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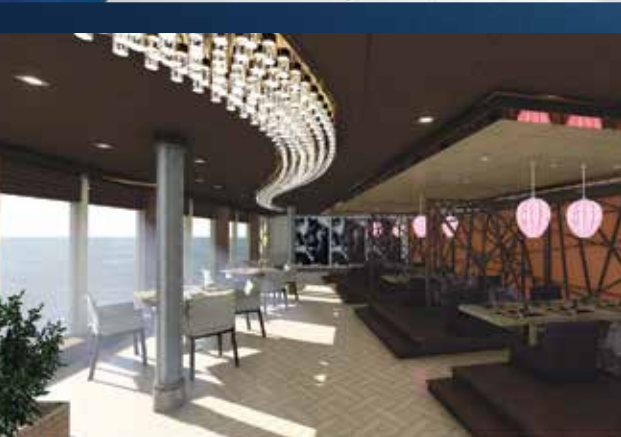
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Variety is the spice of life



TIM BOYLES PHOTOGRAPHY

Vanessa Lee

WITH BOTH FOOD-ORIENTED AND EXOTIC ARTICLES in this issue, this well-known saying seems to be a suitable heading for my letter. Indeed, I believe travel is the very spice of life and gives it a rich and necessary flavor. Spicing up your life by exploring enticing new places makes everything more enjoyable and certainly for me, provides a certain zest and excitement to everyday life.

I adore the anticipation of travel just as much as I enjoy the actual experience. For me it's like spending a day in the kitchen cooking up some of my special recipes. It's satisfying, enjoyable and provides a tasty outcome which can be shared. I also like to think of travel as a bountiful feast laid out before us. It's up to each one of us how much we care to taste, how long we linger at the table and of course, how frequently we might sit and break bread, both literally and figuratively speaking. Travel might be described as a smorgasbord, a buffet, a tasty and delicious repast – and such is this world of ours just waiting to be enjoyed bite by tantalizing bite.

Having an appetite for life and also for travel, blended with a dash of enthusiasm and an understanding of all that is upon that laden table can ensure a palatable and delectable experience. As we journey the globe, seeking ever more enriching adventures, we can oftentimes literally relish morsels of the most wonderful moments. There are times they may be sipped and savored; indelible memories of far-flung places are imprinted on our consciousness, oceans and seas are waiting to be explored, vistas and sights are there to be marveled at and a wide swath of the world waits for us to uncover it.

Some of what we will see, as we venture forth on our varied journeys and voyages, will provide a veritable explosion of the senses and a tantalizing multi-course meal for the soul. The more we travel, the more we will learn, and the more we will understand. We are then able to recognize that “the spice of life” can be quite different from the tastes and sounds we are used to. And that is a good thing.

So, please enjoy this issue with its focus on the exotic, the delicious and the remarkable. Read about beautiful destinations and ships of all kinds. Relish a variety of flavors, colors, and awaken both your taste buds and your desire for enrichment, immersion and fulfilling encounters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vanessa Lee', with a long, sweeping horizontal line underneath it.

PS – Our newly redesigned website launches in concert with this issue – please bookmark www.cruiseandtravellifestyles.com to keep up with the latest in travel and cruise news, follow us on Facebook or find me at twitter [@vanessaleesails](https://twitter.com/vanessaleesails). And I hope you will also enjoy some of the videos we showcase – all about new ships, favorite ships of all kinds and my thoughts on what's exciting, worth exploring and where you might want to go next.



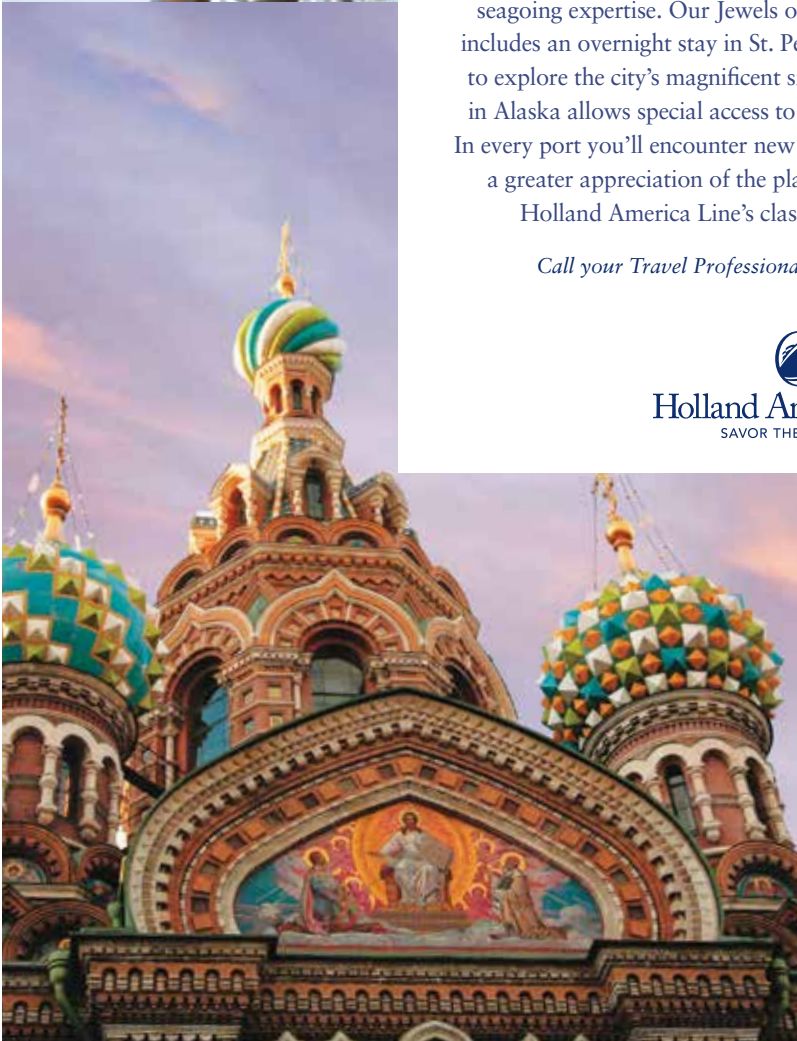
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In Dubai's Spice Souk, saffron is the king. The most expensive spice on earth is worth every penny for the distinct taste these delicate strands bring to savory and sweet dishes.



Sailing into the icy mouth of Frobisher Bay and looking ahead to the next adventure.

EVEN AS THE WAVE OF familiarity hit me, I knew I'd never actually been there. The tiny, over-crowded stall in the Marrakesh souk was as far from my small-town eastern Ontario roots as it was possible to be... but the feeling that I'd been there before was overwhelming. I felt certain that I'd watched the gnarled brown hands of the old couple serving me grasp their wooden spoons and ladle pungent powders into small bags. I'd smelled the heady mix of cinnamon, turmeric, cumin and saffron before – but when?

Travel déjà vu isn't rare – every adventurer feels it from time to time. An inexplicable sense of having walked a certain path, seen a particular face or heard echoes of a familiar-and-yet-not familiar tune can overtake us in a moment, making us feel curiously at home when we're anywhere but.

Days or weeks later, when you've unpacked and you're settling back into a routine, your mind and memory play another set of tricks. A whiff of coconut sends you reeling back to the beach, and the ring of church bells makes you expect to see well-worn European cobblestones under your feet. It's the power of transformative travel – a life-changing experience that enriches your life far more than any bank account ever will.

Transformative travel experiences occur when you're whisked from your comfort zone and taken to places where you can't logically expect to find any connection to your own life – but do. It requires some confidence and a touch of courage to explore challenging places, but what you'll learn there – not only about other ways of life, but fascinatingly, about hidden aspects of yourself – will make it all priceless.

Fortunately, you don't have to load up your backpack and hike out into the wilds alone in order to experience transformative travel. Creative cruise lines, tour companies and clever travel advisors are now offering opportunities that give guests hands-on experiences, introducing them not simply to tour officials, but rather to working artisans, farmers and more – to those who actually live in the exotic destinations visited. Those introductions to the people, the food, the art, the music...the entirety and immediacy of another cultural reality...are what will spur those moments of déjà vu, awaken new understanding, and fuel years of memorable travel stories.

One hot afternoon, you'll escape the Grecian sunshine to stand in a weaver's tiny workshop on the island of Mykonos. You'll watch as she tosses the shuttle back and forth and suddenly you'll know exactly what those fibers she's working with feel like, and will be able to picture the fully finished pattern, though it's only just beginning to appear. Perhaps you'll buy a scarf she's made and each time you wear it, you'll hear her soft voice, speaking a language that's not your own but that you understand perfectly well all the same. That scarf will become a treasure and perhaps a symbol for you – a way to wrap yourself – both figuratively and literally – in those transformative travel memories.

All the best,

Liz Fleming
Editor-in-Chief

CRUISE & TRAVEL LIFESTYLES

VOL. 15 NO. 3 FALL / WINTER 2017

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PUBLISHED BY

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PRINTED BY: **The Lowe-Martin Group**

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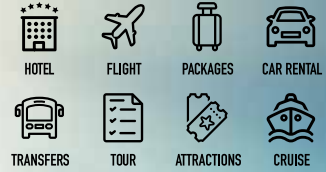
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On the cover: Romantic beach dinner at Azura Quilalea Private Island in Mozambique.

PHOTO COURTESY AZURA QUILALEA



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AMAWATERWAYS

www.amawaterways.ca

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SEE PAGE 1

AVALON WATERWAYS, PART OF THE GLOBUS FAMILY OF BRANDS

www.avalonwaterways.ca

www.globusjourneys.ca

Part of the Globus Family of Brands, Avalon Waterways offers river cruising on some of the newest ships to Europe, Asia or South America. Offering inclusions such as regional wines and beer at dinner, Avalon FreshSM – offering healthy cuisine options at every meal, complimentary Wi-Fi, shore excursions led by Certified Local Guides, complimentary bicycles, Unique Local FavoritesSM and more! Avalon has one-of-a-kind Panorama SuitesSM – with innovative Open-Air BalconiesSM and beds facing the views on Suite ships with two full decks of 200- and 300-square-foot suites. After unveiling two, 36-guest Suite ShipsSM on the Irrawaddy and Mekong Rivers in two years, Avalon will expand in the Far East with another Suite Ship on the Mekong River – the Avalon Saigon, launching in late 2018.

SEE PAGE 4

CELESTYAL CRUISES

www.celestialcruises.com

Celestial Cruises is the only home-porting cruise company in Greece and a preeminent cruise line serving Greek destinations as well as the island of Cuba. Sailing three mid-sized ships with a focus on cultural immersion, it offers an authentic and enriching experience for all guests. In 2017 the cruise line launched the Celestial Inclusive Experience in Aegean waters which offers a welcome and inclusive program of select shore excursions in all ports and an unlimited consumption drinks package with premium brands. Year-round all-inclusive Cuba cruises visiting three Cuban ports include an overnight in Havana as well as a stop in Montego Bay.

SEE INSIDE BACK COVER

EMERALD WATERWAYS

www.emeraldwaterways.ca

Launched in 2014, one of Europe's newest river cruise lines caters to the four-star-plus market with its state-of-the-art ships, top quality service and an array of inclusions such as all gratuities; transfers; all meals; complimentary beverages; exceptional on-board amenities; and extra special included excursions with EmeraldPlus and EmeraldActive. The line's Star-Ships feature deluxe suites and staterooms as well as new features, such as a sun deck swimming pool with a fully retractable roof, full-size cinema, gym, hair dressing salon and massage room. This year, three ships have launched: the Emerald Liberté sailing France's Rhône and Saône rivers, the Emerald Radiance on Portugal's Douro River and Emerald Destiny sailing the Danube, Rhine and Main river cruises. Emerald Waterways also offers itineraries in Myanmar, Vietnam and Cambodia.

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ENCORE CRUISES

www.encorecruisesescapes.com

A cruise wholesaler with over 25 years of history in the Canadian marketplace, Encore enjoys close partnerships with many of the major cruise lines. Offering true cruise packages, complete with protected air and any pre- or post-cruise land stays, they also feature Encore Prestige, a high-end luxury division that offers dedicated, white-glove service. Cruise expertise, remarkable value, quality and reliability have long been Encore's hallmarks and as such, their focus is on ensuring complete cruise vacation satisfac-

tion. Whether you are an experienced cruiser or a newcomer, want an ocean cruise or a river cruise, Encore prides itself on offering something for every style, taste and budget.

SEE PAGE 7

EXCLUSIVE TOURS

www.exclusivetours.ca

Proudly Canadian, Exclusive Tours specializes in unique, best in class, small ship cruising, offering a variety of cruise itineraries, departures and destinations around the world from the seven cruise companies they represent. Choose from river, barging, expedition, yachting, luxury, world and learning cruises. An expansive selection of hotels is also available for pre-and post cruise as well as options including air, airport transfers, shore excursions and car rentals.

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HOLLAND AMERICA LINE

www.hollandamerica.com

For more than 140 years, Holland America Line has been a recognized leader in cruising. Providing award-winning service, elegant dining, extensive activities and enrichment programs and compelling world-wide itineraries. Holland America's 14 ships offer more than 500 cruises to more than 400 ports in 98 countries. From short getaways to 113-day itineraries, the ships visit all seven continents with highlights including Antarctic explorations, South America circumnavigations and exotic Australia/New Zealand and Asia voyages; four annual Grand Voyages; sailings to the Caribbean, Cuba, Alaska, Mexico, Canada/New England, Bermuda, Europe and the Panama Canal. The line welcomed ms Koningsdam in 2016 with a second Pinnacle Class ship, ms Nieuw Statendam, arriving in December 2018.

SEE PAGE 3

MSC CRUISES

www.msccruisesusa.com

MSC Cruises is the world's fastest growing cruise line with a dazzling array of ships sailing in European waters as well as home-porting from Miami. The brand new MSC Seaside – a new class of ship – will debut in December 2017 offering year-round Caribbean cruises. A sister ship, the Seaview arrives in Spring 2018 and will sail in Europe. The Seaside is aptly named as she has a 360 degree promenade offering scenic views and a wide range of dining and entertainment options for her guests. Many restaurant choices will be found on Seaside including a pan-Asian venue from famous chef Roy Yamaguchi. Another ship the MSC Meraviglia was launched in May in the Med and features an exclusive Cirque du Soleil at Sea, expressly designed for MSC whose entertainment consistently wins awards.

