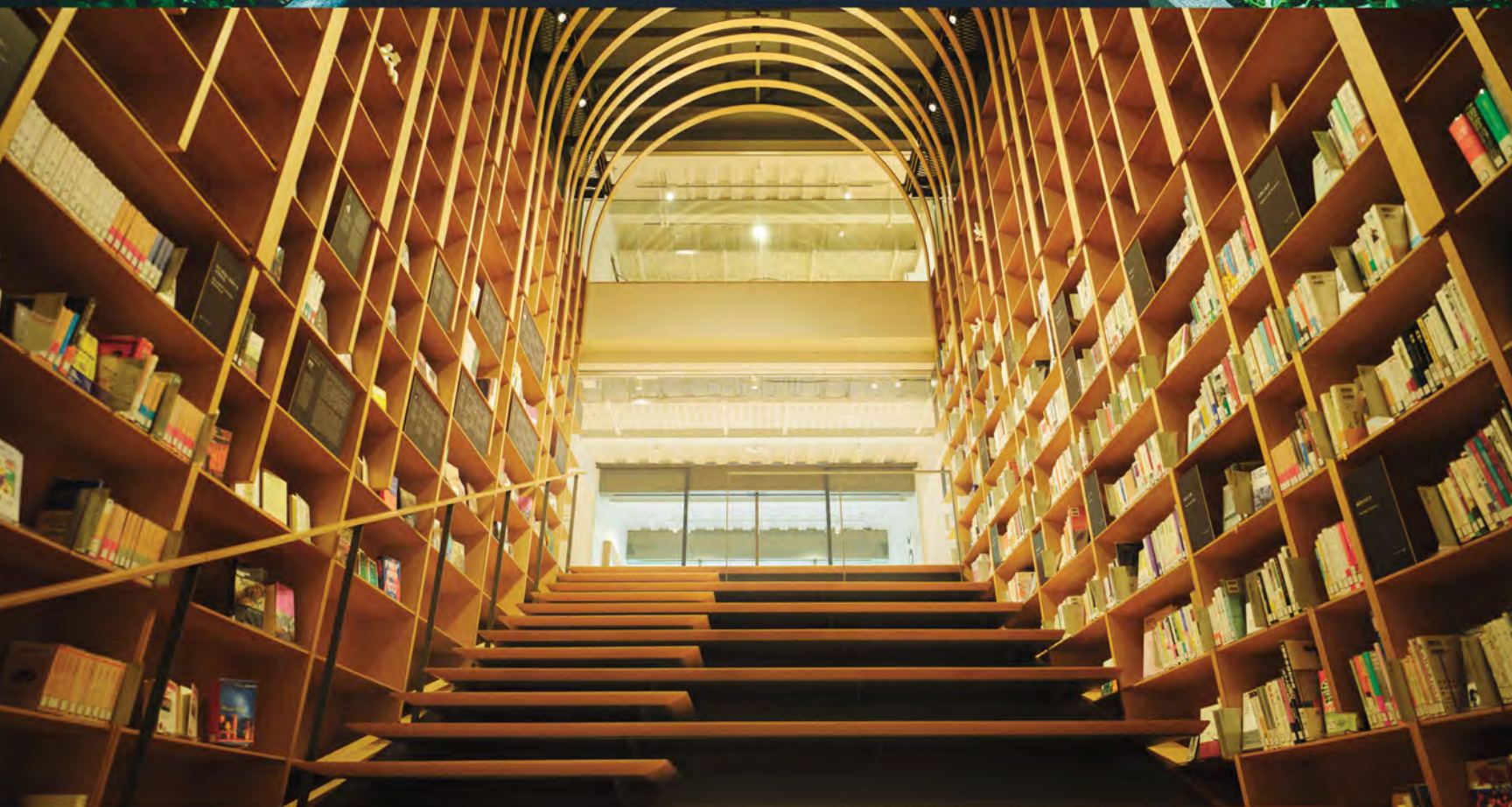
Tokyo has two speeds: exceptionally fast and modern—and traditional and slow. Its fresh air and mountains are tranquil and serene, while its fast paced technology displays another world entirely. No place on the planet can bring these two worlds together so seamlessly—just hop on the train and you can pick your speed.



Yurikamome Line (Shibaura area loop portion of track)



National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation



Always evolving.
Always Tokyo.

tokyotokyo.jp

gotokyo.org

Tokyo **Tokyo** Old meets New

THIS
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An ideal winter get-away, Puerto Penasco is the perfect place to spend the whole winter

■ Location and climate are just right

Puerto Penasco, also known as Rocky Point, is a hidden vacation gem in the northwestern corner of the Mexican state of Sonora on the Gulf of California. The climate here between December and February is mild—not too hot and not too cold, with minimal rain—making it perfect for snowbirds seeking refuge from winter.

■ A beach lovers dream

Puerto Penasco is blessed with a plethora of golden sand beaches. Clean and expansive Sandy Beach is a

favourite among families as well as snorkellers, while Playa Bonita is the closest stretch of sand to the city making it ultra-convenient.

■ Calling all golfers!

In addition, the warm and dry desert climate makes the region idea for golf and there are three scenic courses to choose from, including two designed by Jack



Nicklaus. Vidanta Golf Puerto Penasco, Islas Del Mar Golf Course and the Links Golf Course at Las Palomas Beach & Golf Resort are all worthy of a game (or two).

■ Like-minded community

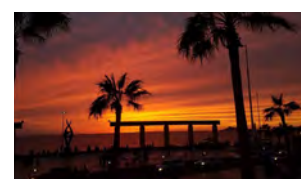
For anyone interested in an extended stay, the ex-pat community here is thriving. This is due in part to the aforementioned comfortable climate, but Puerto Penasco is also known for its affordable and professional health services including dental, medical and beauty treatments. There are also many RV parks and hotels offering special rates for longer stays.



