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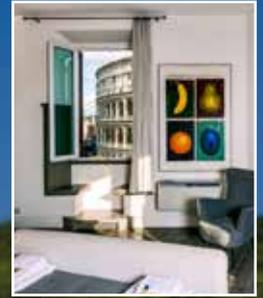
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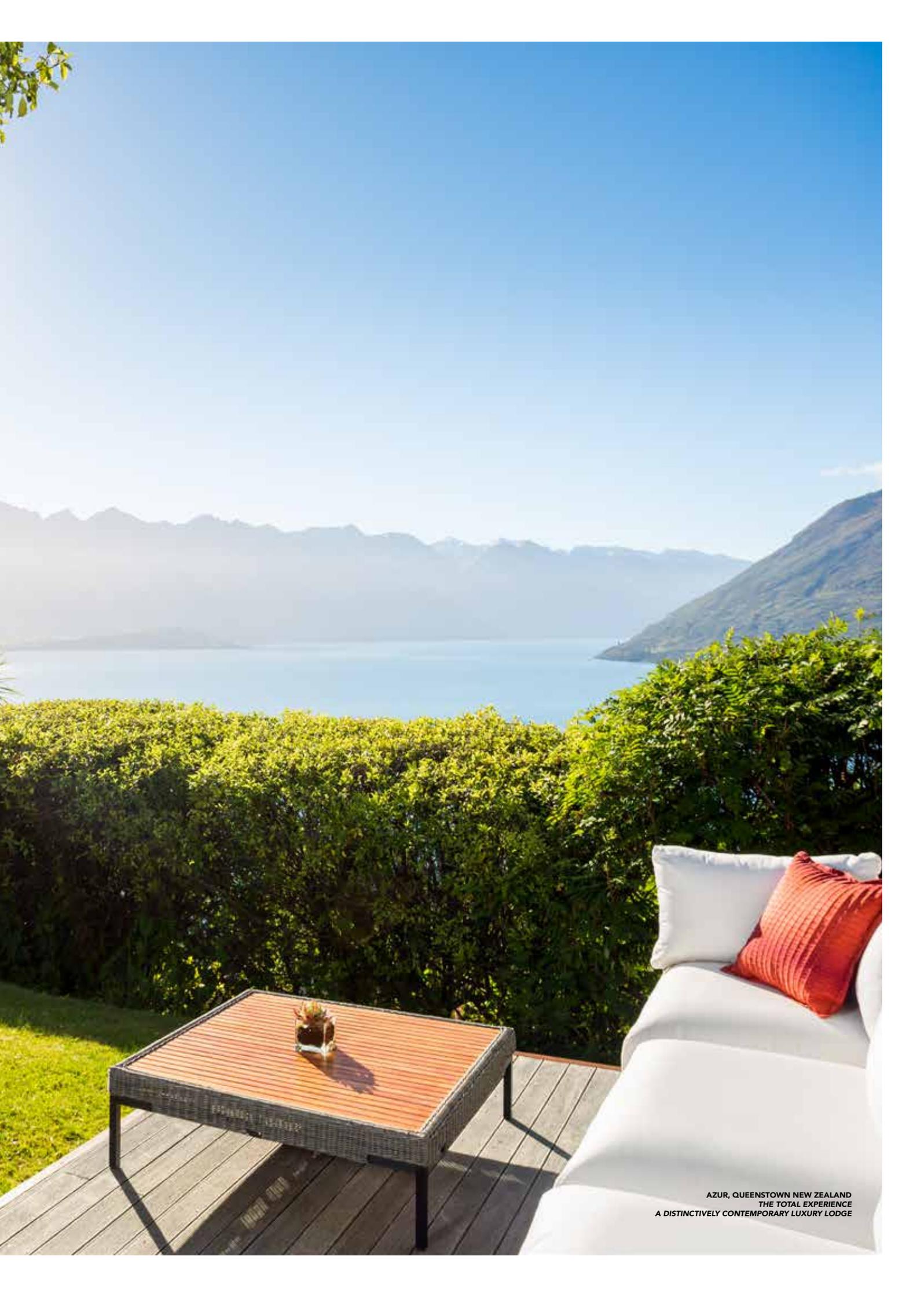


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# EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the very first Australian edition of our Ensemble Extraordinary Experiences magazine!

Whether you are looking for the ultimate romantic experience or a relaxing cruise, or starting to plan your summer holiday or winter escape, these articles will get you dreaming.

In this edition we explore:

- Some of the stunning properties in Australia and New Zealand that feature in our Luxury Hotel and Resorts collection
- Some of the majestic cities of Central Europe
- Cruising to wellness (yes it's possible!)
- Alaska and Antarctica
- Ireland and Britain
- Cinque Terre

Plus there's a smorgasboard of culinary and wine events across the world through to June 2018 – go ahead, you know you want to!

Lastly, check out our worldly delights section where we discover some of Europe's best markets where chefs and locals indulge in the very best of local produce.

When you're ready to book your next holiday, our expert designers are here to help you find the extraordinary experience that's just right for you and your budget.

There's a whole world of adventure out there and we're thrilled to showcase so many amazing destinations and holidays.

Here's to travelling the world together,

*Trish Shepherd*  
Editor



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# MAJESTIC CITIES OF CENTRAL EUROPE

For music, art, architecture and design,  
majestic central Europe is the destination of choice.

By Heather Greenwood-Davis



“The Chain Bridge has become symbolic of nationalism as the first to unite the two sides and the lions that guard entry are among the most photographed in the city”

# BUDAPEST

CHAIN BRIDGE

I can hear the classical music playing inside the car before I climb in. The driver, who has arrived to pick up my husband and I at Budapest airport, rushes to turn down the volume. He is aflutter with apologies but he needn't be. Music is a big part of why we are here. It's a fact made clear when we point out our destination – the music themed Aria Hotel Budapest in the historic city centre. We all laugh as he turns the volume up again.

Venture to any of the cities that roll off your tongue while planning a vacation – Paris, Barcelona, Rome – and what you'll find quite easily are tourist-populated museums hiding history behind glass and rope barriers. Central Europe is different.

Here in these majestic cities, music, art, architecture and design are as inescapable as street-side cafés and bustling squares. In places like Budapest, Vienna and Munich, art is a way of life.

### THE MONUMENTS OF BUDAPEST

Budapest is a city of contrasts. Buildings are a mix of the stark, boxy structures from its communist past and the flashier commercial streets that are the product of a democracy achieved only eight years ago. Then there are the buildings that offer a fairy tale feel by day and come alive under illumination at night: parliaments and palaces, monuments and memorials. All of it shared by an ever-optimistic people and a longstanding practice of sharing the highs and lows of history through art.

"Liberty is very much appreciated by the Hungarians," explains our Budapest guide as we walk, noting that everyone from Catholic convertors to Russian rulers have left their mark.

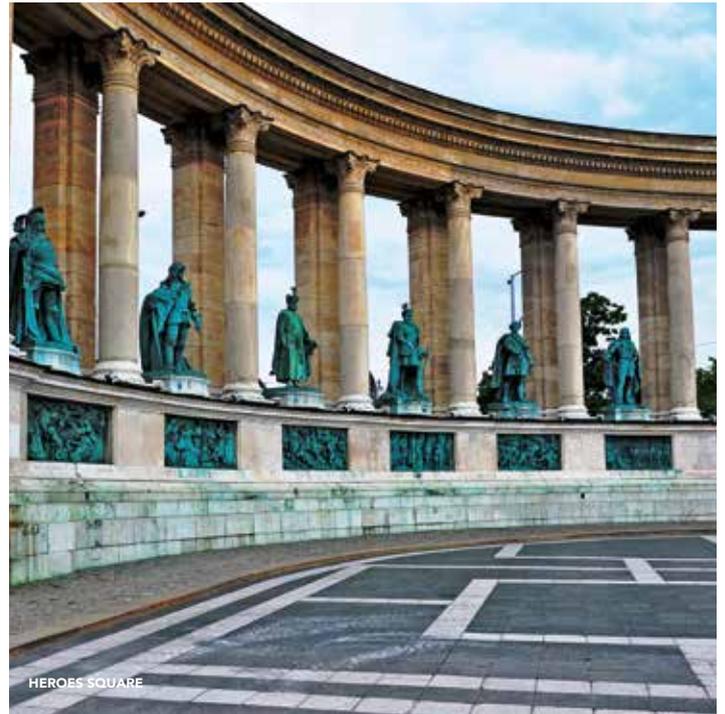
Wander either side of the Danube – Buda's rolling green hills, Castle district, Trinity Square and Fisherman's Bastion to the west, or Pest's bustling markets, ruin pubs and opulent squares to the east – and you'll be met with monuments that date from across Hungary's conquered past; changed as necessary to reflect political movements and new ideals.

