

VIRTUOSO

A large, colorful illustration of a hot air balloon. The balloon's envelope is white with vertical blue stripes. The basket is green and contains a small island with palm trees and a lighthouse. The balloon is floating over a body of water.

THE ARTS ISSUE



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Centre-Ville, Montreal

When people seek to experience the openness of Canada, it's no surprise they generally look to its natural spaces, first exploring the country's vast wilderness and the sweeping landscapes definitely delivers. But when you consider what inspires us to travel, "openness" can mean so much more. Many urban centres situated on the edge of nature, such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver, are bubbling over with lively arts and culinary scenes, world-renowned museums, vibrant neighbourhoods, quirky shops and annual events that celebrate different perspectives and reflect the country's diverse cultural fabric.

Montreal: Arts and the Art of Living

For a country as sprawling as Canada, it can be surprisingly easy to experience the distinct cultural journeys offered by its different cities in a relatively short amount of time. The 10-day Canada's Capital Cities plus Niagara Falls Tour, hosted by Tauck, makes the most of the proximity of four major urban centres: Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City.

Montreal is a true cultural jewel, with a thriving arts and festival scene that rivals other culture capitals of the world. Visit the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts for a unique perspective

on Quebecois and Canadian heritage and follow this with a walk through the city's annual MURAL festival, an open-air international street art festival that celebrates the democratization of urban art. Music lovers flock to both its International Jazz Festival and Osheaga Music and Arts Festival. And there's never a dull moment at Parc des Ameriques during the two-week St-Ambroise Montreal Fringe Festival, a cultural block party of sorts, where hundreds of dance, theatre, music, comedy and even circus performances by local and international artists come to life.

Summer also provides a chance to connect with the Indigenous cultures of the region's First Nations through the Monteregie First Peoples' Festival, a 10-day celebration of Indigenous traditions and imagination told through poetry, dancing, music and film. And be sure to check out the eye-opening AURA at the Notre-Dame Basilica, a moving installation by the world-renowned immersive studio, Moment Factory, that invites you to consider the connection between technology, art and culture in a whole new way.

Toronto: A Dynamic and Diverse Downtown

Canada's largest metropolitan city (fourth largest in North America) is home to 158 distinct neighbourhoods and 170 different languages and is one of the most multicultural cities in the world.

It's easy to see why. Those who live to explore a city's downtown core on foot can shop the sprawling stalls of Chinatown, or take a walk through the heart of bohemian Kensington Market and browse vintage shops and indie art spaces. Foodies will love eating their way through St. Lawrence Market, a culinary hub that's connected local farmers and speciality food vendors since 1803.

Nearby is the Art Gallery of Ontario, an architectural wonder designed by Frank Gehry that houses an extensive

contemporary art collection. The gallery also features work by celebrated Indigenous artists such as Metis artist, Christi Belcourt, and self-taught Ojibwe contemporary icon, Norval Morrisseau.

A day strolling through Midtown could include a stop at the Royal Ontario Museum to explore the connection between humans and the natural world, followed by a stop at the Bara Shoe Museum to explore a much different connection, one between humans and 4,500 years of footwear. Then, shop the high-end stores and galleries of Yorkville, before heading east to wander the family owned shops of Greektown. End the day with a dinner to remember at Sushi Masaki Saito, Canada's newly crowned two-star Michelin restaurant.

Or, plan an east-to-west culture crawl that starts in the historic Distillery District, an old industrial neighbourhood beautifully restored and transformed into a premier arts and dining destination. Spend the day browsing its one-of-a-kind collection of shops, contemporary art galleries and restaurants, before heading across town to catch an outdoor show at the amphitheatre in gorgeous High Park.



Vancouver: Coastal Connections

Vancouver is one of those truly special places that illuminates the intimate connections between nature, communities, culture and ourselves which also makes it the perfect destination to explore while reconnecting with someone special.

Entree Destinations' Suites of Vancouver Tour offers ways for couples to spoil themselves before setting out to enjoy everything the city has to offer. Be sure to explore the restaurants, theatres and art studios of Granville Island, the historic buildings and cobblestone streets of Gastown and the Stanley Park Seawall, a walking and cycling path that stretches 18 miles along the city's waterfront.

The day-long Northwest Coast Art Exploration Tour, also offered by Entree Destinations, provides an opportunity to connect with the seven First Nations of the city's Lower Mainland. You'll learn about their history and traditions from a local anthropologist and member of the Xets'emits'a Band, while visiting museums, galleries and parks across the city.

The Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art is one of those truly intimate experiences. It may be small, but it hosts an impressive collection of wood carvings, jewelry, sculptures and graphic art that celebrates the diverse Indigenous cultures of the region. It's the only public gallery in Canada dedicated to contemporary Northwest Coast Art, one that opens your eyes to the trueness of the region.



All-Access Art

FOR OUR FIRST-EVER ARTS ISSUE, we (mostly) skipped the museums in favour of ducking into the studios and ateliers of working artists. We met a lacquerware maker in Kyoto who combines an 11,000-year-old method and her Parisian training to create exquisite modern pieces. We spent time with a traditional Japanese paper-pattern carver who's finding exciting new applications for his craft. We stopped by a 200-year-old fine-jewellery workshop in Lisbon that's still turning out tiaras but also leaning on contemporary collabs to make edgier pieces.

These people and their creations represent forward momentum: In many cases, they've made a deliberate choice to save centuries-old traditions from blinking out by dedicating themselves to a practice. For travelers, this is great news. With the right connections – aka Virtuoso travel advisors' knowledge and special access – the studio doors swing open. We can step into the artists' worlds and watch them work, get to know more about their craft and inspiration, and, yes, walk away with some killer souvenirs. All the while, we're supporting the heritage that defines a destination.

As you page through this issue, we hope you find a feast for the eyes, a window into a world of creative feats, and a spark for future travels.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Marika Cain'.

MARIKA CAIN
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR



Frameworkthy

When writer Chadner Navarro introduced us to the work of Luca Colapietro, a Lisbon-area artist who puts a surreal twist on Portugal's beloved azulejo tiles, we knew we had a cover star. Colapietro created a travel-inspired, custom-tile mash-up of tradition and his own vision, and we held our breath as the piece winged its way from Portugal to us for a photo shoot.

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THE MAGAZINE



“Favourite museum?”

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“Zagreb's Museum of Broken Relationships and its quirky mementos of loss, revenge, and appreciation from couples around the world.”

“Hobart, Tasmania's MONA (Museum of Old and New Art) for the wonderfully unusual and extravagantly exceptional private collection of David Walshe.”

“The Guggenheim in New York. Visiting on a girls' trip with my mom and sister remains a highlight of all our travels.”

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“Taking my daughters to the Apartheid Museum in South Africa was so powerful.”

“The haunting work of Egon Schiele at Vienna's Leopold Museum is my favourite.”

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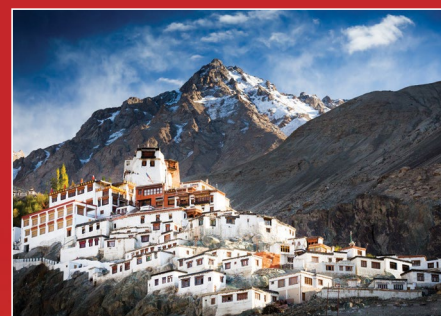
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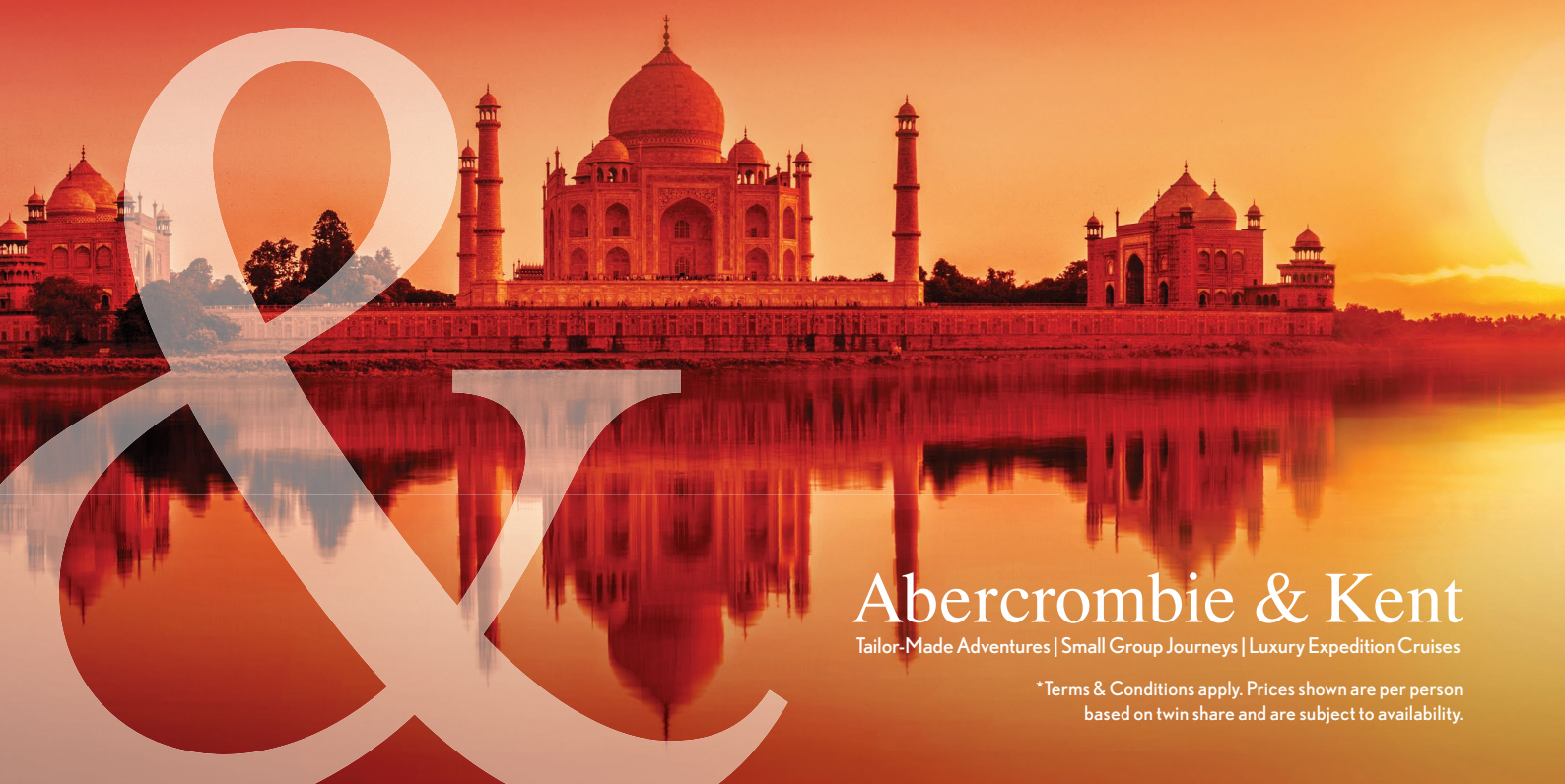
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PLACES
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Hermes Arroyo's studio
in San Miguel de Allende.