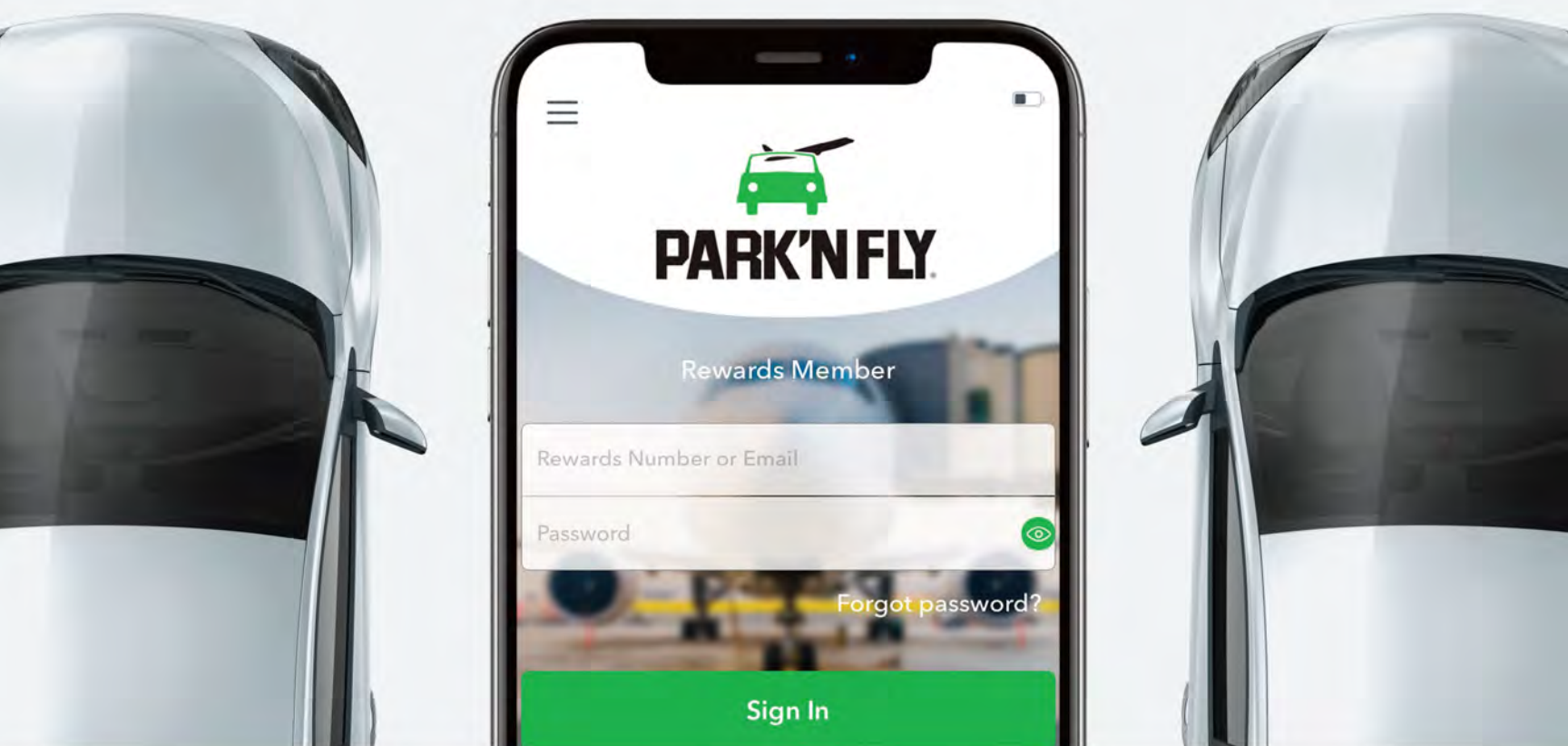
■ Migrate to pristine nature

When you're not relaxing on the beach, Puerto Penasco is brimming with interesting things to see and do. Don't miss Isla San Jorge, also known as "Bird Island," decreed a federal reserve in 1978. The small but scenic group of rock formations is home to many bird species and is also where you'll find one of the most

important populations of seals and sea lions in the country. In addition, make time to visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of El Pinacate and Gran Desierto de Altar Biosphere Reserve, known for its massive sand dunes, dramatic landscape and volcanic craters.



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Snowbirds Are Again Flocking to Warmer Destinations

Following a few winters on the ground, this season is shaping up to be a big one for snowbirds heading south

BY CHRIS RYALL

After a couple of travel-restricted winters due to COVID-19, snowbirds are anxious to store their shovels and winter clothing in favour of a return to sunny skies, sandy beaches and bathing suits. In fact, more than one million Canadian snowbirds are expected to depart Canada for warmer temperatures this season.

Destinations like Florida, Arizona, Texas and California have always been popular, though in recent years there has been a shift to other destinations, according to the Canadian Snowbird Association (CSA) and Snowbird Advisor. These organizations provide information and a range of services, including travel/medical insurance and currency exchange for those looking to spend the winter in warmer climates.

Mexico and the Caribbean, as well as Costa Rica, Panama, Belize and Ecuador are becoming more popular, especially with younger snowbirds. Further afield, Portugal, Australia and Thailand are increasingly the destinations of choice for those looking for more exotic locales.

People 65 and over make up 19 per cent of Canada's population and if you factor in the 50-plus age group, that figure increases to 39 per cent—more than 15 million people according to Statistics Canada.

But forget the typical image you may have of snowbirds—dining out before 6 p.m. at restaurants with early bird discounts, playing shuffleboard and cribbage and heading to bed by 9 p.m. Today's snowbirds are just as likely to try their

hand at stand-up paddle boarding, dine out at a trendy bistro, check out a cultural festival, or participate in a yoga class.

Stephen Fine, co-founder and president of Snowbird Advisor says the main factors in choosing a snowbird destination include available leisure activities, climate (beach, desert, mountains), golf, affordability (whether rental or ownership), taxation, air and transportation services and health care facilities. Fine added that traditionally snowbirds owned mobile homes or condos, but now they are seeing more people rent, especially through services like Airbnb and VRBO.

The CSA says typically snowbirds would travel to the same destination every year and spend the entire winter there. While this still holds true for most, there is a growing trend towards changing destinations every few years or even annually. Some are choosing not to stay the entire winter but come back for part-time work or to see grandchildren. The CSA is also seeing a shift to younger adults becoming snowbirds as people work on contract or from home and want a better work-life balance.

Fine has a few tips for those looking at travelling this winter. These include staying current with the latest COVID-19 rules and restrictions (both at your destination and when returning to Canada), being up to date on your vaccinations, and making sure your travel and medical insurance policy includes COVID-19 coverage (and you understand what that includes).

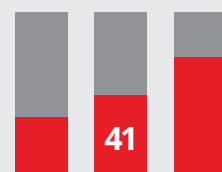
Let the annual migration begin!

CANADIAN SNOWBIRDS BY THE NUMBERS



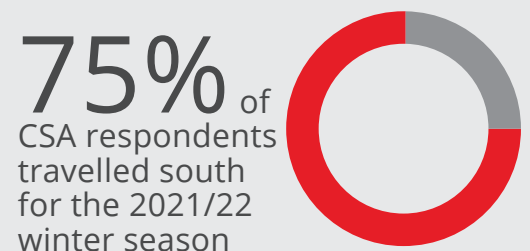
18.8%
OF THE
Canadian
population is
represented
by those aged
65 AND OVER

38.6%
OF THE
Canadian
population is
represented
by those aged
50 AND OVER

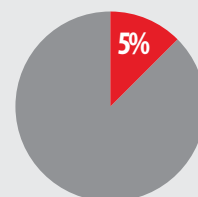


THE MEDIAN
AGE OF THE
CANADIAN
POPULATION
IS

41



75% of
CSA respondents
travelled south
for the 2021/22
winter season



ONLY ABOUT 5%
OF SNOWBIRDS CHANGED
THEIR PLANS DUE TO **DOLLAR/
RECESSION/BORDER ISSUES**
FOR THE COMING WINTER SEASON

**33% OF CSA
RESPONDENTS
HAVE A NEXUS
CARD**



94%

OF CSA RESPONDENTS
RATE THEIR HEALTH
AS GOOD TO
EXCELLENT



Let's Go *Florida!*

It's no surprise Florida is a perpetually popular destination for Canadian travellers looking to escape the winter. From beautiful beaches and an ever-expanding culinary scene, the Sunshine State is a destination that easily offers something for everyone. Whether you're interested in history and culture, luxury vacation rentals, or pristine nature—Florida happens to have it all. Just a short flight away you'll find white sand, friendly locals and enough things to see and do to warrant many return visits. We cover some of the best Florida has to offer on the following pages—from unforgettable food to epic fun in the sun.




