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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR IN CHIEF

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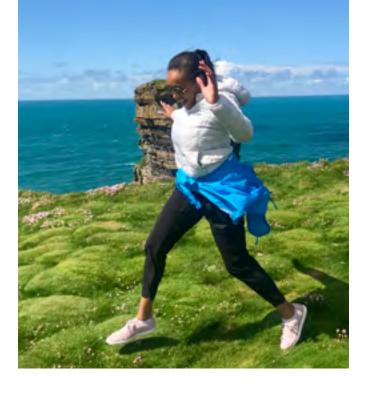
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Welcome to the winter issue...

We have a Swank List that's all about the good stuff. Amy, our newly minted sommelier, gives you her latest take on the hottest wines. Then, saunter through Bali, the Dominican Republic, South Africa and India in our Letters From and Swellegant Stays. Andrew gives you the very first look at the freshest set of The Bungalows in the Florida Keys. In his words, this place "...offers the flexibility to explore unspoiled natural beauty in sync with The Keys vibe of a relaxed local culture." Who else wants to be there now? Florida sun > snow.

As usual though...we've got you covered around the globe. From good times in Ireland to old Montreal with a tasty stop in central California where we learned how to entertain Westcoast style with Natahn Turner at Alisal Ranch. I welcome you to dive into this issue and invite you to follow us on social media. We have our new Swanky Retreats Ambassador program launching, along with our enhanced subscription program.

The SR Ambassador program seeks six global envoys who will get to sample products, places and other travel items all year long, on behalf of the magazine. There's a huge social media component to being an Ambassador and this is why all applicants are being vetted via Instagram **@SwankyRetreats**. Think you have what it takes? Send us a Direct Message and include the **#SRAmbassador** and you'll be contacted with further details.

Our enhanced subscription program includes more than the magazine. The Swanky Retreats subscription program offers VIP experience invites from around the world, exclusive travel discounts at some of the world's finest resorts, access to the hottest travel gear and more. Visit **www.SwankyRetreats.com/invitationonly** after January 18th for further details.

Stay cozy this winter!

Yours.

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THE SWANK TEAM



ALEXANDRA MAE EDITOR-AT-LARGE When you look up "wanderlust" in the dictionary odds are that a picture of me is in the definition.



AMY SEDEÑO EDITOR-AT-LARGE

As a self-proclaimed @hotelista I do quite a bit of traveling, and from holding a tarantula in an ancient site in Guatemala to drinking high tea in Dubai, and petting grey whales in Baja, you bet I've got stories to tell.



ANDREW INNERARITY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY I prefer to let the images do the talking.



ANN MARIE SCHEIDLER EDITOR-AT-LARGE "Thailand was the trip of a lifetime for this Chicago girl...a sensory overload in the best of ways. The people, the food, the landscape: all unforgettable."



AVA ROSALES FEATURES EDITOR Wherever the destination may be, it's the villa life for me.



BRIANA LOZANO EDITOR-AT-LARGE

My favorite place to travel to is one I have never been to before! New cities, new sights, new food, new music, new people, new memories, new ways of life. The only way to truly know, is to see it for yourself. I am forever wanderlust. Thank you, Briana



DYLAN BENOIT CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

I'm a chef with Champagne taste and a beer budget, but always seem to find myself surrounded by the most amazing people in the most amazing places. From eating termites in the Honduran jungle to learning how to make dim sum in Hong Kong, for me treasure is in the story.



JEFFREY SOBEL CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF All I need is a book, a bourbon and a boat to a new destination -I'll be just fine.



SERGIO OLIVARES CREATIVE DIRECTOR

When I am not at a music concert, you might catch me hunting down new and exciting roads to drive on the weekends. "I live my life a quarter mile at a time." - Dom Toretto.



SOPHIE IBBOTSON EDITOR-AT-LARGE

I'm an entrepreneur, writer, and lover of wild places. I like nothing more than exploring new destinations with extraordinary landscapes, rich cultures, and preferably a sprinkling of remarkable wildlife, too. A jaw droppingly beautiful place to stay is the icing on the cake.

u see me

half page

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This winter's wine Swank List is curated by Amy Sedeño.

These are a few of her favorite splurge-worthy wines to gift and sip during the season.



Amy is certified by the Wine & Spirit Education Trust and has worked with brands such as Barton & Guestier and Wines of Chile. She's a contributor to the Vitner Project and a somm at Miami's Design District bespoke wine shop and tasting bar, Abaco Wines & Wine Bar. Amy's picks reflect her palate and wines she's discovered during her travels. When selecting a wine, she values terroir-driven vineyards and winemakers that have a story to tell.

Château de Béru 2017 Chablis Montserre

The Béru family has owned the historic Château de Béru domain for 400 years, and the 2017 Chablis Mostserre is the perfect example of their terroir-driven legacy. Made from 40-year-old vines, this Burgundian white natural wine is organic and biodynamic and harvested from the highest point in the hill of Béru. This wine has bright acidity, a beautiful texture and concentration with mineral, salty, and smoky notes and subtle hints of iodine. This is a purist example of Chardonnay done right. Head winemaker Athénaïs de Béru's recipe is to listen to the grapes and change her approach based on the fruit's needs.

BDV Phillip Leonard Pinot Noir 2014

Made from the ever-so-finicky, yet delicious Pinot Noir grape, Barowsky Disesa Vineyards' Phillip Leonard Pinot Noir is a food-friendly, easydrinking Pinot from Northern California. The name comes from a combination of the middle names from owners Barowsky and Disesa. The Estate grown grapes used in the wine come from three specific Pinot Noir clones blended for an elegant and balanced finish. Bramble, dark and red cherries, cut hay, anise, and faint chocolate come through on the nose. A burst of cranberry comes through on the palate with nice acidity and a long finish.





Piper Heidsieck's Rare Millésime 2002

Holidays have become synonymous with bubbly, and Piper Heidsieck's Rare Millésime 2002 is a celebration within itself. A Champagne of impeccable balance with fine bubbles and toasted brioche, honey, and smoked nut flavors. This is the sparkling you'll purchase to impress your boss (only nine vintages have been developed in the last four decades), but end up keeping for yourself. As regal as its origins, created as a tribute to Marie Antoinette, Rare is made from vineyards selected by their expression and in small quantities with only 300 cases available in the US.



Egly-Ouriet Blanc de Noirs Grand Cru

Speaking of bubbles, I am a sucker for Grower Champagne and have fallen into the Egly-Ouriet cult following. Egly was amongst the first producers to emerge in the Grower Champagne movement, and rightly so, this family was using organic farming methods even before the term "organic" was coined. This Pinot Noir-driven Champagne has an intense bouquet of yellow apples, brioche, red berries, honey, and crushed stones. Although the Insta life may call for flutes, use white wine glasses to enjoy the remarkable aromatics.



Barton & Guestier Châteauneuf du Pape 2017

Barton & Guestier is known as the oldest wine merchant in Bordeaux, and today, the producer's wines are a true representation of some of France's top winegrowing appellations. Take Châteauneuf du Pape, for instance. Harvested in southern Cotes du Rhône vineyard, this well-balanced red has the rich diversity of black fruits from the Grenache grape and spicy notes, peppery notes from its share of Syrah. Ripe tannins and weight make this the perfect wine for rich winter stews and cozy snow days.



Don Melchor Cabernet Sauvignon 2018

Rarely does one come across a wine so meticulously crafted as those from Don Melchor. Enrique Tirado, Don Melchor's head winemaker, is in constant search for the best expression of the vine in the vineyard and aims to turn each bottle into a narrative of the Puente Alto terroir. Don Melchor became the first Chilean wine to be amongst the Top 100 Wines of the World list published by Wine Spectator, and today, it continues its legacy of tradition. This is a dense, red wine with everso-smooth tannins that can age. On the palate, notes of black fruit, chocolate, and oak.

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SWELLEGANT STAYS

The indefinable sense of style that makes us swoon: swanky, swell & elegant.

Bulgari Bali Bali, Indonesia

Bulgari Bali is not just for honeymooners. Whether you are young, free, and single, coupled up and in love, or visiting with extended family in tow, this glorious beachside retreat is a stunning place to rewind.

The resort is built into a steep cliff side, descending eventually to the beach. Every villa boasts Indian Ocean views, so you can lie back in bed – our take a dip in your private plunge pool – and admire the panorama. The villa architecture is inspired by indigenous Balinese styles, but with a strong and effective contemporary twist. The black Terrazzo bathroom is a dramatic nod to Bulgari's Italian heritage, and you can choose to shower there or step outside beneath the rain shower, bathing in the secluded tropical garden. The high ceilings and variety of indoor and outdoor seating areas emphasises just how large Bulgari's villas are.









But you can't spend all your time in the villa, tempting as it is. The villa has so much more to offer! Take the elevator down the cliff to La Spiaggia for a delicious seafood lunch, or to sunbathe on a lounger, listening to the sound of the surf hitting the pristine golden sand.

Bulgari's spa reception is in an extraordinary historic building which has been brought here and beautifully conserved. The treatment rooms open out onto the sea: the waves aid with relaxation. In an hour long massage you will feel every ache and stress slip away, and the sense of tranquility continues as you sit on the terrace sipping tea.