Person of Interest: Hermes Arroyo

Master craftsman and *mojiganga* artist

Mojigangas, supersize papier-mâché puppets, are a staple of almost every San Miguel de Allende wedding, fiesta, and *callejoneada* (parade). Third-generation artist Hermes Arroyo crafts the giant figures of brides, grooms, and revelers in his downtown studio. And at Belmond's 37-room **Casa de Sierra Nevada**, he leads workshops in mini-*mojiganga* making, helping guests fashion folksy avatars of themselves.

Number of years making *mojigangas*:
Thirty-plus.

What drew you to crafting *mojigangas* for a living? I grew up in a family of artists and started making art at age 7. I like *mojigangas* because they impress and attract a lot of attention. In San Miguel, people traditionally used them at religious events, but over the years, they brought joy to parties, parades, and weddings too, which is how my work grew.

How long do they take to make? About three weeks for one that's over two metres tall. It takes four people to paint, produce, and sew the piece.

And you've made how many? At least a thousand.

Do you have a favourite? "La Española," the first one I ever made.

Do guests love making mini papier-mâché versions of themselves? I create the guests' mini-*mojiganga* mould before they arrive, and then we paint it together. It's a two-hour workshop, but time flies and sometimes we're there for much longer. I love showing them a little of our magic.

What makes a *mojiganga* the life of a San Miguel party? They add giant joy – pops of colour, majesty, and attention – to any festivity. When I was a kid, most *mojigangas* had serious expressions, but I like mine to be happier. I'm inspired by happiness.

What kind of music do *mojigangas* prefer? In the streets, we use the music of the people, such as mariachi. However, at private parties, they can dance to anything. I've danced inside *mojigangas* since I was 10. Now, at 53, I still love to dance with them, just not for as long.

Accommodations include breakfast daily and a \$145 dining credit. Mojiganga experience, from \$145. – Elaine Glusac



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South Africa Calling

Virtuoso travel advisor Hollie Johnson reports on her ten-day adventure, packed with beaches, city culture, and a life-list safari.

Why put South Africa on your list? From its cities and coastal villages to learning about traditional Zulu culture and exhilarating safaris, there's lots to experience, see, and taste. I spent ten days exploring Johannesburg, Durban, and Saint Lucia and its iSimangaliso Wetland Park, finishing with a safari through andBeyond South Africa. It's a great year-round destination, though March through October is the best time to see the "big five."

What surprised you most about the country? How great the food was and how happy the locals were to see tourists again.

Packing tips: Bring layered clothing to weather the elements, sturdy close-toed shoes, and a great camera.

Trip highlight: Zip-lining through Oribi Gorge. We did the "extreme" course over the lake with more than a dozen zips.

Best non-hotel meal you ate: Sakhumzi Restaurant in Johannesburg's Soweto township is a popular Sunday lunch spot and feels like a family gathering with everyone's favourite dish. It's casual: long wood tables and benches, no air conditioning, and a great vibe.

Favourite happy-hour spot: Alto234 in Johannesburg, Africa's highest urban bar at 234 metres. Go at sunset for a spectacular setting, with unmatched views of the city and one of the world's largest human-made forests.



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WHISTLER. WIDER THAN WONDER



SO MANY EXPERIENCES, ONE SPECIAL PLACE

Winter in Whistler is magnetic. From breathtaking alpine terrain, to the endless options of the Village, its diverse offering of rugged West Coast Canadian beauty, passionate community, luxury accommodations and refined experiences continue to attract adventurous travellers from around the world, year after year.

A short, scenic 125-kilometre drive from Vancouver up the stunning Sea to Sky highway, Whistler is considered one of North America's premier mountain resorts – and for good reason. Only in Whistler will you find two mammoth, side-by-side mountain playgrounds, a combined total of over 200 marked runs, 8,171 acres of terrain, 16 alpine bowls, three glaciers, unmatched off-mountain adventures and a snow season that extends from November to May.

The fairytale pedestrian friendly Village is home to a plethora of fine dining restaurants and vibrant après options, over 200 premium retail options and some of the ski world's most luxurious Virtuoso hotels.

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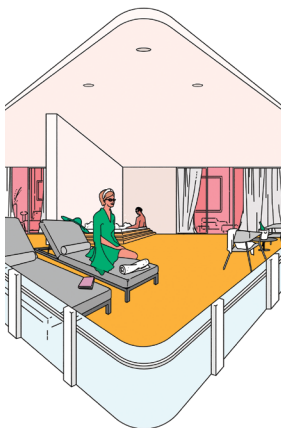


LIT FROM WITHIN

The first new vessel from **Oceania Cruises** in 11 years, *Vista* arrived in May trimmed in ivory and gold accents. An elegant atrium engages the ship's 1,200 passengers right as they board, with a crystal column suggesting schooling fish in a vortex of water that swirls with the central staircase. Artistic touches in the Grand Dining Room range from intricate, Czech-designed chandeliers resembling lacy hydrangeas to handpainted wall coverings anchoring seating clusters splashed with dappled light, as though placed beneath a willow tree. In September, the all-balcony *Vista* will embark on a 15-night leaf-peeping cruise from Montréal to Miami, with well-timed stops at peak colour locations. *Departure:* 29 September.

A retractable glass roof over the top-deck pool allows for all-weather swims, and onboard residences come equipped with private outdoor whirlpools.

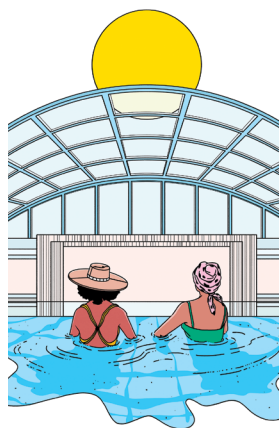
Cruising



ROOM WITH A WIDE-ANGLE VIEW

Cruise-ship architecture is typically an exercise in symmetry – fore and aft, port to starboard, the layout can be one big mirror image. **Silversea's** 728-passenger *Silver Nova* launched in August with an asymmetrical layout challenging conventional orthodoxy, including a starboard-facing pool on

the top deck, which creates both a more generous pool deck and a swimming oasis. A few of the expansive new aft suites will have curved balconies delivering 270-degree views from sea to sky. Plus, thanks to a design that integrates the superstructure inside the ship, every suite has larger windows. The reimagining allows for enhancements to the venues that Silversea regulars already know, such as the popular S.A.L.T. hands-on cooking lab, kitchen, and bar – features to savour this summer on a six-night sailing through the southern Caribbean between Barbados and Cartagena, Colombia. *Departure: 4 December.*



TOP-TIER STYLE

In August, **Explora Journeys** introduced the 922-passenger *Explora I*, the first ship in its new upscale fleet. Architecture conceived by British yacht designer Martin Francis and pieces from Italian furniture makers Molteni&C and Manutti lend the vessel modern, mega-yacht style. A retractable glass roof over

the top-deck pool allows for all-weather swims, and onboard residences come equipped with private outdoor whirlpools. Shopping sprees at The Journey, *Explora I*'s boutique, yield treasures from more than 30 artisanal brands – including prêt-à-porter fashions, Borsalino hats, and ethically sourced scarves and more from Pink Maharani. True to its name, *Explora I*'s inaugural season will include visits to 138 ports in more than 40 countries. Dive into Québec and the Canadian Maritimes on a ten-night voyage from Québec City to Manhattan. *Departure: 3 October.* – David Swanson



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Setting Sail with Diane von Furstenberg

The well-travelled queen of the wrap dress on boat life and Brussels.

