SEE ALASKA RIGHT!

A week aboard UnCruise's Wilderness Adventurer

by A.V. Eichenbaum
SGN Managing Editor

"Look over there!" Jill, the woman who became one of my regular morning companions aboard the Wilderness Adventurer, was pointing out the window of the van. "Bald eagles."

"Yes, our driver, Andrews. "Yeah, probably about 30 or 40. They're trash birds." I blinked. "What?"

"They're trash birds! Y'know, scavengers. They eat scraps. The ravens around here pick on 'em all the time."

"Huh."

Thus began my weeklong sojourn into the wild and wonderful world of Southeast Alaska, a trip generously provided to me by Seattle's own UnCruise Adventures.

Summarized: Unpretentious. Exciting. Educational. I learned a lot about moss. To know more, you'll have to keep reading.

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Scan For Inspiration
Openness and passion for the work resonated throughout the ship’s crew, who hailed from all different backgrounds. Their lives — a Seattle bartender, an MS in fisheries science, an MA in gender studies, and a career in the fashion industry, to mention just a few — were all changed and guided to the UnCruise by their mutual love of our ocean and the life in it.

Photo courtesy of UnCruise

Lunch was a bed of sphagnum moss in the middle of an old-growth temperate rainforest is an experience unlike any other, though “peaceful” isn’t the first word that comes to mind. Laughing, sneezing, and singing camp songs to ward off bears, we made our way through the woods on Kuitu Island to the beach and back again. The rest of the day was much the same, one adventure after the next, with some downtime in between. From there to Takhlakh Lake, to Glacier Bay National Park, and then back home again. Soothing gear was provided for the bolder among us on the fifth day, I would’ve regretted not going if it weren’t for the other things out there to see.

We were encouraged to mark the wildlife we spotted on a large whiteboard located near the dining area. We were notified over the intercom system any time whales were spotted. Notable among the other wildlife sightings were a black bear, six-legged sea stars, and, at 9:30 pm on July 1, passengers swam up and down they spotted a bright white UFO hovering overhead.

I cannot promise your experience will include a UFO. I can say with certainty that the sheer magnificence of the waters, especially Gerstle Bay in particular, where we were led to a hidden rocky beach, complete with a dark obedik point and electric violet flowers — will fill you with awe.

There was no cell service for most of the trip, but that didn’t matter. We were busy exploring.

Those moments of calm and wonder that come with finding a chicken-of-the-woods mushroom the size of a small dog or a prime specimen of bone sheath lichen in the middle of a drizzle-filled morning hike are ones you have to feel for yourself, moments you won’t capture in your Instagram story, moments you won’t have again.

The food
Three hours and a cot all are I hoped for when booking the Wilderness Adventurer. Regular readers of my column will know my usual breakfast here in the Emerald City consists largely of eggs and whatever is in season now.

What we were served well surpassed my expectations. Three gourmet meals a day starting at a hearty breakfast buffet and ending with a choice of soup, salad, or vegetarian options — is what we get, Salmon the first night. Lamb another, steak. All expertly prepared and followed by a dessert specially prepared by the ship’s pastry chef to conclude the course.

UnCruise works with the Monterey Bay Aquarium to ensure that their seafood options make as little impact as possible on
the ecosystem, another example that stood out to me of the company's commitment to spreading ecological awareness, as well as enjoyment to their passengers.

What's more, I noticed on several occasions their willingness to work with guests' dietary restrictions and allergies at what seemed like a moment's notice.

We dined with other passengers. Most of the time I ate with Jill, as mentioned, and her friends Susan and David, a couple from Seattle who invited me to dinner once we were back in the city. (The answer is still yes to that, by the way.) Our dinner conversation delved into topics like politics, transhumanism, science fiction recommendations, and even Elon Musk. There are few things I appreciate more than interesting dinner conversation, and, no matter who I sat with, it was never boring.

For the last meal of our trip, I was among a handful chosen to dine at the captain's table. I ordered the stuffed portobello and listened with interest as those at the table discussed raising kids, living meaningfully, and, ultimately, various philosophies on life itself. If this sounds like a good time to you, you're in luck. Spending a week with strangers on a ship elicits conversations like this regularly.

Food and drink are included in your ticket price, and every evening before dinner we had cocktail hour in the lounge. The bartender, Heather, was kind enough to make me my favorite — Death in the Afternoon — on the first night, and it became my not-so-secret mission to convert my fellow shipmates to Hemingway's absinthe and sparkling wine blend by the end of the week.

Sitting there in the lounge, surrounded by books on local ecology and chatting with other passengers while we gazed out at the ocean, I — a twenty-something queer journalist with badly chipped nail polish — felt completely at ease among the myriad retirees, teachers, and government scientists on board. I determined once again that Fjälls previous assessment had been true: this type of trip naturally weeds out the assholes, leaving nothing but interesting people with fascinating stories.

My one complaint would be the coffee, which, though provided freely and without limit, didn't quite meet base levels of the frothier amount of caffeine I consume on a regular basis, even at four cups a day.

The last day

We'd been blessed by unusually warm weather most of the week, leading some to hope the dry spell would last until Friday. Pulling into Glacier Bay National Park, the sky was a gray expanse. Little droplets of rain hit us during our morning stretches on the sun deck.

Some of us opted for a hike to the top of the glacier, while others chose a skiff tour or kayak around the area. Climbing up the side of the mountain, my regret at not having packed my bug spray quickly gave way to my appreciation of the view. There's something about the enormity of a glacier that makes you lose track of perspective. Sitting on the cliff ledge and looking down, I could see the ship, small and insignificant against a backdrop of blue-white ice reaching up into the clouds.