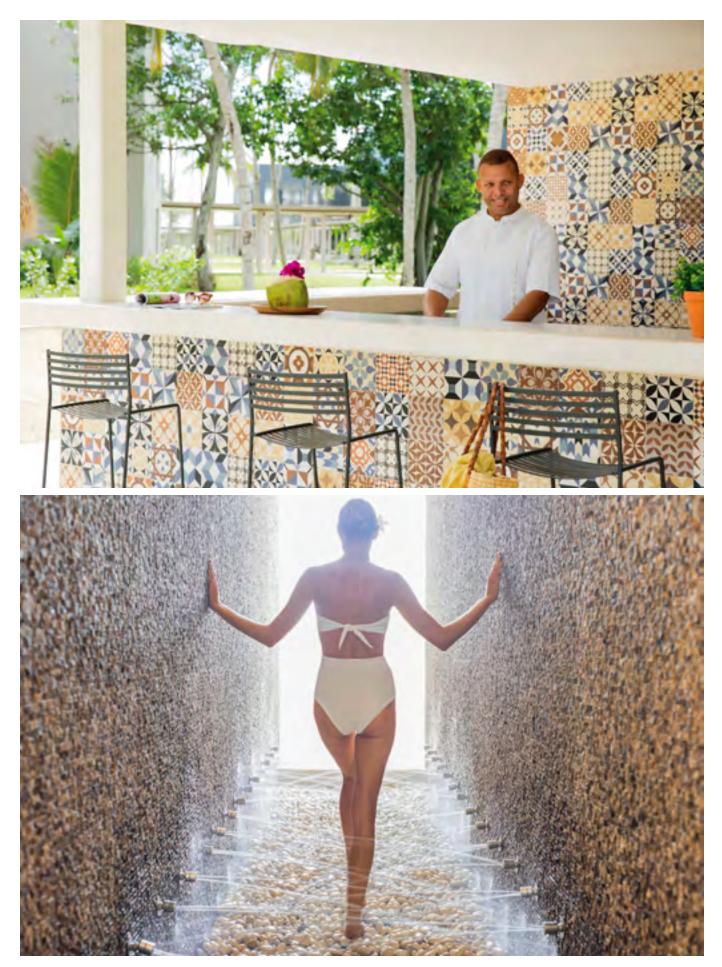
Michelin starred chef Luca Fantin is the culinary master behind II Ristorante, where guests are treated to a mouthwatering array of dishes on his imaginative tasting menu. The spaghetti with smoked eel and the veal with black truffle are the best you will ever taste.

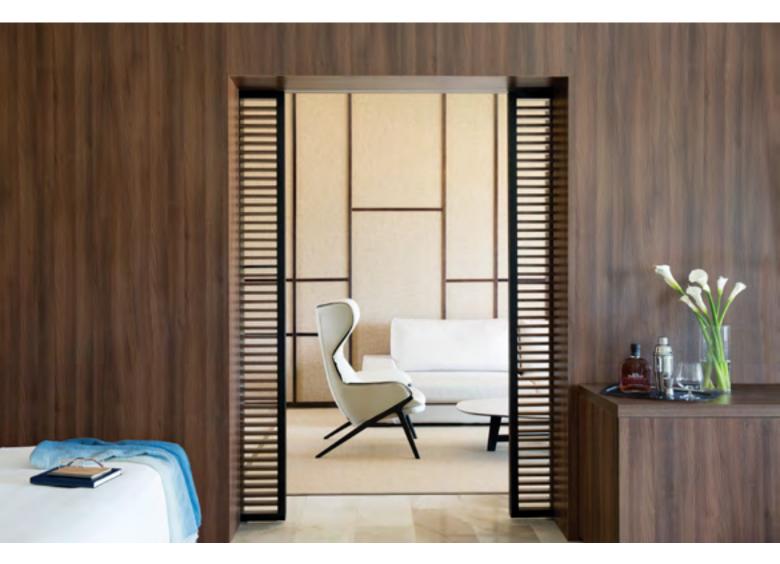
www.bulgarihotels.com



Excellence El Carmen Punta Cana, Dominican Republic

A lot has changed in Punta Cana over the years. The arrival experience at the airport has changed for the better and taking advantage of the VIP experience is an excellent way to kick off a vacation. We checked out the adults-only Excellence El Carmen for the first time and it's pretty hip. The only way to go is The Excellence Club. This level comes with a private check-in/checkout area, where you can unwind and partake in a variety of snacks, meals and cocktails. Besides the private lounge where these activities take place, there is an exclusive restaurant for Excellence Club guests, called Magna. Enjoy a private beach and pool areas, there's a private concierge service available throughout the stay, a preferred room service menu with exclusive dining offerings, designer Bylgari toiletries and, get thisupgraded in-room premium liquor. You get four bottles in your room; Johnny Walker, Bombay Sapphire, top local Barcelo rum, and Vodka. One bottle replenished daily, and feel free to take them all home. This is such a unique feature we had to let you know.





The stylish and sophisticated Excellence El Carmen is home to 173 Excellence Club suites out of 492 suites in total. This sounds like a lot of accommodations yet there's so much space on the, well manicured, grounds of the resort that you feel a sense of space and tranquility at all times. Dining is diverse with 12 international dining offerings, you will want to leave room for a taste of them all. There's an extra feeling of privacy with your own swim-up pool suite. Our insider tip is that you opt for beach-front when making your booking, it makes life so much easier when dashing from sand to pool and having as many freshly cut coconuts as you desire. Also remember to take full advantage of the spa as each Excellence Club guest has Included, one Aqua Wellness treatment per stay. Destressing will be a breeze at this resort, situated on the lovely island of the Dominican Republic. Be sure to keep the VIP experience going by upgrading your departure to the VIP lounge at Punta Cana International airport. You will thank us later, as you are watching the planes taxi to the gate while you sip one more tropical cocktail poolside overlooking the runways.

www.excellenceresorts.com/resorts/excellence-el-carmen

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In Europe, she season is in full flow. I've come to Courchevel in the French alps to breathe in the fresh mountain air, feast my eyes on the snow covered landscape's, and to make the think the the the the the sound the landscape's in the

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IFTTERS FROM.

By The Swank Team

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A LETTER FROM AFRICA: Cape Town By Sophie Ibbotson



Sawubona!

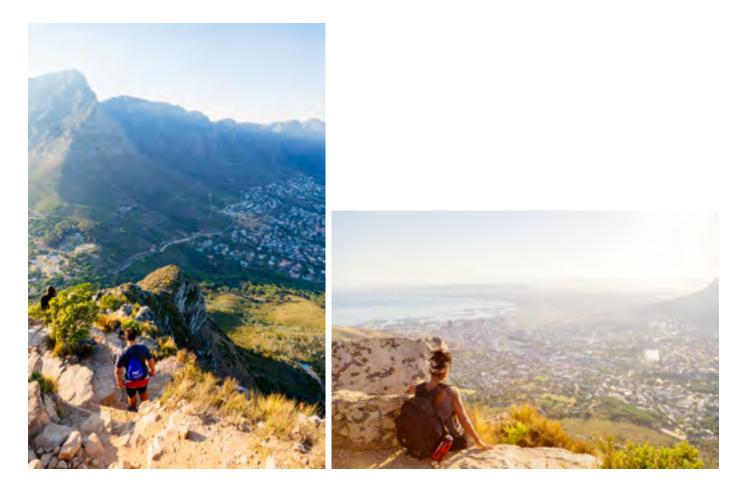
Welcome to South Africa. I'm spending a week exploring "The Mother City", also known as Cape Town. Though it's not the country's capital, this vibrant city boasts everything you could wish for, from culture to commerce.

I have checked in at Cape Grace, a grand hotel on a private quay, a fabulous waterfront location. It's a member of Leading Hotels, and it is often said that "You have to stay here at least once in your lifetime." Well, I'm doing as I'm told, and thoroughly enjoying the experience.

Each morning I wake up and look out the window at the yachts bobbing on the water, and the mountain peaks rising up behind the city. It is peaceful here, in spite of the downtown location, so whilst I'm sipping my coffee, still in my soft towelling robe and slippers, I can plan my excursions for the day ahead.

As we are in the southern hemisphere, it is spring in Cape Town right now. I'm making the most of being outdoors.

On the west coast, it is wildflower season. Blankets of colorful blooms carpet the ground, which is quite unexpected in an otherwise rather arid, drought prone region. I took a walk yesterday in the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, and had the most incredible views from the Centenary Tree Canopy Walkway. I love to look at the plants, but have only the most basic knowledge of botany, so I joined a two-hour guided tour, and got a huge amount out of the visit. Kirstenbosch is a brilliant spot for culture vultures, too, as tucked in between the trees and flowers is a rather impressive sculpture collection. There are life sized, anatomically correct dinosaurs in the Cycad Amphitheatre, but more to my taste were the bronze animals by sculptor Dylan Lewis, which have such realistic textures it is almost as though they are going to move.



The best hike in Cape Town at this time of the year is up to Lion's Head. The British originally named this peak King James His Mount, but funnily enough that moniker never stuck! I'm not sure the rock looks much like a lion, either, but at least it's a catchier name.

I hiked to Lion's Head for dawn: I wanted to see daybreak over the city, and the golden light of the first sun rays warming up the rocks of iconic Table Mountain. The Lion's Head Loop trail is just over three miles long, so it's possible to run it, but I preferred to explore at a more leisurely pace. I stopped frequently to watch the paragliders swooping air soaring like birds on the thermals, their colourful wings dancing in the sky.

