

OLM

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Clara Kim

is one of several
women of consequence
in Canada who define success
on their own terms

Heritage artist turned
entrepreneur
Zhenyu Wen on honey,
balance and being in
harmony with nature

The Salvation Army
mission to influence in the
communities of our world is
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Holiday Best Picks * Santa Margherita Wine * Florida * Mexico * Adventure Canada



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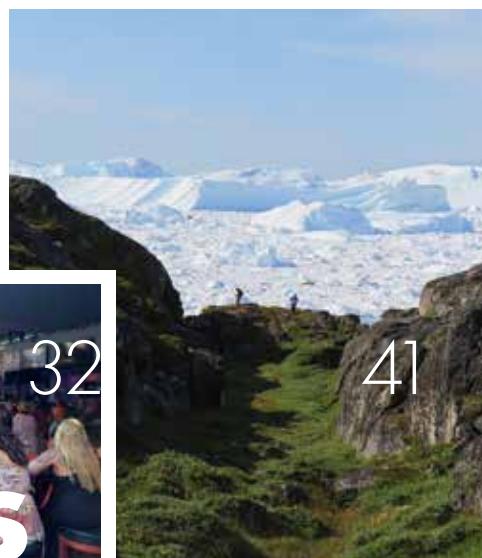


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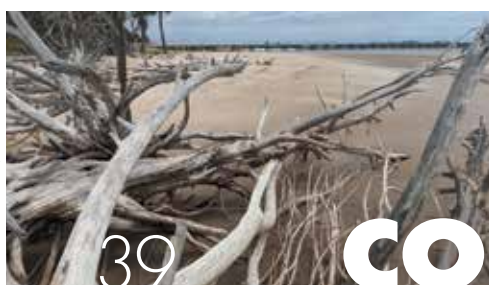
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PHOTO: CHLOE HAYES

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PHOTO: DANDONOVAN

Year of the Manager

It's been one year since the self-described centrist Mark Sutcliffe, an outsider in the race, was elected mayor. Being removed from the mismanagement (think LRT boondoggle) and fractiousness of the Jim Watson-led 2018-2022 Council, the victory offered Sutcliffe a unique opportunity to reset local politics in Ottawa and provide a rudderless ship with a new and bold direction. Sutcliffe's win came during the same period the Ford government passed legislation that handed new strong mayor powers to several cities including Ottawa, as a measure to cut gridlock and bureaucracy and to get things done. One of Sutcliffe's first pronouncements was that he would never use the new powers because they were 'undemocratic.' It was an early sign that Sutcliffe was going to be more a manager than a visionary and bold mayor.

Mayor Sutcliffe has certainly brought more civility to City Hall, but other than a new tone it doesn't seem like much else has changed. Like Watson before him, Sutcliffe preached the value of fiscal restraint by keeping property taxes low. However, he's generating revenue in others ways from cash strapped taxpayers. Council have tripled camera speed traps on major roads. In 2021 the city earned \$2.5 million from the cameras. Under Sutcliffe it rose to \$11 million and this will that grow further to \$66.1 million in 2024. While the inner-city councillors applaud the move in the name of safer streets, the average taxpayer, can't help but see it for what it is — a cash grab.

The mayor has repeatedly stated that his family regularly uses OC Transpo. His speeches at Council would have you believe that the service is improving when the opposite is true; the LRT continues to battle problems and has had several significant shutdowns since his election. The O-Train is known across the region as the NO-Train by riders as they continue to be forced away from the dysfunctional public system into cars. Despite this, transit fares will rise in the new year. To make matters worse, Sutcliffe and Council decided to invest heavily in an electronic bus program, something Transit Commission member Councillor Wilson Lo described as a bad idea due to lack of extensive testing. The City of Edmonton invested over \$100 million in 2020 in a plan to procure 60 electric buses, each costing over \$1 million. Half of the fleet is now plagued by mechanical issues, battery problems, and missing parts, rendering them out of service. Apparently they don't work well in cold weather. And the company who made them went bankrupt.

Ottawa's homeless problem has worsened in the past year. The ByWard Market and Lowertown are increasingly volatile with daily occurrences of business break-ins and theft. Parts of the area could be mistaken as a set for the *Walking Dead*. Just go to the corner of Murray and King Edward. It's a national disgrace — a scaled down version of Vancouver's East Side. There is no sense of urgency in dealing with the real problem, which is a massive drug addiction and mental health crisis fed by the drug trade. Incredibly, the new ByWard Ottawa Police Service (OPS) "station" that Sutcliffe campaigned on will not be accessible to the public.

The OPS is no better under the governance of Mayor Sutcliffe. Councillor Cathy Curry was made vice-chair of the Ottawa Police Services Board and rammed through an anti-democratic motion quashing public delegations, something she clearly despised, telling an activist and the general public to email her office instead. We all know how well that works! In 2021, public delegations were extensive, and the budget was widely opposed, yet the OPS budget continues to increase year after year without much public input. Ironically, crime in the market rises with every increase in the OPS budget.

Disappointingly, Mayor Sutcliffe has proven to be more manager than mayor. He seems to have no sense of urgency about anything. Ottawa has a drug addiction and homelessness crisis in the market, a housing crisis, ongoing transit chaos, new immigrants to the city using recreational facilities as shelters, increasing bureaucracy at city hall and an overall approach to governing the city that could be described as que sera sera. It's like Watson never left. Except for the civility part ■



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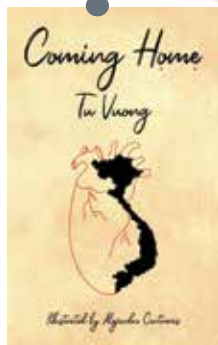
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Ottawa Author's First Poetry Book *Coming Home*

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, Tu Vuong's father and brother came to Canada as part of former Mayor Marion Dewar's Project 4000 to escape the intense repression and scarcity of the new communist regime. Two years later, Vuong and her mother joined them in Ottawa. Vuong's debut book, *Coming Home*, is a collection of poems that focus on her and her family's journey both physically and emotionally. The poems illustrate the transition from life in Vietnam to an unfamiliar society that was often not understanding of their plight or cultural origins. Easy to grasp and very readable, *Coming Home* is also beautifully illustrated, with simple yet meaningful artwork that lends the stories even more meaning.

[amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.ca)



Chef Anjali Pathak Continues the Family Legacy of Providing Ready-to-Eat Healthy Meals



Chef Anjali Pathak is the granddaughter of the founder of Patak's, the leading brand of authentic and flavourful Indian food. Anjali Pathak recently visited Canada to celebrate Diwali, one of the most important festivals in India. While visiting she appeared on several top TV shows including *The Social* to promote to talk about the importance of Diwali (November) and Holi (March) and its importance in Indian and South Asian culture. She also spoke about how Indian food is a great bridge to eating more vegetarian dishes including Patak's ready-to-eat veggie curries which are inspired by the most popular Indian dishes. Patak's ready-to-eat veggie curries are packed full of authentic flavour and wholesome ingredients. Just heat and serve for a quick dinner, easy lunch or delicious side dish. Available at most major grocery stores, Patak's popular curries are non-GMO and free from artificial colours and preservatives.

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Unwrap Comfort this Holiday Season with the La-Z-Boy Scarlett Recliner!



Whether treating yourself or surprising a loved one, this accent chair is the gift of relaxation and style. It's not just a chair; it's a statement piece, your personal oasis of comfort, here to make your holidays merrier than ever.

The Scarlett is a great example of

a new type of modern recliner. It's coined a secret recliner, meaning no one could tell it was a recliner unless you sat on it. With its fresh, clean silhouette, the Scarlett's versatile look features casually tapered arms and tall wooden legs that will complement any room design and reflect your unique style by choosing your favourite colour from a vast selection of fabrics and leathers.

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The Gift of Hydration

WaterH Inc.'s smart water bottle tracks water quality and consumption. The award-winning design looks good, and the built-in TDS sensor sends reminders via the Water app to ensure you consume enough water each day. Simply download the app, click to pair, tap the top of the WaterH bottle lid, and you are done. Customize the frequency of reminder notifications, and never again question whether you have drank enough water in a day. Away from your phone? No problem; an LED light on the bottle ensures you get the notification to drink more water while the built-in TDS (Total Dissolved Solids) sensor meter scans your water quality. No more guessing about water quality based on taste or smell; you can drink with peace of mind knowing you're hydrating quality water.

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“The Charming Taste of Europe” supports the EUFF 2023

Once again “The Charming Taste of Europe” campaign, proudly supports the European Union Film Festival (EUFF) in Canada! The 2023 EUFF boasts a strong line-up of diverse, diverting, and provocative films. Many of the greatest names in the history of world cinema have been represented over the decades of this extraordinary event. This year is no exception, showcasing both brilliant emerging talents as well as the latest work of master filmmakers. There is drama, comedy, action, and documentary: something for everyone! Several guest filmmakers from the European Union traveling to Canada to present and discuss their films, add up to a complete cinematic experience!

For this edition, the EUFF is presenting 27 films from all 27 European Union member states. As a bonus, and to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine, a new feature film from Ukraine will also be presented at a special benefit screening on the final day of the Festival.

In addition to the highly interesting festival program, “The Charming Taste of Europe” will be hosting a wine tasting event at Spadina Theatre, on November 19th, just before the screening of the Italian film “The Spring of my life”.

Even though we have returned to live, in-person screenings in three main cities (Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver), along with the Delegation of the European Union to Canada and the EU Member States, the festival features a very exciting online version too. While not all the films will be available online, most of the Festival line-up is, giving anyone across Canada an opportunity to sample the best of contemporary filmmaking in the European Union.

In-person or online, the goals have remained the same:

- Reflect the excellence and innovation of European independent cinema
- Give award-winning films their Canadian premieres
- Give voice to relevant European filmmakers in Canada
- Foster collaboration and engage in cultural dialogues between Canadian and EU communities
- Promote diversity

Participating EU countries include: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

More about “The Charming Taste of Europe”

The Charming Taste of Europe is an EU co-funded campaign that introduces exquisite European products to the United States and Canada, such as Italian and French wine and fresh fruit from Greece. Products that showcase all of Europe’s charm, beauty, culture, history, art, heritage, and unmistakable tastes.

The mission of The Charming Taste of Europe is to increase awareness of the merits and quality standards of select European wines and fresh fruits with promotional activities in the competitive markets of the United States of America and Canada.

The Charming Taste of Europe project is promoted by the Consortium for the Protection of Wines of Abruzzo, the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Kavala (Kavala COOP), Agricultural Cooperative of Rachi Pieria “AGIOS LOUKAS,” and the Union of Sweet Bordeaux Wines. These European agricultural products, famous around the world for their outstanding properties, will continue to promote with initiatives and events dedicated to consumers, journalists and professionals. Through the superb high quality Italian wines, the juicy kiwis and cherries from Greece, and the melodious French golden wines produced with the artistry of agricultural traditions, this campaign will awaken the senses and a new culinary consciousness by connecting food, cultures, and territories and will undoubtedly bring European charm into the lives of many.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency (REA). Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



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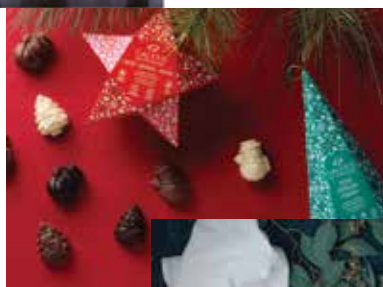
Ticket to Broadway Across Canada Make a Great Gift!

This holiday season, stuff the stockings of your loved ones with tickets to Broadway Across Canada's production of *Ain't Too Proud – The Life and Times of The Temptations*. They also make a great gift for that someone on your list who is hard to buy for. The winner of the 2019 Tony Award for Best Choreography, it's a thrilling story of brotherhood, family, loyalty, and betrayal during a decade of civil unrest in America. Set to the beat of the group's treasured hits, including "My Girl," "Just My Imagination," "Get Ready," "Papa Was a Rolling Stone," *Ain't Too Proud* tells the unforgettable story of the legendary quintet that *Billboard Magazine* named the greatest R&B group of all time. The show is at the National Arts Centre from Tuesday, December 26 until Sunday, December 31, 2023. Tickets start at \$64.20 and can be purchased at broadwayacrosscanada.com

Former Ottawa Radio Personality Debut Novel *Summer At Pine Lake*

When not helping people get back to nature and recalibrate, Alyssa Delle Palme loves to write about the benefits of nature. In 2022, her first short story, *Just Rosie June, Wild and Free*, was included in the children's book *When I am Among the Trees*. Her debut novel, *Summer at Pine Lake*, hit the bookstore shelves in September. The book is the perfect autumn read for teens to dive into while thoughts of their own summer adventures are still fresh in their minds. *Summer at Pine Lake* is available at Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Amazon, and Smashwords.

alyssadellepalme.com



Teens Will Learn The Power Of Words And Truth In Journalism While You Support Literacy

To celebrate the people behind the news, News Media Canada has launched its first-ever illustrated book—*Champions*, honouring notable people from the Canadian news media industry. This relatable, easy-to-read, bilingual publication includes bespoke illustrations by Canadian artist, Rachel Joanis and features the stories of Canadian changemakers from the news media industry who play an integral role in keeping newspapers alive and communities connected. This limited-edition book is the perfect gift for tweens and teens discovering their personal interests and career paths, and can be purchased at championsofthetruth.ca. All proceeds from the sale of *Champions* will be donated to firstbookcanada.org.

A Decadent Delight Handcrafted In Canada Since 1985

From stocking stuffers to hosting gifts, *Galerie au Chocolat* makes the perfect gift to show appreciation for your loved ones this holiday season. Since 1985, *Galerie au Chocolat* has produced decadent high-end chocolates, delighting the North American market with its exquisite creations. Located in Montreal, this artisanal chocolate company prides itself on creating products with simple and high-quality ingredients, setting itself apart by offering all-natural, non-GMO chocolates in a peanut-free, kosher facility. For vegan-friendly, delicious gifts, *Galerie au Chocolat* offers a list of luxurious dark chocolate options. Find them at Shoppers, Rexall, Metro, Whole Foods, independent healthy market/specialty food stores and online. galerieauchocolat.ca

Beautiful Wall Calendars From Darlene Kulig

Darlene Kulig is a Canadian artist with a flair for capturing our native land in her colourful, semi-abstracted, spirited landscapes. Her unique joyful style is dotted with her signature effervescent champagne bubbles. The calendars make a great hostess gift and are perfect for teachers or anyone who loves art. They are \$25 each and available at darlenekuligartist.ca, where you will find various other gift ideas, including puzzles and pillowcases.

darlenekuligartist.ca

Heritage Artist Turned Entrepreneur Zhenyu Wen

— PROPAGATING THE CULTURE OF EASTERN
IMPERIAL PALACE AFTERNOON TEA TO THE WORLD



Zhenyu Wen (also known as Jingcheng Wen) goes by many titles. He has been referred to as a National Think Tank Food Culture lecturer, planner for the Summer Palace of Beijing's Imperial Garden, inheritor of the Eastern court afternoon tea culture, and the founder of the trending brand Bee21, which has earned him the nickname "Master Wen" among friends.

Beyond his many titles, Zhenyu Wen is the first to incorporate the traditional honey refining technique into modern art. He hopes to promote timeless tradition; which has been selected for the Chinese Cultural Heritage Protection Project, to the world.

Wen does not consider himself a gourmet connoisseur, traditional Chinese medicine practitioner, or businessman. He instead devotes himself to staying true to his duties as an educator of traditional oriental culture by promoting the art of honey refining.

Wen's family's honey refining technique

ABOVE: Zhenyu Wen's family honey refining technique was chosen as Intangible Cultural Heritage by the city of Beijing.

traces its roots back to the Qing Dynasty. Because his ancestors oversaw the meals served at the royal court, they had the opportunity to distill their knowledge in the palace and pass it on to their descendants. The Qing Dynasty royal family engaged in afternoon tea habitually, creating a cultural icon that persisted for centuries.

Wen learned growing up that the art of honey refining has existed for millennia. The traditional practice has also played an essential role in the development of medicine. The process has not only been documented in imperial court records, but descriptions of it have been written across centuries of classical literature.

As early as the Song Dynasty, the official Honey Supervisory Bureau was established, and in the Qing Dynasty, honey was added to the afternoon tea at the royal palace, marking its significance at a cultural level.