Allan, a psychologist and jazz musician from Delaware, had brought his harmonica with him to the top. As he serenaded us in that icy landscape, I watched as glacial ice fell slowly into the water. It brought to mind a saying from Heraclitus, a pre-Socratic philosopher we had to read in school. "You can't step in the same river twice."

To me, this trip was once in a lifetime. My experiences are my own, and no matter how many people go on the same or similar cruises, there will only ever be this one.

That feeling is enhanced by the unreasonable sunshine we encountered. The climate is changing. The ice is melting. Several crew members remarked how, in their few years working in Southeast Alaska, the glaciers had receded quickly from where they'd been for decades, if not centuries.

You can't step in the same river twice. No two ice-charing adventures are alike, and, as the world keeps changing, eventually even that river will dry up.

A bittersweet end to a dream-come-true voyage, but don't worry. Any depressing philosophical musings I had were shoved out of my head during the Polar Plunge later that day. Doing a cannonball next to a mountain of ice will do that to you.

To learn more about UnCruise Adventures or schedule a trip of your own, visit www.uncruise.com.
Travel

HAWAII

An ocean’s length of social distancing requested by native Hawaiians

Photo by Tor Johnson / Hawaii Tourism Authority

Tourism is only interested in self-preservation as an industry, and those profiting don’t care for the well-being of the native community.

by Janice Athill
SGN Contributing Writer

In 1893 the United States armed forces illegally invaded the Kingdom of Hawaii. The coup was staged — without presidential approval — by white American sugar cane growers living on the islands. Their profits had suffered greatly from a tariff that raised import rates on foreign sugar, so their intention was to get Hawaii annexed. This would make the tariff disappear. Ships landed at Honolulu, with 160 armed soldiers, disregarding peace agreements with the monarch, Queen Liliuokalani. Outnumbered and hoping to avoid casualties, Liliuokalani made the mistake of believing she could trust the US to deliver justice, so she agreed to a conditional surrender.

President Grover Cleveland believed that Americans had behaved shamelessly, so he appointed Special Commissioner James Blount to investigate the overthrow of the queen’s government. He wanted to return Liliuokalani to her throne, but the American people strongly favored annexation.

Because of this, the matter was prolonged until after Cleveland left office and William McKinley was inaugurated as president. In 1898 McKinley signed a joint resolution annexing the islands. Hawaii remained a territory until 1959, when it became the fiftieth state.

The colonization of the Hawaiian Islands and the boom of its tourism industry has had a negative impact on the native people of Hawaii and brought their culture close to extinction. Despite the $48.6 million spent daily (as of 2019) by visitors, Hawaiians are the poorest of all people in Hawaii; they are the most unemployed and largest recipients of welfare, and they dominate the prison population.

The locals in these stolen and oppressed islands have complained about overtourism for many years. They live there, yet rarely get to enjoy what their own islands have to offer and get stuck in low-end jobs that don’t pay what they need to survive (estimated to be $121,000 annually to live comfortably). On top of that, the islands don’t have many natural resources, instead relying heavily on imports to sustain the massive number of tourists, which contributes to the high cost of living. They have a limited water supply, which they have been forced to share with as many as 9.4 million visitors a year. This has been devastating to the roughly 1.4 million natives suffering in their own homes.

When the world shut down in 2020, during the coronavirus outbreak, native Hawaiians got to see what life could have been like for them: clear beaches, the ability to live and not just survive, and some of the lowest COVID numbers in the country.

But as of April 2021, more than 23,000 tourists are arriving in Hawaii every day, and those numbers have been increasing, approaching pre-pandemic levels. Native Hawaiians feared that these incoming travelers would cause coronavirus cases to rise — and they weren't wrong. They’ve been urges tourists not to visit, and not just due to the pandemic. Maui officials even made an unexpected request to airlines, begging them not to bring so many people to their island.

But they are not being heard. Tourism is only interested in self-preservation as an industry, and those profiting don’t care for the well-being of the native community.

As the United States begins to emerge from the pandemic, Maui began to suffer from some of the same problems seen on the mainland. With a shortage of hospitality workers and restaurants still operating at limited capacity, they are struggling to keep up with the influx of visitors.

To add insult to infection, mainlanders’ sense of entitlement has skyrocketed. Visitors have been reportedly disrespectful, not just of COVID recommendations and restrictions but to natives as well, who have been assaulted, screamed at, and spat on by those who couldn’t get their way. Tourists have also blocked highways and refused to move when asked.

They seem to have forgotten that their chosen vacation destination is someone else’s home. People actually live their lives on these islands; they have families to get home to and jobs to do that make their vacations possible.
“reentering the world of touch of closeness proximity after so much distance
refinding what it means to hold and be held to hug envelop embrace
this is the beginning of a conversation -a shared discovery- unlearning/relearning all the ways we can be together”

Alyza DelPan-Monley and Leah Crosby Seattle, WA
THE US OF GAY

Fifty-one ab-fab road-trip destinations and pit stops
— one in each state and the District of Columbia —
that are must sees and dos for out-and-proud wanderusters

by Mikey Rox
Special to the SGN

There are a million things to love about traveling the United States — from our sprawling national parks and historic coastal cities to tucked-away small towns and Southern hospitality — but every once in a while we need to experience our people in our places.

As it turns out, there’s Queer fun to be found everywhere — in areas that you would never suspect, in fact — throughout the entire country. When planning your next “family” friendly getaway, consider these welcoming attractions, establishments, events, and gatherings in all 50 states and the nation’s capital that exist by and for the LGBTQ+ community.