Table Mountain dominates the skyline of Cape Town, but it is the sea which embraces the city, defining where it can spread. It's peak whale watching season right now, so it is a must to sail out from the Cape by boat. The humpback whales come past Cape Town on their migration route from Antarctica to their breeding grounds off the coast of Mozambique, and there are plenty of southern right whales, too. In between them swim bottle-nosed dolphins, so when your captain charts the right course through the water, you'll be completely surrounded by the most extraordinary marine creatures. The whales seem to like showing off: they put on impressive displays of breaching, spouting, and fluking. As Cape Town is arguably the greatest foodie destination in Africa, it would be amiss of me not to mention the food. I'm in love with the Biscuit Mill Market in Salt River and the Oranjezicht City Farm Market next to V&A Waterfront: the produce is fresh and delicious; and the artisanal bakers have truly captured my heart. At Oranjezicht I also discovered Moro Gelato, and have made it my mission to eat my way through as many of their ice creams and sorbets as possible before I leave. Tonight I'll be venturing to the township of Gugulethu to taste the most famous braai (barbecue) in town: Mzoli's has a cult following of celebrity chefs and locals alike. I'll have to hold off on more ice cream in order to do the meat justice, but I can always catch up with an extra cone tomorrow!

Best wishes,

ophie

www.journeysmiths.co.uk/destination/africa/southafrica/cape-town

A LETTER FROM *Europe:* **DORSET, ENGLAND** ^{By Sophie Ibbotson}



Dear friends,

The cliffs of Lyme Regis on the south coast of England are full of secrets. This is the Jurassic Coast – a UNESCO World Heritage Site – where some of the earliest and most significant discoveries of dinosaurs were found. Walking along the beach at Lyme Bay you can still pick up fossils from amongst the pebbles and sea-smoothed glass, and as each winter storm batters the rocks, more and more layers of prehistory are laid bare.

Hollywood turned its eyes on Lyme Regis this past year as Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan descended on the sleepy little town. They've been filming Ammonite, the story of 19th century fossil hunter and paleontologist Mary Anning. A dissenter and a woman, Anning never became a household name: her male peers in the scientific community would not accept her or her work. I hope that's about to change. The film will be released in early 2020, finally giving Anning the recognition she deserves. Exploring Lyme Regis today, it seems very little has changed since the 1840s when Ammonite is set. The old harbour wall still protects the town from the powerful waves of the English Channel; the working water mill is some 700 years old; and you can pick out the boarding houses and hotels where the likes of Jane Austen, Hilaire Beloc, and Alfred Lord Tennyson stayed. Mary Anning's own birthplace is appropriately now the site of Lyme Regis Museum, and there's a fossil museum in the converted church.

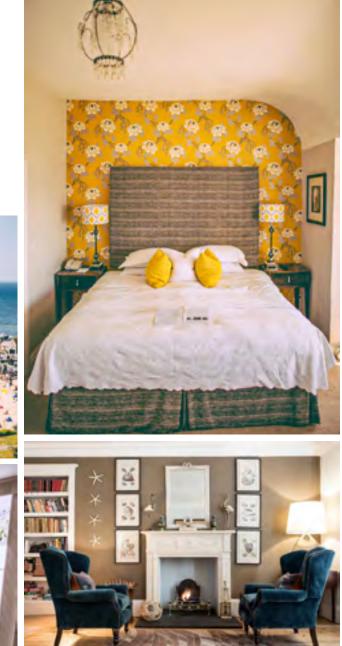
I am staying this week above the town, looking out through private gardens and across Lyme Bay. The Alexandra Hotel & Restaurant was built in 1735 for the Dowager Countess Poulett, and it has been a family run hotel for the past 120 years. In that century, the owners have perfected the art of hospitality: service is discreet and understated, but nothing is too much trouble.

I'd requested The Countess's Room: I wanted to feel like a 19th century lady of leisure in Lyme Regis for a fossil hunting adventure, possibly with a literatureworthy love affair thrown in. The huge bay windows look straight out to sea, and though today is bright and sunny, I imagine it's also a fantastic place to sit





dry and warm when a dramatic storm blows in. The decor here is quintessentially English and undeniably tasteful, and there are plenty of local touches. The Algotherm cosmetics in the bathroom are made with marine extracts, so it feels as if the fresh, salty sea air and the beach have been brought inside.





Dining at The Alexandra so far has been an indulgent treat. The main restaurant won gold at the 2018/19 Taste of the West awards, and many of the ingredients on the menu have been caught or farmed in and around Lyme Bay. In fact, if you choose to spend an afternoon out fishing and bring back your catch, the chef will even prepare and cook it for you! I am already eyeing up the hand picked Brixham crab and Lyme Bay lobster for tonight, which I will eat in the hotel's brand new Ammonite Orangery.

One of the things I love about staying in historic places such as The Alexandra Hotel is the eclectic collection of buildings. This morning whilst taking a stroll around the gardens, I found the Lookout Tower. It is a curious little structure, a folly really, but I can imagine a lovesick Victorian lady sat here waiting indefinitely for a long gone lover to return. The Lookout Tower looks down on Cobb Harbour, and on a clear day you would be able to see the sails of a ship fluttering even whilst it was miles out at sea. It would be an idyllic spot for an intimate wedding ceremony in Dorset, or for a private dinner party: you can hire it with friends for exclusive use, and an award winning chef will prepare whatever you fancy.



I first came to Lyme Regis as a child 30 years ago, and even then it felt like a town that time and the rest of the world had forgotten. The Victorian fossil hunters were long gone, even if plenty of dinosaur fossils remained. The release of Ammonite will no doubt bring fame and a new generation of visitors, but the peace and quiet of a stay at The Alexandra Hotel & Restaurant will remain.

Best wishes from my blustery beachside retreat,

ophie

www.hotelalexandra.co.uk

A LETTER FROM North America: FLORIDA KEYS

Walking through an executive area of Ft Lauderdale International Airport, I'm ready for a some disconnection from the predictable schedule of city life, during my stay at the Adults Only (21 and older) All Inclusive Resort The Bungalows Key Largo. The all inclusive resort on Florida's northernmost Key, is a relative stone's throw by car from Miami, opened in December, 2019.

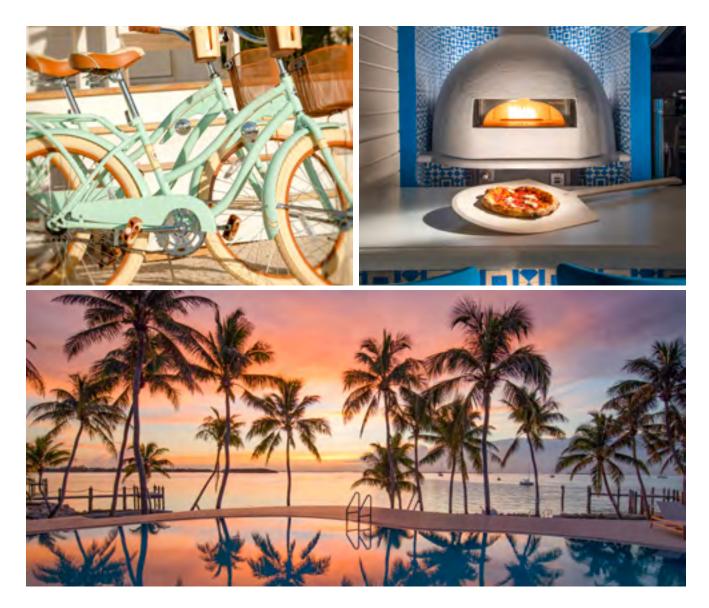
Even though we took off from a concrete runway and spent 45 minutes overflying The Everglades, we land on the tranquil waters of Key Largo's Buttonwood Sound. I'm greeted and ferried by launch the last 100 yards to what I consider to be 12 acres of pleasure blending however many thousand bamboo plants among 135 bungalows, 3 restaurants, a Zen Garden Spa with optional cabana or poolside treatments, a fitness tiki hut, sugar-colored sand paths for walking or cycling, exotic flowers and stands of key lime trees populate the area me as I make landfall.

I feel a bit like Jimmy Buffet, famous for his seaplane piloting ability as the airplane's a shortcut to The Bungalows' address on US Highway's Mile Marker 99, I realize how this property, completed in December, 2019, is a perfect place for couples seeking an intimate escape, some time to chill and reconnect with themselves, nature and each other. If more action is desired, I can take a snorkel adventure, go poolside, kayak, stand up or yoga on a paddleboard. If I care for a more relaxed time, the powered tiki boat or a complimentary guided tour of the area on one of The Bungalows' electric boats.



The Bungalows offers the flexibility to explore unspoiled natural beauty in sync with The Keys vibe of a relaxed local culture. The deliberate design of a thoroughly casual cabana lifestyle allows this resort to caress my senses with maritime visual tones and a commitment to using natural materials and a reliance on local artisans to provide exceptional resort amenities to every one of their 135 individual bungalows, 31 of which are 900 SF with waterfront views, both categories have a private veranda complete with outdoor rain shower, or if I prefer to be horizontal, a soaking tub. If I were feeling more conventional I enjoy the view and refreshment indoors via my spa bathroom and Keurig coffee maker alongside the mini fridge stocked with my preferred snacks and beverages. I could cheat and look at the outside world via the 60" monitor equipped with Beyond TV.





