



A Home and
Travel Magazine

Vacation Rental

travels

Wining up & Winding Down

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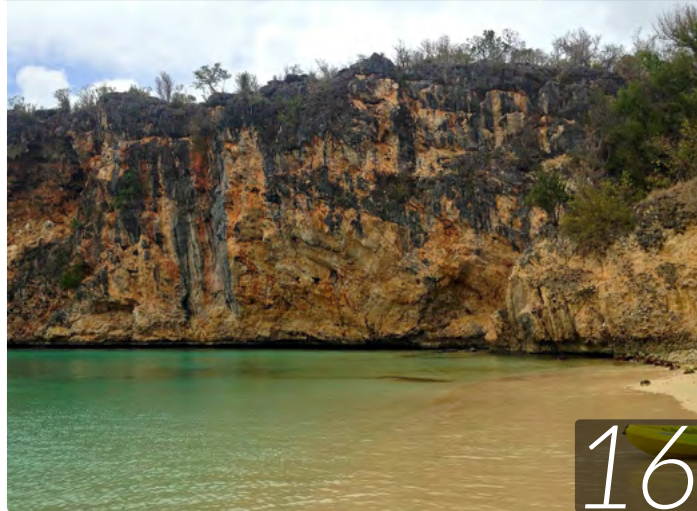
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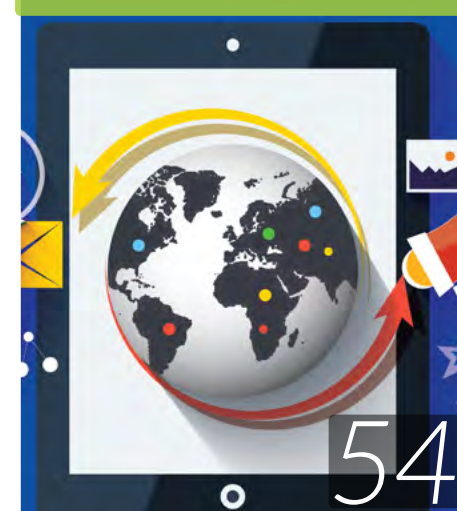
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For the Love of Travel

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We want to thank all of our partners for placing their property, location, event, and products with our magazine. Each issue has a limited amount of space for our partners to let you know about what they have to offer and how to get in touch with them.

It helps us out greatly when you click on their advertisements to visit their sites and make reservations, visit their location, attend the events they put on, and buy their products. It also signals to our partners that you are interested in what they offer.

Please help keep Vacation Rental Travels free by frequenting our partners, letting others know about our magazine, and **sharing us** on your Facebook timeline.

SPONSORING PARTNER

This issue is sponsored by the relief efforts for the people of Fiji, specifically the people in and around Rakiraki. Cyclone Winston, the largest storm to ever hit land in the southern hemisphere, came ashore directly at Rakiraki and devastated the area.

As you can see below, many of the homes, schools, churches, and full communities did not fare well under the pressure of the 150+ MPH winds. [Click here](#) or on the image to see more details.

Please support the Fijian people by contributing what you can to [Beth's GoFundMe project](#). No overhead. No "administrative" costs. Just 100% relief for the people of Rakiraki.



Welcome!

Vacation Rental Travels - where travel inspiration is born! We are a digital publication that highlights the unique experience of vacationing in stylish, comfortable, and sometime quirky vacation rentals.

Explore hidden garden cottages, sumptuous penthouses, and quirky homes that make traveling a rich and rewarding experience.

You can have any kind of experience in a vacation rental... whether you are on a budget or want lavish pampering. It's all available to you.

Vacation Rental Travels magazine covers the best, most unique, quirky, beautiful, amenities-laden homes for rent to vacationers.

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The Editor

From the Desk of Beth Carson

Bula...

It's the Fijian word, similar to Aloha or Shalom, that covers many things, but most commonly used for welcome.

I'm in Fiji right now overseeing repairs to my house after cyclone Winston tore through this area of Fiji- the second most powerful hurricane/cyclone/typhoon in recorded history made landfall at Starfish Blue. You may remember it as the cover story for our [January/February 2016 issue](#). Our house did surprisingly well. I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I got here- but it was mostly drywall ceiling damage from a leak in the master suite.

A lot has changed in just a few weeks. People's houses were flung far and wide, communication was days coming to remote areas, and the lack of food and water was reaching a dangerous level because communities were cut off from the rest of Fiji with downed power lines and heavy trees crisscrossing the roads.

In the week that I've been here, 8 days after Cyclone Winston came through, I've seen the true grit and spirit of the Fijians. Instead of



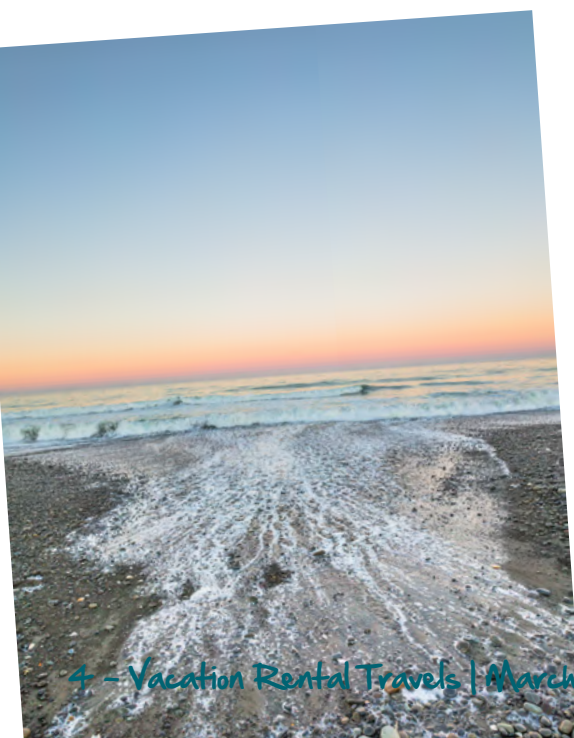
Email me: Beth@VacationRentalTravels.com

"How are you?" we greet one another with, "How is your house? How is your family?"

Where once eyes were clouded with memories of fear and an uncertain future, the world has showed up and the smiles are back, even with a long road to recovery. An Australian warship is at a nearby island rebuilding the community and will come to here next. New Zealand helicopters are landing with food. And grassroots efforts have formed.

My neighbor in Fiji, Ali Howie, from NZ, who runs a vacation rental called Bularangl, and I have set up a GoFundMe Campaign to help the people of Rakiraki. The people on the main road seem to be getting aid, but the ones on the back roads are lacking. I've spent many hours filling up my SUV with supplies and going from house to house. And, seeing the smiles that Fiji is known for.

Our maid Reshmi and her family lost their entire roof. Through the [GoFundMe Campaign](#), we were



able to buy the supplies to restore them back to their home. [You can see her story here.](#)



We found another family who had not seen any outside help since Winston hit, more than 17 days ago. With the fund that my “competitor” and I put together, funded by past guests and our friends and family, we were able to buy the materials to put a roof over their heads and meet some of their basic needs.



That’s what I love about the vacation industry. As our email boxes were flooded with concerned past guests who wanted to help, our [GoFundMe campaign](#) has allowed us to help our staff and the community. None of the funds are being used for our own homes- and no administration costs, either. Those services are given freely by Ali and myself.

One of the benefits of staying in a vacation rental is the connection you have with the community. You just don’t get that when you stay at a hotel.

We’re glad you’re here. We’re glad you have the spirit of Bula about you.

More assistance is needed

If you’d like to contribute to the [GoFundMe campaign](#), it will go to the people of Rakiraki and the surrounding area. You can also donate to the Red Cross.

Thank you for being here.

Vinaka Vakalevu,

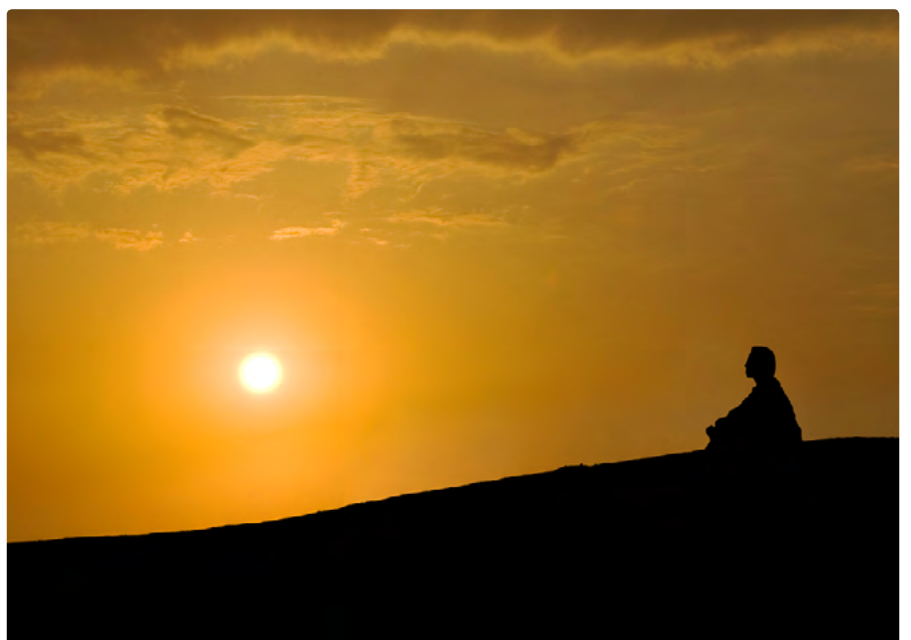
Beth Carson

Beth Carson and the people of Fiji

PS- The best news? **Starfish Blue** is now up and running with some improvements- including a generator that starts on its own and shuts off when power is restored. They don’t expect we’ll have power in the area for at least 4-6 months, so it was a necessary improvement.

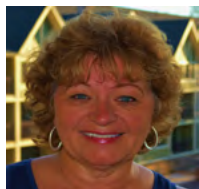
I’m here now and it’s simply relaxing- as soon as I come down the drive, the cares and stress and worries of the day melt away and I’m in my happy place. It could be yours, too.

Moce (pronounced moe-they) means “Until I see you again”



WHO'S ON THE INSIDE?

Each issue we have terrific content created by travel writers from around the world. Without their time and effort, we would not be able to share the wonderful places, glorious vacation homes, and the fun and cool events and activities with you in each issue. We want to not only thank them, but invite you as our valued readers to support them by visiting their websites, subscribing to their publications, and liking them on Facebook or any other social media that you value. It's how we help each other grow.



Noreen L. Kompanik is a published independent travel writer and photographer based in San Diego California. Fortunate to have lived overseas as a Naval Officer wife, she has traveled extensively and her many Italian and other European adventures have sparked her passions for cooking and wine tasting. She shares her latest adventures, photos, and published stories on her [What's In Your Suitcase?](#) Facebook page. She is a frequent contributor to several online and print publications.

Valerie Swiderski - Never traveling much growing up, I caught the travel bug later in life. Raised by self-employed parents, there wasn't much time for travel. I was raised on traditional Midwest food and now have an insatiable appetite when it comes to trying new foods. I enjoy learning about culture through their meal traditions and love learning how to prepare new foods. When I am not traveling abroad, I enjoy exploring the amazing wineries the Midwest has to offer. I often have separation anxiety from TSA and always look forward to exploring the next new place. You can contact Valerie via email: TipsOrTreats13@gmail.com



Paula Wheeler is a part-time freelance travel writer from Boise, Idaho who writes about getting out of one's comfort zone and discovering off the beaten-path locations. Her articles have been published in online magazines and [she writes a blog](#)

Camille Miller has been writing since 2011 on a variety of topics. She especially loves introducing people to their next memorable vacation spot, and has a knack for picking out the unique homes and luxurious locations you want to return to again and again. She often writes about her travels with her husband and three crazy kids, who are chiefly responsible for keeping things lively, and who never disappoint.



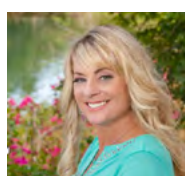
Janice Sakata-Schultze worked as an educator for over twenty years before becoming a travel writer, photographer, copywriter and web marketing strategist in 2012. For the past three years, she's worked with more than two dozen travel and tourism clients, which naturally combines her passion for adventure and writing. Her work has appeared in Matador Network, the Wealthy Web Writer and the Barefoot Writer, and various guest blog posts on marketing websites. She lives with her family in Golden, Colorado, where she cooks, knits, trains for races, and roots for her Bay Area sports teams.

Tawna Brown is a photographer, writer, traveler and wine lover and was diagnosed at a very young age with a serious case of wanderlust. Born, raised and still residing in Canada's Northwest Territories, Tawna takes great pride in where she comes from. She recently returned from an epic self-guided photographic journey that took her around the world twice in 10 months. Be sure to watch for her stories and photos through her blog and social media sites, which can be found at www.TawnaBrown.com



Ann Kuffner is a travel and lifestyle writer, and a photographer, who primarily covers international locations. Having lived in Belize full-time since 2008, her articles focus on the expat lifestyle there. But she also has written about other locations, such as Roatan and Argentina. She trained through the American Writers and Artists Institute, studying both travel writing and copywriting. In 2013 she was retained by International Living to be their dedicated Belize Correspondent. But she regularly writes about other countries for both International Living and other publications. She has also written about other overseas topics such as medical tourism and banking. [Ann Kuffner](#)

Kevin McGoff - Lawyer by day, Kevin is a writer and travel advisor when the courts are closed. He assists voyagers in planning and booking travel to France, encouraging leisurely travel, long lunches and visits to sites that are off the beaten path. Kevin lives in Indianapolis and spends part of the year in Isle sur la Sorgue, a small town in the heart of the Vaucluse département in southern France. Contact Kevin at kevin.mcgoff1@gmail.com



Dede Sindelar lives her life driven by creativity and adventure as a freelance copywriter. She blends that with her background in wellness and her insatiable appetite for traveling to exotic destinations. Her family jokes saying they never have to take out their cameras because she's forever capturing the moment with her photographs. When she isn't busy writing or taking photos, Dede is throwing frisbees for her dog, spending time with her husband and planning their next journey. Please visit [Sindelar Wellness Travel](#) to catch up with Dede.

Where in the World?

In each issue we challenge you to guess where in the world the photos were taken. Sometimes it will be easy and other times not so easy. In every case, though, we bet that you will learn something about the place being featured. Remember NO PEEKING until you make your guess.

Oh, you want a clue or two?

This climate-blessed U.S. destination was founded by Spanish settlers in 1781. Its diverse geography features mountains, desert, beaches, and islands.

Considered a top tourist destination, there's something undeniably exciting and energizing about this city. One would never expect to find a sticky asphalt swamp and the site of the world's most famous ice age fossil excavation in the middle of one of its urban neighborhoods.

Boasting one of the largest railroad passenger terminals in the U.S., this world class city also features a downtown historic district paying homage to its deep cultural roots.

The Cobb salad and French Dip Sandwich were invented here. Full of iconic museums and fascinating architecture, the city is a beacon for all those seeking fame and fortune.