THE COLONNADE
OUTLETS
AT SAWGRASS MILLS

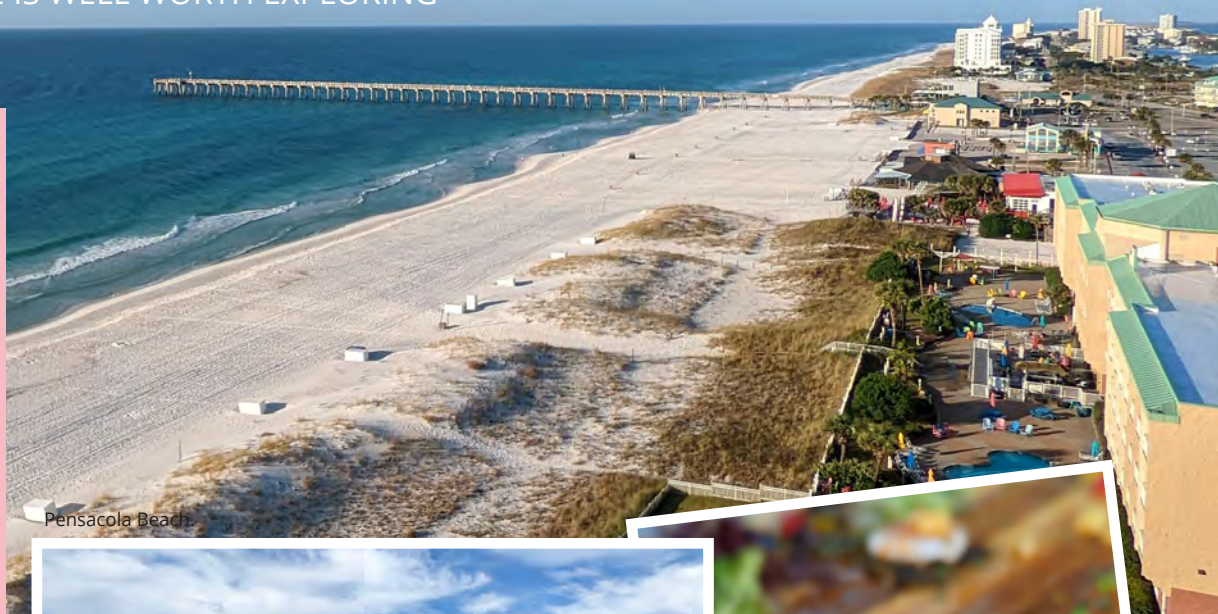
PRADA
BALENCIAGA
FENDI
VALENTINO
MONCLER

DISCOVER FLORIDA'S Best Kept Secret

FROM EXCELLENT SEAFOOD AND BEAUTIFUL BEACHES, TO CHARMING TOWNS AND RICH HISTORY, FLORIDA'S PANHANDLE IS WELL WORTH EXPLORING

Long known as a popular destination for snowbirds and spring breakers, Florida's best kept secret is out, as visitors worldwide are discovering their own version of panhandle paradise. From Pensacola to Panama City Beach, Southern hospitality blends with Old Florida charm, local cuisine compliments immersive cultural experiences and every nuance of this breathtaking region is connected by endless miles of sifted flour-like sand and shallow, crystal clear water.

◆ BY JIM BAMBOULIS



Pensacola Beach



Lionfish at East Pass

THE BEST BEACHES IN THE WORLD

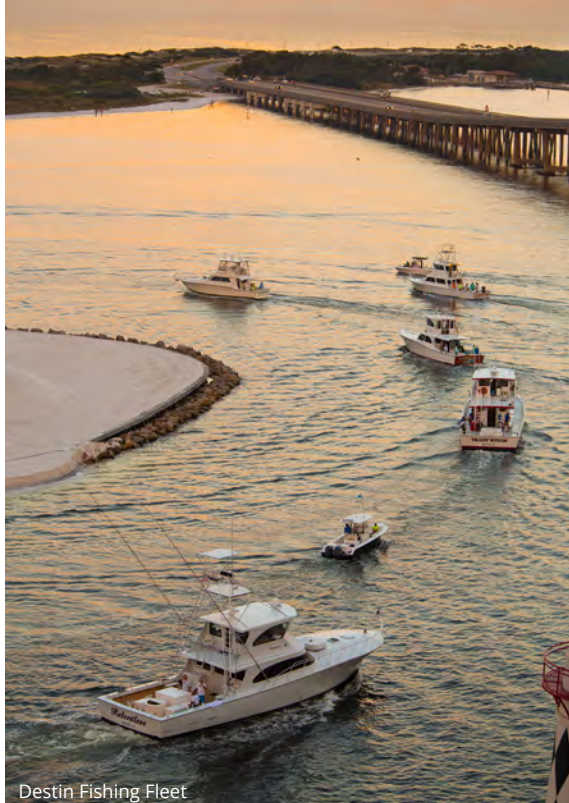
Here, that's not hyperbole, it's a fact. Ditch the flip flops, curl your toes and surrender to the soothing sensations of silica infused, singing white sands under your feet. Once granite in the southern Appalachian Mountains, the sand eroded and flowed down ocean-bound river systems over thousands of years. Of all the minerals weathered down, quartz survived the long trip to the Gulf, and today the beaches along the Panhandle are over 90 per cent quartz crystals, giving the appearance of blindingly beautiful granulated sugar; so reflective it doesn't get hot, even under the most intensive sun.

DESTIN: FOOD AND CULTURE, CONNECTED BY THE SEA

Small in size, big in character, Destin's cultural charm is contagious. Along the boardwalk, fishermen clean their catch caught at the crack of dawn, while nearby pelicans wait for their chance for a bite. It's been this way ever since founder Leonard Destin landed here in the mid-19th century. So abundant with a variety of fish, the town immediately earned the nickname, "World's Luckiest Fishing Village," and by October 1948, locals established the Destin Seafood Festival

and Destin Fishing Rodeo, attracting hundreds of thousands worldwide. But here, great seafood is in season all year long, with countless culinary options.

Walk along HarborWalk Village, Destin's entertainment centre, and follow your nose to East Pass Seafood and Oyster House, a lovely open air restaurant specializing not only in freshly shucked oysters, but a melt-in-your-mouth lionfish tartare. Meanwhile, at rustic and homely Harbor Docks, a local favourite since 1979, try the house-smoked yellowfin tuna dip and any of the four-



Destin Fishing Fleet



End the day on the “Ohana,” a calming and spectacular sunset sightseeing sail. Listen to relaxing tropical music with drink in hand as you embark on a quaint and memorable experience along the coast. Watch as blue skies transform into pinks and purples, and keep your eyes open for beautiful bottlenose dolphins at every turn.

Today, the husband-and-wife team of James Briscione and Brooke Parkhurst carry those traditions forward with southern touches to Italian classics, with James—a four-time Food Network Champion with multiple wins on *Chopped* and *Beat Bobby Flay*—leading the way in the kitchen.