SEE INSIDE FRONT COVER

PONANT CULTURAL CRUISES & EXPEDITIONS

us.ponant.com

As the only French-flagged cruise line for over 25 years, PONANT has specialized in all-inclusive 5-star luxury cruises and polar expeditions offering a variety of voyages with over 200 departures to 81 countries and all 7 continents. Carrying less than 264 guests, Ponant's five-ships maintain the intimate ambiance of a private yacht while enjoying French-inspired cuisine, chic accommodations (many with private balconies) and world-class service. The size of the ships allows guests to visit ports that are inaccessible to larger ships. Four new ships are being added to the fleet with the first two arriving in 2018. These intimate ships feature 92 staterooms for 184 guests. With the world's first underwater, multi-sensory lounge offering a unique perspective on the marine world, the ships will be equipped with state-of-the-art environmental preservation technology, beice-class ranked and offer the elegance for which PONANT is known.

SEE PAGE 16

REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES

www.rssc.com

Celebrating its 25th Anniversary, Regent Seven Seas Cruises is the world's most inclusive luxury experience with a four-ship fleet that visits more than 425 global destinations. Regent Seven Seas Cruises is undergoing a \$125 million fleet-wide refurbishment that will elevate the level of elegance found throughout the fleet to the standard set by the new and luxurious Seven Seas Explorer. A leader in luxury, fares include all-suite accommodations, round-trip air, highly personalized service, exquisite cuisine, fine wines and spirits, unlimited internet access, sightseeing excursions in every port, gratuities, ground transfers and a pre-cruise hotel package for guests staying in concierge-level suites and higher.

SEE PAGE 19

SEABOURN

www.seabourn.com

As the newest ultra-luxury fleet in the industry, carrying between 400 and 600 guests, Seabourn's intimate ships offer elements that set the line apart: spacious, thoughtfully appointed suites, most with verandas and all ocean view; superb dining in a choice of venues including The Grill by Thomas Keller; differentiated evening experiences in partnership with Sir Tim Rice; Spa & Wellness with Dr. Andrew Weil; open bars throughout the ship; fine wines poured at lunch and dinner; award-winning service and a relaxed, sociable atmosphere that makes guests feel right at home. The ships travel to many of the world's most desirable destinations, including mar-quee cities and UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

SEE PAGE 21

SILVERSEA CRUISES

www.silversea.com

An innovator in the ultra-luxury cruise line industry, Silversea Cruises offers guests large-ship amenities aboard its intimate, all-suite vessels: Silver Wind, Silver Shadow, Silver Whisper, Silver Spirit – and the new Silver Muse – all offering an atmosphere of conviviality and casual elegance. With the inclusion of the expedition ships Silver Explorer, Silver Galapagos, Silver Discoverer, and Silver Cloud joining the Expedition fleet in late 2017, itineraries encompass all continents and feature cruises to the Mediterranean, Caribbean, both Polar Regions and 1000 fascinating destinations in between. Currently undergoing the biggest fleet-wide refurbishment in its history, worth US \$170 million, Silversea maintains high levels of excellence and commitment to exceptional standards of comfort and elegance.

SEE BACK COVER

STAR CLIPPERS

www.starclippers.com

Offering unique sailing adventures, Star Clippers are the world's tallest and largest clipper ships with an authentic yet thoroughly modern tall ship sailing experience. The three ships provide 7 to 26 plus day cruises to a variety of destinations in the Caribbean, including Cuba, Panama Canal, the Med, southeast Asia plus transatlantic crossings. Hosting 170 to 227 guests, they offer the ultimate in a sea-going experience, balancing the grandeur, adventure and tradition of sailing with the superb service, amenities and accommodations of the finest modern yacht. There are no schedules and guests are free to do as they wish, day or night. Debuting in 2018, the Flying Clipper will join the fleet, as the biggest and most ambitious of the Clipper fleet to date carrying 300 guests powered by 6,350 sq. meters of sails.

SEE PAGE 25

TAUCK

www.tauck.ca

For more than 92 years, Tauck has been a leader in guided travel. Family-owned and operated, Tauck offers over 100 premium-quality land journeys, small ship cruises, family travel adventures, and active, immersive small-group travel experiences to more than 70 countries and all seven continents. Canadian pricing is now being offered on their 2018 journeys and cruises along with Canadian brochures. Due to demand, Tauck has doubled its family river cruise departures for this year and added new itineraries. Plans for 2018 will see the launch of two all-new cruise itineraries, the debut of two radically redesigned ships, and added enhancements to the shore excursions featured fleet-wide. Celebrating 25 years in 2018, Tauck Small Ship Cruising offers a variety of intimate sailings across the globe providing guests with more access and enrichment onshore.

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UNIWORLD BOUTIQUE RIVER CRUISE COLLECTION

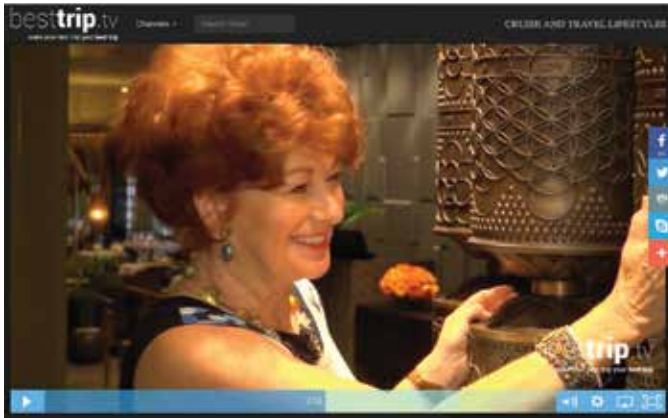
www.uniworldcruises.com

Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection—the world's most luxurious all-inclusive river cruise line™—features ships for an average of 130 guests, exclusive excursions, world-class gourmet cuisine, and the highest staff-to-guest ratio in river cruising. Every ship is a work of art designed to be as unique and inspiring as the destinations it visits. Once aboard, guests notice the thoughtful touches, sublime artistry and quality amenities that set them apart. Uniworld offers truly all-inclusive itineraries in Europe, as well as voyages in Russia, China, Vietnam and Cambodia, India, and Egypt—a total of 23 rivers in 24 countries worldwide. Launching in 2018, U BY UNIWORLD will be Uniworld's first river cruises dedicated to those aged 21 to 45, offering immersive experiences along popular European rivers.

SEE PAGE 10, 11

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We are excited to announce a new partnership with premium travel video provider, BestTrip.TV. Visit our website for links to some really terrific travel videos that showcase the joys of cruising and all kinds of travel destinations. See what we think of some of the world's best cruise lines, get the inside track and view our publisher Vanessa Lee who is also featured in some episodes.



Check out our website over the next few months for a series of cruise and travel videos

Our Publisher Vanessa Lee sails on a number of cruises each year and on some of these voyages, she makes guest appearances on BestTrip.TV videos.

Coming up this year are shoots from Seabourn Cruise Line and the gorgeous *Seabourn Quest* sailing in Canada and New England in October and *Silver Muse*, the flagship of Silversea Cruises in November in South America. Videos from a recent cruise on Regent Seven Seas Cruises' *Regent Explorer*, one of the most luxurious ships in the world can be accessed on our site now at www.cruiseandtravellifestyles.com. Other videos featuring cruises, resorts, destinations and travel tips from BestTrip.TV will also be online during the Fall months.

About BestTripTV

BestTrip.TV videos are created by award-winning Canadian travel television producer Lynn Elmhirst. Escape into cruise and travel dream moments as they come to life on screen.

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* * *

Vanessa Lee, who has cruised on more than 200 ships and over 25 cruise lines, dishes about various ships, cruise lines, the best performers in luxury cruising and also discusses the growth of river cruising.

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> AMERICAN CRUISE LINES

Doubling up on Pacific Northwest

American Cruise Lines' newest ship, the elegant **American Constellation**, will be heading to the West Coast of the U.S. in 2018. The addition of this luxurious and intimate 175-guest ship with its wide selection of bright, inviting public spaces and spacious, well-appointed staterooms, will more than double American Cruise Lines' capacity in the Pacific Northwest and will add 18 cruises to the 2018 season. Not only will the Alaska schedule expand, but **American Spirit** will also be able to sail the popular Puget Sound & San Juan Islands itinerary through July and August of 2018. This will be the first time American has ever offered summer cruises in Puget Sound. The company's new coastal cruise ship, **American Constitution**, will launch in Spring 2018 and be uniquely designed for navigating the East Coast inland waterways. Boasting some of the largest staterooms in the small ship cruising world, ranging from 200-450 sq. ft. she will have an exciting season as well. As guests gaze from their spacious private balconies or perhaps from the expansive upper level sundeck, she'll sail the new American Revolution Cruise itinerary, stopping at some of the most historically significant ports along the Chesapeake Bay, including the last battlefield of the Revolutionary War in Yorktown, the first English settlement in Jamestown and two new ports of call: Washington D.C. and Chestertown, MD.



PHOTO COURTESY PONANT

Ponant has its Blue Eye on four PONANT EXPLORERS

Ponant wowed the cruise world this spring with the reveal of a multi-sensorial underwater lounge called Blue Eye that will create the illusion of a total immersion in the ocean - a cruising first! Now, the company is hard at work, constructing the yachts that will feature it. **Le Lapérouse** has undergone the laying of the first block, and the first sheet of steel has been cut for **Le Champlain**, the initial two in the series of four PONANT EXPLORERS sister ships, to be delivered in summer 2018 and summer 2019. The next two ships, **Le Bougainville** and **Le Dumont d'Urville** will arrive for the Summer 2019 season. This new generation of ships flying the French flag will be certified 1C (Ice class) and will be fitted with the latest technology, meeting the standards of the international Cleanship label thanks to their innovative green technology. At just 131 metres in length, with 92 luxury staterooms, the PONANT EXPLORERS are built to be able to drop anchor in the most inaccessible sites, where other ships cannot. They will start their inaugural season in the Mediterranean and Northern Europe, but their itineraries will also take them to the tropical and sub-tropical regions as well as the Polar regions.

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Prices now in Canadian dollars at tauck.ca. Contact your preferred travel agent.



> RITZ CARLTON

Putting on the Ritz...at sea

The **Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C.**, part of Marriott International, Inc. has announced its entry into the exciting world of luxury yachting and cruises – bringing the award-winning luxury hotel brand's service and timeless style to sea. The first of three cruising yachts in the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection – a 298-guest yacht measuring 190-metres and featuring 149 suites, each with its own private balcony as well as two 452 sq. ft. lavish duplex penthouse suites – is scheduled to set sail at the end of 2019. A restaurant by Sven Elverfeld of Aqua (the three Michelin-starred restaurant at The Ritz-Carlton, Wolfsburg), a signature Ritz-Carlton Spa, and a Panorama Lounge and wine bar are all bound to provide guests with the finest service afloat.

After being lovingly crafted at a Spanish ship yard, the first yacht will be welcomed into service in late 2019 and, with just 298 guests and suites similar in style and design throughout the line, it's expected that the Ritz Yacht Collection will quickly become the 'it' brand for full- and half-ship charters.

What will make these yachts unique? The difference will begin with the renowned Ritz-Carlton service ethic: "Ladies and Gentlemen being served by Ladies and Gentlemen." A curated onboard and shore experience will be shaped to guest preferences and the ship ambience will be wonderfully relaxed yet elegant.

Because exciting culinary adventures are key to the Ritz Carlton experience on land or at sea, dining will be exceptional with a wide choice of options. Guests will enjoy an all-inclusive onboard experience with fine wines, liquors and champagne included, as well as gratuities. If guests wish to purchase even higher premium wines they will be able to do so.

A Ritz-Carlton Spa will provide pampering services and there will be chic bars, lounges, pools and hot-tubs. A marina and generous outdoor spaces will add to the aesthetic. Calls at fascinating, intimate ports around the world will complete the ultra-luxe experience. Several categories of elegant suites – all with balconies, including two fabulous duplex-suites – will meet and exceed every guest's expectations, with lavish yacht-club décor designed by famed Tillberg Design of Sweden.



The Ritz Yacht Collection will place a huge focus on destination enrichment and immersion, providing overnight stays in port, as well as eclectic and delightful shore experiences designed to ensure total guest satisfaction. A number of one-of-a-kind curated destination journeys through collaborations with local chefs, musicians and artists, will also be on offer, allowing guests to experience the locations in unique and experiential ways, both onboard and ashore.

Reservations will open in May 2018 with the ships of the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection also available for private charter.



PHOTO COURTESY SEABOURN



PHOTO COURTESY SILVERSEA

Stunning photography by Steve McCurry



PHOTO COURTESY UNIWORLD

Petra Nemcova, Guardian Angel

> SEABOURN

“Extended Explorations” sailing will showcase the world

The new “Extended Explorations” announced recently for **Seabourn Sojourn’s** fall 2018 and winter/spring 2019 season are designed for intrepid travelers who prefer longer cruises and more exotic destinations and include a selection of unique itineraries ranging from 12 to 128 days in length in exotic locales such as the South Pacific, Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand, as well as Africa and Southeast Asia. *Seabourn Sojourn* will visit more than 30 new and notable ports during these voyages and will offer guests a variety of ways to discover the new destinations by allowing an in-depth experience in a specific region or an effortless move from one region to another. Adding a week, month, or an entire season can offer such experiences as overnight stays in major ports with accommodations on board and ashore. “Each Seabourn itinerary is designed to provide a world-class luxury experience and some travelers prefer a longer, relaxed cruising schedule to explore some very interesting parts of the world in-depth,” noted Chris Austin, senior vice president of global marketing and sales for Seabourn.