Close your eyes, make a guess, turn the page and see if you're correct.

So, Where in the World are we?



Los Angeles: Much More than Glitz & Glam

Article & Photos by Noreen Kompanik



The magnetic lure of Los Angeles is undeniable. Renowned as the center of the nation's film and television industry, this dazzling west coast metropolis is synonymous with glamour, fantasy and ambition. From luxury window shopping on palm tree-lined Rodeo Drive and the cinematic glitz and glitter of Hollywood, to driving the stunning Pacific coastline on a warm, sunny day, top down, wind blowing in your hair, Los Angeles has that "something for everyone" iconic kind of feel!

Geography and History

Los Angeles County is immensely diverse in every sense of the word, even in its geography. It has mountains, deserts, beaches and islands.

The city is situated on a hilly coastal plain with the Pacific Ocean as its southern and western boundaries.

The second largest city in the United States, Los Angeles covers 467 square miles. Adding in the surrounding five-county metropolitan areas, and thirty distinctive neighborhoods, the greater L.A. area covers a range of more than 34,000 square miles.

Known as the City of Angels, Los Angeles was founded by Spanish settlers in 1781. These stalwart colonists named their quaint little settlement El Pueblo de la Reina de Los Angeles, literally "The Town of the Queen of Angels." Following the 1821 War of Independence, the entire region became part of the newly formed nation of Mexico.

Now better known by its short title "Los Angeles," the community along with the rest of California was officially annexed by the United States in 1848, after the Mexican-American War.





Weather

Any time of the year is the right time to visit Los Angeles. The warm, moist Pacific air keeps temperatures mild throughout the year and mountains along the north and east sides of the Los Angeles coastal basin act as buffers against the extreme summer heat and winter cold of the surrounding desert and plateau regions. To put it mildly, L.A. is “climate-blessed”.

L.A. Neighborhoods and What to See and Do

It’s virtually impossible to experience all the geographically and culturally unique neighborhoods of greater Los Angeles in one visit. So, here’s a sampling of the more famously memorable must-dos of L.A. that make for an unforgettable venture to this magnificent city. For first time visitors, taking a tour with a company like [Starline Tours](#) with experienced guides who know their city the best is highly recommended.

Hollywood

America’s world renowned Tinseltown is considered touristy, but there’s something undeniably exciting and energizing about Hollywood that captures the imagination. “It’s much more than a place” said our impassioned tour guide. “It’s more like a state of mind”. Millions of visitors from all over the world are drawn to this entertainment mecca to pay homage to their favorite stars, hoping to catch a glimpse of a famous celebrity. In the midst of what is described as a renaissance, the Hollywood area that once carried a somewhat seedy reputation during the last thirty years has steadily been transforming into a charming recreation of the movie industry’s famous heyday.

Visitors can literally walk in the footsteps of Charlie



Chaplain, Humphrey Bogart, Marilyn Monroe and other Hollywood greats at TLC Chinese Theater. This famous Hollywood symbol, previously known as Grauman’s Chinese Theater, was designated a national cultural and architectural landmark in 1968. It’s a rite of passage when visiting Hollywood to place your hands and feet over the prints of famous stars immortalized in cement at the theater’s entrance court



Known as Southern California's gateway to the cosmos, Griffith Observatory, an art deco landmark built in 1935, features a high-tech planetarium and astronomy museum with telescopes available to the public. The observatory is known for its incredible city views, but, most importantly, the ability to witness amazing starlight and planetary views on clear nights. Incredibly, admission and all programs are free, with only a nominal charge for planetarium shows.

One of L.A.'s greatest traditions and the place to be on a warm summer Southern California night is watching a live performance in the Hollywood Bowl, a graceful,

and have your photo taken for posterity.

Nearby, the mile-long iconic Hollywood Walk of Fame, often called the world's most famous sidewalk, honors more than 2,500 stars of motion picture, television, radio, recording, and live theater. Fifteen blocks of Hollywood Boulevard and three blocks on Vine are lined with coral-pink terrazzo five-point stars rimmed with brass - permanent monuments to each Hollywood star.

For many visitors to Los Angeles, there is no more coveted photo than a great shot of the world famous Hollywood Sign. More than just nine white letters standing 45 feet tall spelling out H-O-L-L-Y-W-O-O-D, the evocative sign stands on its lofty perch in the Santa Monica hills proclaiming the success and glamour of Hollywood. Though visible from all around the city, it can actually be surprisingly difficult to get a well-angled shot. And according to our travel guide, it's illegal to get close to the Sign, set behind restricting gates and protected by security cameras and Park Rangers.

The Capitol Records Building constructed in 1954 is home to the first record company based on the West Coast and the world's first circular office building.

Though never confirmed that the 13-story high-rise was purposely designed to resemble a stack of records topped by a stylus, few would deny that it does. What is certain is that entertainers they promoted, like the Beatles, Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Bob Seger and the like, have been immortalized in the world of music and pop culture.





Greek-styled outdoor amphitheater cradled in a small canyon northeast of Hollywood. The largest outdoor amphitheater in the United States, the bowl is the seasonal home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and attracts some of the most popular, talented performers in the industry.

In Los Angeles, even the dead maintain their magnetic appeal. Never is this more apparent than at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery. Known as the “resting place of Hollywood immortals”, Hollywood Forever is one of L.A.’s oldest cemeteries. With meticulously manicured lawns, ponds and fountains, the fascinating, picturesque, but somewhat bizarre resting place for the rich and famous draws you in with its history. Our original plan of “just checking it out” resulted in over an hour’s visit as we were compelled to find the gravesites of familiar Hollywood legends such as Douglas Fairbanks, Mickey Rooney, Jayne Mansfield, and Cecil B. DeMille. Inside one of the two mausoleums, the vault of Rudolph Valentino, entombed in 1926, is still visited by adoring fans leaving red lipstick prints

behind on his crypt.

Beverly Hills and the West Side

The movie star of Los Angeles communities is without a doubt Beverly Hills. No other area delivers on such a dramatic, cinematic scale the wealth, excess and grandeur of its palm lined streets and spectacular mansions.

In the heart of Beverly Hills lies one of the wealthiest and most famous shopping streets in the world - famously renowned Rodeo Drive. Showcasing the glam of the big screen, Rodeo Drive is home to such couture, high fashion names as Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Prada, Fendi, and Versace. In this epicenter of luxury, fashion and lifestyle, shoppers sit at outside table restaurants enjoying the sunshine, sipping martinis and dining on the latest contemporary California cuisine.

Located at the intersection of Wilshire Boulevard and Rodeo Drive, the Beverly Wilshire is the grand dame of Beverly Hills. Built in 1928 in the Italian





Renaissance style, the elegant hotel with crystal chandeliers, oak paneling, crown moldings and frescos gracing the walls has hosted presidents, foreign dignitaries and of course, the rich and famous. But, to most of us, the hotel is most noted for its featured role in the film, *Pretty Woman*.

Mentioned in Sheryl Crow's hit song "All I Want to Do", Santa Monica Boulevard is a thoroughfare connecting the east side of Los Angeles with the Pacific Ocean, ending in the city of Santa Monica.

Part of the legendary Route 66, the boulevard is known for its eclectic restaurants, boutiques and nightlife. West Hollywood's other major streets representative of Southern California's good life include Sunset Boulevard and Melrose Avenue, both featured countless times in film, television and song.

Smack dab in the middle of urban Los Angeles is the last place you'd expect to find a bizarre primal pool of hot tar that's been bubbling from the earth for more than 40,000 years. La Brea Tar Pits is a fascinating sticky asphalt swamp and the site of the world's most famous ice age fossil excavation site. Nearly 400 species of mammals, birds, amphibians, and fish became trapped in the gooey tar resulting in their bone preservation.

Established in 1935, the Original Farmer's Market is considered the granddaddy of L.A. markets. With its amazing array of clapboard stalls, vendors sell everything from hot sauces, fruits, vegetables to fresh meat, poultry and fish. Cuisines from across the globe can be purchased as meals, making the market a true United Nations of food choices.

A chance to see not only spectacular art, but spectacular views of the Santa Monica Mountains, Pacific Ocean, and Los Angeles, the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center houses an extensive collection of European

paintings, drawings, sculpture, illuminated manuscripts, decorative arts, and photography representing medieval times to present day. Collections are divided by genre throughout various loges and pavilions. Famous original art by Vincent Van Gogh, Monet, Renoir, Cezanne and others are beautifully displayed. If the collections aren't impressive enough, the architectural splendor of the Getty, the surrounding sculptured gardens and tree-lined walkways are themselves a work of art.

Downtown Los Angeles

A flurry of redevelopment has breathed new life into downtown LA. The dramatic makeover and revitalization of its civic center has resulted in some of the best music, arts and sports venues in the country. All aboard! Los Angeles Union Station is the main railway station in L.A. and the largest railroad passenger terminal in the western United States. Opened in 1939, 60,000 people per day pass through this Spanish Revival masterpiece with heavy wood-beam ceilings, terracotta-tiled and inlaid marble floors. With its lush landscaped enclosed garden patios and relaxing courtyards, it's easy to forget you're in a big city.

One of the area's biggest surprises in downtown L.A. is the historic district located in the oldest section of the city known as El Pueblo de Los Angeles, established in 1781. The old pueblo, preserved as a historic park



contains the oldest house in Los Angeles. Olvera Street, known for its Mexican marketplace is a lively historic, brick-lined, street filled with colorful shops, outdoor markets, restaurants and Mexican entertainment. Other ethnic enclaves located in downtown include Chinatown and Little Tokyo.

The massive postmodern architectural structure known as Cathedral of Our Lady for the Angels was built in 2002 to replace the Cathedral of Saint Vibiana, severely damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake. As the mother church for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Sunday Mass in this breathtaking, soaring cathedral is celebrated in 42 different languages.

Downtown's famous entertainment venues include the strikingly beautiful Walt Disney Concert Hall, a masterpiece of design by world renowned architect Frank Gehry. Though not architecture buffs, we still experienced a sense of awe and admiration gazing at its fascinating, almost impossibly designed curvaceous stainless-steel exterior.

The sports and entertainment complex that surrounds Staples Center and the Microsoft Theater (previously known as the Nokia Theatre) buzzes with sporting events and more than 22 restaurants. Staples Center is home to L.A.'s famous sport teams, the Lakers, Clippers and Kings. Microsoft Theater's auditorium can hold 7,100 spectators, and has one of the largest indoor stages in the U.S.

Beach Towns

L.A.'s beaches are an iconic and integral part of Southern California, and getting some sand on the floor of your car and in your flip flops is practically a requirement when you visit the west coast. Located along the Santa Monica Bay, the communities of ultra-rich Malibu, ultra-casual Santa Monica, and bohemian Venice represent all styles of beach living. Continuing south to L.A.'s three beach cities, Manhattan Beach, Hermosa, and Redondo, the emphasis is truly on a more fun-in-the-sun beachy existence - a lifestyle we all envied while bopping to the popular surf songs made famous by a local group, none other than the Beach Boys.

Los Angeles Cuisine

Though Los Angeles may not be as renowned for its culinary reputation as New York, San Francisco or New Orleans, that's not to say there isn't a wealth of fantastic restaurants and dining options. Los Angeles has one of the most exciting and influential dining scenes in the country. With its international amalgamation of visitors, businessmen, and residents from the four corners of the globe, L.A. features cuisine of every culture. Here you can dine with the world at your fingertips (or on your spoon).

For generations, innovative and inspiring dishes from many of L.A.'s imaginative and talented chefs have become culinary worldwide favorites. Among their creations, the Cobb salad, French Dip Sandwich, and the plethora of modern California pizzas with toppings like smoked salmon or arugula and pear. With so many restaurants with delightfully delicious fare, how could we possibly choose? On this weekend visit, we opted for some local favorites and iconic classics.

No trip to Los Angeles would be complete without a visit to Pink's Hot Dogs, a quintessential Hollywood foodie experience. In 1939, Paul & Betty Pink sold their famous "juicy snap" hot dogs on a perfectly





HOLIDAY SHOPPING



steamed bun from a pushcart near the corner of La Brea and Melrose in Hollywood. The restaurant opened in 1946, and ever since patrons have lined up in droves to enjoy one of Pink's 39 famous hot dog combinations - from chili dogs to those covered in pastrami, guacamole, mushrooms or coleslaw to name a few. Trust me, one bite, and you'll understand.

There is no shortage of food choices at the L.A. Market, but, we had to try a slice of Patsy D' Amore's famous pizza. No one in Los Angeles had ever even heard of pizza before Patsy introduced this Neapolitan delight in 1939. Still baked in their original pizza oven, their pizzas are literally irresistible.

Understandably, the line at Bennett's Ice Cream is impressive. Bennett's still makes their own ice cream on site and guests can peek at the process through the building's kitchen window. The family's been making this old fashioned frozen treat since 1946, along with wonderfully inventive delectable sundaes and ice cream flavors that range from pumpkin to cabernet sauvignon sorbet. Even their more standard flavors, like chocolate or butter pecan, are some of the best we've ever tasted.

World famous celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck opened his first signature restaurant, Spago, on Sunset Strip, West Hollywood in 1982. Pioneering the term "California Cuisine", this award winning restaurant, once the place to be on Oscar night, is now located in posh Beverly Hills. One of the top 40 restaurants in the US since 2004, the chef's flagship restaurant has for years attracted stars and politicians from all over the world and is still widely considered THE place to "see and be seen".

Frank Lloyd Wright, the famous American architect, once said "Tip the world over on its side and everything will land in Los Angeles". True to his comment, Los Angeles is a splendid cosmopolitan cocktail that appeals to all tastes and interests. Quirky, exciting, eccentric, and full of energy, every visit guarantees a distinct, but unique experience. Ours was for only a weekend. There's so much more to discover. Guaranteed, we'll be back.





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Untouched Caribbean Found In Anguilla

The water is choppy and 40 feet deep in some places as I try my best to balance on the paddleboard. Our guide tells us we are going “just around that point.” One point comes and goes, and then another and another.

It’s just my family and me with our two guides and we are starting to get tired. Up ahead, we spot our final destination on the horizon.

Gliding into Meads Bay, we can’t

help but notice the color of the water. It is translucent blue and smooth as glass.

After loading up the paddle boards, my family and I begin the trek back to where we started earlier that morning. Palm trees and goats pass by in the rear view mirror as I chat with our guide. I inquire how far he thinks we went, “Oh, miles and miles, probably 6.” he says.

Six miles? Well, that would explain

why I’m so tired. Luckily for us, we have a well-equipped and quiet vacation rental to return to for a much-deserved nap.

We arrive back at [Sea Breeze at the Fountain](#), our home away from home while we are here on Anguilla.

Our two bed/two bath condo gives us the space we crave while vacationing. These condos are on the east side of the island and a 2-minute walk from the property





to Shoal Bay East beach where you'll see various shades of impossibly blue water and sand so white you might mistake it for baby powder.