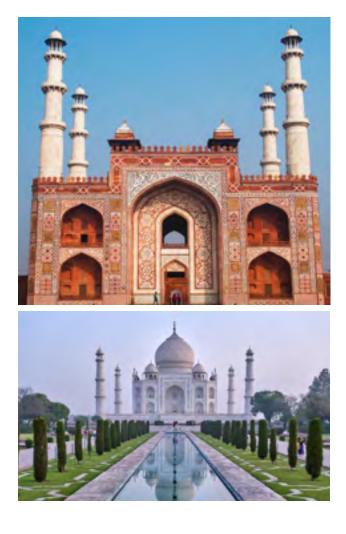
But, that would be a luxurious cheat, because in The Keys one must revel in nature! And besides, housekeeping needs a chance at turndown service, so I check my schedule, yoga class? Before the catamaran cruise from our dock on Florida Bay through the mangroves, or a scenic paddle through this, one of the world's unique Ecosystems? Ahhhh the luxury of choice.

I'll consider them over lunch, I hop on my bungalow's cruiser bike for a lunchtime trip to "Sea Senor" for some local seafood where I'll slip off the bike's leather seat, into the alfresco environment where leather chairs and palm fronds supplement "Senor's" waterside location.

Finishing my margarita about Noon, I scope my sunset meal's location, "Fish Tales" one of the property's other 2 restaurants whose view allows me to sandwich the sunset between The Bungalows' infinity pool and the water, today I plan to be a landlubber, letting other guests take the resort's sunset catamaran cruise. "Fish Tales" offers breakfast to dinner service, grilled fish and peel and eat shrimp, grilled prime steak and freshly caught seafood specialties appeal to land and seafood lovers alike.

But fear not, I'll save the third restaurant "Bogie & Bacall's" whose 5 course menu changes daily, showcasing daily fresh caught seafood, seasonal produce representing the sort of adventure one expects in The Keys. Digestives and aperitifs available at the Hemingway Bar. Were it not for the relaxed atmosphere of The Bungalows, I'd feel the pressure to be as cool as Ernie or Humphrey, but just to be sure, I'll ease into my pretend movie star persona with cocktails at the property's Sunset Tiki Bar because I never know when a fedora-topped stranger will glance my way and say "Here's looking at you, Kid."

A LETTER FROM ASic: INDIA'S GOLDEN TRIANGLE By Sophie Ibbotson



Namaste!

I'm living a fairytale in India. I followed an elephant down the road, and stopped to chat with his mahout. In a palace I was greeted by a genuine princess, and we drank tea on the terrace while peacocks strutted by. Priests garlanded with marigolds set tea lights adrift on the lake after dark, and on the surface of the water their dancing mirrors the twinkling of stars overhead.

Travelling in India's Golden Triangle, between the historic cities of Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur, assaults and excites every sense simultaneously. It seems as if a paintbox has exploded, spraying its rainbow of pigments everywhere I go. There's the vermillion red of the ladies' sindur, and the terracotta colored henna painting spiders web like patterns on their hands. Climbing the walls is a hot pink bougainvillea, and the girl who just sashayed past me in an electrifying orange shalwar kameez suit. I've bought shawls in every shade of blue, purple, and green, and the mango lassi I'm sipping on as I write is a golden yellow.

The past few days have been a whirl, and I'm grateful for the chance to sit awhile in the calm, quiet garden of Oberoi Amarvilas. I need time to process the magical moment I set eyes on the Taj Mahal — the world's most iconic monument to love — and watched as the early morning rays of light cast a blush rose glow on the marble dome. I posed, of course, like Princess Diana alone on that bench, but for me there was no feeling of melancholy. Rather, there was excitement to explore the Taj Mahal's UNESCO gardens, admire the decorative floral inlay with its precious stones, and to listen as the mullah called the faithful to pray in the mosque. It's a sound which has echoed around these walls five times a day, every day, for the best part of 400 years.



Oberoi Amarvilas feels like a palace: I can easily imagine an Emperor or Maharaja standing and admiring the fountains, looking out from his balcony at the Taj Mahal, or swimming in the idyllic pool. Being able to retreat to a haven such as this is much needed: there's an exhausting noise and chaos to the streets of Agra, which I've fought through on my way to the Agra Fort and the magnificent tomb of Akbar the Great at Sikandra.

There are so many monuments packed into the Golden Triangle that it would take a lifetime to visit and fully appreciate them all. I can therefore only tell you about a few of my favourites, places well worth a few hours of your time as a first time visitor to India, or as someone like myself who for a while made the country my home.

In Delhi, seven cities have been built on the same site, each one more impressive than the last. You can peel back thousands of years of history, making your way back in time as you walk through Lodhi Gardens, visit Humayun's Tomb, or stroll through the bazaars of Chandni Chowk.

In Jaipur, the most splendid sites are the royal palaces and the pink painted Old City, which in 2019 was finally named as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I love the City Palace and the Jantar Mantar astronomical observatory, the imposing Amber Fort, and the white wedding cake temple that is the Birla Mandir. Every other day there seems to be a festival: dancers, musicians, incense, and fireworks stimulate every sense.





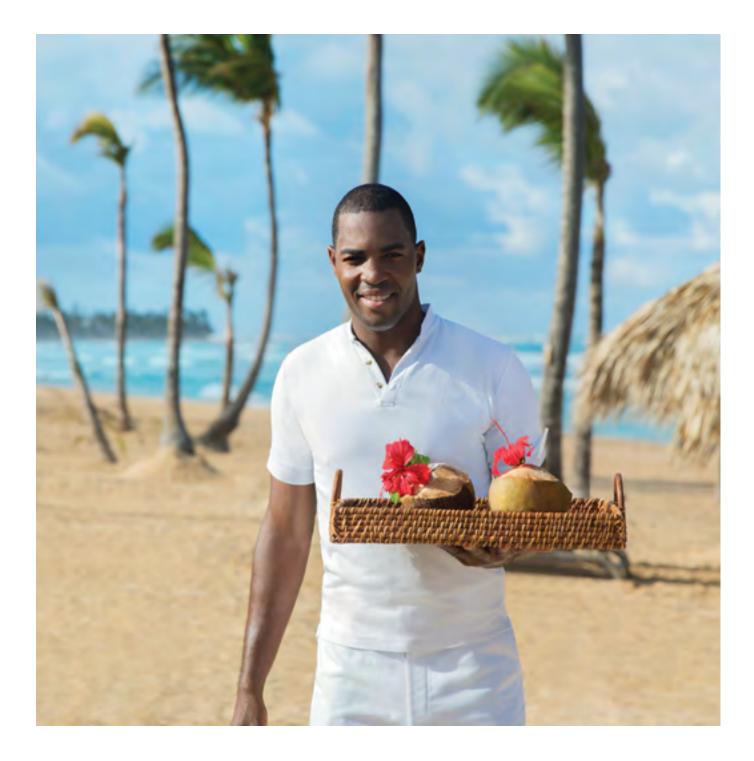
Home from home in Jaipur is the Rambagh Palace, a former royal residence of the Maharaja of Jaipur which has been converted into a five star heritage hotel by the Taj Hotels group. The historic suites are the epitome of opulence with their silk furnishings, fine artworks, and antiques. Having watched a high stakes polo match at the nearby Rajasthan Polo Club, this is where I come to sip a gin and tonic at Steam, the royal train turned bar which is parked permanently in the grounds. Invariably I stay for dinner, either in the Suvarna Mahal (the Rambagh's Renaissance style dining room), or outside, enveloped by the balmy evening air in the manicured gardens. The Dahi ke kebab is marinated in yoghurt flavoured with fragrant saffron and cardamom, and the memory of the Dhundar murgh -- slow cooked chicken with raw mango and mint - will stay a long time on my mind.

I'm waiting for you to join me in the Golden Triangle. When can I expect you to come?

Best wishes,

ophie

www.journeysmiths.co.uk/destination/asia/india/ golden-triangle



A LETTER FROM the Caribbean: PUNTA CANA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

By Peta Phipps





Hi guys,

There's been one resort that I have wanted to check out in Punta Cana, in the Dominican Republic. It's the Excellence Resort Punta Cana. When choosing all inclusive resorts, some things can be quite tricky, so I had to come and experience for myself. Nineteen years of innovative curation have led The Excellence Collection to be a name synonymous with an upscale Caribbean experience, where bespoke service meets extraordinary moments at every single one of its resorts in the Dominican Republic. It was difficult for me to pass up such a glowing invitation.

I hopped on my flight from Miami to Punta Cana, prepared myself to enter an all inclusive world overflowing with vibrant gardens and ocean views, as they put it. This experience promised me seclusion but not isolation. The all-adult, allsuite resort sits on a golden beach amid a glorious palm tree grove. Let me be specific...these are coconut palms. Thankfully there was no shortage of coconuts as I had at least three fresh coconuts before lunch, one coco-loco with lunch, and then at least a dozen more all the way up until midnight. A coco-loco. I was well hydrated on a daily basis. There was a real sense of place at this resort. You know how some all inclusives transport you and you could be anywhere in the world? Well, here I knew I was being taken care of by Dominicans who remembered my name after the very first time seeing me. Here, traditional Caribbean architecture blended with modern interior design alongside luxurious choices like swim-up suites and private plunge pools, while four bright blue pools await you throughout the lush grounds. was drawn to the sand and the sea. I spent days lounging and swimming (and sipping coconut water) while I watched lovers embrace and stroll hand-in-hand.



