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 month-long companions aboard the Wilderness Adventurer, was pointing out the window of the van. "Hail eagles!"

"Yes, our driver, Greg. "Yeah, probably about 30 or 40. They’re trash birds."

"I blinked. "What?"

"They’re trash birds! You 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.


I learned a lot about moss. To know more, you’ll have to keep reading.

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The ship
If you are accustomed to vacationing aboard numerous floating palaces with lavish accommodations throughout hundreds of nameless strangers, UnCruise may not be for you. We were at half-capacity with 31 passengers — all COVID-tested, all friendly. Jill remarked at dinner that this sort of trip "needs the kids out on its own." After spending time getting to know everyone — whether during a hike or happy hour — I’m inclined to agree.

The accommodations were compact show- ers, a shelf storage area, and a single window made complete with a pair of binoculars for birdwatching or sightseeing once we were underway. I found out quickly that my neighbors had a Bluetooth speaker with them.

They were fewer, and quieter. Humble though the accommodations might have seemed, we were by no means lacking. I first thought when waking into my room — a Trailblazer cabin — that the bed was twice the size of the one I have in my studio apartment. Softer, too.

My second was that the wood panelling was absolutely gorgeous. The Wilderness Adventurer was built in 1984. I guess I’m a sucker for the classics.

The crew
We were greeted before boarding by Captain Alan, a warm man with a genuine smile. The few conversations I had with him were pleasant and, having not left Seattle for several months, refreshingly down-to-earth. We went on a small boat tour of the nearby evening port of the San Juan. "The way I see it," he said, "I wouldn’t ask this crew to do anything out here I wouldn’t do myself. Sometimes, I sit down there with the stewards and clean glasses with them."

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

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Lunch on 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. Lunching, cupping, and sipping camp soup to ward off bears, we made our way through the woods on Kukut Island to the beach and back again.

The rest of the days were much the same way, one adventure after the next, with some downtime in between. From there to Takotna, to George Island, to Glacier Bay National Park, and then back home again. Safeguarding gear was provided for the colder 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 noted over the cumm 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 3, passengers swab 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 numbers of wildlife throughout the Inside Passage, in particular, where we were led to a hidden rocky beach, complete with a dark obelisk ponded by electric violet flowers — will fill you with awe.

There was no cell service for most of the trip, but it 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 nights and a cot are all 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 a breakfast burrito and shoebox-size coffee.

What we served was well surpassed my expectations. Three gourmet meals a day starting with a breakfast buffet and ending with a choice of sea, land, or vegetarian options — is what we get. Salmon the first night. Lamb another, steak another. All expertly prepared and followed by a dessert specially prepared by the ship’s pastry chef to complement 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 Hennessy’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 NPS’s 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 freshish 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 a 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 jam 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-flying 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.unccruise.com.
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 in Honolulu, with 160 armed soldiers, to negotiate peace agreements with the monarch, Queen Liliuokalani. Outnum-

mered 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 shamefully, so he appointed Special Commissioner James Bleust 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 1899, 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 must stick to low-end jobs that don’t pay what they need to survive (estimated to be $212,000 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 urging 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 injury, 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 spit 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 vacation 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”

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SGN AUGUST 27, 2021 CELEBRATING 47 YEARS!
by Mikey Rox  
Special to the SGN

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 wanderlusters.

Missouri — Rob Connolly of Balnsh — Photo by Jay Hemphill

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.

Alaska

Newly renovated Mad Myrna's, in downtown Anchorage, hosts a wide range of LGBTQ+ events, including movie nights, drag and strip shows, karaoke, and Pride pageants. This nighttime mainstay, along with Queer dive bar The Raven just down the street, has provided last frontier fabulousness for over two decades.

Arkansas

Pet-friendly Prad 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 darts.

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 Uxson allows each person to take home up to three titles — for free — from the selection of thousands that line its walls.

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Travel

US OF GAY

continued from page 9

Florida
Florida in the sand and surf on decidedly gay Poodle 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 Queer revelry in this lively shore town with a rich LGBTQ+ history.