This destination is one of the favorites of tourists and locals alike. The property is dotted with beachfront dining options and offers plenty of space to get away to your own piece of the beach.

The condo comes with a fully fitted kitchen and ample space on the outdoor terrace to savor that first cup of coffee as you watch the sunrise from this penthouse condo. You can even enjoy the view of the ocean as you shower in the master suite.

Anguilla (pronounced Ann-gwil-a) is a British West Indies island seven miles north of St. Martin.

Although it's close to St. Martin, this largely unknown island is untouched by time. The island's name comes from the Spanish word Anguila which means eel. Driving on this flat island comes easy, as long as you remember to stay on the left and watch for the goats that roam the island!

*Experience the untouched Caribbean right here at **Sea Breeze at the Fountain.***

[Click here for more information and rates and availability for your trip.](#)



Anguilla Travel Tips

To get to Anguilla, you can fly directly into Clayton J. Lloyd International Airport. You won't find many flight options and it can be quite expensive.

You will find better prices and more frequent routes if you fly into Princess Juliana International Airport on the Dutch side of St. Maarten. You can book a private ferry (prices vary) located close to the airport or take a taxi to the public ferry in Marigot on the French

side of St. Martin. The public ferry is \$20 per person each way, cash only. You will also have to pay departure taxes leaving St. Martin and Anguilla. The cost is \$5 and \$23 per person, cash only.

When you leave St. Martin, they will give you immigration papers that you will need to show in Anguilla.

Anguilla's currency is the East Caribbean Dollar. All gas stations and

grocery store prices are listed in East Caribbean Dollar. All other goods and services will be listed in USD.

Anguilla restaurants automatically add a 15% gratuity regardless of the size of your party. You'll likely see this as a service charge on your receipt.

Check out [Anguilla's official tourism website](#) for more information and help to plan your itinerary.

Food and Fun - Anguilla

Article & Photos By Valerie Swiderski

Dining Options

Anguilla offers everything from food trucks to upscale beachfront restaurants. There is something to fit everyone's budget.

The Blue Bar & Brick Oven Restaurant located on the property of CéBlue Villas & Beach Resort offers brick oven baked pizzas and calzones. You can watch the sunset over the ocean from this hillside open air restaurant.

Straw Hat on Meads Bay offers an eclectic menu using local ingredients. You may be tempted to try Anguillian crayfish or Curried Goat Pot Pie. If you are not feeling adventurous, you'll also find burgers and barbecue chicken on the menu.



the tourist hot spots. Pulling into the parking lot, you're likely to see a lively game of "bones," or dominoes, played across the street. Here, you will find amazing creations like the coconut crusted grouper, local curried Anguillian goat with rice and vegetables or Anguillian crayfish. Crayfish is a type of lobster found in the waters around Anguilla. It's small and sweet, served grilled with rice and vegetables.

Hungry's Food Truck located in The Valley offers soups, salads and quesadillas. The quesadillas are filling and priced with budget in mind. If you'd like to try another local dish, Hungry's offers Bull Foot soup.

Water Activities

Anguilla Watersports offers stand up paddle board lessons and rentals as well as kayak tours and kiteboarding lessons. Da'Vida Restaurant located in Crocus Bay offers kayak rentals by the hour. From here, you can reach Little Bay, which is only accessible by boat or cliff jumping-- not for the faint of heart. The cost is \$10 for a single person kayak or \$15 for a two-person kayak per hour. One hour is plenty of time to get to Little Bay and back.

Rent snorkel equipment from **Andy's Auto Rentals** and explore the waters of Anguilla at your leisure.



Blanchard's Beach Shack is a great option for lunch. You will find soups, salads, street tacos (they are small so order several) flatbread sandwiches and bowls featuring rice, beans, corn salsa and choice of pork, shrimp and chicken to name a few. They also offer ice cream shakes, smoothies, and homemade desserts like their coconut cheesecake.

E's Oven located in The Valley has a more local vibe. It's not on the water and serves mostly locals, but don't let that scare you off. We had an incredible meal for about half the price of



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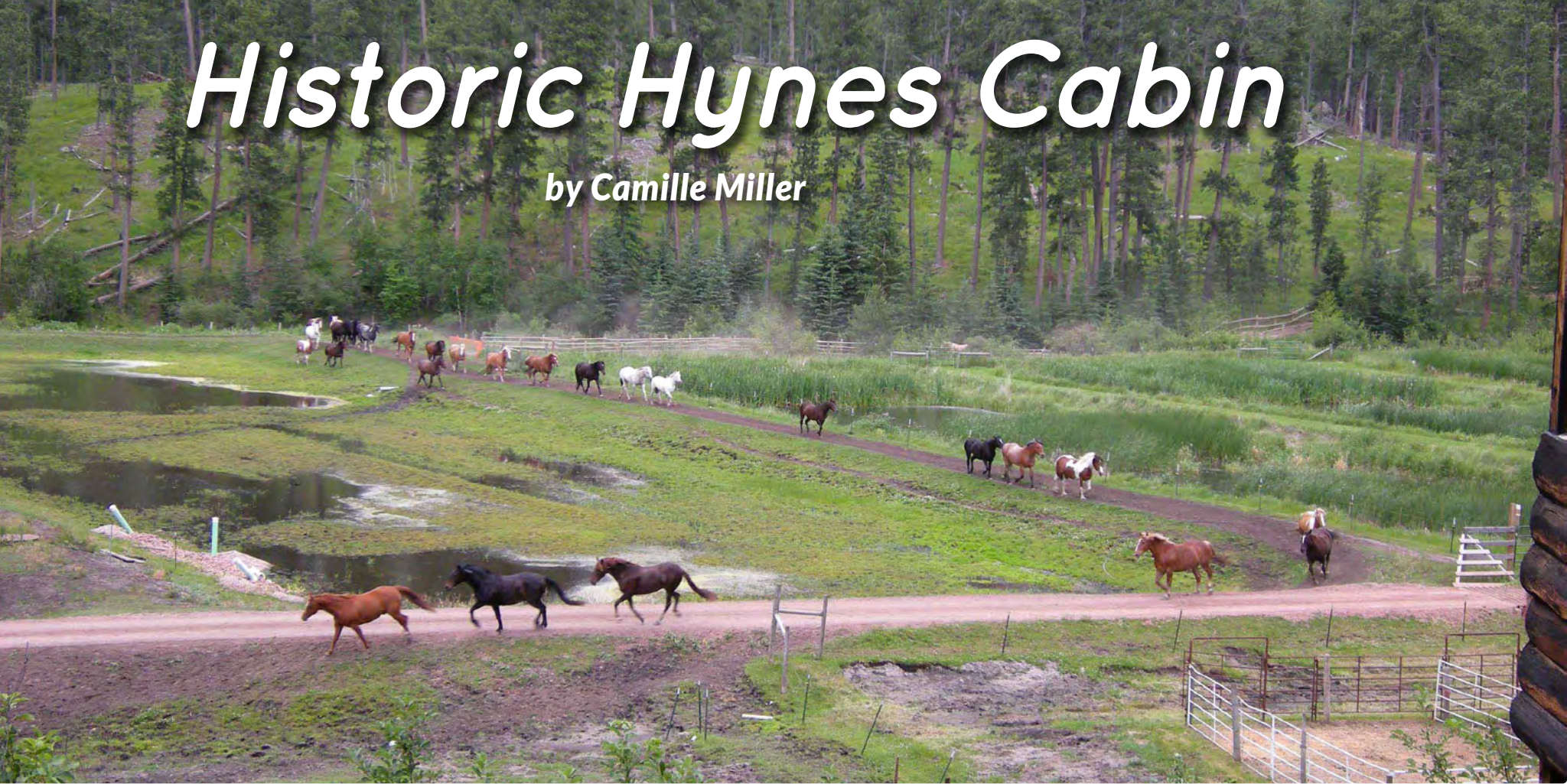
Beth Carson

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Historic Hynes Cabin

by Camille Miller



Step back in time to enjoy a taste of the simple life in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

In the early 1920's, the young Hynes family followed a friend's enthusiastic recommendation to drive to the Black Hills of South Dakota, to see the "most beautiful valley in the world." It was a long drive from their home in Evanston, Wyoming and they had to camp along the way, cooking their food over a primitive fire, but that one trip changed everything.

After seeing the beautiful valley themselves, they knew they had to have a piece of it to call their own. Gathering their friends, each family purchased an acre apiece and began building log and split log cabins. There was no electricity in the valley, and

the nearest phone was a half mile away, but it was paradise.

Located at the foot of Harney Peak their simple cabin has become a haven for generations. Every summer since its construction in 1925, families have gathered here to experience life as it used to be: simple, carefree, and undisturbed.

The Hynes cabin is full of memories. Other cabins work hard to achieve the rustic authenticity that comes naturally here. As the land and the property has passed ownership through the generations, the Hynes family has devotedly maintained and updated it in keeping with its historical significance.

Now it has all the modern comforts of home with a fully stocked kitchen, two bathrooms, and room to sleep seven guests. In 2010 it was entirely renovated using local materials and environmentally-conscious methods, to preserve as much as possible the original look and feel of the cabin.

The best feature of the home is a wide sleeping porch looking over the horse pastures, ponds, and up to Harney Peak. The view from this porch is serene at every moment of the day, and most visitors to the



cabin find that they spend most of their time here eating meals together, making crafts, or reading. The walls are decorated with hundreds of hand-colored paper plates, created in love by the cabin's many visitors over the years.

It's the perfect summer camp experience to wake up with the morning sun on the peak and watch dozens of horses make their way passed the cabin from the pastures above down the hill to the stables of the KOA resort nearby. The horses and the other KOA amenities are available to guests of the cabin, including a pool with a water slide and splash park, a climbing wall, bike and UTV rentals, and a Chuck Wagon Supper Show.

Other nearby activities include visits to Mount Rushmore (just a 20-minute drive away) and hikes along the many trails through the surrounding Black Hills National Forest. Children especially will love riding a genuine 1880's steam train from Hill City to Keystone at the South Dakota State Railroad Museum just a few minutes from the cabin. Guests who wish to eat out will love a steak dinner from Hill City at Desperados Cowboy Kitchen or the Alpine Inn.

Hynes cabin really does provide a home in the most beautiful valley in the world, and in the past 90 years, not much has changed.



Things To Do and See

Mountain Sculptures

Mount Rushmore
Crazy Horse

Caves

Wind Cave
Jewel Cave

Geologic Formations

Badlands
Needles
Devils Tower
Bear Butte
Spearfish Canyon

Lakes

Sylvan
Pactola

Parks, Forests, and Grassland

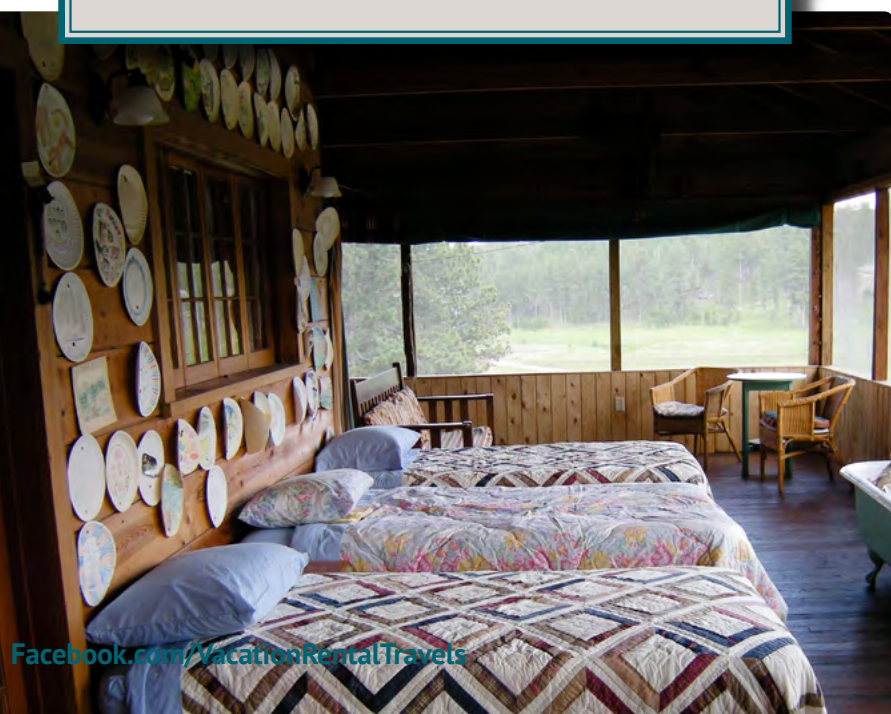
Custer State Park
Black Hills National Forest
Black Elk Wilderness
Buffalo Gap Nat'l Grassland

Mountains

Harney Peak

Hynes Cabin is a wonderful retreat and base for so many Black Hills area adventures

[Click here for more information and to book your stay.](#)



Two Days in Montreal



Article & Photos by
Paula Wheeler

Location is everything and that's what you get at this chic apartment. One hundred seven steps out of the apartment building's front door, across the Place d'Armes square, the Gothic Revival style Basilique Notre-Dame de Montréal takes center stage with its twin towers that soar towards heaven, commanding attention. While exiting the building to the right, Old Town Montreal is just steps away and farther down Old Port. Turning left you are minutes from China Town, the Parliament building, shopping and the metro station.

Turning my attention to our abode, I took in the contemporary artwork, vogue furnishings, and the apartment's layout. Upon entry, the bathroom and bedroom are to the left. The kitchen, dining and living room have an open floor plan. Anywhere in the apartment you are treated to a million-dollar view; whether you are lying in bed or busy in the kitchen.

From the 14th floor, Montreal's skyline welcomed us. The western exterior wall features a picture window, which

made it impossible not to be compelled to gaze out. Minutes ago I was appreciating architecture from the 1800's, then I was standing in a modern room overlooking skyscrapers. Glass high-rises encompass the perimeter while below, breaking up the gray concrete rooftops, a restaurant's vegetable garden contributed a splash of green. Anticipation built within me for the sunset.

History Lessons Mingled with Fun

Traveling with my teenage son, my task was to keep us both happy during our time in the city. We





started our two-day Montreal gala with a visit to the [Notre Dame Basilica](#). Its exterior's grand façade is a wonderful prelude to the glory of the inside. Instantly I was mesmerized by the sanctuary's color palate. It was a combination of reds, purples, blues and golds. Sitting on a pew that exhibits a carved praying monk, I took in the intricately detailed wood carvings of the high altar - statues of Saints, Aaron sacrificing a lamb, Leonardo da Vinci's last supper, scenes from the Old Testament and the crucifixion of Jesus.

I gazed upward in awe at the arched royal blue ceiling with gold crosses that looked like stars and the massive Casavant organ above the choir loft. Then I turned to examine the embellished

pulpit. The pulpit's staircase coils behind statues of prophet's Ezekiel and Jeremiah and up to the skirt that is adorned with sculptures of Jesus teaching. Four church fathers stand on top of the canopy. To finish the massive piece, a woman stands holding a cross in one hand and a chalice in the other.