Pristine beaches, delicious fare with splashes of rich history, immersive culture and southern hospitality. Isn't it time you discovered Florida's Panhandle for yourself?

dozen sushi options, including the Big Papi with tuna, yellowtail and jalapeno, all made to order.

Off the main drag and down a gravel road you'll find Dewey Destin's, a bayside shack owned and operated by Leonard's descendants. A must: the slightly sweet and steamed, medium-spiced deep water royal red shrimp with corn-on-the-cob and potatoes, a dish that would make their forefathers proud.

SHOP, SAIL, SAVOUR AND CYCLE IN PANAMA CITY BEACH

Take a walk along the 1,500 foot pier to get panoramic views of the silky emerald water, do the SkyWheel experience for an elevated perspective of the city and explore Pier Park's eclectic, beachy boutiques. A few miles east, rent bicycles at St. Andrews State Park and cycle along coastal dunes while getting up close views of the rich wildlife.

Having worked up an appetite, Captain Anderson's Restaurant and Waterfront Market is an obvious choice. Grand yet intimate, it's among the 50 best in the USA, and recipient of Wine Spectator's, “Award of Excellence.” Greek-inspired, it's the little things that stand out, including accentuating the flavour of fresh fish with drizzles of EVOO, pinches of oregano and fresh lemon all on oak-infused coals. Meanwhile across town, Schooners—last of the old open-air hangouts left on the Gulf Coast—is another seafood mecca. Add a live band and nightly sunset celebrations complete with a countdown and cannon firing, and you'll understand why locals call it “the best place on earth.”

PENSACOLA: A PANHANDLE JEWEL

In Pensacola, the sugar sand beaches are just the beginning. Florida's westernmost panhandle city is home to America's oldest settlement, predating the establishment of St. Augustine by six years. It's home to not only the Blue Angels flight demo squad, but also Fort Pickens, a massive masonry, pre-Civil War brick fortress on Gulf Islands National Seashore.

Downtown ‘P-Cola’ features 40 square blocks of food, drink, history and culture, with Palafox Street—one of the country's top 10 streets—at the heart of it. Here, a harmonious blend of architectural styles, vibes and aromas fill the air, including intoxicating coffee. Handcrafted brews are a passion, and some pleasantly unorthodox, including Buzzed Brew's Sugar Cookie, made with white coffee, vanilla, English toffee and salted caramel. Meanwhile, The Well is a funky Florida-themed hangout with beers and signature cocktails, including Scuba Steve, made with Icelandic vodka, Blue Curacao, mint, lemon and ginger beer.

Gone are the days of Florida being known primarily for its corporate-style dining and big box, buffet-style restaurants. Case in point, The Grand Marlin on English Navy Cove features award-winning chef Gregg McCarthy at the helm, and not only offers a tranquil ambiance, but seafood so fresh, menus are printed daily to take advantage of the local catch. In town, Angelena's Italian Restaurant is rooted in culinary traditions established by a young immigrant couple to Pensacola in the 1880s.



SUNSHINE TO SUDS, DUNEDIN TO DALI

By Jim Bamboulis

A

IT'S TIME TO PUT ST. PETE/CLEARWATER ON REPEAT

Steps from Clearwater's legendary Pier 60, visitors refer to the sunset countdown clock to plan their days. Unobstructed Gulf views and a nightly sunset festival fuel the ritual of sun worshippers congregating on lovely white sands to gaze upon the myriad of fading, cotton candy pastels in the distance. But beyond sands and sunsets, St. Pete/Clearwater caters to everyone from culinary epicures to culture cravers, and everything in between. From Gulf to Bay, this corner of Florida is home to the best of all worlds.

SUNNY SKIES, SPARKLY SURF

From Anclote Key to Pass-a-Grille, sugar-white sandy beaches span more than 35 heavenly miles along the Gulf Coast, attracting multiple accolades along the way. This region sees an average of 360 sunny days per year, meaning the water temperature is ideal and white caps in the distance are simply sunny reflections off the surf. Be it Clearwater Beach, Honeymoon Island, or Treasure Island, there's a beach with your name on it, with your desired level of activity (or inactivity).

DUNEDIN MAKES FOR AN INCREDIBLE DAY TRIP

Dunedin, home of the Toronto Blue Jays annual Spring Training Camp, is another lovely enclave that resembles a perfect Floridian postcard. A Sister City to Sterling, Scotland, Dunedin's name is derived from Scottish Gaelic, and every spring, Scottish clans descend upon the city for the Dunedin Highland Games. Boutiques, cafes and bars line Main Street, including The

Living Room, a robust, mural covered restaurant that combines a great meal and exotic cocktails with a pinch of people watching. In beer circles, Dunedin's Beer-muda Triangle, aka 'Beer Barrel District,' features nine breweries within walking distance, including Woodwright Brewing Co. which is part brewery, part wood shop and iconic Dunedin Brewery. Florida's first craft brewery opened in 1996, where live music is a weekly staple, part of the experience and always free of charge.





- A. Clearwater Beach
- B. Blue Jays Spring Training
- C. St. Pete Mural
- D. Pier 60 entrance
- E. Dali Museum

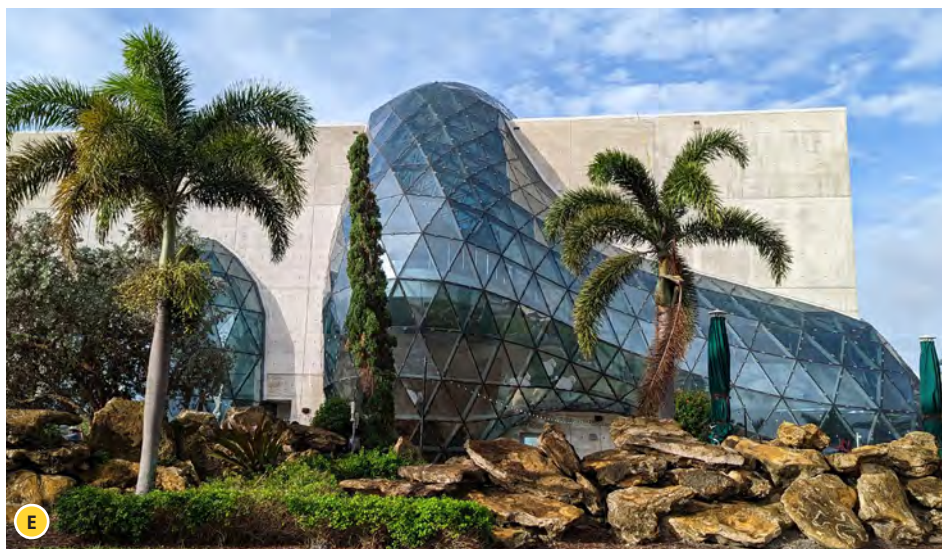
ST. PETE: DINING, IMBIBING MECCA

Embark on the Craft Brewery Trail, become an aficionado and enjoy passionately made local suds from any number of the 45 breweries on 'The Gulp Coast.' In St. Pete, eclectic neighbourhoods only further compliment the dining and imbibing experience. In the city's artistic Edge District, dog-friendly Green Bench Brewing Company honours the fabric of the community, crafting unique brews, mead and cider using fresh, local and traditional ingredients. Up the street, Trophy Fish is a cocktail-fun, seafood-forward restaurant that serves the freshest fish around, within a 'bait shop chic,' tiki-nautical décor. Around the corner, Bodega, once a tiny Cuban walk-up spot turned colourful sit-down restaurant with lines around the block, combines culinary creativity with a respect for authenticity.