Alabama
Praise Him on high (before hitting a boozy brunch; wine is Jesus-approved, remember) at Cornerstone Metropolitan Community Church in Mobile, a predominantly LGBTQ+ congregation led by Lesbian pastor Reverend Sara Sills. Sunday services begin at 10-45 a.m. Arrive early for easy parking, visit the institution’s welcome center, and take a guided tour of the campus.

Arizona
A pair of well-worn cowboy boots and a bottle of sunscreen are all you’ll need for a rugged, clothing-optional weekend at the all-male Copper Cactus Ranch, quietly nestled deep in the foothills of the Superstition Mountains in Queen Valley. Weekends feature bonfires, musical jam sessions, drum circles, and body painting, among other activities that encourage boys to be boys.

Arkansas
Pet-friendly Prew Mountain Lodge is the longest continuously operating Gay-owned resort in Eureka Springs, where you can enjoy the great outdoors while hiking, fishing, swimming, picnicking, and more. It’s also become a Queer wedding destination in the South since the landmark SCOTUS marriage-equality decision was handed down.

California
You may recognize Lesbian-owned Hicksville Trailer Palace as the setting for Lana Del Rey’s “White Dress” music video, but this dog-friendly, 21-and-older desert oasis in Joshua Tree hosts travelers in 11 individually designed, vintage mini-mobile homes situated on seven acres flush with fun and games, including a ball pit, arcade, cornhole, put-put, a BB gun and archery range, shuffleboard, ping pong, and dart.

Colorado
Memorialize your road trip with fresh ink — maybe your route map or a memorable symbol — at LGBTQ+—owned Pens & Needles Custom Tattoo Company. voted Best Tattoo Shop in Colorado Springs.

Connecticut
Once you’ve quelled your hunger pangs with the Traveler Restaurant’s classic dining options, like linguini and meatballs, pizza, fried seafood platters, and BLTs, browse the stacks — of books, that is — to find your favorite LGBTQ+ authors or stories. This quaint country eatery in Union allows each person to take home up to three titles — for free — from the selection of thousands that line its walls.

Missouri — Bob Connelly of Ballrush — Photo by Jay Hemphill

Arkansas — Photo courtesy of Hicksville Trailer Palace

California — Photo courtesy of Hicksville Trailer Palace
Florida – Photo courtesy of Stonewall National Museum and Archives

US of GAY
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Delaware
Taste in the sand and surf on decidedly gay Poole Beach — you’ll find it at the far southern end of the Rehoboth Boardwalk near Queen Street to be on the nose, but what can ya do? — before cleaning up and heading out for a night of Queen revellers in this lively shore town with a rich LGBTQ+ history.

District of Columbia
Queen or not, every American should pay a visit to the Supreme Court, judiciously located at 1 First Street in Washing- ton, DC, the battleground for many milestone equal-rights cases, including the goings-on in Obergefell v. Hodges, which, in 2015, granted marriage rights to same-sex couples across the United States.

Florida
Dedicated solely to LGBTQ+ history, civil rights, art and culture, the Stonewall National Museum and Archives in Fort Lauderdale (with a branch in neighbor- ing Wilton Manors) features three gallery spaces, monthly and bimonthly exhibits, and includes a perma- nent timeline of American Queer history.

Georgia
Strip down and relax in the steam room, sauna, and pools of this clothing-optional, membership-only men’s bathhouse in midtown Atlanta, which hosts weekly events like Bear & Daddy Night on Tuesdays, $5 lockers on Wednesdays, and a complimentary BBQ on Sundays from 2 to 6 p.m.

Hawaii
Asia the LGBTQ+ Honolulu FrontRunners/Walkers every Saturday at 8:30 a.m. in Kapiolani Park for a fun-filled, all-welcome, rainbow-sash among stunning Waikiki ($10 for singles/$15 for couples) before braving the group at a downtown restaurant, pit stalls and all.

Idaho
You’ll need to lace up your hiking boots to reach the two-mile-in-and-back Goldbug Hot Springs, the trailhead of which starts at Bureau of Land Management land just south of the Elk Bend community. But it’ll be well worth your while when you slip out of your shorts and soak made in natural pools of varying degrees, surrounded by picturesque scenery.

Illinois
Pay homage to the Queer pioneers who blazed their own trails toward LGBTQ+ equality on a self-guided tour of the Legacy Walk in Chicago’s Northalsted neighbor- hood, the placards of which on the area’s 40 rainbow-colored pylons honor our commu- nity’s heroes, including Oscar Wilde, Har- vey Milk, Antonio Pantoja, Frida Kahlo, and Alice B. Toklas.

Indiana
Put your name on the list at popular Bloomington bowling/bbq/kitchen Cardi- nal Spirits, where you’ll know on inspired (but affordable) dishes like lamb barbecue tacos and queso bltnido to mate and cantaloupe gazpacho, sip on canned bourbon cream soda, and take a bottle of its Indiana corn pride vodka, 10% of whose proceeds support local LGBTQ+ orgs.

Iowa
Stop for a photo op at the “American Gothic” cottage in Eldon, famously depicted in Gay artist Grant Wood’s offi- cially named same-name 1930 painting, which has since become an iconic example of 20th-century American art.

Kansas
With its rainbow-flag-painted façade, Equality House, a project of Planting Peace in Topeka, gained international attention (and you saw the news everywhere) when it revealed itself as a beacon of hope and equality against anti-lesbians, specifically the anti-everything Westboro Baptist Church, which is right across the street.

Kentucky
Bourbon — but make it gay. That’s your task in your bicicte from one celebrated distil- lery to the next (most of which are within walking distance of each other along the Ohio River) in downtown Louisville. Stumble back and check off a to- bacco warehouse turned boutique hotel Y.O. Guesthouse.