Take the Liberation Statue for example. The 46-foot-tall woman holding the torch of progress high above the city was once flanked by gun-toting Russian soldier statues. They were removed once the Russians were out of power.

And then there are the bridges: The Chain Bridge has become symbolic of nationalism as the first to unite the two sides and the lions

that guard entry are among the most photographed in the city. The Liberty Bridge was originally named after Emperor Francis Joseph in 1896, but by the time it was bombed during World War II times had changed dramatically. When the time came to rebuild, the name was changed to reflect the end of Nazi occupation. These artistic facts of history, with little emotion or fanfare attached – no oversized plaques or pointed explanations – dot the landscape as we walk among the constant flow of tourists.

The closest we come to artistic sentiment is in Heroes' Square where the Millennium Monument at its centre is flanked by a bisected colonnade. On it stands an impressive selection of statues featuring kings and notables from Hungary's past. When WWII attacks damaged it, Hungarians took the opportunity to snub the Austro-Hungarian empire that had ruled when it was originally built. Five of the statues representing the once-ruling Habsburg emperors were rebuilt with Hungarian freedom fighters in their place.





GRABEN STREET, VIENNA

# VIENNA

## MUSIC, ART AND ARCHITECTURE IN VIENNA

Vienna demands perspective. You need to see it from different angles and at different speeds, sometimes with an informed guide in your ear and sometimes without. We get our first glimpse of Vienna's famous Ring Road from a tour coach. The height of the coach offers a unique view of the mid-19th century buildings, monuments and parklands. Driving the route in a car wouldn't have allowed lingering looks at the detailed carvings that run along the tops of buildings and fountains, and walking it would've required Herculean neck strength for the craning required to see it all. But to circle the UNESCO World Heritage site city only by coach would also be a mistake. Viennese streets beg to be walked and it is best to do so with music in your ears.



This is the music capital of the world. The place the classical musicians ran to, the birthplace of “Viennese Waltz King” Johann Strauss and his waltz that has become the city’s anthem (On the Beautiful Blue Danube). It’s where Mozart lived (the house behind St Stephens cathedral can still be toured for 10 Euro) and where the Vienna Boys Choir call home.

In Vienna, everyday life has a soundtrack. It’s everywhere: wafting through cafés as you sip your Wiener Melange (a speciality coffee with steamed milk), proudly coming from the strings of a violinist at The Opera House; or booming from the telltale chimes of the Anker, an Art Nouveau clock where 12 carved historical figures rotate through the peekaboo window telling the city’s history to the tune of their respective era. Classical music seems fitting with the city’s classic architecture. The combination of contemporary and traditional designs blend seamlessly.

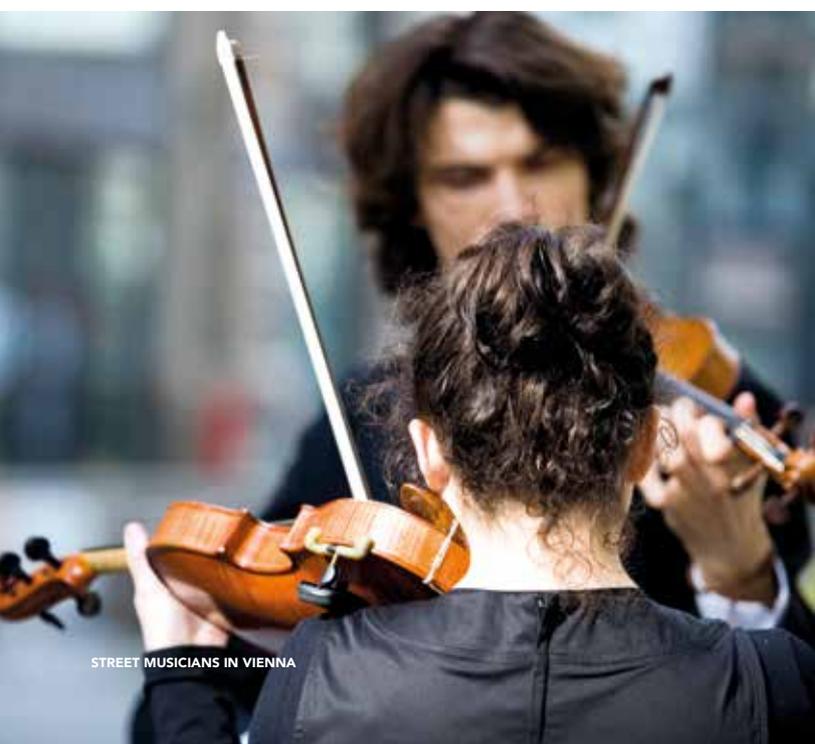


Lovers of art will find plenty in the museums and palaces but we decide to save The Albertina – one of the world’s best museums featuring original works from Klimt, Picasso and Cézanne – for another visit and wander the cobblestone streets instead. It’s enough, as a first-timer, to pause in the courtyards of the Schönbrunn palace and marvel. And, to admire the horse-drawn carriages that trot along the inner pathways of the city with tourists under blankets in the back. I’m happy to spend a few hours watching the people move about, peering up at the statue of Empress Maria Theresa (mother to Marie Antoinette and the only woman to ever rule during the time of the Habsburgs) in the city’s main square while tourists and locals stroll carefree.

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“Classical music seems fitting with the city’s classic architecture.

The combination of contemporary and traditional designs blend seamlessly”



# MUNICH

## DESIGN IN MUNICH

Where Budapest and Vienna use art to laud the past, Munich looks forward. There's a Bavarian joviality here that tempers the stereotypical German no-nonsense reputation. Laughter is louder and runs later into the night here, and yet in the morning, workers board the U-Bahn none the worse for wear. You can dream, the city seems to say, but there should be some practicality in the end.



MUNICH



OLYMPIC PARK



NEW TOWN HALL



BMW HEADQUARTERS

“There’s a Bavarian joviality here that tempers the stereotypical German no-nonsense reputation”

You only have to look to the famous Maximilianstraße area for proof of that. Here, the high-end stores that line the street are recognizable names to the fashion-savvy: Bvlgari, Jimmy Choo, Prada among them. But the windows – here a dining table where the courses are purses and shoes; there furry monsters wearing shiny leather boots – suggest they don’t take themselves as seriously as their contemporaries might in Paris or New York. The windows are more than beacons wooing pedestrians, they are statements of art in their own right, making an afternoon of window shopping as intoxicating as a trip to the museum. It’s enough to have us walking for hours.

