



SGN THE
TRAVEL ISSUE

QUEER HISTORY & WONDER

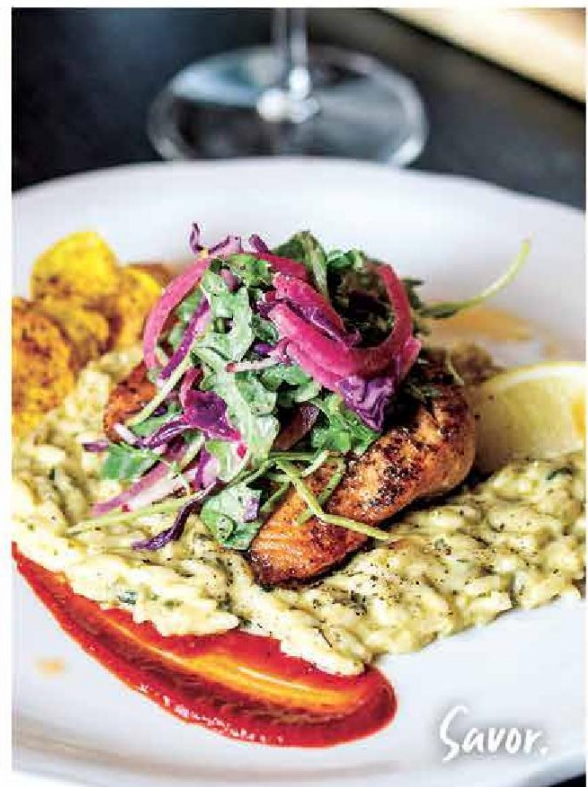
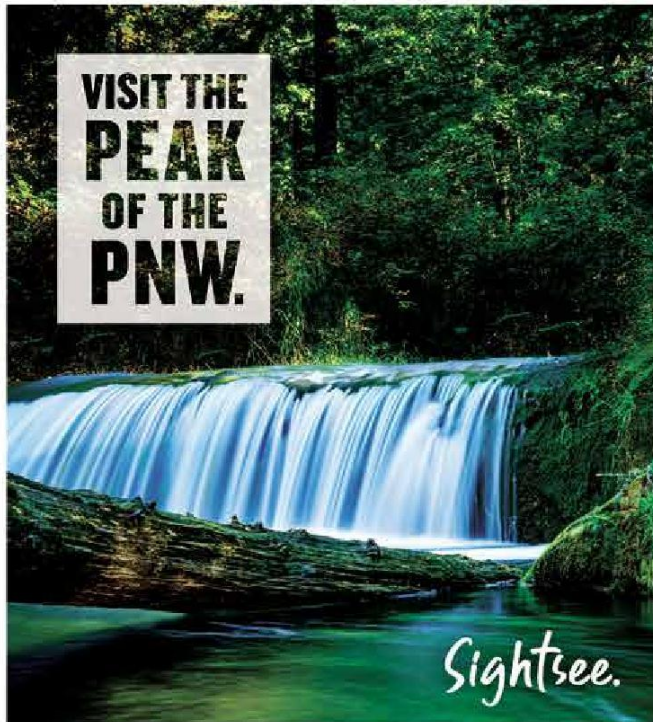
NYC's still got it

BY LINDSEY ANDERSON
SGN CONTRIBUTING WRITER

New York City is the birthplace of revolutions, where hip-hop began and where the modern-day LGBTQ+ rights movement first raised its tiny fist into the air. For anyone hoping to travel to the greatest city in the world, there are, of course, the usual tourist sites: Times Square, Broadway, the Met. However, for the more adventurous Queer traveler, New York is where you'll find the room where it happened.

see NEW YORK page 4

Photo by Lindsey Anderson



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A Midsummer Night's Dream
Sarah Roa (Puck)
Photo: Emily Cooper

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Stonewall National Monument – Photos by Lindsey Anderson

NEW YORK

continued from cover

Stonewall

Near the crossroads of a beautiful brownstone neighborhood and a bustling intersection of shoppers sits an ordinary-looking brick alehouse. A little over fifty years ago, there was nothing to mark this dive bar as anything other than a neighborhood gathering place. But today, it sits in front of a small park and several monuments announcing its historical significance to all who pass by. This is where the modern Queer rights movement began.

For anyone passing the Stonewall Inn today, the message is loud and clear. The building is surrounded by a colorful bunting of all the various Pride flags. For a Seattleite, it feels like coming home, stepping back into the Capitol Hill neighborhood, albeit a lot closer to the wrong ocean.

Inside, aside from a small plaque and a wall of Pride flags, the room looks like just about any other Queer bar. However, the crowd it draws today is usually tourists.

The Stonewall Inn knows how to make a quick buck off its cultural fame. Nobody enters without buying a drink — it is not a museum, after all. Behind the counter, bartenders offer merch commemorating the riots of '69 and the same beverages they've been serving for the last fifty years. They know the significance of the building they work in, but to them, it's no different than any other neighborhood gathering joint.

A hub for history

If you're looking for more Queer history in NYC, you might want to stroll a bit past Stonewall to the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, located in SoHo. This museum is carefully curated to showcase some of the best modern artists to come out of the LGBTQ+ scene and pieces that capture some of the movement's most important struggles and victories, including the AIDS crisis and the passage of marriage equality.

For a more general look at art and history, one doesn't have to go far. New York is thick with museums — the best of which happen to be on elegant Fifth Avenue. Of course, there is also the American Museum of Natural History, as seen in the hit film *Night at the Museum*, but the real glitz and glamor can only really be found at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Metropolitan Museum of Art – Photo by Lindsey Anderson

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Photo by Lindsey Anderson

Like SAM on steroids, it has a bit of everything. A wing of modern art for pretentious PNW hipsters to make sense of is a given, but the beauty of the Met lies in the history hidden inside its many halls and wings. It's easy for one to get lost in the shifting periods, but getting lost is part of the joy of a trip to the Met. Artifacts from around the world take you back in time, begging guests to ponder just what they might have been doing in the days of Jesus, knights, or early America.

Central Park

No trip to New York City is complete without a stroll through the world's most famous park. Central Park, as it is aptly named, sits in the middle of Manhattan, giving the urban jungle a sprig of greenery, and a homesick Washingtonian some much-needed verdant spaces.

The park is a historical relic itself with a dark history. It now rests in the area that was once Seneca Village, a thriving Black com-

munity in the heart of Manhattan. When the city planned out the park, the community was destroyed. Homeowners were forced to give up their property without adequate reimbursement, businesses were shut down, and the people were dispersed across town.

Despite the lesser-known and tragic origin story of Central Park, the location has become an iconic part of American culture, a backdrop for some of the best rom-coms, like *When Harry Met Sally* and *Sav-*

ing Face, and a staple in iconic television series, like *Friends*. The park also pays homage to American history with several bronze statues along the horse-trodden paths, commemorating everyone from Revolutionary War heroes to Balto, one of the brave dogs from the 1925 diphtheria outbreak in Nome, Alaska.