District of Columbia
Queer or not, every American should pay a visit to the Supreme Court, judiciously located at 1 First Street in Washington, DC, the battleground for many milestone equal-rights cases, including the game-changing 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 neighboring Wilton Manors) features three gallery spaces, as well as a community room, monthly and bimonthly exhibits, and includes a permanent 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
Aoku the LGBTQ+ Mokuleia FrontRunners/Walkers every Saturday at 8:30 a.m. in Kapolei Park, for a free, all-ages, all-abilities lawn bowling at a starting line.

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 neighborhood, the placards of which on the area's 40 rainbow-colored pylons honor our community's heroes, including Oscar Wilde, Harriette May, Antoni Panjola, Filda Kabalo, and Alice B. Toklas.

Indiana
Put your name on the list at popular Bloomington gay-friendly bar/kitchen Cardinal Spirits, where you'll know you've arrived when you see the sign featuring a picture of a beer bottle, a credit card, and a credit card symbol.

Iowa
Stop for a photo op at the "American Gothic" cottage in Eldon, famously depicted in gay artist Grant Wood's oft-parodied same-name 1930 painting, which has since been transformed into an icon of 20th-century American art.

Kansas
With its rainbow-flag-painted facade, Equality House, a project of Planting Peace in Topeka, gained international notoriety when the owner of the house, a conservative Christian group, alluded to a shooting in 2015.

Kentucky
Bourbon — but make it gay. That's your task as you bounce from one celebrated distillery to the next (most of which are within walking distance of each other) along the Ohio River in downtown Louisville. Stumble back and rebuild at the Makers' Mark Distillery before staying at the historic G pitched Tale.

Louisiana
Best the oppressive New Orleans heat with a summertime treat at Queer women-owned ice cream shop Hail Soo Halls, a traveling water-in-a-cup pop-up shop in the French Quarter.

Maine
When in Maine, you order the lobster roll — given — but when dining at Ogunquit'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 oysters like lobster 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 the night's standards on a grand piano (the pianist takes requests). If you look above the bar, you'll be amazed by fish and old hats.

Maryland
One of the last bastions of LGBTQ+ Baltimore nightlife (Charity Chats has lost most of its Queer bars and hangouts in the past few years), the Eagle, which celebrates 30 years of business on the scene in 2021, has transformed over the years into a haven for the Leather and kink communities and those who love them. Pro-tip: head to the Toolbox for all the what-happens-there-stays-there excitement you're seeking.

Massachusetts
Following the route of Boston's First Gay Pride March in 1970, The Equality Trail walking tour includes 13 sites around Beantown, including the 83-year-old Bay Village Gay bar, the police headquarters on Berkeley Street, the State House on Beacon Hill, and the site of the 2013 Gay Bombing.

Michigan
Test your pop-culture prowess at Fiswell, a retail shop with a stage (and bar) in downtown Royal Oak, on its drag queen trivia nights.

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-focused 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 fishing and funning in the buff.

Missouri
Poodles will get a crash course in late-19th-century 18th-century American cuisine from James and Reba Bondert, who presents a reservations-requested, seven-course, Grant-inspired tasting menu Thursday to Sundays at Belmenth 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 LGBTQ+-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 Mining Company — an on-the-fringe Gay watering hole that has, according to one Yelp reviewer, "enjoyed the 1800s between the Douglas County jail and urban night" (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 Mosaic for pool tables and art. Every fourth Saturday 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 casinos, cause the pain with a trip to the Frat Loop, a cluster of Gay bars and clubs along East Naples Drive, near the University of Nevada, Ballards 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 meritment without losing your ass — unless that's what you're into.

New Hampshire
Dabble in the dark arts with a visit to the Quirk and creature of the Bristish occultist and “Weirded Man in the World” Aleister Crowley, whose broomstick stay at this house in Harvard, owned by self-professed medium Evangeline Adams, resulted in myriad “secret and arcane” activities. If you're superstitions of the supernatural, there's a church conveniently located next door to cleanse your sassy soul.

see US OF GAY page 15
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**US of GAY continued from page 10**

**New Jersey**

Asbury Park, a 1.6-square-mile city located on the northern Jersey Shore, has a long and colorful history — from disproportionately impoverished minority communities and race riots to political corruption and a severely underserved school system — but it has since overcome many of those 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. Stop by for kitsh at Seaverrending, belt your signature tune on karaoke nights at Joe’s, enjoy a chef-prepared meal at Hotel Tides, dance poolside at Paradise, and carry out an artisanal 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 than your gay bar than your travel partner is capable of providing until quaffers do exist, y’all, join the Queerly Reading Book and discussion club, which meets every second Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. in the Bisman Barnes & Noble café. Join its Facebook group for title selections and to contribute ideas.