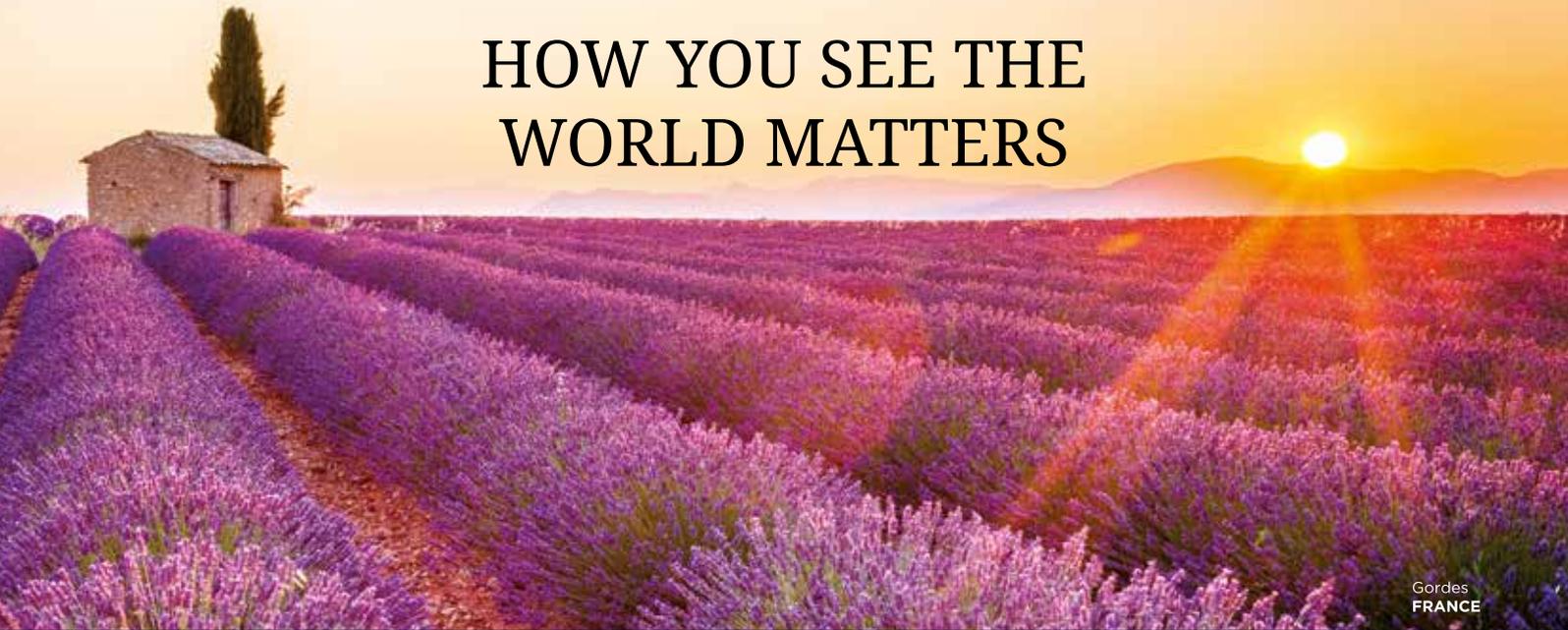
We pause in the lobby of the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski that has stood as a beacon on this street since 1858. In the lobby, well-dressed waiters deliver High Tea trays filled with delicately designed pastries perched just so. The service is formal and precise, but the desserts themselves bright and whimsical.

Munich has its moments of Gothic stiffness but it’s like an angry mother who can’t hold her temper for long. For a moment you’ll be caught up in the pointed arches and vaulted ceilings, only to step outside, turn a corner and find the frivolity once again. Case in point: The New Town Hall with its dark foreboding exterior is also home to the whimsical glockenspiel; the church of St. Peter’s design tempers its reserved religious intent. At a 16th century beer hall, we meet a waitress with a gruff demeanour and a generous pour. In the pub across the street, shared tables lead to late night laughs with strangers who become fast friends. And the art isn’t limited to the large squares frequented by foreigners.

At the BMW Welt exhibition centre, sexy curves and bright colours depict the future of design inside the award-winning building. The cars seem secondary to the artistry behind them. And as we stroll through Olympic Park, the curved sloping architecture of the halls still feel futuristic more than 40 years after they hosted the games.

My husband and I run out of time before we can take in any of the art museums that draw thousands each year and it dawns on me that, like Vienna and Budapest, there are no pangs of guilt as a result. We may have missed the art curated for viewing, but seeing the art that was built for living is enough.

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# FALLING FOR PROVENCE

**FRANCE IS SYNONYMOUS WITH ROMANCE — THE VERY THOUGHT OF IT CONJURING UP IMAGES OF LOVERS EMBRACED AT THE FOOT OF THE EIFFEL TOWER. BUT, AS OUR WRITER DISCOVERS, THE SEDUCTION EXTENDS FAR BEYOND PARIS. ITS TASTES AND EXPERIENCES EQUALLY TEMPTING IN THE SOUTH EASTERN REGION OF PROVENCE WHERE YOUR PALATE WILL NO DOUBT BE SATISFIED AND YOUR HEART WILDLY CONTENT. BY JILL GLEESON**

The first time I saw Provence it was with sleep-smudged eyes, from the scratched window of a plane descending gently toward the Nice Côte d’Azur Airport. My boyfriend had awoken me with a nudge, pointing out the ribbons of white sand and impossibly clear, bottle blue waters of the fabled French Riviera unspooling beneath us. From a mile up, it was every bit as spectacular as I had imagined one of the planet’s more favoured slices of real estate would be. I felt magnificently swanky winging toward it, although – travel begrimed and stuffed into economy – I was not exactly a jetsetter.

I didn’t fall in love with Provence until two days later. I was on a coach as part of an organised group tour, headed to Pont du Gard, the massive Roman aqueduct built in the mid-first century AD and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There was a slight back-up in traffic and we paused alongside a vineyard. It’s a common enough sight in the region, which is a robust, though mostly underrated producer of wine, especially dry, fresh rosés. (Half of all wine bottled in Provence is pink; the area’s reds, typically rich and full-flavoured, account for a third of its output.)

It’s believed Provence viticulture dates back at least 26 centuries, making it France’s oldest wine growing region, but the plants I was gazing at from my seat on the coach were young and had not yet begun to spread grape-bearing tendrils heavenward. Between road and field, wild orange poppies were blooming, as it seemed they’d been everywhere I looked since arriving in Provence. Behind them sat a flawlessly preserved, bright red tractor from the 1950s. My mouth fell open. The whole thing was so perfect as to appear crafted: an enchanting *mise-en-scène* meant only for me. And just like that, I was in love.



Pont du Gard, Avignon

Provence stretches lazily, like a sun-drenched cat, from the Mediterranean Sea northward and from the Rhone River east. It has seduced travellers since the time of the Greeks, who established Massilia – much later to morph into the Provençal capital Marseille – around 600 BC. This is the region that so bewitched mad Vincent van Gogh. He created many of his most enduring paintings, including “The Starry Night,” while in the ancient Roman city of Arles and from his asylum room in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. Provence’s lemony southern light and bold colour palette inspired the artist; in the 444 days he lived within its borders, he produced some 500 works. Arles is also home to a two-tiered Roman arena dating back to the

first century BC, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and unfortunate host to bullfights in the summer. But for me, there was no finer place to be in all of Provence than Uzès on a Wednesday morning.

The medieval town, with a population of less than 10,000, is one of the region’s largely undiscovered pleasures, and even with dozens of North Americans wandering its narrow, cobblestoned streets, Uzès still feels authentic. Sidewalk cafés and upscale shops are everywhere, their interiors spilling out festive and very enticing racks filled with pinafores and parasols, chapeaus and shoes, handbags and baby regalia – all of it, every bit, unique and fabulous. I could have spent days poking

around these boutiques, but a greater joy awaited: the Wednesday morning market in the town's centre, Place aux Herbes.

There are actually two weekly markets in Uzès; the more crowded Saturday version includes locally made goods, like textiles and jewellery. But I browsed today's market with no regrets for trinkets unseen, because Wednesday was dedicated solely to food and in Provence, with its shores that kiss the Mediterranean and appealing range of microclimates, food nourishes every sense. On this morning, as you head to Uzès' central square, you might note the faint scent of lavender, thyme or rosemary before you come upon the stalls stocked with it, or hear the pleasant hum of exchange between vendor and patron prior to catching sight – with perhaps a few accordion-fingered notes of "La Vie En Rose" drifting by on the breeze for good measure. And then you're in the Place aux Herbes and your eyes widen at sights nearly as lovely as any Provençal artist has produced.

Wednesday mornings in Uzès find butchers selling lamb and perhaps game birds – meats typically flavoured with herbes de Provence, a mixture of thyme, lavender, oregano, rosemary and marjoram, any chef in the world worth their salt stocks in their kitchen. Fishmongers display their wares, too, including some of the ingredients of bouillabaisse, the traditional Marseille stew, like rockfish, mussels and turbot.

But nothing dazzled me like the chèvre purveyors. Thanks to a climate that largely favours the type of scrubby vegetation preferred more by goats than cows, Provence has perfected the craft of making goat cheese. There were several stalls offering a head-turning array of the stuff and I sampled a few. Most were of the soft, crumbly variety, pleasantly tangy but not bitter, than those I adore back home, though the flavours were deeper, the texture a bit smoother.

Slightly groggy from my feast, I dragged myself from Place aux Herbes. There was a classical concert exclusively for the group I was with set for early evening at Palais des Papes, the largest Gothic building of the Middle Ages and the seat of Western Christianity in the 14th century. Afterward, we'd dine on dishes including John Dory sole, a favourite fish of the region, and salads with produce procured from the Avignon market, like lamb's lettuce, soft-textured and with a hint of nuttiness. I'd heard there might be local wine served too, perhaps Chateauneuf-de-Pape Fiole-du-Pape. I'd previously sampled this fruity red inventively made from blending young wines and older reserve cuvées and fully expected to enjoy it even more on its home turf.