On trendy Beach Drive, a Mediterranean aura surrounds Stillwaters Tavern, which focuses on creative cocktails and innovative twists on American classics such as fried green tomatoes, burgers and steaks. Steps away on the expansive 26-acre St. Pete Pier, Teak is a stunning, nautical, upscale yet casual bayside restaurant where dishes range from pan seared salmon with a mustard-balsamic glaze to short ribs with a ginger guava sauce. Upstairs, Pier Teaki is a tiki-themed rooftop lounge with bites and brews and unparalleled panoramic views of the Bay, and the ever-growing St. Pete skyline.

MURALS, GLASS AND DALI, OH MY!

There's no shortage of arts and culture in this town! Monthly festivals dominate the calendar, and daily free walking tours are the norm.



FLY SWOOP TO ST. PETE/CLEARWATER

Swoop Airlines offers three direct flights per week between Hamilton International Airport and St. Petersburg International Airport, making it even easier to escape the gloomy winter for endless summer.

Since 2015, the annual SHINE Mural Festival has inspired artists from near and far to express themselves, and now throughout the city, stunning murals colour entire neighbourhoods, including the Central Arts District, aforementioned Edge District and Warehouse Arts District. Explore by foot or bicycle and discover the more than 400 murals (and counting) around every corner.

Dozens of galleries, studios and museums celebrate and commemorate local and international excellence. The Museum of Fine Arts, St. Pete's first, displays 5,000 years of art, from antiques to contemporary. The Imagine Museum features glass art from both American and International artists and The Chihuly Collection is dedicated to the glass works of Dale Chihuly. Glass art is so prominent here that St. Pete is now known as, "the glass coast," with an added touch. At Zen Glass Studio, entire families can book a one-hour session with a professional glass maker, with hands-on, step-by-step

instructions to help create your own, customized glass masterpieces to take home.

Finally, St. Pete's Dali Museum is home to more Dali masterpieces than any other museum in the world and include "The Hallucinogenic Toreador" and "The Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus." Augmented reality adds another immersive glimpse into the mind of Dali, and gives you a chance to discover facts about his works. Meanwhile, the building itself is surrealism-inspired with a large glass geodesic bubble made of more than 1,000 triangular pieces known as the "Enigma." While inside, the helical staircase at the centre was inspired by Dali's fascination with DNA. Take a guided tour or download the museum app on your phone and take a self-guided tour. Either way, prepare to be amazed. ♦

Sun, Sand, Sea—and Song

A visit to Fort Myers, Florida turns out to be just as much about great music as it is about the region's natural beauty

By Mark Stevens

Lured by the prospect of sun, sea and sand, snowbirds have long been drawn to Lee County on Florida's scenic Gulf Coast. And there's no shortage of those commodities among this collection of delights that include Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel and Captiva Islands.

But I was here for another reason. As a music lover, I'd been lured by the 8th annual Island Hopper Songwriter Fest, held each September. Featuring eighty artists and a hundred acoustic performances from folk to country to pop, the festival is a music-lover's dream.

This area has long been known for that aforementioned sun, sea and sand, but since 2014 they've been able to add "song" to that appealing list. Then again, even before I heard my first note, I'd succumbed to the lure of Fort Myers.

Lounging on the balcony of my room at South Seas Resort on Captiva Island, I shared my view with an egret perched on the railing beside me. Minutes before, two dolphins broke the water's surface. After dinner one night I hung out dockside at the resort's marina, bonding with a manatee.

But for all the natural appeal of the area, this visit was also about the tunes. Halfway through the first set, I was already swaying in time to the music. A procession of artists commanded the stage, including Kat Higgins, a folk singer from Vancouver. Higgins is also—aptly enough—a songwriter whose compositions have been performed by Carrie Underwood and Kenny Chesney.

Later in the week another highlight included a late-night jam hosted by BMI, a festival sponsor, on the deck at Doc Ford's Restaurant on Captiva Island. This iconic local spot is just one of many festival venues, in a celebration that draws both visitors and locals. "Last year we had upwards of ten thousand guests over the course of the festival," says organizer Miriam Dotson.

This year's festival kicked off here on Captiva Island before shifting to downtown Fort Myers and finishing at Fort Myers Beach, where the final day included a pool party at Pink Shell Beach Resort and Marina.

Various country styles dominated, along with a genre Lee County VCB representative Jackie Parker calls "Americana." But stylistic range wasn't the most noticeable feature. I was also impressed by the diverse programming. "We've got performers from up-and-coming writers, right up to the big names," Parker says. Unlike some larger festivals, the format here was downright casual. Performers chattily shared the backstory or inspiration for each song and there was close proximity between performers and audience.

Given that proximity and the informal vibe, I felt like these artists were performing at my very own house party (two actual house parties were part of the schedule), right in my living room or backyard. That's assuming my house boasted killer sunset views or a white sand beach out front.

Here at the Island Hopper Songwriter Fest the ambiance is every bit as appealing as the music. "Nature, nature, nature," is how Parker described this area and, sometime between my manatee bonding and my dolphin discovery, between a perfect sunrise

and a perfectly executed arpeggio, I decided that even without the musical accompaniment, Lee County was a place worth another visit.

It was the perfect recipe for paradise. Sun, sea, sand—and song.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- While Fort Myers Beach sustained devastating damage from Hurricane Ian only three days after the end of the festival, Sanibel and Captiva were seriously affected. New openings in terms of parks, attractions and accommodations are being announced daily. For example, though the Sanibel Causeway was at first impassable, it has re-opened ahead of schedule. Both Westjet and Air Canada continue to offer convenient flights and you can check out current conditions at www.visitfortmyers.com.

- A testament to the fortitude and enthusiasm of locals, they've already announced the dates for next year's Island Hopper Songwriter Fest (Sept. 22 – Oct. 1). One indication of the importance of this festival, both to the region and as a seminal musical event, is the fact that sponsors BMI and iHeartRadio presented an early November concert in Nashville, called "Songwriters for Southwest Florida." It was supported by a veritable choir of songwriters contributing to the aid of the region's hospitality workers.

THE HOTTEST TICKET IN TOWN.



48 Hours in Miami

Even a short visit to this eclectic and exciting city is enough to keep you coming back for more

BY TAMMY CECCO

Miami is a destination that calls to me for so many different reasons. I love the fact that it's a melting pot of cultures, from the flavours in the diversity of restaurants, to the varied beats of music playing in clubs. There is an international

influence on literally everything consumed here—and it's all just a quick flight away.

I would love to say this trip allowed for time to pause and soak up the sun and beautiful beaches,

but it was a quick 48 hours.

