



6 ITALY Six summer days in five towns on the Golfo Paradiso.



7 LIBRARIES Luring visitors with gardens and movie theaters.



9 CALIFORNIA Wine, beaches and 36 Hours in Santa Barbara.

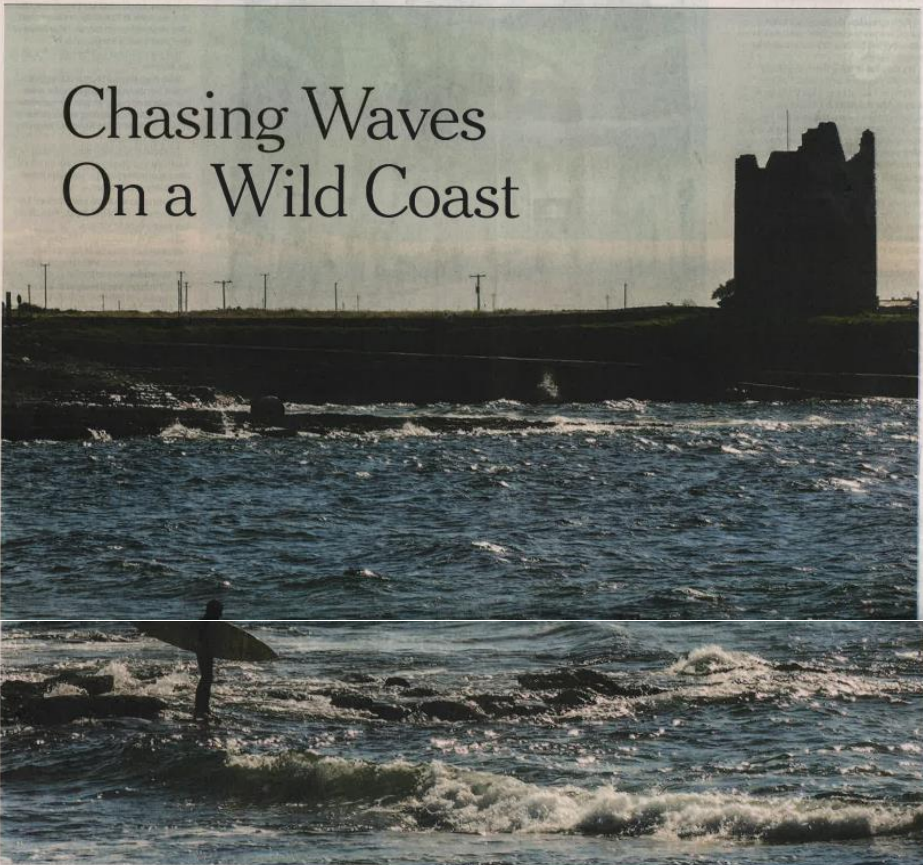
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Travel

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Chasing Waves On a Wild Coast



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFFREY M. HARRIS FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In western Ireland, the Atlantic tempts and teases surfers.

By BIDDLE DUKE

In the 1970s and '80s, the California surfer and writer Kevin Naughton and the photographer Craig Peterson traveled the globe "Endless Summer"-style searching for perfect waves.

When they arrived in Ireland, with its friendly locals and powerful, mostly empty waves, amid a landscape of stone walls and ruins, Mr. Naughton recalled, "there was a sense of disbelief, an improbable feeling

that perhaps of all places, on the often frigid island in the North Atlantic they had found what they were looking for.

"I've had more great solo days in Ireland than anywhere else," Mr. Naughton said when I called him to plan a surfing trip.

Over the years, Ireland has gained a mythical reputation in the surf world as a wild and unpoliced place for exploration and crowd-free surf. But you can't jump on a flight and count on great waves, which explains why, along with the cold water, it has

remained off the mainstream surf circuit.

The prime Irish surf season is September through November when the water is warmest (relatively speaking, that is; it peaks in the low 60s) and storm swells stream out of the North Atlantic from hurricanes and early nor'easters coming off the eastern coast of the United States. Winter brings the coldest, biggest waves, with water temperatures dipping below 50 degrees, but it's also the season that attracts big-

There are two surf breaks at the mouth of the Eskay River in Ireland. It flows into the Atlantic next to the ruins of Rosilea Castle.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

The Fiberglass Totems of Wisconsin

A father traveling with his son hopes something will beguile: A big Hodag? Maybe a Muffler Man?

By ROBERT SIMONSON

My teenage son grumbled from the back seat as we pulled over in Wabeno, about the 10th Wisconsin town with a population of 1,000 or so that we had stopped at that day. My attempt to get him to leave the car to look at the 22-foot-tall statue of a lumberjack across the street was as unsuccessful as my appeal a half-hour earlier in Luona to clap eyes on the world's largest soup kettle.

"What is it about these places you find so interesting?" he said, his hands limp with boredom, loosely cradling a well-used Nintendo Switch. I looked at Larry the Logroller, as the town calls its fiberglass giant; then at the tiny Logging Museum next to him, there since 1941; then at the upside-

Larry the Logroller, a 22-foot-tall fiberglass sculpture in Wabeno, in northern Wisconsin.