Fine dining

New York is a city full of wonders, but after a day of fine dining, you'll be the full one. A trip here is not complete without tasting some of the finest foods available. From classic street hotdogs to classy five-star restaurants, it isn't hard to find something for everyone's palate.

To start your day off right, Manhattan has plenty of great breakfast options. If large, hearty portions of classic East Coast breakfast favorites are what you're looking for, check out the Brooklyn Diner, offering sweet and savory items perfect to start your day. If you're more in the mood for a classy pastry with a unique French vibe, check out Angelina's, just a hop away from Times Square. The classic European atmosphere and sweet Nutella donuts will transport your taste buds to another time and place entirely.

For those looking for a romantic dinner on the town, there is no stop like Carmine's. The classic Italian restaurant is known for its monumental portions and will not disappoint. There is no such thing as making a wrong menu choice here, unless of course you forget to order its world-class cheesy bread appetizer.

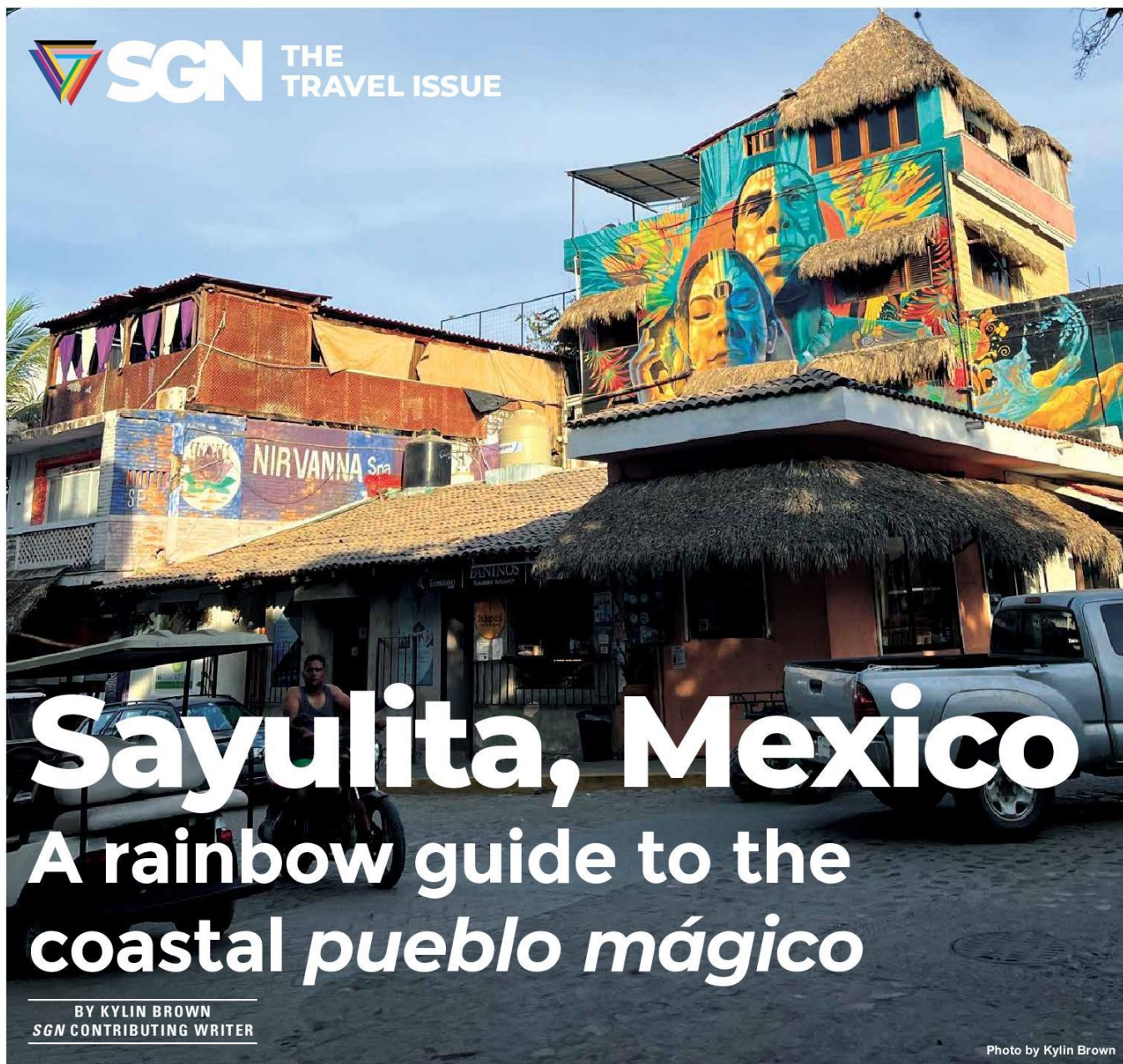
If you're looking for a *Mad Men* type of restaurant, take a trip down to the Empire State Building for a delicious burger at the 1960s-inspired restaurant The State. With classic décor and possibly the best burgers in history, it's a must-stop.

No visit to Broadway is complete without a visit to Sardi's. An iconic stop for celebrities, the walls are lined with caricatures of some of Hollywood's favorites. If you're lucky, you might just find yourself seated next to an up-and-coming star.

New York is a Queer traveler's paradise, a city everyone must visit at least once in their life. Come for the Broadway shows and copious museums, and stay for the food and nightlife. It's a city full of history, where our foremothers threw the first stones at the Stonewall riots.



Angelina's — Photo by Lindsey Anderson



Sayulita, Mexico

A rainbow guide to the coastal *pueblo mágico*

BY KYLIN BROWN
SGN CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Photo by Kylin Brown

After a seven-day “work-from-away” trip to the small coastal town of Sayulita, Mexico, I have had my fill of micheladas, stunning views, and fresh ceviche, usually all at once, toes in sand.

Mexico is known to have some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, so these indulgent daytime experiences were unsurprising. I was *not* expecting to find a bustling nightlife or a safe haven for the LGBTQ community — but I did.

Getting to Sayulita

Having flown into Puerto Vallarta from evergreen Seattle, the first noticeable feature was the climate. From the plane, the landscape looked dry, arid, and dusty. But the cacophony of tropical birdsongs, flowering foliage, and eager sunshine put me at ease. Isn't every paradise hot and dusty?

Thanks to the multilingual info center inside the airport, my group of seven twentysomethings secured transit recommendations, a map, and directions to aid us on the next leg of our journey: the hourlong drive to Sayulita.

Being such a large party, we opted to travel by bus. Other options included Ubers and taxis, which the info desk worker warned commonly overcharge new arrivals, and more expensive rental cars. As seven recent college graduates, we went for the affordable option. Bus tickets cost 50-100 pesos, or \$2-5.

After a couple of Coronas with lime at a swordfish-themed spot across the highway from the airport, we crammed ourselves onto a bus with our luggage both in our laps and all around us.

This is also when I realized that vacations aren't to be taken lightly, and it was time to switch out the lime-colored glasses I had on with the ultra-UV-protective kind. The bus was hot, and dehydration was setting in after a long day of travel.