> SILVERSEA

Photographer Steve McCurry celebrates spirit of exploration

Silversea Cruises and renowned photographer Steve McCurry recently announced a global creative partnership that will chronicle **Silversea’s** extensive fleet and portfolio expansion, taking guests to some of the world’s most remote, intriguing destinations. McCurry, best known for his haunting portrait of a green-eyed Afghan refugee girl in *National Geographic*, has traveled the world for four decades capturing vibrant cultures and the human experience. His images have appeared on international magazine and book covers, in major gallery and museum exhibitions, and in permanent and private collections worldwide. “Silversea has launched the most ambitious fleet and product expansion in its history, with the goal of unlocking new territories for guests and going deeper,” Barbara Muckermann, Chief Marketing Officer at Silversea Cruises, says. “Steve McCurry’s artistry and storytelling align perfectly with Silversea’s immersive experiences, intimate vessels and unforgettable destinations. We look forward to capturing the emotion and inspiration of global travel through Steve’s lens.” Silversea Cruises’ gorgeous ships sail to more than 850 destinations in more than 130 countries on all seven continents – perfect for exploration and life-enriching moments.

> UNIWORLD

U by Uniworld’s Guardian Angel

U by Uniworld, the new brand from **Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection** offering immersive, authentic and adventurous travel for 21-45-year-olds, has selected Petra Nemcova, model and noted philanthropist, as the brand’s ‘Guardian Angel.’ Ahead of its launch and in celebration of its new Guardian Angel, U by Uniworld will also support the Happy Hearts Fund, an organization founded by Petra following her harrowing experience during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami to rebuild safe, resilient schools in areas impacted by natural disasters. “We’re making history with this concept, so rather than follow the traditional ‘Godmother’ path for each individual ship, we’re paving our own way forward,” says Ellen Bettridge, President & CEO of Uniworld. U by Uniworld will begin sailings in spring 2018 with nine itineraries on the Seine, Rhine, Main and Danube Rivers, among two renovated ships with a maximum capacity of 120 guests. U by Uniworld river cruises will deliver the authenticity and personalization for which the company is celebrated, while offering a new way for younger guests to travel from city to city or even country to country.



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PHOTO COURTESY NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE



PHOTO COURTESY HOLLAND AMERICA

> **REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES**

Set sail on a world cruise aboard Seven Seas Mariner

Spanning approximately 33,870 nautical miles across 11 seas in three oceans, **Regent Seven Seas Cruises'** new 2020 world cruise will deliver infinite, unforgettable opportunities for luxury travelers to experience the world. The all-suite, all-balcony **Seven Seas Mariner** will offer a captivating 131-night itinerary, departing January 24, 2020, roundtrip from San Francisco. She'll sail the idyllic islands of the South Pacific, experience the ancient cultures of subcontinental India, navigate the Arabian Peninsula, ply the Mediterranean in springtime and cruise the Caribbean and Central America in early summer. Guests will visit 30 countries on six continents as they circumnavigate the globe, visiting 36 UNESCO World Heritage sites among a total of 66 ports, 13 of which are overnight stays. The cruise includes not only 330 free, unlimited shore excursions for guests to fully explore each exciting port, but also an exclusive, pre-cruise Gala Dinner Event in San Francisco, and three additional exciting shore-side events. Book now for this special event and the best accommodation choice. The *Seven Seas Mariner* will undergo a major refurbishment in early 2018. Regent also offers World Cruises in 2018 and 2019 on board their smallest ship, **Seven Seas Navigator**.

> **NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE**

Start your engines

Norwegian Cruise Line has revealed features and amenities for Norwegian Bliss, designed to create the ultimate cruising experience as she sails to Alaska and the Caribbean with select voyages to the Mexican Riviera beginning in June 2018. **Norwegian Bliss** will boast many firsts at sea, including the largest competitive race track as well as an open-air laser tag course. Guests will be able to put the pedal to the metal on a two-level, competitive electric-car race track, the longest at sea at nearly 1,000 feet. Those who race through the many twists and turns can choose from four settings, ranging from novice to advanced, reaching speeds of up to 30 miles per hour - with a special "turbo boost" available on each lap. The electric cars run silently to preserve the serene environment but sound will be piped in through speakers located in the car's headrest. The exciting new features on *Bliss* will join the brand's signature elements including a myriad of dining options and a vibrant onboard atmosphere fueled by dynamic intimate spaces and a multitude of bars and lounges, award-winning youth programs and more.

> **HOLLAND AMERICA**

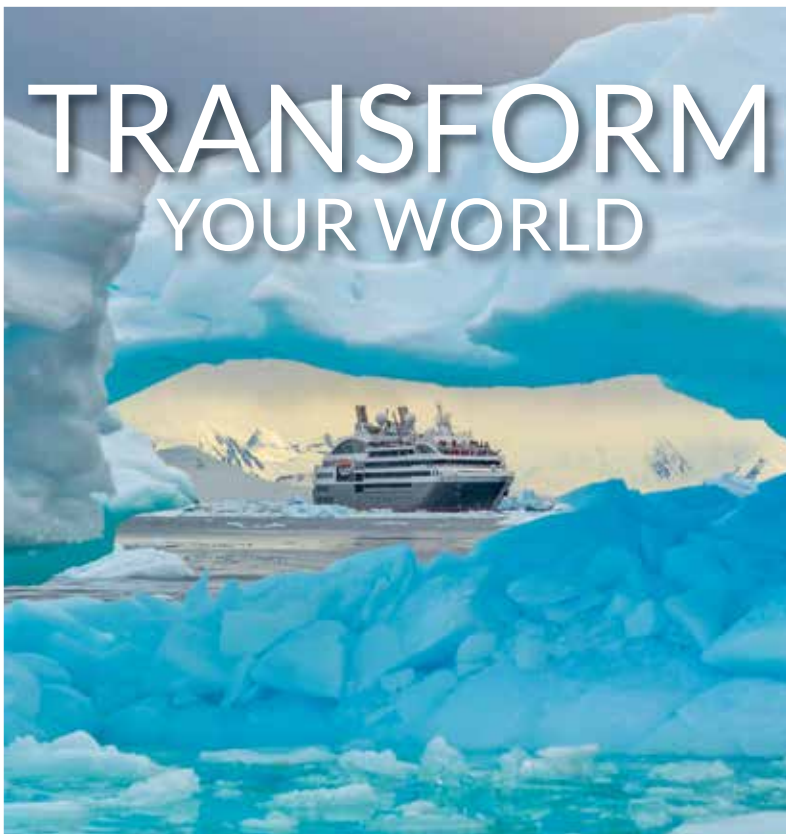
EXC in-depth voyages brings new innovation

If you're a seasoned traveler looking for an innovative and customized approach to cruising, **Holland America's** EXC In-Depth Voyages might be the answer. Designed to enable guests to explore the most fascinating corners of the globe through the prism of their personal interests and passions, EXC In-Depth Voyages range from 12-34 days and longer, and include exciting itineraries to South America, French Polynesia, the South Pacific, Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean and more. Guests can even combine cruises to create Collector's Voyages, lasting from 26-239 days on these immersive and enriching journeys. These exciting new sailings for just 1,200 guests will take place on the **ms Maasdam**, a nimble, mid-sized ship able to slip into smaller, less-visited ports as well as signature harbors. A vessel that is perfect for everything from couples to families and corporate incentive travel, the welcoming facilities aboard the *ms Maasdam* are well-suited to small-group workshops, seminars and learning opportunities with less typical entertainment and a focus on cultural activities.

> TAUCK

Tauck to launch redesigned ships, new itineraries and excursions for 2018

Tauck has an exciting year on the horizon. The launch of two all-new cruise itineraries will be combined with the debut of two radically redesigned ships, as well as added enhancements to the shore excursions featured fleet-wide. From itineraries on the Danube to the Rhine, Rhone and more, Tauck's guests will enjoy travel on both river ships and high-speed trains, as well as fascinating walking, coach and cycling tours in destinations across Europe. Tauck is ramping up its shore excursions and adding a second option in many locations to give guests a choice of experiences to better match their interests. For example, guests on "The Blue Danube" itinerary will be able to choose between two full-day excursions to two different countries; Salzburg, Austria or Cesky Krumlov in the Czech Republic. On the new "Rhine Enchantment" itinerary, guests will have their choice of a tour and wine tasting in Riquewihr or a guided bicycle ride in the Black Forest. Besides debuting new itineraries and enhancing its shore excursions, in 2018, Tauck will also complete its two-year initiative to reconfigure half of its riverboat fleet by welcoming the newly refurbished **ms Treasures** and **ms Esprit** into service. The two 110-meter Tauck ships will now feature twenty, 225 sq. ft. staterooms on the Ruby (middle) Deck, decreasing each vessel's overall capacity from 118 guests to 98, and reducing the total number of staterooms from 59 to 49. Now, staterooms measuring 225 sq. ft. or larger will account for 69 percent of all accommodations aboard each reconfigured vessel – the highest percentage of such staterooms on any 110-meter riverboats in Europe.



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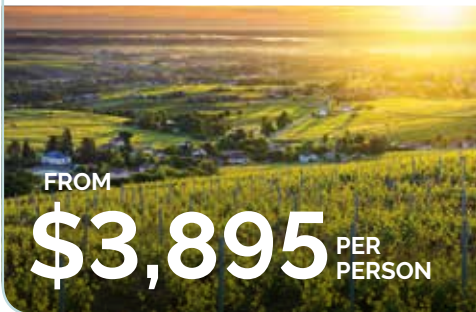
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The charm of the past
and the luxury of today
in Panama City's first hotel:
Central Hotel Panama

IF YOU LOVE CHECKING INTO a hotel that's both historic and luxurious, then deciding where to stay in Panama City will be easy. It's got to be the Central Hotel Panama.

When it opened in 1874, it was the first hotel in the country. At the turn of the century it was the meeting place of revolutionaries, where, in 1903, they proclaimed Panama's independence and appointed its first president.

The Grand Central Hotel, as it was originally called, also hosted U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt and Ferdinand de Lesseps – the mastermind behind the French effort to build the Panama Canal. Eventually, the Grand Central and other buildings in Panama's Old Quarter fell into disrepair. Recently however, Casco Antiguo – as the historic area is known – has been undergoing a renaissance deserving of its UNESCO World Heritage designation.

In 2016, Central Hotel Panama re-opened after months of meticulous restoration. The beautiful, balconied

façade is gleaming white once again. Inside, polished and painted wooden staircases lead up to three floors of rooms that overlook light-filled interior courtyards or pedestrian-friendly outside streets.

The 135 rooms come in a variety of sizes and styles but all boast luxurious linens and the latest amenities, right down to robes and slippers. Open the French doors in an outer room and you'll be delighted with the balcony, perfect for two people enjoying a nightcap in the warm air and watching the action below. If you need to cool off, there's a swimming pool on the top floor.

On the main level, a buffet breakfast is served to guests each morning, while the Argentinean-style restaurant 9 Reinas is open to all. Specializing in meat and hand-made pasta, the restaurant is partly owned by Javier Mascherano of FC Barcelona fame, perhaps reason enough for soccer fans to pay a visit.

—SUZANNE MORPHET



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Home-away-from-home comfort in Costa Rica's Papagayo Luxury Villas



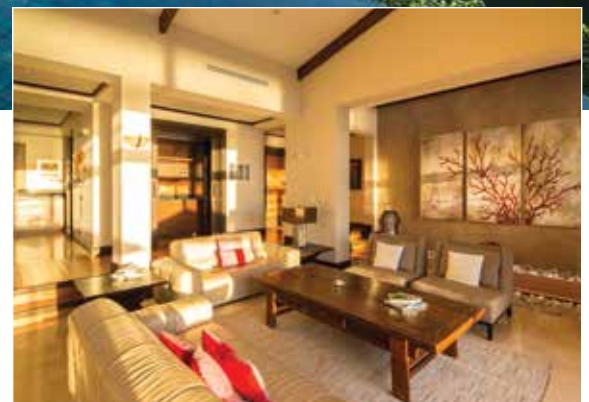
IN COSTA RICA'S EXCLUSIVE Papagayo Peninsula, you have 31 beaches, an 18-hole Arnold Palmer Signature golf course and grass tennis courts as your playground. Papagayo Luxury Villas puts you in the heart of this exclusive gated resort community. Most of the peninsula is a nature reserve, so when walking or driving a golf buggy around, you see white-faced capuchin monkeys in the trees and flocks of red-beaked ducks in ponds, but back in your villa, you have the civilized luxuries of daily maid service and a concierge at your fingertips (she welcomes you at check-in with her delicious, warm-from-the-oven, banana bread).

A member of Ultra Villas, which offers vacation villas around the world, Papagayo's collection ranges from a one level, three-bedroom/three-bathroom condo - like the one in which we stayed - to uber-deluxe 7,000 to 10,000 sq. ft. villas with private swimming pools. All have stupendous ocean views and are decked out with high-end furnishings.

Our condo, with marble and polished wood floors, was decorated with art the owners had collected from around the world, including a temple rubbing from Thailand and large abstract pieces from internationally-recognized Latin American artists. In the great room, there was an antique mahogany sleigh bed from Haiti, brass metal lanterns from the medina in Marrakesh, and antique red-and-black wood side tables from China. The condo was also fully stocked with every imaginable comfort - from mother-of-pearl placemats to a waffle maker.

Guests of Papagayo Luxury Villas have complimentary access to the exclusive Prieta Beach Club on a private beach, where attendants lay out your towels on cushioned lounge chairs shaded by leafy trees. Body surf the gentle waves, swim in the club's two outdoor pools, and when it's time for lunch, eat with your toes in the powdery-fine volcanic grey sand. Life doesn't get any better.

- JANICE AND GEORGE MUCALOV



PHOTOS COURTESY PAPAGAYO LUXURY VILLAS



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| INSIDER'S VIEW

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NINA SLAWEK



Uniworld's *Joie de Vivre*... MOMENTS TO REMEMBER

WITH THE CHAMPAGNE ON ICE, the linens freshly ironed and the brass polished to a gleam, we boarded Uniworld's latest river cruise jewel *Joie de Vivre* where else but in Paris, the city that embodies that exultant phrase.

One of river cruising's most luxurious lines, the Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection has a 40-year history. It truly hit its stride, however, in the years since 2004, after being acquired by The Travel Corporation, a four-generation global family business built by Stanley and Beatrice Tollman from humble beginnings with a hotel and restaurant in South Africa.

