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SGN

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SEATTLE'S LGBTQIA+ NEWS & ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY SINCE 1974

SEE ALASKA RIGHT!



by A.V. Eichenbaum
SGN Managing Editor

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

Wes, our driver, shrugged. "Yeah, probably about 30 or 40. They're trash birds."

I blinked. "What?"

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

"Huh."

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

Summarized: Unpretentious. Exciting. Educational.

I learned a lot about moss.

To know more, you'll have to keep reading.

see ALASKA page 4

A week aboard UnCruise's *Wilderness Adventurer*

Photo by A.V. Eichenbaum

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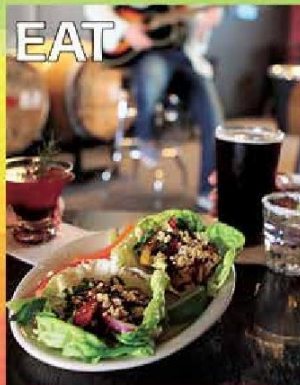
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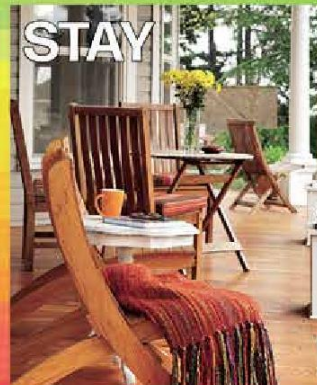
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ALASKA

continued from cover

The ship

If you are accustomed to vacationing aboard monstrous floating palaces with lavish accommodations alongside 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 “weeds the jerks out on its own.” After spending time getting to know everyone — whether during a hike or happy hour — I’m inclined to agree.

The rooms were modest: compact showers, 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 fond of Adele.

Humble though the accommodations might have seemed, we were by no means roughing it. My first thought when walking into my room — a Trailblazer cabin — was that the bed was twice the size of the one I have in my studio apartment. Softer, too.

My second was that the wood paneling 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 got to talking briefly one misty afternoon on the sun deck. “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.”

That 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.

There was a strong femme-driven energy to the vessel. Working and living on a ship has long been thought to be “a man’s job,” and it was heartening to see so many strong femme presences, especially when taking into account how many families with children ride with the UnCruise every season.

“Last week, we had a little girl who got picked on at school for thinking bugs and nature are cool,” Taylor, an expedition guide, told me one evening in the lounge. They smiled. “And after seeing me and this crew, she was like ‘Wow! I can do that? I want to do that!’ It was really awesome.”

One steward, Roberto, confided in us one evening that it was his first time working on a ship.

“It’s great here! Everyone’s really nice. It’s only my first week, but if that changes by the end of it, I’ll let you know.”

Whether it was a kind word in the morning from a steward or an enthusiastic slide-show lecture from a guide when the day was winding down, you could see the spark in every crewmember’s eyes. They wanted to be there, and they were excited to share this adventure with you. And it made sense.

That first morning, watching the sun rise over the mountains of Tracy Arm, I felt a sense of wonder swell up in my chest — something I’d thought was long since stamped out by leering luxury high rises and overpriced coffee.

Thank God for mask mandates or else every time someone looked at me, they’d have seen me grinning ear to ear like an idiot.

The voyage

Our path was pretty clear-cut. We trav-



Photo courtesy of UnCruise

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 by A.V. Eichenbaum

eled from Juneau into Tracy Arm, where we stopped to see the South Sawyer Glacier. Out on a skiff, we witnessed a magnificent glacier calving, blue and white cascading down from impossible heights in the summer sun.

From there, we traveled to Thomas Bay and Cascade Creek, where I had the pleasure of learning how to kayak for the first time before hitting a lush Tongass National Forest hiking trail.

Each day’s activities were determined the afternoon prior. We were told on the first night that our plans and trajectory could change from the original script if it looked like we would cross paths with a different cruise ship, or our way was blocked by some sort of natural phenomenon. Options were presented daily, with activities ranging from all-day bushwhacks to mild skiff tours.

This made the trip accessible to all ages: the oldest of the passengers was 87, the youngest 11. I’ll be the first to admit I was relieved to see a family of five on board, if only for the simple fact that I was no longer the youngest. I still have an irrational fear of being sent to the kids’ table, despite having lived and worked with people twice

or three times my age my entire career. Beyond that, it was nice to see a family having a good time.

Every day, as previously mentioned, we wound down in the lounge with an educational lecture on a variety of topics. One night was a speculative journey through what it takes to live in the ocean. Another was about conservation and leaving no footprint behind as we explored the wilderness. Another taught us more about moss and lichen than I’d ever hoped to know. Did you know that moss can have sex with itself? And even if it appears dry or dead, it may just be cutting back on life support, so to speak, in order to survive in drier climates.

That particular lecture kept coming up in conversation among the passengers. If you get a chance, I highly recommend it.

On the third day, I opted for the “Yak ‘n’ Whack” in the Bay of Pillars: two hours by kayak to land, two hours of bushwhacking through untamed wild. I was assigned one of the stewards, Lindsay, as a partner. “They encourage us to try to get us off the boat as much as we can,” she told me when we were about halfway to our destination.

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. Laughing, sweating, and singing camp songs to ward off bears, we made our way through the woods on Kuui Island to the beach and back again.

The rest of the days were spent much the same way, one adventure after the next, with some downtime in between. From there to Takatz Bay, to George Island, to Glacier Bay National Park, and then back home again. Snorkeling gear was provided for the bolder among us on the fifth day. I would’ve regretted not going if it weren’t for the other things out there to see.