My appetite was primed way before getting to the island. I heard of the eleven restaurants at the resort. Before leaving home, I sort of saved myself from indulging in calories so I could enjoy all the treats while traveling. The flavorful global cuisine in beautifully styled settings, certainly hit the spot. While indulgence was sort of my theme for this trip, I still took care of myself. Here. I made time to escape into the serene Miilé Spa. I took archery lessons, and I set aside daily time to work out at the state-of-the-art fitness center. I had to look good to have some fun with daytime activities and evening entertainment. The foam party was so much fun, and jumping around under the bubbles to the bumpin' tunes was a workout in itself.

I had such a great time. If your plans include the Dominican Republic, come check this place out. You'll be treated like family from day one!

See you soon,

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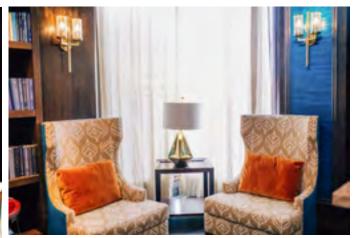


swanky sips: Rham Range

his winter we are warmed by the spirit of rum. The rarely sipped, often mixed, sometimes under-represented fermented sugarcane juice that can leave you with a hankering for more. The good stuff will rarely, if consumed in moderation, leave you with a hangover. However, chances of feeling the down side of the drink increase with the popular mixed cocktails that range from the creamy deliciousness of the Pina Colada to the Daiquiri. These tasty beverages, along with the famed Mojito, the simply delicious Dark 'N Stormy, and the effervescent Cuba Libré, rum has been a staple on cocktail menus for well over a century...assuming cocktail menus weren't part of the parley of pirates. The stuff originates in the West Indies and is first mentioned in records that originated in Barbados, back in the 1600's.







The evolution of rum having once been called Killdevil, upgraded to rumbullion, was elevated to being regularly rationed to British sailors for centuries, all the way up to the late 20th century. Then the difference between rum and rhum delves even deeper into the rich history and distillation, aging, and casking of fermented cane juice and molasses.I'll be far briefer than this distinction deserves: Rhum is a very specific term. The word is an abbreviation of the term rhum agricole, which is a type of rum that can only come from Martinique. In short-- while most rums are distilled from fermented molasses, rhum is made from fresh pressed sugarcane juice. Think of this like the term champagne. Only sparkling wines from the Champagne region of France can actually be called Champagne. I really hope that made sense. Back to the allure of rum/rhum. Even the less romanticised notion of where the word rum comes from are guite intriguing. History has also said that it comes from the Latin word for sugarcane, saccharum officinarum. Wherever it came from, we have found the perfect spot to sample the best of the elixir. On the island of Anguilla there is a special place called the Rhum Room. This space of dark walls, flanked by velvet turquoise curtains and cozy couches to match is a siren song beckoning all those who dream of an elegant evening tucked away from the rest of the world, surrounded by the faint scent of cigar smoke and the service of a barman who knows his way around more than 100 small-batch, single-estate rums.



inking softly into place, you'll be asked what strikes your fancy that evening. What flavors are you drawn to? What sort of wine you typically drink. These questions may seem random or off-key to the setting of what can be easily likened to a very upscale speakeasy with a twist. Within minutes of answering, one can be assured that a fitting rum cocktail or simple sipping rhum will be in your grasp and on its way to your lips. There's no rushing to be done within these walls, only stories to be told, tales of the estate upon which your chosen rhum was casked. There's plenty of room for almost everything on the cocktail menu should your taste buds yearn for features found within its pages. There's an old pirate's chest atop the bar and if you enquire with the barman, he may just be inclined to treat you to what comes from within. Trust that it is a treasure that embodies the age of the chosen rum and adds even more depth once he embarks upon a mission to unleash the chest's smoky side.

With over 100 small-batch and single-estate rums, which can be sampled with an on-site rhummelier to guide you through the ultra-premium Caribbean selections and showcase the unique flavors and profiles. You'll spend hours here and luckily for you, it's located at Zemi Beach House, so there's plenty of room for a sleepover. Find some time to get to this spot and taste Caribbean rums like never before. Explore the history of the region without ever leaving the turquoise seats that adorn this room like the sought after gems of those who roamed the High Seas.



[SR]



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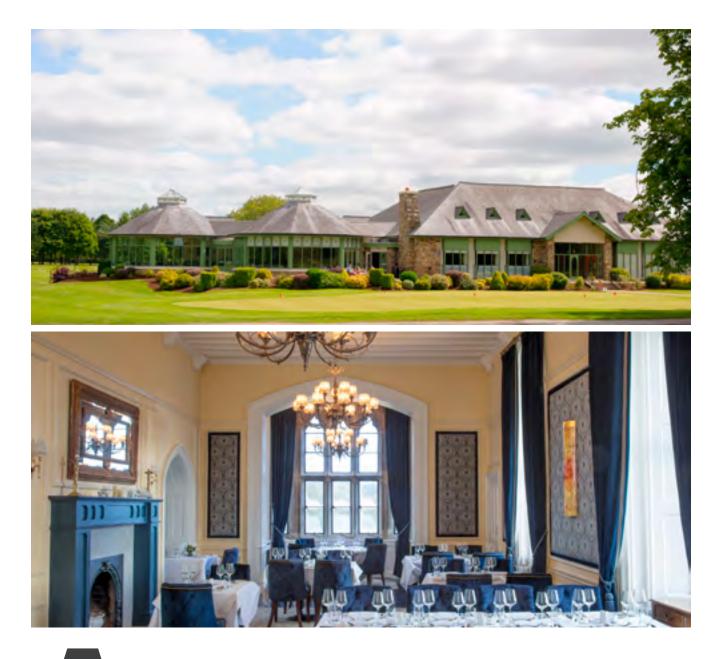
y good friend time, presented a gift, in the form of a one hour drive from downtown Dublin, I'm threading Kilkea Castle's enticing tree-lined canopy, a tunnel of leaves trunks and branches, an entry to a building of wood and stone construction in the

12th Century that culminates today with its magnificent staff. Lee Ann greets me at check in with a brief history of the site, construction began in 1180 when Sir Walter Riddlesford received the castle for distinguished military service in a local military campaign. A few centuries later Jay and Christie Cashman were married in Ireland, fell in love with castles. When this one came on the market, they purchased it and completed a \$40 million 4 1/2 year refurbishment a few months ago. This included adding a brand new spa, where in addition to everything I expected to find in the luxury facilitys, there were six treatment rooms, and executive gym, a hydrotherapy room, and then there's the state of the art thermal suite, beauty lounge and Elmis Biotech treatments.

On my walk to the pro shop I bump into someone who happens to be Kilkea's development manager Reamonn, gives me some of the property's highlights: In the castle itself, one has a choice of either the suite, or one of eleven rooms, dining in the 1180 restaurant, drinks in The Keep bar or relaxation in The Drawing Room lounge. A few yards beyond the castle the next category of Kilkea's accommodation is one of I30 carriage house rooms, each appointed in the 5 star plus category, beyond these options is the choice of 99 Lodge bedrooms, classed as 4 Star deluxe.







fter meandering between spa, luxury accommodation options and 18 hole championship course, I realize it's time for tea where I get my first taste, pun intended, of Executive Head Chef David McKane's stated philosophy to take diners

on a "culinary journey" that blends the area's classic rural Irish roots with modern presentations. I relax in a purple velvet chair, the respite accompanied by soft piano music and the Irish Independent newspaper. Choices choices, choices, will I put raspberry jam, honey or black currant on my scone? What about the ham with Dijon on white bread finger sandwiches? Perhaps house salmon on a brown soda bread or crab as a prelude to chocolate fudge cake, just before the big finish, creme brulee and/or blueberry and almond tart? Well, both time and a hearty appetite are my friends. Because in a few hours it's dinner at the castle's restaurant, 1180, I hope Cathriona is still on the dinner waitress shift, because my reservation at an alcove table in a hunk of 5 foot thick castle wall calls for another evening with the tasting menu, while it changes almost nightly, tonight I've decided to indulge in tuna, wood pigeon, seabass, venison, spiced pineapple, and peanut parfait ... or have I? Maybe I'll choose a la carte seabass or Dexter Beef in truffle jus with pomme puree? Have I mentioned time is one of my very good friends?

[SR]

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CATCHING UP IN Old Montreal

Story By Gina Hines



In the Autumn issue, I wrote "A Letter from North America Montreal, Canada"

It alluded to a feature further in the magazine, then the hurricane hit the Bahamas and we retooled much of the magazine to dedicate pages to our friends in the islands. I inadvertently left the mention of the larger piece in the letter from. You can read it below and then I'll catch you at the end of the letter with the rest of the story. Here's the letter. I hope you enjoy it (again):

Bonjour...

Everything is turning and changing in this city. I'm not saying that because it's autumn and the weather is no longer warm and the leaves are no longer a vibrant green. I am saying this because Montreal has so many revitalization projects under way that the city is visibly changing before our eyes. These changes are for the better and are we happy that we got to spend a few days exploring Old Montreal.

This part of the city dates back to the 17th century and its cobblestone streets are intrinsic reminders of its age. For those who are not prone to looking down while walking, there are buildings that were once pillars of the community, with their imposing architectural facades, now turned hip café and co-working spaces that go by solo monikers like, Crew. This city is swanky, sexy, hip and cool. We have barely had reason to leave Old Montreal (Vieux Montreal) which is aptly known (in French and In English) as the historic center of the city of Montreal. The antiquity only endears the city more to one's heart. Be not fooled by the terms old or vieux. There is such vibrancy here! We ate at Ikanos on night one where we were invited to discover Mediterranean cuisine, so fresh we felt like we were in Greece, with a distinct twist only found in Montreal. Staff are so ready to share their passion about every aspect of the restaurant. From the Josper Oven grill seafood that unmistakably carries the flavor of the embers from the kitchen to the palate. We spent a wonderful evening in this cozy restaurant atop a short flight of stairs inside, yet another, historic building on McGill street.