It is good to note for Seattleites that no matter where you go along the Bahía de Banderas (meaning Bay of Flags, named for historical pirate activity in the region), you will be buying water. Bottled water, juggled water, and ice in plastic bags. My group quickly learned the art of the 10-gallon jug, spending 40 pesos (\$2) on each one and learning to refrigerate our nalgens overnight.

After our bus ride through the jungle that weaves the state of Nayarit together, we familiarized ourselves with the heat of early May and walked to our Airbnb. The real trip was finally beginning.

Street life

Once you've settled in, it's time to take a stroll through the colorful *pueblo mágico* (“magical town”). Mexico has a total of 132 of these *pueblos mágicos*, whose historical and cultural importance is symbolic to the nation and engages visitors in tradition.

Rainbows of *papel picado*, perforated paper folk art, form a canopy of vivid color over the streets near the main plaza and the beach. Underneath them, yellow churro stands, family-style restaurant seating, and sky-blue surf shops await.

After the dreary Seattle winter, it felt as though my eyes were adjusting to the saturation of it all until the moment I left. Even the public recycling bins are colorful and shaped like animals, the sun, or other regional icons.

Many symbols, like these animals, I would learn, are actually religious.

Indigenous Huichol iconography exists throughout town and along beach trails, even while the influence of expat families rises to prominence.

Streetside, locals sell tacos in open-air buffets outside of their kitchens, or in portable ones. Meanwhile, across the street, a tanned, blonde Australian can call you “darling” and whip up the frothiest “chakra-healing” smoothie you could ask for.

For travelers weary of exiting their comfort zones, this juxtaposition of cultures makes tourism and exploration of the area quite comfy. As the sole Spanish speaker in my group, I got to know some locals and receive more intimate recommendations during our stay, but everyone else did pretty well, too. (A “swing bar” recommendation turned out not to be a swingers' bar or a swing-dancing bar but a bar with all swinging seats along its edges.)

Posters across town advertised nightlife, from live music and DJs on rooftop bars to a weekly “Drag and Disco Night.” Though I was working 9-to-5, my partner and I found time to meander into town at night, while our sun-tuckered friends finally reappeared at the Airbnb. Most nights, the people and scenes of Sayulita after dark reinvigorated me. Tequila and dancing are two peas in a pod for those who wish to indulge, but honestly, the anonymity of the traveler's nighttime served the same purpose as libations.

Aprender, comer, y ver

Drag night was followed by “Country Redneck Night” at the Garden Selinas, a

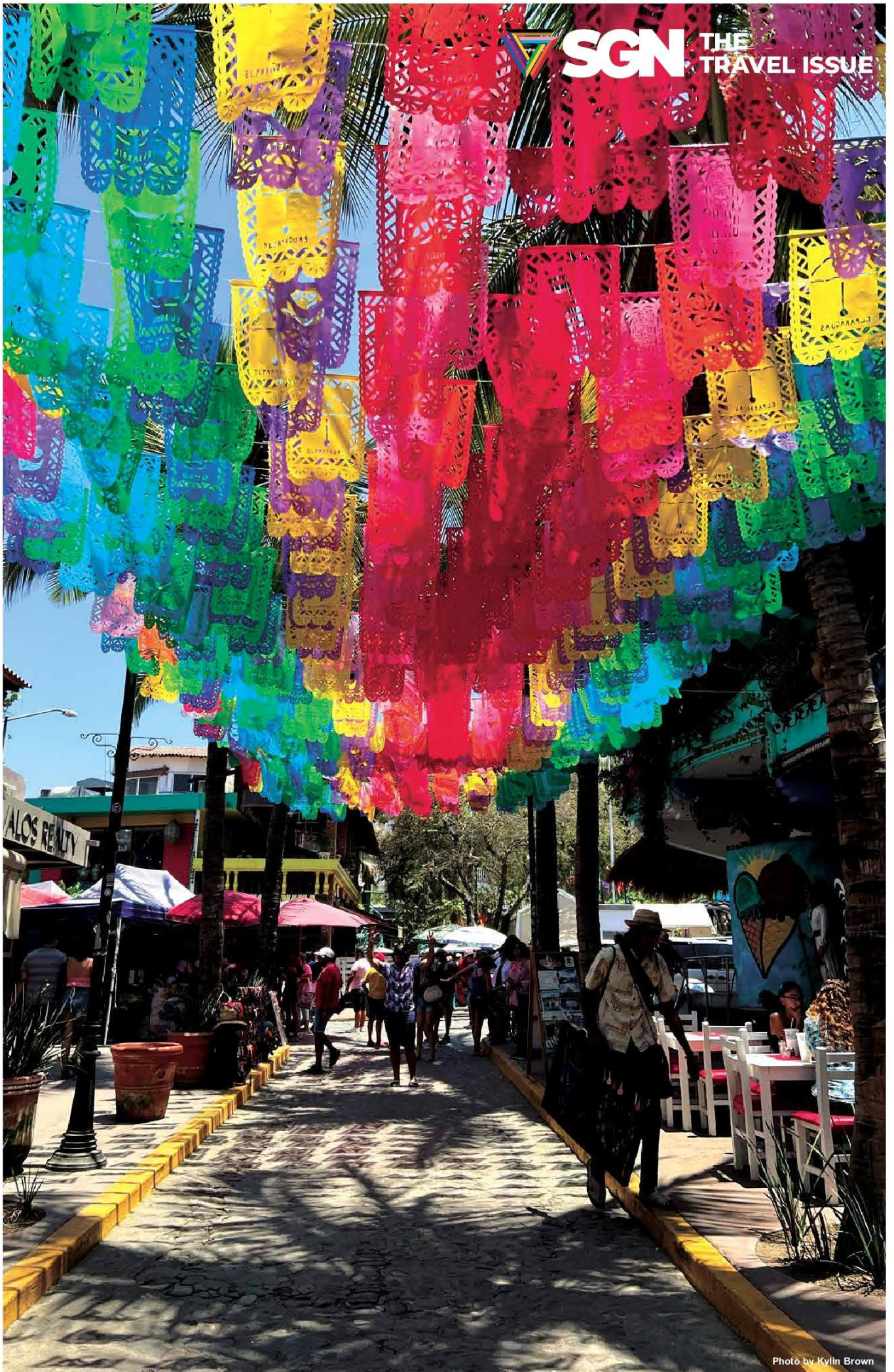
restaurant attached to a resort-style hotel a block up from the beach. Surprising or not, this town of just over 2,000 locals and expats sure knows how to have a proper good time, inclusive of all who wanted to join.

A glimmer of celebration shined upon an all-women wedding party, who proudly proclaimed an entire dance floor to be a Lesbian bar. Nobody stopped them. I found out later that the Chicana brides were on a day trip from the next town up, San Pancho. They said there actually *is* a Lesbian bar there, and a whole gayborhood in Puerto Vallarta: “La Zona Romántica.”