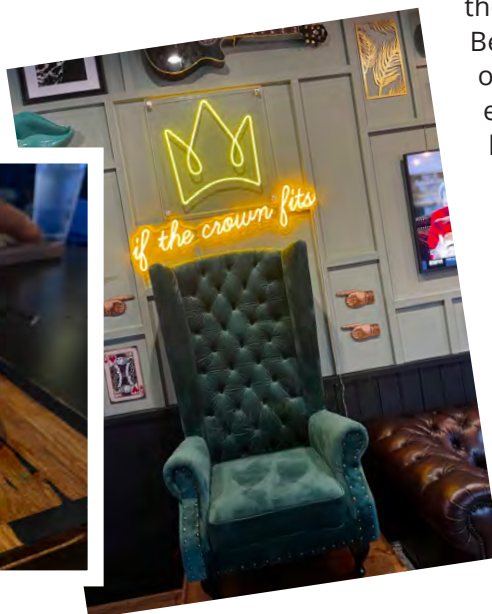
Although rushed, there were some unexpected discoveries made on this visit and some stops along the way that did not disappoint.

South Beach like a local

From Ocean Drive to Lincoln, there is no question that you can live the luxe life in Miami. Aside from world famous hotels and restaurants, plenty of time can also be spent admiring the multitude of art deco architecture. One of my favourite things to do is simply grab a coffee or cocktail to enjoy on a streetside patio and watch all of the action. One place to go if you want to feel like you're a part of local life (something I love to do in my travels) is Mickey Burkes. The welcoming yet refined pub is exactly the kind of place I could see myself visiting regularly if I lived in the area. In addition to an impressive and creative craft cocktail list, they offer a

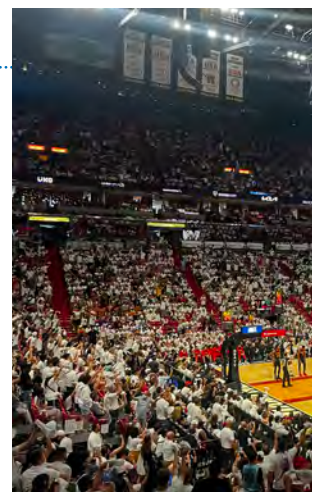
slew of savoury bites both big and small. Don't miss the Mickey B, a unique burger featuring crispy back bacon, gruyere, an organic fried egg, spiralized truffle potatoes and arugula. The roasted garlic and passionfruit aioli is the perfect topper.

Be sure to check out their weekly event schedule for live music nights and activities where you can mingle with locals from the neighbourhood.



It's all about the game!

Miami's world-class FTX Arena on the waterfront of Biscayne Bay offers the best in live sports, concerts and entertainment. Whether you're attending a sporting event or catching your favourite artist, there are plenty of options to extend the experience with an exclusive dinner at Bacardi Ocho Lounge (day memberships available for purchase) or party pre or post-event at 601 Miami or Courtside Club. One of the highlights of our weekend was catching a Heat game. Raptors fans are known to have the best fan hype, but I would say in Miami they really know how to bring the Heat!



Brickell City Centre—one stop to shop, play & eat

The last time I was in the neighbourhood of Brickell (probably 10 years back), I was impressed with gorgeous condo buildings but it was still primarily the financial district of Miami. Now it goes far beyond Miami's highest skyscrapers. This urban extension is fast becoming the

new "in spot," attracting young professionals, millennials and a growing ex pat community. A few hours in Brickell left me feeling like it might have to be the focus of a future trip. One unexpected stop was Brickell City Centre which was much more than a high-end mall, offering dining and entertainment alongside a wide range of retail options.



Shop

You can find all of your favourite brands here alongside many unique finds. Think Parisian label Zadig & Voltaire meets lesser known Italian labels like 120% Lino.

Play

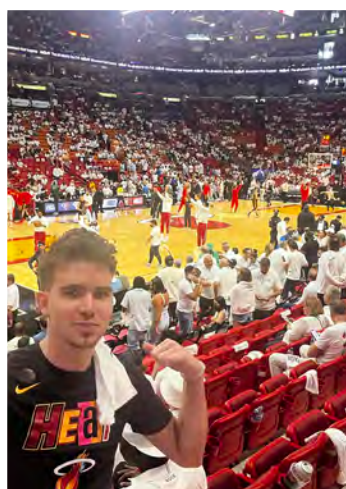
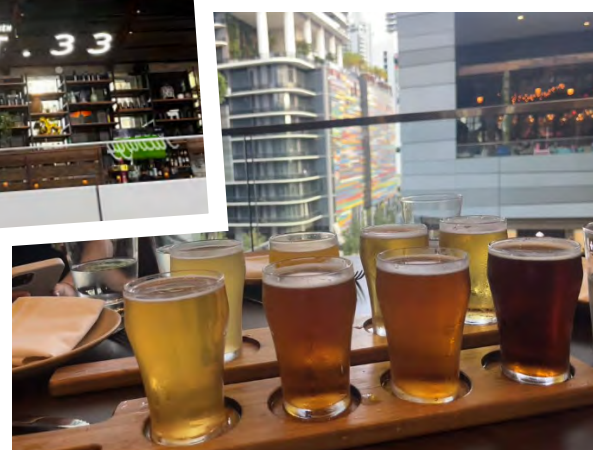
For entertainment, catch a flick at the VIP cinema or try an upscale, tech-infused mini golf experience at Puttshack. I loved how there was no hassle of pencil and paper to keep score as your ball tracks your gameplay. The game is taken up a notch with opportunities to earn bonus points or lose points on risks like hazard traps throughout the course.



Eat

Among the diverse restaurants here, be sure not to miss Est. 33, which will change the way you think of Asian cuisine. Here you'll find an extensive menu blending Asian flavours with the techniques of American barbecue. The open kitchen and grills along with an in-house microbrewery create an ambiance you wouldn't expect to find inside a shopping centre.

Speaking of beer, EST. 33's creative craft brews celebrate time-honored Thai traditions and the tropical influences of Miami. The on site beer master will be happy to provide recommendations and explain the flavour combinations of premium local and imported ingredients. I loved the Aromatic Snowy brewed with French orange peels and coriander seeds, but I would recommend starting with a beer flight to taste several offerings. Pair your flight with a selection of appetizers and something from the open grill. If hops aren't your thing, they have a great list of craft cocktails.



Although 48 hours didn't feel quite long enough, it reminded me of exactly why Miami has become one of my favourite destinations in Florida.

For more information on endless Miami travel inspirations:
miamiandbeaches.com



Over-the-Top Luxury in Florida

Exceptional vacation rentals you'll only find in the Sunshine State

BY ELIZABETH HEATH

A FABULOUS FAMILY MANSION

Vacation rentals are the accommodation standard for families and large groups looking for a place to stay. And Florida wrote the book on vacation rentals—Kissimmee alone has more than 50,000 individual rental properties. Across

the state, property owners and resort developers just keep raising the luxury bar by offering more bedrooms, more bells and whistles and more hotel-like perks.

We used luxury amenities, exquisite locations and unusual, over-the-top features as our standard to source these vacation rentals you'll only find in Florida. A word to the wise: book way in advance!