The sanctuary seemed surreal and warranted silence. I took a few moments absorbing my surroundings, then the stained glass windows and paintings caught my attention. Surprisingly, the scenes were not the typical reflection of biblical stories, but rather were of Canada's religious history. One painting displays the baby Jesus on Mary's lap while she is holding a Canadian Maple leaf in her finger-tips.



Next, strolling along the cobblestone streets in Old Montreal's architectural design, we were transported to another era. Alluring alleyways drew us inward to hidden restaurants, ice cream parlors, candy stores and cupcake shops. This area is a magnet for tourists, but even though we were there during high season, the streets were not cramped.

Then there's Old Port, designed for kids of all ages to be entertained with zip-lines and carnival-type attractions. The brick walkway along the St. Lawrence River is a great place to bike, jog, mosey along or to claim a spot on the grass for a picnic. At the North end, the clock tower in the distance beckons to be climbed. Walking past the marina and Montreal's Urban Beach Club brought us to the foot of the tower. The first step is stamped



#192. The stairs are easily maneuverable, until the end where they turn into a tight spiral staircase. Ascend step #1 to enjoy a spectacular view of the city, Saint Lawrence River, the Jacques Cartier Bridge and, off in the distance, La Ronde amusement park and Biosphere.

Taking the subway's orange line we set off for Parc du Mont-Royal. The park is 494 acres and features trails that lead to a lake, monuments, and St. Joseph Oratory. Adjacent to the park are the University of Montreal and four cemeteries – dating back to the mid-1800's.

A wide dirt path curls the mountainside under the tree's canopy making bike riding and walking easy. To cut the distance, for those who are on foot, stairs are provided. The chalet at the top of the hill offers food, drinks and tourist information. Push-cart ice cream vendors are located in the courtyard. The reward for the trek up is the view, since this is the highest point of the city.

A Chocolate Lover's Dream

Cacao 70 is a chocoholic's dream. With four locations in Montreal, it's easy to submerge your taste buds into chocolate heaven. We found this restaurant by chance while we were walking along Avenue Du Mont-Royal Est. Samples of waffles drizzled with white and dark chocolate were being offered.

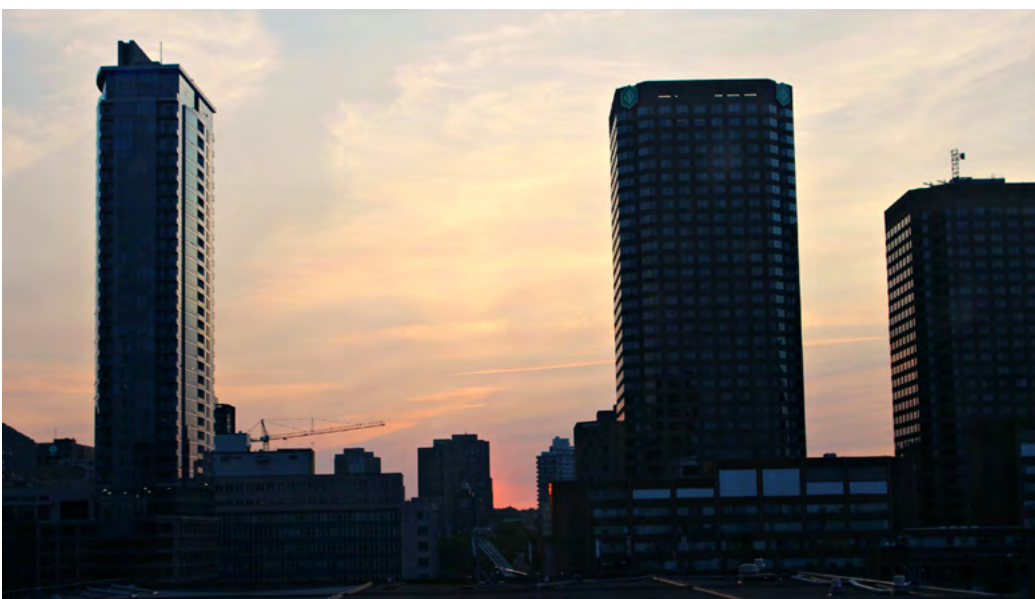
One bite is all it took for us to be enticed inside. The menu features chocolate drinks of various percentages. We ordered the 43.5% Venezuela

with its hint of nut, vanilla, and caramel. Hardened chocolate decorates the bottom of a brandy glass and along its rim. Piping hot chocolate is served separately. Fusing the two together, I felt like a kid again. This was hot chocolate at its finest – thick, rich, creamy – it was almost like drinking a melted candy bar. Fondue, crêpes, desserts and a brunch menu are also available. They serve the best grilled chicken salad sandwich that I've ever eaten.

Our SkyVenture

Asking my son what activity he wanted to do, he chose [SkyVenture](#) for an indoor skydiving, simulated free-fall experience. Sessions start with a tutorial demonstrating body position as well as hand signals to correct posture. Then it's time to gear up and fly. Inside the flight chamber's doorway, you lean forward into the 14-foot wide by 45-foot tall circular tube. The instructor then ushers you in and lets go as the 150 mph





wind lifts your body airborne. The controller increases the wind speed. It's hard not to smile, even with the wind force flapping your cheeks. Proper position keeps your body balanced, and the instructor stays near to lend a steadying hand when you wobble, using hand signals to direct you.

Flights last for one-minute. Packages consist of two or four flights. On the last session, it's tandem time with the trainer. The first thirty-seconds you float alone, perfecting arm and leg positions. Then the instructor takes hold, the wind gets cranked up to 175 mph and up the cylinder you go, in a circular motion. Once at the top, you free-fall downward and then soar back up again. To describe the experience in a single word would be **cool**.

Departure Time

It was time to say au revoir to Montreal, a fact that saddened me. Two days in this stylish apartment and city was not enough, both deserve at least a week. As I closed the apartment's front door, I bid farewell and vowed to return.



Discover Montreal's fun and fancy while staying in this beautiful and conveniently located property.

[Click here for more information and to book your stay.](#)



Wining Up & Winding Down

A sensational excursion to New Zealand

Story & Photos By Tawna Brown

While visiting New Zealand's South Island, with Marlborough's main town, Blenheim, as my base, I had the opportunity to stay at The French Barn. It felt like my very own castle with my realm surrounded by vineyards in all directions. The French Barn is a private vacation rental at The Bell Tower on Dog Point, a luxury bed and breakfast.

Perched atop a hill and reachable by a narrow, tree-covered road, I felt as though I was the Queen of Marlborough wine country. During my stay, I was the only guest on the property and had complete solitude and privacy in the evenings.

April's autumn colors were vivid and fresh in with



blankets of yellow and orange spanning out for miles, and the odd tractor moving up and down the rows of grapeless vines. The grape harvest had just finished over the previous two weeks and there was a noticeable calmness in the air.

The two-floor French Barn is tastefully decorated in French style, with light-coloured walls, high ceilings, spacious rooms, and plenty of natural light.





There are two bedrooms (with super king beds) and two bathrooms (one on each floor), a small basic kitchenette, large dining table and living room, and an outdoor table and barbeque. Cots can be made available should additional sleeping space be required.

What a pleasant surprise to find the kitchenette stocked with a wide selection of complimentary breakfast provisions, many of which were locally-produced, including delicious poached fruit, yogurt, cheese, crackers, bread, cookies, homemade jams, bacon and eggs, assorted beverages and a bottle of Dog Point wine. This attention to detail was a very appreciated special touch.

[Click here to take a video tour of The Bell Tower with Tawna](#)





For meals, I prepared my own breakfast with the simple hot plate and most often had dinner in nearby Blenheim and area. Marlborough is a foodie's nirvana, with award-winning wineries, gourmet restaurants and other dining options that will be sure to please your taste buds and tummy.

My Days

In the mornings, I would enjoy my breakfast al fresco while marvelling at the breathtaking views of the Richmond Range and Wairau Plains.

Each afternoon I found myself looking forward to sampling the flowing riches of my make-believe realm. When you're standing on the very birthplace of the grapes and walking the paths alongside miles of tangled vines, drinking wine becomes a sensual experience.

You become more attuned to the environment, to all the effort that has gone into producing that bit of magic in your glass. Everything seems enhanced, the fresh Marlborough air, the warming afternoon sun, the chirping birds flitting about here and there.

And it doesn't have to end so soon! As you savour a glass of smoky Greywacke Pinot Noir and melt away in The French Barn's soaker bathtub, the sights and sounds at dusk bring about a different perspective to appreciate.

Due to The French Barn's secluded location, guests will need their own transportation to get around. Blenheim is the nearest town; a perfect base for a longer stay in Marlborough and only a leisurely 10-minute drive away. Several rental car companies service the Blenheim airport, while Picton, 30 minutes away, offers a larger selection. The Bell Tower also provides two bicycles for guest use. If you're driving, remember to keep left!

If you have a larger group and require additional space, The Bell Tower on Dog Point operates as a boutique bed-and-breakfast in the main house. There are two large and privately situated bedrooms, each with their own bathroom and kitchenette; spacious dining and living areas, including a library/TV room with a wood-burning fireplace; and a beautifully manicured French courtyard. Guests of The French Barn are welcomed to use the public areas of the





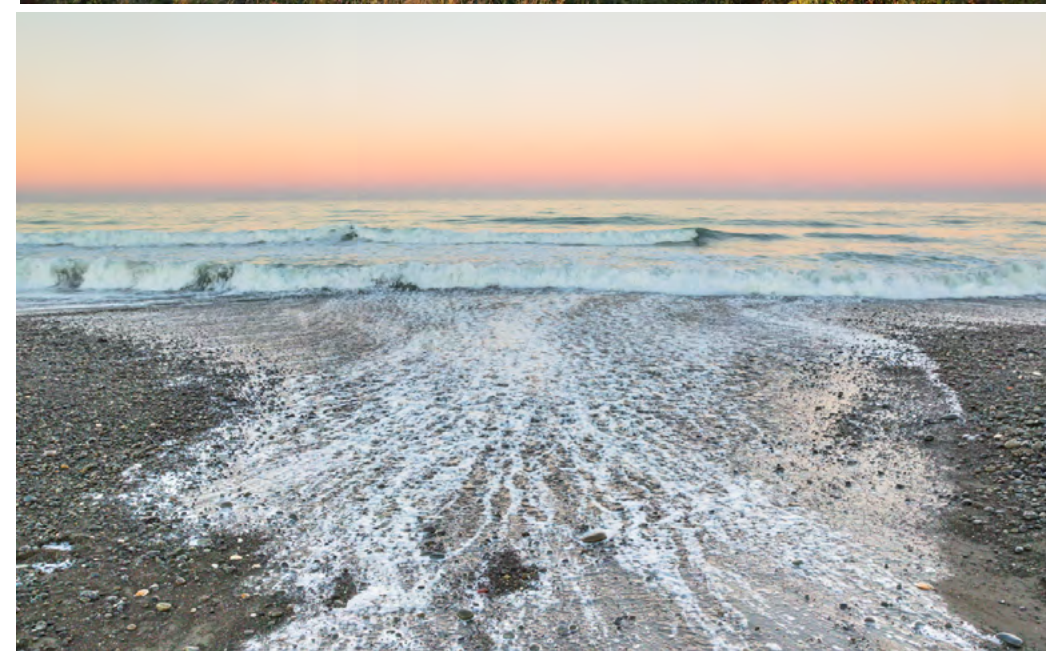
main house, including the laundry and vegetable garden.

Things to Do

Marlborough, New Zealand's premier wine destination, includes Blenheim, Havelock, Picton, Marlborough Sounds, and the Wine Trail, all of which are within a short driving distance from The French Barn.

There are heaps of activities to fill your days, from hiking or cycling the Queen Charlotte Track or the nearby Wither Hills, to boating and kayaking the Marlborough Sounds, to photography, shopping, and of course, there is no shortage of wining and dining options.

Be sure to visit [Marlborough's official tourism website](http://MarlboroughNZ.com) (MarlboroughNZ.com) which has all the details you'll need to plan your visit, including a listing of current events, accommodation options, suggested itineraries, and direct contact information for the various tour providers and businesses.





For the Winos

Producing over 75% of New Zealand's wine, with over 140 wineries and 35 cellar doors to visit, Marlborough has much to offer those who appreciate fine wine. While the dominant flagship varietal is sauvignon blanc, which makes up 86% of Marlborough's wine production, many fine pinot noirs, chardonnays and other varieties are also produced in the region.

Your visit to Marlborough would be incomplete without taking in at least one wine tour. There is something for all: guided or independent tours, both driving and cycling; food and wine tours; cruise and wine tours; private or group tours; deluxe tours; heli wine and dine; winemaker tours; and half/full/multi-day tours. While many wineries are open to the public, others offer tours and tastings by appointment only. Dog Point, Greywacke, and Babich are three such wineries.

Remember to be open and try new things! For over 15 years, I had convinced myself that I disliked pinot noir. Knowing that this was one of New Zealand's specialties, I remained open to the possibilities. Upon the first sip of Kevin Judd's Greywacke Pinot Noir

2013, I was converted. It turned out that I enjoyed this particular wine so much that it was the only bottle of wine I brought back with me to Canada after my 10-month long round-the-world journey.

Whether you're looking to escape the hustle and bustle or seeking an extra special getaway, **The French Barn** will not disappoint.

Sit back and relax while sipping a glass or two of award-winning sauvignon blanc or fill your days by exploring the region; the memories of Marlborough will surely leave you with a desire to return.

Open year round, The French Barn's high season is between October and April; it is recommended to book your stay months in advance.

If you would like to experience the wonder and beauty of the Marlborough and visit The French Barn and The Bell Tower on Dog Point, click the link below for more information.

[Click for details on The French Barn & The Bell Tower](#)





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Seattle

A tale of two vacation rentals

Story & Photos By
Janice Sakata-Schultze

My two teen daughters and I expected mostly rain, or, at least, cool overcast, during our week this past June in the Pacific Northwest's largest city. After all, [Seattle](#) and precipitation are practically synonymous to those who live outside of this verdant, hilly metropolis.

Instead, we struggled to keep our cool through mid-80's temperatures that even the locals probably weren't used to. They often call this time of the year "Juneuary" because of the wet weather that often plagues the skies, but not this time.

Anomalous hot weather aside, we reserved two diverse rentals in two very different areas of the city. The first was a modern newly constructed one-bedroom apartment in the busy [Belltown neighborhood](#), a mere two blocks from the popular Pike Place Market. The second was a sprawling 1950's home across the water in quiet [West Seattle](#), apart from the traffic and frenzy of the big city.

Chic modern downtown living

We opened the door to the first rental, a seventh floor unit with floor-to-ceiling picture windows, presenting a blast of intense sun-drenched heat--

and a stunning view of Elliott Bay. As Seattle's direct waterfront to Puget Sound, it curves in a graceful sweep that begins in pricey residential areas to the north to the massive shipping cranes to the south. The girls and I quickly opened the windows and drew the shades, hoping we could cool the apartment.