Even after these developments, there were some gaps in the generational teaching of honey refining, which is why Wen treasures the tradition to this day. The traditional honey refining technique was silenced for decades by changing times and external factors, so it was only taught within his family in secrecy through generations.

To share the rich culture of afternoon tea, Zhenyu Wen began to incorporate his knowledge into the afternoon tea served in French restaurants in 2008. He received high praise and eventually started to promote his honey product nationwide.

At the same time, Wen was the first person in China to try to incorporate the concept of afternoon tea into French cuisine, bridging cultures.

Because it originated in the imperial palace, afternoon tea traditions have

particular rules about the use of utensils and selection of ingredients. Fine Eastern porcelain must be used for tableware, and deep mountain organic honey must be selected for the ingredients. The process in entirety is meant to reflect the elegant balance between man and nature. Wen presents his work with the same sincerity as an artist.

Wen's efforts attract international acclaim. Many worldwide events feature his Eastern court afternoon tea ceremony. Recently, Wen was an honoured guest at the GIC Global Innovators Conference, where he invited worldwide attendees to sample his honey. During the Beijing International Design Week and in a series of documentaries on food culture, Wen spoke about the Art of Balance; in harmony with nature. Then, he appeared as a special guest at the oriental Concept Designer Live event during Beijing International Fashion Week.

Wen's efforts using his honey refining

technique for afternoon tea attracted widespread attention by major media in China. In 2013, CCTV-4 gave a special report on the international reach of the Eastern afternoon tea culture, which gave him great confidence in his practice.

Set on reaching an even larger audience, Wen has integrated modern tools and equipment into the honey production process, turning honey refining products into capsules for coffee machines. As Chinese consumers gradually accept Zhenyu Wen's inherited honey refining technique, his next step is to promote this product around the world.

"This is not just about selling an Eastern drink overseas, but about spreading the Eastern court afternoon tea culture, which has been inherited for hundreds of years, to the world," Zhenyu Wen said, "The honey refining technique has been able to stay intact for centuries relying not only on teaching, but more importantly, the significance of its cultural heritage."

Zhenyu Wen hopes that by reaching the global stage, more people can appreciate and enjoy the afternoon tea culture that was exclusive to the royal family in the East and introduce the heavenly way of life that was once popular in the Qing Dynasty royal court.

With the techniques he developed based on traditional art, Wen was selected to enter the competition for Intangible Cultural Heritage by the city of Beijing. After a rigorous qualification review, he stood out from hundreds of projects and, through the scrutiny of dozens of experts, was ultimately awarded the title of representative protection project for intangible Chinese cultural heritage within the context defined by UNESCO.

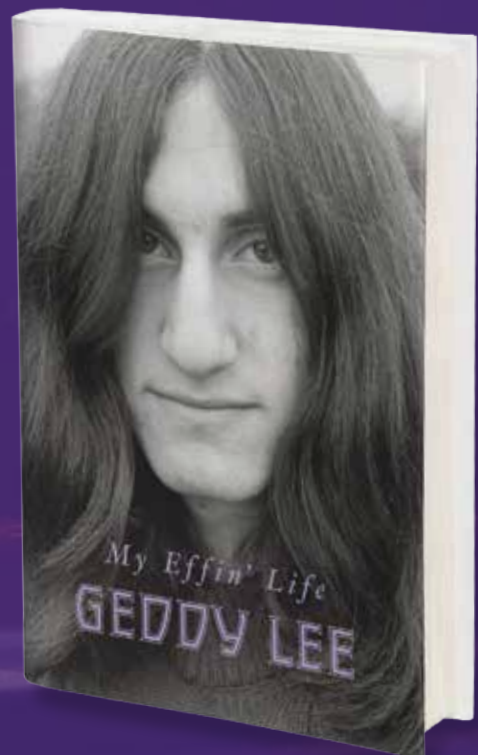
Wen actively promotes the traditional and cultural values of the technique to increase its influence and awareness. His research has continued, too; he is constantly refining the innovation and adaptability of the honey refining technique ■

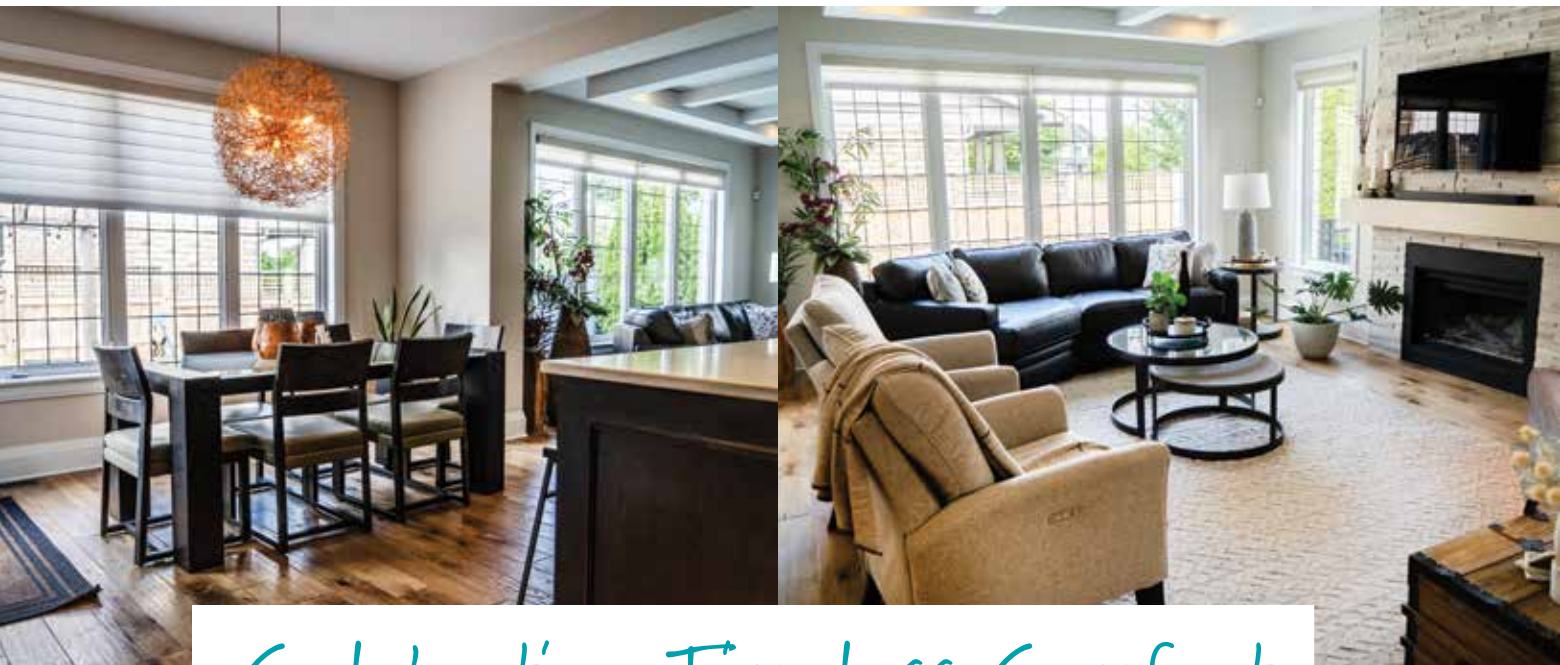
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Celebrating Timeless Comfort:

A DESIGN STORY IN MANOTICK

If you live in or have visited the picturesque town of Manotick, you might be familiar with a neighbourhood called Mahogany. This ever-developing community from Minto is home to many suburban lots that elevate the lives of Manotick's residents.

In regards to this design story, it has been home to our client for the greater part of two years. Born and raised in the Ottawa region, our satisfied client has always called Manotick home.

After moving into their new home, our client knew the next step was to find pieces that would complete their new space.

"My husband and I had thought that our furniture wouldn't fit with what we wanted for our new home," she says. Because there was very little furniture and so much space to play around with, she had no idea what to do.

However, with the help of the interior design services from La-Z-Boy Ottawa & Kingston, she was able to put together a home that looks timeless and relaxed.

Before La-Z-Boy had come across her

new Manotick home, there were only essential furniture pieces in each room. Inside the space at the time were two fold-up tables and chairs for the dining areas and a small couch in the living room.

However, she brought two white accent chairs from her previous place, serving as the inspiration for some of the newly added furniture pieces.



The La-Z-Boy interior designer who helped reignite this home's beauty, Zeina Badawi, had worked on this project for almost a full year. "The entire process was estimated to take about eight or nine months," she said.

So, with no furniture in sight and a bone-dry first floor, Zeina had a lot to work with. And, the fact that it was previously a Minto Dream Home for CHEO, there was a lot of potential for big ideas!

The client and Zeina's first meeting was inside the home. As Zeina browsed through the lounging area, the dining room, the living room and the kitchen, she could tell she needed to make sure everything flowed with each other.

Because it was an open-concept floor plan, they both agreed not to overcomplicate things and try to keep the ideas simple. The client requested a timeless look, with neutral colours to help accentuate the natural light coming in from the large windows.

"I think that first meeting was the key," the client says as she remembers her time in the La-Z-Boy Kanata showroom. "I found you couldn't see the furniture

frames in their true potential, but once the interior designer comes in, they show you what those pieces can look like in a room, and that helped a lot.”

With her fabric swatches and wood samples, Zeina got to work. And pretty enthusiastically, by the sounds of it! The shared excitement between herself and the client served as the driving force behind the home’s inspiration.

Throughout the numerous meetings and conversations between both women, Zeina formulated a plan of attack! Her idea to create a post-modern home with muted tones came to fruition with detailed mood boards and 3D planners that served as the blueprints for the design.

As for the furniture chosen, the client

dining room complement each other with lighter wood tones and deep textures.

The living area was the final challenge for the client and Zeina. Their main concern was arranging a suitable seating arrangement for the family of four, who enjoyed spending quality time together watching TV.

I think that’s where I got the idea to add the leather sectional with the cuddler piece since it covered so much space and gave more seats for everyone and even guests” Zeina says.

Along with the large dark leather sectional, Zeina also added two high-leg recliners in the centre of the room for the client and her husband, and a chair & a half in the corner to complete the

pieces, the showroom also includes modern options that appeal to younger audiences. These contemporary sofas, sectionals, and recliners seamlessly enhance various spaces, as seen in this design project.

As this design project comes to a close, the client looks inside her fully furnished home with awe. Now that this chapter in her life is complete, she has a friend in Zeina, whom she can ask for help at any time. “I can safely call my space welcoming, comfortable and stylish, all thanks to her!”

Given its previous life as a Minto Dream Home decorated with different La-Z-Boy furnishings, Zeina proudly declares, “It’s certainly a full-circle moment for La-Z-Boy” as she admires her hard work.



wanted pieces that were comfortable, stylish and not over-the-top. In her words, it would feel like “a home you could walk into and immediately feel comfortable in the space.”

The same applied to the dining areas. In the main dining room, the client sought a formal yet welcoming atmosphere. While the main dining area featured a lighter-toned wood finish, the casual dining room in the kitchen had a contrasting dark finish to complement the light colours in that space.

The main dining and lounging areas also set the tone for what guests first see when they walk in. According to Zeina, the lounging area and the

conversational circle she was going for. As the project was entering its final stages, the client was excited to see everything coming together before her eyes. What was once a living area that wasn’t so welcoming was now a place that guests can admire.

“When people hear I got all my furniture from La-Z-Boy, they almost do a double-take,” the client chuckles. With the stereotypical grandfather recliner being synonymous with the brand, it’s natural to assume that’s all La-Z-Boy has to offer.

While some may perceive La-Z-Boy furniture as primarily serving an older demographic with traditional

There’s no doubt in the client’s mind that Mahogany, Manotick will be her new home for a long time. And with all her new furniture set in place, she can live comfortably, knowing she will enjoy her furniture for years to come.

After trusting our design team, our client was thrilled with the comfortable and timeless décor we delivered. If you’re looking to transform a room, don’t miss out on La-Z-Boy’s free design services. Schedule an appointment with us today, either in-store or virtually! ■

Find La-Z-Boy in Ottawa-East, Ottawa-West, Kanata and Kingston
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The Salvation Army

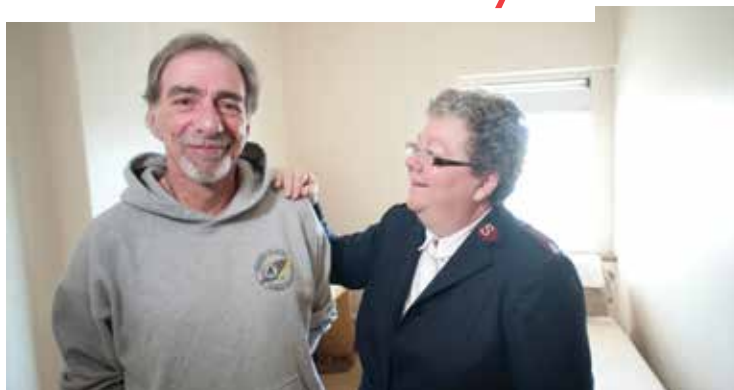


PHOTO: CAROLINE FRANKS

The Salvation Army has the same mission today as in 1865 – *To share the love of Jesus Christ, meet human needs and be a transforming influence in the communities of our world.*

At a time when people are starting their retirement, Liem, at the age of 67 suddenly found himself homeless and alone with no place to go.

At a time when people are starting their retirement, Liem, at the age of 67 suddenly found himself homeless and alone with no place to go.

Born in Vietnam in 1955 Liem moved to Canada in 1984 and in 1994, he married his wife in his homeland and eight years later she joined him in Canada in 2002. They built a life here raising three successful children. Liem worked in manual labour type jobs for most of his life, but when he turned 60, he became unemployed because he couldn't keep up with younger workers. He tried for years to find work, with no luck.

During this time, his marriage fell apart and he had no place to go so he stayed with a friend for a few days.

However, due to Covid, he was once again homeless. With nowhere to go, he found himself at The Salvation Army Ottawa Booth Centre men's emergency shelter for eight months as a resident.

"The Salvation Army was very nice to me," Liem says. "They asked me a lot

of questions to find out what I needed. I told them I just don't have anywhere to go."

During his time there, case workers journeyed alongside Liem to assess his immediate needs while working diligently to find him permanent housing.

While waiting for housing, Liem completed the Residential Life Skills program at The Salvation Army, a program that equipped him with new skills and supports to be successful. The Salvation Army's housing team helped Liem find his current apartment and he now receives old age security and CPP and is living independently and able to put food on his table.

Liem's story is one of many across the Ottawa region of struggling individuals and without notice, find themselves homeless and at the doorsteps of The Salvation Army where they receive life-

“The Salvation Army's presence in the Ottawa area is far reaching and our life-changing programs help people find permanent housing, put food on their tables, and mentor young parents so they are able to achieve their long-term goals.”

changing supports, guiding them on a pathway to a brighter future.

The Salvation Army provides critical services and programs in Ottawa addressing housing and homelessness and food security while giving a helping hand to young parents and families through parenting and educational supports at The Salvation Army Bethany Hope Centre.

“The Salvation Army’s presence in the Ottawa area is far reaching and our life-changing programs help people find permanent housing, put food on their tables, and mentor young parents so they are able to achieve their long-term goals,” said Glenn van Gulik, Divisional Secretary for Public Relations, The Salvation Army Ontario Division. “We are seeing a dramatic increase for our services as more people are finding it difficult to make ends meet because of the high cost of food and housing. We’re very grateful for the community’s generosity and we’re appealing to them to support The Salvation Army’s work

in helping their struggling neighbours.”

Through early intervention and focusing on a housing first approach, last year, The Salvation Army referred 440 people to housing. Also in 2022, The Salvation Army Community and Family Services provided food security to 1,200 single households and 750 families. This year, The Salvation Army anticipates an increase for their life-changing programs and support is needed more than ever from mission partners.

Over the coming weeks, The Salvation Army’s iconic Christmas Kettle Campaign will get underway – a vital fundraising appeal that directly supports Ottawa’s most vulnerable year-round, as their mission partners will be bringing smiles and ringing bells while volunteering their time accepting donations from generous donors.

Every dollar put into a kettle ensures The Salvation Army can deliver life-changing programs that provide dignity and a way out of poverty permanently

for many who are finding it difficult to make ends meet.

Last year, The Salvation Army supported over 1.5 million individuals and families throughout Ontario.

When you see The Salvation Army’s red kettles and bell ringers this holiday season, remember Liem’s story and be a transforming influence in your community.