Beatrice, a chef, cookbook author, interior designer and hotelier, is the remarkable muse behind Uniworld, which offers itineraries throughout Europe, Russia, Egypt, and Asia. The European fleet features luxurious ships with an average capacity of 130 guests, the highest staff-to-guest ratio in the industry, enticing shore excursions, truly gourmet cuisine, fine wines and spirits and impeccable service – all included.

Travel is made up of moments and the ones that truly touch you are the ones you remember and retell – the ones that stay with you. The Uniworld experience is filled with them.

There are moments such as a butler bringing you a glass of superb wine as you sit in your stateroom, window fully lowered, sun streaming in, with the pastoral French countryside passing by. More moments to remember...a mouthful of buttery caviar washed down with a glass of Bollinger...gazing onto Rouen's Notre Dame Cathedral from the very room where Monet painted it, while I stand at an easel, being gently guided in my clumsy attempt at an impressionistic watercolor... sharing the emotional weight of the beaches of Normandy with fellow guests – many of whom lost relatives in the liberation effort.

This page (clockwise from top left):

Joie de Vivre in Paris.

Monet's house and gardens at Giverny.

Club L'Esprit spa and wellness centre.

The *Joie de Vivre* lounge was inspired by 20th-century Parisian design and artwork.

Suites feature handcrafted Savoir of England beds topped with 100 percent Egyptian cotton linens.





WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Ultimately this superlative river cruise experience is characterized by superior quality and the genuine desire of staff members to deliver memorable ‘moments’ to their guests.

Those of us on a pre-inaugural journey succumbed to the charms of the *Joie de Vivre* – we are only human, after all.

Each river ship boasts distinct décor, elevated by original artwork and authentic antiques – many of them hand-chosen by Beatrice herself, but it is the bed in each stateroom that best encapsulates Uniworld’s single-minded passion for delivering luxury. The handcrafted Savoir of England beds cost \$25,000 apiece. They’re topped with 100 percent Egyptian cotton linens and there are six choices of pillow style.

“No request too large, no detail too small” is the mantra for Uniworld service. Every staff member on a Uniworld vessel is trained by Red Carnation Hotels (also a part of the family). Butlers, who are assigned to guests choosing suite accommodations, receive the same training as those who work at Buckingham Palace. And it shows. The service is impeccable, warm and attentive but never pretentious.

Many river lines talk about ‘inclusive’ cruising and the definition varies with each. Uniworld delivers true all-inclusive cruising, beginning with included transfers and ending with included gratuities. Unlimited Wi-Fi, onboard dining, along with unlimited beverages, ranging from specialty coffees to fine wines and top-shelf liquors like Grey Goose, Crown Royal and Glenfiddich – everything is included along with a choice of excursions in each port, not just a standard city tour but an offering of unique, experiential – and exclusive – excursions on every itinerary.

An onboard fitness center on each ship means guests can take wellness seriously with full-time onboard instructors who lead exercise and wellness classes.

Ultimately this superlative river cruise experience is characterized by superior quality and the genuine desire of staff members to deliver memorable ‘moments’ to their guests.

For me, those ‘moments’ were provided by people like Martin at the front desk who accompanied me into town without hesitation when I asked about the nearest ATM; by our doting waiters who truly could not do enough to please; and by the amazingly knowledgeable tour guides who brought ancient buildings to life.

For a time, Uniworld’s newest vessel carried us blissfully away from the stress of work and the troubles of the world, and allowed us to revel in the joy of living – or as the French say, *le Joie de Vivre*. ■

This page (clockwise from top left): Every evening Club L’Esprit transforms into the glamorous Claude’s supper club. One of Claude Monet’s many famous paintings of Rouen Cathedral. French accents create a lively atmosphere in the main restaurant.

IF YOU GO For more information on Uniworld Boutique River Cruises go to www.uniworld.com and see your preferred travel advisor for details

PHOTOS: RAINER WITZGALL / UNIWORLD



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Celebrity Cruises ON THE LEADING EDGE

There's a distinctive and remarkable new ship on the horizon – arriving on our shores in December 2018. A ship so bold, so beyond the expected, one that will be the epitome of modern luxury, will truly amaze and best of all, provide a refreshing new take on ocean-going cruising.

VANESSA LEE



Iconic suite

SO WHY IS *EDGE* GOING TO BE so different – not only from other Celebrity ships, especially those five in the revolutionary Solstice class. Why is she unique? Let's explore all that's new and why this ship is already being called a game-changer. Let's see why you'll want to sail on her and what experiences you'll enjoy.

First of all Celebrity has shaken up a few main concepts about ocean cruising. One of the most wonderful things about cruising is the sea view – and also the magic of sailing in to or away from a beautiful port of call and this is where Celebrity has designed a ship bringing the ocean and the guest closer together.

Small touches abound such as having the sun loungers face outward towards the sea rather than inward to the pool, and offering a reimagined Resort Deck rather than a simple pool deck. And working with the brand's five-pillar focus – Destination, Design, Accommodation, Cuisine and Service.





One of Edge’s most exciting elements will be the accommodations and a whole new class of dramatically expanded staterooms.

The 918 new Edge Staterooms with Infinite Verandas (16 for solo travelers) turns guest rooms into a wonderful, seamless space – all the way from the entry to the water’s edge. With a simple touch of the button, guests will enjoy open-air access to the sea. All beds are king-size and there’s a lot more living and storage space and gorgeous, creative design.

There are the fabulous Iconic Suites situated above the ship’s bridge. At almost 2,600 sq ft, these two-bedroom, two-bathroom suites feature incredible views of the ocean from the panoramic windows surrounding the living and dining rooms, as well as the bedroom. These suites also boast a 700 sq. ft. veranda that provides a 270-degree view of the sea. Guests will feel as if they are on top of the world!



Edge Villa

PHOTOS COURTESY CELEBRITY CRUISES



Edge Stateroom with Infinite Veranda



Luminae Restaurant



Rooftop garden



Cabanas



Magic Carpet

There's a sea change coming to the resort deck.

This expansive space will include the beautiful Rooftop Garden and the ever-popular, adults-only Solarium – both of which are pivotal in bringing cruisers and the ocean together. You'll be delighted at the endless ways to enjoy the sun and blue skies as you sail from port to port. The ship's main pool is here with an outward-facing terraced deck offering the best views. There are two very sexy martini-glass shaped,

two-level hot tubs and a beautiful mosaic. Add 20-ft high soaring pool cabanas and you can see how vibrant and innovative this space will be. The Rooftop Garden is a lively, spacious and playful environment for relaxing, wandering and enjoying some music – a real novelty are musicians sitting in decorative “trees” entertaining you. A “Taste of Film” dinner and movie concept is showcased here too.

A virtual "Garden of Eden" with a uniquely designed culinary and entertainment venue.

Innovation is alive and well at Celebrity Cruises with this remarkable and amazing space named EDEN which will also showcase a "Window to the World" with the largest amount of outward-facing glass - 7,000 sq ft - at sea. The whole space for Eden spans Decks 4, 5 and 6 aft, exemplifying Celebrity's desire to bring guests and the ocean together in exciting new ways - never before seen at sea.

In these three decks, there will be varying moods and décor designed for certain parts of the day. Cool in the mornings with more of a calm Zen feel, as the day progresses the space takes on a playful tone with a different vibe and then by evening it turns into a sinful Eden with an edgier feel, with music and dining at the Deck 4 restaurant.



We've saved the best for last with the ground-breaking Magic Carpet.

Cantilevered from the side of the ship, the Magic Carpet gives the Celebrity Edge a distinctive profile. The size of a tennis court, this engineering feat scales the 16-deck ship, traveling from Deck 2 to Deck 5, up to the Resort Deck and even to Deck 16, the summit of the ship. There it becomes the ultimate specialty restaurant, offering a unique "Dinner on the Edge" for 90 diners. Alongside Deck 14 the Magic Carpet becomes

an open-air extension of the main pool and resort area. On Deck 5, Magic Carpet extends the reach of a specialty restaurant and offers al fresco dining, a spot for cocktails and has a DJ spinning tunes. Designed to also offer guests a luxury embarkation station, the Magic Carpet is the key component to the Destination Gateway where guests board the sleek Edge Launches as they go ashore. Totally transformational! ■



A taste of Dubai

Far from a barren desert, Dubai is a banquet table celebrating local foods as well as cuisines from around the world.

WAHEEDA HARRIS



STEPPING INTO THE LOBBY of the newly-opened W Hotel in Dubai's Al-Habtoor City, you see that the bold surroundings are punctuated by contemporary-lobby-meets-nightclub style: an oversized curved banquette in a sunken living room, neon lights, endless shiny surfaces and a wall of windows displaying the ever-changing skyline.

But tradition is still found here, with a white dish piled high with fresh dates, a symbol of welcome that started with the nomadic tribal people who have lived in this desert region for centuries.

Known for its eye-catching architecture and modern décor as well as a local population that has come from countries around the globe, Dubai has quickly risen to rank with London, Paris, Hong Kong



and New York as a destination known for its cuisine. Middle Eastern flavors are the backbone of any meal and commonly mixed with influences from Indian, Asian and European food traditions. Dubai chefs benefit from the wide variety of fruit, vegetable, seafood and meat easily sourced in the Middle East and neighboring Asian and African countries, as well as from serving diners who are adventurous and regularly indulge in eating out.

One of the most popular areas of Old Dubai is the Spice Souk, a crowded area of vendors that lures shoppers with its colors and scents. Sultry shades of brown reveal the heady piles of cinnamon, cumin, clove, turmeric and coriander, staples for so many dishes, interspersed with the softer shades of dried rose and lavender, the floral parts of any local chef's stash for making desserts and tea blends. Bold red saffron is the king, sequestered from the rest of the spices. Sourced from Iran, the most expensive spice on earth is worth every penny for the distinct taste these delicate strands bring to savory and sweet dishes.

Leaving behind the noisy confines of the souk, you can find a luxe afternoon escape within the eye-catching Burj Khalifa. Featuring panoramic views this – the world's tallest structure – is home to At.Mosphere

Restaurant, located on the 122nd floor. The elegant lounge is a favorite for quiet conversation and afternoon high tea. The British tradition is a popular ritual for business meetings as well as for friends who come to indulge in small sandwiches, English scones with cream, exclusive tea blends (like Red of Arabia or Earl Gray D'Amour) and pastries made with sweet bursts of honey, walnut, rose and cardamom.

Despite the commonly-held assumption that the desert is nothing but piles of sand and an occasional oasis, it can be a source of food. The growing season in the Middle East is from late autumn until May, and in Dubai an increasing number of farmers are battling the endless sun and wind to provide locally-grown produce, often located in cool houses (the opposite of green houses).

For residents, wanting to buy local has resulted in the weekly Farmers Market on the Terrace, first started by local bakery Baker and Spice in 2010. The market is not just a place for locally-grown fruit and vegetables but is also a place to meet friends and taste a wide range of palate-pleasing items like fresh baked bread and pastries from Baker and Spice, raw honey from Yemen, Ethiopian java from Boon Coffee and Palestinian olive oil and spicy sauces from passionate foodie and cookbook author Dima Sharif.

Above:

A bowl of dates is a traditional symbol of welcome.

Night view of Dubai's Burj al Arab.

Facing page:

Vibrant colors in Dubai's Spice Souk.

NIKADAY / ISTOCK

ALANGA / ISTOCK

NIKADAY / ISTOCK





PAMELA JONES OF ARJANE / ISTOCK



PHOTO COURTESY THE ARTISAN



PHOTO COURTESY FRYING PAN ADVENTURES

Clockwise from top left: Kanafeh is a savory and sweet cheese pastry. Frying Pan Adventures co-founder Arva Ahmed prepares a traditional middle eastern lunch for guests of her foodie walking tour. The recently opened Artisan brings fine northern Italian style dining to Dubai.

The different traditions of the Middle East countries are everywhere in Dubai, especially in the neighborhood of Deira. Thanks to local food tour company Frying Pan Adventures, it's possible to taste Lebanese, Palestinian, Turkish and Persian cuisine in a three-km walking tour of this laid-back area north of the glitzy downtown. Tour groups are treated to an extended lunch: fresh made falafel, hummus, tahini and pita, kanafeh, a savory and sweet cheese pastry, honey-laden baklava, Al Machboos, a slow-cooked Emirati dish of meat and rice and pistachio ice cream, Iranian-style.

From street food stall to bakery to restaurant to spice shop, each step is filled with chatter about history, tradition and the passion with Frying Pan Adventures' Arva Ahmed, confirming that even if the dish originated elsewhere it's now embedded in Dubai's food scene.

The satiated group is left with a better understanding of the city's tasty places and red and white tote bags filled with fresh made pita, baklava, cookies and tempting items like pomegranate syrup, za'atar (a local spice mixture) and rose water purchased during the tour.

Gathering for the evening meal, diners in Dubai dress to impress, eat after 8 pm and love to experience the glamorous side of the city. At recently opened The Artisan, A-list patrons are happy to indulge in fine dining, Italian style. Enoteca Pinchiorri, a Michelin 3-star restaurant from Florence, opened this intimate dining space in Fall 2016, quietly bringing their inventive style of Italian cuisine to the emirate.

The restaurant's pretty interior is a mix of gray and blue velvet seating, white marble and wood floors and a delicate Murano glass installa-

tion that sparkles above diners. The menu is quintessentially northern Italian: zucchini flowers stuffed with buffalo mozzarella and veal with tuna, capers and watercress; house-made spaghetti with seafood or agnolotti stuffed with pumpkin, sage, and almonds; or secondi favorites such as branzino: baked salt-crusted sea bass, or Florentine T-bone steak.

But hints of Dubai exist within this Italian oasis. Arabic coffee can be ordered – cups filled with dark roast and cardamom. Like any other city that has benefitted from a wide range of people from around the planet, Dubai's dining scene embraces and celebrates variety – from the simplicity of old school Arabic street food to the elegant traditions of European cuisine. ■

IF YOU GO For great ideas for travel in Dubai, visit www.visitdubai.com and consult your travel planning professional.