Believing that time away and the impending evening would bring down the room temperature, we headed two blocks south to Seattle's most visited landmark.





Imagine the most impressive cornucopia of luscious fruits and vegetables, handcrafted food products, vibrant flowers in every hue and meats and seafood that would lead the most hardcore vegan astray.

That's Pike Place Market in a nutshell, but it's really just the start. On the north end of the market is a sprawling yet fascinating crafts market. Below its highly trafficked first level are two more levels of shops, most worthy of a look-see and possibly a purchase. That's where my tween and teen daughters preferred to stay, not above where I, the avowed foodie, wanted to. The more fascinating stores on their list included Golden Age Collectables, Animal Gifts and Collectables and Metsker Maps of Seattle – just three of the 200-plus shops in this marketplace.

Two hours later, with pasta, bread, and salad from the Market, we headed to the apartment and

discovered it was more tolerable, thanks to the cool breezes coming from the waterfront. The rental's kitchen was well stocked with everything to create a more full meal than our simple one. However, there is only a butcher-block sized place to sit down and eat – fine for one, pushing it for two, and impossible for three. So the living room couch, just off the kitchen, served double duty as our dining area. If we were staying longer, the stacked washer and dryer would have been great for washing our clothes.

This rental can actually sleep four if two people sleep in the bedroom and two on the pull-down couch. My younger daughter and I shared the first space, and my older daughter slept on the couch bed. The bedroom has a downy soft full mattress that borders on one of the most awesome picture windows in town. But it's an open room, which means there's no door for privacy. Also, because the unit is directly above busy Elliott Avenue, traffic noise prevails



during morning and evening rush hour. Both of my daughters slept well in spite of this drawback, and even I, a very fitful sleeper, rested well during the night.

On the eight floor of the building, a common area offers a kitchenette, pool table and an expansive patio with an even more fantastic view of Puget Sound, plus the Seattle skyline and the [Space Needle](#). The first floor housed a fully equipped fitness center, where I worked out the next morning before moving to our second, more spacious and much quieter rental across the bay.

Suburbia with a side of postcard views

There are two ways to get to West Seattle. One is via water taxi, which is essentially a smaller people only version of the iconic white and green [Washington State Ferries](#) that crisscross Puget Sound. The other is the West Seattle Bridge, a high curving cantilever span that connects the downtown area with a large suburban peninsula. Similar to the Coronado Bridge in San Diego, it affords a fantastic view of the skyline to the north every time you cross it.

Once you are on the other side, a busy hillside road takes you up into the established residential neighborhoods of West Seattle and a small business district, about a half a mile inland. Along the northern edge of the peninsula is [Alki Beach](#), where locals hang out when the weather cooperates.

Our second rental was up on this hill and opposite



5 Uncommon Things Families Can Do in Seattle

Water is everywhere in Seattle. It's surrounded on its western front by Puget Sound and two inland lakes that eventually lead to the ocean on the east.

Of course, you'll encounter it in the air, too. The Pacific Northwest's largest metro area and rain seem to be synonymous, but it's largely a myth. Seattle does receive its share of precipitation, but a constant marine layer only makes it appear rainy all the time. The total annual rainfall for the city is a mere 37.5", and it doesn't even make the U.S. top 10 of rainiest cities.

So when you and your family want to do these five out-of-the-ordinary activities, don't worry if you haven't brought your raincoat, boots, and umbrella. Seattle will likely welcome you with some gray but not necessarily showery skies. One thing is for certain – everyone will enjoy their time in this jewel of the Northwest.

1. The EMP Museum

Officially known as the Experience Music Project, this uniquely structured museum is conveniently located at Seattle Center, near the base of the Space Needle. Music remains at the core of its identity, with a signature upper level featuring a funnel-shaped sculpture with more than 500 instruments, interactive music studios and permanent exhibits devoted to hometown acts Jimi Hendrix and Nirvana. But you'll also find special pop culture displays to keep all ages busy and entertained.

2. Chittenden/Ballard Locks

Resembling a mini-Panama Canal that links the inland Lake Union and Lake Washington to Puget Sound, this engineering marvel holds great fascination for visitors to the Ballard area. It goes by two names, both by the neighborhood it's located in and the commander who started the project. You'll see all manner of watercraft passing through and awaiting the water levels to rise and lower. Kids will especially enjoy the fish ladder during salmon migrating season. They can witness various species make the arduous swim upstream to their spawning grounds.

3. Pike Place Market's basement levels

Everyone knows about the famous food market that essentially defines Seattle. Rainbows of fresh produce and seafood abound, and the workers at the

(Continued on the next page)



one of the most enviable views of the city. If you can imagine a postcard coming to vivid, three-dimensional life, this house brought it.

The four bedroom mid-century house had a small parking space and steep driveway leading to the garage in front. These two areas provided the only areas to park, as the street was narrow and didn't have room for cars.

Walking into the front entry, the girls and I looked around and dropped our bags as soon as we gazed upon that dreamy vista of downtown, with the signature Space Needle set off to the north.

With an extensive great room furnished with a grand piano, hardwood floors, leather sofas and large picture windows, the rental felt like home to us right away. This area flowed into a

5 Uncommon Things (continued)

Pike Place Fish Market still hurl impossibly slippery and large catches around for entertainment. But head down to the much quieter lower floors, where you can browse some buy-worthy merchandise that doesn't scream touristy kitsch.

4. International District

Once simply called Chinatown, this diverse neighborhood includes The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian American Experience, which currently is celebrating the 75th birthday of Bruce Lee. Lee attended the University of Washington and started his martial arts school in Seattle. Head over to the Uwajimaya grocery for fun Japanese foods and gift items. If your family is on the daring side, try flying through the air at Emerald City Trapeze.

5. Skyview Observatory

The crowds will inevitably visit the Space Needle, the city's iconic landmark. But if you really want to impress family members with a spectacular view, ascend to the 73rd floor of the tallest skyscraper in the region, the Columbia Tower. There you will take in the vast expanse of the city, the Cascade Mountains, Puget Sound and beyond – and be roughly 300 feet higher than you'd be at the other observation deck.



round formal dining table, perfect for viewing while eating, then on to an updated kitchen with a black granite countertop, stainless steel appliances, and new cabinetry.

Two bedrooms, each with a queen size bed, were just a few steps up right outside the kitchen, as well as a general-use full bathroom. The girls chose to camp out here, with each having their own space.

Across from these rooms were two doors. One led down to the basement, with another bedroom, kitchenette, laundry room and somewhat dated but homey rec room furnished with large screen television and a pool table. A square hot tub lay just beyond the Dutch door.

Feeling that this floor was a bit creepy for their liking, the girls began to regale each other with scary stories about what could be behind each closed door, or what would happen at night. It's actually not that scary.

The other door snaked its way up some narrow carpeted stairs to a bright loft-style bedroom, with a queen-size bed on an elevated platform. Coming over to the bed that would be mine, I hit my head on the sloped ceiling, silently chastising myself for being clumsy. I never repeated that mistake again while we stayed there. The best part about this room was the balcony with the same fantastic view of the city, just slightly higher up.



Both of these rentals make contrasting but wonderful options for your stay in Seattle, depending on your unique travel needs of location, price and size of your traveling party. None of the three of us could decide which one we liked better because both were great places in their own way. You won't go wrong with either one.

[If you'd like more information about the Belltown property, please click here](#)

And

[More details and availability for the West Seattle property can be found here](#)



See the Tour de France - Your Way

Story & Photos by Kevin McGoff



Join the riders in the 2016 Tour de France as they compete for the yellow jersey to be awarded the winner of the 12th Stage on the peak of the famed Mont Ventoux. On July 14th, France's national holiday, the Tour will cycle through an area of Provence that boasts numerous holiday rentals. Three stages of the Tour, including the climb of Mont Ventoux, can be seen from a base in the region. Rent a property in ancient cities such as [Orange](#) or [Avignon](#); take residence in an apartment or gather a group of friends and live large together in a villa in one of the scenic villages that dot the countryside.

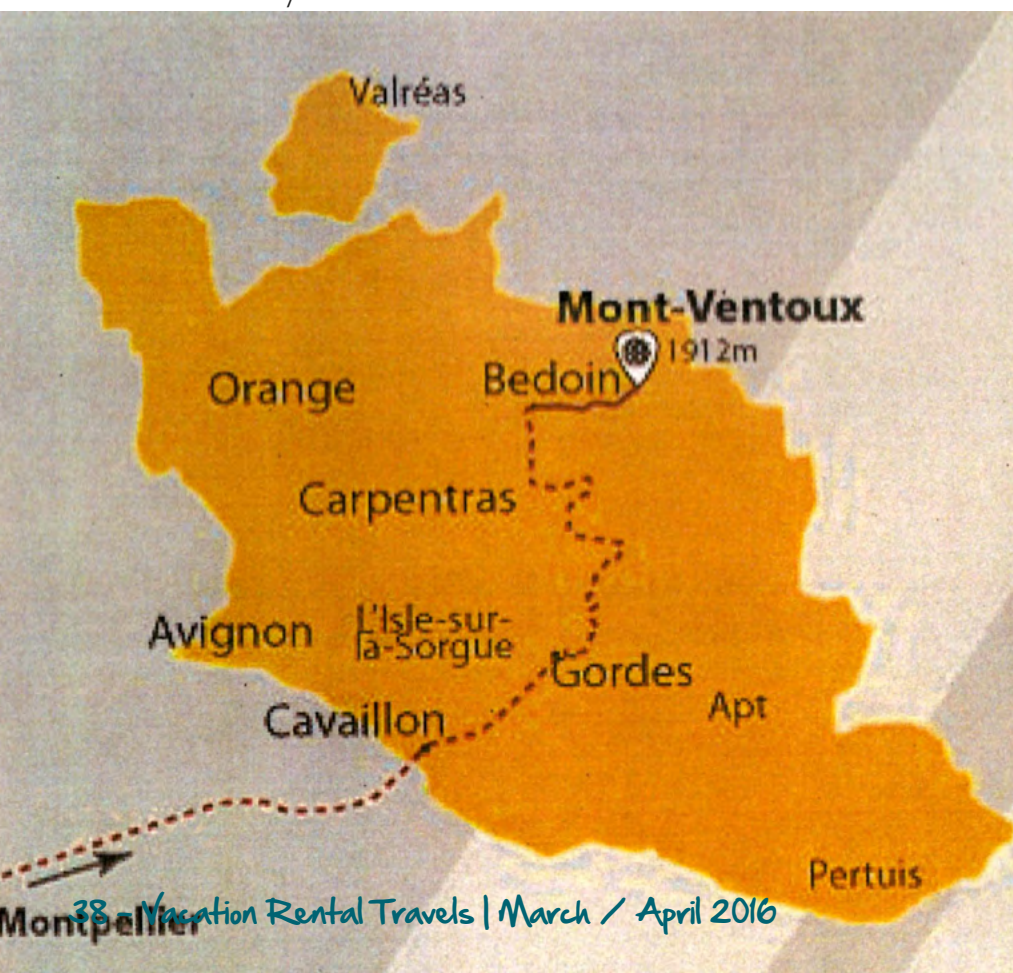
The ride up Mont Ventoux is one of the most famous mountain stages of La Tour de France. This summer the climb will come at the end of the 185 km route, which begins in Montpellier. Riders will wind through Provence to Mont Ventoux, le Géant de Provence.

There are multiple tour operators offering package vacations for this summer's Tour de France. The prices vary from expensive to the take out a mortgage variety. Granted, some of these trips will get you behind the scenes, which you will not likely do on your own. But if you want a roadside vantage point to take in the race as it crosses Provence this summer at a bargain price, plan your own excursion.

You can ride a part of the route before the Tour arrives, including the climb up Ventoux. If cycling is not an attraction for you, there is endless sightseeing or one can pass time idling about the villages while your traveling companions watch the race. Add to the experience of a visit to Provence this summer by taking in a stage of the Tour de France.

Location, Location, Location - See Three Stages of the Tour

The 2016 route will allow spectators with proper planning to watch Thursday's Stage 12, which ends at the peak of Mont Ventoux, and follow it up with





two more days of the Tour from your home base. The Stage 13 individual time trial jumps off at Bourg Saint-Andéolon on Friday. On Saturday, July 16, the 208 km Stage 14 begins in Montélimar, heading north where the riders will next face several climbs in the Alps. Spectators staying in the northern part of Provence, known as the Vaucluse, can easily be standing along the route of each of these three stages with about one hour's drive of their home in Provence.

Where to Stay

There are many festivities on France's national holiday, fireworks, son et lumière - sound and light productions - and the cities and villages are in full festive mode for this long weekend celebration. Whether you choose a city or village as your base, there will be evening festivities to enjoy after a day of leisure, watching the Tour or knocking about the hills in the sun of southern France.

Avignon and Orange are major cities in the region, each of which will provide an excellent staging area for sightseeing and spending a day, or two or three, viewing the race. Avignon was once the seat of the papacy. The Palais des Papes and its gardens sit high above

the Rhone River looking down on the Pont d'Avignon, the famous bridge which now only partially spans the river. It is a lively town in the summer with museums, a vibrant market, Les Halles, and a vast square in the city center crowded with restaurants.

Orange is well known for the Roman ruins, particularly the Théâtre Antique which dates to early in the first century. The tour of this well-preserved structure is brilliant and to this day, the Théâtre Antique hosts productions of all genres.

If a smaller town or a village is more suitable to your style of travel, there are many from which to choose. Malaucene and Bedouin rest at the base of Mont Ventoux. Either town will provide a great base if you are inclined to take in more than one of the stages in the region.

A bit further south are the many charming towns of the Vaucluse. Isle sur la Sorgue is well known for its antique and brocante markets. Pernes les Fontaines, as the name suggests, has 40 fountains scattered about the town. In normal traffic these villages are within an hour's drive of Stages 12, 13 and 14's of this year's Tour de France. Expect to add a little more time to your commute for this popular sporting event.



The route is set to pass through the village of [Gordes](#), which rests on a peak in the Vaucluse mountain. It's equally well-known counterpart, [Menerbes](#), is a short drive across the Luberon valley. [Roussillon](#), known for its ochre quarry, and the quiet village of Goult are also nestled along the mountain. These towns are a five-minute drive to the D 900, the main route across the Vaucluse.

If you decide to stay in one of these villages, it will add a half hour to your travel time to stages 13 and 14 if you choose to take them in from this base. If you wish to enjoy firsthand the villages Peter Mayle wrote



about in *A Year in Provence*, and sit where Russell Crowe and Marion Cotillard met in *A Good Year* the extra windshield time will not be noticed.

Tips for viewing the race

It is best to arrive early at your chosen vantage point to watch the riders streak by. The communities near and along the route distribute maps with the precise route and literature about road restrictions. Stop in the local Office de Tourisme and obtain a copy as the first order of business.

True Tour enthusiasts will camp along the route up the Mont Ventoux days in advance. If your heart is set on experiencing the Tour from a mountainside seat, there will be a hassle factor to include into your planning.