We were due to motor out of Provence that night, headed up the Rhône toward the bright lights of Lyon and beyond. It had been an ideal 48-hour introduction to the culinary and cultural charms of Provence, and I knew I'd be back as soon as I could to explore more, my heart – just like those of the ancient Greeks, to poor old van Gogh and beyond – utterly stolen by the region.



French cheese at Provence market



French seafood at Provence market



Cobblestone street in Uzès

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CRUISES



# Cruising to Wellness

onboard the luxurious Crystal Symphony

By Toby Saltzman

When most people think of cruising, it's the itinerary that springs to mind, but for worldly cruise aficionados looking beyond ports to a hedonistic interlude at sea, it's the shipboard lifestyle that lures them back to the same line, time after time. When I found my heart and soul craving an exuberant renewal to wellness, vitality, and mindfulness, I returned to Crystal Cruises' *Crystal Symphony*.

The itinerary, a leisurely, 14-day sojourn from New York City to Baltimore, Charleston, Jacksonville, Grand Turk, Curaçao and Aruba, ending in Miami, enticed me with sea days. Ah, sea days, the floating space of time to lavish purely on myself and cultivate sensations of wellness and mental acuity.

Boarding the ship, gleaming against New York's grey skyscrapers, I was greeted by staff offering flutes of Champagne. Within minutes, I was ushered into my penthouse suite laden with flowers, fresh fruit, chocolate truffles, and a silver bucket chilling French Champagne. There, I found Igor, my tuxedo-clad butler stocking my in-suite bar with spirits, wine and beer.

"May I provide anything else?" Igor asked. Wowed by the suite – the bed with cushy duvet, the seating area, the big bathroom with twin sinks, tub and shower, and balcony facing the sea – I couldn't imagine needing anything else. Igor deftly offered to book specialty dining reservations, unpack and have my clothes pressed (complimentary for penthouse guests) and set consultations with the spa and fitness directors while I enjoy lunch.

A brief interview with the empathetic spa and fitness gurus helped align my ambitions for this cruise. As my daily routine typically starts with a morning walk, they upped the fitness ante with a Nordic walk training session that I could follow on my own. Then, combining therapeutic spa and exercise programs that could be enhanced with daily stretching, yoga, pilates or personal training, they synchronized a schedule that spared time to engage in other activities.

That evening set the vibe for a gala voyage. Music enlivened the lounges where passengers danced to live bands, or mingled over cocktails – all complimentary on the all-inclusive Crystal Cruises. In the dazzling atrium lobby, the pianist played romantic tunes on the "crystal piano", a masterpiece of Lucite design.

Dinner in the Waterside was superb. Sipping deliciously crisp Sancerre, I perused the two distinctive menus, titled *Modern Cuisine* and *Crystal Classics*, then dined ecstatically on an appetizer of seared Ahi Tuna and an entrée of plump veal rib eye glossy with fragrant rosemary demi-glaze.

The *Symphony* is lively to the wee hours, from show lounge to bars, casino, cinema and cigar room retreat. But I soon retreated to my suite, intent on nurturing my body with restorative sleep.

The first sea day brimmed with Crystal's stimulating spectrum of options: simply relax or arouse your mind; join smart Computer University@Sea programs that include digital filmmaking; enrich your mind with new skills at Crystal's Creative Learning Institute, which offers professional instruction in Berlitz Spanish, bridge lessons, water colour painting, knitting, and golf; take dancing lessons with gentleman and lady hosts provided for solo travelers; and, of course, enjoy various lectures by esteemed experts on political science and cultural topics.

Eager to try my hand at bridge and the art of watercolour painting, I signed up for beginner classes. After cruising through eight sessions of each program, I mastered basic skills of the game to continue playing at home, and learned that focusing on dabbing a canvas with delicate paint unleashes your inner creativity and calms your mind.

After the captain's reception that evening, conversations among my tablemates flowed cheerfully from the first Bordeaux to the finishing Brandy. Hailing from Australia, New Zealand and Canada, we anticipated various excursions from Baltimore to Washington and the White House.



Butler Service



Crystal Symphony Main Dining Room

From Charleston to historic plantations; a day in Savannah; kayaking, or culinary lessons from famed chefs. From Jacksonville to historic St. Augustine, or lovely Amelia Island.

In Grand Turk, snorkelling, kayaking, dune-buggy adventures or a two-tank dive for the certified divers. Beaches, natural sights, and shopping topped plans for Curaçao and Aruba.

Dining together occasionally as the cruise progressed, my tablemates and I shared ship and shore experiences, and described choice meals in *Symphony's* specialty restaurants. Faves in Prego: succulent lobster, delicate Branzino, rack of lamb crusted with rosemary and ginger gremolata, and lavender roasted duck breast. Umi Uma created by celebrity Chef Nobu Matsuhisa earned raves about the fusion of flavours that turned salmon tartare, yellowtail tuna and wagyu beef into mouth-watering delicacies.

It was on the tenth day, while lounging on my private balcony, smiling mindlessly at the sea as the *Symphony* navigated under sunny Caribbean skies, that I suddenly realized I was blissfully, joyously enveloped by a sense of well-being. No aches or angst. No wonder. Besides perking up mentally with bridge and painting, I had just reveled in the third of a series of healing therapies. Starting with a 90-minute Thai massage, the therapist had melted my tense muscles to mush by rolling a poultice heated with anti-inflammatory Chinese herbs up and down my limbs. A few days later, an exfoliating lime and ginger salt scrub, followed by a Frangipani body wrap and massage left me feeling all aglow. This day, after my all-time favorite treatment, a deep cleansing, detoxifying seaweed wrap and aromatic oil massage that revs up circulation, I felt tingly with rejuvenation.

The last sea day, while indulging in an illuminating facial, I envisioned the *Crystal Symphony* as a palace of privileged pampering. After all the royal treatment, I felt so good.



Photo Credit: Toby Saltzman



Fitness class



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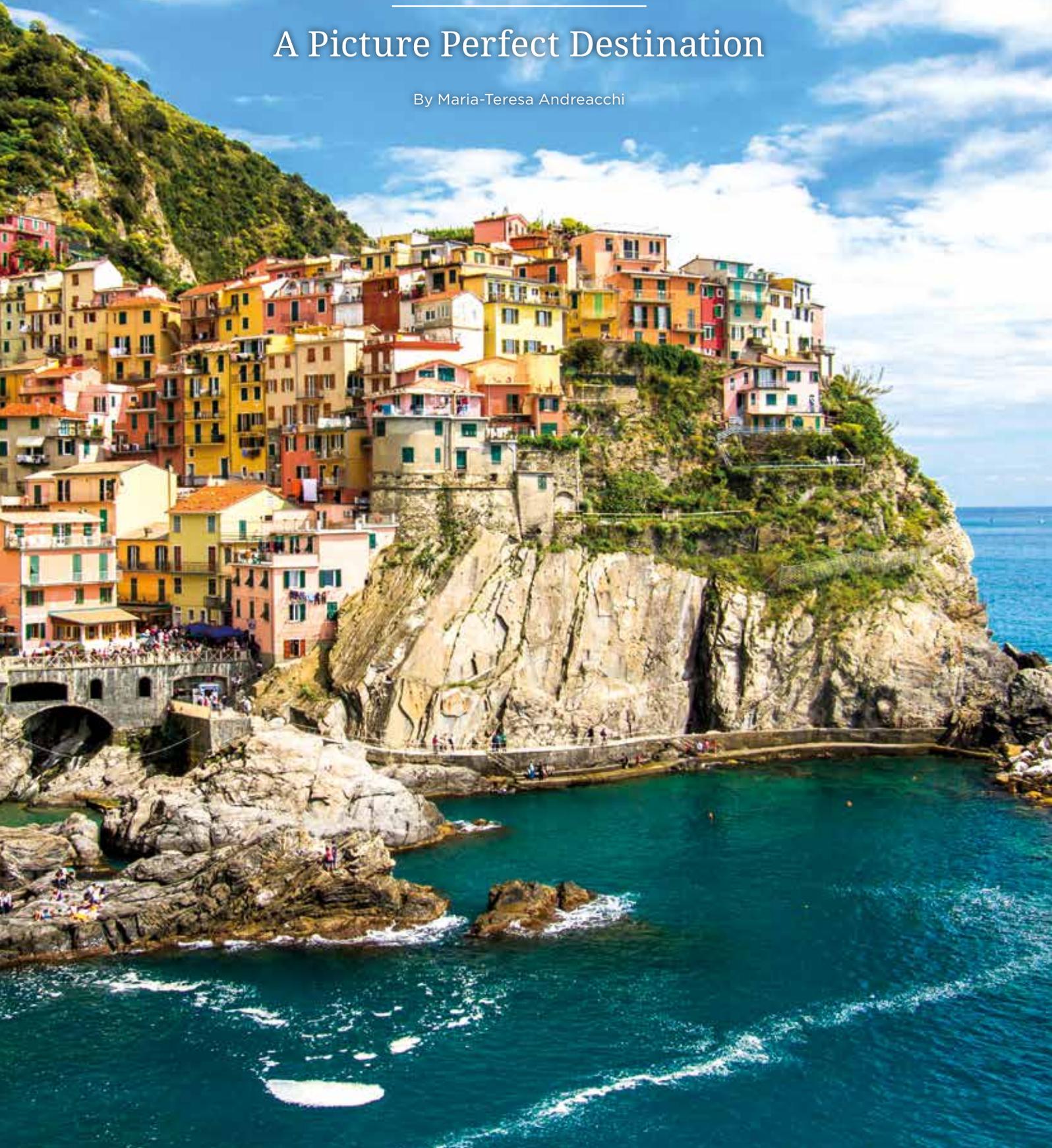
*"This tour by CIE Tours was fantastic. Great tour driver, excellent hotels and meals and we saw so much of Ireland. We could not have covered anywhere near as much by ourselves and the local knowledge was excellent. Highly recommended!!!"*