Please donate at one of our over 30 kettle locations around Ottawa this Christmas, which are equipped with TipTap touchless giving ■

Donate online at [SalvationArmy.ca](https://www.salvationarmy.ca), by calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY or by scanning the QR code below.



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ANCIENT TRADITIONS MEET MODERN SUSTAINABILITY AT

Santa Margherita Wines

Sustainability. Carbon footprint. These are terms that we hear often but what do they mean when it comes to making wine? Italy's Santa Margherita Wines is a pioneer and world leader in the field of sustainable wine production. They recently hosted their first Sustainable Retreat at the Drake Devonshire Hotel Resort in Prince Edward County. Drake Devonshire was chosen as the ideal spot for the retreat because of their own efforts at reducing their carbon footprint.

The story of Santa Margherita is a love story of a man and his family, of passion and commitment, of innovative viticulture and of social responsibility. Count Gaetano Marzotto was a

man of vision and a pioneer in sustainability. He purchased a region in the sunny Venetian countryside where grapes had been cultivated as far back as Roman times. Inspired by the location and its history, he named it after his beloved wife, Margherita. This was before agriculture had been mechanized, so he was ambitious and forward-thinking, too. He employed many people in that area, and because he brought jobs and increased prosperity to the region, King Emmanuel II honoured him with the title of Count. Considering that earning a title is much more significant than simply inheriting it, this was an early sign of recognition for his to social responsibility in his community.

Santa Margherita Valdobbiadene Prosecco Superiore DOCG Brut

A delightful sparkling wine made from 100 percent Glera grapes, with a fresh, fruity bouquet of apples and peach blossoms. Prosecco is an excellent aperitif that pairs well with white fish, soft cheeses or custard tarts. Sock up on this for the upcoming holiday season

Dry 11%

LCBO# VINTAGES# 19024

\$23.95



grapes. I'm a big Rosé aficionado, and this elegant wine showcases the many reasons why I love it. It's crisp and dry with mouthwatering acidity. Delicate aromas and floral notes, along with fresh pear, herbal hints and a touch of pink pepper on the palate, are a sensual delight. The gorgeous colours add visual impact. The mouthwatering acidity makes Santa Margherita Rosé pair well with many foods, such as classic Caesar and Niçoise salads, pasta and risotto dishes, grilled meats, seafood, and soft cheeses.

Dry 12.5%

LCBO VINTAGES# 25752

\$17.95

Santa Margherita Pinot Grigio Valdige DOC 2022

From Italy's beautiful Adige River Valley region in the mountainous northeast, this is the gold standard for Pinot Grigio and a consistent best seller at LCBO Vintages. It is dry, refreshing and aromatic, giving lifted aromas and flavours of Golden Delicious apples, quince and yellow pear.

It is a perfect match for shellfish, seafood pasta, shrimp risotto or white meats and can also play the role of aperitif. It has achieved carbon-neutral certification, as indicated on the label.

Dry 12.5%

LCBO VINTAGES#

106450 **\$22.95**



Santa Margherita Cabernet Sauvignon Veneto IGT 2020

An elegant Cab Sauv that shows the typical blackcurrant and herbal notes but with a lighter body and mouthfeel, making it even more versatile than usual in a Cab. It has refined, soft tannins and a lovely persistent, aromatic finish. Food pairings include red meats, such as



game or prime roast beef, mushroom soup or risotto, as well as hot and spicy dishes and mature cheeses. Because it is lighter-bodied, you can also chill it slightly and serve it at 13C with salmon. This wine offers excellent value at this price

Dry 13%

LCBO VINTAGES# 13620

\$19.95

Santa Margherita Chianti Classico DOCG 2020

This vibrant, velvety Chianti is crafted from 100 percent Sangiovese grapes grown in Santa Margherita's vineyards in Tuscany. It has subtle fruity and spicy aromas, with a gorgeous fruity palate giving notes of dark cherry, plum, baking spice, dried herbs and cedar, with soft tannins and appetizing peppery notes on the long finish. This is a great pairing for pot roast or spaghetti Bolognese, as well as steak. Worth remembering, too, as a terrific gift wine.

Dry 13.5%

LCBO VINTAGES# 91694

\$23.95



Santa Margherita Rosé Tre Venezie IGT 2022

This beautiful salmon pink Rosé is crafted from Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir



Santa Margherita's Sustainable Retreat provided a unique opportunity to do a deep dive into the world of sustainable wine production. It gave us a chance to learn about these fabulous wines and to get acquainted with new wine colleagues, too. The Drake Devonshire offered a fantastic setting, with gracious hospitality, and the natural beauty of Lake Ontario.

For more wine and food discovery from Jane Staples, visit www.bellovinoj.com



women of CONSEQUENCE

Since Confederation, women have played a pivotal role in shaping Canada. From the bustling boardrooms of multinational corporations to the hallowed halls of politics, the vibrant world of art, and the compassionate domain of social work, women of consequence have left indelible imprints on our diverse landscape. But what are the factors that truly define a person as a woman of consequence in contemporary Canada?

In an era where the definition of influence is evolving, it's no longer measured solely by wealth or political power. Today, a woman of consequence is recognized for her ability to catalyze change, inspire others, and make a lasting impact in her chosen field. There are many factors that make a person one of consequence.

In the pages that follow, we delve into their inspiring journeys, highlighting the remarkable achievements and challenges that have forged their paths. Through their experiences, we hope to uncover the essence of leadership, resilience, and the unyielding spirit that defines the Women of Consequence of our time.



THE WISE & WONDROUS ANIMALS OF ARTIST CLARA KIM

The artists of the Korean peninsula began to explore naturalistic characteristics as early as the Three Kingdoms period that dates from circa 57 BCE to 668 CE. While their work has long shared ideas, motifs, and forms with the art of neighbouring China and Japan, Korean art evolved a distinctive beauty of its own based on the captivation of nature as a subject to be left untouched and unadorned.

Clara Kim describes herself as a country girl. The Kanata artist grew up in GoHeung, a small fishing and farming town in South Korea from where her imagination has been enriched with myriad memories of a childhood surrounded by nature. A profound loss at a tender age drew Clara into an emotional reality where animals provided solace and became her closest friends.

"I lost my mum suddenly when I was eight and went from being a chatty girl to someone who didn't speak for months," Clara says. "I followed my mother everywhere and talked to her for hours when she was working around the house. She was a very kind woman, but I'm not sure she was actually listening to me," she says with a laugh. But, laughter turns to tears when she shares more of the story. "People loved her and she had lots of friends, but one day she was at a big party at a friend's house and ate sashimi that, well...we think maybe there was a problem with her liver because she became ill and passed away two days later in the hospital," Clara shares, her voice trembling. "I didn't speak for months and lost all of my friends because I was struck silent. I lost my voice."

The centre of Clara's world was gone forever, and while her father, now a man struggling with his own grief as well as hers, was a wonderful dad, Clara did not share her thoughts with him with the same natural ease. His was the kind of quiet, protective caring that a father shows a daughter. "I was deeply lonely without friends and my older siblings had already left home," she recalls. "I kept my mother's pillow for a

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on **Facebook** at Clara Kim Art

long time to keep her scent close to me. My dad helped me in a beautiful way by teaching me about animals and how to play with them and build friendships with them. He loved them too, but I could see in his face that he was really, very sad."

One childhood activity Clara fondly remembers is receiving little lessons from her farmer father about the nature of animal interactions. How to flock with birds in a yard where chickens and roosters wandered around as freely as the children. How to outsmart a rooster whose combative memory only lasts a few seconds. How to use seeds to catch and feed frogs in her grandmother's pond. "Dad showed me the way to form relationships with the animals around us in a way that had meaning for both me and them." No wonder her home studio is filled with animal portraits, canvasses upon which Clara translates the complexities of human nature into fables of creatures great and meek.

Clara's artwork is grounded in the visual culture of the late Joseon dynasty in which expression was actuated by fine brush techniques shaping forms of both muted and dazzling colours. It was an era when Chinese power waned allowing Korea to establish a stronger, sovereign identity, and when Eastern and Western traditions began to cross pollinate. "I started out as a Korean artist, but I feel like I am becoming more Canadian in my art as time goes on," Clara says, recognizing that she is absorbing influences that enrich her creativity. Her subjects amount to a catalog of Canadian flora and fauna iconography.

'Daybreak' is a portrait of a handsome bull moose who is positioned comfortably in a resting pose, looking out at his surroundings with a serene but commanding gaze on his face. "The first time I saw a moose near Vancouver and in the Gaspé I was like 'wow, that's amazing,'" Clara remembers with wide eyes. Her subject is framed in a transitional light moving from darkness to dawn; therein lies the meaning. "I had a real health scare that involved a biopsy, and the minute you hear that word you wonder if you are going to have a tomorrow," Clara says. "I had my gall bladder removed and the tests came back negative." Today, she is healthy

and vibrant. Her moose faces the light of a new day with colours in his antlers that are meaningful. "You can start your day and choose a lovely day in the pink or a passionate day in the orange. It's all about the miracle of having a tomorrow."

Clara feels a powerful inspiration to take the experiences of losing her mother and her own health scare to engage with the women and single mothers in her community who have experienced loss. "I have always supported organizations but I want to help mothers more directly who have lost a husband, for example. Once my new studio is completed, I can imagine having a gathering of maybe 20 people who come together here to heal through painting and sharing stories." Her home and studio would be the perfect venue, set as it is within the pastoral embrace of trees and tall grasses. Clara expresses her deep appreciation of home in her depiction of nesting birds.

"This is part of a series exploring home. It's easy to forget that home is the best place to be. It only requires some effort



ABOVE: *Daybreak* by Clara Kim

to make it that way and to give it a great energy,” Clara says. “We talk about travel and going to places where things might be better, but actually the best place is your home. My birds are making a nest and building a better home.” A sense of place, of being, of identity, and of creative and personal freedom are expressed subliminally on the same visual plane by her use of two recurring motifs, found throughout her work. The scribbled lines are actions that express our desire to be free from restraints. The scratched freeform grids, created with knife points, are reminiscent of the material textures of ramie and hemp cloth, which were fashioned into summer hanbok (clothing) worn by Clara’s ancestors since antiquity.

A variety of birds inhabit Clara’s world. “My dad taught me that crows are very clever. You have to treat them with respect, and if you do, they will bring something good to you. Maybe a piece of polished glass or a white stone to show their appreciation.” Clara’s crow comes with an ancient myth told to her by her daughter. “The rainbow crow was admired for the beauty of his feathers. He was very proud of his display of colours. But when God

created winter and snow blanketed the world, the crows and other animals could not gather food. The rainbow crow offered to seek the gift of heat and light from God to bring spring to the world. But, when he carried the torch in his beak, he returned blackened from the fire he carried and only a hint of colours remained in his feathers. It was a sacrifice of service for others, and the black feathers commemorate that.”

A close friend recommended a bear portrait. It was a new challenge, but Clara found a symbol for motherhood that resonated with her as the mother of a 22-year-old son and a 16-year-old daughter. “Mothers spend so much time caring for the kids, that we sometime forget to care for ourselves. So I wanted to say to mothers, ‘hey, don’t forget you’re still very special,’” she says with a big, cheerful laugh. The mamma bear captured Clara’s heart and she’s painted many versions, “using soft colours to make her beautiful,” with bold colours on the claws and an enveloping glow that suggests a warm summer sun tinted by the haze of a humid evening.

Clara Kim’s work has been selected for the City of Ottawa Art Collection by the Direct Purchase Program, the Government of Ontario Art Collection and the Korean Ambassador’s Art Collection. She has exhibited her work across Canada and internationally in Switzerland and Korea, and is currently working hard to enter the American art market. Clara also leads the Canada and Korea Art Connection Project that involves 22 Canadian and Korean professional artists, sponsored by the Canada Council for the Arts. Exhibits will be held at art museums and galleries in Canada and Korea from 2024 to 2026. Her work is represented by Butter Gallery in Collingwood, Westland Gallery in London, and Cube Gallery here in Ottawa.

Contact Clara to visit her at her studio at Enriched Bread Artists on Gladstone Avenue, or at her home in Kanata. She is a kind-hearted, delightful person, filled with laughter, light and wisdom. I thoroughly enjoyed speaking with her, and you will too!

www.clarakimart.ca



ABOVE: *Still Beautiful* by Clara Kim



ABOVE: *The Crow Who Swallowed the Sun* by Clara Kim



ABOVE: *Still Beautiful* by Clara Kim

A photograph of Melissa Lantsman, a woman with short dark hair, wearing an orange blazer over a white top. She is speaking into a microphone and gesturing with her hands. The background is a light blue wall with some blurred text.

MELISSA LANTSMAN

Melissa Lantsman has taken the House of Commons by storm. One of Parliament's quickest-rising Conservative voices, she was elected MP for the Thornhill constituency in 2021 and appointed deputy opposition leader by Pierre Poilievre in 2022.

Lantsman's story is typical of someone who grew up interested in politics, but her presence in politics is anything but typical. She was young when she first became involved, volunteering in political and community organizations throughout her teen years. Eventually, she graduated into larger roles, working in communications for the Conservative Party under Stephen Harper's government and gaining experience outside her community.

Lantsman's goal was always to establish herself as a community builder. "I have always said that I wanted to run one day, and that opportunity presented itself a bit earlier than I imagined," she says with a laugh and adds, "You don't get to choose your time in politics."

Lantsman's fearlessness makes her one

of the most recognizable voices in Parliament. Within her constituency and across the country, Lantsman is admired for giving Canadians from all demographics and backgrounds a voice. For someone of her success, Lantsman remains modest. "It has everything to do with the people you surround yourself with," she says. "There are so many people in my orbit who have helped me achieve my early success in being a representative of Thornhill."

Lantsman's upbringing as a first-generation Canadian has provided her critical insight into the lives of Canadians today, especially those new to the country. In the 1970s, her parents, Ora and Michael Lantsman immigrated to Canada from the former Soviet Union, settling in the Thornhill riding, where Melissa was born and raised. Her ability to speak English, French, and Russian results from her resilient parents and the comfortable environment they provided her as a child.

Michael Lantsman came to this country as an uncredentialed engineer and

remained so due to a lack of options. With a child in tow (Melissa's older brother), Michael turned to driving a taxi to put his wife through school. Melissa's parents spent years working tirelessly to raise their children in a home in a safe neighbourhood where they could receive a good education. "I come from the same story as many Canadians," Lantsman says. "In one generation, my family made it from the front seat of a taxi to the front row of Parliament Hill. That can happen in Canada."

Lantsman's parents made many sacrifices that helped their daughter get to where she is today. "The way I see it now is . . . if the cycle was repeated today, within the last eight years, the same promise does not exist," she said. "You can come here and drive a taxi or an Uber, but you can't afford to own a home in a safe neighbourhood and make sure that your family has opportunity. I learned from my parents' sacrifices to ensure that the next generation of immigrant children have similar opportunities."

Lantsman is proud to be a part of a Conservative Party that values merit-based success. The first openly gay Jewish woman to become an MP, she celebrates the diversity found in her party. "This is a country where everyone should achieve their goals based on merit. I hold a lot of identities, and I am all of those things, but they're not checkboxes for me. I was raised in a family where if you work hard, you should be able to get ahead," Lantsman says. "That's the country we want to build for the next generation. The party we built respects everybody, no matter your name, colour, language, or religion, there is a home for you in the Conservative Party."

Lantsman is a fierce community advocate and volunteer, and before being elected office, she was one of Canada's most sought-after public affairs executives. A University of Toronto alum, she spent 39 years becoming closely acquainted with her north-of-Toronto community. She now lives there with her wife, litigator Lauren Rakowski.

Lantsman's strong connection to her community fosters a strong relationship

with her constituents. "I find inspiration in the people I represent. I live the highest of the highs with them and see the lowest of the lows. I can see both how people celebrate and how they handle challenges . . . It's the everyday people that inspire me. I'm humbled every day that they trust me."

If Pierre Poilievre wins the next federal election, Lantsman will undoubtedly remain one of his most trusted advisors. While Canada faces a multitude of urgent issues, Lantsman describes a 'common sense Conservative plan.' She says, "There is no question that there is a cost-of-living crisis. Our plan is very simple. It's a common-sense plan to lower prices, make paycheques more powerful, build more homes that people can actually afford, make sure our streets are safer, and enforce the principle of freedom."