INTERVIEW BY SALLIE LEWIS

DIANE VON FURSTENBERG'S LIFE STORY is as bold and colourful as her New York City-based fashion line. The designer, who's celebrating the 50th anniversary of her iconic wrap dress next year, is also a devoted philanthropist, an activist, and an avid traveller. "I'm the world's lightest packer and always ready to go," she says, crediting her signature silk-printed clothing and lightweight knits. "My best

**“Travelling
is everything.
You learn, you learn,
you learn.”**

design ideas come when I pack my suitcase. I've travelled the entire world – I think the only place I've missed is Mongolia.” Bhutan remains one of her all-time favourite destinations. And, she says, nothing beats dining in Japan or the old-world luxury of hotels such as Claridge's in London and The Peninsula Shanghai. These days, she relishes the time she shares with her husband, Barry Diller, along with family and friends, aboard their sailing yacht. She swims in the sea every morning for two hours, before lacing up her hiking boots for an afternoon of exploration. “Boat life is true happiness – it's a floating home.” Year after year, the Mediterranean lures her back for sun-soaked days spent swimming, hiking, exploring, and learning. “Whether it's Italy, Turkey, or Greece,” she says, “the Mediterranean is a gem. You can never go wrong.”

DIANE VON FURSTENBERG'S BRUSSELS

I was born in Brussels after the war. As a little girl, I'd go every weekend with my family to the **Atomium**, a landmark building created in 1958 for the World's Fair. The neighbourhood where I lived was farther south, near the **Bois de la Cambre** park and the **Forêt de Soignes**, or Sonian Forest. I used to go with my best friend and walk the dogs in this forest. As adults, we both became princesses – she, the Princess of Hanover, and I, the Princess von Furstenberg – so that's fun.

My old school, the Lycée Dachsbeck, is in the city's Sablon neighbourhood. There are many good restaurants there, such as **Au Vieux Saint Martin**, an old, very famous restaurant known for its filet américain. **Senzanome** has the best Italian food. Belgian food in general is wonderful. Chocolate is big here, as are waffles and french fries (the best *frites* are made at Au Vieux Saint Martin).



The Grand-Place, Brussels.

Lace is another Belgian treasure. The **Grand-Place** is the most beautiful place in Brussels, and the **Fashion & Lace Museum** is located nearby. My show, *Woman Before Fashion*, is on display there through January 2024. It was very emotional when we went for the opening, and I realised how proud I am to be Belgian. Other favourites include the **Musée Magritte** and the **Musée Oldmasters**, with all its beautiful Flemish paintings. Recently, I stayed at the **Hotel Amigo**, which is my favourite hotel in the city. The site that it's on was a prison a long, long time ago. Close by is the **Manneken-Pis**, which is this famous little statue that every head of state visits. ♥

EXT. WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL — DAY

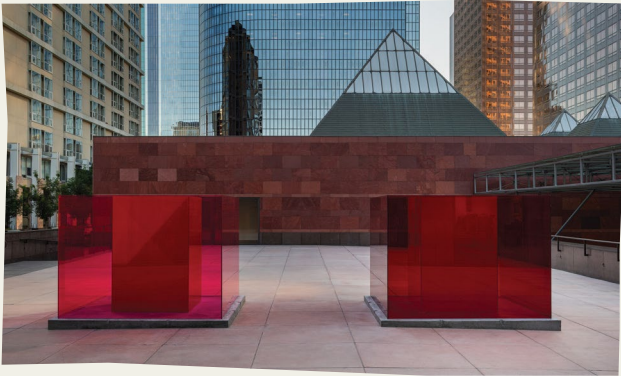
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The Broad

The Broad has received global acclaim as much for its stunning architecture as for the extraordinary collection of art on view. The Shop at The Broad offers high end exclusives including limited edition prints, home decor, books, gifts, jewelry. Private before and after-hours tours are available.



The Music Center

The Music Center is a nationally recognized cultural mecca. Don't miss the behind-the-scenes tour of the iconic Walt Disney Concert Hall, home of the LA Phil. Book Premier Seats for an unforgettable night at the LA Opera in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Experience dance with The Music Center's boldest season yet with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and The Joffrey Ballet.



The Conrad

The latest hotel designed by acclaimed architect Frank Gehry, the first California location of Hilton's luxury Conrad brand is spectacular with 305 modern rooms. The rooftop oasis, Airlight, is an infinity pool with private cabanas. There's a high-end spa and two restaurants by famed chef José Andrés. For the ultimate stay, book a Penthouse Suite with soaring city views and interior design by Tara Bernerd.



Over the River

Venture beyond the Canal Belt to discover the Amsterdam that locals love.

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS SCHALKX

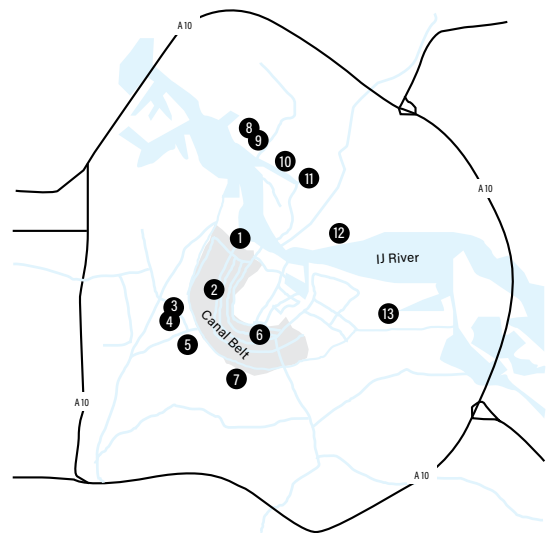


A yoghurt- and pumpkin-based course at Foer, and Oedipus brewery. Opposite: A Dutch bike and Arie in De Pijp.

FEW CITIES BLOSSOM like Amsterdam. As European travel roared back last year, the Dutch capital grabbed headlines with ambitious measures to keep crowds out of its tourist-thronged Canal Belt and give back the cobblestoned streets to the Amsterdammers who call them home. Local leaders announced plans to move the Red Light District to the city's outskirts and placed a moratorium on new souvenir shops. Even the cannabis-vending coffee shops weren't spared: New ordinances prohibit lighting up spliffs in city-centre areas. Consider it a gentle nudge to venture off the tourist track into the corners of town that locals have largely kept to themselves. On your next visit to the city, hop a free, 20-minute ferry to **NDSM Wharf** in up-and-coming Noord, where artists' workshops, riverfront hangouts, and spaces such as the **STRAAT** street-art museum blow new life into former shipyards. Or head west, where cultural hub **De Hallen** has revitalised an early 1900s tram depot with shops, galleries, a theatre, restaurants and bars, and an expansive food hall.

EAT On a tree-shaded corner in the heart of trendy Oud-West, **Karavaan** draws a crowd from brekkie to late-night bites. The all-day menu riffs on Middle Eastern and North African favourites such as *shakshuka* and chicken tagine, but the burgers with piccalilli mayo and sweet-onion chutney are equally delicious. After dark, laptops and coffees make way for mezze spreads, palomas, and espresso martinis.

Taking over a high-ceilinged former working-class coffeehouse from 1902, Nordic-tinged **Foer** is an excellent reason to venture



1. Sukha
2. Pulitzer Amsterdam
3. Karavaan
4. De Hallen and The Gathershop
5. Uncommon
6. Waldorf Astoria Amsterdam
7. Arie
8. STRAAT
9. NDSM Wharf
10. Van Dijk & Ko
11. Corner Store
12. Oedipus Taproom
13. Foer

City Guide

out to Amsterdam's little-visited Eastern Docklands. From his open kitchen stocked with jars of fermenting foraged herbs, chef-owner Steven Broere dishes out plant-forward and intricately plated arrangements of salsify, celeriac, and licorice, among other local ingredients.

Across the IJ River in Noord, the new **Corner Store** restaurant serves seasonal, Asian-influenced dishes such as mushroom *karaage* and cured halibut with yuzu-chili paste and fennel. With a design that nods to Tokyo's postage-stamp-size listening bars, the counter doubles as a DJ booth and serves natural wines and sake to the sound of jazz and worldly beats.

DRINK Also in Noord, **Oedipus Taproom** serves its cheekily named beers – Polyamorie, Mannenliefde (which roughly translates to “male love”) – flavoured with elements such as lemongrass and Sichuan pepper right next to the kettles they're brewed in. This envelope-pushing brewery often experiments with rare hops and new brewing methods – ask for the specials on tap.

Arie in the De Pijp district channels a typical Dutch *bruine kroeg* (vintage pub) with a hint of Parisian bistro, serving local craft beers and an assortment of G&Ts.

For a coffee break, stop at **Uncommon** in Helmersbuurt, a roastery that sources beans from small-scale farmers from Ethiopia to Peru. Keep an eye out for its limited-edition roasts to take home.