We were encouraged to mark the wildlife we spotted on a large whiteboard located near the dining area. We were notified over the comm system any time whales were spotted. Notable among the other wildlife sightings were a black bear, six-legged sea stars, and, at 9:30pm on July 1, passengers swear 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 majesty of these places — George Island in particular, where we were led to a hidden rocky beach, complete with a dark obelisk painted 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 hots and a cot are all I hoped for when boarding the *Wilderness Adventurer*. Regular readers of my column will know my usual breakfast here in the Emerald City consists largely of cold coffee and nicotine gum.

What we were served 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 got. Salmon the first night. Lamb another. On another, steak. 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



Photo by Heather Prather

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, trans-humanism, science fiction recommendations, and even Elon Musk. There are few things I appreciate more than interesting dinner conversation, and, no matter who I sat with, it was never boring.

For the last meal of our trip, I was among a handful chosen to dine at the captain's table. I ordered the stuffed portobello and listened with interest as those at the table discussed raising kids, living meaningfully, and, ultimately, various philosophies on

life itself. If this sounds like a good time to you, you're in luck. Spending a week with strangers on a ship elicits conversations like this regularly.

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

Sitting there in the lounge, surrounded by books on local ecology and chatting with other passengers while we gazed out at the ocean, I — a twentysomething 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 Jill'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 freakish 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.

Clambering up the side of the mountain, my regret at not having packed any 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

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.

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 unseasonable 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-faring adventures are alike, and, as the world keeps changing, eventually even that river will dry up.

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

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



Photo courtesy of UnCruise



HAWAII



Photo by Tor Johnson / Hawaii Tourism Authority

by Janice Athill
SGN Contributing Writer

In 1893 the United States armed forces illegally invaded the Kingdom of Hawaii. The coup was staged — without presidential approval — by white American sugar cane growers living on the islands. Their profits had suffered greatly from a tariff that raised import rates on foreign sugar, so their intention was to get Hawaii annexed. This would make the tariff disappear.

Ships landed at Honolulu, with 160 armed soldiers, abrogating peace agreements with the monarch, Queen Liliuokalani. Outnumbered and hoping to avoid casualties, Liliuokalani made the mistake of believing she could trust the US to deliver justice, so she agreed to a conditional surrender.

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

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

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

The locals in these stolen and oppressed islands have complained about overtourism for many years. They live there, yet rarely get to enjoy what their own islands have to offer and get stuck in low-end jobs that don't pay what they need to survive (estimated to be \$121,000 annually to live comfortably).

On top of that, the islands don't have many natural resources, instead relying heavily on imports to sustain the massive number of tourists, which contributes to the high cost of living. They have a limited

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

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.

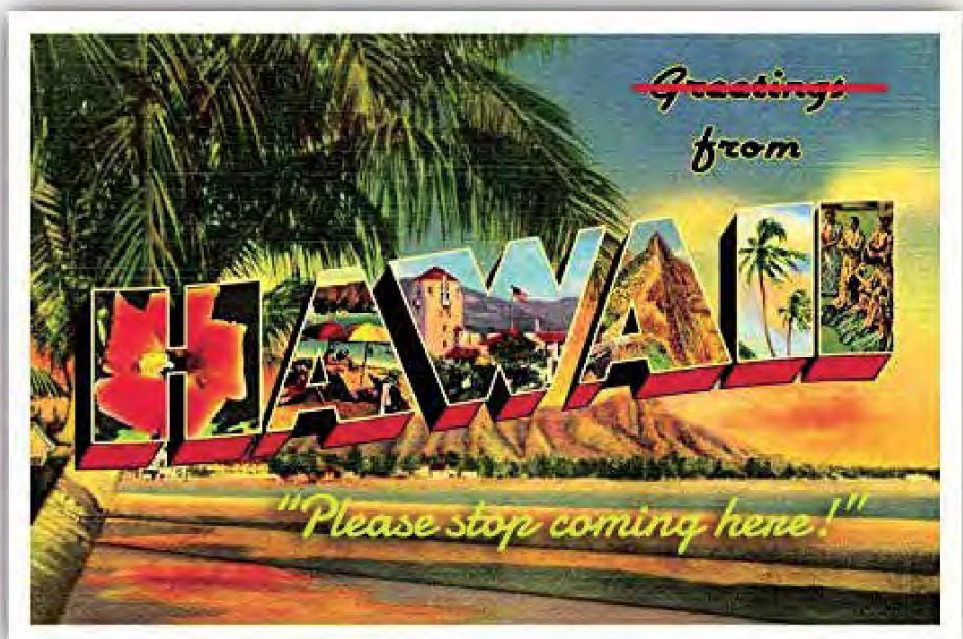
But they are not being heard. Tourism is only interested in self-preservation as an industry, and those profiting don't care for the well-being of the native community.

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 infection, mainlanders' sense of entitlement has skyrocketed. Visitors have been reportedly disrespectful, not just of COVID recommendations and restrictions but to natives as well, who have been assaulted, screamed at, and 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 vacations possible.