In the last eight years, violent crime has increased by 32 percent across the country, 90 percent when you look at gang-related crime. In January of 2023, Lantsman called for an emergency debate in Parliament on the rise in violence in the Toronto area, on the TTC, and across Canada. She is passionate that these issues are resolvable with the proper action but that the necessary solutions are being neglected. "We have a catch-and-release justice system which lets violent offenders back into the streets to victimize Canadians and lower the safety of our communities," she says. "We need to get serious about jail time and no bail for repeat violent offenders."

A lack of coordination between systems designed to help Canadians in mental health crises, those with substance abuse disorders, and those living in poverty pushes thousands of Canadians onto the streets. Lantsman states, "We need real change to expand access to treatment and recovery services to bring our loved ones home drug-free." She says, "These are policy failures, not a failure of Canadians. We can't keep blaming the system for failure. We need to change the system."

Lantsman is a prominent speaker on Bill C-18, an act that was designed to supposedly enhance the economic

relationship between news businesses and online platforms. The law was enacted this past July and has since restricted news sharing on Instagram and Facebook, posing concerns about harm to small news businesses and an overall decrease in news accessibility. Lantsman states, "News sharing connects people." She says, "What it does in practice is give too much power to the government to regulate without limitation. We believe that people should pay their fair share for news, but we also believe that shutting down small local and independent news is not the way to do it."

An open-minded leader, the more responsibility Lantsman gains, the more she learns from those she is responsible for. When asked what makes a good leader, she does not hesitate: "I think somebody that knows they represent their community is what makes a good leader."

In her role as MP and as Deputy Leader, Lantsman hopes to restore the promise of a Canada she once knew: A place where hard work and playing by the rules can lead to the promise of home ownership, success, and a fulfilling life for you and your family.

Melissa Lantsman's dedication, self-assurance, and integrity make her a valuable asset in the House of Commons.

She is a captivating voice in Parliament, on social media, and in the news. When asked about the possibility of the Conservatives forming the next government, Lantsman states unequivocally, "I think Pierre Poilievre will be Canada's next prime minister. We have a strong team that is going to help him get there . . . He has the full support and confidence of the caucus in a way that recent Conservative leaders have not."

In the event of a Conservative victory, Canadians will surely hear more from Melissa Lantsman, a true woman of consequence ■

Find Melissa Lantsman on X
@MelissaLantsman

REETU GUPTA

HAS GOT IT GOING.

I sat down to interview her at the classy and contemporary restaurant Día, located on the second floor of her latest venture, Canopy by Hilton Hotel at 387 Bloor Street East, steps from Yorkville in Toronto. This boutique lifestyle hotel is yet another success story for Reetu, The Gupta Group, and Easton's Group of Hotels. That Reetu and her team managed to get the project built despite the spread of COVID, and all the things that followed the global pandemic, is a story in and of itself.

Reetu is very self-effacing for a person who is one of Canada's top businesspeople. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including Canada's Most Powerful Women: Top 100, BMO Entrepreneur Award presented by the Women's Executive Network (WXN) 2010 and 2020; Excellence in Real Estate and Hospitality Award, Impact; Events Corporation (IMEC)

in 2019; Female Entrepreneur of the Year Award, Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce (ICCC) in 2019; Rising Star Award, Pink Attitude in 2018; Business Executive of the Year Award, Anokhi Media in 2018; Canada's Top 40 Under 40 Award, Caldwell Partners and MNP in November 2017. "These awards to me are an honour, and more importantly, serve as a responsibility for me. A responsibility to now uplift others, as I have been uplifted, to support others and pave the path so others can achieve their dreams," said Reetu.

Reetu is quick-witted, intelligent, charismatic, serious, straightforward, friendly, and has a charming and disarming self-deprecating sense of humour. Her sense of style has obviously rubbed off on the hotels and properties she manages, including Canopy by Hilton Toronto Yorkville. Her influence

can be seen in its stylish contemporary fashion, art displays, welcoming aura, and friendly staff. The hotel's decor perfectly complements its architectural design with modern-art-inspired murals and soft earth-tone colours that enhance the spacious, modern, yet relaxed atmosphere. The hotel has contemporary and modern rooms, a pool, a cafe, a wellness centre with state-of-the-art athletics equipment, yoga and fitness rooms, over 3,400 square feet of glass-enclosed meeting spaces for businesses or conferences, and a cafe and a posh restaurant.

As the 30th property for the Gupta Group, Canopy by Hilton Toronto Yorkville is a significant achievement given that it was built during and despite a global pandemic. Reetu managed to keep her team members and contractors working and safe while having the vision to look beyond

COVID to what's next. This is more impressive given that most major hotels closed or dramatically scaled back all operations during the pandemic. The hotel's soft opening in mid-February brought a jump to the city's business confidence and showcased a classy new joint in Toronto's popular Yorkville neighbourhood. When I ask her what she would say is the key ingredient to her success in the very competitive hotel market, she doesn't hesitate. She credits the contractors and workers who built the hotel and the 'incredible team members at the company' for the success. She adds, "I've succeeded because I have learned so much from people I have worked with over these past few years. I always believe that anyone I work with may have something to teach me or something that I can learn from."

When I ask Reetu about her job title, Ambassadors, she says she always admired the idea that ambassadors are tasked with putting forward the best representation of their country. "Their role is part service, part business, part diplomacy, and part hospitality." The idea of applying that title to her role in business appealed to her because of what it represents, "of course, Ambassadors—not Ambassador," she says with a smile and a chuckle.

Reetu has been representing The Gupta Group ownership interests and diversifying the company's portfolios with greater emphasis on philanthropic work, mentorship, and women empowerment for over a decade. But any idea that she just fell into the role or was given it would be a mistake. She grew up during a time when her father, Steve Gupta, the founder and executive chairman of Gupta Group and Easton's Group, was in the early stages of building a family business. In 1978 he purchased a car and truck stop, Easton's Service Centre in Port Hope, Ontario. Reetu says, "Growing up, and still today, I have great admiration for my Dad, his work ethic, and attention to detail. I am what I am today because of both of my parents!"

"I worked summers as a child at the office, doing everything from answering phones to rent rolls and dealing with customers—you know, all kinds of administrative things—in accounts, in

the office, small administrative jobs, anything really to help," Gupta says she watched and worked hard and just learned her way up. "I loved working and learning and just the fast pace of things—the energy in the business. I found it fun and challenging. Our team is our extended family; they were (and are) the people who keep our business running. I have tried to incorporate the feeling of family into our organization, so everyone from team members, to clients, and guests, feels the Gupta Family energy. The most important thing for me is that our team is happy and loved," says Reetu. "Because of our team, we have a business!"

As she got older, she worked in accounts payable, receivables, performed rent rolls, and other duties at the head office. She trained at the front desk and shadowed GMs to learn the operations of hotels. After completing her BBA from the University of Toronto in 2005, she returned to the family business and spearheaded the opening and marketing efforts of two new hotels and banquet halls. She became director of sales and marketing, and over several years, she gained experience in distinct roles, including executive director, vice president of sales, marketing, and strategic development. Along the way, she earned an MBA from the Schulich School of Business.

Then, in 2012 she made a significant impact in the company by launching The Gupta Group (the parent company of Easton's Group of Hotels), moving it more aggressively into the competitive residential real estate market. In 2014, as the chief operating officer, she launched Gupta Group Mining. During this same period, she was the key driver behind the company's King Blue Condos in downtown Toronto. By 2018 Reetu successfully had grown The Gupta Group companies to over \$1 billion in assets. In 2018 she was named president and CEO.

In September 2021, she took on the new role of Ambassador as part of her work to diversify the portfolio of Canada's largest private hotel development corporation. The Gupta Group remains the parent company for the Gupta family's global investment portfolio, including The Easton's Group

of Hotels, Gupta Group Mining, Gupta Group Developments, Rogue Insight Capital, and more.

The Easton's Group of Hotels is one of Canada's largest private hotel developers. Under Reetu's leadership, it has grown into a major force in the hospitality and service industry across Ontario. Easton's flagship hotel properties include renowned brands such as Hilton, Marriott, and Holiday Inn in diverse locations, including downtown Toronto, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, and Montréal. Reetu's determination, business acumen, and smarts were really tested during COVID. While most hotels closed their doors during the two-year pandemic, Reetu ramped up and added two new hotels to their portfolio. She was able to keep 80 percent of the properties she managed open and, most importantly, kept thousands of people employed during the most difficult periods of the COVID pandemic.

Reetu and her brother, Suraj Gupta, launched Rogue Insight Capital, where Suraj is the president and CEO. It is a venture capital and private equity firm. The firm's primary mandates include investing in female, immigrant, and visible minority founders and companies that are making a social impact on their community. Reetu says that she and her brother have always been passionate about philanthropy. Our parents raised us with the notion of giving back, says Reetu, who credits her mother and father with instilling those values in her and Suraj. She says that mentorship and empowerment for women are important areas where she believes she can contribute, and her role as Ambassador allows her "to further this passion and continue to create positive change and impact across the globe."

During COVID, Reetu launched the Project Kindness campaign. Her aim was simple: to spread kindness and love as people struggled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The drive took an organic and community-based approach to corporate and social responsibility and the Project Kindness campaign made meaningful, targeted donations to multiple local organizations that included; providing blankets, towels, and toiletries to shelters; food

CONTINUED >> PAGE 25

A professional portrait of Karen Littlewood, a woman with shoulder-length brown hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses, a black blazer over a dark top, and a watch on her left wrist. She is smiling and has her arms crossed.

KAREN LITTLEWOOD

AN UNYIELDING FORCE *for* CANADIAN EDUCATION

No one understands the ins and outs of Ontario's education system like Karen Littlewood. Her background in education dates back over three decades, starting with a Bachelor of Science in Language and a Bachelor of Education from Laurentian University. She began teaching in 1991 and taught at the elementary and secondary levels, establishing herself as a local and provincial leader over time.

Littlewood is driven by her desire to make public education available to everyone regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. As the 11th female President of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF) in the over 100-year history of the organization, Littlewood

consistently represents the voices of education workers and students.

Littlewood's current position as the vice president of the OSSTF and sheer drive to make change led her to her influential roles as governor of the Ontario Teacher's Federation and the Director of the Canadian Teachers Federation. She is also a member of the Canadian Council and Ontario Federation of Labour 'Heads of Unions.' With these roles, she exercises her firm belief in the importance of solidarity and the role of labour councils.

Littlewood has been known to use her voice for fair treatment and adequate funding for education staff. Over the last year, she has advocated for fair

wages while encountering barriers with the former Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce. In August 2022, Lecce claimed the OSSTF were demanding a 'ridiculous' 52 per cent pay increase. His claim was proven to be misinformed as the support staff requested the pay raise, not the teachers.

Every day, hundreds of support staff; custodians, secretaries, early childhood educators and youth development workers hold down the fort at schools across the province. Meanwhile, they earn between \$39,000 and \$49,000 a year, barely a living wage. Bargaining began a year ago to make no changes except for reduced funding towards education (with \$600 less per student).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ontario government received \$2 billion of extra funding in tax-payer money taken with zero accountability and not properly spent. As a result, school boards were forced to dig into their reserves to find a solution. "Our members provided stability to the students of the province. We were there through the COVID waves providing that stability and the safe return to school, so students had some sense of normalcy," Littlewood pointed out. "Yet the government is continuing to not put anything on the table that would allow us to have a deal."

The reality is that education is an essential investment to be made, as it generates wealth. In 2019, Littlewood, along with the provincial executive at the time, commissioned a report from the Conference Board of Canada on the value of education. Their data showed that every dollar spent on education brings back \$1.30 to the economy. Despite these impactful findings, since 2018, funding has been reduced by \$1200 per pupil, \$600 of that in the last year alone.

A special education teacher, Littlewood understands that education is an important equalizer that should be available equitably to every student. When budgets are cut, programs such as special education take the biggest hit. The Ministry of Education makes cuts to balance the budget while refusing to invest.

Littlewood is passionate that education

and support services are a crucial investment in the lives of Canadian children to "ensure we have citizens that are going out and joining the workforce and choosing a job for themselves with all the skills and tools they need."

Beyond her continued advocacy and bargaining efforts with the Ontario government, Littlewood advocates for anti-violence efforts in schools and an Indigenous curriculum across grade levels. Her persistent leadership is an essential influence to safeguard the futures of Canadian children and the well-being of education workers.

In January, Littlewood called on the Ontario government to provide funding for anti-violence training programs and the hiring of mental health support staff to address violence in and around schools. While the issue of school violence has been present in Ontario for a long time, Littlewood highlighted the rise in the situation since the COVID-19 pandemic. She was a part of multiple ideas to push for safety in schools and urged the government to create a section in the Occupational Health and Safety Act that is specific to the education system. "The safety needs at schools and other educational institutions are different from the safety needs at other workplaces."

Littlewood handles the complexities of navigating frustrating and layered situations with grace. Her years of experience, determination, and expertise create an impact on behalf of all Ontarians involved with the education system. She is known for her saying, "Any day is a good day for a rally!"

In all of her efforts, Littlewood makes a point to recognize OSSTF/FEESO members for providing stability for Ontario students and hopes that the provincial government will recognize the need for investment in public education.

To hear more about Littlewood's leadership and ongoing discussions with the Ontario government, check out the OttawaLife podcast ■

For more information on the OSSTF, visit www.osstf.on.ca.

and snack boxes to emergency services; COVID masks to multiple hospitals, service providers, and agencies; meals for students at Humber College; food for Second Harvest and food donations for Martha's Table in Kingston; furniture to Habitat for Humanity, and many others.

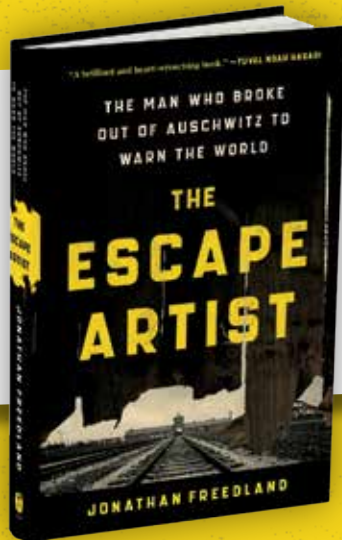
Reetu also re-launched The Gupta Family Foundation during COVID with a new mandate to focus on education and empowerment internationally. The Foundation has built solar-powered schools in the Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in northwestern Uganda, donated 400 android tablets to Cornerstone Jamaica to help children in rural areas access educational resources, and provided over 1,000 oxygen tanks and 300 oxygen concentrators to India in May 2021 when that country was at the height of its most devastating wave of COVID-19.

Despite her impressive academic business credentials, business success, and continued rise as a leader in the business world, Reetu Gupta is uniquely humble. She credits her parents for her business savvy and outlook on life and business. "My dad taught me tenacity—not to give up, to persevere, and my mom taught me some great lessons about confidence when dealing with things in business and ...in life. I think the combination of these things plays a huge factor in how I approach things. My parents believed in their dreams and made things happen. A lot of that approach to life rubbed off on me, and I believe that anything is possible."

Reetu Gupta's natural leadership abilities, entrepreneurial spirit, commitment to excellence, and desire to make a positive change in the world while ensuring her team and employees are treated respectfully make her one of Canada's most impressive business leaders. In September Reetu Gupta's book *Auspicious* was published. It is a book for those who seek to honour their life's purpose with spiritual intention ■

A portion of the proceeds go to the The Gupta Family Foundation. *Auspicious* is available on Amazon and Apple books.

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PAMELA PALMATER

is a remarkable leader paving the way for the future of Indigenous advocacy. She has dedicated her life to fighting for the rights of Indigenous peoples in Canada in her roles as a lawyer, activist, author, professor, and mother. Palmater's relentless commitment to justice and ability to connect academic research with community engagement have made her a key figure in the fight for reconciliation in Canada.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Palmater during one of her busy days teaching at Toronto Metropolitan University. After an invigorating conversation, it was a shock to hear that Palmater grew up "mortally shy." Once petrified at the idea of public

speaking, she has become a fiery voice in every room she enters. Her passion is captivating and contagious.

Activism is embedded in Palmater's DNA. She grew up in a fiercely politically active family and credits the majority of her 12 siblings for instilling a sense of advocacy within her from a young age. "My brothers and sisters went out and did everything they did with a vengeance . . . they dragged me to everything they did," she said.