For the LGBTQ community, Sayulita is a common destination for vacations, events, and even weddings. “LGBTQ couples and people of all types are welcomed warmly and happily into Sayulita's eclectic community of writers, artists, surfers, and CEOs. We all live here because we wanted something different and have liberal views on the idea of traditional,” reads a wedding blog post on SayulitaLife.com.

Beyond work, my week in Sayulita consisted of three things: seeing, learning, and eating. I had the best vegetarian tacos of my life (and I am a prideful home cook) and the funnest surf lesson through Patricia's surf shop, and I tried to take in the sights of traditional art and serene sunsets as much as possible.

Discover Sayulita's LGBTQ-friendly hotel options for your next vacation on Sayulita Life's informational page: www.sayulitalife.com/sayulita-lgbtq.



SGN THE TRAVEL ISSUE

Photo by Kylin Brown

Descanso is Palm Springs' newest Gay resort

The luxury property is the first to go Gay in the city in more than a decade

BY DAVID TAFFET, DALLAS VOICE, DALLASVOICE.COM
SPECIAL TO THE SGN
COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LGBT MEDIA ASSOCIATION

Photo courtesy of Descanso Resort

Descanso is the first resort for Gay men to open in Palm Springs in more than 10 years, and "the response has been beyond expectations," said General Manager Kent Taylor. Weekends are already booked through June, although some weeknights are still available during Pride month.

Taylor said the trend among the area's Gay resorts in recent years has been to go straight, and his property was one of the first to do so. Formerly called East Canyon, it lasted as a straight resort for about four years.

Now, however, the property has been completely renovated and has reopened with amenities "to create a special men's experience," Taylor said. Currently the resort features 14 rooms, but two more will come online once they've been refurbished to Descanso standards. Rooms feature king-size beds.

There is also a heated saltwater pool with a spa. For relief from the heat, an outdoor misting system moderates the temperature. Breakfast and "stay-and-splash poolside lunch" are included with the room rates. A cantina offers complimentary snacks and beverages. For dinner, plenty of restaurants are within walking distance.

Many guests arrive by car, and those vehicles can remain parked throughout in the off-street, overnight parking the resort provides.

Sightseeing

For those who prefer to mix their pool time with sightseeing, there's plenty to see and do in Palm Springs, and the resort lies just two blocks from the beginning of the city's commercial area.

First on the list for anyone from the flatlands of Texas has to be the aerial tramway. Get a fantastic view of the Coachella Valley from 8,500 feet high in the sky. When you reach the top, you can enjoy the trails and hiking as well as a restaurant, bar, and cafeteria.

For zoo lovers, Taylor said, the 1,200-acre Living Desert is ranked among the top 10 in the US. Visiting in summer when the temperature in Palm Springs often soars over 100 during the day? Go for a night walk instead for a nocturnal zoo experience.

Palm Springs is known for its mid-century modern architecture and a variety of stores that feature furniture from that period. To tour the neighborhoods, Taylor

said the best way is by bike, which Descanso offers complimentary to its guests.

The city is also known as a celebrity hangout and hideaway. Stars have lived in this desert resort since the 1920s, and others have been frequent visitors. Sonny Bono served as the city's mayor. To honor them, the Palm Springs Walk of Stars features blocks of sidewalk stars, including one for Dallas favorite Del Shores (*Sordid Lives*) at 538 N. Palm Canyon Drive.

If you're looking for museums, Palm Springs has one of the country's top air and space museums as well as an art museum that's quite good.

The city recently saw the 2022 version of its biggest Gay event, the White Party, the granddaddy of circuit parties. Pride weekend is held during cooler weather, though; this year it's scheduled for Nov. 3-6. Leather Pride Weekend is Oct. 27-30, and

Western Exposure's Dadfest celebrates daddies on July 4; Descanso recommends the all-day pool party as the best way to enjoy the event.

Next year's Palm Springs International Film Festival takes place Jan. 4-15. It is one of the largest in North America, attracting 135,000 people.

Joshua Tree National Park is an hour's drive from town. This portion of the Mojave Desert ecosystem features the spiky Joshua trees, enormous boulders, and a surprising variety of wildlife in this desert habitat.

Dining

Many Descanso guests just remain on property during their stay, enjoying the resort experience and walking or Ubering to nearby restaurants for dinner, Taylor said. On its website, the staff's picks of favorite restaurants include something for everyone.

Fisherman's Market, located downtown, is recommended as "definitely a great place for fish and chips, grilled seafood" (in the desert!).

Al Dente and Il Corso are the staff picks for Italian food. Jake's is an American bistro. Johannes is a "local favorite" for modern European cuisine by an Austrian-born chef. The Sandwich Spot offers "fun concept sandwiches. Not your standard sub shop."

A number of Mexican offerings include La Bonita's; Rio Azul Mexican Bar & Grill, home to Palm Springs' original drag brunch; and La Tablita in neighboring Cathedral City, which is listed as "absolutely a local favorite."

More information about Descanso can be found at descansoresort.com.



Photo courtesy of Descanso Resort

Discover Europe.

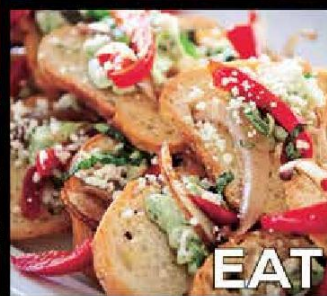


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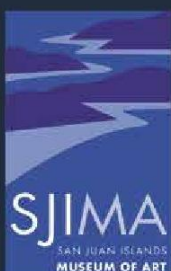
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WHAT WAS: unmarked HELEN O'TOOLE



Pirate Queen (detail) – Photo by Spike Mafford

"My paintings probe this covert mess of darkness and trauma, implicating the inner lives of my ancestors and their sense of place. The burnt-out big houses, the remains of famine cottages, and the limestone walls surrounding stony green fields are expressions of the stories told, marking out what's mine and what's yours."



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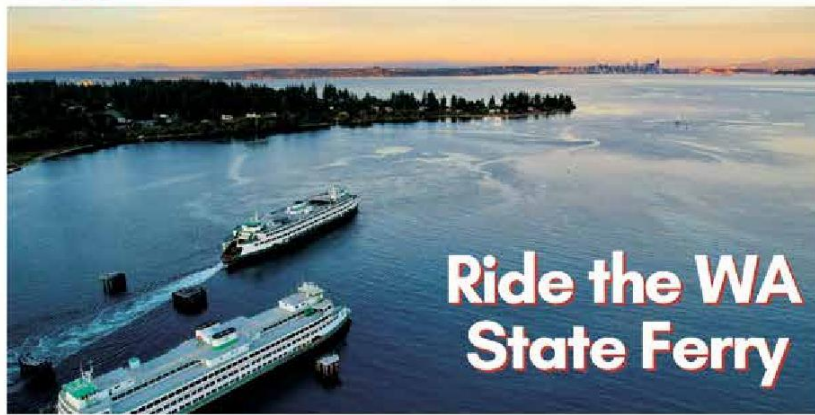