*"reentering the
world of touch
of closeness
proximity*

after so much distance

*refinding what
it means to hold
and be held
to hug
envelop
embrace*

*this is the beginning
of a conversation
-a shared discovery-
-unlearning/relearning-
all the ways we can be together"*

***Alyza DelPan-Monley and Leah Crosby
Seattle, WA***

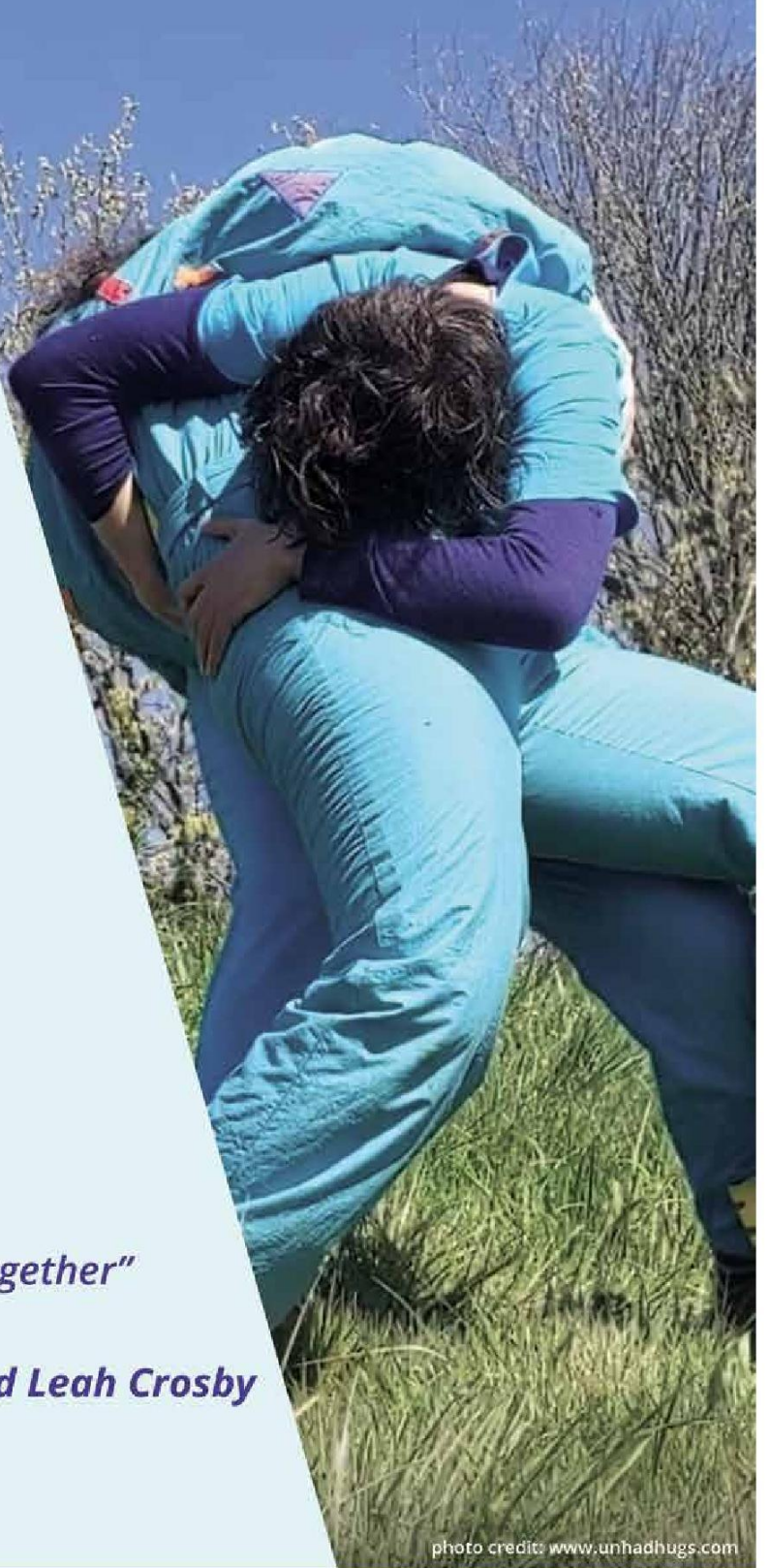


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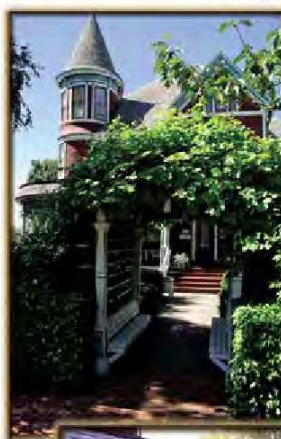
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BRIDE
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THE US OF GAY

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 Connoley of Bulrush — 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.

Alabama

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

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 nightlife mainstay, along with Queer dive bar The Raven just down the street, has provided last-frontier fabulousness for over two decades.

Arizona

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

Arkansas

Pet-friendly Pond 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, putt-putt, a BB gun and archery range, shuffleboard, ping-pong, and darts.

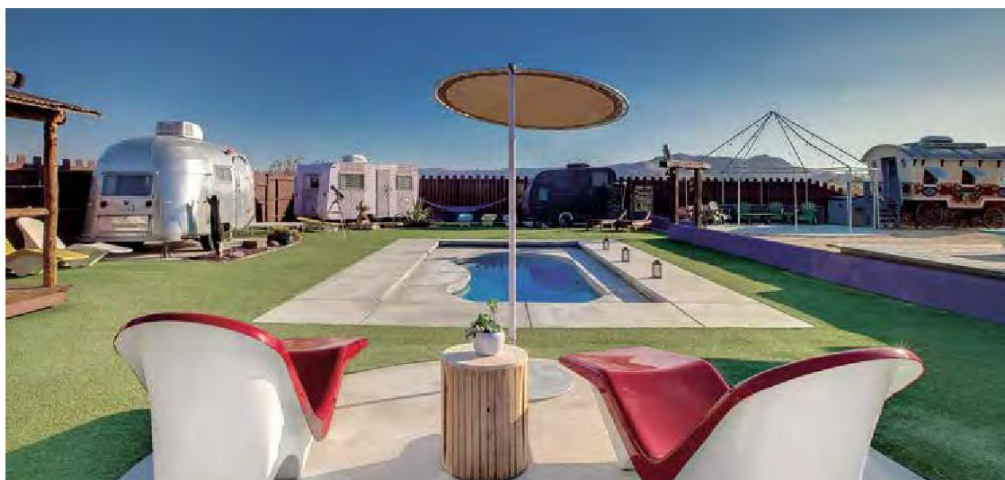
Colorado

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

Connecticut

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

see **US OF GAY** page 10



California — Photo courtesy of Hicksville Trailer Palace

Travel



Florida – Photo courtesy of Stonewall National Museum and Archives

US OF GAY

continued from page 9

Delaware

Frolic 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 (a bit 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 with changing 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