A member of the Eel River Bar First Nation in northern New Brunswick, Palmater reveres her small, tightly-knit community. "It feels like everyone is family," she beamed. "Our territory is right on the beach. You can smell

the ocean and hear the waves and the seagulls. Life revolves around that.”

As Palmater grew up, she shifted between the front lines of activism and the behind-the-scenes, focusing specifically on accessible public education. She spent ten years working in the federal government in both Justice Canada and Indian Affairs (now called Indigenous Services Canada), which serves her as a well-rounded learning experience. Palmater is committed to making complex, pressing issues accessible to everyone. She understands that only some are able to attend university.

In her public outreach, Palmater emphasizes translating intricate concepts into simple terms anyone can relate to and understand. “I consider myself to be a translator,” she said.

By doing so, she ensures that her messages reach a broad audience, from young children to adults. Palmater’s “action-based education” tactic takes the form of podcasts, YouTube videos, social media posts, news & magazine publications, three books, protests, and her university lectures. She focuses on providing tangible solutions and calls to action rather than merely raising awareness, a personal pet peeve.

Palmater refuses to let Indigenous issues be seen as solely a component of history. She distributes a remarkable amount of focus across past and present issues, including sex discrimination in the Indian Act, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Indigenous nationhood, and clean water on reserves, to name a few. “Canada has been found guilty of historic acts of genocide against Indigenous peoples and present acts of genocide. There is still sex discrimination in the Indian Act, forced sterilization of Native women and girls, the foster care crisis, over-incarceration, human trafficking, and racism in healthcare, policing, and education,” she said.

As a kid, Palmater did not know she would ever attend university, let alone hold four degrees and become the Chair of Indigenous Governance at Toronto

Metropolitan University (TMU). The first in her family to complete a university degree, Palmater uses her role to create lifelong commitments to advancing Indigenous rights and fostering long-lasting relationships with First Nations communities. She appreciates the opportunity to focus on research, teaching, and public engagement, enabling her to create powerful impacts. “I call this position my research slash activism chair,” she said.

Palmater’s responsibilities extend beyond the classroom in her role. She actively engages with various committees, provides advice and guidance, and participates in events that urge students and colleagues to build awareness surrounding important issues and take action accordingly. Her involvement at TMU is not limited to Indigenous-focused causes but extends to supporting other marginalized groups. “It’s about supporting everyone in their own areas,” she said.

Passionate about creating accessible resources, Palmater has over 200 publications, including three books. In *Indigenous Nationhood: Empowering Grassroots Citizens*, she delves into the concept of Indigenous nationhood. She emphasizes the importance of understanding that Indigenous nations are not homogeneous entities but diverse and distinct, each with their own histories, cultures, and visions for the future.

Palmater’s commitment to her work is fueled by her ability to find joy and creativity amid challenging circumstances. She has embraced podcasting to exercise a fun, creative outlet while addressing critical issues. In her podcasts, *Warrior Life* and *Warrior Kids*, she engages with influential Indigenous changemakers, discussing topics ranging from justice to corruption in policing. “I started my podcasts because I have always needed to be creative,” she said. “It’s very cathartic to me, and I get to talk to other people doing the same things.”

For inspiration and drive, Palmater

looks to the other remarkable Indigenous women of the world. She holds a strong admiration for her good friend Dr. Cindy Blackstock, who fought tirelessly for the rights of First Nations children in care, leading to a multi-billion-dollar settlement and systemic changes. She also mentions Sharon McIvor, a relentless advocate to end sex discrimination in the Indian Act, who has welcomed back countless Indigenous women and children who were wrongly excluded, Ellen Gabriel, a driving force in advocating for Mohawk language, culture, sovereignty and land rights, and others who have risked their lives and freedom to protect water, land and people.

What grounds Palmater most of all is family. As a mother and grandmother, she relishes the opportunity to relive the joys of raising children and cherishes the moments spent with her loved ones. In her free time, she finds solace in physical activities: driving motorcycles, riding dirt bikes, hiking and running to release the everyday adrenaline and bring healthy balance.

The work done by Pamela Palmater throughout her life has earned her the title of a true changemaker. She calls on Canadians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to ensure they are playing their part in ending injustice and bringing about health, safety, and well-being for all.

She emphasizes that everyone has a sphere of influence. No matter how much one knows about Indigenous culture or treaty history, everyone has the power to do something: donate, share stories of resurgence on social media, sign a petition, organize a funding event at school, attend Have a Heart Day, ask a teacher to bring in Indigenous speakers, contact an MP, start conversations and think locally.

“Whatever you have, there is something you can do to help. Just think about the basic human rights of what is happening and make little changes today, tomorrow, and next week. As long as there are injustices, we need your help.”■

Recovery And Bright Prospects of CHINA'S ECONOMY



Recently, I have had the opportunity to engage with people from various sectors, including business people, in Canada. I have noticed their keen interest in China's economic performance. While many of them hold rational views, there are also some misunderstandings and misinterpretations. I would like to take this opportunity to share my views on this matter.

The Bright Long-Term Prospects Of China's Economic Fundamentals Remain Unchanged

The timeline shows that China's economic recovery has gained momentum. In the first half of this year, China's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 5.5 percent year on year, significantly surpassing the growth rates of the previous year and the first quarter of this year. From January to August, fixed-asset investment increased by 3.2 percent year on year, with investment in high-tech industries growing by an impressive 11.3 percent. The real estate market has shown signs of recovery with the implementation of policies such as "recognizing households with mortgage records but no local property ownership as first-time homebuyers." Total retail sales of consumer goods grew by 7 percent year on year, with a 4.6-percent increase in August alone, up 2.1 percentage points from the previous month. China's surveyed urban unemployment rate dropped to 5.2 percent in August. The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for China's manufacturing sector continued to rise. I firmly believe that the strong resilience, tremendous potential, and great vitality of China's economy remain unchanged, and China has all the necessary conditions and ability to achieve this year's projected targets

for economic and social development, continuing to provide a crucial impetus for stable global economic growth.

From an international perspective, China's economic growth has significantly outpaced that of major developed economies, showcasing strong resilience. The recent OECD "Interim Economic Outlook" predicts global economic growth of only 3 percent in 2023, with inflation in the G20 economies hovering around 6 percent. Against the backdrop of a slowing global economy and persistent inflation pressures in many countries, China's recovery is beneficial to global economic revival. According to the International Monetary Fund's "World Economic Outlook", China's economy is expected to grow by 5.2 percent this year and contribute one-third of the global growth.

The Idea Of "China's Economic Collapse" Is Groundless

In the first eight months of this year, China's imports and exports were roughly the same as in the same period last year, with an improved structure. Since the beginning of the year, prices have been at a low level. However, taking into account the price level, demand recovery, economic growth and money supply factors, it can be concluded that there is no so-called deflation in the Chinese economy, and deflation will not occur later on. In August, consumer spending continued to recover, with a continuous improvement in the relationship between demand and supply. During the period, consumer prices rose at a faster pace month on month and returned to positive territory on a yearly basis, while producer prices for industrial products returned to positive territory month on

month, with a narrowing year-on-year decline. China's price levels are likely to continue to improve and reach close to the annual average. Since mid-July, the Chinese yuan has remained stable and strengthened against a basket of currencies and has shown relative strength against non-U.S. currencies.

China's economic development will continue to offer opportunities to the world.

From January to August, 33,000 new foreign-invested enterprises were established in China, a 33-percent increase year on year. FDI in high-tech manufacturing in actual use soared 19.7 percent, while that in high-tech services related to research and development (R&D) and design experienced a remarkable 57.1-percent growth. Investments from countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Germany in China maintained rapid growth, with Canadian investments in China growing by 111.2 percent.

Chinese modernization will offer new cooperation opportunities to countries worldwide, including Canada. From January to August, Canadian exports to China reached 19.4 billion Canadian dollars, up 17.3 percent year on year. This clearly demonstrates the potential of China-Canada economic and trade cooperation, and China's economic development will continue to provide opportunities for Canadian businesses. In addition, I hope that Canada will meet China halfway, providing a fair, just, transparent, and non-discriminatory business environment for Chinese enterprises, so as to bring tangible benefits to the people of both countries through economic and trade cooperation ■



PARADISE IN THE SUN'S PATH Awaits you at Cayo Levantado Resort



PHOTOS: COURTESY GRUPO PINERO. G

Are you looking to escape the ravages of a Canadian winter and find yourself in an extraordinary Caribbean paradise? Of course, you are. Then look no further than Cayo Levantado Resort, an exquisite haven nestled on a breathtakingly picturesque island in the Dominican Republic. This enchanting destination promises a vacation like no other, where lush tropical landscapes meet azure waters, and every day feels like a rejuvenating dream come true.

Getting to Cayo Levantado Resort

The Cayo Levantado Resort guest experience begins the minute you step out of Santo Domingo airport. I walked out the door and was greeted by a driver who was hired by the resort to take me on the 1.5-hour trip to Samaná. The resort's lobby is a separate building located on the mainland, where I was greeted by radiant smiles as sunny as the day. A quick check-in was followed by a 10-minute boat shuttle from the Simi Baez jetty to the island. That's when things began to feel very, very special as the outside world faded into the distance.

The island of Cayo Levantado itself lay before me like a scene from a myth, a world unto itself where the cares of life dissolve in the warm embrace of an imagined paradise. But this is not the stuff of the imagination. Cayo Levantado Resort is a real place dedicated to ensuring your stay is not just comfortable, but truly unforgettable. Off the boat, more friendly smiles and I knew that this was all actually happening. Before long, I met my 'ambassador' who attended to my every wish. Once a tropical drink was placed in my hand, Jimmy Buffett's words came to mind. "If there's heaven for me, I'm sure it has a beach attached to it."

The Cayo Levantado Resort Luxury Environment

Cayo Levantado Resort offers luxurious accommodations to suit every traveller's preferences. The resort has 218 rooms across multiple buildings that fit a wide range of requirements, whether you're seeking a romantic hideaway, a family-friendly suite, or a spacious villa for up to eight guests. You'll wake up to

breathtaking views of the Caribbean Sea from your private balcony or terrace, and enjoy such comforts as plush bedding, spacious bathrooms, and all the modern conveniences you'll ever need.

Like all things Cayo Levantado, the architecture and design of every specially-curated space is rooted in the rich cultural and natural heritage of the Dominican Republic. The prestigious firm of ARQUIMILIO, known for its innovative and world-class work, was commissioned to create the design.

The design mandate reflects what Cayo refers to as "a triple regeneration approach," meaning an authentic guest experience, respect for and protection of the environment, and the celebration of local culture. Interior spaces feature details that are crafted by skilled Dominican artisans in traditional workshops from locally-sourced materials, creating an ambience with a strong sense of place. Look for tables made with beautiful larimar stone, and lamps and trays made from yagumbro leaves, all wrapped in tropical island motifs.

Cayo Levantado Resort Luxury Meets Stewardship

In addition to the values expressed in its physical design, Cayo Levantado Resort works hard in its programming to integrate local culture into every aspect of its offerings, including gastronomy and mixology. Produce is grown on site, and all gardening and landscaping uses native species of the island.

Waste management and renewable energy strategies employ a biodigester that helps make Cayo a self-sufficient property, by no means an easy task on an island. It's all very brilliant. Water production and bottling utilizes condensation technology. Paper and plastic have all but been eliminated. A futuristic control system called "RoomXperience" allows guests to actively monitor their energy consumption through advanced room controls. And, Grupo Piñero (the Spanish family-owned company behind Cayo) and its Eco-Bahía Foundation work closely with local NGOs to actively conserve and restore the delicate coral reefs that thrive in the area's waters. So, you can feel good about feeling good.

The Cayo Levantado Resort Wellness Experience

Cayo offers four wellness paths designed around the integrated themes of REFRESH, RESTORE, RELAX, and RENEW. Experience a range of invigorating, custom-designed workout routines that will get your heart pumping. Feel revitalized through higher intensity activities coupled with metabolic and cross-training programs. Relax with a menu selection that combines mindfulness with nervous and muscular system recovery using heat therapies and massages. And, rebalance your mind from the hectic world that at this point will seem very far way.

That faraway feeling envelopes you when you enter Yubarta, a meditation temple situated at the heart of the wellness area. I can still see the path through the island's tropical gardens framed by the embrace of otherworldly trees deeply rooted into the earth.

Yubarta is staffed by the best talent in the world of wellness, with each highly-skilled 'collaborator' trained in the region to provide the best in mindfulness, neuroscience, metaphysics, biology, yoga, and ancestral energetic initiations. Guests can experience some remarkable offerings. Sound healing uses resonant bowls to transport the mind into a state of deep relaxation. A yoga menu includes practices like aeroyoga, wimhof, and hatha.

Refreshing Pools, Pristine Beaches and Plenty of Activities

The Dominican Republic is famous for baby-powder soft sand that is cool on the feet. Cayo Levantado island has three such sensual beaches, two of which are reserved exclusively for resort guests. The resort also features two stunning swimming pools, both with their own unique ambience. Take a dip in the infinity pool overlooking the cerulean waters and golden sands of Samaná Bay, or enjoy a more relaxed vibe at the quieter pool area.

Cayo Levantado Resort is an absolute paradise for sports and activities enthusiasts. Whether you're a thrill-seeker or simply looking for some relaxation, this place has something for everyone. You can start your day with a refreshing game of beach volleyball or test your skills with some paddle boarding in the crystal-clear waters. For those who prefer land-based activities, there's a well-equipped gym and tennis courts available. And remember the Caribbean has some of the best snorkelling and diving in the world.

Weddings at Cayo Levantado

Whether you're planning an intimate ceremony with close family and a few friends or a grand celebration, this resort offers the perfect backdrop for your special day. The dedicated wedding team at Cayo Levantado Resort will work hard to ensure every detail is taken care of, from the decor to the cuisine, so you can relax and enjoy every moment leading up to your special celebration.

Dining in Paradise

Indulge your taste buds at the resort's diverse dining options, all overseen by

Executive Chef Antonio Tridenti. His team includes renowned Chef Carlos Romero, who brings his wealth of experience from top-ranked restaurants in the US and Dominican Republic, and Beverage Director and Sommelier Aneley Caceres, who developed her wine skills in London UK. There are several cuisines and dining scenes to choose from.

The Palma Real features international cuisine. Dominican specialties are served up alongside Italian favourites and a tasty selection of French pastries. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served in an informal atmosphere.

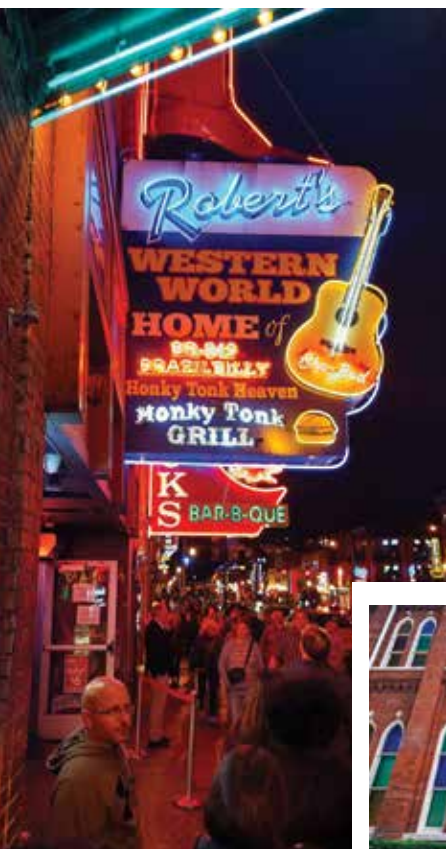
Located in the Olah Beach Club, CAREY International offers lunch and snacks along with a la carte selections. It's a great place to lounge in the afternoon with a drink. Come evening, it transforms into a gourmet dining experience.

Breakfast, lunch and healthy snacks are available poolside at Santa Yuca Slow Food Restaurant.

There are two options available for additional cost, but well worth it. Manaya Steak House has a laid back, chic vibe and features grilled meats and top-quality cuts imported from Spain, the U.S., Australia, and Japan, as well as fresh fish, all expertly paired with an extensive wine list. A very special experience awaits diners in Senda, a Dominican restaurant in which a room-to-room journey takes guests on a sensory experience through the geography and customs of the island. It is unquestionably Cayo's signature dining experience, inspired by the work of the legendary Dominican poet Pedro Mir.