SHOP As its name suggests, **The Gathershop** in cultural hub De Hallen stocks keepsakes from indie design studios and artisans spanning the globe, such as ceramic incense holders from Edinburgh, leather sandals made in Greece, and gold jewellery by Amsterdam-based Koi.

Van Dijk & Ko's warehouse on a small Noord industrial estate is a cross-cultural trove of curios and antiques. Weekly deliveries

FYI

“To avoid the city-centre crowds, I take the five-minute ferry to Buiksloterweg in Amsterdam-Noord for the Eye Filmmuseum's fun exhibits, architecture, and waterfront terrace for lunch, sunset drinks, or dinner. Another Noord favourite: casual Hotel de Goudfazant, which isn't a hotel, but a lively restaurant in a former warehouse.”

– Elisabeth Hoogerbrugge,
Virtuoso agency executive

from its partner in Hungary bring in everything from West German ceramics to vintage Eastern Bloc enamelware.

Haarlemmerstraat, a boutique-lined street just north of the Canal Belt, is one of the best places to pick up thoughtful gifts and quirky souvenirs. Stop by the white-and-wood showroom of homegrown clothing brand **Sukha** for breezy cotton shirts, dresses, and other slow fashion made by craftspeople at the store's ateliers in Nepal.

STAY No hotel conveys classic Canal Belt charm quite like the **Waldorf Astoria Amsterdam**, which melds rococo ceilings and grand spiral staircases with a Guerlain spa and 93 lofty guest rooms. *Accommodations include breakfast daily and a \$145 hotel credit.*

Sandwiched between the Prinsengracht and Keizersgracht canals, the art-studded **Pulitzer Amsterdam** combines 25 canal houses into a mazelike blend of tree-shaded nooks, a modern Dutch restaurant, and 225 rooms and suites. Come sunset, board the hotel's polished teak- and brass-accented saloon boat for a Champagne cruise around the district. *Accommodations include breakfast daily and a \$145 dining credit.* 📍



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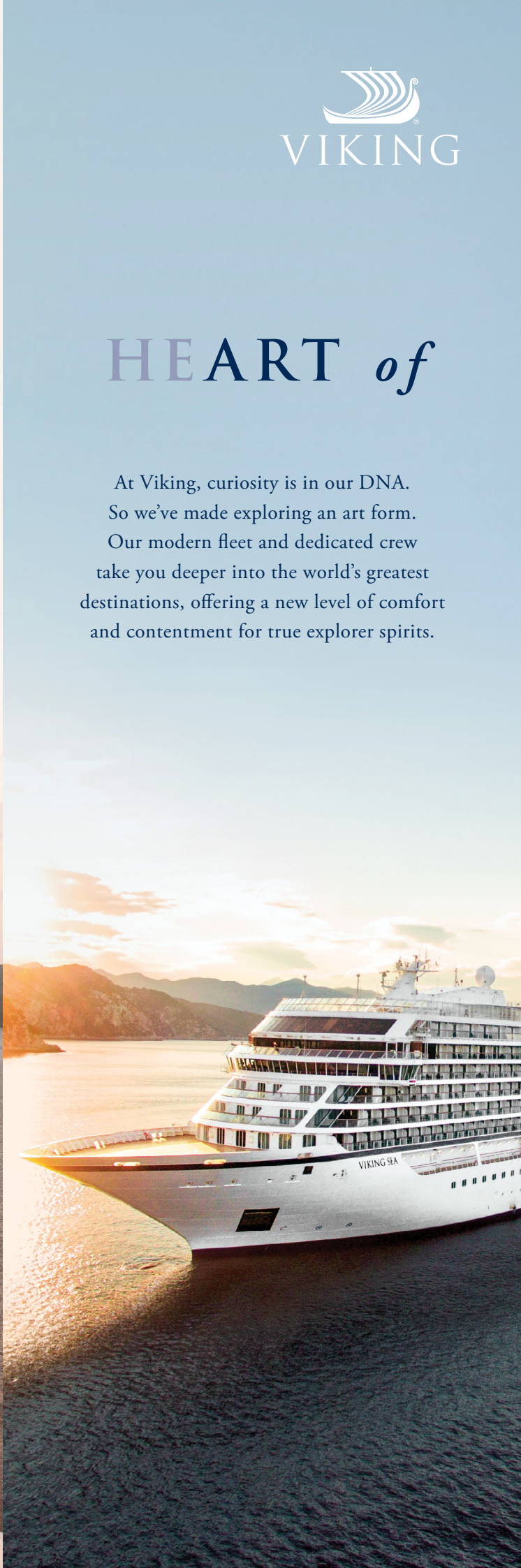
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SET SIGHTS ON THE SEYCHELLES

NATURE RULES IN THIS INDIAN OCEAN OASIS.

BY DAVID SWANSON

La Digue's Grand Anse and
(right) hiking on Mahé.

ON THE STEEP hillside below villas at Six Senses Zil Pasyon, the sole resort on the Seychelles island of Félicité, lush forest embraces granite monoliths, while a flying fox – its small, doglike face dwarfed by its enormous wingspan – glides gracefully through the breeze, alighting upside down on a branch to socialise with other megabats. The headlining act, however, takes place in the distance: As the persimmon-coloured sun sets behind neighbouring islands and thunderheads drift on- and offstage, bands of showers sweep across the horizon in wispy sheets.

Situated a few degrees shy of the equator in the Indian Ocean, the Seychelles are known for ribbons of loamy white sand spiked with the archipelago's trademark pink boulders. The granite is a remnant of the lost continent of Gondwana, and in places the singular ecosystems and abundant endemic species inspire allusions to the Garden of Eden. This far-flung locale has some 100 islands to choose from, so the natural questions is, where to start? Here are our six favourite spots.

ESSENTIAL STOPOVER: MAHÉ

As the archipelago's waypoint and home to 90 percent of its population, Mahé offers the largest and most convenient landing in the Seychelles. With peaks reaching into the clouds, it's the one island where you'll want to rent a car to explore – driving (and hiking) in precipitous Morne Seychellois National Park is a highlight, and there are dozens of beaches, many of them remote and undeveloped, that you'll need transportation to enjoy. Highlights of the capital, Victoria, include Creole architecture and the National Museum of History, but make time for Kaz Zanana, which houses paintings by the Seychelles' most famous artist, painter George Camille.

STAY The striking former home of fashion photographer Gian Paolo Barbieri was reconceived mid-pandemic as the intimate, 41-room **Mango House Seychelles**. A pocket of sand sits tucked below the resort's restaurants, while a convivial spirit thrives at its three pools. *Virtuoso travellers receive private one-way transfers to or from the airport or cruise terminal, a bottle of Champagne on arrival, breakfast daily, and a \$145 resort credit.*

INDIAN OCEAN PARADISE: PRASLIN

Second largest of the Seychelles, Praslin is where Eden comparisons run rampant. Deep valleys bisect the beach-girdled island, most notably the Vallée de Mai, a compact nature reserve and UNESCO World Heritage designee that's home to a primeval forest with the country's six endemic palm species. Among them is the coco de mer, which rises more than 30 metres and bears the plant kingdom's largest seed – up to 18 kilos – that's shaped like



a voluptuous woman's derriere. Keep an eye out for the endangered Seychelles black parrot flitting between the fronds, and swim with frisky shivers of harmless juvenile lemon sharks at tranquil beaches.

STAY **Raffles Seychelles'** 86 villas are among the islands' largest, sitting on a steep hillside overlooking Anse Takamaka beach. Four restaurants, a spa with 12 open-air treatment pavilions, and a robust kids' program are among the resort's numerous temptations. *Virtuoso travellers receive breakfast daily and a \$145 resort credit.*

THE POSTCARD: LA DIGUE

La Digue embodies the classic Seychellois scene: a tumult of evocatively weathered pink granite boulders interspersed with outstretched palm trees, pearlescent sand, and azure water. Anse Source d'Argent on the island's west coast is undoubtedly one of the world's most beautiful beaches. Come early or late to avoid the midday crowd, and don't overlook less-touristed but equally inviting coves, such as Anse Marron and casuarina-shaded Anse Cocos, both reached via a hiking trail. The bikes favoured as transport on 3-by-6-kilometre La Digue give its port, La Passe, a village feel – watch out for scampering chickens.

GO Ponant's 184-passenger *Le Champlain* and *Le Bougainville* make the 12-night cruise from Zanzibar to Mahé, visiting La Digue and more-remote islands. *Departures: 7 and 20 February 2024.*

ECO-CHAMPION: NORTH ISLAND

North Island is the 209-hectare home to an ongoing conservation effort dubbed the Noah's Ark project. Cows, rodents, and various nonindigenous flora introduced during 250 years of human habitation are gradually being eliminated in favour of native species that once thrived here – the coco-de-mer palm, Aldabra giant tortoise, and Seychelles white-eye, a tiny bird numbering just a few hundred. Velvety, bone-white beaches flank the privately owned island, accessed by helicopter.