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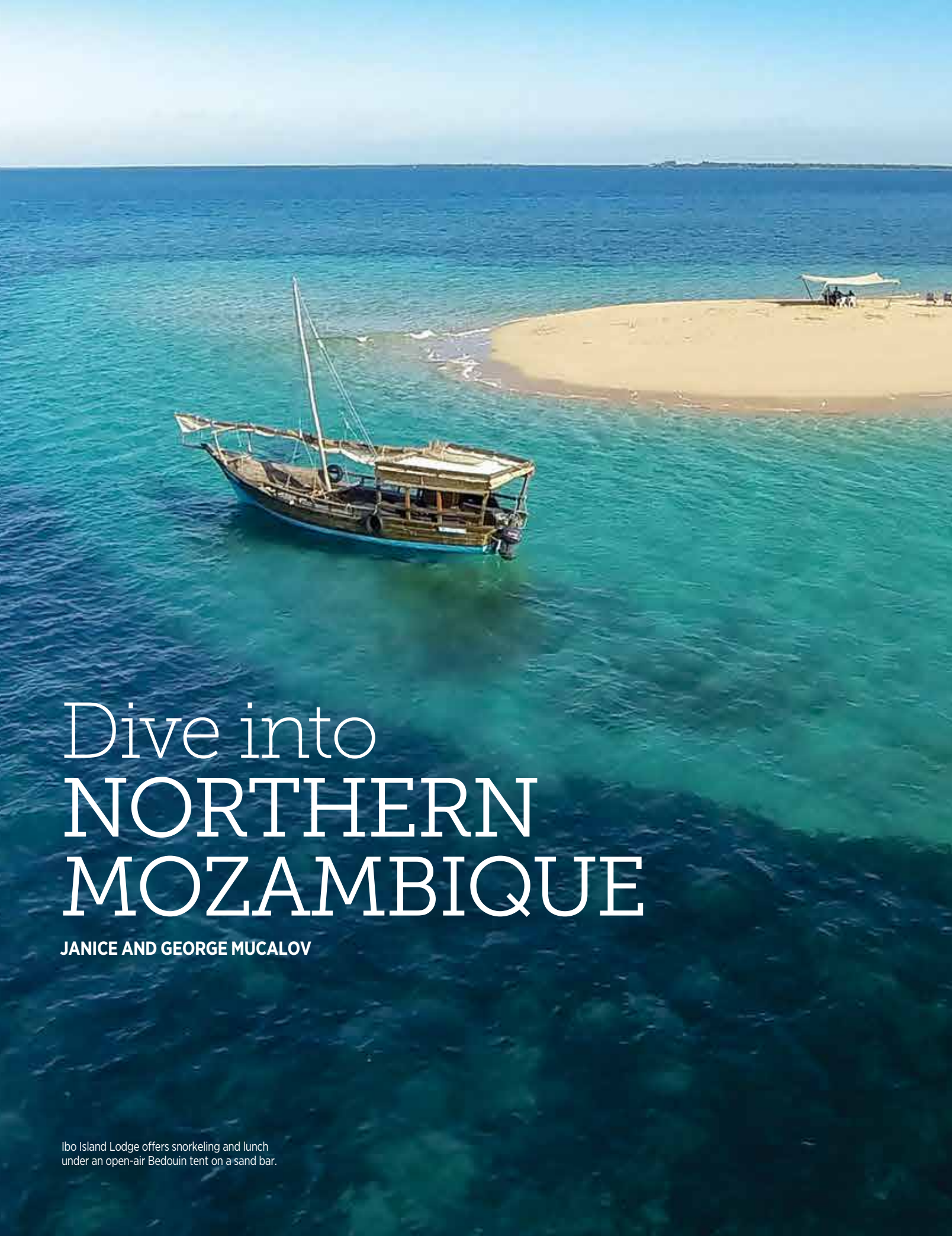
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Dive into
**NORTHERN
MOZAMBIQUE**

JANICE AND GEORGE MUCALOV

Ibo Island Lodge offers snorkeling and lunch under an open-air Bedouin tent on a sand bar.



ARISTOTOO/ISTOCK



Snorkeling with dolphins in the wild. A UNESCO-nominated island full of colonial Portuguese ruins. Millionaire hideaways. Northern Mozambique is as far off-the-grid as you can get and perfect for a post-safari idyll.

IN THE SUN-DAPPLED WATER, we see them clearly through our snorkel masks. First one, then five, then a whole pod of more than 30 sleek gray bottlenose dolphins glide past, directly below us. The calves snuggle up close to their moms, tails swishing back and forth twice as fast to keep up. One dolphin hangs back. Turning around, he (she?) digs up a sand dollar with its nose from the sandy bottom and flips it at us, as if to say “Wanna play?”

We’re snorkeling with wild dolphins in northern Mozambique’s untrammled Quirimbas Archipelago. Picture translucent turquoise waters, sprinkled with 32 stunning coral islands (most uninhabited) and say “hello” to the Quirimbas! To see the dolphins, we took a 20-minute speedboat ride from Ibo Island in the archipelago to a spot known locally as a natural dolphin breeding area and nursery.

It seems surreal to be hanging out up-close-and-personal with these free and wondrous creatures. We’ve swum with other dolphins in the ocean before, but this feels different – more raw, more intimate. Except for the dolphins, we’re alone out here – just the two of us, our guide Causemore and our boat captain above.

The only other humans in sight are a couple of fishermen sailing tiny dhows, just dots in the distance. We simply drift on our bellies, kicking a little every so often, and let the dolphins swim up to check us out. Occasionally, Causemore, who’s like a fish himself, free dives down the 20 odd feet to fin alongside them.

In how many places in the world can you swim in the wild, alone, with dolphins that come within touching distance?

ROGER DELA HARPE



PHOTO COURTESY DIAMONDS MEQUFI BEACH RESORT

It's experiences like this – unique, authentic and totally non-touristy – that make northern Mozambique special. Tourism has barely opened up in this part of the world, and visitors are few and far between. Those who do come usually make their way to the handful of mostly exclusive, small and off-the-grid resorts. Many seek a luxury beach break after an African safari. Blessed with secluded white sand beaches, unspoiled snorkeling reefs and prolific marine life, northern Mozambique is ideal for exactly this, but it offers a big dollop of culture too. Ibo Island, for one, is nominated for UNESCO World Heritage status. It's steeped in a rich tapestry of history – wander its haunting colonial ruins, observe the local traditions, and you'll feel like you've stepped through a portal into a bygone world.

We start our journey on the mainland at Pemba, the gateway to this part of the country. From the small airport, a one-hour drive on a sunbaked red-dirt track – past women in colorful sarongs, babies strapped to their backs or with buckets of water on their heads – delivers us to an enormous white-walled property. Inside sprawls the luxurious Diamonds Mequfi Beach Resort.



PHOTO COURTESY DIAMONDS MEQUFI BEACH RESORT

One activity that catches our eye here is horseback riding. The resort has its own spacious air-conditioned stable, housing seven much-pampered horses. Mequfi Bay's endless white sand beach – with not another dwelling in sight – is tailor-made for horseback riding.

If you know how to ride, you can canter freely along the water's edge for miles. We opt instead for a gentle ride late one afternoon. Happy to be led by a rope, our horses plod slowly along as we take in the colors of the sunset turning from blazing neon orange to soft pink.

“Perhaps you also want to try wind-karting?” offers the general manager. “It's a Formula One adrenalin high.” Somewhat dubious about this fast-growing new sport in France, one of us (that would be George) gives it a spin the next morning. Wearing a helmet, he tries to steer a fat-wheeled tricycle attached to a huge triangular sail, as the wind whips him along the sand dunes. Ego bruised when the wind-kart heads for the water, splashing him mightily, he gives up, envious of the expert kite surfer playfully skipping along the waves nearby.

We go bicycling by the full moon and paddle kayaks up a mangrove-lined river, but for the most part, our time is spent relaxing, replenishing our safari-sapped energy reserves. After a few blissful days, we're ready to venture to the Quirimbas.

First island stop: Ibo, where we swim with the dolphins. Arab, Indian and Chinese gold traders and slavers all dropped anchor at Ibo. The Portuguese then arrived in the early 1500s, building forts, slave quarters and colonial mansions. The remnants remain today, whispering tales of both grandeur and the cruel peddling of human flesh.



PHOTO COURTESY AZURA QUILALEA





JULIAN LOVE/PHOTOGRAPHY / ALAMY

On a walk of Ibo town, we soak up the atmosphere. Much of it seems stuck in the past (electricity only came in 2012). There are no paved roads, just sandy paths on which islanders walk or ride rusty bicycles. Sunlight streams through open arches of empty white stone buildings. Graceful Romanesque-style columns stand proud and tall amid piles of coral rubble. Goats scramble around palm trees sprouting up through crumbling church ruins; monkeys hop on chipped red-tile roofs.

A house covered with cowrie shells is intriguing. “The owner was a trader who was often away,” explains Causemore (he does double duty – guiding us on this cultural

tour as well as on our dolphin swim). “Every day he was at sea, his wife would walk the island and collect one shell, which she’d glue to the outside wall.”

We pass by a dig on which a couple of Italian archaeologists have been working. Causemore tells us he often finds centuries-old objects lying about. We pick up pieces of blue-and-ivory china by the water’s edge at low tide – did they come from the dinner set of a wealthy Portuguese manor wife? At the well-preserved Sao Joao Batista Fort, built in 1791 in the shape of a star, we admire intricate silver bracelets and necklaces hand-crafted by the island’s aged silversmiths.

Facing page: Mequfi Bay’s endless white sand beach is tailor-made for horseback riding. Left: A woman pauses in front of a crumbling Portuguese colonial villa on Ibo Island, part of the Quirimbas Archipelago Mozambique. Guests of Azura Quilalea enjoy a cruise aboard a traditional dhow.



GEORGE MICALOV



PHOTO COURTESY IBO ISLAND LODGE



GEORGE MICALOV



PHOTO COURTESY IBO ISLAND LODGE

(Clockwise from top left):

Flying over the Quirimbas Archipelago.

The women of Ibo Island decorate their faces with mussiro (a white paste made from tree sap), protecting their skin from the sun.

Ibo Island children.

Relaxing after a kayak safari.

The people are exotic to us Westerners. The island is over 90 percent Muslim, and the sound of the Muezzin wafts through the fragrant warm air throughout the day. The women decorate their faces with mussiro (a white paste made from tree sap), protecting their skin from the sun. Many people live pretty much as they have for centuries – carrying water from the well, pounding peanuts in wooden bowls, which they stew with cassava leaves and coconut to make matapa (delicious!), weighing market items on old-fashioned scales.

Change, though, is coming. Historic old houses are slowly being restored. A new Spanish-owned bungalow resort (rumoured to be five-star) is nearing completion, and we check out a boutique B&B that has just opened. “Ibo is on the verge of being discovered,” Causemore muses.

We still have more of the Quirimbas to discover, and Quilalea Island, our final destination, beckons. Like a couple of other small Quirimbas islands, Quilalea is a private island, home to Azura Quilalea resort. Think uber-luxe – but in a carefree, barefoot kind of way. Before Pippa Middleton married recently, *Vogue* touted Azura Quilalea as a perfect paparazzi-free destination for her honeymoon.

Quilalea has what Ibo Island lacks – beautiful, soft, white sand beaches. You come here to chill, perhaps snorkel and dive, and forget about the outside world. We loll about in our beach chairs, rising every so often for a dip in the calm water. Sometimes we take

out stand-up paddleboards for some light paddling. At dusk when it’s cool, we walk the twisting, shady path around the island, gazing up at ancient Baobab trees and drinking in the wild coastal vistas.

We dive Quilalea’s house reef. Quirimbas National Park is a marine and land park stretching for 70 miles along the northeast coast of Mozambique; it protects the fertile coral reefs around 11 of the islands in the Quirimbas, including Quilalea. Sea turtles, moray and garden eels, stingrays, big-lipped potato bass and huge schools of brilliant red wrasse patrol these waters. Our dive whets our appetite. Now we want to dive the deep channel that curls in behind Quilalea where white-tipped reef sharks hang out! Our impending onward flight, alas, prevents this.

Still, we’ve set foot in more of northern Mozambique than we ever imagined. We’ve seen it in all its natural untouched beauty, before tourism has had a chance to change the landscape – and that is a gift. ■

IF YOU GO: Getting to your destination in northern Mozambique requires effort. To reach Ibo Island, we flew from Pemba by small plane with CR Aviation. Azura Quilalea Private Island arranges transfers on its own helicopter. For a multi-island holiday, flights can be arranged between the Quirimbas islands.

New hotel gem
sparkles in Mozambique:

Diamonds Mequfi Beach Resort

WITH 50 SEA-VIEW ROOMS and suites far from civilization – surrounded by nothing for miles but grass-covered sand dunes and the occasional mud-brick village – Diamonds Mequfi Beach Resort is an ambitious new hotel, but this member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World is run with such spit and polish that it outshines all expectation.

Air-conditioned accommodations are in white-washed, duplex beach bungalows with soaring thatch ceilings, all scattered wide apart for privacy. Each has a covered stone terrace facing the turquoise Indian Ocean. Inside, we were blown away by the solid quality of construction and serene beachy décor. A four-poster, king-size bed dominates the bedroom, where polished tree stumps serve as night tables. In the bathroom, wood-framed mirrors hang from the ceiling by jute rope, and an indoor glass shower opens onto an outdoor stone shower. Welcome discovery: small jars of mosquito gel and sunscreen in faux-pearl-studded amenity boxes. Housekeeping is immaculate too – our whole room was virtually redone at turndown each night and despite the remote location, we could catch up on world news on our flat-screen satellite TV and surf the Internet via high-speed Wi-Fi.

The grounds are expansive but you can grab a bicycle to navigate the concrete paths meandering around the sand dunes with newly-planted palm trees. When it's windy (kite-surfing season May to September), a giant oval-shaped pool set back from the beach offers respite and whether you choose the half-board or all-inclusive option, meals whipped up by a talented Indian head-chef are delicious.

We tried all manner of activities from horseback riding on the beach to stand-up paddle boarding along a mangrove-lined river but we were happiest lounging on our terrace – napping, reading and listening to the waves.