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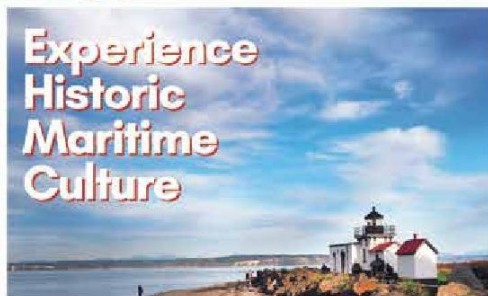
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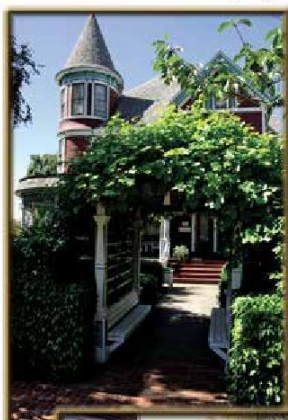


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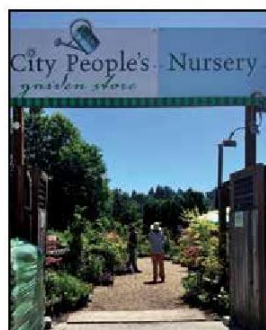
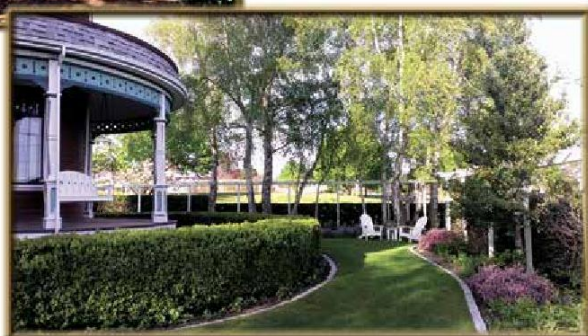
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Sin City

A gambling-free Vegas weekend is still a big deal

BY RICH LOPEZ, DALLAS VOICE, DALLASVOICE.COM
SPECIAL TO THE SGN
COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL LGBT MEDIA ASSOCIATION

Photo courtesy of Westgate Las Vegas

I'm not gonna lie: Las Vegas has never held much appeal for me. The bright lights and big city are certainly a fun attraction, but a trip there also seemed like voluntary sensory overload, and my post-quarantine self has come to be a lot more chill. Plus, I'm no gambler.

So how did I end up there for a fun, fabulous weekend?

Westgate Las Vegas Resort and Casino (WestgateResorts.com) extended an invitation for a weekend visit this past January. To be properly transparent, the resort hosted the trip that allowed me to experience its amenities and entertainment, all just off the Strip. Like many resorts, if not all, in Las Vegas, Westgate offers layers of interest, including its massive casino, chef-driven food, on-site entertainment (Queer icon Barry Manilow is in residency here, weekends through June 11), and ultra-comfortable accommodations.

Since I arrived in the daytime, Las Vegas surprisingly didn't overwhelm me with flashing lights and slot machine noises everywhere, even though they could be found inside Harry Reid (formerly McCarran) International Airport, which was a fun if not expected sight for my virgin Vegas eyes.

The resort itself is minutes away from the main drag, adjacent to the Convention Center, but served a lovely blend of Vegas energy and relaxed ambiance. Its casino is front and center upon entering, but as you meander through the resort, its other features unfold nicely. They include Edge Steakhouse, the cabaret show *The Magic of Jen Kramer*, and SuperBook, a sports fan's wet dream, featuring a massive 220-by-18-foot 4K video wall of practically every sporting event happening at the moment. The indoor mall features an eclectic selection of shops and services.

I committed the first day, a Friday, to just exploring the resort. Prior to dinner, I caught Jen Kramer's show, and she delivered a quite charming performance of magic that still blew my mind. Magic isn't a big must-see for me, but her very home-spun delivery mixed with glamtastic gowns really made the show a fun experience. Her magic tricks and illusions were mesmerizing, and, despite the smaller cabaret stage, she delivered a spectacle.

The upscale Edge Steakhouse reminded me a bit of Fort Worth's Reata's atmosphere. The elegant, rustic fusion, with its just-right mood lighting, really set the scene for an elevated dining experience. The cream of butternut squash was a revelation as it was poured over a frozen foie gras mousse to create a silky, flavorful bowl.

A steak in a steakhouse should be an obvious move, but I opted for the sea scallops with celery root, golden raisins, apple chutney, and a side of grilled asparagus, topped with bearnaise sauce and charred lemon. The scallops were buttery, and the mix of the sweet and bitter flavors of the root and chutney packed a tasteful punch.

For a more casual yet still gorgeous dining experience, Silk Road Asian Bistro fit the bill. An unfussy menu of noodles, rice dishes, and bento boxes offered a relaxed feel, particularly in the restaurant's peaceful, dark ambiance. My simple choice of pot stickers and shrimp-fried rice may not sound too exciting, but each item turned the freshness up a notch with subtle flavoring that offered both familiar and surprising tastes.

For major convenience, the resort has a shuttle to the Strip and is next to the monorail, so getting to and from the heart of the city was an easy task. For a daytime walk-about on Saturday, the shuttle dropped me off at Treasure Island, and I had at least two hours to kill before the next bus back.

On the Strip

Las Vegas is exactly as it seems in movies and television. So while there's no surprise at the grandeur of each hotel and neon sign along the road, it is something else to embrace them in person. The eye is never at rest as you take in the different buildings and their architecture, as well as all the people on the street — from showgirls looking for photo ops (40 bucks each? — no thanks) to a bevy of international travelers.

Plus, the fountains of the Bellagio are magical to watch live. The gondolas at the Venetian looked romantic, or at least as if they would offer a nice respite from walking. The Roman statues at Caesars Palace were simply magnificent.

I had anticipated walking into these

iconic hotels to admire their interiors' architecture and features. As I said, I am not much of a gambler, so walking through casino after casino became a bit meh. But it's easy to enjoy the excitement of all the goings-on inside each location and worth checking them off the "Las Vegas famous hotels" list if you're kinda OCD like me.

Queens

For a Saturday night out, I had one destination: *RuPaul's Drag Race Live!* Showgirls? No thanks. Adele? Hell, she canceled that weekend. Give me the drag queens — especially Asia O'Hara, who hosted the show.

Since the cast rotates, this evening's show at the Flamingo, directed by RuPaul, featured performances by Naomi Smalls, Vanessa "Vanjie" Mateo, Yvie Oddly, and Derrick Barry. It was flat-out fun and funny. Each queen was performing at her highest level — whether dancing, lip-synching, or sashaying. For *Drag Race* superfans who know each queen's backstory, the show was even more exciting. Seeing Vanjie so polished and precise compared to her somewhat busted first appearance on *Drag Race* was astonishing. Naomi proved that she was the star she always thought she was, and Yvie's eccentricity was pure wacky performance art. With both single and group acts, the high energy was truly thrilling to see as well as hilarious AF. And the Werk Room (store) is a must for *RPDR* memorabilia.