STAY Just 11 villas make up the Luxury Collection's all-inclusive North Island resort, conceived by an African safari operator well versed in the light footprint of today's eco-chic design. Exclusivity and privacy have made it a celebrity favourite for honeymoons and reconnecting with nature through kayaking, diving, and communing with tortoises. *Virtuoso travellers receive a \$145 resort credit.*

FOR THE BIRDS: ARIDE

Less than two kilometres long and uninhabited but for a small staff of rangers, this predator-free inselberg was gifted to a Seychelles-based NGO in 1973 following a campaign by Christopher Cadbury (of chocolate fame) and is today protected by a conservation society. Aride is accessible only by special arrangement, and its few visitors reap the reward: up-close encounters with some of the island's 1.25 million birds (and more species than are found on any other isle in the archipelago),

including the endemic Seychelles warbler, blue pigeon, and magpie-robin. Bonus: The gorgeous, roller-lapped beach offers a resplendent cool-off.

GO Abercrombie & Kent island-hops from Zanzibar to Mahé on a 13-night charter of Ponant's *Le Champlain*. The expedition is capped at 148 guests for a more intimate feel and smaller groups for Zodiac excursions. Along with Aride, Seychelles calls include Astove and Saint François atolls, as well as Praslin and La Digue. *Departure: 1 March 2024.*

ADVENTURE ON: FÉLICITÉ

Fifth largest of the Seychelles, Félicité is robed in takamaka trees, coconut palms, and fruit trees, and is surrounded by healthy reefs, making it a fine base for kayak and snorkel excursions to uninhabited neighbouring islands. Its largest beach, Grand Anse, is frequented by nesting sea turtles – hatchlings emerge October through February. Ecologists have worked to eradicate the remaining invasive species, such as the coco plum.

STAY Thirty-three-villa Six Senses Zil Pasyon is Félicité's one and only roost. Each of the one-bedroom pool villas feels as though it's been uniquely moulded into the rocks and vegetation; the spa is equally woven into the landscape, with five treatment rooms accessed via a swing bridge. Multibedroom private residences are available higher on the slopes. *Virtuoso travellers receive breakfast daily and a \$145 resort credit.* ♡



The Seychelles' Aldabra tortoises can reach up to 250 kilograms and 150 years in age.

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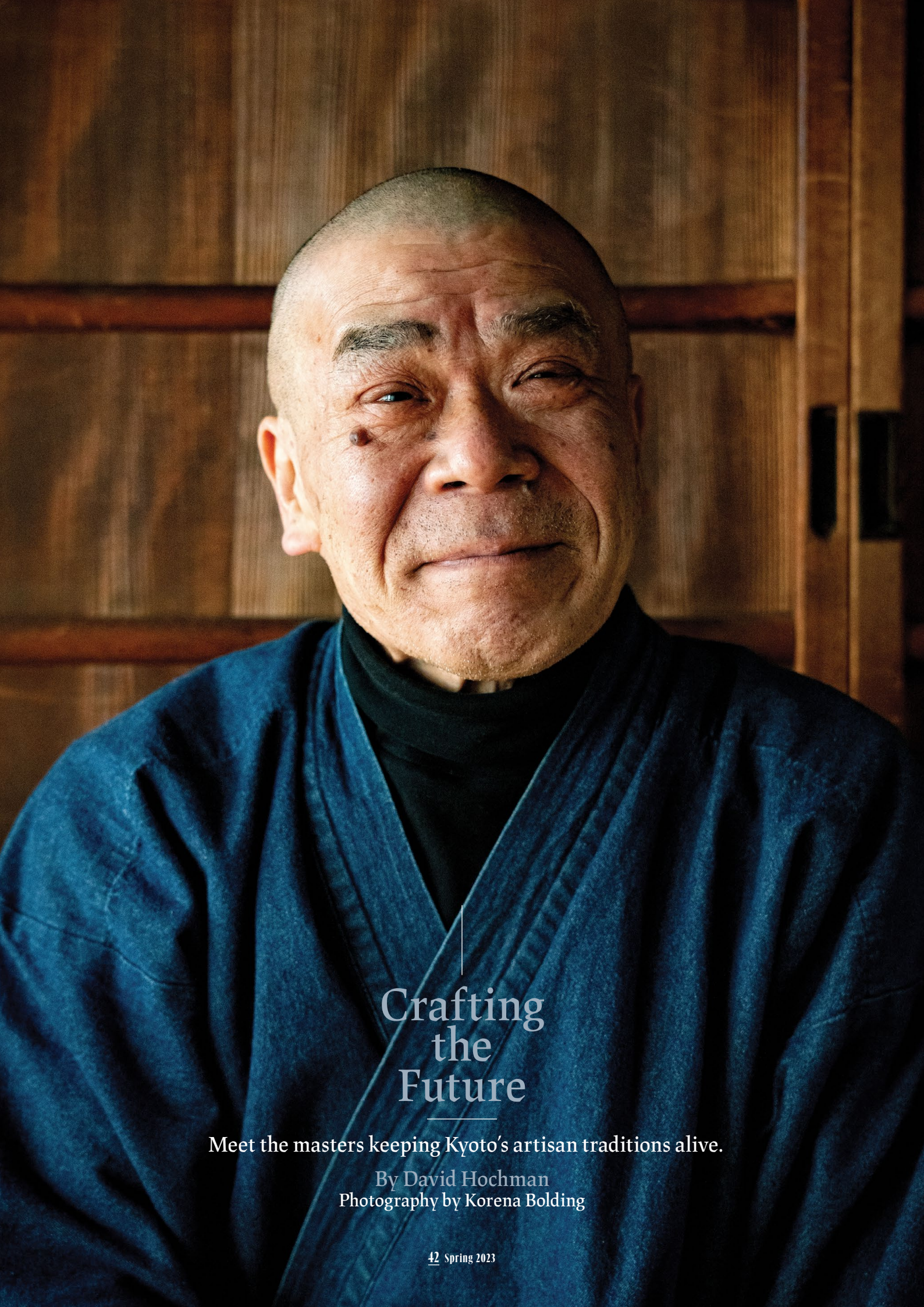
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Crafting
the
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Meet the masters keeping Kyoto's artisan traditions alive.

By David Hochman
Photography by Korena Bolding



Paper-cutting master Takeshi
Nishimura and a sunset view
from the Park Hyatt Kyoto.

In a quiet temple courtyard not far from Kyoto's Imperial Palace,

Kotaro Nishibori shares a technique that's been a family go-to for more than 160 years. Whenever the sun is shining, the fifth-generation umbrella maker pops open an assortment of colourful, handmade bamboo-and-paper parasols – some as wide as a table for ten – as part of the 100-plus steps in their making and drying.

Once, umbrellas like these covered heads across Japan – the fashionable, all-weather canopy of choice for sovereigns, temple-goers, Kabuki dancers, and geisha. In the 1920s, when Nishibori's grandfather-in-law learned from his father-in-law to make *Kyo-wagasa*, as they're called, the Kyoto region alone was turning out millions of umbrellas a year. Today, the company Nishibori and his wife inherited 20 years ago is one of only two traditional umbrella studios left in the prefecture.

Across the street in his tidy two-storey workshop, Nishibori opens a laptop and pulls up a magazine photo of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip seated under his family's magnificent red umbrellas at a tea ceremony during a 1975 state visit. "I remember seeing this picture and thinking, 'Wow, what an important legacy,'" he says. "But also: 'If we want to survive, we can't just make umbrellas for royalty.'"

The image inspired Nishibori to bring new dimensions to the handiwork he'd cultivated for seven years as an apprentice. Guided by a philosophy that tradition requires continuous innovation, he and another artist came up with a prototype that applied what he knew about paper and wood to a line of contemporary lighting products. Those creations – lampshades of bamboo and washi paper that open and close like umbrellas but are fit for modern hotels and living rooms – now win international design awards and adorn interiors from Tokyo to Milan. "We continue to make and repair *Kyo-wagasa* in the traditional way," Nishibori says, "but it's the other work that points us to the future."

IN KYOTO, craft is deeply embedded in nearly every experience. From the lacquerware canisters holding your morning matcha to the woodblock patterns inked onto sliding bedroom-door panels, art and beauty elevate the ordinary. At the Kyoto Museum of Crafts and Design, which received a welcome refresh in 2020, the city's crafts are divided into 74 categories. Paper lanterns, folding fans, ornamental hairpins, bamboo flutes, tasseled cords, wooden signs – each trade has its revered masters and arcane practices. Often these are generations-old businesses. Talk to a candlemaker or *yuzen* dyer or confectionary-mould maker in the historic Nishijin district, and you'll likely hear about a great-grandparent's great-grandparent who employed the same methods in the very same spot.

That may sound quaint, but quaint isn't always sustainable. With Japan's low birth rate, a rapidly aging society (almost 33 percent of the country's population is over 65, compared to around 16 percent in Australia), and younger generations smitten with technology, Kyoto's storied artisanship is giving way to laser cutting and robot assembly. Or worse, these trades are silently vanishing. "In 10 to 15 years, we could lose the traditions completely," Nishibori says.

This sense of urgency led Nishibori and some friends to launch the nonprofit Dento Foundation to support and reinvigorate Kyoto's artisan trades. Instead of watching traditional Japanese workshops fade away, the organisation is collaborating with scores of craftspeople to update their skills, connect them with outside mentors and funding, and open their ateliers to select groups of visitors.

Umbrella maker
Kotaro Nishibori.