Louisiana
Best the oppressive New Orleans heat with a summertime treat at Queer women-owned Choc’s in Hell Sodquoll, a traveling water-in-a-cap-up-pop-up shop in the Bywater that serves frosty flavors like grape Nahi, pineapple-cilantro-chili, refreshing cucum- ber-cardamon-basil, and ginger matcha.

Maine
When in Maine, you order the lobster roll — given — but when dining at Ogun- quiac’s Gay-owned The Front Porch you have your pick of elevated seafood. Start with blue cheese mussels or the oyster trio before settling into entrées like lob- ster risotto or haddock tacos. When you’re stuffed to the gills (fish pun intended), head upstairs to the restaurant’s bar, where you can sing along with nightly House to show tunes and standards around a grand piano (the pianist takes requests), all from above by fix- ing your eyes on old hats.

Maryland
One of the last bastions of LGBTQ+ Balti- more nightlife (Charly Char has lost most of its Queer bars and hangouts in the past few years), the Eagle, which celebrates 30 years on the scene in 2021, has triumphed over financial ups and downs to keep its doors open to the leather and kink communities and those who love them. Pro-tip head to the Toolbox for all the what-happens-then-stays-there excitement you’re seeking.

Massachusetts
Following the route of Boston’s first Gay Pride March in 1973, the Equality Trail walk- ing tour includes 13 sites around Beantown, including 83-year-old Bay Village Gay bar Jacob’s, the police headquarters on Berkley Street, the State House on Beacon Hill, and the site of the memorial on Tremont Street, which has hosted the annual Queer March for the past fifty years, peaceful protests instead of lists of civil rights demands at each location.

Michigan
Test your pop-culture prowess at Fives, a retail shop with a stage (and bar) in down- town Royal Oak, on its drag queen trivia night, the latest of which featured Schitt’s Creek-centric questions. If memory games aren’t your thing, opt for less-skilled activi- ties, like weekend drag bingo and the some- times Drag Brunch Cookout.

Minnesota
Friends of Dorothy can follow a yellow brick road (of sorts) to the Judy Garland Museum, established in the actress’s birth- town of Grand Rapids, where you’ll learn about the troubled star’s illustrious life and career, or, on a lucky day, attend a Garland- themed event, book signing, or festival.

Mississippi
Set sail for Ship Island, off the Gulf Islands National Seashore in Biloxi, in your private vessel, or hop aboard the public ferry in Gulfport from March to October. If you arrive in your own boat, anchor near Fort Massachusetts, swim ashore, and make the trek on foot to the easternmost end of the island for legal swimming and fishing in the bay.

Missouri
Foodies will get a crash course in late-19th-century 19th-century American cuisine from James and James’ semi-finalist chef Robin Connelly, who presents a reservations-optional, seven-course, Gratz-inspired tasting menu Thursdays to Sundays at Bulblin in St. Louis. Each meal includes staff explanations of the dishes, a history, and QR code accessible videos on the top- rated restaurant’s research projects.

Montana
Research will show that there’s not much in the way of LGBTIQ+ specific recreation in traditionally conservative Montana, but if you’re traveling through Big Sky Country, consider a stop in Missoula’s Gay Men’s Meeting at The Center, every Wednesday from 7 to 9 p.m.

Nebraska
Belly up to the bar at Omaha’s Mining Company — an on- the-fringe Gay watering hole that has, according to one Yelp review, “existed since the 1960s between the Douglas County jail and urban flight” (though tonight parking has made the area much safer these days) — and order an ice- cold lager or similar no-nonsense libation before heading downstairs to the Museum of local history for some tasty table and art. Every fourth Sat- urday of the month the Big O Bears group hosts a growing good time.

Nebraska
After you’ve made your requisite donation to Las Vegas’ glitzy casino, case the pain with a trip to the Trip Loop, a cluster of Gay bars and clubs along East Naples Drive, near the University of Nevada, Ballard’s Saloon and Charlie’s, both country-western bars (this is the desert, after all), along with the Las Vegas Eagle and FreeZone, offer plenty of merriment without losing your ass — unless that’s what you’re into.

New Hampshire
Dabble in the dark arts with a visit to the “magick retinue” cottage of Bisex- ual British occultist and “Wickedest Man in the World” Aleister Crowley, whose four-month stay at this house in Haver- Hill was owned by self-proclaimed medium Edina- line Adams, resulted in myriad “secret and arcane” activities. If you’re superstitions of the supernatural, there’s a church conven- iently located next door to cleanse your saucy soul.

see US OF GAY page 15

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US OF GAY
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New Jersey
Astor East, a 1.6-square-mile city located on the northern Jersey Shore, has a long and storied history — from disproportionately impoverished minority communities and race riots to political corruption and a severely underserved school system — but has it since overcome many of the obstacles to emerge as one of the most densely populated LGBTQ+ communities in the Mid-Atlantic. There’s tons for you and your gay friends to do here, too. Shop for kitsch at Severedweld, belt your signature tune on karaoke nights at Georgia’s, enjoy a chef-prepared meal at Hotel Tides, dance poolside at Paradise, and carry out an autumn pizza from Modena Stone Fired Kitchen, all of which are Gay-owned and -operated (and just a sampling of the abundant LGBTQ+ businesses around town).

New Mexico
Rest your weary head at the eponymous, well-appointed home of wealthy Bisexual arts patron Mabel Dodge Luhan, now a National Historic Landmark and B&B in Taos, which has welcomed such visionaries as Georgia O’Keeffe, D.H. Lawrence, Ansel Adams, and Martha Graham.