Join the LGBTQ+ Honolulu FrontRunners/Walkers every Saturday at 8:30 a.m. in Kapi'olani Park for a tourists-are-welcome sweat sesh around stunning Waikiki (\$10 for singles/\$15 for couples) before brunching with the group at a downtown restaurant, pit stains and all.

Idaho

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

Illinois

Pay homage to the Queer pioneers who blazed their own trails toward LGBTQ+ equality on a self-guided tour of the Legacy Walk in Chicago's Northalsted neighborhood, the placards of which on the area's 40 rainbow-colored pylons honor our community's heroes, including Oscar Wilde, Harvey Milk, Antonia Pantoja, Frida Kahlo, and Alvin Ailey.

Indiana

Put your name on the list at popular Bloomington distillery/bar/kitchen Cardinal Spirits, where you'll nosh on inspired (but affordable) dishes like lamb barbacoa tacos and gochujang tomato and cantaloupe gazpacho, sip on canned bourbon cream sodas, and take home a bottle of its Indiana corn Pride vodka, 10% of whose proceeds support local LGBTQ+ orgs.

Iowa

Stop for a photo op at the "American Gothic" cottage in Eldon, famously depicted in Gay artist Grant Wood's oft-parodied same-name 1930 painting, which has since become an iconic example of 20th-century American art.

Kansas

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

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 sleep it off at tobacco warehouse-turned-boutique hotel Vu Guesthouse.

Louisiana

Beat the oppressive New Orleans heat with a summertime treat at Queer women-owned Chance in Hell SnoBalls, a traveling winter-in-a-cup pop-up shop in the Bywater that serves frosty flavors like grape Nehi, pineapple-cilantro-chili, refreshing cucumber-cardamom-basil, and ginger matcha.

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 entrees 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 nightly to show tunes and standards around a grand piano (the pianists take requests), lit from above by fixtures fashioned from old hats.

Maryland

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

Massachusetts

Following the route of Boston's first Gay Pride March in 1971, the Equality Trail walking tour includes 13 sites around Beantown, including 81-year-old Bay Village Gay bar Jacques, the police headquarters on Berkeley Street, the State House on Beacon Hill, and St. Paul's Cathedral on Tremont Street. Fifty years ago, peaceful protesters issued a list of civil-rights demands at each location.

Michigan

Test your pop-culture prowess at Five15, a retail shop with a stage (and bar) in downtown Royal Oak, on its drag queen trivia nights, the latest of which featured *Schitt's Creek*-centric questions. If memory games aren't your milieu, opt for less-skilled activities, like weekend drag bingos and the some-Sundays Drag Brunch Cookout.

Minnesota

Friends of Dorothy can follow a yellow brick road (of sorts) to the Judy Garland Museum, established in the actress's birth town of Grand Rapids, where you'll learn about the troubled star's illustrious life and career, or, on a lucky day, attend a Garland-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 isle for legal sunning and funning in the buff.

Missouri

Foodies will get a crash course in late-18th-/early-19th-century American cuisine from Queer and James Beard semi-finalist chef Rob Connoley, who presents a reservations-required, seven-course, Ozark-inspired tasting menu Thursdays to Sundays at Bulrush 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 into 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, "existed since the 1960s between the Douglas County jail and urban blight" (though tighter 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 Mineshaft for pool tables and art. Every fourth Saturday of the month the Big O! Bears group hosts a growling good time.

Nevada

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

New Hampshire

Dabble in the dark arts with a visit to the "magick retirement" cottage of Bisexual British occultist and "Wickedest Man in the World" Aleister Crowley, whose four-month stay at this house in Hebron, owned by self-professed medium Evangeline Adams, resulted in myriad "secret and arcane" activities. If you're superstitious 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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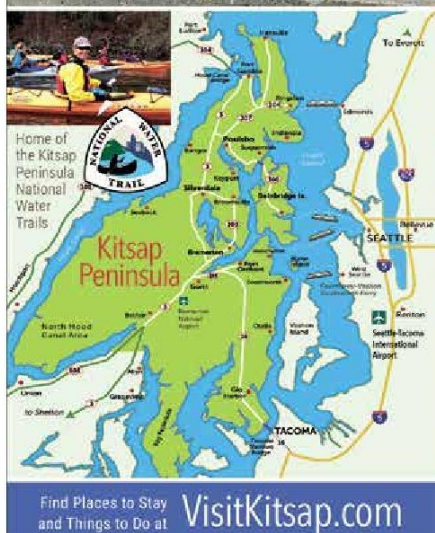
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Travel



Washington – Squirrel Chops in the Central District – Photo courtesy of Squirrel Chops

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 sordid 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 fey friends to do here, too. Shop for kitsch at Severedwing, belt your signature tune on karaoke nights at Georgie's, enjoy a chef-prepared meal at Hotel Tides, dance poolside at Paradise, and carryout an artisanal pizza from Medusa 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 house of wealthy Bisexual arts patron Mabel Dodge Luhan, now a National Historic Landmark and B&B in Taos, which has welcomed such visionaries as Georgia O'Keeffe, D.H. Lawrence, Ansel Adams, and Martha Graham.