If you arrive in the area a day or so in advance, you can scope out your viewing spot while sightseeing. The riders will pass by in the afternoon, early to late depending on the stage and your point along the

route. Long before the professional riders stream past spectators are entertained by the festivities - some supplied by the Tour organizers - and others by towns and villages dotting the stage. In advance of the riders on the Tour, citizen cyclists in racing garb pedal some or all of the day's route ahead of the competitors. They are cheered along by the crowd that begins lining the route and sipping rosé hours ahead of the race. A colorful parade of vehicles decked out by various sponsors - some elaborate float-like displays tossing knickknacks touting their wares - also precedes the day's main event. Unless the riders will pass under your balcony, plan on enjoying four or five hours of conviviality with your group and the new friends who will join you lining the roadway at your viewing station. Pack your lunch, a cooler and take along the sunscreen.

There will be many spots from which to watch Stage 12 along its 185 km route to and through Provence. In July, you are almost guaranteed a hot and sunny day. The precise route has not been released as of this date. Checking the [official Tour website](#) closer to your departure will enable you to make your plans with more precision. If you are in the region, travel along the route a day or so in advance to find a place that suits you. Consider where you will park as you may need to leave your vehicle well off the Tour route. If you are up to it, rent a bike which will give you greater mobility and flexibility when searching out that perfect vantage point.

Vacation Rentals

This area of the world would take a lifetime to fully discover and you are still likely to miss something even in that span of time. If you have a week in Provence, take residence in one of the many vacation rentals dotting the area and spend it living like a local.



Greet the server on a sunny terrasse taking your morning café with a fresh croissant in hand; frequent a nearby bar for a late afternoon apéritif and you will be rewarded with a friendly “Bonjour, ça va?” from the owner by the third visit. After a full day of sightseeing or returning from cheering on your favorite rider in the Tour, you will enjoy returning home – to your rented villa in the country or the sunny apartment you rented in the south of France.

The vacation rental market in Provence is booming as more properties have come on line in the past several years. There is plenty of availability for this summer and the prices are reasonable. Given the strong dollar, they are a bargain for Americans. Apartments are being let in Provence for \$700 per week, about the price of two nights in a big city hotel. A villa with a pool may set you back a bit more, but not appreciably if you find three or four compatible traveling companions to share the cost.

My two brothers and I have planned our Tour de France excursion. We will watch the same race and come in well under the \$2,500 price tag some will pay a tour company operator. The apartment rented in L’Isle sur la Sorgue through Trip Advisor is less than \$700 per week. We can cook in though will more likely dine at one of the many restaurants the town and region offer. There is a host of other properties online through HomeAway, AirBnb and several sites that specialize in rentals in the Luberon.

Travel to and around the area is easy. If coming from the US, connecting to Marseille and renting a car leaves you with about an hour’s drive to the heart of Provence. The high-speed train (TGV) zips to Avignon from Paris in three hours. The car rental agencies are just out the door of the station and you are a half hour or so to your home for the week - or longer if you are able to swing it.

This is an excellent opportunity for cycling enthusiasts with traveling companions not so keen on spending a summer day at a bicycle race to travel together in peace and harmony. While Tour aficionados chase the race, others in the group can be taking in the sites of the region. As a bonus to the entire group, the lavender fields will be in bloom. Bonne Route.

Additional information

There is a tourist office in every town in the area. Follow the signs pointing you to the Office de Tourisme. After unpacking your bags, make this your first stop. The staff are knowledgeable, helpful and speak your language. Load up on brochures and leaf through them with a glass of rosé at a local café.

The villages along the river Sorgue have an intercommunal website. You can access it in English, German or French [from this site](#).

Not watching Le Tour?

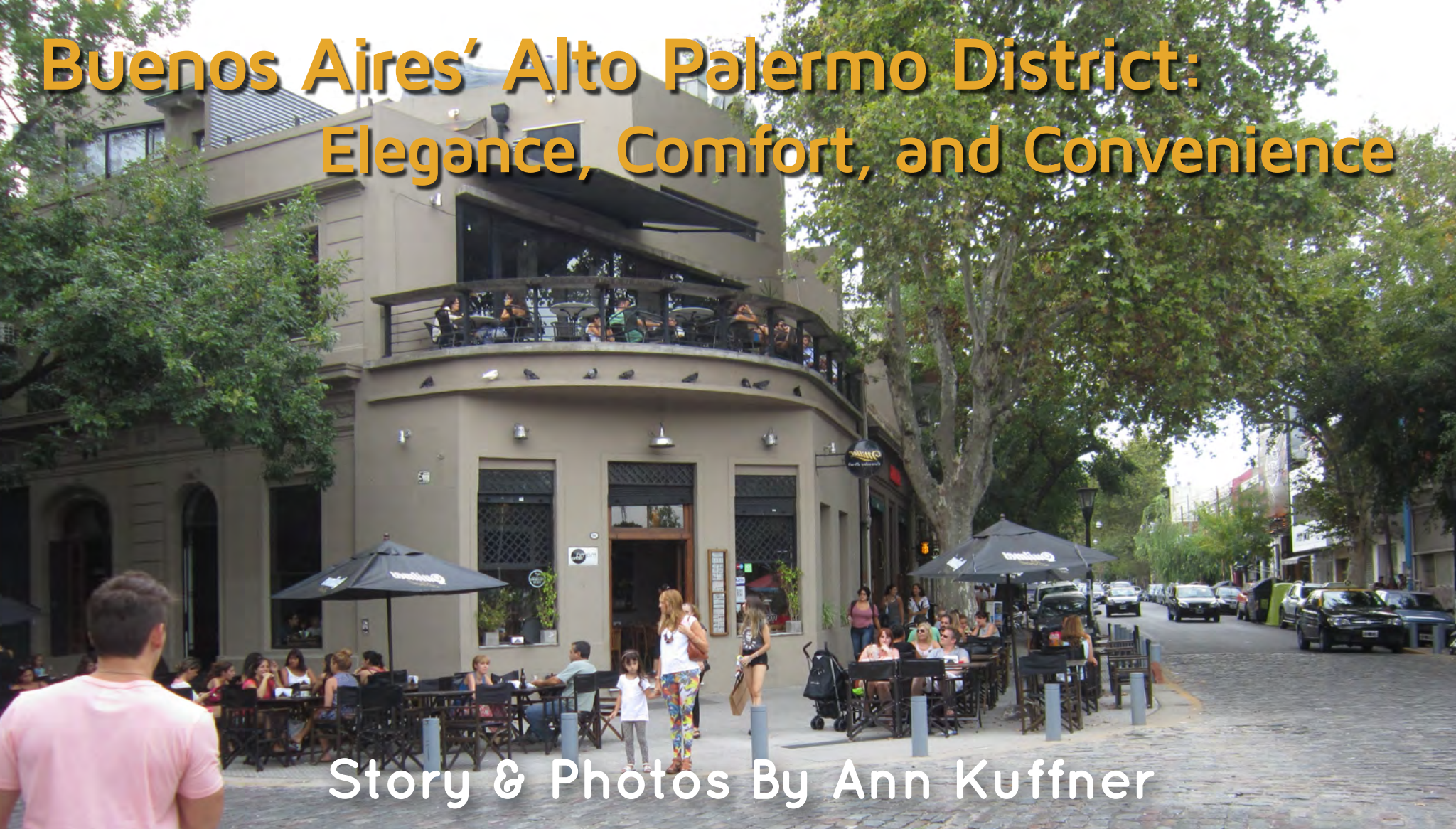
There is plenty of cycling in the area. You can rent a bicycle from:

- [Luberon Biking in Velleron](#)
- [Kvelo in L’Isle sur la Sorgue](#)
- [Sun E Bike in Bonnieux](#)

Discover the river Sorgue via canoe with [Kayakvert](#) or with [Club de Canoë Kayak Islois](#)



Buenos Aires' Alto Palermo District: Elegance, Comfort, and Convenience



Story & Photos By Ann Kuffner

Since the first time an Astor Piola tango tune wrapped me in its melancholic embrace, I've yearned to visit Buenos Aires... experience its irresistible mystique first hand, learn the authentic Argentine tango, sip a cappuccino in a Parisian style Buenos Aires sidewalk café, and devour a juicy, medium rare Argentine steak complimented by a robust red Malbec.

Buenos Aires – the Paris of South America - has been on my bucket list for years. Many districts in this thriving city of 15 million look and feel European, especially the architecture, museums, culture and café society. No matter the time of day or night, in Buenos Aires we passed cafes

where locals sat, sipping their Cortado espressos while chatting with friends. And Buenos Aires is famous for its sultry tango culture. It's also a theater center. Corrientes Avenue, in the downtown area, is known as the “Broadway of Buenos Aires.”

My husband and I were especially anxious to experience Buenos Aires' tango culture, explore its well-known and historic neighborhoods or barrios, and indulge in its food and wine. When traveling, we immerse ourselves in the local culture, so prefer to rent a place in an established locals' neighborhood. A number of popular barrios in Buenos Aires piqued my interest,





including the Recoleta, Alto Palermo, Palermo Soho, Palermo Hollywood, and San Telmo. Many vacation rentals are listed on-line for Buenos Aires barrios.

My goal was to find a rental in a barrio that was both desirable and safe. The Palermo area quickly rose to the top of my list. And the perfect apartment appeared through VRBO. Centrally located in the Alto Palermo barrio, it provided easy access to public transportation, grocery stores, a major shopping center complex, restaurants, and a Cineplex.



This apartment is in a desirable upper-class residential barrio known for its attractive multi-unit buildings and high concentration of psychiatrists. It occupies the entire third floor, affording incredible privacy. Elegant, mature, leafy maple trees shade the local streets from the mid-day sun.

The unassuming, classic building was constructed during the rule of the infamous Eva and Juan Peron. The unit itself maintains its classic style. But it's been updated with modern amenities and technology, including large screen TVs, digital cable, high-speed Internet access, Wi-Fi, and an Internet telephone with free long distance to North America.

At 950 square feet, with 10-foot ceilings, the apartment is spacious and open. We appreciated that we had plenty of space to spread out. The living areas are bathed in abundant natural light that filters through the expansive windows.

With two large bedrooms, a third smaller bedroom known as a dependencia, a full kitchen, and one & three-quarters baths, it can accommodate up to five visitors.

Upon entering the main living space, I was drawn to the modern décor and bright, splashy art. The living and dining room paintings incorporate vibrant yellow, red, orange and blue tones. A mirror on the main living room wall adds depth. Two comfy leather chairs complement a



fashionable corner sofa. We spent hours in these cushy chairs, sipping a smooth Malbec while sifting through travel brochures and local maps

The elegant dining room contains a modern glass table and four mauve upholstered chairs. Recessed soft lit lights in the living and dining areas add soft lighting. Halogen lights hang above the table, adding a modern touch.

The refurbished parquet wood floors are warm and classic. A hip modern canvas, painted in the style of the pop-artist Roy Lichtenstein, adds an interesting focal point in the room. This painting always made me smile.

Upon entering the dining area, my eyes were drawn to the patio doors leading to the balcony. (4B - patio picture) Many mornings we sat outside at the marble table, sipping a strong espresso, watching the action on the street below us.

Another advantage - this apartment has a built in office in the main bedroom. The desk shelf holds a printer, internet connection, and two phones - one for local calls and one for international Vonage calls. The office setup made it easy for me to work as needed. And it was blessing to be able to make local and long distance calls from the apartment, at no cost.

When vacationing, we usually prepare at least one meal per day, usually breakfast or lunch. The kitchen worked well for our needs, with a refrigerator, new gas stove, and kitchen equipment. Upgraded granite countertops add a touch of class while the new butcher block prep station simplified putting meals together. In addition to the standard microwave, coffee-maker, toaster, and blender, there's a Bialetti stove-top Italian Espresso maker. (Insert kitchen pix - 7) We bought fresh coffee beans at a local café and had it ground. It felt like home, beginning each day with a dark, rich espresso, made with the Bialetti.

We slept soundly at night, and during our



afternoon siestas, given the comfortable king size bed. But the updated windows and the roll-up shades - common in South America - also made a difference. These traditional shades effectively block out all street light.

The owner has left a basket of Argentina and Buenos Aires travel maps, magazines and books in the living room to enjoy. Another important touch: a binder, with detailed instructions on how to operate the locks, appliances, telephone, and the internet. One section recommends restaurants close to the apartment. Another suggests local walks to nearby barrios.

Easy Access to Popular Attractions

The Alto Palermo is the downtown of the greater Palermo area. It provides the main shopping area and transportation hub for the Palermo sub-barrios. The lovely Las Heras Park and the Alto Palermo Shopping Center are two of its highlights.

Here's an interesting tidbit - the Alto Palermo has the highest concentration of psychiatrists in Buenos Aires.

The apartment's located in a safe neighborhood that's only a few blocks from Las Heras Park and the Alto Palermo shopping mall. The city's botanical gardens are within four blocks and the zoo is less than half a mile away.

Within a two block walk are many fine restaurants, cafes, grocery stores, fresh produce stands, pharmacies and a movie theater complex.

The Eva Peron Museum, the Decorative Arts Museum, and the MALBA art museum are all a short walk away. It takes about 10-15 minutes to walk through the elegant sections of the Palermo to the Recoleta, or to the Palermo Soho. The Palermo



Hollywood, with its hip restaurant and nightlife scene, is just beyond the Palermo Soho, about a 30-minute walk.

The D line of the Subte (the city's subway system), is two blocks from the apartment. It takes about a ten-minute subte ride to reach the historic Plaza de Mayo and the Casa Rosada, located in the heart of Buenos Aires historic downtown.

It's quite safe in the Alto Palermo and adjoining barrios. But when traveling on public buses and the subte, be aware that pickpocketing can occur in crowded areas. We regularly traveled on both buses and the subte during the day, without problems. But at night, we opted for taxis.

Staying in a popular barrio such as the Alto Palermo worked perfectly for us. And this apartment exceeded our expectations. We are looking forward to returning to Buenos Aires. My new bronze metallic tango shoes are ready for our return trip.

Exploring the Alto Palermo & Nearby Barrios

Most of our favorite activities in Buenos Aires cost little to nothing. Our favorite pastimes included: strolling the cobblestone streets of popular barrios, attending weekend ferias (fairs) with their live tango and music performances, quality arts and crafts, and local food. We also enjoyed the vibrant, sometimes whimsical, street art and graffiti, wandering through lush parks, and sitting at a chic sidewalk café with a robust espresso.



We put many miles on our walking shoes, meandering through nearby Palermo barrios. Even though our Castilian Spanish is sketchy we managed to chat with local shopkeepers. Most days we dropped by the local Chinese grocery store to grab a few items. The friendly Chinese owner asked where we were from, and about our stay in Buenos Aires. On the way home we'd drop by the Fruteria Verduria stand, our favorite spot to pick up fragrant fresh peaches, meaty avocados, fresh figs, or plump red cherries. When in need of a quick meal we'd walk three blocks to the Alto Palermo shopping center and head to the top floor and the food court. The fresh green salads at Green & Company became my "go to" lunch, at \$7-8/each. Our other favorite spot, for a nice salmon salad, was Tiendas



with as many as ten dogs in tow. The Republica Arabe Siria is lined with trendy cafes and a good selection of health food restaurants.