SKY PENTHOUSE AT 1 HOTEL MIAMI BEACH MIAMI BEACH

If you gasp when you catch your first glimpse of the Sky Penthouse at the eco-friendly, 5-star 1 Hotel South Beach, you can't be faulted. The 4,207-square-foot, two-story suite features an astounding 5,300-square-foot rooftop terrace with unparalleled views of the Atlantic Ocean and the city skyline. Nothing is overlooked here, and guest perks include two daily spa treatments, unpacking service, daily fresh juices and access to the hotel's pools, gardens and beach cabanas. Luxury Rentals Miami Beach has loads of similar in-hotel options, depending on your needs.



MODERN MARVEL SIESTA KEY

Wake up to the sound of gently lapping waves at this 3-level, 4-bedroom house on Sarasota's Siesta Key, where the beaches are consistently ranked among the best in the world. This daringly modern villa has its own private beach, a splash pool, a fitness room with a Peloton bike and—get this—a rooftop putting green. Siesta Key Village is walking distance away, but the sunsets don't get any better than from the backyard. Siesta Key Luxury Properties has other options if this beauty is booked.





**TREEHOUSE MANSION AT REUNION RESORT
KISSIMMEE**

Which features here will make the adults most jealous of the kids? It might be the treehouse bedroom with an actual tree in the middle and multiple slides, the epic laser tag room (with separate laser maze), the home theater, the lagoon-style pool, or the video arcade. The 10-bedroom, 10-bathroom Treehouse Mansion wins the prize for delivering the most childhood wish fulfillment. But adults don't have it so bad either, with a sauna and fitness room, wet bars, a putting green and the ultimate old-school bonus—a Pac Man game! This rental is offered through Jeeves Florida Rentals, which has plenty of other luxe options if this one is booked.

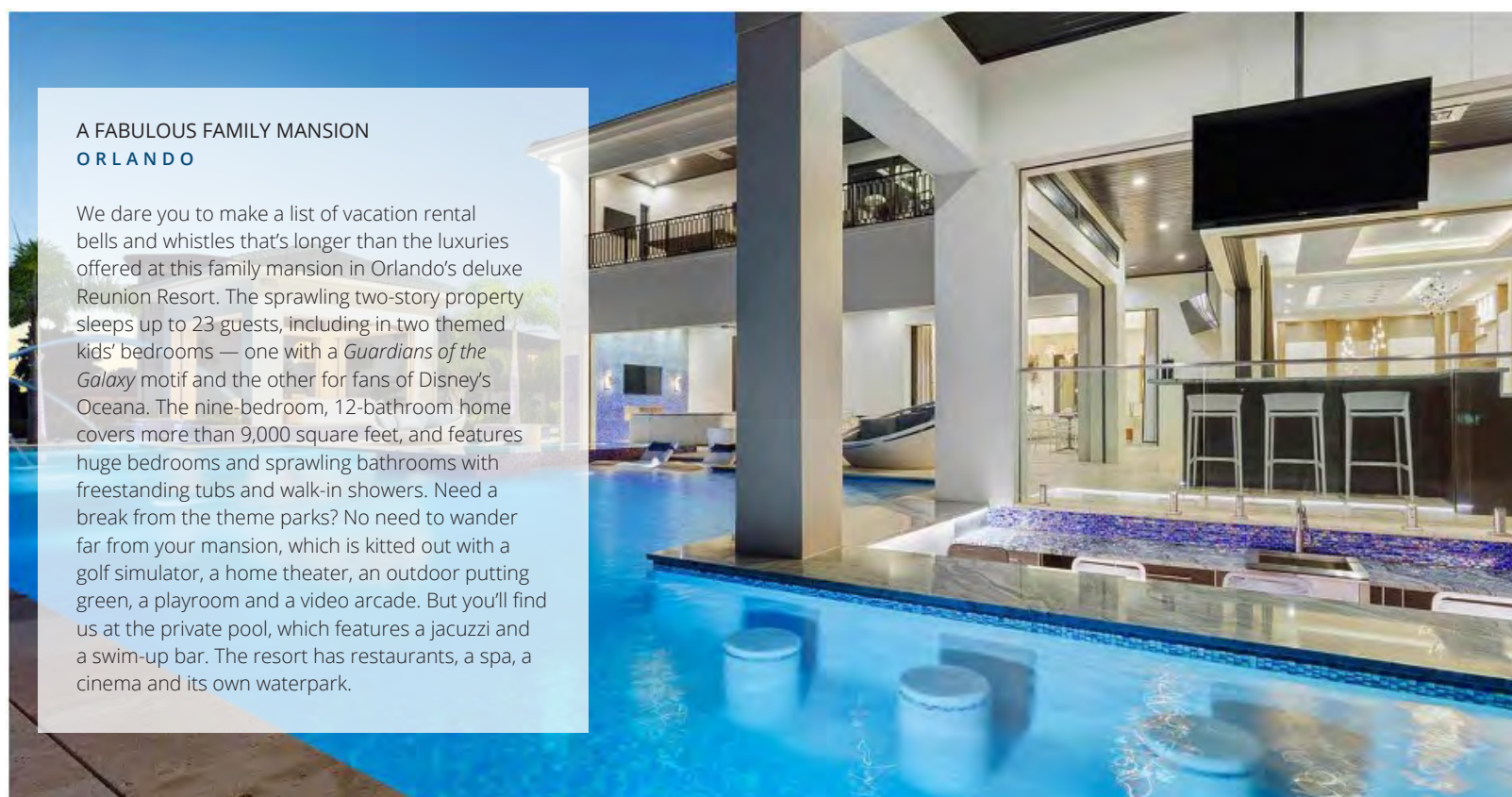
**SUNSET KEY OCEANFRONT 4-BEDROOM COTTAGE
KEY WEST**

Toes in the sand, or in your private plunge pool? This may be the biggest decision of the day at Sunset Key, the private island retreat located just minutes by boat from Key West. The resort's 4-bedroom oceanfront cottage is done in Old Key West style, with a wraparound porch and direct beach access. The resort has an open-air restaurant, a pool bar and a spa. The buzz of Key West is a short ride—and about a million miles—away. For something in town, check out Historic Hideaways.



**A FABULOUS FAMILY MANSION
ORLANDO**

We dare you to make a list of vacation rental bells and whistles that's longer than the luxuries offered at this family mansion in Orlando's deluxe Reunion Resort. The sprawling two-story property sleeps up to 23 guests, including in two themed kids' bedrooms — one with a *Guardians of the Galaxy* motif and the other for fans of Disney's Oceana. The nine-bedroom, 12-bathroom home covers more than 9,000 square feet, and features huge bedrooms and sprawling bathrooms with freestanding tubs and walk-in showers. Need a break from the theme parks? No need to wander far from your mansion, which is kitted out with a golf simulator, a home theater, an outdoor putting green, a playroom and a video arcade. But you'll find us at the private pool, which features a jacuzzi and a swim-up bar. The resort has restaurants, a spa, a cinema and its own waterpark.





Lift Your Spirits in the Psychic Capital of the World

Cassadaga, Florida offers an abundance of charm alongside many options for spiritual guidance

By Chris Ryall

“

If You Could Read My Mind,” was a popular hit for Gordon Lightfoot when it was released in 1970. Perhaps Lightfoot visited Cassadaga, Florida before he wrote his well known song. Since the late 1800’s the tiny community located between Orlando and Daytona Beach has been popular with psychics, healers, spiritualists and visitors alike.