**Ohio**

Cleveland-based DJ Alia Freed is widely credited for creating the term “tech and roll” in the early 1980s — or, at the very least, popularizing it — so it’s only fitting that the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame was born here, too. Inductees include many of your LGBTQ+-music idols, from Janet Jackson and Joan Jett to Freddie Mercury and Elton John.

**Oklahoma**

Many Queer folks got their first sensation of same-sex attraction by playing with shapeless superheroes when they were kids (what future Gay boy didn’t pisa for a peek under the Caped Crusader’s codpiece?), and you can relieve that age of innocence at the Toy and Action Figure Museum, filled to the brim with over 13,000 distinct characters and many mini-condition collectibles, located in Pails Valley.

**Oregon**

Portland-based Wild Diversity offers a full slate of outdoor activities (that require advance reservations) — which include birdwatching around Willamette Pond, a two-day Willamette River paddling adventure, writers’ retreats, and a deaf community campout, among many others — specifically geared toward (but not limited to) BIPOC and QTBIPOC.

**Pennsylvania**

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

**Rhode Island**

After a day of exploration in Queer-friendly Providence — The Stable, Mira-bar and The Dark Lady are known for their neighbor-friendly customer service — spend a night or two at the Old Town Inn in New Shoreham 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 can’t-miss photo ops is Rainbow Row, 13 brilliantly 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 Mason Mikes 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 chilly nighttime buzz with slightly drinks specials (many of which are half-price) and occasional events like drag bingo on the rooftop patio.

**Texas**

Download the 1956 Western film Giant to your tablet, open a bottle of wine, snuggle up in bed and press play in a styrofoam space at Martin’s Hotel Paisano, which hosted LGBTQ+ icons Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, and James Dean in his final role as they shot scenes for the film in this charmin’ far-west Texas town 66 years ago.

**Utah**

Despite his 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 church-with-a-heart- of-gold’s humble boyhood abode, and poke around the family plot, located in Paunui.

**Vermont**

Fill a waffle cone with your favorite Ben & Jerry’s flavor at its factory-owned Scoop Shop in Waterbury before taking a saunter through the behind-the-building-and-up-the-hill Flower Graveyard, where dis-contined pans, like Schweddy Balls and Vernorroy Python, rest in peace. The confectionary connoisseurs are longtime supporters 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 premium, small-batch, made-from-scratch ice creams, sorbets, sherbets, and desserts in tantalizingly taste-combines like roasted peanut/rosemary, strawberry/sweet red bean, and guava dajquiri, 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 and your daily pick-me-up.

**West Virginia**

Photo-capture rainbows in the mist as sunrays reflect off the tassied acid-darkened water of the 57-foot high Thomas 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 booze and junk-food enthusiasts (i.e., non-locavores) — and you’ll find options aplenty at wife-and-wife-owned Trouble and Sons in Whitewater, where you also can order fresh salads to trick 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 homophobic attackers in 1998, as it remains undiscovered to this day, but a memorial bench on the University of Wyoming campus in Laramie serves as a sufficient spot to remember our modern-day martyr.

Mikey Ross (an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than two hundred outlets across the world) is currently nomading across the country in his van, seeking Queer excitement everywhere he roams. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikey.mstravels.
by Ed Walsh  
Special to the SGN

Within an hour after landing at Puerto Vallarta’s airport last month, I was enjoying a cocktail by the pool at the upscale Westin Resort and Spa. It itself as a wellness resort, and I was feeling very well indeed, enjoying the warm breeze coming off the Bay of Banderas. The hotel was 80% booked, but because the property is so expansive, it didn’t feel crowded. Its COVID-19 protocols requiring masks in the indoor common areas and for its employees made it feel very safe.