New York
Directly across the street from Manhattan’s Stonewall Inn — the site of the landmark June 28, 1969 riots — is the Stonewall National Monument, designated as such by the National Park Service on June 24, 2016, which encompasses Christopher Park and the block of Christopher Street bordering the park in the West Village. Pop into the gift shop for a souvenir before entering the inn for cocktails and local oral history.

North Carolina
Pick up a few cans of spray paint and head to the ever-changing Free Expression Tunnel, connecting the north and central campuses of North Carolina State University in Raleigh, where you can add your own progressive designs and messages that students and tourists alike can enjoy for years to come (or at least until another artist paints over them).

North Dakota
If you’re seeking more stimulating conversation on your getaway than your travel partner is capable of providing, take your cue from the citys, and at the very least, popularizing it — so it’s only fitting that the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame was born here, too. In addition to many of your LGBTQ+ music idols, from Janis Joplin and Joan Jett to Freddie Mercury and Elton John.

Ohio
Cleveland-based DJ Alfa Feed is widely credited for creating the term “twerk and roll” in the early 1990s — or, at the very least, popularizing it — so it’s only fitting that the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame was born here, too. In addition to many of your LGBTQ+ music idols, from Janis Joplin and Joan Jett to Freddie Mercury and Elton John.

Pennsylvania
Pay your respects by setting a can of Campbell’s Soup beside the final resting place of Gay pop-art icon Andy Warhol, whose grave is at St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cemetery in the town of Castle Shannon. Broadway is broadcast 24/7 on his queen’s website as part of a project called “Fígurum.”

Rhode Island
After a day of exploration in Queer-friendly Providence — The Stable, Mira- bar and The Dark Lady are known for their friendly customer service — spend a night or two at the Old Town Inn in New Shereham or Newport’s Francis Malbone House. Both Gay-owned and secluded on nearby islands.

South Carolina
In a walking city like Charleston, you can spend an entire day sightseeing, and one of the card-miss photo ops is Rainbow Row, 13 brightly colored townhomes along East Bay Street on Charleston Harbor. After you’ve fulfilled your daily step requirement, take a load off and relax with a crafty selection of Moscow Mules at historic queer haunt Dudley’s on Ann.

South Dakota
Club David is as good as it gets for queer congregating in a state not exactly known for its LGBTQ+ progressiveness. Still, you’ll manage to catch a gay-priding buzz with slightly darker Butch Cassidy might have been Gay. Allegedly, his mother heard noises and wondered what he and his new cowboy friend Mike Cassidy, whose last name he eventually took, “were doing down by the corral.” (A mother always knows what’s up, doesn’t she?) See where it all started with a visit to the thief-with-a-heart- of-gold’s humble boyhood abode, and poke around the family plot, located in Paughzhell.

Texas
Down the road from the city’s 1960s film Giant to your tablet, open a bottle of wine, snuggle up in bed and press play in a state room at Marcelo’s Hotel Paisano, which hosted the LGBTQ+ icons Elizabeth Taylor and Rock Hudson, and James Dean in his final role as they shot scenes for the film in this charming far-west Texas town 66 years ago.

Utah
Despite its Mormon upbringing, wanted Wild West outlaw Butch Cassidy might have been Gay. Allegedly, his mother heard noises and wondered what he and his new cowboy friend Mike Cassidy, whose last name he eventually took, “were doing down by the corral.” (A mother always knows what’s up, doesn’t she?) See where it all started with a visit to the thief-with-a-heart- of-gold’s humble boyhood abode, and poke around the family plot, located in Paughzhell.

Vermont
Fill a waffle cone with your favorite Ben & Jerry’s flavor at their factory-based Scoop Shop in Waterbury before taking a saunter through the behind-the-scenes-and-up-the-hill Flower Graveyard, where dis- continued pairs, like Schweddy Balls and Vermont String Cheese, rest in peace. The con- fectionary connoisseurs are longtime sup- porters of the LGBTQ+ community, most recently celebrating International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Virginia
Satisfy your sweet tooth at Ruby Scoops, a Black- and LGBTQ+ owned ice cream shop in Richmond’s Brookland Park neighborhood, which serves up gourmet, small-batch, made-from-scratch ice creams, sorbets, sherbets, and desserts in tantalizing taste combinations like roasted pecan-brown sugar, strawberry-vanilla, and guava-daiquiri, plus a few tried-and-true standards, too.

Washington
Come for a haircut, stay for the coffee at Seattle-based Squirrel Chops, a Queer-owned hybrid salon and café where you can kill two birds with one stone when you get a perm or your daily pick-me-up.

West Virginia
Photo-capture rainbows in the mist as suns reflect off the tawny acid-darkened water of the 60-acre Little Falls in the Allegheny Mountains of Tucker County, then pitch a tent at the state park’s campground for a night of slap-and-tickle under the stars.

Wisconsin
Pizza and wine are a treasured culinary combo — at least for boozing and junk-food enthusiasts (i.e., non-vegans) — and you’ll find options aplenty at wife-and-wife-owned Trouble and Sons in Whitewater, where you can also order fresh salads to tickle yourself into feeling healthy while getting fat and happy.

Wyoming
You may have trouble finding the exact spot where Matthew Shepard was brutally beaten and left to die by two hetrophobic outlaws across the world. He’s currently residing across the country in his van, seeking queer excitement everywhere he roams. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @Mikeymostravels.
Puerto Vallarta (aka “PV”) has long been Mexico’s most popular LGBTQ+ beach vacation destination... Things are expected to get back to normal in time for the high season, in late fall and winter.