Cayo Levantado Resort operates in accordance with the premium standards laid out in the Forbes Travel Guide, recognized as the world's leading authority on excellence in hospitality. Forbes is the only independent, global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants, and spas. Life in the sun's path awaits you ■

www.bahia-principe.com/en/resorts-in-dominican-republic/cayo-levantado-resort/



The Sounds of Nashville: A MUSIC CITY MECCA



I've always wanted to go to Nashville. It remains the home of country music and a destination with a magical pull for up-and-coming songwriters and musicians from across North America. The city's musical roots can be traced back to the early 1800s when it became a hub for publishing and distributing gospel and country music. In the 20th century, Nashville's music scene expanded to include a wide range of genres, including blues, rock, and pop. Today, Nashville is known as "Music City," and its music scene attracts tourists from all over the world.

Nashville's rich history dates to before European settlers inhabited the area. Native American tribes, including the Cherokee and Chickasaw, originally inhabited the region. Named Nashville, after Francis Nash, a Continental Army officer who fought in the Revolutionary War, the capital city of Tennessee was founded in 1779 by James Robertson and a group of settlers, mainly from Scotland and Ireland, who were drawn to the area due to its fertile soil and abundance of natural resources. It quickly became a major cultural, trade,

and economic hub in the Southeast.

Today, Nashville remains a prosperous, historical place with a fantastic story, beautiful cultural landmarks, museums, recreational activities, incredible food, superior accommodation, great professional sports teams, and the most welcoming and hospitable people to be found anywhere.

Nashville gave the world bluegrass, fueled the early days of R&B, and continues to have a huge influence with an incredible pop music and rock scene.



In fact, one of the most popular clubs in the city is the Twelve Thirty, owned by mega-star Justin Timberlake. Country music still thrives on Honky Tonk Row with numerous venues and bars operating that are owned by multiple Grammy winners and performers, including Blake Shelton, Jason Aldean, Garth Brooks, Miranda Lambert, Dierks Bentley, Florida Georgia Line, Luke Bryan, Kid Rock, and others. On any given day on Lower Broadway, you'll find live bands performing music from 10 a.m. till 3 a.m. with no cover charges.

In addition to its musical roots, Nashville is also home to several

ABOVE: Country music still thrives on Honky Tonk Row. On any given day on Lower Broadway, you'll find dozens of live bands performing music from 10 a.m. till 3 a.m. with no cover charges. **(LEFT)** The Carnton Plantation in historic Franklin, with its Greek Revival back porch, is a National Historic Landmark. The Parthenon in Centennial Park is the only exact replica of the Parthenon in Athens, Greece.

universities and colleges, including Vanderbilt University and Nashville State Community College. The city is a major player in the healthcare industry, with several hospitals, medical centers, and related businesses and R & D firms located in the area that have made the region one of the most prosperous in the U.S., attracting top talent from around the world.

Nashville is easy to navigate. There is public transit, cycling paths, and walking paths. A great way to begin your visit to Music City is with Mint Julip Tours. They offer a variety of custom tours for small and large groups alike. One of their best offerings is their distilleries tour. They host you in executive black buses featuring an expert whiskey tour guide. You'll get a whiskey 101 lesson during the 90-minute ride to a couple of distilleries. At the end, you'll know "why all bourbon is whiskey, but not all whiskey is bourbon," where the terms "roof" and "shot glass" originated, why most of the distilleries are in TN and KY, and even more trivia. The tour includes a lunch or dinner stop.

The Cumberland River, which runs through Nashville, is an important economic and recreational resource for the city. The John Seigenthaler pedestrian bridge, which spans the river, is a popular spot for tourists and locals alike and allows you to see great views of the city. To learn more about where to go and what to do in Nashville, drop into the Bridgestone Tower Visitor Center, home to the NHL Nashville Predators, a place where you'll find a variety of exhibits, including information on the city's history, cultural attractions, and local events.

There are incredible hotels in Nashville that offer a range of amenities for travelers. The Noelle Nashville Hotel is in the heart of the city and is known for its historical significance. It features a variety of amenities, including a spa, fitness center, and rooftop bar. Located two blocks from the famous Ryman Auditorium and Honky Tonk Row, The Noelle makes touring Nashville easy. If driving, park it and walk. Everything is literally at your fingertips. The Hotel Fraye Nashville in midtown offers a variety of amenities, including

TOP TO BOTTOM: Drop into the Bridgestone Tower Visitor Center to learn more about where to go and what to do in Nashville. Locals have nicknamed the AT&T Building in the heart of Nashville the Batman Building. If Music City were a superhero, you bet it would be Batman—cool, iconic, and every fan's favourite! Justin Timberlake's swanky supper club, The Twelve Thirty is a must-stops in Music City. The resplendent Four Seasons Hotel fits Nashville . . . like a cowboy hat fits a cowboy.

a pool, fitness center, and a superb on-site restaurant.

The new 235-room, forty-story art and light-filled Four Seasons Hotel Nashville with its panoramic city and river views celebrates local heritage and craftsmanship. It is within walking distance of the city's major sporting and entertainment venues and most legendary musical landmarks. They are collaborating with the city's music and arts communities for Songwriter City, which provides an opportunity to meet and spend time with industry professionals in an intimate setting. Guests are encouraged to experience "songwriters in the round," wherein a group of chart-topping writers talk – and play – through the artistic process. The hotel's Mimo Restaurant and Bar, named for Tennessee's state bird, the mockingbird, bills itself as a place 'Where Southern Italian Cuisine Meets Southern Hospitality.' This place just seems to be a natural fit for Nashville in the same way a comfortable cowboy hat fits a cowboy.

Nashville is a foodie city with restaurants that offer a wide range of gastronomy for any appetite. Hattie B's is a popular spot known for its spicy Southern-style chicken. The Farmhouse Restaurant Nashville offers delectable and creative farm-to-table dishes paired with nice wines. Puckett's in nearby Franklin is famous throughout the region for its Southern-style comfort food. The Assembly Food Hall is a popular food court in downtown Nashville that caters to the local breakfast and lunch crowd and tourists alike with its variety of American and international cuisine offerings.



Supper club music venues are very popular in Nashville. Be sure to book an evening at Electric Jane and enjoy their spectacular cocktails, tapas plates, and incredible live music while sitting at a swanky white linen-clad table with exceptional service. Similarly, you can book a table at the popular Twelve Thirty Club and, like the Electric Jane, have dinner and dance all night to the grooviest tunes in Music City.

The Ryman Auditorium is a historic venue in downtown Nashville that has played host to some of the most famous musicians from America and abroad over the past century. It's referred to as the Mother Church of Country Music, the birthplace of bluegrass, and the original home of the Grand Ole Opry, where countless musical legends' careers were launched. The Ryman was initially called the Union Gospel Church and was built by Captain Thomas G. Ryman and opened in 1889. When Ryman died in 1904, it was renamed Ryman Auditorium in his honour. In 1943, it became the home to the Grand Ole Opry radio show, as country music stars like Minnie Pearl, Roy Acuff, Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, and others performed live each Saturday night for more than 30 years from its famous stage into living rooms across the U.S. It was lovingly given the nickname 'The Mother Church.'

In the 1970s, it was decided that the Grand Ole Opry needed its own permanent home, which ended the show's decades-long run at the Ryman as the new Grand Ole Opry building (the Opry house) was constructed. The Ryman fell into disrepair over the years, and at one point, the building was close to demolition, but a group of concerned musicians and Nashville residents got together to save and gloriously revive the historic site. Today the restored Ryman is one of Nashville's most popular and active music venues while serving as a living museum and an icon of Music City. The Grand Ole Opry show is still held at Ryman Auditorium on select dates throughout the year.

When you go to Nashville, you must visit both the Ryman Auditorium and the Grand Ole Opry. I attended on a Saturday night, and just by chance, Vince Gill was the feature act. He

was superb. Could not have planned that better. Another surprise was the performance by Don Schlitz, one of the most successful and beloved country music songwriters of all time. He's penned 24 No. 1 songs that have been recorded by some of the genre's most celebrated artists, including Keith Whitley, the Judds, Alabama, Reba McEntire and others. Schlitz wrote *Forever and Ever, Amen* for Randy Travis and the Kenny Rogers hit *The Gambler*. Schlitz's on stage performance was both terrific and hilarious, and the audience loved the guy. Another treat was Tenille Nicole Townes, the Canadian country music singer from Grande Prairie, Alberta who charmed everyone with her tunes. The Opry presents one or more artists



ABOVE: The Ryman Auditorium is a historic venue in downtown Nashville with a magical pull for up-and-coming songwriters and musicians.

in each show, giving the audience a sample of each artist's musical style. The performances are exceptional, and it is a great night out.

For a more classical music experience in Music City check out the Nashville Symphony, which performs at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. The musicians, building, and theatre are world-class and truly spectacular. Music Director Giancarlo Guerrero is a six-time Grammy award-winning conductor who champions the work of prominent American composers, presenting eleven world premieres and fifteen recordings of American music with the Nashville Symphony. Born in Nicaragua, Guerrero has led the Boston Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Queensland Symphony and others. A trip highlight for sure.

To really get a sense of the origins and path of music that has become the life of Nashville, there are several stops that really help you to connect with the magnificence of this incredible city. The Bluebird Cafe is a famous music venue—almost a mecca for singers and songwriters that has been around since 1982. Known for its intimate atmosphere, it has played host to some of the most prolific country music artists over the years. Many got their start at the Bluebird and many others go there to try to get it going. The venue features daily live music performances where songwriters go to showcase their work.

The National Museum of African American Music (NMAAM) is a new museum that opened in Nashville in January 2021. It tells the story of African American music from its roots in Africa to its impact on contemporary music today. The museum features multiple exhibits, including interactive displays, videos, and artifacts, as well as a performance space and educational programs. Some of the artists profiled in the museum include Ray Charles, Duke Ellington, Aretha Franklin, and more.

The Musicians Hall of Fame & Museum was opened in 2006 and honours the musicians who have played on some of the most famous recordings in popular music history. It features interactive exhibits, artifacts, and memorabilia,



as well as a performance space. Some of the artists profiled in the museum include Chet Atkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and James Brown.

The Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Nashville. It opened in 1967 and is dedicated to preserving the history of country music. The museum features a wide variety of exhibits, including artifacts, interactive displays, videos, and more. Some of the famous artists profiled in the museum include Dolly Parton, Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Tammy Wynette,

The Eagles, Elvis, George Jones, Dwight Yoakam, Patsy Cline, and Garth Brooks.

The Patsy Cline Museum and Glen Campbell Museum & Rhinestone Stage are all specialty museums located in Nashville. Each of these museums is dedicated to preserving the legacies of these famous country music artists. They offer a variety of exhibits, artifacts, and memorabilia, and are popular stops for fans of the artists. All are worth a visit.

Nashville has some eclectic shops, and a local favourite is the Goo Goo Chocolate

LEFT: Nashville is paradise for those who love music. Walk around and enjoy this oh so friendly and historic city and the treasure trove of class music museums: The Johnny Cash Museum, Glenn Campbell Museum, The Grand Ole Opry . . . and so much more. Get a ticket and get to the game! Nashville is home to the NHL Predators, NFL Titans, and Nashville SC. PHOTO: BRAD MOORE, TENNESSEE TITANS

Shop & Dessert Bar that serves a variety of chocolate treats and desserts. They have a wide range of chocolate bars, truffles, and other treats to choose from. The Ernest Tubbs Record Shop is one of the oldest and most famous record stores in Nashville and carries a wide selection of music, from classic country to contemporary hits. They have helpful and very knowledgeable staff. You can almost get a free history lesson of music in Nashville from these folks!

If you love sports, Nashville doesn't disappoint. The city has multiple professional sports teams including the NFL's Tennessee Titans the MLS Nashville SC soccer team and of course the Nashville Predators NHL ice hockey team.

If you are a history buff be sure to take a drive to Franklin, a beautiful storybook town located just 17 miles from Nashville that has been designated a Great American Main Street in part because of its 16-block historic district that preserves its southerly heritage. The town radiates a sophistication that's inspiring and inviting while brimming with history, music, shopping, and of the Southern hospitality that has made Tennessee famous. Franklin is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and has several historical sites and museums, including the Carter House which served as a headquarters for Confederate generals during the Battle of Franklin and was heavily damaged during the fighting. Today, the house is open to the public as a museum and offers tours and educational programs.

Nashville has so much to offer that one trip is not enough. You'll go . . . and I guarantee, you'll be going back! ■

For more information on Nashville, visit www.visitmusiccity.com



Amelia Island

A SLICE OF FLORIDA'S ENCHANTING PAST
& VIBRANT PRESENT



The term “Old Florida” invokes a nostalgic vision of a Florida that existed before the rapid urbanization and commercialization that has characterized its more recent decades. It speaks of a time when the state was a wild and untouched paradise, with pristine beaches, dense mangroves, and sprawling wetlands.

A time of simple, unhurried lifestyles, where the connection between the land and its people was intimate and profound, “Old Florida” evokes images of moss-draped oak trees, old wooden fishing docks, and mom-and-pop shops. Before the theme parks, high-rises, and bustling resorts, Florida was a tranquil escape defined by its natural beauty and Southern charm.

While there are many magnificent things about present-day Florida, I was pleased to find that “Old Florida” with

a modern twist exists in the present, and its location is Amelia Island, located in northeastern Florida, thirty minutes from Jacksonville. It's a place where timeless beauty meets modern luxury.

This unspoiled barrier island stretches for 13 miles, bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on one side and the intracoastal waters of the Amelia River and the St. Mary's River on the other three sides. Its beaches are renowned for their soft, golden sands and tranquil waves, making them a haven for water recreation and sun worshippers. Interspersed with these idyllic beaches are outcroppings of coquina limestone, a testament to the island's ancient geological past.

There are numerous accommodation options on the Island. The Residence Inn by Marriott Amelia Island has all the modern comforts and island charm you would expect when visiting

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: **The Salty Pelican is the perfect place to rack up some points on the Amelia Island Shrimp Challenge. Exploring the natural beauty of the saltwater marshes and the incredible driftwood on Boneyard Beach with a Pedego e-bike excursion. Fort Clinch State Park is a four-square kilometre park on the northernmost tip of Amelia Island that features a campground, beaches for fishing and looking for shark teeth, self-guided nature trails, and the 19th-century historic fort. Since the locals swim at American Beach, you know it's the best!**

‘Old Florida’. The staff are friendly and helpful; rooms are modern with a small kitchen, coffee service, wifi and a complimentary sit-down buffet breakfast is served each morning in the hotel. There is a great pool, and the beach is a block away.

Amelia Island has so much to offer.

Whether it's a history tour, cycling, boating or fishing, below are some of our faves and trip highlights:

Historic Fort Clinch State Park is nestled on the island's northern tip. It spans over 1,400 acres and six miles of pristine beaches anchored by a meticulously preserved 19th-century fort, which played pivotal roles during the Civil War and Spanish-American War. Today, it's a haven for nature enthusiasts who visit to see its majestic live oaks draped in Spanish moss, creating a unique canopy over picturesque trails and making it perfect for hiking and biking. Birdwatching is also popular here because of the myriad of species that make the park their home, from ospreys to songbirds. There are camping facilities that range from shaded woodland sites to beachside spots.

A popular activity for locals and tourists alike is surf fishing on the beach at Fort Clinch State Park. Boss Voss Charters is one of the best on the Island, and you'll spend a morning or afternoon with Jake, an angling enthusiast, who can give you cursory lessons in the gear, casting, the thrill of the chase and if you're lucky (we were) catch yourself a big fish!!

The charming, small and perfect Amelia Island Museum Of History is a must-stop on any visit to the Island. Go for a deep dive into the island's fascinating 4,000-year-old story. From Native American settlements to Spanish missions, the museum beautifully chronicles the island's past.

Discovered by the French in 1562, Amelia Island has a fascinating history. From its French origins, Amelia Island has been under the flags of eight different nations during its turbulent past – though the “Eight Flags” concept is a marketing invention, the actual historical sequence can be a bit more complicated.