“By moving these techniques forward and introducing what were once hidden arts to a wider audience, we’re passing the light to a new generation,” says Avi Lugasi, a longtime Kyoto resident and a founding partner in the project. “When the world sees the work of these incredible craftspeople, it safeguards the knowledge and the culture.”

Clockwise from top left:
Bellmaker Kazuya Nanjo
and one of his *orin*, and
Yohko Toda and sets of her
lacquered dinner plates.

FOR MY WEEKLONG TRIP TO KYOTO, Lugasi, who owns Virtuoso on-site tour connection Windows to Japan, worked with Nishibori and his team to organise intimate studio visits with craftspeople in and around the city. The Park Hyatt, in the heart of the historic Higashiyama neighbourhood, provided an excellent base for exploring the old town and its workshops. Seeing Japan’s cultural capital through the eyes of its esteemed makers is a true insider experience. Visiting experts at their cutting tables and kilns is like a portal into Kyoto’s history, art, and community, and its spirit of *shokunin kishitsu* – the way of the artisan.

For seventh-generation bellmaker Kazuya Nanjo, that means using traditional techniques to create something new. His small factory on an industrial strip in southeast Kyoto is one of only two in Japan handmaking the *orin*, or standing bell, that’s placed on Buddhist altars. It’s a painstaking process. At the factory, Nanjo shows me how a sacred combination of copper and tin is carefully poured into clay moulds before each small chime is polished and burnished, one by one. He pulls a cup-shaped bell from a crate and strikes it with a mallet, issuing a clear and penetrating tone that reverberates for 30 seconds. To the untrained ear the sound is enchanting, but it’s not quite right, Nanjo says, and he sends the bell back to be fired and shaped again.

“Living in Japan, you sometimes hear the *orin* at temples, but I wanted people to hear this beautiful sound in their homes or maybe in their offices,” Nanjo says. After consulting with Nishibori and taking design courses run by his team, he developed a line of bells and singing bowls with the same haunting tones but a more sophisticated look. His new showroom has a dedicated space for sound baths and shelves of decidedly contemporary products – like an electric turntable that plays multiple chimes with each revolution. “It’s a look and sound for the next generation,” Nanjo says.

Farther north near the Kyoto Botanical Gardens, Yohko Toda demonstrates the wonders of another plant known as the lacquer tree. The stylish *urushi* tableware and sculptures she makes from sap and natural pigment reflect Japanese lacquering techniques that date back to 9000 BC. Sitting at a low table in a corner of her tiny home studio, Toda coats her creations up to 30 times with brushes traditionally made from the hair of women who free dive for shellfish off the Pacific coast. (Human hair bristles are firmer than those made from animal hair and are the best for applying sticky lacquer.) But Toda’s time studying art history in Paris lends her work a striking modern edge. Near the end of the visit, she stacks 12 finished dinner plates in a charcoal-to-gold colour spectrum that subtly captures Kyoto’s changing seasons. Everyday objects suddenly look like high art.

Another afternoon, in the traditional wooden house in central Kyoto where he grew up, Takeshi Nishimura, at age 70, is buoyant as a teenager about the new applications he’s finding for his work. The paper-pattern-carving techniques he learned from his father are part of a behind-the-scenes process that goes into classical kimono making. But with demand for these pricey handmade garments dwindling, Nishimura worked with Dento to retool his skills and transfer his talents to the digital age.



Camellias in bloom and quiet moments at Kiyomizu-dera Temple.





Wearing the dark denim robe of his trade, Nishimura – a small man with a huge personality – deftly punches holes in the form of flowers and mandalas into thick washi paper soaked with persimmon juice. Some of these patterns will be silkscreened onto kimonos, but he’s also making pointillist-style sconces, decorative fans, and leather iPad covers for Takashimaya, one of Japan’s high-end department stores, and for orders as far away as Paris (Nishimura is big in France). “The work I do is so different than the work machines can do,” he says through a translator. “I’m happy that people are still happy with craft that’s done by hand.”

MEETING KYOTO’S ARTISTS is like peeling a layer off an onion that’s otherwise impossible to peel. Modesty and humility are prized attributes in Japanese culture, and much of what happens on an aesthetic level in Kyoto is inaccessible to casual outsiders. “In workshop after workshop, craftsmen and craftswomen are doing museum-quality work, but the magic of this experience is almost entirely hidden to people who don’t get the proper introductions,” Lugasi says.

For instance, a small wooden “Arts & Crafts” sign is the only tip-off to the century-old pottery business behind an unimposing storefront in the Higashiyama District. Yuko Hayashi’s inherited talent for handmade ceramics stretches back to her great-grandfather. For generations, Koson Kiln set standards for its orthodox approach to white and celadon porcelain vases, plates, and bowls. And while these traditional pieces are still popular with older buyers, Hayashi challenged herself to bring freshness and dash to the heritage brand. It took her more than a decade to figure out how. After the foundation helped her find training in Kyoto and Paris, she created a new method for cutting

Takeshi Nishimura
with a cut-paper pat-
tern originally used
for kimono textiles.

Kyoto Unveiled

clay – from an unexpected inspiration. “I had a breakthrough moment after watching a video of a confectioner cutting flower designs with scissors,” Hayashi says, as she shows off the trick in a sunny upstairs atelier. Pressing into soft clay with eyebrow scissors – “These are just right for making delicate petals and leaves,” she says – Hayashi gives a flat plate the look of a gorgeous chrysanthemum. Koson’s *tsuchibasami*, or “scissoring clay,” now ships around the world.

Nishibori, the umbrella maker, has a global following too. With pandemic travel restrictions in Japan finally lifted, small groups of overseas guests are visiting his craft lab to learn about *Kyo-wagasa* and follow the steps of making parasols themselves. He shows his contemporary lighting designs at international exhibitions. He also recently helped open a three-floor Kyoto boutique, blocks from Nijo Castle, that celebrates the handiwork of Dento-affiliated artists. There’s a bamboo art installation, displays of lacquerware and Nanjo’s bells, and a wall of woven and dyed textiles that he calls a “fabric forest.”

Nishibori is increasingly optimistic about the future of these crafts. His daughter, an art student herself, is 19 and considering getting into the family business. “She’s not sure yet, but that’s OK,” he says. “I like to joke and say, ‘It’s your decision. Either way, I will continue to be an umbrella to these traditions.’”

Ceramist Yuko Hayashi demonstrates her clay-cutting technique in her studio.

STAY The Park Hyatt Kyoto feels like a secret haven in the bustling Higashiyama District. Steps away from Ninen-zaka’s shops and small cafés, the hotel’s 70 guest rooms embody Kyoto artistry and the zen serenity of the surrounding hills. Its on-property Kyoyamato restaurant serves *kaiseki* cuisine inside one of the historic teahouses and has been a family-run operation for seven generations, since 1877. *Accommodations include breakfast daily and a \$145 hotel credit.*

Tucked within an 800-year-old koi pond garden in Kyoto’s temple district, **Four Seasons Hotel Kyoto** features 123 tradition-inspired rooms and 57 residential suites. Follow the glass bridge to Shakusui-tei, a classic teahouse and sake room. *Accommodations include breakfast daily and a \$145 hotel credit.*

With its commanding location on the Kamo River, **The Ritz-Carlton, Kyoto** is a modern retreat inspired by a traditional Japanese *ryokan*. Minimalist wood-toned interiors with floor-to-ceiling windows bring luminous calm to 134 guest rooms, including a few furnished with tatami mats and futons. *Accommodations include breakfast daily and a \$145 hotel credit.*

GO **Windows to Japan** works with Virtuoso travel advisors to create custom itineraries throughout the country, which can include exclusive group and individual visits to Kyoto’s traditional design and crafts studios and time with Dento-affiliated artisans across Japan. Through its partnership with the foundation, those visits (and crafts purchases) directly support local makers. *Departures: Any day through 2023.*

Explore gardens, historic districts, Kinkakuji and Nijo Castle, and other temples and shrines on **Artisans of Leisure**’s private, customisable seven-day tour of Kyoto. Upon request, the company coordinates visits with local craftspeople, such as a master swordsmith or ceramist. *Departures: Any day through 5 July 2025.*

Beginning in Tokyo, **Remote Lands**’ 13-day tour goes deep on Japanese art and culture. Highlights include museum and garden tours in Kurashiki and Miyajima, followed by a bullet-train hop from Hiroshima to Kyoto for five days in the country’s artistic capital. *Departures: Any day through 2025.* ♥



SPOTLIGHT ON: **VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

VENTURE DEEPER IN VANCOUVER

B.C.'s largest city comes up big for winter escapes.

VANCOUVER shines year-round, but come winter, it's especially in its element. Summer crowds have thinned, snow covers local peaks, and a mild climate makes it easy to savour all the city has to offer. This includes 12 distinct and diverse neighbourhoods, an international dining scene, and endless outdoor adventures within an urban wilderness surrounded by mountains, ocean inlets, and rainforest. Sure, Whistler awaits just a two-hour drive up the scenic Sea-to-Sky Highway, but don't sleep on one of Canada's most beautiful and entertaining cities.