PHOTOS COURTESY DIAMONDS MEQUFI BEACH RESORT



A trip back in time at a restored colonial mansion: Ibo Island Lodge

THE YOUNG COUPLE was looking for “paradise” on the Quirimbas islands after traveling through then war-torn Mozambique. When they sailed into the ancient harbor of Ibo Island, they were smitten by the island’s 16th century crumbling forts and ruins of once-grand houses. Ibo had been forgotten by the outside world for almost a century, and they were virtually the first tourists. They decided to renovate what was once the governor’s mansion, restoring three side-by-side coral and limestone buildings, and so in 2006, Kevin and Fiona Record became the owners of Ibo Island Lodge, the island’s first hotel in “modern” history.

It oozes character like no other place we’ve stayed. Each of the 14 rooms and suites is different – but all have beamed ceilings at least 20 feet high, polished gray stone floors, dark wood antiques, embroidered silk bedspreads, and brass knobs and switches. From the swinging daybed on our porch, framed by bougainvillea, we gazed out at mangroves and weathered wooden dhows stuck in the sand at low tide. You can expect dim lighting and almost non-existent Wi-Fi, but there’s air-conditioning.

Must-do: Daily complimentary boat trips are offered at low tide to a sandbar for breakfast or lunch and snorkeling. Under an open-air Bedouin tent, surrounded by brilliant blue sea, we sat at a table with our toes in the sand. Breakfast – coffee, porridge, scrambled eggs and sausages – was cooked over a coal fire. The experience was priceless! Staff set up everything from scratch as the sandbar is completely covered by water each day at high tide.

Back at the lodge, creative seafood lunch salads and candlelight dinners kept us happily stuffed (meals are included) and its rooftop bar is the best place on Ibo Island to watch the dramatic sunsets.



PHOTOS COURTESY IBO ISLAND LODGE

Barefoot,
celeb-worthy escape:
**Azura Quilalea
Private Island**

Ready to feel like a rock star?

A gun-metal gray helicopter whisks you off to Azura Quilalea Private Island. Greeted by the manager, you walk along a shell-and-coral path to reception. The view encompasses a postcard-pretty beach in front of the resort's PADI dive center (top-notch, you discover later).

You're then shown to your hand-crafted villa – one of just nine. Facing the sea, it has coral stone walls, soaring makuti thatch roof and stone floor inlaid with shell mosaics. Your king-size bed is swathed with a cloud of mosquito netting (not needed, you happily realize). The rain-shower has swinging shutter doors opening onto a timber deck, furnished with couches and cushioned teak loungers under an umbrella. Louvered doors and windows, all wide open, let the cooling sea breeze in. There's no key (slide a wood latch to open and close the carved front door) – but you can lock valuables in a built-in, shell-encrusted box. A bottle of French Champagne from the owners' chateau in the Loire Valley, waiting in an ice bucket, begs to be popped and enjoyed. Such was our introduction to the sublime Azura Quilalea.

What really makes the Azura unforgettable is the bespoke service. Every evening, you gather for sun-downers at the convivial bar, where you discuss with the manager your preferred activities for the following day – spa treatment, helicopter sightseeing, private beach picnic? Dinner follows, perhaps by the pool or on the beach (each couple at a different private location) and fresh lobster is often featured.

The last evening, our butler (yes, you have a butler) surprised us with a scented bubble bath in a copper tub on our deck plus two gin-and-smashed-lime cocktails – a singular treat – which we loved.



PHOTOS COURTESY AZURA QUILALEA PRIVATE ISLAND



Oceania celebrates the
PLEASURES
of the table

If you'd like some tasty and well-deserved self-indulgence, Oceania's elegant *Marina*, with its reputation for outstanding service and culinary excellence, will meet and exceed your every expectation.

LIZ FLEMING



SOMETIMES, IT'S CHALLENGING to be the bigger sister.

A gorgeous member of the six-ship Oceania fleet, the *Marina* and her sister ship, the *Riviera* are each able to welcome nearly twice as many guests as their smaller sisters, the *Nautica*, *Regatta*, *Insignia* and *Sirena*. With 1,250 guests aboard, you might think that the larger vessels wouldn't offer quite as personal a welcome but the opposite is true. Somehow, despite their size, the *Riviera* and the *Marina* – the ship we sailed on a wonderful seven-day itinerary out of Miami – retain every ounce of the small-ship, ultra-luxe atmosphere that has made their smaller sisters so popular. It's truly a sprinkling of Oceania magic.

It begins with the elegance of the design and decor. In the heart of the ship, a gorgeous Lalique crystal staircase curves gracefully upward – the perfect spot for photos – and it sets a tone of chic refinement for the rest of the ship. Creature comforts take priority on the *Marina*, we discovered when we wandered into the cozy, leathery library where guests curled up with a great book

and a cup of coffee. On the spacious, sunny pool deck, servers hovered with trays of icy drinks, but it was in the exquisite calm of the Canyon Ranch Spa and Sanctuary, that we loved the sense of privacy and relaxation. We retreated there each afternoon to bask on the private sun-deck and loll on the heated tile beds. Clearly, the *Marina* is a little piece of floating heaven.

Each night, talented performers sang and danced on the main stage and in the many shipboard lounges and every day, we enjoyed fantastic shore excursions in sunny spots like the Costa Maya, Roatan, Belize and Key West. Whether we were singing our hearts out at a friendly outdoor bar on the Key West strip, soaring on the zip line that carried us across the wide sandy beach at the private destination of Harvest Caye or paddling glass-bottomed kayaks in Belize, we loved every minute of our shore time.

Yes, the shore excursions were outstanding, but we were happy to head back to our ship at day's end. It might have been the lure of our well-appointed suite, with its breezy balcony or it might have been

the friendly bartenders, ready to welcome us back with something tall and cool, but in fact, what made us hurry back to the *Marina* after each day was our anticipation of the glorious meals that awaited us.

Oceania proudly bills itself as having “the finest cuisine at sea” – a bold claim, but one that many enthusiastic returning guests would argue is absolutely true. In the seven days spent aboard, we heard nothing but rave reviews from every guest we spoke with. People don't simply enjoy the *Marina*'s dining offerings – they become the focus of every conversation and of course, a world of social media posts!

This page (clockwise from top left): Butler service in the Owner's Suite. Duck and watermelon salad. The elegant Oceania Marina.



Knowing how popular the specialty dining venues are aboard the *Marina*, we'd made sure to book in advance. Note: as is the case on many ships, great restaurants require advance reservations so the wise cruiser sits down and gets clicking on line as soon as the booking is finalized. Though we weren't able to arrange a night at La Reserve – an ultra-exclusive small venue that books up almost as soon as an itinerary opens – we had all the others lined up and began our culinary adventures at Jacques – the signature restaurant created for Oceania by renowned chef Jacques Pépin himself.

The restaurant is elegant, with crisp linens and gracious servers creating the feeling of a special retreat for gastronomes. Our multi-course menu included traditional delights such as escargot drenched in a delicious garlic butter sauce, and a beef tenderloin more tender and flavorful than any we'd ever had. It was immediately after our timelessly perfect Crêpes Suzette that we began to worry that perhaps we'd been foolish to start with Jacques. Would every other restaurant aboard pale by comparison and leave us disappointed?

This page (clockwise from top left):
 Polo Grill.
 Lemon ravioli.
 Indoor dining in the Terrace Café.
 Jacques Restaurant.
 Oceania Culinary Center.

We needn't have been troubled. The next night at Red Ginger – a dining space that celebrates the exotic beauty of Asia and even features a selection of chopsticks ranging from hand-carved wooden beauties to a sleek sculpted steel variety – we joined friends to munch on crispy spring rolls, delectable seafood soups and creative, delicate symphonies of vegetable, duck, chicken, beef and

fish lapped in delicious broths and sauces. The only thing more extensive than the chopstick selection was the tea menu, carefully explained by our gracious server and presented with great attention to the details of brewing and pouring.

Every day and evening offered different culinary experiences. Toscana, a warmly authentic Italian restaurant, with a décor that combined elegance and the kind of open-hearted welcome you'd expect from your nonna – offered handmade pastas, lovingly-brewed sauces, and rich chunks of fresh parmigiana cheese along with tender veal parmesan and veal marsala – two long-time favorites prepared beautifully.

The Polo Grill – the meat-lovers Mecca – treated us to a glorious feast of rare prime rib while the Grand Dining Room offered its own menu of delicious favorites (no reservations necessary).



Each morning and noon hour, we basked in the sunshine as we gorged on the fabulous à la minute offerings at the Terrace Café and Waves Grille and each afternoon, we enjoyed the oh-so-proper and delicious high tea, offered in the Grand Dining Room, accompanied by the sounds of a string quartet. Feathery light scones and Mozart – a glorious combination.

Oceania's reputation for top-notch cuisine doesn't stop with the fleet's dining rooms. Serious food lovers rave about the Oceania Culinary Center and with good reason. The gleaming, full-on cooking classroom is a wonder to behold and a pleasure to learn and work in. Featuring a roomful of well-outfitted cooking stations with fully functional range tops, individual sinks, and top-notch equipment, the Center provides the kind of high-quality knives, pots, pans and spatulas etc. that make you

feel like the pro you're fantasizing that you'll become. The lucky guests who sign up (again, book well in advance) are treated to afternoon or even day-long programs that blend a rich cultural introduction to the region from which the food to be prepared originates, with comprehensive instruction in the techniques needed to prepare it. When possible, the class incorporates a chef-led shore excursion element such as a trip to a farm, or a market. In our case, we visited a hydroponic farm where we all learned about the quick and efficient growing of lettuce in a dry climate.

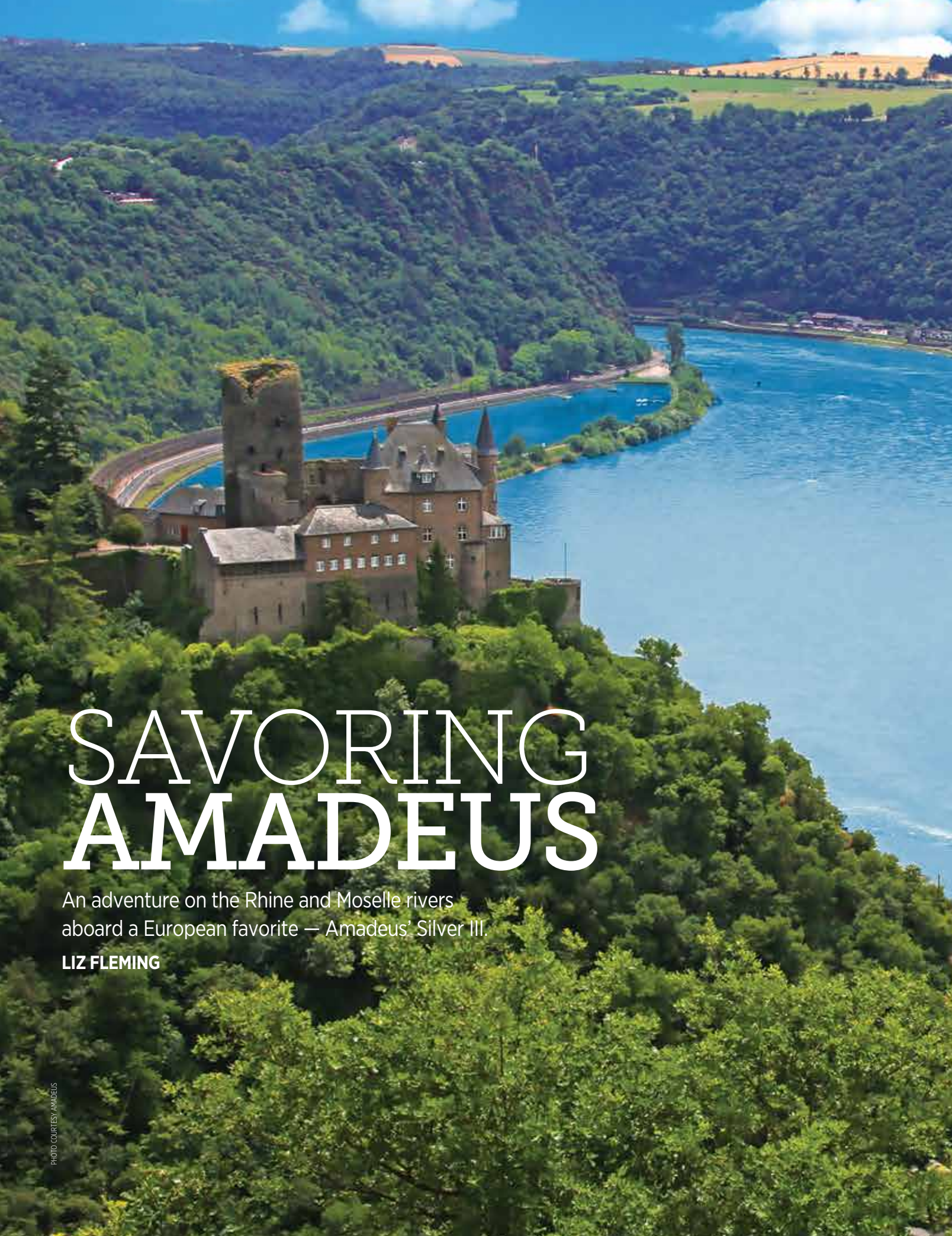
Back at the Culinary Center, Head Chef Kathryn Kelly showed us the alchemy involved in turning chicken, capers, lemons and panko bread crumbs into crisp pieces of fried-chicken gold, and then fortified us with glasses of Limoncello. Glasses in hand, we learned the delicate stirring technique necessary

to make the world's creamiest risotto and then, to top off our food-fest, she taught us to make tiny, feathery lemon cakes, just the right size to pop into small bowls filled with more Limoncello, Bailey's, or Grand Marnier. Left for a few minutes, the tiny cakes soaked up the boozy baths below and became truly exquisite yet utterly simple desserts.

If there's a more satisfying way to spend an afternoon, I can't think what it might be and if there's a more delectable way for cuisine-loving cruise enthusiasts to explore the Caribbean, I haven't yet found it. Our week aboard the *Oceania Marina* exceeded our every expectation – onboard and ashore – but still managed to leave us with an appetite for another Oceania cruise to come. ■

IF YOU GO: Oceania offers a great range of itineraries in the Caribbean and beyond! For complete information, visit www.oceaniacruises.com and see your preferred travel advisor.