KEVIN MAZUR FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

down Old Style sign that hung outside the Bottoms Up bar (get it?). It was a fair question, and not one I could immediately answer.

I grew up in a small Wisconsin town called Eagle (population 745 at the time), where my family moved from Milwaukee. I was presented with two existential options: be bored cross-eyed by the limited options of a rural hamlet or figure out what might make Eagle special. I chose the latter. It began a lifelong habit of seeking out the attractions of the more obscure corners of the world. I grew up not wanting to visit France, but Luxembourg.

I know southern Wisconsin fairly well. The northern part of the state, however, was a mystery. I didn't fish, hunt or ride a snowmobile, the reasons most Wisconsinites head north. Still, I was curious.

Last summer, an opportunity arose to explore the area. Since 1999, my father's family has held an annual reunion. These get-togethers are typically held at some resort

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Psst, There's a Secret 'Gossip Girl' Tour in New York

It isn't advertised online, and guests of the hotel where the show was filmed aren't told of it.

By TARIRO MZEZEWA

For the past 21 years, Maurice Legere has been a security officer at the Lotte New York Palace, a hotel in Midtown Manhattan. And for the past decade, in addition to keeping the building safe, Mr. Legere has given a tour of the hotel to loyal fans of the "Gossip Girl" television show, showing them the spaces where the series was filmed.

The tour isn't advertised online or at check-in for hotel guests. The only way to find out about it is through word of mouth.

The hotel was the home of Serena van der Woodsen and Chuck Bass, some of the drama's main characters. Throughout the show's six seasons, the hotel became a character of its own with much of the scheming, fighting and other drama in "the scandalous lives of Manhattan's elite" taking place there and its characters referring to it as just "the palace."

"I started doing it because people come into the courtyard, they look and I notice them right away because they start giggling and laughing," Mr. Legere said. "They say, 'Oh my God this is the 'Gossip Girl' hotel.'"

So he started offering to show them the most "Gossip Girl"-linked spots inside the hotel.

With the show's reboot on HBO Max, announced last month, Mr. Legere may get even more takers for the tour, for which he does not charge. It typically begins in the lobby where he points to a gold balcony, gives its history and recalls a memorable scene from the show's 2007 pilot.

"Serena stood up there looking down at Dan when they went on their first date she had the gold dress on," he said.

From the lobby, Mr. Legere takes guests up the hotel's grand staircase and into the ballroom where Blair and Serena's cotillion took place in the first season. Then Mr. Legere goes to the Gold Room, where Serena and Blair decided not to be friends in the pilot. The bar's décor has changed since the show was filmed, but the show's most loyal fans can imagine the scenes.

"It was cool to walk around and visualize scenes from the show like where Serena and Nate had drinks in the hotel bar," said Jessie Sporn, who went on Mr. Legere's tour in April. "When Maurice described certain things happening in a specific room, I could remember the scenes perfectly."

Mr. Legere then takes guests into the Villard restaurant, where Chuck regularly ate breakfast, and Villard's kitchen, where Chuck made Serena a truffle grilled cheese.

The next stop on the tour is a marble staircase where Nate watched his father buy drugs. Thanks to the natural light streaming through a window near the bottom of the staircase, tourists always want a photo of themselves standing on the stairs.



ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Maurice Legere takes Gayatri Sriram's picture in the library of the Lotte New York Palace hotel during one of Mr. Legere's under-the-radar "Gossip Girl" tours of parts of the hotel where the television series was filmed.

"I've become a freelance photographer," Mr. Legere said recently. "I take so many photos of people here. They want all the angles."

Mr. Legere's tour is not included with the "Gossip Girl" Getaway offered by the Lotte Palace, which includes a small box of macarons and prosecco gummy bears, two "Gossip Girl" Champagne cocktails at the hotel's bar, Trouble's Trust, or in the Gold Room, a 25 percent discount on tickets to the "Gossip Girl" sites tour from On Location, a group that offers TV- and movie-themed tours of New York and Boston, and postcards with images of the show's most

famous locations at the hotel, where rates start at about \$400 a night.

Ms. Sporn, 22, said that she also went on a separate tour of other locations in the city that are in the show, but not affiliated with the hotel.

"We also went to the Met steps and the rooftop bar of the Empire Hotel, which are in the show," she said. "The hotel had 'Gossip Girl' drinks and at The Met there were other people who were there because they had seen it on the show, so it was interesting to see the cultural impact of the show." Ms. Sporn added that a group of people she spoke with mentioned that they had come to the museum because of the show. In the series, Blair often had lunch on the Met steps.

Mr. Legere began giving the tour about a decade ago and said that it has become more popular in the last four or so years, likely because the show is available on Netflix and more people have access to it. He said that he has given at least 1,000 tours to groups big and small and with guests from all over the world.

David Shenman, director of sales and marketing for the hotel, anticipates that the reboot will bring even more people to the hotel and to Mr. Legere's tour.

"I feel like any time there's a resurgence, like when the show became available on Netflix, there is additional interest that brings people here," Mr. Shenman said. "We just started talking about this last week, but obviously being the Palace, we will find something to do celebrating the return."