Tomorrow Will be an afternoon exploring even more of Montreal and ending the evening at Aura, in the Notre-Dame Basilica. That's a light extravaganza that is set to music that is said to reveal the riches of the Basilica. We can hardly wait. Take a look at the features of Montreal, also in this issue, and go a little deeper into our views of the city.

A bientot,





Whetting your appetite over at Ikanos Mediterranean restaurant and leaving you wanting more, was unavoidable, but we are here to make it up to you.

Ikanos means from the sea and this restaurant doesn't joke! They actually have a special license to import fresh fish from the Mediternanean. As you know, we love the yummy ambiance and the service is so personal, we can barely leave. They had us eating oysters fresh from the islands surrounding Prince Edward Island. So good!

They lure you in (pun intended) with their wall of fishing bait. Hard **Baits**. Crankbaits. Topwater **Baits**. Stick **Baits**. Lipless **Baits**. Blade **Baits**. Spinnerbaits. Hard **Baits** Kits. InLine Spinners. Hard Swimbaits. Buzzbaits. Rigged Plastic Swimbaits....I took it! I took all the bait and spent a gastronomically memorable evening at this restaurant.

Everything there is meant to share, so come with someone who has good taste*.

Pascal was my waiter and he was the very best. The bread is homemade at the restaurant and the olive oil, for dipping is...wait for it—Greek!

I started with the oysters and then went to snow crab with asparagus salad and ink tiles....squid ink and water olive oil and flour to make that Fan Coral side piece. Decadent visually and gastronomically

Somehow we got to chatting about bike paths. There are over 500 km of bike paths on the island of Montreal. After this meal, I may need to do a few laps.



Foxy

Foxy for dinner is in a neighborhood setting and A very local upbeat vibe. Signature cocktail made with burnt orange juice and burnt orange garnish.

The music, while I was there was very much an exotic beat. I can't be sure but felt like a mix between African and Brazilian, all I know is that it made me sway in my seat, or maybe it was the delicious cocktail. Our initial order hit the spot, but then again, so did everything else on the menu...believe me, I tried to eat every word.

Take your time here and wait for it...the music gets turned up when the lights go down and it's a whole lot of R&B. You're going to want to enjoy this transition from dusk to dark.

It is advisable to stop in for a warm beverage at Crew Collective & Cafe on your way to brunch. This former bank has all the guts of its former life and the glory that only polished brass can bring to a space. Order your mocha at one of the old teller stalls and then wend your way through the space to a table that used to house deposit slips and transaction material. There is something very charming about this grand space turned intimate collective. Still walking around the city because all we seem to be doing is eating and drinking. Next stop – Le Cartet. The hip and welcoming wait staff make this busting space feel like a cozy neighborhood hangout. The eclectic style of everyone working there becomes art to punctuate the industrial design of the interior. Everyone had a different yet very cool style. When everyone in staff is dressed in black, hair and other accents make your personality pop and this place is full of personality.

Brunch lasted a little longer than anticipated. There's very little fanfare but loads of people watching and tons of good food with service to match.

The industrial flare of the structure that contains all the fun and great food of Le Cartet gives it such an edge. Brick walls painted white and a massive metal door that appears to slide along a track and cover shelves of wine. Although I never saw it side, I did partake in moving the wine. Easy to do when surrounded by effervescent company. I will probably pop back in for lunch on a weekday as there's a realness to this restaurant. This is a place where I feel there is very little pretense and an awful lot of repetition, as in customers coming back time and time again.



Sip on a cocktail or take your time mulling over a few selections in the menu. The energy here keeps you inspired, either way. Old Montréal has stolen my heart. After brunch, being so close to the river, there's a chance to go and unwind at the spa. Not certain we'll make it to the hydrotherapy treatments as all we can think about is a stroll back to gorgeous Hotel Gault. This neighborhood packs a punch when it comes to action, experiences, proximity, lifestyle and history.

For now, we call it a day because across town at Le Filet, there's a dinner spot to hit. As we enter, we are immediately struck by the decor. Loving the dark walls and terrazzo floor. This place is hip and cool but then again, what about Montreal isn't? We ask in all sincerity. The crisp white linen adds the pop of drama as the light hits our table. My soft pink drink, perfect for the unusually warm day,heightens the experience. Piscine is its name. Its ingredients are rose bubbly Cerdon, Campari and vodka then finished with an orange zest. It's not blue like a piscine (pool) but would be fabulous while lounging beside one.

The three pieces of art on the walls also intimate water and aquatic life. This is all the art of dining. Open kitchen and counter seating surrounding the bar, make me feel at one with my environment. Design is minimal but exceptional. The light fixtures resemble black caviar (fish roe) bursting to life with pops of light. The seafood is everything. Don't let the name fool you. I was thinking about red meat when I heard Le Filet. However, the owner is a huge tennis fan and it means net, as in one found on a tennis court

Chef Yassu runs a tight ship here. I also have it under good advice that the owner is opening a hotel out West, expanding his portfolio of his existing three restaurants which have amazing following. Here, in this room painted with subliminal pulsating beats that one would struggle to identify, it's the buzz of the room that captivates the attention and the taste of the food that made us want to savor every moment. It is time to get going though and this is where we leave you.

Old Montréal, you are a refreshing city and have won our hearts.

These are a few of the uncharted highlights we experienced and recommend.

Grab lunch lunch at the renowned Relais & Châteaux restaurant Europea by Jérôme Ferrer.

1065, rue de la Montagne Lucien-l'Allier, a melding of theater and haute cuisine

After staging Celine Dion and Cirque du Soleil shows in Las Vegas, world-renowned director René Richard Cyr will surprise you in an immersion that invites you with Chef Jerome Ferrer on a very entertaining culinary journey. 514-398-9229

If all this exploring and discovering is becoming a bit stressful Take in the full benefits of thermal therapy and follow the water circuit's steps of Bota-Bota, spa-sur-l'eau (spa on the water).

Old-Port of Montreal, McGill Entrance (Corner of De la Commune and McGill) Square-Victoria This unique space will have you

refreshed and floating through the city. 514-284-0333

Maybe floating is the perfect word for our next recommendation. Visit the tallest ferris wheel in Canada – Montréal Observation Wheel (La Grande Roue de Montréal)

Old Port of Montreal, Bonsecours Basin Champ-de-Mars 514-325-7888

Take a seat in La Grande Roue de Montréal for an unforgettable experience. A panoramic view 60 meters high, with a breathtaking view of the river, Old Montreal, downtown and the mountains! This experience is unparalleled and needs to be done both day and night. It's that good.

Back on Ground Level, we love **a walk to the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts**

Address: 1380, Sherbrooke Street West. The city is extremely pedestrian friendly and not so large that you can't take a stroll to mostly everything. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (MMFA) is pleased to present the first exhibition on French creator Thierry Mugler. This exhibition reveals the multiple universes of this undeniably artistic figure – visionary couturier, director, photographer and perfumer – in a retrospective of his work, especially his ready-to-wear and haute couture creations.

If you do want to get out of town and head to the outskirts, **Enjoy the outstanding cuisine of Restaurant** Le Filet.

219, Mont-Royal Avenue West Mont-Royal 514-360-6060 In a sparkling universe entirely dedicated, in sense and spirit, to the oceans and their treasures, we invite you to indulge with them in some moments of joy. Exquisite dishes and service is what awaits you.

The very next day, start your morning discovering Marché Jean-Talon (market) and the Little Italy neighborhood

Address: Marché Jean-Talon – 7070, Henri-Julien Avenue

Marché Jean-Talon

The multicultural flavours and sights of the Jean-Talon Market have been attracting crowds to Little Italy since 1933. One of North America's largest openair public markets, its lively atmosphere, authentic character and wide selection of fresh, local produce and specialities from here and abroad always make for a pleasant – and appetizing – outing.

True to its culture and spirit, the Jean-Talon Market showcases local and ethnic eats and a diverse array of merchants. Fruit, vegetable and flower stalls line the walkways alongside a tasty array of specialty shops that feature spices, oils, cheeses, meats, pastries and other exquisite Québec products. Butchers and fishmongers enthusiastically hawk their wares, always ready to share a recipe or recommend something new.

Little Italy

Ristorantes, pasticcerias (mmm cannolis) and caffes – Piccola Italia remains filled with Italian flavour. Block at least a day (or three meals) to explore this foodie's paradise named Little Italy after a great wave of Italian immigration in the early 20th century. With the renowned Jean-Talon Market at its side, Located at the corner of Laurier and Durocher streets in Outremont, the Leméac has become one of the pillars of the Montreal gourmet scene. Since 2001, you can enjoy at Leméac a taste of classic French cuisine. The bistrot specializes in traditional fare like steak frites, short rib, home-style blood pudding and cabillaud. The menu also offers an elaborate wine list, a selection of Quebec cheeses and a variety of homemade desserts.