As Oceania's Executive Culinary Director, eminent Master Chef Jacques Pépin (right) inspires the cruise line's chefs to perform feats of gastronomic wizardry.



SAVORING AMADEUS

An adventure on the Rhine and Moselle rivers
aboard a European favorite — Amadeus' Silver III.

LIZ FLEMING

An aerial photograph of a river cruise ship, the Amadeus Silver III, sailing on a blue river. The river curves through a lush green valley. On the right bank, there is a town with several buildings, including a large white building with a gabled roof. A winding road follows the curve of the river. In the foreground, there are more buildings and a church spire. The background shows rolling green hills under a blue sky with some clouds.

SPOTLIGHT ON RIVER CRUISING

Wondering why river cruising is the hottest and fastest growing segment of the travel world? Is it the fabulous cuisine that mixes fresh local ingredients with the culinary imagination of talented chefs? Maybe the fascinating shore excursions to iconic sites? Perhaps its the luxurious stateroom and suite accommodation. Or the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to immerse yourself in local culture? According to our two river cruise enthusiasts, it's a delightful combination of everything!



SZELMEK / ISTOCK



ADAM SINGIELSKI / ISTOCK

The walking shore excursion

in Rudesheim had been fascinating (loved the fantastic music box museum!) but so thorough that when it ended, we had to trot along pretty briskly to get to the café we'd spotted. We weren't leaving without a cup of famous whipped-cream-topped Rudesheim coffee and a slice of hot apple strudel.

What were we thinking? No sooner were we back on board the *Amadeus Silver III* – the newest ship in the Amadeus fleet – than the preparations began for a strudel-making class. Oh...and would we like a specialty coffee to go with that?

The only thing better than one plate of strudel and a cup of Rudesheim coffee is two plates and two cups.

A cruise on Amadeus is like that—dedicated to celebrating local flavors, whether culinary or cultural. A river cruise line new to many North American travelers, Amadeus is well-known in Europe and is, in fact, the company from which AMA Waterways was born. The company offers ten sleek river cruise ships and exciting European itineraries on the Rhine, Main, Moselle, Danube, Seine, Rhône, and Saône, as well as other smaller ship adventures on the Amazon, the Ganges, the Irrawaddy, and the Mekong.

Shore excursions and onboard entertainment and dining are designed to give guests a chance to experience each port's most iconic sites and



CLUBPHOTO / ISTOCK

savor its particular style with time to wander unaccompanied for those magical, we-were-the-only-ones-there moments. Unlike all-inclusive river cruise competitors, Amadeus offers shore excursions on an à la carte basis, enabling guests to choose the tours they'd prefer, or to explore entirely on their own. Not including daily shore excursions keeps the initial cost of the cruise lower but guests should be sure to budget for the excursions they choose.

Culture-vultures that we are, we chose a shore excursion in every port, touring the romantic ruins of the castle in Heidelberg and imagining the grand balls once held there, took photo after photo of exquisite, flower-bedecked Strasbourg, tasted rich, smoked gouda near Hoorn, then strolled the tiny streets of the fishing port of Volendam, eating crisp hot poffertjes awash in melted chocolate.

Gazing up at the massive towers of the Cathedral at Cologne, and taking a boat tour through the canals of old Amsterdam – there was more to do than we could squeeze into a single week. Some of our friends chose to shop for treasures instead or to sample the local beers or simply stay aboard, relax and take advantage of their luxe staterooms or suites (note: one features a separate seating area, the other, beds alone, but both are sunny and welcoming).

Certainly, our own suite was spacious and well-equipped with a French balcony that brought the world inside. Cozy corner seating and a window-view desk/vanity were two favorite spots for watching the shore glide past. In fact, we might just happily have burrowed into our suite, posting photos using the free onboard Wi-Fi after each big day ashore, had we not

This page (clockwise from above):

Hot apple strudel is a German treat.

Iconic view of the bridge and cathedral in Cologne, Germany.

Visitors enjoy an outdoor cafe in Rudesheim, Germany.

Facing page (clockwise from top):

Quaint timbered houses of Petite France in Strasbourg., France.

Restaurant and state-room aboard Silver III.



RUDYBALAJSKO / ISTOCK



PHOTO COURTESY AMADEUS



PHOTO COURTESY AMADEUS

known that great things awaited us in the dining room and lounge.

Though there was just one restaurant with a small casual luncheon area in the upstairs lounge, table service was available at all three meals, with a menu of breakfast and lunch choices that changed daily, and the buffet treats were often so tempting that we forgot to order. Soups, salads, smoked fish, fresh pasta...and then there were the pastries! Flaky, sweet, and deceptively petite, those pastries invited you to have another...and another.

Dinner each night was a delicious range of local specialities and chef's masterpieces and while those choices, in combination with the masterful table service, were exceptional, the real gem of the cruise was the Highlight Dinner. Special evenings created for small groups of guests (and offered at an extra cost). Highlight Dinners

are culinary extravaganzas that feature the chef's finest dishes paired with the sommelier's favorite wines – incredibly decadent and every sip or mouthful, a real treat.

Whether enjoying fabulous meals, lounging up top on the sun-deck as we gazed at the stunning castles of the Rhine Valley, learning tips and tricks from our talented chefs, listening to shore chats by our cruise director, touring beguiling cobblestone streets, or wandering imposing castle halls on excursions ashore, every day was a revelation and an important reminder that life is for living, for savoring, and for celebrating. Where better to do just that than aboard the *Amadeus Silver III*? ■

IF YOU GO Amadeus Cruises offer a European-flavored river cruise experience on well-appointed ships. For complete information and itineraries, visit www.amadeus-rivercruises.com and discuss the options with your travel professional.

The enchantment of Eastern Europe

A cruise on the Danube with
Emerald Waterways delivers a
cultural smorgasbord – delicious,
diverse and memorable.

ANNA HOBBS





ADAM PETTO / ISTOCK



ANNA HOBBS



FUNKYFOOD LONDON - PAUL WILLIAMS / ALAMY

The young history buff leading the tour

around Romania's capital, Bucharest, not only knows his stuff, but he also knows how to bring it to life. "We have been put together like a Lego kit," Serban Capatana says, with a twinkle in his eye, adding that until 150 years ago, the country was under Turkish control. "After 1866, we were allowed to do what we wanted." Today, within one downtown block, you can see Roman, French, Spanish and French buildings, as well as the new Romanian architectural style developed in the 1900s. Added to the mix are grim reminders of the Communist era – drab concrete towers that pepper the streetscape. "We are like a big tossed salad," Serban says.

Credit for creating this city that's dubbed the Paris of the East goes to Carol I, the king imported from Germany who ruled from 1886 to 1914. He commissioned Georges-Eugène Haussman, the architect who rebuilt Paris, to create broad, tree-lined avenues flanked by impressive public buildings and elegant mansions. The city even has its own scaled-down version of the Arc de Triomphe, built to commemorate Romania's victories during the First World War.

We're touring this handsome city before boarding Emerald Waterways' ten-day, Enchantment of Eastern

Europe – a Danube River cruise through five countries, bookended by Bucharest in the south and Budapest in the north. This being my first visit to the Balkans, and my first river cruise, I have granted the experience permission to surprise me every day, in every country, without any guidebook preconceptions.

If your idea of a cruise ship is a mega-floating-hotel with a climbing wall, three swimming pools and a cha-ching, cha-ching casino, then *Emerald Sky* isn't for you. But if a sleek, modern river ship that provides friendly, exquisite, mainly all-inclusive service for 150 guests as it glides along a beautiful river, docking in ancient cities and quaint towns appeals, then look no further.

On this voyage, all five countries we visited were once part of the Eastern Bloc. "This is the trip to take when you have explored Western Europe," says Emerald's vivacious cruise director, Jana Pakstaitis. "It is a fascinating, diverse region. Your experiences will be different and memorable."

That diversity is obvious in Bulgaria, the poorest country in the EU, where horse and donkey carts populate country roads. We pass factories that are shut down and deteriorating. Unemployment is high. "It is a continuing struggle to transition from a communist society to a free market," our young Bulgarian guide tells us. "Things change for the better, little by little, but not as quickly as we would like."

Facing page:

The Hungarian Parliament buildings in Budapest.

This page (clockwise from top left):

Covered arcade with bars and restaurants in Bucharest, Romania.

Street food in Budapest.

A woman in traditional dress in Kalocsa, Hungary makes strings of chilis.



COURTESY EMERALD WATERWAYS



COURTESY EMERALD WATERWAYS



COURTESY EMERALD WATERWAYS



COURTESY EMERALD WATERWAYS



REINHARD SCHMID / HUBER IMAGES / GETTY IMAGES

Clockwise from top left: Panorama Balcony Suite onboard Emerald Sky.

Emerald Sky's pool area and Reflections Restaurant.

Night scene in Old Quarter of Belgrade, Serbia.

Mraconia Monastery in Serbia's Danube Gorge.

Emerald Sky passing Decebal's head carved in rock in the Iron Gates Natural Park, Romania.

Yet here, in a rather gloomy old hotel, I meet four gentlemen (the youngest is 89) who have been friends since their teens. They meet in a cavernous banquet room every morning at 11 for coffee – Tim Hortons, Bulgarian-style. They tell me about their love of their country, about all the difficult times that Bulgaria has gone through, how it has always managed to survive, and how proud they are of its history. I am awed by their strength and resilience.

The day we sail through the narrow gorge called the Iron Gates – between the limestone cliffs of the European Alps and the Carpathian Mountains, separating Serbia from Romania – is a day to relax onboard.

My Panorama Balcony Suite has an indoor teak deck, with two chairs and a small table. At the touch of a hydraulic switch, the upper half of the glass wall lowers, creating an open-air balcony. It's a perfect place to enjoy a quiet afternoon with a book, admiring the passing scenery and to be lulled to sleep by the sound of the rippling water.



REINHARD SCHMID / HUBBER IMAGES / ISTOCK PHOTO



The next morning, we are in Serbia, tied up alongside Belgrade's cruise terminal, which is within walking distance of the city center.

"We have been bombed five times in the 20th century," our guide points out as we pass the remnants of a decimated building. Despite this gruesome reminder of the most recent conflict, renewal is obvious. With its cobblestone pedestrian streets, restaurants and bars, fashionable shops and the historic National Theater, the city center has a lively vibe. "I believe we need 15 more years to be where this country deserves to be," he says.

Included in Emerald's tours is a special opportunity to share a meal with a family in their home. The highlight of my day in rural Croatia is lunch at the farm of Milena and Stjepanu Lakic. Stjepanu is at the end of the driveway to greet us and loses no time in proposing a toast with his homemade pear brandy. Lunch, served family style, begins with tomato soup, (so good, we ask for the recipe), followed by hearty pork meatballs, (so delicious, we all have seconds) mixed vegetables and pickled beets. Dessert – equally delicious – is a traditional cherry square. Most of the ingredients have been grown or raised on the farm.

We see another aspect of rural life in the Hungarian town of Kalocsa where traditional folk art flourishes. Along with its lively songs, sprightly dances, colorful peasant costumes and beautiful embroideries, Kalocsa is famous

for the production of paprika. Hungarians, we learn, are so obsessed with the red spice that the average family consumes three kilos per year. Songs and dances tout its importance and there's even a museum in its honor.

The most spectacular surprise of the trip comes as we sail into Budapest after sundown. The handsome buildings that line the riverbanks – with Buda on one side of the river and Pest on the other – are garlanded in myriad white lights, creating a dazzling display against the night sky. Budapest by day is equally thrilling. I had been told that the river at its heart makes it an easy city to navigate on foot. With just one day to absorb as much as possible, I set off. The climb up to the Buda Castle rewards with a breathtaking view across the Chain Bridge to the Houses of Parliament. Striking turn-of-the century architecture and luxuriously restored buildings have replaced the impoverished communist-era image. I discover a city with a rich history, steamy thermal bathhouses, indulgent coffee houses and a lively culinary scene. Aria, the new music-themed, five-star, boutique hotel adds yet another reason to return to one of the most vibrant capitals in Eastern Europe.

I have been treated to a cultural smorgasbord – delicious, diverse and, as Jana promised, most certainly memorable. ■

IF YOU GO For more information about Emerald Waterways cruises, contact your travel professional and visit www.emeraldwaterways.ca

RIVER CRUISING

Symphony at sea

When **Crystal Bach** made her debut in August, she was the first of Crystal's four custom-built river ships to set sail. *Crystal Bach* and her successors – **Crystal Mahler** will debut later this year followed by **Crystal Debussy** and **Crystal Ravel** in 2018 – will offer the first all-balcony, all-suite river cruise ships in Europe. All four river yachts will offer Crystal's acclaimed butler service for every suite, plush king-sized beds that face toward the Panoramic Balcony Windows, walk-in closets, dual vanity in the bathrooms in most categories, ETRO robes and slippers, wall-mounted flat-screen HD TVs, and Nespresso machines. Additional features include farm-to-table, Michelin-inspired cuisine in multiple open-seating eateries: the elegant Waterside Restaurant, namesake Bistro cafés and the exclusive Vintage Room and the Palm Court. This year, every itinerary will feature at least one opportunity to dine ashore.



PHOTO COURTESY CRYSTAL

Sailing into a new world of wellness

As part of a celebration Global Wellness Day, **AmaWaterways** announced the launch of a wellness program onboard **AmaLyra** on her Paris & Normandy sailings. Featuring four to six classes daily, the program includes morning stretches, jogging, yoga, cardio and core strengthening and circuit training as well as discussion groups with a focus on healthy eating and relaxation techniques. The first river cruise line to embrace the active travel trend in 2006, AMA Waterways started by adding 25 bicycles onboard each European ship and has since expanded its biking and hiking shore excursions to offer a range of paces, giving guests options that suit their needs. In addition, the company increased its relationship with Backroads – the leader in active travel – in 2017 and now offers more than 50 active river cruise departures. Health-conscious eating and locally-sourced ingredients are the focus of the AMA Waterways healthy approach to cuisine, and their ships feature Hydration Stations with infused detox and gemstone water. Additional ships will feature wellness programs in 2018, and in 2019, AmaWaterways' newest ship – **AmaMagna** – will not only boast expanded fitness and spa facilities, but also a retractable water sports platform – another first in river cruising.