Area 15

Before hitting the airport back to Dallas on Sunday afternoon, I squeezed in a morning visit to Area 15 (Area15.com), the immersive entertainment venue that houses Meow Wolf. Located just minutes from the Strip, it's described as "the world's first experiential entertainment complex that offers live events, monumental art installations, unique retail, groundbreaking technology, bars and eateries, and more." Think of a massive warehouse blacklit entirely inside, making for trippy visuals throughout the two-story complex.

Among its features are the Emporium (a bar/arcade), Oddwood (for cocktails), Dueling

Axes (axe throwing), Lost Spirits Distillery, Wink World ("psychedelic art house meets carnival funhouse"), The Beast Food Hall by Todd English, and its main attraction and anchor, Meow Wolf (an "imaginative, immersive installation with interactive artwork, optical illusions, and hidden passages").

Where to begin with Meow Wolf? Its "Omega Mart" was everything you want from a supermarket, with bright lights and fully stocked shelves. A closer look at the products, though, shows something far away from the usual: Casual Tomato Milk, Whale Song deodorant, Oh Those cereal, and other cheeky takes on popular grocery items. Then step into the refrigerated section: an entirely new world of secret portals, sinister intentions, and interactive experiences that lie underneath the surface of the squeaky-clean market.

Walking through this was extraordinary. This modern take on an art exhibition truly flips the script with innovation, humor, and high-tech gadgetry. The experience is self-guided, so it can either be up to two hours or, if you move fast and without distraction, just shy of an hour. Either way, the place is beyond remarkable and an incredible respite from the casino side of Vegas.

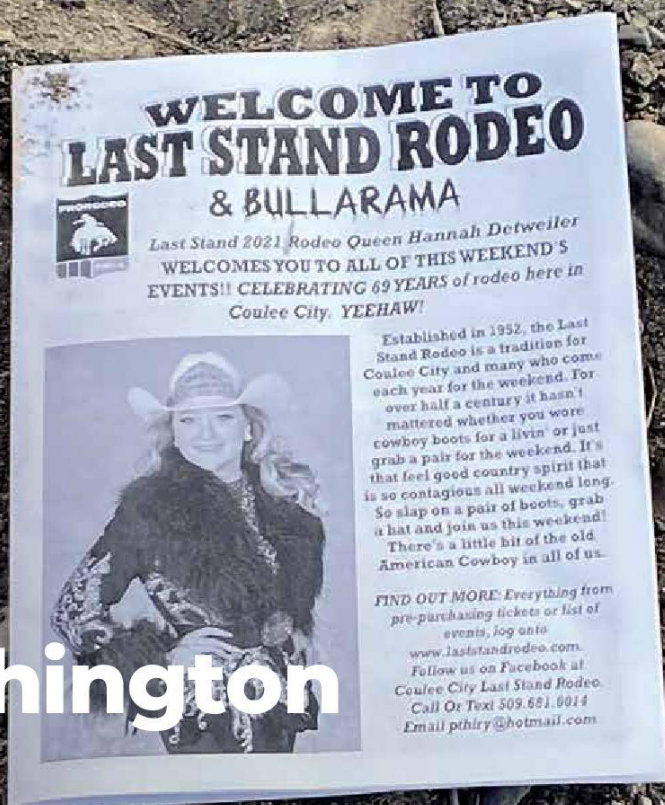
Upstairs, Wink World is its own art experience mixed with a side of funhouse. After entering through a corridor of 3-D art in blacklight, I took a journey through six infinity mirror rooms that mixed music, light, sound, and movement into energetic ballets.

Before even entering Area 15, though, is its Art Island, with a magnificent display of sculptural, interactive art. You'll definitely pile up your Instagram with pics and selfies from Area 15 alone.

For this first-timer, Las Vegas was an impressive city, no doubt. Definitely more for the on-the-go type traveler who can handle a whole lot at once. But it's certainly a versatile place that's much more than its glitzy image. Its various hotels exhibit myriad personalities (European, New York, tropical, Ancient Rome), but perhaps the city's truest is that it brings all those into one setting for an exciting time — whether for a weekend or a whole week.

Eastern Washington rodeo antics make for an intriguing Memorial Day weekend

BY NICK RAPP
SGN CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Ah, Memorial Day in Seattle — probably hovering around 60 degrees with a chance of rain (given this month's cool, rainy pattern). Luckily, the Cascades mark a geographic stopping point for the moisture, and the eastern half of our state offers plenty of sunny recreation this time of year. Thank God for rain shadows.

Around 120 miles east of Seattle lies the state's hidden gem of oddball tourism: Soap Lake. If you're searching for a warm getaway with easy access to a quaint Memorial Day rodeo, look no further. This Grant County town, home to just over 1,500 people, serves as a perfect microcosm of Western American eccentricity. Shops and homes wrap around the southern tip of the namesake lake, a gorgeous two square miles with the most diverse known mineral content of any single body of water on the planet.

Soap Lake's waters draw a wide swath of visitors for swimming, kayaking, mud-bathing, and lakeside relaxation. The lakebed gradually slopes down toward the middle, so one can make it over a hundred feet in certain sections and only reach about hip level — perfect for wading. Its reflective expanse emphasizes the basalt beauty of the Columbia Basin, whose rolling hills and dramatic cliffs contrast with the mountainous terrain of Western Washington.

An eclectic assortment of local businesses provide a lovely weekend's worth of poking around. On the food and drink front, visitors can eat and drink well before evening festivities. Dive bar Del-Red Pub boasts talkative locals, tabletop games, cheap drinks, and fried appetizers to boot. Cloudview Kitchen's part coffee shop, part vintage store, and some friendly Queer staff welcome visitors for an intriguing lunch stop; its standout menu features an incredible assortment of sandwiches and freshly baked goods. Mom's European Food and Deli simplifies customer choice with a small menu of pierogis and one sandwich option, and Mi Cocinita serves tasty Mexican eats.



Photos by Nick Rapp

As for shopping, Hecklebarney's Thrift Store features walls of curios and fun wardrobe choices.

"The Last Stand Rodeo" takes place at 7 p.m. on May 27 and 28, and 5 p.m. on May 29 in Coulee City, just 30 minutes north of Soap Lake. The northern portion of Highway 17 cuts through understatedly beautiful canyon walls and along multiple lakes carved by the Missoula floods from the last ice age. The canyon's greenish hue is reminiscent of Icelandic geologic features, testament to the vast difference between the eastern and western portions of Washington. Upon arrival in Coulee City, one almost wonders if the drive was a dream.

The rodeo's event description describes Last Stand as "professional rodeo at [its]

best," with "fast-paced, up-close action" that features "all the standard events of pro rodeo." These include "bareback riding, steer wrestling, saddle bronc riding, team roping, tie-down roping, girls' breakaway roping, barrel racing, and bull riding." Quite the list! A rodeo clown and barrel man tease the audience, offering levity between events of escalating danger. Community support for participants is palpable throughout. The fear, awe, horror, and intrigue of rodeo events defy definition; every act is high stakes.