Cassadaga, known as the “Psychic Capital of the World,” was designated a Historic District and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991. It is also home to The Southern Cassadaga Spiritualists Camp, which was established in 1894. The Camp consists of 57 acres and 55 homes, many of which house healers, mediums, psychics and spiritualists.

People from all over the world travel to Cassadaga seeking guidance and answers to life’s big questions, while some just stumble upon the town on their way to Florida’s coastal beaches or Orlando’s many theme parks. The welcome mat is put out for all, whether a believer, skeptic or someone simply curious and interested in learning more about spirituality.

Long Live the Spirits

Take a stroll around town and you will find neon and homemade signs advertising the services of spiritual healers, mediums and more. Fees vary depending on type and length of service and the individual healer. The Cassadaga Spiritualists Camp has certified mediums and healers available, but no tarot card or palm readers (though these can be found outside the property). Don’t expect to be spooked, however—there isn’t even a cemetery in Cassadaga. It’s more about the energy and enlightenment one can feel when visiting. The town is known as a natural vortex (vortexes are thought to be centers of energy that are conducive to healing and meditation) and smaller “vortices” can be found at various locations on the scenic grounds.

Tours on the Spiritual Side

Take a guided historical tour and learn how this small community developed into one of the largest and oldest concentrations of spiritualists in the U.S. Or venture into the darkness with the Cassadaga After Dark—Find the Spirits Tour. Led by investigators, the tour offers the chance to discover a more scientific view of spiritualism. In addition to learning how investigators classify and analyze spirit manifestations, paranormal enthusiasts are even encouraged to bring their own equipment! Feel the energy and spirits on the Encounter the Spirits Night Tour every Saturday night that takes visitors to the town’s energy “hot spots.” Don’t forget your camera to capture energy orbs and spirit manifestations—you can bring your smartphone but digital cameras are recommended. As you are guided through this energy-filled tour, you will learn about spiritualism, mediumship and other phenomena. In addition to these tours there are séances, readings, lectures and other special events scheduled throughout the year.

Giving Your Spirit a Rest

Anyone seeking the full spiritual experience can check into Hotel Cassadaga, a 1920's style boutique hotel. It's not just a hotel but also a Psychic Center with a full roster of psychics, mediums and healers onsite. Guests can book a variety of sessions including crystal healing, hypnotism, reiki, chakra balancing, past life regression, infinity healing and other energy healing treatments. The hotel is said to be haunted, but apparently the spirits are friendly to guests!

In addition, close to Cassadaga you'll find abundant nature preserves and rivers where turtles, gators and manatees will lift your spirits in a natural way. Head over to DeLand, about a 15-minute drive from Cassadaga, for a variety of microbreweries, brewpubs and wine bars where you can indulge in spirits of the alcohol-based variety. No matter your interest, it's easy to unearth your spiritual side in Cassadaga.



James Thomas leads a healing circle prayer service at the Cassadaga Spiritualist Camp



Happy Glamping!

Sleep under the stars in the Sunshine State without sacrificing the comforts of home

BY JESSICA PADYKULA



Florida is well known for many things—from a plethora of theme parks and RV parks, to some of the best golf courses in the world. But the Sunshine State doesn't always come to mind when it comes to camping—let alone glamping—but it should. Sprawling state parks and other scenic spots offer the chance to be close to nature, whether you want to swim, paddle, hike, bike, or beach-hop. Take full advantage of Florida's natural beauty with a stay under the stars that leans more towards luxury than a typical tent vacation.

Lake Louisa State Park, LAKE COUNTY

Located 30 minutes from Orlando, this 4,500 acre state park is one of the best in Florida and features three lakes, beautiful forests and 30+ kilometres of unpaved multi-use trails. Keep your eyes peeled for a variety of local wildlife, including gopher tortoises, bald eagles and osprey. An overnight stay here can easily be done in a luxury tent or one of 20 cabins, and when you're not out exploring on your own, take a guided hiking, horseback, kayaking or segway tour.



Westgate River Ranch Resort and Rodeo, RIVER RANCH

For a truly unique experience, Westgate River Ranch lies on 1,700 acres in the heart of Florida's cattle lands, offering cowboy-themed accommodations ranging from tent camping and a lodge, to cabins, glamping tents and Luxe Teepees. Activities include horseback riding, airboat and swamp buggy rides, zip-lining, swimming, golf, nature hikes, hayrides, cookouts and a full-service marina complete with boating and fishing. The resort also features a Saturday night rodeo in a 1,200-seat arena and the River Ranch Saloon that opens for dancing following the rodeo.



Matlacha Tiny Village, CAPE CORAL

Take glamping up a notch with a waterfront stay in a capsule-sized cottage. Exuding laid-back, Caribbean vibes, this adorable enclave of colourful, individually decorated tiny homes is located on the edge of the ocean not far from Cape Coral. Each unit includes a full kitchenette with a fridge, microwave, coffee maker and induction cooktops. There's also a BBQ on site for communal use, as well as a spacious dock and kayak launch (kayaks are complementary for guests).



Twin Lakes Camp Resort, DEFUNIAK SPRINGS

Northwest Florida is where you'll find Twin Lakes Camp Resort on 18 treed acres in DeFuniak Springs. The scenic waterfront property offers five luxury cabin suites, nine glamping tents, three tiny homes and two lake houses for larger groups. Glamping tents here come with everything you need for a comfortable stay (some include claw foot tubs). There are also boat rentals available, as well as BBQs, firepits, daily activities and a swimming pool.

Timberline Glamping Company, NEAR TAMPA

Cozy vibes await in Hillsborough River State Park where you can stay in one of Timberline Glamping Company's well-equipped tents featuring ample space to spread out, coffee makers, mini fridges, rustic-chic décor, as well as a wood fire ring (with cooking grate), string lights, two camp chairs and a picnic table. Fun add-ons include a game of giant Jenga, S'mores kits, bike rentals, cornhole and activity boxes for little glampers. Nearby stops to add to your itinerary include Keel and Curley Winery (a farm, winery, brewery and restaurant in one) and Parkesdale farmers' market.



Coldwater Gardens, MILTON

Choose from a variety of glamping options at Coldwater Gardens, an eco-resort on 365 acres of pine forest and lowland cypress swamp adjacent to Coldwater Creek. Six well-appointed glamping tents await, as well as a treehouse, cabana and a tiny house. There are over 11 kilometres of mixed use trails for hiking and biking, as well as an expanse of creek front property perfect for swimming. The property is also home to greenhouses, chickens, friendly bunnies (guests are welcome to pick them up) and a butterfly garden.



OUR SPIRIT REMAINS.



It's our reaction to adversity and not adversity itself that determines how our story will unfold. Parts of our landscape may look different right now, but it is clear the way our area makes you feel hasn't changed because of the outpouring of love and support we've received from around the world. What has defined us in the past still defines us today. With resilience and optimism, good days throughout Fort Myers' islands, beaches and neighborhoods are being restored.

fort
MYERS
ISLANDS, BEACHES
& NEIGHBORHOODS

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