Puerto Vallarta (aka “PV”) has long been Mexico’s most popular LGBT-friendly destination. The city’s Gay-focused businesses have survived the pandemic, with the exception of the city’s newest Gay bar, Casby Bar, which closed earlier this year after the building’s owner bought out the lease. The bars that don’t also serve food had to close for the month of August, as the delta variant became a concern, but things are expected to get back to normal in time for the high season, in late fall and winter.

On Mexico’s west coast along the Bay of Banderas, Puerto Vallarta is a little less than a five-hour flight from Seattle. Delta and Alaska fly there nonstop from Sea-Tac. You don’t need a COVID test or proof of vaccination to enter Mexico, but you will need a negative test to go back to the US.

Most of the larger hotels, including the Westin and Marriott, will give you a test in the hotel for free. You can also get a test at Puerto Vallarta’s airport for about $20.

Much to offer LGBT visitors

Puerto Vallarta has about two dozen Gay bars and more than a half dozen LGBT hotels around the area. Almost all of the Gay stuff is to be found in the Zona Romantica area, which is just south of downtown, just on the other side of the Cuale River. Some people also call that neighborhood Old Town, which is a misnomer, since downtown is much older.

The Gay epicenter of Puerto Vallarta is at the corner of Lázaro Cárdenas and Ignacio L. Vallarta, where the very popular open-air club Mr. Flamingo is. Playa del Rodeo next door is busiest at late night due to its popular drag shows, which generally don’t start until after midnight.

The other clubs on that block include La Noche, CC Slaughter’s, and the newest club on the block, Industry and CoDe.

An LGBT-friendly destination on Mexico’s west coast

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.

تجاور هايلوت، the owner of Gay PV (gapply.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 why it is called the Blue Chairs.

PV offers a number of Gay-focused tours and cruises, but the best-known and longest running is Diana Tours, run by Diana DeCoste, a French-Canadian Lesbian. Her cruises have been running for over twenty years, and she deservedly has a loyal following.

Accommodations

For the uninhibited, the Puerto Vallarta airport is about a 30-minute ride north of downtown. Just south of the airport, you will find some of the city’s best luxury full-service megahotel properties, including the Westin and the Marriott Hotel and Spa, both of which, while not Gay-specific, promote themselves to the LGBT community, and the staff has been trained to welcome LGBT visitors and provide them with information about Gay-oriented nightlife and activities.

There are also a number of Gay hotels, most of which are in the Zona Romantica, the heart of Gay PV. Hotel Mercurio is a great budget hotel. Piliata PV is an upscale boutique property for Gay men. Casa Cupula is a luxury LGBT hotel that deservedly ranks highly. Almar, on the beach, is the largest of the Gay hotels; it is part of the Montaamart beach club, which is open for day passes and includes a huge pool, cabanas, a bar, and a restaurant. Piliata LGBT took over the airport but they can drop you off there. You can also call a Uber car or 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 downtown or the Zona Romantica for just 10 pesos, or about $0.50 cents. Just be sure to ask the driver if they are going to Centro (down town).“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 you for a copy before they will exchange your dollars — and they won’t make a copy for you.

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. The 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. Taxis: Taxis in Puerto Vallarta are not metered, so be sure to establish a price before you get into the taxi. It isn’t 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 times, 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
SGN Contributing Writer

Spokane is a charming place, described by visitors and residents as a "metropolitan 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 historic Davenport features turn-of-the-century charm, from the Victorian ballroom 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. The hotel is a must-visit if you're in the area, and the story of the hotel and crashed through a skylight, on August 18, 1920. She survived the fall, and the hotel survived, and legend has it that the story of the hotel and crashed through a skylight, on August 18, 1920. She survived the fall, and the hotel survived, and legend has it that the story is told to this day.

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.

Fine dining
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.