Puerto Vallarta boasts three Gay news and information guides: Gay PV, Gay Guide Vallarta, and Out and About PV. You can find them all over the Zona Romantica, and some of the more Gay-friendly mainstream hotels have them in stock at the concierge desk. Tim Wilson, the owner of Gay PV (gaypv.com), also runs Gay bar tours, which is a great way to have fun and get the inside scoop on the city’s LGBT nightlife.

The unofficial Gay beach is the stretch of the public Los Muertos Beach in front of the Blue Chairs Resort, which is the space where the Vallarta Cora was, and the property was completely renovated and looks better than ever.

The newest Gay hotel in Puerto Vallarta is Amaria Villas, which is on a jungle hillside about a 15-minute Uber ride from the Zona Romantica. Jet’s Hostel and the hacienda-style Villa David are both downtown, a short walk from the Zona Romantica. Jet’s is PV’s most affordable option if you are okay with sharing a space. Villa David is now only welcoming returning guests and friends.

Five quick travel tips

1. Timeshares: When you arrive in Puerto Vallarta and clear customs, you will be confronted with salespeople selling timeshares. They often pretend they are affiliated with various hotels and will offer you a free shuttle. Ignore them and just keep walking. Even if you want to buy a timeshare, do so from the secondary market, where they are practically giving them away. Some people cheat the timeshare salespeople at their own game by bidding up the “free gifts” or cash you get to attend the presentation. But you will pay for those rewards and cash by giving up a good part of your day at a sales presentation.

2. Getting from the airport: You can save money on cab fare if you cross over the pedestrian bridge on the side of the airport and take one of the yellow taxis that are parked in front of the Taxis de Martin Restaurant. You can also call an Uber car from there, which will usually be cheaper than a taxi. (Uber is not allowed to pick up at the airport but they can drop you off there. You can catch an Uber car on either side of the pedestrian bridge next to the airport.) If you don’t have a data plan that works in Mexico, you can call Uber using the airport’s free Wi-Fi. A cab to the Zona Romantica is about $15, but about $10 more if you ride from the airport itself. You can also catch a city bus into downtown or the Zona Romantica for just 10 pesos, or about 80 cents. Just be sure to ask the driver if they are going to Centro (downtown): “Va al centro?”

3. Money: Exchange money at a bank. That is where you will get the best rate. Currently it’s about 20 pesos per dollar, but the airport will give you only about 16 pesos per dollar. A bank will give you 18-19 pesos per dollar. But bring copies of your passport. The bank will ask for a copy before they will exchange your dollars—and they won’t make a copy for you. Hotels and many streetfront booths will exchange money, but their rate will be a little less than the bank, and generally will not ask you for a copy of your passport. Most stores will accept dollars as payment, but they usually will not give you a good exchange rate, and they will give you change in pesos. You can also withdraw money from an ATM in pesos, but you will be assessed a fee for every withdrawal, and the exchange rate may be a little less than you would get if you exchanged money with a teller.

4. Water: Don’t be afraid of the water. Puerto Vallarta’s tap water has won awards for quality and safety. Drinking tap water instead of bottled water is also better for the environment. One exception is that if you are staying in a building that relies on a water tank at the top of the building to provide water pressure and if the tank is contaminated, you could get into trouble. But you won’t have a problem at a major hotel.

5. Taxicabs in Puerto Vallarta are not metered, so be sure to establish a price before you get into the taxi. It is customary to tip cab drivers in Mexico, but if they give you extra service, such as helping you carry your bags, you should give them a tip. Taxis are usually cheaper and the best way to ensure that you won’t be ripped off by a taxi driver. But sometimes during peak tourist season, when there is a high demand, taxis may be cheaper than Uber.
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Escape to a small-town feeling

by Lindsey Anderson
SGW Contributing Writer

Spokane is a charming place, described by visitors and residents as a "modernized city with a small-town feel." If you're looking to escape the Seattle freeze or just catch a little bit of that Eastern Washington heat before summer fades away, then look no further than the Inland Empire.

Classy lodging
Spokane is home to many beautiful hotels, but there is no better option than lodging in one of the classic Davenport Hotels: the Historic Davenport Hotel, epitome of luxury, along with the Davenport Grand and Davenport Tower. Originally built in 1914, the ornate Historic Davenport features turn-of-the-century charm, from the Victorian balcony to the red-carpeted staircases, and a chilling secret: it is said to be haunted! Mr. Davenport himself, the hotel's founder, is rumored to walk the halls of the top floor late at night, inspecting his masterpiece. Davenport passed away on the top floor, and Spokane locals swear his soul has never left the building. The hotel is also said to be haunted by the ghost of Mrs. McNamara, a woman dressed in 1920s fashion who can be seen peering over the railing of the lobby if you look at just the right angle. These spooky stories add to the hotel's intrigue, making it a great location for a romantic getaway.

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Fine dining
As you make your way past the falls, you'll find some of Spokane's best restaurants. Anthony's provides guests with the best views in the city, overlooking the falls, and as the sun sets, the beautiful colors of downtown. Anthony's has a classic seafood menu, showcasing some of the best catches to come out of Eastern Washington.

Another option for fine dining is Kincaid's, a must for any foodies in the city. It's a Spokane landmark offering views of the river and skyline, as well as perfectly grilled steak and salmon.

For more casual but still excellent food in Spokane, there is perhaps no better place than the classic Frank's Diner. Located in an old railroad with a 1920s feel, Frank's serves all the comfort food you could ask for—and while you're asking, request a waffle. Frank's has the best waffles in town, possibly in the world, cooked to golden perfection and topped with berries or the classic chocolate shops. The restaurant's rustic-themed design is very fitting for Spokane, as the town originated as a railroad hub and mournful train whistles still pierce the night.