(Multi)Culture Fixes

Myriad markets, galleries, and museums honour Vancouver's vibrant multicultural influences. Among Chinatown's gardens, apothecaries, and dim sum shops, for instance, you'll find the new Chinese Canadian Museum, housed in the nineteenth-century Wing Sang Building. Visit Punjabi Market, with a jaunt to the nearby Sikh temple on Ross Street, for a glimpse into the city's Indo Canadian population. The Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art and the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology (closed for renovations through 2023) both pay tribute to First Nations cultures. Another must: Take a mini-tugboat ferry to Granville Island to browse its galleries and shop for First Nations artwork.

Top Tables

Vancouver's multicultural vibe also permeates its recently minted Michelin guide. Starred restaurants range from Kissa Tanto (Italian-Japanese) to St. Lawrence (French-Québécois) to iDen & Quanjude Beijing Duck House (Chinese). Sustainable dining is equally vital to Vancouver, birthplace of the 100-Mile Diet, which emphasises uber-local ingredients. For sustainable seafood, look for Vancouver Aquarium's Ocean Wise stamp of approval at restaurants such as Forage and Fairmont Pacific Rim's RawBar. And save room for the Dine Out Vancouver Festival in mid-January, featuring multicourse menus and culinary events at 300-plus restaurants.

Natural Highs

Urban renewal takes on new meaning in Stanley Park, a 400-hectare sanctuary in the heart of downtown. Stroll the park's ten-kilometre seawall loop or forest-bathe along its sylvan trails scented by some 500,000 evergreen trees. Peak adventures around the city include night skiing at Cypress Mountain and snowshoeing at Grouse Mountain. Not for acrophobes: traversing the 70-metre-high Capilano Suspension Bridge with views of the Capilano River. Multicoloured light displays illuminate the bridge – along with its neighbouring cliffside and rainforest canopy pathways – during Canyon Lights (held nightly from 17 November 2023 through 21 January 2024).

Vancouver aglow, with Grouse Mountain in the background.

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SPOTLIGHT ON: **ROCKY MOUNTAINEER**

A FEAST FOR THE SENSES

On Rocky Mountaineer's epic rail journeys, fine dining is a work of art.

TALK ABOUT A PEAK EXPERIENCE: By day, Rocky Mountaineer's luxe rail journeys through Western Canada and the American Southwest roll through the Rockies with glass-dome coaches. But count on more than just seeing the scenery – across all four of the company's routes and two service levels, onboard hosts/storytellers bring the landscape to life by sharing insights about local history, geology, and Indigenous cultures. And now Rocky Mountaineer's newly refreshed culinary program extends the adventure to your palate, serving regionally inspired dishes using locally sourced ingredients. Guests can even raise toasts with local libations, from Colorado-made bourbons to Canadian cab-merlots. Here's what to expect on the table.

Meet the Chef

For executive chef Kaelhub Cudmore, honouring homegrown cuisine has always been a part of his culinary history. He first honed his kitchen skills with his mother while growing up on B.C.'s Vancouver Island, where they fished, foraged for wild foods, and harvested produce from their gardens. Stints at Victoria's Fairmont Empress hotel and the Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge reinforced his devotion to the type of local ingredients that shine on Rocky Mountaineer's menus. On board, he says, "expect to be served bright, fresh food that speaks to the journey you're on."

Sense of Place

"Our new menu is based on the idea of telling a story," Cudmore says, and "expresses the terroir we travel through." Take, for instance, Rocky Mountaineer's Journey through the Clouds route. After departing Vancouver and winding through the Fraser Valley for Jasper, travellers can sample a salad starring steelhead from B.C.'s Lois Lake, along with dishes such as Fraser Valley chicken paillard and Alberta beef shank ragout with wild mushrooms. Regionally focused desserts are equally delicious: Try the Berries & Cream bowl, featuring Fraser Valley-grown berries.

Tastemakers

The trains' ever-evolving cuisine and settings make each route unique. Look for dishes such as Colorado smoked salmon on the Rockies to the Red Rocks tour from Moab to Denver. Current favourites on Canadian trips include ravioli with squash and local mushrooms on the Rainforest to Gold Rush journey from Vancouver to Jasper, and lemon lavender posset with local Earl Grey macarons and Okanagan stone fruit compote on the First Passage to the West from Vancouver to Banff. Bon appétit.



Riding the rails (from left): Chef Kaelhub Cudmore, the Rocky Mountaineer, and a table with a view.



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MAKERS

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Across Portugal,
contemporary creatives
are upping the country's
souvenir game.

BY CHADNER NAVARRO

Photography by
Clara Tuma

Ceramic art from
Porto's Ater Objects.



WHEN I STARTED VISITING LISBON

more than 15 years ago, I generally avoided shopping. For those who know me – a man so materialistic he once owned 120 pairs of shoes – this may come as a shock. But staring at a wall of bags made of cork, kitschy ceramic bowls, and T-shirts with roosters and the word “PORTUGAL!” screaming at me, I wasn’t exactly compelled to fill up a second suitcase. Back then, the best mementos from my many trips to Portugal were bottles of wine or boxes of pastries that were unlikely to survive the flight home. I yearned to find beautiful Portuguese things to take back with me.

A lot has changed since then. Over the last decade, a new generation of makers and designers has emerged as rightful heirs to Portugal’s rich art and craft traditions. They’re not only putting their innovative stamps on a legacy, but also making covetable products much more accessible to visitors like me. My luggage has never been heavier.

On my most recent trip to the country, I set out to experience this renaissance for myself. While travellers typically come to Lisbon’s riverfront Belém neighbourhood to see some of the city’s most historic attractions – the Monument to the Discoveries, the fifteenth-century Jerónimos Monastery, the famous Pastéis de Belém bakery – I was here to visit Portugal Manual, a contemporary homage to Portuguese handiwork. Opened in 2020 inside the Belém Cultural Center, it’s the kind of shop I would have lost my mind in ten years ago. Perusing its 40 brands, I suddenly realise I’m touching *everything*: thick-gauge wool sweaters from Lobo, which works with textile factories across the country to make use of scrap

materials; curvy-but-delicate glass vases by Catarina Pacheco; and whimsical felt hats by Cascais-based brand Avo. The variety is a testament to Portugal's robust design scene, but the common denominator is each brand's relevance – I could picture one of Lobo's chunky fisherman-style cardigans in my closet at home – and its focus on handmade techniques.

"My objective is to tell the stories of artisans who dare return to handmade production," says Filipa Belo, Portugal Manual's founder. She credits this renewed interest in Portuguese craftsmanship to the marriage of ancient professions and young, talented creatives. Together, they're rejuvenating heritage techniques through products that resonate with new generations of buyers, who want to shop for things they can't find anywhere else – items with cultural heft, a sense of place, and no shouting roosters in sight. "Designers know how important it is to show who's backstage."

I WANT TO SEE this old school-new school magic in action, so I ask Tours For You, a Virtuoso on-site tour connection in Portugal and Spain, to help me dig deeper. We start in Caldas da Rainha, a quiet, ancient city about an hour's drive north of Lisbon. Known historically for its healing thermal waters – Queen Dona Leonor built what's now the world's oldest thermal hospital here in the 1480s – Caldas' soil is bursting with clay, a resource that supports its thriving ceramics industry. (Ceramics are arguably the most visible of Portugal's creative achievements – the most obvious example being azulejos, the tin-glazed ceramic tiles that cloak entire buildings and are about as prevalent as *pastéis de nata*.) One of Portugal's most iconic brands, Bordallo Pinheiro, was founded here in the nineteenth century, and many other ceramic showrooms, shops, and factories have since followed suit.

Caldas may have started as a destination for ceramic making, but its design schools, lower rents, and easy proximity to Lisbon have seduced creatives of all types. "Some of Portugal's most famous makers have had a foothold in this town," says my guide, Tiago Falcão.

Eneida Tavares' vases and Tavares
with Samuel Reis at Silos
in Caldas da Rainha. Opposite:
Azulejo beauty in Porto.



“Design as a discipline is quite new in Portugal. It almost feels like each of us is creating by our own rules.”

He takes me to Silos, an old brutalist grain silo that’s been transformed into workspaces for many of the region’s most promising talents, from ceramists and glass blowers to basket weavers and woodworkers.

In their shared ground-floor workshop, designers Enaida Tavares and Samuel Reis show me what they’re working on. Reis, who’s known for his otherworldly blown-glass creations, hands me drinking glasses and bottles moulded from petrified wood. Their textures are unusual, shaped by the curves and ridges of a tree branch. Then Tavares surprises me with vases that are half ceramic, half pine-needle basketry. Her parents are from Cape Verde and Angola, and after some research, she learned of an Angolan spiral coiling technique traditionally used for sieves and containers that can also be used to weave baskets. The resulting products are as dynamic as that global inspiration.

“Design as a discipline is quite new in Portugal,” Tavares says, noting that while there’s an incredibly rich history of craftsmanship, it isn’t a regulated practice or industry. “It almost feels like each of us is creating by our own rules.”

If anyone’s reinventing the rule book, it’s Italian transplant and Caldas resident Luca Colapietro, who’s turning azulejo tradition on its head with Surrealejos, a project that infuses Dalí- and Duchamp-inspired motifs with unexpected production techniques. Using ceramic decals created via digital and manual collage, his most striking works feature hot-air balloons, flamingos, and colourful, circuslike scenes. “My visuals

Surrealejos’ Lisbon showroom
and Leitão & Irmão and Carolina Curado-designed ear cuffs.