Enjoy a classic Montreal brunch at the iconic Restaurant Leméac 1045, Laurier Avenue West Laurier

514-270-0999

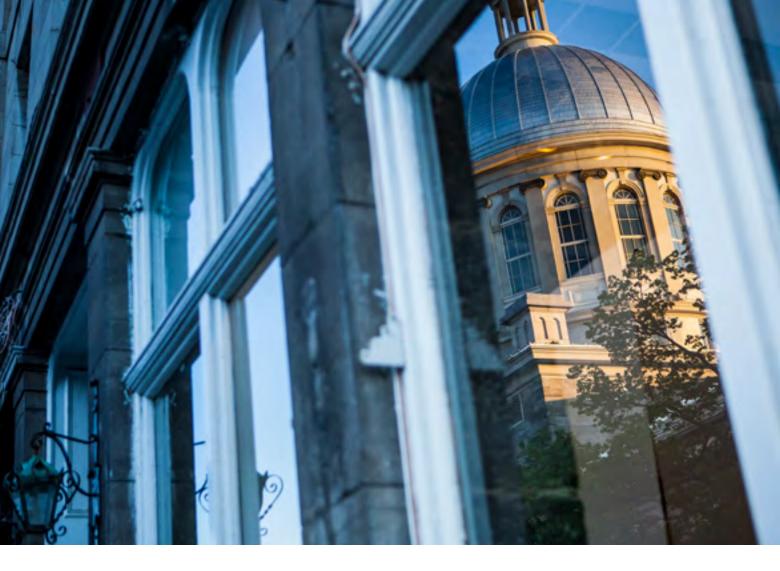












For Adults only:

Speakeasy recos

Coldroom

Saint-Vincent Street Place-d'Armes 514-294-6911 No address. Simply follow the duck corner of St-Amable and Saint-Vincent Street.

Nhâu Bar

600, William Street Square-Victoria 514-379-4111 Hidden inside the beautiful Vietnamese restaurant Hà.

Boho

436, Saint-François-Xavier Street Place-d'Armes 514-285-4037 Not your usual poké bar, look for the right door.

Clandestino

436, Saint-François-Xavier Street Place-d'Armes 514-285-4037 There is Boho, and then, there is Clandestino...

We know you will enjoy our take on Montreal... the uncharted way.

*Pro tip

(SR)



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-Somm Journal, Tasting Panel

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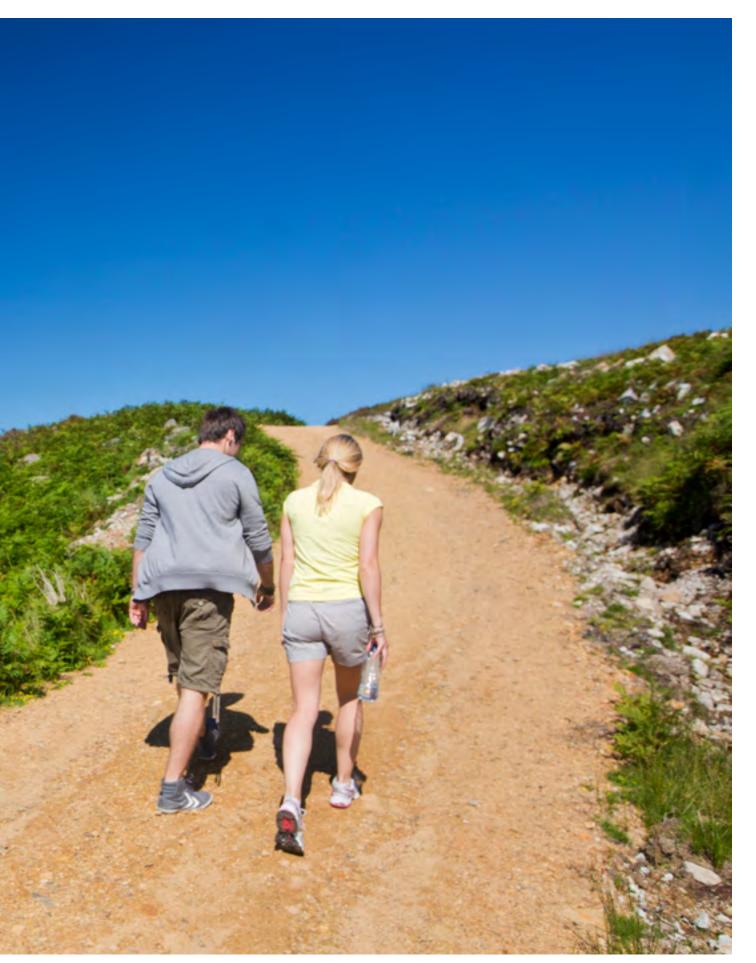
the

Story By Peta Phipps



while walking along Ireland's rugged West Coast. I suddenly feel like waxing poetic. It could be the verdant fields and steep cliffs of this side of the Emerald Isle. There is something very magical about this country and this part of it, in particular. I began my walking tour in the region of Mayo, situated on Ireland's western seaboard, renowned for its remote, wild and spectacular landscapes. Being a bit of an outdoor enthusiast, I thought I would start here. It has the perfect setting for those of us who love being in the great outdoors and nature lovers. There is a vast array of outdoor activities and experiences and on this journey, I wanted to experience Ireland from the outside in. Adventure was on tap for me this go round.









Rather than tackling the cliffs straight away...

I opted to stroll around the town of Westport before Diving in the countryside. The small Georgian town can trace its history back 5,000 years. Its colourful past includes links to an infamous Pirate Queen called Grace O'Malley who used the town as one of her strongholds where she ruled the seas far and wide. The town has all the charm you can imagine; an old clock tower, quaint bridges that span the Carrowbeg River, flanked by tree-lined streets that look straight out of a fairytale. Most of Ireland reminds me of a magical land filled with imaginary beings on the other side of the brow of every hill. Westport just so happened to be my first stop. After strolling through the town, I realized that it was also the starting point for the Great Western Greenway, a cycling and walking trail. I was less ambitious than most, having just arrived from the States, and ventured out a few miles and returned to town rather than taking the journey to Achill Island. I figured I would rest up overnight and then take a drive out to the island and take in the views of some of Europe's highest cliffs as I tried my hand at some stand up paddle boarding. I figured the juxtaposition of me being a dot on the water against the backdrop of such magnificent natural wonders would be nothing short of spectacular and indeed I was correct.



Choices and vantage points abound on this lovely island in the Atlantic. The very next morning, I decided to go on a guided cultural adventure with the Bourke family through this 'Area of Special Scenic Importance' as designated by the EU. We took a stroll through a valley and native woodland and got to enjoy panoramic views of Mweelra Mountain, Wild Atlantic Way islands and views of the entrance to Ireland's only fjord at Killary Harbour. The walk took a little longer than the family usually takes because it had just been lambing season and I could not pass up the opportunity to feed the baby lambs their milk, right from a bottle. They tugged and slurped as I held the sticky milk bottle and there was nowhere else on the planet I would have rather been. The most adorable creatures eating out of my hands as we stop atop an undulating hill with historic potato mounds beneath our feet. There was a lot to this scene, both seen and unseen. As the lambs drained the bottles and I regained my footing to carry on my walk, I got a bit of a history lesson on the famine in Ireland. As Mr. Bourke recounted his family's generations on the land, I could retrace his every step. There were school days, where -as a child, he would cross an expanse of land (some of it was under water at times, depending on the tide) to get over a hill to get to school. There were memories pouring out of him about his grandparents and survival on the land and of these potato beds. Then there was the Fairy Tree, found standing by itself in the center of a field. I had to stop and take it all in. This was the absolute definition of a Fairy tree. These are trees whose presence are supposed to be the sacred ground of the "wee folk" of Ireland. Folklore abounds in Ireland and I am here for every last word of it. Steeped in history, my every step was a walk through the pages of a book that could not merely be read. This has to be experienced.

Wending my way long the Wild Atlantic Way, which is a very well demarcated region along the west coast of the country, I learned about this land in the most authentic and memorable way. On my next stop, I walked on to the Glen Keen Farm where the family-run land yielded an even closer look at this amazing history, after gorgeous homemade scones and jams. The sustenance was just wat was needed before I embarked upon a turf cutting demonstration and sheep dog herding. If you've never cut turf, you have yet to truly unearth some of Ireland's most earthy history. This had to be one of the coolest experiences of my life. Bogs hold so much of this country's ancestral history that cutting bog is an adventure in itself. Sure, it's hard work, but so well worth it. The cut bog is stacked in the fields to dry and is then turned into fuel for the furnaces still used in many homes in these rural parts of the country. Many artifacts have been found buried within the bogs of Ireland. There's bog butter, bog bodies, pottery and other treasures. The bog butter was fascinating to me. These bogs are natural preservation grounds and I can definitely dig that.







Seeing Ireland this way ...

from a walking perspective was extremely grounding. Getting around the Wild Atlantic Way by car, foot, and bike is easy and added so much to my vacation. The Great Western Greenway from Achill island to Mulranny is so accessible and an easy ride, although the route may sound daunting. This cycling/walking route has been developed on an old railway line. The ride was not tiring at all and I finished the day with a walk along the Claggan Mountain boardwalk and coastal trail at Ballycroy National Park - one of Ireland's six national parks. This one is comprised of Atlantic blanket bog surrounded by mountainous terrain - it's a truly unspoilt wilderness overlooked by the Nephin Beg mountain. The hiking and biking did not take my breath away in the same way these vistas did. Dressed appropriately for all four seasons, I never wanted to be inside out of fear I may miss even one of these spectacular views. With only a short time left on this beautiful coast, I kickstarted my day with some more Wild Atlantic Way fresh air at Erris Head and took a 5km guided looped walk of this stunning headland. More unbeatable views and memories.With one last stop in the rugged outdoors I decided to explore the Ceide Fields, an extensive Stone Age monument dating back over 5,000 years.