*– Lisa S.  
Castle Hill, NSW*

# CINQUE TERRE

A Picture Perfect Destination

By Maria-Teresa Andreacchi





A photographer once told me it's the one place in the world where you can't take a bad photo. With colourful homes to add composition and breathtaking landscape as a natural background, the edge of Manarola, Cinque Terre has all of the elements of a perfect photo – and, as I discover, the perfect destination.

I sit on the terrace of my hotel listening to the waves rolling across the Mediterranean and crashing onto the rocks beneath me. I am 350 metres above sea level lodging in a village called Volastra. With a population of only 200, it is a far cry from my usual city dwellings. In front of me is the sea, to my left, rows of grapevines carve into the mountains, and to my right is Manarola, the place I will spend the next three days exploring.

Cinque Terre, or in English "five lands," is a stretch of five towns along the Italian Riviera. The UNESCO World Heritage site has been a traveller's dream for years, known for its beautiful sights and exquisite cuisine.

Later that day, I walk up the winding stone pathways lying between the colourful homes. The place I'm wanting to try is Trattoria dal Billy, a famous seafood restaurant tucked away from the main attractions. There are no menus at this place. Instead, the waiter recites the fresh catches of the day. Curious and hungry, I choose the seafood antipasti, a selection of 12 mini seafood dishes infused with local ingredients. Raw fish with pomegranate seeds, anchovies with lemon, and marinated calamari. Washing it down with red wine made by Trattoria dal Billy, I discover a new love for seafood.

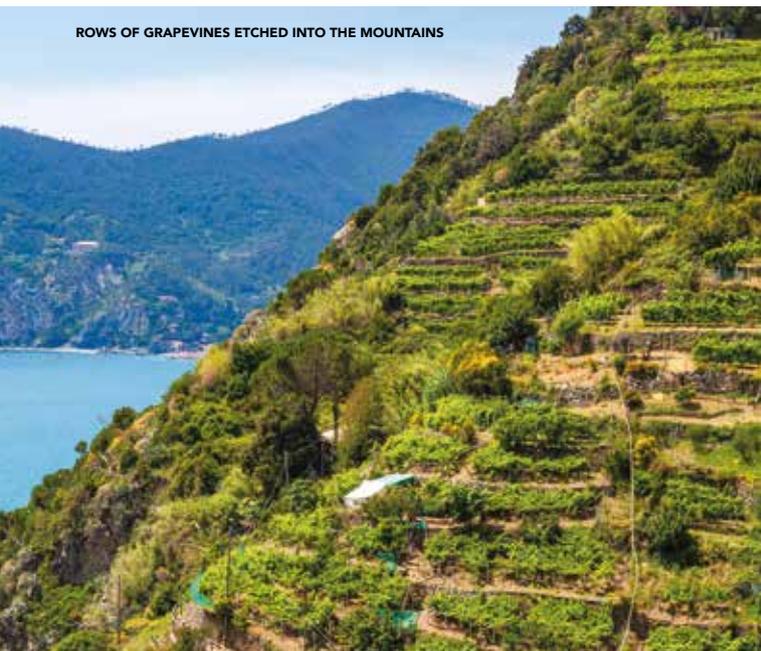
**“Standing at the top of the mountain, I see homes nestled between massive peaks of green. The S-shape coastline shows the sheer size of the mountains, one of which I’m standing on”**

The next day, I hike from Manarola to Riomaggiore. In 2011, a landslide wiped out nearly all of Cinque Terre's coastal walking trails, and while some were later restored, the trail from Manarola to Riomaggiore remains closed. In an effort to truly experience this region, I ditch the short train ride to Riomaggiore and choose to hike over the mountain. Walking up the stairs, then the rocks, then the mountain. It isn't a straight line, but travelling rarely is. Standing at the top of the mountain, I see homes nestled between massive peaks of green. The S-shape coastline shows the sheer size of the mountains, one of which I'm standing on.

As I stop to catch my breath, I capture Manarola's beauty by memory, a remote town unlike anything I have ever experienced. A town where steep slopes inspired architecture, land and water inspire culinary art, and landslides turned average tourists like me into extraordinary hikers.

The last morning, I walk back to the marina, the place that first fuelled my desire to travel here. With a few moments left before departing, I snap the iconic photo. It is only a matter of time before another wanderer is inspired to explore the five lands known as Cinque Terre.

ROWS OF GRAPEVINES ETCHED INTO THE MOUNTAINS



MONTEROSSO BEACH IN CINQUE TERRE NATIONAL PARK



## A Day-Tripper's Itinerary: Five Hours in Manarola

Whether you're taking a day trip from Florence or stopping in Cinque Terre while cruising the Mediterranean, Manarola has something for everyone.

### PERFECT BACKDROP

Grab your walking shoes and stroll along the waterfront as you take in the cool breeze, then lay your towel on the rocks and bask in the sun. Don't forget to snap a photo before you leave – the colourful homes make for a perfect backdrop.