Parks-a-plenty!
If nature is your thing but you like it inside the city limits, never fear: Spokane has plenty of beautiful and well-maintained parks to explore. Manito Park, one of the best loved parks in the city, is filled with lush gardens originally designed by Frederick Olmsted, who also designed New York's Central Park. The Olmsted town can be seen in Manito's old brick bridges and winding pathways, and on the park's Japanese Garden loop, visitors can stroll amid the blooming cherry trees and koi ponds. Manito's vast, manicured fields are perfect for picnics, volleyball games and sending the kids to run off some steam. A trip to Spokane isn't complete without exploring one of the city's most famous parks, Riverfront Park. Built for the 1974 World's Fair, the park is full of whimsy, Giant butterfly sculptures leading guests the falls, downtown Spokane has several footbridges with breathtaking views of the river and falls.

Shop till you drop
Spokane has some excellent retail stores to check out while you're visiting the city. Downtown 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 Mamas Dining 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 knock-knock and riddling books, while Atticus has some of the best coffee in town and an excellent gifts-section. Full of rugged Northwest charms, Atticus features home decor, mugs and candles created by local artists. Atticus also has an art gallery, 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.
Travel

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 the past year and a half. But with continued safety measures, traveling no longer feels like a pipe dream. This year, 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 MASA, 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' temperature usually hovers 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.

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 full display at the Palace of Governor's National Historic Landmark, where scores of local Indigenous artists display their craft skills and artisanship.

One day, we wandered into the Rocki Gorman's jewelry and clothing store in the La Fonda Hotel. On the day of our visit, the counter was staffed by a man named Mark Stoffel, from Castle Rock, looking particularly photogenic in a black cowboy hat and bolo tie. When I asked Stoffel his thoughts on Santa Fe, he said, "There is nothing quite like the culture anywhere—the food, the clothing and the spiritualness."

On our way out of town we visited Canyons Road, Santa Fe's historic arts district and mile-long artists community. The vitality of the Canyons Road art scene made me wonder if I would find these same works hanging in the New Mexico Museum of Art in 50 years I guess only time will tell.

To end the 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 the mountain.

While Taos was scenic, I wasn't in the mood for more art galleries at that point. We soon left the town in favor of a detour 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 backtracked through Taos and headed along the Rio Grande River once again to Albuquerque. There we finished out the trip with dinner at the Parua Alto restaurant, sharing a delicious pizza, salad and each other's company.

After a year and a half confined inside 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 me 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.

A small-town church with a picturesque entry – Photo by Josephine Baird
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 artisally roasts their beans. And the baristas? They’re the sweetest souls 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-commissioned Fort Vancouver is a popular destination today. It was originally the headquarters for the Hudson's 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 Van- couver was named a National Historic Site. Its Pearson Field is ideal for plane-watching, and there are endless meadows, mak- ing it dog friendly as well.

I love going to Fort Vancouver for an early morning walk so I can watch the birds swoop down, or 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

Texas-style BBQ, Cocktail bar (if that's what you're into). Good music. Friendly staff. Oregon White Oak smoked meats that melt in your mouth ... especially the brisket and the pork spareribs. The Smokin' Oak will turn your worst day into your best.

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. The Multnomah Falls is the most popular stop on the Historic Columbia River Highway, and for good reason. It's a two-tiered, 900-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’s 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 at a better time.

Hundreds of thousands of rooftops-up Queer artists and allies with tickets to the twin host cities in Denmark and Sweden, respectively, from August 12 to 22, to party with the largest group of people on the planet — a delightful distinction provided to 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 (put that in your trivia hat), 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 (hun, hun, hun) 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. Malmöm, 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 exhibitors will also be a centerpiece of the village, alongside a street-food market and bars with plenty of space to relax.

EuroGames will be held simultaneously

If you enjoy watching hims, hers, and thens compete in variety of sports that range from boxing and badminton to dancing and dodgeball, add the spectator-friendly EuroGames to your list of to-dos while you’re in Copenhagen. If you want to get hands-on (but not handy; mind ya business, see), consider signing up to become a volunteer at the games, to be held August 18 to 20. EuroGames’ website is currently accepting those applications.

Spread out and explore 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 target audience specific but open to everyone.

You might have a brush with royalty

Mary, Crown Princess of Denmark, Cousin of Monique, is part 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 restrictions, 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 goooooo!

Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBTQ lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than 100 outlets across the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyroxtv.
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