At 2021's show, trick rider Haley Proctor (a returning special guest this year) wowed the crowd with a horse-riding feat that seemed implausible up until she proved it could be done. She began her perfor-

mance with some laps of "Roman riding," standing atop two horses at once in a glamorous fuchsia getup. When the initial shock wore off, rodeo staff set up a literal ring of fire in the middle of the arena. Proctor rode a few laps before steering her horses through the ring in a leap of faith and with skill in equal parts.

Surprises abound at the rodeo; half the fun is not knowing what to expect. Though visitors can trust there will be a beer garden, hot dog stand, and ample bleacher seating to take it all in from any angle. Even if it's not your first rodeo, the intimate setting and unique features of the area make for a singular experience. Soap Lake and Coulee City offer much more than just respite from Seattle's monotonous spring weather.

Los Angeles Museum of Jurassic Technology delightfully bewilders

BY DANIEL LINDSLEY
SGN CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Installation View of *Dreams of Earth and Sky - The Ecstatic Journey of Konstantin Tsiolkovsky*
- Photo courtesy of MJT



Divination Table from the exhibit, *The World is Bound with Secret Knots - The Life and Works of Athanasius Kircher, 1602 - 1680* - Photo courtesy of MJT



Mouse Cures from the exhibit, *Tell the Bees... Belief, Knowledge and Hypersymbolic Cognition* - Photo courtesy of MJT

I didn't know what to expect, aside from the hype, when I walked into the Museum of Jurassic Technology, but the place was already off to a good start. It occupies a small, rustic-looking building with a wall fountain in the Culver City area of Los Angeles, possessing the kind of quaintness that, to me, belies the depth of the stuff inside.

Many museums have great, expansive rooms full of echoing footsteps, murmurs, and empty space. Their light is bright and their air is cold. The text on the placards by each piece of art or history is bland, factual, and on-topic.

This museum is not so constrained. Its corridors are huddled and its lights are dim, and each room is nestled so close to the others that the sounds, and even the smells, bleed from one exhibit into the next.

It's also a nonlinear experience. Although it uses some of the trappings of a museum — lectures through an earpiece at the push of a button, for instance — there are no guiding arrows, no tours really. Visitors explore as they like, letting whim and intuition steer them, and when they reach a dead end, they can retrace their steps and find another path.

But what is this place? After spending at least an hour and a half inside, I can't answer that question both quickly and honestly, although that fact by itself is part of the answer. The best I can do is give a few choice examples of what I encountered, leaving the rest for travelers to discover for themselves, should they go in blind as I did.

Many of the exhibits were historical, or at least appeared that way. There was a collection of unique glass perfume bottles, by a couple who had collected them over decades. It was couched, with a few other collections, in an exhibit describing the rise of American trailer culture, which included miniature models of trailer scenes. The room smelled faintly of gasoline.

Other exhibits, especially toward the front, were like small jokes. In a glass case, two tiny green objects were each affixed to the end of a rod. A red light alternated

between them, playing a slightly different sound in turn, both an insect-like drone. A closer look revealed that the upper object was a green beetle, the lower one a green gem. A sign above the case read, "Protective Auditory Mimicry."

Still more exhibits strained the facts, in a spectrum between the poles of obvious and questionable. An exhibit on animals superimposed their sluggish timelapse holograms over plaster models of ancient books, each placard beneath citing the Bible, or the first-century natural philosopher Pliny the Elder.

One placard informed me that stags are known to draw snakes out of hiding by spitting water into their dens, after which the stag will eat the snake to cure itself of illness. There were no phones allowed, so I was helpless; I couldn't search for where Pliny had written such a thing, if he ever had. Instead, all I could do was carry that wonderment with me for the rest of my time there.

And those are just a few of the many things on the first floor. There's a whole second floor of exhibits, and a "Russian-style" rooftop courtyard at the end, with a beautiful garden, a few resident doves, a dog, and free Georgian tea and biscuits (with cream and sugar if desired). I welcomed the opportunity to sit down, sip, and process all I had witnessed — which was impossible in just one visit, I found.

I wondered how a place so full of marvels could have escaped my notice. Maybe the quiet and cozy experience is easily lost in the bustle of such an extroverted city. But the museum has been around since 1988. Many of its exhibits are permanent. I suppose that means I'll have plenty of time to visit again and absorb more of what it has to offer. For now, I hope this account will persuade travelers to make it a regular stop, as I have.

You can make a reservation and learn more about the Museum of Jurassic Technology at www.mjt.org. Tickets cost \$12 per person.

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**SGN****THE TRAVEL ISSUE**

Summer fun in Washington, DC

BY BILL MALCOLM
SPECIAL TO THE SGN

Photo courtesy of Bill Malcolm

DC is back open and better than ever. There are plenty of outdoor spaces keep you COVID safe, and of course the Smithsonian museums are all free. Summer is also the value season, during which hotel rates are reasonable. Plus, it is arguably one of the Gayest cities in America.

You can walk practically everywhere. And yes, you will run into famous folks. I had the pleasure of meeting White House Deputy Press Secretary (now Press Secretary) Kareen Jean-Pierre, a Haitian immigrant raised in New York City, at the Victory Fund Brunch at the Grand Hyatt, as well as the attorney general of Massachusetts, Maura Healy, who is running for governor there. The Equality PAC also had a fundraiser at the Number 9 bar, where I ran into my friend, Arizona state Rep. Daniel Hernandez, who is running for Congress in the 6th District (Tucson). Long story short, expect to run into someone famous in DC.

What to do

Don't miss the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (Metro: Gallery Place/Chinatown) for its orchid display in the atrium, the portraits of every US president, and the new Watergate display. The nearby National Building Museum is another must. Check both websites to see if they require (free) tickets in advance and their hours of operation.

The US Botanic Garden on the grounds of the Capitol features orchids and a tropical garden, as well as an outdoor garden that showcases mid-Atlantic native plants. The climate is so mild in DC that it even has a palmetto.

Walking around the Dupont Circle, Thomas Circle, and Logan Circle neighborhoods is fun. Meet up with the walkers at DC Frontrunners at 23rd St. at P St. NW (near Dupont Circle) Saturdays

at 9:30 a.m. (or run with them at 10 a.m.). They meet next to a statue honoring Taras Shevchenko, a Ukrainian poet. I walked with them around Georgetown and then down along the Potomac River. Usually, they walk or run up Rock Creek Park, which runs down to the zoo. This friendly group is a great way to meet locals. DC folks are an interesting and highly educated bunch: lots of politicians, political types, etc. As it is also a very transient city, it is easy to meet people from all over.

Plus, don't miss the Sunday farmers' market in Dupont Circle, where you can grab locally grown produce or sample the local coffee at Zeke's.

I snagged tickets to the spring White House Garden Tour as well. You can check with your congressperson or senator to see about White House tours, or simply walk around the National Mall and to the monuments on your own.