### EAT LIKE AN ITALIAN

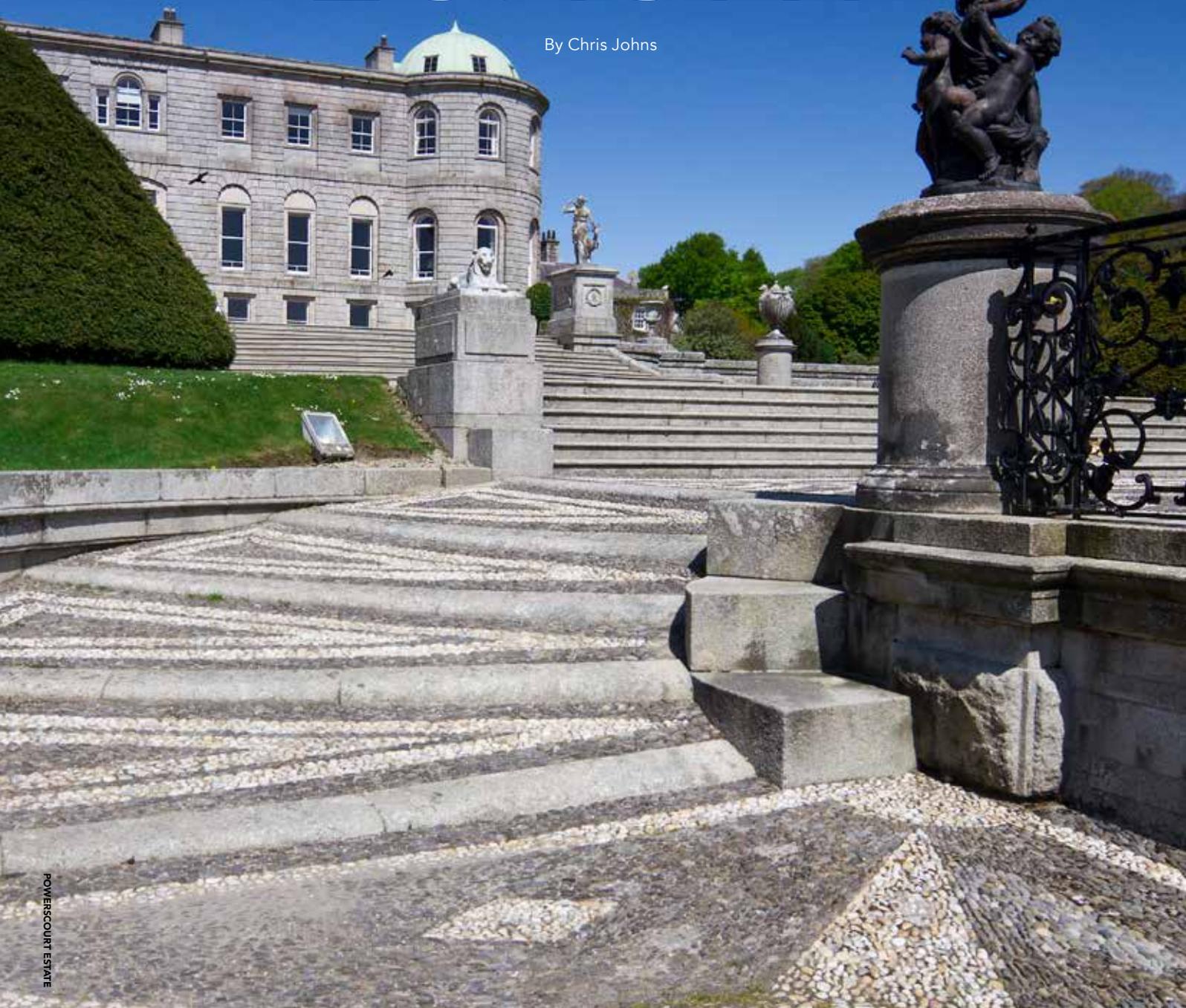
You'll want to indulge in this town's delicacies. Stroll along the main pathway and check out local bakeries. Places like Pan & Pumate have long lineups during the lunch hours, but the pesto focaccia is worth the wait. You can even walk to Trattoria dal Billy, one of the most well reviewed restaurants in the region.

### LOCAL WINES, LIMONCELLO

The rows of grapevines etched into the mountains are one of the first signs you're in Cinque Terre. Take advantage of the fertile land and buy a bottle of local wine or limoncello to bring home. The keepsake won't last as long as a typical souvenir, but it will be one of the best beverages you've ever had.

# OLD IRISH LUXURY

By Chris Johns



POWERSCOURT ESTATE

*France, Italy, Switzerland - these are the countries at front of mind when thinking of grand European luxury. But in the past few years it's Ireland that, again and again, tops all the lists of the luxury resort destinations in Europe. Our writer seeks to find out why by visiting three of the best.*



ASHFORD CASTLE

*From a high castle window, I watch a pair of rainbows materialise over the lake, Lough Corrib, glow radiantly, then gently disappear. Arriving in Ireland, I knew I'd find natural beauty, that's a given. The friendliness of the locals is legendary and obviously, any country that can offer Galway oysters and Guinness stout won't be lacking for good things to eat. What I didn't realise before coming here was that all of those elements, in tandem with some of the finest hotels anywhere, have come together to create one of the most luxurious destinations in the world.*

### Shelbourne Dublin

Overlooking Dublin's iconic St Stephen's Green - the largest garden square in Europe, the monumental High-Victorian red-brick, glass and Portland stoned Renaissance style Shelbourne Dublin – is as good a place as any to start.

As if the marble floors, candelabras and gilded ionic columns aren't enough to set the tone, there's a wedding party milling about the lobby dressed in tuxedos and ball-gowns. Still in the same clothes from my overnight flight, I'm feeling a bit underdressed, so it's an even bigger surprise when the smiling receptionist utters the magic words: "We've upgraded you to a Heritage junior suite."

Instead of climbing into my plush pillow-topped bed, as billowing as a cloud, I force myself to have a quick rinse in the marble-lined shower (no hardship) and get dressed for a cocktail before dinner. I'm halfway through my Champagne and oysters when a dignified

woman in a fur stole wanders by. If anyone can give me insights into Irish luxury, I figure, a woman in fur can.

I compliment her on her stole "It's faux," she says and steers the conversation toward my goal. "This is such a lovely hotel," I say. "Best in the city," she insists. "Why do you think Ireland does luxury so well?" I ask. "We Irish have a long history," she says. "We've been poor, we've been rich, we've been conquered and we've been independent. We're proud of our history and of where we are now, and want to present ourselves to the world the best way we know how."

It's a great answer and I raise a toast to it. She invites me to join her and her friends, who are celebrating a birthday, and soon the Champagne turns to Guinness, then to Irish whisky. Eventually, we're all knocking back Dublin Bay prawns at the hotel's famous Saddle Room with its golden banquettes and marble-topped oyster bar. They're still at it when I turn in.

## Powerscourt Estate

Despite the late night, I'm up early the next morning to make the short trip south toward County Wicklow and into lush countryside. A long, tree-lined driveway curves past a rolling golf course and winds toward the Powerscourt Estate, one of the finest mansions in the world. Originally a 13th century castle, the house was completely rebuilt as a Palladian mansion in the 18th century. For all of its stone and marble grandeur, I'm more interested in what's going on outside and around the house.

National Geographic considers the gardens at Powerscourt to be some of the finest in the world, ranking just behind Versailles and Kew Gardens in splendour. Standing at the top of the great central walkway, it's easy to see why. A long path draws the eye toward a pair of statues, winged stallions – Pegasus, that flank the scene and bookend a single jet of water that rises from the heart of the great pond. In the distance, Great Sugar Loaf mountain frames the horizon.

I follow a path lined by yew trees for a while then wander aimlessly. Soon I'm deep in an ancient grotto, surrounded by moss-covered stone, then amid a flawless Japanese garden complete with pagodas and a delicate bridge.

## Ashford Castle

If I dreamed of the ultimate luxury hotel, it would look exactly like Ashford Castle. Turrets rise above the lavish grounds. Peat burns in countless fireplaces. A polished suit of armor guards the reception and flowers are everywhere.

Re-opened in April of 2015 after a €67 million, 16-month renovation, the 800-year-old medieval castle is widely regarded as one of the finest, most opulent and romantic hotels in the world. How romantic? The castle has a trained owl, Dingle, who will deliver a ring to any groom interested in proposing on the grounds.

Etched Chippendale mirrors reflect the light from Waterford chandeliers that hang from coffered ceilings in the grand King George V dining room. "This room was specially built by the Guinness family when, in 1906, the king himself paid a visit," the maître d' explains as he guides me to my table. All around me, heavy, silk curtains frame high windows. Formally-attired staff members carve great joints of beef tableside and pour Champagne from silver ice buckets.

As I see it, when in a medieval castle, do as the medieval royalty did, so I arranged for an afternoon of falconry. After a quick orientation – "the bird will not attack you" – I'm fitted with a long glove and introduced to Lima, the Peruvian Harris hawk I'll be flying today. We spend a couple of hours wandering among the forests and grounds of the castle, and I soon discover the only thing more thrilling than sending a bird of prey off your arm and into the air is having it come flying back to land on your arm and dig a piece of chicken out of your gloved fist.

For me, more than the gold and silver, the truffles and Champagne, the velvet or the ebony, watching Lima soar above the treetops and glide among the branches is the ultimate luxury.