Shop till you drop!
Spokane has some excellent retail stores to check out while you're visiting the city. Just across the street from Riverfront Park you'll find Riverpark Square shopping center. This mall has all of the fanciest stores as well as fun stops for the whole family, with a theater on the top level, Polkadot Pottery painting studio on the second floor, and, on the basement level, the Mabey's Discovery Center, a museum for kids.

Just across from Riverfront Park sits two of Spokane's beloved stores, Boo Radley's and Atticus, both named after characters in the classic novel To Kill A Mockingbird.

Boo Radley's is a curiosity shop full of knockknocks and intriguing books, while Atticus has some of the best coffee in town and an excellent gifts-section. Full of rugged Pacific Northwest charms, Atticus features home decor, mugs and candles created by local artists. Atticus also has auating books, everything from used classics to children's books on feminism. A stop to Spokane isn't complete without a visit to Boo Radley's and Atticus.

In Spokane you'll find a little bit of everything: gorgeous nature, wonderful parks, amazing food and charming shops. It's a great place for a summer vacation or even just a weekend away from Seattle. Enjoy the views, the sunshine and, of course, the waffles at Frank's.
NEW MEXICO

Sunflowers, blue doors, and sunsets on the plains
A New Mexico vacation

by Josephine Baird
SGN Contributing Writer

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the idea of traveling has been seemingly off limits for much of the year. But with continued safety measures, traveling no longer feels like a pipe dream. To celebrate a personal milestone—finishing my master's degree program—my mother and I went to New Mexico. While I'd never had much interest in seeing the state before, my mother promised it was worth a visit—and she wasn't wrong. In all my travels, I've never been in a place quite like New Mexico, with its unique culture that combines Indigenous heritage and the historic remnants of the cowboy era as well as Spanish and Mexican rule. The adobe homes with their round-edged walls and brightly colored accents make for picture-postcard sights in town, while the highways wind through the stark and stunning beauty of the desert plains.

To start our trip, we flew into Albuquerque, the largest city in New Mexico, and stayed at the Hotel Andaluz, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. Home to New Mexico's first elevator and a gorgeous interior, the hotel also houses MAS, a restaurant known for its unique take on traditional Spanish cooking. The restaurant didn't disappoint our party and was accommodating to our vegetarian needs, making this one of the best meals we had in the state.

After Albuquerque, we drove to Santa Fe, taking the scenic route through Jemez Springs and its famed hot springs. To take part in the local culture, my mom and I went to a local hot spring with four different pools. The pools' temperatures usually hover around 100 degrees Fahrenheit, but on the hot day of our visit, the pools were warmer than usual—one pool was even too hot to enter with more than a toe. Braving ourselves, we slipped into one of the other, cooler pools for a relaxing day in Jemez.

Next we headed to New Mexico's state capital, Santa Fe. At more than 7,000 feet above sea level, it's the highest state capital in the United States, and with a founding date in the early 1600s, it's also America's second-oldest city. Our day in Santa Fe remains my favorite part of the trip. Our hotel of choice was the Hotel St. Francis with its iconic entryway and its proximity to the heart of Santa Fe.

We spent this part of the journey walking the gorgeous old streets and drifting through the town's galleries and museums, including the New Mexico Museum of Art, which houses a large collection of Native American and Hispanic art. We also visited the Palace of the Governors, which served as the seat of government for Spain, Mexico, and the United States.

The adobe homes with their round-edged walls and brightly colored accents make for picture-postcard sights in town, while the highways wind through the stark and stunning beauty of the desert plains.

We ate crepes at the French Pastry Shop and got coffee at the Café Des Artistes, and then it was back for more strolling and shopping. The culture of Santa Fe was on display at the Palace of Governor's Native American Art Museum, where scores of local Indigenous artists display their craft skills and artistry.

One of the highlights of our visit was a visit to the New Mexico Museum of Art, which houses a large collection of Native American and Hispanic art. We also visited the Palace of the Governors, which served as the seat of government for Spain, Mexico, and the United States.

On our way out of town we visited Canyon Road, Santa Fe's historic arts district and mile-long artists community. The vitality of the Canyon Road art scene made me wonder if I would find these same works hanging in the New Mexico Museum of Art in 30 years. I guess only time will tell.

To end our trip, my mom and I headed to Taos, a northern New Mexico town and unique artist community in the high desert. The peak of this part of the trip was catching a gorgeous sunset on our last day.

While Taos was scenic, I wasn't in the mood for more art galleries at that point. We wanted to take a break and head to the Farmhouse Café and Bakery, an adorable and vegan-friendly establishment with a backdrop of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. We then headed through the small but memorable community of Arroyo Seco, and from there we headed straight to Taos Ski Valley. The valley, according to my mom, was picturesque enough to be the location of a Hallmark movie come winter.

Next we backpacked through Taos and headed along the Rio Grande River once again to Albuquerque. There we finished out the trip with dinner at the Paria Alto restaurant, sharing a delicious pizza, salad, and each other's company.

After a year and a half confined inside our four walls, with no sounds but the clicking of my keyboard and nothing to see out my window but urban Seattle, a trip to colorful, lively New Mexico did my soul good.

If you're looking to brighten your life with the sight of sunflower-strewn fields, bright blue doors and sunsets on the plains, New Mexico might just be the place for you. But be prepared, a trip like this is more fun with sturdy sandals, a fully charged camera and—most importantly—food companions.
Vancouver: An underrated Washington getaway

by Hannah Saunders
SGN Contributing Writer

With its rich history, proximity to Portland and diverse community, Vancouver—also known as “the Cove”—is Washington’s hidden gem. The former Northwest trading hub sits on the banks of the Columbia River and was named after British explorer George Vancouver, who mapped the Northwest coast in the 18th century. Red brick buildings give the downtown area an old-time feel, while vibrant murals are up to the minute.