Cappuccino Contest

A Porteno friend invited us to a baristas' cappuccino foam art competition at Del Vento Café one Saturday. Much to our delight, we were the only gringos in the crowd. We never imagined it would be such fun watching Latin baristas create complex steamed milk patterns on their cappuccinos. [\[You can check out the short competition videos here.\]](#) After scoring, the frothy creations were handed out to attendees. We left the competition with a serious caffeine buzz and a newfound respect for artistic baristas.

Just a few blocks from the Republica cafes we stumbled upon the Evita Peron Museum and garden café. This is a spot well worth visiting. The small museum gave us the opportunity to better



Naturales, on Republica Arabe Siria. This salad ran about \$12, including the grilled salmon, radicchio, spinach, pistachios and dried mango.

Many mornings we strolled past the Arboretum Park, on our way to the Del Viento or the Birkin Coffee Bar on the Republica Arabe Siria, for a strong cappuccino or a café Cortado, with an Alfajore cookie. This traditional double layered cookie is filled with rich dulce de leche filling. On our way, we'd pass several dog walkers, some





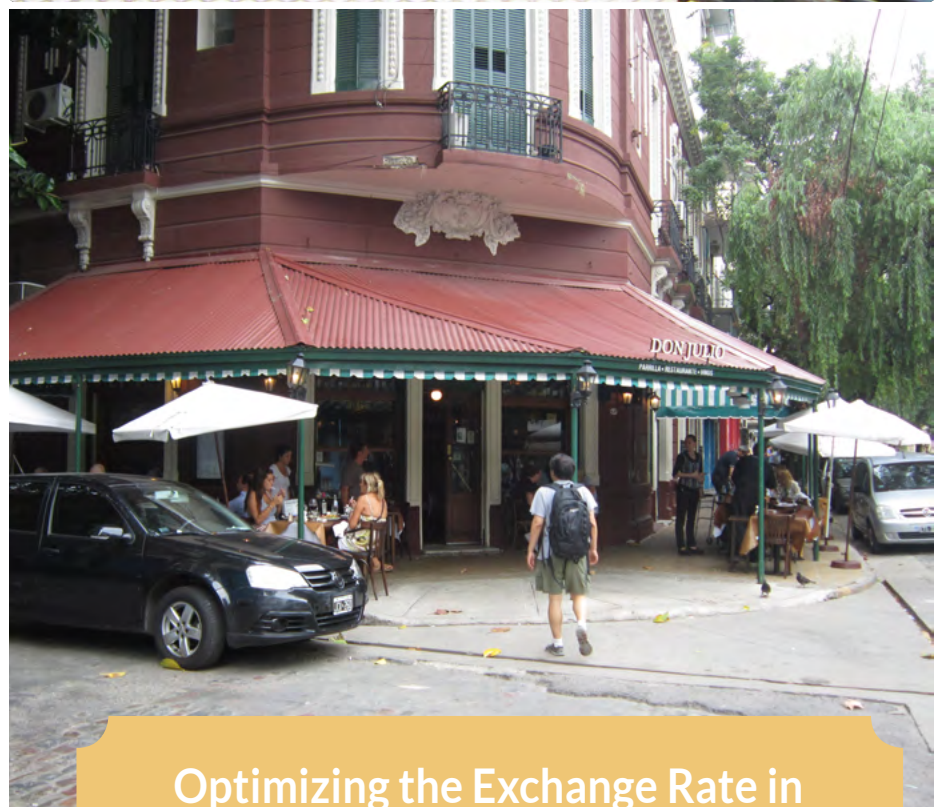
grasp Argentina's recent volatile political history. After a few hours in the museum, we sat down for lunch in the charming garden café. The Menu del Dia is a deal, at \$10-12 for a three-course meal with a generous glass of Argentine wine.

Twice a week we headed to the Tango Piola dance studio for private tango classes (\$25/hour for couples). We typically took a bus to the studio, to save time. Christian, our English speaking tango instructor, was every so patient with us. After class we'd walk home, stopping for a well-deserved treat of dulce de leche gelato at the Faricci artisan gelato shop. The dulce de leche in Argentina is in a class of its own. Beware – its rich, burnt caramel edge is highly addictive.

On almost every street an Argentine Parrilla offers thick, fork tender steaks with robust red Argentine wines. Equally common are the authentic Italian pizzerias. On our second stroll through the Palermo Soho, we found Don Julio's Parrilla a la Carbon.

We spent a relaxing afternoon in this unassuming restaurant indulging in massive, medium rare steaks, grilled veggies, and a bottle of a refined red Malbec. The total bill came to \$62 and we left with enough leftovers for a hearty steak and eggs breakfast the next morning.

The weather in Buenos Aires in February/March is comfortable. The temperature was in the 80s most days. The evenings were warm and balmy. In the evening, we'd meander through the cobblestone streets in search of our next dinner adventure. It took three attempts to find the Plaza Serrano in the Palermo Soho, with its trendy designer clothes stores, fine wine shops, and hip cafes. On one evening stroll, we headed for the exceptional Las Pizzaros, where the evening's creative dishes are scrawled on a chalkboard. I was in seventh heaven sitting in this tiny café, sipping a glass of a floral white Torrontes while digging into a nuanced confit of rabbit with warm peaches, pistachios, and mustard sauce. Crème Brulee with passion fruit sauce was a sublime ending to the meal. After dinner we strolled home in the warm evening air, giving our dinner time to digest.



Optimizing the Exchange Rate in Argentina

The cheapest way to travel in Argentina is to bring US dollars in cash and to exchange them at the blue exchange rate cambios in Buenos Aires.

The difference in rate is significant, at \$12 pesos/dollar on the blue exchange, vs. only \$8.50 pesos/dollar for cash exchanged in a bank. Ask a concierge or friend to show you several reliable blue exchange rate cambios.

Note that the prices quoted in this article are based on the blue exchange rate of \$12/peso. They do change but are easy to look up online. So check before you travel.

The Nearby Recoleta

Another easy day trip is to stroll around the swanky Recoleta district, to experience its stunning French architecture and style. We would take a bus to the Recoleta. But another option is to grab a taxi, especially at night. The cost runs about \$3-4 for this taxi ride. In Buenos Aires, a taxi can usually be hailed on the street within a few minutes.

The famous Recoleta Cemetery, considered one of the world's most beautiful, is a must-see tourist attraction. (17 - Insert pix of Recoleta cemetery lane) The above-ground marble crypts are adorned with exquisite statues in styles that



range from Baroque to Art Deco. Argentina's past presidents, military heroes, elite, and Nobel laureates are buried here. Tour guides share the sad stories to explain the history behind the more elaborate crypts.

[For information and details about this lovely condo, please click here and book your stay](#)

Every weekend an outdoor feria, or fair, is held in the Recoleta, in the open square near the cemetery. The variety and quality of the art, jewelry, purses, mate cups and leather products on offer is impressive. I found several pairs of exquisite pink rhodochrosite earrings for under \$20 each, a pendant for \$70 and a gorgeous ring for only \$60.

After wandering through the feria's stalls, we headed to the nearby La Biela café, across the plaza from the cemetery. This is such a classy French style café that we dropped in on several occasions for an espresso and serious people watching. I was in heaven... sipping a cappuccino, sitting under the 200-foot expanse of a majestic old ficus tree, listening to nostalgic tango tunes played by a wandering bandolier minstrel. Free Tango Street Performances in La Boca – Where the Tango was Born.

Some days we hopped on a local bus, or subway, to reach a distant barrio destination. We ventured as far as La Boca, the maritime/shipping barrio where the tango was born in its risqué bordellos. Free tango performances are performed on outdoor stages at the local cafés of La Boca.

The Cost to Rent in the Alto Palermo

The current rates for this apartment are \$140/night, \$850/week, or \$2250/month.

The owner is flexible and does not require visitors to arrive on a particular day. A minimum stay of four nights is required.

A local property manager meets arriving guests at the apartment to show them the various keys and locks, explain the apartment's appliances, Wi-Fi, and technology operation. He can always be reached via e-mail or by calling him with the apartment phone.

Owners, want to stand out in a crowded marketplace?

From the desk of... *Beth Carson*

The travel market gets more competitive by the day. People are, rightly so, very careful with where they spend their money. It's not enough to have a clean, functional place. Four walls, so-so décor, basic amenities-- it's hard to compete on price alone. You'll be racing your competition in a bidding war to the bottom.

That's *no* way to run a business.

There's a better way.

You have to create something a little magical. A little quirky or luxurious. A tiny bit to the right on the over-the-top part of the spectrum.

You have to *WOW* them.

It doesn't have to be hard. It doesn't have to be complicated. But, it has to be deliberate. Well thought out.

To achieve this, you need to dig a little deeper than the average owner and pull out one part Hollywood set designer and one part storyteller. The work you do here will last for years to come, so you want to spend some time here making things really special.

People will line up for experiences they can remember for a lifetime. Stories they will tell for years to come.

I'm going to share where the magic is most potent. It's not even while they are actually on vacation. Surprised?

Sign up for my 4 part webinar below. It's free.

When we meet, pull up a chair. Close down your tabs. Not only will it be fun, but you'll actually have some notes with actions you can take this week to start sprinkling pixie dust on your business and delighting a new generation of guests.

I'll be sharing secrets on one of the things I'm most intrigued by, something that can help you grow your business.

Travel psychology.

Click here to sign up today for this free video series



VRMarketPlace



Marco Island, Florida

Our eco-friendly home is minutes from white sand beaches and stellar Gulf of Mexico sunsets (including the green flash). At just four by six miles, the island is more small town than booming resort. Take a day trip to Sanibel Island or the Everglades, or plan a charter fishing excursion in some of the most abundant waters around. Heated pool, covered lanai, fenced yard (for Fido) and much more.

[Click for details and availability](#)

Fun Coconut Hideaway

Coconut Hideaway Beachhouse sits directly on the Gulf of Mexico with your private beach just off our front deck. Our charming Caribbean-inspired beach house is decorated with antiques and oriental carpets and features hardwood floors and soaring high ceilings.

[Click for details and availability](#)



Reefs Edge Bonaire

Reefs Edge Bonaire is an Ocean front condo with Amazing views! Feel the sun warm your skin while gazing off into the sunset on one of our three balconies. Floor to ceiling glass doors/windows provide a spectacular view of the ocean! The minute you walk in and see the view immediately you feel the stress leave your body. Time to Relax...

[Click for details and availability](#)

Orlando Vacation Villas

Welcome to your vacation home just minutes south of Orlando... Two fully air-conditioned villas are situated across from each other on a quiet no-through court. They can be rented individually or together. Designed in a contemporary style, both villas have all of the features you need, and more.

[Click for details and availability](#)



Vacation Rental Experiences - Just for Our Readers

Include your property in the **VRMarketPlace**, go to <http://vacationrentaltravels.com/add-your-property/>

Starfish Blue, Suncoast Fiji

Nothing says relaxation like a hanging bed. Enjoy the view as you gently sway with a stellar view of paradise. Starfish Blue is on Fiji's vivid Suncoast- lush greenery and tropical water. Honeymooners love the master suite with 2 person jetted tub, and families love the three bedrooms and bathrooms and private pool.

[Click for details and availability](#)



Luxurious Asheville Lofts

Enjoy the comforts of home in the heart of downtown Asheville. Experience the charm of our recently renovated historic building just steps from the vibrant cosmopolitan center of Asheville. Surround yourself with the warmth of abundance of natural light and handsome decor. All modern amenities and off street parking.

[Click for details and availability](#)

Escape To Branson

Two retreat homes, a short stroll from Table Rock Lake, have a peaceful views of the Ozarks and are not just a place to stay, but a place to play. "Decked out" with exceptional amenities, like sleek black pool tables, a solid wood poker table or a foosball table, TV/ DVD in each bedroom, and more.

[Click for details and availability](#)



Kawailoa Beach Paradise

Ready for lounging in the sun or floating in the sea? Surf awaits at MJ's & Gators, as well as snorkeling & fishing. Protected swimming perfect for the family. Whale watch in the winter & spot turtles year round. Enjoy TV, internet, games & 2 covered lanais when it's time to escape the sun. **Unbelievable North Shore Hawaii sunsets and stargazing!**

[Click for details and availability](#)



Increase Empathy and Compassion with Mindfulness Meditation

When I first learned about mindfulness meditation, I thought it was a lot of woo woo. I believed it was all about stopping your mind from thinking and learning breathing techniques. Then I grasped that it's a natural way to promote internal healing and understand things as they are.

As a beginner or advanced mindfulness meditation practitioner, you'll find different techniques beneficial to you. Below are samplings that exist today in the comfort of your surroundings or while traveling to your next destination. Open your mind to what resonates with you.

Either way, mindfulness decreases stress and negative emotions. It's the path to self-compassion; something we can all use in today's hectic life

Types of Mindfulness Meditation

Gratitude Meditation cultivates contentment that engages your mind in positive thoughts. Practicing gratitude has been shown to help you feel more energetic, happy, determined and alert.

Floating Meditation helps release your mind's tension and stress by "floating" weightlessly in a silk hammock. As you gently rock to the soothing vibrations of crystal bowls, you are fully supported and cocooned in a silk wrap allowing peace to flow to all parts of your mind and body.

Loving Kindness Meditation, an ancient method useful to quiet one's distracting thoughts and move you to a deep state of concentration. Repeated phrases of goodwill evoke feelings of friendliness and kindness towards us and others.

Labyrinth Journey is perfect if you don't want to sit still. On this walk you follow a path from the entrance to the center that facilitates forgiveness, resolves conflict and aids in decision making.

Morning meditation involves starting your day off with the practice of acceptance, letting go, non-striving and suspending your judgmental mind. This method leaves us with a deep sense of openness and receptivity to ourselves.

Sound Meditation utilizes sound and vibrations as a way to calm your mind. Experience how different sounds affect you from huge waves of crystal bowls to the subtle waves of vibration coming from your breathing. For years, animals, humans and living creatures have used sound for understanding and communicating with the world.

Healing Visualizations Meditation is an active form of meditation that engages your mind and harnesses the power and healing of positive imagery for your well-being.

Visualizations are guided meditations that take you on a trip to the mountains, beaches or perhaps the woods where all your senses come alive.

The following visualization meditation was my latest experience where I was guided to a serene safe place.

From the 60 foot Catamaran I stared in awe at the shallow, azure Caribbean waters. Looking down, I saw beautiful parrot fish with colors of pink, aqua, orange, yellow, red, and



WELLNESS TRAVEL IS...more important now than ever because of the added stress that we encounter in our workplace, home, relationships and finances. Wellness intersects with everything from lodging... to food and beverage... to shopping... activities...and excursions.

ARE YOU...generally healthy and motivated to travel to recharge your batteries, take a break from work, improve your health, reduce stress, or to be more productive when you return home? Do you want to take personal responsibility for your health? Do you want fun, adventure and to experience something new?