New York

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

North Carolina

Pick up a few cans of spray paint and head to the ever-changing Free Expression Tunnel, connecting the north and central

campuses of North Carolina State University in Raleigh, where you can add your own progressive designs and messages that students and tourists alike can enjoy for years to come (or at least until another artist paints over them).

North Dakota

If you're seeking more stimulating conversation on your gaycay than your travel partner is capable of providing (dull queers 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 Bismarck Barnes & Noble café. Join its Facebook group for title selections and to contribute ideas.

Ohio

Cleveland-based DJ Alan Freed is widely credited for coining the term "rock and roll" in the early 1950s — 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 Janis Joplin and Joan Jett to Freddie Mercury and Elton John.

Oklahoma

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

Oregon

Portland-based Wild Diversity offers a full slate of outdoors activities (that require advance reservations) — which include bird-watching around Whitaker 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-art icon Andy Warhol, whose gravesite 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 "Figment."

Rhode Island

After a day of exploration in Queer-friendly Providence — The Stable, Mirabar and The Dark Lady are known for their neighborly 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 brightly colored townhomes along East Bay Street on Charleston Harbor. After you've fulfilled your daily step requirement, take a load off and relax with a crafty selection of Moscow Mules at historic qQueer 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 penny-pinching buzz with nightly drinks specials (many of which are half-price) and occasional events like drag bingo on the rooftop patio.

Tennessee

Throw your hands up as you barrel through the Thunderhead rollercoaster, stroll through the Chasing Rainbows Museum, and tap your feet to the Dreamland Drive-In musical show at Dollywood, the namesake theme park of everybody's favorite LGBTQ+ lovin' glam-ma Dolly Parton, in Pigeon Forge.

Texas

Download the 1956 Western film *Giant* to your tablet, open a bottle of wine, snuggle up in bed and press play in a stately room at Marfa's Hotel Paisano, which hosted LGBTQ+ icons Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, and James Dean (in his final role) as they shot scenes for the flick in this charming 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 thief-with-a-heart-of-gold's humble boyhood abode, and poke around the family plot, located in Panguitch.

Vermont

Fill a waffle cone with your favorite Ben & Jerry's flavor at its factory-based Scoop Shop in Waterbury before taking a saunter through the behind-the-building-and-up-the-hill Flavor Graveyard, where discontinued pints, like Schweddy Balls and Vermonty 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 tantalizing taste combos like roasted pineapple/rosemary, strawberry/sweet red bean, and guava daiquiri, plus a few tried-and-true standards, too.

Washington

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

West Virginia

Photo-capture rainbows in the mist as sunrises reflect off the tannic acid-darkened water of the 57-foot cascading Blackwater 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-psychopaths) — and you'll find options aplenty at wife-and-wife-owned Trouble and Sons in Whitefish Bay, 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 homophobes in 1998, as it remains unmarked 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.

MikeyRox is an award-winning journalist and LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than a hundred outlets across the world. He's currently nomadic across the country in his van, seeking Queer excitement everywhere he roams. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikey-roxtravels.



PUERTO VALLARTA

An LGBT-friendly destination on Mexico's west coast

Blue Chairs Beach (with the blue umbrellas) looking forward to iconic pier on Los Muertos Beach – Photo by Ed Walsh

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 breezes 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 LGBTQ beach vacation destination. All the city's Gay-focused businesses have survived the pandemic, with the exception of the city's newest Gay bar, Candy 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.

Almost all of the Gay stuff is to be found in the Zona Romántica 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. Paco's Ranch next door is busiest late at night due to its popular drag shows, which generally don't get started until after midnight.

The other clubs on that block include La Noche, CC Slaughters, and the newest clubs on the block, Industry and Co-De.

There are no Lesbian bars in Puerto Vallarta, but Elixir Mixology Bar, about four blocks from Mr. Flamingo's, is women-owned and has a Thursday evening women's night offering a free cocktail for women. All the other Gay bars in the city, with the exception of the male-stripper ones, are welcoming to women.

great budget hotel; Piñata 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 Mantamar beach club, which is open for day passes and includes a huge pool, cabanas, a bar, and a restaurant. Pilatas LGBT took over

Puerto Vallarta (aka "PV") has long been Mexico's most popular LGBTQ beach vacation destination...

Things are expected to get back to normal in time for the high season, in late fall and winter.

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

The unofficial Gay beach is the stretch of the public Los Muertos Beach in front of the Blue Chairs Resort, which is 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 uninitiated, the Puerto Vallarta airport is about a 20-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 Romántica, the heart of Gay PV. Hotel Mercurio is a

the space where the Vallarta Cora was, and the property was completely renovated and looks better than ever.

The newest Gay hotel in Puerto Vallarta is Amara Villas, which is on a jungle hillside about a 15-minute Uber ride from the Zona Romántica. Hotel & Suites

Jet's Hotel and the hacienda-style Villa David are both downtown, a short walk from the Zona Romántica. Jet's is PV's most affordable option if you are okay with sharing a space. Villa David is now only welcoming returning guests and friends.