KRISTEN JOHANSEN / ISTOCK



ANATOLIY_GLEBY / ISTOCK

Getting active on the Rhine

Building on the success of their Active Discovery on the Danube cruises, **Avalon Waterways** has launched two exciting new active itineraries, now available on the Rhine River. On these highly unique cruise vacations, travelers have the opportunity to engage with their European destination by biking, hiking and exploring in unusual ways. Said Terri Burke, managing director of Avalon Waterways, in discussing the positive guest reactions to the program: "They can bike along the Rhine River, take a running tour of Amsterdam or hike on incredible trails. They can also immerse themselves in history and culture in each port with excursions to historic castles, a culinary tour or a painting class. Avalon travelers can even dress up in real Roman attire and participate in a reenactment of the Roman Games, tour an extinct volcano and a coal mine – a UNESCO World Heritage Site." Watch for an article by editor Liz Fleming on an Avalon Waterways' Active Discovery cruise on the Rhine in an upcoming issue!

Editor-in-Chief Liz Fleming had a chance to chat with **Terri Haas**, Vice President of Sales at Star Clippers about what's on the horizon for that unique cruise line.



What elements of a Star Clippers cruise set that experience apart from other cruises to similar destinations?

It's all about sailing – that's what sets us apart more than anything. In fact, the sailing experience is so important to us that we create our itineraries using wind charts because it's our intention to move under the power of wind as much as possible. On a Star Clippers trip, you don't spend very much time in your stateroom because you want to be up on deck. Going through her sail-away process, for example, is an absolutely breathtaking experience. The things you do on board are also very different – like climbing to the crow's nest and learning to tie nautical knots etc. – it's all very relaxing. Many of our guests just love lying in the bowsprit – I certainly know that I lost my husband to the bowsprit on our last trip!

Which 2018 itineraries are you most excited about and why?

All of our itineraries are great, but I think our South East Asian sailings are truly unique. We take our guests to some of the most incredible coral reefs in the world in Thailand, and to Indonesia where every island is different – from lush green forests to volcanic landscapes. The other thing that's so exciting about our cruises in that part of the world – particularly in Phuket and Singapore – are the diving opportunities. Some of the most incredible diving destinations in the world are in Thailand and Indo-

nesia. To make it as convenient as possible for our guests, we carry 15 sets of SCUBA equipment and have an outstanding dive master on board. Guests only have to pay for their tanks of air. In addition, we offer complimentary water sports activities on all our itineraries including snorkeling, kayaking, paddle boarding, and more.

Star Clippers has an exciting new ship on the horizon – what details can you share with us about her unique features, her size, the differences she'll have and the timing of her launch?

Well... I wish I could give you more information about the arrival date of the new *Flying Clipper* but the truth is that Star Clippers' owner, Mikael Krafft, wants every part of the ship to be perfect.

Mr. Krafft grew up next to a shipyard in Sweden and built model sailing ships as a boy. He was given a model of a sailing ship named the *Preussen* – and he said, "One day, I'll build this for real." And he did – the *Royal Clipper* which was built according to specifications of the *Preussen*. Now, Mr. Krafft wants the exterior of the *Flying Clipper* to look like the *France II* – the original sailing ship she's being modeled after – but inside, she'll have modern amenities to make it as comfortable as all of our other ships.

The *Flying Clipper* will look a lot like her sister, the *Royal Clipper* with five masts and square sails just like the *France II*, the largest square-rig sailing ship ever built. One big difference is that the *Flying Clipper* will have 30 balcony suites and four owner suites. *Royal Clipper* has 14 and they are always sold out – after all, everyone wants the balcony experience! We're planning on a launch in late 2018.

Star Clippers is adding an exciting Indonesian itinerary to its 2018 lineup. What can you tell us about the ports you'll visit and the shore excursions guests will enjoy?

There's so much! For example, our guests will visit Komodo Island where they'll walk on pink sand beaches and see Komodo dragons. Then in Java, they'll visit Probolinggo, take a jeep ride through the volcanic tops, and then ride ponies to the base of Mount Bromo where they'll hike. In Bali, guests will do hiking tours into mangrove forests

to see monkeys and lizards, and experience some just incredible views. Of course, there are city tours, and visits to villages where they'll meet local people making their boats and thatched roofs, even carrying out religious rituals. We have a broad audience of guests – everything from honeymooners, to millennials, to active seniors – and they're all active and outgoing. The best way to visit these destinations for that kind of guest is on a sail boat, so they get to see the diversity of all the islands.

Star Clippers takes a very different approach to onboard culture – particularly in the evenings. Can you describe what guests enjoy most?

Entertainment at night varies depending on the itinerary, but what we offer is very different than cruise ships. Our activities and entertainment very often are made up of fun activities involving the crew and our guests (talent shows, games, etc.) with local entertainers brought on board as well to give a flavor of the destination we're visiting. In addition, story telling by the cruise director is always entertaining, and our many "theme" cruises also add variation when we host photographers, astronomers, yoga instructors, culinary and wine specialists, etc

You've been introducing your guests to the thrill of true sailing for more than 25 years. In that time, how has Star Clippers grown and evolved?

The company began with the *Star Flyer* in 1991, and the next year added her twin sister, *Star Clipper*, to the fleet. In 2000, Mr. Krafft commissioned the building of the *Royal Clipper* and since then, more than 60 percent of guests have become repeat sailors – often in the course of their first year! That kind of guest loyalty has made it possible for us to grow in terms of the new destinations we offer to our repeat guests. For example, we began sailing in Phuket about six years ago, and then moved on to Tahiti to offer repeat sailors something new. Now, we've gone back to Thailand because of many requests from our past guests, and added Indonesia and Bali for something new. Our company has evolved most in terms of our itineraries and we're always looking at new destinations suggested by our guests. We listen and plan according to what those loyal guests want. We ask, "Where would you like us to sail?" And Mr. Krafft listens. Who knows what new destinations we will come up with next?



Holiday like the Royals at NORTH ISLAND, SEYCHELLES

"YOU'RE GOING TO NORTH ISLAND? Seychelles?" asked a colleague. "That's where Will and Kate honeymooned!" she exclaimed.

Yes, North Island inspires awe, excitement and more than a little bit of jealousy, even among well-traveled types.

Little wonder. This private island hideaway provides a haute Robinson Crusoe experience that begins as soon as you set eyes on East Beach, a perfect expanse of white sand trimmed with turquoise water.

Set back, but with exquisite views, are eleven large and very private villas. Number eleven – where Will and Kate stayed – is a multi-tiered extravaganza of more than 8,000 square feet that stretches from the beach up into the coconut canopy. The other ten 'presidential' villas offer the same barefoot luxury with indoor and outdoor spaces converging so naturally under a soaring thatched roof that you might wonder 'Am I inside or out?'

Not that it matters, because the smart design carries over into the furnishings and décor. Natural materials – including the trunks and branches of takamaka trees – provide structure and shade, as well as surfaces you can't resist running your hands over, be it the sleek rosewood vanity in the sumptuous bathroom, or the gossamer bed curtains.

If you can drag yourself away from your villa – and I promise it will be difficult – you'll find an island that's being restored to its original glory. Aldabra giant tortoises munch on fallen fruit, hawksbill and green turtles nest on the beaches, and birds such as the tiny Seychelles White-Eye trill from the treetops.

Offshore experiences are just as special. Scuba dive or snorkel along the colorful coral reefs. Paddle a kayak around the island and stop at a secluded beach for a swim. At day's end, dine al fresco, with toes in the sand and drink in hand, as the sun sets over West beach.

— SUZANNE MORPHET



PHOTOS COURTESY NORTH ISLAND

2017-18
SEASON
CANADIAN

Sea the unseen.
Sea more.
See the Authentic Cuba



Celestyal Cruises
Sea more.

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- Fully guided selected shore excursions - 3 excursions when boarding in Montego Bay and 4 excursions when boarding in Havana
- Unlimited Standard Alcoholic beverage package (under 18 years of age will receive a non alcoholic beverage package)
- Authentic Cuban and international cuisine
- Port and service charges (gratuities)
- Intimate cruise ship, only 960 guests
- Fabulous nightly entertainment performed by local Cuban artists

8 DAYS/7 NIGHTS ITINERARY



2017 DEPARTURES

OCT 23, 30
NOV 6, 13, 20, 27
DEC 4, 11, 18, 25

2018 DEPARTURES

JAN 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
FEB 5, 12, 19, 26
MARCH 5

DAY	PORTS	ARR.	DEPT.
MON	HAVANA	8 AM	(OVERNIGHT)
TUE	HAVANA		10 PM
WED	AT SEA		
THU	CIENFUEGOS	7 AM	3 PM
FRI	MONTEGO BAY	8 AM	8 PM
SAT	SANTIAGO DE CUBA	7AM	3 PM
SUN	AT SEA		
MON	HAVANA	8 AM	

Itinerary is subject to change without notice

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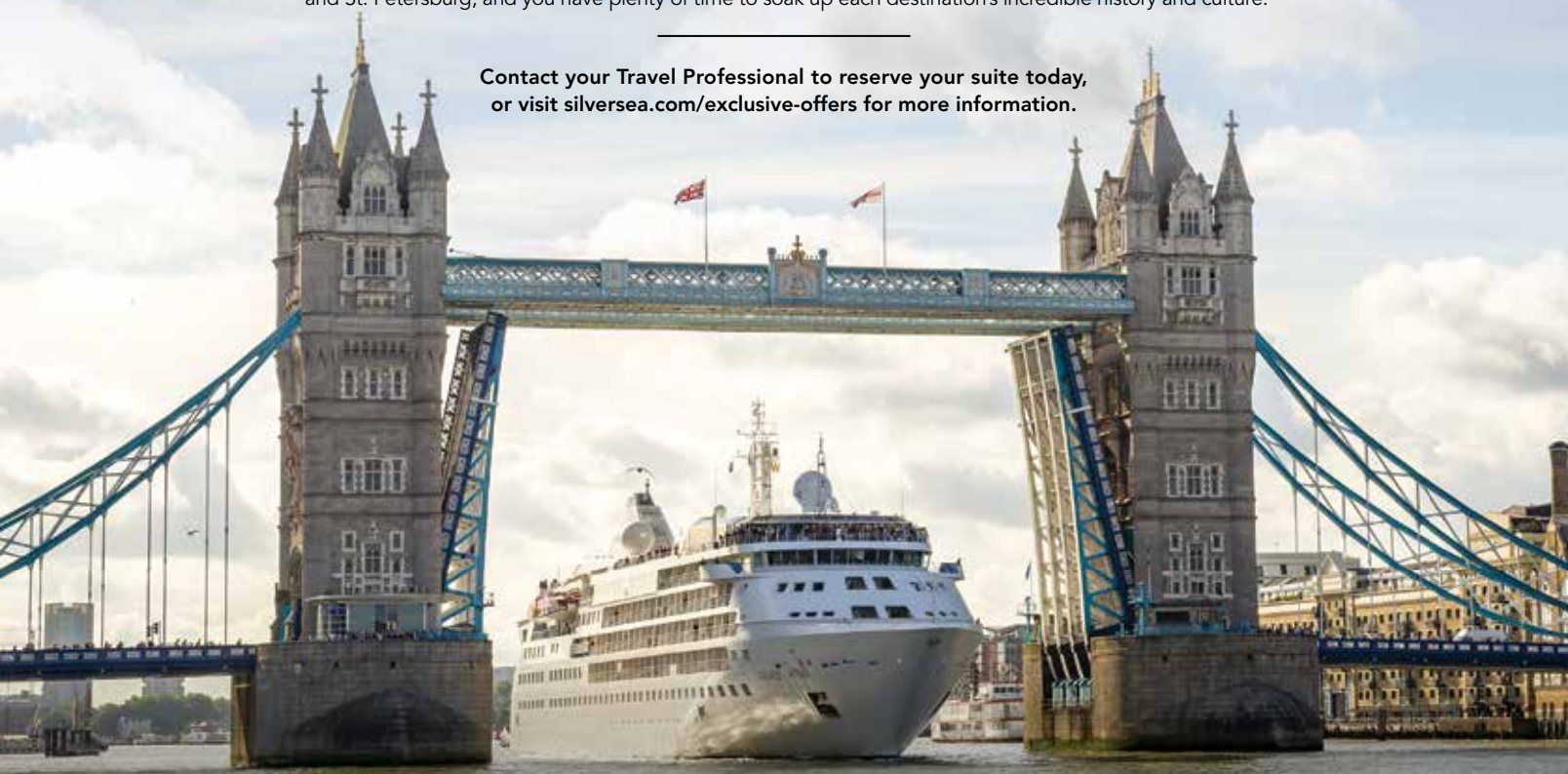
Best for embarkation, entertainment, shore excursions and value!

The SilverSea logo features a stylized 'S' icon to the left of the word 'SILVERSEA' in a serif font, with a registered trademark symbol.

COME SEE OUR WORLD

SilverSea's 2018 voyages through Northern Europe and the British Isles exudes a character accrued over centuries, and you'll gain a unique perspective from all the destinations you'll visit. *Silver Spirit* and *Silver Wind* will take you through exclusive routes as they cruise the Baltic and up Norway's North Cape. Our small ships lead you to big discoveries on the broadest scale, from architectural splendors and grand palaces to floating markets and local cuisine. An assortment of eight brand new ports, plus three which have not been visited by SilverSea in the last five years, bring fresh perspective on this remarkable region. Add in late-night departures from Dublin, London and St. Petersburg, and you have plenty of time to soak up each destination's incredible history and culture.

**Contact your Travel Professional to reserve your suite today,
or visit silversea.com/exclusive-offers for more information.**

A large white SilverSea cruise ship is sailing through the open bascules of the Tower Bridge in London. The bridge's two massive stone towers and blue steel suspension cables are prominent. The ship has multiple decks with many windows and is moving towards the viewer. The sky is overcast with soft light.

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