Nightlife

The Gay scene is no longer in one neighborhood as in days past (when it was in Dupont Circle then 17th St. NW). The new Kiki Bar at 919 U St. in the Shaw neighborhood has an upstairs dance floor. It's the place for Sunday afternoon see-and-be-seen and mingling with the Stonewall Kickball crowd. The next-door companion bar, the Dirty Goose, is also a lot of fun, as is Nellie's, the sports bar across the street.

My favorite is the Number 9 on P St. NW (across from Whole Foods), which has something going on every night on its second floor. Around the corner is Trade (on 14th St. NW), which features a large outdoor patio.

The Green Lantern (1335 Green Ct. NW) is another downtown bar that features a fun happy hour and other events. The As You Are bar on Capitol Hill (500 8th St. SE) is the newest addition to the scene.

Where to eat

DC has a great restaurant scene, with innovative dishes featuring chefs from all over. You cannot beat Sweetgreen, the fast-casual salad concept restaurant chain (there's one on P St. NW) started in DC by two guys sick of dorm food at a local college; it's now going national. Try the fish taco salad with steelhead salmon.

Zaytinya (701 9th St. NW) is my favorite for Mediterranean food. The small dishes let you sample a lot. Rasika (633 D St. NW) is a must for the best Indian food in the US which my friend tells me is showcasing Indian street food.

The Red Bear Brewery in the NoMa neighborhood (209 M St. NW) has great IPAs. (The next-door REI Co-op is also a shopping experience in a historic recycled building that was once a music hall.)

Try the new Planta vegetarian restaurant in nearby Bethesda (4910 Elm St.). You can even bike up from DC.

Annie's Paramount Steakhouse (1609 17th St. NW) is a long-time staple for the LGBTQ+ crowd and great for people-watching or Sunday brunching. It has outdoor seating as well.

Where to stay

I always stay at the Comfort Inn Downtown DC/Convention Center at 1201 13th St. NW. It's close to the stores, restaurants, and shopping on 14th St. NW and an easy walk or Metro ride to museums and other attractions. Other great options I have stayed at include the Washington Plaza Hotel, the Tabard Inn, and the Beacon House.

Getting there and getting around

I took American Airlines nonstop to convenient Reagan National Airport (aka DCA). It took just 35 minutes to get from the airport

to the Comfort Inn (take the subway to the Convention Center/Mt. Vernon stop, from which it is just a short walk west).

Amtrak goes to the magnificent Union Station; the Acela express train from New York City will get you there in under three hours. The MARC commuter rail can take you from BWI (Baltimore) airport and other destinations.

DC's Metro subway system is great. The Metro Bus and the Circulator take you where the subway does not.

Under no circumstances rent a car. Parking is in short supply, and the DC drivers have one hand on the horn at all times. You can walk everywhere or hop on the Metro.

Helpful hints

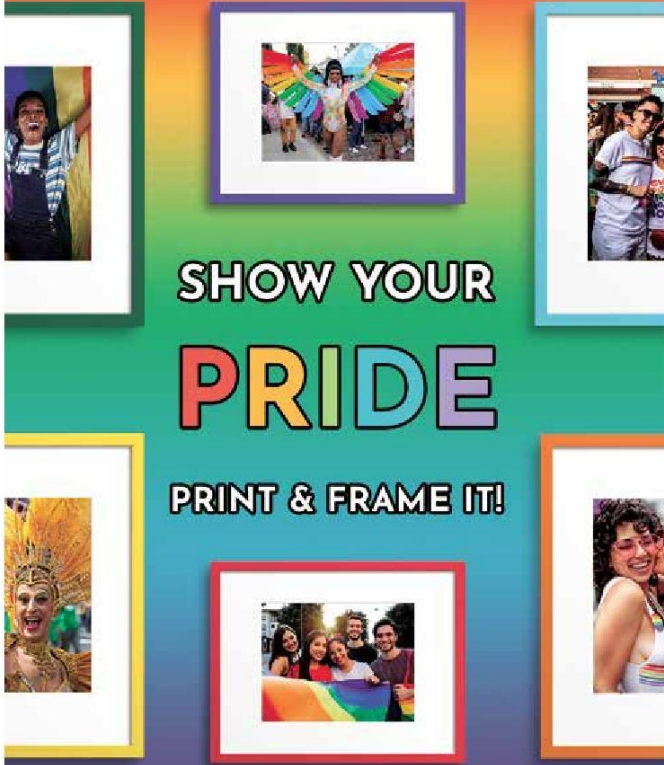
The *Washington Blade* (in print and online at washingtonblade.com) comes out every Friday. *Metro Weekly* is your other source for LGBTQ information. Visit DC has the local happenings at washington.org, the city's official tourism site.

You will run out of time before you run out of things to do in this amazing city. Consider a trip to the DMV today (DC-speak for DC, Maryland and Virginia).

Special thanks to Visit DC for their travel tips and to friends at the Comfort Inn Downtown DC/Convention Center.

Bill Malcolm is a syndicated LGBTQ travel writer based in Indianapolis. His column appears or has appeared in publications and on websites around the country. He writes as a hobby at no charge to publications to support LGBTQ journalism.

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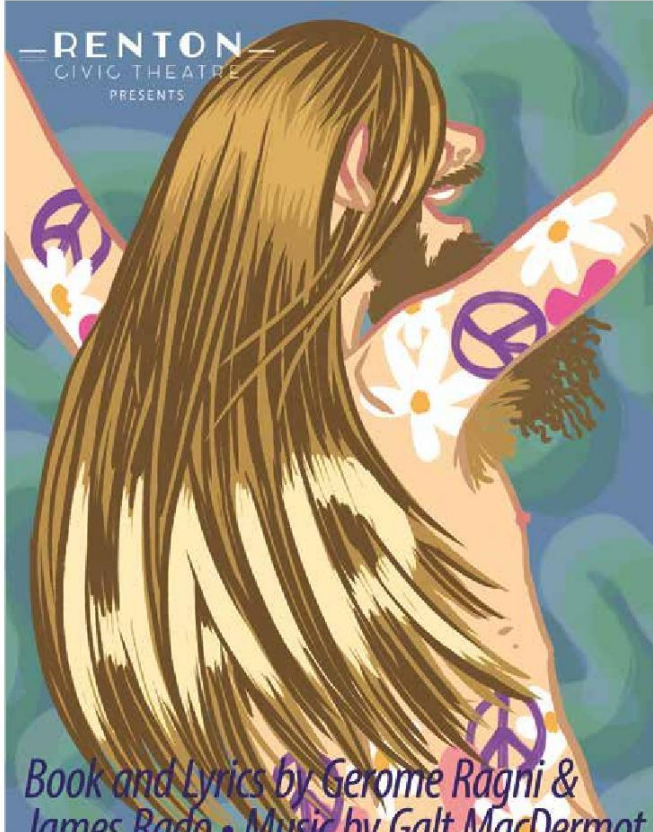


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