SHELBOURNE DUBLIN



POWERSCOURT ESTATE

SEABOURN'S

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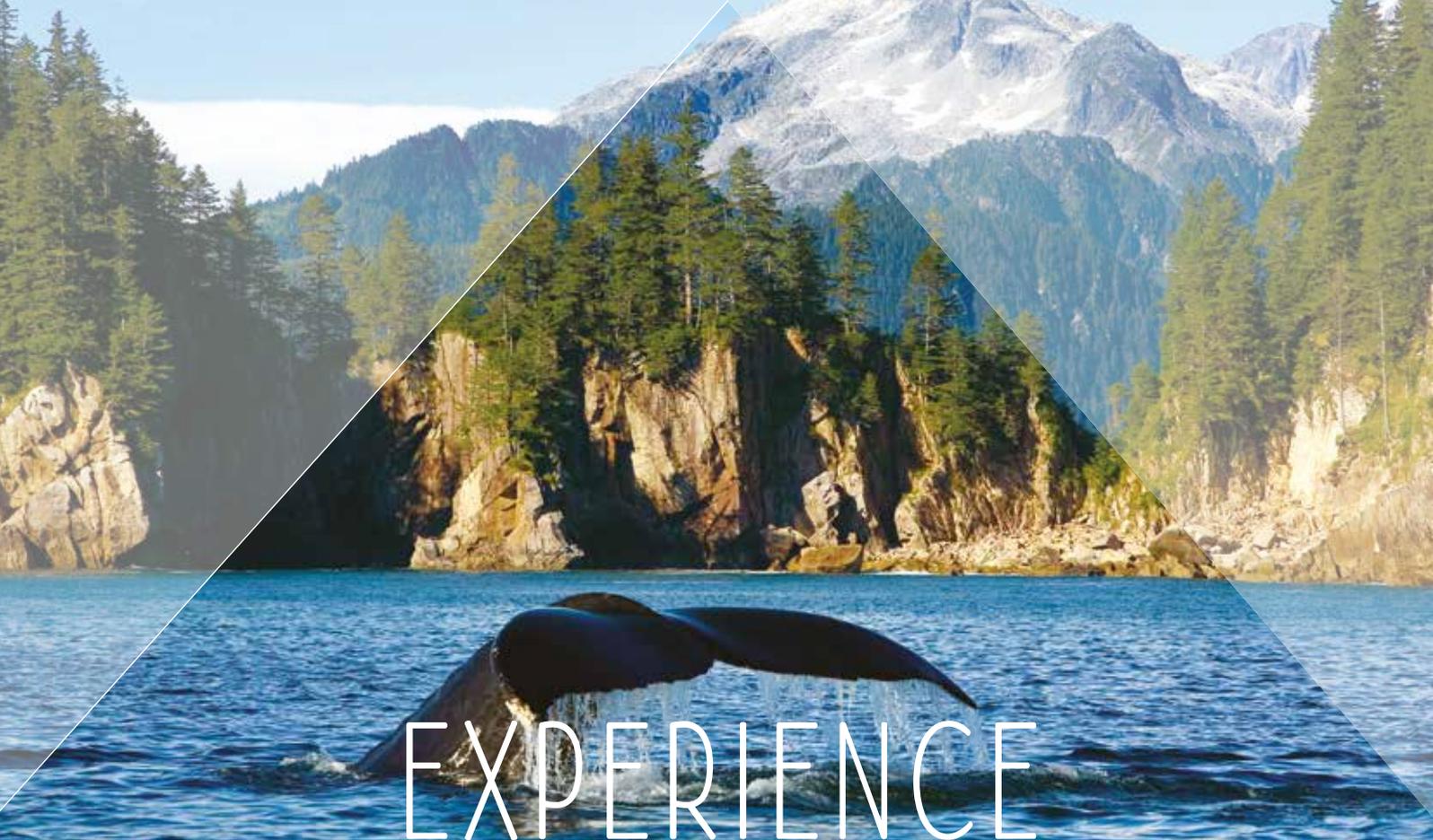


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# EXPERIENCE

## NATURE'S MOST MAJESTIC DESTINATIONS IN SEABOURN STYLE

They are literally poles apart, and yet Alaska and Antarctica share the same tantalising attraction for travellers seeking nature's most extravagant and unspoiled displays of beauty and grandeur. Today, you can experience the serene majesty and thrilling adventure of both of these far-flung destinations in consummate elegance and ease, aboard the world's most luxurious ships.



SEABOURN®





The intrepid polar explorers of yesteryear could never imagine watching whales breach right outside the windows of a world-class spa or enjoying gourmet cuisine as your elegant restaurant glides slowly past massive tabular icebergs adrift in a mirror-like sea. The hardy prospectors of the Klondike Gold Rush never sipped a refreshing artisanal cocktail while watching twilight gild the forested peaks of the Misty Fjords or greeted the cobalt-blue expanse of Hubbard Glacier over a breakfast of eggs benedict and fresh-squeezed juice served on a private veranda.

During the Boreal Summer in Alaska and British Columbia, Seabourn guests can visit the colourful outposts born of America's last great gold rush, and survey the shining glaciers, snowcapped peaks and virgin forests of the continent's last frontier. Encounter proud First Nations people preserving ancient traditions, and marvel at the eagles, bears, moose, salmon, otters, seals and whales that maintain an unbroken and abundant kinship with these people, amid the natural splendours of the great land.



While the Southern Hemisphere basks in its Austral Summer, Seabourn guests sail between two of South America's most sophisticated and cosmopolitan cities, exploring the rustic towns and soaring peaks of the Patagonian Andes, threading the twisting Chilean Fjords between gleaming glaciers and polished granite cliffs. The crowning experience of the journey will be a span of days spent in the last unclaimed natural domain on earth – the white continent of Antarctica. Here, fantastically sculpted icebergs and vistas of mountains and glaciers glow in endless daylight. The skies are alive with seabirds and the shorelines and sea teem with penguins, seals, and whales. Daily Zodiac landings are escorted by a team of experts, including photography coaches ensuring you capture all your incomparable experiences.



Intimate Ships - Exceptional Places. Only Seabourn voyages offer you these exceptional destinations in our signature blend of thrilling adventures with soul-soothing amenities. A veteran expedition team supplements Seabourn's award-winning hospitality staff throughout the cruise, offering insights about the wildlife and destinations in lectures and on open, un-crowded decks, and guide special ventures by Seabourn excursions in zodiacs and kayaks from the ship's marina on select voyages. Seabourn's skilled culinary staff takes full advantage of seasonal local bounty of fresh produce and seafood to prepare exceptional meals, enhanced by our culinary partnership with Michelin-starred American chef and restaurateur Thomas Keller.

Alaska and Antarctica are among the bucket-list places that many seasoned travellers dream of seeing. Why not make your visit to these unforgettable locations as exceptional as the places themselves?





# Victoria Falls

## OUR **TOP** REASONS FOR VISITING VICTORIA FALLS

Victoria Falls, known as “The Smoke that Thunders”, is one of the Seven Natural Wonders of the World.

It is also known as the adventure capital of Africa; from Grade 5 white water rafting to bungee jumping off the Victoria Falls Bridge - the choice is yours.

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe and Livingstone, Zambia are both just a short 1hr40minute flight from Johannesburg and the Kruger area. Plus, you can now fly direct from Cape Town and Nairobi to these destinations.

Represented by



Choose from a wide range of luxurious hotels and lodges, many located on the banks of the mighty Zambezi River.

Your Big Five safari lies just a short drive away, in the Chobe National Park, or you can charter a flight directly into the Okavango Delta.

In low-water periods, visit Devil’s Pool for the ultimate adrenalin rush and best view of the chasm.

For the avid fisherman, the Zambezi River offers some of the best tiger fishing in the world.

**DRAGONFLY**  
AFRICA



# AGENDA

CULINARY & WINE EVENTS ACROSS THE GLOBE,  
TAKING PLACE JANUARY-JUNE 2018

## JANUARY

### ROCHESTER WINE AND CHOCOLATE FESTIVAL

JAN. 6, Bill Gray's Ice Plex, Rochester, New York

Regional wineries, distilleries and cider mills offer tastings during this three-hour festival (sessions at 1 – 4 pm and 5 – 8 pm). Dip into the chocolate fountain or peruse boutique vendors featuring purses, clothing and jewellery.

### CAYMAN COOKOUT

JAN. 11 – 14, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands

Barefoot beach dinners, spirit tastings, culinary tours and wine pairings are only enhanced by the stunning setting on Seven Mile Beach.

## FEBRUARY

### SAVOUR FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL

FEB. 1 – 22, Nova Scotia

Every winter, foodies around Nova Scotia gather to imbibe cocktails, taste rare and fine wines, eat culturally significant dishes and toast craft beer in east coast kitchen party-style.

### A TASTE OF NIAGARA ON THE LAKE

FEB. 2 – 4, MARCH 23 – 25, APRIL 6 – 8, Niagara on the Lake, Ontario

Spend your weekend satisfying your taste buds. On Friday night, mingle with other participants while nibbling on wine and cheese pairings. On Saturday, experience an adventurous five-course dinner. Sunday wraps up with a tour and complimentary tasting at five local wineries.