It was time to reenter the 21st century and the modern niceties of Ireland. I overnighted in Ballina and stayed at the au courant Ice House. This stay was just the one I needed to ease my way back into reality of the modern day. The Wild Atlantic Way is such a refreshing way to see Ireland that I plan to make it an annual trip. I think you should plan to see the Emerald Isle any way you can, but a brisk walk down this coast is highly recommended. Should you fly in to Dublin, follow in my footsteps:

Stop at the Horseshoe Bar, Mullingar Park Hotel for casual lunch en route to Westport. www.mullingarparkhotel.com

Dinner in Westport www.ciansonbridgestreet.com

Hike the Lost Valley **www.thelostvalley.ie**

Glen Keen Farm www.glenkeenfarm.com

Hotel www.mulrannyparkhotel.ie

Great Western Greenway www.greenway.ie

Ballycroy National Park www.ballycroynationalpark.ie Overnight in The Broadhaven Bay Hotel in Belmullet. W: **www.broadhavenbay.com**

Erris Head www.tourismpurewalking.com

Ceide Fields www.heritageireland.ie/en/west/ceidefields

Explore Downpatrick head. W:www.tourismpurewalking.com

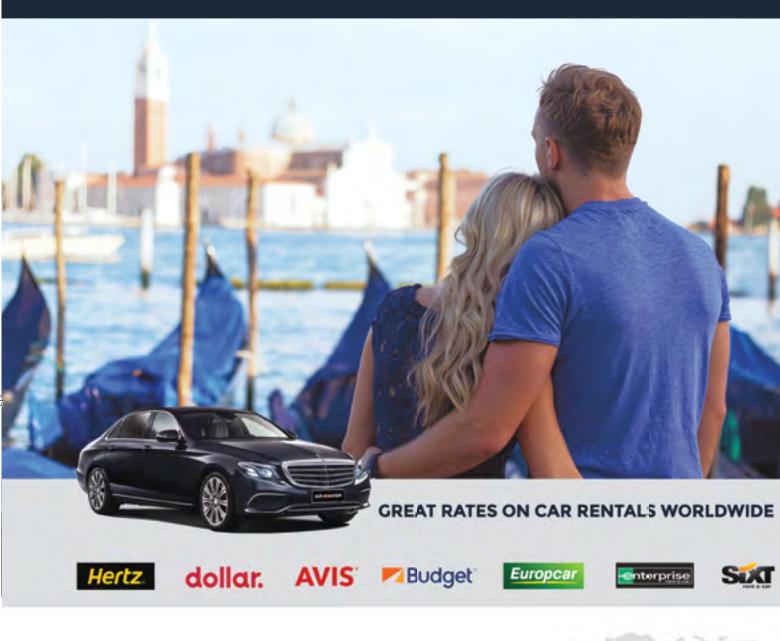
Hotel: www.icehousehotel.ie

Stop for light refreshments at Strokestown House café. W: **www.strokestownpark.ie**

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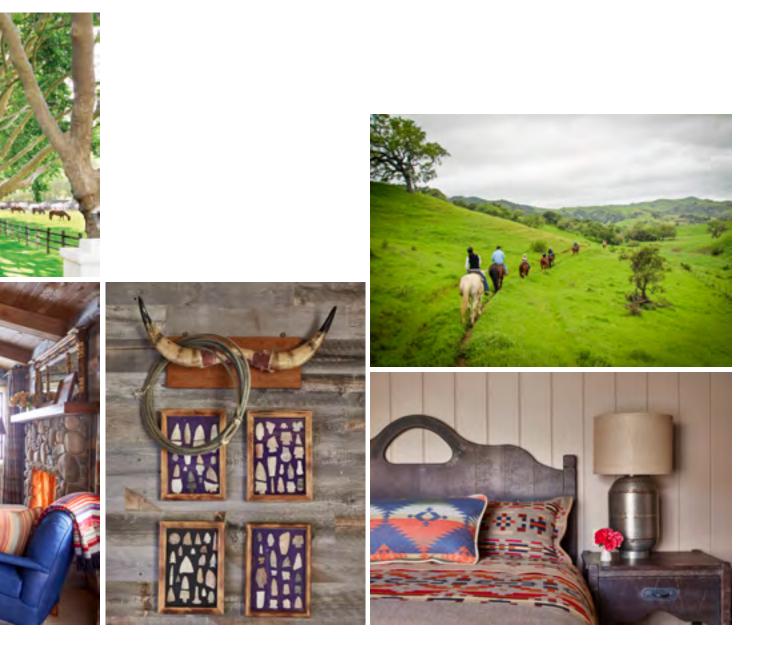




The guest experience at Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort just got a little swankier. Thanks to Nathan Turner. The designer whose style is synonymous with "the easy glam of California living" has designed the interiors of a set of guest cottages at this iconic guest ranch into everything we love about California.

We got on our swanky cowboy and cowgirl (Californiastyle) duds and drove the half hour north of Santa Barbara to spend a few days with the designer and his latest curation. Everything about the weekend was low-key amazing and high-key fabulous. The ranch is always stunning upon entrance at the tree-lined drive welcomes guests, bit Nathan added to the expected splendor. As I made my way across the grass to the twinkling bistro lights hung near a roaring fire pit, the clinking of glasses warmed the crisp California air. As soon as I approached, it was clear that our host for the weekend at the ranch was going to show us a good time. Within seconds of arriving, I had the signature cocktail of the event placed in my hands. Nathan's Pomegranate Champagne Cocktail went down so easily, the second one was in hand in short order.

Cheers turned into cheers as we drifted from the ranch's patio setting to a private dining room where a bountiful table of locally-sourced roses that looked like peonies overflowed their vases to touch deer antlers and persimmons. The care that Natah took to intertwine the rustic with the softness of this land was as obvious as the meal was delicious.Course after course, we dined and sipped wines as though turning the pages of his "I Love California" book that is the grail of designing and entertaining the West Coast way. Which just so happens to be my favorite way. The come as you are attitude coupled with an air of sophistication



and joy is one of the ways I describe the feelings evoked by Nathan's style. He's a son of the soil not far from this ranch so his ability to transform what is first nature to him into an experience that highlights the very best of the land and its surroundings to others is second nature and second to none.

The pleasure of staying at this secluded jewel tucked into California's famed Santa Ynez Valley and explore some of its 10,000-acres, as it effortlessly melds the spirit of the Old West with the seductive charms of today's most relaxing resorts, while being hosted by Nathan was a treat. He shared with us tips and tricks on decorating a table and hosting friends. Then he gave us the first look at his newly designed cottages at Alisal. Here again, he outdid himself. Effortlessly maneuvering between the great outdoors that were just a step away and the cozy warmth of a fire-warmed cabin experience replete with up-to-date wood paneled walls. I was obsessed and wanted to stay in the cottage but there were hayrides to margaritas and horseback rides to breakfast to be taken. We have been to Alisal before, but experiencing it through the gracious lens of a shared experience gave this classic California getaway a new level of enjoyment. We love Nathan's book as a perfect reminder of how to enjoy life, even when not at Alisal.



The ranch has a full calendar of events for the year ahead and we may just pop back up for their Unbridled Retreat which is being held for the first time on May 3-6, 2020. It is slated to be an intimate 4-day, 3-night itinerary full of hands-on interactions with horses, facilitated by globally recognized Equine Gestalt Coach, Devon Combs, Founder of Unbridled Retreats. Guests will experience Alisal's luxury accommodations with scheduled daily activities designed to help them find the clarity, confidence and courage to move from the path they "should" be on, to the one their hearts crave, all while meeting a supportive group of like-minded women. Combs has a unique synergy with horses and her expert intuitive coaching provides profound breakthroughs to women who seek to unlock their unlimited potential.

"I'm excited to offer the Unbridled Retreat in the Santa Ynez Valley. Alisal is the perfect setting for the

Unbridled Retreat - an idyllic place to unplug, reconnect, and gain clarity. The magic of this 10,500-acre ranch and the healing power of horses will provide profound breakthroughs for women seeking positive change." says Combs.

After checking-in to a luxe ranch suite where a welcome gift awaits, the retreat officially begins with an opening ceremony and the first look at what is sure to be a life-changing experience. Over the course of four days, Devon will guide participants through two personalized equine gestalt coaching sessions.

No visit to Alisal is complete without sampling the local cuisine. Daily breakfast, lunch, and dinner is included in the retreat with food that captures the essence of California cooking paired with the depth of flavor and heartiness of Western ranch cooking. Guests will also participate in one of Alisal's Signature Breakfast Rides



to the historic AlisalAdobe on horseback or by hay wagon. Guests can also partake in complimentary wine tastings at a host of nearby Santa Ynez Valley wineries. The retreat closes with another ceremony to reflect on the learnings, leaving guests with a renewed focus.

Space is limited to 12 guests and no horse experience is necessary to attend.

The Unbridled Retreat includes accommodation in one of Alisal's suites featuring a king bed, spacious living area, and wood-burning fireplace complete with authentic Western décor, exquisite linens, coffee makers, and refrigerators. Meals, all activities and welcome amenity also included. Guests can book their Unbridled Retreat experience online or by calling (800) 425-4725.

Check the website to see when Nathan may be hosting another event at Alisal. You'll want to book that!

www.alisal.com

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