Five quick travel tips

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

2. Getting from the airport: You can save money on cab fare if you cross over the pedestrian bridge on the side of the airport and take one of the yellow taxis that are parked in front of the Tacón de Marlin Restaurant. You can also call an Uber car from there, which will usually be cheaper than a taxi. (Ubers are not allowed to pick

up at the airport but they can drop you off there. You can catch an Uber car on either side of the pedestrian bridge next to the airport.) If you don't have a data plan that works in Mexico, you can call Uber using the airport's free Wi-Fi. A cab to the Zona Romántica is about \$15, but about \$10 more if you ride from the airport itself. You can also catch a city bus into downtown or the Zona Romántica for just 10 pesos, or about 50 cents. Just be sure to ask the driver if they are going to Centro (downtown): "¿Va al centro?"

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

4. Water: Don't be afraid of the water. Puerto Vallarta's tap water has won awards for quality and safety. Drinking tap water instead of bottled water is also better for the environment. 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 is not 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. Ubers are usually cheaper and the best way to ensure that you won't be ripped off by a taxi driver. But sometimes during peak surge time, when there is a high demand, taxis may be cheaper than Uber.

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SPOKANE

Escape to a small-town feeling

Photo by Lindsey Anderson

by Lindsey Anderson
SGN Contributing Writer

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

Classy lodging

Spokane is home to many beautiful hotels, but there is no better option than lodging in one of the classic Davenport Hotels: the Historic Davenport Hotel, epitome of luxury, along with the Davenport Grand and Davenport Tower. Originally built in 1914, the ornate Historic Davenport features turn-of-the-century charm, from the Victorian 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 time. McNamara fell from the third story of the hotel and crashed through a skylight, on August 18, 1920. She survived the fall only briefly, and her last words were “Where did I go?” Hotel workers claim that if you listen closely, you can hear her whispering that question in the walls.

If haunted hotels have you a little spooked, have no fear — the Davenport Grand and the Davenport Tower are perfect for you! Revamped within the last decade, these two locations are ghost free, filled only with the most stylish modern design, delicious gourmet food, and onsite spas in both locations. The Tower also provides guests with the best views of Spokane’s gorgeous downtown skyline, and the rooftop is one of the best places to catch a classic “Spo” sunset.

Near nature, near perfect

Spokane is the perfect destination for anyone fond of nature adventures. With a Washington State Adventure Pass, you can get into any state park in Spokane and explore gorgeous hills, breathtaking views, and some of the most charming wildflower meadows in the state. The most popular hiking trails, for both beginners and seasoned adventurers, can be found at Riverside State Park, nicknamed the “Bowl and Pitcher” by locals for its unique rock for-

mations. To enter the park, guests cross a swaying footbridge high above the rapids of the Spokane River, a breathtaking sight.

Another great location for nature walks is Mount Spokane State Park in the Selkirk Mountain. This park, which doubles as a ski and snowboard location in the winter, is the perfect summer spot for picking wild huckleberries in late August. Enjoy serene trails, and be prepared to see wildlife along the way—everything from deer, rabbits, and even moose.

In North Spokane you can find the Switchbacks Trail, a winding path that eventually takes hikers a delicate waterfall they can step right into as if it were a beach shower. The trail starts with a view over a gorgeous meadow and then winds down past stands of evergreen trees and bursts of wildflowers. If you need to get your steps in, the switchbacks are a great location for a workout.

If floating the Spokane River is your way of getting out and enjoying nature, there are several locations that are perfect to begin your float. Boulder Beach in the Spokane Valley is a great launching spot for tubes, paddle boards, and canoes. The beach is also a great place to picnic and just enjoy some time near the cool water. There are even a few hidden rope swings for brave travelers to try! Pine River Park in North Spokane is also an optimal place for launching a float party. The river runs right through the park, and starting here will give you hours of relaxing time on the water as you float past serene, rural parts of Spokane County.

Spokane is also a quick drive away from dozens of lakes. Deer Lake, Bear Lake, Loon Lake, oh my — there’s something for everyone! These mountain and spring-fed lakes are great places to cool off, take a boat ride, and perfect that tan under the blazing Spokane sun. RV and camping spots are available all summer, as well as several cottages to rent. With a fishing license you can explore some of the species native to the area, including salmon and largemouth bass. With luck, you and your family won’t be the only ones fishing there; Spokane lakes are home to bald eagles, osprey, and the occasional black bear.

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 Fredrick Olmstead, who also designed New York’s Central Park. The Olmstead charm 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 blossoming 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 to the Papillon Building, a historic brick structure that, every summer, bursting with the colors of butterflies on their annual migration.

Riverfront Park is also home to the Looft Carousel. Opened in 1909, the carousel still retains its original charm, and even if the horse figurines no longer feature real horsehair manes, they still bob up and down to old-fashioned music, and bolder kids can try to catch the brass ring as they whirl past it. The park is also home to the “Little Red Wagon,” a giant, kid-friendly sculpture that doubles as a slide and monkey bars. The wagon is situated on the bank of the river, where ducks and geese will come right up to you looking for an afternoon snack.

Right outside the carousel you can find more Spokane charm! The Garbage Goat, a metal sculpture, loves to eat your trash and keep the park clean. Across from the goat sits the skate ribbon, featuring ice skating in the winter and roller skating in the summer. High above all the action of the park soar Spokane’s gondolas, purple cars that will take you on a romantic journey with views of the river, the falls, and the downtown skyline. For a close-up view of the falls, downtown Spokane has several footbridges with breathtaking views of the rushing river and the falls.

Fine dining

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

Another option for fine dining is Clinckerdaggers, a must for any first-timers to the city. It’s a Spokane landmark offering views of the river and skyline, as well as perfectly grilled steak and salmon.

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

Shop til you drop!

Spokane has some excellent retail stores to check out while you’re visiting the city. In the center of 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 Mobius Discovery Center, a museum for kids.