These flags, representing the various rulers who claimed dominion over the island at different periods, are the French flag (1562–1565): The French were the first Europeans to set foot on Amelia Island. They named it Île de Mai. Jean Ribault, the French explorer, established a short-lived

settlement before the Spanish took control. The Spanish flag (1565–1763, 1784–1821): The Spanish were dominant on Amelia Island for two distinct periods, with a brief British interruption between them. The British flag (1763–1784): The island, renamed Egmont Isle by the British, was part of their colonization after the Treaty of Paris at the end of the French and Indian War. The Patriots flag (1812): In an effort to claim Florida for the United States during the Patriot War, insurgents, with tacit U.S. backing, briefly overthrew Spanish rule on the island. The Green Cross of Florida



TOP TO BOTTOM: On the first Wednesday and the third Friday of the month, the Amelia Island Museum of History hosts historical talks. We took part in a Wednesday talk on the eight flags of Amelia Island; it was simply fantastic. We bought our non-resident fishing license (\$17) and met up with local beach fishing guide Josh Voss on the beach in front of historic Fort Clinch for some surf fishing. Riptide Watersports is a thrilling adventure and one of the only ways to access Cumberland Island, home to hundreds of wild horses.

Flag (1817): Sir Gregor MacGregor, a Scottish soldier of fortune, captured the island and claimed it for the “Green Cross,” but his rule was short-lived. The Mexican Revolutionary Flag (1817): After MacGregor's departure, the island was taken over by Mexican Revolutionaries, signifying allegiance to the revolutionary cause in South America. The United States Flag (1821–present): Florida was ceded to the U.S. in 1821, and the United States flag began flying over Amelia Island and has continued to do so to the present day.

It's worth noting that there is a flag not mentioned here, the Confederate Flag. During the Civil War, the island was under Confederate control for a brief period before being taken by Union forces in 1862. Hence, the “Eight Flags” over the island. However, the seven flags mentioned above are the ones most frequently acknowledged in historical recountings.

Riptide Watersports Rentals and Tours — This was a trip highlight for sure. There is nothing like experiencing the thrill of gliding across the water at speeds of up to 25 mph in a state-of-the-art CraigCat catamaran. It combines the performance of a sports boat with the genuine comfort of a runabout. These ‘CraigCats’ offer unmatched high-speed stability and cutting-edge handling. As you ride, you'll see stunning local wildlife: playful dolphins, graceful manatees, and even the awe-inspiring sight of wild horses roaming free on Cumberland Island. There are no worries as you are with seasoned guides. Each CraigCat accommodates two people — a driver and a passenger. It's an unforgettable, exciting and fun excursion.

Pedego Electric Bikes Amelia Island — If you want to see the island on two wheels, then one option is e-bikes. You can ride around historic downtown Fernandina Beach, an experience enhanced by the bikes from Pedego, or take a nature tour along the inner pathways and beaches. Well worth the rentals, this tour gives you a real sense of the island. Our guide, Amy, was a wealth of information, providing great restaurant suggestions and must-sees during our stay.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: **Stop by the Palace Saloon, the oldest bar in Florida, for a Pickle Back — a local shot that features a pickle juice chaser. Story and Song began as a bookstore but has morphed beautifully into a centre for arts and culture in Fernandina Beach. The modern Amelia Island Brewing Company (AIBC) is another pub worth visiting on Centre Street.**

American Beach — Founded in 1935 during the segregation era, this beach holds deep roots in African-American heritage, serving as a sanctuary for Black families to relax and revel in seaside joys. Today, it is a haven for tourists and locals alike. Its dunes, among the tallest in Florida, lead to the refreshing sunny beaches of the Atlantic.

Amelia River Cruises & Charters — This is a must-do for any first-time visitor to Amelia Island. The tour gives you a sense of the Island from the water. We saw wild horses on the channel shores, dolphins, manatees, numerous bird species and even fish jumping from the water. The Captain ensures everyone has a chance to view the wildlife, and the first mate relays a wonderful narrative about the history of the area. There are restrooms, and you can bring small coolers with drinks and snacks on board.

Amelia Island has so many great food and restaurant options that it's hard to know where to start. Shrimping was the leading industry until the Great Depression. The island celebrates the crustaceans annually at the Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Boat Festival, held in May.

The Amelia Island Shrimp Challenge is a mobile app that highlights 15

local restaurants where you can enjoy everything from a plate of peel-yourself shrimp to finer cuisine featuring the beloved shrimp. Collect points as you fill up on shrimp and redeem them for shrimpy swag. Here is a list of can't-miss restaurants we sampled.

Salt Life Food — Shack-fresh seafood, a quintessentially relaxed beachy ambiance and a casual vibe make it a hotspot for both tourists and locals. The services, live music, energy and atmosphere at the beach bar is superb.

PJD's Beer and Wine Garden — Nestled beside Pajama Life in the heart of downtown Fernandina Beach, PJD's offers a cozy beer and wine haven shaded perfectly for those sunny days. Go for lunch and try their eclectic range of beers and have one of their great Cubano sandwiches. You may even have the pleasure of chatting with the very hospitable owner, Pyjama Dave.

The Salty Pelican Bar & Grill — A popular spot in the heart of town that overlooks the Amelia River. We came during a busy lunchtime on a hot day, sat on the top deck at the bar, and ordered a couple of cold beers, a plate of fresh peel-and-eat shrimp, and fish tacos (Mahi Mahi)!

Story & Song Bookstore is a quaint space where literature meets gourmet coffee and great lunches. This is a popular local spot that also has great local gifts. In addition to creating an exceptional bookstore and cafe, owners Mark and Donna Paz Kaufman have given the community of Fernandina Beach a cultural hub. Like many small businesses that lend a sense of heart and soul to their locale, Story and Song is much more than a bookstore. From the virtual story times and author interviews during the pandemic to their second-floor, non-profit community event space that hosts music festivals and other public events, Story and Song is a real treasure. It's no wonder the business was awarded Business of The Year in its first year of operation.

Amelia Island Brewing Company — The brews here are distinct and capture the spirit of Amelia. From crisp, refreshing pilsners that pay homage to old-world brewing techniques, to robust stouts with hints of local ingredients like sea salt caramel and Florida orange zest, there's a brew for every palate. Seasonal offerings rotate regularly, ensuring there's always something new to sample. The food menu, designed to complement the beverage offerings, features an array of gastro-pub delights. Fresh seafood, sourced from local waters, takes centre stage in dishes like beer-battered fish tacos or spicy shrimp po' boys. Traditional bar fare is elevated, with burgers seasoned with house-made aiolis and wings glazed in unique brew-infused sauces. The atmosphere effortlessly marries rustic charm with contemporary elegance. Exposed brick walls and wooden beams create a cozy ambiance, while modern lighting fixtures and artworks give a nod to the present.

Amelia Island has a timeless allure. Its beaches offer solace to sun-seekers and adventurers alike, while the island's dense forests and diverse ecosystems reflect the calm of "Old Florida." It's a place where modern amenities meet old-world grace. Amelia Island is not just a destination, but a place you'll yearn to return to ■

www.ameliaisland.com



THE MANY GEMS OF THE NAYARIT REGION OF Mexico



Upon arrival in Mexico, there is no better way to begin your Nayarit adventure than by checking in for a few days at Puerto Vallarta's Vidanta Resort. You'll enjoy a perfect blend of relaxation and adventure, all set against the backdrop of Mexico's natural beauty, where breathtaking ocean views meet luxurious accommodations. Vidanta has world-class amenities and services, pristine beaches, stunning pools, and exquisite dining options for guests.

Sayulita — known as the Surf Capital of Riviera Nayarit — is just an hour's drive from Puerto Vallarta. It's the vibrant heart of surf culture at Sayulita, nestled within the enchanting Riviera Nayarit. This #MagicalTown boasts captivating beaches and a laid-back atmosphere defined by the bohemian spirit that has embraced the area. Enjoy the sandy beaches and thrilling waves, explore local markets, and embrace the traveller spirit that defines this area.

A scenic drive well worth taking is from Puerto Vallarta to Jala. It's easy to get lost in the picturesque landscapes of Nayarit, Mexico, with its rolling hills,

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The falls at Jala are a refreshing respite on a hot sunny day. The beach of Sayulita is a favourite with surfers. Birdwatching near Sayulita. The main island of Islas Marias is a new and unique Mexican tourist destination off the Pacific coast. The beach town of Sayulita.

vibrant flora, and charming villages that provide a serene and immersive experience.

You'll either feel like you're on a cool movie set or have just stepped into the past when you visit the historic town of Jala, a hidden gem that is gaining popularity among tourists. The name "Jala" draws its origins from the Nahuatl language melding of "Xali," meaning sand, and "Tlán," or a place "where there is an abundance of sand." Old Jala was originally settled by the Nahuatl inhabitants, who were people steeped in magical and enigmatic traditions. Their legacy reverberated through cultural, artistic, and spiritual expressions, vividly displayed in their ceramic artifacts and hunting implements. Over time, Jala transformed from a modest hamlet into a thriving village and was eventually designated as a municipality in 1918, following the ratification of the political

constitution of the state of Nayarit.

The "Ceboruco" volcano, a revered natural wonder, boasts a diverse landscape adorned with cascading waterfalls. Since the turn of the millennium, it has been a protected ecological park, thriving with an abundance of pine and cedar trees. The local fauna mirrors the volcano's unique environment, where temperatures range from 51°F to 61°F. Here, you'll encounter the elusive ocelots, graceful white-tailed deer, nimble hares, playful skunks, cunning raccoons, and a myriad of reptilian wonders, including turtles and serpents, all seamlessly integrated into this enchanting ecosystem.

Don't miss a visit to the awe-inspiring El Salto Waterfall, a natural wonder that captivates visitors with its cascading beauty. The short hike to get to the falls is hot, but it's so refreshing upon arrival

to feel the cold mountain water from the falls as it cools you down. And don't be surprised if some free-roaming horses gallop by on the way there or back.

Elevate your stay in the beautiful town by staying a couple of nights at the spectacular Nukari Quinta Boutique, a wonderful respite after a busy day that is a sanctuary of elegance and comfort. Indulge in their luxurious accommodations and be sure to spend an evening at their rooftop restaurant, NUKARI, where local culinary delights meet breathtaking panoramic views that create an unforgettable dining experience.

As you stroll along the charming cobblestone streets of Jala, it's hard not to marvel at the well-preserved 18th and 19th-century mansions that exude colonial charm. It's like a real-time

skunks, cunning raccoons, and a myriad of reptilian wonders, including turtles and serpents, all seamlessly integrated into this enchanting ecosystem.

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beer or refreshing margarita on a hot day.

You can't leave the San Blas area without first taking the La Tovara Estuary and Mangrove Swamps Tour. This is a mesmerizing journey with a skilled boat guide who navigates you through a diverse ecosystem where you'll spot crocodiles and other exotic wildlife, and you'll be immersed in the untouched beauty of this natural wonderscape for a couple of hours. It's also a birder's paradise. Bring a camera!

Islas Marías

It's a three-hour ferry ride to Islas Marías, a remote archipelago with a rich and intriguing history that is 130 miles off the coast of Mexico. Until 2018, it was a notorious prison colony and home of the Islas Marías Federal Prison — one of Mexico's most high securities lockups.



glimpse of a town where time seems to stand still. There is a treasure trove of historical monuments in this small town, including the Basilica of Jala, which was built in 1856 and crafted from the local pink, green, and yellow Cantera stone, taking centre stage as an architectural masterpiece fusing Roman and Gothic styles.

The "Ceboruco" volcano, a revered natural wonder, boasts a diverse landscape adorned with cascading waterfalls. Since the turn of the millennium, it has been a protected ecological park, thriving with an abundance of pine and cedar trees. The local fauna mirrors the volcano's unique environment, where temperatures range from 51°F to 61°F. Here, you'll encounter the elusive ocelots, graceful white-tailed deer, nimble hares, playful

LEFT TO RIGHT: The ferry at San Blas takes visitors to Islas Marías. The pristine beach on the main island of Islas Marías. Children playing in the mountain river that flows through Jala.

NUKARI, where local culinary delights meet breathtaking panoramic views that create an unforgettable dining experience. After visiting the interior region of Nayarit, take the 2.5-hour drive to the Pacific and experience the coastal bliss of charming San Blas, a captivating town that boasts pristine beaches and a rich cultural heritage. Discover the warmth of Puerto Balleto and savour the delectable flavours at El Estero Restaurant, a culinary haven that celebrates local cuisine. We were there on a Sunday, and it would be an understatement today that this place is popular with locals and tourists alike. The seafood is amazing, the steaks to die for, and there is nothing like a cold

After being elected in 2018, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador closed the prison, paving the way for a new era of tourism to be created for this pristine area. The Mexican Navy and Mexico Tourism have worked together to transform Islas Marías over the past four years into an enchanting tourist destination (including running the new ferry service, which is uber-modern and comfortable).

Their collaborative effort ensures the preservation of the islands' natural wonders while providing visitors with a unique and responsible travel experience. Upon arrival, you'll check into one of the mini cabins, which

CONTINUED >> PAGE 43



ALL ABOARD THE OCEAN ENDEAVOUR A Journey to the Land of the Midnight Sun



The far north is one of those places most wonder about yet never witness. Not knowing what to expect, I embarked on Adventure Canada's Greenland and Arctic Canada: High Arctic Explorer trip, and now I am here to say it is an adventure of a lifetime.

Our journey to some of the most otherworldly places on the planet began with a charter flight to Resolute, Nunavut, or Qausuittuq, meaning "place with no dawn."

Stepping off the plane, it's hard to believe you are still in Canada. The surrounding backdrop of Arctic desert mountains and crystal-clear water feels otherworldly. Our time in Resolute began a journey into the region of powerful ice, midnight sun, surreal mountains, marine wildlife, and strong Inuit communities. From day one, Adventure Canada reminds travellers of their role as guests in the High Arctic, and their leave-no-trace approach.

The Ocean Endeavour was a comfortable base for our 12 days of adventure and education, carrying 198 passengers, an expedition team, and a crew. The group is small compared to other cruise ships, fostering a strong sense of community along the way. Each day,

knowledgeable guides led expeditions, and an impressive group of experts on archaeology, biodiversity, history, Inuit culture, geology, and more shared their expertise.

Resolute Bay is thrilling for nature lovers, wildlife fanatics, history buffs, anyone really! We set out in zodiac boats and cruised by Mars-like views and diving seals to Beechey Island, an eerie arctic historical site.

Resolute Bay is named after the H.M.S. Resolute, a British Royal Navy ship sent to search for the failed Franklin expedition. To this day, Beechey Island has traces of the nearly 50 expeditions that were launched in search of the Franklin party. Northumberland House, now dilapidated by the environment, tells the story of the many ship crews that wintered in Resolute in the 1800s and 1900s, beginning with Sir John Franklin's in 1845-46. On the other side of the tiny island lay the graves of three crewmen who died over that winter.

In the far north, the environment is unpredictable, but that is the beauty of it. The wind, the fog, and the waves remind you how small you are on this planet. Every voyage in the Arctic is

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: **Polar bear wake-up call in Croker Bay** (PHOTO: MEG LANGLAIS). **Midnight Sun in Nunavut, 11:30 p.m. Each day, knowledgeable guides with strong connections to our destinations led shore expeditions.**

different, but each day, Adventure Canada's expert expedition leaders take advantage of the opportunities presented by the conditions.

Everywhere the Ocean Endeavour anchored told its own remarkable story. In Nunavut the ship anchored in Port Leopold, Croker Bay, Bylot Island, Cuming Inlet, and Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet) before sailing through the Davis Strait to Greenland. The vast ice floes were highly hospitable to wildlife, awarding us the pleasure of seeing walruses, seals, beluga whales, polar bears, and seabirds.

A zodiac ride in Port Leopold brought us to barren grounds coated in orange moss and Arctic poppies, an old wooden house showing a trace of human existence. Further down the shore, past bouts of blue ice and a lake shimmering in the sun, the expedition team discovered the site of Inuit



ABOVE (LEFT TO RIGHT): An abandoned HBC trading post in Port Leopold. The graves of three members of Sir John Franklin's crew. Ocean Endeavour looking small beside icebergs in Ilulissat.

camping homes from hundreds of years ago. Surrounding each depression in the ground were colourful arctic flowers, displaying the beautiful connection between human history and nature. "Where there are plants, there were people," remarked trip archaeologist Kaylee Baxter.

Zodiac cruises took us gliding through the sea, by towering cliffs inhabited by kingdoms of seabirds. Thick-billed murres, northern fulmars, black-legged kittiwakes, and black guillemots soared down to the water in search of fish — quite the performance!

In Croker Bay, we saw firsthand the majesty of ice. We were amazed by the sight of the South Croker Bay Glacier, proceeding from the Devon Ice Cap, appearing through our windows at breakfast.

We spent the morning cruising by it, listening to the cracking of the ice and were lucky enough to watch it calve. The glacier was big, but we learned how it used to be much bigger; a lesson in how vulnerable the Arctic is to climate change.