Vancouver does not leave residents or vacationers lacking when it comes to activities. The location of the city provides endless opportunities for outdoor adventure and social outings. Here are some of my favorite things to do in “the Cove.”

Brewed Awakenings

On every morning of a visit to Vancouver, my dog and I go for our favorite morning treat: he gets a biscuit and I get cold brew with heavy cream. Out of all the coffee stands in the state, Brewed Awakenings is my hands-down favorite!

The company sources certified organic, shade-grown, fair trade and bird-friendly coffee from around the globe and artfully roasts their beans. And the baristas? They’re the sweetest ones you’ll ever meet. I can’t think of a more perfect way to start my day than with delicious coffee and an overjoyed puppy.

Fort Vancouver

Established in 1825, the historic and now-decommissioned Fort Vancouver is a popular destination today. It was originally the headquarters for the Hudson Bay Company’s fur trade, which expanded to support the Army, but the original buildings were burned down during an 1866 wildfire. Rebuilt and preserved, in 1961 Fort Vancouver was named a National Historic Site. Its Pearson Field is ideal for plane-watching, and there are endless meadows, making it dog friendly as well.

I love going to Fort Vancouver for an early morning walk so I can watch the birds swap down or, on an evening stroll so I can watch the sky turn orange with the setting sun. The entire site is so beautiful that many couples hold their wedding there.

The Smokin’ Oak

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Multnomah Falls

How could I fail to mention the stunning waterfalls, only a 30-minute drive from town? Everything about a trip to Multnomah Falls is breathtaking. I always drive on the historic Columbia River Highway, dotted with rainforests, stone bridges and scenic viewpoints.

Multnomah Falls is the most popular stop on the Historic Columbia River Highway, and for good reason. It’s a two-tiered, 690-foot high waterfall with a beautiful bridge of stone balustrades. If you’ve never seen it, Google it now, and then plan your trip to Vancouver!

Everything you need to know about WorldPride 2021

Party in Scandinavia with the happiest people on Earth

by Mikey Rox
Special to the SGN

It’s been two years since Stonewall 50 WorldPride NYC 2019 became the largest international Pride celebration in history, but the “bye” year of 2020 (spoiler alert!) wasn’t due to the pandemic.

The global celebration is held only every odd-numbered year, starting in 2017, given it’s a massive logistical undertaking (before that, it was held in 2000, 2006, 2012, and 2014), and WorldPride Copenhagen/Malmö 2021 couldn’t have come in a better time.

Hundreds of thousands of cooped-up Queers and allies will flock to the twin host cities in Denmark and Sweden, respectively, from August 12 to 22, to party with the happiest people on the planet—a delightful distinction afforded the Scandinavian countries by the United Nations’ famous World Happiness Report. (The United States ranked number 19 in the most recent report, FYI.)

So what’s in store for this year’s all-out progressive-flag-flying festival? Read on for more.

WorldPride 2021 will coincide with two LGBTQ+ anniversaries in Denmark

If you can believe it, it’s been 70 years since Danish doctors in 1951 performed the world’s first successful genital reconstruction surgery (just that is your trivia fact), a medical marvel that provided hope to transgender people the world over. This year is also the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Gay Liberation Front’s Danish chapter, which has been instrumental in blazing trails toward equality for the country. Look how far it’s come!

Opening ceremonies kick off in Copenhagen...with (dun, dun, dun!) COVID restrictions

In conjunction with Copenhagen Pride, WorldPride will officially start on the late afternoon of August 13, but in adherence with COVID-19 protocols, the opening ceremony won’t be held in WorldPride Square—a makeshift village of sorts (similar to the Olympics) located within Copenhagen’s main square—at least not as of press time (things could—and probably will—change).

That potential snafu notwithstanding, Denmark welcomes vaccinated US travelers, and if any testing is needed, both PCR and antigen tests will be available free to everyone, including tourists. 24/7 Munchen Copenhagen is OPENHAGEN again, y’all.

WorldPride Square will be open for the rest of the fest

WorldPride Square will provide a gathering place for all attendees that have traveled from far and wide. LGBTQ+ and nongovernmental organizations spanning the globe will set up shop in the square to greet pedestrians, provide information, and invite folks to get involved. Art exhibits also will be a centerpiece of the village, alongside a street-food market and bars with plenty of space to relax.

Spreads out and explores other WorldPride villages

While WorldPride Square will serve as the jump-off for the 30 days of festivities, other villages will allow crowds to spread out and explore their individual interests. In addition to Sports Village for EuroGames athletes and fans, villages will focus on kids and families, youth, women, and the Queer community, among others. The content of these villages will be specifically tailored to open everyone.

You might have a brush with royalty

Mary, Crown Princess of Denmark, Countess of Monpezat, is patron of Copenhagen 2021, making her the first-ever royal to serve in the role for a major LGBTQ+ event. Say hi if you spot her; she knows a queen when she sees one.

Despite pandemic protocol, the show will go on

Organizers have said in an official statement that despite some COVID-19 modifications, they’re “continuing to plan for full delivery of all Copenhagen 2021 events, taking into account the guidance and recommendations of government agencies. Doubting down, organizers have promised they will not cancel or postpone events.

Now there’s only one thing left to do: Let’s goooooommmmm!!!

Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 200 publications and outlets around the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyroxtravels.
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