Just across from Riverfront Park sit 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 knickknacks and intriguing books, while Atticus has some of the best coffee in town and an excellent gifts section. Full of rugged Pacific Northwest charm, Atticus features home decor, mugs and candles created by local artists. Atticus also has amazing books, everything from used classics to children’s books on feminism. A stop to Spokane isn’t complete without a visit to Boo Radley’s and Atticus!

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

NEW MEXICO

Sunflowers, blue doors, and sunsets on the plains

A New Mexico vacation

Architectural detail of the New Mexico Museum of Art – Photo by Josephine Baird

by Josephine Baird
SGN Contributing Writer

With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the idea of traveling has been seemingly off limits for the last year and a half. But with continued safety measures, traveling no longer feels like a pipe dream.

To celebrate a personal milestone—finishing my master's degree program—my mother and I went to New Mexico. While I'd never had much interest in seeing the state before, my mother promised it was worth a visit—and she wasn't wrong.

In all my travels, I've never been in a place quite like New Mexico, with its unique culture that combines Indigenous heritage and the historic remnants of the cowboy era as well as Spanish and Mexican rule. The adobe homes with their round-edged walls and brightly colored accents make for picture-postcard sights in town, while the highways wind through the stark and stunning beauty of the desert plains.

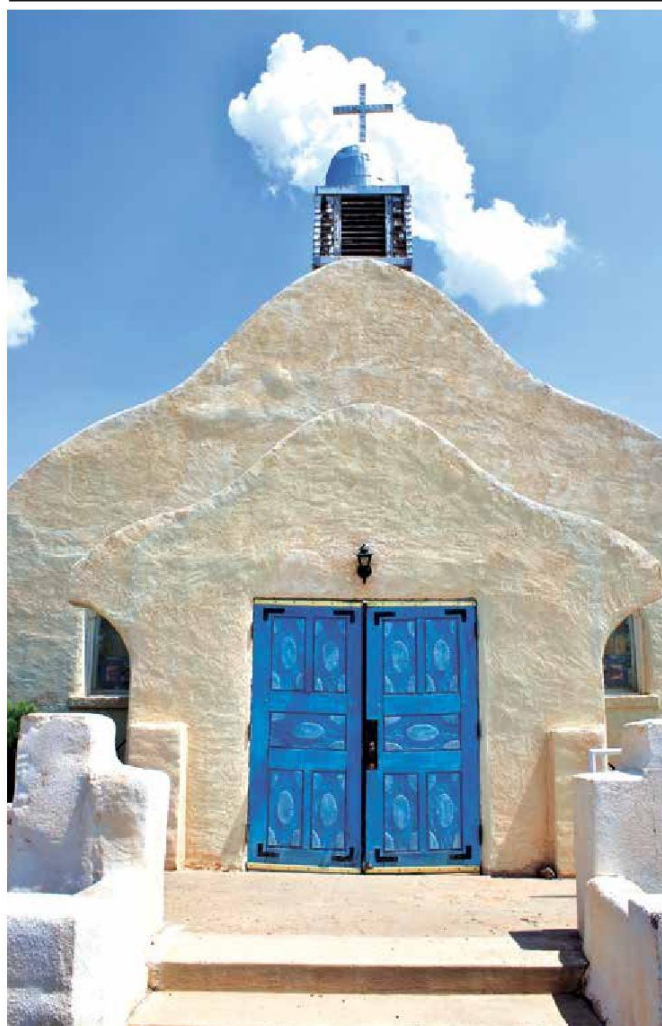
To start our trip, we flew into Albuquerque, the largest city in New Mexico, and stayed at the Hotel Andaluz, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. Home to New Mexico's first elevator and a gorgeous interior, the hotel also houses M&S, a restaurant known for its unique 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. Bracing 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 stay 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.



A small-town church with a picturesque entry – Photo by Josephine Baird

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 Native American Artisans Program, where scores of local Indigenous artists display their craft skills and artisanship.

One of the memorable shops we wandered into was 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 around here—the food, the clothing and the spiritualness."

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

To end 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 plains.

While Taos was scenic, I wasn't in the mood for more art galleries at that point. We soon left the town behind in favor of a detour to the Farmhouse Cafe 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 Farina 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 my soul good.

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

Vancouver: An underrated Washington getaway

by Hannah Saunders
SGN Contributing Writer

With its rich history, proximity to Portland and diverse community, Vancouver—also known as “the Couve”—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-timey 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 Couve.”

Brewed Awakenings

On every morning of a visit to Vancouver, my dog and I go for our favorite morning treats: 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



Photo by Hannah Saunders

coffee from around the globe and artisanally roasts their beans. And the baristas? They’re the sweetest ones you’ll ever meet. I can’t think of a more perfect way to start my day than with delicious coffee and an overjoyed puppy.

Fort Vancouver

Established in 1825, the historic and now-decommissioned Fort Vancouver is a popular destination today. It was originally the

headquarters for the Hudson’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 Vancouver was named a National Historic Site. Its Pearson Field is ideal for plane-watching, and there are endless meadows, making it dog friendly as well.

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

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, stonework bridges and scenic viewpoints.

Multnomah Falls is the most popular stop on the Historic Columbia River Highway, and for good reason. It’s a two-tiered, 600-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



Malmö, Sweden – Photo courtesy of Copenhagen 2021 WorldPride & EuroGames

by Mikey Rox
Special to the SGN

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

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

Hundreds of thousands of cooped-up Queer revelers and allies will flock to the twin host cities in Denmark and Sweden, respectively, from August 12 to 22, to party with the happiest people on the planet — a delightful distinction 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 (dun, dun, dun!) COVID restrictions

In conjunction with Copenhagen Pride, WorldPride will officially start on the late afternoon of August 13, but in adherence

with COVID-19 protocols, the opening ceremony won’t be held in WorldPride Square — a makeshift village of sorts (similar to the Olympics) located within Copenhagen’s main square — at least not as of press time (things could — and probably will — change).