If so, then you're like the majority of wellness travelers that go on vacation for authentic experiences and meaningful transformations. You like to engage in wellness activities as part of a trip.

WHAT ARE WELLNESS TRAVEL ACTIVITIES?

- Spa and Beauty**
- Mind-Body**
- Spiritual & Connection**
- Personal Growth**
- Eco & Adventure**
- Fitness**
- Healthy Eating**

These seven base activities ensure physical health, empower intellectual health, encourage the emotional health, extend the community health, enhance the environmental health, and evolve the spiritual health of travelers. According to "Institute for Healthy Destination Accreditation", this is the PIECES MODEL that meeting professionals, business travelers and general consumers regard as valuable pieces when seeking wellness destinations.

As Founder of Sindelar Wellness Travel and a wellness traveler myself, I have an interest in personal well-being and participating in wellness activities. It's not a luxury anymore, but a necessity to reduce stress and enhance the quality of life.

electric blue. 100 yards away the palm fronds swayed in the breeze on this remote island, my island escape for an hour.

As I swam to the shoreline I tasted the salty water and felt my body floating in the buoyancy of the ocean. Finally when I could touch the bottom, soft powdery sand sifted between my toes. I shuffled to the shoreline, and the current took hold of me. I felt the sand wash in around my feet and then pull away as it was sucked back into the ocean.

As I tiptoed onto the white sand beach I noticed crabs scurrying sideways running to their holes. Tiny bubbles escaped out of the sand. Then I saw a gigantic crab emerge and stare at me, neither of us feared the other. I

thought that he was wise, the master of all the crabs and sensed that he had something to tell me. He knew that even in a beautiful place; you must rely on one's intuition to survive, have your hiding place figured out before you need it. I felt I had something to learn from him.

That visualization filled my eyes with tears. I felt totally relaxed with a new sense of confidence and focus--just like I had just conversed with a higher spirit.

These guided meditations are tailored for personal transformation, physical healing or deep relaxation. It's a time to stop controlling or judging our experiences and take an interest in the attitudes of compassion and openness.

Embrace yourself with more kindness and care and acknowledge that it's okay to become curious about your mind wandering rather than frustrated if it meanders.

By helping us stay attuned to what's happening around us in the present moment, we stay connected to what's most important. This awareness cultivates self-compassion.

Listed below are some resources that I have personally used.

Resources

Miraval Resort in Tucson, Arizona offers an assortment of mindfulness techniques that help you release deep feelings of negativity to ourselves and others. Soften your heart and let go of things holding you back and heal your mind and body.

Self-compassion.org with Dr. Kristin Neff provides different guided meditations to help you understand when confronted with personal failings. The exercises teach you not to be judgmental or critical to yourself or others.

Websites

[Health Journeys](#) - Belleruth Naparstek [Academy for Guided Imagery](#) founded by Martin Rossman, MD and David Bressler, Ph.D.

[Journal of Mental Imagery](#)

[The Healing Mind](#) founded by Marty Rossman; MD provides an extensive line of "over the counter" strength self-help products that empower patients and makes it easy for them to use imagery.

Books

Rituals in Healing: Using Imagery for Health and Wellness. Achterberg, Jeanne
Free Yourself from Pain. Bresler, David
Staying Well with Guided Imagery.

Naparstek, Belleruth

Guided Imagery for Self-Healing. Rossman, Martin

Mindfulness can bring richness into our lives by improving communication, deepening connections, shifting expectations, and developing more satisfaction with each other.

Guided imagery is a very powerful technique that directs and focuses the imagination.

By focusing on some of these techniques, you learn to savor the pleasures of life as they occur, live in the present moment and experience compassion for yourself and others.

What types of mindfulness meditation resonate with you?



Owners' Corner

By: Beth Carson &
Allana Schroeder

of The Distinguished Guest

Hi Vacation Rental Owners.

What to do if someone arrives at your place and it's not up to their standards?

Two owners weigh in

Beth Carson

This happened to me recently. Unfortunately, even after emails to both couples checking in on things and pleas in my Welcome Book to contact me if anything wasn't as they expected, the guests waited until they got home to send me a note of things I should know.

As an owner, there are probably fewer things that can frustrate you as much as getting a note, all with solvable things, after the guests return home. Especially after having such a positive booking experience- one of the couples told me they had back problems, so I purchased a new mattress prior to their arrival.

Had they informed me when they got there, I would have had offered them a boat ride to a nearby island while the maids could do a deep clean. Instead, they left me helpless.

As a guest, I'm sure there are lingering doubts that the staff may in some way retaliate or at minimum have a surly attitude.

Good owners will make sure to communicate any issues you are having properly to the staff to make sure that the message is understood and the staff's feelings are not hurt.

I'm blessed with staff who really care about their jobs. Through the years, I've been able in

infuse a desire for the guests' happiness as their number one job. I told them, "I am not your boss.

We have 50 bosses who come every year. We all work for them. They wait all year for their vacation, so we need to make sure it's a fantastic experience."

Here's Alanna Schroeder's take

I have never personally had this happen thankfully, but it is possible for this to happen to any vacation rental owner at anytime. When it comes to maintaining a vacation rental in top form the number one component is the cleaning staff and if my cleaners have failed to scrub to perfection, I want to know.

I make it a point to check in with each and every guest within 24 hours of check in to make sure that they are settling in and that everything is in order. If my home is not cleaned to the guest's satisfaction, or if something is not in order, I want to know so that I can have the opportunity to get my cleaning staff out to fix the problem.

Most proactive owners and managers welcome the immediate feedback so they have the opportunity to provide that great customer service that we pride ourselves on and maybe drop off a box of cookies as a peace offering for the oversight.

Once the problem has been identified, fixed, and the guest is happy I would then work with the cleaner to identify what went wrong and put protocol in place to prevent a similar issue in the future.

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My Traveling Circus

Let the Kids Plan the Vacation

Late Sunday night, we were having difficulty leaving a dinner party. Not for the typical lingering, chatty, dawdling-toddler kind of reasons, but because my oldest son had gone missing. No amount of calling his name had brought him to the door, so I had sent my husband to find him while I helped the girls get their jackets.

Ten minutes passed. The February air outside was getting colder as the light faded from the sky, and I wasn't sure I could stand in the doorway much longer without offering to pay part of our hosts' heating bill. Finally, my son appeared with an exaggerated frown on his face, his father coming up just behind him. "He was upset about the game," my husband explained, "I think he was hiding."

Once we were in the car and buckled in, I asked what had happened. My husband tried to explain, "John was upset that all we did was stand around and talk with the other adults. He had a balloon game planned, but when he asked people to play, no one listened to him."

"Oh no," I replied, and turned to my son again. "You mean that game was for adults? I thought you just wanted to play with the kids! The kids all got out the balloons and began playing, but you disappeared. I don't think any of the adults knew you were talking to them. I'm sorry son."

Finally, John spoke up. "If I had a week of freedom, I would just play games with you the whole time." My heart started to sink, as waves of guilt washed over me. He was feeling ignored, unvalued, unloved. "If I had a week of freedom, we could play sports, get out the board games, play video games, go swimming, have picnics in the park!" His voice was rising. It was serious. Taking a minute to think about his wish, I realized this was a storm that had been brewing for a

while. For three months, every time we had gone to friends' houses the parents typically sat and visited, while children had been expected to play with each other and keep out from underfoot. And every time, for three months, John had come away disappointed and upset. I had figured he'd get over it, because don't all children feel that way sometimes? But John meant it. He had taken to hiding from the problem so he wouldn't have to deal with his disappointment. It was pretty clear we needed to make some changes.

As I sat there and considered what to do, I hit on an idea. He could help me plan our summer vacation!

February to me, means vacation-planning. I'm not sure why this task always falls to me. It has just always been Mom's job. I decide where to go, make all the reservations, and plan the calendar of activities. February is both fun, and exhausting, as I consider all the options and make all of the decisions by myself. Sitting in the car and listening to him sniffle all the way home made me think: it might be nice to have a little help, and he clearly needed to contribute.

So, the following day, I sat down with the family over dinner and asked the question, "If we were world travelers, where would you like to go?" My 5-year-old only wanted to go to Chuck E Cheese, and my 7-year-old wanted to visit a schoolmate who had moved to Oklahoma. But then 10-year-old John said, "Yellowstone?" and the family jumped on the idea with unanimous approval.

We got out the computer and I set him down to look through a couple of Yellowstone-related sites and help me decide what to do with our time there. Paddling around Lake Yellowstone in a kayak quickly jumped to the top of his list. But he also wanted to go star-gazing, horseback riding, and camping. It was astonishing how quickly we made

progress. In one afternoon, we had almost the whole trip planned, and all I had left to do was look at the calendar and make a few phone calls.

My children are growing up, and they want, they need, to have a voice. Especially when it comes to their own downtime. During our planning process, I took a few notes to share with other parents who hope to include their children in vacation planning, and I hope they are helpful.

Children need to have time with and attention from their parents.

This was the biggest theme of every suggestion John made. It almost didn't even matter what the activity was, so long as we were doing it together. Somehow, he instinctively knows that fun is only fun if you have someone to share it with. They also know that nothing is as wonderful as having the undivided attention of a loved one.

Children need to have independence, within boundaries.

It was helpful to sit down with John and go over a few suggestions. But there were limits. I found 3-5 decisions to be an ideal amount for him to make. I selected just two child-friendly sites to let him explore and consider, and he spent the bulk of his time only looking at one of them. If I had given him more than that to research, he could have easily become stressed over all the options. Knowing that stress usually turns to whining,

especially when children realize they can't have everything, I pre-approved several favorite activities to make it more exciting and empowering.

Children need to have a positive experience with decision making.

I had to be mentally and emotionally prepared to accept John's decisions, before ever going into the discussion. If we had spent the whole time arguing over differing opinions, or second-guessing each other, it could have become a dividing, rather than unifying experience. All children need to have the experience of having their own opinions and decisions trusted – so they can learn to trust themselves.

Children need to take other's needs and abilities into consideration.

This one was hard for John, because it meant saying no to horseback riding because his five-year-old sister didn't meet the minimum age requirement. That was a huge disappointment. But, in giving him plenty of consideration time and reassurance, he realized that choosing what is best for everyone is more fun than leaving someone behind – a mature realization.

Children need to be creative, an important problem solving skill.

When he realized that kayaking would also be out of his sister's range of abilities, he spent some time

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How Travel Changes Our Perspective on Life



Article By Noreen Kompanik

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “The purpose of life, after all, is to live it, to taste experience to the utmost, to reach out eagerly and without fear for newer and richer experience.”

I have been blessed to be traveling since childhood, journeying to exotic destinations, faraway places and fascinating cities and towns. Having the privilege of being married to a career naval officer provided even more opportunities to traverse the world, experiencing different foods, cultures, languages and geography. Every move brought added diversity and new grand adventures.

Becoming a travel writer introduced me to other kindred spirits; those adventure-loving, wander-lusters who, like me, are picture painters and storytellers of life. We write so people will want to go visit a place or, if they can't, to live vicariously through our words and photos. Simply put, we write to joyously share the world with others.

“Changes in Latitude, Changes in Attitude,” sings Jimmy Buffet, the widely acknowledged King of Island Escapism. And, so true. How can a drink in your hand, toes in the sand, listening to a steel drum band be bad for you? Or floating by gondola in the Blue Grotto on the isle of Capri, as you are serenaded to “O Sole Mio?” thinking, “it doesn't

get any better than this.” It doesn't! Even traveling to a beach, mountain or another relaxing spot for a long weekend can be a much-needed latitude adjustment. Travel removes the shackles of work schedules, daily routines, doldrums and stressors of ordinary life, even if it's just for a little while. It lets us decompress, leaving us refreshed, revived, and restored, ready to take on the world once more.

We've all heard a variation of the saying, “In the end our biggest regrets are the things we did not do and the chances we didn't take.” Far too many times people talk about taking that long-dreamed-of, perfect vacation, but, somehow never manage to convert that fervent desire into reality. Some even put off their dream vacation until retirement then finances, fears, or perhaps even health issues become insurmountable obstacles. When their long cherished dream is never realized, they are filled with regret - that damaging emotion that sucks the joy from life.

But, it doesn't have to be that way. An anonymous author once wrote, “Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the places and moments that take our breath away.” Even seeing small snippets of our diverse and wonderful world with its grab bag of opportunities can be life changing.

Travel is food for the soul. It's a magic elixir for our senses. We see new exciting sights, experience new tastes and smells, and hear different sounds.

Forever embedded in our memories, these experiences travel with us for the rest of our lives, becoming forever a part of us wherever we go. And we're changed because of it. The world is now broader and more expansive than it was before. We never quite forget what it felt like to witness the grandeur of the Grand Canyon for the first time, the majesty of Alaskan glaciers, or standing in the center of the Roman Coliseum, the icon of the glory that was once Rome.

Travel is a quest for self-discovery. The movie Eat, Pray, Love is a perfect example. Life is a journey- literally and figuratively. Travel gives us the opportunity to explore who we are, what we are and where we want to be. As a result, we exist on a higher plane.

For those of us who recall Abraham Maslow's prolific Hierarchy of Needs from psychology class, human beings who strive toward self-actualization experience immense personal growth and self-fulfillment. Some of the most profound epiphanies in our lives occur because of travel- a fresh relationship start, a well-needed career change, the decision to relocate. Why? Because travel not only gives us the chance to leave our worries and cares behind, it also lets us view our world and see ourselves through a different mirror.

Travel allows us new and refreshing introspection with incredible clarity- just when we need it the most.

"I am not the same, having seen the moon shine on the other side of the world." quotes Mary Anne Radmacher.

Yes, travel changes our perspective on life. And, as a result, we are all the better for it.



My Traveling Circus (con't)

From page 57

considering what we could do on Lake Yellowstone that would include her. He didn't want to give up on his favorite activity. So, after some thought, he suggested that we buy an inflatable canoe for the family, which we would use with lifejackets, and just paddle around the shore. His creativity provided an alternative option to make everyone happy.

Children need to contribute and be responsible.

As we look ahead to this summer's Yellowstone visit, the children are expected to save some of their money to help pay for favorite snacks, entertainment, and souvenirs. We hope they will realize that vacations aren't something they can have on a whim, but that they require accountability, planning, and some sacrifices. They will also contribute in other ways: helping set up campsites, prepare meals, and keep the rules while we are in the Park. This makes the trip, and themselves, more valuable in their eyes.

As my children grow up, it becomes pretty obvious when they need extra freedom and responsibility. If they don't get regular upgrades in what they can expect, and what is expected of them, they begin to act out and wish for a different life. They can even disappear. While I'm not always so quick to recognize the opportunities, this one was a real pleasure. John is growing up, and while I'm sad to see my little boy go, I'm excited to see the young man he's becoming. And I'm excited for the Yellowstone memories we've planned out together.

If you haven't heard yet: Every 4th Grader in the United States has the opportunity to get a free Parks Pass to any National Park. Just visit the program [Every Kid in a Park](#) for more information.



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