### THE LEMON FESTIVAL

FEB. 7 – MARCH 2, Menton, France

“Fête du Citron” has grown from its humble origins as a fruit show in the 1930s to an international citrus extravaganza. Nestled between Monaco and the Italian Riviera, this sunny city celebrates its world-famous fruit with a heavy dose of humour and fun.

### WINEFEST EDMONTON

FEB. 16 & 17, Edmonton, Alberta

Winefest offers wine from around the world, carefully selected hors d'oeuvres, door prizes, meet-and-greets with accomplished wine masters, and a complimentary wine glass to bring home as a souvenir.

### FESTIVAL OF FOOD, DRINK AND RHUBARB

FEB. 23 – 25, Wakefield Precinct, UK

Celebrate Wakefield's renowned rhubarb with free street entertainment, colourful market stalls and lessons from local chefs on the numerous ways to prepare the perennial pink vegetable.

### VANCOUVER INTERNATIONAL WINE FESTIVAL

FEB. 24 – MARCH 2, Vancouver, British Columbia

For eight days, 180 local and international wineries gather at 25 locations across Vancouver to sip over 800 wines. Rub shoulders with winemakers, indulge in gourmet dinners, learn from educational seminars and cheer on your favourites (or compete!) at culinary competitions.

## MARCH

### NATIONAL GRAPE HARVEST FESTIVAL

MARCH 2 & 3, Mendoza, Argentina

Extravagant parades, vibrant festivities, cultural dance, art, light and music performances ignite the Mendoza province in celebration of a fruitful harvest – and plentiful wine.

### BC UNCORKED FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL

MARCH 10, Westwood Plateau Golf & Country Club, Coquitlam, British Columbia

Forty-five B.C. wineries gather to share their reds, wines, roses and speciality wines, alongside delectable cuisine from 10 local restaurants and caterers.

## APRIL

### ST. CROIX FOOD & WINE

APRIL 5 – 9, St. Croix, US Virgin Islands

Sunset BBQs, gourmet dinners and wine from around the world fill this festival with succulent tastes and community focused fun.

### FOOD & HOTEL ASIA (FHA)

APRIL 24 – 27, Singapore Expo & Suntec Singapore

Food, hospitality and wine companies showcase their products and services through six specialised events at this mega-tradeshow. Exhibits, culinary competitions, workshops, seminars and masterclasses are held throughout the week.

### THE NATIONAL SPANISH CHEESE FESTIVAL

APRIL 28 – MAY 1, Trujillo, Spain

The largest cheese festival in the world overtakes the streets of Trujillo every spring, transforming it into a cheese village that overflows with rare cheeses, wine and beer.

## MAY

### CHEESE ROLLING AT COOPER'S HILL

MAY 28, Gloucestershire, UK

Every year, thousands gather to watch, race – or roll – down Cooper's Hill after a large round of cheese. The winner gets to keep the prized cheese.

## JUNE

### SEA & VINES FESTIVAL

JUNE 9 – 11, McLaren Vale, South Australia

Celebrate the Queen's birthday weekend in style by toasting some of the region's best wines. Tour world-class wineries, dress up for classy dinners and get a little day drunk in South Australia's gorgeous vineyards.

### BURLINGTON FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL

JUNE 23, Burlington Waterfront Park, Burlington, Vermont

Focusing on farm-to-table food and wine, Burlington Food and Wine Festival builds anticipation in the week leading up to the grand tasting with local events, unique menus and perfect wine pairings.

# WORLDLY DELIGHTS

## Europe's Top Gourmet Markets

By Tim Johnson



MERCAT DEL NINOT, BARCELONA  
©TIM JOHNSON

In these delicious spots – some of them hidden, some famous – you'll find the best markets from Paris to Budapest, where chefs and locals alike shop for fresh, local ingredients for their own kitchens.

### MARCHÉ COUVERT DE PASSY, PARIS

Tucked away in a labyrinth of tiny laneways on the Right Bank, this diminutive spot draws chefs from across the City of Light. Once an entirely separate village, Passy was slowly absorbed into the larger Parisian metropolis. Here, malls and big supermarkets are forbidden, so every day or two, Parisians and chefs from local restaurants (both low-key and Michelin-starred) literally faire le marché (“do the market”), pulling little carts and choosing carefully from amazingly fresh, unpasteurised cheese, including camembert and big displays of fruit and veggies so colourful and beautiful, they look like they've been painted by Paul Cézanne. Grab some cheese, freshly baked baguettes and your pick of charcuterie, and head to the banks of the Seine, just a few blocks away, for an impromptu picnic – a tradition that'll make you feel like a true Parisian.



FRESH CHEESE AT MARCHÉ COUVERT DE PASSY

### MERCAT DEL NINOT, BARCELONA

Recently revitalised with a five-year renovation, the Ninot was originally opened in the late 19th century and it typifies those halcyon days – the heyday of Gaudí, and a time when food markets became fashionable and a number of them were built across the city. Ninot has gleaming aisles, bigger stalls and tasting tables and spaces for cooking classes interspersed amongst the sellers. But it retains the selection (including a great array of local fish), charm, and service that sustained it for more than 100 years. Here, you may spot chefs such as Claudio Aguirre from five-star Fairmont Rey Juan Carlos I, who frequents the market. Try salt cod, used for making Catalan favourites like esqueixada, a local take on ceviche, which fuses traditional ingredients with culinary trends that have made their way from South America.



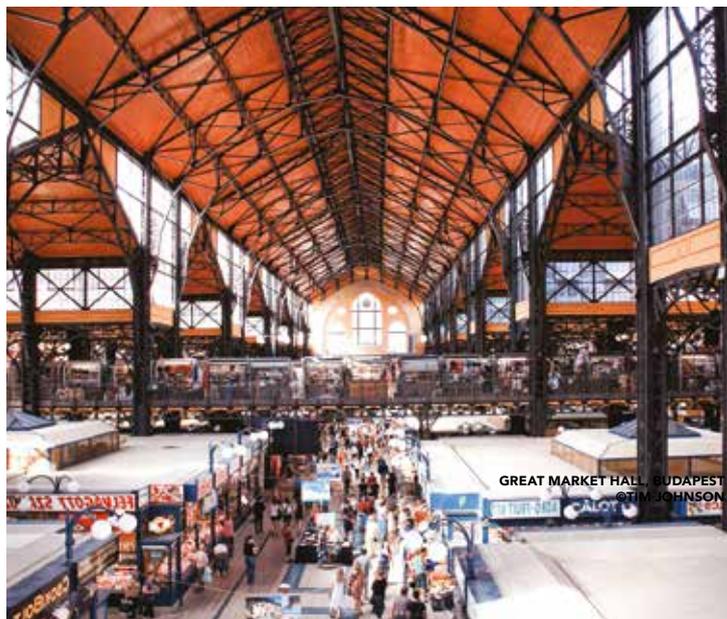
MARKET STALL WITH FRESH FISH AT MERCAT DEL NINOT ©TIM JOHNSON

### MATHALLEN, OSLO

A hot culinary trend, Scandinavian food halls are opening all over the world, including inside New York City's Grand Central Station. Mathallen preceded most of them. Housed in a historic, long-shuttered steel mill in a once-forgotten part of Oslo, the hall now glimmers with red brick and skylights, putting fresh Norwegian ingredients front and centre in a city with its fair share of Michelin stars. Inside, more than 30 food shops plus a couple of full-scale restaurants and cafés, offer everything from fresh, smooth brown cheese to moose meat cured with juniper and blueberries – both distinctively Norwegian. Try røkt laks (smoked salmon) and enjoy this time-honoured Nordic dish.

### GREAT MARKET HALL, BUDAPEST

The largest of five similar markets spread across the city, this late 19th century Hungarian icon feels a bit like a grand train station from a classic Agatha Christie novel. It still maintains a number of its original features, including a roof covered in traditional Zsolnay tiles and intricate ironwork reminiscent of the Eiffel Tower. And it's still the best place to pick up fresh cheeses, meats, fruits and vegetables, plus Magyar specialties like paprika and local wine vintages. Visit the second-floor food stalls for hearty Hungarian fare like goulash or lángos, a guilty pleasure that covers deep-fried dough with sour cream and cheese.



GREAT MARKET HALL, BUDAPEST ©TIM JOHNSON



## Our Singapore to London route is back

From 25 March 2018, we'll once again be flying direct to London from Singapore.\* Choose from First, Business, Premium Economy or Economy. Fares available now.

\*Subject to Government and Regulatory approval.