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

WorldPride Square will be open for the rest of the fest

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

EuroGames will be held simultaneously

If you enjoy watching him, hers, and them 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 handsy; 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 10 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. Programs and 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, Countess of Monpezat, is patron of Copenhagen 2021, making her the first-ever royal to serve in the role for a major LGBTQ+ event. Say hi if you spot her; she knows a queen when she sees one.

Despite pandemic protocol, the show will go on

Organizers have said in an official statement that despite some COVID-19 restrictions, they’re “continuing to plan for full delivery of all Copenhagen 2021 events, taking into account the guidance and recommendations” of government agencies. Doubling 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 LGBT lifestyle expert whose work has been published in more than a hundred outlets across the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyroxtravels.

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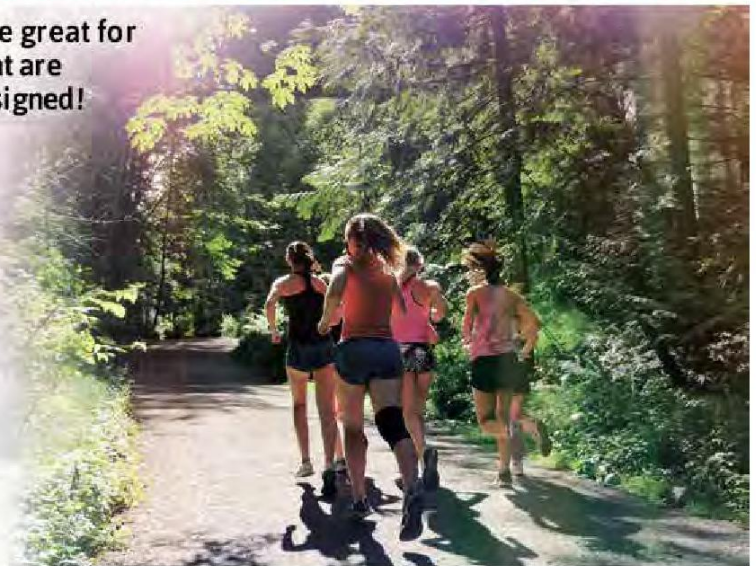
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- Alan Hart, 1918

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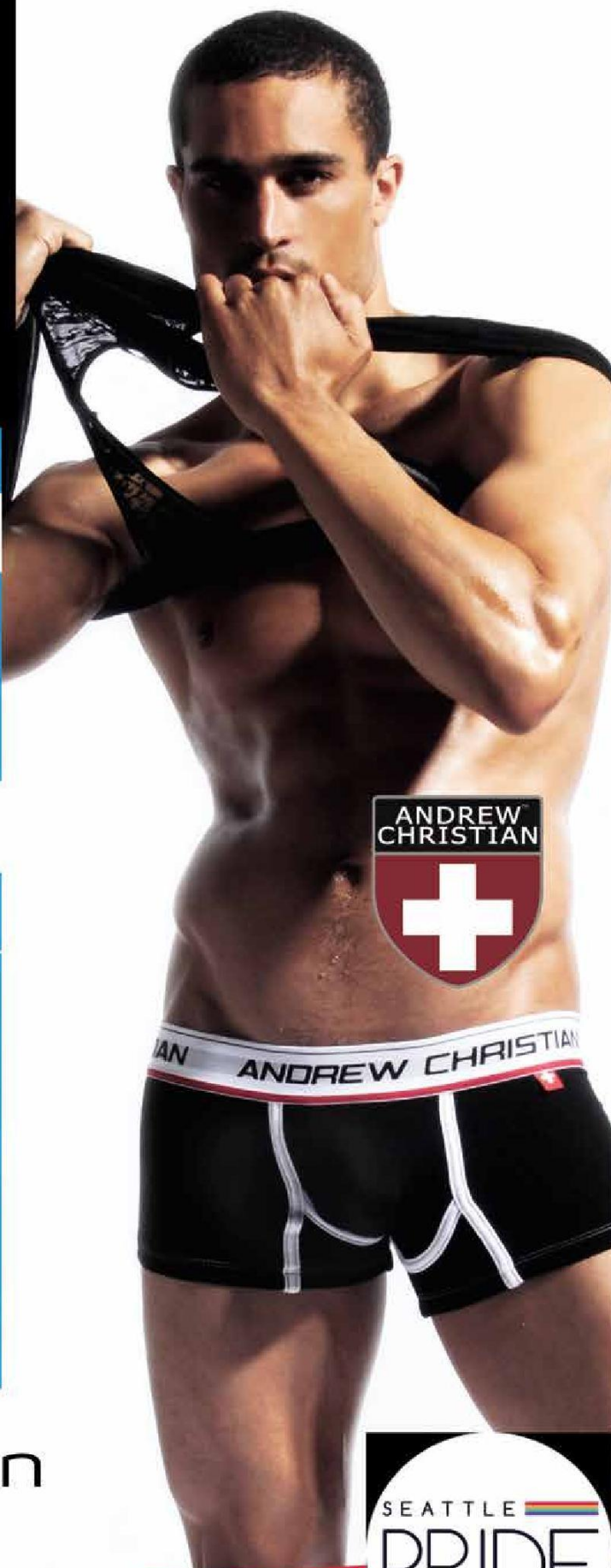
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