The wildlife and Inuit people of the Arctic are affected by climate change in ways that others are not. Up north, there is growing concern about accelerated changes to the land, altering the movement of ice and wildlife that serve as food and material. The chance to see only a glimpse of life in the Arctic and have meaningful conversations with Inuit people awoke a newfound environmentalism within all of us.

Hiking on Devon Island is a dream come true for nature-loving travellers. Alongside the canyons of Cuming Inlet, we trekked uphill to find a rushing glacier river. The absence of human inhabitancy was evident: the air was clean, and the cold water was transparent. Out of breath, we refreshed ourselves with water from the stream.

Every day was a contradictory coupling of relaxation and spontaneity — calm that came with being connected to nature and the thrill and wonder of adventure. It pushed a group of passengers to challenge themselves to try things for the first time, like the famous polar dip in four-degree water. It was an exhilarating shock to the system.

Our time in Nunavut concluded with a visit to the community of Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet) where we were warmly welcomed. We drank tea with Inuit elders, followed guides through the community, and took in a performance of drum dancing and throat singing. Adventure Canada and Mittimatalik have spent over 30 years building a close relationship. Each season, the tour company organizes fundraisers for the community.

On our way to Greenland, we sailed through the fog and sea ice in Baffin Bay and the Davis Strait for two days. We spent our days on board enjoying the boat's amenities: the sauna, the hot tub, the library, and evenings in the lounge with a cocktail and live music.

On the third day, we woke up in Ilulissat, Greenland. Ilulissat is the Kalaallisut word for "icebergs." One look outside and it was obvious how the town got its name. On our way to shore, we cruised past icebergs the size of New York City blocks.

Two hundred fifty kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, the famous Greenland Icecap reaches the sea at the Ilulissat Icefjord. A world-famous boardwalk leads to green cliffs hugged by vegetation, overlooking miles of sparkling white ice. The Sermeq Kujalleq Glacier is one of the most active and fastest moving in the world, calving more than 35 cubic kilometres of icebergs each year. The glacier plays a critical role in scientific research surrounding icecap glaciology and climate change. In 2004, it was named a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Before the boardwalk stands the Icefjord Centre, a museum with interactive exhibits that tell the story of Greenlandic nature, culture, and appreciation of ice. Two kilometres north of the Icefjord is the frequently visited town of Ilulissat, a vibrant village populated by a nearly equal number of humans and sled dogs.

Our final day was spent in Sisimiut, the second-largest city in Greenland after Nuuk. A change of scenery compared to icy Ilulissat; warm currents keep it ice-free year-round. Here, we took the time to learn about the history of Greenland, visiting local museums and tasting traditional Greenlandic food: muskox

soup, narwhal muktuk, snow crab, and more.

We said goodbye to Greenland and the breathtaking Kangerlussuaq, home to one of the longest fjords in the world. My final night was spent in the hot tub, alongside memorable people, marvelling at the dramatic, glacial-carved mountains. For the first time in nearly two weeks, we watched a sunset.

An Adventure Canada journey is life-changing. You will leave with calmness in your heart, an appreciation for new ends of the Earth, a deeper understanding of Inuit culture, and a newfound sense of urgency for the state of the environment. The only way to fully understand the impact of a trip to the Arctic is to experience it.

Since 1987, family-run Adventure Canada has strived to bring explorers where roads don't reach, and lights don't appear on the map. Founders Dave Freeze, Bill Swan, and Matthew Swan started Adventure Canada by running tours to awe-inspiring, remote places of the world untouched by human industrialization.

The expeditions were land-based hiking trips until Matthew Swan received a cold call from the Art Gallery of Ontario, asking if he would lead 50 people to Cape Dorset (Kinngait). Coincidentally, he had received a call from a ship owner not long before offering him the opportunity to charter an old Russian research vessel.

The timing of the two events was fate, and Swan took the opportunity to lead his first cruise. Adventure Canada has since grown to be a leader in cruise-style expeditions that offer a strong sense of community and hospitality. In 2015, management of the company was passed onto Swan's children, Cedar, Alana, and John.

Alana Bradley-Swan was our host for the 2023 Greenland and Arctic Canada: High Arctic Explorer expedition and spoke of her pride in the team of extraordinary Adventure Canada staffers: "As host, I enjoy curating the experience and building a solid team that can provide that depth of knowledge to our guests." Bradley-Swan explained

how "They have an open mind and are connected to our destinations."

While sailing through Inuit territory, a wonderful group of Inuit staff from communities in Nunavut to Northern Labrador took the time to share their culture with the guests on board every day, providing an important cultural element of awareness. We were lucky to have them as guides, polar bear guards, educators, and friends.

Sharing meals, expeditions, and common spaces with under 200 people builds connection quickly and leaves you with lifelong friends. Bradley-Swan describes the small-ship experience, "In our Arctic destinations, because you can't get here by road, people feel that element of the unknown, being in a small group close together provides a feeling of safety."

Adventure Canada's vision is a world where people are well because of tourism, not despite it. It is an interesting conflict to visit some of the most untouched places in the world while understanding that travel poses threats to the environment.

With a commitment to carbon neutrality, low waste operations, and contribution to cultural preservation and revitalization projects, Adventure Canada follows a Regenerative Travel Strategic Plan as a road map to their goals.

"I think travelling in our time with an awareness of climate change and coming up to these regions increases your ambassadorship to making a difference on the planet," Bradley-Swan said. "Our company is in favour of the balance between conservation, protection, and tourism. If it is done properly, it is important that travellers see very vulnerable places."

Behold the staggering beauty of the High Arctic — the illuminated water and sky all hours of the night, colourful culture and communities, otherworldly landscapes, and captivating wildlife — on an Adventure Canada expedition ■

To find your trip with Adventure Canada, visit www.adventurecanada.com or call 1-800-363-7566.

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have air conditioning, comfortable beds, bathrooms and a seating and workspace area. There is a restaurant on site and some street vendors who cook up some great locale fare. The islands offer a diverse range of activities, from eco-tourism to cultural immersion. From its dark past to its designation as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2010, Islas Marias showcases a blend of history, natural beauty, and cultural significance.

Visitors spend two nights and two days being immersed in the history of Islas Marias through a series of activities, including exploring the historic ruins of



the former prison, taking a tour through the stunning marine and terrestrial ecosystems, birdwatching, indulging in water sports, from kayaking to paddle boarding or snorkelling and swimming in the crystalline waters and witness vibrant marine life. You can also learn about traditional Mexican culture through local workshops, hike through lush forests and uncover hidden trails.

In the span of just one week, I embarked on an unforgettable journey through the heart of Mexico, uncovering hidden gems and embracing the vibrant culture of this diverse nation. From the luxurious Vidanta Resort in Puerto Vallarta to the charming streets of Sayulita, the mystical town of Jala, the historic allure of San Blas, and the remote beauty of Islas María, each destination offers a uniquely different and remarkable adventure that showcases the rich tapestry of experiences that Mexico has to offer. Whether it's the taste of authentic Mexican cuisine, the warmth of its people, or the enchanting landscapes and sea breezes from spectacular beaches, Mexico is a true traveller's paradise ■

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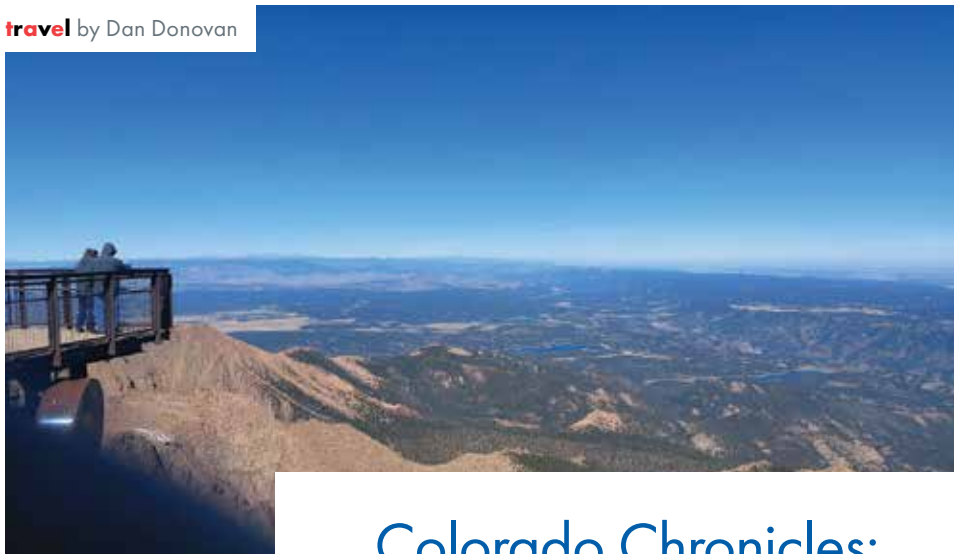
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Colorado Chronicles: A TAPESTRY OF ADVENTURE, ART, AND CULINARY DELIGHTS



Colorado, a place like no other in North America, has become a magnet for a new generation of adventurers and city dwellers seeking a unique lifestyle. During my week in the “Centennial State,” I truly grasped the irresistible allure of this stunning destination, celebrated for its majestic mountains.

The Rockies offer a playground for year-round outdoor activities, from summer hiking and mountain biking to top-tier skiing and snowboarding in the winter. Colorado’s natural wonders extend to diverse ecosystems found in national parks like Rocky Mountain National Park and the Great Sand Dunes National Park, where visitors can discover alpine lakes, surreal sand dunes, and lush forests.

While cities like Denver and Colorado Springs provide dynamic urban experiences, the state’s incredible natural landscapes take centre stage just beyond city limits. Outdoor enthusiasts flock to

CLOCKWISE (FROM TOP LEFT): **The lookout at Pikes Peak. See incredible street art on the Denver Graffiti Tour. The hip RiNO district in Denver. E-tuk Tours in Denver are a great way to see the city up close.**

Colorado, drawn by its extensive trail systems and pristine wilderness areas, perfect for hikers, climbers, and nature enthusiasts.

Colorado’s captivating cities and breathtaking natural landscapes seem to coexist in perfect harmony, creating a place of unparalleled beauty and adventure that offers experiences for urban explorers and nature enthusiasts alike. Whether you travel, trek or tour, you’ll love Colorado.

Denver (known as Mile-High City) is the bustling urban heart of Colorado’s culture and commerce. It is an unapologetic blend of modernity and tradition.

The Source Hotel & Market Hall in the RiNo Art District seamlessly fuses industrial design with comfort. There

is no more invigorating feeling than waking up here to views of Denver’s skyline framed by the Rocky Mountains that make you feel like you are part of something bigger.

Denver’s thriving arts and music scene features a plethora of museums, galleries, and live music venues. The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver is one of America’s great museums. Their exhibit ‘Cowboy’ explores the origins of the American cowboy and how its mythology persists today. The American Museum of Western Art is also exceptional. The Denver Art Museum is worth a visit. Its extensive Indigenous Arts of North America collection is one of the finest collections of Latin American Art and Art of the Ancient Americas.

Denver takes great pride in its past

and has gone to great lengths to preserve its historic neighbourhoods and architectural gems, which have been gentrified in a way that provides a fascinating glimpse into Colorado's past. A great way to get a sense of the city is to take the Denver Graffiti Tour, a visual reflection of the city's creative spirit. The tour guides know all the local lore and trivia and tell the stories behind each of the vibrant graffiti murals and the thought-provoking street art that adorns the walls of businesses, shops and homes and make Denver's historic neighbourhoods come alive.

A fun way to see the city is the Urban Denver City eTuk Tour. It begins and ends at Denver Union Station in the heart of the city. Built in 1881, it was once a key hub before falling into decline in the later part of the last century. In 2012, it underwent a major renovation and transformation that combined new transit-oriented mixed-use development built on the site's former railyards. It reopened in the summer of 2014 with a new 112-room Crawford Hotel and several shops, boutiques, and restaurants. The eTuk Tour glides through Denver's eclectic neighbourhoods, starting with LoDo (Lower Downtown), known for its historic architecture, trendy bars, and vibrant arts scene. It's also home to Coors Field, making it a hub for sports fans and a destination for those seeking a lively nightlife.

Next up is Highland (LoHi), a neighbourhood combining a historic feel with modern amenities and a hotspot for young professionals and food enthusiasts. Not far from here is RiNo, short for River North Art District. Once an industrial area with factories, warehouses, and railroad tracks dominating the landscape, it went through several decades of decline. Over the past 25 years, artists began to settle in the area, drawn by the spacious, affordable studio spaces.

Today, RiNo is a hip neighbourhood known for a thriving arts scene, unique street art, and a remarkable blend of historic and modern architecture. It's a hotspot for galleries, breweries, and restaurants, making it a cultural and culinary destination. A short ride away is the historic neighbourhood of



TOP TO BOTTOM: A view of the continental divide from the top of Pikes Peak. Denver Market is part of the Graffiti Tour. The fort restaurant at Red Rocks.

Capitol Hill, with its mix of Victorian and modern architecture.

Denver's culinary scene is a delightful fusion of flavours and features an eclectic mix of restaurants, breweries, and food markets. Mister Oso in RiNo is a recent Michelin Bib Gourmand winner. Their Mexican-inspired dishes, from mouthwatering tacos to delectable guacamole, scream authenticity. Safta Restaurant is an authentic Middle Eastern eatery that pays homage to

the culinary dishes of Israel and is beyond superb. Tavernetta Restaurant near Union Station is an exceptional, popular, upscale, busy but hot — with an open kitchen and a fireplace — Italian lounge spot that serves la dolce vita-style handmade pastas. Another great restaurant at Union Station is Stoic & Genuine, renowned for its exquisite fish dinner offerings. Their Crispy Whole Fish baked with lemongrass, lime, Fresno chilli, ponzu butter and cilantro is superb.



TOP TO BOTTOM: View from lookout at Rocky Mountain National Park. With multiple restaurants, shops and great public space, the beautifully refurbished Denver train station is a destination in of itself. Graffiti in The Broadmoor Resort is one of Colorado's most famous and historic hotels.

Red Rocks, located just outside Denver, Colorado, is a natural amphitheatre renowned for its breathtaking setting and acoustically perfect surroundings. Carved into the towering red sandstone rocks, the venue offers a unique and immersive concert experience. The iconic venue is surrounded by stunning rock formations and panoramic views of the city and plains below, creating a visually spectacular backdrop for

performances. The Beatles, U2, Jimi Hendrix, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Fleetwood Mac, Grateful Dead, Dave Matthews Band, The Who, Mumford & Sons, John Mayer, Radiohead, Prince, Stevie Nicks, Neil Young and many others have performed at Red Rocks which remains one of the most revered music venues in the world.

Nestled against the stunning backdrop of

Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Colorado, The Fort Restaurant is an absolute gem. This culinary haven effortlessly marries history with haute cuisine, offering a dining experience as unforgettable as the surrounding landscapes. The menu features frontier-inspired cuisine, from iconic buffalo steaks to delectable quail and unique game dishes

Rocky Mountain National Park Day Trip from Denver

Aspire Tours is a Denver-based company that takes visitors on a Rocky Mountain National Park Day Trip that makes you feel like you are stepping into a postcard. You begin at Union Station in a comfortable executive-style van with ten or twelve other travellers and leave the streets of the "Mile High City" towards Rocky Mountain National Park. This trip is a journey through the rugged beauty of Colorado's mountains. You drive through small, historic towns and over alpine passes as you scan the horizon for mountain wildlife like elk, black bears, or moose. The awe-inspiring landscapes, serene lakes, and sight of wildlife are truly incredible.

It's a short scenic drive from Denver to Colorado Springs, nestled at the foot of the majestic Pikes Peak and surrounded by the stunning Rocky Mountains. It's home to the United States Air Force Academy and Garden of the Gods, a national natural landmark visible for its striking red rock formations for hiking and rock climbing. The downtown area features a lively culinary scene, breweries, and live music venues.

We stayed at The Broadmoor Resort, a historic gem nestled along mountain ranges that provide an experience in luxury and charm. This grand hotel's rich history adds an extra layer of allure to the majestic backdrop of Pikes Peak. It's a 15-minute drive to the small town of Manitou Springs, where you can board the Pikes Peak Cog Railway. As the train chugs its way up to the summit (at a 25 percent incline at times), you'll see out-of-this-world surreal panoramic vistas of the Rocky Mountains and the Continental Divide ■

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