Susana Bettencourt
designs at Scar-ID and
Galula's Gustavo Macedo
and Filipa Mendes.



of the cuffs tells me that in her decades with the *casa*, she's never worked on anything like this.

LISBON'S DESIGN SCENE can hold its own, but most Portuguese consider Porto – three hours by train from the capital – to be the country's true creative centre, thanks to its proximity to northern manufacturing towns. I've always loved scoping out the scene at Scar-ID in the Cedofeita district. When the boutique opened in 2013, owners Sílvia Pinto Costa and André Ramos stocked a lot of exclusive drops from independent Portuguese fashion designers, and over the years, they've expanded to include home goods to accommodate expats looking for local merch. In 2019 the couple launched their own line, Ater Objects, featuring ceramics designed by Costa herself. Some pieces are practical (plates and cups), but others are more abstract, including a two-pronged vessel I can't quite identify – a water jug, maybe, or a vase, or just an objet d'art to be used as a conversation piece.

Costa and Ramos were pioneers of championing local brands, but it wasn't always easy. "All of our clients were devoted to labels from France and Italy," Ramos says. "But now, everything has changed. Portugal is a brand."

Included in that brand is knitwear designer Susana Bettencourt, who started learning her craft at age 5 from her grandmother. "My Azorean heritage brought me to knitting," she says, adding that, growing up, her family in those Portuguese isles made most of their clothes at home. She learned foundational techniques – knitting, crochet, embroidery, and bobbin lace – from them before studying fashion at Central Saint Martins in London and returning to Portugal to create some of the most eye-catching knits coming out of the country. Scar-ID carries Bettencourt's more subdued creations, including a jacquard cotton-blend dress depicting Portugal's windows, but her full range of work is more avant-garde: skirts with peekaboo hems, for example, and hand-crocheted, boho-style ruffled pants you'd hardly expect to see someone wearing while prancing through the quiet villages of São Miguel Island. But Bettencourt's vision

is all about looking toward the future. "My goal is to modernise knitwear, keep the heritage alive, and pass the knowledge on," she says.

Bolstered by an inspiring week, I finally decide to track down some cork worth bringing home. Portugal produces hundreds of thousands of tonnes of cork (some 50 percent of the world's supply), and I had yet to find a single cute cork creation. But if it exists, it must be in Porto, I thought. In their downtown studio, Gustavo Macedo and Filipa Mendes, the founders of furniture and lighting outfit Galula, are excited about how they're reimagining the possibilities around the country's greatest crop. "A lot of people don't think of it as a noble material," Macedo tells me as I palm a handsome shallow cork bowl that would look fabulous holding a bunch of bananas on my kitchen table. "And I understand, especially if you only see cork as a wine-bottle stopper, a fridge magnet at the souvenir shop, or an ugly purse."

Galula's most popular items are its ultramodern pendant and desk lamps, which feature exposed bulbs fixed to magnetised pieces of cork, and the duo's chairs and tables, which are fashioned out of different varieties of cork: some dark, some dense, some with a tighter grain. "Working with cork for furniture is completely different to producing bottle stoppers," Macedo says, before adding that convincing manufacturers to even take on their projects was a massive undertaking, requiring a mutual interest in learning from each other, something I've heard a lot of on this trip. "We teach them; they teach us," Mendes says. "And together we become ambassadors for Portuguese design."

As I consider which bowl to bring home with me, I remember those cork bags of souvenir shops past. It may seem like the country's local crafts have come a long way, but they've always been there. They just needed a generation of artists to see them anew.



Cork gets a glow-up at Galula.

Portugal by Design

GO Virtuoso travel advisors can work with **Tours For You** to arrange custom deep-dive trips around Portugal, including exclusive visits to many of the ateliers and workshops mentioned in this story. A full-day tour, for example, can include a guided trip to Caldas da Rainha to meet with local designers (many of whom take custom orders), followed by an afternoon of shopping in Lisbon, with visits to historic design houses and up-and-coming brands. *Departures: Any day through 2023.*

STAY A recent makeover transformed the **Four Seasons Hotel Ritz Lisbon's** 282 rooms into contemporary hideaways, complete with marble bathrooms and balconies overlooking the city and Eduardo VII Park. The art collection throughout the ten-storey building spans site-specific sculptures, paintings, and locally made tapestries; and at the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant, Cura, chef Pedro Pena Bastos puts fine art on the plate. *Accommodations include breakfast daily and a \$145 hotel credit.*

In a restored eighteenth-century townhouse on Lisbon's Avenida da Liberdade, the 25-room **Valverde Hotel** welcomes travellers into residential-style guest rooms with vaulted ceilings, antique furniture, and Portuguese textiles; sexy common spaces lined in contemporary art; and a fern-ensconced pool area that feels like a secret respite in the middle of the bustling city. *Accommodations include private round-trip airport transfers and breakfast daily.*

The Yeatman – perched on a hill on the Vila Nova de Gaia side of the Douro River – takes its reputation as a culinary destination seriously. Surrounded by some of the country's most famous port houses, the 109-room property is also home to one of the world's largest Portuguese wine collections and chef Ricardo Costa's two-Michelin-starred restaurant. The wine obsession is real: The hotel's Porto-facing infinity pool is shaped like a decanter. *Accommodations include breakfast daily and a winetasting for two.*

Housed inside a 1920s neoclassical building, the 76-room **Maison Albar Le Monumental Palace** brings a touch of art deco glam to Porto's city centre. Guest rooms feature sleek lacquered furniture and high crown-moulded ceilings, there's a French brasserie downstairs, and the marble-clad indoor pool makes for a compelling post-sprees afternoon at the spa. *Accommodations include breakfast daily and a \$145 hotel credit.* ♥



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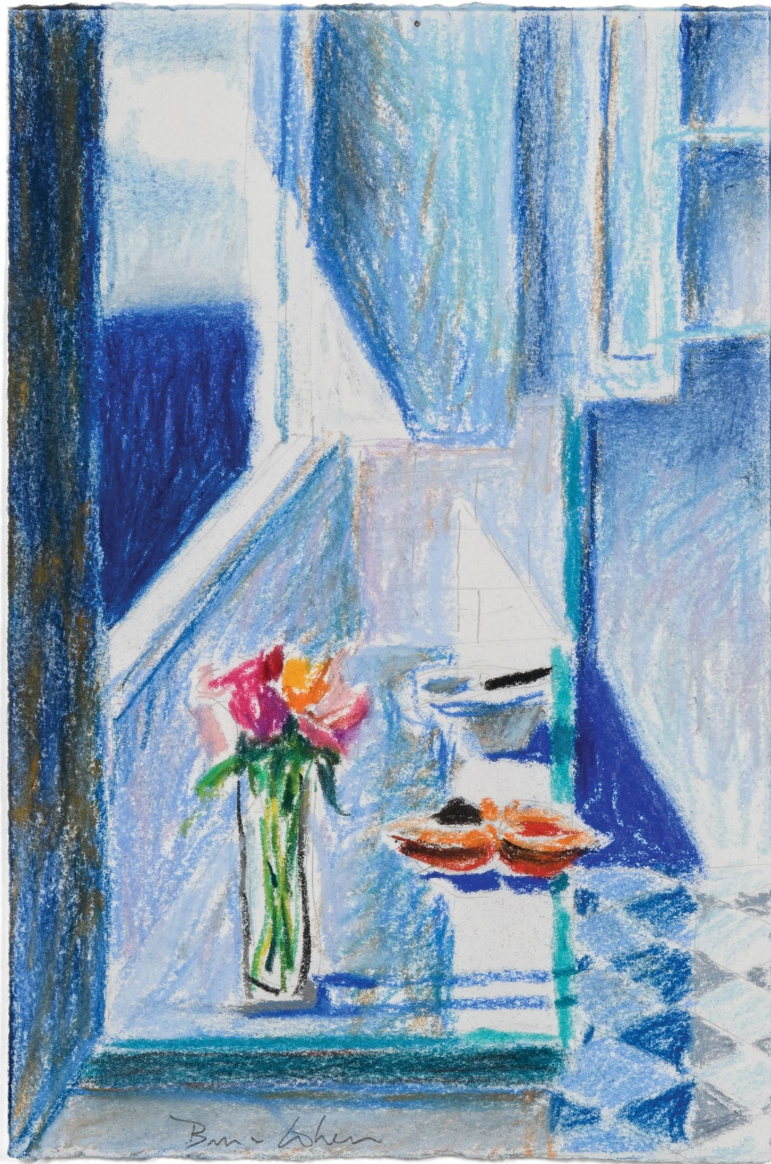
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The View from Here

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Untitled #12
Pastel on paper

Santa Monica, California-based artist Bruce Cohen is known for his still-life oil paintings – vivid, realistically lit scenes often filled with flowers, windows, and doorways. But before taking brush to canvas, he sketches with pastels, playing with colour and geometry in what he calls his “observation collage process.” While Cohen shies away from citing specific inspiration for this piece, a lifetime spent on the California coast feels evident. For the viewer, that ambiguity opens the door for a range of travel memories, perhaps from the Pacific, the Greek Isles, or somewhere else entirely. Original work available at lesliesacks.com. @brucecohenstudio

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